



## CRIME AND JUSTICE

# DRUG SEIZURES AND OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS, 2014-15 and 2015-16

This bulletin presents Official Statistics on drug seizures made by the police in Scotland, and the characteristics of those found in possession of drugs in 2014-15 and 2015-16. These statistics relate to drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which divides drugs into three classes, namely A, B and C. For the purpose of this bulletin, the drug classifications at the end of the reporting period, 31 March 2016, have been applied to the data.

## Key Points

- The quantity of drugs seized can fluctuate considerably each year and does not necessarily move in line with the number of seizures made. Whilst most drug seizures consist of relatively small quantities (usually possession-related crimes), annual quantities of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by a small number of large seizures (usually from supply-related crimes).
- For crimes of drug supply, the main Class A drugs seized by Police Scotland in 2015-16 were heroin (74.0 kilograms), cocaine (82.7 kilograms) and crack cocaine (4.2 kilograms). In addition to this they also seized approximately 13,400 ecstasy-type tablets.
- Again for crimes of drug supply, the main Class B drugs seized by Police Scotland in 2015-16 were herbal cannabis (413.9 kilograms) and cannabis resin (570.4 kilograms). They also seized nearly 31,400 cannabis plants. For Class C drugs, the main drug seized was diazepam or other benzodiazepines (approximately 1.3 million tablets).
- A sample of drug possession crime across 2014-15 and 2015-16 found that nearly two thirds of drug possession crimes involved cannabis, with diazepam being the next most common type of drug seized.
- The vast majority of drug possession offenders were male. The average age of an offender was 30 years old, with the majority (65%) being between 20 and 39 years old. 16% of offenders were under 20 years old and 19% were 40 years old or older.

# Drug Possession Crime in Scotland, 2014-15 and 2015-16

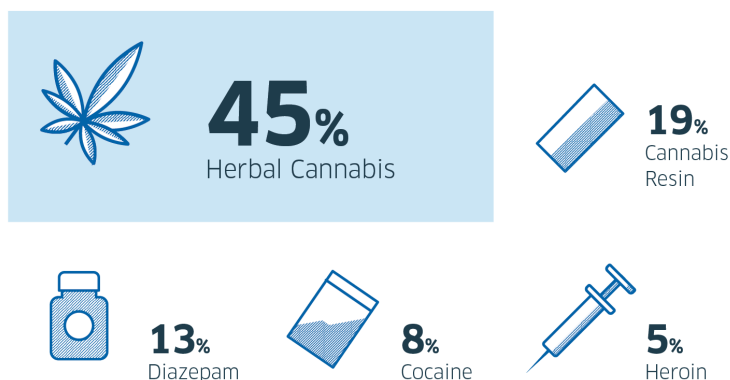
Based on a sample of 800 crimes



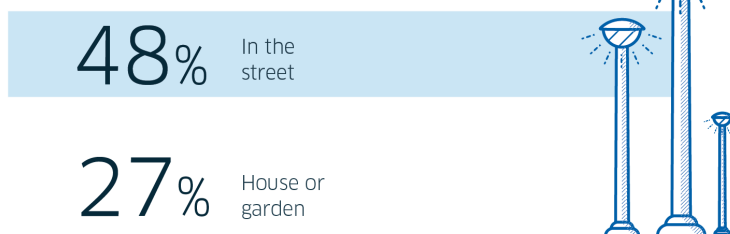
## Who were the offenders



## WHAT TYPE OF DRUGS WERE SEIZED



## WHERE WAS THE CRIME DISCOVERED



## OTHER FEATURES ON THE POLICE RECORDS



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# Background

This bulletin presents Official Statistics on the number and type of drug seizures made by Police Scotland during 2014-15 and 2015-16. It does not include information on drugs seized by the UK Border Force or British Transport Police, or as a result of Police Scotland activity which led to drugs being seized out-with Scotland.

This is the first bulletin to reflect a change to the data collection process for these statistics. For previous bulletins the data was manually extracted by Police Scotland from each crime record that included a drug crime. This was a time consuming process given the relatively large number of records covered each year. As such a new data collection process was put in place to increase the value of this bulletin to users, whilst making more effective use of resources.

