

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 September 2023 16:05
To: [REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>;
Director for Operations <Director.for.Operations@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: Red Box Media Bullets 25 09 2023

In the news....

- “Census ‘hugely overstated’ trans population” was the headline of a Sunday Telegraph article citing unnamed ‘Whitehall sources’ who claim the ONS has “hugely overestimated” the number of transgender people, with an OSR report drawing up several “lessons learned from the way the data was handled by the ONS”. It quoted from a letter from [REDACTED] back in June saying the ONS team that carried out the quality assurance of the census data had “agreed that, with more time to look at all combinations of variables, for example looking at gender identity and ethnicity, it may have identified areas for additional probing and analysis” He also suggested there could have been better user engagement and communication of uncertainty in the data. However, the article explained, the ONS stands by its data, insisting: “The census estimates on gender identity remain the best available. They are broadly consistent with NHS data collected in the same year and other countries’ comparable data. “The new, voluntary question went through rigorous development and testing involving trans and non-trans people and, through the census rehearsal, people who did not have English as their main language, before being finalised through legislation.”
- In a ‘Digital Leaders interview’ with [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
“reveals plans to revamp migration and mobility statistics, and explore the limitless potential of AI.” He says “data can provide answers we could only have dreamed about 20 years ago”. It “can help us to understand the ways in which we can improve the lives of our fellow citizens, to improve the way they go about things, to improve the productivity of our economy, and to improve the entire well-being of our society” he goes onto explain. Responding to the question “What’s your favourite new or emerging technology?” he says “Data linkage, no question. The fact that now, you can link data very smoothly, very easily, so long as of course you’ve got something to link it with is, to me, a marvel” and adds “Technology means that we really can undertake the

statistics quite quickly to impact on policy and that means that we can be ever more relevant.”

- “Deaths were nine times higher than normal in parts of Europe during the darkest days of Covid,” says the Daily Mail as it runs a data-heavy feature on today’s international comparisons publication . “Bergamo, a city in northern Italy, recorded 156.1 deaths per 100,000 people in the week to March 20 in 2020 — 800.5 per cent higher than the average for that time of year. This means it logged Europe’s deadliest spell during the Covid crisis, according to data from the Office for National Statistics. This means it logged Europe’s deadliest spell during the Covid crisis, according to data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). For comparison, Birmingham, where deaths spiked most in the UK, saw a 239.5 per cent rise during mid-April.”

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] | Office for National Statistics

Direct [REDACTED]

Mob. [REDACTED]

Media Relations Office telephone: [REDACTED] (8:30am - 5:30pm

Weekdays).

Emergency out of hours (limited service): [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 16 October 2023 11:43
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: GI report

Hi,

We have a first draft of the proposed summary GI report (based on the initial Key Points circulated last week) here -> [Summary Report.docx](#)

At this stage, can I ask for your views particularly on:

- Whether the structure meets what you expected
- The extent to which we should add detail to the (very condensed) *Investigating respondent error* section (and whether we should reference the births linkage work)
- Whether the section on *Plan for future work* is appropriate and who can provide the plan for the Harmonisation part of the work
- Whether you are comfortable that the level of detail provided meets the OSR interim recommendations (copied below for reference)

Please tell me if you prefer to talk this through rather than comment via email.

Thanks.

[REDACTED]

OSR recommendations

- ONS should publish a statement within four weeks of this report that sets out a timeline for its research, covering what it plans to publish by when.
- ONS should make data available to understand subgroups of the reported transgender population.
- ONS should publish analysis of the agreement rates for the gender identity question in the Census and Census Quality Survey.
- As part of the ongoing development of the harmonised standard for gender identity, should the question remain the same, ONS should carry out further testing of the question.

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 23 October 2023 09:40
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: GI comparator sources

[REDACTED]

I thought it may be useful for you to know what comparator sources were considered in the GI works (first link) and the main sources used (table)

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 23 October 2023 09:11
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: GI comparator sources

Hi [REDACTED]

This doc contains all comparator sources considered as part of the GI work:
[Comparator sources on request.docx](#)

The table below shows the main sources used to compare Census estimates.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

