



ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

Public Sector Employment in Scotland Statistics for 4th Quarter 2023

The statistics in this release are based on administrative records and surveys of individual public sector bodies carried out by the Scottish Government and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is a snapshot of employment as at December 2023.

The public sector is defined based on UK National Accounts definitions. The statistics in this release were designated National Statistics in May 2010. National statistics are accredited official statistics.

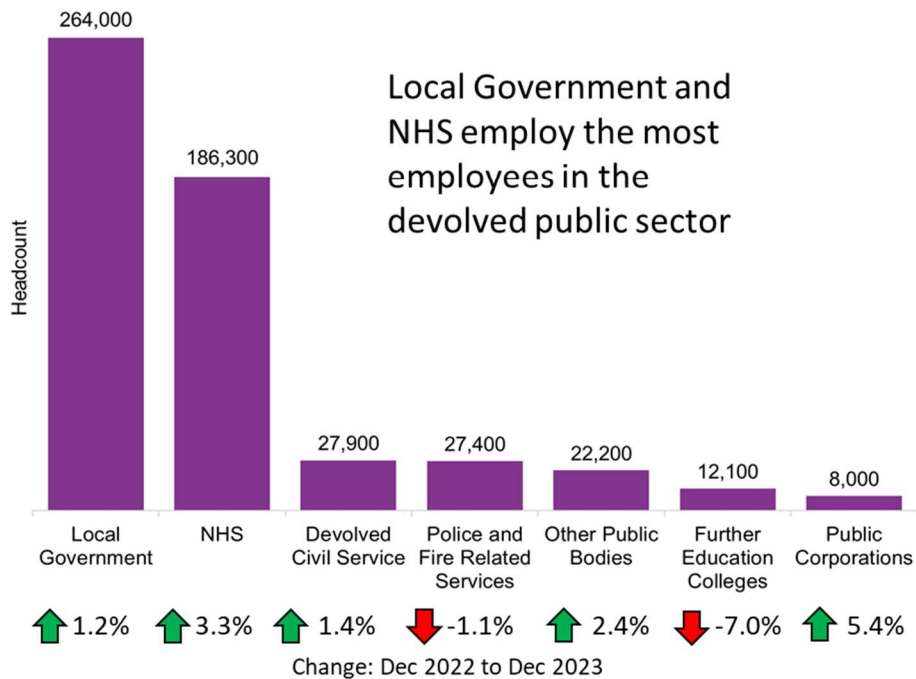
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Quarterly Public Sector Employment in Scotland Q4 2023

Public Sector Employment Headcount: 604,800 ↑ 1.8%

Devolved Public Sector Headcount: 547,700 ↑ 1.7%



Reserved Public Sector Headcount: 57,100 ↑ 2.1%



Over the year, both the devolved and reserved public sector headcounts increased.

The Devolved Public Corporations saw the largest percentage increase (5.4%), while 'Further Education Colleges' saw the largest decrease (-7.0%).

Source: Public Sector Employment, Joint Staffing Watch, Scottish Government, ONS
Changes between December 2022 and December 2023 are shown

Key points

Summary - based on headcount data:

- in December 2023, there were 604,800 people employed in the public sector in Scotland, accounting for 22.9% of total employment¹.
- in December 2023, employment in the public sector was 10,520 (1.8%) more than in December 2022.
- when major reclassifications are excluded, the public sector increased by around 10,000 (1.7%) between December 2022 and December 2023².
- of the total 604,800 people employed in the public sector in Scotland, 547,700 (90.6%) were employed in the devolved public sector in December 2023. This was 9,320 (1.7%) more than in December 2022.
- between December 2022 and December 2023, employment in the devolved public sector increased by:
 - 6,000 (3.3%) in the NHS
 - 3,240 (1.2%) in Local Government
 - 380 (1.4%) in the Devolved Civil Service
 - 510 (2.4%) in Other Public Bodies
 - 410 (5.4%) in Public Corporations
- while employment in the devolved public sector decreased by:
 - 920 (-7.0%) in Further Education Colleges
 - 300 (-1.1%) in Police and Fire Related Services
- in December 2023, there were 57,100 people employed in the Reserved Public Sector in Scotland. This was 1,200 (2.1%) more than in December 2022. The Reserved Public Sector accounts for 9.4% of total public sector employment in Scotland.
- between December 2022 and December 2023, employment within the Reserved Public Sector increased in Other Public Sector³ by 640

¹ Estimates for **total employment and private sector employment** are based on the Labour Force Survey, ONS. ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for July to September 2022 onwards have been reweighted, causing a step change discontinuity. Therefore, the LFS reweighting exercise creates a break in the series between June 2022 and September 2022 for regional total employment and regional private sector employment. LFS estimates are designated as official statistics in development.

² Further details on major reclassifications are provided on page 8 and on the [About public sector employment statistics](#) page of the Scottish Government website.

³ Public corporations, public sector financial institutions and public bodies have been combined into 'other public sector' to ensure individual organisation employment figures are not disclosed.

(3.1%), increased in the Reserved Civil Service by 760 (3.1%), and decreased in the Armed Forces by 200 (-1.9%).

Introduction

The statistics in this release are based on administrative records and surveys of individual public sector bodies carried out by the Scottish Government and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is a snapshot of employment as at December 2023.