The new data collection process takes a two part approach, looking at drug supply and drug possession crimes separately. Police Scotland continue to manually check drug supply-based crimes each year, with these records accounting for the clear majority of drugs seized in terms of quantity. This is supplemented by a sample led by Scottish Government statisticians of the remaining and far more numerous crimes of drug possession. The sample consists of a random selection of 400 crime records per year, stratified by police division so to reflect the distribution of drug possession crimes across Scotland. The information from the sample is then used to estimate the number of seizures and quantities seized in relation to possession crimes for the most commonly identified drug types for Scotland as a whole. This is done by multiplying the average quantity seized per crime by the estimated total number of seizures for that drug type.

For the drug types where quantities seized from possession-related crimes can be estimated, a figure for total amount seized has been produced by adding the quantity seized from supply crimes to the estimated quantity seized from possession crimes. For those drug types where the possession amount cannot be reliably estimated, only the quantity seized from supply crimes is available. However, as these drug types only appear in very small numbers within the sample, it can be assumed that the quantity seized from possession crimes is relatively low.

As well as using the sample to record information on the drugs seized from crimes of possession, information about the offender and the circumstances of the crime have also been recorded so that additional analysis on offender characteristics can be presented. This is new information that was not available with the previous data collection.

The change to the data collection process means that the figures presented in this bulletin are not directly comparable with the figures produced for previous years. However care must always be taken when making comparisons on this topic as

there can be very large fluctuations in the quantity of drugs seized from one year to the next. Data on the quantities of drugs seized from 2010-11 to 2013-14 can be found in the [2013-14 publication](#).

There are two statutory requirements for the UK to provide data on drug seizures, which are managed by the [UK Focal Point on Drugs](#), based at Public Health England. The UK Focal Point on Drugs collate drug seizures statistics from England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the UK Focal Point's annual report. This is then submitted to the [European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction](#) (EMCDDA) and the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC). These data inform the EMCDDA's annual report and the UNODC's annual World Drugs Report.

The minimum data requirements to satisfy these two obligations are to submit data on the number of drug seizures and the quantity of drugs seized for each of the following types of drugs: cocaine, crack, ecstasy-type substances, heroin, LSD, methylamphetamine, amphetamines, herbal cannabis, cannabis resin and cannabis plants. In addition to these ten drugs, this bulletin contains seizures data on methadone, morphine, barbiturates, ketamine, mephedrone, anabolic steroids, diazepam, GHB, temazepam and other benzodiazepines.

The statistics on drug seizures are used to inform [National Outcome 9](#) – 'we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger' as well as [The Strategy 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 'Drug Seizures and Offender Characteristics' annual statistical bulletin series forms part of a series of bulletins produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system which can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Publications>.

# Number of Seizures and Quantities of Drugs Seized

- The quantity of drugs seized can fluctuate considerably each year and does not necessarily move in line with the number of seizures made. Whilst most drug seizures consist of relatively small quantities (usually possession-related crimes), annual quantities of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by a small number of large seizures (usually supply-related crimes).

## Drug Supply Crimes

- Intelligence led operations against known drug dealers tend to result in a low number of seizures, but conversely the quantity of drugs seized and their value will be high. These high profile operations may result in greater disruption to the illicit drugs trade which, whilst having a positive effect, may reduce the number of seizures made. As such care should be taken when comparing quantities of drugs seized over time.
- A significant proportion of drugs seized in terms of quantity come from seizures related to supply crimes, despite making up a relatively small proportion of the overall number of seizures.
- This section covers drugs seized where the crime was one of drug supply, drug production or illegal importation of drugs. For both years it was not possible to collect data from every police record around these crimes. As such the figures provided relate to an estimated 85% and 92% of drug supply-related crimes in 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively, for full information see the Data Quality Statement in the [Annex](#).

