

THE IRISH IN BRITAIN

Findings from the analysis of the
2022 Census of Scotland

June 2025

Irish **50** YEARS
in Britain
1973 – 2023

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The Irish in Britain

Findings from the analysis of the 2022 Census of Scotland

Introduction

This report presents key statistical data and an overall analysis of the 2022 Census of Scotland, focusing in particular on the resident Irish population. The study was commissioned by Irish in Britain to explore the size and characteristics of these communities, defined on grounds of self-reported country of birth, passport held and ethnicity—and also including those who identify as Gypsy/Travellers.

This complements the Census of England and Wales report published earlier in 2024¹ with the two documents together providing a wide and detailed picture of people of Irish origin and identity living across Britain. Despite its historical and social importance, the Irish population of Scotland has been significantly under-researched when compared to the rest of Britain, so this new report represents an important step in providing a more comprehensive population map and a basis for further research and analysis.

Overall, the statistical evidence emerging from these reports is meant to enable national and local organisations part of Irish in Britain’s network to update and integrate their understanding of the communities they serve, thus informing their plans, activities, service provision, advocacy work and campaigning.

The Scotland Census study was led by Professor Alessio D’Angelo (University of Derby), working alongside Dr Neil Kaye (UCL’s Institute of Education). This is part of a long-standing collaboration with Irish in Britain, which includes previous editions of the census report and a research project on health inequalities and health issues faced by Irish communities in Britain.²

This research was funded by the Irish government Department of Foreign Affairs.

¹ The 2021 Census of England and Wales Report is available on:
www.irishinbritain.org/what-we-do/policy-and-representation/the-census

The 2011 Census reports are still available on:
www.irishinbritain.org/what-we-do/publications/census-analysis-reports

² The Health Inequalities project is led by Professor Alessio D’Angelo, with Dr Necla Acik and the support of a group of expert advisors.

About Irish in Britain

Irish in Britain (www.irishinbritain.org) is a membership charity representing and promoting the interests of the Irish community in England, Scotland and Wales. It has over 130 member organisations providing a range of frontline support and advice services to Irish people and other marginalised groups and cultural communities. Irish in Britain's affiliates include front-line support and advice services, agencies delivering specific services (eg to the elderly, women, Irish Travellers, prisoners, homeless people, people with mental health problems), social, cultural and sports organisations, social clubs and Irish professional networks. Irish in Britain provides capacity-building support to its member organisations in areas of service development, governance and sustainability. It aims to address health inequalities and social exclusion faced by Irish people in Britain with a focus on policy to influence government and the statutory sector to ensure that they meet the needs of the Irish community.

Irish in Britain has a long research and policy history, mapping the community and their needs to inform its campaigning priorities and as a resource for a diverse stakeholder group. We are pleased to share this new census research on the Irish community in Scotland, adding to the detailed data for England and Wales in the 2021 Census. It is the first time this research has been commissioned in Scotland—providing a baseline for future work and an open access resource for all who have an interest in Irish community demographics in Scotland.

If any groups or organisations would like to know more about the membership benefits of joining Irish in Britain, please contact info@irishinbritain.org.

Size of the Irish population in Scotland

As discussed in previous editions, establishing the size and profile of the Irish population based on census data is not as easy as it might appear. Different figures emerge depending on the specific components of the population we want to focus on, how people are classified by the census variables, and how they self-identify.

The 2022 Scotland Census collected information on people’s country of birth, ethnic group and passports held. The way in which these categories relate to each other reflects the complex history and characteristics of the Irish communities.

Unlike with the 2021 Census of England and Wales, the Scottish Government took the decision to delay their census due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, this took place on 20 March 2022, with data being released in different rounds between 2022 and 2025 by the National Records of Scotland (NRS).

Overall, Scotland’s census statistics show that the Irish continue to represent an important component of the Scottish population. In fact, the data reveal an increase of those who self-identify as being of ‘White Irish’ ethnicity over the past two decades, growing from 49,428 in 2001 to 56,882 in 2022—with an increase of 5.2% over the last ten years.

The figures for the ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ category in Scotland, however, have seen a reduction: the small population who identifies in this way has gone from 4,212 in 2011 to 3,349 in 2022. It is also worth highlighting that the option provided in the census questionnaire for Scotland is different from that for England and Wales, which explicitly refers to ‘Gypsy or Irish Traveller’.

Looking at the data by country of birth, at the time of the 2022 Census there were a total of 59,345 Irish-born people living in Scotland. Of these 37,269 were born in Northern Ireland, and 22,076 in the Republic of Ireland. These data are higher than 2001 (when the total was 55,302), but lower than was recorded at the time of the 1981 Census (62,190).

	Country of birth				Ethnic group	
	Northern Ireland		Republic of Ireland		White: Irish	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
England and Wales	198,344	0.3%	324,670	0.5%	507,465	0.9%
Scotland	37,269	0.7%	22,076	0.4%	56,877	1.0%
Total Britain ³	235,613	0.4%	346,746	0.5%	564,342	0.9%

³ NB Census Day in Scotland occurred one year later than in England and Wales and so figures for ‘Total Britain’ are indicative only.

Country of birth

The census data historical series allow us to look at the change of the Irish-born population going back to the pre-Second World War period. Back in 1931, there were 55,487 people living in Scotland who were born in the Irish Free State (what is today the Republic of Ireland). Together with the 67,905 residents born in Northern Ireland these 124,296 people represented 2.6% of the Scottish population, and one of the largest populations born outside of Britain.

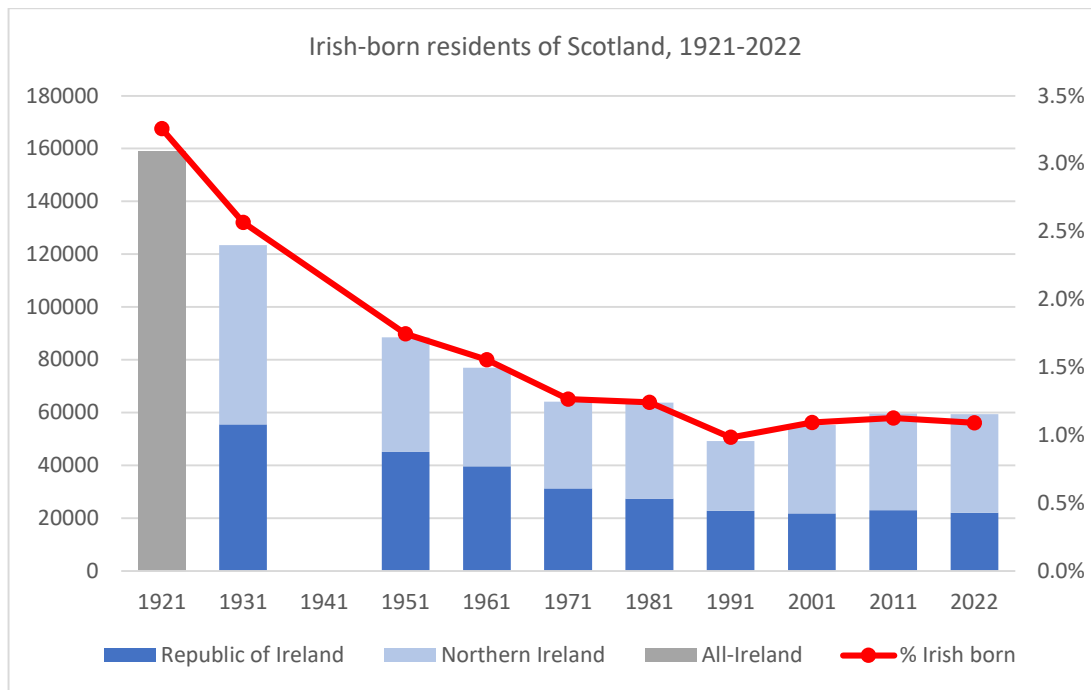
Over the following decades, this presence saw a considerable reduction and by 1971 it had nearly halved to a total of 66,155 Irish-born people. After a significant (20%) increase between 1991 and 2011, the trend has pretty much plateaued over the past decade. On Census Day of 20 March 2022, 59,345 Scottish residents reported being born in Ireland, with the majority (37,269) being born in Northern Ireland and 22,076 being born in the Republic of Ireland. Overall, this population represents 1.1% of all people living in Scotland, only smaller in size than the English-born (9.3%) and Polish-born (1.4%) population.

