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Parliament and regulators

How select committees can better
hold regulators to account



Dr Matthew Gill | Maddy Bishop | Callum Parris

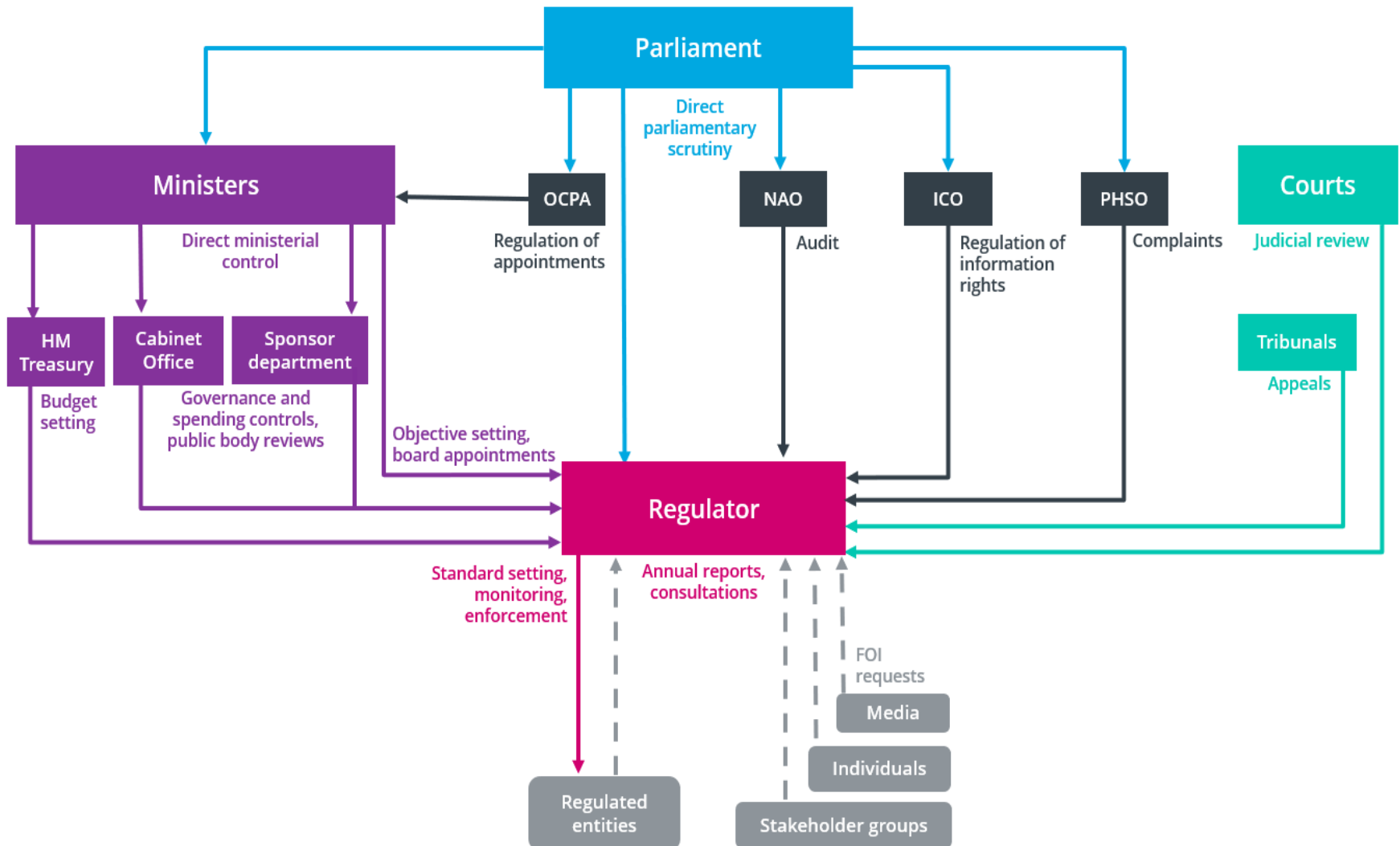
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Matthew Gill

