



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## BACKGROUND

# Gypsy and Traveller caravan count: quality report

This report details data quality information relating to the Gypsy and Traveller caravan count release.

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## Background

In July 2006, bi-annual census counts of Gypsy and Traveller caravans were reintroduced in Wales. This followed recommendations from the Review of Service Provision for Gypsies and Travellers in 2003, and a Welsh Government review undertaken by Pat Niner of Birmingham University in 2006.

Between January 2011 and January 2020, the bi-annual census counts were conducted by the data collection team within the Welsh Government. Data from these counts was published in a **series of statistical first releases** (and accompanying **StatsWales tables**). These outputs were classified as official statistics.

In 2015 to 2016, the Welsh Government developed the All Wales Caravan Count online data collection system which allows local authorities in Wales to log unauthorised encampments as they occur and record authorised sites. The online collection and the biannual census count collection ran concurrently from July 2016 onwards with periodic reconciliation exercises undertaken to assess

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the accuracy of the online data.

## Change of data source

The onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in March 2020 necessitated a rapid reprioritisation of analytical resources within the Welsh Government. As a result of this, the biannual census count was temporarily suspended before a decision was taken in early 2021 to fully discontinue the count. Caravan counts were not conducted from July 2020 onwards and the last statistical release was published in April 2020.

To ensure that information about Gypsy and Traveller caravans in Wales continues to be made available, Welsh Government statisticians have developed a new statistical output sourced from the All Wales Caravan Count online collection. Since early-2021, statisticians have been working closely with local authorities to identify, understand and resolve outstanding data-quality issues. More information on this process is included in the 'Data Reconciliation Process' section below.

## Data reconciliation process

Local authorities are notified in advance of the upcoming census date and asked to review the quality of the data they have submitted to the All Wales Caravan Count online collection.

A data-extract relevant to the census date is then taken from the All Wales Caravan Count online collection and reconciliation reports for each local authority are produced. Welsh Government statisticians review the data in these reports and undertake a series of sense-checks. This involves comparing the data against previously published figures in order to identify potential data-issues.

The reconciliation reports are then issued and local authorities are asked to

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confirm the accuracy of their data and/or address any data-quality concerns. If necessary, local authorities are given opportunity to amend or correct their data. In such instances, a revised reconciliation report is produced and issued.

Where a local authority does not provide a response to the reconciliation report, data for this local authority is assumed to be correct although caveated as such in the data tables.

## Quality information

Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political influence.

The data published as part of the Gypsy and Traveller caravan count release is designated as experimental statistics and is outside the scope of National Statistics.

## Timeliness and punctuality

Data is produced for a specified census date in January or July each year, giving a snapshot of the number and location of caravans on the specific date. An extract from the All Wales Caravan Count online tool is downloaded two weeks after the census date. Reconciliation reports summarising data for each local authority are then issued promptly and data is published as soon as possible after each census date.

## Accessibility and clarity

This statistical first release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics and Research section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed local authority level tables in spreadsheet format.

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## Relevance to users

As noted above, the bi-annual counts of Gypsy and Traveller caravans and families were reintroduced in Wales in July 2006 following recommendations from the Review of Service Provision for Gypsies and Travellers, carried out by the Welsh Government's Equality of Opportunity Committee in 2003, and the Welsh Government's review of the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Wales undertaken by Pat Niner of Birmingham University 2006.

Section 101 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to carry out an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing in or resorting to their area.

The draft [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#) (2021) outlines a strategy for an actively anti-racist Wales. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are affected by this due to their status as a protected characteristic group under the 2010 Equality Act. It is outlined in the plan that by 2030 the voices of these communities will have been heard and acted on. Another goal outlined in this action plan is "To recognise that safe, culturally appropriate accommodation is necessary in order for individuals to flourish in other parts of their lives and to address the lack of site provision and poor quality of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Wales".

The caravan count does not estimate the number of Gypsy and Travellers in need of sites. Evidence suggests that many people identifying as 'Gypsy or Irish Travellers' live in homes that are not mobile structures.

Further information from the [2011 Census on Gypsy and Travellers accommodation for England and Wales \(ONS website\)](#).

There are a variety of users of the Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count statistics, including national and local government, researchers, students, as well as individual citizens with an interest in the count.

The count is used when assessing bids from local authorities for the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Capital Grant. Some of the other uses include:

- monitoring of progress towards targets
- policy development
- advice to Ministers
- informing debate in the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament and beyond.

