

Population of Scottish Borders

"Information on Scotland's population is vital for planning health services, education and transport. Census data paints a detailed picture of how Scotland and our communities are changing."

Dr Janet Egdell, Chief Executive, National Records of Scotland

Scottish Borders is at its highest ever population

On Census Day, 20 March 2022, the population of the Scottish Borders was estimated to be 116,821. Similarly with Scotland, this is the largest population ever recorded by Scotland's Census.

The Scottish Borders population is still growing, but much more slowly than before

The population of Scottish Borders grew by 2,941 (2.6%) since the previous census in 2011, compared with a 2.7% growth for Scotland.

Between 2001 and 2011, the Scottish Borders population grew by 7,116 (6.7%). The rate of growth in Scottish Borders between 2001-2011 was more buoyant than the Scottish average growth of 4.6% during that time.

Since the 2011 Census, population growth in Scottish Borders has slowed significantly, even more than the Scottish average, although it is still growing, slowly.

Population growth could be better...but other Council areas have it worse

Between 2011 and 2022, the population increased in 17 council areas, including Scottish Borders, and decreased in 10 council areas. There were 5 council areas that saw minimal change.

The council area that saw the largest increase was Midlothian (up 16.1%) while Na h-Eileanan Siar saw the biggest decrease (down 5.5%).

Population decreases were concentrated in the west and south west of Scotland, from Argyll and Bute to Dumfries and Galloway. These decreases were driven by a higher number of deaths than births between censuses. In Shetland, the decrease was driven by migration.

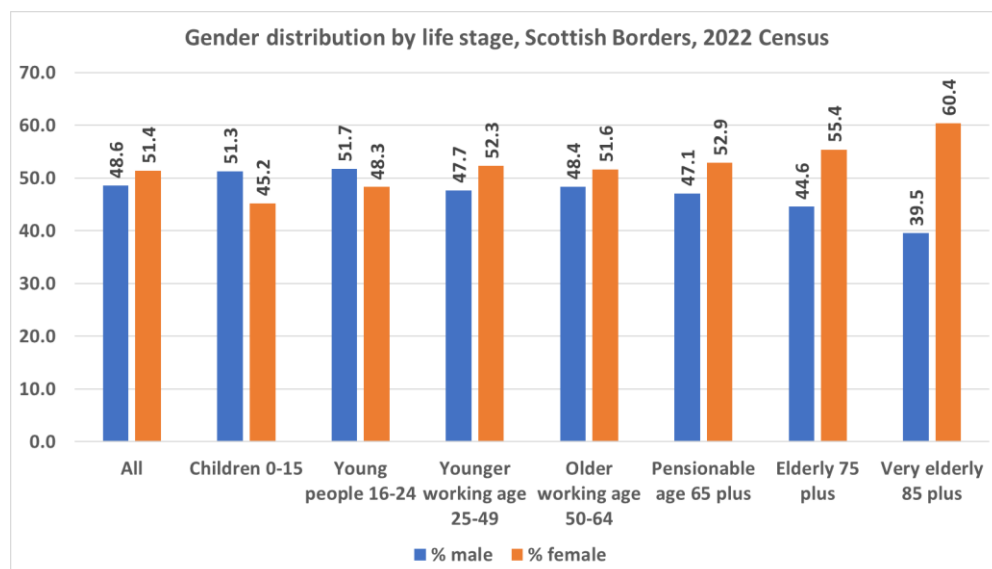
Most of the council areas in the Central Belt saw increases in their populations, particularly those around Edinburgh. These increases were driven by migration from within Scotland and from elsewhere.

According to NRS, the other UK censuses showed higher rates of population growth than in Scotland. In England and Wales the population increased by 6.3% between 2011 and 2021. In Northern Ireland the population increased by 5.1% over the same period.

Gender balance

There were 60,059 females (51.4%) and 56,262 males in Scottish Borders in 2022. This is similar to the Scottish average gender balance.

The graph below shows how gender balance changes as the population ages.



The gender distribution remains reasonably balanced up until retirement, but from then on, the older population is more likely to be female than male. In the 85+ age group, 60% of the population is female and 40% is male.

