

Mid-Year Population Estimates Scotland, Mid-2019



Published on 30 April 2020

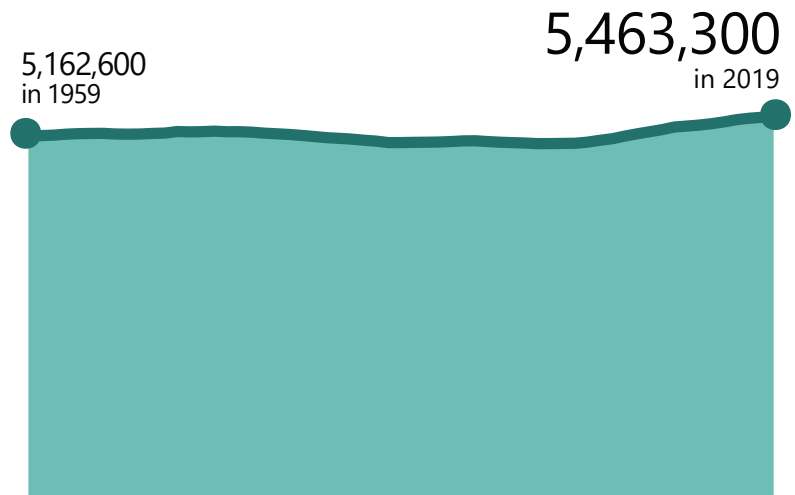
This statistical report provides population estimates for Scotland, its council areas and NHS boards, by sex and age.

Scotland's population has increased in recent years

Scotland's population has been increasing for the last 19 years.

The latest estimate of Scotland's population (on 30 June 2019) is 5,463,300 – the highest ever and an increase of 25,200 people over the last year.

Number of people

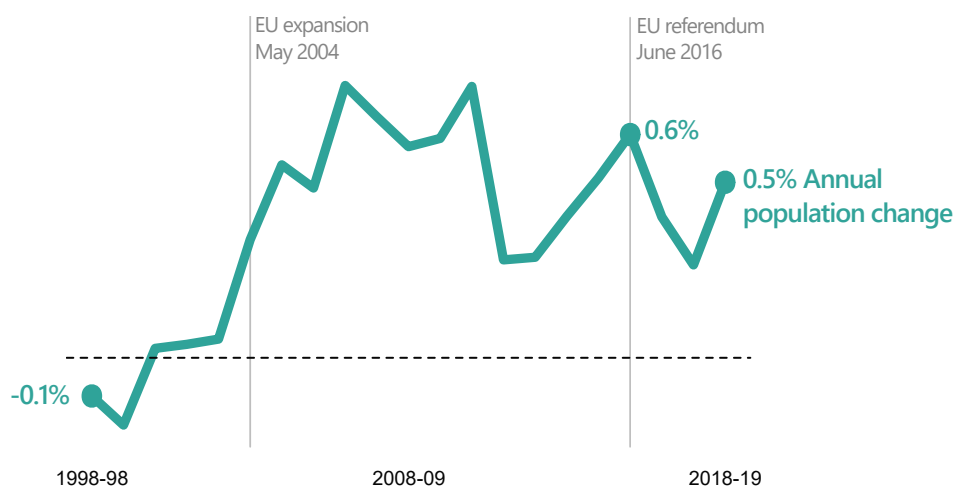


Population growth has increased following two years of slowed growth

Scotland's population has grown each year since 30 June 2000, but the amount of growth has varied over this period.

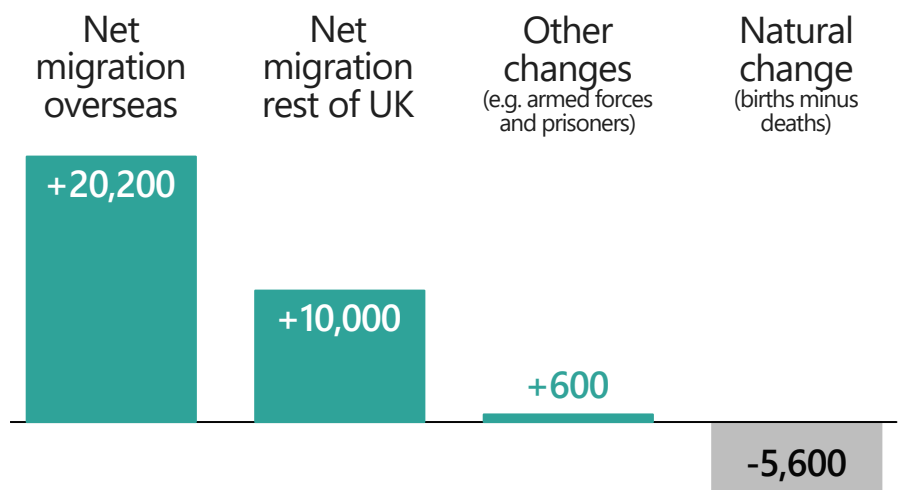
Scotland's latest population growth was driven by migration from both overseas and the rest of the UK.

Annual percentage change in number of people



Scotland's population growth is driven by migration

- Over the latest year
- 20,200 more people arrived from overseas than left
- 10,000 more people arrived from the rest of the UK than left
- There were 5,600 more deaths than births
- Other changes resulted in an increase of 600 people



In 2019, just under one in five people (19%) in Scotland were aged 65 and over

Scotland's population is ageing due to:

- People born in the post-war and 1960s baby booms getting older
- People living longer due to higher life expectancy than earlier decades
- The number of births falling since the 1960s

Scotland's population is ageing

The increase in the population of older age groups has been much higher than younger age groups over the last 20 years.

The population aged 0 to 15 years has seen the largest percentage decrease due to fewer births every year since 2009.

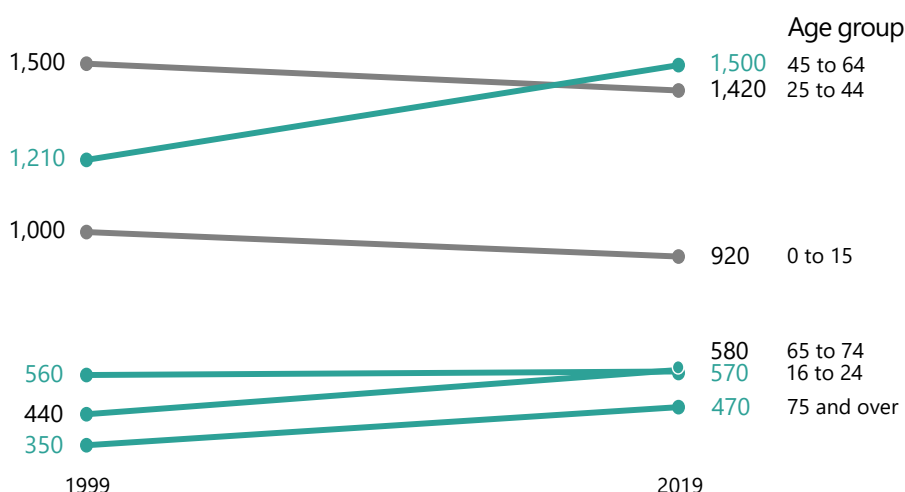
Since 2000, Scotland's population increase has mostly been due to positive net migration

There have been more people coming to Scotland than leaving in each of the last 19 years.

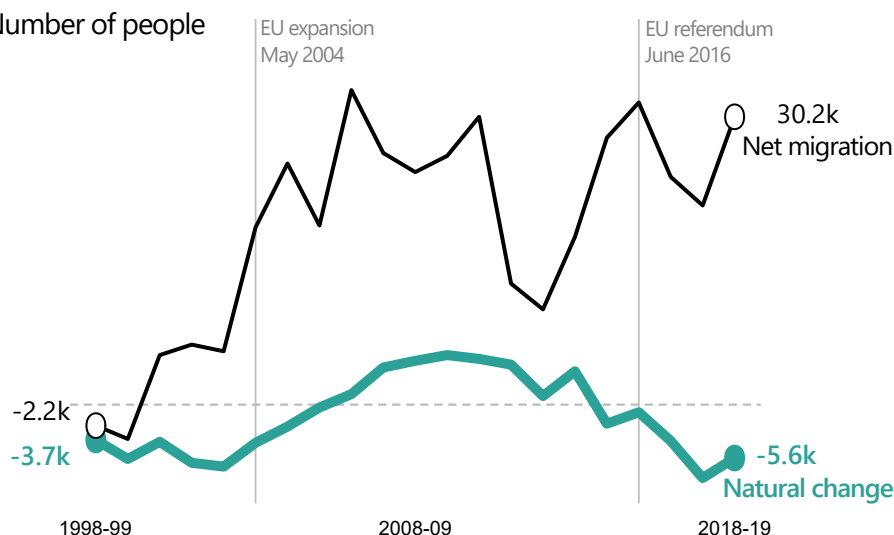
Over the past five years, there have been more deaths than births each year.



Number of people (thousands)



Number of people

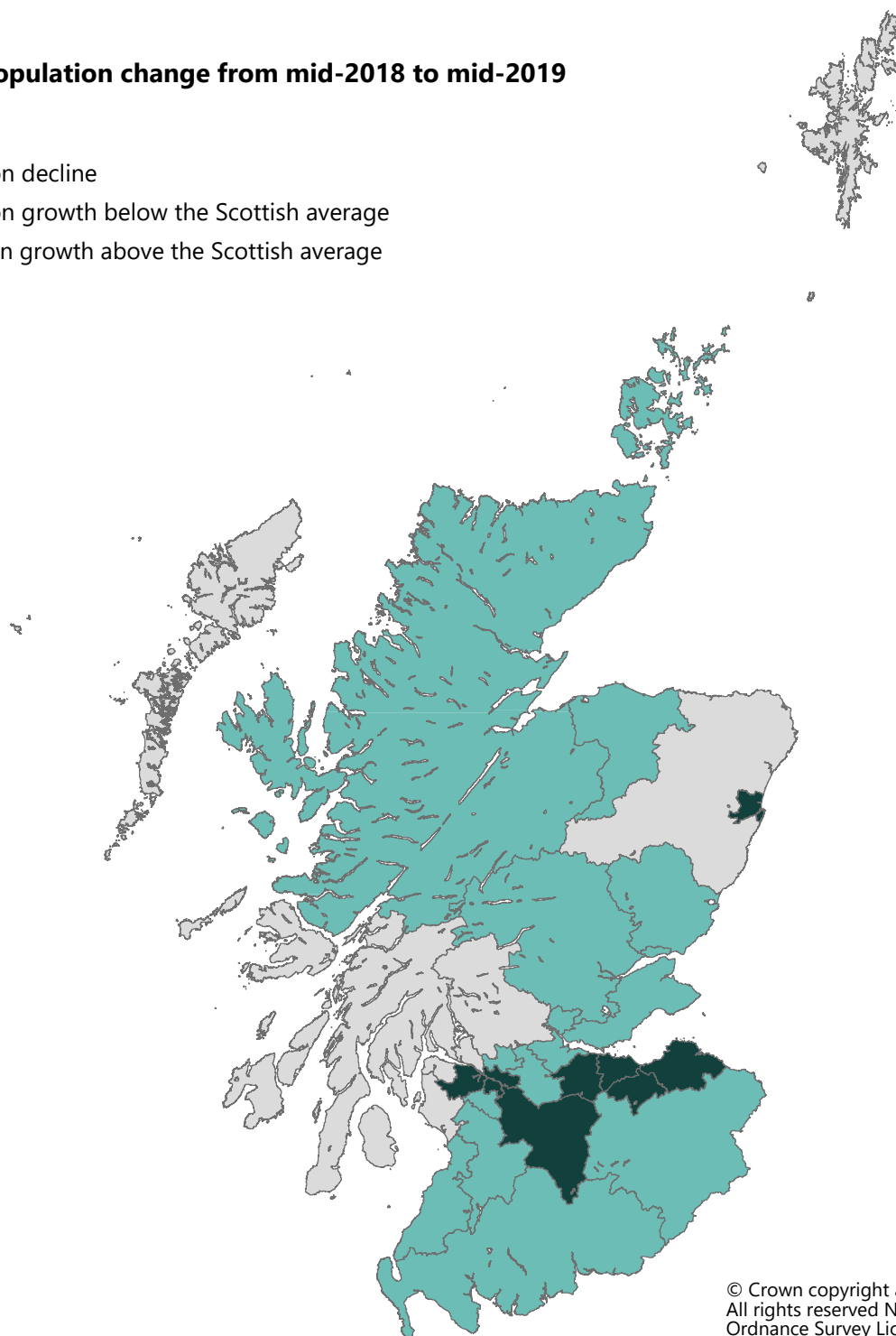


Population change varies across Scotland's council areas

Over the last year, three quarters of Scotland's council areas (24 out of 32 areas) increased in population with the remaining 8 areas experiencing depopulation. Areas facing depopulation are mainly island and rural areas, as well as areas in the west of the country.

