

Whalsay & Skerries

A scenic view of Whalsay & Skerries. In the background, a white lighthouse with a yellow top sits on a grassy hill. The middle ground shows a calm body of water with a small white boat. The foreground is dominated by out-of-focus yellow flowers. The text 'Whalsay & Skerries' is overlaid in large blue letters at the top.

Community Profile

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INTRODUCTION

This document sets out social, economic, environmental and cultural information for the Islands of Whalsay and Skerries of Shetland. This information has been gathered from statistical data available nationally and locally and from the views of communities in Whalsay and Skerries.

The purpose of this detailed information is to provide a baseline from which agencies and communities in the Whalsay and Skerries can work better together to tease out issues and deliver locally appropriate solutions and services to address them.

The lay out of this document mirrors 'Sustainable Shetland', a baseline profile of Shetland capable of measuring trends in Shetland's quality of life and sustainability. This document can be found at www.shetland.gov.uk/datashare/DatasetDetailed.asp?datasetID=513

THE AREA

The Shetland Islands are the most northerly local authority area in the UK, 298 miles north of Edinburgh, 211 miles north of Aberdeen and at least 50 miles north of Orkney, our closest neighbours. Shetland is only 228 miles from Torshavn in Faroe and a similar distance from Bergen in Norway. Shetland comprises more than 100 islands, 15 of which are inhabited and the total population is around 22,000. We lie further north than Moscow and southern Greenland.

Whalsay & Skerries

The island of Whalsay, lying off Shetland's east coast is known locally as "the bonny isle", the island is 5 miles (8km) long by 2 miles (3.2km) wide. The main hub of activity is round the harbour area at Symbister. There is some crofting, but Whalsay is heavily dependent on fishing for its economic survival. The island has a thriving and dynamic community.

Whalsay's main settlement is Symbister, with most of the other dwellings clustered around the NW coast in crofting townships, principally Brough and Skaw, with Isbister on the east coast.

Standing in rugged isolation against the full force of North Sea storms, Out Skerries are a small group of islands and rocks lying about 9 miles (14km) east of the Shetland mainland and about 5 miles (8km) north-east of Whalsay.

Skerries has three main islands, Housay (West Isle) and Bruray (East Isle), which are joined by a bridge, and the presently uninhabited island of Grunay. The total land area is little more than one square mile. Skerries is a busy and industrious community which is heavily dependent on the natural resources of the sea for its economic survival.

OVERVIEW

Shetland's population as a whole shows signs of stabilising, and the population of Whalsay is expected to follow this trend until 2011.

Since Skerries has such a small population, which is highly dependant in the success of it's industries, future population trends cannot be estimated.

Scotland and Shetland as a whole are demonstrating an aging population structure, and this is most pronounced in Whalsay and Skerries.

Numerically there is a very small ethnic minority population in the area, but there is a similar percentage to Shetland as a whole, of approximately 1% of the total population.

Whalsay has a good level of health in comparison with the rest of Shetland and Scotland.

Whalsay primary school roll has decreased since 1991, but is now fairly stable, while secondary school roll has risen slightly. Skerries primary school roll has also decreased since 1991, becoming stable in recent years, while secondary roll has remained relatively stable, though due to small class sizes there have been prominent fluctuations.

Generally the rural areas of Shetland tend to have a lower crime rate than urban areas. Whalsay and Skerries have a
While the statistical probability of being allocated SIC housing in Brough is high at 89%, it is fairly low in Symbister, at 19%.

There are a total of 405 houses in Whalsay and 36 houses in Skerries
While the statistical probability of being allocated SIC housing in Brough is high at 89%, it is fairly low in Symbister, at 19%.

Whalsay has good ferry links to the mainland with 18 return crossings per day Monday to Saturday, and 14 return crossings on Sundays from Symbister to Laxo, which has good road connections.

A ferry runs between Skerries and Vidlin ten times weekly, and between Skerries and Lerwick twice weekly, but the new ferry is considered unsatisfactory. An air service operates on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between Skerries and Tingwall airstrip.

There are many sites of special interest in Whalsay and Skerries, whether geological, flora and fauna or architectural.

The majority of jobs on Whalsay are either directly or indirectly connected to the fishing industry. Ferry staff also account for many jobs on the island, while 22% of the population work on the mainland.

Skerries major industry is also fishing: deep sea, inshore and aquaculture. It is felt the poor ferry service is a constraint for other business, including salmon and tourism.

Between 2004 and 2006 the overall SIMD rank of Whalsay and Skerries (excl. Symbister fell, while the SIMD of Symbister increased.

Geographical access and telecommunications was ranked poorly in all areas, dragging down what would otherwise have been higher SIMD ranks.

There is thought to be a lack of childcare options and spaces in the area.

Use of the Whalsay leisure centre and pool has been decreasing in recent years

POPULATION

Shetland's population as a whole shows signs of stabilising, and the population of Whalsay is expected to follow this trend until 2011. Since Skerries has such a small population, which is highly dependant in the success of it's industries, future population trends cannot be estimated.

Scotland and Shetland as a whole are demonstrating an aging population structure, and this is most pronounced in Whalsay and Skerries.

Numerically there is a very small ethnic minority population in the area, but there is a similar percentage to Shetland as a whole, of approximately 1% of the total population.

Where has the information come from?

The total number of people resident in Whalsay and Skerries is measured using data from the 2001 census and GROS mid-year estimates.

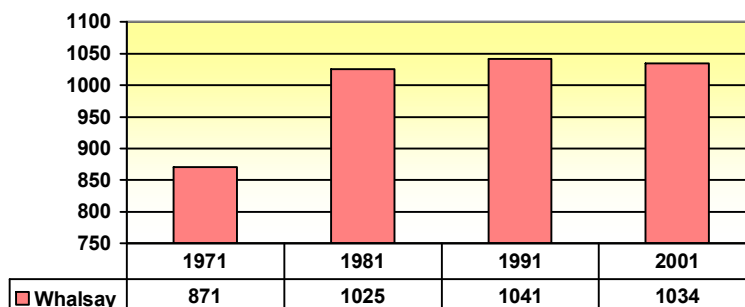
Population level

- Shetland's population has been in decline for the past 20 years, but there are signs this trend is slowing/ reversing.
- The birth rate continues to be higher than the death rate.

Table 1: Census population data.¹

	1971	1981	1991	2001	10 Yr % pop change	20 Yr % pop change
Whalsay	871	1025	1041	1034	-0.7	+0.9
Skerries	100	88	87	76	-13.6	-12.6
Total	971	1113	1128	1110	-1.6	-0.3

Figure 1: Whalsay Population Trends²

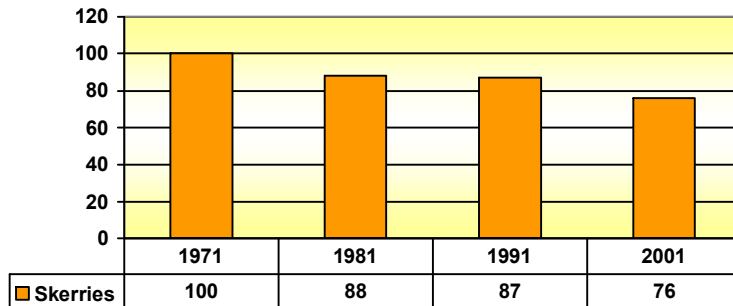


¹ Census, 2001

² Census, 2001

- Over the past 20 years, Whalsay's population has remained stable.³
- The population is estimated to remain stable until 2011.⁴

Figure 2: Skerries Population Trends⁵



- The population of Skerries is in decline, with a 13.6% population decrease between 1991 and 2001.⁶
- As the future population is highly dependent on the success or otherwise of its local industries, it is very difficult to make future population forecasts.⁷

Table 2: GROS mid-year population estimates⁸

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Symbister	589	601	586	590	597
Whalsay & Skerries (excl. Symbister)	524	524	527	520	527
Total	1113	1125	1113	1110	1124

- Between 2001 and 2005 the total population of Whalsay and Skerries increased slightly, fluctuating by up to 15.

