

STATISTICS REPORT

2023

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April 2024



Volunteering
to save lives



PREFACE

This Annual Statistical Report is a supplement to the Scottish Mountain Rescue Review 2023.

For more information on Scottish Mountain Rescue and our member teams visit:

www.scottishmountainrescue.org

This report includes data gathered from the 25 civilian member teams as well as three Police Scotland MRTs.

Scottish Mountain Rescue are proud to represent our member teams.

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Image © Hebrides MRT



Image © Braemar MRT

INTRODUCTION



Image © Arrochar MRT

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 2023 is compiled from information received from the **25** civilian and **3** Police Scotland teams that were members of Scottish Mountain Rescue in 2023. These teams are listed to the right.

This annual report covers the calendar year from 1st of January to 31st December 2023.

Important Note: *This report does not include incidents from non-member teams, except where 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)

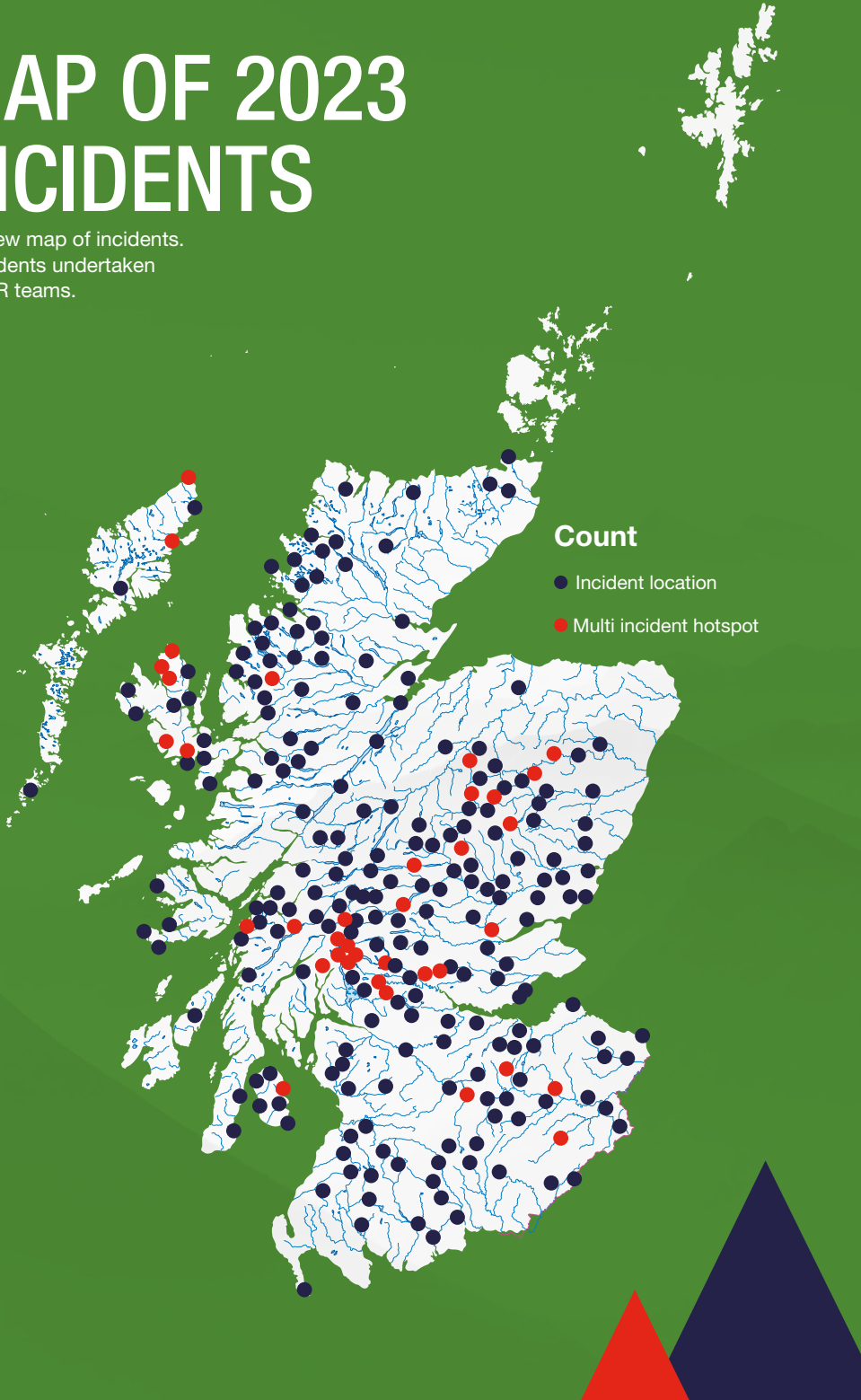
Comparison of key figures with those from previous years are provided where this is considered helpful.

