

CRIME AND JUSTICE

Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland, 2018-19 and 2019-20

This bulletin provides new information for the reporting years of 2018-19 and 2019-20, on crimes and offences recorded by the police in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved or where a firearm was stolen.

Statistics for the five years of 2015-16 to 2019-20 are provided using the improved data collection process that was highlighted in the previous bulletin. That change increased the accuracy of this information by reducing the risk that a police recorded offence involving a firearm has not been included in the data.

The first nationwide lockdown as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was introduced towards the very end of the 2019-20 reporting year. As such it is likely to have had a minimal effect on the figures presented here.

Key Points:

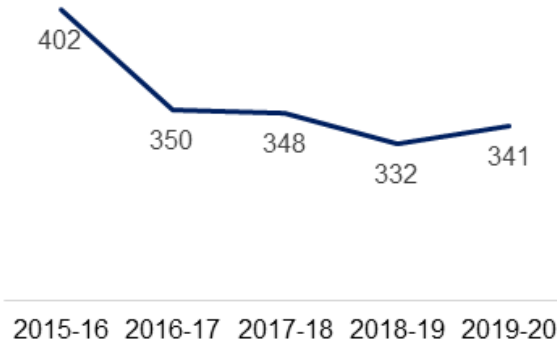
- In 2019-20, the police in Scotland recorded 341 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved, an increase of 3% from 2018-19 (332 offences) and down 2% from 2017-18 (348 offences).
- The 332 offences in 2018-19 were the lowest since records began in 1980, with the 341 offences in 2019-20 the second lowest.
- The most commonly committed offences involving a firearm in 2019-20 were Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (33%), Breach of the peace etc. (14%) and Robbery (11%).
- The number of offences in which a firearm was discharged and caused fatal or non-fatal injury increased by seven (or 26%) from 27 in 2018-19 to 34 in 2019-20.
- A pistol/revolver was the main firearm used in 28% of all offences including the alleged involvement of a firearm in 2019-20, followed by an air weapon (21%) and other firearms¹ (18%).

¹ Other firearms includes tasers, flare guns, mace/pepper spray etc. as covered by Section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968.

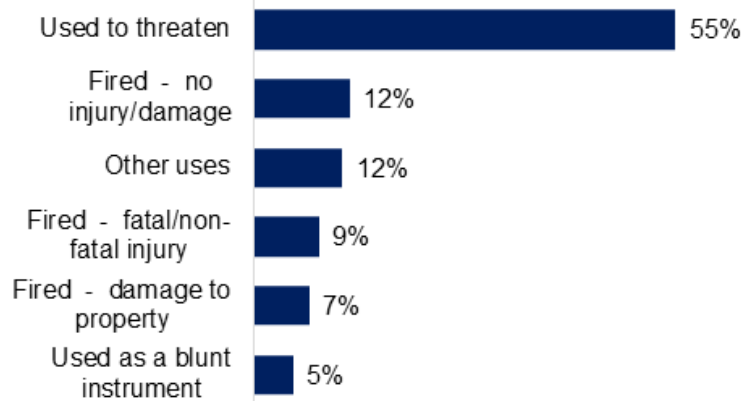
Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland, 2019-20

▼ How many offences were recorded?

- ▶ Since 2015-16, the number of firearms offences has fallen by 15%
- ▶ 2019-20 saw the second lowest level since records began in 1980



▶ How were the weapons used? (%)



▶ Where were they used?

40%
of offences occurred
in a dwelling



27%
of offences occurred
in the street



9%
of offences occurred
in a shop



▶ Who were the perpetrators?

