



# Fife Local Economic Profiles 2024-2025



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## Introduction

These profiles provide a summary of economic development and employability activities carried out by Fife Council's Business & Employability Services during 2024/25.

They also provide an overview of the characteristics and performance of Fife's business base and labour market. This overview is based on a range of publicly-available socio-economic data. Whilst many of the data have a time lag, the figures presented are the most up-to-date available at the time of writing.

Unless otherwise stated, the data are broken down to the areas covered by each of Fife Council's seven Local Area Committees.

# Supporting Local Businesses

## **Supporting new business start-ups and their early survival**

Business Gateway Fife supported a total of 562 new business start-ups during 2024/25, 52 fewer than the previous year, but the highest number supported of any local authority area in Scotland by a significant margin (the next highest was Glasgow City with 434 starts). (Figure 2). It is expected that this support will have helped create 682.5 new full time equivalent jobs (Figure1). 53% of those starts were female-led.

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

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding was used to deliver a Steps to Start-up course in partnership with the University of St Andrews for Fife College students interested in starting their own business. 50% of attendees stated that they would definitely start a business and 30% that they were likely to.

## **Helping small and medium-sized local businesses to grow, accelerate their transition to net zero emissions and adopt digital technologies**

Over 1,500 existing businesses received support from Business Gateway Fife's business advisory services; this support focused on addressing the challenges posed by the increased costs of doing business. (Figure 1).

482 businesses received financial support estimated to have supported 481 jobs (Figure 3). This support included £1.1m of grants awarded to 95 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) towards the costs of progressing towards Net Zero or introducing digital solutions.

During 2024/25, the Service's Trade Development Programme supported 191 businesses to attend and/or exhibit at 72 major trade shows, events and workshops; this included 13 businesses supported to attend 16 tradeshow outwith the UK.

A programme of events and activities was delivered to strengthen businesses' links with academia, learn from leading examples of innovation and access funding and innovation support mechanisms.

Eleven town centre and independent retail businesses participated in a free business support programme which upskilled owners and managers in marketing; digital transformation and e-commerce; and premises optimisation.

Food from Fife was supported to launch an innovative Kiosk Project to increase the visibility of Fife's food and drink products. The project installed point-of-sale materials and retail display units in retail, tourism and hospitality businesses.

## **Attracting and Supporting Inward Investment**

In 2024/25 Fife attracted inward investment valued at over £163m and projected to create 199 new jobs and safeguard a further 210.

An investment prospectus was produced for Glenrothes, joining the prospectuses for Levenmouth, Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline already in circulation. Published on the [InvestFife website](#) and promoted by Scottish Development International, the prospectuses detail Fife's investment opportunities.

## Supporting Local Businesses (cont)

### Developing and strengthening local supply chains and optimising the level of public sector expenditure retained within Fife's economy

Over 800 attendees participated in 18 events at the 16th Annual Fife Business Week in November 2025. The week included a Welcome to Fife Tourism Showcase, Fife House Builders Forum, Meet the Buyer and The Local Advantage: Boosting Your Business with Fife Produce.

The second 'Build Fife Programme' took place over 8-weeks from January to March 2025 and included a visit to the Built Environment – Smarter Transformation (BE-ST) Innovation Centre. Delivered in partnership with Hub East Central Scotland and Tier 1 construction contractors, the programme provided 14 companies with skills and knowledge for trading in the construction sector.

An Imagining the Future of Manufacturing workshop, delivered in partnership with the University of St. Andrews, brought together manufacturers, engineers, university researchers and community representatives to identify joint projects. As a result, two key projects are moving forward - making outdated equipment more efficient and inspiring the next generation to join the manufacturing industry.

**Figure 1: Businesses Supported by Business Gateway Fife (BGF) 2024/25**

	Cowdenbeath Area	City of Dunfermline	Glenrothes Area	Kirkcaldy Area	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South & West Fife	Fife
No. of businesses receiving Expert Help	11	29	21	16	3	22	18	<b>120</b>
No. of businesses accessing business growth services	124	191	200	236	108	312	167	<b>1,505*</b>
No. of Business Gateway-supported start-ups	61	90	68	110	55	106	72	<b>562</b>
No. of jobs created from BGF start-up support	74	100	92	123.5	67	129	94	<b>682.5</b>
Turnover generated	£2,187,000	£2,075,500	£3,160,500	£3,338,080	£1,772,000	£3,511,000	£2,145,500	<b>£18,219,180</b>

Source: Business Gateway Fife. Note: \* include 167 records with invalid postcodes making identification of Area Committee difficult.

**Figure 2: Number of Start-Ups supported by Business Gateway Fife (BGF) 2019/20 - 2024/25**

	Cowdenbeath Area	City of Dunfermline	Glenrothes Area	Kirkcaldy Area	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South & West Fife	Fife*
2019/21	51	96	103	121	44	111	88	<b>615</b>
2020/21	60	73	93	85	36	101	70	<b>518</b>
2021/22	80	102	80	125	51	93	72	<b>603</b>
2022/23	51	70	59	116	47	85	68	<b>503</b>
2023/24	73	96	88	115	64	92	80	<b>614</b>
2024/25	61	90	68	110	55	106	72	<b>562</b>

Source: Business Gateway Fife.

Note: \* some year's figures may include start-ups with an address outwith Fife.

**Figure 3: Financial Support Given to Businesses in Fife 2024/25**

	Cowdenbeath Area	City of Dunfermline	Glenrothes Area	Kirkcaldy Area	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South & West Fife	Fife
No. of businesses supported	28	54	66	67	36	119	58	<b>428</b>
Value of financial support approved	£162,580.71	£501,338.26	£688,268.77	£476,251.43	£233,244.82	£1,018,000.20	£545,947.86	<b>£3,625,612.05</b>
Jobs created as a result of financial support	26	69.5	66.5	72.5	35	143	68.5	<b>481</b>

Source: Fife Council Economic Development.

Note: includes support given to businesses by the Fife Investment Fund (Fife Council funded) and the Business Efficiency Grant, SME Development Grant and Start-up Grant Schemes (funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund)

# Fife's Business Base

## Number and Size of Businesses

Figure 4: Number of Enterprises 2025: Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Areas (SPCAs), Fife & Scotland

	Cowdenbeath SPCA	Dunfermline SPCA	Kirkcaldy SPCA	Mid Fife & Glenrothes SPCA	North East Fife SPCA	Fife	Scotland
Number of Enterprises March 2025	1,500	1,840	1,590	1,505	2,450	8,840	173,100
Percentage of Fife Total	17.0%	20.8%	18.0%	17.0%	27.2%	-	-
Change 2020-2025	-430	-180	-315	-125	-5	-1,060	-4,595
Percentage Change 2020-2025	-22.3%	-8.9%	-16.5%	-7.7%	-0.2%	-10.7%	-2.6%
Change 2024-25	-5	-5	-60	-60	+15	-110	+845
Percentage Change 2023-2024	-0.3%	-0.3%	-3.6%	-3.8%	+0.6%	-1.2%	+0.5%

### Change in Number of Businesses 2020-2025

Between March 2020 and March 2025, the number of enterprises in Fife fell by 1,060 businesses or -10.7% (Figure 4). This followed a period of sustained growth between 2015 and 2020.

Cowdenbeath Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Area (SPCA) saw the largest fall between 2020 and 2025 (-430 businesses or -22.3%) and North East Fife the smallest fall (-0.2%).

Micro-businesses (those employing 0-9 employees) were the only type of business to reduce in number. All areas, apart from Mid Fife & Glenrothes, saw an increase in the number of larger businesses (Figure 5).

Source: ONS UK Business Counts, 2025.

Note: The number of enterprises registered for VAT and/or PAYE that were live on 14 March 2025. Does not therefore include unregistered enterprises (sole traders and partnerships) who are not VAT and/or PAYE registered. As all numbers are rounded to the nearest zero or 5, all zeros are not necessarily true zeros, numbers below 10 should be viewed with caution and the Fife totals may not equal the sum of the five Fife Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Areas figures.

**Figure 5: Change in the number of enterprises by Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Area (SPCA) and Size 2020-2025**

	Cowdenbeath SPCA		Dunfermline SPCA		Kirkcaldy SPCA		Mid Fife & Glenrothes SPCA		North East Fife SPCA		Fife	
	2025	Change 2020-25	2025	Change 2020-25	2025	Change 2020-25	2025	Change 2020-25	2025	Change 2020-25	2025	Change 2020-25
Micro (0 to 9 employees)	1,315	-445	1,630	-195	1,365	-295	1,285	-115	2,100	-20	7,690	-1,080
Small (10 to 49 employees)	160	+20	175	+15	190	-20	180	-5	265	+15	965	+15
Medium (50 to 249 employees)	25	0	30	0	30	0	30	-5	30	0	145	-5
Large (250+ employees)	5	0	10	+5	5	0	5	-5	10	0	35	0

**Businesses by Size**

Kirkcaldy and the Mid-Fife and Glenrothes Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Areas have the highest proportions of small and medium-sized businesses (Figure 6).

