

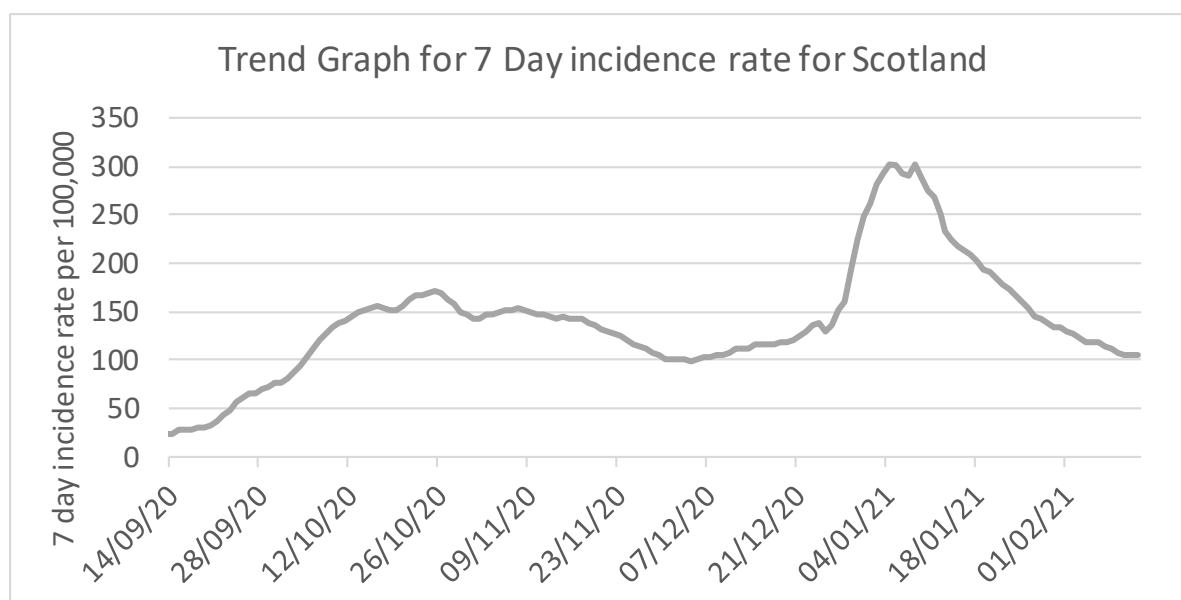
STATE OF THE EPIDEMIC IN SCOTLAND, 19 FEBRUARY 2021

This report summarises the data up to and including the 18 February 2021 on COVID-19 in Scotland.

Cases and incidence

Over the last month we have seen the impact of stay at home measures in reducing the level of SARS-CoV-2 in Scotland, however in the last week there has been a levelling off in the average number of cases reported daily. An average of 826 cases were reported per day in the 7 days to 18 February. This is about the same level as was reported a week ago¹, and around a third of the daily cases reported at the peak of 2,323 average daily cases reported in the week to 7 January. Our current position is 101 weekly cases per 100,000² in the week to 15 February³. This compares to 302 weekly cases per 100,000 on 8 January and is now similar to the weekly case rate observed at the beginning of December (see Figure 1). Test positivity has decreased since stay at home measures were introduced, and is now at 5.4% on average over the past week (to 15 February)⁴.

Figure 1: Seven day incidence rate for Scotland



East Ayrshire currently has the highest case rates in Scotland with over 300 weekly cases being reported per 100,000 in the week to 15 February. This is an increase of 96% from 162 to 318 weekly cases per 100,000 in the week 8 – 15 February. Much of this increase can be attributed to an ongoing outbreak in Kilmarnock prison, where 252 cases have been reported to 18 February⁵. Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire, currently have over 200 weekly cases per 100,000.

¹ Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-data-for-scotland/>

² The incidence rate of diagnosed infection is defined as the number of newly reported, laboratory confirmed cases of SARS - CoV-2 per 100,000 population.

