



## The Hope and Fulfilment Survey:

A tool to understand the experiences of long-term prisoners

## About the Prison Reform Trust

PRT is an independent UK charity working to create a just, humane and effective penal system. It was founded in 1981 to inform and influence public debate on prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners, amidst concerns about a projected prison population of 48,000 by 1984. With the prison population in England and Wales now approaching 88,000 and projected to rise to at least 95,700 by 2029,<sup>1</sup> PRT remains as important to civic society today as it was over 40 years ago. We are one of the few organisations willing and equipped to hold the state to account for its treatment of vulnerable people in prison. Our reputation, built over four decades of knowledgeable, reliable analysis and presentation of the facts, gives us influence behind the scenes that few organisations can match. PRT's main objectives are: (1) Reducing unnecessary imprisonment and promoting community solutions to crime. (2) Improving treatment and conditions for prisoners and their families. (3) Promoting equality and human rights in the justice system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system, informing prisoners, staff and the wider public, and by influencing Parliament, government and officials towards reform. Whilst often working alongside the prison service and maintaining close links with government departments including the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), His Majesty's Treasury (HMT), and the Home Office, to retain its independence, PRT does not seek or accept government funding. The structure and rigour of our programmes are agreed with the trusts and foundations that fund our work.

<https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/project/building-futures>

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Cover image: Andy Aitchison.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Justice. (5 December 2025). *Prison Population Projections 2024-2029*

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# Introduction

## The Building Futures programme

Building Futures is the Prison Reform Trust's programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, exploring the experiences of people serving long prison sentences. The long-term cohort includes men that will spend ten or more years in prison and women who will spend eight years or more. The programme gives voice to these individuals, providing them with the space to advocate for themselves, bringing about change from within the system and shedding light on the human cost of long-term imprisonment. Collaboration with those the programme represents is a core part of this work. Through consultation, advocacy and research, Building Futures works alongside those with direct experience of long-term imprisonment to demonstrate the true impact of ever-increasing sentence lengths. The Building Futures Network (BFN) has an active membership of around 900 prisoners, former prisoners, and their loved ones across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The programme also works closely with a range of academics, practitioners, and third-sector organisations to holistically understand what it means to serve, progress, and be released from, a period of long-term imprisonment.

## The purpose of this report

This report details one of the key Building Futures workstreams: to develop a survey that measures levels of hope and fulfilment within the long-term prison population (the Hope and Fulfilment Survey (HAFS)). The research seeks to address how long-term prisoners conceptualise and experience hope and fulfilment and how these constructs can be reliably measured.<sup>2</sup> It also investigates how a prisoner's ability to maintain hope and fulfilment is influenced by different factors within imprisonment, such as sentence length, prison conditions and personal circumstances.

Our aim is to develop a tool to monitor hope and fulfilment within the long-term population over time and identify any group differences. We seek to provide further insight into how best to support long-term prisoners and highlight how prison spaces could be better equipped to meet their needs. In sharing the HAFS measure with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), we hope the Building Futures legacy continues to help improve the experience of those serving the longest sentences.

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<sup>2</sup> This study was approved by the National Research Committee in 2024; NRC 2024-1581.

# Methods

## Design and recruitment

This study had a cross-sectional design, with data collected between January 2025 and May 2025. Convenience sampling was used: the survey was circulated with members of the Building Futures Network currently serving a long sentence in prison. Purposive sampling also ensured representation across key demographic and situational categories, including age, ethnicity and sentence stage to capture variation in experiences. Surveys were completed remotely (via Freepost) or in person (during consultation groups). The survey package included three sections: (i) demographic questions, (ii) 40 items assessing levels of hope and fulfilment, (iii) nine open-ended questions for additional insights (Appendix 1). Participants had to be aged 18 or over, not acutely vulnerable (e.g. not having a severe mental health condition or learning difficulty), and had to be serving a sentence for which the custodial aspect included at least ten years in prison for men and eight years in prison for women. In this report, the term 'sentence' reflects the period spent in prison rather than on community licence. This is otherwise known as a 'tariff' for those serving indeterminate sentences. All respondents provided informed consent. No incentive was provided for participation.

## Item selection

An in-depth review of the empirical and theoretical research literature was completed to identify themes of hope and fulfilment in the findings of long-term imprisonment studies. Researchers and senior staff at the Prison Reform Trust discussed these themes and generated a long list of items that related to hope and fulfilment constructs from existing Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) and Staff Quality of Life (SQL) research surveys. Each item response follows a 5-part Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). An Appreciative Inquiry approach<sup>3</sup> was used, which aims to frame questions around strengths and positive experiences. Potential items were then discussed in two-hour long focus groups with Building Futures working groups in two men's and two women's prisons. Prisoners were invited to share their personal experiences of hope and fulfilment. After review, the item list was revised to 40 items.

## Statistical analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to assess the latent structure of the data and refine our research instrument. This helped to group related items together into meaningful factors. Items that did not accurately measure any aspect of hope or fulfilment were removed. Reliability analysis was used to examine the internal consistency of the items belonging to each factor. Regression modelling was then used to investigate what aspects of imprisonment impact long-term prisoners' ability to feel hopeful and fulfilled. The sample included 190 participants. This was smaller than recommended by a priori power analysis for a medium effect size, which limited statistical power. However, it was still sufficient to detect larger effects, and the results provide useful preliminary evidence. Analyses were conducted in SPSS v.29.

## Who contributed to this report?

In total, 190 responses were collected from 57 prisons across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Most survey respondents were male (84%). Participants had an average age of 47 years old, ranging from 21 to 78 years old. The sample was 64% White British, 11% Black, 10% Mixed, 10% White other (including Irish, Gypsy/Irish Traveller), 5% Asian and 2% Other. Total sentence length ranged from 6.5 months – 49 years, with an average custodial term of 18 years. Over half the sample were serving life sentences.

3 Cooperrider, D. L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J. M. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Table 1 presents participant demographic and prison-related characteristics:

Variable	Group	n (%)	Mean (SD), Range
Sex (prison)	Male	153 (84.1)	
	Female	29 (15.9)	
Age (years)			47.4 (12.74), 21 - 78
Ethnicity	Asian	9 (4.7)	
	Black	20 (10.5)	
	Mixed	18 (9.5)	
	Other	3 (1.6)	
	White other	18 (9.5)	
	White British	122 (64.2)	
Foreign national	Foreign national	14 (7.7)	
	British citizen	169 (92.3)	
Religion	Christian	80 (42.3)	
	Hindu	1 (0.5)	
	Jewish	7 (3.7)	
	Muslim	32 (16.9)	
	No religion	31 (16.4)	
	Other	38 (20.1)	
Status	Sentenced	176 (93.6)	
	Licence recall/revoke	12 (6.4)	
Sentence type	Normal Determinate	25 (13.3)	
	Extended Determinate Sentence	28 (14.9)	
	Imprisonment for Public Protection	16 (8.5)	
	Life	117 (62.2)	
Sentence length (years)			18.0 (8.59), 6.5 months – 49 years
Sentence stage	Early	12 (6.9)	
	Mid	99 (56.6)	
	Late	27 (15.4)	
	Post tariff	28 (16.0)	
	Post tariff recall	9 (5.1)	
Time left to serve (years)			8.7 (7.35), 0 – 46
Sector	Public	137 (75.3)	
	Private	45 (24.7)	
Category	LTHSE*	50 (27.5)	
	B	33 (18.1)	
	C	58 (31.9)	
	D	7 (3.8)	
	Women's (closed)	29 (15.9)	

	Other jurisdiction	5 (2.7)	
First time in prison	First time in prison	120 (63.2)	
	Been to prison before	70 (36.8)	
Number of prior imprisonments			3.9 (5.27), 1 - 40
Been in current prison before	In this prison before	19 (27.5)	
	New to this prison	50 (72.5)	
Time in current prison (years)			4.8 (4.44), 20 days – 31 years 10 months
Age at first conviction (years)			32.9 (13.86), 11 – 70
Joint enterprise	Joint enterprise conviction	39 (21.1)	
	No joint enterprise	146 (78.9)	
Offending Behaviour Programmes	Completed course	108 (57.8)	
	No course	79 (42.2)	
Visits	Receives visits	121 (65.1)	
	No visits	65 (34.9)	
Distance from home	Close to home	49 (26.5)	
	Far from home	136 (73.5)	
Family contact	Regular contact	156 (82.5)	
	Irregular or no contact	33 (17.5)	

*Table 1: Participant demographic and prison-related characteristics; \*LTHSE = Long-Term High Security Estate; For men, sentence stage is defined as ‘early’ – up to four years of the sentence, ‘mid’ – period between first four years and last two years of sentence, ‘late’ – two years prior to end of sentence, ‘post tariff’ – beyond tariff date, ‘post tariff recall’ – recalled beyond tariff date. For women, sentence stage is defined by ‘thirds’ of their sentence.<sup>4</sup>*

## Report structure

Following this introduction, the report has four main sections. First, we give an overview of the concepts of hope and fulfilment in a prison context. This summarises current literature to emphasise the importance of hope and fulfilment in ensuring safe and rehabilitative practice for prisoners. Second, we discuss the qualitative survey responses. This examines how participants themselves contextualise hope, fulfilment and purpose within long-term imprisonment, providing a deeper understanding of the relational dynamics that underpin coping and adaptation in prison. Third, we detail the development of the HAFS. We examine its factor structure, present tests of scale reliability, and explore what factors impact levels of hope and fulfilment. Fourth, we expand on these findings and discuss policy and practice implications. We conclude with recommendations to stakeholders and potential next steps.

<sup>4</sup> Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2020). *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: adaptation, identity and time*. Palgrave Macmillan.

# Understanding hope and fulfilment

Hope has often been described as the belief that a desired outcome is possible, regardless of its probability.<sup>5</sup> It tends to be future-focused and can be a motivator in the face of uncertainty. In contrast, fulfilment typically relates to contentment in the present. This may result from achieving things that matter to you or living in line with your core values. The two concepts reinforce each other: hope can be a precursor to fulfilment by helping to pursue meaningful goals, while experiences of fulfilment can strengthen hope by affirming one's capacity to achieve what is meaningful to them.

*'I have no life, no freedom, no future. I fear IPP will force me to commit suicide. I have lost all trust and hope in this justice system... Each day I feel more and more fear and dismay and I am starting to dislike life... I have to suffer in prison in silence. Accept it or suicide. That's my only options left.'*<sup>6</sup>

In 2013, the Grand Chamber at the European Court of Human Rights declared that life-sentenced prisoners should not be deprived of the hope to be granted release as this strikes 'at the very heart of human dignity'.<sup>7</sup> Research has documented that a fundamental component in whether an individual is able to survive a prison sentence is their ability to maintain hope.<sup>8</sup> To 'overcome tremendous handicaps in order to survive, let alone succeed', hope is vital.<sup>9</sup> People serving long prison sentences have been seen to experience prolonged periods of hopelessness resulting in a state of 'almost psychological "paralysis"', often due to the nature of their sentences.<sup>10</sup>

There has been some exploration into the role of hope and personal fulfilment in promoting psychological resilience among prisoners serving long sentences.<sup>11</sup> A growing body of evidence suggests that hope functions as an anchor that enables individuals to endure the psychological strain of prolonged imprisonment and to sustain a sense of meaning in their lives. Hope is often both situational and relational – emerging from interactions with others, personal achievements, and opportunities for self-development.<sup>12, 13</sup> This hope can mitigate the negative effects of long-term incarceration, such as feelings of isolation and despair, which are particularly acute for individuals with limited or no prospect of release.<sup>14</sup> In addition, hope also serves as a motivator for engaging in self-improvement and rehabilitation activities, including education and therapy, which can contribute to personal fulfilment.<sup>15, 16</sup> The ability to envision a future beyond the prison gates, even in abstract terms, has been linked to lower rates of depression, greater engagement in 'prosocial' behaviour and improved adaptability to the prison environment.<sup>17</sup>

As noted by Styles, hope can persist even in the most restrictive conditions, but it is fragile and easily undermined. Prisoners described finding meaning in education, family ties and faith, yet reported that perceptions of illegitimacy or unfairness diminished motivation and trust. Without hope, imprisonment becomes 'pointless pain' and prioritising meaningful activities, fairness and consistent relationships is essential if long-term imprisonment is to be survivable.<sup>18</sup>

Maintaining connections with family and loved ones plays a vital role in fostering and maintaining hope. Family relationships offer emotional support, which significantly impacts prisoners' wellbeing and motivation. Many prisoners identify family contact, along with faith and educational opportunities, as their main sources of hope.<sup>19</sup>

5 Vannier, M. (2025). On the importance of 'hope-in-practice' behind bars. *The February Journal*, 04, 32–49. <https://doi.org/10.60633/tfj.i04.101>

6 Prison Reform Trust. (2020). *No life, no freedom, no future: The experiences of prisoners recalled under the sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection*. Page 46. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old\\_files/Documents/no%20freedom\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old_files/Documents/no%20freedom_final_web.pdf)

7 See Szydto, M. (2013). Free Life after Life Imprisonment as a Human Right under the European Convention: European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, Judgment of 9 July 2013, *Vinter and Others v. The United Kingdom*. *European Constitutional Law Review*, 9(3), 501–512. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1574019612001265>

8 Liebling, A. (2011). Moral performance, inhuman and degrading treatment and prison pain. *Punishment & Society*, 13(5), 530–550.

9 LeBel, T. P., Burnett, R., Maruna, S., & Bushway, S. (2008). The 'Chicken and Egg' of Subjective and Social Factors in Desistance from Crime. *European Journal of Criminology*, 5(2), 131–159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370807087640>

10 Liebling, A., Arnold, H., & Straub, C. (2011). *An exploration of staff-prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: Twelve years on*. Ministry of Justice / National Offender Management Service. Page 271.

11 Liebling, A., Laws, B., Lieber, E., Auty, K., Schmidt, B.E., Crewe, B., Gardom, J., Kant, D. & Morey, M. (2019). Are Hope and Possibility Achievable in Prison? *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*. 58: 104–126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12303>

12 Maruna, S. (2001). *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. The American Psychological Society.

13 Crewe, B., Hulley, S. & Wright, S. (2017). Swimming with the Tide: Adapting to Long-Term Imprisonment. *Justice Quarterly*, 34, 517–541.

14 Sliva, S. M. (2015). On the meaning of life: A qualitative interpretive meta synthesis of the lived experience of life without parole. *Journal of Social Work*, 15(5), 498–515. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017314550748>

15 Bullock, K., Bunce, A., & McCarthy, D. (2019). Making Good in Unpromising Places: The Development and Cultivation of Redemption Scripts Among Long-Term Prisoners. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(3), 406–423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X18800882>

16 Kazemian, L. (2019). *Positive Growth and Redemption in Prison: Finding Light Behind Bars and Beyond* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429458149>

17 Burnett, R., & Maruna, S. (2004). So 'Prison Works', Does It? The Criminal Careers of 130 Men Released from Prison under Home Secretary, Michael Howard. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43(4), 390–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2004.00337.x>

18 Styles, W. (2019). A crisis of hope? Long term prisoners' experiences in Category A environments. *Prison Service Journal*, (243), 22–29.

19 Ruddell, R., Broom, I., & Young, M. (2010). Creating Hope for Life-Sentenced Offenders. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 49(5), 324–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509674.2010.489464>

For many, the hope of reuniting with family, or being a better parent or grandparent, gives purpose to daily life in prison.<sup>20</sup> However, sustaining these relationships is challenging due to the restrictions on visitation and communication, which can hinder the continuity of support over long sentences.<sup>21</sup> Research suggests that expanding opportunities for meaningful contact, such as more frequent visits or private phone conversations, can strengthen prisoners' resolve to stay positive and seek personal growth.<sup>22</sup>

Recent literature highlights that sustaining hope is not merely a psychological coping strategy but an essential component of a humane and dignified prison service. Hope provides the emotional scaffolding through which prisoners construct meaning, engage in self-development, and maintain identity beyond their sentence. When prisons fail to create environments that cultivate hope – through fairness, relationships and personal activity – they risk deepening despair and undermining rehabilitation. Building on these insights, we present our study findings, which illustrate these experiences, and we explore the use of HAFS as a valid measure of hope and fulfilment in those serving long prison sentences.

## Findings

### Qualitative data

#### Introduction

Open-ended responses invited participants to reflect on the relationships, aspirations, activities, and individuals that had shaped their sense of hope and fulfilment, as well as describe barriers and opportunities for improvement within the prison system. Thematic coding was used to analyse the qualitative data. Responses were grouped into categories that reflected both positive and negative dimensions of prisoners' experiences, as well as suggestions for improvement. This approach highlighted the most common themes – such as the importance of family contact, aspirations for release, and frustrations with a lack of in-prison opportunities – but also highlighted the diversity of perspectives within the long-term prisoner cohort. Some participants expressed positive visions for the future and emphasised the role of personal agency in sustaining hope, while others described feeling resigned or hopeless, particularly in the context of long, indeterminate sentences and perceived institutional neglect.