Table 1: Irish-born residents of Scotland, 1931-2022

	1931	1951	1971	1991	2011	2022
Republic of Ireland ⁴	55,487	45,126	31,260	22,773	22,952	22,076
Northern Ireland	67,905	43,354	32,790	26,393	36,655	37,269
All-Ireland	124,296	89,007	66,155	49,184	59,607	59,345
Scotland population	4,842,980	5,096,415	5,228,965	4,998,567	5,295,403	5,439,843
% Irish born	2.6%	1.7%	1.3%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%

⁴ Irish Free State before 1937.

Figure 1: Irish-born residents of Scotland, 1921-2022



Ethnicity

Detailed data on ethnicity has only been collected as part of Scotland’s census over the past two decades. As of 2022, the number of respondents self-identifying as White Irish was 56,877, about 1% of the total population.⁵ On the one hand, this represents a sizeable increase compared to the data collected in 2001 (49,428) and 2011 (54,090)—see table 2. This trend—a 15% growth over the last 20 years—is quite different to what has been registered in England and Wales.⁶ On the other hand, because of the increasing diversification of Scotland’s population, the share of all ethnic minorities represented by the White Irish has gone down from 21.6% in 2001 to 8.1% in 2022 (still around ten times the proportion of that recorded in 2021 for England and Wales: 0.9%).

The number of White Irish is significantly smaller than those who reported being born in Ireland. In part, this is likely to reflect the inability of census data to capture the Irish population of mixed heritage or those who do not self-identify as White. Moreover, this may also reflect the predominant component of the population being born in Northern Ireland, among which many may identify as ‘White: Other British’, rather than ‘White: Irish’ or ‘White: Scottish’.⁷

⁵ In addition, some people wrote down ‘Irish’ as part of the write-in field in the census form when selecting different ethnic categories. In particular, of those who self-identified under the ‘mixed of multiple ethnic group’ category, 793 wrote ‘Irish’, 233 wrote ‘Mixed Irish/Other white’ and 114 ‘Northern Irish’.

⁶ According to the Census of England and Wales, the White Irish population was 531,087 in 2001 and 507,465 in 2021, with a reduction of 4.4%.

⁷ Moreover, like in the Census of England and Wales, Scotland’s Census has a question on ‘National Identity’, with the options including Scottish, English, Northern Irish, Welsh and British. In 2022, 17,897 people ticked ‘Northern Irish’ as their main identity.

As for those who indicate their ethnicity as falling within the 'Gypsy/Traveller' category, their number is significantly smaller: 3,343 people in total, representing about 0.1% of the population of Scotland and 0.3% of all minority groups. This compares to 67,768 'Gypsy and Irish Travellers' recorded in the Census of England and Wales (0.1% of the population). Again, it is also worth highlighting that the different classification adopted across the two nations makes it difficult to make a proper comparison—though in both cases census data does not allow us to count Irish Travellers separately.

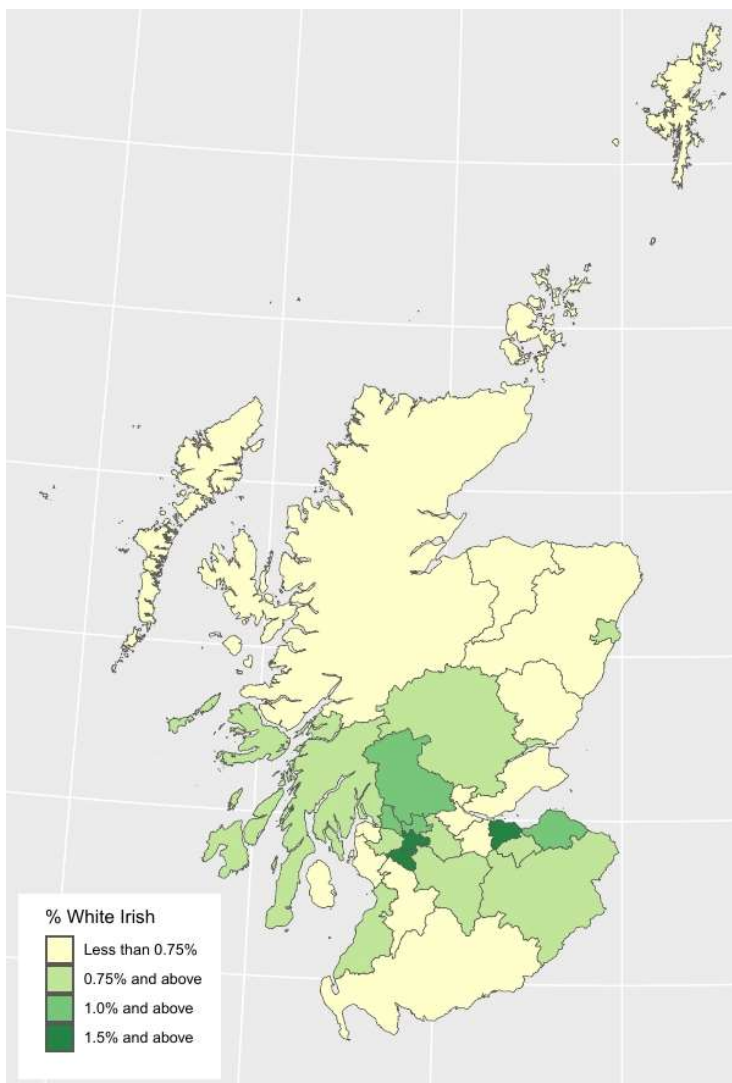
Table 2: Residents of Scotland by Ethnicity, 2022

	#	%
White Scottish	4,226,965	77.7%
Other White British	510,354	9.4%
Other White	254,336	4.7%
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	72,871	1.3%
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	60,899	1.1%
African, African Scottish or African British	58,636	1.1%
White Irish	56,877	1.0%
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	52,951	1.0%
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	47,075	0.9%
Other Asian	32,187	0.6%
Other ethnic group	27,328	0.5%
Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British	22,304	0.4%
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	6,934	0.1%
Caribbean or Black	6,778	0.1%
White: Gypsy/ Traveller	3,343	0.1%

Regarding geographical distribution (see Figure 2), the highest concentration of White Irish people in 2022 was registered in Edinburgh, where they represented 2% of the resident population and about 1/5 of all Irish people in Scotland. Over the last ten years, the Scottish capital has also seen a well-above average increase of Irish people: +20% since the previous Census of 2011. This is followed by Glasgow and the neighbouring council area of East Renfrewshire—where the self-identified White Irish comprise over 1.6% of all local residents.

