

# Vital Events Reference Tables

## 2021

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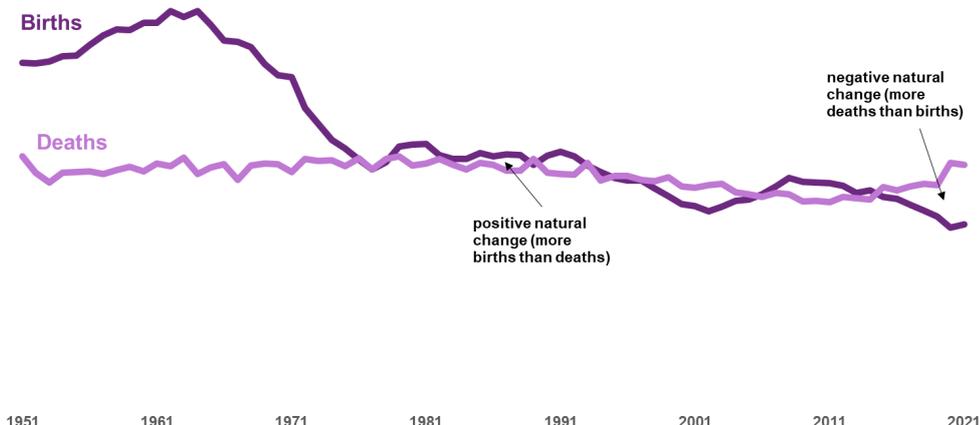
This release presents final figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021, inclusive. The tables provide statistics of births, adoptions, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths.

### More deaths than births for last seven years

There were 47,786 live births and 63,587 deaths registered in 2021.

There were 15,801 fewer births than deaths. Scotland has been in a period of negative natural change (more deaths than births) since 2015.

### Birth and Death Registrations

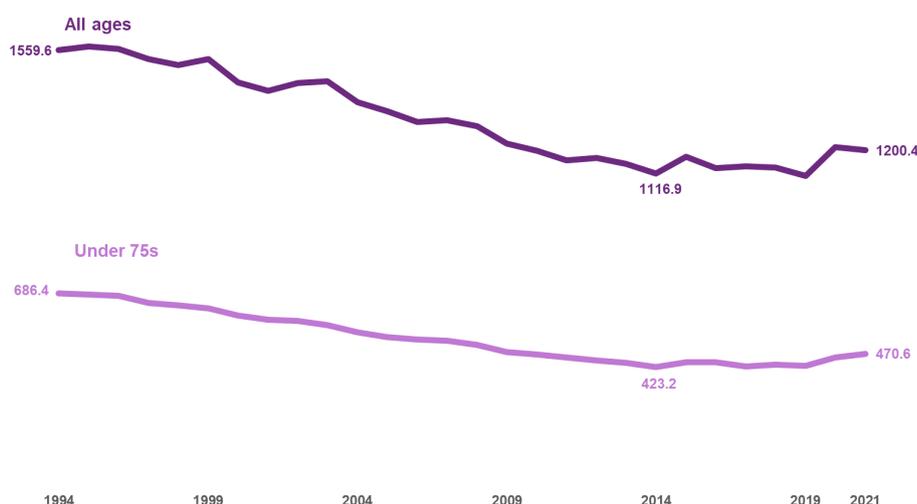


### Death rates have risen in recent years

The age-standardised death rate fell slightly in 2021 but remains at a higher level than has been seen in recent years.

The under 75 rate (referred to as premature mortality) increased by 3% in the latest year and has been increasing since 2014.

