

Most common surnames – Main Points

The lists of the surnames that occur most often in Scotland's registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths count the surnames of each child for births, of both parties (e.g. bride and groom) for marriages, and of the deceased for deaths. Different spellings are counted separately. Surnames which occurred fewer than ten times (in total) in a year do not appear in the list for that year.

The surnames from the birth, marriage and death registers may not be representative of the surnames of the population of Scotland as a whole, as:

- they include the surnames of non-residents who were born / married / died here;
- they exclude the surnames of residents who were born / married / died elsewhere; and
- some age-groups have very low birth, marriage and death rates, whereas others account for most births, marriages and deaths.

A summary table shows the 'Top Twenty' surnames, and the number of times that they occurred, in every fifth year from 1975 to 2015. In each of those years, the top three remained the exact same:

- SMITH (2,719 occurrences in 2020)
- BROWN (1,970 occurrences in 2020)
- WILSON (1,886 occurrences in 2020)

Many names appeared on all lists, including:

- ROBERTSON, 4th in 2020 with 1,796 occurrences.
- CAMPBELL, 5th in 2020 with 1,749 occurrences.
- STEWART, 6th in 2020 with 1,675 occurrences.
- THOMSON, 7th in 2020 with 1,658 occurrences.
- ANDERSON, 8th in 2020 with 1,511 occurrences.
- SCOTT, 9th in 2020 with 1,194 occurrences.
- MACDONALD, 10th in 2020 with 1,146 occurrences.
- REID, 11th in 2020 with 1,115 occurrences.
- MURRAY, 12th in 2020 with 1,114 occurrences.
- CLARK, 13th in 2020 with 1,042 occurrences.
- TAYLOR, 14th in 2020 with 1,016 occurrences.
- ROSS, 15th in 2020 with 946 occurrences.
- YOUNG, 16th in 2020 with 904 occurrences.

The names which have risen most since 1975 and 2000 reflect Scotland's growing diversity. ALI was the fastest rising name from 1975-2020 and from 2000-2020, going from 39 occurrences in 1975 to 95 in 2000 to 145 in 2020. ALI was the joint 128th most common name in birth, marriage and death registers in 2020, rising from joint 900th in 1975. Other names that rose by fifty or more occurrences between 1975 and 2020 were AHMED, KHAN, HUSSAIN and SINGH.