

## CRIME AND JUSTICE

# Recorded Crime in Scotland:

## May 2020

This bulletin is the second edition of a new monthly release of Official Statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland. It provides information on the number of crimes and offences recorded during May 2020, and includes a comparison with the equivalent month of the previous year.

These Official Statistics have been introduced to inform users about the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Whilst the conditions of lockdown have had a significant impact on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police, some caution is advised before necessarily attributing all of the changes to this situation. For example, longer term trends in some types of offending recorded by the police, which existed prior to the pandemic, may remain a factor.

Scottish Government statisticians will continue to publish these bulletins each month, covering the period of April to September 2020. After that point, the Scottish Crime Recording Board (which oversees the production of Official Statistics on recorded crime in Scotland) will review whether this process should continue, including user feedback on the value of these statistics.

The annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin](#) remains the primary source of information on crimes and offences recorded by the police, and has been designated as National Statistics by the Office for Statistics Regulation. The next update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, will be published in September.

Statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police provide a measure of the volume of criminal activity with which the police are faced. Crimes recorded by the police do not reveal the incidence of all crimes committed as not all crimes are reported to the police.

## Summary

**The number of crimes recorded by the police in Scotland was 5% lower in May 2020 than in May 2019, reducing from 21,722 to 20,587.**

Over the same time period:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 5% lower (reducing from 787 to 744).
- Sexual crimes were 26% lower (reducing from 1,280 to 942).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 11% lower (reducing from 9,508 to 8,436)
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. were 22% lower (reducing from 4,286 to 3,324).
- Other crimes were 22% higher (increasing from 5,861 to 7,141).
- Fewer crimes were recorded by the police in 19 (59%) out of 32 local authorities.

**The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland was 5% lower in May 2020 than in May 2019, reducing from 22,121 to 21,069.**

Over the same time period:

- Miscellaneous offences remained unchanged, reducing by less than 1% (from 11,507 to 11,458).
- Motor vehicle offences were 9% lower (reducing from 10,614 to 9,611).

**Overall, the number of crimes recorded by the police during April to May 2020 was 12% lower than the same period in 2019.** This included April 2020 being 18% lower than April 2019 and May 2020 being 5% lower than May 2019.

As outlined above, the annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin](#) remains the primary source of information on crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland, including longer-term analysis of changes to each of the crime and offence groups detailed above.

**It should be noted that the total figure for recorded crime (presented in this summary and throughout the bulletin) excludes the new crimes being recorded under the recently enacted coronavirus legislation. Please see the [Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation](#) section below for more information.**