TTF, 18 March 2025



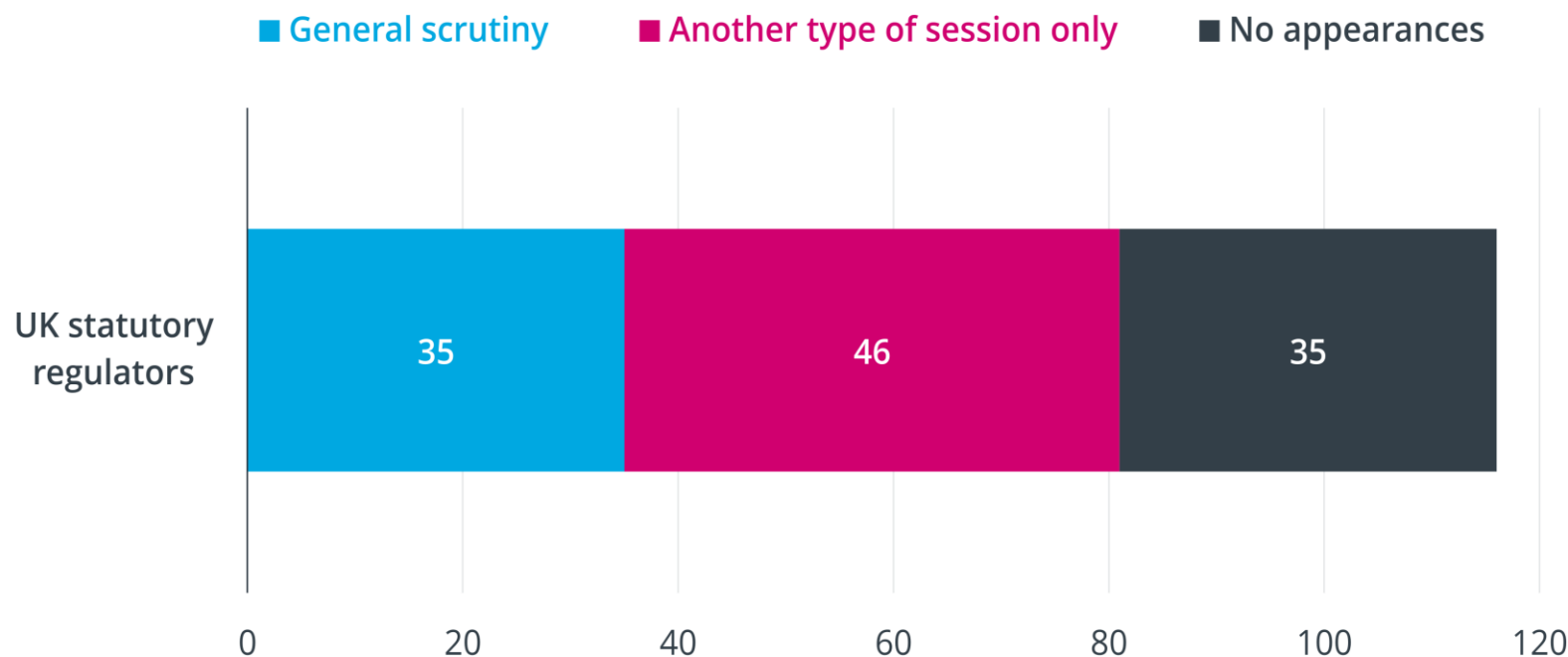
Focusing on parliament's unique role



Frequency of scrutiny

Regulators called for general scrutiny, another type of session only, or in no capacity by select committees, December 2019 to March 2024

