KnowFife Briefing

Sharing data & information across the Fife Partnership

Fife Briefing: Scottish Priority Family Groups Dataset

Contact: research.enquiries@fife.gov.uk Version: 01 Date: 06/11/2026

This briefing explores the Fife findings from the Scottish Priority Family Groups Dataset.

Main Findings

- 90% of children in poverty are living in one or more of 6 priority family groups.
- Lone parent families represent the largest of the 6 priority groups in Fife, followed by large families.
- The proportion of families and children within each priority group and ward varies across Fife. A higher rate of lone parent and young parent families can be seen in mid-Fife, whilst North East Fife tends to have a higher rate of ethnic minority and large families
- Disabled and ethnic minority families also show ward level variation, while the proportion of children under one years old is relatively consistent across Fife wards.
- Families can be in more than one priority group. Lone parents, young parents and disability in household are more likely to intersect and lead to cumulative disadvantage.
- Wards with the highest intersection of priority groups are Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages; Kirkcaldy East; Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty and Rosyth, based on having 4 or more priority groups with a decile of 8 or above.

Child Poverty Priority Groups

The Scottish Government has identified six priority groups as being at greatest risk of experiencing child poverty:

- lone parent families,
- young mothers,
- large families,
- ethnic minority families,
- families where someone is living with a disability, and
- families with an infant

Why are these family groups most likely to be in poverty?

- Lack of access to paid or better work
- Higher living costs
- ‘Poverty premium’ for services
- More likely to be on social security benefits

Scottish Priority Family Groups Dataset

The Scottish Priority Family Groups Dataset has been created by the University of Glasgow using Census 2022 data to provide an understanding of the prevalence of these priority groups at Ward level.

The dataset brings together publicly available Census 2022 data, to provide estimated numbers and percentages of children/families for each priority family group, as well as national rankings and population-weighted deciles (1 to 10).

Fife picture

Fife has a similar profile to Scotland in terms of priority family groups, with a higher proportion of lone parents and disabled households, and a lower proportion of minority ethnic families.

Table 1 – Percentage of priority family groups in Fife and Scotland

	% Lone Parents	% Young Parents	% Large Family	% Disabled household	% Ethnic Minority Family	% Infant under 1
Fife	25.2	2.7	13.6	13.4	6.4	0.9
Scotland	24.5	2.2	13.2	12.1	11.8	0.9

Area picture

Across the seven area committees in Fife, the proportion of children in lone parent families shows the greatest variation. Levenmouth has the highest (+7.2pp above Fife), while North East Fife has a substantially lower proportion (-6.0pp). Large families and families with an infant under 1 are relatively consistent across areas.

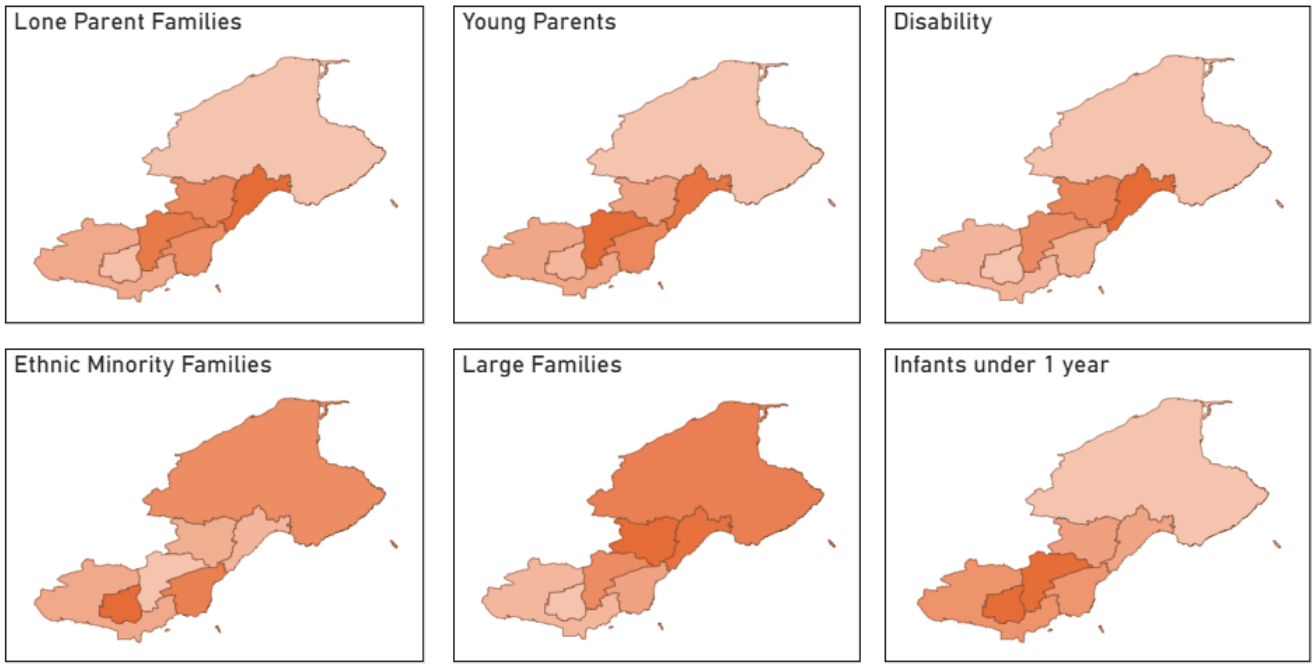
Table 2 – Percentage of priority family groups in Fife Areas

