

CRIME AND JUSTICE

Recorded Crime in Scotland: February 2021

This Official Statistics bulletin presents information on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland during February 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 16% lower in February 2021 than in February 2020, decreasing from 18,992 to 15,979¹.

Over the same time period:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 6% lower (decreasing from 694 to 653 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 9% lower (decreasing from 1,124 to 1,020 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 28% lower (reducing from 8,843 to 6,405 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. were 17% lower (reducing from 3,656 to 3,019 crimes).
- Other crimes were 4% higher (increasing from 4,675 to 4,882 crimes).
- Fewer crimes were recorded by the police in 26 (81%) out of 32 local authorities.

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland was 20% lower in February 2021 than in February 2020, decreasing from 19,222 to 15,352.

Over the same time period:

- Miscellaneous offences were 21% lower (decreasing from 9,528 to 7,540).
- Motor vehicle offences were 19% lower (decreasing from 9,694 to 7,812).

Overall, the number of crimes recorded by the police between April 2020 and February 2021 was 7% 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 – February 2021 - recorded crime was 16% lower than in February 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.

¹ It should be noted that in 2021 February had 28 days compared to 29 in 2020

Main findings

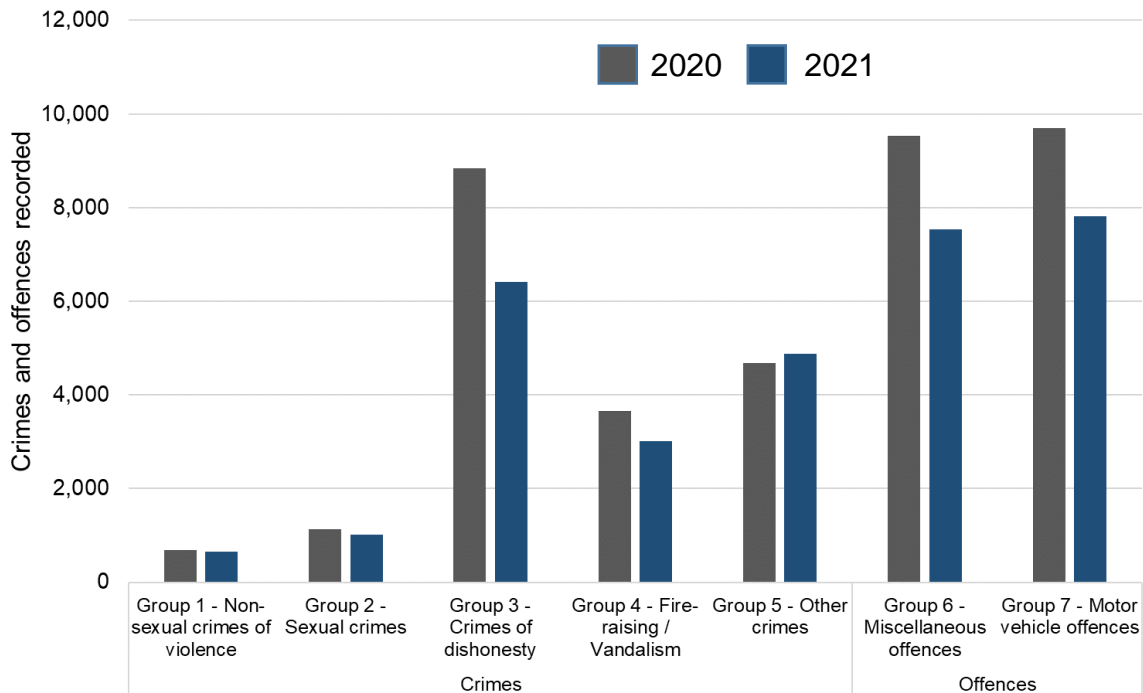
Crimes recorded by the police

In February 2021, the police recorded 15,979 crimes. This is 16% lower (or 3,013 crimes) than the 18,992 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 February 2020 and February 2021:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 6% lower (or 64 crimes), decreasing from 694 to 653. The most marked decrease was in Attempted murder and serious assault, which decreased by 101 crimes (34%), from 295 to 194. Crimes of Other violence increased by 71 crimes (56%), from 127 to 198.
- Sexual crimes were 9% lower (or 104 crimes), decreasing from 1,124 to 1,020 crimes. The main contributor to this decrease by volume was Sexual assault, which decreased by 25% (or 103 crimes), from 418 to 315.
- Crimes of dishonesty were 28% lower (or 2,438 crimes), decreasing from 8,843 to 6,405 crimes. All categories experienced a decrease with the exception of Fraud (which increased by 45%, from 1,099 to 1,592 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 48% from 2,505 to 1,299 crimes), Other theft (which decreased by 29% from 2,952 to 2,090 crimes) and Housebreaking (which decreased by 42% from 1,061 to 612 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. was 17% lower (or 637 crimes), decreasing from 3,656 to 3,019 crimes. Within this, crimes of Fire-raising decreased by 7% from 181 to 169 crimes, and Vandalism etc. decreased by 18% from 3,475 crimes to 2,850 crimes.