IfG



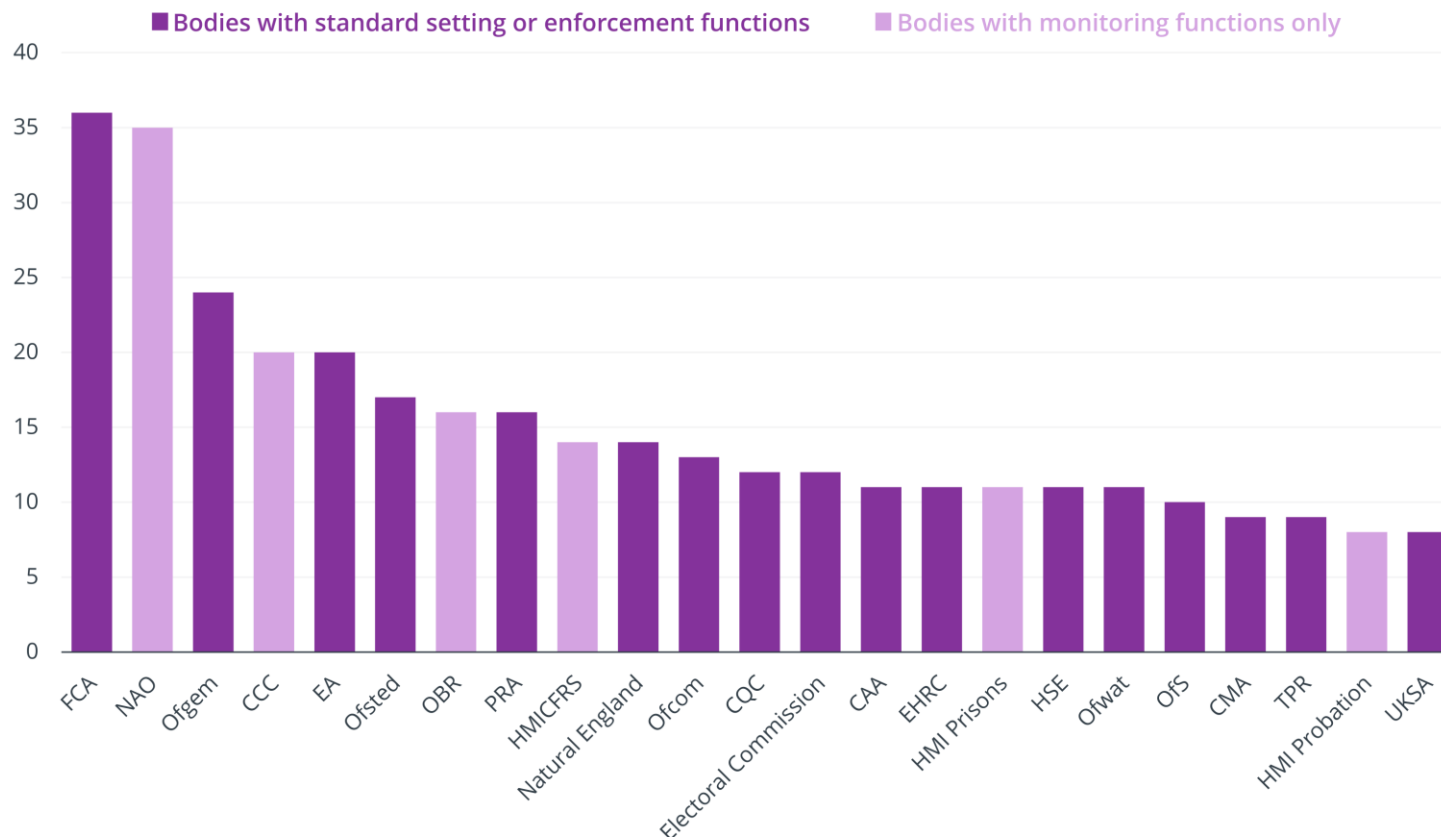
Source: Institute for Government analysis of select committees' oral evidence transcripts, December 2019 to March 2024.
Notes: Analysis includes only committees listed in Box 1. See Methodology for further detail.



Frequency of scrutiny

Regulators called before a committee eight or more times, December 2019 to March 2024

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Source: Institute for Government analysis of select committees' oral evidence transcripts, December 2019 to March 2024.

