

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

CRIME AND JUSTICE

Recorded Crime in Scotland:

April 2021

This Official Statistics bulletin presents information on the number of crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland during April 2021. It also includes a comparison with the equivalent month of the previous two years.

These Official Statistics were introduced from April 2020 to inform users about the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded in Scotland during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Whilst the restrictions put in place to limit the spread of the virus will 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, which existed prior to the pandemic, may remain a factor.

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 most recent update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, was published on 29th September 2020. The 2020-21 reporting year will be published in September 2021.

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 police in Scotland recorded 19,347 crimes in April 2021. This was 13% higher than the 17,171 crimes recorded in the same month of 2020 (when the first pandemic lockdown was in place) and 8% lower than the 20,994 crimes recorded in the same month of 2019 (for which there was no pandemic or restrictions on movement).

In April 2021:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 13% higher compared to April 2020 (increasing from 636 to 716 crimes), but 3% lower compared to April 2019 (decreasing from 740 to 716 crimes).
- Sexual crimes were 45% higher compared to April 2020 (increasing from 781 to 1,136 crimes) and 8% higher than April 2019 (an increase from 1,055 to 1,136 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 7% higher than April 2020 (increasing from 7,177 to 7,645 crimes) and 19% lower than in April 2019 (a decrease from 9,459 to 7,645).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. was 18% higher than April 2020 (increasing from 3,148 to 3,729 crimes) and 12% lower than in April 2019 (a decrease from 4,233 to 3,729).
- Other crimes were 13% higher compared to April 2020 (increasing from 5,429 to 6,121 crimes) and 11% higher than in April 2019 (an increase from 5,507 to 6,121).
- More crimes were recorded by police in 27 (84%) out of 32 local authorities, compared to April 2020.

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland in April 2021 was 20,234. This was 31% higher than the 15,449 offences recorded in the same month of 2020 (when the first pandemic lockdown was in place) and 7% lower than the 21,644 offences recorded in the same month of 2019 (for which there was no pandemic or restrictions on movement).

In April 2021:

- Miscellaneous offences increased by 8% compared to April 2020 (increasing from 9,306 to 10,080) and decreased by 9% compared to April 2019 (a decrease from 11,047 to 10,080).
- Motor vehicle offences were 65% higher compared to April 2020 (increasing from 6,143 to 10,154) but 4% lower compared to April 2019 (decreasing from 10,597 to 10,154).

As outlined above, the annual <u>Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin</u> 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 April 2021, the police recorded 19,347 crimes. This is 13% higher (or 2,176 crimes) than the 17,171 crimes recorded in the same month of 2020 (when the first pandemic lockdown was in place) and 8% lower than the 20,994 crimes recorded in the same month of 2019 (for which there was no pandemic or restrictions on movement). There were variations in the year-on-year trends between different crime types. Whilst all groups of crimes and offences increased compared to April 2020, the majority were still lower than prepandemic levels (April 2019) (Table 1, Chart 1).

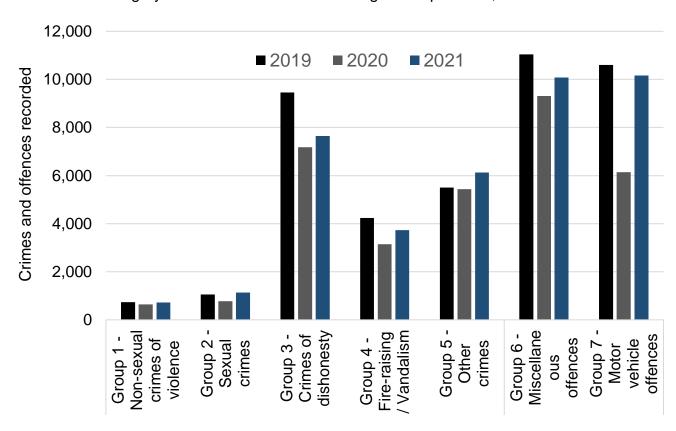
In April 2021:

- Non-sexual crimes of violence were 13% higher compared to April 2020 (increasing from 636 to 716 crimes), but 3% lower compared to April 2019 (decreasing from 740 to 716 crimes). Within this, Attempted murder and serious assault increased by 16% compared to April 2020 (from 226 to 262), however was still 27% lower than in April 2019 (decreasing from 361 to 262 crimes). Other violence increased by 20% compared to April 2020 (from 153 to 184) and increased 64% from April 2019 (from 112 to 184). Crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 increased by 28 crimes (26%) compared to April 2020 (from 109 to 137), and were 9% higher than in April 2019 (an increase from 126 to 137).
- Sexual crimes were 45% higher (or 355 crimes), increasing from 781 to 1,136 crimes. Sexual crimes were also 8% higher than in April 2019 (increasing from 1,055 to 1,136 crimes). Sexual assault saw the largest increase since April 2020, increasing by 69% (from 220 to 372), however it remained 8% below April 2019 levels. Other sexual crimes increased by 30% compared to April 2020 (from 425 to 554); this was also a 20% increase compared to April 2019 (from 461 to 554). Rape and attempted rape increased by 51% compared to April 2020, from 134 to 202 crimes; this is also a 10% increase compared to April 2019 (from 184 to 202 crimes).
- Crimes of dishonesty were 7% higher (or 468 crimes) compared to April 2020, increasing from 7,177 to 7,645 crimes. However, this was still 19% lower than in April 2019 (decreasing from 9,459 to 7,645). Crimes of Fraud have continued to increase throughout the pandemic, increasing by 55% since April 2020 (from 1,089 to 1,684) and increasing 113% since April 2019 (from 791 to 1,684). The Changes in levels of recorded fraud section below provides users with further background on what may be contributing to this change. Shoplifting also increased by

- 22% compared to April 2020 (from 1,417 to 1,732), but is still 39% lower than in April 2019 (decreasing from 2,826 to 1,732).
- Fire-raising, vandalism etc. was 18% higher (or 581 crimes) compared to April 2020, increasing from 3,148 to 3,729 crimes. However this was still 12% lower than in April 2019. The increase since April 2020 was driven by crimes of Vandalism etc., which increased by 17% from 2,937 to 3,430 crimes, however this is still 14% lower than April 2019 levels.
- Other crimes were 13% higher (or 692 crimes) than in April 2020, increasing from 5,429 to 6,121 crimes; this was also an 11% increase since April 2019 (from 5,507 to 6,121). The main contributors to these increases were Crimes against public justice (which rose by 13% compared to April 2020 and 32% compared to April 2019) and Drugs (which rose by 16% compared to April 2020 and 4% compared to April 2019).

Chart 1. Crimes and offences recorded by the police, by crime group, April 2019, 2020 and 2021





Offences recorded by the police

In April 2021, the police recorded 20,234 offences. This is 31% higher (or 4,785 offences) than the 15,449 offences recorded in the same month in 2020, but 7% lower than in April 2019 (21,644 compared to 20,234). Miscellaneous offences increased by 8% compared to April 2020, but were still 9% lower than in April 2019. Motor vehicle offences increased by 65% compared to April 2020, but were still 4% lower than in April 2019, as detailed below (Table 2).

In April 2021:

- Miscellaneous offences increased by 8%, from 9,306 to 10,080 offences, but were still 9% lower than in April 2019 (decreasing from 11,047 to 10,080). The largest increase since April 2020 was in Common assault (which increased by 12% from 3,678 to 4,110 offences), however levels were still 15% lower than in April 2019. Other miscellaneous offences increased by 13% compared to April 2020 (from 1,162 to 1,315 offences), and 19% compared to April 2019 (from 1,105) to 1,315).
- Motor vehicle offences were 65% higher compared to April 2020 (or 4,011 offences), increasing from 6,143 to 10,154 offences, but were still 4% lower than April 2019 levels. The main contributor to the increase since April 2020 was offences of Speeding (which more than quadrupled from 501 to 2,248 offences), however this is still 21% below April 2019 levels. Unlawful use of a vehicle has also increased over this time period, by 34% compared to April 2020 (from 2,747 to 3,686 offences) and 16% compared to April 2019 (from 3,176 to 3,686).