Percentage population change from mid-2018 to mid-2019

- Population decline
- Population growth below the Scottish average
- Population growth above the Scottish average



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It is important to remember that within every council area, there are pockets of both growth and depopulation. NRS' small area population estimates for mid-2019 will be published in August 2020 – these can be used to help understand how the population of local areas are changing.

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Key Findings

- Scotland's population is at a record high at 5,463,300 as at 30 June 2019¹. The population increased by 25,200 people from mid-2018, growth of 0.5% which is higher than the previous two years.
- Scotland's population growth is driven by migration with 30,200 more people moving to Scotland than leaving in the year to mid-2019; +20,200 from overseas and +10,000 from the rest of the UK. Overall, net migration was 9,300 higher than the previous year due to more people moving from overseas and fewer people leaving for overseas.
- There is no natural growth with 5,600 more deaths than births in the year to mid-2019, a decrease compared with 7,700 more deaths than births the previous year.
- Scotland's population is ageing. In mid-2019, 19% of the population were aged 65 and over compared with 17% a decade earlier in mid-2009. Over the same period, the population aged 65 and over increased in all council areas.
- Population change varies across Scotland. Three quarters of council areas (24 out of 32) experienced population growth with 8 areas seeing population decline in the last year. Areas facing depopulation are mainly rural and island areas, as well as areas in the west of the country.

Do these statistics take into account the effect of COVID-19 on our population?

These statistics relate to the population as at 30 June 2019 and do not take into account recent change since then. However, we know that older people are more at risk of becoming seriously ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) so these statistics can be used to understand the number of older people and where in Scotland they live.

Links to resources:

- [Open data](#) showing the number and percentage of people aged under 16, 70 and over, and 85 and over.
- Maps of Scotland displaying the percentage of people in age groups: [under 16](#), [70 years and over](#), and [85 years and over](#).
- Check out our [blog](#) for more information about the range of NRS statistics that are useful for understanding COVID-19.

¹ 30 June is commonly referred to as mid-year.

1. Introduction

This publication provides estimates for the population of:

- Scotland
- Council areas
- NHS Board areas

The estimates cover the population at 30 June 2019 (commonly referred to as mid-2019).

How are population estimates calculated?

Population estimates are based on the census and are updated each year to account for population change from 1 July to 30 June. They are based on the usually resident population which covers people living in Scotland for a period of at least 12 months.

The two main contributors to population change are:

- Natural change (births minus deaths)
- Net migration (the difference between long-term moves into and out of Scotland)

How are population estimates used?

Population estimates are used for a variety of purposes including:

- Resource allocation
- Planning of services such as education and health
- Informing local and national policy
- Modelling the economy

Population estimates are also used to measure progress of the population indicator in Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#). In June 2019, the Ministerial Population Taskforce was established to address Scotland's population challenges. Further information on the work of the Taskforce is available on the gov.scot website.

What are you looking for?

The data used in this publication

Useful information about the estimates

Information on how the population is calculated

Demographic profiles of council areas

Select and compare the population of council areas

Where is it?

[Data and charts](#)

[Background notes](#)

[Methodology guide](#)

[NRS Council area profiles](#)

[Interactive charts](#)

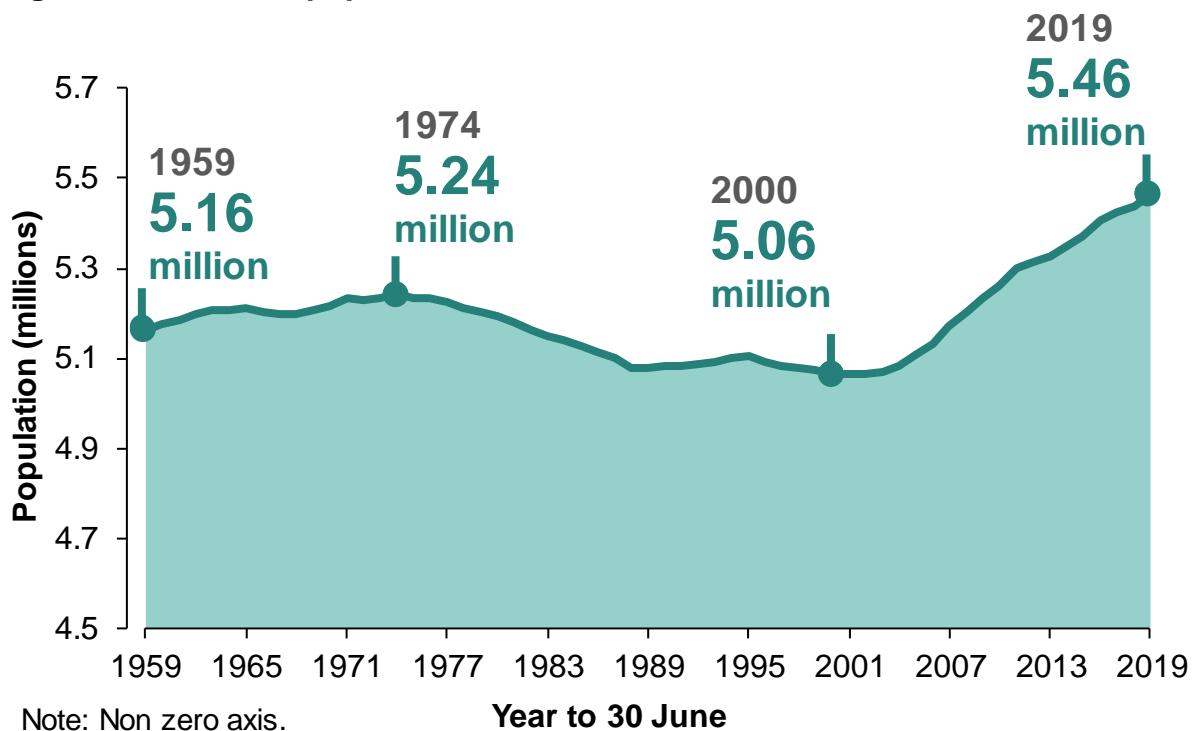
2. The population of Scotland

Scotland's population is increasing

On 30 June 2019, Scotland's population was the highest ever at **5,463,300 people**. The population increased by 25,200 people (0.5%) over the latest year to mid-2019.

Scotland's population has fluctuated over the last 60 years, as shown in [Figure 1](#). The population grew throughout the 1960s and early 1970s to a peak of 5.24 million in 1974 before falling to 5.06 million in 2000. Over the last 19 years, the population has increased every year to a record high of 5.46 million in 2019.

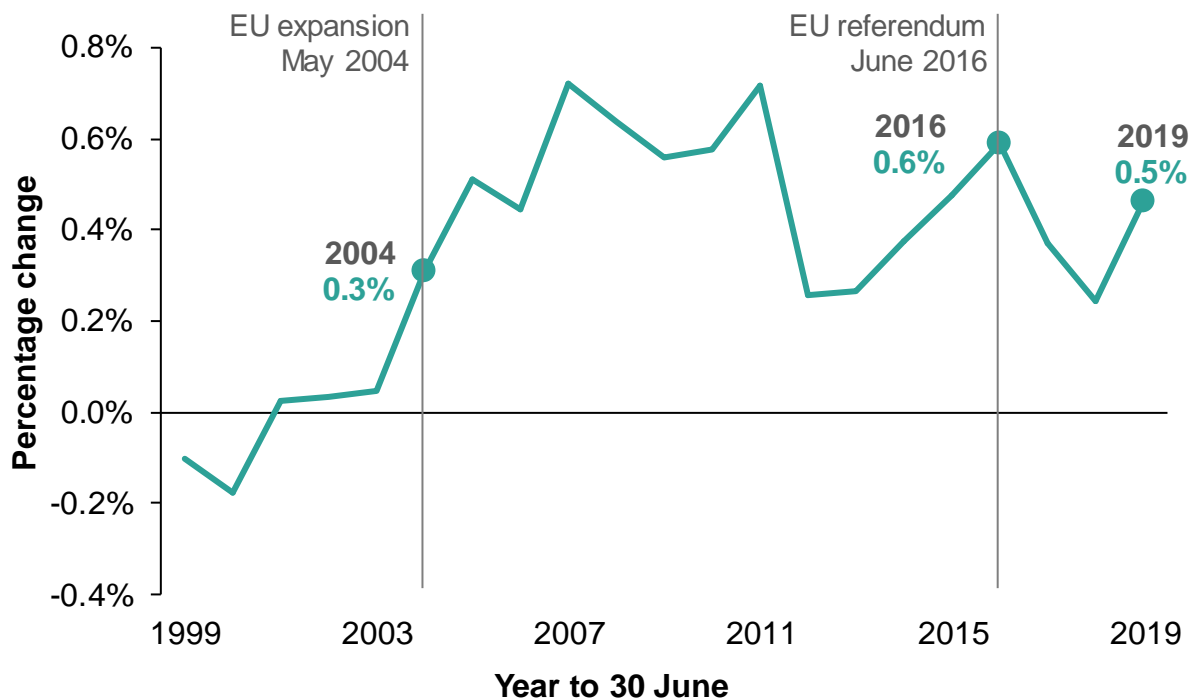
Figure 1: Estimated population of Scotland, mid-1959 to mid-2019



Scotland's population has been increasing for the past 19 years

Over the past two decades, the annual rate of change in Scotland's population has fluctuated between -0.2% and 0.7%. [Figure 2](#) shows that following the expansion of the EU in 2004, Scotland experienced a high rate of population growth every year until mid-2011 before slowing and then increasing steadily in the three years up to mid-2016. This was followed by slower growth in the two years after mid-2016, coinciding with the period after the UK's decision to leave the EU. Population growth in the latest year was 0.5% which is a similar rate of growth to the year ending mid-2015.

Figure 2: Annual population change for Scotland, 1958-1959 to 2018-2019



Why is the population increasing?

