



ONS Census Transformation Programme

The 2021 Census

Assessment of initial user
requirements on content for
England and Wales

Language topic report

May 2016

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1. Introduction

In June 2015 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the public consultation document ‘[The 2021 Census initial view on content for England and Wales](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales)’¹. This discussed the initial views of ONS regarding the potential inclusion of current (2011) and additional topics in the 2021 Census. The public consultation was open from 4 June 2015 to 27 August 2015 and aimed to promote discussion and encourage the development of strong cases for topics users wanted to be included in the 2021 Census. The focus was on information required from the 2021 Census, not the detailed questions that could be asked on the questionnaire.

ONS received 1,095 responses to the consultation; 279 of these were from organisations and 816 were from individuals. Of all consultation respondents 315 answered at least one question, or discussed collection of data, on the ‘Language’ topic.

There are three sub-topics within the ‘Language’ topic:

- Welsh
- Main languages used
- English language proficiency

Based on the evidence given by users and topic experts, sub-topics were evaluated using the criteria detailed in the consultation document using a standardised method. The criteria are listed in table 1 below. The criteria largely reflect those used in the 2011 Census topic consultation and have undergone expert review within ONS and via the Census Advisory Groups for use in the 2021 Census topic consultation. More detail on the scoring methodology is available in section 2 of the document ‘[The 2021 Census - Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England & Wales: Response to consultation](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/2021censustopicconsultation/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementscontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation)’².

Table 1 Evaluation criteria

<p>1. User requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose • Small geographies or populations • Alternative sources • Multivariate analysis • Comparability beyond England and Wales • Continuity with previous censuses 	<p>2. Other consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data quality • Public acceptability • Respondent burden • Financial concerns • Questionnaire mode
	<p>3. Operational requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising coverage or population bases • Coding of derived variables and adjustment for non-response • Routing and validation

This report provides ONS’s updated view based on our evaluation of user responses against these evaluation criteria.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/2021censustopicconsultation/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementscontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation.pdf>

2. Background

The language topic comprises three sub-topics, which collect information on the ability to use Welsh, main languages used and English language proficiency. There are two aspects to understanding the use of language: skills and proficiency. Language skills are the abilities to understand spoken language, to speak it, to read it and to write it. Proficiency is related to the level of these skills.

A question on Welsh Language has been included in every census in Wales since 1891, and collects information on the ability of respondents in Wales to understand spoken Welsh, speak Welsh, read Welsh and write Welsh. There is an ongoing user need for these data to monitor and promote the use of the Welsh language. This need has been strengthened in recent years due to obligations under the ‘Welsh Language Act 1993’, which places a duty on public organisations in Wales to treat the Welsh and English languages equally. In addition to this, the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#) have recently been implemented, which confirm the requirement for Welsh Ministers and public authorities to take account of the Welsh language when developing policies and services. This legislation only applies in Wales.

The 2011 Census was the first to gather information on main languages used and English language proficiency, following a [programme of research, consultation, testing and analysis](#) to establish the most suitable questions. This included consultation with data users and providers, qualitative and quantitative question testing, carrying out an equality impact assessment, and working with Scotland and Northern Ireland to harmonise the questions where possible.

ONS’s initial view on language sub-topics, as published in the consultation document ‘The 2021 Census: Initial view on content for England and Wales’ is reproduced in table 2 below.

Table 2 Initial view of ONS

Topic detail	Initial view	Collected in 2011?
Welsh	Collect in Wales	Yes
Main languages used	Collect	Yes
English language proficiency	Collect where main language is not English (or Welsh in Wales)	Yes

3. Summary of consultation responses

Table 3 presents the number of responses by type of respondent and organisational sector. The organisations that responded to this topic are listed by sector in Annex A.

Table 3 Language topic - number of responses by type of respondent

Type of respondent	Total responses	
	N	% total responses
Individual	194	62
Organisation (all sectors)	121	38
Sector		% organisation responses
- Government department/public body	10	8
- Local authority	74	61
- Health organisation	3	2
- Housing	1	1
- Academic / research	4	3
- Charity and voluntary	14	12
- Commercial	5	4
- Genealogist/family historian	1	1
- Other	9	7
Total responses	315	100

Note: Percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding.

Note: An organisation may have submitted more than one response.

Welsh

The Welsh language skills question is only asked in Wales. The Information is used widely by the Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales to monitor use of the Welsh language and to inform strategies to support and promote the Welsh language. This requirement has been strengthened by legal responsibilities arising from Welsh language legislation such as the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

The quotations below are used to illustrate how respondents use information about Welsh. These provide additional context to the evaluation.

