

# Births, deaths and other vital events

## Third quarter 2020

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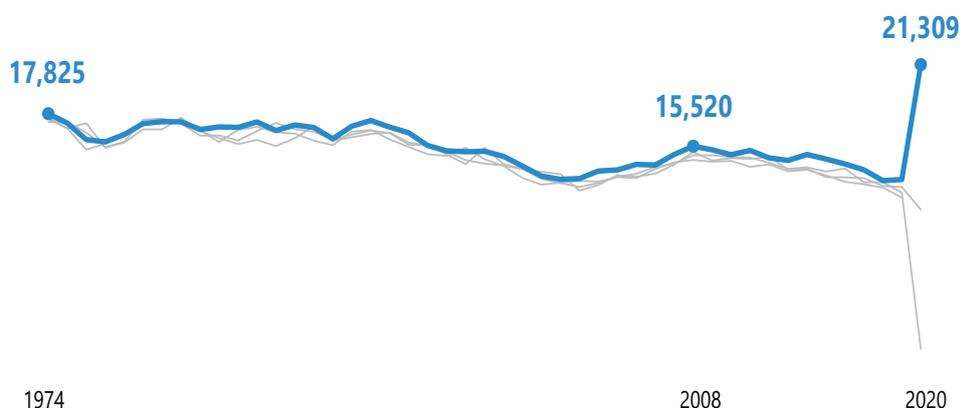


This release presents provisional figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 July to 30 September 2020, inclusive. The tables provide statistics of births, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths.

**Birth registrations restarted**

21,309 births were registered in 2020 quarter 3. This period coincided with the restart of registration of births - most birth registrations couldn't take place between mid-March and late June. Many of the quarter 3 registrations are births which took place in quarter 2.

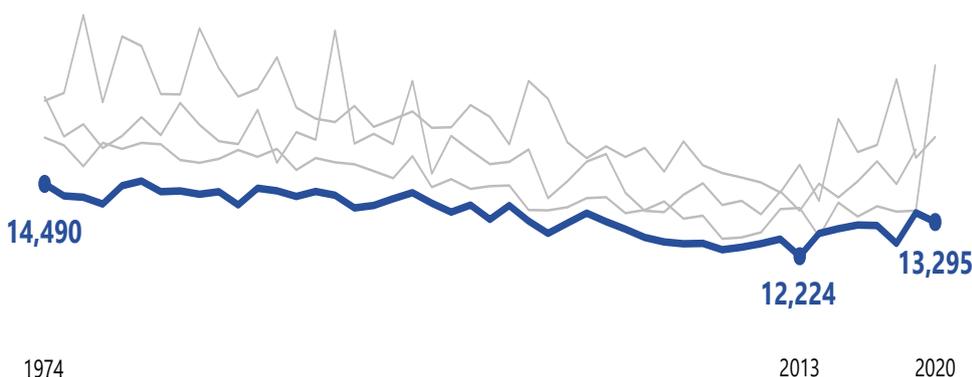
Number of births by quarter (Q1, Q2, **Q3**, Q4)



**Deaths were around average levels in July - September**

13,295 deaths were registered in July-September 2020. That's a 1% increase compared with the five year average.

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

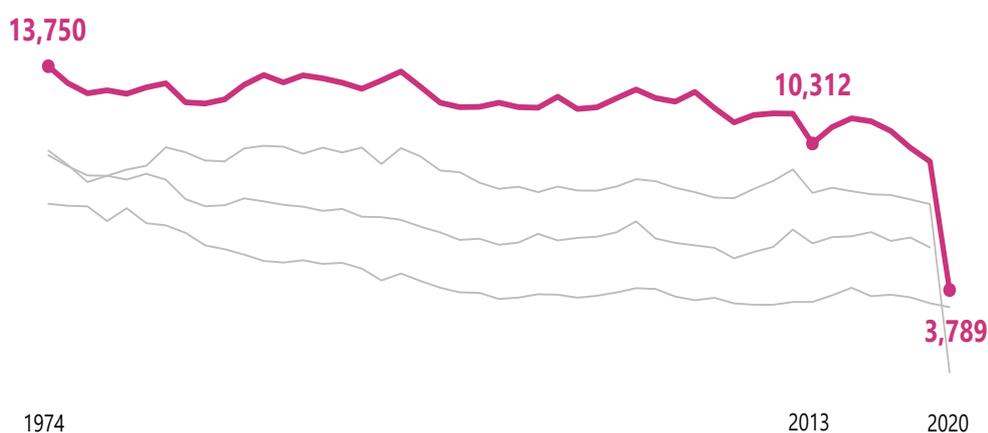


**Marriages could take place on a restricted basis in Q3**

There were 3,789 marriages in 2020 quarter 3.

This is significantly fewer than the average of 10,647 over the previous five years.