Country	Organisation	Survey name	Sample size	Survey question	Population estimate
Canada	Statistics Canada	2021 Census	30.5 million	"What is this person's gender?" (Asks sex assigned at birth and then gender. Trans status is subsequently derived where the	0.33% (15 years old or over population)

				results are different)	
United States	Williams Institute	Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)	2.07 million	BRFSS: "Do you consider yourself to be transgender?" YRBSS: "Some people describe themselves as transgender when their sex at birth does not match the way they think or feel about their gender. Are you transgender?"	0.50% (18 years old or over population)
United States	Crissman, H P, Berger, M B, Graham, L F, Dalton, V K	Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)	151,456	BRFSS: "Do you consider yourself to be transgender?"	0.53% (18 years old and over population)
United States	Meerwijk, E L and Sevelius, J M	Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), National Adult Tobacco Survey, National College Health Assessment, National Health Interview Survey, National Inmate Survey	1.85 million	These surveys used a variety of gender identity questions including "Do you consider yourself to be transgender?"; "Do you identify as transgender?"; "Are you male, female, or transgender?"; and "What is your gender?" In addition to male or female gender options, response options included "transgender" and "male-to-female," "female-to-male," and "gender-nonconforming."	0.39%

				<p>Sexual-orientation questions with transgender response options included “Which of the following best describes you?”; “Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?”; and “Do you consider yourself to be. . . ?” or “Do you think of yourself as. . . ?”</p> <p>Response options included “transgender,” “transgendered,” and “You are transgender, transsexual, or gender variant.””</p>	
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Census 2021 | Population Statistics

Office for National Statistics | Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol

 [@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons@ons.gov.uk) | www.ons.gov.uk | [@ONS](https://twitter.com/ONS)



From: [REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>

Sent: 24 October 2023 16:09

To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk>

Subject: Topical question being asked tomorrow to [REDACTED]

In its 2021 Census the ONS estimated that there are 260,000 transgender people in the UK. Does the Minister agree with the Office for Statistics Regulation that due to skewed methodology this number is likely to have been a huge overestimate?

[REDACTED]

Office for National Statistics | Private Office and Strategy Unit | 2 Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 4DF

Tel: [REDACTED] | Email:

[REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk | ROSA: [REDACTED]@ons.cg.gov.uk | www.ons.gov.uk | [@ONS](https://twitter.com/ONS)

Member of the [Policy Profession](#).

From: Parliamentary Unit <Parliamentary.Unit@ons.gov.uk>

Sent: 25 October 2023 12:18

To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: LINES FOR MINISTER FOR REVIEW: RE: Census 2021 gender identity estimates: progress and next steps

Hi all,

I wanted to come back to you as soon as I could with the exchange today at the Women and Equalities questions in the House of Commons this morning.

The exchange was as follows:

Philip Hollobone MP (Con): *“In its 2021 Census the ONS estimated that there are 260,000 transgender people in the UK. Does the Minister agree with the separate Office for Statistics Regulation that due to skewed methodology this number is likely to have been a huge overestimate?”*

Kemi Badenoch MP (Con), Minister for Women and Equalities: *“I do share the concerns the OSR has raised. Actually, in February, I asked my officials to explore with the ONS whether the census got the number right because of the lack of understanding about the question. We need to be very careful about language; people don’t often understand what we mean when we used terms like, “transgender” and “gender identity”. They’ve got to understand that. The ONS will be conducting and reporting on research to explore this issue and they should publish the results by the end of the year. We will monitor that going forward.”*

The Minister did use our updated line on by the end of the year and I don’t think I have any major concerns about the response. Let me know if any of you think otherwise.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
UK Statistics Authority | Awdurdod Ystadegau'r Deyrnas Unedig | [@UKStatsAuth](#)

[REDACTED] [@statistics.gov.uk](#)
[www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](#)

From: Parliamentary Unit <Parliamentary.Unit@ons.gov.uk>

Sent: 24 October 2023 16:21

To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; Parliamentary Unit

<Parliamentary.Unit@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>

Cc: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@Statistics.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@Statistics.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk)>

Subject: LINES FOR MINISTER FOR REVIEW: RE: Census 2021 gender identity estimates: progress and next steps

Importance: High

All,

I have managed to get the lines that they have provided to their Minister sent over from the CO Parli Unit:

The Office for Statistics Regulation recently published an interim report which investigated issues raised about gender identity data from the 2021 Census for England and Wales. The report indicated that more information about data quality and uncertainty was needed to help users understand these new statistics. It also concluded that further research is required to understand to what extent, if any, a misunderstanding of the gender identity question in the 2021 Census for England and Wales led to a misestimation of the transgender population. As I have indicated previously, I would certainly be concerned if language proficiency in some communities led to this question being misinterpreted.

In February I asked my officials to explore with ONS whether the census inflated the size of transgender population because a proportion of the population did not understand the question and answered it incorrectly. Subsequent discussion focused on ONS' plans to conduct and report on research to explore this issue; I understand that ONS had planned to publish the results in Summer 2023, but this has been postponed and the research remains ongoing.

