

CRIME AND JUSTICE

Recorded Crime in Scotland:

January 2021

This Official Statistics bulletin presents information on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland during January 2021. 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.

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 2020.

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 12% lower in January 2021 than in January 2020, decreasing from 19,054 to 16,813.

Over the same time period:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 9% lower (decreasing from 736 to 672 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 22% lower (decreasing from 1,107 to 861 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 21% lower (reducing from 8,658 to 6,811 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. was 20% lower (reducing from 3,964 to 3,176 crimes).
- Other crimes were 15% higher (increasing from 4,589 to 5,293 crimes).
- Fewer crimes were recorded by the police in 24 (75%) out of 32 local authorities.

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland was 16% lower in January 2021 than in January 2020, decreasing from 19,758 to 16,626.

Over the same time period:

- Miscellaneous offences were 12% lower (decreasing from 9,541 to 8,443).
- Motor vehicle offences were 20% lower (decreasing from 10,217 to 8,183).

Overall, the number of crimes recorded by the police between April 2020 and January 2021 was 6% lower than the same period in the previous year. In April 2020 recorded crime was 18% lower than April 2019. For the most recent month – January 2021 - recorded crime was 12% lower than in January 2020. 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

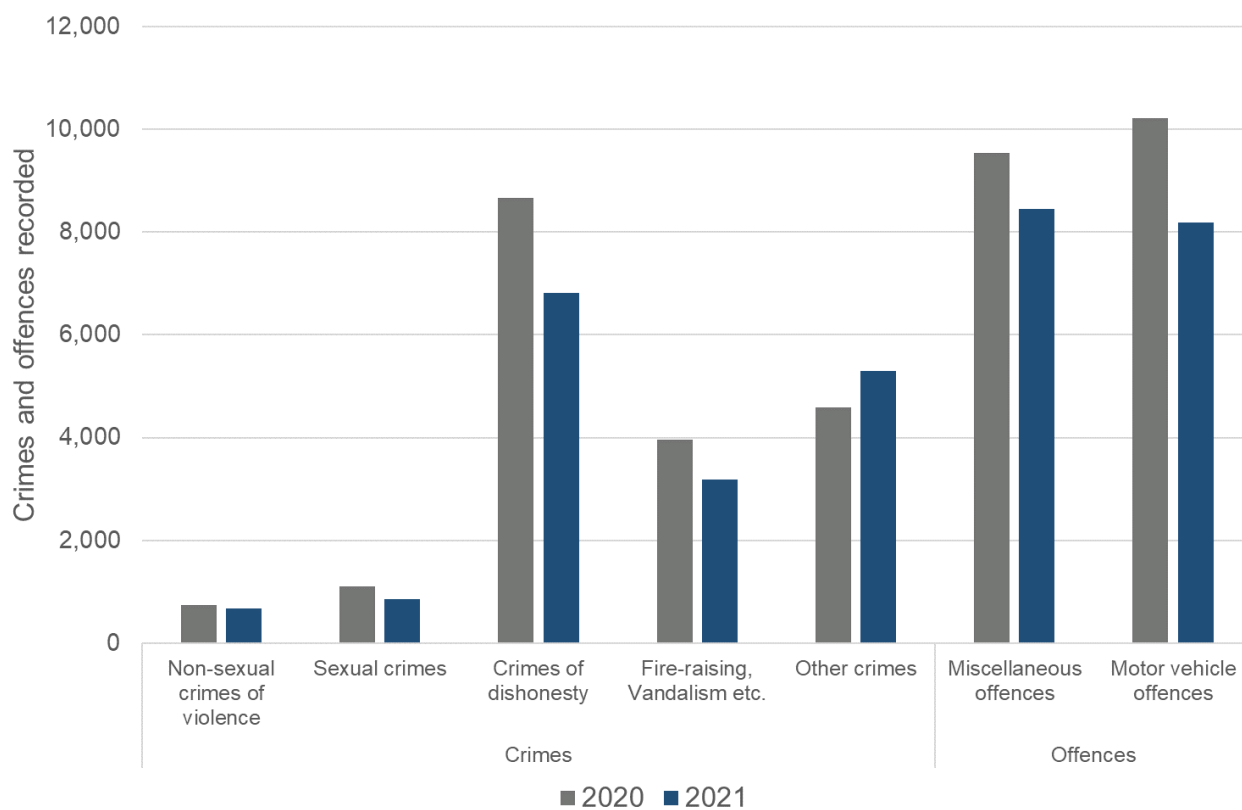
Crimes recorded by the police

In January 2021, the police recorded 16,813 crimes. This is 12% lower (or 2,241 crimes) than the 19,054 crimes recorded in the same month of 2020. There were variations in the year-on-year trends between different crime types. ([Table 1](#), [Chart 1](#)).

Between January 2020 and January 2021:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 9% lower (or 64 crimes), decreasing from 736 to 672. The most marked decrease was in Attempted murder and serious assault, which decreased by 75 crimes (26%), from 291 to 216. All crime categories decreased with the exception of Other violence, which increased by 89 crimes (68%), from 130 to 219.
- Sexual crimes were 22% lower (or 246 crimes), decreasing from 1,107 to 861 crimes. The main contributor to this decrease by volume was Sexual assault, which decreased by 36% (or 146 crimes), from 405 to 259.
- Crimes of dishonesty were 21% lower (or 1,847 crimes), decreasing from 8,658 to 6,811 crimes. All categories experienced a decrease with the exception of Fraud (which increased by 60%, from 969 to 1,555 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 in Crimes of dishonesty was driven by decreases in Shoplifting (which decreased by 38% from 2,205 to 1,366 crimes), Other theft (which decreased by 25% from 3,054 to 2,292 crimes) and Housebreaking (which decreased by 37% from 1,142 to 717 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. was 20% lower (or 788 crimes), decreasing from 3,964 to 3,176 crimes. Within this, crimes of Fire-raising decreased by 3% from 179 to 174 crimes, and Vandalism etc. decreased by 21% from 3,785 crimes to 3,002 crimes.
- Other crimes were 15% higher (or 704 crimes), increasing from 4,589 to 5,293 crimes. The main contributors to this increase by volume were Crimes against public justice (which rose by 32%, from 1,535 to 2,029 crimes), and Drugs (which rose by 13%, from 2,330 to 2,628 crimes).

Chart 1. Crimes and offences recorded by the police, by crime group, January 2021 compared with January 2020



Offences recorded by the police

In January 2021, the police recorded 16,626 offences. This is 16% lower (or 3,132 offences) than the 19,758 offences recorded in the same month in 2020. There was a 12% decrease in Miscellaneous offences, and a 20% decrease in Motor vehicle offences, as detailed below ([Table 2](#)).

Between January 2020 and January 2021:

- Miscellaneous offences were 12% lower (or 1,098 offences), decreasing from 9,541 to 8,443 offences. All categories experienced a decrease with the exception of Other miscellaneous offences which increased by 13% (from 1,029 to 1,159 offences). The most prominent decreases were in Common assault (which decreased by 15%, from 4,381 to 3,723 offences) and Breach of the peace etc. which decreased by 10% (from 3,748 to 3,381 offences)
- Motor vehicle offences were 20% lower (or 2,034 offences), decreasing from 10,217 to 8,183 offences. The main contributor to this decrease was Speeding, which fell by 44% (from 2,369 to 1,336 offences).

Local Authorities

Compared to January 2020, a decrease in recorded crime was seen in 24 (75%) out of 32 local authorities, with 8 showing an increase ([Table 3](#)). The largest increase was seen in Na h-Eileanan Siar (up 56%) and the largest decrease was in the Shetland Islands (down 47%). 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 decrease in crimes recorded by the police were Glasgow City (down 22%, or 717 crimes) and Edinburgh City (down 21%, or 526 crimes).

