

Scottish Islands Data Overview (2023)



Berneray. Credit: K Gow

December 2023

Highlights

Why was the research needed?

Previously, there has been a lack of Scottish islands level data. The demand for Scottish islands data has grown since the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. The [Scottish Islands Data Dashboard](#) delivers specifically on the commitment to help gather better island level data. Scottish islands level data is required for [Island Community Impact Assessments](#) (ICIAs), which are a statutory requirement under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, as well as to monitor progress on the National Islands Plan strategic objectives. This new dashboard also responds to the desire from the Scottish Government's Rural Affairs and Islands (RAI) committee to see greater detail on progress and performance against the Plan.

What did we do?

Key data sources have been selected for each of the strategic objectives outlined in the [National Plan for Scotland's Islands \(2019\)](#):

1. Population
2. Sustainable economic development
3. Transport
4. Housing
5. Fuel poverty
6. Digital connectivity
7. Health, social care and wellbeing
8. Environmental wellbeing
9. Climate change mitigation
10. Communities
11. Arts, culture and language
12. Education

Scottish island-level data has been compiled into an easy-to-understand dashboard. In some cases we transformed the data and presented it using the new [Scottish Islands Region geography](#).

Key messages from the data dashboard have been summarised in this report. The Rural Scotland Data Dashboard, which will be available shortly, will be published alongside a separate report giving a detailed picture of evidence on rural Scotland.

What did we learn?

The data presented on this dashboard demonstrates the diversity within and across Scottish islands. Compiling the available Scottish Islands level data gives evidence of both positive island attributes as well as challenges.

Next steps

The Scottish Government will continue to develop island level data sources and use these to monitor progress on the National Islands Plan strategic objectives and contribute to Island Community Impact Assessments (ICIAs).

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Executive summary

This report provides a snapshot of island-level data relating to Scotland's islands as collated in the new [Scottish Islands Data Dashboard](#). The interactive dashboard responds to the commitment set out in the [National Islands Plan](#) to “review the availability, usefulness of, and the wider barriers to, island level data both at an individual island level, groups of islands and consider the creation of a ‘Scottish islands’ data level in order to better understand the challenges faced by island communities”.

The data snapshots provided here relate to the strategic objectives set out in the National Islands Plan covering: population; sustainable economic development; transport; housing; fuel poverty; digital connectivity; health, social care and wellbeing; environment biosecurity; climate change and energy; empowered island communities; arts, culture and language; and education. In relation to these, the report also highlights a number of positive attributes of Scotland's islands including:

- Higher than average employment rates in most island areas compared with the Scottish average.
- High levels of Gross Value Added in a number of island regions.
- Improved access to high-speed internet in the islands in recent years.
- High levels of satisfaction with access to GPs, pharmacies and dental healthcare.
- A strong sense of community belonging across island areas.
- High levels of cultural participation across the islands.

However, the report highlights a number of challenges facing Scotland's islands including:

- Island populations are either declining or growing more slowly than in mainland areas and have an increasingly older age profile across all island groups.
- Falling numbers of private sector businesses in a number of island areas.
- Low satisfaction with the cost of transport in island areas.
- High levels of non-resident home ownership compared to the Scottish average.
- Low recycling rates compared with the Scottish average.
- High levels of energy inefficiency in homes and higher levels of fuel poverty across most island areas compared with the Scottish average.
- Significant potential risks to the islands from climate change in terms of flooding and contamination of freshwater.
- High suicide rates in most island local regions compared with the Scottish average.

In doing so the report highlights how the [Scottish Islands Data Dashboard](#), which uses the new [Scottish Islands Region Geography](#) to frame existing data-sets, might improve our understanding of Scotland's islands.

1 Introduction

The [Scottish Islands Data Dashboard](#) collates existing data on the Scottish Islands in order to enable policymakers and other stakeholders to easily access key Scottish Islands data on a variety of topics. Data for each of the strategic objectives outlined in The National Plan for Scotland's Islands (2019) has been compiled. Within each strategic objective, key data sources have been selected to allow for monitoring of progress towards achieving these objectives. This report briefly presents and summarises some of the key information located within the Scottish Islands Data Dashboard

1.1 Scotland's Islands

Our islands contribute to national life in a variety of ways. As well as playing a key role in how we understand ourselves as a nation they also influence the way international audiences see Scotland. As such they are integral to our national identity while also preserving and promoting strong local identities. The people and communities in Scotland's inhabited islands, both those born in the islands and those who have moved there, are key to this.

The National Islands Plan consultation, carried out in 2018, identified that those living in Scotland's islands value the strong sense of community, freedom and safety that life in the islands offers. The islands' important economic role, their spectacular natural environment, and their rich cultural heritage mean that they are both valued by the nation and are a draw for visitors and investors from around the world who hold a special affection for our islands. Islands and island communities in Scotland are innovative and resilient, often developing examples of community-based solutions in estate management, energy, and digital connectivity, or pioneering health delivery, arts provision, and support for language and culture. This not only benefits local communities but can also produce ideas and solutions that can be then exported to the mainland.

While there are many positive aspects of life in Scotland's islands, (including access to green spaces), the communities and individuals who live there can experience specific challenges. Many of these challenges are related to geographical location, higher costs, reliance on ferries, and distances from services. This has often led to islanders and island communities feeling that they are on the periphery of public policy. In particular, island communities have previously often felt that decisions which directly affect them were taken by people not living in the island who were detached from the reality of life away from the mainland. In addition, depopulation has been identified as a key issue affecting many island areas. While most islands have in the past experienced much stronger population levels, a pattern of long-term out-migration from the islands has affected many island communities, leading to challenges with service provision and community sustainability. It is in this context that the Scottish Government has developed proactive policies to address the challenges faced by island communities and build sustainable island futures for local and national benefit.

1.2 Policy context

Scotland's first ever National Islands Plan was published in 2019 as a provision of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 which set out the Scottish Government's objective of ensuring that there is a sustained focus across the Scottish Government and the public sector to meet the needs of islanders - now and in the future, with the aim of improving outcomes for communities. The

Act received Royal Assent on 6 July 2018, the first Commencement Regulations were laid on 20 September 2018, and the act came into force on 4 October 2018. The Act is an historic piece of place-based legislation that carries the promise of improving island governance and policy in Scotland and included a duty on Scottish Ministers to prepare a National Islands Plan.