### Age-standardised death rates, per 100,000 people

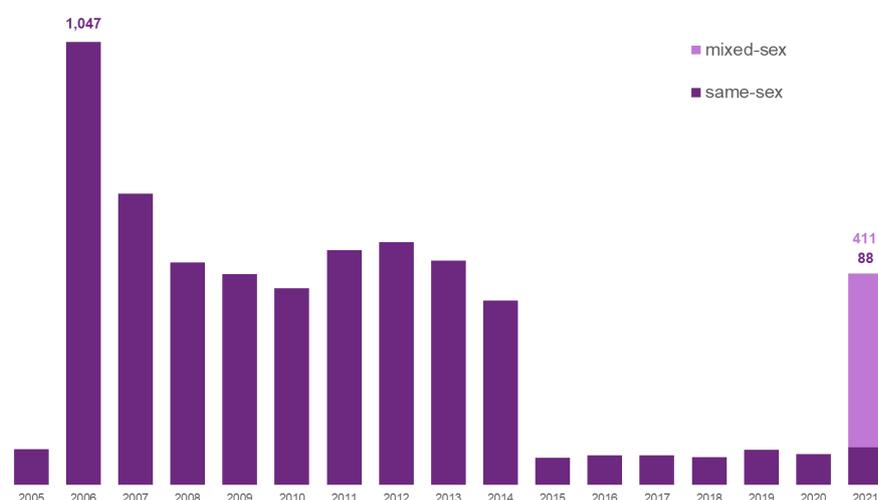


### Highest number of civil partnerships since 2013

The introduction of mixed-sex civil partnerships in June 2021 has led to an increase in the number of couples entering civil partnerships.

The majority (411) of civil partnerships registered in 2021 were of mixed-sex couples.

### Civil Partnership registrations



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## 1. Main points

- There were 47,786 live births registered in 2021, a slight increase of 2 per cent on the year before but still the second lowest annual total since records began in 1855.
- There were 15,801 fewer births than deaths registered in 2021. The difference between births and deaths is described as natural change. Scotland has been in a period of negative natural change (more deaths than births) since 2015.
- The total fertility rate (TFR) increased slightly to 1.31 after falling to its lowest ever level last year (1.29). For a population to replace itself this figure needs to be around 2.1.
- There were 480 adoptions registered in 2021, more than double the number registered in 2020. A large part of this increase reflects registrations catching up after being paused during the pandemic.
- There were 180 stillbirths in 2021, a rate of 3.8 for every thousand live and still births. This was a decrease on last year's rate (4.2) and low in historical terms. The lowest ever still birth rate (3.5) was recorded in 2019.
- There were 186 infant deaths, a rate of 3.9 for every thousand live births in 2021. This was an increase on last year's rate of 3.1. The 2021 rate is the highest rate recorded since 2011.
- The number of deaths registered in 2021 was 63,587. This was one per cent lower than the number in 2020.
- There were 5,827 (10%) excess deaths in 2021 compared to the pre-pandemic five-year average (2015-2019), only slightly lower than in 2020 when excess deaths were 6,333 (11%).
- The age-standardised mortality rate was 1,200 per 100,000 people in 2021, a decrease of 1 per cent on 2020.
- The age-standardised mortality rate for under 75s (sometimes referred to as premature mortality) increased by 3% over the last year.
- There were 24,284 marriages in 2021. This is more than double the number in the previous year but remains low in historic terms. There were 819 same-sex marriages.
- There were 499 civil partnerships registered in 2021, the highest number since 2013. 411 of these involved mixed-sex couples and 88 same-sex couples.

## **2. Introduction**

Provisional figures have been released throughout the last year on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis. This release replaces these and provides the final figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland from 1 January to 31 December 2021.

## **3. Adoptions**

There were 480 adoptions registered in 2021, more than double the number registered in 2020. During March 2020 registration of adoptions stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This work restarted in late October and by the end of 2020, adoptions finalised in August were being registered. Some of the adoptions registered in 2021 relate to those which were finalised in the latter part of 2020.

The number of adoptions has fallen over the long term. The number of adoptions registered in 2019 was around half the number in the mid-1980s and less than a quarter of the number of the late 1960s.(Table 2.01)

