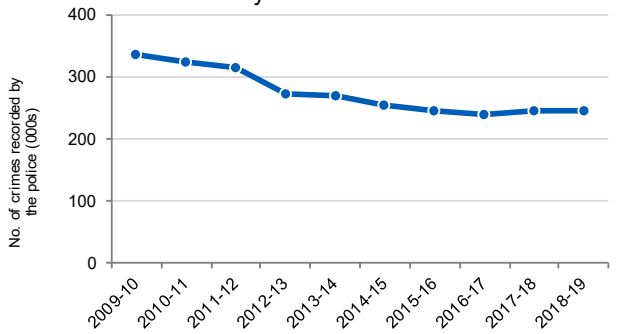
MONTHLY SAFER COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE BRIEF | November 2019

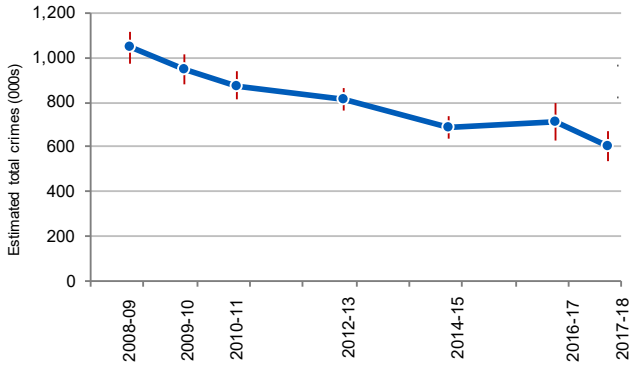
NEW=yellow

CRIME

- **Police recorded crime at one of the lowest levels since 1974.** Recorded crime is down by 27% since 2009-10 and is at one of the lowest levels seen since 1974. Between 2017-18 & 2018-19, the number of crimes recorded increased by 1%.



- **Crime has fallen by over two fifths since 2008-09.** Results from the 2017-18 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) show that 1 in 8 adults were the victim of crime in 2017-18 (12.5%) compared to 1 in 5 in 2008-09 (20.4%). The estimated number of crimes fell by 42% over the same period, and by 16% since 2016-17. The SCJS detected no change in the overall victimisation rate between 2016-17 and 2017-18.

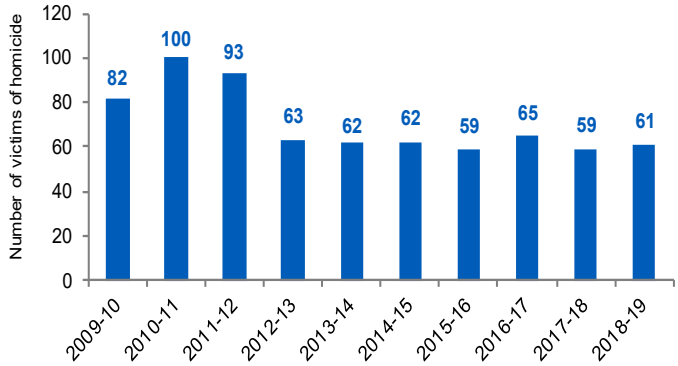


- **Violent crime has fallen over the long term.** Non-sexual crimes of violence recorded by the police rose by 10%, to 8,008 in 2018-19. These crimes remain at a lower level than all years between 1980 and 2011-12. The SCJS shows a 46% fall in violent crime between 2008-09 and 2017-18 and that an estimated 39% of violent crime in 2017-18 was reported to the police. The number of crimes of handling an offensive weapon (where not used to commit a crime or offence against a person in a public setting) recorded by the police increased by 18% between 2017-18 and 2018-19 to 4,216.