The National Islands Plan addressed the requirement in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 to “set out the main objectives and strategy of the Scottish Ministers in relation to improving outcomes for island communities that result from, or are contributed to by, the carrying out of functions of a public nature”. In preparing the plan, Scottish Ministers were required to consider the distinctive geographical, natural heritage and cultural characteristics (including the linguistic heritage) of each of the areas inhabited by island communities. The initial five-year plan is currently under review, as required by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, and the Scottish Government is working with local authorities, island communities and relevant sectors and partners to ensure this process is as thorough and effective as possible. The review will provide vital feedback from those most impacted by the National Islands Plan.

1.3 Improving island-level data

Strategic objective 13 of the National Islands Plan focuses on supporting the effective implementation of the plan. In relation to this objective, the plan sets out a commitment to “review the availability, usefulness of, and the wider barriers to, island level data both at an individual island level, groups of islands and consider the creation of a ‘Scottish islands’ data level in order to better understand the challenges faced by island communities” and a range of work has been undertaken to support this.

The recent release of the [Scottish Islands Region Geography](#) has facilitated new island-level evidence sources, including i) the National Records of Scotland (NRS)’s [Scottish Island Regions population dashboard](#), ii) Household estimates outlining [occupied and vacant dwellings in Scottish Island Regions](#), and iii) the [Sub-Scotland Economic Statistics database](#). Charts on households (including second homes and vacant properties) have now been added to the NRS Island regions interactive dashboard. In addition, the next routine release of house price data by Registers of Scotland in November 2023 will include information covering the Scottish Islands Regions. These sources have been used in the development of a new dashboard which provides a compilation of Scottish Islands evidence, in conjunction with other sources.

1.4 Scottish Islands Data Dashboard

This new interactive Scottish Islands Data Dashboard uses existing datasets, as identified by a review of data in 2022/23, to create an additional mechanism to monitor the National Islands Plan. The dashboard presents island data categorised by the strategic objectives set out in the plan. Where possible the new Scottish Islands Region Geography has been applied to the existing data. However, some data are only available at a Local Authority level. Where Local Authority level data has been used this has been clearly highlighted in the dashboard. The following chapters summarise the key points from each section of the dashboard.

Alongside developing the Scottish Islands Data Dashboard, we have also been developing a similar data dashboard for rural Scotland. The Rural Scotland Data Dashboard, which will be available shortly, will provide evidence for the Rural Delivery Plan and a separate report focusing on this dashboard will be made available.

1.5 Other useful resources

Scottish island regions 2023: overview

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-island-regions-2023-overview/>

Scottish island regions 2023: best-fitting data zones

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-island-regions-2023-best-fitting-data-zones/>

Population Estimates of Scottish Island Regions (2011 Data Zone based)

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/2011-based-special-area-population-estimates/population-estimates-by-island-region>

Small area population estimates for Scotland, 2021 (interactive map)

<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/nrs-small-area-population-estimates-map/>

Scottish Island Regions GIS files

<https://spatialdata.gov.scot/geonetwork/srv/eng/catalog.search#/metadata/77581afc-9f8b-477d-9b8c-f130af35a283>

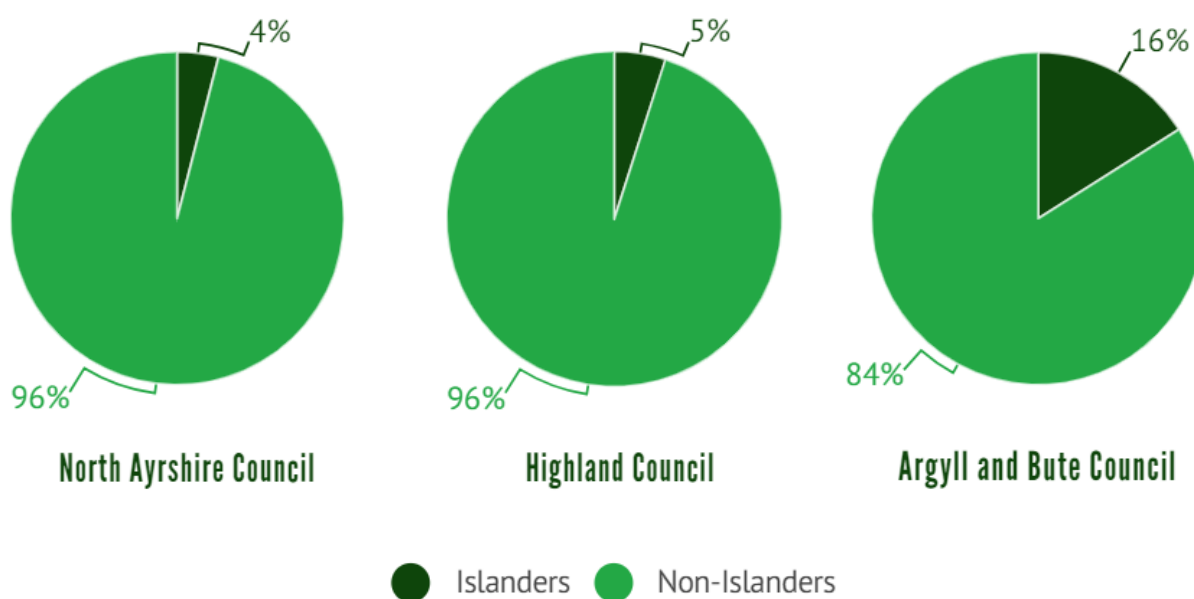
2 Island Geographies

2.1 Local Authority

Scotland is divided into 32 administrative areas for the purposes of local government. According to the Islands (Scotland) Act (2018), there are 6 Local Authorities which contain inhabited, offshore islands.

Shetland Islands Council, Orkney Islands Council, and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are Local Authorities which are completely made up of islands. However, Argyll and Bute Council, Highland Council and North Ayrshire Council encompass a significant amount of mainland in addition to islands.

