

Protected Characteristics Profile: Age

Purpose

This profile is one of nine, presenting quantitative (mainly through the Census) and qualitative (through locally run focus groups) data alongside desktop research. The purpose is to inform discussions about our local community.

Background

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination and unfair treatment in Britain; this is because of the Protected Characteristics they have. The Protected Characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

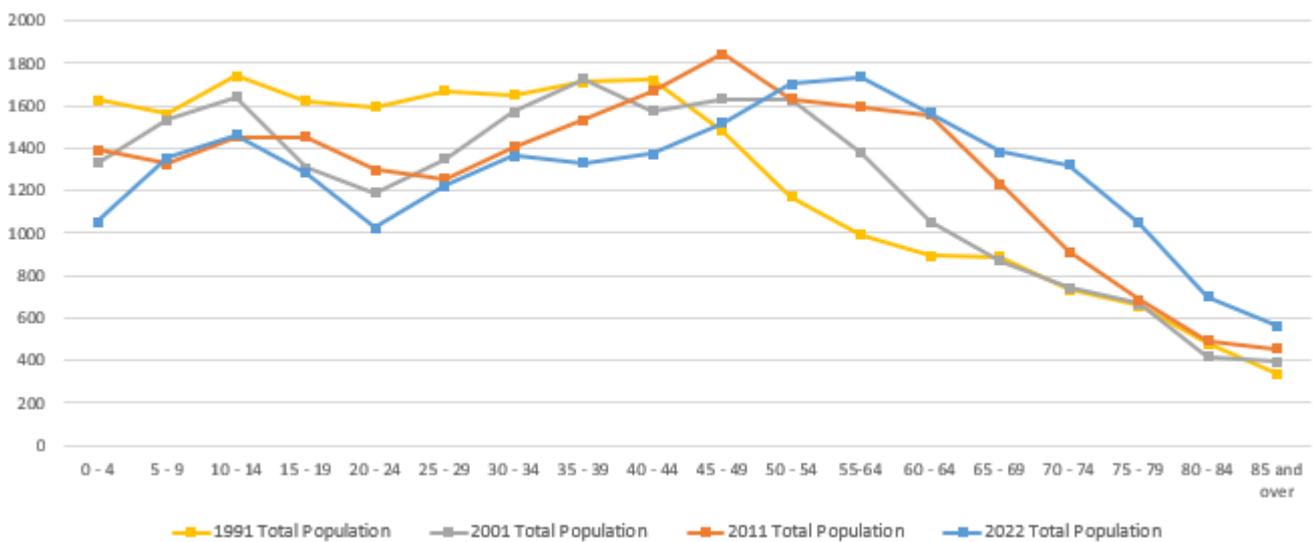
It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a Protected Characteristic. Age discrimination is when a person is treated differently because of their age, in one of the situations that are covered by the Equality Act.¹

Key Points

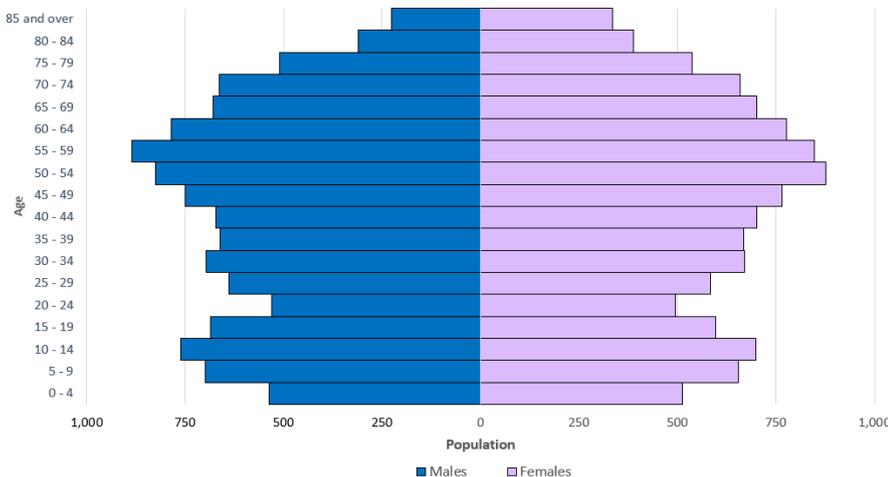
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Since 1991, Shetland’s older population has increased, whilst the number of young people (35 and under) has declined. This trend reflects patterns across Scotland and other rural areas.

Shetland Population by Age in 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2022



Shetland Population by Age and Sex in 2022



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In 2022, there were notably more males in age groups 0-34 & 55-64 than females, whilst there are more females than males in age groups 35-54 & 65-85 and over. This pattern is similar in Orkney, the Western Isles and Scotland, although the Highlands, as a whole, has more females across most age groups.