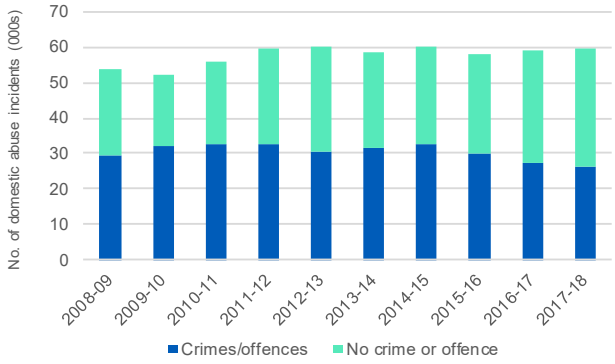
- **Sexual crimes continue to rise.** Sexual assault, rape and attempted rape, and other sexual crimes, all increased between 2017-18 and 2018-19. Multiple factors lie behind the increase in recorded sexual crime including a greater willingness of victims to come forward, more historical reporting, increased online offending and the impact of new legislation. The SCJS, for 2016-17 & 2017-18 combined, estimates that 3.6% of adults experienced at least one serious sexual assault since the age of 16, unchanged from 2008-09.

- **Firearm offences lowest since 1980.** In 2017-18, the police recorded 348 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved, 1% fewer than the number in 2016-17 (350). New data collection methods have been used for 2015-16 onwards to improve the accuracy of the statistics by identifying more offences that involved the alleged use of a firearm. Despite this, numbers are at their lowest level since 1980.

- **No. of victims of homicide at around the same level in the last seven years.** There were 61 homicide victims recorded by the police in Scotland in 2018-19, a 26% decrease from 2009-10. Since 2012-13, the number of victims of homicide each year ranged between 59 and 65.



- **Increase in recorded domestic abuse incidents.** There were 59,541 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2017-18, an increase of 1% on 2016-17. Just under half (44%) of all incidents recorded in 2017-18 included the recording of at least one crime or offence.

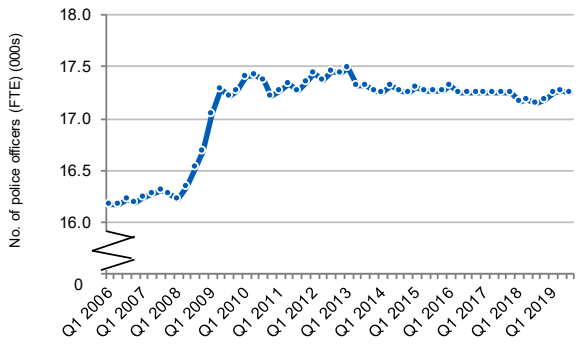


- **Women more likely than men to experience partner abuse.** The SCJS for 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined estimates that 3.0% of respondents had experienced partner abuse in the 12 months prior to interview. A higher proportion of women than men experienced partner abuse, at 3.6% and 2.3% respectively.

- **Increase in crime clear up rate.** The clear up rate for all recorded crimes was 51.0% in 2018-19, up from 49.5% in 2017-18. Clear up rates have been relatively stable over the last decade following a generally upward trend since 1976.

POLICING

- **There were 17,256 full-time equivalent (FTE) police officers in Scotland at 30 June 2019.** This was 1,022 more officers compared to the position at 31 March 2007.



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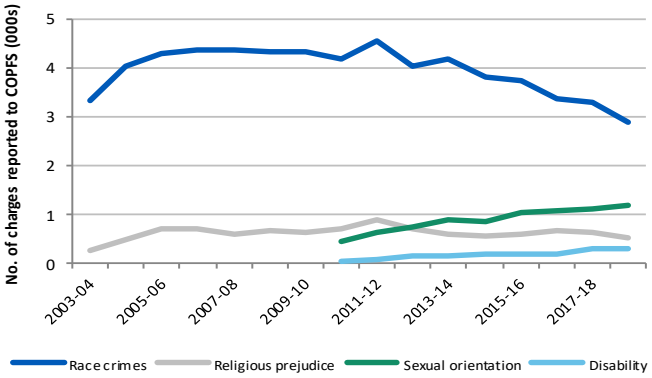
HATE CRIME