Figure 3 provides an indication of the relative change of the White Irish component across census areas; though the seemingly large percentage decrease registered in areas such as the Shetland islands refers to very small populations of less than 200.

Figure 2: People who identify as White Irish as a percentage of total resident population



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GIS analysis: Dr Phil Jones (University of Derby)

Table 3: Ethnicity—2001-2022

Ethnicity	2001	2011	2022
All Ethnic minorities	229,255	432,616	702,530
White Gypsy/Traveller	...	4,212	3,349
White Irish	49,428	54,090	56,882
% White Irish (of all Ethnic minorities)	21.6%	12.5%	8.1%
Scotland population	5,062,011	5,295,403	5,439,843

Figure 3: Change in 'White Irish' population, 2011-2022

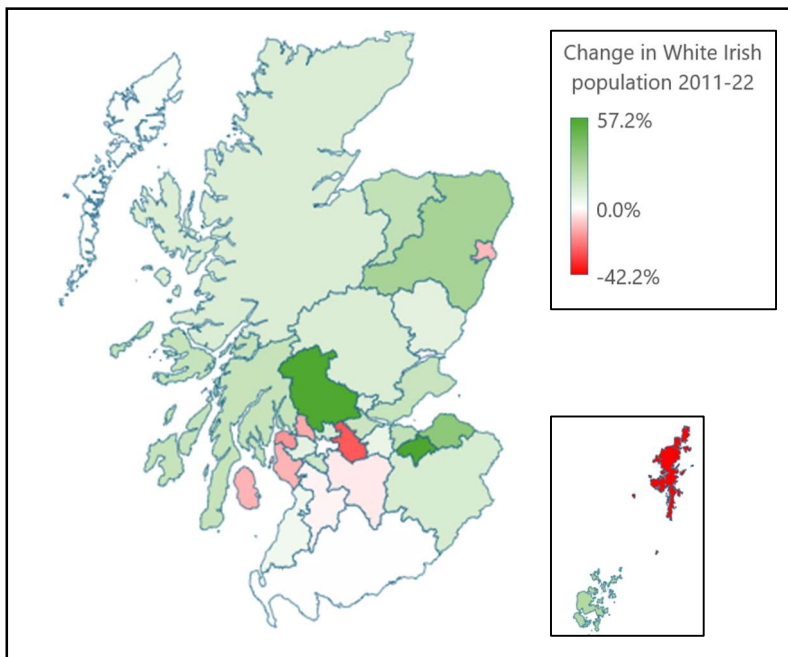


Table 4: ‘White Irish’ population by local area

	White Irish	White Irish as % of total population	White Irish as % of ethnic minority population	Change in White Irish population size since 2011
SCOTLAND	56,882	1.0%	8.1%	5.2%
<i>Aberdeen City</i>	<i>1,963</i>	<i>0.9%</i>	<i>3.5%</i>	<i>-11.3%</i>
<i>Aberdeenshire</i>	<i>1,493</i>	<i>0.6%</i>	<i>7.2%</i>	<i>28.5%</i>
<i>Angus</i>	<i>577</i>	<i>0.5%</i>	<i>8.3%</i>	<i>8.9%</i>
<i>Argyll & Bute</i>	<i>853</i>	<i>1.0%</i>	<i>15.1%</i>	<i>18.3%</i>
<i>City of Edinburgh</i>	<i>10,326</i>	<i>2.0%</i>	<i>7.1%</i>	<i>20.0%</i>
<i>Clackmannanshire</i>	<i>337</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>9.3%</i>	<i>10.1%</i>
<i>Dumfries & Galloway</i>	<i>1,062</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>15.7%</i>	<i>-0.1%</i>
<i>Dundee City</i>	<i>1,342</i>	<i>0.9%</i>	<i>5.4%</i>	<i>-2.0%</i>
<i>East Ayrshire</i>	<i>622</i>	<i>0.5%</i>	<i>13.0%</i>	<i>-1.7%</i>
<i>East Dunbartonshire</i>	<i>1,402</i>	<i>1.3%</i>	<i>13.2%</i>	<i>12.3%</i>
<i>East Lothian</i>	<i>1,186</i>	<i>1.1%</i>	<i>12.5%</i>	<i>36.3%</i>
<i>East Renfrewshire</i>	<i>1,595</i>	<i>1.6%</i>	<i>10.2%</i>	<i>14.7%</i>
<i>Falkirk</i>	<i>1,030</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>8.9%</i>	<i>16.8%</i>
<i>Fife</i>	<i>2,658</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>7.9%</i>	<i>17.6%</i>
<i>Glasgow City</i>	<i>11,130</i>	<i>1.8%</i>	<i>6.6%</i>	<i>-0.9%</i>
<i>Highland</i>	<i>1,549</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>8.3%</i>	<i>11.5%</i>
<i>Inverclyde</i>	<i>587</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>16.5%</i>	<i>-17.3%</i>
<i>Midlothian</i>	<i>745</i>	<i>0.8%</i>	<i>7.9%</i>	<i>57.2%</i>
<i>Moray</i>	<i>514</i>	<i>0.6%</i>	<i>8.8%</i>	<i>19.5%</i>
<i>Na h-Eilean Siar</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>0.5%</i>	<i>12.7%</i>	<i>1.6%</i>
<i>North Ayrshire</i>	<i>831</i>	<i>0.6%</i>	<i>15.1%</i>	<i>-12.3%</i>
<i>North Lanarkshire</i>	<i>3,188</i>	<i>0.9%</i>	<i>12.3%</i>	<i>-27.4%</i>
<i>Orkney Islands</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>0.6%</i>	<i>12.9%</i>	<i>25.0%</i>
<i>Perth & Kinross</i>	<i>1,266</i>	<i>0.8%</i>	<i>8.5%</i>	<i>11.4%</i>
<i>Renfrewshire</i>	<i>1,778</i>	<i>1.0%</i>	<i>10.1%</i>	<i>8.2%</i>
<i>Scottish Borders</i>	<i>864</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>11.9%</i>	<i>12.6%</i>
<i>Shetland Islands</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>0.5%</i>	<i>8.5%</i>	<i>-42.2%</i>
<i>South Ayrshire</i>	<i>947</i>	<i>0.8%</i>	<i>17.3%</i>	<i>4.5%</i>
<i>South Lanarkshire</i>	<i>3,078</i>	<i>0.9%</i>	<i>13.0%</i>	<i>-3.4%</i>
<i>Stirling</i>	<i>1,295</i>	<i>1.4%</i>	<i>13.0%</i>	<i>56.8%</i>
<i>West Dunbartonshire</i>	<i>1,006</i>	<i>1.1%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>	<i>-13.9%</i>
<i>West Lothian</i>	<i>1,290</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>6.1%</i>	<i>6.7%</i>

Passports held

In addition to Country of Birth and Ethnicity—the variables most widely used to count the Irish population—the 2022 Scotland Census also collected, for the first time, information on passport holders. The total number of respondents holding an Irish passport was 52,206.⁸ This is nearly two-and-a-half times higher than the number of people born in the Republic of Ireland, and broadly comparable to the total number of individuals born across the whole island of Ireland. Unsurprisingly, the geographical distribution of passport data aligns with what emerges from the other statistics presented so far (see Table 5).