Ageing population

The population of Scotland, and especially of Scottish Borders, is ageing. There are more people in the older age groups than ever recorded in Scotland's Census. The 2022 Census recorded 30,721 people aged 65 and over in Scottish Borders. For the first time, the number of over 65s is higher than the number of children and young people aged under 25 (27,615).

Other countries are seeing similar trends. Recent censuses in the rest of the UK and in several other G7 countries showed that their populations are ageing too.

The table below shows that pensioners, the elderly and the very elderly had by far the biggest population increases in the Scottish Borders between the 2011 and 2022 Censuses, more even than Scotland in general, which has also seen large increases.

% change in population numbers by age group, 2011-22	Scottish Borders	Scotland
Children 0-15	-5.7	-2.7
Young people 16-24	-9.4	-7.7
Younger working age 25-49	-13.1	-5.9
Older working age 50-64	10.8	12.0
Pensionable age 65 plus	28.2	21.7
Elderly 75 plus	30.6	19.2
Very elderly 85 plus	26.6	21.7
All people	2.6	2.6

According to NRS, the 65+ population increased in other UK countries too. In England and Wales the 65+ population increased by 20.0% between 2011 and 2021. In Northern Ireland the 65+ population increased by 23.8% over the same period.

According to NRS, the main reasons for Scotland's ageing population are:

- people born in the post-war baby boom getting older
- the number of births dropping since the 1960s
- people living longer

Scottish Borders has a worse-than-average ageing population

According to NRS figures, Scottish Borders has the fifth highest proportion of over 65s out of the 32 Council areas.

In Scotland, the areas with the largest proportion of people aged 65 and over tend to be in the west or south of the country: Argyll and Bute has the highest rate, followed by Dumfries and Galloway. Western Isles and South Ayrshire also have a higher proportion of over 65s than Scottish Borders.

Jon Wroth-Smith, Director of Census Statistics, National Records of Scotland said:

"It is important that we understand how our population is ageing so we can prepare for it. These changes will put greater demand on health and social care services."

The four largest cities in Scotland were amongst the areas with the lowest proportions of people aged 65 and over. The council area with the lowest proportion of people aged 65 and over was Glasgow City (14.0%).

The council areas with the lowest proportion of people in the 65+ group also have higher proportions of young adults. These council areas tend to have large student populations.

Changes in the population at local level within Scottish Borders

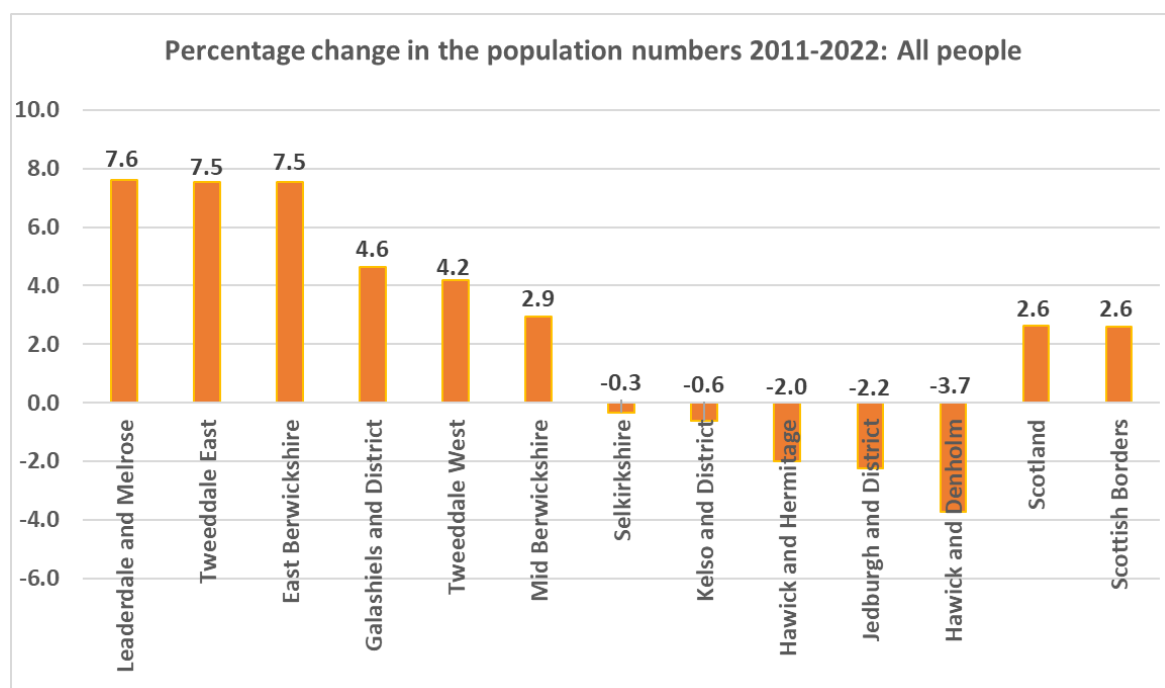
As well as comparing Scottish Borders against Scotland, we can compare areas within the Scottish Borders to see how the population has changed between 2011 and 2022. We can do this at any scale from Locality to Datazone, but here we will examine population change at Electoral Ward level.

