

Census 2031: Consultation on content for England and Wales

Consultation document

October 2025



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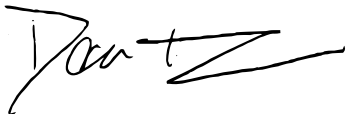
Foreword from the Permanent Secretary

Since 1801, a census has taken place in England and Wales every ten years, with the exception of 1941 due to the Second World War. The census provides information about the population of England and Wales that is vital for the functioning of our society. It informs decisions about public services and helps us understand the economy, public health and inequality. It describes the communities we live in and how they are changing over time. As society has changed, so too have the questions asked in the census, along with the methods used to collect data, with Census 2021 moving to an online-first approach to data collection.

I am delighted to present this consultation, which will inform decisions on which topics will be included in the next census of England and Wales. As the new Permanent Secretary of the Office for National Statistics (ONS), it is my priority to ensure we are meeting the core needs of our users across the full suite of our statistics and analysis, many of which rely on the census. By responding to this consultation, you will play a key role in informing which topics are included in the next census and ensuring that Census 2031 provides the most valuable outputs for informing pivotal policy decisions.

My ambition is for Census 2031 to build on the success of Census 2021. It will take a digital-first and inclusive approach, making best use of administrative data to support data collection and quality, and we will work closely with colleagues within the Devolved Governments to produce coherent outputs. We will also seek to innovate, taking advantage of technological developments such as artificial intelligence, where we can be confident in the reliability of these approaches.

As with all our statistics, the needs of our users continue to be at the heart of our decision-making on the census. Feedback at the 2025 UK Statistics Assembly demonstrated how important census is to our users, and I welcome views from across our broad user base through this consultation's questionnaire to inform which topics are included in the next census. As I start my first year as Permanent Secretary, I look forward to engaging with many of you as we work together towards a successful Census 2031.



Darren Tierney

Permanent Secretary of the Office for National Statistics
October 2025





Executive summary

On 15 July 2025, the UK government commissioned the ONS to conduct a census of England and Wales in 2031. We have now begun census preparations, to provide high-quality statistics that meet user needs for the 2030s. Census 2031 will serve as a strong foundation for addressing ongoing population statistics requirements across the decade, in combination with other data sources.

This consultation document sets out our initial view on the topics to be collected through the census. This initial view is based on responses to the [2023 consultation](#) on the future of population and migration statistics, as well as extensive engagement with stakeholders over the past decade since our previous topic consultation in 2015. The 2023 consultation sought views on how the ONS's proposals to use administrative data to produce statistics met the needs of users compared to a system based on a census.

We invite users to provide further evidence to inform decisions on the inclusion of a range of topics in the census.

These decisions will be based on an evaluation against the criteria described later in this document, in line with the moderation policy (read more in [Annex B](#)).

Consultation responses will also be used alongside other information to support the prioritisation of other relevant work within the ONS that goes beyond Census 2031. This includes administrative-based statistics and the [Government Statistical Service's harmonised standards](#) for data collection (see [Purpose of this consultation](#)).

Following this consultation, we will continue to engage with users to support the development of questions and the questionnaire design for the census. At a later stage, we will consult on the content design and release phase proposals for census outputs.

As in the past, there will be separate censuses in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and we are working with the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to align approaches towards the censuses in 2031.

You are invited to respond to the consultation by completing the questionnaire by the closing date of 4 February 2026.

We strongly encourage you to complete the consultation questionnaire online on the [Citizen Space website](#). You can also download the questionnaire from the Citizen Space website and respond by email or post.

Physical copies of this consultation document and the questionnaire are available on request. Large print copies are also available.

Responses and enquiries can be emailed to Topic.Consultation@ons.gov.uk, or sent by post at:

ONS Consultations Team

Post Room
Office for National Statistics
Segensworth Road
Fareham
PO15 5RR

You can also call ONS Census Customer Services on [01329 444 972](tel:01329444972).

Background

Information about the population of England and Wales is vital for the functioning of our society. It informs decisions about public services and helps us understand the economy, public health and inequality. It describes the make-up of the communities we live in and how they are changing over time. It is essential that information about the population is high-quality and representative of society, so the best evidence is available for decision-making and research.

At the ONS, we produce regular population statistics and data about England and Wales, including through the census. The Welsh Government are important partners throughout the planning and delivery of the census. We also work in partnership with the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to produce this information about the UK, recognising the importance of coherent statistics across the UK. The [UK Concordat on Statistics](#) sets out how the UK and devolved governments cooperate in relation to statistics.

A census in England and Wales has typically taken place every decade since 1801, providing the evidence base for decision-making at national and local levels. Over time, it has evolved to capture the issues of the day and respond to social and technological changes.

Census 2021 was the first to be held primarily online, and we used data from across the public sector (“administrative” or “admin” data) to support the census operation and the production of outputs. Census 2021 also introduced a new question on previous service in the UK armed forces and new voluntary questions on sexual orientation and gender identity. We were also able to use admin data to replace the question about the number of rooms available to a household.

The new questions were added to Census 2021 after an assessment informed by responses to a consultation in 2015, and other factors, which included considerations around questionnaire length and respondent burden. Respondent burden is how difficult, time-consuming or stressful a census respondent finds completing the questionnaire, and it can impact on data quality. Informed by responses to this consultation, Census 2031 will take a similar approach, prioritising the collection of the information that provides the greatest public good within acceptable limits of questionnaire length and respondent burden.

We have also explored whether it is possible to produce census-type data and estimates more frequently and more quickly based on admin data. We have produced [admin-based population estimates](#) and [admin-based estimates of long-term international migration](#) as official statistics in development, and we are continuing to develop this work.

Through consultation and engagement on the broader admin data research programme, we recognised the strong user demand for the detailed and inclusive data that a census is uniquely placed to provide on a broad range of topics. In June 2025, the [UK Statistics Authority recommended holding an England and Wales census in 2031](#), alongside the continued development of admin-based statistics. Through this approach we would bring together data from a range of data sources to better meet user needs.

In its response, [the UK government commissioned a census in 2031](#). It noted the importance of inclusive, detailed information about the population, as well as working with partners across the UK to produce coherent UK statistics. It also noted that innovative use of admin data can support these priorities. We are now working to deliver these aims.

Census 2031 will be a core component of the current and future population and migration statistics system. Building on the success of Census 2021 and working in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), it will be designed to provide high-quality statistics that meet user needs for the 2030s, and be a strong foundation for meeting future population statistics needs across the decade using the best available sources.

As in the past, there will be separate censuses in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Each jurisdiction will design their own questionnaires to meet local user needs, but will also work together to align where possible in the interests of coherence across the UK. We are working with NRS and NISRA to align approaches, which may include a shared data-collection platform. Where possible, the census of England and Wales will support the harmonisation of UK outputs, while recognising differing contexts, characteristics, user needs and operational requirements across the UK.

The ONS has a proven track record of protecting sensitive data, built over many decades of delivering the census in England and Wales and the UK's biggest regular household surveys. We continue to abide by the ethical principles of the National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee (NSDEC), and we will continue to consult that committee for advice as work on the census develops.

Purpose of this consultation

The census is a unique opportunity to ask questions of the whole population of England and Wales. This consultation's primary purpose is to provide evidence to support decisions about which topics should be included in the census. We will do this by prioritising the information that will provide the greatest insight and value for users, taking into account constraints such as questionnaire length, respondent burden, and public acceptability. To support this assessment, we will evaluate responses to this consultation against a set of criteria relating to user requirements (see [Evaluation criteria for census topics](#)).

Consultation responses will also be used for the secondary purpose of informing other relevant work within the ONS that goes beyond the Census 2031, alongside other factors and evidence from broader engagement. This includes the prioritisation of:

- the development of admin-based statistics, in line with the [UK Statistics Authority's recommendation to government](#). This includes whether administrative sources may be better placed to meet user needs than data from a traditional census for given topics
- the ongoing review of [harmonised standards for data collection](#) on different topics. Alignment to harmonised standards enhances the value from data collections, including the census, by improving the comparability and coherence of statistics across sources

Alongside this topic consultation, the Government Statistical Service is consulting on revisions to the [harmonised standard for data collection](#) on ethnicity. We expect the relevant census question to align to this standard in England and Wales. The purpose of the consultation on the ethnicity harmonised standard is to gather views on additional tick-box response options which may be required for the new standard, informing new guidance for data collection across a range of sources and modes. It therefore has a different scope and questionnaire from this topic consultation. Both consultations will inform the way data on ethnic group are collected in the England and Wales census in 2031 and users of data about ethnic group are encouraged to complete both consultations.

More information can be found on the related [ethnicity harmonisation consultation page](#), which closes on 4 February 2026.

The design of the census questions and the questionnaire more broadly will follow this consultation and analysis of responses. We will conduct further engagement with users and a programme of research to support question development, which will also be informed by relevant standards.

Evaluation criteria for census topics

This section presents the criteria we will use to evaluate responses to this consultation. The evaluation criteria will help us to prioritise topics with the greatest societal benefit and assess whether the census is the most suitable method for meeting each data need, while considering acceptable limits of questionnaire length and respondent burden. Each topic considered for inclusion will be evaluated against:

- user requirements
- operational requirements
- other considerations

Consultation responses will be evaluated against the user requirements criteria to inform the selection of topics for inclusion in Census 2031. Other evidence will also inform these decisions, assessed against the criteria relating to operational requirements and other considerations.

We will publish the full details of the evaluation criteria in due course. The criteria are based on the criteria used for Census 2021.

Evaluation criteria relating to user requirements

Purpose (impact)

This relates to the reasons users need the data, and the impact the data would have for its users, their activities, and the public.

Small geographies or populations

This relates to the importance of information on small population groups and/or detailed geographical levels. A small population group could include groups of people identified by shared cultural identities that may be difficult to accurately represent through surveys. Information that is only required for broad geographic areas or large population groups might be better obtained from other statistical sources.

Alternative sources

This relates to the availability of data from other sources, such as admin data, and whether those sources would enable the ONS to meet quality requirements and user needs without needing to be collected directly from the census.

Multivariate analysis

This relates to user needs for analysing information across different topics. A requirement to undertake multivariate analysis will affect whether suitable alternative sources for the information exist and may strengthen the case for inclusion in the census.

Comparability beyond England and Wales

This relates to user needs for comparable data across geographical boundaries, primarily in relation to other parts of the UK.

