
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Jen Woolford
Director of Population Statistics
Office for National Statistics (ONS)
(by email)

24 April 2023

Dear Jen

Statistics on Gender Identity based on the 2021 England and Wales Census data

The Office for Statistics Regulation has been monitoring public discourse about statistics on sex and gender for some time. The gender identity question was asked for the first time in the 2021 Census and is the current [Government Statistical Service harmonised standard](#) for collecting data on gender identity.

The first release of statistics on gender identity based on Census data was in January 2023. This led to some concerns being raised with us regarding the correlation of gender identity with other characteristics, as well as the level of methodological information published on how the gender identity question has been processed.

We welcome the release of further data tables combining gender identity with other variables on 4 April that allow users to explore the data in more detail. A link to the sexual orientation and gender identity quality information is provided in the summary of each table to aid understanding of the data. This information was updated on 17 April to include greater signposting to information on data collection and processing, to further support appropriate use and interpretation of the data.

We note an additional [data table for gender identity by proficiency in English](#) was released and signposted in the [Latest Census 2021 Products blog](#), as well as being shared with those who had enquired about the data. By publishing this breakdown, ONS has responded directly to interest in this topic, and we encourage it to consider ways to allow greater accessibility of this information through ONS' search bar to increase awareness of this information.

The publication of these data received some media attention which largely reflected the concerns raised with us. In response to this, ONS published a [statement on gender identity in Census 2021](#) on 14 April, summarising the process taken to develop and test the Census question on gender identity, and to highlight that it is undertaking more work to understand if individual responses were affected by different interpretations of the question. The statement confirms ONS' intention to publish more research on this topic in the next two months.

Given the continued interest in these data, we have decided to undertake a short review of statistics on gender identity based on data collected as part of the 2021 England and Wales Census. The scope of our review will be formed around the principles within the Code of Practice for Statistics and will consider ONS' approach to responding to questions raised by users about the results of the data. It will not consider gender identity as a concept or the decision to collect data on gender identity.

We hope the review will inform and support ONS' plans to publish additional analysis and research of the Census gender identity question, as set out in its statement.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation