

# STATISTICS REPORT 2021

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April 2022



Volunteering  
to save lives

# PREFACE

This Annual Statistical Report is a supplement to the Scottish Mountain Rescue Review 2021.

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 25 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 © SRPA Scotland

# INTRODUCTION

Mountain Rescue in Scotland is coordinated by Police Scotland. Police Scotland receive the initial call-out 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 2021 is compiled from information received from the **25** civilian and **3** Police Scotland teams that were members of Scottish Mountain Rescue in 2021.

This annual report covers the calendar year from 1st January to 31 December 2021.

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

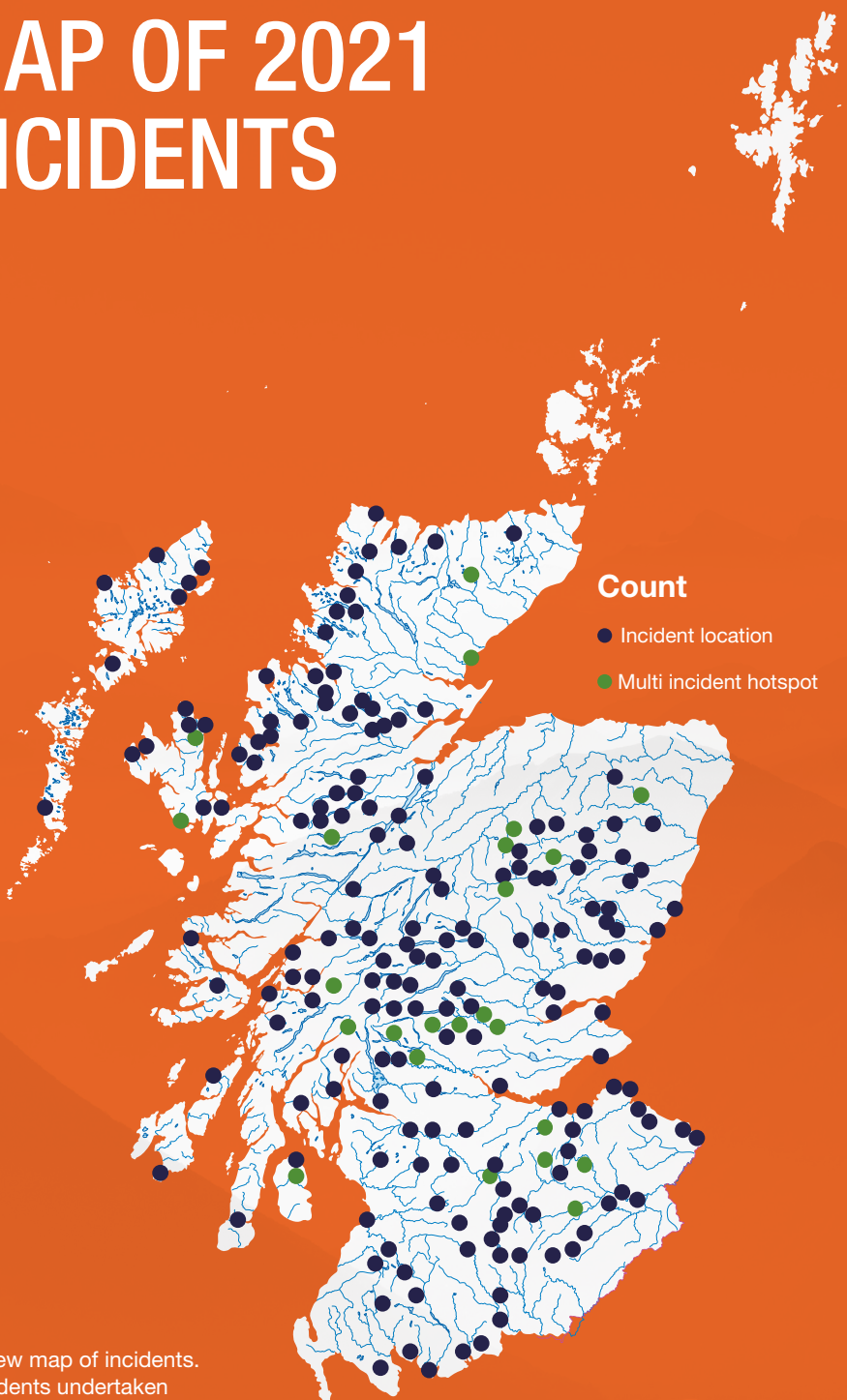
*This complicates direct comparison of numbers with those from previous years (membership has been consistent since 2016, with one team rejoining in 2021).*