	% Lone Parents	% Young Parents	% Large Family	% Disabled household	% Ethnic Minority Family	% Infant under 1
City of Dunfermline	20.1%	1.8%	12.8%	11.6%	9.1%	1.0%
Cowdenbeath	30.4%	4.3%	13.8%	15.1%	3.6%	1.0%
Glenrothes	28.3%	2.5%	14.4%	15.4%	4.9%	0.8%
Kirkcaldy	27.7%	3.4%	13.4%	12.8%	7.8%	0.9%
Levenmouth	32.4%	4.0%	14.3%	17.0%	4.5%	0.8%
North East Fife	19.2%	1.4%	14.0%	11.6%	7.0%	0.7%
South West Fife	23.2%	2.4%	13.0%	12.6%	5.3%	0.9%
Fife	25.2	2.7	13.6	13.4	6.4	0.9

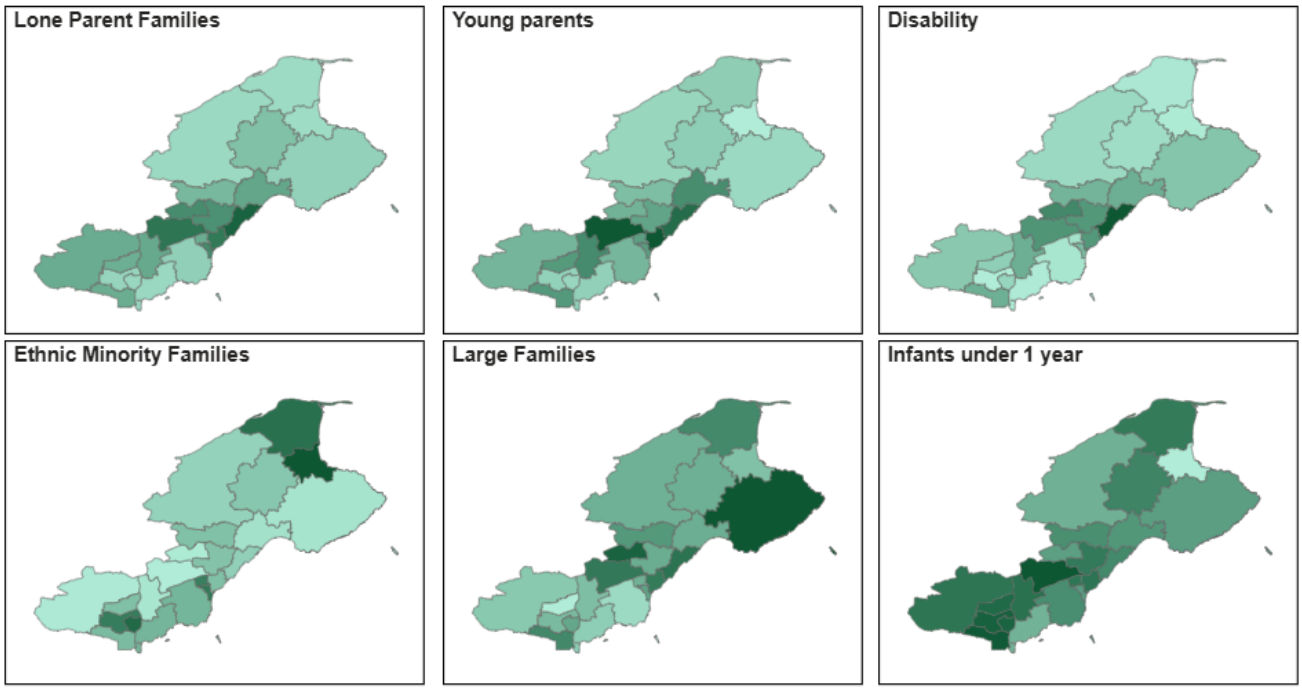
Differences across Fife

The proportion of families and children within each priority group varies across Fife by both Area and Ward. (Darker colours represent a higher percentage)

At Area level, a higher proportion of both lone parent and young parent families can be seen across mid-Fife. The distribution of ethnic minority families differs from other priority groups, with a higher proportion found in North East Fife and Dunfermline.



At ward level, a higher rate of lone parent and young parent families can be seen in Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss villages and Lochgelly Cardenden and Benarty. The proportion of families with a child under 1 year is similar across all Fife wards varying from between 0.3% to 1.1%.



Priority Family Groups by Ward

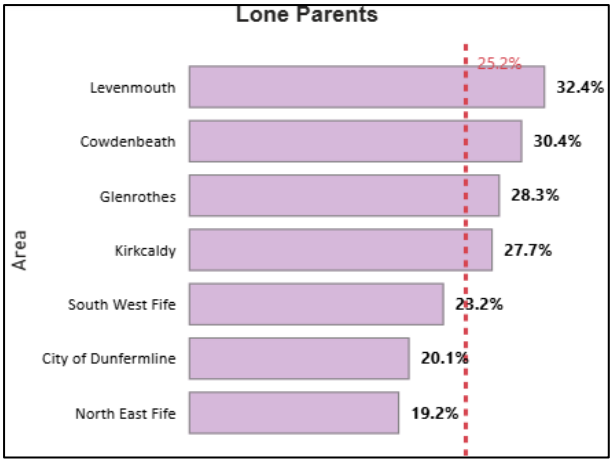
The final column of this table shows the number of priority family group indicators which falls within deciles 8-10 for each ward. Higher scores indicate that a ward has higher concentrations across multiple priority family groups. Cell shading is used to highlight wards with a greater number of indicators in the highest deciles.

