

CRIME AND JUSTICE

RECORDED CRIMES AND OFFENCES INVOLVING FIREARMS, SCOTLAND, 2016-17 & 2017-18

This bulletin provides information on crimes and offences recorded by the police in which a firearm was **alleged** to have been involved or where a firearm was stolen.

As outlined to users in January, an earlier review into the quality of these Official Statistics resulted in some change being made to the data collection process. This change has improved the accuracy of this information by reducing the risk that a police recorded offence involving a firearm has not been included in the data.

Statistics for the latest three years are provided in this bulletin using the improved data collection process. This includes a revision to previously published figures for 2015-16 and new information for both 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Key Points:

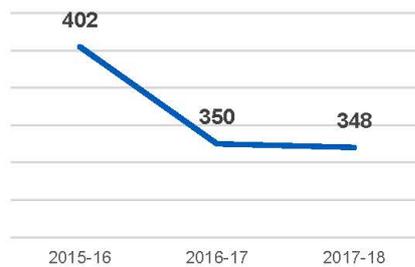
- In 2017-18, the police in Scotland recorded 348 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved, a decrease of 1% from 2016-17 (350 offences) and 13% from 2015-16 (402 offences).
- Any direct comparison with previously published statistics for the period prior to 2015-16 will not provide a reliable measure of change, as earlier figures may have underestimated the number of offences involving firearms.
- Despite this note of caution – it can be said that the number of offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved in 2017-18 was lower than any other year since the current data collection began in 1980.
- The most commonly committed offences involving a firearm in 2017-18 were Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (18%), Breach of the peace etc. (17%) and Common assault (14%).
- The number of offences in which a firearm was discharged and caused fatal or non-fatal injury decreased by two (or 5%) from 43 in 2016-17 to 41 in 2017-18.
- An air weapon was the main firearm used in 36% of all offences including the alleged involvement of a firearm in 2017-18, followed by a pistol (11%) and a shotgun (7%)

RECORDED CRIMES AND OFFENCES INVOLVING FIREARMS, 2017-18

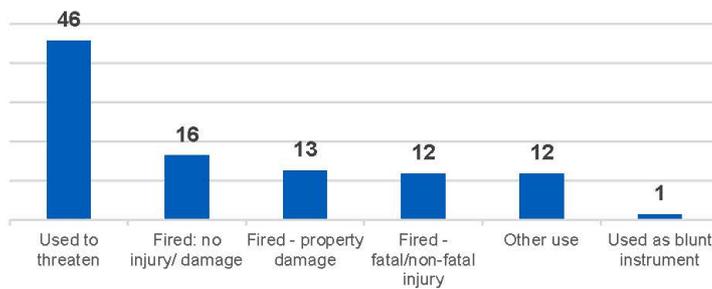
▼ HOW MANY OFFENCES WERE RECORDED?

▶ Since 2015-16, the number of firearms offences has fallen by 13%.

▶ 2017-18 saw the lowest level recorded since records began in 1980.



▶ How were the weapons used? (%)



▶ Where were they used?

36%
of offences occurred in a dwelling



20%
of offences occurred in the street



8%
of offences occurred in a shop



▶ Who were the perpetrators?

7%
Female



93%
Male



28 median age of the perpetrator

▶ What type of firearms were used? (excluding unidentified and other firearms)



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1. Background

- All tables referenced in this bulletin are presented in an accompanying excel workbook, available via the following link:
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Datasets/FirearmsDatasets>
- To avoid unnecessary repetition of the term ‘recorded crimes and offences’ throughout this publication, reference will simply be made to ‘offences’. Any reference to the ‘use and/or involvement’ of firearms throughout this bulletin should also be interpreted to include the ‘alleged use and/or involvement’ of firearms.
- Minor Firearms Act 1968 offences (mainly relating to the possession, handling and distribution of weapons and ammunition) are not included in the main points and tables of this bulletin. Totals for these offences are presented separately in Table 17. This also applies for offences recorded under the Air Weapons Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015, where totals are presented in Table 17a.
- Statistics on recorded crimes and offences inform the Scottish Government’s Justice Vision and Priorities. Available via the following link:
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Justice/justicestrategy>
- These statistics are also used by a wide range of stakeholders to monitor trends, for policy research and development, and for research purposes. The ‘Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland’ statistical bulletin forms part of a series of bulletins produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system.
- During quality assurance of the information collected for the 2016-17 official statistics, Scottish Government statisticians and analysts from Police Scotland noted there was a higher risk in some divisions that the data collection process being used may not have identified all relevant offences involving the alleged use of a firearm. Following further discussion a decision was taken to postpone the release of the 2016-17 figures until further checks could be carried out. Users were informed of this through the SCOTSTAT network in January 2018.

