

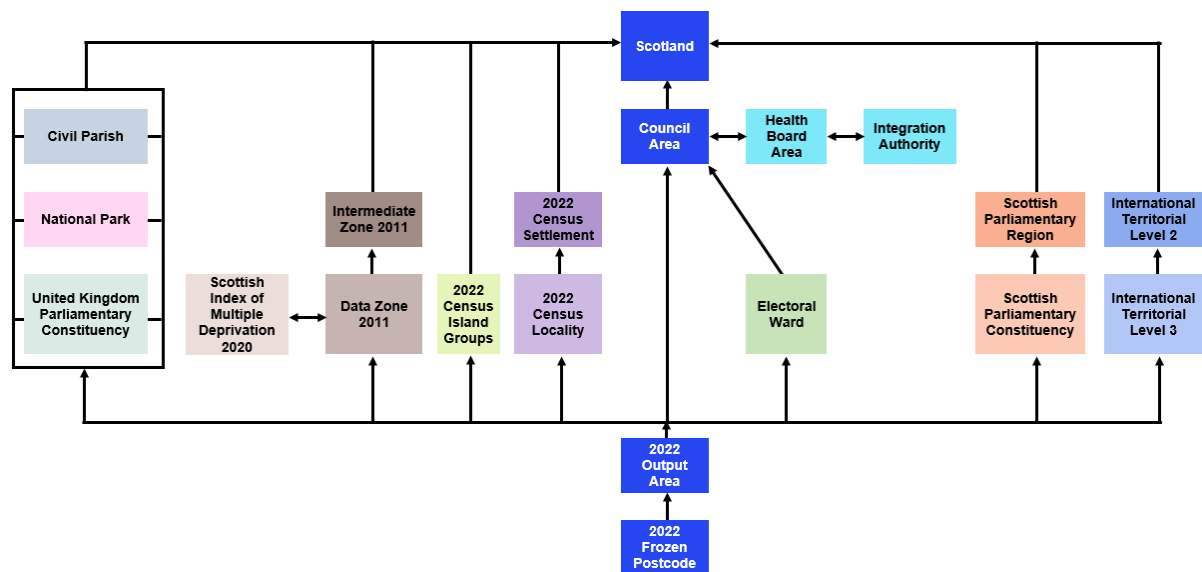
Geography – Scotland’s Census 2022

Higher Geography Classifications

Results from Scotland’s Census 2022 are available for a range of higher statistical geographies, from the smallest, Output Area (OA), to the largest, Scotland.

The higher statistical geographies for which results are available (and are provided in the 2022 Census Index) have been decided in consultation with users.

The method used to allocate OAs to the higher statistical geographies in the 2022 Census Index aligns with the [GSS Geography Policy for National Statistics](#). OAs are plotted to administrative, electoral and health areas by 'best-fit' allocation using the centroid for each OA (using point-in-polygon methodology). The diagram below depicts the hierarchy of the statistical geographies.



Geographies that are exact-fit to 2022 Census Output Areas are:
Council Area 2019, Health Board Area 2019, Integration Authority 2019, and 2022 Census Island Group.

Geographies that are best-fit to 2022 Census Output Areas are:
Civil Parish 1930, National Park 2010, UK Parliamentary Constituency 2005, Data Zone 2011, Intermediate Zone 2011, Electoral Ward 2022, Scottish Parliamentary Region 2021, Scottish Parliamentary Constituency 2021, International Territorial Units 2021 - Level 2 and 3, Census Settlement 2022, Census Locality 2022, and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 ranking which is based on 2011 Data Zones.

Further information on best-fit and exact-fit aggregations can be found in the [Geography Policy section](#) of the National Records of Scotland (NRS) website.

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The geographies contained in the 2022 Census Index are a snapshot of the position in 2022.

