

Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification

2022

December 2024

Scottish Government

Geographic Information Science & Analysis Team
Rural & Environment Science and Analytical Services Division



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Overview	4
3. Methodology	12
4. Changes with this Release	15
5. Classifying Other Geographies and Land Area calculations	19
Annex 1: Outputs of the Classification	24

Tables

Table 2.1: Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, 6-fold	5
Table 2.2: Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, 8-fold	5
Table 2.3: Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification lookup table	6
Table 3.1: Data Sources for the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2022	12
Table 4.1: Changes between population categories, 2020 vs 2022 Settlements	16
Table 4.2: Road classes and average speed previously applied in the 2020 classification	18
Table 5.1: Urban Rural Classification of Output Areas by centroid location and Data Zone classification	22
Table 5.2: Percent of population in each 6-fold Urban Rural category, by Local Authority	22
Table 5.3: Percent of population in each 8-fold Urban Rural category, by Local Authority	23

Maps

Map 2.1: Scottish Government 2-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022	8
Map 2.2: Scottish Government 3-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022	9
Map 2.3: Scottish Government 6-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022	10
Map 2.4: Scottish Government 8-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022	11

1. Introduction

The Scottish Government is committed to improving its understanding of life in rural Scotland. The Rural & Environment Science and Analytical Services Division works to continuously improve evidence available on rural communities.

We understand that issues such as transport, education and health can have a distinct impact on rural communities and reflect this when developing or implementing policy. To do this we need accurate and up-to-date information on our rural communities, and our main tool to identify rural communities is the Urban Rural Classification. This classification aids in developing our understanding of the issues facing urban, rural and remote Scotland.

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification (version 2022, which updates the 2020 version) was first released in 2000 and is consistent with the Government's core definition of rurality which defines Settlements of less than 3,000 people to be rural. It also classifies areas as remote based on drive times from Settlements of 10,000 or more people. The definitions of urban and rural areas underlying the classification are unchanged.

The publication includes background information, methodology and guidance on the use of the classification, and also the geographic information to allow analysts to use the classification in their research.

The wider dissemination and use of the classification will improve the evidence base on urban, rural, and remote Scotland.

Rural & Environment Science and Analytical Services Division
Scottish Government
December 2024

2. Overview

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification provides a consistent way of defining urban and rural areas across Scotland. The classification is based upon two main criteria: **(i) population**, as defined by the National Records of Scotland (NRS), and **(ii) accessibility**, based on drive time analysis to differentiate between accessible and remote areas in Scotland. The classification is available in multiple forms, including a 6-fold classification which distinguishes between urban, rural, and remote areas through six categories, and an 8-fold classification which further distinguishes between remote and very remote regions.

The population criteria is derived from the Settlements dataset produced by NRS, which defines areas of contiguous high density postcodes that make up a Settlement. Using the population thresholds of 125,000, 10,000 and 3,000 people, Settlements can be grouped into the following categories:

- (1) Large Urban Areas** - populations of 125,000 or more
- (2) Other Urban Areas** - populations of 10,000 to 124,999
- (3) Small Towns** - populations of 3,000 to 9,999
- (4) Rural Areas** - populations less than 3,000

Accessibility is measured in terms of drive times to an urban area. This is done by calculating 30 and 60 minute drive times from the population weighted centroids of Settlements with a population of 10,000 or more (i.e. Large and Other Urban Areas). The results allow areas to be classified in terms of accessibility by the following categories:

- (1) Accessible** - Areas within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.
- (2) Remote** - Areas that are more than a 30 minute drive time (6-fold classification), **or** areas that have a drive time between 30 and 60 minutes (8-fold classification) from a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.
- (3) Very Remote** - Areas that are more than a 60 minute drive time from a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more (8-fold classification only).

By combining both the population and accessibility measures, a Scotland-wide Urban Rural Classification is defined. Categories of the 6- and 8-fold classifications are shown in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below.

Table 2.1: Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, 6-fold

Class	Class Name	Description
1	Large Urban Areas	Settlements of 125,000 people and over.
2	Other Urban Areas	Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people.
3	Accessible Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
4	Remote Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
5	Accessible Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
6	Remote Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.

Table 2.2: Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, 8-fold

Class	Class Name	Description
1	Large Urban Areas	Settlements of 125,000 people and over.
2	Other Urban Areas	Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people.
3	Accessible Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
4	Remote Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than or equal to 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
5	Very Remote Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
6	Accessible Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a drive time of 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
7	Remote Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than or equal to 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
8	Very Remote Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.

The Scottish Government core definition of rurality classifies areas with a population of fewer than 3,000 people to be rural. The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification can be collapsed to this core definition, to create a 2-fold classification (see Table 2.3). Categories 5 and 6 are rural and categories 1 to 4 make up the Rest of Scotland (Urban Areas and Small Towns).

(1) Rest of Scotland – (1) Large Urban Areas, (2) Other Urban Areas, (3) Accessible Small Towns, and (4) Remote Small Towns.

(2) Rural Scotland – (5) Accessible Rural and (6) Remote Rural.

Table 2.3: Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification lookup table

UR 8-fold Class	UR 6-fold Class	UR 3-fold Class	UR 2-fold Class
1	1	1	1
2	2	1	1
3	3	1	1
4	4	1	1
5	4	1	1
6	5	2	2
7	6	3	2
8	6	3	2

An alternative grouping of categories can be used to distinguish between Accessible and Remote areas. Settlements containing fewer than 10,000 people, or areas of Scotland not included in a Settlement, with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more are defined to be remote areas. These are categories 4 and 6 in the 6-fold classification.

(1) Accessible – (1) Large Urban Areas, (2) Other Urban Areas, (3) Accessible Small Towns, and (5) Accessible Rural

(2) Remote – (4) Remote Small Towns and (6) Remote Rural

Versions

The Scottish Government hold the current and previous versions of the classification, as listed below. All previous versions are readily available and, depending on the analysis, users may want to apply these or the current version to historic datasets. Users are encouraged to reference the version of the Urban Rural Classification used.

The classification was last produced based on 2020 Settlements, and named the ‘Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020’. This updated version is reflective of Census 2022 Settlements and has been named the ‘Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2022’.