Table 2 – Percentage of the priority family group types in each ward and number of deciles 8+

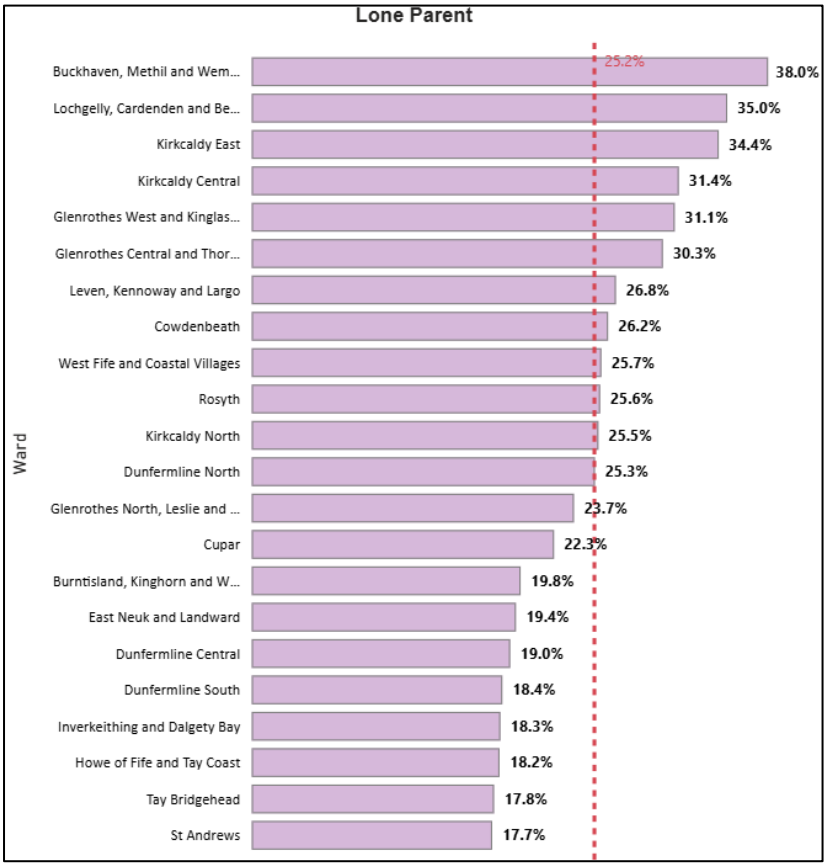
Ward	Lone parent families	Large families	Minority ethnicities	Disability	Young Parent	Child <1 yrs	Number Deciles 8+
Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages	38	15.3	5.0	19.6	4.7	0.8	4
Burntisland, Kinghorn and Western Kirkcaldy	19.8	11.7	6.3	11	2.4	0.8	0
Cowdenbeath	26.2	12.7	3.8	14.3	3.8	1.0	2
Cupar	22.3	13.2	5.4	11.6	1.7	0.9	0
Dunfermline Central	19.0	12.9	9.4	10.7	1.5	1.0	1
Dunfermline North	25.3	11.1	5.8	12.4	3.3	1.0	2
Dunfermline South	18.4	13.5	10.4	12	1.4	1.0	1
East Neuk and Landward	19.4	16.3	3.9	13	1.3	0.7	1
Glenrothes Central and Thornton	30.3	13.3	5.6	15.7	3	0.9	3
Glenrothes North, Leslie and Markinch	23.7	14	5.7	14	2.2	0.8	1
Glenrothes West and Kinglassie	31.1	15.9	3.5	16.7	2.5	0.7	3
Howe of Fife and Tay Coast	18.2	13.2	4.8	11.8	1.4	0.6	0
Inverkeithing and Dalgety Bay	18.3	12.2	6.3	10.8	1.6	0.6	0
Kirkcaldy Central	31.4	13.7	9.6	13.7	3.2	0.7	3
Kirkcaldy East	34.4	15.1	5.8	15.7	5.4	0.9	4
Kirkcaldy North	25.5	13.1	9.2	11.3	3.2	0.9	1
Leven, Kennoway and Largo	26.8	13.3	4	14.3	3.7	0.8	2
Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty	35.0	15.1	3.4	15.9	5.4	1.1	5
Rosyth	25.6	14.6	6	14.3	3.3	1.1	4
St Andrews	17.7	12.6	11.4	10.7	0.7	0.3	0
Tay Bridgehead	17.8	14.6	10	10.9	1.7	0.9	1
West Fife and Coastal Villages	25.7	12.3	3.6	12.8	2.4	0.9	0
Fife	25.2	13.6	6.4	13.4	2.7	0.9	

Lone Parent families

In Fife, just over a quarter (25.2%) of children aged 0-15 live in a lone parent family. There is considerable variation across Areas and wards. Four of the seven Areas have proportions above Fife, with Levenmouth area noting the largest proportion (32.4%), and North East Fife the lowest (19.2%).



Variation is greater at ward level, ranging from the lowest proportion of 17.7% in St Andrews to 38.0% in Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages, a difference of 20.3 percentage points. More than half of all wards (12 out of 22) have percentages higher than Fife.