The aim of this qualitative strand is therefore twofold. First, it illustrates the lived experiences of prisoners in their own words. This adds depth to the statistical findings of the survey by capturing how they themselves describe sources of hope and fulfilment, as well as the barriers that erode them. Second, it contributes to wider Building Futures findings on the impact of long sentences, particularly in relation to extensive periods of 'nothing time' whereby the sentence feels purposeless and stagnant.<sup>23</sup> In doing so, it also complements existing scholarship which emphasises the significance of hope, resilience and meaningful activity in mitigating the harms of long sentences.<sup>24</sup>

The qualitative results reflect prisoners' perception of hope and fulfilment as two distinct but closely related concepts. For many, hope refers to a forward-thinking or future-orientated outlook, which focuses on one's ability to plan for a meaningful life, both in prison, but also beyond the prison upon release. Conversely, fulfilment related to the present day – how participants were able to use their time constructively and make some sense of their daily lives in prison. This is an important distinction and demonstrates why including both concepts in the HAFS is valuable.

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20 Burnett, R., & Maruna, S. (2004). So 'Prison Works', Does It? The Criminal Careers of 130 Men Released from Prison under Home Secretary, Michael Howard. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43(4), 390–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2004.00337.x>

21 Hutton, M., & O'Brien, R. (2024). *A Long Stretch: The challenge of maintaining relationships for people serving long prison sentences*. Prison Reform Trust.

22 Kotova, A. (2015). "He has a life sentence, but I have a life sentence to cope with as well": The experiences of intimate partners of offenders serving long sentences in the United Kingdom. In J. A. Arditti, & T. le Roux (Eds.), *And Justice for All: Families & the Criminal Justice System: Groves Monographs on Marriage and Family* (pp. 85-103). Michigan Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.3998/groves.9453087.0004.001>

23 Jarman, B., & Vince, C. (2022). *Making Progress?* Prison Reform Trust. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making\\_progress.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making_progress.pdf)

24 Liebling, A., Laws, B., Lieber, E., Auty, K., Schmidt, B.E., Crewe, B., Gardom, J., Kant, D. & Morey, M. (2019). Are Hope and Possibility Achievable in Prison? *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*. 58: 104-126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12303>. See also: Bullock, K., Bunce, A., & McCarthy, D. (2019). Making Good in Unpromising Places: The Development and Cultivation of Redemption Scripts Among Long-Term Prisoners. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(3), 406-423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X18800882>

## Positive relationships as a source of hope

One of the most consistent findings across the qualitative responses was the central role of relationships in sustaining hope. For many, contact with loved ones outside prison, including family and friends, was described as the single most important factor that provided emotional support and motivation for the future. This echoes a large body of research which highlights outside contact as an anchor, providing resilience and hope for those serving long or indeterminate sentences.<sup>25</sup>

*'All my family and loved ones all give me hope and keep me positive'* (male, life sentence)

These accounts demonstrate how outside connections act not only as sources of comfort but also as reminders of an identity beyond the prison gates, offering a form of continuity in an otherwise disrupted existence.<sup>26</sup>

Alongside external ties, participants frequently highlighted the importance of peer relationships within the prison. This included friendships on the wing as well as formal peer-support roles within the prison. Listeners and mentor schemes were frequently mentioned as sources of support and encouragement.

*'Certain prisoners have helped me to stay on track with progression, surrounding myself with pro-social people have helped me to improve aspects of myself.'* (male, life sentence)

*'The lads who have pulled me up whenever I have done wrong and praised when I have done something good. (I was used to the opposite).'* (male, life sentence)

*'When I was remanded and entered prison for the first time the induction orderly was amazing. I was so lost and my entire identity had been stripped, but he welcomed me and helped me to settle. Positive role models in the early days roles can be the difference between life and death, success or failure.'* (male, EDS)

When asked about positive relationships that have helped them maintain hope in their current prison, one participant said:

*'Friendship with other prisoners with similar past to myself to share thoughts and fears about what the future holds.'* (male, EDS)

Other participants spoke about prison staff. Keyworkers, prison psychologists, tutors and Safer Custody staff were cited as individuals who provided reassurance and support:

*'Officers who take time to get to know you, they go above and beyond and know when something is troubling you.'* (female, life sentence)

*'Personally, my keyworker has invested time in supporting me through some adverse times, by taking a person-centred approach and by having regular keywork sessions, they keep me focused on progression and hopeful that life after prison will be colourful and purposeful.'* (male, determinate sentence)

Such examples illustrate the potential for positive staff-prisoner relationships to mitigate feelings of isolation.<sup>27</sup> However, participants also raised concerns about the disruption caused when particular staff members who they had worked to build positive relationships with moved into different positions or left the prison entirely.

Accounts also revealed gaps and inconsistencies in support. Some shared experiences of strained family ties or the breakdown of relationships, and how this left them without vital sources of hope:<sup>28</sup>

*'I struggle to think about my future. My wife and kids were my everything, now I feel I have nothing to look forward to or dream of.'* (male, life sentence)

Others described frustration at a lack of consistent keywork or difficulties in accessing the Offender Management Unit, which contributed to concerns about sentence progression:

*'Ensure we get keywork and for staff to be better trained. Staff to stop treating us like dirt.'* (male, life sentence)

In summary, these findings highlight that positive relationships – whether with family, staff or peers – are an integral component of hope in prison. The absence or breakdown of such relationships can be frustrating, disruptive and destabilising.

25 Hutton, M. & O'Brien, R. (2024) *A Long Stretch: The challenge of maintaining relationships for people serving long prison sentences*. Prison Reform Trust. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/A\\_Long\\_Stretch.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/A_Long_Stretch.pdf)

26 See upcoming Building Futures publication on the experiences of young adults serving long prison sentences.

27 This finding is consistent with Liebling's work on the moral quality of prison life.

28 These issues are discussed at length in Hutton, Dr M. and O'Brien, R. (2024). *A Long Stretch*. Prison Reform Trust. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/A\\_Long\\_Stretch.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/A_Long_Stretch.pdf)

## Aspirations and dreams for the future

Participants were asked what aspirations or dreams give them a sense of hope when thinking about their future. They articulated aspirations that centred on release, rebuilding a life outside, reuniting with family, employment and education. These themes reflected a hope of constructing a meaningful identity beyond the long sentence. For some, this hope for the future was optimistic and outward-looking – despite the challenging circumstances they currently found themselves in.

*'To have a good, stable job, settle down, rebuild my relationships with family members.'*  
(woman, life sentence)

*'Deterring others from following in my footsteps. Giving back to society. Being free.'*  
(male, life sentence)

These statements highlight a personal resilience and determination to shape a positive future for themselves. However, not all participants expressed such positivity. When asked what aspirations or dreams gave them a sense of hope for the future, some participants instead described hope only in terms of its absence, reflecting a sense of resignation and hopelessness:

*'Nothing in this jail.'* (male, life sentence)

For some, the length of their sentence or tariff, or a lack of confidence in the formal routes for sentence progression, meant release was an abstract, unattainable goal, which only served to create further disappointment. Many described themselves as 'worn down' by long or indeterminate sentences, particularly those serving IPP sentences or facing repeated recalls. These findings echo previous research which identifies uncertainty, lack of progression and indefinite imprisonment as profound barriers to hope.<sup>29</sup> As found in other Building Futures research and consultations, many long-term prisoners felt abandoned by the system, with limited means to progress towards release.<sup>30</sup> Many participants expressed a deep hopelessness, which was linked to sentence type, the institutional context and personal resources for resilience.

## Pathways to fulfilment in prison

Participants were also asked about the activities and programmes that had been most helpful in promoting personal fulfilment during their time in prison. The responses consistently identified the value of education (including distance learning), work roles, the gym, faith and mentoring schemes. These opportunities were described as providing structure, purpose and opportunities for personal growth, which went some way in counteracting the disempowerment of prison life.

*'I do every course and attend every forum available to me; I don't 'qualify' for behaviour modification programmes. Access to distance learning is the most significant activity for me.'* (male, life sentence)

These accounts mirror wider research showing that meaningful activities can provide both immediate psychological benefits – such as self-expression and a sense of purpose – and longer-term benefits, including skills development and hope for the future.<sup>31</sup> However, several participants also expressed frustration at the lack of meaningful opportunities or inconsistent access to such opportunities:

*'I have no personal fulfilment in this prison, I am just warehoused.'* (male, life sentence)

*'There are currently no programmes (OBPs) that you can currently do and even when they are available there are significant barriers such as excessive waiting times. There is not much here in terms of real-life skills to promote personal fulfilment.'* (male, determinate sentence)

These accounts highlight the disparities in provision between establishments and the frustrations experienced by those who wish to engage but find themselves unable to do so. These reflections echo the literature on the pains of long-term imprisonment, where a lack of purposeful activity has been seen to exacerbate hopelessness and disengagement.<sup>32</sup>

29 Crewe, B., Hulley, S. & Wright, S. (2017). Swimming with the Tide: Adapting to Long-Term Imprisonment. *Justice Quarterly*, 34, 517–541.

30 Jarman, B., & Vince, C. (2022). *Making Progress?* Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making-progress.pdf>

31 Wright, S., Crewe, B., & Hulley, S. (2017). Suppression, Denial, Sublimation: Defending against the Initial Pains of Very Long Life Sentences. *Theoretical Criminology* 21(2). 225–246; see also Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2020). *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: adaptation, identity and time*. Palgrave Macmillan.

32 Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2020). *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: adaptation, identity and time*. Palgrave Macmillan; Liebling, A., Laws, B., Lieber, E., Auty, K., Schmidt, B.E., Crewe, B., Gardom, J., Kant, D. & Morey, M. (2019). Are Hope and Possibility Achievable in Prison? *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*. 58: 104-126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojc.12303>

Some participants emphasised the role of self-directed personal development, even in the absence of formal opportunities for progression. This point reinforces findings from a previous Building Futures consultation, which noted the disparity between what prisoners perceived as ‘personal development’ – which many felt goes unnoticed by prison staff – and the more conventional ‘prison-approved’ progression, which was intrinsically linked to the formal risk reduction processes.<sup>33</sup>

*‘You have to rehabilitate yourself. You have to want to change. Prison just makes better criminals! Everything that gives me fulfilment apart from loved ones, I’ve taught myself.’* (male, life sentence)

Other participants highlighted good practice:

*‘This prison is different.... Negative behaviour is clearly tackled so we understand consequences. There’s a community ethos with collective responsibility.’* (male, determinate sentence)

However, some were notably disengaged or resigned to living a life without hope.

*‘I just want to get out of here but I know I will die here waiting so there is no future without progression and there is none of that here if you are A cat.’* (male, life sentence)

The contrast between these accounts highlights the uneven landscape of opportunities for fulfilment in custody. While some went out of their way to find ways of achieving personal goals and bettering themselves, others were left totally despondent by limited opportunities and institutional barriers. This suggested that individual agency may be a mediating factor even when purposeful activities available within the prison are poor.

## Individuals who support fulfilment

In addition to activities and programmes, participants highlighted specific individuals who had supported their sense of fulfilment while in custody. These included both staff and peers, whose guidance and everyday interactions shaped prisoners’ experiences of hope and fulfilment.

Several respondents described staff members who had provided meaningful support, often going beyond their formal role. In some cases, education and psychology staff were cited as offering encouragement and opportunities for growth.

*‘I’ve had a couple of positive relationships with psychology leads.’* (male, life sentence)

*‘The psychologist who did Kaizen with me 1 to 1. I was able to build trust which has been difficult for me in prison.’* (male, life sentence)

*‘Psychologist. Worked with me and actually helped me address my offending, thanks to them treating me like a real person by taking time.’* (male, life sentence)

What seemed to set these positive accounts apart from more critical reflections was the relational component. Where prisoners described building rapport and trust with professional staff, they often experienced these relationships as supportive and motivating. Conversely, where interactions felt distant, inconsistent, or judgemental, participants expressed frustration and despondency:

*‘Speaking with inmates who can relate to my imprisonment and not a prison officer or a psychologist who has just read a book as opposed to real experience.’* (male, life sentence)

This links to previous work on the moral quality of staff-prisoner relationships: support is not simply about access to services, but about whether individuals feel recognised, respected and genuinely invested in.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, institutional support seemed to be inconsistent. Broken trust – whether due to staff turnover, lack of consistency or judgmental attitudes – was experienced as particularly harmful, reinforcing feelings of neglect and abandonment.

Peers played an equally significant role. Mentors, friends and listeners were highlighted as sources of support:

*‘I have made friends here that keep me calm and make me feel safe. Only positives here are fellow inmates.’* (male, life sentence)

33 Jarman, B., & Vince, C. (2022). *Making Progress?* Prison Reform Trust. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making\\_progress.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making_progress.pdf)

34 Liebling, A., Arnold, H., & Straub, C. (2011). *An exploration of staff-prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: Twelve years on*. Ministry of Justice / National Offender Management Service.

Taken together, these accounts suggest that fulfilment in prison is not only linked to activities but is deeply relational, shaped by the presence – or absence – of supportive individuals who invest in prisoners' progress and wellbeing. Fulfilment is often created through social connections, whether with trusted staff or fellow prisoners who provide solidarity in difficult circumstances.

## Absence of hope

While many participants described relationships, activities and aspirations that helped them sustain hope, a significant proportion offered accounts characterised by low expectations and an absence of hope for the future. These reflections demonstrate how imprisonment, particularly for long or indeterminate sentences, can wear away hope over time. For some, the institutional environment itself was perceived as a barrier. Respondents pointed to a lack of fairness, limited opportunities for progression and inconsistent support as reasons for feeling that hope was difficult to maintain.<sup>35</sup> One participant noted:

*'No matter how strong I try to be, hope keeps slipping away gradually every day. I've asked to do each and every [course], as well as courses that don't apply to me, to ensure nothing like this happens again. Yet, as I mentioned, none apply to me!'* (male, life sentence)

For some, the fears of becoming institutionalised and detached from the outside world eclipsed hope for the future:

*'How can you dream of the future when you know you will leave here so disconnected from the reality that has changed so much since you came in?'* (woman, life sentence)

The psychological strain of long sentences was particularly evident in accounts from those serving indeterminate or IPP sentences, or from individuals facing recall after a period in the community. These participants often described limited prospects and uncertainty about their future:

*'Nothing, this prison is shocking when it comes to helping lifers.'* (male, life sentence)

*'None, IPP ergo no hope.'* (male, IPP)

Such reflections reinforce the well-documented challenges associated with indeterminate sentencing, where uncertainty about release or lack of clear progression routes can significantly undermine motivation and well-being.<sup>36</sup> The indeterminate nature of these sentences often creates a sense of being 'stuck', with little control over the future, which in turn limits the capacity to sustain hope.

For those respondents who referred to the impact of recall, the experience of being returned to custody after time in the community was particularly detrimental to hope. For these individuals, the cycle of release and recall was framed as a source of instability and resignation, making it difficult to envisage a pathway to a different future.

*'Hope is important to motivate, however as a recalled life sentenced prisoner having committed no further crime or received any charges, being back in prison 4 yrs and my COM still does not support release. I have to fight hard everyday to motivate myself which is very difficult with no support/ for re-release from my COM but I do it with difficulty.'* (male, life sentence)

The absence of hope was not always expressed in absolute terms but was sometimes described as a gradual erosion. As one participant explained:

*'No matter how strong I try to be, hope keeps slipping away gradually every day.'* (male, life sentence)

Such accounts suggest that a lack of hope emerges not only from the sentence type, but also from the cumulative effects of unmet expectations, stalled progression, and repeated disappointment.

## What people say they need

Alongside reflections on what hope and fulfilment means to them, participants also offered thoughts on what they believed would better support them during their sentences. These responses provide important insights into how individuals themselves understand the conditions that can foster hope and enable fulfilment.

A consistent theme was the call for fairness and professionalism in day-to-day interactions with staff. Several participants highlighted the importance of being treated with respect, noting that perceptions of inconsistency, bias, or lack of professionalism negatively affect trust.

<sup>35</sup> Styles, W. (2019). A crisis of hope? Long term prisoners' experiences in Category A environments. *Prison Service Journal*, (243), 22–29.

