

**CRIME AND JUSTICE****Recorded Crime in Scotland:****March 2021**

This Official Statistics bulletin presents information on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland during March 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 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The 2020-21 reporting year will be published in September 2021.

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 1% higher in March 2021 than in March 2020, increasing from 18,874 to 19,148. This month's bulletin is the first time that both the current month and the comparison month from the previous year have included periods of coronavirus restrictions.

Over the same time period:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 13% higher (increasing from 702 to 795 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 16% higher (increasing from 1,106 to 1,278 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 8% lower (reducing from 8,356 to 7,684 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. were 4% lower (reducing from 3,897 to 3,753 crimes).
- Other crimes were 17% higher (increasing from 4,813 to 5,638 crimes).
- More crimes were recorded by police in 22 (69%) out of 32 local authorities.

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland was 8% higher in March 2021 than in March 2020, increasing from 18,359 to 19,772.

Over the same time period:

- Miscellaneous offences remained relatively unchanged (increasing from 9,755 to 9,797).
- Motor vehicle offences were 16% higher (increasing from 8,604 to 9,975).

Overall, the number of crimes recorded by the police between April 2020 and March 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 – March 2021 - recorded crime was 1% higher than in March 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

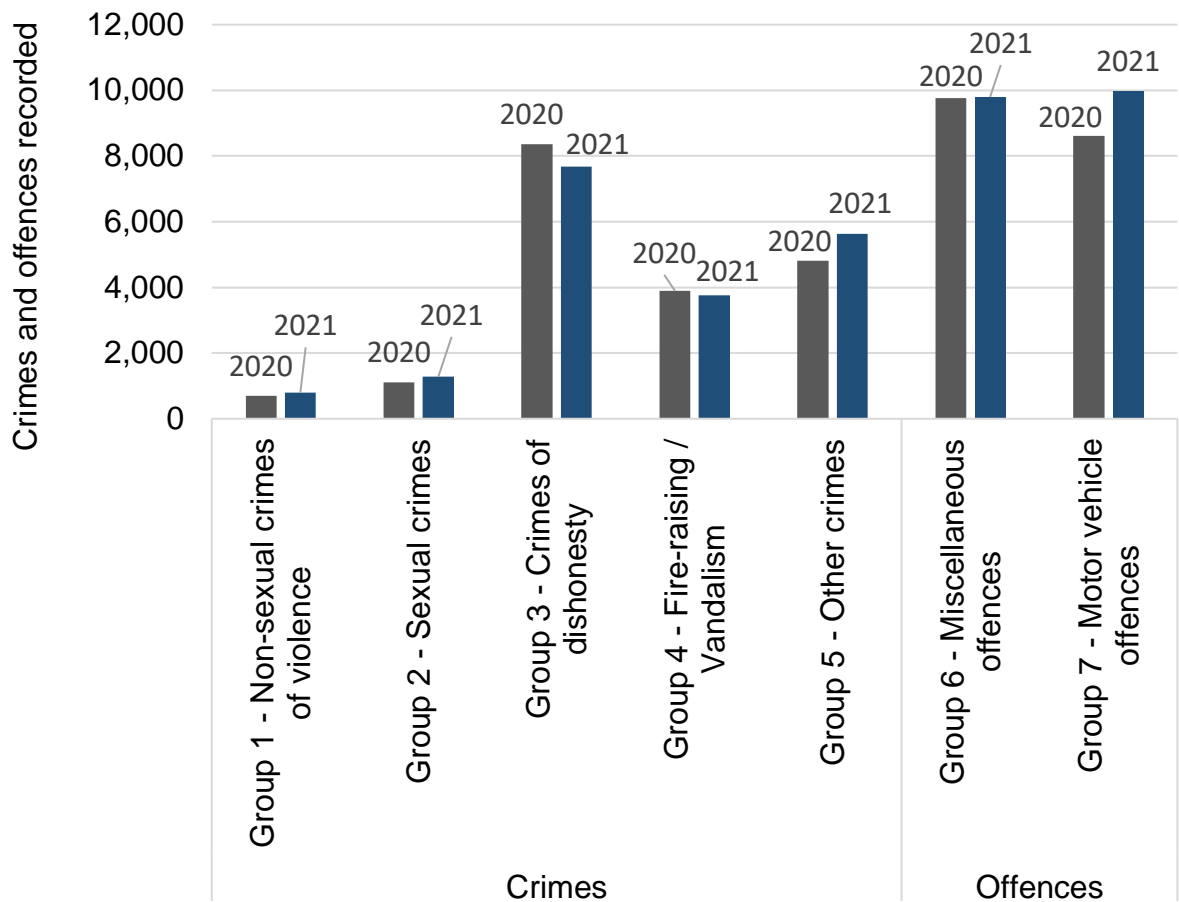
## Crimes recorded by the police

In March 2021, the police recorded 19,148 crimes. This is 1% higher (or 274 crimes) than the 18,874 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 March 2020 and March 2021:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 13% higher (or 93 crimes), increasing from 702 to 795. The most marked increase was in Other violence, which increased by 106 crimes (from 118 to 224). Crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act increased by 40 crimes (from 110 to 150). Attempted murder and Serious assault decreased by 13% (from 302 to 262), and Robbery decreased by 7% (from 163 to 152).
- Sexual crimes were 16% higher (or 172 crimes), increasing from 1,106 to 1,278 crimes. The main contributor to this increase by volume was Other sexual crimes, which increased by 111 crimes (from 563 to 674). Rape and attempted rape also increased, from 152 to 225 crimes.
