



ONS Census Transformation Programme

The 2021 Census

Assessment of initial user
requirements on content for
England and Wales

Basic demographics and
household composition
topic report

May 2016

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Background	4
3. Summary of consultation responses.....	5
4. Evaluation	7
4.1 User requirements – age and sex.....	7
4.2 Other considerations – age	13
4.3 Other considerations – sex.....	13
4.4 Operational requirements – age and sex	14
4.5 User requirements – marital and legal partnership status	14
4.6 Other considerations – marital and legal partnership status.....	17
4.7 Operational requirements – marital and legal partnership status	17
4.8 Operational requirements – household and family relationships	18
4.9 Other considerations – household and family relationships	23
4.10 Operational requirements – household and family relationships	23
5. Updated view	24
6. Equality implications of ONS’s updated view	25
7. Next steps	27
Annex A: List of organisations that responded, by sector	28

1. Introduction

In June 2015 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the public consultation document ‘The 2021 Census initial view on content for England and Wales’¹. This discussed the initial views of ONS regarding the potential inclusion of current (2011) and additional topics in the 2021 Census. The public consultation was open from 4 June 2015 to 27 August 2015 and aimed to promote discussion and encourage the development of strong cases for topics users wanted to be included in the 2021 Census. The focus was on information required from the 2021 Census, not the detailed questions that could be asked on the questionnaire.

ONS received 1,095 responses to the consultation; 279 of these were from organisations and 816 were from individuals. Overall, 850 respondents answered at least one question on the ‘Basic demographics and household composition’ topic.

The Basic demographic ‘Basic demographics and household composition’ topic is divided into four sub-topics:

- age
- sex
- marital or legal partnership status, and
- household and family relationships.

Based on the evidence given by users and topic experts, sub-topics were evaluated using the criteria detailed in the consultation document using a standardised method. The criteria are listed in table 1 below. The criteria largely reflect those used in the 2011 Census topic consultation and have undergone expert review within ONS and via the Census Advisory Groups for use in the 2021 Census topic consultation. More detail on the scoring methodology is available in section 2 of the document ‘The 2021 Census - Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England & Wales: Response to consultation’².

1

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales>

2

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/2021censusubtopicconsultation/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementsoncontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation.pdf>

Table 1 Evaluation criteria

1. User requirement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose• Small geographies or populations• Alternative sources• Multivariate analysis• Comparability beyond England and Wales• Continuity with previous censuses	2. Other consideration <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data quality• Public acceptability• Respondent burden• Financial concerns• Questionnaire mode 3. Operational requirement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximising coverage or population bases• Coding of derived variables and adjustment for non-response• Routing and validation
--	--

This report provides ONS’s updated view based on our evaluation of user responses against these evaluation criteria.

2. Background

Basic demographic information is essential for the majority of census outputs and is a fundamental requirement for census users. ONS’s initial view on this topic, as published in the consultation document [‘The 2021 Census: Initial view on content for England and Wales’](#) is reflected in table 2 below.

Table 2 ONS Initial view

Sub-topic detail	Initial view	Collected in 2011?
Age	Collect	Yes
Sex	Collect	Yes
Marital or legal partnership status	Collect	Yes
Household and family relationships	Collect	Yes

3. Summary of consultation responses

Table 3 presents the number of responses by type of respondent and organisational sector. The organisations that responded to this topic are listed by sector in Annex A.

Table 3 Basic demographics and household composition - number of responses by type of respondent

Type of respondent	Total responses	
	N	% total responses
Individual	684	80
Organisation (all sectors)	166	20
Sector		% organisation responses
- Government department/public body	16	10
- Local authority	93	56
- Health organisation	4	2
- Housing	4	2
- Academic / research	8	5
- Charity and voluntary	19	11
- Commercial	5	3
- Genealogist/family historian	9	5
- Other	8	5
Total responses	850	100

Note: Percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding

Note: An organisation may have submitted more than one response

The quotations below are used to reflect how respondents use information about this topic. These provide additional context to the evaluation.

There was support to maintain collection of core demographic information which is used directly and indirectly (eg. through population projections).

Respondents told us that the census is the only detailed source of this information, which is used in targeting resources and service delivery toward specific groups. Additionally, three of the sub-topics, age, sex and marital or legal partnership status, are protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

London Borough of Hackney: *“Input to resource allocation, infrastructure planning, and GLA’s population projection model used at ward level to plan services. Demographic information at small area level also informs targeting of services and how resources are allocated, e.g. children’s centres, local health projects, fuel poverty, employment support, school places planning.”*

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board: *“Service planning is based on population need, including demographic changes, so an understanding of key demographics such as age profile is vital for planning services. “*

North Yorkshire County Council: *“Age [and Sex] - Census, and derived products such as ONS population estimates are the only source available to us for this type of detailed information. Without this information we would be unable to calculate population and household projections and annual population estimates.*

Household and family relationships - the Census is the only source available to us for this type of detailed information. Without this information we would not have evidence for resource allocation for projects targeting groups such as lone parents and older people living alone. “

Shropshire Council – Intelligence and Research Team: *“Marital Status and Household and family relationships: This data is vital for the preparation of the CLG household projections on which all local planning for new housing is guided. Household projections also inform waste management planning and other family / household focused services. The formation rates also feed into policy based forecasting undertaken by the Council. “*

Responses regarding marital status or legal partnership alluded to the importance of collecting information regarding same-sex marriages.