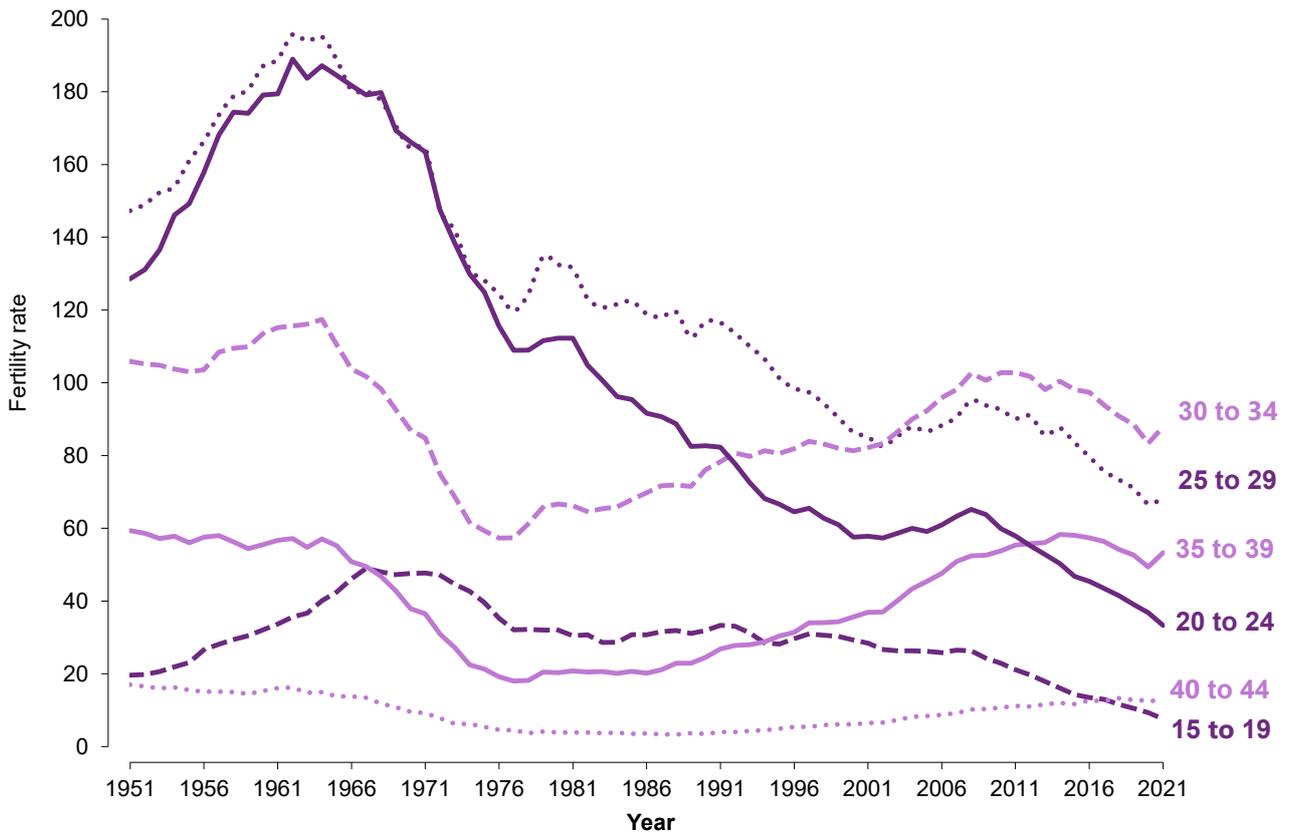
## **4. Births**

There were 47,786 live births registered in 2021, a slight increase of 2 per cent on the year before but still the second lowest annual total since records began in 1855. Births have been falling over the long term and fell to their lowest point in 2002 before increasing to reach a recent high point of 60,041 in 2008 and decreased steadily until 2020 before a slight increase in 2021.

There were more boys born than girls with 1,056 boys born for every 1,000 girls. Just over half of all live births (54%) were to unmarried parents. Multiple births accounted for 1.4% of all maternities with 629 maternities involving twins and 9 involving triplets or more. (Table 1.01b)

The age of mothers has changed over time. In the 1960s, mothers in their twenties were the most common age-groups. From the mid-1970s onwards births to mothers in their thirties began to increase and the 30-34 age-group is now the most common. The birth rate among mothers under 20 has fallen over time and is now the age group with the lowest birth rate. (Figures 1 and 2)

