

How to help the public take part in Census 2021

The census is happening in England and Wales on 21 March 2021. This guide will help you in answering questions you may receive from members of the public.

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1. Introduction

1.1 | The census is happening in England and Wales on 21 March 2021

It's vital that everybody takes part and there is plenty of support available for anyone who needs it. We have designed the census to be quick and easy to complete, and to help others complete. However, we know there are always those who will need some extra help.

This guide will help you in answering questions you may receive from members of the public. It has been designed for use by local authorities, charities, community staff and other individuals who have offered to help or provide reassurance to the public. It contains key information about the census and aims to help you answer queries which members of the public may have. This includes questions on how, when and why people should complete the census. It also includes details on how they can access a wide range of additional support, if required.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for helping with Census 2021. Your contribution will help to ensure the smooth running and success of this important event.

Please do not share this guide with members of the public directly: it is designed for you to use to support them only. The services detailed are not live until March.

1.2 | Introduction to helping with the census

Whether you are working for a local authority, volunteering with a charity or simply a member of the community wanting to offer your support, there are many ways you can help make a difference during Census 2021.

You could:

- arrange for information to be added to a community website
- talk about the census in things like community newsletters, meetings and social media groups
- share our [resources](#) and use them to tell people about the census, why it's important and when it's happening
- address people's questions or concerns about the census. This might include issues like data security ([Section 13](#)) and COVID-19 safety measures ([Section 14](#))
- help people to complete their questionnaires where they have asked for assistance. Find out more in [Section 11](#)
- direct people to our website where they can get help in different languages and accessible formats. Find out more in [Section 10](#)
- help someone get onto the internet, so they can fill in the census questionnaire online. Find out more about the online questionnaire in [Section 7](#)
- organise or volunteer at a census completion activity. Find out more about these in [Section 10.6](#)
- help someone to attend a census completion activity

2. About Census 2021

The census is a survey that happens every 10 years and gives us a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. The census is unique. There's simply nothing else that gives so much detail about us and the society we live in.

All kinds of organisations, from local authorities to charities, use the information to help provide the services we all need, including transport, education and healthcare. Without the census, it would be much more difficult to do this.

3. Who runs the census?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics. We report directly to the UK Parliament but we do not work for any political parties. We don't make money from the census.

We plan and run the census in England and Wales. We work with the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). These agencies run the censuses in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Together we make sure the three censuses create a clear picture of the UK. The census in Northern Ireland will take place on the same day (21 March) as in England and Wales. Scotland's census will take place in 2022.

4. What information will the public receive and when?

4.1 | How can people recognise genuine ONS census communications?

Every household in England and Wales will receive a letter at the start of March which invites them to take part in the census. This letter will have the Royal Coat of Arms at the top and contain a unique access code that enables people to access their questionnaire at www.census.gov.uk. Only genuine ONS codes will work on this website. Similarly, the letter will contain telephone numbers for our official contact centre. Please note this number is different for people in England to those in Wales. If someone is unsure whether the letter they have received is genuine, they should contact the ONS via www.census.gov.uk/contact-us, quoting their reference number (highlighted on the example letter that follows).

The ONS will never text, phone or email individuals unless they have specifically requested it. No one from the census will ever ask for payment.

Example contact letter:

SAMPLE DOCUMENT

census
2021



Householder
Little Cottage
11 Any Road
Little Village
Newtown
YD9 6TY

If you need help, go to
www.census.gov.uk
or phone us free on
0800 141 2021

Reference number:
1234 1234 12

Dear Householder

We need your help with the census, which gathers vital information to help plan services such as transport, education and healthcare. All households should complete the census on **Sunday 21 March 2021** or as soon as possible after.

You must complete the census by law or you could be fined up to £1,000.

How to complete your census

1 Read this letter containing your **household access code**.



2 Go to www.census.gov.uk, select "Start census" and enter your household access code:



1 A 2 B 3 C 4 D 5 E 6 F 7 G 8 H

3 Answer the questions and **submit when complete**.



Your answers are protected by law and will be kept confidential.

The census should take around **10 minutes per person** to fill in.

Every census completed online saves paper and taxpayers' money.

See the enclosed leaflet for how to get help to complete your census.

You can request a paper form at www.census.gov.uk or call 0800 141 2021.

Thank you

Professor Sir Ian Diamond – National Statistician

4.2. Census postcard

In late February, every household in England and Wales will receive a postcard via Royal Mail. This postcard will let the public know that the census is coming and ask them to look out for a letter explaining more.

4.3. Census information pack

Before Census Day, all households will receive a pack in the post, asking them to take part in Census 2021. They will receive their pack from 3 March onwards.

This information pack will direct them to the census website, where they can complete their questionnaire. It also contains a “household access code” which they can use as a password to log in. The code is unique to each household and is private and secure. The pack will also provide useful information about data security and where to go for support if needed. In areas where internet usage is lower, households will receive a paper questionnaire.

4.4 | Marketing campaign

The ONS will also be running a wide-reaching marketing campaign to raise awareness of the census. It will include adverts in newspapers, on television, radio and social media, as well as posters on buses and billboards. Some adverts will aim to reach everyone in England and Wales. Others are tailored to meet the needs of specific groups, such as students or people who may not speak English as their first language. The ONS will also be working with partners like schools and businesses to help spread the word and encourage support.

