

Fife Business Base Report 2025



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About this Report

This report provides information on the number and characteristics of private sector companies operating in Fife, their sectors, size and performance.

Most of the data are from:

- The Scottish Government's *Businesses in Scotland: 2025 dataset*. This provides information on the number of private sector businesses as at March 2025. Estimates of businesses' employment and turnover are also provided: for employment, the latest data will tend to be from 2024 and for turnover from 2023.
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) *Business Demography, UK:2024*, which provides annual data on the birth and survival rates of new businesses.

This year's report analyses changes in the number and performance of Fife's businesses between March 2024 and March 2025 and on changes in business survival rates between 2023 and 2024.

Both datasets use data from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), a database of all businesses in the UK registered for VAT and/or the PAYE income tax system with HMRC and Companies House. The database does not include information on unregistered enterprises (sole traders and partnerships who are not VAT and/or PAYE registered). In March 2025 the VAT registration threshold was a turnover of £90,000. The term 'business', 'enterprise' and 'company' are used interchangeably in this report.

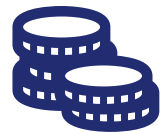
Profile of Fife's Business Base



9,380 private-sector businesses:



- supporting 101,808 jobs



- generating £17.1bn turnover per annum



395 or 4.2% are high growth businesses



92.5% of businesses employ fewer than 50 people
95% are SMEs with fewer than 250 employees

Largest employing sectors:



Wholesale, retail & repairs (22,770 jobs)



Education, human health & social work (16,010 jobs)



Manufacturing (13,180 jobs)



Accommodation & food services (10,340 jobs)



Construction (6,410 jobs)



Professional, scientific & technical activities (5,340 jobs)

Summary of Annual Changes

Between March 2024 and March 2025 in Fife:

- The number of registered private-sector enterprises fell by 105 (-1.1%) to 9,380 businesses, but employment in these businesses increased by 240 jobs (+0.2%).
- The fall in business numbers was confined to small and medium-sized businesses.
- The number of 'high growth' businesses increased to the highest number recorded.
- *Real Estate Activities* had the largest proportionate increases in business numbers followed by *Arts, Entertainment & Recreation* while the *Information & Communication* and *Manufacturing* sectors saw the greatest proportionate falls.
- *Education, Human Health & Social Work Activities, Manufacturing* and *Real Estate Activities* saw the greatest increases in employment; *Primary Industries, Construction* and *Wholesale, Retail & Repairs* saw the greatest decreases.
- Fife's self-employment rate increased from 12.0% to 13.5%.

Between 2023 and 2024:

- Fife's 3-year business survival rate remained the same at 54% (NB 74% of businesses supported by Business Gateway Fife that started trading in 2022/23 survived for their first 3 years).
- There were fewer business closures, but the number of business births also fell. Whilst Business Gateway Fife supported fewer new business start-ups than the previous year, in 2024 more start-ups were supported in Fife than any other Business Gateway area in Scotland.

Annual Change in Business Numbers & Employment

The number of private sector businesses in Fife registered for VAT and/or PAYE has fallen each year since 2020.

As a result, between 2020 and 2025, the number of businesses decreased by -1,080 (-10.3%).

In 2025, there were 2,860 fewer jobs in these businesses (-2.8%) than prior to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

In Scotland as a whole, the number of registered businesses fell by -2.5% and the number of jobs by -1.5% between 2020 and 2025.

These falls followed 5 consecutive years of growth in enterprise numbers in Fife, so that in 2025 there were still 160 more businesses and 720 more jobs in Fife than there were ten years previously in 2015.

Figure 1: Total enterprise stock & annual change in Fife (March 2015-March 2025)

Year	Total Number of Enterprises in Fife	Annual Change in the Number of Enterprises	Total Employment	Annual Change in Employment
2015	9,540		100,360	
2016	9,760	+220	102,420	+2,060
2017	10,105	+345	102,770	+350
2018	10,295	+190	106,000	+3,230
2019	10,355	+60	103,790	-2,210
2020	10,460	+105	103,940	+150
2021	10,085	-375	100,480	-3,460
2022	9,645	-440	100,150	-330
2023	9,545	-100	103,300	+3,150
2024	9,485	-60	100,840	-2,460
2025	9,380	-105	101,080	+240
Change 2020-2025	-1,080 enterprises		-2,860 jobs	
Change 2015 - 2025	+160 enterprises		+720 jobs	

Source: Businesses in Scotland, Scottish Government (2025)

Annual Change by Sector

Some sectors saw business and job numbers grow between 2024 and 2025, whilst others saw numbers fall.

