

# Population Projections for Scottish Sub-Council Areas (mid-2022 based): Project Overview

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## 1. Project Background

### 1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 There is significant demand from local government users for sub-council area population projections to inform planning and service delivery at a local level. Examples include creating projections for housing needs assessments, health and social care planning and infrastructure planning.
- 1.1.2 National Records of Scotland (NRS) publish national and sub-national (including council and health board) projections typically every two years, but do not have the resource to routinely publish sub-council area projections. In 2020 the Improvement Service collaborated with the NRS to create a standard set of population projections for Scottish sub-council areas to meet wider user needs and support councils who do not have capacity to produce their own projections. These projections were well received by councils and used in a variety of ways including supporting Housing Needs and Demand Analysis, planning future service provision and helping inform interventions related to depopulation.
- 1.1.3 Feedback received from councils and other stakeholders suggested there was demand to create an updated set of these projections. The Improvement Service agreed to create this updated set, based on mid-2022 population data and constraining to the latest NRS 2022-based sub-national population projections.
- 1.1.4 The goal of this updated set of sub-council area projections (SCAP) is to assist councils in understanding the future size and make-up of the population of their local areas. This understanding will enable councils to plan for demographic change and the challenges this poses to local services.

### 1.2 Potential Uses for Projections

- Projections are useful for housing need and demand assessment preparation and in identifying care needs, for example for future elderly care home provision.
- The planning service can use the projections to inform local development plans and housing land allocations. At the broader corporate level, the projections could assist with the planning of council services.
- The council and its community planning partners can also use the projections for a wide range of uses such as determining service provision requirements which vary considerably across different areas within the council. These differences are not captured in sub-national (council level) projections.
- The council could look at changes in the age/sex structure of the population and likely consequences for service demand and in particular forecasting the incidence/prevalence of long-term health conditions. This can feed into joint work with National Health Service (NHS) Boards to inform the health and social care strategic needs assessment and joint commissioning process.

### 1.3 Project outline

- 1.3.1 The aim of the project was to produce sub-council area population projections for all 32 council areas in Scotland. The following criteria were set out for the project:
  - The 2022 mid-year population estimates (the population as at 30 June 2022) were used as the base year from which to project due to the availability of input data.
  - The proposed projection time period was 15 years to cover the period mid-2022 to mid-2037.

- The default geography was Multi-Member Wards. Each council had the opportunity to choose a custom geography instead of Multi-Member Wards. These geographies are based on aggregations of 2011 data zones.
- These projections were based on past trends of fertility, mortality and migration. They do not account for future development or political and economic changes, which is consistent with routine NRS population projections.
- Results were only produced for the principal projection and do not include projections using alternative assumptions such as high or low migration.
- The population projections were constrained to (made consistent with) the published [NRS 2022-based sub-national population projections for council areas](#).
- Adjustments were not made for special populations due to a lack of reliable data.
- Assumptions of future migration trends were adjusted in some areas where evidence was provided by councils highlighting that recent trends were anomalous and unlikely to continue. Details of alternative assumptions are outlined in the projection files for each council.

1.3.2 The project milestones have been summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Project Milestones

Stage	Time Frame
The Improvement Service attended the Population and Migration Statistics committee ( <a href="#">PAMS</a> ) meeting and issued a survey to members to understand demand for small area population projections.	June 2024
The Improvement Service issued a survey to consult on council's preferred geography to be used in the population projections.	July 2025
The Improvement Service attended the PAMS meeting and provided an update highlighting that although the intention had been to use 2022 data zones population data, delays meant the work would begin using 2011 data zones instead.	November 2025
The Improvement Service signed a Data Sharing Agreement with the NRS to share data zone data relating to population, births, deaths and census information relation to people living in communal establishments.	January 2026
NRS provided the Improvement Service with relevant population, births and deaths data, to be used as the basis for projections.	February 2026
The Improvement Service prepared projections for each council area and shared initial projections results with councils who volunteered to provide feedback. Projections were reviewed and adjusted based on relevant feedback.	February - April 2026
Projections were finalised and publications files were prepared.	May 2026

Publication of results.	
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Table 2: Sub-council area geography by council area

Council Area	Sub-council area projection (SCAP) geography	Number of SCAP areas	Total Population MYE <sup>1</sup> 2022	Smallest area population MYE 2022	Largest area population MYE 2022
Custom Geography	4 Council Areas	34			
Aberdeenshire	Place Boundaries	17	263,750	9,378	25,571
Argyll & Bute	Housing Market areas	9	87,930	870	26,268
East Renfrewshire	Housing Market areas	2	97,170	24,758	72,412
North Ayrshire	CPP Localities	6	133,490	4,613	38,189
Default Geography	28 Council Areas	311			
Aberdeen City	Multi-Member Ward areas	13	224,250	14,218	20,576
Angus	Multi-Member Ward areas	8	114,670	10,476	18,695
City of Edinburgh	Multi-Member Ward areas	17	514,570	23,024	37,633
Clackmannanshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	5	51,750	8,001	12,431
Dumfries & Galloway	Multi-Member Ward areas	12	145,770	8,583	15,375
Dundee City	Multi-Member Ward areas	8	148,470	14,933	20,860
East Ayrshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	9	120,400	10,799	17,607
East Dunbartonshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	7	108,990	13,070	19,219
East Lothian	Multi-Member Ward areas	6	112,460	14,957	24,039
Falkirk	Multi-Member Ward areas	9	158,450	15,095	21,807
Fife	Multi-Member Ward areas	22	371,390	12,312	24,607
Glasgow City	Multi-Member Ward areas	23	622,050	19,690	35,637
Highland	Multi-Member Ward Areas	21	235,710	5,629	16,135
Inverclyde	Multi-Member Ward areas	7	78,350	9,239	13,872
Midlothian	Multi-Member Ward areas	6	97,040	13,173	18,830
Moray	Multi-Member Ward areas	8	94,300	8,535	16,227

<sup>1</sup> (MYE) Mid-Year Estimates – Population as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Na-h Eileanan Siar	Multi-Member Ward areas	11	26,120	1,290	3,802
North Lanarkshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	21	340,920	14,012	19,899
Orkney Islands	Multi-Member Ward areas	6	22,030	2,211	4,685
Perth & Kinross	Multi-Member Ward areas	12	151,130	8,711	17,912
Renfrewshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	12	184,370	10,184	21,508
Scottish Borders	Multi-Member Ward areas	11	116,820	8,546	15,479
Shetland Islands	Multi-Member Ward areas	7	23,020	2,023	4,775
South Ayrshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	8	111,560	10,783	16,779
South Lanarkshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	20	327,460	13,184	23,093
Stirling	Multi-Member Ward areas	7	92,610	11,088	16,785
West Dunbartonshire	Multi-Member Ward areas	6	88,270	10,757	18,733
West Lothian	Multi-Member Ward areas	9	181,730	15,108	24,113

## 2. Further information

### 2.1 Sub-council area projections

2.1.1 The projections for the areas discussed in this document are available by single year of age and sex for each year of the projection period, mid-2022 to mid-2037 from the detailed tables on the Improvement Service website. Users can also request further information by contacting [research@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:research@improvementservice.org.uk)

### 2.2 Projections for other areas

2.2.1 NRS publishes [population projections](#) for Council areas and health boards and [household projections](#) for Council areas.