April 2019 to January 2020 compared with April 2020 to January 2021

Overall, in April 2020 to January 2021 the police recorded 193,375 crimes, a reduction of 6% (or 13,192 crimes) compared to the same period the previous year (206,567 crimes) ([Table 4](#)). The biggest drivers of this reduction by volume were Shoplifting (down 33%, or 8,429 crimes), Other theft (down 19%, or 6,515 crimes), and Vandalism etc. (down 12%, or 4,613 crimes). Fraud saw the biggest increase over this period (up 63%, or 5,614 crimes), followed by Crimes against public justice (up 32%, or 5,142 crimes).

Over the same period, the number of offences recorded by the police was 7% lower (or 15,204 offences), with Miscellaneous offences decreasing by 4% (or 4,204 offences) and Motor vehicle offences decreasing by 11% (or 11,000 offences) ([Table 5](#)).

Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 60% higher (or 586 crimes) in January 2021 than in January 2020. 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 3,473 such crimes were recorded during January 2021. This month's figure is the highest recorded (see Table A below). This may in part be due to increased levels of enforcement due to the tightening of restrictions from the beginning of 2021. 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 2020 to January 2021

Month	Number of crimes recorded
2020	
April	2,741
May	1,654
June	219
July	17
August	21
September	189
October	588
November	1,811
December	1,540
2021	
January	3,473

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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: [Recorded crime in Scotland: January 2021](#)

Table 1: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, January 2020 and January 2021

Crime group	January		% Change since January 2020
	2020	2021	
Total crimes¹	19,054	16,813	-12%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	736	672	-9%
Homicide etc.	13	3	-77%
Attempted murder & serious assault	291	216	-26%
Robbery	149	110	-26%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	153	124	-19%
Other violence	130	219	68%
Sexual crimes	1,107	861	-22%
Rape & attempted rape	174	145	-17%
Sexual assault	405	259	-36%
Crimes associated with prostitution	3	3	n/r
Other sexual crimes	525	454	-14%
Crimes of dishonesty	8,658	6,811	-21%
Housebreaking	1,142	717	-37%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	153	69	-55%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	311	131	-58%
Theft of a motor vehicle	414	349	-16%
Shoplifting	2,205	1,366	-38%
Other theft	3,054	2,292	-25%
Fraud	969	1,555	60%
Other dishonesty	410	332	-19%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	3,964	3,176	-20%
Fire-raising	179	174	-3%
Vandalism etc.	3,785	3,002	-21%
Other crimes	4,589	5,293	15%
Crimes against public justice	1,535	2,029	32%
Handling offensive weapons	712	626	-12%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	355	307	-14%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	357	319	-11%
Drugs	2,330	2,628	13%
Other	12	10	-17%

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, January 2020 and January 2021

Crime group	January		% Change since January 2020
	2020	2021	
Total offences¹	19,758	16,626	-16%
Miscellaneous offences	9,541	8,443	-12%
Common assault	4,381	3,723	-15%
Breach of the peace etc.	3,748	3,381	-10%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	242	160	-34%
Urinating etc.	141	20	-86%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,029	1,159	13%
Motor vehicle offences	10,217	8,183	-20%
Dangerous and careless driving	948	774	-18%
Driving under the influence	562	599	7%
Speeding	2,369	1,336	-44%
Unlawful use of vehicle	3,546	3,496	-1%
Vehicle defect offences	614	444	-28%
Seat belt offences	119	66	-45%
Mobile phone offences	128	57	-55%
Other motor vehicle offences	1,931	1,411	-27%

Table 3: Crimes recorded by the police by local authority, Scotland, January 2020 and January 2021

