

## Scots in the Census: age and sex feegers

Detailed results are oot noo fae the Census question on Scots, braken doon be age an sex. The feegers be cooncil area can be doonloadit in the yae table <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-analyser/jsf/tableView/crosstabTableView.xhtml> or ye can wirk through menus that offers data be cooncil area, ward, constituency etc. <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-web/standard-outputs.html>

### Cooncil areas

For this first wee leuk at the data, we'll yaise cooncil areas – excep for Hielan. Caithness and Nairn (that we're expectin fae the auld mappin tae be Scots-spickin) juist disappears intae the Hielan cooncil area. Wards is ay kinna coorse – the hale o Caithness is yae ward – bit it daes clear the watter a bittie. Eilean Siar an the lave o Hielan isnae deserts as faur as Scots in concernt, bit we're gaunnae ignore them here, in favour o thae areas whaur Scots haes tae survive doon the generations gin it's gaun tae survive ava.

### Some skill in Scots

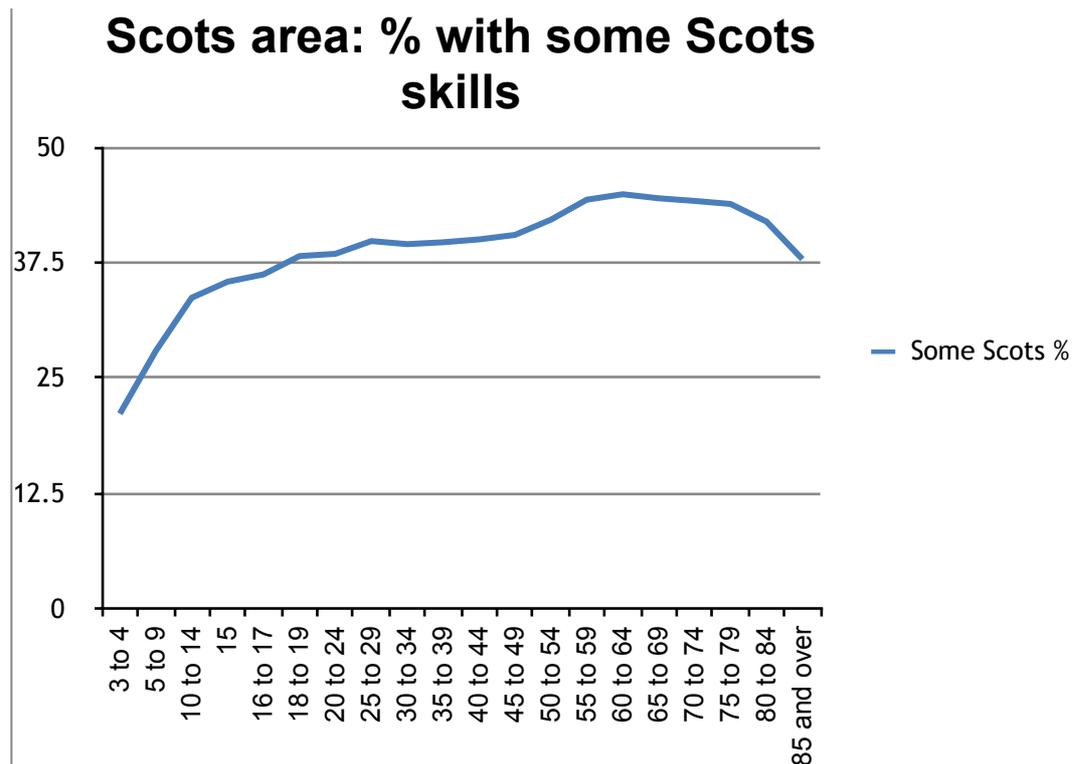
The data is set oot in terms o varyin degrees o skill in Scots: fae nae skill, tae juist unnerstaunin, through spickin, tae readin, tae screivin. Than there's the answers that daesnae fit this hierarchy (reads bit disnae spick, than kinna thing). For this first quick gander, the easiest thing is tae tak 'nae skill', turn it intae a percentage, and subtrack it fae 100% tae gie a feeger – a best case feeger – that we can cry 'some skill in Scots'. The average is 39.5%.

### Sex differences

The male average is 39.3%, female 39.8%. In the overall percentages (i.e. no braken doon be age) for ilk area, there verra little difference atween the sexes, usually a wee tait mair females. Nane o the areas is faur aff that, sae we'll pit by the sex differences for anither time an concentrate on age.

