

Census Dates etc. – British Isles

The census across the British Isles happens on the same day, but countries within the United Kingdom are split into the following:

- England and Wales
 - 1939 National Registration Act (see page 3)
- Scotland
 - 1939 National Registration Act (see page 3)
- Ireland (see page 5 & 6)

Each time the Government wished to undertake a census; it was required to be approved by Parliament who then approved the legislation which outlined the details of a specific census. This happened from 1801 with the Population Act 1800, every decade until 1920, when the Census Act made it possible for the Government to hold a census at any time, but not within five years of the previous census.

- **1801 - 10th March** - [Population Act 1800](#)
- **1811 - 27th May**
- **1821 - 28th May**
- **1831 - 30th May**
- **1841 - 6th June (HO107)** - [Population Act 1840](#)
- **1851 - 30th March (HO107)**
- **1861 - 7th April (RG9)**
- **1871 - 2nd April (RG10)**
- **1881 - 3rd April (RG11)**
- **1891 - 5th April (RG12)**
- **1901 - 31 March (RG13)**
- **1911 - 2nd April (RG14)** – [Parliamentary Paper 1911 Census](#)
- **1921 - 19th June (RG15)** (delayed from original date of 24 April because of strike action with coal miners, railway workers & transport workers) [Census Act 1920 & Arrangement of sections within the Act](#)
- **1931 - 26th April** (England & Wales) and destroyed by enemy action in 1942. The 1931 Census in Scotland was stored in Edinburgh and therefore not subject to the fire that affected the 1939 Census for England and Wales.
 - **1939 – National Registration Act** (see page 2)
- **1941** - none, due to the second world war
- **1951 - 8th April**
- **1961 - 23rd April**
 - **1966** – Trial of alternative methods of data collecting
- **1971 - 25th April**
- **1981 - 5th April**
- **1991 - 21st April** – [Census \(Confidentiality\) Act 1991](#)
- **2001 - 29th April** - [Census \(Amendment\) Act 2000](#) and [Research Paper 2001 Census](#)
- **2011 - 27th March** – [Census \(England and Wales\) Order 2009](#)
- **2021 – 21st March**

1939 National Registration Act (1939 Register) – This took place on **29 September 1939**. It was designed to capture a picture of **civilians** in the run up to the Second World War. Information captured in this document was used in a variety of way, some of which were not linked to the second world war.

- Production of Identity Cards
- Issuance of Ration Books (January 1940)
- Introduction of the National Health Service in 1948, where this became the **NHS Central Register** following the (It was updated right up to 1991 and therefore captures surname changes caused by marriage)

Military personnel are not included.

The **National Registration Act 1939** was repealed in **1952**.

The original document for those in England and Wales can be found at The National Archives (TNA) at Kew, London where it is free to view
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/1939-register/>

The National Archives have produced a **webinar** which can be viewed at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25bGiXLo8Yk>

The digitisation of the Register was undertaken by FindMyPast (FMP) who frequently update and open records of those known to be deceased. A **presentation** given by (FMP) can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gG9bFp1jI4Y>

Ancestry does also have the same dataset, but it is updated much less frequently.

The **1939 Register in Scotland** was not digitised under the same agreement with FMP. Instead, it is located at the National Records for Scotland (NRS).

General Information about the Register in Scotland -

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/nhs-central-register/about-the-register/the-history-of-the-register>

1939 Register in Scotland Ordering an Official Extract from the Register -

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/nhs-central-register/about-the-register/1939-national-identity-register-and-how-to-order-an-official-extract>

Useful Census links:

- Bodleian Library Census 1801+ - <https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/op/census>
- Parliament and the Census - <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/relationships/collections1/parliament-and-the-census/>
- Research Paper 2001 Census
<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP01-21/RP01-21.pdf>
- Hansard - <https://hansard.parliament.uk/> - this is the written version of debates that occur in both the House of Commons and House of Lords
- HISTPOP The Online Historical Population Report -
<http://www2.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/>
- A Vision Through Time <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/>
 - Part 1 – Census Reports https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/Cen_Guide/1
 - Part 2 – Significant Developments in the Scope and Organisation of the Census
https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/Cen_Guide/2
- The **1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831 Census** has largely limited value to family historians, sadly in 1904 the returns information for most places was destroyed. Some places though have survived, but these are limited.
- Series of Blog Posts - <https://anglersrest.net/category/genealogy-2/census-people-and-genealogy/>

Scotland Census Info & Links:

All Census in Scotland tend to take place on the same day as England and Wales, except for 2021, when Scotland delayed the Census until 2022 due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

