

This document gives more detailed information concerning the 2001 Census, including the questions that were asked and what the census is used for.

About the 2001 Census

The census is a survey of all people and households in the UK and is carried out every ten years. It provides data both on numbers of people and their socio-economic conditions.

The Census covers everyone at the same time and asks the same questions everywhere, so making it easier to compare different parts of the country. It has the largest sample size of any data source and is the only survey that provides a detailed picture of the entire population. Data is available for the smallest geographical areas of any large data source – now called Output Areas.

The Census, together with other data sources, is used to plan the funding of public services and in research to determine demographic and social trends.

The last Census was held on Sunday 29 April 2001 and was carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). You can download a sample 2001 Census form [here](#).

Census questions asked in 2001

Household members and their relationships

- Sex
- Date of birth
- Marital status
- Address one year ago
- Country of birth
- Ethnic group
- Religion (voluntary)
- Long-term limiting illness
- General health
- Provision of care
- Academic and vocational qualifications
- Professional qualifications
- Economic activity

- Time since last employment
- Employment status (employed or self-employed)
- Size of workforce and place of work
- Occupation
- Supervisor status
- Industry
- Hours usually worked
- Name and address of employer
- Method of travel to work

Household accommodation

- Type of accommodation
- Whether accommodation is self-contained
- Number of rooms
- Whether have sole use of bath/shower or toilet
- Lowest level of accommodation
- Central heating
- Access to cars or vans
- Ownership of accommodation and type of landlord

You can view a sample questionnaire here.

Factors influencing a successful Census:

- In Lambeth there was a response rate of just under 80% (average for London), and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) consider that of this data, 95% is accurate to +/-3%.
- There are people the Census may have missed. For example, young men are less likely to fill in a Census form and other people; people from overseas temporarily in this country may not consider themselves as 'usually resident' in the country, and may be undercounted. Some people prefer not to appear on any official register and so avoid the Census for that reason.
- High levels of mobility and migration (e.g. asylum seekers, whether legal or illegal) make a complete count (or enumeration) of the population more difficult.

- Language barriers may make completing the Census form more difficult.
- False or incomplete data.
- Ethnic categories change. There were 10 categories in 1991, which were expanded to 16 in 2001. Ethnicity is also difficult to define, being partly based on physical attributes like skin colour, and partly on non-physical aspects like language and culture. The category a person identifies with may also change. Children too young to identify themselves are classified by their parents' ethnicity, and thus their recorded ethnicity may change as they get older.

Although the Census is one of the largest and most comprehensive sources of socio-economic information, it does not cover everything:

- There is no information on crime, although industry, occupation and social grade are included;
- There is no information on crime or on housing condition e.g. housing decency or fitness

Comparison with the 1991 Census

There were considerable changes to the questions in the 2001 Census, which makes comparison with the 1991 Census not always possible. The biggest change was the increase of ethnic categories from 10 to 16 groups. Within this, the most significant changes were in the redefinition of Industry and Socio-Economic groups, which again makes comparison difficult.