### Age differences

Ablow is the general age profile. The brak-doon intae age groups is gey fine unner age 20 – which means yon doonturn at the left of the graph is e'en steyer nor it leuks. There some room for optimism, though. Only time, an the 2021 Census, will tell, bit we cud be leukin at whit's cried 'age-grading', i.e. the young yins micht cheynge (an get tae at least unnerstaun the leid) as they get aulder. We maun bear in mind, forbye, that young fowk micht hae haed the answers fillt in for them.



Another curiosity of the graph is the downturn on the right. It doesn't seem likely your generation is really less Scots. One possibility is that the missing folk are using a different yardstick. Burns got mentioned a lot in the question testing as a point of comparison. Mind too, that this folk is saying that they don't even **unnerstaun** Scots. This oldest age group had grandparents that were born around the 1870s or earlier. They might well have heard Scots that really was unintelligible to them, and that's their ellwand. Another possibility is that the very oldest aren't filling in the forms for themselves.

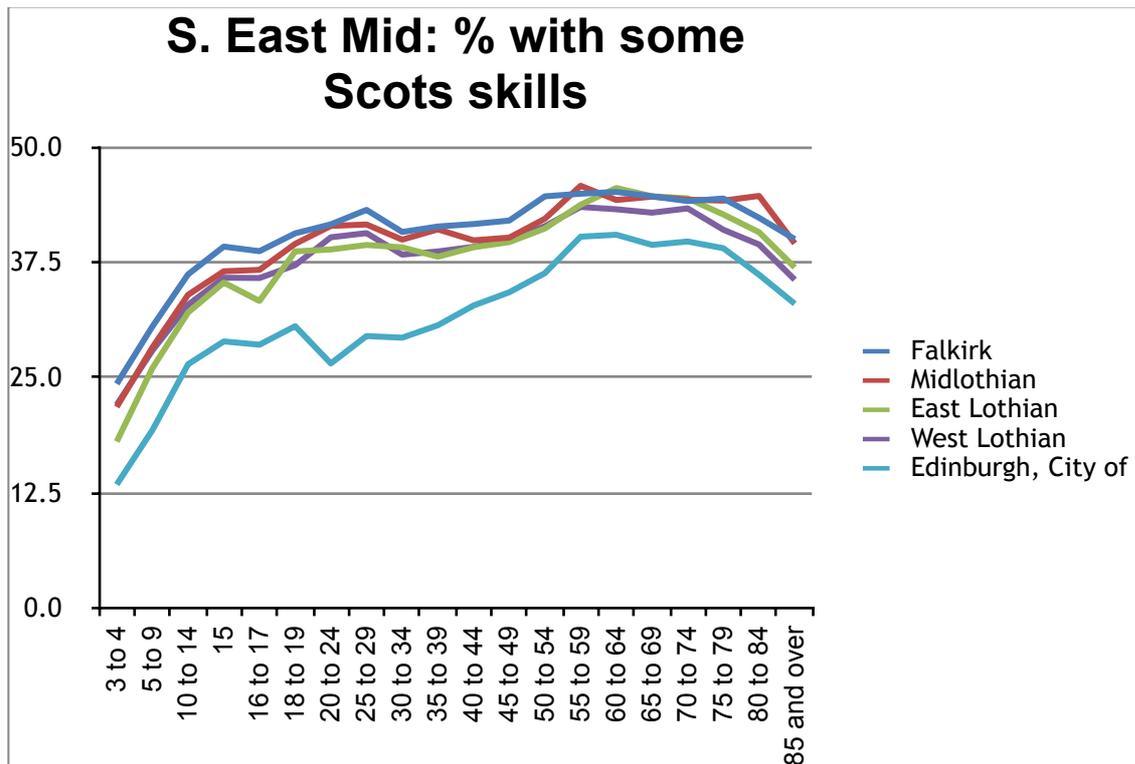
### Dialect areas

We can look at the traditional dialect areas, bearing in mind that the correspondence with council/ward areas is only rough. Most of the traditional areas is surprisingly consistent within themselves.

