Mid-2020 Small Area Population Estimates, Scotland

This statistical report provides population estimates by sex and age for small areas, known as data zones, across Scotland.

Preserving the past | Recording the present | Informing the future

Scotland is split into about 7,000 small areas called data zones

Data zones are a small area geography used to provide statistics at local level.

There are 6,976 data zones covering the whole of Scotland and they nest within council areas.

Scotland

32
Council Areas

1,279   Intermediate Zones
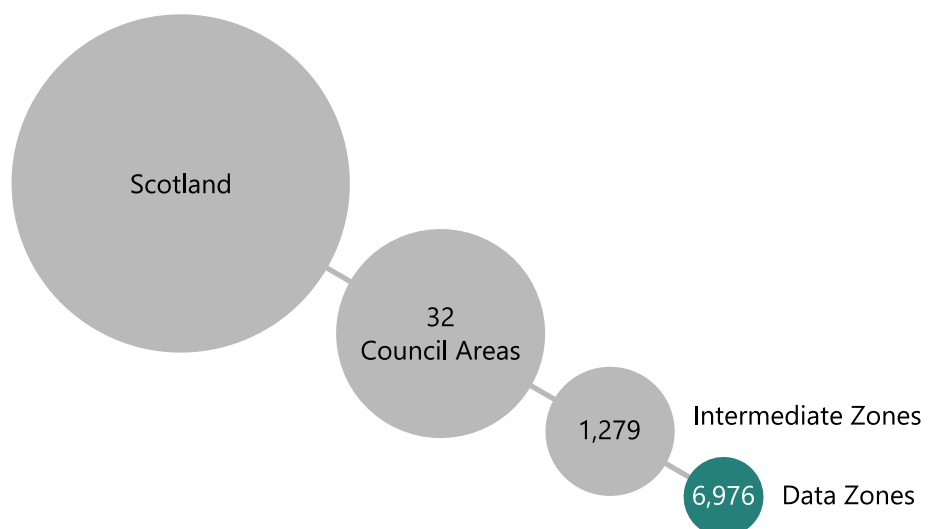
6,976   Data Zones

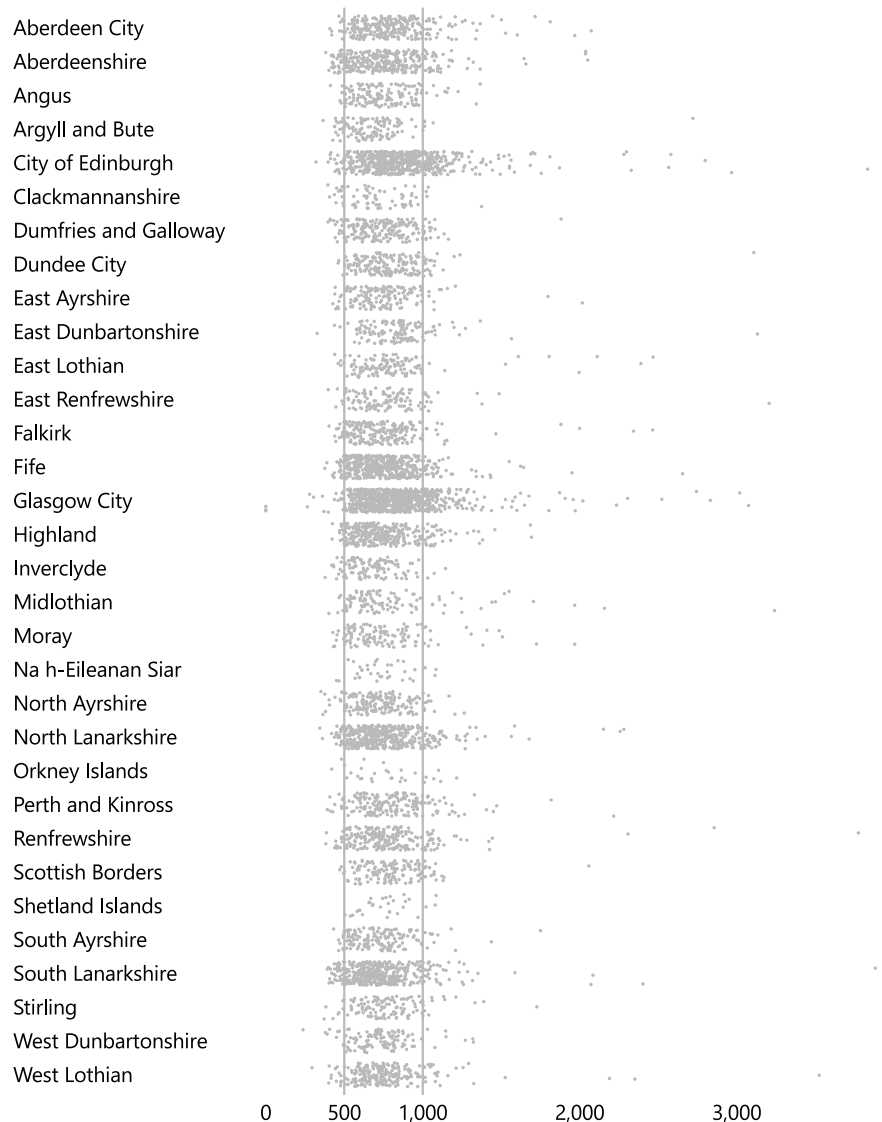## Most data zones contain between 500 and 1,000 people

Data zones are designed to have a population of around 500 to 1,000 household residents. In mid-2020, the average data zone population was 784.

Most data zones change in population over time. This can be for many reasons. For example:

- Births
- Deaths
- Migration
- Larger changes may be due to housing demolitions or new housing development

Find out about the data zone you live in at www.nrscotland.gov.uk/interactive/small-area-population-estimates
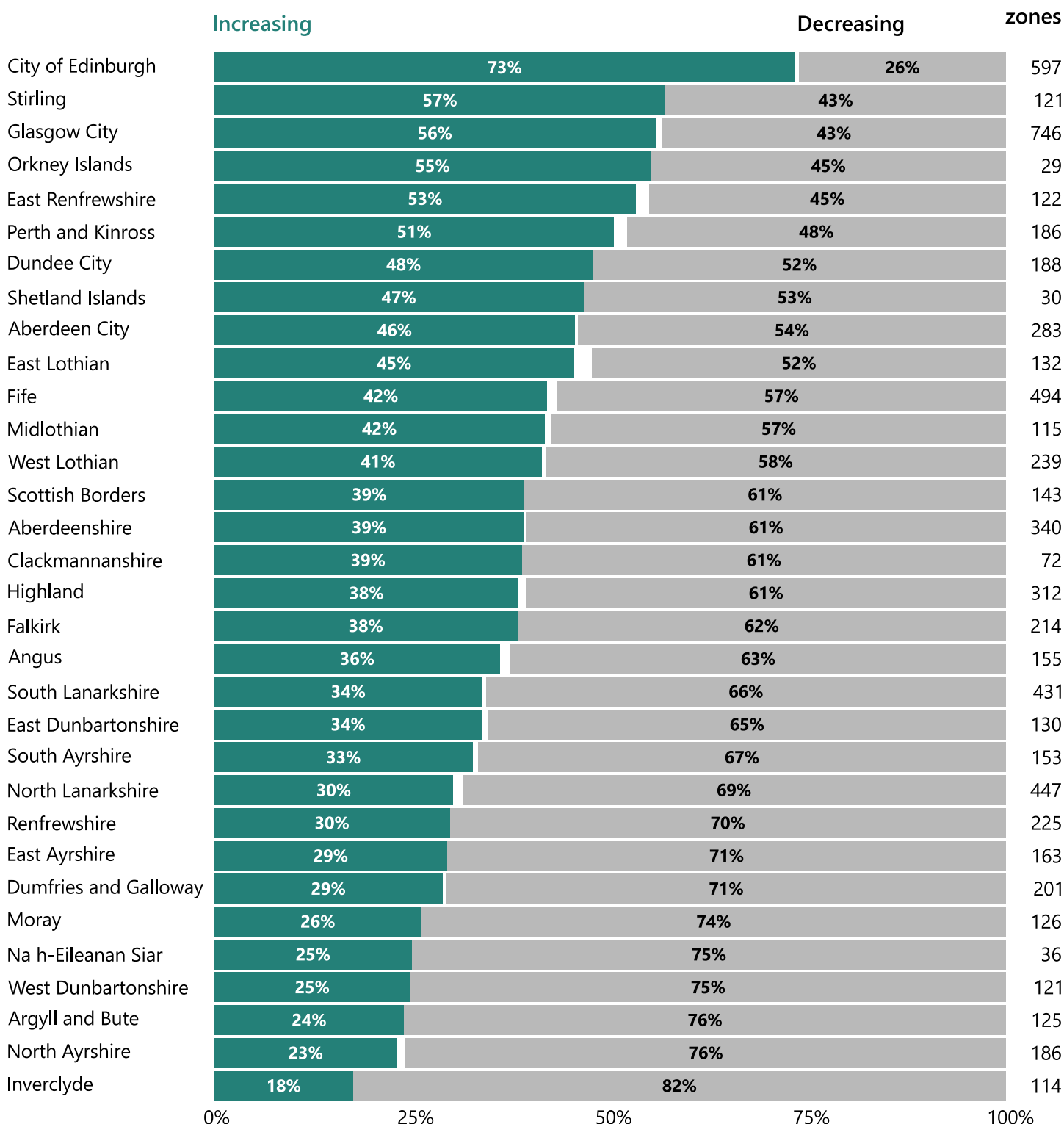
Population of each data zone, mid-2020

Aberdeen City
Aberdeenshire
Angus
Argyll and Bute
City of Edinburgh
Clackmannanshire
Dumfries and Galloway
Dundee City
East Ayrshire
East Dunbartonshire
East Lothian
East Renfrewshire
Falkirk
Fife
Glasgow City
Highland
Inverclyde
Midlothian
Moray
Na h-Eileanan Siar
North Ayrshire
North Lanarkshire
Orkney Islands
Perth and Kinross
Renfrewshire
Scottish Borders
Shetland Islands
South Ayrshire
South Lanarkshire
Stirling
West Dunbartonshire
West Lothian

0   500   1,000   2,000   3,000

Every council area has pockets of population growth and depopulation

In the last decade, mainly rural councils, as well as those in the west of Scotland have seen a higher proportion of their areas decrease in population. In contrast, the cities have seen more areas increase in population.

