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A SCOTLAND FOR THE FUTURE:

The opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population



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Fiona Hyslop
Cabinet Secretary
for Economy, Fair Work
and Culture.

Scotland's people are our most valuable resource. People grow our economy, provide our public services, they teach our next generation, build our communities, and make Scotland the place it is. A most basic measure of Scotland is of our population.

Our population has been shaped by our history. For many years Scotland was a nation of out-migration and people left Scotland to build a future elsewhere in the UK or further afield. Between 1825 and 1938 over 2.3 million people left Scotland to move overseas. That outflow of people continued through the 20th century and the pattern of migration only started to shift at the start of this century.

Today, across our cities, towns, villages, countryside and island areas, our population now stands at a record high of 5.46 million people. This record high is the result of a period of steady population growth from the beginning of the 21st century.

Yet, populations are not fixed things. They ebb, flow and ultimately they change over time, presenting each generation with new opportunities and challenges. While the population of Scotland as a whole has grown and is projected to grow into the 2020s and 2030s, this masks a set of real and very significant demographic challenges that face 'a Scotland for the future.'

Like many advanced economies around the world, Scotland's population is ageing. We are living longer and that is to be celebrated. Yet, at the same time, we are having fewer babies. This means that by 2050 the numbers of older people are expected to have risen dramatically as a proportion of our population. To add to this, Scotland's relationship with migration, as a key driver of labour market stability, is anticipated to change as a result of Brexit. Together, these three demographic processes - mortality, fertility and migration - add up to fundamental challenges facing key aspects of our society over the next 10, 20, 50 years and beyond - including our economy, our public services and our environment.

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But Scotland's population change is, crucially, not a monolith. From Edinburgh to the Orkney Islands, from the Borders to Argyll and Bute, each and every local authority feels our demographic challenge differently. At a local level, the balance of people living in our cities, towns, villages and island areas continues to change. Some local populations are experiencing rapid population growth, causing increased pressure on services; local populations in other areas, especially, but not only, in rural areas are experiencing population decline.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges on a scale that our public services, economy and population have not seen in our lifetime. It is difficult to assess the impact of the pandemic on our demography although it is clear that COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities within our country and our economic growth.

This paper frames Scotland's demographic challenge around four key building blocks:

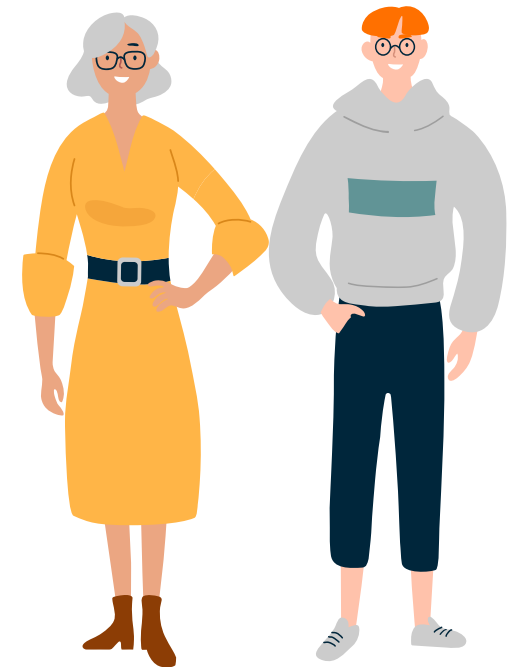
- 1) a family friendly nation,
- 2) a healthy living society,
- 3) an attractive and welcoming country, and
- 4) a more balanced population.

It frames the complex and cross-cutting issue of population change, connecting existing actions around economic and infrastructure development, local investment and planning, migration, housing, education, population health and social care and public finance.

Using these building blocks, it also begins to open up opportunities for innovation, adaptation and greater strategic focus which will enable Scotland to harness demographic opportunities and meet the needs of our people as its population changes over time.

This is a national challenge and requires a national response across Scottish Government, local government and partners to ensure a thriving and sustainable country for generations to come. We must recognise though that Scotland can only do so much with the powers it has. Within this document, we set out the actions we propose to take at a local and national level. We also recognise that the UK Government either needs to make changes or to give further powers to the Scottish Government and partners to deliver the changes that Scotland needs. This paper sets out therefore a series of asks of the UK Government.

The challenges that we face have developed over decades. While this paper sets out some actions we can take now which will start to have an impact this is a long-term challenge. That is why I do not see this paper as the end, but rather the beginning.



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By its size, its balance of ages, by how we are spatially spread, Scotland's national and local populations are crucial pillars for our sustainable future. Across our cities, towns, villages, rural and island areas, our population stands at a record high of 5.46 million people. Yet, underneath this record high, exist very real and significant threats to our future as a nation.

In 2019, the Scottish Government established a Ministerial Population Taskforce to consider Scotland's future population challenges. The Taskforce is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture and brings together Ministers from across the Scottish Government to deliver a coherent focus on the interventions which are needed to address our population challenges.

This paper, *A Scotland for the Future*, is the product of major work carried out by the Taskforce. It sets out the complex and multi-dimensional demographic challenge before us.

It first tells the story of Scotland's population – the journey that brought us to this stage, and future population projections. As we look forward, we see a Scotland with an ageing population, falling fertility rates, with future population growth dependant on inward migration. We also see a precariously balanced Scotland, with depopulation threatening some of our areas particularly across the Islands and in the West, and rapid population growth in others, predominantly in the East.

To frame these different dimensions within our long-term demographic challenge, this paper lays down four thematic building blocks. These blocks are:

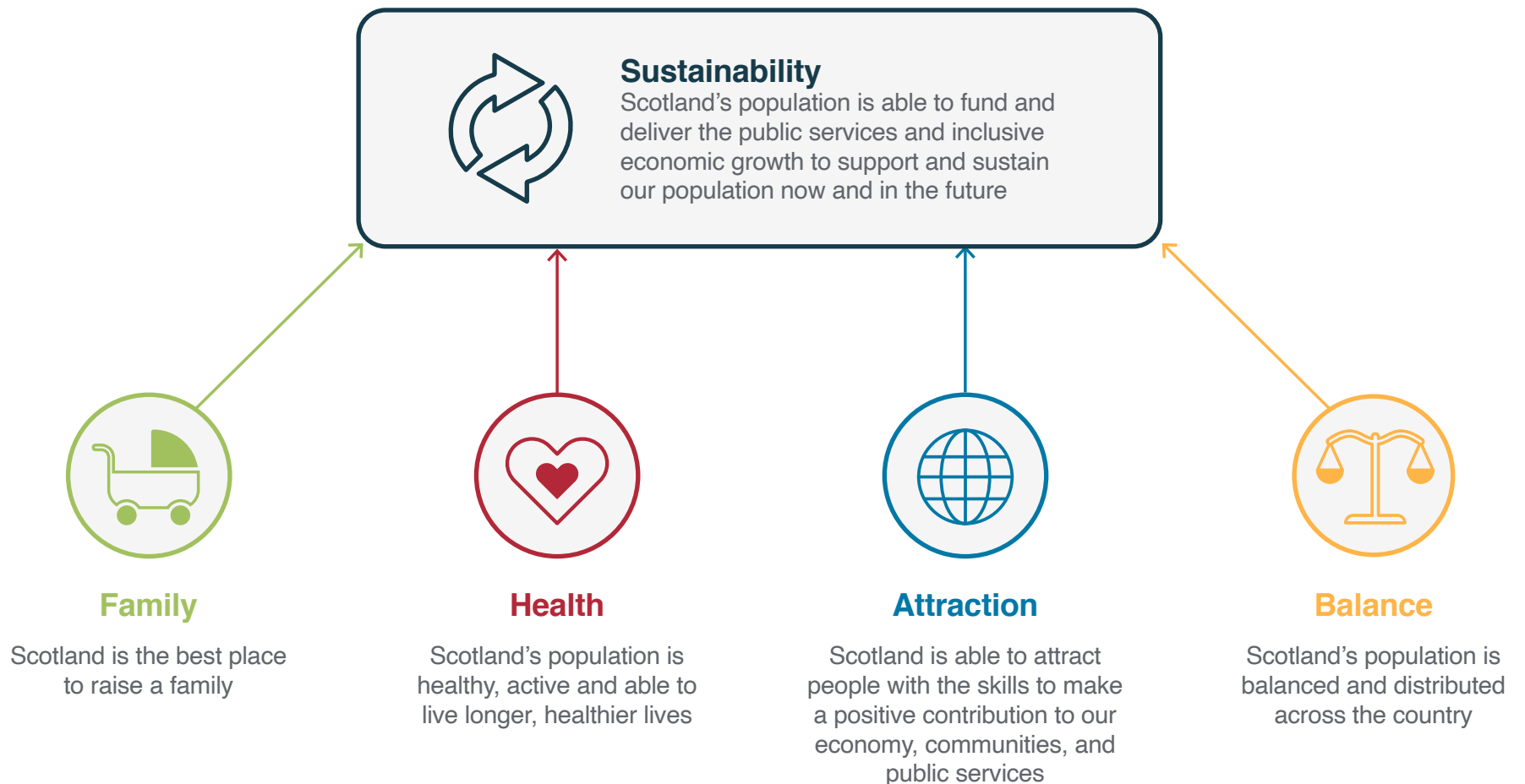
- A family friendly nation
- A healthy living society
- An attractive and welcoming country
- A more balanced population

Within each building block, **we connect together the major and ambitious actions we are already developing and delivering which address Scotland's demographic issues** (across economic development, health and social care, infrastructure and connectivity, migration, education and beyond...) These are reminders that, as we set out to address our population challenges and maximise our opportunities, we do not start with a blank page.

However, the four building blocks are not only mechanisms to map our existing work. They are also mechanisms **to frame our horizon, chart our next steps, open new cross-cutting conversations, identify opportunities to build on our strengths and do more to address our challenges as we take the work further**. Addressing population change is a long-term ambition which will require sustained and cohesive actions across a wide range of policy areas. It is therefore important – at the outset of our Population Programme – to identify a number of principles that underpin our vision as it develops.

Scotland's Demographic Challenge: What is our vision?

The Scottish Government's aim is to make communities across Scotland attractive places to live, work, bring up families and to move to; so that Scotland's population profile provides a platform for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and wellbeing



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Delivering this vision will require an agile, whole-system and sustained government response. This is why our outlook for Scotland's population and demographic changes are set within the context of the Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#).

The NPF sets out a long-term vision of the kind of Scotland we want to see, through its National Outcomes, Purpose and Values. It is Scotland's 'Wellbeing Framework' - explicitly including 'increased wellbeing' as part of its purpose, and combining measurement of economic progress with a broader range of wellbeing measures.

Figure 1: Scotland's National Performance Framework



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The NPF belongs to the whole of Scotland, recognising that government on its own cannot deliver those broad societal outcomes, and that it requires the public sector, businesses, civil society and communities to take this work forward. It promotes partnership working by making organisations jointly responsible for planning and spending to achieve shared outcomes.

The NPF sets out not just what we want to achieve but how we want to get there. Its values will guide an approach to developing a population policy that:

- treats all people with kindness, dignity and compassion;
- respects the rule of law; and
- acts in an open and transparent way.

Population and demography are at the heart of the NPF. The core purpose is to create a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing and sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

In addition, due to the scale, breadth, and complexity of our demographic challenge, our approach is – and must continue to be – a deeply collaborative one. Together, our Population Programme brings together national and local government, partner organisations, as well as academics, government analysts, and the National Records of Scotland. We are committed to widening and extending our engagement to bring together all of those with an interest in this crucial issue.

We recognise that this will require long-term transformation and will require strategic thinking about changes to policies for the years to come. This document begins the conversation but is by no means the end of the discussion. However, we also recognise that urgent action is needed now to help our communities. Within this paper, we have identified a number of actions that we commit to act upon, both in the short and longer-term. These include:

Taking a place-based approach to demography

Place must be at the centre of the answer to our demographic challenge. The economy, infrastructure, housing and public services are all driven by taking a place-based whole-system approach. This paper is the start of threading together these areas into one cohesive approach.

We commit to explore opportunities around our anchor institutions, ensure our economic development is regionally targeted and our housing supply, transport links and public services are fit for purpose across all of Scotland.

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**Considering the impact of
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COVID-19 has impacted our lives in ways we could not have imagined. We must ensure that our communities that were already experiencing health and wealth inequalities are supported now, more than ever, to become vibrant and sustainable communities.

We commit to continue to support these communities, but we must also explore the consequences of the pandemic. We will look at improving opportunities around remote working, the creation of community work hubs and the Scottish Government's own workplace footprint.



**Attracting people and
business to Scotland**

Inward migration is currently the sole reason for Scotland's population growth and is projected to be so in years to come. We must ensure that growth is not impacted by the UK Government's new immigration system.

We commit to continuing to push for a migration system that works for Scotland, developing evidence-based, deliverable policy proposals working in partnership to deliver solutions. In addition to seeking to attract people from the EU and internationally we will also continue to attract those from elsewhere in the UK who may wish to make Scotland home.

Working with our partners

Scottish Government cannot deliver this change on its own. We commit to work with our national partners (within both the public and private sector) and local government to explore options to address both national and local demographic challenges. We also call on the UK Government to work with us in areas of reserved matters, such as migration and parental leave, which can help influence change.

Building a programme of engagement

As this is just the start of the programme, we commit to engaging with all parts of Scottish society, from private sector to the third sector; from academic institutions to the public, we will build a programme of engagement, both here and abroad, to ensure the interventions being taken are the right ones for our economy, public services and our communities.

The full list of actions we commit to can be found on [page 85 \(Next Steps\)](#).

These actions must be delivered in partnership. The Scottish Government and our local government partners recognise population and demography is a national challenge and therefore, **we commit to addressing this national challenge collaboratively to make a better Scotland for all our futures.**

The paper is structured as follows: the initial chapters set out Scotland's population story, and why demography and population change are crucial to our future. The following four chapters focus individually on each of the building blocks of the Programme, setting out the actions already taken, and where more must be done. Finally, we set out our plans for opening up more conversations about Scotland's changing population and continuing to develop our evidence base.



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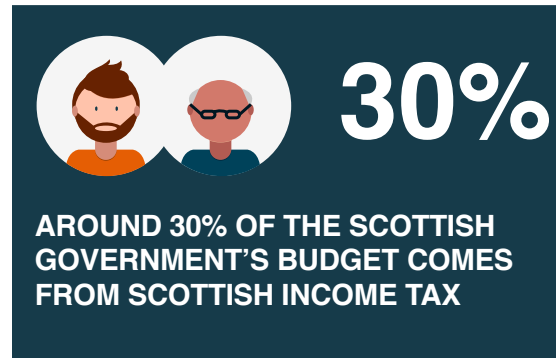
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Demography shows us the structure our population through the number of births, deaths and migration in, out and within Scotland. Through the collection of data, we are able to see how Scotland's population has changed over time and predict what might happen in the future.

Scotland's National Performance Framework sets out the sort of country we want to see and at its heart is our purpose to create a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing and sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

To achieve that vision, to meet our targets to address the global climate emergency, to raise educational attainment and to build the necessary skills and infrastructure Scotland needs, to create a fairer, greener and wealthier country.



To fund and deliver quality public services, we need a well-skilled, healthy, and resilient population. A significant proportion of the government's budget (around 30%) comes from the income tax paid by people living and working in Scotland. Understanding more about who those who pay tax, and those who don't, will allow us to forecast how much public money is likely to be needed to fund our visions for Scotland, while continuing to deliver public services, like health and education.



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Fiscal impacts of changes to population growth

The Scottish Fiscal Commission is Scotland's official independent Economic and fiscal forecaster. The Commission, whose forecasts directly inform the Scottish Government's budget, has stated that the size of the working age population is very important for Scotland's future economy and public finances.

In May 2019 the Commission published their Economic and Fiscal Forecasts report setting out their five-year forecasts of the Scottish economy, tax receipts, social security expenditure and an assessment of government borrowing. Their comments about the importance of population growth highlight the impact of demography on our economy:

“We expect growth in Scottish GDP to be significantly lower than in the UK, primarily because of slower population growth in Scotland,”

The Commission's latest Economic and Fiscal Forecasts¹ were published in January 2021 including new population forecasts and these show the indirect impact of COVID-19 and the ending of free movement by projecting the population of Scotland aged between 16 and 64 to be smaller by around 14,000 compared with their February 2020 forecast. These new population projections lower trend GDP relative to the projections used in February 2020 by 0.5 per cent in 2025 Q1 and have been revised mostly due to lower anticipated net migration to Scotland as a result of the pandemic rather than excess deaths.

The fiscal framework agreed between the Scottish Government and the UK Government insulates the Scottish budget from differences in overall population growth in respect of devolved tax revenues and social security expenditure. However, this does not protect the Scottish budget from all demographic change. The budget is not protected from a reduction in the proportion of the population accounted for by working age people, and a consequent reduction in tax revenues per head or increase in social security spend per head. As set out in the Scottish Government and Scottish

Parliament's Finance and Constitution and Social Security Committees joint [working group report](#), these demographic risks to the Scottish Budget are one of the key issues that should be considered as part of the review of the Fiscal Framework.

Economy and Labour Market

How Scotland's population is changing is fundamental to the current and future health of our economy and labour market.

Beyond the importance to government finances and the ability of the public sector to provide services to its population, Scotland's population is a driver of overall economic activity and growth. Scotland's business base, the domestic customers that provide them with demand, and the workforce required to supply that demand are all derived from its resident population.

In recognition of this, monitoring population growth is, as set out above, a component outcome of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework² and ensuring Scotland has a well-skilled, productive, healthy and resilient population is an action identified in Scotland's Economic Strategy as a requirement to achieve sustainable growth.³

¹ [Scotlands-Economic-and-Fiscal-Forecasts-January-2021 \(1\).pdf](#)

² [National Indicator Performance | National Performance Framework](#)

³ [Scotland's Economic Strategy March 2015 \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

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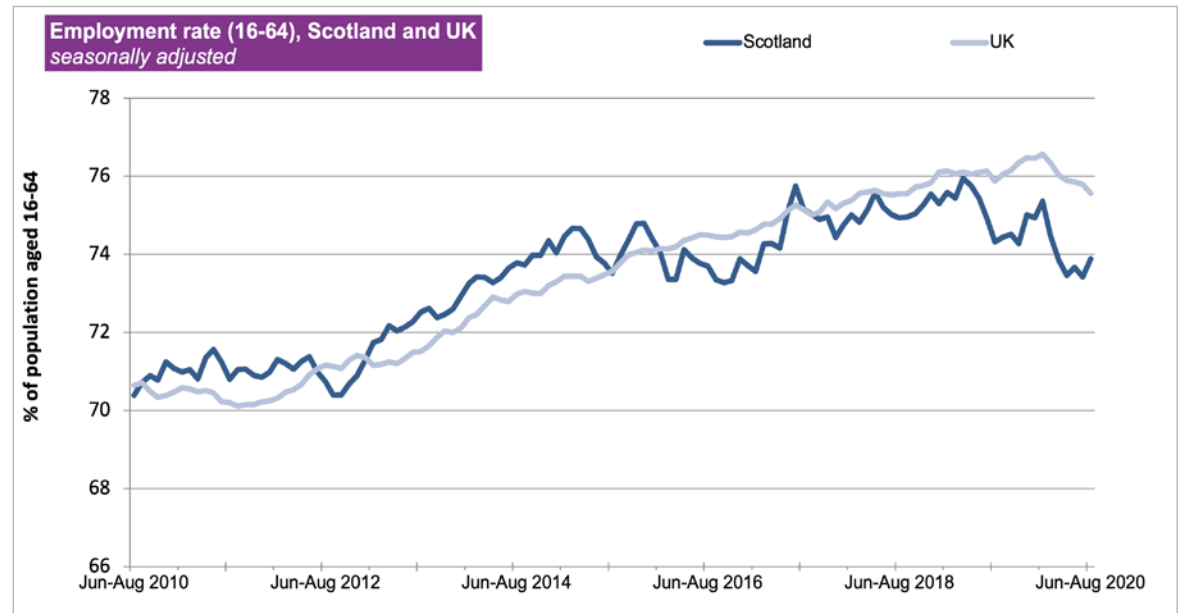
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Scotland's Labour Market Pre-COVID-19

Prior to COVID-19, compared with historical trends and similar economies, Scotland's employment rate was high and unemployment rate low. Scotland's employment rate reached a record high of 75.9% in Feb-Apr 2019 (Office for National Statistics (ONS),⁴ Labour Force Survey (LFS)) and was the culmination of consistent employment growth as the economy recovered from the effects of the 2008 financial crash and global recession that drove unemployment in Scotland to around double today's rate, reaching 8.8% in May-July 2010.

However, even during this period of recovery and strong employment growth, the UK's and Scotland's labour market faced long-standing challenges affecting efficiency. For example, in the form of weak underlying productivity growth and widespread skills shortages and gaps.⁵

Figure 2 - Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey



⁴ (ONS, LFS)

⁵ [Future Skills Action Plan for Scotland: evidence and analysis annex - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2020/09/16/Future_Skills_Action_Plan_for_Scotland_evidence_and_analysis_annex.pdf)

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As in many economies there was also persistent inequality in our labour market based upon gender, age, disability, ethnicity and geography. Progress has been made against some of these inequalities, for example sustained growth in female participation in Scotland's labour market, with Scotland's female employment rate rising from 66.3% in 2011 to 71.7% in 2019.⁶

However, COVID-19 has been shown to have a generally regressive impact on our labour market by disproportionately affecting already disadvantaged groups. For example, young people have experienced higher increases in unemployment and reductions in employment than other age groups, employment rates for lower qualified employees have fallen more than higher qualified employees, and in latest data (ONS, LFS, July to September 2020) the disability employment gap widened over the year.⁷ The effects of COVID-19 have yet to fully materialise in Scotland's labour market. However, the medium term outlook remains highly uncertain.

