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Scotland's Population 2022

The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends



[Return to NRS website \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/stats-at-a-glance/registrar-generals-annual-review/2022\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/stats-at-a-glance/registrar-generals-annual-review/2022)

Last update: 31 October 2023

Next update: 2024

[Download the full dataset \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/rgar/2021/scotlands-population-2022.xlsx\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/rgar/2021/scotlands-population-2022.xlsx) for these charts (Excel spreadsheet about 80KB).

Foreword

"I am pleased to introduce Scotland's Population 2022. Since 1855 we have delivered this overview of our statistics on the population of Scotland. Our data shows how the population is changing and the challenges facing modern Scotland. This includes evidence on key issues such as: suicide, drug deaths, and population change.

"In addition, the first results from [Scotland's Census 2022 \(https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/\)](https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/) were released this year. This is an exciting milestone and the results paint a fascinating picture of how Scotland and our communities are changing. Census data is vital for planning health services, education and transport.

"We will publish further results from Scotland's Census 2022 from spring 2024 onwards. In summer 2024, a series of topic data reports will provide new and unique insights into the characteristics of Scotland's people. They will include information on ethnicity, religion, the labour market, education and housing. For the first time, it will also include data on armed forces veterans, sexual orientation and trans status or history.

"I am immensely proud of the work of my colleagues over the last year. They have continued to innovate and develop our key statistical products. These statistics play a vital role in supporting key policy and funding decisions, and informing broader public debate."



Janet Egdell, Registrar General

Health inequality

"Some people in Scotland experience considerably worse health than others. We also see a lot of health inequality between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

"Mortality rates are almost two times as high in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas. But for some specific causes of death, we see much larger inequalities. For example, people in the most deprived areas of Scotland are almost 16 times as likely to die from drug misuse than those in the least deprived areas.

“Over the last 40 years, our overall life expectancy has improved and we’re living longer than we used to. But our life expectancy is lower than the rest of the UK and many other countries in western Europe.

“In recent years, life expectancy improvements have stalled and started to reverse. Although this isn’t unique to Scotland.”



Julie Ramsay, Statistician, Head of Demographic Statistics

Deprivation

In 2022 we saw the largest year on year decrease in drug misuse deaths on record. However, the rate of drug misuse deaths is still 3.7 times as high as it was in 2000. Scotland has had a much higher rate of drug poisoning deaths than the rest of the UK for the past decade.

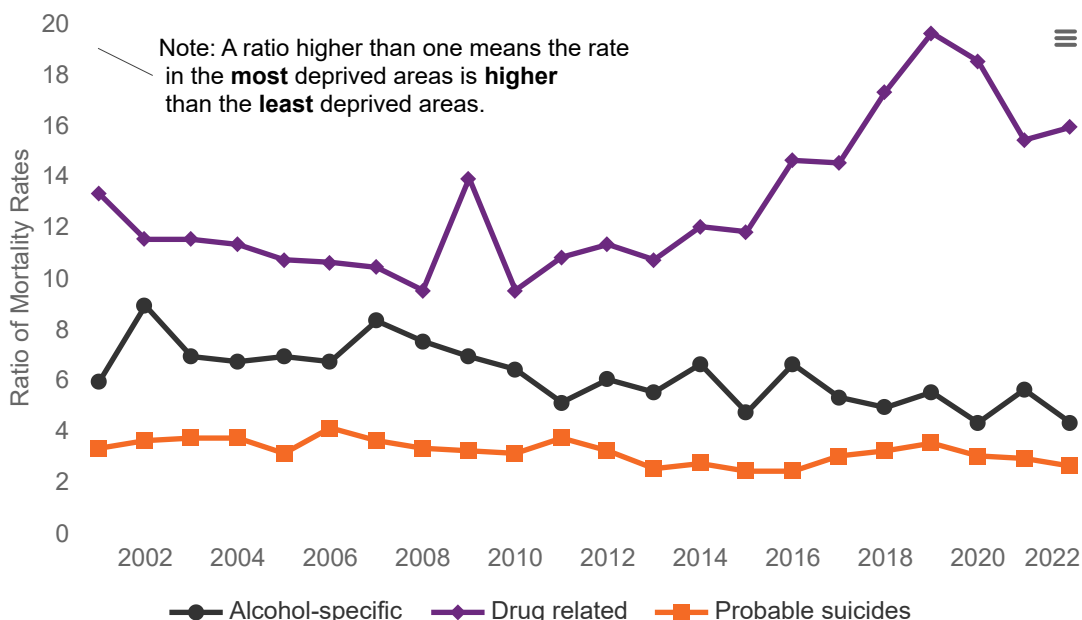
In 2022, people in the most deprived areas (quintiles) were 15.9 times as likely to die from drug misuse as those in the least deprived areas. That ratio has increased over the past two decades. In the early 2000s, those in the most deprived areas were around 10 times as likely to have a drug misuse death as those in the least deprived areas.

