

Population by Country of Birth and Nationality, 2020



Published on 17 September 2021

This report provides statistics on the number of non-UK born and non-British nationals living in Scotland and each council area, using data from the Annual Population Survey.

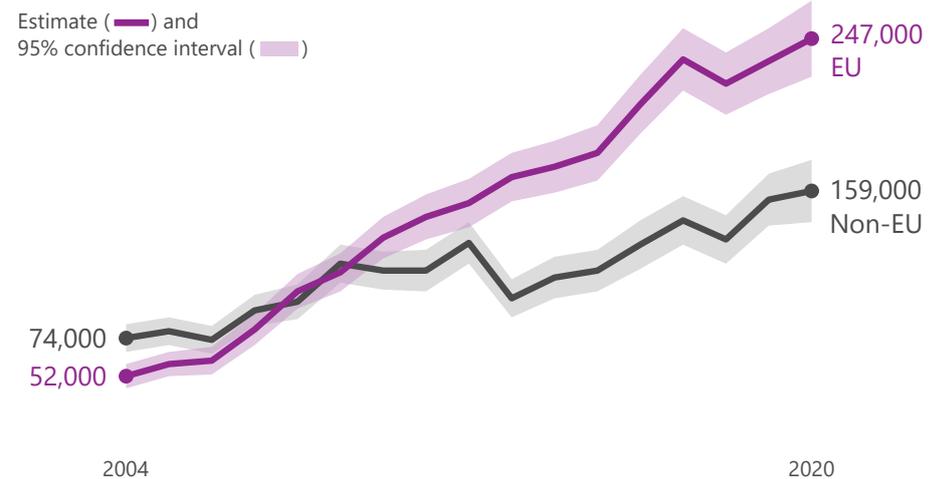
Important

A new weighting method has been introduced to the survey which this report is based on. As a result, breakdowns of population estimates below the EU and non-EU level are subject to greater uncertainty. Caution should therefore be taken when making comparisons with these data.

In 2020, there were 406,000 non-British nationals in Scotland

Following EU expansion in 2004, the population of EU nationals has increased. The number of non-EU nationals has also increased, although at a generally lower rate than EU nationals.

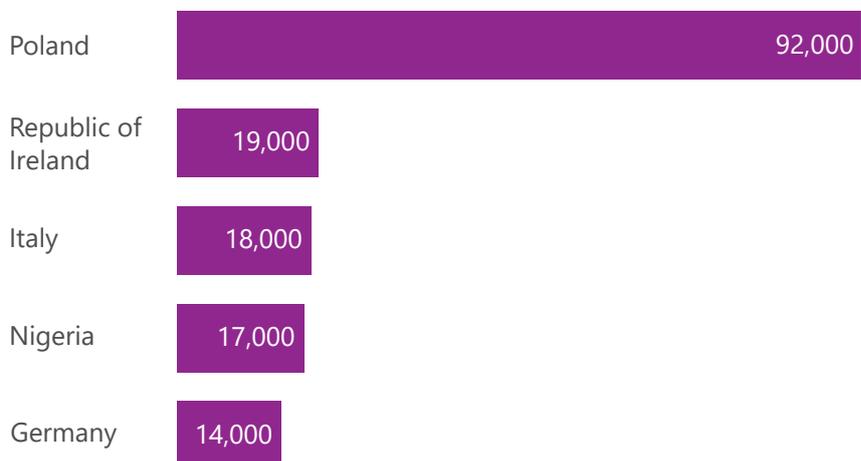
Number of non-British nationals, 2004-2020