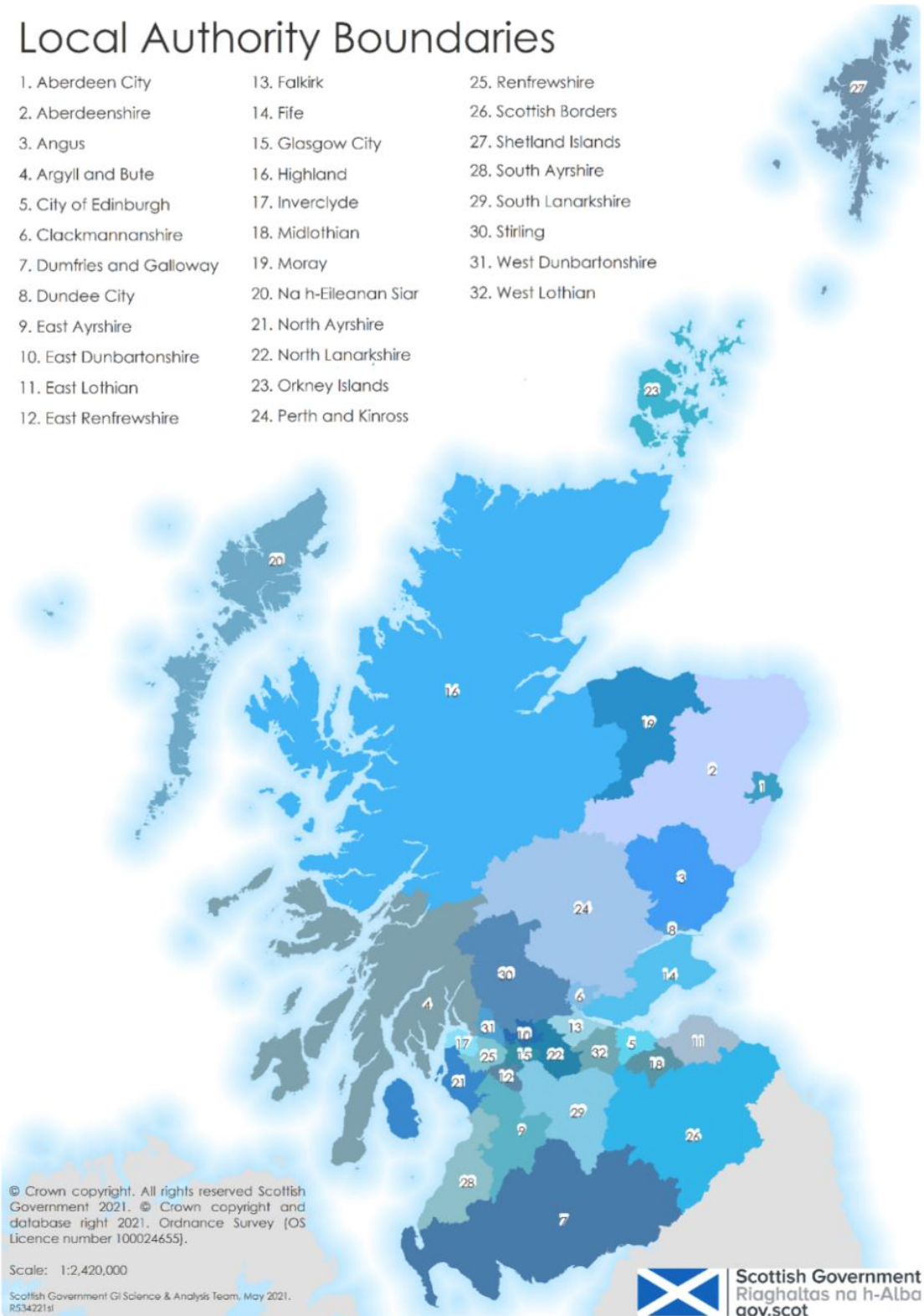
It is therefore important to note that the majority of the population in Argyll and Bute Council, Highland Council and North Ayrshire Council is not island based. As such, Local Authority statistics should be interpreted with caution.



Source: Population breakdowns calculated by National Records of Scotland using the [Mid-2021 Small Area Population Estimates and the Population Estimates of Scottish Island Regions](#).

Local Authority Boundaries

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Aberdeen City | 13. Falkirk | 25. Renfrewshire |
| 2. Aberdeenshire | 14. Fife | 26. Scottish Borders |
| 3. Angus | 15. Glasgow City | 27. Shetland Islands |
| 4. Argyll and Bute | 16. Highland | 28. South Ayrshire |
| 5. City of Edinburgh | 17. Inverclyde | 29. South Lanarkshire |
| 6. Clackmannanshire | 18. Midlothian | 30. Stirling |
| 7. Dumfries and Galloway | 19. Moray | 31. West Dunbartonshire |
| 8. Dundee City | 20. Na h-Eileanan Siar | 32. West Lothian |
| 9. East Ayrshire | 21. North Ayrshire | |
| 10. East Dunbartonshire | 22. North Lanarkshire | |
| 11. East Lothian | 23. Orkney Islands | |
| 12. East Renfrewshire | 24. Perth and Kinross | |



