

Births, deaths and other vital events

First quarter 2020

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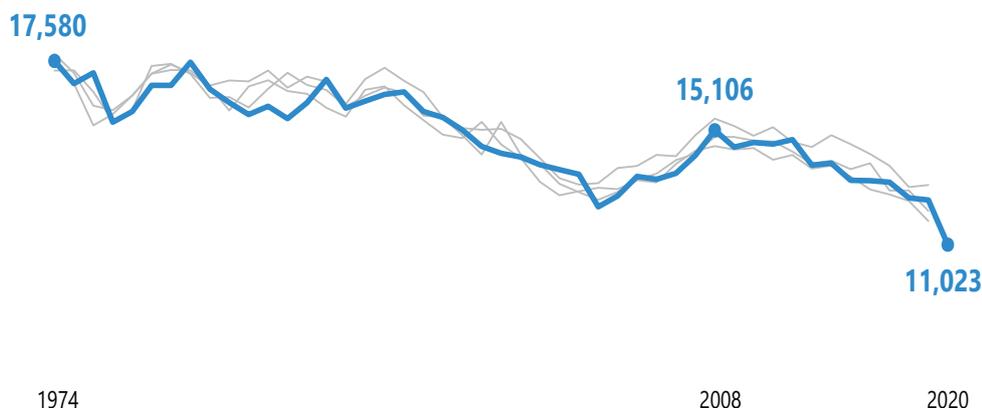


This release presents provisional figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 January to 31 March 2020, inclusive. The tables provide statistics of births, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths.

Quarter 1 births at lowest recorded level

There were 11,023 births registered in 2020 quarter 1, the lowest quarter 1 total since civil registration began. However, Registration Offices closed during March and birth registrations have been postponed. So for Q1 the number of registrations does not reflect the actual number of births.

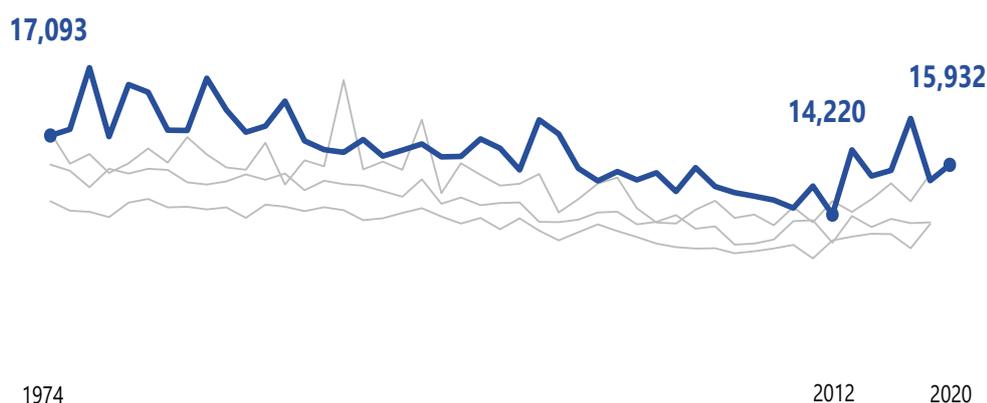
Number of births by quarter (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)



Increase in number of deaths registered in Quarter 1

There were 15,932 deaths in 2020 quarter 1. This is 4.1% higher than quarter 1 of 2019 but is 1.4% lower than the quarter 1 average over the previous 5 years.