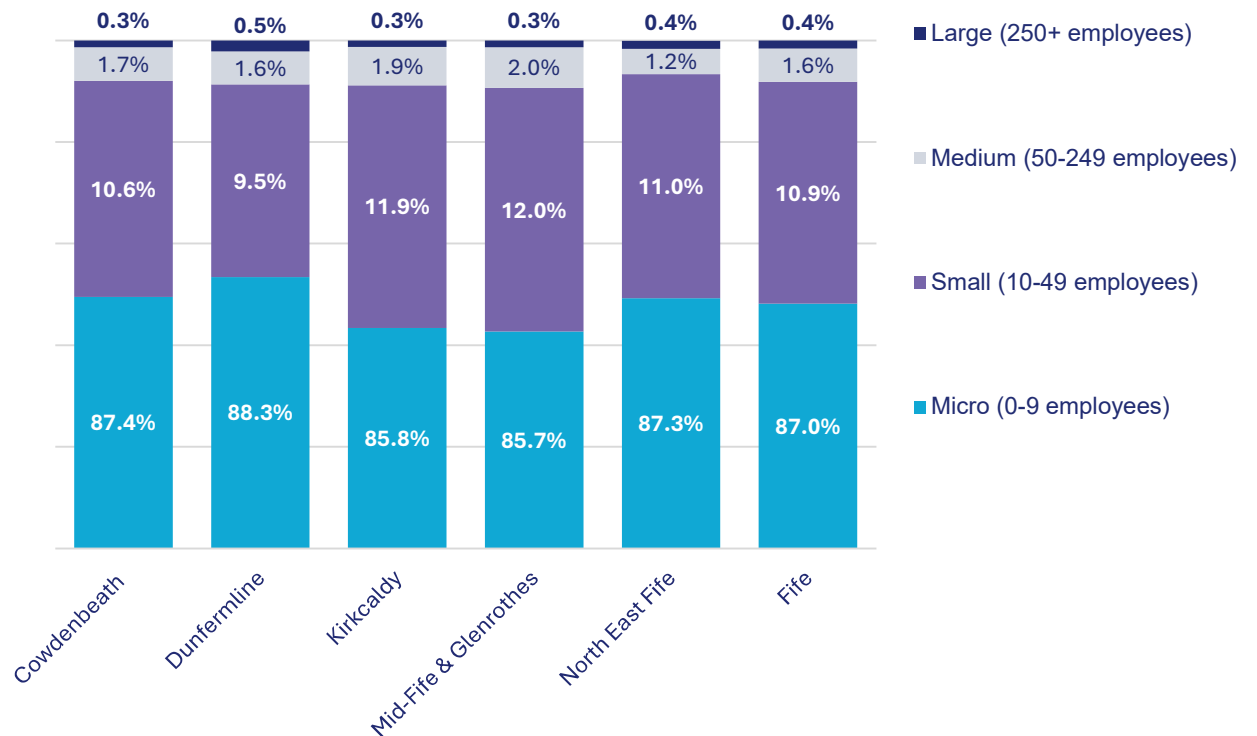
Dunfermline SPCA has the highest proportion of micro businesses (88.3%) followed by Cowdenbeath (87.4%) and North East Fife (87.3%).

Kirkcaldy, Cowdenbeath and the Mid-Fife and Glenrothes SPCAs have the lowest proportion of large businesses.

Source: UK Business Counts, 2025.

Note: The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered enterprises that were live on 14 March 2025. Does not therefore include unregistered enterprises (sole traders and partnerships) who are not VAT and/or PAYE registered. As all numbers are rounded to the nearest zero or 5, all zeros are not necessarily true zeros, numbers below 10 should be viewed with caution and the Fife totals may not equal the sum of the five Fife SPCA figures.

**Figure 6: Proportion of businesses by size, Fife's SPCAs, 2025**



## Business Births

In 2024, both the number of new business start-ups and the business start-up rate in Fife fell for a third year.

A total of 905 new businesses started up in 2024, 85 or 8.6% fewer than in 2023 when there were 990 new business registrations.

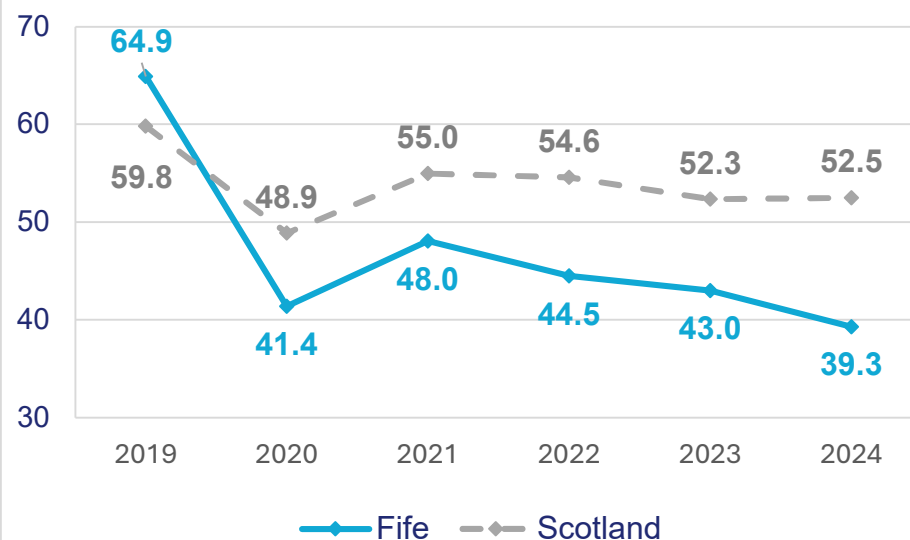
In Scotland as a whole, the number of business births grew slightly (by +0.8%) between 2023 and 2024.

As a result, the gap between Fife's start-up rate and that for Scotland as a whole grew after narrowing in 2023. (Figure 7).

Source: ONS Business Demography, UK (2024).

Note: These figures do not include unregistered enterprises (sole traders and partnerships who are not VAT and/or PAYE registered). They should be viewed with caution as they include registered holding companies and duplicate bank accounts.

**Figure 7: Business start-ups per 10,000 working age adults (16-64) 2019-2024**



## Business Survival Rates

**Figure 8: Survival of New Start Businesses 2024**

	Percentage of businesses surviving 1 year (born 2023)	Percentage of businesses surviving 2 years (born 2022)	Percentage of businesses surviving 3 years (born 2021)
Fife	93.9%	72.1%	54.1%
Scotland	94.0%	71.3%	57.6%

Whilst the proportion of new businesses in Fife surviving two years of operating was higher than the rate in Scotland as a whole, the proportion surviving three years was below the Scottish rate.

In 2024, the 3-year survival rate of businesses in Fife (54.1%) was virtually the same as in 2023 (54.2%) but lower than in 2020 (58.7%). Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Fife's 3-year business survival rates were higher than the national rates.

Source: ONS Business Demography, UK 2024.

Note: These figures do not include unregistered enterprises (sole traders and partnerships who are not VAT and/or PAYE registered).

## Business Densities

In 2025, Fife had a business stock rate, or business density, of 285 registered businesses per 10,000 resident adults (aged 16+) compared with 380 businesses per 10,000 adults in Scotland as a whole (Figure 9)

The North East Fife Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Area (SPCA) is the only part of Fife with an overall business density above the Fife rate. It has a much higher density of micro and small businesses than the rest of Fife.

The Dunfermline SPCA has the second highest density of micro businesses and Kirkcaldy and Mid-Fife and Glenrothes have the second highest density of small businesses in Fife.

Kirkcaldy SPCA has the lowest business density in Fife, followed by Cowdenbeath. Kirkcaldy would need a 56% increase in the number of registered businesses (891 additional businesses) and Cowdenbeath would need a 52% increase (775 businesses) to reach the Scottish business density.

Source: ONS Business Counts 2025 and National Records for Scotland Mid-2022 Population Estimates.

Note: These figures do not include unregistered enterprises (sole traders and partnerships who are not VAT and/or PAYE registered).

**Figure 9: Number of registered businesses per 10,000 resident adults by enterprise size, 2025**

Area	Micro (0-9 employees)	Small (10-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (250+ employees)	All sizes
Cowdenbeath SPCA	220	27	4	1	251
Dunfermline SPCA	250	27	5	2	283
Kirkcaldy SPCA	209	29	5	1	244
Mid-Fife & Glenrothes SPCA	225	32	5	1	264
NE Fife SPCA	336	42	5	2	385
Fife	248	31	5	1	285
Scotland	333	39	6	2	380

## Distribution of Employment

Figure 10: Number of Jobs in Fife 2019-2024

	Cowdenbeath Area	City of Dunfermline	Glenrothes Area	Kirkcaldy Area	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South & West Fife	Fife*
September 2019	8,000	30,000	25,000	22,000	10,000	24,000	16,000	<b>138,000</b>
September 2020	8,000	28,000	25,000	23,000	9,000	23,000	15,000	<b>133,000</b>
September 2021	9,000	31,000	24,000	24,000	10,000	25,000	15,000	<b>142,000</b>
September 2022	9,000	32,000	22,000	25,000	10,000	25,000	15,000	<b>140,000</b>
September 2023	9,000	29,000	22,000	25,000	10,000	25,000	15,000	<b>138,000</b>
September 2024	9,000	28,000	23,000	25,000	10,000	25,000	15,000	<b>139,000</b>
% change 2019-2024	+12.5%	-6.7%	-8.0%	+13.6%	0.0%	+8.3%	-6.3%	<b>+0.7%</b>

### Change in Number of Jobs

The number of jobs in Fife increased between 2023 and 2024, after falling between 2021 and 2023.

The Kirkcaldy Area saw the largest proportionate increase in employment between 2019 and 2024 followed by the Cowdenbeath Area; over the same period, the Glenrothes Area, Dunfermline and South and West Fife saw job numbers fall. (Figure 10).

Between 2023 and 2024, Dunfermline was the only part of Fife to see job numbers fall.

### Employment by Sector

North East Fife has the largest share of Fife's jobs in Accommodation & Food Services, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation and Education (40.0%, 37.5% and 35.7% of Fife's jobs in these sectors respectively) (Figure 11 below).

54.5% of all employment in Public Administration & Defence Activities is located in the Glenrothes Area along with 28.6% of Fife's Manufacturing jobs.

40.0% of Fife's jobs in Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing\* are located in Levenmouth.