¹ [Age discrimination | EHRC](#)

Summary of Other Publications

Desk-top research of discrimination faced by individuals who due to their age highlights several key findings:

Employment

Research from the Older People and Employment Scotland 2017 Report, reveals that perceived ageism in the labour market leads participants to believe that older individuals may be forced to accept lower-level jobs, if they need to seek new employment. Ageist and sexist attitudes among employers can interact, particularly disadvantaging older women. As a result, these women often end up in roles for which they are overqualified and underpaid, exacerbating gender inequality in later-life employment opportunities.

Health Disparities

In 2018, FeelsFM launched a campaign alongside young people across Scotland to hear views on mental health. They found that stigma is a significant barrier to young people opening up about their mental health as they feared not being listened to, believed or taken seriously by adults.

Crime

Research from Youth Justice, Keep the Promise Care Review 2020 Report reveals that in Scotland care-experienced children are over represented in the youth criminal justice system, with those in residential care expressing to the Care Review that they had too often had police involvement for behaviour that other families would accommodate within the family.

Summary of Feedback from Local Focus Groups

Older People

The following summarises the main findings of relevance to this Policy area for Older People.

Access to Services

The main challenges are:

- Accessing buildings, facilities and / or public transport;
- Navigating complex processes and technology systems, such as booking appointments or applying for benefits;
- Relying on others to assist in accessing support and services.

Suggestions for improvement are:

- More flexible service hours, particularly for health services (e.g. evenings or weekends);
- Personalised support, such as a single point of contact;
- Easier to understand services, with clear instructions and support on what to expect and when;
- Greater variety for services to be provided at home; and
- Improved transport reliability and connections, for health appointments.

Health and Care

Positive feedback was provided about health and care professionals and local care homes.

Suggestions for improvement are:

- Increased GP availability and out-of-hours doctor coverage;
- Expanded local treatment options to reduce travel;
- Simplified processes for making appointments, collecting prescriptions, and accessing home adaptations; and
- Improved recruitment and training for health and care staff, to enable older workers to enter the workforce.

Community and Society

Most participants felt the community understood them and there is good support, from family and friends, support groups and local charities. Many felt they could ask for and receive help and feel safe in the community. However there does, now, seem to be less kindness and respect in society and apportioning of blame.

Data Sources: [Older People and Employment in Scotland 2017](#); [See Me Scotland, 2020](#); [Youth Justice 2020](#).

Suggestions for improvement are:

- More training on dignity and respect, to support a shift from blame to kindness, in services and society;
- More training on menopause awareness; and
- Expanding preventative health initiatives.

Cost of Living and Healthy Living

The main challenges are:

- The financial strain of caregiving, ageing and living with health conditions, particularly on a low-income; this can limit access to healthy food and necessities.

Digital and Technology

Opinions are mixed; some prefer digital solutions whilst others find them challenging. There are concerns about online and phone scams and data-sharing, particularly ones targeting older people.

There was positive feedback about services supporting digital access.

Suggestions for improvement are:

- Simplifying online health systems and expanding teleconsultations; and
- Addressing concerns about scams and data privacy.

Communication and Information Sharing

Concerns were raised about the rapid shift to digital systems, leaving some unable to adapt.

Suggestions for improvement are:

- Accessibility for all communication channels (e.g., phone, email, in-person); and
- Transparency in how feedback is addressed.

Young People

Young People in Shetland highlighted the following issues and challenges:

- Adults are frequently suspicious of young people, thinking they are going to cause trouble, particularly if they are in groups of more than 3 – this is stopping young people going to certain places, and being able to ‘just hang out’;
- They can all be penalised for something only one person has done (one young person’s actions don’t represent the motives / actions of all young people) – they point out that this wouldn’t happen to adults with another Protected Characteristic;
- In general, Shetland is old fashioned and prejudiced;
- The wider population associates them with drinking or vaping;
- An assumption that young people make choices (e.g. religion, sexual orientation, disability) for attention;
- Social media exacerbates stories and ‘news’ about young people;
- Young people are paid less for the same job;
- Some employers won’t employ anyone under 18; and
- NHS don’t take young people seriously and mental health services don’t listen or take young people seriously.

Young People in Shetland highlighted the following opportunities:

- There is a need for education and activity to reduce stigma and discrimination: there needs to be greater respect for young people, with no labelling (labelling impacts on mental health) and a consistent approach across all school years and all school settings;
- There are a lot of activities for young people, but nowhere to just hang out – especially without drawing suspicion from wider society, as a group of young people. They would like to meet with businesses and services to discuss the challenges, and seek to find solutions, so that not all young people are banned.
- Explore Shetland minimum wage for young people.