

Annual births, deaths, marriages and other vital events

Vital Events Reference Tables 2023

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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 2023, inclusive. The tables provide statistics of births, adoptions, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths.

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1. Main points

- There were 45,935 live births registered in 2023, a slight decrease of 2% on 2022 and the lowest annual total since records began in 1855.
- Scotland's total fertility rate fell to 1.30, down from 1.33 last year. For a population to replace itself this rate needs to be around 2.1.
- There were 63,445 deaths registered in 2023, 1% more than in 2022. Deaths were broadly in line with expected levels (an excess of 0.2% above expected levels).
- In 2023 there were 17,510 more deaths than births. This measure is sometimes called "natural change". The last time Scotland had more births than deaths was in 2014.
- The age-standardised mortality rate was 1,166 per 100,000 people in 2023, an increase of 1% on 2022. Age-standardised mortality was higher for males (1,344 per 100,000) than for females (1,019 per 100,000)
- There were 26,753 marriages in Scotland in 2023, 11% fewer than in 2022. The number of marriages in Scotland initially increased after the COVID-19 pandemic restricted opportunities to have ceremonies but is now at a similar level to that seen in 2019 (26,007).
- There were 171 stillbirths in 2023, a rate of 3.7 for every thousand live and still births. The rate was unchanged from the previous year. The lowest ever still birth rate (3.5) was recorded in 2019.
- There were 184 infant deaths in 2023, a rate of 4.0 for every thousand live births. This was an increase on last year's rate of 3.5 and the highest rate seen since 4.1 in 2011.
- There were 369 adoptions registered in 2023, 1 fewer than in 2022.
- There were 719 civil partnerships registered in 2023, the highest number since 2006. The majority of civil partnerships in Scotland are mixed sex (82% in 2023), following a legislation change in 2021 which allowed this.

2. Introduction

Provisional figures have been released throughout the last year on a weekly, monthly and 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 2023.

When this report was published no population estimates were available for 2023, so 2022 population estimates will be used in their place. Rates (which use population as a denominator) will be updated in the future when 2023 population estimates are available.

Rebased population estimates for 2011 to 2021 were published on 9 July 2024. Rates for the relevant years have been updated to reflect these new population estimates and may therefore differ from those previously published.

3. Adoptions

There were 369 adoptions registered in 2023, 1 fewer than in 2022.

The number of adoptions has fallen over the long term. The pre-pandemic level was around half the number in the mid-1980s and less than a quarter of the number of the late 1960s.(Table 2.01)

4. Births

There were 45,935 live births registered in 2023, a slight decrease of 2% on the year before and 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, generally decreasing since then.

In 2023 there were 23,594 baby boys and 22,341 girls. [The most common names were Luca and Isla](#) respectively.

Just over half of all live births (53%) were to unmarried parents. Multiple births accounted for 1.5% of all maternities with 664 maternities involving twins and 10 involving triplets or more. (Table 1.01b)

The age of mothers has changed over time. In the 1960s, mothers in their twenties were the most common age-groups. From the mid-1970s onwards births to mothers in their thirties began to increase and the 30-34 age-group is now the most common. The birth rate among mothers under 20 has fallen over time and is now the age group with the lowest birth rate, although it rose a little in the latest year. (Figures 1 and 2)

