Census 2021 FAQ’s

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**What is the census?**

The census is a survey that is to be completed by every person in the country every 10 years.

**When is census day?**

Sunday 21st March.

**Why is the census important?**

The census is the gold-standard for information about society – who lives where, the types of work carried out, backgrounds and how residents identify themselves. The data collected informs where billions of pounds are spent on services like roads, schools and hospitals. It also helps central and local government, health authorities, and many other voluntary and charitable organisations to target their resources more effectively and get funding.

There is no greater source of information to identify current needs and plan for the future to ensure communities get the services they need. Census material is also hugely important for those researching their ancestry and this census will assist future generations to learn about how people lived in the 21st century.

**Why is the census beneficial for Slough specifically?**

For Slough, the census is an important opportunity to ensure an accurate estimate of the population, as well as the needs of Slough residents. This helps to determine how much money comes to the area from central government and how services such as schools and hospitals are planned.

The census will ask questions about who Slough residents are and how they live and develop a picture of what is required in the future.

**Does the council conduct the census?**

No. Census 2021 is an apolitical survey, accountable to parliament only. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) asks councils to inform residents of their obligation to fill in the survey.

**When and where did the census originate?**

The census has its roots in the ancient world, with the Ancient Babylonians in 4,000 BCE using a census to determine how much food they needed to source for each member of their population. In Britain, the earliest census was the Domesday Book commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1086. Since the first modern census in 1841, each survey has changed to reflect technological changes in the intervening years from paper and pencil to this watershed moment – the first ever digital-first census.

**How is the census being completed this year?**

Census 2021 will be the first digital-first survey where the majority of people will fill in the form online. Every household will be sent a letter with a unique code to be inputted into the census 2021 website on Sunday 21st March. However, a printed version can be requested if it is required.

**What is the target online return rate for this year?**

This year the target set by the ONS is over 75%. In 2011, just 16% of respondents completed the census online.

**What if someone is having trouble getting online to complete the census?**

Some households, identified by the government as unlikely to be able to fill it out online, will be sent a paper census automatically.

However, if an individual does not automatically receive this and is not confident online or does not have a computer, smartphone or tablet, they can go to a local Census Support Centre where help will be offered. Personal laptops, smartphones or tablets can be brought along and devices will also be available at the centre.

**Where is Slough’s Census Support Centre?**

The Pakistani Welfare Association located in Chalvey will operate as Slough’s census support centre.

**Who should fill in the census?**

The householder should fill in the census for the household. This is the person who owns or rents the property, or the person who is responsible for paying household bills and expenses.

The householder will have to answer a few questions about their household before moving on to questions about each individual. Anyone living in the household can fill in these questions on their own if they want to.

In addition, anyone included in a household who wants to keep their information private can complete an individual questionnaire. They can request an individual access code online or through the contact centre.

**How long does the census take to fill in?**

It takes around10 minutes per member of your household to fill in.

### What if a resident cannot fill in their census questionnaire online?

### There will be a wide range of support services available for residents including guidance and support in many languages and formats, help over the phone, in a web chat or on social media, a paper version of the questionnaire if preferred and accessible census guidance (e.g. in braille).

**Can I fill in the census for someone else who needs help?**

Yes. The person you are helping will have a letter or a paper questionnaire, both contain an access code, so you can complete online even if they have a paper version. If possible, read the questions aloud to them and complete the questionnaire with the answers they give you.

If you’re this person’s carer or you have lasting power of attorney, you have a responsibility to act in their best interest under the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The ONS consider it to be in the individual’s best interests for you to complete the census for them if they cannot do it for themselves.

**What happens if someone does not fill in the census?**

This is a compulsory survey to be completed by people living in the country on that day. Residents who do not fill in the questionnaire will be followed up by the ONS reminding them of their responsibility and they could be prosecuted and fined up to £1,000 for not taking part.

**What kind of questions does the census ask?**

The census asks questions about individuals, their household, homes, employment, and religious beliefs.

### What if someone does not identify with the census options?

### The census asks about an individual’s ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion and national identity and it is up to the individual to decide how to answer each question. They are free to do it in the way that they feel best represents them.

**What languages will the census be available in?**

The paper copy of the census will only be available in English and Welsh. However, the following languages will be supported by the census call support line from 1st March:

Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cantonese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Guajarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malayalam, Mandarin, Nepali, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Potwari, Punjabi (Gurmukhi), Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yiddish, Welsh

Residents can request a translation booklet to help complete the census, or will be able to book an appointment to complete the form over the phone, if no one is available:

**Will someone visit my home during census 2021?**

The ONS field employees may visit residents who have not filled it in as a reminder to complete the survey or to offer assistance after census day but they will never need to enter anyone’s home. All contacts with the public will be socially distanced and field staff will be equipped with PPE in line with government guidance.

### Could information shared in the census affect benefits or immigration status?

### No. The ONS is independent from the government so Census data cannot be used by the government or police for regulatory, immigration or prosecution reasons.

**Will my information be stored or available?**

All information is anonymised and the actual census records are kept secure for 100 years. The information will be statistically analysed and the results published 2 years later, but no individual can be identified from the responses.

**How do we know data collected by the census is safe?**

The census has a proud 200-year history of keeping this personal information safe. The ONS also has a strict security regime that follows government standards. This includes physical and IT security measures to protect your data, covering people, processes and technology.

**How do you plan to deal with the challenges posed by Covid-19?**

The ONS will be following the government’s safety guidelines about Covid-19 throughout the census period. There are teams across England and Wales dedicated to ensuring everyone can participate and the decision to make this year’s census the first digital-first survey and provide ongoing support, all residents should still be able to complete the census.

For any further info, visit: [https://census.gov.uk](https://census.gov.uk/)