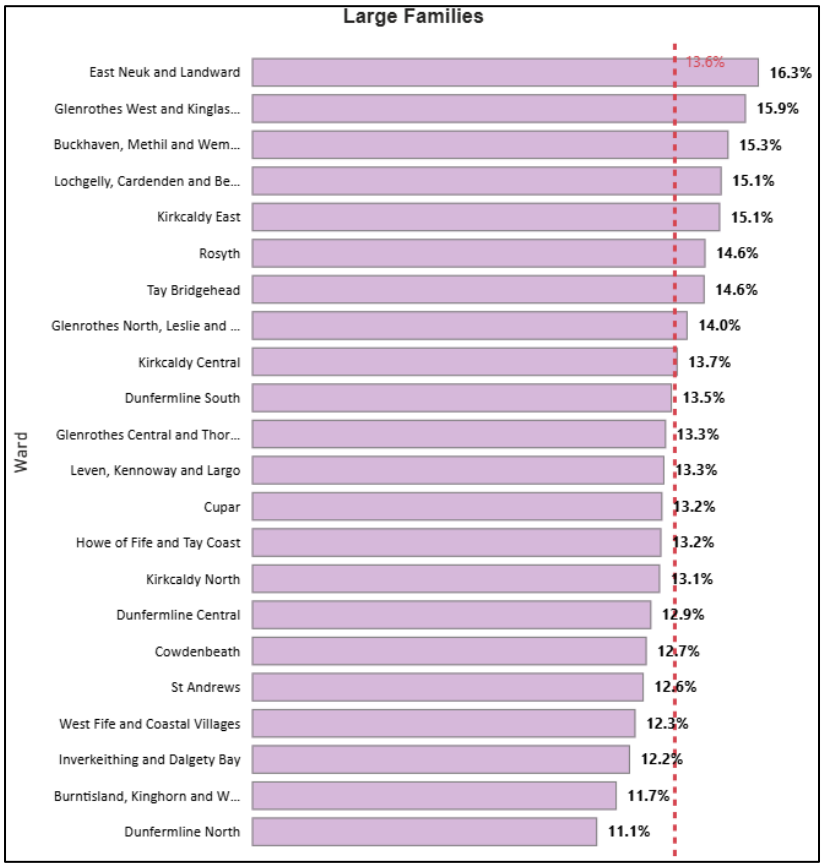


Large families

In Fife, 13.6% of families are considered large families (those with 3+ dependent children, where the youngest child is under 19 years). Similar proportions are seen across all 7 committee areas, with only 1.6 percentage points difference between the highest in Glenrothes (14.4%) and the lowest in City of Dunfermline (12.8%).

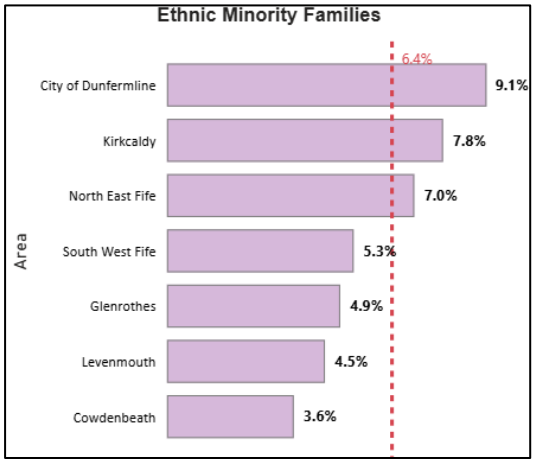


At ward level the highest proportion is seen in the East Neuk and Landward ward (16.3%) and the smallest in Dunfermline North (11.1%).