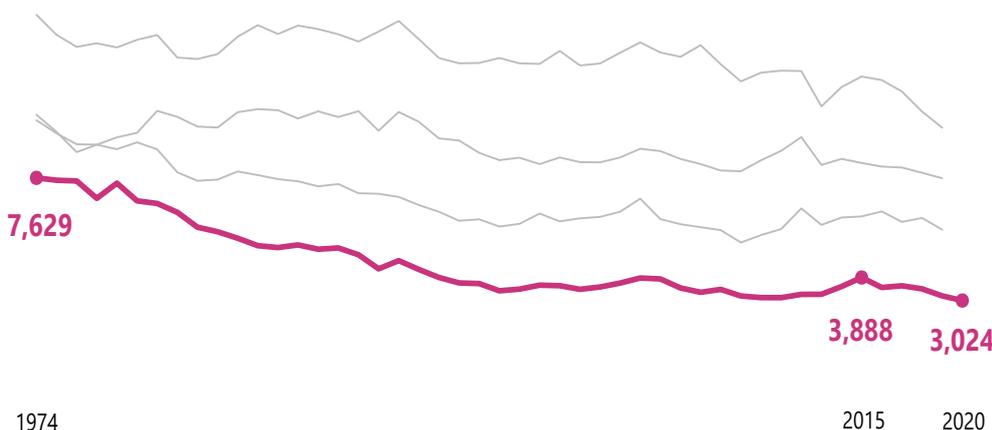
Number of deaths by quarter (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)



Quarter 1 marriages fall to lowest recorded level

There were 3,024 marriages in 2020 quarter 1; 14.3% fewer than the quarter 1 average over the past five years and the lowest recorded total for the first quarter. Registration Offices closed mid-March and most marriages after the closure could not take place.

Number of marriages by quarter (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)



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The [tables and chart](#) above have been made available as Excel spreadsheets and can also be viewed in Comma Separated Value (CSV) format.

1. Main points

- There were 11,023 births and 15,932 deaths registered in Scotland between 1 January and 31 March 2019.
- At 11,023, the number of births was the lowest quarter one total since civil registration began in 1855. However, in mid-March most registration offices closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and registration of births was postponed. This means that the number of registrations does not reflect the actual number of births in quarter one.
- Expressed as a rate, there were 8.1 births per 1,000 population.
- At 15,932, the number of deaths in 2020 quarter one is 4.1% higher than quarter one of 2019, but 1.4% lower than the average quarter one total over the previous five years.
- Expressed as a rate, there were 11.7 deaths per 1,000 population.
- The age-standardised mortality rate for the four-quarter period ending in 2020 quarter 1 was 0.4% higher than the previous four-quarter period. This rate takes into account the growing and ageing population and is therefore the best indicator of the direction of the mortality trend.
- Compared with the quarter one average over the previous five years, 2015-2019:
 - The number of cancer deaths rose by 1.5% to 4,169;
 - Deaths from respiratory diseases fell by 22.1% to 1,872;
 - The number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease rose by 1.9% to 1,857;
 - The number of deaths from coronary heart disease fell by 6.5% to 1,750;
 - There were 1,064 deaths from cerebrovascular disease (a decrease of 7.2%).
- Coronavirus was the underlying cause in 145 deaths during quarter one. The first death was registered in mid-March.
- There were 3,024 marriages in total. This is 14.3% lower than the average number of first quarter marriages for the previous five years and the lowest recorded quarter one total. There were 174 fewer marriages than in quarter one of 2019, but registration offices closed in mid-March due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and many marriages would have been cancelled.
- There were 120 same-sex marriages, 9 fewer than in 2019 quarter one. Of the same sex marriages registered in the first quarter, 7 (5.0%) were changes from civil partnerships.
- There were 22 civil partnerships (12 male and 10 female), eight more than in the first quarter of 2019.

2. Introduction

This release presents provisional figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 January to 31 March 2020, inclusive. The tables and chart provide statistics of births, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths, including:

- quarterly figures for Scotland for each of the past ten years;
- the totals for each Local Authority and NHS Board area for the latest quarter; and
- more detailed analyses of the numbers of deaths (for example cross-classified by sex, cause and NHS Board area) for the latest quarter.

3. Commentary

The number of births in the first quarter of 2020 (11,023), was the lowest quarter one total since civil registration began in 1855.