<sup>36</sup> Jarman, B., & Vince, C. (2022). *Making Progress?* Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making-progress.pdf>

As one respondent noted:

*'Have staff, especially OMU, operate in a fair, open and honest way that doesn't prioritise 'risk management' (aka covering their own backs) over everything else.'* (male, life sentence)

*'Prison staff to listen to the individual needs. To be given a chance. To be treated like a human being, not an animal.'* (woman, life sentence)

Another area frequently mentioned was the availability of opportunities for progression. Many participants expressed frustration at the limited number of courses, jobs, or educational opportunities available, as well as delays in accessing programmes. Several respondents described being motivated to take part in rehabilitative or developmental activities, but felt constrained by waiting lists, eligibility criteria, or limited provision:

*'For me it would be more vocational opportunities that can be more transferable into 'normal life'.'* (male, EDS)

These reflections suggest that expanding access to accredited programmes, increasing vocational and educational opportunities and providing clearer pathways to progress are central to sustaining hope. This aligns with research highlighting the role of meaningful activity in promoting a forward-looking orientation and supporting desistance.<sup>37</sup>

Keyword and sentence management were also identified as critical areas for improvement. Several respondents reported difficulties in maintaining contact with their offender managers or described inconsistent keyword sessions:

*'Ensure we get keyword and for staff to be better trained.'* (male, life sentence)

*'The keyworkers play a huge role in motivating the inmates in personal growth, by opening doors for them to have more freedom and responsibility, this gives us a routine and sense of purpose to spend our time wisely.'* (male, determinate sentence)

For some, the absence of such support created a sense of being in limbo, unable to move forward with their sentence plan. By contrast, where participants described positive and consistent support, they emphasised its value in providing structure, encouragement and a feeling of being listened to. This finding reflects wider calls for better integration of trauma-informed and relational practice into prison regimes.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, several participants underlined the importance of family contact and maintaining relationships. Requests for more visits, easier phone or video communication, and greater support for maintaining family ties were common.

*'Increasing access to family contact by removing one hour per day phone talk-time, having more social visits, regular family day visits, operating prison video calls, taking photos on visits with visitors.'* (male, life sentence)

Participants repeatedly stressed that these connections provided motivation for change and a sense of continuity with life outside prison. This is consistent with earlier studies emphasising that family ties are among the strongest protective factors for hope and resilience during long sentences.<sup>39</sup>

Taken together, these reflections suggest that prisoners see hope and fulfilment as closely tied to institutional practices. Fair treatment, meaningful opportunities for progression, consistent professional support and the ability to maintain family ties were the most frequently identified needs. Addressing these areas would not only help sustain hope but could also strengthen the conditions under which wellbeing can be maintained for those serving the longest prison sentences.

- 37 Bullock, K., Bunce, A., & McCarthy, D. (2019). Making Good in Unpromising Places: The Development and Cultivation of Redemption Scripts Among Long-Term Prisoners. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(3), 406-423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X18800882>; Kazemian, L. (2019). Positive Growth and Redemption in Prison: Finding Light Behind Bars and Beyond (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429458149>
- 38 Auty, K. M., Liebling, A., Schliehe, A., & Crewe, B. (2023). What is trauma-informed practice? Towards operationalisation of the concept in two prisons for women. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 23(5), 716-738. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958221094980>
- 39 Hutton, M., & O'Brien, R. (2024). *A Long Stretch: The challenge of maintaining relationships for people serving long prison sentences*. Prison Reform Trust; Kotova, A. (2015). "He has a life sentence, but I have a life sentence to cope with as well": The experiences of intimate partners of offenders serving long sentences in the United Kingdom. In J. A. Arditti, & T. le Roux (Eds.), *And Justice for All: Families & the Criminal Justice System: Groves Monographs on Marriage and Family* (pp. 85-103). Michigan Publishing.

## Conclusion

*'Recognition we are people with dreams, abilities and to be treated as a valued member of society. Treated as more than our conviction – it does not define us!'* (woman, life sentence)

The qualitative findings highlight that hope and fulfilment in prison are grounded in everyday experiences of relationships, activities and aspirations for the future. While many participants identified supportive staff, peers and family connections as central to sustaining motivation, others described barriers such as inconsistent support, limited opportunities and the strain of indeterminate sentences. Across these accounts, a recurring theme was the importance of being treated fairly, consistently and with dignity.

Ultimately, participants' reflections suggest that what they most desire is to be recognised and treated as human beings, with access to meaningful opportunities and relationships that affirm their worth. These findings also underline the value of systematically measuring experiences of hope and fulfilment among long-term prisoners. Doing so at regular intervals would provide the prison service with a more accurate and responsive picture of what matters to these individuals, ensuring that policies and regimes are shaped by the lived experiences of those most affected.

## Quantitative data

### Introduction

Responses to the 40 Likert-scale items were examined to develop the HAFS and assess its use as a valid measure of hope and fulfilment in the long-term prisoner population. Exploratory factor analysis was performed for survey development. Regression analyses were then used to assess the relationship between hope, fulfilment and factors within imprisonment. Quantifying these constructs will increase understanding of the needs and experiences of those serving long sentences. HAFS data could therefore inform improvements in policy and practice to support prisoners to feel hopeful and fulfilled.

### Non-technical summary

- The 40 survey items were assessed for their similarity and relevance to hope and fulfilment concepts and to each other. Items that did not clearly relate to the main themes were removed. In total, 22 items were retained.
- Authors investigated which items clustered together. Three different groups of items were identified (known as "factors"). These were labelled (1) Making Meaningful Progress (MMP), (2) Believing in a Future (BIAF), and (3) Preserving Personal Autonomy (PPA).
- Authors then examined what demographic and prison-related characteristics were associated with each factor. MMP scores were higher among those in category B and D (open) conditions, those who had completed an Offending Behaviour Programme and who had regular family contact. Lower scores were reported by Asian individuals, those reporting no religion, and those serving IPP sentences. BIAF scores were higher among Black individuals, those in category B and D conditions and those that receive prison visits. Lower scores were reported by those serving an IPP sentence and those who were early in their sentence. PPA scores were higher among those in category B conditions and those with regular family contact. Lower scores were reported by prisoners with no religion and those belonging to 'Other' religious groups. Results were used to inform suggested recommendations to stakeholders.

### Descriptive statistics

First, we looked at the distribution of survey responses to understand initial data trends. Table 2 displays frequencies and percentages for each response category, along with item-level means and standard deviations. Response spread tended to vary per item, as expected. However, statements related to system-level advocacy (items 18-20), such as hoping the justice system changes for the better or someone speaks out on prisoners' behalf, showed very strong endorsement and positive skew (~80% 'strongly agree' responses). Limited score variability suggested these items may not contribute meaningfully to factor extraction in subsequent exploratory factor analysis, due to reduced inter-item correlations. Survey responses were also disaggregated by sex (Appendix 2) and prison category (Appendix 3). Separate descriptives were not produced for category D and other jurisdiction prisons due to small sample sizes.

TABLE 2	Item	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neutral (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
1	This prison has a harsh regime	184	19.6	67	36.4	33	17.9	28	15.2	20	10.9	2.6	1.26
2	In this prison I am able to build my future	183	25.1	39	21.3	32	17.5	52	28.4	14	7.7	2.7	1.32
3	I have a sense of purpose in this prison	186	17.7	36	19.4	30	16.1	57	30.6	30	16.1	3.1	1.36
4	I am able to deal with everyday challenges in this prison	187	14	25	13.4	39	20.9	73	39	36	19.3	3.5	1.17
5	The sentence I received reflects the crime I committed	171	65	38	18.7	28	16.4	24	14	22	12.9	2.5	1.44
6	The use of my time in this prison is wasted	186	30	16.1	26.3	30	16.1	30	16.1	47	25.3	3.1	1.44
7	In this prison there is nothing to do except 'keep your head down' and 'hope'	187	28	15	25.1	26	13.9	39	20.9	47	25.1	3.2	1.43
8	I can't even imagine what life is like out there	187	37	19.8	24.1	28	15	43	23	34	18.2	3.0	1.41
9	I have hope for my life beyond prison	185	23	12.4	7.6	27	14.6	52	28.1	69	37.3	3.7	1.36
10	My legal appeal gives me hope	86	26	30.2	10.5	22	25.6	16	18.6	13	15.1	2.8	1.44
11	The possibility of release gives me hope	181	22	12.2	6.6	24	13.3	67	37	56	30.9	3.7	1.31
12	My appeal feels like a long shot	84	11	13.1	8.3	26	31	12	14.3	28	33.3	3.5	1.37
13	In this prison I feel I can deal with a lot if I have hope	186	20	10.8	11.3	40	21.5	68	36.6	37	19.9	3.4	1.23
14	I have control over my day-to-day life in this prison	187	33	17.6	20.9	35	18.7	52	27.8	28	15	3.0	1.34
15	The things I need to do to progress in this prison are made clear to me	186	62	33.3	22	24	12.9	44	23.7	15	8.1	2.5	1.37
16	I am treated as a human being in this prison	186	33	17.7	18.8	39	21	53	28.5	26	14	3.0	1.32
17	I am hoping I can get my appeal and go home	118	21	17.8	5.9	37	31.4	24	20.3	29	24.6	3.3	1.38
18	I hope the justice system changes for the better	186	2	1.1	2	4	2.2	29	15.6	149	80.1	4.7	0.66
19	I hope that someone speaks out for us	186	2	1.1	0	10	5.4	26	14	148	79.6	4.7	0.67
20	I hope someone shines a light on how the justice system really works	185	3	1.6	1.6	5	2.7	23	12.4	151	81.6	4.7	0.75
21	I have more hope now than when I first came to prison	189	39	20.6	16.4	24	12.7	56	29.6	39	20.6	3.1	1.45
22	In this prison I am able to make progress	189	40	21.2	23.8	36	19	49	25.9	19	10.1	2.8	1.31
23	In here there are places that don't feel like 'prison'?	188	34	18.1	14.9	20	10.6	76	40.4	30	16	3.2	1.37
24	I trust in my future	188	17	9	8.5	48	25.5	53	28.2	54	28.7	3.6	1.24
25	My family gives me hope	182	14	7.7	2.7	26	14.3	50	27.5	87	47.8	4.0	1.20
26	Education gives me hope	185	17	9.2	10.3	49	26.5	54	29.2	46	24.9	3.5	1.23
27	I feel I have some control over my future	188	32	17	15.4	36	19.1	64	34	27	14.4	3.1	1.32
28	All I can think about is the here and now	189	22	11.6	28.6	36	19	43	22.8	34	18	3.1	1.30
29	I am able to make plans step-by-step	189	20	10.6	16.9	42	22.2	66	34.9	29	15.3	3.3	1.22
30	I try not to expect anything in this prison to avoid disappointment	189	7	3.7	10.1	27	14.3	61	32.3	75	39.7	3.9	1.13
31	In this prison I am able to work towards achievable goals	189	38	20.1	13.8	52	27.5	60	31.7	13	6.9	2.9	1.24
32	I wonder what I am waking up for in this prison	189	32	16.9	23.3	39	20.6	29	15.3	45	23.8	3.1	1.42
33	This prison has failed other people like me	188	15	8	9	41	21.8	46	24.5	69	36.7	3.7	1.26
34	This prison is preparing me for a world that doesn't exist	184	17	9.2	17.4	65	35.3	35	19	35	19	3.2	1.21
35	I feel stuck in the system in this prison	185	20	10.8	13.5	26	14.1	45	24.3	69	37.3	3.6	1.38
36	This prison offers a chance for me to change	187	35	18.7	17.6	51	27.3	47	25.1	21	11.2	2.9	1.28
37	This prison offers constructive activities	188	43	22.9	20.7	34	18.1	53	28.2	19	10.1	2.8	1.34
38	This prison offers activities that 'remove the prison walls'	189	59	31.2	20.6	37	19.6	37	19.6	17	9	2.5	1.35
39	This prison helps individuals feel like more than just a prisoner	188	57	30.3	27.1	29	15.4	33	17.6	18	9.6	2.5	1.34
40	I have the motivation to pursue goals despite challenges	188	8	4.3	5.9	30	16	72	38.3	67	35.6	4.0	1.07

Table 2: Percentage frequency table for 40 HAFS items (n=190)

## Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

### Missing data

Three survey items (10, 12, 17) were excluded prior to EFA. These items were only applicable to those pursuing an appeal, so data were missing for approximately half of participants. As the missingness was structural rather than at random, their inclusion may have distorted the factor structure.

Missing data across the remaining 37 items was minimal at 2%. Expectation-Maximisation (EM) was used to impute missing values. EM preserves sample size and considers relationships between variables when estimating missing data, unlike mean imputation or deletion. However, EM produces a single best-estimate dataset which may not fully reflect uncertainty in missing data. This may lead to over-precise estimates of correlations and factor loadings. Still, the choice of missing-data imputation method has been reported to make little difference when less than 10% data are missing.<sup>40</sup> Given the small proportion of missing data, these limitations are unlikely to have meaningfully affected the results.

### Data suitability

The sample size ( $n=190$ ) was very close to the recommended minimum of 200 participants and 5-to-1 participant-to-variable ratio.<sup>41</sup> The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was 0.93, considered 'marvellous'<sup>42</sup> and Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant ( $p<0.001$ ). This indicated the data were appropriate for factor analysis.<sup>43</sup>

All individual KMO values were greater than 0.64, well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Appendix 4).<sup>44</sup>

Four items (18, 19, 20, 28) were removed because they had very few ( $\leq 2$ ) correlations above 0.3. After initial item deletion, the determinant remained small ( $<0.0001$ ), but the correlation matrix suggested no multicollinearity (no correlations greater than 0.8).

### Principal axis factor analysis

The remaining 33 items were subjected to a principal axis factor analysis (PAF) with oblique rotation (direct oblimin), as the factors were expected to be related. The KMO was 0.94 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was again significant ( $p<.001$ ).

Based on parallel analysis, visual scree plot inspection and theoretical context, three factors were retained.<sup>45</sup>

Five items (5, 8, 13, 29, 40) with factor loadings below 0.4 were removed. Six cross-loading items (2, 3, 31, 32, 37, 39) were removed because the difference between two of its factor loadings was less than 0.2.<sup>46</sup> After each item removal, the factor solution was re-rotated. In total, 22 items were retained for the HAFS. The three factors explained 54.7% of variance in the items.

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficients were calculated for each factor. Internal consistency reliability was high, with all values above the accepted 0.80 threshold.

40 Howard, M. C. (2016). A Review of Exploratory Factor Analysis Decisions and Overview of Current Practices: What We Are Doing and How Can We Improve? *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 32(1), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2015.1087664>

41 Ibid.

42 Kaiser, H. F., & Rice, J. (1974). Little Jiffy, Mark Iv. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 34(1), 111-117. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447403400115>

43 de Winter, J. C. F., Dodou, D., & Wieringa, P. A. (2009). Exploratory Factor Analysis With Small Sample Sizes. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 44(2), 147–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00273170902794206>

44 Howard, M. C. (2016). A Review of Exploratory Factor Analysis Decisions and Overview of Current Practices: What We Are Doing and How Can We Improve? *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 32(1), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2015.1087664>

45 Patil, V. H., Singh, S. N., Sanjay, M., & Donovan, T. (2017). *Parallel Analysis Engine to Aid in Determining Number of Factors to Retain using R [Computer software]*. <https://analytics.gonzaga.edu/parallelengine/>

46 Howard, M. C. (2016). A Review of Exploratory Factor Analysis Decisions and Overview of Current Practices: What We Are Doing and How Can We Improve? *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 32(1), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2015.1087664>

Table 3 contains the factor loadings after rotation, reliability coefficients and variance explained before and after rotation.

		Pattern matrix			
	Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Communalities
35	I feel stuck in the system in this prison*	<b>0.707</b>	0.179	0.102	0.75
30	I try not to expect anything in this prison to avoid disappointment*	<b>0.695</b>	0.071	-0.029	0.51
6	The use of my time in this prison is wasted*	<b>0.690</b>	-0.088	0.161	0.58
34	This prison is preparing me for a world that doesn't exist*	<b>0.636</b>	0.036	-0.128	0.34
33	This prison has failed other people like me*	<b>0.622</b>	0.039	0.162	0.56
7	In this prison there is nothing to do except 'keep your head down' and 'hope'*	<b>0.582</b>	-0.067	0.241	0.52
15	The things I need to do to progress in this prison are made clear to me	<b>0.531</b>	0.024	0.303	0.58
22	In this prison I am able to make progress	<b>0.520</b>	0.218	0.309	0.75
36	This prison offers a chance for me to change	<b>0.507</b>	0.170	0.283	0.64
9	I have hope for my life beyond prison	-0.017	<b>0.850</b>	-0.040	0.69
24	I trust in my future	-0.052	<b>0.812</b>	0.123	0.70
11	The possibility of release gives me hope	-0.147	<b>0.745</b>	0.199	0.59
21	I have more hope now than when I first came to prison	0.293	<b>0.558</b>	0.082	0.61
25	My family gives me hope	0.061	<b>0.517</b>	-0.066	0.28
27	I feel I have some control over my future	0.158	<b>0.514</b>	0.295	0.61
26	Education gives me hope	0.186	<b>0.445</b>	-0.109	0.26
14	I have control over my day-to-day life in this prison	0.015	0.045	<b>0.746</b>	0.59
16	I am treated as a human being in this prison	0.200	0.006	<b>0.667</b>	0.65
23	In here there are places that don't feel like 'prison'?	-0.061	0.193	<b>0.656</b>	0.50
1	This prison has a harsh regime*	0.157	-0.182	<b>0.547</b>	0.37
4	I am able to deal with everyday challenges in this prison	0.071	0.128	<b>0.546</b>	0.42
38	This prison offers activities that 'remove the prison walls'	0.245	0.141	<b>0.497</b>	0.38
	Cronbach's alpha	0.92	0.87	0.85	
	Rotation sum of squared loadings	7.48	5.51	6.53	
	Variance explained (pre-rotation)	42.44%	8.43%	3.83%	

Table 3: Rotated factor loadings of the 22-item HAFS; Factor loadings higher than 0.4 are in bold; \* Reverse-scored item (negatively worded)

Factors were labelled based on high-loading items and relevant literature, including the qualitative HAFS findings.