I also contacted FCA in November 2021 regarding their consultation on changing listing rules for company boards. I impressed upon them the importance of adhering to the guidance of the National Statistician's Inclusive Data Taskforce, which states that "regularly collected characteristics such as sex, ethnic group and disability status should continue to be comprehensively and appropriately recorded, whilst ensuring reporting does not single employees out.

They have asked us to let them know whether or not we are happy with the lines as they currently stand and whether we have any comments.

I would be grateful if you would let me know ASAP [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] once we are happy I
will go back to CO.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

UK Statistics Authority | Awdurdod Ystadegau'r Deyrnas Unedig | [@UKStatsAuth](#)

[REDACTED] [@statistics.gov.uk](#)
www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 03 November 2023 16:27
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Pansexual correction tweet by [REDACTED]

Our comment runs in full at the end of the article but this is not happy reading. I don't think there is anything we can tackle in terms of inaccuracy though. They also refer to labour market issues and [REDACTED] has brought in his view there is an even greater problem with the gender identity data and wider reliability.

[REDACTED] comments seem to relate to GI as well as SO.

Pansexual population was hugely inflated in census by 'faulty coding'
Critics say the whole 2021 census is in question after it showed there were 110,000 pansexual people in Britain when there are only 48,000

[REDACTED] 3 November 2023 • 4:06pm

The 2021 census has been beset by blunders by the Office for National Statistics
CREDIT: [REDACTED]

The Office for National Statistics has corrected the census after it mistakenly inflated Britain's "pansexual" population by more than half.

The latest census in 2021 had claimed that 112,000 people in Britain identified as "pansexual", where one is attracted to people of all genders.

But this was incorrect and it has since been changed to 48,000 people.

Officials blamed the blunder on "a coding mistake", but critics said it brings the reliability of the entire census into question.

The gaffe centres on the "other sexual orientation" box which invited 165,000 open-ended responses from people who self-defined.

Initially, the ONS website reported that of those who selected "other sexual orientation, the most common write-in responses included: pansexual (112,000, 0.23 per cent), asexual (28,000, 0.06 per cent) [and] queer (15,000, 0.03 per cent). Another 10,000 (0.02 per cent) wrote in a different sexual orientation".

This has now been corrected to read: "Pansexual (48,000, 0.10 per cent), asexual (28,000, 0.06 per cent), queer (15,000, 0.03 per cent). Another 75,000 (0.15 per

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 08 November 2023 12:00
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>;
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>;
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Gender Identity media note

BBC Briefing – [REDACTED] with LGBT correspondent [REDACTED] and data team

Went well. They understand the complexities and said - This is not an exact since; first time the question has been asked, consistent with other sources, some people will say it is right/others that it is wrong.'

They do not see this as headline news and are in the process of updating their explainer article which they published this summer – particularly the section on How many transgender people are there in the UK? Not updated yet but this is the link <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-53154286> Once updated we will review for accuracy.

Guardian Briefing – [REDACTED] with Social Affairs Corr [REDACTED]

We expect his piece to ultimately be balanced – talked him through the key points and the detail of uncertainty, why we cannot quantify opposing forces of an over/under estimate. He had spoken to [REDACTED] and repeated a view (see monitoring below) that we should admit the GI question was poorly designed and 'come clean'. [REDACTED] talked through the extensive work which went into design and explained what we're doing today is being transparent, there is very much use in this data and we've spoken to users who have told us the value in it." Also pointed out there are clearly a range of views/perspectives.

Monitoring

The Mail Online has run a fair piece paraphrasing from the report – they say we have said no evidence question design or processing had an adverse effect while also adcknowledging some may have misunderstood question if English was not first language.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12724857/ONS-confidence-data-showing-262-000-trans-people-England-Wales-despite-admitting-census-question-misunderstood-poor-English-FIVE-times-likelier-state-gender-didnt-match-birth-sex.html>

We will pay attention to likely updates over the day.

There has been a helpful tweet from [REDACTED], [author of Queer Data](#) which says our 'review makes some good points. In particular, ONS argues that we can't say whether the count of trans people is an under or overestimate (as the question was voluntary)

RT/Interaction – from some helpful voices in demography, law, academia

[https://twitter.com/\[REDACTED\]/status/1722190048689353034](https://twitter.com/[REDACTED]/status/1722190048689353034)

[REDACTED] (23k followers) has tweeted disappointment that we 'have not held up our hands to acknowledge question was poorly designed - They acknowledge implausible patterns in the data, but fail to draw the obvious conclusions.'

