



# **Scotland's Census 2011 Equality Impact Assessment**

**A report by  
The General Register Office for Scotland**

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## 1. Introduction to policy

- 1.1 Since 1801, a census of the Scottish population has been taken every 10 years, the only exception being 1941, during the Second World War. The last one was carried out on 29 April 2001. A census provides essential information from national to neighbourhood level for government, business and the community. It is the most complete source of information about the population. As the only survey which provides a detailed picture of the entire population, it is unique because it covers everyone at the same time and asks the same core questions of everyone. This makes it possible to compare different parts of the country and identify small areas, and small groups of the population, with distinct characteristics. Despite the enormously increased demand for information about population characteristics in recent years, no satisfactory alternative source of such basic data has been developed yet. The census remains the only comprehensive consistent source of national and local data about people and their key characteristics, and about housing.
- 1.2 The uses to which the data collected have been put have become more sophisticated over the years. The output of the census is used extensively by national and local government; by the NHS; by commercial companies; by voluntary organisations; by academia and by the general public. It provides not only statistics on the basic characteristics of population units – age and sex – and on the make up of households and families, but also provides the opportunity for more sophisticated multivariate analysis. The ability to analyse data covering a wide range of variables at small area or postcode level is particularly valued. Currently the census provides the only comprehensive source of such data.
- 1.3 Scottish Ministers have decided that, subject to the approval of the Scottish Parliament, the next Scottish census should be taken on Sunday 27 March 2011. Censuses are also planned to be taken on the same day in the rest of the UK. Further information is available in [Scotland's 2011 Census – A Government Statement](#), published in December 2008 by the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS).
- 1.4 The aims of Scotland's 2011 Census are to:
- build public confidence and encourage participation in the census, thereby maximising response rates nationally, locally and among sub-groups of the population;
  - provide complete, accurate and accessible population statistics, which meet user requirements, on a consistent and comparable basis nationally and for small areas and small population groups;
  - protect, and be seen to protect, confidential personal census information; and
  - provide value for money.
- 1.5 There are a number of planned key 2011 Census design features.
- Enumeration of everyone usually resident in Scotland on census night, with a subset of information also collected from visitors present on census night.
  - Information will also be collected from residents in communal establishments such as hotels and army barracks, and people with no usual address.
  - About 95% of questionnaires will be delivered by specially-recruited enumerators, with the remainder (mostly in rural areas) being delivered by post.

- Most households will have the option of completing the questionnaire online (the first time this service has been provided for the Scottish census), or returning their questionnaire by post (in a reply paid envelope) or by giving it to their enumerator.
- Enumerators will be able to provide general guidance and assistance on the doorstep and extra help will be available to people who have difficulty completing the questionnaire, including an internet help facility, a telephone helpline, language support (via the helpline and on the doorstep) and a number of special initiatives for people who face special difficulties, such as blind people.
- The questionnaire will have four pages per person (an increase from three in 2001), to accommodate a slight increase in the number of 'individual' questions and to give more response options for some other questions.
- In order to help ensure that coverage is comprehensive, basic information about visitors will also be collected.
- The questionnaire has been redesigned to reduce the amount of time and effort needed to complete it; to make it easier to complete; and with the font size maximised wherever possible.
- The main proposed differences from the questions asked in 2001 will be:
  - a new question on long term health conditions;
  - the inclusion of civil partnerships in the marital status question;
  - a considerably revised question on ethnicity;
  - a new question on national identity;
  - questions seeking more information on language ability;
  - only one question about religion (dropping the 2001 question about religion of upbringing); and
  - no questions about bath/shower/toilet, lowest floor level or furnished/unfurnished rental.
- Stringent confidentiality and security procedures will protect the information gathered in the census.
- To encourage public co-operation on which the census relies, publicity will explain the purpose and value of the census and give assurances about the confidentiality with which the information is treated.
- Care will be taken to maximise, and measure effectively, the quality of the information collected: in particular, coverage and quality surveys will be carried out following the census to measure the number of people who have not been counted and the quality of the responses.
- The statistical outputs from the census will be designed to meet user needs, and disseminated to a pre-announced timetable.

1.6 The Census (Scotland) Order 2010 was approved in April 2010. The Regulations to support the Order cleared the parliamentary process thereafter.