The Welsh Government: *“The use of Welsh is underpinned by legislation which applies to the public sector and some elements of the private and third sectors. The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 is the latest piece of legislation which aims to protect and promote the use of Welsh, and confirms that the Welsh language has official status in Wales. Another provision of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 is to establish a new framework of statutory duties relating to the Welsh language in the form of standards (displacing Welsh language schemes). The standards specify how organisations are expected to use and promote the Welsh language.”*

Welsh Language Commissioner: *“The census is an extremely valuable source of information and evidence which is widely used in the Commissioner’s day to day work and in the linguistic planning of other organisations in Wales. One of the Commissioner’s strategic aims is to influence and scrutinise public policy and legislation, and increase and improve people’s understanding of the position of the Welsh language. In this respect, census data is the only authoritative and comprehensive evidence that exists on the position of the Welsh language. The census also allows us to analyse linguistic changes and patterns in Wales on a national, regional, local authority, ward and community level.”*

Carmarthenshire County Council: *“The Council pays particular attention to the number of Welsh language speakers; what Welsh language skills residents hold and long-term trends in household language. We also look at what other main household languages are identified from the census data to assist with service provision and forward planning.”*

There was some evidence, from the Welsh Government and other users of census data in Wales, of an additional requirement to count the number of Welsh speakers outside of Wales, mainly in England:

Welsh Government: *“There is a requirement for information on Welsh speakers in other parts of the UK. Migration is such an important factor in terms of the language trends that it is important to assess the impact that this has on the Welsh language profile in Wales and beyond. This will be critical to understand future planning of services and the changing demographic nature of the country. Previous work on measuring the loss of Welsh speakers from Wales that has been undertaken has been limited because of the lack of information on Welsh speakers outside Wales... We would also want the main language question to be harmonised to provide the ability to note that Welsh is respondents’ main language in Wales (to be consistent with the position in England).”*

Gwynedd Council: *“We disagree with the intention not to collect information on Welsh speakers in England – with a historical pattern of migration of people of working age out of Wales, especially out of rural areas, and the reduction in the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales, is there a lost opportunity to collect information about the location of Welsh speakers – where they are going and to pair this with other information about those households?”*

The Welsh Government also requested that a question on frequency and fluency of speaking Welsh be included in the 2021 Census. Data on the fluency of Welsh language was also requested by a small number of other respondents from Wales.

Main languages used and English language proficiency

New questions on ‘main languages used’ and ‘English language proficiency’ were included in the 2011 Census. Data from these questions have been used to identify people for whom English is not their main language and to identify areas where a particular language is in use. This information helps councils and other organisations plan support strategies and monitor the impact of policies. Data are also used for targeting the delivery of services such as language support, translation, and study programmes at a local level to promote integration and cohesion within communities, to help eliminate discrimination, and to ensure that people are treated fairly.

Data on main language and English language proficiency are often used together and the quotations below illustrate how respondents use this information.

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames: *“This has been used as an indicator in policy development, primarily our Localities Strategies and projects eg our The Malden Manor Community Project used language as one of its indicators of community engagement noting that English proficiency can lead to isolation in the community.”*

East Riding of Yorkshire Council: *“Main languages used and English language proficiency - if these were not collected we would not know about the changing migration picture of the East Riding and therefore could not plan services accordingly such as translation and interpretation services. This would have an impact on funding and also planning actual specific services.”*

Welsh Government: *“Main languages used is important to inform local planning and service provision such as education, health, local services and any other devolved topics. This includes UK languages, including British Sign Language, as well as foreign languages. The information is useful for funding allocation such as grants and informing policy development for English as an additional language but will also be important in development of equality policies generally. This can include issues such as access to service and cohesive communities.”*

Walsall Council: *“We use main languages used as a way to target communications with the local community in more effective ways and where there may be issues with community cohesion. It is also used to plan for possible demand (for example availability of information in other languages or demand for translation services). Lack of English language ability is also an indicator that has been used locally to determine communities that may be likely to suffer from issues of social isolation, and as a way to target the provision of ESOL support.”*

Consultation respondents commented on some perceived limitations of the current question on main languages used. The 2011 Census question included response options for ‘English’ in England or ‘English or Welsh’ in Wales and a text response option for other languages. Some Welsh respondents requested that the ‘English or Welsh’ option is offered as separate tick boxes and the question is harmonised across England and Wales. Although the explanation of what may be included in the ‘Other’ write-in box stated that British Sign Language was a valid response, several respondents stated that the question was unclear. Some respondents suggested that this led to an undercount of people whose main language is Welsh, and those for whom British Sign Language is their main method of communication. This concern is reflected in the quotes below:

Health Deafinitions: *“Many D/deaf people who use BSL are still unclear about whether they should select English or BSL. Many struggle to read or speak, but they still have to use English*

with family and work, so they have told us that they still selected English. This changes/ oversimplifies, and ultimately distorts, the impact of the numbers of BSL users.”

Welsh Language Commissioner: *“Data on the Welsh language cannot be compared on an UK-wide level as the questions are specifically aimed at Wales. Despite this, if there was an intention to include a question on other languages in England, we would wish to see the Welsh language included on the list of languages on the census form. In 2011, 8,248 people living in England noted that Welsh is their main language, but it is estimated that there are many more people in England who can speak Welsh but have not noted this.”*

Welsh Government: *“For parity with England, we propose that respondents in Wales are able to state that Welsh is their main language, by including two separate tick box responses; one for Welsh and the other for English.”*

There were some requests for a dedicated Cornish language response tick-box in the 2021 Census, for example:

Bewnans Kernow: *“Government allocated £150,000 to the Cornish language for a 12-month span in March 2015 following a period of grave uncertainty about continued funding. This is a fraction of the funding received by other recognised minority languages. Better data through the inclusion of a dedicated Cornish tickbox within the census for language and for ethnic group and National identity is the best way to ensure stable and consistent funding and other resources to allow the development of the Cornish language to meet demand.”*

Other requests from respondents related to language included the collection of information on Irish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic, native language, first and second language and written English language proficiency.

