

Population Estimates for Settlements and Localities in Scotland, Mid-2016



Published on 12 March 2018

This statistical report describes the populations of the built-up areas of Scotland, known as settlements and localities. It also provides a breakdown of these areas by sex, age group and council area.

What are settlements and localities?

Settlements and the localities within them are designed to represent the populated, built-up areas of Scotland.

Over 90% of people in Scotland live within a settlement.

Settlements account for just over 2% of Scotland's area.

Settlement population distribution

A settlement is defined to be a group of high density postcodes whose combined population rounds to 500 people or more. They are separated by low density postcodes.

The population in each settlement varies as areas change over time. In 2016, there were on average 1,900 people per settlement.

Find the latest population estimates for Scotland's settlements and localities

Detailed tables containing the latest population estimates by sex and age are available at the settlements and localities section of nrscotland.gov.uk.

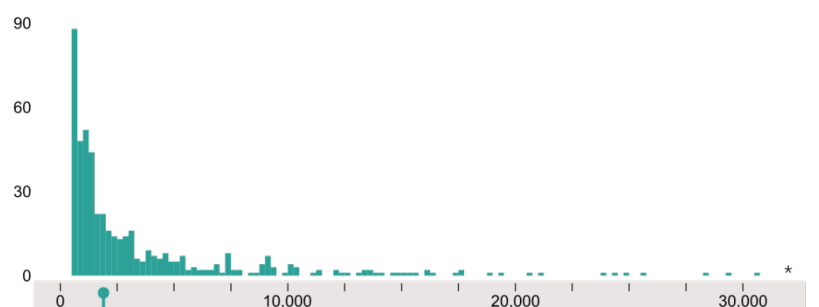
Geographic shape files which display the settlement and locality boundaries using GIS software are also available in the same area.

Distribution of settlements across Scotland



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Number of settlements



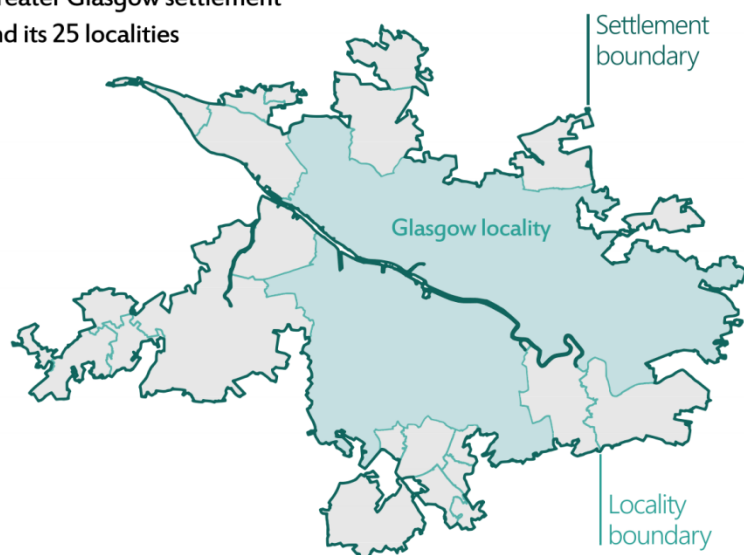
1,900

Average number of people per settlement

Population

* There were 25 settlements with an estimated population higher than 30,000

Greater Glasgow settlement and its 25 localities



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1. Main Points

Settlements and the localities within them are designed to represent the populated, built-up areas of Scotland. Over 90% of people in Scotland live within a settlement, yet settlements account for just over 2% of Scotland's area.

Settlements

A settlement is defined to be a group of high density postcodes whose combined population rounds to 500 people or more. They are separated by low density postcodes.

- There are currently 519 settlements in Scotland with a population of 500 people or above.
- Seven new settlements have been identified from the mid-2016 population estimates.
- No existing settlements have decreased in population to below the threshold of 500 people. There are six settlements that have been merged with larger settlements.
- 91% of people in Scotland live within settlements.
- Settlements account for 2.2% of Scotland's area.
- The largest settlement in Scotland is Greater Glasgow with a population of 985,290 accounting for 18.2% of Scotland's population.
- The council area with the largest number of settlements within its boundaries is Aberdeenshire which has 62 settlements. However the combined population of these settlements accounts for only 3.5% of Scotland's population.

Localities

A locality is either a settlement or a portion of a settlement of 500 people or more, corresponding to a distinct town or city within a settlement. These are defined based on previous locality boundaries and local authority input.

- The number of localities in Scotland now stands at 655.
- Seven new localities have been identified.
- There are six localities that have been split into two.
- No localities have decreased in population to below the threshold of 500 people. There are two localities which have been combined into one.
- The largest locality in Scotland is Glasgow with an estimated population of 612,040.

2. Introduction

The settlements and localities datasets are produced to show the boundaries and estimated populations of urban areas in Scotland.

Settlements are defined using areas of contiguous high density postcodes bounded by low density postcodes. The density of a postcode is defined using measures of population, residential addresses and non-residential addresses per hectare, using the postcode boundaries maintained by NRS based on the assignment of postcodes to addresses by Royal Mail.

The larger settlements have been divided into localities, with input from local authorities, as some settlements are very extensive and can group together some very large populations.

The mid-2016 settlements and localities estimates are based on the mid-2016 small area population estimates published in August 2017, and relate to the population as at 30 June 2016. The small area population estimates are based on results from the 2011 Census, and are adjusted for births, deaths and estimated migration in the years since then.

Figures for settlement and locality totals in this report and the accompanying data tables have been rounded to the nearest 10. Breakdowns by sex and age groups are provided at unit level, but it is not implied that estimates are accurate to this level of detail.

The population figures are estimates that have gone through a number of stages of processing, each of which may impact on the quality of the estimates. Additionally, the estimates by sex and age for settlements and localities can be affected by areas close to but outside of the settlement or locality with unusual age or sex ratios - for example, military bases and university halls of residence. Communal establishments are considered separately in the methodology to prevent this, however our data on communal establishments is not always complete.

It is important to note that comparisons over time are not appropriate for this publication as population changes may be attributable to factors other than the normal population changes experienced by an area. For example, changes to postcode boundaries affects the inclusion of households on the extreme edges of settlements.

