



Volunteering  
to save lives

# STATISTICS REVIEW 2020

# PREFACE

This Annual Statistical Report is a supplement to the Scottish Mountain Rescue Review 2020.

For more information on Scottish Mountain Rescue and our member teams visit: [www.scottishmountainrescue.org](http://www.scottishmountainrescue.org)

This report includes data gathered from the 24 civilian member teams as well as three Police Scotland MRT's and one RAF MRT.

Scottish Mountain Rescue are proud to represent our member teams.

Compiled by Tom Adams (Oban MRT; [statistician@scottishmountainrescue.org](mailto:statistician@scottishmountainrescue.org)) and Andy Morgan (Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation; [statssupport@scottishmountainrescue.org](mailto:statssupport@scottishmountainrescue.org)).

Scottish Mountain Rescue is a registered Scottish Charity, No. SC045003.



Image © Assynt MRT

# INTRODUCTION

Mountain Rescue in Scotland is coordinated by Police Scotland. Police Scotland receive the initial callout through the 999 system and, if appropriate, contact the local Mountain Rescue Team (MRT). Each MRT is an independent organisation who submit their reports to the Statistician of Scottish Mountain Rescue (SMR), the representative body for the majority of MRTs in Scotland.

There are **28** voluntary civilian Mountain Rescue Teams in Scotland, of which **25** are members of Scottish Mountain Rescue\*. This report for 2020 is compiled from information received from the **24** civilian and **3** Police Scotland teams that were members of Scottish Mountain Rescue in 2020.

This annual report covers the calendar year from 1st January to 31 December 2020.

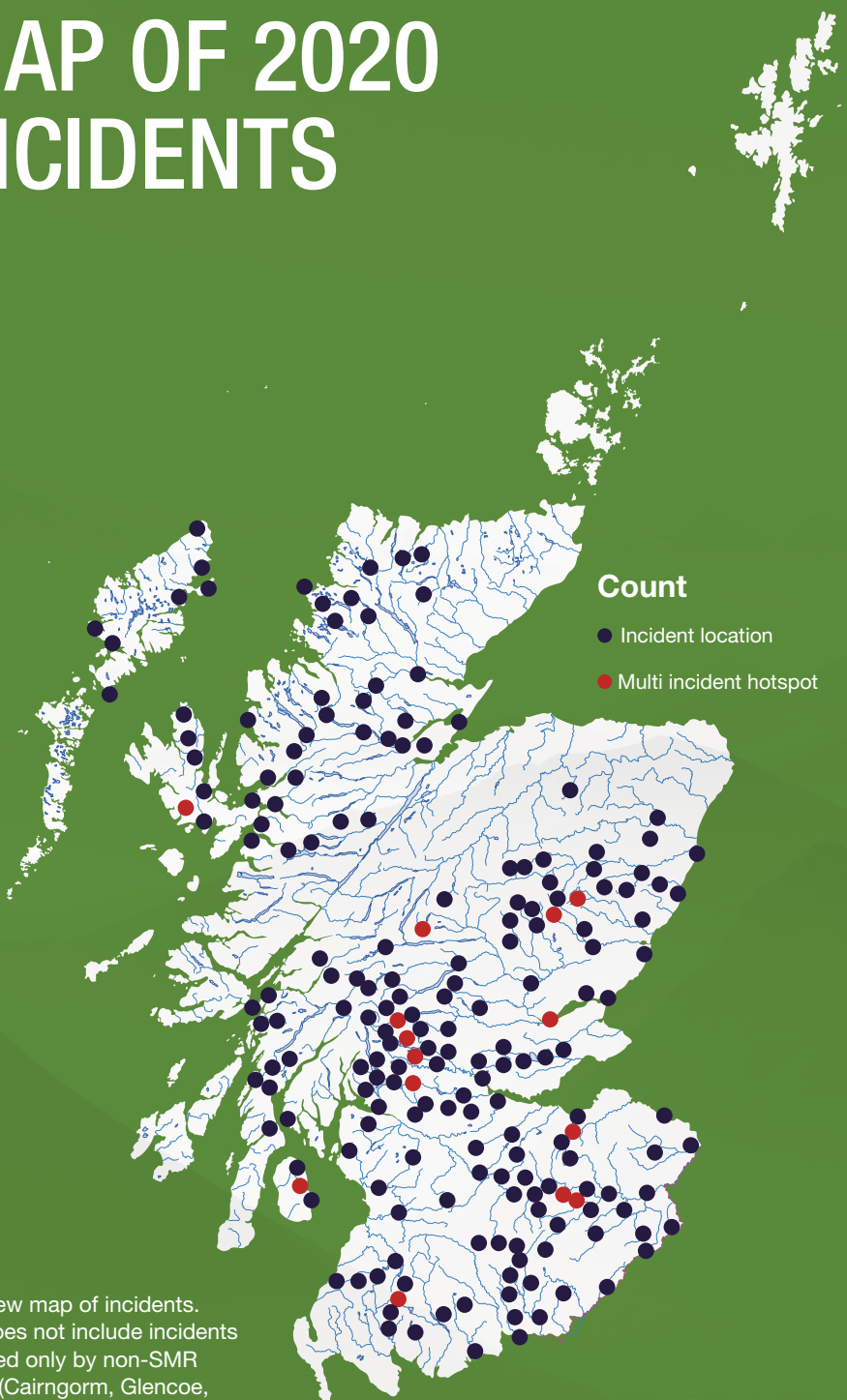
**Important Note:** *This report does not include incidents from non-member teams, except where the SMR teams have assisted these teams.*