³ Public Health Scotland Covid dashboard: https://public.tableau.com/profile/phs.covid.19#!/vizhome/COVID-19DailyDashboard_15960160643010/Overview

⁴ Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-trends-in-daily-data/>

⁵ COVID-19 Information Hub (sps.gov.uk)

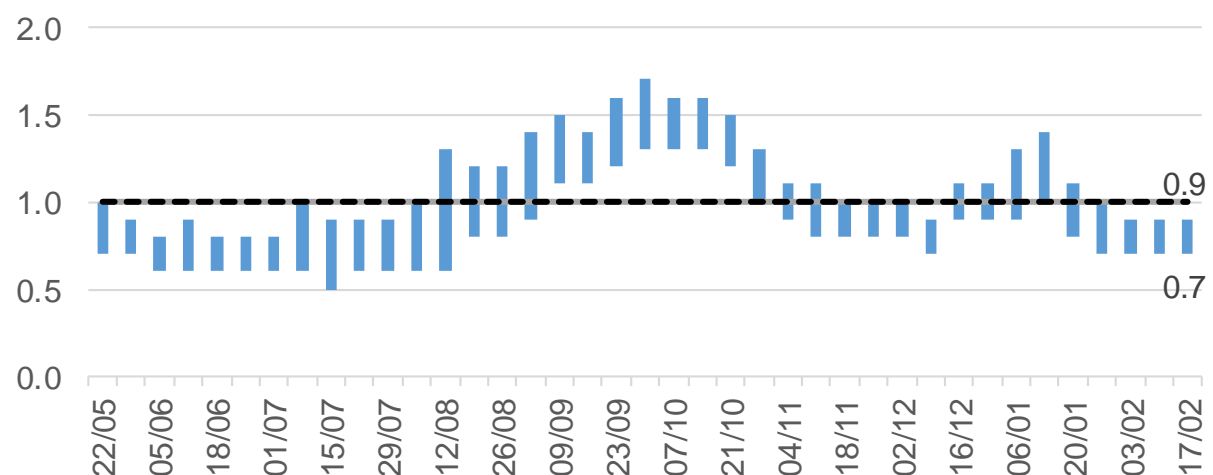
Clackmannanshire has seen a 4% increase in weekly cases (from 219 to 229) per 100,00 over 8 - 15 February, while West Dunbartonshire has seen a 22% increase in weekly cases (from 175 to 215) per 100,000 population in the same period. East Ayrshire currently has the highest positivity rate in Scotland, which has been increasing in the last week and currently sits at 12.6% as of 15 February. Other Local Authorities that have recorded an increase in cases per 100,000 over 8 – 15 February were Fife (+5%, from 58 to 61), Orkney (+600%, from 4 to 31), Renfrewshire (+22%, from 142 to 174) and West Lothian (+42%, from 123 to 175). Case rates have fallen or remained stable in most other parts of Scotland³. Over the past week the incidence rate per 100,000 has gone down to 0 in Shetland.

Levels of infection and what modelling tells us about the epidemic

Not everyone who has the virus will be tested as many people do not realise they have COVID or have mild symptoms and do not come forward. Latest modelled estimates suggest there are currently anywhere between 0 and 5,200 people infected each day⁶. This means that as of 10 February there were between 0 and 96 new daily infections per 100,000 people. In a UK context, the level of infection from the ONS survey in Scotland (0.55% people currently testing positive for Covid on 31 Jan – 06 Feb) is below England (0.88%), Wales (0.81%) and Northern Ireland (0.97%)⁷. Average daily deaths in Scotland (0.7 per 100,000 in the week to 17 February) are above Northern Ireland (0.4 per 100,000) and Wales (0.6 per 100,000), but lower than in England (0.9 per 100,000).

The latest R value for Scotland (published on 18 February) has remained the same as the previous two weeks and was between 0.7 and 0.9 (Figure 2), with a growth rate of between -6% and -2%⁸.

