

Accredited Official Statistics



Recorded Crime in Scotland: year ending December 2023

February 2024

Recorded Crime in Scotland: year ending December 2023

This quarterly Accredited Official Statistics bulletin presents information on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland for the year ending December 2023. It also includes a comparison with the equivalent four previous years.

Key Points

The police in Scotland recorded 302,076 crimes in the year ending December 2023. This was 5% higher than the 287,678 crimes recorded in the year ending December 2022, but 2% lower than the 308,434 crimes recorded in the year ending December 2019.

It should be noted that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and associated measures to limit social contact, has had an impact on both the type and volume of crime recorded since March 2020. The largest impact was seen during years ending December 2020 and 2021, and to a lesser extent the year ending December 2022. The final legal restrictions were lifted in April 2022, meaning the most recent year (year ending December 2023) was not impacted by these restrictions.

In the year ending December 2023:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 4% higher compared to the year ending December 2022 (increasing from 69,117 to 71,900 crimes), and 4% higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 68,987 to 71,900 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 2% higher compared to the year ending December 2022 (increasing from 14,640 to 14,894 crimes), and 8% higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 13,765 to 14,894 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 11% higher compared to the year ending December 2022 (increasing from 100,754 to 111,682 crimes), and <1% higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 111,392 to 111,682 crimes).
- Damage and reckless behaviour was 4% lower compared to the year ending December 2022 (decreasing from 43,711 to 42,124 crimes), and 13% lower compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 48,469 to 42,124 crimes).
- Crimes against society were 3% higher compared to the year ending December 2022 (increasing from 59,442 to 61,476 crimes), but 7% lower

compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 65,821 to 61,476 crimes).

- Coronavirus restrictions were 100% lower compared to the year ending December 2022 (decreasing from 14 to 0). As noted above, the legislation used to record these crimes was introduced in March 2020.

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland in the year ending December 2023 was 179,616. This is 4% higher than the 173,269 offences recorded in the year ending December 2022, but 6% lower than the 192,028 offences recorded in the year ending December 2019.

- Antisocial offences were 7% lower compared to the year ending December 2022 (decreasing from 51,657 to 47,916 offences), and 21% lower compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 60,395 to 47,916 offences).
- Miscellaneous offences were 6% higher compared to the year ending December 2022 (increasing from 12,849 to 13,656 offences), and 22% higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 11,191 to 13,656 offences).
- Road traffic offences were 9% higher compared to the year ending December 2022 (increasing from 108,763 to 118,044 offences), but 2% lower compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 120,442 to 118,044 offences).

Introduction

This quarterly Accredited Official Statistics bulletin presents information on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland for the year ending December 2023. It also includes a comparison with the equivalent four previous years.

For additional and more detailed commentary on the recording of crimes and offences, including time series analysis over the longer term (back to 1971), statistics on cyber-crimes and clear-up rates, users should refer to the 2022-23 (or year ending March 2023) [Accredited Official Statistics bulletin](#).

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. The other main source of crime statistics in Scotland is the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#), a national survey of adults (aged 16 and over) living in private households, which asks respondents about their experiences and perceptions of crime.

An Accredited Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

These statistics are [accredited official statistics](#). The Office for Statistics Regulation has independently reviewed and accredited these statistics as complying with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

These statistics were accredited in September 2016
[Assessment of statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland –
Office for Statistics Regulation \(statisticsauthority.gov.uk\)](#)



Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

Amendments to the recording of Crimes and offences over the past five years

Users should note that some changes have been made to the recording of crimes and offences over the five years up to year ending December 2023. Most often this reflects the enactment of new legislation passed by either the Scottish or UK

Parliaments, which can create new criminal offences or amend the existing approach to recording some types of criminal activity. Other changes reflect decisions taken by the Scottish Crime Recording Board. These include:

- The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, which came into effect on 1 April 2019;
- A procedural change made to the recording of international crime, from 1 April 2020;
- The Coronavirus Act 2020 and Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020, implemented on 25 March and 27 March 2020, respectively;
- The implementation of the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted goods and services) (Scotland) Act 2021, which came into effect on 24 August 2021;
- The enactment of various sections of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 in June 2022 and March 2023.