**Figure 1 – Live Births per 1,000 women, by age of mother, 1951 - 2021**



**Figure 2 – Live Births per 1,000 women, by age of mother, selected years**



The total fertility rate (TFR) increased slightly to 1.31 after falling to its lowest ever level last year (1.29). For a population to replace itself this figure needs to be around 2.1. In Scotland, the total fertility rate is lowest in the cities. The lowest is the City of Edinburgh, with a TFR of 0.98 children, followed by Dundee City at 1.04. The highest figures tend to be in areas outside the main cities, such as Midlothian (1.77), Clackmannanshire (1.74), Aberdeenshire (1.66), East Dunbartonshire and South Lanarkshire (both 1.62). (Table 3.16)

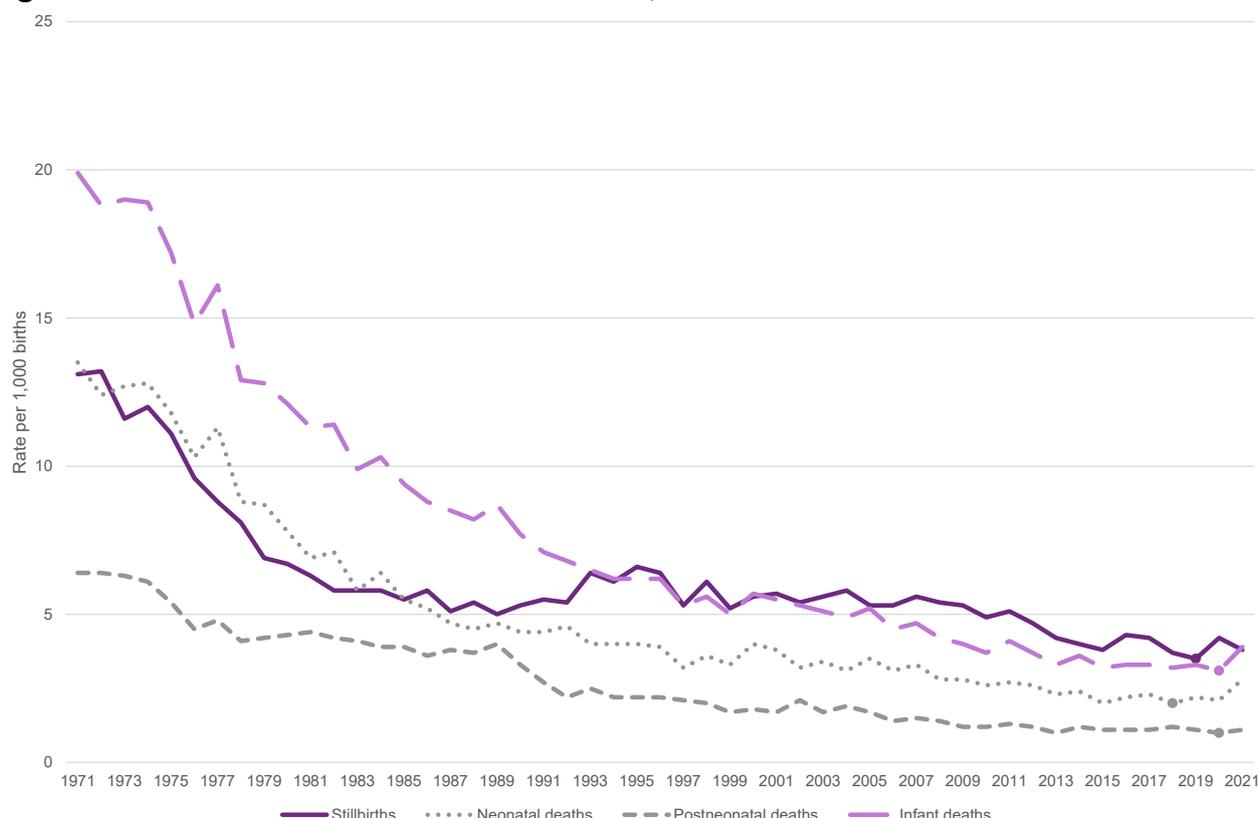
The **total fertility rate** is the average number of children that a group of women would expect to have if they experienced the observed age specific fertility rates in each of their childbearing years.

Fertility rates were highest in the most deprived areas (1.42) and lowest in the least deprived areas (1.23). (Table 3.17)

### 5. Stillbirths and Infant Deaths

There were 180 stillbirths in 2021, a rate of 3.8 for every thousand live and still births. This was a decrease on last year's rate (4.2) and low in historical terms. The lowest ever still birth rate (3.5) was recorded in 2019.

