Response to the ONS consultation on user need for: estimates of the population in marriages between same-sex couples.

16 January 2018

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# 1. Introduction

This document summarises the responses received to the consultation on user need for ‘estimates of the population in marriages between same-sex couples’ and sets out what action ONS plan to take as a result.

The consultation ran from 3 October 2017 to 24 October 2017 and gave users an opportunity to tell us how they use estimates of the population who are in a marriage between same-sex couples, and specifically whether separate estimates from the total married population are required for analysis and why. The consultation was designed to enable us to gain a better understanding of; who is currently using our data, what they use the data for and whether we are meeting their analysis needs. The [consultation document](https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/data-analysis-unit/user-need-for-separate-estimates-of-the-population/) is available to download from the National Statistics website.

The consultation was conducted in line with the [Code of Practice](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/) for Official Statistics.

# 2. Background

ONS currently produces [population estimates by marital status and living arrangements](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationestimatesbymaritalstatusandlivingarrangements/2002to2016) for England and Wales. Where possible an estimate of the population who are in a marriage between same-sex couples is provided separately. This is currently a number, not available by age or sex because of very small estimates of this population. Throughout the majority of the publication the population who are in a marriage between opposite-sex couples and same-sex couples are presented together as a total married population.

ONS were keen to learn whether the provision of a separate estimate of the population who are in a marriage between same-sex couples is meeting user need, allowing us to gain a better understanding of who uses these estimates and how they are being used.

The consultation questions were specifically aimed at gathering user need about the number (stock) of people by marital status living in England and Wales not the number of marriages being formed in England and Wales (flow), which ONS has asked users about in the past.

# 3. Summary of responses and our actions

We are grateful to everyone who took time to respond to the consultation. There were a total of 354 responses received from a variety of organisations and individuals that monitor, formulate or influence policy and plan services both at the national and local level. We also received responses from academics, charities and religious groups. A full list of organisations that responded can be found in Annex A. The feedback we received is very valuable to us and has helped us to better understand our users and their data requirements.

The key points to note from the responses to the consultation are:

* 99.4% of respondents require estimates of the population who are married to be presented separately for same-sex couples and for opposite-sex couples.
* The majority (71.8%) of responses came from individuals; the next largest group of responses (16.1%) came from religious or church groups.
* Respondents require estimates of the married population to be separate to allow:
	+ Analysis of family and relationship trends and diversity
	+ Calculation of divorce rates which allows analysis of the differences in length of marriage
	+ Equalities monitoring
	+ Provision of a comprehensive picture of the resident population
	+ Informed service provision
	+ Monitoring of physical/ mental health and wellbeing outcomes
	+ Support of evidence based policy making
	+ Understanding of the impact and effect of the introduction of the [Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/30/contents/enacted/data.htm)
	+ Historical and international comparisons of the population who are in a marriage between opposite sex couples.

As a result of this consultation, we:

* Have a better understanding of user need which allows us to make informed decisions about marital status data collection in the future.
* Will continue to provide separate estimates of the population who are in a marriage between same-sex couples and in a marriage between opposite-sex couples where possible.
* Will continue to monitor these data to see whether we can provide more detailed estimates in the future which could be of more use to our users.

# 4. Detailed responses and our actions

**4.1 Our response to other concerns raised:**

**A large number of respondents raised concerns that ONS were proposing not to provide a separate estimate of the population who are in a marriage between same-sex couples.**

The purpose of this consultation was to gather and better understand the user requirements for, and current use of, the separate estimates of the population who are in a marriage between same-sex couples and between opposite-sex couples. The consultation did not cover changes to the current or future provision of separate estimates of the population who are in a marriage.

For the avoidance of doubt we will continue to provide a separate estimate of the population who are in a marriage between same-sex couples and between opposite-sex couples where possible for the foreseeable future.

# 5. Getting in Touch

If you have any queries or comments about the consultation process, please email ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk.

For further information on ONS consultations, please visit <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/consultationsandsurveys>

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# 6. Accessibility

All material relating to this consultation can be provided in braille, large print or audio formats on request. British Sign Language interpreters can also be requested for any supporting events.

# Annex A: Organisations which responded

We are grateful to everyone who supported and contributed to our consultation. Organisations that responded are listed below.

|  |
| --- |
| 1979 |
| Arrabon Technologies Limited LLC |
| Abbeyfield Tiverton Society |
| ACC |
| AceKing |
| Ampleforth College |
| Anglican Mainstream |
| BBC News |
| Bethel Christian Fellowship |
| Bible Theology Ministries |
| Brierley Consultancy |
| Carmel Evangelical Church, Christchurch, Dorset |
| Catenian Association |
| Catholic Church - Archdiocese of Birmingham |
| Chiddingfold Baptist Church |
| Christ Church, Exmouth |
| Christian Peoples Alliance, Restore the Family for Children's Sake, The Alliance For Change |
| Christian Voice |
| Church of England  |
| City Church Dundee |
| Coalition for Marriage |
| Common Sense |
| Connect Assynt |
| Coventry University |
| Diocese of Portsmouth |
| Dorset County Council |
| Elim Church, Hayes. |
| Faith Aglow  |
| Family Education Trust |
| FEC |
| Fit Hire  |
| Free Church of England |
| Free Church of Scotland |
| Glebe Farm Baptist Church |
| Government Equalities Office |
| Grassroots conservatives |
| Ground Level Network |
| Hartshill Bible Church |
| Haven Green Baptist Church |
| Home Office |
| Hope Chapel |
| Immanuel Presbyterian Church |
| Inclusive Messy Church |
| International Presbyterian Church |
| Kent County Council |
| LGE Ltd |
| Maryvale Institute |
| Morality Forum |
| Noah's Ark Zoo Farm |
| Normal Familes |
| Oasis Church |
| Organisation for Equality and Human Rights - OFEAHR |
| PanCare  |
| Poulner Baptist Chapel, Ringwood, Hampshire |
| Poynton Christian Fellowship |
| Presbyterian Church of Wales |
| PSBC |
| Rccg |
| Residents association |
| Richmond and Wandsworth Councils |
| Salem Baptist Church, Ramsey |
| Scottish Christian Party (part of The Christian Party) |
| South Street Free Church, Eastbourne |
| St Lawrence, Lechlade |
| St Luke's Cheltenham  |
| St Mary's Church, Cholsey |
| Swavesey Particular Baptist Chapel |
| T.R.A.C. (The Reired and Actively Concerned) |
| The General Synod of the Church of England |
| The Redeemed Christian Church of God |
| The Sanctuary Church |
| Trinitarian Bible Society |
| Truth Research |
| University of Bradford |
| University of Bristol |
| University of Cambridge |
| University of Gloucestershire |
| Verwood Road Evangelical Church, Three Legged Cross, Dorset  |
| Vital Statistics Outputs Branch, ONS |
| W&P Ltd  |
| West Bromwich Deanery and Holy TrinityWB church |