## **2. United Kingdom Harmonisation Agreement**

2.1 GROS works closely with the UK's other census offices (the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which runs the census in England and Wales, and the Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA)) to ensure that consistent UK-wide census results will be available where there is user demand and to gather as much evidence as possible to ensure the questions proposed for the 2011 Census are clear and robust. The Registrars General for Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the National Statistician for England and Wales have agreed (subject to the need for

approval where appropriate by the relevant legislature) to conduct censuses simultaneously in 2011 which are as harmonised as possible subject to the need to reflect specific needs in each country. Further details regarding the principles and harmonised aspects can be found on the [GROS website](#).

### 3. Census Design

3.1 Design of the questionnaire for Scotland's 2011 Census has been influenced by the following:

- the requirement of users of census data to have comparable results between censuses;
- joint topic-by-topic work on questions with the ONS, NISRA and the Scottish Government (SG);
- formal public consultation in 2004 and 2007;
- the results of the 2006 Census Test and the 2009 Census Rehearsal: and
- lessons learnt from 2001.

In addition the simplicity of the wording of the questionnaire has been tested and assessed by the Plain English Campaign.

3.2 Consultation has played an important part in the design and content of Scotland's 2011 Census, to establish the demands and requirements of users of census statistics. Consultation has gathered the views of community groups and members of the public – because the census questions must be widely acceptable to people who are expected to fill in the questionnaire.

3.3 Formal consultation documents, on the entire census process, were published by the GROS in [Autumn 2004](#) and in [Spring 2007](#). Views were invited to be submitted in writing and during a series of meetings across Scotland.

3.4 In addition to these formal consultations many activities are undertaken to ensure census users' views are taken into account. These include consultation with focus groups throughout Scotland to determine the quality and acceptability of proposed new questions.

3.5 These focus groups include, among others, representatives of:

- elderly people;
- young people;
- religious/faith views; and
- rural communities.

3.6 As an ongoing part of the consultation, GROS meet with a number of people and organisations with specialist knowledge. These meetings help us to understand the needs of both census users and hard to count groups. Some of the groups we have met include:

- blind and partially sighted people – a request in 2006 for blind and partially sighted people to tell us how they would like to complete their census questionnaire in 2011;

- deaf and deaf blind people – a discussion in May 2007 about current plans for census topics/questions and community engagement for the 2011 Census;
  - gypsy/travellers – SG studies and independent surveys have shown that this group tends to be under-enumerated in the census. Working with the community and their representatives since 2004 to develop methodologies and questions that will help enumerate them properly in the forthcoming census.
  - disabled people – meetings with representatives from all the major disability organisations working in Scotland to find out how to improve methods of communication and questions for people with long term impairments.
- 3.7 GROS has worked with the SG on the topic of ethnicity, to develop the best question not only for the forthcoming census but also for use in other surveys. This has involved extensive consultation over several years (formal and informal), with minority ethnic groups and community leaders as well as with the public and data users.

## 4. Census Outputs

- 4.1 A further formal consultation with users was carried out in spring 2010 to seek their views on the more detailed plans and methods currently being considered to disseminate the 2011 Census results. A summary analysis of the consultation responses will be published on the GROS website in autumn 2010. The consultation responses included a number of suggestions from users for cross-tabulating the new questions on national identity, long-term health conditions and languages with other census variables. These suggestions will be taken into account in the detailed design and specification of standard census outputs.
- 4.2 Census information is vital to the government, local authorities, other public bodies, (including the voluntary sector) NHS boards, academic researchers, commercial business and professional organisations, community groups and the general public for research, decision making, shaping policy and planning services. Examples of how census information can be used in the context of equality include:
- equalities monitoring – providing baseline information on the population’s age, sex, ethnicity, religion and levels of disability in order to identify the extent and nature of disadvantage, and for government and local authorities to measure the success of equal opportunities policies;
  - linking this data with other census information, for example on qualifications and socio-economic status, to identify causes of deprivation; and
  - identifying areas of Scotland where deprivation exists so that effort can be targeted on improving circumstances.
- 4.3 The following strands of equality have the potential to be impacted by new questions being asked.
- Age and Disability – the new ‘long term health condition’ question will provide information about long-term problems (including those associated with old age).
  - Gender – potential positive impact as gender information will be gathered on the whole population to provide valuable information for user groups.
  - Sexual orientation – the marital status question will include categories for registered same-sex civil partnerships.