Population change is driven by two main components, natural change and net migration. **Natural change** is the number of births minus the number of deaths. If there are more births than deaths, the population will grow. **Net migration** is the number of people moving into an area minus the number of people leaving an area. The population will also grow if there are more people moving into an area than leaving it.

The latest increase in Scotland’s population was driven by positive net migration with 30,200 more people arriving in Scotland than leaving in the year to mid-2019. In contrast, natural change did not add to the population with 5,600 more deaths than births over the same period.

Other changes over the year to mid-2019 resulted in a small increase of 600 people across Scotland. Other changes include changes in the prison population, changes in the number of armed forces personnel based in Scotland and small rounding adjustments.



How do the number of births and deaths compare with past trends?

Historically, Scotland had positive natural change with many more births than deaths each year, as seen in Figure 3. Following the introduction of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s, the number of births in Scotland fell. As a result, natural change fell dramatically from 40,600 to 4,600 between mid-1965 and mid-1975. Since mid-1975, natural change has fluctuated between -7,700 and 6,600.

The number of births has been **falling** for the past 10 years

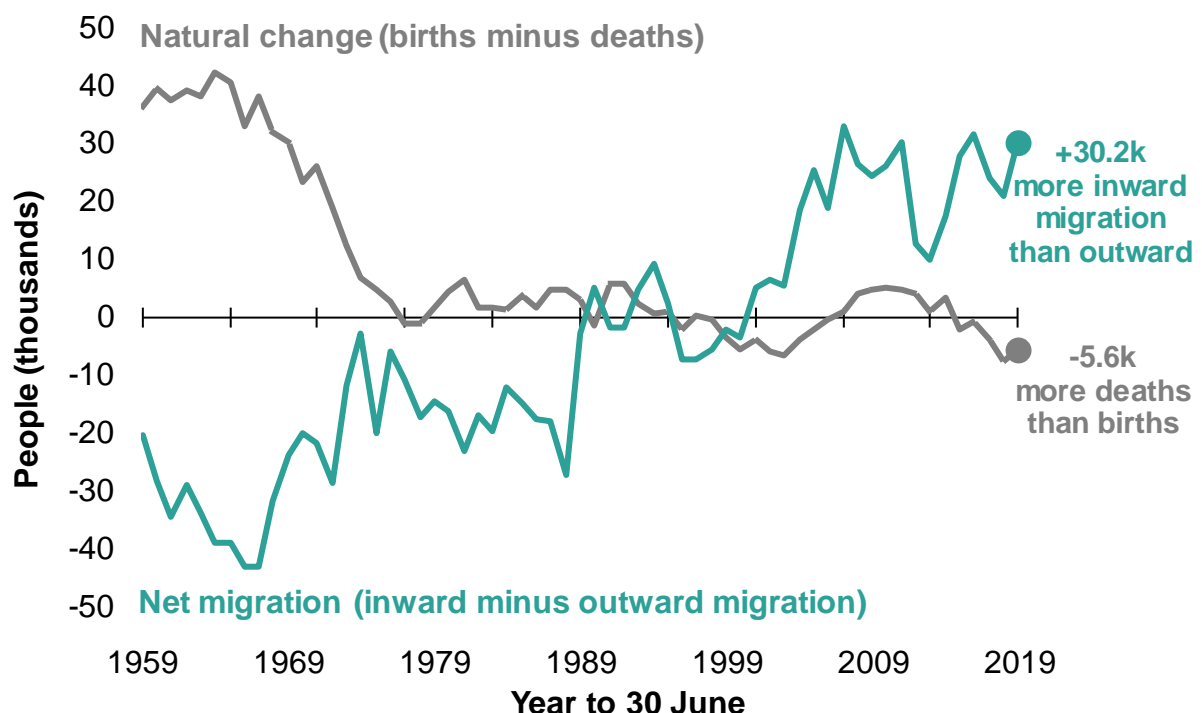
Over the five years ending mid-2019, there were more deaths than births every year. This is due an overall increase in the numbers of deaths over the last decade, as well as a decrease in the number of births every year since mid-2009.

Over the latest year to mid-2019, in Scotland there were:

- 50,600 births; 1,600 less than the previous year
- 56,200 deaths; 3,700 fewer than the previous year
- 5,600 more deaths than births; 2,100 less than the previous year

A time series of mid-year births and deaths in Scotland are available in the mid-year estimates tables² on the NRS website.

Figure 3: Natural change and net migration, 1958-59 to 2018-19



² Table 10: Births and deaths at mid-year, Scotland, mid-2009 to mid-2019

How does net migration compare with past trends?

Migration has been the **main driver** of Scotland's population growth for the past 19 years

Prior to the 1990s, there were more people migrating out than into Scotland, as shown in [Figure 3](#). Net migration was at an all-time low in 1966 when 43,200 more people left than came to live in Scotland. However, many more births

than deaths (33,200 more) at the time meant that this had only a small impact on the overall population of Scotland.

Since mid-2001, net migration has been driving population growth with more people moving to Scotland than leaving every year. This was pronounced in the years following the expansion of the EU in 2004, when far more people moved to Scotland than left.

Over the latest year to mid-2019:

- 87,400 people moved to Scotland; 6,800 more than the previous year
- 57,100 people moved out of Scotland; 2,600 less than the previous year
- 30,200 more people moved to Scotland than left; 9,300 more than the previous year

3. Migration to and from Scotland

As well as understanding trends in overall net migration, it is useful to consider where people are coming from or moving to. As illustrated in [Figure 4](#), there are two types of migration flows which add to Scotland's population:

- **Rest of the UK** – moves between Scotland and other countries in the UK
- **Overseas** – moves between Scotland and countries outside the UK

Did you know: The third type of migration flow is **internal migration** which consists of moves between areas within Scotland. Internal migration affects the population of council and health board areas, however it does not add to Scotland's population. Information on moves within Scotland can be found in [Section 5](#) of this document.

Over the latest year, there were small decreases in both the number of people moving to and from the **rest of the UK** and Scotland. In the year to mid-2019:

- 47,500 people moved to Scotland from the rest of the UK; 200 less than 2018
- 37,400 people moved from Scotland to the rest of the UK; 300 less than 2018
- Net migration from the rest of the UK was +10,000; the same as in 2018

In contrast, over the latest year, there was a large increase in the number of people moving from **overseas** to Scotland and a decrease in the number of people moving from Scotland to overseas. In the year to mid-2019:

- 39,900 people moved to Scotland from overseas; 7,000 more than 2018
- 19,700 people moved from Scotland to overseas; 2,300 less than 2018
- Net migration from overseas was +20,200; 9,300 more than 2018

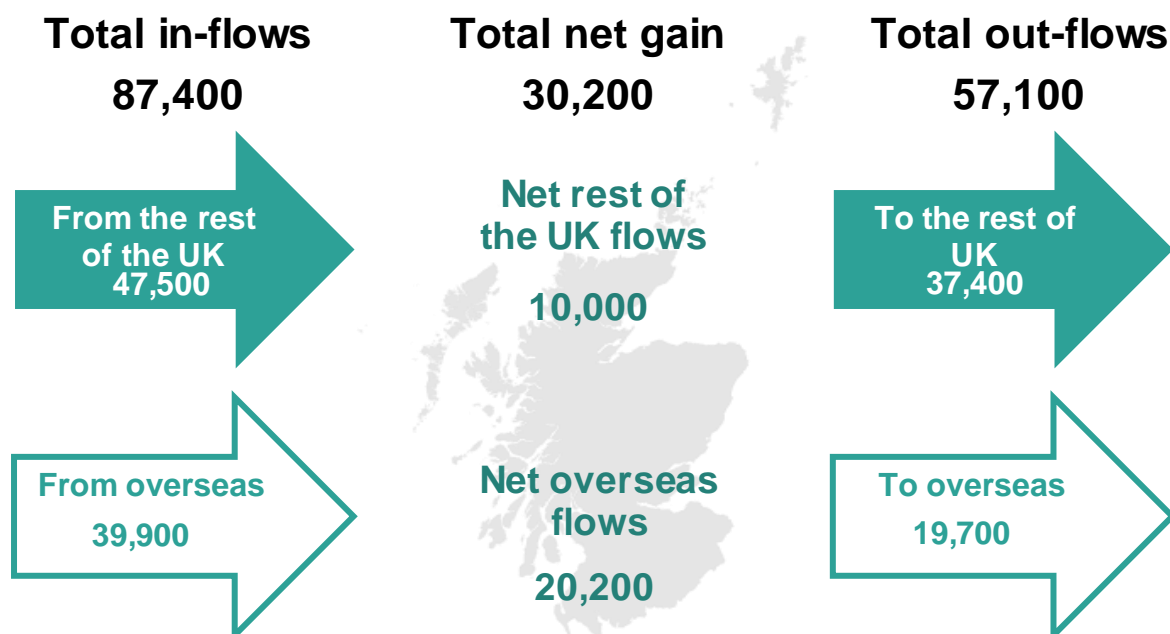
How is international migration calculated?

A long-term international migrant is defined by the United Nations as someone who changes their country of residence for 12 months or more. There is no single source which counts the movements of all people into and out of the UK so the following sources are combined to calculate estimates of long-term international migration:

- International Passenger Survey
- Information held by the Home Office
- Labour Force Survey

More information on the calculation of international migration can be found in the [methodology guide](#).

Figure 4: Movements to/from the rest of the UK and overseas, mid-2018 to mid-2019



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Note: The sum of component parts may not equal the total due to rounding.

How have migration patterns changed?

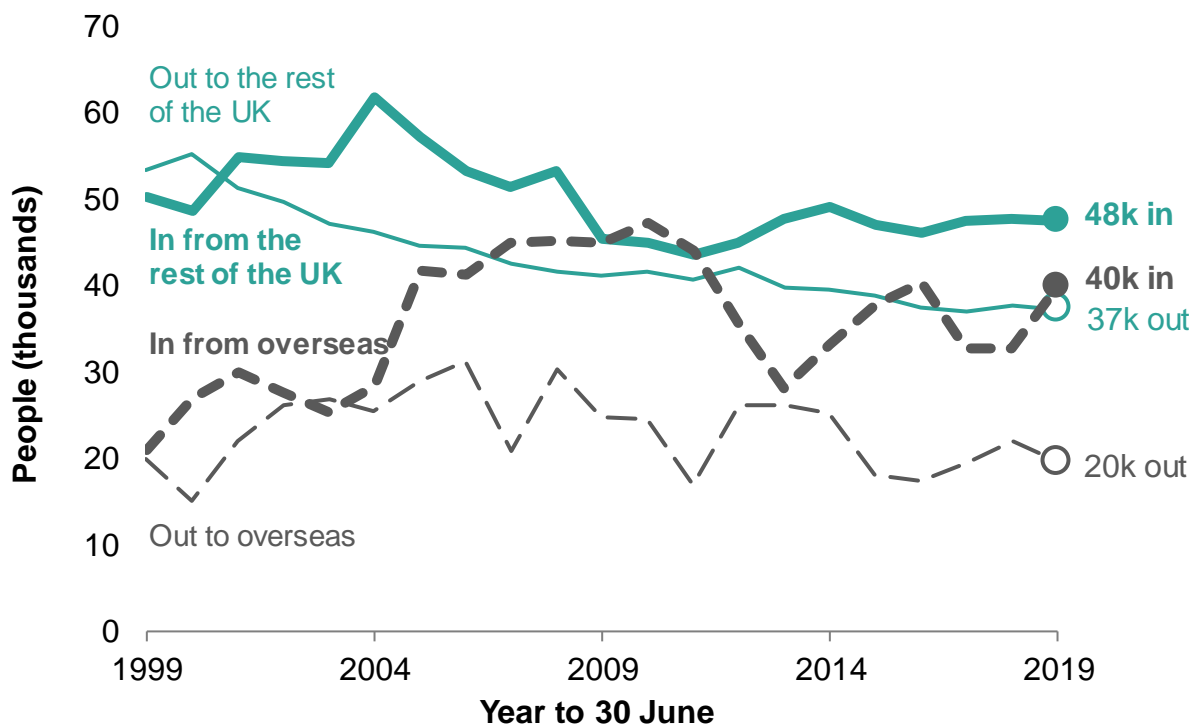
Figure 5 shows migration flows between Scotland and the rest of the UK and overseas since mid-1999.