Percentage of data zones that increased, stayed the same (in white), or decreased population by council area mid-2010 to mid-2020

Increasing   **Decreasing**

Council area	Increasing	Decreasing	Total data zones
City of Edinburgh	73%	26%	597
Stirling	57%	43%	121
Glasgow City	56%	43%	746
Orkney Islands	55%	45%	29
East Renfrewshire	53%	45%	122
Perth and Kinross	51%	48%	186
Dundee City	48%	52%	188
Shetland Islands	47%	53%	30
Aberdeen City	46%	54%	283
East Lothian	45%	52%	132
Fife	42%	57%	494
Midlothian	42%	57%	115
West Lothian	41%	58%	239
Scottish Borders	39%	61%	143
Aberdeenshire	39%	61%	340
Clackmannanshire	39%	61%	72
Highland	38%	61%	312
Falkirk	38%	62%	214
Angus	36%	63%	155
South Lanarkshire	34%	66%	431
East Dunbartonshire	34%	65%	130
South Ayrshire	33%	67%	153
North Lanarkshire	30%	69%	447
Renfrewshire	30%	70%	225
East Ayrshire	29%	71%	163
Dumfries and Galloway	29%	71%	201
Moray	26%	74%	126
Na h-Eileanan Siar	25%	75%	36
West Dunbartonshire	25%	75%	121
Argyll and Bute	24%	76%	125
North Ayrshire	23%	76%	186
Inverclyde	18%	82%	114

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

Contents

Key Findings

- As at mid-2020, the average data zone population in Scotland was 784 people. Data zones are a small area geography. They cover the whole of Scotland, and can be used to understand the population of local communities. Find out more about the data zone you live via our interactive visualisation.
- Every council area across Scotland had pockets of population growth and pockets of depopulation (see Figure 4).

Age Structure

- The median age in Scotland was 42 years, however this can vary. For example:
  - The "youngest" data zone (median age 20 years) was **Newington and Dalkeith Road - 03** in City of Edinburgh. This area contains student accommodation for the University of Edinburgh.
  - The "oldest" data zone (median age 73 years) was **Falkirk – Town Centre and Callendar Park**. This area contains a lot of developments aimed at older residents.

- Scotland has an ageing population. Over the last decade, rural and island areas have aged the most. The percentage of data zones in which the median age increased, varied from 52% of the data zones in Dundee City, to 94% of the data zones in Na h-Eileanan Siar (see Figure 5).

Urban Rural Classification

- The majority of Scotland's population (71%) live in large urban and other urban areas, as defined by the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020

- Inverclyde had the highest percentage of its population (30%) living in the 10% most deprived areas in Scotland.
- East Renfrewshire had the highest percentage of its population (38%) living in the 10% least deprived areas.

> **Do these statistics take into account the effect of COVID-19 on our population?**
>
> These statistics take into account changes in the population up to 30 June 2020. This means only part of the year covered in this publication (March to June 2020) was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the effects of COVID-19 after June 2020 are not included.

Introduction

This report shows estimates of how many people were living in each data zone on 30 June 2020. We call this date "mid-2020" for short.

Data zones are small areas of around 500 to 1,000 people. There are 6,976 data zones in Scotland. See Definitions for more information about data zones.

Data zones are designed to fit neatly into council areas and health boards. Adding up the populations of all data zones in these areas will give the same populations as those in the NRS Mid-Year Estimates publication.

Data zones can also approximate other areas. By combining data zones, small area population estimates are used to make estimates for many areas, including:

- Scottish and UK Parliamentary Constituencies
- Electoral wards
- Urban / rural areas (based on the Urban Rural Classification)
- Deprived areas (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)
- Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) areas

Estimates for these areas can be found on the Other Geographies section of the NRS website.

What are you looking for?	Where is it?
Population estimates by data zone, 2020	Excel tables
Time series of data zone population estimates	Time series
Population estimates for other geographies	Excel tables
Open data	statistics.gov.scot
Find out about the population of the data zone you live in	Interactive data visualisation

Small area population estimates have a wide range of users. For example:

- Local government uses them to plan services and spending
- The Scottish Government uses them to develop the Urban Rural Classification and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)
- They provide the denominator for a lot of other statistics.

The [methodology guide](#) on the NRS website contains details of the data sources and how these were used to produce the small area population estimates, as well as the strengths and limitations of the data.

Latest population estimates, 2020

Overview of data zone populations

The current data zone boundaries were designed to have a population of 500 to 1,000 people in the 2011 Census. However, this was not possible for all data zones, and since then the populations of even more data zones have increased or decreased outside these limits.

In mid-2020, the population of the 6,976 data zones across Scotland ranged from 0 to 3,883 people. The population of Scotland was 5,466,000.

Most data zones (82%) had a population of between 500 and 999 people. 378 data zones had a population of less than 500, while 859 data zones had a population of 1,000 or more. Figure 1 shows the mid-2020 distribution of data zone populations.

Figure 1: Distribution of data zone populations, mid-2020
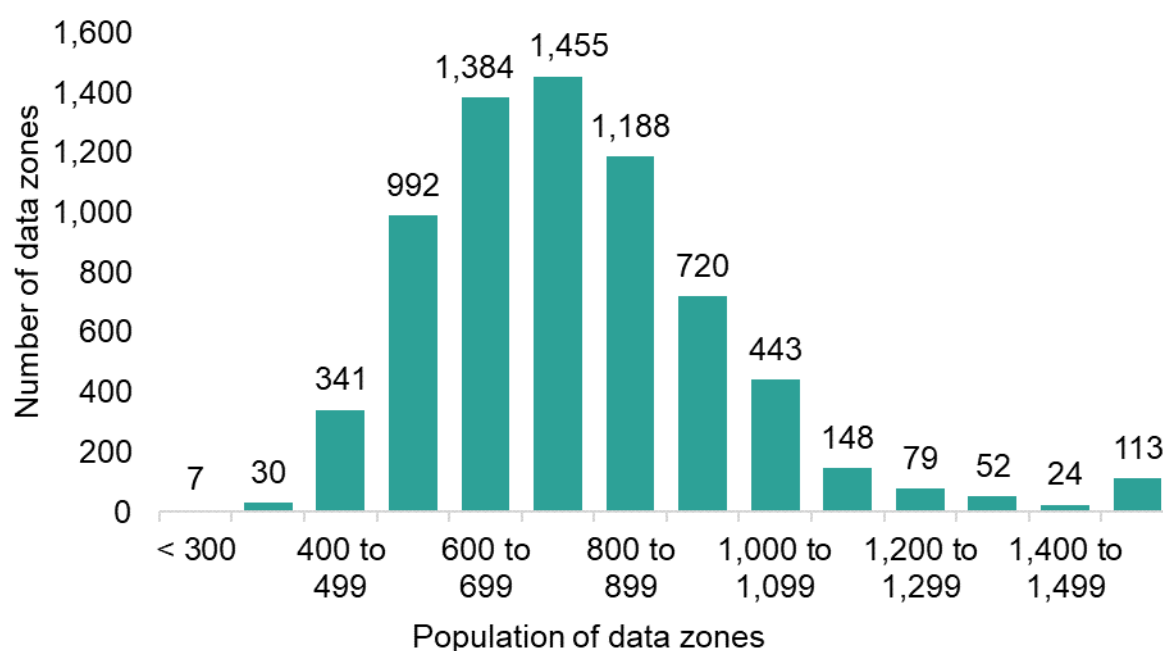
The [average](#)[1] data zone population was 784 people. The [median](#) population was smaller, at 749 people, due to a few very large data zones.

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[1] Throughout this document the term average is used to refer to the mean (see [Definitions](#)).

Large communal establishments such as armed forces bases, prisons and student accommodation can cause high data zone populations. For example, **Currie West – 01** in Edinburgh is the second most populated data zone in Scotland, and contains many student halls of residence for Heriot-Watt University.

When analysed by the Scottish Government's 6-fold Urban Rural Classification, most of the data zones with small populations (below 500) are in Other Urban Areas and Large Urban Areas. This is mainly because urban areas have the most data zones.

Most data zones with large populations (1,500 or higher) are also located in Large Urban Areas or Other Urban Areas. Data zones with large populations often contain new housing developments which have led to an increase in the local population.

Do these figures reflect the impact of COVID-19?

These statistics take into account changes in the population up to 30 June 2020. This means only part of the year covered in this publication (March to June 2020) was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has impacted the number of deaths across Scotland and restricted movement across the UK and overseas under the first national lockdown.

However, the population estimates do not take account of the impact of events which happened later in the year. For example, these figures do not take account of COVID-19 related deaths which occurred after 30 June 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many of the data sources which feed into the population estimates. More information about the impact on data sources can be found at the end of this document.

Data zone populations by council

Council areas tend to have relatively few data zones with fewer than 500 people. South Lanarkshire had the most with 36 data zones, followed by Aberdeenshire with 33 data zones. Shetland Islands was the only council area which had no data zones with a population of less than 500 (See Table 1).

75% of Scotland's council areas (24 out of 32) had at least one data zone with 1,500 people or more. Glasgow City and City of Edinburgh had the most data zones of this size, with 22 and 21 respectively.