Welsh Government: *“Following the Marriage (Same sex couples) Act 2013 it will be important to monitor the impact this has on marriage and legal partnership status. “*

In their responses to this topic a number of respondents indicated the importance of measuring the transgender population accurately in order to meet the needs of the Equality Act 2010. This topic is discussed in more detail in the Gender Identity Topic Report.

A large number of individuals responded to this topic. Most of these responses were from genealogists who requested the addition of new topics, to the census for future generations' historical reference. The requests for new topics on place of birth and maiden name are covered in more detail in the Genealogists Topic Report.

4. Evaluation

The following sections show the scores allocated to each sub-topic by individual criterion based on the evidence given by users. The criteria largely reflect those used in 2011, but have undergone expert review within ONS and via the Census Advisory Groups. The document ‘The 2021 Census - Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England and Wales: Response to consultation’³ gives details on the scoring methodology including:

- ‘user requirements criteria’, including a description of relative weights, are described in section 2.1 of the document. Note that, in the following tables, the overall score is weighted and is not the sum of the scores for individual criteria
- ‘other considerations’ are described in section 2.2 of the document. These will predominantly be used in conjunction with the user requirement score to steer the development of the census questionnaire and the production of administrative data research outputs
- ‘operational requirements’ are described in section 2.3, of the document. ONS has operational uses for some of the data collected in the census, of which the most important is maximising coverage of the 2021 Census. Each subtopic is categorised as being of maximum, moderate or minimum importance in relation to operational requirements.

4.1 User requirements – age and sex

Table 4 User requirement score by criterion – age and sex

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Weighted overall score	92.5	High user need
Purpose	10	<p>Information about age and sex are fundamental inputs to population projections. For example the Greater London Authority stated:</p> <p><i>“Information on age and sex underlie all population outputs. In particular, age data are used in GLA’s population projection models that are used in the London Plan and other plans and indirectly feed into London borough’s school place and other plans.”</i></p> <p>The Department of Education also discussed the need for population projections to feed into schools planning:</p> <p><i>“The most critical aspect for the Department is the need for timely and accurate data on the population of England to feed into our models for pupil projections and Teacher Supply. The</i></p>

3

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/2021censustopicconsultation/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementscontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation.pdf>

		<p><i>quality and accuracy of the population data by age and local area is the most important use we make of the data as Department and it influences the demand for new schools, funding and teachers.”</i></p> <p>Age and sex are protected characteristics under The Equality Act 2010. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) stated:</p> <p><i>“Census information is an important source of data by age and gender, since it provides a basis for population estimates by age and sex. It also provides the opportunity to populate a range of measures for groups identified by combinations of equality characteristics such as age, ethnicity and gender, or for smaller geographic areas.”</i></p> <p>Respondents reported a need for information about the population by age and sex for resource allocation, profiling and monitoring. For example, the Welsh Government said:</p> <p><i>“The age and sex distribution of the population from the Census ... is used widely in support of analysis across many areas. Population data is essential by age and sex for calculation of rates for many key indicators. ... Accurate ... data is required both for reviewing the resource allocations at a national level and for the indicators used in calculating the local authority allocations. It is also used in reviewing local development or health, social care and well-being plans.”</i></p> <p>Walsall Council stated:</p> <p><i>“Age and sex are the basic population characteristics that underpin the majority of our local authority needs assessments, equality impact assessments and resource allocation. They form the basis of our Local Equality Profile, and are fundamental to all the local profiles produced at ward and community level.”</i></p>
<p>Small geographies or populations</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>There was evidence of a fundamental need for basic demographic data by respondents at the small area level. For example, the Welsh Government stated:</p> <p><i>“Population by age and sex: Areas of the Welsh Government that rely on accurate population data to support allocation of resources at local or national level or towards certain policies, would be badly affected [if age and sex questions were not asked] ... it is therefore important to have accurate data that is trusted at small area levels in order to calculate allocation and indicators for small areas such as deprivation indices or population density that feed into this work.”</i></p> <p>Respondents indicated that information about the population by</p>

		<p>age and sex is used for resource allocation, monitoring and service planning in small geographies, for example</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council stated:</p> <p><i>“Population by age and gender by OA is essential for the construction of data sets for small geographies which are then used in a Type III cohort component model to make small area population projections with a projection horizon of 15 years. These small area projections are important for service development and resource allocation.”</i></p> <p>Blackpool Council said:</p> <p><i>“As a Council we regularly use age information to shape and tailor services according to the needs of communities. Single-year age bands are vital to constructing accurate information at LSOA level in order to build up a picture of the neighbourhood. This is regularly used to produced tailored area profiles for funding bids, such as looking at the number of children in an area in accordance with funding criteria for youth activities.”</i></p> <p>The Greater London Authority stated:</p> <p><i>“Age and sex are basic characteristics in describing London’s communities for policy formulation and targeting interventions. Without this information the GLA would not be able to target specific communities nor monitor them.”</i></p> <p>Operational Research in Health Ltd (ORH Ltd) told us:</p> <p><i>“Using sports survey data, the participation and frequencies for modelled sports (eg. swimming) are applied to the population at OA level to estimate demand. The rates differ significantly by age/gender and so without this information the modelled outputs would be significantly degraded.”</i></p>
Alternative sources	5	<p>Respondents stated that although there are alternative sources available by age and sex, there is little confidence among data users that such data is sufficiently reliable or extensive enough to meet their needs. Despite work to improve the quality of administrative data, it is not guaranteed that this will also fully meet the need by 2021.</p> <p>Evidence from the Welsh Government identifies this:</p> <p><i>“We are aware of the ONS work to use administrative data to produce basic demographic information but as yet consider it is unproven regarding the quality of the statistics that can be produced through these sources and methods. Until such time</i></p>

