

CRIME AND JUSTICE

Domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland, 2019-20

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This bulletin presents statistics on domestic abuse, based on details of incidents and crimes recorded by Police Scotland in 2019-20. Domestic abuse recorded by the police does not reveal the incidence of all domestic abuse committed in Scotland, as not all incidents are reported to the police. These figures are used to inform policy and, in conjunction with findings on partner abuse from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (see [Chapter 3](#)), are used to assess the extent and nature of domestic abuse in Scotland.

The definition of domestic abuse used by Police Scotland¹ is:

‘Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere including online’.

¹ Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) have a shared definition of domestic abuse available on the [Police Scotland website](#).

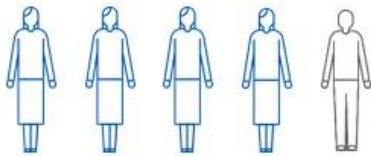
Key points

- The police recorded 62,907 incidents of domestic abuse in 2019-20, an increase of 4% compared to the previous year. This is the fourth year in a row this figure has shown an increase.
- In 2019-20, 40% of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland included the recording of at least one crime or offence.
- The type of crime or offence that was most frequently recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident in 2019-20 was Common assault, accounting for 34% of all crimes and offences recorded. This was followed by Breach of the peace etc. accounting for 26% of crimes and offences.
- Following its enactment on the 1 April 2019, crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 accounted for 4% of crimes and offences recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident in 2019-20.
- There were 115 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland per 10,000 population in 2019-20. At a local authority level, Dundee City (166), Clackmannanshire (152) and Glasgow City (151) recorded the highest incident rates per 10,000 population.
- Where gender information was recorded, around four-in-five (82%) incidents of domestic abuse in 2019-20 involved a female victim and a male accused. This was the same as in 2018-19.
- In 2019-20, 15% of domestic abuse incidents involved a male victim and a female accused (where gender information was recorded). This decreased slightly from 16% in 2018-19.
- In 2019-20, the 26 to 30 years old age group had the highest incident rate for victims (272 incidents recorded per 10,000 population). The 31 to 35 years old age group had the highest incident rate for the accused (257 incidents recorded per 10,000 population).
- Recorded incidents of domestic abuse were higher on a Saturday or Sunday than on any other day of the week, with these two days together accounting for 34% of incidents in 2019-20.
- In 2019-20, around nine-in-ten (88%) of all domestic abuse incidents occurred in a home or dwelling.

DOMESTIC ABUSE RECORDED BY THE POLICE IN SCOTLAND, 2019-20



WHO were the victims?

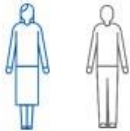


In 2019-20, more than **4 out of 5** (83%) victims of domestic abuse were female

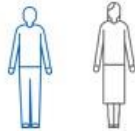
62,907

incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by the police in 2019-20

WHAT was the gender of the victims & accused?



82% of incidents involved a female victim & a male accused



15% of incidents involved a male victim & a female accused

In the remaining **3%** of cases, victim & accused were the same gender



■ Incident rates per 10,000 population above the Scottish average

WHERE did the incidents occur?



88% of domestic abuse incidents occurred in a home or dwelling



39% of domestic abuse incidents occurred in the victim's home

WHEN did the incidents occur?



34% of domestic abuse incidents occurred at the weekend



1. Introduction

This statistical bulletin provides information on **domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police in 2019-20** (from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020).

The definition of domestic abuse used by Police Scotland is²:

‘Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere including online’.

Police Scotland is responsible for operational policing in Scotland and is held to account by the Scottish Police Authority. [The Police and Fire Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#) changed the policing landscape in Scotland, replacing the previous eight police forces, the Scottish Police Services Authority and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency from 1 April 2013.

The creation of Police Scotland altered the way in which domestic abuse data was collected. Prior to 1 April 2013, each legacy force had a bespoke system to collect the data required. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 a new system – iVPD (interim Vulnerable Persons Database) was rolled out to the then 14 police divisions in Scotland. From 1 April 2014 onwards, all domestic abuse data has been collected through the iVPD.

Due to the changes in data collection, figures and tables throughout the bulletin are presented with clear breaks in the time series between 2013-14 and 2014-15. As such, some caution should be exercised in interpreting the statistics on the number of incidents recorded across years.

The data in this bulletin covers the 13 police divisions in Scotland (across all 32 local authorities). Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire & Moray police divisions merged together to form the North East police division in January 2016.

Information on crimes and offences³ recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident has been split into the seven crime and offence groupings used by the [Recorded Crime National Statistics](#). Further breakdowns of crime and offence groupings are also shown⁴ where relevant.

This annual ‘Domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland’ Official Statistics bulletin forms part of a series of bulletins on the criminal justice system, which can be found on the [Scottish Government website](#).

² Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) have a shared definition of domestic abuse available on the [Police Scotland website](#).

³ [Section 6.2](#) in Annex 1 provides definitions of ‘crime’ and ‘offence’.

⁴ [Section 6.3](#) in Annex 1 provides a full list of crimes and offences groupings.

All tables and figures, including additional tables, are available in the '[Supporting files](#)' for this bulletin.

1.1. What are these statistics used for?

Statistics on domestic abuse are used to inform the Scottish Government's [Justice in Scotland: vision and priorities](#). The report, published in summer 2017, defined an evidence-based set of outcomes along with a collective commitment to seven key collaborative priorities for the period 2017-2020 shared across Scottish justice organisations and partners. The latest [Justice vision and priorities delivery report – key achievements and impact of COVID-19](#), published in March 2021, summarises progress under the justice priorities since 2017, alongside describing the impact of COVID-19 on policy development and on the justice system.

These statistics are also used by a range of stakeholders to monitor trends, for policy research and development, and for social research purposes. Further information on users and uses of the statistics is available in [Section 4.2](#) of this bulletin.

1.2. How does the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 impact these statistics?

This bulletin covers the first year of operation for the [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#). The Act, which came into force on 1 April 2019, created a new offence for circumstances where a person engages in a course of behaviour⁵ which is abusive towards their partner or ex-partner.

The Act did not alter the way in which statistics on the volume of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police are collected and produced. As such its impact on this data is likely to be limited, albeit the associated awareness campaign to raise public understanding of domestic abuse, and to encourage victims to seek support, may have played a role in the 4% increase in incidents recorded this year.

The Act will have at least some impact on statistics showing the volume and type of crimes and offences recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident. Prior to the 1 April 2019, any criminal act which formed part of a domestic abuse incident (for example a common assault) was included within the statistics under the relevant crime or offence. From the 1 April 2019, where there is evidence that an incident forms part of a course of behaviour, new crimes of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 will also be recorded (split into whether they had a male or female victim).

In general, existing common law and statutory offences will continue to be recorded where appropriate, in addition to the new crimes. There are some exceptions, including offences which had previously been recorded under Breach of the peace etc. (primarily Threatening and abusive behaviour and Stalking). These should no longer be recorded when occurring as part of a course of behaviour for domestic abuse, with the new crime of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 taking

⁵ A course of behaviour involves behaviour on at least two occasions.

precedence. These exceptions all relate to activity in Group 6 Miscellaneous offences.

The number of Breach of the peace etc. offences recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident did decrease between 2018-19 and 2019-20 (from 9,499 to 8,758). However, this may in part be due to the continuation of a longer term trend, and in general it is difficult to quantify at this early stage the extent to which the new offence has affected the recording of Group 6 Miscellaneous offences. This will likely depend on the types of abusive behaviour that occur during a course of behaviour where the new offence may apply, some of which (such as psychological abuse) may not have included the recording of a crime or offence prior to the Act being passed.

Furthermore, in a limited number of cases when the incident occurred before 1 April 2019, offences that can now amount to a crime under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 (e.g. Threatening and abusive behaviour and Stalking) could not yet be considered as part of the Act and would have to be recorded separately. As time progresses since the introduction of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, these instances are likely to reduce.

Given this, some caution should be exercised when interpreting the statistics on the number of Group 6 Miscellaneous offences recorded before and after 1 April 2019 – due to the changes in the legislative and operational landscape used by police to record these crimes. This caution should also apply to the data presented on the percentage of domestic abuse incidents that include the recording of at least one crime or offence, albeit this remained relatively stable in the year following passage of the Act. Where relevant, further information on these changes is provided throughout this bulletin.

1.3. Do these statistics cover COVID-19 lockdown?

The statistics in this bulletin cover incidents of domestic abuse which occurred between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. The first COVID-19 lockdown started on 23 March 2020; therefore a small proportion (1.7% or 1,098 incidents) of the 2019-20 incidents occurred⁶ during this time.

More statistics on the impact of COVID-19 on domestic abuse incidents can be found in the [monthly reports on the Justice system](#). These reports have been introduced to provide users with a summary of the latest impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Justice system in Scotland. The information presented in these reports is compiled from a range of sources, including Official Statistics, Management Information published by partner bodies and administrative data. Police Scotland's Management Information⁷ provides provisional data on domestic abuse incidents recorded by police. The final position for 2020-21 will be reflected in the next edition of this bulletin.

⁶ This refers to the date the incident of domestic abuse occurred, rather than when it was recorded by the police.

⁷ Police Scotland's Quarterly Management Information reports are available from the 'Our Performance' section of [Police Scotland website](#).