The implementation of the Protection of Workers Act did not change the volume of crime being recorded. Prior to this, any assault of a retail worker would have been recorded as either a Common or Serious assault. From 24 August 2021 such cases are now recorded as either Common or Serious assault of a retail worker (with the same changes for threatening and abusive behaviour towards retail workers).

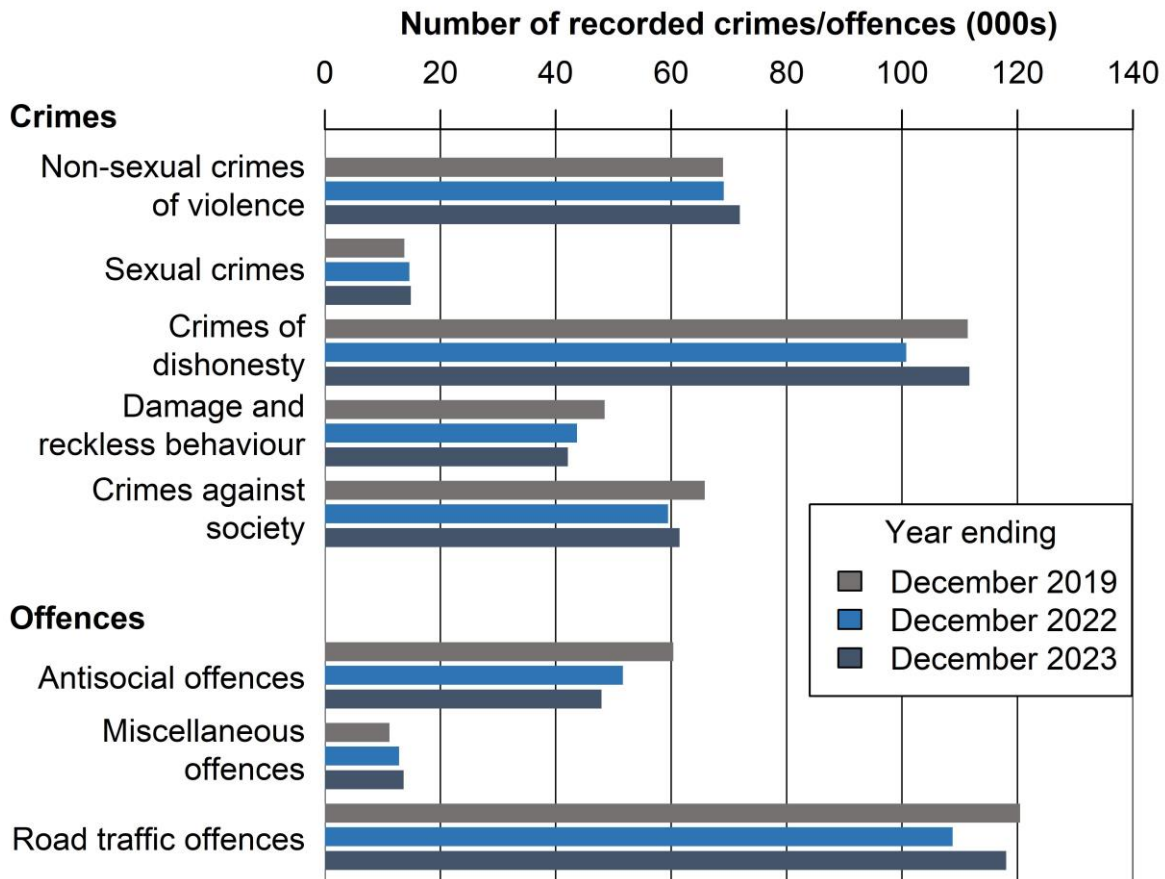
The other amendments did result in changes to the number of crimes being recorded within these statistics, following their implementation – most notably the 9,273 crimes recorded under Coronavirus related legislation in year ending December 2020, which increased to 15,648 in year ending December 2021, then reduced to 14 crimes in year ending December 2022 and further reduced to zero crimes in year ending December 2023.