Figure 2: R in Scotland over time



⁶ Scottish Government:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/?term=modelling&cat=filter&topics=Coronavirus%20in%20Scotland&publicationTypes=research-and-analysis&page=1>

⁷ Office for National Statistics:

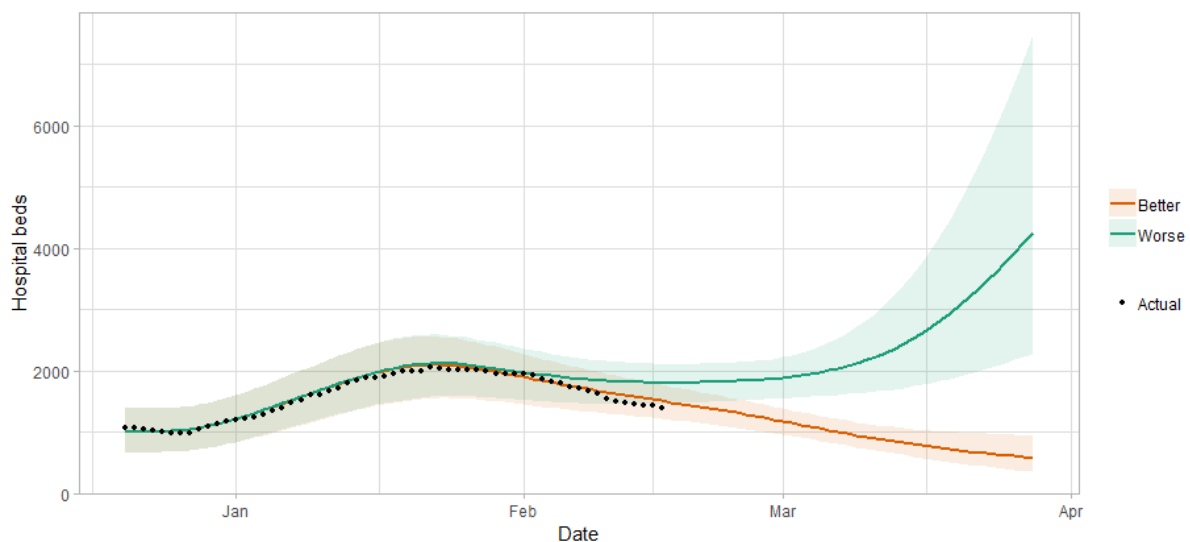
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurvey/pilot/previousReleases>

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-modelling-epidemic-issue-no-39/>

The Scottish Contact Survey measures times and settings that people mix where they could potentially spread Covid. From this survey we can say that interactions decreased from the level observed before the festive period and has remained low throughout January (currently 2.9 average daily contacts)⁸. The Stay at Home regulations that came into effect on 5 January are having an impact on behaviour, and there is high level of compliance with the regulations. This is supported by evidence on self-reported compliance with the restrictions: on 16 – 18 Feb, 81% of people reported ‘complete’ or ‘almost complete’ compliance, and this number has been consistently high since the beginning of the year⁹.

The number of people in hospital with confirmed Covid for less than 28 days is declining. After peaking at 2,053 on 22 January, this figure has decreased and as of 18 February there were 1,261 patients in hospital with COVID-19. In addition, there was a fall in daily hospital admissions for people with Covid from a peak of 241 on 11 January to 74 on 12 February¹⁰. At a national level the number of daily new infections are projected to fall slightly in the next two weeks as result of lockdown restrictions. Hospital bed and ICU occupancy are also projected to fall over the next two weeks (Figure 3) in advance of any partial schools re-opening effect⁸.

Figure 3: Medium term projections of modelled hospital bed demand¹¹, from Scottish Government modelling¹.



⁹ Results are taken from questions run on behalf of Scottish Government on the YouGov online omnibus survey. The sample is demographically and geographically representative of adults 18+ across Scotland, with c.1000 responses each week. Total sample size on 16-18 February was 1007 adults. ‘Complete’ or ‘almost complete’ compliance refers to respondents who rated themselves 6 or 7 on a scale of 0-7 for the question: *Thinking about ALL of the guidance from the Scottish Government on what to do and what not to do during the Coronavirus pandemic (including distancing, protection measures and all restrictions)...On a scale of 1-7, where 1 is 'Not at all' and 7 is 'Completely', to what extent do you feel you are following the regulations and guidance?*

¹⁰ Public Health Scotland weekly trends dashboard: <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/covid-19-statistical-report/27-january-2021/dashboard/>

¹¹ The logistical model developed by Scottish Government to assess implications for health care demand has been adapted to produce a medium-term prediction of infections. There are two projections which take account of vaccine roll-out (better and worse).

