



CRIME AND JUSTICE

Recorded Crime in Scotland: September 2020

This Official Statistics bulletin presents information on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland during September 2020. It also includes a comparison with the equivalent month of the previous year.

These Official Statistics were introduced from April 2020 to inform users about the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Whilst the restrictions put in place to limit the spread of the virus will have had an 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, which existed prior to the pandemic, may remain a factor.

We originally planned to ask the Scottish Crime Recording Board (which oversees the production of Official Statistics on recorded crime in Scotland) to review in the autumn whether this monthly process should continue, including user feedback on the value of these statistics. However at this stage, given the increasing levels of the virus in Scotland, no changes are planned in the short term. As such, we will continue to publish these Official Statistics on a monthly basis and will consult with users when the above review takes place.

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 most recent update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, was published on 29th 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 4% lower in September 2020 than in September 2019, reducing from 20,405 to 19,684.

Over the same time period:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 17% lower (decreasing from 851 to 704 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 4% higher (increasing from 1,143 to 1,185 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 9% lower (reducing from 8,980 to 8,139 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. were 5% lower (reducing from 4,003 to 3,812 crimes).
- Other crimes were 8% higher (increasing from 5,428 to 5,844 crimes).
- 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 3% lower in September 2020 than in September 2019, decreasing from 20,686 to 20,050.

Over the same time period:

- Miscellaneous offences were 5% lower (decreasing from 11,036 to 10,469).
- Motor vehicle offences were 1% lower (reducing from 9,650 to 9,581).

Overall, the number of crimes recorded by the police between April and September 2020 was 7% lower than the same period in 2019. In April 2020 recorded crime was 18% lower than April 2019. For the most recent month - September 2020 - recorded crime was 4% lower than in September 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.

