

RESPONDENT: 2962843551 – Ian Plewis
SECTOR: Unknown - Individual

Q1 - What are your views of the different census approaches described in the consultation document?

I think the balance of evidence favours the online Census approach. Given that (a) most households will have access to the internet in 2021, (b) experience with online surveys both within and outside ONS will have increased by then, (c) the quality of the data will probably be higher because the questionnaire can be designed to aid that; then a full internet-based Census is much the safer option. Such an approach will, of course, need to be supplemented by other means of data collection from households without the internet along with a Census Coverage Survey of the kind used in 2011 which seemed to work well. Then, as for 2011, the data from administrative sources will have an important part to play in quality assurance. The Skinner, Hollis and Murphy review has pointed to concerns about the quality of administrative data, especially concerns about overcount and people being counted in the wrong place. Although I believe the quality of data from administrative sources can be improved by 2021, I am not convinced that systems designed for administrative sources can be redesigned to fit the statistical purposes required for a population census. Nor am I sure that having annual surveys to supplement the administrative data is desirable.

Q2 - Please specify any significant uses of population and housing statistics that we have not already identified.

Q3 - Please specify any significant additional benefits of population and housing statistics that we have not already identified.

Q4 - What would the impact be if the most detailed statistics for very small geographic areas and small population groups were no longer available? High, medium, low or no impact?

High

If medium or high, please give further information.

I live in a parish with 936 households, according to the 2011 Census. Of these, 151 consist of one family with all residents age 65 or above. Household data could only be obtained from the annual surveys if the administrative option were adopted as administrative data are generally person-based. Aggregating over 5 survey years would give a 95% confidence interval of 107 to 195 such households according to ONS' CI tool. This is a wide interval, arguably too wide for sensible planning at the very local level.

Q5 - What would the additional benefit be if more frequent (i.e. annual) statistics about population characteristics were available for areas like local authorities and electoral wards? High, medium, low or no additional benefit?

If medium or high please give further information.

Q6 - Please specify any significant uses of census information for historical research that we have not already identified.

Q7 - What advantages or disadvantages for genealogical or historical research can you see from a move to a solution based on archiving administrative data sources?

I am doubtful about the possibilities of archiving administrative data and so genealogical and historical research are likely to be compromised under the administrative data option.

Q8 - What are your views of the risks of each census approach and how they might be managed?

In addition to those set out in response to question 1, I see the main risks as follows. Administrative data option: 1. This could only work well if ONS is enabled to have substantial input into the collection and organisation of these data. Legislation would be necessary but legislation might not be sufficient. 2. Legislation would also be required to make the annual surveys mandatory. There is a substantial difference in public perception between a one-off data collection every 10 years that affects everybody and which nearly everyone can see the benefits of as a public good, and an exercise that only affects part of the population over time and which might not be so easily accepted. And making an annual survey compulsory in this context might have undesirable effects on response to all the other important surveys that ONS/GSS carries out. 3. It is not clear how quality assurance of the results would proceed without recourse to external sources of data as has happened in previous censuses. Internet Census 1. The risks here are much lower. Perhaps the main issue, other than the level of internet penetration amongst older people, is who completes the form within the household.

Q9 - Are there any other issues that you believe we should be taking into account?

The administrative data option would probably mean the end of the Census-based Longitudinal Study (LS) and this would be a blow to research in the social and medical fields especially as the value of the LS increases each time new Census data are added.