Sustaining Public Services

Having a sustainable and growing working age population is important and this is measured by the dependency ratio of people aged under 16 and those of pensionable age as compared to those between those ages, in what is generally referred to as the working age population. There are many people over the age of 65 who are working just as there are many who are in the working age population who are not currently working. However, this ratio is an internationally recognised measure which helps to assess the number of people able to contribute to paying taxes to deliver our necessary public services.⁸ Scotland's dependency ratio is currently 56.2 but that masks significant divergence as the dependence ratio ranges from 41.5 to 71.6 in Glasgow City and Nah-Eileanan Siar respectively.

As well as the importance of having a population that is able to fund our public services, we also need people who are able to work and deliver these crucial services. For example, a large number of our nurses are aged over 50, and we will need to recruit and train more to support our vital NHS services both now and in the future.

Local Level

Population change is important at a local level as well as a national level. Declining population levels can impact on the sustainability of some local communities, and the retention of key local services. A declining working age population means that there are fewer people available to deliver key public services or to meet gaps in the workforce. In addition, the lack of working age families can threaten the sustainability of essential public services like schools which risks families moving elsewhere. Conversely, planning future development can be challenging in areas where demand is high and infrastructure is constrained.

To deliver a more successful country with opportunities for all we need a skilled population across Scotland's communities. However, our overall population growth is slowing with all future population growth depending entirely on migration. Our population is ageing and while some of our communities are facing the challenges of rapid population growth many others are struggling with depopulation. This raises significant challenges.

⁶ [Scotland's Labour Market: People Places and Regions – background tables - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-labour-market-people-places-and-regions-background-tables-2020/pages/10-12-2020-people-places-and-regions-background-tables-2020.pdf)

⁷ [Labour+Market+Monthly+Briefing+---+December+2020.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/labour-market-monthly-briefing-2020-12/pages/10-12-2020-labour-market-monthly-briefing-2020-12.pdf)

⁸ The active dependency ratio is equally important as that includes those who are actually in employment, compared to the dependency ratio which also includes those on working-age benefits.



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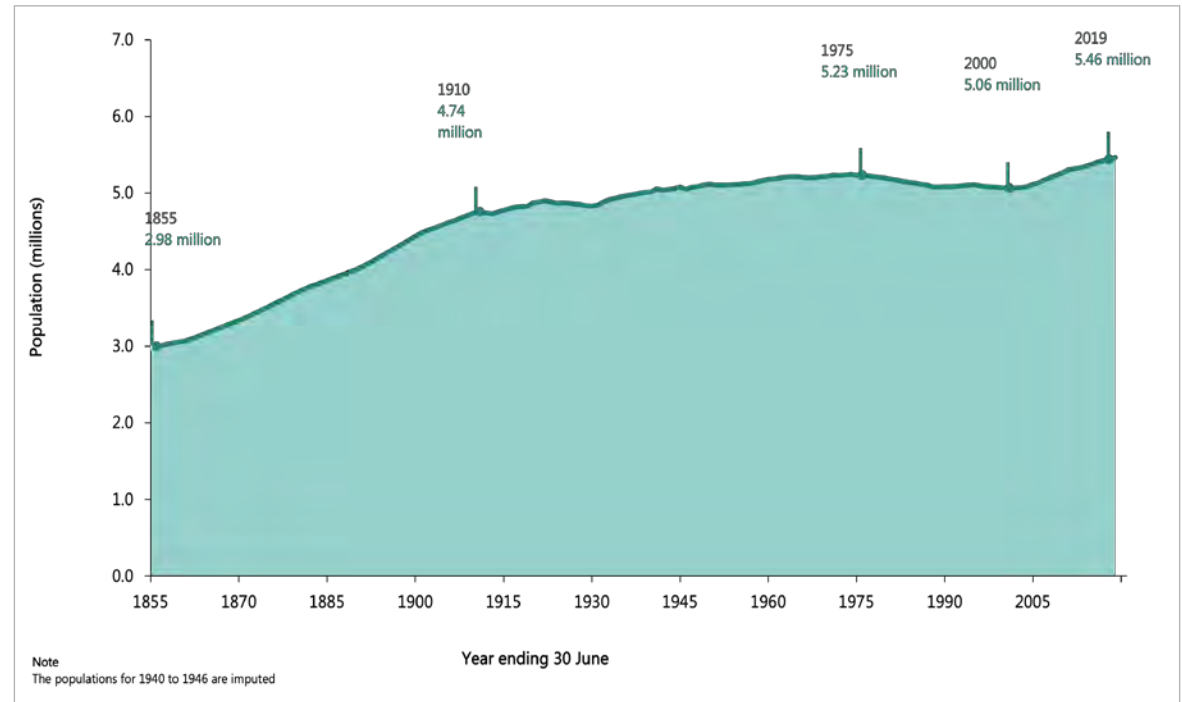
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Scotland's Population History

Centuries of demographic drivers – rates of fertility, mortality, and migration – have shaped Scotland's population story. Much of this story is told by numbers – the number of new-borns per year, the number of deaths, the numbers of those who leave Scotland to build a future elsewhere, and the numbers who arrive and settle here. But Scotland's story of demography is just as much about the events behind the numbers. Famines, industrialisation, the growth of cities, lowland and highland clearances, public health advances, bursts of emigration, wars, baby booms, freedom of movement – these are all key chapters that have formed our changing population.

In 1707, Scotland's population was thought to be around 1 million people. By 1855, official records show that Scotland's population stood at 2.98 million. Since then, Figure 3 demonstrates Scotland's steady population growth all the way to a record high of 5.46 million in 2019.

Figure 3: Estimated population of Scotland,⁹ mid-1855 to mid-2019



⁹ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates>

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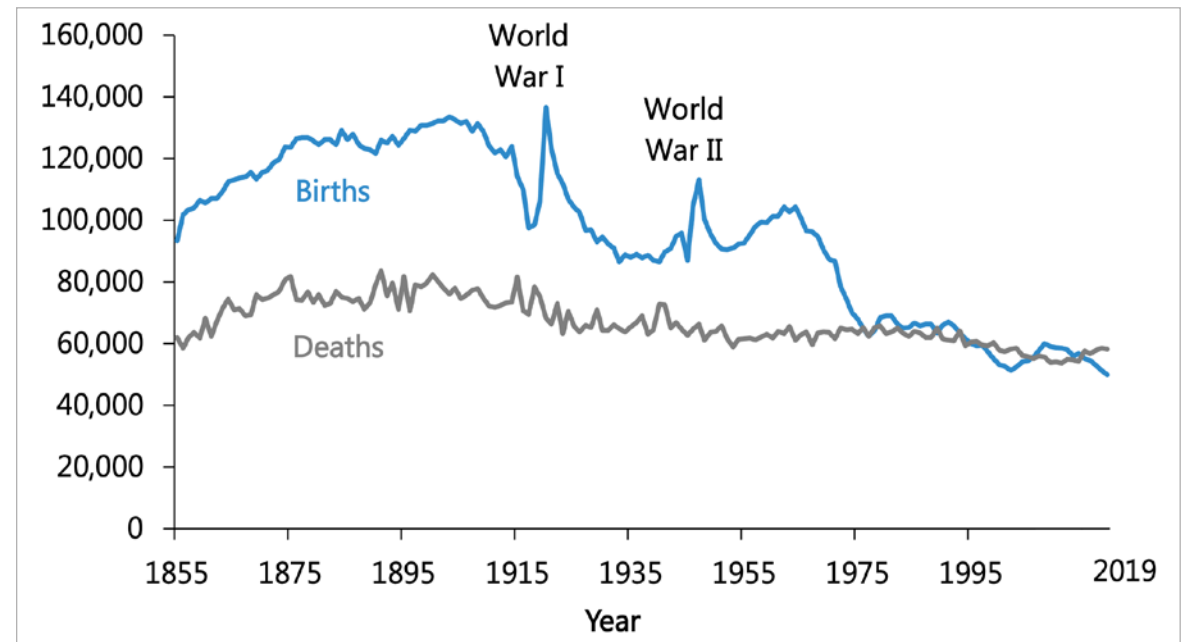
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Over this history, there have been two drivers of Scotland's population change. During the 19th and first half of the 20th century, as Figure 4 shows, Scotland's population growth was largely driven by the number of births outweighing the number of deaths (otherwise known as 'natural change'). However, from 1975 to 2000, during a time where a falling birth rate coincided with sustained net outward migration (where more people were leaving Scotland to seek their futures elsewhere, than were arriving and settling), Scotland's population declined.

Since 2000, Scotland's population has grown again to a record high. But, as Figure 2 showed, this has not been the result of any 'natural change' through the number of births outstripping the number of deaths. Instead, population growth over the last two decades has been driven by a Scotland shifting from being a country of net-outward migration to one of sustained net inward migration.

Migration patterns fluctuate from year to year. However, as an overall trend, Figure 5 demonstrates how Scotland has shifted from a country of out-migration with more people leaving to both the rest of the UK and beyond to a country of in-migration.

Figure 4: Births and Deaths in Scotland from 1855-2019¹⁰



¹⁰ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/rgar/2019/rgar-2019.pdf>

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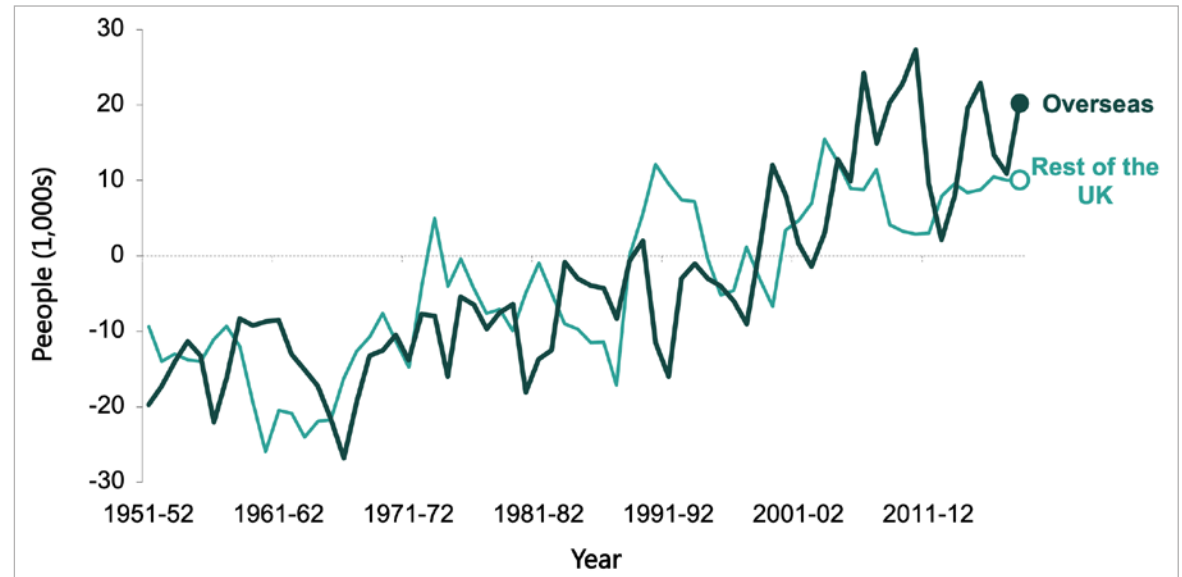
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Along this timeline, Scotland's demographic journey has been unique. For example, compared with England and Wales, Scotland had slower population growth on average across every decade from 1851 to 2011. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, where England and Wales saw strong in-migration, almost 6% of the population left Scotland in each decade. Scotland also experienced population decline throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s whereas the UK as a whole saw almost constant growth in population over this period. Likewise, during this second half of the 20th century, population growth in Scotland was slower than in any other part of Western Europe.¹¹

Yet, as a consequence of our unique demographic journey, one intertwined with emigration, Scotland's people and culture have long been spread across the world. Data from the 2009 US Census showed that more than 9 million Americans identified as having Scottish or Scottish-Irish ancestry while in the 2011 Canadian Census 4.7 million Canadians indicated Scottish ancestry.

Figure 5: Difference in the number of people (in 1,000s) who migrated to Scotland either from the rest of the UK or from overseas¹²



¹¹ [Scotland's Population - The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends 2015 - Invited Chapter \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/migration-flows)

¹² <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/migration-flows>

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Together, these demographic indicators allow us to see how our population has changed through history. However, equally as important are the projections that forecast and frame our future population challenges.

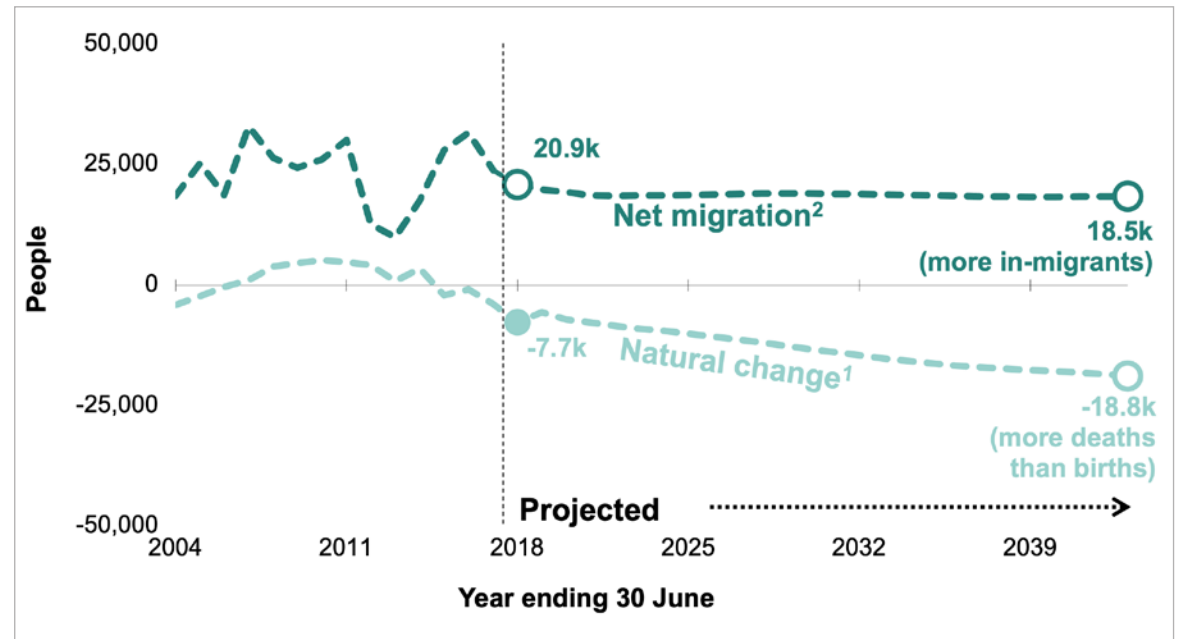
Projections and challenges ahead

Population projections are often used to plan ahead. These projections highlight three significant population change challenges for a Scotland of the future:

- maintaining a sustainable total population size;
- maintaining sustainable age structures within our population;
- maintaining a sustainable spatial balance of our population across Scotland's urban, rural, and remote locations.

Our **first projected challenge** revolves around maintaining a sustainable overall population size. As Figure 6 shows, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) project that, with years of negative natural change (the number of deaths exceeding the number of births) ahead, all of our population growth over the next 20 years is projected to come from inward migration.

Figure 6: Projected net migration and natural change in Scotland's population to mid-2043



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Given that these NRS projections do not take into account the ending of free movement between the UK and the European Single Market, it is possible that the challenge of Scotland maintaining a sustainable population size may be even more stark than projected.¹³

The Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population has assessed the impact of the ending of freedom of movement and projected a reduction in annual overseas net migration to Scotland of between one third and one half after 2020 leading to a reduction in our working age population of between 3% and 5%.



The independent [Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population](#) was established in October 2018. The Group's purpose is to provide independent expert analysis and advice to Scottish Government ministers on migration and population.

The group comprises of academics from five Scottish institutions:

- Professor Christina Boswell (chair) - University of Edinburgh
- Professor David Bell - University of Stirling
- Dr Andrew Copus – University of Eastern Finland and James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen
- Professor Rebecca Kay - University of Glasgow
- Professor Hill Kulu - University of St Andrews

The Group has produced five reports so far:

- UK immigration policy after leaving the EU: impacts on Scotland's economy, population and society
- Immigration policy and demographic change in Scotland: learning from Australia, Canada and continental Europe
- UK immigration policy after leaving the EU: impacts on Scotland's economy, population and society - July 2020 update
- Internal migration in Scotland and the UK: trends and policy lessons
- Designing a pilot remote and rural migration scheme: analysis and policy options

¹³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/uk-immigration-policy-leaving-eu-impacts-scotlands-economy-population-society/>

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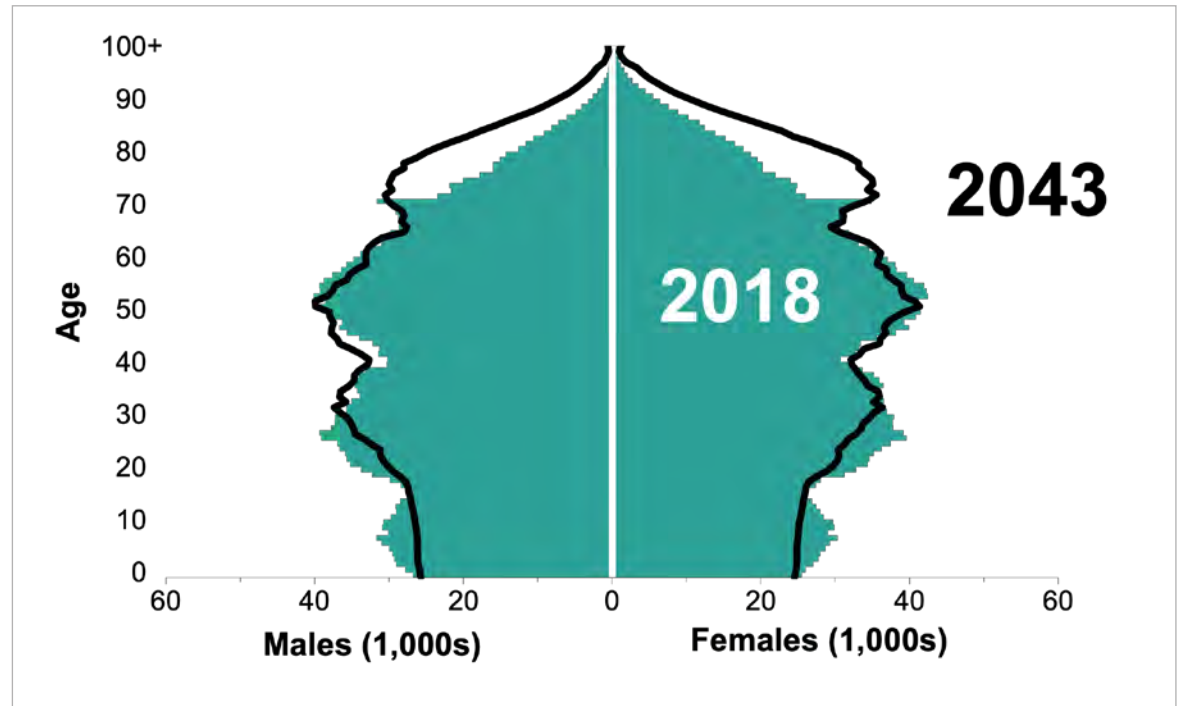
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The **second challenge** focuses on not only maintaining a population size, but specially ensuring that the age structures of our population are sustainable. Like many Western countries, Scotland's population is ageing. Over decades, life expectancy has been increasing and the birth rate has been declining.¹⁴ In 1980-1982, the life expectancy for a female in Scotland was 75.3 years and 69.1 years for a male. This jumped to 81.1 years for a female in 2017-2019 and 77.1 years for a male.

Though patterns of long life are marked by widespread inequality between our poorest and wealthiest communities,¹⁵ long-term demographic trends of increased life expectancy and falling birth rates mean that the proportion of non-working age people is rising and is projected to rise dramatically over the coming decades. This is demonstrated through Figure 7.

Figure 7: Projected population of Scotland by age and sex, mid-2018 and mid-2043



¹⁴ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-in-scotland/2017-2019>

¹⁵ Unjust and avoidable differences in health among population groups are widespread. In 2017-19, comparisons of people who live in our most and least deprived areas of Scotland show a difference of 10.0 years in life expectancy for females and 13.3 years for males. This rises dramatically for healthy life expectancy where the gap is 23.9 years for females and 23.0 years for males. These gaps – broadly determined by the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age - have been increasing. And there is evidence that death rates are increasing in the most deprived areas whilst falling in the least deprived areas - meaning that the gap is getting wider.

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By mid-2043, it is projected that 22.9% of the population will be of pensionable age, compared to 19.0% in mid-2018. Scotland's age-structural shift is also projected to contain increasing numbers of people aged in the 'oldest old' age categories - the number of people aged 90 and over in Scotland is anticipated to double between 2019 and 2043 from 41,927 to 83,335.¹⁶

As the proportion of Scotland's pensionable age population grows, the proportions of both Scotland's working age and child population are projected to fall.^{17,18} One implication of this projection is that a future Scotland may not have enough people of working age to replace those leaving the labour market as they grow older. Another implication is that without more working age people, pressures on fiscal sustainability, tax revenues, public services and welfare will increase.