75% of all employment in Financial & Insurance activities in Fife is located in Dunfermline, along with 66.7% of Fife's jobs in the Information & Communication sector and 42.9% of jobs in Transport & Storage.

Over a third (39.1%) of people in Fife working in the Human Health & Social Work Activities sector are employed in the Kirkcaldy Area.

Source: ONS Business Register & Employment Surveys 2019- 2024. Note: \* The Fife totals include farm agriculture while the committee area figures exclude farm agriculture. Employment estimates include employees plus the number of working owners who receive a share of the profits but are not paid via PAYE. Committee areas defined using 2011 datazones.

**Figure 11: Employment by Sector, Fife 2024**

Sector	Cowdenbeath Area	City of Dunfermline	Glenrothes Area	Kirkcaldy Area	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South & West Fife	Fife
A : Agriculture, forestry and fishing*	15	20	10	50	400	150	100	1,000
B : Mining and quarrying	0	0	10	20	0	150	30	200
C : Manufacturing	1,000	1,500	4,000	1,500	1,750	1,250	3,500	14,000
D : Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning	20	0	250	0	100	20	25	400
E : Water supply; sewerage, waste management	30	175	150	75	45	75	75	600
F : Construction	900	1,500	1,000	1,500	500	1,500	1,000	8,000
G : Wholesale and retail trade; vehicle repair	1,500	4,000	3,000	4,500	1,000	4,000	2,000	20,000
H : Transportation and storage	600	3,000	500	500	800	600	600	7,000
I : Accommodation and food service activities	400	1,750	1,000	1,500	600	4,000	800	10,000
J : Information and communication	25	2,000	125	300	10	125	600	3,000
K : Financial and insurance activities	20	2,250	125	150	50	100	300	3,000
L : Real estate activities	75	250	400	175	125	400	125	1,500
M : Professional, scientific and technical acts	250	2,000	700	900	350	900	1,250	6,000
N : Administrative and support service acts	200	1,000	600	800	225	1,000	1,000	5,000
O : Public admin, defence, social security	1,000	450	6,000	1,250	150	500	1,250	11,000
P : Education	1,250	2,250	1,500	2,000	1,000	5,000	1,250	14,000
Q : Human health and social work activities	1,500	4,500	3,000	9,000	2,000	2,500	1,000	23,000
R : Arts, entertainment and recreation	300	700	350	600	250	1,500	350	4,000
S : Other service activities	250	700	1,000	500	175	1,000	300	4,000
<b>Total Employment*</b>	<b>9,000</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>56,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>135,000</b>

Source: ONS Business Register & Employment Survey 2024.

Note: \* excludes farm agriculture. Employment estimates include employees plus the number of working owners who receive a share of the profits but are not paid via PAYE. They do not however include those who are self-employed operating below the VAT threshold with no employees. The level of rounding applied varies by estimate, so zeros may not be true zeros and the data may not add up to the totals shown. Committee areas defined using 2011 datazones.

# Creating Thriving Places : Investing in Premises & Infrastructure

## Providing high-quality, modern business premises

New business units were delivered at Fife Interchange North along with additional floorspace at Queensway Industrial Estate in Glenrothes, and construction started on new units at John Smith Business Park and Levenmouth Business Park with funding from Tranche 2 of the ten-year £58 million Fife Industrial Innovation Investment Programme (Fi3P) part-funded by the Edinburgh & SE Scotland City Region Deal. The funding is also being used to support the development of new flexible business accommodation in Cowdenbeath town centre.

## Developing serviced employment land sites and bringing vacant & derelict land and buildings back into productive use

In 2025, there were 605.3 hectares of vacant & derelict land across Fife, 97.6 fewer hectares than in 2024 (Figure 12).

South & West Fife contains the largest proportion of vacant & derelict land (50.6% of Fife's total) and the City of Dunfermline and Cowdenbeath Area the lowest (2.7% each).

Since 2015/16, Fife Council has been one of five local authorities to receive funding from the Scottish Government's Vacant & Derelict Land Fund; in 2024/25, the council's £1.1m award from the Scottish Government Vacant & Derelict Land Fund was used to support a number of remediation projects.

Tranche 2 of the Fife i3 Programme was used to deliver site servicing at Fife Interchange North, Lochgelly, and Hillend and Donibristle Industrial Estate.

**Figure 12: Extent of Vacant & Derelict Land in Fife 2025**

Area Committee	Proportion of Fife's total Vacant & Derelict Land	Total Amount of Vacant & Derelict Land (ha)	Change in amount of Vacant & Derelict Land 2024-25 (ha)
Cowdenbeath	2.7%	16.2	-42.3
City of Dunfermline	2.7%	16.5	+6.2
Glenrothes	18.0%	108.8	-11.0
Kirkcaldy	5.4%	32.6	-7.5
Levenmouth	11.5%	69.4	-3.6
North East Fife	9.2%	55.6	+0.1
South and West Fife	50.6%	306.2	-39.5
Total Fife	100%	605.3	-97.6

Source: Fife Council Vacant & Derelict Land Audit 2025

### **Delivering place-based investment to help revitalise and re-purpose Fife's key town and city centres**

Phase 1 of the regeneration of Riverside Park in Glenrothes was opened to the public on 11 April 2025. The £6m transformative regeneration project, whose delivery was led by the Service with funding from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, was completed on time and within budget and has already increased footfall in Glenrothes town centre.

Investment from the Scottish Government's Place-Based Investment Programme was used to support the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration Programme, Silverburn Flax Mill and Riverside Park Glenrothes in 2024/25. Funding from the programme is being used to support the refurbishment of Cowdenbeath Town House and the development of visitor facilities at Aberdour Silver Sands in 2025/26.

The 5-year Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration Programme has been given an extension for completion until the end of April 2026. The development phase of the Buckhaven Area Heritage Regeneration Scheme has been extended until February 2026 when a funding application for a 5-year programme will be submitted.

2024/25 was the last year of the council's Town Centre Building Improvement Grant Scheme which awarded grants worth up to £10,000 (per eligible property) to town centre businesses. 17 grants were paid out totalling £198,730.

A City Centre Design and Development Framework has been agreed for Dunfermline and an HM Treasury Green Book Outline Business Case for a Dunfermline Abbey and wider precinct is under development with the aim of creating a programme of work to establish the Abbey as a 'must visit' destination. Further background work has been undertaken to prepare for a programme of repairs at Fife Station Creative.

## Town and City Centre Vacancy Rates

Figure 13: Vacancy rates April 2025

Area Committee	Town/City	% of Vacant Units	% of Vacant Floor Space
Cowdenbeath Area	Cowdenbeath	16.9%	12.8%
	Lochgelly	25.4%	27.6%
City of Dunfermline	Dunfermline	18.5%	27.0%
Glenrothes Area	Glenrothes	18.8%	28.8%
Kirkcaldy Area	Kirkcaldy	25.6%	32.9%
	Burntisland	8.5%	6.3%
Levenmouth	Leven	19.7%	18.1%
North East Fife	Anstruther	15.6%	16.1%
	Cupar	14.6%	16.9%
	St Andrews	5.3%	7.4%
South & West Fife Area	Inverkeithing	17.3%	24.3%
	Kincardine	20.8%	41.8%

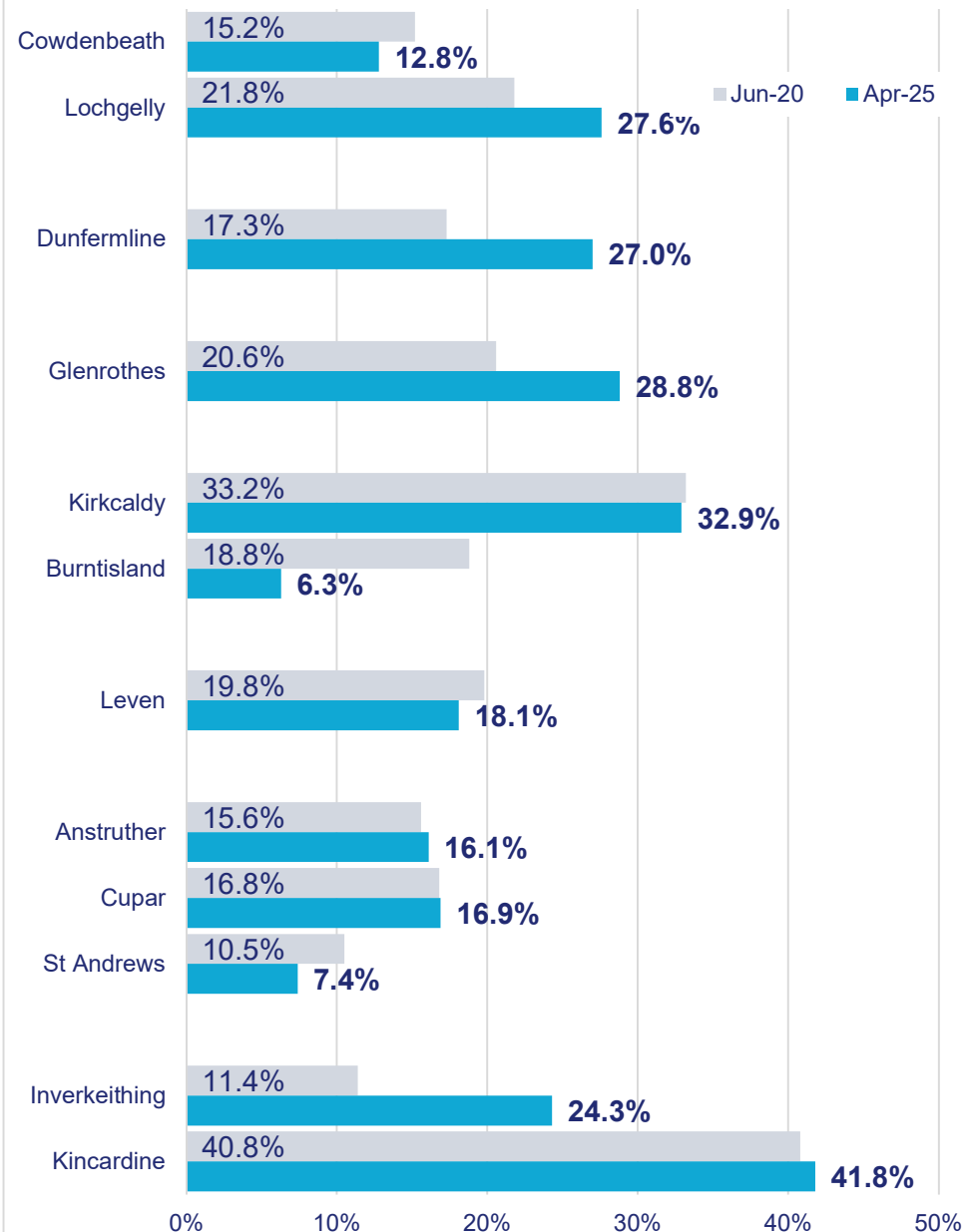
St Andrews and Burntisland have the lowest vacancy rates of Fife's main town centres (Figure 13).

