

Households and Dwellings in Scotland: Methodology Guide



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1. Introduction

This paper describes the current (as at June 2024) methodology used by National Records of Scotland to produce estimates of households and dwellings in Scotland.

Coverage and availability of estimates

Coverage

The latest household and dwellings estimates can be found on the [NRS website](#).

The available estimates are split into three sections:

1. Households and Dwellings in Scotland

The latest annual publication of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, which provides statistics for Scotland and council areas back to 2001.

2. Small Area Statistics on Households and Dwellings

This section contains estimates of households and dwellings for 2011 Data Zones.

3. Households and Dwellings Estimates for Other Geographies (2011 Data Zone based)

Estimates of households and dwellings for Electoral Wards, Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies, Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies, Scottish Island Regions, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles (SIMD) and Urban/Rural classification categories. Estimates also available for National Park areas based on aggregations of postcodes.

Availability

Household estimates for Scotland, for a particular mid-year (as at 30 June) normally become available around one year after the reference date. Estimates of occupied dwellings for council areas, small areas and other geographies refer to September and normally became available around 10 months after the reference date.

Estimates of dwelling characteristics for council areas, small areas and other geographies refer to December and normally became available around six months after the reference date.

How are estimates of households and dwellings used?

These statistics are used for a range of purposes by the Scottish Government, local authorities, other organisations and researchers.

The household estimates contribute to National Records of Scotland (NRS) [household projections](#) which are available on the NRS website. Household estimates and projections (for Scotland and the UK) are used directly and indirectly in the production of certain statistics contained within the Scottish Government's annual '[Government Expenditure and Revenues Scotland \(GERS\)](#)' publication and the '[Quarterly National Accounts Scotland \(QNAS\)](#)' releases, both of which can be found on the Scottish Government (SG) website. Some of the SG's major population surveys use the household estimates and projections in their weighting strategies; further information on these surveys is available from the [Population surveys](#) section of the SG website.

Household estimates are also used as the denominator for other statistics, such as the percentage of households receiving benefits, and in various forms of research. They contribute to Scottish Health and Wellbeing profiles published by the [Scottish Public Health Observatory](#). These are used by policy makers and others to increase understanding of local health issues.

The figures on occupied dwellings are used to measure progress towards Scottish Government Housing and Regeneration Outcomes, via the [Housing and Regeneration Programmes \(HARP\)](#) website.

Household estimates are also used for:

- Informing councils about housing need and provision of services (including housing, waste collection and community care)
- Inputs to the Development Plans prepared by councils and other planning authorities
- Land use allocation and planning
- Inputs to transport models
- Assessing demand for water and sewerage services
- Risk analysis by Fire and Rescue Services
- Providing information on housing in rural areas (including second homes and empty properties)
- As a baseline for local projections of household numbers
- Informing projections of future school rolls
- Producing profiles of small areas to increase local knowledge

Key Definitions

A **'dwelling'** refers to the accommodation itself, e.g. a house or a flat. Dwelling estimates come from both Council Tax records and Scottish Assessors' data.

A **'household'** refers to the people living together in a dwelling. The number of dwellings will not necessarily equal the number of households in an area, because some dwellings are vacant or second homes, and some dwellings contain more than one household. Communal establishments, such as care homes and student halls of residence, are not included in the definition of a household. Household estimates come from Council Tax records.

'Household size' is the number of people in a household. Household size is [estimated](#) using the household estimates and estimates of the population living in households (i.e. excluding people living in communal establishments such as care homes and student halls of residence).

A household can be classed into a **'household type'** based on the number and gender of adults, and the number of children which it includes (for example '1 adult: male' households). Household type Information on household type is available from a number of sources, including the [Census](#), the [Scottish Household Survey](#) (SHS) and the [Labour Force Survey](#) (LFS).

Data zones are a key geography for presenting small area statistics in Scotland. They are small enough to represent local communities, or can be aggregated to other geographies such as electoral wards, parliamentary constituencies, urban/rural regions and deprived areas. There are currently 6,976 Data Zones across Scotland, with an average of around 350 households each. A Scottish Government consultation on a new set of Data Zones, based on the results of the 2022 Census, is scheduled for summer 2024.

2. Methodology for producing estimates of households and dwellings

Overview of the method for producing household estimates for Scotland and council areas

A household is a group of people living together in a dwelling. Dwellings can contain more than one household, or groups of people living communally (e.g. halls of residence).



Scottish Assessors record all dwellings in Scotland



Councils record the council tax charges, discounts and exemptions applicable to each dwelling. These records can identify whether a dwelling is occupied, vacant, or a second home. NRS receives a snapshot of these records in September.



The number of occupied dwellings is found by subtracting the number of vacant or second homes from the total number recorded by the council. This is used as the initial estimate for the number of households.



The estimated number of households is adjusted back to June, based on the September estimates from the current and previous year



A final adjustment is made to account for (i) the estimated number of occupied dwellings which contain more than one household, and (ii) the estimated number of communal establishments which have been included in council tax records. These estimates are based on census data from 2011 and 2022.



How are household estimates calculated?

The household estimates for Scotland and Council areas are based on the number of occupied dwellings obtained from Council Tax systems. Data is provided in September each year. The mid-year household estimate for Scotland and each council area are calculated by adjusting the number of occupied dwellings from September back to June. A further adjustment is made (i) to account for the estimated number of occupied dwellings which contain more than one household and (ii) to account for the estimated number of communal establishments which have been included in Council Tax records.

Data zone level household estimates are based on September information on occupied dwellings at postcode level. The number of occupied dwellings is roughly

equivalent to the number of households in an area, which is why we refer to these as 'Household Estimates'.

How is average household size calculated?

Average household size at the time of the census is calculated directly from the census data by dividing the population in households by the number of households.

The rebased population estimates for 2012 to 2021 were not available at the time of this publication – 20 June 2024. Table 3 therefore presents just average household size from the 2001, 2011 and 2022 censuses. Updated data on average household size for years in the period 2012 to 2021 will be included in the next (June 2025) edition of this publication.

Otherwise, average household size is calculated using the mid-year household estimates ([Table 1](#)), the mid-year population estimates¹, and communal establishment rates from Scotland's Census 2001, 2011 and 2022.

The first stage is to calculate the number of people living in private households (the 'private household population') rather than in communal establishments, such as student halls of residence, prisons or care homes. This is done by applying the communal establishment rates to the mid-year population estimates to estimate the communal establishment population, and subtracting this population from the mid-year population estimate. Communal establishment rates for 2002 to 2010 are estimated using the rates from Scotland's Census 2001 and 2011, while those for 2012 to 2021 are estimated from the rates from Scotland's Census 2011 and 2022. (The communal establishment rates from Scotland's Census 2022 will be used from 2023 onwards.)

The second stage is to estimate average household size by dividing the private household population by the mid-year household estimate.

¹ National Records of Scotland's '[Population Estimates Time Series Data](#)' available from the NRS website.

How are dwelling estimates calculated?

Information on dwellings and dwellings characteristics (Council Tax band, type of dwelling, number of rooms) is obtained from the Scottish Assessors in December each year, or the following January. This information is provided at individual dwelling level and is aggregated up to Data Zone level. Numbers of dwellings at higher geographies are then derived by further aggregation of these Data Zone estimates. The estimated total number of dwellings from this source differs from those in [table 2](#) as these are extracted from a different source (Council Tax systems), at a different time of year (September).

3. Data sources

Council Tax systems

To administer Council Tax, each council keeps a record of all dwellings in its area. Information is also held on those receiving Council Tax discounts or exemptions, such as vacant dwellings and second homes. Some categories of dwellings are now also liable for a premium on Council Tax. This makes it possible to estimate the number of dwellings that are occupied, by subtracting the number of vacant dwellings and second homes from the total number of dwellings.

An occupied dwelling is approximately equivalent to a household.

Council Tax billing systems also hold records of other types of discounts and exemptions which provide information on household type. Dwellings which contain just one adult living alone or one adult living with children or with adults who are 'disregarded' for Council Tax purposes can receive a 25% Council Tax discount (referred to as a 'single adult discount'). Certain types of dwellings are occupied but exempt from paying Council Tax. These include all-student households and dwellings which are owned by the Secretary of State for Defence for providing armed forces accommodation (referred to as 'occupied exemptions').

Definitions of household characteristics from Council Tax billing systems

Category	Description
All dwellings	This is the total number of dwellings on the Council Tax valuation list (excluding free-standing private lock-ups and garages). A 'dwelling' refers to the accommodation itself, for example a house or a flat and includes second homes that are not let out commercially. Caravans count as dwellings if they are someone's main home.
Vacant dwellings	This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• dwellings exempt from Council Tax, which are unoccupied; and• dwellings which are recorded on Council Tax systems as being long-term (6 months or more) empty properties.
Second homes	Dwellings can, in some council areas, be subject to a Council Tax discount of between 10 and 50% due to being second homes. From 1 April 2024 local authorities now have the power to impose a premium on second homes of up to double the full rate of council tax. ² A 'second home' is a dwelling which is no-

² [Council Tax \(Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2023](#)

	one's sole or main residence but which is furnished and lived in for at least 25 days during the chargeable 12 month period. This includes self-catering holiday accommodation available to let for a total of less than 140 days per year.
Occupied dwellings	All dwellings, minus those which are vacant or second homes.
Single adult discounts	Dwellings subject to a Council Tax discount of 25%. This may include, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dwellings with a single adult; and • dwellings with one adult living with children, or with one or more adults who are 'disregarded' for Council Tax purposes.
Occupied exemptions	Dwellings exempt from Council Tax, which are occupied. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dwellings only occupied by students; • armed forces accommodation owned by the Secretary of State for Defence; • dwellings which are the sole residence only of people aged under 18 or people who are classed as 'severely mentally impaired'; • trial flats used by registered housing associations; and • prisons.

When interpreting the figures, it is important to note that vacant dwellings will not be included here if they are not recorded on Council Tax systems – for example, short-term vacancies which can arise when people move house. In addition, second homes which are let for a total of 70 nights and are available to let for 140 nights in a financial year are not liable to pay Council Tax – they are instead liable to pay non-domestic rates. This means that such dwellings are not included here, in either the figures on second homes or the total number of dwellings. It should also be noted that, for the purposes of the statistics in this publication, long-term empty properties nominally relate to those which have been empty for 6 months or more. It has been identified that some councils have additionally included properties furnished and unoccupied for a shorter period in their data. The number of 'long-term empty' properties reported in their statistics will therefore be overstated in such instances. Further analysis is planned to estimate the extent and scale of this.

Household and dwelling estimates for Scotland and council areas

Summary information on the number of dwellings in different categories is provided by each council to the Scottish Government, using the Council Tax Base

(‘[Ctaxbase](#)’) form, available from the Scottish Government website. The information on the number of dwellings contained in [Table 2](#) is based on these figures.

The household estimates for Scotland and for each council area in [Table 1](#) are calculated by subtracting vacant dwellings and second homes from the total dwellings figures shown in [Table 2](#). The resulting number of occupied dwellings is then adjusted from September back to June, as the National Records of Scotland (NRS) mid-year population estimates and household projections are both based at 30 June each year. A further adjustment is made to account for differences in the number of households estimated from Council Tax data and recorded in Scotland’s Census 2001, 2011 and 2022. A number of factors can be responsible for the different number of households recorded by each source. They can include the treatment of vacant dwellings, shared dwellings, holiday lets, caravans and some communal establishments (for example student halls of residence and purpose built student accommodation).

To make the adjustment for differences with the censuses, the household estimates for each council area are adjusted by the percentage difference between the number of households recorded in Scotland’s Census 2011 and 2022 and the number of occupied dwellings (adjusted from September to June) in the 2011 and 2022 Council Tax data. The census figures are adjusted from Census Day to June, by applying household information from the census (in the form of ‘headship rates’³) to the mid-year population estimates for 2011 and 2022. A straight-line interpolation between the percentage differences in 2011 and 2022 is then used to adjust the occupied dwellings figures from 2012 to 2021. Figures for 2023 onwards are adjusted by the percentage difference for 2022.

