

Report prepared by  
Fife Council Research & Insight Team



# Safer Fife

Final Report

June 2024

Topics: Community Safety, Population, Health and Wellbeing, Poverty and Deprivation

# Overview

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Community safety covers a range of issues including crime, antisocial behaviour, public perception of crime, and safety in our homes and on our roads. Council officers and partner organisations work together to improve the local environment, make people feel safer, and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. This document summarises community safety trends in Fife, highlighting issues and areas of note. Depending on the nature of data available, information is provided at Fife or committee area level.

The evaluation of trends relating to safety indicators is affected by the legacy of the Covid pandemic and associated lockdowns. Restrictions on people's mobility, as well as interruptions in recording practices, mean that all figures must be carefully analysed to place any apparent decreases or increases in context.

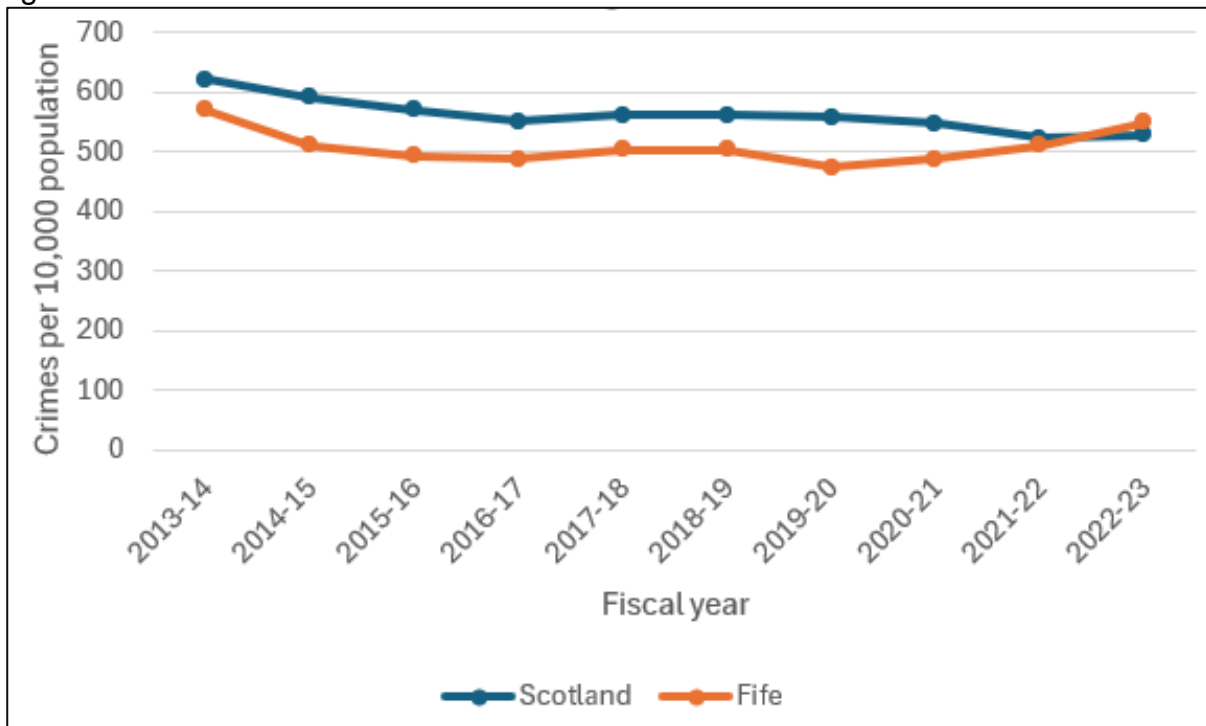
## Key findings

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- The Fife crime rate has increased for the third consecutive year. This is the first time in a ten-year period where the Fife rate has exceeded the Scottish figure.
- Fife shoplifting charges increased to 77 per 10,000 population in 2022/23. Only Dundee City and Aberdeen City had higher rates.
- Fife Council dealt with 2477 ASB cases in 2023/24.
- Fewer than 20% of calls to the police result in a crime being recorded, with there being a strong link with mental health distress in many cases.
- There has been an upwards trend for males aged 85+ hospitalised due to unintentional injury falls. The 2022/23 rate is the highest on record.
- Of 766 home visits in 2022/23 carried out by the Fife Cares service, over half (57%) were in the Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and Cowdenbeath committee areas.
- Eight people were fatally injured in road traffic accidents in 2022. While overall road traffic offences continued to decline, mobile phone offences increased by 292% in 2022/23, the highest level since 2016/17.