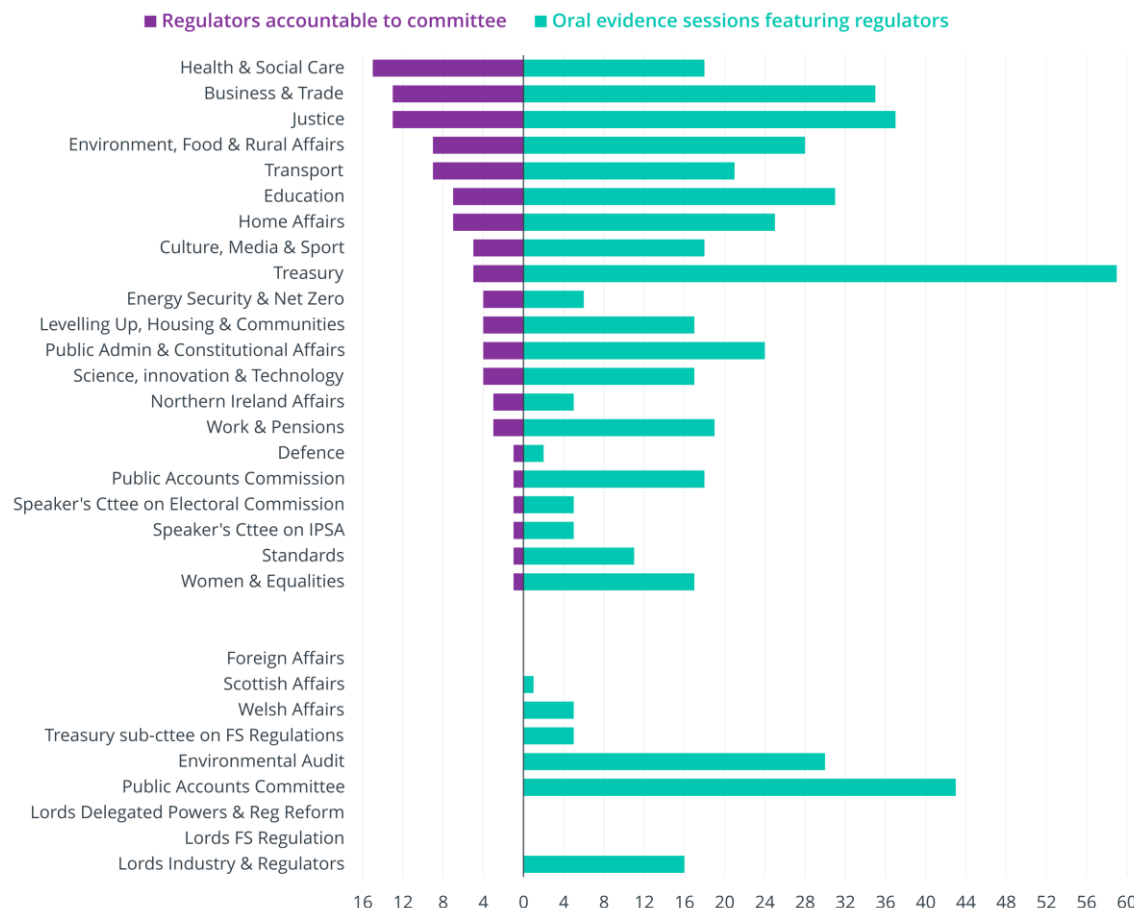
Notes: Analysis includes only committees listed in Box 1. See Methodology for further detail. Acronyms are defined in the list of regulators in the Annex.



Frequency of scrutiny

Oral evidence sessions featuring regulators by committee, December 2019 to March 2024