Real Estate Activities saw the largest proportionate growth in business numbers (+4.8%) followed by Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (+1.8%).

Manufacturing had the second greatest proportionate fall in business numbers over the period but saw the second highest increase in employment.

Education, Human Health & Social Work saw the greatest increase in employment while Primary Industries¹, Construction and Wholesale, Retail & Repairs saw the greatest decreases.

Figure 2: Change in the number of businesses in Fife and their employment by sector (March 2024 - March 2025)

Sector	Change in the Number of Enterprises in Fife 2024-2025		Change in Employment in Fife 2024-2025	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Real estate activities	+15	4.8%	+70	5.1%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	+5	1.8%	+40	1.2%
Other service activities	+5	1.0%	+10	0.3%
Administrative & support service activities	+5	0.7%	-220	-4.0%
Financial & insurance activities	0	0.0%	-10	-0.4%
Professional, scientific & technical activities	-5	-0.4%	+50	0.9%
Primary Industries ¹	-5	-0.7%	-270	-5.6%
Construction	-10	-0.7%	-280	-3.9%
Wholesale, retail & repairs	-25	-1.5%	-520	-2.1%
Education, human health & social work	-10	-1.9%	+1,140	8.0%
Accommodation & food service activities	-25	-3.0%	-180	-1.8%
Transport & storage	-15	-3.9%	+10	0.2%
Manufacturing	-25	-4.3%	+430	3.3%
Information & communication	-15	-4.5%	-10	-0.3%
Total Change 2024-25	-105	-1.1%	+240	0.2%

Notes: Figures are rounded to the nearest zero or five to avoid disclosure. Zeros may not be true zeros and data may not add up to totals shown.

¹ Primary Industries include Agriculture, forestry & fishing; Mining & quarrying; and Electricity, gas & water supply.

Annual Change by Size of Business

The number of small companies (those employing between 0 and 49 employees) fell by 100 businesses (-1.1%) between 2024 and 2025.

Employment increased within large companies by 730 jobs.

Although the number of jobs fell in small and medium-sized businesses, overall there were 240 more jobs in registered private-sector companies in 2025 compared with the previous year.

Figure 3: Change in the number of registered businesses in Fife and their employment by size of business (March 2024 - March 2025)

Size of Business by Employment	Change in the Number of Enterprises 2024-2025		Change in Employment 2024-2025	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Small (0-49 Employees)	-100	-1.1%	-310	-0.8%
Medium (50-249 Employees)	-5	-1.8%	-180	-1.3%
Large (250+ Employees)	0	0.0%	+730	+1.5%
Total Change 2024-25	-105	-1.1%	+240	+0.2%

Source: Businesses in Scotland, Scottish Government (2025)

Notes: Figures are rounded to the nearest zero or five to avoid disclosure. Zeros may not be true zeros and data may not add up to totals shown.