We want a Scotland where everybody thrives. A Scotland where healthy life expectancy increases. A Scotland where people who enter retirement, having contributed so much during their working lives, are supported and have access to the services that they need. Many older people will continue to work to support their families and wider communities, which is welcome. We need to address the barriers that may constrain the ability of those people to contribute whilst also ensuring we have a skilled population to provide key public services and to generate the tax income to fund our public services and pensions.



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The **third challenge**, in addition to maintaining a sustainable population size and age-balance in our population, is maintaining a sustainable balance of people across Scotland's urban, rural and remote areas.

Population change is important at a local as well as a national level, as each local authority in Scotland feels our demographic challenge differently. Some of our communities are facing significant population growth while many others, notably the west coast authorities and those in rural and remote areas, are facing depopulation as people move to larger towns and cities for employment and education opportunities.

Yet, whether a population is growing or declining, changing populations present numerous sustainability challenges to local areas. For those areas that are dealing with an increase in the population, this brings significant challenges in providing the infrastructure and services – housing, education, transport and health – to support this increased population. While, in contrast, areas dealing with decreasing (and often simultaneously ageing) populations face different challenges, including skill shortages and increased pressure on public services.



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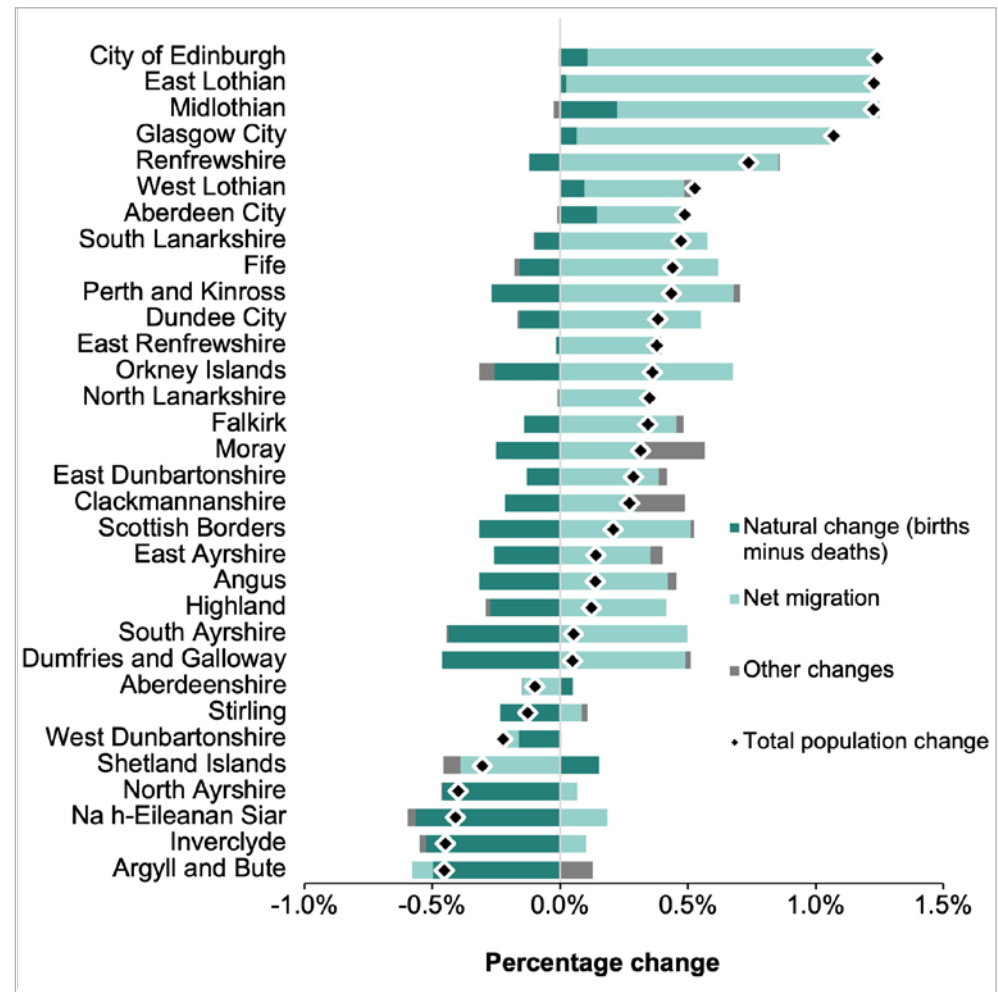
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Figure 8 provides a snapshot (between mid-2018 and mid-2019) of the different demographic profiles of growth and decline by each local authority – each uniquely shaped by natural change and net-migration. In the latest year, the three local authorities experiencing the greatest population increase are all situated in the east (City of Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian). While in contrast, 8 out of 32 council areas experienced depopulation – the greatest population declines were seen in Argyll and Bute, Inverclyde, and the Western Isles. It should be noted this still does not tell the whole story, as even within council areas, such as Highland, areas are experiencing severe depopulation as well as population growth.

Figure 8: Components of population change for council areas, mid-2018 to mid-2019



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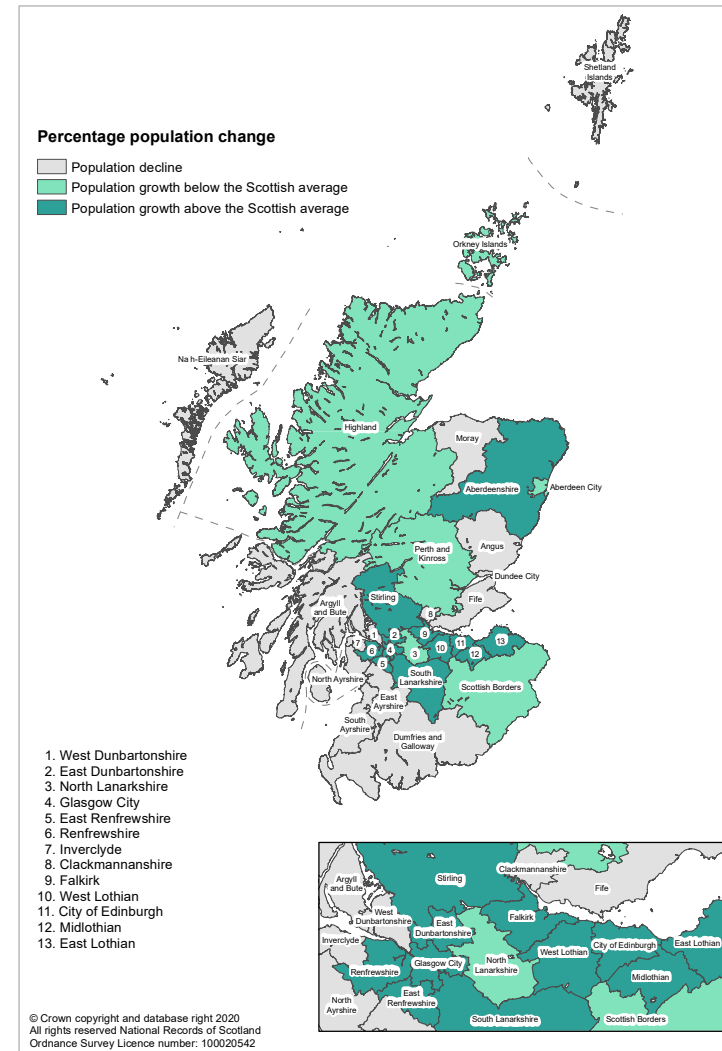
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Figure 9 shows NRS projections of population growth and decline across local authority areas over the next decade. This highlights crucial patterns of deviation across the country, especially between eastern and western areas of Scotland.

Ultimately, Scotland's population story is multi-dimensional – bringing together a long history of growth and decline, migration, changing age-structural trends, and shifting local populations. Yet, as we set out this story and consider the sustainability challenges that lie ahead, we must remember that just as the actions of the past have shaped our current population, so too will the actions that we take now shape the future.

Figure 9: Projected percentage change in population, by council area, mid-2018 to mid-2028 (Map)



FAMILY FRIENDLY: GROWING OUR POPULATION



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Families in Scotland are diverse and come in all shapes and sizes. We celebrate that and it must continue. In looking at our demographics, in order to support our increasing older population, we need to increase the number of our younger people. Migration is one route, but this relies on powers from the UK Government but the other is to identify and address the barriers that stop people from growing their families. It also helps sustain our public services such as schools. This chapter looks at the context behind our falling birth rate and what actions we are taking that can address this.

What does the evidence tell us?

Scotland's total fertility rate (TFR; the average number of children per woman that a group of women would have expected to have if they experienced the observed Age Specific Fertility Rate) has fallen from 2.5 in 1971 to a record low of 1.37 in 2019. In order for a population to grow, the replacement fertility rate needs to be at 2.1. Scotland's fertility rate has not been at 2.1 since 1973.

There is variation in fertility rates across Scottish council areas. The five council areas with the lowest rates are all cities – Stirling, Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Each has a TFR of below 1.3.

Rural and remote areas, and commuter areas, tend to have higher fertility rates. The Shetland Islands, Argyll and Bute, the Scottish Borders, Midlothian and East Dunbartonshire all have higher TFRs than the England and Wales average of 1.65.¹⁹

Though cities generally have low fertility rates internationally (primarily due to younger age profiles and higher concentrations of students), the rates in Scottish cities are substantially lower than cities in England and Wales with comparable age and student profiles.

For example, Bristol and Leeds, cities of comparable population size with comparable student populations, have total fertility rates of 1.44 and 1.58 respectively, compared to 1.01 for Edinburgh and 1.18 for Glasgow. It would be helpful to understand more about the basis for these differences and this is something we propose to explore.

¹⁹ [Births in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

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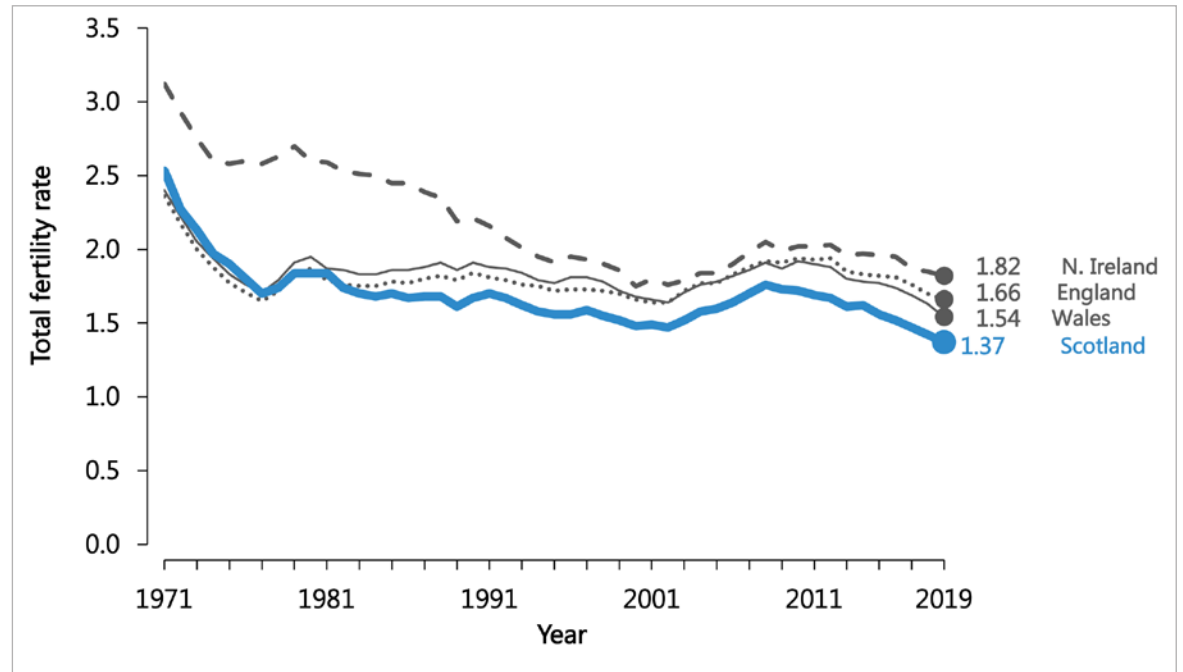
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Scotland is not alone in this, the rest of the UK and all EU countries also have a total fertility rate lower than the replacement fertility rate (although Scotland has the lowest rate across the UK).

Deciding to have a child is an important decision and it is a decision for that individual or couple. It is not for government to seek to dictate or influence whether an individual should have a child or how many children they should choose to have. However, there is a role for government in addressing the barriers that may prevent individuals and couples from starting a family.



Figure 10: Comparison of Total Fertility Rates (TFR) across UK Nations.²⁰



²⁰ Scottish figures provided by NRS statisticians. England and Wales figures from ONS: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/birthsummarytables>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC425510/#:~:text=The%20social%20structure%2C%20religious%20beliefs,rates%20are%20low%2C%20birth%20control>
<https://www.volusonclub.net/empowered-womens-health/4-contributing-factors-to-declining-fertility-rates-a-global-overview/>

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There are a number of factors that influence people's decisions to start, or to expand, their family. Some of these include:

- **Financial.** For example, families may not have the economic sustainability to pay for children, or their ability to access well paid flexible employment or local affordable childcare may also mean they choose to have fewer children. Women may also be concerned about the risk of discrimination and the impact on their career.
- **Housing.** Depending where families live, they may not have adequate housing to raise a family, or at least the family size they wish to have either due to supply or cost. If individuals do not have certainty about their housing then this can also impact on their decision.
- **Personal.** Couples or individuals may choose to wait longer to have children than their parents did, either due to the financial reasons set out above or to focus on their education or career development. People may not be living close to their extended family with the attendant loss of close family support. With people having children later in life, this means that families tend to be smaller.
- **Wider societal.** As well as health reasons which can lead to fertility issues, people may also choose not to have children because of a range of cultural and religious reasons including concerns about the size of the global population and the impact on our climate.

Impact of COVID

Financial uncertainty already plays a part in when and if people decide to start a family. There is a risk that COVID-19 has compounded these issues with the risk that young people who may be considering starting a family may be more exposed to the economic impact of the pandemic.

The Social Renewal Advisory Board report,²¹ which reported on the impact of COVID-19 on our society, recognises the pandemic has disproportionately affected certain parts of our society, from those in deprived areas to ethnic minorities. The actions contained in that report are of importance to all aspects of our nation, including the high labour market standards we expect and demonstrating how we want our country to be – which is important in attracting families and those who may want to raise a family here. Work will be on-going to support communities hardest hit by the pandemic, and the population programme will be aligned to this work as it progresses.

²¹ "If not now, when?" The Social Renewal Advisory Board Report (www.gov.scot)

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Ambition

We want to encourage families and people of working age to come to Scotland and build their lives here; to make a positive contribution to our economy, our communities and our public services. For them, and those already in Scotland our focus is on identifying and addressing the barriers which may prevent people from taking the decisions to start or expand their family, if that is what they wish.

Current actions and commitments

Our aspiration is that all families are supported to give their children the best start in life, so that Scotland's children grow up loved, safe and respected and that they realise their full potential. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes for children and young people. It provides a common framework which puts the child at the centre and helps children get the right support from the right people at the right time.

We are committed to delivering the whole system changes needed to develop and implement the recommendations that The Independent Care Review set out in their report, *The Promise*.²² Scotland has a clear commitment to early intervention and prevention, and by offering children and families support at the right time it will give parents the chance to thrive and mitigate the impact of socio-economic factors supporting them to fully function in society. That commitment is best realised through proper, holistic support for families. We must provide access to universal services to assist families and prospective parents at all stages of their lives. There must be sufficient resources to offer support during pregnancy through early education and healthcare, and during pre-school where community-based support is vital. Services must be responsive and flexible to a family's needs and their voices must be heard in the decisions that impact them.

Offering support to children, young people and families is one way of demonstrating that Scotland is a great place to raise a family. However, one of the barriers women face is concern about the impact of parenthood on their job.

Employment Law, including the provision of parental leave and pay is a matter reserved to the UK Government which means Scotland is currently limited to following the decisions of the UK Government in these areas.

Therefore, like the rest of the UK, Scotland has maternity leave for eligible employees to take, either for 26 weeks, or 'Ordinary Maternity Leave' and up to 52 weeks with the additional 26 weeks as 'Additional Maternity Leave'. Fathers/partners leave, however, is different with eligible employees only being able to take one week or two consecutive weeks' leave.

²² [The-Promise.pdf \(carereview.scot\)](#)

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To build a family friendly nation we are:

- Providing a box of essential items to all expectant mothers with our **baby boxes**.
 - Committed to funding more **early learning and childcare** hours for all parents for those aged three to four years and for two year olds for those in more deprived households.
-
- Committed to GIRFEC as an overarching rights-based policy approach through a common framework for whole family support including named person or single point of contact, consideration of wellbeing and, where needed, co-ordination of support for identified needs through a single child's plan
 - Working with local authorities, care providers and all relevant stakeholders, to make the necessary changes to the care system set out in **The Promise**.
-
- Committed to **free education** for all of our children and continue to offer no tuition fees to Scottish people who wish to study in Scottish universities.
 - Committed to providing universal and targeted health services to support the health and development of all children in the earliest years of life.
 - Delivering the **Family Support Directory** which allows users to access information and further sources of support on a broad range of issues such as money advice, relationships, health and wellbeing.
-
- Providing support through the **Scottish Child Payment** which launched on 15th February 2021 which pays the equivalent of £10 per week to eligible claimants with a child under six years old. The payment will be rolled out to eligible claimants with a child under 16 by the end of 2022, subject to the receipt of data on qualifying benefits from DWP.
 - Supporting those on certain benefits through our **Best Start Grants** to buy healthy food for their children and provide financial support at key stages of their lives. Committed to ensuring that no child grows up in poverty - our **Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan** sets out a range of actions to help us achieve this

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- Providing holistic support to help parents progress toward and within work, access to child care funds, financial advice and support from our **Money Talk Team** service and support for young parents through our **Parental Employability Support Fund** and the **Young Person' Guarantee**.

- Delivering on the commitments in our **Fair Work Action Plan** aiming for Scotland to be a Fair Work Nation by 2025, including rolling out our flagship **Fair Work First** approach to public sector grants and contracts.

- Promoting payment of the **real Living Wage** through the Living Wage Employer Accreditation scheme and supporting more towns, cities and regions to become Living Wage Places.



- Supporting women back into the labour market following a career break, for example to have children, through the **Women Returners Programme**.

- Launching the **Workplace Equality Fund 20/21** supporting equality groups impacted by the economic impact of COVID-19.

- More person-centred approach to employability for all, including disabled people to ensure everyone can move into fair work employment.



- Working with the Hunter Foundation to support and promote the development of flexible and family friendly workplaces through **Flexibility Works**.

- Working with TimeWise to support employers and employees develop more fair and flexible work opportunities.

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What more needs to be done?

Deciding whether or not to have a child is rightly a matter for individuals and couples. We are not seeking to attach value judgements to different families but we are interested in the barriers that individuals may face when deciding whether or not to have a child. We are interested in exploring why people are waiting longer and having fewer children. Through these insights, this will help us determine whether the interventions we have set out above to eliminate barriers are the right ones or whether we need to focus elsewhere.

A number of countries across the world are considering the impact of a declining birth rate. Some countries have put in place incentives to encourage people to have children while other countries have focused on addressing the potential barriers that may discourage people from having a child.

For example some countries that offer more generous parental leave packages, such as Sweden which offers 480 days of gender-blind parental leave at 80% of salary, have a higher total fertility rate than Scotland. That is not to say that policy interventions are the reason behind the higher fertility rates, but does suggest more investigation into family friendly policies and the impact on fertility.

We must continue to promote Scotland as a fairer country. Not just for our children, with our aim to reduce child poverty from 1 in 4 as it currently stands to 1 in 10 by 2030, but also by empowering women to return to the workplace after having children (if they wish to do). We need to ensure that workplaces are fair and give women the same opportunities to pursue a worthwhile career.

Similarly we must continue to encourage broader participation of women in business and entrepreneurship. Current figures demonstrate a clear and long-standing gender gap in rates of business start-up, growth, scale and access to finance.

[Work led by Professor Sara Carter from the Hunter Centre of Entrepreneurship at Strathclyde University indicates that if women's participation rates matched men's there would be the potential of c.35,000 more direct jobs in the Scottish economy. It could also boost the economy by as much as 5% GDP, a difference of £7.6 billion GVA.](#)

The Scottish Government supports a gender-balanced use of employee benefit and family-related leave however we do not have the powers required to enact such changes. Changes to maternity pay and leave are the responsibility of the



UK Government but actions to increase the level and length of statutory provision would provide financial support to families throughout the maternity leave period, supporting parents and children to get the best start in life and not feeling the imperative to return to work due to a low income level. This would help address the 'motherhood penalty', a key driver of the gender pay gap and will respond to 2015 research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission whose findings on pregnancy and maternity discrimination revealed that 77% of women reported a negative or discriminatory pregnancy/maternity experience.

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At the moment, NHS assisted conception services are offered to heterosexual and same sex couples who meet certain criteria. Increasing access to NHS treatment for the purposes of increasing population could be achieved by widening access criteria to NHS fertility treatment (for example to include single people, or couples who already have a child) or by increasing the number of cycles of IVF to increase success rates. Further modelling would need to be undertaken to inform the demand and possible outcome of these changes and insight work to be carried out to understand if that is one of the reasons behind people not having children.

We must ensure all employers, no matter the sector, support mothers who return to work, offering flexible opportunities around childcare and working. UNICEF's report on Family Friendly Policies²³ suggests that employers must support breastfeeding breaks in the workplace. Breastfeeding has a number of health advantages for children and if mothers choose to breastfeed, they should be supported to do this once they return to the workplace. This is one policy which might support the choice for women to return to work earlier than they would otherwise. As part of our engagement with the public, we should explore and ensure these opportunities are available in Scotland.

