

## CRIME AND JUSTICE

# Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland, 2020-21 and 2021-22

This Official Statistics bulletin provides new information for the reporting years of 2020-21 and 2021-22, 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 seven years of 2015-16 to 2021-22 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 statistics in this bulletin cover recorded crimes and offences involving firearms which occurred between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2022. The first COVID-19 lockdown started in Scotland on 24 March 2020; therefore statistics in this bulletin relate entirely to offences involving firearms recorded during the first and second year since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK.

## Key Points

In 2021-22, the police in Scotland recorded 273 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved, a decrease of 23% from 2020-21 (353 offences) and down 20% from 2019-20 (341 offences).

The 273 offences in 2021-22 were the lowest since records began in 1980.

The most commonly committed offences involving a firearm in 2021-22 were Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (26%), Common assault (17%), Breach of the peace etc. (14%) and Reckless conduct with firearms (also 14%).

The number of offences in which a firearm was discharged and caused fatal or non-fatal injury increased by 13 (or 41%) from 32 in 2020-21 to 45 in 2021-22.

An air weapon was the main firearm used in 30% of all offences including the alleged involvement of a firearm in 2021-22, followed by an imitation firearm (16%) and other firearms<sup>1</sup> (14%).

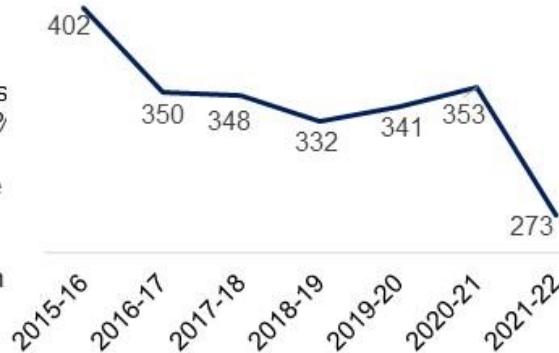
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<sup>1</sup> Other firearms includes tasers, flare guns, mace/pepper spray etc. as covered by Section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968.

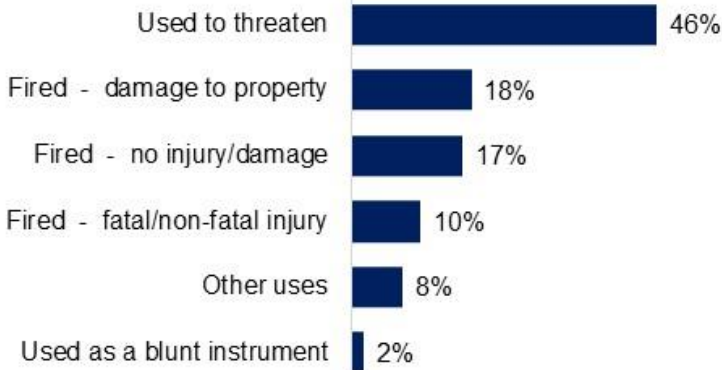
# Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland, 2021-22

## ▼ How many offences were recorded?

- ▶ Since 2015-16, the number of firearms offences has fallen by 32%
- ▶ 2021-22 saw the lowest recorded level since records began in 1980



## ▶ How were the identified weapons used (excluding air weapons)? (%)



## ▶ Where were they used?

40% of offences occurred in a dwelling



31% of offences occurred in the street



7% of offences occurred in a shop



## ▶ Who were the main perpetrators?

96% Male



4% Female



27

median age of the perpetrator

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

41% Air weapon



21% Imitation Firearm



17% Pistol/Revolver



11% Rifle



9% Shotgun



# Introduction

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 and 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 2022-23.

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 [Annex 2](#).

This bulletin provides new information for the reporting years of 2020-21 and 2021-22, on the same improved methodology as 2015-16 to 2019-20.

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 273 firearms related offences recorded by the police in 2021-22 can be said to be the lowest recorded for any single year since 1980.

## **An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland**

These statistics are official statistics. Official statistics are statistics that are produced by crown bodies, those acting on behalf of crown bodies, or those specified in statutory orders, as defined in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

# Offences involving firearms

Tables 1, 2, 2a, 3, 4; [Chart 1](#)

In 2021-22, the police in Scotland recorded 273 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved, a decrease of 23% since 2020-21. In 2020-21, the police recorded 353 offences, an increase of 4% from 2019-20. The 273 offences in 2021-22 were the lowest since records began in 1980.