*Comparisons of key figures with those from previous years are provided where this is considered helpful.*

*\*Rejoined SMR and included in 2021 statistics (absent since 2016).*

- 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

# MAP OF 2021 INCIDENTS



Overview map of incidents.  
All incidents undertaken  
by SMR teams.



# OVERVIEW:

## INCIDENTS, CALL-OUTS AND HOURS

### Number of incidents

The total number of independent incidents in 2021 was **660**.

Of these, **345 (52%)** were related to mountaineering (this includes hillwalking, scrambling, rock climbing, winter climbing, and MRT activity).

The total number of separate team activations or “call-outs” was **893**, or **951** including “continuations” (linked call-outs on different days).

This is an average of **2.6 per day**, including continuations. At least one team was called out on **290** days this year, and on the busiest day of Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July there were 12 activations of teams.

660

Total number of independent incidents.

345 (52%)

Incidents related to mountaineering.

893

Total number of team call-outs.

290

Days where at least one team was called out.

31,799

Hours of time given by volunteers.

### Hours

Mountain Rescue team members gave up **31,799** hours of their time during call-outs.

That’s the equivalent of one person working 40 hour weeks every year for more than **15 years**... Voluntarily!

### People helped

During 2021, **715** people were assisted.

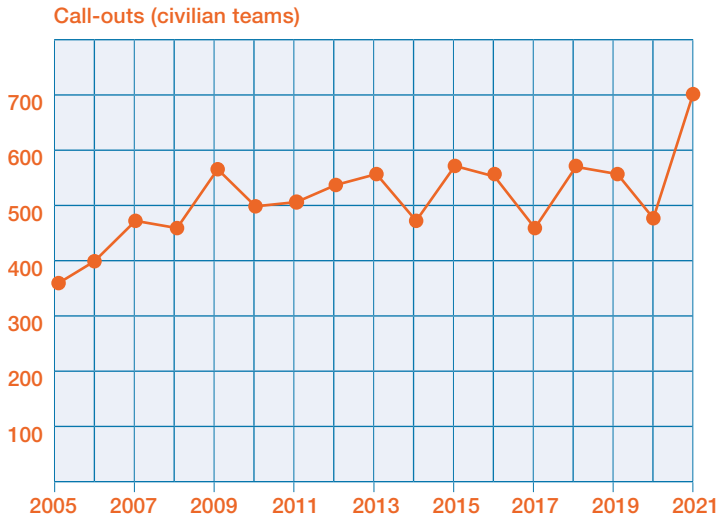
**4** incidents involved the rescue of dogs, and **2** incidents the rescue of sheep.

There were **19** fatalities, **7** of which occurred in mountaineering incidents.

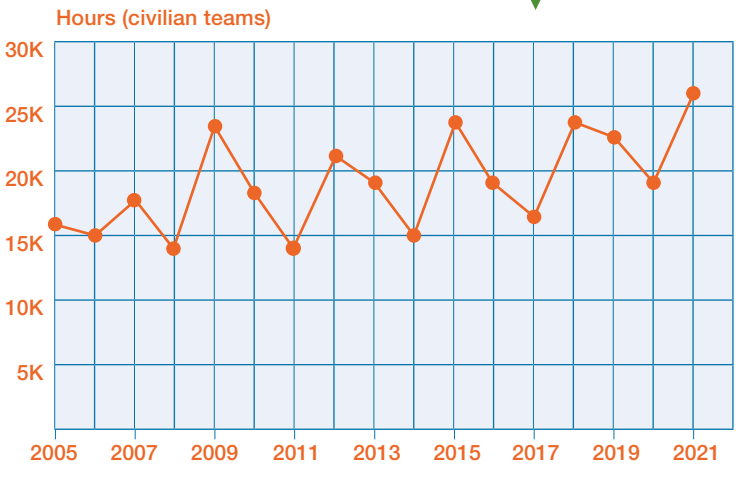
715

People were assisted.

