



Draft National Records of Scotland (NRS) Statistics Plan 2015-16

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1 Introduction

Population statistics and analysis are used for managing the economy, resource allocation and planning, measuring government performance against its targets and the delivery of local government and health services. They are important in measuring societal and demographic change.

The population is continuously changing. The number of births and deaths changes from year to year as does the level of migration: both in and out of the UK and within the UK. These changes have a fundamental impact on society and the economy and are of immense interest to policy makers, the media and the public.

There are also a wide range of datasets that can be used to estimate different components of the population. Some of these sources of information are register-based such as births and deaths data and these tend to be very accurate. Other sources of information are survey-based, such as the International Passenger Survey used to estimate international migration, and have a degree of uncertainty around them.

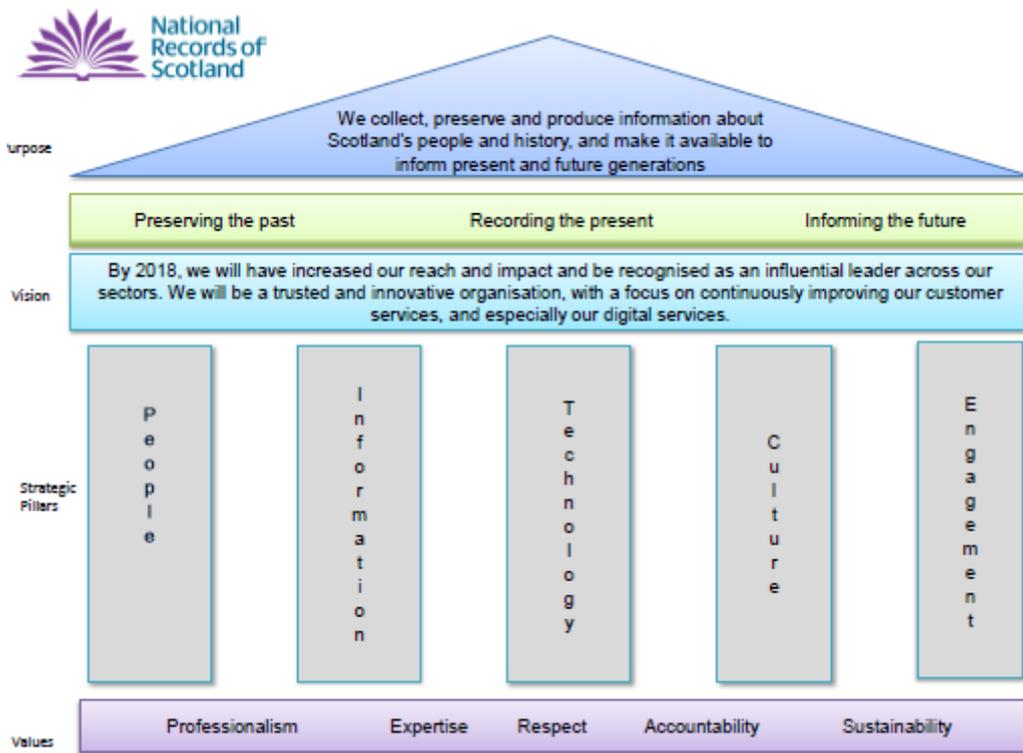
In addition, more administrative data is becoming available which can provide valuable information on subsets of the population.

This is an exciting time for population statistics. A review into the options for the next Census (the Beyond 2011 programme) has now made its initial recommendation – an online Census backed up by continuing research into using admin data to help measure the population. There is also considerable interest in migration statistics. Policy Makers across Central and Local Government are becoming more aware of how population statistics can inform policy decisions in topics such as ageing, pensions, the economy and the distribution of services across the country.

This plan sets out our statistical work planned for the next three years and includes information on: priorities; statistical publications; and improvement activities.

