

Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2022

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This statistical report describes the latest statistics on occupied and vacant dwellings, second homes, and trends in household types.

In 2022 the number of households in Scotland was 2.5 million

A household is a group of people living together in a dwelling.
A dwelling refers to the accommodation itself, e.g. a house or a flat.

The number of households is calculated from the number of occupied dwellings that are in the Council's evaluation list.

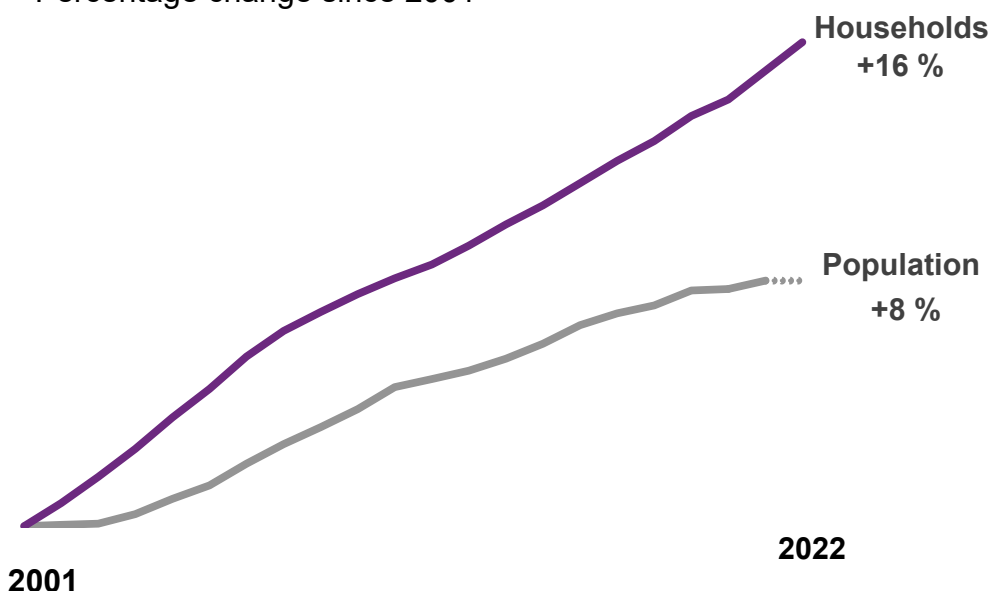


The number of households has risen faster than population

In 2022 there were 338,000 more households than in 2002.

The relative increase in households was greater than Scotland's population growth, which means that the average household size decreased from 2.25 in 2002 to 2.11 in 2022.

Percentage change since 2001

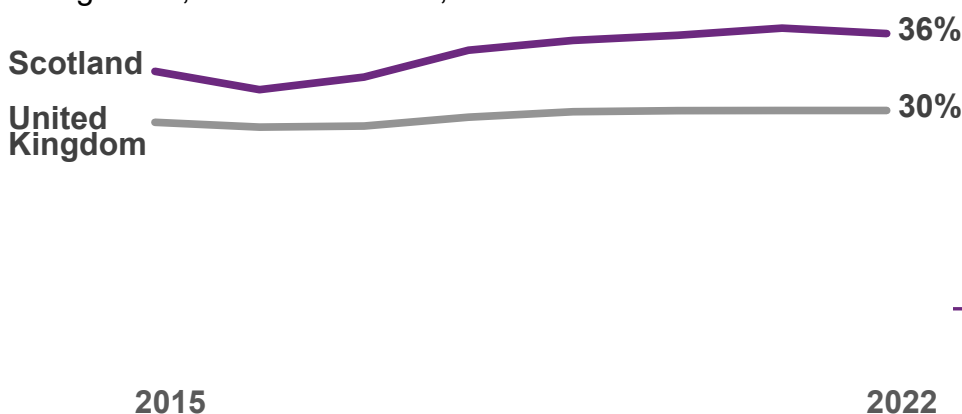


Scotland has the highest proportion of one-person households in UK

Over a third of households in Scotland are just one person living alone

This is partly because Scotland's population is ageing, as older people are more likely to live alone or in smaller households.

Percentage of households with one person living alone, Scotland and UK, 2015 to 2022



Source: Labour Force Survey

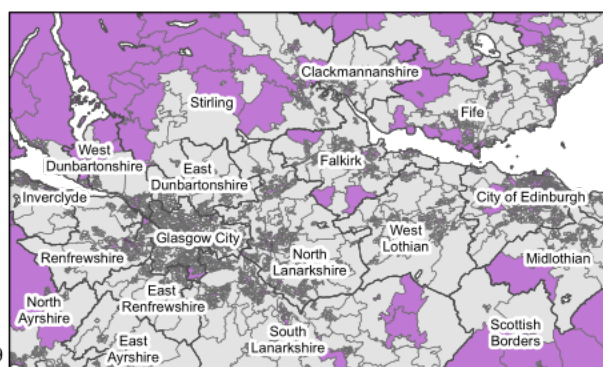
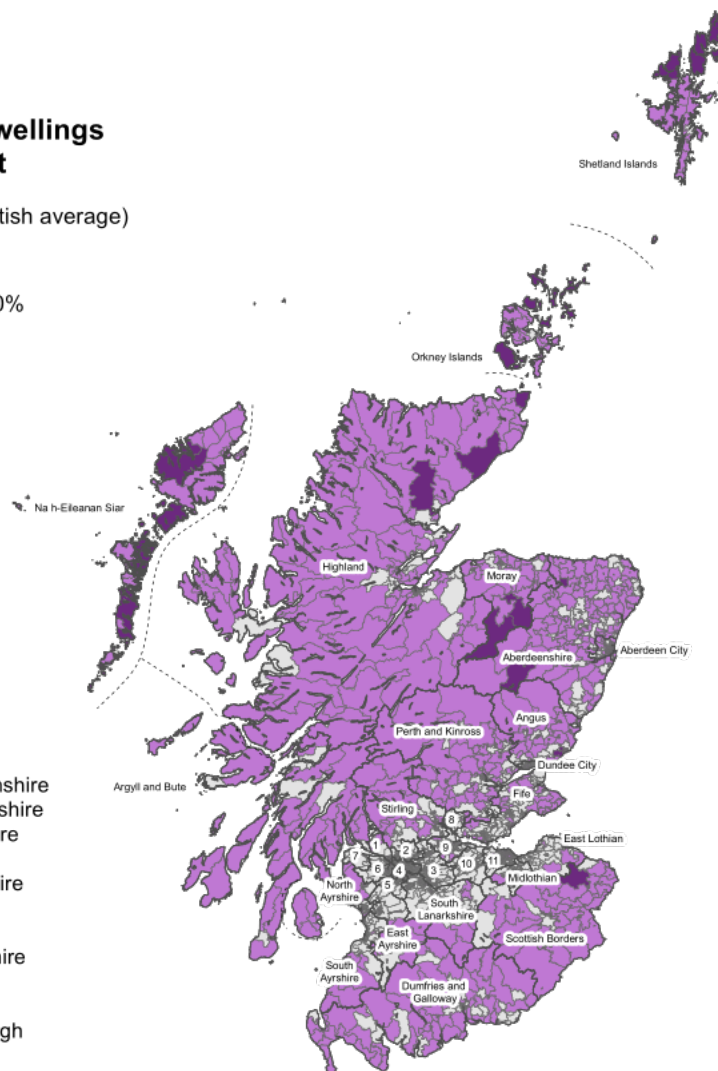
The level of vacant dwellings varies across Scottish areas

The highest proportions of dwellings that are vacant are found in rural areas. Within a council area the proportion of dwellings that are occupied may vary considerably.