		<p><i>that those methods are proved the continuation of Census data on these topics is critical.”</i></p> <p>Tower Hamlets Council said:</p> <p><i>“While administrative data can provide useful demographic intelligence for sub-groups within the population, their coverage is very partial and the ability to cross-tabulate against other topics limited (eg Schools Census can provide data about most children being schooled in the area, but does not provide a complete count of all children resident).”</i></p> <p>London Borough of Hounslow stated:</p> <p><i>“Age/sex: The best alternative source of data for these which is not itself based on the Census would most likely be GP data from the CCG. However, this is not freely accessible, and suffers from substantial data quality issues (eg. because some borough residents register with a GP outside the borough and vice versa, or because a patient may still be registered with a GP despite moving away).”</i></p> <p>Lancashire County Council said:</p> <p><i>“Age – targeting of services and allocating of budgets via funding formulae would be weakened. Next best sources would vary for age groups, for example birth statistics, school census, pension claimants or GP registrations. Impact of using these would be a lack of clarity where they provide contradictory data and there is under registration or registration.”</i></p>
<p>Multivariate analysis</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>Respondents told us that information about the population by age and sex are frequently cross-tabulated with other census variables in order to aid profiling and service planning. For example,</p> <p>Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames stated:</p> <p><i>“For our children’s services functions, census information on age and sex is used in combination with ethnicity and housing type to derive ‘child yield’ to predict future demand for school places... Census indicators including age, sex and household type (as well as ethnicity, health and economic activity) at LSOA level are used by the Neighbourhood Committees as one set of criteria among others for grant allocation and by local groups to target engagement and interventions because LSOA boundaries often coincide with that of large housing developments.”</i></p> <p>They are also used in equality monitoring For example, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said:</p>

		<p><i>“The Commission currently uses census information on age and gender in various ways. One has been in briefings on employment and hours of work and on residents of communal establishments. These publications analysed a range of census data to compare groups with the equality characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity, gender and religion. Another use is as a source of population estimates broken down by age and/or gender and other characteristics, such as ethnic group. For example, these have been used in the Commission's analysis of race disproportionality in stop and search by the police and in the calculation of rates from other administrative data.”</i></p> <p>Local authorities explained how data about age and sex are used for a range of purposes related to resource allocation, planning and equality monitoring.</p> <p>The London Borough of Camden told us:</p> <p><i>“Census data in Camden has been used to allocate resources to areas and groups in need and to tackle inequality, eg. 2011 Census data has been used in the evidence base of the Camden Equality Taskforce to identify areas and groups within the population that require assistance; to create Equality Impact Assessment profiles for protected groups (age, sex, marriage/Civil Partnership, ethnicity, religion and long-term health problem/disability), for which only age/sex could have been derived by other means; locating older people living alone with health problems; to assist a charity looking to improve health and wellbeing of Irish people; mapping of languages spoken, ethnicity and religion for OAs across Camden.”</i></p> <p>North Yorkshire County Council said:</p> <p><i>“Age breakdown is the most frequent information used with other characteristics. Examples include health information by age for use in planning resources to tackle issues affecting the older population, and carers by age to identify numbers of children caring for parents”.</i></p>
<p>Comparability beyond England and Wales</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>The evidence indicates that demographic data comparability across the UK is a fundamental need, particularly for population projections. For example,</p> <p>Welsh Government stated:</p> <p><i>“... Consistent population data ... underpin a wide range of ... measures and outcomes that are critical to be analysed across the UK, for instance in understanding differences in life</i></p>

		<p><i>expectancy and producing national population projections across the UK.”</i></p> <p>Shropshire Council – Intelligence and Research Team stated how this information can provide insight into a population:</p> <p><i>“National or UK data is essential for using as a benchmarking tool against local performance outcomes determined as part of the commissioning process. These outcome measures may be designed locally or may form part of the Public Health / NHS / Adult Social care outcome frameworks. When analysing local demographics, comparison of UK and national data provides context and can highlight the significance of findings and lead to further investigation.”</i></p>
Continuity with previous censuses	10	<p>Age and sex have been highlighted as important explanatory variables for understanding changes over time. These factors have been highlighted throughout the responses to the consultation, not just in this topic. More specifically respondents referred to the need for preserving continuity with previous censuses in order to produce projections to aid policy development and optimise service planning. For example,</p> <p>the Greater London Authority said:</p> <p><i>“Changes in populations by age and sex inform the evidence base for the London Plan and other strategic documents. Changes, often in the local concentrations of specific age groups, contribute to policy development in housing, education, economic development and transport.”</i></p> <p>Hampshire County Council said:</p> <p><i>“Understanding our population both currently and in the past helps to inform our population forecasting going forward and helps to sense check any results. It is also useful for teaching purposes to be able to show how the population of an area changes over time (and its age and gender structure) and what the reasons behind such changes are.”</i></p>
Weighted Overall Score	92.5	High user need