Table 5: Irish passport holders in Scotland

	Number of Irish passport holders	% holding an Irish passport
SCOTLAND	52,206	1.0%
<i>Aberdeen City</i>	2,211	1.0%
<i>Aberdeenshire</i>	1,579	0.6%
<i>Angus</i>	501	0.4%
<i>Argyll & Bute</i>	732	0.9%
<i>City of Edinburgh</i>	12,042	2.3%
<i>Clackmannanshire</i>	283	0.5%
<i>Dumfries & Galloway</i>	763	0.5%
<i>Dundee City</i>	1,247	0.8%
<i>East Ayrshire</i>	473	0.4%
<i>East Dunbartonshire</i>	1,363	1.3%
<i>East Lothian</i>	1,287	1.1%
<i>East Renfrewshire</i>	1,337	1.4%
<i>Falkirk</i>	802	0.5%
<i>Fife</i>	2,525	0.7%
<i>Glasgow City</i>	9,421	1.5%
<i>Highland</i>	1,648	0.7%
<i>Inverclyde</i>	361	0.5%
<i>Midlothian</i>	832	0.9%
<i>Moray</i>	487	0.5%
<i>Na h-Eilean Siar</i>	140	0.5%
<i>North Ayrshire</i>	574	0.4%
<i>North Lanarkshire</i>	1,653	0.5%
<i>Orkney Islands</i>	101	0.5%
<i>Perth & Kinross</i>	1,288	0.9%
<i>Renfrewshire</i>	1,413	0.8%
<i>Scottish Borders</i>	923	0.8%
<i>Shetland Islands</i>	97	0.4%
<i>South Ayrshire</i>	722	0.6%
<i>South Lanarkshire</i>	2,229	0.7%
<i>Stirling</i>	1,341	1.4%
<i>West Dunbartonshire</i>	663	0.8%
<i>West Lothian</i>	1,157	0.6%

⁸ This refers to individuals holding an Irish passport as their only passport or as one of dual or multiple passports.

Structure of the Irish population and migration history

The demographic structure of the Irish community living in Scotland is quite similar to that of the overall resident population, with a larger proportion of young people (particularly among women) and a smaller proportion of older people (see Figure 4a). This is another significant difference from the Irish in England and Wales who—as detailed in our previous census report—tend to be significantly older (see Figure 4b).

Such a pattern is also a reflection of two very different migration histories. Whilst over 40% of the Irish-born residents living in England and Wales had arrived before 1971, this proportion is only about 20% in Scotland, with about half of all Irish-born residents having arrived after the year 2000.

This is detailed in Table 6, below, which breaks down the population born in the Republic of Ireland by decade of arrival. The data also show how—after a post-war reduction—Scotland has registered increasing arrivals of Irish people from the 1980s onwards, with a significant peak during the 2017-2022 period. Moreover, this timeseries reveals how the number of people who self-identify as White Irish is consistently lower than the number of migrants from the Republic of Ireland.

Finally, the fact that the Irish population in Scotland is predominantly Northern Ireland-born—as discussed in the previous sections—is another key difference with the patterns seen in England and Wales, and quite noteworthy. It is a reflection of the geographical proximity and, above all, of a long-standing history of population movements between Northern Ireland and Scotland dating back centuries. In particular, in the 19th century, while Scotland was (like Ireland) a country of international emigration it was at the same time a country of continued Irish immigration.⁹ Over time this produced significant demographic convergence¹⁰ and reinforced the major role the Irish played in Scotland in industry, employment, politics and religion.¹¹

⁹ See eg Cullen, L. M. (1999), 'Ireland and Scotland: Famines and Migrants', *Scottish Economic & Social History*, 19(2), 155-62.

¹⁰ Lisenkova, K., Mosca, I., & Wright, R. E. (2008), 'Ireland and Scotland: converging or diverging demography?', *Scottish Affairs*, 64(1), 18-36.

¹¹ Mccready, R. B., 'Revising the Irish in Scotland: The Irish in Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century Scotland', in *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andrew Bielenberg (Routledge: Oxford, 2013), 37-50.