*Due to this, direct comparisons can only be drawn against values produced since the 2016 SMR report (since previous reports included teams which are now not members of SMR). Where available, figures from previous years follow the 2020 numbers for comparison.*

- Aberdeen MRT
- Arran MRT
- Arrochar MRT
- Assynt MRT
- Borders SAR Unit
- Braemar MRT
- Dundonnell MRT
- Galloway MRT
- Glenelg MRT
- Glenmore Lodge MRT
- Hebrides MRT
- Killin MRT
- Kintail MRT
- Lomond MRT
- Moffat MRT
- Oban MRT
- Ochils MRT
- Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) (Scotland)
- Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) (Southern Scotland)
- Search and Rescue Aerial Association (SARAA-Scotland)
- Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation
- Skye MRT
- Tayside MRT\*
- Torridon MRT
- Tweed Valley MRT
- Police Scotland (Grampian) MRT
- Police Scotland (Strathclyde) MRT
- Police Scotland (Tayside) MRT
- RAF Lossiemouth MRT

\*Tayside rejoined in 2021.

# MAP OF 2020 INCIDENTS



Overview map of incidents. This does not include incidents attended only by non-SMR teams (Cairngorm, Glencoe, Lochaber, Tayside).

# OVERVIEW:

## INCIDENTS, CALLOUTS AND HOURS

### Number of incidents

The total number of independent incidents in 2020 was **497**.

Of these, **289 (58%)** were related to mountaineering (this includes hillwalking, scrambling, rock climbing, winter climbing, and MRT activity).

The total number of separate team callouts was **671**, or **715** including "continuations" (linked callouts on different days).

This is an average of **2.0 per day**. At least one team was called out on **242** days this year, and on each of the busiest days (Saturday 21st March, Thursday 13th August and Saturday 22nd August) there were 10 activations of teams.

### Hours

Mountain Rescue team members gave up **24,401** hours of their time during call-outs.

That's the equivalent of one person working 40 hour weeks non-stop for about 11 years and 9 months... Voluntarily!

### People helped

During 2020, **627** people were assisted.

**4** incidents involved the rescue of dogs, and **5** incidents the rescue of sheep.

There were **12** fatalities, **4** of which occurred in mountaineering incidents.

497

Total number of independent incidents.

289<sup>(58%)</sup>

Incidents related to mountaineering.

671

Total number of team callouts.

242

Days where at least one team was called out.

24,401

Hours of time given by volunteers.

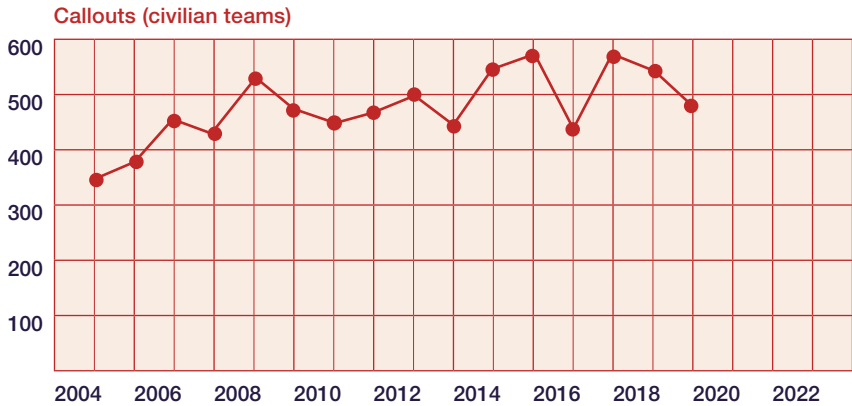
627

People were assisted.

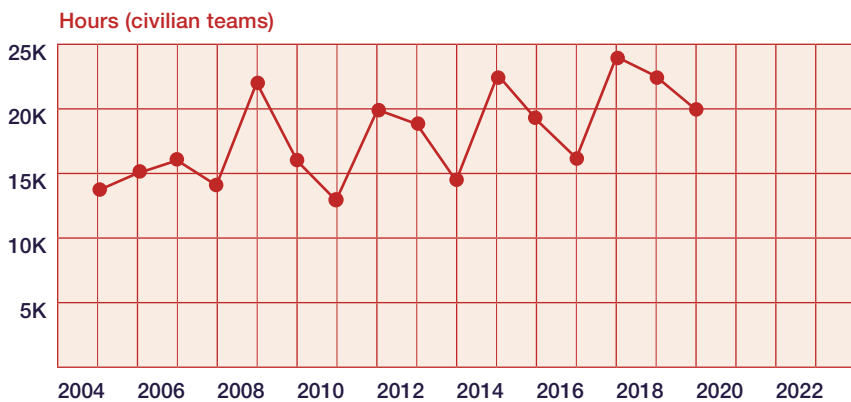
12

Fatalities.

# TRENDS OVER TIME



Total number of callouts of civilian rescue teams. This does not include incidents attended only by non-SMR teams (Cairngorm, Glencoe, Lochaber, Tayside) or police teams (Tayside, Grampian, Strathclyde).



Total number of hours spent by SMR civilian rescue teams. This does not include incidents attended only by non-SMR teams (Cairngorm, Glencoe, Lochaber, Tayside) or police teams (Tayside, Grampian, Strathclyde).