4.2 Other considerations – age

Table 5 ONS assessment of impact by criterion – age

Criterion	Operational Impact	Evidence
Impact on data quality	Low	There is no evidence of concern about the quality of date of birth responses.
Impact on public acceptability	Low	A question on age has been asked on the census since 1841. Date of birth was first asked in the 1971 Census and since then age has been derived from date of birth. ONS does not anticipate any impact arising from public acceptability concerns.
Impact on respondent burden	Low	Date of birth is generally easily recalled by respondents.
Impact on financial concerns	Low	The response to this sub-topic did not require manual coding or complex processing.
Impact on questionnaire mode	Low	This question displayed well online and on the 2011 Census paper questionnaire and there are no expected challenges with moving to a predominantly online census.

4.3 Other considerations – sex

Table 6 ONS assessment of impact by criterion - sex

Criterion	Operational Impact	Evidence
Impact on data quality	Low	There are minimal data quality considerations as this question has a low non-response rate (0.4 %) and a high agreement rate with the census quality survey (99.7%)
Impact on public acceptability	Low	There is no evidence of public acceptability issues with this question.
Impact on respondent burden	Low	There are no concerns regarding respondent burden associated with this question.
Impact on financial concerns	Low	The response to this sub-topic did not require manual coding or complex processing.
Impact on questionnaire mode	Low	This question displayed well online and on the 2011 Census paper questionnaire and there are no expected challenges with moving to a predominantly online census.

4.4 Operational requirements – age and sex

Maximum operational requirement

There is a high operational requirement for information on date of birth, age and sex as they are critical to assessing and adjusting for under, and over, enumeration in the census and the quality assurance process.

4.5 User requirements – marital and legal partnership status

Table 7 User requirement score by criterion – marital and legal partnership status

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Weighted Overall Score	76	Medium user need
Purpose	8	<p>Respondents told us that these data are used for monitoring the impact of government policy and services and referred to the need to include same sex marriage in the next census, eg.</p> <p>HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) said:</p> <p><i>“Census data is a useful reference to compare HMRC administrative data against the general population. We use it when ...considering the impact of policy developments and service offerings...we are assuming that 'Same Sex Marriage' is included this time as well as Civil Partnership.”</i></p> <p>London Borough of Hackney said:</p> <p><i>“Information on marital status, age and gender supports our work to ensure we are compliant with the Public Sector Equality duty, in our work to advance equalities and eliminate discrimination. This information is also used to complete equality impact assessments and assess the equalities implications of service alterations, including mitigating against negative impacts on specific groups. Our work in this area allows us to target resources where need is greatest, and promote cohesion. It also ensures we treat people fairly and avoid discrimination of any one group.”</i></p> <p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) stated:</p> <p><i>“Demographic Analysis Unit (DAU) use marital, partnership, family and household information from the census to provide a 10 year benchmark for data collected in surveys. The census provides more robust estimates of smaller sub groups and at lower geographies that are not available from survey data. Also survey data exclude the</i></p>

		<i>communal population, while the census provides these data. Data on these topics help to inform household projections.”</i>
Small geographies or populations	7	<p>Respondents cited the need to collect marital status data for small geographies or populations. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) explained :</p> <p><i>“Census data on marital status and family type are used... to measure the size of various small population groups eg. children living in stepfamilies, civil partners and same-sex cohabiting couples, particularly at lower geographies. This information can be used by external parties to ensure population sub-groups are not discriminated against and plan services if required.”</i></p> <p>Gloucestershire County Council stated:</p> <p><i>“We use ward level information about marital or legal partnership status, to support due regard statements that focus on changes or decisions that will affect small areas. So for instance, if we were considering redesigning a service in a particular part of the county we would consider the needs of protected groups in the surrounding wards.”</i></p>
Alternative sources	6	<p>Users stated that although there are alternative sources of marital status data, such sources only partially met their needs. For example</p> <p>Gloucestershire County Council stated:</p> <p><i>“We would be able to get some information about marriages and civil partnerships from the registrar service, but we would not be able to get any information around divorce, the single population and widowed which would mean we would only have a partial picture.”</i></p> <p>Caerphilly County Borough Council stated:</p> <p><i>“Marital or legal partnership status - this sub-topic is probably less used than other ones in this topic. However, this information is important in terms of understanding family relationships and helping to identify possibly vulnerable members of our communities. If this information were not available from the Census we would have to rely on surveys to provide what we require, which obviously do not cover the whole population.”</i></p>
Multivariate analysis	8	<p>Respondents provided some evidence of the use of marital and legal partnership status for multivariate analysis. It is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and therefore has a high user need for equalities monitoring and assessment purposes.</p> <p>The Welsh Government said:</p> <p><i>“Population and household information is used widely with a wide range of other topics from the Census – this is the value of Census</i></p>

