

# Vital Events Reference Tables

## 2020

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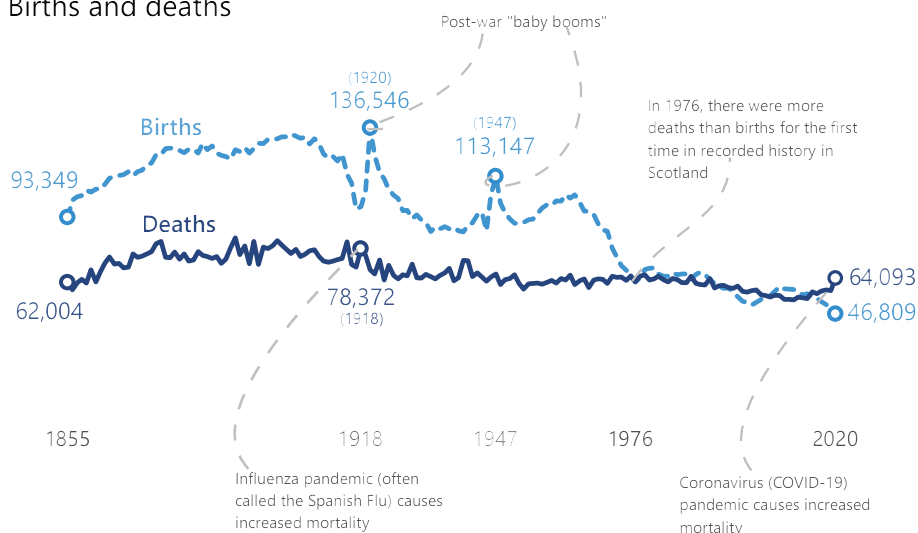
This release presents final figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020, inclusive. The tables provide statistics of births, adoptions, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths.

### Deaths at 32 year high while births are lowest ever

Deaths rose by nearly 6,000 (10%) between 2019 and 2020, and were 6,300 (11%) above the five-year average.

Births fell to the lowest ever recorded level in 2020, and were more than 3,000 (6%) lower than in 2019. Births were 5,900 (11%) lower than the five-year average.

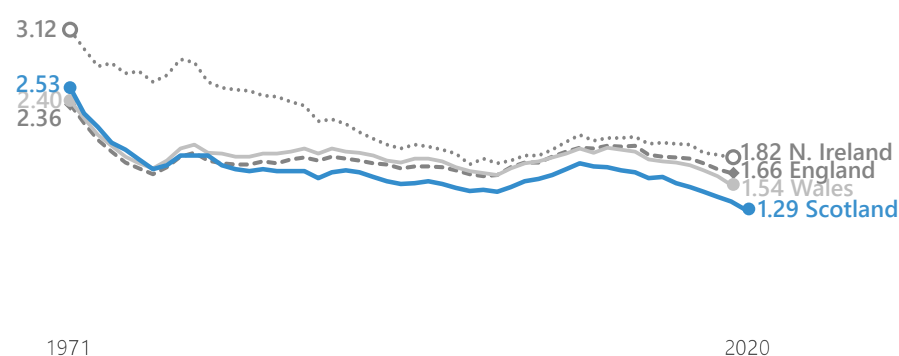
Births and deaths



### Scotland has the UK's lowest fertility rate

Until the early 1970s, Scotland's total fertility rate (TFR) was slightly higher than that for England and Wales. However, since the early 1980s, Scotland's TFR has dropped steadily and is now the lowest of the UK countries.

Total UK fertility rates, UK countries\*



\* Data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland available up until 2019

### Mortality rate increases in 2020

Taking into account population size and age structure, the mortality rate increased in Scotland by 9% in 2020.

Mortality rates have generally reduced over time, although there had been little change between 2012 and 2019. The increase in 2020 takes the rate back to 2009 levels.

Deaths, numbers and rates



#### What is an age standardised rate?

An age standardised rate takes into account the average age of the population becoming older. This gives a better comparison of the numbers over time.

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## 1. Main points

- There were 46,809 live births registered in 2020, the lowest annual total since records began in 1855.
- There were 17,284 fewer births than deaths registered in 2020. This figure - known as natural change - is the lowest ever recorded since records began in 1855.
- The total fertility rate (TFR) fell to its lowest ever level (1.29). For a population to replace itself this figure needs to be around 2.1.
- There were 198 stillbirths in 2020, a rate of 4.2 for every thousand live and still births. This was a slight increase on last year's rate (3.5) but low in historical terms.
- There were 146 infant deaths, a rate of 3.1 for every thousand live births in 2020. This was the lowest infant death rate ever recorded.
- The number of deaths registered in 2020 was 64,093. This was 10 per cent higher than the number in 2019.
- There were 6,333 (11%) excess deaths in 2020 compared to the previous five-year average, representing the highest level of excess deaths seen since 1940.
- The age-standardised mortality rate was 1,212 per 100,000 people in 2020, an increase of 9 per cent on 2019 and the highest rate observed since 2009.
- The age-standardised mortality rate for under 75s (sometimes referred to as premature mortality) increased by 7% over the last year.
- There were 11,831 marriages in 2020. This is the lowest number ever recorded. Of these, 289 were same sex marriages.
- There were 72 civil partnerships in 2020, 11 fewer than in the previous year. 33 of these involved male couples and 39 involved female couples.

