

Recorded Crime in Scotland:

August 2020

This bulletin is the fifth edition of a monthly release of Official Statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland. It provides information on the number of crimes and offences recorded during August 2020, and includes a comparison with the equivalent month of the previous year.

These Official Statistics have been introduced to inform users about the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Whilst the conditions of lockdown have had an impact on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police, some caution is advised before necessarily attributing all of the changes to this situation. For example, longer term trends in some types of offending recorded by the police, which existed prior to the pandemic, may remain a factor.

Scottish Government statisticians will continue to publish these bulletins each month, covering the period of April to September 2020. After that point, the Scottish Crime Recording Board (which oversees the production of Official Statistics on recorded crime in Scotland) will review whether this process should continue, including user feedback on the value of these statistics.

The annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin](#) remains the primary source of information on crimes and offences recorded by the police, and has been designated as National Statistics by the Office for Statistics Regulation. The next update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, will be published on 29th September.

Statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police provide a measure of the volume of criminal activity with which the police are faced. Crimes recorded by the police do not reveal the incidence of all crimes committed as not all crimes are reported to the police.

Summary

The number of crimes recorded by the police in Scotland was 4% lower in August 2020 than in August 2019, reducing from 20,730 to 19,927.

Over the same time period:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 7% higher (increasing from 775 to 828 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 3% lower (reducing from 1,128 to 1,091 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 11% lower (reducing from 9,159 to 8,118 crimes).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. remained almost unchanged, decreasing by less than 1% (reducing from 3,963 to 3,954 crimes).
- Other crimes were 4% higher (increasing from 5,705 to 5,936 crimes).
- Fewer crimes were recorded by the police in 18 (56%) out of 32 local authorities.

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland was 1% higher in August 2020 than in August 2019, increasing from 21,725 to 21,847.

Over the same time period:

- Miscellaneous offences were 8% higher (increasing from 11,407 to 12,375).
- Motor vehicle offences were 8% lower (reducing from 10,318 to 9,472).

Overall, the number of crimes recorded by the police between April and August 2020 was 7% lower than the same period in 2019. In April 2020 recorded crime was 18% lower than April 2019. For the most recent month - August 2020 - recorded crime was 4% lower than in August 2019. As outlined above, the annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin](#) remains the primary source of information on crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland, including longer-term analysis of changes to each of the crime and offence groups detailed above.