Figure 1 – Live Births per 1,000 women, by age of mother, 1951 - 2023

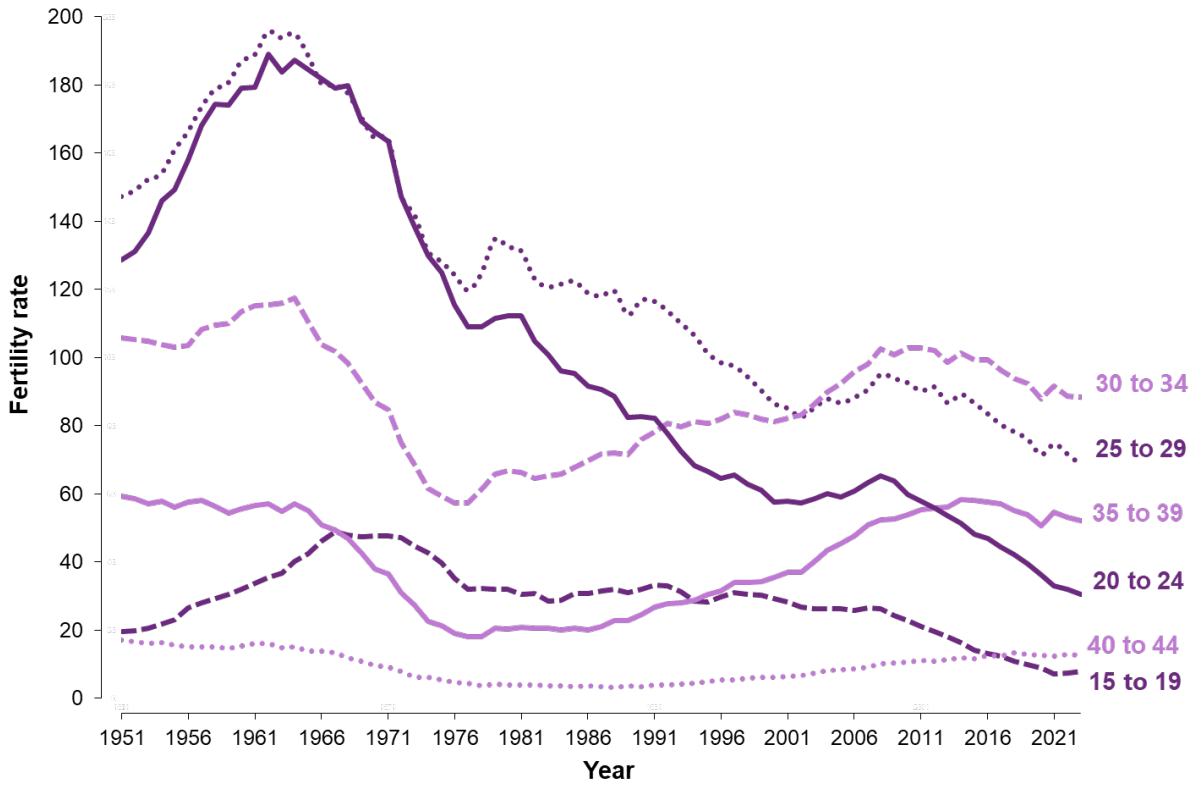
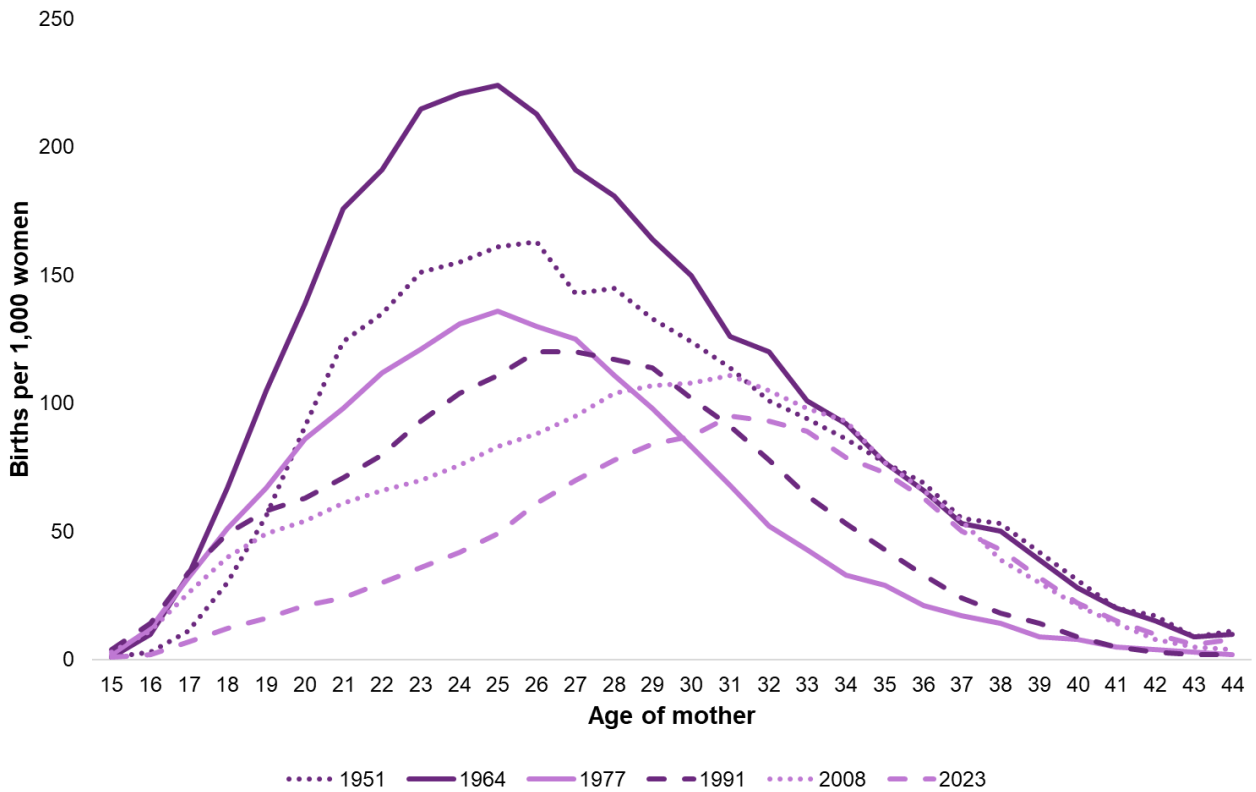