- The number of Fife fire incidents was the highest since 2009/10. Fife's primary outdoor fire rate was considerably above the Scottish figure, and just short of West Lothian's peak local authority rate.
- Outdoor fires have increased in every committee area, with Kirkcaldy's increase of 86% between 2021/22 and 2022/23 being the largest of any committee area.
- In Fife 4,903 incidents of domestic abuse were reported in 2022/23, a 17% decrease from 2021/22. This was still above the 2019/20 figure, appearing to be a legacy of the increase in incidents seen during the Covid pandemic.
- The Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (FRASAC) supported 835 individuals throughout 2022-23, of which 556 were new referrals. This number of new referrals was an increase of 57% on the previous year and the highest level recorded by the partnership.

# Recorded charges

The 2020 strategic assessment highlighted how Fife’s crime rate per 10,000 population was below the Scottish equivalent.<sup>1</sup> Recorded charges for 2022/23 show how the Fife crime rate, at 549 crimes per 10,000 population was greater than the Scottish figure of 528. This marks the third consecutive year where the Fife rate has increased. Perhaps more significantly, it represents the first time in a ten-year period where the Fife rate has exceeded the Scottish figure.

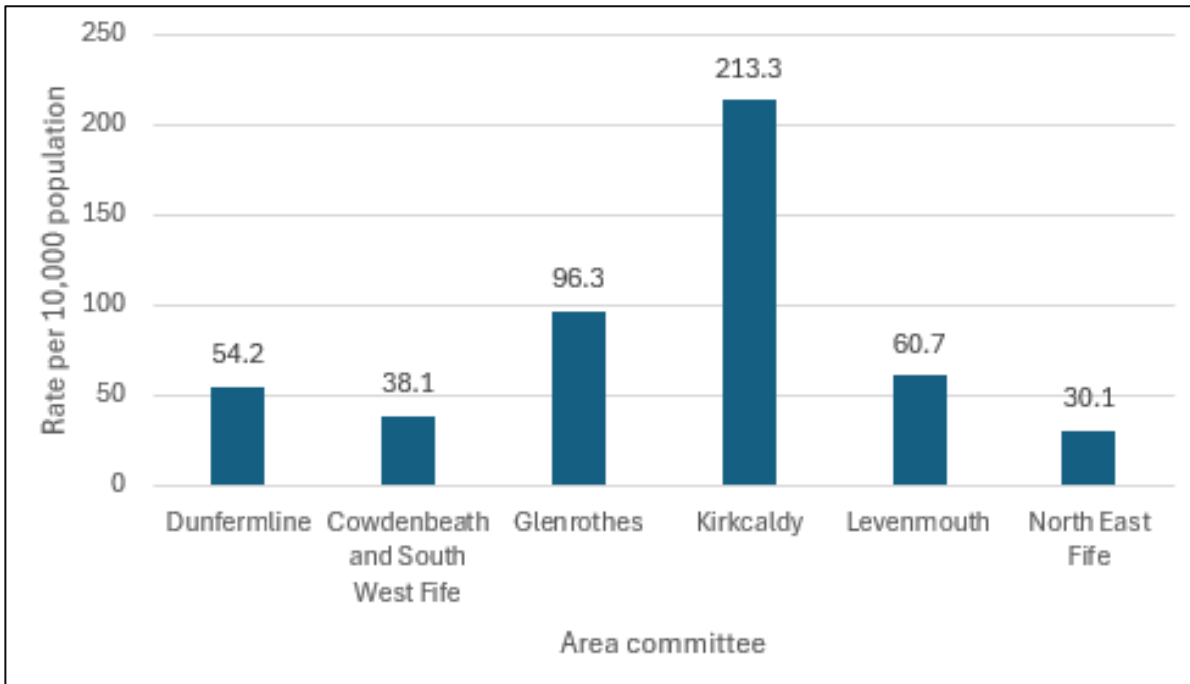


**Figure 1: Recorded crimes per 10,000 population (Police Scotland Recorded Crime, 2022-23 Bulletin tables)<sup>2</sup>**

Fife saw a 7% increase in recorded crimes between 2021/22 and 2022/23, primarily due to a 29% increase in crimes of dishonesty, to 8,030 crimes. Theft of a motor vehicle, shoplifting and fraud crimes all increased to their highest level in the ten-year period. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23, Scottish shoplifting offences per 10,000 population increased from 42 to 52. The Fife increase over the same period was from 49 to 77, with Dundee City (113) and Aberdeen City (79) the only Scottish councils to have higher rates in 2022/23. It is unclear to what extent such crimes of dishonesty – particularly shoplifting – may be linked to the ongoing cost of living crisis and its ramifications.