- Other crimes were 4% higher (or 207 crimes), increasing from 4,675 to 4,882 crimes. The main contributors to this increase by volume were Crimes against public justice (which rose by 15%, from 1,504 to 1,733 crimes), and Drugs (which rose by 9%, from 2,401 to 2,610 crimes).

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



Offences recorded by the police

In February 2021, the police recorded 15,352 offences. This is 20% lower (or 3,870 offences) than the 19,222 offences recorded in the same month in 2020. There was a 21% decrease in Miscellaneous offences, and a 19% decrease in Motor vehicle offences, as detailed below ([Table 2](#)).

Between February 2020 and February 2021:

- Miscellaneous offences were 21% lower (or 1,988 offences), decreasing from 9,528 to 7,540 offences. All categories experienced a decrease with the exception of Other miscellaneous offences which increased by 3% (from 1,081 to 1,112 offences). The most prominent decreases were in Common assault (which decreased by 28%, from 4,411 to 3,180 offences) and Breach of the peace etc. which decreased by 17% (from 3,631 to 3,018 offences).
- Motor vehicle offences were 19% lower (or 1,882 offences), decreasing from 9,694 to 7,812 offences. The main contributor to this decrease was Speeding, which fell by 34% (from 2,003 to 1,327 offences).

Local Authorities

Compared to February 2020, a decrease in recorded crime was seen in 26 (81%) out of 32 local authorities, with 6 showing an increase ([Table 3](#)). The largest increase was seen in Na h-Eileanan Siar (up 17%) and the largest decrease was in the Moray (down 35%). 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 24%, or 781 crimes) and Edinburgh City (down 30%, or 703 crimes).

April 2019 to February 2020 compared with April 2020 to February 2021

Overall, in April 2020 to February 2021 the police recorded 209,354 crimes, a reduction of 7% (or 16,205 crimes) compared to the same period the previous year (225,559 crimes) ([Table 4](#)). The biggest drivers of this reduction by volume were Shoplifting (down 34%, or 9,635 crimes), Other theft (down 19%, or 7,377 crimes), and Vandalism etc. (down 13%, or 5,238 crimes). Fraud saw the biggest increase over this period (up 61%, or 6,107 crimes), followed by Crimes against public justice (up 30%, or 5,371 crimes).

Over the same period, the number of offences recorded by the police was 8% lower (or 19,074 offences), with Miscellaneous offences decreasing by 5% (or 6,192 offences) and Motor vehicle offences decreasing by 11% (or 12,882 offences) ([Table 5](#)).

Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 45% higher (or 493 crimes) in February 2021 than in February 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 area², 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.

