



National Records of Scotland
Statistics Plan 2016-18

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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.

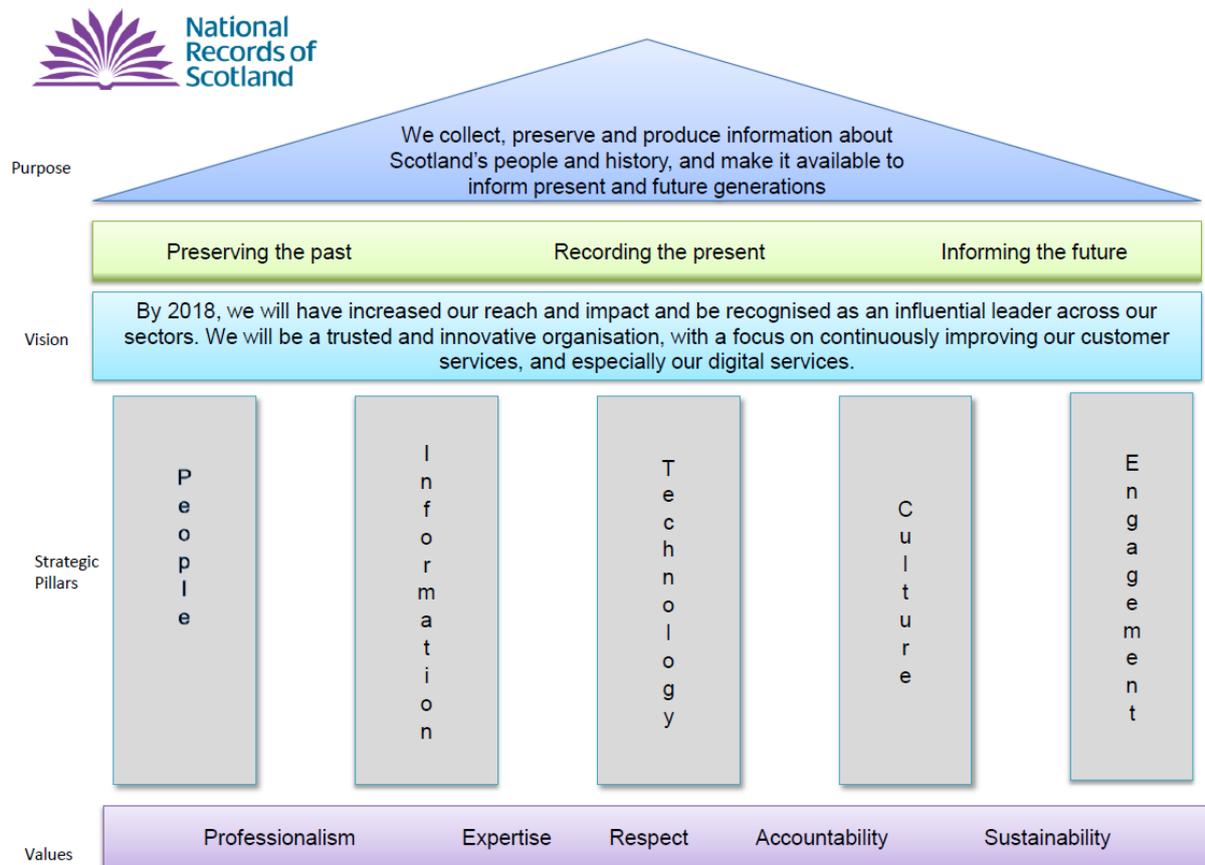
There are also a wide range of datasets that can be used to estimate different components of the population. Some of these sources of information are register-based such as births and deaths data and these tend to be very accurate. Other sources of information are survey-based, such as the International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

At the same time, more administrative data is becoming available which can provide valuable information on subsets of the population. The National Records of Scotland (NRS) is actively considering how administrative data might support its functions. The interest in migration statistics grows. Policy Makers across Central and Local Government are using population statistics more to 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 two years and includes information on priorities, statistical publications, and improvement activities. The content of this plan has been discussed with our users - NRS welcome comments and suggestions as outlined in Section 5.

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

The purpose and vision of NRS are given below :-



The key strategic themes are:

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

NRS vision for statistical services is:-

“To produce high quality population and socio demographic statistics and analysis which meet user needs, bringing together statistics to provide new insights, with skilled and motivated staff recognising the changing environment we work in and the need for continuous improvement.”