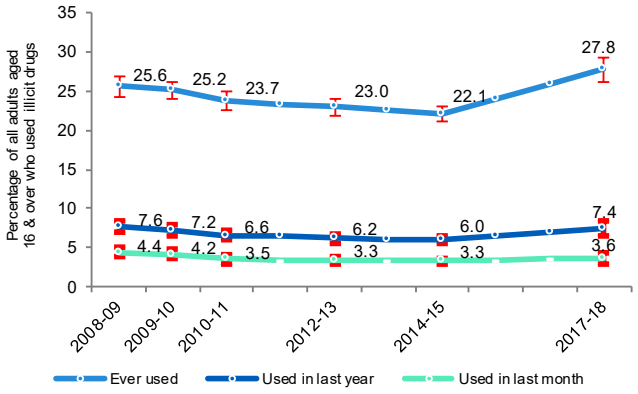
- **Fall in charges for race and religion.** Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, charges aggravated by race fell by 12% from 3,280 to 2,880 while, for religion, numbers fell by 18% from 649 to 529. Despite the fall, racial crime remains the most commonly reported hate crime. There were slight rises in charges reported to COPFS in relation to disability and sexual orientation. Charges aggravated by sexual orientation rose by 5% from 1,117 to 1,176. Apart from 2014-15, there have been annual increases in charges with an aggravation of prejudice relating to sexual orientation since the legislation came into force.



- **Numbers stable for police recorded hate crime.** Between 2014-15 & 2017-18, the number of hate crimes recorded by the police has been relatively stable, at around 6,600 to 7,000. In 2017-18, 67% of hate crimes included an aggravator for race, 16% sexual orientation, 7% religion, 4% disability and 1% trans-gender identity. The remaining 5% had multiple hate aggravators.

DRUGS

- **Illicit drug use in adults increases in latest year.** Looking at comparable measures, where the types of drugs included in the SCJS are generally consistent over time, the proportion of adults reporting use of illicit drugs in the 12 months prior to interview has increased from 6.0% in 2014-15 to 7.4% in 2017-18, but is unchanged since 2008-09. Those aged 16-24 were the most likely to have reported using drugs in the last year. Cannabis was the drug most commonly used by adults both in the last year and in their lifetime.



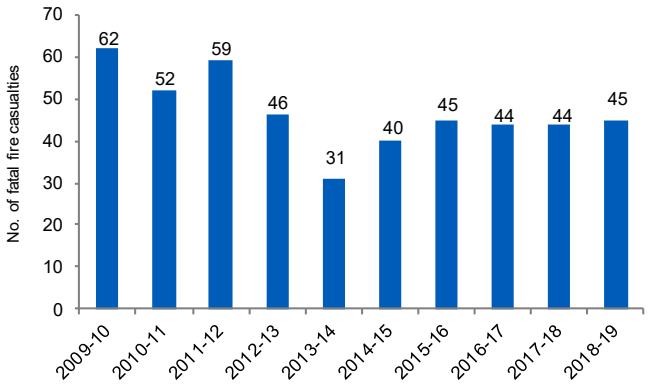
COMMUNITY SAFETY

- **Improved public perception of local crime rate since 2008-09.** The public feel safer in their local communities. 73% of adults thought that the local crime rate stayed the same or improved in their local area in 2017-18, an improvement from 69% in 2008-09 but a decrease from 76% in 2016-17.

- **Most adults feel safe walking alone after dark.** Over three-quarters (77%) of adults said they felt very or fairly safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark in 2017-18, unchanged from 2016-17 but an increase from 66% in 2008-09.

- **Most adults say police are doing good or excellent job.** In 2017-18, 57% of adults said that the police in their local area were doing a good or excellent job, unchanged from 2016-17 but down from 61% in 2012-13.

- **Number of fires fallen 31% in the last decade.** In 2018-19, there were 26,726 fires in Scotland, up 2% on 2017-18 but 31% lower than in 2009-10. There were 45 fire fatalities in 2018-19 – higher than the all-time low of 31 in 2013-14, though still 27% lower than in 2009-10.