Polish was the most common non-British nationality

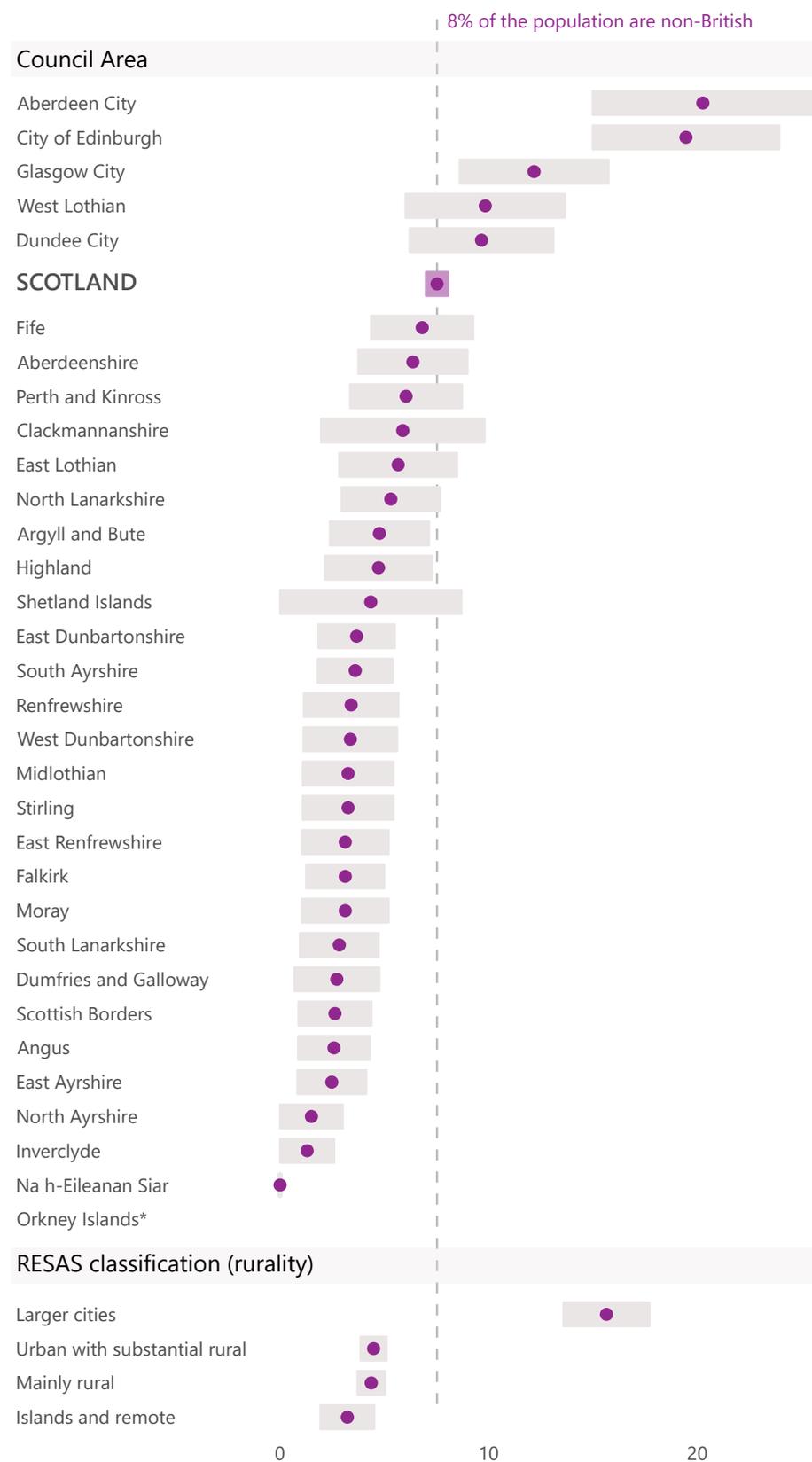
In 2020, Polish was the most common non-British nationality, with 92,000 people. Polish nationals accounted for almost one quarter (23%) of all non-British nationals living in Scotland.

Most common non-British nationalities in Scotland, 2020



Population who are non-British nationals (percentage)

Estimate (●) and 95% confidence interval (■)



* Estimates for Orkney Islands are not available due to disclosure control.

Population of non-British nationals varies across council areas

In 2020, cities had the largest proportion of non-British residents – highest in Aberdeen City (20%), City of Edinburgh (19%) and Glasgow City (12%). This compares to the Scottish average of 8%.

Estimates of EU and non-EU nationals living in council areas are available on the NRS website.

* Confidence intervals are reported to the nearest thousand. For Na h-Eileanan Siar they round to zero; for Shetland Islands the lower limit rounds to zero.

Non-British nationals are more likely to live in larger cities

- Areas are grouped by their level of rurality into:
- larger cities
 - urban with substantial rural areas
 - mainly rural
 - islands and remote

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Main Points

Population by nationality

- In 2020, there were estimated to be 406,000 non-British nationals living in Scotland. This represented about 8% of Scotland's population.
- Of all non-British nationals, 61% were EU nationals (247,000) and 39% were non-EU nationals (159,000).
- Prior to 2010, the populations of EU and non-EU nationals living in Scotland were similar. Since 2010, the population of EU nationals has consistently been higher than the population of non-EU nationals.
- Polish was the most common non-British nationality in Scotland in 2020, with 92,000 nationals (23% of the total non-British population).
- The council areas with the largest proportion of residents with a non-British nationality were Aberdeen City (20%), City of Edinburgh (19%), and Glasgow City (12%).

Population by country of birth

- In 2020, there were estimated to be 516,000 people living in Scotland who were born outside the UK. This represented about 10% of Scotland's population.
- Of those who were born outside the UK, around half (257,000) were born in an EU country, and around half (258,000) were born elsewhere in the world.
- The gap between the numbers of EU and non-EU born people in Scotland has narrowed over time. A decade ago, there was a relatively higher proportion of non-EU born people in Scotland.
- Poland was the most common non-UK country of birth in Scotland in 2020, making up around 16% of people (80,000) born outside the UK.
- The council areas with the largest proportion of residents born outside of the UK were Aberdeen City (25%), City of Edinburgh (23%) and Glasgow City (15%).