# TRENDS OVER TIME







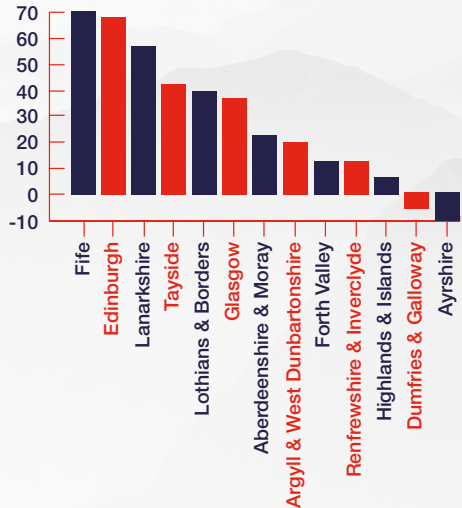
# SPECIAL FEATURE:

## 2021 – ANOTHER UNUSUAL YEAR?

In a mountain rescue context, the period since the arrival of Coronavirus and “lockdown” restrictions (early 2020) has been marked by a notable change in patterns of call-outs received by teams. This was noted in last year’s (2020) statistics report, and 2021 was no different. In fact, 2021 appears to have been the busiest on record for many teams, and overall for SMR. Key statistics are highlighted below.

- Total number of activations including police teams was 951.
- Total number of hours spent including police teams was 31,799 hours.
- Max number of team activations<sup>1</sup> in one day = 12 ( July 3rd; joint highest on database)
- Max number of team activations in one month = 125 (August; highest on database)
- Max number of team activations in one quarter = 343 (Q3; highest on database - and busier than the previous peak post lockdown 1)
- Busiest year ever for 5 teams (in terms of call-outs, looking all the way back to 2005)
- Year was in top 3 busiest since 2005 for 13 teams (in terms of call-outs)

An ongoing theme of discussion has been a possible change in the type and location of call-outs received. This is evident in the numbers of call-outs received in different Police Divisions of Scotland over recent years<sup>2</sup>. The number of call-outs in some, often more remote, regions (Highlands & Islands<sup>3</sup>, Dumfries & Galloway, Ayrshire) have remained fairly stable, while other areas closer to urban centres have seen notable increases (highest ever number of call-outs in Fife, Edinburgh, Lothians & Borders, Forth Valley, Tayside<sup>4</sup>). The percentage increase seen in 2021 versus the 2015-2020 average for each area is shown in the bar plot.



1: This is the number of activations/callouts of teams, which is more than the number of independent incidents, which may run over several days

2: Most incidents (around ¾) have a Police Division recorded on the database.

3: Highlands & Islands division contains 3 teams who are not members of SMR (Glencoe, Lochaber and Cairngorm).

4: Tayside civilian team rejoined SMR in 2021 after a gap of 5 years.



# MAP OF POLICE DIVISIONS







# 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	233
Search and Rescue	144
Search	109
Medical Emergency	66
Police Investigation	28
Body Recovery	15
False Alarm	15
Other	10
Civil resilience	9
Technical Rescue	8
Not Recorded	7
Animal Rescue	7
Search (water)	2
	<b>Total 660</b>

# 660

Total number of independent incidents

Image © Tayside 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 2021 there were 345 “mountaineering” incidents, in which 395 people were assisted.