<sup>1</sup> Since the last strategic assessment was produced, a new set of crime and offence groups have been formed, following public consultation. All data has been back revised to conform.

<sup>2</sup> 'Recorded crime in Scotland, 2022-23', (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2022-23/documents/>)



**Figure 2: Fife shoplifting rates by committee area, 2022/23 (Police Scotland)**

As figure 2 highlights, when shoplifting charges are considered against committee area population there are significant differences between Fife areas. This ranges from a high of 213.3 per 10,000 population in Kirkcaldy, to a low of 30.1 in NEF. Such differences cannot be explained solely by the number of shops in each committee area. Dunfermline, one of Fife’s main shopping areas, has a rate of only 54.2, behind Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes and Levenmouth.<sup>3</sup>

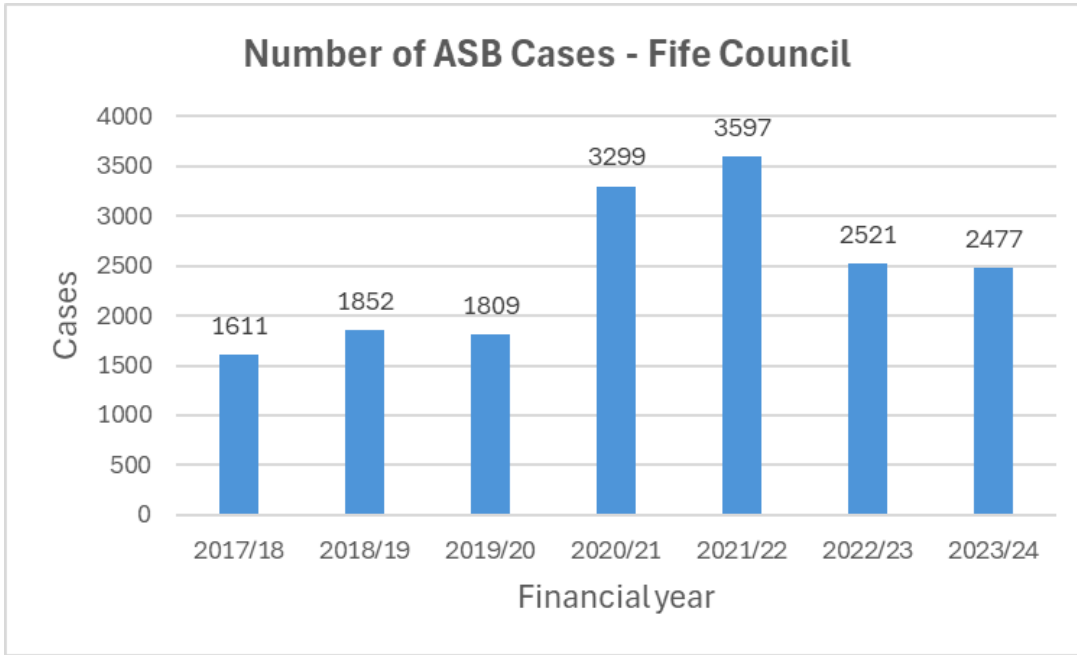
The number of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents recorded by Fife Division saw a slight reduction between 2021/22 and 2022/23, from 24,350 to 22,961. This equated to 614.7 incidents per 10,000 population. Disturbance incidents were the largest category, accounting for 26% of recorded ASB incidents.<sup>4</sup> Analysis has highlighted that fewer than 20% of calls to the police result in a crime being recorded, with Police Scotland increasingly providing support to people experiencing mental health distress.<sup>5</sup>

Fife Council dealt with 2477 ASB cases in 2023/24. Although showing a decrease from the two years where national lockdowns were implemented, reports remain at a higher level than pre-Covid. During 2022/23, the Safer Communities Team became the single point of contact for all reports of ASB to Fife Council. Prior to this, Housing Management Officers investigated complaints of ASB occurring in council tenancies.