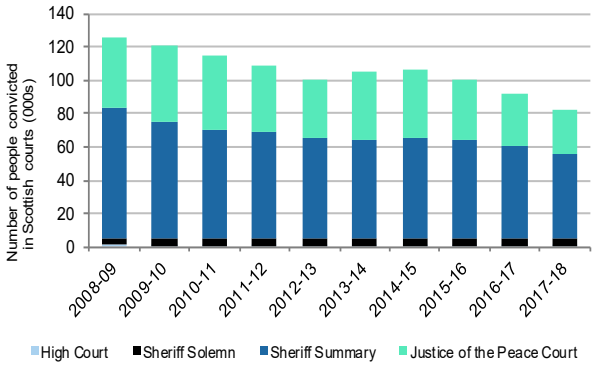


- **Sharp fall in emergency hospital admissions due to assault since 2008-09.** In 2017-18, there were 2,383 emergency hospital admissions due to assault, including 553 due to assault with a sharp object. These were, respectively, 55% and 61% lower than in 2008-09.

CRIMINAL AND CIVIL PROCEEDINGS

- **Lowest number of convictions in last 10 years.** In 2017-18, the number of people convicted in Scottish courts decreased by 10% to 82,716. This is in line with the general downward trend of the last ten years.

- **Fall in convictions in most categories between 2016-17 & 2017-18.** The decline in convictions in 2017-18 was driven by falls in breach of the peace (11%), common assault (13%) and speeding (12%). Notably, convictions for non-sexual crimes of violence increased by 5% in 2017-18 from 1,724 to 1,812 people, Also, the number of convictions for sexual crimes was almost unchanged in 2017-18 at 1,053, compared to 1,040 in 2016-17.



- **Fine is still the most common sentence.** Less than half (47%) of people convicted in 2017-18 received a financial penalty, compared with 58% in 2008-09. The proportion of people receiving a community sentence has increased from 14% to 20% over the same period.

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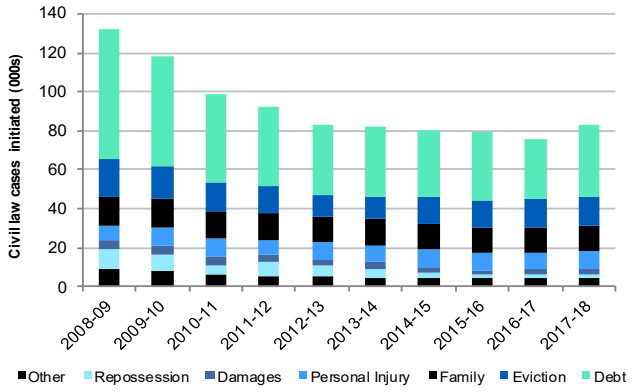
- **No. of children referred to SCRA down by almost 80% in last 10 years.** Statistics published by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) show that, in 2018-19, 2,824 children were referred to the Reporter on offence grounds. This constitutes a decrease of 76% since 2008-09.

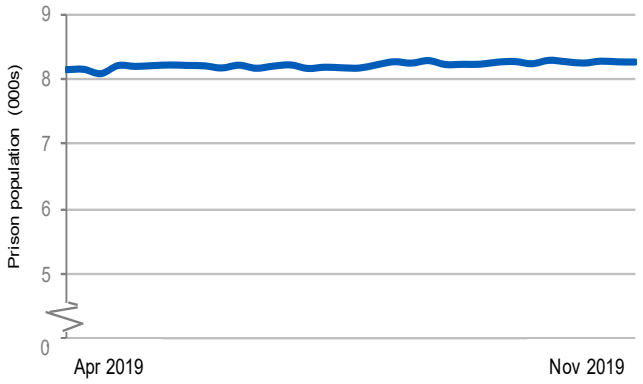
- **Civil law court cases increase for the 2nd time in ten years.** There were 81,200 civil law cases initiated across the Court of Session and sheriff courts in 2017-18 (excluding summary applications). This represents an increase of 10% from 2016-17, and is only the second increase in court business in the last ten years. Numbers of cases remain considerably lower (38%) than in 2008-09, following a long decline.