Incorporating information from the most recent (2022) census in the adjustment process described above resulted in revisions to the household estimates published previously for the years 2012 to 2022. For Scotland as a whole there was a downward revision which increased over time, from 0.2% in 2012 to 1.4% in 2022

³ A ‘headship rate’ is the proportion of adults within a particular age and gender group who are a ‘household reference person’ (HRP). The HRP for a household is defined as the oldest economically active person in a household, or the oldest person if there is no one who is economically active. Previously ‘head of household’ data was used in calculating headship rates. Switching to HRP resulted in some very minor revisions - less than 100 households at Scotland level - to the household estimates published previously for 2001 to 2011.

(Table 1). This reflected the impact of moving further away in time from the 2011 Census data used in the previous adjustment. The general downward revision compared with previously published estimates is believed in large part to reflect the 2022 Census taking better account of the significant increase there has been since the time of the 2011 Census in purpose built student accommodation ([Student housing research](#)). (While the previous adjustment did factor in some specific adjustments for student halls of residence, it is likely that this did not fully account for the steep increase in purpose built student accommodation.)

More information on the differences between NRS's household estimates (and projections) and household results from Scotland's Census 2022 can be found on the [Scotland's Census website](#).

The revisions in the 2022 estimates for council areas ranged from an upward revision of 0.9% for Aberdeenshire to a downward revision of 2.5% for Dundee City (Table 2).

Table 1 – Revisions to household estimates following 2022 Census, Scotland, 2012 to 2022

Year	Previous estimate (based on 2011 Census)	Revised estimate (based on 2022 Census)	Revised – previous (number)	Revised – previous (%)
2012	2,386,660	2,383,070	-3,590	-0.2
2013	2,400,342	2,393,456	-6,886	-0.3
2014	2,416,014	2,405,752	-10,262	-0.4
2015	2,429,943	2,417,066	-12,877	-0.5
2016	2,446,171	2,430,583	-15,588	-0.6
2017	2,462,736	2,445,399	-17,337	-0.7
2018	2,477,275	2,457,998	-19,277	-0.8
2019	2,495,623	2,473,364	-22,259	-0.9
2020	2,507,625	2,481,692	-25,933	-1.0
2021	2,528,823	2,498,127	-30,696	-1.2
2022	2,549,797	2,515,319	-34,478	-1.4

Table 2 – Revisions to household estimates following 2022 Census by council area, 2022

Area Name	Previous 2022 estimate (based on 2011 Census)	Revised 2022 estimate (based on 2022 Census)	Revised – previous (number)	Revised – previous (%)
Scotland	2,549,797	2,515,319	-34,478	-1.4%
Aberdeen City	109,827	109,720	-107	-0.1%
Aberdeenshire	114,897	115,892	995	0.9%
Angus	55,441	54,419	-1,022	-1.8%
Argyll and Bute	42,664	42,664	0	0.0%
City of Edinburgh	244,738	239,633	-5,105	-2.1%
Clackmannanshire	24,157	24,103	-54	-0.2%
Dumfries and Galloway	70,984	70,638	-346	-0.5%
Dundee City	71,701	69,933	-1,768	-2.5%
East Ayrshire	56,621	55,479	-1,142	-2.0%
East Dunbartonshire	47,131	46,479	-652	-1.4%
East Lothian	49,220	48,902	-318	-0.6%
East Renfrewshire	40,697	39,859	-838	-2.1%
Falkirk	73,646	72,567	-1,079	-1.5%
Fife	172,287	169,723	-2,564	-1.5%
Glasgow City	300,340	295,232	-5,108	-1.7%
Highland	111,633	111,890	257	0.2%
Inverclyde	38,218	37,394	-824	-2.2%
Midlothian	41,676	41,217	-459	-1.1%
Moray	43,995	43,480	-515	-1.2%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	12,986	12,717	-269	-2.1%
North Ayrshire	65,237	64,245	-992	-1.5%
North Lanarkshire	154,382	151,526	-2,856	-1.8%

Orkney Islands	10,799	10,664	-135	-1.3%
Perth and Kinross	71,103	70,033	-1,070	-1.5%
Renfrewshire	88,749	86,996	-1,753	-2.0%
Scottish Borders	55,660	55,629	-31	-0.1%
Shetland Islands	10,633	10,607	-26	-0.2%
South Ayrshire	52,920	52,538	-382	-0.7%
South Lanarkshire	151,587	148,124	-3,463	-2.3%
Stirling	40,609	40,417	-192	-0.5%
West Dunbartonshire	43,481	42,559	-922	-2.1%
West Lothian	81,779	80,042	-1,737	-2.1%

