

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2019/20: Key Findings Summary

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) is a large-scale social survey which asks people about their experiences and perceptions of crime.

The 2019/20 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) confirms that Scotland has become a safer place over the last decade or so, following large falls in both the overall level of crime and the likelihood of being a victim of crime since 2008/09. The amount of overall crime has decreased by 21% since 2016/17, though has remained stable since 2017/18. People were also more likely to feel safe in their communities and less likely to be worried about most types of crime in 2019/20 compared to 2008/09.

This summary outlines some key headline results and trends emerging from the survey. The [main report](#) contains a wide-range of evidence about experiences and perceptions of crime, the police and justice system in Scotland, as well as results from the survey's self-completion modules (covering drug use, stalking and harassment, partner abuse, and sexual victimisation), with more detail and context presented in each specific report chapter.



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What does the survey tell us about trends in overall crime?

The survey finds the volume of SCJS crime (violent and property crime) in Scotland, including incidents not reported to the police, has fallen by 46% over the last decade or so – from an estimated 1,045,000 incidents in 2008/09 to 563,000 in 2019/20.

563,000

SCJS crimes were experienced by adults in Scotland in 2019/20

↓ 46%

decrease in overall level of crime experienced in Scotland since 2008/09

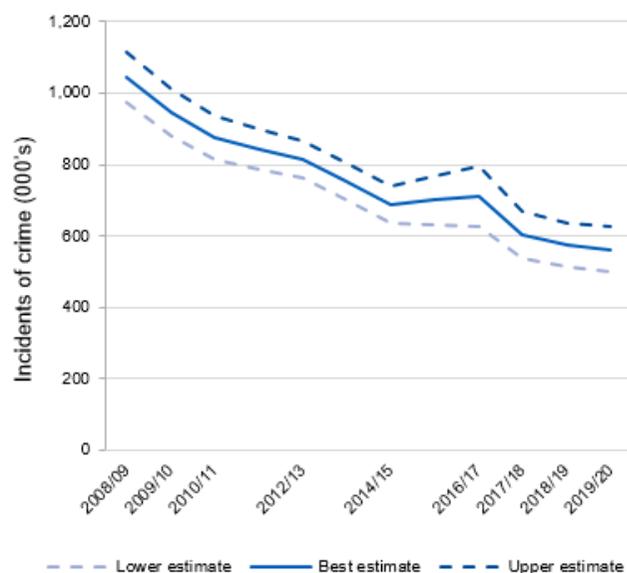
11.9%

of adults experienced crime in 2019/20

↓ 8.5 percentage point

decrease of adults experiencing crime in Scotland since 2008/09

► How much crime was there?



The SCJS estimates that the **police became aware of 40% of crime** in 2019/20, a similar proportion to previous years. However, when examining categories of crime which are comparable across the SCJS and police recorded crime statistics, both show a long-term decrease in the level of crime experienced in Scotland.

40% of crimes were reported to the police



The survey estimates that the number of incidents experienced in 2019/20 was lower than all years between 2008/09 and 2016/17 however has shown no change compared to the years since (2017/18 and 2018/19), suggesting that in more recent survey years the decreasing trend in overall crime may have started to level off.

Most adults (88.1%) were not victims of any crime in 2019/20 and victimisation has become less common over the last decade – the proportion of adults experiencing crime decreased from one-in-five (20.4%) to one-in-eight (11.9%) between 2008/09 and the latest year. The SCJS detected no change in the likelihood of being a victim of crime between 2018/19 and 2019/20.

However, despite the large reduction in overall crime in Scotland over the years, victimisation rates continued to vary among the population in 2019/20. For example, **the likelihood of experiencing any crime was higher among those living in the 15% most deprived areas and urban areas of Scotland, and lowest for those aged 60 and over.**

► **11.9%** of adults experienced crime. This rate varied across the population.

60+

Those aged 60 and over were less likely than other age groups to experience crime



People living in the 15% most deprived areas were more likely than those living elsewhere in Scotland to experience crime



