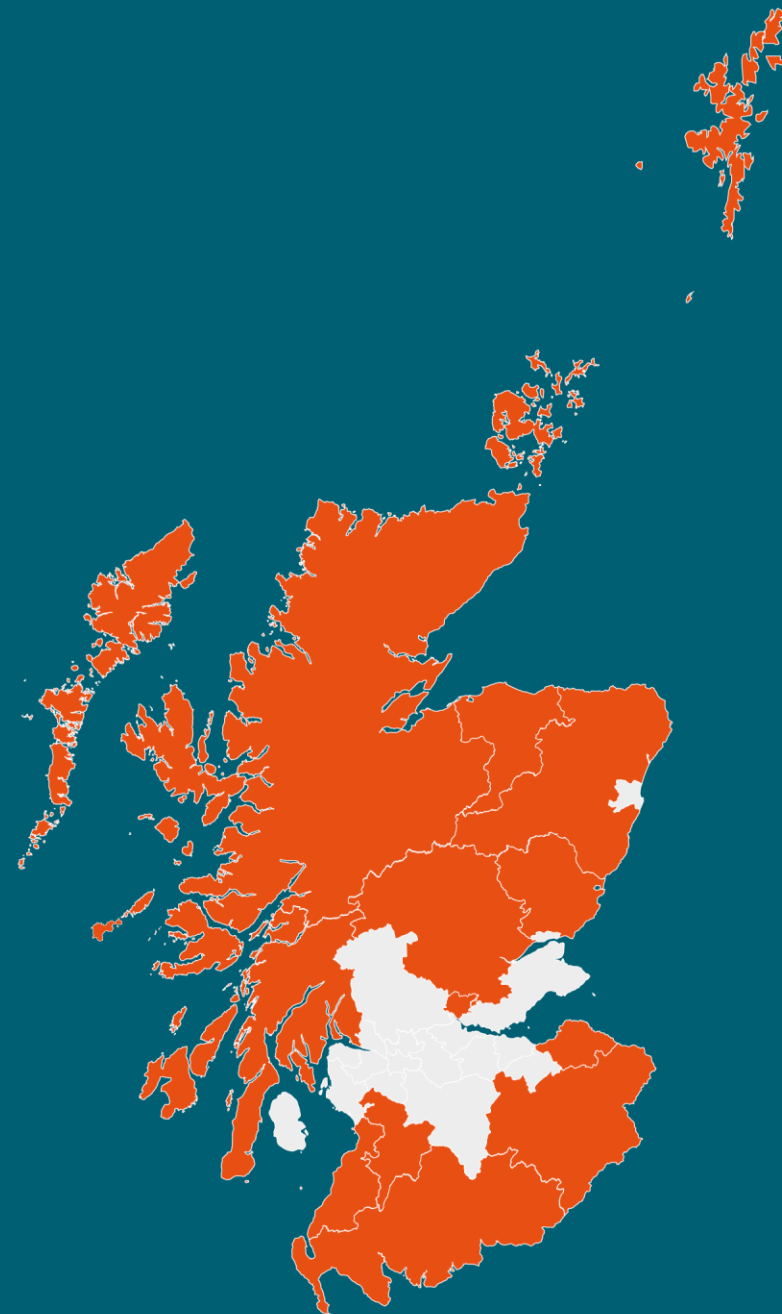


October 2025



Regional Skills Assessments

First launched in 2014, Regional Skills Assessments (RSAs) provide a robust and consistent evidence base to support strategic skills investment planning. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has worked with key partners and stakeholders to produce RSAs, ensuring an inclusive approach to their development, dissemination and utilisation.

RSAs include forecast data that has been commissioned through Oxford Economics. The Technical Note¹ provides full details on the caveats that must be applied when using forecast data, but broadly, it should be noted that:

- Forecasts are based on what we know now and include past and present trends projected into the future.
- The more disaggregated they become, especially at smaller geographical units, the less reliable they are likely to be.
- Their value is in identifying likely directions of travel rather than predicting exact figures.
- The forecasts do not account for national or regional activities, initiatives or investments that are planned.

Industries and occupations used in the RSAs are defined by Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC)² and Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC).³

This RSA report for **Rural Scotland** is based on the Scottish Government's Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) classification of rural areas. It covers the Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Lothian, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, Shetland Islands, and South Ayrshire local authorities. **The 15 local authorities above are those RESAS classified as either 'mainly rural' or 'islands and remote rural'.**

A summary of forecast data is also available down to local authority level in the [RSA Summary Infographics](#).

The RSAs are part of a suite of Labour Market Insight publications by SDS. Other products in the suite include:



Economy, People and Skills report which provides succinct and up-to-date evidence on Scotland's economy, businesses and people. It is published monthly.



Sectoral Skills Assessments provide Labour Market Insight for key sectors across Scotland. These are published annually.



The **Data Matrix** is an interactive tool, offering more detailed data from a variety of sources in a visually engaging format. It is updated frequently.

Throughout the report, we indicate where **local authority information is available through the Data Matrix**. The Data Matrix also contains additional data for the region, including data on employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity from the Annual Population Survey. These are available under the theme Skills Supply.

Alongside the suite of Labour Market Insight publications, SDS also produces a wide range of reports such as statistics on Modern Apprenticeships and the Annual Participation measure for 16-19 year olds. This includes a wide range of data related to equalities. Further information can be found on the [Publications and Statistics](#) section of the SDS website.



We value user feedback on the Regional Skills Assessments.

If you would like to provide feedback, please do so [here](#).

For any further information or queries on the RSAs or any of our other products, please contact:

[**RSA@sds.co.uk**](mailto:RSA@sds.co.uk)

1. RSA Technical Note (2025).

2. Office for National Statistics UK Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 2007.

3. Office for National Statistics UK Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2010.

The Context for Scotland's Labour Market

Over the past decade, the Scottish economy has experienced disruption driven by changes in the global political landscape, the cost-of-living crisis and conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine. In addition, megatrends in demography, technology, and the environment have continued to shape Scotland's economy and labour market, many of which are interdependent. Below is an overview of the drivers that are expected to have the greatest influence on Scotland's labour market outlook in the near term, based on a comprehensive analysis of both structural and cyclical factors.

The Economy

Scotland and the UK experienced weak economic growth of 1.1% in 2024, with inflation also staying above the 2.0% target. Forecasters expect economic growth to remain at around 1.0% in 2025, with inflation also expected to remain elevated. The effects of rising prices and high interest rates continue to impact Scottish households and businesses. This contributes to the Scottish labour market being cooler in 2025, following a period of sustained tightness in recent years.



Demographic Change

Scotland's population is projected to grow until mid-2047, largely driven by positive net migration, which will offset the anticipated natural decline due to a falling fertility rate. However, whilst the population is growing, it is also ageing. Around one-fifth of Scotland's residents were aged 65 or over in 2024. By 2047, the number of people of pensionable age is expected to increase by 21%. This demographic change has implications for the economy and labour market, by affecting caring responsibilities, tax revenue, and productivity.



Inclusion and Equality

There is a lingering effect from the cost-of-living crisis, which began in 2021, with rising energy prices and financial pressures continuing to have a disproportionate impact on low-to-middle income households. Poverty, including in-work poverty, persists; however, the Fair Work policy agenda aims to reduce labour market inequalities. Barriers to accessing the labour market remain for disabled people and minority ethnic groups, and gender equality still requires progress.



Technology and Automation

Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to be the core driver in technology transformation. Scotland has a strong technology sector, underpinned by extensive academic and business presence in AI and related fields. The adoption of AI is rapidly increasing among Scottish businesses, particularly in optimising workflows. However, the implications of AI for the labour market remain uncertain. Scotland's strong base in digital and data skills could provide an advantage, but maintaining a skilled workforce will be essential.



Climate Change and Net Zero

The transition to net zero will directly impact the labour market as actions are taken to meet net zero targets. This shift offers significant opportunities for job creation in Scotland, particularly in the clean energy sector. Scotland has strong natural assets, and existing sectoral strengths provide a strong foundation for a green economy. However, upskilling will be crucial for transition to net zero. Especially in the construction, manufacturing, agriculture, energy and transport sectors.



A fuller report on Scotland's Labour Market Drivers can be found [here](#).

The definition of rural Scotland used for this RSA incorporates 15 local authority areas located across the length and breadth of the country, incorporating remote, coastal and island communities.

The economies and labour markets in these areas can look quite different depending on several factors, including proximity to urban centres, industry sector specialisms and the business base structure.