Main findings

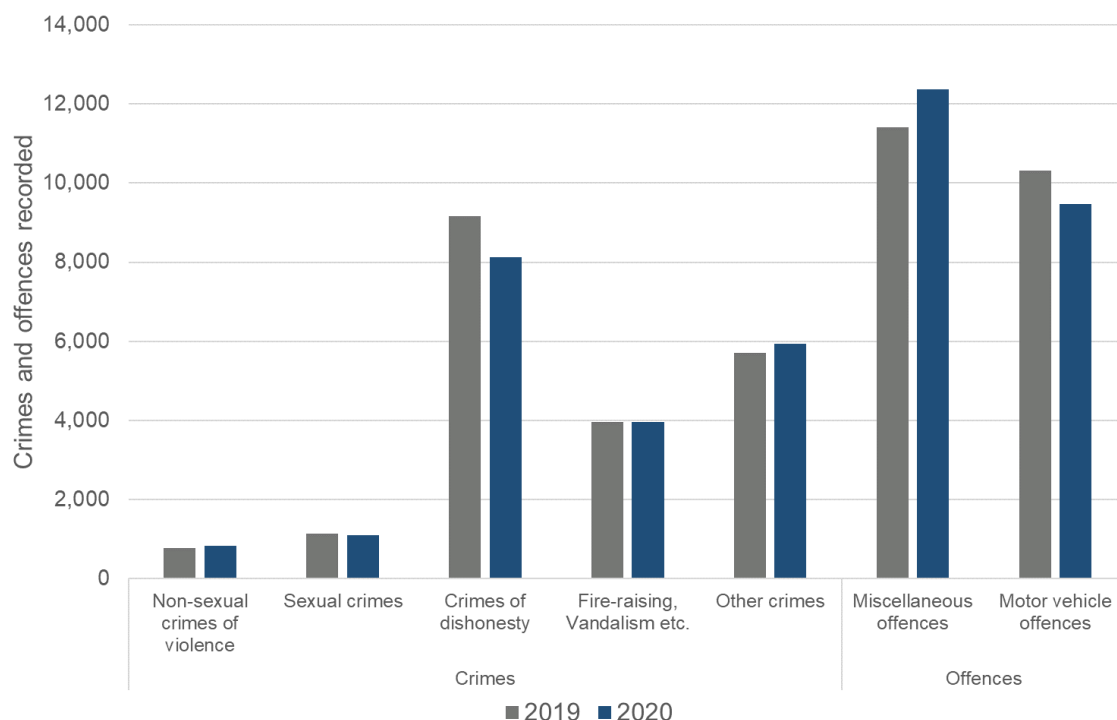
Crimes recorded by the police

In August 2020, the police recorded 19,927 crimes. This is 4% lower (or 803 crimes) than the 20,730 crimes recorded in the same month of 2019. There were variations in the year-on-year trends between different crime types. ([Table 1](#), [Chart 1](#)).

Between August 2019 and August 2020:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 7% higher (or 53 crimes), increasing from 775 to 828 crimes. The main contributors to this increase by volume were Attempted murder & serious assault, up by 16% (or 56 crimes), and Other Violence, which rose by 30% (or 37 crimes). Over the same period, crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 decreased by 15% (or 22 crimes) from 144 to 122 crimes.
- Sexual crimes were 3% lower (or 37 crimes), decreasing from 1,128 to 1,091 crimes. The main contributors to this decrease by volume were Sexual assault which fell by 19% (or 83 crimes) and Rape and attempted rape which decreased by 24% (or 52 crimes). Other sexual crimes increased by 21% (or 97 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 11% lower (or 1,041 crimes), reducing from 9,159 to 8,118 crimes. The main contributors to this reduction by volume were falls in Shoplifting (down 28% or 718 crimes) and Other theft (down 16% or 578 crimes). Over the same period, the number of frauds recorded was 56% higher, increasing by 488 to 1,354 crimes. The [Changes in levels of recorded fraud](#) section below provides users with further background on what may be contributing to this change.
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. remained almost unchanged, decreasing by less than 1% (or 9 crimes) from 3,963 to 3,954 crimes.
- Other crimes were 4% higher (or 231 crimes), increasing from 5,705 to 5,936 crimes. The main contributors to this increase by volume were Crimes against public justice, which rose by 28% (or 483 crimes) and Handling offensive weapons, which increased by 23% (or 179 crimes). Drugs crimes fell by 13%, or 421 crimes.

Chart 1. Crimes and offences recorded by the police, by crime group, August 2020 compared with August 2019



Offences recorded by the police

In August 2020, the police recorded 21,847 offences. This is 1% higher (or 122 offences) than the 21,725 offences recorded in the same month in 2019. There was a 8% increase in Miscellaneous offences, and a 8% decrease in Motor vehicle offences, as detailed below ([Table 2](#)).

Between August 2019 and August 2020:

- Miscellaneous offences increased by 8% (or 968 offences), from 11,407 to 12,375. This was driven by increases in Breach of the peace etc., up 10% (or 436 offences), Other miscellaneous offences, which rose by 26% (or 295 offences), and Common assault, up 4% (or 213 offences). The only reduction was in Urinating etc. which fell by 29% (or 52 offences).
- Motor vehicle offences were 8% lower (or 846 offences), reducing from 10,318 to 9,472. The main contributors to this reduction were Speeding, which fell by 34% (or 905 offences), Unlawful use of a vehicle (down 6% or 199 offences), and Other motor vehicle offences (down 8%, or 172 offences). The biggest increase was in Driving under the influence, up 50% or 258 offences.

Local Authorities

Compared to August 2019, a reduction in recorded crime was seen in 18 (56%) out of 32 local authorities, with the remaining 14 showing an increase ([Table 3](#)). The largest decrease was seen in Shetland Islands (down 38%) and the largest increase was in Moray (up 19%). It should be noted that the relatively small number of crimes recorded in some of Scotland's local authorities can fluctuate over time - leading to large percentage changes. This is particularly relevant in this release, where monthly data is being presented rather than the annual information provided in the National Statistics.

The biggest contributors by volume to the overall reduction in crimes recorded by the police were Edinburgh City (down 34% or 963 crimes), followed by Dumfries and Galloway (down 12% or 68 crimes) and Inverclyde (down 20% or 66 crimes).