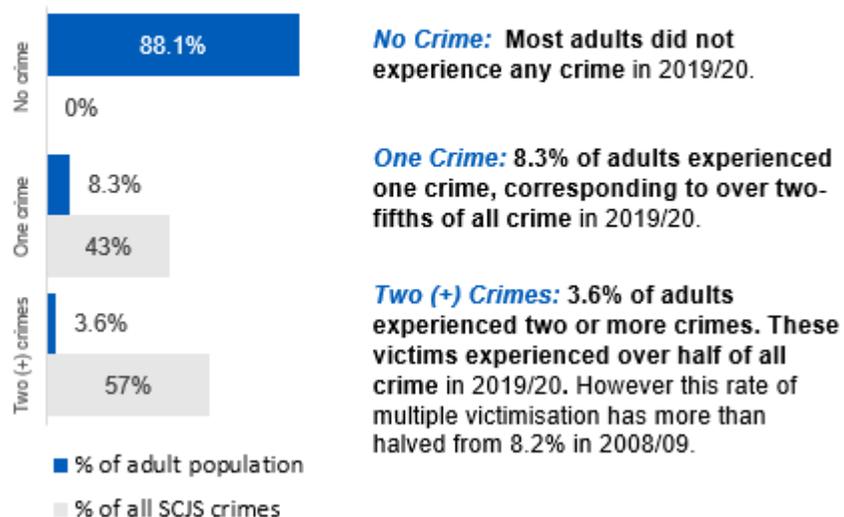
People living in urban areas were more likely than those living in rural areas to experience crime



No difference was found between men and women in the likelihood of experiencing crime

As in previous years, **crime was concentrated among victims of multiple victimisation** – under one-in-ten adults (8.3%) experienced a single crime in 2019/20, while 3.6% of adults were victims of two or more incidents, accounting for over half (57%) of all crime in the year.

► **A small number of victims experienced a high proportion of all crime.**



The overall crime victimisation rate produced by the SCJS also enables a broad comparison with the equivalent rate in England and Wales. As with the previous year, adults in Scotland were less likely to have experienced crime than those in England and Wales during 2019/20, with victimisation rates of 11.9% and 13.3% respectively.

What does the survey tell us about violent and property crime?

As in previous years, violent crime (accounting for 34% of all crime) was less common than property crime (66%) in 2019/20, with the long-term decrease in overall crime underpinned by large falls in both categories.

Violent crime

Violent crime has **almost halved since 2008/09** (down by 39%), whilst the proportion of adults experiencing any violence has fallen from 4.1% in 2008/09 to 2.5% in 2019/20. This suggests that violent victimisation in Scotland has remained relatively uncommon since 2008/09, and has become an even less prevalent experience over the last decade. The fall in the volume of violent crime over the last decade has been mostly driven by decreases between 2008/09 and 2010/11, with broad stability seen in more recent years and no change since 2018/19.

194,000

violent crimes were experienced by adults in Scotland in 2019/20

↓ 39%

decrease in violent crimes in Scotland since 2008/09. No statistically significant change since 2018/19

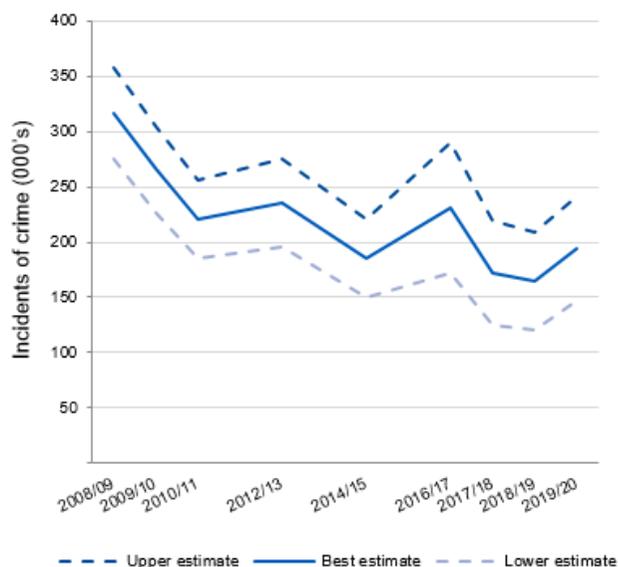
2.5%

of adults experienced violent crime in 2019/20

↓ 1.6 percentage point

decrease in adults experiencing violent crime in Scotland since 2008/09

► How much violent crime was there?



Consistent with previous years, the **majority of violent incidents were cases of minor assault resulting in no or negligible injury (73%)**, with instances of serious assault (6%) and robbery (5%) remaining relatively uncommon.

34%

VIOLENT CRIME



Of all violent crime, the majority was **minor assault with no / negligible injury (73%)**.

Other violent crime comprises **minor assault with injury (10%), attempted assault (6%), serious assault (6%) and robbery (5%)**.

Men were more likely to experience violent crime in 2019/20, as well as people in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland, and those living in urban locations. People aged 60 and over were less likely to be victims of violence in 2019/20. No significant difference was found in the likelihood of being a victim of violence between those aged 16 to 24 and 25 to 44.

