

NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND

preserving the past; recording the present; informing the future



Scotland's 2011 Census February 2011 Consultation on Statistical Outputs: Analysis of Responses

30 June 2011

NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND joins together



General Register Office
for
SCOTLAND
information about Scotland's people



Acknowledgements

National Records of Scotland (NRS) would like to thank the individuals and organisations who contributed to this consultation.

Table Of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Background to the Consultation.....	4
The Consultation Process.....	5
Consultation points: summary of responses (and commentary).....	7
Next steps in the consultation process.....	11
Annex A – list of consultation respondents.....	13

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of responses to the February 2011 consultation by the General Register Office for Scotland (now National Records of Scotland*) on its plans for the statistical outputs from Scotland's 2011 Census. The consultation built on the outcome of the previous consultation carried out in spring 2010. In particular it sought views from users on draft outlines of new additions to the set of pre-defined tables, proposals for the treatment of pensionable age in the statistics, changes to some of the 2001 output definitions, comparability issues and topics for further user engagement.

As a result of feedback received through this latest consultation, the set of pre-defined tabular outputs for the 2011 Census has been revised. [Table outlines](#) have been produced and published in order to give users a clear indication of how the final tables will look and a basis for any further comments which they may have. The table outlines are still provisional and subject to further revision. A review of previous comments from users will be carried out, in case any have been overlooked, while the design of some tables may be modified because of potential statistical disclosure control issues or to better achieve UK harmonised outputs. It may also be that further modifications will be required once the tables have been populated with actual data, e.g. because of unanticipated disclosure issues.

2. Background to the Consultation

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) carries out the census of population every 10 years in Scotland. The data collected about the characteristics of people and households in the country is widely used by central and local government, health boards and many other organisations to allocate resources and plan for future services.

As part of its preparations for the 2011 Census in Scotland, NRS has conducted an extensive programme of consultation and research. Further details of this can be found in the [2011 Census preparations](#) section on this website. A formal consultation about the initial plans for the statistical outputs was held in spring 2010. That consultation provided an opportunity for users to help shape the main statistical outputs from the census and to comment on a range of related issues. It also enabled NRS to update users on the progress being made across a number of areas bearing on its plans for producing and disseminating the census results.

The February 2011 consultation, which this analysis covers, was a further phase in the process of user consultation. An outline of how NRS intends to engage with users as its plans for the statistical outputs from the 2011 Census are developed further is given in [Section 5](#).

* From 1 April 2011, the General Register Office for Scotland merged with the National Archives of Scotland to become the National Records of Scotland (NRS).

3. The Consultation Process

Introduction

The consultation was launched on 10 February 2011 and closed on 21 April 2011. It was run as a web-based consultation, with the consultation document and supporting background material placed on the [census consultation section](#) of this website.

Consultation Document

The consultation document set out the background to the consultation, including details of previous consultations, topics on which views were being sought and progress on other areas related to 2011 Census outputs.

Respondents were asked to consider and comment on seven specific consultation points:

- the list of proposed significant revisions to the pre-defined tables from 2001;
- the set of proposed new pre-defined table outlines;
- suggestions for any additional new cross-tabulations of census information;
- the proposed treatment of pensionable age in the 2011 Census outputs;
- the proposed approach to table populations for outputs relating to qualifications, industry, occupation, social grade and NS-SEC;
- suggestions of topics it would be important to cover in further user engagement by NRS on its plans for the 2011 Census outputs; and
- any other additional points in relation to NRS plans for the 2011 Census outputs.

The supporting material included an Excel file which provided an initial set of proposals for new pre-defined census output tables and a list of tables from 2001 with comments noting changes and any comparability issues. A template for respondents to use in submitting their comments was also provided in order to make the job of collating and analysing them easier. (Responses were, however, also accepted by email.)

Promotion of the Consultation

The consultation document and supporting material was published on this website in order to make it open for anyone to respond. When the consultation was launched, everyone in the census consultation database (nearly 1,200 contacts in total), others who had registered a previous interest in the census and members of ScotStat (the Scottish Government's statistical consultation network) were sent an email alert with web links to the consultation material. The consultation launch was also highlighted at a number of census stakeholder meetings.

Responses and Respondents

In total, 17 responses to the consultation were received. These were mainly made using the response template provided, though a small number were also received by email.

