

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was responsible for the 2011 Census?

The census in England and Wales was run by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Simultaneous, yet separate, censuses took place in Scotland and Northern Ireland. All three censuses took place on 27 March 2011.

More information about the 2011 Census in England and Wales can be found online: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

How successful was the 2011 Census?

The 2011 Census in England and Wales was the biggest statistical operation ever undertaken in the UK. It was a great success, delivered on time, on budget and to a high quality.

We made particular efforts to make this the most inclusive census to ensure that we understand more about the characteristics of all sections of the community.

Many new features of the census were designed to improve the quality of the data, and as a result response rates were higher than in 2001 in those areas that are traditionally difficult to enumerate.

Statistics from the 2011 Census are available on the ONS website.

How do I get statistics about my local area?

2011 Census statistics are published on the ONS website. www.ons.gov.uk/census

The first statistics to be released include:

- usually resident census population estimates for England and for Wales, and for England and Wales, at single year of age, and sex
- usually resident census population estimates for England and for Wales at regional level, and local authority level, by five year age bands and sex
- estimates of households for England and for Wales at country, regional and local authority level

More statistics will become available later in 2012. Information about the statistics which are being released can be found in the [2011 Census Prospectus](#).

When will the population figures for the United Kingdom be released?

ONS is responsible for delivering population estimates for England and Wales, and for collating a UK population estimate.

Population figures for Northern Ireland are produced by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and for Scotland by National Records of Scotland (NRS).

The population figures for the UK are due to be published in December 2012.

How does the 2011 Census compare with the 2001 Census?

The 2011 Census was different to the 2001 Census in several ways. Questionnaires were, in the main, posted to addresses, and people could complete their answers online. There were some new questions, and lots more facilities to help people complete their questionnaire (such as online help, support materials in many languages and a census telephone helpline). All of these helped make the 2011 Census as inclusive as it could be.

The statistical bulletins (below) detail change in the population between 2001 and 2011, and over other time periods.

- The 2011 Census – Population and household estimates for England and Wales: March 2011
- The 2011 Census – Population and household estimates for Wales: March 2011

How many people completed online?

Some 16.5 per cent of census questionnaires were completed online. For more information see "[Providing the online Census](#)" and "[Internet take-up rates](#)"

Who did the 2011 Census include?

The 2011 Census set out to include everyone. The main statistical outputs are in respect usual residents in England and Wales on census day, 27 March 2011. ONS worked with organisations and groups to support key population groups, such as the homeless, in completing their census questionnaires. Visitors and short-term residents (people here for at least three months but less than a year) were also counted.

Was anything different about the 2011 Census in Wales?

People in Wales were able to choose to complete their questionnaire (on paper or online) in Welsh, if they wished. Enquiry lines, advice and online guidance were also available in Welsh. An extra question was asked of people living in Wales, about the Welsh language.

ONS worked with many organisations in Wales during the development and operation of the 2011 Census, such as at the time the Welsh Language Board, local authorities, businesses and voluntary organisations and established a Census Advisory Group for Wales.

Are the 2011 Census statistics likely to change?

No. However, the population figures in the statistics published in July 2012 will be estimates that are rounded to the nearest 100. Unrounded estimates will be published with the mid-year population estimates, and these will be released in September 2012.

Why are census statistics called estimates this time?

The vast majority of people complete a questionnaire. But inevitably some people don't, and others are included on more than one because they have more than one address (for example students with both a term-time and vacation address).

ONS used statistical procedures, based on information from the Census Coverage Survey, to measure and estimate the number of people not included on a questionnaire. These measures enable ONS to produce estimates of the whole population.

How does the census ensure confidentiality?

Personal census data is kept confidential at all times and is not shared with other organisations. The data is even exempt from the Freedom of Information Act under section 40 of the SRSA.

Information security is fundamental to the 2011 Census. All personal census data is owned by ONS, remains in the UK, and is processed only by ONS or UK/EU companies. Personal census data is protected by law and is not shared with any other government departments, local councils or marketing agencies.

To ensure the confidentiality of personal information, all 2011 Census systems, processes, staff and contractors are bound by the Data Protection Act, the 1920 Census Act and the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (SRSA)

Some specialist researchers may be allowed limited, supervised access to some records from which all personal identifiers has been removed.

After scanning, all the paper questionnaires were shredded and recycled. Census records are digitally archived and stored in a secure location for 100 years.

How much did the 2011 Census cost?

The 2011 Census cost approximately £480 million. This breaks down to less than £1 per person per year over the 12-year planning and operational cycle of the census. This is very good value and compares favourably with other censuses around the world.

The cost of the census has to be set against its value in helping central and local government to allocate annually many billions of pounds of funding to communities. Without census data, the ability to make informed decisions would be severely hampered.

What difference will this census make?

Census statistics provide valuable information for public and private organisations to plan services nationally and in the community over the next 10 years, for example:

- An accurate population count helps the Government to calculate the grants it allocates to each local authority and health authority
- Data collected and analysed about the age, social and economic make up of the population, and on general health and long-term illness, enables the Government and local authorities to plan and fund health and social services
- Information about housing and its occupants indicates where accommodation is inadequate and helps in planning new housing
- Knowing how many people work in different occupations helps government, local authorities and businesses to plan jobs and training policies
- Information about travel to and from work and car ownership highlights the pressures on transport systems and how road and public transport could be improved to meet local needs
- Information about ethnic groups helps central and local government to plan and fund programmes to meet the needs of these minority groups

- Population statistics enable licensed census distributors to create business planning software products
- In Wales, information on Welsh language speakers helps government and many other organisations, to take account of Welsh language in planning appropriate services for local areas.
- Census statistics helps research organisations to decide how, when and where to capture representative samples
- Population statistics help businesses to decide where to locate or expand their premises to reflect local demand and the available workforce

More statistics will become available later in 2012. Information about the statistics which are being released can be found in the [2011 Census Prospectus](#).

Why does it take more than a year to produce the results?

We have processed more data than any previous census. We have to be sure that the data are of the highest possible quality so we scrutinise them carefully before publication and correct any inconsistencies we find (for example, if the data show that someone is three years old and is a brain surgeon). We also adjust for people who didn't complete a form. This quality assurance work takes time.

What data have you used for comparisons with previous censuses in the statistical bulletin?

Comparison with 2001 and 1991 is based on the mid-year population estimates for those years, comparison with 1981 and earlier is based on census results.

For households, comparisons have been made with household estimates from Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for England and the Welsh Government (for Wales). This data is consistent with the 1991 and 2001 mid-year population estimates. For 1981 and earlier, data on households from the relevant census has been used.

Why have you not compared with 1991 and 2001 Censuses?

The published mid-year estimates are our best estimates of the population at national/local level within the census years for 1991 and 2001 as they contain adjustments made following the 1991 and 2001 Censuses and therefore provide a better indication of population growth.

For households, for 1991 and 2001, the 2011 Census estimates are compared with the household estimates for 1991 and 2001 produced by Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for England and the Welsh Government (for Wales) as these correspond to relevant mid-year population estimates.

For 1981 and earlier, the difference between the census and the mid-year estimates is much smaller than for 1991 and 2001 and so census results have been used for comparison. The 1981 and earlier census are 'population present rather than usual residents'.