This is consistent with the ten year vision for the future of statistics in Scottish public services 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.”

This plan has been prepared in line with Corporate Statement of Current Practice on Planning and the Statistical Planning Arrangements of the Scottish Government.

In planning for the work of statistics in NRS, account has also been taken of the indicators in [National Performance Framework](#) and [Single Outcome Agreements](#). Many of the indicators are heavily dependent on NRS statistics.

Furthermore, NRS are keen to collaborate with colleagues from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) for example on [improving population and migration statistics](#).

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3 Key drivers between now and 2019 – 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:

- **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 national and local levels needs reliable and robust data to inform long-term and short-term decision and policy making. NRS 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 contributes to the Scottish Government's population target. Consequently, there is a lot of media and political interest in the net migration figures.

Population Statistics for groups of the population with different characteristics.

- **Scotland's Census 2021**

Planning is underway for the Scotland's Census 2021 which will build on the success of the in 2011. Scotland's Census 2021 will be designed and managed in Scotland, to best meet the needs of its users, it will be conducted primarily online, while offering support and alternative routes of completion where required. It will make best use of technology, digital services and other existing data to support the census process. A consultation on the topics to be included in 2021 was completed at the beginning of 2016 and a report will be published later in the same year.

- **Administrative data sources**

NRS has been exploring the potential of linking existing administrative data – for example from the health service, or education (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data). There is no doubt that there are real benefits in linking datasets for statistical and research purposes. NRS will continue to explore this with other agencies, within a framework that respects individual privacy. 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 understand better the quality of administrative data and to use it more in analysis. 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**

Digital technology and communications continue to evolve at great pace. It is vital that population statistics are produced and disseminated in a way that remains responsive to the changing digital landscape. Furthermore, the audience for population statistics continues to grow. Developing digital technology will provide this audience with the data they need, and in formats 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.

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4 Objectives for 2016/2017 to 2018/2019 – 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, 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 few years to ensure that they meet the code of practice. Because of the vital importance of population statistics, they were reassessed in 2014/15 as part of the continuing process of quality assurance by the UK Statistics Authority. The [UK Statistics Authority report](#) was issued in June 2015. NRS are currently implementing the requirements.

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 listed below sets out what we plan to do to take forward the production of high quality socio-demographic statistics. It focuses on maintaining our regular statistical publications and lists the improvements that we will seek to make. It does not detail the work which will be carried out for Scotland's Census 2021. Further information about that programme of work is available from the [Scotland's Census website](#) and will be the subject of a wide range of separate plans and documentation.

Established Work

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 ensure that our stakeholders are aware and engaged with the statistical work of NRS.
- Provide informed advice and analysis to support uses of our statistics, through liaison with policy colleagues, Ministers, key users, user groups, publications and presentations.

- Answer ad hoc customer requests for statistics on topics such as the population, households and vital events (births, deaths and marriages) and provide a service for commissioned census outputs.
- Develop access agreements to census microdata products for at the Bioquarter in Edinburgh.
- Continue to work with the Data Linkage Framework to improve the data linkage landscape.
- Continue to develop the Scottish Longitudinal Study and seek out other potential sources of data.
- Contribute to UK wide projects on: improving migration statistics, population estimates and population projections.
- 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.
- 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).
- Develop further analysis of data from Scotland's Census 2011 when requested by customers.
- Continue to further enhance the Scotland's Address Register to support Scotland's Census and other activities.
- 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 any disruption.
- Support local authorities in using 'Popgroup' software to produce their own local area population projections.

New Developments

We plan to:-

- Investigate ways to improve our digital engagement and investigate ways to improve the dissemination methods of our statistics.
- Develop a new Vital Events information technology (IT) system to improve data processing, take account of the changes to the arrangements for the certification of death, improve efficiency and provide scope for improving data quality.

- Develop the use of the NHSCR as the basis for creating a population data base for use in data linkage projects as well as exploring its further use in other projects.
- Improve the Census Data Explorer website.
- Develop new infographics and data visualisations and investigate ways to exploit the latest technologies and methods to improve the effectiveness of our dissemination.
- Investigate the potential of existing and new sources of administrative data to contribute to the development of more efficient systems for population statistics - for example, using Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data.
- Maintain and develop a Geography Strategy for NRS.
- Investigate the reliability of the data, collected when a death is registered, on the ethnicity of the deceased person. Report on the apparent level of reliability, for Scotland as a whole and for some sub-groups of the population, and on any points that users should keep in mind when using such statistics.
- 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.