[https://x.com/\[REDACTED\]/status/1722212422524850564?s=20](https://x.com/[REDACTED]/status/1722212422524850564?s=20)

Briefing Guardian

PQ

Briefing BBC at 09:45

[REDACTED] with press office leads speaking to LGBT correspondent [REDACTED] and two of [REDACTED] data journalism team [REDACTED]

Social affairs corr [REDACTED] timing tbc

Same offer to Independent

Stakeholder comms

Bespoke emails going out to those 20 users who engaged in research to thank them and alert them to the report. Clear offer to keep the conversation/engagement going. Prioritisation and responses prepared accordingly.

Press office to press office conversations with support groups/charities/networks to flag report with potential to nudge positive messages.

Monitoring

We will monitor media and social over the day (and beyond) and alert this group as to how we recommend responding.

We have drafted an Op Ed which we will adapt depending on coverage and begin to offer out if needed to position our message.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 September 2023 22:20
To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>
Cc: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>
Subject: Sunday Telegraph piece on gender identity
Importance: High

Hi all – the Sunday Telegraph piece we managed to knock back two weeks ago is running tomorrow. We were not approached for further comment.

Unfortunately the impetus behind its revival as the anonymous ‘Whitehall source’ quoted below

‘A Whitehall source suggested the ONS executive, led by [REDACTED] may have lost its “credibility” to accurately record sex and gender, based on its handling of the trans issue together with its separate loss of a legal challenge over the wording of the 2021 census.

The source said it was now clear the 2021 figures on gender, released in January, “hugely overestimated” the number of transgender people – a view they said was shared by multiple ministers.

Elsewhere it says:

“The inquiry’s findings are likely to exacerbate tensions between ministers and the ONS after the body admitted earlier this month it had underestimated the size of the economy by nearly 2 per cent as of the end of 2021 – meaning Britain recovered to its pre-pandemic level almost two years ago. “

Full text below

Census 'hugely overstated' trans population

Office for National Statistics may have lost its 'credibility' to accurately record sex and gender, suggests Whitehall source

[REDACTED], SUNDAY POLITICAL EDITOR 23 September 2023 • 9:05pm

The Office for National Statistics “hugely overestimated” the number of transgender people in the UK, Whitehall sources have claimed, as the body admitted it could have carried out “additional probing” before releasing the controversial data.

An official inquiry by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) into the census finding that 260,000 people identified as transgender has drawn up several “lessons learned” from the way the data was handled by the ONS.

They include a conclusion the ONS should do more to communicate “uncertainty” about the data and should have sought external “quality assurance”.

The inquiry’s findings are likely to exacerbate tensions between ministers and the ONS after the body admitted earlier this month it had underestimated the size of the economy by nearly 2 per cent as of the end of 2021 – meaning Britain recovered to its pre-pandemic level almost two years ago.

Advertisement

A Whitehall source suggested the ONS executive, led by [REDACTED], may have lost its “credibility” to accurately record sex and gender, based on its handling of the trans issue together with its separate loss of a legal challenge over the wording of the 2021 census.

The source said it was now clear the 2021 figures on gender, released in January, “hugely overestimated” the number of transgender people – a view they said was shared by multiple ministers.

Inquiry into findings

The inquiry into the findings was sparked after academics warned the wording of the census question, “is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?” may have skewed the answers for respondents whose first language is not English, or who are less familiar with the language of gender identity.

Earlier this year, academics found those who speak English poorly were five times more likely to be transgender.

[REDACTED] claimed that confusion over the question may explain why the London boroughs of Newham and Brent, which have a significant percentage of residents who speak English as a second language, recorded the highest proportion of transgender people in the UK.

[REDACTED], has written to the ONS setting out its initial observations.

His letter said the ONS team that carried out the “quality assurance” of the data “agreed that, with more time to look at all combinations of variables, for example looking at gender identity and ethnicity, it may have identified areas for additional probing and analysis.”

He added: “When releasing big data sets for the first time, it is inevitable users will want to interrogate and analyse the data for their own purposes.

“ONS could have done more to see this as an opportunity to crowdsource quality assurance, or at a minimum, be clearer that it was open to feedback as part of releasing the data.”

██████████ also said that “the communication of uncertainty should be strengthened”.

ONS stands by data

The ONS stood by its data, insisting: “The census estimates on gender identity remain the best available. They are broadly consistent with NHS data collected in the same year and other countries’ comparable data.

“The new, voluntary question went through rigorous development and testing involving trans and non-trans people and, through the census rehearsal, people who did not have English as their main language, before being finalised through legislation.

“We await the OSR interim findings and will publish further updates in due course.”

A spokesman for the OSR said: “Our review is ongoing, and we would not comment on speculation about its findings.”

██████████
██████████ | Office for National Statistics

Direct ██████████

Mob. ██████████

Media Relations Office telephone: ██████████ (8:30am - 5:30pm Weekdays).

Emergency out of hours (limited service): ██████████.