2 National Records of Scotland (NRS) and statistics area vision

The purpose and vision for NRS are shown below :-



The key themes are

- Increasing reach and impact
- customer focus
- digital services
- professionalism

Following on from this the vision for the statistics area is :-

To produce high quality, fit for purpose, population and socio demographic statistics and analysis, by linking data and bringing together statistics to provide new insights, with highly skilled and motivated staff recognising the changing environment we work in and the need for continuous improvement.

This ties in with the ten year vision for the future of statistics in Scotland which is:-

The Scottish public sector is one where analytical skill and thinking permeates organisations, ensuring that they understand, and make decisions informed by, high quality evidence. The Scottish Statistical System is at the heart of that process and is internationally respected for the relevance and integrity of its contribution.

In planning for the work of statistics in NRS, account has also been taken of the National Performance Framework and Single Outcome Agreements - many of the indicators for which are underpinned by NRS statistics.

3 Key drivers between now and 2018 – why our statistics are important

The following key areas will be particularly relevant to population and socio demographic statistics over the next three years and will drive the work we do:

- **2021 Census**

The ten yearly census has a 210 year history. Since 1801, every household in Scotland has been required by law to respond to a series of questions about the household and people within. The result has been the production of an unparalleled source of consistent and comparable information about the population, household characteristics, housing and occupations. The census is highly valued by government local authorities, public bodies, business, the voluntary sector, academic researchers, commentators and individuals. For genealogists and historians, household responses from the ten yearly census are a key source, when released after 100 years, to support family or social history research.

Population and housing statistics, particularly small area and small population statistics, underpin the allocation of millions of pounds of public spending each year at the national and local level. They are fundamental to policy formulation, decision making, research and outcome monitoring across the public, private and voluntary sectors. They also underpin the allocation of European regional aid and enable the UK to fulfil international obligations. The need for population and housing statistics is unquestioned. Population statistics are at the heart of the wider statistical system; they are used not just for estimates of the numbers and characteristics of people but also underpin numerous other statistics. For example, economic statistics are often expressed as rates in relation to population - the unemployment rate, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.

Despite the history and value of the census, it is important to regularly review what population information is needed, and if a ten yearly census is the best way to meet changing information needs. Over the last couple of years, National Records of Scotland (NRS) carried out a review of the future of population statistics in Scotland - the Beyond 2011 Programme. This programme has now closed and The Registrar General reported to the Scottish Parliament in March 2014 that he intends to carry out a modernised Census in 2021 which will be predominantly online, but with other options available as well. This recommendation recognises that there still is a need for the ten yearly cycle but that in planning for the 2021 Census there is a need to take account of:

- Changes in technology, in particular the opportunities offered by the internet, enabling a move away from a traditional paper based census.
- An increasingly rapidly changing society meaning a stronger demand for more frequent data on the number and make-up of the population.

- Improvements in administrative data sources (such as the patient register) giving the potential for their increased use in the production of statistics.
- The need to make the most effective use of public money.
- An increasingly rapidly changing society meaning a stronger

- **Administrative data sources**

NRS has been exploring the potential of linking together already existing administrative data sets – for example from the health service, or education (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data). There is no doubt that there is real potential for statistical and research purposes from doing more to link together datasets, and NRS will continue to explore that. The use of administrative data has already improved the way that we estimate international immigration at the local level. NRS will continue to seek opportunities to use more administrative data in its population statistics and to understand better the quality of administrative data used. In particular, we will seek to develop our use of data from the NHS Central Register (NHSCR) and HESA systems.

- **The digital world and social media**

Technology and the digital world are evolving at a great pace. The way that population statistics are accessed varies and it is vital that they are produced and disseminated in a way that remains responsive to this changing digital landscape. The audience for population statistics continues to grow and innovative products that will make use of the latest technology will be developed to provide our audience with the data they need in a format that can be used for their purposes.