- 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
- Skye MRT
- Tayside MRT
- Torridon MRT
- Tweed Valley MRT
- Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation
- Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) (Scotland)
- Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) (Southern Scotland)
- Search and Rescue Aerial Association (SARAA-Scotland)
- Police Scotland (Grampian) MRT
- Police Scotland (Strathclyde) MRT
- Police Scotland (Tayside) MRT



MAP OF 2023 INCIDENTS

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



Count

- Incident location
- Multi incident hotspot

OVERVIEW:

INCIDENTS, CALL-OUTS AND HOURS

Number of incidents

The total number of independent incidents in 2023 was **572**.

Of these, **319 (56%)** were related to mountaineering (this includes hillwalking, scrambling, rock climbing and winter climbing).

The total number of separate team activations or “call-outs” was **870**, or **976** including “continuations” (linked call-outs on different days).

This is an average of **2.7 per day**, including continuations. There were callouts on **278** days of 2023, and on the busiest day (Friday 8th September 2023) there were **12** activations of teams.

Hours

Mountain rescue team members gave up **32,762** hours of their time during call-outs. In addition to this, each of the more than **850** individual team members will spend dozens of hours each year on training activities, and most are also regularly involved in the day-to-day running of their teams, each of which is a charity in its own right.

People helped

During 2023, **677** people were assisted.

2 incidents involved the rescue of dogs, and **7** incidents the rescue of sheep.

There were **41** fatalities, **7** of which occurred in mountaineering incidents.

572

Total number of independent incidents.

319^(56%)

Incidents related to mountaineering.

870

Total number of team call-outs.

278

Days where at least one team was called out.

32,762

Hours of time given by volunteers.

677

People were assisted.



TRENDS OVER TIME

Trends over time

Although the number of unique mountain rescue incidents decreased by **10%** from **636** in 2022 to **572** in 2023, 2023 was a record year in terms of the total number of callouts across both Police Scotland and civilian teams, including continuations (up **7.7%** from 2022). As the analysis of multi-day and multi-team incidents in the report shows, some of these unique incidents triggered complex missing person searches, explaining the upwards trend in callouts despite a reduction in unique incidents. Civilian teams also spent nearly the same number of hours on callouts in 2023 as in the record year for hours of 2021.

These figures sit within an overall trend of increasing callout numbers and total number of hours spent over recent years.

Total number of hours spent by SMR **civilian** rescue teams.

Year	Callouts	Hours
2005	372	15,399
2006	396	15,263
2007	463	17,487
2008	455	14,150
2009	548	22,483
2010	501	17,663
2011	504	14,272
2012	532	21,242
2013	540	19,361
2014	472	15,141
2015	575	23,396
2016	562	19,115
2017	466	16,439
2018	563	23,209
2019	534	22,191
2020	480	19,457
2021	698	25,653
2022	709	24,545
2023	716	25,453



