



Press Release

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Lockdown fines more common in poorest areas, study finds

Penalties against people breaking Covid-19 lockdown regulations in Scotland were issued disproportionately in the most deprived communities, research shows.

Almost a third of all Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were issued to those living in the 10 per cent most deprived communities, the study reveals.

FPNs were 12 times more likely to be issued to people living in the 10 per cent most deprived areas compared with those in the 10 per cent least deprived parts.

Report author Professor Susan McVie, of the University of Edinburgh, provides the first detailed analysis of the police's use of powers introduced by the Coronavirus Regulations to curb the spread of the virus.

The paper is one of several presented to the Scottish Police Authority by John Scott QC, Chair of the Independent Advisory Group set up to scrutinise Police Scotland's use of the temporary powers.

The report covers all FPNs in Scotland between 27 March and 31 May 2020. It found that 4,328 were issued, meaning less than 0.1 per cent of Scotland's population was affected.

The use of FPNs rose sharply at the start of lockdown but gradually reduced over time. There were few repeat breaches, and they were rarely used by the start of lockdown easing in Phase 1, the report says.

Penalties were most likely to be issued to men, young people and people from White backgrounds. However, the proportion of FPNs issued to people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and non-British nationals was slightly higher than population estimates.

Four out of five who received a penalty notice had already come to the attention of the police in the past.

Greater Glasgow had the most FPNs but, by head of population, the highest rate of activity was in Argyll and West Dunbartonshire – mainly due to people visiting Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

The report author cautions that while the rate of FPNs issued in Scotland looks higher than that for England and Wales, the data are not comparable.

The regulations gave police officers temporary powers to issue FPNs to anyone age 16 or over or, in extreme circumstances, arrest them for failing to comply.

The severe constraints placed on freedom of movement meant the police were given powers to issue penalties to people who, under normal circumstances, would have been acting lawfully.

Professor Susan McVie said: "The disparity in the likelihood of receiving an FPN for breaching the Coronavirus Regulations among those in the most and the least deprived communities of Scotland is startling. This report highlights the possibility that there may have been justice inequalities, in terms of who has been subject to enforcement and the drivers of their non-compliance."

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