



KnowFife Briefing Population Projections 2022 to 2047

Contact: research.enquiries@fife.gov.uk

Version: 01

Date: 06/10/2025

This paper provides information on the latest population projections for Fife based on 2022 population estimates for the period 2022 to 2047, published by the National Records of Scotland.

Main Findings

- Fife's overall population is now expected to increase by around 2.3% over the next 25 years. This is a change from a previous estimate which showed a reduction of -2.1%
- Fife's child population will continue to decrease, but at a faster rate than previous estimates showed
- Fife's working age population, while continuing to shrink, will reduce at a slower rate than previous predictions
- Fife's older people numbers will continue to increase, and at a slightly faster rate than previous estimates predicted.

Introduction

The main purpose of population projections is to provide estimates of the future population of an area so that public service providers have a basis on which to allocate resources.

These can include areas such as planning, education, health and social care, transport, and the environment.

It is worthwhile highlighting that population projections are not forecasts of future populations, but are based on past trends, and make certain assumptions about future levels of fertility, mortality and migration. They do not take into account aspects, such as, political or economic change, housebuilding, or local circumstances or priorities.

The last set of projections were based on the mid-year population estimates for 2018. They were rolled forward from Scotland's Census 2011, whereas this set of 2022-based projections are the first to be based on Scotland's Census 2022.

Demographic changes as well as international migration have contributed to the differences between the two sets of population projections, including - Scotland's fertility rate falling from 1.46 in 2018 to 1.33 in 2022, and estimated life expectancy also decreasing. However, international migration to Scotland has increased during this time, leading to greater net migration, and an overall increase in population projected forward to 2047.

Fife's population projections 2022 to 2047

Figure 1 shows the difference between the previous overall Fife population projections based on 2018 data, compared with the latest data for 2022.