The publication includes information on public sector employment in Scotland with distinctions made for employment in devolved bodies and reserved bodies (located in Scotland).

The public sector is defined based on UK National Accounts definitions. The statistics in this release were designated National Statistics in May 2010. National statistics are accredited official statistics.

An Accredited Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

These statistics are [accredited official statistics](#). The Office for Statistics Regulation has independently reviewed and accredited these statistics as complying with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

The Office of Statistical Regulation published a [report accrediting Public Sector Employment in Scotland statistics](#) as accredited official statistics from May 2010.



Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

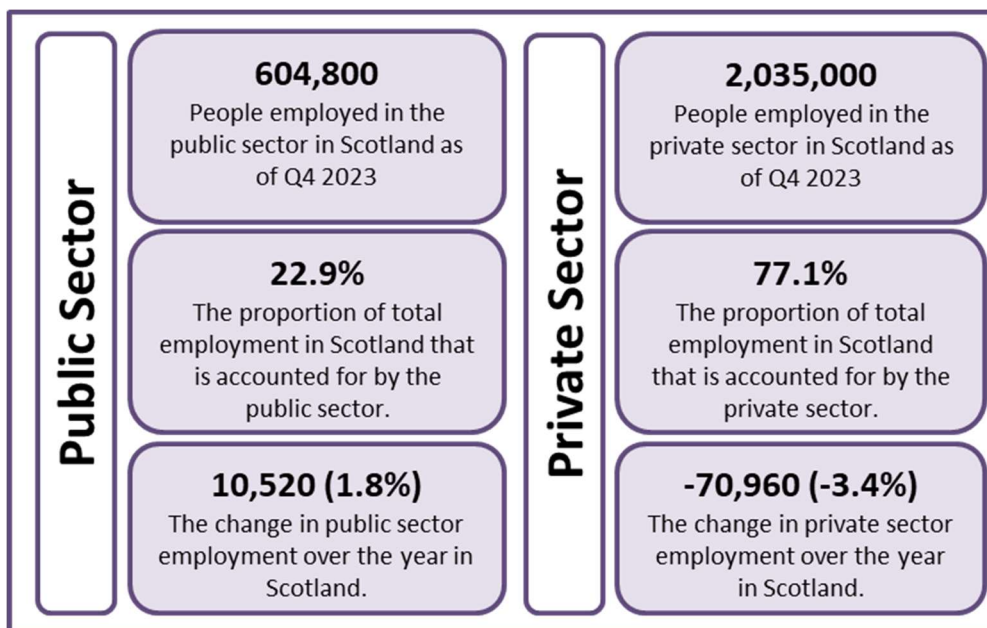
1. Public and Private Sector Employment in Scotland; Headcount

Public sector employment in Scotland increased by 10,520 (1.8%) between December 2022 and December 2023. This increase in public sector employment is mainly due to an increase in the devolved public sector.

The public sector is defined according to the [UK National Accounts Classifications Guide](#)

Figure 1: Public sector employment in Scotland has increased over the year and accounts for just over one fifth of total employment

Public and Private⁴ Sector employment (Headcount) in Scotland as at December 2023

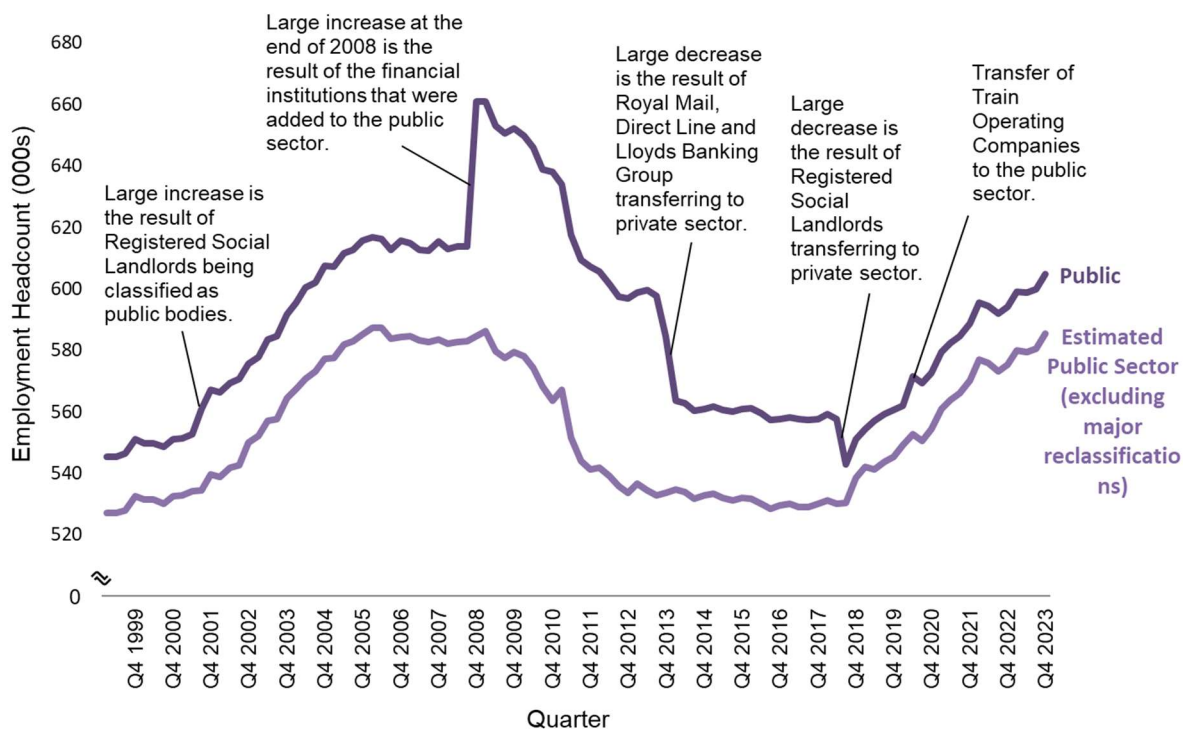


Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4 2023

⁴ Estimates for private sector employment are based on non-seasonally adjusted total employment estimates from the ONS Labour Force Survey and public sector employment figures.

Figure 2: Public Sector employment in Scotland has been gradually increasing since 2018

Public Sector employment and estimated public sector employment (excluding major reclassifications) in Scotland, June 1999 to December 2023, non-seasonally adjusted



Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4 2023

Figure 2 shows that the number of people employed in the public sector remained relatively constant between Q1 2014 and Q2 2018, before falling in Q3 2018 and rising again from Q4 2018 onwards. Excluding the effects of major reclassifications⁵ (i.e. taking out the headcounts for all large organisations listed in footnote 5 from the overall numbers), the number of people employed in the public sector gradually reached a peak in Q2 2006, decreased until Q3 2013 and remained relatively constant until Q3 2018. The increase between Q3 2018 and Q4 2018 is mainly due to Cordia services moving back under Glasgow City Council services. Since Q4 2018, the series has typically been increasing over time. In Q3 2018, Social Security Scotland was added to the public sector series and has grown in size over time partly contributing to the increase.

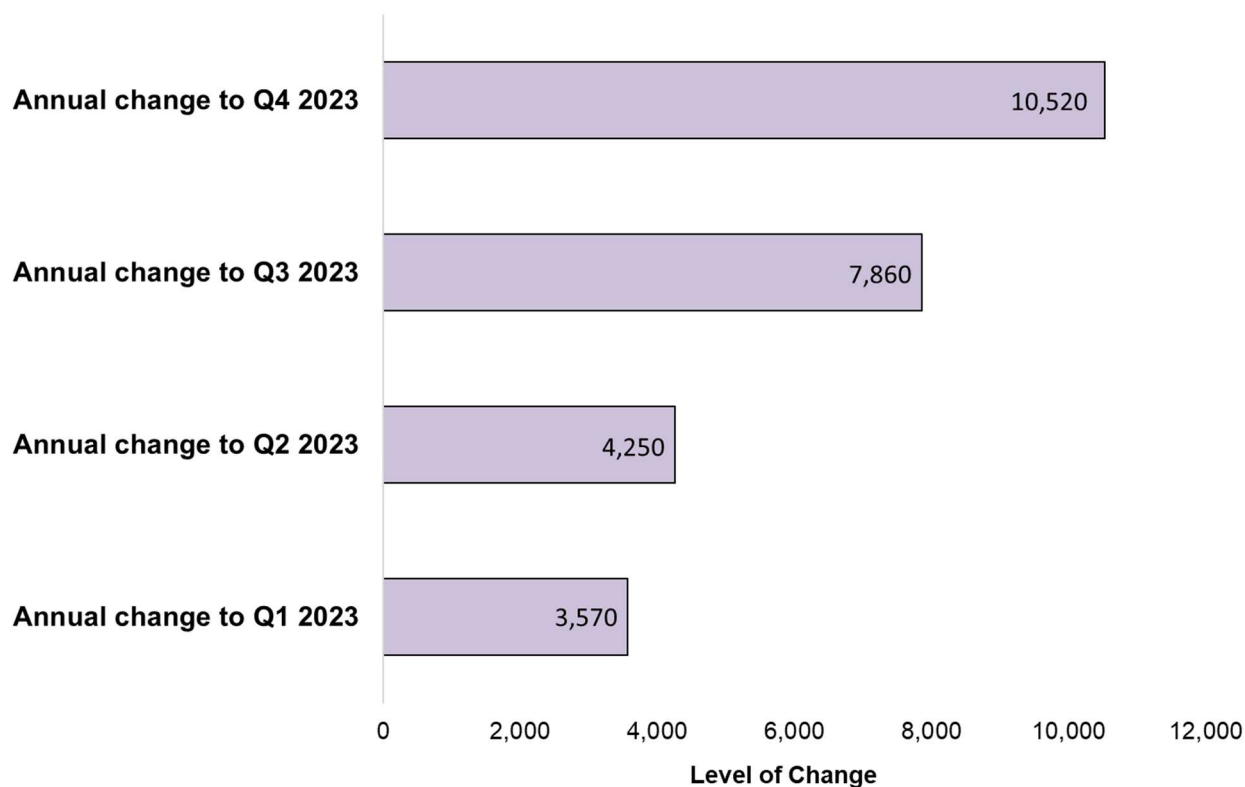
Figure 3 shows the annual change in employment for the public sector. Employment increased by 10,520 (1.8%) between December 2022 and

⁵ Major reserved reclassifications include Royal Bank of Scotland plc, Lloyds Banking Group plc, Northern Rock plc, Lloyds TSB Commercial Finance, Lloyds Bank Asset Finance, Scottish Widows, Direct Line, Royal Mail Group plc, (known as the Post Office Ltd (until Q2 2006) and Network Rail. Devolved reclassifications include Registered Social Landlords, with Train Operating Companies split across Reserved and Devolved responsibility.

