

THE INFLUENCE OF
THE PANDEMIC ON

CRIME STATISTICS



2021



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Key Findings

- A total of 56,596 crimes were reported in 2020, which is 11.7% less than in 2019.
- In 2020, despite the decrease in the overall crime rate, the upward trend in various crimes continued. For instance, the rate of premeditated homicide increased by 39.5%, incitement to suicide + 6.3%, threats + 36.3%, cybercrime + 18.7%, domestic violence + 6.9%.
- The decrease in the total crime rate registered in 2020 is largely due to the critical decline in criminal offenses against property (-3,149 cases) and the number of drug offenses (-2,963 cases).
- The reduction of crime rates was significantly affected by the state of emergency declared in the country in the fight against the pandemic and the curfew. For example, theft rates, which account for 32% of all crimes, fell by 40% in April 2020 compared to the same month last year.
- From June 2020 (with the lifting of restrictions) onwards, the number of crimes increased significantly, and in August-September exceeded the numbers from the same periods of the previous year.
- The number of crimes starts to decrease again from October, which may be related to the reduction of control over certain crimes during the pre-election period. For example, drug crime in October 2020 decreased by 80% compared to the same month the previous year.
- The rate of domestic violence increased by 7% in 2020. However, according to the monthly reported cases of domestic violence, the number of registered cases during the months of restrictions and curfew did not increase.
- In 2020, cybercrime increased significantly during the restrictions period. In April 2020, 303 computer crime cases were reported, a record for the last 4 years.
- In 2020, despite the restrictions on traffic, the traffic crime rate increased by 7.7%.

Introduction

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic taking place in the world led to an increased risk of deteriorating criminogenic conditions. For example, the deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the country, the massive reduction of jobs, etc., contains significant risks of an increase in crime, especially economic crime. However, in 2020, the specifics of fighting the pandemic to prevent the spread of the virus have led to the isolation of numerous people in a single space with potential abusers. On the other hand, the specifics of combating pandemics were also significant deterrents and an additional mechanism for tackling some crimes. For example, the introduction of a state of emergency, the curfew, the restriction of crowded economic activities, all could have been an important deterrent to crime.

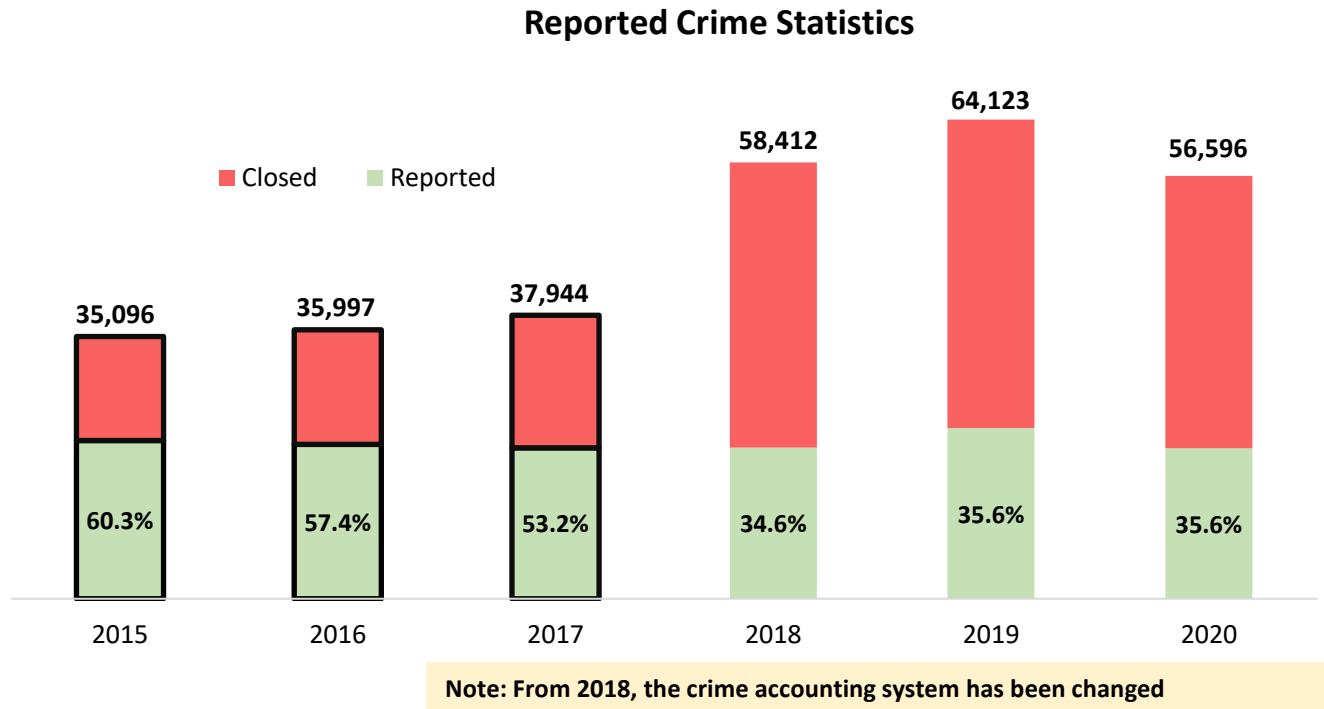
In order to assess the impact of the pandemic on the reported crime rates in the country, IDFI analyzed the crime statistics registered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Since 2018, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has been proactively publishing crime statistics by different types of crime on a monthly basis, enabling us to assess the impact of the pandemic and restrictive measures on specific crimes¹.