<sup>3</sup> Cowdenbeath and South West Fife are grouped together due to systems recording them under a single area code, making it difficult to split out.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Police Scotland: Management information council area report quarter 4, 2022-23’ (<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-are-performing/>)

<sup>5</sup> ‘Scottish Police Authority: Spotlight on Mental Health’ (<https://www.spa.police.uk/spotlight-on/mental-health/>)



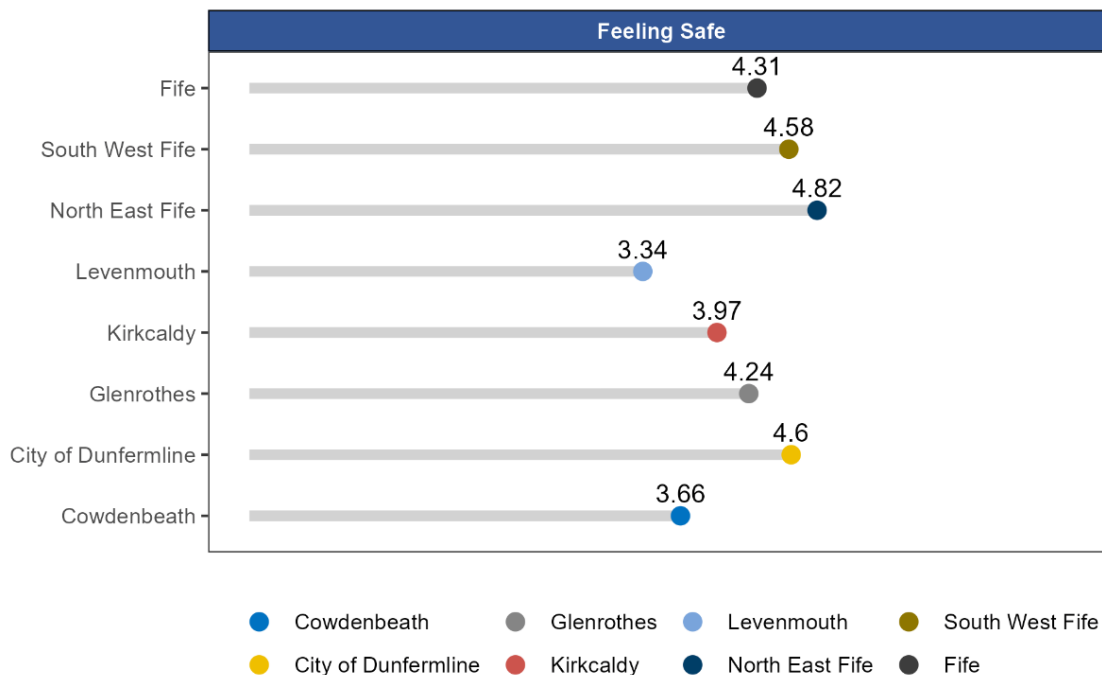
**Figure 3: Number of ASB cases, 2017/18 - 2023/24 (Fife Council)**

# Public perception

Residents' perception of crime has often highlighted a disconnect with official figures, particularly through response mechanisms such as the Scottish Crime and Justice survey. Local authority findings are not yet available for the 2021/22 survey, but data for the 2018-20 period shows that Fife differs from the aggregate Scottish response in several key areas.<sup>6</sup> Fife respondents were more likely to have a positive attitude towards the police, specifically in agreeing that police in the area treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are, and that overall, people have a lot of confidence in the police in this area. This extends to a positive perception of contact with the police. Fife respondents were more likely to report being treated very/quite fairly (93.7%) and being very/quite satisfied with how police handled matters (79%).

Fife respondents were less likely to express confidence in the criminal justice system. 70.5% of respondents were confident that everyone had access to the justice system if they needed it. Only 52.4% of respondents were confident that the criminal justice system considered the circumstances relating to crimes when handing out sentences.