	Count	%
Hillwalking (Summer)	248	72
Hillwalking (Winter)	82	24
Rock Climbing	4	1
Scrambling	10	3
Snow/Ice Climbing	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

# 345

Total number of mountaineering incidents

## Cause and conditions

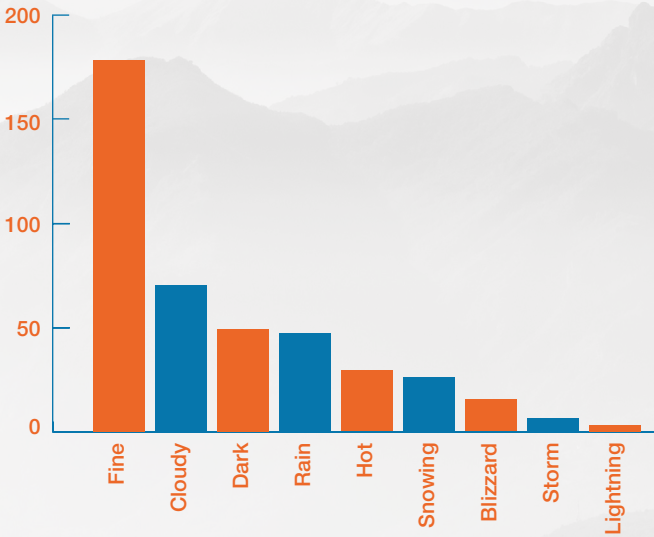
The factors leading to mountaineering incidents (as described by the casualty or witnesses, or determined by the rescue team) are listed in the table below. Incidents may have more than one contributing factor.

	Count
Slip/Trip	119
Lost	50
Navigation Error	48
Fall	30
Medical	27
Reported Missing	25
Overdue	24
Missing Kit	22
Crag-fast	18
Benighted	17
Weather-bound	11
Other	10
Separated	9
Experience	6
Tiredness	5
Blown Over	4
Lightning	2
Rock-fall	2
Technology Reliance	2
Walk Over Cornice	1
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).

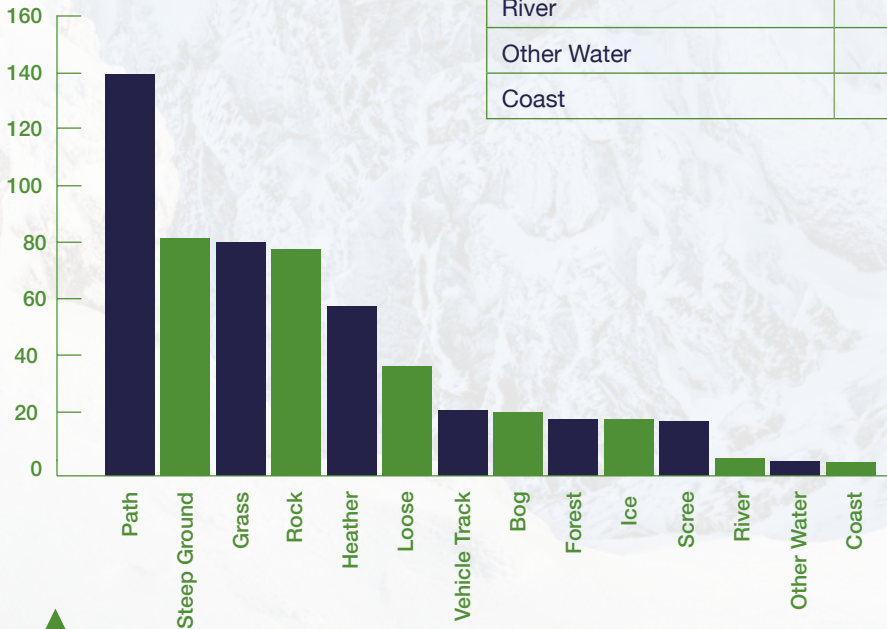
	Count
Fine	178
Cloudy	70
Dark	52
Windy	48
Rain	41
Freezing	26
Hot	23
Snowing	18
Blizzard	7
Storm	3
Lightning	2



# 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	141
Steep Ground	81
Grass	80
Rock	76
Heather	58
Loose	35
Snow	34
Vehicle Track	19
Bog	17
Forest	14
Ice	14
Scree	14
River	4
Other Water	3
Coast	1





# INJURY TYPES

In 2021, **108 (27%)** 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	60	56
Sprains	9	8
Other	7	6
Fatal	6	6
Heart	6	6
Illness	4	4
Laceration	4	4
Seizure	3	3
Bruising	2	2
Hyperthermia	2	2
Hypothermia	2	2
Minor Cuts	2	2
Multiple	1	1

# INJURY SITE

Casualties generally have a single (or no) injury site recorded. Injury location was reported in 87 cases.