¹ According to the Ministry, the crime accounting system has significantly improved since 2018, which was conceived as one of the main reasons for the rapid increase in the number of registered crimes since that period.

Analysis of Crime Statistics

According to the [statistics](#) published on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a **total of 56,596 crimes were registered in 2020, which is 11.7% less than in 2019**, while the crime clear-up rate remained at a similar level (35.6%).

Figure 1: Reported crime



For a comprehensive analysis of reported crime in 2020, it is crucial to analyze trends by crime categories. Although in 2020 the overall rate of registered crimes decreased compared to the previous year, the increasing trend towards different crime groups continued. For example, the number of criminal offenses against life increased by 4.5%. Among them, **the rate of premeditated murders under aggravating circumstances increased by 39.5%**, while the rate of crimes reported under the article of incitement to suicide increased by 6.3%. Additionally, the rate of crimes against human rights and freedoms increased by 23.5%, which was mostly due to the rapid increase in threatening cases (+ 36.3%, +799 cases). Despite the restrictions on traffic in 2020, the rate of traffic crime increased by 7.7%. In addition, reported cybercrime cases increased by 18.7% in 2020. The growing trend of cybercrime is particularly noticeable against the background of its low clear-up rate (9.6%). In 2020, the total number of crimes in the group of crimes against health decreased by 6.4%, although **the rates of domestic violence increased by 6.9%**.

The decrease in the total crime rate reported in 2020 is largely due to the significant decline in criminal offenses against property (-3,149 cases) and the number of drug offenses (-2,963 cases).