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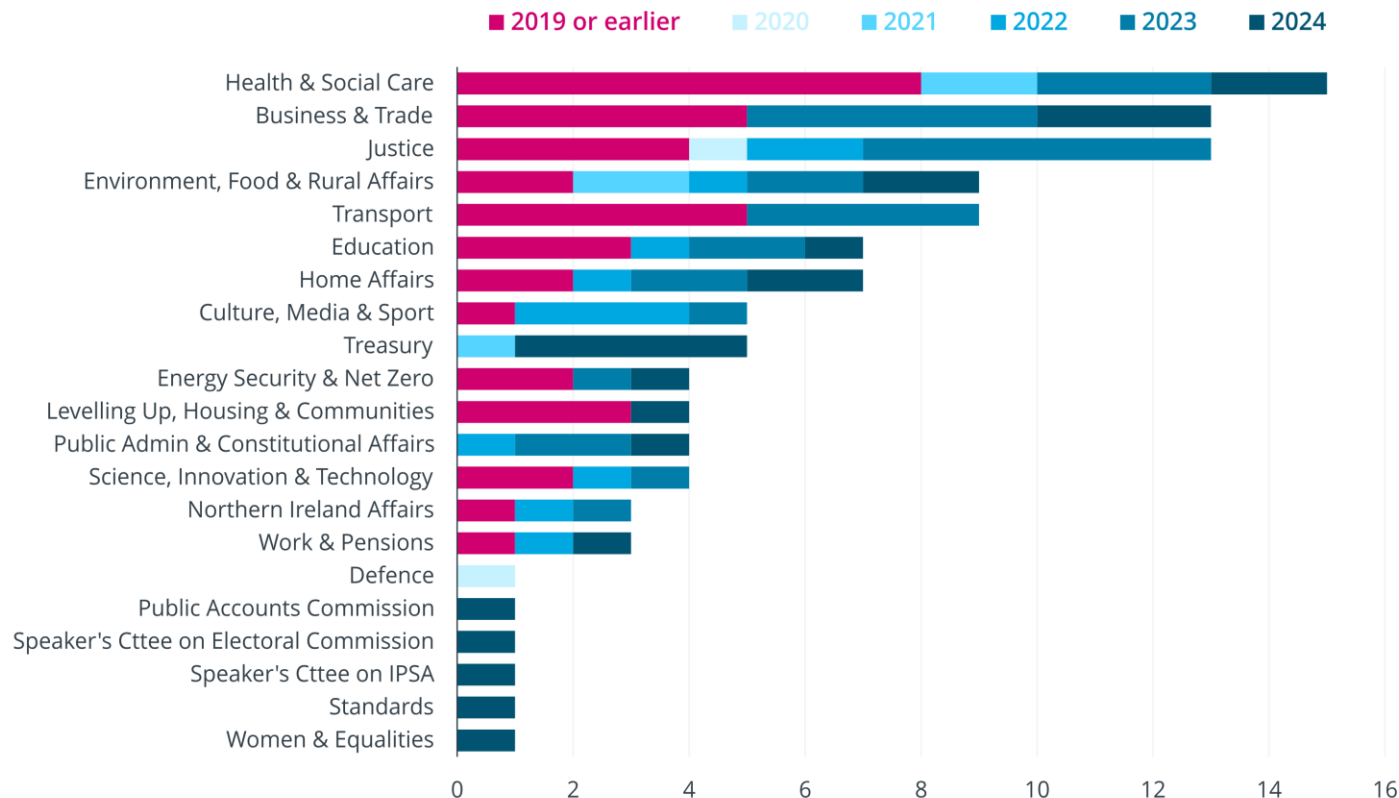
Source: Institute for Government analysis of select committees' oral evidence transcripts, December 2019 to March 2024.
Notes: Analysis includes only committees listed in Box 1. See Methodology and Annex for further detail.



Type of scrutiny

Year in which regulators accountable to each committee last appeared before them,
26 March 2024