4. Evaluation

The following sections show the scores allocated to each sub-topic by individual criterion based on the evidence given by users. The criteria largely reflect those used in 2011, but have undergone expert review within ONS and via the Census Advisory Groups. The document '[The 2021 Census - Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England & Wales: Response to consultation](https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/2021censustopicconsultation/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementscontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation.pdf)'³ gives details on the scoring methodology including:

- 'user requirements criteria', including a description of relative weights, are described in section 2.1 of the document. Note that, in the following tables, the overall score is weighted and is not the sum of the scores for individual criteria
- 'other considerations' are described in section 2.2 of the document. These will predominately be used in conjunction with the user requirement score to steer the development of the census questionnaire and the production of administrative data research outputs
- 'operational requirements' are described in section 2.3, of the document. ONS has operational uses for some of the data collected in the census, of which the most important is maximising coverage of the 2021 Census. Each sub-topic is categorised as being of maximum, moderate or minimum importance in relation to operational requirements.

4.1 User requirements - Welsh

Table 4 User requirement score by criterion

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Weighted Overall Score	78.5	Medium user need
Purpose	8	<p>Central and local government respondents described how the data are used for service planning and resource allocation purposes, especially in relation to providing language education and support. For example, the Welsh Government commented on the use of data as an evidence base for developing, planning and resourcing new and ongoing projects:</p> <p><i>“Census data at below local authority level is used by organisations such as Welsh Language Initiatives (Mentrau Iaith) and the Urdd (Youth Movement) to plan and prioritise services and projects.”</i></p> <p>The Welsh Government also said that:</p> <p><i>“Language transmission rates are available via census data (“transmission rate” is defined as the proportion of children within a family type able to speak Welsh) which are used to develop policies and plan services.”</i></p> <p>Cyngor Sir Ceredigion (Ceredigion County Council) linked uses of the data to the Welsh Language Act:</p> <p><i>“Without this data we would be unable to plan provision of language improvement or to meet requirements of Welsh Language Act.”</i></p>

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/2021censustopicconsultation/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementscontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation.pdf>

Criterion	Score	Evidence
		<p>Caerphilly County Borough Council commented on how the data are used for essential monitoring and planning purposes:</p> <p><i>“The Council has a specific budget to deliver services via the Welsh language. It is also a key equality strand that we are legally required to monitor and report on. Therefore it is vital that we have information on people using the Welsh language available to us. It is also vital in planning Welsh medium education services.”</i></p> <p>National Parks Wales reported using the data for administrative and resource allocation purposes in relation to areas such as recruitment and communication.</p>
<p>Small geographies or populations</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>Local area level data are used to target support services. The Welsh Language Commissioner wrote that:</p> <p><i>“The census is the only source of comprehensive geographical data on the Welsh language ability of the Welsh population. Organisations increasingly need data for smaller areas, for example, when assessing local needs for Welsh language or bilingual education, when assessing the impact of housing developments and planning on communities, and when developing services.”</i></p> <p>The Welsh Government said that:</p> <p><i>“This particular set of information is used to develop policies and plan services. For example, data for small population groups is used to designate and resource priority areas for the Twf Project (advising parents on raising children bilingually).”</i></p> <p>Cyngor Sir Ceredigion (Ceredigion County Council) described how variation within their authority leads to a need for low geographical area level data:</p> <p><i>“There is considerable variation in language characteristics across our local authority area and we require small area data to plan services and resource allocation and make meaningful forecasts of change.”</i></p> <p>In addition, Cyngor Sir Ceredigion (Ceredigion County Council) said that:</p> <p><i>“Small area data are particularly important to distinguish areas where language use is affected by eg university student population. It is essential to our research into topics such as the impact of housing policy on language use, and to our planning of language support programmes.”</i></p> <p>Powys County Council commented that:</p> <p><i>“We use Welsh language data down to the smallest level possible for schools planning.”</i></p>
<p>Alternative sources</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Central and local government respondents noted various alternative survey sources, such as the Annual Population Survey, but explained that these do not meet their requirements. For example, Powys County Council stated that the:</p> <p><i>“Annual Population Survey gives very broad data on the ability to speak Welsh, but this isn’t broken down geographically or by age bands. It is</i></p>