## Class A drugs seized from Drug Supply Crimes

- [Table 1](#) shows that in 2015-16, Police Scotland reported that they seized 74.0 kilograms (kg) of heroin, 82.7 kg of cocaine and 4.2 kg of crack cocaine from drug supply crimes. This is compared to 106.1 kg of heroin, 75.7 kg of cocaine and 0.0 kg of crack cocaine in 2014-15.
- Approximately 13,400 ecstasy-type tablets were seized in 2015-16, compared to just over 15,000 in 2014-15.
- 4.3 litres of methadone was seized by Police Scotland in 2015-16, compared to 8.1 litres in 2014-15.

**Table 1: Class A drugs seized by Police Scotland from Drug Supply Crimes, by drug type, 2014-15 and 2015-16<sup>1</sup>**

Drug	Units	2014-15		2015-16	
		Number of Seizures	Quantity Seized	Number of Seizures	Quantity Seized
Cocaine Powder	kg	366	75.7	506	82.7
Crack Cocaine	kg	3	0.0	25	4.2
Ecstasy-type Substances	tablets (000s)	89	15.1	148	13.4
Heroin	kg	553	106.1	737	74.0
LSD	tablets (000s)	3	0.1	6	0.0
Methadone	litres	34	8.1	11	4.3
Methylamphetamine	kg	0	0.0	0	0.0
Morphine	litres	3	0.1	18	0.0

1. Data for 2014-15 is based on an estimated 85% of all drug supply-related crimes and data for 2015-16 is based on an estimated 92% of all drug supply-related crimes.

- Compared to other types of Class A Drugs, relatively small amounts of LSD and methylamphetamine (or “speed”) were seized in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

#### **Class B drugs seized from Drug Supply Crimes**

- [Table 2](#) shows the quantities of class B drugs seized in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

**Table 2: Class B drugs seized by Police Scotland from Drug Supply Crimes, by drug type, 2014-15 and 2015-16<sup>1</sup>**

Drug	Units	2014-15		2015-16	
		Number of Seizures	Quantity Seized	Number of Seizures	Quantity Seized
Herbal Cannabis	kg	731	165.4	905	413.9
Cannabis resin	kg	268	153.4	400	570.4
Cannabis plants	plants	594	13,022	655	31,398
Amphetamines	kg	124	118.4	135	71.8
Barbiturates	tablets (000s)	0	0.0	0	0.0
Ketamine	kg	2	0.0	2	0.0
Mephedrone	kg	2	0.0	11	0.9

1. Data for 2014-15 is based on an estimated 85% of all drug supply-related crimes and data for 2015-16 is based on an estimated 92% of all drug supply-related crimes.

- The quantity of cannabis related drug seizures from drug supply crimes in 2015-16 included 413.9 kg of herbal cannabis, 570.4 kg of cannabis resin and almost 31,400 cannabis plants. This is compared to 165.4 kg of herbal

cannabis, 153.4 kg of cannabis resin and just over 13,000 cannabis plants in 2014-15.

- There were 71.8 kg of amphetamines and 0.9 kg of mephedrone seized from drug supply crimes in 2015-16.

### Class C drugs seized from Drug Supply Crimes

- [Table 3](#) shows the quantities of class C drugs seized from drug supply crimes.

**Table 3: Class C drugs seized by Police Scotland from Drug Supply Crimes, by drug type, 2014-15 and 2015-16<sup>1</sup>**

Drug	Units	2014-15		2015-16	
		Number of Seizures	Quantity Seized	Number of Seizures	Quantity Seized
Anabolic Steroids	tablets (000s)	3	0.3	5	0.3
GHB	litres	0	0.0	2	0.0
Temazepam	tablets (000s)	2	0.0	4	1.3
Diazepam and other Benzodiazepines	tablets (000s)	419	1,182.7	382	1,276.1

1. Data for 2014-15 is based on an estimated 85% of all drug supply-related crimes and data for 2015-16 is based on an estimated 92% of all drug supply-related crimes.

- Most class C seizures were of diazepam and other benzodiazepines, with approximately 1.2 million tablets seized in 2014-15 and 1.3 million tablets in 2015-16. In previous bulletins separate figures were presented on seizures of diazepam and other benzodiazepines, however this split has not been possible for 2014-15 and 2015-16. Whilst a combined figure has been presented on this occasion, the vast majority of tablets seized are likely to have been diazepam.
- Approximately 300 tablets of anabolic steroids and approximately 1,300 tablets of temazepam were seized in 2015-16.