Council Area 2019

Local government in Scotland comprises 32 unitary Local Authorities (also known as Council Areas), which are responsible for the provision of a range of public services such as education, licensing regulations, social care, transport, and waste management. The current authority boundaries are largely a result of reorganization that took place in 1996, following the enactment of the [Local Government etc. \(Scotland\) Act 1994](#), which abolished the two-tier structure of regions and districts.

Boundaries Scotland is responsible for recommendations on the definition of Local Authority boundaries; however, Ordnance Survey delineates the definitive dataset for inclusion in their BoundaryLine product.

Electoral Wards 2022

In Scotland, each Council Area contains a number of Electoral Wards (355 in Scotland). Electoral Wards (also known as multi-member wards) are the spatial units used to elect local government councillors in Council Areas in Scotland. The voters in each of these Electoral Wards elect councillors to the local council. Each Mainland ward returning three or four councillors. Island wards may have one or two member wards.

Boundaries Scotland is responsible for recommendations on the definition of ward boundaries; however, Ordnance Survey delineates the definitive dataset for inclusion in their BoundaryLine product.

Data Zones 2011

Data Zones are the key geography for the dissemination of small area statistics in Scotland. Data Zones also represent a relatively stable geography that can be used to analyse change over time, with changes only occurring after a Census.

The Data Zone geography covers the whole of Scotland and nests within Local Authority boundaries (as they were in 2011). Composed of aggregates of 2011 Census Output Areas, Data Zones are large enough that statistics can be presented accurately without fear of disclosure and yet small enough that they can be used to represent communities. There are 6,976 2011 Data Zones.

They are designed to have roughly standard populations of 500 to 1,000 household residents, nest within Local Authorities (at the time of the Census), have compact shapes that respect physical boundaries where possible, and to contain households with similar social characteristics.

The Scottish Government is responsible for creating and maintaining definitive Data Zone boundaries.

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Higher Geography Classifications

Civil Parish 1930

Civil Parishes lost their former administrative function in 1929, they have changed little since the 20th Century, and Census data has been produced for these areas for all Censuses from 1891.

NRS Geography are responsible for the Civil Parish boundaries, of which there are 871.

Scottish Parliamentary Regions and Constituencies 2021

Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies and Regions define the electoral areas used to return members to the Scottish Parliament. There are 73 constituencies, each electing one Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), and 8 regional constituencies each electing an additional seven MSPs.

Boundaries Scotland is responsible for recommendations on the definition of constituency and region boundaries; however, Ordnance Survey delineates the definitive dataset for inclusion in their BoundaryLine product.

UK Parliamentary Constituencies 2005

Scottish UK Parliamentary Constituencies (or Westminster Constituencies) define the electoral areas of Scotland used to return members to the Parliament of the United Kingdom in UK general elections. They are different from the Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies, which are used to return members to the Scottish Parliament. There are currently 59 Westminster constituencies in total, each electing one Member of Parliament (MP).

The Boundary Commission for Scotland is responsible for recommendations on the definition of constituency boundaries; however, Ordnance Survey delineates the definitive dataset for inclusion in their BoundaryLine product.

Health Board Areas 2019

Delivery of frontline healthcare services in Scotland are the responsibility of 14 regional National Health Service (NHS) Boards (or Health Board Areas) that report to the Scottish Government.

Current boundaries of NHS Health Boards in Scotland are defined by the [National Health Service \(Variation of Areas of Health Boards\) \(Scotland\) Order 2013 \(SSI 2013/347\)](#), which came into force on April 1st 2014, and replaces the previous definition based upon the former Regions and Districts of the [Local Government \(Scotland\) Act 1973](#). This change was made to re-align Health Boards with the combined area of each Local Authority that they serve.

Subsequent changes to Local Authorities will result in corresponding amendments to Health Board boundaries to maintain alignment.

Geography – Scotland’s Census 2022 Higher Geography Classifications

Health Board Area boundaries are defined in legislation. The Scottish Government is responsible for delineating and maintaining the definitive boundary datasets.

Census Settlements and Localities 2022

Settlements are a group of high-density postcodes containing a minimum of 500 residents, which are enclosed by low-density postcodes or water.