# SPECIAL NOTE: IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

2020 was an unusual year in many respects, and mountain rescue was no exception. Teams were forced to introduce a wide range of protocols in order to effectively manage callouts, risk to team members and the public, and in order to maintain an effective response. Incident patterns were very different to most years. Despite an extended period of fantastic weather in late spring 2020, callouts were at an all time low – Q2

was the quietest quarter on record. The weekend immediately before lockdown began, however, was one of the busiest on record. When lockdown was released in July there was a surge of activity in the hills, with a correspondingly high number of callouts in Q3 (the busiest quarter on record for SMR teams).

The number of team activations on a weekly basis is show in the figure below.

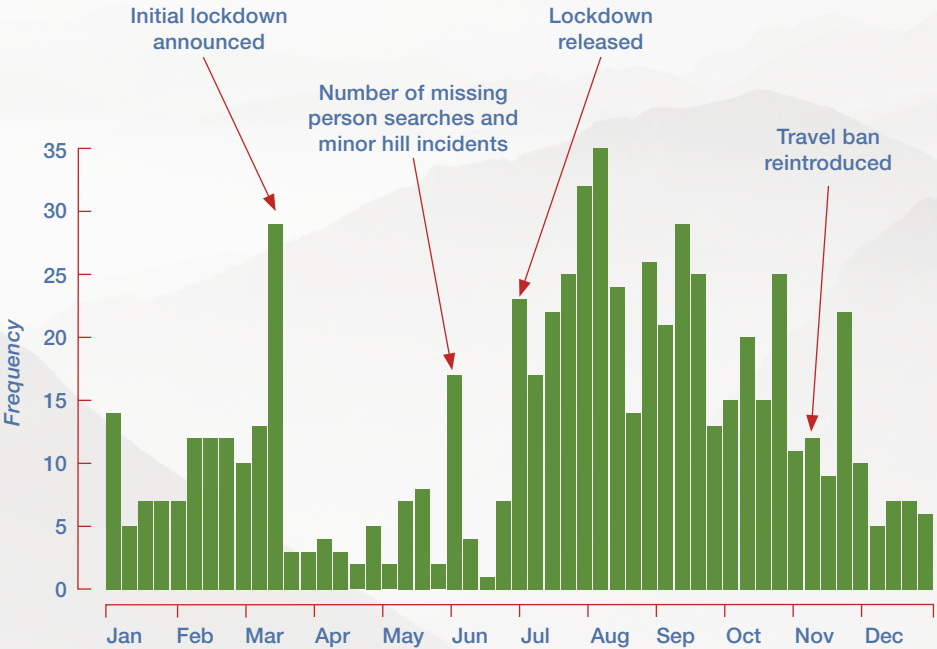




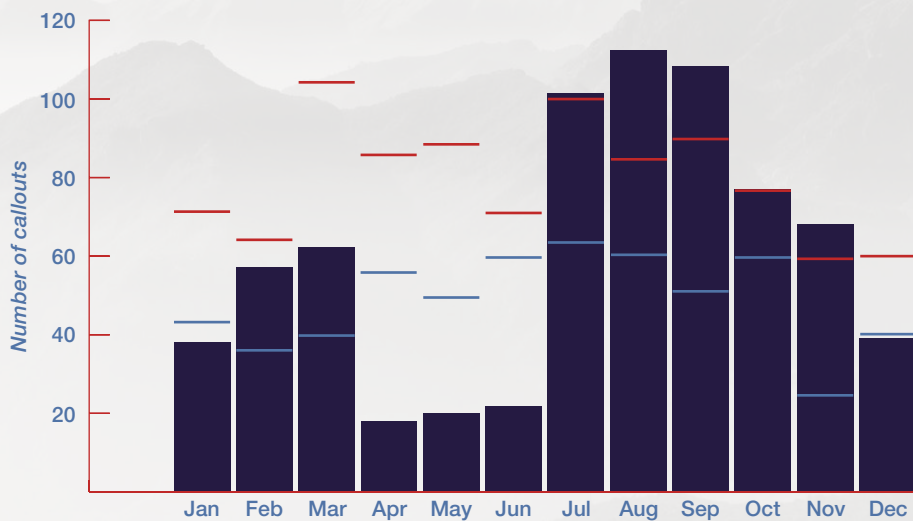


Image © Assynt MFT



Image © Arochar MFT

The number of team activations on a monthly basis is shown in the figure below, with blue and red bars indicating the lowest and highest counts recorded for that month in the previous 5 years (2015-2019).



# EXAMPLE INCIDENTS

Mountain Rescue Teams throughout the country are on standby 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They respond to a wide variety of call-outs from minor incidents to life-threatening emergencies.

To give a flavour of some incidents, a selection of comments from the Team incident reports are below:

**Elderly male descending hill appeared to have had a stroke, which resulted in slurred speech and inability to walk. Police SAR contacted, Coastguard rescue helicopter requested. Details obtained from reporter placed walking party of 19 on ridge. Police and Arrochar MRT requested to attend as contingency. Male evacuated by helicopter.**

**SSPCA asked for assistance in rescuing injured lamb and mother from sea cliff. Due to Covid-19 minimal numbers of team members were deployed.**

**Male with ankle injury unable to weight bear requests assistance of Mountain Rescue. Police SAR advisor gains grid ref from What 3 words. MRT deploy with Landrover and escort male to campsite.**

**Walker on the An Teallach ridge became crag fast and having a panic attack. Once spoken to a PhoneFind was sent and his location pinpointed. Team deployed onto the hill at about 2.30, missing person was located and then escorted back to base.**

“PhoneFind” is a technology via which Police can attempt to identify the geographical location of a GPS-equipped mobile phone. It relies on a casualty being able to respond to a text message.