Despite these differences, there is evidence of shared labour market issues. In terms of labour supply, for example, common challenges in rural areas include depopulation, an ageing population,² and difficulty attracting people and skills due to wider infrastructure issues such as housing.³ Combined, these factors can make it difficult for employers to access (and retain) the skills they need, and the most recent business panel in Highlands and Islands notes that 53% of respondents cited the availability of labour and skills as a risk to their business.⁴

Access to labour is important for many reasons, such as achieving ambitions around net zero, ensuring businesses can realise opportunities coming from investment projects or ensuring that rural businesses can continue to deliver vital products and services within our rural communities and beyond. Rural Scotland will play an important role in supporting the transition to net zero, particularly given proximity to natural capital and expertise in agriculture and other

nature-based sectors. Maintaining and developing skills in these sectors will be key to supporting the transition.

A supply of skilled people will also be necessary for businesses to realise investment opportunities. Insight from a Highlands and Islands Enterprise study showcases the scale of opportunity for the region across several sectors, many of which support decarbonisation. It indicates a potential investment pipeline of over £100bn, with over 114,000 FTE job years in construction and a further 18,000 operational and maintenance jobs by 2040.⁵ In response to workforce challenges identified in the Highlands and Islands, a collaborative partnership approach, referred to as Workforce North, is now being taken forward in the region.

Regional Economic Partnership (REP) structures have been set up to bring partners together around economic priorities at a regional level and often this approach includes a focus on skills. In the South of Scotland, for example, skills have been identified as one of the key barriers to growth in the region.

REPs and the local partners that form part of these structures (and associated skills workstreams) have an important role in driving skills development which meets regional needs. An example of a partnership approach to skills development which incorporates rural communities is the recently published Forth

Valley Regional Skills Action Plan, which responds to identified skills needs and sets out a framework for collaboration in the region.

Developing the right skills at the right time will continue to be key in ensuring that people in rural areas can access good jobs in their own communities. In turn, this will give employers the people and skills they need to continue to provide vital products and services, drive productivity and innovation and support a thriving rural economy.

It is important to note that the forecasts used in this Regional Skills Assessment are policy and investment neutral.



This means the figures present a baseline outlook that takes into account historical trends and external economic conditions, but the figures do not reflect investment or policy that is unconfirmed or at planning/development stage. This would include investments coming through the City and Region Deals which incorporate rural areas as well as the regional transformational opportunities expected in the Highlands and Islands.

Therefore, the forecasts should be used in conjunction with other sources, and readers are encouraged to overlay these with their own local and sectoral knowledge.

1. Insight from the region gathered via Skills Development Scotland (2025).

2. Scottish Government (2021) [A Scotland for the future: the opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population](#)

3. Scottish Parliament (2024) [Rural and Island Housing](#)

4. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2025) [HIE Business Panel](#)

5. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2025) [Regional Transformation Opportunities](#)

Economic Performance¹



Estimated GVA in **Rural Scotland** in 2025: **£42,119m**

Rural Scotland was estimated to generate 24.9% of Scotland's output in 2025. This share of GVA ranked the region 0 for GVA contribution to the Scottish economy.

In 2025, the highest value industries in Rural Scotland were estimated to be:

	Real Estate Activities *	£6,090m
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	£4,728m
	Manufacturing	£4,712m
	Wholesale and Retail Trade	£3,914m



GVA forecast average annual growth (2025-2028)

Rural Scotland: 1.5%

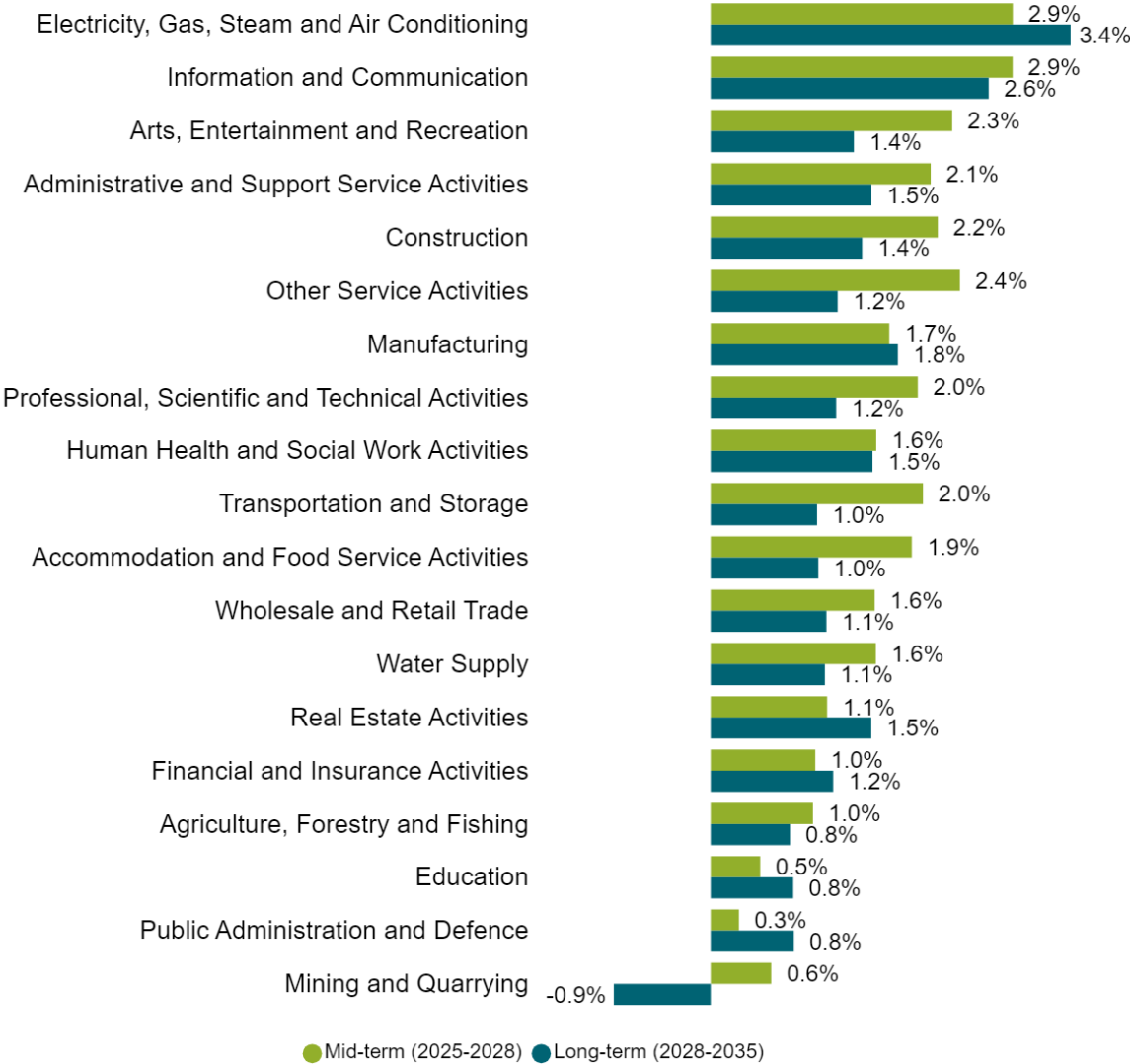
Scotland: 1.7%

GVA forecast average annual growth (2028-2035)

Rural Scotland: 1.4%

Scotland: 1.6%

Forecast Average Annual GVA Change by Industry (%), Rural Scotland



For data on GVA at local authority level please see the **Data Matrix**.
(Theme: Skills Demand; Topic: Economic Output (GVA))

1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

*GVA in the Real Estate industry is inflated by owner-occupier imputed rent. This reflects the value of services provided by homeowners who own and live in their homes.

In this report, we have used Oxford Economics' measure of productivity, which is calculated by dividing total regional GVA by total regional employment (measured by jobs). Please note, there are different ways of calculating productivity, and caution is needed when interpreting productivity data presented in this report. It must be considered in the context of other data and insight.

Productivity in **Rural Scotland** was estimated to be **£52,900** in 2025. In comparison, the Scottish average was estimated to be £57,700.



Mid-term Productivity

From 2025 to 2028, productivity in Rural Scotland is forecast to grow by 0.9% on average each year. Over the same period, the Scottish growth rate is forecast to be 0.8%.

Rural Scotland forecast productivity in 2028: **£54,200**

Scotland forecast productivity in 2028: **£59,100**



Long-term Productivity

From 2028 to 2035, productivity in Rural Scotland is forecast to grow by 1.1% on average each year. Over the same period, the Scottish growth rate is forecast to be 1.0%.

Rural Scotland forecast productivity in 2035: **£58,700**

Scotland forecast productivity in 2035: **£63,600**

Forecast Productivity (2025)



Regional Employment¹



Workforce Size 2025:
733,900 people

The region's workforce was estimated to account for **27.2%** of Scottish employment.