- Crimes of dishonesty were 8% lower (or 672 crimes), decreasing from 8,356 to 7,684 crimes. Most categories experienced a decrease with the notable exception of Fraud (which increased by 75%, from 1,010 to 1,764 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 Housebreaking (which decreased by 41% from 1,128 to 661 crimes) and Shoplifting (which decreased by 21% from 2,147 to 1,706 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. were 4% lower (or 144 crimes), decreasing from 3,897 to 3,753 crimes. This decrease was driven by crimes of Vandalism etc., which decreased by 5% from 3,711 crimes to 3,533 crimes.
- Other crimes were 17% higher (or 825 crimes), increasing from 4,813 to 5,638 crimes. The main contributors to this increase by volume were Crimes against public justice (which rose by 38%, from 1,520 to 2,094 crimes), and Drugs (which rose by 14%, from 2,480 to 2,822 crimes).

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



### Offences recorded by the police

In March 2021, the police recorded 19,772 offences. This is 8% higher (or 1,413 offences) than the 18,359 offences recorded in the same month in 2020. Miscellaneous offences remained relatively unchanged, whilst Motor vehicle offences increased by 16%, as detailed below ([Table 2](#)).

Between March 2020 and March 2021:

- Miscellaneous offences remained relatively unchanged, increasing slightly from 9,755 to 9,797 offences. The most prominent decrease was in Common assault (which decreased by 9% from 4,449 to 4,066 offences). The largest increase was in Other miscellaneous offences, which increased by 39% from 990 to 1,372 offences.
- Motor vehicle offences were 16% higher (or 1,371 offences), increasing from 8,604 to 9,975 offences. The main contributors to this increase were offences of Speeding (which increased by 30% from 1,758 to 2,294 offences) and Unlawful use of a vehicle (which increased by 25% from 3,084 to 3,849 offences).

## Local Authorities

Compared to March 2020, an increase in recorded crime was seen in 22 (69%) out of 32 local authorities, with 10 showing a decrease ([Table 3](#)). The largest increase was seen in the Shetland Islands (up 89%) and the largest decrease was in West Lothian (down 14%). 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 increase in crimes recorded by the police were Aberdeen City (up 26%, or 230 crimes), Dundee City (up 17%, or 125 crimes) and Aberdeenshire (up 28%, or 121 crimes).

## April 2019 to March 2020 compared with April 2020 to March 2021

Overall, in April 2020 to March 2021 the police recorded 228,502 crimes, a reduction of 7% (or 15,931 crimes) compared to the equivalent period of the previous year (244,433 crimes) ([Table 4](#)). The biggest drivers of this reduction by volume were Shoplifting (down 33%, or 10,076 crimes), Other theft (down 19%, or 7,654 crimes), and Vandalism etc. (down 12%, or 5,416 crimes). Fraud saw the biggest increase over this period (up 63%, or 6,861 crimes), followed by Crimes against public justice (up 31%, or 5,945 crimes).

