

# **Scotland's Census 2021 Unpaid Care Topic Report**

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## 1. Main Points

- High user need for information on unpaid carers has been identified.
- For 2021 it has been noted the devolution of some welfare benefits, including carers benefit, potentially provides a new need for data on unpaid carers for future monitoring and evaluation of social security in Scotland.
- If, between now and 2020, the eligibility criteria for carers allowance changes, amendments to the question options will be reviewed.
- Users have identified a lower priority need for information on 1 to 4 hours, 5 to 19 hours. This disaggregates the 2011 response option 1 to 19 hours so allowing harmonisation over time. This is under consideration.
- Research and analysis supports taking a question on this subject further at this stage.
- The digital first approach for 2021 requires further development and user testing to fully understand the best way to present the questions online to maximise response, minimise respondent burden and ensure good quality data which meets user needs. An on-going programme of question development, focusing on sensitive or complex questions will further inform the specific question wording.

## 2. Introduction

This topic review sets out the evidence gathered in developing a question on unpaid care for Scotland's Census 2021.

Question development for the 2021 Census began in 2015. An iterative and comprehensive process of user consultation, evaluation and prioritisation of user requirements, and qualitative and quantitative question testing has been carried out to inform decisions on the questions to be recommended for inclusion in the 2021 Census. More information about [research and preparation](#) and [question development](#) for Scotland's Census 2021 can be found online.

The 2021 Census will be digital first. The Census 2021 questionnaire must gather high quality data that meets user needs. More information about [key elements of the design](#) for 2021 can be found online.

Two frameworks have been published by National Records of Scotland (NRS) to evaluate the effectiveness of [question design for existing, alternative and new questions](#) (PDF) and to evaluate the effectiveness of [question design of tick box response options](#) (PDF).

Questions and their response options are evaluated against five main themes:

### Strength of user need

- ✓ Data collected by the census must meet a user need for equality monitoring, policy development, resource allocation and/or service planning and delivery.

### Suitability of alternative sources

- ✓ Data collected by the census must meet a user need that cannot be met elsewhere.

### Acceptability, clarity and data quality

- ✓ Questions asked in the census must be acceptable to the majority of the public, clear and be designed with minimal respondent burden in order to obtain good data quality that meets user needs.

### Comparability

- ✓ Data collected by the census should be comparable over time where possible, and harmonised across the UK where reasonable.

### Operational considerations

- ✓ Census questions must be considered as part of the census as a whole, where effective digital and paper design, space and financial constraints must be considered. Additionally, some questions may be required for operational purposes in the process of conducting the census.

The final decision on the content of Scotland's Census 2021 questionnaire will ultimately be made by the Scottish Parliament.

As in previous years, there will be separate censuses conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in England and Wales, and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in Northern Ireland. The three census offices work together to develop a set of questions that, wherever possible and necessary, will deliver harmonised outputs across the UK.

### 3. Background

Information about unpaid carers is important to inform service planning and provision, policy formulation, resource allocation, and equalities monitoring. Understanding the amount of unpaid care that is given is a key indicator of care needs in particular populations and areas. This information is used to assist in the planning and provision of health and social care services, and the planning of local facilities and services such as in-home support, respite care, and the provision of information and support to carers.

#### 3.1 Previous Scotland's Census questions on unpaid care

The questions on unpaid care in 2001 and 2011 were worded the same, with different response options. In 2011 the response option 'Yes, 20-49 hours a week' was split into 'Yes, 20-34 hours a week' and 'Yes, 35-49 hours a week'. This captures those respondents who are providing 'full-time' care, therefore are in receipt of carers allowances and benefits.

Figure 1. and 2. Scotland's Census 2001 and 2011 Unpaid Care Questions

Figure 1

**17** Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of:

- long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or
- problems related to old age?

◆ Do *not* count anything you do as part of your paid employment.

◆ ✓ time spent in a typical week.

No

Yes, 1-19 hours a week

Yes, 20-49 hours a week

Yes, 50+ hours a week

Figure 2

**9** Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either:

- long-term physical / mental ill-health / disability; or
- problems related to old age?

◆ Do not count anything you do as part of your paid employment.

No

Yes, 1 - 19 hours a week

Yes, 20 - 34 hours a week

Yes, 35 - 49 hours a week

Yes, 50 or more hours a week

### 3.2 Questions on unpaid care in other UK 2011 censuses

The questions asked by the ONS (in England and Wales) and NISRA (in Northern Ireland) are shown in Figures 3 and 4 below.

*Figure 3. ONS Unpaid Care Question 2011*    *Figure 4. NISRA Unpaid Care Question 2011*

**14** Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either:

- long-term physical or mental ill-health/disability?
- problems related to old age?

Do not count anything you do as part of your paid employment

No

Yes, 1 - 19 hours a week

Yes, 20 - 49 hours a week

Yes, 50 or more hours a week

**25** Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either:

- long-term physical or mental ill-health/disability?
- problems related to old age?

Do not count anything you do as part of your paid employment.

No

Yes, 1 - 19 hours a week

Yes, 20 - 49 hours a week

Yes, 50 or more hours a week

### 3.3 Alternative Sources

Since 2012, a set of core questions has been used to provide information on the composition, characteristics and attitudes of Scottish households and adults across a number of topic areas through the three largest surveys in Scotland:

- the [Scottish Household Survey](#) (SHS)
- the [Scottish Health Survey](#) (SHeS)
- the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#) (SCJS)

A set of core and harmonised questions is recommended in order to provide comparable estimates across Scotland. More information can be found on the Scottish Government website ([Core Survey Questions](#)). The Scottish Government also produce guidance for [collecting equality information](#), including disability.