Other Improvements

We plan 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 processing of migration data by replacing historic processing systems to better reflect data supply and data needs to produce migration and population estimates.
- Extend the reach and impact of the Scottish Health and Ethnicity Longitudinal study through wider engagement with potential users.
- Improve the methodology for mid-year estimates.
- Develop a standardised data sharing agreement for use across NRS and develop a common approach to data sharing across NRS including the use of Secure File Exchange.

- Have a coordinated approach to data access and privacy.
- Improve the quality of the NHS Central Register (NHSCR) and increase the capacity to carry out and support data linkage projects.
- Take part in a range of continuous improvement activities at individual, team and business area level.
- Implement improvements to the Geography section of our website, including incorporating Scotland's Census 2011 geography information.

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 example:

- Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee (main ScotStat user committee)
- Household Analysis Review Group (HARG)
- Projections Sub-Group (PSG)

More information on our main consultation groups, events and seminars is available in the [User Consultations, Groups and Seminars](#) section of the NRS website. There are also other groups that work with, for example:

- NHSCR governance board
- 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 our 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 on-going 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 example:

- 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) events.
- Royal Statistical Society annual conference.

The Population and Migration Statistics biennial conference was held on 1 December 2015. NRS also takes part in other seminars, talks etc, which are used as another method to engage with users of our information. Details of these events can be found on the [Events, Talks and Visits](#) page of the NRS website.

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 example:

- Scottish Government policy and analytical staff
- Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
- Office for National Statistics, Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
- National Forum on Drug-Related Deaths
- The Scottish Suicide Information Database Steering Group
- Scottish Public Health Observatory Steering Group
- Department for Communities and Local Government.

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

4.2 Dissemination

We now produce an infographic to accompany each of our main statistical publications, showing the key messages in a way which is very quick and easy to understand. We have produced a number of interactive data visualisations which allow users to explore our data more easily. This is all available from the [Infographics and Visualisations](#) page of our website. We also tweet about our work.

All the standard tables from Scotland's Census 2011 have now been published with more detailed analyses and commissioned tables still being produced. More information is available from [Scotland's Census](#) website.

Dates for [future publications](#) are 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 2016/17 will remain the Population and Household Estimates, Migration Statistics, Population and Household Projections, Vital Events and Life Expectancy.

Demographic Analysis and topic reports from the Scotland's Census 2011 are now concluded so future publications will be dependent on customer requests.

The Scottish Longitudinal Study database will be maintained and extended.

Data linkage projects will be supported through the [indexing service](#).

Details of planned publications are given in Annex A.

Some of our key outputs over the next few years will include the research findings and plans for Scotland's Census 2021.

5 Comments

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 has been 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 NRS websites. If you wish to comment on this plan, please contact:

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National Records of Scotland (NRS) Statistical Publications (2016-17)

A list of planned publications for 2016-17 is below.

April 2016

Mid-Year Population Estimates, Mid 2015 and Corrected Population Estimates mid 2012-2014.

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths registered in Scotland, March 2016

May 2016

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths registered in Scotland, April 2016

June 2016

Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2015

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, first quarter 2016

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths registered in Scotland, May 2016

July 2016

Total Migration to or from an Area, Mid 2015 Update

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, June 2016

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

August 2016

Deaths from Various Causes, 2015

Drug-related Deaths in Scotland, 2015

Local Area Migration, 2015 update

Population By Country of Birth and Nationality for Scottish Areas, 2015

The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends, 2015

Small Area Population Estimates, Mid-2015 for 2011 Data Zones and Corrected Estimates for mid-2012, 2013 and 2014.

Vital Events Reference Tables, 2015

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, July 2016

September 2016

Population Estimates for Scottish Centenarians, 2005 - 2015

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, second quarter 2016

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, August 2016

October 2016

Life Expectancy for Areas in Scotland, 2013-2015

Winter Mortality in Scotland, 2015-16

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, September 2016

November 2016

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, October 2016

Household Projections for Scotland, 2014-based

December 2016

Babies' First Names, 2016

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, third quarter 2016

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, November 2016

January 2017

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, December 2016

February 2017

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, January 2017

March 2017

Babies' First Names, 2016 (full lists)

Most Common Surnames in Birth, Marriage and Death registers, 2016

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, 2016 (preliminary)

Births, Deaths and Other Vital Events, fourth quarter 2016

Weekly and monthly data on births and deaths Registered in Scotland, February 2017