		<p><i>data. Data on ethnicity, national identity, language and age, sex and marital or legal partnership status are all used in monitoring Strategic Equality Plans and in Equality Impact assessment of policies. This can cut across all devolved policy areas including housing, education, health, public services, tackling poverty etc.”</i></p> <p>The Centre for Longitudinal Study Information and User Support (CeLSIUS) stated:</p> <p><i>“Some examples of recent projects: Sibship size, family structure and educational outcomes.[...] The role of education in determining marital choices.”</i> And <i>“Marital status: Is an important predictor for health and mortality as well as an indicator of economic resources which are shared between partners. An example of a current project would be the study of young people’s housing tenure transitions in conjunction with life course events (including leaving the parental home and getting married); the hypothesis is that socio-economic status (in childhood as well as young adulthood) will have changed as a predictor of becoming a householder and of housing tenure. This is important for planning national and local policies to assist young people to find accommodation and become owners.”</i></p>
<p>Comparability beyond England and Wales</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Marital status is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, so comparability beyond England and Wales is important. While there were no explicit references to marital and legal partnership status from users in terms of UK comparability; responses referred to general household composition (see table 9 below). Many of the uses of marital status data cited require comparable data in order to draw meaningful conclusions to support decision making.</p> <p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) stated:</p> <p><i>“... Marital status and partnership status: Census data (national) used in research to develop a new output on marital status and living arrangements and to benchmark survey estimates on this topic. Without this information the new output would no longer be available and the quality of survey estimates could decline without the benchmark.”</i></p>
<p>Continuity with previous censuses</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Evidence indicates that marital status is used to monitor social change in order to aid policy development and service planning, e.g.</p> <p>the Marriage Foundation stated that marital status is a good indicator of:</p> <p><i>‘... changes in family stability over time for policy papers... We used microdata from the 2001 Census to assess the proportions of households... by marital status and age of child. We were unable to do this with 2011 data because children’s ages were bracketed by age band rather than individual year.’</i></p> <p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) stated that they:</p>

		<p><i>'...have used information for evaluating change over time for reporting on the social condition of the population and to inform other organisations making decisions about policy/planning services (e.g. charities supporting older people or stepfamily organisations).'</i></p> <p>Manchester City Council said:</p> <p><i>'Marital status: used to monitor changing lifestyle trends and household formation – future housing demand by type of property.'</i></p>
Weighted Overall Score	76	Medium User Need

4.6 Other considerations – marital and legal partnership status

Table 8 ONS assessment of impact by criterion – marital and legal partnership status

Criterion	Operational Impact	Evidence
Impact on data quality	Low	There is no evidence of data quality issues as this sub-topic has a high response rate at 96.2 per cent and in 2011, the agreement rate between the Census and CQS for this question was also high at 98.1 per cent.
Impact on public acceptability	Low	Asking for information on this sub-topic was considered to be publicly acceptable.
Impact on respondent burden	Low	Although additional response options were included in 2011 respondents found this question straightforward to answer, as evidenced by the high agreement rate between the 2011 Census and the CQS.
Impact on financial concerns	Low	This question does not require manual coding and therefore the financial impact is minimal.
Impact on questionnaire mode	Low	This question displayed well online and on the 2011 Census paper questionnaire and there are no expected challenges with moving to a predominantly online census of the questionnaire, although the length of instructions required could potentially be an issue with online question design.

4.7 Operational requirements – marital and legal partnership status

Minimum operational requirement

There is no operational requirement for information on this topic.

4.8 Operational requirements – household and family relationships

Table 9 User requirement score by criterion - household and family relationships

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Weighted Overall Score	93	High user need
Purpose	10	<p>Respondents made a strong case for collecting household relationship information in the Census for planning and resource allocation.</p> <p>The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) said:</p> <p><i>“The Census is an indispensable source of information on the number and composition of households at the national and local level... The Department’s main requirements for low-level demographic/household data (i.e. comprehensive and granular information at various spatial levels) are as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Equitable allocation of funding to Local Authorities</i> • <i>Benchmarking Household formation</i> • <i>Infrastructure Planning</i> • <i>Resilience and Emergencies Planning</i> • <i>Provision of up-to-date demographic denominators for indicators</i> • <i>Generation of fresh Sampling Frames for household surveys.</i> <p><i>In particular, information on this topic provides the base point for our own Household Projections which, in turn, form the key component in Local Authorities’ assessments of housing requirements in their areas.”</i></p> <p>Carmarthenshire County Council said:</p> <p><i>“Forward planning would have less of a basis in statistics, impacting on the long term developments for Education, Social Care & Housing. The Census gives us important robust information in respect of single occupancy households, single parent families etc and allows us to examine the non-service users that may not be included in other primary datasets held by the local authority.”</i></p> <p>North Yorkshire County Council said:</p> <p><i>“The information is ...used in funding bids for projects which aim to tackle issues effecting groups such as lone parent families, young adults and older people living alone.”</i></p> <p>Gloucestershire County Council stated:</p>