Continuity with previous censuses

This relates to user requirements for comparing census data from 2031 with past censuses.

Operational requirements will also inform what census data are collected.

We will consider the role each topic plays in making the census operation a success, whether in collection, processing or quality assurance.

Other considerations will also inform the review of census topics and support development of questions, for instance, considerations related to data quality, public attitudes, respondent burden, and questionnaire mode.

As described in the [Purpose of this consultation section](#), this consultation will also contribute to an evidence base informing our work with admin data and the ongoing review of harmonised standards for data collection.



Census 2031: initial view on content for England and Wales

This section summarises our initial view on topics for inclusion in the census and invites views from respondents through the [topic consultation questionnaire](#). A shorter summary is provided at [Annex D](#). The initial view set out in this document is informed by past user engagement and consultation activity, as well as operational considerations, and is subject to change in light of new evidence. For each topic an initial view is given based on existing evidence, stating whether:

- we expect to collect data on the topic - “Collect via census”
- more information is needed to inform decisions - “More information needed”
- we propose to use admin data to produce census-type statistics instead of collecting via the census - “Do not collect via census (seek to meet user need via administrative data)”

Our initial view for many of the topics listed below is to collect via census. For a small subset of these topics, their inclusion does not require further justification because the information is essential to the census operation or the wider population statistics system. However, we remain interested in respondents’ feedback on their needs in relation to these topics, especially where requirements may have changed in recent years. The initial view for these topics will clearly identify them as “collect via census - essential”. This will indicate the importance of a given topic to the ONS’s population statistics.

For several topics, additional information is required to support our preliminary assessment. Specific prompts for additional information are included in this section and we welcome views on these points in your response.

The [Evaluation criteria for census topics](#) section sets out how evidence provided by respondents on each topic will be evaluated. This evaluation will help to determine whether we produce census outputs on a topic and whether the topic should be collected via census or be produced using administrative sources linked to census.

This consultation's questionnaire is split into three parts, and different questions will be asked for each part.

- Part one: Questions about topics which were included in Census 2021 or previous censuses.
- Part two: Questions about potential new topics.
- Part three: Questions about geographies, definitions and populations, which cut across census topics.

This consultation also includes questions on the way topics are grouped on the census questionnaire and about user needs for data on communal establishments and their residents.

Part one: topics included in Census 2021

This section summarises known user needs for topics included in Census 2021, and some other topics collected through previous censuses. Many of the topics (for example, age, or highest level of qualification) are grouped into topic groups (for example, basic demographics and household composition, or education). Additional context is provided for each topic group.

We are seeking detailed feedback from data users to ensure that we fully understand how and why data are used. Informed by an assessment of the evidence provided through consultation responses and wider engagement, we will update or confirm our initial view on whether to include a given topic in Census 2031.

You can find the related questions for these topics in the “Information on census topics” section of the sample questionnaire at [Annex A](#).

Basic demographics and household composition

Age

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: Age is a protected characteristic under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Data about age (from date of birth) are used for service planning and provision, equalities monitoring and creating age-standardised rates. They are also used in conjunction with other data such as economic indicators, health and social care, and migration. Users need age by single year, age bands (derived) and for specific groups of interest (for example, children, the elderly, the working-age population).

Sex

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: Sex is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. These data are used for service planning and provision, equalities monitoring, weighting and population bases, and policy development. We invite respondent views on how sex data are used and the impact these uses have.



Please note that an updated harmonised standard for this topic is currently in development (see [Harmonisation workplan updated in December 2024](#)). This work is in the discovery phase and will also be informed by relevant information from responses to this consultation.

Marital or legal partnership status

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Marriage and civil partnership is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to employment. Users need these data for equalities monitoring and to understand family structures.

Household and family relationships

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: Data on this topic are used to understand household composition and family structures. When combined with other topics, they can inform policy-making and equalities monitoring. Understanding household structures and phenomena such as single occupancy, single parent households, houses in multiple occupation, student housing and overcrowding is fundamental for population profiling, planning and resource allocation. Respondents are invited to indicate needs for any additional types of family relationships.

Additional context for the basic demographics and household composition topic group

These are core demographic variables and are vital for many types of statistics and disaggregation.

Sex has been recorded in the census at individual level since 1841. Since 2011 online guidance has been made available. The [guidance provided from 9 March 2021](#) for Census 2021 advised those considering how to answer to use the sex recorded on their birth certificate or Gender Recognition Certificate.

In April 2025, a UK Supreme Court judgement defined sex for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 to mean biological sex. The ONS is currently working on the development of an updated [harmonised standard](#) for questions and guidance on sex that takes this ruling into account. Work on that standard will be informed by relevant information from responses to this consultation.

Administrative sources have shown potential for meeting user needs for some of these topics. We are continuing to develop [admin-based population estimates](#), for which the latest statistical output was published in July 2025. Census data can help to quality-assure admin-based estimates on these topics.

The harmonised standard for marriage or civil partnership was updated in 2023 to reduce respondent burden and is fully comparable with data from Census 2021. The [household and family relationships harmonised standard](#) was updated in 2020 to record half-siblings as siblings rather than step-siblings. The “foster” response option was removed for improved comparability to census data, categorising instead as “unrelated”.

Housing

Type of accommodation

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: Information on types of accommodation, such as whole houses or flats, is used by central and local government to inform housing policy and planning. These data are used in multivariate analysis for equalities monitoring and to measure deprivation. See [Part three](#) for information on self-containment of accommodation, under the dwelling definition heading.

Number of rooms

Initial view: Do not collect via census (seek to meet user need via administrative data)

Known user need: Information on number of rooms is used to estimate the size of housing stock and project future housing need. It is also used alongside other household and individual characteristics data to understand local populations. To reduce respondent burden the question on number of rooms was not included in Census 2021, as census data on this topic could be replaced with admin data from the Valuation Office Agency. We are interested in user views on whether this approach met their needs, and the impact if it did not.

Number of bedrooms

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: Information on number of bedrooms is used to monitor housing need and inform housing strategy. It helps to understand specific population groups and understand overcrowding and underoccupancy. We are interested in user views on using alternative sources for this topic and the value it adds beyond the number of rooms topic.

Type of central heating

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: These data inform service provision and support development of energy and net zero policy. They also provide information about energy efficiency of homes, and help government monitor how access to central heating varies by characteristics to support equalities monitoring. We are interested in whether these data continue to provide value to users, the purposes for which they are used and their impact. Also of interest is what impact users may achieve with additional data on built-environment facilities such as heat pumps, low-carbon heating solutions or household cooling.

Tenure and landlord (if renting)

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: Tenure data are used alongside other characteristics and housing data by local government for statutory returns, policy development and service provision. They are also used to understand the private rented, owner-occupied and social rented sectors. We are interested in views on the need for distinct information about different types of social housing.

Number of cars or vans

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: Local authorities require statistics on the number and type of cars and vans available at the household level and small geographical levels, to assess need for transport services, allocate funding and monitor decarbonisation. We are interested in views on the collection of data about the availability of campervans and motorhomes, electric cars or other types of electric vehicles. We are also interested in the impact this would have for users, as well as whether there is a need to distinguish between vehicle ownership and availability at household.

Additional context for the housing topic group

Data on central heating was collected for the first time in 1991, and a question on the number of bedrooms was added to complement the number of rooms question in 2011. Information on tenure has been collected on the census since 1961 and information on type of landlord since 2001. We also collect information on second addresses.

For the type of accommodation variable, although some admin data sources partially align with the census categories, they lack granularity and are often categorised at the property level rather than the household level. Significant coverage gaps exist, and as a result, using admin data for these topics is limited. Combining administrative and survey data may support estimates on these topics.

Admin data exist for the ownership of cars but are limited on car availability by household, as many households lease cars.

Migration and citizenship

Country of birth

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: These data can be cross-tabulated with other variables for equalities monitoring, to build area profiles, target services, and monitor migration.

Long-term international migration

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Information on long-term international migration is collected through information on country of birth, year of arrival to the UK, address one year ago and intention to stay. It helps to establish whether someone is usually resident in the UK according to the UN definition (see [Part three](#)) as the definition encompasses long-term international migrants. These data provide an important comparison for quality assurance with admin-based estimates of long-term international migration. They also distinguish long-term residents who have migrated to the country from other usual residents for analysis purposes and enable us to measure the usually resident population accurately.

International temporary mobility

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: International temporary mobility relates to people who intend to stay in the UK for less than 12 months. It describes short-term migration using terminology from the [latest UN framework](#). Data on this topic help to distinguish between short-term and long-term migrants for ONS population estimates and projections, which inform a wide range of decisions. These data are needed to understand population changes in local areas and allocate resources accordingly, as well as for projections of demand for services and funding. We are interested in user views on using administrative sources for these estimates, in addition to census estimates.

Internal migration

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Internal migration relates to movement between different local authorities within England and Wales, and movement between England and Wales and other parts of the UK. These data are informed by asking an individual's address one year ago. These data provide context on the population present at a given time, as well as data on origins and destinations to understand where people have come from and are going to. They also help us to produce quality information and benchmark regular internal migration outputs. These data are needed to understand population changes in local areas and allocate resources accordingly, as well as for funding and projections of demand for services. An ability to cross-tabulate these data with characteristics information can further inform understanding of this demand.

Passports held

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: These data are used by various stakeholders to assess international mobility, assess the characteristics of residents with multiple nationalities, as well as those without passports. They provide information on people's rights of movement, eligibility to vote and rights to employment and welfare benefits. They also enable us to meet international requirements for the collection of information, and to allow the populations of citizens of different countries to be measured at local level. The data may also support an understanding of populations that enter the UK with one passport and leave with another, which can create gaps in admin-based migration estimates.

Some users have expressed a need for data on those with more than one non-UK and non-Ireland passport, or on expired passports that individuals are entitled to renew. We are aware that the Census 2021 question did not account for migrants who have acquired British citizenship, those on the EU Settlement Scheme or with indefinite leave to remain. Furthermore, there is a general need for improvements to measuring the number of migrants resident in the country. We are interested in views on the need for these data and the impact they would have.

Additional context for the migration and citizenship topic group

A question on intended length of stay was included in the census questionnaire for the first time in 2011. It provides context on how long migrants intend to stay in the country, including the time they have already spent in the UK. This enables an understanding of long-term international migration and international temporary mobility.

A question on passports held was asked for the first time in the 2011 Census as a proxy for citizenship, while other topics in this section have been included in census questionnaires for decades.