96%
Male

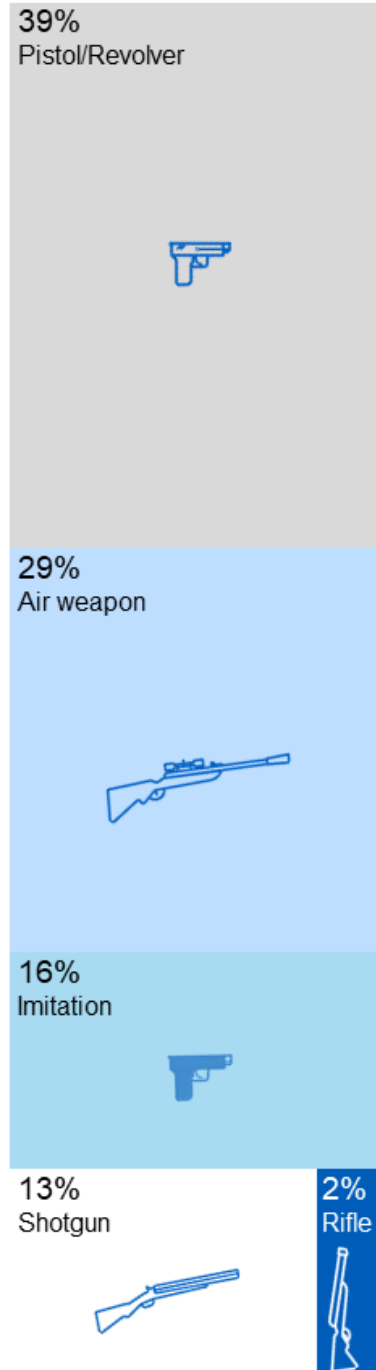


4%
Female



28
median age
of the
perpetrator

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



Contents

1. Background	5
2. Commentary	7
2.1 Offences involving firearms (Tables 1, 2, 2a, 3, 4; Chart 1)	7
2.2 Main firearm recorded (Tables 4, 4a, 5; Chart 1)	8
2.3 Firearm use (Tables 6, 6a, 7, 8, 9, 9a; Chart 2)	9
2.4 Location of firearm offences (Tables 10, 10a; Chart 3)	11
2.5 Victim characteristics (Tables 11, 11a)	12
2.6 Clear up rates (Table 12)	12
2.7 Accused characteristics (Table 13)	13
2.8 Offences in local authorities (Tables 15, 15a)	13
2.9 Stolen firearms (Tables 16, 16a)	13
2.10 Miscellaneous firearm offences (Tables 17, 17a).....	13
3. Further information on statistics used in this bulletin	14
3.1 Statement on Data Quality	14
3.2 Data collection process	15
3.3 Review of data process for these Official Statistics.....	15
3.4 Data Returns	16
3.5 Legislation	16
3.6 Crimes and offences cleared up.....	17
3.7 Statistical issues	18
3.8 Classification	19
3.9 Comparator data.....	20
3.10 Other.....	20
An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland	22
Correspondence and enquiries	22
How to access background or source data	22
Complaints and suggestions.....	22
Crown Copyright	23

1. Background

- All tables referenced in this bulletin are presented in the [supporting documents](#) accompanying this publication.
- To avoid unnecessary repetition of the term ‘recorded crimes and offences’ throughout this publication, reference will simply be made to ‘offences’. Any reference to the ‘use and/or involvement’ of firearms throughout this bulletin should also be interpreted to include the ‘alleged use and/or involvement’ of firearms.
- Minor Firearms Act 1968 offences (mainly relating to the possession, handling and distribution of weapons and ammunition) are not included in the main points and tables of this bulletin. Totals for these offences are presented separately in Table 17. This also applies for offences recorded under the Air Weapons Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015, where totals are presented in Table 17a. In both cases data has been included up to the most recent reporting year of 2020-21.
- Statistics on recorded crimes and offences inform the Scottish Government’s [Vision for Justice in Scotland](#).
- These statistics are also used by a wide range of stakeholders to monitor trends, for policy research and development, and for research purposes. The ‘Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland’ statistical bulletin forms part of a [series of bulletins](#) produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system.
- During quality assurance of the information collected for the 2016-17 official statistics, Scottish Government statisticians and analysts from Police Scotland noted there was a higher risk in some divisions that the data collection process being used may not have identified all relevant offences involving the alleged use of a firearm. Following further discussion a decision was taken to postpone the release of the 2016-17 figures until further checks could be carried out. Scottish Government statisticians then worked with Police Scotland to review the approaches being taken across their 13 divisions, to identify any additional offences that needed to be included in the data.
- Based on the findings of this review, refreshed guidance on how to collate this data was issued to the divisions, who were asked to resubmit their returns for 2015-16 and 2016-17, along with new data for 2017-18. The resulting statistics were then published in April 2019. Further details on the process undertaken for this review can be found in [Section 3.2](#).
- This bulletin provides new information for the reporting years of 2018-19 and 2019-20, on the same improved methodology as 2015-16 to 2017-18.
- Given the improvement to the data collection process, users are advised to be cautious when making comparisons between data published up to 2014-15 and the data published in this bulletin for 2015-16 onwards. As the earlier data has not been revisited, a direct comparison of this nature is unlikely to be on a like-for-like basis.

- What can be said is that any error in previously published data up to 2014-15 would be likely to involve a small underestimate in the true position. As such, the 341 firearms related offences recorded by the police in 2019-20 can be said to be the second lowest recorded for any single year since 1980.