The first factor, Making Meaningful Progress, included 9 items and reflected prisoners' ability to engage in worthwhile opportunities that contribute to their progression. This factor included items linked to the prison's responsibility to provide relevant purposeful activity and perceived success in doing so. It also captured the emotional toll of not being able to progress, like feeling stuck and disappointed.

Seven items were retained for factor 2, Believing in a Future. This factor reflected prisoners' hope and motivation for a positive future-self in prison and beyond. Items measured potential sources of hope (release, education, family) that may be linked to aspirations and impact future outcomes.

Six items were retained for factor 3, Preserving Personal Autonomy. This factor captured perceived control over their own behaviour and being seen as a person first, rather than a prisoner.

Table 4 displays correlations between the three factors. This indicates the hope and fulfilment subdimensions are interrelated, as we anticipated.

Factor	MMP	BIAF	PPA
Making Meaningful Progress	1.0		
Believing in a Future	0.439	1.0	
Preserving Personal Autonomy	0.591	0.340	1.0

Table 4: Correlations between three factors identified in EFA

It is recommended to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the fit of the model identified in the EFA. It is generally considered best practice to conduct EFA and CFA on independent samples.<sup>47</sup> However, the current study was constrained to a single, relatively small dataset so this was not possible. It is not advised to conduct both analyses on the same sample as this will likely result in an overly optimistic estimate of model fit because the model was tested on the same data from which it was derived. Sample-specific variance may inflate model fit indices and limit generalisability of findings. Future research should seek to replicate the factor structure of the HAFS scale using an independent sample, which would provide a more rigorous test of its structural validity and support its wider use.

## Scoring

Factor scores were calculated using the regression method and standardised to a mean of 0 and a variance of 1. Higher scores indicate higher levels of hope and fulfilment.

Factor scores were used over sum-scoring to reflect the varied loadings of items on each factor. McNeish<sup>48</sup> argued the model information produced from the factor analysis can be used to produce scores with "better psychometric properties", although risks of overfitting the model are recognised. There is scope for a simpler scoring approach to be adopted in the future, when this measure has been tested on larger samples. This may improve comparability with other populations.

47 Worthington, R. L., & Whittaker, T. A. (2006). Scale development research: A content analysis and recommendations for best practices. *The Counseling Psychologist, 34*(6), 806-838.

48 McNeish, D. (2023). Psychometric properties of sum scores and factor scores differ even when their correlation is 0.98: A response to Widaman and Revelle. *Behavior Research Methods, 55*(8), 4269-4290.

**Bivariate regression analyses**

Next, demographic and prison-related covariates were examined in relation to each factor score using bivariate regression analyses. Effect sizes and 95% confidence intervals are reported alongside p-values. Wide confidence intervals in some comparisons reflect smaller group sizes and should be interpreted as indicating imprecision rather than absence of effect.

Table 5 presents bivariate associations between characteristics and Making Meaningful Progress (MMP) scores. The estimated difference between male and female prisoners was small ( $B = -0.124$ , 95% CI [-0.5, 0.26],  $p = 0.53$ ), with male prisoners scoring 0.12 standard deviations lower than female prisoners. However, the female group itself was small ( $n = 29$  vs  $n = 153$  men). The estimate lacks sufficient precision to draw meaningful conclusions about the direction or magnitude of any sex differences and is therefore treated as inconclusive. There were no significant age differences. Asian prisoners had an MMP score 0.89 standard deviations lower than white British prisoners ( $B = -0.891$ , 95% CI [-1.53, -0.25],  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, Muslim prisoners ( $B = -0.498$ , 95% CI [-0.89, -0.11],  $p = 0.01$ ) and those with no religion ( $B = -0.516$ , 95% CI [-0.91, -0.12],  $p = 0.01$ ) showed MMP scores that were approximately 0.5 standard deviations lower than Christian prisoners.

Several sentence-related characteristics showed associations with MMP scores. Prisoners serving Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences scored 0.48 standard deviations lower than those on life sentences ( $B = -0.478$ , 95% CI [-0.97, -0.02],  $p = 0.058$ ). Conversely, those on normal determinate sentences scored higher ( $B = 0.304$ , 95% CI [-0.10, 0.71],  $p = 0.143$ ). Sentence stage was also relevant, with post-tariff prisoners scoring lower than those at the mid-stage of their sentence ( $B = -0.352$ , 95% CI [-0.76, 0.05],  $p = 0.088$ ). These patterns suggest that uncertainty about release may be associated with lower perceived progress.

Institutional characteristics were also associated with factor scores. Prisoners held in public sector prisons reported MMP scores 0.31 standard deviations lower than those in the private sector ( $B = -0.310$ , 95% CI [-0.63, 0.01],  $p = 0.06$ ). Prisoners in category B establishments scored 0.64 standard deviations higher than those in the Long-Term High Security Estate ( $B = 0.641$ , 95% CI [0.23, 1.05],  $p = 0.002$ ). Category D prisoners also reported higher MMP scores, potentially reflecting greater sentence progression, proximity to release, or increased opportunities in open conditions ( $B = 0.598$ , 95% CI [-0.14, 1.34],  $p = 0.113$ ).

Prisoners who had completed an Offending Behaviour Programme reported higher MMP scores ( $B = 0.269$ , 95% CI [-0.01, 0.55],  $p = 0.057$ ), as did those who had regular family contact ( $B = 0.430$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.79],  $p = 0.018$ ). This suggested engagement with rehabilitative courses and maintenance of external relationships may support a sense of meaningful progress.

Factor 1: MMP			95% CI		
Variable	Group	B	Lower	Upper	p value
Sex (ref. female)	Male	-0.124	-0.507	0.260	0.525
Age (years)		-0.001	-0.012	0.010	0.896
Ethnicity (ref. white British)	Asian	-0.891	-1.533	-0.248	0.007**
	Black	-0.025	-0.474	0.424	0.913
	Mixed	-0.193	-0.663	0.277	0.419
	Other	0.155	-0.932	1.242	0.779
	White other	-0.230	-0.700	0.240	0.335
Foreign national (ref. British citizen)	Foreign national	-0.070	-0.588	0.449	0.792
Religion (ref. Christian)	Jewish	-0.391	-1.121	0.340	0.292
	Muslim	-0.498	-0.886	-0.111	0.012*
	No religion	-0.516	-0.908	-0.124	0.010*
	Other	-0.210	-0.575	0.155	0.257
Status (ref. licence recall/ revoke)	Sentenced	0.022	-0.542	0.586	0.940
Sentence type (ref. life)	Normal Determinate	0.304	-0.104	0.713	0.143

	Extended Determinate Sentence	0.237	-0.153	0.627	0.232
	Imprisonment for Public Protection	-0.478	-0.972	0.017	0.058
Sentence length (years)		0.006	-0.010	0.022	0.484
Sentence stage (ref. mid)	Early	-0.072	-0.649	0.505	0.806
	Late	0.207	-0.203	0.617	0.320
	Post tariff	-0.352	-0.756	0.052	0.088
	Post tariff recall	-0.013	-0.671	0.644	0.968
Time left to serve (years)		-0.008	-0.030	0.014	0.486
Sector (ref. private)	Public	-0.310	-0.632	0.013	0.060
Category (ref. LTHSE)	B	0.641	0.229	1.053	0.002**
	C	0.008	-0.346	0.363	0.964
	D	0.598	-0.143	1.340	0.113
	Women's (closed)	0.279	-0.150	0.707	0.201
	Other jurisdiction	-0.430	-1.291	0.432	0.326
First time in prison (ref. been to prison before)	First time in prison	0.156	-0.126	0.438	0.278
Number of prior imprisonments		0.008	-0.039	0.055	0.721
Been in current prison before (ref. new to this prison)	In this prison before	-0.291	-0.816	0.234	0.273
Time in current prison (years)		0.009	-0.023	0.040	0.577
Age at first conviction (years)		0.003	-0.007	0.013	0.508
Joint enterprise (ref. no conviction)	Joint enterprise conviction	-0.040	-0.379	0.300	0.819
Offending Behaviour Programmes (ref. not done)	Completed course	0.269	-0.008	0.546	0.057
Visits (ref. no visits)	Receives visits	0.073	-0.217	0.363	0.620
Distance from home (ref. far from home)	Close to home	0.033	-0.279	0.346	0.833
Family contact (ref. irregular or no contact)	Regular contact	0.430	0.074	0.785	0.018*

Table 5: Bivariate regression analysis of HAFS Making Meaningful Progress factor scores by demographic and prison-related covariates; B=unstandardised regression coefficient; CI =confidence interval; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Note. Hindu category omitted due to insufficient sample size ( $n=1$ )

Bivariate associations for the Believing in a Future (BIAF) factor are presented in Table 6. Age showed a very small, statistically significant negative association, suggesting that each additional year of age would correspond to a 0.013 standard deviation decrease in scores ( $B = -0.013$ , 95% CI [-0.02, -0.002],  $p = 0.016$ ). Black prisoners scored higher than white British prisoners ( $B = 0.517$ , 95% CI [0.08, 0.96],  $p = 0.022$ ), as did prisoners of mixed ethnicity ( $B = 0.448$ , 95% CI [-0.02, 0.91],  $p = 0.058$ ). "Other ethnicity" showed the largest estimated difference ( $B = 0.659$ ), though this estimate was more uncertain (95% CI [-0.41, 1.73],  $p = 0.226$ ). This likely reflects the very small group size ( $n=3$ ). Prisoners reporting no religion ( $B = -0.536$ , 95% CI [-0.92, -0.15],  $p = 0.007$ ) and those of other religions ( $B = -0.399$ , 95% CI [-0.76, -0.04],  $p = 0.030$ ) scored significantly lower than Christian prisoners, suggesting that religious belief may play a meaningful role in prisoners' outlook.

Sentence-related characteristics showed some of the strongest associations with BIAF scores. IPP prisoners scored 0.80 standard deviations lower than those serving life sentences, a large difference. This is consistent with the inherent uncertainty of IPP sentences, where release is not guaranteed and prisoners may struggle to envisage a future within or beyond custody. Sentence stage showed a similar pattern, with early-stage prisoners scoring lower ( $B = -0.436$ , 95% CI [-0.97, 0.10],  $p = 0.108$ ) and post-tariff prisoners scoring substantially lower ( $B = -0.795$ , 95% CI [-1.17, -0.42],  $p < .001$ ). Both groups' perceptions of the future area also likely characterised by uncertainty and limited perceived control. Similarly, time left to serve was negatively associated with BIAF scores, although the effect was small ( $B = -0.021$ , 95% CI [-0.04, -0.002],  $p = 0.028$ ). Each additional year remaining on sentence corresponded to a 0.021 standard deviation decrease. Time left to serve data are unavailable for IPP and post-tariff prisoners as they do not have a fixed release date. This association with BIAF scores should be interpreted in the context of prisoners with determinate sentences only.

Notably, prisoners convicted under joint enterprise also scored 0.32 standard deviations higher than those without such convictions ( $B = 0.321$ , 95% CI [-0.01, 0.65],  $p = 0.058$ ). Category B prisoners scored significantly higher than those held in the Long-Term High Security Estate ( $B = 0.444$ , 95% CI [0.02, 0.87],  $p = 0.039$ ), while Category D prisoners also scored higher though with greater imprecision ( $B = 0.362$ , 95% CI [-0.40, 1.12],  $p = 0.347$ ), likely reflecting the small number of respondents in open conditions.

Maintaining family relationships also showed meaningful positive associations with BIAF scores. Prisoners who received regular visits scored significantly higher ( $B = 0.497$ , 95% CI [0.22, 0.77],  $p < .001$ ), as did those who reported regular family contact where scores were 0.61 standard deviations higher than those with irregular or no contact with family ( $B = 0.606$ , 95% CI [0.26, 0.95],  $p < .001$ ).

Factor 2: BIAF			95% CI		
Variable	Group	B	Lower	Upper	p value
Sex (ref. female)	Male	-0.128	-0.510	0.255	0.512
Age (years)		-0.013	-0.024	-0.002	0.016*
Ethnicity (ref. white British)	Asian	-0.295	-0.928	0.338	0.359
	Black	0.517	0.075	0.960	0.022*
	Mixed	0.448	-0.015	0.911	0.058
	Other	0.659	-0.412	1.731	0.226
	White other	-0.178	-0.641	0.285	0.450
Foreign national (ref. British citizen)	Foreign national	0.322	-0.202	0.846	0.227
Religion (ref. Christian)	Jewish	-0.236	-0.956	0.484	0.519
	Muslim	-0.064	-0.446	0.318	0.743
	No religion	-0.536	-0.923	-0.150	0.007**
	Other	-0.399	-0.758	-0.039	0.030*
Status (ref. licence recall/ revoke)	Sentenced	0.174	-0.386	0.734	0.541
Sentence type (ref. life)	Normal Determinate	0.115	-0.284	0.513	0.571
	Extended Determinate Sentence	-0.034	-0.415	0.346	0.859
	Imprisonment for Public Protection	-0.798	-1.281	-0.315	0.001**
Sentence length (years)		0.012	-0.004	0.028	0.147
Sentence stage (ref. mid)	Early	-0.436	-0.968	0.096	0.108
	Late	0.109	-0.268	0.487	0.568
	Post tariff	-0.795	-1.167	-0.422	<.001***
	Post tariff recall	-0.330	-0.936	0.276	0.284

Time left to serve (years)		-0.021	-0.040	-0.002	0.028*
Sector (ref. private)	Public	-0.157	-0.482	0.167	0.340
Category (ref. LTHSE)	B	0.444	0.023	0.865	0.039*
	C	0.074	-0.288	0.436	0.688
	D	0.362	-0.395	1.120	0.347
	Women's (closed)	0.256	-0.182	0.694	0.250
	Other jurisdiction	-0.361	-1.242	0.520	0.420
First time in prison (ref. been to prison before)	First time in prison	0.056	-0.225	0.338	0.693
Number of prior imprisonments		-0.027	-0.072	0.017	0.222
Been in current prison before (ref. new to this prison)	In this prison before	-0.288	-0.806	0.229	0.270
Time in current prison (years)		-0.017	-0.049	0.014	0.274
Age at first conviction (years)		-0.003	-0.013	0.007	0.530
Joint enterprise (ref. no conviction)	Joint enterprise conviction	0.321	-0.011	0.653	0.058
Offending Behaviour Programmes (ref. not done)	Completed course	0.217	-0.057	0.491	0.120
Visits (ref. no visits)	Receives visits	0.497	0.220	0.773	<.001***
Distance from home (ref. far from home)	Close to home	-0.097	-0.404	0.211	0.537
Family contact (ref. irregular or no contact)	Regular contact	0.606	0.261	0.951	<.001***

Table 6: Bivariate regression analysis of HAFS Believing in a Future factor scores by demographic and prison-related covariates; B=unstandardised regression coefficient; CI =confidence interval; \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$ . Note. Hindu category omitted due to insufficient sample size ( $n=1$ )

Table 7 presents bivariate associations for the Preserving Personal Autonomy (PPA) factor. Asian prisoners scored significantly lower than white British prisoners ( $B= -1.20$ , 95% CI [-1.82, -0.59],  $p<.001$ ), a large difference of 1.20 standard deviations. However, this estimate should be interpreted with considerable caution given the small number of Asian prisoners in the sample ( $n = 9$ ). Muslim prisoners had significantly lower scores than Christian prisoners, a decrease of 0.71 standard deviations ( $B= -0.709$ , 95% CI [-1.08, -0.34],  $p<.001$ ). This suggests religious identity may be an important correlate of perceived personal autonomy in custody.

Security category was also associated with PPA scores. Compared to those in the Long-Term High Security Estate, category B prisoners scored 0.51 standard deviations higher on PPA ( $B= 0.509$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.92],  $p=0.015$ ). Category D prisoners showed a larger estimated difference of 0.87 standard deviations ( $B= 0.867$ , 95% CI [0.13, 1.60],  $p=0.021$ ). This pattern is broadly consistent across all three factors, suggesting that prison category may reflect meaningful differences in regime and conditions that cut across multiple dimensions of hope and fulfilment constructs. Prisoners with a joint enterprise conviction scored significantly lower on PPA ( $B= -0.339$ , 95% CI [-0.67, -0.01],  $p=0.044$ ). This contrasts with the positive association observed for the Believing in a Future factor. Together, this suggests those convicted of joint enterprise may have greater optimism about long-term outcomes while experiencing reduced control over their immediate circumstances and identity in prison.