People in the most deprived areas were 4.3 times as likely to die from alcohol-specific deaths as those in the least deprived areas in 2022. Over time, this ratio has generally decreased (from a high of 8.7 in 2002) but has increased in the last few years. Changes in the ratio are mostly driven by changes in death rates in the most deprived areas. This is because rates in the least deprived areas have remained stable over time.

Males account for around two thirds of drug misuse and alcohol-specific deaths.

Figure 1: People in the most deprived areas are 15.9 times as likely to die from drug misuse

Ratio of mortality rates between the most and least deprived areas by cause of death, 2001 to 2022



Source: [Age-standardised death rates \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/age-standardised-death-rates-calculated-using-the-esp\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/age-standardised-death-rates-calculated-using-the-esp)

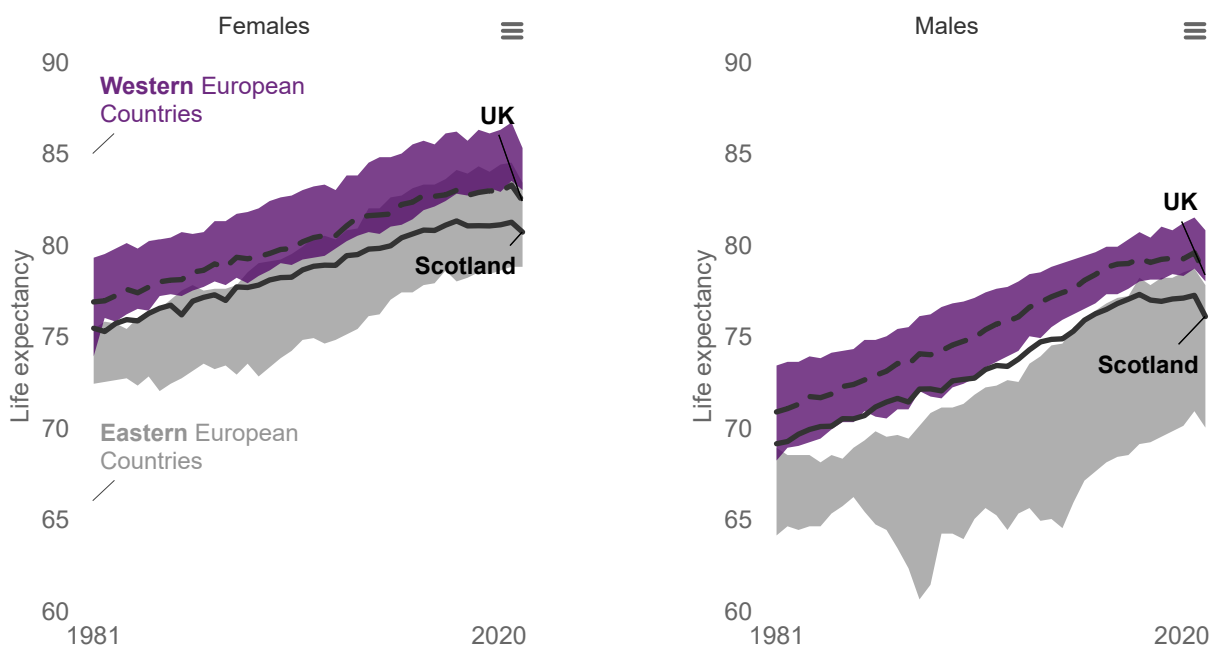
Life expectancy

Life expectancy has improved over the last 40 years. In the last 10 years improvements have stalled and most recently have started to reverse. The recent fall was mainly due to COVID-19. But the stall was caused by a number of factors:

- past decreases in heart disease deaths have slowed down
- the number of drug-related deaths has increased
- the number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer’s has increased

Figure 2: Long term improvements to life expectancy have stalled and most recently started to reverse

Life expectancy at birth in Scotland by sex compared to other countries, 1981 to 2020



Source: [Life Expectancy in Scotland \(NRS\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level) (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level>), [Life expectancy at birth by sex \(Eurostat\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=sdg_03_10) (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=sdg_03_10)

Note: more recent data is not yet available for most of the countries in figure 2.

Find out more

- see our blog article on [Why is life expectancy stalling in Scotland?](https://blog.nrscotland.gov.uk/2019/07/18/why-is-life-expectancy-stalling-in-scotland/) (<https://blog.nrscotland.gov.uk/2019/07/18/why-is-life-expectancy-stalling-in-scotland/>)
- our publication on [life expectancy in Scotland](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level) (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level>)
- we wrote this [comparative decomposition analysis of mortality data](https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/10/10/e036529) (<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/10/10/e036529>) with Public Health Scotland
- read our latest [statistics on COVID-19 deaths in Scotland](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/covid19stats) (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/covid19stats>)
- our publication on [statistics on deaths from specific causes](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths) (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths>)

Deaths

“Our most common causes of death have been changing.

“For example, fewer people are dying from coronary heart disease and cancer at younger ages. At the same time, more people are now dying from Dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.”



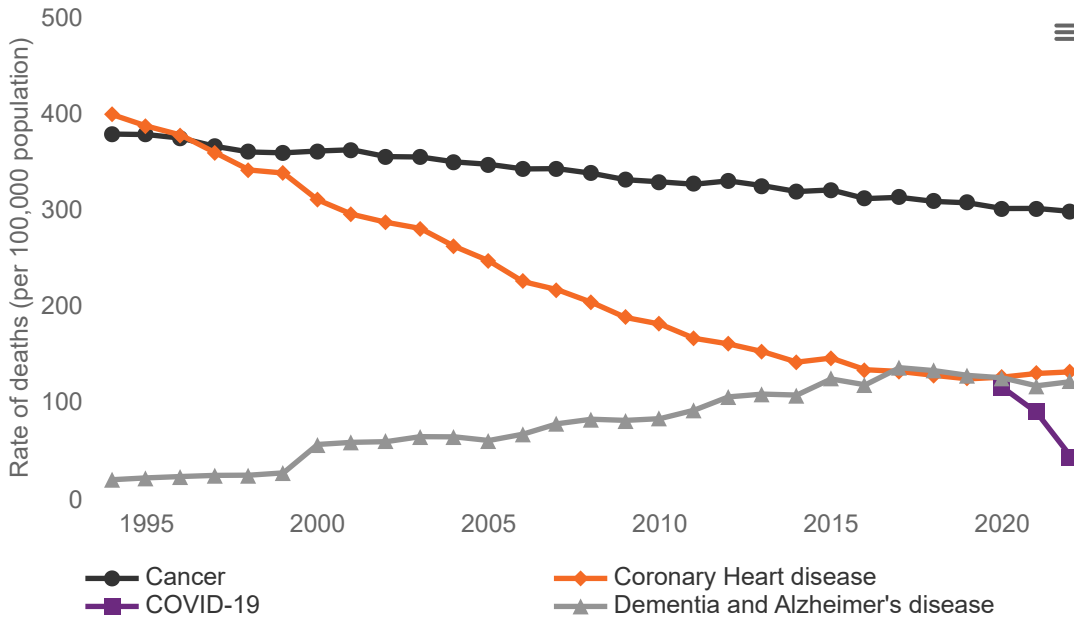
Causes of death

Fewer people are dying from coronary heart disease and cancer at younger ages. Some explanations for this may include:

- Improvements in: regular screening, early detection and treatment
- Changes in lifestyle, such as: reductions in smoking

Figure 3: More people are now dying from Dementia and Alzheimer's disease

Age-standardised rate of mortality (per 100,000 population) for Scotland



Source: [Age standardised death rates \(NRS\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/age-standardised-death-rates-calculated-using-the-esp) (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/age-standardised-death-rates-calculated-using-the-esp>).