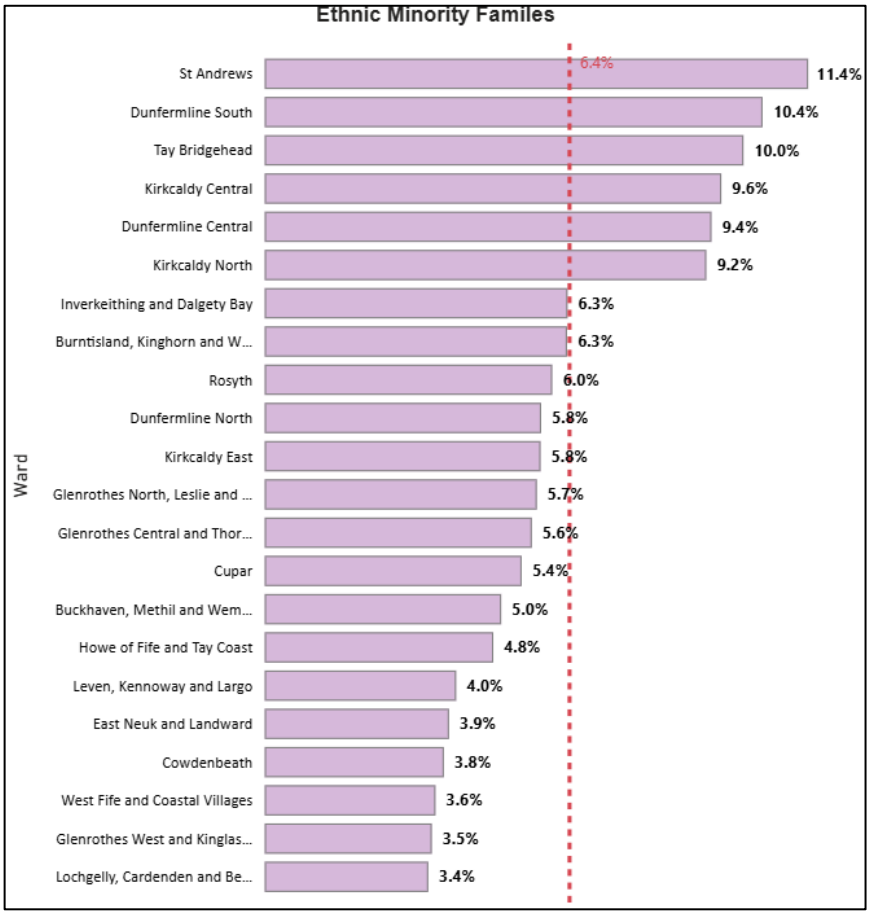


Ethnic Minority families

The proportion of the population aged under 16 within an ethnic minority family, shows a different pattern across Fife than the other priority groups, with notable variation. The highest proportions are found in the City of Dunfermline (9.1%), Kirkcaldy (7.8%) and North East Fife (7.0%), all above the Fife average of 6.4%. Cowdenbeath records the lowest proportion at 3.6%.

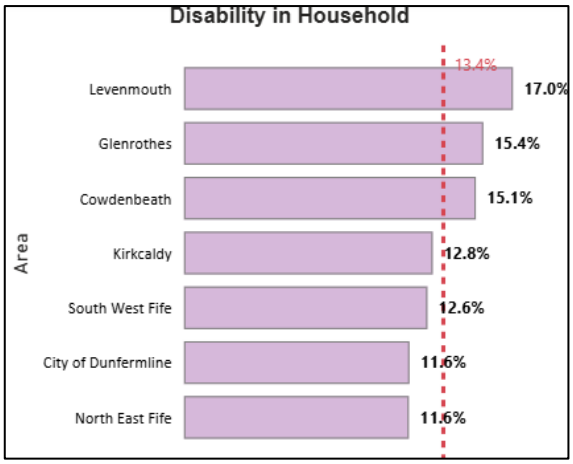


Only six of Fife's 22 wards have a higher proportion of under 16s in ethnic minority households. St. Andrews ward has the greatest proportion (11.4%), 5 percentage points higher than Fife (6.4%).

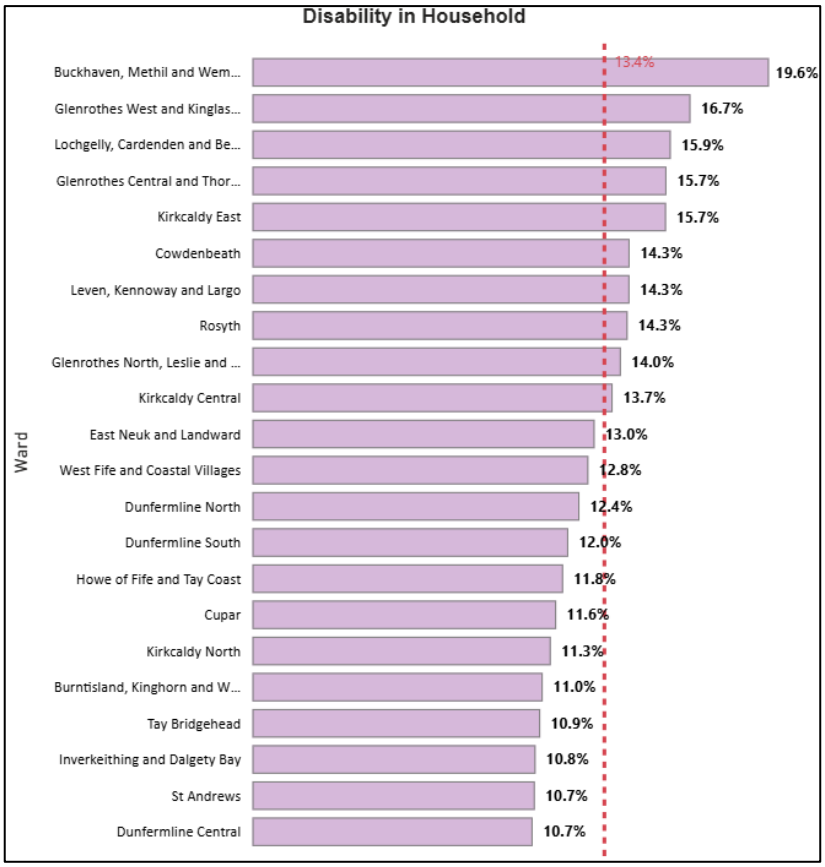


Disabled families

The percentage of people who live in a household with dependent children and are living with a disability varies slightly across Fife. Areas in Mid-Fife such as Levenmouth (17.0%), Glenrothes (15.4%) and Cowdenbeath (15.1%) all have rates higher than Fife (13.4%).

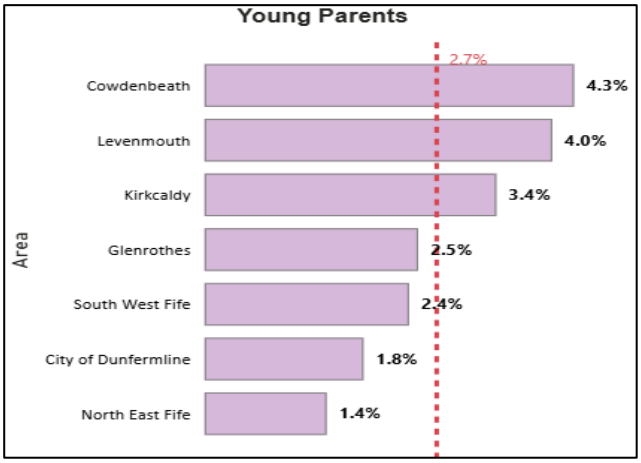


The proportion of people in a household with dependent children and a disabled person also varies by ward. Nine wards exceed the Fife rate of 13.4%, with higher proportions recorded in Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages (19.6%), Glenrothes West and Kinglassie (16.7%), and Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty (15.9%).