We must also ensure people are getting the work-life balance that they want, and perhaps need, to raise a family. A study by Family Friendly Working Scotland found that 95% of Scottish people believe a work-life balance is as important as their salary and one third believe this balance is more important than salary.²⁴ At a UK level flexible working experts Timewise found that at the start of 2020, 9 out of 10 people wanted to work flexibly and even with the onset of COVID and the rise in working from home only 22% of jobs advertised

as flexible in Scotland.²⁵ since lockdown. Scottish Government has commissioned Timewise have been to produce the Timewise Flexible Jobs Index for Scotland due to be published in March 2021

We recognise the importance of enabling all children in Scotland to have access to high quality and affordable childcare which meets their needs and the needs of their families and communities. The benefits of this type of childcare are 3-fold:

- Improving outcomes for children
- Providing opportunities for parents and carers to access work and study
- Improving family wellbeing

That is why in Scotland, we are in the process of almost doubling the number of hours of funded early learning and childcare children can access in Scotland; and we have committed to developing a strategic framework for school aged childcare, supported by a £3 million Access to Childcare fund to test new models of school age childcare that will be accessible and affordable for low income families.

²³ [UNICEF-policy-brief-family-friendly-policies-2019.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/uk/media/1000/2019-11-14-unicef-policy-brief-family-friendly-policies-2019.pdf)

²⁴ [Scots 'want more control over flexible working' - Business Insider](https://www.businessinsider.com/scots-want-more-control-over-flexible-working-2020-12)

²⁵ <https://timewise.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Timewise-Flexible-Job-Index-2020.pdf>

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We know when it comes to providing flexible and affordable high quality childcare, challenges and opportunities are different across local areas. That is why our partnership working with local authorities and the private and third sectors is so key to the successful delivery of these ambitious commitments. Each area of Scotland is responding to their communities in ways that best suit their needs.

A lack of access to high quality and affordable childcare is a barrier to encouraging young families to move to an area. We understand this can be a key challenge in rural and island areas, which tend to have higher proportions of people who have a second job and who are self-employed, working part-time and working from home. Families in these areas need flexible, wrap-around childcare to accommodate non-standard or seasonal working patterns; childcare before/after school, weekends and holiday; and they need it to be very local to avoid long travel times or routes that can be disrupted in adverse weather.



The challenges to address for these areas include: attracting and retaining a qualified workforce; providing sustainable services that are flexible enough for the patterns of rural employment; and minimising travel times for children and families to a childcare setting.

These issues are part of the on-going programmes of work on Scotland's commitments for childcare. We are developing cross-government networks to ensure key policies for rural and island communities (e.g. on rural economy, women in agriculture) are feeding in to these work programmes.

In addition, individuals' decisions on whether or not to have a child, or a further child, may be affected by accessibility of maternity services locally and experience of those services in previous pregnancies. Rural maternity services in particular are under pressure to centralise and loss of these services may contribute to decisions of families in those areas, either to have children or to locate in those areas. Work is underway across Scotland to improve maternity and neonatal services as part of *The Best Start: A Five Year Forward Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Care*, with a strong focus on individualised care as close to home as possible, however pressure will remain on the more remote and rural services.

Improving women's position in the labour market remains a priority for the Scottish Government and a key part of delivering inclusive economic growth. We have committed to reviewing the actions in *A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan*²⁶ to ensure they remain fit for purpose and support women through the economic recovery from COVID-19.

²⁶ [A fairer Scotland for women: gender pay gap action plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2022/04/A_fairer_Scotland_for_women_gender_pay_gap_action_plan_-_gov.scot)

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We must also look to address the gendered approach to child caring responsibilities which creates inequality in the first place. Women are typically expected to take this on, which can impact on their ability to work or reach their potential. We must explore the nation's view on this, and how we address these inequalities.

Access to affordable, secure accommodation is another key consideration when starting a family. The proportion of households in the private rented sector has grown from 5% in 1999 to 14% in 2018 and 2019. Younger households of owner-occupiers has dropped in the same time period, down from 53% in 1999 to 38% in 2019.²⁷

This evidence highlights a number of important actions. For the private rented sector, this suggests addressing the affordability of rent by capping rents to tackle high rent rates and allowing those living in the private rented sector greater opportunities to make changes and improvements to their homes.

The other aspect is making owning your own home more achievable for our younger generations – if that is what they choose to do. We will continue our commitment to build more affordable homes as well as focusing our shared equity schemes on those who really need to buy a home.

While it is important to have these family friendly policies in place, it is equally important that people are made aware and understand the support which will be available to individuals, couples or families when they make that decision to have a child.

Encouraging Families to Move to Scotland

Attracting people to move to Scotland is important in addressing our demographic challenges. In doing so, we can hope to address our challenges twofold, by encouraging more working age people to live here to help support our ageing population and increase the numbers of children and young people if they choose to raise a family here as well.

Scotland is a vibrant country, and it is important that we publicise this. We have beautiful green open spaces for families explore, we have amazing cultural heritage from book festivals in the south to our Nordic heritage in the north, we have fantastic sporting opportunities and families can benefit for all of these things being right on their doorstep.

Work has already been delivered through the collaborative Brand Scotland Strategic Partnership²⁸ with a range of marketing campaigns under the current international audience umbrella strategy #ScotlandisNow. These campaigns have publicised what a fantastic country Scotland is to live, work and grow up in and demonstrates the quality of life families and individuals can enjoy.

We will share our family friendly policies with investors we engage with through our Inward Investment Plan, as this may well be a deciding factor in which businesses decide to invest here. We will continue to use the Brand Scotland umbrella strategy to develop and deploy campaigns over the coming months and years to help achieve our population ambitions. That means we must do more to increase awareness of our work through other channels, making links with the domestic parental audience strategy through Parent Club.

²⁷ [Scottish Household Survey 2019: twenty years of Scotland's people - summary report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.scotland.org/)

²⁸ <https://www.scotland.org/>

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A family friendly nation: summary of actions

#	Action	Action for
1	We will review the actions of the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan to ensure they remain fit for purpose and support women through the COVID-19 recovery	Scottish Government with employers
2	We commit to build more affordable as well as ensuring our current homes are fit for purpose	Scottish Government and Local Authorities
3	We will use the collaborative Brand Scotland marketing communications strategy to promote Scotland as a family friendly nation and promote resources such as Parent Club to help attract talent to our country	Scottish Government
4	We will call on the UK Government to make changes to employment law to pursue a gender-blind parental leave	Scottish Government and UK Government
5	We will explore widening access to fertility services for those within society who wish to raise a family and need those services to conceive	Scottish Government
6	We will explore opportunities to ensure breastfeeding breaks are available to all new mothers in the workplace	Scottish Government with employers



HEALTHY LIVING: INCREASING HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY AND DRIVING INNOVATION IN AN AGEING SOCIETY



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We want Scotland to be a place where everyone can live long and healthy lives. Our ambition is to raise both the life expectancy and, critically, the number of years that all of Scotland's people spend in good health. To do this, we must reduce the unjust and avoidable inequalities that exist between those in our most deprived communities and those in our wealthiest. Some of these inequalities have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and we must therefore rebuild in a way that delivers a world-class public health system to improve the health and wellbeing of our population.

At the same time, creating a Scotland where more people are living for longer, will require us to create an inclusive and innovative society that not only supports our older population to live healthy lives but ensures they have opportunities to participate, contribute and thrive.

This chapter sets out the demographic context around longevity in Scotland, alongside a summary of what actions are already being taken and where more work is needed.

What does the evidence tell us?

Like many advanced economies around the world, the age structure of Scotland's population is changing. Since the 1950s, our life expectancy has increased dramatically. We are living longer. We are having fewer children. Given modern patterns of migration, this means the numbers of older people as a proportion of our population are rising. Major achievements in public health and science over time have brought us to this position, though Scotland still has a lower average life expectancy than the rest of the UK or in Western Europe.^{29, 30} The long-term effects of living longer and having fewer children means that the age structure of Scotland's population is changing. This will have major implications for our future.



²⁹ [National life tables, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

³⁰ [RGAR 19 Life Expectancy \(nrsotland.gov.uk\)](https://nrsotland.gov.uk)

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As Figure 11 shows, National Records of Scotland projects that the proportion of the population of pensionable age people in Scotland will increase. By mid-2043, it is projected that 22.9% of the population will be of pensionable age, compared to 19.0% in mid-2018. As the proportion of Scotland's pensionable age population grows, the proportions of both Scotland's working age and child population are projected to fall.^{31, 32}

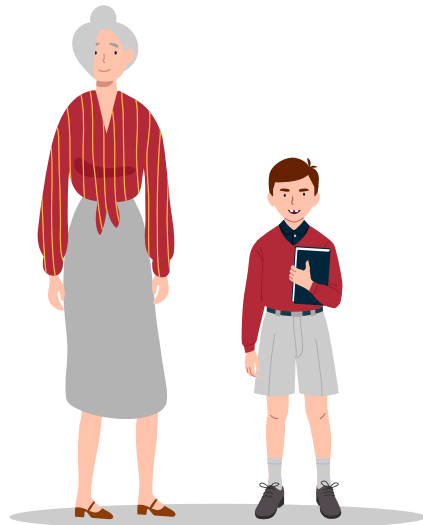
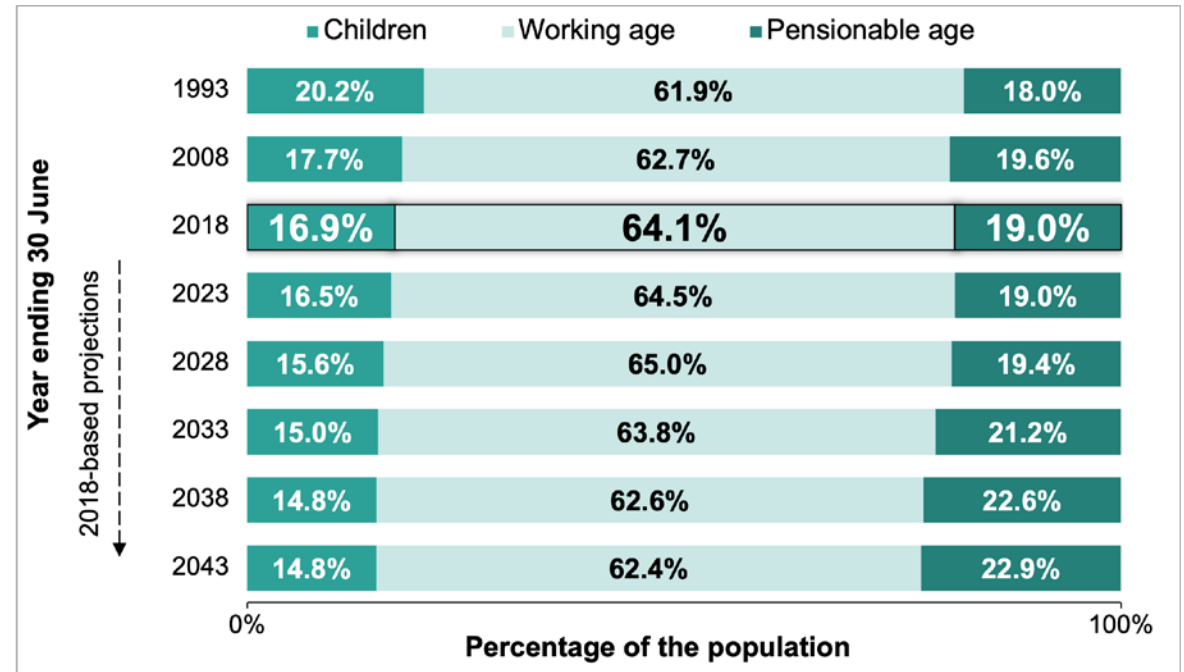


Figure 11: Population by age group in Scotland, mid-1993 to mid-2043



31 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/population-projections/2018-based/pop-proj-2018-scot-nat-pub.pdf>

32 Projections take into account future legislative changes to the State Pension Age.

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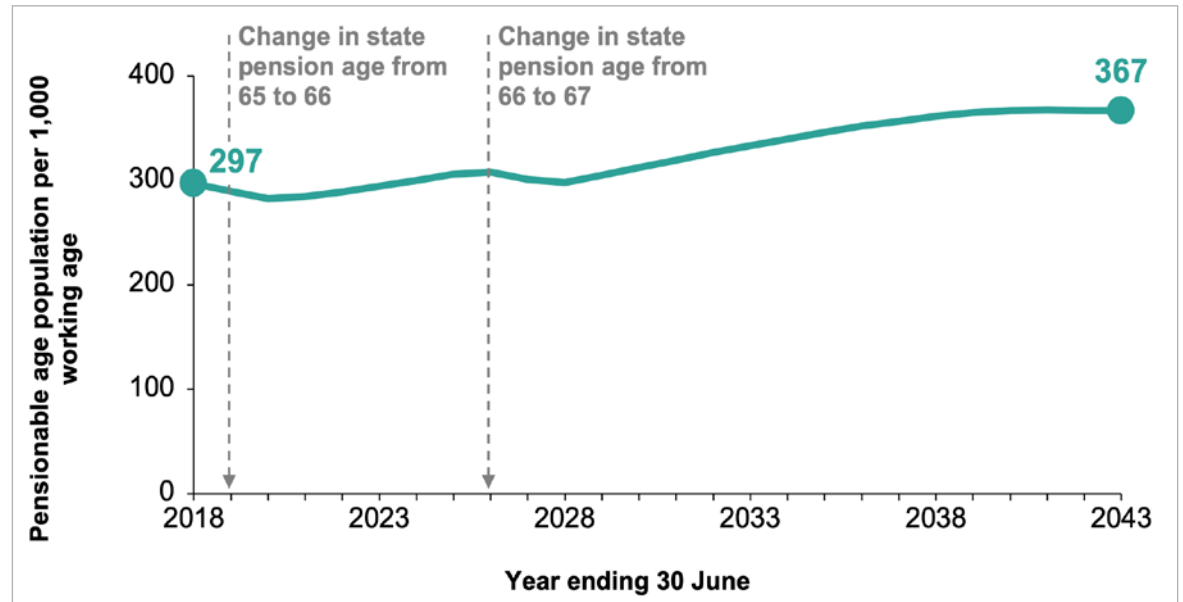
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To see this age-structural shift from another angle, projected population estimates show that, over the next 25 years, the number of people of pensionable age per 1,000 working age people is expected to rise significantly in Scotland. These estimates factor in the anticipated changes in the state pension age.



Figure 12: Projected population of pensionable age per 1,000 working age in Scotland, mid-2018 to mid-2043



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Scotland's age-structural shift is also projected to contain increasing numbers of people aged in, what demographers refer to as, the 'oldest old' age categories. For example, the NRS projects that the number of people aged 90 and over in Scotland will double between 2019 and 2043 from 41,927 to 83,335.³³

It is important to acknowledge that these population projections are based upon assumptions and therefore have limitations. Over the next 25 years, many social and economic factors, such as COVID-19, can and will influence population change. However, projection data does show a window into Scotland's potential future. These measures of projected longevity across our lifespans and increasing dependency ratios, are tools to inform our understanding of a sustainable future for Scotland as a country in 2040, in 2060, and beyond.

These projected age-structural shifts of the upcoming decades are part of a wider historical context where, since the 1950s, life expectancy in Scotland has risen dramatically. Figure 13 demonstrates this upwards trajectory over the past seven decades.

Figure 13: Male and Female Life Expectancy in Scotland: 1950-52, 1980-82, and 2017-2019.³⁴

Life Expectancy (Scotland)	Born in 1950-52	Born in 1980-82	Born in 2017-2019
Male	64.4 years	69.1 years	77.1 years
Female	68.7 years	75.3 years	81.1 years



³³ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/population-projections-scotland/2018-based>

³⁴ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level/table1-le-1861-2013.pdf>

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These long-term trends reflect the continuous advances of public health, housing, and scientific developments since the Second World War. Over decades people in Scotland have had more time to enjoy being active, to have a fulfilling and well-earned retirement, and to prolong their contributions to society as they grow older.

However, life expectancy and healthy life expectancy trends in Scotland have not improved since around 2012. A similar stalling in trends has been seen across the rest of the UK and some other countries including the USA. This has meant that life expectancy has actually been decreasing for the Scottish population living in the most deprived 40% of areas. The best available evidence indicates that this is largely due to economic factors impacting on the whole population, but particularly on those living in the most deprived circumstances. These life expectancy trends are very unusual and indicate the urgency of addressing their underlying causes – the social and economic circumstances such as poverty, housing, and education that together influence health throughout the life.

Without focusing on this, life expectancy and healthy life expectancy cannot be assumed to improve in the future.³⁵

Much of our challenge to support longer, healthier lives for our population must be focused around tackling premature mortalities, preventable illnesses, and widening health inequalities.

Unjust and avoidable differences in health among population groups are widespread. In 2017-19, comparisons of people who live in our most and least deprived areas of Scotland show a difference of 10.0 years in life expectancy for females and 13.3 years for males.³⁶ This rises dramatically for healthy life expectancy (the years that people can expect to live in good health) where the gap is 21.5 years for females and 25.1 years for males.³⁷ These gaps – broadly determined by the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age - have been increasing.³⁸ And there is evidence that death rates are increasing in the most deprived areas whilst falling in the least deprived areas – meaning that the gap is getting wider.³⁹

Working Age Population and the Economy

For Scotland, how our population is ageing is important not only in the context of having sufficient numbers of people of working age to fulfil business requirements for workers and the overall health of the economy, but also for the Fiscal Framework agreement with the UK, where Scotland's budget is dependent on its tax performance relative to the rest of the UK.

Despite the many benefits of an age diverse workforce⁴⁰ these older and ageing demographics can impact on Scotland's labour market performance as inactivity due to poor health is more common among older ages. For example, although "long-term sick" as a reason for inactivity accounts for 6.6% of the inactive population of 16-24 year olds, this rises to 38.4% of inactive 50-64 year olds.⁴¹

³⁵ <https://www.scotpho.org.uk/population-dynamics/recent-mortality-trends/>

³⁶ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-in-scotland/2017-2019>

³⁷ [Healthy Life Expectancy, 2017-19: Report \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/healthy-life-expectancy-2017-19-report)

³⁸ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/determinants-of-health>

³⁹ <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/10/11/e038135.full.pdf>

⁴⁰ [Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce Living, Learning and Earning Longer.pdf \(employment-studies.co.uk\)](#)

⁴¹ ONS, APS, Jul '19 – Jun '20

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Although Scotland's unemployment rate tends to track the UK rate quite closely, over the past 4 years Scotland has consistently had a higher rate of inactivity (the proportion of people aged 16-64 not active in the labour market) than the UK, with latest figures showing Scotland's inactivity rate at 21.8% compared to 20.8% for the UK.⁴²

Scotland's higher inactivity rate has been driven by a greater proportion of inactive people citing poor health and retirement as the reason in Scotland than the UK. This has arguably acted to keep Scotland's employment rate lower than it otherwise would have been.

These age profiles and subsequent pools of available labour supply vary significantly by region in Scotland with rural and remote areas tending to have older populations that are set to continue ageing. Some of these areas, particularly those located in the West coast (e.g. Argyll and Bute, Western Isles), are expected to experience overall population decline in future years and typically don't benefit from migration trends in the way that Scotland's major cities do.⁴³



Increasing healthy life expectancy for all

We want Scotland to be a place where everyone can live long and healthy lives. We also want to create an inclusive and innovative society that not only supports our older population to live healthy lives but ensures they have opportunities to participate, contribute and thrive. In order to do this, there is still much work to be done.

In 2018, the leading causes of death in Scotland in 2018 were:⁴⁴

- Ischaemic heart disease: 6,615 deaths (11.3%)
- Dementia including Alzheimer's disease: 6,484 deaths (11.1%)
- Lung Cancer: 3,980 deaths (6.8%)
- Cerebrovascular disease (including stroke): 3,831 deaths (6.5%)
- Chronic lower respiratory diseases (e.g. bronchitis and emphysema): 3,469 deaths (5.9%)

In 2018, we published our Public Health Priorities⁴⁵ and major action plans that are enabling us to tackle some of the most significant challenges we face. Our cross-government action to create a world-class public health system is focused directly on stopping the stalling of life expectancy improvement, improving healthy life expectancy, and tackling health inequalities.

⁴² ONS, LFS, Aug-Oct '20

⁴³ [Internal migration in Scotland and the UK: trends and policy lessons - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-and-the-uk-trends-and-policy-lessons-2018-2020/pages/10-internal-migration-in-scotland-and-the-uk-trends-and-policy-lessons-2018-2020.aspx)

⁴⁴ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/scotlands-facts/leading-causes-of-death-in-scotland>

⁴⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-public-health-priorities/>

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To address these challenges, our major action plans include:

Our **Framework for supporting people through Recovery and Rehabilitation during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic** sets out our vision for the provision of rehabilitation and recovery services across Scotland, for people whose health and wellbeing has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our **Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan** includes population-level approaches to encourage healthier choices, including progressing legislation to restrict the promotion and marketing of foods that typically have little or no nutritional value, where they are sold to the public. This sits alongside tailored and targeted approaches to help people eat well and have a healthy weight.

Our **Active Scotland Delivery Plan** sets out the wide range of actions we and our partners are taking to encourage and support people in Scotland to be more active more often – these include our **National Walking Strategy**, supporting women and girls to take part in sport, and record investment in active travel.

Our **Alcohol and Drug Treatment Strategy** and our **Rights, Respect, and Recovery Action Plan**, are committed to preventing and reducing drugs and alcohol harm in Scotland, whilst ensuring that effective interventions and high quality treatment and support services are available when required.