Criterion	Score	Evidence
		<p><i>not accurate enough to plan for service delivery. APS doesn't provide info on people who cannot speak English/Welsh to a high standard. Using the APS would mean that we could not plan service provision with any degree of confidence, resulting in service provision being over provided..."</i></p> <p>The main point made by many respondents was that they require data below local authority level for service targeting and that this is not available from survey sources. An annual survey of Welsh speakers is carried out but users have told us that it is not sufficient for a detailed assessment in terms of number, location and different characteristics.</p>
Multivariate analysis	9	<p>Multivariate analysis of these data is essential to identify characteristics of groups that do and do not speak Welsh, and to target and monitor the effectiveness of policies to increase its use.</p> <p>Data users carry out cross-tabulations with a range of other topics for different purposes, including in relation to the planning and delivery of services. The Welsh Government said that:</p> <p><i>"Some use is made of Welsh language ability by occupation and industry for example – this information can inform our understanding of the language skills profile of specific sectors and inform service planning and delivery to ensure that the needs of Welsh speakers are met."</i></p> <p>The Welsh Government also discussed the need for a rich source of other data to cross-tabulate with Welsh language data and explained how it is used to support planning and implementation of its Welsh-medium education strategy:</p> <p><i>"The census continues to be the key source of information about the Welsh language in Wales. Knowledge and use of Welsh is influenced by demographic factors such as age, social status and economic status. As such, the picture with regard to the Welsh language is complex and multi-layered, and one which is heavily reliant on census data."</i></p> <p>Chwarae Teg referred to their use of multivariate data for planning training courses linked to employment:</p> <p><i>"We run training courses in Welsh as well as English. We need gender disaggregated data about Welsh language proficiency, since proficiency in Welsh is helpful for getting a good job in Wales."</i></p>
Comparability beyond England and Wales	3	<p>Few respondents mentioned the need to use the Welsh language skills data for UK comparison although Carmarthenshire County Council said that:</p> <p><i>"...it would be useful to identify the Welsh Language skills of those who migrate from the country, especially the younger generation. Whilst undertaking a working group on the Welsh language skills following the results of the 2011 Census, many queries were asked about the language skills of the young people leaving the local authority but there was no evidence to record this."</i></p>

Criterion	Score	Evidence
		<p>IAITH Cyf (y ganolfan cynllunio iaith) :</p> <p><i>“Byddai gwybodaeth ynghylch gallu/sgiliau Cymraeg ar draws y DG yn rhoi mewnwelediad defnyddiol i ni o ran polisi a chynllunio iaith, e.e. tracio presenodeb a symudiadau siaradwyr Cymraeg draws y DG.”</i></p> <p>English translation</p> <p>IAITH Cyf (Welsh Centre for Language Planning) added that:</p> <p><i>“Information on Welsh language abilities/skills across the UK would provide us with a useful insight in terms of language policy and planning, e.g. tracking the presence and movements of Welsh language speakers across the UK.”</i></p>
<p>Continuity with previous censuses</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>Central and local government as well as commercial organisations stated that they compare census data over time to, for example, monitor change and to evaluate language strategies. The Welsh Language Commissioner said that:</p> <p><i>“This longitudinal data is essential evidence for policy and service planners in terms of the current position of the Welsh language and changes over time. It also allows statisticians to predict what could happen to the Welsh language and Welsh-speaking communities in future. This information could be used to target policies, resources and interventions to ensure the viability of the Welsh language.”</i></p> <p>Similarly, the Welsh Government said that:</p> <p><i>“Much of the use that the Welsh Government makes of census data relating to the Welsh language is to monitor change over time. This is to understand changes in the Welsh language ability of the population in Wales, and the possible impact of Welsh language policy. Evaluating change over time informs policy development and service planning. It also impacts on funding. Many local activities and initiatives are targeted or adapted in response to census findings.”</i></p> <p>Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg/Welsh Language Society stated the importance of continuity with previous censuses:</p> <p><i>“In order to analyse the position of the Welsh language, we must obtain data which can be compared with previous censuses: any changes to the questions or they way in which they are asked can put this at risk. Without census data, it would not be possible to assess changes over the past decade in a way which is consistent with the past.”</i></p>
<p>Weighted Overall Score</p>	<p>78.5</p>	<p>Medium user need</p>

4.2 Other considerations - Welsh

Table 5 ONS assessment of impact by criterion

Criterion	Operational impact	Justification
Impact on data quality	Medium	The response rate (96.6%) for this question was good. However, previous testing concluded that some people found it difficult to answer due to its subjective nature. Due to non-exclusive response options, respondents could tick a combination of response options. The 2011 Census Quality Survey found that this increased the likelihood of respondents answering differently when asked again.
Impact on public acceptability	Low	There were no public acceptability concerns associated with collecting information on this sub-topic.
Impact on respondent burden	Medium	Previous testing of this question found that some respondents needed to consider how to answer this question as they were unsure whether the level of their Welsh language skills was sufficient to warrant selecting a skill, and were unclear about how to answer the question for babies and young children whose language abilities were still developing.
Impact on financial concerns	Low	The response to this sub-topic did not require manual coding and although the multi-tick option does require more complex processing, the requirement is only for Wales.
Impact on questionnaire mode	Low	This question displayed well online and on the paper questionnaire.

4.3 Operational requirements - Welsh

Minimum operational requirement

There is no census operational requirement to collect data on this topic.

4.4 User requirements - main languages used

Table 6 User requirement score by criterion

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Weighted Overall Score	83	High user need