An increasing number of locations are being provided using the “What 3 Words” application. This has worked well in many cases, but accuracy relies on the phone GPS having settled on the correct location. In some instances, incorrect locations have been provided, making the task of rescue teams more challenging. Staying aware of your location using a map and compass remains the most reliable form of navigation.



# DATA

## TYPES OF INCIDENT

Mountain Rescue Teams are asked to respond to a variety of incident types. The breakdown by primary type is shown below.

	Count
Rescue	131
Search and Rescue	127
Search	92
Medical Emergency	48
Police Investigation	30
Body Recovery	18
False Alarm	16
Other	11
Animal Rescue	9
Technical Rescue	8
Civil resilience	3
Search (water)	2
Water Rescue	2
	<b>Total 497</b>

# 497

Total number of independent incidents

Image © Assynt MRT



# MOUNTAINEERING INCIDENTS

All incidents involving Scottish Mountain Rescue Teams are reported in two broad categories, Mountaineering and Non-Mountaineering.

Since 2010, this classification is based on the activity being undertaken.

“Mountaineering” includes Climbing or Hillwalking in both Summer and Winter. It also includes personnel on Mountain Rescue missions.

In 2020 there were 289 “mountaineering” incidents, in which 395 people were assisted.

	Count	%
Hillwalking (Summer)	191	66
Hillwalking (Winter)	84	29
Rock Climbing	8	3
Scrambling	4	1
Snow/Ice Climbing	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100</b>

# 289

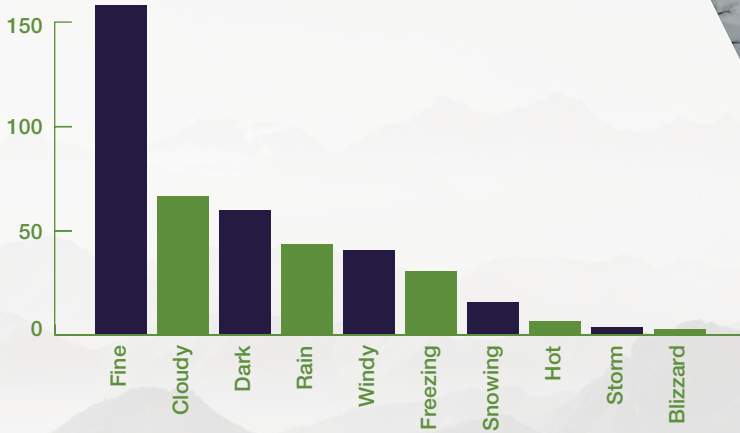
Total number of mountaineering incidents

## Cause and conditions

The factors leading to mountaineering incidents (as described by the casualty or witnesses, or determined by the rescue team) are listed in the table below. Incidents may have more than one contributing factor.

	Count
Slip/Trip	96
Nav Error	68
Lost	49
Missing Kit	44
Medical	28
Fall	18
Reported Missing	15
Technology Reliance	14
Weather-bound	11
Crag-fast	10
Separated	10
Benighted	8
Other	8
Experience	6
Kit Failure	5
River Crossing	3
False Alarm	3
Belay Failure	2
Fitness	2
Tiredness	2
Mental Health	1

Where available, the weather conditions recorded at the time of the incident are detailed below. Most incidents occurred during fine weather (note that each incident may have more than one type of weather recorded).



	Count
Fine	157
Cloudy	66
Dark	59
Rain	43
Windy	40
Freezing	30
Snowing	15
Hot	6
Storm	3
Blizzard	2