Figure 4a: Population of Scotland—White Irish vs White Scottish/British

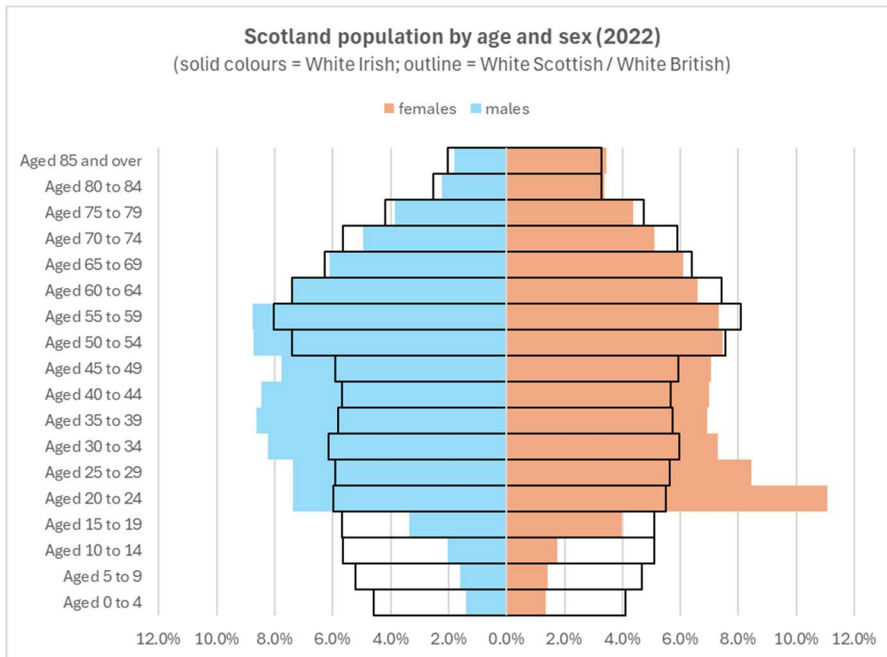


Figure 4b: 'White Irish' population—Scotland vs England and Wales

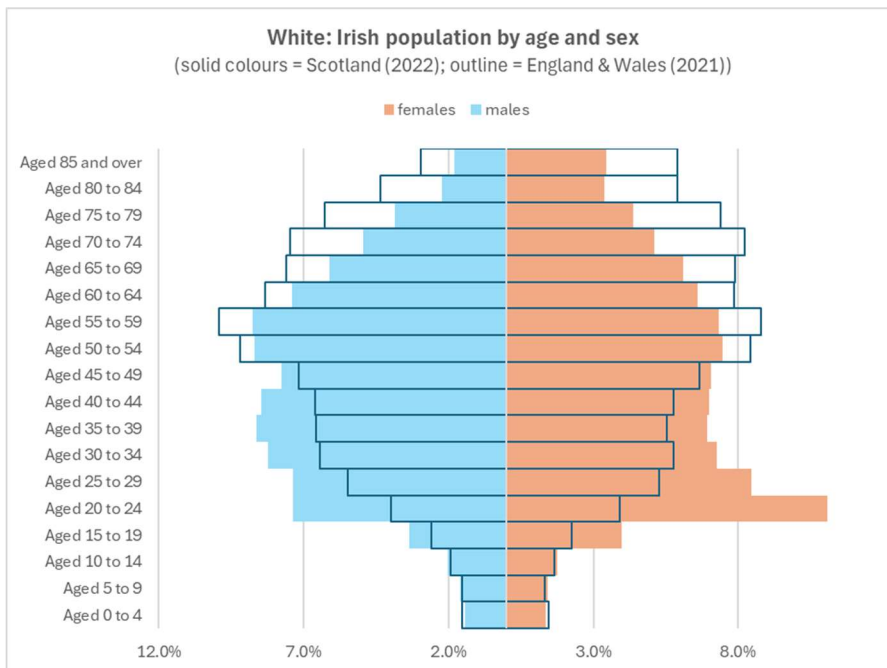


Table 6: Irish people in Scotland—by year of arrival*

	Country of Birth: Republic of Ireland		Ethnicity: White: Irish	
Born in Scotland	N/A	N/A	16,279	28.6%
Born in Northern Ireland	N/A	N/A	14,259	25.1%
Born in England and Wales	N/A	N/A	5,359	9.4%
Arrived before 1971	4,630	21.0%	3,911	6.9%
Arrived 1971 – 1980	1,870	8.5%	1,788	3.1%
Arrived 1981 – 1990	1,744	7.9%	1,709	3.0%
Arrived 1991 – 2000	2,424	11.0%	2,380	4.2%
Arrived 2001 – 2010	3,998	18.1%	3,780	6.6%
Arrived 2011 – 2016	3,071	13.9%	2,880	5.1%
Arrived 2017 – 2022	4,343	19.7%	4,536	8.0%
Total	22,080	100.0%	56,882	100.0%

* note: data refers to arrivals to Scotland from outside the UK

Figure 5: Migration from Republic of Ireland to Scotland

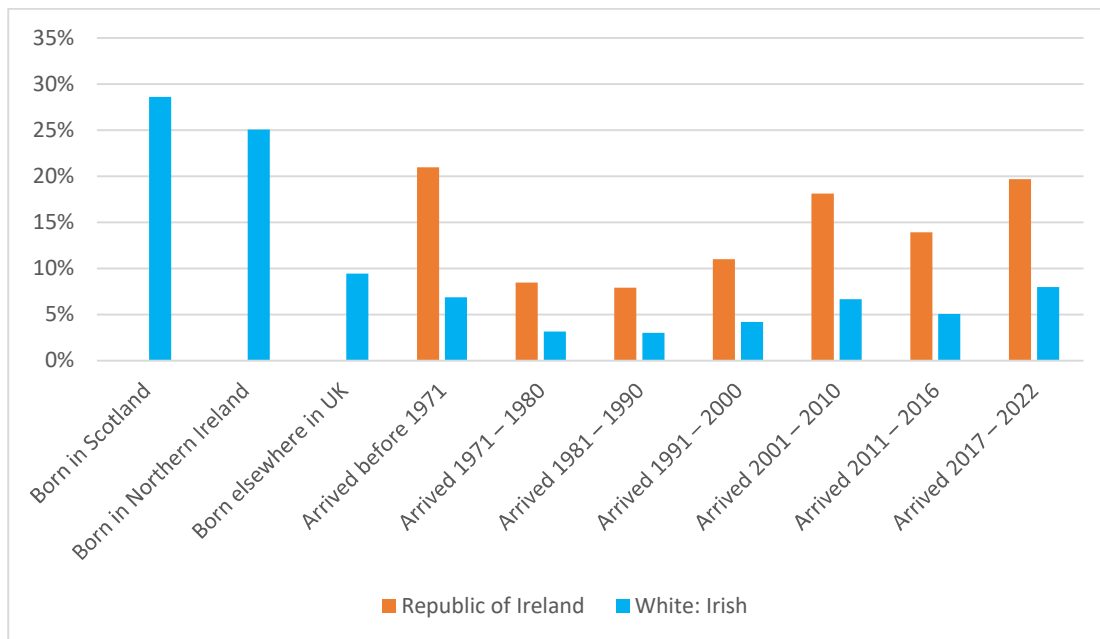


Figure 6: Migration from Republic of Ireland (Country of Birth)—Scotland v England & Wales