Scottish Government statisticians then worked with Police Scotland to review the approaches being taken across their 13 divisions, to identify any additional offences that needed to be included in the data. Based on the findings of this review, refreshed guidance on how to collate this data was issued to the divisions, who were asked to resubmit their returns for 2015-16 and 2016-17, along with new data for 2017-18. Further details on the process undertaken for this review can be found in [Note 3.2](#).

The revised statistics for 2015-16 and newly published statistics for 2016-17 and 2017-18 (all presented in this bulletin) are now considered to provide a more accurate picture of the number of firearms related offences in Scotland.

Given the improvement to the data collection process, users are advised to be cautious when making comparisons between data published up to 2014-15 and the data published in this bulletin for 2015-16 onwards. As the earlier data has not been revisited, a direct comparison of this nature is unlikely to be on a like-for-like basis.

What can be said is that any error in previously published data up to 2014-15 would be likely to involve a small underestimate in the true position. As such, the number of firearms related offences recorded by the police in 2017-18 can be said to be at the lowest level recorded for any single year since 1980.

2. Commentary

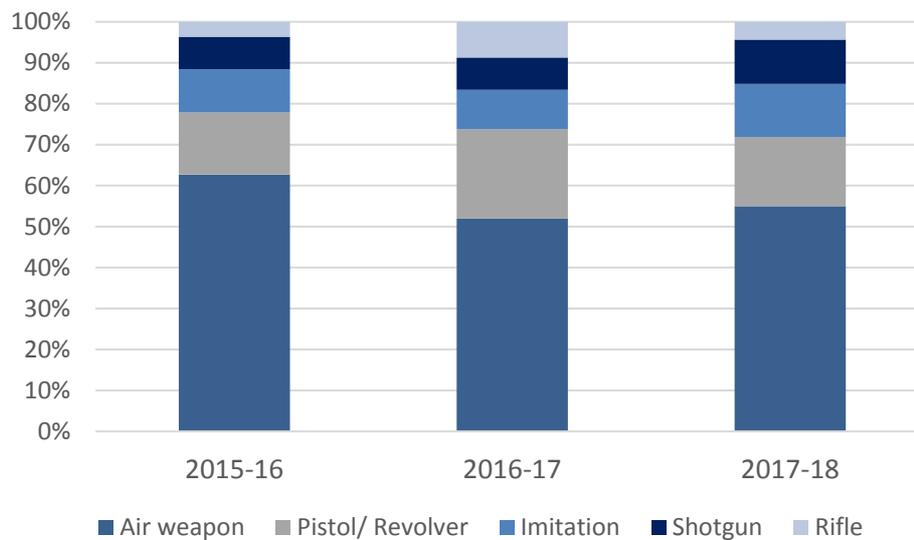
2.1 Offences involving firearms (Tables 1, 2, 2a, 3 and 4, and [Chart1](#))

- In 2016-17, the police in Scotland recorded 350 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved, a decrease of 13% since 2015-16. In 2017-18, the police recorded 348 offences, a decrease of 1% from 2016-17. This is the lowest number of recorded offences since 1980.
- In 2017-18, 18% of recorded offences involving a firearm were for Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc.. A further 17% of total recorded offences were for breach of the peace etc., 14% were for Common assault and 11% were for Reckless conduct with firearms.
- In 2016-17, a single Homicide involving a firearm was recorded, with two recorded in 2017-18. There were eight Attempted murders involving a firearm in 2016-17 and ten in 2017-18.
- The number of Serious assaults involving a firearm increased by three offences from five in 2016-17 to eight in 2017-18. The number of robberies involving a firearm recorded in 2017-18 was 34, an increase of three from 2016-17.
- When air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded, the total number of offences involving a firearm decreased by 14% between 2016-17 and 2017-18 (from 177 offences to 153 offences).
- Offences relating to Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. and Breach of the peace etc. continue to account for the largest proportion of offences involving a firearm when air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded (at 18% and 15% of offences, respectively), discounting the 'other' offence category.
- The use of firearms in criminal activity continued to constitute only a small proportion of all offences recorded by the police in 2017-18, including 3.4% of Homicides (two offences), 4.1% of Attempted Murders (ten offences) and 2.2% of Robberies (34 offences). Only 0.2% of all Serious assaults, and less than 0.1% of all Common assaults, and all Vandalism offences involved the alleged use of a firearm. For further information please see [Note 3.8.2](#).