Image © Kieran, Arrochar MRT



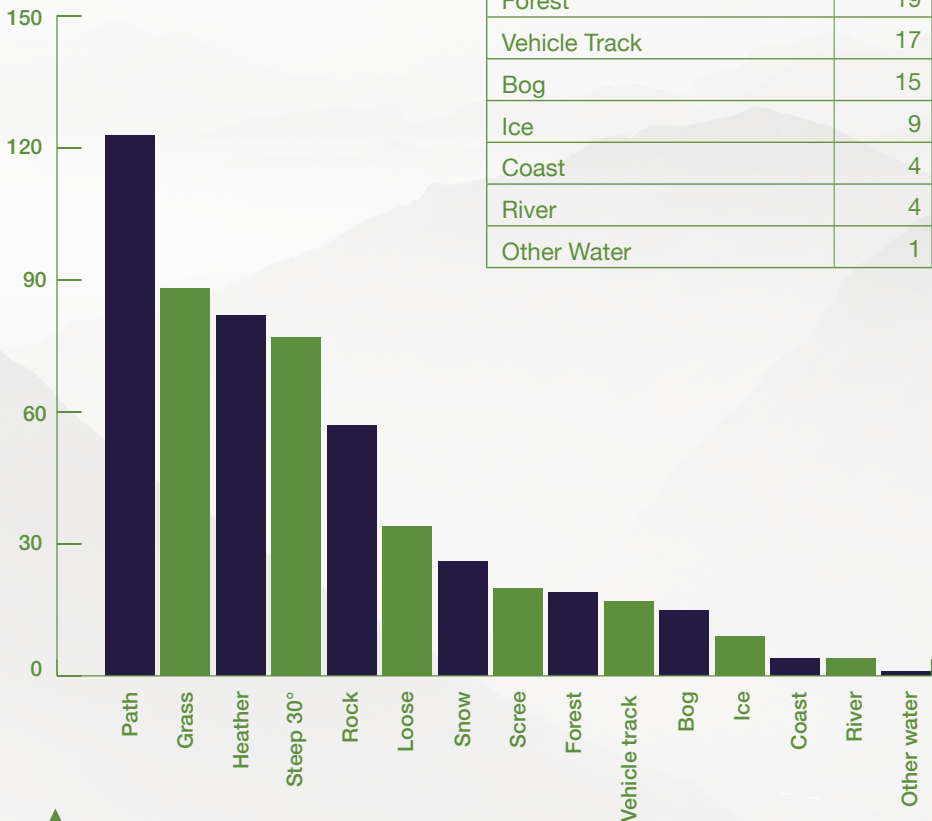
Image © SARAA Scotland

# MOUNTAINEERING

## INCIDENTS

Where available, the terrain in the locality of the incident is detailed below. It can be seen that most incidents occurred near a path of some sort, often involving steep ground (note that each incident may have more than one terrain classification).

	Count
Path	123
Grass	88
Heather	82
Steep 30°	77
Rock	57
Loose	34
Snow	26
Scree	20
Forest	19
Vehicle Track	17
Bog	15
Ice	9
Coast	4
River	4
Other Water	1





# INJURY TYPES

In 2019, **112 (36%)** of the people assisted had an injury recorded.

Casualties only have a single injury type recorded (though this may be “multiple”). The breakdown of injury types is given below.

	Count	%
Fracture	43	46
Sprains	19	20
Laceration	6	6
Bruising	5	5
Fatal	4	4
Other	4	4
Heart	3	3
Illness	3	3
Hyperthermia	1	1
Hypothermia	2	2
Multiple	2	2
Internal	1	1

# INJURY SITE

Casualties generally have a single (or no) injury site recorded.

	Count	%
Ankle	28	34.6
Lower Leg	25	30.9
Knee	8	9.9
Head	4	4.9
Chest	4	4.9
Back	3	3.7
Shoulder	3	3.7
Lower Arm	2	2.5
Pelvis	2	2.5
Neck	1	1.2
Thigh	1	1.2

Due to rounding, percentage values in the table may not add up to 100%.

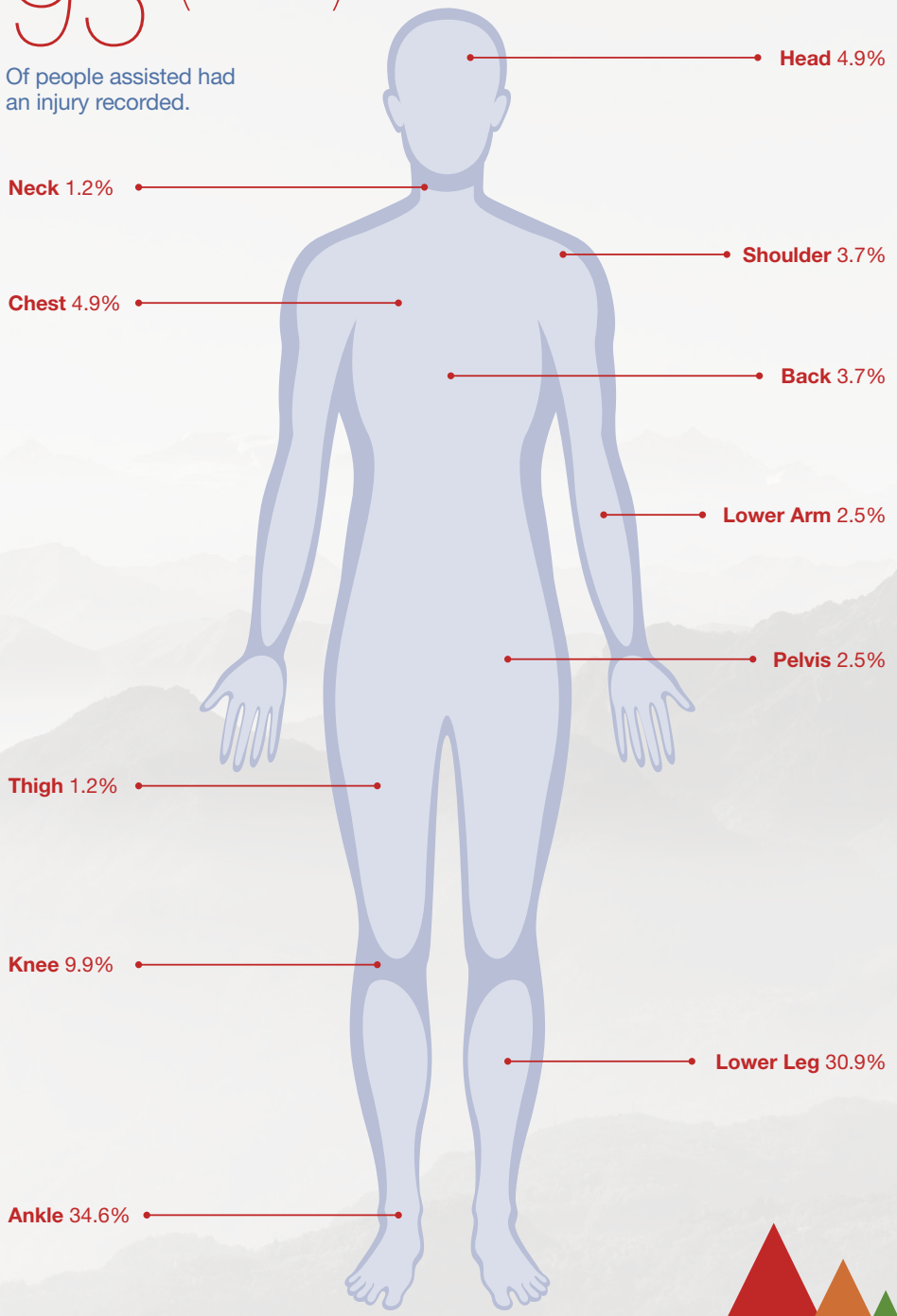


Image © Borders Search and Rescue Unit



# 93 (24%)

Of people assisted had an injury recorded.



# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Gender

Gender of people assisted.

Gender	Count
Male	185
Female	147
Unspecified	63

## Nationality

Nationality was recorded for 241 of the assisted mountaineers. Mountaineers rescued had 2 different nationalities.

Country	Count
France	3
United Kingdom	238

## British Nationality

The breakdown for British mountaineers (where the specific country they were from was recorded) is shown below.

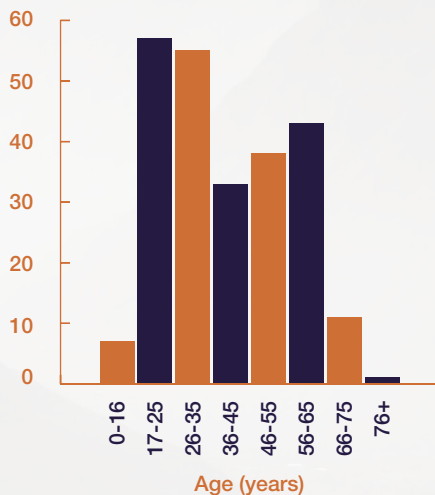
Nation	Count
England	24
Scotland	238
Wales	2

## Age

Age was recorded for 245 mountaineers. The most frequently rescued age category was 17-25 years, although this may simply reflect that certain age groups go out into the hill more frequently than others.

Age Range	Count	%
0-16	7	2.9
17-25	57	23.3
26-35	55	22.4
36-45	33	13.5
46-55	38	15.5
56-65	43	17.6
66-75	11	4.5
76+	1	0.4

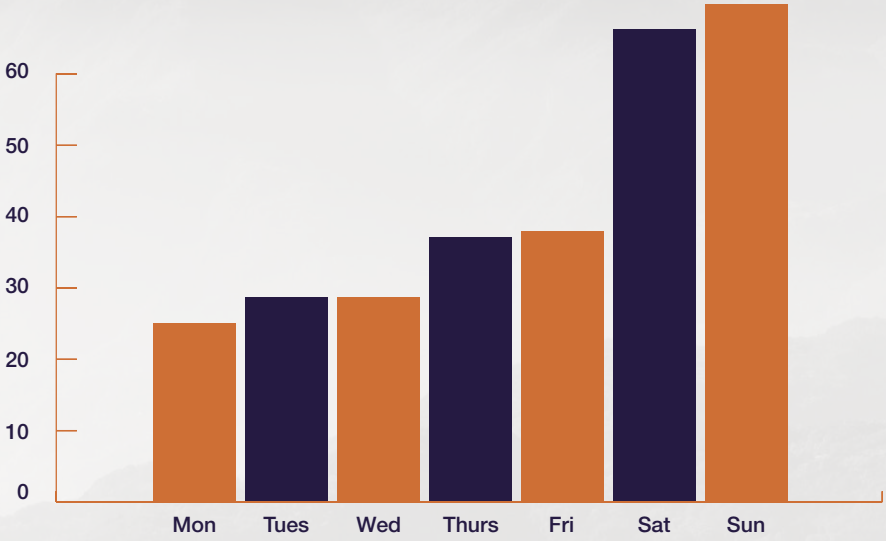
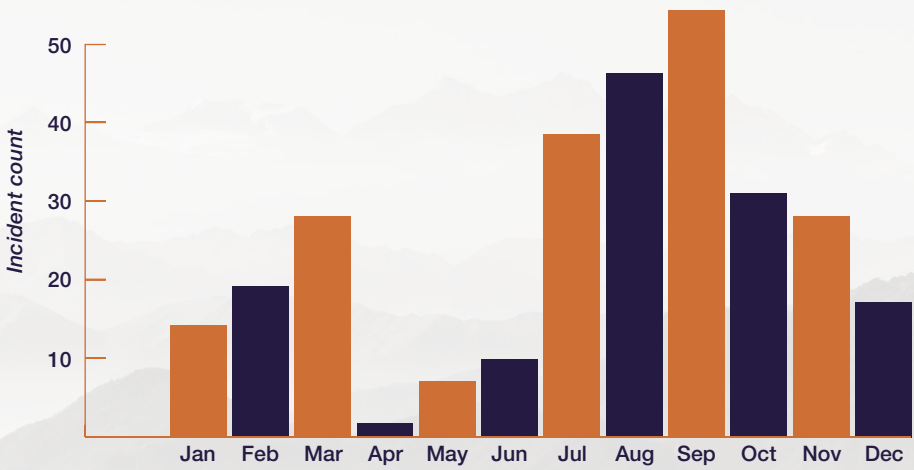
Due to rounding, percentage values in the table may not add up to 100%.



# TIMING OF INCIDENTS

Mountaineering incidents generally increase during the summer (but see earlier section on impact of coronavirus). The busiest day of the week for teams from mountaineering incidents tends to be a Saturday or Sunday.