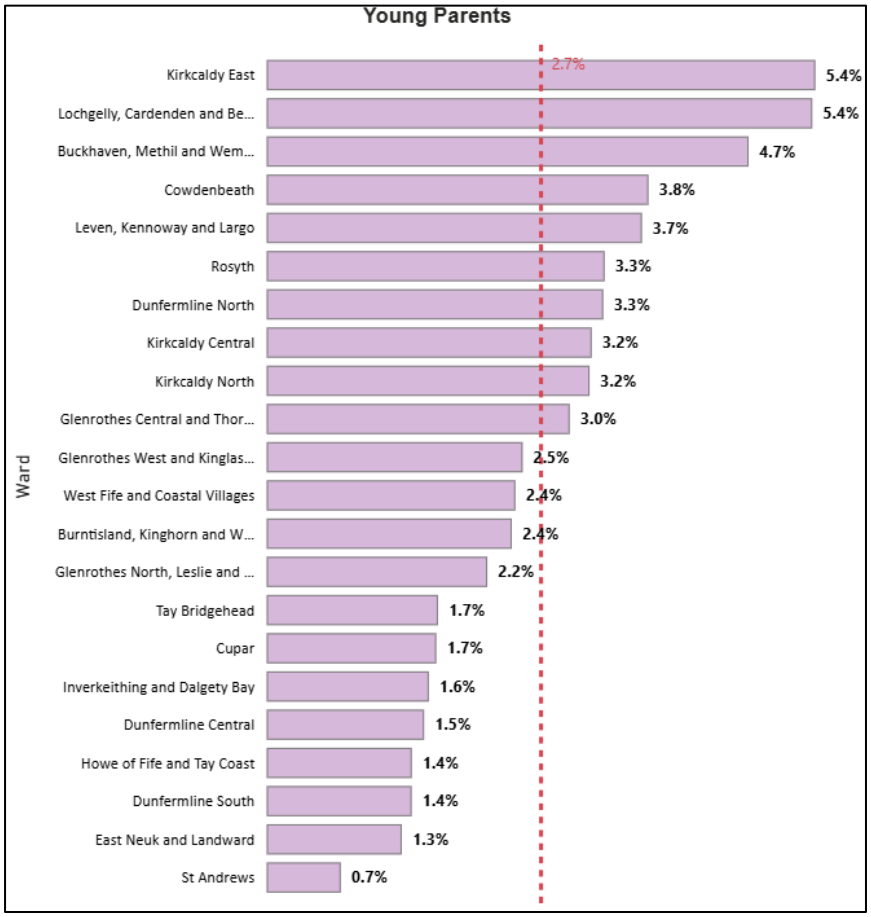


Young Parent families

Census data cannot directly tell us how many mothers under the age of 25 live in the area. However, it can be used to ascertain the percentage of households with dependent children where the Family Reference Person is aged 16–24. This could be a male or female. Using this measure 2.7% of families in Fife are headed by a young person. Cowdenbeath sits well above this at 4.3% and is over three times that of North East Fife (1.4%).

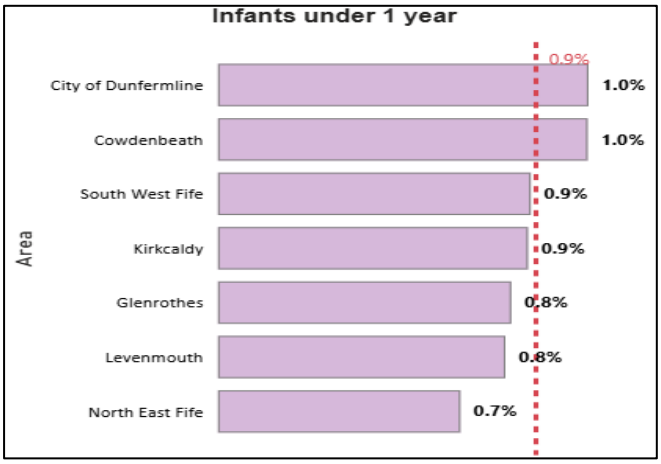


The proportion of young parent families varies across Fife's wards. Ten of the 22 wards have rates higher than Fife (2.7%). The highest proportions are found in Kirkcaldy East (5.4%) and Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty (5.4%), both double that of Fife, while St Andrews records the lowest proportion at 0.7%.