A **new weighting methodology** has been introduced which calibrates to UK, EU and non-EU born weighting populations for periods from January 2020. More information can be found in the [background information](#) section.

1. Introduction

This publication summarises the latest estimates of the Scottish population by country of birth and nationality, for the year ending December 2020. These estimates are produced using the Annual Population Survey (APS) which is carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Country of birth refers to the country a person was born in, and it cannot change. **Nationality** is the nationality a person stated when they were interviewed. This can change. For example, someone may later apply to become a British national.

These statistics relate to the year ending December 2020 and therefore cover part of the period of the coronavirus pandemic. As the APS data collection has been impacted by COVID-19, a new weighting methodology has been used. More information on this can be found in the [Background Information](#) section.

It is important to note that the APS estimates the number of non-British nationals and non-UK born living in the UK at a particular point in time, regardless of when they moved to the UK.

What are you looking for?

The data used in this publication

All figures from this publication

Data for council areas

Individual country data from the APS for Scotland and other regions across the UK

Analysis from ONS on trends at UK level

Where is it?

[Data](#)

[Charts](#)

[Data](#)

[ONS tables](#)

[ONS statistical bulletins](#)

2. Population by nationality

How many non-British nationals are there in Scotland?

There were about **406,000 non-British nationals** living in Scotland in 2020, which accounted for about 8% of the Scottish population. A breakdown by nationality group is shown in [Table 1](#).

1 in 13 people living in Scotland in 2020 was a non-British national.



Because of the **new weighting methodology**, breakdowns of population estimates below the EU and non-EU level are likely to be subject to greater uncertainty. Therefore, caution should be taken when making comparisons with these data.

Table 1: Population by nationality in Scotland, 2020

Nationality	Population	Percentage of non-British population
All	5,396,000 ¹	-
British	4,988,000	-
Non-British	406,000	-
EU (total)	247,000	61%
EU14	107,000	26%
EU8	127,000	31%
EU2	11,000	3%
EU Other	3,000	1%
Non-EU (total)	159,000	39%
Other Europe	7,000	2%
Asia	59,000	15%
Rest of the World	93,000	23%

Source: Annual Population Survey (APS), Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Notes: All estimates rounded to the nearest thousand. Totals may not add exactly due to this rounding.

Of all **non-British nationals** living in Scotland in 2020:

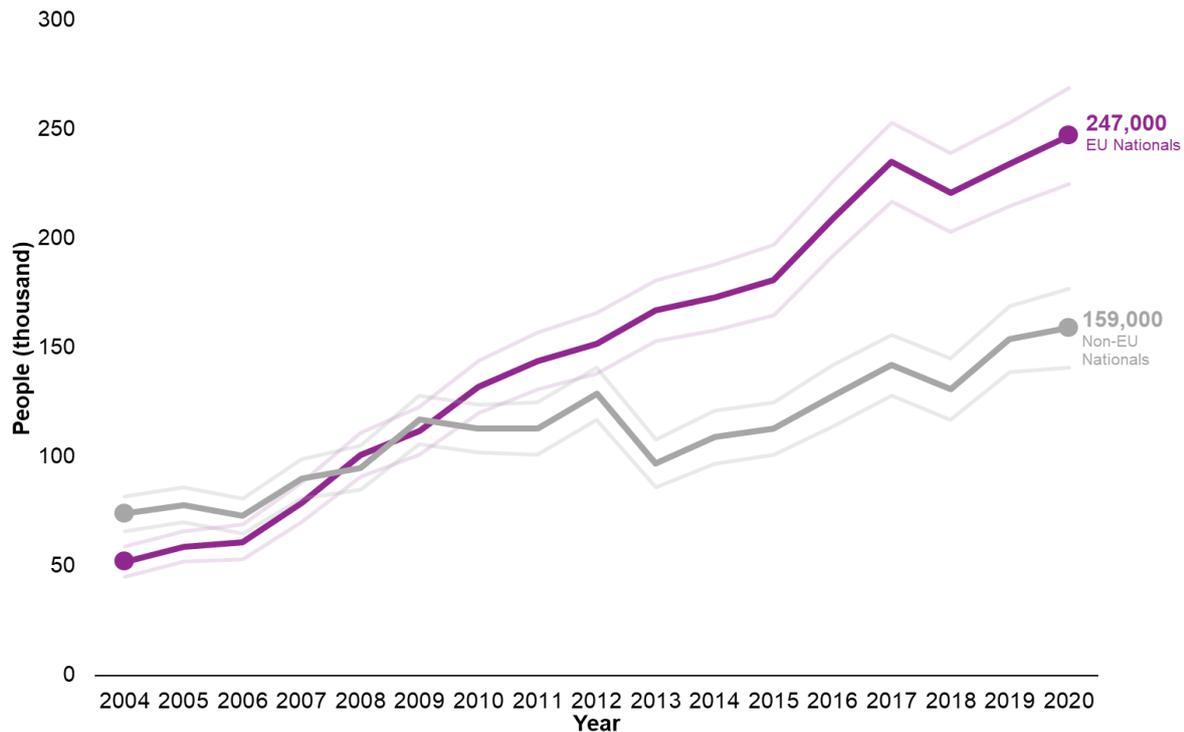
- 247,000 (61%) were EU nationals.
- 159,000 (39%) were non-EU nationals.