2.2 Main firearm recorded (Tables 4, 4a and 5, and [Chart 1](#))

- An air weapon was used in just over one-third (36%, or 127 offences) of all offences involving a firearm in 2017-18, slightly up from 34% (119) in 2016-17. When unidentified and other firearms are excluded, air weapons were used in 55% of offences in 2017-18. Over the last three years, the number of offences involving an air weapon fell by one-third (from 190 to 127 offences).
- Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, the number of offences involving shotguns (+7, or 39%), imitation firearms (+8, or 36%), unidentified firearms (+14, or 26%), and air weapons (+8, or 7%) increased, while the number of offences involving rifles (-10, or 50%), pistols/revolvers (-11, or 22%) and other firearms (-18, or 27%) decreased.
- In general, an air weapon was the most common weapon used – including for crimes of Vandalism (79%), Reckless conduct with a firearm (59%) and Common assault (57%).
- Offences where air weapons were not the most common include those relating to Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (23%) and Robbery (15%). Pistols/revolvers were more common than air weapons in Robberies (29%), and equally common in offences of Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (both on 23%).
- [Chart 1](#) shows the type of weapon used in each offence as a proportion of the total number of offences recorded in each year (excluding unidentified and other firearms). It shows that in 2017-18, 55% off offences involved the use of an air weapon.

Chart 1: Main firearm recorded in offences involving the alleged use of a firearm, as a percentage of recorded offences (exc. Unidentified and other firearms), Scotland, 2015-16 to 2017-18

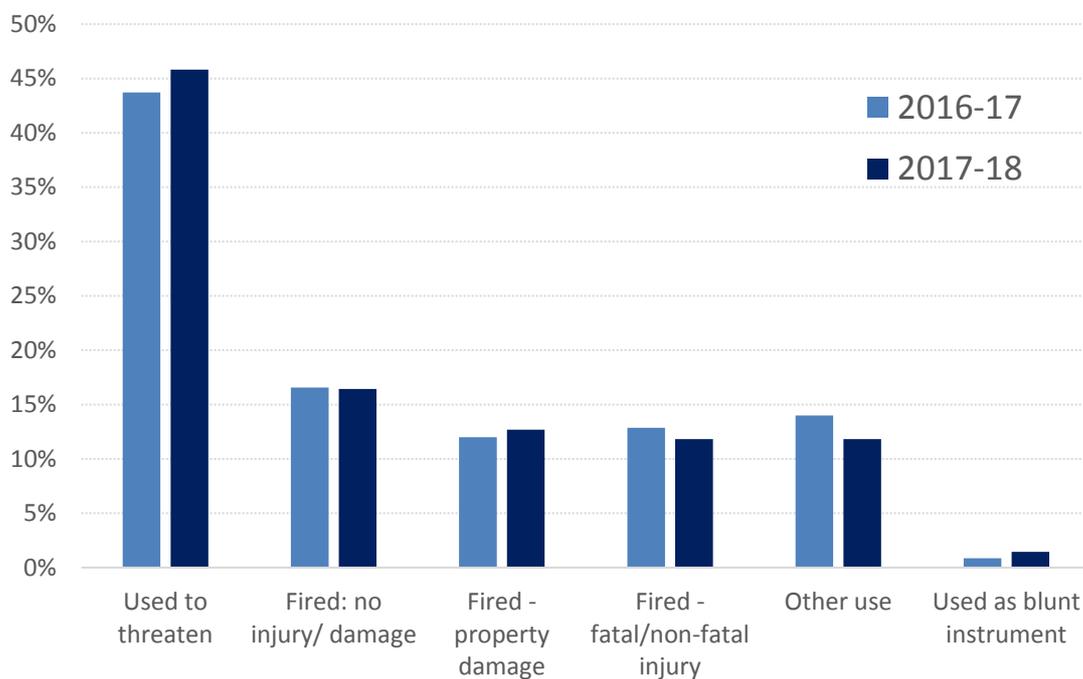


2.3 Firearm use (Tables 6, 6a, 7, 8, 9 and 9a, and [Chart 2](#))

- 348 (or 46%) of the recorded offences in 2017-18 involved a firearm being used to threaten. A firearm was discharged in 41% of offences. The breakdown of how the main firearm recorded was used is provided in [Chart 2](#).
- The small decrease in the total number of offences involving firearms between 2016-17 and 2017-18 was not driven by any significant changes in a particular method of how the firearm was used. The biggest change was observed amongst 'other use' offences which decreased by 16% from 49 in 2016-17 to 41 in 2017-18.
- There were small changes in every other category. Some had small increases, such as fired – fatal injury (+1), fired – property damage (+2), used as a blunt instrument (+2), and used to threaten (+6). Other categories saw small decreases, e.g. fired – non-fatal injury (-3), fired – no injury / damage (-2), and other use (-8).
- The number of offences in which a firearm was fired and caused fatal or non-fatal injury to a person decreased by 5% from 43 in 2016-17 to 41 in 2017-18. For more information regarding the method of counting victims, see [Note 3.8.5](#).
- The number of offences in which a firearm was discharged causing no injury or damage decreased by two offences from 59 in 2016-17 to 57 in 2017-18 (-3%). Crimes where property was damaged increased by two offences from 43 in 2016-17 to 45 in 2017-18 (+5%).