Settlement and locality population estimates assist and inform other areas of Scottish Government policy and legislation. For example:

- to define land to which the Community Right to Buy applies; the [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#) and Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 offers communities the opportunity to register an interest in land along with the right to buy should it be for sale, with settlement and locality boundaries used as one way of defining communities.
- to define rural areas where qualifying properties are eligible for ratings relief; the [Local Government and Rating Act 1997](#) offers discretionary relief from non-domestic rates for certain properties in rural settlements with a population below 3,000.

- to inform updates to the Scottish Government's [Urban Rural Classification](#) which is based on the identification of key population thresholds of 3,000, 10,000, and 125,000.

The estimated settlement and locality populations referred to in this document have been published on the [NRS website](#). This includes:

- Detailed data files with breakdowns by sex and broad age groups
- Geographic shapefiles containing the settlement and locality boundaries. These files can be viewed using Geographical Information System (GIS) software¹.

More information on the methodology used to create the estimates and the accuracy of the results can be found in the Settlements and Localities Methodology Guide on the [NRS website](#).

We welcome feedback on this publication. For contact details, please refer to section 7 of this publication.

1) [ArcGIS software](#) is available from the ESRI website or alternatively [QGIS software](#) can be obtained from the QGIS website.

3. Settlement Populations

3.1 Changes in Settlements

As of mid-2016 there were 519 settlements in Scotland. This is an increase of 3 compared with the 516 settlements which were identified in mid-2012.

Seven new settlements have been included because their population now exceeds 500 people, these are:

- Ancrum, Scottish Borders
- Darnick, Scottish Borders
- Dirleton, East Lothian
- Finstown, Orkney Islands
- Gairloch, Highland
- Gartloch, Glasgow City
- Methlick, Aberdeenshire

There are no settlements from 2012 that have been excluded due to their population no longer exceeding 500 people.

Eleven settlements have been joined to another settlement because they are no longer separated by low density postcodes. These are:

2012 Settlements	2016 Settlement	Council Area
Dalkeith Gorebridge	Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith and Gorebridge	Midlothian
Culloden Inverness Milton of Leys	Inverness and Culloden	Highland
Cargenbridge Dumfries	Dumfries	Dumfries and Galloway
Livingston West Calder	Livingston	West Lothian
Bilston Loanhead	Loanhead and Bilston	Midlothian

Two settlements have been created from larger settlements because they are now separated by low density postcodes. These are Marywell in Aberdeenshire, which has been split from Portlethen, and Barrhead in East Renfrewshire which has been split from Greater Glasgow.

Eleven settlements have changed name in 2016 after consultation with local authorities. These are:

2012 Settlement	2016 Settlement	Council Area
Cowdenbeath	Cowdenbeath, Lochgelly and Lumphinnans	Fife
Kelso and Maxwellheugh	Kelso	Scottish Borders
Kingskettle	Kingskettle and Kettlebridge	Fife
Kirkcaldy	Kirkcaldy and Dysart	Fife
Leuchars	Leuchars and Guardbridge	Fife
Limekilns	Limekilns and Charlestown	Fife
Motherwell and Bellshill	Motherwell and Wishaw	North Lanarkshire
Ratho Station	Newbridge and Ratho Station	City of Edinburgh
Oakley	Oakley, Carnock and Comrie	Fife
Ardrossan	Saltcoats	North Ayrshire
Shotts, Dykehead and Stane	Shotts	North Lanarkshire

3.2 Urban/Rural Thresholds

Settlements and localities are mainly used in the Scottish Government for defining areas by urbanity. As such, settlements with populations that pass thresholds of 3,000, 10,000, and 125,000 are of particular interest, based on the definitions used in the Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification. The number of settlements in each of these categories is as follows:

Population range	Settlements		Total Population (2016)
	2012	2016	
Less than 3,000	334	333	438,150
3,000-9,999	119	119	649,900
10,000-124,999	59	63	1,958,200
125,000 or more	4	4	1,870,230

Of the 519 settlements in Scotland, the population of ten have changed enough since 2012 to pass one of these key population thresholds, and one new settlement has been identified which passes a threshold. These changes are shown in the table below.

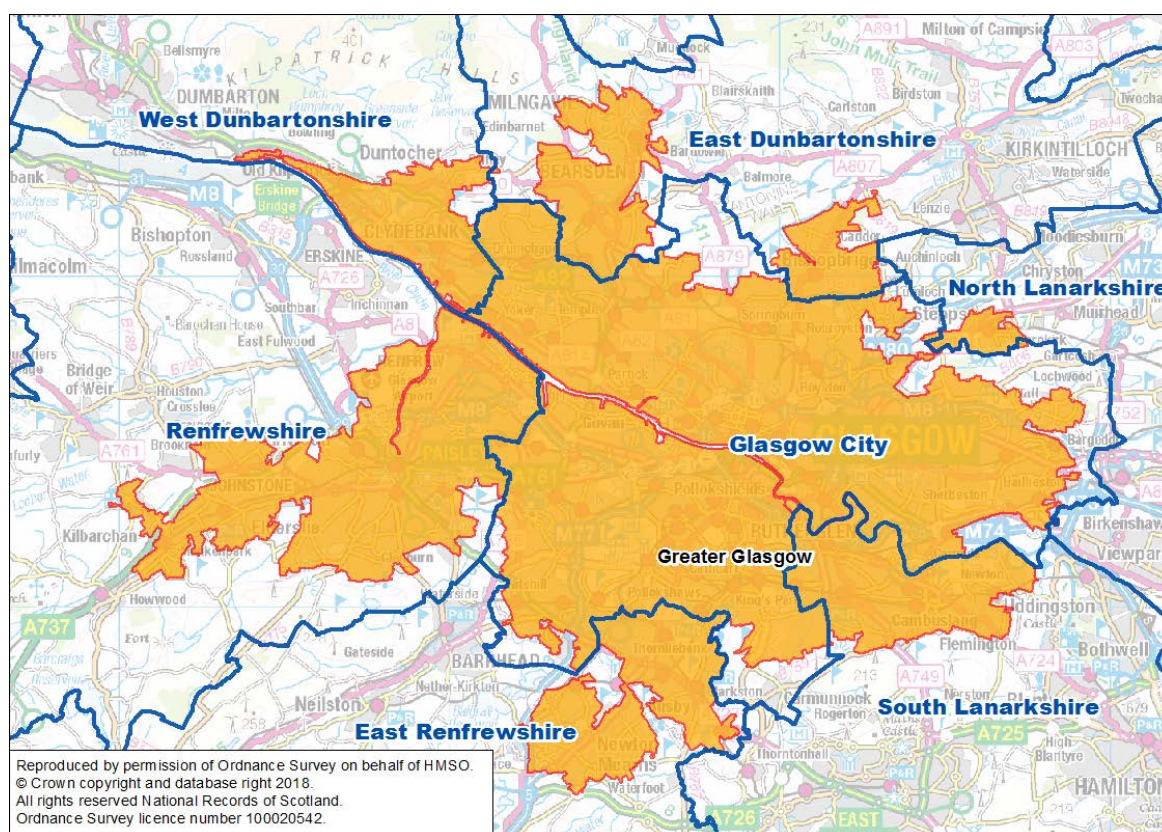
Settlement	Council area	Population	
		2012	2016
<i>Increased to more than 3,000:</i>			
Blackburn	Aberdeenshire	2,980	3,050
Conon Bridge and Maryburgh	Highland	2,890	3,140
Garelochhead	Argyll & Bute	2,110	3,700
Laurencekirk	Aberdeenshire	2,920	3,040
Leuchars and Guardbridge	Fife	2,860	3,090
Winchburgh	West Lothian	2,500	3,040

