

# **Scotland's Census 2021 Enumeration Base**

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## 1. Main Points

- Scotland's Census 2021 intends to enumerate all people in Scotland on census night who are staying, or expecting to stay in the UK for six months or more. This is the same enumeration base as in the Scotland's Census 2011.
- The primary output base for the 2021 Census will be all usual residents. This is consistent with the primary output base for the 2011 Census.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Scotland's Census

Scotland has carried out a census every ten years since 1801, except for 1941. The census is the largest statistical collection in Scotland. It plays an important role in supporting the allocation of funds from government, development of policies and initiatives, and planning and provision of local services that benefit the people of Scotland.

Following Scotland's Census 2011, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) established the [Beyond 2011 Programme](#). This explored the future provision of population and social-demographic statistics in Scotland. The programme investigated a range of options and alternatives. It concluded with the recommendation to carry out a census in 2021.

In order to take a census in 2021 we need to define who should be counted and what the main population base should be for outputs. This paper answers those questions.

### 2.2 The enumeration base

The enumeration base describes who to include in the count of the population. The enumeration base has implications for many areas of census planning.

The decision on which enumeration base to use is informed by the need to collect information on families, housing, and specific population groups such as short-term migrants, students and armed forces personnel.

### 2.3 Output population bases

The primary output base in the 2011 Census was all usual residents. That is, all people who, on the night of 27 March 2011, were resident in Scotland and had been resident, or intended to be resident in the UK for a period of 12 months or more (or who were resident outside the UK but had a permanent Scotland address and intended to be outside the UK for less than a year).

NRS intends to continue to produce estimates using the usual resident population as the primary output base for the 2021 Census.

As in 2011, a limited number of other outputs will be produced on other output bases. The workplace population is an example of such an output base. It is a count of all people working in a geographical area.

The chosen enumeration base has implications for producing output population bases.

### 3. Scotland's Census 2011

In 2011 all people staying, or expecting to stay in the UK for six months or more were enumerated in Scotland.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all people staying in the UK for three months or more were enumerated. An intent to stay question was included to meet user requirements for data on short-term migrants and temporary workers. Intent to stay was used with data from other census questions to estimate the usually resident population.

An intent to stay question was not included in Scotland's Census 2011.

Data from this question may help identify short-term migrants. However, the question is subjective and difficult for respondents to answer. This led to concerns about the quality of data. It is also difficult to assess the robustness of this data without follow-up.

Not including this question in 2011 allowed space for other questions of more interest to Scottish users to be asked.

In preparation for Scotland's Census 2011, NRS performed analysis to estimate for the scale of the difference in population count between the enumeration and main output base. This research was detailed to the Population and Migration Statistics Committee (PAMS) in [PAMS Paper 9 PAMS\(11\) 08](#) and [PAMS Paper 9 PAMS\(11\) 09](#) and the UK Statistics Authority in [2011 UK Census – Moving from a 6-month enumeration base to 12-month output base in Scotland](#).

This research estimated that the number of migrants staying between six and 12 months would be within the margin of error of the expected census population estimate, furthermore, this difference between bases was expected to be offset to some extent by the likelihood that some of those temporarily outside the UK would be missed by the 2011 Census. The 95 per cent confidence interval estimated for the 2011 Census was +/- 0.44 per cent (23,000 people)<sup>1</sup>. It was therefore not deemed necessary to perform an adjustment to the 2011 Census usual resident population to account for short-term migrants present in Scotland who were staying or intending to stay in the UK for 6 to 12 months.

### 4. Scotland's Census 2021

No strong user need for information on intent to stay or short-term migration has been identified in Scotland. Concerns about the data quality from an intent to stay question also remain. The intent to stay question is discussed in more detail in [Scotland's Census 2021 Migration Topic Report](#) (PDF).

Information on intent to stay could be used to improve the estimation of the census usual resident population of Scotland. However, it is expected that additional respondent burden, concerns about data quality, and the additional cost to process this information will outweigh the benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> National Records of Scotland (2015) [Scotland's Census 2011 General Report](#) (PDF)

As such, the 2021 enumeration base will remain the same as that for 2011: to enumerate all people in Scotland on census night who are staying, or expecting to stay in the UK for six months or more.

## **5. Next Steps**

Work is on-going to determine whether an adjustment would be required to the census population base to account for the move from a six month enumeration base to a 12 month output base.

More information about preparation for Scotland's Census 2021 and details about upcoming events can be found on the [Scotland's Census website](#), by subscribing to the [Scotland's Census newsletter](#) and following us on Twitter [@NatRecordsScot](#).