² <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 4,199 such crimes were recorded during February 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 February 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 |
| February | 4,199 |

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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: <https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-842-3>

Table 1: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, February 2020 to February 2021

| Crime group | February | | % Change since February 2020 |
|--|---------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| | 2020 | 2021 | |
| Total crimes¹ | 18,992 | 15,979 | -16% |
| Non-sexual crimes of violence | 694 | 653 | -6% |
| Homicide etc. | 5 | 10 | n/r |
| Attempted murder & serious assault | 295 | 194 | -34% |
| Robbery | 140 | 123 | -12% |
| Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 | 127 | 128 | 1% |
| Other violence | 127 | 198 | 56% |
| Sexual crimes | 1,124 | 1,020 | -9% |
| Rape & attempted rape | 186 | 163 | -12% |
| Sexual assault | 418 | 315 | -25% |
| Crimes associated with prostitution | 14 | 9 | -36% |
| Other sexual crimes | 506 | 533 | 5% |
| Crimes of dishonesty | 8,843 | 6,405 | -28% |
| Housebreaking | 1,061 | 612 | -42% |
| Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP) | 135 | 101 | -25% |
| Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP | 302 | 142 | -53% |
| Theft of a motor vehicle | 376 | 292 | -22% |
| Shoplifting | 2,505 | 1,299 | -48% |
| Other theft | 2,952 | 2,090 | -29% |
| Fraud | 1,099 | 1,592 | 45% |
| Other dishonesty | 413 | 277 | -33% |
| Fire-raising, vandalism etc. | 3,656 | 3,019 | -17% |
| Fire-raising | 181 | 169 | -7% |
| Vandalism etc. | 3,475 | 2,850 | -18% |
| Other crimes | 4,675 | 4,882 | 4% |
| Crimes against public justice | 1,504 | 1,733 | 15% |
| Handling offensive weapons | 746 | 530 | -29% |
| <i>Not used in other criminal activity</i> | 349 | 261 | -25% |
| <i>Used in other criminal activity</i> | 397 | 269 | -32% |
| Drugs | 2,401 | 2,610 | 9% |
| Other | 24 | 9 | -63% |

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, February 2020 and February 2021

| Crime group | February | | % Change since February 2020 |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| | 2020 | 2021 | |
| Total offences | 19,222 | 15,352 | -20% |
| Miscellaneous offences | 9,528 | 7,540 | -21% |
| Common assault | 4,411 | 3,180 | -28% |
| Breach of the peace etc. | 3,631 | 3,018 | -17% |
| Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct | 265 | 206 | -22% |
| Urinating etc. | 140 | 24 | -83% |
| Other miscellaneous offences | 1,081 | 1,112 | 3% |
| Motor vehicle offences | 9,694 | 7,812 | -19% |
| Dangerous and careless driving | 900 | 728 | -19% |
| Driving under the influence | 571 | 471 | -18% |
| Speeding | 2,003 | 1,327 | -34% |
| Unlawful use of vehicle | 3,483 | 3,300 | -5% |
| Vehicle defect offences | 595 | 438 | -26% |
| Seat belt offences | 133 | 84 | -37% |
| Mobile phone offences | 110 | 83 | -25% |
| Other motor vehicle offences | 1,899 | 1,381 | -27% |

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

| | February | | Change since |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2020 | 2021 | February 2020 |
| Aberdeen City | 920 | 820 | -11% |
| Aberdeenshire | 512 | 420 | -18% |
| Angus | 240 | 251 | 5% |
| Argyll & Bute | 198 | 138 | -30% |
| Clackmannanshire | 137 | 146 | 7% |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 453 | 492 | 9% |
| Dundee City | 737 | 591 | -20% |
| East Ayrshire | 477 | 407 | -15% |
| East Dunbartonshire | 235 | 173 | -26% |
| East Lothian | 289 | 297 | 3% |
| East Renfrewshire | 155 | 136 | -12% |
| Edinburgh City | 2,306 | 1,603 | -30% |
| Falkirk | 507 | 414 | -18% |
| Fife | 1,108 | 929 | -16% |
| Glasgow City | 3,283 | 2,502 | -24% |
| Highland | 622 | 516 | -17% |
| Inverclyde | 258 | 246 | -5% |
| Midlothian | 288 | 265 | -8% |
| Moray | 252 | 163 | -35% |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar | 30 | 35 | 17% |
| North Ayrshire | 507 | 500 | -1% |
| North Lanarkshire | 1,453 | 1,149 | -21% |
| Orkney Islands | 29 | 22 | -24% |
| Perth & Kinross | 346 | 345 | 0% |
| Renfrewshire | 555 | 582 | 5% |
| Scottish Borders | 263 | 256 | -3% |
| Shetland Islands | 48 | 45 | -6% |
| South Ayrshire | 350 | 333 | -5% |
| South Lanarkshire | 1,160 | 1,097 | -5% |
| Stirling | 269 | 235 | -13% |
| West Dunbartonshire | 417 | 366 | -12% |
| West Lothian | 588 | 505 | -14% |
| Scotland¹ | 18,992 | 15,979 | -16% |