5. Other ONS surveys

The ONS runs other surveys as well as the census so respondents may be contacted about these as they will continue to run alongside the census. Unlike the census, these surveys are voluntary, but we appreciate continued support from the public as they are still extremely important.

ONS's surveys:

- randomly select households/individuals invited to take part
- never cold call and always send an introductory letter
- are conducted through a mixture of online, face to face and telephone interaction
- are supported through a separate contact centre, field and telephone staff
- run continually all year (and won't stop during census)
- will contact people who also receive a census pack

6. When should people complete their census questionnaire?

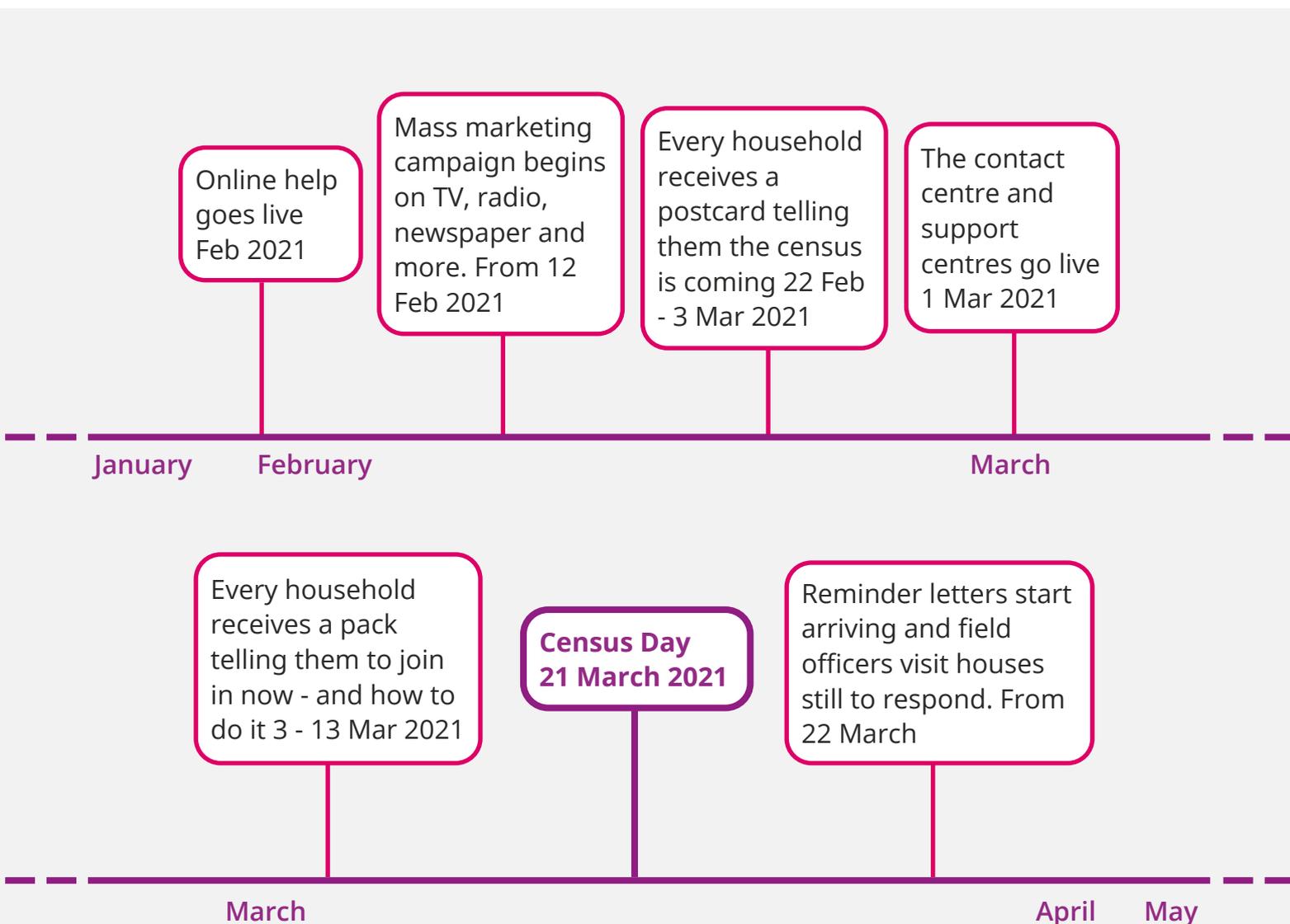
Census Day is on Sunday 21 March 2021. This means that everyone should fill in their form on this date, or as soon as possible afterwards. This is so the ONS can count the whole population on the same day.

People can fill it in early, as long as they're confident that the people in their household won't change between when they fill it in and Census Day.

If someone has responded before Census Day and things have changed, they should contact us. Everyone should answer about their household as they expect it to be on Census Day, Sunday 21 March 2021.

6.1 | Census timeline

Here is a high-level timeline of key events around the census.



6.2 | Census reminders

Households can complete their census questionnaire as soon as they get it but all answers need to relate to Sunday 21 March 2021. If they do not complete their census questionnaire, they will receive letters reminding them to do so.