## Drug Possession Crimes

- The majority of seizures of controlled drugs are from drug possession crimes, however by their nature these incidents involve a relatively small quantity of drugs being seized. As a result, drug possession crimes account for only a small proportion of all drugs seized in terms of quantity, despite accounting for the vast majority of seizures.
- The data presented below for drug possession crimes is based on a sample of 400 records per year. As this analysis is drawn from a sample of records, users should treat the following information as a broad indication of the characteristics of drug possession rather than as an exact measure. All figures are presented at a national level as the sample size is too small to provide robust estimates for geographies below this.

### Number of Drug Possession crimes by Drug Classification

- In total, there were 31,632 drug possession crimes recorded by the police in 2014-15, and 29,929 drug possession crimes in 2015-16.
- [Table 4](#) shows the distribution of the classification of drugs seized in the sample for 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. There is also a resulting estimate of the total number of possession crimes involving each class of drug.

**Table 4: Estimated number of Drug Possession crimes by drug classification, 2014-15 and 2015-16**

Drug Class	2014-15		2015-16	
	Percentage of records in the sample	Estimated total number of crimes <sup>1</sup>	Percentage of records in the sample	Estimated total number of crimes <sup>1</sup>
Class A	15.8%	5,000	17.5%	5,200
Class B	68.0%	21,500	67.5%	20,200
Class C	15.8%	5,000	14.5%	4,300
Unclassified <sup>2</sup>	0.5%	200	0.5%	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>31,632</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>29,929</b>

1. As these figures are estimates they have been rounded to the nearest 100

2. In a small number of cases the drug type could not be classified due to lack of information or no controlled drugs were seized.

- For both years, slightly more than two thirds of all drug possession crimes were estimated to involve class B drugs.
- The remaining third of drug possession seizures involved class A or class C drugs. In 2014-15 the sample estimated an even split between the two

classes. In 2015-16 there were slightly more seizures involving class A drugs than class C, however this difference is not statistically significant.

### Quantity of drugs seized from Drug Possession Crimes

- [Tables 5 and 6](#) provide estimates of the quantity of drugs seized from 2014-15 and 2015-16 for particular drug types. Estimates of the quantity seized from drug possession crimes have only been calculated where there were at least 15 observations of that drug being seized in the sample.
- The quantity has been estimated by multiplying the average quantity seized in the sample by the estimated number of drug possession seizures involving that drug.

**Table 5: Quantity of drugs seized by Police Scotland from Drug Possession Crimes, by drug type, 2014-15**

Drug	Units	Drug Class	Percentage of sample	Estimated number of crimes <sup>1</sup>	Estimated quantity seized
Cocaine	kg	A	7.8%	2,500	4.1
Heroin	kg	A	4.8%	1,500	0.8
Herbal Cannabis	kg	B	43.0%	13,600	36.2
Cannabis Resin	kg	B	21.0%	6,600	14.8
Diazepam	tablets (000s)	C	14.5%	4,600	151.3

1. As these figures are estimates they have been rounded to the nearest 100

**Table 6: Quantity of drugs seized by Police Scotland from drug Possession crimes, by drug type, 2015-16**

Drug	Units	Drug Class	Percentage of sample	Estimated number of crimes <sup>1</sup>	Estimated quantity seized
Cocaine	kg	A	8.3%	2,500	6.1
Heroin	kg	A	6.0%	1,800	2.1
Herbal Cannabis	kg	B	46.8%	14,000	36.8
Cannabis Resin	kg	B	16.8%	5,000	17.6
Diazepam	tablets (000s)	C	12.3%	3,700	63.2

1. As these figures are estimates they have been rounded to the nearest 100

- In both years, cocaine, heroin, herbal cannabis, cannabis resin and diazepam accounted for approximately 90% of all drug possession seizures. The quantities seized for most of these drugs is reasonably similar between 2014-15 and 2015-16. The exception to this is diazepam where an estimated

151,300 tablets were seized in 2014-15, compared to 63,200 tablets in 2015-16.