Percentage of dwellings which are vacant

- Up to 3% (Scottish average)
- 4% - 10%
- Greater than 10%

1. West Dunbartonshire
2. East Dunbartonshire
3. North Lanarkshire
4. Glasgow City
5. East Renfrewshire
6. Renfrewshire
7. Inverclyde
8. Clackmannanshire
9. Falkirk
10. West Lothian
11. City of Edinburgh



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The small area dataset of household estimates which accompany this publication can be used to help to understand changes in the number of households in a local area. This information is also available in an interactive visualisation.

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Supporting data tables and background data for the charts in this publication are available on the [NRS website](#).

A separate [Methodology Guide](#) provides background details on:

- The definitions, data sources and methodology used for producing estimates of household and dwellings in Scotland
- Other data sources used in the production of the statistics in this publication
- How the household and dwelling estimates are used
- Links to related publications and websites.

Main points

- In 2022 the number of households in Scotland was estimated to be 2.55 million. This was 21,000 (0.8%) higher than in 2021, and 338,400 (15%) higher than in 2002.
- The increases in household numbers in 2021 and 2022 (around 21,000 in each year) were the highest since 2008. They compared with an increase of just 12,000 in 2020 and an average annual growth in the five years before the pandemic of around 16,000 households.
- Over the last twenty years the number of households increased in every council area. The highest percentage increases were in Orkney Islands (28%), East Lothian (27%) and Midlothian (26%). The lowest percentage increases were in Inverclyde (4%), Dundee City (7%) and West Dunbartonshire (7%).
- Of the 2.70 million dwellings in Scotland in 2022, 90,700 (3%) were vacant and 24,300 (1%) were second homes.
- Empty and second homes are concentrated in different parts of the country. For example, remote rural areas had the highest percentage of dwellings that were empty (6%) or second homes (7%).
- Average household size in Scotland decreased from 2.25 people per household in 2002 to 2.18 in 2012, and then to 2.11 in 2022.
- In 2022 more than a third (36%) of households were estimated to be one person living alone. An estimated 904,000 people lived in these households.

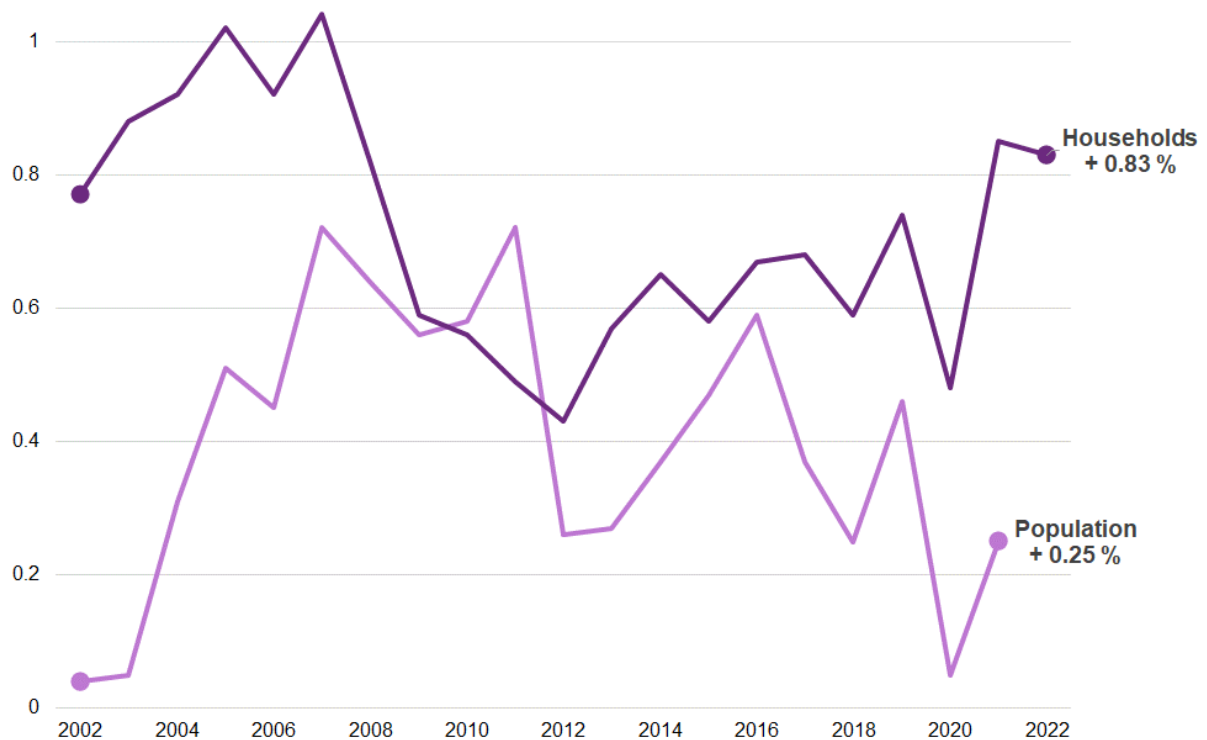
1. Households

National

In 2022 there were 2.55 million households in Scotland. This was 21,000 (0.8%) higher than in 2021 and 338,400 (15%) higher than in 2002. Over the last twenty years Scotland's population increased by 8%.

People increasingly live in smaller households or alone. So the number of households has increased at a faster rate than it would due to an increase in the population alone.

Figure 1: Annual percentage change in households and population, 2002 to 2022



Source of population data: NRS [Mid-Year Population Estimates](#). The population estimate for 2022 was not available at the time of publication, so the 2021 value has been used as a proxy instead.

Average household size is decreasing

Average household size has been decreasing over a long period, though at a slower rate in more recent years. It decreased from 2.25 people per household in 2002 to 2.18 in 2012, and then to 2.11 in 2022.

The trend towards smaller households is also reflected in changes to the proportions of different household types. According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), an estimated 904,000 households (36% of the total) in 2022 consisted of one adult living alone. By comparison, the proportion of single person households at the time of the 1971 Census was 19%.

The changes in household size and type over time are partly due to changes in the way we live. They also reflect the general ageing of Scotland's population. Older people are more likely to live alone or in smaller households. In addition, a growing proportion of older people are living in their own homes rather than in care homes.

How Scotland compares with the rest of the UK

LFS data enables comparisons to be made between UK countries on household numbers and types. It shows that between 2012 and 2022 there was an estimated 6% increase in households in the UK as a whole. There were increases in each country, except Wales:

- England: 7%
- Wales: no increase
- Scotland: 7%
- Northern Ireland: 9%¹.