Figure 2: Reported crime rates by crime groups

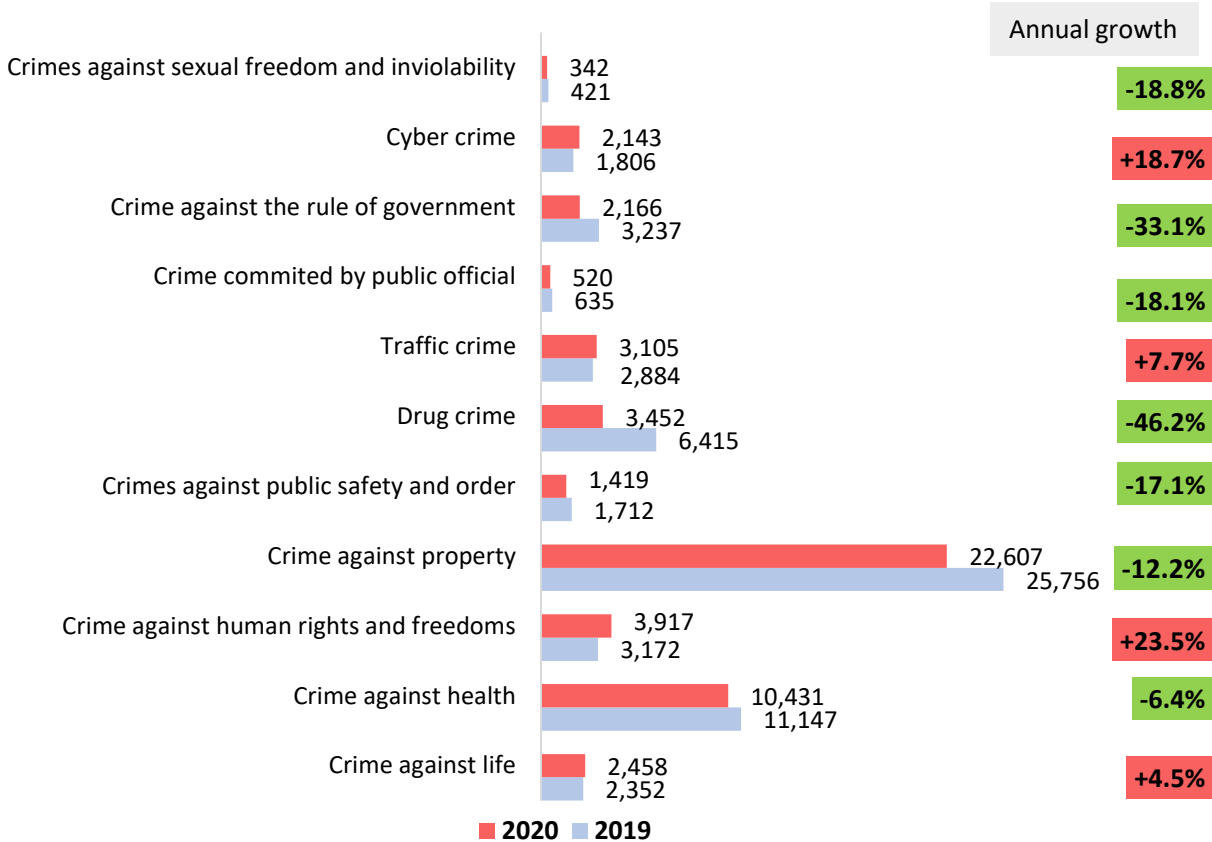