Settlement	Council area	Population	
		2012	2016
<i>Increased to more than 10,000:</i>			
Dalgety Bay	Fife	9,810	10,050
Forres	Moray	9,900	10,100
Kilsyth	North Lanarkshire	9,860	10,080
Prestonpans	East Lothian	9,490	10,410
<i>New settlements between 10,000 and 125,000:</i>			
Barrhead	East Renfrewshire	-	17,610

3.3 The Range of Settlements in Scotland

The settlement in Scotland with the largest population is Greater Glasgow, as shown in Figure 1, with 985,290 people (48.3% men and 51.7% women). This accounts for 18.2% of people in Scotland, and 20.0% of the people living in settlements in Scotland.

Figure 1: The settlement of Greater Glasgow, 2016



In contrast, the settlement with the smallest population is Crosshill in South Ayrshire, with 500 people (49.2% men and 50.8% women). This accounts for less than 0.01% of people in Scotland.

The ten largest settlements in 2016 (in order from largest to smallest population size) are summarised in the table below. This order has remained unchanged from 2012.

	Settlement	Council Area	Population
1	Greater Glasgow	Glasgow City, 6 others	985,290
2	Edinburgh	City of Edinburgh, 1 other	512,150
3	Aberdeen	Aberdeen City	214,610
4	Dundee	Dundee City, 2 others	158,200
5	Motherwell & Wishaw	North Lanarkshire	124,790
6	Falkirk	Falkirk	103,030
7	Coatbridge & Airdrie	North Lanarkshire	91,020
8	Hamilton	South Lanarkshire	83,730
9	East Kilbride	South Lanarkshire	75,120
10	Dunfermline	Fife	74,380

3.4 Settlements by Council Area

The settlement which crosses the most council areas is Greater Glasgow. Currently the settlement is part of seven council areas, namely: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire.

The proportion of each council's population living in settlements is shown in Figure 2. The council with the highest proportion of people living in settlements is Glasgow City, with less than 0.1% of its population living outside of a settlement.

The council areas with the lowest proportion of people living in a settlement are Na h-Eileannan Siar (30%) and Shetland Islands (38%). Many communities in these islands are sparser than those in the rest of Scotland, due to crofting and other factors, and so do not fulfil the density requirements needed to be counted as a settlement.