The highest vacancy rates are found in Kirkcaldy, Lochgelly, Glenrothes and Kincardine.

Lochgelly, Dunfermline, Glenrothes and Inverkeithing saw the proportion of vacant floorspace increase between 2020 and 2025 (Figure 14), while Cowdenbeath, Burntisland, Leven and St Andrews saw rates decrease.

Source: Experian Goad Town Centre Reports for Fife Council

Figure 14: Percentage of vacant retail floorspace 2020-2025



## Supporting & delivering investment in tourism infrastructure and events

### Volume and Value of Visitors

In 2024, Fife received over 4 million visitors who brought in an estimated £817 million to the area's economy and supported an estimated 11,403 full time job equivalents (Figure 15 below).

### Fife Tourism Activity

'The Kingdom – Where It All Begins' destination marketing campaign reached over 8 million people in 2025; the campaign's partnership with Expedia brought in £313,830 of gross bookings to Fife.

A design proposal was developed to improve infrastructure for motor homes, traffic flow, accessibility to the beach and the general visitor experience at Aberdour Silver Sands. Funding has been secured to carry out the work (see section above) which is expected to be completed in Spring 2026.

Following VisitScotland's closure of its St Andrews visitor information centre, a network of Love Fife Visitor Information Points has been opened across Fife.

A tourism action plan is being delivered for Dunfermline, promoting it as a city break destination. Activity has included delivery of a marketing campaign, production of a set of cycling routes and the launch of the 'Dunfermline Discovery Trails' website to encourage increased dwell time in the city.

Dunfermline has been awarded Coach Friendly Accreditation - only the third destination in Scotland to do so.

Funding from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund was used to develop Fife's travel trade offering, offer a business development programme and to market the region as a destination for the travel trade.

A new section dedicated to golf was created on the Welcome to Fife website. This was accompanied by a dedicated marketing campaign and golf-focussed video.

An Events Strategy for Fife is being developed which aims to establish a year-round, balanced, and inclusive events calendar that prioritises sustainability, communities and economic growth. In 2025 the Strategic Events Fund awarded funding to 11 events, totalling over £34,000.

The Forth Bridges Trail signage was completed in 2025 and promotion of the route and visitor opportunities in the area continues through the Forth Bridges website and social media channels.

Fife Council is carrying out early engagement with businesses, residents and stakeholders to gather views on the potential introduction of a Transient Visitor Levy.

**Figure 15: Volume and Value of Visitors, Jan-Dec 2024**

<b>STEAM* Indicators</b>	<b>St Andrews</b>	<b>Dunfermline Area</b>	<b>Kirkcaldy and Mid Fife</b>	<b>NE Fife (exc. St Andrews)</b>	<b>Fife</b>
<b>Visitor numbers</b>	<b>1.14m</b>	<b>1.24m</b>	<b>1.05m</b>	<b>982,700</b>	<b>4.4m</b>
% change in visitor numbers 2023-2024	+24.8%	+26.1%	+21.8%	+22.0%	<b>+23.8%</b>
<b>Economic impact (direct, indirect &amp; induced)</b>	<b>£275m</b>	<b>£158m</b>	<b>£135m</b>	<b>£248m</b>	<b>£817m</b>
% change in economic impact 2023-2024**	+6.1%	+8.0%	+6.5%	+7.9%	<b>+7.1%</b>
<b>Number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs supported by visitor expenditure</b>	<b>3,462</b>	<b>2,180</b>	<b>1,625</b>	<b>4,136</b>	<b>11,403</b>
% change in number of FTE jobs 2022-2023	+5.1%	+5.6%	+5.1%	+5.6%	<b>+5.3%</b>

Source: Fife STEAM Reports 2024 - DRAFT, Global Tourism Solutions (UK) Ltd.

Notes:

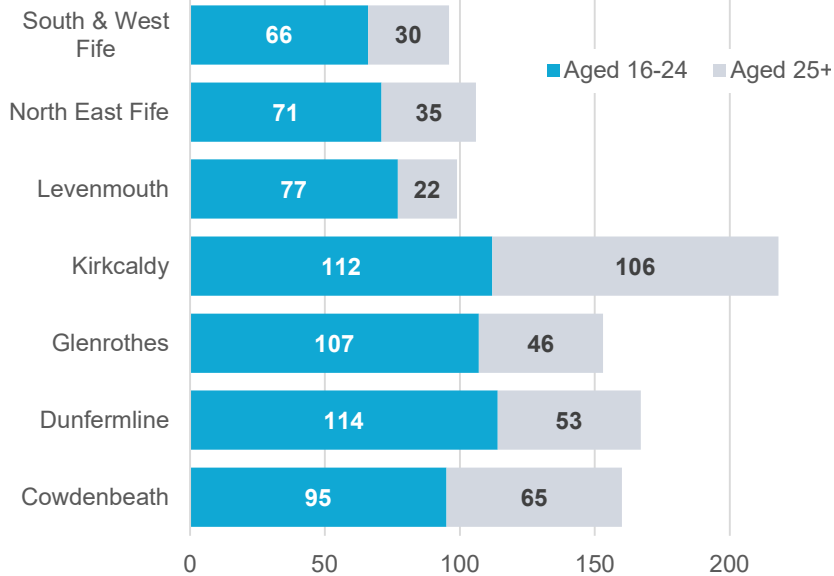
\*STEAM is a tourism economic modelling tool owned by Global Tourism Solutions (GTS) UK Ltd and is used by most visitor destination areas in the UK. 'Visitors' include staying visitors (tourists staying overnight for at least one night) and day visitors visiting the area on a non-routine and non-regular leisure day trip from a home or holiday base.

\*\* Indexed to 2024; includes VAT.

The areas relate to Fife's Local Tourist Associations (LTAs) as follows: St Andrews=St Andrews LTA; NE Fife=Cupar & North Fife and East Neuk LTAs; Kirkcaldy & Mid Fife=Levenmouth and Heartlands of Fife LTAs; Dunfermline Area=Dunfermline & West Fife LTA. Figures are not available at a lower level than these four areas.

# Delivering Skills, Training & Fair Employment

**Figure 16: Participants by age on employability programmes delivered by Fife Council's Employability Services 2024/25**



**Figure 17: Participants by type of programme delivered by Fife Council's Employability Services 2024/25**



## Monitoring & responding to current & future needs for workforce skills

A new Opportunities Fife Partnership Employer Engagement subgroup was set up to work with other delivery partners and key stakeholders to increase employers' awareness of employability support services and focus on how to best meet the demands of employers to support recruitment, fill vacancies and offer fair, healthy and inclusive work.

A Forth Green Freeport Fair Work and Skills Strategy was submitted as part of the Freeport's Final Business Case. Optimat has analysed the 38,000 jobs likely to be created and/or sustained over the life of the programme and provided a timescale for the skills that will be required to fill them. Work is ongoing with training providers to ensure that the required phased capacity for re-skilling, upskilling and skills development can be met. A Forth Green Freeport Skills Fund is being set up which, funded by contributions from investors, will align with and complement existing skills programmes.

## Encouraging the adoption of inclusive employment & fair work practices

The 23rd Fife Business Diversity Awards took place in December 2025. Organised by the Supported Employment Service, the awards, whose theme was 'Pride and Prejudice', showcased the success of people who have faced overwhelming challenges on their journey to find and stay in work, and the employers who created diverse workforces by providing opportunities for all.

## **Ensuring school and college leavers have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to move on to positive destinations**

An Enterprise and Education Pack was launched as a resource for students, educators and parents looking to explore entrepreneurship, business skills and enterprise education - [Fife Enterprise Information Pack | InvestFife](#).

61 Modern Apprenticeship places were supported across Health & Social Care, Children & Young People, Engineering, Construction (Building Services), Automotives, Horticulture and Business Administration.

173 Foundation Apprenticeships were supported, 148 of which were completed - 115 within the Children & Young People framework and 33 on the Health & Social Care framework. 55% of young people fully achieved the FA qualification, compared with 45% the previous year.

## **Targeting enhanced employability support to those most disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market**

In 2024/25, 4,240 people participated in employability programmes supported by the Opportunities Fife Partnership, Fife's Local Employability Partnership which is managed by the Service. Over half of participants (52%) went on to employment or improved employment.