## 2. Introduction

Provisional figures have been released throughout the last year on a 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 2020.

Due to delays in information on deaths received from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) tables about causes of death have not been included. These will be published in August 2021. Find more information about these delays in our [NRS Publication Schedule Changes](#).

## 3. Adoptions

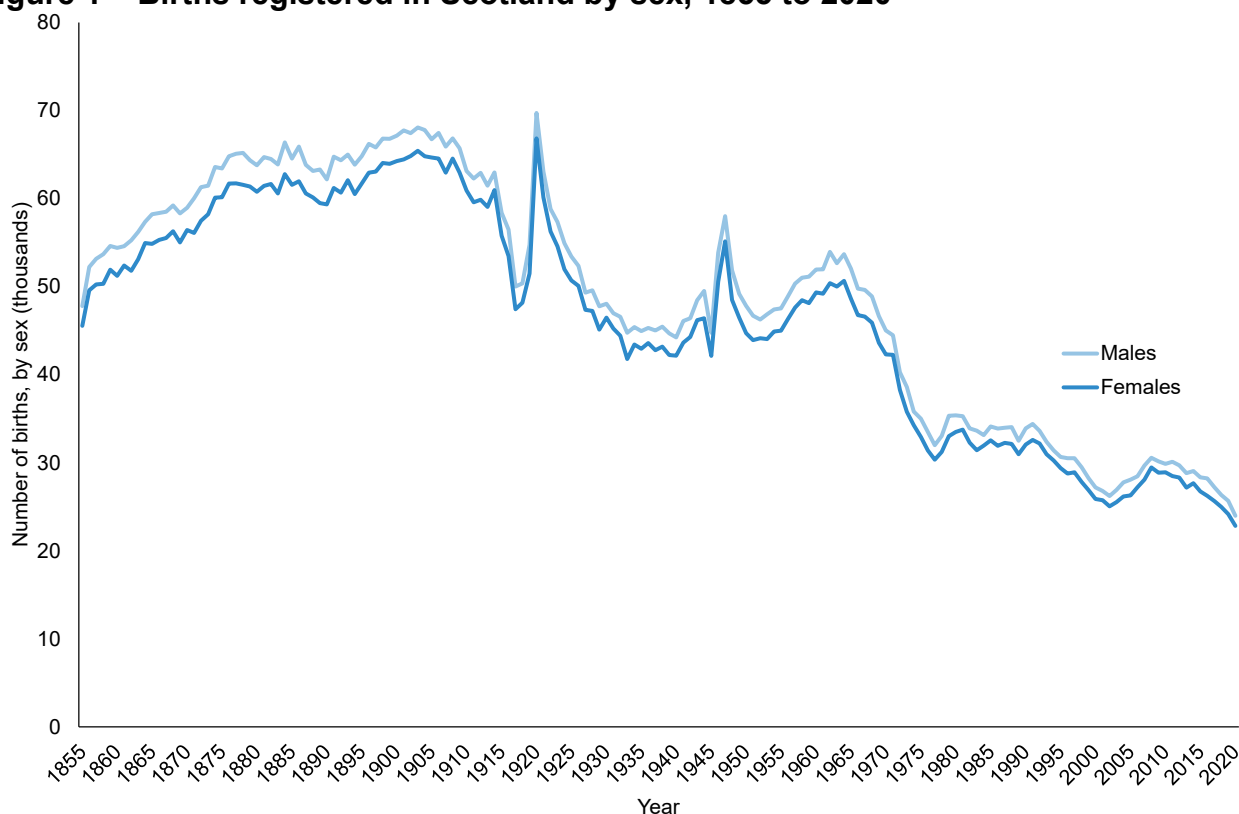
There were 211 adoptions registered in 2020, a decrease of 261 compared to 2019. The figure for 2020 does not reflect the actual number of adoptions finalised in 2020. During March 2020 registration of adoptions stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This work restarted in late October and by the end of 2020, adoptions finalised in August were being registered. Adoptions finalised in the latter part of 2020 will appear in the 2021 registration figures.