Finally, regular family contact was again associated with higher PPA scores ( $B= 0.401$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.75],  $p=0.024$ ). This is consistent with the associations observed across the other two factors, indicating the importance of maintaining family relationships to foster hope and fulfilment.

Factor 3: PPA			95% CI		
Variable	Group	B	Lower	Upper	p value
Sex (ref. female)	Male	-0.088	-0.466	0.290	0.647
Age (years)		0.007	-0.004	0.018	0.242
Ethnicity (ref. white British)	Asian	-1.200	-1.816	-0.585	<.001***
	Black	-0.246	-0.676	0.184	0.260
	Mixed	-0.287	-0.737	0.163	0.210
	Other	0.261	-0.780	1.303	0.621
	White other	-0.080	-0.530	0.370	0.726
Foreign national (ref. British citizen)	Foreign national	-0.196	-0.705	0.312	0.447
Religion (ref. Christian)	Jewish	-0.281	-0.985	0.423	0.432
	Muslim	-0.709	-1.083	-0.336	<.001***
	No religion	-0.249	-0.627	0.129	0.196
	Other	-0.071	-0.423	0.281	0.692
Status (ref. licence recall/ revoke)	Sentenced	-0.120	-0.672	0.431	0.667
Sentence type (ref. life)	Normal Determinate	0.235	-0.170	0.641	0.254
	Extended Determinate Sentence	0.213	-0.175	0.600	0.280
	Imprisonment for Public Protection	-0.051	-0.542	0.440	0.839
Sentence length (years)		-0.007	-0.023	0.009	0.408
Sentence stage (ref. mid)	Early	0.015	-0.561	0.592	0.959
	Late	0.130	-0.279	0.540	0.531
	Post tariff	-0.001	-0.405	0.402	0.994
	Post tariff recall	0.146	-0.510	0.803	0.661
Time left to serve (years)		-0.008	-0.029	0.014	0.486
Sector (ref. private)	Public	-0.172	-0.492	0.148	0.290
Category (ref. LTHSE)	B	0.509	0.101	0.917	0.015*
	C	0.038	-0.313	0.389	0.831
	D	0.867	0.134	1.601	0.021*
	Women's (closed)	0.236	-0.188	0.660	0.274
	Other jurisdiction	-0.485	-1.338	0.368	0.263
First time in prison (ref. been to prison before)	First time in prison	0.081	-0.195	0.358	0.562
Number of prior imprisonments		0.014	-0.032	0.061	0.537
Been in current prison before (ref. new to this prison)	In this prison before	0.255	-0.264	0.773	0.330
Time in current prison (years)		0.014	-0.018	0.045	0.386
Age at first conviction (years)		0.008	-0.002	0.018	0.109

Joint enterprise (ref. no conviction)	Joint enterprise conviction	-0.339	-0.670	-0.009	0.044*
Offending Behaviour Programmes (ref. not done)	Completed course	0.224	-0.045	0.494	0.102
Visits (ref. no visits)	Receives visits	0.005	-0.276	0.286	0.973
Distance from home (ref. far from home)	Close to home	0.071	-0.235	0.378	0.646
Family contact (ref. irregular or no contact)	Regular contact	0.401	0.052	0.749	0.024*

Table 7: Bivariate regression analysis of HAFS Preserving Personal Autonomy factor scores by demographic and prison-related covariates; B=unstandardised regression coefficient; CI =confidence interval; \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$ . Note. Hindu category omitted due to insufficient sample size ( $n=1$ )

### Multiple regression analyses

Variables for multivariable models were selected based on substantive interest, as well as statistical significance. Categorical predictors with more than two categories were dummy-coded. The same three cases were removed in all models for leverage values above 0.5. All other test assumptions were met.

The first multiple linear regression was run to predict Making Meaningful Progress scores from ethnicity, religion, sentence type, sentence stage, prison sector, prison category, completion of offending behaviour programmes and family contact.

Prison sector was removed during model refinement. Although prison sector showed a moderate bivariate association with MMP scores ( $B= -0.310$ ), this effect reduced substantially in the multivariable model ( $B= 0.039$ , 95% CI [-0.43, 0.43],  $p=0.872$ ). This suggests that the bivariate association was largely accounted for by other variables included in the model, particularly prison category. When removed, model fit improved slightly (adj.  $R^2$  increased from 17.0% to 17.6%) with no meaningful changes in magnitude or direction of the remaining coefficients.

$R^2$  for the final model was 28.8% with an adjusted  $R^2$  of 17.6%, a moderate effect size.<sup>49</sup> The model statistically significantly predicted MMP scores,  $F(22,139) = 2.559$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Results indicated that individuals who were in category B prisons ( $p<.01$ ), had completed an Offending Behaviour Programme, had regular family contact, and were in category D (open) conditions had significantly higher MMP scores,  $p<0.05$ . Individuals from an Asian background ( $p<0.05$ ), without a religion ( $p<0.05$ ) and serving an IPP sentence ( $p<0.01$ ) had significantly lower MMP scores.

49 Cohen, J. (1988), *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Table 8 displays regression coefficients, 95% confidence intervals and p-values for the MMP model.

Factor 1: MMP			95% CI		
Variable	Group	B	Lower	Upper	p value
Constant		-0.593	-1.127	-0.059	0.030*
Ethnicity (ref. white British)	Asian	-0.763	-1.457	-0.069	0.031*
	Black	0.052	-0.513	0.616	0.856
	Mixed	-0.089	-0.637	0.459	0.748
	White other	0.029	-0.493	0.552	0.911
Religion (ref. Christian)	Jewish	-0.084	-0.885	0.717	0.836
	Muslim	-0.279	-0.756	0.197	0.248
	No religion	-0.476	-0.895	-0.056	0.027*
	Other	-0.326	-0.732	0.079	0.114
Sentence type (ref. life)	Normal Determinate	0.337	-0.119	0.792	0.146
	Extended Sentence for Public Protection	0.186	-0.252	0.624	0.403
	Imprisonment for Public Protection	-1.009	-1.705	-0.313	0.005**
Sentence stage (ref. mid)	Early	-0.046	-0.67	0.577	0.884
	Late	0.00	-0.428	0.428	0.999
	Post tariff	0.191	-0.325	0.706	0.466
	Post tariff recall	0.438	-0.331	1.208	0.262
Category (ref. LTHSE)	B	0.632	0.167	1.097	0.008**
	C	0.112	-0.319	0.543	0.609
	D	1.003	0.192	1.815	0.016*
	Women's (closed)	0.327	-0.173	0.826	0.198
	Other jurisdiction	-0.471	-1.367	0.426	0.301
Offending Behaviour Programmes (ref. not done)	Completed course	0.334	0.03	0.639	0.032*
Family contact (ref. irregular or no contact)	Regular contact	0.454	0.061	0.847	0.024*

Table 8: Multiple regression analysis for HAFS Making Meaningful Progress factor scores ( $n=162$ );  $R^2=0.288$ ,  $adj. R^2=0.176$ ;  $B$ =unstandardised regression coefficient;  $CI$ =confidence interval; \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$ . Note. Hindu and Other Ethnicity categories were excluded from analysis as no participants remained in these categories following case removal

Next, a multiple linear regression was run to predict Believing in a Future scores from age, ethnicity, religion, sentence type, sentence stage, joint enterprise conviction, prison category, visits and family contact.

Joint enterprise conviction was removed during model refinement. In the multivariable model, joint enterprise was not statistically significant and had a considerably reduced effect size compared to bivariate tests ( $B=0.062$ , 95% CI [-0.34, 0.46],  $p=0.760$ ). When removed, the adjusted  $R^2$  increased from 14.6% to 15.4% and the remaining coefficients were stable. Age was also removed. It showed little independent association with BIAF scores ( $B=0.004$ , 95% CI [-0.02, 0.01],  $p=0.576$ ). However, its inclusion substantially reduced the coefficients for IPP sentence type ( $B=-0.632$  vs  $B=-0.988$ ) and family contact ( $B=0.073$  vs  $B=0.332$ ).

Model fit also improved with age removed (adj.  $R^2$  increased from 15.4% to 21.3%). The pattern suggests age shared substantial variance with sentence type and family contact while contributing limited unique variance to the model. Age was therefore excluded to improve parsimony and interpretability.

$R^2$  for the final model was 32.1% with an adjusted  $R^2$  of 21.3%, a moderate effect size.<sup>50</sup> The model statistically significantly predicted BIAF scores,  $F(22,138) = 2.972, p < 0.001$ . Results indicated that individuals who were Black, in category B and category D (open) conditions, and received prison visits had significantly higher BIAF scores,  $p < 0.05$ . Individuals who were on an IPP sentence ( $p < .001$ ) and in the early stage of their sentence ( $p < 0.05$ ) had significantly lower BIAF scores.

Table 9 displays regression coefficients, 95% confidence intervals and p-values for the BIAF model.

Factor 2: BIAF			95% CI		
Variable	Group	B	Lower	Upper	p value
Constant		-0.526	-1.011	-0.041	0.034*
Ethnicity (ref. white British)	Asian	-0.194	-0.842	0.453	0.554
	Black	0.625	0.101	1.148	0.020*
	Mixed	0.431	-0.081	0.942	0.098
	White other	0.190	-0.297	0.677	0.442
Religion (ref. Christian)	Jewish	-0.342	-1.093	0.409	0.369
	Muslim	-0.225	-0.670	0.221	0.320
	No religion	-0.333	-0.731	0.064	0.099
	Other	-0.158	-0.530	0.214	0.402
Sentence type (ref. life)	Normal Determinate	-0.036	-0.463	0.392	0.868
	Extended Sentence for Public Protection	-0.033	-0.443	0.377	0.874
	Imprisonment for Public Protection	-0.988	-1.630	-0.345	0.003**
Sentence stage (ref. mid)	Early	-0.610	-1.197	-0.023	0.042*
	Late	-0.045	-0.443	0.354	0.825
	Post tariff	-0.278	-0.764	0.209	0.261
	Post tariff recall	0.093	-0.629	0.815	0.800
Category (ref. LTHSE)	B	0.505	0.066	0.945	0.025*
	C	0.190	-0.208	0.588	0.347
	D	0.950	0.200	1.701	0.013*
	Women's (closed)	0.379	-0.085	0.844	0.109
	Other jurisdiction	-0.063	-0.899	0.773	0.882
Visits (ref. no visits)	Receives visits	0.338	0.032	0.644	0.030*
Family contact (ref. irregular or no contact)	Regular contact	0.332	-0.055	0.719	0.092

Table 9: Multiple regression analysis for HAFS Believing in a Future factor scores ( $n=161$ );  $R^2=0.321$ , adj.  $R^2=0.213$ ; B=unstandardised regression coefficient; CI =confidence interval; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Note. Hindu and Other Ethnicity categories were excluded from analysis as no participants remained in these categories following case removal

50 Ibid.

The final multiple linear regression was run to predict Preserving Personal Autonomy scores from ethnicity, religion, joint enterprise conviction, prison category and family contact.

R<sup>2</sup> for the final model was 20.4% with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 12.8%, a moderate effect size.<sup>51</sup> The model statistically significantly predicted PPA scores,  $F(15,157) = 2.681, p < 0.001$ . Results indicated that individuals who were in category B prison and had regular family contact had significantly higher PPA scores,  $p < 0.01$ . Individuals without a religion ( $p < .01$ ) and those of 'Other' religions ( $p < .05$ ) had significantly lower PPA scores.

Table 10 displays regression coefficients, 95% confidence intervals and p-values for the PPA model.

Factor 3: PPA			95% CI		
Variable	Group	B	Lower	Upper	p value
Constant		-0.563	-1.004	-0.122	0.013*
Ethnicity (ref. white British)	Asian	-0.298	-0.984	0.387	0.391
	Black	0.452	-0.047	0.950	0.075
	Mixed	0.311	-0.190	0.812	0.222
	White other	-0.163	-0.639	0.314	0.501
Religion (ref. Christian)	Jewish	-0.126	-0.912	0.660	0.752
	Muslim	-0.189	-0.651	0.273	0.420
	No religion	-0.547	-0.943	-0.152	0.007**
	Other	-0.391	-0.756	-0.026	0.036*
Category (ref. LTHSE)	B	0.665	0.241	1.089	0.002**
	C	0.148	-0.217	0.512	0.424
	D	0.546	-0.184	1.275	0.141
	Women's (closed)	0.348	-0.125	0.820	0.148
	Other jurisdiction	0.045	-0.812	0.901	0.918
Joint enterprise (ref. no conviction)	Joint enterprise conviction	0.157	-0.205	0.520	0.393
Family contact (ref. irregular or no contact)	Regular contact	0.543	0.190	0.895	0.003**

Table 10: Multiple regression analysis for HAFS Preserving Personal Autonomy factor scores ( $n=173$ );  $R^2=0.204$ ,  $adj. R^2=0.128$ ; B=unstandardised regression coefficient; CI =confidence interval; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Note. Hindu and Other Ethnicity categories were excluded from analysis as no participants remained in these categories following case removal

Sub-group analyses by sex, prison type and sentence stage were restricted due to inadequate statistical power from the small sample size. Modelling should be repeated with a larger sample to identify factors that impact specific sub-groups.<sup>52</sup>

51 Ibid.

52 Breck, A., & Wakar, B. (2021). *Methods, Challenges, and Best Practices for Conducting Subgroup Analysis*. <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/methods-challenges-best-practices-jan-2021.pdf>

## Discussion

This report presents preliminary evidence for the HAFS; a useful instrument designed specifically to measure hope and fulfilment in the long-term prison population. The factor analyses showed the final HAFS scale included 22 items, loaded onto three factors: Making Meaningful Progress, Believing in a Future, and Preserving Personal Autonomy. Each subscale had high internal consistency and was in line with prior literature. We also found HAFS factors were associated with demographic (ethnicity, religion) and prison-related covariates (prison category, sentence stage/type, programmes, visits and family contact). Considered alongside the qualitative responses, these findings provide important insight into how to create prison environments that sustain hope and personal fulfilment.

The factor Making Meaningful Progress reflected prisoners' sense of purpose, their desire to develop, and the emotional impact when there are not the chances to do so. Failure to meet these needs can lead to reduced fulfilment. For the long-term population, the concept of progress takes many forms. For some, they do not see release from prison as a likely or attainable goal. Progression should recognise personal growth, as well as sentence-related stages. The need for readily available risk reduction work and offending behaviour courses for progress towards recategorisation is well-documented. Yet personal growth has been cited as the most meaningful form of progression by long-term prisoners.<sup>53</sup> Included items also conveyed the frustration at feeling stagnant and restricted by lack of opportunity, rather than capacity or motivation to engage. This aligns with research that reiterates the need for, and often lack of, consistent provision of purposeful activity to help prisoners maintain focus and direction across many years in custody.<sup>54</sup> Access to activities like education and work continue to be impacted by chronic staff shortages within the prison estate.<sup>55</sup>

The factor Believing in a Future captured hope for a life sustained by meaningful relationships, opportunities for growth and ability to plan beyond imprisonment. Vannier and Gair noted the difficulty in maintaining hope when faced with increasingly long sentences and an ageing prison population.<sup>56</sup> They observe that hope in prison "can serve as a coping mechanism, a tool of resistance, or a strategy for managing despair in the absence of any realistic prospect of release".<sup>57</sup> Hope can be grounded in meaningful opportunities in prison life, like higher-education.<sup>58</sup> It has been argued that prisoners' "right to hope" should include reliable access to rehabilitation programmes and family visits to maintain social links and support future attempts at re-socialisation.<sup>59</sup> The full relational impact of long-term imprisonment may not have been adequately captured by the single relevant item included in the HAFS ("My family gives me hope"). Future survey development should consider additional items to better represent these domains. The importance of healthy relationships was one of the most consistent themes from our qualitative findings. Similarly, respondents often spoke positively of social support that goes beyond immediate family. Strengths-based approaches, relational decency, and embracing a common mission of "generating hope" from staff can make a considerable difference to prisoner well-being.<sup>60</sup> Such insights indicate the need for a broader view of what family can represent in prison and the significance of staff-prisoner relationships.