2. Commentary

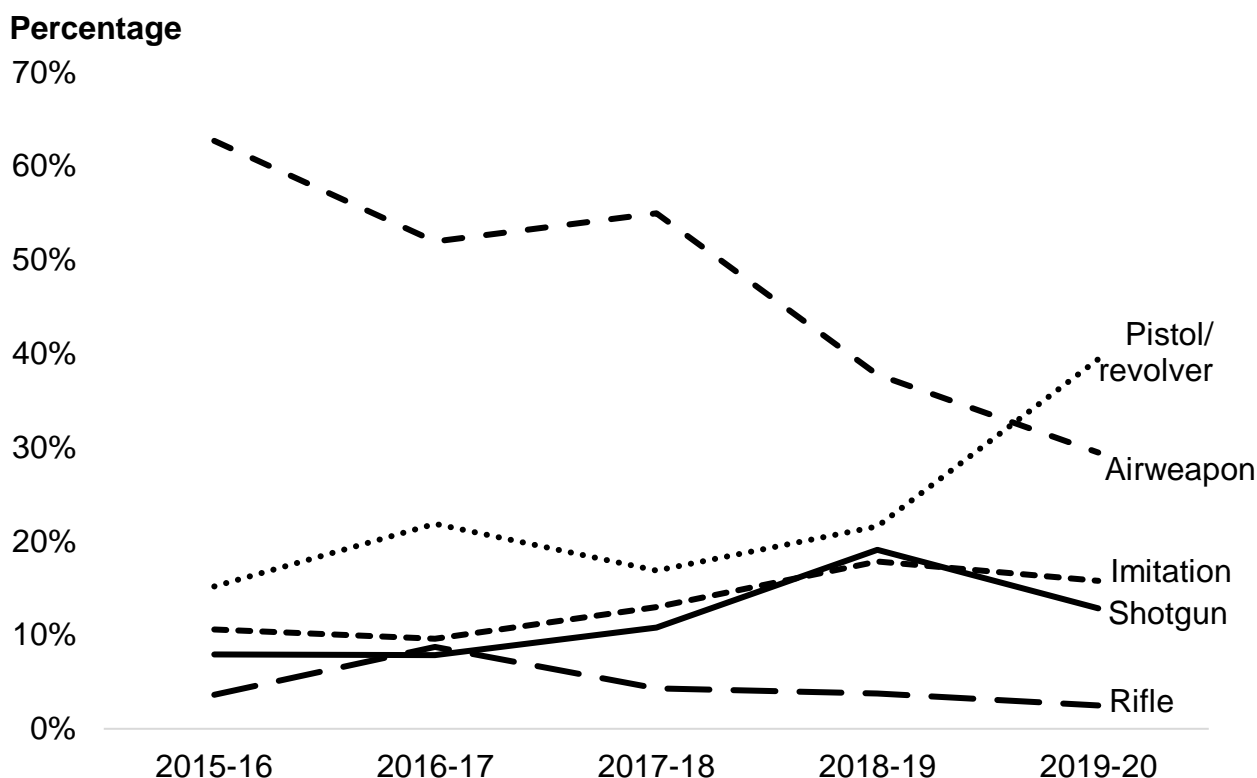
2.1 Offences involving firearms (Tables 1, 2, 2a, 3, 4; [Chart 1](#))

- In 2019-20, the police in Scotland recorded 341 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved, an increase of 3% since 2018-19. In 2018-19, the police recorded 332 offences, a decrease of 5% from 2017-18. The 332 offences in 2018-19 were the lowest since records began in 1980 and the 341 offences in 2019-20 are the second lowest.
- In 2019-20, 33% of recorded offences involving a firearm were for Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. A further 14% of total recorded offences were for Breach of the peace etc., 11% were for Robbery, 11% were for Common assault and 9% were for Reckless conduct with firearms.
- In 2018-19, three Homicides involving a firearm were recorded, with one recorded in 2019-20. There were nine Attempted murders involving a firearm in 2018-19 and seven in 2019-20.
- The number of Serious assaults involving a firearm was unchanged from two in 2018-19 to two in 2019-20. The number of robberies involving a firearm recorded in 2019-20 was 39, an increase of 10 from 2018-19.
- When air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded, the total number of offences involving a firearm increased by 19% between 2018-19 and 2019-20 (from 196 offences to 233 offences).
- Offences relating to Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. and Breach of the peace etc. continue to account for the largest proportion of offences involving a firearm when air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded (at 36% and 16% of offences, respectively).
- The use of firearms in criminal activity continued to constitute only a small proportion of all offences recorded by the police in 2019-20, including 1.5% of Homicides (one offence), 2.8% of Attempted Murders (seven offences) and 2.2% of Robberies (39 offences). Only 0.1% of all Serious assaults, and less than 0.1% of both Common assault and Vandalism offences, involved the alleged use of a firearm. For further information please see [Note 2 of Section 3.7](#).

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

- Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, the most likely main firearm recorded was an air weapon. This changed in 2019-20, where the most likely main firearm recorded was a pistol/revolver.
- An air weapon was used in just over one-fifth (21%, or 71 offences) of all offences involving a firearm in 2019-20, down from 27% (91 offences) in 2018-19. When unidentified and other firearms are excluded, air weapons were used in 30% of offences in 2019-20. Over the last five years, the number of offences involving an air weapon fell by almost two-thirds (from 190 to 71 offences).
- Between 2018-19 and 2019-20, the number of offences involving a pistol/revolver increased by 43 offences (83%), making it the most common main firearm in 2019-20 (28% of offences). The only other type of firearm that saw an increase over this period were other firearms, up 17 (37%). All remaining firearms saw decreases, with the number of offences involving shotguns (-15, or 33%), air weapons (-20, or 22%), unidentified firearms (-8, or 18%) and imitation firearms (-5, or 12%) all falling.
- In general, in 2019-20 a pistol/revolver was the most common weapon used – including for crimes of Robbery (56%), Vandalism (36%) and Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (37%).
- In 2019-20, Air weapons were most common in Reckless conduct with a firearm (43%), Common assault (32%) and Other crimes and offences (35%).
- [Chart 1](#) shows the type of weapon used in each offence as a proportion of the total number of offences recorded in each year (excluding unidentified and other firearms), 2015-16 to 2019-20.