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)

Only 12 per cent of children adopted in 2020 were aged under two. Eight per cent were aged 15 or over. (Table 2.02)

## 4. Births

**Figure 1 – Births registered in Scotland by sex, 1855 to 2020**



There were 46,809 live births registered in 2020, the 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 have decreased steadily since then.

The total fertility rate (TFR) fell to its lowest ever level (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 0.96 children, followed by Glasgow City at 1.04. The highest figures tend to be in areas outside the main cities, such as Aberdeenshire and Moray (both 1.64), Midlothian (1.62) and East Dunbartonshire (1.61). (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 (1.44) and lowest in the least deprived areas (1.16). (Table 3.17)

There were more boys born than girls with 1,050 boys born for every 1,000 girls. Just over half of all live births (52%) were to unmarried parents. Multiple births accounted for 1.5% of all maternities with 672 maternities involving twins and 2 involving triplets or more. (Table 1.01b)

## 5. Stillbirths and Infant Deaths

There were 198 stillbirths in 2020, a rate of 4.2 for every thousand live and still births. This was a slight increase on last year's rate (3.5) but low in historical terms.

There were 146 infant deaths, a rate of 3.1 for every thousand live births in 2020. This was the lowest infant death rate ever recorded. (Table 1.01b)

## 6. Deaths

The number of deaths registered in 2020 was 64,093. This was 10 per cent higher than the number in 2019. There were 6,333 (11%) excess deaths in 2020 compared to the previous five-year average, representing the highest level of excess deaths seen since 1940.

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

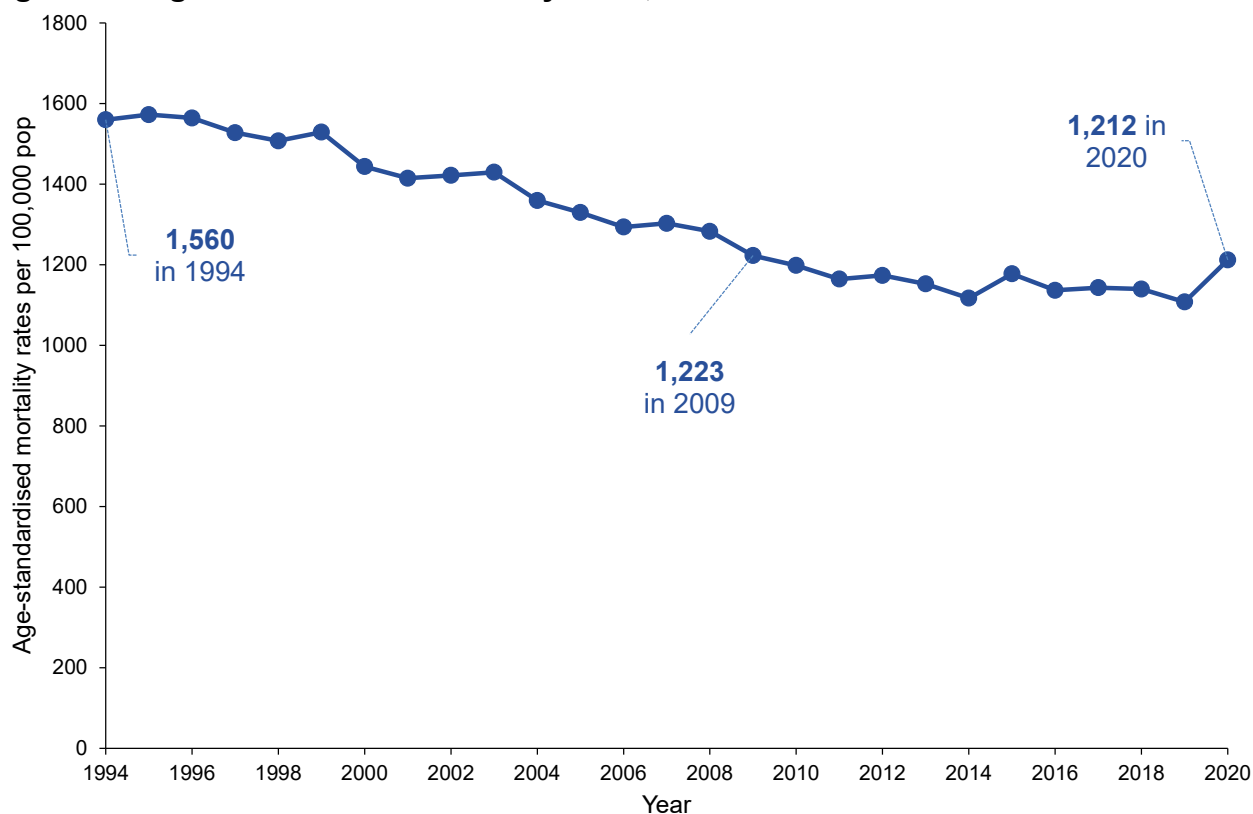
The age-standardised mortality rate was 1,212 per 100,000 people in 2020, an increase of 9 per cent on 2019 and the highest rate observed since 2009. The rate among males (1,423 per 100,000) is higher than among females (1,043 per 100,000). (Table 5.05)