Dialect area	% of the total
<i>Insular</i> (Orkney, Shetland)	0.9
<i>mid Northern</i> (Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen, Moray, Nairn) and north Northern (Caithness)	11.7
<i>sooth Northern</i> (Angus, Dundee)	5.2
<i>northern East Mid</i> (Fife, Clackmannanshire, Perth & Kinross, Stirling)	12.9
<i>sudren East Mid</i> (Falkirk, the Lothians, Edinburgh)	19.5

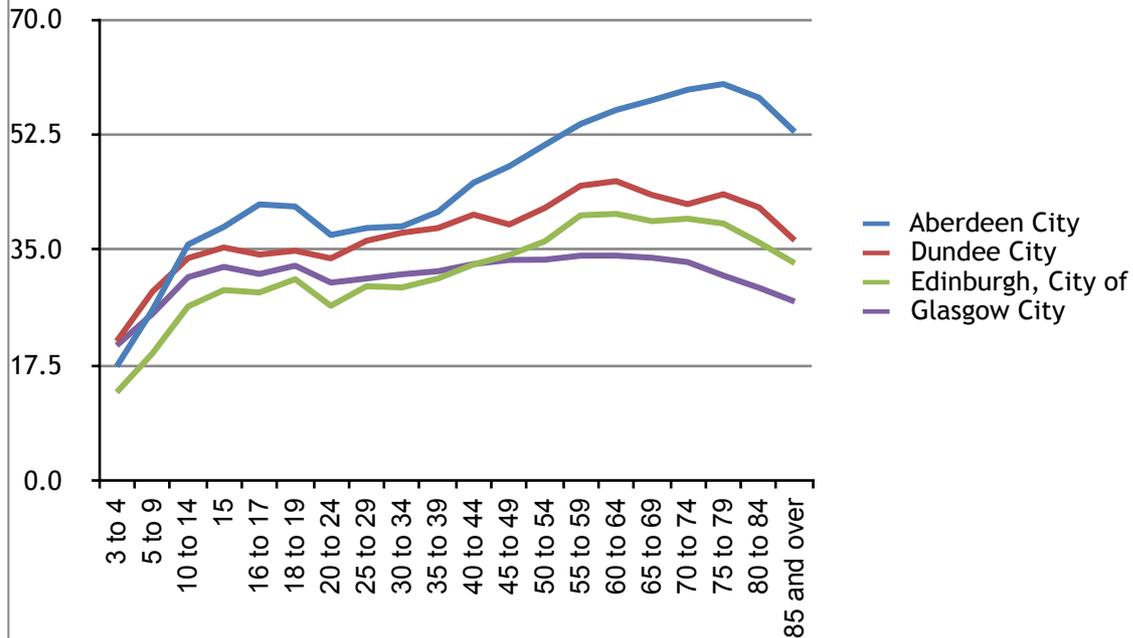
<i>West Mid</i> (mair rural: East an North Ayrshire, North an Sooth Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire, Argyll & Bute; mair urban: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire; urban: Glescae, Inverclyde)	42.2
<i>Sooth Mid</i> (Dumfries & Galloway, Sooth Ayrshire)	5.2
<i>Sudren</i> (Borders)	2.3

Sudren Scots leuks lik the overall graph, an it's the same wi the rural pairts o West Mid.



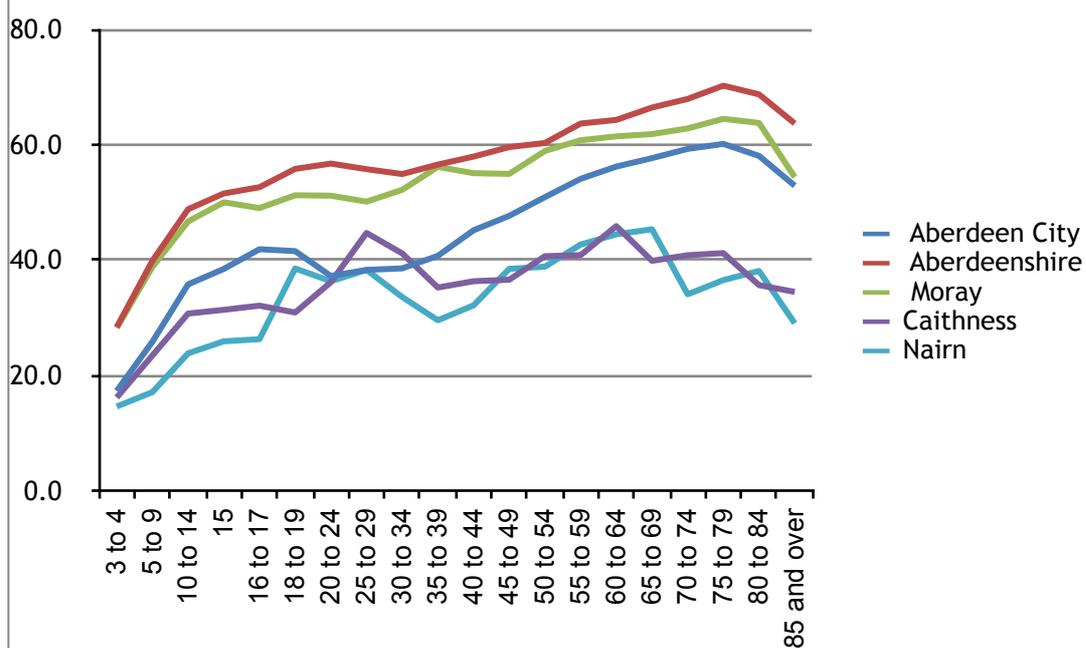
The sudren pairt o East Mid is close tae the pattren o the overall graph, bit wi signs o recovery aroon age 24-29 (younger in the ceety). The same pattren kythes in north East Mid, Sooth Mid, an the mair urban pairts of West Mid (East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire).