Figure 2: Percentage of council populations in settlements, 2016

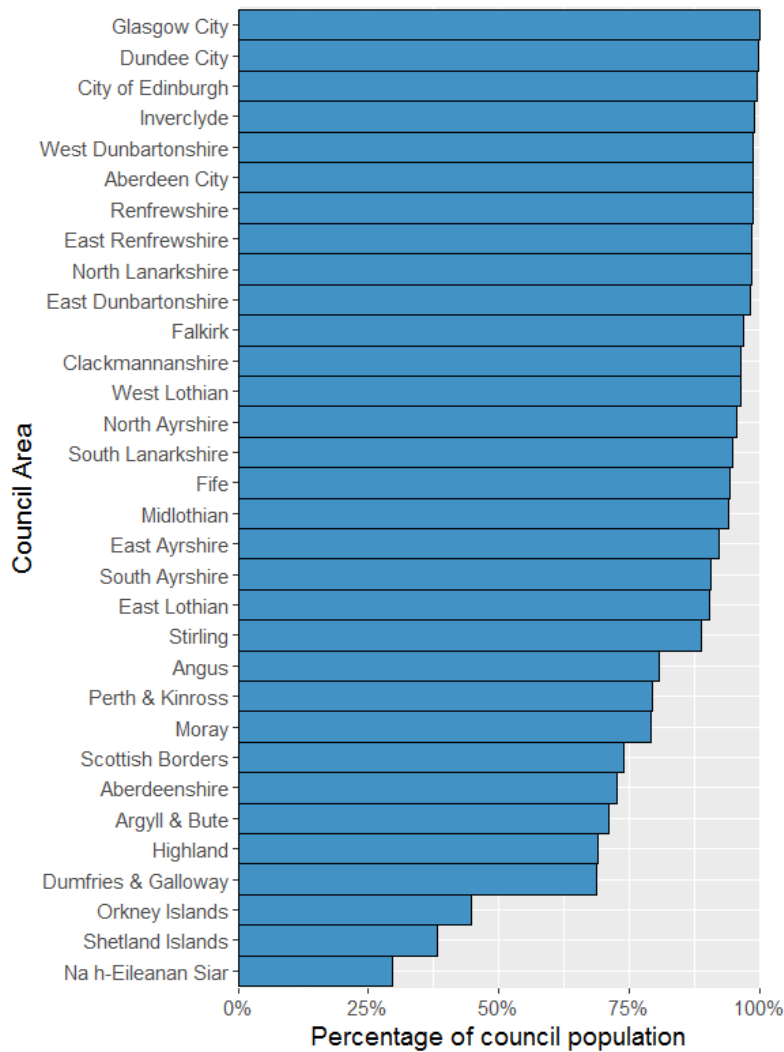
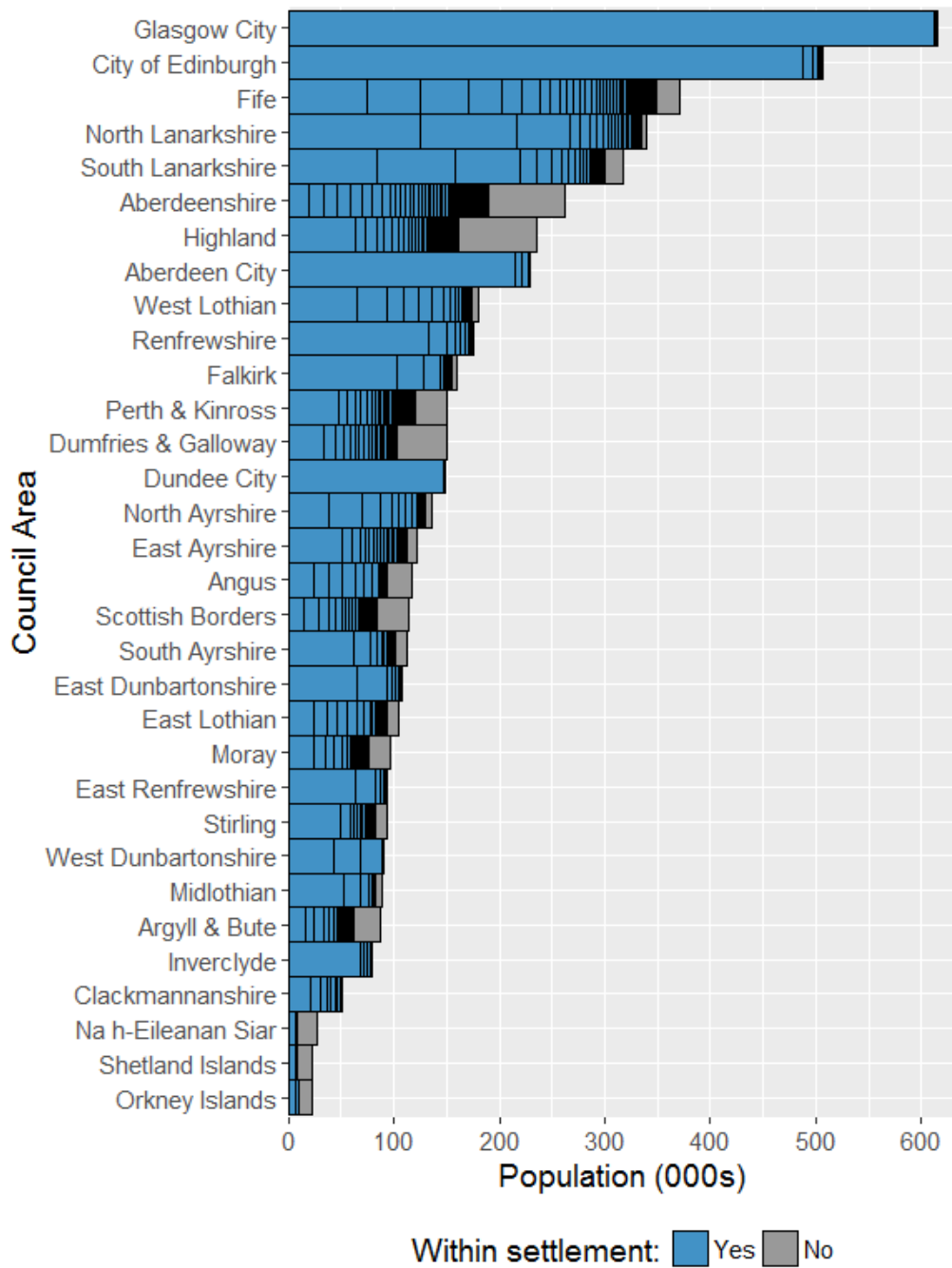


Figure 3 shows the population of each council area separated into individual settlements (by black lines) and those who do not live in settlements at all (in the grey section on the right of each bar). The council area with the most identified settlements is Aberdeenshire, with 62. However, only 190,300 people live in these settlements – this is 3.5% of people living in Scotland and 72.6% of the population of Aberdeenshire.

Figure 3: Population of councils split by settlements, 2016



3.5 The Age Structure of Settlements across Scotland

Overall, 17.0% of people living in settlements are aged under 16 years, 64.8% are between 16 and 64 years, and 18.2% are 65 years or over. The range of age proportions across all settlements is shown in Figure 4. The proportions of those aged 65 or over are the most varied across settlements, while there is less overall variation in the proportions of under 16s.