Local Authorities

Compared to April 2020, an increase in recorded crime was seen in 27 (84%) out of 32 local authorities, with 5 showing a decrease (Table 3). The largest increase was seen in Angus (up 98%) and the largest decrease was in Na h-Eileanan Siar (down 16%). 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 increase in crimes recorded by the police were Fife (up 28%, or 259 crimes), Dundee City (up 34%, or 234 crimes) and Aberdeen City (up 23%, or 198 crimes).

Changes in levels of recorded fraud

Fraud was 55% higher (or 595 crimes) in April 2021 than in April 2020, and 113% higher (893 crimes) than in April 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 <u>Recorded Crime National Statistics</u> have highlighted an increasing trend in recorded fraud over a number of years (up 73% between 2014-15 and 2019-20), 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. This is likely to have had an impact when comparing figures for fraud which fall before and after the April 2020 change.

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 coronavirus legislation such as 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 2,221 such crimes were recorded during April 2021. This month's figure is lower than the previous month and the lowest this calendar year (see Table A below). This may in part be due to decreased levels of enforcement due to the relaxation of some restrictions in recent months. 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 2020 to April 2021

Month	Number of crimes recorded
2020	
April	2,741
May	1,654
June	219
July	17
August	21
September	189
October	588
November	1,811
December	1,540
2021	
January	3,473
February	4,199
March	3,573
April	2,221

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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 and 2 can be accessed at local authority level online via the following link: <u>Recorded Crime in Scotland: April 2021</u>

Table 1: Crimes recorded by the police, Scotland, April 2019, 2020 and 2021

Crime group	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	% change since April 2020	% change since April 2019
Total crimes ¹	20,994	17,171	19,347	13%	-8%
Non-sexual crimes of violence	740	636	716	13%	-3%
Homicide etc.	5	9	10	n/r	n/r
Attempted murder & serious assault	361	226	262	16%	-27%
Robbery	136	139	123	-12%	-10%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	126	109	137	26%	9%
Other violence	112	153	184	20%	64%
Sexual crimes	1,055	781	1,136	45%	8%
Rape & attempted rape	184	134	202	51%	10%
Sexual assault	406	220	372	69%	-8%
Crimes associated with prostitution	4	2	8	n/r	n/r
Other sexual crimes	461	425	554	30%	20%
Crimes of dishonesty	9,459	7,177	7,645	7%	-19%
Housebreaking	1,045	965	647	-33%	-38%
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	138	83	103	24%	-25%
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	264	265	167	-37%	-37%
Theft of a motor vehicle	407	397	347	-13%	-15%
Shoplifting	2,826	1,417	1,732	22%	-39%
Other theft	3,550	2,515	2,583	3%	-27%
Fraud	791	1,089	1,684	55%	113%
Other dishonesty	438	446	382	-14%	-13%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	4,233	3,148	3,729	18%	-12%
Fire-raising	243	211	299	42%	23%
Vandalism etc.	3,990	2,937	3,430	17%	-14%
Other crimes	5,507	5,429	6,121	13%	11%
Crimes against public justice	1,581	1,858	2,094	13%	32%
Handling offensive weapons	865	837	860	3%	-1%
Not used in other criminal activity	409	448	401	-10%	-2%
Used in other criminal activity	<i>4</i> 56	389	459	18%	1%
Drugs	3,041	2,718	3,149	16%	4%
Other	20	16	18	13%	-10%

^{1.} The total figure for recorded crime excludes the new crimes being recorded under the recently enacted coronavirus legislation. Please see the <u>Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation section</u> for more information.