**Note:** *These plots show the number of independent incidents, as opposed the individual team activations shown in the section on coronavirus.*



# NON-MOUNTAINEERING INCIDENTS

Mountain Rescue Teams grew locally as a result of a need in their community. Over time, the needs of the community change, and with it the capabilities of the MRTs to respond to these needs. Throughout the period, teams continued to respond to a wide variety of calls for help and their activity is recorded in this section.

Teams were engaged in 208 incidents supporting the community.

## Activity

The activity leading to these incidents was recorded in 147 cases.

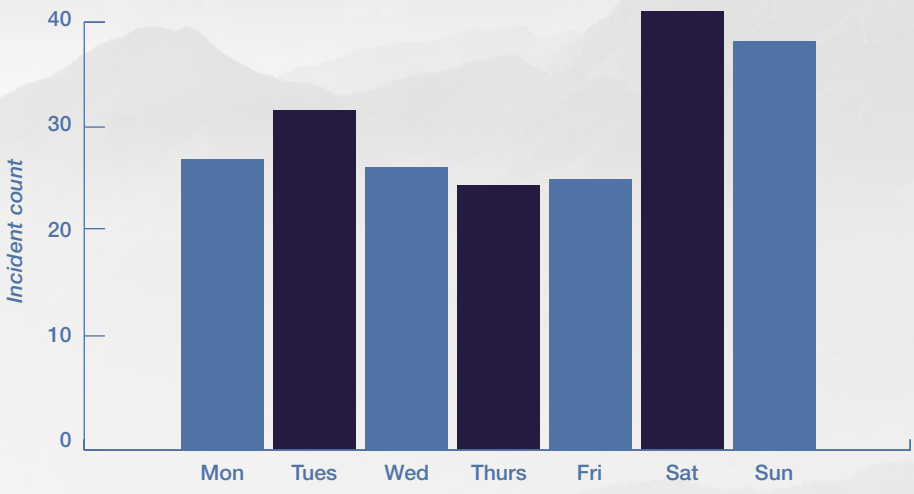
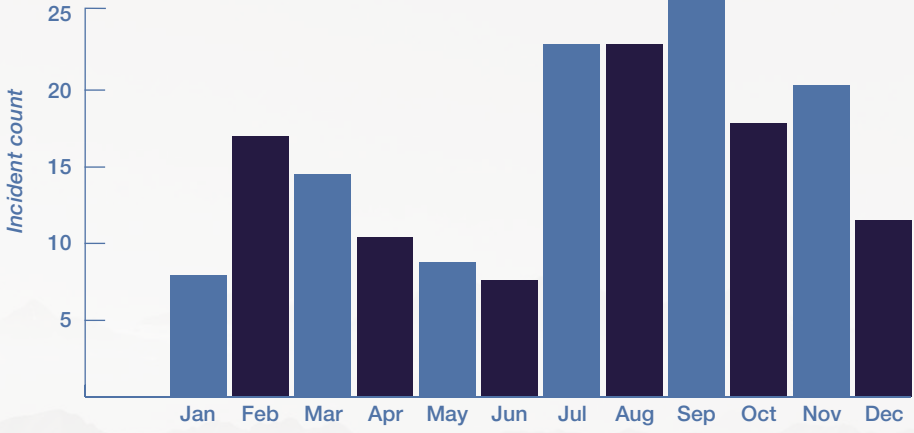
	Count
Missing Person	49
Rural Walking	35
Mental Health Related	26
Mountain Biking	24
Police Investigation	13
Running	8
Working	7
Motor Vehicle	4
Fishing	3
Canoe/Kayak/Raft	2
Civil Resilience	2
Swimming	2
Air Sport	1
Canyoning	1
Cycling	1

## Causes

Factors leading to incidents are recorded by teams. Each incident may have several contributing factors. The most frequent specific cause of a non-mountaineering callout was *reported missing*.

	Count
Reported/Missing	55
Mental Health	39
Fall	25
Slip/Trip	21
Lost	8
Overdue	8
Nav Error	7
Weather-Bound	7
Medical	7
False Alarm	5
Missing Kit	3
Separated	2
Technology Reliance	1
Fitness	1
Tiredness	1

# TIMING OF INCIDENTS



The busiest day of the week for teams for non-mountaineering incidents tends to be a Saturday or Sunday.

# ALL INCIDENT TYPES

## Joint working (all incident types)

Mountain Rescue Teams are called out by and work closely with Police Scotland to resolve every incident. In 7% of incidents, teams worked closely with a number of other partner agencies (in addition to helicopters, which are covered in the next table).

	Count
SAS Special Operations Response Team	7
RAF MRT	6
Borders Water Rescue Team	4
Scottish Charity Air Ambulance	4
Royal National Lifeboat Association	3
Loch Lomond Rescue Boat	2
Police Search Teams (NOT Police MR)	2
Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA)	2
Forestry Commission	2
Police Dive / Marine Unit	1
Medic One	1
Doctor	1
Bomb Disposal	1

## Helicopter usage

MRTs work closely with helicopter services across the country.

Helicopters were recorded as attending 153 incidents. The number of activations of specific aircraft is detailed below (163 in total).