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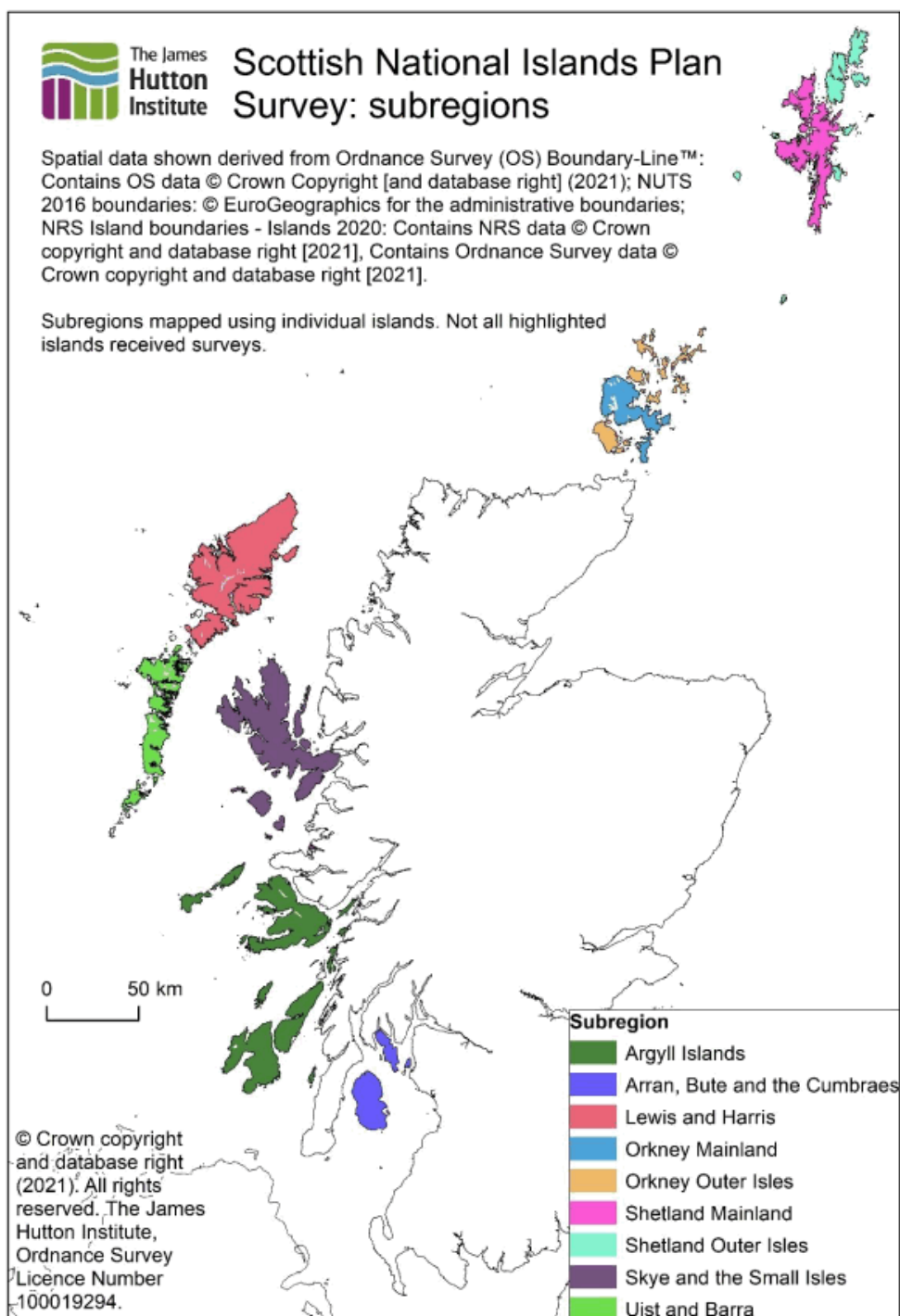
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Scottish Government GI Science & Analysis Team, May 2021. R534221st



2.2 Island Groupings

The James Hutton Institute framework was created to reflect some of the diversity of islands within Local Authority areas and connections across these areas (i.e. for the Clyde Islands). The framework groups Scotland's islands into 9 distinct subregions, as illustrated on this map. The subregions were created from a subset of 100 islands from the National Records of Scotland (NRS) Islands 2020 product. All of the islands which were selected for inclusion were classed as inhabited or previously inhabited based on the 2020-2 Scottish Postcode Directory (i.e. they contained at least one Royal Mail Delivery Point).



3 Population



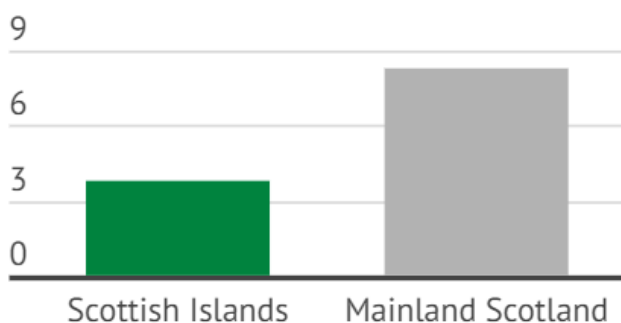
Whilst the overall population of Scotland's Islands has grown over the last 20 years, there is considerable variation and some islands have a declining population. Projected loss of working age population in the islands is anticipated to be disproportionately higher than elsewhere.

Population growth has been strongest in Orkney Mainland and Connected Islands and the Highland Islands, which have seen a population growth of 20% and 13% respectively. However, the population in Arran, Bute and the Cumbraes and the Shetland Outer Isles has declined by 13% and 9% respectively.

Large population losses are predicted in Island Sparsely Populated Areas (SPAs). Population sparsity presents direct difficulties for the viability of communities, businesses and services due to low access to people. Furthermore, the percentage loss of working age population in the islands is anticipated to be disproportionately higher than the total percentage loss of population.

The 2022 Census shows that Na h-Eileanan Siar saw the biggest population decrease (down 5.5%), while a 1.2% decrease in the Shetland Islands was driven by out-migration. In contrast, the Orkney Islands have grown by 3%.

Graph: % Population Change (2001-2021)



The projected population percentage change shows the highest reduction in children and working age population is in islands and remote rural areas (-23% and -15%).

Source: [Mid-year population estimates by Scottish Island Region](#), National Records of Scotland (2021)

4 Sustainable Economic Development

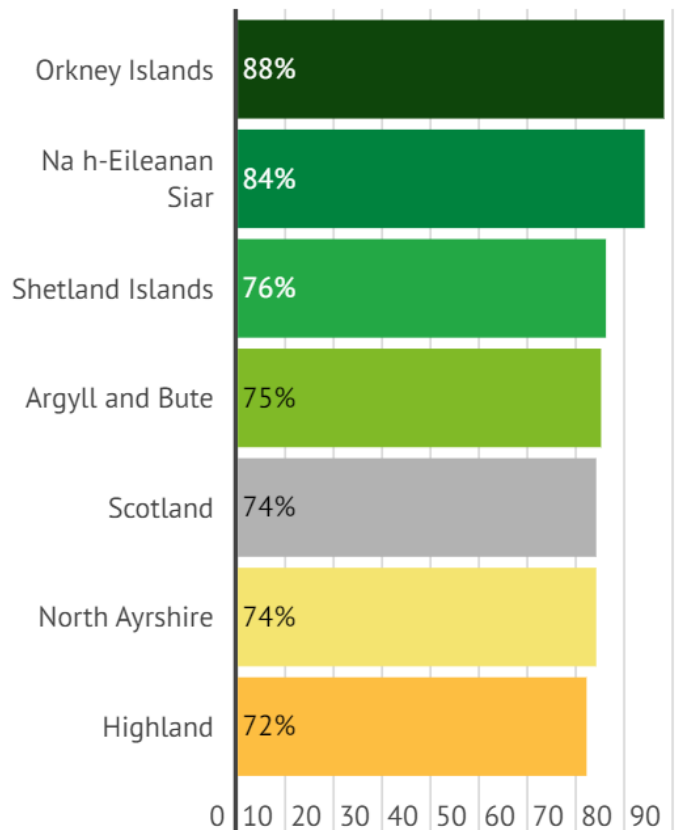


Isle of Cumbrae. Credit: Steve Douglas, Infogram/Unsplash

Most Island Local Authorities have a higher employment rate than the Scottish average.