Figure 4: Settlements by age proportions, 2016

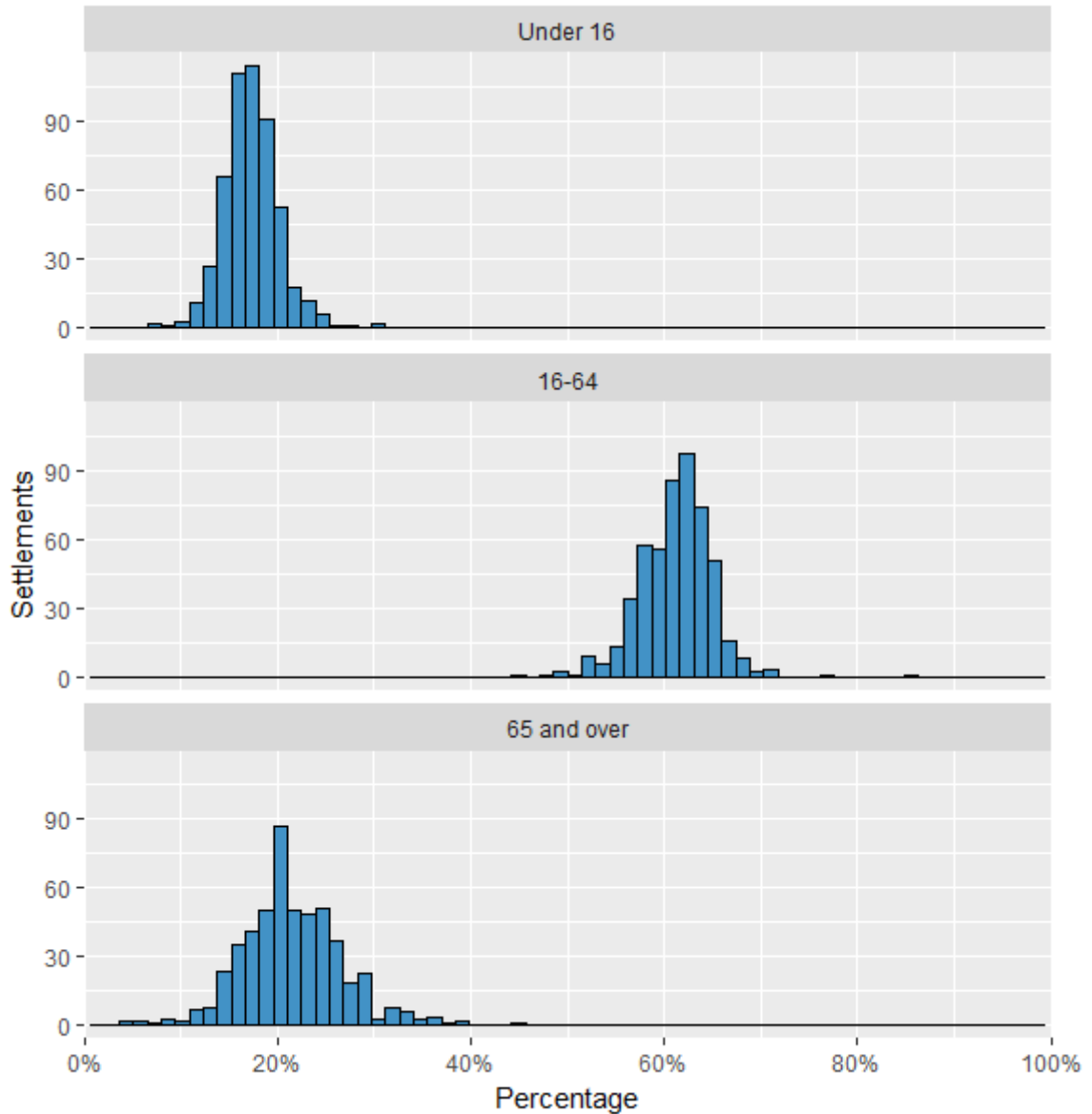
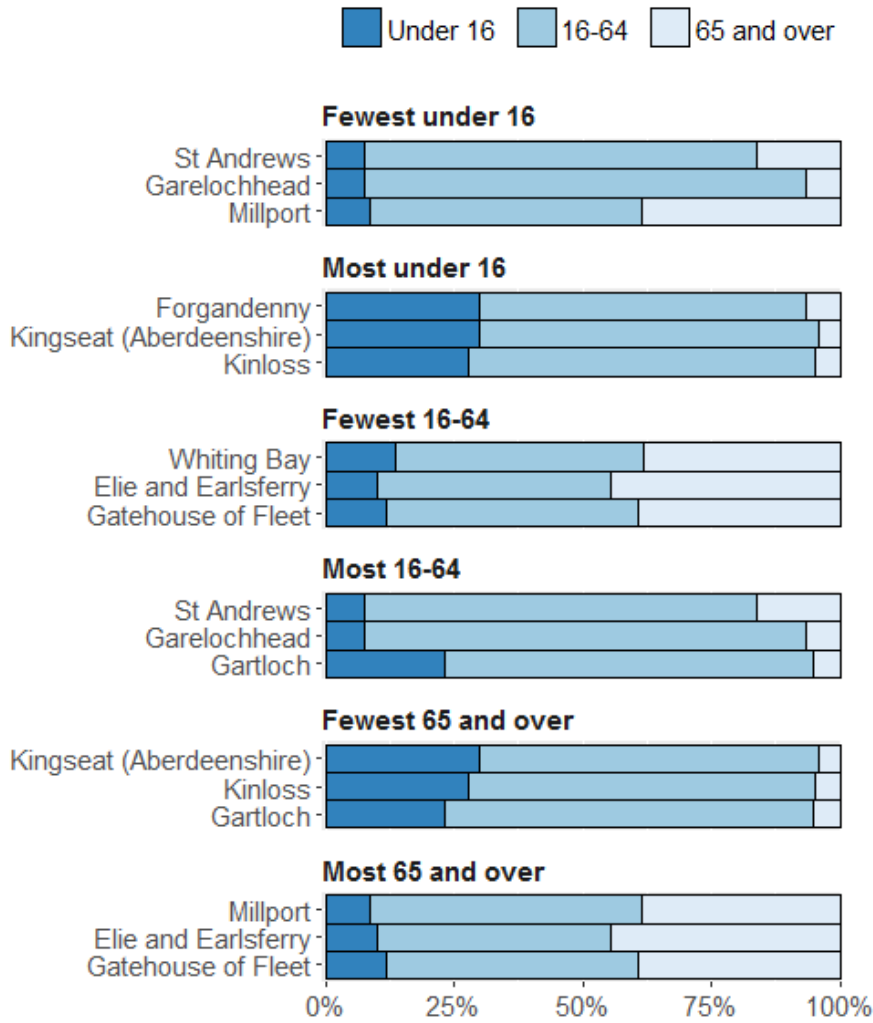


Figure 5 shows the settlements with the largest and smallest proportions of each age group. St Andrews contains St Andrews university, resulting in a large proportion of 16-64 year olds. Forgandenny is a relatively smaller settlement containing a boarding school, causing it to have the largest proportion of under 16 year olds. Garelochhead contains the naval base in Faslane, and Kinloss contains Kinloss Barracks, affecting the age distributions of both.

Figure 5: Selected settlements by proportion of broad age groups, 2016



3.6 Settlement Populations by Sex

The range of proportions of women in all settlements is shown in Figure 6. Most settlements (86%) have a higher proportion of women than men.

