

Mid-2022 Small Area Population Estimates, Scotland



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This statistical report provides population estimates for data zones and other geographies across Scotland

Contents

Main Points	3
Overview of data zone populations.....	4
Population and age.....	5
Urban-rural populations	5
Population by deprivation.....	6
Background notes	9
Notes on statistical publications.....	10

Main Points

- There are 6,976 data zones in Scotland. In mid-2022, 80% of data zones had a population between 500 and 999 people living in them.
- Most people lived in large urban areas (37%) and other urban areas (34%), compared with accessible rural areas (12%), accessible small towns (9%), remote rural areas (5%), and remote small towns (3%).
- Younger people are more likely to live in urban areas, and older people are more likely to reside in rural areas. The median age of people in large urban areas was 39, while people in rural areas has a median age of 52.
- Inverclyde and Glasgow City had the highest percentages of population living within the most deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile (31% and 30% respectively).
- East Renfrewshire had the highest percentage of population living within the least deprived SIMD decile (37%).
- These small area estimates are the first set based on Scotland's Census 2022; however, the data zones used are the 2011 data zones. Once the 2022 data zones are available, we will rebase small area estimates for mid-2011 to mid-2021, using these 2022 data zones. As a result, this report does not present comparisons with previous years.

Links to data

What are you looking for?

[Population estimates by data zone](#)

[Population estimates for other geographies](#)

[The data used in this publication](#)

[Information on how the data is calculated](#)

[Scotland's Census 2022 data](#)

Where is it?

[Data](#)

[Special area data](#)

[Charts](#)

[Methodology](#)

[Census data](#)

Overview of data zone populations

[Data zones](#) are a small unit of geography which help summarise population data at a local level. They are designed to contain a population of around 500 to 1,000 household residents and they nest within council areas.

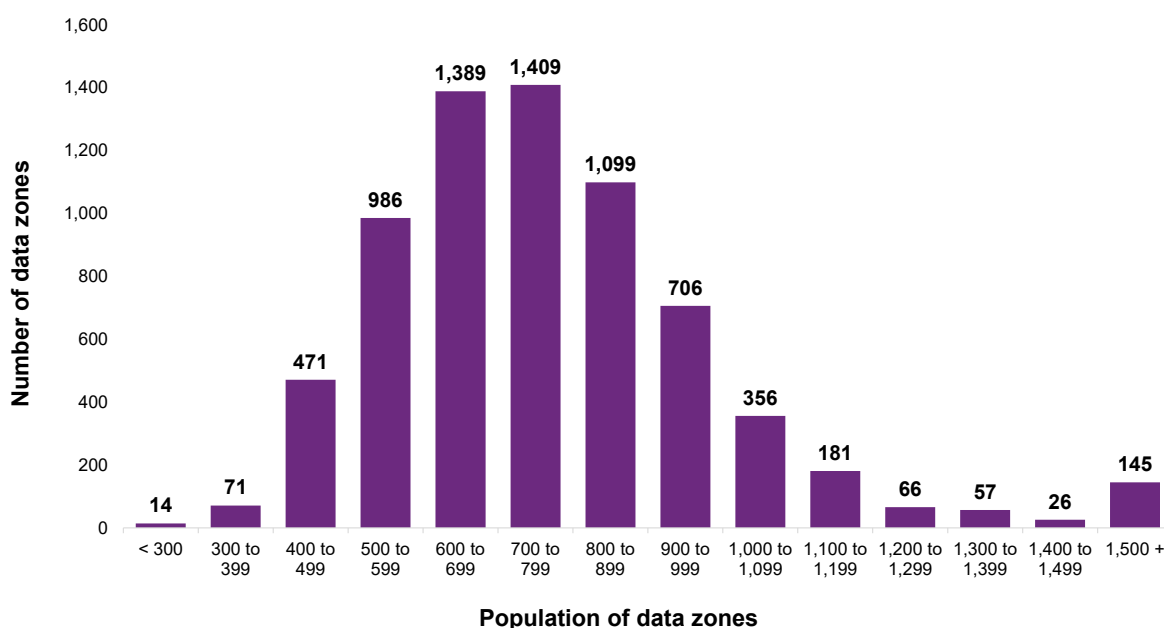
There are 6,976 data zones in Scotland. In mid-2022, their populations ranged from 0 to 6,052 people. Together they summed to the population of Scotland which was 5,447,000.