Figure 2 – Live Births per 1,000 women, by age of mother, selected years



The total fertility rate (TFR) fell to the lowest ever recorded level in 2023 at 1.30. 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 0.98 children, followed by Glasgow City at 1.12.

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.

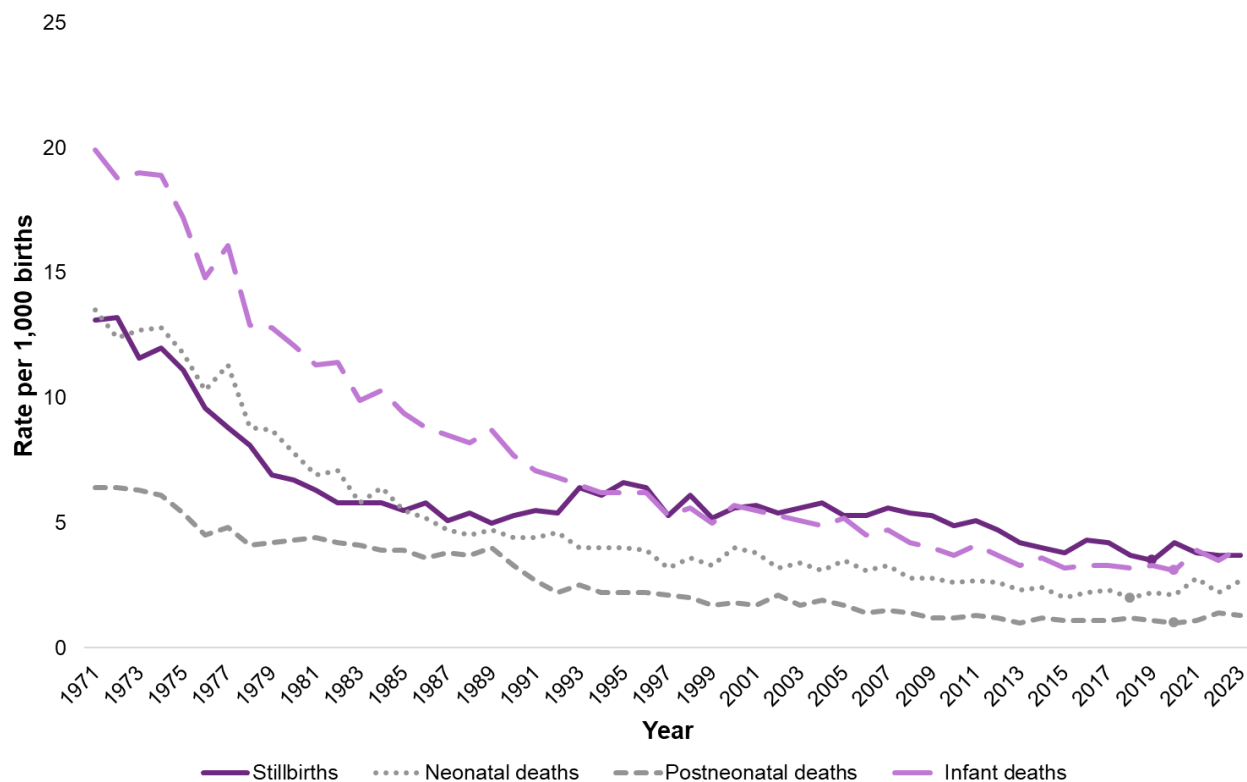
Fertility rates were highest in the most deprived areas (1.42) and lowest in the least deprived areas (1.12). (Table 3.17)

Almost half of all births in 2023 (47%) were to mothers who had had no previous live births. 34% were to mothers with 1 previous live birth and only 2% were to mothers who had 4 or more previous live births. The number of previous live births differed according to the age of the mother, with younger mothers being more likely to have had no previous live births than older mothers, with the exception of the oldest mothers. Mothers aged 45 and over were more likely than mothers aged 35-44 to have had no previous live births. (Table 3.18)

5. Stillbirths and Infant Deaths

There were 171 stillbirths in 2023, a rate of 3.7 for every thousand live and still births - unchanged from 2022. The lowest ever still birth rate (3.5) was recorded in 2019.

Figure 3 – Stillbirth and Infant Death Rates¹, 1971 - 2023



¹ Stillbirth rates are calculated per 1,000 live and still births. Infant deaths, neonatal and post-neonatal death rates are calculated per 1,000 live births.

There were 184 infant deaths, a rate of 4.0 for every thousand live births in 2023. This was an increase on last year's rate of 3.5 and the highest rate seen since 4.1 in 2011 (Table 1.01b, Figure 2).

Infant deaths can be split into neonatal deaths (deaths in the first 4 weeks) and post-neonatal deaths (deaths from 4 weeks to 1 year). There were 122 neonatal deaths and 62 post-neonatal deaths registered in 2023 (Table 4.01). The rate of postneonatal deaths was 1.3 per 1,000, a slight decrease on the previous year although still the second highest rate in the last twelve years. The rate of neonatal deaths rose in the latest year to 2.7 following a decrease in 2022. This is the joint second highest neonatal death rate since 2009.

6. Deaths

The number of deaths registered in 2023 was 63,445. This was 1% higher than the number in 2022.

The age-standardised mortality rate was 1,166 per 100,000 people in 2023, an increase of 1% on 2022. Age-standardised mortality was higher for males (1,344 per 100,000) than for females (1,019 per 100,000)

Deaths in 2023 were broadly in line with expected levels, with an excess of 0.2% above the expected number of deaths. This follows the previous three years of high excess deaths which saw the number of deaths between 4.8% to 9.4% above the expected level (figure 4).