Admin data have been the main data used for producing long-term international migration estimates since 2022. Data from Census 2021 were used alongside information from administrative sources to inform the rebasing of population and migration statistics for the previous decade. They also provided important quality assurance for the methods used when producing administrative-based migration estimates.

The harmonised standards for various migration topics have been marked for review.

We have identified a need for alternative and more detailed estimates of different population bases. We are investigating options for producing statistics on short-term residents using admin data, though this is in its early stages. Further information on population bases and definitions is provided in [Part three](#) of this document.


Admin data for country of birth are not collected in a standardised way and further research is needed on their use. The admin data sources variously collect country of birth, country of origin, nationality, but are not consistent in their definition or application.

Ethnicity and national identity

Ethnic group

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: Ethnicity is part of the protected characteristic of “race” under the Equality Act 2010. It is multi-dimensional and subjectively meaningful to individuals. Data about ethnic groups are used at small geographical levels and nationally in conjunction with other topics for service planning and provision, for policy development, to weight surveys, and for monitoring and responding to inequality.

 Please note that the GSS is consulting in parallel on the harmonised standard for ethnic group data. We expect the relevant census question to align to this standard in England and Wales. Users of these data are encouraged to also [complete the related questionnaire](#), as described in the section [Purpose of this consultation](#), noting it differs in content from this topic consultation’s questionnaire.

National identity

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: National identity relates to the country or countries where people feel they belong or think of as home, within the UK and internationally. Data on national identity can be used to understand local populations and plan services. Some users have highlighted a need for more granular data to understand and target services towards specific communities. Users are invited to set out the impact national identity data have for their uses, including in combination with other variables. In the Census 2021 questionnaire, the ordering of responses was updated to move “British” to be the first response option. This was applied for England only. Users are invited to comment on the effect of this change on their use of the data.

Additional context for the ethnicity and national identity topic

Ethnic group was collected for the first time in the 1991 census. Over time, response options have developed. In 2021, 19 tick-box response options were available, including write-in responses. This enabled us to include 287 ethnic group categories in our most detailed ethnic group outputs.

The statistical concept collected by the census is self-identified and may be based on an individual's culture, family background, identity or physical appearance.

Ethnicity and national identity are aspects of a person's cultural identity, alongside religion and language. There is strong interconnectivity between these identity characteristics.

We are continuing to explore [the feasibility of using admin data to produce statistics on ethnic groups](#). To date, it has not been possible to do this using administrative sources alone. We have also explored the use of survey data to produce ethnic group estimates, but small sample sizes limit the quality and granularity of these estimates.

National identity was introduced as a question in the 2011 census. It is a self-determined assessment of individuals' own identity, which includes the country or countries where they feel they belong, or think of as home. It is not dependent on ethnic group or citizenship. The question used in Census 2021, and the harmonised standard, both enabled respondents to select more than one national identity.

The coverage of admin data on national identity across the population is not currently sufficient to capture the topic on the scale required for detailed estimates.

Religion

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Religion is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Data about religious affiliation help to understand the size of religious populations, plan services and monitor inequality. We are aware that some users have a need for information on non-religious affiliation and are interested in users' views on the impact this information would have. We are also interested in user requirements for information on religion at different geographies, and the impact users can achieve with information about small geographies.

Additional context for the religion topic

Religion is an aspect of a person's cultural identity alongside ethnic group, national identity and language. A voluntary question on religion has been asked in the census since 2001. Census 2021's question aligned to the current Government Statistical Service harmonised standard.

In England and Wales, data are typically captured on religious affiliation as opposed to religious belief or practice, as it most closely aligns to the harmonised standard and is most comparable to previous census data.

The coverage of admin data on religion is not currently sufficient to capture the topic on the scale required for detailed estimates.

Language

Main language

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Data on main language are used by local and central government to understand local populations. They are used in conjunction with other variables such as health and disability, to understand, and target, service provision. There are different ways to define main language (for example, first language or language most spoken at home) and we are interested in user views on which definition is needed. We are also interested in whether there is a need for data on multilingualism at the individual level or within families, and the impact these data would have.

English language proficiency

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Local authorities need data on English language proficiency for small geographical areas to target services. These data are used to understand trends in English language ability between population groups, and geographies, by linking it with the main language data. As with main language, some users need this data below local authority level due to the large size of some local authorities. Some users have expressed an interest in understanding cases where individuals use their English language skills on behalf of others in their household or family. We are interested in the impact these data would have for users.

Welsh language skills

Initial view: Collect via census (Wales only)

Known user need: Local and central government in Wales use data on Welsh language speakers and proficiency to understand local populations and target services. These data are also used to measure progress on delivering the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Welsh language strategy. We are aware that the [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Act 2025](#) places a duty on Welsh Ministers to draw up a code establishing a standard method for describing the characteristics of Welsh language users. This may necessitate a different collection approach. We are interested in users' views on this in relation to the capture of Welsh language skills on the census.

Additional context for the language topic group

Language is an aspect of a person's cultural identity alongside ethnic group, national identity and religion.

The Welsh language skills question has only ever been asked in Wales. Census 2021 asked respondents to indicate their ability to speak Welsh, read Welsh, write Welsh and/or understand spoken Welsh, and this approach aligns to the current harmonised standard.

Administrative sources around Welsh language are not yet sufficient on their own to meet user needs. Surveys are used to estimate Welsh language ability outside of a census, though the lack of a clear definition of Welsh language ability leads to inconsistent data collection and interpretation. We are continuing our collaboration with Welsh Government to improve survey design and weighting.

We have identified various administrative sources that contain main language data, but these sources are not sufficient on their own to produce estimates that meet user needs. However, a combined administrative and survey solution may have potential. We are aware that the response options available in the Census 2021 language question did not meet some user needs.

Sexual orientation

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010). Detailed data about sexual orientation is used at small geographical areas and nationally, and in conjunction with other variables, for service planning and provision, for policy development and for monitoring and responding to inequality.

Additional context for the sexual orientation topic

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. The sexual orientation question is a voluntary question. It was asked for the first time in 2021 and was asked only of people aged 16 years and over.

Data on sexual orientation in administrative sources is very limited. The Annual Population Survey (APS) provides information on this topic, but it has limitations in coverage and detail. It has been found that these sources alone are not sufficient to meet user needs.


Census 2021 made amendments to the harmonised standard when implementing a sexual orientation question following new research. We expect the harmonised standard for sexual orientation to undergo further review in the coming years in response to user feedback, which includes responses to this consultation.

Gender identity

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: Gender identity is related to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment under the Equality Act 2010 (see Additional context). Responding to the need for information about the transgender population, the ONS included a new gender identity question in Census 2021. We sought to provide detailed data on gender identity at small geographical areas and nationally, in conjunction with other variables, for service planning and provision, policy development, and for monitoring and responding to inequality. While

we use the term “gender identity” as a broad term for this topic area, there is a range of concepts that a question might seek to address more specifically. We are also aware that some stakeholders do not agree that gender identity is a valid concept. When responding to questions on this topic, users are invited to provide information about whether a particular concept most closely meets their needs.

 Please note that a harmonised standard for this topic is currently in development (see [Harmonisation workplan updated in December 2024](#)). That work is in the discovery phase and will also be informed by relevant information from responses to this consultation.

Additional context for the gender identity topic

The ONS’s collection of gender identity in Census 2021 intended to meet needs for data on people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Under the Equality Act 2010, a person with this protected characteristic “is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person’s sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.” This is broader than the possession of a Gender Recognition Certificate.

This is an area where social norms and respondent and user needs have developed rapidly since the previous census topic consultation in 2015. A gender identity question was added to Census 2021 to provide the first official data on the size of the transgender population in England and Wales. The voluntary question asked respondents aged 16 years and over whether the gender they identify with was the same as their sex registered at birth. Patterns were identified in the data that suggested some respondents may not have interpreted the Census 2021 gender identity question as intended, notably those with lower levels of English language proficiency. Consequently, the Census 2021 [gender identity data were reclassified](#) as official statistics in development in 2024.

In Scotland’s Census 2022, a question on “trans status or history” was asked, which differed from the question in England and Wales. While some differences in the data collected were to be expected, the two questions provided broadly consistent estimates at a national level.

Admin data and alternative survey sources on this topic are both very limited.

Health, disability and unpaid care

Disability and long-term health conditions

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It relates to long-term health conditions that have a negative effect on the ability to do normal daily activities. Information on the prevalence of disability or long-term physical or mental health conditions at small geographical levels has been found to be a strong indicator of the need for health and social services. Knowledge of the amount and distribution of disabled people or those with long-term health conditions, combined with other topics, helps to understand the size of these populations. This helps to allocate resources, target health and social care services, and monitor and respond to inequality. It can also help users to understand reasons that might contribute to inactivity in the workforce.

We note that some users have needs that align with a social model understanding of disability, and have begun to explore this as part of its [review of harmonised standards](#). We are interested in user views on the impact that the existing approach (described in the additional context section for health topics) has on uses of the data. Respondents are invited to note that [Part two](#) includes a potential new topic (Type of health condition, impairment or disability).

General health

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: General health is a self-perceived assessment of the general state of an individual's health. It is used to help plan service provision and interventions, to calculate healthy life expectancy and health inequalities, and as a health indicator at small geographical levels. We are interested in views on whether a self-perceived assessment of individuals' general health is a useful concept to capture.

Unpaid care

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Information on the number of unpaid carers, and the number of hours of unpaid care provided, is used by charities, local and central government for service planning and provision and for policy development. These data can be used in conjunction with information about other individual and household characteristics to monitor and respond to inequality. Some users have expressed a need for more granular data, in order to tailor services. In particular, the carers' relationship to the person cared for, the roles undertaken, and whether the care is being provided within or outside of the home.

Additional context for the health, disability and unpaid care topic group

Since 1991, questions have been asked in the census to identify people with long-term illnesses and disability. Questions on general health and unpaid care were first included in the 2001 census.

Census 2021 gathered data on disability and long-term health conditions through two questions. One asked about physical or mental health conditions lasting 12 months or more, and the other asked how these restricted day-to-day activities. These aligned with the single question asked in the 2011 Census, and to two of the three harmonised standards for measuring disability, which themselves broadly align to the Equality Act 2010 definition. This approach helps generate data on both disability and long-term health conditions.

Data on disability are available across different central government data sources, but the definitions and quality vary. We have begun to consider the viability of alternative sources for producing disability estimates.