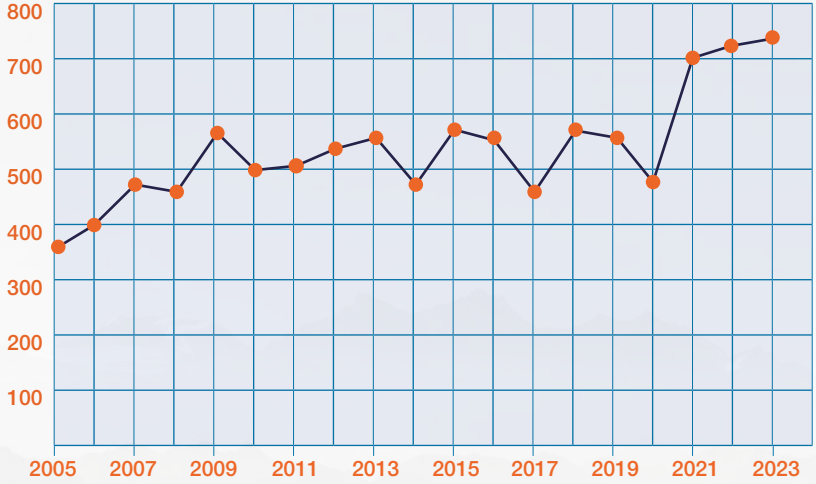
Image © Arrochar MRT



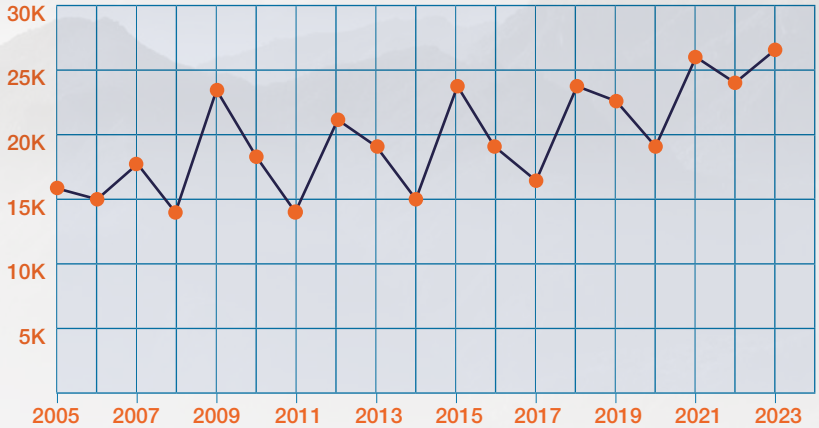
Image © Assynt MRT



Call-outs (civilian teams)



Hours (civilian teams)



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	183
Search and Rescue	155
Search	81
Medical Emergency	59
Police Investigation	23
Body Recovery	22
False Alarm	12
Animal Rescue	9
Other	7
Technical Rescue	5
Civil resilience	5
Search (water)	3
Water Rescue	2
Not Recorded	6
	Total 572

572

Total number of independent incidents

Image © Moffat MRT





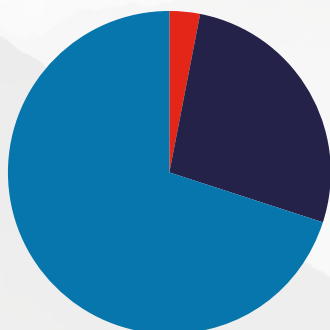
MOUNTAINEERING INCIDENTS

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, as well as scrambling.

In 2023 there were **319** "mountaineering" incidents, in which **387** people were assisted.

	Count	%
Hillwalking (Summer)	222	70
Hillwalking (Winter)	85	27
Rock Climbing	11	3
Scrambling	1	<1
Snow/Ice Climbing	0	0
Total	319	100



- Hillwalking (Summer) 70%
- Hillwalking (Winter) 27%
- Rock Climbing 3%

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	116
Lost	45
Navigation Error	39
Fall	39
Overdue	28
Missing Kit	26
Medical	22
Crag-fast	18
Technology Reliance	12
Reported Missing	12
Food	9
Benighted	7
Weather-bound	7
Separated	6
Tiredness	6
Experience	5
Rockfall	4
False Alarm	4
Kit Failure	4
River Crossing	2
Fitness	2
Mental Health	1

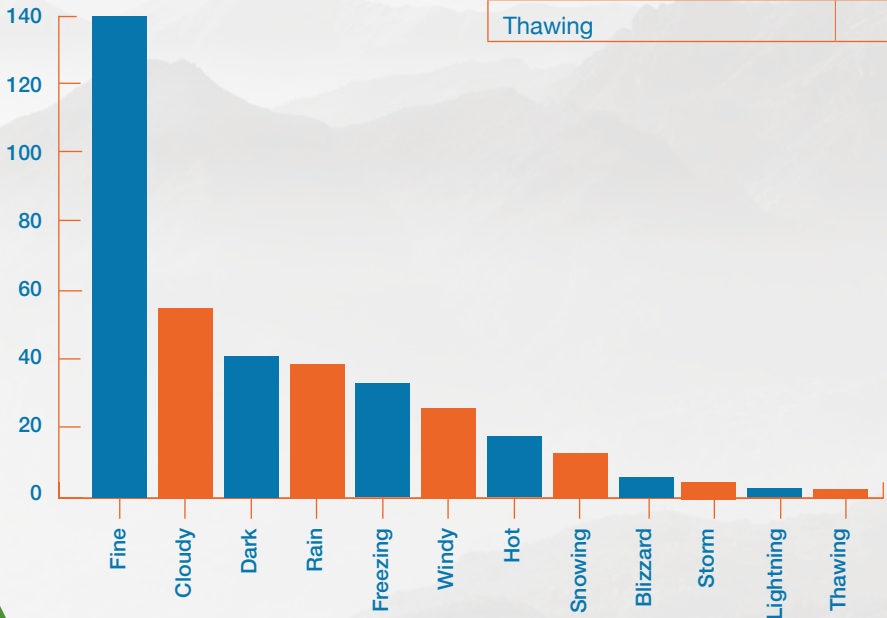


Where available, the weather conditions recorded at the time of the incident are detailed below. Most incidents occurred during fine weather (note that each incident may have more than one type of weather recorded).