These estimates of expected and excess deaths take into account the size and age structure of the population. In 2023, deaths were lower than expected levels in the two age groups: up to age 64 (2.0% lower) and age 65 to 79 (0.7% lower). Deaths in those aged 80 and over were 1.6% above the expected level. These trends are similar when broken down by sex, with the exception of females aged 65 to 79 where deaths were close to expected levels at 0.1% (Table 5.11).

Comparing against the expected number of deaths

Excess deaths is the difference between the observed number of deaths in a particular period and the number of deaths that would have been expected in that period, based on historical data. The expected number of deaths is estimated from age-specific mortality rates rather than death counts, so trends in population size and age structure are taken into account. This new method for calculating excess deaths has been adopted by statistical agencies across the UK. More information about this can be found in the methodology paper on the [ONS website](#).

In 2023, Ischaemic heart disease was the leading cause of death accounting for 11% of all deaths in Scotland (figure 5). Dementia and Alzheimer disease was the second leading cause accounting for 10% of all deaths.

Leading causes of death can vary, particularly when broken down by age and sex. More detailed data can be found in Table 6.15.

Figure 4 – Deaths, expected and excess deaths 2011-2023

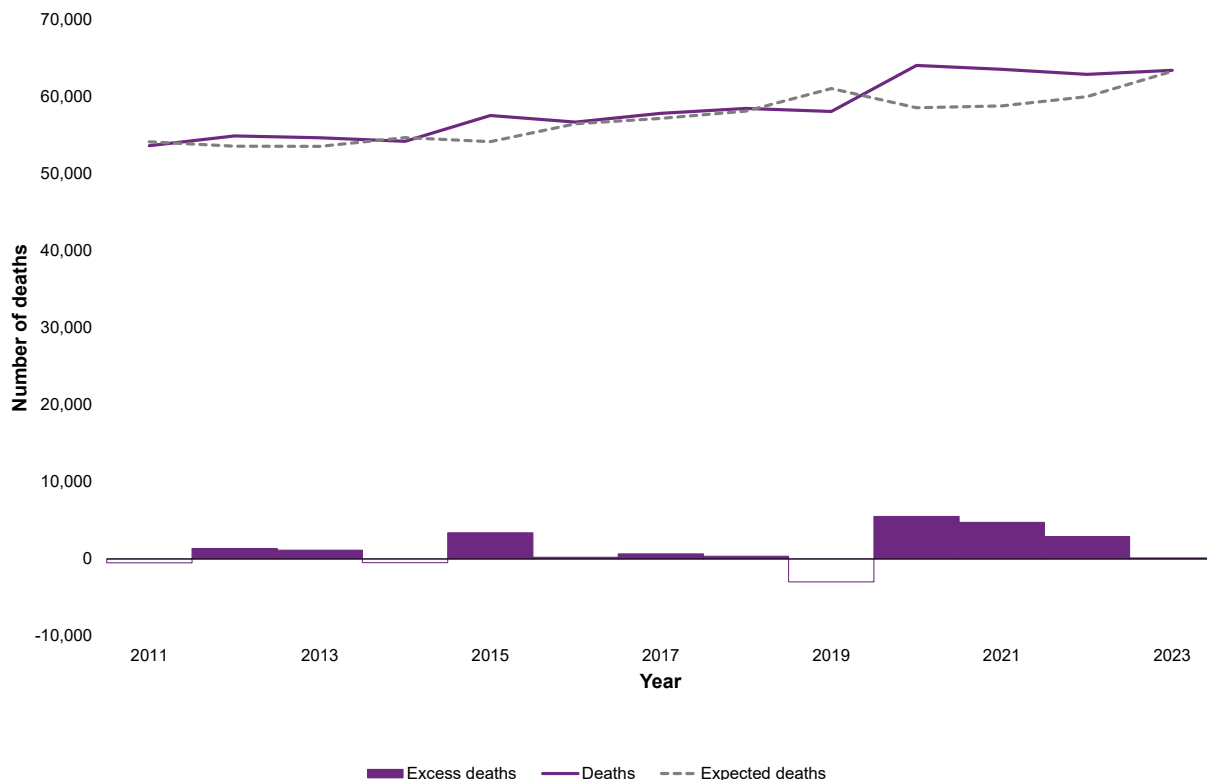
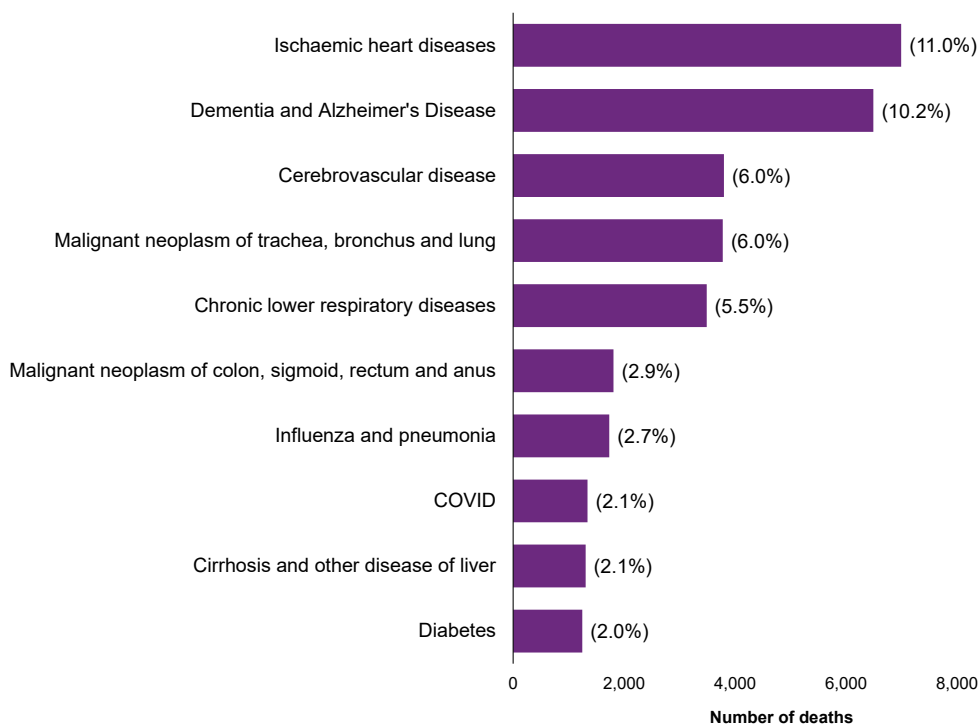