## Accuracy

In general, the response and quality of the data can be affected by the following factors:

- local authorities not promptly submitting data to the online tool (the data collection is voluntary, with no specific incentives to local authorities submitting data or penalties for those that fail to do so)
- inadequate counting practices
- geography, particularly in large rural areas which require correspondingly large resources to map all sites
- Gypsy and Traveller mistrust

## Comparability and coherence

When comparing trends over time users need to be consider the change in data source from the census count collection (pre-January 2021) to the All Wales Caravan Count online collection (from January 2021 onwards). Although efforts have been made to ensure the data is as comparable as possible, the differences in data collection methods may have had an impact. We advise that some caution is exercised when interpreting trends over time.

Meaningful comparisons of total figures for Wales over time are also limited by Local Authorities who did not take part in all previous counts. It is therefore advised that comparisons over time should only be made for Local Authorities that have taken part in all relevant counts.

Data for the Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count is subject to seasonality. To compare figures over time it is advised to look at the winter and summer counts each year separately. The count takes place twice a year to reflect winter

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residence and summer travelling trends and changes. Previous years' figures indicate that the number of unauthorised caravans are higher during the summer (July) count.

Equivalent information for England is available via the [GOV.UK website](#). Census dates for England and Wales are usually aligned in advance to minimise double-counting of caravans travelling across the border. However, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) did not undertake a count in January 2021.

## Revisions

We follow the [Welsh Government's statistical revisions policy](#).

## Related statistics for other UK countries

Caravan Count Statistics for other UK countries is available at the following links:

[Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities \(2021 onwards\) and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in England \(pre-2021\)](#).

[The Scottish Government](#) collects and publishes information on travellers in Scotland. In particular, a review of the evidence base is available.

[Information on traveller accommodation in Northern Ireland](#).

## Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities

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and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## Glossary

### Caravans

A ‘caravan’ can include any of the following:

- mobile homes, caravans, trailers and other living-vehicles on Gypsy or Traveller sites and encampments, whether or not they meet the strict legal definition of a caravan
- touring caravans on Gypsy or Traveller sites and encampments even if not lived in permanently
- tents, benders or yurts where these are the ‘permanent’ living accommodation of Gypsies or Travellers

### Gypsies and Travellers

For the purposes of this release ‘Gypsies and Travellers’ include Traditional and

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Ethnic Gypsies and Travellers or members of non-traditional New Traveller groups who live in caravans or other moveable dwellings whether or not they meet the strict legal definition of a 'Gypsy' or 'Traveller'. The caravan count is not designed to be an estimate of the Gypsy or Irish Traveller population in Wales.

## Local authority sites

Sites operated by Local Authorities or Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers.

## Not tolerated

A 'not tolerated' encampment is one where: the Local Authority or police are using, or are preparing to use, their powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to remove the encampment, or where the landowner (including the Local Authority) has instigated, or is preparing to instigate, action either through the courts or under common law rights to regain possession of the land.

## Pitch

A pitch, also referred to as a plot, will vary according to the size of the occupant household. One pitch can accommodate multiple caravans.

## Privately funded sites

Privately funded Gypsy and Traveller sites with planning permission may include:

- sites with planning permission owned by Gypsies and Travellers for their own and/or their family's occupation and/or for commercial letting
- sites owned by any other private individual or body with planning permission

for use as a Gypsy or Traveller site

- sites owned by a Local Authority but leased to, or managed by, a non-Local Authority body or individual under arrangements which do not give the Local Authority control of site management (critically of rent setting and lettings)

‘With planning permission’ may be interpreted to include sites without ‘planning permission’ as such, but with established use rights or other planning status which means that planning enforcement action cannot be taken.

## **Tolerated**

A ‘tolerated’ encampment is one where the local authority and/or the land owner have decided not to seek the removal of the encampment, and where the encampment has been or is likely to be ‘tolerated’ for an indefinite period of months or years.

## **Unauthorised sites on Gypsies or Travellers own land**

Unauthorised sites where Gypsies and Travellers are living on their own land in caravans/moveable dwellings without planning consent or established use rights. Such sites may vary in size and in the extent to which the land has been ‘developed’ with roadways, distinct plots, hard-standings, amenity blocks etc.

## **Unauthorised sites on land not owned by Gypsies or Travellers**

Caravans/moveable dwellings on sites without planning permission on land not owned by Gypsies or Travellers. The land may be in public or private ownership, including the highway.

## About this document

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