- Herbal cannabis is the most commonly seized drug by a considerable margin, with cannabis resin the second most commonly seized drug. In both years just under two-thirds (64%) of all possession-related seizures involved these two drug types.

## Overall quantity of drugs seized

- [Table 7](#) shows the total quantity of drugs seized for the drug types where an estimate of the quantity seized from possession crimes has been made. The figures shown in the table are the sum of the quantities seized from supply-related crimes and the estimated quantity seized from possession crimes.
- For those drug types not shown in Table 7, there were fewer than 15 observations in the sample of possession crimes for each year, and therefore the total quantity seized from possession crimes is likely to be very small. Due to this the quantity seized from supply-related crimes shown in [Tables 1, 2](#) and [3](#) should provide a reasonable estimate of the total quantity seized.

**Table 7: Estimated total quantity of drugs seized by Police Scotland, by drug type, 2014-15 and 2015-16<sup>2</sup>**

Drug	Units	Drug Class	Estimated quantity seized in 2014-15	Estimated quantity seized in 2015-16
Cocaine	kg	A	79.9	88.8
Heroin	kg	A	106.8	76.1
Herbal Cannabis	kg	B	201.6	450.7
Cannabis Resin	kg	B	168.2	588.0
Diazepam <sup>1</sup>	tablets (000s)	C	1,334.0	1,339.3

<sup>1</sup>For the element of this which applies to supply based crimes a small proportion of these will be other benzodiazepines

<sup>2</sup>For the element of this which applies to supply based crimes there was an estimated coverage of 85% of crimes in 2014-15 and 92% of crimes in 2015-16.

- For all of these drugs types the quantity of drugs seized from possession crimes is relatively small when compared to the quantity seized from supply crimes.

- In 2015-16, 88.8 kg of cocaine was seized in total compared to 79.9 kg in 2014-15. There was also 76.1 kg of heroin seized in 2015-16 compared to 106.8 kg in the previous year.
- In total, 450.7 kg of herbal cannabis was seized in 2015-16 compared to 201.6 kg in 2014-15. The quantity of cannabis resin seized in 2015-16 was 588.0 kg compared to 168.2 kg in 2014-15.
- Approximately 1.3 million diazepam tablets were seized in both 2014-15 and 2015-16.

# Analysis of the characteristics of drug possession crimes

- Information about the offenders of drug possession crimes and how they came to the attention of the police was also recorded from the sample of 800 records across 2014-15 and 2015-16.

## Characteristics of Offenders

- The vast majority of drug possession crimes were committed by one offender, with only 3% of crimes having multiple offenders (these situations can occur where offenders collectively admit to ownership of the seized drugs, or if no one admits to ownership).
- The vast majority of drug possession crimes are committed by males or all male groups. In both 2014-15 and 2015-16, 85% of drug possessions were committed by individual males, with a further 2% committed by entirely male groups.
- The mean average age of a drug possession offender during 2014-15 and 2015-16 was 30 years old. [Table 8](#) shows the age distribution of the offenders in the sample.

**Table 8: Age distribution of the offenders of drug possession crime during 2014-15 and 2015-16**

Age group of offender	Percentage of offenders	Percentage of population <sup>1</sup>
0-19	16%	22%
20-29	38%	14%
30-39	27%	12%
40-49	15%	14%
50+	4%	38%

1. Population figures are based on the National Records of Scotland mid-year estimates for 2014 and 2015 (percentages were the same in both years).

- The majority of offenders are in the 20-29 years or 30-39 years age groups. Offenders are far more likely to come from these two age groups than would be expected based solely on their size within the general population.
- In just over a fifth of drug possession crimes (22%) there was a reference to someone being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In the majority of

these cases it refers to the offender, however in a small number of cases it is in reference to another party.