	Count	%
Ankle	33	37.9
Lower Leg	23	26.4
Head	5	5.7
Pelvis	5	5.7
Chest	4	4.6
Knee	4	4.6
Shoulder	3	3.4
Thigh	3	3.4
Hand	2	2.3
Neck	1	1.1
Abdomen	1	1.1
Back	1	1.1
Spinal	1	1.1
Lower Arm	1	1.1

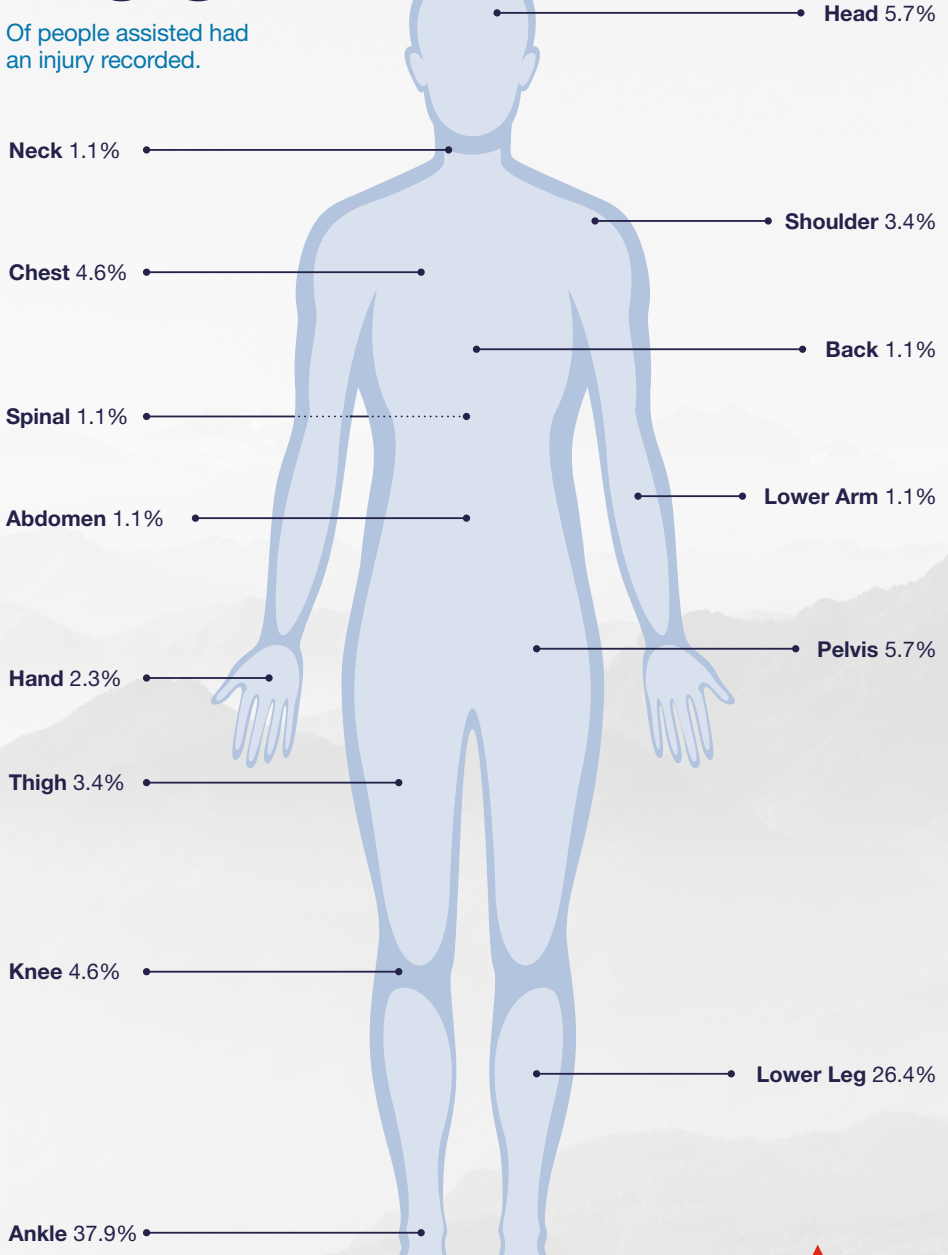
Due to rounding, percentage values in the table may not add up to 100%.