In relation to general health, existing administrative sources do not enable a self-perceived general health measure because these sources do not collect this information. However, a different measure of general health (not self-reported/self-perceived) could be feasible using admin data.

Census 2021 defined unpaid care as looking after, or giving help or support to, anyone with long-term physical or mental ill-health conditions, illnesses, or problems related to age. This excluded paid care-related employment activities. Respondents were asked to include any help and support they give to someone who is unwell, elderly or unable to manage on their own.

There is no single admin data source that fully meets the census definition. We have identified a need for further work to assess the quality of administrative sources and explore survey strategies to produce more frequent estimates of unpaid care.

Education

Qualifications

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Understanding the highest level of qualification held by individuals helps to target employability skills programmes and understand the effectiveness of education policies, including identifying regional disparities. This includes multivariate analysis in combination with other variables. These data are also important for understanding social mobility. We also note users' specific need for data on those with no qualifications to understand inequalities. This helps to ensure inclusivity in service planning and provision, by identifying areas with a concentration of people with lower skills or no qualifications. Some users have also expressed a clear need for disaggregation between different types of apprenticeships and degrees, and the pathways individuals take into higher-level qualifications.

Student status and term time address

Initial view: Collect via census – essential

Known user need: Identifying schoolchildren and students in full-time education, and ensuring they are counted at the correct address informs resource allocation within central and local government. It assists with urban planning for student accommodation at local authority level. Information about students' addresses supports enumeration. We are interested in user views on what benefits may be realised through data on people in part-time education, or undertaking informal training.

Additional context for the education topic group

Administrative sources exist for UK qualifications, but qualifications achieved internationally have poorer coverage. Further research would be needed to evaluate the quality of these data sources and explore modelling strategies in conjunction with survey data to produce non-census estimates.

Admin data for student status – including schoolchildren, further and higher education students – are promising as they are of good quality. However, some groups may be missing, for example home-schooled children. Likewise, for administrative qualifications data, those who received qualifications overseas may be missing.

Labour market

Most of the topics in this section are typically asked of individuals who are currently in work. If an individual is not working, they are typically asked to answer in relation to their last main job.

Recent years have seen an increase in complex working patterns, such as people working in multiple jobs (for example, in the gig economy) or hybrid workers and people that work solely from home. We are aware that this is likely to affect data on the labour market and travel to work. We invite users to express their views on this by completing the relevant questions in the consultation questionnaire, and set out any additional needs for data on these topics, and the impact this would have on their use of the data.

Economic activity

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Economic activity data encompasses employment, unemployment and economic inactivity (people not in the labour force who are not seeking work). It provides information on local labour markets, employment history, hours worked per week and length of unemployment to develop policies at local and regional levels. In combination with other variables this is useful for understanding trends in the labour market and informing policy and investment. We are interested in views on the need for, and potential impact of, census data on volunteering.

Industry

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Data on industry and occupation, cross-tabulated with place of work and transport data, support analysis for transport planning. Cross-tabulation of occupation with industry at small geographical levels can help identify opportunities for growth to support labour market policy. We plan to produce an agreed UK Standard Industrial Classification (SIC2026) by March 2026, revising the current UK SIC2007. It is expected this would inform the coding of industry data from the Census 2031.

Occupation

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: Occupation data are used by various stakeholders to define socio-economic status and monitor deprivation and inequality by linking with other characteristics for analysis. Occupation is used with other labour market information to understand economic performance and analyse local labour markets. This informs local economic and community development strategies, and influences both central and local government resource allocation. It is used with other variables, including supervisory status, to derive the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) variable. NS-SEC is used to understand and address inequalities and track improvement in social mobility to assess the impact of government policy. We welcome views on whether the current approach to producing NS-SEC data meets needs. Complementary to NS-SEC, some users have expressed an interest in how census data can support an understanding of social grade. Users are invited to explain their needs for this and the impact these data would have.

Additional context for the labour market topic group

Variables in the labour market topic group have been included in the census for many decades. Several of these variables are used to derive NS-SEC, which is an important measure of social mobility.

Administrative sources have shown some promise for producing administrative-based estimates on some of these topics. However, collection is not always at the person level, informal employment information is not included in admin data, and it would be challenging to align admin-based estimates to international definitions. Occupation data are notably lacking from many administrative sources. Although some sources do exist, they typically have either low population coverage or cannot be mapped to the required Standard Occupational Classification coding, or both. As a result, the quality of these data is often low or unsuitable for ONS needs. This impacts the ability to produce an admin-based NS-SEC measure, though an alternative measure based on qualification and income data may be feasible.

There is potential to use admin data for industry estimates. However, limitations in coherence, accuracy, and person-level linkage mean that it may not fully meet user needs on its own.

Travel to work

Recent years have seen an increase in complex working patterns, such as people working in multiple jobs (for example, in the gig economy), hybrid workers and people that work solely from home. We are aware that this is likely to affect data on the labour market and travel to work. We invite users to express their views on this by completing the relevant questions in the consultation questionnaire, and set out any additional needs for data on these topics, and the impact this would have on their use of the data.

Main method of transport to place of work

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: Users need data on commuter flows, informed by an understanding of how people tend to travel to work, to inform policy and plan transport services. The data are also used to understand carbon emissions for monitoring of decarbonisation objectives. Cross-tabulating travel data with personal characteristics can highlight limited access to transport types for some population groups. We are interested in views on the need for and potential impact of information on: the use of e-scooter or bike hire schemes that are now prevalent in many cities in England and Wales; the ability to distinguish between vehicle ownership and availability to a household; and information about how many and which days of the week hybrid workers travel to work.

Address of place of work

Initial view: Collect via census

Known user need: These data provide information including origin and destination tables, helping to understand commuter zones and patterns, including homeworking, and daytime populations. This informs policy, transport services and infrastructure planning. They also provide context on commuting distance for research on carbon emissions. Together with information on travel to work, these address of place of work data allow us to produce the Travel to Work Area geography. They also assist local authorities in evaluating expected travel patterns and journey times. We are interested in views on whether there is a user demand for information on daily travel other than for work, such as for study, care or for other reasons, and what impact this information would have.

Additional context for the travel to work topic group

Questions on travel to work have been asked in the census for many decades. Restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic affected travel to work data collected in Census 2021, with many people working from home or on furlough as a result of the pandemic.

No admin data currently meet the full range of user needs on workplace address data. Surveys are the only viable source for some variables, especially the mode of travel.

UK armed forces veterans

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: Local and central government need data on the UK armed forces veteran population and their family members to target services, resources and conduct analysis against other characteristics. The question on UK armed forces veterans was asked for the first time in Census 2021, to enable us better meet the needs for service providers and others who support veterans, in line with the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Additional context for the UK armed forces veterans topic

Admin data for this topic show promise; [veteran population data for mid-2023](#) were released in August 2025 as official statistics in development, using admin data from the Service Leavers Database (SLD) linked to Census 2021. The gaps in admin data were primarily for those whose service ended before 1975, while Census 2021 collected data about hundreds of thousands of veterans who served prior to 1975. The combination of current data from the SLD and existing Census 2021 data could therefore be sufficient to meet user needs in future without inclusion of this topic in Census 2031, but further research is required before a decision is made.

The data provide information on veterans and whether they served in the Regular or Reserve Armed Forces. It also includes their family members (who are also included in the Covenant), but only when they are resident with the veteran. We are interested in views on whether user needs go beyond this.

Part two: potential new topics

These are potential new topics where further information is required to make an assessment.

You can find the related questions for these topics in the “Requirements for topic data not collected before” section of the sample questionnaire at [Annex A](#). You can also suggest additional topics in this section of the questionnaire.

Type of health condition, impairment or disability

Initial view: More information needed

Known user need: Some users have expressed an interest in the collection of data on specific impairments or type of disability, and the separation of data on physical and mental health conditions. This would align to what Scotland and Northern Ireland have previously collected within their censuses. This may encompass, for example, visual, cognitive and hearing impairments, neurodiversity, learning disability and mobility limitations, among other

conditions. We have begun to explore these user needs as part of our [review of harmonised standards](#). There may also be a need to understand multimorbidity and its impacts. We invite responses from users on their needs and the impact these data would have.

Income

Initial view: Do not collect via census (seek to meet user need via administrative data)

Known user need: Data on income (gross and disposable) for individuals and households, cross-tabulated with other topics, are needed for a wide range of purposes. These include service planning, and understanding inequality and deprivation.

Income has never been collected through the census as testing has identified that an income question would have an unacceptable impact on response rates, in addition to concerns about data accuracy. Admin-based income statistics have shown good promise for meeting some user needs and can be cross-tabulated with census data in 2031. However, there are challenges in capturing household income after housing costs. There are also challenges in covering all population groups, as admin data do not capture all population groups consistently.

Additional context for the income topic

As well as admin-based income statistics, local income statistics are also available at a statistical building block level (called a Lower layer Super Output Area), produced according to the System of National Accounts and called [gross disposable household income \(GDHI\) statistics](#). For more information see our blog [Understanding the new income statistics for local areas: Different measures for better insights](#).

Part three: Population bases and definitions

This section introduces questions about geographies, definitions and output bases, which cut across census topics. Users will be invited to respond to questions about how far the existing geographies and definitions meet their needs. We also invite views on populations within communal establishments in which users have an interest. The definitions in this section are provided for context to enable respondents to answer the related questions.

You can find the related questions for these definitions in the “Geographies”, “Census definitions and population bases” and “Communal establishments” sections of the sample questionnaire at [Annex A](#).

Geographies

Census data have consistently been published for a wide range of geographies. The building blocks of these geographies are our census statistical geographies, first developed for the 2001 census: Output Areas (OAs), Lower layer Super

Output Areas (LSOAs), and Middle layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), as explained in our [Census 2021 geographies publication](#). We would expect to maintain these statistical geographies for the 2031 census, although as in 2011 and 2021 there may be some changes to specific OAs, LSOAs and MSOAs to accommodate population change in each area.

For the most part our other outputs geographies are produced on a best-fit basis built up of OAs. OAs are used as the best-fit building block. Our [Census 2021 geographies](#) included: countries, regions, local authority areas (including upper- and lower-tier where relevant in England), constituencies for the UK Parliament and the Senedd (the Welsh Parliament), electoral wards, health geographies, parishes, communities, national parks, and built-up areas.

