

2011 CENSUS – QUICK BRIEFING

On 17th December 2012, National Records of Scotland (NRS) announced the first results from the Census held in Scotland on 27th March 2011. The results show that:

- The population of Scotland was 5,295,000, an increase of 233,000, 5%, from the 2001 figure of 5,062,011.
- The population of Highland was 232,000, an increase around 23,000, 11%, from the 2001 figure of 208,914.

The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand as the final work to produce populations by age and gender for areas within Scotland, and also ensure confidentiality, has not been completed.

The 2011 Census figure for Highland is higher than the figure we were expecting, when compared with the previous mid year estimate for 2011 of 222,370, which was the last “rolled forward” figure to be produced based on the 2001 Census. This note gives the background to the Census figure, explains why it might differ from the last mid year estimate, and outlines the next steps in the Census process. We will not be able to determine the reasons for the difference, and where the increase has occurred, until more detailed Census results are released later in 2013.

What is the Census Day Population Figure?

The single figure for Highland of 232,000 is the population normally resident on Census day. Although we tend to think that simply counting the Census forms gives an accurate figure, a second more detailed Census survey – the *Coverage Survey* sampling 1.5% of the population in detail and carried out six weeks after Census day – shows that not everyone completes a Census form. In Highland, the Census form was completed by 94% of the population and the Coverage Survey is used to fill in for the missing returns. Small adjustments are also made for known errors: for example, students should be counted at their term time address but many are also included by their parents at their home address. This is standard best practice in dealing with Census results across the world.

In recognition of part played by adjustments to the count, NRS have published confidence intervals for the Highland population of + / - 1.49%, meaning that we are 95% confident that the population lies within the range 229,000 to 235,000. In simple terms, although the population increase is higher than we were expecting, we can be very confident that the increase is genuine.

What is the Mid Year Estimate Figure?

The mid year estimate figure is generated annually by NRS. It starts with the 2001 Census results, and for each subsequent year:

- The numbers of births and deaths are added and subtracted, respectively;
- An adjustment is made for migration, which is inferred records of Doctors' registration held by the NHS;
- A more complex process is used to take international migration into account, based on the International Passenger Survey carried out at ports and airports.

Why Might the Census Figure Differ From the Mid Year Estimate?

At the moment we can only speculate why the two might differ, but the reasons will become clear as more detailed Census results are released. Errors are most likely in the mid year estimates: records of births and deaths used to produce the mid year estimates are

accurate, but the estimates of migration relies on timely registrations with GPs and use of the International Passenger Survey, and both have scope for error.

One of the few areas where we can provide equivalent information is from our records of school pupils. We have no private schools in Highland and our pupil records give a reasonably accurate record of the number of children in Highland: these suggest that mid year estimates might have been under-estimating the number of children by up to 2%.

Could Migrant Workers Account for the Difference?

We have seen large numbers of workers from the A8 Accession States moving into Highland since 2004 leading to occasional media speculation that there may be as many as 10,000 (and perhaps more) in Highland, although our own in-house estimates are that there are less than half of this figure. Publication of census statistics for England and Wales is more advanced and they show that around 1% of the population there is now Polish, rising rapidly from a low level in 2001.

It is likely that migration has contributed to the increase in population. Highland receives large numbers of migrants from the rest of Scotland and the UK as well as from overseas, and we will not know until more detailed information is released whether one or more of these regions have played a particular part, and what the age and gender profile might be.

Does the Higher Population Figure Matter?

Nothing changes as a result of a Census population figure that is higher than we might have expected, and we are still providing high quality services across a third of the area of Scotland. As more detail becomes available (see below) we will be able to use the information to refine the way we deliver our services through a continuation of the on-going service planning process.

The last decade has seen steady growth in Highland. Our economy has proved reasonably resilient through the economic downturn and population growth is continuing, albeit at a reduced rate since 2008. The headline figures demonstrate that Highland is being successful not only at sustaining its population but attracting people to the area, but again we need the detailed local figures to see if growth is happening throughout the area, and whether it is in the younger age groups which is important to sustain our communities.

Publication of the Census Results – the Next Steps

NRS has published the following timetable for the results:

- Release 1A (17 December 2012) – Population estimates by five-year age bands and sex for Scotland, total population estimate for each council area.
- Release 1B (March 2013) – Population estimates by five-year age bands and sex for Scotland and each council area. Household estimates for Scotland and each council area.
- Release 1C (May 2013) - Population estimates by single year of age and sex for Scotland and each council area.
- Release 2 (from summer 2013) – Key and Quick statistics; Scotland level population estimates by single year of age and sex, Census Profiles; Population and Household estimates by postcode and Geography products.
- Release 3 (from autumn 2013) – Local Characteristics.
- Release 4 (from winter 2013) – Detailed Characteristics.

As detailed information becomes available in releases 3 and 4 we will start to publish local profiles for areas such as wards, settlement zones and Community Councils on the Highland Council website.