Similar findings emerge from Fife Council's Place standard survey, where respondents were asked to give their opinions about living in Fife, scoring categories between 1 (most need for improvement) and 7 (little need for improvement). Feeling safe was scored as 4.31 in the 2023 survey, a decrease of 0.37 from 2021. While North East Fife had the highest score, it also had the largest area decrease from the previous survey. Cowdenbeath (3.66) and Levenmouth (3.34) emerged as the areas that residents considered most in need of improvement.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 4: Community perception of area safety (Our Place Survey, 2023)**

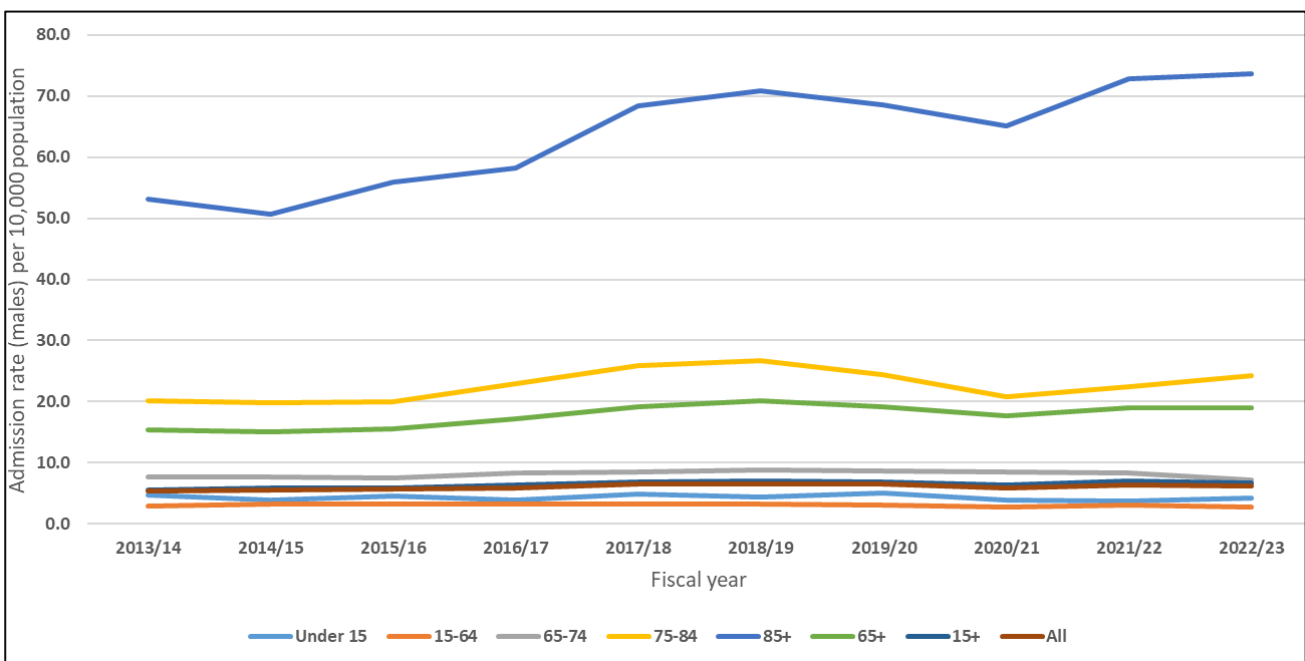
<sup>6</sup> [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(shinyapps.io\)](https://shinyapps.io)

<sup>7</sup> 'Our Place: Living in Fife 2023' (Fife Council Research Team, 2024) [Our-Place-Fife-2023.pdf](#)

# Unintentional injuries

Unintentional injuries within Fife follow the Scottish trend of being most prevalent for the 0-4 age group and those aged 65+. There is a gender divide in such figures, with males having a higher rate of injury at every age group until the age of 64. From the 65+ age group up, females have a higher injury rate, with the divide becoming progressively larger before peaking in the 85+ age group. This sees a female admission rate per 100,000 population of 11,634, with the male equivalent at 7,579.<sup>8</sup>

The overall rate of admissions due to falls has seen only minor fluctuation in recent years, but an upwards trend has been particularly apparent for males aged 85+. The Fife 2022/23 rate of 73.6 per 1,000 is the highest on record.



**Figure 5: Emergency hospital admissions (males) resulting from falls, per 1,000 population (Public Health Scotland, Unintentional Injury data)<sup>9</sup>**

The Fife Cares service carried out 766 home visits in 2022/23. The service carried out 411 ‘Safe, Secure and Supported at Home’ visits to people who have suffered domestic violence, 321 child safety visits, and 34 visits to vulnerable adults. Kirkcaldy (157), Glenrothes (156) and Cowdenbeath (124) were the committee areas with the most visits. At 11% of the area total, North East Fife had the largest proportion of vulnerable adult visits, reflecting the age profile of the area. Glenrothes was the only area to have child safety visits make up the largest proportion, at 53% of committee area visits.