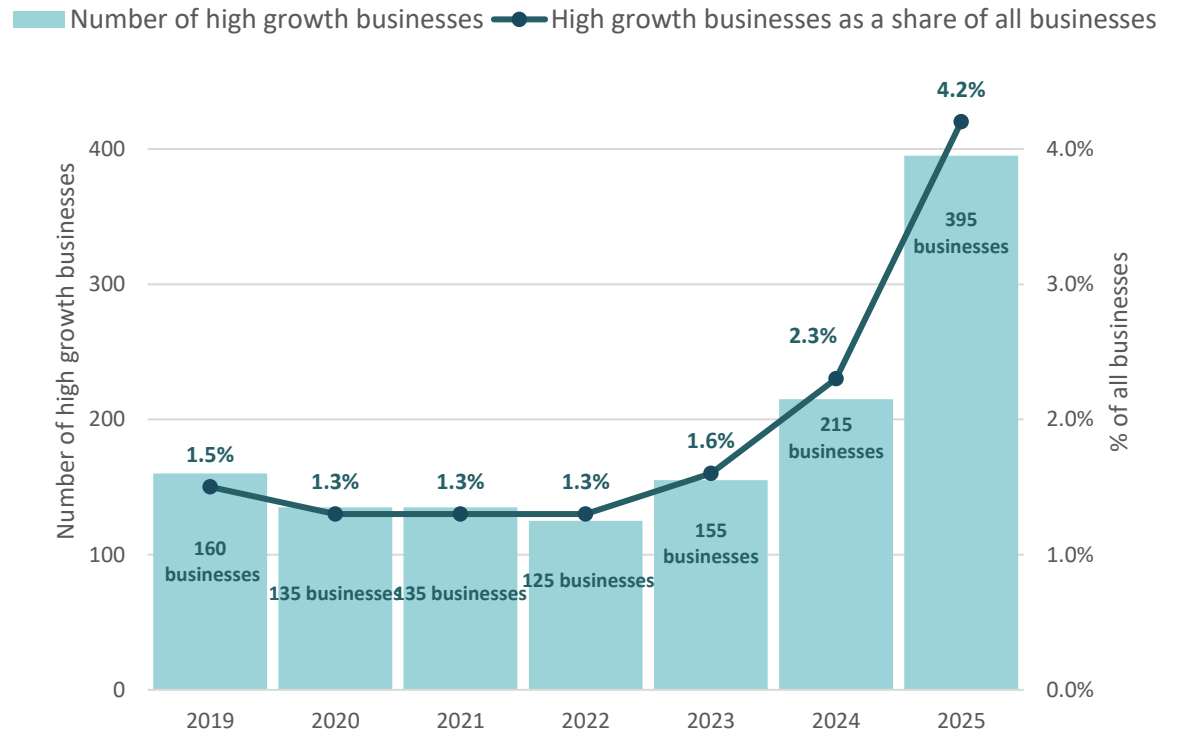
Annual Change in the Number of High Growth¹ Businesses

The number of ‘high growth¹’ businesses in Fife increased significantly from 215 to 395 companies between 2024 and 2025, the highest number recorded since this dataset began (2013).

The proportion of Fife’s businesses which are ‘high growth’ also grew, increasing to the highest level recorded since the dataset began (4.2% of businesses).

This proportion (4.2%) is higher than that for Scotland overall (3.1%).

Figure 4: Number and Proportion of high growth businesses in Fife 2019-2025



Source: Businesses in Scotland, Scottish Government (2025)

Notes: ¹ A high growth business is defined as a business with ten or more employees in the base year (three years prior to the year shown) which exhibits an average 20% growth in turnover over three years. This definition excludes financial & insurance businesses. There are time lags associated with the turnover data used to measure high growth; the turnover data used in 2025 will be for either the 12 months ending Dec 2023 or Jan/Feb 2024, depending on the reporting pattern of the trader so that the increase in high growth businesses between 2024 and 2025 is really reflecting the rise in business turnover between 2022 and 2023.