Where statistics have been impacted by the above changes, this has been highlighted within the bulletin. More detailed information, including for changes prior to the five years presented below, is available in the recorded crime [User Guide](#).

Main findings

Figure 1: Trends in recorded crimes and offences over the last five years have varied by crime group

Crimes and offences recorded by the police, by crime group, year ending December 2019 to 2023



Crimes recorded by the police

In the year ending December 2023, the police recorded 302,076 crimes. This was 5% (or 14,398 crimes) higher than the 287,678 crimes recorded in the previous year, but 2% lower than the 308,434 crimes recorded in the year ending December 2019.

Non-sexual crimes of violence

The number of Non-sexual crimes of violence in the year ending December 2023:

- were 4% (or 2,783 crimes) higher compared to the previous year (increasing from 69,117 to 71,900 crimes), and
- were 4% (or 2,913 crimes) higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 68,987 to 71,900 crimes).

Within this:

- Murder and culpable homicide increased by 36% compared to the previous year (from 44 to 60 crimes), but decreased by 6% from the year ending December 2019 (from 64 to 60 crimes).
- Death by dangerous driving increased by 35% compared to the previous year (from 37 to 50 crimes), but decreased by 2% from the year ending December 2019 (from 51 to 50 crimes).
- Serious assault and attempted murder decreased by 2% compared to the previous year (from 3,583 to 3,503 crimes), and decreased by 20% from the year ending December 2019 (from 4,358 to 3,503 crimes).
- Common assault increased by 2% compared to the previous year (from 58,192 to 59,561 crimes), and increased by 1% from the year ending December 2019 (from 58,775 to 59,561 crimes).
- Robbery increased by 29% compared to the previous year (from 1,516 to 1,961 crimes), and increased by 9% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,799 to 1,961 crimes).
- Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 crimes increased by 9% compared to the previous year (from 1,800 to 1,963 crimes). Please note that the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 came into effect on 1 April 2019. As such the year ending December 2019 figures reflect only nine months of activity, with subsequent years covering a full 12 months.
- Other non-sexual violence increased by 22% compared to the previous year (from 3,945 to 4,802 crimes), and increased by 82% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,639 to 4,802 crimes).

Sexual crimes

The number of Sexual crimes in the year ending December 2023:

- were 2% (or 254 crimes) higher compared to the previous year (increasing from 14,640 to 14,894 crimes), and
- were 8% (or 1,129 crimes) higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 13,765 to 14,894 crimes).

Within this:

- Rape and attempted rape increased by 1% compared to the previous year (from 2,530 to 2,545 crimes), and increased by 3% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,481 to 2,545 crimes).
- Sexual assault increased by <1% compared to the previous year (from 5,277 to 5,283 crimes), and increased by 3% from the year ending December 2019 (from 5,133 to 5,283 crimes).
- Causing to view sexual activity or images increased by 6% compared to the previous year (from 2,089 to 2,220 crimes), and increased by 11% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,997 to 2,220 crimes).

- Communicating indecently increased by 8% compared to the previous year (from 1,494 to 1,610 crimes), and increased by 12% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,435 to 1,610 crimes).
- Threatening to or disclosing intimate images decreased by 4% compared to the previous year (from 857 to 826 crimes), but increased by 27% from the year ending December 2019 (from 651 to 826 crimes).
- Indecent photos of children decreased by 5% compared to the previous year (from 783 to 745 crimes), but increased by 28% from the year ending December 2019 (from 583 to 745 crimes).
- Crimes associated with prostitution increased by 7% compared to the previous year (from 61 to 65 crimes), but decreased by 56% from the year ending December 2019 (from 147 to 65 crimes).
- Other sexual crimes increased by 3% compared to the previous year (from 1,549 to 1,600 crimes), and increased by 20% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,338 to 1,600 crimes).