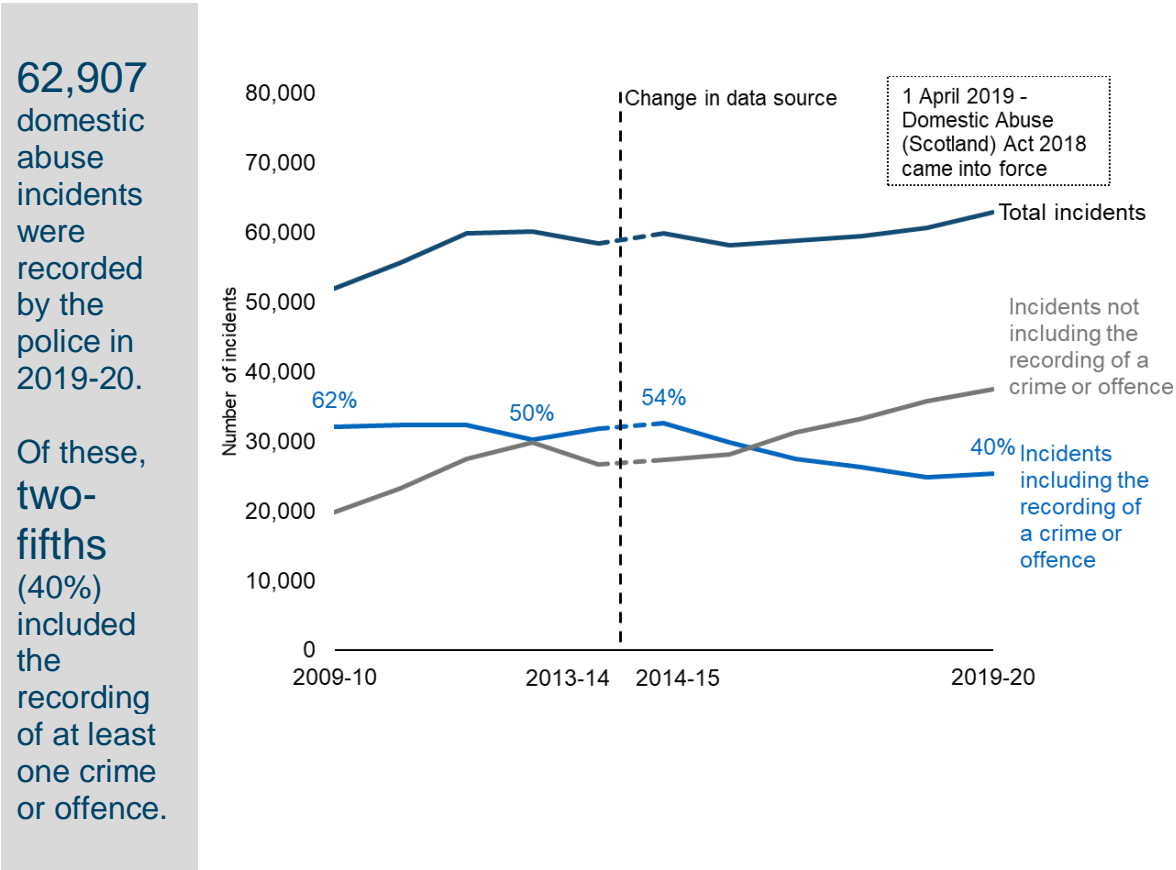
2. Domestic abuse incidents in Scotland

2.1. Incidents of domestic abuse

The police recorded 62,907 incidents of domestic abuse in 2019-20, an increase of 4% compared to the previous year ([Figure 1](#) & [Table 1](#)). This is the fourth year in a row this figure has shown an increase.

Of the 62,907 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2019-20, 40% (25,420) included the recording of at least one crime or offence⁸ (compared to 41% in 2018-19) ([Figure 1](#) & [Table 1](#)). The remaining 60% (37,487) did not include the recording of a crime or offence. [Section 2.3](#) provides information on incidents which do not include a crime or offence.

Figure 1: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, 2009-10 to 2019-20



Note: See [Annex 2](#) for information on the change in data source between 2013-14 and 2014-15.

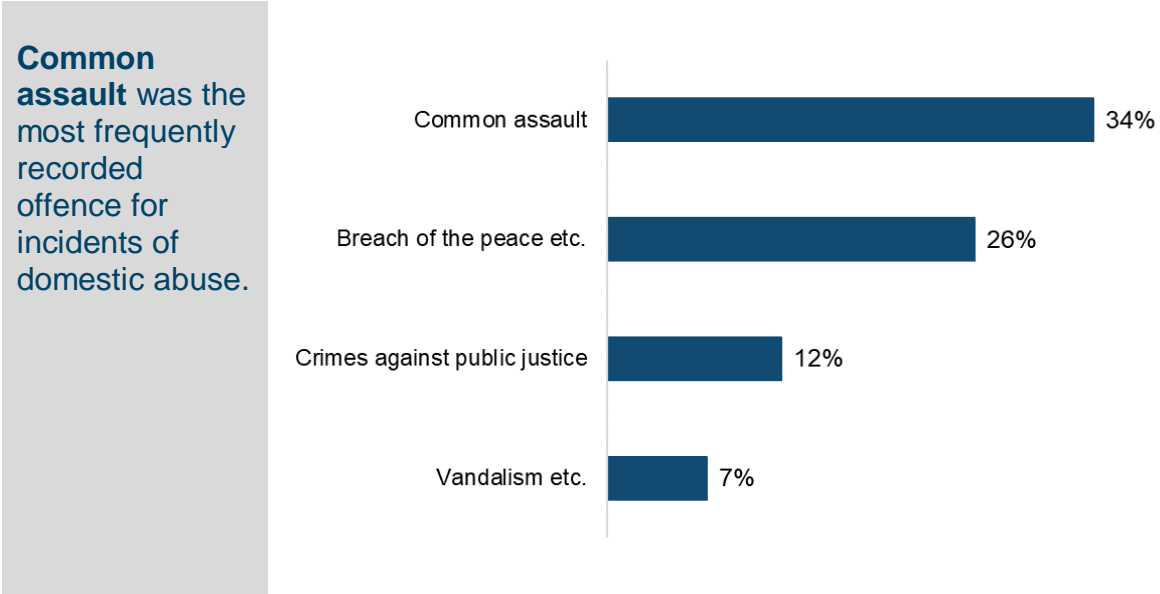
2.2. Incidents which included a crime or offence

For those domestic abuse incidents that included the recording of at least one crime or offence in 2019-20, the most frequently recorded was Common assault,

⁸ [Section 6.2](#) in Annex 1 provides definitions of ‘crime’ and ‘offence’.

accounting for 34% of all crimes and offences. This was followed by Breach of the peace etc. which accounted for 26% of all crimes and offences. Breach of the peace etc. includes Threatening or abusive behaviour and Stalking (24% and 2% of all crimes and offences respectively) ([Figure 2](#) & [Table 2](#)).

Figure 2: Most frequently recorded crimes and offences as part of incidents of domestic abuse, 2019-20



Note: An incident can have multiple crimes associated with it.

Following the enactment of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 on 1 April 2019, crimes recorded under the Act accounted for 4% of crimes and offences recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident in 2019-20. These amounted to 1,461 crimes recorded under the Act.

See [Section 1.2](#) on statistical impact for further information on how crimes and offences might have changed due to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018.

2.3. Incidents which did not include a crime or offence

In 2019-20, 60% of domestic abuse incidents within the interim Vulnerable Persons Database (iVPD) did not include the recording of at least one crime or offence. This reflects the definition of domestic abuse used by Police Scotland, which is not restricted to behaviour where criminal conduct has been identified and recorded.

The iVPD itself is not a crime recording system. Instead, it aims to collate disparate pieces of information about incidents into a single file, allowing officers to build a narrative about people who have reported or been involved in an incident with a domestic abuse element.

Further information on incidents which did not include a crime or offence

In 2016-17, Scottish Government statisticians reviewed a sample of domestic abuse incidents which did not include the recording of at least one crime or offence, to provide users with additional information on the circumstances of these incidents. Four hundred incidents from 2016-17 were randomly selected from the iVPD and a synopsis of each case was recorded. The findings, presented below, should be treated as a broad indication of the characteristics of these incidents. They are not an exact measure, given the associated possibility of sampling error and wide range of behaviours covered.

Around half of these incidents (52%) in 2016-17 were based on some form of argument between partners or ex-partners that excluded any reference to a physical confrontation or threatening behaviour. Of these cases, around two-thirds include one of the partners/ex-partners contacting the police, whilst in around 30% of cases a third party or other witness did so. A quarter of cases that refer to some form of argument include one of the parties contacting the police as they wanted the other person to leave.

Around a fifth of these incidents (19%) were based on concern about the communication or attempted communication of one partner/ex-partner towards the other (excluding any reference to an argument or a specific crime or offence). In almost all these cases it was one of the partners/ex-partners that contacted the police. This involved a range of different incidents, including frequent references to unwanted communication or attempted communication, which could be through electronic means (text messages, phone call) or in person. This category also includes incidents where one party was concerned about what their partner/ex-partner has said about them (sometimes to third parties).

Beyond the incidents above, the other cases cover a diverse range of situations. Some included the police being contacted for advice or an individual raising concerns without reference to any specific incident (7% of the sample). In some instances the police were contacted by one partner/ex-partner out of concern for the wellbeing of the other party (3%) or by someone wishing to retrieve their belongings from a partner/ex-partner (3%).

Finally, some incidents recorded in the iVPD in 2016-17 were best described as situations in which it is inferred that a crime or offence may have taken place (13% of the sample). In most of these cases (11% of the sample) further investigation determined either that a crime or offence had not occurred (for example by the police reviewing the content of text messages that were alleged to be threatening) or there was insufficient evidence for the police to record a crime or offence. In the other cases (2% of the sample), further discussion with Police Scotland determined that these incidents did include a crime or offence. This splits into cases where a crime or offence had been recorded in crime management systems⁹ but not added to the iVPD or where no crime or offence had been recorded at all.

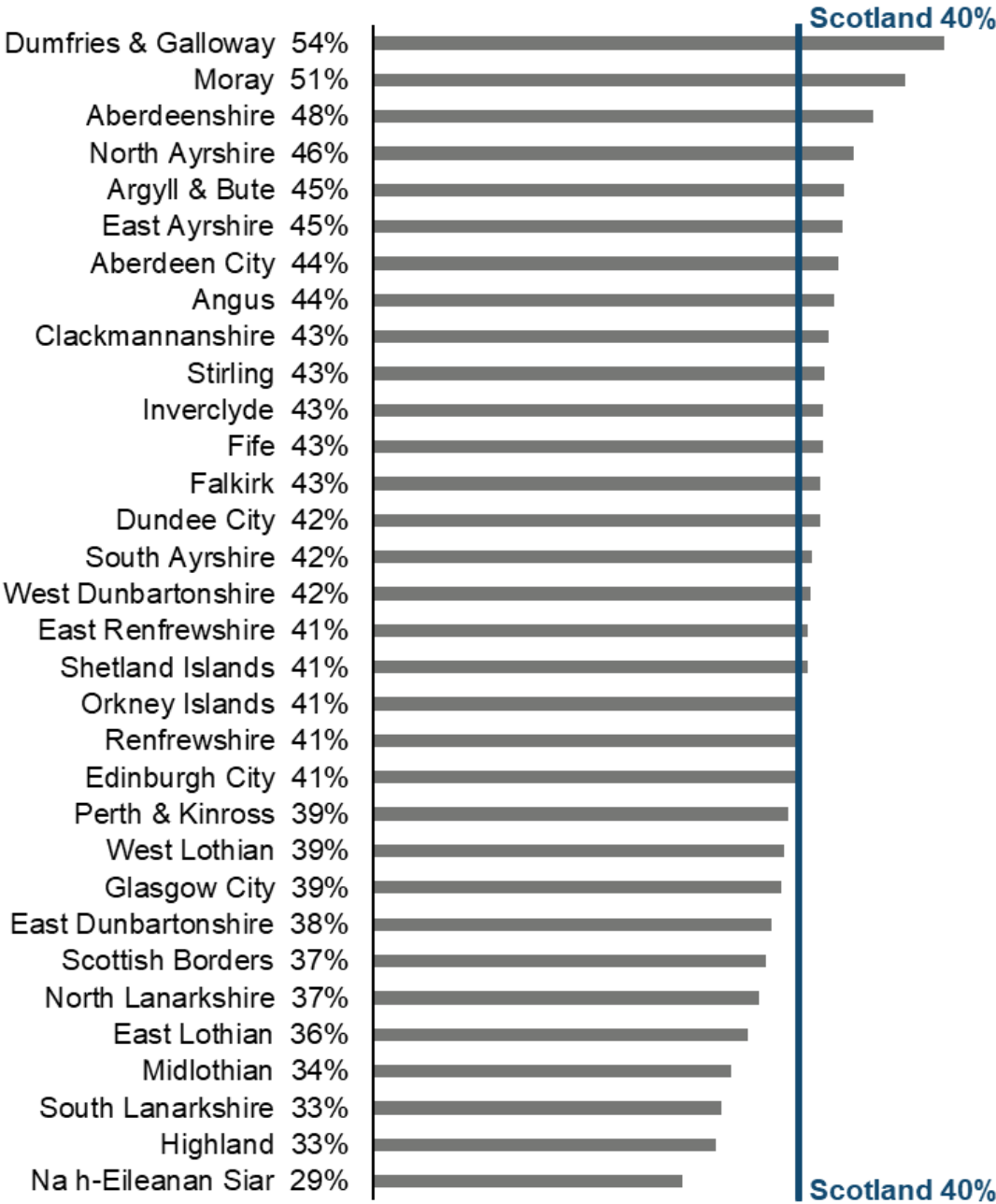
⁹ Incidents may result in the creation of one or more crime reports on the relevant crime management system. Different crime management systems are used Police Scotland to record and manage crime.