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Purpose	7	<p>Data about main language are used by local authorities for service planning and resource allocation, for example, when making decisions about the provision of translated materials. There was also evidence that local authorities use main language data alongside language proficiency information. Tower Hamlets Council stated that:</p> <p><i>“The 2011 Census was the first to provide detailed intelligence about the languages spoken in the borough and levels of proficiency. These data are invaluable in a borough such as Tower Hamlets where 34 per cent of residents use a main language other than English. The Council uses language data in many areas of its work. Examples include: needs assessments, commissioning of services (eg translation and interpretation services), grants allocation and policy development...”</i></p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council commented that:</p> <p><i>“Data on main language spoken has been used by our library service to assess the availability of foreign language books.”</i></p> <p>These data are also used to provide evidence when bidding for funding. For example, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames stated that:</p> <p><i>“Census information helped the council secure a £240,000 European Integration Fund grant from the Home Office to employ a Korean Link Worker. Working with Kingston College the project is to improve the health and wellbeing of people who are often isolated and vulnerable within the community, and to support people by breaking down language barriers...”</i></p> <p>Furthermore, commercial organisations use the data to inform marketing strategies. For example, First UK Bus stated that:</p> <p><i>“we use it to understand the language needs of the population living close to our bus routes so we can provide appropriate marketing information. If the information were not available then we would have to rely on ‘ethnicity’ data which is not always very helpful in terms of language used.”</i></p>
Small geographies or populations	10	<p>Councils stated a requirement for the data to be at local authority level to target services and resources at specific community areas and small population groups, particularly residents who speak English as an additional language. Birmingham City Council stated that:</p> <p><i>“We use the data at all geographies to support neighbourhood working across the city. Understanding the languages spoken at small levels helps neighbourhood and ward officers to deliver more targeted services. As stated we are using the data to identify all population groups in the city. So the ability to break down the language category to as small as groups as possible would be helpful. Birmingham is a city with a significant proportion of residents who were born abroad and speak English as a second language. Having this data set is essential to gain an understanding around what English language support is needed and where, and also what languages the city council need to provide translation services for.”</i></p> <p>Organisations such as the National Association of British Arabs also showed how they use the data to target services to support small populations:</p>

Criterion	Score	Evidence
		<p><i>“We are collecting information on the numbers of the Arab population in the UK where Arabic remains the primary language, and how this percentage falls within subsequent generations as an illustration of assimilation into the indigenous population. In terms of culture this information will also affect who we target for cultural events...”</i></p>
Alternative sources	10	<p>Some respondents mentioned alternative sources such as the School Census. However, these do not offer the level of coverage or detail required so are not adequate. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames said that:</p> <p><i>“The only other sources would be our Admin data and School Census data could provide some information on the languages used in the wider community but not really anything on the proficiency of adults in the community. We would lose a true picture of the make up of our community if we were to only have access to the School Census data. Using this data only could lead us to be less successful with resource allocation (such as ESOL) or gaining grants (e.g the £240,000 European Integration Fund grant).”</i></p> <p>Respondents also stated that the School Census is becoming less useful for collecting data on children’s language use. The London Borough of Hackney commented that:</p> <p><i>“Some limited information is available from the School Census which may give a sense of language spoken in families, but this data is increasingly difficult to obtain from schools due to the larger numbers of academies who are not required to provide data to the local education authority.”</i></p>
Multivariate analysis	8	<p>Cross-tabulation of the data is carried out by respondents with a wide-range of topics including age and sex. Uses include local authorities understanding the needs of minority groups. For example, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council said that:</p> <p><i>“In conjunction with other demographic factors such as ethnicity, religion, age and gender, this information helps to gain a broader picture of the diverse cultural communication needs of minority ethnic communities and other vulnerable groups.”</i></p> <p>Birmingham City Council showed that they use data on language with information on age:</p> <p><i>“We use this topic with many other areas to understand what languages are needed for what services – for example predominately older populations that need English language support? Or young populations. By combining with other datasets, we can also get an idea on what services people who do no speak English access or need.”</i></p> <p>The data are also used by commercial organisations. Sainsbury’s stated that:</p> <p><i>“We would use language with ethnicity and various other census data to build a total picture of store demographics.”</i></p>

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Comparability beyond England and Wales	7	<p>Some local authority respondents said that they make comparisons with other areas. For example, Essex County Council said that:</p> <p><i>“The census provides consistency across the UK enabling comparability and benchmarking against other areas: similar authorities, regionally and nationally to enable analysis for planning, policy and research.”</i></p> <p>Organisations with remits beyond England and Wales also stated a requirement to make comparisons. The National Association of British Arabs commented that:</p> <p><i>“We do need to make comparisons across the UK and within areas of population clusters for the purpose of policy development and to assist government and non-governmental bodies in public services. We are involved in UK wide policy as the only organisation collecting and collating information on the Arab population in total.”</i></p> <p>UK data are also used by Sainsbury’s to understand which stores have different customers in relation to characteristics including language. The ppre Community Interest Company commented that they use the data to assess how devolved administrations, local authorities, NHS and businesses deal with linguistic diversity.</p>
Continuity with previous censuses	8	<p>Although this question was first introduced in 2011, local authorities expressed an interest in making comparisons over time. Kent County Council said that:</p> <p><i>“Questions on language were asked for the first time in 2011. We are looking forward to seeing the differences in 2021.”</i></p> <p>Manchester City Council showed that they would wish to draw comparisons over time to monitor the integration of immigrants into the community:</p> <p><i>“Not asked in 2001 Census so not been compared to any censuses but would have been used to determine change using language as a proxy for immigrants integrating.”</i></p> <p>Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council stated that they need to look at change over time to help forecast future needs for service provision:</p> <p><i>“Information over time to understand the detail of international migration patterns enables us to plan for future needs for interpretation and translation services or for the support some sections of the community will need. This has informed our approach to developing services to support schools to meet the needs of children with English as an additional language- recognising where the increased need will be over the foreseeable future.”</i></p>
Weighted Overall Score	83	High user need