³ Shetland in Statistics, 2006

⁴ Planning Department, SIC

⁵ Census, 2001

⁶ Shetland in Statistics, 2006

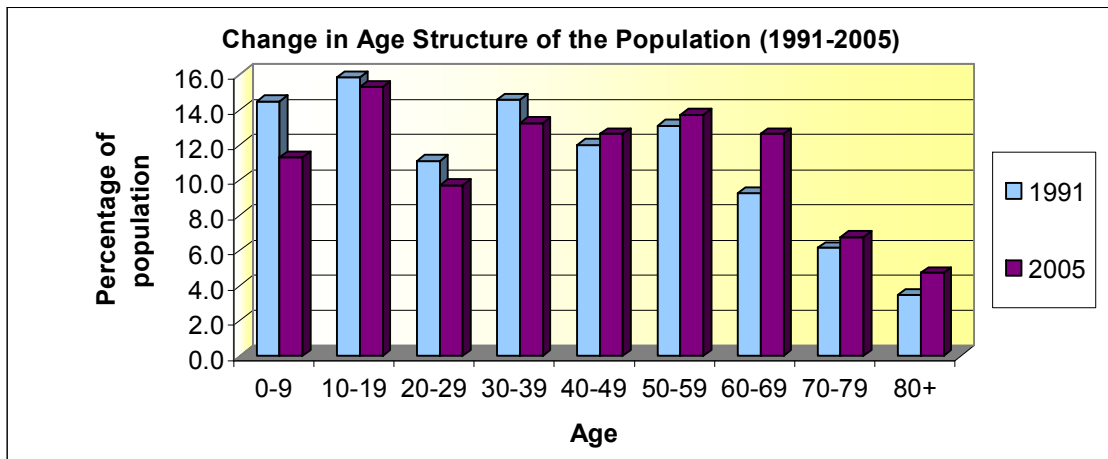
⁷ Planning Department, SIC

⁸ GROS mid-year estimates 2001-2005 (*Census and GROS estimates are not consistent for 2001*)

Population Structure

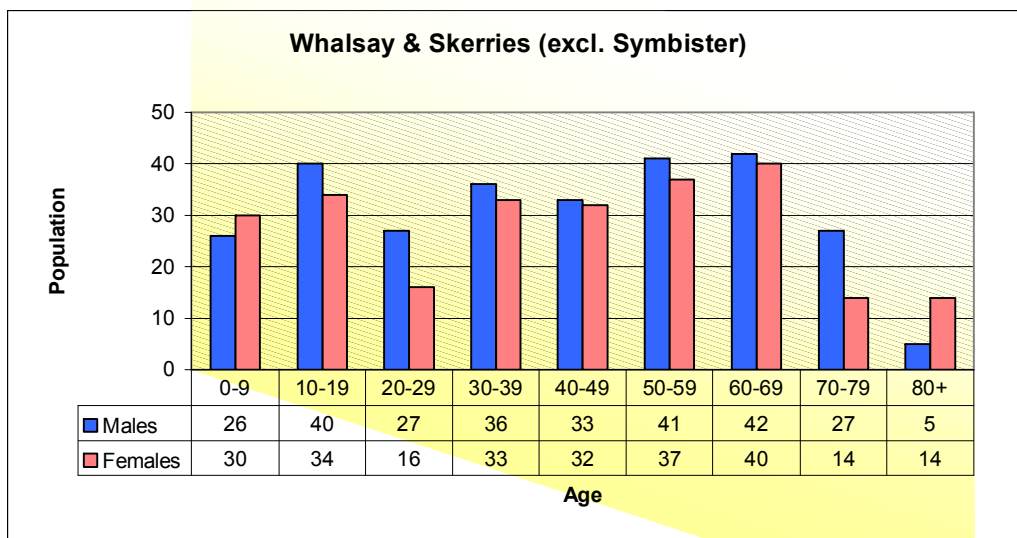
- The population age structure is similar to that of Shetland as a whole, although Whalsay and Skerries has a greater proportion of elderly inhabitants, with 24.1% over 60, compared to 20.9%.
- The population is ageing. In 1999, 30.3% of the population was under 20 years, falling to 26.6% in 2005, while 18.9% of the population was over 60 years, rising to 24.1% in 2005.

Figure 3: Age structure change.⁹



- Whalsay & Skerries (excl. Symbister) has a greater proportion of males to females for all age groups between 10-19 and 70-79.

Figure 4: Gender structure.¹⁰

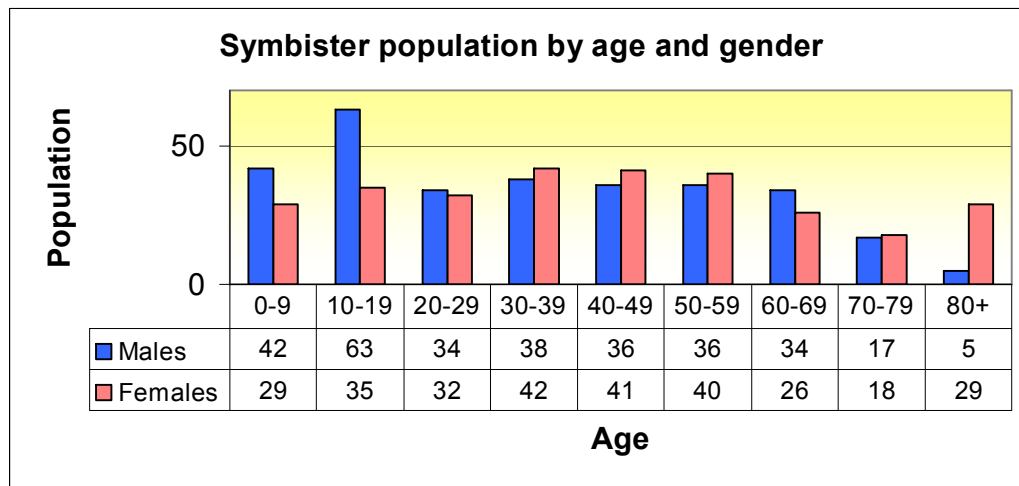


⁹ GROS mid-year estimates, 2006

¹⁰ GROS mid-year estimates, 2006

- Symbister has a higher proportion of young males to young females, and a higher proportion of over 80 year old females to males.
- There is a notably large proportion of males under the age of 20.