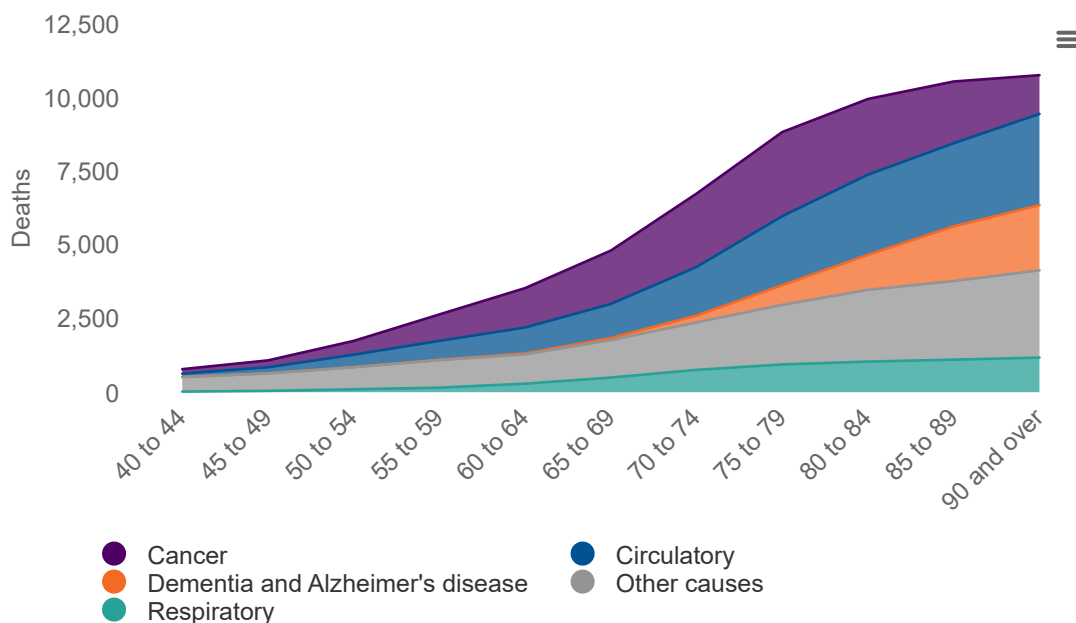
In more recent years, the number of COVID-19 deaths has reduced by almost two thirds. At its peak in 2020, the rate of COVID-19 deaths was similar to that for coronary heart disease

With fewer people dying of coronary heart disease and cancer at younger ages, more people live to older ages. Deaths from Dementia and Alzheimer's disease are more common at those older ages.

Females make up around two thirds of these Dementia and Alzheimer's disease deaths. This is because there are more females than males in the oldest age group.

Figure 4: Deaths from Dementia and Alzheimer's disease are more common in older age groups

Numbers of deaths by cause and age group, 2022



Source: [Vital events reference tables \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/vital-events-reference-tables/2022/list-of-data-tables\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/vital-events-reference-tables/2022/list-of-data-tables) (including births, deaths, and marriages)

Find out more

- read our latest [statistics on COVID-19 deaths in Scotland \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/covid19stats\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/covid19stats)
- [statistics on different causes of death in Scotland \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths)

Population

“Scotland’s population is changing. We now have a lot more people aged 65 and over than people under 15. And there are big differences in the population of different parts of the country.

“Most of the council areas in the Central Belt saw increases in their populations over the last decade, particularly those around Edinburgh.

“Most of the council areas that saw a decrease in population are in the west or south west. These decreases were driven by a higher number of deaths than births between censuses.

“People who move here from outside Scotland are most likely to move to the cities. People moving within Scotland tend to move to nearby council areas.”



Esther Roughsedge, Statistician, Head of Population and Migration Statistics

Population change

On Census Day, 20 March 2022, the population of Scotland was estimated to be 5,436,600. This is the largest population ever recorded by Scotland’s Census.

The population grew by 141,200 (2.7%) since the previous census in 2011. This is a slower rate of growth than between 2001 and 2011, when the population grew by 233,400 (4.6%).