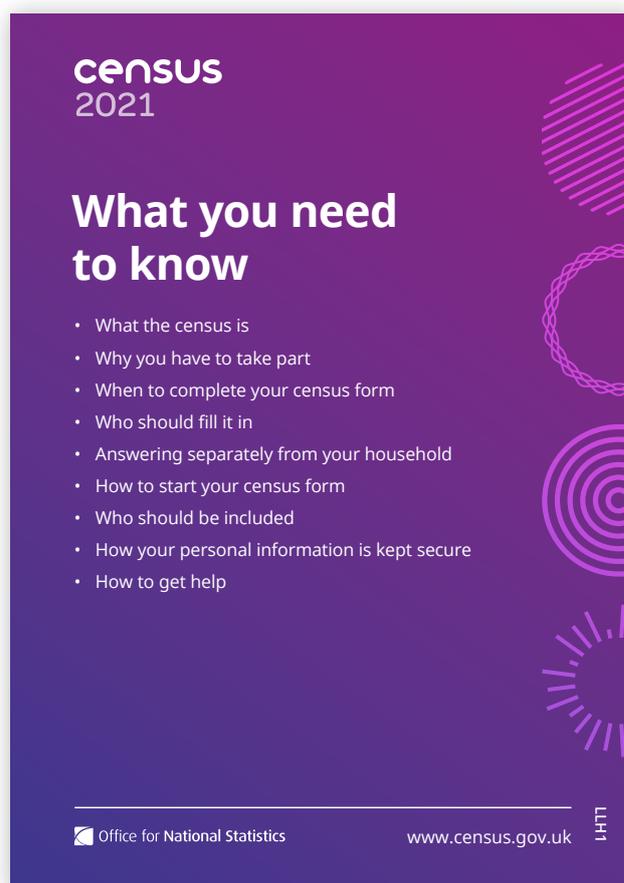
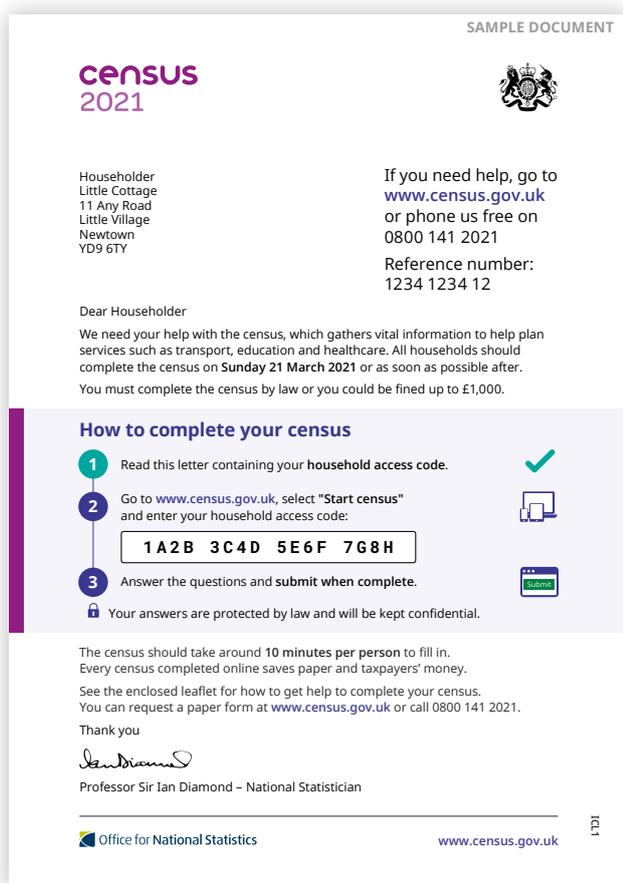
7. How can people take part in Census 2021?

To make sure everyone can take part in the census, we've made the questionnaire as simple as possible to complete.

We hope that most people will complete their Census form online. However, there is plenty of support available for anyone who does not feel confident in doing this. Details of this can be found in [Section 10](#). They can also ask a trusted family member or friend to help them. Details of this can be found in [Section 11](#).

7.1 | How to start the census questionnaire online

Census 2021 is the first digital-first census, meaning we would like as many people as possible to take part online. Every household will get a letter in the post with a code which allows them to log on to the website. These letters will be sent out from 3 March 2021 over a ten-day period. They look like this:



The access code is used to open an online census form. It is unique to each household and is private and secure. It is therefore important to keep the access code safe to protect personal information. It should be treated like a password.

Once they've got their access code, people should go to www.census.gov.uk and select "Start census". This is where they enter their access code.

The image displays two screenshots of the census.gov.uk website. The left screenshot shows the 'Census is here' landing page. It features a purple header with the 'census 2021' logo and a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'About the census', 'Your data and security', 'Help', and 'Contact us'. The main heading is 'Census is here', followed by 'Census Day is 21 March'. Below this, it states 'To start your census online, you will need your 16-character access code' and includes a green 'Start census >' button. A link '> Don't have a code?' is also present. At the bottom, it mentions that users in Northern Ireland should visit the 'Northern Ireland census website' to take part. The right screenshot shows the 'Start census' page. It has a purple header with the 'census 2021' logo and a '< Home' link. The heading is 'Start census'. Below this is a section titled 'Enter your 16-character access code' with a warning: 'Keep this code safe. You will need to enter it every time you access your census'. There is an input field for the access code and a link 'Where to find your access code'. A security warning with a lock icon states 'Your personal information is protected by law and will be kept confidential.' Below this is a green 'Access census' button. At the bottom, there is a section 'If you don't have an access code' which explains that users can 'request a new access code' if they have lost or not received one, and provides a link '> Need to answer separately from your household?'.

The online questionnaire can be completed on any smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer. It can be started on one device and finished on another, as long as the same code is used. It usually takes around ten minutes per person to complete but may take longer if someone is receiving help to do so.