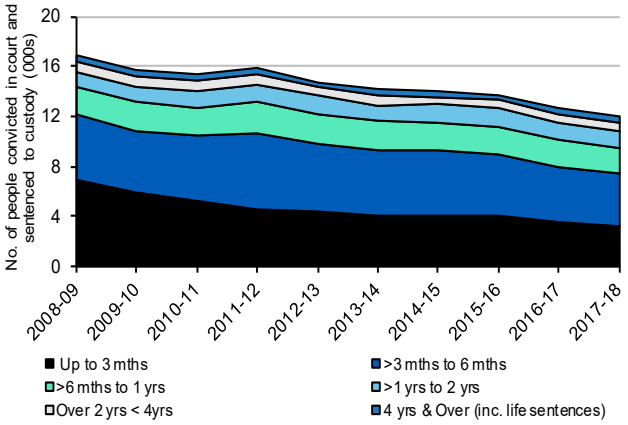
- **Case types increase in line with trend, highest increases in debt and repossessions.** Debt cases made up 46% of civil court cases initiated in 2017-18. In the context of rising levels of business overall, most case types have increased in parallel. The largest increases were recorded for debt (+22%), repossession (+17%) and personal injury (+13%). Over the longer term, debt cases fell 43%, repossessions by 80% and personal injury cases by 35% since 2008-09.

PRISONS & COMMUNITY SENTENCES

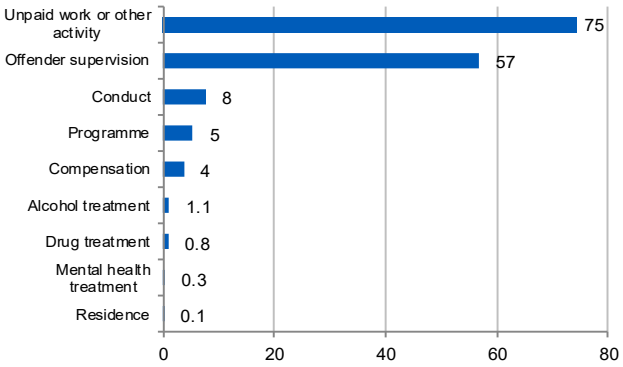
- **Prison population has risen since April 2018.** Scottish Prison Service (SPS) annual reports show a 4% rise in the average prison population between 2017-18 and 2018-19, to 7,789. Daily population figures for Friday published by SPS, show that the prison population has remained steady since April 2019 and is currently at 8,263 (at 22nd November 2019).



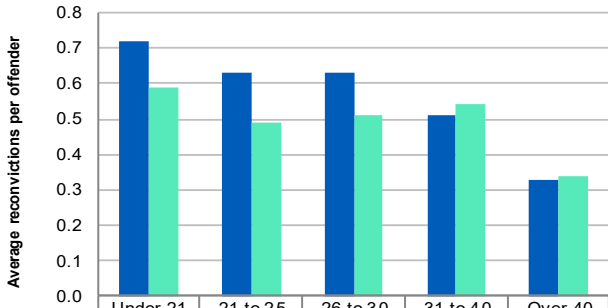
- **Average custodial sentence is around 10½ months long.** For those who are convicted in court and sentenced to custody, the average sentence in 2017-18 was around 10½ months (318 days) in length. This is 1% longer than in 2016-17 and 21% longer than in 2008-09 (8½ months). The proportion of people receiving a sentence of up to 3 months fell to 27% in 2017-18, the lowest proportion of the last decade and considerably lower than the level of 41% in 2008-09.



- **75% of community payback orders issued with unpaid work.** There were 17,834 community payback orders imposed during 2017-18, 7% lower than in 2016-17. Seventy-five per cent of these had an unpaid work or other activity requirement, while 57% had an offender supervision requirement. Community payback orders accounted for around 92% of all social work orders imposed in 2017-18.