Each respondent was assigned to one of six (NRS-defined) categories, in order to give a broad indication of the variety of user interest and requirements. These categories were:

- Central Government – including Scottish Government
- Local Government – respondents from Local Authorities (LAs) within Scotland
- Local Service Providers – mainly in the health sector
- Business & Commercial
- Community & Special Interest Groups
- Other Academic – those associated with universities
- Individuals

The profile of respondents is summarised in Table 1 and a list of individual respondents (who were happy for their response to be made publicly available) is given in [Annex A](#). The majority of responses came from the local authority and business & commercial sectors. While lower than the total number (43) of responses received in the spring 2010 consultation, a lot of useful and detailed feedback was obtained. Some respondents were also representing the views of a wider community of census users, e.g. the Demographics User Group which covers a number of commercial and business users. Therefore, both the number and variety of respondents are considered satisfactory for a consultation of this kind.

Table 1: Profile of Respondent Type

Type of respondent	Number of responses
Local Government	7
Business & Commercial	6
Community & Special Interest Groups	3
Central Government, Academic, Local Service Providers and Individuals	1
Total	17

Interpretation of findings

As with previous phases, this consultation was open to a wide range of users to respond. Those replying did so voluntarily, each with their own particular motivation and interpretation of the issues involved. Inevitably, it predominantly captured the views of established census users with a keen interest in the level of detail involved, such as those working in local authorities, health boards and other organisations who already make significant use of census data.

There will be other types of user, for example some voluntary groups or members of the general public, who perhaps have made relatively less (or no) use of census information in the past. They will not necessarily have been aware of the consultation (or if they were, perhaps less inclined to submit a response). NRS will therefore consider how best to widen awareness of census statistics and engage with new user groups, to ensure that their needs can also be considered as the 2011 Census output products are developed.

4. Consultation points: summary of responses (and commentary)

This section sets out a summary of the responses to each of the seven specific points included in the main consultation document. It does not attempt to provide a readout of every single comment submitted - rather it aims to provide an overall reflection of the feedback obtained. Similarly, the 'NRS commentary' attempts to provide an update on NRS's current thinking on each area and on the approaches being developed for the 2011 Census outputs.

Consultation Point 1: do you have any comments on the list of proposed significant revisions to the pre-defined tables from 2001?

User Response

Sixty-five percent of respondents provided comments on the list of changes proposed for the pre-defined tables from 2001. These changes are required due to significant revisions to the underlying census questions, coding or definitions. Respondents generally agreed that the proposed revisions seemed sensible and were pleased that they were consistent with approach proposed by the other UK census offices.

The comments included:

- Suggestions for additional changes/additions to the 2001 tables, including extra sex and age breakdowns and different groupings of variables such as number of cars or rooms e.g. splitting 3-4 rooms into 3 rooms and 4 rooms.
- Concern about some potential disclosure issues e.g. adding a 75+ age group category to tables on working parents, full-time students etc may result in very low numbers for this age group.
- An issue was flagged up from 2001 in relation to some council, housing association and private tenants in receipt of housing benefit who had incorrectly selected 'living rent free' as their response to the question on tenure. This had resulted in inconsistencies in the way their households were categorised in most of the 2001 output – being incorrectly included in the 'living rent free' category.
- A request that any revised table outlines be released to users in a further iteration of consultation so that they can confirm these will meet their needs.

NRS commentary

The feedback received on the revisions to the tables from 2001, along with the extra suggestions for enhancing the tables, has been incorporated into redesigns of the tables involved. These [table outlines](#) can be accessed on this website. Please note, the tables are provisional at this stage and users are invited to provide further feedback should they wish to do so.

The rewording of the tenure question (H10) in the 2011 Census to include a category 'Rents (with or without housing benefit)' will hopefully reduce the number of people wrongly responding that they were living rent free when in fact they received Housing Benefit. Nevertheless, measures are being taken to check for this type of error during the processing of the data.

Consultation Point 2: do you have any comments on the proposed new pre-defined table outlines?

User Response

Over 80 per cent of respondents commented on this consultation point. The proposed new tables for 2011 were generally well received. There were some additional suggestions for how the tables could be improved, such as incorporation of extra variables or the use of different age breakdowns. Some users noted that the maximum benefit for some of the new tables would only be realised if they were available for the whole of the UK.

NRS commentary

The comments from users have been taken on board wherever possible, and the table outlines published in February 2011 have been updated to incorporate these suggestions, taking into account UK comparability and also any potential disclosure risk. [Table outlines](#) can be accessed on this website and users are invited to provide more feedback on the proposed outlines should they wish to do so.

Further work will be undertaken with the other UK census offices to develop detailed specifications of the set of standard tables to be produced on a harmonised UK-wide basis.

