

POLICY NOTE

THE CENSUS (SCOTLAND) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2020

SSI 2020/450

The above instrument was made in exercise of the powers conferred by section 3(1) of the Census Act 1920. The instrument is subject to the negative procedure.

<p>Purpose of the instrument: To amend the Census (Scotland) Regulations 2020 to reflect the change made by the Census (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 to the date on which the next census will be taken to 20 March 2022.</p>
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Policy Objectives

The key policy objective of these Regulations is to make consequential changes to the Census (Scotland) Regulations 2020 (“the principal Regulations”) to reflect the change made by the Census (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 to the date on which the census is to be taken to 20 March 2022.

Schedules 1 to 4 of the principal Regulations are amended so that dates listed in the questions, instructions and response options reflect the change of census date. The questionnaires set out at schedules 5 to 8 of the principal Regulations are substituted for new questionnaires which also reflect the change of census date.

A new question, instruction and response option will also be inserted into the tables at schedules 2 and 4 of the principal Regulations. These will ask a person making an individual online return to provide their name. This addresses an omission from the principal regulations.

The information collected through the census is a tool utilised by public bodies and other organisations across Scotland to inform key financial and policy decisions on how services such as transport, housing, schools and hospitals are planned.

The census also helps paint an important picture of the characteristics of our population, helping us to understand the similarities and differences in the population’s characteristics locally and nationally, now and over time.

Background

The Census Act 1920 allows for a census to be taken no less than five years after the last census. The census in Scotland is usually carried out every 10 years on behalf of the Registrar General for Scotland. The last census in Scotland was held on 27 March 2011.

Due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic Scottish Ministers have decided to move Scotland’s Census to 20 March 2022 and the Census (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 allows for this change of date. These Regulations amend the principal Regulations to reflect the new census date.

Delivery of the census is a substantial logistical operation for National Records of Scotland (NRS), with preparations in the year up to census day critical to the successful delivery of the census. Whilst NRS had been on track to take a census on 21 March 2021, COVID-19 significantly impacted on a range of public engagement, testing, procurement and operational priorities.

NRS conducted a comprehensive options assessment on the risks of COVID-19 to the delivery of the census in March 2021. A summary of this options assessment can be found on NRS's census website. NRS advised the Scottish Government that the disruption caused by COVID-19 placed delivery of the 2021 census at considerable risk, with particular concern about the impact on achieving the comprehensive response necessary for the production of high quality outputs. Scottish Ministers agreed to NRS recommendation that the census be taken in March 2022 to best secure a census that allows everyone to participate and delivers its full benefit to the people of Scotland.

The census in 2022 will be the 22nd census to take place and the 17th to be managed independently in Scotland. For the first time, the census will be primarily online, which will deliver benefits in terms of ease of completion and the timeliness and quality of data.

Consultation

Stakeholders were not consulted in advance of the decision being made to change the date of the census. NRS will work closely with stakeholders and partners to ensure that appropriate data is available to support work that was expecting to make use of the census 2021 data. The census in March 2022 will follow the same model and question set as planned for March 2021.

Impact Assessments

There are a total of eight impact assessments for Scotland's Census which have been updated to reflect the move to 2022. They are

- **Equality** – an assessment of the census with regard to the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.
- **Data Protection** – an assessment of privacy risks and the use of data for the census.
- **Business Regulatory** – an assessment of the impact of the census on business.
- **Fairer Scotland Duty** – an assessment of any socio-economic disadvantage in the taking of the census and responsibilities under the Fairer Scotland Duty.
- **Human Rights** – an assessment of the census with regard to the European Convention on Human Rights.
- **Children's Rights and Wellbeing** - an assessment of the census with regard to the United Nations Charter for the Rights of the Child.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment** - an assessment of the census with regard to responsibilities under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.
- **Island Communities** - an assessment of the census with regard to island communities and responsibilities under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

Copies of these impact assessments are available on the National Records of Scotland census website.

Financial Effects

Programme lifecycle costs following the Scottish Budget 2020-2021 were £117m. The decision to move Scotland's Census to March 2022 will have a financial impact with detailed re-planning activity currently ongoing in order to review previous estimates and update programme lifecycle costs.

The census is a central process funded directly by the Scottish Administration and carried out by National Records of Scotland.

National Records of Scotland
Scotland's Census 2022 Programme
17 December 2020