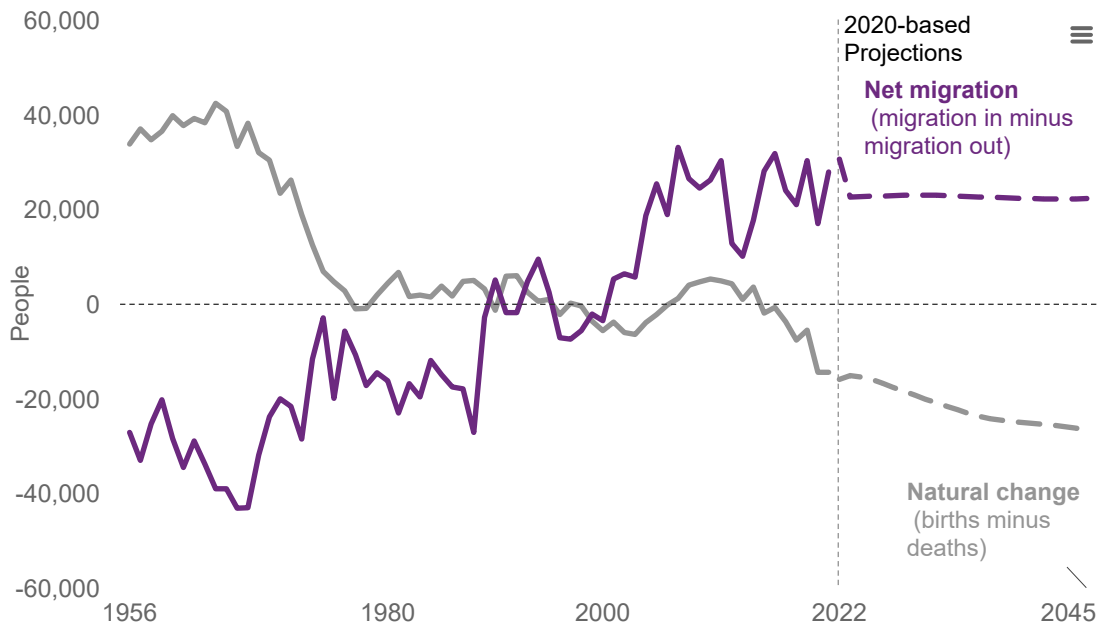
Population change is driven by births, deaths and migration (people moving into or out of Scotland).

Since the 2011 census there were around 585,000 births and 634,800 deaths registered in Scotland. Without migration, the population would have decreased by around 49,800. But the population has grown because more people moved to Scotland than moved out.

The population of Scotland is projected to continue growing slowly, before starting to fall by the end of the decade.

Figure 5: There is a growing gap between births and deaths

Natural change and net migration in Scotland with projections, 1956 to 2045



Source: [Mid-2021 Population Estimates Scotland \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2021\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2021), [2020-based interim national population projections \(ONS\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/2020basedinterimnationalpopulationprojections).

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/2020basedinterimnationalpopulationprojections>
[Total Migration to or from Scotland \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/migration-flows/total-migration-to-or-from-scotland\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/migration-flows/total-migration-to-or-from-scotland)