We recognise that an increasing number of users want increased flexibility when using our data. They require population statistics for a variety of geographic areas and for different groups within the population.

- **Demographic Changes**

The structure of the Scottish and UK population is changing. The population is ageing and migration patterns are changing. This means that the provision of services at both the national and local levels needs reliable and robust data to inform long-term and short-term decision and policy making. In particular, our statistics and analysis will inform debate on several key topics including:

- **Ageing:** this has an impact on pensions and health care provision.
- **Migration:** international migration is high on the public agenda. Net migration is a key component of population growth and it underpins the Government's population target. Consequently, there is a lot of media and political interest in the net migration figures.
- **Increased urbanisation:** more people are moving to the cities. The proportion of the population living in built up areas has steadily increased over time.
- **Population Statistics for groups of the population with different characteristics.**

4 Objectives for 2015/2016 to 2017/2018 – what we are planning to do

A key priority for us is to increase the reach and impact of our statistics by having a customer focus, consulting regularly with our users, producing high quality professionally produced statistics which provide insights, and disseminating outputs in innovative ways.

As a National Statistics producer, National Records of Scotland (NRS) is a member of the Scottish Government statistics service and therefore also a member of the UK wide Government Statistical Service (GSS).

All statistics publications in NRS adhere to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which is a prescribed set of practices and protocols for producing government statistics. All National Statistics publications in NRS have been assessed over the last three years to ensure that they meet the code of practice. Because of the vital importance of population statistics, they have been reassessed in 2014/15 as part of the continuing process of quality assurance by the UK Statistics Authority.

[Assessment reports](#) can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website.

Continuous improvement is an integral part of the National Performance Framework and the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics. We are always trying to improve the way that we meet the needs of users, to ensure that our statistics are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards and to ensure that the statistics are well explained.

The work detailed below sets out what we plan to do to take forward the production of high quality socio-demographic statistics. It focuses on our on-going regular statistical production and the improvements that we will seek to make. It does not detail the work which will be carried out for the 2021 Census. We are still at the initiation stage of this large programme of work and will produce further information on the objectives and outputs throughout the year.

We plan to:-

- Engage with other colleagues, stakeholders and users to ensure that we understand their current and future needs and that we work to meet those needs and ensuring that our stakeholders are aware, and engaged with the statistical work of NRS.
- To investigate ways to improve our digital engagement and investigate ways to improve the dissemination methods of our statistics.
- To review the content of the Register General Annual Report for 2015.
- To provide informed advice and analysis to support uses of our statistics, through liaison with policy colleagues, Ministers, key users, user groups, publication in journals and presentations.
- Contribute to UK wide projects on: improving migration statistics, population estimates and population projections.

- Develop new infographics and data visualisations and to investigate ways to exploit the latest technologies and methods to improve the effectiveness of our dissemination.
- Develop a new Vital Events information technology (IT) system to improve data processing, take account of the forthcoming changes to the arrangements for the certification of death, improve efficiency and provide scope for improving data quality.
- Develop methods for revising population estimates for Councils, NHS Boards and data zones using the 2011 census and other data (e.g. estimation of the number of Armed Forces and investigation of improved sources of internal, cross-border and international migration).
- Work with pilot local authorities and health boards to help improve population and household estimates.
- Improve the methodology for mid-year estimates.
- Review the methods and systems used to produce sub-national population projections, taking into account changes made in the national methodology by Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- Support local authorities in using popgroup software to produce their own local area population projections.
- Develop methods for future quality indicators for population estimates.
- Continue to work collaboratively with the Centre for Population Change, an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded project involving a consortium of Scottish universities and Southampton University.
- Develop Census 2011 microdata products and progress access to secure data through a safe haven.
- Provide a service for commissioned census outputs.
- Develop further census topic reports.
- Improve the Census Data Explorer website.
- Investigating the potential of a range of sources of administrative data to contribute to the development of more efficient systems for population statistics.
- Investigate new sources of administrative data to contribute to the improvement in quality of population and household statistics - for example, using Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data.
- Continue to work with the Boundary Commission for Scotland to provide improved quality assurance for the annual Electoral Statistics publication.
- Continue to work with the Scottish Assessors' Association Electoral Registration Committee to improve the exchange of information.
- Continue work to produce an address spine in order to support Census and Data Linking.
- Continuing to work with the Data Linkage Framework to improve the data linkage landscape.
- Develop a standardised data sharing agreement for use across NRS and developing a common approach to data sharing across NRS including the use of Secure File Exchange.
- To have a coordinated approach to data access and privacy.
- To develop our approaches to data linkage and safe access to data in a collaborative, proportionate and risk managed manner across our three key linkage projects to facilitate legal, ethical and public value research.
- Improve the quality of the NHS Central Register (NHSCR) and increasing the capacity to carry out and support data linkage projects.