## **How Police Scotland became aware of the Drug Possession Crime**

- The circumstances leading to a drug possession seizure have been recorded based on the details of the event within the crime record. As crime records have not been created specifically for this purpose, it has been necessary on occasion to make assumptions around certain aspects of what happened. As such this information should be seen as a broad illustration, rather than a precise measure.
- During 2014-15 and 2015-16, over half (53%) of drug possessions in the sample were detected by police while on patrol. The majority of these were cases where the police on patrol had a suspicion or observed that the offender was in possession of drugs, with this category accounting for 39% of all records reviewed. A further 14% of records involved police on patrol dealing with another crime, offence or incident and finding drugs while doing this.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of drug possessions were found as a result of police responding to a report of a crime, offence or another reported incident. A further 22% of drug possession seizures were made by police during investigations into an earlier crime, offence or incident.

## **Other information about the Drug Seizure**

- During 2014-15 and 2015-16, 5% of crime records for drug possession made reference to the involvement of NHS services. This involvement was not necessarily for the offender of the drug possession crime, and will not necessarily be linked to the use of drugs.
- More than one crime was recorded in 37% of records in the sample. The additional crimes recorded are not necessarily committed by the same person responsible for the drug possession crime. In over half (54%) of the records where another crime was recorded, at least one of the other crimes was also in relation to drug possession or supply.
- Drug seizures were more common over the weekend, with Fridays and Saturdays accounting for 20% and 19% of the sample respectively.
- The most common location for drugs to be seized from an offender was the street, with 48% of records reviewed having this locus. Dwellings were the next most common locus, with just over a quarter (27%) of seizures.

# Annexes

## Data Quality Statement

- To produce this annual release on drug seizures, the Scottish Government requests data on drug supply-related crimes from Police Scotland's Analysis and Performance Unit (APU). APU, in turn, requests this information from divisions across Police Scotland which still maintain aspects of their own Crime Management Systems defined by the previous legacy force areas. It was not possible to get data from every record for the two years presented in this bulletin. Edinburgh and the Lothians & Scottish Borders divisions were unable to extract data for 2014-15 and provided a partial return for 2015-16. As such the figures provided for drug supply crime relate to an estimated 85% and 92% of drug supply-related crimes in 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. It is anticipated that all areas will provide a full return from 2016-17 onwards.
- In addition to this, data from drug possession crimes is collected via a random sample of 400 drug possession crime records per year. This sample is stratified by police division so that the sample's geographic distribution reflects the distribution of drug possession crimes across Scotland. These records are reviewed by Scottish Government statisticians.
- As part of the sampling process, the quality of the recording of drug possession crimes was checked and found to be very good, with nearly 100% of records classified correctly across 2014-15 and 2015-16.
- We always welcome feedback on the content of our statistical bulletins and users are welcome to submit their comments to: [JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot](mailto:JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot).

## Police Scotland Management Information

- In addition to the Official Statistics on drug seizures, Police Scotland publish management information on drug crimes recorded by the police (including the number of recorded crimes of drug supply & production, possession of drugs and other drug crimes). This is presented within their Quarterly Management Information Reports, which are available from the 'Our Performance' section of Police Scotland's website: <http://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/our-performance/>
- 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 3 months of data (from April to June), the second containing 6 months of data (from

April to September) etc. The reports are typically published within 2 months of the period to which they refer.

## Other Notes

- Justice Analytical Services publishes a work plan each year detailing the programme of work planned over the current financial year period. The work of the division covers both an agreed forward programme of analytical priorities, and routine analytical work particularly related to the compilation of National and Official Statistics, ongoing project management and knowledge transfer activity.
- Analytical planning to develop a programme for the financial year 2016-17 followed a structured process of engagement with policy colleagues which was designed to closely align our analysis with current policy priorities and to the delivery of outcomes. The work plan is available via the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/JAS-Programme-2016-17>
- Clearly, only a limited selection of tables can be included in any statistical bulletin. Further analysis of Drug Seizures in Scotland can be supplied on request. In certain cases a fee is charged. For details of what can be provided, please telephone Hugh Mackenzie on 0131 244 5428 or e-mail [JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot](mailto:JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot).



## **An Official Statistics publication for Scotland**

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### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this statistical bulletin

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available on the Scottish Government website
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot](mailto:JusticeAnalysts@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**

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