The two settlements with the largest proportion of men, Garelochhead (23.1% female) and Longforgan (43.0% female), are not included on the graph to allow a closer view of the rest of the settlements. The settlement in the data with the largest percentage of women, Whitecraig (57.9% female), has been excluded as this figure has been judged to have been influenced by surrounding areas affecting the estimate rather than an accurate reflection of the sex balance of Whitecraig.

Figure 6: Settlements by sex proportions, 2016

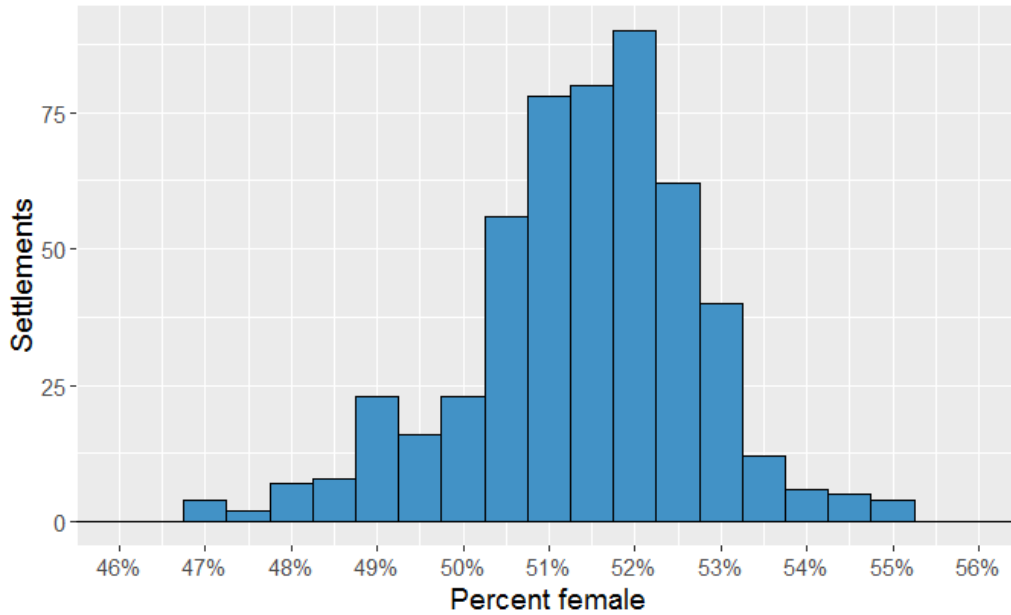
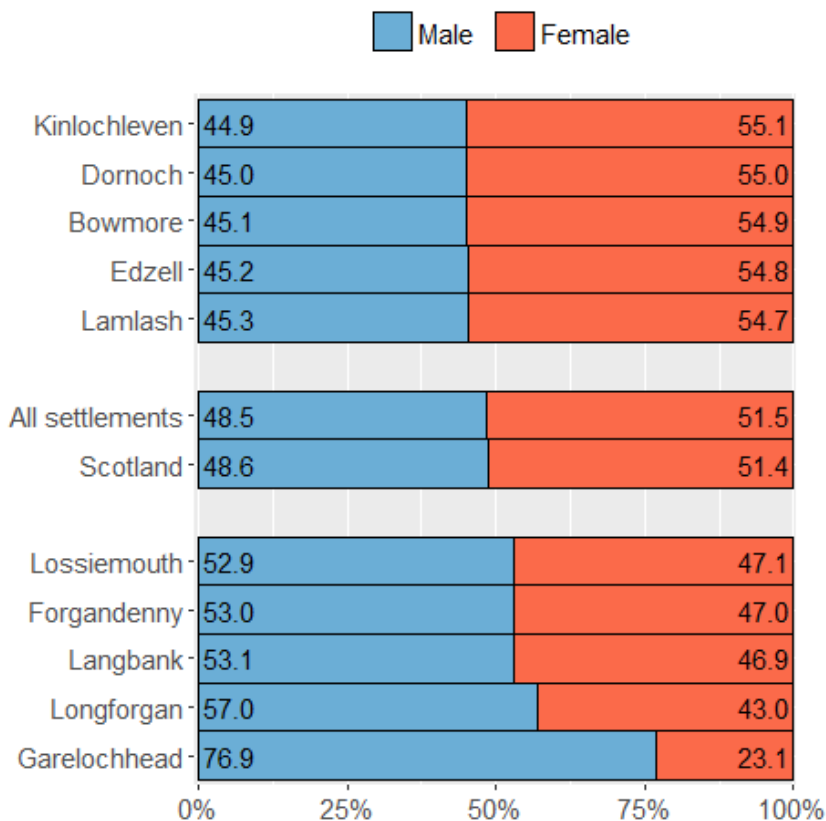


Figure 7 shows the settlements with the highest and lowest percentage of each sex, as well as the overall figures for Scotland and those living in settlements. The high percentage of men in Garelochhead, Longforgan, and Lossiemouth is explained by the presence of HM Naval Base Clyde, HM Prison Castle Huntly, and RAF Lossiemouth respectively. Whitecraig has again been excluded from this figure for the same reasons as above.

