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News

Impact of COVID-19 on crime

Published: **04 June 2020 09:38**

Topic: Communities and third sector, Law and order, Coronavirus (COVID-19) and other respiratory infections in Scotland

New monthly statistics published.

An analysis of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown has shown a decrease in almost all areas of crime recorded by police.

However, the statistics, which compare data from this April to the same month last year, suggest an increase in some types of crime including fraud.

A total of 17,171 crimes were reported in April, representing an 18% reduction (or 3,823 fewer crimes) compared to the 20,994 crimes recorded in April 2019.

Non-sexual crimes of violence fell by 14%, with a 13% decrease in crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse Act 2018.

Recorded sexual crimes were 26% lower overall, prompted mainly by a drop in offences of sexual assault (down by 46%) and rape and attempted rape (down by 27%).

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf said:

"While many types of crime have fallen in recent months, we know that some people have been using lockdown as a chance to commit offences, notably fraud – including targeting some of our most vulnerable citizens and exploiting businesses.

"We must remain vigilant to such criminals, and also to the risks of harm against those who may be living in fear of abuse and violence within their own homes. I would urge anyone who has experienced or witnessed crime to continue to report it.

"Some women and children may feel very isolated now, and need our help more than ever. My message to anyone experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence is absolutely clear: while you may feel vulnerable and unseen, you are not alone. Help from police and support services is still available round the clock.

"We know that criminals may also be using lockdown as a chance to exploit the vulnerable, especially those most at risk at home and in the care sector. This behaviour is absolutely abhorrent and we, along with the police, are determined to pursue those who set out to cause harm and misery to our communities."

Chief Constable Iain Livingstone said:

"The recorded crime figures show some changes to the demands on policing but it will undoubtedly take months, or even years, before we understand the true impact of the coronavirus pandemic on crime levels in Scotland.

"Our officers will continue to pursue fraudsters who set out to cause harm and misery to our communities. I know that private and virtual spaces are not safe places for some people and that the current restrictions may expose them to a greater risk of abuse, harm and neglect.

"Police Scotland will always pursue reports of domestic abuse or sexual crime whenever they occur and will continue to support those who feel vulnerable in our communities, particularly during this challenging time. Police Scotland is here to help 24 hours a day and if you need our support or intervention, please contact us."

Background

This bulletin is the first edition of a new monthly release of Official Statistics on crimes and offences recorded by the police in Scotland. These statistics will continue to be published each month, covering the period of April to September 2020. After that point, the Scottish Crime Recording Board will review whether this process should continue.

These Official Statistics currently exclude crimes recorded under the Coronavirus Act 2020 and Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020.

Recorded Crime in Scotland: April 2020 Official Statistics publication

Recorded Crime in Scotland: April 2020 statistical news release

The number of offences recorded by the police in Scotland was 29% lower in April 2020 than in April 2019, reducing from a total of 21,644 to 15,449. These figures include common assault (down 24%), breach of the peace (down 11%) and motor vehicle offences (down 42%).

Rules on staying at home do not prevent anyone from leaving their home to escape or keep themselves safe from domestic abuse. Further guidance is available here.

Scotland's 24 hour Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline is available on 0800 027 1234 or visit sdafmh.org.uk to email or webchat. Visit Safer.Scot for further information and support. Rape Crisis Scotland helpline is available on: 08088 01 03 02

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