



Further information

Estimating the number of rooms and bedrooms in the 2021 Census: An alternative approach using Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data – Consultation

Survey open: **28 June 2017 – 20 September 2017.**

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1. Introduction

We've released our [first assessment of the Valuation Office Agency \(VOA\) data](#) as a potential option for replacing the questions on number of rooms and bedrooms in the 2021 Census. We're inviting users to explore the data and take part in a [consultation](#) to tell us what impact this could have.

This follows a commitment made in the [2021 Census topic consultation](#), where we recommended it wasn't appropriate to continue asking two questions designed to meet a single information need.

Based on the initial analysis, it's the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) view that – with some further development – the VOA data is of sufficient statistical quality to replace one or both of the questions on number of rooms and bedrooms in the 2021 Census.

The VOA data holds information on properties including number of rooms and bedrooms for addresses across England and Wales. It includes some information about addresses that isn't currently available from the census. Moving to VOA as a data source for housing characteristics would allow us to produce more frequent and timely estimates.

As with many administrative data sources, there is definitional, coverage, timing and data collection differences between the 2011 Census and VOA data. It's important for users to be aware of these differences when considering the impact of this change.

We're asking you to take part in the [estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation](#) so we can understand the impact this could have on your work. In the report there are summary tables and a local authority and output area analysis tool for you to explore and see what this means for you. By helping us to understand the impact on your work, you will further our ability to meet your need.

We'll evaluate your responses based on the strength of impact (positive, negative or none) on your work. These will be balanced against the benefits of having this information available more frequently with new housing characteristic variables and reducing respondent burden in the 2021 Census.

For transparency, the criteria against which the stakeholder responses will be evaluated is presented in the '[Evaluation criteria: Estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation](#)' section below. This will give you a clear view of how your responses will be evaluated in relation to using VOA data as an alternative to estimating number of rooms and bedrooms. Responses will also be moderated and details of this moderation policy can be found in the '[Moderation policy: Estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation](#)' section below.

The 2021 Census: Estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation

1.1 Responding to the consultation

You can either respond to the consultation [online](#) or fill in the consultation [here](#) and email it to 2021census.consultation@ons.gov.uk. Please use the subject line 'Estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation'.

There are some essential questions you'll need to complete so we can include your responses in our analysis.

Your answers will be considered stronger if you:

- give specific examples of the potential impacts on your work (If you refer to a specific policy or scheme, please provide a direct reference to it and include links to supporting documentation where appropriate)
- take into account the considerations that form part of the evaluation process (see section 4 or '[Estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation](#)' for more details)

Responses to the estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation are invited until midnight **20 September 2017**.

For transparency in our decision making process, responses to this survey will be made public. This will include the name of the responding organisation or individual. However, we'll ask you to confirm you agree for your name to be published. We won't publish personal contact details. Please be aware that any information provided in response to this survey could be made publicly available if requested under a Freedom of Information request.

2. 2021 Census design context

In March 2014, the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority made a recommendation on the census and the future provision of population statistics in England and Wales. This recommended an increased use of administrative data and surveys in order to enhance the statistics from the 2021 Census and improve annual statistics between censuses.

The government responded to the consultation in July 2014, welcoming the recommendation for further use of administrative and survey data. The government stated that:

'Our ambition is that censuses after 2021 will be conducted using other sources of data and providing more timely statistical information.'

3. Collecting number of rooms in the census

Information on number of rooms has been collected since the 1891 Census and information on number of bedrooms was introduced in 2011. Information on the number of rooms and bedrooms allows local and central government to:

- assess changes in overcrowding
- assess the number of households living in unsuitable accommodation
- tackle deprivation
- develop appropriate housing policies
- plan future housing provision
- allocate resources

4. Evaluation criteria

The estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation will provide evidence that will be used to assess and put forward a recommendation to use Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data to estimate number of rooms and bedrooms for the 2021 Census. This is unless the consultation provides significant evidence that this could have a negative impact on users of this data.

We'll evaluate responses based on the strength of impact (positive, negative or none) on stakeholder's work. The areas of work that will be considered are:

- size of population affected
- policy development and monitoring
- service planning and delivery
- research

The stakeholder consultation is part of the work we're doing to assess the move to VOA data to estimate number of rooms and bedrooms. In addition to evidence provided in this consultation, when making a recommendation we'll evaluate against:

- user need
- continuity with previous censuses
- data quality
- respondent burden

We'll only evaluate evidence provided in responses to this consultation. We value your input and thank you for your contribution.

5. Moderation policy

In the interests of transparency, we'll publish all responses to the consultation.

This gives you the opportunity to post a response that will remain publicly visible on the ONS website. We'll therefore moderate responses to ensure they're appropriate and not harmful to others. We moderate in accordance with the terms below.