The percentage of data zones by population in each council area are shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Data zone populations by council area, mid-2020

| Council area	Number of data zones	Total population	Minimum population	Maximum population	Mean population	Median population	Upper quartile	Lower quartile
Aberdeen City	283	229,060	408	2,073	809	775	905	637
Aberdeenshire	340	260,780	382	2,051	767	755	887	600
Angus	155	115,820	412	1,366	747	716	857	619
Argyll and Bute	125	85,430	365	2,721	683	667	759	559
City of Edinburgh	597	527,620	320	3,834	884	834	987	708
Clackmannanshire	72	51,290	396	1,375	712	691	872	572
Dumfries and Galloway	201	148,290	396	1,881	738	725	862	598
Dundee City	188	148,820	461	3,109	792	773	893	668
East Ayrshire	163	121,600	427	2,016	746	731	841	622
East Dunbartonshire	130	108,750	327	3,132	837	833	903	694
East Lothian	132	107,900	439	2,467	817	771	876	652
East Renfrewshire	122	96,060	398	3,206	787	768	876	632
Falkirk	214	160,560	403	2,465	750	719	844	586
Fife	494	374,130	376	2,655	757	733	856	616
Glasgow City	746	635,640	0	3,076	852	817	959	678
Highland	312	235,430	423	1,692	755	714	857	607
Inverclyde	114	77,060	378	1,145	676	661	762	561
Midlothian	115	93,150	402	3,241	810	698	871	610
Moray	126	95,710	427	1,968	760	705	875	569
Na h-Eileanan Siar	36	26,500	450	1,084	736	712	857	606
North Ayrshire	186	134,250	351	1,264	722	703	811	613
North Lanarkshire	447	341,140	344	2,281	763	722	860	622
Orkney Islands	29	22,400	420	1,216	772	768	889	609
Perth and Kinross	186	151,910	392	2,216	817	795	946	661
Renfrewshire	225	179,390	383	3,775	797	749	872	638
Scottish Borders	143	115,240	471	2,058	806	797	923	681
Shetland Islands	30	22,870	505	1,085	762	770	876	657
South Ayrshire	153	112,140	432	1,750	733	720	820	584
South Lanarkshire	431	320,820	391	3,883	744	710	820	606
Stirling	121	94,080	372	1,727	778	754	876	652
West Dunbartonshire	121	88,340	237	1,323	730	733	816	626
West Lothian	239	183,820	294	3,526	769	730	839	629
Scotland	**6,976**	**5,466,000**	**0**	**3,883**	**784**	**749**	**883**	**630**

In mid-2020, the average data zone population was 784 people. Across council areas in Scotland, the average data zone populations were:

- Highest in City of Edinburgh (884), Glasgow City (852) and East Dunbartonshire (837).
- Lowest in Inverclyde (676), Argyll and Bute (683) and Clackmannanshire (712).

With the exception of West Dunbartonshire and Shetland Islands, the median data zone population was lower than the average data zone population. This suggests that most council areas have a number of data zones with very large populations. These inflate the average population, but have little or no effect on the median.

Table 1 shows the distribution of data zone populations across Scotland's council areas. This includes the minimum, maximum, mean and median, along with upper and lower quartiles.

Figure 2: Percentage of data zones in population ranges by council area, mid-2020
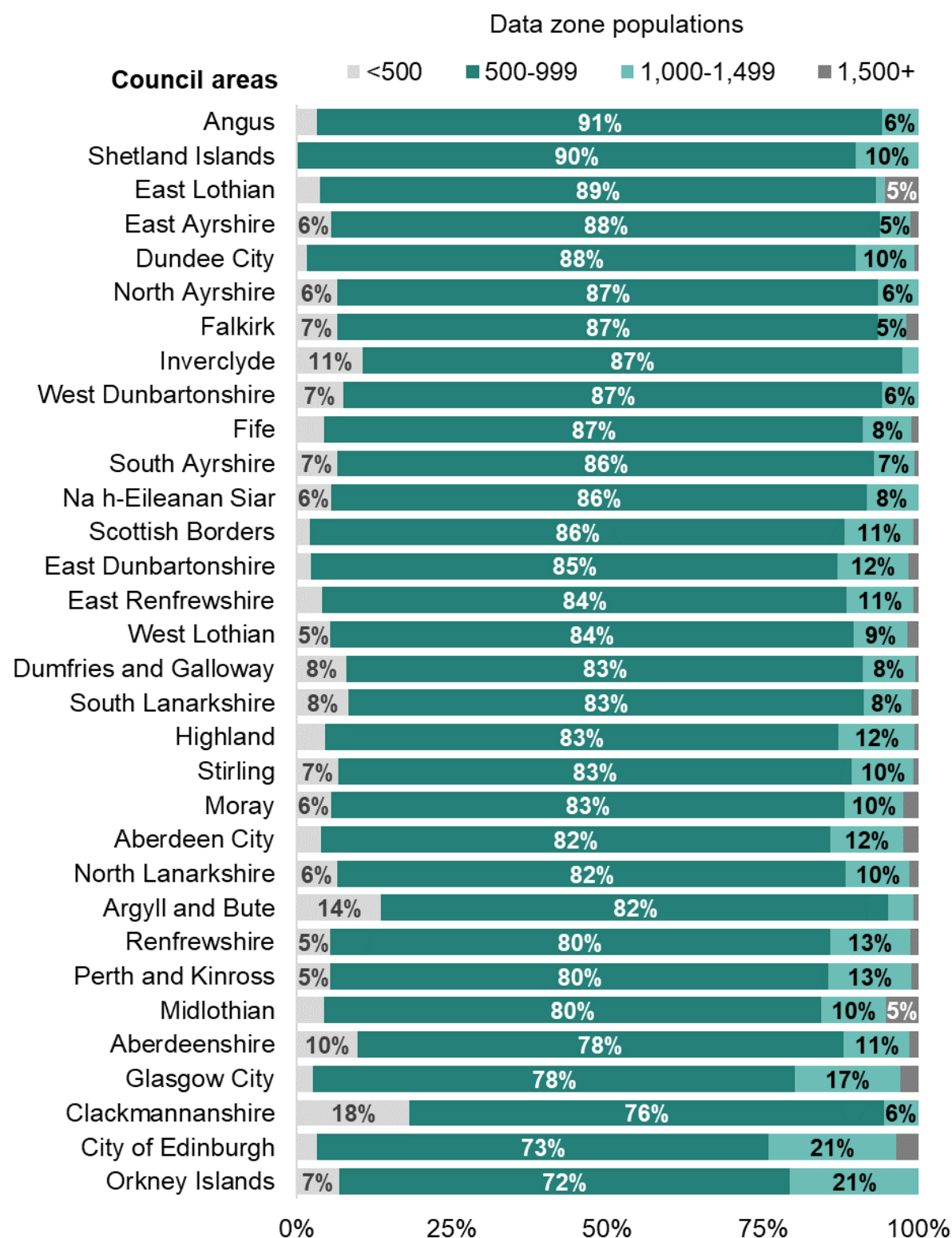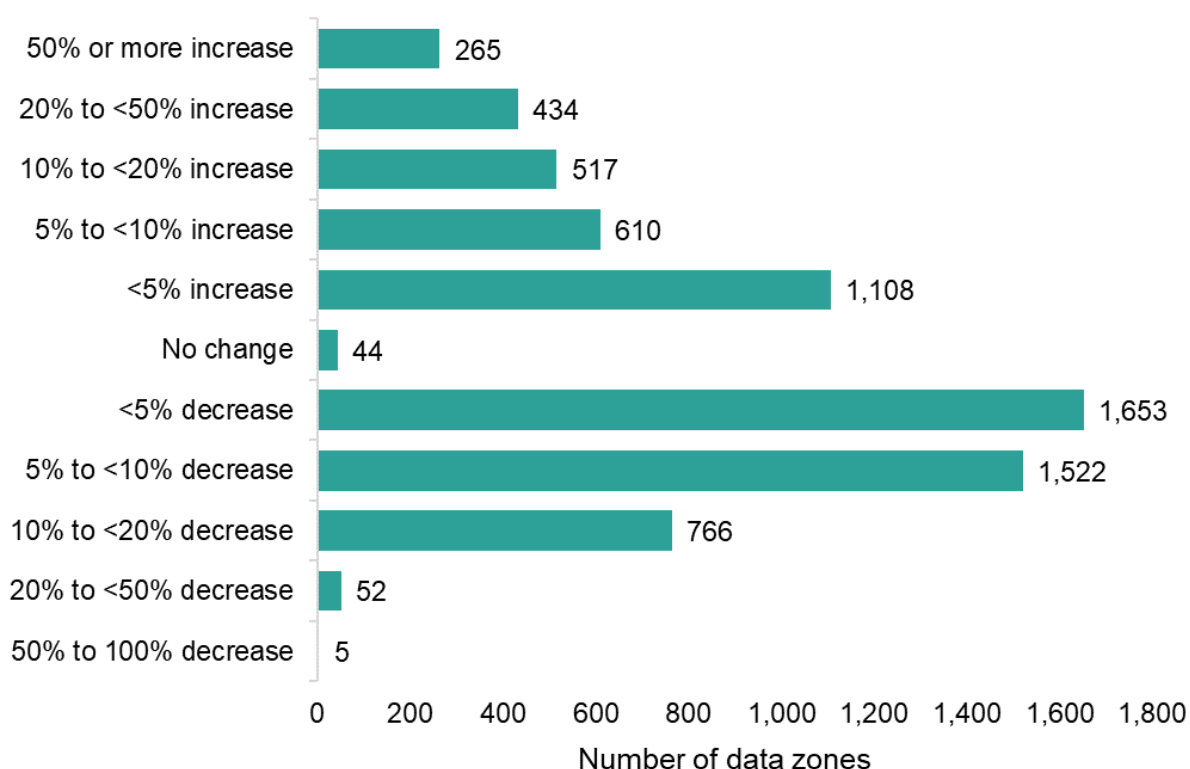
Population change over time, 2010-2020

Between mid-2010 and mid-2020, the population of Scotland increased by 203,800 people (3.9%) from 5,262,200 to 5,466,000. The average data zone population increased from 754 to 784 over the same period, reflecting the overall increase in population.

Although the population of Scotland increased between mid-2010 and mid-2020, more data zones decreased in population than increased, shown in Figure 3. The population of 3,998 data zones (57.3%) decreased, while 2,978 data zones (42.7%) increased or had no change to the population.

Figure 3: Data zone population change, mid-2010 to mid-2020

More of the large population changes (changes of more than 20%) were increases than decreases. 699 data zones increased by 20% or more, compared to 57 that decreased by 20% or more.

Large changes over time are often due to new housing developments, or the demolition of old ones. For example, there are 3 data zones with 0 people in Glasgow due to demolitions.

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In contrast, more of the small population changes (less than 20%) were decreases. These small decreases may be related to the average household size getting smaller, as more people live alone or in smaller households[1].

Population change by council area

Figure 4 shows the proportion of data zones within each council area that have increased in population, decreased or stayed the same between mid-2010 to mid-2020.

> Areas with the highest percentage of data zones experiencing **depopulation** are mainly rural and island areas, as well as areas in the West of Scotland.