Households in Scotland are smaller than in other UK countries. According to the Labour Force Survey, Scotland had the highest proportion (36%) of single person households in 2022. It also had the lowest proportion (30%) with three or more people. One reason contributing to this might be the lower fertility rate in Scotland.

¹ Northern Ireland value is estimated from [Census data](#) and relates to the increase between 2011 and 2021

The proportions of people aged 65 or over in 2021 (latest year for which data are currently available) in Scotland and the UK as a whole are similar, at just under a fifth. So this would not appear to be a factor contributing to the higher proportion of one person households in Scotland.

Council areas

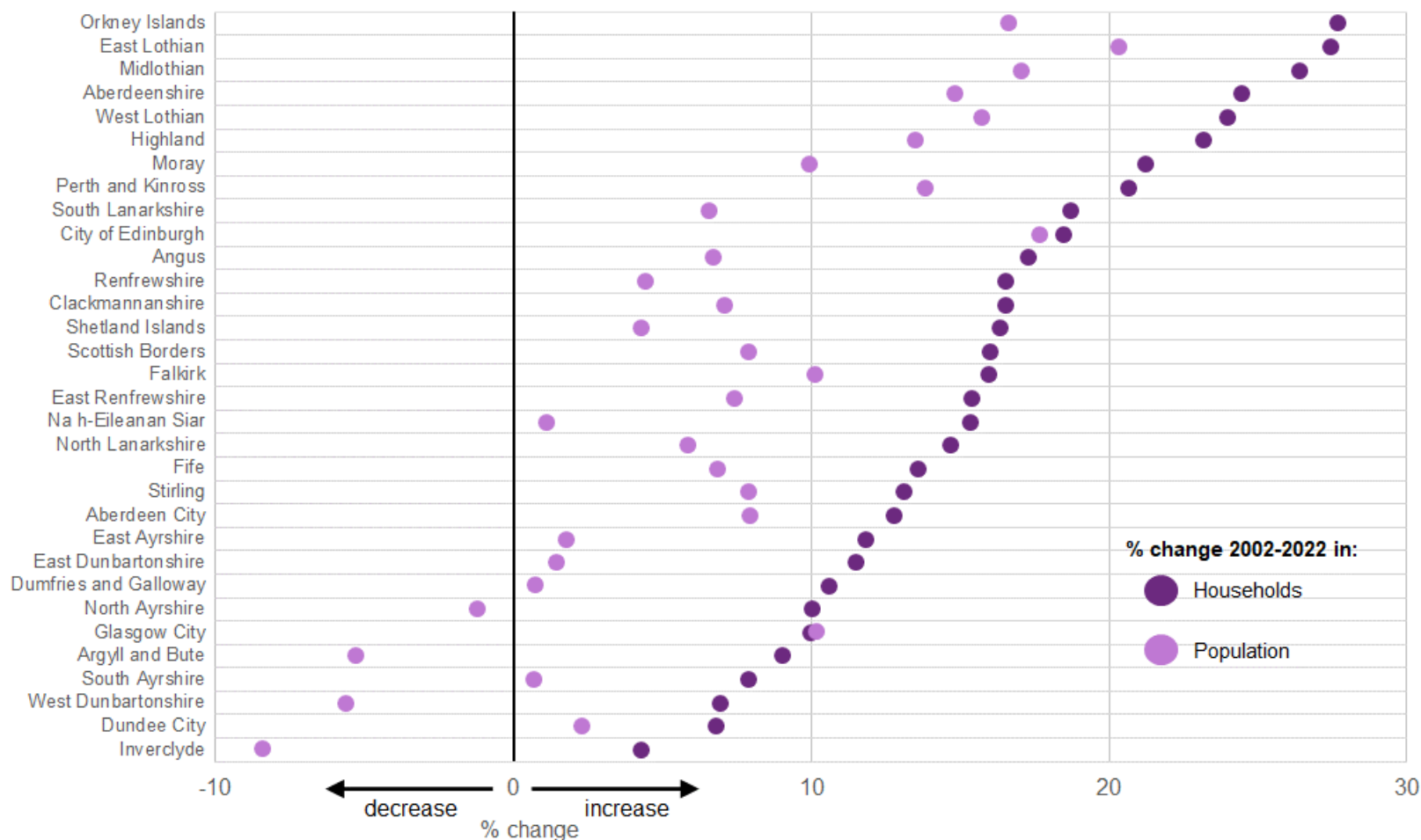
Over the last twenty years the number of households has increased in every council area. Figure 2 shows that changes in household numbers and population over the last 20 years are generally correlated. Council areas with the biggest percentage increases in households tend also to be those with the biggest percentage increases in population.

Broadly speaking, the east and north of the country have seen bigger increases in household numbers compared with the west and south. The highest percentage increases were in Orkney Islands (28%), East Lothian (27%) and Midlothian (26%). The lowest percentage increases were in Inverclyde (4%), Dundee City (7%) and West Dunbartonshire (7%).

In more recent years the pattern of population change was different to previous years. For example, between 2020 and 2021 the population of the largest cities fell, which was a change from growth in previous years. The greatest population growth was in council areas around Edinburgh. In addition, many rural areas which previously had falling population saw an increase in population.

Household numbers and population in council areas around Edinburgh grew faster than the rest of Scotland. There were also large increases in some council areas around Glasgow. For example, since 2020 in East Renfrewshire the number of households has grown by more than 1.2% each year.

Figure 2: Percentage change in the number of households and population by council area, June 2002 to 2022