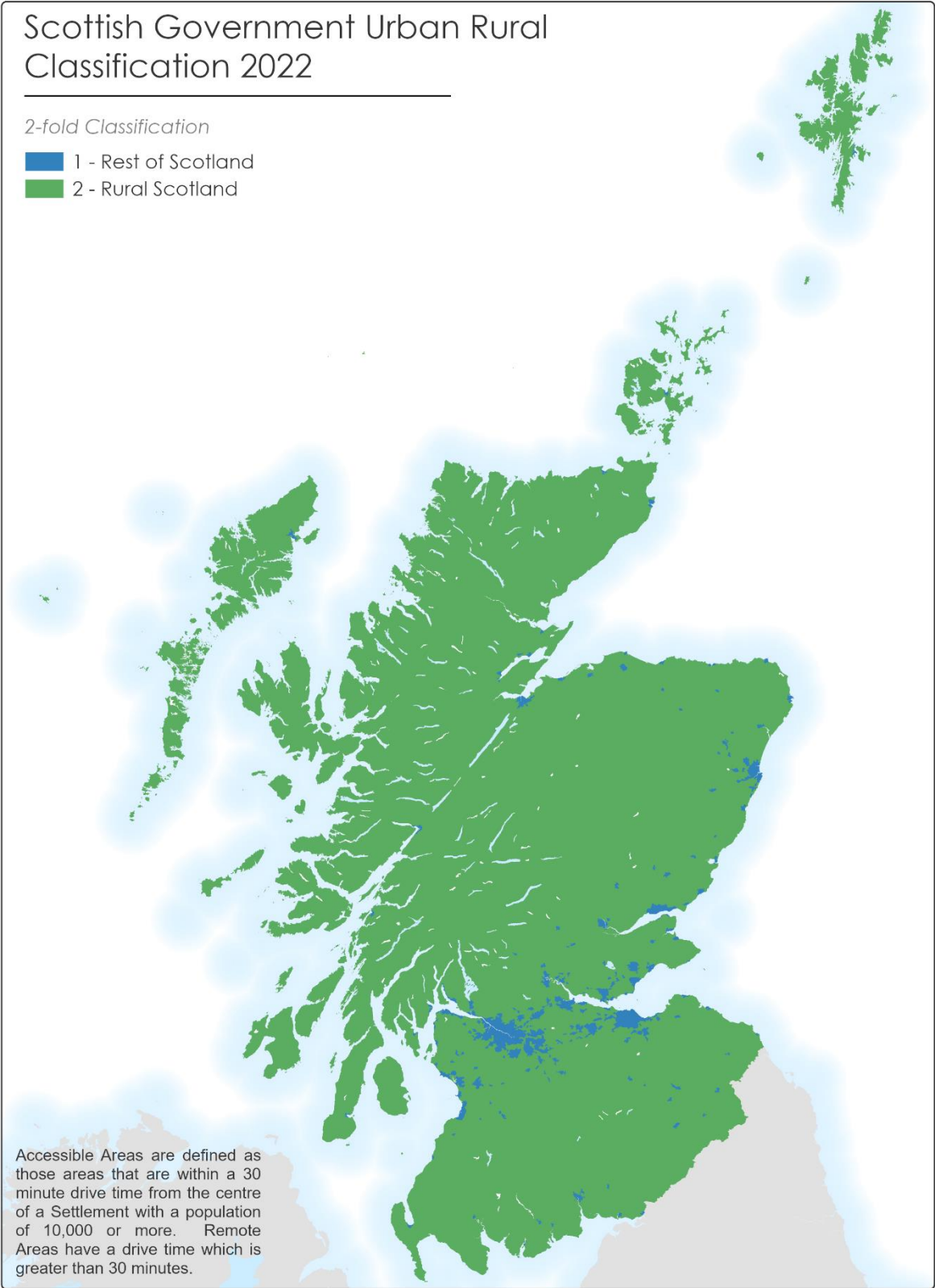
Note; the classification was previously called the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) Urban Rural Classification. Its original name reflected the fact that it was developed within the context of the SHS. To reflect its wider use beyond SHS, the name has been changed to the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification.

- 2022 Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- 2020 Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- 2016 Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- 2013-2014 Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- 2011-2012 Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- 2009-2010 Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- 2007-2008 Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification
- 2005-2006 Scottish Executive Urban Rural Classification
- 2003-2004 Scottish Executive Urban Rural Classification
- 2001 Scottish Household Survey Urban Rural Classification (6-fold only)

Comparison with other UK classifications

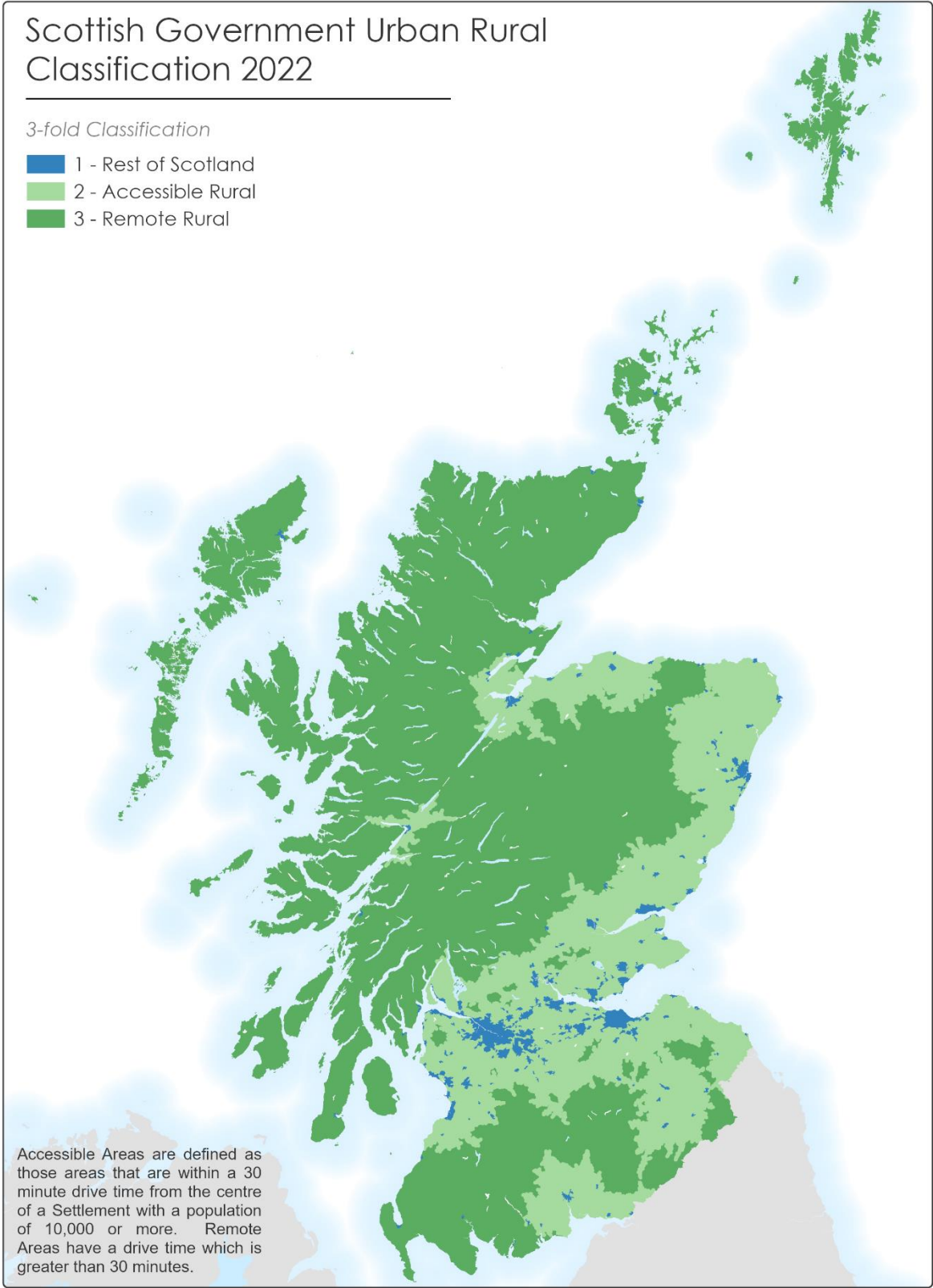
Different urban rural definitions are required as the nature of rurality is different in each country. Separate definitions in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England and Wales have been in use for a number of years. A [review paper](#) is available which provides more information on the Northern Ireland 2015 classification. A definition for England and Wales was introduced in 2004 and, at the time of writing, was most recently updated in 2011. For more information see [Rural/urban classifications - Office for National Statistics](#).