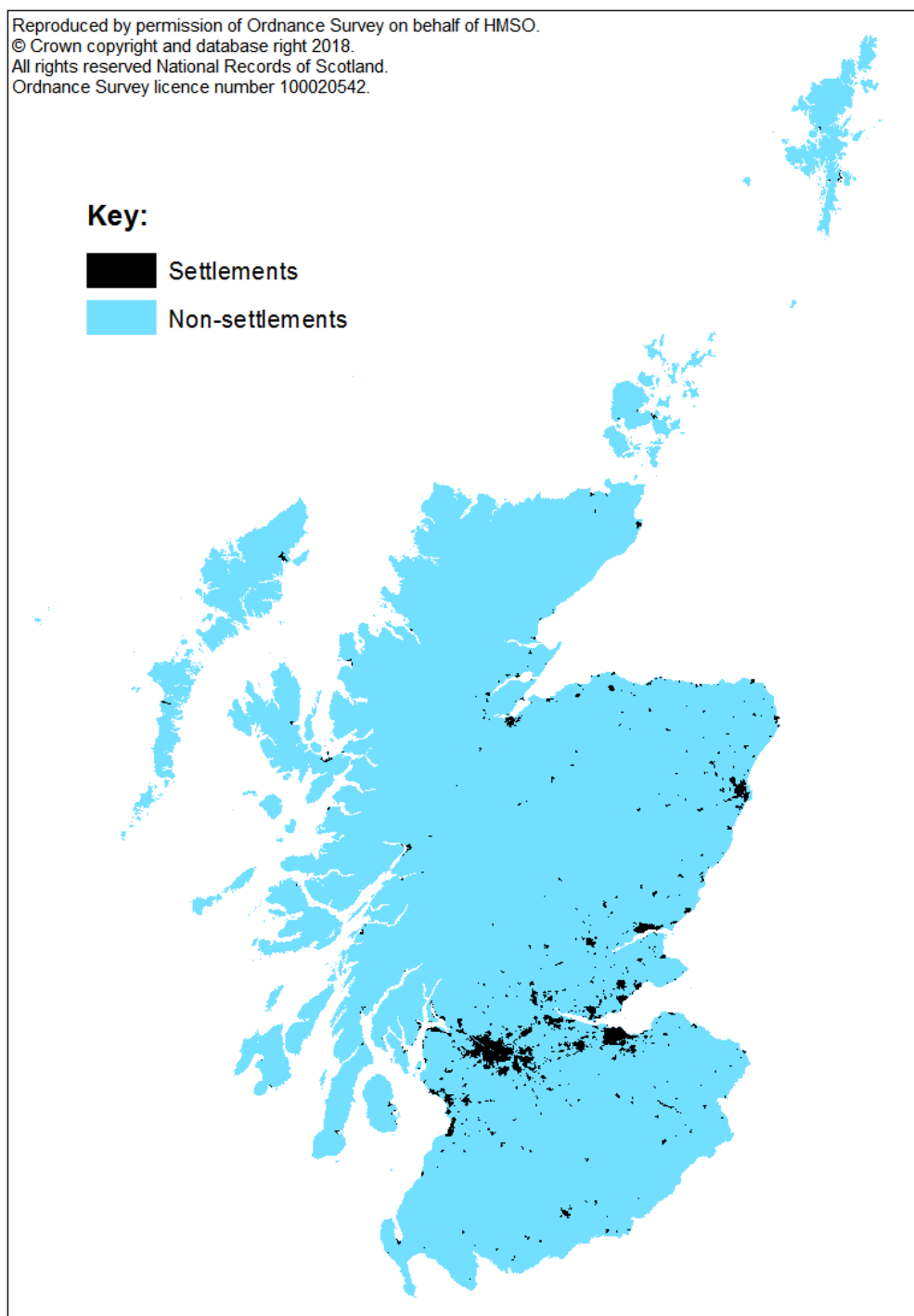
Figure 7: Selected settlements by proportion of men and women, 2016



3.7 Settlements and non-settlements in Scotland

Of the 5,404,700 people living in Scotland there are 4,916,500 people who live in a settlement of 500 people or more. This accounts for 91% of the people living in Scotland. These people live in an area of 1,750 square kilometres which is 2.2% of the total area of Scotland (77,911 square kilometres), as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Map of Scotland split by settlements and non-settlements, 2016



As a whole, the settlements of Scotland have a population density of 2,809 people per square kilometre. In contrast the remaining people, the people not resident in

settlements (488,200 people), live in an area of 76,160 square kilometres giving a population density of 6.4 people per square kilometre.

In Scotland there are 2,627,500 men (48.6%), and 2,777,200 women (51.4%). For people living in settlements this remains nearly the same with 51.5% women and 48.5% men, while the population not living in settlements leans more male with 50.1% men.

Across Scotland there are 915,920 people under the age of 16 (16.9%), 3,489,930 people 16 to 64 years old (64.6%), and 998,850 people aged 65 and over (18.5%). These proportions are very similar to those living in settlements (17.0%, 64.8%, and 18.2% respectively). In areas not identified as settlements there are fewer under 16s (16.3%) and 16-64s (61.9%), and more over 65s (21.8%).

4. Locality Populations

4.1 Changes in Localities

As of mid-2016 there were 655 localities within Scotland. This is an increase of 12 compared with the 643 localities which were identified in mid-2012.

Due to the creation of seven new settlements described in Section 3.1, seven new equivalent localities have also been created. These localities are:

- Ancrum, Scottish Borders
- Darnick, Scottish Borders
- Dirleton, East Lothian
- Finstown, Orkney Islands
- Gairloch, Highland
- Gartloch, Glasgow City
- Methlick, Aberdeenshire

There are no localities from 2012 that have been excluded due to their population no longer exceeding 500 people.

Two localities have been joined together after consultation with local authorities – Maxwellheugh has been joined to the locality of Kelso, in the settlement of Kelso in Scottish Borders.

Twelve localities have been created from the sub-division of existing localities. These are:

2012 Locality	2016 Localities	Settlement	Council Area
Alloa	Alloa Sauchie	Alloa	Clackmannanshire
Dalkeith	Dalkeith Newbattle	Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith and Gorebridge	Midlothian
Harthill	Eastfield Harthill	Harthill	North Lanarkshire and West Lothian
Musselburgh	Musselburgh Wallyford	Edinburgh	East Lothian
Portlethen	Marywell Portlethen	Portlethen	Aberdeenshire
Wattston and Greengairs	Greengairs Wattston	Wattston and Greengairs	North Lanarkshire

Nine localities have changed name after consultation with local authorities. These are:

2012 Locality	2016 Locality	Settlement	Council Area
Addiebrownhill	Addiewell	Stoneyburn	West Lothian
Cowdenbeath	Cowdenbeath and Lumphinnans	Cowdenbeath, Lochgelly and Lumphinnans	Fife
High Valleyfield	High Valleyfield, Low Valleyfield and Culross	High Valleyfield	Fife
Kingskettle	Kingskettle and Kettlebridge	Kingskettle and Kettlebridge	Fife
Kirkcaldy	Kirkcaldy and Dysart	Kirkcaldy and Dysart	Fife
Limekilns	Limekilns and Charlestown	Limekilns and Charlestown	Fife
Lochgelly and Lumphinnans	Lochgelly	Cowdenbeath, Lochgelly and Lumphinnans	Fife
Ratho Station	Newbridge and Ratho Station	Newbridge and Ratho Station	City of Edinburgh
Shotts, Dykehead and Stane	Shotts	Shotts	North Lanarkshire