April to August 2020 compared with April to August 2019

Overall, in April to August 2020 the police recorded 98,526 crimes, a reduction of 7% (or 7,843 crimes) compared to the same period in 2019 (106,369 crimes) ([Table 4](#)). The biggest drivers of this reduction by volume were Shoplifting (down 39% or 5,342 crimes), Other theft (down 20% or 3,613) and Vandalism etc. (down 14% or 2,636 crimes). Crimes against public justice saw the biggest increase over this period, growing by 34% (or 2,836 crimes) from 8,240 to 11,076 crimes. Fraud was also higher, increasing by 59% (or 2,595 crimes) from 4,365 to 6,960.

Over the same period, the number of offences recorded by the police was 7% lower (or 7,915 offences), with Miscellaneous offences remaining almost unchanged, reducing by less than 1% (or 152 offences) and Motor vehicle offences falling by 15% (or 7,763 offences) ([Table 5](#)).

Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 56% higher (or 488 crimes) in August 2020 than in August 2019. Further to the note of caution provided in the introduction to these statistics, there are two reasons why some care is advised before attributing all of this change to the specific circumstances of the COVID-related lockdown.

The first is that the [Recorded Crime National Statistics](#) have highlighted an increasing trend in recorded fraud over a number of years (up 40% between 2014-15 and 2018-19), which may be continuing. The second is that a procedural change was made in April 2020 to how some crimes of fraud (and other types of crime which could involve a victim and a perpetrator in different physical locations) are recorded.

Prior to the 1st April 2020, these statistics excluded any crime with a victim in Scotland and a perpetrator who was confirmed by the police to be outside the United Kingdom when the crime took place. Following a recommendation by Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate for Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) to review recording practice in this area¹, the Scottish Crime Recording Board approved a change so that from the 1st April these crimes are now included in the statistics. It should be noted that those cases with only a suspicion or insufficient evidence to confirm that the perpetrator was outside the UK were always included.

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

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

Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation

It is important to note that these Official Statistics currently exclude crimes recorded under the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) and [Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) \(Restrictions\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#). These were implemented on 25th March and 27th March respectively and resulted in new crimes being recorded - for example where someone, who had left the place they were living, did not have a reasonable excuse for this when asked by a police officer, and failed to comply with police advice or instruction to return there.

Given the rapid pace of these changes, Police Scotland have used an interim and bespoke data collection to capture information on the number of new crimes recorded under the coronavirus legislation. This is why figures for this legislation are currently presented separately to the overall totals provided for recorded crime in this bulletin. The bespoke data collection suggests that 21 such crimes were recorded during August 2020. This figure has fallen considerably since April (see Table A below). Users should treat these figures as broadly indicative, and may be subject to further revision in future releases. In due course the annual National Statistics will include this activity within the overall crime total for Scotland.

Table A: Number of crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation, April to August 2020

Month	Number of crimes recorded
April	2,741
May	1,654
June	219
July	17
August	21

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Notes for these tables

- The symbol 'n/r' is used to denote where a percentage change figure is not reported. This is done if the denominator is less than ten as any resulting figure may be misleading.
- Please note that tables 1, 2, 4 and 5 can be accessed at local authority level online via the following link: <https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-80004-081-6>

Table 1: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, August 2019 and August 2020

Crime group	August		% Change since August 2019
	2019	2020	
Total crimes¹	20,730	19,927	-4%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	775	828	7%
Homicide etc.	8	10	n/r
Attempted murder & serious assault	340	396	16%
Robbery	158	138	-13%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	144	122	-15%
Other violence	125	162	30%
Sexual crimes	1,128	1,091	-3%
Rape & attempted rape	216	164	-24%
Sexual assault	439	356	-19%
Crimes associated with prostitution	3	4	n/r
Other sexual crimes	470	567	21%
Crimes of dishonesty	9,159	8,118	-11%
Housebreaking	1,030	881	-14%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	142	112	-21%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	226	162	-28%
Theft of a motor vehicle	382	355	-7%
Shoplifting	2,570	1,852	-28%
Other theft	3,614	3,036	-16%
Fraud	866	1,354	56%
Other dishonesty	329	366	11%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	3,963	3,954	0%
Fire-raising	191	196	3%
Vandalism etc.	3,772	3,758	0%
Other crimes	5,705	5,936	4%
Crimes against public justice	1,727	2,210	28%
Handling offensive weapons	774	953	23%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	322	411	28%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	452	542	20%
Drugs	3,187	2,766	-13%
Other	17	7	-59%