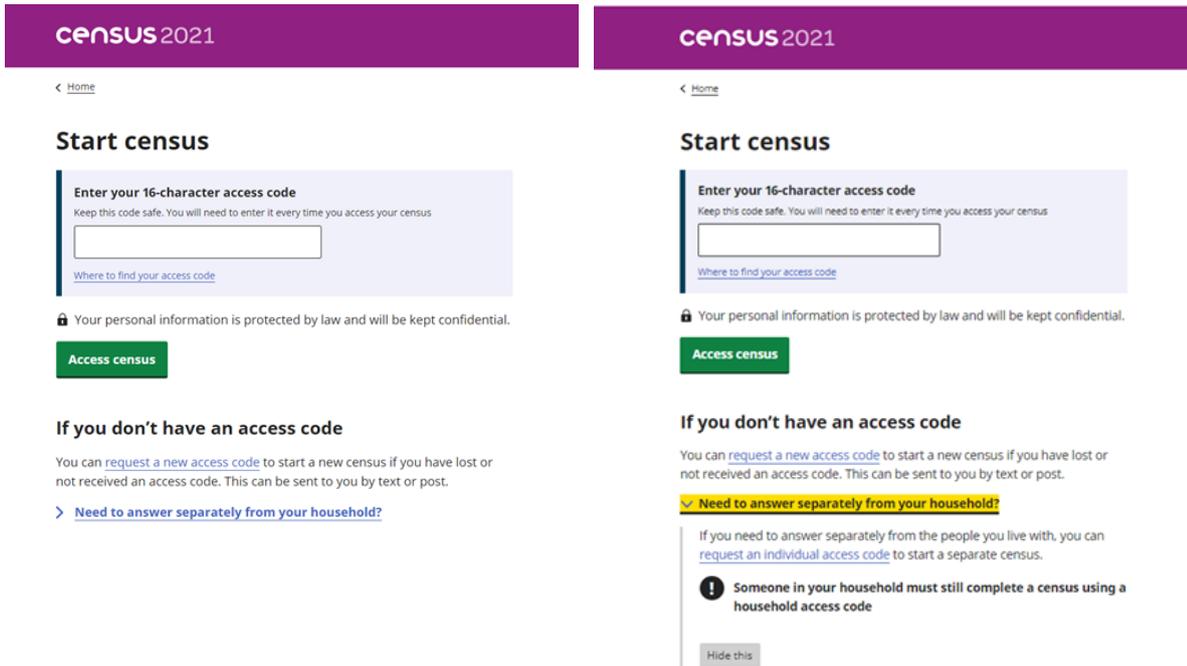
Individuals can use a public computer, but they should be sure to protect their access code to keep their information safe. For example they should:

- treat their access code the same way they would a password
- make sure they click "save and sign out" if they haven't finished, or press "submit" if they're all done
- not leave behind anything which has their access code details on

If the access code is lost, a new one can be requested online at www.census.gov.uk or by calling the contact centre. The new code can be sent in a letter or text message. The census form will need to be started again with the new code. Any answers saved while using a different code won't be visible.

Anyone included in a household who wants to keep their information private can complete an individual questionnaire. They can request an individual access code online or through the contact centre. An individual access code will allow them to complete a separate individual questionnaire; someone in the household must still complete a questionnaire using the household access code.

To request an individual access code online, select “Start census” on the homepage at www.census.gov.uk (when live in March) then follow the instructions under “Need to answer separately from your household”, as shown below.



Alternatively, anyone can order an individual paper form via the contact centre or website.

7.2 | Filling in the census questionnaire online

When the census is completed online, it does not need to be filled in all at once. For example, it can be completed in multiple sittings. The electronic questionnaire automatically saves each question as the respondent moves through it, and routes to the next question depending on the answers given. Progress can be saved at any time by clicking “save and sign out”.

Some questions in the electronic questionnaire have help text. We have added this to help people give an answer to the questions. For example, this help text might include definitions or additional information. The help text does not have to be opened or read. However, it might be useful if someone has a query or is unsure how to answer a question.

The help text can be shown or “opened” by clicking on the blue text underneath the question.

The image displays two versions of a questionnaire question: "What is your main language?".

Left Screenshot: Shows the question with a blue link "What we mean by 'main language'" above two radio button options: "English" and "Other, including British Sign Language". Below the second option is a note: "You can enter your main language on the next question".

Right Screenshot: Shows the same question with the help text expanded. The help text reads: "This is the language you use most naturally. For example, it could be the language you use at home." Below the text is a "Hide this" button. The two radio button options are visible below the help text.

There is also help text on why certain questions are being asked. This is the blue text which is placed between the response options and the “save and continue” button.

Online help is also available if respondents have a question that cannot be answered by the help text included throughout the questionnaire. This can be accessed either by clicking the “Help” link at the bottom of each page within the electronic questionnaire, or from the Census 2021 website.

7.3 | Finishing the census questionnaire online

Once someone has finished the form they should check that every section is complete. They should then press the “submit” button. It is important that they remember to do this. They won’t be able to view their information after they have pressed “submit”.