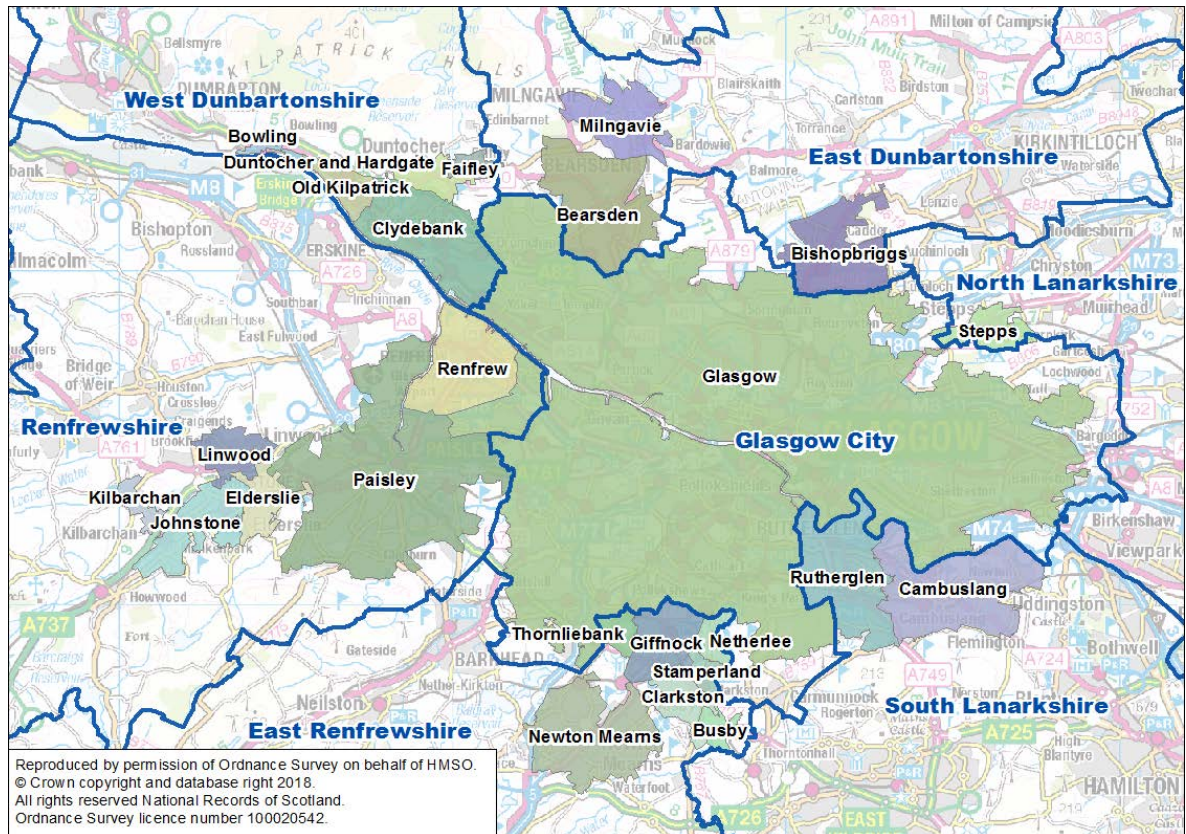
4.2 The Range of Localities in Scotland

Of the 655 localities in Scotland, 466 are also settlements. The remaining 189 localities are contained within 53 settlements.

The settlement of Greater Glasgow, as shown in [Figure 9](#), contains the most localities (25 localities are within Greater Glasgow), this is followed by the settlement of Falkirk (15 localities are within Falkirk), and the settlements of Bonnybridge, and Motherwell & Wishaw (both settlements contain 9 localities each).

The largest locality in Scotland is Glasgow with 612,040 people (48.6% male and 51.4% female). This accounts for 11.3% of the people in Scotland and 62.1% of the people in the settlement of Greater Glasgow.

Figure 9: The settlement of Greater Glasgow with localities highlighted, 2016



5. Background

The first statistics on localities were provided during the 1981 census, to replace the previously available figures on large and small burghs, which had ceased to exist in 1975. These were based on continuous built-up areas that had a population of around 500 or more at the time of the 1971 Census. Since the digitisation of postcode boundaries in 1991, the definition of settlements and localities has been based on the density of postcodes.

There are currently over 145,000 postcodes in Scotland. Data on unit postcodes includes a boundary enclosing all of the addresses assigned to the postcode. Using this data and population estimates, postcodes are split into high-density and low-density postcodes. The current definition, in use since 2003, defines a postcode as high-density if it has one or more of the following:

- more than 2.1 residential addresses per hectare;
- more than 0.1 non-residential addresses per hectare; or
- an estimated population of more than 5 people per hectare.

Settlements are created from groups of contiguous dense postcodes whose population rounds to 500 or more. Postcodes within a settlement are then assigned to localities based on previous locality boundaries. Local authorities are then consulted to suggest any changes needed.

For more details on the methodology used to produce the settlements and localities estimates, see the Methodology Guide on the [NRS website](#).

6. Links to related statistics

- Population estimates for Scotland's councils and health boards are published annually as part of the Mid-Year Population Estimates (MYE) and can be found on the [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\) website](#).
- Population estimates for various small area geographies within Scotland are also available from the [NRS website](#). These areas include 2011 Data Zones, parliamentary constituencies, areas of deprivation (using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) and urban/rural areas (using the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification).

7. Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (available on the [UKSA](#) website).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is National Records of Scotland's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Information on background and source data

Further details on data source(s), timeframe of data and timeliness, continuity of data, accuracy, etc can be found in the About this Publication document that is published alongside this publication on the NRS website.

National Records of Scotland

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Recording the present – At our network of local offices, we register births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, divorces and adoptions in Scotland.

Informing the future – We are responsible for the Census of Population in Scotland which we use, with other sources of information, to produce statistics on the population and households.

You can get other detailed statistics that we have produced from the [Statistics](#) section of our website. Scottish Census statistics are available on the [Scotland's Census](#) website.

We also provide information about [future publications](#) on our website. If you would like us to tell you about future statistical publications, you can register your interest on the Scottish Government [ScotStat website](#).

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Enquiries and suggestions

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