



CRIME AND JUSTICE

Recorded Crime in Scotland:

April 2020

This bulletin is the first 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 April 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 in April 2020 (compared to one year earlier), 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 since not all crimes are reported to the police.

Summary

The number of crimes recorded by the police in Scotland was 18% lower in April 2020 than in April 2019, reducing from 20,994 to 17,171.

Over the same time period:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 14% lower (reducing from 740 to 636).
- Sexual crimes were 26% lower (reducing from 1,055 to 781).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 24% lower (reducing from 9,459 to 7,177)
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. were 26% lower (reducing from 4,233 to 3,148).
- Other crimes remained relatively unchanged, at 1% lower (reducing from 5,507 to 5,429).
- Fewer crimes were recorded by the police in all but two local authorities.

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland was 29% lower in April 2020 than in April 2019, reducing from 21,644 to 15,449.

Over the same time period:

- Miscellaneous offences were 16% lower (reducing from 11,047 to 9,306).
- Motor vehicle offences were 42% lower (reducing from 10,597 to 6,143).

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 April 2020, the police recorded 17,171 crimes. This is around a fifth lower (18%, or 3,823 crimes) than the 20,994 crimes recorded in the same month of 2019. A reduction was seen in all crime groups as detailed below ([Table 1](#)).

Between April 2019 and April 2020:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 14% lower (or 104 crimes), reducing from 740 to 636. The main contributor to this reduction was Attempted murder & serious assault which fell by almost two-fifths (37%), or 135 crimes. Over the same period, crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 reduced by 13% (or 17 crimes) from 126 to 109 crimes. Other violence was almost two-fifths higher (37%), increasing from 112 to 153 crimes. This was driven by an increase in Threats and extortion.
- Sexual crimes were 26% lower (or 274 crimes), reducing from 1,055 to 781 crimes. The main contributor to this reduction was Sexual assault which fell by almost half (46%, or 186 crimes). Reductions were also seen across all other sexual crime groups including Rape & attempted rape (down 27% or 50 crimes) and Other sexual crimes (down 8% or 36 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 24% lower (or 2,282 crimes), reducing from 9,459 to 7,177 crimes. The main contributors to this reduction were a halving in levels of Shoplifting (falling 50%, or 1,409 crimes) and a 29% reduction in Other theft (down 1,035 crimes). Over the same period, the number of frauds recorded was 38% higher, increasing 791 to 1,089 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 26% lower (or 1,085 crimes), reducing from 4,233 to 3,148 crimes. The main contributor to this reduction was Vandalism etc., which fell by around a quarter (26%, or 1,053 crimes). A reduction was also seen in Fire-raising, which fell by 13% (or 32 crimes) from 243 to 211 crimes.
- Other crimes were relatively unchanged, reducing by 1% (or 78 crimes) from 5,507 to 5,429 crimes. There was a reduction in Drugs crime which fell by around a tenth (11%, or 323 crimes). However, this was offset by a higher number of Crimes against public justice which increased by 18% (or 277 crimes).

Offences recorded by the police

In April 2020, the police recorded 15,449 offences. This is over a quarter lower (29% or 6,195 offences) than the 21,644 offences recorded in the same month in 2019. A reduction was seen in both offence groups as detailed below ([Table 2](#)).

Between April 2019 and April 2020:

- Miscellaneous offences were 16% lower (or 1,741 offences), reducing from 11,047 to 9,306. The main contributor to this reduction was Common assault, which fell by around a quarter (24%, or 1,156 offences). This was followed by Breach of the peace etc., which fell by 11% (or 466 offences).
- Motor vehicle offences were 42% lower (or 4,454 offences), reducing from 10,597 to 6,143. The main contributor to this reduction was Speeding offences, which fell by 82% (or 2,354 offences). With the exception of Driving under the influence, reductions were seen in all other categories of motor vehicle offences.

Local Authorities

Compared to April 2019, a reduction in recorded crime was seen in all but two local authorities, with one showing an increase and another remaining unchanged ([Table 3](#)). The largest decrease was seen in the Shetland Islands (down 67%) and the only increase was in Na h-Eileanan Siar (up 45%). 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 Glasgow City (down 19% or 702 crimes), followed by Edinburgh City (down 23% or 603 crimes) and North Lanarkshire (down 21% or 348 crimes). Combined, these three local authorities represent over two-fifths (43%) of the overall reduction in crime compared to the previous April.

Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 38% higher (or 298 crimes) in April 2020 than in April 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 area¹, 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.

¹ <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 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. Users should treat this figure 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).

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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 and 2 can be accessed at local authority level online via the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-83960-801-8>

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

Crime group	April		% Change since April 2019
	2019	2020	
Total Crimes¹	20,994	17,171	-18%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	740	636	-14%
Homicide etc.	5	9	n/r
Attempted murder & serious assault	361	226	-37%
Robbery	136	139	2%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	126	109	-13%
Other violence	112	153	37%
Sexual crimes	1,055	781	-26%
Rape & attempted rape	184	134	-27%
Sexual assault	406	220	-46%
Crimes associated with prostitution	4	2	n/r
Other sexual crimes	461	425	-8%
Crimes of dishonesty	9,459	7,177	-24%
Housebreaking	1,045	965	-8%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	138	83	-40%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	264	265	0%
Theft of a motor vehicle	407	397	-2%
Shoplifting	2,826	1,417	-50%
Other theft	3,550	2,515	-29%
Fraud	791	1,089	38%
Other dishonesty	438	446	2%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	4,233	3,148	-26%
Fire-raising	243	211	-13%
Vandalism etc.	3,990	2,937	-26%
Other crimes	5,507	5,429	-1%
Crimes against public justice	1,581	1,858	18%
Handling offensive weapons	865	837	-3%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	409	448	10%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	456	389	-15%
Drugs	3,041	2,718	-11%
Other	20	16	-20%

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 below for more information.

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

Crime group	April		% Change since April 2019
	2019	2020	
Total offences	21,644	15,449	-29%
Miscellaneous offences	11,047	9,306	-16%
Common assault	4,834	3,678	-24%
Breach of the peace etc.	4,356	3,890	-11%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	538	529	-2%
Urinating etc.	214	47	-78%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,105	1,162	5%
Motor vehicle offences	10,597	6,143	-42%
Dangerous and careless driving	954	698	-27%
Driving under the influence	507	604	19%
Speeding	2,855	501	-82%
Unlawful use of vehicle	3,176	2,747	-14%
Vehicle defect offences	615	270	-56%
Seat belt offences	284	84	-70%
Mobile phone offences	255	95	-63%
Other motor vehicle offences	1,951	1,144	-41%

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

	April		Change since April 2019
	2019	2020	
Aberdeen City	951	847	-11%
Aberdeenshire	607	386	-36%
Angus	251	182	-27%
Argyll & Bute	196	186	-5%
Clackmannanshire	158	158	0%
Dumfries & Galloway	559	431	-23%
Dundee City	831	690	-17%
East Ayrshire	482	403	-16%
East Dunbartonshire	221	201	-9%
East Lothian	305	290	-5%
East Renfrewshire	196	149	-24%
Edinburgh City	2,598	1,995	-23%
Falkirk	607	524	-14%
Fife	1,149	937	-18%
Glasgow City	3,641	2,939	-19%
Highland	614	574	-7%
Inverclyde	289	255	-12%
Midlothian	342	254	-26%
Moray	223	145	-35%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	42	61	45%
North Ayrshire	516	488	-5%
North Lanarkshire	1,652	1,304	-21%
Orkney Islands	26	18	-31%
Perth & Kinross	394	319	-19%
Renfrewshire	689	577	-16%
Scottish Borders	328	258	-21%
Shetland Islands	54	18	-67%
South Ayrshire	430	331	-23%
South Lanarkshire	1,244	1,097	-12%
Stirling	301	217	-28%
West Dunbartonshire	433	288	-33%
West Lothian	665	649	-2%
Scotland¹	20,994	17,171	-18%

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 below for more information.

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 May 2020, will be published on 25th June. 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 May 2020. The information for April 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 April 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.

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.

Correspondence and enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Mark Bell

Justice Analytical Services,

Telephone: 0131 244 5459,

e-mail: Justice_Analysts@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

e-mail: 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.
- some limited additional information may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact 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.

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