



Update on the conduct of the 2021 censuses in the UK

A statement of agreement between the National Statistician and the Registrars General for Scotland and Northern Ireland

Introduction

This is a progress report on the [statement of agreement](#)¹ between the National Statistician and the Registrars General for Scotland and Northern Ireland. It covers the conduct of the 2021 censuses, which are intended to be carried out simultaneously throughout the UK.

Progress

The table below shows the progress made so far on each aspect of the census that the 3 census offices are aiming to harmonise. These aspects were set out in the statement of agreement.

Harmonisation aspects	Progress as at 1 November 2016
Harmonised outputs:	
The 2021 Census outputs should constitute consistent, coherent and accessible statistics for the UK, individual countries and geographic areas within each country.	<p>The census offices will review what users need from UK outputs. They aim to define a set of statistics that are consistent and can be compared across the UK.</p> <p>The census offices will define the main aims for the 2021 outputs by reviewing the outputs from the 2011 census. However, they will aim to provide census results that improve on the flexibility, accessibility and timeliness of the 2011 outputs.</p>
Common definitions and classifications, typically based on international standards, should be agreed, used and published [this includes a common population base].	Common definitions and classifications will be developed as the questions and outputs are produced. These will be based on international standards where possible.
Common topics and questions should be agreed wherever possible, with the intention of making available consistent census outputs across the	Each of the census offices ran separate topic consultations. They each used broadly consistent approaches to these. The offices' individual

¹ www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/progressanddevelopment/legislation

UK.

responses to their topic consultations can be found on their respective websites:

- Office for National Statistics ([ONS](#))²
- National Records of Scotland ([NRS](#))³
- Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency ([NISRA](#))⁴

Following the topic consultations, the census offices are working together to make sure questions and topics are made consistent across the UK where possible.

Progress so far includes:

Research and testing plans: ONS has developed and published research and testing plans on [sexual identity](#)⁵ and [gender identity](#)⁶. The 3 census offices are aiming to carry out (for the most part) the same research, which will enable decisions to be taken on a consistent evidence base. In turn, this will reduce the risk of differences and, therefore, differences in outputs.

Stakeholder workshops: Workshops were held in August 2016, which were attended by all 3 census offices. The workshops were arranged to explore the user need for topics on sexual identity and gender identity in more detail and to share and review the joint research plans. Summary notes of the discussions from the [sexual identity](#)⁷ and [gender identity](#)⁸ workshops have been published.

Working group: A working group made up of the 3 census offices and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has also been set up. This will review how best to meet the need for information on the

²<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales>

³http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/census2021/Scotlands_Census_2021_Topic_Consultation_Report_August_2016.pdf

⁴<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/census/2021/planning/consultation/topic.html>

⁵<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/topicreport19sexualidentityresearchplan.pdf>

⁶<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/topicreport20genderidentityresearchplan.pdf>

⁷<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/progressanddevelopment/questiondevelopment/sexualidentityworkshopsummaryofdiscussions>

⁸<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/genderidentity/genderidentityworkshopsummaryofdiscussions>

	armed forces community. ONS has published an update ⁹ on progress.
Census procedures:	
The three censuses should be carried out with reference to the same date in 2021.	As a planning assumption, we're working towards a census day of 21 March 2021. The census day won't be finalised until secondary legislation is passed in the relevant Parliaments and Assemblies. We expect this to happen in 2019.
The statistical procedures applied to the census data, such as methodologies for statistical disclosure control and estimation should be evaluated, tested and agreed in advance of the census, and co-ordinated across the UK.	<p>Development of the outputs has so far mainly focused on evaluating the relevant methods for statistical disclosure control. These support the aims for disseminating the 2021 Census outputs.</p> <p>A common approach to statistical disclosure control is being developed. This is to ensure that the analysis of the outputs across the 3 censuses is consistent in terms of the level of protection and usability. Each census office plans to evaluate and test methods, and co-ordinate approaches.</p> <p>More detailed work to co-ordinate on other methodologies (for example edit and imputation, and coverage assessment and adjustment) is just beginning.</p>
Recognising their common requirements, the census offices will share skills and experiences and endeavour to exploit economies of scale wherever possible.	<p>As the census programmes started at different times, opportunities to share skills and experience are only just emerging. In some areas, research and question testing is already shared regularly across the offices for both reviewing the findings and developing local questions.</p> <p>As another example, ONS and NISRA are developing joint procurement plans where opportunities for joint working and shared requirements have been identified. A memorandum of understanding has been created to establish working arrangements and the offices are working closely to develop joint requirements.</p>

⁹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/updateonmeetinginformationneedsontearmedforcescommunityveterans>

<p>The census offices will work together to exploit, and make greater use of, administrative data sources.</p>	<p>The ONS Administrative Data Census project holds a quarterly data suppliers' meeting. This group is a forum for discussing issues around data sharing, sharing research and building stronger relationships. Welsh Government, NRS and NISRA have been invited to join this group.</p> <p>NISRA is using administrative data to help ensure its address register is accurate and fit for purpose. This work is being shared with colleagues in Great Britain.</p>
<p>The census offices will endeavour to ensure that the publicity campaigns for each census complement each other.</p>	<p>The planning of publicity campaigns and timings hasn't yet started. However, plans to make sure the different campaigns complement each other are being developed.</p>