Over the last decade, areas which have seen a large proportion of data zones decrease in population are mainly rural and island council areas, as well as areas in the west of Scotland. Between mid-2010 and mid-2020, the population decreased in:

- 82% of data zones in Inverclyde
- 76% of data zones in North Ayrshire
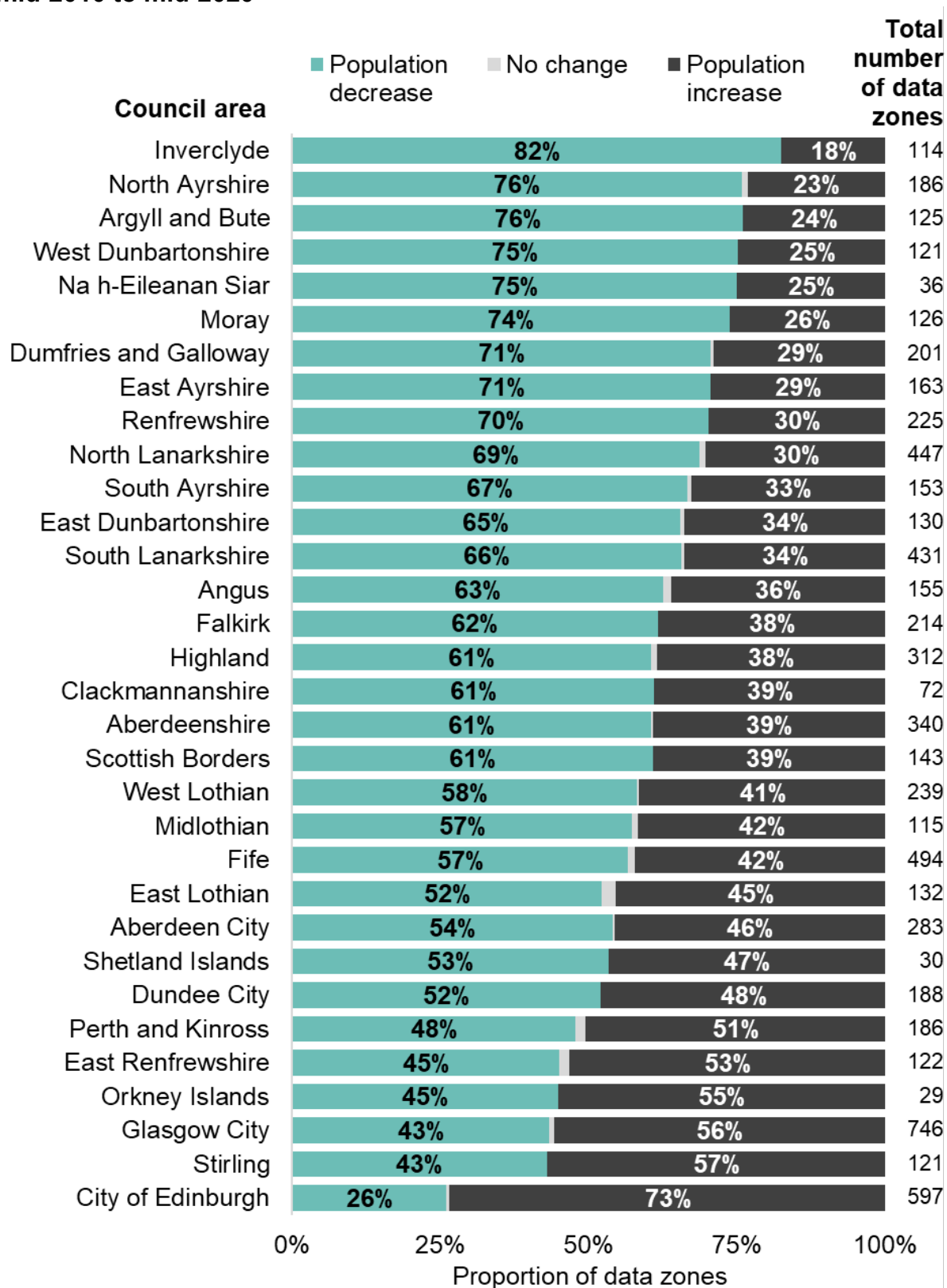- 76% of data zones in Argyll and Bute

However it is important to remember that the number of data zones in each council area varies. For example, in Na h-Eileanan Siar there are only 36 data zones, compared to Glasgow City which has 746 data zones.

In contrast, three of the five council areas with the largest proportion of data zones that increased in population were council areas containing cities. Between mid-2010 and mid-2020, the population increased in:

- 73% of data zones in City of Edinburgh
- 57% of data zones in Stirling
- 56% of data zones in Glasgow

1) National Records of Scotland (2021) 'Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2020'

Figure 4: Percentage of data zones by population change and council area, mid-2010 to mid-2020

Council area	Population decrease	No change	Population increase	Total number of data zones
Inverclyde	82%		18%	114
North Ayrshire	76%		23%	186
Argyll and Bute	76%		24%	125
West Dunbartonshire	75%		25%	121
Na h-Eileanan Siar	75%		25%	36
Moray	74%		26%	126
Dumfries and Galloway	71%		29%	201
East Ayrshire	71%		29%	163
Renfrewshire	70%		30%	225
North Lanarkshire	69%		30%	447
South Ayrshire	67%		33%	153
East Dunbartonshire	65%		34%	130
South Lanarkshire	66%		34%	431
Angus	63%		36%	155
Falkirk	62%		38%	214
Highland	61%		38%	312
Clackmannanshire	61%		39%	72
Aberdeenshire	61%		39%	340
Scottish Borders	61%		39%	143
West Lothian	58%		41%	239
Midlothian	57%		42%	115
Fife	57%		42%	494
East Lothian	52%		45%	132
Aberdeen City	54%		46%	283
Shetland Islands	53%		47%	30
Dundee City	52%		48%	188
Perth and Kinross	48%		51%	186
East Renfrewshire	45%		53%	122
Orkney Islands	45%		55%	29
Glasgow City	43%		56%	746
Stirling	43%		57%	121
City of Edinburgh	26%		73%	597

Proportion of data zones

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Age distribution of data zones

In mid-2020, the overall median age for Scotland was 42 years. However, the median ages of data zones vary, with some having a younger median age and others having an older one.

- The "youngest" data zone (median age 20 years) was **Newington and Dalkeith Road - 03** in City of Edinburgh. This area contains student accommodation for the University of Edinburgh.
- The "oldest" data zone (median age 73 years) was **Falkirk – Town Centre and Callendar Park - 02**. This area contains a lot of developments aimed at older residents.

The median female age in Scotland was 44 years, ranging from 20 to 74 years across data zones. Male median ages are lower. The overall median male age was 41 years, with a range of 18 to 72 years across data zones. This reflects the higher life expectancy for females.

The youngest and oldest data zones in mid-2020

- **10** data zones had a median age of **22 years** or younger. All of these were near a university, and most contained student halls of residence.

- **5** data zones had a median age of **65 years** or over. These were largely in popular retirement areas or places with designated accommodation for the elderly.

Over the last decade, some data zones have seen significant changes in median age. The data zone of **Uphall, Dechmont and Ecclesmachan – 03** in West Lothian had the largest increase in median age by 27 years (from 22 to 49). This has been caused by a lower proportion of people in younger age groups. For example, there was a 71% decrease (142 fewer people) of those aged 16 to 24.

The largest decrease in median age was in **Whitburn, Croftmalloch and Greenrigg – 03** in West Lothian. Here, the median age fell by 21 years, from 53 to 33[1]. This data zone covers a rural area in between several small towns. In 2010 it was entirely rural, and much of its population was 65 or over. However, in the last decade many

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[1] The inconsistency in the quoted difference is due to rounding.

of the bordering small towns have expanded, with new housing developments reaching into the data zone. This has greatly increased the data zone's population, particularly among children and adults under 65.

Median age by council area

Over the last decade, rural and island areas have aged the most in terms of median age. Conversely, the areas becoming more youthful tend to be in cities. This reflects the general trend of younger people moving from more remote areas to cities for higher education or employment, and older people tending to retire to the countryside and coastal areas.

Between mid-2010 and mid-2020, the percentage of data zones in which the median age increased, varied from 52% of the data zones in Dundee City, to 94% of the data zones in Na h-Eileanan Siar

The breakdown of this data for each council area is displayed in Figure 5. It should be noted that while rural areas and the islands have a higher percentage of data zones which have increased in age, they also have far fewer data zones in total.

Key points on median age

- One way of measuring population ageing is to look at how the median age is changing (the age at which half the population is younger and half older).

- In Scotland, the average change in median age across all data zones **between mid-2010 and mid-2020** was an increase of **2.2** years.