Over the last 10 years (2015-2025), regional employment was estimated to have **grown** by **5.0%** (**34,700** people). In comparison, employment in Scotland increased by 5.5%.



Workforce Size 2028:
747,400 people

The region's workforce is forecast to **grow** by **1.8%** (**13,500** people) between 2025 and 2028.

Compared to a Scotland-wide increase of **2.5%** or **68,000** people.

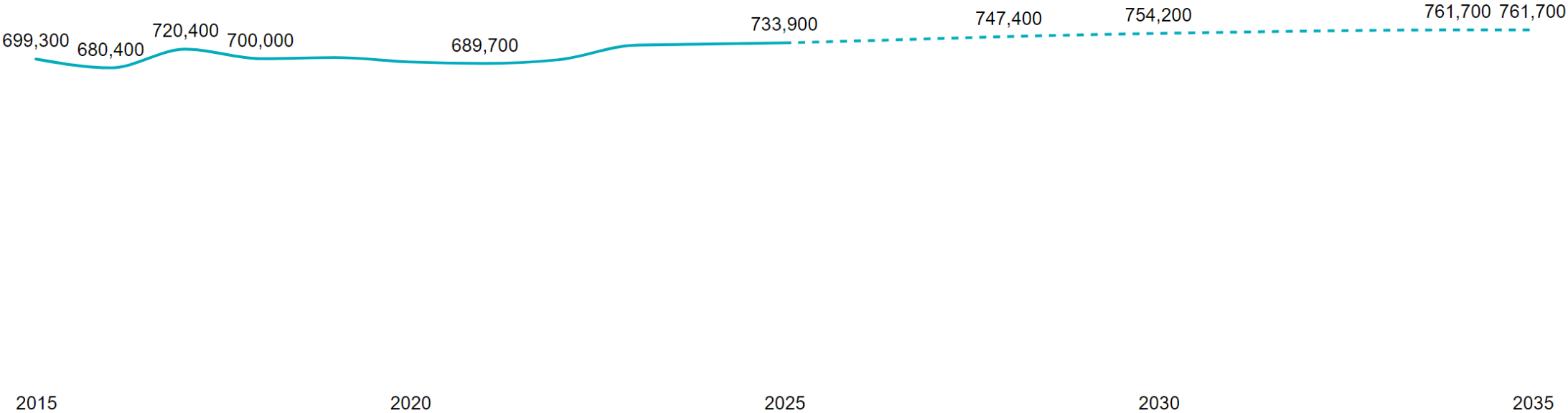


Workforce Size 2035:
761,700 people

The region's workforce is forecast to **grow** by **1.9%** (**14,200** people) between 2028 and 2035.

Compared to a Scotland-wide increase of **4.0%** or **112,500** people.

Employment and forecast employment (2015-2035) (people), Rural Scotland



For data on employment and forecast employment at local authority level please see the Data Matrix.
(Theme: Skills Demand; Topic: Employment Forecast)

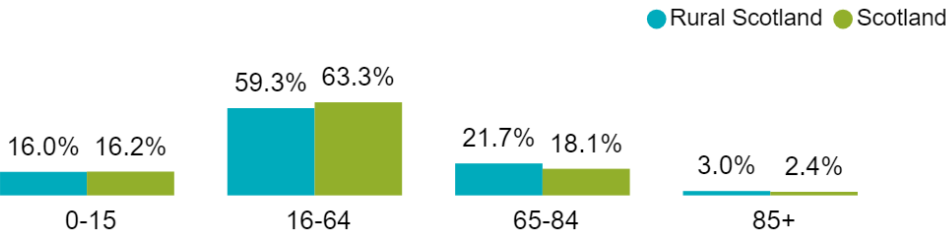
1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

Spotlight: Region's People

Population¹



In 2024, the population in **Rural Scotland** was estimated to be **1,689,400**, accounting for **30.5%** of Scotland's total population. By age, the population distribution of the region and Scotland was:



Disability²

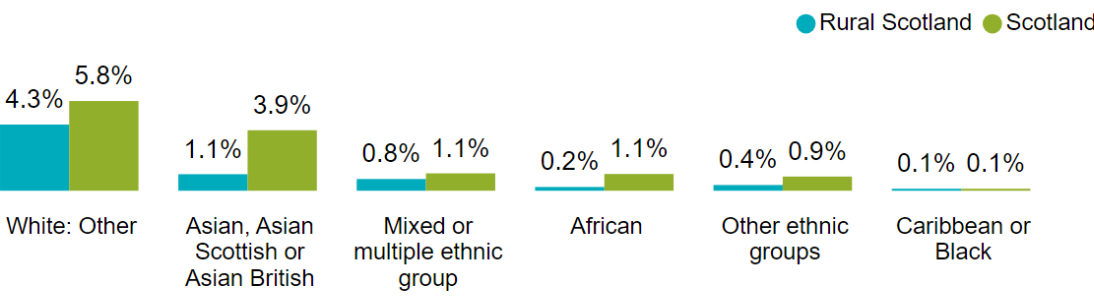


In 2022, the percentage of the population that reported having a health condition or disability that affected their daily activities was:

Rural Scotland: 23.8% **Scotland: 24.1%**

Ethnic Groups²

The majority (**93.2%**) of people in **Rural Scotland** identified as 'White Scottish' or 'Other White British' in 2022. The breakdown of Minority Ethnic groups included:



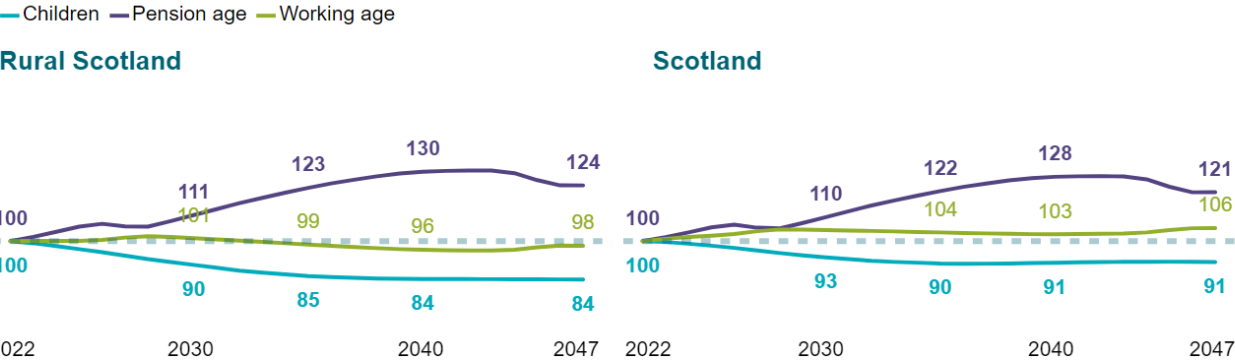
Population Projections³



The population is forecast to **grow** by **1.5%** in **Rural Scotland** between 2022 and 2047. Over the same period, the Scottish population is forecast to grow by 6.2%.

The number of people of working age is projected to **decline** by **2.0%** by 2043. While, across Scotland it is forecast to increase by 5.6%.

Index of Regional and National Projections (2022=100)³



Dependency Ratio⁴

The dependency ratio considers the **non-working age population** (consisting of children and those of pensionable age) **compared to those of working age**. As an example, a dependency ratio of 54% would mean that for every 100 people of working age there are 54 people of non-working age.

Dependency Ratio for Rural Scotland :	Dependency Ratio for Scotland :
2022: 64%	2022: 54%
2047: 69%	2047: 55%

1. National Records of Scotland (2025) [Mid-2024 Population Estimates](#)
2. Scottish Government (2024) [Scotland's Census 2022](#)
3. National Records of Scotland (2025) [Projected Population of Scotland: 2022-based](#)
4. SDS analysis of: National Records of Scotland (2025) [Projected Population of Scotland: 2022-based](#)

Employment by Industry¹

The largest employing industries in the region in 2025 (based on people) were estimated to be:

 **Human Health and Social Work Activities**
134,000

 **Wholesale and Retail Trade**
77,400

 **Education**
68,500

Between 2025 and 2028, employment in the region is forecast to grow, however industries will have varying performance. The greatest employment growth is forecast in Construction, with 2,600 more people by 2028. While Manufacturing is forecast to have the greatest employment contraction (-2,200 people) in the mid-term.