From: [REDACTED] <no-reply@sharepointonline.com>
Sent: 03 November 2023 15:47
To: [REDACTED] @ons.gov.uk>
Subject: [REDACTED] left a comment in "Gender_identity_LTT_v2"

Gender identity LTT v2.docx

[REDACTED] added a comment
need a response

...will be providing a list of local authorities with the highest population of those who identified as "trans" by providing a "write in" response coded to a trans category e.g. trans woman.

The tables

Why does this local authority have a high % of trans respondents by a lower percentage of write-ins?

Most of your 'trans women' simply wrote in 'female' or 'woman' as their gender (not 'trans woman' or similar), how do you know they were transgender and not just confused by your question?

Response ...

[REDACTED] added a comment
do we need this?

- Stakeholder engagement
- Clear quality information

The research

Why did the research take so long if you've released published data?

- Comparing to data sources
- Stakeholder engagement
- Clear quality information

What ever happened to the three reports you were going to publish?

How did you conduct the research?

We have looked at record-level census data for evidence of respondent error in how the gender identity question was answered. We cannot identify individual responses where the respo...

██████████ added a comment
line from previous LTT ██████████?

...h language skills?

Was there a skewed methodology?

Why did the research take so long if you've released published data?

- Comparing to data sources
- Stakeholder engagement
- Clear quality information

The research

Why did the research take so long if you've released published data?

- Comparing to data sources
- Stakeholder engagement
- Clear quality information

What ever happened to the three reports you were going to publish?

How did you conduct the research?

We have looked at record-level c...

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From: [REDACTED] <no-reply@sharepointonline.com>
Sent: 06 November 2023 17:54
To: [REDACTED] <@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: [REDACTED] replied to a comment in "Briefing for gender identity media"

Briefing for gender identity media.docx

[REDACTED] left a comment
Is this right?

[REDACTED] left a comment
The macro report has a table that supports this @ [REDACTED]
can provide the table if needed

[REDACTED] left a comment
*micro but we do have evidence to support statement.

[REDACTED] replied
I would also add something like 'While the question was extensively tested prior to Census, it is only through the large scale exercise of the Census that we have been able to explore the data in this depth. Our work has suggested that some people with low English language skills may have misinterpreted the question.'

... of how the transgender population varies over different population subgroups were built on limited evidence – precisely the evidence gap that inclusion of this question on the census was intended to fill.

Generally, people with lower English proficiency were less likely to provide a write-in response. Whilst this could be interpreted as the question being misunderstood, it could also be because people with lower English proficiency found it more difficult to describe their gender identity in En...

[Why am I receiving this notification from Office?](#)

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>

Sent: 07 November 2023 17:02

To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>

Subject: proposed text for stakeholder email post publication

[REDACTED]

Here's some proposed text for the email – we have added a single line for 'advocates' but wonder if this would be best asked if a meeting is requested...

[REDACTED]

Phase 1 and 2 stakeholder engagement – informing them report now live

Dear XXXX

Today we published [Quality of Census 2021 gender identity data \[LINK\]](#).

The Office for National Statistics has been investigating the quality of census gender identity data after some *unexpected patterns* were identified. Our final summary report has been published to help users in their interpretation of the census results.

Commenting on the research, the ONS's director of population statistics, Jen Woolford said: "We have confidence in our gender identity estimates at a national level, however there are some patterns in the data that are consistent with - but do not conclusively demonstrate - that some respondents may not have interpreted the question as intended, for example, people with lower English language skills in some areas.

"While these patterns may be unexpected, this does not necessarily mean they are wrong. Some local authorities may attract trans people due to established communities and unexpected patterns can result from correlations between variables, such as younger age profiles in some ethnic groups.

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 November 2023 13:21
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Request for comment - The Times

So the proposed response is...

Thanks [REDACTED]

Firstly we'd like to point out you "cannot infer that the response to one, new voluntary question would have an impact on what the census results said as a whole". We had a very high response rate overall of 97%.

You will have received our full statement earlier. However, here it is again. I've highlighted the bits in red we're keen for you to include in response to this line of enquiry:

"We have confidence in our gender identity estimates at a national level, however there are some patterns in the data that are consistent with - but do not conclusively demonstrate - that some respondents may not have interpreted the question as intended, for example, people with lower English language skills in some areas.

"While these patterns may be unexpected, this does not necessarily mean they are wrong. Some local authorities may attract trans people due to established communities and unexpected patterns can result from correlations between variables, such as younger age profiles in some ethnic groups.

"We have spoken with users of these data, and they recognise that there will be greater levels of uncertainty in our gender identity statistics. We have also released additional information to help them interpret the data at a detailed level. We have made it clear that these should not be used to create alternative estimates of the trans population.