Map 2.1: Scottish Government 2-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022



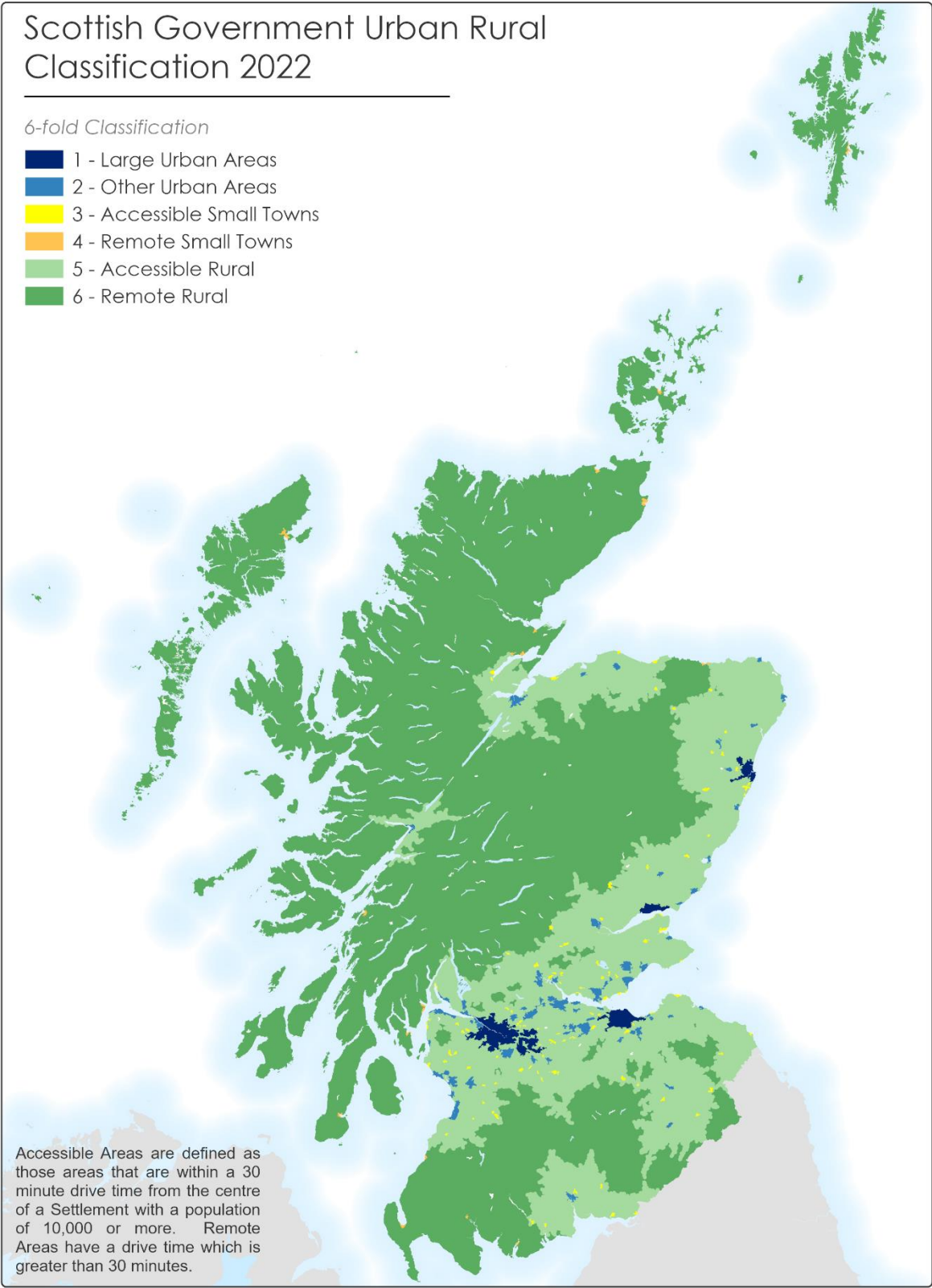
© Crown copyright and database rights 2024. Ordnance Survey (OS Licence number AC0000849451).