319

Total number of mountaineering incidents

	Count
Fine	140
Cloudy	55
Dark	41
Rain	38
Freezing	33
Windy	26
Hot	17
Snowing	13
Blizzard	5
Storm	4
Lightning	2
Thawing	2



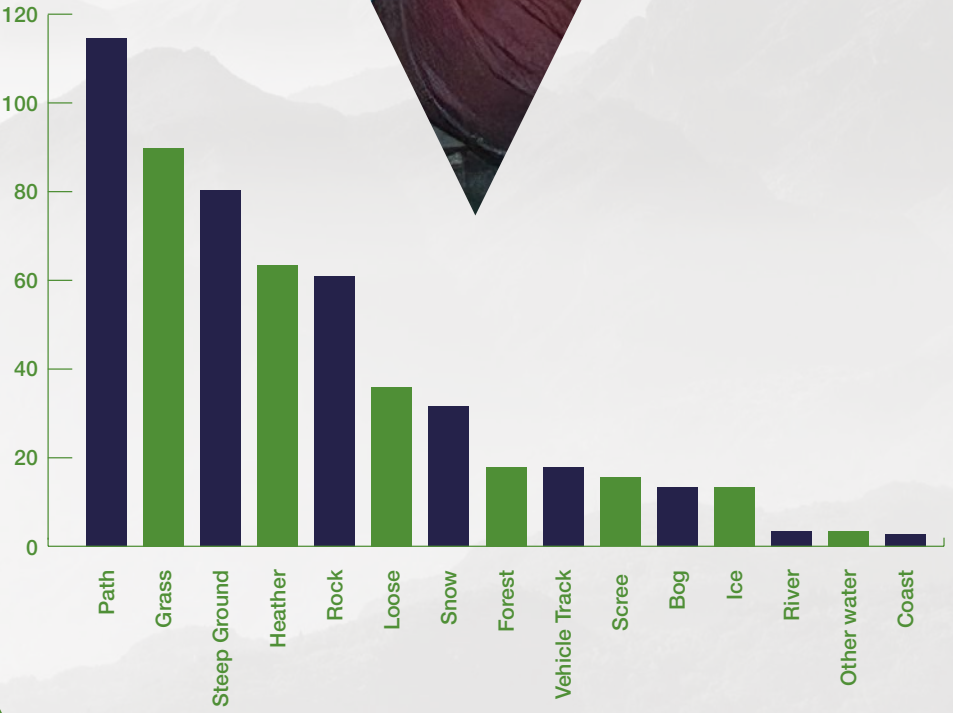
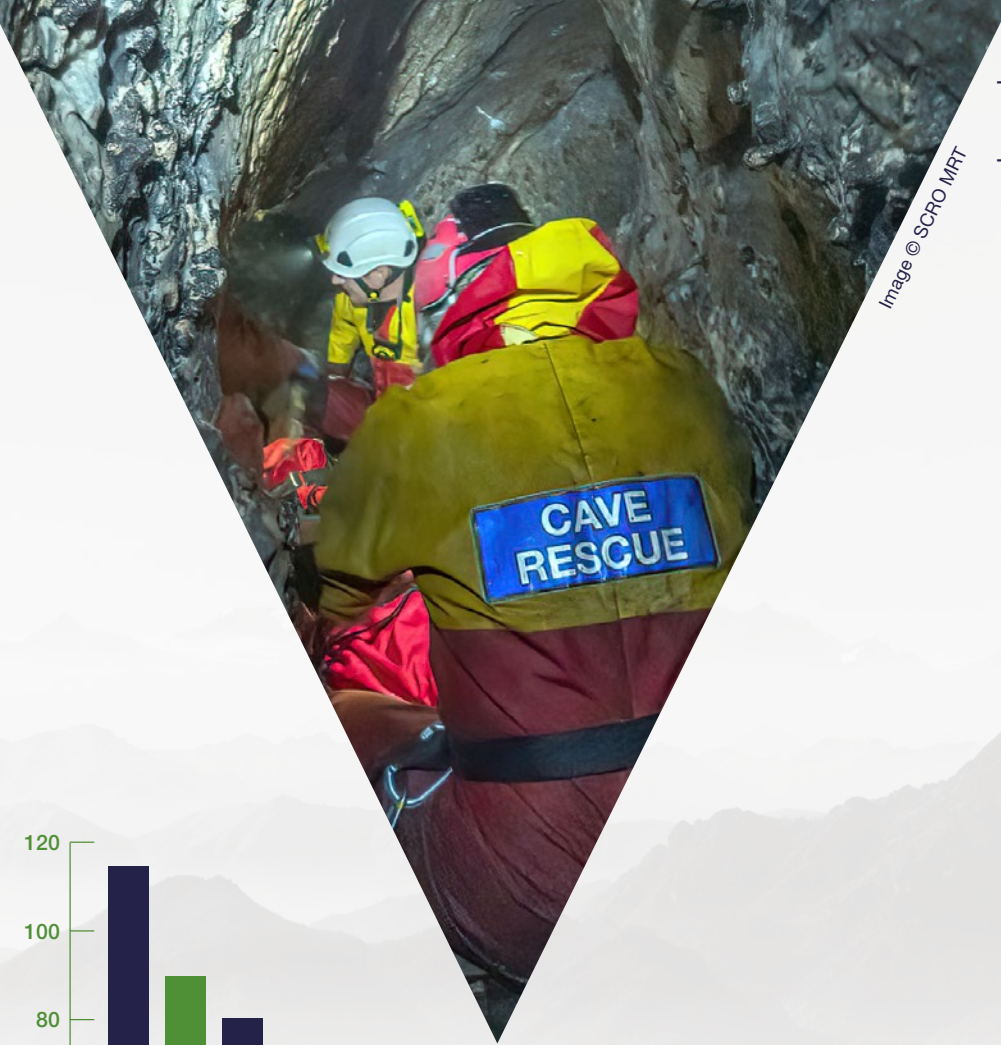
MOUNTAINEERING INCIDENTS