The number of people moving from Scotland to the rest of the UK has gradually decreased over the last 20 years. Whereas, the number of people moving to Scotland from the rest of the UK experienced a spike in the mid-2000s and has now been relatively stable for the last 10 years.

Moves from overseas to Scotland increased by 7,000 over the latest year

In contrast, migration flows between Scotland and overseas tend to more volatile. In the mid-2000s, there was an increase in the number of people moving from overseas to Scotland, peaking in mid-2010. Since then, between 28,200 and 44,200 people have moved to Scotland from overseas each year, with an increase of 7,000 people over the latest year. The number of people leaving Scotland for overseas decreased by 2,300 people over the latest year, the first decrease in outflows to overseas since the year to mid-2016.

Figure 5: Movements to/from the rest of the UK and overseas, 1998-99 to 2018-19



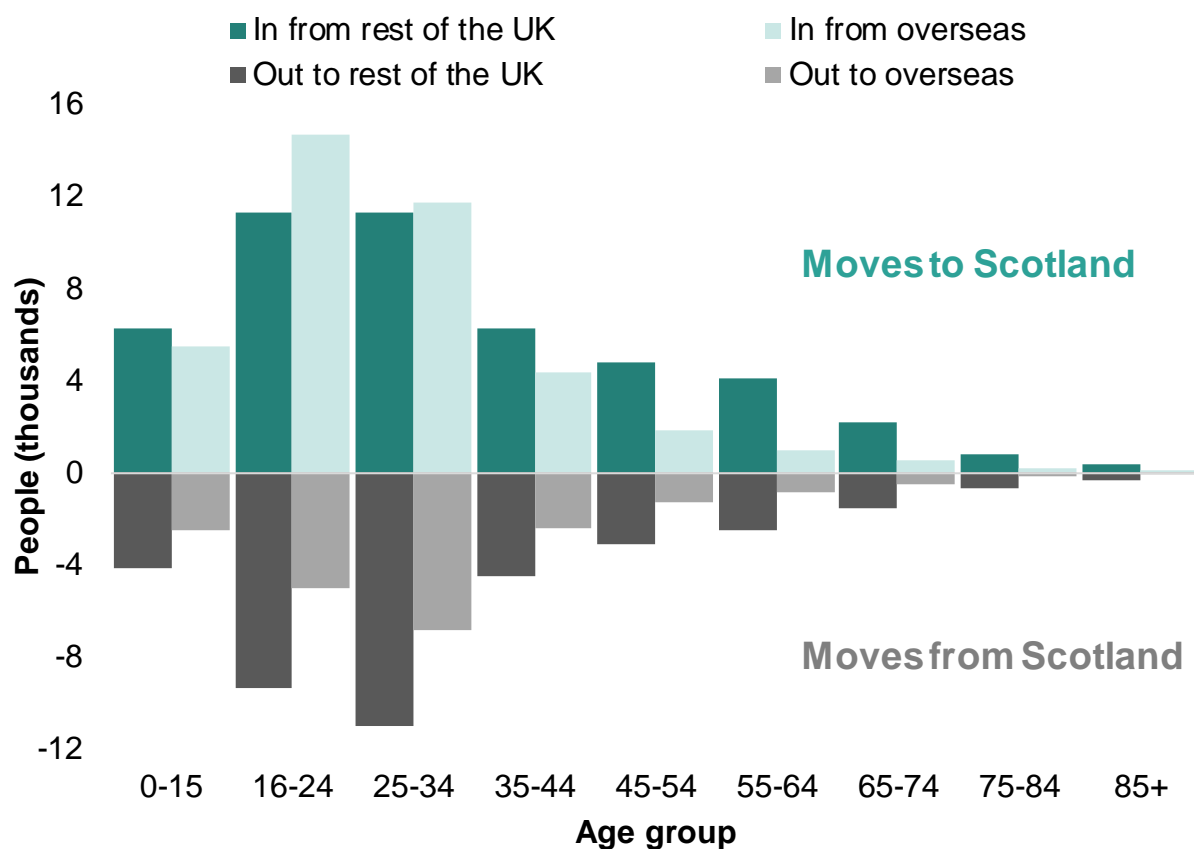
What age are the people coming to and leaving Scotland?

On average people moving to Scotland tend to be younger than the general population. In the year to mid-2019, people aged 16 to 34 accounted for over half (56%) of all people moving to Scotland. In contrast, only 24% of Scotland's population are aged 16 to 34. [Figure 6](#) shows that in the year to mid-2019:

- 16 to 24 and 25 to 34 were the most common age groups for moves from the rest of the UK to Scotland
- 16 to 24 was the most common age group for moves from overseas to Scotland
- 25 to 34 was the most common age group for moves from Scotland to both the rest of the UK and overseas

The number of moves to Scotland from the rest of the UK are highest for age 19, whereas the peak for moves in the opposite direction are highest at age 23. This is most likely the result of an influx of students moving to Scotland to start higher education, followed by moves out of Scotland after graduation. A similar pattern is observed for people moving to and from overseas with a peak for moves to Scotland at age 23 and moves to overseas at age 25, which may reflect overseas moves for work reasons.

Figure 6: Movements to/from the rest of the UK and overseas by age, mid-2018 to mid-2019



4. The age structure of the population

The population of Scotland is ageing

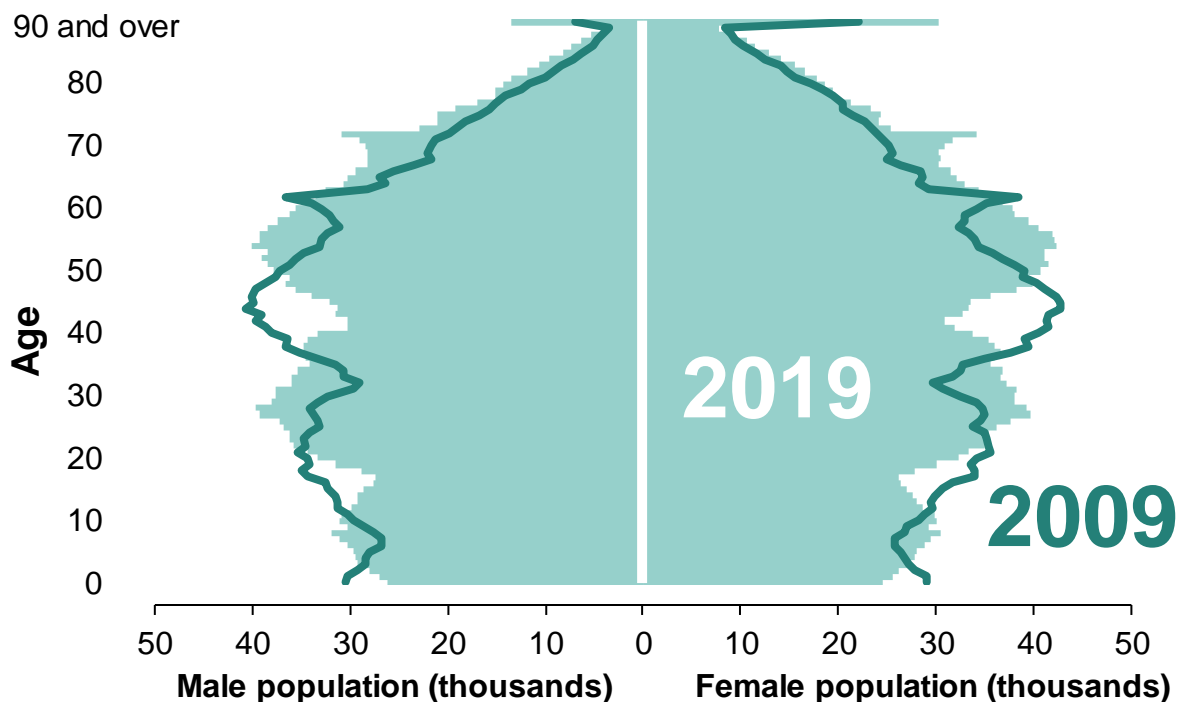
Age composition of a population is very important as changes in different age groups will have different social and economic impacts. For example, increases in the elderly population are likely to place a greater demand on health and social services.

Scotland's population is ageing with an increasing number of people in older age groups compared with 10 years ago, as shown in [Figure 7](#). There is also a higher ratio of females to males in older ages, reflecting the longer life expectancy of females.

Children born in the baby booms of 1947 and the 1960s are visible with a sharp peak at age 72 and another peak around ages in the mid-50s, respectively. The main reasons for Scotland's ageing population are:

- People born in the post-war baby booms getting older
- The number of births dropping since the 1960s
- Increased life expectancy in comparison to earlier decades

Figure 7: Estimated age structure of the population, mid-2009 and mid-2019



How is the age structure of the population changing?

While Scotland's population has increased over the last 30 years, growth is not consistent across all ages. In the last **three decades**, the number of people aged

- 0 to 15 years (children) has decreased by 99,400 people (-10%)
- 16 to 64 years has increased by 203,700 people (+6%)
- 65 and over has increased by 280,800 people (+37%)

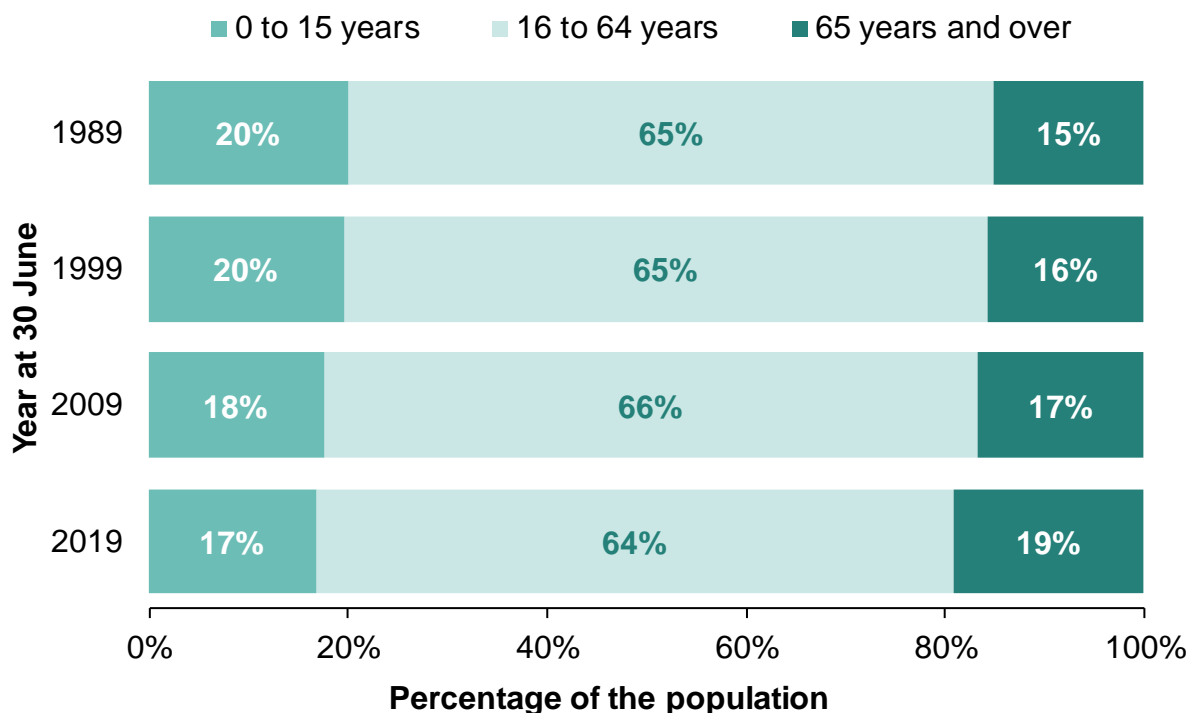
The falling birth rate in Scotland has resulted in people aged 0 to 15 making up a smaller proportion of the population over the last 20 years, as shown in [Figure 8](#).