- Of the 143 offences in which a firearm was discharged in 2017-18, 56% (80) involved an air weapon, of which none resulted in fatal injury. Of those 80 offences, 32 resulted in no injury or damage, 26 in property damage, and the remaining 22 in a non-fatal injury to a person.
- Of the 49 Common assaults involving a firearm in 2017-18, 17 resulted in the weapon being discharged and causing a non-fatal injury. This accounts for nearly half (45%) of the 38 recorded offences in which a firearm was fired and caused a non-fatal injury.
- Where a firearm was discharged resulting in no injury, one-third (19 offences) of these instances were classified as Reckless Conduct With a Firearm. Where a firearm was used to threaten, just over one-third (34%) of these were offences of Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc..

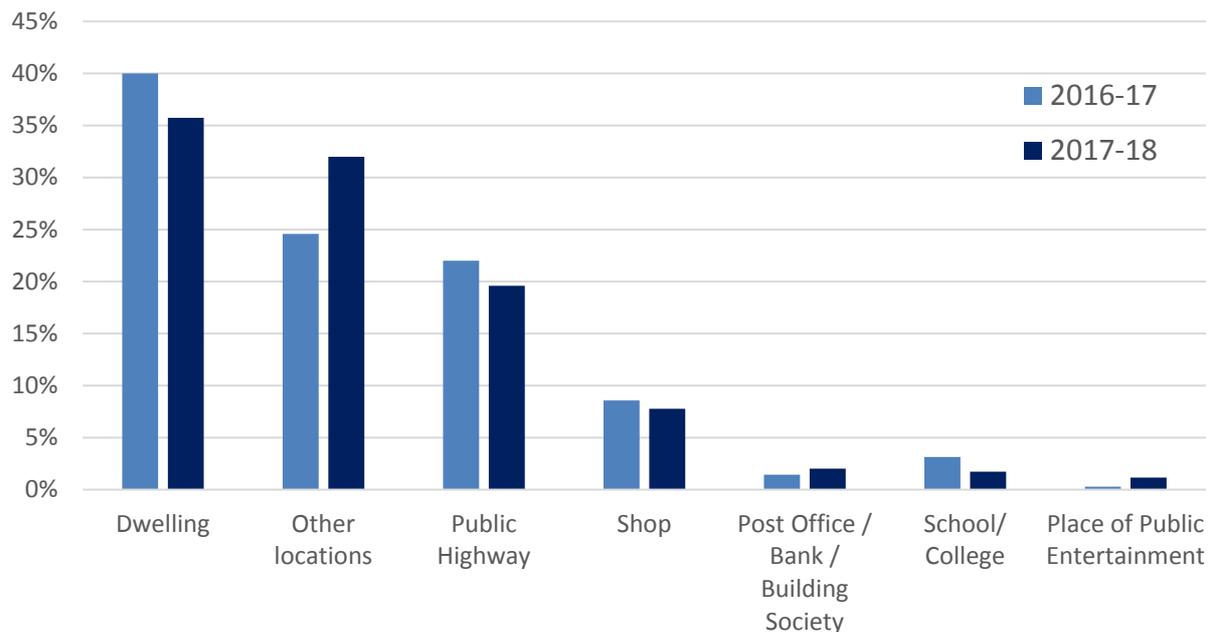
Chart 2: How main firearm recorded was used in offences involving the alleged use of a firearm, as a percentage of total offences, Scotland, 2016-17 and 2017-18



2.4 Location of firearm offences (Tables 10 and 10a, and [Chart 3](#))

- In 2017-18, most offences involving firearms either took place in a dwelling (36%) or other locations (32%). Other locations include: within a motor vehicle, licensed premises, and other outside locations i.e. a field.
- Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, the number of offences occurring in certain locations increased. 'Other' locations (+26), places of public entertainment (+3), post offices (+1), and banks/building societies (+1) all saw an increase.
- The number of offences occurring in a dwelling (-16), public highway (-9), school/college (-5), and shop (-3) all decreased from 2016-17 to 2017-18.

Chart 3: Location of offences involving the alleged use of a firearm, as a percentage of total offences, Scotland, 2016-17 and 2017-18



1. Public highway includes roads and footpaths.
2. Shop includes shops, stalls, stores, offices and factories
3. Other locations include: within a motor vehicle, on licensed premises, and other outside locations i.e. a field

- In 2017-18 there were six offences that occurred in a school or college involving the alleged use of a firearm. This represents a 45% decrease from the previous year, when 11 offences were recorded in 2016-17. In total, seven offences involving the alleged use of a firearm occurred within a bank, building society or post office in 2017-18, with a further four in places of public entertainment in 2017-18.
- An air weapon was the only type of weapon used in offences that occurred within a School/College, Bank, Building society or Place of public entertainment in 2017-18.