Main findings

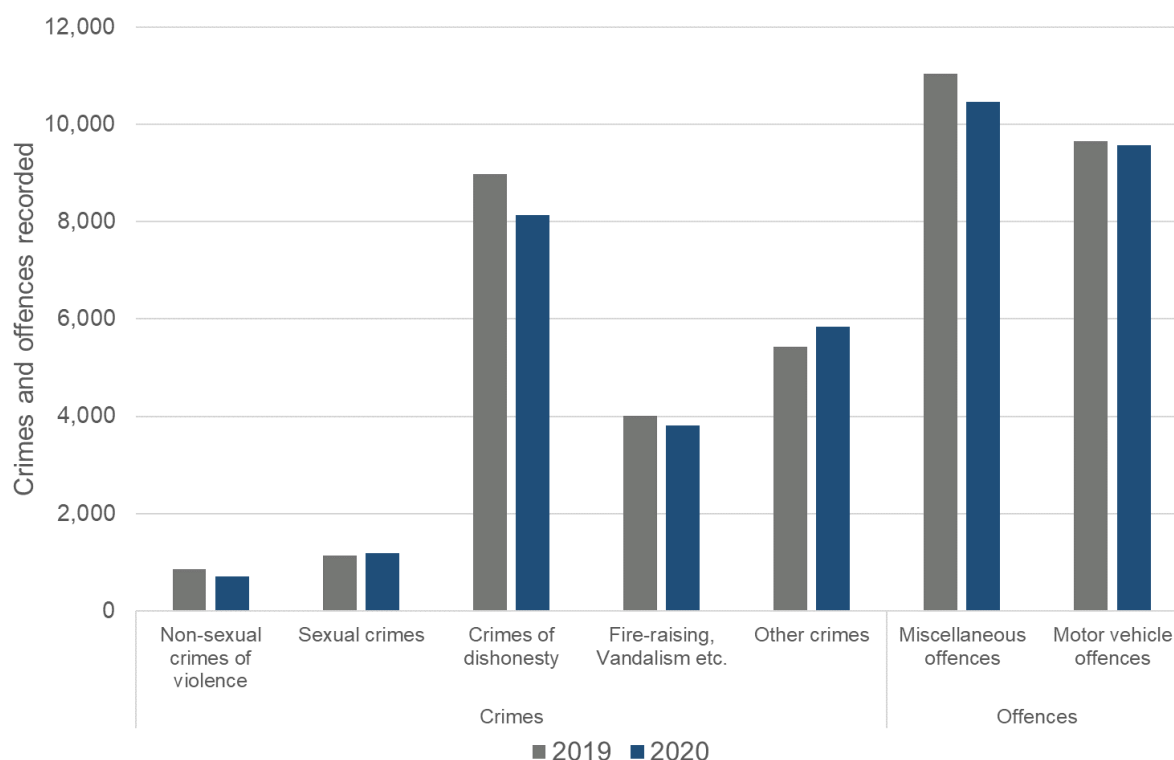
Crimes recorded by the police

In September 2020, the police recorded 19,684 crimes. This is 4% lower (or 721 crimes) than the 20,405 crimes recorded in the same month of 2019. There were variations in the year-on-year trends between different crime types. ([Table 1](#), [Chart 1](#)).

Between September 2019 and September 2020:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 17% lower (or 147 crimes), decreasing from 851 to 704 crimes. Most categories in this group experienced a decrease, with the exception of Homicide etc. which increased by 3 crimes. The most marked decrease was in the Attempted murder and serious assault category, which decreased by 81 crimes (22%), from 372 to 291. Crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act decreased by 30% (from 152 to 107 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 4% higher (or 42 crimes), increasing from 1,143 to 1,185 crimes. The main contributor to this increase by volume was Other sexual crimes, which increased by 11% (or 53 crimes), from 486 to 539.
- Crimes of dishonesty were 9% lower (or 841 crimes), reducing from 8,980 to 8,139 crimes. Most categories experienced a decrease, although there were increases in Fraud (an increase of 72% from 797 to 1,367 crimes) and Other dishonesty (an increase of 3% from 360 to 371 crimes). The [Changes in levels of recorded fraud](#) section below provides users with further background on what may be contributing to this change. The overall decrease was driven by decreases in Other theft (which decreased by 18% from 3,601 to 2,937 crimes), Shoplifting (which decreased by 17% from 2,360 to 1,948 crimes), and Housebreaking (which decreased by 19% from 1,065 to 858 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. decreased by 5%, from 4,003 to 3,812 crimes. Within this, crimes of Fire-raising increased by 11% from 208 to 231 crimes, and Vandalism etc. decreased by 6% from 3,795 crimes to 3,581 crimes.
- Other crimes were 8% higher (or 416 crimes), increasing from 5,428 to 5,844 crimes. The main contributor to this increase by volume was Crimes against public justice, which rose by 40% (or 604 crimes). Drugs crimes fell by 6%, or 196 crimes.

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



Offences recorded by the police

In September 2020, the police recorded 20,050 offences. This is 3% lower (or 636 offences) than the 20,686 offences recorded in the same month in 2019. There was a 5% decrease in Miscellaneous offences, and a 1% decrease in Motor vehicle offences, as detailed below ([Table 2](#)).

Between September 2019 and September 2020:

- Miscellaneous offences decreased by 5% (or 567 offences), from 11,036 to 10,469. Most categories experienced a decrease with the exception of Other miscellaneous offences, which experienced an increase of 17% from 1,065 to 1,241. The most prominent decreases by volume were in Common assault (which decreased by 9% from 4,989 to 4,533 offences), Urinating etc., which decreased by 56% and Breach of the peace etc. which decreased by 2%.
- Motor vehicle offences were 1% lower (or 69 offences), reducing from 9,650 to 9,581. The main contributors to this reduction were Speeding, which fell by 15% (or 347 offences) and Seat belt offences which decreased by 39% (or 96 offences). Unlawful use of a vehicle crimes increased by 9% (269 offences), and Driving under the influence increased by 28% or 142 offences.

Local Authorities

Compared to September 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 Shetland Islands (down 29%) and the largest increase was in Na h-Eileanan Siar (up 66%). 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 508 crimes), followed by Glasgow City (down 8% or 292 crimes) and Aberdeen City (down 11% or 106 crimes).