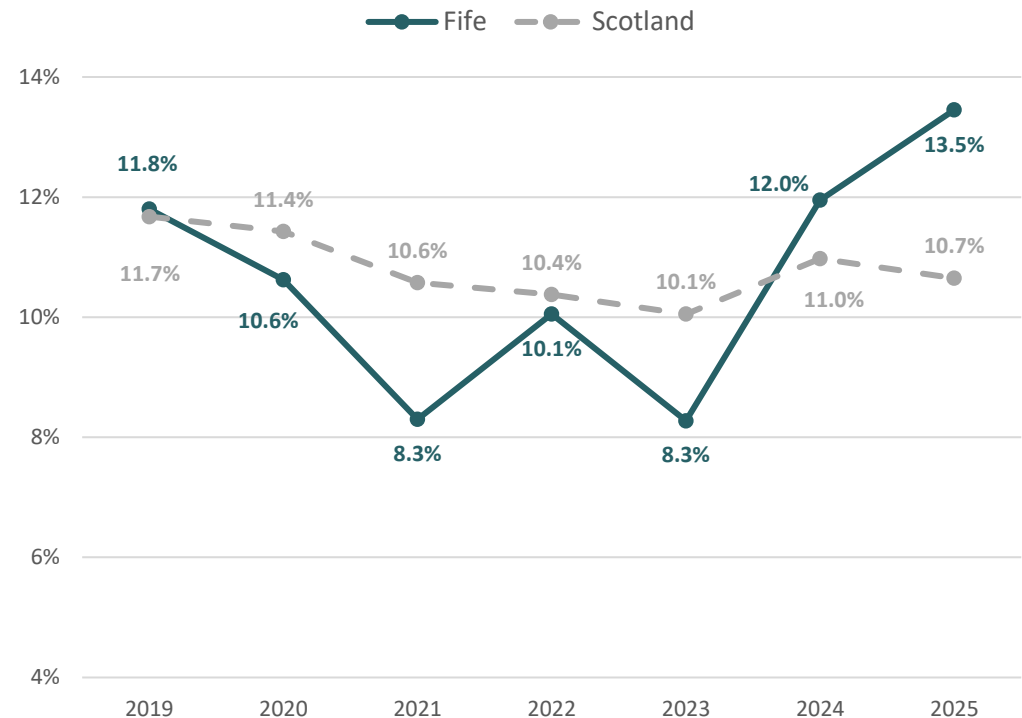
Annual Change in Self-Employment

Micro-enterprises (firms employing fewer than 10 workers) and self-employment are an important part of the business base. Many micro and self-employed businesses operate below the VAT registration threshold however, so that activity of this sector is not fully captured by a lot of data sources at the local authority level.

In 2025, Fife's self-employment rate increased from 12.0% to 13.5%, as the estimated number of people who were self-employed in the region increased from 20,400 to 22,850.

As shown in Figure 5, Fife's self-employment rate appears much more volatile than that of Scotland as a whole, possibly as a result of the smaller sample size at the local authority level. As a result of this volatility, the figures should be treated with care.

Figure 5: Self-Employment in Fife as a percentage of the total working age population (16-64 years) who are employed (2019 - 2025)



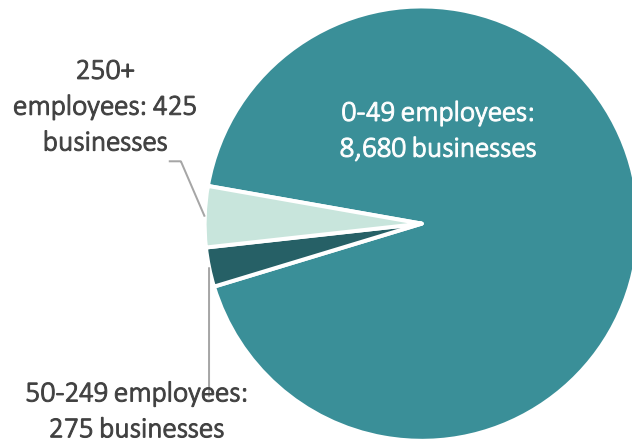
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

Notes: Figures shown are the average self-employment rates for each calendar year. These statistics do not represent Business Gateway Fife's performance in relation to people supported into self-employment.

Composition of Fife’s Business Base by Size of Business

Fife’s business base is dominated by small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), with 95% (8,955) of Fife’s businesses employing fewer than 250 employees and 92.5% (8,680) employing fewer than 50 people (Figure 6). These are slightly lower proportions than in Scotland as a whole, where 98.6% of registered enterprises are SMEs and 96.4% employ fewer than 50 employees.