The total number of quarter one births fell to a previous low of 12,374 in 2002. It then rose to 15,106 in 2008 before falling in more recent years. Despite the recent closure of registration offices, there had already been a downward trend in the number of births. There is no single reason for this trend in the number of births, but possible causes may include the postponement of childbearing until later in life; and economic uncertainty influencing decisions around childbearing, as the beginning of the recent fall coincided with the financial crash just over a decade ago.

The number of quarter one deaths fell to a low point of 13,959 in 2014 and has risen since then, with notable spikes in 2015 and 2018. The 2020 quarter one figure (15,932) was 4.1% higher than quarter one of 2019, but 1.4% lower than the average quarter one total over the previous five years. Expressed as a rate, there were 11.7 deaths per 1,000 population.

Compared with the first quarter average over the previous five years, 2015-2019, the number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease and cancer rose, whilst deaths from coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease and respiratory disease all fell.

Over the longer term, deaths from coronary heart disease and cerebrovascular disease have decreased considerably whilst the number of deaths from cancer and respiratory disease has risen slightly. There has been a relatively large increase in the number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease with such deaths now accounting for more than 10% of all deaths compared to 5% a decade ago.

The quarterly tables, which can be downloaded from the [National Records of Scotland](#) (NRS) website, contain further detailed statistics on births, deaths and other vital events, including figures for NHS Boards and local authority areas.

For the four most recent complete quarters (2019 Q2 to 2020 Q1) there were 48,268 births and 58,734 deaths, a shortfall of 10,500 births compared to deaths. Having less births than deaths in a population is referred to as 'negative natural change', meaning that without external factors (such as migration) the population will fall. Scotland has been in a position of negative natural change since the period ending 2015 Q1. Prior to this, there was a sustained period of positive natural change (i.e. more births than deaths) going back to 2006. As can be seen from figure 1, the gap between births and deaths has fluctuated

over time and there have been several periods of both positive and negative natural change over the last 40 years.

Figure 1: Births, deaths and marriages registered in rolling periods of four quarters