April to September 2020 compared with April to September 2019

Overall, in April to September 2020 the police recorded 118,204 crimes, a reduction of 7% (or 8,570 crimes) compared to the same period in 2019 (126,774 crimes) ([Table 4](#)). The biggest drivers of this reduction by volume were Shoplifting (down 36% or 5,754 crimes), Other theft (down 20% or 4,277), and Vandalism etc. (down 12% or 2,856 crimes). Crimes against public justice saw the biggest increase over this period, growing by 35% (or 3,440 crimes) from 9,764 to 13,204 crimes. Fraud was also higher, increasing by 61% (or 3,165 crimes) from 5,162 to 8,327.

Over the same period, the number of offences recorded by the police was 7% lower (or 8,551 offences), with Miscellaneous offences decreasing by 1% (or 719 offences) and Motor vehicle offences falling by 13% (or 7,832 offences) ([Table 5](#)).

Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 72% higher (or 570 crimes) in September 2020 than in September 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 73% between 2014-15 and 2019-20), 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 coronavirus legislation such as 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 189 such crimes were recorded during September 2020. This month's figure is higher than the previous month but considerably lower than April (see Table A below). Users should treat these figures as broadly indicative, and may be subject to further revision in future releases. In due course the annual National Statistics will include this activity within the overall crime total for Scotland.

Table A: Number of crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation, April to September 2020

Month	Number of crimes recorded
April	2,741
May	1,654
June	219
July	17
August	21
September	189

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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, 2, 4 and 5 can be accessed at local authority level online via the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-235-3>

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

Crime group	September		% Change since September 2019
	2019	2020	
Total crimes¹	20,405	19,684	-4%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	851	704	-17%
Homicide etc.	8	11	n/r
Attempted murder & serious assault	372	291	-22%
Robbery	148	132	-11%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	152	107	-30%
Other violence	171	163	-5%
Sexual crimes	1,143	1,185	4%
Rape & attempted rape	224	232	4%
Sexual assault	412	411	0%
Crimes associated with prostitution	21	3	-86%
Other sexual crimes	486	539	11%
Crimes of dishonesty	8,980	8,139	-9%
Housebreaking	1,065	858	-19%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	151	116	-23%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	210	166	-21%
Theft of a motor vehicle	436	376	-14%
Shoplifting	2,360	1,948	-17%
Other theft	3,601	2,937	-18%
Fraud	797	1,367	72%
Other dishonesty	360	371	3%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	4,003	3,812	-5%
Fire-raising	208	231	11%
Vandalism etc.	3,795	3,581	-6%
Other crimes	5,428	5,844	8%
Crimes against public justice	1,524	2,128	40%
Handling offensive weapons	866	879	2%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	436	397	-9%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	430	482	12%
Drugs	3,018	2,822	-6%
Other	20	15	-25%

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, September 2019 and September 2020

Crime group	September		% Change since September 2019
	2019	2020	
Total offences	20,686	20,050	-3%
Miscellaneous offences	11,036	10,469	-5%
Common assault	4,989	4,533	-9%
Breach of the peace etc.	4,263	4,163	-2%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	502	437	-13%
Urinating etc.	217	95	-56%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,065	1,241	17%
Motor vehicle offences	9,650	9,581	-1%
Dangerous and careless driving	951	1,017	7%
Driving under the influence	514	656	28%
Speeding	2,326	1,979	-15%
Unlawful use of vehicle	2,972	3,241	9%
Vehicle defect offences	542	542	0%
Seat belt offences	244	148	-39%
Mobile phone offences	220	169	-23%
Other motor vehicle offences	1,881	1,829	-3%