December 2023. The increase is mostly due to increases in the NHS and Local Government employment in the Devolved Public Sector.

Figure 3: Public Sector employment in Scotland increased over the year

Annual change in Public Sector employment (Headcount) in Scotland



Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4, 2023

Impact of Excluding Major Reclassifications from Public Sector

If the major reclassifications⁵ were to be excluded from the public sector series (i.e. the headcounts for all large organisations listed in footnote 5 were taken out of the overall numbers), there would be around 585,000 people employed in the public sector as at December 2023.

Public sector employment, excluding the effects of the major reclassifications, would be around 10,000 (1.7%) higher in December 2023 compared with December 2022. The increase when major reclassifications are included is higher (10,520), showing that reclassifications are playing a small role in the increase over the year.

2. Public Sector Employment by Devolved and Reserved Responsibility; Headcount

The devolved public sector covers those bodies which are the responsibility of the Scottish Government or Scottish Parliament while the reserved public sector in Scotland covers those bodies for which the UK Government has ministerial responsibility.

The devolved public sector headcount was 9,320 (1.7%) higher in December 2023 compared with December 2022 and the reserved public sector was 1,200 (2.1%) higher.

In the devolved public sector, Public Corporations saw the largest percentage increase (5.4%) over the year, while Further Education Colleges saw the largest percentage decrease (-7.0%).

The largest increase in headcount over the year was in the NHS (increasing by 6,000) and the largest decrease was in Further Education Colleges (decreasing by 920).

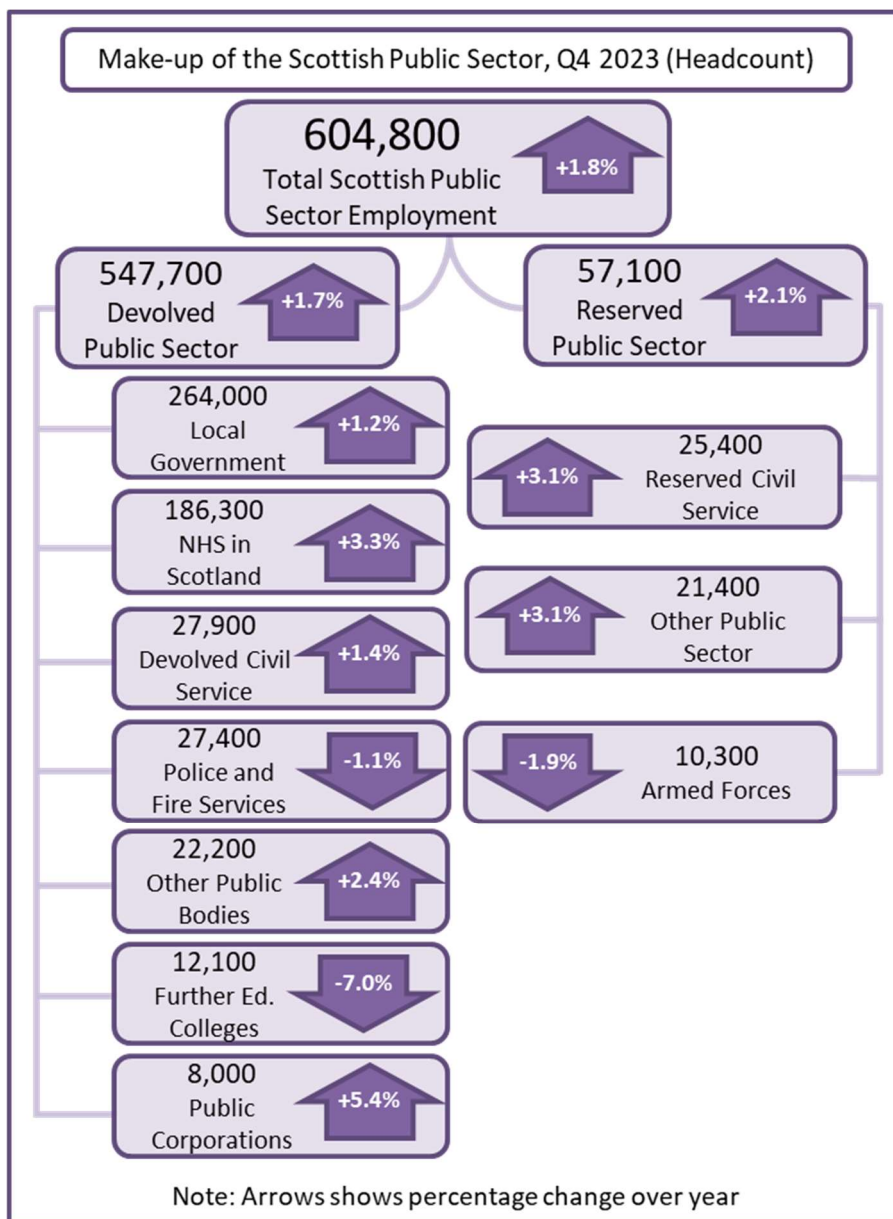
In the reserved public sector, both the Civil Service and Other Public Sector⁶ saw a percentage increase of 3.1%, while the Armed Forces had a percentage decrease of 1.9%.