Responses which include any of the following may be deleted. These include:

- threats or incitements to violence
- use of obscenity
- duplicative or substantially duplicative postings by the same person or entity
- postings seeking employment or containing advertisements for a commercial product or service
- information posted in violation of law, including libel, condoning or encouraging illegal activity, revealing classified information, or infringing on a copyright or trademark

Moderators reserve the right to remove responses that don't address some aspect of that purpose. We value your time and input, and our desire is to remove as few responses as possible while ensuring that a focused, constructive survey takes place.

This moderation policy is subject to change to address additional matters as necessary. If you have a complaint about an item of user-generated content, or feel that your own content was removed in error, please contact us.

6. Conclusion

Your response to the estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation will help us evaluate the impact of using Valuation Office Agency data to estimate number of rooms in the 2021 Census. We value your input and thank you for taking part.

Annex A Glossary

| Term | Description |
|---|---|
| Administrative data | Administrative data refers to information collected primarily for administrative (not research) purposes. This type of data is collected by government departments and other organisations for the purposes of registration, transaction and record keeping, usually during the delivery of a service. |
| Consultation | Public consultation , or simply consultation , is a regulatory process by which the public's input on matters affecting them is sought. Its main goals are in improving the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in large-scale projects or laws and policies. |
| Household | For the 2011 Census a household was defined as: one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area. |
| Number of rooms | This is the number of rooms in a household's accommodation (see annex C). |
| Number of bedrooms | This is the number of bedrooms in a household's accommodation (see annex C). |
| Respondent burden | Respondent burden could, for example, result from lengthy instruction or explanation, large numbers of response categories, or large numbers of questions on a single topic. |
| Unique property reference number (UPRN) | Unique property reference number (UPRN) is a unique alphanumeric identifier for every spatial address in Great Britain and can be found in Ordnance Survey's address products. It provides a comprehensive, complete, consistent identifier throughout a property's lifecycle - from planning permission through to demolition. |
| Variable | A variable refers to a particular characteristic of a person or household. The variable is assigned one of a set of values which will be either a numerical measure or a category from a classification. For example the age variable records a numerical age value for a person, and the accommodation type variable records a category of house, flat or apartment, mobile structure etc for a household. |
| Valuation Office Agency | An executive agency sponsored by HM Revenue & Customs. It provides valuations and property advice to support taxation and benefits to the government and local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. |

Annex B References

1. 2021 Census: Initial view on content for England and Wales
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/the2021censusinitialviewonthecontentforenglandandwales.pdf>
2. 2021 Census: Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England and Wales – Response to consultation
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementsoncontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation.pdf>
3. 2021 Census: Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England and Wales – Housing topic report
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/topicreport12housing.pdf>

Annex C 2011 Census number of rooms and number of bedrooms questions

H1 – Household questionnaire in England (left)

H2 – Household questionnaire in English for Wales (middle)

H2W – Household questionnaire in Welsh (right)

Household Questionnaire
England
Office for National Statistics

H9 How many rooms are available for use only by this household?

Do NOT count:

- bathrooms
- toilets
- halls or landings
- rooms that can only be used for storage such as cupboards

Count all other rooms, for example:

- kitchens
- living rooms
- utility rooms
- bedrooms
- studies
- conservatories

If two rooms have been converted into one, count them as one room

Number of rooms

H10 How many of these rooms are bedrooms?

Include all rooms built or converted for use as bedrooms, even if they are not currently used as bedrooms

Number of bedrooms

Household Questionnaire
Wales
Office for National Statistics
Swyddfa Ystadegol Gwladol

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Number of bedrooms

Holiadur y Cartref
Cymru
Office for National Statistics
Swyddfa Ystadegol Gwladol

H9 Sawl ystafell sydd yn y cartref hwn at ddefnydd aelodau o'r cartref hwn yn unig?

PEIDIWCH â chyfrif:

- ystafelloedd ymolchi
- toiledau
- cynteddau neu landins
- ystafelloedd sydd ddim ond yn gallu cael eu defnyddio ar gyfer storio, fel cypyrddau

Cofiwch gyfrif pob ystafell arall, er enghraifft:

- ceginau
- ystafelloedd byw
- ystafelloedd iwtliti
- ystafelloedd gwely
- stydis
- ystafelloedd gwyr

Os bydd dwy ystafell wedi'u cyfuno i fod yn un, cyfrifwch nhw yn un ystafell

Nifer yr ystafelloedd

H10 Faint o'r ystafelloedd hyn sy'n ystafelloedd gwely?

Dylech gynnwys pob ystafell a gafodd ei hadeiladu neu ei throï i'w defnyddio fel ystafell wely, hyd yn oed os nad yw'n cael ei defnyddio fel ystafell wely ar hyn o bryd

Nifer yr ystafelloedd gwely



Contact us

Email: 2021census.consultation@ons.gov.uk. Please use the subject line 'Estimating rooms and bedrooms consultation'.