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

	September		Change since September 2019
	2019	2020	
Aberdeen City	967	861	-11%
Aberdeenshire	505	498	-1%
Angus	291	286	-2%
Argyll & Bute	218	196	-10%
Clackmannanshire	276	237	-14%
Dumfries & Galloway	473	481	2%
Dundee City	799	936	17%
East Ayrshire	386	551	43%
East Dunbartonshire	221	230	4%
East Lothian	385	297	-23%
East Renfrewshire	219	163	-26%
Edinburgh City	2,523	2,015	-20%
Falkirk	552	570	3%
Fife	1,145	1,207	5%
Glasgow City	3,662	3,370	-8%
Highland	579	602	4%
Inverclyde	297	309	4%
Midlothian	342	268	-22%
Moray	240	199	-17%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	35	58	66%
North Ayrshire	476	546	15%
North Lanarkshire	1,441	1,391	-3%
Orkney Islands	40	31	-23%
Perth & Kinross	401	443	10%
Renfrewshire	618	677	10%
Scottish Borders	305	266	-13%
Shetland Islands	34	24	-29%
South Ayrshire	450	413	-8%
South Lanarkshire	1,217	1,192	-2%
Stirling	259	346	34%
West Dunbartonshire	385	364	-5%
West Lothian	664	657	-1%
Scotland¹	20,405	19,684	-4%

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 September 2019 and April to September 2020

Crime group	April to September 2019	April to September 2020	% Change since 2019
Total crimes¹	126,774	118,204	-7%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	4,798	4,461	-7%
Homicide etc.	67	50	-25%
Attempted murder & serious assault	2,248	1,868	-17%
Robbery	828	862	4%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	861	747	-13%
Other violence	794	934	18%
Sexual crimes	6,846	6,386	-7%
Rape & attempted rape	1,237	1,132	-8%
Sexual assault	2,590	1,990	-23%
Crimes associated with prostitution	47	19	-60%
Other sexual crimes	2,972	3,245	9%
Crimes of dishonesty	56,769	48,220	-15%
Housebreaking	6,398	5,329	-17%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	895	616	-31%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	1,419	1,167	-18%
Theft of a motor vehicle	2,501	2,242	-10%
Shoplifting	16,189	10,435	-36%
Other theft	21,826	17,549	-20%
Fraud	5,162	8,327	61%
Other dishonesty	2,379	2,555	7%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	24,436	21,516	-12%
Fire-raising	1,391	1,327	-5%
Vandalism etc.	23,045	20,189	-12%
Other crimes	33,925	37,621	11%
Crimes against public justice	9,764	13,204	35%
Handling offensive weapons	5,092	5,527	9%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	2,348	2,550	9%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	2,744	2,977	8%
Drugs	18,960	18,814	-1%
Other	109	76	-30%

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 September 2019 and April to September 2020

Crime group	April to September 2019	April to September 2020	% Change since 2019
Total offences	130,465	121,914	-7%
Miscellaneous offences	67,953	67,234	-1%
Common assault	29,876	27,155	-9%
Breach of the peace etc.	26,757	27,469	3%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	3,411	3,696	8%
Urinating etc.	1,250	594	-52%
Other miscellaneous offences	6,659	8,320	25%
Motor vehicle offences	62,512	54,680	-13%
Dangerous and careless driving	5,819	5,861	1%
Driving under the influence	3,102	4,395	42%
Speeding	16,095	10,690	-34%
Unlawful use of vehicle	19,064	18,966	-1%
Vehicle defect offences	3,586	3,248	-9%
Seat belt offences	1,784	1,073	-40%
Mobile phone offences	1,404	985	-30%
Other motor vehicle offences	11,658	9,462	-19%

Annexes

Annex 1: Background

As outlined on page one, these 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](#).

We originally planned to ask the Scottish Crime Recording Board (which oversees the production of Official Statistics on recorded crime in Scotland) to review in the autumn whether this monthly process should continue, including user feedback on the value of these statistics. However at this stage, given the increasing levels of the virus in Scotland, no changes are planned in the short term. As such, we will continue to publish these Official Statistics on a monthly basis and will consult with users when the above review takes place.

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 most recent update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, was published on 29th 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.

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 has been carried

out. This involved 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 due course.

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 October 2020. The information for September 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 September 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.

The annual National Statistics for 2019-20 and 2020-21 (when published) 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-2019-2020/>

Annex 3: Feedback

We are always keen to hear users' views on our products and as this a new series of monthly recorded crime publications we would welcome feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions please contact us at:

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An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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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.

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