2.4. Incidents of domestic abuse by local authority

The number of police recorded domestic abuse incidents varied at the local authority level. Between 2018-19 and 2019-20, the majority (27) of local authorities recorded an increase in domestic abuse incidents, whereas five recorded a decrease ([Table 3](#)).

In 2019-20, the highest percentages of incidents of domestic abuse that also included the recording of at least one crime or offence were in Dumfries & Galloway (54%) and Moray (51%), whilst the lowest were in Na h-Eileanan Siar (29%), Highland and South Lanarkshire (both 33%) ([Figure 3](#) & [Table 4](#)).

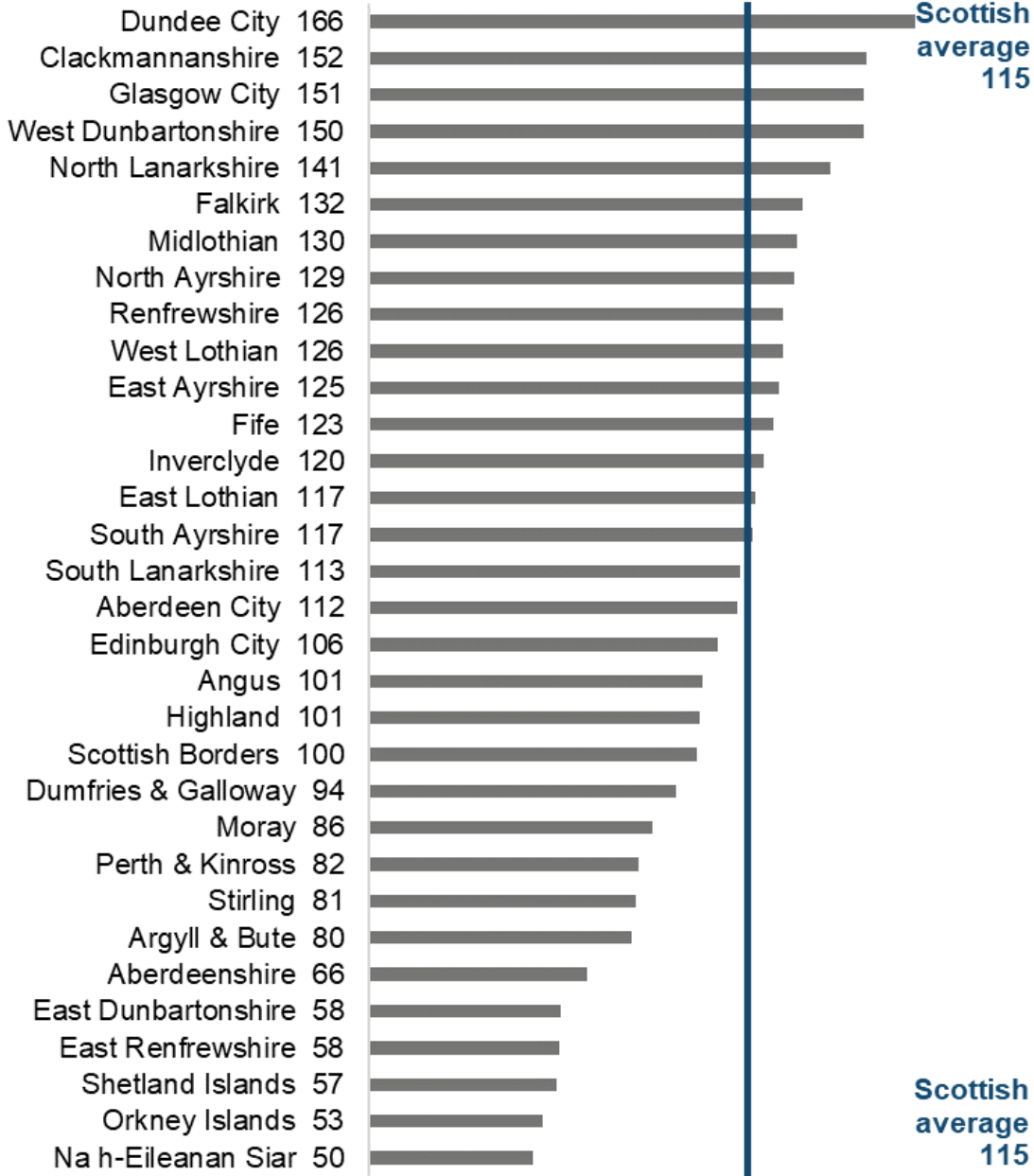
Figure 3: Percentage of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police which included at least one crime or offence being recorded, by local authority, 2019-20



2.5. Incidents of domestic abuse per 10,000 population

Taking the [population of Scotland](#) as at mid-year 2019, there were 115 recorded incidents of domestic abuse per 10,000 population in 2019-20. At a local authority level, Dundee City (166), Clackmannanshire (152) and Glasgow City (151) recorded the highest incident rates per 10,000 population. Na h-Eileanan Siar (50), Orkney Islands (53) and Shetland Islands (57) recorded the lowest rates per 10,000 population. ([Figure 4](#) & [Table 5](#)).

Figure 4: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police per 10,000 population, by local authority, 2019-20

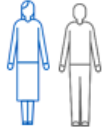


Note: Population estimates are at mid-year 2019 published by the [National Records of Scotland](#).

Characteristics of victim & accused

GENDER

82% of incidents



female victim
&
male accused

15% of incidents

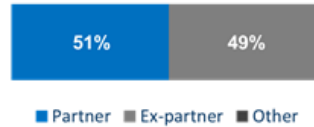


male victim
&
female accused

In the remaining 3% of cases, victim & accused were the same gender

RELATIONSHIP

Just over half of incidents were between **current partners**



■ Partner ■ Ex-partner ■ Other

AGE

26-30
year
olds

highest rate per 10,000
population for **victims**

31-35
year
olds

highest rate per 10,000
population for **accused**

Note: Current partner is defined here as spouse/civil partner, partner and co-habitee. Ex-partner is defined as ex-spouse/civil partner and ex-partner.

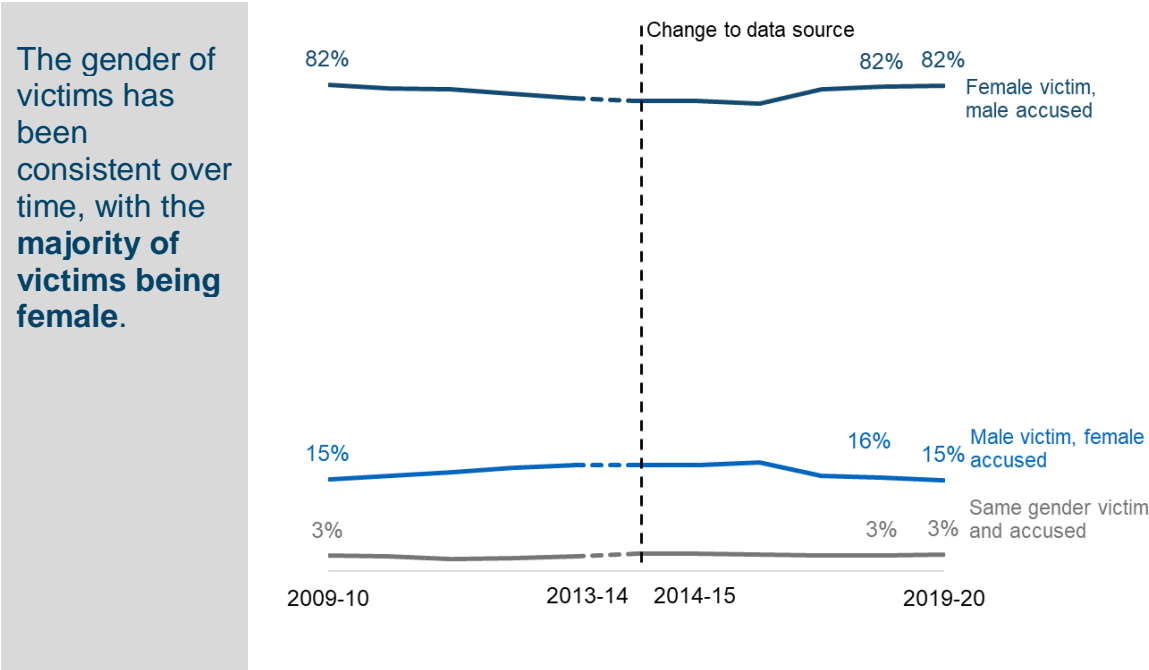
2.6. Gender of victim & accused

Where the victim's gender was known, the clear majority of victims in 2019-20 (83%) were female. Around four-in-five incidents (82%) of domestic abuse in 2019-20 had a female victim and a male accused. This was the same as in 2018-19.

Again, where the victim's gender was known, 17% of victims in 2019-20 were male. In 2019-20, 15% of domestic abuse incidents involved a male victim and a female accused. This decreased slightly from 16% in 2018-19.

In the remaining 3% of domestic abuse incidents, the victim and accused were the same gender. This figure has remained stable over several years ([Figure 5](#) & [Table 6](#)).

Figure 5: Gender of victim & accused¹, where known, 2009-10 to 2019-20



¹ The figure only displays incidents where gender of victim and accused is known. See [Annex 4](#) for more details on missing data.
 Note: See [Annex 2](#) for information on the change in data source between 2013-14 and 2014-15.

2.7. Relationship between victim & accused

In 2019-20, just over half (51%) of domestic abuse incidents, where the relationship¹⁰ between the victim and accused was known, were between current partners. 49% of incidents were between ex-partners ([Table 7](#)).

2.8. Age of victim & accused

In 2019-20, the 26 to 30 year old age group had the highest rate per 10,000 population for victims (272 incidents recorded per 10,000 population) ([Table 8](#)).

Female victims aged 26 to 30 had the highest rate (468) of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police per 10,000 population. Among male victims, the highest rate of incidents of domestic abuse recorded per 10,000 population, was for those aged 31 to 35 years, where the rate was 87 incidents recorded per 10,000 population ([Figure 6](#) & [Table 8](#)).