The ONS is also responsible for disseminating census statistics for the UK, working with NRS and NISRA, and we work in partnership to produce this information, recognising the importance of coherent statistics across the UK.

The consultation questionnaire invites responses on the geographies that are most important to users.

Usual residence definition

For our population and migration statistics, including censuses, the main population being measured (the population base) is people who are usually resident. We use the standard United Nations definition, including only people who have stayed, or intend to stay, in a country for 12 months or more, making them usually resident in that country.

A UK resident's place of usual residence is generally their permanent or family home, or the address in the UK at which they spend most of their time. A UK resident can include a household resident, a communal establishment resident, or someone who is sleeping rough, among others.

Family definition

For Census 2021, a "family" was defined as a married, civil-partnered or cohabiting couple with or without children or step-children, or a lone parent with at least one child who lives at the same address. It also included single grandparents or couples with grandchildren, where the parents of the grandchildren were not present. Children in a family may be dependent or non-dependent. Families may be equivalent to a household, or may be one part of a larger household.

Household definition

For Census 2021 we used the following [definition of household, with some nuances](#): either one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room or dining area.

Dwelling definition

For Census 2021, a dwelling referred to a self-contained unit of accommodation, for example houses or flats, which may be occupied or unoccupied. In a dwelling, all of the rooms (including kitchen, bathroom and toilet) in the accommodation are behind a single door that only the household can use. A dwelling is usually made up of one household, but those with more than one household are shared and called a “shared dwelling”.

Short-term resident definition

A census short-term UK resident is anyone born outside the UK who has stayed, or intends to stay, in the UK for a period of three months or more, but less than 12 months.

Visitor definition

A domestic visitor is a person who is usually resident in the UK, or a census short-term UK resident, staying overnight on census day at an address at which they are not usually resident.

An international visitor is a person who intends to stay in the UK for less than three months. They are usually resident outside the UK so will only be counted as a visitor.

Communal establishments definition and context

A communal establishment (CE) was defined in Census 2021 as an establishment providing managed residential accommodation. “Managed” in this context meant providing full- or part-time supervision of the accommodation. This can include, for example, prisons, care homes, university and private halls of residence, boarding schools, staff accommodation and religious establishments with accommodation.

A CE resident was defined as [someone who has spent, or who intends to spend, six months living in such an establishment](#), with some exceptions. In 2021 this information was gathered regarding people living in CEs who were residents, staff or owners, family members or partners of staff or owners, and those staying temporarily with no usual UK address.

In Census 2021, CEs excluded all sheltered accommodation, serviced apartments, houses rented to students by private landlords, and nurses’ accommodation. They also excluded hotels, guest houses, B&Bs, inns and pubs with residential accommodation with fewer than seven guests, which were all defined as households.

Managers of CEs were asked in 2021 about the nature of the establishment, who is responsible for its management and the number of people resident (or visiting). Meanwhile, residents of CEs were invited to complete the full individual questionnaire. We are interested in views on whether this approach to individual-

level collection was appropriate and necessary for all the population groups that reside in CEs. Respondents are invited to express their opinion on whether a subset of questions would be sufficient for particular CE populations (specifying which questions and populations).

We welcome responses on how data about CEs and their residents are used and their impact. We invite views on whether information collected in 2021 met or went beyond users' needs, and if any other information should be collected in addition. For example, this may include family relationships within CEs, data about the heating of CEs and their facilities, the tenure of residents, or the presence of vulnerable populations. In addition, we are interested in views on what information users are most interested in identifying about CEs residents.

Admin data are available for some types of CEs and may be able to support some CE estimates.

Output population bases

The ONS can potentially produce outputs against different groupings known as population bases. We currently produce them for:

- the usually resident population, for which purpose students are counted at their term-time address
- the daytime population, which is the working-age population as it is when people are at work; noting this is impacted by changes in mobility patterns (for example, hybrid working)
- the out-of-term population, which is the usual resident population as it is when students are at their out-of-term address if they have one

We are interested in whether these bases meet needs, and whether we collect or publish sufficient information on where else people we enumerate might be at different times of the day or year. For example, this could include the population present (which includes everyone in a given area at a given time, including visitors) or populations at different times of year.



Next steps and how to take part

Thank you for taking the time to read through this consultation.

The ONS has set out its initial view on the collection of topics in Census 2031 and invites responses from users.

When providing answers for topic groups containing multiple topics, we encourage users to explicitly state the specific topics on which they would like to provide feedback.

Following this consultation, we will analyse responses in line with the criteria described in the [Evaluation Criteria](#) section, to inform the selection of topics for Census 2031. Your responses to this consultation will help inform this evaluation.

Further research, engagement and consultation will take place in the coming years to support the development of questions and the questionnaire design for the census, and to inform the production of census outputs.

We will provide an update within 12 weeks of the consultation's closing date. We will also publish a dedicated report on the responses to this consultation.

You are invited to respond to the consultation by completing the questionnaire by the closing date of 4 February 2026.

We strongly encourage you to complete the consultation questionnaire online on the [Citizen Space website](#). You can also download the questionnaire from the Citizen Space website and respond by email or post.

Physical copies of this consultation document and the questionnaire are available on request. Large print copies are also available.

Guidance for organisations with multiple responses is provided in [Annex C](#).

Responses and enquiries can be emailed to Topic.Consultation@ons.gov.uk, or sent by post at:

ONS Consultations Team

Post Room
Office for National Statistics
Segensworth Road
Fareham
PO15 5RR

You can also call ONS Census Customer Services on **01329 444 972**.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Confidentiality and data protection

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) needs your name and email address to receive your response. With your permission, we may contact you about your response to the consultation. We aim to be as open as possible in our decision-making process. All responses to the consultation will be published. The names of organisations that have responded will be included with their response, and where individuals provide the ONS with permission to publish their names for an individual response, these names will also be included. We will not publish personal contact details, such as email addresses.

To find out more, read our [Privacy Policy](#). This consultation has been carried out in accordance with the [government's consultation principles](#). If you have any complaints about the way this consultation has been conducted, please email: Topic.Consultation@ons.gov.uk.

ANNEX A:

Consultation questions: sample questionnaire

This annex provides a sample of the consultation questionnaire. Please do not complete this sample. We strongly encourage you to complete the consultation questionnaire online on the [Citizen Space website](#). You can also download the questionnaire from the Citizen Space website and respond by email or post.

Physical copies of this consultation document and the questionnaire are available on request. Large print copies are also available.

Responses and enquiries can be emailed to Topic.Consultation@ons.gov.uk, or sent by post at:

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Fareham
PO15 5RR

You can also call ONS Census Customer Services on **01329 444 972**.

About you

1. What is your name?

Please include your first and last name. (Required)

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2. What is your email address?

This will be used to confirm your response has been received. (Required)

.....

3. Please can we contact you in the future to discuss your requirements for population statistics?

This may be to clarify or elaborate on your response, or to invite you to take part in further engagement about your requirements related to population and migration statistics.

Yes

No


This is a sample of the consultation questionnaire

4. Are you answering on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?

For organisational responses, a single coordinated response is preferred. It may not always be appropriate or possible to do so, and in this case, please select that you are responding on behalf of an organisation but only tell us about requirements you have knowledge of.

- Individual
- On behalf of an organisation

Please specify the name of your organisation

 If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please ensure that your responses throughout the form reflect the needs and perspectives of your organisation as a whole, rather than personal views.

5. What sector do you work in?


This will assist the ONS in monitoring the range of users this consultation has reached.

Please select all that apply

- UK government department
- Devolved government
- Non-departmental public body or government agency
- Local or regional government
- Public service (for example a school or police force)
- Academia or research
- NHS board or health organisation
- Housing

 **This is a sample of the consultation questionnaire**


- Charity or community sector
 - Commercial or private sector
 - Journalism or media
 - Genealogical or family history
 - Individual member of the public
 - Other, please specify
-

 **We aim to be as open as possible in our decision-making process. All responses to the consultation will be published.**

The names of organisations that have responded will be included with their response. If you are responding as an individual, we will publish your name with your response, if you agree. We will not publish your email address.

6. If you are responding as an individual, do you agree to your name being published?


- Yes, I consent to my name being published with my response
- No, please remove my name before publishing my response

 **Please be aware that any information provided in response to this topic consultation could be made publicly available if requested under a Freedom of Information request.**

This is a sample of the consultation questionnaire

Information on census topics

This section will ask you about how you expect to use census data. In line with the evaluation criteria set out in the consultation document, questions will be asked about purpose, geography, small populations, comparability and multivariate analysis. Your answers will help the ONS to evaluate user needs for topics and make recommendations for their inclusion (or exclusion) within the Census 2031 questionnaire.

 Questions 7 to 18 are repeated for each topic group described in part 1 of this consultation document. Small variations in how the questions are asked for specific topic groups are noted where relevant.

Data use and purpose

7. At what geographical levels do you expect to use Census 2031 data for this topic group?

Please select all that apply

Geographical definitions

A Middle layer Super Output Area usually comprises four or five Lower layer Super Output Areas, containing between 2,000 and 6,000 households or 5,000 to 15,000 people.

A Lower layer Super Output Area usually comprises four or five Output Areas, containing between 400 and 1,200 households or 1,000 to 3,000 people.

An Output Area usually comprises between 40 and 250 households or 100 to 625 people.

- National
- Regional
- Local authority
- Middle layer Super Output Area

! This is a sample of the consultation questionnaire

- Lower layer Super Output Area
- Output Area
- Other, please specify

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**8. What are your requirements for Census 2031 data for this topic group?
Please include examples of why you need them.**

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

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i Please include detailed examples in your answers to the following questions, focused on describing the uses most important for you or your organisation.

For gender identity, questions 9 to 11 ask about how you would expect to use census data, instead of your current usage.

9. What purpose do you use census data on this topic group for?

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

Please provide specific examples of what you are doing, why you are doing it and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- how the data are used for policy development or monitoring
- how the data are used to meet statutory requirements

! This is a sample of the consultation questionnaire

- how the data are used for research
- how the data are used for funding allocation

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10. How, if at all, do you use census data for this topic group at small geographies?

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

Small geographies mean levels below local authority level.

Please provide specific examples of what you are doing, why you are doing it and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- identifying those areas (below local authority) that require certain services, intervention, and planning
- monitoring demographic change
- allocating resources

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11. How, if at all, do you use census data for this topic group to understand more about small population groups?