Figure 5: Gender structure.¹¹



Population Ethnicity

- There were fewer than 10 people from black and ethnic minorities living in Whalsay & Skerries in 2001.

¹¹ GROS mid-year estimates, 2006

LIFE EXPECTANCY AND AVOIDABLE DEATHS

Whalsay has a good level of health in comparison with the rest of Shetland and Scotland.

Where has the information come from?

Average life expectancy is measured by GROS.

Health levels are estimated by SIMD from a variety of indicators, including mortality, illness, emergency admissions, alcohol and drug admissions, low birth weight and drug prescriptions for anxiety, depression or psychosis.

- Rates of avoidable deaths in Shetland are fairly stable at around 100 a year.
- Shetland's life expectancy continues to increase. Life expectancy at birth (2003/05) was 75.3 years for men (an increase of 1.1 year from 2002/04) and 81.0 for women (an increase 0.7 years from 2002/04)¹².

Whalsay & Skerries (excl. Symbister)

- In 2006 the area was ranked best for health of the 30 wards in Shetland, up from 2nd in 2004.¹³
- The area was ranked very highly in Scotland, at 6449 out of 6505 Scottish data zones (where 1 is worst and 6505 is best).¹⁴

Symbister

- In 2006 Symbister was ranked 2nd best for health of the 30 wards in Shetland, down from 1st in 2004.¹⁵
- The area was also ranked very highly in Scotland, at 6239.¹⁶

¹² GROS, 2006

¹³ GROS, 2004-06

¹⁴ SIMD, 2006

¹⁵ GROS, 2004-06

¹⁶ SIMD, 2006

- **EDUCATION AND LEARNING**

Whalsay primary school roll has decreased since 1991, but is now fairly stable, while secondary school roll has risen slightly. Skerries primary school roll has also decreased since 1991, becoming stable in recent years, while the secondary roll has remained relatively stable, though due to small class sizes there have been prominent fluctuations.

Where has the information come from?

Opportunity and enrolment measures the availability of education and participation rates over the years, so trends can be seen.

The destinations of school leavers can be compared to past years.

Opportunity and Enrolment

Adults

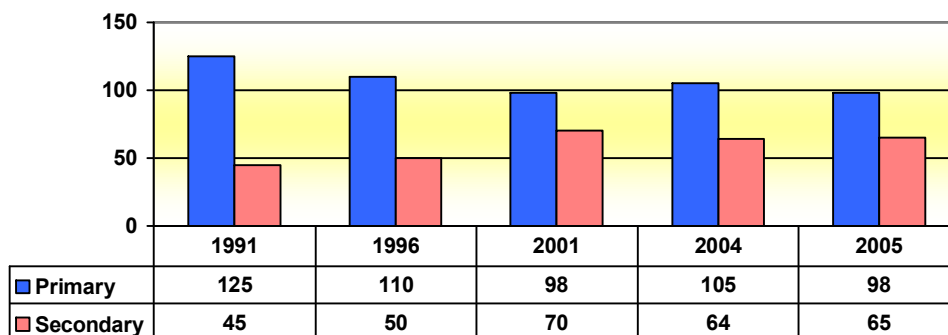
- In 2005-06 adult learning classes were held in Whalsay and 6 classes were delivered, with 57 people enrolled on classes. Of the participants, 2 were under 18 and 5 had fee waivers.¹⁷

Young People

Whalsay

- There is 1 pre-school centre, at the Whalsay school, providing places for all 3 and 4 year olds.¹⁸
- The Whalsay primary school roll has fallen since 1991 but has been stable in recent years.¹⁹
- The Whalsay secondary school roll has risen slightly since 1991.²⁰

Figure 6: Whalsay School Rolls.²¹



¹⁷ Adult Learning Department, SIC

¹⁸ Education Department, SIC

¹⁹ Education Department, SIC

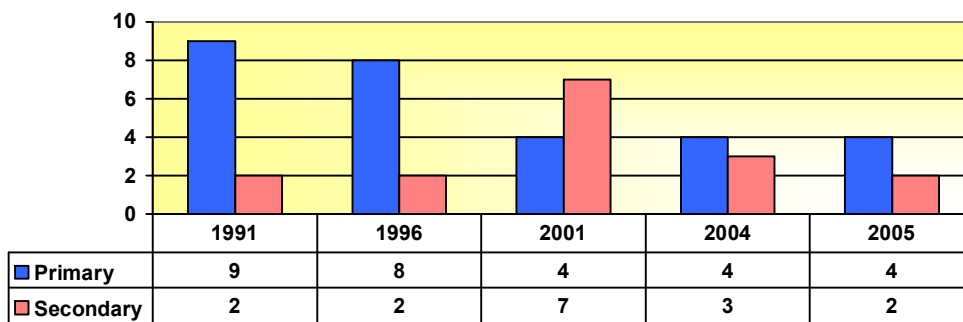
²⁰ Education Department, SIC

²¹ Shetland in statistics, 2006

Skerries

- There is 1 pre-school centre, at the Skerries school, providing places for all 3 and 4 year olds.²²
- The Skerries primary school roll has fallen since 1991 but has been stable in recent years.²³
- The Skerries secondary school roll has remained relatively stable since 1991, though due to the small numbers involved there can be fluctuations.²⁴

Figure 7: Skerries School Rolls.²⁵



Attainment

- In the year 2005/06, very few Whalsay school pupils were school leavers and all those who did went into employment.²⁶
- In the year 2005/06, no Skerries school pupils were school leavers.²⁷

²² Education Department, SIC

²³ Education Department, SIC

²⁴ Education Department, SIC

²⁵ Careers Scotland, 2007

²⁶ Careers Scotland, 2007

²⁷ Shetland in Statistics, 2006

CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Generally the rural areas of Shetland tend to have a lower crime rate than urban areas. Whalsay and Skerries have very low levels of crime in relation to Scotland, and low levels in relation to Shetland .

Where has the information come from?

The SIMD 2006 crime domain measures the rate of recorded crime using 2004 small area data based on five indicators: crimes of violence; drug offences; domestic house breaking; minor assault; and vandalism.

Shetland

- In general, crime levels in Shetland are slowly increasing. There has been a recent increase in the amount of criminal offences, road accidents and number killed or injured on Shetland's roads. The number of reported incidents of domestic abuse is increasing.

Whalsay & Skerries (excl. Symbister)

- Whalsay and Skerries has one of the lowest crime rates in Scotland, ranked 5748 of 6505 datazones in the SIMD 2006, (where 1 is lowest, 6505 highest).²⁸
- The area is ranked 12th of the 30 Shetland datazones.²⁹

Symbister

- Symbister has a crime ranking very close to that of the rest of Whalsay and Skerries. It is ranked 5798 of the 6505 datazones.³⁰
- The area is ranked 10th of the 30 Shetland datazones.³¹

²⁸ SIMD, 2004/06

²⁹ SIMD, 2004/06

³⁰ SIMD, 2004/06

³¹ SIMD, 2004/06

HOUSING

There are a total of 405 houses in Whalsay and 36 houses in Skerries

While the statistical probability of being allocated SIC housing in Brough is high at 89%, it is fairly low in Symbister, at 19%.

Where has the information come from?