"We cannot ignore that some trans people are likely to be among those who chose not to respond to this voluntary question, so it is not possible to quantify any potential under or overestimate among these groups.

“Any expectations of how the transgender population varies over different population subgroups were built on limited evidence – precisely the evidence gap that inclusion of this question on the census was intended to fill.

“We will continue to develop these statistics as part of our programme to develop population and migration statistics, informed by our recent public consultation.”

From: Media Relations <Media.Relations@ons.gov.uk>

Sent: 08 November 2023 12:49

To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>

Subject: FW: Request for comment - The Times

For you [REDACTED]

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 08 November 2023 12:47

To: Media Relations <Media.Relations@ons.gov.uk>

Subject: Request for comment - The Times

Caution: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi guys,

In relation to your press release this morning on the census transgender figures, we have spoken to [REDACTED]

Stakeholder comms

We now know that Stonewall have provided a helpful statement to The Guardian:

[REDACTED] at Stonewall, [REDACTED] said: *'This correlation could be down to a number of factors, including the fact that many trans people will have moved to the UK in the hope of finding a strong, vibrant LGBTQ+ community and the chance to thrive as themselves.*

'While it's vital the ONS continue to build on their questionnaire design and guidance to gather the most accurate data on LGBTQ+ populations, it is important to note that the current figures for the trans population are in step with comparable estimates in other nations, such as Canada who included a similar question in their 2021 Census.'

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 08 November 2023 12:00
To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@Statistics.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>
Cc: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@ons.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk)>
Subject: RE: Gender Identity media note

BBC Briefing – [REDACTED] with LGBT correspondent [REDACTED] and data team

Went well. They understand the complexities and said - This is not an exact since; first time the question has been asked, consistent with other sources, some people will say it is right/others that it is wrong.'

They do not see this as headline news and are in the process of updating their explainer article which they published this summer – particularly the section on How many transgender people are there in the UK? Not updated yet but this is the link

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-53154286> Once updated we will review for accuracy.

Guardian Briefing – [REDACTED] with Social Affairs Corr [REDACTED]

We expect his piece to ultimately be balanced – talked him through the key points and the detail of uncertainty, why we cannot quantify opposing forces of an over/under estimate. He had spoken to [REDACTED] and repeated a view (see monitoring below) that we should admit the GI question was poorly designed and ‘come clean’. [REDACTED] talked through the extensive work which went into design and explained what we’re doing today is being transparent, there is very much use in this data and we’ve spoken to users who have told us the value in it.” Also pointed out there are clearly a range of views/perspectives.

Monitoring

The Mail Online has run a fair piece paraphrasing from the report – they say we have said no evidence question design or processing had an adverse effect while also acknowledging some may have misunderstood question if English was not first language.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12724857/ONS-confidence-data-showing-262-000-trans-people-England-Wales-despite-admitting-census-question-misunderstood-poor-English-FIVE-times-likelier-state-gender-didnt-match-birth-sex.html>

We will pay attention to likely updates over the day.

There has been a helpful tweet from [REDACTED], [author of Queer Data](#) which says our ‘review makes some good points. In particular, ONS argues that we can't say whether the count of trans people is an under or overestimate (as the question was voluntary)

RT/Interaction – from some helpful voices in demography, law, academia

[https://twitter.com/\[REDACTED\]/status/1722190048689353034](https://twitter.com/[REDACTED]/status/1722190048689353034)

[REDACTED] (23k followers) has tweeted disappointment that we ‘have not held up our hands to acknowledge question was poorly designed - They acknowledge implausible patterns in the data, but fail to draw the obvious conclusions.’

<https://x.com/ProfAliceS/status/1722212422524850564?s=20>

Stakeholder comms

Bespoke emails going out to those 20 users who engaged in research to thank them and alert them to the report. Clear offer to keep the conversation/engagement going. Prioritisation and responses prepared accordingly.

Press office to press office conversations with support groups/charities/networks to flag report with potential to nudge positive messages.

Monitoring

We will monitor media and social over the day (and beyond) and alert this group as to how we recommend responding.

We have drafted an Op Ed which we will adapt depending on coverage and begin to offer out if needed to position our message.

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>

Sent: 09 November 2023 14:05

To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>

Subject: For comment: Gender identity written PQ draft response - [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

I think you are both aware of the written PQ we received yesterday from [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is the DD assigned to sign it off, with [REDACTED] as Director, included here as agreed in case you [REDACTED] have any comments ahead of the sign-off deadline tomorrow.