The mean data zone population was 781 people. This is greater than the median¹ population (738). This is because there are several very large data zones and fewer very small data zones. For example, the presence of large communal establishments like armed forces bases, prisons, and student accommodation can result in high data zone populations.

Figure 1 summarises the frequency of data zones by population size. In mid-2022, most data zones (80%) had between 500 and 999 people living in them.

Figure 1: Within the 6,976 data zones in Scotland, the population ranged from 0 to 6,052 people.

Population distribution by data zone, mid-2022



¹ The median is the value which splits the data into the highest 50% of values and the lowest 50% of values. In this example, a median of 738 means that half of the data zones have a greater population than 738 and half have a smaller population than 738.

Population and age

In mid-2022 the median age in Scotland was 45, but this varied considerably across data zones:

- The “youngest” data zone was ‘*Old Aberdeen – 01*’ in the Aberdeen City council area with a median age of 20 years. This area contains student accommodation for the University of Aberdeen.
- The “oldest” data zone was ‘*Falkirk - Town Centre and Callendar Park – 02*’ in the Falkirk council area with a median age of 73 years. This area contains many developments aimed at older residents.

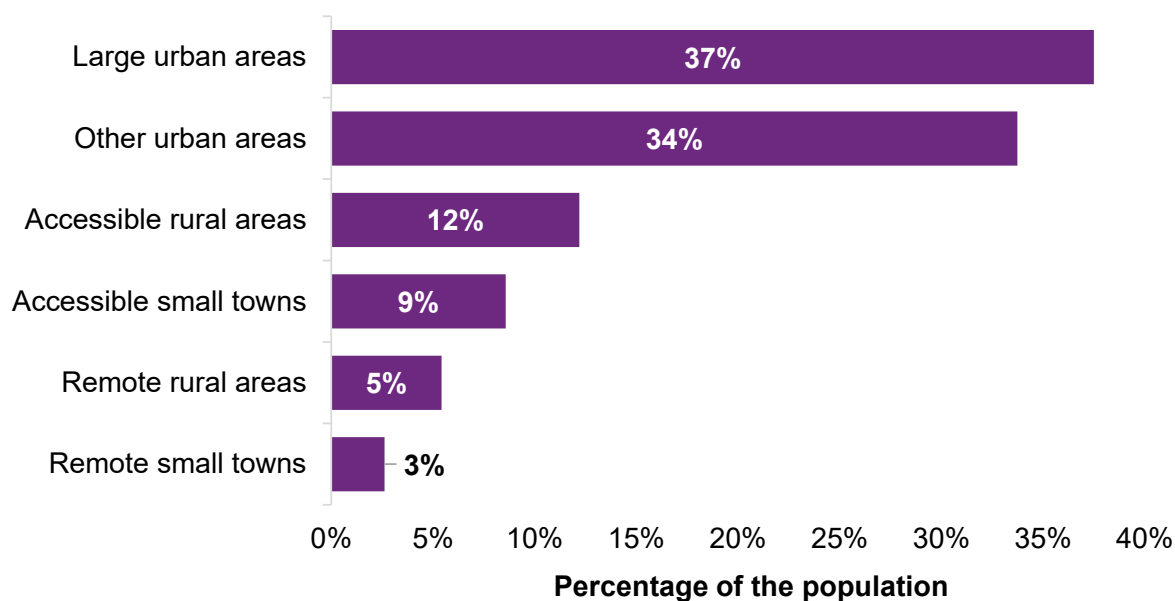
Urban-rural populations

The Scottish Government’s Urban Rural Classification categorises each data zone in terms of how urban or rural, and how accessible the land area is. This helps us understand demographic patterns by area type. More information about the methodology underlying the Urban Rural Classification can be found on the [Scottish government website](#).

Using the 6-fold classification system, [Figure 2](#) shows the percentage of the population who lived in each area type in mid-2022. It shows that 37% (2,042,350) of people lived in large urban areas, while just 3% (142,153) lived in remote small towns.