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 February 2020 and April 2020 to February 2021

| Crime group | April 2019 to February 2020 | April 2020 to February 2021 | % Change since previous year |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total crimes¹ | 225,559 | 209,354 | -7% |
| Non-sexual crimes of violence | 8,621 | 8,002 | -7% |
| Homicide etc. | 112 | 88 | -21% |
| Attempted murder & serious assault | 3,846 | 3,091 | -20% |
| Robbery | 1,568 | 1,533 | -2% |
| Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 | 1,580 | 1,419 | -10% |
| Other violence | 1,515 | 1,871 | 23% |
| Sexual crimes | 12,390 | 11,350 | -8% |
| Rape & attempted rape | 2,209 | 1,984 | -10% |
| Sexual assault | 4,626 | 3,563 | -23% |
| Crimes associated with prostitution | 88 | 48 | -45% |
| Other sexual crimes | 5,467 | 5,755 | 5% |
| Crimes of dishonesty | 101,218 | 86,020 | -15% |
| Housebreaking | 11,727 | 9,235 | -21% |
| Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP) | 1,616 | 1,111 | -31% |
| Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP | 2,678 | 1,954 | -27% |
| Theft of a motor vehicle | 4,484 | 4,013 | -11% |
| Shoplifting | 28,425 | 18,790 | -34% |
| Other theft | 37,939 | 30,562 | -19% |
| Fraud | 9,947 | 16,054 | 61% |
| Other dishonesty | 4,402 | 4,301 | -2% |
| Fire-raising, vandalism etc. | 44,269 | 38,955 | -12% |
| Fire-raising | 2,452 | 2,376 | -3% |
| Vandalism etc. | 41,817 | 36,579 | -13% |
| Other crimes | 59,061 | 65,027 | 10% |
| Crimes against public justice | 17,759 | 23,130 | 30% |
| Handling offensive weapons | 8,871 | 9,031 | 2% |
| <i>Not used in other criminal activity</i> | 4,112 | 4,207 | 2% |
| <i>Used in other criminal activity</i> | 4,759 | 4,824 | 1% |
| Drugs | 32,234 | 32,719 | 2% |
| Other | 197 | 147 | -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](#) for more information.

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

| Crime group | April 2019 to February 2020 | April 2020 to February 2021 | % Change since previous year |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total offences | 231,019 | 211,945 | -8% |
| Miscellaneous offences | 118,917 | 112,725 | -5% |
| Common assault | 53,266 | 47,015 | -12% |
| Breach of the peace etc. | 46,541 | 45,422 | -2% |
| Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct | 4,947 | 5,096 | 3% |
| Urinating etc. | 2,103 | 761 | -64% |
| Other miscellaneous offences | 12,060 | 14,431 | 20% |
| Motor vehicle offences | 112,102 | 99,220 | -11% |
| Dangerous and careless driving | 10,621 | 10,172 | -4% |
| Driving under the influence | 6,059 | 7,431 | 23% |
| Speeding | 26,673 | 18,813 | -29% |
| Unlawful use of vehicle | 36,003 | 36,460 | 1% |
| Vehicle defect offences | 6,487 | 5,695 | -12% |
| Seat belt offences | 2,514 | 1,532 | -39% |
| Mobile phone offences | 2,125 | 1,444 | -32% |
| Other motor vehicle offences | 21,620 | 17,673 | -18% |

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 March 2021. The information for February 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 February 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:

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:

Debbie Kyle

Justice Analytical Services,

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.

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