Map 2.2: Scottish Government 3-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022



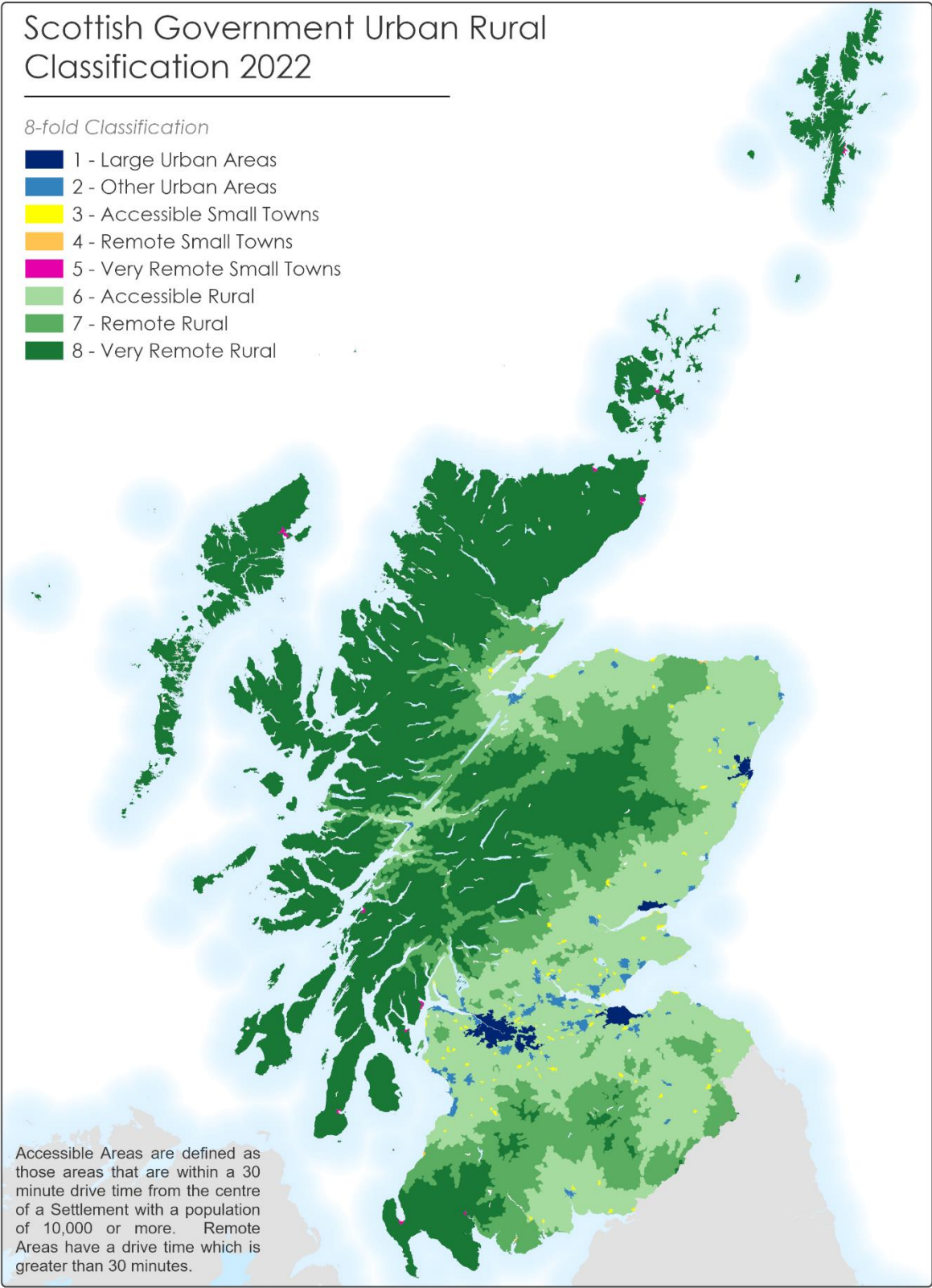
© Crown copyright and database rights 2024. Ordnance Survey (OS Licence number AC0000849451).

Map 2.3: Scottish Government 6-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022



© Crown copyright and database rights 2024. Ordnance Survey (OS Licence number AC0000849451).

Map 2.4: Scottish Government 8-fold Urban Rural Classification 2022



© Crown copyright and database rights 2024. Ordnance Survey (OS Licence number AC0000849451).

3. Methodology

Data Sources

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2022 was created by combining population and accessibility information to distinguish between urban and rural areas across Scotland. Population information is sourced from the Census 2022 Settlements dataset provided by National Records of Scotland (NRS), and accessibility information is obtained by calculating drive times from the centres of Settlements with a population of 10,000 or more (i.e. Large and Other Urban Areas). Table 3.1 summarises the datasets used to create the 2022 version of the classification.

Table 3.1: Data Sources for the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2022

Dataset	Source
Scottish Settlement boundaries, centroids and Census population	National Records of Scotland (NRS), Census 2022 version (released May 2024)
Centroids for Berwick-upon-Tweed and Carlisle	Ordnance Survey (OS) 50K Gazetteer, 2014
OS NGD Transport Network	OS NGD Transport Network, 2024 (August)
SG Ferry Routes	Scottish Government, 2021
Extent of the Realm (EoR) and Mean High Water (MHW) Coastlines	OS BoundaryLine, 2022 (May)

Settlements define contiguous built-up areas in Scotland and, along with Localities, are generally more identifiable as the traditional towns and cities than administrative boundaries such as Local Authorities, much of which consist of land that is not developed and unpopulated. The Settlements dataset is produced by NRS, with the Census 2022 version having been released in May 2024. Census 2022 population and households data, together with information on non-residential addresses from the Royal Mail Postal Address File, were used to classify 2022 postcodes as high or low density. A Settlement is defined to be a group of high-density postcodes whose combined population rounds to 500 people or more. They are separated by low density postcodes. Further information on how [Settlements](#) are created can be found on the NRS website.

Settlement centroids for Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed in Northern England were also included in the analysis as they have populations of over 10,000 and are within a 30-minute drive of the Scottish border, and thus will influence accessibility results. For consistency, the same centroids which were used in 2013-14, 2016, and 2020 Classifications were used in the 2022 analyses. These were based on the OS 50k Gazetteer product.

Transport Network Creation

For the calculation of drive times, a network dataset including road and ferry routes was required. Roadways were obtained from Ordnance Survey (OS) National Geographic Database (NGD) Transport Network for Scotland with an extension beyond the border to include routes for Northern England. OS NGD Transport Network gives a current, comprehensive network view of Great Britain's roads. In the previous 2020 Classification, another OS product – OS Highways - was used. Further information on the new road speeds included in OS NGD Transport and their impact on the Urban Rural Classification can be found on page 17.

The Scottish Government maintain a dataset of Scotland's ferry routes which have been digitised against OS background mapping. Both vehicle and passenger only services are included in the SG Ferry Routes, though only the vehicular routes are used within the Urban Rural analysis. The journey duration can be calculated from online timetables, and the outputs account for a 30-minute boarding time being added for the drive times.