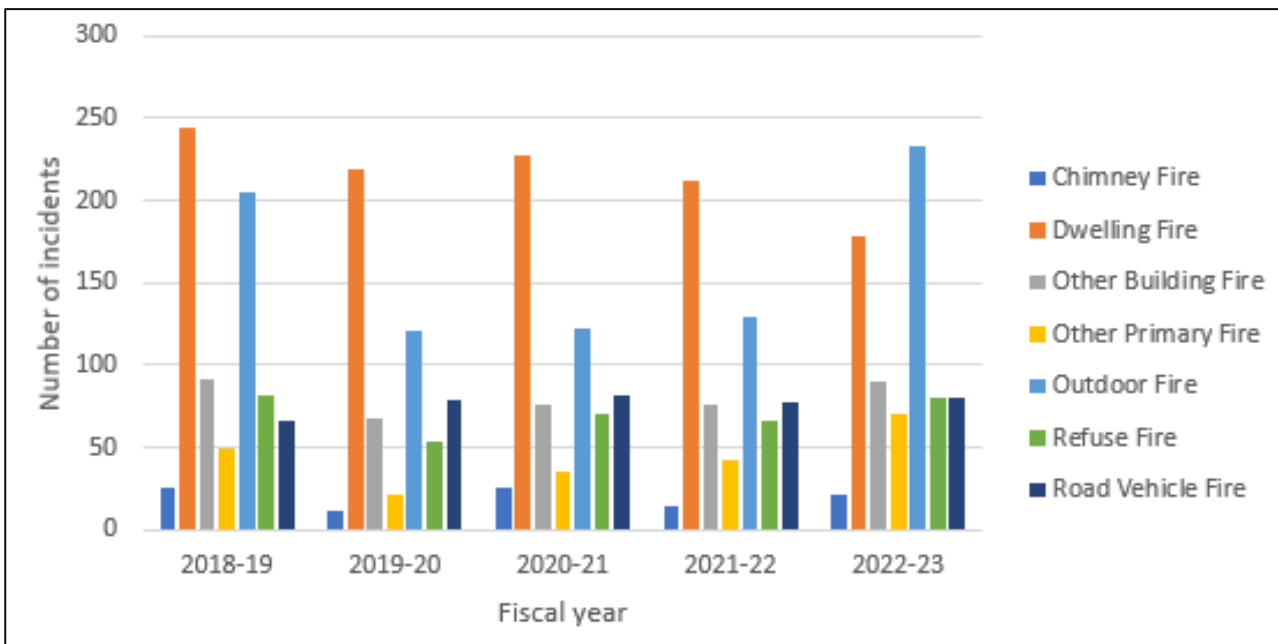
<sup>8</sup> ‘All unintentional injuries, Scotland, 2018/19 - 2022/23, by Council area’

(<https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/unintentional-injuries/unintentional-injuries-hospital-admissions-year-ending-31-march-2023-and-deaths-year-ending-31-december-2022/dashboard/>)

<sup>9</sup> Emergency hospital admissions resulting from a fall, by age group and cause of injury, year ending 31 March 2014 to 2023 (Unintentional injuries - Hospital admissions year ending 31 March 2023 and deaths year ending 31 December 2022 - Unintentional injuries - Publications - Public Health Scotland)

# Fire incidents

At 1,908, the number of Fife fire incidents was the highest since 2009/10. This was driven by considerable variation in several fire categories, including a 20% decrease in dwelling fires and a 33% increase in outdoor fires – particularly the category of grassland/woodland/crops. This gives Fife a total primary outdoor fire rate of 111.7 per 100,000 population. This is considerably above the Scottish figure of 65.7, and just short of West Lothian’s peak local authority rate of 112 per 100,000.



**Figure 6: Number of Fife fire incidents by type (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Fires dataset, 2009/10 - 2022/23)<sup>10</sup>**

Restrictions on movement during the Covid pandemic and associated lockdowns have not led to a decrease in outdoor fires. Instead, the years since the first lockdown was implemented in March 2020 have seen an increase in outdoor fires across every committee area. This is most apparent in Kirkcaldy, where there was an 86% increase in outdoor fires between 2021/22 and 2022/23. This was the largest increase of any committee area, with Kirkcaldy East remaining the most affected ward. Levenmouth incidents also remain high, driven by an upwards trend in the Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages ward.