The following section presents the numbers and percentage change in the numbers of people between the 2011 and 2022 Censuses for All people and by the 7 lifestage age categories, at Electoral Ward level and for Scottish Borders and Scotland.

All people

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of people at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders.

All people	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	10,583	11,381
Galashiels and District	14,656	15,336
Hawick and Denholm	9,512	9,159
Hawick and Hermitage	8,724	8,551
Jedburgh and District	9,210	9,003
Kelso and District	10,275	10,212
Leaderdale and Melrose	10,585	11,391
Mid Berwickshire	10,342	10,645
Selkirkshire	9,829	9,796
Tweeddale East	10,174	10,942
Tweeddale West	9,990	10,407



There is continued and serious population loss in both Hawick Wards and also in the Jedburgh Ward. There is also some population loss in the Kelso and Selkirk Wards. This is driven by population loss from the towns themselves, especially Hawick. Hawick has been losing population for many years.

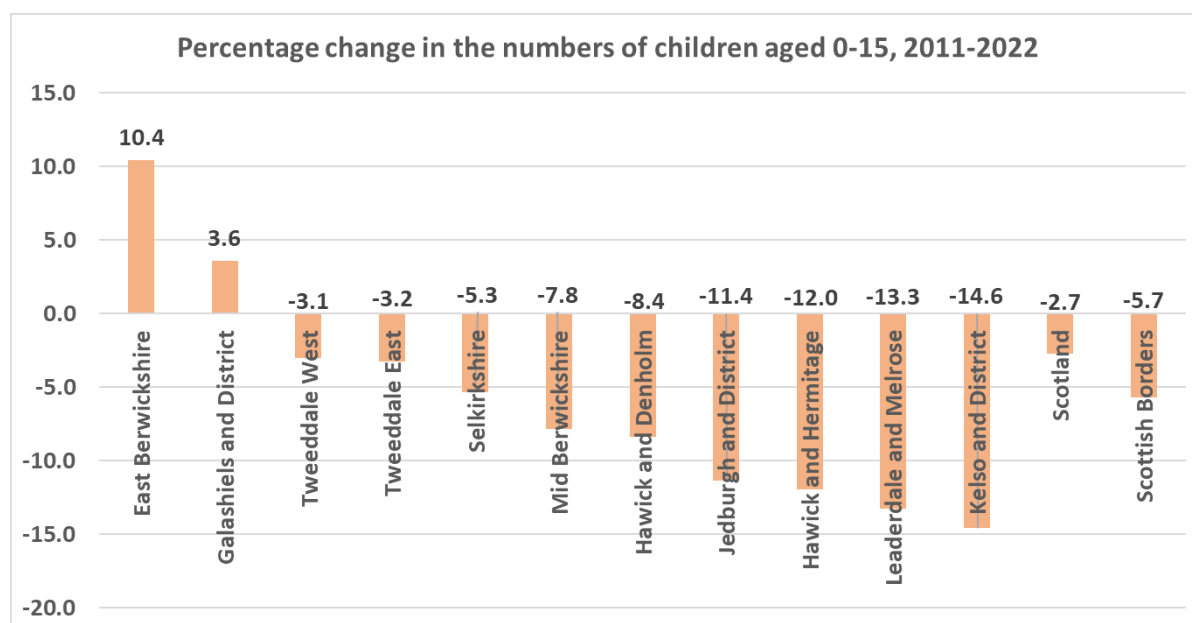
The Wards serving Peebles, Duns, Eyemouth and Galashiels have fared much better

The biggest percentage population increases within Scottish Borders between 2011 and 2022 have been in the Leaderdale and Melrose Ward, Tweeddale East and East Berwickshire.