The number of people aged 65 and over has increased by 37% in the last 30 years

Similarly, over the last decade the proportion of the population aged 16 to 64, which consists of those most likely to be of working age, fell from 66% to 64%. In contrast, people aged 65 and over make up 19% of the population an

increase from 17% in 2009 due to people born in the 1947 baby boom ageing into the 65 and over category.

Figure 8: Age groups as proportion of Scotland's population, mid-1989 to mid-2019



5. The population of areas within Scotland

How has the population changed across areas in Scotland?

One in four council areas decreased in population over the latest year

The population of Scotland increased over the latest year and has been increasing every year since mid-2000. However, population change varies across the country. In the latest year to mid-2019, the population increased in 24 out of Scotland's 32 council areas, with the remaining 8 experiencing depopulation.

Figure 9 shows how population change varies across the country. Council areas facing depopulation are mainly island and rural areas, as well as areas in the west of the country. In contrast, the areas experiencing the highest population growth are Edinburgh, Glasgow and their neighbouring council areas, as well as other areas in the east of the country.

In the year to mid-2019, the council areas which experienced the highest **population growth** (in percentage terms) were:

- City of Edinburgh (+6,430 people, +1.2%)
- East Lothian (+1,300 people, +1.2%)
- Midlothian (+1,120 people, +1.2%)

Whereas, the council areas which experienced greatest **population decline** (in percentage terms) were:

- Argyll and Bute (-390 people, -0.5%)
- Inverclyde (-350 people, -0.4%)
- Na h-Eileanan Siar (-110 people, -0.4%)
- North Ayrshire (-540 people, -0.4%)

Did you know: National Records of Scotland also publish [population estimates for small areas](#) across Scotland. These small areas are called data zones and typically have around 500 to 1,000 household residents.

Small area population estimates are useful for identifying trends **within council areas** showing pockets of both growth and depopulation in each area. They can be combined to create other geographies such as urban rural areas, areas of deprivation, parliamentary constituencies and wards.

Mid-2019 small area population estimates will be published in **August 2020**.

Why has the population of an area increased or decreased?

Figure 10 shows the components driving population change in **council areas** between mid-2018 and mid-2019. The three components of population change are:

- **Natural change** - the number of births minus deaths
- **Net migration** - the number of people moving to an area minus the number of people leaving
- **Other changes** – changes in the prison population, number of armed forces personnel based in Scotland and small rounding adjustments

75% of council areas had more deaths than births in the latest year

Net migration was positive in 28 of Scotland's 32 council areas, meaning that more people moved to the area than left. Whereas, only 8 councils (a quarter) experienced natural growth with more births than deaths.

Of the 24 areas which experienced **population growth** over the latest year to mid-2019:

- All of these councils had positive net migration, with more people moving to the area than leaving
- 6 council areas also experienced natural growth due to more births than deaths
- 18 council areas had more deaths than births

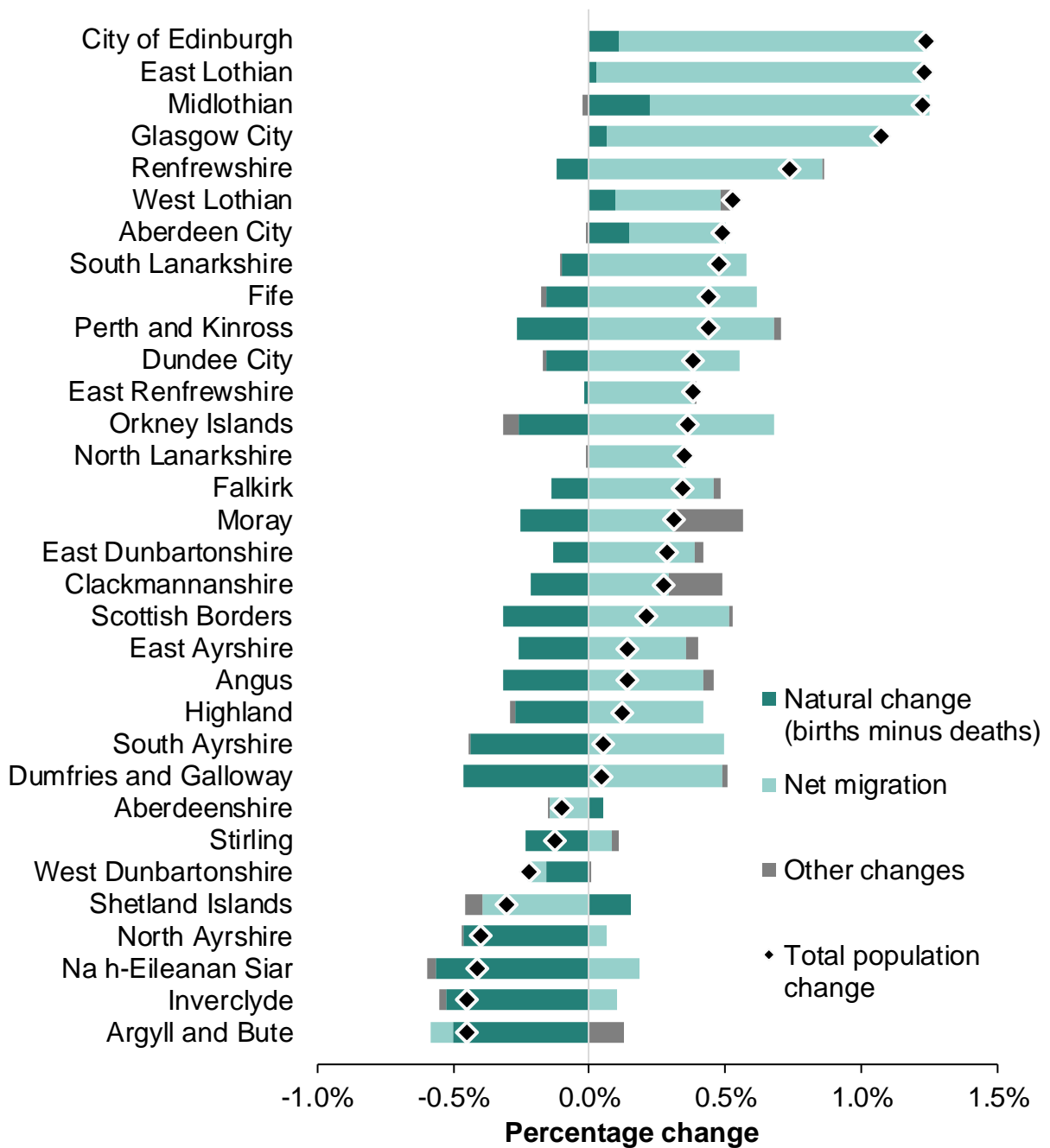
Of the 8 areas which experienced **population decline**:

- Negative natural change (more deaths than births) was the main driver in 6 of these council areas
- Negative net migration (more people leaving than arriving) was the main driver of depopulation in the other 2 areas

Did you know: The Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework](#) includes an indicator on Scotland's population, measuring population change by council area. This sits under the National Outcome "*we are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally*".

The Scottish Government's Ministerial Taskforce on Population is helping tackle Scotland's population challenges – find out more information about the work of the Taskforce on the gov.scot website.

Figure 10: Components of population change for council areas, mid-2018 to mid-2019 ^{3,4}



Ordered by descending percentage population change.

³ Population estimates for mid-2018 are based on the 2018 Council areas, whereas mid-2019 population estimates are based on the 2019 Council areas. The 2019 areas differ from the previous areas due to a boundary change at Cardowan by Steps, between Glasgow and North Lanarkshire. The boundary change resulted in approximately 400 people transferring from Glasgow to North Lanarkshire. These moves have been accounted for as migration within Scotland.

⁴ Other changes includes changes in the prison population, changes in the armed forces personnel based in Scotland and small rounding adjustments.

The number of council areas facing population growth or decline varies each year. Over the latest year, seven council areas changed from decreasing to increasing in population, although it is important to remember that some of these year on year changes can be very small. One of these areas was Dumfries and Galloway which experienced a small increase of 70 people after decreases to its population in each of the previous seven years.

In comparison, Stirling was the only council area to change from population increasing (+330 people in the year to mid-2018) to population decreasing (-120 people in the year to mid-2019). Stirling had previously increased in population every year since mid-2004. The recent decrease in population was driven by more deaths than births in the year to mid-2019.

[Figure 11](#) shows the components driving population change in **NHS Board areas** between mid-2018 and mid-2019. The population increased in 10 out of the 14 NHS Board areas. Net migration was positive in all health board areas, with the exception of Shetland. Whereas, there were more deaths than births in 11 health board areas.