Consultation Point 3: are there additional tables you would now wish to propose?

User Response

Over 80 per cent of the respondents provided suggestions for new additional tables. These mainly related to new cross-tabulations involving the language, migration and type of long-term health condition variables.

NRS commentary

The requests for new tables have been taken on board and, where possible, outlines have been drafted and included within the current release of the pre-defined [table outlines](#). The extent to which flexible table generation can assist with requests for new cross tabulations has still to be identified, but is part of NRS workplan for the coming year. The intention remains to provide users with the ability to define and produce tables additional to those included in the pre-defined set, with proper safeguards against disclosure.

Consultation Point 4: do you have any comments on the proposed treatment of pensionable age in the 2011 Census outputs?

User Response

Almost all respondents commented that they were in agreement with the proposed treatment of pensionable age in the 2011 Census outputs.

NRS commentary

The approach proposed for handling the changes to the definition of pensionable age within the 2011 Census outputs is consistent with that proposed by the other UK census offices and also with that being taken for other government statistics on working age employment and inactivity rates. This harmonised approach

should add value by increasing the comparability of census information with other data sources.

Consultation Point 5: do you have any comments on the proposed approach to table populations for tables relating to qualifications, industry, occupation, social grade and NS-SEC?

User Response

Just over half of respondents commented on this consultation point. The majority of these were agreed with the proposed approach. One user expressed concern about the loss of comparability on some tables and requested further explanation on the additional coding and definitional changes which lay behind this. It was suggested that if direct comparability is not possible, NRS should provide users with guidance on the approximate comparisons that can be made.

One respondent made use of the new 2011 table outlines published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in their recent consultation and provided comments in reference to these new mock-ups. These outlines incorporate the new table populations and additional age breakdowns. This then led to comments querying the NRS approach because there seemed to be some contradiction between the definition used by NRS and the table outlines produced by ONS. For example, NRS stated that for tables on industry, occupation, social grade and NS-SEC no additional age range would be incorporated for the 75 and over age group, whereas the corresponding ONS tables have been redesigned to show this extra age band.

NRS commentary

In the 2011 February consultation paper, the following paragraph stated:

‘For industry, occupation, social grade and NS-SEC, it is proposed to produce the relevant tables on the entire population aged 16 and over in the standard tables but with no additional age range incorporated for the 75 and over age group. This is because additional coding and definitional changes between 2001 and 2011 mean that direct comparability is not possible.’

This paragraph should have read ‘...but with no additional age range incorporated for the 75 and over age group unless the 2001 table had previously included age’.

Therefore, for those tables from 2001 that included industry, occupation, social grade, NS-SEC **and age**, an additional 75 and over age group will be incorporated wherever possible so as to maintain comparability between 2001 and 2011. These changes have been incorporated into the latest versions of the [table outlines](#). We believe that inclusion of these changes addresses the concerns raised about the apparent contradiction.

Consultation Point 6: are there any other topics you think it would be important to cover in further user engagement by NRS on its plans for the 2011 Census outputs?

User Response

Over seventy per cent of respondents submitted suggestions of topics for NRS to cover in further user engagement. These included:

- geographies for outputs, including the extent to which these will be customisable;
- special migration statistics and special travel statistics;
- postcode headcounts;
- bulk output format(s);
- workplace statistics;
- more on comparability issues;
- training in the use of flexible table generation;
- language classification to be used within the tables; and
- new table mock-ups with changes incorporated to be released for further comment.

NRS commentary

A programme of user engagement, including the publication on this website of regular (probably quarterly) progress reports, is planned to begin in late summer 2011. These reports will provide a mechanism for NRS to update users on progress across all areas and, where appropriate, focussing on particular topics and issues, including those listed above

New [table](#) mock-ups have been produced and published alongside this paper.

Consultation Point 7: are there any other points you want to make in relation to the developing NRS plans for the 2011 Census outputs?

User Response

Over eighty per cent of respondents made additional points in relation to the plans being developed by NRS for the 2011 Census outputs. These included:

- A strong request for bulk data delivery, with a keenness to know which format(s) this will be provided in – CSV was noted as the preferred format.
- A request for the 2011 Census outputs to be released on the ‘Strategic Development Plan Authority’ geography.
- A suggestion that, in recognition of the significant support local authorities had provided in preparation for the census, consideration should be given to providing them with all standard outputs on DVD free of charge.
- Release timetable – one user noted that it was important that NRS should aim to release census results for Scotland as soon as they are ready and not hold off for rest of UK.
- Workplace statistics – noted that these should relate to working people, not to businesses. Would also like to see Scotland adopt the additional workplace zone geography, both to give finer detail for univariate statistics in city centres, and to produce better origin / destination flows. It would also help enable the goal of UK-wide analyses.
- A request for NRS to flag up which tables will be specific to Scotland and which will also be available for other countries in the UK.