¹ This figure is lower than the mid-2020 population estimate. The differences between the APS and the mid-year population estimates are explained in the [background section](#) of this report.

How has the number of non-British nationals changed over time?

Figure 1 shows the change in the number of EU and non-EU nationals living in Scotland between 2004 and 2020. Following EU expansion in 2004, the estimated population of EU nationals has increased. The number of non-EU nationals living in Scotland has also increased over this period although at a generally lower rate than the number of EU nationals.

Figure 1: Population by nationality in Scotland, 2004 to 2020



Note: Lighter lines represent the 95% confidence interval on these estimates

As these estimates come from a survey, there is sampling variability and a degree of uncertainty around the estimates. [Confidence intervals](#) are used to show this uncertainty and these are displayed in [Figure 1](#) alongside the estimates.

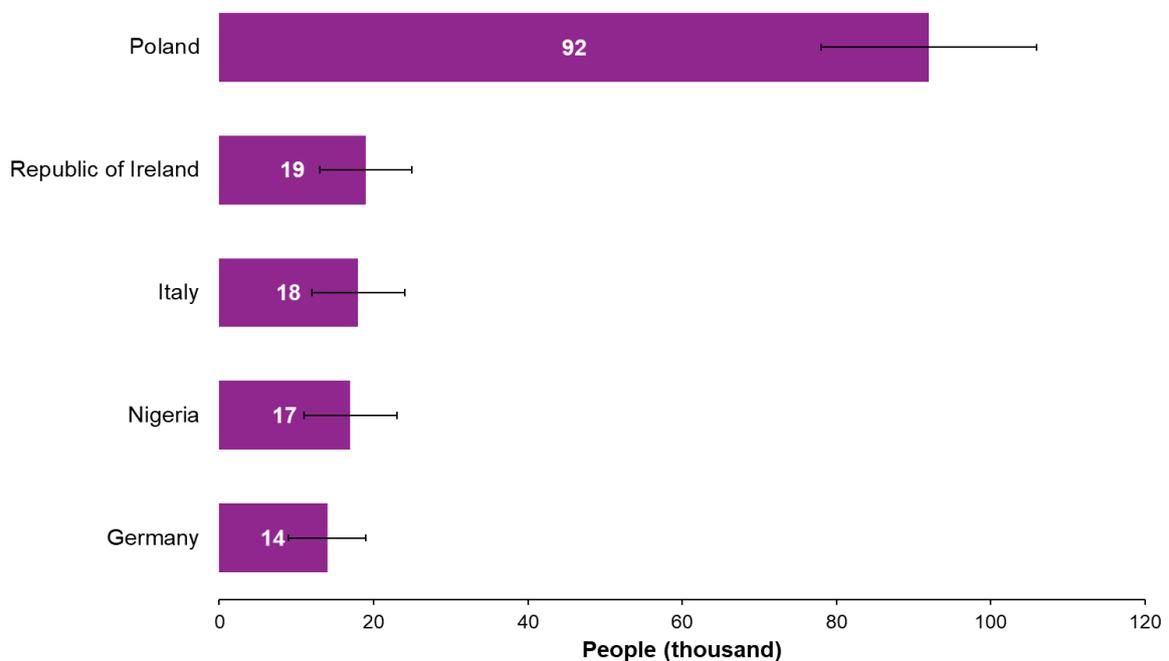
What are the most common non-British nationalities in Scotland?

Polish was the most common non-British nationality. In 2020, Polish nationals accounted for almost one quarter (23%) of all non-British nationals living in Scotland. The five most common non-British nationalities in Scotland in 2020 are displayed in [Figure 2](#). Breakdowns of the most common nationalities by EU and non-EU are available from the [NRS website](#).



Because of the **new weighting methodology**, breakdowns of population estimates below the EU and non-EU level are likely to be subject to greater uncertainty. Therefore, caution should be taken when making comparisons with these data.

Figure 2: Most common non-British nationalities in Scotland, 2020



Note: Lower and upper 95% confidence interval limits indicated by error bars.

Where in Scotland do non-British nationals live?

The population estimates by nationality groups are also available for Scotland's council areas and can be accessed on the [NRS website](#).