# Main findings

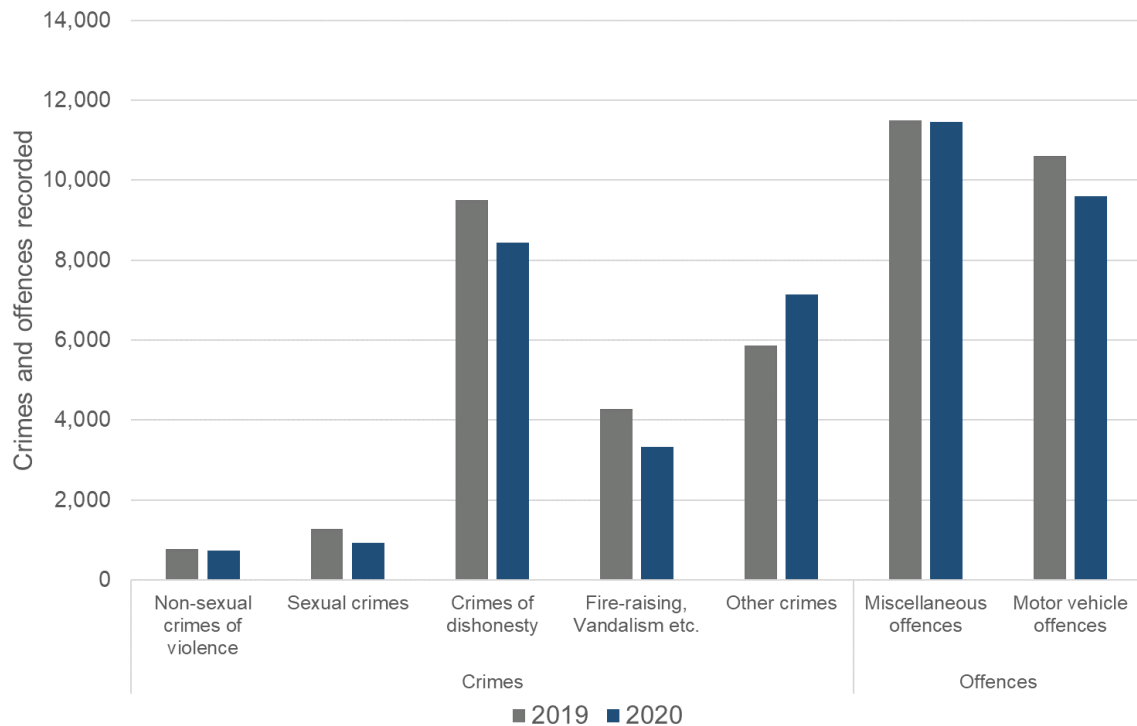
## Crimes recorded by the police

In May 2020, the police recorded 20,587 crimes. This is 5% lower (or 1,135 crimes) than the 21,722 crimes recorded in the same month of 2019. A reduction was seen in most crime groups as detailed below ([Table 1](#), [Chart 1](#)).

### Between May 2019 and May 2020:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 5% lower (or 43 crimes), reducing from 787 to 744. The main contributor to this reduction was Attempted murder & serious assault which fell by 15% (or 53 crimes). Over the same period, crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 reduced by 12% (or 19 crimes) from 157 to 138 crimes. There were increases in both Robbery and Other violence, up by 16% and 10% respectively.
- Sexual crimes were 26% lower (or 338 crimes), reducing from 1,280 to 942 crimes. The main contributor to this reduction was Sexual assault which fell by almost half (45%, or 213 crimes). Reductions were also seen across all other sexual crime groups including Rape & attempted rape (down 33% or 76 crimes) and Other sexual crimes (down 8% or 47 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 11% lower (or 1,072 crimes), reducing from 9,508 to 8,436 crimes. The main contributors to this reduction were a 35% fall in levels of Shoplifting (or 957 crimes) and an 18% reduction in Other theft (down 674 crimes). Over the same period, the number of frauds recorded was 72% higher, increasing 837 to 1,441 crimes. The [Changes in levels of recorded fraud](#) section below provides users with further background on what may be contributing to this change.
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. was 22% lower (or 962 crimes), reducing from 4,286 to 3,324 crimes. The main contributor to this reduction was Vandalism etc., which fell by around a quarter (23%, or 900 crimes). A reduction was also seen in Fire-raising, which fell by 21% (or 62 crimes) from 299 to 237 crimes.
- Other crimes was 22% higher (or 1,280 crimes), increasing from 5,861 to 7,141 crimes. The main contributors to this increase was Crimes against public justice which rose by just over half (52%, or 835 crimes) and Drugs crime which increased by 12% (or 415 crimes).

**Chart 1. Crimes and offences recorded by the police, by crime group, May 2020 compared with May 2019**



### Offences recorded by the police

In May 2020, the police recorded 21,069 offences. This is 5% lower (or 1,052 offences) than the 22,121 offences recorded in the same month in 2019. A reduction was seen in both offence groups as detailed below ([Table 2](#)).

#### Between May 2019 and May 2020:

- Miscellaneous offences remained relatively unchanged, decreasing by less than 1% (or 49 offences), reducing from 11,507 to 11,458. The biggest decrease was seen in Common assault, which fell by 13% (or 648 offences) while the biggest increase was seen in Breach of the peace etc., which increased by 7% (or 326 offences).
- Motor vehicle offences were 9% lower (or 1,003 offences), reducing from 10,614 to 9,611. The main contributor to this reduction was Speeding offences, which fell by 31% (or 868 offences). With the exception of Driving under the influence and Unlawful use of vehicle, reductions were seen in all other categories of motor vehicle offences.