In 2021-22, 26% of recorded offences involving a firearm were for Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. A further 17% of total recorded offences were for Common assault, 14% were for Breach of the peace etc. and a further 14% were for Reckless conduct with firearms.

In 2020-21, two Homicides involving a firearm were recorded, with one recorded in 2021-22. There were eight Attempted murders involving a firearm in 2020-21 and one in 2021-22.

The number of Serious assaults involving a firearm increased from two in 2020-21 to three in 2021-22. The number of robberies involving a firearm recorded in 2021-22 was 10, a decrease of 12 from 2020-21.

When air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded, the total number of offences involving a firearm decreased by 17% between 2020-21 and 2021-22 (from 188 offences to 156 offences).

Offences relating to Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc., Breach of the peace etc., Reckless conduct and Common assault continue to account for the largest proportion of offences involving a firearm when air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded (at 29%, 15%, 13% and 13% 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 2021-22, including 2.0% of Homicides (one offence), 0.6% of Robberies (10 offences) and 0.4% of Attempted Murders (one offence). Only 0.1% of all Serious and Common assaults, and less than 0.1% of Vandalism offences, involved the alleged use of a firearm. For further information please see [Annex 7](#).

# Main firearm recorded

Tables 4, 4a, 5a; [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. This then changed back to an air weapon for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

An air weapon was used in three-in-ten (30%, or 83 offences) of all offences involving a firearm in 2021-22, down from 102 offences (accounting for 29% of offences) in 2020-21. When unidentified and other firearms are excluded, air weapons were used in 41% of offences in 2021-22.

Over the last seven years, the number of offences involving an air weapon fell by 56% (from 190 to 83 offences).

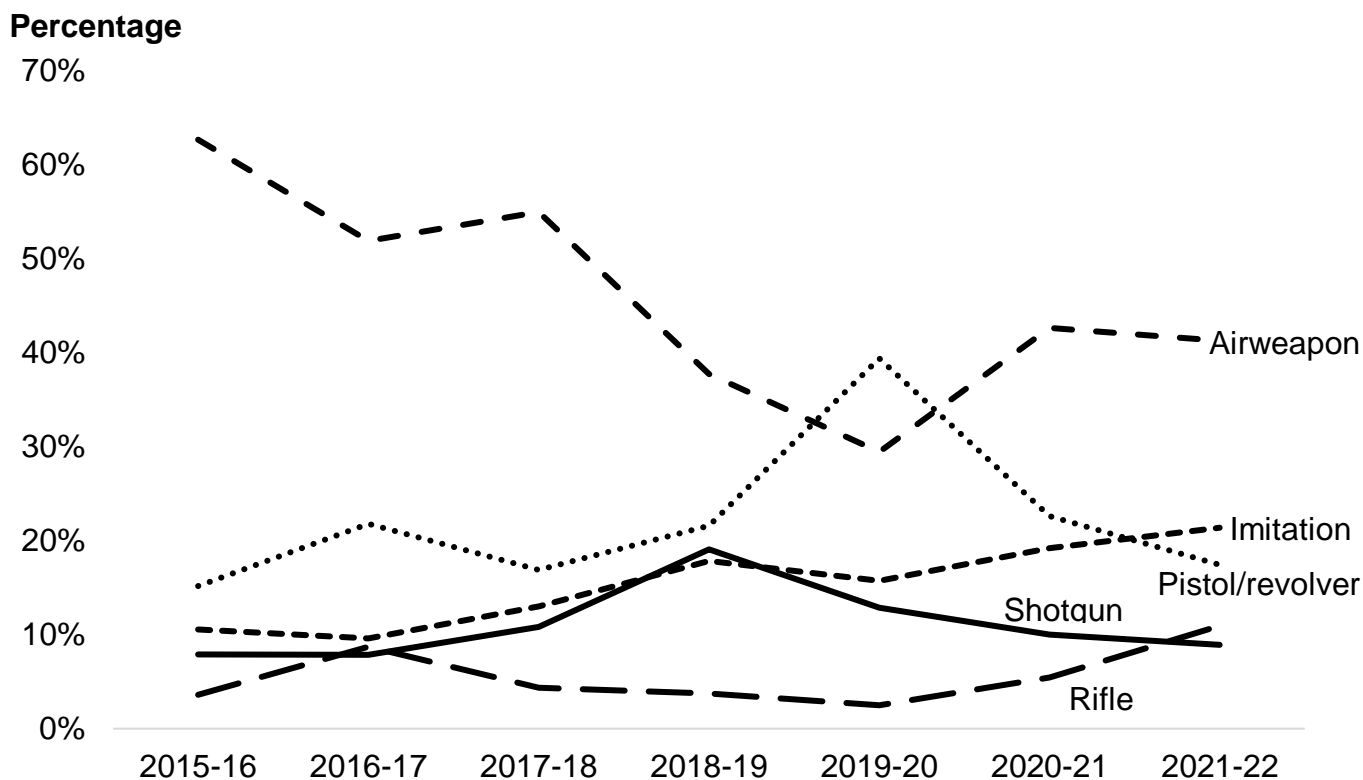
Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, most of the remaining types of firearms saw a decrease. Unidentified firearms decreased by 29 (46%), pistol/revolver by 19 (35%), other firearms by 13 (25%), Shotgun by 6 (25%) and Imitation firearm by 3 (7%). Rifle was the only type of firearm that increased in this time period (up 9, or 69%).