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



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

## 1. Main points

- There were 21,309 births and 13,295 deaths registered in Scotland between 1 July and 30 September 2020.
- In mid-March registration offices closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and registration of births was postponed. Birth registration restarted in late June and most of the postponed registrations have now taken place. The number of birth registrations in each quarter of 2020 does not reflect the actual number of births in each quarter. Once all postponed registrations have been processed we will provide more meaningful statistics for the period of postponement.
- 13,295, the number of deaths in 2020 quarter three is 1.2 per cent higher than the quarter three average over the previous five years – an excess of 158 deaths.
- Expressed as a rate, there were 9.7 deaths per 1,000 population.
- The age-standardised mortality rate for the four-quarter period ending in 2020 quarter 3 was 0.8 per cent lower than the previous four-quarter period (ending 2020 quarter 2). This rate takes into account the growing and ageing population and is therefore the best indicator of the direction of the mortality trend.
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) was the underlying cause of 60 deaths during quarter three.
- Compared with the quarter three average over the previous five years, 2015-2019:
  - The number of cancer deaths was unchanged at 4,007;
  - The number of deaths from coronary heart disease rose by 1.8 per cent to 1,519;
  - The number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease fell by 4.7 per cent to 1,246;
  - Deaths from respiratory diseases fell by 21.0 per cent to 1,060;
  - There were 880 deaths from cerebrovascular disease (an increase of 0.2 per cent).
- There were 3,789 marriages, compared with an average of 10,647 third quarter marriages for the previous five years. Registration offices closed in mid-March due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and most marriages and civil partnerships could not take place. Ceremonies have been able to take place on a restricted basis since late June.
- There were 116 same-sex marriages, compared with an average of 384 for the previous five years.
- There was 22 civil partnerships registered in the quarter, compared to an average of 21 in the third quarter for the previous five years.

## 2. Introduction

This release presents provisional figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 July to 30 September 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 registered in the third quarter of 2020 (21,309), is not representative of the number of births which occurred in the quarter. In mid-March registration offices closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and registration of births was postponed. Birth registrations restarted in late June and a large number of postponed birth registrations took place in quarter three. Once all postponed birth registrations have been processed we will be able to provide more meaningful statistics for the period of postponement.

The number of deaths registered in the third quarter of 2020 (13,295) was the second highest quarter three total since 2003 (13,307). Only 2019 was higher at 13,585.

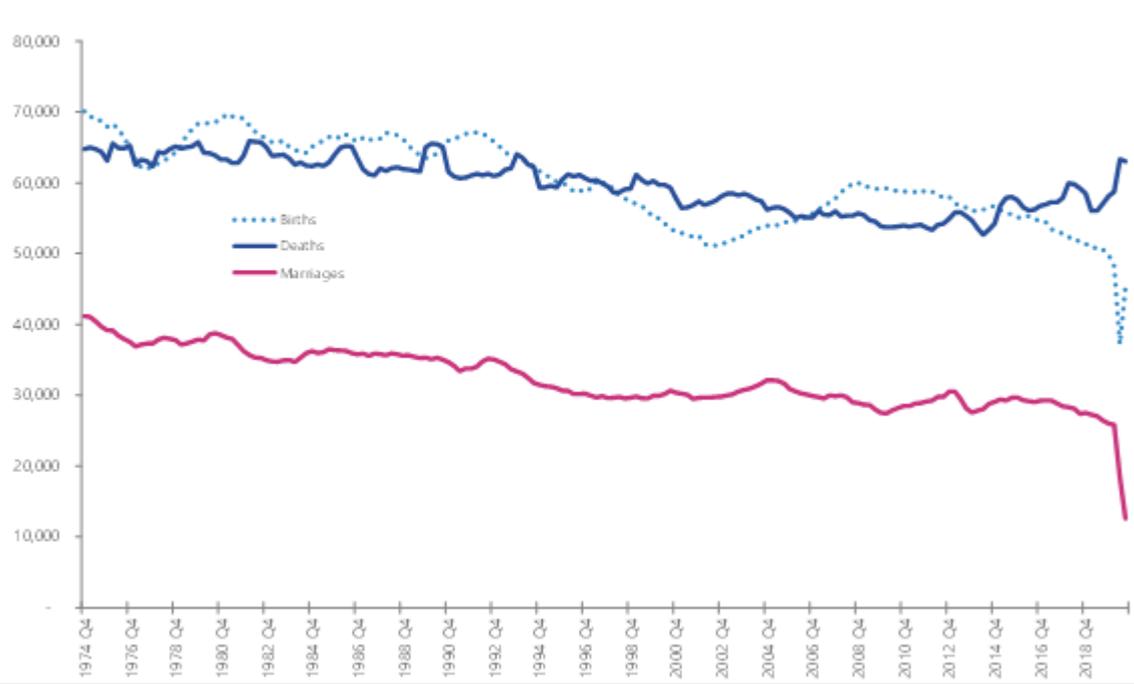
The number of deaths from coronary heart disease and cerebrovascular disease rose slightly, whilst deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease and respiratory disease fell compared with the third quarter average over the previous five years, 2015-2019. The number of deaths from cancer was the same as the five-year average.