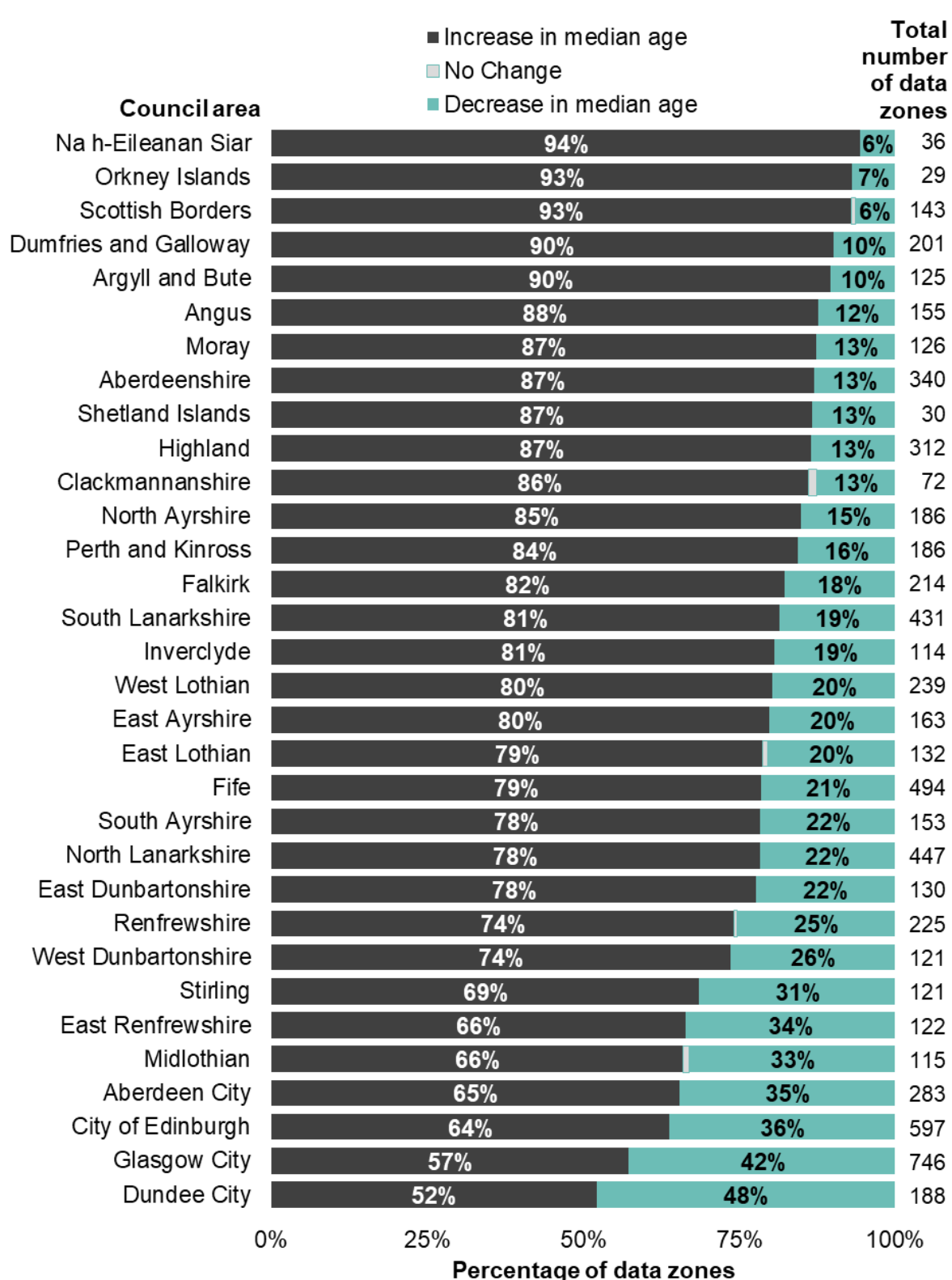**Figure 5: Percentage of data zones by change in median age and council area, mid-2010 to mid-2020**

Council area	Increase in median age	No Change	Decrease in median age	Total number of data zones
Na h-Eileanan Siar	94%		6%	36
Orkney Islands	93%		7%	29
Scottish Borders	93%		6%	143
Dumfries and Galloway	90%		10%	201
Argyll and Bute	90%		10%	125
Angus	88%		12%	155
Moray	87%		13%	126
Aberdeenshire	87%		13%	340
Shetland Islands	87%		13%	30
Highland	87%		13%	312
Clackmannanshire	86%		13%	72
North Ayrshire	85%		15%	186
Perth and Kinross	84%		16%	186
Falkirk	82%		18%	214
South Lanarkshire	81%		19%	431
Inverclyde	81%		19%	114
West Lothian	80%		20%	239
East Ayrshire	80%		20%	163
East Lothian	79%		20%	132
Fife	79%		21%	494
South Ayrshire	78%		22%	153
North Lanarkshire	78%		22%	447
East Dunbartonshire	78%		22%	130
Renfrewshire	74%		25%	225
West Dunbartonshire	74%		26%	121
Stirling	69%		31%	121
East Renfrewshire	66%		34%	122
Midlothian	66%		33%	115
Aberdeen City	65%		35%	283
City of Edinburgh	64%		36%	597
Glasgow City	57%		42%	746
Dundee City	52%		48%	188

Percentage of data zones

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Figure 6: Average change in median age across data zones between mid-2010 and mid-2020, by council area

Council Area

Council Area	Average change in median age (years)
Dundee City	-0.1
Glasgow City	0.4
City of Edinburgh	0.8
Aberdeen City	0.8
East Renfrewshire	1.2
Midlothian	1.4
Stirling	1.5
East Dunbartonshire	2.2
Scottish Average	2.2
West Dunbartonshire	2.3
Renfrewshire	2.3
Fife	2.5
North Lanarkshire	2.5
West Lothian	2.8
South Lanarkshire	2.8
East Ayrshire	2.8
Inverclyde	2.9
Perth and Kinross	3.0
Aberdeenshire	3.0
East Lothian	3.0
Falkirk	3.0
North Ayrshire	3.2
Angus	3.2
Shetland Islands	3.2
Orkney Islands	3.3
South Ayrshire	3.3
Highland	3.3
Scottish Borders	3.5
Argyll and Bute	3.6
Dumfries and Galloway	3.6
Clackmannanshire	3.6
Moray	3.6
Na h-Eileanan Siar	4.1

Average change in median age (years)

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Figure 6 shows the average change in median age across data zones for all council areas compared with the Scottish average. Every council area, except Dundee City, experienced an increase in the average median age of its data zones between mid-2010 and mid-2020, reflecting Scotland's ageing population.

Over the past decade, the average median age of data zones increased the most in:

- Na h-Eileanan Siar (+4.1 years)
- Moray (+3.6 years)
- Clackmannanshire (+3.6 years)

The largest cities (Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen) experienced the slowest population ageing and Dundee City actually experienced a small decline in median age between mid-2010 and mid-2020:

- Aberdeen City (+0.8 years)
- City of Edinburgh (+0.8 years)
- Glasgow City (+0.4 years)
- Dundee City (-0.1 years)

Data zones with the oldest populations

Another way to look at population ageing is to consider the population aged 65 years and over. The population aged 65 and over by data zone is available from Table A on the NRS website.

The 10 data zones with the highest percentage of population aged 65+ are:

Data zone	Code	Council Area	Percentage 65+
Falkirk - Town Centre and Callendar Park – 02	S01009150	Falkirk	**79%**
Blairgowrie West – 07	S01011994	Perth and Kinross	**57%**
Ayr South Harbour and Town Centre – 07	S01012486	South Ayrshire	**54%**
Kessington West – 01	S01008076	East Dunbartonshire	**53%**
Bothwell South – 04	S01012801	South Lanarkshire	**51%**
Largs South – 02	S01011318	North Ayrshire	**50%**
Earlsferry	S01009701	Fife	**50%**
Saltcoats North West – 03	S01011257	North Ayrshire	**50%**
Alloway and Doonfoot – 01	S01012457	South Ayrshire	**49%**
Monifeth East	S01007150	Angus	**49%**

Population estimates for other geographies

Did you know: NRS publish population estimates for a range of other geographies including:

- Electoral Wards
- Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) – the statistical geography of the EU (Eurostat)
- Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles
- Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies (SPC)
- UK Parliamentary Constituencies (UKPC)

Population estimates for other geographies are produced by combining data zone populations. The lookup tables listing which data zones are in which area for each geography can be downloaded from statistics.gov.scot. More information on how population estimates for other geographies are produced is available in the background notes.

Small area population estimates are summarised below for urban / rural areas, SIMD deciles, Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies and UK Parliamentary Constituencies. Population estimates by sex and single year of age for other small areas can be found on the Special Area Population Estimates section of the NRS website.

Urban Rural populations

The Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification defines urban and rural areas across Scotland. This is based on the population of built-up areas and accessibility (based on how long it takes to drive to the closest built-up area).

The main classifications are the 6-fold and 8-fold. These distinguish between urban, rural and remote areas in six and eight categories respectively. More information is available on the Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification website.

Population estimates by Urban Rural Classification (6-fold and 8-fold) by single year of age and sex are available from the NRS website for 2001 to 2020. Figure 7 shows that in mid-2020:

- 71% of people (over 3.8 million) lived in Large Urban and Other Urban Areas,
- 20% of people (over 1 million) lived in Accessible Small Towns and Accessible Rural Areas, and
- 9% of people (over 500,000) lived in Remote Small Towns and Remote Rural Areas.

Most of Scotland's population live in **large and other urban areas**.

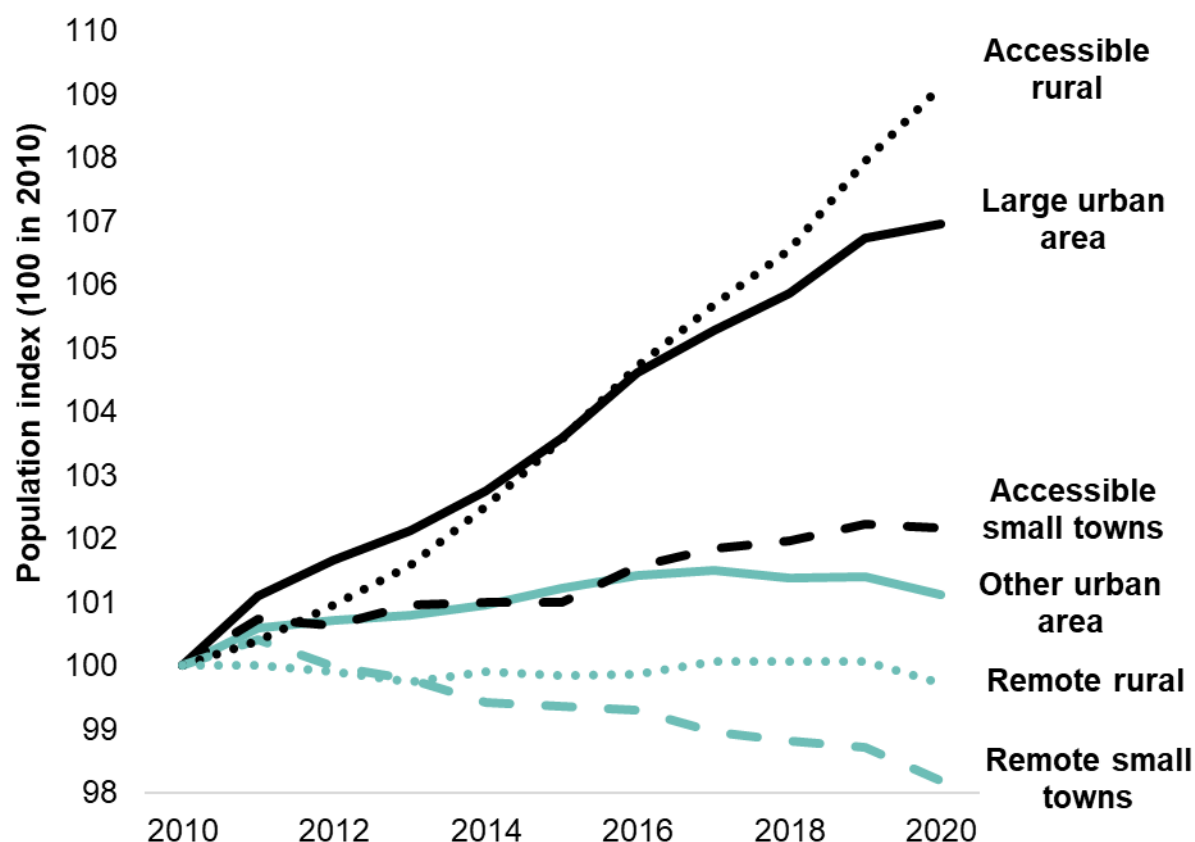**Figure 7: Scotland's population by 6-fold Urban Rural Classification[1], mid-2020**