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	115
Grass	90
Steep Ground	80
Heather	64
Rock	61
Loose	36
Snow	32
Forest	18
Vehicle Track	18
Scree	15
Bog	13
Ice	13
River	4
Other Water	4
Coast	3



Image © SCRO MRT



INJURY TYPES

100 of the people assisted in mountaineering incidents (**26%**) had at least one injury recorded.

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

	Count
Fracture	69
Sprains	17
Bruising	8
Other	8
Laceration	7
Hypothermia	6
Multiple	6
Heart	5
Hypothermia	5
Illness	3
Minor Cuts	2
Asthma	1
Drowning	1
Total	138

INJURY SITE

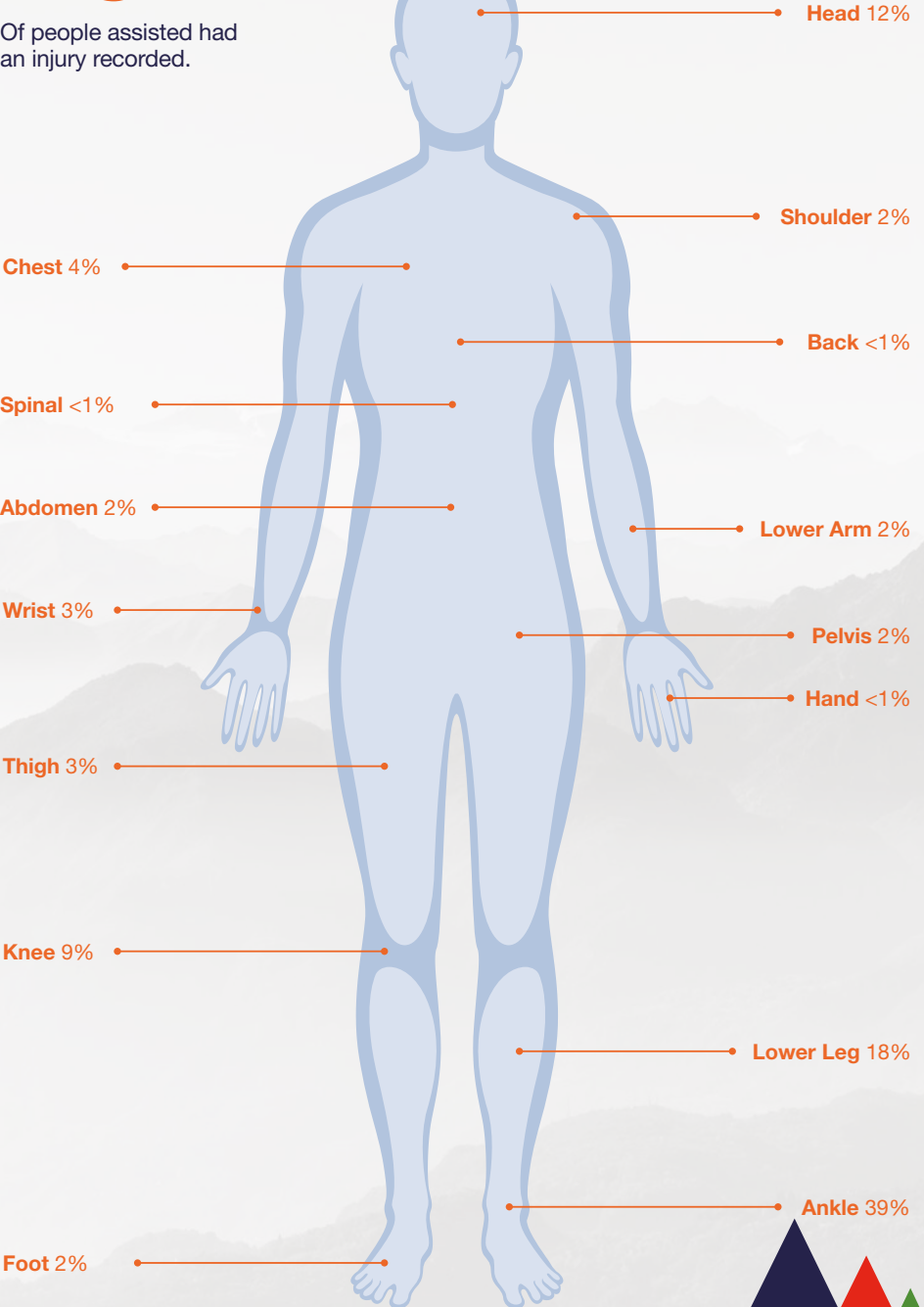
Casualties generally have a single (or no) injury site recorded.