NRS commentary

Bulk data delivery is an issue that users will continue to be updated on, e.g. through regular progress reports mentioned above. It is also an area that

colleagues in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are considering in consultation with existing 'heavy duty' users of census data. Any feedback received via this avenue will feed into the NRS plans in this area.

It is intended that the 2011 Census outputs dissemination system will provide users with the ability to define (and save for later re-use) their own output geographies built up from aggregations of census output areas. Therefore additional geographies outwith the standard set should be achievable. This is a feature that users expressed a strong demand for in previous consultations.

All the UK census offices are working towards a common date for the first release of the 2011 Census results. This first release will focus on population figures by age and sex for local authority areas. Dates and content for subsequent releases will be for each census office to determine, informed by the requirements and priorities of their user communities. For some output products, such as census microdata files and origin-destination analyses, there are likely to be advantages in co-ordinating on a UK-wide basis. It is planned to make a full outputs prospectus and associated dissemination timetable available early in 2012.

5. Next steps in the consultation process

As noted in Section 2 above, the table outlines issued with this report are still provisional. We will continue to refine them, taking into account:

- a review of all previous comments made by users (to check that none of these have been overlooked);
- the potential need to modify the design of some tables to address any statistical disclosure control concerns;
- any comments made by users in outputs consultation activity undertaken by the other UK census offices that have a read across to Scotland.

NRS aim to baseline the design of all tables in the standard set of outputs for Scotland by the end of September 2011. It would therefore be helpful to receive, **by 31 August**, any further detailed comments users may have on the design of specific tables, either emailed to census.consultation@gro-scotland.gsi.gov.uk or posted to:

Census Consultation
National Records of Scotland,
Area 2/3/1, Ladywell House,
Ladywell Road,
Edinburgh
EH12 7TF.

Together with the other UK census offices, NRS also aim to finalise, by the end of September 2011, detailed specifications of the set of standard tables and other census outputs to be produced on a harmonised UK-wide basis.

NRS will hold discussions over this summer with colleagues in the Analytical Services Divisions of Scottish Government to check that the proposed set of standard outputs from the 2011 Census will meet their requirements.

The current expectation is that the following information will be made available to users in July 2011:

- a proposed running order for the release of 2011 Census outputs;
- a specification of the content of the first release and publication date.

Regular progress updates on issues relating to the development of the statistical outputs from Scotland's 2011 Census will be published on this website, provisionally on a quarterly basis, from September 2011. Email alerts will be sent to all those on our census consultation database every time a progress update is issued.

Work continues on scoping and designing data cubes to underpin flexible table generation. The full scope of what can be offered via data cubes will be subject to statistical disclosure control constraints (as yet unknown). Further progress on this topic will be reported through the quarterly updates mentioned above.

We will also be building, over the remainder of 2011, a prototype of the web-based census results dissemination system which we plan to introduce as a successor to the existing SCROL system. We are keen to involve users in testing the prototype system and were reassured by the high level of interest expressed in this by respondents to the consultation. More information on user testing will be provided in the next progress update.

Annex A – list of consultation respondents¹

Name	Organisation Name	User Category
Peter Sleight Simon Whalley	Association of Census Distributors Beacon Dodsworth	Business & Commercial Business & Commercial
Peadar Morgan Carolyn Valder/ Sheena Murchie	Bòrd na Gàidhlig CACI	Community & Special Interest Groups Business & Commercial
Keith Dugmore Margo Houston	Demographics User Group, representing commercial users East Ayrshire Council Equality and Human Rights Commission	Business & Commercial Local Government Community & Special Interest Groups
Suzi Macpherson Jennifer Boag Andrew Ballingall Jan Freeke Alison Clark Heather Smith	Falkirk Council Fife Council Glasgow City Council Highland Council Highlands and Islands Enterprise Improvement Service and Equality and Human Rights Commission	Local Government Local Government Local Government Local Government Central Government Community & Special Interest Groups
Coryn Barclay		
Susan Blackburn	Orkney Islands Council Perth & Kinross Council (Economic Development)	Local Government Local Government
Marek Styczen		
Alan Lewis	SASPAC	Business & Commercial

¹ One additional submission was made by a respondent who did not wish to have their details published.