

Victims of Crime

Actual risk of victimisation

The [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#)

- is conducted every two years across the whole of Scotland
- is a large-scale social survey (12,000 face-to-face interviews with adults over 16 living in private households)
- asks people in Scotland about their experiences and perceptions of crime.



The 2017-2018 survey (the most recent survey) found that:

- the overall risk of being a victim of crime has fallen, from 20.4% in 2008-2009 to 16.9% in 2012-2013 and 12.5% in 2017-18.
- this risk of victimisation is lower in Scotland than in England and Wales, where the risk of being a victim is 18.7%.

What about demographic (population) characteristics?

- Location
Those living in deprived areas have a greater risk of being a victim of crime than those who do not live in deprived areas:
for those living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland, the risk of victimisation was 18%, compared with 11.5% for the rest of Scotland. Deprivation is defined with reference to the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#).
- Age
The risk of being a victim of any crime decreases with age:
16% of those aged between 16 and 24 were at risk of being a victim of any crime, compared to 5.3% of those aged 60 or over
- Gender
The risk of being a victim of crime is slightly higher for males than females:
Males had the highest reported risk of being a victim of any crime (12.8%) compared to females (12.1%).

- Repeat victims
Fewer than 1 in every 100 adults were victims of repeated incidents of violence, but their experiences accounted for around three-fifths of violent crime in 2017/18.

Case Study: Cathleen

For Cathleen Lauder being stared at, talked about and harassed because she is a transgender woman is part of everyday life. She has been subjected to verbal abuse, intimidation and unwanted physical contact ever since she transitioned. She never felt confident enough to report the abuse: she had no proof, and she was concerned about how the police would respond. But then a friend bought her a mobile phone so she could record 'hate crimes' when they happened.

In April 2015 Cathleen was on a bus in Edinburgh when two men and a woman started calling her names, singing offensive songs and making rude gestures at her. Trapped in a small space and worried that the abuse could escalate, Cathleen began recording on her phone. She got off the bus as soon as possible. It was only at the police station, as she was giving her statement, that she realised how much the incident had affected her.

This time Cathleen could provide evidence, and the Crown Office and the Procurator Fiscal decided to prosecute one of the perpetrators. A court date was set for December 2015. Cathleen dreaded having to appear in front of a jury, but she welcomed the opportunity to receive justice. It was a shock to find the court hearing cancelled because the evidence had been lost. She had to wait another eight months for her case to be heard.

Cathleen had experienced persistent, 'low-level' hate crime for two years, and when at last she had the confidence to report it, the workings of the criminal justice system brought additional trauma and frustration. "I think there's still a lot of mistrust between trans people and the police," she says. "Historically the police and other authorities have been prejudiced towards LGBT people and this has prevented LGBT people from reporting... It is only through better community engagement and training that things will improve."

Since the court case, Police Scotland have set up a network of LGBTI liaison officers trained by the Equality Network, a Scottish LGBTI charity. It will be important to monitor how this improves the confidence of LGBTI people in the police.

Source: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/ether/hate-crimes-uk-victims-stories>

Perceived risk of victimisation

How do adults feel about their local area?

- 47% of adults perceived the crime rate in their local area to have stayed the same or reduced in the past 2 years.
- 77% said they felt very or fairly safe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night. This was up from 66% in 2008/09 and unchanged from 2016/17.

However, there are some demographic differences. Females were more likely to report feeling unsafe walking alone at night in their neighbourhood compared to men (33% of females vs 11% of males).

This [survey](#) found that in general, members of the public think they are at greater risk of being a victim of crime than they actually are. For example, 5.8% thought it was likely that they would be attacked in the street in the next year, yet the prevalence rate for all assaults (including those which happened in public places, but also elsewhere) in 2017/18 was 2.2%.

For more information on public perceptions of crime, see [SCCJR 'Crime and the media'](#).

Scottish Government response to victims of crime

The Scottish Government committed themselves to work with the justice organisations to help victims and witnesses feel supported, safe and informed at every stage of the process.

Improvements were brought in by the [Victims and Witnesses \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) which included:

- the right for victims of certain crimes to specify the gender of their police interviewer
- the right for victims and witnesses to access information about the progress of their case
- publication of service standards for victims and witnesses so they know what to expect from criminal justice agencies

As part of the commitments made in the Scottish Government plan: [Justice in Scotland: vision and priorities](#) and the [Programme for Government 2017 to 2018](#), they are working with justice partners and other organisations to build on this, by:

- [reviewing current support for victims of crime](#), and looking at the potential to introduce a single point of contact to help victims through the process

- providing better support for [child and other vulnerable witnesses](#)
- introducing a statutory duty to provide [appropriate adult support](#) to vulnerable adults during police procedures

A [Victims Taskforce](#) was also established in 2018 (which SCCJR has representation on) with the primary role of co-ordinating and driving action to improve the experiences of victims and witnesses within the criminal justice system, whilst ensuring a fair justice system for those accused of crime.

Further reading

Amnesty International UK, Hate Crimes in the UK – the victims’ stories. Available from: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/ether/hate-crimes-uk-victims-stories>

Dinisman, T and Moroz, A (2017) Understanding Victims of Crime: The impact of the crime and support needs. Available from: https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/VS_Understanding%20victims%20of%20crime_web.pdf

Scottish Government (2013) *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2012-2013, ‘Main Findings’*. Available from: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/crime-and-justice-survey>

Scottish Government (2017) *Justice in Scotland: Vision and Priorities*. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/justice-scotland-vision-priorities/>

Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014. Available from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/1/contents>

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SCCJR’s learning resources for schools (Modern Studies) were initially developed by Rebecca Foster and Greg Duncan. They are regularly reviewed and updated by SCCJR researchers. Any queries (including notes of broken links, ideas for development and new topics) about these resources should be sent to enquiries@sccjr.ac.uk

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