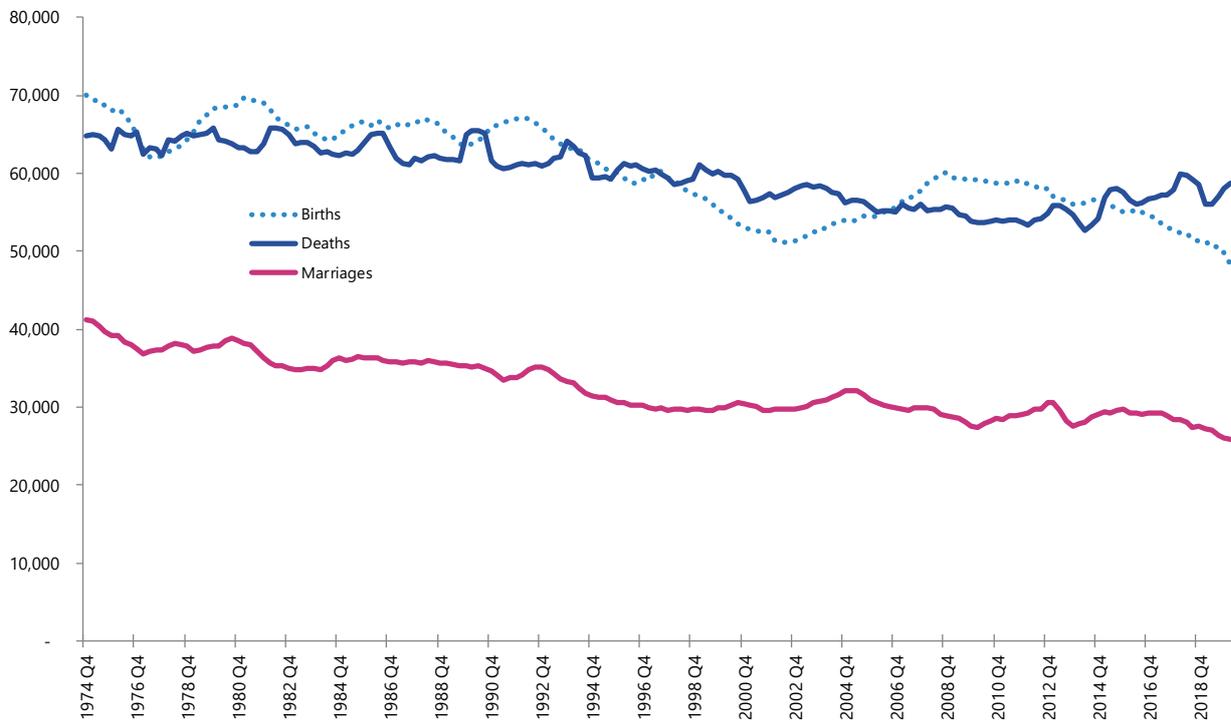
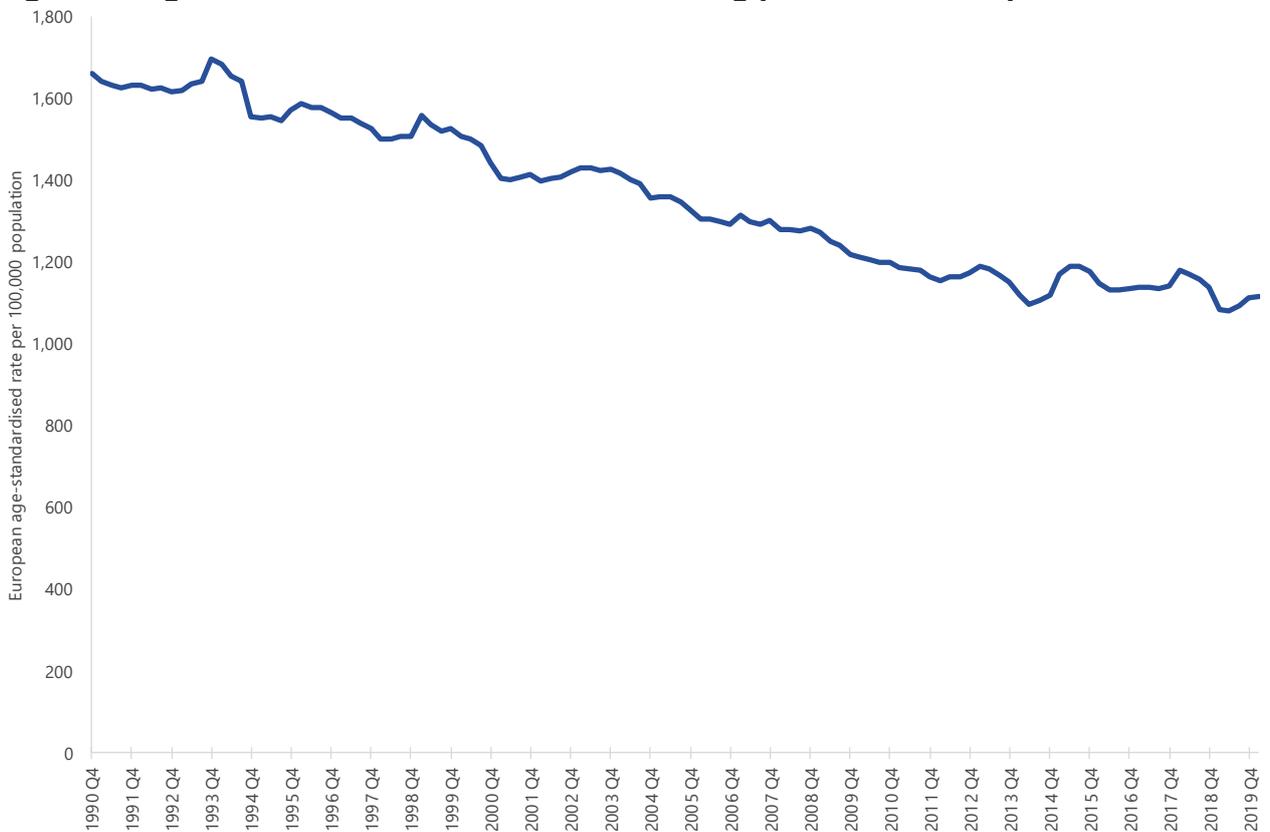