The council areas with the largest **proportion** of residents with a **non-British nationality** were:

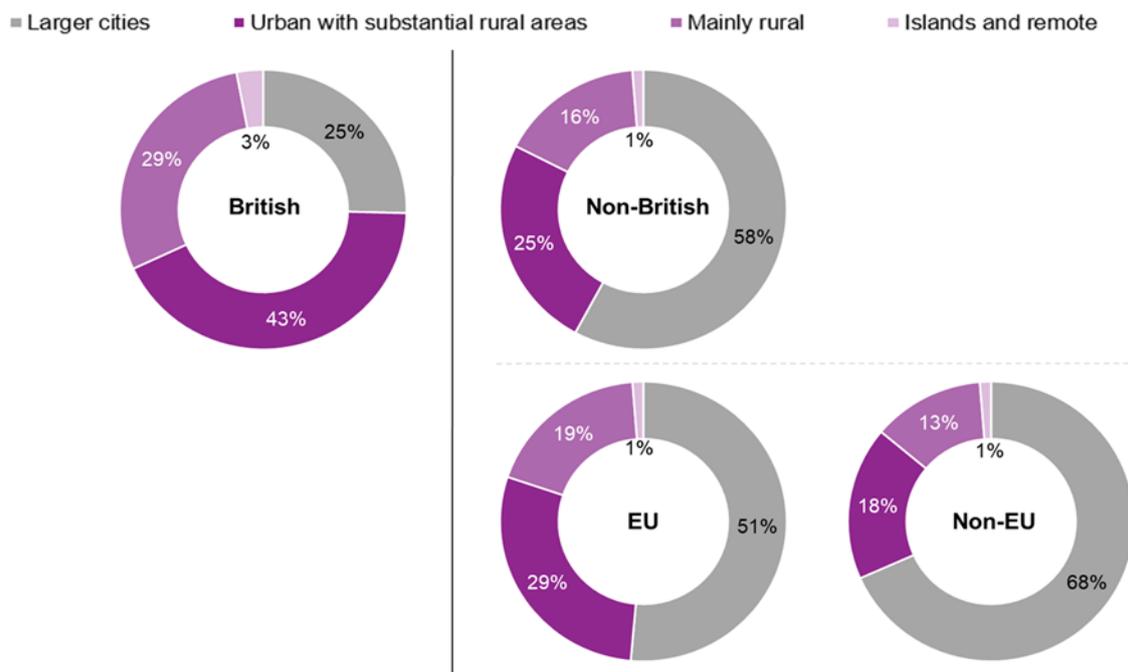
- Aberdeen City (20%)
- City of Edinburgh (19%)
- Glasgow City (12%)

The same council areas had the largest **numbers** of **non-British nationals**:

- City of Edinburgh (100,000)
- Glasgow City (75,000)
- Aberdeen City (46,000)

To understand where people live within the country, councils can be grouped together using the [RESAS classification](#)² of Scottish council areas. This groups areas according to their level of rurality using four different categories: *larger cities*, *urban with substantial rural areas*, *mainly rural*, and *islands and remote*. As shown in [Figure 3](#), different nationality groups tend to live in slightly different areas within Scotland.

Figure 3: Population by nationality and RESAS classification, 2020



Note: Figures are rounded and may therefore not add up to 100%.

² The Scottish Government's Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) have developed a fourfold classification of council areas according to their level of rurality. More information can be found in their research paper: [Understanding the Scottish rural economy \(2018\)](#).

Among **British nationals**, who make up 92% of Scotland's population, the largest proportion (43%) lived in areas classed as urban with substantial rural areas. Just 25% of British nationals lived in larger cities.

Non-British nationals made up about **16%** of the population in larger cities in 2020.

Non-British nationals were more likely to live in cities than the British population. In 2020, over half of non-British nationals (58%) lived in larger cities. Within the non-British population, non-EU nationals were more likely to live in larger cities than EU-nationals.

The British population were more likely to live both in rural areas and in island and remote areas than the non-British population.

3. Population by country of birth

How many non-UK born people are there in Scotland?

In 2020, there were 516,000 people living in Scotland who were **born outside of the UK** – about 10% of the Scottish population. A breakdown of the non-UK born population by country groupings is shown in [Table 2](#).



As the **reweighting methodology** uses UK, EU and non-EU born population totals, breakdowns of population estimates below this level are likely to be subject to greater uncertainty. Therefore, caution should be taken when making comparisons with these data.

Table 2: Population by country of birth in Scotland, 2020

Country of birth	Population	Percentage of non-UK born population
All	5,396,000 ³	-
UK	4,879,000	-
Non-UK	516,000	-
EU (total)	257,000	50%
EU14	124,000	24%
EU8	114,000	22%
EU2	12,000	2%
EU Other	6,000	1%
Non-EU (total)	258,000	50%
Other Europe	14,000	3%
Asia	111,000	22%
Rest of the World	133,000	26%

Source: Annual Population Survey (APS), Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Notes: All estimates rounded to the nearest thousand. Totals may not add exactly due to this rounding.

Around **1 in 10** people living in Scotland in 2020 were born outside the UK.