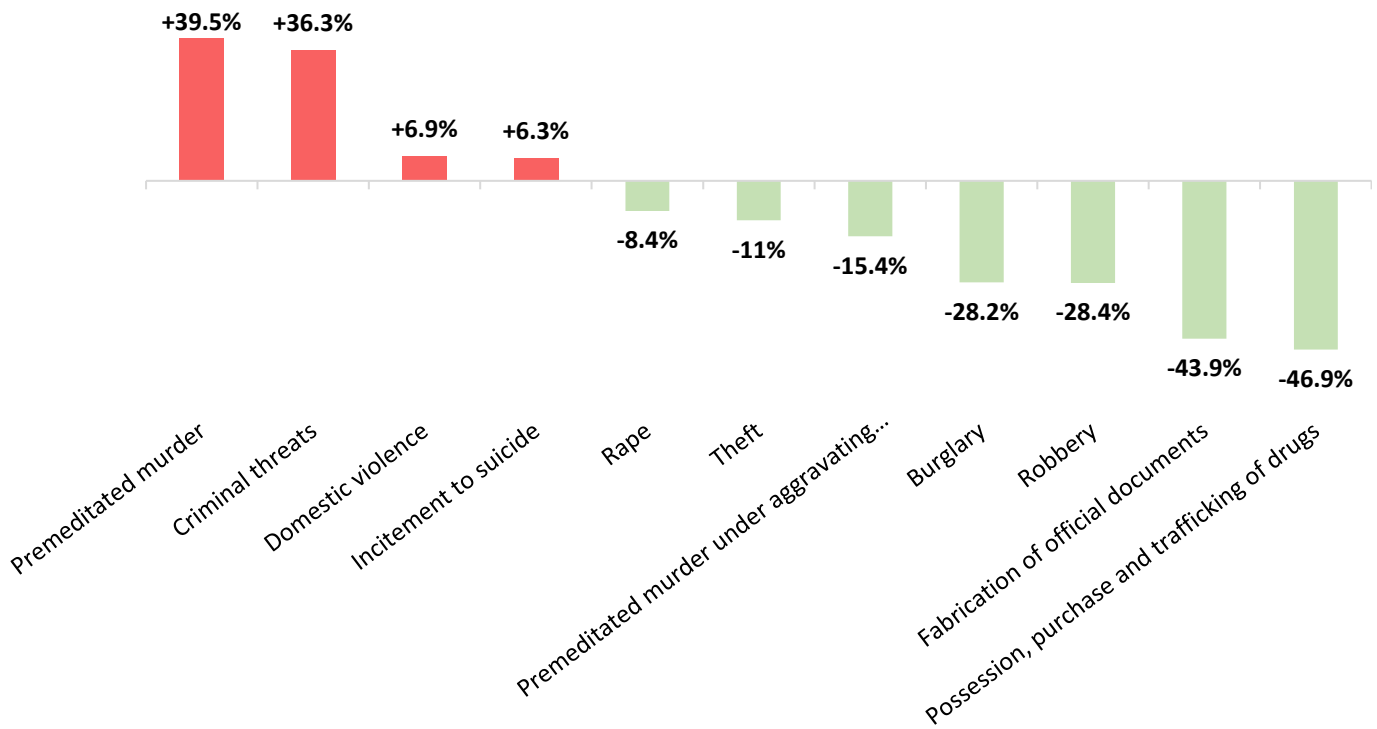
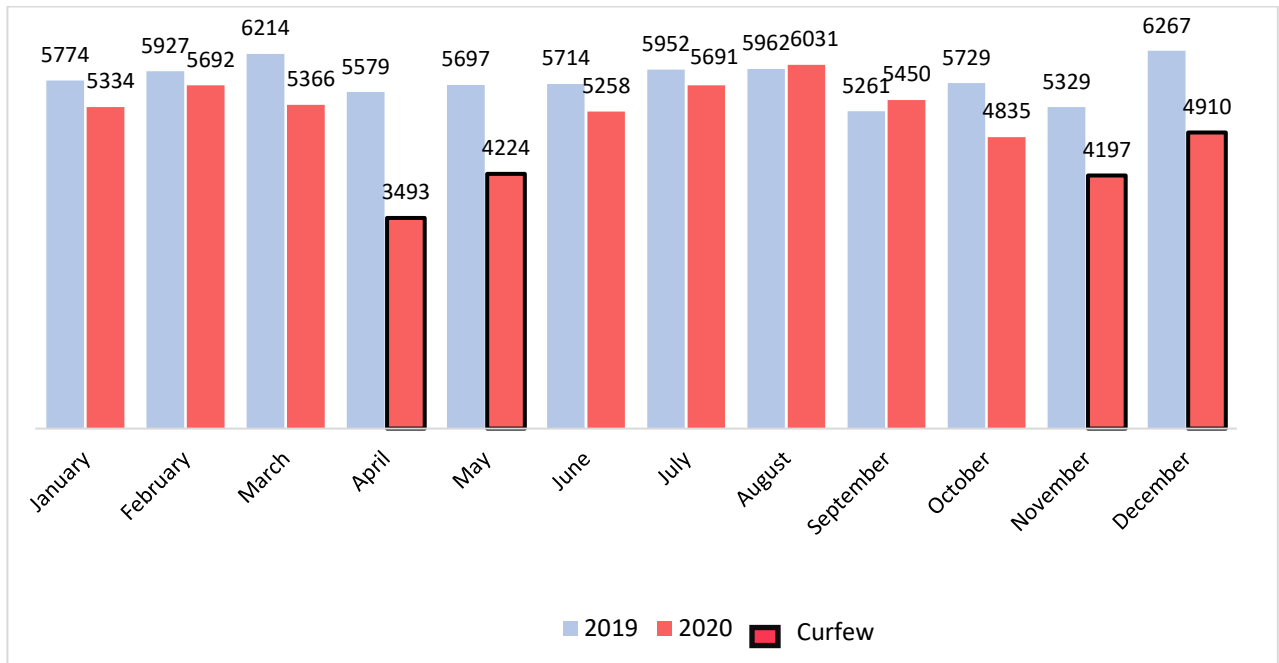