Housing looks at the quantity of housing available in different areas, (the number of homes and type), house sales and costs and the demand for council housing.

Quantity of Housing (including housing development)

The amount of houses in Shetland continues to rise, primarily due to an increase in private housing. This makes it increasingly difficult for first time buyers, whilst the probability of being offered a council house in the area of an applicants choice is low and decreasing in many areas.

Whalsay

- There were a total of 405 houses in Whalsay in 2006, 55 of which were local authority or housing association dwellings and 350 of which were privately owned.³²
- There are 41 council houses in Whalsay, 22 in Brough and 19 in Symbister.³³
- There are 43 applicants for housing, 23 for Brough and 20 for Symbister.³⁴
- The statistical probability of being allocated a house in Brough is 89% and in Symbister 19%.³⁵
- The waiting list for Whalsay is evenly split between families and single people.³⁶

Skerries

- In 2006 there were a total of 36 houses in Skerries, 2 of which were local authority or housing association dwellings and 36 of which were privately owned.³⁷
- There are 6 council houses in Skerries.³⁸
- There are few applicants for housing in Skerries.³⁹
- The statistical probability of being allocated a house in Skerries cannot be calculated as no properties became available during the calculation

³² Local housing strategy, 2006 update

³³ Housing Department, SIC, September 2006

³⁴ Housing Department, SIC, September 2006

³⁵ Housing Department, SIC, September 2006

³⁶ Housing Department, SIC, September 2006

³⁷ Local housing strategy, 2006 update

³⁸ Housing Department, SIC, September 2006

³⁹ Housing Department, SIC, September 2006

period.⁴⁰

Quality of housing

25% of Shetland households are in fuel poverty due to a combination of high costs of fuel and poor housing standards, particularly in the private housing stock in remote rural areas.

Appropriateness/ Affordability of housing

The average price of a house increased 12% in 2005, whilst the number of local authority and housing association properties available has been falling since 2002. No private properties were sold in the area in 2005.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Housing Department, SIC, September 2006

⁴¹ Review of Housing and the Shetland Economy, 2005

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Whalsay has good ferry links to the mainland with 18 return crossings per day Monday to Saturday, and 14 return crossings on Sundays from Symbister to Laxo, which has good road connections.

A ferry runs between Skerries and Vidlin ten times weekly, and between Skerries and Lerwick twice weekly, but the new ferry is considered unsatisfactory. An air service operates on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between Skerries and Tingwall airstrip.

Where has the information come from?

Availability, accessibility, usage and cost of internal transport is measured, where possible, by bus and ferry routes, fares and passengers numbers.

Geographical access and telecommunications is measured by the SIMD and is intended to capture the issues of financial cost, time and inconvenience of having to travel to access basic services.

Availability, accessibility and cost of internal transport

- Community involvement in the development of Shetland's Regional Transport Strategy suggests the need for an increase in the availability of public transport.

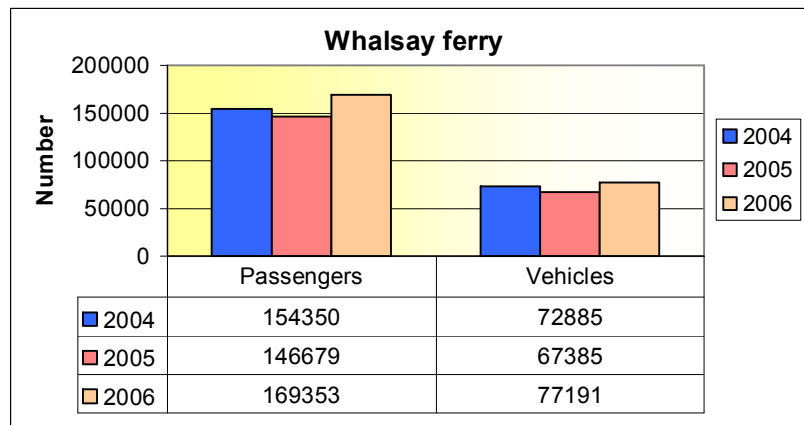
Whalsay

- The Whalsay ferry service operates from Symbister Harbour in Whalsay to Laxo/Vidlin. The service is operated by the MV Linga and the MV Hendra.
- The Vidlin terminal is used as a diversionary port during periods of adverse weather. The use of Vidlin can be extensive during the winter months, following periods of strong south-easterly wind and swell.
- When the ferry is using Vidlin, it is noted that it can be difficult to maintain the timetable as it takes longer to travel to Vidlin compared to Laxo.
- There are 18 return crossings per day Monday to Saturday, and 14 return crossings on Sundays. The last return sailing of the day is undertaken on a booking only basis.
- Ferry fares are £3 for an adult return (40p for children); £14 for an adult 10 return journey ticket (£2.40 for children); and £7 for cars up to 5.5m (and driver).⁴²
- Passenger numbers on the Whalsay ferry increased between 2004 and 2006.⁴³

⁴² SIC Transport, 2007

⁴³ SIC Transport, 2007

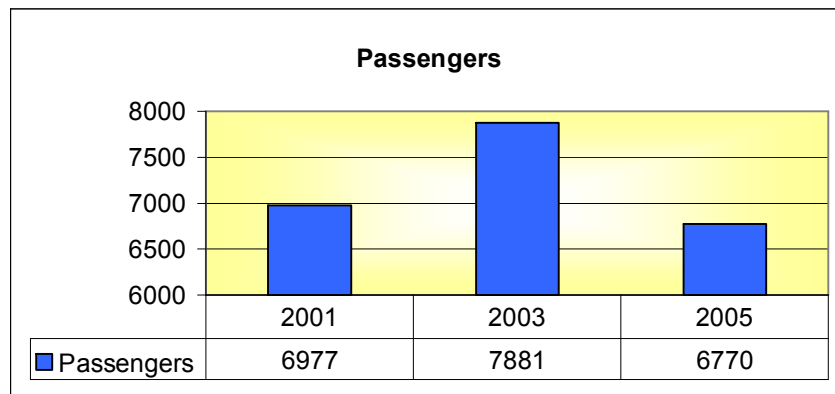
Figure 8: Passenger Numbers.⁴⁴



- Some commuters living in Whalsay own two cars and leave one on the mainland during the working week for commuting purposes. There is also a large amount of car sharing.
- The main road from the Laxo terminal (B9071) is believed to be good. The route from Laxo to Vidlin is also taken via the B9071, although this stretch of road is said to be of poorer condition. This is a single carriageway road and there are few passing places, which raises concerns when ferries are diverted to Vidlin. On such occasions, it has been said that conflicts can occur between vehicles attempting to catch a ferry departure from Vidlin, and those vehicles recently disembarked at Vidlin.
- There is a bus service that collects passengers from the Laxo terminal twice a day during the am and pm commuter periods. The earliest bus departs Laxo at 0820. The second service departs Lerwick at 1705. This service also stops at Vidlin and will wait on ferry users when the Whalsay ferries have been forced to divert to Vidlin. Fares from Lerwick to Laxo/Vidlin are £2.20.
- Passenger numbers on the Laxo/Vidlin service have fluctuated, increasing between 2004 and 2006.