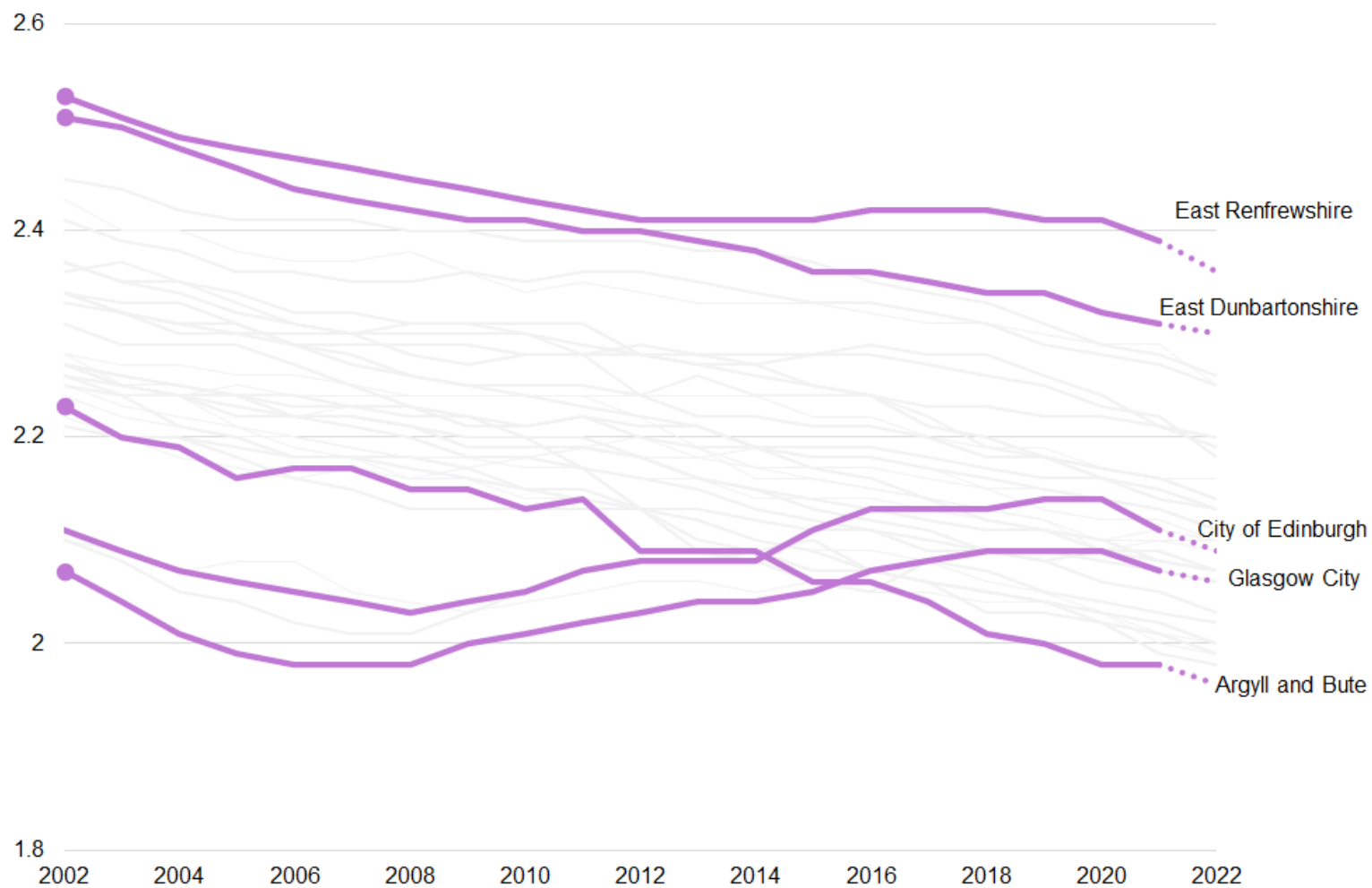


Source of population data: NRS [Mid-Year Population Estimates](#). The population estimates for 2022 were not available at the time of publication, so the 2021 values have been used as a proxy instead

In 2022, average household size varied from 1.96 people per household in Argyll and Bute to 2.36 people per household in East Renfrewshire. Figure 3 shows that average household size has decreased in most council areas since 2002. The biggest relative decrease occurred in Na h-Eileanan Siar, from 2.32 to 2.02 people per household.

In the period since 2008 City of Edinburgh and Glasgow City bucked the general downward trend in average household size. Both experienced increases in most years. However, in the last two years the average household size has decreased for both these councils.

Figure 3: Average household size by council area, June 2002 to 2022



Source of population data: NRS [Mid-Year Population Estimates](#). The population estimates for 2022 were not available at the time of publication, so the 2021 values have been used as a proxy instead. The trend between 2021 and 2022 is shown as a dotted line in the chart.

Data Zones

2011 Data Zones are a geography widely used for official statistics on small areas in Scotland. There are 6,976 Data Zones, typically with between 200 and 600 households. Estimates of the number of occupied dwellings – a close equivalent to households – in each Data Zone are available for downloading from the [NRS website](#).

2. Dwellings

National

In 2022 there were 2.70 million dwellings in Scotland. This was an increase of 15% since 2002.

Of these 2.70 million dwellings, 115,000 (4.3%) were unoccupied. These unoccupied dwellings included:

- vacant properties (90,700, 3.4% of all dwellings)
- second homes (24,300, 0.9% of all dwellings).

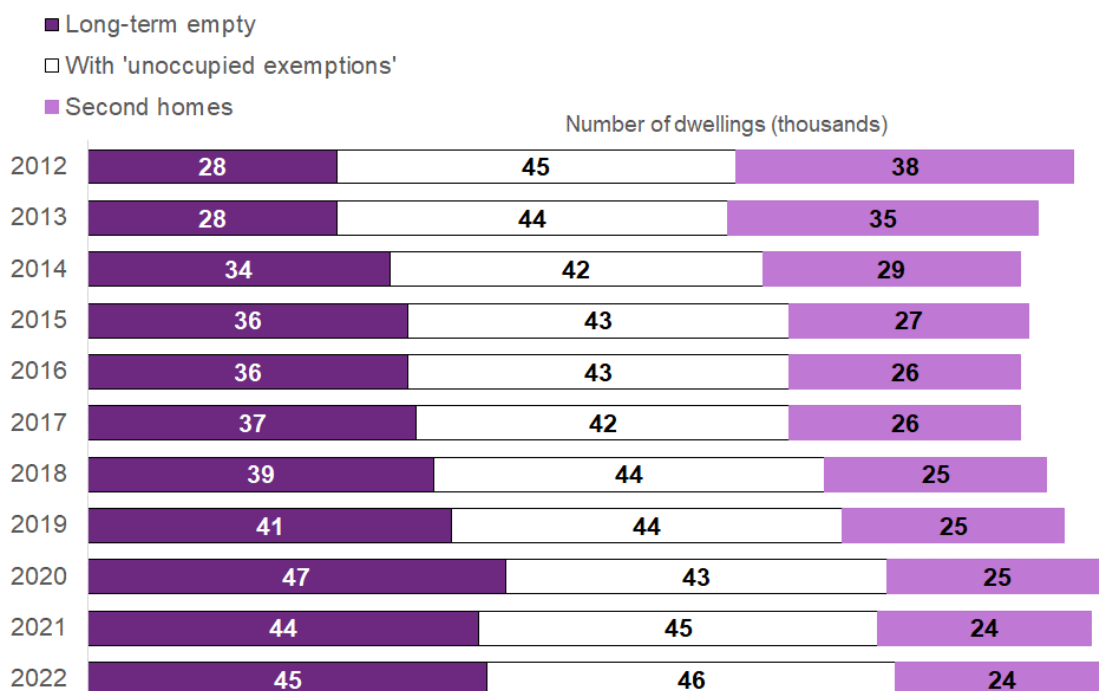
Vacant properties included those classified as:

- long-term (six months or more) empty (44,600, 1.7% of all dwellings)
- unoccupied exemptions (46,100, 1.7% of all dwellings), such as new homes yet to be occupied and dwellings undergoing repair or awaiting demolition.

In 2022, just under two thirds (27,700) of long-term empty dwellings had been empty for 12 months or more².

² [Scottish Government Housing Statistics \(download a table\)](#)

Figure 4: Long-term empty, dwellings with unoccupied exemptions and second homes in Scotland, 2012 to 2022



How do these figures compare with recent trends?

Overall, the percentage of unoccupied dwellings in Scotland has remained fairly stable in recent years, around 4%. However, within this overall picture the number of vacant dwellings has been increasing as shown in Figure 4.