Estimates of occupied and vacant dwellings for 2011 Data Zones

The Ctaxbase report, which is used by NRS to produce household estimates for Scotland and its 32 council areas ([Table 1](#)), only provides figures at council area level. In order to produce statistics about occupied and vacant dwellings for smaller geographic areas, NRS collects equivalent data from Council Tax systems at postcode level. This collection is carried out in September each year to align with the timing of the Ctaxbase collection. The data are subsequently aggregated to 2011 Data Zone level. The resulting estimates for 2011 Data Zones and higher geographies are available from the [NRS website](#) and [statistics.gov.scot](#).

For a number of council areas, the totals from summing Data Zone figures do not exactly match the council area figures from Ctaxbase report. For example, some dwellings on the Council Tax systems have missing or invalid postcode information. In 2023, this varied from all dwellings in a council area having a valid postcode to around 0.1% of dwellings with missing or invalid postcodes. The postcode is used to identify the Data Zone, so a dwelling without a postcode will not be included in the Data Zone level figures. In most cases where there are differences, councils have confirmed that the Ctaxbase figures will be more accurate, so the Data Zone figures are constrained to the Ctaxbase totals for each council area.

A small number of councils have told us that the totalled Data Zone level figure for a particular category is more accurate than the Ctaxbase figure. In such cases, we use

the Data Zone data in both the neighbourhood statistics and council area household estimates.

New regulations on Council Tax for unoccupied properties were introduced in 2013. These have had an impact on the postcode level data collected by NRS and on the council area level data collected through Ctaxbase (although to a lesser extent). The new regulations gave councils the power to vary the charges applied to some vacant properties which were classed as 'long-term empty'. Many councils have now made changes to how they charge such properties, including introducing a levy. These changes have led to new categories being added to some billing systems which are not always properly picked up when our postcode level data is extracted. Some councils also struggled with how the data on such properties is extracted from their system, even when no new categories were introduced. Some councils experienced similar issues when extracting their Ctaxbase returns. This has had an impact on the quality of the postcode level data from 2013 onwards

Vacant dwellings and second homes

Clackmannanshire Council were unable to provide separate figures on second homes and vacant dwellings at council area until 2014. They were unable to provide separate figures at neighbourhood (Data Zone) level until 2015. Therefore all such properties were grouped under 'vacant' dwellings until 2014 at council area level and until 2015 at Data Zone level. Separate figures on second homes were not available for East Renfrewshire until 2012 and Renfrewshire until 2013. When comparing these figures with earlier years, second homes should be included in the 'vacant dwellings' category in order to have consistent figures for comparisons over time. As councils can now choose not to apply a council tax discount in relation to second homes it is possible that in future it will become more difficult to source statistical information on them from Council Tax systems. In 2017, figures on second homes were not available for Aberdeen City, City of Edinburgh and West Dunbartonshire. These were therefore estimated from data for 2016. However, for 2018 and 2019 only West Dunbartonshire was unable to provide second home data.

Scottish Assessors' Portal

The [Scottish Assessors](#) are responsible for valuing property for Council Tax purposes. They maintain their web-based [Scottish Assessors' Portal](#), which contains details of every dwelling in Scotland along with its Council Tax band.

NRS uses data from the Assessors' Portal to publish information on the number of dwellings in each Data Zone in Scotland along with information about their Council Tax bands. This information is based on an extract of the Assessors' Portal database taken around December or January each year.

Summary information on dwellings produced using data from the Assessors' Portal for 2022 is included in [Tables 8, 9 and 12](#) relating to this publication. Information for each Data Zone is available from the '[Small Area Statistics on Households and Dwellings](#)' section of the NRS website and will be made available through the [statistics.gov.scot](#) website. We tend to use the Assessors' Portal data, rather than our postcode level collection of Council Tax data, for the total number of dwellings in a Data Zone because every dwelling has been assigned a postcode and as a result can be allocated to a Data Zone. (As discussed above, a very small percentage of dwellings in the Council Tax data have missing or invalid postcodes and therefore cannot be assigned to a Data Zone). However, we use information from council tax records to produce estimates of number of dwellings in local authorities and Scotland as a whole ([Table 2](#)).