Preserving Personal Autonomy captured individuals' self-determination and the desire to maintain a sense of control within the constraints of imprisonment. Fulfilment depends not only on conditions being met, but on individuals having the autonomy to shape how those conditions are experienced. The prison environment by nature is restrictive. Prisoners often have little influence over their daily regime, when they eat, sleep or exercise. For the majority of our sample, this "bounded autonomy" will last for life on licence.<sup>61</sup>

53 HMP Rye Hill Building Futures Network Group. (2023). *Progression within a prison. What does it mean and what does it look like?* <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BFNG-Progression-within-a-prison.pdf>

54 Wainwright, L., Harriott, P., & Saajedi, S. (2019). *What do you need to make the best use of your time in prison?* [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old\\_files/Documents/PPN/What\\_do\\_you\\_need\\_to\\_make\\_best\\_use\\_of\\_your\\_time\\_in\\_prisonlo.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old_files/Documents/PPN/What_do_you_need_to_make_best_use_of_your_time_in_prisonlo.pdf); see also Jarman, B., & Vince, C. (2022). *Making Progress?* Prison Reform Trust. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making\\_progress.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making_progress.pdf)

55 HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2024). *Purposeful prisons: time out of cell.* <https://cdn.websitebuilder.service.justice.gov.uk/uploads/sites/19/2024/09/Purposeful-prisons-time-out-of-cell-web-2024.pdf>

56 Vannier, M., & Gair, H. (2025). *Carceral hope: Life sentences, ageing, and the ethics of possibility.* <https://www.penalreform.org/blog/carceral-hope-life-sentences-ageing-and-the-ethics/>

57 Ibid.

58 Vannier, M. (2025). On the importance of 'hope-in-practice' behind bars. *The February Journal*, 04, 32–49. <https://doi.org/10.60633/tfj.i04.101>

59 Fontanelli, F., & Dzehtsiarou, K. (2015). The Regime of Long-Term Family Visits for Prisoners Serving Life Sentence: Winter is Coming (Back). *European Human Rights Law Review*, (2), 163-173.

60 Liebling, A., Laws, B., Lieber, E., Auty, K., Schmidt, B.E., Crewe, B., Gardom, J., Kant, D. & Morey, M. (2019). Are Hope and Possibility Achievable in Prison? *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*. 58: 104-126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12303>

61 Rennie, A., & Crewe, B. (2023). 'Tightness', autonomy and release: The anticipated pains of release and life licencing. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 63(1), 184-200.

Greater perceived choice, particularly regarding daily activities, has been linked to enhanced quality of life amongst Belgian prisoners.<sup>62</sup> Van der Kaap-Deeder and colleagues<sup>63</sup> argued the importance of autonomy satisfaction in prison, noting it provides psychological freedom in a physically constrained environment. Lack of autonomy has been recognised as one of the many “pains of imprisonment”, negatively impacting well-being and resulting in long-lasting impairment of prisoners’ sense of agency.<sup>64</sup> Items also reflected the importance of recognising prisoners as individuals. Being treated as a human being and having access to spaces that feel less like prison can help maintain a sense of identity and self. This may reinforce feelings of autonomy by affirming their values and capacity for independent decision-making.

Predictors of Making Meaningful Progress scores were identified as completion of an Offending Behaviour Programme, regular family contact, prison category, sentence type, religion and being from an Asian background. As already discussed, engagement in Offender Behaviour Programmes can provide meaningful focus and occupy the ‘nothing time’ that dominates long periods of imprisonment.<sup>65</sup> Regular family contact can also foster fulfilment through maintenance of emotional connections.<sup>66</sup> Receiving social support can provide a sense of purpose that helps prisoners feel valued and connected to life outside prison.

Asian prisoners’ lower fulfilment may reflect a lack of culturally appropriate support and activities, like religious practices or suitable food. This could also evidence poorer treatment compared to their white British counterparts. Asian prisoners were previously reported as more likely to be victims of racially motivated prisoner-on-prisoner assaults than other ethnic minority groups.<sup>67</sup> Prison environments may also mirror broader societal dynamics in the UK, where hate crimes and discrimination against Asian communities have increased in recent years.<sup>68</sup> It should be noted that the sample of Asian prisoners was small though (n=9), so their experiences may not represent all Asian individuals in long-term imprisonment. Not having a religion also predicted lower MMP scores. Religious belief may offer a sense of peace and purpose which contributes to greater fulfilment.<sup>69, 70</sup> Engaging in religious activities can also provide opportunities for personal growth and emotional support, as well as pass time of a sentence.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, having religion in prison could enable the development of interpersonal relationships with others who share the same faith, as well as with chaplaincy staff.

Category B and D institutions reported greater perceived progress than those in the Long-Term High Security estate, likely due to increased focus on rehabilitation and opportunities for programmes. Recategorisation also reflects progression through their sentence plan and potential proximity to release, which may further contribute to elevated fulfilment. Those serving IPP sentences were associated with lower MMP scores. It is well-documented that IPP prisoners often face limited access to relevant educational courses and rehabilitative programmes, further reducing opportunities to progress.<sup>72, 73</sup> Similarly, the uncertainty of release may make it difficult to identify or work towards meaningful goals. This may be compounded for those who have spent many years in prison beyond their original tariff.

62 Van der Kaap-Deeder, J., Audenaert, E., Vandeveldel, S., Soenens, B., Van Mastrigt, S., Mabbe, E., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2017). Choosing when choices are limited: The role of perceived afforded choice and autonomy in prisoners’ well-being. *Law and Human Behavior*, 41(6), 567-578.

63 Ibid.

64 Driessen, J. M., Dirkzwager, A. J., Harte, J. M., & Aarts, H. (2023). How restrictions of choice affect the sense of agency: The case of personal autonomy in prison. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, 13(4), 381-393.

65 Jarman, B., & Vince, C. (2022). *Making Progress?* Prison Reform Trust. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making\\_progress.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Making_progress.pdf)

66 Hutton, M., & O’Brien, R. (2024). A Long Stretch: The challenge of maintaining relationships for people serving long prison sentences. Prison Reform Trust; Edgar, K., Vince, C., & O’Brien, R. (2025). A Measure of Hope? How purpose, meaning and fulfilment can ease the harms of long-term imprisonment. Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/BF-Hope-Meaning.pdf>

67 Cheliotis, L. K., & Lieblich, A. (2006). Race matters in British prisons: Towards a research agenda. *British Journal of Criminology*, 46(2), 286-317.

68 Home Office. (2025). *Victims of racial and religious hate crime*. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/crime-and-reoffending/victims-of-racial-and-religious-hate-crime/latest/>

69 Akca, D., Ammar, N. H., Shoemaker, B., Cesaroni, C., & Ouellet, M. (2023). Joy, Compassion, and Job Satisfaction: Insights into the Canadian Prison Chaplaincy. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 70(4), 271-286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X231212812>

70 Woodbridge, E., Vanhouche, A. S., & Lechkar, I. (2025). Islamic practices as powerful tools for coping with prison life: experiences of men in a Belgian prison. *Justice, Opportunities, and Rehabilitation*, 64(1), 25-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509674.2024.2433283>

71 Jarrett, M., Skinner, J., Busulwa, R., Dyson, J., & Brooke, J. (2024). The Role and Impact of the Prison Chaplain: A Systematic Review and Narrative Synthesis. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Advancing Theory and Professional Practice through Scholarly and Reflective Publications*, 78(4), 133-143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423050241296487>

72 Addicott, P. (2012). Frustrations within: imprisonment for public protection (IPP). *Prison Service Journal*, 201, 24-30.

73 Smart, S. (2018). *Too many bends in the tunnel? Women serving Indeterminate Sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection – what are the barriers to risk reduction, release and resettlement?* Women in Prison. [https://womeninprison.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/griffins\\_research\\_paper\\_2018-02\\_updated\\_21.03.2019.pdf](https://womeninprison.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/griffins_research_paper_2018-02_updated_21.03.2019.pdf)

Multiple regression analyses demonstrated that prisoners from category B and category D prisons, those from Black ethnic backgrounds, and those who receive prison visits reported significantly higher Believing in a Future scores. Conversely, those serving an IPP sentence and in the early sentence stage had significantly lower scores. The presence of culturally competent staff who focus on prisoners' future potential or provide representation within leadership roles may foster self-belief amongst Black prisoners. This would be a welcome finding, following repeated reports of systemic racism and disproportionate use of force against those from Black backgrounds.<sup>74, 75</sup> Equally, greater hope may reflect increased levels of resilience among this group due to such prejudicial treatment and marginalisation. Moreover, 85% of Black prisoners reported having a religion, and our results indicated that some religions are associated with increased hope and fulfilment.

In contrast, prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (IPP) reported significantly lower BIAF scores. This finding is consistent with the nature of IPP sentences, where many prisoners are over tariff and have little clarity about their release, contributing to uncertainty and high levels of distress.<sup>76</sup> None of the Black prisoners in our sample were serving IPP sentences, which may partly explain their higher scores too. Future research into potential interaction effects between ethnicity, sentence type and hope in prison is needed to unpick this relationship. Those in the early stages of their sentence also reported lower scores which echoes research showing that the onset of a long prison term is often accompanied by trauma, disorientation, and deep uncertainty about the future.<sup>77</sup> Individuals may still be coming to terms with their offence and adjusting to life in custody, which can make it hard to look ahead with any sense of purpose or hope. Further into their sentences, prisoners may have developed coping strategies, established daily routines, and a renewed sense of control, all of which could support a stronger belief in a meaningful future.<sup>78</sup>

Category B and D prisons were associated with higher BIAF scores. Better access to programmes may help foster feelings of forward momentum and self-improvement. Transferring from higher-security settings may also reinforce a sense of meaningful movement towards a future. Category D prisoners may be closer to the end of their sentence and feel more hopeful for their future on release. Open conditions also reflect trust and progression over time, which may reinforce that change is possible. Many category D prisoners participate in Release On Temporary Licence (ROTL), helping to maintain family contact, engage in education or work in the community. This can allow them to begin rebuilding an identity outside of prison and give something to look forward to and plan around, making a positive post-release future more tangible. Stronger family ties can also act as an additional motivator for change.<sup>79, 80</sup> Prison visits predicted higher BIAF scores. Visits provide evidence that meaningful relationships have endured despite imprisonment, reinforcing prisoners' sense of worth and belonging. This may help buffer against psychological distress and preserve a prosocial identity, from which a positive future self can be imagined.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, category B prisons and family contact predicted higher Preserving Personal Autonomy scores. Compared to the Long-Term High Security Estate, category B prisons present a less restrictive environment which allows prisoners greater opportunity and freedom to exercise agency over their daily lives. Access to a broader range of training also allows individuals to make active choices about their own development, fostering a sense of self-determination and personal control that higher security conditions may suppress.<sup>82</sup> Family contact may increase personal autonomy through sustaining a sense of identity and agency that

74 Liebling, A., & Williams, R. J. (2018). The new subversive geranium: Some notes on the management of additional troubles in maximum security prisons. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 69(4), 1194-1219.

75 HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2022). *The experiences of adult black male prisoners and black prison staff*. <https://cdn.websitebuilder.service.justice.gov.uk/uploads/sites/19/2024/02/The-experiences-of-adult-black-male-prisoners-and-black-prison-staff-web-2022-1.pdf>

76 Edgar, K., Harris, M., & Webster, R. (2020). *No life, no freedom, no future. The experiences of prisoners recalled under the sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection*. [https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old\\_files/Documents/no%20freedom\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old_files/Documents/no%20freedom_final_web.pdf)

77 Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2019). *Experiencing long term imprisonment from young adulthood: identity, adaptation and penal legitimacy*. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d35da18e5274a40181b0cb3/experiencing-long-term-imprisonment-from-young-adulthood.pdf>

78 Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2020). *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: adaptation, identity and time*. Palgrave Macmillan.

79 Farmer, M. (2017). *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. London: Ministry of Justice. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81d6b2e5274a2e87dbfc00/farmer-review-report.pdf>

80 Farmer, M. (2019). *The Importance of Strengthening Female Offenders' Family and other Relationships to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. London: Ministry of Justice. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d078d37e5274a0b879394c7/farmer-review-women.PDF>

81 Woodall, J., Dixey, R., Green, J., & Newell, C. (2009). Healthier prisons: The role of a prison visitors' centre'. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education*, 47(1)

82 Van der Kaap-Deeder, J., Audenaert, E., Vandeveld, S., Soenens, B., Van Mastrigt, S., Mabbe, E., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2017). Choosing when choices are limited: The role of perceived afforded choice and autonomy in prisoners' well-being. *Law and Human Behavior*, 41(6), 567-578

exists beyond the prison walls.<sup>83</sup> Family ties allow prisoners to have something that is still their own. Regular connection with the outside world may help remind individuals that they are a person first, rather than a prisoner. Maintaining these relationships also requires active involvement and decision-making which can counteract the lack of control over the prison regime and physical environment. Likewise, emotional support through family contact may reinforce self-efficacy, encouraging individuals to feel more in control of their own choices.

Having no religion or belonging to an 'Other' faith category was associated with lower PPA scores. Religion can provide an important coping resource in prison and without this, individuals without religious affiliation may struggle more with personal identity and resilience.<sup>84</sup> Religion may also provide a different perspective to interpret or assign purpose to adversity, giving individuals a greater sense of meaning. For those belonging to minority faiths, the issue may not be the absence of belief itself, but rather limited institutional support. Restricted access to appropriate chaplaincy, faith communities, or religious materials may reduce opportunities to benefit from the potential benefits of religious identity in prison. In both cases, the result may be a weakened sense of connection, which may contribute to less perceived autonomy.

This study does have some methodological limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions about changes in hope and fulfilment. Longitudinal studies are needed to administer the HAFS over time. This would provide a more robust understanding of these relationships. The sample size was also smaller than ideal, which may have impacted the observed effect sizes. Several comparisons were likely underpowered due to unequal or small groups. The measure needs continued refinement through testing on different, larger samples and validation using confirmatory factor analysis. The reliance on a written survey format may also have led to an overrepresentation of literate respondents, potentially excluding those with lower literacy levels. Authors attempted to alleviate this through in-person recruitment within consultation groups, but most responses were received by post.

## Conclusion

In summary, the HAFS demonstrates acceptable reliability as an instrument to measure levels of hope and fulfilment amongst the long-term prison population. Further survey refinement and testing with larger and more diverse samples is required before wider implementation. Initial regression analyses indicated that specific demographic and prison-related factors significantly impact HAFS scores. This suggests areas of focus within prison policy and practice to promote feelings of hope and fulfilment for those serving the longest sentences.

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83 Booth, N. (2020). Maintaining family ties: how family practices are renegotiated to promote mother-child contact. In K. Lockwood, K (Eds.), *Mothering from the inside: research on motherhood and imprisonment* (pp. 31-48) Bingley: Emerald.

84 Woodbridge, E., Vanhouche, A. S., & Lechkar, I. (2025). Islamic practices as powerful tools for coping with prison life: experiences of men in a Belgian prison. *Justice, Opportunities, and Rehabilitation*, 64(1), 25–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509674.2024.2433283>

## Implications and recommendations

The Prisons Strategy White Paper highlighted plans to ensure prisons ‘generate hope and provide opportunities for prisoners to turn their lives around, through regimes that ensure time is well spent’.<sup>85</sup> By exploring themes of hope and fulfilment, this research addresses critical gaps in understanding how long-term imprisonment impacts psychological resilience and well-being. Findings provide actionable insights into creating prison environments that enable prisoners to live constructive lives and prepare for eventual reintegration into society. For prisoners, it highlights practices that foster emotional resilience and personal growth. For policymakers, it provides evidence-based recommendations for designing prison regimes that promote hope and productivity. For academics, the study contributes to the understanding of long-term imprisonment, coping mechanisms to address hopelessness and unfulfilment, and prisoner well-being.

This report follows on from the Building Futures publication “A Measure of Hope? How purpose, meaning and fulfilment can ease the harms of long-term imprisonment”, published December 2025.<sup>86</sup> Authors presented findings from a survey and active citizens group consultations which identified harms of long-term imprisonment that impact their experience of hope, meaning, and fulfilment. Their recommendations should be considered in conjunction with those outlined below:

1. HMPPS should work in partnership with an academic partner to conduct further psychometric testing with larger and more diverse samples.

Further validation of the HAFS should be undertaken using larger, independent samples across the long-term prison estate. This would strengthen the robustness and generalisability of the measure prior to wider operational use.

2. HMPPS should establish academic-policy partnerships to support implementation of the HAFS.

Any wider adoption of the HAFS should be supported through formal partnerships between HMPPS, HM Inspectorate of Prisons and academic institutions. This would ensure rigorous oversight of data collection and analysis, ethical use of findings and the ongoing refinements of the tool.

3. Following this, the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS should utilise the HAFS longitudinally to examine how hope and fulfilment fluctuate across different stages of long sentences.

Repeated administration at key sentence milestones (e.g. early custody, post-recategorisation, post-tariff, post-recall) would provide insight into how institutional experiences shape hope and fulfilment over time and would help identify critical points at which they are most fragile.

4. The HAFS model should be integrated with inspection and performance frameworks to evaluate regime conditions and interventions for long-term prisoners.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons should explore how HAFS data could complement existing inspection frameworks, particularly those relating to purposeful activity, respect and rehabilitation. Incorporating HAFS data alongside MQPL-style measures could provide a deeper understanding of lived experience among long-term prisoners and strengthen evidence on how prisons ‘generate hope and fulfilment’ in practice.

