

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
Office for Statistics Regulation
[by email]

29 July 2021

Dear Ed,

Review of Population Estimates and Projections

Thank you for your review of ONS Population Estimates and Projections. I am grateful for the work of your team in reviewing our population statistics. As always, this was a thorough review and will help us to improve our statistics. I appreciate that you have recognised that while our approach is generally fit for purpose and highly regarded internationally, there are some areas for improvement.

ONS is committed to addressing the OSR recommendations and has detailed how we plan to do this in our publication 'Future plans for research on population estimates and projections'. We will deliver several parallel streams of work over the coming months:

Improving methods

ONS will undertake further research on cities with large student populations through completing detailed case studies using a wide range of data sources. We will seek to integrate local insights and knowledge, update on the progression of the work and communicate findings. Alongside this we will seek user feedback on how we can best deliver a more flexible, timely and responsive approach to methodological change.

Enhancing communication

We will continue to publish regular updates on our transformation of population and migration statistics (to put administrative data at the core of what we do), using our Transformation Overview page on the ONS website. Through spring and summer 2021 we have been open about our work producing migration statistics using administrative data supported by statistical modelling. We will continue to update users as we move forwards. We will provide further guidance on interpreting levels of uncertainty in our population estimates and projections. As Census 2021 data becomes available, we will use this in reconciliation and rebasing of our mid-year population estimates and as a new base for our projections, communicating the outcomes of this work.

Active engagement

Feedback on our statistics is of the utmost importance to us. We will continue to engage regularly with our users to fully understand who is using our data and for what purposes. We will do more to inform users of how they can share their views on the data and methods we use. We are always looking to develop new opportunities to engage and involve users of our statistics and will also continue our ongoing engagement with users at relevant conferences, events and groups.

We will report back to you on a quarterly basis starting in October 2021, outlining our progress, as well as continuing to keep our users regularly informed throughout this process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Athow', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jonathan Athow

Deputy National Statistician and Director General, Economic Statistics
Office for National Statistics