4.5 Other considerations - main languages used

Table 7 ONS assessment of impact by criterion

Criterion	Operational impact	Justification
Impact on data quality	Low	The response rate for this question (97.5%) was good, as was the agreement rate between the 2011 Census and the 2011 Census Quality Survey (96.3%).
Impact on public acceptability	Low	There were no public acceptability concerns associated with collecting information on this sub-topic.
Impact on respondent burden	Medium	Previous questionnaire testing found that some non-UK born respondents were uncertain whether the question was asking about the language they first learnt or the language they most frequently spoke. They were also sometimes unclear about how to answer the question for babies and young children whose language abilities were still developing. The relatively high demand for online help for this question indicated that some online respondents had difficulty interpreting the question.
Impact on financial concerns	Low	There were some manual coding costs associated with the write-in text response option but no other concerns.
Impact on questionnaire mode	Low	This question displayed well online and on the paper questionnaire.

4.6 Operational requirements - main languages used

Minimum operational requirement

This topic question routed respondents whose main language was not English (or English or Welsh in Wales), to the English language proficiency question, but is not used for any other census operational purpose.

4.7 User requirements - English language proficiency

Table 8 User requirement score by criterion

Criterion	Score	Evidence
Weighted Overall Score	83	High user need
Purpose	7	<p>Data on English language proficiency are used by local authorities to target language support services where they are needed within their communities. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames stated that:</p> <p><i>“Kingston part-funds an organisation that targets low English proficiency in the community. Learn English At Home (LEAH) aims to promote migrants’ integration into the local community through language tuition. We provide LEAH with maps on English proficiency to help them target their resources effectively. We provide areas that need targeting at an LSOA level. They have been granted 18K for three years of work. LEAH have been good at helping people access council information and access health services (eg GP Surgeries)...”</i></p> <p>The data are also used by councils to support bids for funding from central government. Bristol City Council commented that:</p> <p><i>“The Department for Communities and Local Government launched a competition to discover, and support, organisations than can deliver community-based English language programmes. The competition was used to discover innovative ways of delivering community-based English language programmes that will help to integrate their participants into their local communities. The size of the total funding pot was up to a maximum of £6m. Bristol City Council bid for this funding based on 2011 Census data on language proficiency and new migrants.”</i></p> <p>Tower Hamlets Council added to this justification by stating that:</p> <p><i>“The council uses language data in many areas of its work. Examples include: needs assessments, commissioning of services (eg translation and interpretation services), grants allocation and policy development. Importantly, the data help build evidence about the type of barriers that people with poor language proficiency face across the borough and inform targeting of services and interventions to tackle these issues.”</i></p>
Small geographies or populations	10	<p>Local authorities require the data below local authority level to identify where to target language support services. Tower Hamlets Council stated that:</p> <p><i>“To support residents with language needs, and to deliver services effectively, the council needs to understand who lives where. Localised data allows the council to identify where particular populations are concentrated and to profile their respective needs and characteristics. These data in turn inform the appropriate targeting, design and delivery of particular services to support those with language needs.”</i></p>

Criterion	Score	Evidence
		<p>The data are also used by local councils to measure the demand for translation services and to support bids for funding. The Home Office (HO) stated that:</p> <p><i>“As part of the pre-application process, the HO directs bidders to local level census data to support their bids and help demonstrate their need for funding (for example, by evidencing a high number of newly arrived non-EU migrants with poor English proficiency) enabling informed and impactful allocation of funding.”</i></p> <p>Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council said that:</p> <p><i>“This information enables identification of communication needs of specific population groups in local areas, so that resources can be targeted where language support is required most...”</i></p> <p>The 2011 Census found that 1.6% (863,150) of all usual residents aged 3 and above in England and Wales, said that they cannot speak English well or cannot speak English at all. Therefore, to identify these small population groups, data at output area level is required.</p>
Alternative sources	10	<p>Whilst data users mentioned other sources of language data, they explained why these do not meet their needs when investigating English language proficiency. For example, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames said that:</p> <p><i>“The only other sources would be our admin data and School Census data that could provide some information on the languages used in the wider community but not really anything on the proficiency of adults in the community.”</i></p> <p>Tower Hamlets Council similarly noted:</p> <p><i>“As far as we are aware, while some surveys record language, none are able to provide reliable local authority estimates for the different languages used, nor for proficiency levels. Consequently, the census remains the only information source that can provide the level of detailed language data required.”</i></p>
Multivariate analysis	8	<p>Respondents reported using data on English language with a range of other variables. The Home Office (HO) reported this being carried out at a local level:</p> <p><i>“Level of English language ability has allowed analysis of how English language ability relates to socio-economic status, income, employment, qualifications, deprivation, housing etc on a local basis. English language ability has been shown to be one of the key aspects effecting integration and the data shows which areas have a greater need for ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) provision, and where demand for the ESOL route to citizenship may be highest.”</i></p> <p>Comments from Shropshire Council also showed how the data are used with information on age:</p> <p><i>“Language proficiency by age is a useful indicator to have access to, as is proficiency by gender, as it helps to identify within the local authority area who may need more language resources and support.”</i></p>