Definitions of dwelling types

Category	Description
All dwellings	This is the total number of dwellings on the Council Tax valuation list (excluding free-standing private lock-ups and garages). A 'dwelling' refers to the accommodation itself, for example a house or a flat, and includes second homes that are not let out commercially. Caravans count as dwellings if they are someone's main home.
Council Tax bands	Each dwelling is placed in one of eight Council Tax bands (A to H), with dwellings in band H being the most expensive. The Council Tax band reflects the Assessor's opinion of open market value, subject to a number of statutory assumptions. Assessors base their opinion of value on the actual selling prices of similar properties which sold around the valuation date of 1 April 1991. More information about this can be found on the Scottish Assessors' Association website.

Category	Description
Dwellings per hectare	This variable has been calculated by dividing the total number of dwellings by the area in hectares, as determined by a NRS in-house measure.
Type of dwelling (latest available data relates to 2017)	This information is based on 'attachment' – i.e. the type of property in relation to its degree of attachment to surrounding properties. This information has been aggregated into five categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detached; • semi-detached; • terraced; • flat, maisonette or apartment; and • not known – in some areas, this information is not available via the Assessors' Portal for every dwelling.
Number of rooms (latest available data relates to 2017)	In the Assessors' Portal, this is defined as the number of habitable rooms (usually bedrooms and living rooms). This is different to the census definition, which includes kitchens. There may be some differences between different Assessors in the way in which this information is recorded. For example, differences could arise in the treatment of open plan areas, dining rooms, kitchens and kitchenettes. <p>This information on number of rooms may not always represent the most up to date position. Assessors are only able to reflect physical changes and alterations to dwellings once they have been sold and a reconsideration of the banding has taken place.</p> <p>Information on the number of rooms is not available for most dwellings in Shetland. No information is separately available for dwellings with seven or more rooms in Dumfries and Galloway.</p>

As at June 2024, the most recent information on type of dwelling and number of rooms is for 2017.

Scottish Household Survey

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) is used to estimate the number of different types of households in Scotland as a whole ([Table 7](#)).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the approach for the SHS 2020 and 2021 was changed and survey fieldwork was carried out using remote interviewing. The results of the SHS 2020 and 2021 surveys are not directly comparable to SHS results for previous years. So it is not possible to determine whether differences between the results for 2020 and 2021 and those for previous years represent genuine changes in views and experiences, or are due to changes in how the survey was carried out. Data on household type for 2020 and 2012 have therefore not been presented in the table.

More information about the [impact of the SHS change in survey mode](#) is available on the Scottish Government website.

Labour Force Survey

Separate estimates of the number of households, household size and household composition for Scotland and other parts of the UK are available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). These estimates are available back to 1996 in the Office for National Statistics [Families and Households](#) release. They are based on the April to June quarter of the LFS and are the official national statistics on households for the UK. This survey has a large sample size, long time series and timeliness; the April to June quarter is used because it includes the mid-point of each year which provides consistency with the reference point for the mid-year population estimates.

4. Interpreting the data

NRS household estimates use data on occupied dwellings taken from Council Tax systems. Although an occupied dwelling is roughly equivalent to a household, the number of occupied dwellings can differ from the number of households recorded by the census. One reason is that some dwellings may be shared by more than one household; each household would be counted by the census but only the dwelling would be counted in Council Tax data. Another reason is that certain communal establishments (for example student halls of residence and purpose built student accommodation) will be included in the count of occupied dwellings from Council Tax systems but would not be classified as households in the census. The occupied dwellings figures are adjusted to account for differences between Council Tax data and the census. However, as we move further from the most recent (2022) census this may not fully account for the discrepancies. No such adjustment is applied to the Data Zone level data on occupied dwellings.