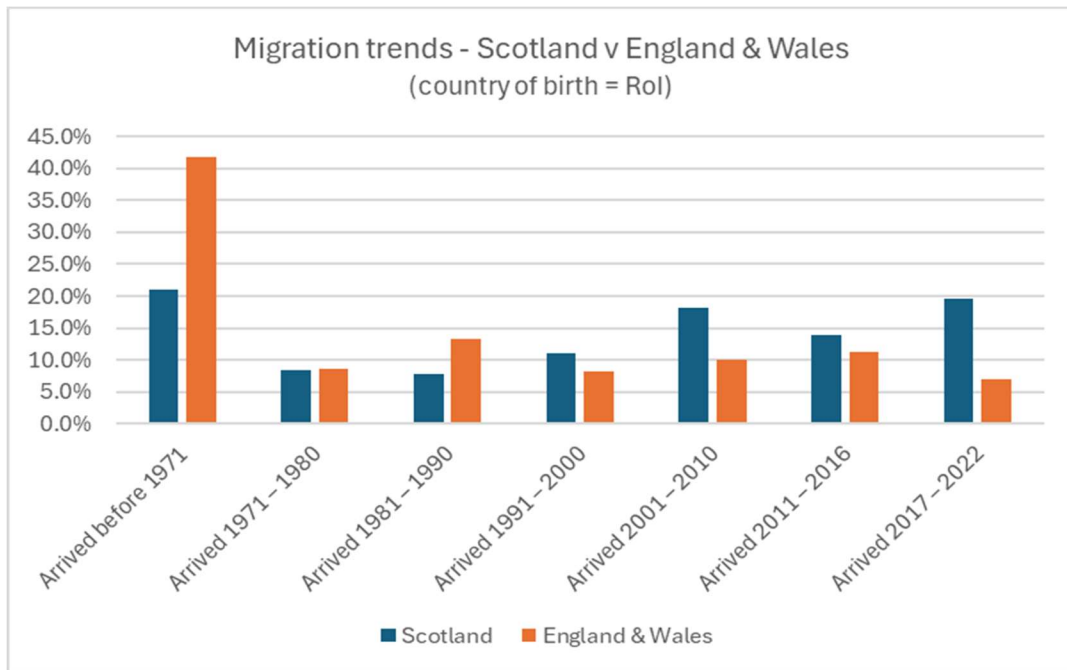
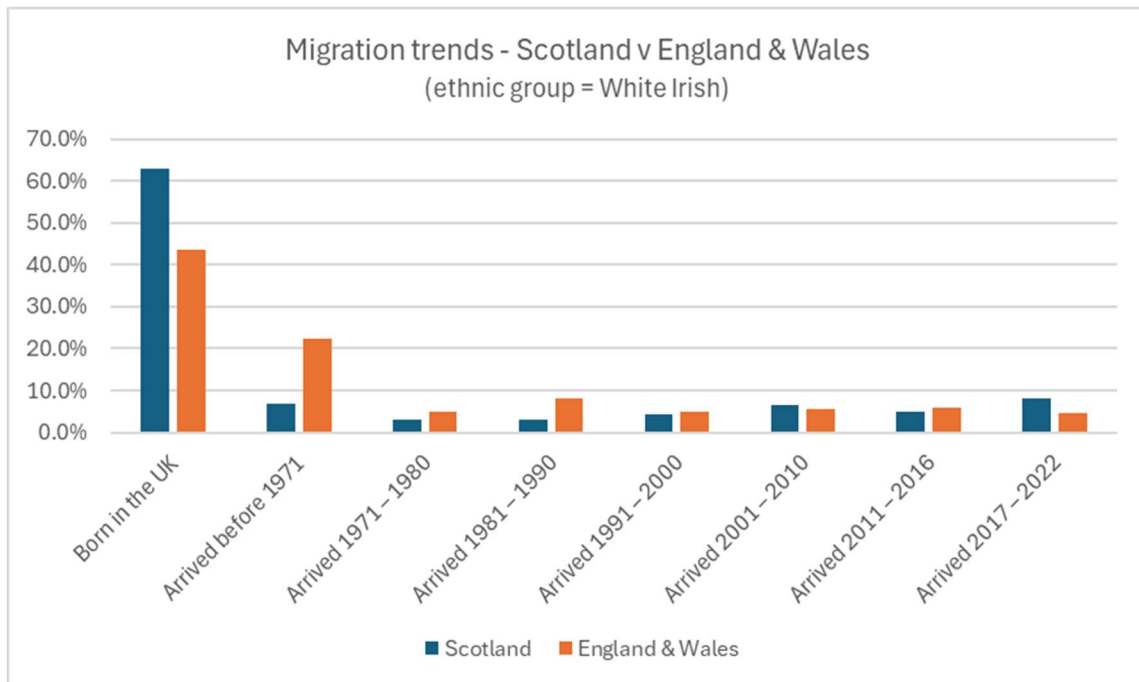


Figure 7: Migration trends of White Irish—Scotland v England & Wales



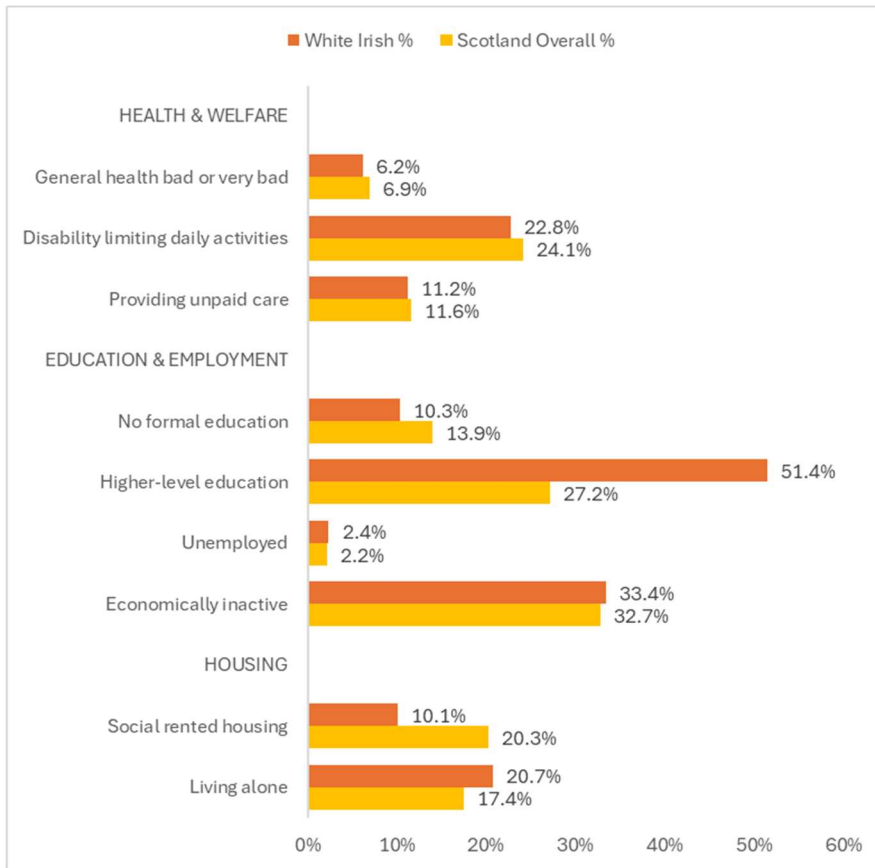
Social Indicators

The demographic composition and migration history of Irish people in Scotland is reflected in some of the key social indicators available from the census. The percentage of White Irish people reporting their general health as ‘bad or very bad’ (6.2%) is very similar—and indeed slightly better—than for the overall population of Scotland (6.9%). The same applies to statistics about eg self-reported ‘Disability limiting daily activities’ (22.8% for the Irish, vs 24.1% for Scotland overall), being providers of unpaid care (11.2% vs 11.6%) and being economically inactive (33.4% vs 32.7%). Those self-identifying as White Irish are nearly twice as likely to report a high-level educational qualification (51.4%, against 27.2% for the overall population) and much less likely to be in social rented housing (10.1% vs 20.3%). The White Irish are also more likely to live alone than the overall population (20.7% vs 17.4%).

