

Housing Information Group, 18 June 2021 Update on 2021 Census and housing outputs

How did the 2021 Census data collection operation go?

The 2021 Census for England and Wales took place on 21 March and the collection operation appears to have gone very well. The online census worked smoothly and was easy for respondents.

- The main census operation has concluded, with [97% of households across Wales and England responding to the 2021 Census](#); with a similar response rate in Wales to that in England.
- Response rates in all local authorities exceeded 90%; well above the target the Office for National Statistics (ONS) had set of 80% in all local authorities.
- The Census Coverage Survey is coming to an end. This Survey helps make sure that everyone is counted and that the census results are as accurate as possible.
- The ONS has now commenced non-compliance fieldwork for those individuals who have refused to respond to the census.
- The Census Quality Survey will start on 28 June. This is a smaller survey, and the results allow the ONS to work out how accurate the responses were in the main census and help improve the statistics.
- Prior to Census outputs being released there is considerable work to validate and process the data.

Discussions between Welsh Government Housing Statistics team and ONS regarding Census outputs

The WG Housing statistics team have continued discussions about the needs for data on housing and housing circumstances of the population from the Census data with the ONS. Topics discussed include:

- Data on dwellings (occupied/ unoccupied),
- Data on second homes – at low geographic areas (second homes total, second holiday homes)

- Data on housing circumstances for different ethnic groups - including Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (including information on mobile and temporary structures),
- Data on multi-generational households
- Data on central heating type (including renewables)
- Data on overcrowding/underoccupancy analysis planned (by tenure and LA)
- Whether it will be possible to link Census data to VOA data for provide analysis such as dwellings by accommodation type, by age of property and floor area.

A wider document summarising Welsh Government user needs from the Census mentions, in addition to the above, the following:

- Interest in the housing experiences of different groups in the population, for example, by protected characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity, disabled people) and in the circumstances of those are migrants or asylum seekers. Analysis of tenure, type and size of property, household size and type (including whether multi-generational households and whether households do or do not contain children) and overcrowding would be of interest for these different groups.
- Analysis of age groups, household type and socioeconomic group of those who are renting (private or social renting)
- type and size of properties, information on concealed households/families, on self-containment and houses in multiple occupation.

Census 2021 Outputs consultation

As indicated in the last Housing Information Group in January 2021, first results from the Census in England and Wales are planned for release by March 2022, with further data being released in the following year.

In preparation for releasing results from the Census the Office for National Statistics will shortly be undertaking a Census 2021 Outputs consultation, see message below from ONS:

Coming soon

Look out this summer for the launch of our 'Census 2021 Outputs: content design and release phase proposals' consultation. This online, public consultation will run for 12 weeks.

We want to obtain an updated view of your changing detailed needs for Census 2021 data and analysis, and to understand your priorities. We will be asking for your feedback on the following topics:

- The shape of the outputs and analysis release schedule
- Main changes to variables compared to the 2011 Census

- Proposals for feasibility work to derive new variables
- Population base specifications
- Taking a census during a period of change
- The release of paradata, information about how census data was collected and processed

We will be announcing the launch date for the consultation and supporting webinars soon. If you have any questions in meantime, please contact census.outputs@ons.gov.uk.

Responses to questions raised at Housing Information Group (HIG) meeting on the Census in Jan 2021

A number of questions were raised by those attending the HIG meeting in January 2021 which ONS have responded to (see Annex 1)

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Annex 1: ONS response to questions asked at the Welsh Housing Information Group meeting, 28 January 2021

1. HMOs. How are they defined?

The Census Outputs team are working with ONS's Housing topic group to develop a derived variable to indicate HMOs, based on a working definition drawn from the government definition:

Your home is a house in multiple occupation (HMO) if both of the following apply:

- at least 3 tenants live there, forming more than 1 household
- you share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities with other tenants

Your home is a large HMO if both of the following apply:

- at least 5 tenants live there, forming more than 1 household
- you share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities with other tenants

2. Vacant dwellings – how are they being enumerated in 2021?

All addresses are sent invitations to take part in the census regardless of whether they are vacant or not.

Owners of vacant properties are responsible for completing a census form for their properties even if there are no usual residents at that property. This message is reinforced through the campaign and the online help guidance. Census officers visit all addresses where no response has been received. If the property is vacant, they complete a 'dummy form' with basic information and it is removed from the follow-up list. This does not stop any returns from being receipted should a homeowner/visitor/householder complete a form later. The census is a census of housing and population so it's important to stress that we want a census questionnaire returned even if no one is usually resident at an address.

Dummy returns are coded as per below, including a category for 'holiday homes'. It is difficult for an enumerator to confirm the function of an empty dwelling so we are still considering the outputs that we may be able to reliably produce to a reasonable quality.

-99	Not yet specified
1	Hard refusal
2	Extraordinary refusal
3	Non-return/no contact
4	Property is HH-Refused
5	Vacant property
6	Second residence

7	Holiday home
8	Absent household
9	Unoccupied property

3. Location and format of the published data tables /datasets?

Census 2021 outputs will be made available online. It is expected that variables related to housing will be available via the flexible dissemination system. We are currently working on which variables and which reclassifications of these will be available, taking into account our responsibility to protect the confidentiality of information about individuals and households. More information on this, including a list of all variables, derived variables and output classifications available from census 2021, will be available as part of the consultation taking place this spring/summer 2021.

4. Would there be a re-introduction of the standard table on second homes and vacant properties (available as KS016 in 2001 but not available in 2011)?

In 2001 the variable VSHHUK11 was only based on the enumerator return.

Since 2011, we have relied on household members to return a census form to differentiate between vacant, holiday, and second residences. If the household owner does not return their census forms, the census enumerators are unable to record the purpose of a vacant address and record it as 'vacant-purpose unknown'. Unless the owner then completes their Census form for that address, overwriting the enumerator response, we will be unable to determine the nature of the property.

The second residence question should only be used if the owner resides at the address more than 30 days per year. Some holiday homes are identified as vacant dwellings due to the fact the owner hasn't returned a form for that address. This can occur for two reasons: the owner has not collected and completed the census form from their second residence, or the owner has not requested an additional paper form. This can result in misleading or incomplete counts of holiday homes.

We are currently exploring the outputs on second homes and vacant properties (particularly holiday homes) that we can make available for 2021. We realise that this is an important topic for many and as such we are in discussion with ONS's Housing topic group to develop outputs based on vacant dwellings, second and alternative addresses.

5. Will space heating be differentiated from water heating to provide more nuanced data?

The census question does not make the distinction between space and water heating, therefore we are unable to provide this in the outputs.

6. Additional Information:

The Welsh Housing Information Group members be interested in reading the '[Statistical design for Census 2021, England and Wales](#)' we published in October 2020.