This is mainly due to an increase in long-term empty properties. (The slight spike in the number of long-term empty properties in 2020 may reflect the impact of Covid restrictions, for example with fewer people moving house in that period).

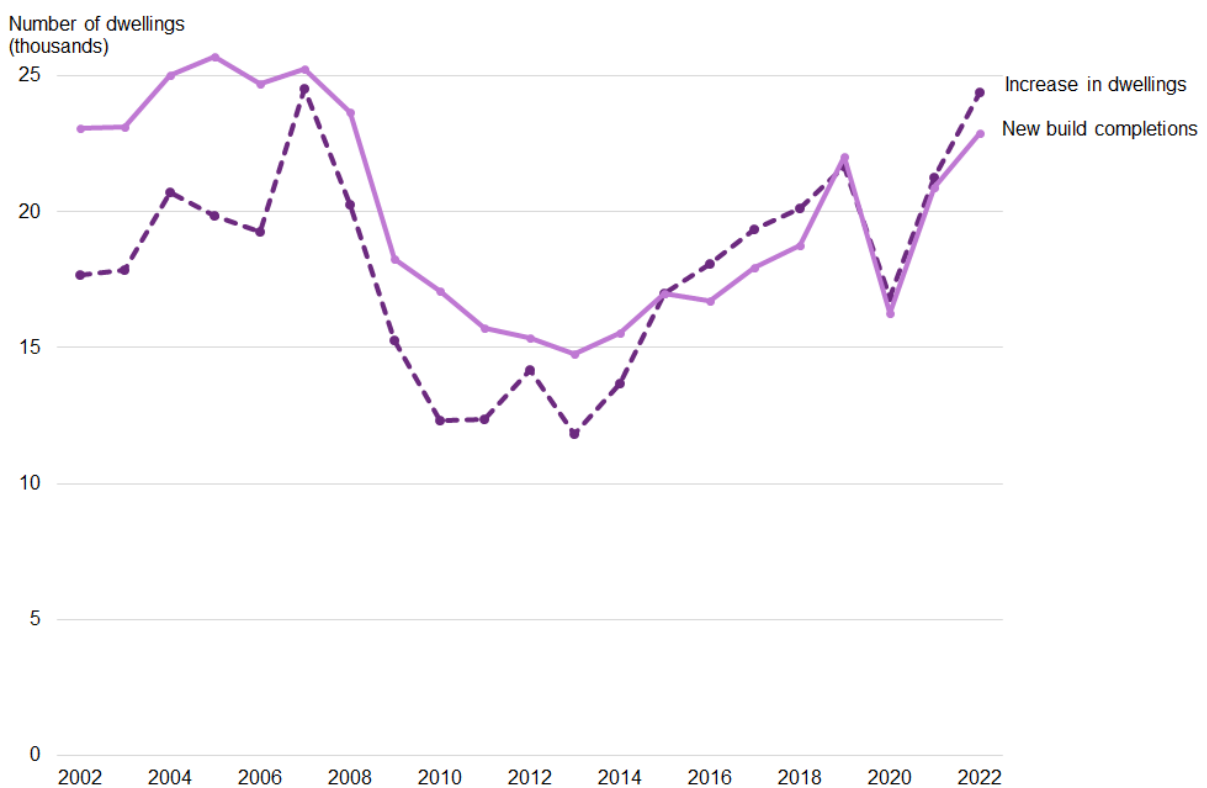
The numbers of vacant and second homes can fluctuate a lot from year to year. This can be due to changes in the definitions involved, the charges payable on these types of property and reviews carried out by councils. Further details on this are included in the [Methodology Guide](#).

Figure 5 shows the annual change in the number of dwellings and in the number of new build completions in Scotland since 2002. Following the recession in 2007/8 the number of new build completions fell over the period to 2013. Completions then increased until 2019 before a decrease – most likely reflecting the impact of Covid

restrictions – in 2020. The total of 22,900 completions for the year to September 2022 was over 2,000 more than the previous year. It was the highest value since 2009³.

The trend in the annual change in the number of dwellings is similar to that seen for the number of new build completions. However, there are differences between the two measures. For instance, changes in dwelling numbers also reflect demolitions and conversions. Moreover, the data comes from two different sources.

Figure 5: New build completions (October, 2002 to 2022) and annual increase in number of dwellings (September, 2002 to 2022)



³ Scottish Government: [Housing Statistics for Scotland – New House Building](#)

Council areas

Figure 6 shows the proportion of dwellings which are vacant, long-term empty or second homes in 2022.

The council areas with the highest proportion of dwellings that were vacant in 2022 were Na h-Eileanan Siar (8%), Shetland Islands (7%), Aberdeen City (7%) and Orkney Islands (5%).

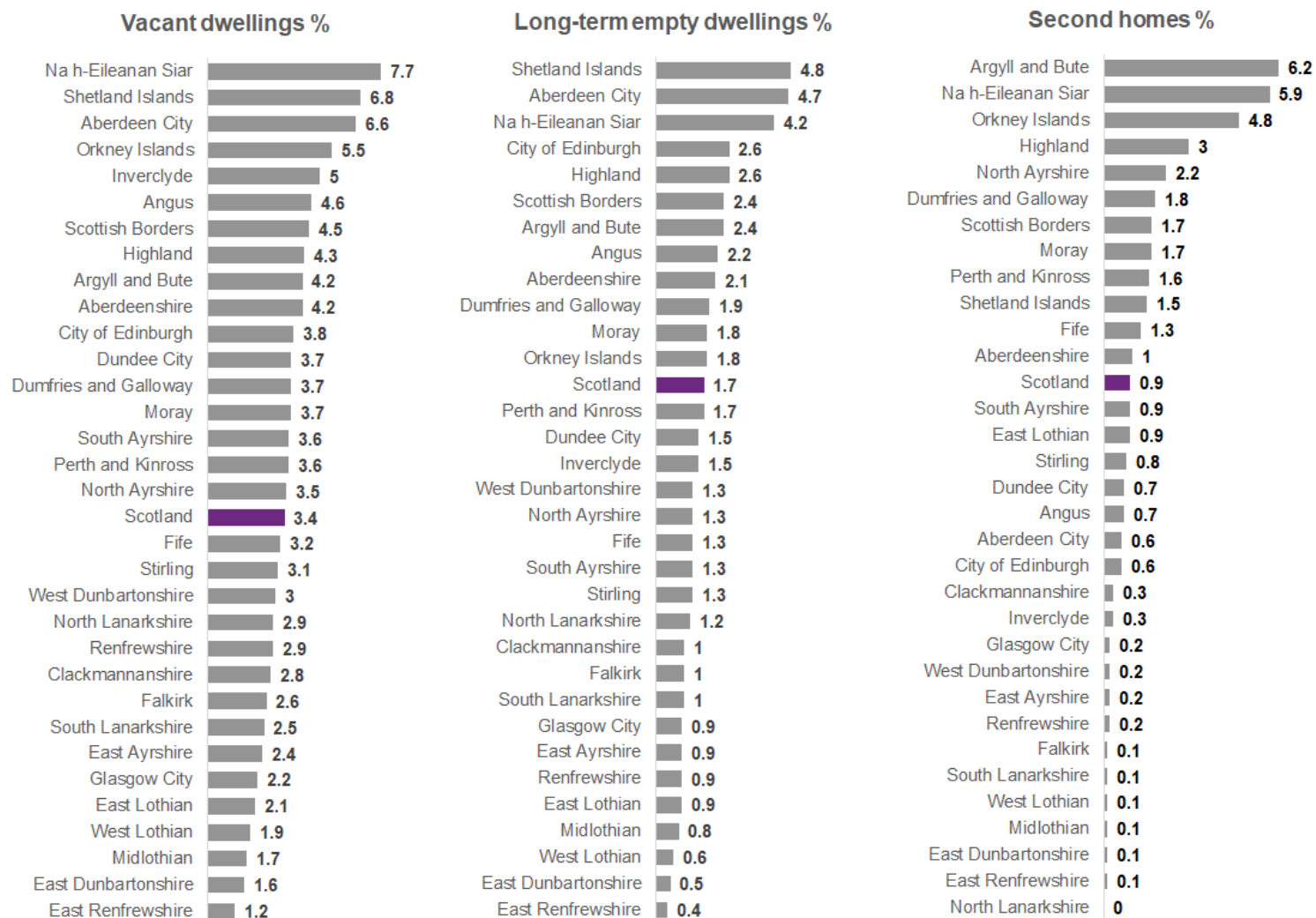
Shetland Islands, Aberdeen City and Na h-Eileanan Siar were also the areas with the highest proportion of dwellings that were long-term empty.