Household and dwelling estimates are drawn from administrative data sources relating to Council Tax. There are limitations in using administrative sources to produce statistics. Small differences can arise in the definitions used for various categories of households/dwellings in the administrative systems. It is also possible that not all information held on the systems is up-to-date. For example, councils may not be notified immediately of a change in the circumstances of a household which

affects eligibility for a Council Tax discount or exemption. Furthermore, it may take time for changes as a result of new building or demolition to be recorded.

Changes over time in categories of Council Tax discounts and exemptions can occur because a council has carried out a review and identified cases where a dwelling has been incorrectly categorised. This can sometime result in changes in the overall numbers of occupied and vacant dwellings. There can also be variations in the ways that some councils classify vacant properties and second homes between different years. Until 2013 the effect on the percentages of dwellings which are vacant or second homes each year in a council area would most likely have been small.

From 2013 onwards, many councils have carried out re-classification exercises of vacant dwellings and second homes, alongside making changes to their systems to reflect new legislation surrounding such properties introduced in 2013. The definitions of a second home and a vacant property classed as 'long-term empty' were also changed with the introduction of the new legislation, leading to some dwellings switching between these categories. Users are advised to note these differences when analysing the figures. In particular, changes in the rate of growth in household numbers from 2013 onwards are not simply due to growth in the number of dwellings. Instead they are also the result of apparent variations in the number of second homes and vacant properties. The reasons for the variations differ depending on the year but are largely due to re-classification of properties as a result of the 2013 legislation, either following a review of such properties or simply because their definitions have changed. As noted above there is also the recently surfaced issue around discrepancies in the data reported by local authorities on long-term empty data properties.

At Data Zone level, changes over time can occur not only as a result of new building activity and demolition, but also because of changes related to the postcodes of dwellings. Postcode changes can occur due to improvements made to administrative systems or to NRS data cleaning, resulting in the reallocation of postcodes to a corrected Data Zone. Differences can also occur when postcodes are allocated to a different Data Zone because the distribution of their population has changed. These differences are likely to be minimal and have only a small effect on change over time, except when looking at small numbers of Data Zones.

Rounding

At the end of the process for producing the estimates, the total number of households are rounded to the nearest unit at Scotland, council and Data Zone level.

In general all numbers quoted in the text of the publication report are rounded to the nearest hundred. Percentages are generally quoted to the nearest whole number, except where they are less than 5%.

Quality assuring the data

When the Household estimates team within NRS receives data from the various data sources, checks are carried out and comparisons made with data for previous years to gauge consistency and completeness of coverage. The data are then processed electronically to produce the household estimates. Quality assurance takes place at each stage of this process. This involves producing summaries of the data that each council has provided and seeking their comments on the summaries. This may include calculation of rates and ratios to help check the plausibility of the data.

5. 2011 Data Zones

The Scottish Government published a new set of Data Zone boundaries in November 2014⁴, based on the results of the 2011 Census. There is a total of 6,976 Data Zones covering the whole of Scotland. Aside from Scotland and council area, the geographies used for household and dwelling estimates are based on aggregations of these Data Zones. Unfortunately we cannot produce a back series of the neighbourhood data on occupied and vacant dwellings using the 2011 Data Zone boundaries. This is because until the 2014 collection, not all council areas provided us with postcode level information. We use postcode data as the building blocks for Data Zones, and so without that data we cannot re-aggregate up to 2011 Data Zones. However, as Assessors' Portal data is available at postcode level, we have been able to produce a back series of this data on dwellings, using the 2011 Data Zone boundaries. This [back series](#) was published in September 2021.

Following a boundary review, eight postcodes were transferred from Glasgow City to North Lanarkshire with effect from 1 April 2019. As a result Data Zone S01010117 (Garthamlock, Auchinlea and Gartloch – 05) was split between the two council areas

⁴ Scottish Government [Small Area Statistics Reference Material](#)

with approximately 150 dwellings transferring from Glasgow to North Lanarkshire. These dwellings have been correctly accounted for in the council totals but are still assigned to the S01010117 Data Zone in the small area data.