Children aged 0-15

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of children at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders Children aged 0-15

Children 0-15	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	1,688	1,877
Galashiels and District	2,404	2,459
Hawick and Denholm	1,722	1,480
Hawick and Hermitage	1,153	1,090
Jedburgh and District	1,541	1,374
Kelso and District	1,631	1,372
Leaderdale and Melrose	2,095	1,907
Mid Berwickshire	1,701	1,545
Selkirkshire	1,614	1,487
Tweeddale East	1,914	1,903
Tweeddale West	1,867	1,742



There has been a significant decrease in the number of children throughout Scottish Borders in the last ten years, affecting Scottish Borders worse than other Council areas.

This will begin to have an impact on the number and viability of schools throughout the region, if this trend continues for the next 10 years.

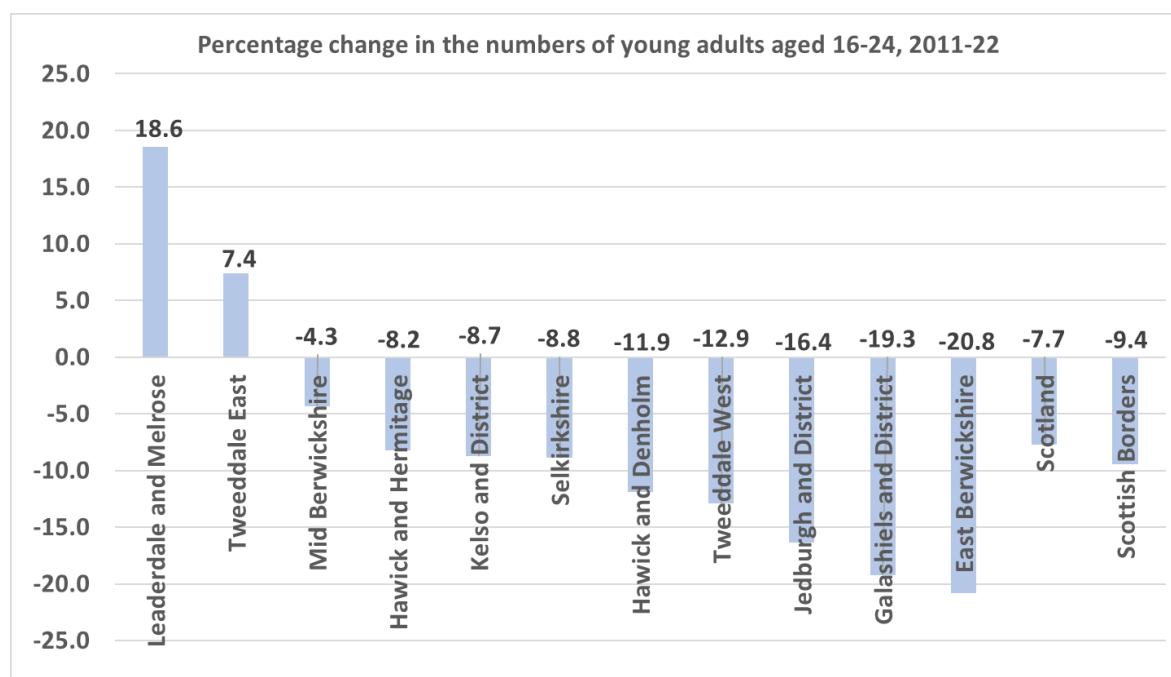
The only parts of the region that are not losing children are the East Berwickshire and the Galashiels and District wards.