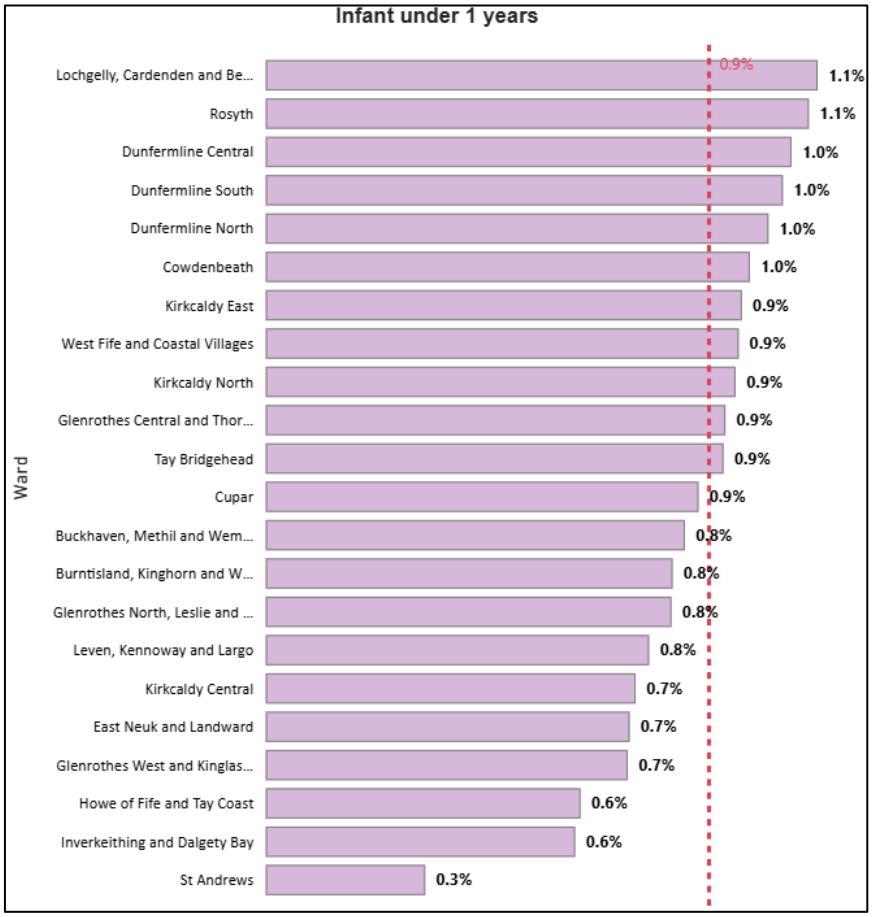


Infants under 1 year

At the time of the Census, children aged under one year accounted for 0.9% of Fife's population. There is little variation across committee areas, ranging from 1.0% in the City of Dunfermline and Cowdenbeath to 0.7% in North East Fife.



Similarly, there is very little variation across wards. Most wards are close to the Fife average. St Andrews records the lowest proportion (0.3%), while Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty records the highest (1.1%).



Priority family groups overlap

While the Scottish Priority Family Groups Dataset is useful for identifying the proportion of families in each of the priority groups, it does not show that family groups are often overlapping rather than mutually exclusive. Families can be in more than one of the priority groups.

Taking a multiple priority characteristics approach is more powerful than analysing the six groups separately because it highlights intersectionality and cumulative disadvantage, which are major drivers of child poverty in Scotland.

The combinations most likely to identify families facing multiple and interacting barriers are:

1. Lone Parent + Mother <25 + Child <1
2. Lone Parent + Disabled Adult/Child
3. Large Family + Minority Ethnic
4. Large Family + Disabled Adult/Child
5. Lone Parent + Large Family

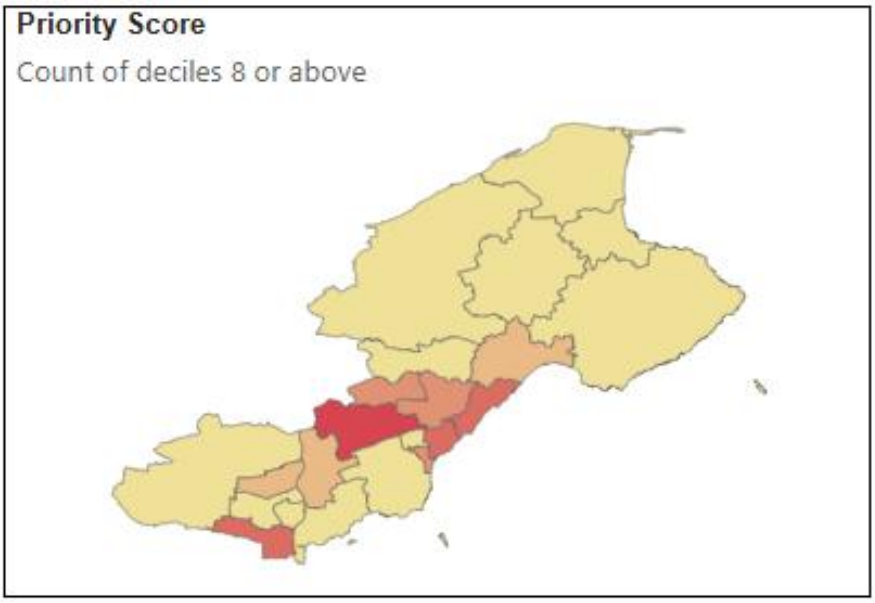
Table 3 - Overlap matrix highlighting where greatest risks of correlation and double-counting are likely to occur

Priority Group	Lone Parent	Disabled Adult/Child	Large Family (3+)	Minority Ethnic	Child <1	Mother <25
Lone Parent	-	High	Medium	Low-Medium	Medium	High
Disabled Adult/Child	High	-	Medium	Low-Medium	Low	Low-Medium
Large Family (3+)	Medium	Medium	-	High	Low	Low-Medium
Minority Ethnic	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	High	-	Low	Low
Child <1	Medium	Low	Low	Low	-	High
Mother <25	High	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Low	High	-

Cumulative disadvantage

The indicator data (see Appendix 1) contains a decile ranking for each ward and priority indicator. This ranking is based on how that ward compares to all wards across Scotland. A decile rank of 1 represents wards with the lowest prevalence of that priority group, while decile 10 is the highest prevalence.