- Race – the new ‘ethnicity’ question is aimed to provide a more detailed breakdown of ethnic groups and so give government and others better baseline information for monitoring possible disadvantage. In addition the new ‘national identity’ question will, in combination with the ‘ethnicity’ question, allow people to better express their sense of identity.
- Religion & Belief – this question will provide comparable data with the outputs from the 2001 Census, the first time a question on religion had been included in Scotland’s Census.

## 5. Collecting the information (enumeration)

5.1 The data collection operation is the public face of the census. It involves the delivery of census questionnaires and their collection once completed – as well as a range of tasks including the recruitment of around 7000 field staff (enumerators and their managers) to ensure that householders complete a census questionnaire and are offered support if needed.

5.2 It is becoming increasingly difficult to make contact with households. This can be attributed to:

- an ageing population;
- growing numbers of single person households;
- changing work patterns;
- increase in access security systems;
- a less compliant society; and
- growing numbers of migrants.

In some areas the difficulty is increased by multi-occupancy in dwellings and incomplete address lists. Ensuring that every household gets a census questionnaire and is motivated to complete it is, therefore, more important than ever in the strategy and planning of data collection.

5.3 The 2011 Census in Scotland will be carried out in much the same way as the last census in 2001, with the notable innovation for 2011 of the option to reply online to the census questionnaire.

5.4 Specific links have been established with groups which can help ensure that the census is accessible to the whole community, including the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, the Royal National Institute for the Blind, minority ethnic groups and representatives of gypsy travellers and other communities which, the experience of previous censuses suggests, have not in the past been fully enumerated.

5.5 Action taken to improve the collection of data from all groups of society is summarised below.

- Recruitment of field staff – uses the SG guidelines on recruitment, which follow employment legislation.
- Advertising - One vital aspect of the role of the census enumerators is to engage with the people in their enumeration district. It is therefore beneficial to the census that the field staff are representative of Scotland’s diverse population. As well as advertising in the national and local press, adverts are carried in ethnic publications and websites which carry advertising. In addition census regional managers (the top management layer of the census field force) will liaise with

- local ethnic groups, as appropriate, to promote the opportunities for part-time census work and encourage applications from these groups.
- Applications are made online through the GROS website which gives visually impaired people access to text enhancements and screen readers. In accordance with age equality legislation, the application form does not ask the applicant for their date of birth. The job description will provide potential applicants with information regarding the physical aspects of the job to allow them to make an informed decision on their ability to carry out the required tasks.
  - Interviews - Disabled applicants have the right to request an automatic interview. Interviews will, so far as possible, be carried out by a gender balanced panel of two people, asking a mix of competency-based and hypothetical questions. A group exercise is also being considered.
- 5.6 A standard pay rate for each level of field staff has been identified by GROS which complies with (and exceeds) minimum wage legislation and is expected to attract the desired number of good quality applications.
- 5.7 Enumeration procedures have been designed to provide the field staff with the information and training they will require to aid the whole population of Scotland to complete their census questionnaire. The 7000 field staff will be made aware of the different tools available to help them identify instances where assistance is required and to allow this to be offered.
- language identification cards. These are designed to tell the non English speaker about the census and to allow the householder to identify to the enumerator the language for which they may require support;
  - access to large print questionnaires;
  - access to translated questionnaires; and
  - guidance can be sought from field managers and GROS headquarters.
- 5.8 Training events will be held for all field staff and a DVD and CD Rom will be produced. This will provide field staff with access to different methods of training and to allow them to reinforce and revise their training at their own pace. The training DVD will provide the field staff with examples of the types of scenarios that may occur.
- 5.9 Community liaison – There has been a programme of liaison to target groups traditionally poorly enumerated in the census, with the aim of improving response rates from these groups. In the 2006 test a well-developed community liaison network was put in place which engaged the appropriate SG agencies, the local authorities, ethnic communities and organisations representing groups such as asylum seekers who were known to be housed in the test area at the time. Frequent contact with the gypsy/traveller community was a strong feature of this network. The 2009 Census Rehearsal built on this work. Contact was also made with rough sleeper groups, women’s refuges, and Age Concern. A census regional manager wrote an article for the latter’s publication. Links will be maintained and built on for 2011.
- 5.10 As a result of this work it is planned to include for 2011:
- enumeration of women’s refuges – working very closely with groups to maintain confidentiality;

- a schools project, to promote the census and make young people more aware of the benefits, in the hope that they will encourage their parents to participate, and do so themselves in later years;
- special arrangements for students, prisoners and others who reside in communal establishments;
- enumeration of rough sleepers; and
- special arrangements for Royal households, the Ministry of Defence and Consulate Generals.