⁴⁴ SIC Transport, 2007

Figure 9: Bus Service Usage.⁴⁵



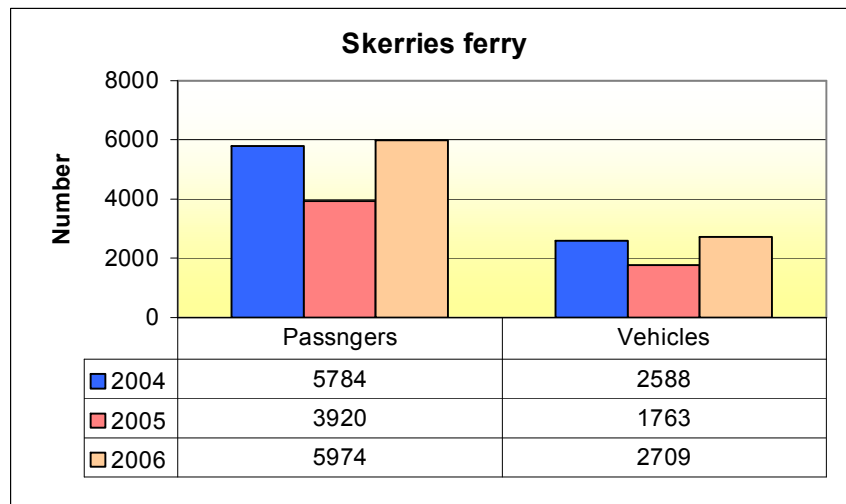
- Whilst there is a gravel air strip on the island, this does not accommodate any scheduled services. However, it is frequently used to transport key service personnel to and from Skerries.
- 2001 travel to work trends reveal a high commuting rate to the mainland, where 22% of Whalsay's population work (66% are island based, and 12% have no fixed location of work).
- Car ownership has increased on Whalsay between 1991 and 2001. In 1991, 20% of households had no cars or vans available, whilst in 2001 this had decreased to 16%. There has also been an increase in households with two or more cars or vans available, from 32% in 1991 to 40% in 2001.

Skerries

- The remote nature of Skerries means that frequent ferry links provide an essential lifeline link to the island. Skerries is served by a passenger and vehicle ferry which departs from Skerries and runs twice weekly from Lerwick and ten times per week from Vidlin.
- A new vessel called the Filla, which can carry up to 9 cars and 30 passengers, is used on the Skerries route. This service moors overnight in Whalsay.
- There is one ferry service on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and three services on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. A single adult fare is priced at £2.60.
- Passenger numbers have fluctuated in recent years, decreasing between 2004 and 2005, then increasing in 2006.

⁴⁵ Shetland datashare, 2007

Figure 10: Passenger numbers⁴⁶



- The local community have experienced many problems with the new Filla vessel and have made the point that the performance of the service using the North entrance is far below what was expected and is not satisfactory in terms of either reliability or comfort.
- The community feel that the biggest difference between the old Filla and the new Filla is that if the old Filla could make the passage it would be able to get into Skerries. Whilst the new Filla can get across, it may not necessarily get into the island due to conditions in the North East entrance. This means that it is often down to luck as to whether journeys happen or not.
- Fishing boats have been known to collect people from Skerries when the ferry hasn't run in the past. It has been suggested, therefore, that if the south entrance was navigable by the new Filla, then the ferry could have run.
- There is an 18 berth marina at Stringa Voe.
- Other transport infrastructure is provided by a short stretch of road, less than 1km long, which travels around the harbour, through the main settlements, and across the bridge connecting West Isle to East Isle.
- There are a number of blind corners on this road and it is believed that a safety audit should be undertaken to establish areas where road improvements are necessary.
- Air transport is provided from a gravel airstrip with regular flights from Tingwall airport. The air ambulance sometimes calls for minor things if the ability of the ferry to sail looks 'iffy'.
- The air service operates on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays only. On Mondays and Wednesdays there is one flight from Tingwall and two flights on Thursdays. The service also calls in at Whalsay on request. The service takes twenty minutes and a single air fare costs £19.50.
- There are no internal public transport services on the island.

⁴⁶ SIC Transport, 2007

- Car ownership trends have significantly increased between 1991 and 2001, even though the area has experienced population decline during this period. In 1991 the proportion of households with no cars or vans was 31%, but in 2001 this figure had decreased to 22%. Also, the percentage of households with two or more cars or vans was 24% in 1991 but by 2001 this figure had increased to 47%.

Geographic access and telecommunications

- The SIMD geographical access and telecommunications domain is intended to capture the issues of financial cost, time and inconvenience of having to travel to access basic services.⁴⁷
- SIMD rankings show Shetland has some of the most deprived areas in terms of Geographic access in Scotland.
- Between the SIMD 2004 and 2006 the ranking of Whalsay and Skerries (excl. Symbister) fell by 93.4%, while the ranking of Symbister increased over 10-fold.⁴⁸
- Whalsay and Skerries (excl. Symbister) is ranked worst in Shetland for geographical access, while Symbister is ranked 21st.⁴⁹

Table 3: Geographic access⁵⁰

	Geographic access domain 2004 rank	Geographic access domain 2006 rank	Percentage Change (%)	Rank of the 30 Wards in Shetland
Whalsay & Skerries (excl. Symbister)	106	7	-93.4	1
Symbister	66	767	+1062.1	21

⁴⁷ SIMD, 2006

⁴⁸ SIMD 2004/06

⁴⁹ SIMD 2004/06

⁵⁰ SIMD 2004/06

NATURAL RESOURCES

There are many sites of special interest in Whalsay and Skerries, whether geological, flora and fauna or architectural.

Where has the information come from?

The Cleanliness Index gives an idea on the extent of litter and waste in an area. Information on conservation in different areas comes from Scottish Natural Heritage.

Whalsay

- The exposed nature of the island has formed a rugged and windswept landscape, generally low-lying with rocky shores and dramatic cliffs. There are no designated nature sites on Whalsay.⁵¹
- Whalsay's heritage is rooted in the fishing industry. The harbour at Symbister has developed over centuries and is at the heart of the community. Historic trading links with Europe have left a legacy of many fine and interesting buildings.⁵²
- Symbister House, a category B listed building, dominates Symbister. Constructed of Nesting granite in the early 1800s, this substantial building is one of the best examples of Georgian architecture in the North of Scotland. The building has been used as the island's school since the 1960s and has recently been extensively refurbished by the Council.⁵³
- There are 5 other Listed Buildings on Whalsay, 2 category B (Ness Kirk and Symbister Pier House and New Dock) and 3 category C – all in Symbister: Harbour View, Skeo and the SW Dock and Sheds.⁵⁴
- There are currently 74 known archaeological sites on the island, 7 of which are scheduled.⁵⁵
- The Community Council has identified several sites as requiring environmental improvements: the Fish-House/Cooperage and Small Dock area in Symbister, the Yoxie and Beenie House (which needs paths/signage and interpretation) and the site between the school playground and the new sports pitch (which would be improved by hard surfacing).⁵⁶
- Local residents have identified an area at Kirk Ness as a Local Protection Area in order to retain the view of the Kirk and its surroundings.⁵⁷
- Coastal protection works have been carried out at Bayview, Kirk Ayre and Symbister Ness. In general the island has a "hard" coastline, but sea level