This report highlights the importance of hope and fulfilment for people serving long prison sentences. Maintaining a sense of meaning, purpose, and belief in the possibility of a future can support psychological wellbeing, healthy relationships, and adjustment to imprisonment. Promoting hope and fulfilment in prison matters not only as a basic human right, but also because people who retain a sense of purpose and agency may be more able to engage with rehabilitation and build a positive future both in custody and beyond.

85 Ministry of Justice. (2021), *Prisons Strategy White Paper*. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61af18e38fa8f5037e8ccc47/prisons-strategy-white-paper.pdf>

86 Edgar, K., Vince, C., & O'Brien, R. (2025). *A Measure of Hope? How purpose, meaning and fulfilment can ease the harms of long-term imprisonment*. Prison Reform Trust. <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/BF-Hope-Meaning.pdf>

## Appendix 1: HAFS open-ended survey questions

1. Can you think of any examples of positive relationships that have given you hope during your time in this prison?
2. When thinking about your future, what aspirations or dreams give you a sense of hope?
3. How do you see hope motivating your process of rehabilitation and personal growth?
4. What activities or programmes within this prison have been of most use in promoting personal fulfilment for you?
5. Reflecting on your experiences, are there specific individuals who have inspired hope in you, and how did they do so?
6. What parts of your life, values, relationships add most to your personal fulfilment while in this prison?
7. What activities or programmes in this prison have been the most helpful in promoting personal fulfilment for you?
8. Reflecting on your experiences, are there specific individuals who have played a role in supporting your personal fulfilment?
9. Looking ahead, what steps can be taken to ensure that individuals in this prison have opportunities for personal fulfilment and a sense of purpose?

## Appendix 2: Survey responses by sex

TABLE 11	Item	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neutral (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		Mean	SD	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
1	This prison has a harsh regime	151	31	20.5	52	34.4	27	17.9	23	15.2	18	11.9	2.6	1.29
2	In this prison I am able to build my future	150	40	26.7	35	23.3	24	16	39	26	12	8	2.7	1.33
3	I have a sense of purpose in this prison	152	19	19.1	29	19.1	26	17.1	42	27.6	26	17.1	3.0	1.39
4	I am able to deal with everyday challenges in this prison	153	12	7.8	22	14.4	30	19.6	59	38.6	30	19.6	3.5	1.19
5	The sentence I received reflects the crime I committed	139	54	38.8	26	18.7	19	13.7	19	13.7	21	15.1	2.5	1.49
6	The use of my time in this prison is wasted	153	23	15	43	28.1	25	16.3	24	15.7	38	24.8	3.1	1.43
7	In this prison there is nothing to do except 'keep your head down' and 'hope'	153	25	16.3	38	24.8	20	13.1	29	19	41	26.8	3.2	1.47
8	I can't even imagine what life is like out there	153	33	21.6	31	20.3	26	17	36	23.5	27	17.6	3.0	1.42
9	I have hope for my life beyond prison	151	20	13.2	12	7.9	21	13.9	42	27.8	56	37.1	3.7	1.39
10	My legal appeal gives me hope	72	23	31.9	9	12.5	18	25	13	18.1	9	12.5	2.7	1.41
11	The possibility of release gives me hope	148	20	13.5	10	6.8	20	13.5	53	35.8	45	30.4	3.6	1.34
12	My appeal feels like a long shot	69	8	11.6	4	5.8	22	31.9	11	15.9	24	34.8	3.6	1.33
13	In this prison I feel I can deal with a lot if I have hope	153	16	10.5	17	11.1	33	21.6	54	35.3	33	21.6	3.5	1.24
14	I have control over my day-to-day life in this prison	153	28	18.3	30	19.6	30	19.6	42	27.5	23	15	3.0	1.35
15	The things I need to do to progress in this prison are made clear to me	152	55	36.2	29	19.1	20	13.2	34	22.4	14	9.2	2.5	1.41
16	I am treated as a human being in this prison	152	27	17.8	32	21.1	25	16.4	45	29.6	23	15.1	3.0	1.35
17	I am hoping I can get my appeal and go home	98	20	20.4	6	6.1	31	31.6	17	17.3	24	24.5	3.2	1.42
18	I hope the justice system changes for the better	152	2	1.3	2	1.3	4	2.6	23	15.1	121	79.6	4.7	0.71
19	I hope that someone speaks out for us	152	2	1.3	0	0	8	5.3	22	14.5	120	78.9	4.7	0.69
20	I hope someone shines a light on how the justice system really works	151	3	2	2	1.3	5	3.3	18	11.9	123	81.5	4.7	0.77
21	I have more hope now than when I first came to prison	152	33	21.7	24	15.8	18	11.8	43	28.3	34	22.4	3.1	1.48
22	In this prison I am able to make progress	153	37	24.2	34	22.2	26	17	40	26.1	16	10.5	2.8	1.35
23	In here there are places that don't feel like 'prison'?	151	29	19.2	24	15.9	16	10.6	56	37.1	26	17.2	3.2	1.40
24	I trust in my future	151	13	8.6	15	9.9	41	27.2	37	24.5	45	29.8	3.6	1.25
25	My family gives me hope	146	13	8.9	3	2.1	22	15.1	41	28.1	67	45.9	4.0	1.23
26	Education gives me hope	150	16	10.7	15	10	41	27.3	42	28	36	24	3.4	1.26
27	I feel I have some control over my future	151	28	18.5	25	16.6	25	16.6	52	34.4	21	13.9	3.1	1.35
28	All I can think about is the here and now	152	18	11.8	44	28.9	29	19.1	34	22.4	27	17.8	3.1	1.31
29	I am able to make plans step-by-step	152	17	11.2	26	17.1	32	21.1	51	33.6	26	17.1	3.3	1.25
30	I try not to expect anything in this prison to avoid disappointment	152	7	4.6	14	9.2	23	15.1	48	31.6	60	39.5	3.9	1.15
31	In this prison I am able to work towards achievable goals	152	34	22.4	22	14.5	35	23	49	32.2	12	7.9	2.9	1.29
32	I wonder what I am waking up for in this prison	152	27	17.8	33	21.7	30	19.7	22	14.5	40	26.3	3.1	1.46
33	This prison has failed other people like me	151	12	7.9	13	8.6	34	22.5	35	23.2	57	37.7	3.7	1.27
34	This prison is preparing me for a world that doesn't exist	149	14	9.4	25	16.8	52	34.9	26	17.4	32	21.5	3.2	1.24
35	I feel stuck in the system in this prison	148	16	10.8	21	14.2	21	14.2	34	23	56	37.8	3.6	1.39
36	This prison offers a chance for me to change	151	33	21.9	27	17.9	35	23.2	38	25.2	18	11.9	2.9	1.33
37	This prison offers constructive activities	151	34	22.5	29	19.2	26	17.2	44	29.1	18	11.9	2.9	1.36
38	This prison offers activities that 'remove the prison walls'	152	51	33.6	28	18.4	27	17.8	29	19.1	17	11.2	2.6	1.41
39	This prison helps individuals feel like more than just a prisoner	151	46	30.5	41	27.2	21	13.9	27	17.9	16	10.6	2.5	1.37
40	I have the motivation to pursue goals despite challenges	151	6	4	9	6	20	13.2	61	40.4	55	36.4	4.0	1.05

Table 11: Percentage frequency table for 40 HAFS items from male participants (n=153)

# Appendix 3: Survey responses by prison category

TABLE 12	Item	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neutral (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		Mean	SD	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
1	This prison has a harsh regime	26	3	11.5	12	46.2	6	23.1	4	15.4	1	3.8	2.5	1.03
2	In this prison I am able to build my future	25	4	16	2	8	7	28	11	44	1	4	3.1	1.17
3	I have a sense of purpose in this prison	26	3	11.5	3	11.5	4	15.4	13	50	3	11.5	3.4	1.20
4	I am able to deal with everyday challenges in this prison	26	2	7.7	3	11.5	6	23.1	11	42.3	4	15.4	3.5	1.14
5	The sentence I received reflects the crime I committed	25	8	32	6	24	6	24	4	16	1	4	2.4	1.22
6	The use of my time in this prison is wasted	26	6	23.1	6	23.1	4	15.4	4	15.4	6	23.1	2.9	1.52
7	In this prison there is nothing to do except 'keep your head down' and 'hope'	26	3	11.5	9	34.6	4	15.4	6	23.1	4	15.4	3.0	1.31
8	I can't even imagine what life is like out there	26	4	15.4	9	34.6	2	7.7	6	23.1	5	19.2	3.0	1.43
9	I have hope for my life beyond prison	26	3	11.5	2	7.7	4	15.4	6	23.1	11	42.3	3.8	1.39
10	My legal appeal gives me hope	9	1	11.1	0	0	4	44.4	2	22.2	2	22.2	3.4	1.24
11	The possibility of release gives me hope	25	2	8	2	8	2	8	11	44	8	32	3.8	1.21
12	My appeal feels like a long shot	10	1	10	3	30	3	30	1	10	2	20	3.0	1.33
13	In this prison I feel I can deal with a lot if I have hope	25	4	16	4	16	4	16	10	40	3	12	3.2	1.31
14	I have control over my day-to-day life in this prison	26	4	15.4	7	26.9	2	7.7	9	34.6	4	15.4	3.1	1.38
15	The things I need to do to progress in this prison are made clear to me	26	4	15.4	10	38.5	3	11.5	8	30.8	1	3.8	2.7	1.19
16	I am treated as a human being in this prison	26	5	19.2	2	7.7	8	30.8	8	30.8	3	11.5	3.1	1.29
17	I am hoping I can get my appeal and go home	13	0	0	0	0	5	38.5	5	38.5	3	23.1	3.8	0.80
18	I hope the justice system changes for the better	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	19.2	21	80.8	4.8	0.40
19	I hope that someone speaks out for us	26	0	0	0	0	2	7.7	4	15.4	20	76.9	4.7	0.62
20	I hope someone shines a light on how the justice system really works	26	0	0	1	3.8	0	0	5	19.2	20	76.9	4.7	0.68
21	I have more hope now than when I first came to prison	29	6	20.7	5	17.2	3	10.3	10	34.5	5	17.2	3.1	1.45
22	In this prison I am able to make progress	29	3	10.3	7	24.1	9	31	7	24.1	3	10.3	3.0	1.16
23	In here there are places that don't feel like 'prison'?	29	5	17.2	3	10.3	0	0	18	62.1	3	10.3	3.4	1.32
24	I trust in my future	29	4	13.8	1	3.4	4	13.8	12	41.4	8	27.6	3.7	1.32
25	My family gives me hope	28	1	3.6	2	7.1	2	7.1	7	25	16	57.1	4.3	1.11
26	Education gives me hope	27	0	0	3	11.1	8	29.6	9	33.3	7	25.9	3.7	0.98
27	I feel I have some control over my future	29	4	13.8	3	10.3	8	27.6	9	31	5	17.2	3.3	1.28
28	All I can think about is the here and now	29	3	10.3	7	24.1	5	17.2	7	24.1	7	24.1	3.3	1.36
29	I am able to make plans step-by-step	29	3	10.3	5	17.2	5	17.2	13	44.8	3	10.3	3.3	1.19
30	I try not to expect anything in this prison to avoid disappointment	29	0	0	5	17.2	4	13.8	9	31	11	37.9	3.9	1.11
31	In this prison I am able to work towards achievable goals	29	4	13.8	3	10.3	11	37.9	10	34.5	1	3.4	3.0	1.09
32	I wonder what I am waking up for in this prison	29	5	17.2	8	27.6	5	17.2	7	24.1	4	13.8	2.9	1.35
33	This prison has failed other people like me	29	3	10.3	4	13.8	6	20.7	7	24.1	9	31	3.5	1.35
34	This prison is preparing me for a world that doesn't exist	27	3	11.1	6	22.2	8	29.6	7	25.9	3	11.1	3.0	1.19
35	I feel stuck in the system in this prison	29	4	13.8	3	10.3	4	13.8	9	31	9	31	3.6	1.40
36	This prison offers a chance for me to change	28	2	7.1	3	10.7	12	42.9	8	28.6	3	10.7	3.3	1.04
37	This prison offers constructive activities	29	7	24.1	6	20.7	6	20.7	9	31	1	3.4	2.7	1.26
38	This prison offers activities that 'remove the prison walls'	29	6	20.7	8	27.6	9	31	6	20.7	0	0	2.5	1.06
39	This prison helps individuals feel like more than just a prisoner	29	8	27.6	6	20.7	7	24.1	6	20.7	2	6.9	2.6	1.30
40	I have the motivation to pursue goals despite challenges	29	2	6.9	1	3.4	7	24.1	9	31	10	34.5	3.8	1.17

Table 12: Percentage frequency table for 40 HAFS items from female participants (n=29)

TABLE 13	Item	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neutral (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
1	This prison has a harsh regime	49	10.2	20	40.8	13	26.5	4	8.2	7	14.3	2.8	1.20
2	In this prison I am able to build my future	50	32	14	28	7	14	11	22	2	4	2.4	1.26
3	I have a sense of purpose in this prison	50	24	11	22	7	14	16	32	4	8	2.8	1.34
4	I am able to deal with everyday challenges in this prison	50	4	8	16	12	24	18	36	10	20	3.5	1.11
5	The sentence I received reflects the crime I committed	44	38.6	6	13.6	9	20.5	4	9.1	8	18.2	2.5	1.59
6	The use of my time in this prison is wasted	50	6	15	30	7	14	9	18	16	32	3.4	1.37
7	In this prison there is nothing to do except 'keep your head down' and 'hope'	50	16	11	22	7	14	10	20	14	28	3.2	1.47
8	I can't even imagine what life is like out there	50	22	7	14	7	14	13	26	12	24	3.2	1.50
9	I have hope for my life beyond prison	50	20	5	10	6	12	11	22	18	36	3.4	1.55
10	My legal appeal gives me hope	22	31.8	5	22.7	6	27.3	2	9.1	2	9.1	2.4	1.30
11	The possibility of release gives me hope	48	18.8	3	6.3	10	20.8	15	31.3	11	22.9	3.3	1.40
12	My appeal feels like a long shot	22	22.7	1	4.5	6	27.3	3	13.6	7	31.8	3.3	1.55
13	In this prison I feel I can deal with a lot if I have hope	50	14	6	12	13	26	15	30	9	18	3.3	1.29
14	I have control over my day-to-day life in this prison	50	18	12	24	11	22	11	22	7	14	2.9	1.33
15	The things I need to do to progress in this prison are made clear to me	49	34.7	14	28.6	8	16.3	7	14.3	3	6.1	2.3	1.26
16	I am treated as a human being in this prison	50	22	11	22	6	12	16	32	6	12	2.9	1.39
17	I am hoping I can get my appeal and go home	33	36.4	2	6.1	4	12.1	5	15.2	10	30.3	3.0	1.72
18	I hope the justice system changes for the better	49	0	1	2	1	2	11	22.4	36	73.5	4.7	0.63
19	I hope that someone speaks out for us	49	0	0	0	4	8.2	6	12.2	39	79.6	4.7	0.61
20	I hope someone shines a light on how the justice system really works	49	0	2	4.1	2	4.1	7	14.3	38	77.6	4.7	0.75
21	I have more hope now than when I first came to prison	50	26	12	24	2	4	15	30	8	16	2.9	1.50
22	In this prison I am able to make progress	50	26	13	26	10	20	12	24	2	4	2.5	1.23
23	In here there are places that don't feel like 'prison'?	49	24.5	10	20.4	5	10.2	14	28.6	8	16.3	2.9	1.47
24	I trust in my future	48	10.4	5	10.4	13	27.1	10	20.8	15	31.3	3.5	1.32
25	My family gives me hope	47	10.6	1	2.1	4	8.5	13	27.7	24	51.1	4.1	1.29
26	Education gives me hope	48	10.4	3	6.3	17	35.4	11	22.9	12	25	3.5	1.24
27	I feel I have some control over my future	50	20	10	20	7	14	15	30	8	16	3.0	1.41
28	All I can think about is the here and now	50	10	11	22	9	18	14	28	11	22	3.3	1.31
29	I am able to make plans step-by-step	50	14	10	20	9	18	16	32	8	16	3.2	1.31
30	I try not to expect anything in this prison to avoid disappointment	50	0	4	8	10	20	17	34	19	38	4.0	0.96
31	In this prison I am able to work towards achievable goals	50	24	8	16	13	26	17	34	0	0	2.7	1.18
32	I wonder what I am waking up for in this prison	50	18	9	18	9	18	10	20	13	26	3.2	1.47
33	This prison has failed other people like me	50	6	3	6	11	22	14	28	19	38	3.9	1.18
34	This prison is preparing me for a world that doesn't exist	48	4.2	10	20.8	20	41.7	5	10.4	11	22.9	3.3	1.16
35	I feel stuck in the system in this prison	50	6	5	10	9	18	13	26	20	40	3.8	1.23
36	This prison offers a chance for me to change	50	26	6	12	15	30	14	28	2	4	2.7	1.25
37	This prison offers constructive activities	50	28	9	18	10	20	12	24	5	10	2.7	1.37
38	This prison offers activities that 'remove the prison walls'	50	48	9	18	6	12	7	14	4	8	2.2	1.38
39	This prison helps individuals feel like more than just a prisoner	50	38	14	28	10	20	4	8	3	6	2.2	1.20
40	I have the motivation to pursue goals despite challenges	49	2	6	12.2	6	12.2	17	34.7	19	38.8	4.0	1.10