Our **Tobacco Control Action Plan** sets out how we will reach our goal of creating a tobacco-free generation by 2034.

Our **Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027** sets our ten year plan to prevent and treat mental health problems with the same commitment as we do with physical health problems.

Our **Suicide Prevention Action Plan** has a commitment to reduce the rate of suicide by 20% by 2022 (from a 2017 baseline) and supporting local partners and, in particular NHS staff, in supporting those in crisis.

Our **Health Literacy Action Plan** aims to provide individuals, families and employers the skills and knowledge to maintain good health.

At its heart, our Public Health Reform Programme sees an interconnected system between our health, our public services, our economy, and our communities. Together through a whole-systems approach, we aim to create a sustainable public health system that is not only able to address the nation's current health challenges, but is also equipped to respond to the complex future challenges of the twenty first century – one of which is an ageing society.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ [Why reform is important - The reform programme - Public Health Reform](#)

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Challenges and opportunities for Scotland's changing population:

A changing population brings with it new opportunities and new challenges. Population projections show that, like many other Western European nations, Scotland has an ageing society. As a greater proportion of our population are projected to become of pensionable age, there are major implications.

Almost every area and every region of Scotland will feel the implications of our age-structural shifts. This includes:

- Public finance
- Health and care systems
- Our working lives
- Education, skills, and learning
- Housing
- Infrastructure

Looking into the future, we need to find ways to drive innovation to meet the needs and to maximise the opportunities for a Scottish population in 10, 20, and 50 years' time. For the Scottish Government, this means careful thought and strategic engagement about our changing needs as a population.



Public finance:

Ageing is a significant driver of public service expenditure. An ageing population puts increasing pressures on public expenditure, in particular pensions, health and social care. As the Scottish population is ageing and the proportion of the working age population decreases, this means that public services and welfare payments for all need to be funded on a smaller active economy. While these changes are gradual and not necessarily significant over short periods of time, policy interventions are required early in order to maintain the affordability of health care and the pension system over the long-term.

Health and social care:

An ageing population, with an increasing number of our 'oldest old' citizens, has the potential to transform our population's health and care needs. In order to address these, careful long-term systems planning is needed. While many older people will enjoy better health than their predecessors did at an equivalent age, they will still have significant health needs living with potentially multiple conditions, and the overall impact will be a steadily increasing demand for health and social care.

On the one hand, we must ensure that we are able to *manage and mitigate the levels of demand* from an ageing population on our health and care services. First and foremost, extending the number of years that our population spends living in good health is vital. If people in Scotland live longer, but not healthier lives, then more people will spend a greater proportion of their lives in some kind of ill-health. An outcome of this would be increasing demand on health and care services for a longer period of time across the lifespan.

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Long-term planning must also consider the *gradually changing nature of demand* on health and care services that may manifest as our population changes. Population ageing is likely to increase the prevalence of age-related conditions in Scotland. Chronic conditions which affect the heart, along with the musculoskeletal and circulatory systems are all more prevalent with age. The same is true of certain mental health conditions such as dementia. A changing burden of disease – towards increasing prevalence of chronic and degenerative conditions – means that there are likely to be changing needs for primary, secondary, and community care.

Current and future workforce planning efforts will need to be attentive to the profound disruption to models of service delivery caused by COVID-19. Work is underway in the Scottish Government to understand how the landscape of health and social care services has been impacted by COVID-19 and to draw on lessons learned from the domestic and international response to the pandemic. This intelligence will inform workforce planning that balances short-term challenges and the long-term health and social care needs of our changing population.



In December 2019, we published the first Integrated **National Health and Social Care Workforce Plan** in the UK. Developed in partnership with COSLA, the Integrated Plan sets out how health and social care services will meet growing demand to ensure the right numbers of staff, with the right skills, across health and social care services.

The **Independent Review of Adult Social Care** published its report on 3 February 2021. The report sets out how adult social care can most effectively be reformed to deliver a sustainable national approach to adult social care that delivers high quality care and support to people who need it and improves support for their families, unpaid carers and the workforce.

To face the long-term challenges of an ageing society, innovation must also be at the heart of health and care systems planning. This is why the Scottish Government's innovation pathway is working to support the introduction of new innovative health technologies into NHS Scotland and the social care sector rapidly, with Scotland's ageing society viewed as an area of priority. Such innovations in public health (such as medical devices, diagnostic tests, pathway interventions and digital technologies, including robotics and artificial intelligence) can bring improvements in healthcare outcomes, quality, safety, and result in cost savings for NHS Scotland. Benefits for patients can also include faster diagnosis, a decline in preventable deaths, more effective and appropriate treatment, smoother pathways and easier methods of treatment.

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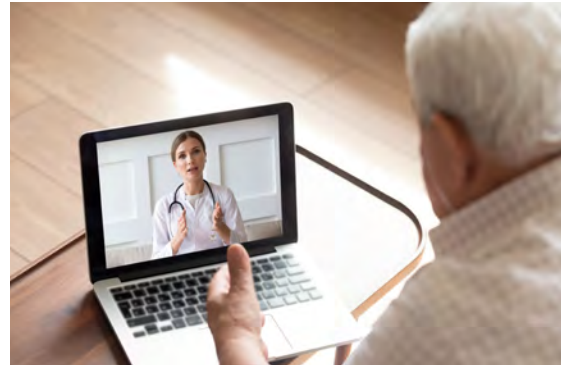
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We are taking a step-wise approach to embedding genomics medicine in NHS Scotland, ensuring the service has a capacity and resource needed. We included a commitment in the Programme for Government 2018/19 to continue the development of genomic medicine through the enhancement of NHS Scotland genetic capabilities for the diagnosis of rare diseases. In September 2020, we signalled out support for the UK Government [Genomics UK: the future of healthcare Strategy](#), committing to publishing our own response to the strategy in the form of an Action Plan.



We work closely with the NHS Scotland National Planning Board to support strategic planning of NHS Scotland services in the medium to long-term, part of which involves taking account of new and emerging areas of health technologies and innovation. One area of particular focus for the Board recently has been the expansion of Robotic Assisted Surgery (RAS) across NHS Scotland.

In 2020, we pledged to establish a Scottish Health and Industry Partnership to work with industry and academics to strengthen the research and development stages to help bring such technologies into NHS Scotland and social care sectors at pace.



Working lives:

The prospect of longer life also presents numerous opportunities to reframe how we work and learn over the course of lifespan. Over time, as people live longer, more can be done to support longer and fuller working lives, and to remove the barriers which can force older people to leave working life before they may wish to. Such ways to increase these 'longevity dividends' may include addressing negative attitudes towards older workers, encouraging entrepreneurship or civic participation in later life, or providing mechanisms for continuous learning across the lifespan.

Harnessing such demographic dividends will require joined-up collaboration to combine demographic opportunities with other shifts in society. For instance, combining shifts in demography with changing economic trends – e.g. providing pathways for skills development in emerging sectors of Scotland's economy.

As part of this conversation on doing right by our older population, in 2019 we published *A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action*.⁴⁷ This plan engages with how we can remove barriers experienced by older people, tackle inequality and allow people to flourish in later life.

⁴⁷ [A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-fairer-scotland-for-older-people/framework-for-action/pages/100/index.aspx)

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Housing

Housing also represents an important piece of the interconnected demographic challenge. It is vital that we have a housing system that is dynamic and resilient enough to meet people's changing needs, including an ageing population. As more of the Scottish population grows older, we must think about our different housing options and promote greater accessibility to allow our people to live well and independently at home and to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions.



Our **Housing 2040 Routemap** together with the **National Planning Framework** are central to the way in which we plan for and deliver the right homes in the right places to ensure that we meet housing needs, support people to live independent lives and support regeneration and growth alongside the infrastructure required. We will invest over £2.8 billion in direct capital grant funding, over 5 years, to deliver more affordable and social homes, continuing to ensure the right types of homes in the right places reflecting and supporting Local Housing Strategies and regional development priorities. As part of planning reform we will provide more clarity on future housing land required (for consultation and scrutiny) in the draft National Planning Framework, due in 2022, and will frame this within a new spatial strategy that aligns with our investment programme and principles National Planning Framework 4 will also need to fulfil a statutory obligation to set out how it will support homes for older people and disabled people, as a result of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

Housing to 2040's long-term vision will help to deliver a housing system that is dynamic and resilient enough to deliver the homes we need in the right places and of a quality and type to meet people's changing household needs, including those created by an ageing population.

Community and Social Connectedness

As we live longer lives, there are also opportunities to enhance our quality of life. Social isolation and a lack of community connectedness are issues which can often be felt most by our oldest citizens.

As part of this conversation, in 2018 we published *A Connected Scotland: our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections*.⁴⁸ It recognises social isolation and loneliness as a major public issues that can have significant impacts on the physical and wellbeing of older people.

Together, these issues only scratch the surface of the complex combination of challenges and opportunities that we can address in the face of population ageing. One of the actions for this paper is for Scottish Government to **consider establishing a Demographic Commission** to further open up these conversations with experts and partners.

⁴⁸ [A Connected Scotland: our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-connected-scotland-our-strategy-for-tackling-social-isolation-and-loneliness-and-building-stronger-social-connections/pages/1-to-100.aspx)

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Healthy living: summary of actions

#	Action	Action for
7	We will continue to invest in improving population health and reducing health inequalities to ensure that people are supported to live longer healthier lives	Scottish Government
8	We must consider the changing nature of demand of an older population and adjust our healthcare provision accordingly	Scottish Government and Health Boards
9	We will consider innovation and technological tools to support our future ageing population	Scottish Government
10	We will explore opportunities to help people live longer and fuller working lives and remove barriers which force older people to leave the workforce before they wish to	Scottish Government with employers
11	We will ensure our housing options allow our population to live independently at home for longer	Scottish Government and Local Authorities
12	We will ensure the quality of life for our older people is enhanced to combat social isolation	Scottish Government, local government and partners



MIGRATION: ATTRACTING AND WELCOMING PEOPLE TO SCOTLAND



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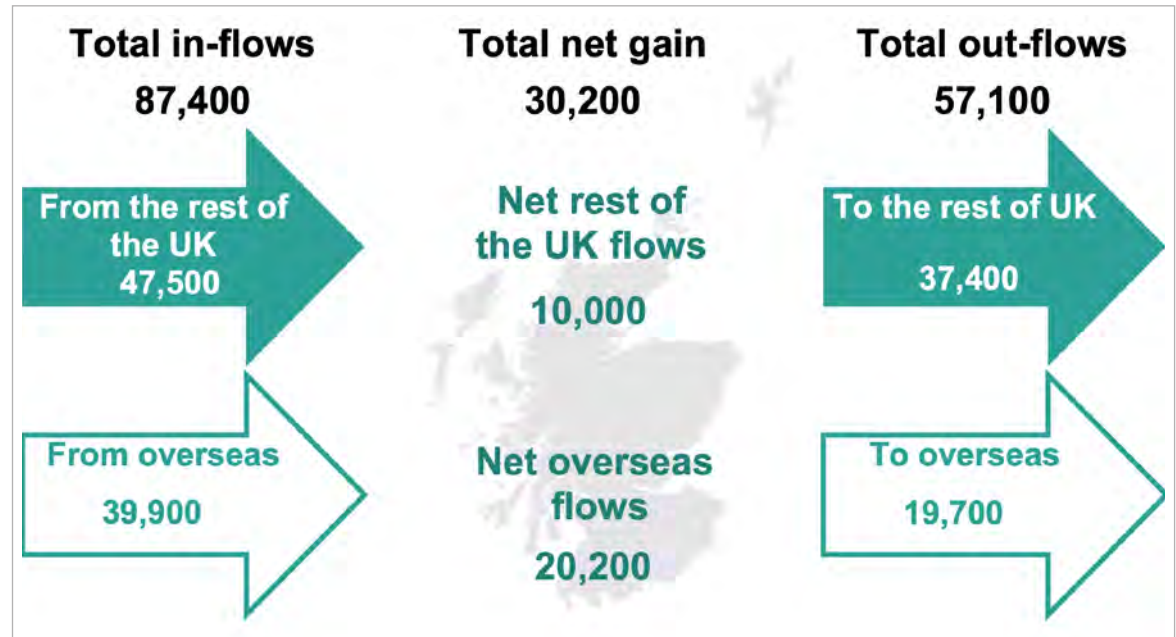
What does the evidence tell us?

Historically, Scotland experienced negative net migration for decades, with more people leaving Scotland than arriving. That legacy means that Scotland today is more reliant on migration than other parts of the UK.

Over the past twenty years, Scotland's migration flows have changed, with outward migration to the rest of the UK (rUK) declining, and inward migration from overseas rising significantly in the 2000s. Net migration from both rUK and overseas have now been consistently positive for over a decade.

In the year to mid-2019, net total migration to Scotland was +30,200. Net rUK migration was +10,000, with inward and outward flows of 47,500 and 37,400, respectively. Net overseas migration was +20,200, with inward and outward flows of 39,900 and 19,700.⁴⁹

Figure 14: Movements to/from the rest of the UK and overseas, mid-2018 to mid-2019.



49 NRS Mid-Year Population Estimates Scotland, Mid-2019 www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/population-estimates/mid-19/mid-year-pop-est-19-report.pdf

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Migration within the UK

Over the past two decades, around two-fifths of Scotland's total migration flows have consisted of migration between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Over time, patterns of internal migration within the UK have changed significantly. For much of the 20th century the flow was predominantly people leaving Scotland for the rest of the UK. Between 1951-52 and 2000-01, 399,000 more people left Scotland for elsewhere in the UK than vice versa. However, since mid-2001 that dynamic has reversed, and net positive flows from the rest of the UK have increased Scotland's population by 147,000.⁵⁰

People who move between Scotland and the rest of the UK tend to be relatively young, with relatively high education levels. Inward flows from elsewhere in the UK have two peaks: those aged 18-20, many of which are likely to be students, and those in their late 20s and early 30s. Outward flows follow a similar pattern – however, the peak at ages 18-20 is lower, reflecting that fewer young people in Scotland move to the rest of the UK to study.



Outward flows of those in their mid to late 20s have declined in recent decades, suggesting that more students are staying in Scotland after graduating.

Overseas migration

Overseas migration to Scotland rose markedly in the 2000s following EU enlargement, from +28,500 in 2003-04 to +47,400 in 2009-10. Since then the figure has fluctuated, but net overseas migration to Scotland has remained consistently positive in every year since 2003-04.⁵¹

The profile of overseas migration to Scotland is similar to that of migration within the UK. Most people who come to Scotland from abroad are working age – in the year to mid-2019, 80.2% (32,000) of overseas migrants to Scotland were under 35, compared to 41.1% of Scotland's general population.⁵² Around two thirds of overseas migrants to Scotland have a degree, compared to around one third of Scotland's general population.⁵³

Migration and the economy

Migration can help alleviate some of the challenges associated with Scotland's demographic change. Without migration Scotland's population would be in decline with deaths exceeding births.⁵⁴ Migrants who come to Scotland tend to be well educated and highly skilled, help raise productivity and contribute to government revenue.⁵⁵

There is also evidence to suggest that migration can specifically help alleviate issues related to skill shortages in the labour market. For example, a summary of the available evidence by the Bank of England suggests that EU workers

⁵⁰ EAG, Internal migration in Scotland and the UK: trends and policy lessons <https://www.gov.scot/publications/internal-migration-scotland-uk-trends-policy-lessons/>

⁵¹ NRS Migration to and from Scotland www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/migration-flows/total-migration-to-or-from-scotland

⁵² NRS Migration between Scotland and overseas by age www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/migration-flows/migration-between-scotland-and-overseas

⁵³ EAG, Internal migration in Scotland and the UK: trends and policy lessons <https://www.gov.scot/publications/internal-migration-scotland-uk-trends-policy-lessons/>

⁵⁴ [Mid-2019 Population Estimates Scotland | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)

⁵⁵ [Scotland's population needs and migration policy: discussion paper - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

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may have filled skill gaps or specialised in different tasks. Specifically at the firm level, the Bank points to research by Rolfe et al (2013)⁵⁶ that found that employers in the pharmaceuticals, IT, banking and universities sectors recruited from outside the UK in order to fill skills gaps that exist in the resident population and to complement the skills of non-migrants.

Scotland's seasonal industries are particularly reliant on migration. Those industries are particularly significant in rural and remote areas where populations tend to be older and population growth lower. While 8.3% of Scotland's overall employment was made up of non-UK workers in 2019, this rose to 16.0% in Food & Drink and 15.0% in Tourism.⁵⁷

Future migration to Scotland

Scotland's population is projected to grow by 2.5% between 2018 and 2043.⁵⁸ All of this growth is projected to come from migration, as there are projected to be more deaths than births in Scotland every year moving forward. However, this NRS projection is not a forecast, it assumes that migration flows will stay broadly consistent with average levels over recent decades.

Future migration flows are difficult to predict. Since 2010, migration to Scotland from overseas in particular has fluctuated significantly year-on-year. Moreover, looking ahead, EU exit and COVID-19 both represent significant sources of uncertainty about future overseas migration to Scotland.

EU exit

The UK's exit from the EU will have major implications for overseas migration. On 1 January 2021, the UK's participation in EU free movement ended, and a new UK immigration system came into effect.

In 2019, the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population was commissioned by the Scottish Government to consider the impact on Scotland's economy, communities and public services of the UK Government's proposals for the new immigration system.⁵⁹ The Group estimated the impact of the plans would be a 50-80% reduction in net EU migration to Scotland after 2020, and an overall reduction in overseas net migration to Scotland of 30-50%. These changes would disproportionately affect our rural areas which would be likely to see an even more significant reduction in migration. They

would also have a pronounced gender effect with proportionally fewer women able to meet the salary threshold.

Restricted routes for EU immigration would also be particularly disruptive for rural and remote areas of Scotland, where the old age structure means that in-migration is the only means of countering depopulation.

These proposals will significantly change the patterns of migration Scotland has seen over the last 10-15 years. A proliferation of smaller groups of migrants from a wider range of countries, a predominance of shorter stays, changes to gender, age and family profiles will require planning and investment for successful social integration.

An update to that analysis in July 2020, in light of revised Home Office proposals, retained the same projections.

⁵⁶ Migration and productivity: employers' practices, public attitudes and statistical evidence, Rolfe, Rienzo, Lalani, and Portes (2013).

⁵⁷ [Non-UK nationals in Scotland's workforce - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/non-uk-nationals-in-scotland-workforce-2019/pages/1-10.aspx)

⁵⁸ NRS Projected Population of Scotland <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/population-projections/2018-based/pop-proj-2018-scot-nat-pub.pdf>

⁵⁹ EAG, UK immigration policy after leaving the EU: impacts on Scotland's economy, population and society [www.gov.scot/publications/uk-immigration-policy-leaving-eu-impacts-scotlands-economy-population-society](https://www.gov.scot/publications/uk-immigration-policy-leaving-eu-impacts-scotlands-economy-population-society/pages/1-10.aspx)

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It has also been confirmed that free tuition for EU undergraduates will end for those starting studies at Scottish higher education institutions from 2021-22 onwards, as existing arrangements under EU law will no longer apply.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, this could lead to a significant decline in numbers of EU citizens coming to Scotland to study each year, as undergraduates will now need to pay international student fees, as well as meeting Home Office student visa criteria.



The wider economic implications of our exit from the EU, with our previous modelling suggesting that our GDP could be at least 4.5% lower in 2040 than if Scotland had remained part of the EU, may also have a knock-on impact on overseas migration, especially if EU exit contributes to an economic downturn as jobs and opportunities become less available.

COVID-19

Like EU exit, COVID-19 has direct impacts on opportunities for migration, as well as wider economic and demographic implications.

From the outset of the pandemic, there has been a significant impact on the movement of people across borders. A short-term global impact of COVID-19 has been a sharp fall in migration, with prospective migrants forced to delay plans, and flows of seasonal migrant workers, for example, dropping dramatically.⁶¹

As well as migration to work, migration to study has also been affected in the short-term. Universities Scotland has outlined a 50% drop in the Scottish sector's intake of international students in 2020-21 as a "mid-range" estimate.⁶² The full impact on the sector's significant levels of international staff is also not yet clear. However, there is a risk that the combined impact of COVID-19, EU exit and the new UK immigration system could create a perfect storm for our institutions in maintaining Scotland's position as a leader in international student and staff recruitment, with likely knock-on effects on the competitiveness and sustainability of the sector.



There is further evidence that COVID-19 has resulted in reductions in non-UK national employment in the UK, with the employment level of non-UK nationals falling by 12.0% in the year to Jul-Sep 2020 compared with 0.5% for UK nationals. Such a large fall in employment levels would normally be expected to result in a lower employment rate, however, at the same time, the employment rate of non-UK nationals fell only slightly (from 76.2% to 76.1%), suggesting a significant fall in non-UK national residency in the UK.⁶³

⁶⁰ Students with Pre-Settled and Settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme will however remain eligible for free tuition.

⁶¹ COVID-19: Policies and Impact on Seasonal Agricultural Workers, IOM https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/seasonal_agricultural_workers_27052020_0.pdf

⁶² An existential challenge: the financial threat facing Scotland's universities as a result of COVID-19

<https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-HE-finances-v1.0.pdf>

⁶³ EMP06: Employment by country of birth and nationality - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

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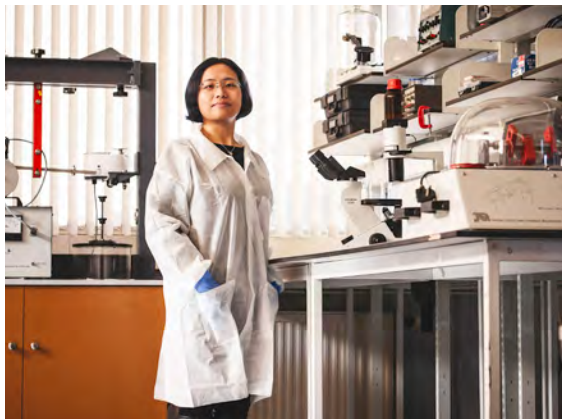
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It is still too early to predict precisely the long-term impact of the pandemic on overseas migration to Scotland, or broader global migration patterns. This is likely to depend on the relative economic impact of the pandemic in different places, and how this in turn affects differentials in wages and wider economic conditions.