⁵¹ Shetland Local Plan

⁵² Shetland Local Plan

⁵³ Shetland Local Plan

⁵⁴ Shetland Local Plan

⁵⁵ Shetland Local Plan

⁵⁶ Shetland Local Plan

⁵⁷ Shetland Local Plan

- rise is a cause for concern and care needs to be taken when planning waterfront developments.⁵⁸
- There is also a need for further coastal protection works at Symbister North Voe, Suther Ness Ayre and Kirkness Ayre.⁵⁹
 - In addition to the domestic refuse collection service, a skip is provided at Crugafirth, Marrister, giving residents convenient disposal for bulky household items. There are collection points for used batteries at two of the shops and there is a glass recycling collection bank at the ferry terminal.⁶⁰
 - The cleanliness index combined Whalsay and the North mainland as an area and found the 2003 index to be 86, which was well above the Shetland average of 77.
 - The area is considered to have a consistently high standard of cleanliness.
 - Redgrind Quarry, Brough, is the only operational quarry on Whalsay supplying most of the rock for local building needs.⁶¹

Skerries

- The exposed nature of these islands gives a rugged and windswept landscape, generally low-lying with rocky shores and dramatic cliffs. Gullies and geos break the low cliffs around much of the outer coastline. West Voe lies between Housay and Bruray with a number of small sounds between the islands, one of which broadens out to the east between Housay and Bruray to form the enclosed harbour.⁶²
- The community on Skerries is scattered around the sheltered inner shores of the islands of Housay and Bruray, where the crofting townships are concentrated around the harbour. There are cultivated areas around the crofts, but much of the land is grazed moorland. There are no designated nature sites on Skerries.⁶³
- Local Protection Areas identified by residents are at the Old Village, the Battle Pund, the Burn, Bruray Hill and Lang Ayre.⁶⁴
- There are 3 Listed Buildings on Skerries, 1 category B (Bound Skerry Lighthouse) and 2 category C Bruray Harbour Shop and Grunay Lighthouse Keeper's House). Currently, there are 16 known archaeological sites in the area.⁶⁵
- The harbour has been subject to recent dredging to allow larger fishing boats to use the pier. Navigation improvements in the form of buoys and beacons were installed at the harbour entrance in 2001, primarily to aid

⁵⁸ Shetland Local Plan

⁵⁹ Shetland Local Plan

⁶⁰ Shetland Local Plan

⁶¹ Shetland Local Plan

⁶² Shetland Local Plan

⁶³ Shetland Local Plan

⁶⁴ Shetland Local Plan

⁶⁵ Shetland Local Plan

the ferry.⁶⁶

- Skerries has a unique system of water collection using a man-made concrete collection area, bore holes and water storage tanks.⁶⁷
- A community skip is provided on the islands for the disposal of bulky household refuse and there is a glass recycling point at the pier.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Shetland Local Plan

⁶⁷ Shetland Local Plan

⁶⁸ Shetland Local Plan

THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The majority of jobs on Whalsay are either directly or indirectly connected to the fishing industry. Ferry staff also account for many jobs on the island, while 22% of the population work on the mainland.

Skerries major industry is also fishing: deep sea, inshore and aquaculture. It is felt the poor ferry service is a constraint for other business, including salmon and tourism.

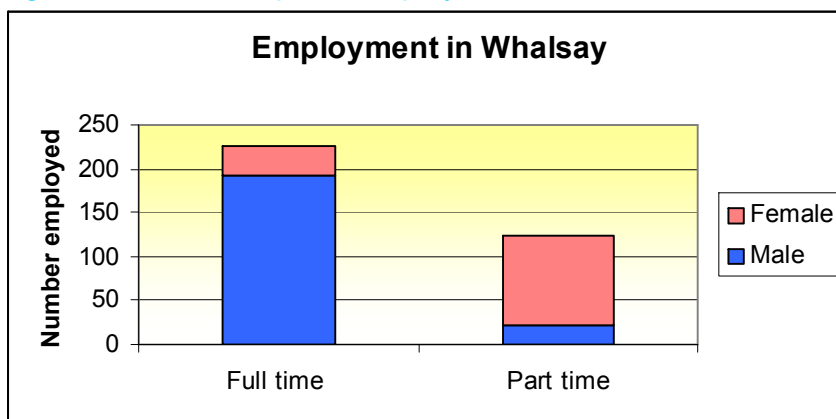
Where has the information come from?

Local economy is assessed in terms of: types of employment, gender split of workforce, the main sectors in different areas and rates of economic activity and inactivity.

Whalsay

- The 2003 employers survey⁶⁹ found there to be a total of 349 jobs in Whalsay, equalling a total of 267 FTE⁷⁰ jobs. At this point there were 349 economically active residents, meaning there were 0.52 FTE jobs per economically active resident. This can be compared to the highest and lowest figures in Shetland: 1.45 in Lerwick and 0.15 in Gulberwick and Quarff.⁷¹
- The majority of full time jobs are held by males, while females occupy the majority of part time employment.

Figure 11: Gender split of employment⁷²



- Many jobs on Whalsay are either directly or indirectly connected to the fishing industry, which is divided into three sectors: white fish, pelagic fish

⁶⁹ Figures reflect the areas where respective companies and organisations are based, not necessarily where employees are based. Also, agricultural employment is not included.

⁷⁰ Full-Time Equivalent jobs - 3 P/T jobs = 1 FTE

⁷¹ Shetland datashare, 2006

⁷² Employer Survey, 2003

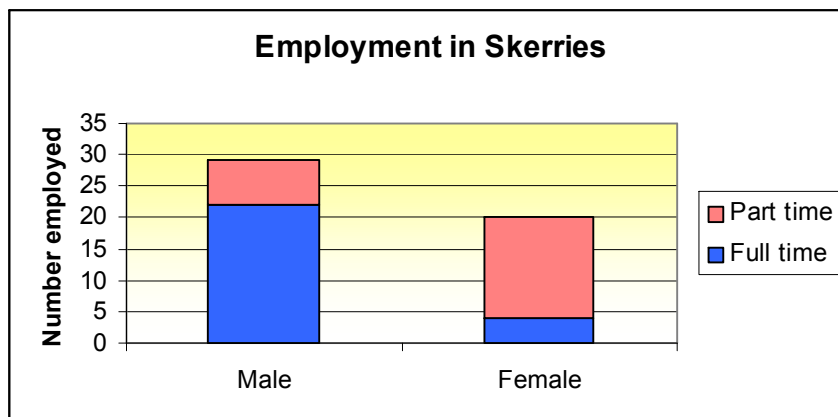
and shell fish.

- Employment rates on Whalsay, both for males and females have significantly increased between the 1991 census and 2001 census. For instance, the percentage of males aged between 16 to retirement age in employment has increased from 77% in 1991 to 83% in 2001. Female employment has also grown from 59% in 1991 to 72% in 2001.
- There is only a limited amount of agricultural and crofting activity on the island and the remainder of the working population are based in the public sector and service sector. Many jobs are taken on the mainland, enabled by the current ferry service.
- Ferry staff account for 43 full time jobs on the island. This accounts for seven crew, split between the two Whalsay ferries, and the Skerries ferry. An additional employee mans the Whalsay booking office.
- Four shell fish vessels are based in Whalsay, based on inshore waters. Typically, these fish for scallops, velvet crabs and prawns.
- Aquaculture is a growing industry in the island. There is a fish farm located to the west of North Voe operated by Johnson Seafarms. The company has recently diversified into the farming of organic cod.
- Fish processing is also a major industry in Whalsay. Whalsay Fish is currently 100% owned by Shetland Leasing and Property, and supported by the Council. The workforce comprises 65 employees.