Ageing population

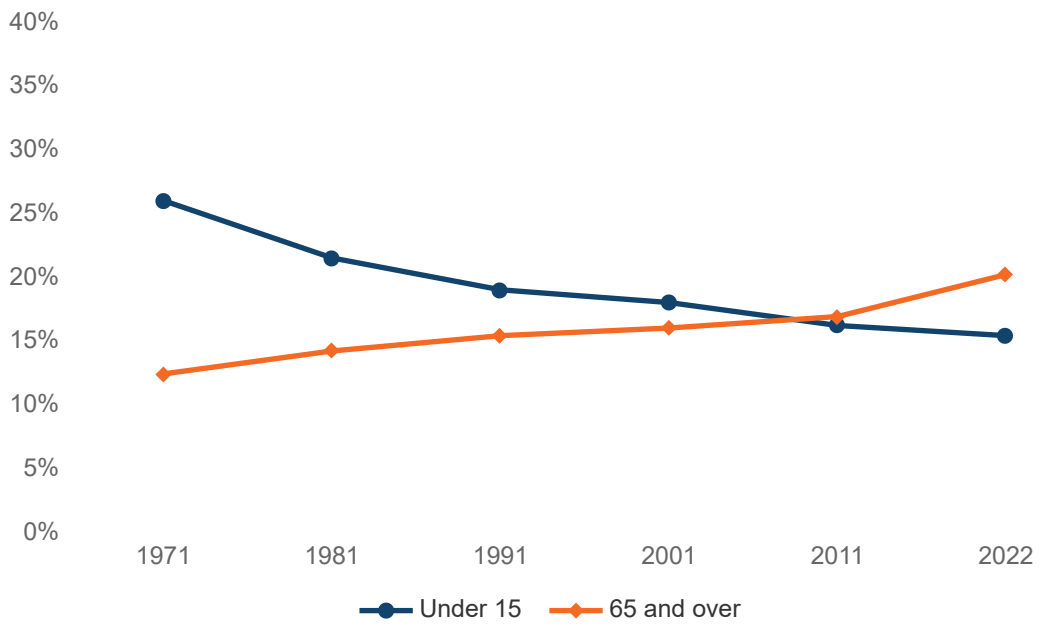
Scotland's population is ageing. There are now more people aged 65 and over than people under 15.

This trend is mainly driven by the post-war baby boom generation getting older. But also, by people living longer and fertility in Scotland falling. Fertility is now at the lowest recorded level and is one of the lowest in Europe.

These changes will profoundly impact public services like schools, health and social care.

Figure 6: Scotland's population is ageing

Age groups as a proportion of Scotland's population, 1971 – 2022, Scotland



Source: [Scotland's Census \(https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-rounded-population-estimates/\)](https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-rounded-population-estimates/)

Local differences

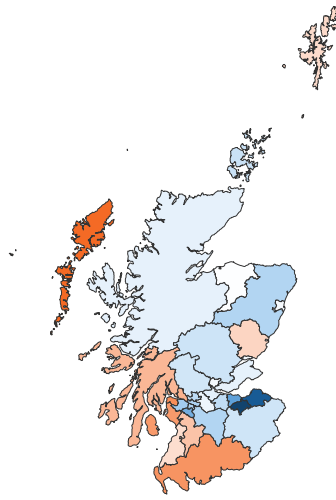
Over the last decade, most of the council areas in the Central Belt saw increases in their populations, particularly those around Edinburgh. These increases were driven by migration from within Scotland and from elsewhere.

Most of the council areas that saw a decrease in population are in the west or south west. These decreases were driven by a higher number of deaths than births between censuses.

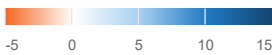
A common misinterpretation of these trends is that large numbers of people are moving from the west or south west to the east. In reality, when people move within Scotland, they tend to move to neighbouring areas. For example, people often move from a city to a nearby council area.

In contrast, people who move to Scotland from another country are more likely to move to cities. This is often to pursue work or study opportunities.

Figure 7: Population decreases were concentrated in the west and south west
Population change, 2011 – 2022, council areas in Scotland



%



Source: [Scotland's Census \(https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-rounded-population-estimates/\)](https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-rounded-population-estimates/)

Smaller households

Older people are more likely to live alone. Women are particularly impacted by this because they tend to live longer.

Find out more

- [Scotland's Census 2022 \(https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-rounded-population-estimates/\)](https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/scotland-s-census-2022-rounded-population-estimates/)
- our [national population projections \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/population-projections-scotland/2020-based\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/population-projections-scotland/2020-based) and [population projections for areas of Scotland \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/sub-national-population-projections\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/sub-national-population-projections)
- a [Ministerial Population Taskforce \(https://www.gov.scot/groups/population-task-force/\)](https://www.gov.scot/groups/population-task-force/) was established in June 2019 to consider Scotland's future population challenges
- for more on [Household estimates \(https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-estimates\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-estimates/)

About

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National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. This provides assurance that these statistics are of the highest quality, meet user needs, and comply with the [Code of Practice for Statistics \(https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/\)](https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/).

Further information on National Statistics is published by the [UK Statistics Authority \(https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/types-of-official-statistics/\)](https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/types-of-official-statistics/).

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