Crimes of dishonesty

The number of Crimes of dishonesty in the year ending December 2023:

- were 11% (or 10,928 crimes) higher compared to the previous year (increasing from 100,754 to 111,682 crimes), and
- were <1% (or 290 crimes) higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 111,392 to 111,682 crimes).

Within this:

- Housebreaking increased by 9% compared to the previous year (from 8,537 to 9,300 crimes), but decreased by 28% from the year ending December 2019 (from 12,967 to 9,300 crimes).
- Theft by opening lockfast places increased by 5% compared to the previous year (from 1,279 to 1,349 crimes), but decreased by 23% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,751 to 1,349 crimes).
- Theft from a motor vehicle increased by 12% compared to the previous year (from 2,040 to 2,275 crimes), but decreased by 20% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,844 to 2,275 crimes).
- Theft of a motor vehicle increased by 9% compared to the previous year (from 4,975 to 5,438 crimes), and increased by 11% from the year ending December 2019 (from 4,889 to 5,438 crimes).
- Shoplifting increased by 37% compared to the previous year (from 26,835 to 36,815 crimes), and increased by 15% from the year ending December 2019 (from 32,000 to 36,815 crimes).
- Other theft decreased by 1% compared to the previous year (from 36,488 to 35,974 crimes), and decreased by 14% from the year ending December 2019 (from 41,850 to 35,974 crimes).

- Fraud decreased by 1% compared to the previous year (from 17,126 to 16,890 crimes), but increased by 63% from the year ending December 2019 (from 10,333 to 16,890 crimes). Further explanation on the changes in levels of recorded fraud are available in the Recorded Crime in Scotland annual bulletin.
- Other dishonesty increased by 5% compared to the previous year (from 3,474 to 3,641 crimes), but decreased by 23% from the year ending December 2019 (from 4,758 to 3,641 crimes).

Damage and reckless behaviour

The number of Damage and reckless behaviour crimes in the year ending December 2023:

- were 4% (or 1,587 crimes) lower compared to the previous year (decreasing from 43,711 to 42,124 crimes), and
- were 13% (or 6,345 crimes) lower compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 48,469 to 42,124 crimes).

Within this:

- Fire-raising increased by 2% compared to the previous year (from 2,659 to 2,722 crimes), and increased by 2% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,674 to 2,722 crimes).
- Vandalism decreased by 5% compared to the previous year (from 37,866 to 36,105 crimes), and decreased by 17% from the year ending December 2019 (from 43,245 to 36,105 crimes).
- Reckless conduct increased by 3% compared to the previous year (from 3,186 to 3,297 crimes), and increased by 29% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,550 to 3,297 crimes).

Crimes against society

The number of Crimes against society in the year ending December 2023:

- were 3% (or 2,034 crimes) higher compared to the previous year (increasing from 59,442 to 61,476 crimes), and
- were 7% (or 4,345 crimes) lower compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 65,821 to 61,476 crimes).

Within this:

- Crimes against public justice increased by 5% compared to the previous year (from 23,196 to 24,451 crimes), and increased by 25% from the year ending December 2019 (from 19,599 to 24,451 crimes).
- Weapons possession (not used) increased by 16% compared to the previous year (from 4,015 to 4,671 crimes), and increased by 3% from the year ending December 2019 (from 4,528 to 4,671 crimes).