2.5 Victim characteristics (Tables 11 and 11a)

- Details on the way that victims are counted within this bulletin are provided in [Note 3.8.5](#).
- Of the 41 main victims who were either fatally or non-fatally injured during an offence involving a firearm in 2017-18, 33 were male (80%) and 8 were female (20%).
- The number of offences that included a male main victim increased by five (+18%) between 2016-17 and 2017-18, while the number of offences that included a female victim decreased by five (-38%).
- The number of offences with a main victim decreased by two from 2016-17 to 2017-18. This decrease comes from the number of offences with an unknown victim, where there were two in 2016-17 and none in 2017-18.
- In 2017-18, the median age of victims was 23. 39% of all offences where someone was either fatally or non-fatally injured involved a victim under the age of 16. There were 20 offences that had a main victim aged 31 or older, accounting for 49% of offences with a main victim.
- When air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded, there were 13 offences with a main victim in 2017-18, a 59% decrease from 32 in 2016-17.
- For data that specifically relates to the number of homicide fatalities involving the use of a firearm, please refer to the [National Statistics for Homicide in Scotland 2017-18](#).

2.6 Clear up rates (Table 12)

- In 2017-18, 69% of all offences involving a firearm were cleared up. For further information on clear up rates please see [Note 3.7](#).
- There were large variations in the clear-up rate across the different crime groups in 2017-18. Some crime groups - Homicide (100%), Serious assaults (100%) and Common assaults (86%) - had relatively higher clear-up rates. The clear-up rate was relatively lower for other crime groups, including Breach of the peace etc. (75%), Reckless conduct with a firearm (62%), Attempted murder (60%), and Robbery (53%). Vandalism had a clear-up rate of 14%, with two of 14 incidents were cleared up in 2017-18.

2.7 Accused characteristics (Table 13)

- In 2017-18, there were 241 offences in which an accused person has been identified. Of these 241, 93% (or 224) were male, while only 7% (or 17) were female.
- In 2017-18 the median age of an accused person was 28. The main accused was under 16 years old in 12% of cleared up offences involving the use of a firearm (29 out of 241 offences). A further 17% of cleared up offences were committed by an accused aged 16 to 20 years (41 offences). Of all offences that were cleared up in 2017-18, the most common ages of the main accused was those aged over 41 years and 21-30 years, with 67 and 65 offences respectively (28% and 27% of all offences cleared up).

2.8 Offences in local authorities (Tables 15, and 15a)

- When considering the trends in the number of offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been used in each local authority area, it should be noted that most local authority areas have relatively small counts of firearm offences. As a result, small changes in the number of offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been used can lead to large changes in percentage terms.
- In 2017-18, the local authority areas of Glasgow City (64), South Lanarkshire (35) and North Lanarkshire (28) had the highest number of offences involving firearms. When cases involving air weapons are excluded – the highest number of offences were recorded in Glasgow City (20), Aberdeen City (18), South Lanarkshire (15), and Aberdeenshire (15).

2.9 Stolen firearms (Table 16 and 16a)

- During 2017-18, Police Scotland recorded 14 offences in which a firearm (other than an air weapon) was stolen (an increase from seven offences in 2016-17).

2.10 Miscellaneous firearm offences (Table 17 and 17a)

- The number of miscellaneous firearm offences recorded by the police, relating mainly to the possession, handling and distribution of firearms and ammunition, fell from 426 in 2016-17 to 398 in 2017-18 (-7%). This continues an overall downward trend since 2008-09, with 2017-18 having the lowest number of miscellaneous firearm offences over the previous ten years. For further information on these Miscellaneous firearm offences, please see [Note 3.5.1](#).
- 2017-18 was the first full reporting year following the introduction of the air weapons licensing legislation in Scotland. There were a total of 396 recorded offences under this Act in 2017-18. The legislation was only in place for part of 2016-17 (January to March) during which 55 offences were recorded.

3. Further information on statistics used in this bulletin

3.1 Statement on Data Quality

The statistics presented in this bulletin are derived from data returns submitted to Police Scotland. Unlike other Justice Analytical Services (JAS) bulletins which have seen changes to the way data is collected arising from the merger of Scotland's police forces, this publication retains a familiar data process. The main difference is that Police Scotland, and not JAS, collect data returns from the divisions in respect of offences involving a firearm. A reporting officer based within each division of Police Scotland runs a series of queries on their individual Crime Management Systems to identify crime reports which include firearms. These records are then manually inputted into the data return.