Figure 6: Number of Enterprises in Fife by Employee Size Band (March 2025)

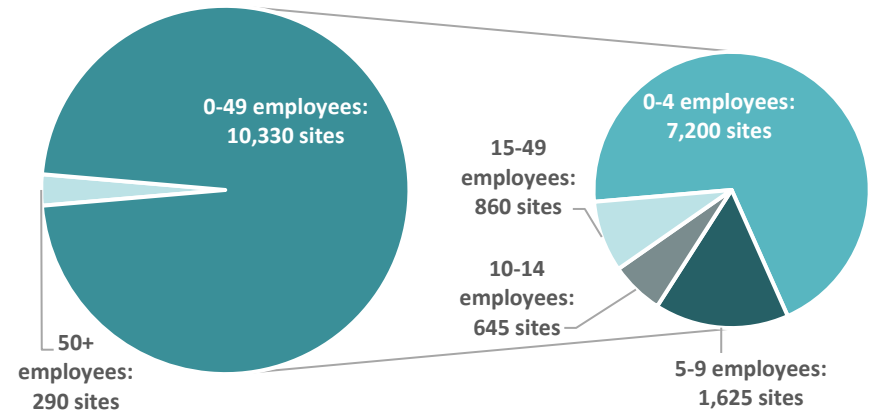


Source: Businesses in Scotland, Scottish Government (2025)

The region’s 10,620 *business sites* are dominated by micro enterprises employing fewer than 10 employees (Figure 7):

- 7,200 (68%) employ between 0-4 people
- 1,625 (15%) employ between 5-9 people
- 645 (6%) employ between 10-14 people
- 860 (8%) employ between 15-49 people
- Only 290 (3%) employ 50 or more people

Figure 7: Number of Business Sites in Fife by Employee Size Band (March 2025)



Source: Businesses in Scotland, Scottish Government (2025)

Notes: A business site is a local unit (eg a factory, shop or restaurant). A business may have more than one unit / site.

Performance of Fife’s Business Base – business births and closures

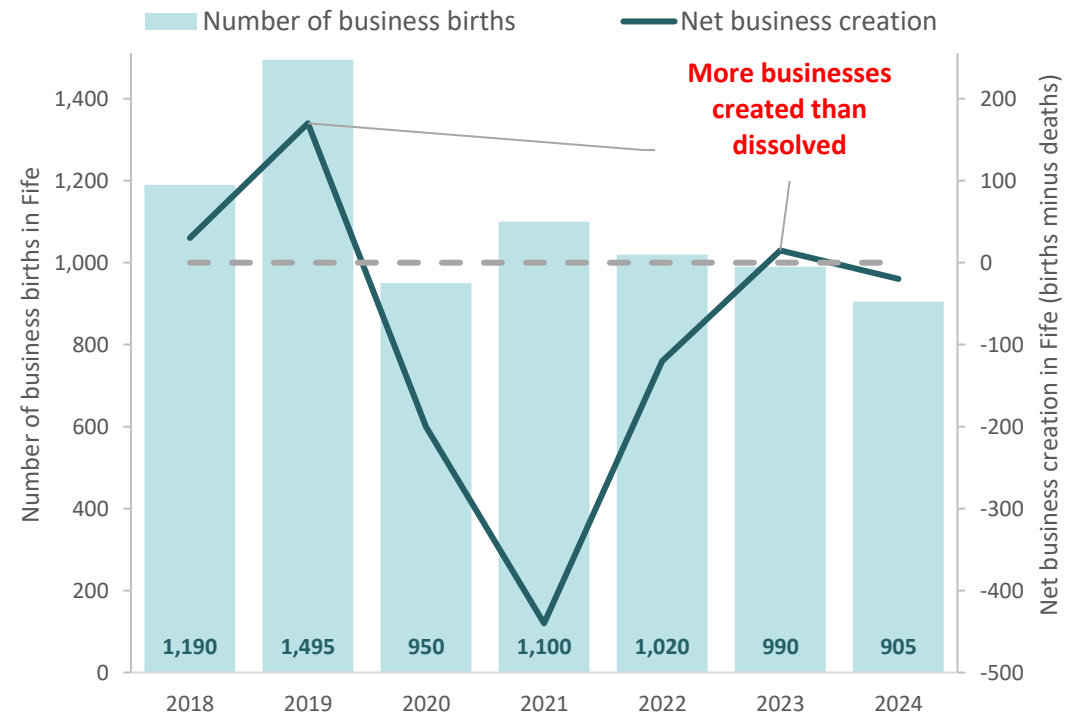
A total of 905 new businesses started up in Fife in 2024. This was 85 fewer than in 2023, and 590 fewer than in 2019 when 1,495 new start-ups were recorded (the highest number recorded for Fife in the time-series of this dataset going back to 2009).