# 108 (27%)

Of people assisted had an injury recorded.



# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Gender

Gender of people assisted.

Gender	Count
Male	204
Female	167
Unspecified	24

## Nationality

Nationality was recorded for 206 of the assisted mountaineers. Mountaineers rescued had 6 different nationalities.

Country	Count
Belgium	1
Denmark	1
Great Britain	200
Ireland	1
Poland	1
Portugal	2

## British Nationality

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

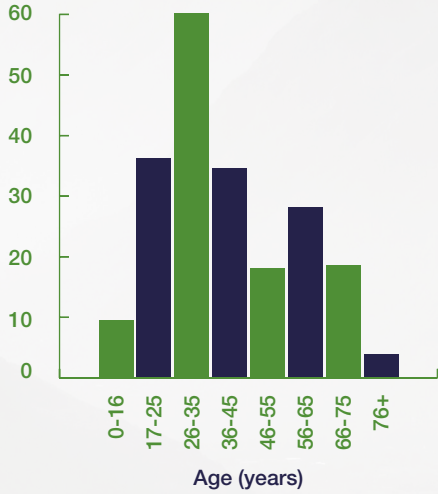
Nation	Count
England	26
Scotland	161

## Age

Age was recorded for 245 mountaineers. The most frequently rescued age category was 26-35 years, although this may simply reflect that certain age groups go out into the hill more frequently than others.

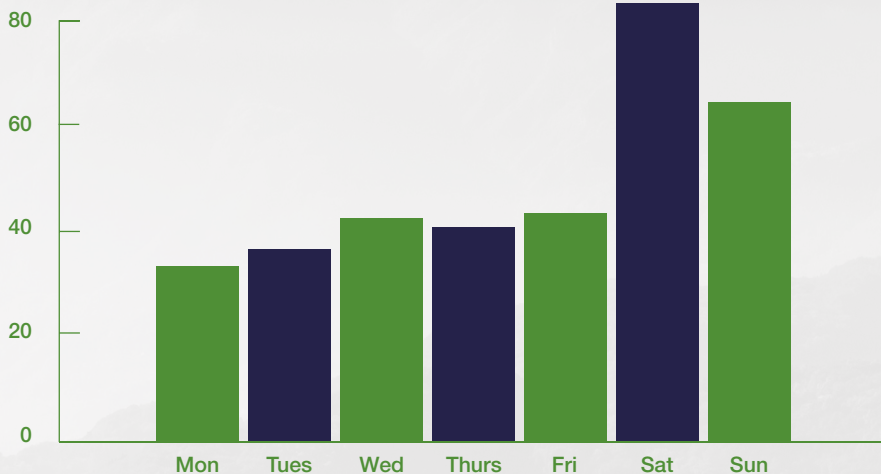
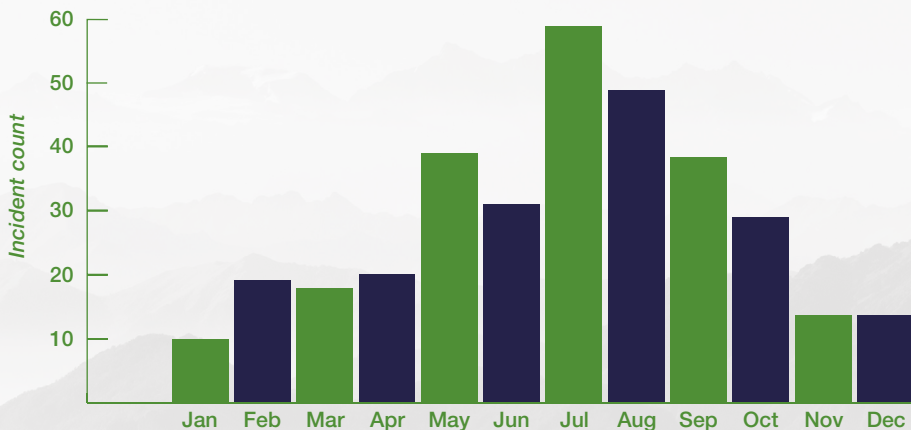
Age Range	Count	%
0-16	11	5.2
17-25	35	16.4
26-35	55	25.8
36-45	34	16.0
46-55	18	8.5
56-65	29	13.6
66-75	19	8.9
76+	12	5.6