**Figure 3 – Stillbirth and Infant Death Rates<sup>1</sup>, 1971 - 2021**



<sup>1</sup> Stillbirth rates are calculated per 1,000 live and still births. Infant deaths, neonatal and post-neonatal death rates are calculated per 1,000 live births.

There were 186 infant deaths, a rate of 3.9 for every thousand live births in 2021. This was an increase on last year's rate of 3.1. The 2021 rate is the highest rate recorded since 2011 when there were 4.1 infant deaths for every thousand live births. (Table 1.01b, Figure 3)

Infant deaths can be split into neonatal deaths (deaths in the first 4 weeks) and post-neonatal deaths (deaths from 4 weeks to 1 year). There were 132 neonatal deaths and 54 post-neonatal deaths registered in 2021 (Table 4.01). Figure 3 shows that the increase in the infant death rate over the latest year was mainly due to an increase in the neonatal death rate as the post-neonatal death rate has been relatively stable in recent years.

## 6. Deaths

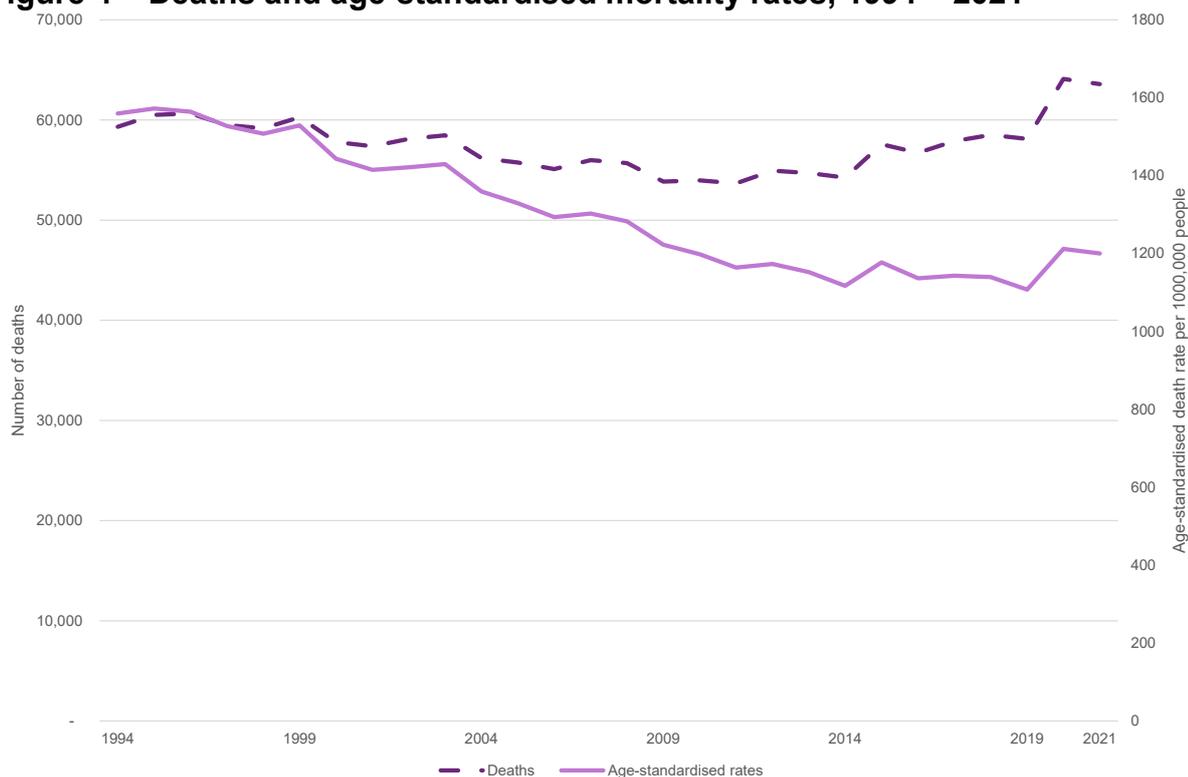
The number of deaths registered in 2021 was 63,587. This was one per cent lower than the number in 2020. There were 5,827 (10%) excess deaths in 2021 compared to the pre-pandemic five-year average (2015-2019), only slightly lower than in 2020 when excess deaths were 6,333 (11%).