	January		Change since January 2020
	2020	2021	
Aberdeen City	904	888	-2%
Aberdeenshire	517	520	1%
Angus	231	272	18%
Argyll & Bute	162	149	-8%
Clackmannanshire	180	177	-2%
Dumfries & Galloway	536	435	-19%
Dundee City	753	697	-7%
East Ayrshire	412	381	-8%
East Dunbartonshire	283	191	-33%
East Lothian	304	300	-1%
East Renfrewshire	162	133	-18%
Edinburgh City	2,475	1,949	-21%
Falkirk	525	514	-2%
Fife	1,079	1,012	-6%
Glasgow City	3,198	2,481	-22%
Highland	580	475	-18%
Inverclyde	305	269	-12%
Midlothian	310	286	-8%
Moray	198	200	1%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	27	42	56%
North Ayrshire	502	441	-12%
North Lanarkshire	1,361	1,213	-11%
Orkney Islands	27	32	19%
Perth & Kinross	311	337	8%
Renfrewshire	679	605	-11%
Scottish Borders	281	274	-2%
Shetland Islands	38	20	-47%
South Ayrshire	326	351	8%
South Lanarkshire	1,125	1,018	-10%
Stirling	222	258	16%
West Dunbartonshire	371	331	-11%
West Lothian	670	562	-16%
Scotland¹	19,054	16,813	-12%

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 2019 to January 2020 and April 2020 to January 2021

Crime group	April 2019 to January 2020	April 2020 to January 2021	% Change since previous year
Total crimes¹	206,567	193,375	-6%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	7,927	7,349	-7%
Homicide etc.	107	78	-27%
Attempted murder & serious assault	3,551	2,897	-18%
Robbery	1,428	1,410	-1%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	1,453	1,291	-11%
Other violence	1,388	1,673	21%
Sexual crimes	11,266	10,330	-8%
Rape & attempted rape	2,023	1,821	-10%
Sexual assault	4,208	3,248	-23%
Crimes associated with prostitution	74	39	-47%
Other sexual crimes	4,961	5,222	5%
Crimes of dishonesty	92,375	79,615	-14%
Housebreaking	10,666	8,623	-19%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	1,481	1,010	-32%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	2,376	1,812	-24%
Theft of a motor vehicle	4,108	3,721	-9%
Shoplifting	25,920	17,491	-33%
Other theft	34,987	28,472	-19%
Fraud	8,848	14,462	63%
Other dishonesty	3,989	4,024	1%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	40,613	35,936	-12%
Fire-raising	2,271	2,207	-3%
Vandalism etc.	38,342	33,729	-12%
Other crimes	54,386	60,145	11%
Crimes against public justice	16,255	21,397	32%
Handling offensive weapons	8,125	8,501	5%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	3,763	3,946	5%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	4,362	4,555	4%
Drugs	29,833	30,109	1%
Other	173	138	-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](#) for more information.

Table 5: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, April 2019 to January 2020 and April 2020 to January 2021

Crime group	April 2019 to January 2020	April 2020 to January 2021	% Change since previous year
Total offences¹	211,797	196,593	-7%
Miscellaneous offences	109,389	105,185	-4%
Common assault	48,855	43,835	-10%
Breach of the peace etc.	42,910	42,404	-1%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	4,682	4,890	4%
Urinating etc.	1,963	737	-62%
Other miscellaneous offences	10,979	13,319	21%
Motor vehicle offences	102,408	91,408	-11%
Dangerous and careless driving	9,721	9,444	-3%
Driving under the influence	5,488	6,960	27%
Speeding	24,670	17,486	-29%
Unlawful use of vehicle	32,520	33,160	2%
Vehicle defect offences	5,892	5,257	-11%
Seat belt offences	2,381	1,448	-39%
Mobile phone offences	2,015	1,361	-32%
Other motor vehicle offences	19,721	16,292	-17%

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](#).

Scottish Government statisticians will continue to publish these bulletins each month. In due course, 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 most recent update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, was published on 29th September 2020. 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 February 2021. The information for January 2020 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 January 2021 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 years, 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 is 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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