► **2.5%** of adults experienced violent crime. This rate varied across the population.

60+

People aged 60 and over were less likely than other age groups to experience violent crime



Men were more likely than women to experience violent crime



People living in the 15% most deprived areas were more likely than those living elsewhere in Scotland to experience violent crime



People living in urban areas were more likely than those living in rural areas to experience violent crime

The **concentration of violent crime among repeat victims** (those experiencing two or more violent crimes) was also particularly pronounced. Whilst this affected one-in-every-hundred adults (1.0%), their experiences of violence accounted for almost two-thirds (65%) of violent crime in 2019/20.

► **A small number of victims experienced a high proportion of violent crime.**



Consistent with previous years, the 2019/20 results show that **most violent crimes involved offenders who were male, under the age of 40 and known (or previously seen) by the victim.** Offenders being under the influence of alcohol or drugs continued to be fairly common factors in violent crime in 2019/20, though the presence of weapons remained relatively uncommon.

Property crime

The proportion of adults experiencing property crime has fallen from 18.0% in 2008/09 to 10.0% in 2019/20, with the estimated number of incidents occurring down by 49% over the same period. Both the volume of property crime and victimisation rate have shown stability since the previous survey in 2018/19.

369,000

property crimes were experienced by adults in Scotland in 2019/20

↓ **49%**

decrease in property crime experienced in Scotland since 2008/09

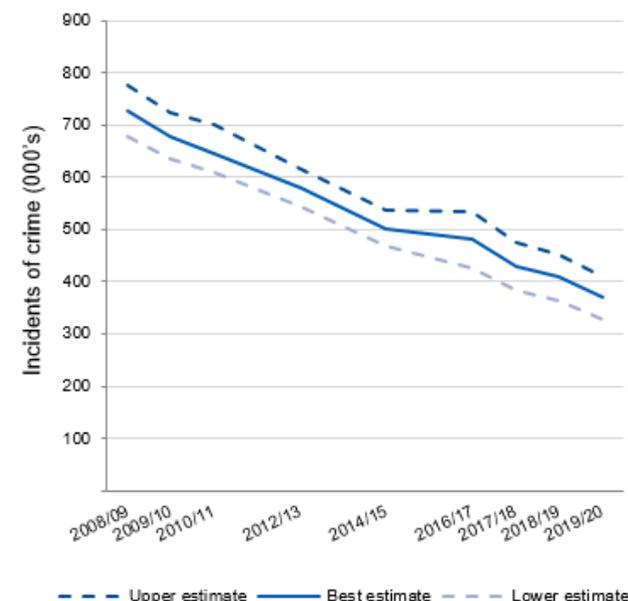
10.0%

of adults experienced property crime in 2019/20

↓ **8.0**

percentage point decrease in adults experiencing property crime in Scotland since 2008/09

► **How much property crime was there?**



Vandalism continued to be the most common form of property crime experienced in Scotland (accounting for 38% of incidents) but has more than halved in volume since 2008/09. Other household theft (including bicycle theft) (27%) and personal theft (22%) were the next largest categories.

66%
PROPERTY CRIME



Types of property crime are **vandalism** (38%), **other household theft** (27%), **personal theft** (22%), **motor vehicle theft** (8%) and **housebreaking** (6%).

Similar to overall crime victimisation rates, experiences of property crime in 2019/20 were more common among people living in the 15% most deprived areas and urban locations, whilst people aged 60 and over were least likely to be victims. The 2019/20 SCJS found no difference in the likelihood of experiencing property crime by gender.

► **10.0%** of adults experienced property crime. This rate varied across the population.

60+

People aged 60 and over were less likely than other age groups to experience property crime



People living in the 15% most deprived areas were more likely than those living elsewhere in Scotland to experience property crime



People living in urban areas were more likely than those living in rural areas to experience property crime

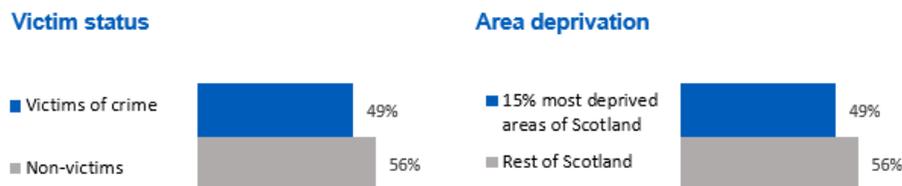


No difference was found between men and women in the likelihood of experiencing property crime

What does the survey tell us about perceptions of the police and justice system?