Changes in the devolved and reserved public sector are explored in more detail in sections 3 and 4 respectively.

⁶ For the Reserved sector: Public corporations, public sector financial institutions and public bodies have been combined into 'other public sector' to ensure individual organisation employment figures are not disclosed.

Figure 4: Both the Devolved and Reserved public sectors have increased over the year

Breakdown of Public Sector⁷ employment (Headcount) in Scotland and annual change from December 2022 to December 2023



Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4 2023

⁷ For further details on the make-up of the Scottish Public Sector, please see the background notes for this publication on the [About public sector employment statistics – background notes webpage](#)

3. Devolved Public Sector Employment in Scotland; Headcount

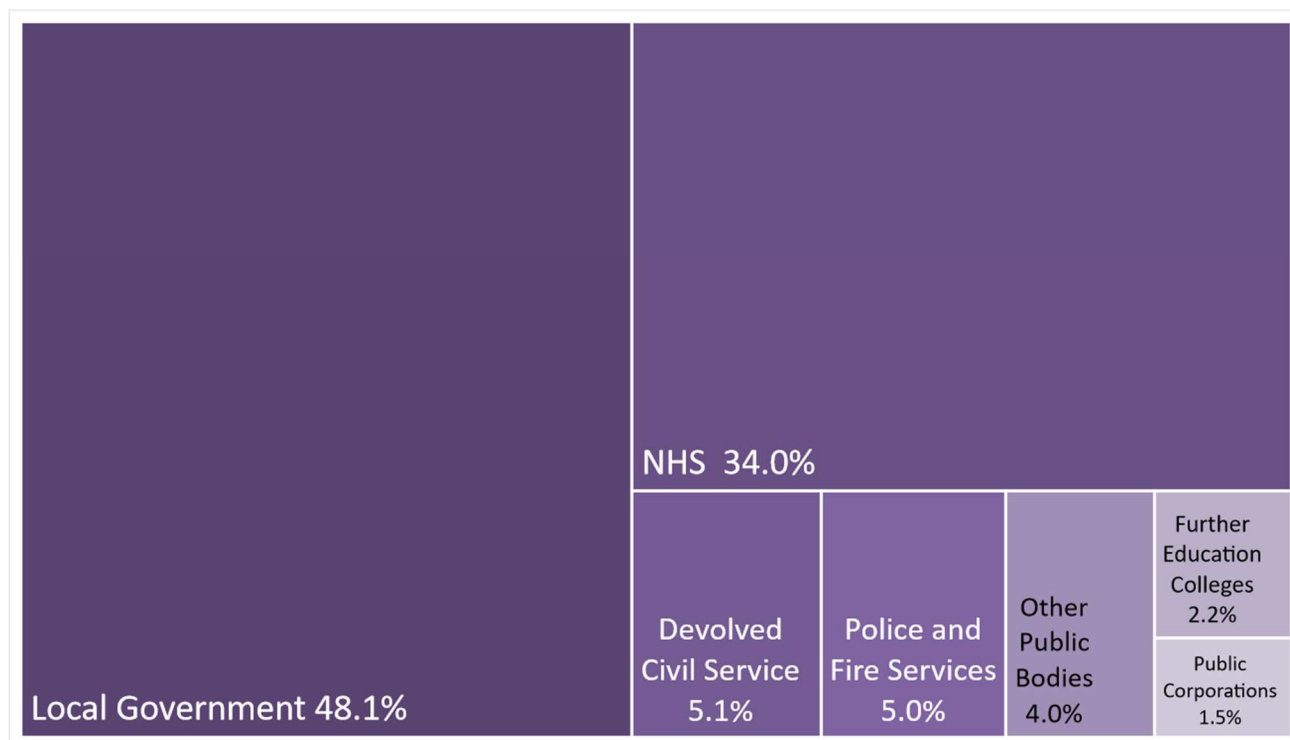
The devolved public sector includes:

- Devolved Civil Service
- Local Government, covering Scottish Local Authorities, Police and Fire Services (up to Q1 2013), Valuation Joint Boards and Regional Transport Partnerships
- Police and Fire Services (Q2 2013 onwards)
- NHS in Scotland
- Further Education Colleges
- Devolved Public Corporations
- Other Devolved Public Bodies (which covers Non-Departmental Bodies and other bodies).

Employment in the devolved public sector was 547,700 in December 2023. This is 9,320 (1.7%) higher than in December 2022. This increase is largely due to increases in the NHS of 6,000 (3.3%) and Local Government of 3,240 (1.2%).