Criterion	Score	Evidence
		<p>The data are also used in multivariate analysis to support needs assessments. Tower Hamlets Council stated that:</p> <p><i>“The 2011 Census is currently the only data source that can provide comprehensive quantitative intelligence on this population disaggregated for different groups (eg main language, ethnic group, country of birth, religion). Without information on small population groups the council’s ability to carry out needs assessments, and to commission and deliver services effectively, would be limited. Furthermore, the council would be unable to fully monitor its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.”</i></p>
<p>Comparability beyond England and Wales</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>Some local authorities reported a requirement to make UK comparisons to better understand their communities. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council said that:</p> <p><i>“...we have used this data to better understand the requirements of our local BME communities. So although Barnsley has a much lower BME population than the regional or national average, we know that their English language proficiency is similar to other parts of the country- suggesting that a greater proportion of the BME community in Barnsley are new arrivals with a greater language needs. This for example will impact on the needs of children entering school with English as an additional language.”</i></p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council stated that:</p> <p><i>“For determining need for funding and resources for non-proficiency English, data on comparability with other areas of the UK is important.”</i></p> <p>Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commented that:</p> <p><i>“DCLG’s policy responsibilities relate, in the main, to England but, in some policy areas, extend to England and Wales, or GB, or UK. Regardless, we often need to make cross-administration comparisons, eg for bench-marking purposes.”</i></p>
<p>Continuity with previous censuses</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>The question on English language proficiency was first included in the 2011 Census. Local authorities showed why they would make use of comparisons over time. For example, Tower Hamlets Council said that:</p> <p><i>“The 2011 Census was the first to collect language data, and 2021 data on language will allow us to analyse the changing language profile of the borough. Importantly, it will allow us to assess whether outcomes for those with poor language proficiency are changing over time. This type of research helps inform how effective past policies have been, and informs future policy development and priorities.”</i></p>
<p>Weighted Overall Score</p>	<p>83</p>	<p>High user need</p>

4.8 Other considerations - English language proficiency

Table 9 ONS assessment of impact by criterion

Criterion	Operational impact	Justification
Impact on data quality	Medium	Respondents, whose main language was not English in England or, English or Welsh in Wales, answered this question. The response was a self-assessment of a person's proficiency in spoken English. The response rate (96.4%) for this question was good. The agreement rate between the 2011 Census and the 2011 Census Quality Survey (CQS) could not be reliably calculated due to the small number of people sampled in the CQS whose main language was not English or English or Welsh in Wales.
Impact on public acceptability	Low	Asking for information on this sub-topic was considered to be acceptable.
Impact on respondent burden	Medium	Previous question testing indicated that some respondents found this question difficult to answer due to its subjective nature. They were also sometimes unclear about how to answer the question for babies and young children whose language abilities were still developing. The relatively high demand for online help for this question indicated that some online respondents had difficulty answering the question.
Impact on financial concerns	Low	The response to this sub-topic did not require manual coding or complex processing.
Impact on questionnaire mode	Low	This question displayed well online and on the paper questionnaire.

4.9 Operational requirements - English language proficiency

Minimum operational requirement

There is no census operational requirement to collect data on this topic.

5. Updated view

The following table gives the updated view of ONS at the sub-topic level and the justification for this.

Table 10 Updated view

Sub-topic detail	Initial view	Updated view	Justification
Welsh	Collect in Wales	Collect in Wales	The user need for the data is medium overall, however, the analysis of the consultation responses showed a high user need in Wales and low user need in England. There is a clear need for these data down to low levels of geography from a range of users, particularly in relation to fulfilling responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) (Wales) Regulations 2015. These place an obligation on government as well as organisations to uphold the Welsh language. The data are important in identifying areas of need where language education and support should be targeted.
Main languages used	Collect	Collect	There is a clear need for local authorities to use the data for resource allocation and service planning such as for education and translation services. The information is needed to low levels of geography to enable resources to be targeted where they are most required. There is also a lack of alternative sources of data about this topic.
English language proficiency	Collect where main language not English (or Welsh in Wales)	Collect	The data are collected for people who say that their main language is not English (or English or Welsh in Wales) so it provides supplementary information that enables local authorities to target language support and integration policies where most needed. Information below local authority level is needed to support this work. There is also a lack of alternative sources for information about this sub-topic.

6. Equality implications of the updated view of ONS

The Equality Act 2010 and associated public sector equality duty require public bodies to work towards eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity with regard to nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These requirements are reinforced by secondary legislation in both England and Wales⁴ as well as by the Equality Objectives published recently by the Welsh Government which seek to address the key equality challenges faced in Wales and to support progress towards the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The proposals made for the 2021 Census content will consider identified 'User requirements' for data alongside other factors such as 'Other considerations' and 'Operational requirements' specified in our evaluation criteria. In addition, it will be important to take account of the impact of any decisions that we may make on equality. Impacts can be:

- positive - actively promote equality of opportunity for one or more groups, or improve equal opportunities/relations between groups
- adverse or negative - cause disadvantage or exclusion (any such impact must be justified, eliminated, minimised or counter-balanced by other measures)
- neutral - have no notable consequences for any group

Whilst language is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, this topic can correlate to protected characteristics such as race, age and disability. Hence, inclusion of questions on main languages used and English language proficiency in 2011 was seen by users as a positive change with regard to providing appropriate services including in relation to fulfilling duties under the Equality Act.