Of the 10 health board areas which experienced **population growth** over the latest year to mid-2019:

- Net migration was positive in all of these areas
- Eight of these health board areas had more deaths than births
- Lothian and Grampian were the only two areas to have more births than deaths

Of the four health board areas which experienced **population decline**:

- More deaths than births was the main driver of depopulation in Western Isles, Ayrshire and Arran, and Highland
- More people leaving than moving into the area was the main driver of depopulation for Shetland

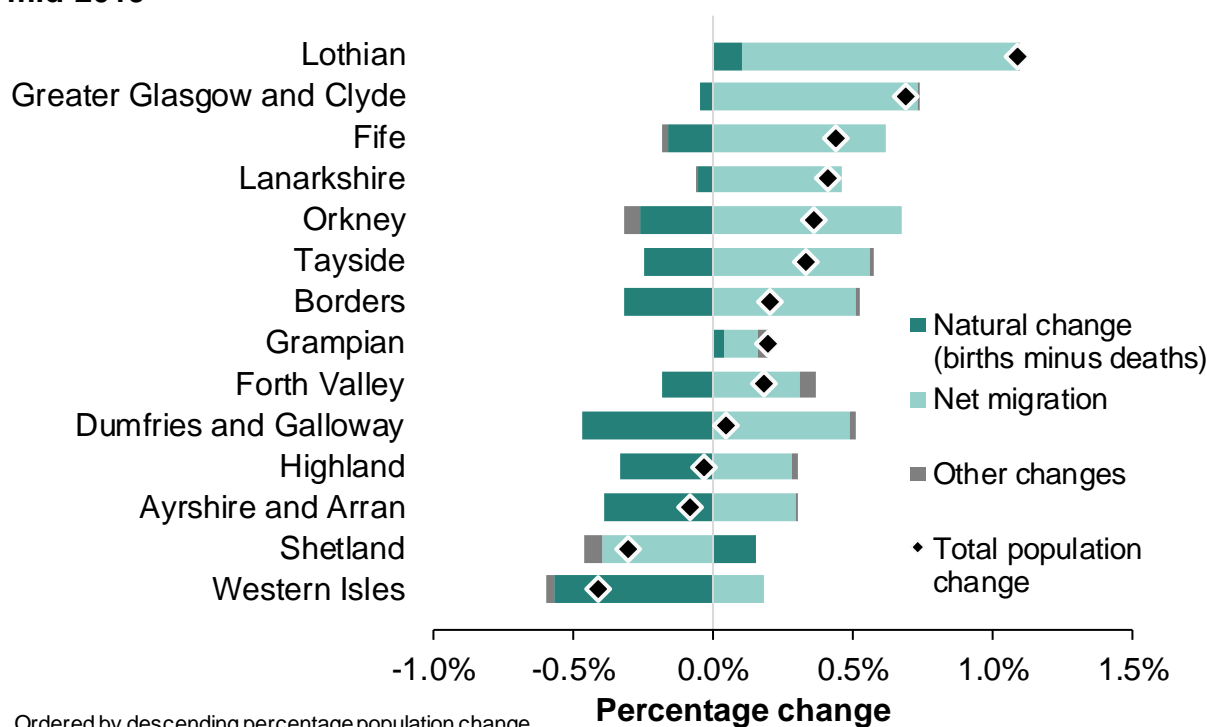
More information about the population and components of population change for the year to mid-2019 are available from tables⁵ on the NRS website. Also available are figures⁶ similar to Figure 10 and 11 which show components of change over the decade to mid-2019.

⁵ [Table 4: Components of population change by administrative area, mid-2018 to mid-2019.](#)

⁶ [Figure A: Components of population change by council area, mid-2009 to mid-2019.](#)

[Figure B: Components of population change by NHS Board areas, mid-2009 to mid-2019.](#)

Figure 11: Components of population change by NHS Board areas, mid-2018 to mid-2019 ^{7,8}



Ordered by descending percentage population change.

How does migration differ across areas in Scotland?

Within Scotland, there are three types of migration which can add to the population:

- **Within Scotland** – between council areas in Scotland
- **Rest of UK** – between Scotland and other UK countries
- **Overseas** – between Scotland and countries outside the UK

Figure 12 shows population change in the year to mid-2019 due to each of the above migration flows.

Migration within Scotland contributed to population growth in over half (17 of 32) of Scottish council areas in the year to mid-2019. The largest percentage increases in population due to migration from other areas of Scotland were in areas which neighbour the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow:

⁷ Population estimates for mid-2018 are based on the 2018 Health Board areas, whereas mid-2019 population estimates are based on the 2019 Health Board areas. The 2019 areas differ from the previous areas due to a boundary change at Cardowan by Steps, between Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Lanarkshire. The boundary change resulted in approximately 400 people transferring from Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Lanarkshire. These moves have been accounted for as migration within Scotland.

⁸ Other changes include changes in the prison population, changes in the armed forces personnel based in Scotland and small rounding adjustments

- Midlothian (+900 people, +1.0%)
- East Lothian (+960 people, +0.9%)
- Renfrewshire (+1,020 people, +0.6%)

In the year to mid-2019, the council areas which saw more people leave for other areas in Scotland than arrive were mostly island and very rural areas, as well as the four largest cities in Scotland: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee. The largest percentage decreases due to migration to other areas of Scotland were in:

- Shetland Islands (-180 people, -0.8%)
- Argyll and Bute (-540 people, -0.6%)
- City of Edinburgh (-2,830 people, -0.5%)
- Glasgow City (-3,130 people, -0.5%)

Did you know: In the year to mid-2019, the five most common moves between Scottish council areas were between neighbouring council areas. With the exception of Aberdeenshire to Aberdeen City, the most common moves were from cities to their neighbouring council areas.

Most common moves within Scotland	Number of moves
Glasgow City to South Lanarkshire	3,020
Aberdeen City to Aberdeenshire	2,870
Glasgow City to North Lanarkshire*	2,530
Aberdeenshire to Aberdeen City	2,470
City of Edinburgh to Midlothian	1,970

Explore our [internal migration interactive visualisation](#) to see the most common moves to and from areas in Scotland.

*A recent boundary review between Glasgow and North Lanarkshire resulted in an additional 400 moves being included in the internal migration estimates from Glasgow City to North Lanarkshire. More information on the boundary change can be found in the background notes.

Migration from overseas contributed to population growth in just over two thirds of council areas (21 of 32) in the year to mid-2019. The largest percentage increases due to migration from overseas were in the four largest cities:

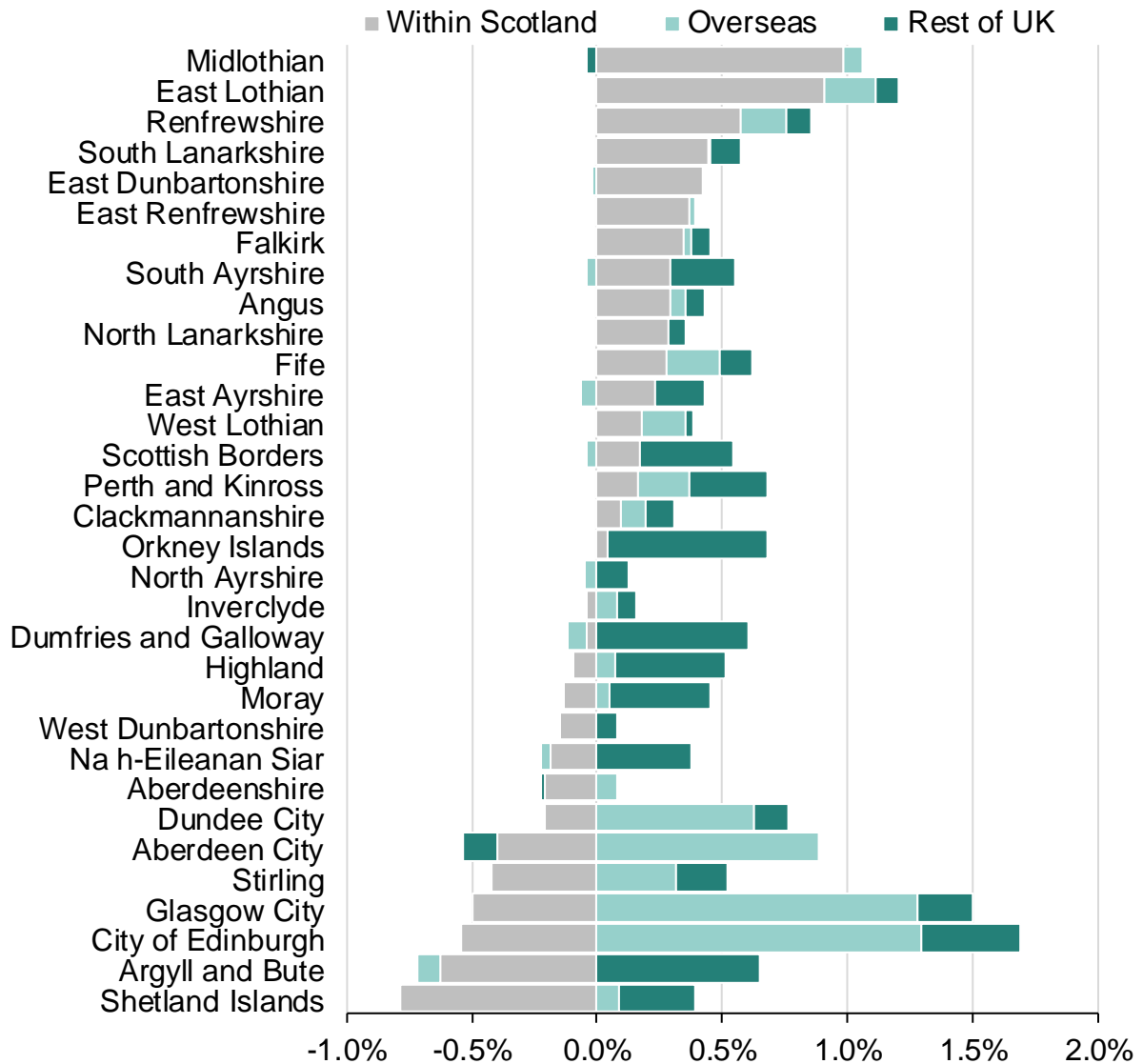
- City of Edinburgh (+6,710 people, +1.3%)
- Glasgow City (+7,990 people, +1.3%)
- Aberdeen City (+2,020 people, +0.9%)
- Dundee City (+930 people, +0.6%)

Did you know: More people move from overseas to the four largest cities in Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee) than leave the cities for overseas. However, more people leave the four cities for other parts of Scotland than arrive from other council areas.

Migration from the rest of the UK added to the population in all but five council areas (27 of 32) in the year to mid-2019. The largest percentage increases in population due to migration from the rest of the UK were in:

- Argyll and Bute (+560 people, +0.6%)
- Orkney Islands (+140 people, +0.6%)
- Dumfries and Galloway (+900 people, +0.6%)

Figure 12: Components of population change due to net migration by council area, mid-2018 to mid-2019



Ordered by migration within Scotland.

Percentage change

What is the age structure of the population across areas in Scotland?

Although the age distribution across Scotland is complex, some general themes are visible. [Figure 13](#) shows the proportion of the population aged 0 to 15, 16 to 64 and 65 and over in each of Scotland's council areas.