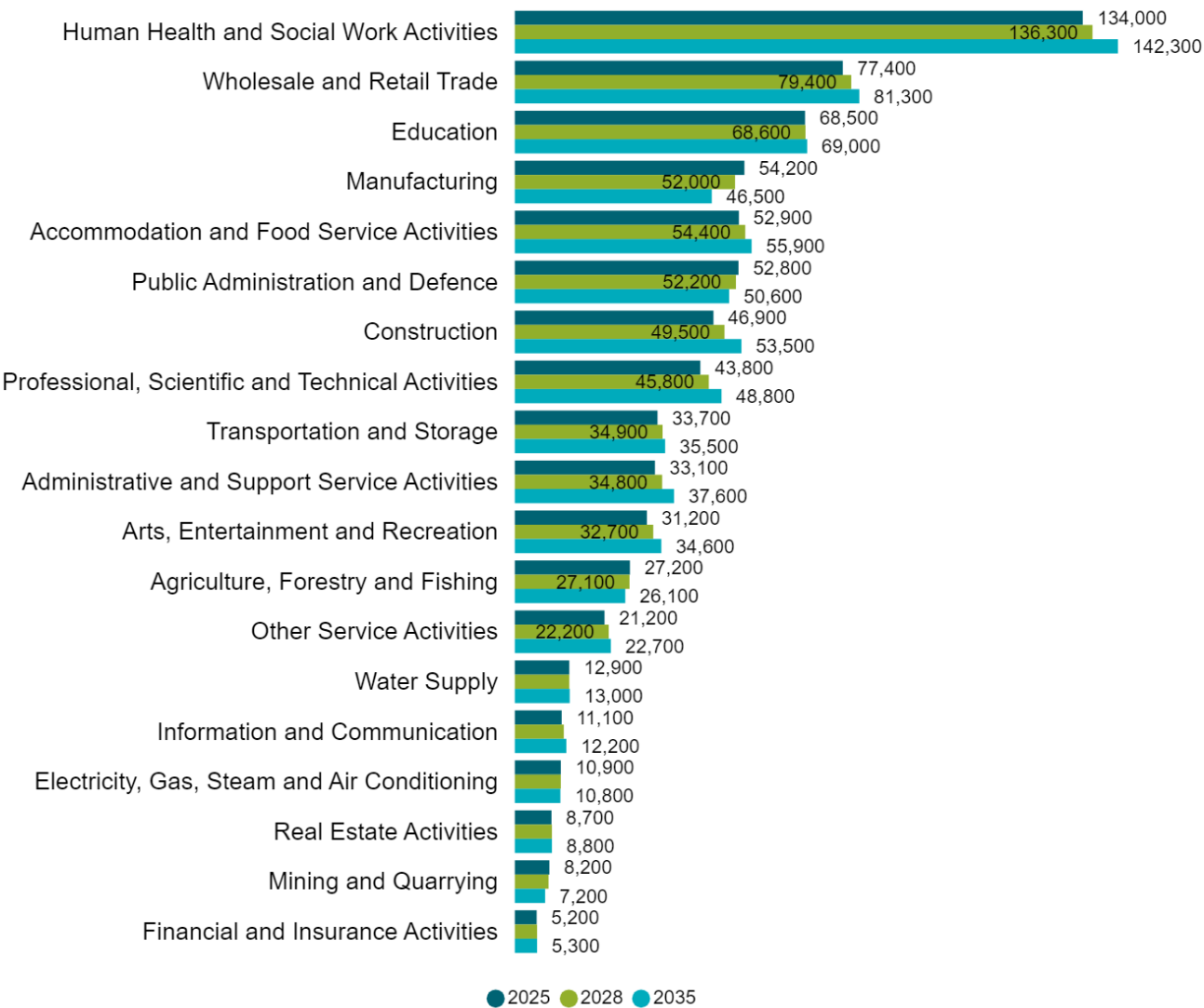
Over the long-term, between 2028 and 2035, the greatest employment growth is forecast in Human Health and Social Work Activities, with 5,900 more people by 2035. While Manufacturing is forecast to have the greatest employment contraction (-5,500 people) in the long-term.

In 2025, Fishing and Aquaculture was estimated to be the region's greatest specialism, with the percentage of employment in this industry 3.4 times greater than the Scottish average. The second largest specialism was estimated to be Crop and Animal Production, Hunting and Related Service Activities (3.0 times greater in the region than the Scottish average).



Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Employment by Industry, Rural Scotland



For data on employment by industry/key sector at local authority level please see the Data Matrix.
(Theme: Skills Demand; Topic: Employment Forecast by Industry)

1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

Employment by Occupation¹

The largest employing occupational groups in the region in 2025 (based on people) were estimated to be:

- 

Caring Personal Service Occupations
66,900
- 

Elementary Occupations: Clerical and Services
61,500
- 

Administrative Occupations
58,300

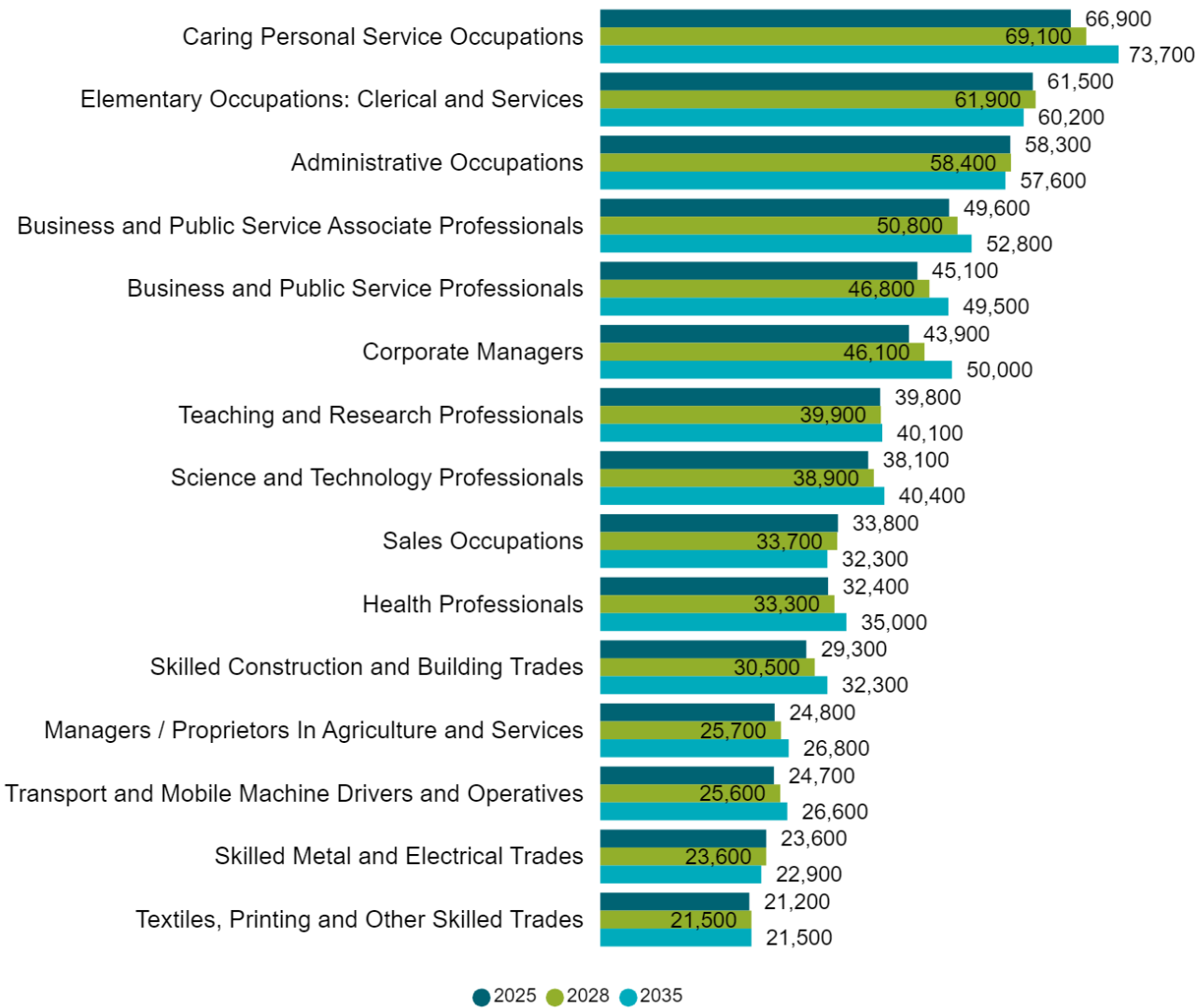
In 2025, 45.3% of employed people in the region were in 'higher-level' occupations*, which was a lower percentage of the workforce than Scotland (50.8%). 'Mid-level' occupations accounted for 33.4% of the workforce, which was a higher percentage of the workforce than Scotland (27.8%). Around 21.2% of people were employed in 'lower-level' occupations, which was a lower percentage of the workforce than Scotland (21.3%).