If this trend continues, these two Wards may have issues with capacity. More localised research is required to see whereabouts the children are living, and to identify any new capacity potential.

Young adults aged 16-24

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of young people at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders

Young people 16-24	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	999	791
Galashiels and District	1,953	1,577
Hawick and Denholm	934	823
Hawick and Hermitage	805	739
Jedburgh and District	776	649
Kelso and District	824	752
Leaderdale and Melrose	791	938
Mid Berwickshire	855	818
Selkirkshire	825	752
Tweeddale East	810	870
Tweeddale West	798	695



There has been a significant decrease in the number of young adults throughout Scottish Borders in the last ten years, affecting Scottish Borders worse than other Council areas.

This trend can be explained by the healthy proportion of Scottish Borders school leavers who leave the region in order to go into higher or further education. This trend would be healthy if the young people returned to the region after graduating, but there is evidence that many of them don't.

The only parts of the region that are not losing young adults are the Leaderdale and Melrose and the Tweeddale East wards.

More detailed analysis is needed to find out why this is, and what they are doing instead.

Younger working age 25-49

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of younger working age people at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders

Younger working age 25-49	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	2,984	2,886
Galashiels and District	4,791	4,708
Hawick and Denholm	2,870	2,290
Hawick and Hermitage	2,627	2,140
Jedburgh and District	2,737	2,169
Kelso and District	2,901	2,401
Leaderdale and Melrose	3,403	2,906
Mid Berwickshire	3,019	2,597
Selkirkshire	2,923	2,433
Tweeddale East	3,107	2,799
Tweeddale West	3,181	2,698



All parts of Scottish Borders are losing this crucial age group in significant numbers, at a level that is much worse than the Scottish Average.

This age group is crucial to maintaining a balanced population of young families to ensure the next generation of children in the region. Over half of Scottish Borders Wards have lost over 15% of their younger Working-age populations in the past ten years. Some of these will have been young adults who left the region for work or study and did not return.

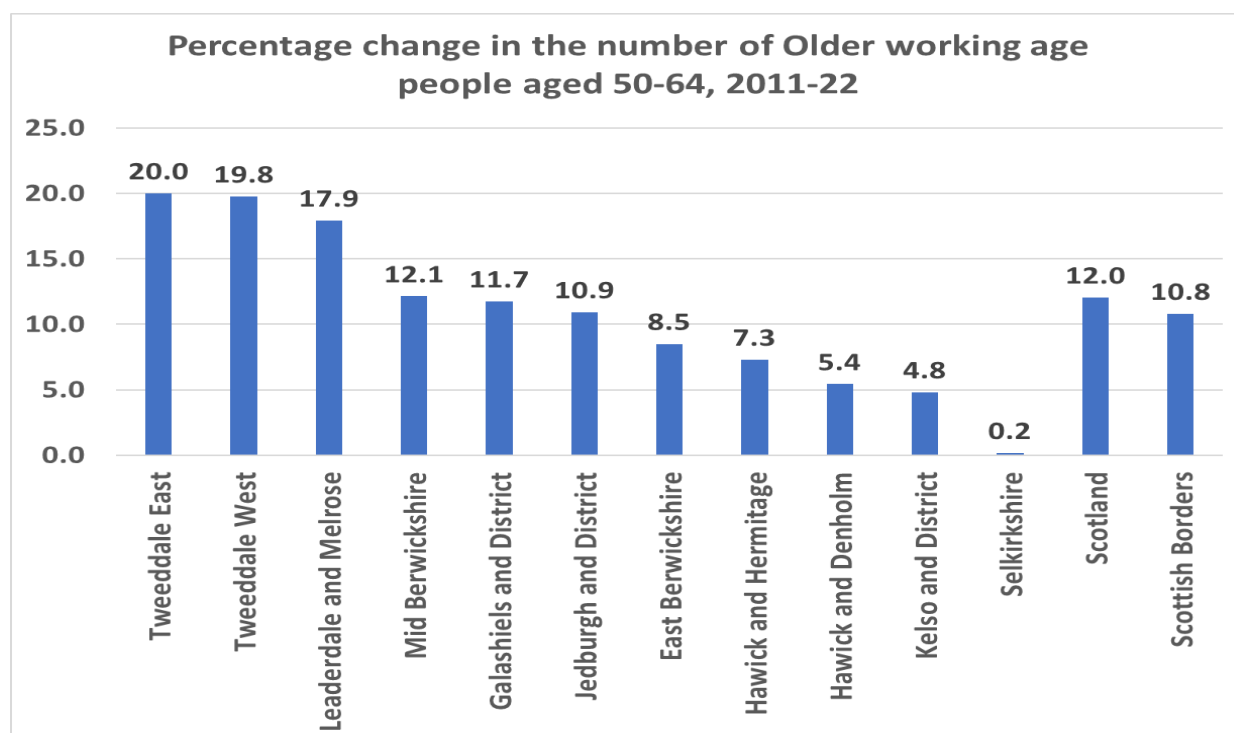
Losses are worst in the Hawick and Jedburgh Wards, but also in Kelso, Selkirk and Tweeddale West

