

Article

Receiving user insights on local population levels and change, England and Wales: August 2022

Allows users of local population statistics to provide information to us, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), regarding data and insight about population estimates in their local area.

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1 . Overview for providing feedback on population estimates

Ensuring that statistics are accurate, and representative of UK-wide populations, is vital to the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') mission to provide quality statistics for the public good. User feedback on our statistics is of great value to us, for continued development and evolution of our outputs. Following the recommendations from the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) review of population estimates and projections in May 2021, we have introduced a range of measures designed to develop population estimates. This article introduces a new way to receive user feedback on population statistics.

As part of this work, we have developed a feedback tool to allow users of local population statistics to provide information on population estimates in their local area. The feedback tool enables us to collect information about local data sources to highlight differences and provide comparisons with our population estimates. Where possible, we will use this information to provide contextual qualitative commentary regarding the relevant estimates, and to help inform our future research.

The feedback tool aims to let users suggest sources of data that provide insight into local population levels and change. It also provides a transparent and structured way for us to determine whether data are suitable for further investigation, and potential inclusion, to improve the quality of our outputs. We have included details on data requirements and feedback processing in this article, and the feedback tool, so users understand how we will use the information sent to us.

While we are not proposing to make quantitative adjustments to the mid-2021 population estimates on an area-by-area basis, decisions about evidence-based adjustments to future population estimates may be guided in part by data provided through this feedback framework.

2 . Wider context to population statistics in 2022

Our [Population statistics and sources guide](#) provides information on the different types of population estimates we have published and plan to publish in 2022 and 2023. For example, it includes information about population estimates from Census 2021, Labour Force Survey reweighting and the official mid-year population estimates. This also contains information about whether it is an official estimate of the population or the results of wider research into the development of population statistics, the periodicity and planned publication date, along with a summary of the main uses and comparability issues for the estimate.

3 . How to provide feedback on local level population estimates

If you would like to provide feedback on local level population estimates, with the aim of adding commentary to such statistics and informing future research, use the [Population estimates: contextual information feedback form](#).

Please complete the questions on the form in as much detail as you can. If you have any questions regarding this form, please contact pop.info@ons.gov.uk. To ensure that your email is correctly processed as quickly as possible, please add "Local population insight and feedback tool" to the subject line.

4 . Data quality requirements

To provide a coherent and consistent structure to assess suggested data, we have developed criteria to determine how the data will be handled. All data suggested to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for consideration must pass two criteria before they can be assessed any further. These are necessary to ensure the ONS respects legal and ethical considerations, and upholds the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics \(PDF, 419KB\)](#).

Criteria for ethics and privacy

For feedback to pass this level of criteria, there must be:

- no ethical concerns associated with the underlying data; or if there are, such concerns must be fully documented, and actions must in place to minimise identified risks
- the data, including their collection and processing procedures, must be fully compliant with all parts of the [Code of Practice principle T1](#) (honesty and integrity) and [T6](#) (data governance)
- prospective ONS use of the data must be in line with the terms and conditions of the source, including the use of data to provide feedback using this tool
- the privacy policy must be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the UK and the Data Protection Act 2018

Prospective data would fail this criterion if they were associated with significant ethical concerns, without appropriate mitigations or considerations. They would also fail if they were not compliant with all parts of principle T1 and T6 of the Code of Practice, if the source's terms and conditions prevent use of the data as required, and /or the data were not compliant with GDPR or the Data Protection Act 2018.

Criteria for transparency and accountability

To pass, the source must meet principles T4.1 and T4.5 of the Code (transparent processes and management); ensuring processes for all parts of the data journey are transparent. If metadata information is not already in the public domain, permission must be granted to place this in the public domain.

A source would fail if it does not meet T4.1 and T4.5 of the Code, or if it is not fully transparent about any data quality issues and there is no metadata available. In addition to these criteria, any data suggested will be assessed against the criteria for A1 "basic assurance" Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) requirements.

These areas of best practice do not represent unequivocally essential criteria for usable data, as the appropriateness of data quality assurance processes are in relation to the context and content of the data collected. The ONS assessors will balance both the insights in the data, and the data quality, to make their usability assessment.