The areas with the highest proportion of dwellings that were second homes were mainly rural and island areas, including Argyll and Bute (6%), Na h-Eileanan Siar (6%), Orkney Islands (5%) and Highland (3%).

Highland, Argyll and Bute and Fife together accounted for 9,100 second homes, more than a third (38%) of the total for Scotland.

In 2022 there were 0.35 dwellings per hectare in Scotland as a whole. However, this varies widely between council areas. Highland and Na h-Eileanan Siar had the lowest density of housing, each with an average of 0.05 dwellings per hectare. Glasgow City had the highest average density (18.54 dwellings per hectare), followed by Dundee City (12.72 dwellings per hectare).

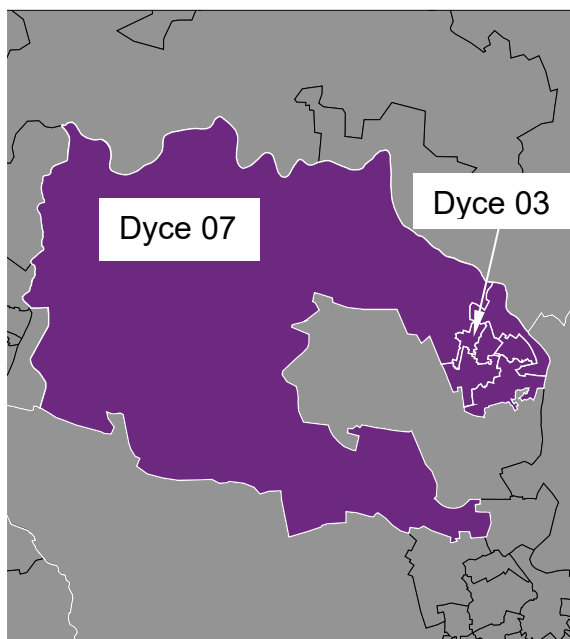
Figure 6: Proportion of dwellings which are vacant, long-term empty or second homes by council area, 2022



Data Zones

While each Data Zone in Scotland is designed to have a roughly similar population size, those in more urban council areas tend to be much smaller in area (see Figure 7). This is because of the greater density of population and dwellings in such areas. The Data Zone level information can be used to illustrate geographic patterns within council areas.

Figure 7: Example of difference in size for Data Zones: Aberdeen City: Dyce

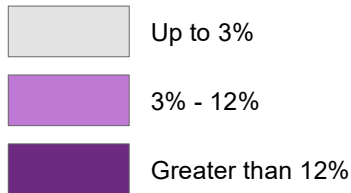


The distributions of household and dwelling characteristics can vary considerably within a council area. For example, in 2022 North Ayrshire had a relatively high proportion of dwellings which were second homes: 2.2% compared with 0.9% for Scotland as a whole. However, as Figure 8 shows, this is mainly because North Ayrshire includes the island of Arran, which has high proportions of second homes. The proportion in the mainland part of North Ayrshire is much lower.

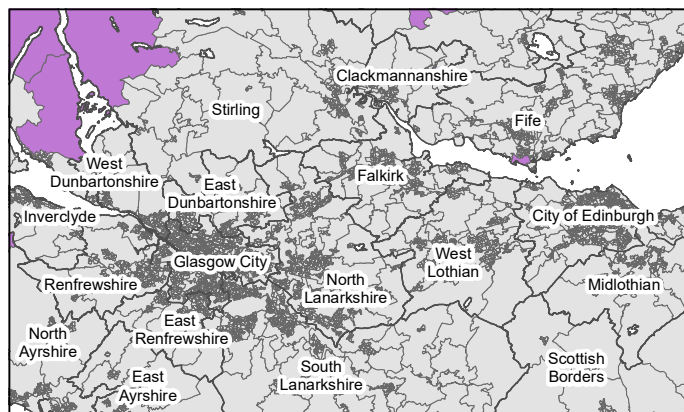
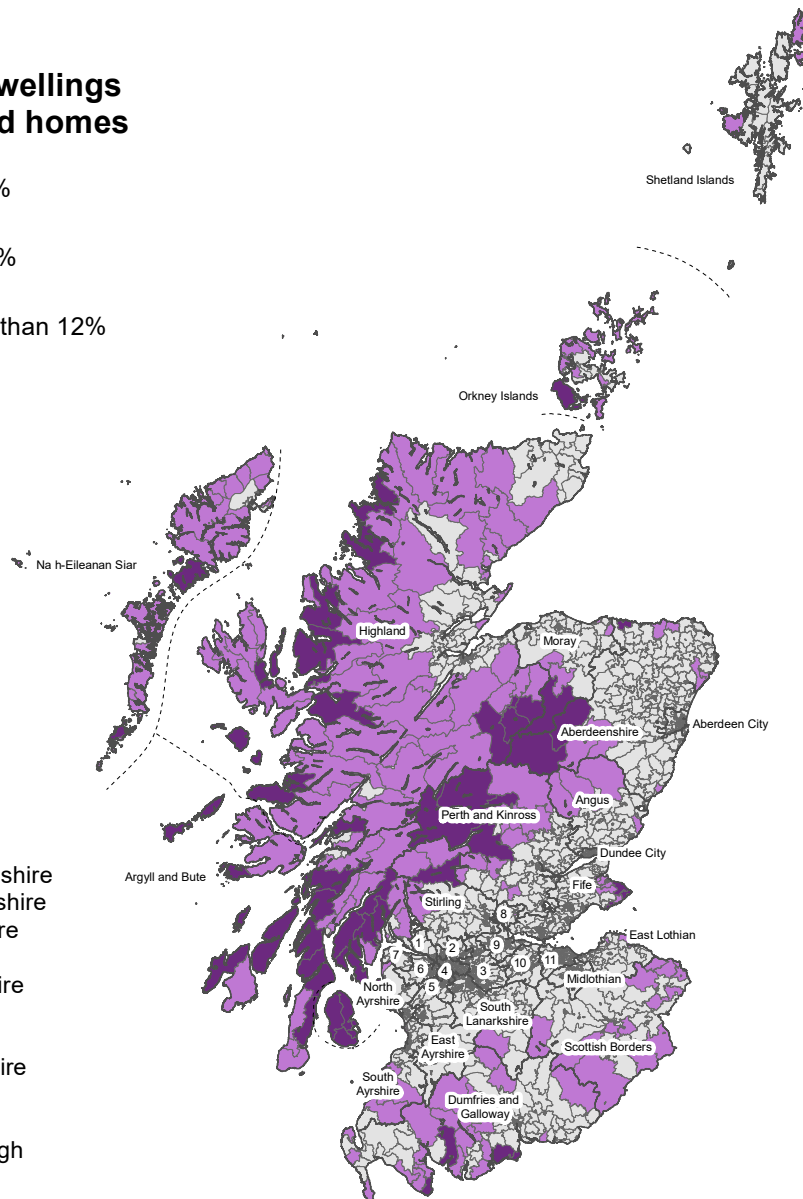
The Data Zone level estimates of occupied and vacant dwellings, and of dwelling characteristics, are published in full online at the [NRS website](https://www.nrs.gov.scot/) and [statistics.gov.scot](https://www.statistics.gov.scot/).

