

Births, deaths and other vital events

Second quarter 2021

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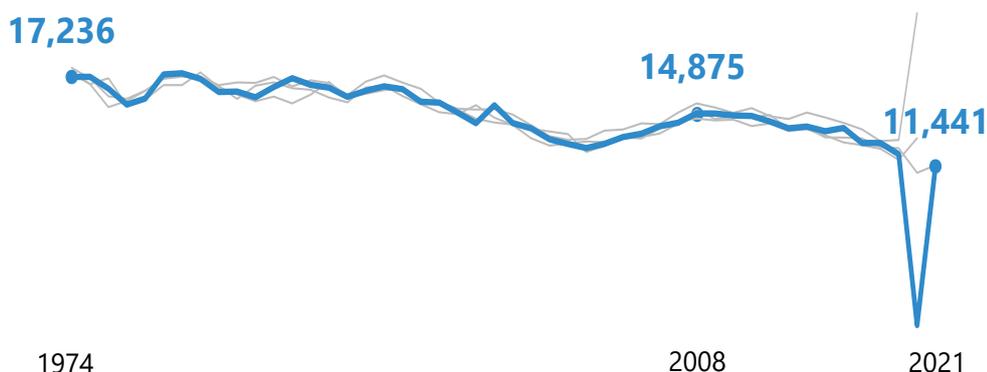


This release presents provisional figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 April to 30 June 2021, inclusive. The tables provide statistics of births, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths.

Births were 13% lower than average

11,441 births were registered in 2021 quarter 2. This is 13 per cent fewer than the quarter one average over the five years 2015-2019.

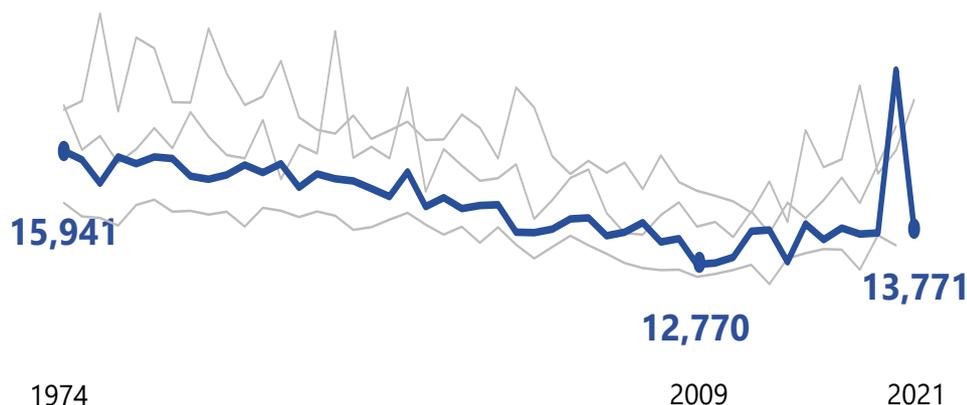
Number of births by quarter (Q1, **Q2**, Q3, Q4)



The number of deaths was broadly in line with the five-year average

13,771 deaths were registered in April - June 2021. That's 0.6% higher than the five year average.

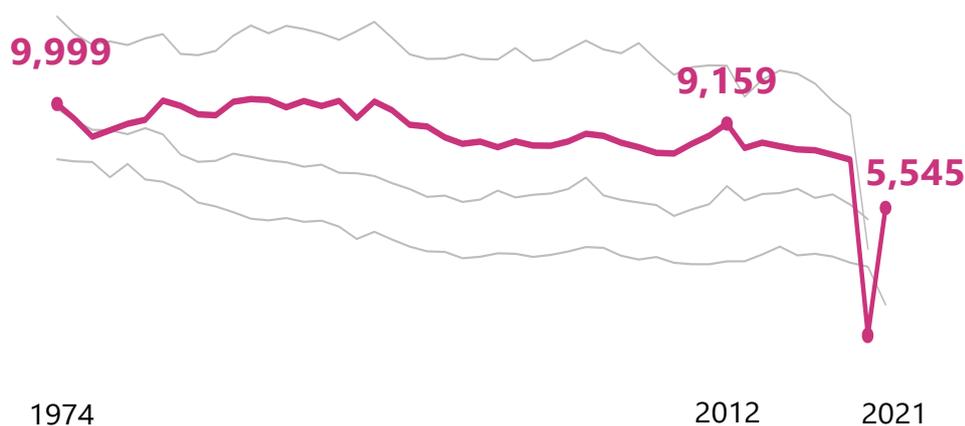
Number of deaths by quarter (Q1, **Q2**, Q3, Q4)



Marriages were 30% lower than average.