Age-standardised mortality rates take account of changes to the population structure and are better for measuring trends

The age-standardised mortality rate was 1,200 per 100,000 people in 2021, a decrease of 1 per cent on 2020. The rate among males (1,402 per 100,000) is higher than among females (1,038 per 100,000). (Table 5.05)

Historically, age-standardised mortality rates have fallen steadily over time but there was little change between 2014 and 2019 followed by a substantial rise in 2020 coinciding with the coronavirus pandemic. The rate in 2021 has fallen back slightly but still remains relatively high compared to recent years (Figure 4)

**Figure 4 – Deaths and age-standardised mortality rates, 1994 – 2021**



West Dunbartonshire had the highest age-standardised mortality rate of all local authority areas (1,499 per 100,000) followed by Glasgow City (1,473) and North Lanarkshire (1,426). (Table 5.07)

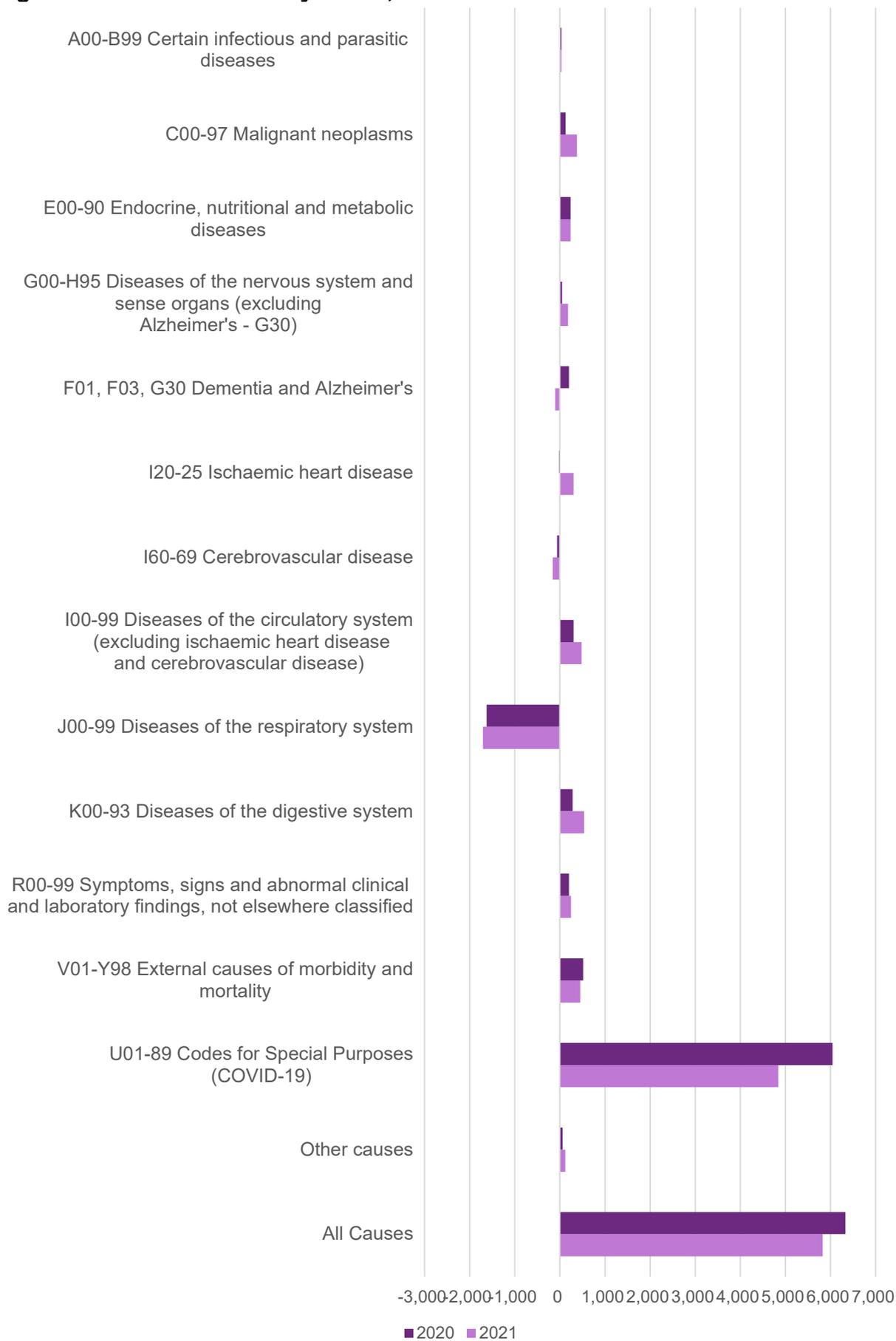
The age-standardised mortality rate for under 75s (sometimes referred to as premature mortality) increased by 3% over the last year. It had been fairly stable between 2014 and 2019 and has risen in the last two years to reach the highest rate since 2009. Among under 75s there is also a higher rate among males (573 per 100,000) compared to females (375 per 100,000). (Table 5.06)