- Develop the use of the NHSCR as the basis for creating a population spine for use in data linkage projects as well as exploring its further use in other projects.
- Implement improvements to the Geography section of our website, including incorporating 2011 Census geography information.
- Maintain and develop postcode and address systems in Geography and a Geography Strategy for NRS.
- Continue to develop the Scottish Longitudinal Survey, linking the data from the 2011 Census and the 1947 Scottish Mental Survey and seeking out other potential sources of data.
- Extend the reach and impact of the Scottish Health and Ethnicity Longitudinal study through wider engagement with potential users.
- To ensure that we have business continuity plans in place for each significant service or product allowing us to continue to operate selected services during and following a disruption.
- To take part in a range of continuous improvement activities at individual, team and business area level.

4.1 Customer focus – how we plan to deliver

In addition to taking into account requirements for the National Performance Framework and Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs), we consider the needs of a wide range of statistics users when planning our work and users are consulted about priorities and potential developments.

NRS engages with our users in three main ways through consultation, events and seminars, and through continued stakeholder liaison. This may be through face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, email, or more recently through online platforms and social media.

4.1.1 Consultation and steering groups

NRS has a core set of consultation groups that are used in an advisory capacity. These contain users from a range of different backgrounds, including local authorities and health boards, for example¹:

- [Population and Migration Statistics \(PAMS\) Committee](#) (main ScotStat user committee)
- [Small Area Population Estimates \(SAPE\) Working Group](#)
- [Household Analysis Review Group \(HARG\)](#)

More information on our main consultation groups is available on the NRS website.

There are also specific steering groups that are used to address issues for example

- 2011/2021 Census Programme Boards
- UK Census Harmonisation Committee
- UK Census Committee
- NHSCR governance board
- National Forum on Drug-Related Deaths and the Scottish Suicide Information Database Steering Group

¹ This is not a comprehensive list but is used to illustrate ways in which we engage.

- 14 separate working groups forming part of the International Census Forum.
- UK Population Theme Advisory Board

To make our data more accessible, a key function of the NRS statistical areas is to provide advice on the use and understanding of its statistics. A user group for POPGROUP software continues to meet to improve the information and guidance available for users to produce their own small area projections.

NRS also provides ongoing ad-hoc statistical advice to internal and external colleagues, and other users of demographic data.

4.1.2 Regular events and seminars

NRS regularly take part or attend the following events, for example¹:

- PAMS biennial conference
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) annual Festival of Social Science Event
- British Society for Population Studies (BSPS) annual conference and other events
- Scottish Local Area Research & Intelligence Association (LARIA) annual conference.
- Royal Statistical Society annual conference

A conference focusing on uses of the 2011 census was held on 25 June 2014 and we have run in excess of 30 (to check) events promoting and supporting the use of 2011 Census data. NRS also takes part in informal seminars, talks etc, which are used as another method to engage with users of our information.