There were 5,545 marriages in 2021 quarter 2. This is nearly a third lower than the average for April - June over the five years 2015-2019, but a large increase on the number of marriages in the same period of 2020.

Number of marriages by quarter (Q1, **Q2**, Q3, Q4)



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The [tables and charts](#) above have been made available as Excel spreadsheets and can also be viewed in Comma Separated Value (CSV) format.

1. Main points

- There were 11,441 births registered in Scotland between 1 April and 30 June 2021. This is 13.0 per cent lower than the quarter two average of 13,157 over the five years 2015-2019.
- At 13,771, the number of deaths in 2021 quarter two is broadly in line (0.6 per cent higher) with the quarter two average for 2015-2019.
- The age-standardised mortality rate for the four-quarter period ending in 2021 quarter 2 was 7.3 per cent lower than the previous four-quarter period (ending 2021 quarter 1). This rate takes into account the growing and ageing population and is therefore the best indicator of the direction of the mortality trend.
- There were 5,545 marriages. This was 30% lower than the average number of second quarter marriages over the five years 2015-2019.
- There were 175 same-sex marriages, compared with a five-year average of 286 for quarter two in 2015-2019.
- Since June 2021 mixed-sex couples have been able to form a civil partnership. Of the 46 civil partnerships registered in the second quarter of 2021, 22 involved mixed-sex couples.
- There were 24 same-sex civil partnerships, compared to an average of 16 for the five years 2015-2019.

Comparing against the five year average

Comparisons are usually made by comparing the current year to the average for the previous five years. For 2021, standard practice would be to compare against the 2016-2020 average.

As the 2020 figures were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic – births and marriages were much lower than usual and deaths were higher - comparing the 2021 figures to the average for 2016-2020 would not give a true reflection of how the latest quarter's figures compare to the average.

Comparisons have therefore been made against the 2015-2019 average.

2. Introduction

This release presents provisional figures for vital events which were registered in Scotland in the period from 1 April to 30 June 2021, inclusive. The tables and charts provide statistics on births, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths, including:

- quarterly figures for Scotland for each of the past ten years;
- the totals for each Local Authority and NHS Board area for the latest quarter; and
- more detailed analyses of the numbers of deaths (for example cross-classified by sex, cause and NHS Board area) for the latest quarter.

The quarterly tables, can be downloaded from the National Records of Scotland (NRS) website.

3. Births

Birth registrations in 2021 quarter two were 13.0% lower than the average quarter two total for the years 2015-2019. We would usually use quarter two of the preceding five years as a comparison (2016-2020), but very few births were registered during the second quarter of 2020 as most birth registrations were postponed at that time due to COVID-19.

Excluding 2020, this is the lowest number of quarter two births since civil registration began.

Expressed as a rate there were 8.4 births per 1,000 population.

4. Deaths

At 13,771, the number of deaths in 2021 quarter two is broadly in line (0.6 per cent higher) with the quarter two average for 2015-2019. It represents a fall of 4,330 deaths (24.3 per cent) compared to quarter 2 of 2020, which contained the first peak of COVID-19 deaths.

Expressed as a rate, there were 10.1 deaths per 1,000 population.

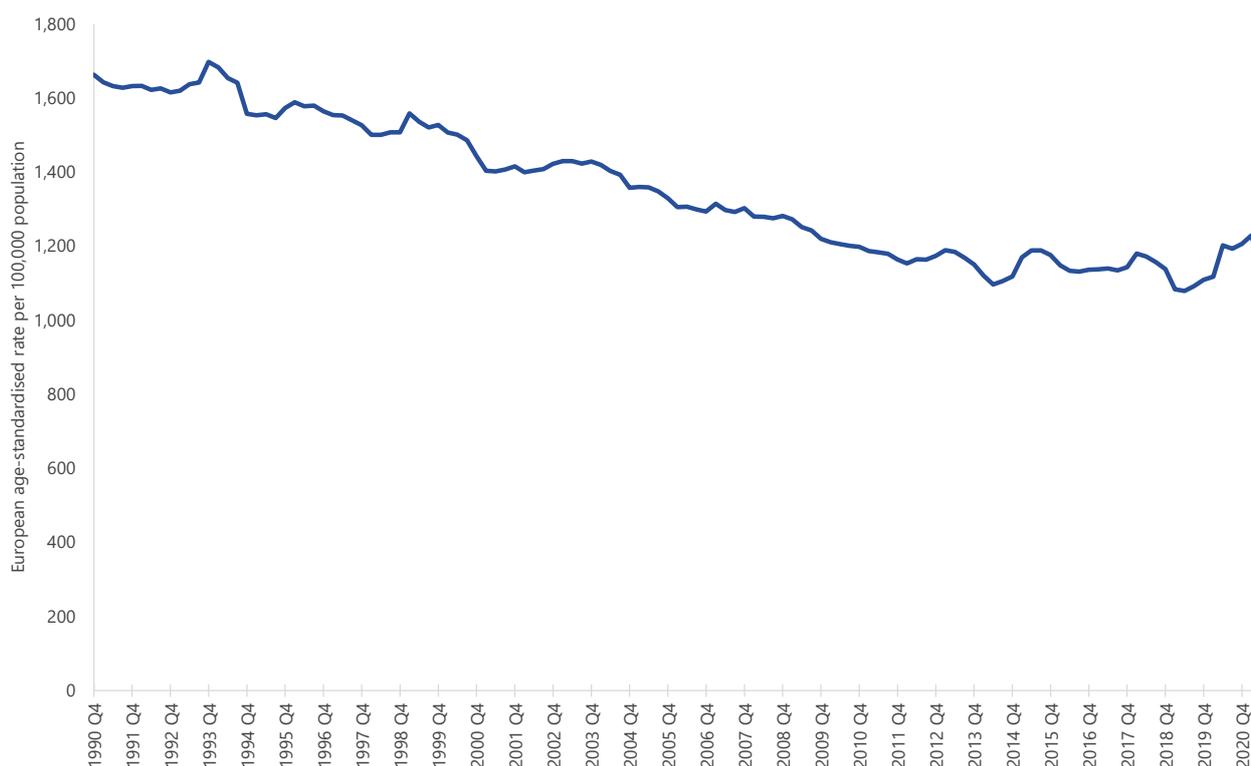
Compared with the quarter two average for 2015-2019:

- The number of cancer deaths rose by 3.4 per cent to 4,046;
- The number of deaths from coronary heart disease fell by 1.1 per cent to 1,628;
- The number of deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease fell by 9.0 per cent to 1,262;
- Deaths from respiratory diseases fell by 29.0 per cent to 1,124;
- There were 843 deaths from cerebrovascular disease (a decrease of 9.7 per cent).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) was the underlying cause of 125 deaths during quarter two and there were four deaths due to adverse effects of COVID-19 vaccines.

Figure 1 illustrates the age-standardised mortality rates for each four-quarter period from the period ending 1990 Q4 to that ending 2021 Q2. These figures are based on rolling periods of four quarters to reduce fluctuations and reduce seasonal variation. There is a large degree of seasonality in mortality, with higher number of deaths occurring in winter than in summer, so it does not make sense to compare a quarter 2 figure with a quarter 1 figure, for example.

Figure 1: Age-standardised death rates for rolling periods of four quarters



Despite the attempts to reduce variation, it is clear that there are still considerable fluctuations in the time series. Particularly of note in the most recent period prior to the coronavirus pandemic, are the increases in early 2015 and 2018 due to high winter mortality in quarter one of these years. As these rates are based on rolling four quarter periods, the impact of the high quarter one is also seen in the figures for the following three data points before dropping out when the next year's quarter one figure is picked up.

The rate for the four quarter period ending 2021 Q2 was 7.3 per cent lower than that for the period ending 2021 Q1. This is primarily due to the very high 2020 Q2 figure (from the first COVID-19 peak) dropping out of the latest four quarter period.

Compared to one year ago the age-standardised mortality rate has decreased by 5.2%.

The longer term trend shows a clear decrease over time, although there have been fluctuations along the way. Between 2014 and 2019 there was virtually no change (with the two notable fluctuations previously discussed in 2015 and 2018). The rate rose after then to reach a peak of 1,228.9 in 2021 Q1, the highest rate since 2009 Q3 . The coronavirus pandemic will have contributed to the high rates in recent quarters, and it will be important to monitor rates going forward to see whether they return to previous levels.

5. Marriages and civil partnerships

There were 5,545 marriages in quarter 2 of 2021. This was 30% lower than the average number of second quarter marriages over the five years 2015-2019. The number of marriages has begun to increase after the restrictions, which were first put in place in quarter 2 of 2020, have been eased, but they are still well below pre-pandemic levels.

There were 175 same-sex marriages, compared with a five-year average of 286 for quarter two in 2015-2019.