## Ceeties: % with some Scots skills

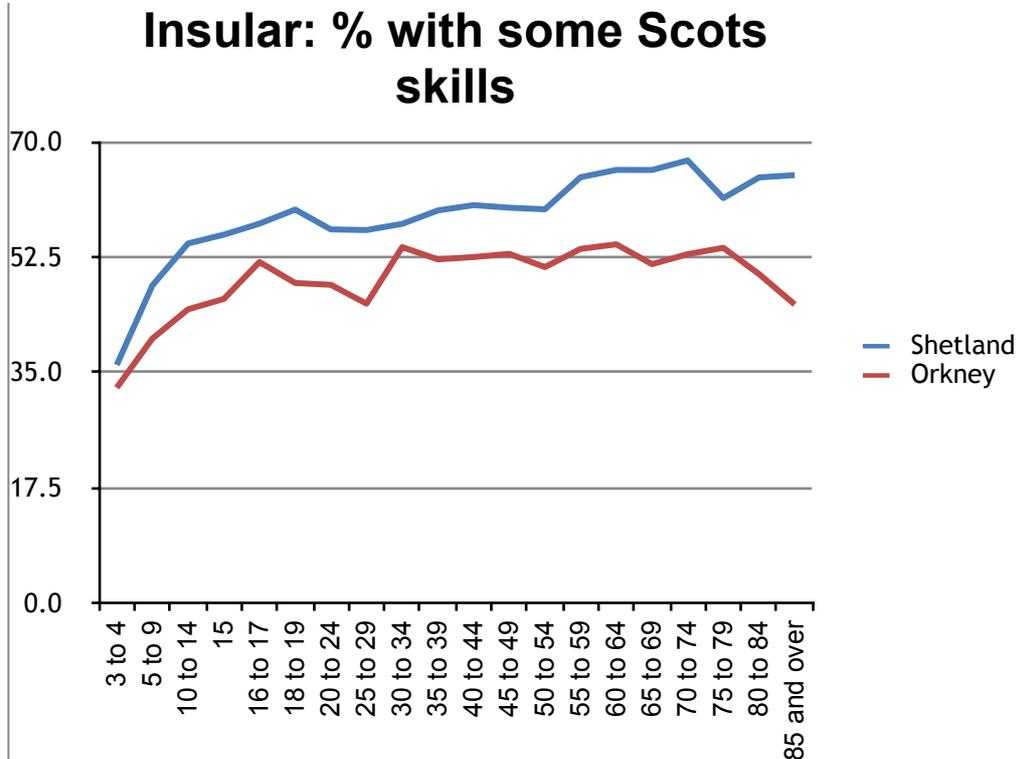


Aa the ceeties faas awa gey steily, excep Glescae that sterts laich an bides kinna flat. (Inverclyde pattrens wi Glescae.) Aiberdeen faas awa parteeicularly fast fae a heich pynt in the late 70s age group. Aiberdeen daes hae a bit o a recovery wi the teens, like Glescae an Edinburgh.