When using Data Zone level information on dwellings and households, changes over time can occur not only as a result of new building activity and demolition but also because of changes related to the postcodes of dwellings. Postcode changes can occur due to improvements made to administrative systems or NRS data cleaning, re-locating postcodes which were previously allocated to an incorrect Data Zones. Differences can also occur due to postcodes being allocated to a different Data Zone because the distribution of their population has changed. These differences are likely to be minimal and have only a small effect on change over time except when looking at small numbers of Data Zones. In 2022, this affects two Data Zones in Glasgow (S01010283 and S01010286). S01010286 sees the number of occupied dwellings spikes and S01010283 a large decrease in occupied dwellings. This is a fictitious event due to changes in the postcodes allocation for 2021.

6. Urban Rural classification

The Scottish Government produces an Urban Rural classification, which is based on settlement size defined by NRS and accessibility based on drive-time analysis. An Urban Rural classification is provided for each Data Zone in Scotland. 2011 Data Zones have been used as the building blocks for the Urban Rural analysis. This year's publication uses Scottish Government's latest [Urban Rural Classification 2020](#), which was published in May 2022.

There are six urban and rural classification categories, shown below:

Scottish Government Urban Rural classification	
1 Large Urban Areas	Settlements of 125,000 people and over.
2 Other Urban Areas	Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people.
3 Accessible Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more.

4 Remote Small Towns	Settlements of between 3,000 and 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
5 Accessible Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
6 Remote Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.

7. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SIMD) is produced by the Scottish Government to identify concentrations of deprivation across Scotland in a consistent way. It is based on 38 indicators in seven domains: Current Income, Employment, Health, Education Skills and Training, Geographic Access to Services, Housing and Crime. A SIMD rank is produced for every Data Zone in Scotland. Based on this, the SIMD deciles are produced, from one (most deprived) to ten (least deprived).

This publication uses the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 (SIMD 2020), building up estimates for each SIMD decile using Data Zone level information.

8. Related publications and websites

Other information about household-related topics can be found in a number of related publications and websites.

Statistics.gov.scot

The statistics.gov.scot website contains information from this publication at Data Zone level. This includes the number of dwellings by Council Tax Band available for [2001 Data Zones](#), and 2011 Data Zones (as [a summary](#) and as [a detailed downloadable dataset](#)), [type of dwelling](#), [number of rooms per dwelling](#), [density of housing](#) and the [percentage of dwellings](#) which are occupied, vacant, second homes, entitled to a 'single adult' Council Tax discount, or an 'occupied exemption'. The

statistics are available for 2001 Data Zones, 2011 Data Zones and aggregations of these Data Zones.

National Records of Scotland

National Records of Scotland (NRS) [Household Projections](#) are forward projections of the number of households in Scotland and each council area, for a 25 year period, broken down by household type and age group. The latest set of projections (2018-based) was published in September 2020.

NRS population estimates and projections can be found in the '[Population](#)' section of the NRS website.

Scotland's Census

Results and information about Scotland's Census are available from the [Scotland's Census](#) website. The initial results from Scotland's Census 2022 were published in September 2023. Further releases of census data tables, topic reports and other output products are scheduled for May 2024 onwards. More information about this is available from the [census outputs schedule](#).

Scottish Government

The Scottish Government produces a range of statistics on housing in Scotland, including the number of new homes built each year and numbers of conversions and demolitions. These statistics are available from the [Housing Statistics for Scotland](#) website, and include an annual summary of the key trends in housing.

Scottish Government [Planning Statistics](#), which include data on vacant and derelict land, can also be found on the Scottish Government website.

[Local Government Finance](#) statistics are available from the Scottish Government website. They include the 'Ctaxbase' form which is used as the basis for some of the statistics included in this publication.

Up-to-date information on the State of the Economy and a Monthly Economic Brief for Scotland can be found in the [Economy](#) section of the Scottish Government website.

Centre for Housing Market Analysis

The [Centre for Housing Market Analysis](#) (CHMA) is part of the Scottish Government's Communities Analysis Division. It provides support to councils and others to aid the strategic planning of housing in Scotland.

The CHMA's collates a range of statistics on house prices, housing market activity, cost and availability of finance and repossessions in the quarterly '[Scottish Housing Market Review](#)'.

Across the UK

The other UK countries produce estimates of households and dwellings (sometimes referred to as stock estimates) for their own areas. Guidance about the coherence and comparability on household estimates and projections for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland is available in a [User Guide](#) on the ONS website.