How the virus is changing

Variant B.1.1.7 or VOC-202012/01 has been increasing its share of confirmed cases since it was first detected in Scotland in mid-December and is now the dominant strain¹². This new variant of Covid is more transmissible, in a recent Public Health England technical briefing the proportion of named contacts of a variant case that were infected is about 13% compared to 10% of named contacts with a non-variant case. The age and sex distribution of VOC 202012/01 appears similar to other variants¹³. There is a realistic possibility that infection with VOC 202012/01 is associated with an increased risk of death compared to infection with non-VOC viruses¹⁴.

Other variants of concern (VOCs) are being monitored, up to 17 February there are four VOCs and three variants under investigation. Up to 17 February, there have been 16 confirmed cases and 1 probable case detected of the Variant VOC-202012/02 (first seen in South Africa), and 1 case of Variant VUI-202101/01 (first seen in Brazil)¹⁵. There is some concern, mainly based on laboratory analysis that these variants may partially escape immunity, from both natural infection and from vaccines currently being deployed, and we are monitoring the evidence on this¹⁶.

The impact of vaccination

The proportion of people surveyed who said they would be likely to be vaccinated for COVID-19 remains high. 26% of all respondents have already been vaccinated and a further 57% report they are likely to be vaccinated when a vaccine becomes available to them, giving 84% in total who say they have been vaccinated or are likely to be. People aged 65+ are more likely to report themselves as having been vaccinated or likely to receive the vaccine when it becomes available (96% giving these responses compared with 74% among those aged 18 - 44¹⁷).

The first vaccines were administered on Tuesday 8 of December and 1,354,966 had received their first dose by 18 February 2021, a 29% increase from the 11 February¹⁸. By the 18 of February over 30,000 residents in older adult care homes had received their first vaccination along with 92% of older adult care home staff (Figure 4). Over 270,000 individuals aged 80 or over had received their first vaccination.

¹² Public Health Scotland: <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/covid-19-statistical-report/9-september-2020/dashboard/>

¹³ [Investigation of novel SARS-CoV-2 variant - Variant of Concern 202012/01 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97414/investigation-of-novel-sars-cov-2-variant-variant-of-concern-202012-01.pdf)

¹⁴ [NERVTAG paper on COVID-19 variant of concern B.1.1.7 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97414/nervtag-paper-on-covid-19-variant-of-concern-b.1.1.7.pdf)

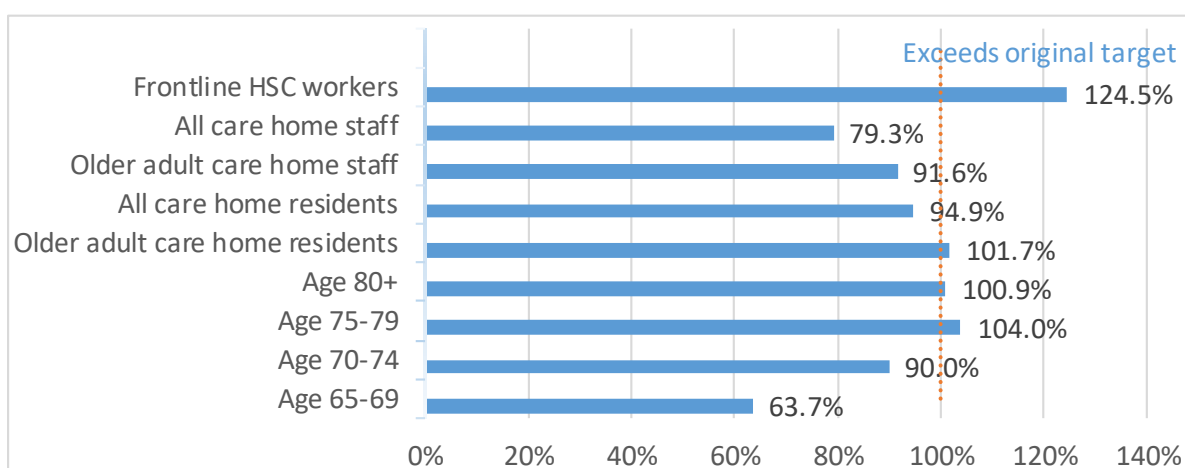
¹⁵ [Variants: distribution of cases data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97414/variants-distribution-of-cases-data.pdf)