- Weapons possession (used) increased by 10% compared to the previous year (from 5,586 to 6,144 crimes), and increased by 17% from the year ending December 2019 (from 5,252 to 6,144 crimes).
- Drugs - Supply increased by 6% compared to the previous year (from 3,961 to 4,208 crimes), but decreased by 13% from the year ending December 2019 (from 4,814 to 4,208 crimes).
- Drugs - Possession decreased by 3% compared to the previous year (from 22,448 to 21,733 crimes), and decreased by 31% from the year ending December 2019 (from 31,425 to 21,733 crimes).
- Other crimes against society increased by 14% compared to the previous year (from 236 to 269 crimes), and increased by 33% from the year ending December 2019 (from 203 to 269 crimes).

Coronavirus restrictions

The number of Coronavirus restrictions crimes in the year ending December 2023:

- were 100% (or 14 crimes) lower compared to the previous year (decreasing from 14 to zero crimes).

The [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) and [Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) \(Restrictions\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) were implemented on 25 March and 27 March 2020, respectively. As such the year ending December 2020 figures reflect only a little over nine months of activity.

Offences recorded by the police

In the year ending December 2023, the police recorded 179,616 offences. This was 4% (or 6,347 offences) higher than the 173,269 offences recorded in the previous year, but 6% lower than the 192,028 offences recorded in the year ending December 2019.

Antisocial offences

The number of Antisocial offences in the year ending December 2023:

- were 7% (or 3,741 offences) lower compared to the previous year (decreasing from 51,657 to 47,916 offences), and
- were 21% (or 12,479 offences) lower compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 60,395 to 47,916 offences).

Within this:

- Threatening and abusive behaviour decreased by 3% compared to the previous year (from 44,537 to 43,168 offences), and decreased by 15% from the year ending December 2019 (from 50,555 to 43,168 offences).
- Racially aggravated conduct decreased by 1% compared to the previous year (from 1,524 to 1,512 offences), and decreased by 13% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,742 to 1,512 offences).

- Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct decreased by 43% compared to the previous year (from 4,315 to 2,471 offences), and decreased by 57% from the year ending December 2019 (from 5,706 to 2,471 offences).
- Urinating etc. decreased by 40% compared to the previous year (from 1,281 to 765 offences), and decreased by 68% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,392 to 765 offences).

Miscellaneous offences

The number of Miscellaneous offences in the year ending December 2023:

- were 6% (or 807 offences) higher compared to the previous year (increasing from 12,849 to 13,656 offences), and
- were 22% (or 2,465 offences) higher compared to the year ending December 2019 (increasing from 11,191 to 13,656 offences).

Within this:

- Community and public order offences increased by 4% compared to the previous year (from 9,177 to 9,517 offences), and increased by 29% from the year ending December 2019 (from 7,404 to 9,517 offences).
- Environmental offences increased by 14% compared to the previous year (from 433 to 492 offences), but decreased by 12% from the year ending December 2019 (from 561 to 492 offences).
- Licensing offences increased by 2% compared to the previous year (from 808 to 822 offences), but decreased by 37% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,313 to 822 offences).
- Wildlife offences increased by 6% compared to the previous year (from 1,440 to 1,524 offences), and increased by 28% from the year ending December 2019 (from 1,193 to 1,524 offences).
- Other miscellaneous offences increased by 31% compared to the previous year (from 991 to 1,301 offences), and increased by 81% from the year ending December 2019 (from 720 to 1,301 offences).

Road traffic offences

The number of Road traffic offences in the year ending December 2023:

- were 9% (or 9,281 offences) higher compared to the previous year (increasing from 108,763 to 118,044 offences), and
- were 2% (or 2,398 offences) lower compared to the year ending December 2019 (decreasing from 120,442 to 118,044 offences).

Within this:

- Dangerous and careless driving increased by 4% compared to the previous year (from 12,621 to 13,109 offences), and increased by 13% from the year ending December 2019 (from 11,557 to 13,109 offences).