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

Small population groups include people identified by shared cultural traits, such as ethnic group, religion, national identity, main language, country of birth or protected characteristics.

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Please provide specific examples of what you are doing, why you are doing it and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- identifying which small population groups might require additional funding from services
- comparing different small population groups for research purposes

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i Question 12 is not asked for the following topics: sexual orientation, gender identity or veterans.

12. How, if at all, do you compare census data for this topic group with earlier censuses?

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

Please provide specific examples of what you are doing, why you are doing it and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- evaluations over time to make funding decisions
- projections you make, and how they're used
- evaluations over time to make policy recommendations

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This is a sample of the consultation questionnaire

 For gender identity, questions 13 to 14 ask about how you would expect to use census data, instead of your current usage.

13. How, if at all, do you use census data for this topic group combined with other census variables (otherwise known as multivariate analysis)?

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

Please provide specific examples of what you are doing, why you are doing it and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include using it for:

- comparing different census variables with each other
- exploring more detail in the counts that the ONS produce
- looking at relationships between census data variables

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14. How, if at all, do you compare census data for this topic group to geographical areas outside England and Wales?

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

Please provide specific examples of what you are doing, why you are doing it and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- comparisons across the UK for funding purposes
- comparisons between different local authorities within other regions across the UK nations for policy development
- comparisons with European countries for research purposes
- comparing England and Wales with Scotland and Northern Ireland data to plan and coordinate crisis responses

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i Question 15 is not asked for gender identity.

15. How, if at all, are these current uses different from your (future) needs for Census 2031 data for this topic group? Please provide detailed examples of your future needs, including comparisons you may make to Census 2021 data.

Please refer to the topic data you use within your descriptions.

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Alternative data sources

16. How, if at all, do alternative (non-census) sources of data for this topic group meet your requirements? Please include detailed examples in your answer.

Alternative data sources include administrative sources, web scraped data, social media data, other surveys and commercial data.

Please refer to the topics you use within your descriptions.

It is useful to include information about the following points, where they apply:

- what alternative data sources you use
- what purpose you use these data for
- how, if at all, you combine alternative data sources with census data
- how well these meet your data requirements

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- what additional costs, if any, are incurred in acquiring administrative data sources

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17. What would the consequences be, if any, for you if data were not collected for this topic group in Census 2031?

It is useful to include information about the following points, where they apply:

- whether existing alternative data sources could be used in place of census data (you do not need to repeat any detail on alternative data that you have already provided)
- whether additional data collection would need to be undertaken or commissioned
- consequences in terms of time, financial cost or quality
- work that could no longer be undertaken without these census data, if any

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Additional requirements

18. What else, if anything, would you like to add about your requirements for Census 2031 data for this topic group?

This could include, for example, additional response tick boxes, or opportunities to link census data to other data sources.

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Requirements for topic data not collected before

Collection of census information can only be justified if there is a significant need for the data.

The following questions will collect detailed information about your requirements for new data on 'type of health condition, impairment, or disability' and 'income'.

i Questions 19 to 26 are asked for each of the potential new topics discussed in part two of this consultation document.

Alternative data sources

19. How, if at all, do alternative (non-census) sources of data on this topic meet your requirements? Please include detailed examples in your answer.

Alternative data sources include administrative sources, web scraped data, social media data, other surveys and commercial data.

It is useful to include information about the following points, where they apply:

- what alternative data sources you use, if any
- what purpose you use these data for
- how well these meet your data requirements
- what additional costs, if any, are incurred in acquiring administrative data sources

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Data use and purpose

20. At what geographical levels do you expect to use Census 2031 data for this topic?

Please select all that apply

Geographical definitions

A Middle layer Super Output Area usually comprises four or five Lower layer Super Output Areas, containing between 2,000 and 6,000 households or 5,000 to 15,000 people.

A Lower layer Super Output Area usually comprises four or five Output Areas, containing between 400 and 1,200 households or 1,000 to 3,000 people.

An Output Area usually comprises between 40 and 250 households or 100 to 625 people.

- National
- Regional
- Local authority
- Middle layer Super Output Area
- Lower layer Super Output Area
- Output Area
- Other, please specify

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21. What are your requirements for Census 2031 data for this topic? Please include examples of why you need them.

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i Please include detailed examples in your answers to the following questions, focused on describing the uses most important for you or your organisation.

22. What purpose would you use Census 2031 data on this topic for?

Detailed examples may include:

- how you would expect to use these data for policy development or monitoring
- how you would expect to use these data to meet statutory requirements
- how you would expect to use these data for research
- how you would expect to use these data for funding allocation

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23. How, if at all, would you use Census 2031 data for this topic at small geographies?

Small geographies mean levels below local authority level.

Please provide specific examples of what you would expect to do, why and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- identifying those areas (below local authority) that require certain services, intervention, and planning
- monitoring demographic change
- allocating resources

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24. How, if at all, would you use Census 2031 data for this topic to understand more about small population groups?

Small population include groups of people identified by shared cultural traits such as ethnic group, religion, national identity, main language, country of birth or protected characteristics.

Please provide specific examples of what you would expect to do, why and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- identifying which small population groups might require additional funding from services
- comparing different small population groups for research purposes

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25. How, if at all, would you use Census 2031 data for this topic combined with other census variables (otherwise known as multivariate analysis)?

Please provide specific examples of what you would expect to do, why and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include using it for:

- comparing different census variables with each other
- exploring more detail in the counts that the ONS produce
- looking at relationships between census data variables

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26. How, if at all, would you compare census data for this topic to geographical areas outside England and Wales?

Please provide specific examples of what you would expect to do, why and the benefits, if any.

Detailed examples may include:

- comparisons across the UK for funding purposes
- comparisons between different local authorities within other regions across the UK nations for policy development
- comparisons with European countries for research purposes
- comparing England and Wales with Scotland and Northern Ireland data to plan and coordinate crisis responses

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Additional new topics

You now have opportunity to tell us about any other new topics you have requirements for. Please complete a copy of the following section for each new topic you wish to propose.

27. What, if any, other additional new topics would you propose for Census 2031?

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28. How would you expect to use these census data? Please include detailed examples in your answer.

It is useful to include information about the following, where they apply:

- how you would use these data to understand small population groups, such as those identified by shared cultural identities which may be difficult to accurately represent through surveys
- how you would use these data at geographies smaller than local authority
- how you would combine these census data with other census variables to look at relationships between the data (multivariate analysis)
- how you would compare these data to data beyond England and Wales, such as comparisons of different local authorities within UK nations, or comparisons across the UK or with European countries

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Geographies

29. The ONS produces a number of core statistical and administrative geographies. What additional geographies, if any, do you require for Census 2031? Please include in your answer what geographies you require, what they are needed for and the benefits of having them, if any.

Core statistical and administrative geographies

- National
- Regional
- Local authority
- Middle layer Super Output Area (usually comprises four or five Lower layer Super Output Areas, containing between 2,000 and 6,000 households or 5,000 to 15,000 people).
- Lower layer Super Output Area (usually comprises four or five Output Areas, containing between 400 and 1,200 households or 1,000 to 3,000 people)
- Output Area (usually comprises between 40 and 250 households or 100 to 625 people)

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Census definitions and population bases

30. Census definitions, such as usual resident and dwelling, describe how individuals and accommodation are counted and grouped. What additional definitions and groupings do you require for Census 2031, if any, that were not used for Census 2021? Please include in your answer any required changes to existing definitions or new groups, what they are needed for and the benefits of having them, if any.

Census 2021 groupings

For reference, the Census 2021 groupings are provided below.

- Usual resident: people who have stayed, or intend to stay, in a country for 12 months or more.
- Family: a married, civil-partnered or cohabiting couple with or without children or stepchildren, or a lone parent with at least one child, who lives at the same address.
- Household: one person living alone, or a group of people living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room or dining area.
- Dwelling: a self-contained unit of accommodation, for example houses or flats, which may be occupied or unoccupied.
- Visitor: a person who is usually resident in the UK, or a census short-term UK resident (defined below), staying overnight on census day at an address at which they are not usually resident.
- Short-term resident: anyone born outside the UK who has stayed, or intends to stay, in the UK for a period of three months or more, but less than 12 months.

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31. The ONS currently produces outputs against the usually resident population, the daytime population and the out-of-term population. What additional population bases, if any, do you require from Census 2031?

Please include in your answer what population bases you require, what they are needed for and the benefits of having them, if any.

Guidance

Population bases are the groupings used for statistical outputs that describe where the people we count are at a specific time of day or year.

- Usually resident population: the population of individuals who have stayed, or intend to stay, in a country for 12 months or more. Students are counted at their term-time address.
- Daytime population: the working-age population as it is when people are at work; noting this is impacted by changes in mobility patterns (for example, hybrid working).
- Out-of-term population: the usual resident population as it is when students are at their out-of-term address if they have one.

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Communal establishments

32. What requirements do you have for Census 2031 data relating to communal establishments and their populations? Please outline your requirements for each accommodation type and their population.

A communal establishment is a place that provides managed full-time or part-time supervision of residential accommodation

Examples include:

- university halls of residence and boarding schools
- care homes, hospitals, hospices and maternity units

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- hotels, guest houses, hostels and bed and breakfasts, all with residential accommodation for seven or more guests
- prisons and other secure facilities
- Single Living Accommodation in military bases
- staff accommodation
- religious establishments

It does not include sheltered accommodation, serviced apartments, nurses' accommodation, and houses rented to students by private landlords. These are households.

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33. At what geographical level do you require Census 2031 data about communal establishments?

Geographical definitions

A Middle layer Super Output Area usually comprises four or five Lower layer Super Output Areas, containing between 2,000 and 6,000 households or 5,000 to 15,000 people.

A Lower layer Super Output Area usually comprises four or five Output Areas, containing between 400 and 1,200 households or 1,000 to 3,000 people.

An Output Area usually comprises between 40 and 250 households or 100 to 625 people.

- National
- Regional
- Local authority
- Middle layer Super Output Area
- Lower layer Super Output Area

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- Output Area
- Other, please specify

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Harmonisation

34. In which topic areas or data items, if any, would greater harmonisation help you bring together data from different sources more effectively? Please include detailed examples where a lack of harmonised standards has made it difficult to combine or compare data.

Harmonised standards and guidance are tools developed by the Government Statistical Service for improving the comparability and coherence of statistics. Harmonised standards include definitions, survey questions, suggested presentations and information for data users. Producers of statistics can use these harmonised standards to align with others, which will increase the usefulness of their statistics. This makes it easier to bring similar data from different sources together to create a broader data picture.