Not all such crimes and offences are reported to the police. The extent of under-reporting is likely to vary considerably according to the seriousness of the crime or offence; for example, armed robberies are much more likely to be reported to the police than malicious damage caused by the firing of an air weapon. Moreover, the propensity of the public to report crimes and offences to the police is influenced by a number of factors and may therefore change over time; thus trends in the number of crimes and offences recorded may differ from trends in the number of crimes and offences actually committed. For further information, the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey for 2017/18](#) includes analysis on why some crimes are not reported to the police.

This bulletin reports on offences involving firearms that are both reported to the police and subsequently recorded as a crime.

One area that could affect the accuracy of the statistics reported in this bulletin is the potential for mistakes in the recording of crime at an operational-level, which could create errors in the Crime Management System (CMS). The CMS should contain a record of all crime reports in Scotland and is audited by the [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland \(HMICS\)](#). On 21 September 2016, HMICS published Crime Audit 2016¹. The Audit found no systemic data quality issues around the recording of crimes and offences. The report found that 'the quality of most incident and crime recording decisions by Police Scotland is good' 92.7% of incidents were closed correctly and 95.1% of crime was counted and classified correctly.

Another area that could affect accuracy of the statistics is the risk that an offence involving a firearm is recorded by the police, but is not identified through the data collection process undertaken for this bulletin. Further information on the data collection process and our review of its effectiveness is provided below.

¹ <http://hmics.org/publications/hmics-crime-audit-2016>

3.2 Data collection process

Some statistical publications draw their information from databases that relate to the specific topic (for example the National Statistics on Recorded Crime, or Homicide). In the case of firearms offences, a topic-specific database is not available, and as such the data collection process has always relied on a mixture of automated and manual checks. The most effective data collection process is one that maximises the chance an offence which involves the use of a firearm is identified, and minimises the risk that one is accidentally missed out.

As outlined previously, each Police Scotland division provides an individual data return based on queries run on their individual Crime Management System (CMS) to identify crime records which included the use, or alleged use, of a firearm. These are reviewed and collated by Police Scotland's Analysis & Performance Unit before being submitted to the Scottish Government. The methods available to analysts vary depending on their particular CMS and as such a combination of the following steps are typically used to identify any relevant crime records.

- A search for all crimes where their description implies the use of a firearm (for example Reckless conduct with firearms)
- A search for all crimes that include either a specific weapons-marker or a modifier that describes the weapon used - for example Air gun, Hand gun or Rifle.
- A key word search of all crimes to identify any potentially relevant cases that were not identified during the two steps above.

Once these preliminary searches are complete, a manual interrogation of each crime record is conducted to confirm whether the record should be included and if so to complete the data return with the required information (i.e. offences committed with weapon, type of weapon, characteristics of those involved etc.).

3.3 Earlier postponement of 2016-17 statistics and review of data process

During quality assurance of the information collected for the 2016-17 official statistics, Scottish Government statisticians and analysts from Police Scotland noted there was a higher risk in some divisions that the data collection process being used may not have identified all relevant offences involving a firearm. Following discussion a decision was taken to postpone the release of the 2016-17 figures until further checks could be carried out. Users were informed of this through the SCOTSTAT network in January 2018.

Scottish Government statisticians then worked with Police Scotland to review the approaches being taken across their 13 divisions, to identify any additional offences that needed to be included in the data. This review suggested that (i) some divisions undertook very thorough checks, which ensured they were well equipped at identifying offences that involved a firearm and (ii) the consistent application of a check based on a key-word search (outlined above as step 3) would help ensure all divisions were in this position. Based on these findings, refreshed guidance on how

to collate this data was issued to the divisions, who were asked to resubmit their returns for 2015-16 and 2016-17, along with new data for 2017-18.

Having reviewed the new information submitted, we have concluded that this work has helped to improve the quality of these statistics, and as such has ensured a more accurate picture of the extent and nature of firearm related offences in Scotland.

3.4 Impact of new approach on Firearm Offences Official Statistics

The resubmitted data for 2015-16 identified 402 firearms-related offences, 70 more than the figure published earlier for Scotland (in November 2016). The resubmitted data for 2016-17 identified 60 additional cases compared to the original return (which prompted the postponement of this publication).

The revised statistics for 2015-16 and newly published statistics for 2016-17 and 2017-18 are now considered to provide a more accurate picture of the number of firearms related offences in Scotland (notwithstanding that there will always remain the slight risk that even with the enhanced checks, an eligible record may have been missed out). Given the improvement to the data collection process described above, users are advised to be cautious when making comparisons between data published up to 2014-15 and 2015-16 onwards. As the earlier data has not been revisited, a direct comparison of this nature is unlikely to be on a like-for-like basis.

What can be said is that any error in previously published data up to 2014-15 is likely to involve a small under-estimate in the true position. As such, the number of firearms related offences recorded by the police in 2017-18 can be said to be at the lowest level recorded in any single year since 1980.