- Driving under the influence increased by 3% compared to the previous year (from 7,764 to 7,975 offences), and increased by 27% from the year ending December 2019 (from 6,288 to 7,975 offences).
- Speeding increased by 23% compared to the previous year (from 17,875 to 22,007 offences), but decreased by 24% from the year ending December 2019 (from 28,899 to 22,007 offences).
- Unlawful use of vehicle increased by 1% compared to the previous year (from 36,639 to 37,188 offences), but decreased by 2% from the year ending December 2019 (from 37,930 to 37,188 offences).
- Vehicle defect offences increased by 20% compared to the previous year (from 5,427 to 6,509 offences), but decreased by 8% from the year ending December 2019 (from 7,089 to 6,509 offences).
- Seat belt offences increased by 23% compared to the previous year (from 1,809 to 2,230 offences), but decreased by 21% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,830 to 2,230 offences).
- Mobile phone offences increased by 24% compared to the previous year (from 2,637 to 3,274 offences), and increased by 35% from the year ending December 2019 (from 2,430 to 3,274 offences).
- Other road traffic offences increased by 7% compared to the previous year (from 23,991 to 25,752 offences), and increased by 10% from the year ending December 2019 (from 23,419 to 25,752 offences).

Local Authorities

Between the year ending December 2019 and the year ending December 2023, of the 32 Local Authorities, 13 saw an increase in recorded crime and 19 saw a decrease in recorded crime.

Between the year ending December 2022 and the year ending December 2023, of the 32 Local Authorities, 28 Local Authorities saw an increase in recorded crime, one saw very little (less than half a percentage) change, and three (Angus, Dumfries and Galloway, Moray) saw a decrease in recorded crime.

Annexes

Annex 1: Background

These quarterly Accredited Official Statistics cover a rolling 12-months of activity, up to the end of the latest quarter. They were introduced to inform users about the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland, on a more frequent basis than the existing annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland Accredited Official Statistics](#).

The latest annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland](#) bulletin, covering the 2022-23 reporting year, was published on 20 June 2023. Users should refer to the annual Accredited Official Statistics for more detailed contextual information regarding the statistics in this report, and the production of the recorded crime statistics more generally - including governance arrangements, a description of their quality, background methodologies and changes to recording practice.

Annex 2: Data Sources

Since 2020-21 the National Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland have been produced using data extracted from a single Police Scotland IT system called the Source for Evidence Based Policing (SEBP), which was created in 2019.

A technical review on the impact of changing from the previous IT system to SEBP, found strong alignment between both administrative systems for recorded crime in 2020-21. Further information on this is available in Annex 3 of the [Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2020-21 bulletin](#).

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. As such it is important for National Statistics purposes that data is extracted at a similar point in time each year, to allow comparisons of any trends to be on a like-for-like basis.

The figures provided in this bulletin for the year ending December 2023 were extracted in January 2024. Data for year ending December 2022 was extracted at the equivalent time in January 2023 and the two previous years ending December 2020 and December 2021 were extracted retrospectively to reflect the position as it would have been at December in each of those two years. This ensured a like-for-like comparison could be carried out, as discussed above. Due to earlier IT constraints, this retrospective extraction wasn't possible for the year ending December 2019. However the impact this will have on any comparisons with that year, will be minor.

Annex 3: Comparisons with England & Wales and Northern Ireland

For further background information (e.g. classification of Crimes and Offences and comparisons with England & Wales and Northern Ireland) please see the [Recorded Crime in Scotland User Guide](#).

Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

Feedback survey

We'd appreciate it if you would complete our short [feedback survey](#) on this publication.

Enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Susan Carsley
Justice Analytical Services
E-mail: justice_analysts@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician
e-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

Join our mailing list

If you would like to receive notification about statistical publications, or find out about consultations on our statistics please join the [ScotStat mailing list](#).

Future publications

Details of future publications can be found on our [forthcoming publications](#) page.



© Crown copyright 2024



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83521-967-6 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, February 2024

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1405574 (02/24)

W W W . g o v . s c o t