Skerries

- The 2003 employers survey found there to be a total of 49 jobs in Skerries, equalling a total of 34 FTE jobs. In 2003 there were 42 economically active residents, giving 0.81 FTEs per economically active resident.
- Males occupy the majority of full-time jobs, while females occupy the majority of part-time jobs.

Figure 12: Gender split of employment⁷³



⁷³ Employer Survey, 2003

- Industry associated with the sea is the main employer on the island, including deep sea and inshore fishing and aquaculture. Several fishing boats are based at the harbour whilst there are fish cages throughout the sounds surrounding the island. The Council recently completed dredging of the harbour to allow for its use by larger boats.
- There are just almost as many part time employees as there are full time employees, which reflects the heavy reliance that residents on Skerries have on the fishing industry.
- There is a salmon packing station located at the ferry terminal whilst a salmon farm shore is based on West Voe.
- The unreliability of the ferry service means that current businesses are being subjected to pressures that mainland based growers and processors are not. For example if a boat is delayed for a day or two this can lead to salmon feed not getting in or seafood with a short shelf life not getting out.
- It has been suggested that the scallop factory wants to pursue retail instead of wholesale and has the potential to go full-time instead of part-time, but these opportunities are constrained by a lack of confidence in the ferry service, as scallops have a shelf life of 14 days from being caught and therefore the factory needs a more reliable service to guarantee getting the product to its market.
- Salmon fishing is also beginning to start up again and requires reliable routes into markets. It is stated that reliable routes are not just important for Skerries, but also the restaurants that Skerries will supply. The unreliability of the ferry service therefore has wider implications because if restaurants can't give reliable service then their reputation will suffer and therefore Shetland's reputation will suffer.
- The community feels that, with the current level of disruption (throughout the entire year), the reputation of the factory (and the developing 'new' salmon industry) will quickly suffer.
- Increasing uncertainty associated with the fishing industry places more emphasis on diversifying the local economy, although the Community Council acknowledges that the island's remote location is a limiting factor in this aim. Nevertheless, it is believed that new technology can help provide new employment opportunities that were not previously possible.
- One example where new technology has been used to the benefit of the island is the START centre which offers IT facilities including an archiving service that puts paper information onto computer disks.
- The island's ornithology and its remoteness are key attractions for visitors. However, it is felt that the unreliability of the ferry service constrains the island's tourist potential because if tourists can't get in then the reputation of the island suffers and the benefits of the island don't get advertised. Tourists visiting the island are known to have curtailed their visit if the forecast is dodgy and poses question marks over the ferry's operation.
- Information and communications technology could be better used and promoted as this may help deliver services to the local community without

- the need for expensive travel.
- In 2001, the Skerries Airport Trust planned to extend the runway and received funding for this. However, no works were undertaken and, after taking account of economic problems that have befallen Skerries in recent times, it was agreed to transfer the airstrip funds into a Community Development Account to help develop the economy and infrastructure within Skerries.
 - The exposed location of Skerries makes the islands a suitable site for renewable energy initiatives using wind and wave generators.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Between 2004 and 2006 the overall SIMD rank of Whalsay and Skerries (excl. Symbister fell, while the SIMD of Symbister increased.

Geographical access and telecommunications was ranked poorly in all areas, dragging down what would otherwise have been higher SIMD ranks.

There is thought to be a lack of childcare options and spaces in the area.

Where has the information come from?

Assessment of social welfare is measured by income and employment deprivation, the SIMD, fuel poverty and the availability of childcare.

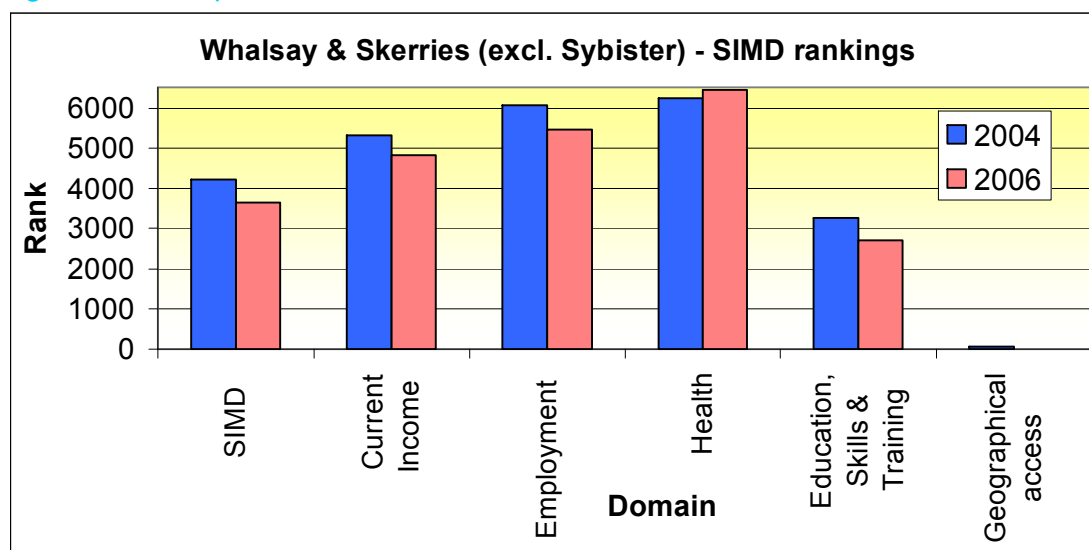
SIMD

- The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) study was carried out in 2004 and in 2006. 2004 results refer to 2001 data, and 2006 results to 2004 data. The SIMD identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland based on 31 indicators. Local authorities are ranked from most deprived (1) to least deprived (32) and data zones are ranked from most deprived (1) to least deprived (6,505).
- Shetland was ranked 28 and Orkney 27 as local authority areas in SMID 2004.
- In both years Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles Health Boards did not have any data zones in 15% most deprived areas, but this does not mean there is no deprivation in these areas, rather that it is not concentrated in small areas.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ SIMD Analysis & Key findings for Shetland, 2004

Whalsay & Skerries

Figure 13: Comparison of SIMD 2004 and 2006.⁷⁵



- In 2006, of the 30 wards in Shetland, Whalsay and Skerries SIMD ranking was very close to the median, ranked 14th worst.⁷⁶
- The area's overall SIMD ranking in Scotland has fallen from 4226 in 2004, to 3649 in 2006.
- The only domain to increase in rank was health.
- It should also be noted that poor performance in an indicator such as geographical access and telecommunications might not be as significant for some people as others. The rural, isolated characteristics of many areas in Shetland are often valued as a positive thing.