Table 7: Key Social Indicators—White Irish vs Scotland Overall

	Scotland			
	White Irish		Scotland Overall	
	#	%	#	%
HEALTH & WELFARE				
General health bad or very bad	3,503	6.2%	377,746	6.9%
Disability limiting daily activities	12,953	22.8%	1,310,912	24.1%
Providing unpaid care	6,361	11.2%	627,719	11.6%
EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT				
No formal education	5,878	10.3%	757,417	13.9%
Higher-level education	29,240	51.4%	1,476,851	27.2%
Unemployed	1,347	2.4%	120,502	2.2%
Economically inactive	18,998	33.4%	1,780,416	32.7%
HOUSING				
Social rented housing	5,530	10.1%	1,080,899	20.3%
Living alone	11,369	20.7%	929,974	17.4%

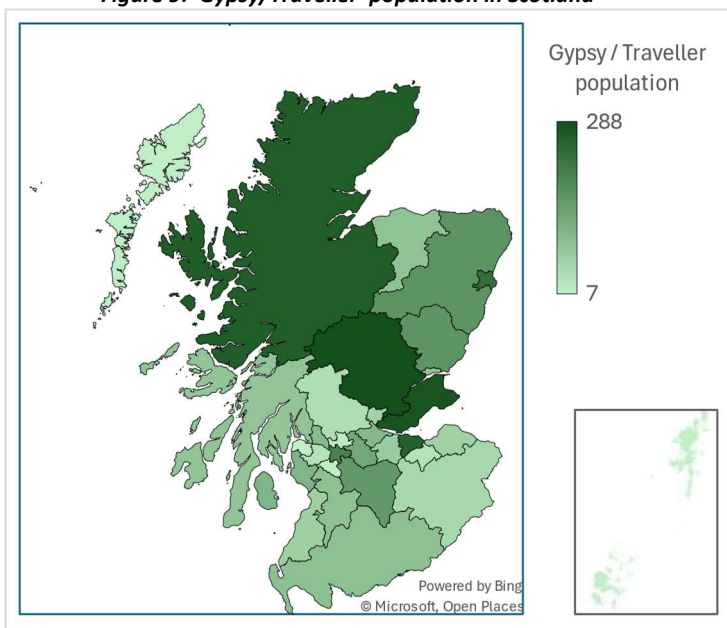
Figure 8: Key Social Indicators—White Irish vs Scotland Overall



Focus on Gypsy/Travellers

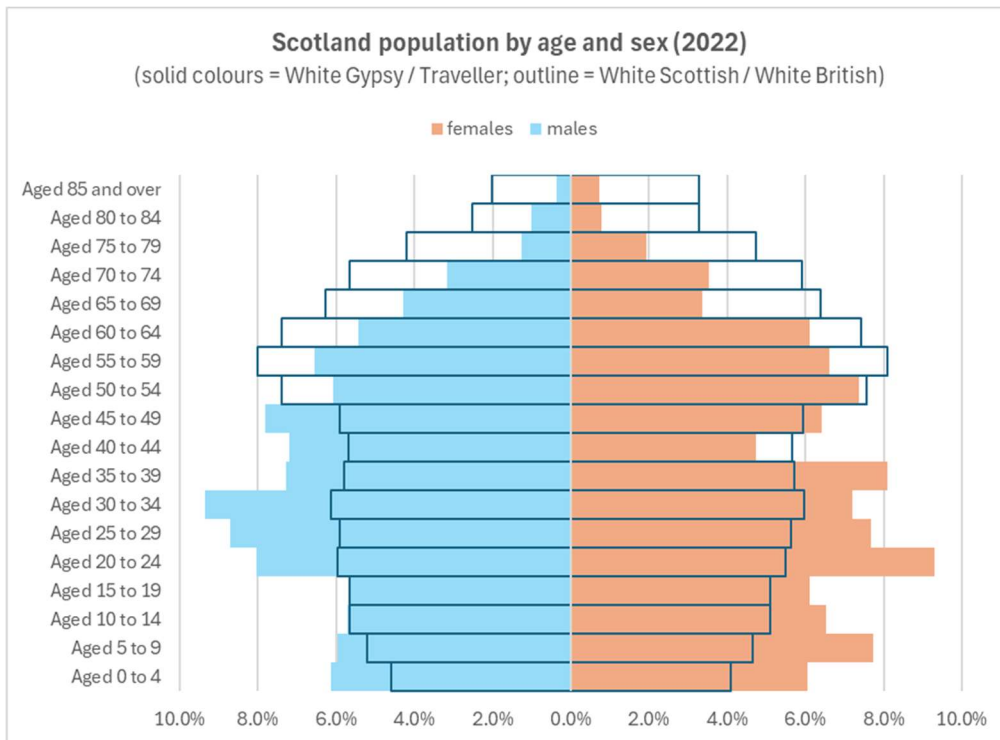
As discussed in the previous sections, the number of Scottish residents who self-identified as ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ is quite small—and significantly smaller than the ‘Gypsy and Irish Traveller’ population recorded in England and Wales. Major cities such as Edinburgh and Glasgow register only about 200 people each, while the census area with the largest number is Perth and Kinross, with 288 (see Figure 9 and Table 8). It is once again worth highlighting that the new classification adopted for Scotland’s Census 2022 does not allow for a direct comparison with the Census of England and Wales, and it is not even fully comparable with Scotland’s Census 2011.¹²

Figure 9: ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ population in Scotland



¹² Specifically, some people in the ‘Showman/Showwoman’ (1,687) and ‘Roma’ (3,218) ethnic groups in 2022 might have ticked ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ in 2011.

Figure 10: ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ population in Scotland—by age and sex



The ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ population is characterised by a larger proportion of younger people and a significantly smaller proportion of over 60s than the ‘White Scottish’ and ‘White British’ populations (as shown by Figure 10, above).

The socio-economic patterns emerging for this population are quite different from the ones referring to the Scottish majority and the White Irish. In particular, among Gypsy/Travellers, the proportion of people reporting ‘bad or very bad health’ (18.9%) is nearly three times higher than the average; as is the proportion of those having ‘no formal education’ (34.9% vs 13.9%). Moreover, nearly half-of the Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland are in social rented housing (49.8%) and economically inactive (44.7%). These data are summarised in Table 9 and Figure 11.

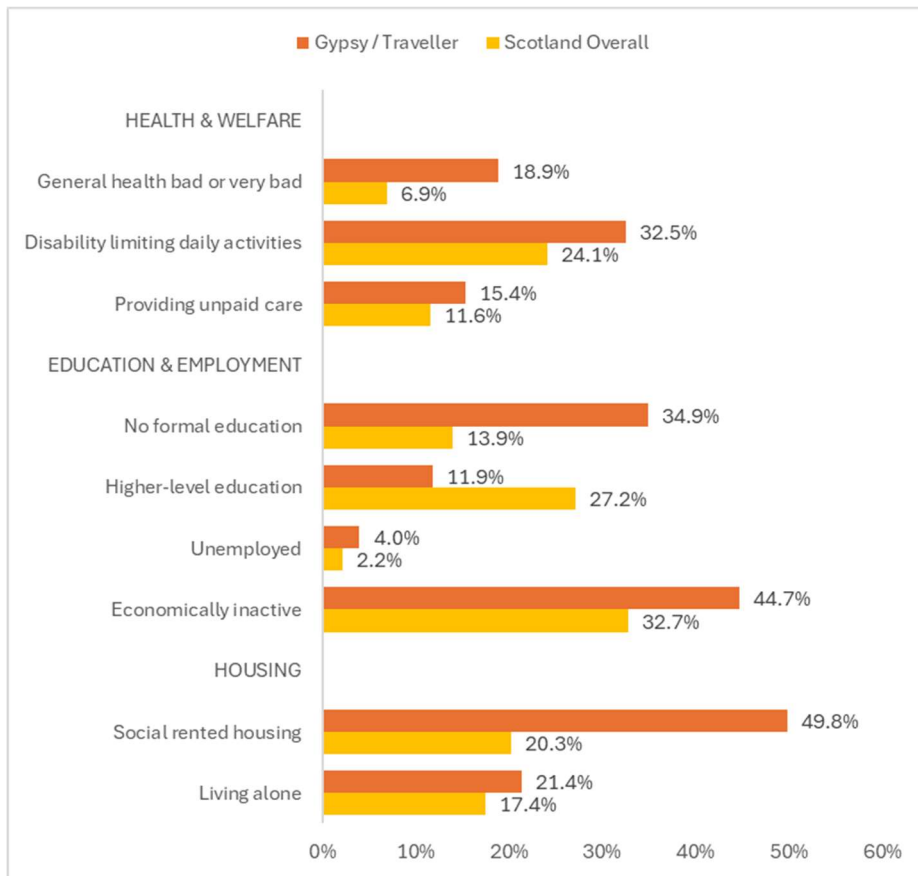
Table 8: 'Gypsy/Traveller' population by local area