Figure 2: The majority of Scotland’s population lived in urban areas (71%).

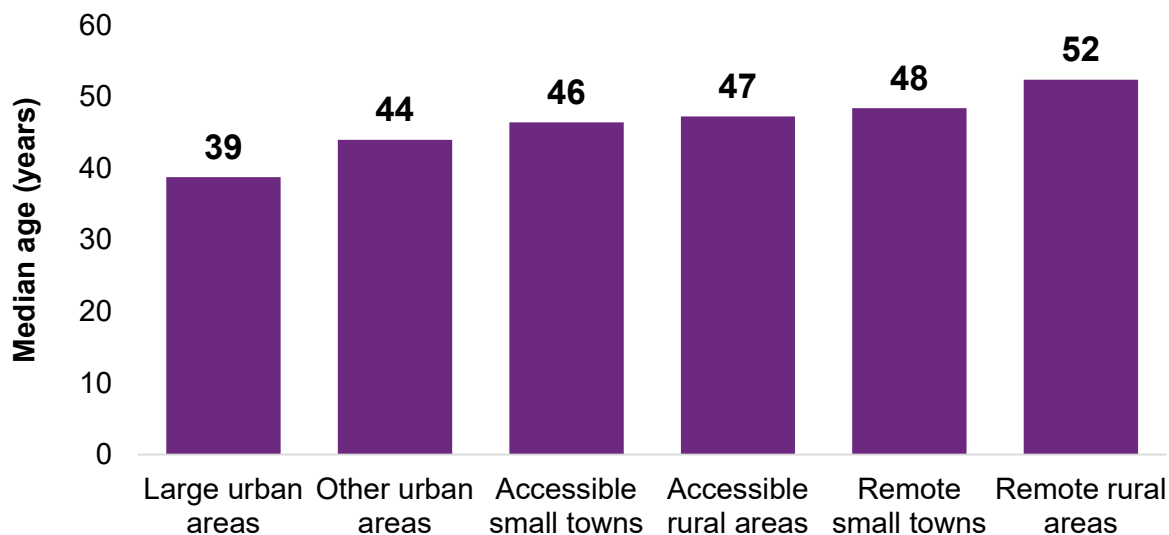
Scotland’s population by 6-fold Urban Rural Classification, mid-2022



On average, people in large urban areas such as cities tend to be younger and people in rural areas tend to be older. [Figure 3](#) shows that remote rural areas had the highest median age at 52 years, whereas large urban areas had the lowest at 39 years.

Figure 3: Younger people tend to reside in urban areas whereas older people reside more in rural areas.

Median age by 6-fold Urban Rural Classification, mid-2022



Population by deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) measures levels of deprivation across Scotland. It is based on a combination of different indicators and can be used to rank each data zone on a scale from 1 (most deprived) to 10 (least deprived). These are called deciles, and each contains 10% of Scotland’s data zones. By summing the data zone populations in each of these deciles, population estimates by deprivation level can be assessed. More information is available on the [Scottish Government’s SIMD website](#).

[Figure 4](#) illustrates the percentage of each council area’s population living in the most deprived SIMD decile in mid-2022. The percentage of Inverclyde’s population living in the most deprived areas was the highest of all council areas at 31%. This was followed by Glasgow City (30%), and Dundee City (24%).

In general, council areas located in the west of Scotland had the highest percentages of people living in the most deprived SIMD decile. The three island councils of Na-h Eileanan Siar, Orkney Islands, and Shetland Islands had no data zones in this decile.

Figure 4: Inverclyde and Glasgow City had the highest percentages of people living in the most deprived SIMD decile.