The question is: *To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the 2021 census, (1) how were the cisgender and transgender individuals who took part in ONS qualitative research on gender identity conducted in 2017 selected; (2) what percentage of transgender individuals participated in the (a) 2019 census rehearsal and (b) 2021 census; (3) which local authority areas were chosen for the rehearsal; and (4) what assessment they have made of census data relating to high levels of trans-identified individuals in areas of England and Wales with high minority ethnic populations. HL38*

I have got a draft response together – [REDACTED] [PQ gender identity v0.docx](#) – with help from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. It starts by addressing (4) by referring [REDACTED] to yesterday's GI publication at the start, then the other questions with a bit of context about the testing and rehearsal. I've assumed that (2) is asking what percentage of respondents were transgender, since otherwise it's an impossible question.

Please let me know if you have any queries or comments either by email or through the shared doc. I'll try to answer/resolve them and submit it on the system after lunch tomorrow (if that timing works for you [REDACTED] – the deadline for DD sign-off is COP tomorrow). [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I'm aiming to log on again this evening, but [REDACTED] are online if there's anything urgent today.

Best wishes,



Population Statistics Directorate | Office for National Statistics | Swyddfa Ystadegau
Gwladol



[@ons.gov.uk](#) | www.ons.gov.uk | [@ONS](#)

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 03 October 2023 08:11
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Updated Draft OSR Gender identity report

Hi all,

In terms of handling here, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] discussed a blog going out in her name signalling a 'softening' in our line. This bit of the statement feels like a good place to start:

As the report makes clear, there was always good reason to expect a significant degree of uncertainty around estimates of the transgender population derived from the gender identity question in the 2021 Census. The willingness on the part of ONS to provide further context and clarity on the initial estimates would be evidence of the strength of the census process and not a weakness, as long as it is fully and transparently explained. ONS providing updates to the interpretation of these estimates should be regarded as a normal part of ongoing statistical production for a new area of data collection. Such updates should not undermine user confidence in the robustness of the Census results as a whole.

[REDACTED] – could you start to pull something together please?

[REDACTED] – [REDACTED] I can cover the HPaM connect call this morning if you want to drop out and have some time back to look at this [REDACTED]

If we can get the blog up on Monday then my response to [REDACTED] (also to go on Monday) can reference it.

[REDACTED] thinks [REDACTED] would like to see these before we go, so can we aim for something to go to [REDACTED] by cop tomorrow? If possible that could include the options paper so he's a full pack to look at. Appreciate this is tight – sorry!

[REDACTED] please could you try and find some time for those of us in the 'to' line to meet and discuss this morning or early afternoon?

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 10 October 2023 09:28
To: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>;
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>;
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>;
Cc: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>;
[REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: GI coverage

Morning all,

This morning's update in case useful.

The exchange of letters happened at the end of the day and subsequently we published both on the ONS website – [Exchange of letters between OSR and ONS - Office for National Statistics](#)

As you know, the blog was published [Census 2021 gender identity estimates: progress and next steps | National Statistical \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) and a link to this was sent by gov delivery email to a wide distribution list which includes homes affairs, social affairs, newsdesks and LGBT media. No questions to us from the media so far.

Stakeholder emails were sent to key users who have been engaging. Do flag any reaction of concern please.

Very little interaction and no concerning comment on social so far.

Media coverage so far is contained to the piece in the Times (in the media summary but copied below and attached). Fair, balanced reporting, in my view.

We will monitor for further media and social pick up today/through the week as stakeholder reaction may prompt further interest.

Times online

UK NEWS

Census trans question under scrutiny for 'confusion'



Tuesday October 10 2023, 12.00am, The Times



The April census found that 262,000 people identified as transgender in England and Wales

SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET/GETTY IMAGES

A question on transgender identity used in the census should be analysed to see if it was misunderstood, the statistics regulator has said.

In April academics queried findings from the Office for National Statistics which suggested that there were 262,000 people [identifying as transgender](#) in England and Wales, 0.5 per cent of the population over 16.

The figure for those whose main language was not English was disproportionately high, at 2.2 per cent, and the academics think that the question, in use for the first time, may have been confusing. The ONS is examining the case.

The Office for Statistics Regulation, in an interim report, made recommendations including a request that the ONS investigate further. It said that the ONS “should consider any potential misunderstanding of the question . . . as part of its analysis into the agreement rates for the gender identity question”.

Its report found that the ONS had worked with “good intentions” on the gender identity question and had sought to ensure reliable data. But it said that the statistics body should have been more transparent, communicating the “inherent uncertainties” of the new data collection. “Had ONS done so, it would have aided users’ understanding of appropriate use of the data and provided relevant context when issues were identified by users,” it said.