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Anything else

35. What, if anything else, would you like to add about your Census 2031 data requirements?

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ANNEX B:

Moderation policy

In the interests of transparency, we – the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – will publish all responses to this Census 2031 topic consultation after the evaluation is complete.

The ONS reserves the right to moderate the publication of responses to ensure that responses are appropriate and not harmful to others, in accordance with the terms below.

Responses may be unpublished, or redacted, if they include any of the following:

- threats or incitements to violence
- use of obscenity
- postings seeking employment or containing advertisements for a commercial product or service
- information posted in violation of law, including libel, condoning or encouraging illegal activity, revealing classified information, or infringing on a copyright or trademark

We deeply value your time and input, and our desire is to redact as few responses as possible while ensuring that a focused, constructive consultation takes place. This list is not fully exhaustive, and the moderation approach is subject to change to address additional matters as may be warranted. If you have a complaint about an item of user-generated content on this site, or feel that your own content was redacted in error, please contact us.

ANNEX C:

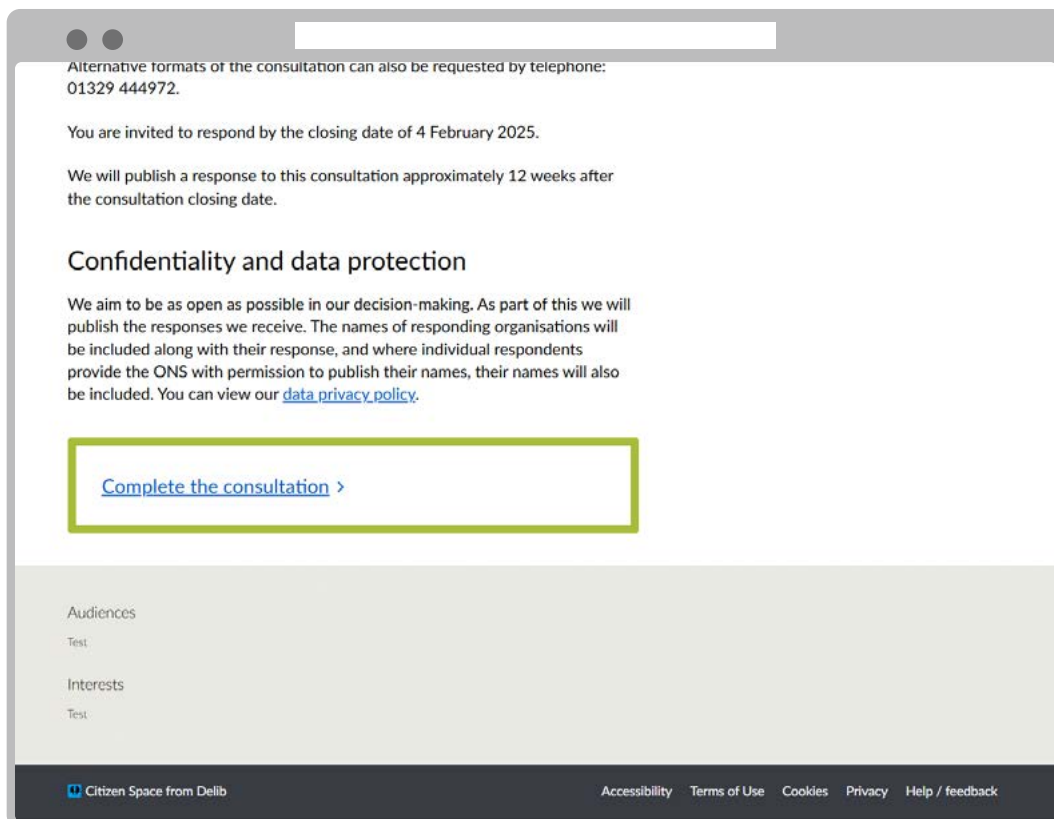
Guidance to organisations with multiple respondents

Where possible, we would prefer one response per organisation, although we appreciate this may not always be feasible.

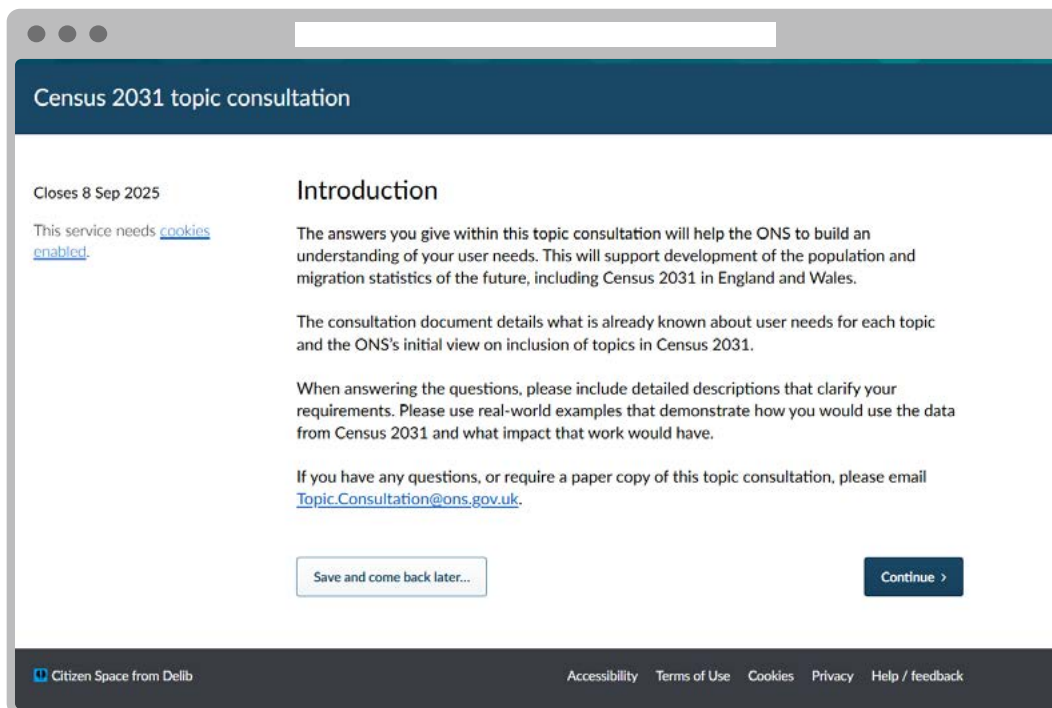
To produce an organisational response you may need to coordinate content from others in your organisation who may have the detailed knowledge of how data on each topic is used. They will be best placed to provide the information we require as evidence.

One person therefore needs to coordinate the response on behalf of these experts.

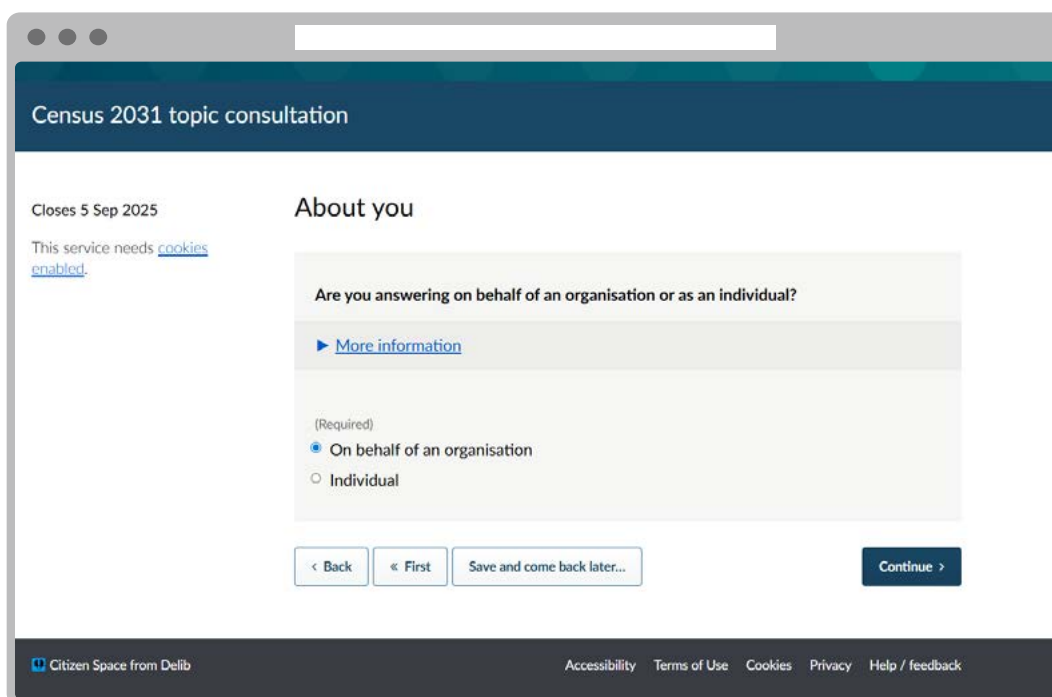
1. The coordinator needs to start an online response to the questionnaire by clicking the link from the consultation overview page.