Historically, age-standardised mortality rates have fallen consistently over time but there was little change between 2014 and 2019 followed by a substantial rise in 2020 coinciding with the coronavirus pandemic. (Figure 2)

Glasgow City had the highest age-standardised mortality rate of all local authority areas (1,567 per 100,000) followed by West Dunbartonshire (1,531) Inverclyde (1,479) and North Lanarkshire (1,411). (Table 5.06)

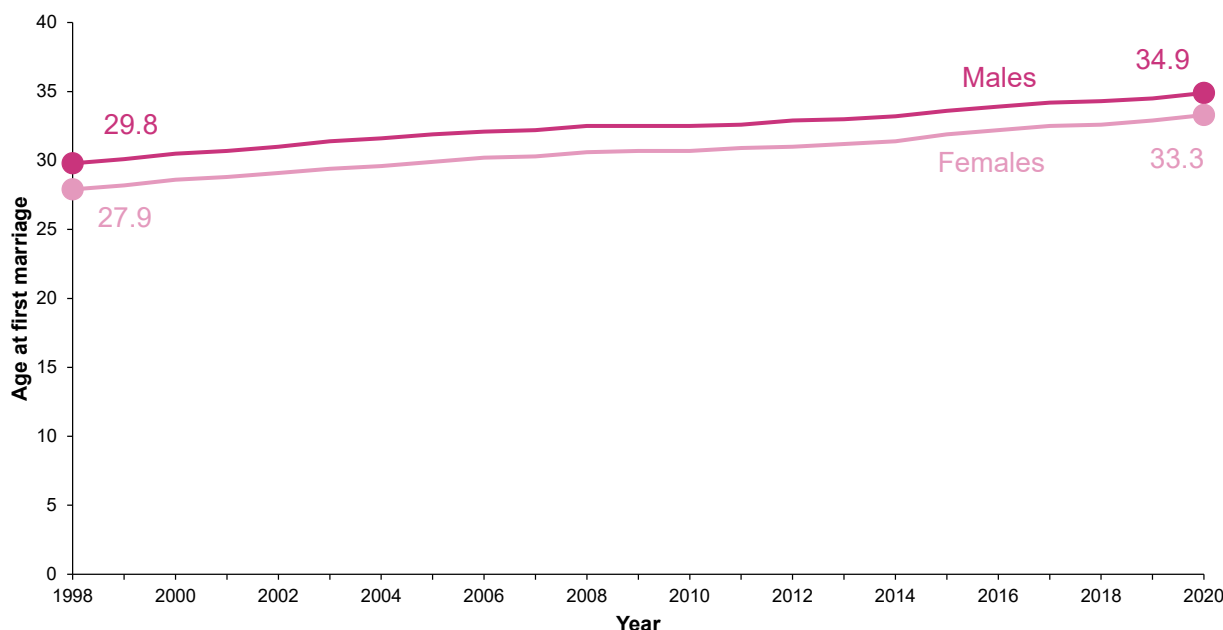
The age-standardised mortality rate for under 75s (sometimes referred to as premature mortality) increased by 7% over the last year. It had also been fairly stable between 2014 and 2019. Among under 75s there is also a higher rate among males (567 per 100,000) compared to females (355 per 100,000). (Table 5.07)

**Figure 2 – Age-standardised mortality rates, 1994 - 2020**



## 7. Marriages and Civil Partnerships

Figure 3 – Average age at first marriage, 1998 - 2020



There were 11,831 marriages in 2020. This is the lowest number ever recorded. Of these, 289 were same sex marriages. Registration offices closed in mid-March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and most marriages and civil partnerships could not take place. Ceremonies began to take place again on a restricted basis in late June 2020. (Table 1.01b)

The average age at first marriage has increased over time and in 2020 was 34.9 for males and 33.3 for females. (Table 7.03a)

Just over half of all marriages were civil ceremonies (6,653, 56%). 5,333 ceremonies were carried out by religious and other belief bodies. The most common denominations were Humanist Society Scotland (1,198), Church of Scotland (649) and Assemblies of God (479). 394 marriages were carried out by Independent Humanist Ceremonies and 311 couples were married by the Roman Catholic Church. (Table 7.07)

There were 72 civil partnerships in 2020, 11 fewer than in the previous year. 33 of these 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 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.

### 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 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](#).

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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.

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