Of all **non-UK born** people living in Scotland in 2020:

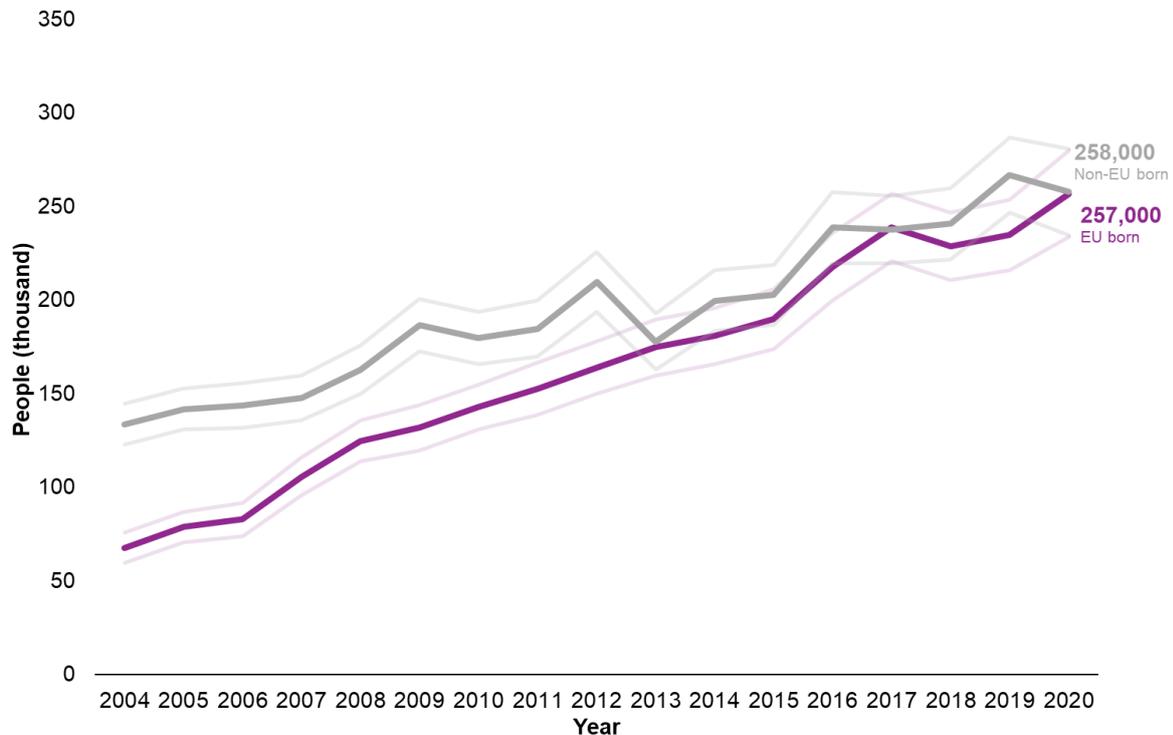
- 257,000 (50%) were born in the EU.
- 258,000 (50%) were born outside the EU.

³ This figure is lower than the mid-2020 population estimate. The differences between the APS and the mid-year population estimates are explained in the [background section](#) of this report.

How has the non-UK born population living in Scotland changed over time?

Figure 4 shows the change in the **EU born** and **non-EU born** populations of Scotland since 2004. The estimated population of both EU and non-EU born people has increased over this period.

Figure 4: Population by country of birth in Scotland, 2004 to 2020



More information about confidence intervals and statistical significance can be found in the [Background Information](#) section of this report.

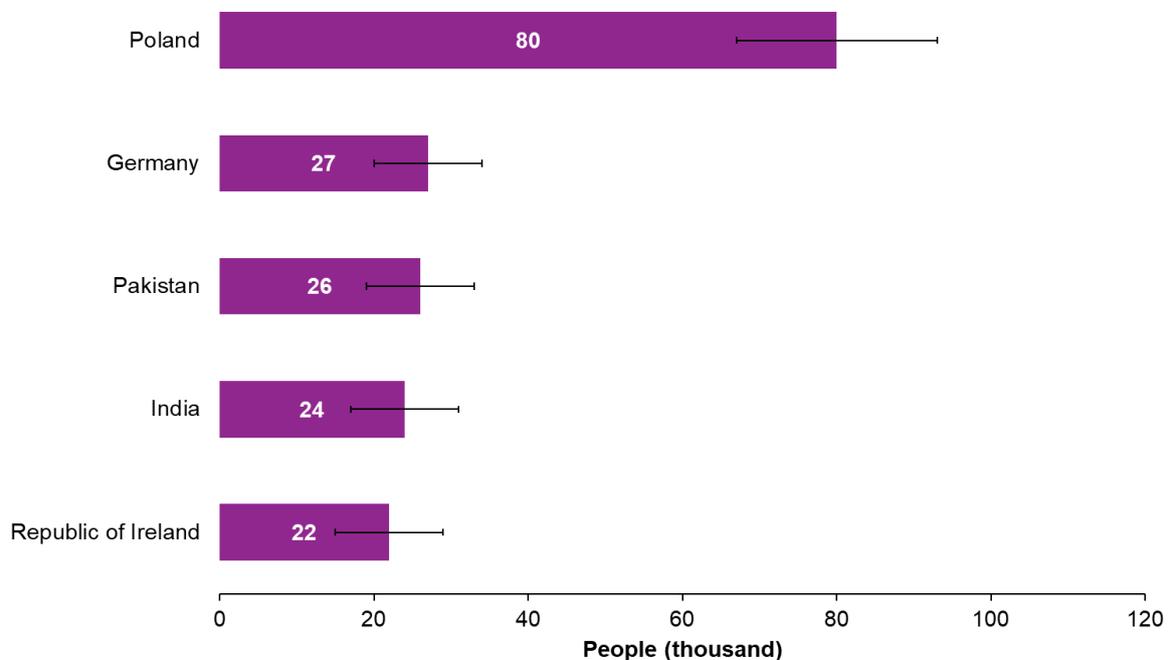
What are the most common non-UK countries of birth in Scotland?