3.5 Data Returns

3.5.1 Miscellaneous firearm offences relating mainly to the possession, handling and distribution of firearms and ammunition are excluded from the main tables. Prior to 2005-06, data returns for this bulletin did include miscellaneous firearm offences, but in discussion with police forces it became apparent that not all such incidents were being included. It was therefore decided to remove such incidents from the main tables and to provide a separate table (Table 17) which presents the totals for these offences based on [Recorded Crime](#) data returns.

3.5.2 Under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the estimated costs of responding to statistical surveys and data collection are to be published. The estimated cost for supplying and validating data for this return is £700 per year. Details of the calculation methodology are available on the Scottish Government Crime and Justice website at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/costcalculation>.

3.6 Legislation

- 3.6.1 Contraventions of Scottish criminal law are divided for statistical purposes into crimes and offences. "Crime" is generally used for the more serious criminal acts; the less serious termed "offences", although the term "offence" may also be used in relation to serious breaches of criminal law. The distinction is made only for working purposes and the "seriousness" of the offence is generally related to the maximum sentence that can be imposed.
- 3.6.2 Following the Dunblane incident in 1996, changes to the existing firearms legislation were introduced to enhance public safety. As a result, the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 (the '1997 Act') was implemented and thereafter the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997 (the '1997 (No. 2) Act'). Under the 1997 Act, all pistols (otherwise referred to as "handguns") over .22 calibre were banned with effect from 1 October 1997. The 1997 (No. 2) Act came into effect from 1 March 1998. A number of types of handgun were exempted from the 1997 (No. 2) Act, including muzzle-loading guns, shot pistols, slaughtering instruments, firearms used for the humane killing of animals, trophies of war, etc.
- 3.6.3 The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 raised the age for owning an air weapon from 14 years to 17 years; created a new offence of possessing an air weapon or imitation weapon in a public place without reasonable excuse; banned future import and sale of air weapons using self-contained air cartridge systems and licensed those already held. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 also imposed minimum sentences for the illegal possession of a prohibited firearm.
- 3.6.4 In relation to individuals aged under 18 years, the following legislation has been introduced:
- The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 raised the minimum age at which a person may purchase or hire either an air weapon or ammunition for an air weapon to 18 years.
 - The EU Weapons Directive 91/477/EEC made it an offence to sell or let on hire a firearm or ammunition to a person under the age of 18 years.
- 3.6.5 The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 came into force on the 1 January 2017 which makes provision for the licensing and regulation of air weapons. Statistics are presented here for both 2017-18, the first full year for which statistics are available as well as for January to March 2017 (Table 17a).

3.7 Crimes and offences cleared up

3.7.1 The definition of 'cleared up' was revised with effect from 1 April 1996.

Previously, a crime or offence was regarded as being cleared up if one or more offenders was apprehended, cited, warned or traced for it. This was revised as follows:

A crime or offence is regarded as cleared up where there exists a sufficiency of evidence under Scots law, to justify consideration of criminal proceedings notwithstanding that a report is not submitted to the procurator fiscal because either:

(i) by standing agreement with the procurator fiscal, the police warn the accused due to the minor nature of the offence, or

(ii) reporting is inappropriate due to the non-age of the accused, death of the accused or other similar circumstances.

3.7.2 For some types of crimes and offences the case is cleared up immediately as the offender is caught in the act. In Scots law, the confession of an accused person to a crime would not in general be sufficient to allow a prosecution to be taken, as corroborative evidence is required. Thus, a case cannot be regarded as 'cleared up' on the basis of a confession alone.

3.7.3 Clear up rates are calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{number of crimes cleared up in year } y}{\text{number of crimes recorded in year } y} * \frac{100}{1}$$

3.8 Statistical issues

3.8.1 Data presented in this bulletin relates to the most recent three years. There are a small number of additional caveats to note when data from earlier years. These are outlined in earlier versions of this bulletin which can be found via this link: <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubFirearms>

3.8.2 To calculate the figures shown in Table 3, the total number of offences involving a firearm are calculated as a percentage of all crimes and offences recorded by the police. These figures are derived from the Scottish Government's '[Recorded Crime in Scotland](#)' statistical bulletin series. The figures are provided in Table A in the accompanying excel tables.

3.8.3 The main firearm is that which inflicts the most serious injury or damage. In cases where no injury or damage is caused, the firearm that is considered to potentially be the most dangerous is treated as the main weapon. The 'other' firearms category includes weapons such as starting guns and ball bearing guns. From 1988, crossbows were included in the 'other' category. The 'imitation' firearms category includes replica and imitation weapons.