Beyond economic effects, the long-term demographic impact of the crisis on mortality and fertility may only increase Scotland's need for overseas migration, in a global context where competition for migrants could be high. For example, early evidence from several European countries, including the UK, suggests that the pandemic has already had a significant impact on plans to have children.⁶⁴



Ambition

Scotland is a welcoming and open country, with a long history of welcoming people of all nationalities. We want people from across the UK, and across the world, to make Scotland their home. We are committed to upholding and promoting equality and human rights for all people.

Migration enriches our society and culture, and migrants make a net contribution to our economy, our public services and our public finances. Migration is also essential to addressing our demographic challenges – our declining birth rate, ageing population, and rural depopulation. It is vital that we grow our working age population to ensure that Scotland has sustainable, vibrant and resilient communities now and into the future.

Current UK Government policy

Immigration policy is reserved to the UK Government. This places major constraints around the Scottish Government's scope for action on migration. The Scottish Government, working with a broad range of partner organisations, including local government, employers and trade unions has argued for a tailored approach to migration which meets Scotland's needs. Unfortunately the UK Government has not so far engaged with the evidence on Scotland's needs.

In January 2021, the UK Government implemented a new immigration system, replacing the previous five-tier model.

EU citizens who were living in the UK by 31 December 2020 will need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021 if they wish to stay in the UK after this date. In the future, EU citizens who do not qualify under this scheme will need to apply and qualify for entry to the UK on the same basis as non-EU nationals.⁶⁵

An overview of changes under the new system is provided at **Annex A**.

⁶⁴ The impact of COVID-19 on fertility plans <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/wr9jlb/>

⁶⁵ With the exception of Irish citizens, and family members of those with status under the EUSS.

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Implications for Scotland

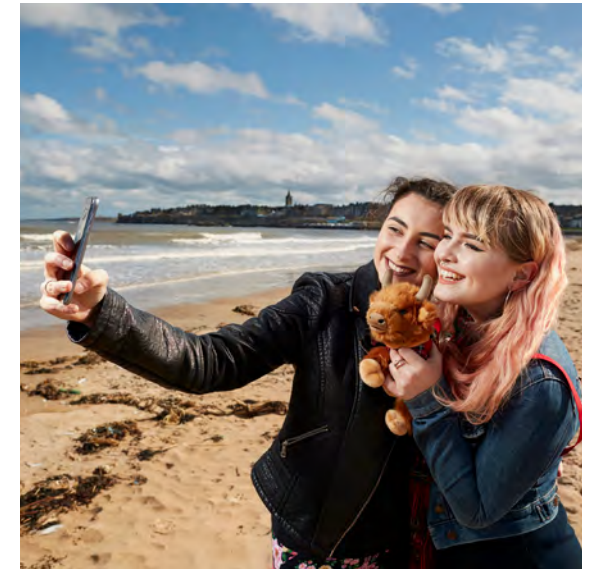
The Home Office has committed to ensuring that the new immigration system meets the needs of all parts of the UK. To date, however, the new system offers no recognition of Scotland's distinct demographic or economic needs and the UK Government has not sought to engage or adapt their approach.

The introduction of skills and salary thresholds and sponsorship requirements for EU workers will generate significant challenges for communities across Scotland. The Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population has estimated that the impact of the proposals on Scotland will be a 50 to 80% reduction in net migration from the EU, and an overall reduction in overseas net migration of 30 to 50%.



Further analysis by the Group has identified that very few jobs would meet the proposed salary threshold in several key sectors in Scotland, including agriculture and social care,⁶⁶ raising the prospect of significant labour shortages. The plans are likely to have a particularly severe impact on migration to rural areas of Scotland that already face significant demographic and economic challenges.

However, the Home Office currently has no plans to include a route for jobs below the skills threshold;⁶⁷ has rejected the possibility of any regional variation in the salary threshold; and has not clarified whether or how the Scottish shortage occupation list will continue to operate. In addition, while former Home Secretary Sajid Javid had accepted a previous UK Migration Advisory Committee recommendation to work with the devolved nations to pilot a visa scheme aimed at supporting overseas migration to rural areas of the UK, the Home Office has now reversed this decision.



Current actions and commitments

Without direct powers over immigration policy, the Scottish Government's current work in this area focuses on:

- welcoming and supporting those who choose to make Scotland their home
- supporting businesses to attract and retain international talent in Scotland
- supporting universities to attract international students and staff to Scotland

66 EAG, UK immigration policy after leaving the EU: impacts on Scotland's economy, population and society - July 2020 update <https://www.gov.scot/publications/uk-immigration-policy-leaving-eu-impacts-scotlands-economy-population-society-july-2020-update/>
 67 With the potential exception of a seasonal agricultural workers scheme.

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- The Scottish Government launched the **Moving to Scotland** resource at the end of January 2021, offering practical, easily accessible information online for people who have recently moved or plan to move to Scotland.
- The **Stay in Scotland** campaign, which covers a variety of practical resources for EU citizens, including toolkits, factsheets, and leaflets, providing information and signposting support.



- Citizens Advice Scotland delivers an **EU Citizens Support Service** which assists EU citizens to secure the right to stay in Scotland, with a particular focus on supporting those who are vulnerable or with more complex needs.
- In partnership with local authorities and the Scottish Refugee Council, we have led the **New Scots refugee integration strategy**, supporting all of our local authorities to support and integrate resettled refugees.



- We fund TalentScotland to deliver its **Immigration and Visa Support Service**, providing information and support to help Scottish businesses navigate the UK immigration system to attract and retain workers from overseas, and support inward investors considering Scotland as a location.
- We are developing a new **Talent Attraction and Retention Service** for Scotland, bringing together hubs across Scotland offering information and advice to support migrants before and after arriving in Scotland.
- We will support the delivery of **Skills Recognition Scotland**, an overseas skills recognition framework, to help employers recruit qualified migrant workers, including in priority sectors such as health and social care.



- We are working closely with universities and colleagues to ensure **our message that Scotland remains a safe, secure and welcoming destination** is reaching international audiences.
- We will continue to work with EU institutions to explore options for maintaining as close a relationship with **Erasmus Plus** as possible, and to lobby the UK Government on the importance of having a **post-study visa** option that is competitive with offers from other countries.

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What more needs to be done?

The development of a tailored approach to migration which meets Scotland's distinct needs.

The Scottish Government will continue to develop the evidence base and to work with partners to develop practical, deliverable, evidence-based proposals which meet Scotland's needs. We need the UK Government to engage in this discussion.

We will continue to develop policy proposals drawing on **international evidence** from Canada, Australia and elsewhere that differentiated migration policy can provide effective solutions to distinct demographic needs, as well as working with partners to present clear **evidence of the needs of Scottish employers, public services and communities** to the UK Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) and UK Government.

Learning From International Examples

The Expert Advisory Group has already looked at the experience of immigration policy and demographic change in Australia, Canada and continental Europe. They find that national and local governments have sought to address geographic shortages through encouraging population retention and increased migration. Immigration can provide an effective and efficient mitigation as part of a wider package of measures.

Canada and Australia both have regionally differentiated points-based systems. They have traditionally been human capital schemes, but also build in employer-based considerations. They offer extensive rights and pathways to settlement. As well as regionalised immigration programmes in each country, the Group also analysed Canada's recent Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program to promote retention in remote areas, which is of particular relevance to Scotland.

Most European countries have adopted employer-based programmes, and those most relevant to addressing shortages created by demographic change are programmes that encourage longer-term settlement, spanning a range of occupations and skills levels. The Spanish Catalogue of Hard-to-Fill Occupations, and the Swedish 2008 Immigration Law are examples the Group considered.

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In January 2020 we published *Migration: Helping Scotland Prosper*, setting out how a tailored approach to migration for Scotland could work in practice, including practical proposals for a **Scottish Visa** as an additional option within the UK immigration system. We will continue to build the case for a Scottish Visa which has is a practical evidence-based proposal to meet Scotland's distinct needs.

In May 2019, the UK Government's immigration advisors the Migration Advisory Committee, following evidence from the Scottish Government, recognised the distinct challenges facing rural communities and recommended the development of a pilot to facilitate migration to these areas:

This indicates that the current migration system is not very effective in dealing with the particular problems remote communities experience. Trying to address these problems through regional SOLs [Shortage Occupation Lists] is unlikely to be successful. If these problems are to be addressed something more bespoke for these areas is needed.

The international evidence suggests that such regional schemes can struggle to retain migrants in the areas they were recruited in once they have the freedom to move, so the key question is whether migrants into these remote areas settle there permanently or leave for other parts of the UK. The only way to address this question in the UK context would be to pilot a scheme that facilitated migration to these areas, then monitor what happens over several years and evaluate the outcomes. The MAC is willing to provide advice on the design of a pilot scheme for remote communities.⁶⁸



The then Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, made a Written Ministerial Statement on 23 July 2019 accepting the recommendation to develop a pilot scheme accepted this recommendation in July 2019. The Scottish Government has offered to work with the UK Government to design and develop solutions in the UK migration system, including rural pilots. On that basis the Scottish Government commissioned the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population to consider what a pilot approach to migration in rural areas would need to achieve in order to benefit Scotland's rural and island communities.

The Expert Advisory Group's report has now been published and it identified three possible models for a rural pilot:

- **Expanding Skilled Worker route.** This would involve relaxing conditions for the Skilled Worker route in the new UK immigration system, specifically for employers in designated areas, potentially through a bespoke Shortage Occupation List for remote and rural areas;

68 Full Review of the Shortage Occupation List, Migration Advisory Committee, May 2019

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- **Scottish Visa.** This would build on the Scottish Government's proposal for a Scottish Visa as set out in our [January 2020 migration paper](#), but aimed specifically at designated areas. Instead of entrants being identified by employers, it would involve a points-based system, which could prioritise targeted characteristics; and
- **Remote and rural partnership scheme.** Modelled on the Canadian Atlantic Pilot scheme, this would be an employment-based scheme, but as part of a wider partnership between local authorities, employers, public services and the voluntary sector, who would play a more active role in identifying which types of areas and employers would benefit most from the scheme, and would be engaged in delivering an 'integration plan'.⁶⁹

These proposals are evidence-based and reflect international models. The current UK Government has not progressed the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendation for rural pilots. The Scottish Government remains committed to developing solutions that benefit Scotland's rural and island communities and we will look to work with local authorities and the UK Government to develop a pilot proposal.



Our ask is that the UK Government delivers on the commitment made by the then Home Secretary in 2019, accepts the evidence of its own migration experts and works with the Scottish and local government to deliver rural migration pilots.

In February 2018, the Scottish Government set out five areas where the UK Government should revise their migration policy:

- Reintroduce the post-study work visa recommended by the Smith Commission;
- End the net migration target;
- End the immigration skills charge;
- Give the Scottish Government a greater say in the Scotland Shortage Occupation List; and
- Extend and protect rights in family migration.

The UK Government has subsequently made changes in two of these areas - ending the net migration target and reintroducing a post study work visa. We will continue to press for action on the other vital reforms to the UK immigration system as well as wider reviews of the salary thresholds for skilled workers and an expansion of youth mobility visas.

The Migration Advisory Committee in their 2020 Annual Report called on the UK Government to review the family migration route noting that '*previous analysis may have given too much weight to the fiscal contributions of such migrants and insufficient attend to the benefits that accrue, to both the family and society, from the route.*' The Scottish Government has commissioned the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population review the family migration route. There is evidence that the ability to bring family members to Scotland is an important factor which encourages migrants to stay long-term. The policy approach to family migration needs to support our shared population ambitions.

⁶⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/designing-pilot-remote-rural-migration-scheme-scotland-analysis-policy-options/>

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Building on Scotland's capacity to attract and retain people from rUK and overseas

Since 2009, over 1,400 students from Scotland's priority countries have benefited from the Scottish Government's Saltire Scholarships. We will continue to consider options to attract international students to Scotland, **exploring the expansion of the Saltire Scholarships programme and the development of an international student retention programme.**

We recognise the importance of global alumni in helping to attract and retain talent and **will consider initiatives to mobilise these networks to promote Scotland as a place to live, work and study.**

The issue of attracting people from overseas remains difficult due to immigration powers being reserved.

However, we do not need more powers to attract people from elsewhere in the UK or indeed from across the Common Travel Area and we will explore further interventions.

Our **Inward Investment Plan** which demonstrates nine opportunity areas under three overarching themes of Net Zero, Digital and High Value Manufacturing has identified a number of priorities. We must better use our communications methods to sell the benefits of Scotland to people living in the UK and across the Common Travel Area.

Communication to International Audiences – 'Scotland Is Now'

The Brand Scotland Strategic Partnership is a collaborative initiative that promotes Scotland's reputation to international audiences. The aim of the partnership is to collectively increase the impact of marketing communications activity to present Scotland as the best place to live/work, study, visit and do business via the joined-up narrative strategy #ScotlandIsNow. The approach highlights Scotland's strengths in the context of current performance and, in addition to campaigns, supporting collateral is produced for use internationally by partners and wider stakeholders. Therefore, where communication can support the delivery of the population aims and objectives, this established function and approach can be leveraged. Where relevant the population programme will draw on Brand Scotland for support to ensure a consistent approach to international messaging and campaigns. Further investment in activity is required to support our broad aims to have enough people of the right ages in the right places in Scotland.

Communication to Domestic Audiences – 'We Are Scotland'

This established domestic communications strategy can be drawn upon for supporting communication in Scotland to highlight the 'welcome' message. 'We Are Scotland' was originally conceived to promote inclusivity and improve attitudes towards in-ward migration in Scotland. Since its launch it has been extended further to promote positive behaviours such as kindness and volunteering and has now become the overarching COVID-19 communications narrative strategy. The primary aim of this values-based approach, in relation to the pandemic, is to motivate collective action around adherence to restrictions and hygiene behaviours through the recovery phase and beyond.

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In attracting people to live in Scotland, and particularly in our more rural areas, we must ensure we have jobs for both partners, otherwise while we may successfully attract valued workers, they may not remain if there are not opportunities for families and partners. We commit **to undertake work to explore how we and partners can offer a support package to those who wish to move and work in Scotland, including support around housing, spousal recruitment and family support where needed as part of our talent attraction and retention work** as well as explore the potential **to extend these options to overseas in the future.**

We must not forget that it is not only about attracting people here. We must look to retain our own population as well. The Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population undertook an analysis of internal migration between Scotland and the rest of the UK their analysis of trend in net migration concludes that:

Scotland is losing people in ages 22 to 26 to rUK, but in lower numbers than was the case at the beginning of this century.

Some young people leave Scotland to study elsewhere while some students leave Scotland after their studies have been completed. While it is important that people have opportunities to work, travel and study elsewhere it is also important that we seek to ensure that we increase the numbers of people who want to stay in Scotland and to make it easier for those who do leave to return.

While we do not want to stand in the way of individual's choices, we must do work to understand why our students leave and, where possible, what more we can do to get them to stay. **We will work with Universities to consider the issues behind student retention in Scotland. We will consider how best to target those people who have chosen to leave Scotland and encourage them to consider returning.** We have commissioned advice from the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population on the family migration rules which too often limit the ability of people from Scotland who moved overseas and now want to return to the UK.

People across the world, from Australia and New Zealand, through Europe to the USA and Canada, have ancestral roots, affinity or connections to Scotland. An estimated 50 million people world-wide claim Scottish ancestry. The Scottish Government values those long-term and growing links and networks and sees them as welcome advocates for Scotland and its values.

We will continue to engage with those networks, encompassing, but not limited to, those groups with a historic or familial identity, alumni, business and cultural networks, incorporating Scotland Is Now messaging into our activity and communications. Scotland's overseas presence with its network of international offices is key in engaging with the traditional and widened diaspora and a wide range of stakeholders in order to promote Scotland as an attractive, modern and welcoming place to live and work, do business and study.

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Migration: summary of actions

#	Action	Action for
13	We will continue to develop an evidence-based case for a tailored Scottish approach to migration	Scottish Government
14	We will work with local government partners to develop proposals for a remote and rural migration service pilot to present to the UK Government	Scottish Government, Local Authorities and UK Government
15	We commit to publishing a report from our Expert Advisory Group on a different approach to family migration	Scottish Government
16	We will continue to press for vital reforms to the UK immigration system	Scottish Government and UK Government
17	We will continue to consider options to attract international students to Scotland, such as exploring a new scholarship offering and develop an international student retention programme.	Scottish Government with university sector
18	We will explore, through our talent attraction and retention service, how we can attract talent from across the rest of the UK, particularly in key sectors identified in our Inward Investment Plan	Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland
19	We commit to undertake work to explore how we and partners can offer a support package to those who wish to move and work in Scotland, including support around housing, spousal recruitment and family support where needed as part of our talent attraction and retention work	Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland
20	We will undertake work to look at students who go on to leave Scotland for work and other reasons and explore opportunities to encourage them to stay or return	Scottish Government with university sector



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What does the evidence tell us?

Population change is important at a local as well as a national level and our national position masks significant local divergence. Some of our communities are facing significant population growth while many others, notably the west coast authorities and those in rural areas are facing depopulation as people move to larger towns and cities for employment and education opportunities. Migration is heavily concentrated amongst younger people leading to increasingly ageing population in some communities.

Our focus in this programme is on population balance and the sustainable distribution of our population in a way that works with the characteristics of our places and local ambitions for change. We recognise that both rapid population growth and depopulation can bring challenges. Much of the population growth in certain parts of Scotland is driven by people moving within Scotland. Focusing on retaining and attracting people to some of the areas of our country most at risk of depopulation can therefore also help to reduce some of the pressure on those communities facing population growth.

Without intervention, fourteen of our local authorities are expected to experience a decrease in population over the next 10 years with most of those being located in the west and south-west of the country. This creates skill shortages, threatens community sustainability and puts pressure on public services. The pace and scale of population change differs across communities and similarly there is no single solution that will apply for all communities.

While rural depopulation is an important issue this issue cannot be seen solely through a rural/urban prism as a number of local authorities in west, such as Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire are experiencing population decline. As with rural areas decline is the result of both negative natural change and negative net migration with relatively low levels of international migration and higher levels of out-migration. Some of our rural areas, including islands and the coasts, may experience further challenges arising from climate change and longer-term projections of coastal flooding require a planned, risk-based approach.



For those areas that are dealing with an increase in the population this brings its own significant challenges in providing the infrastructure and services – housing, education, transport and health – to support this increased population. A lot of this increase is concentrated in those authorities within commuting distance of Edinburgh. This highlights the important economic drivers of population change and also the potential of changing working patterns with an increase in home working breaking that commuting distance link and challenging the assumption that past patterns and demand will continue.

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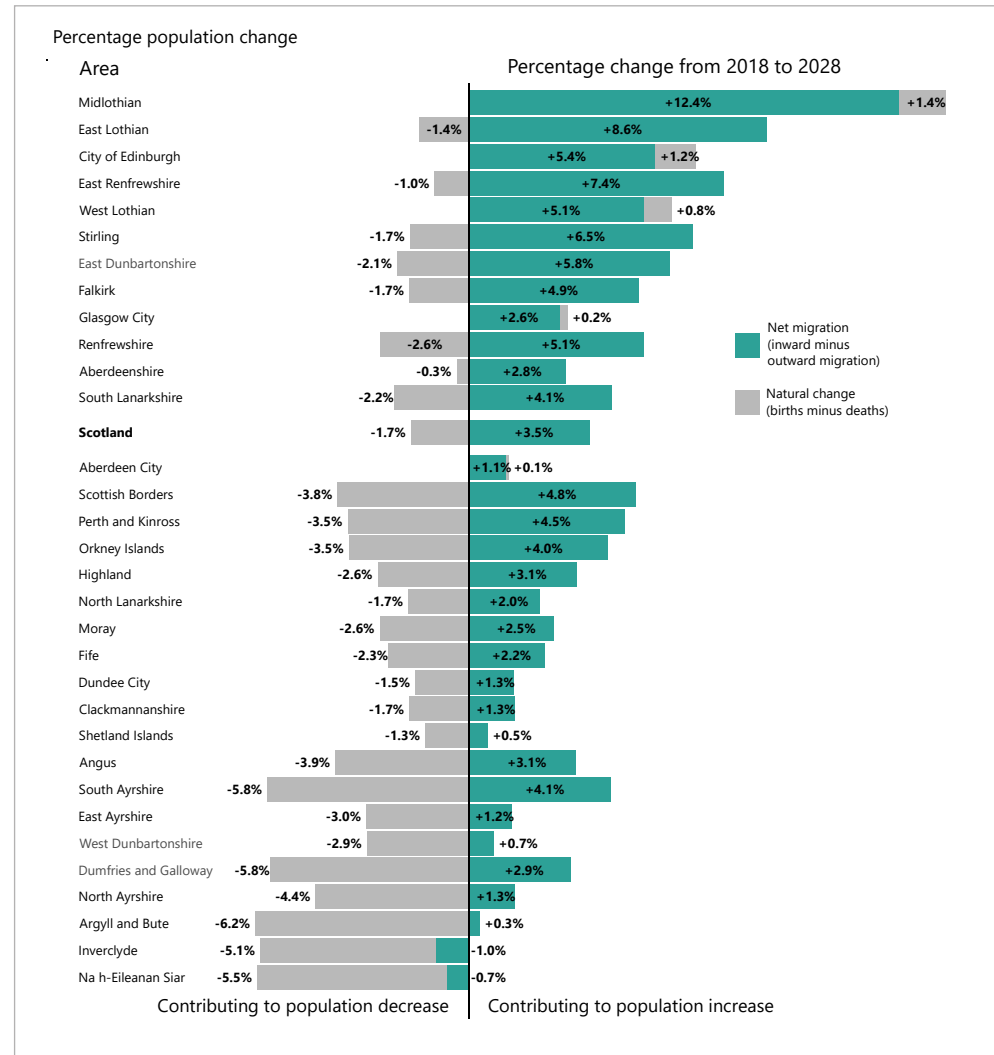
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Addressing our population and demographic concerns is a National Challenge which is shared by national and local government and partner organisations. If we are to address that challenge and achieve our vision of ensuring that Scotland's population is more balanced and distributed across the country then we need to address the issues which drive migration: access to jobs and economic opportunities; access to education and infrastructure including housing, digital and transport as well as access to services and open spaces. We also need to plan the location of our future homes and consider the extent to which we can intervene more proactively through the planning system to achieve better outcomes for communities and places both locally and nationally.