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

Table 2: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, August 2019 and August 2020

Offence group	August		% Change since August 2019
	2019	2020	
Total offences	21,725	21,847	-1%
Miscellaneous offences	11,407	12,375	8%
Common assault	5,028	5,241	4%
Breach of the peace etc.	4,555	4,991	10%
Drunkness and other disorderly conduct	525	601	14%
Urinating etc.	177	125	-29%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,122	1,417	26%
Motor vehicle offences	10,318	9,472	-8%
Dangerous and careless driving	957	1,072	12%
Driving under the influence	512	770	50%
Speeding	2,688	1,783	-34%
Unlawful use of vehicle	3,103	2,904	-6%
Vehicle defect offences	559	646	16%
Seat belt offences	265	261	-2%
Mobile phone offences	195	169	-13%
Other motor vehicle offences	2,039	1,867	-8%

Table 3: Crimes recorded by the police by local authority, Scotland, August 2019 and August 2020

Local Authority	August		% Change since August 2019
	2019	2020	
Aberdeen City	906	979	8%
Aberdeenshire	591	534	-10%
Angus	358	324	-9%
Argyll & Bute	235	245	4%
Clackmannanshire	243	220	-9%
Dumfries & Galloway	559	491	-12%
Dundee City	889	872	-2%
East Ayrshire	458	456	0%
East Dunbartonshire	207	224	8%
East Lothian	311	318	2%
East Renfrewshire	176	174	-1%
Edinburgh City	2,871	1,908	-34%
Falkirk	612	551	-10%
Fife	1,052	1,241	18%
Glasgow City	3,415	3,498	2%
Highland	616	563	-9%
Inverclyde	331	265	-20%
Midlothian	362	312	-14%
Moray	195	233	19%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	34	24	-29%
North Ayrshire	555	588	6%
North Lanarkshire	1,432	1,502	5%
Orkney Islands	35	41	17%
Perth & Kinross	403	429	6%
Renfrewshire	618	667	8%
Scottish Borders	304	303	0%
Shetland Islands	39	24	-38%
South Ayrshire	372	444	19%
South Lanarkshire	1,277	1,284	1%
Stirling	338	286	-15%
West Dunbartonshire	404	400	-1%
West Lothian	532	527	-1%
Scotland¹	20,730	19,927	-4%

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

Table 4: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, April to August 2019 and April to August 2020

Crime group	April to August 2019	April to August 2020	% Change since 2019
Total crimes¹	106,369	98,526	-7%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	3,947	3,757	-5%
Homicide etc.	59	39	-34%
Attempted murder & serious assault	1,876	1,577	-16%
Robbery	680	730	7%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	709	640	-10%
Other violence	623	771	24%
Sexual crimes	5,703	5,201	-9%
Rape & attempted rape	1,013	900	-11%
Sexual assault	2,178	1,579	-28%
Crimes associated with prostitution	26	16	-38%
Other sexual crimes	2,486	2,706	9%
Crimes of dishonesty	47,789	40,081	-16%
Housebreaking	5,333	4,471	-16%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	744	500	-33%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	1,209	1,001	-17%
Theft of a motor vehicle	2,065	1,866	-10%
Shoplifting	13,829	8,487	-39%
Other theft	18,225	14,612	-20%
Fraud	4,365	6,960	59%
Other dishonesty	2,019	2,184	8%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	20,433	17,710	-13%
Fire-raising	1,183	1,096	-7%
Vandalism etc.	19,250	16,614	-14%
Other crimes	28,497	31,777	12%
Crimes against public justice	8,240	11,076	34%
Handling offensive weapons	4,226	4,648	10%
<i>Not used in other criminal activity</i>	1,912	2,153	13%
<i>Used in other criminal activity</i>	2,314	2,495	8%
Drugs	15,942	15,992	0%
Other	89	61	-31%

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

Table 5: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, April to August 2019 and April to August 2020

