

## census 2021

Census is a once every 10 years survey. It's a critical piece of work. In fact, it's so important that the government makes it a legal requirement for every household across England and Wales.

And what it does is it gives us a detailed picture of the population, its characteristics, where we work, how we live, the nature of our families, and different ethnic groups that informs decision making both nationally and locally, around vital services such as hospitals, bus stops, bus routes, schools, etc.

Since the start of the pandemic, back in... gosh, March 2020,...for us when the first kind of lockdown came in, we've been working really hard to adapt the operation. And also we've had a great opportunity to learn from local authorities and a lot of commercial businesses about how they run their services in the context of a pandemic. And on the back of all of that learning, we've been able to make changes to our operation to ensure it's safe for the people that work for us and the respondent out there across England and Wales.

A good thing to know about Census 2021, that's different from every other census that's been completed, is that it'll be digital first, and what that means we're expecting the vast majority of people to complete online. And for those that want to complete by paper questionnaires, they can ask for a paper questionnaire. What that means is that for the vast majority of people and households in England or Wales, they won't need to be engaged by field staff or a field officer.

However, there will be a period where field staff will need to visit. They're there to help, they're there to help you complete the census. Thing to think about when a field officer comes to the door, Is it's not different from an Amazon delivery come to your door or the post officer.

So we provide the field officer with all the kit they need to do to do the job safely. We provide them with a high visibility vest with the census logo on an ID badge so they can be recognised as an official census officer. And then from a safety perspective, we provide them with face coverings that they will wear walking towards the property, at the property itself and then set all the way through to being off the property. We also provide hand sanitisers and sanitising wipes, so they can wipe down their hands and equipment in between visits. It's critical that both the field officer and the respondent feel safe. And the distance or not going to somebody's house massively reduces the risk of transmission. So for both parties, it's important that we don't cross that threshold.

At the time when the pandemic first kicked off, one of the questions we did ask ourselves is, should we delay? Is it the right thing to delay? And can we execute a sense of safety?

Delaying the census doesn't come for free. We've done some estimates, and it could cost up to 360 million pounds to delay to next year. And that's not just a cost to the taxpayer. It's also the delay of information to the users who need it to plan vital services, since things have changed so much in 10 years since the last census back in 2011. And that data is used all the time, even today. But 10 years is a long time. If you could think back to all the changes that have gone back at you know over the last 10 years, both in social media and the way we work and things like the pandemic and it's critical we update that information now to inform planning and policymaking decision making for vital services.

So it's clear the pandemic has presented us with some challenges in delivering Census 2021. However, it's critical that we do get this information to inform the planning and decision making and policymaking. It's critical to help the country recover from the pandemic going forwards.

We've undertaken lots of changes to the operation taken on board or government advice, and we're confident but not complacent, that we can run a really successful Census 2021.