

Housing Information Group, 24 September 2020

Update on plans for the 2021 Census

Summary

1. The census is a mandatory population count covering every household and communal establishment in the country. It is run every ten years and is the most complete source of information about our population, providing an essential foundation for planning by public services and businesses.
2. The UK Statistics Authority and its executive office, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), have statutory responsibility for the census in England and Wales. Officials from Knowledge and Analytical Services work closely with the ONS on plans for the 2021 Census.
3. The legislation to undertake the Census, the Census (England and Wales) Order 2020 and the Census (Wales) Regulations 2020 have now been passed by the UK Parliament and the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament.
4. The next census in Wales and in England will take place on **Sunday 21 March 2021**.
5. The information the census provides on the population, their characteristics, accommodation, education, religion, ethnicity, working life and health gives decision-makers in national and local government, community groups, charities and business the opportunity to better serve communities and individuals here in Wales.
6. First population estimates for local authorities in England and Wales from the 2021 Census are expected to be available by March 2022, with all further Census data available within a year of that date.

Background

7. In December 2018, the UK Government published a White Paper [Help Shape our Future: The 2021 Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales](#), which set out the UK Statistics Authority's detailed recommendations for the 2021 Census in England and Wales.
8. The 2021 Census is the first census to be predominantly online, making it easier for people to take part how they wish. Help, including paper forms, will be available for those who need it. Guidance will be available on-line to help people answer the Census questions.

9. To develop the 2021 Census, the ONS undertook extensive engagement with interested parties, users and members of the public. This took place through international liaison, formal advisory committees, topic-related working groups and via channels such as formal ONS consultations. This involved engaging and consulting with users here in Wales.
10. Interested parties in Wales are represented on the Census Advisory Group for Wales. ONS also regularly engages with the Welsh Government's other statistical networks such as the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee and Third Sector User Panel.
11. [The Census \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#), which came into force on 26 June 2020, set out the operational procedures and arrangements necessary to conduct the 2021 Census.
12. The Regulations also include specimen copies of the 2021 Census paper questionnaires as well as descriptions of the questions and response options for the online questionnaire.
13. We expect that Census outputs will be available in the form of reports and analysis as well as some pre-built standard tables alongside a flexible table builder that will enable users to prepare tables specific to their user requirements. Whilst stakeholder engagement on outputs has already taken place a more formal consultation on the Census Outputs and Dissemination is expected to take place next year.

Census content relevant to households, housing and accommodation

14. While the majority of the questions in the 2021 Census are the same, or very similar, to those in the 2011 Census, new questions to be included cover previous service in the UK Armed Forces and voluntary questions on sexual orientation and gender identity.
15. The Census covers both private households and communal establishments (care homes, prisons, student accommodation etc.).
16. The Census Household Questionnaire (for private households) includes questions about
 - a. household size and household type (single person, family with adults and children, lone parent households, etc.);
 - b. accommodation type:
 - i. house or bungalow (detached, semi-detached, terraced),
 - ii. flat, maisonette or apartment (purpose built, part of a converted house or other building or in a commercial building), or
 - iii. caravan, mobile home or temporary structure, and
 - iv. whether self-contained

- c. number of bedrooms available for use by the household. This, together with information about the household members, enables calculation of overcrowding measures;
- d. type of central heating with new options for renewable energy (e.g. solar thermal or heat pumps);
- e. tenure:
 - i. owns outright,
 - ii. owns with a mortgage or loan,
 - iii. shared ownership,
 - iv. rents from landlord (Housing association, housing co-operative, charitable trust or registered social landlord; council or local authority; private landlord or letting agency; employer of a household member; relative of a household member; other), or
 - v. lives rent free

17. The Census also enables an updated estimate for 2021 of the number of dwellings and occupied dwellings.

18. Note that the Census will no longer ask questions about the number of rooms in the accommodation. See this [recent ONS blog](#) about how they intend to use administrative data from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to count the number of rooms.

Where can you find out more?

19. There are two ONS websites which provide more detail about the 2021 Census plans. The [Census Transformation Programme website](#) gives details of plans and progress, whilst the public facing [Census.gov.uk](#) website aims to raise awareness with the public that the Census is to take place next year. Note that the ONS is now starting to employ the Census Engagement Managers, Census Liaison Officers and Census Field Staff, which will ensure that the Census can run smoothly.

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Knowledge and Analytical Services

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