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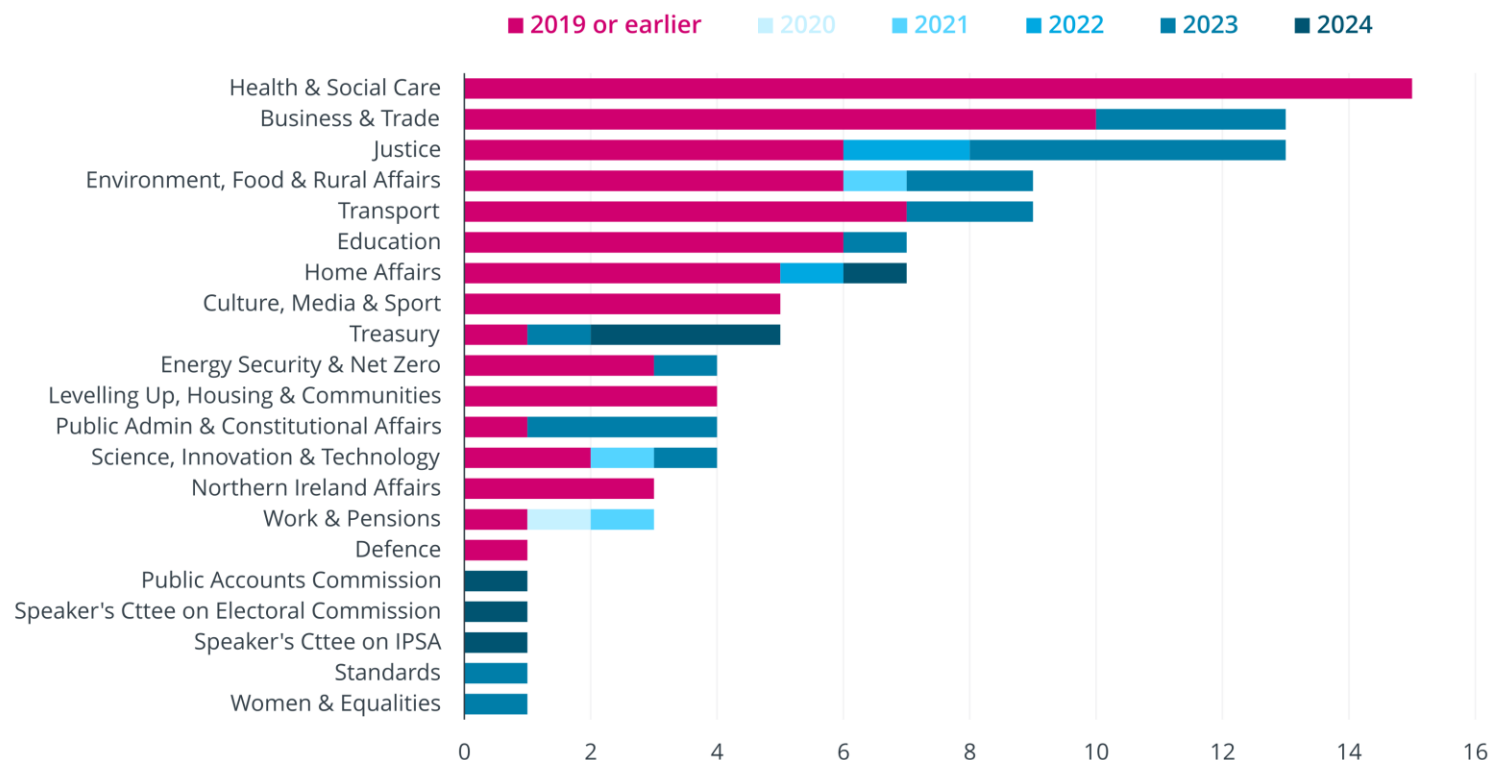
Source: Institute for Government analysis of select committees' oral evidence transcripts, December 2019 to March 2024.
Notes: Includes regulators accountable via oversight regulators. Where the committee responsible for a regulator has changed, sessions held by the previous committee are credited to the current one. See Methodology and Annex for further detail.

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Type of scrutiny

Year in which regulators accountable to each committee last attended a general scrutiny session with them, 26 March 2024

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Source: Institute for Government analysis of select committees' oral evidence transcripts, December 2019 to March 2024.

Notes: Includes regulators accountable via oversight regulators. Where the committee responsible for a regulator has changed, sessions held by the previous committee are credited to the current one. See Methodology and Annex for further detail.

Experience of scrutiny



“I don’t want my **first contact** with [the relevant committee chair] to be **in a crisis.**”



“The aim is no headlines. Organisationally, you send the person in there to be as **boring and bland as possible.**”



“... members **jump from one question to the next** and you don’t get pushed very thoroughly on your position.”



“Candidly, by the time you get to parliament it is **unusual** to find a committee anticipating **something you haven’t already anticipated.**”



Recommendations

- The government should compile – and maintain – a **public list of statutory regulators**.
- The Commons Liaison Committee should reintroduce a **specific core task** for departmental select committees to examine the work of regulators.
- The relevant Commons select committee should hold a **general scrutiny session with each regulator at least once per parliament**. If it does not, the committee should explain why.
- A **joint Commons/Lords Regulatory Oversight Support Unit (ROSU)** should be established in parliament to provide expert resource for both Commons and Lords committees.
- The **NAO should do more to oversee regulators**, working with parliamentarians to determine how it can best meet their expectations.



Discussion

For further information:



<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/parliament-and-regulators>

