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

Scotland's Census:
Custom microdata – Privacy Notice

Version 0.1
14 September 2021

National Records of Scotland

1. Custom Microdata Projects

Researchers can apply to access individual census records (custom microdata). The Administrative Data Research Centre (Scotland) coordinates and supports researchers' applications for custom microdata projects. You can contact us directly if you wish to apply for access to census records in this way.

2. Safeguards

Researchers can only access custom microdata for research when all of the following apply:

- The data will only be used for research purposes, will not contain direct identifiers and may not be used for automated decision-making.
- The project has been approved by a research ethics panel.
- The project has been approved by an independent Statistics and Public Benefit Privacy Panel.
- All researchers have completed the ONS Safe Researcher Training course.
- The researchers and NRS have signed a Data Sharing Agreement and completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment.
- The researchers can only access the data inside an ADRC-S Safe Setting or through a secure remote working environment.

NRS will only agree to supply census data to an approved research project when the project has adequate protection against disclosure of personal information, and that we are not providing more data or detail than is required to address the research question.

The results of any data analysis can only be taken out of the secure research environment once NRS has checked that they cannot be used to identify individual people or households.

3. Current Projects

The following projects are currently using custom census microdata:

COVID Research Data Service

We have deposited a subset of census data in the National Safe Haven, consisting of a range of demographic, household, economic and health variables. The purpose for this is to enable quick delivery of data for projects related to the Covid-19 health emergency. Two research projects are currently using this Census subset:

EAVE II - Early Assessment of COVID-19 epidemiology and Vaccine/anti-viral Effectiveness.

Covid Risk factors – Investigating Socioeconomic, household and environmental risk factors for COVID-19 in Scotland.

The Data Protection Impact Assessment for this data sharing can be found here: Data Protection Impact Assessments | National Records of Scotland (nrscotland.gov.uk)

Developing a national learning health system for asthma
Dr Colin Simpson, University of Edinburgh

This project aims to describe and explain patterns of asthma care across general practices and population sub-groups in Scotland, and to understand the role of weather and exposure to pollution on asthma outcomes.

Health, death and cancers in people with learning disabilities and people with autism
Professor Sally-Ann Copper, University of Glasgow

This study investigates health and health-care inequalities for people with learning disabilities, and autism. Due to the COVID-19 health emergency this project has included COVID-19 risk factors of those with learning disabilities and autism.

Predictors of mental ill health in and its determinants in mothers caring for a son or daughter with intellectual disabilities
Dr Deborah Kinnear, University of Glasgow

This study investigates the prevalence and determinants of mental ill health in mothers caring for a son or daughter with intellectual disabilities, particularly with respect to neighbourhood deprivation and the age of the care receiver.

Regeneration, health, and health inequalities: a longitudinal data linkage study
Dr Elizabeth Richardson, NHS Health Scotland

This study investigates the impact of urban regeneration projects on health and health inequalities.

Scottish cervical screening and ethnicity
Dr Christine Campbell, University of Edinburgh

This study investigates patterns of attendance to cervical screening according to ethnic group. This research aims to provide an improved understanding of screening uptake and outcomes for all ethnic groups in Scotland.

Social and locality variations in dog bites and strikes in Scotland
Jade Hooper, University of Stirling

This study explores a range of possible factors which may contribute to the social patterning of dog bites, considered at both the geographical and individual level.

Understanding the interplay of geography and demographic characteristics in the diagnosis of eight common cancers: The NASCAR-CENSUS project
Dr Peter Murchie, University of Aberdeen

This project looks at how geography, affluence and deprivation affect cancer outcomes.

Does commuting affect health?
Dr Zhiqiang Feng, University of Edinburgh

This study explores different aspects of commuting: distance, traffic conditions, travel modes, and their association with health. This research aims to help inform health, transport and environmental policies.

Childhood cognitive function and use of long-term care across the life course: Linking the Scottish Mental Survey 1947 to healthcare and administrative data.
Dr Matthew Iveson, University of Edinburgh

This project investigates the association between early-life circumstances (cognitive ability and socioeconomic status) and the risk of entry into long-term care.

4. Privacy Notice for custom census microdata projects

Legal Gateway

NRS is allowed to share personal census data with researchers for research because of section 4.2 of the Census Act (1920), which enables the Registrar General for Scotland to authorise the analysis of census data.

Joint Data Control

For each project, NRS and the lead researcher's institution have signed a Data Sharing Agreement making them Joint Data Controllers of the dataset for that project. This means that NRS and the researcher make joint decisions about how the data can be processed. Either party can end the agreement at any time, and if so the dataset must be destroyed.

Responsibilities

We have agreed with researchers that the Data Protection Officer for NRS will take responsibility for reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office any problems or incidents which might put the confidentiality of personal information at risk.

Data Processors

Each lead researcher also holds a legally binding Controller – Processor Contract with Public Health Scotland (PHS), who act as a data processor by providing the Scottish National Safe Haven service and managing the secure transfer, linkage and storage of the data.

Retention

Each project has a set end date, agreed at the start of the project. The data will be securely and confidentially destroyed on this end date, or as soon as it is no longer required for the research project, whichever happens first.

Your rights as a data subject

The NRS Data Protection Officer is your point of contact for any concerns or questions about the confidentiality of your personal census data. You also have the right to report your concerns to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The UK GDPR grants individual data subjects certain rights, for example the right to access your personal data, the right to rectify incorrect data, the right to have your data erased, the right to restrict what can be done with your data and the right to object to the use of your data. However, these rights do not apply to the use of personal data for scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes, where responding to these rights would prevent the research or statistical purpose from being achieved. NRS and the researchers have agreed that the Secure Microdata Files may only be used for scientific or historical research purposes, therefore these rights will not apply.

Personal census data is also exempt from Freedom of Information requests under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, and from Environmental Information requests, under the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004. This applies for 100 years after the data was collected. We are not able to confirm whether or not your data is included in any particular census dataset, as this could put other peoples' personal information at risk.

Changes to this privacy notice

We keep our privacy notices under regular review. This privacy notice was last updated on 09 September 2021.