If this rate of loss from this age group continues at the current rate, there will be serious repercussions for the population balance and the viability of the employment base in the region.

Older Working Age – 50-64

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of older Working Age people at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders

Older working age 50-64	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	2,529	2,744
Galashiels and District	3,024	3,379
Hawick and Denholm	2,120	2,235
Hawick and Hermitage	1,988	2,133
Jedburgh and District	2,088	2,316
Kelso and District	2,332	2,444
Leaderdale and Melrose	2,316	2,731
Mid Berwickshire	2,432	2,727
Selkirkshire	2,396	2,400
Tweeddale East	2,235	2,682
Tweeddale West	2,217	2,655



The crucial Working-age population is ageing in all parts of the Scottish Borders

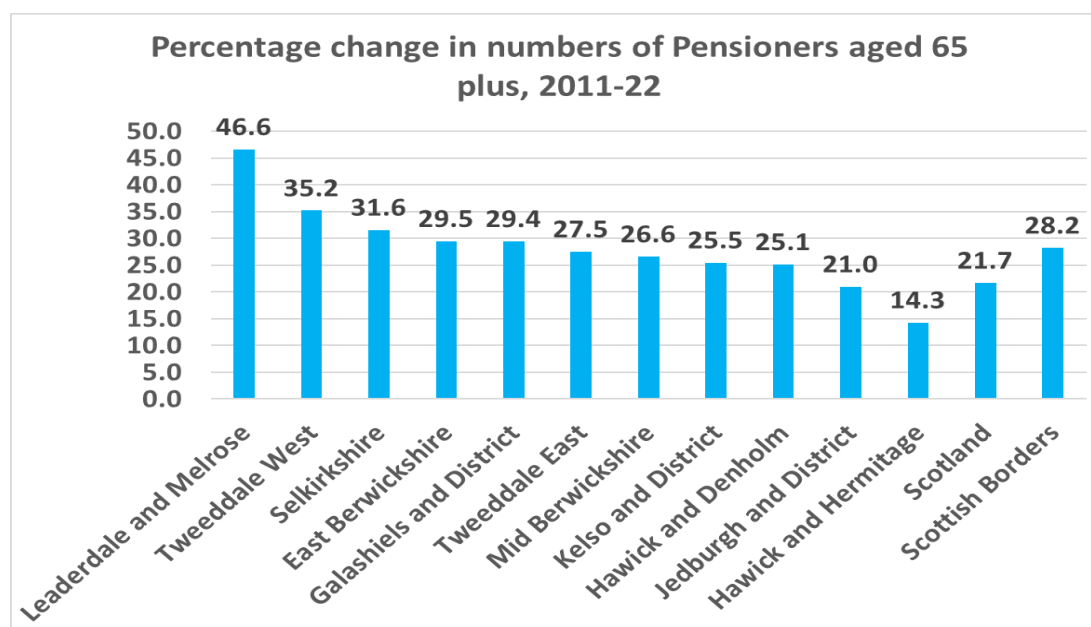
This age group is crucial to the population balance as it represents families with older or adult children, who have been educated in Scottish Borders High schools and now themselves face the choice of remaining in the region or leaving for work or study.