In 2024/25, a total of 929 participant registrations were recorded across employability programmes directly delivered by the Fife Council Employability Team - 103 or 12% more participants than the previous year. These included 572 unique individuals, reflecting the fact that many clients engage with multiple programmes throughout their journey. 354 or 62% of participants went on to employment or improved employment and a further 28 entered other positive destinations.

These programmes included pre-employment training academies designed to help people experiencing barriers to employment - Community Improvement Squad Academies and a Film Academy in Dunfermline. A number of employer-led academies are also being developed in order to support local activity and provide an alternative recruitment approach for the employers and sub-contractors involved.

The Supported Employment Service provides an end-to-end holistic and person-centred Supported Employment Pathway to help prepare people with disabilities and health conditions to participate in more structured learning, training and workplace opportunities. The expanded programme portfolio delivered by this service included:

- Supported Employment Preparation for Work – 76 clients took part in these programmes which are for people of all ages who are at the early stages of their employment journey, either new to the workplace or hoping to return to work after a prolonged period of absence.
- Matrix Fife Pathways to Work – 26 people undertook this 8-week programme.
- Turnaround – a programme established in November 2024 for people leaving HMP Perth.

Fife Council's pilot progressive recruitment approach - Life Chances – which focuses on helping those experiencing barriers to employment to access hard-to-fill, entry level positions, has now been fully integrated into the council's recruitment strategy and is offered as an alternative to mainstream recruitment for hiring managers. A target of 60 placements in 2024/25 was achieved and surpassed with 77 placements filled. This included 49 placements with council services and involved a number of partner organisations offering opportunities – two in NHS Fife and 13 in the third sector. In addition, there were 13 Life Chances Partnerships, which are collaborations between the Employability Service and Fife Gingerbread to support lone parents with placements in Fife Council's Education Service and Fife Sports and Leisure Trust.

## Fife Council's Culture of Enterprise Programme

**Figure 18: Participation in Fife Council's Culture of Enterprise (CoE) Programme, 2024/25**

	Cowdenbeath Area	City of Dunfermline	Glenrothes Area	Kirkcaldy Area	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South & West Fife	Fife
Number of different CoE activities in which schools participated	5	10	4	9	3	11	6	<b>48</b>
Instances of pupil engagement with CoE activities	56	124	40	119	24	90	140	<b>593</b>

Source: Fife Council – Economic Development. Note: Figures for previous years are not shown due to the introduction of a new way of recording instances of pupil engagement.

The Culture of Enterprise Programme, led by Fife Council's Economic Development Team, delivers programmes of activity in Fife's primary and secondary schools designed to support young people in developing abilities and confidence for lifelong enterprising contributions in their learning, life and work.

The [Fife Enterprise Information Pack](#) was launched in March 2025 to provide a gateway to opportunities for students to engage in practical learning experiences, develop essential business skills, and connect with inspiring mentors and peers.

The CoE Programme was actively involved in developing the pilot phase of the Fife Diploma of Achievement (FDA) as part of the Fife Education Directorate Improvement Plan, focusing on 4 pillars Volunteering, Leadership, Enterprise and Personal Development.

The annual Dragon's Den competition continued to be a popular event with teams from five primary and two secondary schools pitching a range of social enterprise ideas in March 2025 at a new central venue at Studio 8, Glenrothes.

In September 2025: the first ever Fife Climate Youth Festival was attended by over 170 young people and around 150 school students took part in the first Pixel Pioneer Fest designed to inspire pupils with the possibilities of gaming and creative technology.

2025 was the 10th anniversary of the RTX Quadcopter Challenge, hosted by Kirkcaldy High School who also won this year's competition.

The app for Race to Zero, the digital replacement for The Enterprise Game was upgraded in 2024 and showcased at various events including Stemovators and the Festival of Engineering at Babcock, both STEM events for primary and secondary schools pupils.

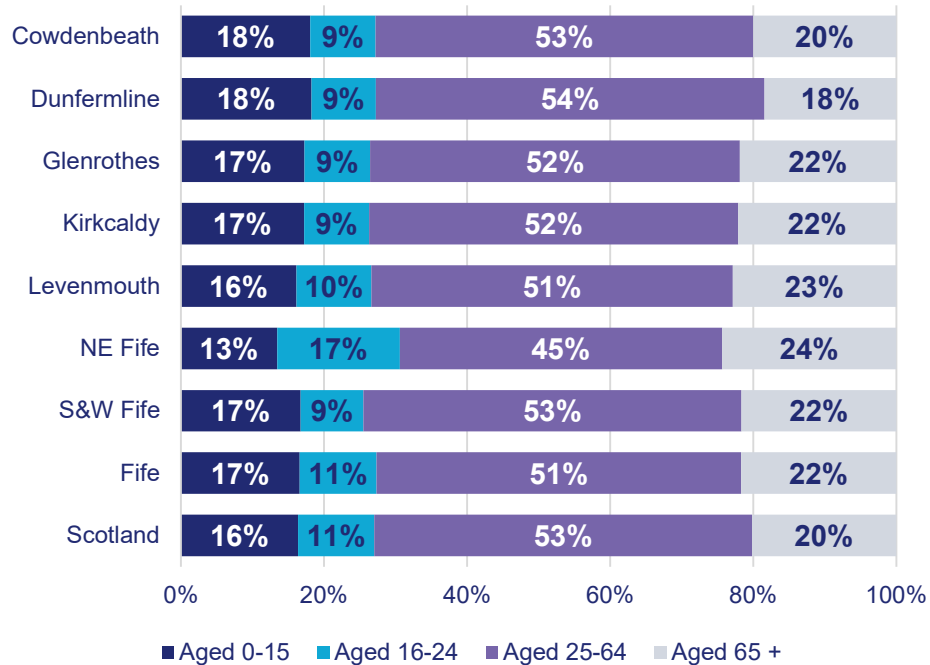
# Fife's Labour Market

## Population

Figure 19: Mid-2022 Population Estimates - Fife & Local Area Committee Geographies

Cowdenbeath Area	City of Dunfermline	Glenrothes Area	Kirkcaldy Area	Levenmouth	North East Fife	South & West Fife	Fife
41,579	60,767	48,461	60,276	38,599	72,191	49,517	<b>371,390</b>

Figure 20: Population Structure - Local Committee Areas, Fife, Scotland Mid-2022



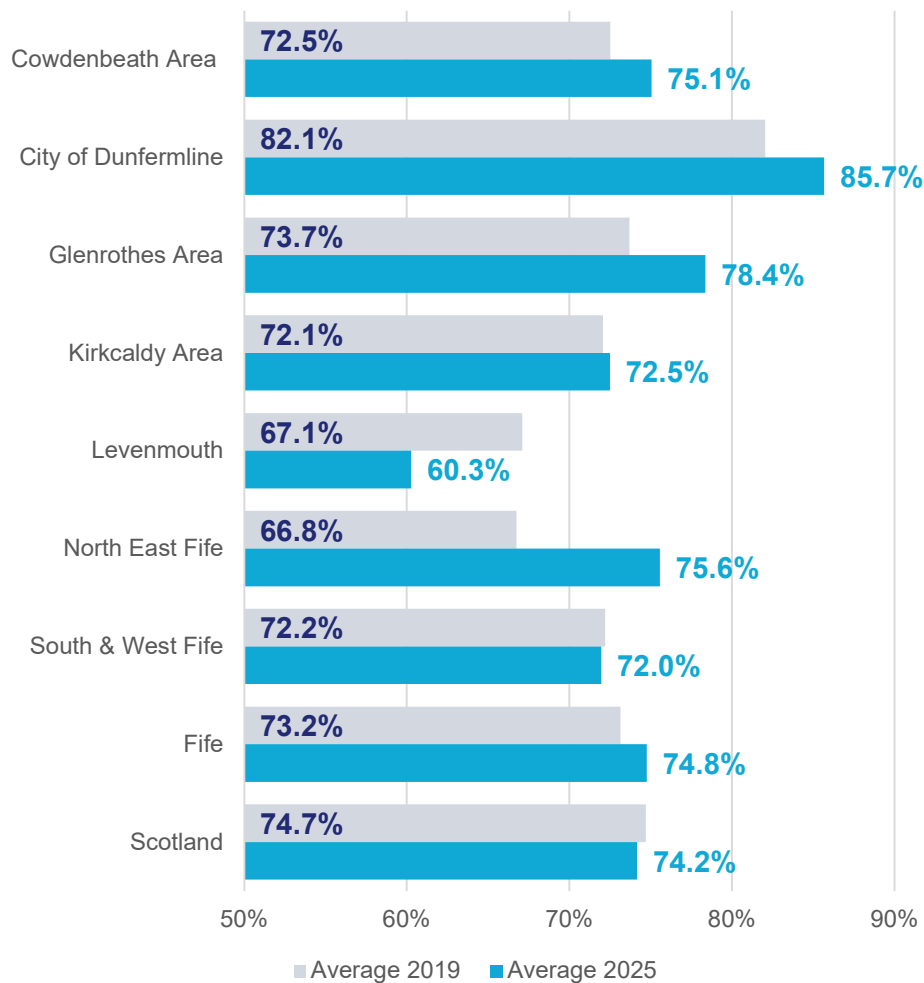
Around 371,390 people live in Fife, 6.8% of Scotland's population (Figure 19). Looking at the population structure of Fife and its committee areas (Figure 20):

- Fife has a smaller proportion of its population of working age (aged 16-64 years) than Scotland as a whole – 61.7% of its population are of working age compared with 63.5% of Scotland's population.
- Kirkcaldy has the smallest proportion of people of working age (60.7%) in Fife.
- Dunfermline has the lowest proportion of people aged over 65 (18.4%) while North East Fife has the highest (24.3%).
- Dunfermline has the largest proportion of people who are of working age (63.3%) and the highest proportion of children (18.2%).
- North East Fife has the lowest proportion of children (13.5%) but the largest proportion of people aged 16-24 years (17.1%) and the lowest proportion aged 25-64 years (45.1%).