- 3.8.4 Details of the age and gender of the main victim (Tables 11 and 11a) are collected only for offences in which fatal or non-fatal injury is caused. The main victim is the person most seriously injured. Cases involving injury to animals are recorded under the category 'damage to property' rather than 'injury' – which is reserved solely for the purpose of recording injuries to persons.
- 3.8.5 This bulletin presents information on all individual crimes and offences recorded by the police that involved the use of a firearm. As such, under circumstances where an individual was a victim of multiple offences involving a firearm at the same time (for example Threatening and abusive behaviour and Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life), that individual will appear against all offences committed i.e. once each for the Threatening and abusive behaviour and Possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life. Therefore, care should be taken when comparing statistics on victims between multiple years as this data represents the number of offences involving a firearm that had a victim rather than all unique victims of firearms related incidents.
- 3.8.6 Details of the age and gender of the main accused (Tables 13 and 14) are collected for offences that are cleared up. In offences involving injury or damage, the main accused is the person who inflicts the most serious injury or damage. In other instances, it is taken to be the oldest person.
- 3.8.7 The figures provided in Table 16 for stolen firearms are not included elsewhere in this bulletin. The information reflects solely those incidents where firearms were stolen and not whether they were used to perpetrate a crime or offence.
- 3.8.8 As mentioned in [Note 3.2](#), there have been changes made to the data collection procedures. Some areas have only applied these changes to the most recent financial year, 2017-18. The affected areas are the Highlands, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan Siar. Given this, further caution should be exercised when making comparisons between the most recent reporting year and previous years for these local authorities.

3.9 Classification

3.9.1 For the purposes of statistical reporting, the Scottish Government has a classification list containing around 500 crime and offence codes. These are grouped in this bulletin as follows:

Category	Notes
Homicide	Includes: Murder Culpable homicide (common law)
Attempted murder	Attempted murder
Serious assault	Serious assault
Robbery	Robbery and assault with intent to rob
Vandalism	Includes: Vandalism Reckless Damage Malicious mischief
Reckless conduct with firearms	Reckless conduct with firearms
Firearms Act 1968 offences	Firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime or resist arrest
Common assault	Includes: Common assault Common assault of an emergency worker
Breach of the peace etc.	Includes: Breach of the peace Threatening or abusive behaviour
Other crimes and offences	Includes: Possession of an offensive weapon Poaching and game laws Deer offences Cruelty to animals Offences involving animals Offences involving birds

3.9.2 In Scotland, assault is a common law offence. In order to distinguish between serious and common assaults, police forces use a common definition of what a serious assault is, namely:

“An assault or attack in which the victim sustains injury resulting in detention in hospital as an inpatient, for the treatment of that injury, or any of the following injuries whether or not detained in hospital:

- Fractures (the breaking or cracking of a bone. Note – nose is cartilage not bone, so a ‘broken nose’ should not be classified unless it meets one of the other criteria)
- Internal injuries
- Severe concussion
- Lacerations requiring sutures which may lead to impairment or disfigurement
- Any other injury which may lead to impairment or disfigurement.”

3.10 Comparator data

3.10.1 Country comparisons should be made with some caution as each country's statistics are based on separate collection systems with their own definitions for what constitutes an offence involving a firearm. The Office for National Statistics publishes information on offences involving firearms in England and Wales. Chapter in The nature of violent crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2018, released in February 2019, includes information on offences involving firearms.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/the-nature-of-violent-crime-in-england-and-wales/year-ending-march-2018#what-is-happening-to-trends-for-different-types-of-violent-crime>

3.10.2 [The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#) is a survey of public experiences and perceptions of crime in Scotland. The 2017-18 survey is the latest sweep of the current guise of the SCJS, with the first being conducted in 2008/09. The survey involves interviews with adults (aged 16 or over) who live in private residential addresses in Scotland.

3.10.3 Only certain categories of crime covered by the SCJS are directly comparable with police recorded crime statistics. These categories are collectively referred to as comparable crime. Comparable crime can be broken down into the following three crime groups.

- Acquisitive crime: comprising housebreaking, theft of a motor vehicle and bicycle theft;
- Vandalism: including both vehicle and property vandalism;
- Violent crime: comprising assault and robbery.

3.11 Other

3.11.1 Only a limited selection of tables are included in this bulletin. However, further analysis of recorded crimes and offences involving firearms statistics can be supplied upon request. This includes available information relating to a different time period than that covered in this bulletin. In certain cases, a fee may be charged for additional information. For details of what can be provided, please telephone Justice Analytical Services on 0131 244 2635 or e-mail Justice_Analysts@gov.scot.

3.11.2 The percentage figures given in tables and charts have been independently rounded, so they may not always sum to the relevant sub-totals or totals.

3.11.3 The following symbols are used throughout the tables in this bulletin:

- = nil.

~ = percentage less than 0.05%.

* = percentage less than 0.5%.

n/r = not reported (a percentage change figure is not reported if the denominator is less than ten as any resulting figure may be misleading).

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available on the Scottish Government website
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

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