Figure 15: Projected change in population due to natural change and net migration, mid-2018 to mid-2028



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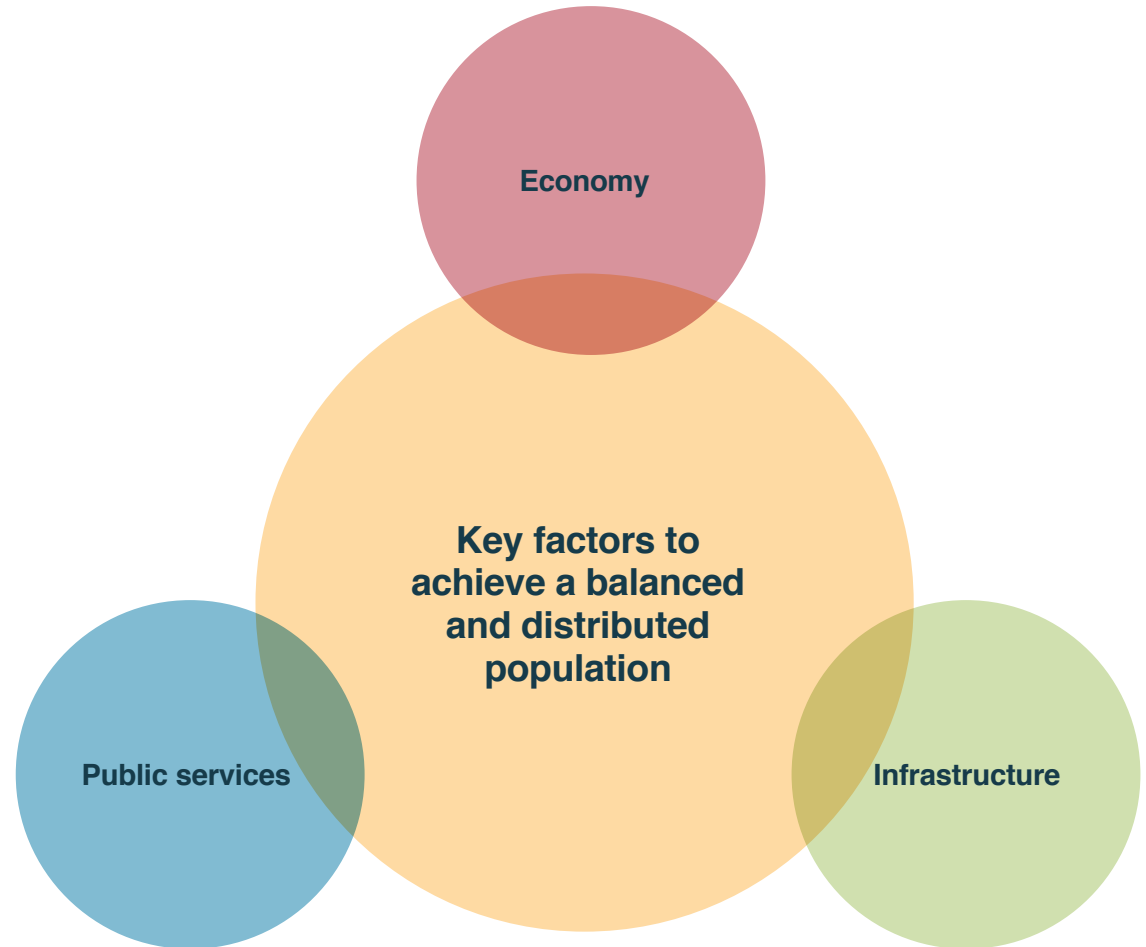
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These issues are interconnected and there is no single solution which will work for all areas. In shaping national responses we also need to recognise the critical importance of the influence of folks' local surroundings. Creating and celebrating great places for all generations and all families to live well and flourish locally would seem to lie at the heart of retaining and attracting people. A sense of place arises from living in an environment which is relevant to individual circumstances and easy to navigate and identify with. Demonstrating on a daily basis what it means to live in a welcoming Scotland.

COVID-19 impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health crisis first and foremost, but it has created an economic crisis, reshaping our economy, the way we work and the structure our lives. The Scottish Government has published an Economic Recovery Implementation Plan to support a jobs focused recovery. Our GDP fell significantly during the first lockdown, and we recognise many of our businesses have struggled to recover due to the introduction of COVID restriction levels. There is a real risk that without intervention COVID-19 could increase inequality with key sectors and areas being particularly exposed.



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The economic impacts of COVID-19 have been felt more starkly in some sectors than in others. These include tourism, hospitality and agriculture which are key economies, particularly in rural areas.

The impact of COVID-19 is not limited to our rural areas. As home working remains the norm for the coming months, footfall on our high streets has fallen, impacting our retail and hospitality sectors. It is important to consider our town centre regeneration and how we use our high streets more intuitively so we avoid the disappearance of our town centres.

The economic crisis does though provide an opportunity to reimagine Scotland. Through our recovery plan there is a clear focus on supporting economic recovery but also how we begin building a greener, fairer and more equal society.

The shift in working patterns with a significant increase in home working has for many changed the way in which they think about travelling to work. This provides opportunities to attract and retain people in areas that were facing depopulation. However, this is dependent on the necessary infrastructure being in place to support remote working. It allows an opportunity to consider issues around access to housing and ensuring we have the infrastructure in place to both attract and retain people in some of our more rural communities.

Economy and jobs

Access to high quality economic opportunities and jobs is a key driving factor in sustaining and driving population change. If we are to deliver our aspiration to support communities that means an inclusive and sustainable economy across our communities with training and skills to support people in accessing opportunities.

This means we must see economic investment in all parts of Scotland. We need each of our local authorities to be fully functioning economic units with a wide range of both highly skilled and specific sector jobs, support for business creation and growth, as well as opportunities within the public sector and other industries.

The change in work patterns with increasing levels of home working as a result of COVID-19 and increased use of digital opportunities does present increased opportunities but only if the necessary infrastructure is in place.

Mobilising private investment alongside public investment is a critical part in focusing our economic recovery on building a better, greener and more resilient future. Our economy must transition to address the complex challenges of the 21st Century: transitioning to Net Zero, achieving a Just Transition, generating productivity growth; and responding to both technological and demographic change.



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Current Scottish Government Policies and Programmes which focus on ensuring that all parts of Scotland are able to share in Scotland's economic success.

- We have launched the **Scottish National Investment Bank**, which opened for business in November 2020 – the single biggest economic development in the history of the Scottish Parliament. The Bank's mission-oriented approach directs its investment towards addressing the major challenges that Scotland faces. The three proposed 'missions' that we set to the Bank focus on tackling the climate emergency, investing in place-based opportunities, and harnessing demographic change.
- Our **Inward Investment Plan** focusing on nine opportunity areas where specific regions of Scotland can demonstrate an international comparative advantage mapped to strong global demand.
- Continuing to strive to be a **wellbeing economy** delivering good quality jobs in a way that enhances the quality of life for all and delivering a net zero economy. A key principle to this commitment is ensuring all people feel the benefits of our economy and taking a **Community Wealth Building** approach will help deliver bespoke solutions that support local people and economies across Scotland to thrive.
- **National Planning Framework 4** will provide a long-term spatial plan to guide our future development. Planning at all scales is based on an understanding of future population change, and local development plans will continue to play a key role in responding to challenges and opportunities for growing our communities.
- Our forthcoming **Capital Investment Plan** seeks to consider the impact of Capital Investment, not just on traditional economic measures such as GDP and productivity indicators, but also on Wellbeing and against our net zero targets.
- The **National Islands Plan** has a clear focus on addressing population decline and ensuring a healthy, balanced population profile.
- We are investing £1.9 billion in **city region and regional growth** deals to spread the benefits of economic growth across the country.
- Our **Future Skills Action Plan** is focused on improving the provision of lifelong learning and enabling people to reskill either later in life or within emerging sectors, such as the green economy.
- The **Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland 2019-21** sets out the key issues and priority actions to ensure that employers have access to the skilled workforce that they need and that individuals can maximise the opportunities in their locality.

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Infrastructure

Infrastructure touches the lives of every person in Scotland – from the homes we live in, to the water and energy we consume to how we travel to the places we shop, work and learn. If we are to meet our ambitions to support communities across Scotland then we need to consider issues around access to suitable and affordable housing; planning; transport access and infrastructure and digital connectivity.



Digital connectivity is crucial for employers, for businesses and for individuals. The shift to remote working for many as a result of COVID-19 presents opportunities for those currently living in areas at risk of depopulation to attract new people to those communities. However, such a shift can only be sustained if the necessary digital infrastructure is in place.

As well as digital connectivity, physical mobility and spatial proximity are also important. In our cities and towns, good public transport links are crucial, not only to enable people to go to work but also to access services and education, while in rural communities, good connectivity not only provides those same links, but can also help address social isolation, particularly for those in our older population. COVID-19 has impacted our transport sector creating greater uncertainty on the future demand for transport and uncertainty on travel behaviour, and we are currently considering what changes this may have for our public transport in the future.

Access to jobs is clearly an important factor but that needs to be supported by access to housing. In our areas experiencing population growth, we continue to build more homes, but the housing market can make it difficult for young people or those with fewer resources to be able to purchase homes in these areas, increasing reliance on the private rented sector. Competition and strong demand for land for housing tends to focus on a small number of areas, whilst other areas find it difficult to draw in investment in new homes as a result of lack of established market demand.

Areas of population decline experience problems as housing developments are less likely in these areas without the economic investment alongside. In addition, certain areas, particularly tourist hotspots, can see high numbers of short-term lets that can cause problems for neighbours and make it harder for local people to find homes to live in. This is a key area for future policy thinking. We need to ensure we are continuing to make best use of existing housing stock and improving the quality where necessary while meeting housing need and demand as well as supporting regeneration and finding ways to encourage private sector housing in all areas – not just in high demand areas.

COVID-19 has exacerbated existing tensions between short-term lets and local residents in some areas and highlighted the need for regulation. We are introducing a licensing scheme and control area regulations which will come into force on 1 April 2021, giving local authorities the powers they need to strike the right balance between the economic and tourism benefits of short-term lets and the needs and concerns of their local communities.

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Current Scottish Government Policies and Programmes which focus on infrastructure

- The **Infrastructure Investment Plan** sets out a clear vision for our future infrastructure – to support and enable an inclusive net zero emissions economy.
- A new approach to national planning policies in **National Planning Framework 4**, together with a long-term spatial strategy that aims to bring together our future housing developments with the services and facilities that communities need The **Place Principle** was adopted by Scottish Government and COSLA as a basis for collaborative working to ensure that future local investment is relevant to local communities for the benefit of local people.
- **Community Wealth Building (CWB)** builds on the place principle, and looks to reorganise our local economies in a way that maximises opportunities for local people and businesses.
- We are introducing a licensing scheme and control area regulations on **short-term property lets**.
- Our **Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP)** is supporting the delivery of affordable housing across urban and rural areas of Scotland.
- We are continuing to implement the measures in **the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016**.
- Applying the concept of **20 minute neighbourhoods** to strengthen the functionality of town and city centres for now and the future.
- The **CAN DO Places programme** supports community groups in identifying and establishing local enterprise hubs, regenerating local spaces as community assets and bases for business start-up.
- Building on the success of the **Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB)** programme we will ensure that everyone in Scotland will have access to superfast broadband by the end of 2021.
- The **Connection Scotland Initiative** aims to get 50,000 digitally excluded households online by the end of 2021.
- Investment to **improve rural 4G mobile** coverage through the Scottish 4G Infill (S4GI) programme.
- **The National Transport Strategy** sets the strategic framework within which investment decisions will be made with the on-going second **Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)** considering the strategic transport interventions needed – to support delivery of the strategy. The strategy highlights the need for the those living in rural, remote or island communities to be well connected including to making a positive contribution to maintaining and growing the populations in these areas.
- **Review of Town Centre Action Plan** which is developing a new vision for the future of our towns. The review, to be published in January 2021, provides an opportunity to rethink and re-energise our efforts to develop healthier, greener and inclusive towns that support communities to thrive.

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Declining population levels can impact on the sustainability of public services. A more dispersed population impacts on the costs of delivering certain services while reductions in the working age population can make it more difficult to recruit and retain people to deliver public services. Yet the risk is that if public services are reduced in the face of cost and staffing pressures that can make it more difficult to maintain population. For families access to childcare and education can be key factors in determining whether to locate to a specific community.

This means we must think about how we deliver our public services going forward. Digital technologies and transformation can support the delivery of public services remotely, for example NHS Near Me video consultations within the health service, so we must consider future technologies now to make our communities of the future sustainable.



Current Scottish Government Policies and Programmes which focus on ensuring that our public services meet the needs of all our population

- As set out in the Christie Commission services need to be driven by local need. We are committed to **public sector reform** occurring at a local level through community empowerment as set out in our Local Governance Review which we launched jointly with COSLA in 2019.
- We are committed to continuing our **Democracy Matters** conversations in 2021 with communities on the future of local decision-making and we will ensure the aims of the population programme are weaved through this work.
- We offer incentives for people to work in public sector jobs in areas that have recruitment issues. For example, the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SCNT) allows local authorities to increase the salary for teachers working in rural areas if necessary. GPs can receive a one-off lump sum payment if they take up a post in a rural or deprived area. This incentives help to drive recruitment in these sometimes difficult to recruit to areas.

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What more needs to be done?

While significant action is being taken across Scottish Government and partner organisations to address the population and demographic challenge at a local level, this is a long-term challenge.

All of the different interventions and policies need to work together to ensure that all of our communities in Scotland are able to attract and retain people. On [page 6](#) we set out our shared vision for change and the principles that will need to guide us to secure that change.

Our focus in this programme is less on dealing with the impact of population change but rather focusing on the actions that need to be put in place to shift that change. Ensuring that Scotland's population is more balanced across the country means exploring the significant structural changes that are needed to support attraction and retention in those areas that are losing people and thereby reduce the pressure on areas dealing with a significant growth in population.

Economy

Our Economic Recovery Implementation Plan includes actions for Scottish Government to pivot to a more distributed regional model to address economic recovery, deploy tax powers to drive recovery and support a renewed focus on place-based initiatives. These actions will be key in supporting our economy as it deals with the impact of COVID and Brexit. Through the work of the population programme, we will champion the call for regional models for economic development with wellbeing, sustainability, and fair work at its heart and ensure place is at the forefront of all government developments.

Place must be at the centre of how we address our demographic challenges but also how, in the post-pandemic recovery, we enable our communities to continue to become stronger and more resilient. Through our Place Based Investment Programme, we have committed from 2021 to investing £275 million to support community-led regeneration and town centre revitalisation, including the repurposing of buildings, maintenance and repairs, reallocating external space and community-led land and asset acquisition. The programme will prioritise investment in disadvantaged areas and reduce inequalities, supporting our aim is to make communities across Scotland

attractive places to live, work, bring up families and to move to; so that Scotland's population profile improves sustainable and inclusive economic growth and wellbeing.

The Clyde Mission initiative is an example as it seeks, through deep collaboration with local, regional and national partners, to make the Clyde an engine of sustainable and inclusive growth for the region and the country. The Scottish Government has committed over £11 million of capital funding to support projects which can drive economic recovery within the Mission footprint in 2020-21, and a further £25 million over the coming parliament for zero carbon energy infrastructure and heat networks for residential and commercial premises along the river's path.

The Clyde Mission footprint includes sections of some of the local authorities most severely impacted by depopulation. The revitalisation of the economy on and around the river Clyde, which is a critical employment base in those areas, can support job opportunities which can provide an anchor for the younger population.

We recognise COVID-19 will have a lasting effect on our economy. We need to minimise the risk that these economic changes will entrench and deepen the population disparity between our communities.

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Infrastructure

We will ensure that our housing strategy supports our population ambitions. In March 2021 we will publish our Housing to 2040 vision and route map to set out our long-term objectives for the housing sector for the next Parliament and beyond. This will adopt a whole-systems approach to housing that takes into account the people, place, environment and communities in which our homes, both new and old, rural, urban and island, are located.



We recognise self-build is an important element of future housing supply even more so in rural Scotland and the Islands where it can often be the only form of new housing. It can give people greater choice and flexibility about where and how they live, helping to create and sustain thriving communities, support home-working and creating homes that are high-quality, energy efficient and affordable.

We will therefore work with the sector to make self-build a mainstream delivery option for homes building through the work of the Self and Custom Build Challenge Fund pilots. We plan to evaluate current mechanisms we have in place to assist self-build, such as the national Self-Build Loan Fund, to ensure that government intervention is targeted to be as effective as possible.

Depopulation is not solely a rural issue but many of our rural and island communities are facing the pressures of a declining and ageing population. We are committed to developing an action plan specifically to support repopulation of these communities and will work with partners to identify barriers and test approaches using small scale pilots.

Planning and housing

Planning, at national, regional and local levels, plays a key role in considering the spatial implications of population change, proactively shaping future land use. Planning is about much more than regulating development proposals – it can set out a clear long-term vision for a place and co-ordinate action in a way that directly tackles geographic advantages and disadvantages.

Development planning in Scotland has a long history, and we can build on the system's considerable experience of understanding and responding to population and household change to realise the aims of this strategy. Planning can co-ordinate future development that will shape, improve and protect existing places and determine where people will choose to live their lives. In the coming years, firstly the new National Planning Framework 4 and subsequent local development plans will support collective action by taking a strategic approach across the wide range of issues, including but not limited to housing, climate change, health, education, and transport. By guiding development to the right locations, the planning system can actively encourage people to live in areas where change is needed to help maintain the viability of local infrastructure. Planning can also manage pressures on infrastructure arising from high demand for new homes, enabling good quality development in a way that is sustainable and reflects the needs of existing communities alongside new residents.

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We are continuing to drive forward planning reform that will improve the way we plan our future places and help to deliver on the aims of this strategy. As a result of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the National Planning Framework is now required to support rural repopulation and to give a clearer steer on the homes that will be required in the future to meet the long-term needs of our changing population. The new legislation introduces similar requirements for local development plans. We expect to lay a draft National Planning Framework in the Parliament this autumn for scrutiny and public consultation. We are developing regulations and guidance on local development plans, with a view to the new system being in place, together with the finalised National Planning Framework 4, by summer 2022. We are also working with planning authorities to explore the new duty to prepare regional spatial strategies that address strategic planning issues and will issue draft statutory guidance later this year.

This ambitious programme of planning reform, supported by our investment in the digital transformation of the system, will help us to focus on improving the quality of our places, as well as involving more people in shaping their future places. We expect that development plans at all scales will reflect the views of local people to define

how areas should change in the future. It is important that our local government partners consider planning as a key strategic tool to understand, and respond, to population change in collaboration with local communities to reflect local need and ambition. The introduction of regulations and guidance on local place plans this year, as well as guidance on mediation in the planning system and statutory guidance on effective community engagement, will also help to achieve this.

In addition, Housing to 2040 will deliver more homes at the heart of great places including through the continued delivery of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme in the next Parliamentary term. We will continue to work closely with local authorities and others in ensuring a robust approach to the planning and delivery of homes to ensure that it is informed by demographic trends and housing needs and is planned alongside the infrastructure and services that communities need.

As set out in the 2020-21 Programme for Government, we will take action to improve the quality of the homes delivered through the affordable housing supply programme. We will introduce guidance to ensure homes provide access to outdoor space and space for home working and learning and



require these improved standards be met in exchange for government funding. These changes will help to support improved health and wellbeing and support children's learning.

In addition to the delivery of more affordable homes over the lifetime of the next Parliament, we will recognise the importance of putting homes at the heart of places, recognise the vital links between housing and planning, set out ambitions to support independent living and supporting local authorities to respond to housing need and demand priorities in their area.

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Through our Economic Recovery Implementation Plan, Scottish Enterprise are shifting to a more regionally focused place-based model for economic development by the end of 2022. Initially working with three regional economies (Glasgow and Clyde, Ayrshire and the North East) to demonstrate the value of more regionally focussed collaboration. This is in addition to the excellent regional work already carried out by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of South Enterprise who also have a role to play going forward.

At the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (COHI) in October 2019, the Scottish Government committed to undertake a strategic consideration of its workforce footprint and consider the opportunities of a more location neutral workforce. While this work commenced before COVID-19, the increased prevalence of remote working offers opportunities for us to consider this in greater detail and we commit to do so.