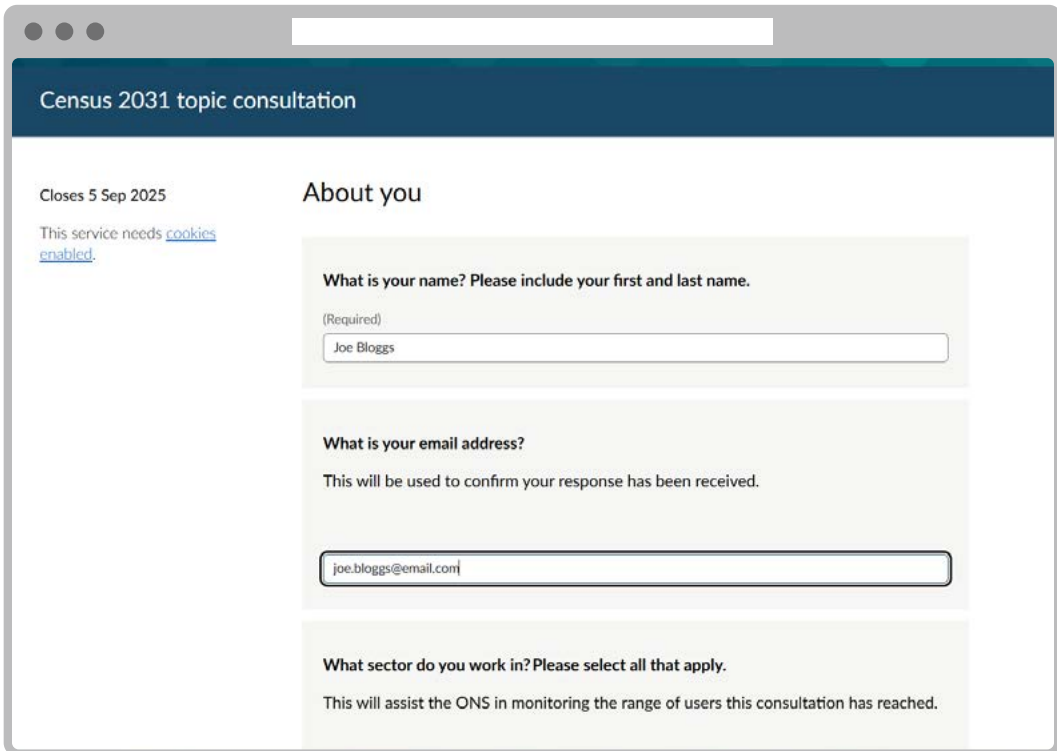
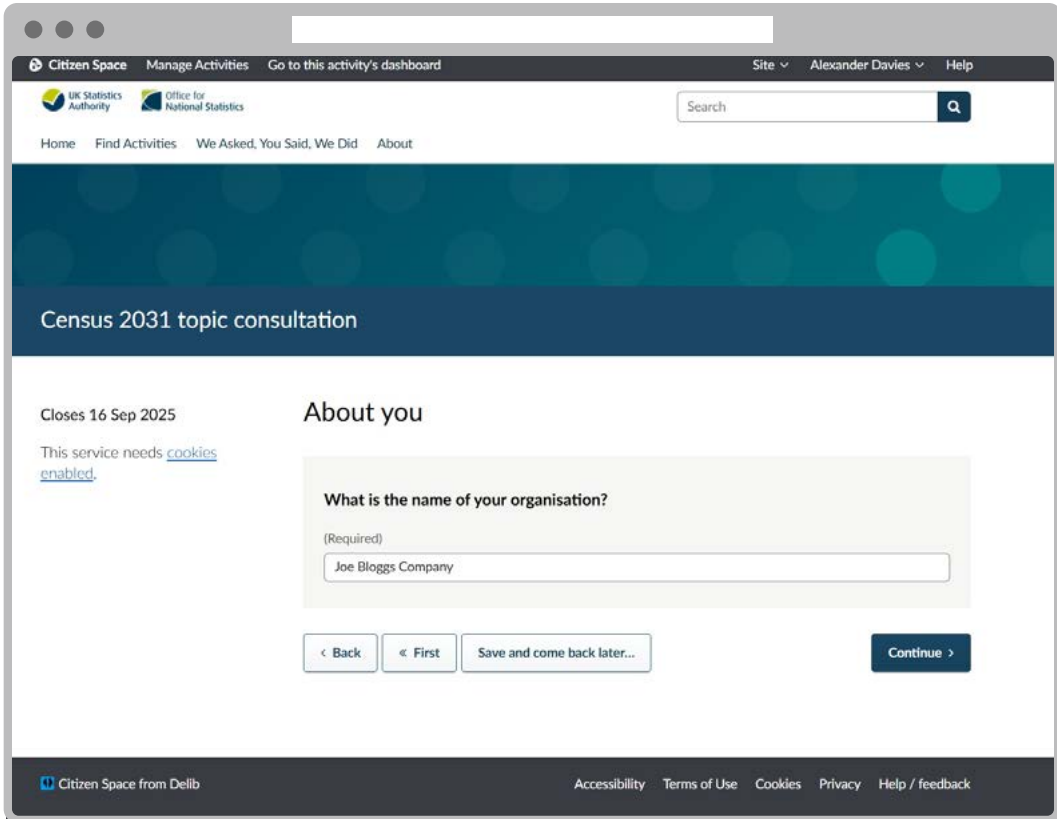


Once you have read the “Introduction” page, click the “Continue” button at the bottom.



2. Complete the “About you” sections. Select “On behalf of an organisation” for the first questions. Click the “Continue” button. Enter the name of your organisation. Then use the coordinator’s email address.





- From here, you can save and return later. At the base of the “About you” section you will see the option to “Save and come back later...”. Click on this, and in the new page, re-enter the coordinator’s email address, then click the button “Save and send email”.

Please can the ONS contact you to discuss your requirements for population statistics?

This may be to clarify or elaborate on your response, or to invite you to take part in further engagement about your requirements related to population and migration statistics.

Yes
 No

To support transparency in our decision-making, responses to this topic consultation will be made public. This will include your name if you agree.

Please be aware that any information provided in response to this topic consultation could be made publicly available if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Do you agree to your name being published?

Yes, I consent to my name being published with my response
 No, please remove my name before publishing my response

< Back « First Save and come back later... Continue >

Citizen Space from Delib Accessibility Terms of Use Cookies Privacy Help / feedback

Census 2031 topic consultation

Save your response to return later

If you would like to finish your response later, please enter your email address. We will send you an email containing a unique link that will let you return to edit and submit your response.

Email address

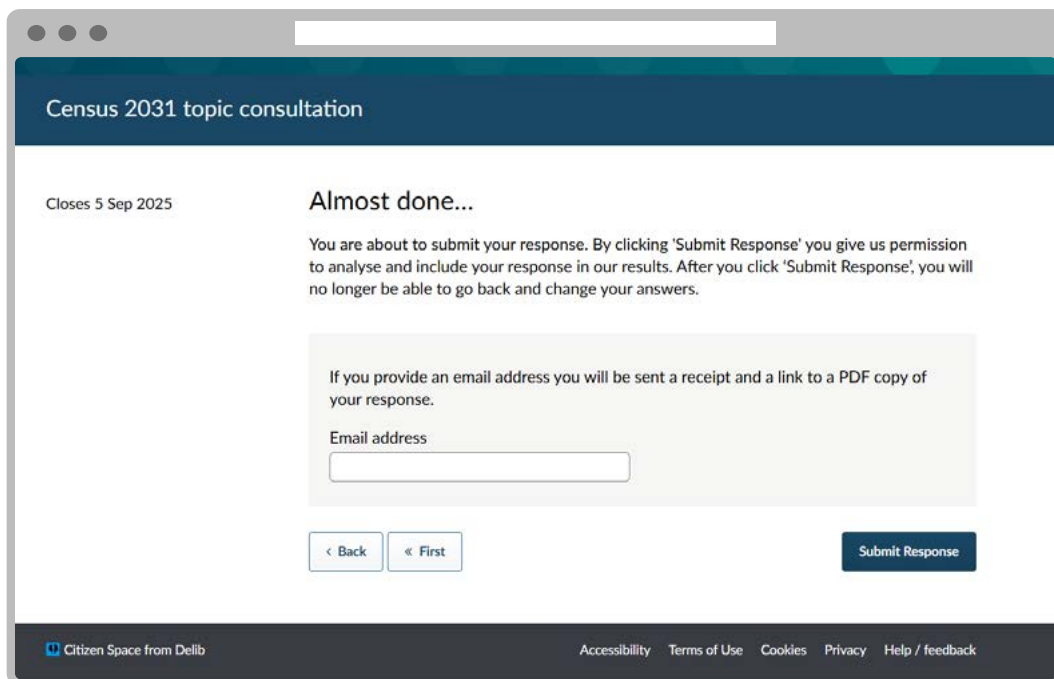
After the email is sent, your response cookie will be cleared to keep your response secure. You can use the details in your email to return to your saved response later.

Save and send email

Citizen Space from Delib Accessibility Terms of Use Cookies Privacy Help / feedback

- You will see a page titled “Your return details”, with a unique ID number and URL. This URL can be emailed to others in your organisation and works as a login to the consultation questionnaire. The coordinator will receive an email containing this information.

5. Multiple people can contribute to the questionnaire, as long as they are not adding responses to the same topic questions.
6. When you log back in to the questionnaire, you will be taken to the first page. You should see your responses pre-populated. Respondents can navigate forwards or backwards.
7. Once others in your organisation have completed their sections they should press “save and come back later” and then exit the questionnaire. They should not use the “submit” button as that will submit the whole consultation response, which may be incomplete if others have not yet contributed.
8. Final submission of your organisation’s consultation response should only be done by the coordinator once all others have completed their sections.
9. At the end of the survey, clicking “Finish” takes you to a confirmation screen explaining what happens next. The coordinator’s final task is to click the “Submit response” button.



10. The coordinator will be sent an email confirming their organisation’s submission, with the same unique reference number as referenced in point 4 to quote, should you need to contact us at Topic.Consultation@ons.gov.uk.

ANNEX D:

Summary of initial view on content for Census 2031 in England and Wales

This section summarises the ONS's initial view on topics for Census 2031. There are four categories of initial view:

- "Collect via census" – meaning we expect to collect data on the topic
- "More information needed" - meaning we need more information to inform decisions
- "Do not collect via census (seek to meet user need via administrative data)" - meaning we propose to use admin data to produce census-type statistics instead of collecting via the census

The fourth category is "Collect via census – essential". This means that a topic's inclusion does not require further justification because the information is essential to the census operation or wider population statistics system. However, we remain interested in respondents' feedback on their needs in relation to these topics, especially where requirements may have changed in recent years.

Collect via census - essential

- Age
- Sex
- Household and family relationships
- Type of accommodation
- Tenure and landlord (if renting)
- International temporary mobility
- Ethnic Group

Collect via census

- Marital or legal partnership status
- Country of birth
- Long-term international migration
- Internal migration
- Passports held
- National identity
- Religion
- Main language
- English language proficiency
- Welsh language skills (Wales only)

- Sexual orientation
- Disability and long-term health conditions
- Unpaid Care
- Qualifications
- Student status and term time address
- Economic activity
- Industry
- Occupation
- Address of place of work

More information needed

- Number of bedrooms
- Type of central heating
- Number of cars or vans
- General health
- Gender identity
- Main method of transport to place of work
- UK armed forces veterans
- Type of health condition, impairment or disability (potential new topic)

Do not collect via census (seek to meet needs via administrative data)

- Number of rooms
- Income (potential new topic)