		<p><i>“Household composition is essential demographic information; it is used to understand the makeup of houses such as people living alone, which could contribute to understanding topics such as loneliness or over crowded households which could be a factor of deprivation.”</i></p> <p>The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames said:</p> <p><i>“Basic demographics including population and household structures inform our medium-term Housing Strategy and allow us to plan for appropriate housing provisions for different household types and needs in the borough.”</i></p>
<p>Small geographies or populations</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>Councils use household data to allocate resources and plan services in small areas for small groups of the population, for example</p> <p>Bedford Borough Council said:</p> <p><i>“Understanding the demographic and household profiles of small areas is essential to the effective targeting and allocation of resources. This has application across many of the Borough’s services. An example would be the importance of knowing the distribution of children aged 0-4 and the family structures in which they live down to a fine geographic level so that funds can be allocated appropriately to Children’s Centres, and those Centres can target their outreach activities.”</i></p> <p>Walsall Council stated:</p> <p><i>“Information on large family sizes, and older people living alone, was used at OA level to identify streets where additional information on waste collection services, such as additional bins or assisted collections, could be promoted.”</i></p> <p>The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames said:</p> <p><i>“In addition, Kingston’s Neighbourhood Committees use Census information on age, sex and household type in combination with ethnicity, health and economic activity as one set of criteria among others to consider the allocation of their grants to activities in the respective Neighbourhoods.”</i></p>
<p>Alternative sources</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Although alternative data sources are available, they would need significant development to meet the needs of users.</p> <p>Shelter said:</p> <p><i>“The English Housing Survey also provides some data on household and family relationships, which we also use. However, this can’t provide local authority level data, which is important for us in showing disparities at the local level.”</i></p>

		<p>The Office for National Statistics (ONS) stated that they:</p> <p><i>“...use regular survey sources on some of these topics (families, households, marital status and living arrangements), but the Census is vital as a benchmark and to provide more robust estimates by area and for small sub-populations. Some topics are only readily available from the Census e.g. stepfamilies.”</i></p>
<p>Multivariate analysis</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Respondents mentioned the use of household relationship data for multivariate analysis to inform For example,</p> <p>the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames said:</p> <p><i>“Census information on age and household characteristics is used in combination with housing tenure, number of rooms, occupation and social classifications to identify children in poverty in the borough and to plan children’s centres services.”</i></p> <p>Irish in Britain:</p> <p><i>“Sex and Marital or legal partnership and Household and family relationships status are also important for similar reasons, in relation to Lone parent families. for example. The information which we derive from such data is also useful for our Equalities work when linked with Ethnicity or, say, Same Sex Marriages, and in households of more than one ethnicity may help the understanding of National Identity.”</i></p> <p>Lancashire County Council:</p> <p><i>“Basic demographics data has also been compared to previous censuses to aid understanding of trends such as the ageing of the population, changing family composition and the number of people living alone and how these trends are likely to impact upon demand for services.”</i></p> <p>Muslim Council of Britain:</p> <p><i>“The household composition data is being by civil society/voluntary sector organisations used to assess the the role and responsibilities of places of worship in supporting the pastoral needs of single parent households with dependent children and also social isolation in single person households. The data is also being used to examine social mobility and the spatial dimension in ethnic diversity.”</i></p> <p>Shelter:</p> <p><i>“We use the Labour market and socio-economic classifications</i></p>

		<p><i>(NS-SEC, occupation groups) and basic demographics (age, household and family relationships) with data in the Housing topic to understand and describe how housing problems impact differently on different groups.”</i></p> <p>Essex County Council:</p> <p>“Education’ information is used in conjunction with other census topics to assess the relationship between other census topics and education. For example, household composition: lone parent family and other factors associated with child poverty and their impact on education.’</p>
<p>Comparability beyond England and Wales</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Respondents indicated a need to compare household information with other areas in the UK to assess which changes in demographic profiles are particularly significant in their borough, thereby contributing to how they allocate resources, e.g.</p> <p>London Borough of Barking and Dagenham said:</p> <p><i>“We use it to make comparisons with the UK and other regional areas for resource allocation purposes, general demographic research and analysis. This enables us to really emphasise significant areas of demographic change in the borough.”</i></p> <p>City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council stated:</p> <p><i>“The basic demographics and household composition data is used to compare the local authority with the UK average, also with comparator local authorities.”</i></p> <p>Worcestershire County Council:</p> <p><i>“Benchmarking of areas against UK average in order to provide context e.g. x% of children live in single parent households is a great deal more meaningful when it is possible to elaborate with how this compares to the national average.”</i></p> <p>Waltham Forest Council:</p> <p><i>“...family status gives us a baseline from which to compare demographic data locally with the national picture. This data helps us in developing needs assessments for various service areas; ...what types of families are most in need as well as locations in the borough where they may be concentrated.”</i></p>
<p>Continuity with previous censuses</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>Most of the responses refer to the fundamental requirement for household data for producing projections in relation to future planning – particularly housing. For example,</p>