Chart 3: % increase/decrease rates of various registered crimes



In 2020, an analysis of monthly crime data shows that the decrease in crime rate was significantly affected by the state of emergency and the curfew declared in the country in the fight against the pandemic. A state of emergency was declared in the country on March 21, 2020, which lasted until May 22 (from April 17, restrictions were significantly tightened when all types of mechanical vehicles, except motorcycles, were restricted, and on May 22, the curfew was lifted). As a result, the lowest crime rates were recorded in April and May 2020. For example, 3493 crimes were registered in April, which is 37% less than in the same month of the previous year. From June 2020 (with the lifting of restrictions), the number of crimes increased significantly, and in August-September exceeded the same periods of the previous year. The number of crimes continued to decline from October, which may be related to the weakening of control over certain crimes during the pre-election period. **For example, drug crime in October 2020 decreased by 80% compared to the same month last year.** And the decrease in the number of crimes in November-December compared to the previous year is likely to be again due to the deterioration of the epidemiological situation and the establishment of a curfew after November 9, 2020.

Figure 4: Crime statistics by months



Strict restrictions imposed during the pandemic turned out to be an especially potent deterrent factor for the crimes that accounted for the largest share of registered crime and therefore had the greatest impact on the overall rate. **For example, theft rates, which account for 32% of all crimes, are significantly reduced during the curfew. In April 2020, 1029 cases of theft were registered, which is about 40% less than in the same month of the previous year.** After the lifting of the curfew, the theft rate increased every month, and in October it was about 14% higher than the previous year.

It should be mentioned that the curfew introduced in November was no longer an efficient deterrent in the case of certain serious economic crimes. Since September 2020, robbery cases have increased significantly compared to the previous year. For example, there were 18 cases in October, while in the previous year there were 5 cases, in November 22 cases – compared to the previous year 10 cases.

Figure 5: Comparison of theft rates recorded in 2020 with the same period of the previous year