Percentage of the population

Category	Percentage
Other urban area	35.8%
Large urban area	35.0%
Accessible rural	11.4%
Accessible small towns	8.6%
Remote rural	5.8%
Remote small towns	3.5%
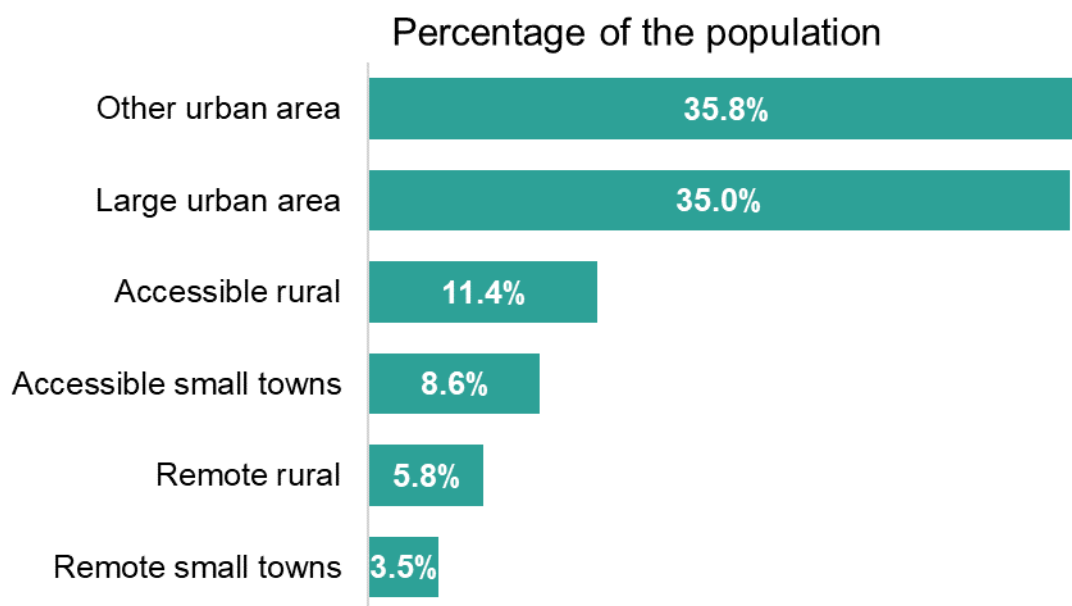
Footnote

1) Based on Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification 2016.

Figure 8 shows the percentage change in population since mid-2010 by Urban Rural Classification. Between mid-2010 and mid-2020, Accessible Rural Areas saw the largest increase (9.1%) followed by large urban areas (6.9%). Meanwhile, Remote Small Towns experienced the largest decrease in population (-1.8%).

Figure 8: Change in population by Urban Rural Classification[1], mid-2010 to mid-2020[2]

Figure 9 shows net migration (moves into areas minus moves out) for Urban Rural areas over the last ten years. Net migration was positive for every Urban Rural category from mid-2019 to mid-2020, as more people moved in to the areas than left. However, there was lower net migration than last year in all areas.

Accessible Rural Areas had the highest levels of net migration, with 7,580 more people moving into these areas than leaving.

Large Urban Areas had the highest net migration for nine of the last ten years. This is the first year that Large Urban Areas did not have the highest net migration since mid-2005 to mid-2006, when Other Urban Areas had the highest.

Figure 9: Net migration by 6-fold Urban Rural Classification[1], 2009-10 to 2019-20

Figure 10: Median age by 6-fold Urban Rural Classification[1], mid-2020

In mid-2020, the median age of Scotland's population was 42 years. The median ages of Urban Rural areas varies, from 38 in Large Urban Areas to 51 in Remote Rural Areas. Figure 10 shows that urban areas have the lowest median ages, while remote areas have the highest.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) populations

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is used to identify areas with more deprivation across Scotland. SIMD uses a combination of multiple measures of deprivation to rank all 6,976 data zones from most to least deprived.

The population estimates by SIMD are created by adding up the data zone population estimates in each SIMD decile. This is a simplified version of the SIMD rank that ranges from 1 (most deprived) to 10 (least deprived), with each decile containing 10% of Scotland's data zones.

Population estimates for SIMD deciles by single year of age and sex are available from the NRS website for years 2001 to 2020.

SIMD is updated every few years and the population estimates published on the NRS website relate to the SIMD 2020[1]. More information is available on the Scottish Government's SIMD website.

Each SIMD decile contains about 10% of Scotland's population. However, some council areas have a higher or lower proportion of people in more deprived areas. Figure 11 shows that Inverclyde has the highest percentage of people (30%) in the most deprived areas (decile 1). In contrast, Figure 12 shows that 3% of Inverclyde's people live in the least deprived areas (decile 10).

East Renfrewshire had the highest percentage of people (38%) in the least deprived areas, with 1% living in the most deprived areas.

[1] The 2020 SIMD was revised in April 2020. We use this updated version.

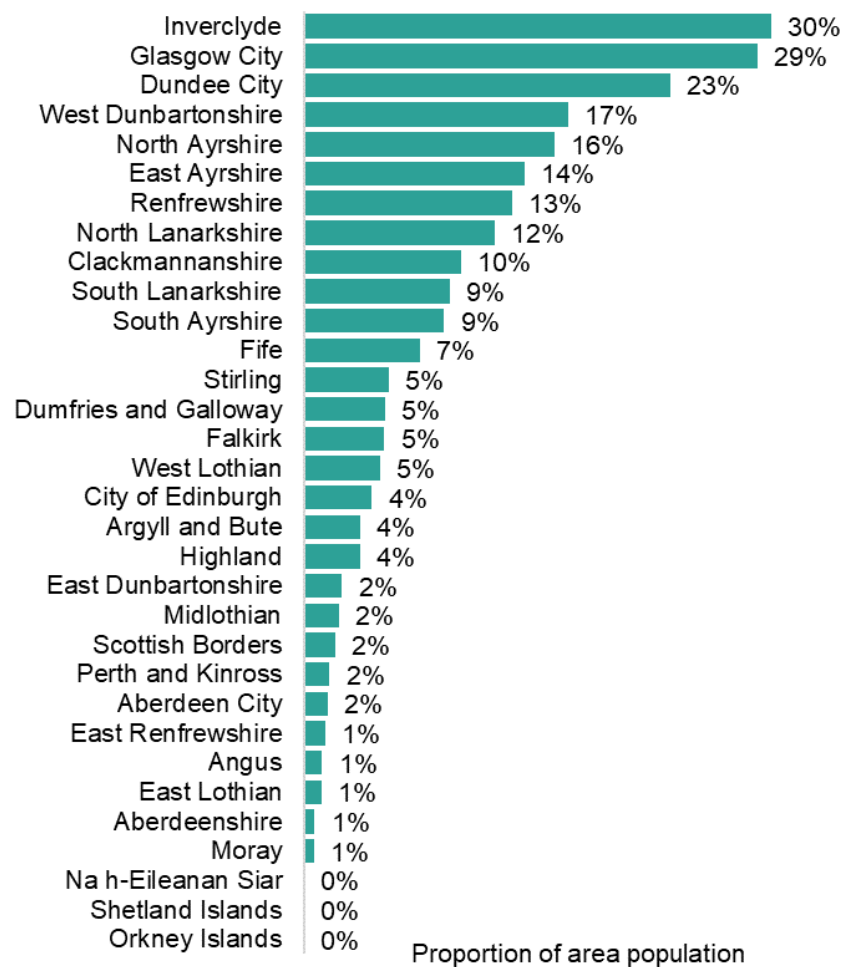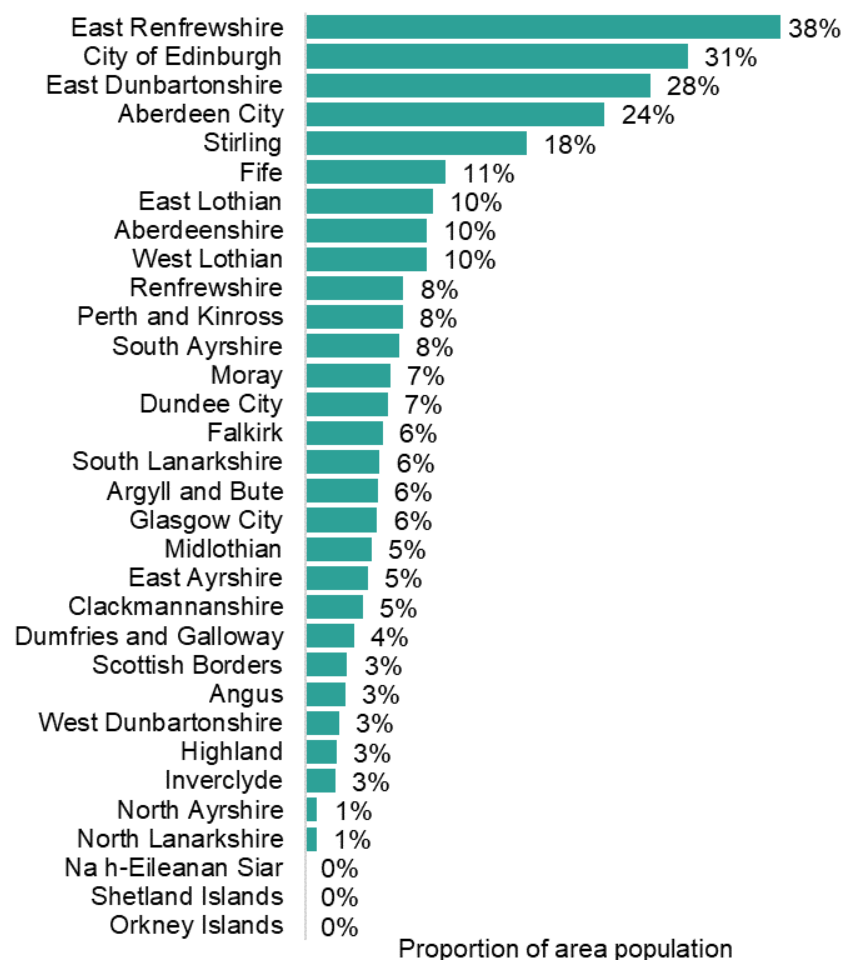**Figure 11: Proportion of population in the most deprived decile by council area[1], mid-2020**