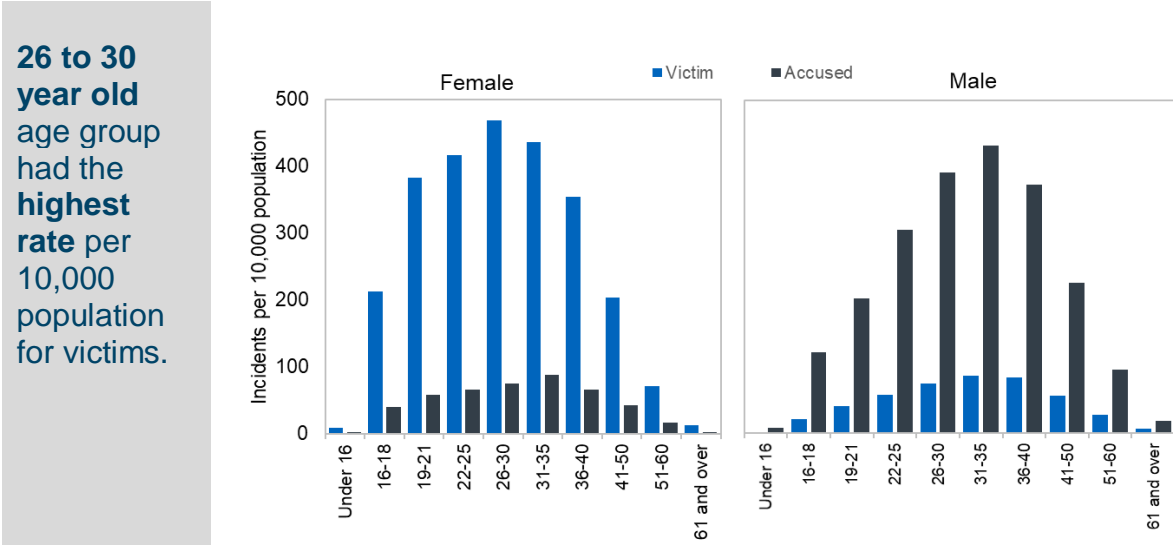
In 2019-20, the 31 to 35 years old age group had the highest incident rate per 10,000 population for those accused (257 incidents recorded per 10,000 population) ([Table 9](#)).

The 31 to 35 year old age group had the highest rate of domestic abuse among male accused (432 incidents recorded per 10,000 population). Among female accused, the

¹⁰ Current partner is defined here as spouse/civil partner, partner and co-habitee. Ex-partner is defined as ex-spouse/civil partner and ex-partner.

31 to 35 year old age group had the highest rate (87 incidents recorded per 10,000 population) ([Figure 6](#) & [Table 9](#)).

Figure 6: Gender and age of victim & accused¹, where known, 2019-20



¹ The figure only displays incidents where gender of victim and accused is known. See [Annex 4](#) for more details on missing data.
 Note: Population estimates are at mid-year 2019 published by the [National Records of Scotland](#).

2.9. Victim & accused repeat analysis

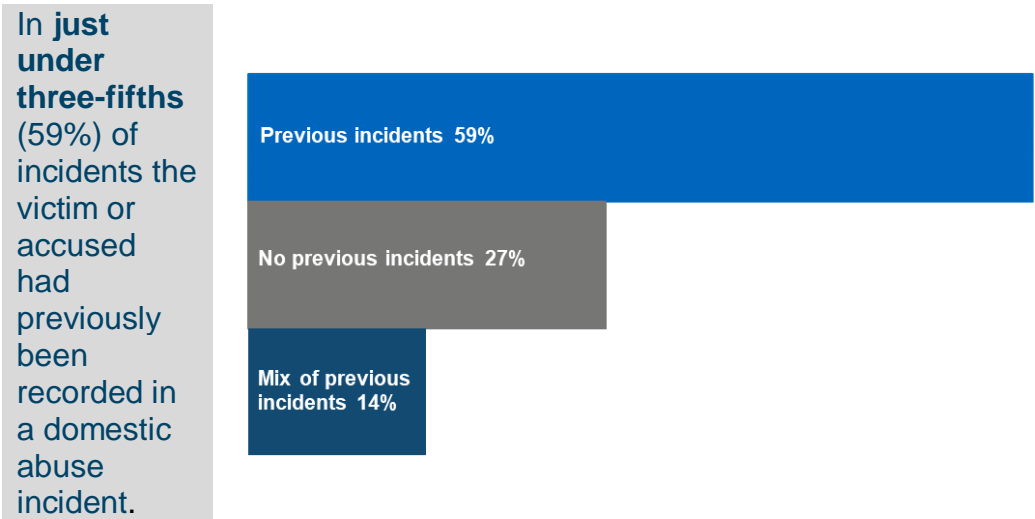
The iVPD enables the identification of a victim or accused that has previously been entered into the system for domestic abuse. A victim or accused can appear multiple times in the database in any one year, each classified as a separate incident.

As the iVPD was introduced and rolled out across the then 14 police divisions during 2013-14, the first and any subsequent reference to any victim or accused in the repeat categories below only refers to whether they were involved in an incident of domestic abuse from 2013-14 (part year depending on divisional roll out¹¹) and not in any years prior to the introduction of the iVPD.

In 2019-20, 21% (13,486) of domestic abuse incidents did not include sufficient information to confirm one way or the other whether at least one of either the victim or accused had previously been recorded in an incident of domestic abuse. For 59% (29,367) of the remaining 49,421 incidents, both the victim and accused had previously been recorded in an incident of domestic abuse – though these previously recorded incidents may have involved different partners/ex-partners. For 27% (13,382) of incidents, neither the victim nor the accused were found on the iVPD. In 14% (6,672) of incidents there was a mix of results for the victim and accused (i.e. only one of the victim or accused had previously been recorded) ([Table 10](#) & [Figure 7](#)).

¹¹ Each police division rolled out the iVPD at different times throughout 2013-14.

Figure 7: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by repeat victim/accused analysis, where known, 2019-20

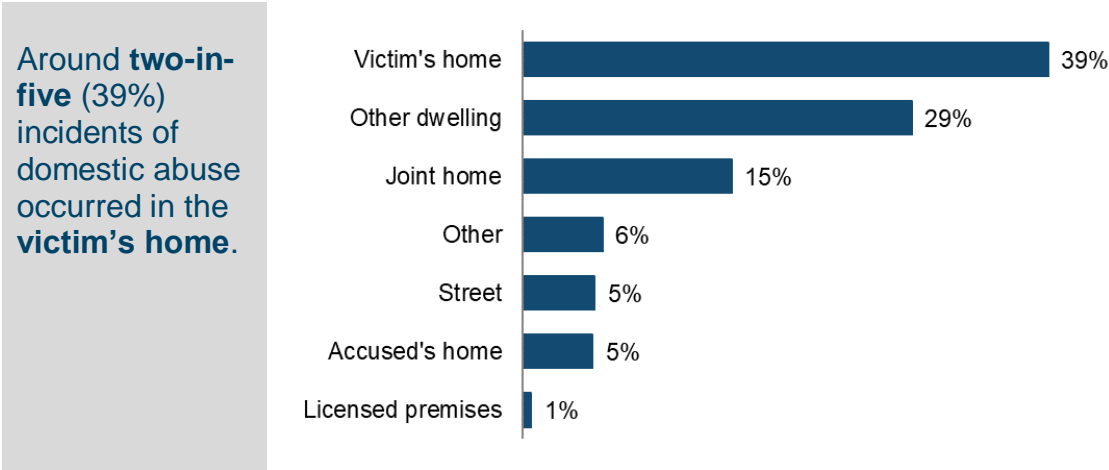


2.10. Location of incidents

In 2019-20, around nine-in-ten (88%) domestic abuse incidents occurred in a home or dwelling. This can be split into 39% of incidents that occurred within the victim’s own home, 15% that occurred within a joint home and 5% that occurred in the accused’s home. Around three-in-ten (29%) incidents occurred in an ‘other dwelling’.

The remaining 12% of incidents occurred in the street (5%), licensed premises (1%) or an ‘Other’ location (6%) ([Table 11](#) & [Figure 8](#)).

Figure 8: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by location, 2019-20



2.11. Day/month of occurrence

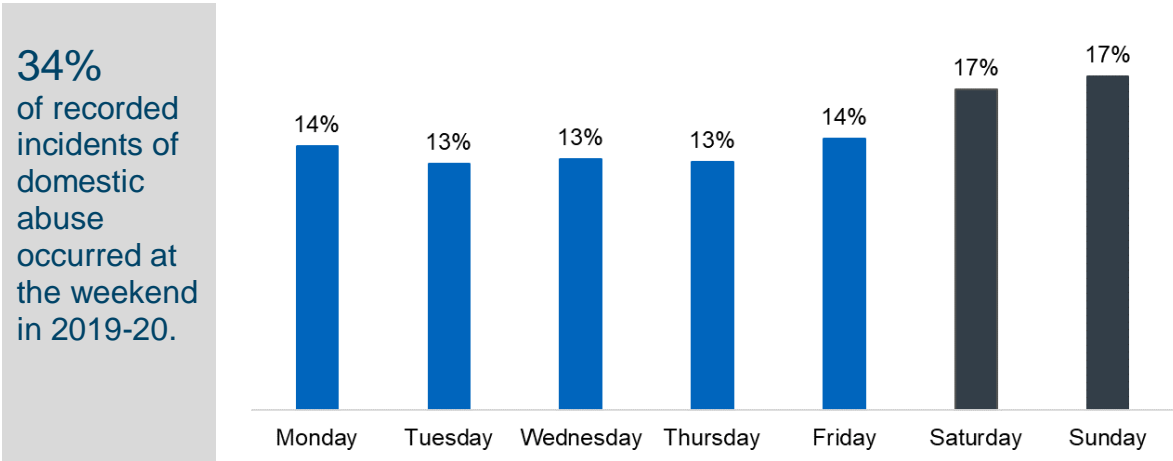
The following section is based on the date the incident of domestic abuse occurred, rather than when it was recorded by the police¹².

Recorded incidents of domestic abuse were higher on a Saturday or Sunday than on any other day of the week. These two days together account for just over a third (34%) of incidents in 2019-20 (Figure 9), similar to the proportion in 2018-19 (35%). The remaining two-thirds (66%) are spread fairly evenly from Monday to Friday.

When looking at the month that incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police occurred in 2019-20, no clear pattern emerges from the data, with incidents fairly evenly spread out across the year.

Tables for incidents by month are available within the 'Supporting files' section on the Domestic Abuse Statistics website.

Figure 9: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by the day of the week the incident occurred, 2019-20



2.12. Further information on Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 and the nature of crimes recorded by the police

As described in Section 1.2, the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 came into force on 1 April 2019 and created a new offence with respect to the engaging by a person in a course of behaviour which is abusive towards their partner or ex-partner.

Where there is evidence of a course of behaviour, new crime codes of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 (against a male or female victim) have been created. Generally, existing common law and statutory offences will continue to be recorded where appropriate, in addition to the new crimes.

¹² See Section 6.5 in Annex 2 for more information on the process of logging incidents.

It should be noted that these new crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 relate to a course of behaviour only and therefore do not include all crimes relating to domestic abuse.