¹⁶ [Brief note on SARS-CoV-2 variants \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97414/brief-note-on-sars-cov-2-variants.pdf)

¹⁷ Total sample size on 16-18 February was 1007 adults. 'Likely' to be vaccinated refers to respondents who rated themselves 8 to 10 on a scale of 0-10 for the question: How likely or unlikely are you to be vaccinated for COVID-19 when a vaccine becomes available to you? (Please select a number between 0 and 10, where 0 means 'extremely unlikely' and 10 means 'extremely likely')

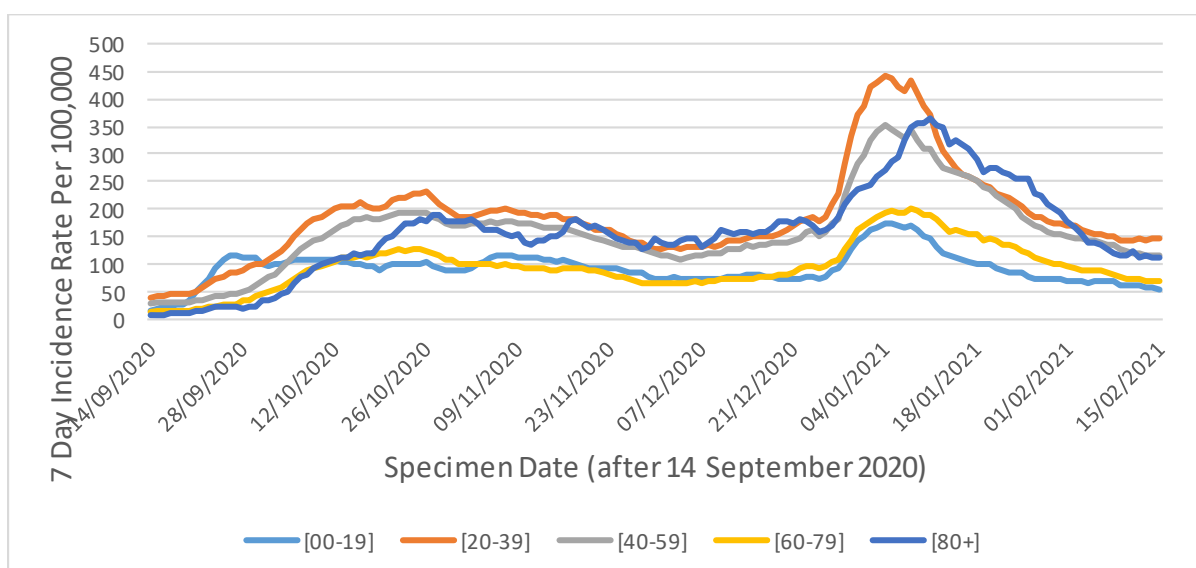
¹⁸ Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-trends-in-daily-data/>

Figure 4: Estimated % of priority groups vaccinated to 18th February 2021



It is anticipated that vaccination will reduce infection levels in the most vulnerable in the coming weeks and months. Last week we saw a sharp decline in the incidence rate in the over 80s although this week case rates have levelled off in all age groups (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Seven day incidence rate³ in Scotland by Age Band by specimen date¹⁹



There were 323 deaths registered where Covid was mentioned on the death certificate in the week to 14 February. This is a 14% decrease on the week before (377 deaths), and 51% lower than the peak in April (662 deaths). The proportion of deaths in care homes has been gradually decreasing from 36% in mid-December to 13% of total deaths in the week to 14 February. The largest decline in deaths involving coronavirus are in those aged 85+ which have fallen by 45% in the 3 weeks to 14 February²⁰.

¹⁹ Source: Public Health Scotland

²⁰NRS Scotland: <https://www.nrs.scotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/weekly-and-monthly-data-on-births-and-deaths/deaths-involving-coronavirus-covid-19-in-scotland>