Crime group	April to August 2019	April to August 2020	% Change since 2019
Total offences	109,779	101,864	-7%
Miscellaneous offences	56,917	56,765	0%
Common assault	24,887	22,622	-9%
Breach of the peace etc.	22,494	23,306	4%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	2,909	3,259	12%
Urinating etc.	1,033	499	-52%
Other miscellaneous offences	5,594	7,079	27%
Motor vehicle offences	52,862	45,099	-15%
Dangerous and careless driving	4,868	4,844	0%
Driving under the influence	2,588	3,739	44%
Speeding	13,769	8,711	-37%
Unlawful use of vehicle	16,092	15,725	-2%
Vehicle defect offences	3,044	2,706	-11%
Seat belt offences	1,540	925	-40%
Mobile phone offences	1,184	816	-31%
Other motor vehicle offences	9,777	7,633	-22%

Annexes

Annex 1: Background

As outlined on page one, these monthly Official Statistics have been introduced to inform users about the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Their role is to provide more recent information on this topic - in a product that has been produced by Scottish Government statisticians, in line with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

Scottish Government statisticians will continue to publish these bulletins each month, covering the period from April to September 2020. After that point, the Scottish Crime Recording Board (which oversees the production of Official Statistics on recorded crime in Scotland) will review whether this process should continue, including user feedback on the value of these statistics.

The annual [Recorded Crime in Scotland](#) bulletin remains the primary source of information on crimes and offences recorded by the police, and has been designated as National Statistics by the Office for Statistics Regulation. The next update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, will be published on 29th September. Users should refer to the National Statistics for more detailed information on the production of the recorded crime statistics - including governance arrangements, a description of their quality, background methodologies and changes to recording practice.

The next bulletin, covering the month of September 2020, will be published on 22nd October.

Annex 2: Data Sources

Since 2013-14, the National Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland have been produced using data extracted from a single Police Scotland IT system called the Scottish Operational and Management Information System (ScOMIS). This data is then provided to the Scottish Government for the production of the National Statistics.

In 2019, Police Scotland developed a new data repository called the Source for Evidence Based Policing (SEBP). The intention is that this will, in due course, become the official source of information for the recorded crime National Statistics, replacing ScOMIS.

A preliminary review, looking at how changing from ScOMIS to SEBP impacts on the production of the Recorded Crime National Statistics, suggests that there is good alignment between both of these administrative systems.

Before the Scottish Crime Recording Board (SCRB) approves this transition, a final confirmatory check of the full 2019-20 reporting year will take place prior to publication of the Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2019-20 National Statistics.

This will involve a comparison of trends in recorded crimes, offences and clear up rates for all local authorities and Scotland as a whole between 2018-19 and 2019-20. A technical report detailing the results of this analysis and highlighting any implications for data interpretation will be published in due course.

In order to produce the new monthly Official Statistics included in this bulletin in the necessary shorter time frames, the information supplied by Police Scotland has been extracted from SEBP. As such, the figures provided in this publication use a different source from the most recent National Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland – and are therefore not directly comparable (notwithstanding the preliminary finding noted above that there is good alignment between the two systems).

In addition, amendments to crime and offence records will always arise after data has been submitted by Police Scotland to the Scottish Government. Some crime or offence records may, on further investigation by the police, be redesignated to not constitute a crime or offence (a process known as ‘no-criming’). In other cases the original crime or offence may be re-classified, which could shift the record between different crime or offence groups (for example if a common assault was found on further investigation to be a serious assault it would switch from Group 6 Miscellaneous Offences to Group 1 Non-sexual Crimes of Violence).

The data for this bulletin was extracted in September 2020. The information for August 2019 is unlikely to change as more than a year has passed since the crimes were originally recorded and the vast majority of amendments are likely to have taken place. In contrast, there has been a much shorter time for amendments to have been made to the information for August 2020 and so this information is likely to change to a greater extent as more time passes. Some caution should therefore be taken in interpreting the changes between 2019 and 2020, as outlined in these monthly bulletins, which should be seen as providing a broad indication of changes over the period in volumes and types of specific crimes and offences.

When published, the annual National Statistics for 2019-20 and 2020-21 will provide the most robust source of information on crimes recorded by the police, and how these have changed over time.

For further background information (e.g. classification of Crimes and Offences and comparisons with England & Wales and Northern Ireland) please see Annex 1 in the latest National Statistics on Recorded Crime in Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2018-19/pages/23/>

Annex 3: Feedback

We are always keen to hear users' views on our products and as this is the first in a new series of monthly recorded crime publications we would welcome feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions please contact us at: Justice_Analysts@gov.scot.

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

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

Complaints and suggestions

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

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