



Scotland's Census
Shaping our future
A' dealbhadh ar n-àm ri teachd

Scotland's Census 2022
Strategic Environmental
Assessment
Pre-screening
v5.0

December 2021

SEA PRE-SCREENING DOCUMENT

Responsible Authority:

National Records of Scotland (NRS)

Title of the plan:

Scotland's Census 2022 programme

What prompted the plan:

(e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)

The census is the official count of every person and household in Scotland. It is usually held every 10 years and provides the most complete statistical picture of the nation available. It also provides information that central and local governments need, in order to develop policies and to plan, fund and run public services.

Scotland's census is taken by the [National Records of Scotland](#) (NRS) on behalf of the Registrar General for Scotland (NRS Chief Executive). NRS is a non-ministerial department of the Scottish Administration. The Census Act 1920 requires the Registrar General to determine the arrangements made for the taking of the census. Each census is underpinned by a Census Order and Census Regulations.

Plan subject:

(e.g. transport)

Socio-demographic statistical information

Brief summary of the plan:

(including the area or location to which the plan related)

The Scotland's Census 2022 objectives are to:

- produce high-quality census results;
- generate outputs that meet the needs of users;
- maximise online responses;
- produce timely outputs to maximise benefits;
- protect, and be seen to protect, confidential information;
- make recommendations for the approach to future censuses in Scotland; and
- do so in a cost effective way.

The programme has two main strands. Firstly, the aim of the programme is to conduct a successful census operation in 2022 to produce statistical data on Scotland's population to the agreed levels of accuracy. Secondly, the programme wants to explore the use of administrative data in the conduct and production of this and future censuses.

Conducting the census enables NRS to fulfil its stated purpose "to collect, preserve and produce information about Scotland's people

and history and make it available to inform present and future generations.”

Scotland's Census moved to 2022

On 17 July 2020 the Scottish Government announced the decision to move Scotland's Census to 2022 following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The census collection is a huge logistical operation involving the recruitment and deployment of thousands of staff, including a large field force team who engage with the public on their doorstep. The 12 months leading up to a census are vital in planning and testing the effectiveness and safety and security of census systems and collection processes to ensure these are ready. COVID-19 restrictions during 2020 prevented these key activities from progressing. These impacts occurred in a number of areas, from progressing recruitment to being able to undertake comprehensive testing, from contacting care homes and hospitals to establish their requirements for questionnaires to engaging with third sector and community groups to encourage participation from everyone in Scotland.

The priority and responsibility of NRS is to put in place a census that enables everyone across Scotland to participate, so that information collected can be used to produce high quality outputs and deliver the benefits required by the people of Scotland. NRS had been monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on the delivery of the 2021 census and explored a number of [options](#) to preserve this census date. The conclusion by NRS was that the only option in which there was confidence around securing the high response rate required was to move the census to 2022. Following the recommendation, Scottish Ministers decided to move Scotland's Census to March 2022 to ensure that a full and successful census is undertaken.

The census in March 2022 will follow the same model and question set as planned for March 2021. NRS will work closely with our stakeholders and partners to ensure that appropriate data is available to support work that was expecting to make use of Census 2021 data. NRS will also continue to work closely with our colleagues in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to ensure the needs of data users in Scotland and across the rest of the UK will be met.

Learning from census rehearsal

As part of our preparations for Scotland's Census 2022, NRS undertook a public rehearsal in parts of Scotland. The rehearsal

took place during October and November 2019. People living in households in parts of Glasgow City, and Dumfries and Galloway, and Na h-Eileanan Siar were asked to help by taking part, and received a letter in early October with more information about the rehearsal and how to participate.

Unlike the census itself, participation in the rehearsal was not a legal requirement. Householders in these areas were asked to take part on a purely voluntary basis to help ensure things go smoothly for the main census in 2022. Field force and communal establishment enumeration operations were not included in the rehearsal activities and a temporary contact centre was created internally within NRS for the purpose of supporting the rehearsal .

The rehearsal also provided reassurance that our chosen approaches in many respects worked well. For example, initial contact materials and reminder letters were effective in encouraging returns, elements of our local engagement and marketing strategy tested strongly, and the overall design and functionality of the online and paper questionnaires allowed the public to complete returns and deliver usable data for our systems.

The rehearsal did importantly identify some new areas of improvement for NRS to take forward. These included the need to:

- make improvements to how address information is collected;
- make improvements to some online question routing;
- review the timing and tailoring of reminder letters; and
- improve the provision of management information.

The rehearsal evaluation report can be found [on the Scotland's Census website](#).

Summary of Operations

The 2022 Census will take place on Sunday 20 March 2022.

The 2022 operation will be predominantly online. The 2011 census was conducted 80% on paper and 20% online. This and other design modifications are expected to achieve substantial reductions in paper and logistical requirements compared to 2011.

Every household in Scotland will receive a letter by post containing an internet access code which respondents will use to access the online census questionnaire. Respondents will be able to request a paper version of the questionnaire, if preferred, which will mostly be printed on demand.

	<p>Field Force</p> <p>Field staff will directly follow-up non-responding households only, using supplied mobile devices as key communication tools for workload allocation, telecoms, video conferencing and health and safety support.</p> <p>This represents a significant change from the 2011 Census and reflects a reduction in the size of field force staff, alongside a reduction in the volume of staff travel and paper usage.</p> <p>All our recruitment and assessment processes will be undertaken digitally which will help reduce the carbon footprint of our field force. NRS aims to recruit staff locally, providing work relevant to their geographical area, reducing the distance and time required to travel.</p> <p>Where travel is required as part of the role, staff will be strongly encouraged to walk, cycle or take public transport to help reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. Subject to conditions, field force staff will be able to claim expenses for use of public transport and a per mile allowance for the use of a pedal bike.</p> <p>The Field Force is committed to supporting environmental principles within our operational design.</p>	
<p>Brief summary of the likely environmental consequences: (including whether it has been determined that the plan is likely to have no or minimum effects, either directly or indirectly)</p>	<p>In completing this section NRS have sought to address each of the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.</p> <p>Whilst users, such as local authorities, have evidenced that census data is a key component in decision-making around resource allocation for the provision of a wide range of public and commercial services, the programme itself plays no part in resource-allocation processes. In addition, the programme carries no influence over other plans, programmes and strategies, although the statistical data outputs from the census will in many cases influence the location, size and nature of projects and initiatives.</p> <p>Operations are designed to reach the whole of Scotland's population, centering around census day on 20 March 2022 with no scope to repeat the process or parts of it in the event of issues with delivery.</p> <p>With reference to the criteria specified within Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 NRS concludes that the programme's operational aspects are anticipated to be no</p>	

	<p>or minimal effects on the environment and therefore a full Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.</p> <p>This assessment reflects the operational design of Scotland's Census 2022, directly before live operations commence.</p>	
<p>Brief summary of how environmental principles have been considered: (including whether any of the guiding principles, as set out in section 13 of the Continuity Act, are relevant to the plan)</p>	<p>The programme has considered the environmental principles throughout planning and design phases including those guiding principles set out in section 13 of the Continuity Act. The programme considers that the principle that protecting the environment should be integrated into the making of policies where relevant, but as the environmental effects are expected to be no or minimal this is likely to be limited.</p>	
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<p>Date of opinion:</p>	<p>December 2021</p>	
<p>When completed send to: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or to SEA Gateway, Scottish Government, Area 2H (South), Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ</p>		