	Gypsy/Traveller population	Gypsy/Traveller as % of total population	Gypsy/Traveller as % of ethnic minority population	Change in Gypsy/Traveller population size since 2011
SCOTLAND	3,343	0.06%	0.48%	-20.6%
<i>Aberdeen City</i>	234	0.10%	0.42%	-16.1%
<i>Aberdeenshire</i>	169	0.06%	0.82%	-3.4%
<i>Angus</i>	166	0.15%	2.40%	-12.2%
<i>Argyll & Bute</i>	84	0.10%	1.48%	-12.5%
<i>City of Edinburgh</i>	256	0.05%	0.18%	-34.0%
<i>Clackmannanshire</i>	56	0.11%	1.55%	-17.6%
<i>Dumfries & Galloway</i>	92	0.06%	1.36%	-9.8%
<i>Dundee City</i>	87	0.06%	0.35%	-11.2%
<i>East Ayrshire</i>	89	0.07%	1.85%	48.3%
<i>East Dunbartonshire</i>	15	0.01%	0.14%	-44.4%
<i>East Lothian</i>	61	0.05%	0.64%	369.2%
<i>East Renfrewshire</i>	10	0.01%	0.06%	-37.5%
<i>Falkirk</i>	103	0.07%	0.89%	-29.0%
<i>Fife</i>	277	0.07%	0.82%	-12.3%
<i>Glasgow City</i>	201	0.03%	0.12%	-50.6%
<i>Highland</i>	263	0.11%	1.41%	-9.6%
<i>Inverclyde</i>	7	0.01%	0.20%	-12.5%
<i>Midlothian</i>	31	0.03%	0.33%	-56.9%
<i>Moray</i>	87	0.09%	1.49%	10.1%
<i>Na h-Eilean Siar</i>	9	0.03%	0.89%	-10.0%
<i>North Ayrshire</i>	110	0.08%	2.00%	89.7%
<i>North Lanarkshire</i>	131	0.04%	0.50%	-36.1%
<i>Orkney Islands</i>	7	0.03%	0.72%	133.3%
<i>Perth & Kinross</i>	288	0.19%	1.94%	-30.6%
<i>Renfrewshire</i>	32	0.02%	0.18%	-54.3%
<i>Scottish Borders</i>	48	0.04%	0.66%	-25.0%
<i>Shetland Islands</i>	6	0.03%	0.44%	-25.0%
<i>South Ayrshire</i>	64	0.06%	1.17%	-34.7%
<i>South Lanarkshire</i>	158	0.05%	0.67%	-22.2%
<i>Stirling</i>	38	0.04%	0.38%	-44.1%
<i>West Dunbartonshire</i>	100	0.11%	1.84%	-2.0%
<i>West Lothian</i>	70	0.04%	0.33%	-11.4%

Table 9: Key Social Indicators—Gypsy/Traveller vs Scotland Overall

	Scotland			
	Gypsy/Traveller		Scotland Overall	
	#	%	#	%
HEALTH & WELFARE				
General health bad or very bad	633	18.9%	377,746	6.9%
Disability limiting daily activities	1,323	32.5%	1,310,912	24.1%
Providing unpaid care	516	15.4%	627,719	11.6%
EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT				
No formal education	1,168	34.9%	757,417	13.9%
Higher-level education	399	11.9%	1,476,851	27.2%
Unemployed	134	4.0%	120,502	2.2%
Economically inactive	1,493	44.7%	1,780,416	32.7%
HOUSING				
Social rented housing	1,575	49.8%	1,080,899	20.3%
Living alone	676	21.4%	929,974	17.4%

Figure 11: Key Social Indicators—Gypsy/Traveller vs Scotland Overall



Conclusions

The picture emerging from the Census of Scotland 2022 is significantly different from that of England and Wales. Although the Irish population is considerably smaller in absolute numbers, it represents a similar proportion of the total residents. Moreover, the Irish in Scotland constitute a much younger and more recently-arrived population. Of the first-generation migrants currently living in Scotland, more people arrived in the 2017-2022 period than at any point before 1971. Among the Ireland born, those coming from Northern Ireland represent 60% of all the Irish living in Scotland (this compares to about one third among the Irish in England and Wales), reflecting a long-term history of migration across these two areas. Overall, since the early 1990s, the total number of Irish-born in Scotland has increased by over 10,000, whilst the number of those who self-identify as White Irish has grown from around 49,000 in 2001 to over 56,000 in 2022 (+14%).

Partially as a reflection of this very different population profile, the Irish in Scotland tend to feature similarly—or even better—than the overall Scottish population regarding general indicators of self-reported health, wellbeing and social housing. The proportion of people with degree-level education is nearly twice the Scottish average.

There is a contrasting trend however for the few thousands of people who self-identify as Gypsy/Traveller, with proportions of people reporting bad health and no formal education approximately three times higher than the general population of Scotland.

When combining the data across all of Britain, census statistics highlight the high levels of diversity across the Irish with regard to life-courses, socio-economic profiles, cultural identities, roles played within society and needs that are met by public services and community support. The Irish community in Scotland has a younger profile reporting better health outcomes and has grown in the last two decades in contrast with the data from England and Wales, presenting different challenges and opportunities for emigrant organisations. It is notable that such a large proportion of the Irish community in Scotland— by country of birth and ethnicity metrics—arrived in the five years up to the 2022 Census Day.

Examination of the data emerging from the 2022 Scotland Census prompts new research questions. Further analysis on the interaction between nationality and ethnic identity could help to understand how Irish identity figures within the second- and third-generation Irish. As highlighted, the 'White Irish' category does not fully capture the diversity of the Irish community in Scotland, omitting those of mixed heritage. Furthermore, qualitative analysis would be needed to better understand attitudes towards the 'White Irish' ethnicity category, compared with 'White Scottish', among second- and third-generation Irish. This report, based on the latest available statistical data, provides key evidential insights for future research into the Irish in Scotland.



Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
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