In mid-2019, the four largest cities in Scotland had the highest proportion of population **aged 16 to 64 years**, as well as some of the lowest proportions of people aged 65 and over:

- Glasgow City (71% aged 16 to 64, 13% aged 65 and over)
- City of Edinburgh (70% aged 16 to 64, 15% aged 65 and over)
- Aberdeen City (69% aged 16 to 64, 16% aged 65 and over)
- Dundee City (66% aged 16 to 64, 17% aged 65 and over)

Whilst the cities tend to have a lower proportion of children, the neighbouring council areas to the cities had some of the highest proportions of children **aged 0 to 15 years** in their population:

- East Renfrewshire (20%)
- Midlothian (19%)
- West Lothian (19%)
- Aberdeenshire (19%)

One in five people living in East Renfrewshire is a child (aged 0 to 15)

More rural and island areas tend to have an older age profile. In mid-2019, islands and areas which are mostly rural had some of the highest proportions of population **aged 65 and over**:

- Dumfries and Galloway (26%)
- Argyll and Bute (26%)
- Na h-Eileanan Siar (26%)
- South Ayrshire (26%)

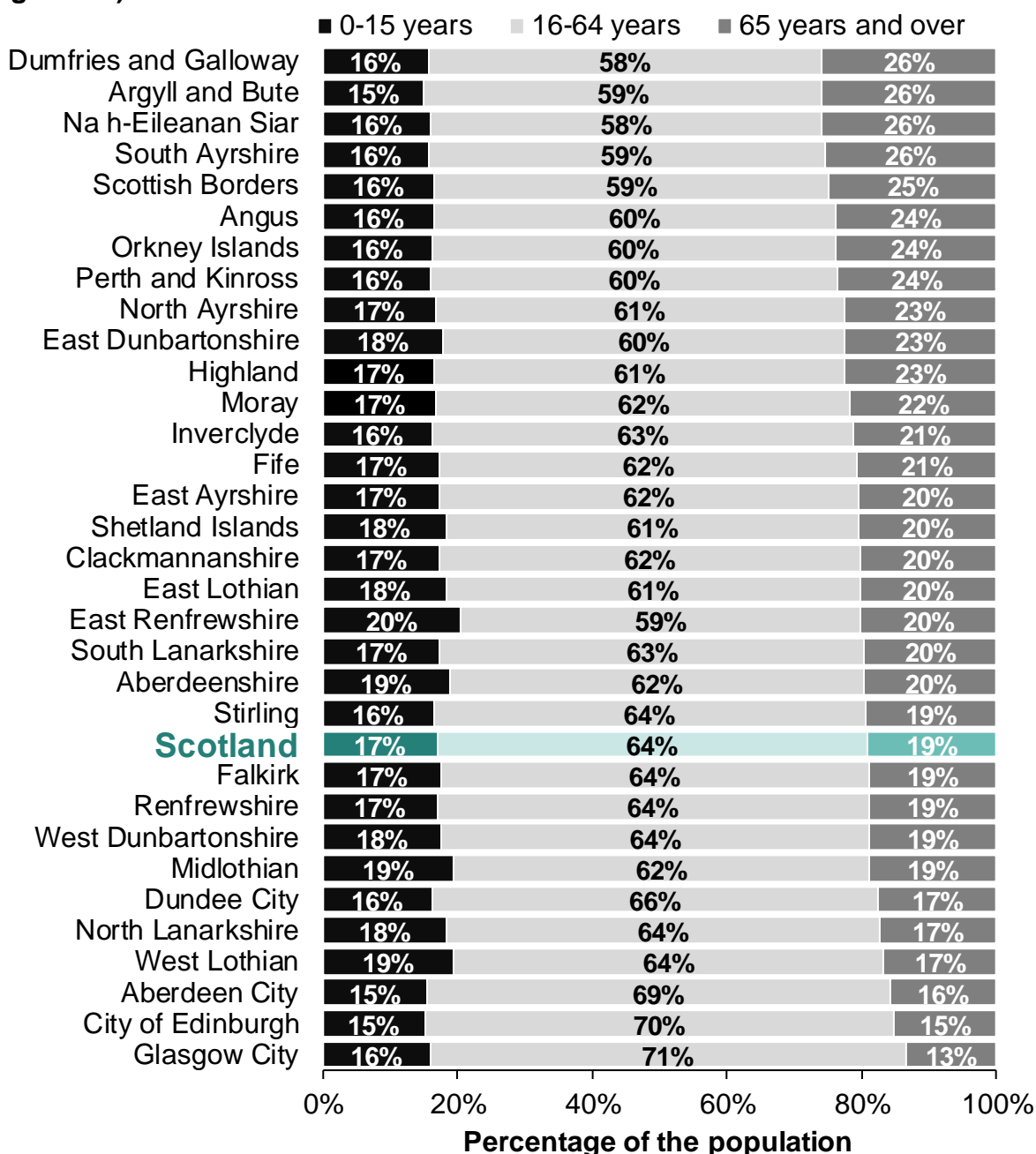
Mostly rural and island areas also represent some of the areas with the lowest proportion of children aged 0 to 15 years, as well as the lowest proportion of people aged 16 to 64.

[Figure 14](#) shows the age profiles of all of Scotland's health board areas. For both council and health board areas, those which are more urban tend to have a younger age profile than those which represent more rural areas.

More detail on the age and sex structure of council areas and NHS health board areas are available from tables⁹ on the NRS website.

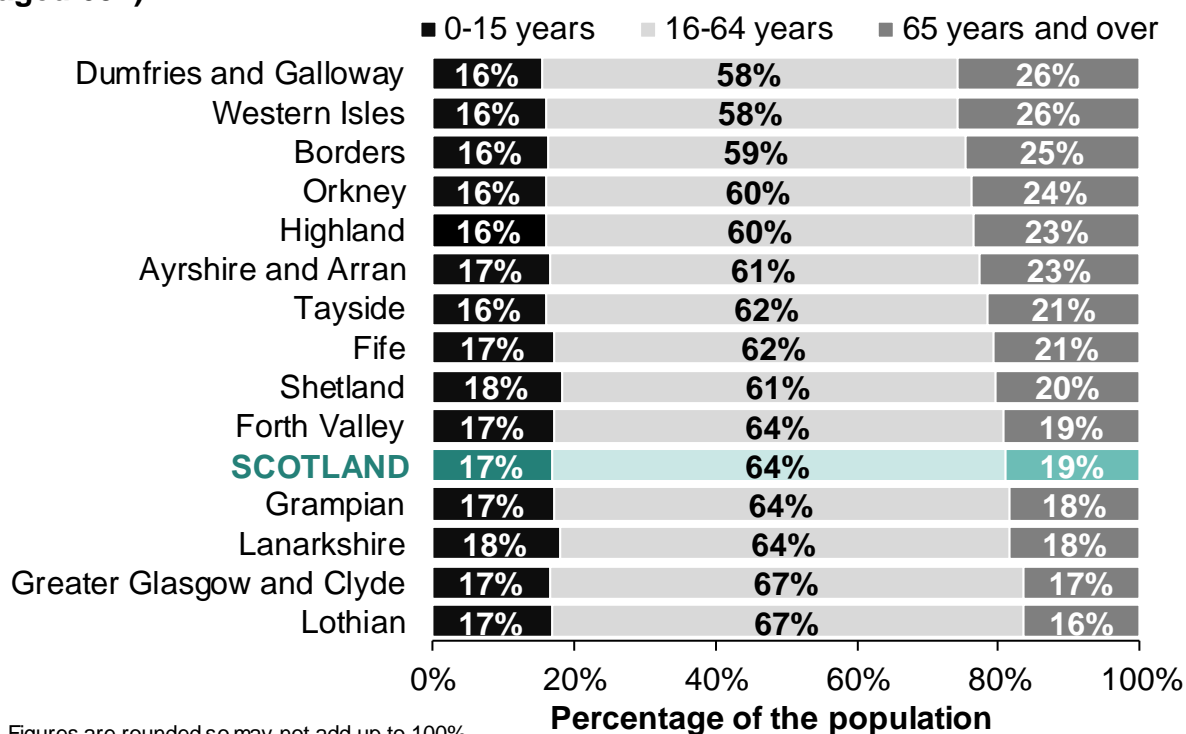
⁹ Table 7: Age and sex structure of administrative areas, mid-2019.

Figure 13: Age structure of council areas, mid-2019 (ordered by percentage aged 65+)



Figures are rounded so may not add up to 100%.

Figure 14: Age structure of NHS Board areas, mid-2019 (ordered by percentage aged 65+)



Figures are rounded so may not add up to 100%.

How has the age structure of the population changed in Scottish areas?

Figure 15 shows how the population has changed in broad age groups over the last decade to mid-2019.

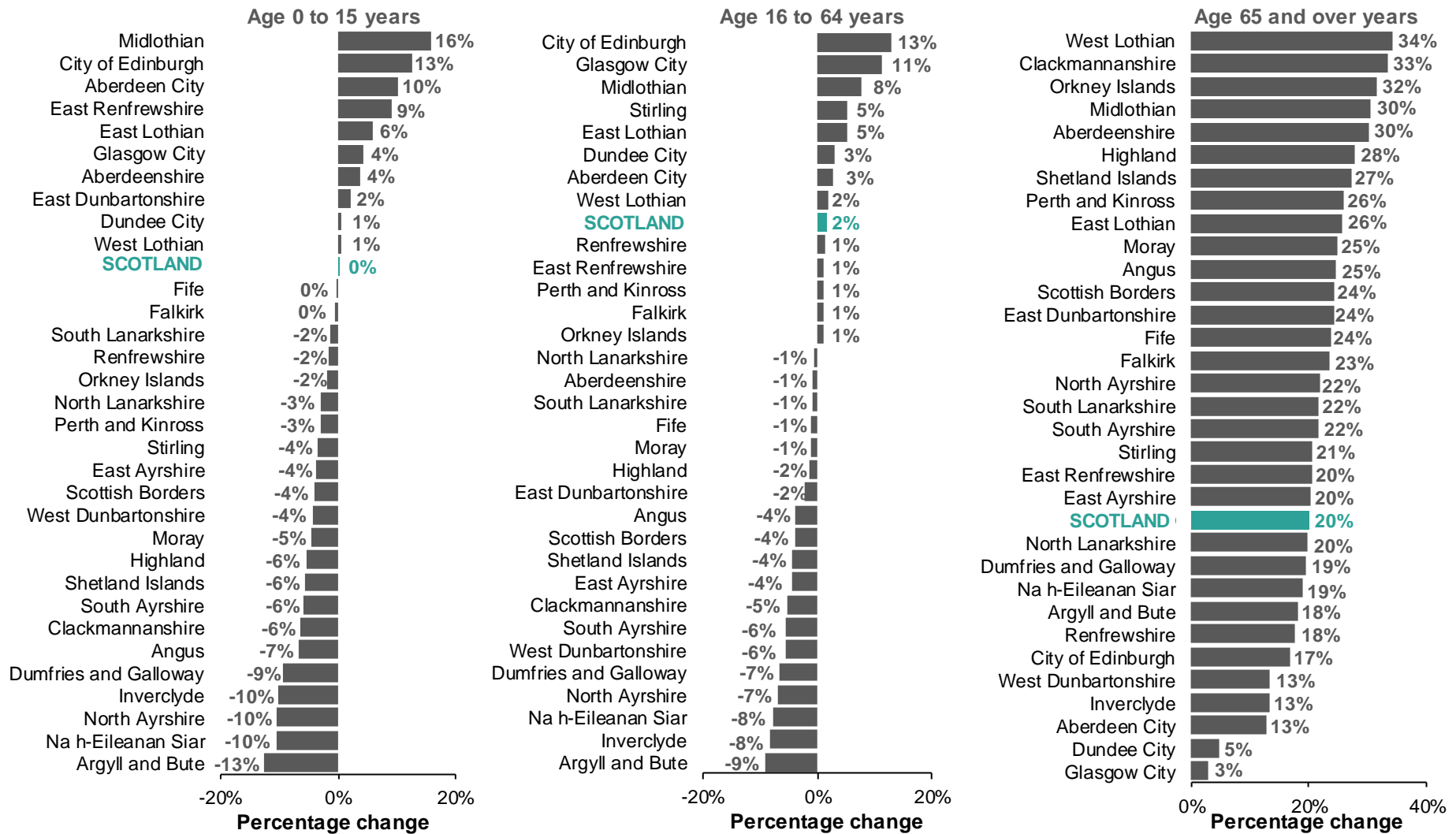
Over the last decade, the four largest Scottish cities and some of their neighbouring council areas have seen the greatest increase in the population of children aged 0 to 15. Many of these areas have also had the greatest increase in the population aged 16 to 64. However, with the exception of Glasgow City, all areas which had growth above the Scottish average for the age group 16 to 64 were in the east of the country.

