

Nature of Offences.—The following table gives a comparative summary of the offences classified under three main groupings—that is, offences against the person, offences against property, and miscellaneous offences :—

Year.	Offences Against the Person.		Offences Against Property.	Miscellaneous Offences.	Total.
	Sexual.	Other Offences.			
1948	85	122	948	1,029	2,181
1947	112	152	1,049	1,038	2,351
1946	92	129	974	1,018	2,213
1945	77	149	985	854	2,065
1944	84	134	947	924	2,099
1943	86	153	1,081	1,162	2,482
1942	110	199	969	1,751	3,029
1941	96	153	789	1,331	2,369
1940	94	144	789	1,174	2,201
1939	80	158	777	1,490	2,505

In view of the concern recently expressed in the public press and elsewhere regarding the incidence of sexual offences, the number of offences against the person has been subdivided to show offences of a sexual nature and other offences.

It is of interest to note that during 1948 there were fewer persons committed to prison for sexual offences than in either of the previous two years. It will also be noted that the number of commitments for other offences against the person was the lowest recorded during the past ten years. The number of persons imprisoned for offences against property during 1948 was 104 less than those for the previous year. Under the heading "Miscellaneous Offences" the total is down on the number for the previous year, and it would have been even lower but for the ship-desertion cases already referred to.

Length of Sentence.—Hereunder is set out a table showing in comparative form the length of sentences imposed on persons committed to prison during the year :—

Term of Sentence.	Number of Prisoners.				
	1944.	1945.	1946.	1947.	1948
Under one month	367	364	425	349	394
One month and under three months ..	627	639	753	866	807
Three months and under six months ..	327	318	274	313	262
Six months and under twelve months ..	189	197	203	224	206
One year and under three years ..	456	449	458	496	426
Three years and under five years ..	78	64	79	84	59
Five years and over	31	18	15	14	24
Indefinite (*including "defaulters") ..	24*	26*	6	5	3
Totals	2,099	2,065	2,213	2,351	2,181

It will be observed that no less than 55 per cent. of the total number of distinct persons sentenced to imprisonment were given terms of three months or less, and that 67 per cent. received terms of less than six months. Although it would not be practicable to eliminate entirely short sentences as a summary penalty in the lower Courts, it is plainly evident that with regard to persons of criminal inclination they serve little purpose from a deterrent point of view. Any sensitivity or self-respect they may have had is dulled and the fear of future imprisonment is lessened. They are also futile in so far as affording any opportunity to exercise a reformatory influence by way of