Areas of best practice associated with data quality

- Awareness of operational context and administrative data collection.
- Communication and partnership with data suppliers.
- Quality assurance principles, standards and checks by data supplier.
- Producers' quality assurance investigations and documentation.

Providing evidence of any of these practices will help our assessment of the data.

For further information regarding these practices, please see the [UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Toolkit \(PDF, 244KB\)](#).

Questions in the feedback form reflect the information needed to make informed judgement on the feasibility of use of the suggested data source. If information is not received, or does not contain sufficient detail, we may be in touch via email.

The judgment about the suitability of the administrative data for use in producing official statistics will be pragmatic and proportionate. It will consider how statistical quality of the data sources suggested may affect the quality of statistics about the population, and the public interest served by the statistics.

Any other information

As part of the feedback form, we have also included questions about the form and processes, so that you can provide feedback to help us improve. Please use the section titled "Improving this process" in the feedback form to provide us with any suggestions you have. The ONS aims to ensure that the process of supplying information is both accessible and efficient, so will highly value any feedback provided.

5 . Steps ONS will take after we receive your feedback

Step 1: receipt of information or data

After we receive your completed form, you will receive an acknowledgement email. Any information we receive through the form will pass through an initial sift to ensure that necessary information has been included for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to make an informed decision regarding the potential use of the data source.

After this initial sift, you will be informed by email of the outcome. If the ONS cannot progress your information at this stage, we will give you feedback on why, and give you the chance to provide further information, or amend and resubmit.

Step 2: data quality, ethics, and privacy assessment of information or data

If essential usability requirements are met, the information will then be assessed against criteria for data quality, ethics and privacy as outlined in the [Data quality requirements section](#) in this article. You will be informed by email of the result of this assessment. You may be contacted at this stage for additional information.

Step 3: data acquisition

If data quality, ethics and privacy requirements are met, the ONS will look to gain access to the data source suggested, if this is not already publicly available. At this point, we will be in contact by email to undertake further usability assessment. Acquiring the data will form part of our strategic data acquisition priorities.

Step 4: assessment of usability by the ONS producers of population statistics

When we have gained access to your suggested data source, we will assess whether the data can inform our mid-year population estimates and future population statistics research and methods. You may be contacted again at this stage for additional information.

Step 5: feedback providers updated on the outcome

Once information has been assessed, all providers of feedback will be contacted with an update on the decision outcome.

The duration of this process will depend on the type of data that is suggested, and the level of assessment and review required to ascertain its potential use. We will keep you updated with any progress when this occurs.

For any other questions regarding this process or the feedback form, please contact pop.info@ons.gov.uk.

6 . Future developments

We plan to publish a short quarterly update to this article, which will contain a summary of the data sources that have been suggested and the outcome or progress of their assessment.

In addition to this feedback process, we will continue to seek out feedback from various sources, including consultations, newsletters, conferences and user forums.

7 . Related links

[Review of population estimates and projections produced by the Office for National Statistics](#)

Review | Released 10 May 2021

A summary of the Office for National Statistics review of population estimates and projections.

[UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit](#)

Document | Released February 2019

This toolkit is intended to help statistical assessors review the areas of practice for the quality assurance arrangements of administrative data used to produce official statistics, during the assessment of official statistics against the Code of Practice for possible designation as National Statistics.

[UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics](#)

Document | Revised May 2022

This Code plays an essential role in ensuring that statistics published by government command public confidence through demonstrating trustworthiness and providing high-quality statistics that enhance public value.

[How we are improving population and migration statistics](#)

Article | Released 15 November 2021

Find out more about our population and migration statistics transformation journey.

[Update on research and plans for population estimates and projections: May 2022](#)

Article | Released 26 May 2022

Outline of completed, ongoing and future work addressing recommendations in the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) review of ONS population estimates and projections.

[ONS Statistical Quality Improvement Strategy](#)

Methodology | Released 8 October 2020

Improving the quality of ONS statistics and analysis.

8 . Cite this article

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