For example, information on main languages used and English language proficiency can enable the identification of people such as ethnic minorities or particular age groups who may require language support. This enables the targeting of education and translation services so that those with protected characteristics have equal access to services. The data can also be used to support approaches to integration and community cohesion to help eliminate discrimination and ensure that people are treated fairly. Language information may also be linked to disability, such as identifying and supporting users of British Sign Language.

The main languages used question in the 2011 Census had two response options, 'English' or 'Other' in England, and 'English or Welsh' or 'Other' in Wales. Whilst there is a limitation to the number of languages that can be listed separately, the write-in option enabled respondents to record an appropriate response, thereby ensuring recognition and inclusion. These data, where disclosure control procedures allow, are included in the detailed main language outputs. This included information for over 90 languages at England and Wales geographical level down to output area. Users can additionally commission tables on specific languages. ONS plans to continue to provide an 'Other' write-in box so that all languages can be captured, allowing the potential for this information to be cross-referenced with equality data.

⁴ *The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 and The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.*

ONS has received requests to alter the response options to the main language question and these will be reviewed ahead of the 2021 Census.

The next steps for this topic, discussed below, take into account the identified equality implications. As research and stakeholder engagement continues, if further equality implications emerge, these will be considered and mitigated where necessary. Further information on the research linked to question development and testing, and stakeholder engagement will be published as required.

7. Next steps

There is a clear continuing user need for data on this topic at local authority level and below. ONS considerations criteria demonstrated that these questions generally worked well in 2011. The proposed census next steps for the language topic are:

- ONS will consider further whether there is sufficient need, balanced against the overall burden and space constraints, for additional response options within the main languages used question.
- This will inform further question development and improvements to the online guidance and the help provided to identify if this enables respondents to answer the questions more easily.

Following the development and testing stages there will be a period of evaluation and further stakeholder engagement to support the final decision regarding any changes to the question. These activities will be sufficiently progressed to provide a clear proposal for the 2021 Census questionnaire which will be included in the Census White Paper in 2018 before the questions are submitted to Parliament for approval in 2019.

Annex A: List of organisations that responded, by sector

This list includes organisations that responded to at least one consultation question, or discussed collection of data, on the ‘Language’ topic. If multiple responses were received from an organisation the name only appears once.

Government department/public body

College of Arms	National Assembly for Wales
Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)	Sport England
Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)	Welsh Government
Local Government Data Unit Wales	Welsh Language Commissioner

Local authority

Arun District Council	Devon County Council - Public Health
Aylesbury Vale District Council	Dorset County Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Bedford Borough Council	Durham County Council
Birmingham City Council	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Blaby District Council	East Sussex County Council
Blackpool Council	Essex County Council
Bournemouth Borough Council	Gateshead Council
Bristol City Council	Gedling Borough Council
Caerphilly County Borough Council	Gloucestershire County Council
Carmarthenshire County Council	Greater London Authority
Cheshire West and Chester Council	Gwynedd Council
Chesterfield Borough Council	Haringey Council
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council	Hertfordshire County Council
City of London Corporation	Horsham District Council
Cornwall Council	Kent County Council
Cumbria County Council	London Borough of Bexley
Cyngor Sir Ceredigion/Ceredigion County Council	London Borough of Camden
Derbyshire County Council	London Borough of Hackney

Local authority (continued)

London Borough of Harrow	Snowdonia National Park
London Borough of Havering	Somerset County Council
London Borough of Hounslow	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Manchester City Council	St Helens Council
Mole Valley District Council	Surrey County Council
National Parks Wales	Swansea Council
Newcastle City Council	Tameside Council
North York Moors National Park Authority	Torfaen County Borough Council
Northampton Borough Council	Tower Hamlets Council
Northumberland County Council	Uttlesford District Council
Oldham Council	Walsall Council
Oxfordshire County Council	Waltham Forest Council
Powys County Council	Warrington Borough Council
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council	Warwickshire Observatory
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Westminster City Council
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames	Wookey Parish Council
Salford City Council	Wycombe District Council
Sheffield City Council	
Shropshire Council – Intelligence and Research Team	

Health organisation

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	Public Health Wales National Health Service Trust
Hywel Dda University Health Board	

Housing

Yarlinton Housing Group

Academic/research

British Sociological Association	Economic History Society
Centre for Longitudinal Study Information and User Support (CeLSIUS)	University of York - Centre for Housing Policy

Charity and voluntary

Bewnans Kernow

Chwarae Teg

Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg/Welsh Language Society

Family and Childcare Trust

Friends, Families and Travellers

Health Deafinitions

Irish in Britain

Muslim Council of Britain

National Association of British Arabs

Older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Association (**OLGA**)

Presbyterian Church of Wales

Royal Town Planning Institute

Shelter

The Vegan Society

Commercial

CACI Ltd

First UK Bus

IAITH Cyf/Welsh Centre for Language Planning

Operational Research in Health Ltd (**ORH** Ltd)

Sainsbury's

Genealogist/family historian

Tasmanian Family History Society Inc.

Other

Emergency Planning Society -
West Midlands Branch

Golden Tree Productions

Market Research Society (**MRS**) and MRS
Census & Geodemographics Group

Mebyon Kernow - the Party for Cornwall

New Economy

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

ppre Community Interest Company

Tees Valley Unlimited

