

Census 2021 myth buster – 11 things you think you know about the census but you're wrong

Census 2021 is over – I've missed Census Day so I don't have to do it

Wrong! Every household is required by law to complete the census and even though Census Day – 21 March 2021 – has been and gone, it is not too late to complete a questionnaire. We have had a great response to Census 2021 so far, but everyone needs to respond as soon as possible to avoid a fine.

Students don't count in the census

Students are vitally important and do count! All students need to be included in the census, and they should complete a form for their usual term-time address even if they weren't there on census day. If they're currently living at their home address, they will need to be included in the census for that household too. If you're an international student and not currently in England or Wales, but would normally be, we also want to count you. All universities and colleges have details of how to get a census form. Or go to census.gov.uk and request an access code.

You only count yourself at the house you were in on Census Day

Everyone needs to complete a return at their usual address, even if they weren't there on Census Day, as local services will still be required at both addresses. If the pandemic has changed where you are currently living, for example if you moved out of a city to a rural or holiday home prior to lockdown restrictions, or you haven't visited your city commuter flat because of lockdown, you still need to complete a census form at both addresses. Visit census.gov.uk to request an access code for your second address.

You don't need to complete a return for an empty house

It is important that we have a census return for all houses, even if nobody usually lives there – for example holiday homes and caravans - because it's a census of housing as well as a census of population. Local councils need to know about all houses in their area so they can plan services and work out how many new houses need to be built. Visit census.gov.uk to request an access code if you own an empty house, flat or caravan.

I'm not a British citizen, so I don't have to be counted

Everyone staying in England and Wales on Census Day, March 21, has to be counted.

My information will be shared

That's not the case. Personal census data is kept under lock and key for 100 years. No individual or their responses can be identified in the statistics we publish. In fact, your personal information can't be seen by anyone who makes decisions about you.

It cannot be used by government to influence benefit claims, a residency application, immigration status or taxes, or by landlords or any other private organisation.

The census is pointless. It doesn't help me.

The census benefits us all by underpinning all the services every single one of us relies on. It provides information on our living arrangements, health, education and the jobs we do and the information from it will help inform policy at a local and national level for years to come. From school places to the planning of bike lanes – census information is even used when deciding where to build new supermarkets, what food to put on the shelves and how many parent and toddler spaces to put in the car park.

If you can't get online, you can't do the census

This is the very first time we are asking everyone to respond online if they can and we've had a terrific response. If you know someone who doesn't have the skills or confidence to do it online, help is at hand. We have census support centres across England and Wales, offering telephone and face to face support visit, <https://census.gov.uk/help/find-a-census-support-centre> to find a centre near you. You can also call our contact centre. Call 0800 141 2021 in England and 0800 169 2021 in Wales for help or to order a paper questionnaire.

Census officers will ask for personal information

A field officer will only ask for a householder's name and phone number if they request a new online code. They will also ask for the householder's name if they request a paper questionnaire.

However, they will never ask to see personal documents like passports or birth certificates. Field officers will never ask for payment and they will not enter your home.

Census officers will fine you on the doorstep

Do not be scammed. Census field officers will never ask for a payment on the doorstep. The role of field officers is to give help and encouragement to those who have not yet filled in their census questionnaire online or on paper after Census Day and direct them to the support services they need. They will be operating in the same way as a postal or food delivery visit. They also carry ID to show they are genuinely working on the census.

We will continue to support people to respond to the census but if a household refuses to fill out a questionnaire we will ultimately proceed to an interview under caution, which may be followed by a court summons, a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record.

I've got to pay a fine online for making a mistake on my census

Do not be scammed. For a fine to be imposed your case must go to court for non-completion of the census. You will never be issued with a fine by text message, on social media or by email. Our Cyber Intelligence team is scouring the web for phishing sites and taking them down. If you find a site that looks suspicious or receive text messages with links to sites asking for money related to the census, do not engage with them. Report them to the Census 2021 Contact Centre by ringing 0800 141 2021 in England and 0800 169 2021 in Wales.

To arrange broadcast or print interviews, please contact Media Relations on **0845 604 1858** or **0203 684 5070** or email Media.Relations@ons.gov.uk