Excess deaths – measured by subtracting the 5-year average from the current year – were very high in both 2020 and 2021. In 2020 there were 6,333 excess deaths, 11% above the 5-year average and the highest level of excess deaths since 1940. Deaths in 2021 were similarly high with 5,827 excess deaths, 10% above average. (Table 6.01)

The vast majority of excess deaths in both years were due to COVID-19, representing 6,048 excess deaths in 2020 and 4,842 in 2021. Most other causes showed a small excess, with the exception of respiratory diseases for which there were 1,626 and 1,708 fewer deaths respectively, compared to the five-year average. In 2021, the cause of death with the biggest excess after COVID-19 was diseases of the digestive system (534), followed by other diseases of the circulatory system (excluding ischaemic heart disease and cerebrovascular disease) (481) and external causes (450). (Figure 5)

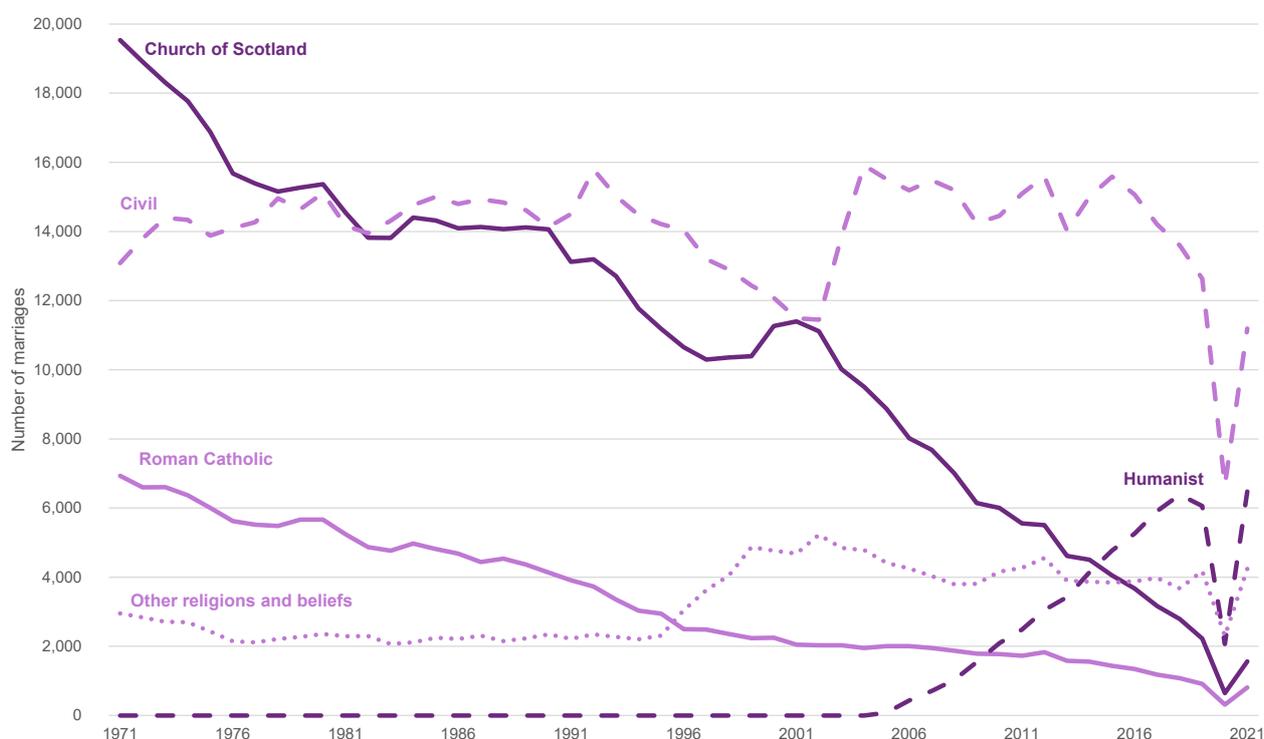
Excess deaths for 2021 would generally be calculated against the average for 2016-2020. Due to the unusually high number of deaths in 2020 due to the pandemic, the 2016-2020 five-year average would not provide a true reflection of excess deaths in 2021. Excess deaths for 2021 have therefore been compared against the 2015-2019 average