In 2021-22, Air weapons were most common in Common assault (55%), Reckless conduct with a firearm (33%), Other crimes and offences (33%) and Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (20%). It was also used in the only Attempted murder involving the alleged use of a firearm.

[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 2021-22.

## Air weapon was the most common firearm recorded in offences involving the alleged use of a firearm in 2021-22 whilst Shotgun was the least common

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 2021-22



## Firearm Use

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

Amongst recorded offences in 2021-22, 104 (or 38%) involved a firearm being used to threaten. A firearm was discharged in 52% of offences. The breakdown of how the main firearm recorded was used is provided in [Chart 2](#).

The decrease in the number of offences involving firearms between 2020-21 and 2021-22 was driven by a decrease in the number of offences where the firearm was used to threaten, which decreased by 40 (28%). Changes seen in all other categories were smaller. The only increase between 2020-21 and 2021-22 by volume was observed amongst ‘fired – non-fatal injury’ offences which increased by 52% from 29 in 2020-21 to 44 in 2021-22.

The number of offences in which a firearm was fired and caused fatal or non-fatal injury to a person increased by 41% from 32 in 2020-21 to 45 in 2021-22. For more information regarding the method of counting victims, see [Annex 7](#).



The number of offences in which a firearm was discharged causing no injury or damage decreased by 9 offences from 61 in 2020-21 to 52 in 2021-22 (-15%). Crimes where property was damaged decreased by 15 offences from 59 in 2020-21 to 44 in 2021-22 (-25%).

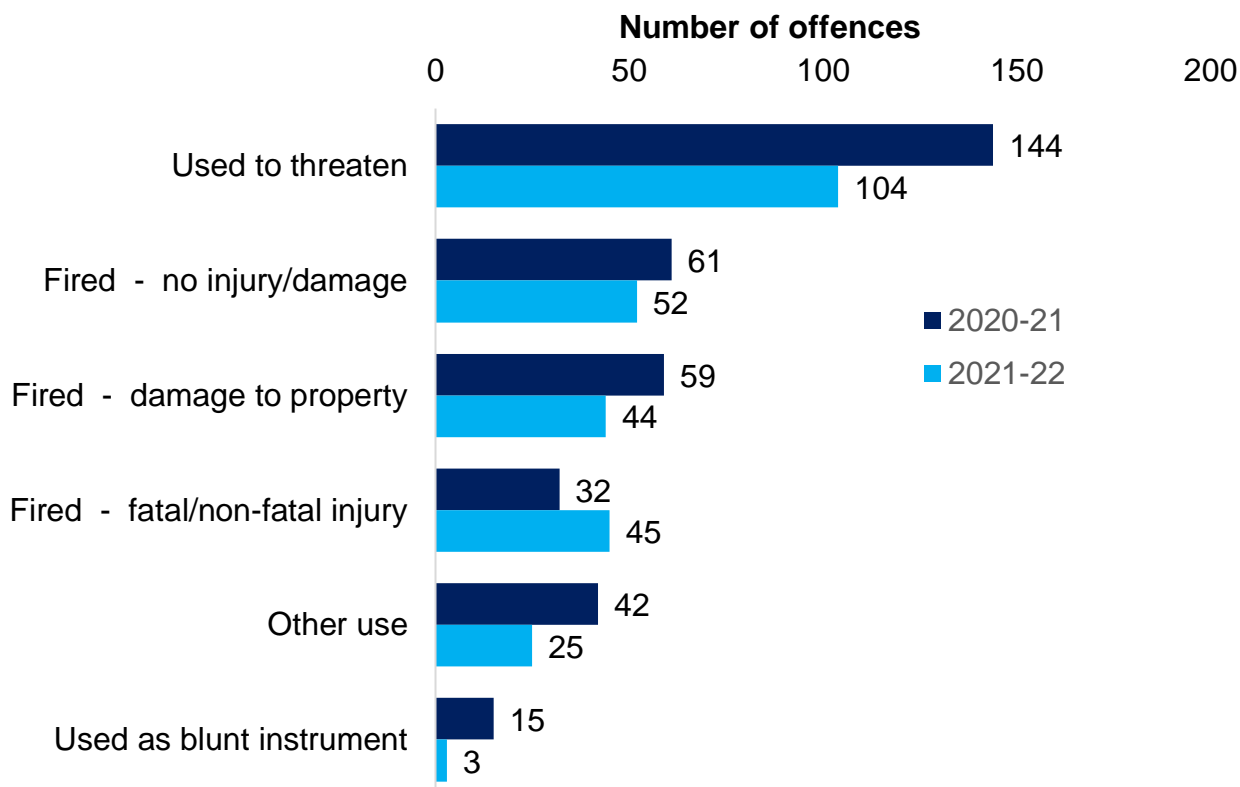
Of the 141 offences in which a firearm was discharged in 2021-22, 42% (59) involved an air weapon, of which none resulted in fatal injury. Of those 59 offences, 21 resulted in no injury or damage, 11 in property damage, and the remaining 27 in a non-fatal injury to a person.