Population by most deprived SIMD decile by council area, mid-2022

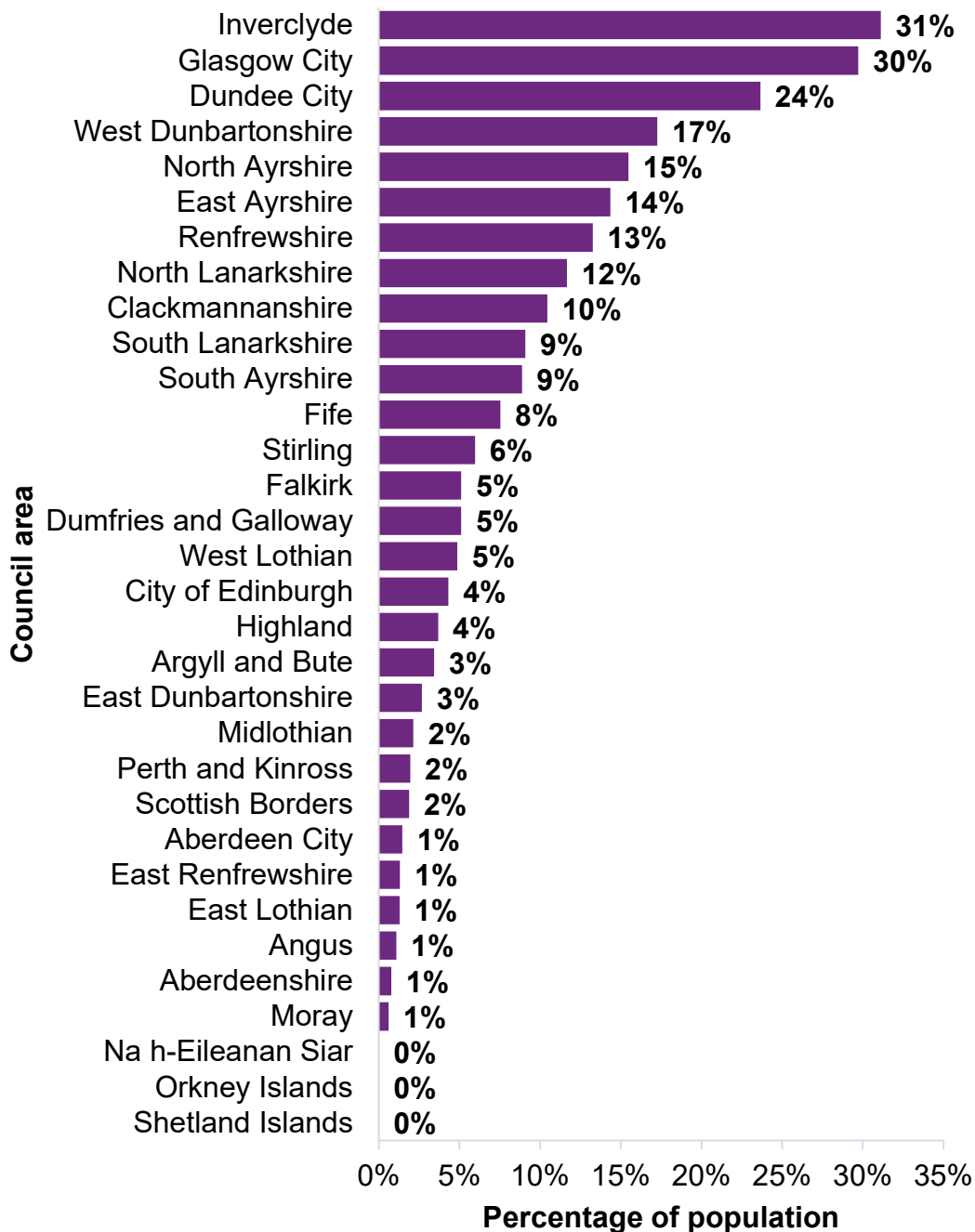


Figure 5 shows the percentage of each council area’s population living in the least deprived SIMD decile. East Renfrewshire (37%), City of Edinburgh (30%), and East Dunbartonshire (28%) contained the highest percentage of people living in the least deprived areas. The three island councils of Na-h Eileanan Siar, Orkney Islands, and Shetland Islands had no data zones in this decile.

Figure 5: The percentage of East Renfrewshire’s population living within the least deprived SIMD decile was greater than for any other council area.