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



# TIMING OF INCIDENTS

The busiest period for teams is generally during the summer months. Both mountaineering and non-mountaineering incidents (see later section) increase during the summer. The busiest day of the week for teams from mountaineering incidents tends to be a Saturday or Sunday.



# 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 315 incidents supporting the community.

## Activity

The activity or activities leading to these incidents was recorded in 264 cases.

	Count
Rural Walking	67
Missing Person	61
Mountain Biking	44
Mental Health Related	33
Running	13
Police Investigation	7
Skiing	7
Working	6
Motor Vehicle	4
Swimming	4
Civil Resilience	3
Cycling	3
4x4/ATV	2
Canoe/Kayak/Raft	2
Medevac	2
Duke or Edinburgh's Award Expedition	2
Air Sport	1
Canyoning	1
Equestrian	1
Fishing	1

## Causes

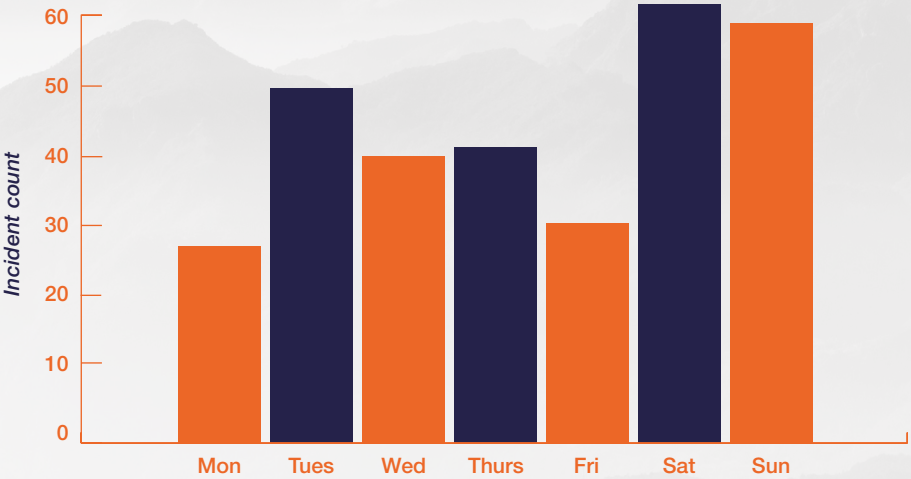
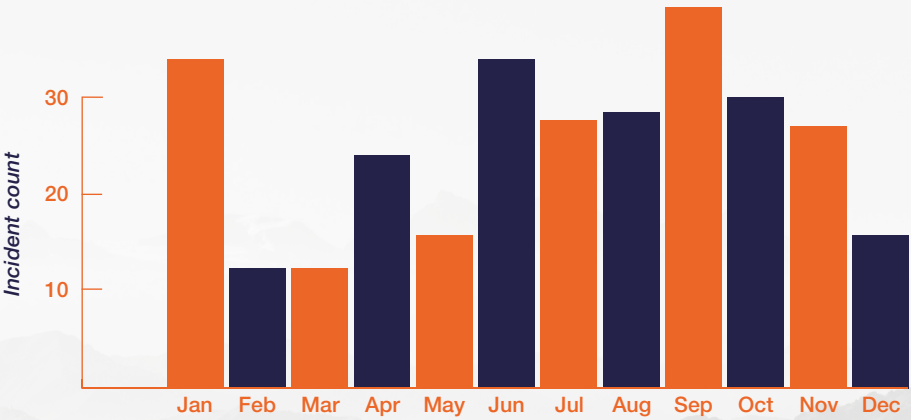
Factors leading to incidents are recorded by teams. Each incident may have several contributing factors. The most frequent specific cause of a non-mountaineering call-out was reported missing.