Table 5: Whalsay & Skerries (excl. Symbister) Income and Employment deprivation⁷⁷

Year	Total Population	Working Age Population	Current Income Deprived (% of total population in brackets)	Employment Deprived (% of total population in brackets)
2004 (2001 census)	520	313	18 (3.5)	11 (2.1)
2006 (2004 mid-year estimates)	520	310	29 (5.6)	15 (2.9)

- In Whalsay & Skerries (excl. Symbister) the percentage of the total population that is income deprived has increased from 3.5% to 5.6% between SIMD 2004 and 2006. The percentage that is employment deprived increased slightly, from 2.1% to 2.9%.

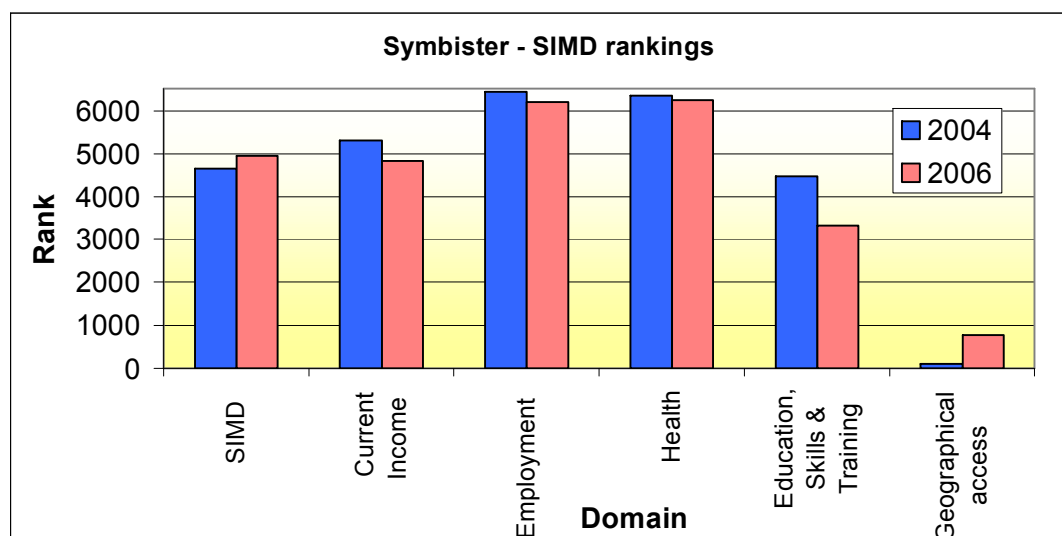
⁷⁵ SIMD 2004/06

⁷⁶ SIMD, 2006

⁷⁷ SIMD, 2004/06

Symbister

Figure: 14 Comparison of SIMD 2004 and 2006.⁷⁸



- In 2006, of the 30 wards in Shetland, Symbister SIMD ranking was ranked 3rd best.⁷⁹
- The area's overall SIMD ranking in Scotland has increased from 4651 in 2004, to 4946 in 2006, yet geographical access and telecommunications was the only other domain to increase during the period.

Table 8: Symbister: Income and Employment deprivation⁸⁰

Year	Total Population	Working Age Population	Current Income Deprived (% of total population in brackets)	Employment Deprived (% of total population in brackets)
2004 (2001 census)	590	343	24 (4.1)	6 (1.0)
2006 (2004 mid-year estimates)	590	349	33 (5.6)	10 (1.7)

- In Symbister the percentage of the total population that is income deprived has increased from 4.1% to 5.6% between SIMD 2004 and 2006. The percentage that is employment deprived increased slightly, from 1.0% to 1.7%.

Childcare

- In Whalsay there were 36 childcare places in 2003, provided by local authority nursery and childminders.
- In Skerries the local authority nursery provided 5 places.

⁷⁸ SIMD 2004/06

⁷⁹ SIMD, 2006

⁸⁰ SIMD, 2004/06

COMMUNITY

Use of the Whalsay leisure centre and pool has been decreasing in recent years

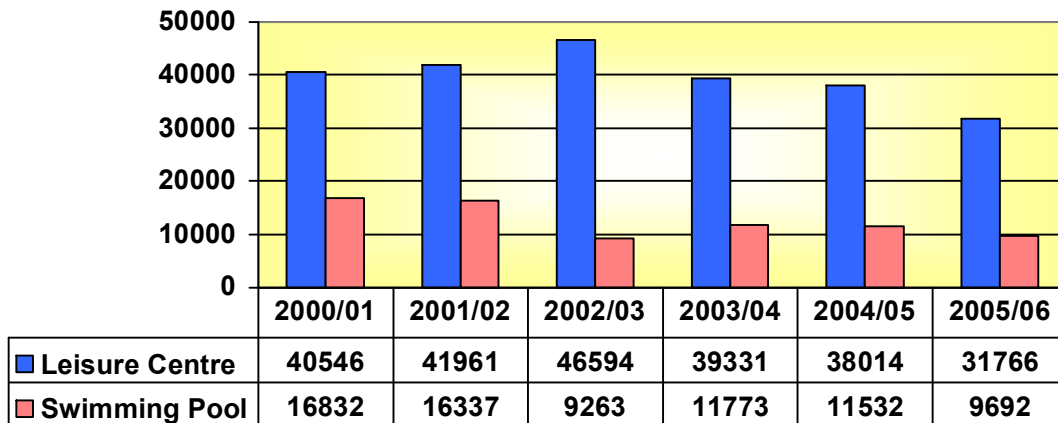
Where has the information come from?

Community involvement is measured through registered votes in Shetland's political elections, number of community groups and usage of leisure facilities.

Whalsay

- In the 2006 Community Council elections no seats in the area were contested.⁸¹
- 79% of eligible people are registered to vote.⁸²
- There are 29 community groups in Whalsay.⁸³
- Use of the Whalsay leisure centre has gradually fallen over the past four years. Use of the swimming pool has fluctuated more, but overall has fallen since 2000.⁸⁴

Figure 15: Use of the Whalsay Leisure centre.⁸⁵



Skerries

- In the 2006 Community Council elections no seats in the area were contested.⁸⁶
- 88% of eligible people are registered to vote.⁸⁷
- There are 6 community groups in Skerries.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Legal & Admin, SIC

⁸² Legal & Admin, SIC

⁸³ Community Directory

⁸⁴ Shetland Recreational Trust, June 2006

⁸⁵ Shetland in Statistics, 2006

⁸⁶ Legal & Admin, SIC

⁸⁷ Legal & Admin, SIC

⁸⁸ Community Directory

- **Appendix A: List of Businesses**

Whalsay

- **Agriculture**
- **Fish Catching & Fish Farming**
- **Construction**
- **Wholesale & Retail**
- **Hotels, B&Bs and Restaurants**
- **Transport, Storage and Communications**
- **Business Services: Technical**
- **Other Business Services**
- **Public Services**

Skerries

- **Agriculture**
- **Fish Catching & Fish Farming**
- **Construction**
- **Wholesale & Retail**
- **Hotels, B&Bs and Restaurants**
- **Transport, Storage and Communications**
- **Business Services: Technical**
- **Other Business Services**
- **Public Services**

Appendix B: List of Community Groups

Whalsay

- **Young People**
- **Church Based Groups**
- **Sports Groups**
- **Adults**

Skerries

- **Young People**
- **Church Based Group**
- **Sports Groups**
- **Adults**