Source: Mid-2022 Electoral Ward Population Estimates, National Records of Scotland.

## Employment Rate

**Figure 21: Employment Rate Change 2019-2025**



### Latest Employment Rates\*:

Dunfermline's average employment rate in 2025 (85.7%) was the highest in Fife (Figure 21) followed by the Glenrothes Area (78.4%).

The average employment rates in Levenmouth, the Kirkcaldy Area and South & West Fife were lower than both the Fife and Scottish rates.

Levenmouth had the lowest employment rates of all the committee areas in Fife (60.3%).

### Employment Rate Change:

In all parts of Fife apart from Levenmouth and South & West Fife, employment rates in 2025 were above the pre-pandemic 2019 levels (Figure 21).

The North East Fife and the Glenrothes Area saw the greatest increases in employment rates.

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, 2019 and 2025 Average Rates.

Note: \*employment rate = the percentage of the working age populations (aged 16-64) who are in employment. As these employment estimates are obtained from a national survey, they are based on a sample rather than the entire population which means they are subject to uncertainty. Rates for committee areas should be viewed with additional caution due to small sample sizes at this geographic level. Because of this, averages of the rates for 2019 and 2025 are given.

## Unemployment Rate

**Figure 22: Unemployment Rates - Fife and Scotland, 2020-2025**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Fife (estimated number of people)</b>	7,550	7,950	6,500	6,475	6,225	6,835
<b>Fife (%)</b>	4.4%	4.7%	3.8%	3.6%	3.4%	3.7%
<b>Scotland (%)</b>	3.6%	4.4%	3.4%	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%

After increasing during the Covid-19 pandemic, Fife's unemployment rate fell to a record low in 2024 (3.4%) when for the first time since 2017 it was lower than the Scottish rate (3.5%).

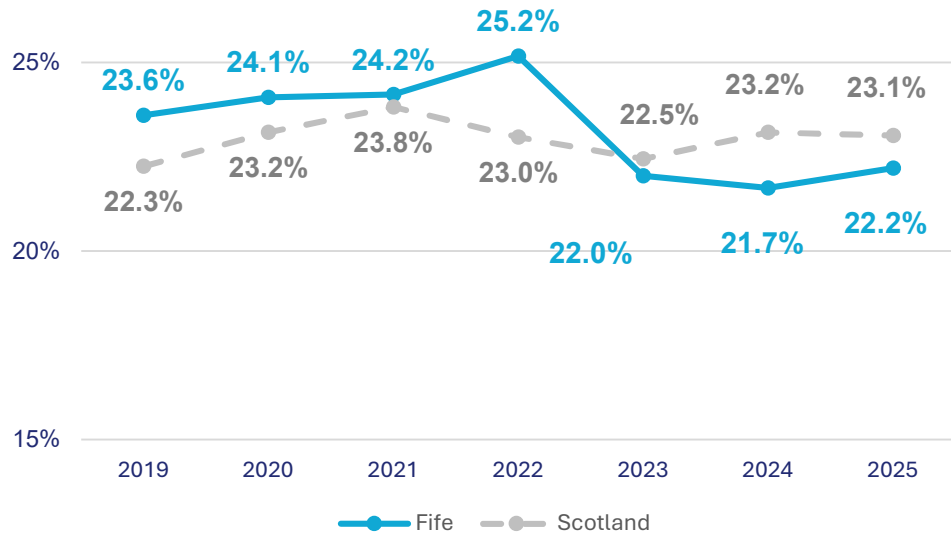
In 2025, Fife's unemployment rate rose to 3.7%, above the Scottish rate. During this period, an estimated 6,835 people were unemployed in Fife.

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, model-based estimates of unemployment; averages are given for each calendar year.

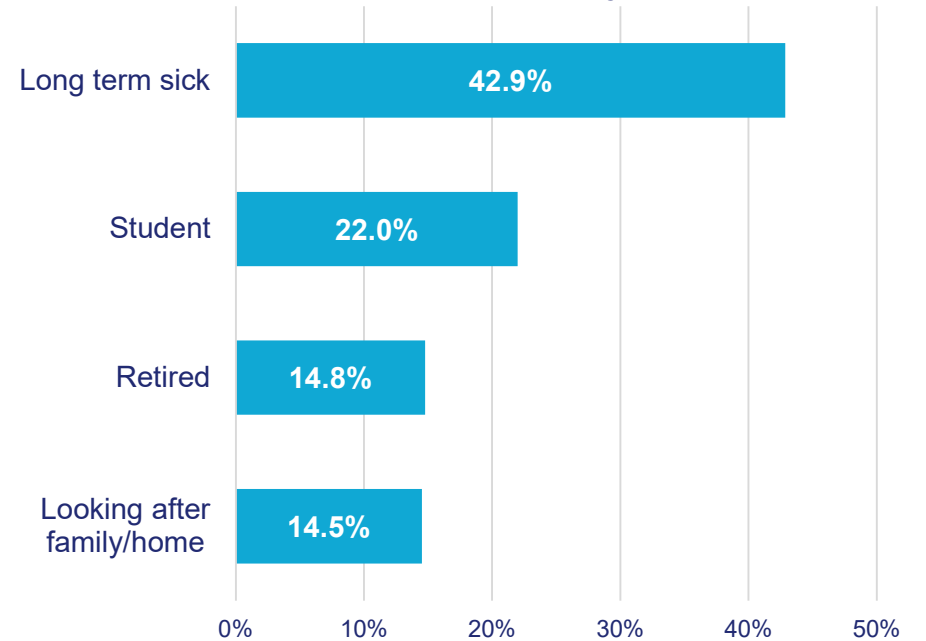
Note: Numbers and percentages are for those aged 16 and over who are without a job but who are looking for and available to start work. The unemployment rate is the proportion of the economically active population who are unemployed. Unemployment figures are not shown below the Fife level as sample sizes are too small for reliable estimates.

## Economic Inactivity Rate

**Figure 23: Percentage of the Working Age Population who are Economically Inactive, Fife & Scotland, 2019-2025**



**Figure 24: Main Reasons for Economic Inactivity, Fife, 2025**



Over a fifth (22.2%) of Fife's working aged population (people aged 16-64) was economically inactive during 2025 - that is they were neither in employment nor actively seeking a job (Figure 23). This represents an estimated 50,330 people.

Fife's inactivity rate was lower than the Scottish rate (23.1%) for the same period and lower than the high rate recorded in Fife immediately following the Covid-19 pandemic in 2022 (25.2%) (Figure 23).

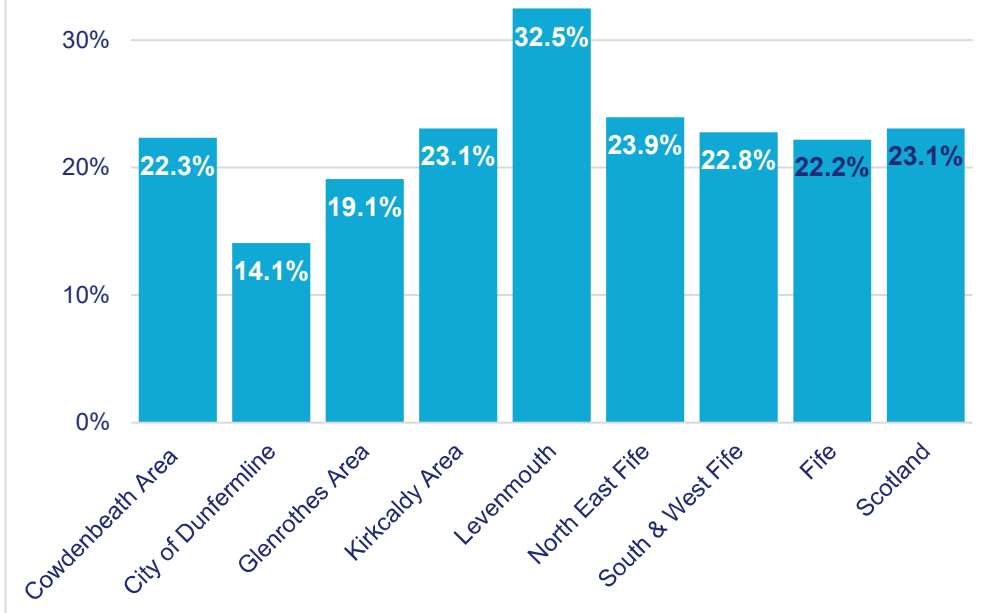
Long term ill-health is the reason 42.9% of those who are economically inactive in Fife (an estimated 21,500 people) gave for not being in employment or seeking a job in 2025 (Figure 24). This is the highest number of people recorded in the dataset (which started in 2004).

Other reasons for inactivity included being a student (22.0%), being retired (14.8%) and looking after the family/home (14.5%) (Figure 24).