As seen in Figure 8, in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2024 Fife had negative net rates of business creation ie the number of business closures exceeded the number of business births.

Business closures should only be viewed as an indicative measure of the health of the business base as not all enterprises are set up to remain open indefinitely, eg some of the temporary online enterprises that were set up during the Covid pandemic.

In 2024/25, Business Gateway Fife supported 563 new business start-ups. Whilst this was 51 fewer than in 2023/24, it was the highest number supported in all the Business Gateway areas in Scotland.

Figure 8: The number of business births and net business creation in Fife 2018 - 2024



Source: Business demography, UK 2024, ONS

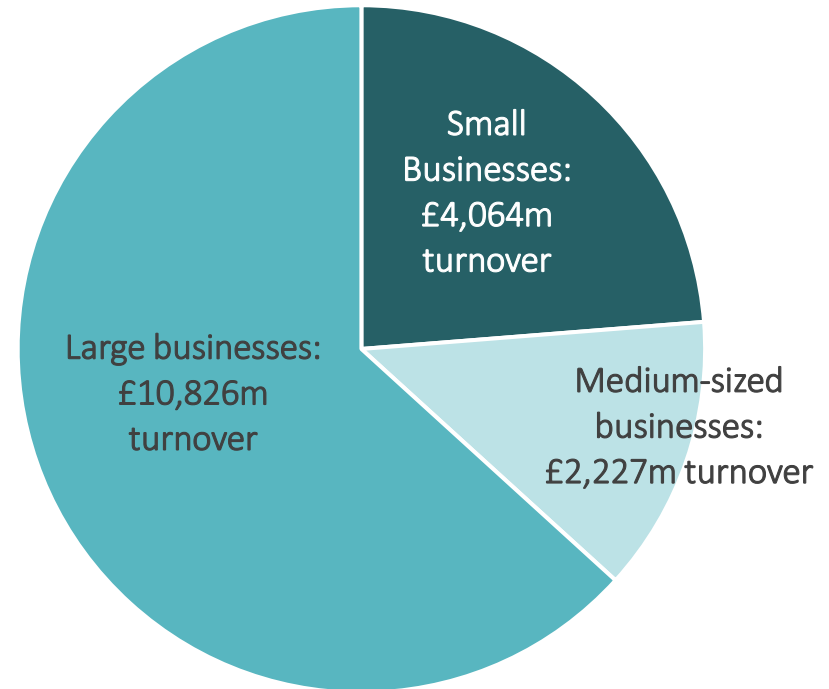
Notes: This dataset measures the number of business births (new business registrations at HM Revenue and Customs for VAT and/or PAYE and at Companies House) and the number of business closures (businesses whose turnover and employment are zero for several periods or who the ONS is told has ceased trading). These statistics do not represent Business Gateway Fife’s performance in relation to the number of business start-ups supported.

Performance of Fife's Business Base by Size of Business

63% of the total turnover generated by Fife's businesses in the year ending March 2025 came from its largest employers (those employing more than 250 people). This is a higher proportion than for Scotland as a whole (60%).

Whilst 93% of Fife's businesses employ between 0-49 employees, they are responsible for only 24% of Fife's total annual enterprise turnover.

Figure 9: Annual Turnover Generated by Fife Businesses, by Size of Business (March 2025)



Source: Businesses in Scotland, Scottish Government (2025)

Note: Small businesses = 0-49 employees; medium-sized businesses = 50-249 employees; large businesses = 250+ employees. A breakdown of turnover by size of enterprise is not available below these employee size bands. These figures exclude turnover of businesses in the Financial & Business Services sector.

Composition & Performance of Fife's Business Base by Sector

Figure 10: Number of registered private sector businesses in Fife and their Employment and Turnover by Sector (March 2025)

'Wholesale & Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles' was the largest industry sector in Fife in terms of both employment and number of enterprises. This sector had the second largest overall turnover.

The Manufacturing sector, the third largest employing sector in Fife, had the largest turnover and was the most productive, with a turnover of £449,393 per employee in 2025.