	Count
Reported Missing	58
Fall	50
Slip/Trip	47
Mental Health	44
Lost	26
Medical	12
Overdue	8
Navigation Error	7
Separated	6
False Alarm	6
Missing Kit	5
Benighted	4
Crag-fast	4
Weather-Bound	3
Technology Reliance	2
Experience	2
Tiredness	2
Avalance Natural	1



# TIMING

September was the busiest month for non-mountaineering incidents with 39 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 5% of incidents, teams worked closely with a number of other partner agencies (in addition to helicopters, which are covered in the next table).

	Count
Scottish Ambulance Service Special Operations Response Team	15
Northumberland MR Service	3
Royal National Lifeboat Association	3
Scottish Charity Air Ambulance	2
Loch Lomond Rescue Boat	1
Borders Water Rescue Team	1
Police Search Teams (NOT Police MR)	1
RAF MRT	1
Forestry Commission	1
BEAR Roads Department	1
Trossachs Search and Rescue	1

## Helicopter usage

MRTs work closely with helicopter services across the country.

Helicopters were recorded as attending 224 incidents. The number of activations of specific aircraft is detailed below (239 in total; some incidents were attended by more than one aircraft).

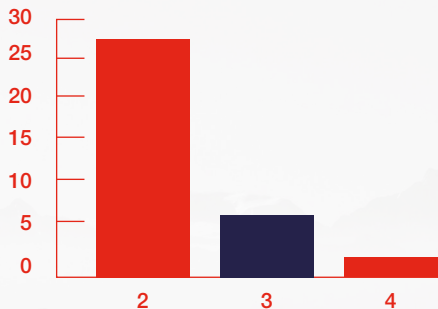
	Count
Rescue 199	80
Rescue 151	61
Police	34
Rescue 948	20
Other	3
Rescue 951	3
Rescue 190	1

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	102
Transport	49
Rescue	71
Evacuation	114

## Multi-day incidents

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



Days	Count
2	28
3	6
4	2

## Multiple teams working together

Number of Teams	Count
1	617
2	121
3	26
4	1
5	2

## Police areas

Alpha	Name	Count
None	None	7
A	Aberdeen	1
B	Aberdeenshire and Moray	64
C	Forth Valley	101
D	Tayside	68
E	Edinburgh	12
G	Glasgow	6
J	Lothians & Borders	87
K	Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	3
L	Argyll & West Dumbartonshire	76
N	Highlands & Islands	140
P	Fife	9
Q	Lanarkshire	5
U	Ayrshire	41
V	Dumfries & Galloway	40



# MULTI-DAY INCIDENTS

## Call-outs by team

Multi day incidents

	Incidents	Hours
None	0	0
Aberdeen	19	837
Arran	25	900
Arrochar	26	1,321
Assynt	15	836
Braemar	38	1,836
Borders	29	1,443
Dundonnell	36	1,922
Galloway	13	676
Glenelg	1	42
Glenmore Lodge	0	0
Hebrides	11	355
Killin	45	1,725
Kintail	15	411
Lomond	41	1,905
Moffat	22	772
Oban	30	1,291
Ochils	36	2,021
Skye	49	2,022
Torridon	12	468
Tweed Valley	84	2,366
Police Scotland (Grampian)	51	1,208
Police Scotland (Strathclyde)	118	3,310
Police Scotland (Tayside)	82	1,628
SARDA (Scotland)	39	563
SARDA (Southern)	41	263
Scottish Cave Rescue	1	2
SARAA-Scotland	15	128
Other	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>31,799</b>







## Footnote

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



**Volunteering  
to save lives**