Figure 2: Age-standardised death rates for rolling periods of four quarters



Given the increasing interest in the changing direction of the mortality trend, we now publish age-standardised mortality rates on a quarterly basis rather than an annual update. Figure 2 illustrates to age-standardised mortality rates for each four-quarter period from the period ending 1990 Q4 to that ending 2020 Q1. These figures are based on rolling periods of four quarters to reduce fluctuations and reduce seasonal variation. There is a large degree of seasonality in mortality, with higher number of deaths occurring in winter than in summer, so it does not make sense to compare a quarter 2 figure with a quarter 1 figure, for example.

Despite the attempts to reduce fluctuations, it is clear that there are still considerable fluctuations in the time series. Particularly of note in the most recent period are the increases in early 2015 and 2018 due to high winter mortality in quarter one of these years. As these rates are based on rolling four quarter periods, the impact of the high quarter one is also seen in the figures for the following three data points before dropping out when the next year's quarter one figure is picked up.

The rate for the 4 quarter period ending 2020 Q1 was 0.4% higher than that for the 4 quarter period ending 2019 Q4.

The longer term trend shows a clear decrease over time, although there have been fluctuations along the way. Until recently, the period ending 2014 Q2 represented the lowest point in the trend with 1,096.8 deaths per 100,000 population. Since then there has been little change (with the two notable fluctuations previously discussed in 2015 and 2018). The 2019 Q1 and Q2 rates of 1,084.7 and 1,081.2 per 100,000, represented slight decreases from the previous low point in 2014 Q2, but the rate has risen for the last three quarters to reach 1,116.9 per 100,000 population in 2020 Q1.

It should be noted that rates for the most recent periods have been revised using the population estimates for 2019 which were published in April 2020.

4. Background to these statistics

This is a quarterly publication. NRS collects the underlying data on a daily basis, as and when each event is registered. The statistics for 2019 and 2020 are all provisional.

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 (including some comparisons of the figures for different years, for parts of Scotland and for some other countries) 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.

National Records of Scotland

We, the National Records of Scotland, are a non-ministerial department of the devolved Scottish Administration. Our purpose is to collect, preserve and produce information about Scotland's people and history and make it available to inform current and future generations. 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](#)

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 Office for National Statistics (ONS) website.

Enquiries and suggestions

Please contact our Statistics Customer Services if you need any further information.

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Related organisations

Organisation	Contact
<p>The Scottish Government (SG) forms the bulk of the devolved Scottish Administration. The aim of the statistical service in the SG is to provide relevant and reliable statistical information, analysis and advice that meets the needs of government, business and the people of Scotland.</p>	<p>Office of the Chief Statistician and Strategic Analysis Scottish Government 2W, St Andrews House Edinburgh EH1 3DG</p> <p>Phone: 0131 244 0442</p> <p>Email: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot</p> <p>Website: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics</p>
<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for producing a wide range of economic and social statistics. It also carries out the Census of Population for England and Wales</p>	<p>Customer Contact Centre Office for National Statistics Room 1.101 Government Buildings Cardiff Road Newport NP10 8XG</p> <p>Phone: 0845 601 3034 Minicom: 01633 815044</p> <p>Email: info@statistics.gsi.gov.uk</p> <p>Website: www.ons.gov.uk/</p>
<p>The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is Northern Ireland's official statistics organisation. The agency is also responsible for registering births, marriages, adoptions and deaths in Northern Ireland, and the Census of Population.</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency McAuley House 2-14 Castle Street Belfast BT1 1SA</p> <p>Phone: 028 9034 8100</p> <p>Email: info.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk</p> <p>Website: www.nisra.gov.uk</p>

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