### Local Authorities

Compared to May 2019, a reduction in recorded crime was seen in 19 (59%) out of 32 local authorities, with the remaining 13 showing an increase ([Table 3](#)). The largest decrease was seen in Midlothian (down 23%) and largest increase was in Na h-Eileanan Siar (up 131%). It should be noted that the relatively small number of crimes recorded in some of Scotland's local

authorities can fluctuate over time - leading to large percentage changes. This is particularly relevant in this release, where monthly data is being presented rather than the annual information provided in the National Statistics.

The biggest contributors by volume to the overall reduction in crimes recorded by the police were Edinburgh City (down 20% or 559 crimes), followed by Glasgow City (down 8% or 284 crimes) and Aberdeenshire (down 18% or 116 crimes). Combined, these three local authorities represent over four-fifths (84%) of the overall reduction in crime compared to the previous May.

#### **April to May 2020 compared with April to May 2019.**

Overall, in April to May 2020 the police recorded 37,758 crimes, a reduction of 12% (or 4,958 crimes) compared to the same period in 2019 (42,716 crimes) ([Table 4](#)). The biggest drivers of this reduction by volume were Shoplifting (down 42% or 2,366 crimes), Vandalism etc. (down 24% or 1,953 crimes) and Other theft (down 24% or 1,709 crimes). Fraud saw the biggest increase over this period, growing 55% (or 902 crimes) from 1,628 to 2,530 crimes.

Over the same period, the number of offences recorded by the police was around a fifth lower (18% or 8,386 offences), with Miscellaneous offences falling by 8% (or 1,790 offences) and Motor vehicle offences falling by 26% (or 6,596 offences) ([Table 5](#)).

## Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 72% higher (or 604 crimes) in May 2020 than in May 2019. Further to the note of caution provided in the introduction to these statistics, there are two reasons why some care is advised before attributing all of this change to the specific circumstances of the COVID-related lockdown.

The first is that the [Recorded Crime National Statistics](#) have highlighted an increasing trend in recorded fraud over a number of years (up 40% between 2014-15 and 2018-19), which may be continuing. The second is that a procedural change was made in April 2020 to how some crimes of fraud (and other types of crime which could involve a victim and a perpetrator in different physical locations) are recorded.

Prior to the 1st April 2020, these statistics excluded any crime with a victim in Scotland and a perpetrator who was confirmed by the police to be outside the United Kingdom when the crime took place. Following a recommendation by Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate for Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) to review recording practice in this area<sup>1</sup>, the Scottish Crime Recording Board approved a change so that from the 1st April these crimes are now included in the statistics. It should be noted that those cases with only a suspicion or insufficient evidence to confirm that the perpetrator was outside the UK were always included.

This change is likely to have led to additional crimes of fraud being recorded, with a similar impact possible for other types of crime which could be committed using digital technologies. At this early stage we are unable to say to what extent this procedural change has increased levels of recorded fraud, though the 2020-21 National Statistics (to be published in September 2021) will provide users with an estimate of the number of additional crimes that were recorded as a result of this change.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hmics.scot/publications/crime-audit-2016>

## Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation

It is important to note that these Official Statistics currently exclude crimes recorded under the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) and [Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) \(Restrictions\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#). These were implemented on 25th March and 27th March respectively and resulted in new crimes being recorded - for example where someone, who had left the place they were living, did not have a reasonable excuse for this when asked by a police officer, and failed to comply with police advice or instruction to return there.

Given the rapid pace of these changes, Police Scotland have used an interim and bespoke data collection to capture information on the number of new crimes recorded under the coronavirus legislation. This is why figures for this legislation are currently presented separately to the overall totals provided for recorded crime in this bulletin. The bespoke data collection suggests that approximately 2,700 such crimes were recorded during April 2020 and 1,700 in May 2020. Users should treat these figures as broadly indicative, and may be subject to further revision in future releases. Police Scotland are currently reviewing the systems and methodologies they use to capture this data, with the aim of incorporating it into the wider administrative system used to produce Scotland's crime statistics. We will inform users of progress in this area through subsequent editions of these monthly Official Statistics (and in due course the annual National Statistics).