Following its enactment on 1 April 2019, crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 accounted for 4% of crimes and offences recorded as part of a domestic abuse incident in 2019-20. These amounted to 1,461 crimes recorded under the Act.

Where the victim and accused's gender was known, the clear majority of crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 in 2019-20 involved a female victim and a male accused (93%). One-in-twenty (5%) had a male victim and a female accused. In the remaining 2% of cases, victim and accused were the same gender.

Where the relationship between the victim and accused was known, just under three-fifths (59%) of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 crimes were between ex-partners in 2019-20. The remaining two-fifths (40%) of crimes were between current partners.

The 25 to 34 years old age group had the highest rate for victims of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 crimes (7 crimes recorded per 10,000 population). The 25 to 34 years old age group also had the highest rate for accused of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 crimes (7 incidents recorded per 10,000 population).

Over half (54%) of crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 occurred in the victim's home in 2019-20, 17% in a joint home and 8% in the accused's home. 15% occurred in another dwelling, whilst small proportions occurred in an 'other' location (3%), or in the street (2%).

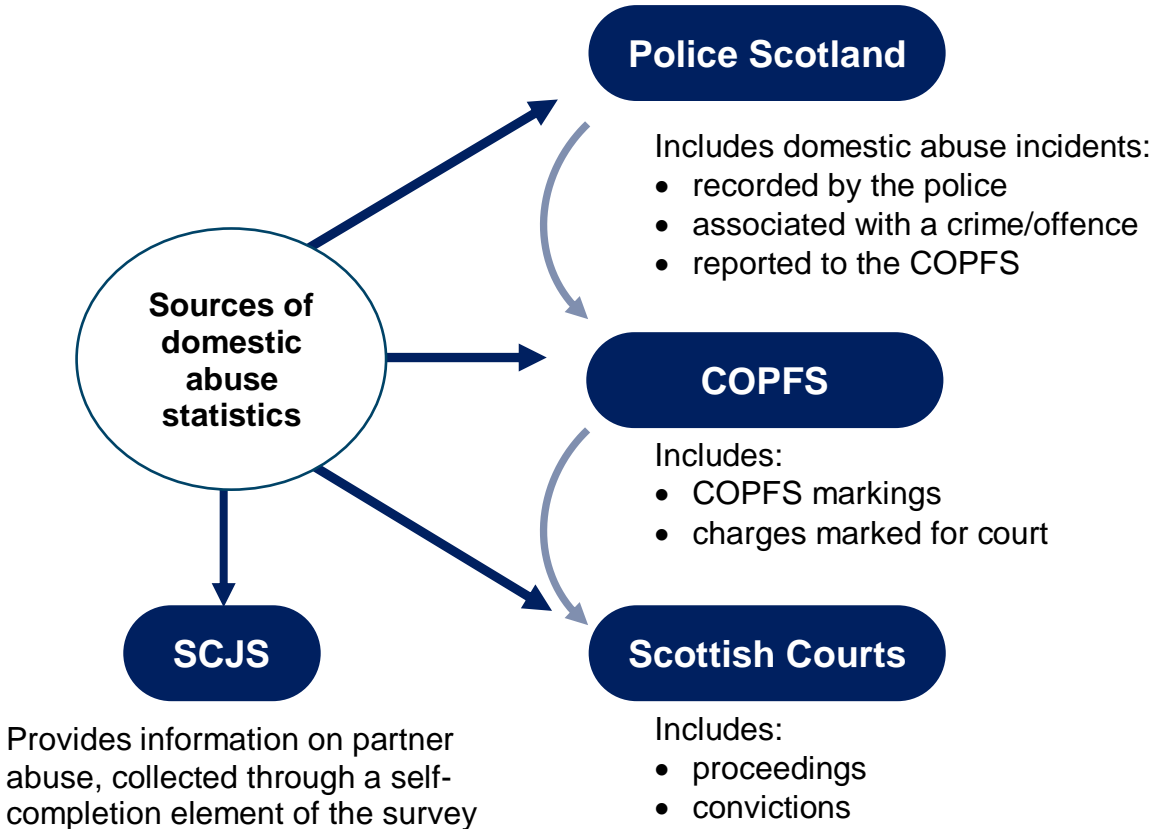
A summary table for these findings is provided in the '[Supporting files](#)' section on the Domestic Abuse Statistics website.

3. Domestic abuse in context

There are a number of data sources which collect information on domestic abuse in Scotland. These include:

- **Police Scotland**, who report the number of domestic abuse incidents recorded (presented in this publication as Official Statistics, and as Administrative Data in their [Quarterly Management Information reports](#))
- **The Scottish Government Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS)**, which provides information on partner abuse
- **The Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)**, who have information on Procurator Fiscal markings and how many charges are reported to courts
- **The Scottish Government Criminal Proceedings in Scotland statistics**, which provides information on proceedings and convictions which take place in the Scottish courts

The relationship between these sources is summarised in the following diagram.



3.1. Police Scotland Quarterly Management Information reports: Background

Police Scotland publish management information on the number of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police.

The Quarterly Management Information reports make clear to users that the data they contain on incidents of domestic abuse is based on the Administrative Data available to Police Scotland at that time and is not presented as Official Statistics. The annual Official Statistics on domestic abuse published within this bulletin are based on management information which has undergone further [quality assurance work](#), including additional dialogue with Police Scotland, in line with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

The Quarterly Management Information reports are available from the 'Our Performance' section of [Police Scotland website](#).

These reports are produced to demonstrate Police Scotland's commitment to transparency (alongside other regular reporting activity to the Scottish Police Authority). The information within these reports is presented on a cumulative quarterly basis, with the first quarter of a reporting year containing three months of data (from April to June), the second containing six months of data (from April to September) etc. The reports are typically published within two months of the period to which they refer.

3.2. Scottish Crime and Justice Survey: Background

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) is large-scale social survey run by the Scottish Government, which asks people about their experiences and perceptions of crime. The survey is based on a representative sample of adults (aged 16 and over), living in private households in Scotland.

The SCJS also provides results on the prevalence and nature of partner abuse. This data is collected through a self-completion module of the survey¹³. The latest survey, published in March 2021, includes findings on partner abuse for the period 2018/20¹⁴.

It should be noted that whilst the SCJS uses a definition of partner abuse consistent with that adopted by Police Scotland in recording domestic abuse incidents, there are several differences that affect the comparability of the data. These include the fact that:

- most incidents of domestic abuse go unreported to the police. The 2018/20 SCJS found that just under a sixth (16%) of those who experienced partner abuse in the 12 months prior to interview said that the police came to know

¹³ The SCJS is completed face-to-face in the homes of respondents, with sections on more sensitive topics, including questions on partner abuse, completed by the respondent themselves using the interviewer's laptop or tablet.

¹⁴ SCJS results for 2018-19 and 2019-20 have been combined to carry out the analysis.

about the most recent (or only) incident. The SCJS also found that when asked the reasons for not reporting the most recent (or only) incident of partner abuse to the police, the most common reasons given were that those involved dealt with the incident themselves (36%), that the abuse was too trivial/not worth reporting (31%), or that the abuse was a private, personal or family matter (30%). This is a consistent finding with previous years

- the SCJS is a sample of those aged 16 and over living in private households. As such, adults living in other circumstances (for example tourists and those staying in institutions or communal residences, such as prisons or hospitals, military bases and student accommodation) or those aged under 16 are not included in the SCJS estimates
- the SCJS captures the victim's self-reported experience of partner abuse. Although this part of the survey is completed in private, some respondents may choose not to disclose information on particular incidents

The SCJS found that between 2008/09 and 2018/20 the proportion of respondents who had a partner, or contact with an ex-partner, in the 12 months prior to interview who experienced any partner abuse decreased from 4.2% to 3.2%. There has been no statistically significant change between 2016/18¹⁵ and 2018/20 in the proportion of respondents experiencing any partner abuse in the 12 months prior to interview. A higher proportion of women than men experienced partner abuse in the 12 months prior to interview, at 3.7% and 2.6% respectively.

More detailed information, along with explanatory notes, is available on the [SCJS website](#).

3.3. Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service: Background

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) publish management information on the number of charges reported to COPFS with a domestic abuse aggravator recorded against them. These figures also include the number taken forward to court, dealt with by direct measures (such as a fine), or where no action was taken.

More detailed information, along with explanatory notes, is available in the statistics section of the [COPFS website](#).

3.4. Criminal Proceedings in Scotland statistics: Background

Statistics on proceedings and convictions which take place in the Scottish courts are published through the [Criminal Proceedings in Scotland](#) publication. These statistics are derived from data held on the Criminal History System (CHS), a central database used for the recording of information on persons accused and/or convicted of committing a criminal act. The publication presents the number of convictions under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) 2018, convictions for crimes with statutory

¹⁵ SCJS results for 2016-17 and 2017-18 have been combined to carry out the analysis.

aggravations for domestic abuse, and convictions for crimes where a domestic abuse identifier was applied. Aggravations need to be proved in court and are taken into account during sentencing, which may result in a higher penalty being given.

There were 206 convictions in 2019-20 for crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018. This was out of 246 people proceeded against, giving a conviction rate of 84%. The majority of people (61%) convicted under this Act in 2019-20 received a community sentence and 19% received a custodial sentence with an average sentence length of about a year (363 days). Although this crime came into effect at the start of 2019-20, the full course of conduct has to have taken place on or after 1 April 2019. Therefore there will have been a time lag before such crimes could be reported, hence this year does not effectively cover a full year under the Act and further data is needed before sentencing patterns are clear.

A statutory aggravation for domestic abuse involving a child can be applied to crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018. There were 38 convictions for this aggravation in 2019-20. As per the crime, it came into effect for a course of conduct committed on or after 1 April 2019, and so does not effectively cover a full year.

The [Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) created a statutory aggravation of domestic abuse which came into force in April 2017. This can be applied to any relevant crime or offence (for example to Common assault). This aggravation was proven in 8,120 convictions in 2019-20, which is a 5% increase from 7,751 in 2018-19.

In 2019-20, the most common crime types with a domestic abuse statutory aggravation that people were convicted of were Breach of the peace (44% of domestic abuse convictions), followed by Common assault (26%) and Crimes against public justice (19%). The vast majority of the Breach of the peace-type convictions were for offences of Threatening or abusive behaviour or Stalking.

The CHS also includes some codes that are not statutory, but are used as identifiers to highlight particular cases to the police, COPFS, or Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. This includes an identifier for domestic abuse, which identifies domestic abuse related charges for operational purposes, whether or not the statutory domestic abuse aggravation applies to them. There were 9,355 convictions where a domestic abuse identifier was recorded against the main charge in 2019-20, an increase of 2% from 2018-19 (9,205 convictions). This represents the first year this has increased after decreases each year since 2015-16 onwards.

Note that the introduction of the new domestic abuse crime under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 in 2019-20 may have affected the number of convictions with a domestic abuse identifier or statutory aggravation. This crime covers a course of conduct. Before the introduction of the crime, this may have resulted in multiple convictions for different offences at different times, whereas now they may result in a single conviction (with a more severe penalty). [COPFS' Domestic Abuse and Stalking Charges 2019-20 Statistics](#) on the number of charges reported to them showed that the percentage of charges for stalking with a domestic abuse identifier fell from 72% in 2018-19 to 65% in 2019-20.