7.4 | How to complete the census questionnaire on paper

Census 2021 will be the first digital-first census, and we'd like to help everyone who can to take part online. Every census completed online saves paper and taxpayers' money. However, we understand that some people would rather complete a paper questionnaire and we have made it easy to do this. Paper forms can be ordered by:

- calling the contact centre for free on **0800 141 2021** (for those living in England) or **0800 169 2021** (for those living in Wales) and speaking to an adviser
- calling the contact centre and selecting self-serve to enter the ten-digit reference number from their census letter
- visiting the help pages on our website, www.census.gov.uk

Anyone can order these paper forms. This includes somebody ordering them on behalf of another person. Some households will automatically receive a paper questionnaire, in areas where we have identified residents are more likely to need them.

There are different types of forms available. All forms are available in both English and Welsh:

- **Household form.** This contains questions about who lives in the household. The form also includes an online access code in case the individual would prefer to complete the form online. There are different forms depending whether you live in England or Wales.
- **Continuation form.** This form is needed if there are more than 5 people in the household. They are not included in the pack as standard and so need to be requested from the contact centre.
- **Individual form.** This contains questions for each individual in the household, meaning they can answer separately and privately from others they live with. If they are requested through the contact centre they will arrive in a non-branded envelope.
- **Communal establishment manager form.** This form is completed by managers of communal establishments and gives details about that establishment. For example, this includes care homes and boarding schools.

Each paper form comes with a prepaid envelope. This can be used to post the forms back to us. There is no need for anyone to ever send personal documents such as their birth certificate or passport when they return their paper questionnaire.

7.5 | How to complete the census questionnaire in Welsh

Respondents in Wales will have the option to complete their census questionnaire in Welsh or English (and move between the languages as they fill it in if they wish). Similarly, people in Wales wanting a paper questionnaire can complete a Welsh-language or English questionnaire depending on their preference.

Only respondents living in Wales will have the option of completing a Welsh questionnaire.

Online:

The public can visit the Welsh-language version of our website directly at www.cyfrifiad.gov.uk, or find it via the link on our English-language website. The Wales questionnaire can also be accessed by visiting www.census.gov.uk and then selecting “Cymraeg” in the top right-hand corner of the screen.

Paper:

The Welsh-language paper questionnaire can be requested by calling our contact centre for free on **0800 169 2021** (for those living in Wales).

8. Who should people include in their census questionnaire?

Respondents should answer the individual questions in their household questionnaire for:

- anyone who lives with them permanently or counts the respondent’s address as their home
- people temporarily away from home, for example students or schoolchildren boarding away
- people staying with the respondent temporarily if they live in the UK and have no other address
- people staying with the respondent temporarily from outside of the UK who are staying in the country for three months or more

There’s also a separate section to fill in on visitors – that is anyone staying with the respondent overnight on Census Day, Sunday 21 March 2021. Visit census online help for more details about who should be included in the questionnaire.

Anyone included in a household who wants to keep their information private can complete an individual questionnaire. They can request an individual access code online or through the contact centre. An individual access code will allow them to complete a separate individual questionnaire; someone in the household must still complete a questionnaire using the household access code.

9. Voluntary and compulsory elements of the census

Taking part in the census is a legal requirement. Anyone who lives in England and Wales must fill in the census form by law. We have designed the census to be easy to complete, and to help others complete, and we provide a wide range of support services to ensure people can meet their legal requirements.

We want people to be able to identify as they choose in their census questionnaire. The online census form has a 'search-as-you-type' function, which means that a list of possible responses appears as you type. People are not restricted to the tick-box options, and are also free to type in any answer which doesn't appear on our list.

There are three questions on the England and Wales census that are voluntary. These questions are about religion, sexual orientation and gender identity. The questions about sexual orientation and gender identity will only be asked to those aged 16 years and over.

Respondents have a legal right not to answer these questions if they don't want to. We understand that some people might not want to share their religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. This might be, for example, because of worries about safety or privacy.

Asking about religion, sexual orientation and gender identity is important because information from the census helps to plan and fund services. It's used by businesses, charities and other organisations. Ultimately census information helps to monitor and tackle inequalities. We encourage people to complete these questions in the way they feel best represents them.

10. What support is available to help people take part?

Everyone should have the support they need to take part in the census. Most people will be able to do it themselves, but we know there are people who'll need a little extra help. You can read about the wide range of support options available below. All this support will be available from March 2021.

10.1 | The contact centre

The contact centre is a vital source of public support. It offers help over the phone, via webchat and SMS text message, and through the 'Contact Us' form on our website.

The contact centre goes live on 1 March 2021. There will be separate lines for England and Wales, plus a language helpline, text relay and short text numbers. These numbers are below but **must not** be shared with the public until the services are live in March.

Contact centre for those living in England

[0800 141 2021](tel:08001412021)

England NGT (text relay service)

[\(18001\) 0800 141 2021](tel:(18001)08001412021)

Contact centre for those living in Wales

[0800 169 2021](tel:08001692021)

Wales NGT (text relay service)

[\(18001\) 0800 169 2021](tel:(18001)08001692021)

Language helpline

[0800 587 2021](tel:08005872021)

10.1.1 | Where is the contact centre?

The contact centre is UK-based and free to call.

10.1.2 | Who can call the contact centre?

The contact centre can be used by individuals themselves, or by a trusted family member or friend on their behalf. This includes community contacts who are offering help. Field staff from the ONS can also call on behalf of someone if needed.

10.1.3 | What can the contact centre help with?