	Count
Rescue 199	51
Rescue 151	40
Police	28
Helimed	19
Rescue 948	19
Other	3
Rescue 951	2
Rescue 137	1

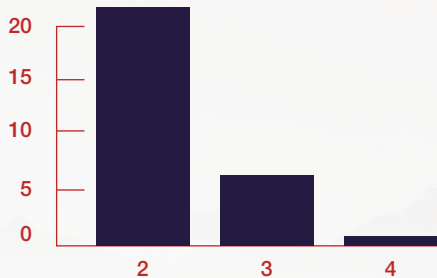
### *Details on the specific aircraft used e.g. S92 etc.*

Helicopters performed a number of roles in assisting teams. In many cases aircraft performed more than one role (while in some instances the helicopter was unable - or not required - to perform any of these roles).

	Count
Search	83
Transport	28
Rescue	43
Evacuation	74

# MULTI-DAY INCIDENTS

29 incidents lasted more than one day. These are summarised below.



Days	Count
2	7
3	6
4	4

## Multiple teams working together

Number of Teams	Count
1	408
2	126
3	14
4	2
5	1

## Police areas

Alpha	Name	Count
A	Aberdeen	0
B	Aberdeenshire and Moray	53
C	Forth Valley	98
D	Tayside	2
E	Edinburgh	6
G	Glasgow	2
J	Lothians & Borders	50
K	Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	3
L	Argyll & West Dumbartonshire	46
N	Highlands & Islands	91
P	Fife	7
Q	Lanarkshire	8
U	Ayrshire	18
V	Dumfries & Galloway	47

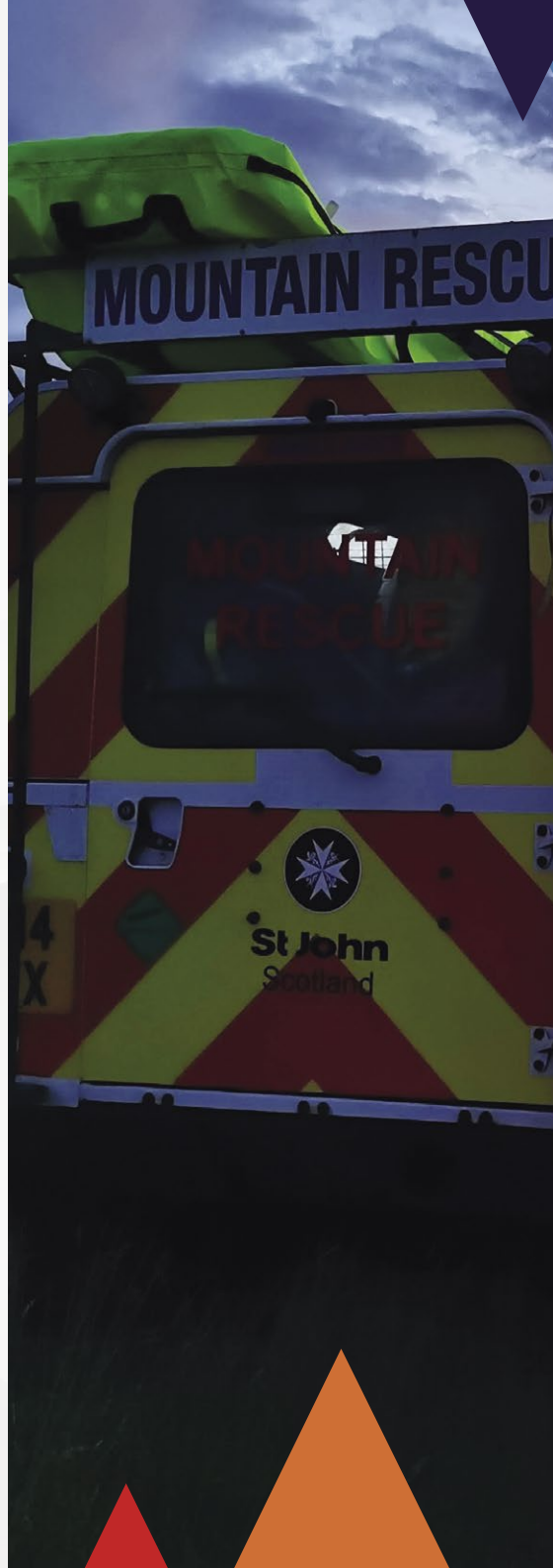


# MULTI-DAY INCIDENTS

## Callouts by team

Multi day incidents

	Incidents	Hours
Aberdeen	13	638.5
Arran	12	299.0
Arrochar	14	589.0
Assynt	15	1190.6
Braemar	36	892.0
Borders	16	992.7
Dundonnell	27	2328.8
Galloway	17	590.2
Glenelg	5	183.5
Glenmore Lodge	0	0.0
HebSAR	13	463.5
Killin	39	2933.5
Kintail	6	190.5
Lomond	50	1720.1
Moffat	21	887.8
Oban	19	633.3
Ochils	28	1015.9
Skye	25	813.5
Torridon	9	293.0
Tweed Valley	47	2053.0
Police Scotland (Grampian)	45	471.0
Police Scotland (Strathclyde)	115	2798.5
Police Scotland (Tayside)	75	1674.5
SARDA (Scotland)	34	477.5
SARDA (Southern)	30	233.4
Scottish Cave Rescue	0	0.0
SARAA-Scotland	4	38.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>24401.4</b>







## Footnote

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All enquires about the content of this report or any other matter associated with Incident Reporting should be directed to Police Scotland on whose behalf the MR statistical data is held.

Any other enquiry relating to Scottish Mountain Rescue should be directed to [info@scottishmountainrescue.org](mailto:info@scottishmountainrescue.org)



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