Figure 8: Percentage of dwellings which are second homes in each Data Zone, September 2022

Percentage of dwellings which are second homes



1. West Dunbartonshire
2. East Dunbartonshire
3. North Lanarkshire
4. Glasgow City
5. East Renfrewshire
6. Renfrewshire
7. Inverclyde
8. Clackmannanshire
9. Falkirk
10. West Lothian
11. City of Edinburgh



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Dwellings with Council Tax discounts and exemptions

Single adult discounts from Council Tax are granted to dwellings where one adult lives either alone, with children or with another adult who is 'disregarded' for Council Tax purposes (for example a student). In 2022, 39% of dwellings in Scotland received a single adult Council Tax discount. This proportion varied from 31% in East Renfrewshire to 45% in Dundee City and Glasgow City.

Some occupied dwellings are exempt from paying Council Tax. Most of these are all-student households, though this category also includes other types of occupied dwellings such as armed forces accommodation. Summary information from Council Tax systems is therefore a good source of data on the numbers of such dwellings. In 2022, 3.3% of dwellings in Scotland were occupied but exempt from paying Council Tax.

The proportion of occupied dwellings that are exempt from Council Tax tends to be highest in council areas which have major universities, and therefore large student populations. They also tend to be quite concentrated within certain parts of these council areas.

The council areas with the highest proportion of dwellings with unoccupied exemptions in 2022 were:

- Orkney Islands (3.7%, 400 dwellings)
- Inverclyde (3.5%, 1,400)
- Na h-Eileanan Siar (3.5%, 500).

Characteristics of dwellings

In 2022, around three in five (59%) dwellings in Scotland fell into the lowest Council Tax bands (A-C). This proportion was highest in Na h-Eileanan Siar (77%) and lowest in East Renfrewshire (26%). Just over one in seven (14%) dwellings fell into the highest Council Tax bands (F-H). This proportion was highest in East Renfrewshire (36%) and lowest in Na h-Eileanan Siar (2%).

Urban rural areas

The Scottish Government produces an [Urban Rural classification](#). This is based on settlement size defined by NRS and accessibility based on drive-time analysis.

The density of dwellings in large urban areas is around 370 times greater than in remote rural.

Figure 9: Change in the number of households (= occupied dwellings) by Urban Rural Classification, 2015 to 2022

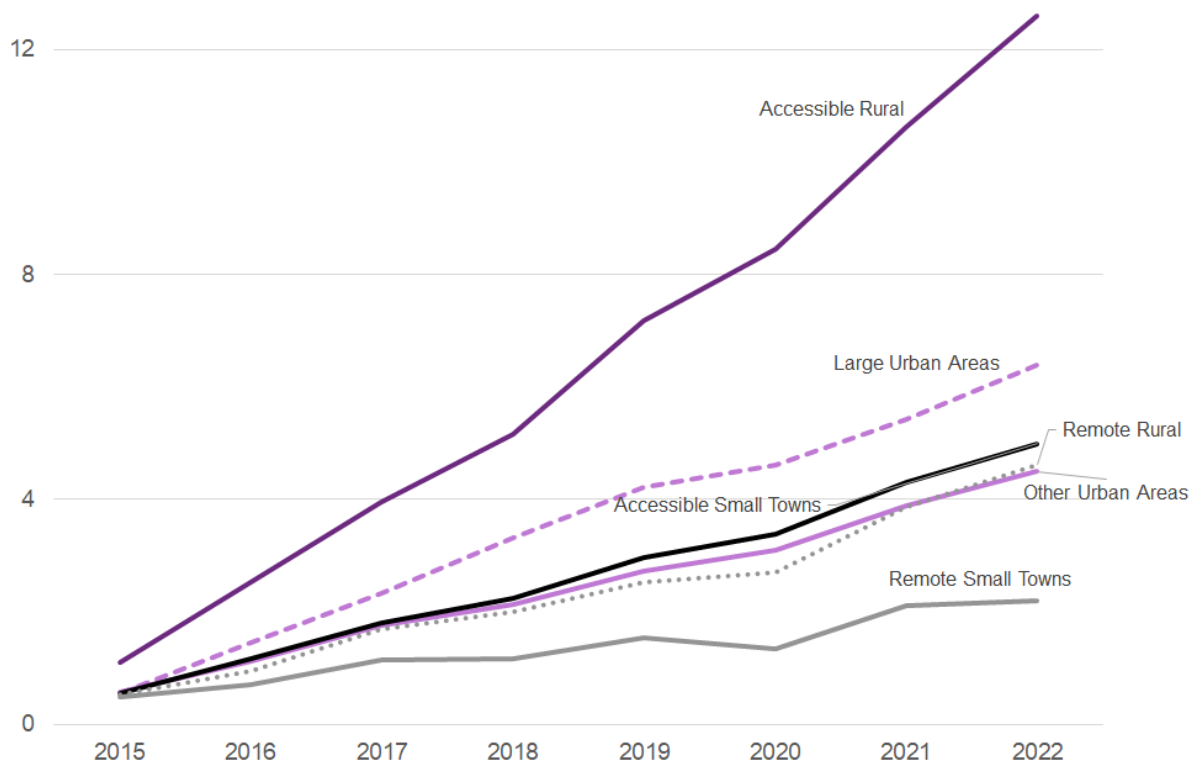


Figure 9 illustrates the percentage change in the number of households by urban rural area since 2015. The greatest increase in the number of households over this period were accessible rural areas (13%). This compared with an increase of just 2% for remote small towns.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) measures level of deprivation across Scotland. More information is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Figure 10: Proportion of long-term empty dwellings, dwellings with unoccupied exemptions and second homes in Scotland by SIMD decile, 2022