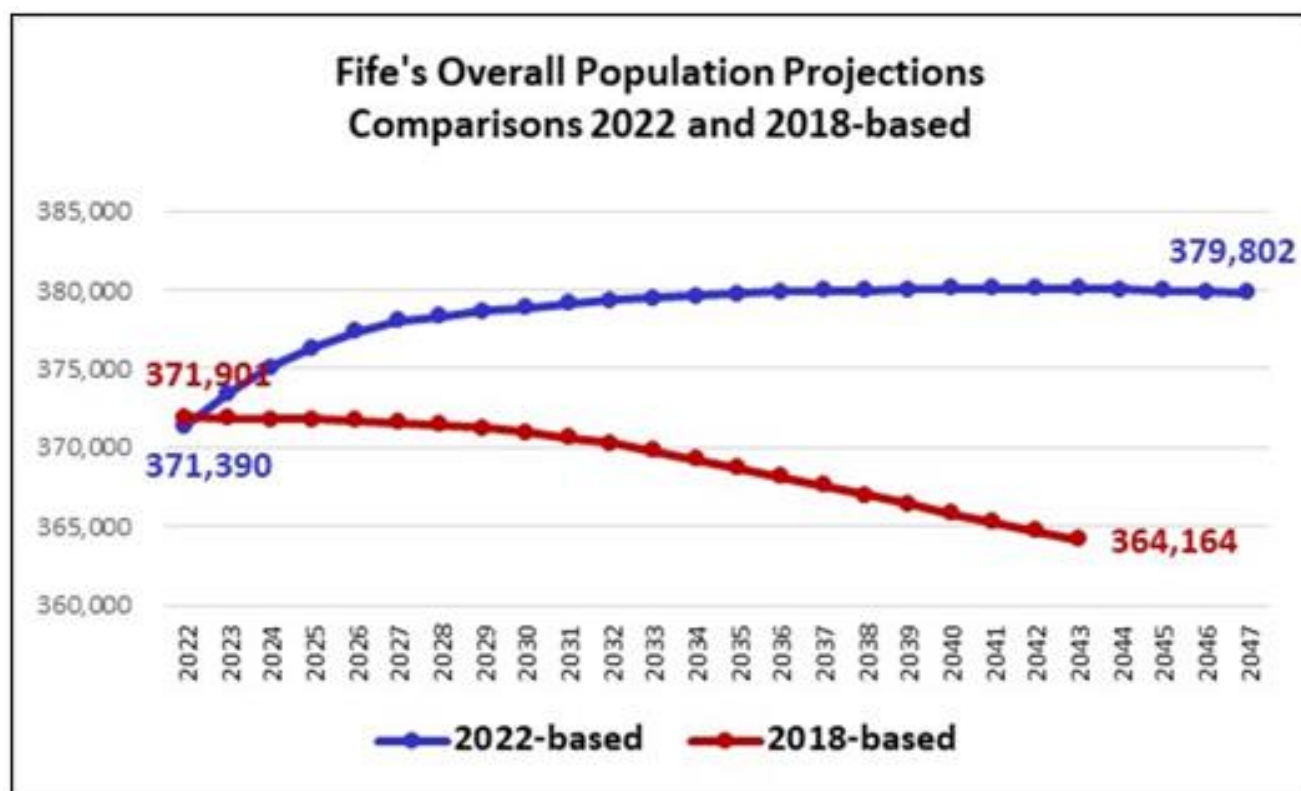


Figure 1 - Overall Fife Population Projections 2022 and 2018-based

As Figure 1 shows, there has been a change in the predictions for Fife's population from 2018-based data. In 2018, Fife's population was estimated to decline by -2.1% over the 25-year period, but in 2022, it is predicted to increase by 2.3%. Longer-term, and despite predicted continued migration to Fife, it will eventually see a levelling off in population growth in the early 2040s, and a slight decline beginning in the mid-2040s.

At Fife's overall population level the general trajectory has changed from one of decline to one of marginal growth. However, this trend does not apply to all age groups and looking at the three main groups (children, working age, and older people) shows a different picture and one that is fairly similar to previous projection patterns.

The following sections will look at the breakdown of Fife's population by age group in more detail, and highlight the changes that are expected to take place.

Age Breakdown of Fife's Three Main Age Groups

Children (0 – 15)

Figure 2 shows the estimated population projections for children (ages 0 to 15).

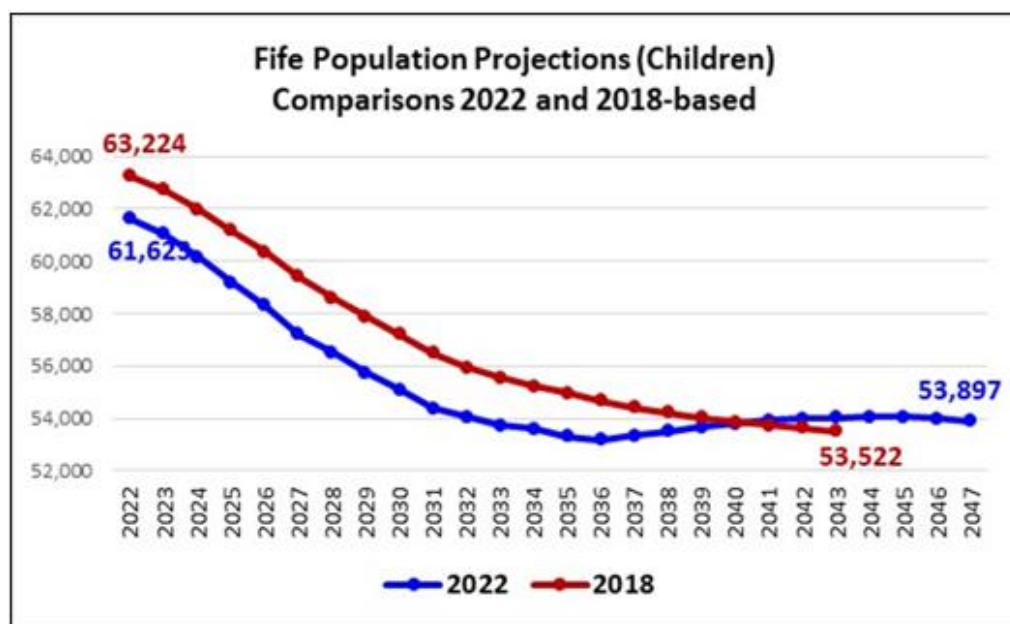


Figure 1 - Child Population Projections 2022 and 2018-based

As Figure 2 shows, the overall trend for Fife's child population remains largely similar. However, the 2020 population projection does show a faster reduction in Fife's child population compared with the 2018 version, with a levelling off in child numbers around the mid-2030s. Fife is expected to see a reduction of just under 8,000 children over the next 25 years. This is a similar picture to almost every other local authority area in Scotland seeing a drop in their child numbers, with only one council area (Midlothian Council) seeing a modest increase.

Working age (16 to 65/66)

Figure 3 shows the estimated population projections for Fife's working age population (ages 16 to 65/66).