The contact centre can help with many tasks, including:

- resolving general and specialist queries from the public
- providing new or additional questionnaires, letters and leaflets, such as household paper questionnaires, individual paper questionnaire, household continuation forms and large print questionnaires
- providing language translation booklets, braille guidance booklets and easy read leaflets
- interpretation services
- assisting individuals to complete the census over the telephone. This can be done straight away when the individual calls, or at a later date via an appointment

10.1.4 | When is the contact centre open?

The contact centre opens on 1 March 2021. The hours of opening are:

- 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday
- 8am – 1pm Saturdays
- 8am – 8pm on Saturday and Sunday on Census weekend (20 and 21 March 2021)

An appointment system will be used for lengthier calls during peak times.

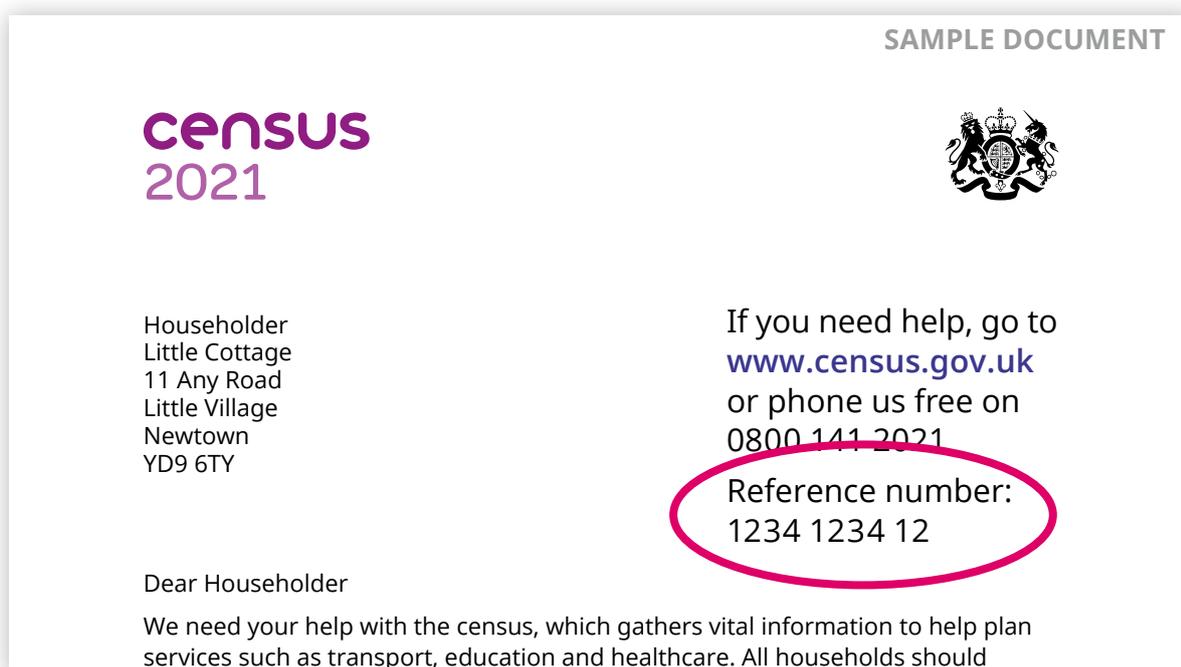
Lines close to the public on 8 July 2021. There will be a recorded information message from mid-February until the 1 March.

10.1.5 | What happens when someone calls the contact centre?

When you call the contact centre you will hear a recorded message. You will then hear three options. The system uses interactive voice response so you can make a selection.

Option 1:

Allows the individual to order a paper questionnaire. This is an automated service. The person calling will not need to speak to anyone if this option is used. There is a unique reference number on each contact letter, like the one circled below. This should be entered on the handset. A paper questionnaire pack will then be dispatched.



Option 2:

Allows the caller to hear answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs). These FAQs are changed over time according to demand. They will be played in both English and Welsh (if someone is calling the Welsh telephone line).

Option 3:

Will enable the caller to speak to an adviser.

10.2 | Census Support Centres

Census Support Centres will provide face to face help for anyone who needs support completing their questionnaire online. They will be open if and when it is safe to do so throughout the time that the census is happening. This is dependent on COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions in any local area. The Support Centres will provide access to the internet and to technology, such as computers and tablets, for those able to complete the questionnaire independently. They will also provide practical support and guidance on the questionnaire for those who need it.

Members of the public will be able to use an online postcode lookup tool on www.census.gov.uk to find their nearest Census Support Centre from March.

10.3 | Alternative formats and guidance

Paper questionnaires

Paper questionnaires can be obtained by members of the public via the following routes:

- calling the contact centre and selecting self-serve. The voice recognition system will ask them to quote a 10-digit reference number. This can be found on the top right of the initial contact letter they will have received in the post, as shown in the example letter earlier in this document
- calling the contact centre and asking to be put through to an adviser, who will order them a questionnaire
- requesting a questionnaire through our online help page
- census field officers will also be carrying paper questionnaires during non-response follow-up

Accessible videos with BSL, audio and subtitles

We have produced **accessible videos with BSL, audio and subtitles**, working with the Royal Association for Deaf People. These include translations of the pack that people will receive in the post when they are invited to complete the census - the initial contact letter, information leaflet and Privacy Notice - as well as translations of the questions from the online questionnaire and a thank-you video for completing the questionnaire. These will be available on the main census website from the end of February.

Large Print

A **Large Print** paper questionnaire pack including a guidance leaflet, Privacy Notice and return envelope can be ordered from the contact centre. This will be available once the census is live.