The most common non-UK countries of birth in Scotland in 2020 are shown in [Figure 5](#). **Poland** was the most common non-UK country of birth in 2020; 16% (80,000) of all non-UK born people living in Scotland were born in Poland. Breakdowns of the most common countries of birth by EU and non-EU are available from the [NRS website](#).



As the **reweighting methodology** uses UK, EU and non-EU born population totals, breakdowns of population estimates below this level are likely to be subject to greater uncertainty. Therefore, caution should be taken when making comparisons with these data.

Figure 5: Most common non-UK countries of birth in Scotland, 2020



Note: Lower and upper 95% confidence interval limits indicated by error bars.

Where in Scotland do people born outside the UK live?

The population estimates by country of birth groupings are available for Scotland's council areas and can be found on the [NRS website](#).

The council areas with the largest **proportion** of their population **born outside the UK** were:

- Aberdeen City (25%)
- City of Edinburgh (23%)
- Glasgow City (15%)

The same council areas had the largest **numbers** of people being **born outside the UK** in 2020:

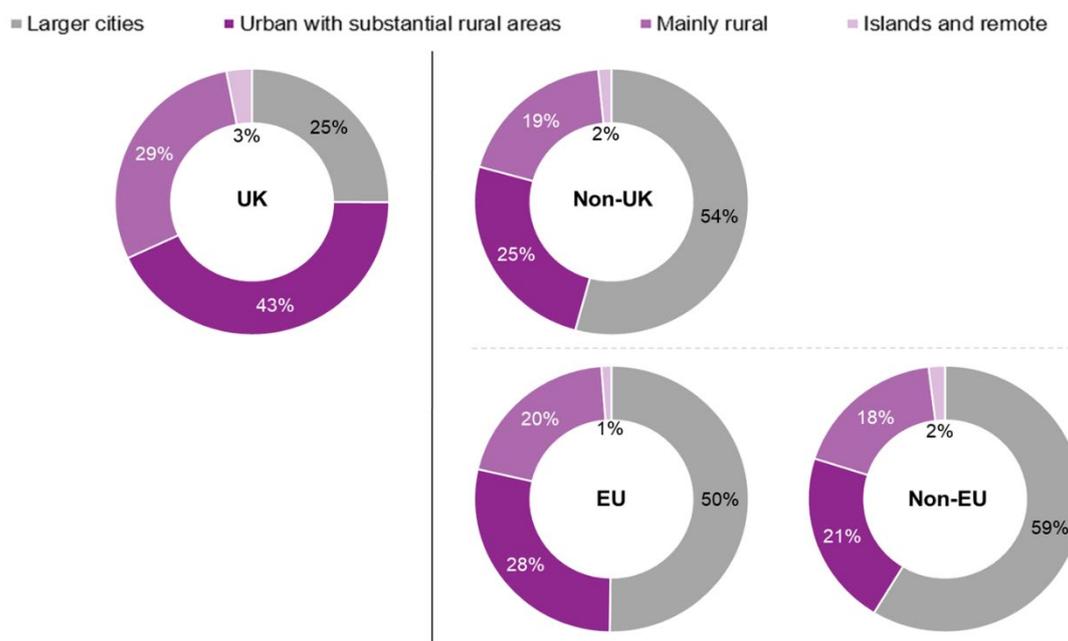
- City of Edinburgh (116,000)
- Glasgow City (90,000)
- Aberdeen City (56,000)

Figure 6 shows where people lived in Scotland in 2020 by country of birth and RESAS classification:

In 2020, **19%** of the population of larger cities were born outside the UK.