Over the same period, the number of offences recorded by the police was also 7% lower (or 17,661 offences), with Miscellaneous offences decreasing by 5% (or 6,150 offences) and Motor vehicle offences decreasing by 10% (or 11,511 offences) ([Table 5](#)).

## Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 75% higher (or 754 crimes) in March 2021 than in March 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 area<sup>1</sup>, the Scottish Crime Recording Board approved a change so that from the 1st April these crimes are now included in the statistics. It should be noted that those cases with only a suspicion or insufficient evidence to confirm that the perpetrator was outside the UK were always included.

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

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

## Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation

It is important to note that these Official Statistics currently exclude crimes recorded under 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 3,573 such crimes were recorded during March 2021. This month's figure is lower than the previous month but is the second 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 March 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
March	3,573



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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: March 2021](#)

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

Crime group	March 2020	March 2021	% change since March 2020
<b>Total crimes</b>	<b>18,874</b>	<b>19,148</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Non-sexual crimes of violence</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>13%</b>
Homicide etc.	9	7	n/r
Attempted murder & serious assault	302	262	-13%
Robbery	163	152	-7%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	110	150	36%
Other violence	118	224	90%
<b>Sexual crimes</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>16%</b>
Rape & attempted rape	152	225	48%
Sexual assault	383	373	-3%
Crimes associated with prostitution	8	6	n/r
Other sexual crimes	563	674	20%
<b>Crimes of dishonesty</b>	<b>8,356</b>	<b>7,684</b>	<b>-8%</b>
Housebreaking	1,128	661	-41%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	116	100	-14%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	282	142	-50%
Theft of a motor vehicle	450	310	-31%
Shoplifting	2,147	1,706	-21%
Other theft	2,870	2,593	-10%
Fraud	1,010	1,764	75%
Other dishonesty	353	408	16%
<b>Fire-raising, vandalism etc.</b>	<b>3,897</b>	<b>3,753</b>	<b>-4%</b>
Fire-raising	186	220	18%
Vandalism etc.	3,711	3,533	-5%
<b>Other crimes</b>	<b>4,813</b>	<b>5,638</b>	<b>17%</b>
Crimes against public justice	1,520	2,094	38%
Handling offensive weapons	797	717	-10%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	353	321	-9%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	444	396	-11%
Drugs	2,480	2,822	14%
Other	16	5	-69%

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, March 2020 and March 2021**

<b>Crime group</b>	<b>March 2020</b>	<b>March 2021</b>	<b>% change since March 2020</b>
<b>Total offences</b>	<b>18,359</b>	<b>19,772</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	<b>9,755</b>	<b>9,797</b>	<b>0%</b>
Common assault	4,449	4,066	-9%
Breach of the peace etc.	3,845	3,885	1%
Drunkness and other disorderly conduct	348	413	19%
Urinating etc.	123	61	-50%
Other miscellaneous offences	990	1,372	39%
<b>Motor vehicle offences</b>	<b>8,604</b>	<b>9,975</b>	<b>16%</b>
Dangerous and careless driving	863	933	8%
Driving under the influence	552	627	14%
Speeding	1,758	2,294	30%
Unlawful use of vehicle	3,084	3,849	25%
Vehicle defect offences	442	493	12%
Seat belt offences	117	132	13%
Mobile phone offences	101	117	16%
Other motor vehicle offences	1,687	1,530	-9%