Unpaid care is a core survey question in Scotland. The core survey question asks “Does anyone in the household look after, or give any regular help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either:

- long-term physical / mental ill-health / disability; or
- problems related to old age?”

It offers the response options of ‘yes’ or ‘no’. If the respondent selects ‘yes’, further questions are asked, including the type of care provided and the number of hours of care provided. The number of hours options include those offered in the NRS question, with the addition of ‘varies’. It also splits the 2011 census ‘yes, 1-19 hours a week’ into ‘up to 4 hours a week’ and ‘5-19 hours a week’.

The Scottish Health Survey asks three questions about care or support received by the respondent, which includes an option of ‘assistance from relative/friend/neighbour’. It also asks questions about who the care is provided to, number of hours spent caring (similar to the census but including a 0-4 hrs and ‘varies’ option), how long caring for, how their employment has been affected by

caring and any support received. It also asks separate questions to carers aged 4 to 15 years about what sort of support they receive.

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey asks one question about unpaid care, with the same options as census with the addition of 'up to 4 hrs a week' and 'varies'.

## 4. Understanding user need

### 4.1 Topic Consultation

NRS invited views on Scotland's Census 2021 in the form of a [Topic Consultation](#) (PDF) between 08 October 2015 and 15 January 2016. The consultation was a key step towards understanding what information users will need from the census in 2021, and helped to build strong cases to justify the inclusion of topics. The focus of the consultation was on information required at topic-level, not the detail of the questions that should be asked on the questionnaire.

Following the consultation, NRS worked closely with stakeholders through follow-up events, meetings, focus groups and online surveys to gather more detailed information about data requirements to ensure user needs were understood. Information about these events can be found on our [Get Involved pages](#) online.

Responses were received through the topic consultation on the subject of unpaid care. A summary of these responses can be found in the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF).

Stakeholders identified the following reasons for requiring information on unpaid care:

- inform service planning and provision;
- policy formulation;
- resource allocation; and
- equality monitoring.

The data was used at all geographical levels, including customised geographies such as council administrative areas, school catchment areas and population sub groups based on health attributes. Multivariate analysis was noted as a key benefit of the census data as many alternative sources of information do not have the capability for cross-tabulation or are available at small-area level. Strong need for UK comparability and continuity with the 2011 census was identified.

Further engagement highlighted that as welfare powers have been devolved, Scottish Parliament has responsibility for administering carers allowances and related benefits. Stakeholders noted it is essential that reliable data on carer numbers is available to aid this process. Alongside these new powers, the [SG Carers Strategy](#) and the introduction of the [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) note a requirement for data on unpaid carers to inform policy development and monitoring going forward.

#### 4.2 Further stakeholder engagement: user need survey and discussions with Scottish Government health and care policy colleagues

The possibility of revising the response options to include '1-4 hours a week' and dropping the '50 plus hours a week' option was discussed with Scottish Health Analytical and Carers policy colleagues, and a short survey was undertaken with stakeholders. The responses received indicated that the preference was to retain the question as per 2011, although there was clear evidence of need for both options.

Stakeholders also noted:

- Keeping the categories the same would provide better evidence in terms of longitudinal studies, and also mean NRS keeps the same categories as England.
- Some noted the 1 to 4 hours category would be as valuable as the 50 plus hours category.
- There are unlikely to be any policy outcomes for the 1 to 4 hours category.
- The number of unpaid carers providing 50 hours or more showed an increase in the last census, indicating carers are caring for more hours than previously. It is important to monitor and evidence this trend.
- Other stakeholders noted the removal of the option of 50 plus hours will mean losing this time series which is comparable with Scotland's 2001 and 2011, and England and Wales' data.
- Adding a category for up to 4 hours may help more people identify as carers.
- If more people self-identify as caring for a small amount each week, census will allow for much fuller data analysis.
- Ideally would like a category to identify those who do a small amount of caring each week - up to 4 hours.

### 5 Question testing

The question on unpaid care was not tested as it is an existing census question. The inclusion of an additional response option does not significantly change the question.

### 6 Other considerations

There is a possibility that changes will be made to the number of unpaid caring hours a person carries out per week in order to qualify for carers allowances and other benefits (currently this is 35 hours a week). If between now and 2020 the eligibility criteria for carers allowance changes, NRS will review the question options in light of any changes.

Also under consideration is a change of response options. Should space allow, the response option 1 to 19 hours a week could be split into two options (1 to 4 hours a week and 5 to 19 hours a week). As this was identified as a lower user need, any decision will be dependent of user need across the census as a whole.



## 7 Next steps

Research and analysis supports taking a question on this subject further at this stage.

NRS is continuing question development of a full question set for the 2021 Census and will be considering questionnaire design and respondent burden. The final decision on the content of Scotland's Census 2021 questionnaire will ultimately be made by the Scottish Parliament.

The digital first approach for 2021 requires further development and user testing to fully understand the best way to present the questions online to maximise response, minimise respondent burden and ensure good quality data which meets user needs. An on-going programme of question development, focusing on sensitive or complex questions will further inform the specific question wording.

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](#).