Table 13: Percentage frequency table for 40 HAFS items from participants in LTHSE prisons (n=50)

TABLE 14	Item	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neutral (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
1	This prison has a harsh regime	32	28.1	12	37.5	3	9.4	4	12.5	4	12.5	2.4	1.37
2	In this prison I am able to build my future	31	9.7	5	16.1	6	19.4	11	35.5	6	19.4	3.4	1.26
3	I have a sense of purpose in this prison	32	12.5	4	12.5	5	15.6	8	25	11	34.4	3.6	1.41
4	I am able to deal with everyday challenges in this prison	33	9.1	5	15.2	4	12.1	15	45.5	6	18.2	3.5	1.23
5	The sentence I received reflects the crime I committed	29	37.9	4	13.8	5	17.2	4	13.8	5	17.2	2.6	1.55
6	The use of my time in this prison is wasted	33	27.3	7	21.2	7	21.2	5	15.2	5	15.2	2.7	1.42
7	In this prison there is nothing to do except 'keep your head down' and 'hope'	33	33.3	9	27.3	5	15.2	3	9.1	5	15.2	2.5	1.44
8	I can't even imagine what life is like out there	33	12.1	9	27.3	7	21.2	9	27.3	4	12.1	3.0	1.25
9	I have hope for my life beyond prison	31	0	0	0	5	16.1	16	51.6	10	32.3	4.2	0.69
10	My legal appeal gives me hope	18	44.4	1	5.6	4	22.2	2	11.1	3	16.7	2.5	1.58
11	The possibility of release gives me hope	33	6.1	4	12.1	5	15.2	11	33.3	11	33.3	3.8	1.23
12	My appeal feels like a long shot	17	11.8	2	11.8	4	23.5	4	23.5	5	29.4	3.5	1.37
13	In this prison I feel I can deal with a lot if I have hope	33	3	1	3	8	24.2	15	45.5	8	24.2	3.8	0.94
14	I have control over my day-to-day life in this prison	33	18.2	4	12.1	5	15.2	12	36.4	6	18.2	3.2	1.39
15	The things I need to do to progress in this prison are made clear to me	33	15.2	7	21.2	3	9.1	12	36.4	6	18.2	3.2	1.39
16	I am treated as a human being in this prison	33	12.1	4	12.1	4	12.1	12	36.4	9	27.3	3.5	1.35
17	I am hoping I can get my appeal and go home	21	4.8	2	9.5	8	38.1	6	28.6	4	19	3.5	1.08
18	I hope the justice system changes for the better	33	6.1	0	0	3	9.1	2	6.1	26	78.8	4.5	1.09
19	I hope that someone speaks out for us	33	6.1	0	0	3	9.1	7	21.2	21	63.6	4.4	1.08
20	I hope someone shines a light on how the justice system really works	33	6.1	0	0	2	6.1	2	6.1	27	81.8	4.6	1.06
21	I have more hope now than when I first came to prison	32	3.1	4	12.5	4	12.5	12	37.5	11	34.4	3.9	1.13
22	In this prison I am able to make progress	33	9.1	6	18.2	4	12.1	12	36.4	8	24.2	3.5	1.30
23	In here there are places that don't feel like 'prison'?	33	18.2	1	3	3	9.1	15	45.5	8	24.2	3.5	1.39
24	I trust in my future	33	0	2	6.1	10	30.3	13	39.4	8	24.2	3.8	0.88
25	My family gives me hope	30	3.3	0	0	4	13.3	9	30	16	53.3	4.3	0.95
26	Education gives me hope	33	0	5	15.2	9	27.3	9	27.3	10	30.3	3.7	1.07
27	I feel I have some control over my future	33	6.1	5	15.2	9	27.3	10	30.3	7	21.2	3.5	1.18
28	All I can think about is the here and now	33	12.1	9	27.3	11	33.3	4	12.1	5	15.2	2.9	1.23
29	I am able to make plans step-by-step	33	9.1	3	9.1	6	18.2	14	42.4	7	21.2	3.6	1.20
30	I try not to expect anything in this prison to avoid disappointment	33	9.1	3	9.1	6	18.2	11	33.3	10	30.3	3.7	1.27
31	In this prison I am able to work towards achievable goals	33	9.1	3	9.1	7	21.2	15	45.5	5	15.2	3.5	1.15
32	I wonder what I am waking up for in this prison	33	21.2	9	27.3	7	21.2	5	15.2	5	15.2	2.8	1.37
33	This prison has failed other people like me	33	15.2	8	24.2	9	27.3	5	15.2	6	18.2	3.0	1.33
34	This prison is preparing me for a world that doesn't exist	33	6.1	7	21.2	8	24.2	11	33.3	5	15.2	3.3	1.16
35	I feel stuck in the system in this prison	32	15.6	7	21.9	5	15.6	10	31.3	5	15.6	3.1	1.35
36	This prison offers a chance for me to change	33	9.1	5	15.2	4	12.1	11	33.3	10	30.3	3.6	1.32
37	This prison offers constructive activities	33	9.1	2	6.1	5	15.2	15	45.5	8	24.2	3.7	1.19
38	This prison offers activities that 'remove the prison walls'	33	15.2	5	15.2	5	15.2	13	39.4	5	15.2	3.2	1.32
39	This prison helps individuals feel like more than just a prisoner	33	12.1	6	18.2	4	12.1	14	42.4	5	15.2	3.3	1.29
40	I have the motivation to pursue goals despite challenges	33	3	1	3	6	18.2	17	51.5	8	24.2	3.9	0.91

Table 14: Percentage frequency table for 40 HAFS items from participants in category B prisons (n=33)D

TABLE 15	Item	Strongly disagree (1)		Disagree (2)		Neutral (3)		Agree (4)		Strongly agree (5)		Mean	SD
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
1	This prison has a harsh regime	58	22.4	17	29.3	10	17.2	11	12.1	19	7	12.1	2.7
2	In this prison I am able to build my future	57	31.6	14	24.6	7	12.3	16	28.1	2	3.5	2.5	1.30
3	I have a sense of purpose in this prison	58	19	12	20.7	11	19	16	27.6	8	13.8	3.0	1.35
4	I am able to deal with everyday challenges in this prison	58	12.1	7	12.1	10	17.2	23	39.7	11	19	3.4	1.27
5	The sentence I received reflects the crime I committed	54	38.9	14	25.9	5	9.3	8	14.8	6	11.1	2.3	1.41
6	The use of my time in this prison is wasted	58	15.5	16	27.6	10	17.2	7	12.1	16	27.6	3.1	1.47
7	In this prison there is nothing to do except 'keep your head down' and 'hope'	58	8.6	15	25.9	7	12.1	13	22.4	18	31	3.4	1.39
8	I can't even imagine what life is like out there	58	24.1	13	22.4	10	17.2	13	22.4	8	13.8	2.8	1.40
9	I have hope for my life beyond prison	58	12.1	6	10.3	10	17.2	14	24.1	21	36.2	3.6	1.39
10	My legal appeal gives me hope	27	25.9	3	11.1	7	25.9	7	25.9	3	11.1	2.9	1.38
11	The possibility of release gives me hope	55	10.9	3	5.5	3	5.5	25	45.5	18	32.7	3.8	1.26
12	My appeal feels like a long shot	26	3.8	1	3.8	8	30.8	4	15.4	12	46.2	4.0	1.15
13	In this prison I feel I can deal with a lot if I have hope	58	12.1	10	17.2	11	19	20	34.5	10	17.2	3.3	1.28
14	I have control over my day-to-day life in this prison	58	19	12	20.7	11	19	17	29.3	7	12.1	2.9	1.33
15	The things I need to do to progress in this prison are made clear to me	58	51.7	5	8.6	9	15.5	11	19	3	5.2	2.2	1.38
16	I am treated as a human being in this prison	57	15.8	15	26.3	13	22.8	15	26.3	5	8.8	2.9	1.23
17	I am hoping I can get my appeal and go home	37	16.2	2	5.4	16	43.2	6	16.2	7	18.9	3.2	1.28
18	I hope the justice system changes for the better	58	0	1	1.7	0	0	9	15.5	48	82.8	4.8	0.52
19	I hope that someone speaks out for us	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	49	84.5	4.8	0.37
20	I hope someone shines a light on how the justice system really works	58	1.7	0	0	0	0	9	15.5	48	82.8	4.8	0.62
21	I have more hope now than when I first came to prison	58	25.9	7	12.1	10	17.2	16	27.6	10	17.2	3.0	1.47
22	In this prison I am able to make progress	58	32.8	11	19	9	15.5	15	25.9	4	6.9	2.6	1.37
23	In here there are places that don't feel like 'prison'?	58	15.5	11	19	8	13.8	23	39.7	7	12.1	3.1	1.30
24	I trust in my future	58	8.6	7	12.1	16	27.6	14	24.1	16	27.6	3.5	1.26
25	My family gives me hope	57	12.3	1	1.8	10	17.5	17	29.8	22	38.6	3.8	1.32
26	Education gives me hope	57	15.8	7	12.3	11	19.3	20	35.1	10	17.5	3.3	1.33
27	I feel I have some control over my future	56	25	8	14.3	7	12.5	22	39.3	5	8.9	2.9	1.39
28	All I can think about is the here and now	57	14	19	33.3	8	14	13	22.8	9	15.8	2.9	1.33
29	I am able to make plans step-by-step	57	8.8	11	19.3	14	24.6	19	33.3	8	14	3.2	1.18
30	I try not to expect anything in this prison to avoid disappointment	57	5.3	4	7	7	12.3	20	35.1	23	40.4	4.0	1.14
31	In this prison I am able to work towards achievable goals	57	29.8	9	15.8	11	19.3	15	26.3	5	8.8	2.7	1.38
32	I wonder what I am waking up for in this prison	57	15.8	12	21.1	12	21.1	6	10.5	18	31.6	3.2	1.48
33	This prison has failed other people like me	56	7.1	4	7.1	12	21.4	13	23.2	26	46.4	4.0	1.19
34	This prison is preparing me for a world that doesn't exist	56	16.1	5	8.9	20	35.7	9	16.1	13	23.2	3.2	1.34
35	I feel stuck in the system in this prison	54	11.1	7	13	7	13	8	14.8	26	48.1	3.8	1.45
36	This prison offers a chance for me to change	56	28.6	13	23.2	12	21.4	11	19.6	4	7.1	2.5	1.29
37	This prison offers constructive activities	56	23.2	14	25	11	19.6	13	23.2	5	8.9	2.7	1.31
38	This prison offers activities that 'remove the prison walls'	57	35.1	12	21.1	13	22.8	8	14	4	7	2.4	1.29
39	This prison helps individuals feel like more than just a prisoner	56	33.9	19	33.9	5	8.9	8	14.3	5	8.9	2.3	1.32
40	I have the motivation to pursue goals despite challenges	57	5.3	2	3.5	7	12.3	25	43.9	20	35.1	4.0	1.05

Table 15: Percentage frequency table for 40 HIAFS items from participants in category C prisons (n=58)

## Appendix 4: Supplementary materials

Item	MSA
1	0.88
2	0.96
3	0.96
4	0.92
5	0.88
6	0.91
7	0.95
8	0.87
9	0.90
11	0.89
13	0.94
14	0.90
15	0.93
16	0.93
18	0.70
19	0.65
20	0.69
21	0.95
22	0.95
23	0.94
24	0.93
25	0.85
26	0.89
27	0.96
28	0.79
29	0.93
30	0.93
31	0.96
32	0.97
33	0.97
34	0.93
35	0.95
36	0.95
37	0.94
38	0.93
39	0.94
40	0.87

Table 16: Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) for individual HAFS items

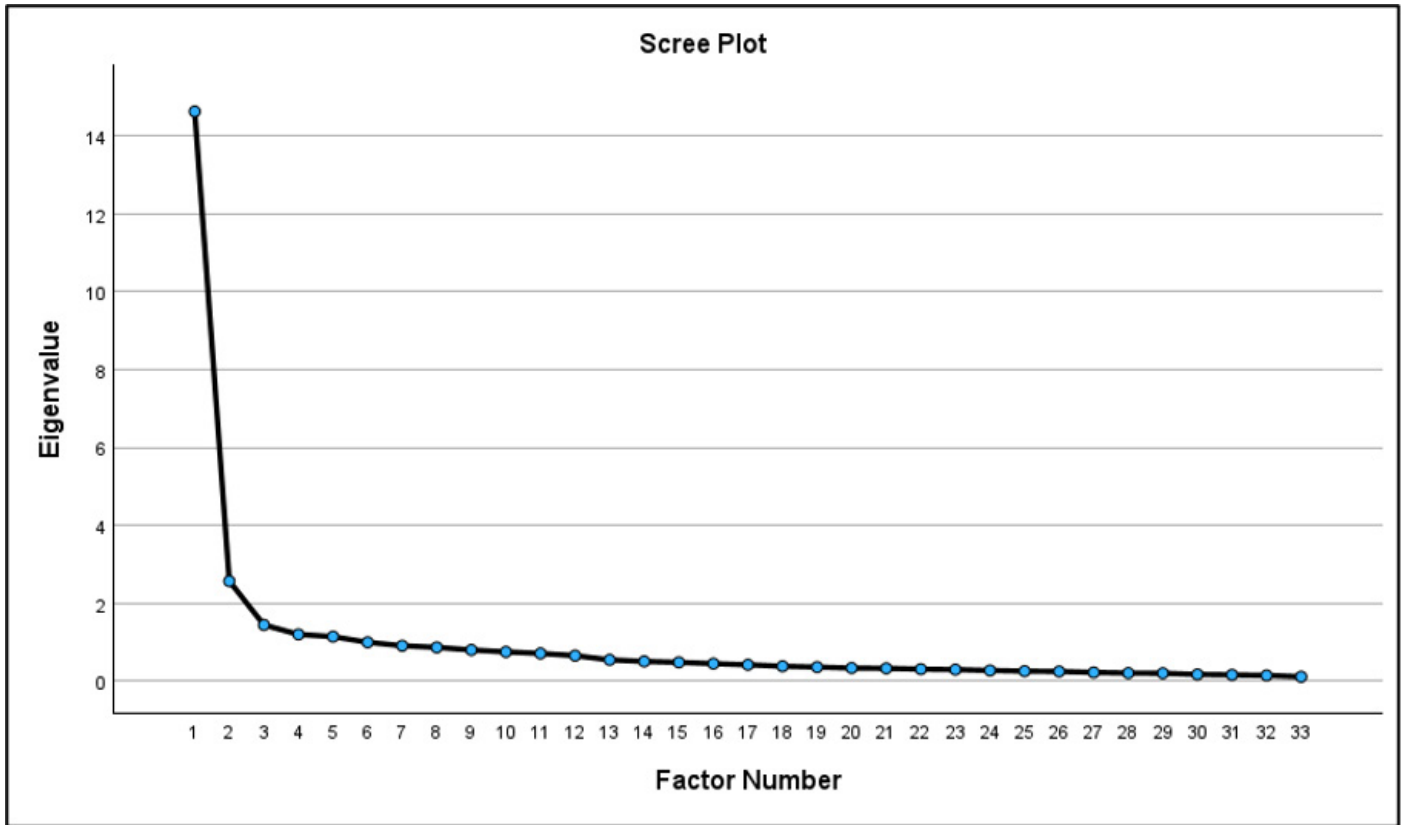


Figure 1: Scree plot from 33-item principal axis factor analysis

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.63	44.33	44.33
2	2.57	7.78	52.10
3	1.44	4.37	56.47
4	1.20	3.63	60.10
5	1.14	3.46	63.55

Table 17: Eigenvalues, percentages of variance and cumulative percentages for 33-item principal axis factor analysis

This report presents the findings from the Hope and Fulfilment Survey (HAFS), a new tool developed by the Prison Reform Trust's Building Futures programme to better understand the experiences of people serving long prison sentences. Drawing on the views of 190 prisoners across the UK, it explores what helps people maintain hope, find purpose, and experience fulfilment while in prison.

The findings reveal the importance of meaningful relationships, opportunities for personal development, fair treatment, and a clear sense of progression. They also highlight the barriers that can undermine hope, including uncertainty, isolation, and a lack of meaningful opportunities.

By providing a robust measure of hope and fulfilment, the HAFS offers a new way to understand the lived realities of long-term imprisonment and to assess whether prison environments support wellbeing, dignity, and personal growth. The report concludes with recommendations for policymakers and practitioners seeking to create prison systems that are more humane, effective, and responsive to the needs of those serving the longest sentences.