Perceptions of the police

The majority of adults (55%) said the police in their local area do an excellent or good job. This figure has been stable in the last few years, but has fallen from 61% in 2012/13. Victims of crime and those living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland were less likely to feel this way about the police than comparator groups.



The survey also looks at attitudes towards, and experiences of, more specific elements of policing, covering a variety of issues. For example, the 2019/20 results show that **adults were generally confident in the ability of the local police** to take forward different aspects of police activity covered in the survey.

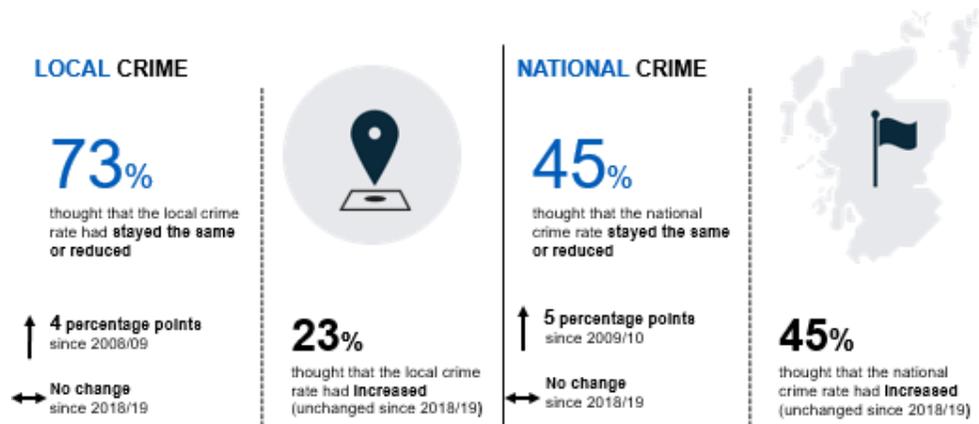
The proportion of adults aware of the police regularly patrolling their area has fallen from 56% in 2012/13 to 37% in 2019/20. However, questions on perceptions of community engagement and fairness find that people generally hold favourable views on the approach of the police in their local area.

Perceptions of the justice system

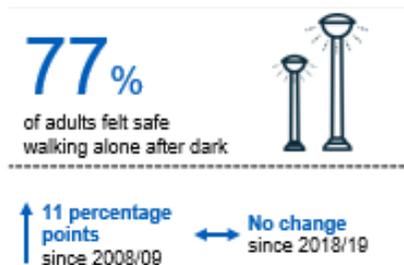
Consistent with previous years, **the majority of adults knew little about the criminal justice system but were fairly confident about its operation.** For example, around three-quarters of adults were confident that the system allows all those accused of crimes to get a fair trial and that everyone is able to access the justice system if they need it (77% and 75%, respectively). However, adults were less confident on other measures, for example, 35% were confident that it gives sentences which fit the crime, with 60% saying they were not confident.

What does the survey tell us about perceptions of crime and safety?

Just under three-quarters of respondents thought that the local crime rate had stayed the same or reduced in the two years prior to interview (73%), up from 69% in 2008/09 and unchanged from last year.



People were more likely to feel safe in their communities than they were a decade ago – the proportions reporting feeling safe when walking alone in their local area or on their own at home during the night were higher in 2019/20 than in 2008/09.



Despite general improvements in perceptions of crime and feelings of safety since 2008/09, differences remain in the population. For example, women, people in the 15% most deprived areas, those living in urban areas, and victims of crime were less likely to feel safe, more likely to be worried about specific types of crime, and more likely to think they would experience crime in the coming year.

What does the survey tell us about illicit drug use, stalking and harassment, partner abuse, and sexual victimisation?

Illicit drug use

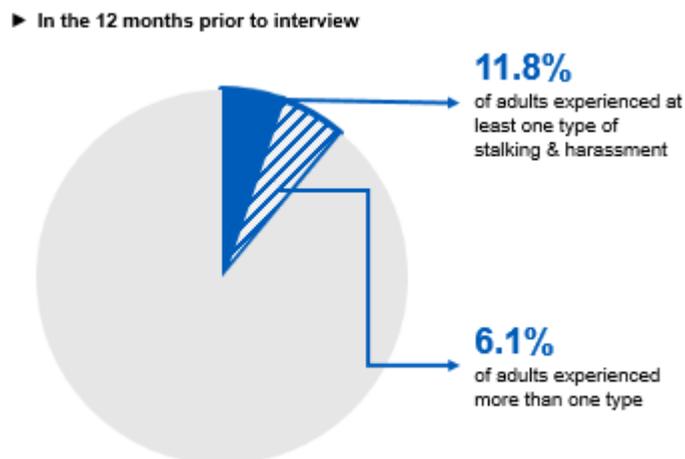
During 2018/20, 13.5% of adults self-reported using one or more of the drugs listed in the survey during the 12 months prior to interview. This was an increase compared to 9.5% self-reporting the use of drugs in 2017/18. As the range of drug types asked about in the survey has changed since 2008/09, a measure of drug use over the longer term can only focus on types that are broadly comparable throughout the period. This narrower measure also shows an increase in self-reported drug use between 2008/09 and 2018/20.