Council area	Proportion
Inverclyde	30%
Glasgow City	29%
Dundee City	23%
West Dunbartonshire	17%
North Ayrshire	16%
East Ayrshire	14%
Renfrewshire	13%
North Lanarkshire	12%
Clackmannanshire	10%
South Lanarkshire	9%
South Ayrshire	9%
Fife	7%
Stirling	5%
Dumfries and Galloway	5%
Falkirk	5%
West Lothian	5%
City of Edinburgh	4%
Argyll and Bute	4%
Highland	4%
East Dunbartonshire	2%
Midlothian	2%
Scottish Borders	2%
Perth and Kinross	2%
Aberdeen City	2%
East Renfrewshire	1%
Angus	1%
East Lothian	1%
Aberdeenshire	1%
Moray	1%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	0%
Shetland Islands	0%
Orkney Islands	0%

Proportion of area population

Figure 12: Proportion of population in the least deprived decile by council area[1], mid-2020

Council area	Proportion
East Renfrewshire	38%
City of Edinburgh	31%
East Dunbartonshire	28%
Aberdeen City	24%
Stirling	18%
Fife	11%
East Lothian	10%
Aberdeenshire	10%
West Lothian	10%
Renfrewshire	8%
Perth and Kinross	8%
South Ayrshire	8%
Moray	7%
Dundee City	7%
Falkirk	6%
South Lanarkshire	6%
Argyll and Bute	6%
Glasgow City	6%
Midlothian	5%
East Ayrshire	5%
Clackmannanshire	5%
Dumfries and Galloway	4%
Scottish Borders	3%
Angus	3%
West Dunbartonshire	3%
Highland	3%
Inverclyde	3%
North Ayrshire	1%
North Lanarkshire	1%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	0%
Shetland Islands	0%
Orkney Islands	0%

Proportion of area population

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In mid-2020, the median age of Scotland's population was 42 years, however the median age by SIMD deciles ranged between 37 and 45 years. Figure 13 shows that the more deprived areas have a younger population. The most deprived decile (decile 1) has the youngest median age at 37 years. In contrast, the least deprived areas have higher median ages, with decile 7 having the highest median age at 45 years.

Figure 13: Median age by SIMD decile, mid-2020
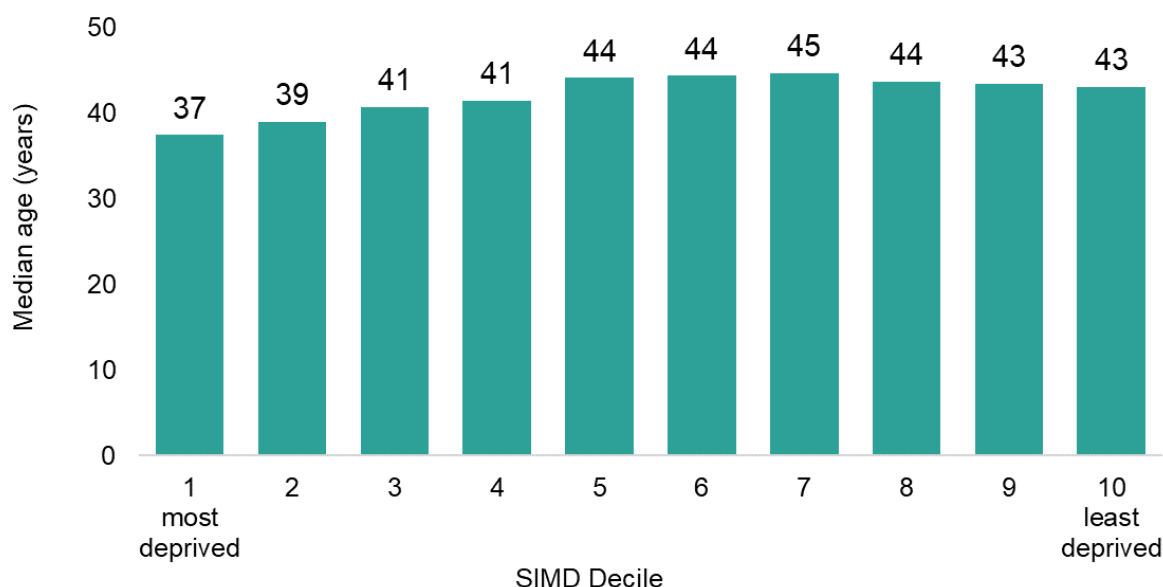
Scottish Parliamentary Constituency populations

The Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) at Holyrood represent 73 constituencies. The constituency boundaries were re-drawn in 2014, and the population estimates in this section use the 2014 boundaries for all years.

Population estimates for Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies by single year of age and sex are available from the NRS website for years mid-2001 to mid-2020.

In mid-2020, the Orkney Islands constituency had the smallest population (22,400 people), and Linlithgow had the largest (96,574 people). Figure 14 shows that most constituencies have between 70,000 and 80,000 people.

People aged 16 and over can vote in the Scottish Parliament elections. The proportion of people aged 16 and over in each constituency ranged from 79% in Eastwood to 92% in Glasgow Kelvin. The high proportion of people aged 16 and over in Glasgow Kelvin is likely due to a high student population, as this constituency contains the University of Glasgow.

Figure 14: Population count by Scottish Parliamentary Constituency, mid-2020
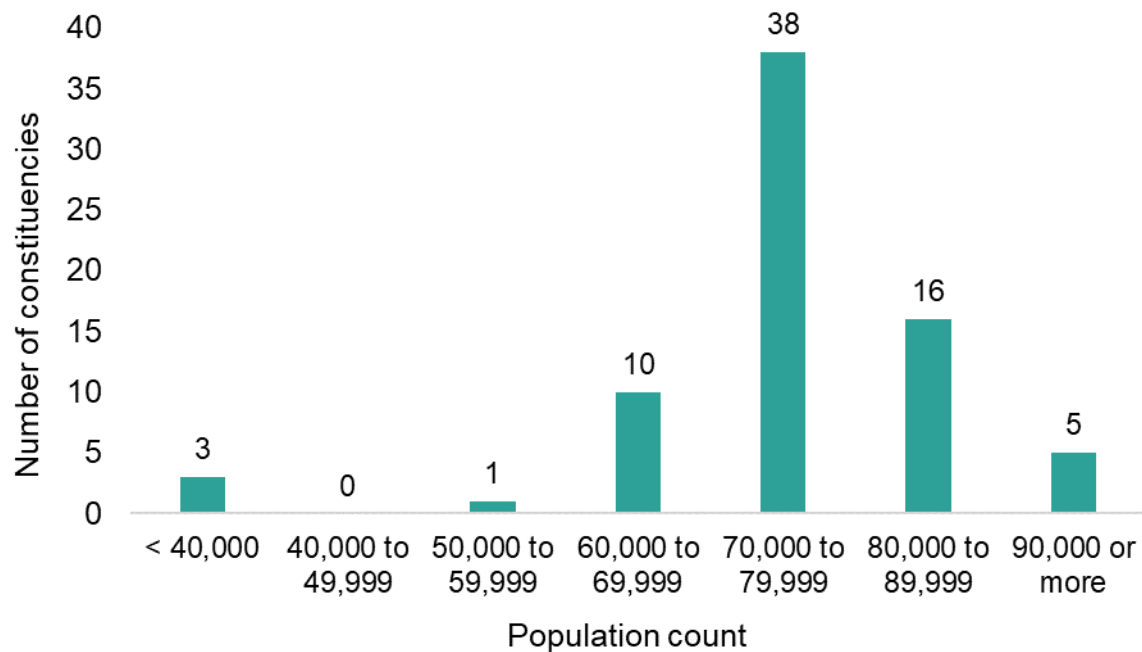
Figure 15: Population count by UK Parliamentary Constituency, mid-2020
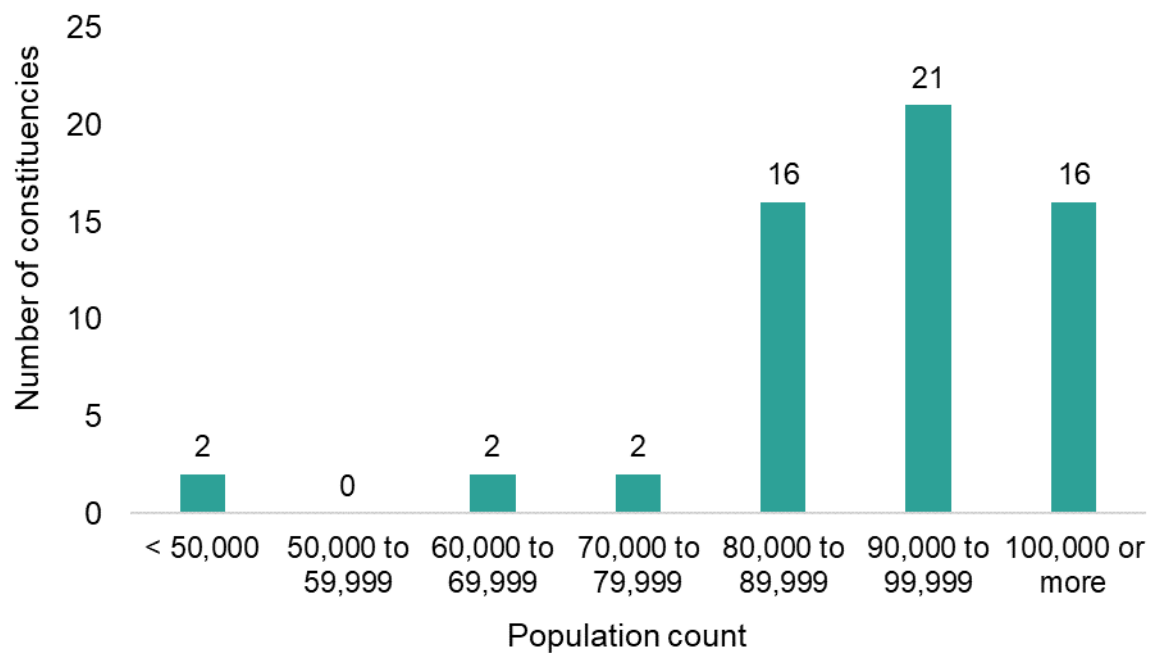
UK Parliamentary Constituency populations

The Members of Parliament (MPs) at Westminster represent 59 Scottish constituencies. The population estimates in this section use the boundaries in the latest general election for all years.