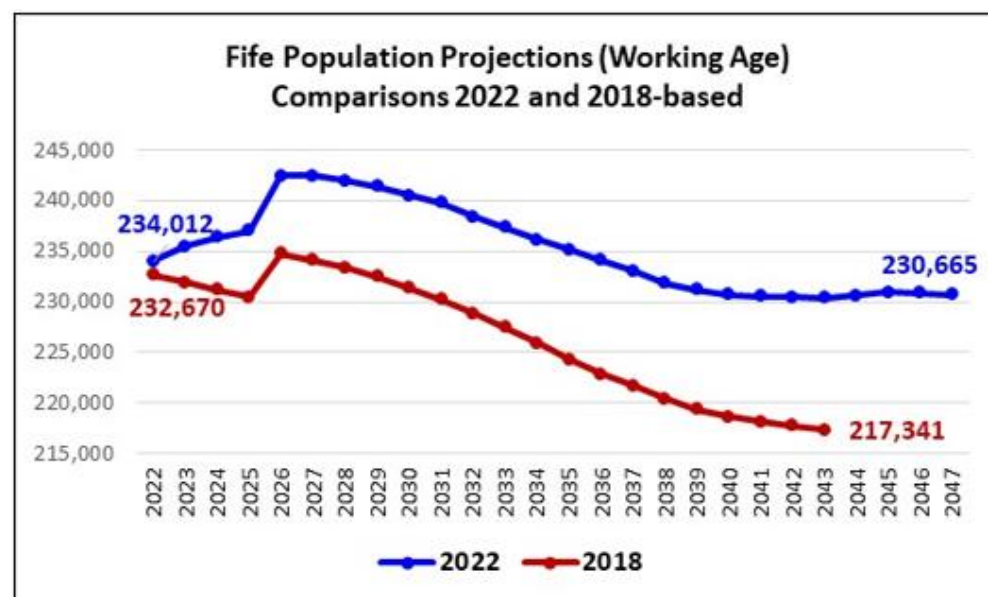


Figure 2 - Working age population projections 2022 and 2018-based

The 2022 projections for Fife's working age population, show a similar downward trend, but at reduced rate compared with the 2018-based projections. Changes to the pension age (increasing to age 66 in 2020 and again in 2026 to 67), have slowed the decline in working age people in Fife. By 2026, Fife's working age is expected to have peaked and will see a decline from then on until the start of the 2040s where it will level out. There will be an expected reduction of just under 3,500 working age people in Fife by 2047.

Older People (Ages 66/67 and over)

Figure 4 shows the estimated population projections for Fife's older people (ages 65/66 and over).

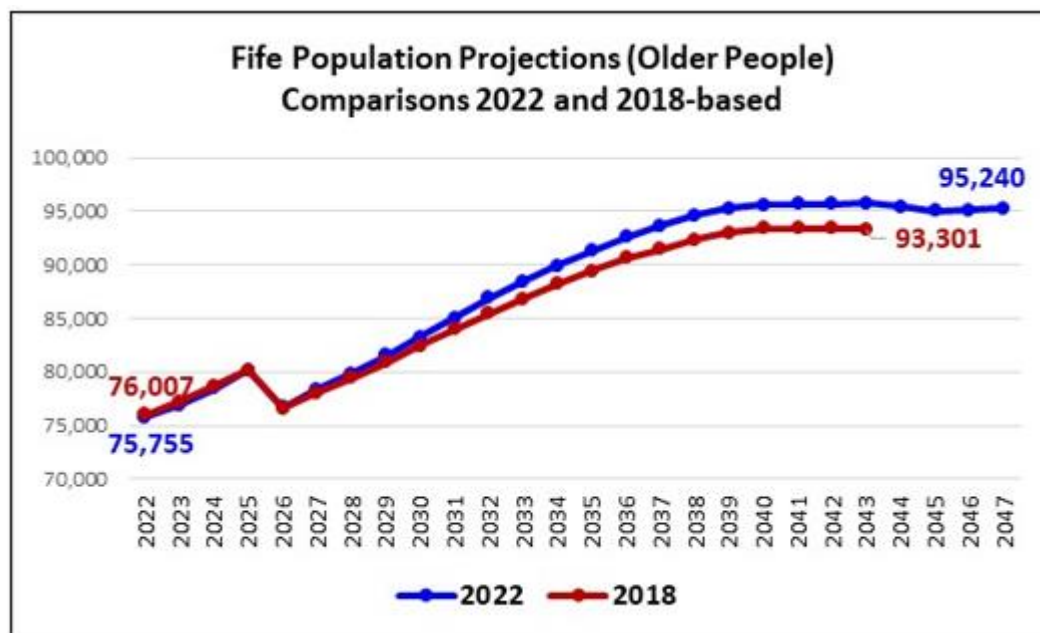


Figure 3 - Older people population projections 2022 and 2018-based

The picture for Fife's older people population shows a very similar picture to that predicted in the 2018-based projections, and growth looks set to continue but at a slightly faster rate. This is slightly surprising, as one of the consequences of the changes to the pension age (increasing from age 65 to 66 in 2020, and again in 2026 to 67), should have had a dampening effect on the number of pensioners. However, this has resulted in slightly more pensioners, with Fife expected to see another 20,000 older people by 2047.

Further information

For more information on the latest population projection figures for Fife and Scotland, please go to [Subnational Population Projections: 2022-based - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#)

For other local analysis relating to the population of Fife, please go to [Population | KnowFife](#)

The Improvement Service are expected to publish a set of sub-council population projections for areas (at ward level) in 2026.