<sup>10</sup> 'Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Fires dataset, 2009/10 -2022/23'  
<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about/statistics/>



Area	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Cowdenbeath	158	228	275	234
Dunfermline	100	108	127	146
Glenrothes	109	205	139	156
Kirkcaldy	130	196	181	336
Levenmouth	142	170	251	288
North East Fife	60	90	91	111
South West Fife	122	119	114	139
Fife	821	1116	1178	1410

**Figure 7: Number of outdoor fires by Fife committee area (Source: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)**

# Road casualties

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The total number of road casualties in Fife remained in line with the four-year average, with eight people fatally injured in 2022, but this represents a significant increase from the 2021 low of two fatalities. Estimates for the number of vehicles on the road increased but are still below pre-pandemic figures, possibly due to increased homeworking and reduced commuting.<sup>11</sup>

Police and road safety groups continue to address road safety issues through education and enforcement. While overall road traffic offences continued to decline, the 292% increase in mobile phone offences in 2022/23 saw this charge type reach the highest level since 2016/17.<sup>12</sup>

The Safer Communities team continue to offer a variety of preventative and responsive road safety inputs, tailored for different age groups and sections of the community. Activities include:

- The continuation of the junior road safety initiative in primary schools, with 167 officers from 28 primary schools being trained in 2023/24.
- S1 road safety talks were delivered in the Kirkcaldy area, based on statistical evidence of need.
- 2,480 secondary school pupils received Safe Drive Stay Alive inputs, with follow-up resources provided to teachers to guide in-class discussion.
- The Pass Plus programme supports new drivers to gain additional driving knowledge and experience, with 5 online courses held in 2023/24.
- Safer Communities presents a generic road safety input on the Taxi Driver course organised by Fife Council Licensing Team, attending 21 courses and delivering to 872 taxi drivers in 2023/24. Future sessions will revert to a monthly basis now the backlog has been cleared.
- Talks continue to be offered to older groups about how to drive safe for longer, with Drivewise 65+ sessions providing practical sessions with Safer Communities staff and a Road Safety Officer.
- Radio campaigns continue to promote key messages, including 'slow down for schools', 'drink and drug driving' and 'winter driving'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 'Reported road casualties Scotland, 2022' (<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/reported-road-casualties-scotland-2022/>)

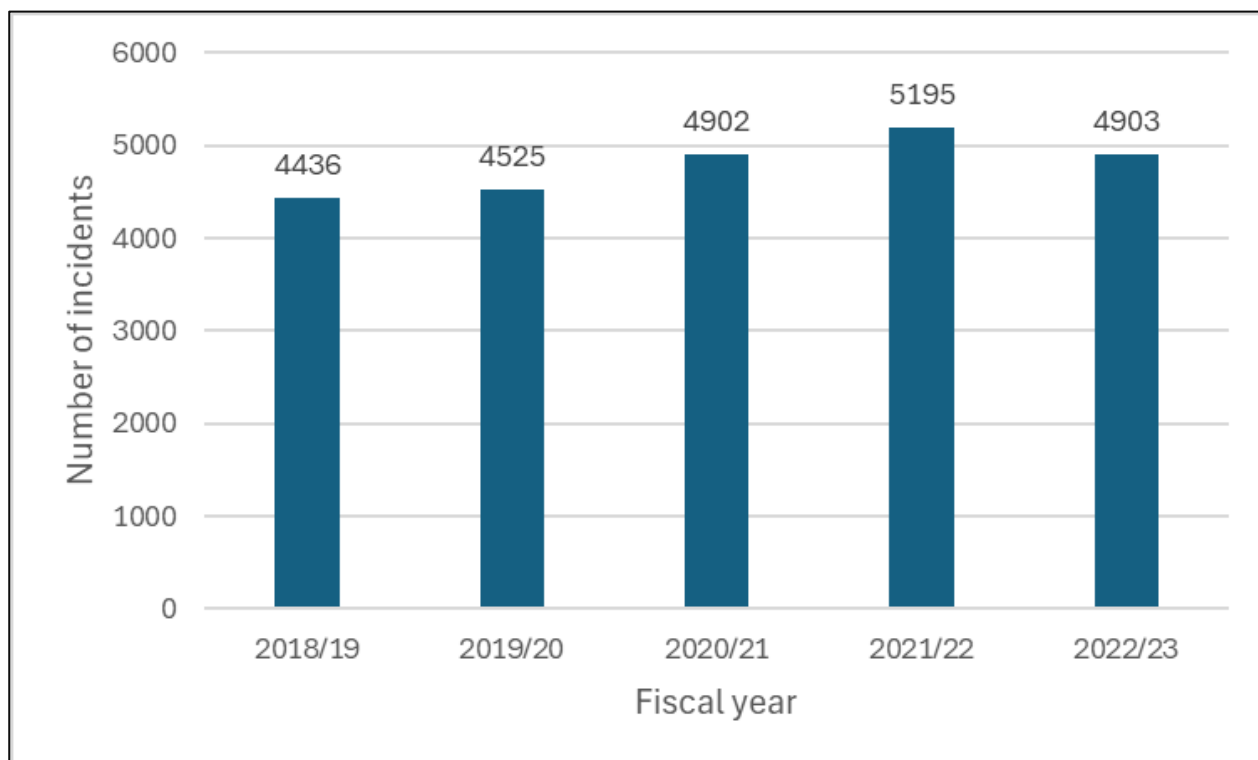
<sup>12</sup> Mobile phone offences cover using a mobile phone or other similar device in a handheld capacity while driving a motor vehicle.