4.1.3 Liaising with Stakeholders

We meet regularly and communicate with a range of public sector and academic organisations on a range of issues, for example¹:

- Scottish Government (SG) policy and analytical staff
- Information Services Division (ISD) of NHS National Services Scotland
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Office for National Statistics (ONS), Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

We also use the ScotStat register, the Census mailing list, NRS Twitter feed (@NatRecScot) and the Knowledge Hub to update users on our publications, upcoming events and consultations.

4.2 Dissemination

All the standard tables from the 2011 census have now been published with more detailed analyses and commissioned tables still being produced. The prospectus presents plans for future releases of Scotland's 2011 Census results. It describes what results are included

within each of the releases and sets out indicative timings for future releases and topic reports. The latest version of the outputs prospectus is available from [Scotland's Census](#) website.

Additional information, including specific dates for [future publications](#) where known, is also provided on the NRS website.

[Statistics at a Glance](#) provides information on key statistical trends, including

[High Level Summary of Statistics](#) - overview of each of our main areas of activity

[Council Area Profiles](#) - overview of each of the 32 council areas in Scotland

The [About Our Statistics](#) section of the NRS website also provides more information about the background to official statistics and the policies and practices used to produce them.

The key statistics outputs for 2015/16 will remain the Population and Household Estimates, Migration Statistics, Population and Household Projections and Vital Events. Demographic Analysis and topic reports from the 2011 Census will continue and the Scottish longitudinal study database will be maintained and extended. Data linkage projects will be supported through the indexing service. A list of planned publications is given in Annex A.

Some of our key outputs over the next few years will be the research findings and plans for the 2021 census.

5 Comments

Our statistical planning is a continuous process, and we place strong emphasis on taking into account the views of the people who use our data. A draft of this plan will be discussed with some representatives of users of our statistics from the Population and Migration Statistics Committee (PAMS). Further information about the committee can be found within the [User consultations, groups and seminars](#) section of the National Records of Scotland (NRS) website. The final version will be circulated to members of the ScotStat Register (available on the Scottish Government website) who have indicated an interest in Demographic and Population Statistics, including the census. If you wish to comment on this plan, please contact:

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National Records of Scotland (NRS) Statistical Publications (2015-16)

A list of planned publications for 2015-16 is below.

April

Electoral Statistics, Scotland, March 2015
Mid-Year Population Estimates, Mid 2014

June

Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2014
Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, first quarter 2015
Monthly Data on Deaths Registered in Scotland, first quarter 2015
Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, first quarter 2015
Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, May 2015
Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, May 2015

July

Total Migration To Or From An Area, Mid 2014 update
Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, June 2015
Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, June 2015

August

Deaths from various causes, 2014
Drug-related deaths in Scotland, 2014
Local Area Migration, 2014 update
Population By Country of Birth and Nationality for Scottish Areas, 2014
The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends, 2014
Small Area Population Estimates, Mid-2011, Mid-2012, Mid-2013 and Mid-2014 Estimates for new data zones
Vital Events Reference Tables, 2014
Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, July 2015
Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, July 2015

September

Population Estimates for Scottish Centenarians, 2004 - 2014
Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, second quarter 2015
Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, August 2015
Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, August 2015

October

Life Expectancy for Areas in Scotland, 2012-2014
Winter Mortality in Scotland, 2014/15
Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, September 2015
Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, September 2015

November

Projected Population of Scotland, 2014-based
Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, October 2015
Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, October 2015

December

Babies' First Names, 2015

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, third quarter 2015

Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, November 2015

Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, November 2015

January 2016

Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, December 2015

Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, December 2015

February

Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, January 2016

Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, January 2016

March

Projected Population of Scotland, Projections for Scottish Areas, 2014-based

Babies' First Names, 2015 (full lists)

Most Common Surnames in Birth, Marriage and Death registers, 2015

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, 2015 (preliminary)

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, fourth quarter 2015

Monthly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, February 2016

Weekly Data on Births and Deaths Registered in Scotland, February 2016

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