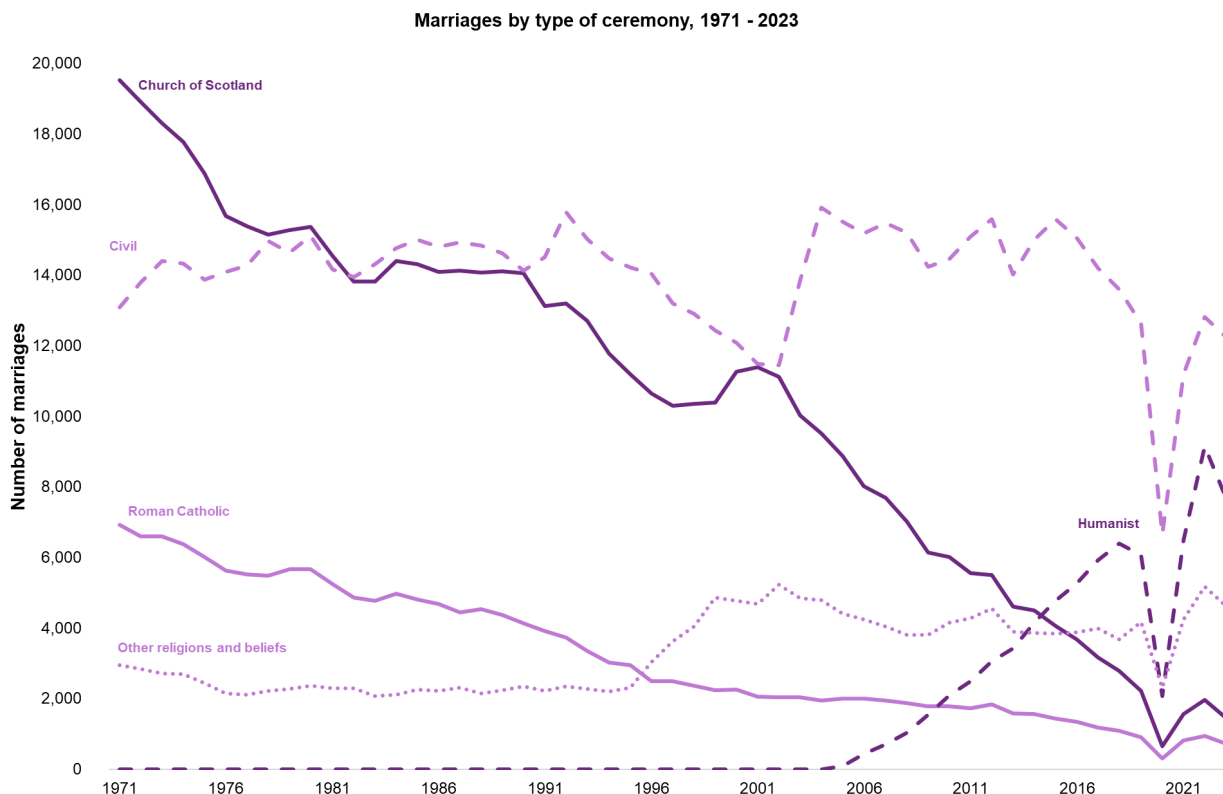
Figure 5 – Leading causes of death, 2023