The older workforce also represents the years of skills and experience in the Scottish Borders, but who are nevertheless likely to retire before the next Census. There are currently more workers retiring from skilled professions in the workforce than entering it, leading to loss of GPs, health and social care staff, teachers, and closure of businesses, Post Offices etc.

Pensioners - 65 plus

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of pensioners at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders

Pensionable age 65 plus	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	2,383	3,085
Galashiels and District	2,484	3,215
Hawick and Denholm	1,866	2,335
Hawick and Hermitage	2,151	2,458
Jedburgh and District	2,068	2,502
Kelso and District	2,587	3,246
Leaderdale and Melrose	1,980	2,903
Mid Berwickshire	2,335	2,956
Selkirkshire	2,071	2,725
Tweeddale East	2,108	2,688
Tweeddale West	1,927	2,605



The numbers of pensioners aged 65 plus have increased substantially in all parts of the region, outstripping the Scottish average increase.

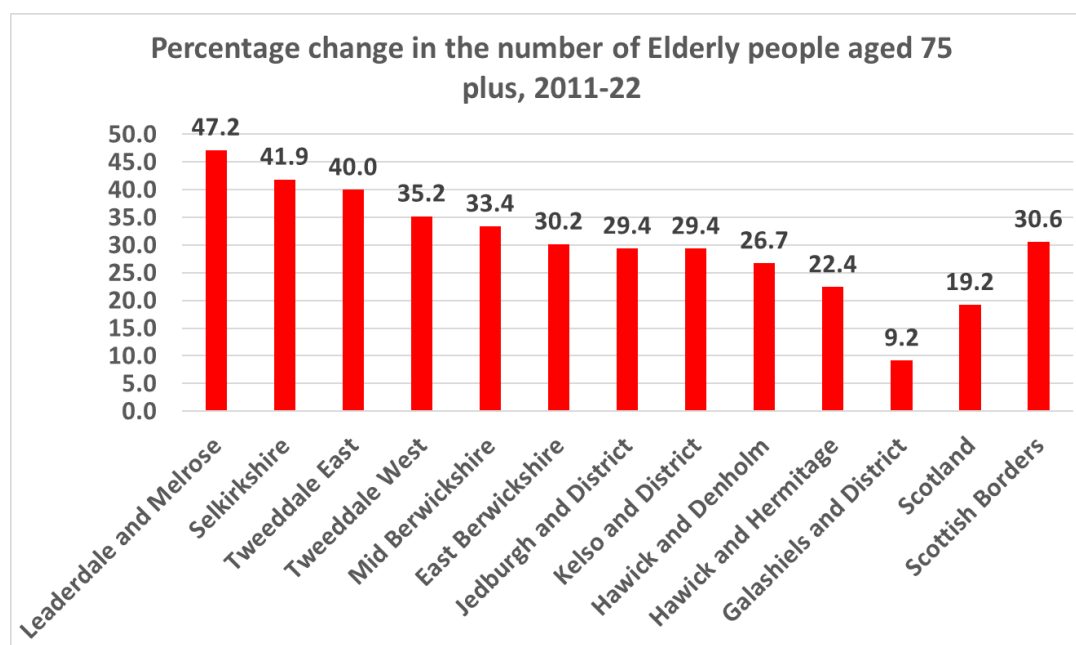
Scotland's burgeoning numbers of pensioners are well documented and are a well established trend, as people continue to live longer, healthier lives. An unbalanced proportion of pensioners in the population puts a strain on the burgeoning state pension budget and also on demands for unpaid care and on the health and social care sector. An increasingly unequal proportion of these pensioners are lone women and some may be carers themselves.

The biggest increase has been in Leaderdale and Melrose, where the number of pensioners has increased by almost half as much again since the last Census

Elderly - 75 plus

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of elderly people at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders

Elderly 75 plus	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	1,014	1,320
Galashiels and District	1,244	1,358
Hawick and Denholm	831	1,053
Hawick and Hermitage	1,017	1,245
Jedburgh and District	895	1,158
Kelso and District	1,257	1,626
Leaderdale and Melrose	916	1,348
Mid Berwickshire	1,021	1,362
Selkirkshire	896	1,271
Tweeddale East	888	1,243
Tweeddale West	923	1,248



In particular, the number of elderly pensioners aged 75 plus has increased substantially in all parts of the region, outstripping the Scottish average increase.