It is now a decade since the publication of the Christie Commission and while we have achieved much in the reform of public services, we must do more. As already mentioned, we are intending to continue our Democracy Matters consultation in 2021 and we will consider what learning we must still do a decade on from the Christie report.

Remote Working

While not a new concept, remote working has become a way of life for many of us in the post-COVID world, and as restrictions continue, the prospect of a future where things go back to the office-based format of the past is looking increasingly unlikely. COVID-19 has undoubtedly changed the landscape of working forever.

The transition to remote working is prompting many to think about their relationship to work and specifically how that impacts on decisions about where they live. This brings opportunities and challenges. There is already emerging evidence that the shift to remote working is prompting some people to look to move.

This represents an opportunity to support a broader rebalancing of the population. However, there are certain requirements that need to be in place to support such a shift and also some risks that we need to consider. This shift is very dependent on access to digital infrastructure and to services – many of the issues that we have already identified as key to attracting and retaining people. There is also a risk that an increase in people moving to some communities can increase pressure on access to affordable housing. It is important therefore that there is a continuing focus on the infrastructure that is needed to both attract and retain people within communities.

Through our Inward Investment Plan, we are already committed to focus our efforts on promoting Scotland as a global leader in the creation of a supportive environment for remote working, but we must tackle this challenge with both hands.

We will consider the opportunities for community work hubs which could allow for a number of employers, both public and private sector, to co-locate in disused building in our town centres. This would not only provide workspaces for those people who are struggling with remote working in small properties but also still provide the social aspect of office working. This can also help our town and city centres improve economically with increased footfall once again.

Through our Work Local Challenge Programme, we will be carrying out socio-economic analysis to explore the opportunities available for future home-working, including the possible creation of co-located local work hubs situated in our disused buildings in our town centres. However, we recognise that not all workers can work remotely, and so, whatever options we pursue must take into account all sectors.

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Anchor Institutions

Local anchor institutions, whether public, private or third sector are very important to the areas they are located in. Given the large amount of investment they oversee, how and from where they purchase goods and services, who they employ, and how they invest in their local communities can have a very significant impact on how wealth is created and shared across the country.

Anchor institutions are defined as large, typically non-profit organisations whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the populations they serve. Hospitals, schools and universities are typical examples of these institutions as they can be large employers, particularly in our smaller towns, and we must consider how we use these organisations to better balance our population. We have already seen positives with the establishment of the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency which has recruited a number of local people, but we have the opportunity to do more. The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) is the only academic institution that is not based in one of our cities and that then drives our younger populations to them. That is not a bad thing as it is important for our young people to experience life away from home, but we must consider how we offer more opportunities to people who return home once they have completed their studies? and think how those opportunities can be more evenly spread.

All of our public sector partners, including local authorities, must consider their role as anchor institutions locally, but also how to work together collaboratively, sharing services when necessary. This can reap a number of benefits from finding efficiencies through the use of shared services to better use of land and estate to better the local community and shortening supply chains which helps in reaching our climate change targets. There is also the opportunity to consider attracting staff to work in our communities through collaborative recruitment, something we already do within our NHS.

We have to ensure we use all levers at our disposal to maximise the role of public investment in creating new opportunities for businesses to establish and grow, and for job opportunities accessed by local people and the benefits of the growth to be shared. To do this it will be important to support more local and socially orientated suppliers to bid for public sector contracts and ensure more tailored community benefits deliver more for our local communities. We should also explore how employability and business start-up support can encourage the development of SMEs, cooperatives and other inclusive business models as a means of pre-distributing wealth and delivering wellbeing.

Tied to this, the private sector also has a role to play in ensuring investment is spread across our country. Our inward investment plan hopes to achieve this but we hope this paper allows both public sector and private companies to better consider the impact of their economic investment on local demographics before investing in particular areas.

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Balance: summary of actions

#	Action	Action for
21	We will champion the call for regional models of economic development and recovery and ensure place is at the forefront of all Government developments	Scottish Government and Enterprise Agencies
22	We will work with the housing sector to make self-build homes a mainstream delivery option	Scottish Government with housing sector
23	We will continue to drive forward planning reform to improve how we plan our future places and support local government in considering planning as a strategic tool to respond to population change	Scottish Government and Local Authorities
24	We will actively consider the Scottish Government's workplace footprint and explore opportunities to distribute our workforce across the country	Scottish Government
25	We commit to considering the Christie Commission a decade on and ensuring our public services are fit to serve our population for now and in the future	Scottish Government
26	We will consider community work hubs for people to work in who may no longer need to work in offices every day, but to reduce the impact of home working	Scottish Government and Local Authorities
27	We will consider the role of our anchor institutions and national partners and ensure their work is aligned to the population programme	Scottish Government and Local Authorities with anchor institutions
28	We will explore opportunities to support Local Authorities in the short-term deal with the demographic pressures of the present	Scottish Government and Local Authorities



BUILDING ENGAGEMENT AND EVIDENCE: THE NEXT CHAPTER OF OUR POPULATION STORY



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This paper represents the beginning of a conversation. Scotland's demographic landscape is changing and the next chapter of our population story is waiting to be written.

The four building blocks identified in the paper help to frame the challenge before us. Together, they provide a valuable contextual picture of significant challenges and opportunities alike that exist in our horizon. They show that from family friendly policymaking to championing health ageing, to migration, to addressing the spatial balance of people across our country - few aspects of Scotland's demographic challenge can be addressed by a quick fix. Instead, these building blocks reinforce the need for an integrated, horizon-scanning, and solutions-focused approach to demographic issues.

In places, the paper reminds us of the wide portfolio of actions which are already being undertaken across the Scottish Government to ensure the sustainability of our population. In others, the paper throws into sharp focus the necessity for new, longer-term thinking also needed to address the changes ahead.

But, as a first step, this paper does not hold all of the answers or solutions. Now that the first foundation has been set, our next steps in 2021 will focus on deepening the conversation about demographic change through a range of work. This includes greater engagement and public consultation on our vision, greater coalition-building with partners, strengthening our evidence base, devising measurement approaches, and developing long-term policy proposals that will allow us to meet our vision.

Future Engagement on our Vision:

We have set out an initial vision – but this is not a definitive one. Addressing population change will require an open conversation. Given that our demographic challenge is felt differently across Scotland, it is important that we engage with different voices in further developing our vision. We will therefore deliver **a range of engagement sessions throughout 2021 and beyond**. This engagement will include discussing whether the actions and areas we have highlighted are the ones that matter to our society, and discussing where more focus should be made. As we continue to shape our vision, we will engage partners from **academic institutions, local government, health boards, the private sector**, and the third sector. We will also consult on our vision with the **public**.



Scotland is not the only country facing these demographic challenges with many countries experiencing similar rural depopulation, as well as the increase in older populations and declining birth rates. As a result, we also commit to **developing an engagement programme with other countries** to share our issues, gather best practice and consider collaborative ideas. This engagement will be with our Nordic partners – including through our Arctic policy framework – as well as others. We will consider how to bring this work together, with the potential of hosting an international event later in 2021.

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Championing Demographic Change across Government

As we move forward, we also commit to **strengthening networks that will empower different levels of government** to actively consider demographic change in decision-making.

At the national level, we will drive effective coalitions through Scottish Government's Ministerial Taskforce for Population and the Population Programme Board. These groups at the most senior levels of the Scottish Government provide the space for ministers and senior officials to embed our long-term demographic change across their existing policy portfolios (economic development, infrastructure and investment, public finance, health, environment, migration, and others). As the Programme builds, these groups are central mechanisms to champion cross-cutting and long-term thinking on demographic issues across the Scottish Government.

We will also **engage with the UK Government**, and look to influence whole-UK change or seek further devolved powers for Scotland. This paper sets out a clear set of asks of the UK Government.



These asks of the UK Government are:

- to make changes to employment law to pursue a gender-blind parental leave
- to press for vital reforms to the UK immigration system, and in particular, call for a Scottish visa to meet Scotland's immigration needs
- to ensure demography is at the forefront of UK-wide policy-making and push for change or further powers in specific reserved areas – such as supporting those who wish to remain in employment when older.

We will also **engage with the spectrum of political parties across Scotland** as we recognise the changes needed cannot just be fixed by this current government.

Likewise, the coalitions we build must not only be at the national government level. We will continue to build, in partnership with COSLA, strong relationships focused on demographic change issues at the local authority level in Scotland. We will continue to collaborate with the Local Government Population Working Group, along with local authority leaders.

As well as strong senior networks, we will also commit to **developing tools to empower government** to consider the impacts of their policies within the bigger picture of demographic change. To begin, we will **explore the creation of a Demographic Change Impact Assessment Tool**. We envisage this tool to support policy makers and our partners to consider what impact their policies will have on our population. This will work in a similar function to the Fairer Scotland Duty and an Equality Impact Assessment.

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Building an Evidence Base for Policy Intervention:

Future policy development will grow from our vision and the building blocks we have set out. But in order to do this, more work must be done to **review existing literature, identify gaps, co-create proposals with analytical colleagues, and ensure that any strategic framework and policy proposals are robustly underpinned by evidence.**

To support decision-making, we commit to embedding a **rigorous evidence base** at the centre of our programme of work. This will involve **identifying research questions and commissioning impactful analytical work** – as required – across each of the building blocks of a family friendly nation, an ageing society, migration, and population balance.

Our Population Analytical Working Group and our Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population will help to shape this evidence base. The EAG has already published a number of valuable reports relating to migration. We will look to **review the membership of the Group** and consider how we can effectively explore the diverse range of demographic issues before us.

Measurement and Monitoring:

Among the 81 indicators of Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF), we have established a progress indicator on depopulation – the indicator measures the number of council areas experiencing population decline since 2009.

However, a sole indicator in the NPF only tells a fraction of Scotland's population story. To capture the multi-dimensional nature of population change, we have produced an interactive [Population Programme Dashboard](#) which contains a variety of different indicators which report on Scotland's changing population structure. Indicators include measures on our population age structure, our active dependency ratio, life expectancy, and population change across council areas.

In the medium to long-term, building ways to measure progress and evaluate what has worked and what has not, will be extremely important. We commit to developing a **measurement framework** which will allow Scottish Government and our partners to monitor our progress in addressing our demographic challenges.

Language:

Language will have an important influence on how we frame and approach population change in Scotland. For example, describing areas as experiencing 'population decline' or 'depopulation' might carry negative connotations which may be better framed by framing them as 'repopulation areas.' Similarly, describing an area as 'remote' might imply that the centres of importance are the larger towns and cities which can feed a narrative of needing to leave rural and island communities in order to progress. Another example might be that while considering population ageing and working age population, it is important that our older generations or those who are not economically active are not seen as a 'burden.' **We commit to an open discussion about the language and narratives that best frame population change issues** to ensure that equality is weaved throughout.

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Establishing a Demographic Commission

Together, these issues only scratch the surface of the complex combination of challenges and opportunities that we can address in the face of population ageing. We will look to **establish an independent Demographic Commission** to further open up these conversations with experts and partners.

#	Action	Action for
29	We will deliver a range of engagement sessions throughout 2021 to hear the views from the public, academic institutions, the private sector, the third sector	Scottish Government
30	We will engage with international countries to share learning and best practice on addressing demographic challenge, with an aim of hosting a demographic event later in 2021	Scottish Government
31	We will engage with the UK Government to ensure demography is at the forefront of UK-wide policy-making and push for change or further powers in specific reserved areas	Scottish Government and UK Government
32	We will carry out further evidence and analysis on existing policies and literature to identify further areas of exploration	Scottish Government
33	We will review the membership of the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population and commission a workplan for them for areas to focus on	Scottish Government
34	We will develop a measurement framework to measure and monitor progress in addressing our demographic challenges	Scottish Government
35	We will look to establish a Demographic Commission to carry out further analysis and open up conversations on future actions	Scottish Government
36	We will consider how to drive change in Scotland and our partners, considering legal powers and other methods in ensuring this national challenge is addressed	Scottish Government and partners



NEXT STEPS: SUMMARY OF OUR ACTIONS



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In this paper we have set out the national demographic challenge that Scotland faces, and identified the steps we will take – working with our partners – to address it. This work requires a whole-system approach and there is not one silver bullet which will solve the problems for each community. However, actions needs to be taken now to protect our communities now and in the future.

Some of the more immediate actions we will take include the development of rural migration pilots proposals, in collaboration with local government to consider with the UK Government; the pilot of rural projects that can help address rural and island repopulation as part of the Islands Plan Implementation work; further learning and investment in the Clyde Gateway and the launch of the Scottish National Investment Bank and any investments that can help affect demographic change.

Throughout this document, we have laid out our plans for actions to take, and where we need to do more through exploring new opportunities to deliver change. We will provide updates on the population programme in due course, to make sure the interventions we are taking are the right ones. The totality of the actions within this paper are provided in the table below.



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#	Action	Action for	Chapter
1	We will review the actions of the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan to ensure they remain fit for purpose and support women through the COVID-19 recovery	Scottish Government with employers	Family friendly
2	We commit to build more affordable homes as well as shared equity schemes for those who really need to buy a home	Scottish Government and Local Authorities	
3	We will use the collaborative Brand Scotland marketing communications strategy to promote Scotland as a family friendly nation and promote resources such as Parent Club to help attract talent to our country	Scottish Government	
4	We will call on the UK Government to make changes to employment law to pursue a gender-blind parental leave	Scottish Government and UK Government	
5	We will explore offering fertility services to all those within society who wish to raise a family and do not have the means to do so	Scottish Government	
6	We will explore opportunities to ensure breastfeeding breaks are available to all new mothers in the workplace	Scottish Government with employers	

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#	Action	Action for	Chapter
7	We will continue to invest in improving population health and reducing health inequalities to ensure that people are supported to live longer healthier lives	Scottish Government	Healthy Living
8	We must consider the changing nature of demand of an older population and adjust our healthcare provision accordingly	Scottish Government and Health Boards	
9	We will consider innovation and technological tools to support our future ageing population	Scottish Government	
10	We will explore opportunities to help people live longer and fuller working lives and remove barriers which force older people to leave the workforce before they wish to	Scottish Government with employers	
11	We will ensure our housing options allow our population to live independently at home for longer	Scottish Government and Local Authorities	
12	We will ensure the quality of life for our older people is enhanced to combat social isolation	Scottish Government	

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#	Action	Action for	Chapter
13	We will continue to develop an evidence-based case for a tailored Scottish approach to migration	Scottish Government	Migration
14	We will work with local government partners to develop proposals for a remote and rural migration service pilot to present to the UK Government	Scottish Government, Local Authorities and UK Government	
15	We commit to publishing a report from our Expert Advisory Group on a different approach to family migration	Scottish Government	
16	We will continue to press for vital reforms to the UK immigration system	Scottish Government and UK Government	
17	We will continue to consider options to attract international students to Scotland, such as exploring a new scholarship offering and develop an international student retention programme.	Scottish Government with university sector	
18	We will explore, through our talent attraction and retention service, how we can attract talent from across the rest of the UK, particularly in key sectors identified in our Inward Investment Plan	Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland	
19	We commit to undertake work to explore how we and partners can offer a support package to those who wish to move and work in Scotland, including support around housing, spousal recruitment and family support where needed as part of our talent attraction and retention work	Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland	
20	We will undertake work to look at students who go on to leave Scotland for work and other reasons and explore opportunities to encourage them to stay or return	Scottish Government with university sector	

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#	Action	Action for	Chapter
21	We will champion the call for regional models of economic development and recovery and ensure place is at the forefront of all Government developments	Scottish Government and Local Authorities	Balance
22	We will work with the housing sector to make self-build homes a mainstream delivery option	Scottish Government with housing sector	
23	We will continue to drive forward planning reform to improve how we plan our future places and support local government in considering planning as a strategic tool to respond to population change	Scottish Government and Local Authorities	
24	We will consider the Scottish Government's workplace footprint and explore opportunities to distribute our workforce across the country	Scottish Government	
25	We commit to considering the Christie Commission a decade on and ensuring our public services are fit to serve our population for now and in the future	Scottish Government	
26	We will consider community work hubs for people to work in who may no longer need to work in offices every day, but to reduce the impact of home working	Scottish Government and Local Authorities	
27	We will consider the role of our anchor institutions and national partners and ensure their work is aligned to the population programme	Scottish Government and Local Authorities with anchor institutions	
28	We will explore opportunities to support Local Authorities in the short-term deal with the demographic pressures of the present	Scottish Government and Local Authorities	

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29	We will deliver a range of engagement sessions throughout 2021 to hear the views from the public, academic institutions, the private sector, the third sector	Scottish Government	Engagement and Evidence
30	We will engage with international countries to share learning and best practice on addressing demographic challenge, with an aim of hosting a demographic event later in 2021	Scottish Government	
31	We will engage with the UK Government to ensure demography is at the forefront of UK-wide policy-making and push for change or further powers in specific reserved areas	Scottish Government and UK Government	
32	We will carry out further evidence and analysis on existing policies and literature to identify further areas of exploration	Scottish Government	
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ANNEX A

Overview of new UK Government immigration system



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The **Start Up, Innovator, and Global Talent routes** have replaced Tier 1 as the intended entry routes for so-called 'high-value migrants'. The Global Talent route is linked to a new cross-departmental unit named the Office for Talent. The Global Talent route may address some barriers to talent attraction, but the costs are high. For example, the Wellcome Trust and Royal Society have estimated that there will be an upfront cost for a family of four on a five year Global Talent Visa of £13,000, in contrast to a £1,000 fee for the same family under the French talent visa.



The **Skilled Worker route** has replaced Tier 2 as the primary route for those coming to the UK to work, adapted to establish a revised points-based system:

- The cap on the route will be removed
- The 'resident labour market test' will end
- The skills threshold will be reduced from RQF6 to RQF3
- The salary threshold will be reduced from £30,000 to £25,600
- Lower salary thresholds will apply to: those with a job classified by the Migration Advisory Committee as a 'shortage occupation', those with a relevant PhD, and those new to the labour market, with a minimum salary requirement of £20,480
- A job offer from a sponsoring employer will remain a requirement, and an English language requirement will be introduced

Within this route, those in specific occupations will be eligible for a Health and Care visa, offering fast-track entry, reduced application fees, support in the process, and exemption from the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). Notably the list of occupations does not include workers in the social care sector.

The **Student route** has replaced Tier 4, and the basic requirements of the route will remain the same: sponsorship at a licensed provider, English language skills, and the ability of the student to support themselves in the UK.

A new **Graduate route** will launch in summer 2021, offering international students leave to stay in the UK to work, or look for work, after they graduate. Undergraduate and master's degree students will be able to stay for two years and PhD students for three years after graduation, with the possibility of switching onto a route that leads to settlement, such as the Skilled Worker route.

Temporary visa routes previously under Tier 5 are broadly unchanged, including routes for temporary creative, sporting, charity and religious workers. The Youth Mobility Scheme also allows some non-EU nationals to come to the UK on a working holiday, but there are currently no plans to extend this to EU nationals. None of these temporary visa routes lead to settlement, nor are applicants permitted to switch onto a long-term route in-country.

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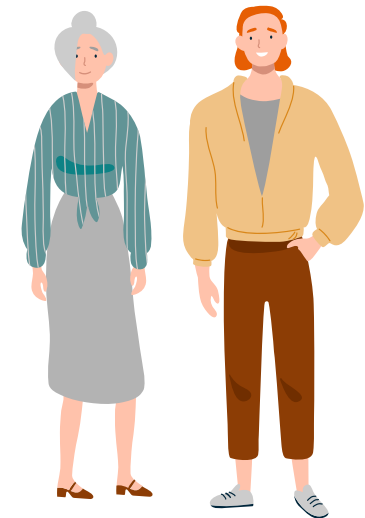
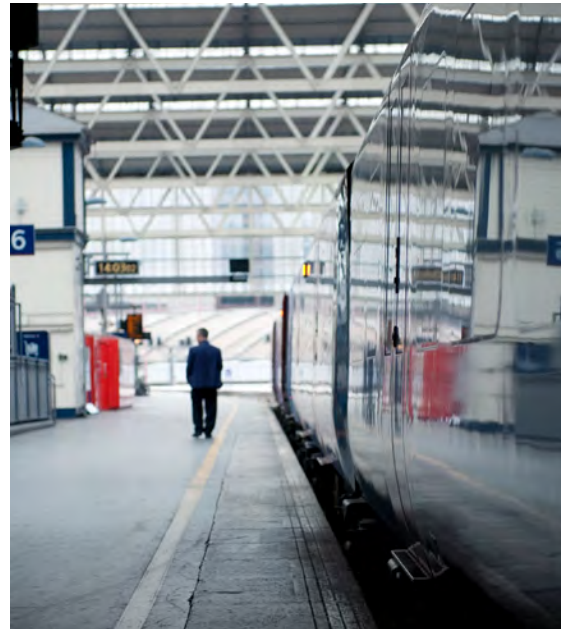
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A pilot scheme for **seasonal agricultural workers** concluded at the end of 2020. The Home Office is reviewing the pilot and it is anticipated that the scheme will continue under the new immigration system. The pilot was capped at 10,000 workers, but stakeholders have stressed this would need to be scaled up rapidly to 70,000-80,000 to meet UK-wide needs within the sector.

The **family migration route** is unchanged and remains highly restrictive, but now applies to EU family of UK nationals, and to EU family joining EU nationals in the UK. The Migration Advisory Committee has recommended that the UK Government review the family migration route, however.

At the end of January 2021, the UK Government launched **a new immigration route for British Nationals (Overseas) from Hong Kong** and immediate family, allowing them to live and work in the UK, and providing a pathway to citizenship.

In addition, a small number of overseas migrants enter the UK via the **asylum process and other humanitarian programmes**.





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