	Count	%
Ankle	49	39
Lower Leg	23	18
Head	15	12
Knee	11	9
Chest	5	4
Thigh	4	3
Wrist	4	3
Pelvis	3	2
Shoulder	3	2
Abdomen	2	2
Foot	2	2
Lower Arm	2	2
Back	1	<1
Spinal	1	<1
Hand	1	<1
Total	126	100%

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

26%

Of people assisted had an injury recorded.



DEMOGRAPHICS



Gender

Gender of people assisted.

Gender	Count
Male	140
Female	160
Unspecified	87

Nationality

Nationality was recorded for **193** of the assisted mountaineers. Mountaineers rescued had **13** different nationalities.

Country	Count
United Kingdom	167
United States of America	9
Germany	7
France	4
Ireland	1
India	1
Norway	1
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Thailand	1
Austria	1
Belgium	1
Italy	1

British Nationality

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

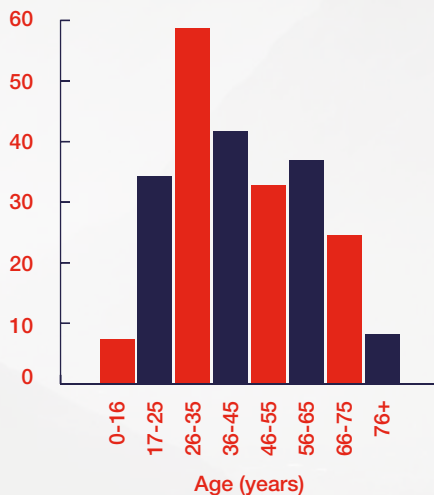
Nation	Count
Scotland	120
England	13
Northern Ireland	1
Wales	1

Age

Age was recorded for **242** mountaineers. The most frequently rescued age category was **26-35** years, although this may simply reflect that certain age groups go out into the hills more frequently than others.

Age Range	Count	%
0-16	7	3
17-25	34	14
26-35	59	24
36-45	41	17
46-55	32	13
56-65	36	15
66-75	25	10
76+	8	3