Elderly pensioners are more likely than younger pensioners to have health and social care needs and to be provided with unpaid care by a family member. A small number of over 75s are carers themselves, which leaves them very vulnerable.

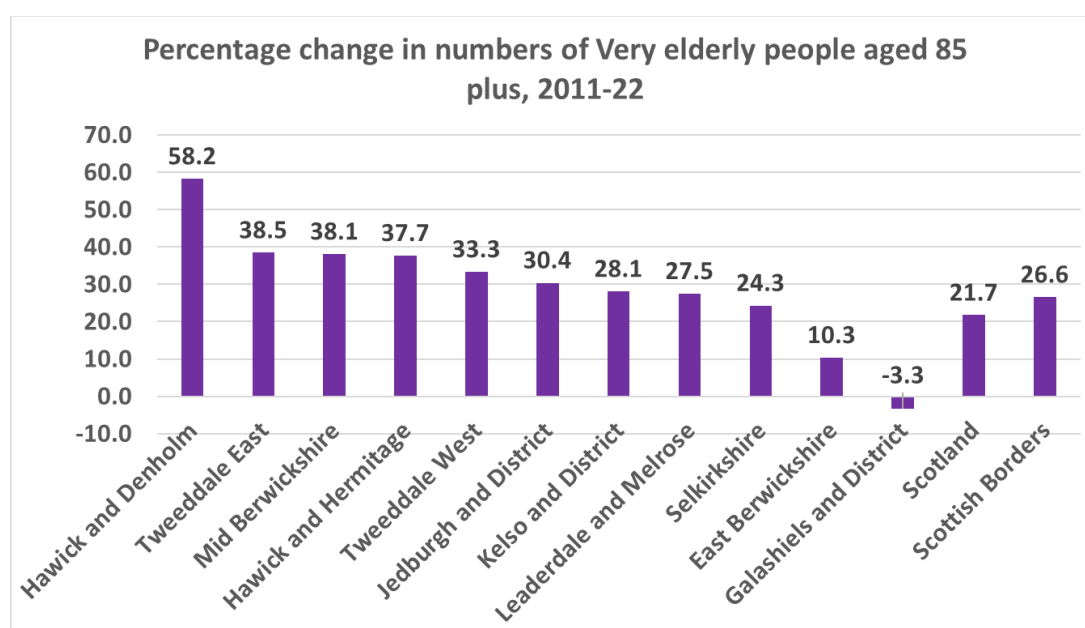
The number of over 75s has increased by almost a third overall and by almost half in Leaderdale and Melrose.

If the number continues to rise at this rate in the next ten years, services such as care homes, GPs and hospitals will be unable to cope, putting more strain on younger relatives providing unpaid care.

Very Elderly - 85 plus

The table and graph below show actual numbers and the percentage change in numbers of very elderly people at Electoral Ward level within Scottish Borders

Very elderly 85 plus	2011	2022
East Berwickshire	261	292
Galashiels and District	391	375
Hawick and Denholm	194	297
Hawick and Hermitage	260	360
Jedburgh and District	250	297
Kelso and District	349	449
Leaderdale and Melrose	251	344
Mid Berwickshire	252	337
Selkirkshire	251	307
Tweeddale East	221	310
Tweeddale West	291	389



The Over 85 age group represents a very small but also very vulnerable group of people (unequally women) who are likely to have substantial care needs. The population of this age group has increased proportionally more in the past ten years in Scottish Borders than in Scotland.

The biggest increase in the number of over 85s since the last Census has been in the Hawick and Denholm Ward. Care should be used in interpreting these figures, as a proportion of this age group is likely to be in specialist accommodation, rather than in their own homes. The distribution of over 85s may therefore relate to the distribution of residential accommodation in the Ward.

Interestingly, however, there are several care homes in Galashiels yet the numbers of over 85s in this Ward have actually decreased since 2011. Detailed stats on communal establishments and living arrangements are available and can be explored further in the 2022 Census.