<sup>13</sup> Road Safety Annual Report, 2023/2024

## Violence against women

Violence against women (including domestic abuse and sexual abuse) continues to be a priority area within Fife, with there being recognition that the effects of the pandemic – including lockdown and linked social restrictions – had the potential to increase levels of risk for some women and children.<sup>14</sup>

In Fife, 4,903 incidents of domestic abuse were reported in 2022/23, a 17% decrease from the previous year. However, this is still significantly above the 2019/20 figure of 4,525 incidents and appears to be a legacy of the increase seen during the Covid pandemic.



**Figure 8: Reported Domestic Abuse Incidents: Fife Division (Police Scotland, 2018/19 - 2022/23)**

Fife Women’s Aid received 1,206 referrals (-8%) to their services for women aged 16 and over, with 856 referrals to the women’s support service.

While overall MARAC (Multi-agency risk assessment conferences) case numbers remained broadly stable at 712, there was a clear decrease in the number of children discussed at case discussions (-89). With many victims and survivors at risk of repeat victimisation, it is likely that there will continue to be a high demand for recovery and counselling services.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Coronavirus supplementary national violence against women guidance*

([https://www.cosla.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0030/19668/COVID-19-Supplementary-VAW-Guidance-Sept-2020.pdf](https://www.cosla.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/19668/COVID-19-Supplementary-VAW-Guidance-Sept-2020.pdf))

<sup>15</sup> *‘2022-23 annual report’*, (Fife violence against women partnership, 2023)

An increase in crimes of indecency was also seen over the same period, following a similar pattern of a sustained rise into 2020/21 and 2021/22, followed by a slight decrease in 2022/23 to 1,418 crimes, still 31% above the 2019/20 total. Crimes of indecency describe a wide range of sexual offending, including sexual assault and rape. These include current and historic offending including in a domestic context. Police Scotland and local support agencies work together to ensure that victims and survivors are supported with recovery and reporting.

Third sector sexual abuse agencies provided 7,526 hours of support to survivors in 2022/23. The Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (FRASAC) received 556 new referrals (835 individuals), an increase of 57% on the previous year and the highest level recorded by the partnership. Agencies such as Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project (KASP) and Safe Space provide support to survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

# Bibliography

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*Reported road casualties Scotland, 2022* (Transport Scotland, 2023)

*Road Safety Annual Report, 2023/2024*, (Fife Council, 2024)

*Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* [<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-crime-justice-survey/>]

*Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Fires dataset, 2009/10-2022/23*, [<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about/statistics/>]

*Unintentional injuries: Hospital admissions year ending 31 March 2023 and deaths year ending 31 December 2022*, (Public Health Scotland, 2023)

*2023 annual report*, (Fife violence against women partnership, 2023)

# About this report

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Fife Council Research and Insight Team works on prioritised projects to deliver strategic insight for the Council and community planning partners in Fife.

We aim to deliver engaging high-quality general insight for those involved in delivering public services across Fife.

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## Important Notes on this Report

1. This report is a companion document to the Fife Strategic Assessment 2024
2. This document summarises community safety trends in Fife, highlighting issues and areas of note.