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



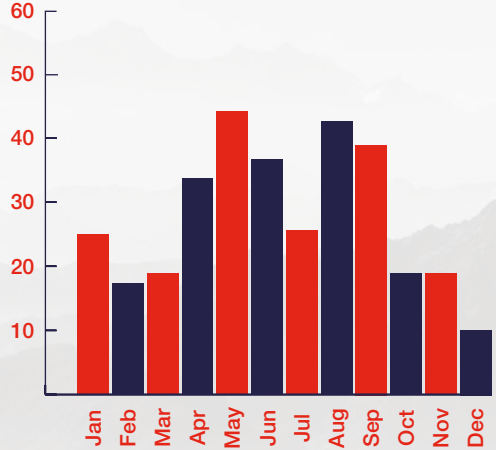
TIMING OF INCIDENTS

Image © Kintail MRT

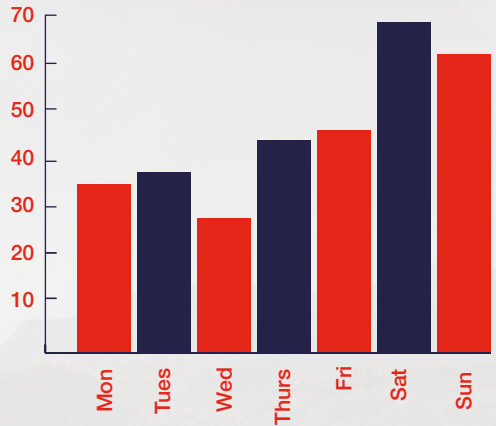
The busiest period for teams is generally during the summer months. Both mountaineering and non-mountaineering incidents (see later section) increase during the summer. The busiest day of the week for teams from mountaineering incidents tends to be a Saturday or Sunday.



Month	Count	%
January	25	8
February	17	5
March	19	6
April	33	10
May	44	14
June	34	11
July	24	8
August	42	13
September	39	12
October	16	5
November	16	5
December	10	3
Total	319	100%



Weekday	Count	%
Monday	35	11
Tuesday	37	12
Wednesday	28	8
Thursday	43	13
Friday	45	14
Saturday	69	22
Sunday	62	19
Total	319	100%



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

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 **253** incidents supporting the community. More than one activity can be recorded against an incident.

Activity

The activity or activities leading to these incidents was recorded in **215** cases.

	Count
Missing Person	55
Rural Walking	49
Mountain Biking	28
Mental Health	28
Running	10
Motor Vehicle	7
Police Investigation	7
Swimming	5
Canoeing/Kayaking/Rafting	4
Working	4
Canyoning	3
Civil Resilience	3
Skiing	3
Air Sport	2
Equestrian	2
Medevac	2
4x4/ATV	1
Cycling	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.

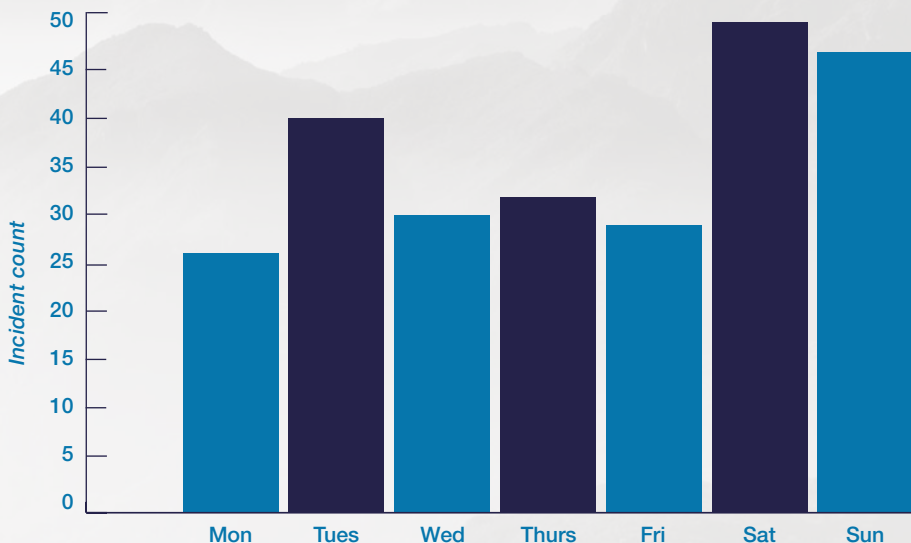
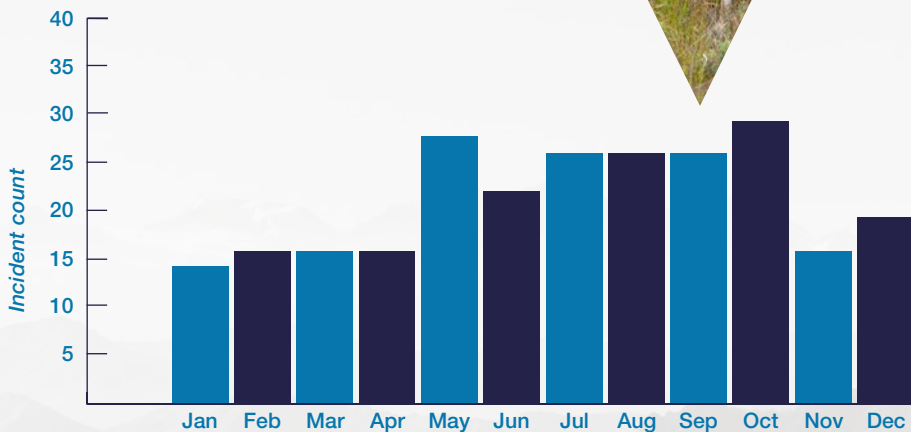
	Count
Reported Missing	62
Mental Health	49
Slip/Trip	30
Fall	22
Medical	18
Lost	16
Weather-Bound	8
Navigation Error	7
River Crossing	6
Crag-fast	5
False Alarm	4
Experience	3
Separated	2
Tiredness	2
Overdue	2
Benighted	1
Food	1