5.11 Householders will have the opportunity to complete their questionnaire online, for the first time in a Scottish census. The online questionnaire was trialled during the 2009 rehearsal and achieved, without a huge publicity drive, an 11% response rate. It has been designed to conform to usability and accessibility standards and aims to minimise the time burden on respondents, improve data quality and reduce the load on the data capture element of 2011 Census processing. It is an important new development in the data collection process for Scotland's Census 2011. The website is designed to have the following features:

- compatibility with screen readers, for the internet public assistance area of the website and to allow completion of the questionnaire for the blind or visually impaired members of the population;
- census questionnaire translated into 11 languages other than English, available via PDF documents;
- census questions translated into British Sign Language in video form (useful as an aid to those completing online, but also able to be downloaded as an aid for people who require assistance but will complete a paper questionnaire);
- use of an accessible font.

5.12 The telephone helpline will provide assistance to the whole population of Scotland in completing their census questionnaire. Special arrangements will be made to provide additional support to groups identified by the community liaison team as follows:

- language support – the use of a real time three-way interpretation service (the provider for the 2009 rehearsal had the capability to provide 300 languages, a similar service will be procured for 2011);
- a text phone service was provided in the 2009 rehearsal to support the hearing impaired population. Introduction of a typetalk service for 2011 will provide a professional service to users; and
- telephone data capture arrangements will be available for members of the population who are unable to complete the questionnaire themselves on paper or online and will be publicised via the community liaison programme.

5.13 A campaign to promote the census to the whole population of Scotland will be implemented. Professional media companies have been engaged to assist with the plans and to design the best ways of engaging with the people of Scotland. Census regional managers will engage with appropriate media in their local areas. Key points that the campaign will highlight are:

- the benefits census information gives to the SG, Local Authorities and other users of census data, and thus to the population at large, in terms of better government and planning; and

- the legal obligation householders are under to complete their census questionnaire.

## **6. Impact assessment**

- 6.1 The benefits of Scotland's 2011 Census materialise when the census outputs are used by government, local authorities, NHS boards the education and academic community, commercial businesses, professional organisations, voluntary organisations and the public at large. Up-to date census information is crucial to all of these groups in their decision making; from informing government policy to academic research, and targeting resources in the NHS and local authorities, to commercial businesses making business decisions (for example, the site for a new supermarket). Census information is especially important where it is the unique source, or where it is the only source of information about individual small areas and sub-groups of the population.
- 6.2 The government, in particular, needs this kind of information to form policy, to plan services for specific groups of people and to distribute resources effectively to local authorities and NHS boards, in a way which matches needs. The information must be authoritative, accurate and comparable for all parts of Scotland. Only a census can provide such a range of information on a uniform basis.
- 6.3 The GROS policy of engagement with traditionally hard to count groups to tackle underenumeration is vital to provide a full and accurate set of information about the population of Scotland. This in turn will allow decision and policy making using census information which accurately reflects the services that hard to count groups need the most. Should this policy not be successful, the impact on groups could be severe with funds being misallocated, or services targeted inappropriately across society.
- 6.4 Only once the outputs of Scotland's 2011 Census have been evaluated by users of the data will there be evidence on whether any of the questions asked in the census or the strategy of community engagement have had a negative impact on response rates and therefore on the quality of the data collected. But the extensive planning work that has been undertaken has helped maximise the chances of this being a successful census.

## **7. Further impact assessment required**

- 7.1 A further equality impact assessment after the results of Scotland's Census 2011 are published would provide more information on the impact the census has had on equality issues for the population of Scotland. To allow users the opportunity to consider the results, the timescale for publishing this further assessment would be end-2013.