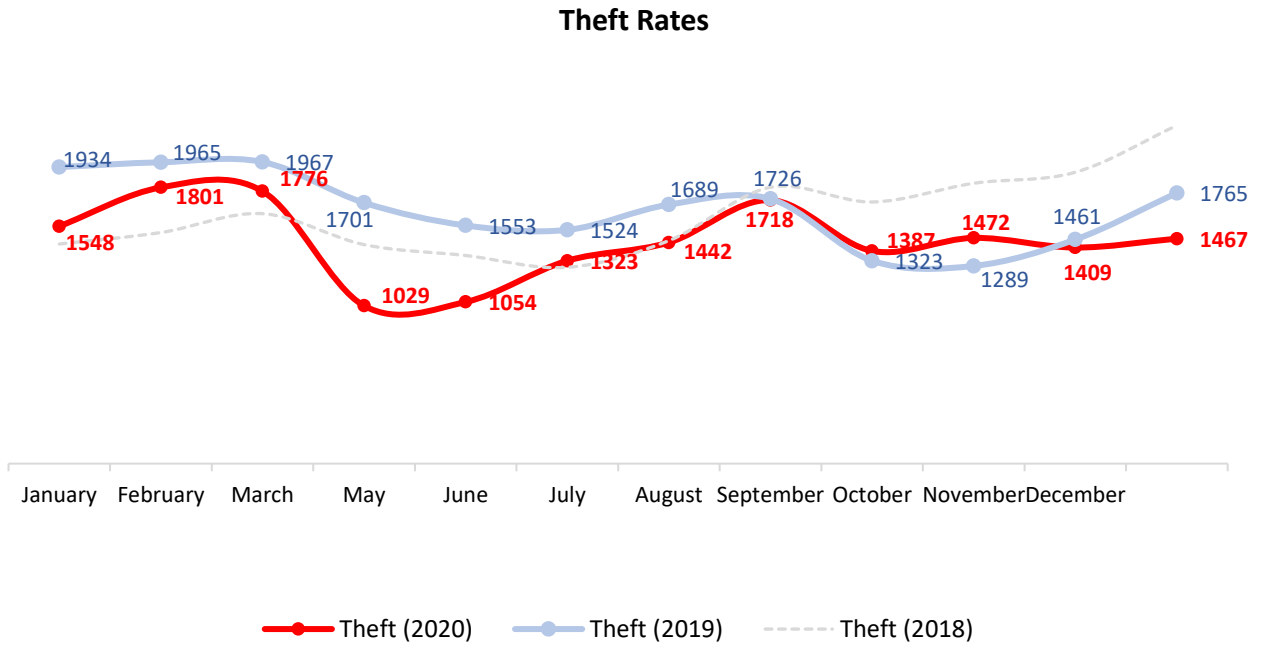
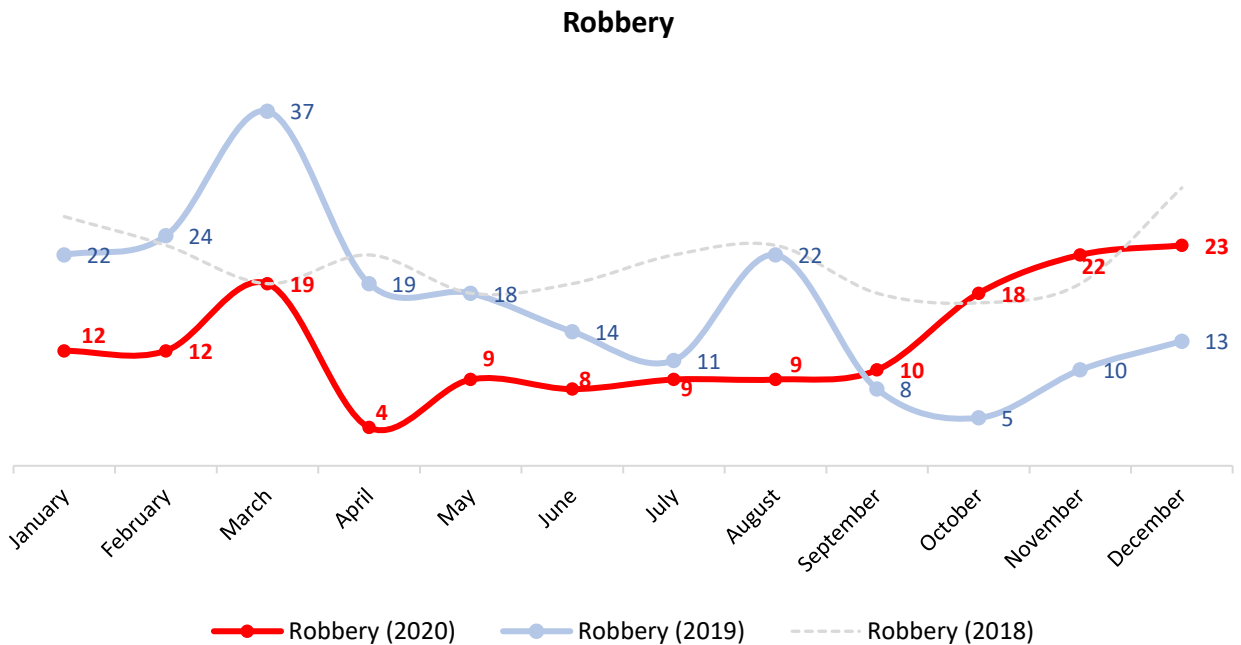