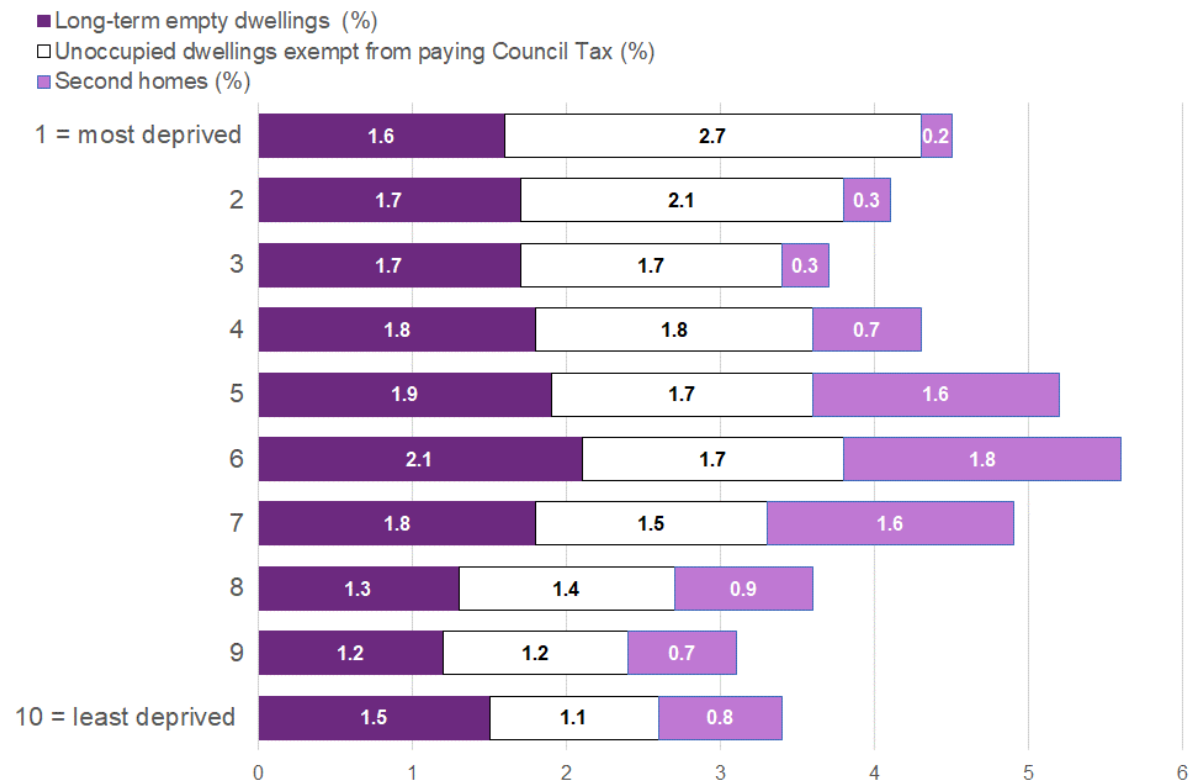


Figure 10 shows the percentage of vacant dwellings and second homes by SIMD decile. The proportion of vacant dwellings is generally smaller in the less deprived SIMD deciles. Second homes are less likely to be located in more deprived areas.

Figure 11: Proportion of dwellings in Council Tax bands A to C, with a single adult discount and number of dwellings per hectare in the most deprived and least deprived SIMD decile, 2022

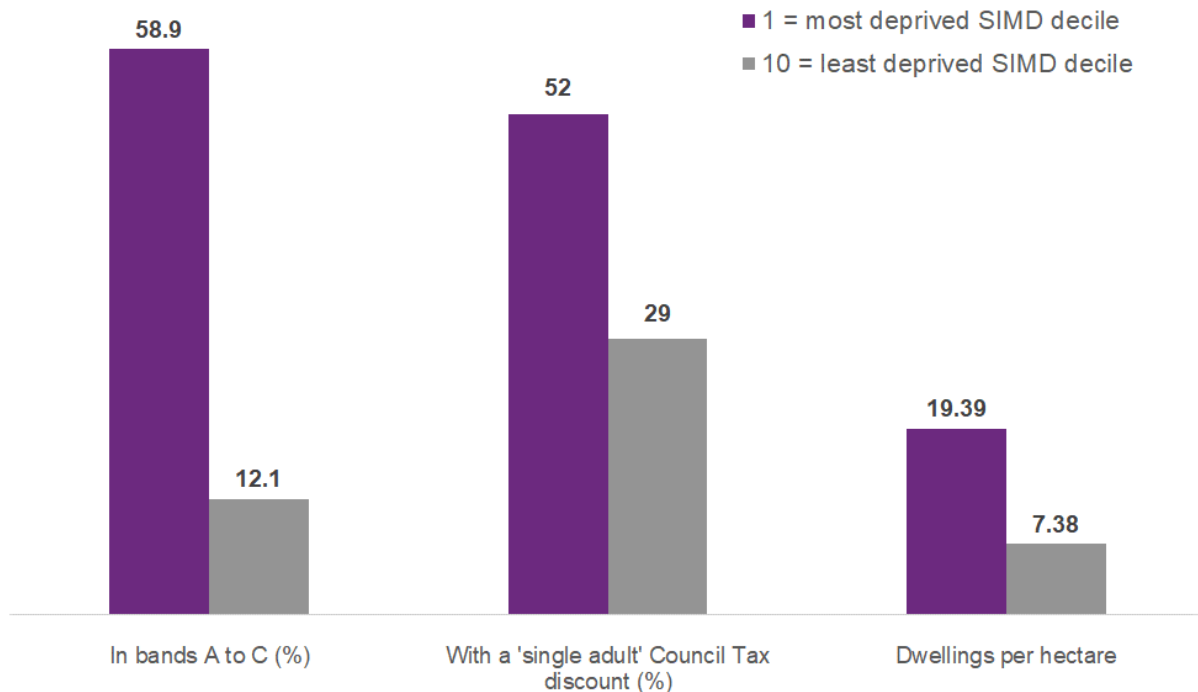


Figure 11 illustrates that the most deprived neighbourhoods have much higher proportions of dwellings in the lowest (A-C) Council Tax bands, and with a single adult discount from Council Tax. The density of dwellings in the most deprived neighbourhoods (19 dwellings per hectare) is nearly three times that in the least deprived areas (7 dwellings per hectare).

The data tables for the analysis by urban rural and SIMD classifications can be downloaded from the [NRS website](#) for dwelling characteristics (2005 to 2022) and for occupied and vacant dwellings (2014 to 2022).

Household and dwellings estimates for other geographies

Household and dwelling estimates for electoral wards and parliamentary constituencies are available from the [NRS website](#). These are based on aggregations of the estimates for Data Zones.

3. Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in August 2021 following a compliance check by the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. It signifies the statistics have been produced in line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and are compliant with the [Code of Practice](#). 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.

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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.

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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.

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