

Press release

**11 February 2021**

## **Census 2021 – Ensuring the big decisions are made on the best information**

Census 2021 will be key to making sure the big decisions on the future of our hospitals, schools, transport and other public services, following the pandemic and EU exit, are based on the best information possible.

Run by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the census – taking place on March 21 - is the once-in-a-decade survey that gives the most accurate estimate of all people and households in England and Wales.

The digital-first census will not only provide a fresh picture of the size of all communities, it will also shed light on the health, social and economic changes to our lives.

“After years of planning, the census is almost upon us,” census director of operations Pete Benton said. “In the coming days and weeks you will be hearing more and more about why the census is so important, why you must take part and, crucially, how you can take part. Every household will soon receive a postcard, explaining what a census is, and in early March letters will arrive in the post inviting people to take part in the digital-first census.

“In light of the coronavirus pandemic, we need this up-to-date information to help shape vital services for the years to come more urgently than ever before and we are making sure everyone can be safely counted in line with all government guidance.

“We have made it simple, straightforward and safe to take part. It takes just 10 minutes per person to fill out your form and if you can’t get online, there are paper forms available for those who need them, as well as lots of support. Now is the time to make your mark on history.”

Running the census in times of a pandemic has naturally thrown up some challenges and the ONS’ focus is ensuring the safety of the public.

“We want everyone to be safely counted and we’re making sure our plans are

always in line with the latest government guidelines,” Pete said.

“Census field officers will only follow up with households after Census Day on March 21 if householders have not yet completed their questionnaire. They will never enter a household, they will always be socially distanced, be equipped with PPE and work in line with all government guidance.”

Some questions also have updated guidance to reflect our changed living and working circumstances.

Pete added: “For those on furlough, we have updated guidance on how to answer questions on work. All students need to be included in the census, and they should complete it for their usual term-time address. If they’re currently living at their home address, they will need to be included in the census for that household too.”

For the first time, there will be a question asking people whether they have served in the armed forces, as well as voluntary questions for those aged 16 and over on sexual orientation and gender identity.

First results will be available within 12 months, although personal records will be locked away for 100 years, kept safe for future generations.

For more information, visit [census.gov.uk](https://census.gov.uk).

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