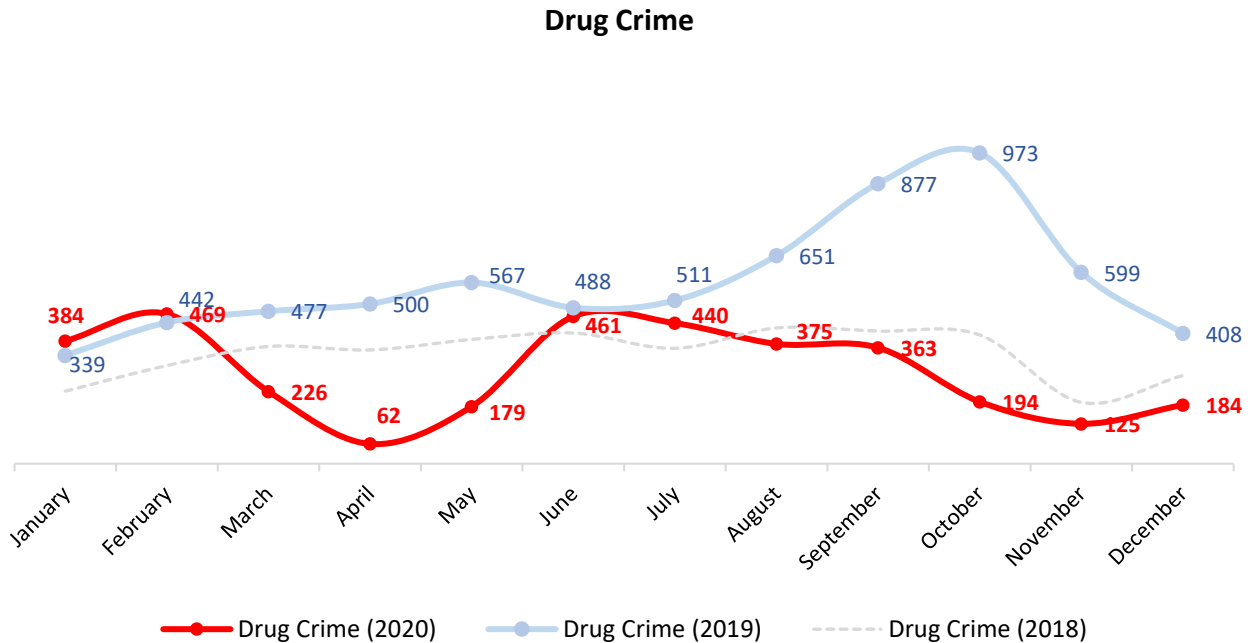
Figure 6: Comparison of robbery rates registered in 2020 with the same period of the previous year



Over the years, drug crimes accounted for a large share in the number of overall crimes, although by 2020 its rate has dropped significantly. Both the restrictions imposed and the significant easing of controls can be considered a potential reason for the reduction in drug crime. For example, in April 2020, a total of 62 such crimes were reported, while 500 cases were registered in the same

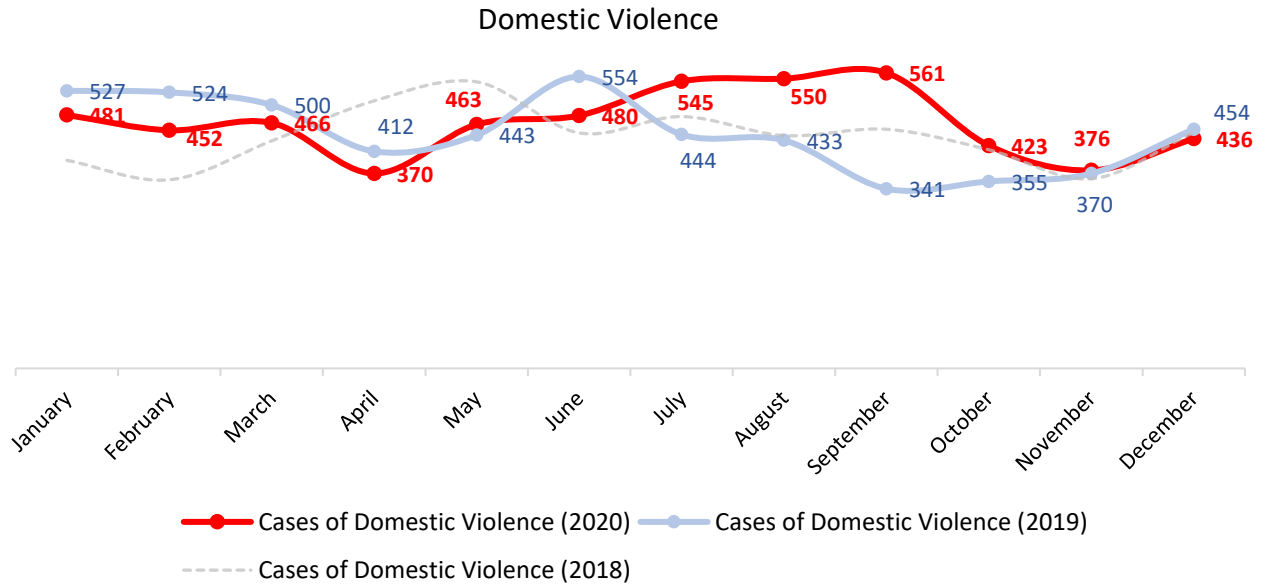
month of the previous year. In October 2020 - 194, while in the same month of the previous year - 973 cases.