Business Sector	Number of Fife Businesses	Total Employment	Annual turnover (millions)	Productivity (Turnover per Employee)
Wholesale, retail and repairs	1,640	22,770	£4,551	£199,868
Education, human health and social work activities	520	16,010	£656	£40,974
Manufacturing	555	13,180	£5,923	£449,393
Accommodation and food service activities	810	10,340	£528	£51,064
Construction	1,400	6,410	£1,221	£190,484
Professional, scientific and technical activities	1,165	5,340	£803	£150,375
Administrative and support service activities	720	4,670	£450	£96,360
Primary Industries	695	4,390	£1,449	£330,068
Transport and storage	365	3,860	£347	£89,896
Arts, entertainment and recreation	280	3,550	£330	£92,958
Information and communication	315	3,150	£554	£175,873
Other service activities	495	3,110	£148	£47,588
Financial and insurance activities	95	2,860	N/A	N/A
Real estate activities	325	1,440	£156	£108,333
Total	9,380	101,080	£17,116	£169,331

Source: Businesses in Scotland, Scottish Government (2025)

Note: Turnover figures for the Financial and Insurance Activities sector are not available.

Performance of Fife’s Business Base: Survival of New Enterprises

Figure 11 shows that in 2024 for the 1st and 2nd years after starting up, Fife’s business survival rates were similar to national survival rates. For the third year after starting up, Fife’s business survival rate was lower than the Scottish rate (54.1% compared with 57.6%).

In 2024, the proportion of new businesses surviving for their 1st and 2nd years after start-up increased compared with in 2023 (Figure 12). The proportion surviving for three years remained virtually the same.

The latest three-year survival rate for businesses supported by Business Gateway Fife was 74% (businesses born in 2022/23 surviving to 2025/26). This is a higher rate than the previous period when 59% of businesses survived (between 2021/22 and 2024/25).

Figure 11: Survival Rates for Fife and Scottish Newly-Born Businesses (% of new businesses surviving to 2024)

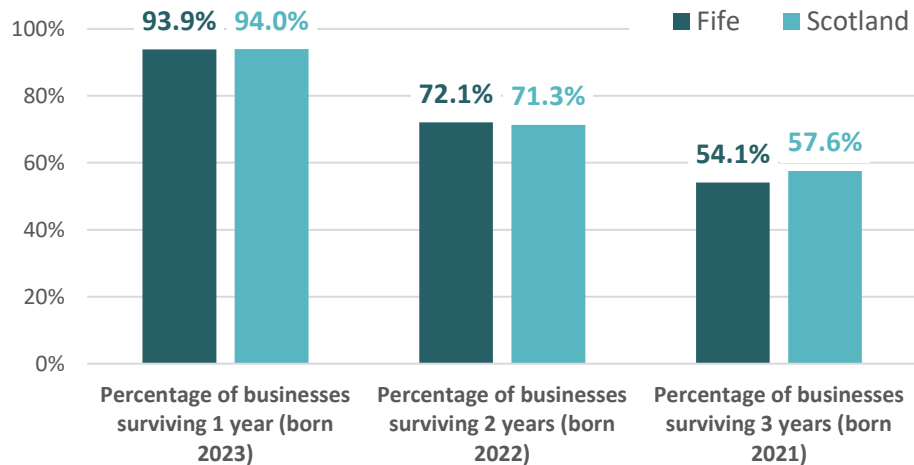
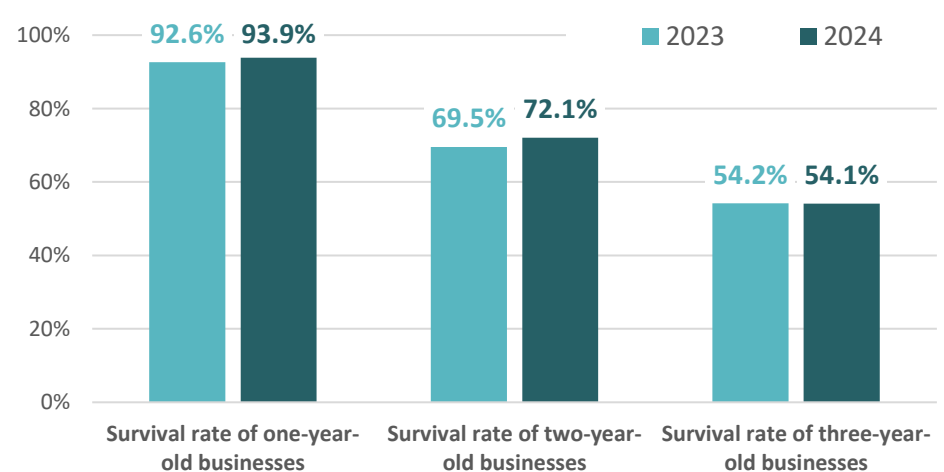