Chart 1: Main firearm recorded in offences involving the alleged use of a firearm, as a percentage of recorded offences (excluding unidentified and other firearms), Scotland, 2015-16 to 2019-20

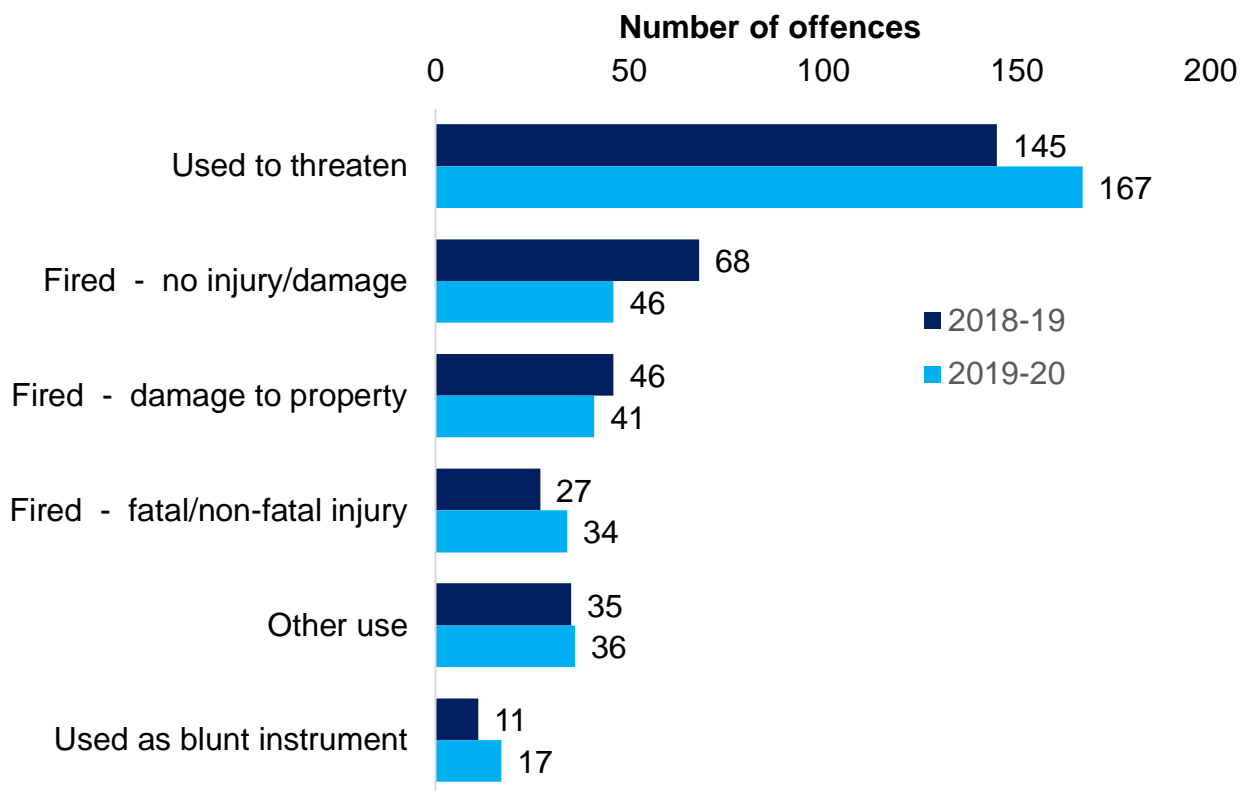


2.3 Firearm use (Tables 6, 6a, 7, 8, 9, 9a; [Chart 2](#))

- Amongst recorded offences in 2019-20, 167 (or 49%) involved a firearm being used to threaten. A firearm was discharged in 35% of offences. The breakdown of how the main firearm recorded was used is provided in [Chart 2](#).
- The increase in the number of offences involving firearms between 2018-19 and 2019-20 was not driven by a single change in how the firearm was used. The largest change by volume was observed amongst ‘used to threaten’ offences which increased by 15% from 145 in 2018-19 to 167 in 2019-20.
- Changes seen in most other categories were smaller. Increases were seen in fired – non-fatal injury (+9), used as a blunt instrument (+6), and other uses (+1). Other categories saw decreases, fired – fatal injury (-2), fired – property damage (-5), and fired – no injury / damage (-22).
- The number of offences in which a firearm was fired and caused fatal or non-fatal injury to a person increased by 26% from 27 in 2018-19 to 34 in 2019-20. For more information regarding the method of counting victims, see [Note 5 of Section 3.7](#).
- The number of offences in which a firearm was discharged causing no injury or damage decreased by 22 offences from 68 in 2018-19 to 46 in 2019-20 (-32%). Crimes where property was damaged decreased by five offences from 46 in 2018-19 to 41 in 2019-20 (-11%).

- Of the 121 offences in which a firearm was discharged in 2019-20, 35% (42) involved an air weapon, of which none resulted in fatal injury. Of those 42 offences, 16 resulted in no injury or damage, 12 in property damage, and the remaining 14 in a non-fatal injury to a person.
- Of the 38 Common assaults involving a firearm in 2019-20, eight resulted in the weapon being discharged and causing a non-fatal injury. This accounts for nearly a quarter (24%) of the 33 recorded offences in which a firearm was fired and caused a non-fatal injury.
- In 2019-20, where a firearm was discharged resulting in no injury, over a third (35%, 16 offences) were classified as Common assault and 24% (11 offences) were classified as Reckless conduct with a firearm. Where a firearm was used to threaten, almost half (48%) of these were offences of Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc.