Population estimates for UK Parliamentary Constituencies by single year of age and sex are available from the NRS website for years mid-2001 to mid-2020.

In mid-2020, the Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency had the smallest population (26,500 people), while Linlithgow and East Falkirk had the largest (119,930 people). Figure 15 shows that the majority of constituencies have more than 80,000 people.

People aged 18 and over can vote in UK Parliament elections. The proportion of people aged 18 and over in each constituency ranged from 77% in East Renfrewshire to 87% in Glasgow North. The high proportion of people aged 18 and over in Glasgow North is likely due to a high student population, as this constituency contains the University of Glasgow.

Background Notes

Methodology

The small area population estimates are produced using a method called the demographic cohort component method. They are also adjusted to match the population estimates for Scottish council areas. More information about the methodology, including the strengths and limitations of the data can be found in the [methodology guide](#) on the NRS website.

Information about past changes to the population estimates methodology is available in the mid-year population estimates [methodology guide](#).

Strengths and limitations

It is important to have high quality statistics on the latest population. NRS produces detailed annual estimates on the resident population of Scotland using a range of data gathered from statistical censuses and surveys, as well as administrative data. There are processes in place to check the suitability of these sources.

The figures are not rounded. However, this does not mean that the estimates are accurate down to the individual person. We use unrounded figures to allow more accurate combination of data zone populations.

Quality assurance takes place throughout the production of population estimates, with checks in place to ensure consistency and completeness. More information on the [quality assurance arrangements for administrative data](#) used in population estimates is available on the NRS website, along with information on the suitability of each data source used in the production of the population estimates.

It is important to consider the **limitations** when using population estimates. The population estimates are based on the Census, which is carried out every ten years. For each year, the population change is estimated, and applied to the previous year's estimate.

There are no means of verifying the true population between censuses. As a result, any uncertainty in the population estimates will increase with time as we move further from the previous census. However, following the next census in 2022, the population estimates will be adjusted in line with the census population.

Migration is the most difficult part of the population estimates to estimate precisely. Migration is not registered in the UK, either nationally (in and out of the UK) or locally (moves within the UK). Migration is instead estimated using the most suitable data available. For example, patient registers and surveys.

NRS are part of a cross-government [transformation programme](#), being led by the Office for National Statistics, to improve population and migration statistics through greater use of administrative data sources.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the availability of a number of data sources which feed into the population estimates.

Overseas migration

Overseas migration was previously estimated using the International Passenger Survey (IPS) as the main source of data for measuring Long Term International Migration (LTIM) at Scotland level. However, in March 2020 the IPS was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Office for National Statistics led research into alternative data sources including using statistical modelling to estimate UK international migration over this period. For the year ending June 2020, overseas migration for Scotland was estimated by the following:

- **July 2019 to February 2020:** Estimate migration flows based on the established method using IPS data.
- **March to June 2020:** Migration flows estimated based on the Scottish proportion of UK modelled migration. The Scottish proportion was calculated based on the Scottish proportion of flows from July 2019 to February 2020.
- **Year to June 2020:** Include data on asylum seekers and refugees for the full year.

Internal migration and cross border flows

Migration within Scotland and between Scotland and the rest of the UK is estimated based on GP registration data. During the pandemic, many people may have moved address without registering a change of address with their GP. In particular, students may have moved from their term-time address to their parents' address. NRS have not made any adjustments to the established method to estimate migration within Scotland and between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Therefore, moves which were not registered with a GP will not have been captured in the migration flows.

Birth registrations

Registration offices were closed to the registration of births between March and late June 2020. Significant work has been undertaken to catch up with the backlog of birth registrations and most of the postponed registrations have now taken place. While there may still be a very small number of birth registrations outstanding, the impact on these statistics will be minimal.

Revisions

Revisions and corrections to previously published statistics are dealt with in accordance with the Scottish Government Statistician Group corporate policy statement on revisions and corrections.

Population estimates for other geographies

Data zones do not always fit the boundaries of other geographies exactly. When a data zone straddles a boundary, we assign it to one of the areas based on the population-weighted centroid. An evaluation of non-standard geography population estimates showed this method gave good results for certain higher-level geographies.

Estimates are provided for the Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) boundaries for 2001 to 2020. However, these units have been replaced by UK International Territorial Levels, which will be used in the 2021 publication next year.

Scottish and UK Parliamentary Constituencies

Population estimates for Scottish and UK Parliamentary Constituencies are made by combining data zone population estimates. Data zones do not always fit the boundaries exactly, and so data zones were assigned based on the population-weighted centroid.

For Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies, an adjustment has been made to the population of two constituencies. 3.4% of the population of Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn is transferred from Glasgow Kelvin to Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn each year.

For UK Parliamentary Constituencies, an adjustment has been made to the population of two constituencies. 2.3% of the population of Glasgow North West is transferred from Glasgow North to Glasgow North West each year.

For both Scottish and UK Parliamentary Constituencies, the adjustments are spread equally by age and sex. More information of the adjustment method can be found in The Evaluation of Non Standard Geography Population Estimates report.

The published figures for Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies do not take into account the 2020 Interim Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries, which resulted in changes to the constituencies of Glasgow Provan and Coatbridge and Chryston. This change will be included in the 2021 publication next year.

Definitions

- **Average (mean):** The sum of a set of values divided by the total number of values. This is one way of measuring the "centre" of a set of values. See also median.

- **Best-fit:** Combining data zones to get larger areas does not always give an exact match. This is because data zones do not always fit neatly into these areas. In

these cases, data zones are allocated on a 'best-fit' basis to give the best possible match. The paper ['Evaluation of Non Standard Geography Population Estimates'](#) on the NRS website assesses the accuracy of population estimates built up from data zones.

- **Data zone:** Data zones are small areas in Scotland, used by the Scottish Government for small area statistics. They are updated every ten years with the Census. They are designed to fit into council area boundaries, and to have around 500 to 1,000 people each at the time of the Census. The most recent data zone boundaries are for the 2011 Census. There are 6,976 of these 2011 data zones, covering the whole of Scotland.

- **Decile:** A decile splits ordered values into ten equal groups. For example, the first decile has the first ten per cent of the values.

- **Mean:** see "average".

- **Median:** The midpoint of a group of values when arranged in order. 50% of the values will be less than or equal to the median, and the other 50% will be greater than or equal to the median. This is one way of measuring the "centre" of a set of values. See also average (mean).

- **Population-weighted centroid:** This identifies the centre of a data zone by taking into account the size and location of the population, as well as the physical characteristics of the data zone.

- **Quartiles:** Three points that divide a set of values into four parts. Quartiles are used to give an indication of how spread out a set of values are. The lower quartile is the number that 25% of the values are below. The upper quartile is the number that 25% of the values are above. The middle quartile is the median.

Links to related statistics

Population estimates for various other geographies are available on the NRS website. This includes:

- Population estimates for [Scotland](#) and its constituent NHS Board and council areas.
- Population estimates for [other special areas](#) within Scotland including Parliamentary Constituencies, Electoral Wards, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles, Urban Rural Classification and Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics.
- Population estimates of [settlements and localities](#) within Scotland (latest available relates to mid-2016).

Data zones are unique to Scotland and cannot be compared directly with small area geographies used in other countries. However, more information on small area population estimates for other parts of the UK are available from:

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish [small area population estimates](#) at Lower and Middle Super Output Areas for England and Wales.
- The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) publish [small area population estimates](#) for Super Output Areas in Northern Ireland.

How to find data

Where is it?	What are you looking for?
[Tables and figures](#)	The data used in this publication in Excel and CSV format
[Times series data](#)	Time series of small area population estimates, 2001 to 2020
[Excel tables](#)	Population estimates for other geographies
[Open data](#)	The mid-2020 population estimates will be available as open data within one month of publishing
[Interactive data visualisation](#)	Select and compare population estimates for Scotland and its council areas

Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (available on the UKSA website).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is National Records of Scotland's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Information on background and source data

Further details on data source(s), timeframe of data and timeliness, continuity of data, accuracy, etc can be found in the About this Publication document that is published alongside this publication on the NRS website.

National Records of Scotland

We, the National Records of Scotland, are a non-ministerial department of the devolved Scottish Administration. Our aim is to provide relevant and reliable information, analysis and advice that meets the needs of government, business and the people of Scotland. We do this as follows:

Preserving the past – We look after Scotland's national archives so that they are available for current and future generations, and we make available important information for family history.

Recording the present – At our network of local offices, we register births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, divorces and adoptions in Scotland.

Informing the future – We are responsible for the Census of Population in Scotland which we use, with other sources of information, to produce statistics on the population and households.

You can get other detailed statistics that we have produced from the Statistics section of our website. Scottish Census statistics are available on the Scotland's Census website.

We also provide information about future publications on our website. If you would like us to tell you about future statistical publications, you can register your interest on the Scottish Government ScotStat website.

You can also follow us on twitter @NatRecordsScot

Enquiries and suggestions

Please contact our Statistics Customer Services if you need any further information. Email: statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk

If you have comments or suggestions that would help us improve our standards of service, please contact:

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