With the exception of Highland and North Ayrshire, the Islands Local Authorities generally have a higher employment rate than the Scottish average in 2023. Orkney had the highest employment rate with 88% of those aged 16-64 in work. Highland council had the lowest employment rate with 72% of those aged 16-64 in work. Orkney, Highland and North Ayrshire councils all experienced greater drops in employment between 2020-21 than the Scottish average. This may suggest that these Local Authorities have been more negatively affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic than other Local Authority areas. However, in 2021-22 Orkney and North Ayrshire Council areas saw the greatest increase in employment. Highland Council saw no change.

Employment rates in Island Local Authorities (2022)



Source: [Annual Population Survey](#), National Records of Scotland (2023)

5 Transport

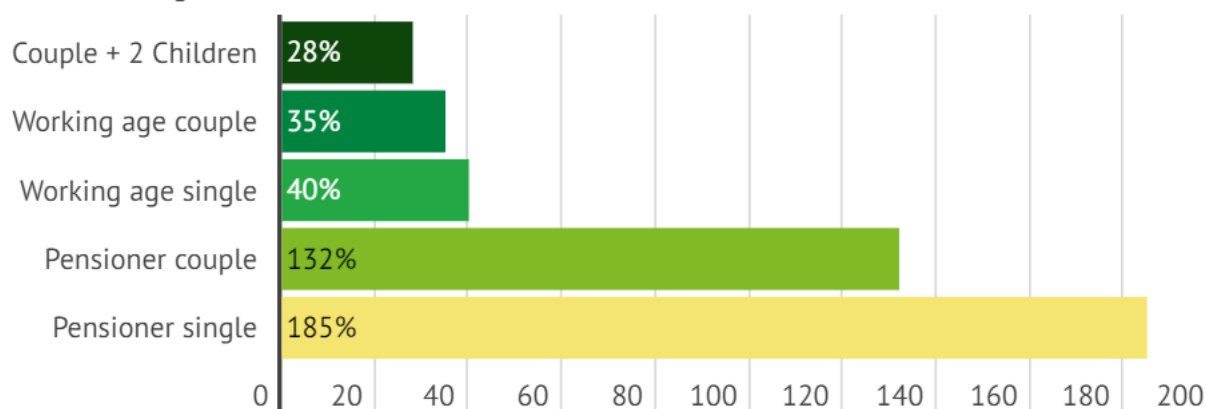


CalMac ferry. Credit: Adam Marikar, Infogram / Unsplash

Transport costs are significantly higher for Scottish island residents when compared to urban UK transport costs. The majority of island residents do not think that transport fares are good value for money.

Transport costs are significantly higher for Scottish island residents when compared to urban UK transport costs. Recognising this, Scottish Government provide concessionary ferry vouchers to those who are eligible to help them take journeys to the mainland. For those eligible for the national concessionary travel bus scheme and for ferry vouchers, vouchers are given for four single (or two return) free ferry trips to the Scottish mainland.

% Difference between urban UK and Island weekly travel costs in different Minimum income standard budgets



Source: [The cost of remoteness - reflecting higher living costs in remote rural Scotland when measuring fuel poverty: research report](#), Scottish Government (2021)

Island residents generally do not believe that transport fares are good value for money. For example, only 19% of island residents thought that flights to and from the mainland were good value for money. Islanders were also dissatisfied with the cost and reliability of inter-island air services.

6 Housing



Modern, energy efficient homes in Scalloway, Mainland Shetland Islands (istock)

A larger proportion of housing stock in island local authorities is energy inefficient than the Scottish average. Six out of ten Islanders think there is not enough housing available to meet local demand. House prices are highest in the Highland Islands followed by the Argyll Islands.

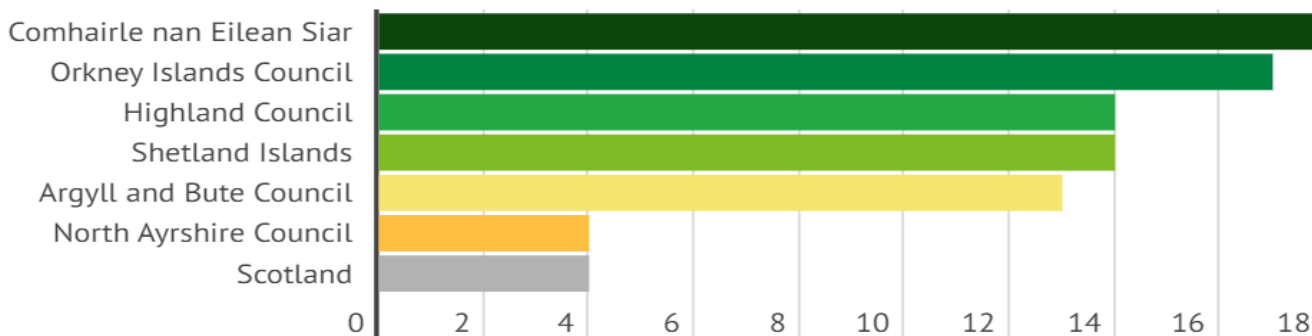
6.1 Energy Efficiency

With the exception of North Ayrshire, every island Local Authority has a much larger proportion of energy inefficient properties than the Scottish average*. For instance, Orkney has amongst the highest proportion of F or G rated dwellings (17%) compared to 4% in Scotland overall. Low energy efficiency results in homes being more expensive to heat and increases the risk of fuel poverty.

6.2 Second Homes

The Scottish islands contain 2% of Scotland's total dwellings, but 17% of Scotland's second homes. 17% of all homes in Arran, Bute and the Cumbraes are second homes.

% of Dwellings with an Energy Efficiency Rating (SAP 2012) of F or G



Source: [Scottish House Conditions Survey: Local Authority Analysis 2017-2019](#), Scottish Government (2021). *Note: characteristics of the housing stock in an area can affect

energy efficiency. For instance, detached houses and housing off the gas grid are more common in island areas and more likely to be F and G rated.