4. Future developments

4.1. Review of administrative data source

As described in [Chapter 1](#), the iVPD has been used to produce the Domestic Abuse in Scotland Official Statistics since 2014-15. Police Scotland use the iVPD to record information about individuals who are, or are perceived to be, experiencing some form of adversity and/or situational vulnerability which may impact on their current or future wellbeing. Its primary function is to support the day-to-day operational procedures of Police Scotland.

We previously informed users of upcoming work to assess the suitability of Police Scotland's database STORM (System for Tasking and Operational Resource Management) as an alternative source for producing these Official Statistics on the number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police. However, due to COVID-19 this work was postponed. Through further discussion with Police Scotland, we have decided to continue using iVPD as the source of these statistics until a new national crime management system is introduced. This is seen as a potentially more valuable source of data on this topic, and is likely to hold similar information to the iVPD.

We will provide further updates on changes to the production process through the [ScotStat](#) network and in future bulletins.

4.2. Stakeholder consultations & users of these statistics

These statistics are used by a range of stakeholders within central government, the police and other public bodies for a variety of purposes.

Domestic abuse statistics are also used by a variety of external stakeholders, including victim support groups, national and local journalism, academics and students and school pupils writing dissertations and carrying out projects.

Official statistics are a tool used in decision making both inside and outside government, and for this tool to be effective it has to be designed to meet the needs of users. We always welcome feedback on the content and the uses made of our statistical bulletins and users are invited to submit their comments and any suggestions for improvement to: Justice_Analysts@gov.scot.

In 2019, the [Scottish Crime Recording Board](#) undertook a consultation on how the [National Statistics on Recorded Crime](#) are presented. This included inviting users' views on some potential changes in approach to the seven group structure currently used to present statistics on recorded crime (including [Table 2](#) in this bulletin). The consultation closed on 30 November 2019.

This work was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant increase in demand for associated analysis (for example the recent introduction of new monthly official statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police). However, it has

recently resumed and a [Summary of responses and a discussion of next steps](#) document has been published.

Further information on this consultation can be found on the Scottish Government [Consultation Hub website](#).

5. Tables

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5.1. Additional tables

All tables and figures, including additional tables, are available in the '[Supporting files](#)' section on the Domestic Abuse Statistics website.

Table 1: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, Scotland, 1999-00 to 2019-20¹

Incident type	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	Number 2009-10
Incidents including the recording of a crime or offence	14,653	13,950	13,926	15,669	21,593	21,829	23,506	23,832	25,127	29,526	32,066
Crimes	1,884	2,296	2,304	2,817	3,612	4,679	4,876	5,235	5,639	6,416	6,630
Offences	12,769	11,654	11,622	12,852	17,981	17,150	18,630	18,597	19,488	23,110	25,436
Incidents <u>not</u> including the recording of a crime or offence	18,534	21,175	21,322	20,208	19,642	21,804	21,825	25,052	24,822	24,405	19,860
Total incidents	33,187	35,125	35,248	35,877	41,235	43,633	45,331	48,884	49,949	53,931	51,926

Incident type	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Number 2019-20
Incidents including the recording of a crime or offence	32,370	32,369	30,259	31,769	32,569	29,906	27,495	26,273	24,831	25,420
Crimes	7,161	7,710	7,488	8,260	-	-	7,621	8,017	8,303	9,944
Offences	25,209	24,659	22,771	23,509	-	-	19,874	18,256	16,528	15,476
Incidents <u>not</u> including the recording of a crime or offence	23,328	27,478	29,821	26,670	27,313	28,198	31,315	33,268	35,810	37,487
Total incidents	55,698	59,847	60,080	58,439	59,882	58,104	58,810	59,541	60,641	62,907

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 2: Crimes and offences recorded by the police⁸ as part of incidents of domestic abuse (where a crime or offence has been included), Scotland, 2019-20

Crimes and offences	2019-20	
	Number	Percentage
Non-sexual crimes of violence	2,108	6%
Homicide	7	0%
Attempted murder and serious assault	427	1%
Robbery	96	0%
Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	1,461	4%
Other non-sexual crimes of violence	117	0%
Sexual offences	1,169	3%
Rape and attempted rape	400	1%
Sexual assault	294	1%
Crimes associated with prostitution	2	0%
Other sexual offences	473	1%
Dishonesty	1,254	4%
Housebreaking	89	0%
Theft by opening lockfast places	20	0%
Theft from motor vehicle	144	0%
Theft of motor vehicle	1	0%
Other theft	832	2%
Fraud	167	0%
Other dishonesty	1	0%
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	2,417	7%
Fire raising	27	0%
Vandalism, etc.	2,390	7%
Other crimes	4,401	13%
Crimes against public justice	4,156	12%
Handling offensive weapons	209	1%
Drugs	30	0%
Other crime	6	0%
Miscellaneous offences²	22,284	66%
Common assault	11,606	34%
Breach of the peace etc. ³	8,758	26%
<i>Threatening and abusive behaviour</i>	8,071	24%
<i>Stalking</i>	590	2%
Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct	2	0%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,918	6%
Motor vehicles offences	75	0%
Total	33,708	100%

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 3: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by local authority, 2009-10 to 2019-20¹

Local authority	Number										
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Aberdeen City	2,415	2,323	2,449	2,648	2,487	3,088	2,570	2,522	2,773	2,496	2,566
Aberdeenshire	584	550	605	787	886	1,408	1,330	1,463	1,616	1,497	1,737
Angus	947	969	1,187	1,154	1,241	1,329	1,226	1,125	1,139	1,041	1,179
Argyll & Bute	503	521	563	536	556	643	653	634	655	650	687
Clackmannanshire	707	833	792	713	782	704	698	776	831	700	781
Dumfries & Galloway	1,176	1,407	1,291	1,411	1,272	1,230	1,146	1,047	1,246	1,296	1,394
Dundee City	2,305	2,366	2,440	2,525	2,442	2,525	2,365	2,266	2,103	2,328	2,480
East Ayrshire	1,273	1,387	1,430	1,413	1,509	1,567	1,535	1,348	1,405	1,468	1,524
East Dunbartonshire	537	661	650	665	623	572	658	610	563	629	634
East Lothian	902	970	929	1,023	1,025	1,000	903	938	938	1,153	1,258
East Renfrewshire	421	481	555	551	463	535	491	518	536	510	554
Edinburgh City	4,923	5,233	5,287	5,313	5,231	5,730	5,541	5,445	5,722	5,807	5,575
Falkirk	1,862	2,019	2,080	1,997	2,014	1,951	2,142	2,162	2,116	1,982	2,123
Fife	4,055	3,847	4,519	4,800	4,621	4,200	4,070	4,457	4,455	4,483	4,599
Glasgow City	8,866	10,160	11,116	10,220	9,559	8,974	8,596	8,888	8,853	9,202	9,539
Highland	879	1,451	1,872	2,102	2,047	2,247	2,312	2,350	2,336	2,387	2,374
Inverclyde	640	773	951	896	811	889	812	872	894	874	935
Midlothian	933	860	1,036	1,125	1,124	1,103	1,116	1,040	987	1,179	1,206
Moray	389	593	694	620	377	749	730	760	714	803	828
Na h-Eileanan Siar	58	102	114	94	124	145	154	152	167	167	133
North Ayrshire	1,770	1,791	1,897	1,820	1,837	1,830	1,725	1,677	1,590	1,671	1,744
North Lanarkshire	4,157	3,662	3,680	3,996	3,900	3,963	4,006	4,406	4,587	4,824	4,801
Orkney Islands	44	107	108	95	107	114	138	102	107	127	118
Perth & Kinross	956	1,060	1,162	1,236	1,351	1,529	1,221	1,180	1,142	1,199	1,249
Renfrewshire	1,658	2,179	2,431	2,333	2,304	2,235	2,151	2,230	2,132	2,147	2,260
Scottish Borders	808	760	801	930	864	911	915	978	1,090	1,019	1,152
Shetland Islands	37	70	103	101	86	107	134	115	124	120	131
South Ayrshire	1,208	1,245	1,265	1,292	1,253	1,296	1,126	1,010	1,027	1,074	1,313
South Lanarkshire	2,717	2,920	3,166	3,064	3,026	3,085	3,253	3,285	3,311	3,504	3,619
Stirling	834	850	833	790	768	785	826	818	802	732	766
West Dunbartonshire	1,362	1,485	1,709	1,518	1,460	1,220	1,358	1,395	1,375	1,316	1,338
West Lothian	2,000	2,063	2,132	2,312	2,289	2,218	2,203	2,241	2,205	2,256	2,310
Scotland	51,926	55,698	59,847	60,080	58,439	59,882	58,104	58,810	59,541	60,641	62,907

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 4: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police and whether they included a crime or offence, by local authority, 2019-20

Local authority	Number & Percentage		
	2019-20		
	Number of incidents	% of incidents including a crime or offence	% of incidents not including a crime or offence
Aberdeen City	2,566	44%	56%
Aberdeenshire	1,737	48%	52%
Angus	1,179	44%	56%
Argyll & Bute	687	45%	55%
Clackmannanshire	781	43%	57%
Dumfries & Galloway	1,394	54%	46%
Dundee City	2,480	42%	58%
East Ayrshire	1,524	45%	55%
East Dunbartonshire	634	38%	62%
East Lothian	1,258	36%	64%
East Renfrewshire	554	41%	59%
Edinburgh City	5,575	41%	59%
Falkirk	2,123	43%	57%
Fife	4,599	43%	57%
Glasgow City	9,539	39%	61%
Highland	2,374	33%	67%
Inverclyde	935	43%	57%
Midlothian	1,206	34%	66%
Moray	828	51%	49%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	133	29%	71%
North Ayrshire	1,744	46%	54%
North Lanarkshire	4,801	37%	63%
Orkney Islands	118	41%	59%
Perth & Kinross	1,249	39%	61%
Renfrewshire	2,260	41%	59%
Scottish Borders	1,152	37%	63%
Shetland Islands	131	41%	59%
South Ayrshire	1,313	42%	58%
South Lanarkshire	3,619	33%	67%
Stirling	766	43%	57%
West Dunbartonshire	1,338	42%	58%
West Lothian	2,310	39%	61%
Scotland	62,907	40%	60%

Table 5: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police per 10,000 population⁴, by local authority, 2009-10 to 2019-20¹