Localities are a group of high-density postcodes within a settlement. These are used to sub-divide large settlements into more manageable areas.

NRS Geography are responsible for the Census Settlement and Locality boundaries, the 2022 Census Settlement and Locality boundaries are built from 2022 Frozen postcodes. There are 503, 2022 Census Settlements, and 656, 2022 Census Localities.

Census Island Groups 2022

The process of creating Output Areas resulted in the smaller islands (in terms of population) becoming merged with neighbouring islands.

Census output is available for 52 islands or groups of islands (excluding mainland Scotland) that meet the confidentiality thresholds for census statistics.

NRS Geography are responsible for the Census Island Groups boundaries.

Integration Authority 2019

Integration of health and social care is one of Scotland's major programmes of reform. Following the dissolution of Community Health Partnerships, the [Public Bodies \(Joint Working\) \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) gave the impetus for the development of Integration Authorities. Integration Authorities represent partnerships between Local Authorities and Health Boards for delivering health and social care services and integration of budgets.

There are 31 Integration Authorities in Scotland, all coterminous with their Local Authority boundary except for Clackmannanshire and Stirling councils, which form a single Integration Authority.

Subsequent changes to Local Authorities will result in corresponding amendments to Integration Authority boundaries to maintain alignment.

Integration Authority boundaries are defined in legislation. The Scottish Government is responsible for delineating and maintaining the definitive boundary datasets.

National Park 2010

National parks are designed to conserve the natural beauty and cultural heritage of areas of outstanding landscape value, and to promote public understanding and enjoyment of these areas. National parks exist in England, Scotland, and Wales. Their boundaries are not constrained by any other geography, i.e. a National Park can cross Council boundaries.

There are 2 national parks in Scotland: The Cairngorms National Park and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.

National Park boundaries are defined in legislation. The Scottish Government is responsible for delineating and maintaining the definitive boundary datasets.

Intermediate Zone 2011

Intermediate Zones are a statistical geography that sit between Data Zones and Local Authorities, created for use with the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) programme. Intermediate Zones also represent a relatively stable geography that can be used to analyse change over time, with changes only occurring after a Census.

Intermediate Zones are used for the dissemination of statistics that are not suitable for release at the Data Zone level because of the sensitive nature of the statistics, or for reasons of reliability. They nest within Local Authorities (as they were in 2011) and are built up from data zones (as they were in 2011). Each Intermediate Zone contains at least 2,500 residents. There are 1,279 2011 Intermediate Zones.

The Scottish Government is responsible for creating and maintaining definitive Intermediate Zone boundaries.

International Territorial Unit (ITL) 2021

Following the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, a new UK-managed international statistical geography called International Territorial Levels (ITLs) was introduced on 1 January 2021, replacing the former Nomenclature des Unites Territoriales Statistiques (NUTS) classification.

To ensure continued alignment, the ITLs have been established as a mirror to the previous Eurostat NUTS system used by the UK.

There are 5 ITL Level 2 and 23 ITL Level 3 areas in Scotland.

The Office for National Statistics is responsible for defining the boundaries of the International Territorial Units.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

The Scottish Government Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Government’s official tool for identifying small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland and is relevant to policies aimed at tackling the causes and effects of multiple deprivation.

The SIMD provides a relative ranking 6,976 small areas (based on 2011 Data Zones) across Scotland from the most deprived (ranked one) to the least deprived in Scotland (ranked 6,976).

Update of Data Zone and Intermediate Zone geographies

The Scottish Government will be launching a full public consultation in summer 2024 regarding the update of the Data Zone and Intermediate Zone geographies to maintain alignment with the 2022 Census Output Areas.

The consultation will be open for 3 months, with plans to publish finalised 2022 Data Zones and Intermediate Zones in autumn of 2024.

Updates on this are available via the [Scottish Government Statistics blog](#) or by subscribing to the [ScotStat email notification service](#).