Between 2025 and 2028, the greatest growth is forecast to be in Caring Personal Service Occupations (2,200 people). While Process, Plant and Machine Operatives is likely to experience the greatest contraction (-400 people).

Over the long-term, between 2028 and 2035, the greatest growth is forecast to be in Caring Personal Service Occupations (4,600 people). While Elementary Occupations: Clerical and Services is likely to experience the greatest contraction (-1,700 people).

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Employment in the 15 Largest Occupational Groups, Rural Scotland



1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.
* See RSA Technical Note (2025) for an explanation of what is defined as 'higher-level', 'mid-level' and 'lower-level' occupations.

Transition to Net Zero¹

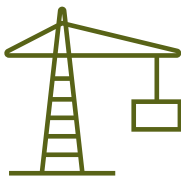
Identified as part of the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP), the sectors² listed below **make a significant contribution to the transition to net zero** and have the greatest potential for skills implications and jobs growth arising from it. This section focuses on overall employment in these sectors that make a significant contribution to the transition to net zero, which is the best available data for **Rural Scotland**. We have been able to additionally establish the split between green jobs and non-green jobs for the College regions. Green jobs in Scotland are defined by three different categories: enhanced skills and knowledge, increased demand and new and emerging.³ For more information, on green and non-green jobs, please see the relevant College region reports. Presented below are the **number of people estimated to be employed in these sectors within Rural Scotland in 2025**.



Agriculture

29,200 people

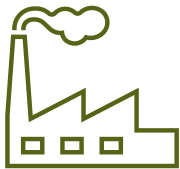
74% of the sector's employment in Scotland



Construction

66,700 people

32% of the sector's employment in Scotland



Manufacturing (with Engineering)

53,500 people

34% of the sector's employment in Scotland



Energy and Waste Treatment

45,300 people

30% of the sector's employment in Scotland



Transport

28,900 people

27% of the sector's employment in Scotland

The total number of people employed in the sectors that will make a significant contribution to net zero in Scotland was estimated to be 667,300 in 2025. Rural Scotland was estimated to account for **33% of Scotland's total** (or 223,500 people). Of the sectors of most importance to the transition, Construction was the largest employing sector (30%) in the region.

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

2. The sectors that make a significant contribution to the net zero transition were identified in [the Green Jobs in Scotland report](#).

Due to the methodology adopted, the footprint of sectors presented on this page differs from the industry footprint presented elsewhere in this report, and in our Sectoral Skills Assessments (SSAs). Please find a full list of the

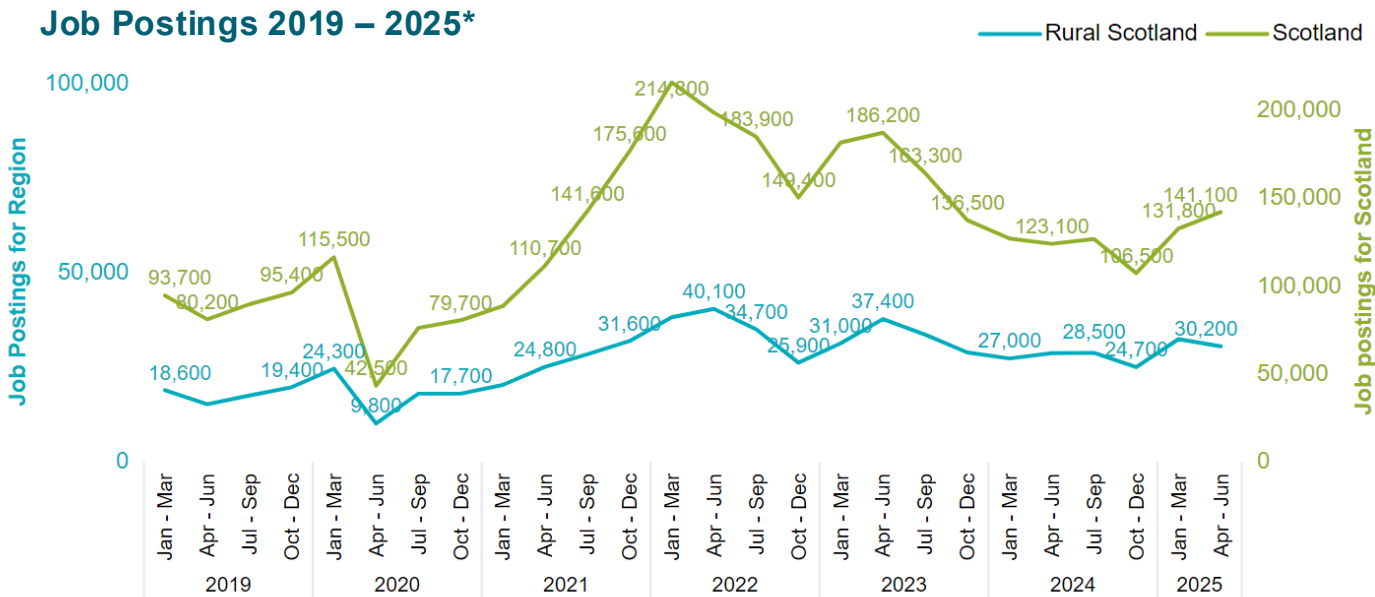
Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes used to define these sectors in the Green Jobs in Scotland report (and on this page) [here](#).

3. Please see slide 13 for more information.

Job Postings¹

Online job postings data provides a useful barometer for the health of the jobs market, real-time employer demand and can indicate changing skills demands. It is important to note that the data does not capture all activity, so it should be considered as an estimate only.

The labour market has cooled across Scotland, and job postings have declined from a peak in 2022. Whilst the labour market has softened, there has been sustained demand for workers in the region in the first six months of 2025. Job postings in Rural Scotland accounted for 22.8% of Scotland's total job postings between January and June 2025.



Between January and June 2025, there were 62,300 job postings in Rural Scotland, of which:

The locations with the most jobs advertised were:

Inverness
7,900 job postings

Ayr
2,900 job postings

Banchory
2,000 job postings

Perth
4,400 job postings

Kilmarnock
2,500 job postings

Musselburgh
1,900 job postings

Specialised skills and knowledge were:

- Personal Care
- Social Work
- Housekeeping
- Machinery
- Food Safety and Sanitation
- Working with Children

The top job postings were for:

Care Workers and Home Carers	2,890
Cleaners and Domestic	2,580
Sales Related Occupations n.e.c.	1,800
Kitchen and Catering Assistants	1,630
Social Workers	1,300
Sales and Retail Assistants	1,190
Teaching Professionals n.e.c.	1,100
Secondary Education Teaching Professionals	1,030
Large Goods Vehicle Drivers	960
Customer Service Occupations n.e.c.	960

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

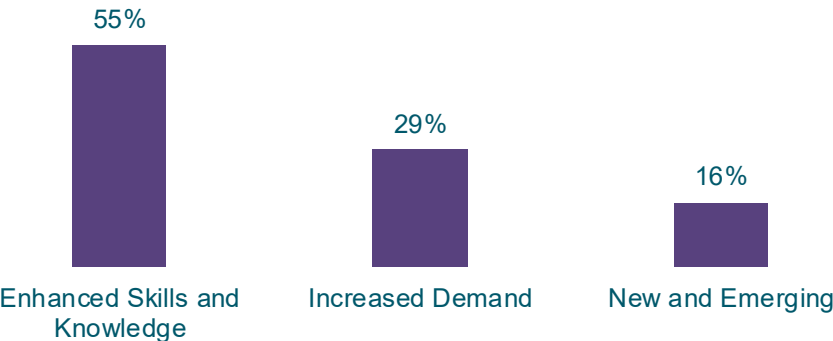
Green Job Postings¹



Out of the 62,300 job postings in Rural Scotland between January and June 2025, **35% (21,600) were for green jobs**. This was a lower proportion of green job postings than the Scottish average (41%). The number of green job postings in the region accounted for 19% of all green job postings in Scotland.



Between January and June 2025, **over half of green job postings** in Rural Scotland were for Enhanced Skills and Knowledge roles.



The green jobs in demand in each category between January and June 2025 included:

Enhanced Skills and Knowledge:



Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians

Increased Demand:

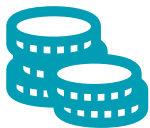


Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

New and Emerging:



Engineering Technicians



The median advertised salary for **green jobs** in Rural Scotland was **£35,300*** in the first six months of 2025.

This was higher than the median advertised salary for all jobs in the region which was £28,700**.

The **Green Jobs in Scotland** research uses an **inclusive definition** to define green jobs.