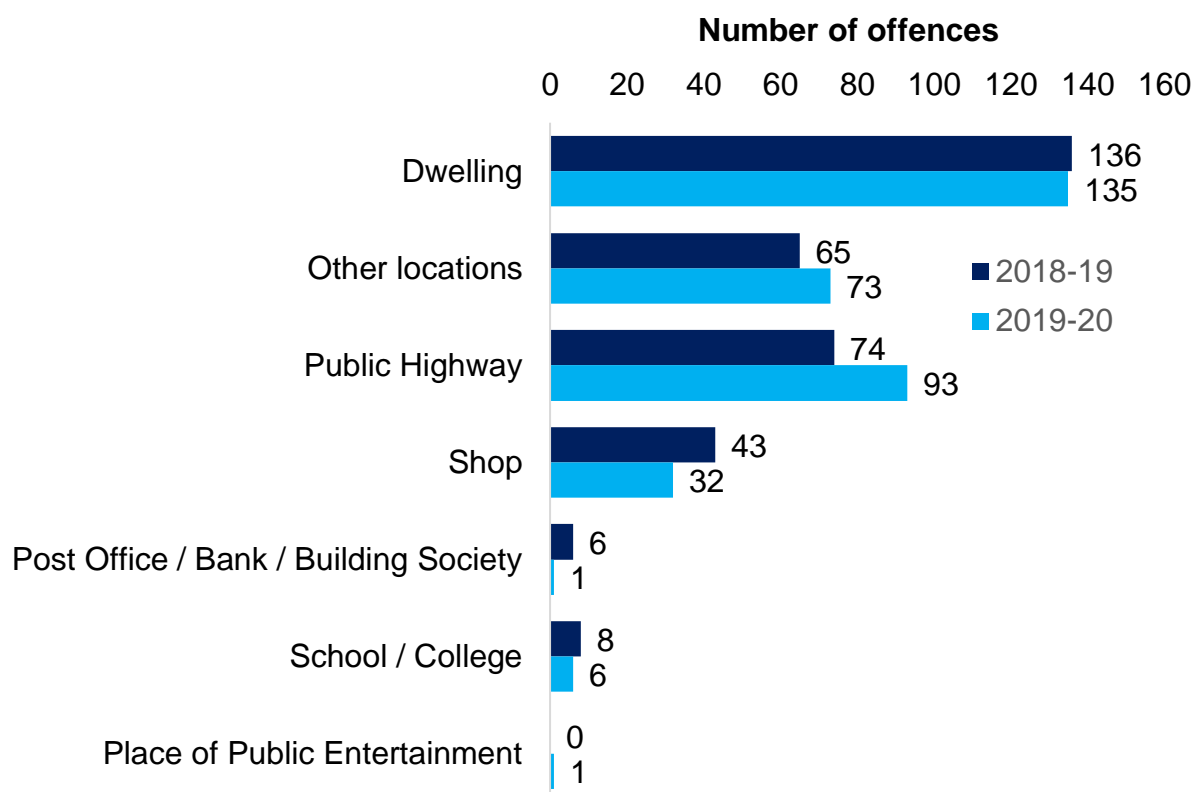
Chart 2: How main firearm recorded was used in offences involving the alleged use of a firearm, Scotland, 2018-19 and 2019-20



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

- In 2019-20, most offences involving firearms either took place in a Dwelling (40%) or on a Public highway (27%). Public highways include roads and footpaths.
- Between 2018-19 and 2019-20, the only locations that saw an increase in offences were, Public highways (+19), Places of public entertainment (+1) and Other locations (+8). Other locations include: within a motor vehicle, on licensed premises, and other outside locations, e.g. in a field.
- The number of offences occurring in a Dwelling (-1), Shop (-9), Post Office (-2), Bank/Building Society (-3) and School/College (-2) all decreased from 2018-19 to 2019-20.

Chart 3: Location of offences involving the alleged use of a firearm, Scotland, 2018-19 and 2019-20



- In 2019-20 six offences occurred in a school or college involving the alleged use of a firearm. This represents a small change from 2018-19, when eight offences were recorded. In total, one offence involving the alleged use of a firearm occurred within a bank, building society or post office in 2019-20, with a further single offence in places of public entertainment.

2.5 Victim characteristics (Tables 11, 11a)

- Details on the way that victims are counted within this bulletin are provided in [Note 5 of Section 3.7](#).
- Of the 34 main victims who were either fatally or non-fatally injured during an offence involving a firearm in 2019-20, 27 were male (79%) and 7 were female (21%).
- The number of offences that included a male main victim increased by four between 2018-19 and 2019-20, while the number of offences that included a female victim also increased by four.
- In 2019-20, the median age of victims was 32. Eighteen percent of all offences where someone was either fatally or non-fatally injured involved a victim under the age of 16. There were 15 offences that had a main victim aged 31 or older, accounting for 44% of offences with a main victim.
- When air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded, there were 20 offences with a main victim in 2019-20, a 43% increase from 14 in 2018-19.
- For data that specifically relates to the number of homicide fatalities involving the use of a firearm, please refer to the [Homicide in Scotland National Statistics](#).