- An excellent overview of Census in Scotland -
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/census-records> with links to various other pages relating to all census years
- An excellent overview of the Census details in Scotland prior to 1841 -
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/census-records/pre-1841-census-records>
- Websters Account of the Population in Scotland 1755 -
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/census-records/webster%E2%80%99s-census-of-1755>
- Websters Account of the Population in Scotland 1755 -
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//research/census-records/websters-census-of-1755-scottish-population-statistics.pdf> (downloadable) This was never published, but several versions have survived.
- Scotland Population 2009 (with a summary of earlier years) -
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/annual-review-09/j1201500.htm>

- Scottish way of Births and Deaths -
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/annual-review-09/j1201500.htm>

Ireland Census Info & Links:

Census Dates – Republic of Ireland

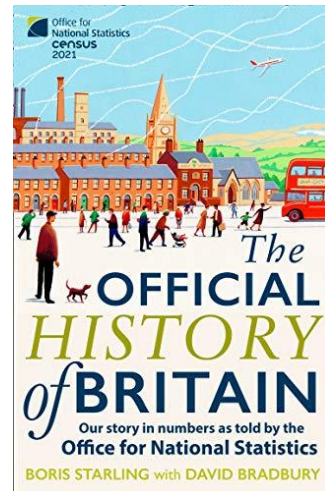
All census date take place on a Sunday

- **1926 - 18 April**
 - **1936 – 26 April**
 - **1946 – 12 May**
 - **1951 – 8 April**
 - **1956 – 8 April**
 - **1961 – 9 April**
 - **1966 – 17 April**
 - **1971 – 18 April**
 - **1979 – 1 April**
 - **1981 – 5 April**
 - **1986 – 13 April**
 - **1991 – 21 April**
 - **1996 – 28 April**
 - **2002 – 28 April** (Initially scheduled for 2001, but postponed due to Foot & Mouth disease)
 - **2006 – 23 April**
 - **2011 – 10 April**
 - **2016 – 24 April**
 - **2022 – 3 April** (Initially been scheduled for April 2021, but postponed due to Covid19 Pandemic)
 - **2026** planned to commence on schedule
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- There are two Records Offices & Archives covering the Island of Ireland:
 - **Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)** – this is the location for material for the six Irish Counties that make up Northern Ireland -
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk>
 - **National Archives of Ireland** – this is the location for material relating to the rest of Ireland from the beginning of the Irish State (1922) until circa 1987
<https://nationalarchives.ie>
 - (As, an aside, I always recommend those researching in Ireland to search the catalogues of both PRONI & National Archives of Ireland)
 - Government Census has been taken of the Irish population every 10 years, commencing in **1821 until 1911**.
 - No Census in Ireland was taken in 1921 because of the unrest, leading to the War of Independence and Civil War. The next Census in Ireland was in 1926.

- Census in Ireland from 1926 are closed for 100 years, in accordance with the Statistics Act 1993 (section 35), therefore the 1926 Census will not be available until 100 years have passed.
- Information published by PRONI relating to the **1901 and 1911 Census** of Ireland -
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/02.%201901%20and%201911%20Census.pdf>
- The National Archives of Ireland Census page 1901 and 1911 with fragments of earlier census - <http://census.nationalarchives.ie/>
- General Statistical Office - <https://www.cso.ie/en/census/>

Books and Resources:

- GENUKI - <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/Census>
- [GENUKI - England and Wales Census](#)
- [GENUKI - Ireland Census](#) (the island of Ireland)
- [GENUKI - Scotland Census](#)
- 1911 Census - <https://www.1911census.org.uk/>
- 1921 Census - <https://www.1921census.org.uk/>
- **Book** – Startling, Boris; and Bradbury, David. *The Official History of Britain: Our Story in Numbers as told by the Office for National Statistics*. HarperCollins, 2020.
- **Book** - Few, Janet. *Ten Steps to a One-Place Study*. Published 2020
- Early British Census Project - <http://ebc.byu.edu/Home/Home>
- **Book** - Jolly, Emma. *Tracing your Ancestors using the Census*. Published 2020.
- [National Archives Research Guide Census Records](#)
- **Book** - Osborn, Helen. *Our Village Ancestors – A Genealogist’s Guide to Understanding the English Rural Past*. Published 2021.
- [Pharos Course - Agricultural Labourers](#) (tutor Janet Few)
- [Pharos Course - First Steps to a One-Place Study](#) (tutor Janet Few)



HO and RG references are those used to determine which Government department was responsible for the Census, and this forms part of the citation.

All links accessed and available 28 August 2023