The Priority Score shown in the map below counts the number of priority groups for each ward in Fife which have a decile of 8 or above. Higher scores indicate that families are experiencing cumulative disadvantage from being in more than one of the priority groups.



Wards with the highest intersection of priority family groups are Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages; Kirkcaldy East; Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty and Rosyth, based on having 4 or more priority groups with a decile of 8 or above.

Further information

The Scottish Priority Family groups dataset is an ecological (ward-level) dataset, produced to help improve local understanding of the six Priority Family Groups identified by Scottish Government as being at greatest risk of experiencing child poverty: lone parent families, young mothers, large families, ethnic minority families, families where someone is living with a disability, and families with an infant.

The Scottish Priority Family Groups Dataset - Enlighten Research Data

The dataset brings together publicly available Census 2022 data, to provide estimated numbers and percentages of children/families for each priority family group, as well as national rankings and population-weighted deciles.

Definitions
Lone parent = under 16s living in lone parent families
Large family = families with 3+ dependent children, where the youngest child is under 19 years
Young parent = families with children under 16 and where the family reference person is 16-24 years of age
Ethnic minority family = people of Non-White British/Scottish ethnicity under the age of 16 years
Disabled household = people who live in a household with dependent children, who are living with a disability
Children under 1 = children under the age of 1

Appendix 1 - Scottish Priority Family Groups Dataset

Table 4 – Table showing percentage of priority family group types and population-weighted deciles for Fife wards

Ward	% Lone parent families	Lone parent families decile	% Large families	Large families decile	% Minority ethnicities	Minority ethnicities decile	% Disability	Disability decile	% Young parent	Young Parent decile	% Child <1 yrs	Child <1 yrs decile	Total 0-15 years
Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages	38.0	10	15.3	9	5.0	4	19.6	10	4.7	10	0.8	4	3049
Burntisland, Kinghorn and Western Kirkcaldy	19.8	3	11.7	3	6.3	5	11.0	4	2.4	6	0.8	3	2417
Cowdenbeath	26.2	6	12.7	5	3.8	2	14.3	9	3.8	10	1.0	7	3892
Cupar	22.3	4	13.2	6	5.4	4	11.6	5	1.7	4	0.9	4	2156
Dunfermline Central	19.0	3	12.9	5	9.4	7	10.7	4	1.5	4	1.0	9	3880
Dunfermline North	25.3	6	11.1	2	5.8	5	12.4	6	3.3	9	1.0	8	2384
Dunfermline South	18.4	3	13.5	7	10.4	7	12.0	5	1.4	3	1.0	8	4930
East Neuk and Landward	19.4	3	16.3	10	3.9	2	13.0	7	1.3	3	0.7	2	1814
Glenrothes Central and Thornton	30.3	8	13.3	6	5.6	5	15.7	10	3.0	8	0.9	6	2664
Glenrothes North, Leslie and Markinch	23.7	5	14.0	7	5.7	5	14.0	8	2.2	5	0.8	3	2913

Ward	% Lone parent families	Lone parent families decile	% Large families	Large families decile	% Minority ethnicities	Minority ethnicities decile	% Disability	Disability decile	% Young parent	Young Parent decile	% Child <1 yrs	Child <1 yrs decile	Total 0-15 years
Glenrothes West and Kinglassie	31.1	9	15.9	9	3.5	2	16.7	10	2.5	7	0.7	2	2887
Howe of Fife and Tay Coast	18.2	3	13.2	6	4.8	4	11.8	5	1.4	3	0.6	1	1922
Inverkeithing and Dalgety Bay	18.3	3	12.2	4	6.3	5	10.8	4	1.6	4	0.6	1	2807
Kirkcaldy Central	31.4	9	13.7	7	9.6	7	13.7	8	3.2	8	0.7	2	2447
Kirkcaldy East	34.4	9	15.1	9	5.8	5	15.7	10	5.4	10	0.9	7	2493
Kirkcaldy North	25.5	6	13.1	6	9.2	6	11.3	4	3.2	8	0.9	6	3201
Leven, Kennoway and Largo	26.8	7	13.3	6	4.0	3	14.3	8	3.7	9	0.8	3	3019
Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty	35.0	10	15.1	9	3.4	2	15.9	10	5.4	10	1.1	9	3446
Rosyth	25.6	6	14.6	8	6.0	5	14.3	8	3.3	9	1.1	9	2741
St Andrews	17.7	3	12.6	5	11.4	7	10.7	4	0.7	2	0.3	1	1274
Tay Bridgehead	17.8	3	14.6	8	10.0	7	10.9	4	1.7	4	0.9	6	2653
West Fife and Coastal Villages	25.7	6	12.3	4	3.6	2	12.8	6	2.4	6	0.9	7	2853
Fife	**25.2**		**13.6**		**6.4**		**13.4**		**2.7**		**0.9**		**61,845**

Contact
Coryn Carmichael – Research & Insight Team Manager
Coryn.carmichael@fife.gov.uk

Kay Thomson – Research Adviser
Kay.thomson@fife.gov.uk