Analysis and Classification

The first stage in creating the classification is to categorise the Settlements dataset using the population thresholds of 125,000, 10,000 and 3,000 to identify the Settlements from which drive times will be calculated. Settlements were grouped into the following categories:

- (1) Large Urban Areas** - populations of 125,000 or more
- (2) Other Urban Areas** - populations of 10,000 to 124,999
- (3) Small Towns** - populations of 3,000 to 9,999
- (4) Rural Areas** - populations less than 3,000

The next step was to distinguish between accessible and remote areas. The drive times were calculated from the centroids of the Settlements with a population of 10,000 or more (i.e. Large and Other Urban Areas). The drive time analysis was performed using GIS software (ESRI ArcGIS Pro Network Analyst extension). The following definitions of remoteness were defined:

- (1) Accessible** – areas within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.
- (2) Remote** – areas that are more than a 30 minute drive time (6-fold classification), or areas that have a drive time more than 30 minutes but less than or equal to 60 minutes (8-fold classification) from a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.
- (3) Very Remote** – areas that are more than a 60 minute drive time from a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more (8-fold classification only).

Accessibility categories were assigned to the Settlement boundary layer based upon the location of the Settlement population weighted centroids. Classifying the

settlements by their centroids means that the entire settlement will be assigned to a single class, regardless of whether the area is split by the drive time extent boundary.

The re-classified settlement boundaries and drive time datasets were combined to form one national dataset containing the 2, 3, 6 and 8-fold urban rural definitions. All layers were clipped to both the Mean High Water and Extent of the Realm coastlines.

4. Changes with this Release

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification was last produced based on 2020 Settlements. This updated version is reflective of Census 2022 Settlements. The differences between the classifications stem from changes to Settlement populations and Settlement boundaries and, to a lesser extent, changes to the road network, the speeds datasets, and the software/parameters used. The Settlements used in this classification were created based on Census 2022 population data instead of Mid-Year Estimates, and did not involve consultation with councils. One-off changes have been made to two Census 2022 Settlements, Dunoon & Innellan and Garelochhead, to improve comparability with the Settlements created from Mid-Year Estimates which have been used in previous Urban Rural classifications.

Dunoon and Innellan

Dunoon and Innellan are both located on the east coast of the Cowal peninsula, in the Argyll and Bute council area. Between the main built-up areas of Dunoon and Innellan is a long, thin strip of houses running along the coast for around three kilometres.

Settlements are based on measuring the density of each postcode in Scotland and combining groups of dense postcodes that are bordering each other. The houses between Dunoon and Innellan are close enough to count as dense areas, connecting the two settlements in the methodology.

From consultation with Argyll and Bute Council, and inspection of the area, the two areas were deemed to be separate settlements for the 2012, 2016 and 2020 sets. This was mainly because of the thinness of the connection, and several significant gaps in the row of houses. As a result, the settlement boundaries were manually adjusted to exclude the area in between.

The Census Settlements did not involve consultation with councils, and so joined Dunoon and Innellan into one Settlement. The combined population of these two areas would be enough to change their classification if counted as one, from a separate Small Town (Dunoon) and a Rural Area (Innellan) to a combined Other Urban Area (Dunoon and Innellan).

For consistency with previous Urban Rural Classifications, the 2022 SGUR has reversed the change in classification in the Census and counted Dunoon and Innellan as two separate areas by removing the NRS Census 2022 Locality of Innellan from the combined Dunoon, Innellan, and Sandbanks Settlement area.

Garelochhead

The Settlement of Garelochhead in Argyll and Bute includes a large naval base, HMNB Clyde. Personnel at armed forces bases are counted differently between the Census and the annual Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE). More of the armed forces are counted at their home address in the Census, while the SAPE counts more at the bases.

In the 2012, 2016 and 2020 Urban Rural Classifications, areas were assigned to categories (Large Urban Areas, Other Urban Areas, Small Towns, Rural Areas) using population counts from SAPE. The 2022 Urban Rural Classification uses Census 2022 data for its classification. However, the difference in counts of personnel at HMNB Clyde is enough to change the classification of Garelochhead. As this change is only caused by a difference in methodology rather than an actual change in population in the area, the 2022 SGUR has given Garelochhead the same classification as in 2020.

Other Settlements with armed forces bases were also investigated, but Garelochhead was the only one where this issue affects the Urban Rural Classification.

Settlement Changes

The classification of a particular area will change if the Settlement population crosses the 3,000, 10,000 or 125,000 thresholds which are used to distinguish between urban and rural areas. Of the 504 Settlements identified in Scotland based on Census 2022 data, the population of ten had increased or decreased enough by 2022 to pass one of the key population thresholds. These changes are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Changes between population categories, 2020 vs 2022 Settlements

Settlement Name 2022	Local Authority	Population	
		2020	2022
<i>Increased to more than 3,000:</i>			
Duns	Scottish Borders	2,820	3,127
Gartcosh	North Lanarkshire	2,920	3,251
Glenboig	North Lanarkshire	2,990	3,033
Plains	North Lanarkshire	2,920	3,112
<i>Increased to more than 10,000:</i>			
Bishopton	Renfrewshire	7,920	10,043
Forres	Moray	9,990	10,069
<i>Decreased to less than 3,000:</i>			
Aviemore	Highland	3,230	2,832
Blackburn	Aberdeenshire	3,050	2,992
<i>Decreased to less than 10,000:</i>			
Nairn	Highland	10,190	9,582
Stranraer	Dumfries and Galloway	10,110	9,751

These changes in population impacted the total number of centroids used for the drive time calculations. There were a total of 71 centroids used to calculate drive times in the 2020 classification. This decreased to 66 centroids for the 2022 classification. The difference was due to the removal of three Settlements centroids for Nairn, Moodiesburn & Chryston, and Stranraer and the addition of two Settlements centroids for Bishopton and Forres.

Furthermore, there have been three mergers of Settlements; the three separate Settlements of Motherwell & Wishaw, Coatbridge, Airdrie, Chapelhall, and Bargeddie, and Hamilton have been merged to form the single Settlement of Airdrie, Hamilton, and Motherwell. The separate Settlements of Bonnybridge and Cumbernauld & Croy have been merged to form the single Settlement of Bonnybridge, Croy, & Cumbernauld. The separate Settlements of Kilwinning and Saltcoats have been merged to form the single Settlement of Kilwinning & Saltcoats.