Of the 47 Common assaults involving a firearm in 2021-22, 22 resulted in the weapon being discharged and causing a non-fatal injury. This accounts for exactly half (50%) of the 44 recorded offences in which a firearm was fired and caused a non-fatal injury.

In 2021-22, where a firearm was discharged resulting in no injury, nearly a third (31%, 16 offences) were classified as Common assault, with the same number being classified as Reckless conduct with a firearm. Where a firearm was used to threaten, nearly a half (47%) of these were offences of Possessing a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc.

**The main way in which the main firearm recorded was used in both 2020-21 and 2021-22 was to threaten whilst the least common was as a blunt instrument**

Chart 2: How main firearm recorded was used in offences involving the alleged use of a firearm, Scotland, 2020-21 and 2021-22



# Location of firearm offences

Tables 10, 10a; [Chart 3](#)

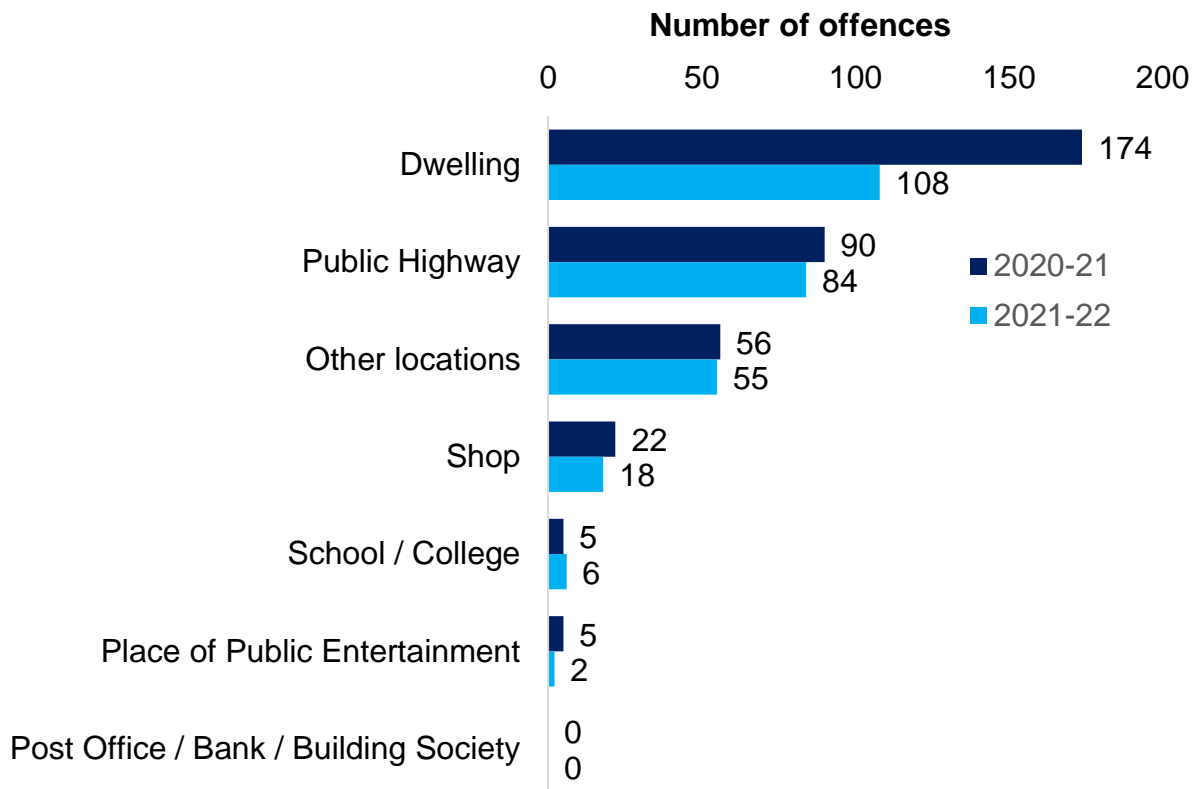
In 2021-22, most offences involving firearms either took place in a Dwelling (40%) or on a Public highway (31%). Public highways include roads and footpaths.

Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, the only location that saw an increase in offences was School/College (+1).

The number of offences occurring in a Dwelling (-66), Public Highway (-6), Shop (-4), Place of Public Entertainment (-3) and Other locations (-1) all decreased from 2020-21 to 2021-22. Other locations include: within a motor vehicle, on licensed premises, and other outside locations, e.g. in a field.

**The most common location of an offence involving the alleged use of a firearm in both 2020-21 and 2021-22 was a Dwelling whilst the least common was a Post Office**

Chart 3: Location of offences (where known) involving the alleged use of a firearm, Scotland, 2020-21 and 2021-22



In both 2020-21 and 2021-22, there were no offences involving the alleged use of a firearm occurring within a bank, building society or post office. This represents a relatively small change from 2018-19, when six offences were recorded, and from 2019-20, when only one offence was recorded. There was also one offence that occurred in an unknown location in 2020-21.

# Victim Characteristics

Tables 11, 11a

Details on the way that victims are counted within this bulletin are provided in [Annex 7](#).

Of the 45 main victims who were either fatally or non-fatally injured during an offence involving a firearm in 2021-22, 23 were male (51%), 21 were female (47%) and 1 victim's sex was unknown (2%).

The number of offences that included a male main victim increased by one between 2020-21 and 2021-22, and the number of offences that included a female victim increased by 12.

In 2021-22, the median age of all victims was 31. 48% of all offences where someone was either fatally or non-fatally injured involved a victim under the age of 16. There were 13 offences that had a main victim aged 31 or older, accounting for 28% of offences with a main victim.

When air weapons and unidentified weapons are excluded, there were 16 offences with a main victim in 2021-22, remaining unchanged from 2020-21.

For data that specifically relates to the number of homicide fatalities involving the use of a firearm, please refer to the [Homicide in Scotland Accredited Official Statistics](#).

## Clear up rates

Table 12

In 2021-22, 71% of all offences involving a firearm were cleared up. The clear up rate of offences involving firearms has remained relatively stable over recent years, with clear up rates fluctuating between 66% and 71% since 2015-16. These are consistently higher than the clear up rate for total recorded crime which has been between 53.4% and 59.3% between 2015-16 and 2021-22.

For further information on clear up rates (including how they are calculated), please see [Annex 6](#).

The clear-up rate varies by crime type for offences involving firearms (and more generally). In 2021-22, the crimes with the highest clear up rates were Homicide and Serious assault (both 100%). Clear up rates for other crimes include, Breach of the peace etc. (85%), Common assault (79%), Possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime etc. (75%), Other crimes and offences (73%), Reckless conduct with firearms (62%) and Robbery (60%). The only crime types with a clear up rate of below 50% was Vandalism (15%) and Attempted murder

(0%). However, it should be noted that there was only one Attempted murder where a firearm was allegedly involved.

## Accused Characteristics

Table 13

In 2021-22, there were 195 offences in which accused person(s) were identified. Of the main accused of these offences, 187 (96%) were male, while only 8 (4%) were female.

In 2021-22 the median age of the main accused person was 27. The main accused was under 16 years old in 16% of cleared up offences involving the use of a firearm (31 out of 195 offences). A further 17% of cleared up offences were committed by an accused aged 31 to 40 (33 offences) and 19% were committed by an accused aged 21 to 30 years (37 offences). Of all offences that were cleared up in 2021-22, the most common ages of the main accused were those aged 41 and older, and those aged 16-20, with 52 and 42 offences respectively (27% and 22% of all offences cleared up).