Percentage of population in least deprived SIMD decile by council area, mid-2022

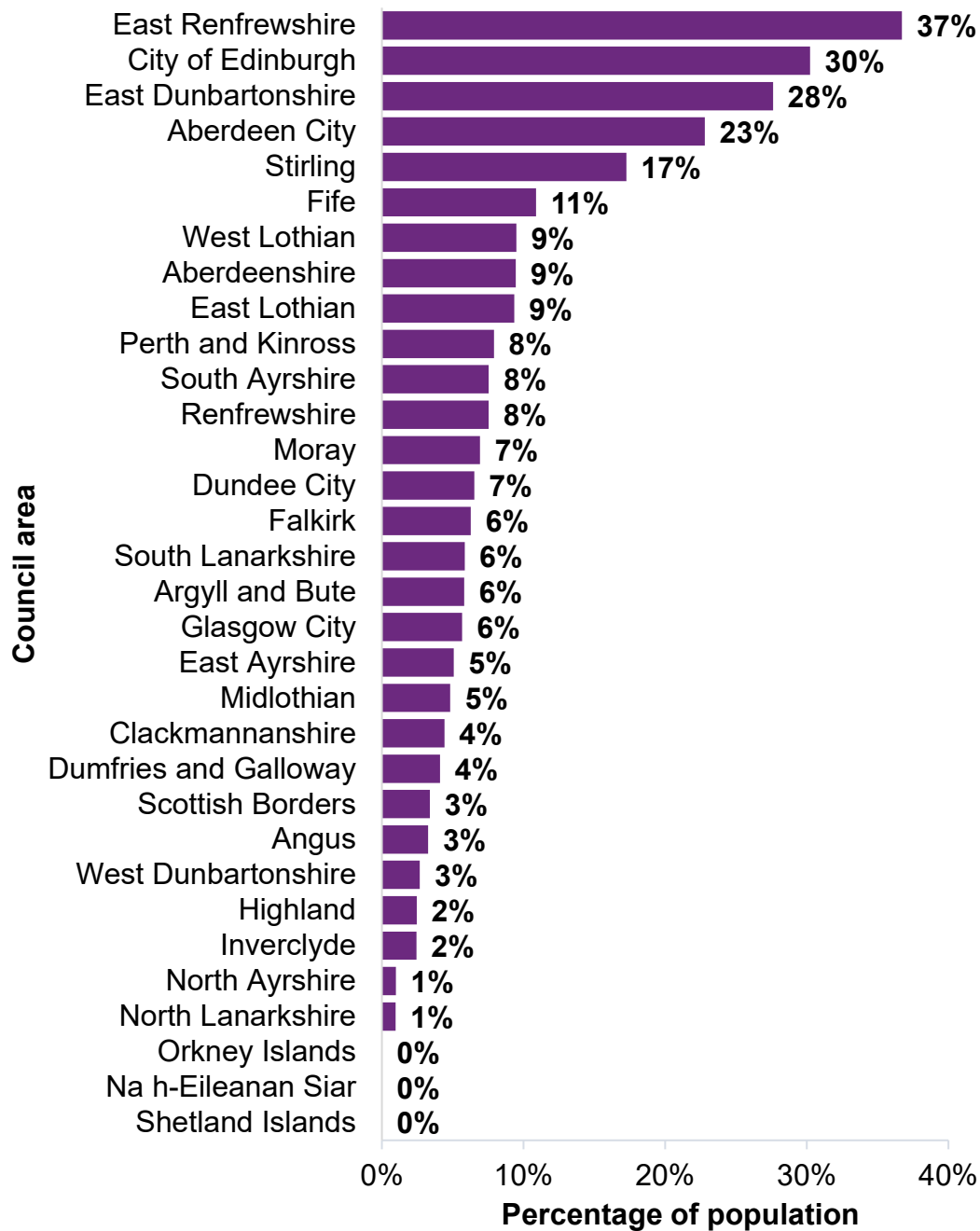
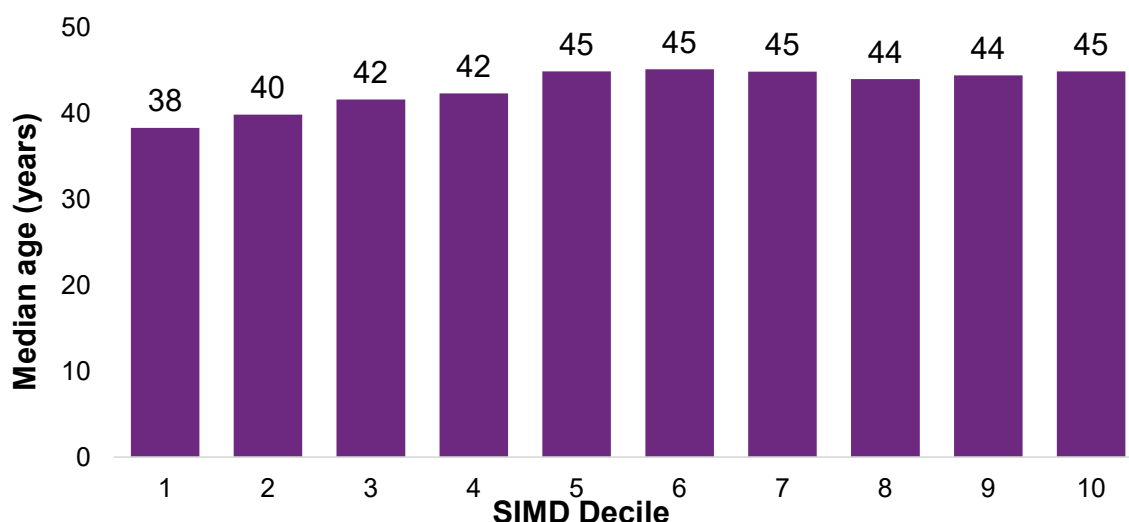