Figure 7: Comparison of drug crime rates registered in 2020 with the same period of the previous year



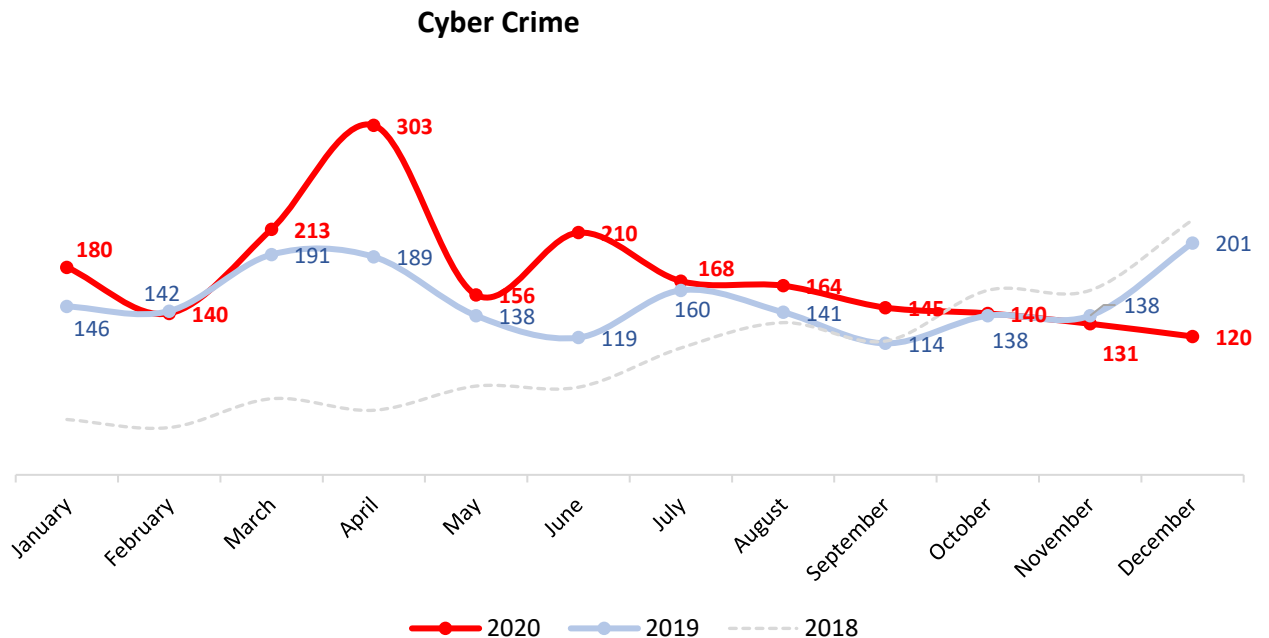
Pandemic and quarantine isolation has increased the number of domestic violence reports globally. In the case of Georgia, in 2020 the rate of domestic violence increased by 7%. However, judging by the monthly registered cases of domestic violence, the number of reports during the months of restrictions and curfew has not increased. The increasing trend has been noticeable since July and the biggest growth was in September, when the domestic violence rate increased by 65% (+220 cases) compared to the same month of the previous year.

Figure 8: Cases of domestic violence by months



In 2020, cybercrime increased significantly during the period of restrictions. The increase is particularly noticeable in the first half of 2020, with 303 cybercrime cases reported in April, a record high for the last 4 years.

Figure 9: Cybercrime cases by months



Conclusion

The analysis of the statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia shows that the decrease in the overall crime rate in 2020 is largely due to the restrictive measures imposed in the fight against the pandemic and has little to do with improving the criminogenic situation in the country. However, the significant decline in certain crimes (such as drug offenses) is likely to be related to the reduction of police control during the election year. The deteriorating criminogenic situation in the country is evidenced by the growing trend of crimes against life. Additionally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs requires more effort to fight cybercrime, which is increasing every year, and their clear-up rate does not reach 10%.

Analysis of the monthly crime data registered in 2020, as well as the worsening socio-economic situation of the country as a result of the pandemic, creates negative expectations regarding the criminogenic situation in the country after the temporary restrictions are lifted. Therefore, in order to avoid a deterioration of the criminogenic situation, special efforts of the relevant agencies in the post-pandemic period are required.