## 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 2021-22, the local authority areas of Glasgow City (37) and Dundee City (24) had the highest number of offences involving firearms. When cases involving air weapons are excluded – the highest number of offences were recorded in Glasgow City (14), Edinburgh City (13) and Angus and Highland (both 12).

## Stolen Firearms

Tables 16, 16a

During 2021-22, Police Scotland recorded two offences in which a firearm (other than an air weapon) was stolen (a very small increase from one offence in 2020-21). These two figures are the lowest recorded figures within the most recent seven years of presented data.

In two out of the three recorded offences in 2020-21 and 2021-22, only one offence involved multiple weapons. This occurred in 2021-22.

## Miscellaneous firearm offences

Tables 17, 17a

Data presented in this section and Tables 17 and 17a are based on [Recorded Crime in Scotland 2022-23 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, a decrease of 20% from 2019-20. This decreased by a further 18% to 356 in 2021-22, the only other full year affected by COVID-19. For further information on Miscellaneous firearm offences please see [Annex 4](#).

The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 came into effect on 31 December 2016, meaning there are now six 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, and in 2021-22, they fell even further, to 215. However, the decreases in the latter two years may in part be due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Statement on Data Quality

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.

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 2021-22](#) includes analysis on why some crimes are not reported to the police.

This bulletin reports on offences involving firearms that are both reported to the police and subsequently recorded as a crime.

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.

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.

## **Annex 2: Data collection process**

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.

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

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.).

## **Annex 3: Review of data process for these Official Statistics**

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.

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.

The resulting statistics were then published in April 2019. A bulletin presenting new information for 2018-19 and 2019-20 on the same methodology was published in June 2022. This bulletin provides new information for the reporting years of 2020-21 and 2021-22, on the same improved methodology as 2015-16 to 2019-20.

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.

## **Annex 4: Data Returns**

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.

## **Annex 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 31 December 2016 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).

## **Annex 6: Crimes and offences cleared up**

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.

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.

Clear up rates are calculated as follows:

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

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

## **Annex 7: Statistical issues**

Data presented in this bulletin relates to the most recent seven 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](#).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

[Annex 2](#) mentions changes made to the data collection procedures made in the 2017-18 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.

## Annex 8: Classification

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"> <li>• Murder</li> <li>• Culpable homicide (common law)</li> </ul>
Attempted murder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempted murder</li> </ul>
Serious assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious assault</li> <li>• Causing injury etc. by Culpable &amp; Reckless Conduct</li> <li>• Illegal driver, disqualified/unlicensed etc. causing serious injury</li> <li>• Serious assault of retail worker</li> <li>• Female genital mutilation</li> </ul>
Robbery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robbery and assault with intent to rob</li> </ul>
Vandalism	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vandalism</li> <li>• Reckless Damage</li> <li>• Computer Misuse Act 1990 (Causing Damage)</li> </ul>
Reckless conduct with firearms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reckless conduct with firearms</li> </ul>
Firearms Act 1968 offences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possess firearm with intent to endanger life, commit crime or resist arrest</li> </ul>
Common assault	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common assault</li> </ul>

Category	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor assault of an emergency worker</li> <li>• Common assault of a retail worker</li> </ul>
Breach of the peace etc.	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breach of the peace</li> <li>• Threatening or abusive behaviour</li> <li>• Threaten or Abuse Retail Worker</li> </ul>
Other crimes and offences	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possession of an offensive weapon</li> <li>• Poaching and game laws</li> <li>• Deer offences</li> <li>• Cruelty to animals</li> <li>• Offences involving animals</li> <li>• Offences involving birds</li> <li>• Sexual crimes</li> <li>• Theft</li> <li>• Housebreaking</li> <li>• Weapons possession (both used and not used)</li> <li>• Drugs offences</li> <li>• Racially aggravated conduct</li> <li>• Drunkenness &amp; other disorderly conduct</li> </ul>

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.”

## Annex 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 2022, released in November 2022, includes information on offences involving firearms.
1. The [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#) is a survey of public experiences and perceptions of crime and the justice system in Scotland. The 2021-22 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.
2. 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.
  - acquisitive crime: comprising housebreaking, theft of a motor vehicle and bicycle theft;
  - vandalism: including both vehicle and property vandalism; and
  - violent crime: comprising assault and robbery.

## Annex 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 e-mail [Justice\\_Analysts@gov.scot](mailto: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).

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