The populations of Nairn, Moodiesburn & Chryston, and Stranraer decreased beneath the threshold of 10,000 between 2020 and 2022, making them ineligible for inclusion in the drive time calculations. The populations of Bishopton and Forres increased above the 10,000 threshold between 2020 and 2022, making them eligible for inclusion in the drive time calculations. The three Settlement mergers have not caused any new Settlement centroids to be included in the analyses, as all of these Settlements were well above the 10,000 population threshold prior to the mergers.

The biggest impact on service areas appears to be the removal of Stranraer, which has caused a significant change to the measured accessibility of the south-west of Scotland; changing it from predominantly Accessible Rural to predominantly Very Remote Rural. No other significant changes due to the Settlement centroids changes have been observed; both Bishopton and Forres are well within the drive time of other 10,000+ Settlements, as are all of the merged Settlements.

Road Network Changes

Road Speeds

Previous iterations of the Urban Rural Classification have been produced using road networks which have an average speed assigned to each road link based on its type (shown in Table 4.2). The average speed figures were sourced from the then UK Government Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions now the Department for Transport. The 2022 Urban Rural Classification has been produced using the OS NGD Transport Network, which includes [indicative and average speeds](#) for each road link within the dataset. This functionality represents an improvement over the previous speeds data used in the Urban Rural Classification. The OS NGD Transport Network indicative and average speeds are actual measured speeds which account for variation in travel time at different times of the day and of the week (e.g. peak and off-peak, weekends, weekdays, etc.), and variation in road type, and rural and urban road settings. For the purposes of the 2022 analyses, the Weekday Off-Peak speeds have been used. A small percentage of higher geography assignments (e.g. post code, Output Area, Data Zones) which have centroids near the boundaries of the drive times may be impacted by this change. Note that the 2-fold classification is unaffected by changes in drive times, as it is based solely on Settlement populations.

Table 4.2: Road classes and average speed previously applied in the 2020 classification

Route Type	Rural Speed (kph)	Urban Speed (kph)
Motorway	104.6	70.8
A Road	64.4	30.6
B Road	54.7	25.8
Minor and Local Road	40.2	22.5
Alley	40.2	22.5
Pedestrian Road	0	0
Private Road – Publicly accessible	40.2	22.5
Private Road	40.2	22.5

Analysis of Data Zone changes

One of the most common uses of the Classification is the assignment of urban rural categories to Data Zones, which is the core geography used for the dissemination of small area statistics in Scotland. More information on the Data Zone geography can be found on the [Spatial.Data.gov.scot](https://spatial.data.gov.scot) website. It is therefore interesting to note the changes in category assignments between versions of the classifications, particularly Data Zones which swap between the 2-fold categories of Rest of Scotland and Rural Scotland. There were previously 6,976 Data Zones in Scotland based on the 2011 Census. For comparison purposes with the previous Urban Rural Classification, each 2011 Data Zone can be assigned to an urban rural category based upon the location of its population weighted centroid. There are 37 Data Zones which have changed from being classified as Rural in 2020 to Urban in 2022 (i.e. 0.53% of all 2011 Data Zones), and 8 which have changed from Urban in 2020 to Rural in 2022 (i.e. 0.11% of all Data Zones).

Note that Data Zones have now been updated based on the Census 2022 data. There are now 7,392 Data Zones in Scotland. Each 2022 Data Zone has been assigned to an Urban Rural 2022 category based upon the location of its population weighted centroid, and a lookup is available in the supporting documents section of the publication.

Please note; the Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR_2022 lookup will only be available as a supporting document temporarily. This is due to a new release of NRS Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD) which will be published in early 2025. If the Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR_2022 lookup is not available as a supporting document, users are advised to access the latest [SPD](#) from the NRS website, which will have a postcode to SGUR 2022 lookup incorporated.

5. Classifying Other Geographies and Land Area calculations

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification can be used to classify other geographies as urban, rural and remote. However, due to the detail of the boundaries, a direct link to the classification is only advisable to geographies that are smaller in area. As part of creating the classification, the Scottish Government provides look-up tables for **postcodes**, **Census Output Areas** and **Data Zones** to the Urban Rural Classification. When applying the classification to other geographies, users are encouraged to make use of the smallest geography possible (i.e. postcodes).

Please note; the Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR_2022 lookup will only be available as a supporting document temporarily. This is due to a new release of NRS Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD) which will be published in early 2025. If the Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR_2022 lookup is not available as a supporting document, users are advised to access the latest [SPD](#) from the NRS website, which will have a postcode to SGUR 2022 lookup incorporated. Where larger geographies are concerned (i.e. Local Authority), it is more meaningful to show the proportion of the population living in each of the 6- and 8-fold categories. Applying the classification rigidly to these geographies would result in the detail of the classification being lost in aggregation, and likely result in Scotland appearing more urban than it is in reality.

Data Zones

Data Zones are the core geography used for the dissemination of small area statistics in Scotland. More information on the Data Zone geography can be found on the [Spatial.Data.gov.scot](#) website. Each Data Zone has been assigned to an urban rural category based upon the location of its population weighted centroid. Data Zones were not designed to nest within the urban rural classification and, as a result, some Data Zones do straddle the classification boundaries. Therefore, it may be possible to have postcodes and Output Areas that belong to one urban rural category when classified based on the locations of their centroids, but belong to another class when the Data Zone in which they are located is used to classify them. To illustrate, Table 5.1 below measures the degree of straddling in terms of Output Areas that are classified differently based upon the Data Zones that they fall within.

Table 5.1: Urban Rural Classification of Output Areas 2022 by centroid location and Data Zone 2022 classification

		Output Area 2022 Classification, based on Data Zone 2022 classification					
Output Area 2022 Classification, based upon centroid location		Large Urban Areas	Other Urban Areas	Accessible Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Accessible Rural	Remote Rural
Large Urban Areas	19,032	19,026	0	0	0	6	0
Other Urban Areas	14,243	0	14,196	1	0	45	1
Accessible Small Towns	4,458	3	1	4,419	0	35	0
Remote Small Towns	981	0	0	0	965	0	16
Accessible Rural	5,462	58	151	95	2	5,097	59
Remote Rural	2,187	0	0	10	14	73	2,090
Total	46,363	19,087	14,348	4,525	981	5,256	2,166

The effect of straddling can also be expressed by the percentage of Output Areas which are assigned to the same category under their centroid classification and their classification based upon the Data Zone in which they are located:

- **99.9%** of Census Output Areas are correctly assigned to Large Urban Areas
- **99.7%** of Census Output Areas are correctly assigned to Other Urban Areas
- **99.1%** of Census Output Areas are correctly assigned to Accessible Small Towns
- **98.4%** of Census Output Areas are correctly assigned to Remote Small Towns
- **93.3%** of Census Output Areas are correctly assigned to Accessible Rural
- **95.6%** of Census Output Areas are correctly assigned to Remote Rural

As shown above, the degree of straddling is most apparent in Accessible and Remote Rural Areas. This is the result of the fact that Data Zones can be very large in rural areas, in order to meet the minimum population threshold, and therefore are more likely to straddle the drive time areas and Settlement boundaries.