All the critical information in the census information pack going to every household is in 16pt font, the recommended size for Large Print. This includes the access code needed to log in to the online questionnaire. The packs have all been checked by the [Digital Accessibility Centre](#) and are optimised for optical character recognition software.

Braille

A **braille guidance booklet**, including information about the census and a braille translation of the household paper questionnaire, can be ordered from the contact centre. This will be available once the census is live.

Text relay prefix

People with speech and/or audio impairments can use a **text relay prefix** when calling our contact centre. Text relay offers text-to-speech and speech-to-text translation services. Simply dial 18001 before the number of the contact centre, which will become available nearer to census time.

Easy read

An **easy read information leaflet** about the census can be ordered from the contact centre once the census is live.

Online Help

The Online Help page on our website covers important topics such as why we ask certain census questions and what they mean. This text should be understandable to anyone with a reading age of 8 or above. You can access online help at www.census.gov.uk. More information will be added nearer census day.

Web chat

Web chat guidance is available for use online and could be useful for those who prefer to communicate in writing. This will be available once the census is live.

10.4 | Assistive technologies

The online questionnaire is compatible with most assistive technologies. This means that people using supportive software such as screen readers or magnifying technology should find the questionnaire and all information on the census website works with their programme.

10.5 | Language support

By law, the census questionnaire must be completed in English or Welsh (in Wales only). However, there is a wide range of support and guidance available in many different languages.

10.5.1 | Language helpline

The language helpline can be contacted on [0800 587 2021](tel:08005872021).

Any member of the public can call the language helpline to ask questions about the census via an interpreter (subject to availability).

Support for less common languages may not be immediately available, but people can instead book appointments to speak to someone later. In total, support will be available for more than 200 languages.

The service provides the same help available via the contact centre. This includes enabling an individual to complete the census over the telephone. However, because the interpretation service takes longer it will not be suitable for households of more than two residents.

We have also made a large range of translated written information available via the website at www.census.gov.uk/downloadable-resources.

10.5.2 | Guidance booklets

Guidance booklets will be available in 49 languages. These booklets contain information about what the census is and why it is important. They also translate the questions in the household paper questionnaire, and the Privacy Notice.

These booklets will be available to download from www.census.gov.uk or to order via the contact centre. They are designed to be used alongside the paper questionnaire.

10.5.3 | Online support

From 1 March, support will be available online via the language pages on our website. These webpages will provide translated detail about the census in 49 languages. These are the same languages as those in the printed translation booklets. These pages will have direct translations of the following:

- Overview
- What is the census?
- Who has to complete the census?
- Staying in the UK for less than 3 months
- When to complete your census
- How to complete your census
- Completing your census online
- Completing your census on paper

Note: we can't provide a translation of the full online questionnaire because of the complex routing involved.

The language pages are mirrored for the Wales website too (for all languages).

10.5.4 | Other translation tools

People may have translation tools installed on their devices. Anyone using online translation tools should be aware that the census questions may not be translated correctly.

10.6 | Census completion activities

People can attend completion activities to fill in their census questionnaire somewhere safe and trusted. Given the COVID-19 (coronavirus) situation, it's likely that most completion activities will be online rather than face to face.

Completion activities might be sessions arranged especially so that people can fill in their census forms, or they might be run as part of a regular assistance service for members of the community.

The assistance people need will vary – some will just need reassurance, others translation ([see Section 10.5](#)), others help to log on to the census website ([see Section 7.1](#)). You also need to clearly inform the respondent that you do not work for the Office for National Statistics and will respect their confidentiality. Use the wording below:

“Before we start, you need to know that I am not employed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to work on Census 2021. Any information that you give me will remain confidential. Are you happy for me to help you?”

11. Guidance for helping others

11.1 | Assisting with the census questionnaire

If a respondent cannot fill in their census questionnaire, a trusted person like a family member or friend can complete it on their behalf.

This helper will need the respondent's access code from the letter or the paper form they have been sent. This code will open their online form.

If possible, the helper should read the questions and answer options aloud to the respondent and fill in the form with the answers they give. They can read the answers back to the respondent at the end to check they're right.

The helper should avoid guessing the answers to any questions they are asked. They should direct the respondent to www.census.gov.uk or call our contact centre if they are not sure.

We recognise that some people will be shielding due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) and will not feel comfortable having someone visit their home to help them. Anyone unable to access help from friends or family can call our contact centre.

See [Section 10.3](#) for information about accessible support which respondents and helpers can download or order.

See [Section 10.1](#) for information about our contact centre, which respondents and helpers can call for free to talk through their options for filling in the census.

See [Section 10.5](#) for information about our free language line, which offers translation help for anyone who needs it.

11.2 | Assisting with a household form

If someone has been asked to help with the whole of the household form, they need to list everyone who usually lives in this household and answer questions about all of them.

They should read the whole form back to the person they're helping, including the answers for other members of the household.

11.3 | Assisting someone in a communal establishment

Those who work in communal establishments such as care homes might be asked for help by residents.

If a person in an establishment has asked for help, staff members could:

- help them to complete their questionnaire, if they have the time
- contact a friend or relative of theirs to help
- help them to call our contact centre ([see Section 10.1](#)) and we can make an appointment to help them over the phone

11.4 | How to finish and return a paper form

If possible, the helper should get the respondent to sign or make their mark in the declaration box on the front of the form. If that's not possible, they can sign it on the respondent's behalf.

If the person cannot get to a post box, the helper can post their completed form for them.