		<p>London Borough of Camden said:</p> <p><i>“The component household information is important in the creation of accurate household projections. The verification is important in allowing us to check changes over the decade, e.g. changes in average household size, household sharing and vacancy, which all point to how well the local housing stock is being utilised and impacts on policy monitoring and amendment, or forming new policy as a result of changing trends.”</i></p> <p>Walsall Council stated that:</p> <p><i>“Understanding changing population and household structures over time, and longer term trends in local areas... have fed into policy decisions and given a broad understanding of the likely future direction of travel to support future service planning and delivery.”</i></p> <p>Bedford Borough Council said:</p> <p><i>“Analysis of changing demographic and household structures in small areas allows us to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated, and provide a basis for projecting needs. Examples would include an ageing population in a LSOA or one where the proportion of lone parents or pensioner households showed major change over time.”</i></p> <p>Centre for Longitudinal Study Information and User Support (CeLSIUS):</p> <p><i>“Studies of transition from census to census: for example, a recent study of social mobility of children from one-parent versus two-parent families of varying socio-economic status, important in planning interventions to combat disadvantage; another of the interaction between the incidence of chronic illness in the family and type of occupation over several decades, important in planning policy to extend access to work for chronically ill people and their carers.</i></p> <p><i>Studies of longer term life history as a predictor of outcome: for example, number and age range of children by women’s age at death, important for planning health services; a comparison between marriage and cohabitation by their duration and the demographic and socio-economic status of the two partners, important for estimating numbers of single parents and likely uptake of benefits.”</i></p>
Weighted Overall Score	93	High user need

4.9 Other considerations – household and family relationships

Table 10 ONS assessment of impact by criterion - household and family relationships

Criterion	Operational Impact	Evidence
Impact on data quality	Medium	The Census Quality Survey (CQS) showed that the agreement rate between the 2011 Census and CQS for this question at a household level was high at 96.9 per cent, however the process of imputing household relationships is complex. Considerable effort was invested in improving the question for online completion in 2011, which provided better quality data than paper completion.
Impact on public acceptability	Low	There is no evidence of any public acceptability issues with this sub-topic.
Impact on respondent burden	High	The complexity and length of instructions and responses currently carry a high respondent burden. The layout of this question online was designed differently to the paper version in England and Wales in 2011. This eased some of the complexity of the instructions.
Impact on financial concerns	High	The derivation of household composition from the information input was very complex in 2011 and required extensive statistical processing and quality assurance.
Impact on questionnaire mode	Medium	The household relationship questions differed in presentation between online and paper versions in 2011. The online version was simpler to complete because the question was redesigned so that, rather than being a tick box matrix, each relationship was a sentence using the previously completed name fields with a drop down answer box. On line completion also potentially allows for all relationships to be recorded in larger households (greater than 6 people).

4.10 Operational requirements – household and family relationships

Moderate operational requirement

In previous censuses, information about household composition was used in editing and imputation of other sub-topics including marital status. These data will again be used in this way in 2021.

5.Updated view

The following tables give the updated views of ONS at the sub-topic level and the justification for these.

Table 11 Updated view

Topic Detail	Initial View	Updated View	Justification
Age	Collect	Collect	Age is a key demographic variable, critical across a wide range of census uses. It feeds into population projections, which underpin decision making, planning and resource allocation across Central and Local Government. Age is vital for multivariate analysis for the vast majority of users and is also a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Age is used operationally during the coverage adjustment process to ensure the accuracy of the final population estimates.
Sex	Collect	Collect	Sex is a key demographic variable, critical across a wide range of census uses. It feeds into population projections, which underpin decision making, planning and resource allocation across Central and Local Government. Sex is vital for multivariate analysis for the vast majority of users and is also a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Sex is used operationally during the coverage adjustment process to ensure the accuracy of the final population estimates.
Marital or legal partnership status	Collect	Collect	Marital or legal partnership status is used by a wide range of users. Marital status is also a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Same sex marriage has been legalised since the last Census and therefore the marital status response options and question format will require review to reflect this.
Household and family relationships	Collect	Collect	The household and family relationships information derived from the relationship matrix is fundamental for population profiling, planning and resource allocation.

6. Equality implications of ONS's updated view

The Equality Act 2010 and associated public sector equality duty require public bodies to work towards eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity with regard to nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These requirements are reinforced by secondary legislation in both England and Wales⁴ as well as by the Equality Objectives published recently by the Welsh Government which seek to address the key equality challenges faced in Wales and to support progress towards the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The proposals made for the 2021 Census content will consider identified 'User requirements' for data alongside other factors such as 'Other considerations' and 'Operational requirements' specified in our evaluation criteria. In addition, it will be important to take account of the impact of any decisions that we may make on equality. Impacts can be:

- positive - actively promote equality of opportunity for one or more groups, or improve equal opportunities/relations between groups
- adverse or negative - cause disadvantage or exclusion (any such impact must be justified, eliminated, minimised or counter-balanced by other measures)
- neutral - have no notable consequences for any group

The basic demographics of age, sex and marriage and civil partnerships are all protected characteristics. There is no intention to change the collection of age, collected by asking date of birth, for the 2021 Census. There will be further development and testing of the question regarding marital and civil partnership status. This will take into account the implications of the 2013 Marriage Act which legalised same sex marriage in England and Wales to ensure that high quality information is collected.

The planned expansion of the current marital status question to include same sex marriages will allow users to monitor same sex marriage demographics and to ensure this population sub-group is not discriminated against in the services they provide or the policies they implement. The question expansion may also help to increase engagement with the census by same sex couples. Overall, any changes to the question will help the 2021 Census provide a high quality baseline for assessment of equality for this protected characteristic.