Figure 6 summarises the median age by SIMD decile. In general, more deprived areas have a younger population. The median age was 38 in the most deprived areas and 45 in the least deprived areas.

Figure 6: Younger people are more likely to reside in areas within the most deprived SIMD decile.

Median age by SIMD decile, mid-2022



Background notes

How are population estimates calculated?

Population estimates are based on the census and are updated each year to account for annual population change. They are based on the resident population which covers people living in Scotland for a period of at least 12 months, whatever their nationality. The three elements of population change are:

- Natural change: births minus deaths
- Net migration: the difference between long-term moves into and out of Scotland.
- Other changes: changes in the armed forces, prison population and any rounding adjustments.

Data zone population estimates are produced using the demographic cohort component method. They are also adjusted to match the population estimates for Scottish council areas. Further detail can be found in the [methodology guide](#) on the NRS website.

Population estimates and the census

Scotland's Census was carried out in March 2022. The census results for small areas are available on the Scotland's Census website. During the years between each census, NRS produces annual population estimates. They are based on the

previous census, and adjusted each year to account for births, deaths and migration. Over time, these estimates gradually drift from the actual population counts until the next census is conducted. This 'drift' is anticipated, and it is standard procedure to revise the annual population estimates once census data becomes available. This is the first set of small area population estimates to incorporate the new data from Scotland's Census 2022.

NRS will now begin the rebasing exercise to revise the annual small area population estimates for 2011 to 2021. It will not be possible to make comparisons between the 2022 estimates and previous figures until these revisions have been made.

Strengths and limitations

The data zone populations are not rounded. However, this does not mean that the estimates are accurate down to the individual person. We use unrounded figures to allow more accurate combination of data zone populations.

Quality assurance takes place throughout the production of population estimates, with checks in place to ensure consistency and completeness. More information on the [quality assurance arrangements for administrative data](#) used in population estimates is available on the NRS website, along with information on the suitability of each data source used in the production of the population estimates.

The population estimates use the census as the base population. Population change is applied to the base population each year to create the annual population estimates.

Migration is the most difficult part of the population estimates to estimate precisely, as migratory moves are not registered in the UK, either at the national or local level. The best proxy data available on a consistent basis, such as patient registers and other administrative data, are used to estimate migration.

Notes on statistical publications

Accredited Official Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) has designated these statistics as Accredited Official 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).

Accredited Official 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 Accredited Official 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 Accredited Official Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. Accredited Official 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 report 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.

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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