The most commonly reported drug used in the 12 months prior to interview was cannabis.

Stalking and harassment

In the 12 months prior to interview, almost one-in-eight adults (11.8%) experienced at least one type of stalking and harassment.

The most common type of stalking and harassment reported in the SCJS was being sent unwanted messages by text, email, messenger or posts on social media sites.



Partner abuse

In 2018/20, 16.5% of adults said they had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse since the age of 16. Experiences of partner abuse both since the age of 16 and in the 12 months prior to interview have decreased since 2008/09. However, three-in-ten respondents (31%) who experienced partner abuse within the 12 months prior to interview had experienced more than one incident. Experiences of partner abuse were more common for women than men.

More women experienced partner abuse than men in the 12 months prior to interview



Sexual victimisation

The latest results show that whilst there has been no change since 2008/09 in the proportion of adults experiencing serious, or less serious, sexual assault since the age of 16, there have been some increases in the proportion of adults experiencing certain types of sexual victimisation. For example, since 2008/09 there has been an increase in the proportion of adults experiencing attempted forced sexual intercourse (from 1.5% to 2.0%), attempted other forced sexual activity (from 0.7% to 1.3%), and unwanted sexual touching (from 4.8% to 7.4%) since the age of 16. Most victims of forced sexual intercourse knew the offender in some way and just over a fifth (22%) of respondents said the police came to know about the most recent (or only) incident of forced sexual intercourse.

3.6%
of adults experienced at least one type of serious sexual assault

1.6%
of adults experienced more than one type

What else does the 2019/20 SCJS cover?

Cyber crime

The SCJS asked respondents a range of questions on cyber fraud and computer misuse, providing information on people's experiences of these types of crime. These questions were asked for the first time in 2018/19 and so whilst findings should be interpreted with a degree of caution due to the limited nature of the questions and how respondents may have engaged with them, the 2019/20 results suggest that **cyber fraud and computer misuse were issues encountered by a significant minority of the population (13.9%)**, and that most people did not bring such experiences to the attention of the police.

Sub-national results

SCJS results at Police Division level are available biennially (as they have been since 2012/13), with two survey years of data combined to increase the sample size and precision around results with effect from 2016/17. Therefore, key results at Police Division level covering the period 2018/19-2019/20 have also been released alongside this report. The findings include perceptions of the police, as well as wider SCJS results such as victimisation rates, within each Division.

These results can be accessed via the [data tables](#). Alternatively, Police Division level data is available through the [SCJS interactive data tool](#) which has been developed to show divisional results relative to the national average for a chosen year or over time.

Methodology and limitations

The SCJS is primarily a victimisation survey which captures information on adults' experiences of violent crime and property crime, including those not reported to the police. However, it does not capture data on all crimes – for example, crimes with no direct or specific victim to interview (e.g. speeding, drug possession and homicide). Experiences of sexual offences are not included in the main estimates and are instead collected in the self-completion section and reported separately in the main findings report biennially.

The 2019/20 results are based on answers given by 5,568 face-to-face interviews that were conducted across Scotland. The sample was designed to be nationally representative of all private residential households.

Survey results are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that the results are subject to a margin of error and some changes in reported estimates between survey years, or between population sub-groups, may occur by chance. All results published here are best estimates (the mean figure drawn from the sample) and any changes commented on are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Get in touch

Please get in touch with the SCJS team if you have any questions, comments, or suggestion – we welcome feedback at any time.

- ▶ Email: scjs@gov.scot

Useful resources

For more information, please visit the SCJS webpages:

www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-crime-and-justice-survey

- ▶ **Main report** – a more detailed explanation of the key findings from the survey
- ▶ **Data tables** – figures, including breakdowns by a range of demographic and area characteristics
- ▶ **Users Statistical Testing Tool** – use this to check if apparent differences between results are significant
- ▶ **Interactive data tool** – sub-national results relative to the national average for a chosen year or over time
- ▶ **Technical report** – understand the methodology that underpins the survey analysis
- ▶ **Questionnaire** – read the questions that respondents were asked