Figure 5: Local Government and NHS employ the largest number of people in the Devolved Public Sector

Breakdown of Devolved Public Sector employment (Headcount) in Scotland as at December 2023



Note: Totals may not equal the sum of the individual parts due to rounding

Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4 2023

The increase over the year in the devolved public sector headcount was due to the following changes (changes are given from December 2022 to December 2023):

- employment in NHS increased by 6,000 (3.3%) to 186,300 ⁸
- employment in Local Government increased by 3,240 (1.2%) to 264,000
- employment in Devolved Civil Service increased by 380 (1.4%) to 27,900
- employment in Other Public Bodies increased by 510 (2.4%) to 22,200
- employment in Public Corporations increased by 410 (5.4%) to 8,000

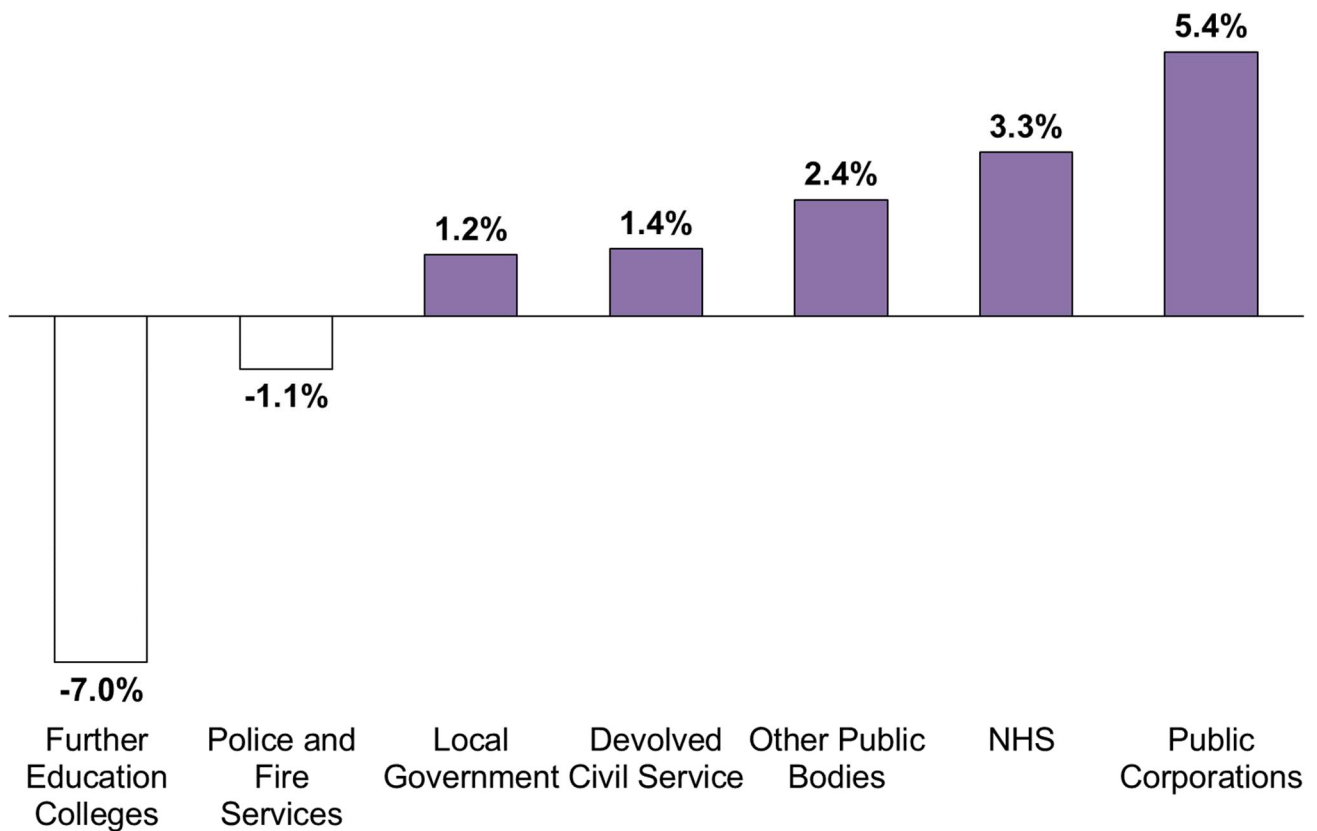
while:

⁸ A detailed breakdown of NHS employment by staffing group was published by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) on 5 March 2024, with data relating to 31 December 2023 in their [NHS Scotland official workforce statistics publication](#)

- employment in Further Education Colleges decreased by 920 (-7.0%) to 12,100
- employment in Police and Fire Related Services decreased by 300 (-1.1%) to 27,400

Figure 6: Public Corporations had the largest percentage increase over the year across the Devolved Public Sector

Change in Devolved Public Sector employment (Headcount) in Scotland from December 2022 to December 2023



Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4 2023

4. Reserved Public Sector Employment in Scotland; Headcount

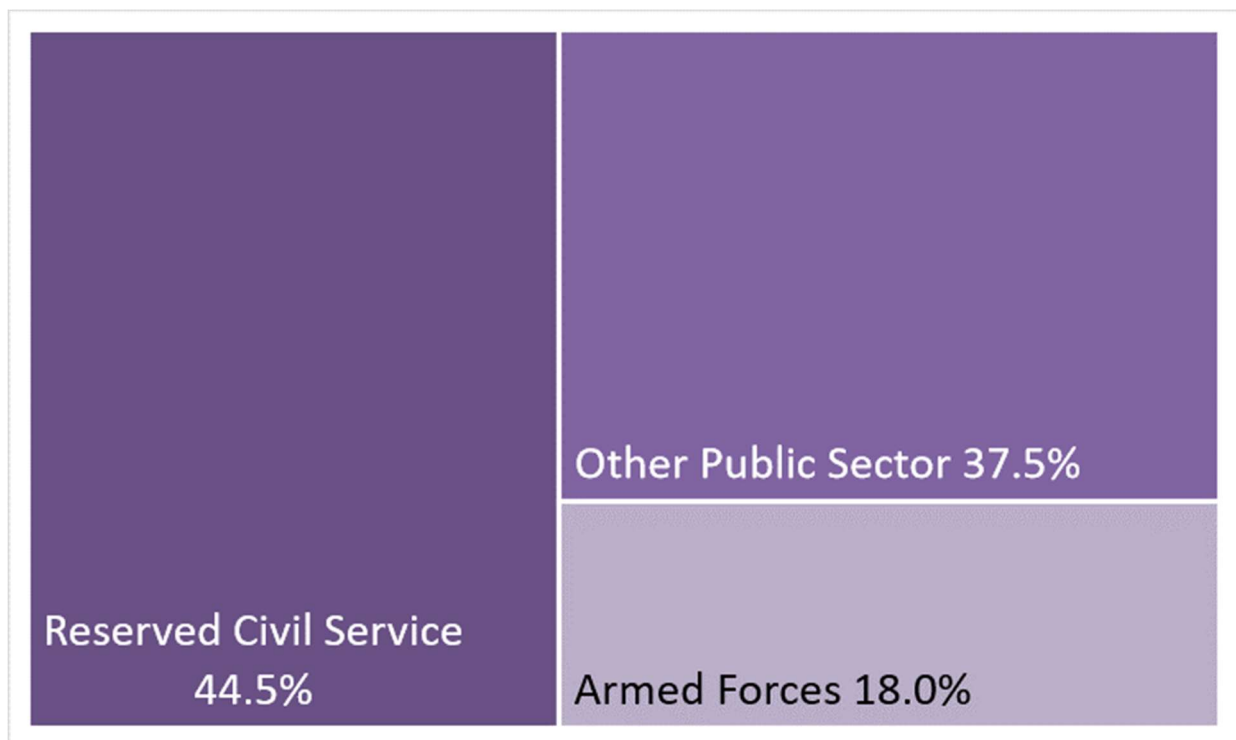
The reserved public sector employment includes:

- Reserved Civil Service
- Armed Forces
- Other Public Sector (which covers Public Sector Financial Institutions, Non-Departmental Bodies and Other Bodies)

The number of people employed in the reserved public sector in December 2023 was 57,100. This was 1,200 (2.1%) higher than in December 2022.

Figure 7: Reserved Civil Service employs the largest number of people in the reserved Public Sector

Breakdown of Reserved Public Sector employment (Headcount) in Scotland as at December 2023



Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4 2023.

Note: Totals may not equal the sum of the individual parts due to rounding.

The increase over the year in the overall reserved public sector headcount was due to the following changes (changes are given from December 2022 to December 2023):

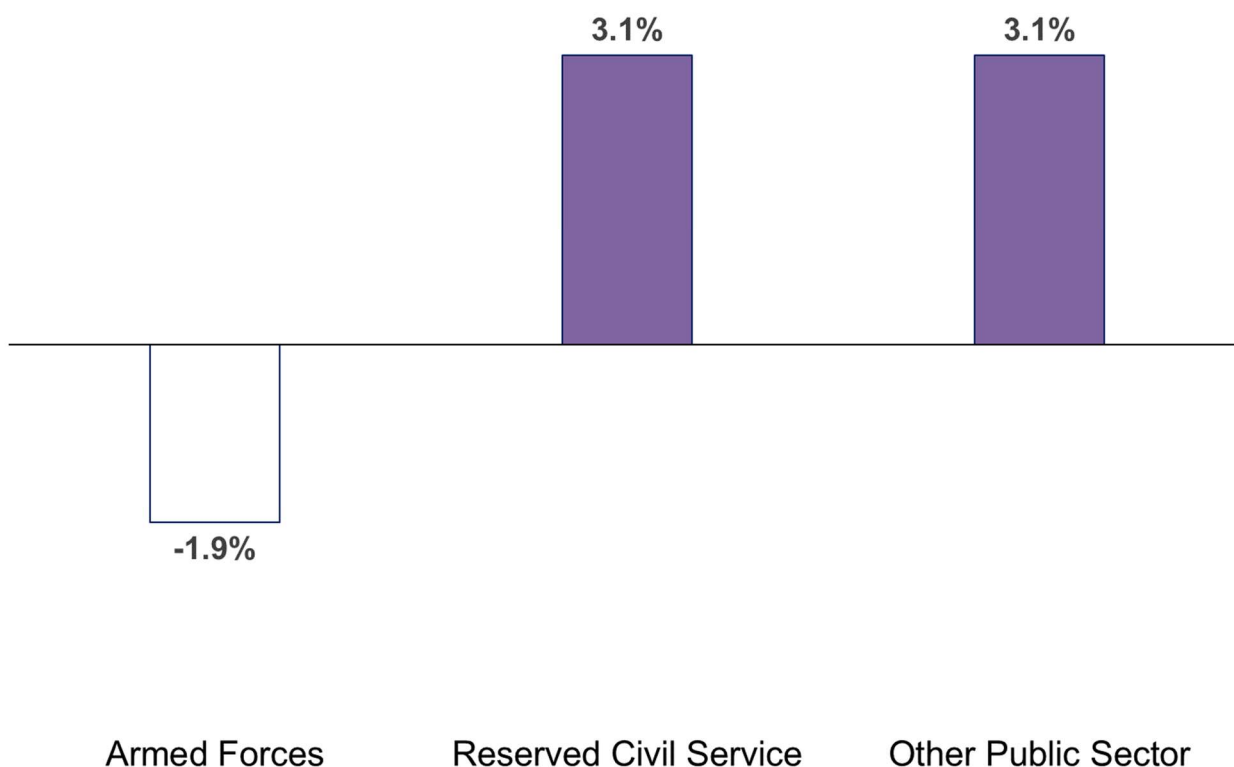
- employment in Reserved Civil Service increased by 760 (3.1%) to 25,400
- employment in Other Public Sector increased by 640 (3.1%) to 21,400

while:

- employment in Armed Forces decreased by 200 (-1.9%) to 10,300

Figure 8: Reserved Civil Service and ‘Other Public Sector’ had the largest percentage increase over the year in the Reserved public sector

Change in Reserved Public Sector employment (Headcount) in Scotland from December 2022 to December 2023



Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland, Quarter 4 2023.

Tables

[Tables showing the Public Sector Employment time series](#) are available as supporting documents. These tables include comparisons for 1999 and 2017 to 2023 only. They give further breakdowns of the Devolved and Reserved Public Sectors for both headcount and full-time equivalent employment.

A complete time series, including all quarters back to Q1 1999, is provided in the [Public Sector Employment web tables](#).

About this publication

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical publication are available via web-tables on the [Public Sector Employment Statistics web tables](#).

Revisions and Amendments

As set out in our [Quarterly public sector employment statistics in Scotland revisions policy](#), larger revisions and amendments are typically made alongside the 3rd quarter release published in December.

An amendment made within this release is related to revisions made to the ONS Labour Force Survey estimates. ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for July to September 2022 onwards have been reweighted, causing a step change discontinuity. Therefore, the LFS reweighting exercise creates a break in the series between June 2022 and September 2022 for regional total employment and regional private sector employment.

Further details of the reweighting of the ONS Labour Force Survey estimates can be found in the [ONS Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators](#) article.

An issue has been detected in the weighting of the ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) for Northern Ireland for the November 2023 to January 2024 quarter only. While only Northern Ireland data are affected, ONS are not publishing regional LFS figures as part of the March 2024 release which means that ONS are unable to publish any regional private sector data for December 2023 as part of their PSE release.

Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for Scotland included in this publication for November 2023 to January 2024 were not published as part of the usual ONS regional labour market release. However, ONS have released the labour market estimates for Scotland as an [ad-hoc data request](#) on the user requested data section of the ONS website to allow us to continue to monitor Scotland's performance over time.

Major Reclassifications

An outline of major reclassifications which have taken place in the Scottish public sector since 2013 are summarised on the [about Public Sector Employment statistics – classifications webpage](#)

A separate public sector series excluding the effects of these major reclassifications has been included in this publication to show the impact of the reclassifications on the number of people employed in the public sector.

More information is available on the [Public Sector Employment Web Section](#).

National Accounts Classifications

An outline of National Accounts classifications which have taken place in the Scottish public sector since 2015 are summarised on the [about Public Sector Employment statistics – classifications webpage](#)

Public Sector Employment Web section

The [Public Sector Employment Web section](#) provides additional information to this National Statistics publication, including the [Public Sector Employment data web tables](#)

The web section includes detailed information on:

- local government employment by local authority for the current quarter. A time series of total local government employment from Q1 1999 and by gender from Q1 2011
- detailed tables showing a full time series of data for all quarters back to Q1 1999 are also available to download
- background notes outlining the methodology used to compile this series

UK Comparisons

Public Sector Employment for Government Office Regions and Nations of the UK can be found in the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) Public Sector Employment publication tables](#).

Comparisons to UK data should be made using non-seasonally adjusted UK data.

Background Notes

Statistics prior to Q1 2008 are estimates. These have been calculated using the total UK reserved public sector employment figure and applying to Scotland on a pro-rata basis as regional level data has only been collected from Q1 2008 onwards.

Background notes about the information contained in our PSE series are available on the [about Public Sector Employment statistics - background notes webpage](#)

Devolved and Reserved Civil Service Tables

Tables and commentary on the devolved and reserved civil service are not included in this summary. However, the full time series of data for the devolved civil service including Scottish Government, Scottish Government Agencies, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal and Non-Ministerial Departments and the reserved civil service are updated and published in our associated [Public Sector Employment statistics web tables](#). Tables 5 and 6 provide the headcount figures for the devolved and reserved civil service and Tables 12 and 13 provide the full-time equivalent figures.

Related Publications

Cabinet Office publish [annual Civil Service employment statistics](#). These statistics provide more detailed information by ethnicity, gender, disability, age and earnings for Q1 each year. It is recommended that the Quarterly Public Sector Employment statistics are used when seeking to measure the size of the civil service over time. The Civil Service employment statistics bulletin was published by the ONS prior to 2019.

Further information on employment in the NHS in Scotland is published quarterly in the [NHSScotland Workforce report](#).

Further information on [employment in Social Security Scotland](#) is available, and updated quarterly.

Next Publication: June 2024

Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

Feedback survey

We'd appreciate it if you would complete our short [feedback survey](#) on this publication.

Enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

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