# Tables

Table 1: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, May 2019 and May 2020 9

Table 2: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, May 2019 and May 2020 10

Table 3: Crimes recorded by the police by local authority, Scotland, May 2019 and May 2020 11

Table 4: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, April to May 2019 and April to May 2020 12

Table 5: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, April to May 2019 and April to May 2020 13

### Notes for these tables

- The symbol 'n/r' is used to denote where a percentage change figure is not reported. This is done if the denominator is less than ten as any resulting figure may be misleading.

Please note that tables 1, 2, 4 and 5 can be accessed at local authority level online via the following link: <https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-83960-849-0>



**Table 1: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, May 2019 and May 2020**

Crime group	May		% Change since May 2019
	2019	2020	
<b>Total crimes<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>21,722</b>	<b>20,587</b>	<b>-5%</b>
<b>Non-sexual crimes of violence</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>-5%</b>
Homicide etc.	12	8	-33%
Attempted murder & serious assault	363	310	-15%
Robbery	120	139	16%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	157	138	-12%
Other violence	135	149	10%
<b>Sexual crimes</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>-26%</b>
Rape & attempted rape	229	153	-33%
Sexual assault	478	265	-45%
Crimes associated with prostitution	4	2	n/r
Other sexual crimes	569	522	-8%
<b>Crimes of dishonesty</b>	<b>9,508</b>	<b>8,436</b>	<b>-11%</b>
Housebreaking	1,041	947	-9%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	125	95	-24%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	231	231	0%
Theft of a motor vehicle	436	397	-9%
Shoplifting	2,745	1,788	-35%
Other theft	3,672	2,998	-18%
Fraud	837	1,441	72%
Other dishonesty	421	539	28%
<b>Fire-raising, vandalism etc.</b>	<b>4,286</b>	<b>3,324</b>	<b>-22%</b>
Fire-raising	299	237	-21%
Vandalism etc.	3,987	3,087	-23%
<b>Other crimes</b>	<b>5,861</b>	<b>7,141</b>	<b>22%</b>
Crimes against public justice	1,610	2,445	52%
Handling offensive weapons	853	898	5%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	392	414	6%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	461	484	5%
Drugs	3,373	3,788	12%
Other	25	10	-60%

1. The total figure for recorded crime excludes the new crimes being recorded under the recently enacted coronavirus legislation. Please see the [Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation](#) section for more information.

**Table 2: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, May 2019 and May 2020**

Offence group	May		% Change since May 2019
	2019	2020	
<b>Total offences</b>	<b>22,121</b>	<b>21,069</b>	<b>-5%</b>
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	<b>11,507</b>	<b>11,458</b>	<b>0%</b>
Common assault	5,083	4,435	-13%
Breach of the peace etc.	4,485	4,811	7%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	553	694	25%
Urinating etc.	190	68	-64%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,196	1,450	21%
<b>Motor vehicle offences</b>	<b>10,614</b>	<b>9,611</b>	<b>-9%</b>
Dangerous and careless driving	966	935	-3%
Driving under the influence	509	774	52%
Speeding	2,758	1,890	-31%
Unlawful use of vehicle	3,208	3,759	17%
Vehicle defect offences	681	497	-27%
Seat belt offences	312	130	-58%
Mobile phone offences	255	161	-37%
Other motor vehicle offences	1,925	1,465	-24%