This definition recognises that there will be an ongoing process of ‘greening’ across the economy due to the transition to net zero, and a broad range of jobs will be impacted in different ways as a result.

Green jobs can be classified into one of the following three categories:

- 1. Enhanced Skills and Knowledge:** Existing occupations which will require significant change to the work and worker requirements due to green economy activities.
- 2. Increased Demand:** Existing occupations which will be needed in higher numbers due to green economy activities.
- 3. New and Emerging:** New occupations which are created because of the need for unique work and worker requirements due to green economy activities.

The full list of occupations (defined using Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) 2020) can be found [here](#).

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Future Demand in the Mid-Term (2025-2028)¹

Oxford Economics' forecasts should be used as guidance only on the overall trends based on current evidence - rather than definitive numbers. There are still a wide range of factors which may impact on the labour market. It is important to note that the forecasts do not account for national or regional activities, initiatives or investments such as those mentioned in our section on Regional Insight, which are likely to influence the outlook presented. Users of the RSAs are encouraged to overlay the forecasts with their local knowledge.

Earlier in the report, we examined the future total employment in Rural Scotland. This part of the report focuses on the total requirement, which introduces not only employment growth or contraction but also the need to replace workers leaving the labour market due to retirement and other reasons.

The mid-term forecast suggests there could be a total requirement for **100,700** people in **Rural Scotland**. Between 2025 and 2028, replacement demand could create the need for **87,100** people, while **positive** expansion demand is forecast to result in **13,500 additional** workers.

In **Scotland**, there could be a total requirement for **398,300** people in the mid-term. Between 2025 and 2028, replacement demand could create the need for **330,300** people, while **positive** expansion demand is forecast to result in **68,000 additional** workers.

Figures may not sum due to rounding.



The total requirement by qualification for **Rural Scotland**:

SCQF 11-12	SCQF 7-10	SCQF 6	SCQF 5	SCQF 1-4	No qualifications
7,500	45,800	15,000	21,600	2,800	7,900
7%	45%	15%	21%	3%	8%

The total requirement by qualification for **Scotland**:

SCQF 11-12	SCQF 7-10	SCQF 6	SCQF 5	SCQF 1-4	No qualifications
37,800	191,300	49,500	78,400	10,400	30,900
9%	48%	12%	20%	3%	8%

1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

Future Demand in the Mid-Term (2025-2028) by Industry¹

By industry, the greatest number of people are forecast to be required in:

- 

Wholesale and Retail Trade
15,500
- 

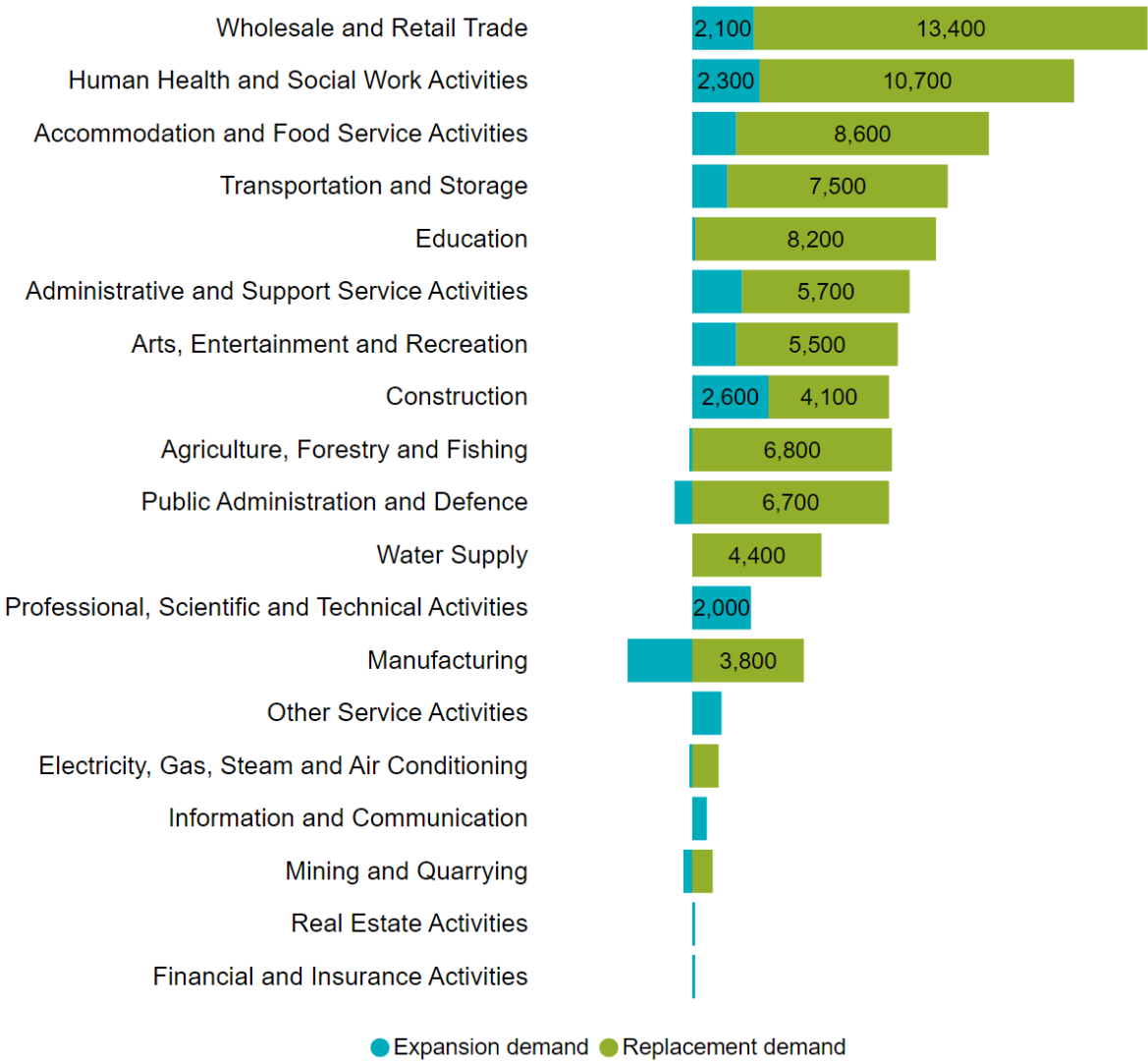
Human Health and Social Work Activities
13,000
- 

Accommodation and Food Service Activities
10,200

Headline figures for each industry do not show how the composition of the industry is changing. Within the industries, there are changes to operating practices and consumer behaviours driven by automation, digitalisation and the transition to net zero. Additionally, industries are defined using SIC codes, which might not reflect the full complexity and diversity within each sector. For example, High Value Manufacturing activities would not be fully captured within the traditional definition of Manufacturing, and it would span across different industries, such as Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities. We encourage readers to keep these two points in mind when interpreting the data. For further sectoral evidence, please see our Sectoral Skills Assessments.

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Forecast Total Requirement by Industry (2025-2028), Rural Scotland



1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

Future Demand in the Mid-Term (2025-2028) by Occupation¹

By occupation, the greatest number of people are forecast to be required in:

 **Elementary Occupations: Clerical and Services**
12,400

 **Teaching and Research Professionals**
11,300

 **Corporate Managers**
7,800

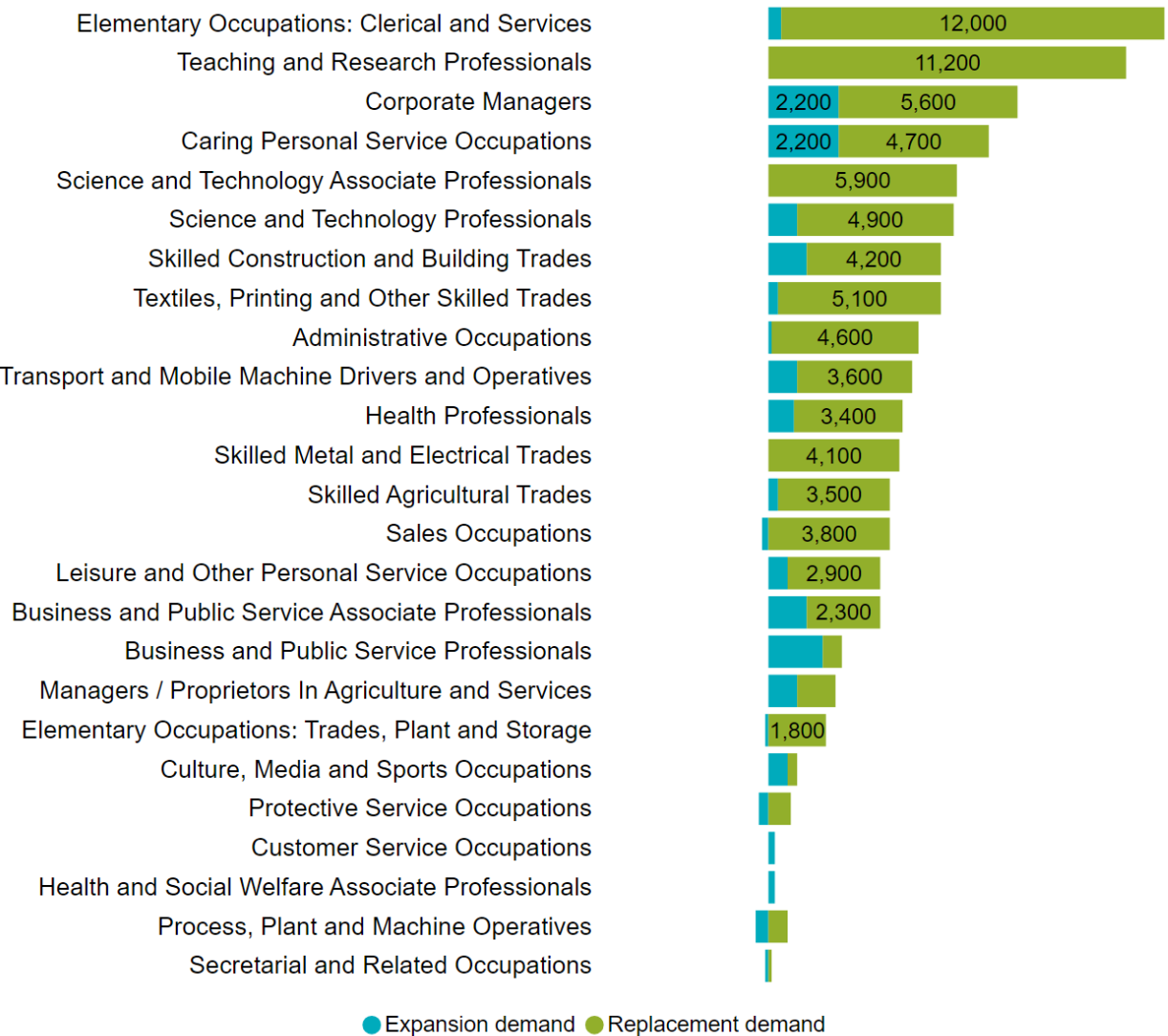
As mentioned, there is forecast to be a total requirement for 100,700 people in the region over the mid-term. 'Higher-level' occupations* are forecast to account for 44.1% of this total requirement, followed by 33.5% in 'mid-level' occupations and 22.4% in 'lower-level' occupations. Across Scotland, 52.2% of total requirement will be in 'higher-level' occupations, 26.5% in 'mid-level' occupations and 21.4% in 'lower-level' occupations.

 **New this year**, the RSA report includes more detailed forecasts on the total requirement for the region.

On the next page, the mid-term total requirement is presented with an intersection by both Industry (SIC 1) and Occupation (SOC 1).

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Forecast Total Requirement by Occupation (2025-2028), Rural Scotland



Future Demand in the Mid-Term (2025-2028) by Industry and Occupation¹

Forecast Total Requirement by Industry and Occupation (2025-2028) (people), Rural Scotland

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

	Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	Professional Occupations	Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	Skilled Trades Occupations	Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	Sales and Customer Service Occupations	Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	Elementary Occupations
▲									
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	600	200	100	300	4,300	0	0	200	1,100
Mining and Quarrying	100	100	300	0	100	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing	300	300	800	0	600	0	0	-500	200
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning	100	200	300	-100	300	0	0	0	0
Water Supply	100	900	800	200	700	0	0	600	1,000
Construction	700	700	400	300	3,800	0	0	400	400
Wholesale and Retail Trade	2,800	700	800	800	2,600	200	4,500	1,200	1,900
Transportation and Storage	700	300	600	400	600	500	100	3,300	2,200
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	1,000	0	200	300	2,900	600	200	300	4,700
Information and Communication	100	300	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Financial and Insurance Activities	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Real Estate Activities	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	400	500	300	500	100	100	0	100	0
Administrative and Support Service Activities	700	500	500	400	1,500	500	0	300	3,000
Public Administration and Defence	600	1,700	1,800	700	200	300	0	100	600
Education	100	6,700	700	200	100	600	0	0	0
Human Health and Social Work Activities	700	4,100	1,100	600	400	5,200	100	100	700
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1,200	700	1,200	200	800	1,900	100	100	700
Other Service Activities	100	300	100	100	100	300	0	0	0

Future Demand in the Long-Term (2028-2035)¹

The long-term forecast is more changeable than the mid-term forecasts and could be influenced by a range of factors that are less known. It is important to note that the forecasts do not account for national or regional activities, initiatives or investments like those mentioned in our section on Regional Insight, which are likely to influence the long-term outlook presented. Oxford Economics' forecasts should be used as guidance on overall trends based on current evidence - rather than definitive numbers.

In Rural Scotland, the labour market forecast for the long-term (2028-2035) suggests employment is expected to grow, and there could be opportunities created as a result of the need to replace workers leaving the labour market due to retirement and other reasons.

Forecasts for the long-term suggest there could be a total requirement for **211,700** people in **Rural Scotland**. Between 2028 and 2035, replacement demand could create the need for **197,500** people, while **positive** expansion demand is forecast to result in **14,200 additional** workers.

In **Scotland**, there could be a total requirement for **885,200** people in the long-term. Between 2028 and 2035, replacement demand could create the need for **772,800** people, while **positive** expansion demand is forecast to result in **112,500 additional** workers.

Figures may not sum due to rounding.



The total requirement by qualification for **Rural Scotland**:

SCQF 11-12	SCQF 7-10	SCQF 6	SCQF 5	SCQF 1-4	No qualifications
15,200	97,400	30,100	48,900	3,800	16,300
7%	46%	14%	23%	2%	8%

The total requirement by qualification for **Scotland**:

SCQF 11-12	SCQF 7-10	SCQF 6	SCQF 5	SCQF 1-4	No qualifications
81,500	427,000	104,500	190,000	15,800	66,400
9%	48%	12%	21%	2%	8%

Future Demand in the Long-Term (2028-2035) by Industry¹

By industry, the greatest number of people are forecast to be required in:

- 

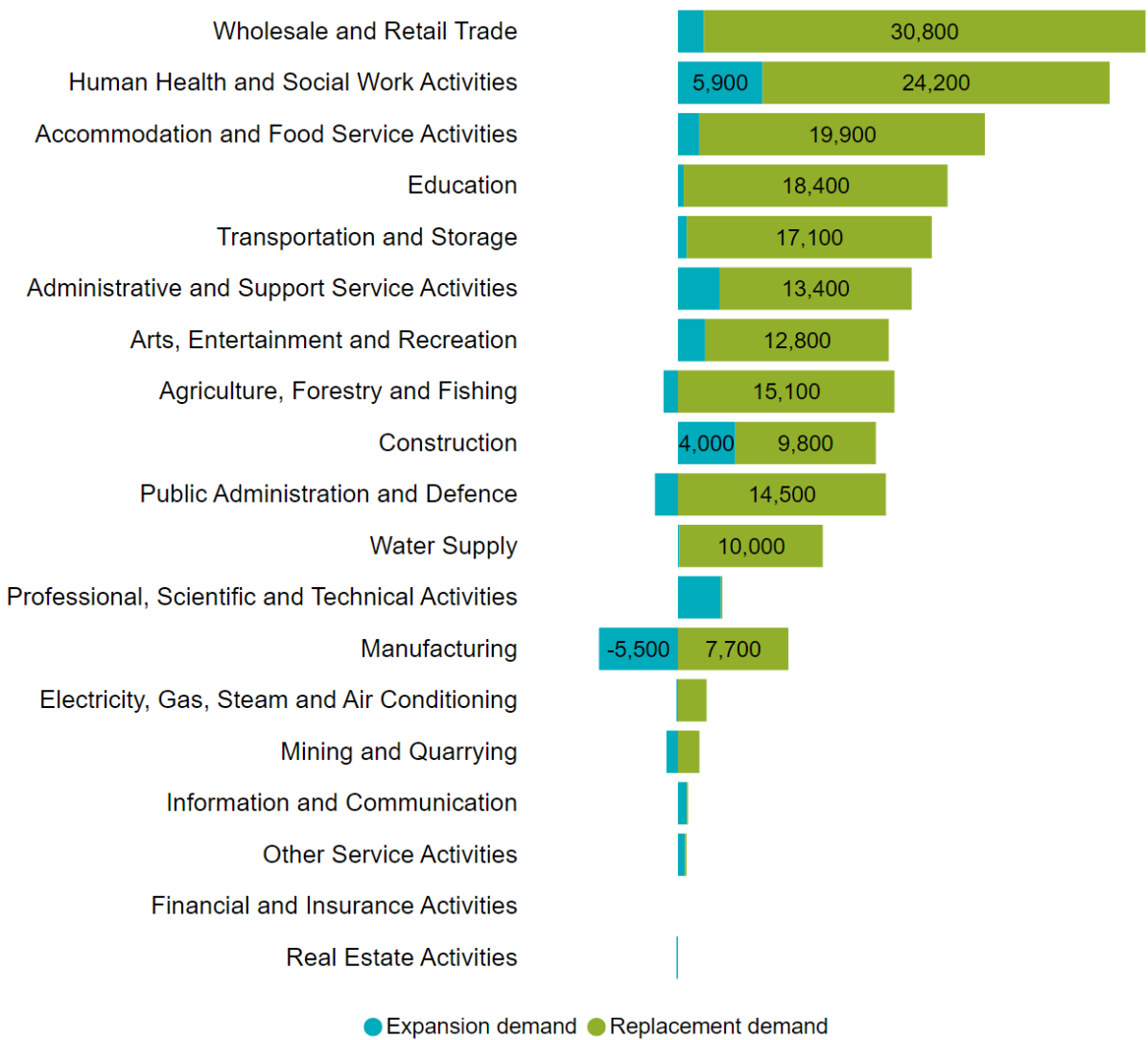
Wholesale and Retail Trade
32,700
- 

Human Health and Social Work Activities
30,200
- 

Accommodation and Food Service Activities
21,300

The mid-term forecast analysis indicated that some industries are experiencing a shift in their operational practices, and this trend is also applicable to the long term outlook.

Forecast Total Requirement by Industry (2028-2035), Rural Scotland



Figures may not sum due to rounding.

1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.

Future Demand in the Long-Term (2028-2035) by Occupation¹

By occupation, the greatest number of people are forecast to be required in:

 **Elementary Occupations: Clerical and Services**
25,800

 **Teaching and Research Professionals**
25,700

 **Corporate Managers**
17,500

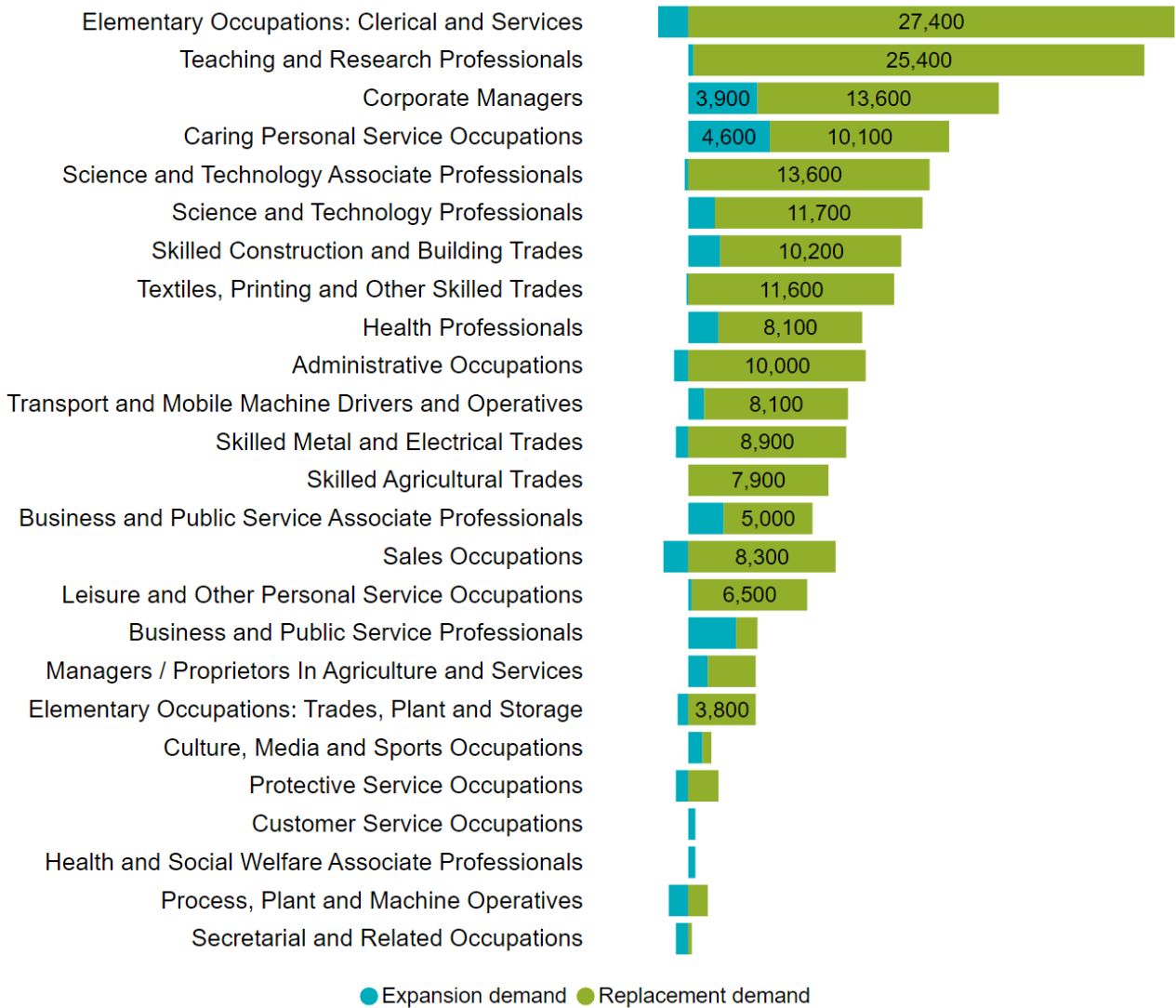
There is forecast to be a total requirement for 211,700 people in the region over the long-term. 'Higher-level' occupations* are forecast to account for 45.8% of this total requirement, followed by 32.9% in 'mid-level' occupations and 21.3% in 'lower-level' occupations. Across Scotland, 54.0% of total requirement will be in 'higher-level' occupations, 25.9% in 'mid-level' occupations and 20.1% in 'lower-level' occupations.

 **New this year**, the RSA report includes more detailed forecasts on the total requirement for the region.

On the next page, the long-term total requirement is presented with an intersection by both Industry (SIC 1) and Occupation (SOC 1).

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Forecast Total Requirement by Occupation (2028-2035), Rural Scotland



1. SDS (2025). Oxford Economics Forecasts.
* See RSA Technical Note (2025) for an explanation of what is defined as 'higher-level', 'mid-level' and 'lower-level' occupations.

Future Demand in the Long-Term (2028-2035) by Industry and Occupation¹

Forecast Total Requirement by Industry and Occupation (2028-2035) (people), Rural Scotland

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

	Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	Professional Occupations	Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	Skilled Trades Occupations	Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	Sales and Customer Service Occupations	Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	Elementary Occupations
▲									
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1,200	300	300	600	9,100	0	0	300	2,200
Mining and Quarrying	200	100	500	-100	100	0	0	-100	0
Manufacturing	500	400	1,600	-100	800	0	-100	-1,200	200
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning	100	500	800	-200	800	0	0	0	0
Water Supply	200	2,200	2,000	600	1,600	0	0	1,200	2,300
Construction	1,600	1,400	900	600	7,900	0	100	600	700
Wholesale and Retail Trade	6,100	1,600	1,800	1,600	5,700	400	8,600	2,600	4,100
Transportation and Storage	1,500	500	1,300	700	1,300	900	200	6,600	4,700
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	1,900	0	300	700	6,200	1,300	500	800	9,600
Information and Communication	100	500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Financial and Insurance Activities	100	100	0	-100	0	0	0	0	0
Real Estate Activities	100	0	-100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	700	500	400	800	200	100	100	200	100
Administrative and Support Service Activities	1,500	1,200	1,100	900	3,300	1,000	0	500	6,800
Public Administration and Defence	1,400	4,000	3,900	1,100	500	700	0	100	1,200
Education	100	15,400	1,600	500	200	1,100	0	100	-200
Human Health and Social Work Activities	1,700	9,800	2,700	1,400	900	11,900	300	200	1,200
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3,000	1,600	2,400	200	1,600	4,000	200	200	1,600
Other Service Activities	100	200	100	100	100	200	0	0	-200

For further information or queries on the RSAs or any of our other products, please contact: [**RSA@sds.co.uk**](mailto:RSA@sds.co.uk)