2.6 Clear up rates (Table 12)

- In 2019-20, 69% of all offences involving a firearm were cleared up. For further information on clear up rates please see [Section 3.6](#).
- There were large variations in the clear-up rate across the different crimes in 2019-20. Crimes with relatively high clear up rates include, Homicide (100%), Serious assault (100%) and Breach of the peace etc. (86%). Crimes with relatively lower clear up rates include, Vandalism (9%), Attempted murder (43%) and Robbery (62%).

2.7 Accused characteristics (Table 13)

- In 2019-20, there were 234 offences in which accused person(s) were identified. Of these, 222 (96%) were male, while only 12 (4%) were female.
- In 2019-20 the median age of an accused person was 28. The main accused was under 16 years old in 8% of cleared up offences involving the use of a firearm (19 out of 234 offences). A further 14% of cleared up offences were committed by an accused aged 16 to 20 years (33 offences). Of all offences that were cleared up in 2019-20, the most common ages of the main accused were those aged 21-30 and those aged 41 and older, with 84 and 51 offences respectively (36% and 22% of all offences cleared up).

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

- When considering the trends in the number of offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been used in each local authority area, it should be noted that most local authority areas have relatively small counts of firearm offences. As a result, small changes in the number of offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been used can lead to large changes in percentage terms.
- In 2019-20, the local authority areas of Glasgow City (63), North Lanarkshire (37) and Fife (30) had the highest number of offences involving firearms. When cases involving air weapons are excluded – the highest number of offences were also recorded in Glasgow City (42), North Lanarkshire (26) and Fife (25).

2.9 Stolen firearms (Tables 16, 16a)

- During 2019-20, Police Scotland recorded four offences in which a firearm (other than an air weapon) was stolen (a decrease from nine offences in 2018-19).

2.10 Miscellaneous firearm offences (Tables 17, 17a)

- Data presented in this section and Tables 17 and 17a are based on [Recorded Crime in Scotland 2020-21 National Statistics](#), not Police Scotland firearms data returns.
- The number of miscellaneous firearm offences recorded by the police, relating mainly to the possession, handling and distribution of firearms and ammunition, rose from 452 in 2018-19 to 537 in 2019-20, an increase of 19%. In 2020-21, the first full year affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, 432 offences were recorded. For further information on Miscellaneous firearm offences please see [Note 1 of Section 3.4](#).
- The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 came into effect on 31 December 2016, meaning there are now four full recording years of offences committed under this act. These show a decline in recorded offences, beginning with 396 offences in 2017-18 and followed by 336 offences in 2018-19 and 296 offences in 2019-20. In 2020-21, this fell further, to 257 offences, although this final fall may in part be due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Further information on statistics used in this bulletin

3.1 Statement on Data Quality

1. The statistics presented in this bulletin are derived from data returns submitted by each police division to Police Scotland. Unlike other Justice Analytical Services (JAS) bulletins which have seen changes to the way data is collected arising from the merger of Scotland's police forces, this publication retains a familiar data process. The main difference is that Police Scotland, and not JAS, collect data returns from the divisions in respect of offences involving a firearm. A reporting officer based within each division of Police Scotland runs a series of queries on their individual Crime Management System to identify crime reports which include firearms. These records are then manually inputted into the data return.
2. Not all such crimes and offences are reported to the police. The extent of under-reporting is likely to vary considerably according to the seriousness of the crime or offence. For example, armed robberies are much more likely to be reported to the police than malicious damage caused by the firing of an air weapon. Moreover, the propensity of the public to report crimes and offences to the police is influenced by a number of factors and may therefore change over time; thus trends in the number of crimes and offences recorded may differ from trends in the number of crimes and offences actually committed. For further information, the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey for 2019-20](#) includes analysis on why some crimes are not reported to the police.
3. This bulletin reports on offences involving firearms that are both reported to the police and subsequently recorded as a crime.
4. One area that could affect the accuracy of the statistics reported in this bulletin is the potential for mistakes in the recording of crime at an operational-level, which could create errors in the Crime Management System (CMS). The CMS should contain a record of all crime reports in Scotland and is audited by [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland](#) (HMICS). On 10 March 2021, HMICS published their [Crime Audit 2020](#). The Audit found no systemic data quality issues around the recording of crimes and offences. The report found that "Police Scotland's compliance with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Counting Rules is generally good at over 90%," with 91.4% of incidents closed correctly and 90.8% of crime counted and classified correctly.
5. Another area that could affect accuracy of the statistics is the risk that an offence involving a firearm is recorded by the police, but is not identified through the data collection process undertaken for this bulletin. Further information on the data collection process and our review of its effectiveness is provided below.