Any minor improvements in the family and household relationships questions are not expected to materially change the data collected and are therefore not anticipated to have any notable consequences for any diversity group.

⁴ *The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 and The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.*

The 2021 Census proposals for age, sex and marital and civil partnership status will enable users to meet requirements for information to promote diversity and meet statutory requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The next steps for this topic, discussed below, take into account the identified equality implications. As research continues further equality implications may emerge and these will be considered and, if necessary, mitigated against. Further information on the research linked to question development and testing, and stakeholder engagement will be published as required.

7. Next steps

We will continue to collect date of birth, and use this to derive age.

We will continue to collect data about sex.

We will continue to collect marital or civil partnership status. We will investigate how the question should be developed to take account of the 2013 Same Sex Marriages Act. The marital status response categories and question design will be reviewed and revised if appropriate to reflect this change.

We will continue to collect household and family relationship information.

There is scope to review question guidance, and to consider improvements possible via online collection, to improve data quality or reduce the burden placed on respondents. This will take into consideration that there will need to be a paper questionnaire too.

The next steps for this topic, discussed below, take into account the identified equality implications. As research and stakeholder engagement continues, if further equality implications emerge, these will be considered and mitigated where necessary. Further information on the research linked to question development and testing, and stakeholder engagement will be published as required.

Annex A: List of organisations that responded, by sector

This list includes organisations that responded to at least one consultation question, or discussed collection of data, on the 'Basic demographics and household composition' topic. If multiple responses were received from an organisation the name only appears once.

Government department/public body

College of Arms
Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
Department for Transport (DfT)
Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)
High Speed Two Limited
Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
Local Government Data Unit Wales
National Assembly for Wales
National Parks England
Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Sport England
sportscotland
Welsh Government

Local authority

Arun District Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Basildon Council
Bedford Borough Council
Birmingham City Council
Blaby District Council
Blackpool Council
Bournemouth Borough Council
Bristol City Council
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Carmarthenshire County Council
Chelmsford City Council
Cheshire West and Chester
Chesterfield Borough Council
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
City of London Corporation
City of York Council
Colchester Borough Council

Cornwall Council
Cumbria County Council
Cyngor Sir Ceredigion/Ceredigion County Council
Derbyshire County Council
Devon County Council - Public Health
Dorset County Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Durham County Council
East Northamptonshire Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
East Sussex County Council
Essex County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gateshead Council
Gedling Borough Council
Gloucestershire County Council
Greater London Authority
Gwynedd Council
Hampshire County Council
Haringey Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Horsham District Council
Kent County Council
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Lancashire County Council
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
London Borough of Bexley
London Borough of Camden
London Borough of Hackney
London Borough of Harrow
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Hounslow
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Lower Broadheath Parish Council
Manchester City Council
Mole Valley District Council
National Parks Wales
Newcastle City Council
North York Moors National Park Authority
North Yorkshire County Council
Northampton Borough Council
Northumberland County Council
Oldham Council
Oxfordshire County Council

Powys County Council
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Salford City Council
Sheffield City Council
Shropshire Council – Intelligence and Research Team
Snowdonia National Park
Somerset County Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
St Helens Council
Surrey County Council
Tameside Council
Torfaen County Borough Council
Tower Hamlets Council
Uttlesford District Council
Walsall Council
Waltham Forest Council
Warrington Borough Council
Warwickshire Observatory
West Sussex County Council
Westminster City Council
Wookey Parish Council
Worcestershire County Council
Wychavon District Council
Wycombe District Council

Health organisation

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Hywel Dda University Health Board
National Health Service England
Public Health Wales National Health Service Trust

Housing

Chartered Institute of Housing
Habinteg Housing Association
Residential Landlords Association
Yarlington Housing Group

Academic/research

British Sociological Association
Centre for Longitudinal Study Information and User Support (CeLSIUS)
Economic History Society
Economic Social Research Council - Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE)
Gloucestershire House Histories

Imperial College London – Small Area Health Statistics Unit
University of York - Centre for Housing Policy

Charity and voluntary

Chwarae Teg
Discrimination Law Association
Fair Play South West
Family and Childcare Trust
Friends, Families and Travellers
Gay and Lesbian Association of Doctors and Dentists (GLADD)
Irish in Britain
Khalsa Foundation
Lichfield Civic Society
Marriage Foundation
Muslim Council of Britain
National Association of British Arabs
Older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Association (OLGA)
Presbyterian Church of Wales
Royal Town Planning Institute
Shelter
The Salvation Army
The Vegan Society
Unity Group Wales

Commercial

CACI Ltd
First UK Bus
HR Wallingford
Operational Research in Health Ltd (ORH Ltd)
Sainsbury's

Genealogist/family historian

Bedfordshire Family History Society

Burgum Family History Society

Lost Cousins

Lyminge Family History Group

Powys Family History Society

Society of Genealogists

Tasmanian Family History Society Inc.

Waltham Abbey Genealogists

Other

Academy of Social Sciences

Emergency Planning Society - West Midlands Branch

Market Research Society (MRS) and MRS Census & Geodemographics Group

New Economy

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (IBG)

Tees Valley Unlimited