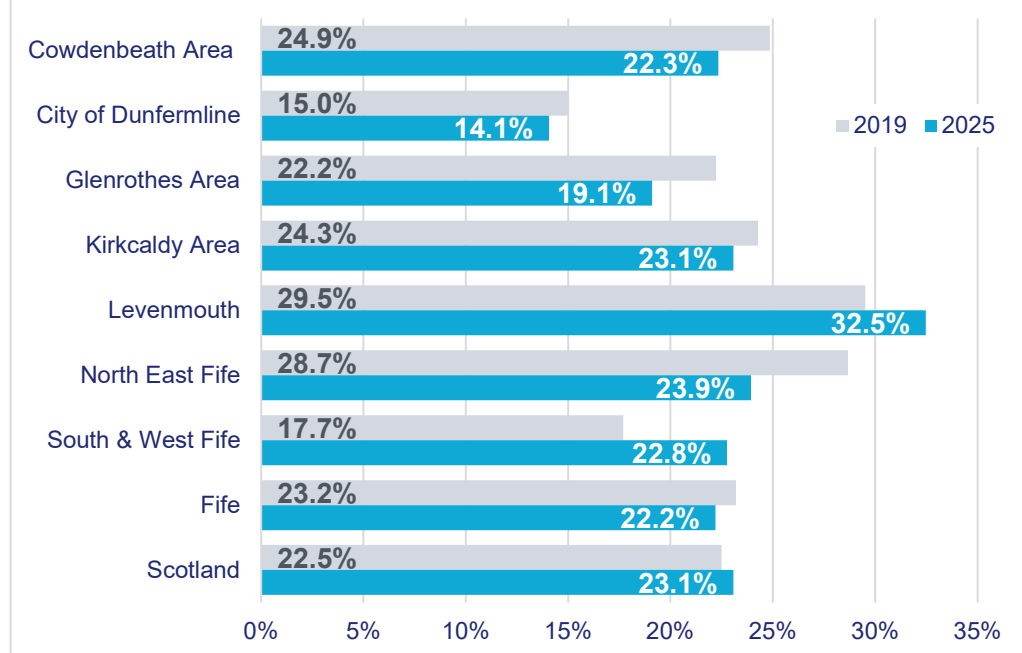
Source: ONS Annual Populations Survey, averages of calendar years.

Note: Those who are economically inactive are people aged 16 and over without a job who have not sought work in the last four weeks and/or who are not available to start work in the next two weeks, ie they are neither employed nor unemployed.

**Figure 25: Proportion of the working age population who were economically inactive (economic inactivity rate) 2025**



**Figure 26: Change in economic inactivity rates 2019-2025**



Dunfermline and the Glenrothes Area are the only parts of Fife whose average economic inactivity rate in 2025 was lower than both the Fife and Scottish rates (Figure 25). Dunfermline had the lowest rate of inactivity in Fife.

Levenmouth had the highest economic inactivity rate (32.5%) followed by North East Fife (23.9%) and the Kirkcaldy Area (23.1%).

Between 2019 and 2025, the Levenmouth and South & West Fife saw increases in the proportion of their populations who were economically inactive. In all other parts of Fife inactivity rates fell (Figure 26).

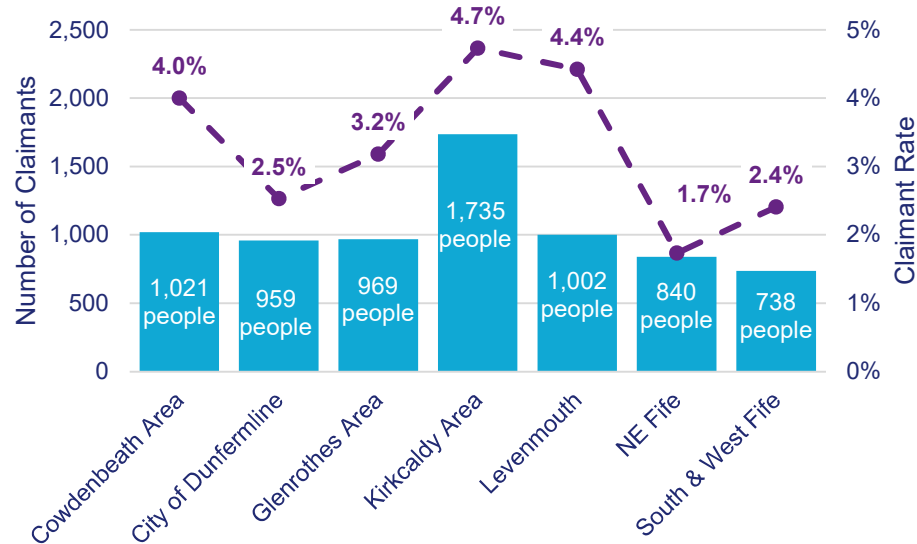
Due to small sample sizes at committee area levels, all these figures should be viewed with caution.

Source: ONS Annual Populations Survey, 2019 and 2025

Note: Those who are economically inactive are people aged 16 and over without a job who have not sought work in the last four weeks and/or who are not available to start work in the next two weeks, ie they are neither employed nor unemployed. Economic inactivity rates for committee areas should be viewed with caution due to small sample sizes at this geographic level; averages of the rates for 2019 and 2025 are therefore given.

## People Claiming Out-of-Work Benefits

**Figure 27: The average number and rate of out-of-work benefit claimants 2025**



North East Fife and South & West Fife have the lowest rates and numbers of people claiming out-of-work benefits of all the area committees (Figure 27).

The Kirkcaldy Area, Levenmouth and the Cowdenbeath Area have the highest claimant rates and numbers.

All claimant rates in Fife increased significantly in 2020 following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and remained considerably higher than pre-pandemic levels until they started to fall in April 2021.

In all parts of Fife, apart from in North East Fife, the average number of claimants and claimant rates for 2025 were lower than prior to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019 (Figure 28)

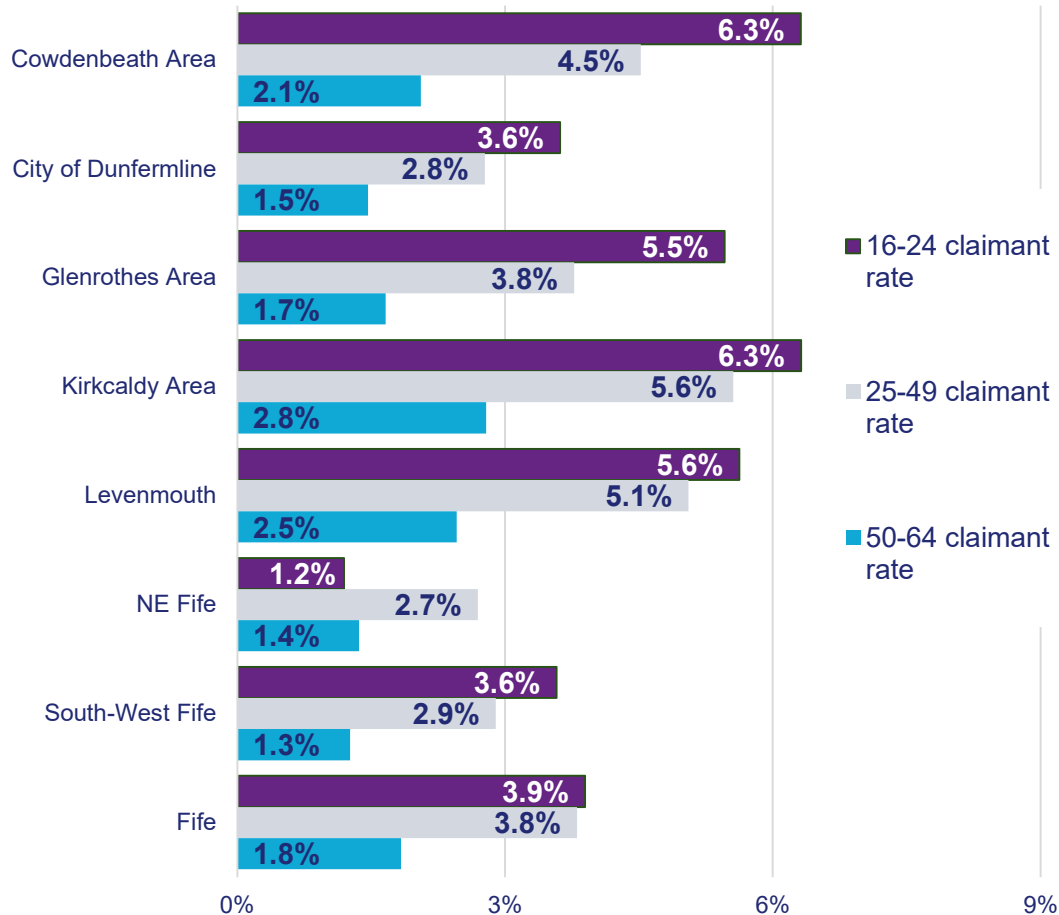
Source: ONS Claimant Count. Note: The claimant rate is the percentage of working age (16-64yrs) residents claiming out-of-work benefits.

**Figure 28: Claimant count and rate change 2019 to 2025**

Committee Area	2019 Average		2025 Average		Difference	
	Claimant Rate	Claimant Count	Claimant Rate	Claimant Count	Claimant Rate	Claimant Count
Cowdenbeath	5.1%	1,330	4.0%	1,020	-1.1%	-310
Dunfermline	3.3%	1,215	2.5%	960	-0.8%	-255
Glenrothes	3.6%	1,110	3.2%	970	-0.4%	-140
Kirkcaldy	5.5%	2,000	4.7%	1,735	-0.8%	-265
Levenmouth	6.4%	1,450	4.4%	1,000	-2.0%	-450
North East Fife	1.7%	760	1.7%	840	0.0%	+80
South & West Fife	2.7%	835	2.4%	740	-0.3%	-95
<b>All Fife</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>8,755</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>7,260</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>	<b>-1,495</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>108,095</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>104,385</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	<b>-3,710</b>

## People Claiming Out-of-Work Benefits (cont)

**Figure 29: Average claimant rates by age group 2025**



In all parts of Fife with the exception of North East Fife, 16-24 year olds have the highest rate of people claiming out-of-work benefits of the three main age groups.

In the Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath Areas, the 16-24 age group's claimant rate is the highest rate of all age groups in Fife.

The Kirkcaldy Area has the highest claimant rates for all three age groups.