**Table 3: Crimes recorded by the police by local authority, Scotland, May 2019 and May 2020**

Local Authority	May		% Change since May 2019
	2019	2020	
Aberdeen City	982	1,051	7%
Aberdeenshire	660	544	-18%
Angus	310	268	-14%
Argyll & Bute	200	210	5%
Clackmannanshire	179	226	26%
Dumfries & Galloway	605	547	-10%
Dundee City	818	852	4%
East Ayrshire	474	489	3%
East Dunbartonshire	262	266	2%
East Lothian	332	309	-7%
East Renfrewshire	175	184	5%
Edinburgh City	2,790	2,231	-20%
Falkirk	639	608	-5%
Fife	1,258	1,183	-6%
Glasgow City	3,776	3,492	-8%
Highland	627	667	6%
Inverclyde	325	319	-2%
Midlothian	358	275	-23%
Moray	239	211	-12%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	16	37	131%
North Ayrshire	543	538	-1%
North Lanarkshire	1,603	1,562	-3%
Orkney Islands	30	27	-10%
Perth & Kinross	334	403	21%
Renfrewshire	654	701	7%
Scottish Borders	331	295	-11%
Shetland Islands	38	46	21%
South Ayrshire	447	355	-21%
South Lanarkshire	1,259	1,381	10%
Stirling	348	342	-2%
West Dunbartonshire	458	375	-18%
West Lothian	652	593	-9%
<b>Scotland<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>21,722</b>	<b>20,587</b>	<b>-5%</b>

1. The total figure for recorded crime excludes the new crimes being recorded under the recently enacted coronavirus legislation. Please see the [Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation](#) section for more information.

**Table 4: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, April to May 2019 and April to May 2020**

Crime group	April to May		% Change since 2019
	2019	2020	
<b>Total crimes<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>42,716</b>	<b>37,758</b>	<b>-12%</b>
<b>Non-sexual crimes of violence</b>	<b>1,527</b>	<b>1,380</b>	<b>-10%</b>
Homicide etc.	17	17	0%
Attempted murder & serious assault	724	536	-26%
Robbery	256	278	9%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	283	247	-13%
Other violence	247	302	22%
<b>Sexual crimes</b>	<b>2,335</b>	<b>1,723</b>	<b>-26%</b>
Rape & attempted rape	413	287	-31%
Sexual assault	884	485	-45%
Crimes associated with prostitution	8	4	n/r
Other sexual crimes	1,030	947	-8%
<b>Crimes of dishonesty</b>	<b>18,967</b>	<b>15,613</b>	<b>-18%</b>
Housebreaking	2,086	1,912	-8%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	263	178	-32%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	495	496	0%
Theft of a motor vehicle	843	794	-6%
Shoplifting	5,571	3,205	-42%
Other theft	7,222	5,513	-24%
Fraud	1,628	2,530	55%
Other dishonesty	859	985	15%
<b>Fire-raising, vandalism etc.</b>	<b>8,519</b>	<b>6,472</b>	<b>-24%</b>
Fire-raising	542	448	-17%
Vandalism etc.	7,977	6,024	-24%
<b>Other crimes</b>	<b>11,368</b>	<b>12,570</b>	<b>11%</b>
Crimes against public justice	3,191	4,303	35%
Handling offensive weapons	1,718	1,735	1%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	801	862	8%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	917	873	-5%
Drugs	6,414	6,506	1%
Other	45	26	-42%

1. The total figure for recorded crime excludes the new crimes being recorded under the recently enacted coronavirus legislation. Please see the [Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation](#) section for more information.

**Table 5: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, April to May 2019 and April to May 2020**

Offence group	April to May		% Change since 2019
	2019	2020	
<b>Total offences</b>	<b>43,765</b>	<b>36,518</b>	<b>-17%</b>
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	<b>22,554</b>	<b>20,764</b>	<b>-8%</b>
Common assault	9,917	8,113	-18%
Breach of the peace etc.	8,841	8,701	-2%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	1,091	1,223	12%
Urinating etc.	404	115	-72%
Other miscellaneous offences	2,301	2,612	14%
<b>Motor vehicle offences</b>	<b>21,211</b>	<b>15,754</b>	<b>-26%</b>
Dangerous and careless driving	1,920	1,633	-15%
Driving under the influence	1,016	1,378	36%
Speeding	5,613	2,391	-57%
Unlawful use of vehicle	6,384	6,506	2%
Vehicle defect offences	1,296	767	-41%
Seat belt offences	596	214	-64%
Mobile phone offences	510	256	-50%
Other motor vehicle offences	3,876	2,609	-33%

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Background

As outlined on page one, these new monthly Official Statistics have been introduced to inform users about the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Their role is to provide more recent information on this topic - in a product that has been produced by Scottish Government statisticians, in line with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

Scottish Government statisticians will continue to publish these bulletins each month, covering the period from April to September 2020. After that point, the Scottish Crime Recording Board (which oversees the production of Official Statistics on recorded crime in Scotland) will review whether this process should continue, including user feedback on the value of these statistics.

The annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland](#) bulletin remains the primary source of information on crimes and offences recorded by the police, and has been designated as National Statistics by the Office for Statistics Regulation. The next update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, will be published in September. Users should refer to the National Statistics for more detailed information on the production of the recorded crime statistics - including governance arrangements, a description of their quality, background methodologies and changes to recording practice.

The next bulletin, covering the month of June 2020, will be published on 23rd July. Publication dates for further bulletins will be announced in due course.

## Annex 2: Data Sources

Since 2013-14, the National Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland have been produced using data extracted from a single Police Scotland IT system called the Scottish Operational and Management Information System (ScOMIS). This data is then provided to the Scottish Government for the production of the National Statistics.

In 2019, Police Scotland developed a new data repository called the Source for Evidence Based Policing (SEBP). The intention is that this will, in due course, become the official source of information for the recorded crime National Statistics, replacing ScOMIS.

A preliminary review, looking at how changing from ScOMIS to SEBP impacts on the production of the Recorded Crime National Statistics, suggests that there is good alignment between both of these administrative systems.

Before the Scottish Crime Recording Board (SCRB) approves this transition, a final confirmatory check of the full 2019-20 reporting year will take place prior to publication of the Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2019-20 National Statistics.

This will involve a comparison of trends in recorded crimes, offences and clear up rates for all local authorities and Scotland as a whole between 2018-19 and 2019-20. A technical report detailing the results of this analysis and highlighting any implications for data interpretation will be published in September 2020.

In order to produce the new monthly Official Statistics included in this bulletin in the necessary shorter time frames, the information supplied by Police Scotland has been extracted from SEBP. As such, the figures provided in this publication use a different source from the most recent National Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland – and are therefore not directly comparable (notwithstanding the preliminary finding noted above that there is good alignment between the two systems).

In addition, amendments to crime and offence records will always arise after data has been submitted by Police Scotland to the Scottish Government. Some crime or offence records may, on further investigation by the police, be redesignated to not constitute a crime or offence (a process known as ‘no-criming’). In other cases the original crime or offence may be re-classified, which could shift the record between different crime or offence groups (for example if a common assault was found on further investigation to be a serious assault it would switch from Group 6 Miscellaneous Offences to Group 1 Non-sexual Crimes of Violence).

The data for this bulletin was extracted in June 2020. The information for May 2019 is unlikely to change as more than a year has passed since the crimes were originally recorded and the vast majority of amendments are likely to have taken place. In contrast, there has been a much shorter time for amendments to have been made to the information for May 2020 and so this information is likely to change to a greater extent as more time passes. Some caution should therefore be taken in interpreting the changes between 2019 and 2020, as outlined in these monthly bulletins, which should be seen as providing a broad indication of changes over the period in volumes and types of specific crimes and offences. We will assess the impact of revisions to the data and provide further information in future publications.

When published, the annual National Statistics for 2019-20 and 2020-21 will provide the most robust source of information on crimes recorded by the police, and how these have changed over time.

For further background information (e.g. classification of Crimes and Offences and comparisons with England & Wales and Northern Ireland) please see Annex 1 in the latest National Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2018-19/pages/23/>

### **Annex 3: Feedback**

We are always keen to hear users' views on our products and as this is the first in a new series of monthly recorded crime publications we would welcome feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions please contact us at: [Justice\\_Analysts@gov.scot](mailto:Justice_Analysts@gov.scot).



## **An Official Statistics publication for Scotland**

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

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e-mail: [statistics.enquiries@gov.scot](mailto:statistics.enquiries@gov.scot)

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available in more detail through [statistics.gov.scot](http://statistics.gov.scot).
- some limited additional information may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [statistics.enquiries@gov.scot](mailto:statistics.enquiries@gov.scot) for further information.
- detailed information cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

### **Complaints and suggestions**

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, GR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail [statistics.enquiries@gov.scot](mailto:statistics.enquiries@gov.scot).

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