6.3 Housing Availability and House Building

Six out of ten Islanders think there is not enough housing available to meet local demand. On average, 44% of Islanders disagree that there is affordable housing in their local area however views differ significantly between island groups. Island house prices are increasing as they are in the Scottish mainland. House prices are highest in the Highland Islands followed by the Argyll Islands. Of all the island local authorities, new build housing completions were highest in 2021 in the Highland Local Authority area. It should be noted that only 5% of population of Highland Local Authority area are islanders. Within the six Scottish local authorities containing islands, 2,331 new homes were built in 2022.

Local authority all sector new build completions

Local Authority:	All sector new build completions
Argyll and Bute	160
Highland	1367
North Ayrshire	480
Nan Eilean Siar	168
Orkney	79
Shetland	77

Source: [Housing statistics quarterly update: new housebuilding and affordable housing supply](https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-quarterly-update-new-housebuilding-and-affordable-housing-supply/pages/1-to-3.aspx) - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

7 Fuel Poverty



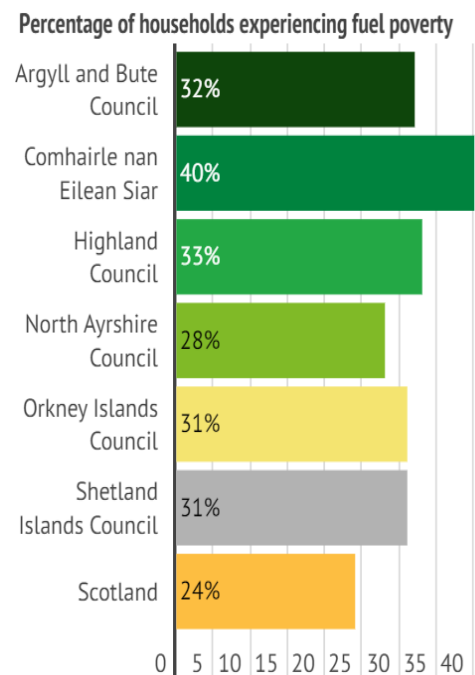
Clay Banks. Credit: Infogram / Unsplash

Scottish island residents are generally more likely to face fuel poverty than the average Scottish resident. Island and rural local authorities generally had the highest proportion of the least energy efficient dwellings. Additionally, almost two-thirds (65%) of rural dwellings are not connected to the gas grid and therefore rely on more expensive heating fuel such as electricity and oil.

Rates of fuel poverty are generally higher in the island Local Authorities with around a third of residents experiencing fuel poverty in Argyll and Bute (32%), Highland (33%), Orkney Islands (31%) and Shetland Islands (31%) councils and as many as 40% in Na h-Eilean Siar, while the average for Scotland is 24%.

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The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 defines a household as being in fuel poverty "if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, total fuel costs necessary for the home are more than 10% of the household's adjusted net income (i.e. after housing costs), and if after deducting those fuel costs, benefits received for a care need or disability and childcare costs, the household's remaining adjusted net income is insufficient to maintain an acceptable standard of living. The remaining adjusted net income must be at least 90% of the UK



Minimum Income Standard to be considered an acceptable standard of living with an additional amount added for households in remote rural, remote small town and island areas."
Source: [Scottish House Condition Survey: Local Authority Analysis 2017-2019](#), Scottish Government (2021)

8 Digital Connectivity



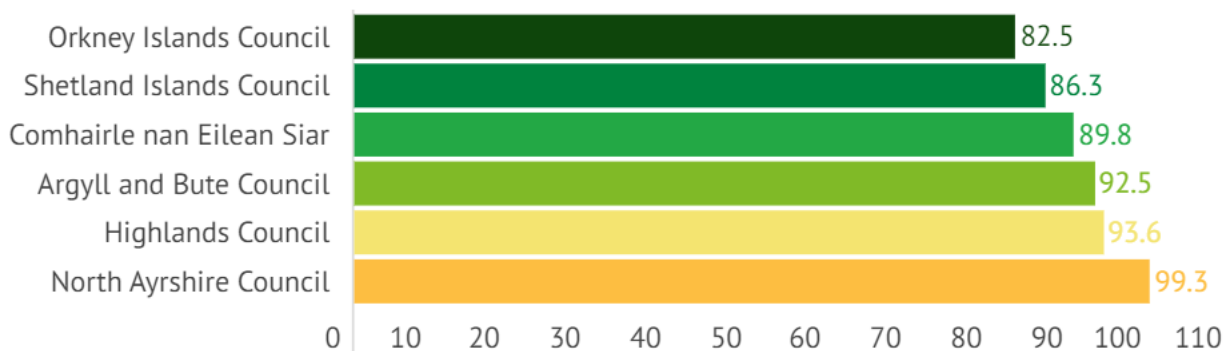
Credit: Christin Hume, Unsplash

Access to high speed internet in the Scottish islands has improved significantly in recent years.

Scottish Government schemes to improve internet access in the islands have been highly successful. For example, access to fibre broadband in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar increased by 88 percentage points between 2014-2019. Furthermore, the majority of island residents agree that their Wi-Fi connection is reliable and that their internet connection at home is fast enough to do what they want online.

However, geographic 4G coverage remains poor in rural areas. For instance, the network operator Three covers 98% of urban areas but only 56% of rural areas. While islanders may struggle to get adequate signal on some networks, generally islanders know which network has the best coverage in their area so use those networks and avoid the ones that have poor coverage, hence the reliability figure is higher than some networks' coverage figures.

Graph: Percentage of premises with access to fibre broadband (2019)



Source: [The National Plan for Scotland's Islands](#), Scottish Government (2019)

9 Health and wellbeing

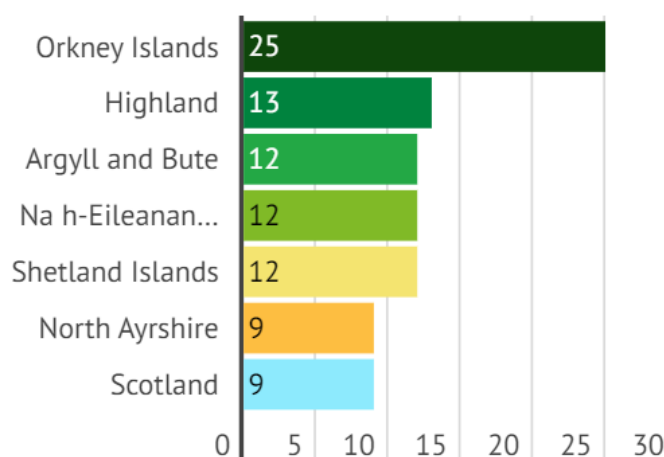


The majority of Scottish islanders agree that they can easily access GP, pharmacy and dental healthcare.