North East Fife has the lowest claimant rates for all age groups and has particularly low rates in its 16-24 and 50-64 age groups.

Source: ONS Claimant Count, Jan- Dec 2025 average rates

## School Leaver Destinations and Attainment

**Figure 30: 2023/24 School Leaver Destinations and Attainment**

	Fife	Scotland
Percentage of school leavers achieving a positive <b>initial</b> destination*	95.6%	95.7%
Percentage of school leavers achieving a positive <b>follow-up</b> destination*	94.1%	93.1%
Percentage of school leavers achieving 1+ SCQF Level 5 or better	77.1%	82.5%
Percentage of school leavers achieving 1+ SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	48.9%	57.4%

95.6% of Fife's 2023/24 school leavers achieved a positive initial destination\* (Figure 30).

This was slightly more than the year before, when 95.3% of leavers achieved a positive initial destination, and is the highest proportion in the time-series of this dataset (which goes back to 2009/10).

The gap with the Scottish rate also narrowed to only 0.1 percentage points.

The proportion of leavers in a positive destination in April, 9 months after the end of the school year, rose from 91.4% to 94.1%, and is also the highest proportion in the time-series of this dataset and above the Scottish rate.

The percentages of 2023/24 school leavers achieving at least one National 5 or Higher qualification were lower than the previous year and Fife's attainment figures remain lower than those for Scotland as a whole.

Source: Scottish Government, Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations and Summary Statistics for Follow-up Leaver Destinations, No 7: 2025 Editions.

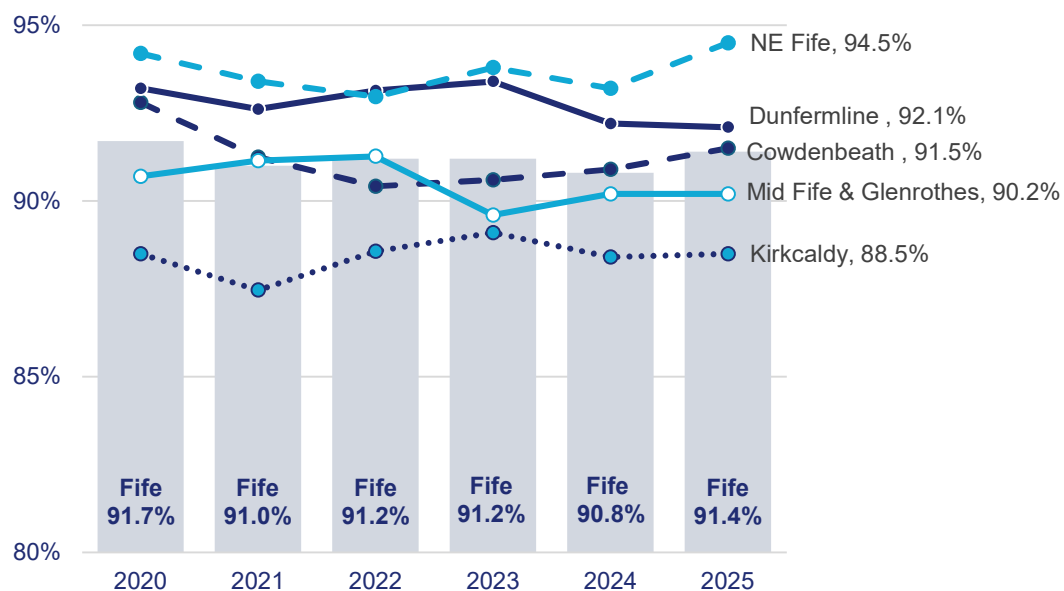
Note: \* A young person is deemed to be in a positive destination when they are actively engaged with an organisation for the purpose of learning, training or work (work includes volunteering).

# Annual Participation Measure for 16-19 Year Olds

**Figure 31: Percentage of 16–19 year olds participating in education, training or employment 2020-2024 - Fife and Scotland**

Year	Fife					Scotland				
	16-19 year olds	16-year olds	17-year olds	18-year olds	19-year olds	16-19 year olds	16-year olds	17-year olds	18-year olds	19-year olds
2020	91.7%	98.6%	94.5%	89.6%	84.1%	92.1%	99.0%	95.0%	90.4%	84.1%
2021	91.0%	99.0%	92.6%	87.1%	85.0%	92.2%	99.1%	94.3%	89.4%	85.4%
2022	91.2%	99.0%	94.4%	88.7%	82.1%	92.4%	99.3%	95.7%	89.8%	84.2%
2023	91.2%	99.1%	95.0%	87.6%	82.6%	92.6%	99.1%	95.7%	90.8%	84.6%
2024	90.8%	99.0%	94.3%	88.1%	81.3%	92.7%	99.1%	95.5%	90.4%	85.3%
2025	91.4%	99.0%	93.6%	88.3%	83.9%	93.3%	99.0%	95.3%	91.0%	87.4%

**Figure 32: Percentage of 16-19 year olds in education, training or employment 2020-2025 - Fife and Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Areas**



In 2025, Fife saw the proportion of its 16–19 year-olds participating in education, training or employment increase from 90.8% to 91.4%, the highest rate since 2020. (Figure 31).

The only age-groups to see an increase in participation between 2020 and 2025 were 16 year-olds (Figure 31).

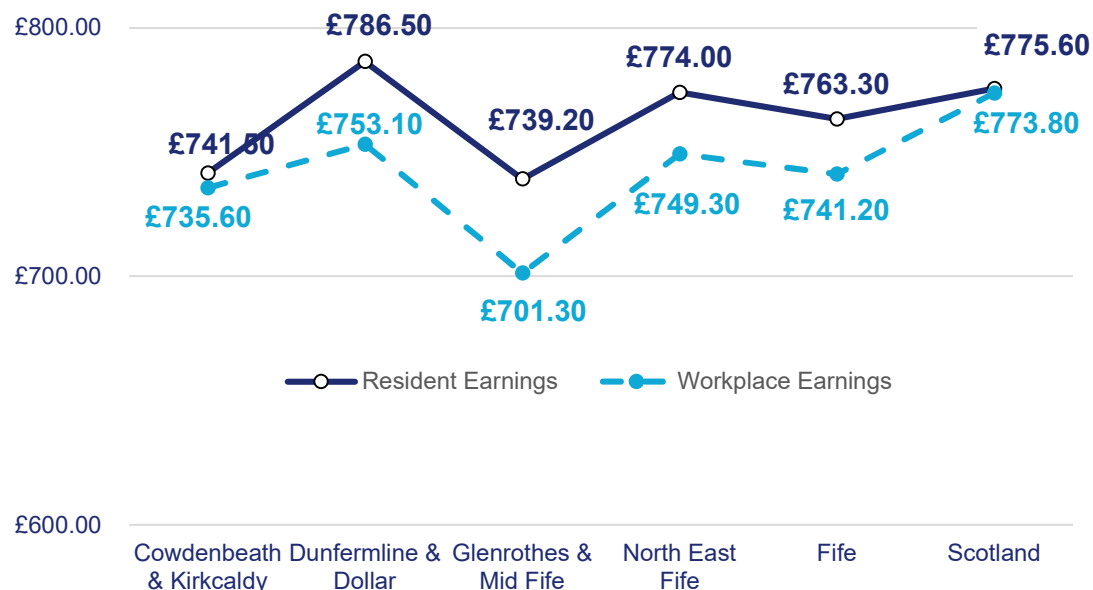
Fife’s 16 year-old participation rate was the same as the Scottish rate in 2025; the overall participation rate and those for other age-groups were lower than Scottish rates.

All parts of Fife saw participation increase between 2024 and 2025 apart from the Dunfermline and Mid Fife & Glenrothes Scottish Parliamentary Constituency Areas (SPCAs). The participation rates in the Mid-Fife & Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy SPCAs are below the rates for Fife as a whole (Figure 32).

Source: Skills Development Scotland, Annual Participation Measure of 16–19-year-olds in Scotland, 2025.

# Earnings

**Figure 33: Median Weekly Earnings, April 2025, UK Parliamentary Constituency Areas, Fife & Scotland**



**Figure 34: Percentage of employee jobs with hourly pay below Living Wage Foundation Rates**

Area/UKPC	April 2024	April 2025
Cowdenbeath & Kirkcaldy	15.5%	8.0%
Dunfermline & Dollar	N/A	N/A
Glenrothes & Mid Fife	12.8%	10.6%
North East Fife	17.3%	10.6%
Fife	13.4%	10.4%
Scotland	11.5%	11.3%

Resident earnings represent the average earnings of people who live in the area, but do not necessarily work in the area. Workplace earnings are the average earnings of those who work in the area, but do not necessarily live there.

In April 2025, Dunfermline & Dollar Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) was the only part of Fife where resident earnings were above Scottish average earnings (Figure 33). Workplace earnings were below Scottish averages in all parts of Fife.

The Dunfermline & Dollar PCA had both the highest resident and workplace earnings and Glenrothes & Mid Fife had the lowest.

The largest gap between resident and workplace earnings was in the Glenrothes & Mid Fife PCA (a difference of £37.90).

An estimated 10.4% of employees working in Fife aged 18 and over earned less than the real living wage in April 2025. This was the lowest level recorded in Fife and for the first time since 2020 was below the Scottish rate (Figure 34).

Source: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Notes: Estimates below the Fife level should be viewed with caution due to small sample sizes. As the data are based on PAYE they do not include the self-employed. Median weekly earnings = the median gross weekly pay for full-time workers. The estimates in Figure ? for Fife's UK Parliamentary Constituency Areas are considered to be 'acceptable' rather than precise; those shown as N/A are considered unreliable for practical purposes.



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**[fifemeansbusiness@fife.gov.uk](mailto:fifemeansbusiness@fife.gov.uk)**



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