Figures in brackets are percentage of all deaths



7. Marriages and Civil Partnerships

Figure 6 – Marriages by type of ceremony, 1971 - 2023



There were 26,753 marriages in Scotland in 2023, 11% lower than in 2022. The number of marriages in Scotland initially increased after the COVID-19 pandemic restricted opportunities to have ceremonies but is now at a similar level to that seen in 2019 (26,007). There were 1,040 same-sex marriages in 2023. (Table 1.01b)

Over two fifths of marriages were civil ceremonies (12,251, 46%). 14,502 ceremonies were carried out by religious and other belief bodies. The most common types of ceremonies after civil ceremonies were Humanist ceremonies (7,691), Church of Scotland (1,459) and Roman Catholic (723) (Table 7.07 and Figure 6).

There were 719 civil partnerships registered in 2023, the highest number since 2006. The majority of civil partnerships in Scotland are mixed sex (82% in 2023), following a legislation change in 2021 which allowed this, and the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2014.

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 weekly, monthly and 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.

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

Accredited Official Statistics

These official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'.

In June 2024 The Office for Statistics Regulation introduced the new accredited official statistics badge, to denote official statistics that have been independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and judged to meet the standards in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). The new badge replaces the current National Statistics badge, though the meaning is the same. Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

The method used to calculate excess deaths was introduced in February 2024 and has been adopted by statistical agencies across the UK. More information about this can be found in the methodology paper on the [ONS website](#). We will regularly review estimates produced by the new excess deaths methodology, with further refinements to the approach being undertaken if necessary. As such, estimates of excess deaths produced by the new methodology will be labelled as Official Statistics in Development while further review, testing and development work is undertaken.

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 Office for Statistics Regulation 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 can be found in the 'About this Publication' document that is published alongside this publication 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.

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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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