Expressed as a rate, there were 9.7 deaths per 1,000 population.

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.

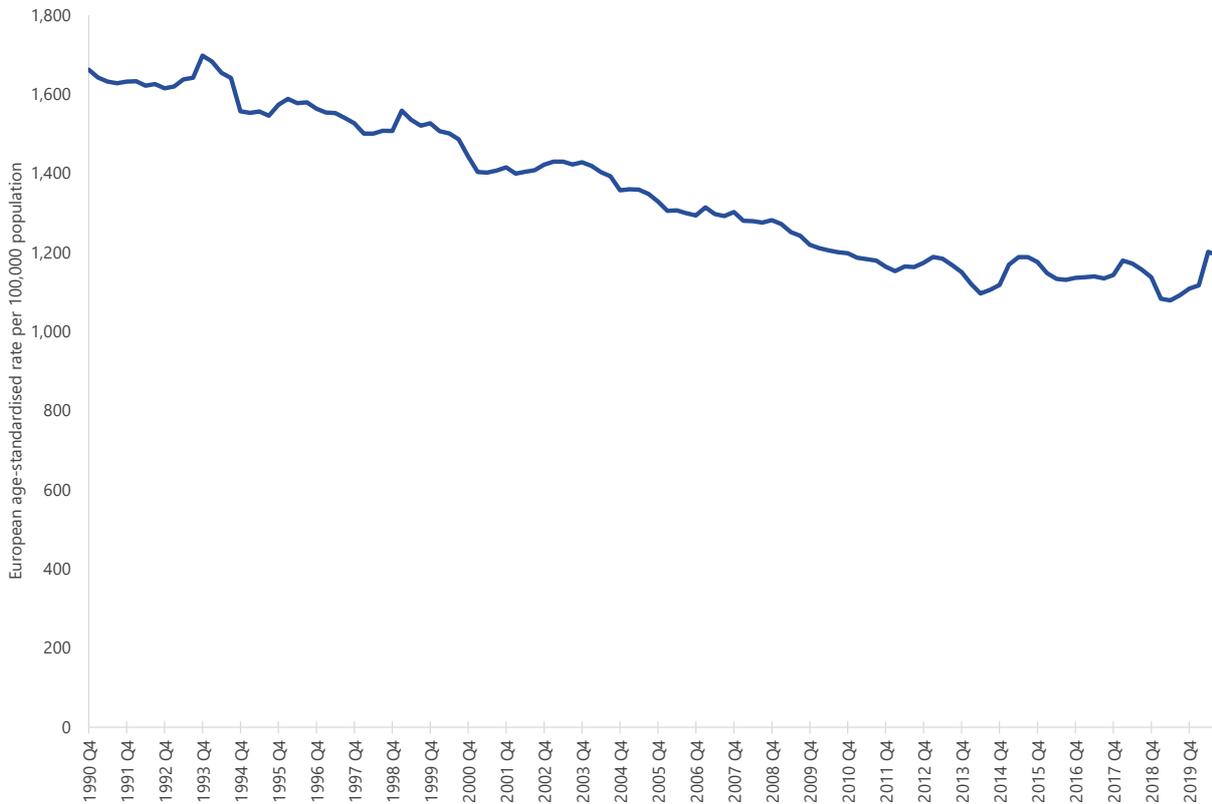
For the four quarters (2019 Q4 to 2020 Q3) there were 45,347 births and 63,022 deaths, a shortfall of 17,675 births compared to deaths. This gap may be artificially high as some postponed birth registrations have still to be processed. Having less births than deaths in a population is referred to as '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**



Note: The number of birth registrations in 2020 Q1, Q2 and Q3 does not reflect the number of births which occurred.

**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 the age-standardised mortality rates for each four-quarter period from the period ending 1990 Q4 to that ending 2020 Q3. 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 four quarter period ending 2020 Q3 was 0.8 per cent lower than that for the period ending 2020 Q2.

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. There was little change over the following few years (with the two notable fluctuations previously discussed in 2015 and 2018) and the 2019 Q1 and Q2 rates of 1,083.6 and 1,079.3 per 100,000, represented slight decreases from the previous low point in 2014 Q2. The rate then rose to reach 1,117.1 per 100,000 population in 2020 Q1, and 1201.8 in 2020 Q2, before falling slightly to the 2020 Q3 figure of 1192.5. The coronavirus pandemic will have contributed to the high rates in 2020 Q2 and Q3 and it will be important to monitor rates going forward to see whether they return to previous levels.

#### **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 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 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: <a href="mailto:statistics.enquiries@gov.scot">statistics.enquiries@gov.scot</a></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics">http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics</a></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: <a href="mailto:info@statistics.gsi.gov.uk">info@statistics.gsi.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.ons.gov.uk/">www.ons.gov.uk/</a></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: <a href="mailto:info.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk">info.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.nisra.gov.uk">www.nisra.gov.uk</a></p>

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