

Homicide in Scotland

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual statistical bulletin providing information on crimes of homicide recorded by the police in Scotland. The bulletin is part of a series of statistical bulletins produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system.
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual level data returns are electronically submitted by Scottish police forces on an annual basis, containing details of each case that has initially been recorded as homicide.
Concepts and Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term “homicide” includes all crimes of murder and culpable homicide, but excludes cases of causing death by dangerous or careless driving, causing death by careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs, and illegal driver involved in a fatal accident. Police forces are required to include all cases that have been initially recorded as homicide within their data return. The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 came into force on 6 April 2008, setting out a new offence for convicting an organisation where a gross failure in the way activities have been managed or organised results in a person’s death. This applies to a wide range of organisations across the public and private sectors. The number of corporate homicide cases recorded by the police is not collected as part of the homicide data return but the information is extracted from the Recorded Crime in Scotland dataset and is presented in the Statistical Notes section of the bulletin. Each bulletin presents statistics for the most recent 10 year period and reports on a financial year basis. A full statistical bulletin is published biennially, with a summary statistical release published in the interim year. A single case of homicide is counted for each incident of murder or culpable homicide, irrespective of the number of victims or accused persons involved. Where more than one person is accused of killing one or more victims, the main accused is taken as the person who received the severest penalty. If more than one possible main accused is identified, then the first person recorded on the statistical return is selected. Similarly, if a person is accused of killing more than one victim, the main victim is the one for which the accused received the severest penalty. Where more than one possible main victim can be identified, the first one recorded on the statistical return is selected. A homicide case is included against the year in which it is recorded by the police. This is not necessarily the year in which the offence took place, the year in which the

	<p>accused is brought to trial for the crime, or the year in which the case is finally disposed of by the courts. This may lead to minor differences between the figures reported in the Homicide in Scotland bulletins and those published by police forces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial classification of a case as murder or culpable homicide is made by the police. This classification may be altered as a result of decisions taken during the course of criminal proceedings. For example, it may be determined that a homicide did not take place if an accused person is found guilty of a lesser charge in court (such as serious assault); or where it has been concluded by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal (COPFS) that a victim actually committed suicide and that no further criminal proceedings are required. Hence, some cases initially classified as homicide will, on the basis of criminal proceedings, no longer be classified as such at a later date. For this reason, and as a result of continual data checking, trend data may differ slightly from year-to-year. • When considering the relationship of the main accused person to the victim, the term “partner or ex-partner” includes: spouse, separated or divorced spouse, cohabitee, lover, boy/girlfriend and ex-boy/girlfriend. Prior to 2000-01, this category did not necessarily include ex-boy/girlfriend as these were occasionally recorded as “acquaintances”. • The motive behind committing a homicide is as determined by the police. For simplicity of presentation, only one motive for killing is selected for each accused person. However, for homicides recorded before 2000, information was collected on up to two motives. Where more than one motive was provided, the first one was selected as the main motive. • Similarly, only one method of killing has been selected for each victim. The main method is taken to be the most serious of those methods recorded. Methods of killing have been ranked in the following order of priority: shooting, sharp instrument, blunt instrument, hitting and kicking, strangulation/asphyxiation, drowning, fire, poisoning and other/unknown. The term “sharp instrument” includes knives, broken bottles, swords, sharpened screwdrivers and any other pointed or edged weapons. The main method of “poisoning” includes the use of drugs, gas and carbon monoxide poisoning. • More detailed information on the concepts and definitions associated with this statistical bulletin are supplied within the Statistical Notes section located towards the end of the publication.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary source of detailed and reliable information on homicides committed in Scotland.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-profile justice issue which acts as a proxy for serious violent crime levels in Scotland. • Only publication in the Crime and Justice statistical bulletin series which is able to report on the overall justice process, from crime to prosecution to sentencing. • Informs the <i>Scotland Performs National Outcome 9</i> – ‘we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger’ as well as The Strategy for Justice in Scotland. • Attracts significant media and political interest, particularly in relation to the involvement of alcohol and/or drugs and the use of “sharp instruments” in homicide cases. Data on these two particular issues are regularly included in evidence accounts relating to knife crime and health-related issues. A wide range of users and stakeholders also use the statistics to monitor trends and develop evidence-based research and policy. • The University of Manchester has been contracted by the Scottish Government to carry out the Scottish element of the ‘UK Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness’. Homicide data is annually submitted to the University who then compile this key national patient safety indicator for the Scottish Government Mental Health Division. • The NHS Substance Misuse Team includes data from the bulletin in the ‘Alcohol Statistics Scotland’ bulletin which is published biennially (http://www.alcoholinformation.isdscotland.org/alcohol_misuse/controller?p_service=Content.show&p_applic=CCC&pContentID=1407). • The bulletin feeds into the work being carried out by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in Scotland. • There is considerable academic and parliamentary interest in the bulletin and homicide figures are annually supplied for inclusion in international compendiums, such as the Eurostat Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics and the United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.
Quality Assurance / Quality Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bulletin has been designated as National Statistics and is quality assured to rigorous standards.
Data Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is presented at a national (Scotland) level, with limited data available at police force area. Local Authority data are available upon request.
Disaggregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive victim and accused data are provided, including the circumstances associated with the homicide. Additional details relating to the method, motive and relationship between the victim and the accused are also captured.

Timeliness of Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statistical bulletin is generally published 8 months after the end of the financial year in question.
Accuracy / Suitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quality assurance process is in operation which includes automated validation procedures and manual checks for significant changes in the data and unrealistic values. Any questionable values are referred back to police forces for either correction or for an explanation to be provided for any unusual values. All police forces are required to sign-off their data at the end of the validation process and bulletins are subjected to a secondary level of checking by statisticians who have not been involved in the production process. • Occasionally, late returns are submitted by police forces which may result in revisions to the next issue of the statistical bulletin. Late returns account for a very small proportion of annual data returns and are considered to have a negligible impact upon the overall results published in past bulletins.
Comparability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable time series data are available dating back to 1974 upon request. • Information is electronically available via the Scottish Government's website dating back to 1978. High-level trend data is comparable for this time period. • Due to the serious nature of the crime, homicide statistics tend to be universally documented. Homicide definitions vary less between countries than they do for other crime types, facilitating the international comparison of homicide figures. However, legislative differences and differences in counting practices do still influence the recording of homicide data (i.e. some countries include attempted murder in their statistics). Hence, it is not always a straightforward exercise to compare homicide crime statistics across international boundaries. Data users are always advised to consult any relevant and accompanying metadata and to proceed with caution when formulating any arguments or drawing any conclusions from international homicide comparisons.
Caveats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to changes in collection methods and resourcing issues it has not been possible to carry out the matching of homicide police returns with court proceedings data since 2006-07. Subsequently, there may be a small overcount of the number of cases currently recorded as homicide as the classification of some cases could have altered as a result of decisions taken during the course of criminal proceedings. This area of work is currently being investigated by Justice Analytical Services and data users will be notified of any resulting outcomes through ScotStat. • More detailed information on the caveats associated with

	<p>this statistical bulletin is supplied within the Statistical Notes section located towards the end of the publication.</p>
Links to Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual bulletins dating back to 1997-98 are available at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubHomicide
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