9.1 Access to Services

The majority of islanders agree or strongly agree that they can easily access GPs, dentists and pharmacies. The majority of islanders do not know if they could easily access mental health services. Many islands have a high GP to patient ratio. Life expectancies are higher than the Scottish average for both men and women in all island local authorities except North Ayrshire Council.

Number of GPs per 10,000 patients



Source: [General Practice - GP workforce and practice list sizes](#), Public Health Scotland (2011)

9.2 Weight and Diet

The prevalence of overweight/obesity is higher in every island local authority when compared to Scotland as a whole. Fruit and vegetable consumption is significantly lower than the rest of Scotland in Shetland, Argyll and Bute and North Ayrshire and significantly higher than the rest of Scotland in Highland Council.

9.3 Suicide Rate

The suicide rate (not age-adjusted) per 100,000 people¹ (2016-20) was higher than the Scottish average in every island local authority except Shetland. In particular, the suicide rate in Highland council was 7% points higher than the national average rate.

¹ Suicide mortality rate is the number of suicide deaths in a year per 100,000 population, often referred to as the crude suicide rate (not age-adjusted).

10 Environment and Biosecurity



Isle of Jura. Credit: K Gow

Recycling rates are generally low across the Scottish islands Local Authorities.

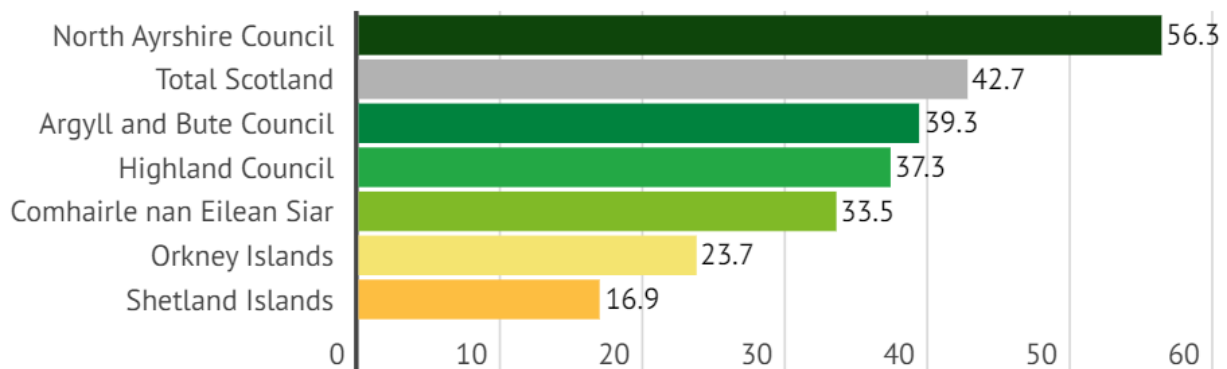
10.1 Greenspace

Over 90% of residents across all of the Scottish island groups agreed that they had access to blue or green spaces within a 5 minute walk from their home, compared to only 56% of adults across Scotland, according to the Scottish Household Survey. Greenspaces are a vital part of the landscape. Having easy access to quality greenspace can improve people's quality of life by increasing neighbourhood satisfaction, promoting mental and physical health (including through its association with increased physical activity), and reducing health inequalities.

10.2 Recycling

Recycling rates are generally low in each Scottish island Local Authority (with the exception of North Ayrshire) when compared to the rest of Scotland. Additionally, every island local

Graph: Percentage of Waste Recycled



authority (with the exception of North Ayrshire) has a higher carbon impact from waste than the Scottish Average.

Source: [Household Waste Data](#), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (2021)

11 Climate Change

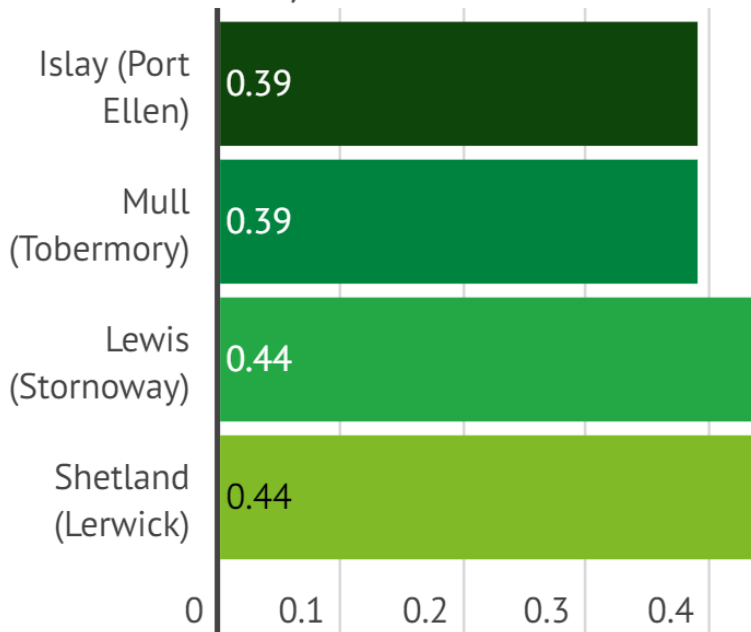


Scottish islands have become warmer and sea levels are projected to rise which poses a significant risk for the islands in terms of flooding and contamination of freshwater.

Without significant reductions in the world's carbon emissions, the Scottish islands could see significant sea level rises. Changes in mean sea level are important with respect to coastal flooding and coastal erosion. As sea levels rise, islands may become more vulnerable to flooding due to increased sea level extremes with the potential to affect homes, businesses and infrastructure. Seawater flooding can contaminate freshwater aquifers, thus reducing the supply of fresh drinking water available on the islands.

The Scottish islands have also experienced significant increases in average high temperatures. The Scottish island Local Authorities have made significant progress in the production of renewable electricity.