11.5 | Assisting someone who cannot answer for themselves

Helpers may be filling in the census for someone who cannot answer for themselves. This could include carers, friends or family members, someone with lasting power of attorney (LPA), or a manager or staff member at a communal establishment.

11.6 | Answering for someone who lacks capacity

Helpers may be filling in the census questionnaire for someone who cannot understand the questions or communicate their answers. We know this can be difficult. Our advice is that helpers should select the answer they think the respondent would choose, based on everything they know about the respondent.

Some questions are clearly marked as being voluntary. It's OK to leave these blank.

There is more information about answering for someone who lacks capacity on our website. Anyone needing further advice should call the contact centre ([see Section 10.1](#)).

12. Will anyone from Census 2021 come to my home?

After Census Day, field staff from the ONS will visit people's homes if they haven't yet filled in their form. They're there to help anyone who needs extra support to join in.

12.1 | How can the public recognise ONS field staff?

Field staff from the ONS:

- will always wear an ID badge and identify themselves immediately
- will leave straight away and not call again if the person has already filled in their form
- will never ask to see personal documents like passports or birth certificates
- will never ask for payment for helping
- will never ask to come inside anyone's home

12.2 | What happens during a visit?

Census field staff visit in order to offer guidance, encouragement and information about how to complete the census questionnaire. They will not be helping people to fill in their census questionnaire on the doorstep.

Field officers can provide paper questionnaires where needed. They carry a language card which contains information about where to get help with the census in multiple languages.

12.3 | How will census field staff stay COVID-safe?

Our field officers will be working in the same way as a postal or food delivery visit. They will never need to enter people's houses; they will always be socially distanced, wear PPE and work in line with all government guidance.

Watch the video entitled "Keeping you and the general public safe" on our census jobs website at <https://www.censusjobs.co.uk/covid-19-update/> to see what doorstep visits from census field staff will look like.

To find out more about how we will be making sure Census 2021 is completed safely during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, please visit the [ONS website](#).

13. Data Security

The census asks questions about respondents, their homes and the people who live there. Some may naturally ask for reassurance around the security of their data.

The census has a proud 200-year history of keeping personal information safe. At the ONS, we have a strict security regime that follows government standards. This includes physical and IT security measures to protect respondents' data, covering people, processes and technology.

The ONS and the statistics we generate are independent from government. Although we report to the UK Parliament, our work is protected from political interference. The safety of respondents' information is our top priority.

13.1 | We will handle data securely

All our systems, staff and suppliers, and the way we do things must protect respondents' confidentiality by law.

Electronic data will be handled on systems securely managed to UK government standards and within the ONS's control. Paper forms will be securely scanned and passed to the ONS by a contractor meeting the ONS's security requirements.

13.2 | Respondents cannot be identified

When the ONS publishes statistics from the census, they're completely anonymous. We don't include any personal information and respondents cannot be identified via census data. Personal census information is protected by law. It is a crime for anyone to share it.

Government departments dealing with any applications, or any payments or services, cannot see the census information of the individual concerned. For example, census information cannot be used to influence benefit claims, a residency application, immigration status or taxes. Private organisations and individuals such as landlords will not have access to respondents' personal information.

13.3 | We'll never sell respondents' data

Personal information from the census will not be used to sell individuals anything or to find them. In turn, we'll never sell respondents' information.

We keep census records secure for 100 years. Only then can they be viewed by future generations, for example, by those interested in family history.

13.4 | Find out more

Read more about the census and how we keep information safe at www.census.gov.uk/privacy-and-data-protection

14. Impact of COVID-19 on Census 2021

When it comes to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) situation, the ONS is guided by the evidence and latest advice from Government and experts.

COVID-19 will present some challenges but the key thing is that Census 2021 is mainly online, with plenty of support for those who need it. Everyone can take part in the census without taking any risks or breaking any rules.

There's never been a more important time to have a census than now. In the light of COVID-19 it's even more crucial to understand our national and local circumstances and enable planning for the future.

We understand that many people may have experienced recent changes in circumstance due to COVID-19 and that this could impact how they fill in the questionnaire. Extra guidance has been included in the online questionnaire to help people answer questions in the light of changed circumstances – for example, changes to work location and employment status. Guidance will also be available for those completing paper questionnaires. Anyone can find this via the website at www.census.gov.uk.

14.1 | Are ONS field staff COVID-secure?

The ONS are committed to ensuring that everyone is kept safe as they take part in Census 2021.

The census field operation, which follows up with people who haven't yet completed their questionnaire and may need help, will be carried out without anyone ever needing to enter anyone's home. All contact with the public will be socially distanced and our field staff will be equipped with PPE in line with government guidance.

We will be following the government's safety guidelines about COVID-19 (coronavirus) throughout the census period.

15. Important things to remember

Whenever you're speaking with a respondent, please do:

- emphasise how important the census is, and that census information makes a real difference to people's lives
- make it clear that you aren't employed by the ONS to work on Census 2021.
- keep the respondent's information confidential and don't share anything on social media – this includes photographs of letters, which may show access codes

If you have any questions which aren't covered in this guide, we're here to help. There's lots of information on our website, www.census.gov.uk. Refer any queries you can't answer to the public contact centre on **0800 141 2021** (for those living in England) or **0800 169 2021** (for those living in Wales).

Thank you so much for your generous support with Census 2021. Your efforts will help make sure that your community gets the services it needs, now and for the future.