- Most of the non-UK born population (54%) lived in larger cities, compared to 25% of the UK born population.
- A smaller proportion of EU born people lived in larger cities (50%) than non-EU born people (59%).
- A larger proportion of EU born people lived in urban with substantial rural areas (28%) compared to non-EU born people (21%).
- 20% of EU born people lived in mainly rural areas, compared to 18% of non-EU born people, and 29% of UK-born people.

Figure 6: Population by country of birth and RESAS classification, 2020



Note: Figures are rounded and may therefore not add up to 100%.

4. Links to related statistics

Other statistical publications that use the Annual Population Survey (APS), and other publications about population and migration in Scotland, can be found at the links below.

Population by country of birth and nationality, UK (ONS) – uses data from the APS to estimate the non-British national and non-UK born populations of the UK as a whole

Non-UK nationals in Scotland's Workforce (Scottish Government) – uses data from the APS to provide insight into labour market characteristics of non-British nationals

Mid-Year Population Estimates, Scotland (NRS) – headline population and migration statistics for Scotland, as at mid-year (30 June)

Migration flows, Scotland (NRS) – measure the number of people moving to and from an area over a specific period of time

5. Background information

What is the APS?

All the latest statistics in this report come from the Annual Population Survey (APS), carried out by the Office for National Statistics, covering the period January 2020 to December 2020. The APS uses data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) plus a number of sample boosts. The boost for Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government. The APS had a sample size of 216,000 respondents across the UK in 2020 and the sample size for Scotland was around 26,000 people.

How has the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic impacted these estimates?

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic introduced new challenges in how population and migration statistics are produced. The methods used in previous versions of this publication relied on population projections to account for the size and distribution of the population. These population projections predated the pandemic and are not able to reflect the demographic and structural impact the UK has faced.

The coronavirus pandemic meant that all face-to-face interviewing for the LFS was suspended on 17 March 2020 and replaced with telephone interviewing. This change resulted in higher non-response from those who rent their accommodation and those with a non-UK country of birth or nationality, leaving them less well-represented in

the sample. Therefore, changes were made to the LFS including a new [weighting methodology](#).

All estimates in this release use the new LFS weighting methodology. We have also updated the [July 2019 to June 2020 dataset](#) with this new methodology.

More information on the impact of COVID-19 and the reweighting methodology can be found in ONS' [Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality: 2020](#) release.

How does the APS compare with the mid-year population estimates?

The APS is a household survey. It does not cover most people living in communal establishments such as care homes, prisons and student halls of residence. The mid-year population estimates (MYE) cover the entire population, meaning that the population totals from the APS will be different from the official mid-year population estimates. The MYE provide estimates of the population by sex and age while the APS provide population estimates by country of birth and nationality. Finally, the MYE estimates the population as at 30 June of a given year, whereas the APS is conducted throughout a calendar year.

Can changes in migrant stocks be compared against changes in migration flows?

Changes in the number of people living in Scotland who are non-UK born/non-British nationals are not directly comparable with estimates of long-term international migration (such as the estimates of migration used in the mid-year population estimates). There are a few reasons for this:

- Non-UK born/non-British nationals could move to Scotland from other parts of the UK, and not be included in estimates of long-term international migration (but will instead be included in cross border migration).
- There are definitional differences between the International Passenger Survey (which is mainly used to estimate long-term international migration) and the APS:
 - The APS is a survey of residential addresses and does not include most communal establishments, whereas the International Passenger Survey includes people who live in communal establishments.
 - The APS measures the total resident population (“stock”) so captures people who may have moved to Scotland many years ago, whereas the long-term international migration estimates (“flows”) measure people moving over a specific period.

How are these statistics used?

The statistics can be used to understand the profile of the population living in local areas, and are often used by central and local government for planning and monitoring service delivery.

What is 'statistical significance'?

All population estimates produced from the Annual Population Survey (APS) are subject to sampling variability and depending on which sample we choose, an estimate can vary slightly. **Confidence intervals** are used as a measure of the precision of the estimate and to show the range in which the true data value is likely to fall. Most commonly, 95% confidence intervals are used.

When two estimates are very close, sometimes their confidence intervals overlap and it's hard to say if there is a real difference. For example, the difference may be due to sampling error or chance. In this case, the difference between the numbers is **not statistically significant**. Statistical tests are also used to confirm this.

When the confidence intervals for two estimates do not overlap, the difference between the estimates is considered **statistically significant**. A statistically significant difference is one that is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance and likely reflects a real difference.

Users should be aware that due to the new weighting methods applied to the 2020 data by the ONS, comparisons with previous years' estimates are subject to increased uncertainty.

6. Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) 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 [UKSA](#) 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 meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss our 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 'Metadata' document that is published alongside this publication on the [NRS website](#).

National Records of Scotland

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Preserving the past – We look after Scotland's national archives so that they are available for current and future generations, and 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](#).

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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

For all other enquiries, please contact statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk

Lead Statistician: Esther Roughsedge