Local authority	Rate per 10,000 population										
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16 ⁹	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Aberdeen City	111	106	110	118	110	135	112	110	121	110	112
Aberdeenshire	23	22	24	31	34	54	51	56	62	57	66
Angus	82	84	102	99	107	114	105	97	98	90	101
Argyll & Bute	56	59	63	62	63	73	75	73	75	75	80
Clackmannanshire	138	162	154	139	152	138	136	151	162	136	152
Dumfries & Galloway	78	93	85	94	85	82	77	70	84	87	94
Dundee City	159	162	166	171	165	170	160	153	141	157	166
East Ayrshire	104	113	117	115	123	128	126	110	115	120	125
East Dunbartonshire	51	63	62	63	59	54	62	57	52	58	58
East Lothian	92	98	93	101	101	98	88	90	89	109	117
East Renfrewshire	47	53	61	61	51	58	53	55	57	54	58
Edinburgh City	106	111	111	110	107	116	111	107	111	112	106
Falkirk	121	130	133	127	128	124	135	136	132	124	132
Fife	112	106	124	131	126	114	111	120	120	121	123
Glasgow City	152	173	187	172	160	150	142	145	143	147	151
Highland	38	63	80	90	88	96	99	100	99	101	101
Inverclyde	78	95	117	111	101	111	102	110	114	112	120
Midlothian	114	104	124	134	133	128	128	117	110	129	130
Moray	42	63	74	67	40	79	76	79	75	84	86
Na h-Eileanan Siar	21	37	41	34	45	53	57	57	62	62	50
North Ayrshire	128	130	137	132	134	134	127	123	117	124	129
North Lanarkshire	124	109	109	118	115	117	118	130	135	142	141
Orkney Islands	21	50	50	44	50	53	64	47	49	57	53
Perth & Kinross	66	73	79	84	91	103	81	78	76	79	82
Renfrewshire	96	125	139	134	132	128	123	127	121	121	126
Scottish Borders	71	67	70	82	76	80	80	85	95	88	100
Shetland Islands	16	30	44	44	37	46	58	50	54	52	57
South Ayrshire	107	111	112	114	111	115	100	90	91	95	117
South Lanarkshire	87	93	101	97	96	98	103	104	104	110	113
Stirling	94	95	92	87	84	86	89	87	85	78	81
West Dunbartonshire	150	164	189	168	163	136	152	155	153	148	150
West Lothian	116	119	122	131	130	125	123	124	122	124	126
Scotland	99	106	113	113	110	112	108	109	110	112	115

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 6: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by gender of victim & accused, 2009-10 to 2019-20¹

Gender of victim & accused	Number & Percentage										
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Female victim, male accused	41,927	44,951	46,439	45,916	42,120	39,483	43,158	42,759	39,864	39,721	40,803
<i>% of total known</i>	82	81	81	80	80	79	79	79	81	82	82
Male victim, female accused	7,938	8,889	9,569	9,946	9,435	8,901	9,845	9,957	7,929	7,686	7,657
<i>% of total known</i>	15	16	17	17	18	18	18	18	16	16	15
Female victim, female accused	682	736	566	605	612	671	743	737	617	660	706
<i>% of total known</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Male victim, male accused	666	693	659	677	724	854	877	835	740	657	742
<i>% of total known</i>	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1
Not recorded or other ⁵	713	429	2,614	2,936	5,548	9,973	3,481	4,522	10,391	11,917	12,999
Total	51,926	55,698	59,847	60,080	58,439	59,882	58,104	58,810	59,541	60,641	62,907

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 7: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by relationship between victim & accused, Scotland, 2019-20

2019-20		
Relationship between victim and accused	Number	Percentage ¹⁰
Spouse/Civil partner	5,918	11%
Co-habitee	9,397	17%
Partner	12,304	23%
Ex-spouse/Civil partner	2,453	4%
Ex-partner	24,124	44%
Other	488	1%
Unknown	8,223	-
Total	62,907	100%

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 8: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by age & gender of victim, Scotland, 2019-20

Age group of victim	Gender of victim				Rate per 10,000 population ^{4, 6}		
	Female	Male	Not recorded or other ⁴	Total	Female	Male	Total
Under 16	373	103	1	477	8	2	5
16-18	1,709	185	8	1,902	212	22	116
19-21	3,674	410	1	4,085	383	41	209
22-25	5,913	839	8	6,760	417	58	235
26-30	9,027	1,438	8	10,473	468	75	272
31-35	8,033	1,556	4	9,593	435	87	264
36-40	6,297	1,444	1	7,742	354	84	221
41-50	7,244	1,883	-	9,127	203	56	132
51-60	2,874	1,090	-	3,964	71	28	50
61 and over	859	411	-	1,270	12	7	10
Unknown	96	84	7,334	7,514	-	-	-
Total	46,099	9,443	7,365	62,907	165	35	115

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 9: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by age & gender of accused, Scotland, 2019-20

Age group of accused	Gender of accused				Rate per 10,000 population ^{4, 6}		
	Female	Male	Not recorded or other ⁵	Total	Female	Male	Total
Under 16	91	373	1	465	2	8	5
16-18	316	1,024	5	1,345	39	122	82
19-21	562	2,011	5	2,578	59	203	132
22-25	928	4,429	3	5,360	65	305	187
26-30	1,437	7,513	7	8,957	75	391	233
31-35	1,611	7,738	8	9,357	87	432	257
36-40	1,175	6,415	4	7,594	66	373	217
41-50	1,517	7,580	4	9,101	43	226	131
51-60	648	3,649	1	4,298	16	95	54
61 and over	171	1,167	-	1,338	2	19	10
Unknown	62	247	12,205	12,514	-	-	-
Total	8,518	42,146	12,243	62,907	30	158	115

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 10: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by whether the victim/accused has previous history of domestic abuse⁷ recorded, Scotland, 2019-20

Victim's history	Accused history			Number
	No previous incident	Previous incidents	Not recorded	Total
No Previous Incidents	13,382	2,632	2,028	18,042
Previous Incidents	4,040	29,367	3,453	36,860
Not recorded	407	408	7,190	8,005
Total	17,829	32,407	12,671	62,907

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

Table 11: Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, by location of incident, Scotland, 2019-20

Location	Number & Percentage	
	2019-20	
Location	Number	Percentage ¹⁰
Joint home	9,701	15%
Victim's home	24,353	39%
Accused's home	3,259	5%
Other dwelling	18,070	29%
Street	3,357	5%
Licensed premises	403	1%
Other	3,712	6%
Unknown	52	-
TOTAL	62,907	100%

Please see [Notes for tables](#) at end of this chapter.

5.2. Notes for tables

1. Domestic abuse information earlier than 2014-15 was recorded using different systems for each legacy police force. Police practice in deciding when behaviour would justify the recording of a crime or offence may also differ. These differences influenced the number and proportion of incidents which led to the recording of a crime or offence. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, the interim Vulnerable Person Database (iVPD) system was adopted nationally across all police divisions via a phased roll out. See [Chapter 1](#) and [Annex 2](#) for more details. The vertical dashed line in the table between 2013-14 and 2014-15 indicates this change in data source. See [Section 6.9](#) for more information on historical changes in methodology.
2. Some caution should be exercised when interpreting the statistics on the number of Miscellaneous offences recorded before and after 1 April 2019 – due to the changes in the legislative and operational landscape used by police to record these crimes. See [Section 1.2](#) for more information on how crimes and offences might have changed due to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018.
3. Threatening or abusive behaviour and Stalking are included in the sub-group Breach of the peace etc.
4. [Mid-2019 population estimates](#) from the National Records of Scotland are used in this bulletin.
5. The category ‘Not recorded or other’ includes both incidents where gender has not been recorded and is therefore unknown (almost 100% of cases) and incidents where the victim or accused was recorded as transgender. Since 2017-18 there has been an increase in the number of incidents where the gender of the victim and/or the accused was unknown. For further information about this change see [Annex 2](#).
6. Due to data with no age and gender rates per 10,000 population will be lower than expected. See [Annex 4](#) for more details of missing data.
7. A victim/accused can appear in the iVPD multiple times in one reporting year. See [Section 2.9](#) for more details on repeat victims and accused.
8. More than one crime or offence may be recorded in one incident.
9. Please note that 2015-16 data in [Table 5](#) has been revised to correct inaccuracies in the rates per 10,000 population by local authority. The rate for Scotland overall has not been affected by the error.
10. Percentage calculated where the relationship between victim and accused was known.

6. Annexes

Annex 1: Terminology and context

6.1. Domestic abuse

A statistical collection on domestic abuse (previously referred to as domestic violence) was introduced in 1999. The definition of domestic abuse used by Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)¹⁶ is:

‘Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere including online’.

6.2. Recording crimes and offences

Contraventions of Scottish criminal law are divided for statistical purposes only into crimes and offences. The term “crime” is generally used for the more serious criminal acts; the less serious are termed “offences”. The distinction is made only for statistical reporting purposes and does not influence the way the police investigate reports of criminal activity. The seriousness of the offence is generally related to the maximum sentence that can be imposed, and does not relate to the impact on the individual experiencing the incident.

In one criminal incident, several crimes or offences may occur – e.g. an accused may assault their spouse and damage their car in the process. In this example, crimes of vandalism and assault would be recorded. Statistics in this bulletin either relate to the number of incidents recorded or the number of incidents with at least one crime or offence committed.

6.3. Crime groupings

The Scottish Government is responsible for mapping each charge code to a crime code, which forms the basis of the crime code classification. There are around 5,300 charge codes, which are the operational codes used within the Criminal Justice System to identify crimes and offences. These charge codes are mapped to around 400 crime or offence codes, which in turn are typically grouped into 35 broader categories, and further into seven crime and offence groups. The latest version of the charge code list can be accessed [online](#). This classification enables consistent and comparable reporting between criminal justice organisations.

Crimes and offences within this publication are presented into the seven main groupings, as shown in the table below. Where statistical available broad sub-groupings are also provided.

¹⁶ Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) have a shared definition of domestic abuse available on the [Police Scotland website](#).

Crimes (groups & sub-groups)		
Group 1	Non-sexual crimes of violence	Homicide etc.
		Attempted murder and serious assault
		Robbery
		Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
		Other non-sexual crimes of violence
Group 2	Sexual crimes	Rape and attempted rape
		Sexual assault
		Crimes associated with prostitution
		Other sexual crimes
Group 3	Crimes of dishonesty	Housebreaking
		Theft by opening lockfast places
		Theft from a motor vehicle
		Theft of a motor vehicle
		Shoplifting
		Other theft
		Fraud
		Other dishonesty
Group 4	Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	Fire-raising
		Vandalism etc.
Group 5	Other crimes	Crimes against public justice
		Handling offensive weapons
		Drugs
		Other crime
Offences (groups & sub-groups)		
Group 6	Miscellaneous offences	Common assault
		Breach of the peace etc.
		Drunkenness and other disorderly conduct
		Urinating etc.
		Other miscellaneous
Group 7	Motor vehicle offences¹⁷	Dangerous and careless driving
		Driving under the influence
		Speeding
		Unlawful use of motor vehicle
		Vehicle defect offences
		Seat belt offences
		Mobile phone offences
		Other motor vehicle offences

As discussed in [Section 4.2](#), some potential changes in the approach to the seven group structure may be applied in future as a result of the [Scottish Crime Recording Board 2019 consultation](#). Users will be kept informed of any developments relating to this work through the [ScotStat](#) network.

¹⁷ Further breakdowns for motor vehicle offences are not included in [Table 2](#), as only a relatively small number of motor vehicle offences were recorded by the police as part of incidents of domestic abuse in 2019-20 (75).