Classification of higher geographies

Where larger geographies are concerned, the classification can be used to show the degree of urbanity, rurality and remoteness as a proportion of the population living within each of the 6- and 8-fold categories. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 below show the percent of population by Urban Rural category for each Local Authority.

[Tables](#) showing the proportion of the population living within each of the 6- and 8-fold categories for Health Boards, Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies, Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies, and Multi-Member Wards are also available as supporting documents.

Land area

As well as calculating the proportion of the population within each of the Urban Rural categories, it is also possible to calculate the proportion of the land area covered by each category. [Tables](#) on the land area for the 2-, 3-, 6- and 8-fold Urban Rural Classifications are available as supporting documents. The figures give the area to mean high water, excluding areas of inland water larger than 1km², based on building the SGUR2022 categories from Census Output Areas 2022 (i.e. using the OA2022_SGUR2022_Lookup file).

Islands

In 2022, the [Scottish Island Regions](#) geography was published and can be used for grouping Scotland's islands into nine different island regions. There are Data Zone lookups available for this geography which can be used in conjunction with the Urban Rural Classification lookups to distinguish mainland and island rural areas. However, it should be noted the Data Zone assignments are a best-fit, based on the locations of the population weighted centroids, as some Data Zones straddle islands and the mainland, and/or multiple islands.

Table 5.2: Percent of population in each 6-fold Urban Rural category, by Local Authority

Local Authority	Large Urban	Other Urban	Accessible Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Accessible Rural	Remote Rural
Aberdeen City	96.1%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%
Aberdeenshire	0.0%	30.7%	16.9%	2.9%	41.9%	7.7%
Angus	8.8%	53.4%	11.5%	0.0%	25.8%	0.4%
Argyll & Bute	0.0%	18.7%	2.0%	29.8%	7.7%	41.8%
City of Edinburgh	96.2%	2.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%
Clackmannanshire	0.0%	40.7%	45.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%
Dumfries & Galloway	0.0%	23.4%	20.7%	11.6%	22.6%	21.7%
Dundee City	98.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%
East Ayrshire	0.0%	42.8%	29.5%	0.0%	22.8%	4.9%
East Dunbartonshire	59.7%	27.9%	7.3%	0.0%	5.2%	0.0%
East Lothian	23.1%	40.1%	12.1%	0.0%	24.7%	0.0%
East Renfrewshire	91.4%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%
Falkirk	0.0%	92.2%	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	0.0%
Fife	0.0%	65.0%	18.4%	0.0%	16.6%	0.0%
Glasgow City	99.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%
Highland	0.0%	32.0%	7.7%	11.7%	17.5%	31.1%
Inverclyde	0.0%	85.7%	12.5%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%
Midlothian	0.0%	76.0%	12.8%	0.0%	11.2%	0.0%
Moray	0.0%	37.2%	21.7%	0.0%	37.7%	3.4%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	26.7%	0.0%	73.3%
North Ayrshire	0.0%	71.7%	18.8%	0.0%	5.1%	4.4%
North Lanarkshire	65.2%	18.7%	10.5%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%
Orkney Islands	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.7%	0.0%	66.3%
Perth & Kinross	1.2%	31.7%	22.3%	0.0%	35.6%	9.2%
Renfrewshire	75.3%	14.6%	6.1%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Scottish Borders	0.0%	25.0%	30.6%	0.0%	40.6%	3.8%
Shetland Islands	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	29.3%	0.0%	70.7%
South Ayrshire	0.0%	69.3%	3.9%	5.7%	19.1%	2.1%
South Lanarkshire	45.7%	33.3%	10.9%	0.0%	10.0%	0.1%
Stirling	0.0%	53.9%	13.0%	0.0%	30.4%	2.8%
West Dunbartonshire	47.9%	50.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
West Lothian	0.0%	80.5%	11.2%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Scotland	40.8%	30.9%	9.7%	1.9%	12.1%	4.6%

Table 5.3: Percent of population in each 8-fold Urban Rural category, by Local Authority

Local Authority	Large Urban	Other Urban	Access. Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Very Remote Small Towns	Access. Rural	Remote Rural	Very Remote Rural
Aberdeen City	96.1%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Aberdeenshire	0.0%	30.7%	16.9%	2.9%	0.0%	41.9%	7.4%	0.3%
Angus	8.8%	53.4%	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%	25.8%	0.4%	0.0%
Argyll & Bute	0.0%	18.7%	2.0%	0.0%	29.8%	7.7%	5.4%	36.4%
City of Edinburgh	96.2%	2.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Clackmannanshire	0.0%	40.7%	45.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Dumfries & Galloway	0.0%	23.4%	20.7%	2.2%	9.4%	22.6%	13.1%	8.6%
Dundee City	98.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%
East Ayrshire	0.0%	42.8%	29.5%	0.0%	0.0%	22.8%	4.9%	0.0%
East Dunbartonshire	59.7%	27.9%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%
East Lothian	23.1%	40.1%	12.1%	0.0%	0.0%	24.7%	0.0%	0.0%
East Renfrewshire	91.4%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Falkirk	0.0%	92.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Fife	0.0%	65.0%	18.4%	0.0%	0.0%	16.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Glasgow City	99.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Highland	0.0%	32.0%	7.7%	5.6%	6.1%	17.5%	12.7%	18.4%
Inverclyde	0.0%	85.7%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Midlothian	0.0%	76.0%	12.8%	0.0%	0.0%	11.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Moray	0.0%	37.2%	21.7%	0.0%	0.0%	37.7%	3.4%	0.0%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	26.7%	0.0%	0.0%	73.3%
North Ayrshire	0.0%	71.7%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%	1.0%	3.5%
North Lanarkshire	65.2%	18.7%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Orkney Islands	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.7%	0.0%	0.0%	66.3%
Perth & Kinross	1.2%	31.7%	22.3%	0.0%	0.0%	35.6%	8.5%	0.7%
Renfrewshire	75.3%	14.6%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Scottish Borders	0.0%	25.0%	30.6%	0.0%	0.0%	40.6%	3.8%	0.0%
Shetland Islands	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	29.3%	0.0%	0.0%	70.7%
South Ayrshire	0.0%	69.3%	3.9%	5.7%	0.0%	19.1%	2.0%	0.1%
South Lanarkshire	45.7%	33.3%	10.9%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Stirling	0.0%	53.9%	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.4%	1.7%	1.0%
West Dunbartonshire	47.9%	50.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
West Lothian	0.0%	80.5%	11.2%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Scotland	40.8%	30.9%	9.7%	0.6%	1.4%	12.1%	1.9%	2.7%

Annex 1: Outputs of the Classification

The following boundaries, datasets, maps, and look-ups are produced as outputs of the Scottish Government Urban Rural (SGUR) Classification. All [outputs](#) are available as supporting documents.