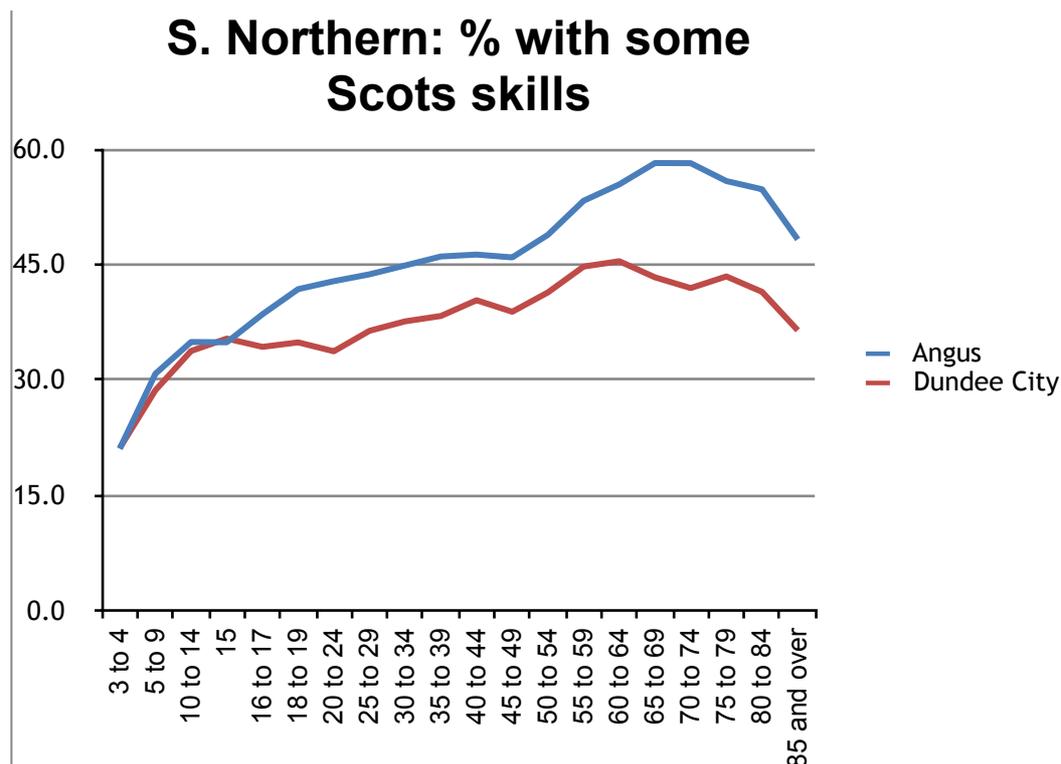
## Mid & N. Northern % with some Scots skills



There twa pattrens in the North, wi Aiberdeen ceety an shire an Moray aa shawin a steady decline doon the age groups fae heich feegers in the 70s age group. Fae a laicher stertin pynt, Caithness an Nairn draps aff less an in a later age group, an haes a bit o a recovery wi young adults (this bein a teepical pattren, lik the sudren pairt o East Mid, etc., abune).



Orkney an Shetlan, lik Glescae, haes a flatter pattren, only they hae it at a gey muckler feeger.



O aa the rural areas, Angus shaws the maist concernin drap aff.

### Pattrens

Wi Shetlan we can see the best case scenario, bit e'en here there a sherp drap aff amangst the youngest groups. Aiberdeenshire an Angus are on the ilk level as Shetlan in the aulder age groups, bit somethin happens wi fowk in their fifties an younger: here, lik in a wheen ithier places, there a sherp doonturn aroon that age. In some places there a bit o a recovery wi fowk in their twinties; in the ceeties gin there a recovery it comes wi a group a wee bit younger. Maybes somethin wis gaun on in the eddication o thir fowk, wha stertit the schuil in the late 80s or early 90s.

### Hoo faur can we trust the results?

There twa issues wi ony set o questionnaire data: are they reliable, an are they valid? The results we hae here seems tae be reliable, i.e. gin ye ask the same question in deefrent places (athin ilk dialect area), or at deefrent times (the Census testin), ye'll get seemilar answers.

Validity is a wee bit mair shoogly. There the problem o some ithier body fillin in the form an no richtly estimatin the intangible langage abeelities o their wean or their granpa. Forbye, wi a question the likes o this, ye're no juist askin fowk tae mak a statement about their ain behaviour – ye're askin them tae mak a statement about ithers' behaviour, i.e. daes their behaviour faa intae a category alang o certain ithier fowks'? Whan it comes tae the category 'Scots', the concept isnae that weel established in popular culture. The faain awa in the auldest age groups, an the arguably depressed feegers for Glescae, cud be doon tae this validity problem:

superficially folk are answerin the same question, but in their ain minds they're relatin it tae deefrent concepts. There local dialeck cultures, for yae thing, stranger in some places than ithers. Forbye, the yardstick o 'Scots' for some is the leid o Rabbie Burns, or o a bygone generation. Ithers hae maybes been taught at the schuil tae cry their ain spick 'Scots'.

Whit it comes doon til, is that the absolute feegers haes tae be viewed wi caution; raither it's the ups an doons that are tellin. We can stert tae see whaur there are danger signs an whaur there are signs o positive impacts. An yince we hae a time series fae mair nor yin Census, we'll get a verra guid idea of whit's happenin tae the leid.

Caroline Macafee  
3 March 2014