3.2 Data collection process

1. Some statistical publications draw their information from databases that relate to the specific topic (for example the National Statistics on Recorded Crime, or Homicide). In the case of firearms offences, a topic-specific database is not available, and as such the data collection process has always relied on a mixture of automated and manual checks. The most effective data collection process is one that maximises the chance an offence which involves the use of a firearm is identified, and minimises the risk that one is accidentally missed out.
2. As outlined previously, each Police Scotland division provides an individual data return based on queries run on their individual Crime Management System (CMS) to identify crime records which included the use, or alleged use, of a firearm. These are reviewed and collated by Police Scotland's Analysis & Performance Unit before being submitted to the Scottish Government. The methods available to analysts vary depending on their particular CMS and as such a combination of the following steps are typically used to identify any relevant crime records:
 - a search for all crimes where their description implies the use of a firearm (for example Reckless conduct with firearms)
 - a search for all crimes that include either a specific weapons-marker or a modifier that describes the weapon used - for example Air gun, Hand gun or Rifle; and
 - a key word search of all crimes to identify any potentially relevant cases that were not identified during the two steps above
3. Once these preliminary searches are complete, a manual interrogation of each crime record is conducted to confirm whether the record should be included and if so to complete the data return with the required information (i.e. offences committed with weapon, type of weapon, characteristics of those involved etc.).

3.3 Review of data process for these Official Statistics

1. During quality assurance of the information collected for the 2016-17 official statistics, Scottish Government statisticians and analysts from Police Scotland noted there was a higher risk in some divisions that the data collection process being used may not have identified all relevant offences involving a firearm. Following discussion a decision was taken to postpone the release of the 2016-17 figures until further checks could be carried out. Users were informed of this through the SCOTSTAT network in January 2018.
2. Scottish Government statisticians then worked with Police Scotland to review the approaches being taken across their 13 divisions, to identify any additional offences that needed to be included in the data. This review suggested that (i) some divisions undertook very thorough checks, which ensured they were well equipped at identifying offences that involved a firearm and (ii) the consistent application of a check based on a key-word

search (outlined above as step three) would help ensure all divisions were in this position. Based on these findings, refreshed guidance on how to collate this data was issued to divisions, who were asked to resubmit their returns for 2015-16 and 2016-17, along with new data for 2017-18.

3. The resulting statistics were then published in April 2019. This bulletin provides new information for the reporting years of 2018-19 and 2019-20, on the same improved methodology as 2015-16 to 2017-18.
4. Given the improvement to the data collection process, users are advised to be cautious when making comparisons between data published up to 2014-15 and the data published in this bulletin for 2015-16 onwards. As the earlier data has not been revisited, a direct comparison of this nature is unlikely to be on a like-for-like basis.

3.4 Data Returns

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

3.5 Legislation

1. Contraventions of Scottish criminal law are divided for statistical purposes into crimes and offences. "Crime" is generally used for the more serious criminal acts; the less serious termed "offences", although the term "offence" may also be used in relation to serious breaches of criminal law. The distinction is made only for working purposes and the "seriousness" of the offence is generally related to the maximum sentence that can be imposed.
2. Following the Dunblane incident in 1996, changes to the existing firearms legislation were introduced to enhance public safety. As a result, the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 (the '1997 Act') was implemented and thereafter the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997 (the '1997 (No. 2) Act'). Under the 1997 Act, all pistols (otherwise referred to as "handguns") over .22 calibre were banned with effect from 1 October 1997. The 1997 (No. 2) Act came into effect from 1 March 1998. A number of types of handgun were exempted from the 1997 (No. 2) Act, including muzzle-loading guns, shot pistols, slaughtering instruments, firearms used for the humane killing of animals, trophies of war, etc.
3. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 raised the age for owning an air weapon from 14 years to 17 years; created a new offence of possessing an air weapon or imitation weapon in a public place without reasonable excuse; banned future import and sale of air weapons using self-contained air cartridge systems and licensed those already held. The Criminal Justice Act

2003 also imposed minimum sentences for the illegal possession of a prohibited firearm.

4. In relation to individuals aged under 18 years, the following legislation has been introduced:
 - The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 raised the minimum age at which a person may purchase or hire either an air weapon or ammunition for an air weapon to 18 years.
 - The EU Weapons Directive 91/477/EEC made it an offence to sell or let on hire a firearm or ammunition to a person under the age of 18 years.
 - The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 came into force on 1 January 2017 which makes provision for the licensing and regulation of air weapons. Statistics are presented here for both the years 2017-18, the first full year for which statistics are available, to 2020-21, the most recent year for which data are available, as well as for January to March 2017 (Table 17a).

3.6 Crimes and offences cleared up

1. The definition of 'cleared up' was revised with effect from 1 April 1996. Previously, a crime or offence was regarded as being cleared up if one or more offenders was apprehended, cited, warned or traced for it. This was revised as follows:

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

- by standing agreement with the procurator fiscal, the police warn the accused due to the minor nature of the offence, or
 - reporting is inappropriate due to the non-age of the accused, death of the accused or other similar circumstances.
2. For some types of crimes and offences the case may be cleared up immediately, e.g. where the offender is caught in the act. In Scots law, the confession of an accused person to a crime would not in general be sufficient to allow a prosecution to be taken, as corroborative evidence is required. Thus, a case cannot be regarded as 'cleared up' on the basis of a confession alone.