Image © Lomond MRT

TIMING

In 2023, the busiest day of the week for teams for non-mountaineering incidents was Saturday, whereas the busiest month was October.



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



Image © SARDA (Scotland) MRT

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 **6%** of incidents, teams worked closely with a number of other partner agencies (in addition to helicopters, which are covered in the next table). Please note that some incidents had more than one partner agency recorded.

	Count
Scottish Ambulance Service Special Operations Response Team	13
RAF MRT	5
Loch Lomond Rescue Boat	3
Police Search Teams (NOT Police MR)	3
Northumberland Mountain Rescue	2
Police Dive/Marine Unit	2
Royal Lifeboat Institution/ Kyle Lifeboat	2
Borders Water Rescue Team	1
Cockermouth Mountain Rescue	1
Medic One	1
Nith Inshore Rescue	1
SARDA Lakes	1
Scottish Charity Air Ambulance	1

Helicopter usage

MRTs work closely with helicopter services across the country.

Helicopters were recorded as attending **159** incidents. The number of activations of specific aircraft is detailed below (**176** in total; some incidents were attended by more than one aircraft).

	Count
Rescue 199	55
Rescue 151	48
Helimed	31
Rescue 948	31
Police	9
Rescue 152	1
Rescue 900	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).

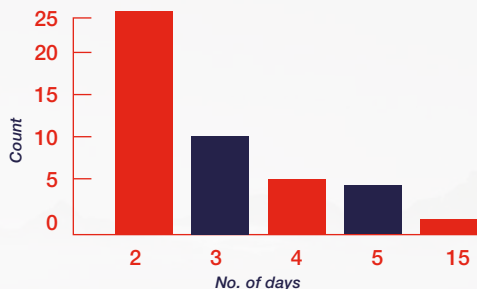
	Count
Evacuation	91
Search	79
Rescue	62
Transport	52



Image © Oban MRT

Multi-day incidents

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



Days	Count
2	26
3	10
4	5
5	4
15	1

Multiple teams working together

Number of Teams	Count
2	183
3	38
4	9
5	3
6	1
8	1

Police areas

Name	Count
Highlands & Islands	156
Forth Valley	86
Tayside	83
Argyll & West Dunbartonshire	67
Lothians & Borders	51
Aberdeenshire and Moray	48
Ayrshire	31
Dumfries & Galloway	25
Edinburgh	6
None	6
Fife	5
Glasgow	5
Lanarkshire	2
Aberdeen	1



Image © Dundonnell MRT

NO OF CALL-OUTS AND HOURS BY TEAM

	Incidents	Hours
Aberdeen	12	568
Arran	26	810
Arrochar	36	1,484
Assynt	17	437
Borders	16	844
Braemar	36	978
Dundonnell	23	1,038
Galloway	15	815
Glenelg	2	140
HebSAR	11	316
Killin	39	1,482
Kintail	20	710
Lomond	42	1,648
Moffat	22	1,230
Oban	36	1,354
Ochils	24	1,086
Skye	70	2,249
Tayside	95	4,219
Torridon	17	330
Tweed Valley	52	2,282
Police Scotland (Grampian)	45	684
Police Scotland (Strathclyde)	99	3,220
Police Scotland (Tayside)	116	3,405
SARDA (Scotland)	44	920
SARDA (Southern)	40	353
SARAA-Scotland	21	165
Total	976	32,762

Total does not match values in table due to rounding.







**Volunteering
to save lives**

Image © Kinrall MRT

Footnote

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Any other enquiry relating to Scottish Mountain Rescue should be directed to info@scottishmountainrescue.org