**Figure 5 – Excess deaths by cause, 2020 and 2021**



## 7. Marriages and Civil Partnerships

**Figure 6 – Marriages by type of ceremony, 1971 - 2021**



There were 24,284 marriages in 2021. This is more than double the number in the previous year when Registration offices closed between March and June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and most marriages and civil partnerships could not take place. Despite this increase, the number of marriages in 2021 is historically low and continues the downward trend seen in recent years. There were 819 same-sex marriages. (Table 1.01b)

The average age at first marriage has increased over time and in 2021 was 34.8 for males and 33.0 for females. (Table 7.03a)

Almost half of all marriages were civil ceremonies (11,193, 46%). 13,091 ceremonies were carried out by religious and other belief bodies. The most common denominations were Humanist Society Scotland (3,537), Church of Scotland (1,565) and Independent Humanist Ceremonies (1,345). 812 couples were married by the Roman Catholic Church. In total, 6,477 marriages were carried out by Humanist organisations. (Table 7.07 and Figure 6)

There were 499 civil partnerships in 2021, compared to 72 in the previous year. Since June 2021 mixed-sex couples have been able to form a civil partnership. 411 of the 499 civil partnerships registered in 2021 involved mixed-sex couples. Of those involving same-sex couples 49 involved male couples and 39 involved female couples. (Table 7.10)

## 8. Background to these statistics

This is an annual publication. NRS collects the underlying data on a daily basis, as and when each event is registered. Provisional data are published on a quarterly basis around 10 weeks after the end of the quarter. These annual figures represent the final figures for the calendar year and supersede the provisional weekly, monthly and quarterly figures already published.

Information about (for example) the sources, methods, definitions and reliability of these statistics is available from the following NRS web site pages:

[general background information on Vital Events statistics](#) and

[background information on points which are specific to statistics about deaths.](#)

These figures are directly comparable with those for other parts of the UK, there are no significant differences across the UK in how Vital Events data are collected and processed.

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

More detailed commentary on the final Vital Events statistics for calendar years as a whole can be found in the relevant chapters of [Scotland's Population - the Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends](#).

## Notes on statistical publications

### National Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority 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 UK Statistics Authority 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 can be found in the 'About this Publication' document that is published alongside this publication on the NRS website.

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- 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.

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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](#).

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### **Revisions and Corrections**

We, the National Records of Scotland, label any revisions and corrections that we have applied to any of our statistics. These revisions and corrections are clearly marked on the webpage of the publication as well on our [revisions and corrections](#) page available on the NRS website.

Where applicable, revisions will also be carried out in accordance with the [revisions policy for population, migration and life events](#) statistics available on the ONS website.

### **Enquiries and suggestions**

Please get in touch if you need any further information, or have any suggestions for improvement.

For media enquiries, please contact [communications@nrscotland.gov.uk](mailto:communications@nrscotland.gov.uk)

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