3. Clear up rates are calculated as follows:

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

4. Further details on clear up rates are available in the [Recorded Crime Statistics in Scotland: user guide](#).

3.7 Statistical issues

1. Data presented in this bulletin relates to the most recent five years. There are a small number of additional caveats to note when considering data from earlier years. These are outlined in [earlier versions of this bulletin](#).
2. To calculate the figures shown in Table 3, the total number of offences involving a firearm are calculated as a percentage of all crimes and offences recorded by the police. These figures are derived from the Scottish Government's [Recorded Crime in Scotland](#) statistical bulletin series. The figures are provided in Table A in the accompanying excel tables.
3. The main firearm is that which inflicts the most serious injury or damage. In cases where no injury or damage is caused, the firearm that is considered to potentially be the most dangerous is treated as the main weapon. The 'other' firearms category includes weapons such as starting guns and ball bearing guns. From 1988, crossbows were included in the 'other' category. The 'imitation' firearms category includes replica and imitation weapons.
4. Details of the age and sex of the main victim (Tables 11 and 11a) are collected only for offences in which fatal or non-fatal injury is caused. The main victim is the person most seriously injured. Cases involving injury to animals are recorded under the category 'damage to property' rather than 'injury' – which is reserved solely for the purpose of recording injuries to persons.
5. This bulletin presents information on all individual crimes and offences recorded by the police that involved the use of a firearm. As such, under circumstances where an individual was a victim of multiple offences involving a firearm at the same time (for example Threatening and abusive behaviour and Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life), that individual will appear against all offences committed i.e. once each for the Threatening and abusive behaviour and Possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life. Therefore, care should be taken when comparing statistics on victims between multiple years as this data represents the number of offences involving a firearm that had a victim rather than all unique victims of firearms related incidents.
6. Details of the age and sex of the main accused (Tables 13 and 14) are collected for offences that are cleared up. In offences involving injury or damage, the main accused is the person who inflicts the most serious injury or damage. In other instances, it is taken to be the oldest person.
7. The figures provided in Table 16 for stolen firearms are not included elsewhere in this bulletin. The information reflects solely those incidents where firearms were stolen and not whether they were used to perpetrate a crime or offence.
8. [Section 3.2](#) mentions changes made to the data collection procedures made in the previous bulletin. Some areas only applied those changes to the 2017-18 recording year. The affected areas were the Highlands, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan Siar. Given this, further caution should

be exercised when making comparisons between 2017-18 onwards and previous years for these local authorities.

3.8 Classification

1. For the purposes of statistical reporting, the Scottish Government has a classification list containing around 600 crime and offence codes. These are grouped in this bulletin in the following table:

Category	Notes
Homicide	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murder • Culpable homicide (common law)
Attempted murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted murder
Serious assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious assault
Robbery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robbery and assault with intent to rob
Vandalism	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vandalism • Reckless Damage • Malicious mischief
Reckless conduct with firearms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reckless conduct with firearms
Firearms Act 1968 offences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime or resist arrest
Common assault	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common assault • Common assault of an emergency worker
Breach of the peace etc.	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breach of the peace • Threatening or abusive behaviour
Other crimes and offences	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possession of an offensive weapon • Poaching and game laws • Deer offences • Cruelty to animals • Offences involving animals • Offences involving birds

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

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

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

3.9 Comparator data

1. Country comparisons should be made with some caution as each country's statistics are based on separate collection systems with their own definitions for what constitutes an offence involving a firearm. The Office for National Statistics publishes information on offences involving firearms in England and Wales. Chapter 4 on [Trends for different types of violent crime](#) in England and Wales: year ending March 2020, released in February 2021, includes information on offences involving firearms.
2. The [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#) is a survey of public experiences and perceptions of crime and the justice system in Scotland. The 2019-20 survey is the latest sweep of the current guise of the SCJS, with the first being conducted in 2008-09. The survey involves interviews with adults (aged 16 or over) who live in private residential addresses in Scotland.
3. Only certain categories of crime covered by the SCJS are directly comparable with police recorded crime statistics. These categories are collectively referred to as comparable crime. Comparable crime can be broken down into the following three crime groups.
4. acquisitive crime: comprising housebreaking, theft of a motor vehicle and bicycle theft;
5. vandalism: including both vehicle and property vandalism; and
6. violent crime: comprising assault and robbery.

3.10 Other

1. Only a limited selection of tables are included in this bulletin. However, further analysis of recorded crimes and offences involving firearms statistics can be supplied upon request. This includes available information relating to a different time period than that covered in this bulletin. In certain cases, a fee may be charged for additional information. For details of what can be provided, please telephone Justice Analytical Services on 0300 244 4000 or e-mail Justice_Analysts@gov.scot.
2. The percentage figures given in tables and charts have been independently rounded, so they may not always sum to the relevant sub-totals or totals.
3. The following symbols are used throughout the tables in this bulletin:
 - = nil.
 - ~ = percentage less than 0.05%.

* = percentage less than 0.5%.

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

An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

Correspondence and enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Graeme Lloyd,
Justice Analytical Services,
e-mail: Justice_Analysts@gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician
Telephone: 0131 244 0442
e-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this publication:

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

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to:

Chief Statistician
St Andrews House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG
Telephone: (0131) 244 0302
e-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please register your interest at www.gov.scot/scotstat

Details of forthcoming publications can be found at [Official statistics: forthcoming publications](#)

ISBN 978-1-80435-541-1 (web only)

Crown Copyright

You may use or re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. See: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/