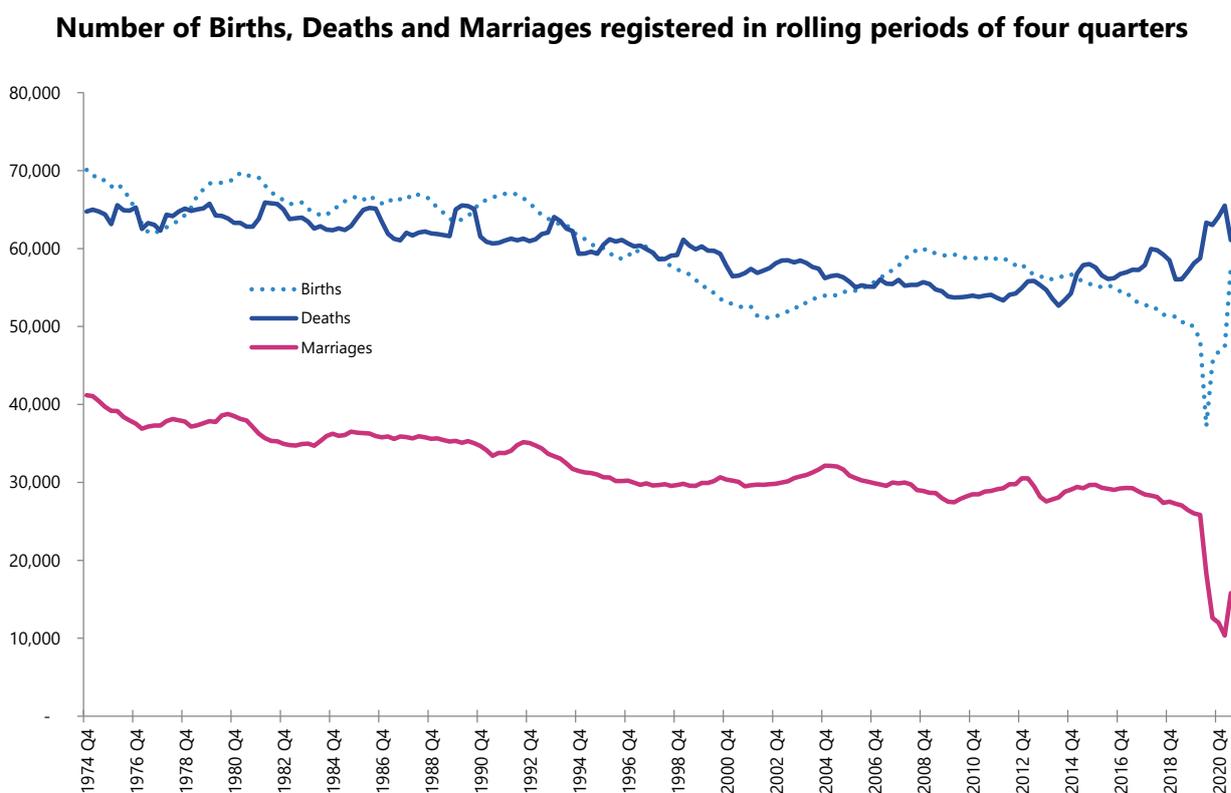
Since June 2021 mixed-sex couples have been able to form a civil partnership. Of the 46 civil partnerships registered in the second quarter of 2021, 22 involved mixed-sex couples.

6. Natural change (births minus deaths)

For the latest four quarter period (2020 Q3 to 2021 Q2) there were 57,590 births and 61,074 deaths, a shortfall of 3,484 births compared to deaths. However, 2020 Q3 contained thousands of postponed birth registrations from Q2, so the actual shortfall is likely to be considerably higher.

Having less births than deaths in a population is referred to as ‘negative natural change’, meaning that without external factors (such as migration) the population will fall. Scotland has been in a position of negative natural change since the period ending 2015 Q1. Prior to this, there was a sustained period of positive natural change (i.e. more births than deaths) going back to 2006. As can be seen from figure 1, the gap between births and deaths has fluctuated over time and there have been several periods of both positive and negative natural change over the last 40 years.

Figure 2: Births, deaths and marriages registered in rolling periods of four quarters



Note: The number of birth registrations in the quarters of 2020 do not reflect the number of births which occurred.

7. Background to these statistics

This is a quarterly publication. NRS collects the underlying data on a daily basis, as and when each event is registered. The statistics for 2021 are provisional and likely to be finalised in summer 2022.

Information about the sources, methods, definitions and reliability of these statistics is available from the following NRS web site pages:

- [general background information on Vital Events statistics](#)
- [background information on points which are specific to statistics about deaths.](#)

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Finalised Vital Events statistics for calendar years as a whole can be found in the [Vital Events Reference Tables](#).

8. Notes on statistical publications

National Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority 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 UK Statistics Authority 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 can be found in the 'About this Publication' document that is published alongside this publication on the NRS website.

National Records of Scotland

We, the National Records of Scotland, are a non-ministerial department of the devolved Scottish Administration. Our purpose is to collect, preserve and produce information about Scotland's people and history and make it available to inform current and future generations. We do this as follows:

- Preserving the past – We look after Scotland's national archives so that they are available for current and future generations, and we make available important information for family history.
- 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

Please get in touch if you need any further information, or have any suggestions for improvement.

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