Table 2: Offences recorded by the police, Scotland, April 2019, 2020 and 2021

Crime group	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	% change since April 2020	% change since April 2019
Total offences	21,644	15,449	20,234	31%	-7%
Miscellaneous offences	11,047	9,306	10,080	8%	-9%
Common assault	4,834	3,678	4,110	12%	-15%
Breach of the peace etc.	4,356	3,890	3,972	2%	-9%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	538	529	576	9%	7%
Urinating etc.	214	47	107	128%	-50%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,105	1,162	1,315	13%	19%
Motor vehicle offences	10,597	6,143	10,154	65%	-4%
Dangerous and careless driving	954	698	1,013	45%	6%
Driving under the influence	507	604	716	19%	41%
Speeding	2,855	501	2,248	349%	-21%
Unlawful use of vehicle	3,176	2,747	3,686	34%	16%
Vehicle defect offences	615	270	554	105%	-10%
Seat belt offences	284	84	151	80%	-47%
Mobile phone offences	255	95	134	41%	-47%
Other motor vehicle offences	1,951	1,144	1,652	44%	-15%

Table 3: Crimes recorded by the police by local authority, Scotland, April 2019, 2020 and 2021

	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	% change since April 2020	% change since April 2019
Alexandra a O'C	054	0.47	4.045	000/	400/
Aberdeen City	951	847	1,045	23%	10%
Aberdeenshire	607	386	543	41%	-11%
Angus	251	182	360	98%	43%
Argyll & Bute	196	186	208	12%	6%
Clackmannanshire	158	158	198	25%	25%
Dumfries & Galloway	559	431	520	21%	-7%
Dundee City	831	690	924	34%	11%
East Ayrshire	482	403	485	20%	1%
East Dunbartonshire	221	201	241	20%	9%
East Lothian	305	290	334	15%	10%
East Renfrewshire	196	149	179	20%	-9%
Edinburgh City	2598	1,995	2,124	6%	-18%
Falkirk	607	524	565	8%	-7%
Fife	1,149	937	1,196	28%	4%
Glasgow City	3,641	2,939	2,974	1%	-18%
Highland	614	574	545	-5%	-11%
Inverclyde	289	255	293	15%	1%
Midlothian	342	254	333	31%	-3%
Moray	223	145	261	80%	17%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	42	61	51	-16%	21%
North Ayrshire	516	488	438	-10%	-15%
North Lanarkshire	1,652	1,304	1,432	10%	-13%
Orkney Islands	26	18	19	6%	-27%
Perth & Kinross	394	319	434	36%	10%
Renfrewshire	689	577	548	-5%	-20%
Scottish Borders	328	258	314	22%	-4%
Shetland Islands	54	18	30	67%	-44%
South Ayrshire	430	331	356	8%	-17%
South Lanarkshire	1,244	1,097	1,165	6%	-6%
Stirling	301	217	285	31%	-5%
West Dunbartonshire	433	288	371	29%	-14%
West Lothian	665	649	576	-11%	-13%
Scotland ¹	20,994	17,171	19,347	13%	-8%

^{1.} The total figure for recorded crime excludes the new crimes being recorded under the recently enacted coronavirus legislation. Please see the <u>Crimes recorded under coronavirus legislation section</u> for more information.

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 <u>Code</u> of <u>Practice for Official Statistics</u>.

Scottish Government statisticians will continue to publish these bulletins each month. In due course, 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 most recent update, covering the 2019-20 reporting year, was published on 29th September 2020. 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.

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, suggested that there is good alignment between both of these administrative systems.

Before the Scottish Crime Recording Board (SCRB) approved this transition, a final confirmatory check of the full 2019-20 reporting year was carried out. This involved 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 findings 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 'nocriming'). 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 April 2021 data for this bulletin was extracted in May 2021. In order to compare on a like-for-like basis, data used for comparison was taken from the April 2020 bulletin published last year, which was extracted in May 2020. Since there was a relatively short time frame for amendments to have been made to the information for both bulletins, this information is likely to be subject to change as time passes. In contrast, information for April 2019 was extracted in May 2020. As more than a year had passed since the crimes were originally recorded and the vast majority of amendments were likely to have taken place, this data is unlikely to change. Some caution should therefore be taken in interpreting the changes between years, 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.

The annual National Statistics for 2019-20 and 2020-21 (when published) 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-2019-2020/

Annex 3: Feedback

We are always keen to hear users' views on our products and as this is 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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The data collected for this statistical bulletin:
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