Projected Sea Level Rise by 2100 in meters (SSP2-4.5: Intermediate Levels of Carbon emissions)



Source: [Sea Level Projection Tool](#), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (2021)

The [Carbon Neutral Islands \(CNI\)](#) project is a Scottish Government commitment aimed at supporting six islands to become carbon neutral by 2040. The Carbon Neutral Islands project provides an opportunity to demonstrate the low carbon energy potential of islands as hubs of innovation in relation to renewable energy and climate change resilience. This will also positively impact on island economies, facilities and general wellbeing by allowing for reinvestment in the communities. The six islands will act as catalysts for decarbonisation across all Scottish islands.

12 Community Empowerment



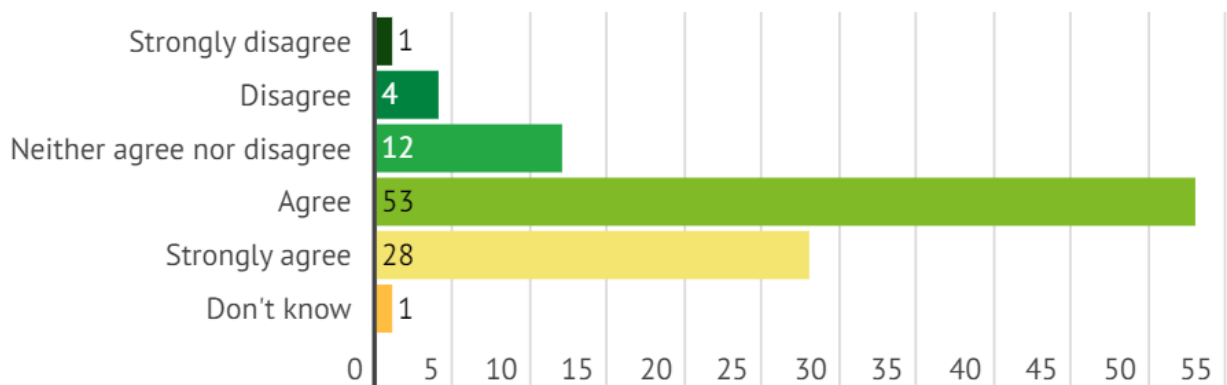
Isle of Ulva. Credit: Scottish Government

Scottish islands have a strong sense of community belonging.

The Scottish islands are home to a sizeable number of community owned assets. Community ownership allows for a community to acquire and own land that could provide local housing, business development, community facilities, recreation facilities or greenspace. Community ownership is particularly prevalent in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar where around 50% of all land is under community ownership.

Scottish islanders also report a strong sense of community belonging with 82% of island residents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they see themselves belonging to their local community. Similarly, 69% of island residents agree/strongly agree that there is a strong sense of community in their local area.

Graph: Islanders who see themselves as belonging to their local community



Note: Figures are percentages.

Source: [The National Plan for Scotland's Islands](#), Scottish Government (2019)

13 Arts, Culture and Language



Up Helly Aa in Lerwick, Shetland

There are high levels of cultural participation across the Scottish islands.

13.1 Cultural Participation

Most island residents report taking part in a culturally specific festival at least once a year or several times a year. Cultural participation is exceptionally high in the Shetland Mainland where over half (56%) of people report taking part in cultural festivals several times a year.

13.2 Indigenous Languages and Dialects

The majority of residents in Uist and Barra (69%), and Lewis and Harris (62%) report that they can understand Gaelic. Moreover, a significant minority of those living in Skye and the Small Isles (45%) and the Argyll Islands (29%) report that they can understand Gaelic.

Understanding of Scots on the islands ranges from 21% in Uist and Barra to 54% on Shetland Mainland. Understanding of local dialects is highest in the Shetland Outer Isles (91%) and Shetland Mainland (87%). Local dialects are also widely understood in the Orkney Mainland (85%) and the Orkney Outer Isles (78%).

14 Education

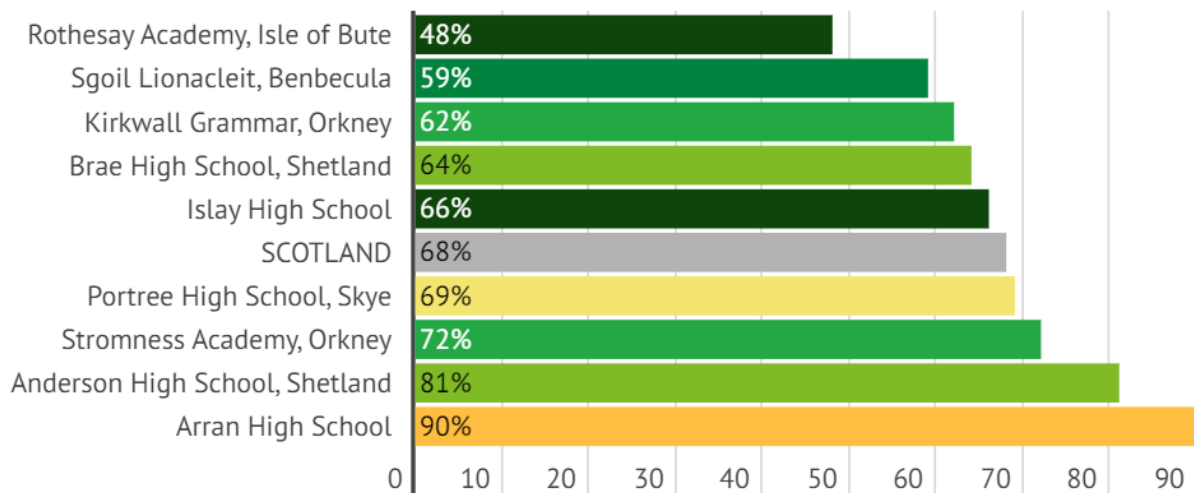


Around half of Island secondary schools were above and half below the Scottish average of achieving level 5 numeracy and literacy.

Some schools in the islands had above and some lower levels of literacy and numeracy than the Scottish average. It should be noted that there are only 9 schools being covered.

Source: [Secondary School Information Dashboard](#), Scottish Government (2022)

Graph: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy



Note

Figures quoted refer to school leavers rather than all pupils.

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Lismore Gaelic Heritage Centre. Credit: K. Gow

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The data collected for this social research publication:

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