6.4. Calculating rates per 10,000 population

Figures on incidents of domestic abuse in this publication are presented both as number of incidents and as rates per 10,000 population. These rates are calculated using the mid-year population estimates from the National Records of Scotland. [Mid-2019 population estimates](#) are used in this bulletin.

Annex 2: Data sources and quality

The creation of Police Scotland has altered the way in which domestic abuse data has been collected. Prior to 1 April 2013, each legacy police force had a bespoke system to collect the data required. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, the interim Vulnerable Persons Database (iVPD) system was rolled out to the then 14 police divisions in Scotland. From 1 April 2014 onwards, all domestic abuse data was collected through the iVPD.

To reflect these changes in data collection, tables and figures in this bulletin are presented with clear breaks in the time series between 2013-14 and 2014-15. The break is denoted by a dashed line and labelled to highlight the change to the data source. Caution should be exercised when making comparisons over time and when interpreting variation in the number of incidents recorded across years.

The data in this bulletin covers the current 13 police divisions in Scotland (across all 32 local authorities). Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire & Moray police divisions merged together to form the North East police division in January 2016.

The data presented in this bulletin is a snapshot of domestic abuse incidents recorded on the iVPD at the end of the financial year.

6.5. Process of logging an incident

When a victim and/or witness makes initial contact with the police regarding a domestic abuse incident, Police Scotland log the incident in their System for Tasking and Operational Resource Management (STORM), Police Scotland's national command and control system¹⁸.

STORM is largely used for resource allocation purposes. Depending on the information supplied and the outcome of additional enquiries, the incident may result in the creation of one or more crime reports on the relevant crime management system (CMS).

Once the police have assessed the incident, they determine if a vulnerable person record is to be set up in iVPD. The purpose of the iVPD is to collect information on people who are deemed to be in a vulnerable situation, to ensure that any concerns for the victim (or any other person subject of concern) are assessed and appropriate actions are taken.

¹⁸ STORM has been used across Scotland since February 2018.

Incidents in this bulletin are counted against the year in which they are recorded by Police Scotland on the iVPD system¹⁹. Not all incidents are reported to the police immediately following their occurrence. As such each year's figures on incidents of domestic abuse will include a proportion of incidents committed in earlier years.

It is important to recognise that amendments to crime and offence records may occur following submission of figures by Police Scotland to the Scottish Government. This may be due to the reclassification of crimes into different crime groups or, no crime being established after further investigation by police into the originally reported offence.

6.6. Additional information on the trend data

In addition to this, there has been an increase since 2017-18 in the number and proportion of incidents where no information was recorded on the characteristics of the victim and/or the accused (from 4,522 or 8% in 2016-17, to 10,391 or 17% in 2017-18, to 12,999 or 21% in 2019-20).

Police Scotland advised that a procedural change was made immediately prior to 2017-18 whereby for certain non-criminal incidents of domestic abuse (i.e. where both parties were believed to have an equal involvement), details were no longer recorded for a specific victim or a specific accused. Prior to this, two incidents may have been recorded treating one party as the victim and the other as the accused and the second for the reverse position.

Whilst this change may also have had an effect on the number of domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police, the impact of this cannot be quantified. However, this change in procedure only relates to a very specific set of circumstances for a domestic abuse incident and the actual number of incidents of domestic abuse recorded since 2017-18 remained similar to all years back to 2011-12.

Annex 3: Auditing of data by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS)

6.7. HMICS Crime Audit 2020

[HMICS Crime Audit 2020](#) aimed to assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of crime recording by Police Scotland and the extent to which recording practice complies with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard (SCRS) and Counting Rules. The SCRS requires that all incidents, whether crime-related or not, will result in the creation of an auditable record. HMICS tested the accuracy of crime recording by auditing incident and crime records in five categories, including sexual crime, violence, domestic abuse, non-crime related incidents, and no-crimes. The section below provides information and outcomes on the audit of domestic abuse incidents.

¹⁹ [Annex 2](#) provides information on Police Scotland's incident recording systems.

Police Scotland's recording system STORM has been audited to assess the compliance for domestic abuse incidents. HMICS examined 3,150 incidents relating to domestic abuse, 1,001 of which resulted in a crime record. HMICS found that the compliance was good overall, as:

- 94.6% of domestic abuse incidents examined were closed correctly
- 92.6% of domestic abuse crime records were counted and classified correctly
- 95.2% of domestic abuse crimes were recorded within 72 hours of the incident being reported to the police, with 10 of the 13 divisions achieving over 95% compliance

Whilst the HMICS Crime Audit 2020 did not extend to data on domestic abuse included on the iVPD, it highlights the quality of domestic abuse information provided by STORM. It is likely the HMICS will be undertaking follow-up inspection work in 2021-22.

Annex 4: Validation

6.8. Reporting of incidents and quality assurance of domestic abuse statistics

The statistics reported in this bulletin do not reveal the incidence of all domestic abuse committed, since not all incidents are reported to the police. However, in conjunction with the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#), these statistics help to assess the extent and impact of domestic abuse in Scotland. There are a number of reasons for domestic abuse being under reported, including victims experiencing fear and shame as a result of the incident. Under reporting may also be caused by a perpetrator physically preventing a victim reporting the domestic abuse.

Challenging domestic abuse is a high priority for both Police Scotland and COPFS. As such, they have a Joint Protocol outlining the procedures and practices to follow when dealing with incidents of domestic abuse. The protocol is available on [Police Scotland website](#).

The data presented in this publication is drawn from an administrative system. Although care is taken when processing, quality assuring and analysing the data, administrative data is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system.

This data goes through a process of quality assurance in which figures are checked against previous years and comparable sources. Anything unusual or which requires further explanation is then fed back to Police Scotland for their attention. Any amendments are carried out and the final data is used to produce a set of data tables which can be used to check the final dataset.

During the quality assurance checking process, it is possible for errors to be found in data for previous years. While we do not routinely revise figures, we are committed to correcting errors in the data and providing suitable explanations for any changes

made to previously published data, in line with the [Scottish Government's guidance on Producing Official Statistics](#).

Whilst Police Scotland aims to record complete information for all incidents, there is some challenge in retrieving and linking the captured information to meet the full data requirements for this publication. As a result some values for certain variables are marked 'missing'.

The statistics provided in the data return for this publication prior to 2014-15 have highlighted the different ways in which legacy police forces recorded information. In particular, police practice in deciding when the behaviour justifies the recording of a crime or offence may differ. For example, some legacy forces had ruled that no crime or offence should be recorded if no further action was taken e.g. because the victim did not wish any action to be taken. Other forces may have recorded this as a crime or offence.

With all police divisions now using the same iVPD system to record incidents of domestic abuse and following the same Police Scotland guidance, inconsistencies in approach may minimise over time. [Annex 2](#) provides more information on how the incidents are logged in Police Scotland's systems.

6.9. Historical changes in methodology

2009-10 was the first year in which data was submitted based on the date the incident was recorded. Prior to this, data was returned based on the number of incidents which occurred during that time period. As historic data has never been revised in this publication series, any incidents which occurred in a different time period to the date in which the incident was recorded will have been excluded from the returns.

For example, if an incident occurred during 2007-08 but was recorded during 2008-09, it would have been excluded from 2008-09 (since the date committed is not in the relevant time period), but it would also have been missed out of the 2007-08 data as the submitted data would not have been updated. Hence, the incident would not be reported in the statistics in this publication series and therefore contributed to an underestimate. Although this publication series has never revised this information, some legacy forces may have updated their own collections and prepared refreshed data in response to bespoke requests.

The number of incidents in the bulletins from 2009-10 onwards, is based on the date the incident was recorded. This should give a better reflection of police activity relating to incidents of domestic abuse. By reporting on the date the incidents were committed, we get a snapshot account of the number of incidents of domestic abuse occurring within a particular period. However, by analysing the data based on the date recorded, we can see the trend in reporting incidents of domestic abuse to the police. Hence, if there was an increase in the number of victims who report incidents of domestic abuse to the police sometime after they occurred, this should be reflected in the statistics.

Annex 5: Legislation

The [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) came into force on 1 April 2019 and created a new offence for circumstances where a person engages in a course of behaviour²⁰ which is abusive towards their partner or ex-partner. Prior to the 1 April 2019, any criminal act which formed part of a domestic abuse incident (such as a Common assault or Threatening or abusive behaviour) was included within the statistics under the relevant crime or offence. Where there is evidence of a course of behaviour, new crime codes of Domestic abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 (against a male or female victim) have been created. In general, existing common law and statutory offences will continue to be recorded where appropriate, in addition to the new crimes.

As well as common law, some of the main legislation applicable to domestic abuse is as follows:

- [Family Law \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) (Section 31 of this Act introduced the concept of “domestic interdicts” into the 1981 Act, which applies to unmarried cohabitants (either opposite-sex or same-sex). Domestic interdicts have much the same effect in relation to cohabitants as matrimonial interdicts have for married couples as is defined in section 10 of this Act, which amends section 14 of the 1981 Act to extend the scope of matrimonial interdicts to include not only a matrimonial home, but also any other home owned by the applicant, the applicant’s place of work and the school attended by any child in the applicant’s care)
- [Protection from Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)
- [Family Law Act 1996](#)
- [Matrimonial Homes \(Family Protection\) \(Scotland\) Act 1981](#)

Annex 6: Comparisons with rest of the UK

6.10. England & Wales

Domestic violence and abuse data in England & Wales is not comparable with Scotland’s statistics on domestic abuse due to differences in definition. The [UK Government’s definition](#) of domestic violence and abuse is:

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional’.

²⁰ A course of behaviour involves behaviour on at least two occasions.

The definition used by Police Scotland does not include family members, with the data collected only including domestic abuse between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The definition used by Police Scotland also has no age restrictions upon it. Differences in legislation and common law also have to be taken into account when comparing the crime statistics for England & Wales and Scotland.

It should be noted that the Domestic Abuse Bill passed both Houses of UK Parliament and was signed into law on 29 April 2021. This is set to provide further protections to people experiencing domestic abuse, as well as strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators. This is now law and will begin to be implemented later in 2021. More information on the Domestic Abuse Act and changes is available on the [Home Office website](#).

Domestic abuse statistics for England & Wales from the Crime Survey for England & Wales, police recorded crime and a number of different organisations are available on the [Office for National Statistics website](#).

6.11. Northern Ireland

Similarly to the comparability issues with England & Wales, statistics on domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland are not directly comparable to those in Scotland. The [Police Service of Northern Ireland's definition](#) of domestic abuse is as outlined in the Northern Ireland Government Strategy '[Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland](#)' as:

'Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former partner or family member'.

The definition clarifies that:

- 'incident' means an incident anywhere and not confined to the home of one of the partners/family members
- 'family members' include mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparents, whether directly or indirectly related, in-laws or stepfamily
- 'intimate partners' means there must have been a relationship with a degree of continuity and stability. The relationship must also have had (or reasonably supposed to have had) a sexual aspect, such as in the relationship between husband and wife or between others generally recognised as a couple including same sex couples.

The main difference between the definitions is that the one used by Police Scotland does not include family members, with the data collected only including domestic abuse between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. Domestic abuse statistics for Northern Ireland are available on the [Police Service of Northern Ireland website](#).

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- are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot.
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