- SGUR 2022 boundaries
- Printable maps of the 2-, 3-, 6- and 8-fold SGUR 2022
- SGUR 2022 code descriptions
- Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR 2022 lookup
- Census 2022 Output Area to SGUR 2022 lookup
- Data Zone 2022 to SGUR 2022 lookup
- Settlements 2022 to SGUR 2022 lookup
- Population tables
- Land Area tables

Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification (SGUR) 2022 boundaries

Digital boundaries of the Urban Rural Classification are created and supplied in ESRI shapefile (.shp) format. The dataset has full coverage for Scotland and is clipped to the Ordnance Survey (OS) Mean High Water coastline. Fields included in the shapefile are listed below:

UR2FOLD:	2-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR3FOLD:	3-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR6FOLD:	6-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR8FOLD:	8-fold Urban Rural Classification

The shapefile can be accessed from urban rural classification record on the [SpatialData.gov.scot](https://spatialdata.gov.scot) website.

Printable Maps of the 2-, 3-, 6- and 8-fold SGUR 2022

Static maps of the classification are produced at A4 size. There are maps showing the 2-, 3-, 6- and 8-fold classifications, both with and without OS background mapping. Maps are available in Portable Document File (.pdf) format.

SGUR 2022 code descriptions

Two look-ups are also produced detailing the categories of the classification, one for the 6-fold and another for the 8-fold version. The class code is given, along with the name of the category and a detailed text description. Fields included in the look-ups are listed below:

URCLASS:	6 or 8-fold Urban Rural Class
URNAME:	6 or 8-fold Urban Rural Class Name
URDESC:	6 or 8-fold Urban Rural Class Description

Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR 2022 lookup

The postcode to SGUR lookup shows the geographic relationship between 2024_2 postcode centroids and the SGUR 2022. Fields included in the index are listed below:

POSTCODE:	Small and large user postcode units, both current and deleted
INT_DATE:	Date that the postcode came into use
DEL_DATE:	Date that the postcode was removed from use
TYPE:	Whether the postcode is a larger user, and if it is split
LINKPC:	Linked Small User Postcode
SPLIT_IND:	Split Indicator
CA_CODE:	Council area S-code
UR2FOLD:	2-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR3FOLD:	3-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR6FOLD:	6-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR8FOLD:	8-fold Urban Rural Classification

The lookup includes both current and deleted postcodes to allow deleted postcodes to be classified and used in any subsequent analysis.

The TYPE field identifies whether the postcode is a small user, large user, and if it is split. The TYPE field uses the following codes:

- 0 = Small user postcode
- A = Split small user postcode
- L = Large user postcode matched with small user postcode – no split area
- Z = Large user postcode matched with a split small user postcode

Large user postcodes are those postcodes that receive more than 50 mail items per day. All Large users postcodes are allocated linked small user postcodes.

A split postcode occurs when a postcode straddles two or more Local Authority boundaries, or when a postcode straddles the Scottish/English border, or where an island shares a postcode with the mainland or another island. The most populous part is identified by suffix A and the smaller parts by suffixes B, C etc. Split postcodes have been stripped out of the Urban Rural Classification Index and only the largest part (in terms of households, identified by an 'A') is included in the index. For large user postcodes which have a split small user linked postcode, the 'A' part of the split should be used to determine the relevant urban rural classification.

Please note; the Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR_2022 lookup will only be available as a supporting document temporarily. This is due to a new release of NRS Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD) which will be published in early 2025. If the Postcode 2024_2 to SGUR_2022 lookup is not available as a supporting document, users are advised to access the latest [SPD](#) from the NRS website, which will have a postcode to SGUR 2022 lookup incorporated.

Census 2022 Output Area to SGUR 2022 lookup

The Output Area to SGUR lookup shows the relationship between the Census Output Area 2022 population weighted centroids and SGUR 2022. Fields included in the index are listed below:

OUTPUTAREA:	Census Output Area code
UR2FOLD:	2-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR3FOLD:	3-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR6FOLD:	6-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR8FOLD:	8-fold Urban Rural Classification

Data Zone 2022 to SGUR 2022 lookup

The Data Zone to SGUR lookup shows the relationship between Data Zones 2022 population weighted centroids and SGUR 2022. Fields included in the index are listed below:

DZ_CODE:	Data Zone code
UR2FOLD:	2-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR3FOLD:	3-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR6FOLD:	6-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR8FOLD:	8-fold Urban Rural Classification

Census Settlements 2022 to SGUR 2022 lookup

The Census Settlements to SGUR lookup shows the relationship between Census Settlements 2022 population weighted centroids and SGUR 2022, and includes the population estimates for Settlements. Fields included in the index are listed below:

SETT_CODE:	Settlement code
SETT_NAME:	Settlement Name
POPEST2022:	Census 2022 Total Population
POP_CLASS:	Population Class Name (i.e. Large Urban Areas, etc)
UR2FOLD:	2-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR3FOLD:	3-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR6FOLD:	6-fold Urban Rural Classification
UR8FOLD:	8-fold Urban Rural Classification

Population Tables

Percentage population estimates are provided for the 6-fold and 8-fold SGUR 2022 for Council Areas, Health Boards, Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies, Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies and Multi-Member Wards. The population data are based on [Census 2022 postcode level Usual Resident Population data](#), which are available from the NRS website. The data are available in an Excel spreadsheet, with a separate tab for each lookup. Note that rows in these tables may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Land Area tables

Land area and proportion of land area figures are available for the 2-, 3-, 6- and 8-fold classifications. The figures give the area to mean high water, excluding areas of inland water larger than 1km², based on building the SGUR2022 categories from Census Output Areas 2022 (i.e. using the OA2022_SGUR2022_Lookup file).