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

	March 2020	March 2021	% change since March 2020
Aberdeen City	884	1,114	26%
Aberdeenshire	438	559	28%
Angus	243	320	32%
Argyll & Bute	178	222	25%
Clackmannanshire	149	208	40%
Dumfries & Galloway	620	586	-5%
Dundee City	738	863	17%
East Ayrshire	443	449	1%
East Dunbartonshire	247	252	2%
East Lothian	267	327	22%
East Renfrewshire	154	160	4%
Edinburgh City	2,081	2,091	0%
Falkirk	617	536	-13%
Fife	1,106	1,123	2%
Glasgow City	3,356	2,943	-12%
Highland	604	534	-12%
Inverclyde	303	311	3%
Midlothian	299	303	1%
Moray	218	236	8%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	22	41	86%
North Ayrshire	542	519	-4%
North Lanarkshire	1,355	1,436	6%
Orkney Islands	17	29	71%
Perth & Kinross	386	373	-3%
Renfrewshire	570	532	-7%
Scottish Borders	242	341	41%
Shetland Islands	27	51	89%
South Ayrshire	407	403	-1%
South Lanarkshire	1,142	1,072	-6%
Stirling	242	266	10%
West Dunbartonshire	310	377	22%
West Lothian	667	571	-14%
<b>Scotland<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>18,874</b>	<b>19,148</b>	<b>1%</b>

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

**Table 4: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, April 2019 to March 2020 and April 2020 to March 2021**

<b>Crime group</b>	<b>April 2019 to March 2020</b>	<b>April 2020 to March 2021</b>	<b>% change since previous year</b>
<b>Total crimes<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>244,433</b>	<b>228,502</b>	<b>-7%</b>
<b>Non-sexual crimes of violence</b>	<b>9,323</b>	<b>8,797</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Homicide etc.	121	95	-21%
Attempted murder & serious assault	4,148	3,353	-19%
Robbery	1,731	1,685	-3%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	1,690	1,569	-7%
Other violence	1,633	2,095	28%
<b>Sexual crimes</b>	<b>13,496</b>	<b>12,628</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Rape & attempted rape	2,361	2,209	-6%
Sexual assault	5,009	3,936	-21%
Crimes associated with prostitution	96	54	-44%
Other sexual crimes	6,030	6,429	7%
<b>Crimes of dishonesty</b>	<b>109,574</b>	<b>93,704</b>	<b>-14%</b>
Housebreaking	12,855	9,896	-23%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	1,732	1,211	-30%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	2,960	2,096	-29%
Theft of a motor vehicle	4,934	4,323	-12%
Shoplifting	30,572	20,496	-33%
Other theft	40,809	33,155	-19%
Fraud	10,957	17,818	63%
Other dishonesty	4,755	4,709	-1%
<b>Fire-raising, vandalism etc.</b>	<b>48,166</b>	<b>42,708</b>	<b>-11%</b>
Fire-raising	2,638	2,596	-2%
Vandalism etc.	45,528	40,112	-12%
<b>Other crimes</b>	<b>63,874</b>	<b>70,665</b>	<b>11%</b>
Crimes against public justice	19,279	25,224	31%
Handling offensive weapons	9,668	9,748	1%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	4,465	4,528	1%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	5,203	5,220	0%
Drugs	34,714	35,541	2%
Other	213	152	-29%

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 March 2020 and April 2020 to March 2021**

<b>Crime group</b>	<b>April 2019 to March 2020</b>	<b>April 2020 to March 2021</b>	<b>% change since previous year</b>
<b>Total offences</b>	<b>249,378</b>	<b>231,717</b>	<b>-7%</b>
<b>Miscellaneous offences</b>	<b>128,672</b>	<b>122,522</b>	<b>-5%</b>
Common assault	57,715	51,081	-11%
Breach of the peace etc.	50,386	49,307	-2%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	5,295	5,509	4%
Urinating etc.	2,226	822	-63%
Other miscellaneous offences	13,050	15,803	21%
<b>Motor vehicle offences</b>	<b>120,706</b>	<b>109,195</b>	<b>-10%</b>
Dangerous and careless driving	11,484	11,105	-3%
Driving under the influence	6,611	8,058	22%
Speeding	28,431	21,107	-26%
Unlawful use of vehicle	39,087	40,309	3%
Vehicle defect offences	6,929	6,188	-11%
Seat belt offences	2,631	1,664	-37%
Mobile phone offences	2,226	1,561	-30%
Other motor vehicle offences	23,307	19,203	-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 April 2021. The information for March 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 March 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](mailto:Justice_Analysts@gov.scot).

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

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

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

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

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

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

### **Complaints and suggestions**

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

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