Figure 12: Survival Rates for new Fife Businesses (% of new businesses surviving to 2023 and 2024)



Source: Business Demography, UK 2024, ONS. Notes: These statistics do not represent Business Gateway Fife’s performance in relation to the aftercare service it provides to new-start businesses. Survival rates should only be viewed as an indicative measure of the local business environment, as not all enterprises are set up to remain open indefinitely for example a number of temporary online enterprises were set up during the Covid pandemic.

Job Density

In 2023, Fife had a job density of 0.66, ie there were 0.66 jobs in the region for every resident of working age (aged 16-64).

Fife’s job density was lower than that for Scotland as a whole (0.83).

The Dunfermline Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Area (SPCA) had the highest number of jobs per working age residents. Cowdenbeath SPCA had the lowest job density in Fife.

All parts of Fife saw job densities increase between 2019 and 2023 apart from Dunfermline and Mid-Fife & Glenrothes.

Figure 13: Job Densities, Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Areas (SPCA), Fife and Scotland (2019-2023)

Area	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cowdenbeath	0.54	0.52	0.51	0.54	0.55
Dunfermline	0.75	0.72	0.78	0.80	0.73
Kirkcaldy	0.61	0.63	0.64	0.71	0.70
Mid Fife & Glenrothes	0.82	0.80	0.79	0.77	0.72
North East Fife	0.57	0.54	0.56	0.62	0.60
Fife	0.66	0.65	0.66	0.70	0.66
Scotland	0.83	0.81	0.82	0.82	0.83

Source: ONS Job Density 2019-2023.

Notes: The job density figure represents the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64. Total jobs include employee jobs, self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces. The number of residents aged 16-64 figures used are based on the relevant mid-year population estimates.

Business Density

In 2024, Fife's business density was 282 businesses per 10,000 resident adults, a lower density than that for Scotland as a whole (372).

The North East Fife Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Area (SPCA) had the highest number of businesses per 10,000 resident adults (385) and was the only part of Fife where the business density was higher than the Scottish rate.

The Dunfermline SPCA had the second highest business density (283).

The Kirkcaldy SPCA had the lowest business density (244).

Figure 14: Business Densities, Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Areas (SPCA), Fife and Scotland (2025)

Area	2025
Cowdenbeath	251
Dunfermline	283
Kirkcaldy	244
Mid Fife & Glenrothes	260
North East Fife	385
Fife	282
Scotland	372

Sources: ONS UK Business Counts 2025 and National Records of Scotland Mid-Year Population Estimates.

Notes: Business density represents the number of businesses registered for VAT and/or PAYE per 10,000 of the adult (+16 years) resident population. Business numbers were taken from the ONS UK Business Counts Dataset which estimates a smaller total number of registered businesses in Fife than the Businesses in Scotland dataset. The population estimates used for the SPCAs are Mid-2022; for Fife and Scotland Mid-2024 population estimates have been used.

Data Sources and Further Information

[Businesses in Scotland: 2025](#), Scottish Government

[Business Demography, UK: 2024](#), Office for National Statistics

Job Density , Office for National Statistics, accessed via [NOMIS](#)

UK Business Counts, Office for National Statistics, accessed via [NOMIS](#)

Mid-Year Population Estimates, [National Records of Scotland](#)

For further information about the statistics used in this report, please contact: fifemeansbusiness@fife.gov.uk

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