Areas which experienced the greatest decrease in population aged 0 to 15 were mainly rural and island areas. The five areas (Argyll and Bute, Na h-Eileanan Siar, North Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Dumfries and Galloway) which experienced the greatest decrease in the population aged under 16, also experienced the greatest decline in the population aged 16 to 64.

The number of people aged **65 and over** has increased in all council areas in the last decade

All 32 Scottish council areas have seen an increase in their population aged 65 and over in the last decade. The greatest increases were in West Lothian (34%), Clackmannanshire (33%) and Orkney Islands (32%).

Figure 15: Percentage change in age group by council area, mid-2009 to mid-2019



Where is the population located within Scotland?

In the year to mid-2019, the population density of Scotland was 70 people per square kilometre, although this varies significantly across the country.

In mid-2019, the four largest Scottish cities were the most densely populated areas:

- Glasgow City (3,600 people per square kilometre)
- Dundee City (2,500 people per square kilometre)
- City of Edinburgh (2,000 people per square kilometre)
- Aberdeen City (1,200 people per square kilometre)

In comparison, areas in the highlands and islands of Scotland had the fewest people per square kilometre¹⁰:

- Na h-Eileanan Siar (9 people per square kilometre)
- Highland (9 people per square kilometre)
- Argyll and Bute (12 people per square kilometre)
- Shetland Islands (16 people per square kilometre)

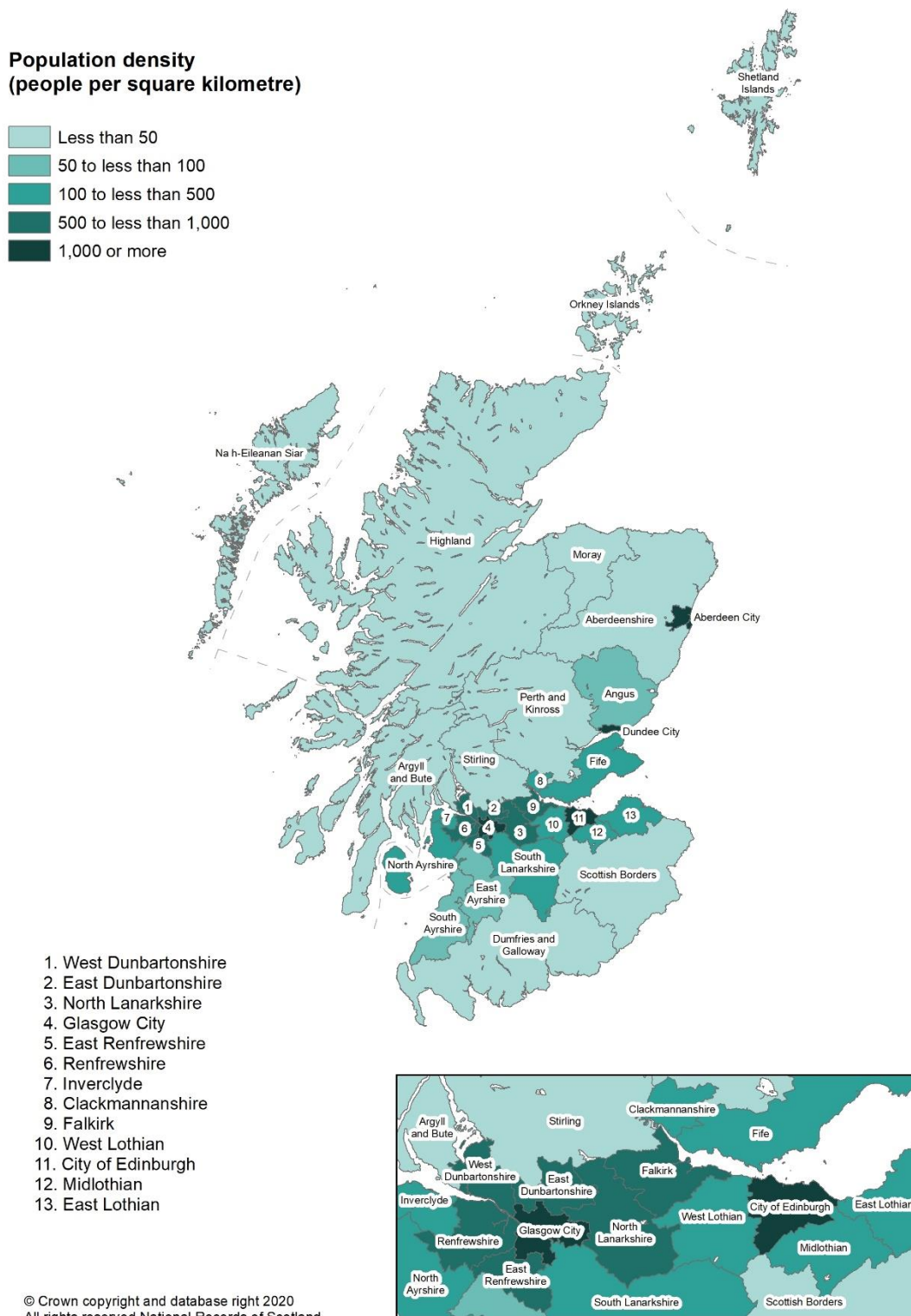
Figure 16 shows that the most densely populated council areas are clustered around Scotland's central belt. The only exceptions to this being Aberdeen City and Dundee City.

More detail on the land area and population densities for mid-2019 are available in tables¹¹ from the NRS website.

¹⁰ Please note that population densities have not been rounded, while previous figures at local level have been rounded to the nearest 10.

¹¹ [Table 9](#): Land area and population density by administrative area, mid-2019

Figure 16: Population density by council area, mid-2019



6. Background Notes

Population covered

Mid-year population estimates relate to the usually resident population on 30 June of the year shown and ages relate to age at last birthday. Long-term international migrants are included, but not short-term. A long-term migrant is defined by the United Nations (UN) as someone who changes country of residence for 12 months or more, whatever their nationality. Other changes include changes in the armed forces and prison population and any rounding adjustments.

Methodology

The Mid-Year Population Estimates for Scotland [Methodology Guide](#) that accompanies this publication provides more detail on the methodology, as well as information on the quality of the data and known uses of the data.

On 1 April 2019, a boundary review between Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire council areas came into effect. As a result, eight postcodes were transferred from Glasgow City to North Lanarkshire. Residents of these postcodes were included in the internal migration estimates between Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire, hence the migration estimates will include approximately 400 additional moves. The same process has been applied to Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Lanarkshire health board areas, which were also affected by the boundary review.

Strengths and limitations

It is important to have high quality statistics on the latest population (mid-year population estimates). NRS produces detailed annual estimates on the resident population of Scotland using a range of data gathered from statistical censuses and surveys, as well as administrative data. There are processes in place to check the suitability of these sources.

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.

It is important to consider the **limitations** when using 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

surveys, are used to estimate migration. The international migration estimates are based largely on the International Passenger Survey (IPS). However the number of migrant contacts for Scotland is very small and there is a significant degree of uncertainty surrounding these estimates, due to the size of the sample. NRS are part of a cross-government transformation programme, being led by the Office for National Statistics, to [improve population and migration statistics](#) through greater use of administrative data sources.

There are no means of verifying the true population between censuses. As a result, any uncertainty in the population estimates will accumulate with time as we move further from the previous census. However, in the future, Scotland's Census 2021 will provide a new base population and as a result, the population estimates for mid-2012 to mid-2020 will be rebased to bring them in line with the 2021 Census population.

Revisions

Revisions and corrections to previously published statistics are dealt with in accordance with the Scottish Government Statistician Group [corporate policy statement](#) on revisions and corrections.

7. Future developments

The methodology used in the mid-year estimates is ever-evolving as more administrative data sources become available to NRS. Any improvements to the data sources and methodology of these statistics are discussed and assessed with the [Population and Migration Statistics Committee \(Scotland\)](#).

Improving the use of the NHSCR

NRS are continuing to review the process for estimating migration flows within Scotland and from the rest of the UK using a direct extract of anonymised records from the NHS Central Register (NHSCR). This should result in more accurate migration data at council and small area level.

Transformation of population and migration statistics

In Scotland, NRS are working with the Office for National Statistics, and other GSS partners, as part of the [transformation programme](#) to improve international migration statistics, which should help address user demand for more evidence on the impacts of international migration, particularly at local level, as well as provide the best estimate of international migration to feed into Scotland's population statistics.

One of the objectives of Scotland's Census 2021 Programme is to make recommendations for future censuses. In order to feed in to this recommendation, a project to create Administrative Data Population and Household Estimates was commissioned. The aim of this project is to look at the future use of administrative data collected by public bodies and services to augment or replace NRS' data collected by a traditional census.

NRS are working to create admin-based population outputs from various sets of administrative data. This project has been in development since 2017, and hopefully later this year the first set of administrative based population estimates will be published. These will be published as experimental statistics under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and will allow a discussion with users about the use of administrative data within the field of demographic statistics. As this area of statistics develops, information will be updated on the following webpage:

<https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/administrative-data>

If you have an interest in attending any future stakeholder events where administrative data is being discussed, please contact:

Scotlandscensus@nrscotland.gov.uk

New sources of data

NRS are exploring the feasibility of using data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to improve estimates of student migration.

Publication of future population estimates

Mid-year population estimates for 2020 will be published in spring 2021.

8. Links to related statistics

[Population projections](#) for Scotland and sub-national areas (2018-based) are available from the NRS website.

[Population estimates for the UK](#) and its constituent countries are available from the Office for National Statistics website.

Population estimates for [small area and other special areas](#) within Scotland including data zones, Parliamentary Constituencies, Electoral Wards, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles, Urban Rural Classification and Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics for mid-2019 will be released in August 2020.

In response to user feedback, NRS have published improved [Council Area Profiles](#). These provide a summary of demographic trends for each Scottish council area.

Provisional data on annual births and deaths in Scotland for 2019 are published in the [Vital Events](#) section of the NRS website.

[Deaths involving COVID-19](#) are published weekly every Wednesday by NRS. This includes all deaths where COVID is mentioned on the death certificate. These figures are broken down by age, sex, location of death and geographic area.

Population estimates of [centenarians and people aged 90 and over](#) at Scotland and sub-national levels for mid-2019 will be published in September 2020.

How to find data

What are you looking for?

The data used in this publication in Excel and CSV format.

Time series population estimates.

The mid-2019 population estimates will be available as open data within one month of publishing.

Detailed tables on migration statistics for the period covering mid-2018 to mid-2019.

Demographic profiles of Scottish council areas.

Select and compare population estimates for Scotland and its council areas.

Where is it?

[Data and charts](#)

[Times series data](#)

[Open data](#)

[Migration statistics](#)

[NRS Council area profiles](#)

[Interactive charts](#)

9. 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 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, and more can be found in the metadata 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 aim is to provide relevant and reliable information, analysis and advice that meets the needs of government, business and the people of Scotland. 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](#)

Enquiries and suggestions

Please contact our Statistics Customer Services if you need any further information.
Email: statisticscustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk

If you have comments or suggestions that would help us improve our standards of service, please contact:

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