- **Reconviction rates remain at their lowest level for 20 years.** The average number of reconvictions per offender was 16% lower than it was a decade ago, although there was no change between 2015-16 and 2016-17. The fall in the last decade was mostly driven by younger age groups, with average reconvictions decreasing by 18% for under 21s, 22% for 21-25 year olds, and 19% for 26-30 year olds. In contrast, average reconvictions were 6% higher for 31-40 year olds and 3% higher for the over 40s.



	Under 21	21 to 25	26 to 30	31 to 40	Over 40
2007-08	0.72	0.63	0.63	0.51	0.33
2016-17	0.59	0.49	0.51	0.54	0.34

ANY QUERIES?

If you require further information on any of the statistics in this brief, please contact Justice_Analysts@gov.scot or speak to Alan Fleming (0131 244 7768).

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Monthly Feature | Violence in Scotland

JAS violence research programme

This research programme aims to provide up to date statistics and evidence on the problem of non-sexual violence (NSV) in Scotland, in line with the public health methodology. As part of this, two publications were produced, both published in September 2019.

(1) Non-Sexual Violence in Scotland

This report brings together the latest official data from Criminal Justice and Health sources to better understand the profile and problem of NSV in Scotland and how this has changed over the last decade. The latest data refers to 2017-18 for all sources included, except for Police Recorded Crime where 2018-19 data is used.

What does NSV in Scotland look like?

Most people in Scotland do not experience any violent crime

Most NSV is not reported to the police.

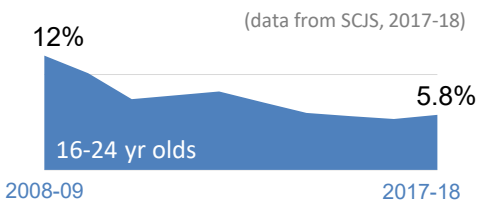
Violent crime is experienced disproportionately by repeat victims, and those living in deprived areas.

Most NSV is carried out by males.

How has NSV in Scotland changed over time?

All established sources show a notable reduction in NSV over the past decade, driven by decreases in the years following 2008-09 with broad stability more recently. While police recorded violence has increased 10% in 2018-19, the broader measure - including common assault - has shown more stability, with increases of less than 1% in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

▶ Victims of violent crime



A reduction in younger males' involvement in violent crime has driven the fall in NSV, with no change in the proportion of females who experienced NSV.

▶ Perpetrators of Violent Crime

Males are more likely than females to commit violent crime. The age groups for perpetrators vary but are normally between **16-24 or 25-39** and evidence suggests the average age has increased.

Sources suggest that most perpetrators of violent crime are known to the victim.

(2) Taking Stock of Violence in Scotland by SCCJR

This report, commissioned by JAS and carried out in consultation with experts on violence, consolidates existing knowledge about violence in Scotland, collates relevant information about the state of violence and violence research in Scotland, identifies evidence gaps, and makes recommendations for future research.

AGE AND GENDER

Violence is now less patterned by age and gender. Compared to a decade ago:

1. Those aged 16-24 are now equally likely to be a victim of NSV as those aged 25-44.
2. There is now no difference in the proportion of males or females estimated to have experienced violent crime in 2017-18. (Males are more likely to experience some lower volume types of violence that include severe physical injuries).

Women more likely than men to have experienced partner abuse (psychological & physical abuse).

ALCOHOL & DRUGS

Alcohol now plays a less prominent role in NSV.

Though (in 2017-18):

- 46% of violent incidents involve a perpetrator under the influence of alcohol.
- 36% of violent incidents involved perpetrators under the influence of drugs, unchanged from a decade ago.

USE OF WEAPONS

Violent incidents where a weapon was used are less common than in 2008-09.

- Crimes of possessing, but not using, an offensive weapon in public are down over the longer term but have increased in the most recent years.

LOCATION OF NSV

Violence in public spaces has fallen in recent years. Most types of NSV in private spaces have also decreased over the last decade.

For further information on this article please contact Fran Warren, Safer Communities Analytical Unit, Justice Analytical Services: frances.warren@gov.scot or 0131 244 2541.