The results were taken from answers to the 2021 census — a questionnaire on British society produced every ten years — which explored the issue of gender identity for the first time.

Of the 262,000 people who indicated they were transgender, 118,000 did not provide further detail.

Some 48,000, or 0.1 per cent of the population aged 16 and over, identified as a trans man, and a similar number identified as a trans woman. A total of 30,000 identified as non-binary while a further 18,000 people wrote in a different gender identity.

A later data release from the ONS showed that those who spoke English “not well” or “not well at all” were most likely to be counted as transgender, at 2.2 per cent. This compared with 0.4 per cent of those whose main language was English or Welsh — making those who speak English poorly five times more likely to be transgender.

The ONS maintained that the 2021 census results on its gender identity question were “broadly consistent with NHS data collected in the same year”.

[REDACTED] released a blog post on the OSR report.

In it, she said: “The OSR review acknowledges there is always good reason to expect uncertainty, especially when you are trying to estimate a small population among a large one and there are scant alternative data sources to corroborate against.

“As our regulator notes, our teams remain committed to providing public value with our innovative work as we seek to better understand the quality of the data and how this can best be communicated to users.”

[REDACTED]

From: [redacted]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 15 September 2023 18:37
To: [redacted]@ons.gov.uk>; [redacted]@ons.gov.uk>;
[redacted]@ons.gov.uk>; [redacted]@ons.gov.uk>;
[redacted]@ons.gov.uk>; [redacted]@ons.gov.uk>;
[redacted]@ons.gov.uk>; [redacted]@ons.gov.uk>;
[redacted]@ons.gov.uk>; [redacted]@ons.gov.uk>;
[redacted]@ons.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: OSR Census Gender Identity Review - Draft Report comments by COP 21/09

Hi all,

I've made a copy which those of us in ONS can edit: [DRAFT OSR Review of Census Gender Identity - ONS copy \[redacted\].docx](#), although it might be that whoever's co-ordinating will want to copy it into an official central copy so they can better monitor updates etc.

I've just made a handful of annotations, covering points of clarity, language and a misleading implication that intersex people are transgender. I've avoided commenting on other aspects and, overall, I feel it's a fair report.

I see one of their conclusions (point 4.3) is that "ONS should have communicated the inherent uncertainties in this new data collection when it published the data to aid use". That's misleading as we did that, linking to the [quality page \[redacted\]](#) produced. Perhaps their point, instead, is that we should have been more upfront in the topic summary and bulletin?

I'm also intrigued to know more about the line (point 2.16) that "The UK harmonisation group, which includes the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), is working closely to determine how it will collectively produce estimates for Great Britain given the divergence in approach". That sounds good, but who is involved in that (Harmonisation? / someone else?) and is it about the census results or future work? The main reason I'm confused is that despite the fact I'd assumed SOGI would be heavily involved in the publication of GB results (which we'd agreed with NRS should be an aim), I've not been made aware of or approached about any work which has been done in that space.

Please could someone clarify, thanks.

[redacted]

[redacted]
Demography | Population Statistics Directorate
Office for National Statistics | Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol
[redacted]@ons.gov.uk | www.ons.gov.uk | @ONS

From: [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 November 2023 10:37
To: [REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@ons.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@Statistics.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@statistics.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Gender identity report

Morning all,

As indicated last week, the report has now been published: [Quality of Census 2021 gender identity data](#).

Additionally, we have also released a media statement, copied here for ease: The Office for National Statistics has been investigating the quality of census gender identity data after some [unexpected patterns](#) were identified. Our final summary report has been published to help users in their interpretation of the census results.

Commenting on the research, the [REDACTED] said: “We have confidence in our gender identity estimates at a national level, however there are some patterns in the data that are consistent with - but do not conclusively demonstrate - that some respondents may not have interpreted the question as intended, for example, people with lower English language skills in some areas.

“While these patterns may be unexpected, this does not necessarily mean they are wrong. Some local authorities may attract trans people due to established communities and unexpected patterns can result from correlations between variables, such as younger age profiles in some ethnic groups.

“We have spoken with users of these data, and they recognise that there will be greater levels of uncertainty in our gender identity statistics. We have also released additional information to help them interpret the data at a detailed level. We have made it clear that these should not be used to create alternative estimates of the trans population.

“We cannot ignore that some trans people are likely to be among those who chose not to respond to this voluntary question, so it is not possible to quantify any potential under or overestimate among these groups.

“Any expectations of how the transgender population varies over different population subgroups were built on limited evidence – precisely the evidence gap that inclusion of this question on the census was intended to fill.

“We will continue to develop these statistics as part of our programme to develop population and migration statistics, informed by our recent public consultation.”

Thanks

[REDACTED]