

# Labour market quality information for Census 2021

Known quality information affecting labour market data from Census 2021 in England and Wales to help users correctly interpret the statistics.

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# 1 . Quality information

Census 2021 took place during a period of rapid change. The labour market data reflect a situation when many more people than at the time of the 2011 Census were working from home or on furlough.

The origin-destination statistics for travel to work reflect a situation when many more people than at the time of the 2011 Census were working from home or on furlough. There are a number of ways in which this affected census results for travel to work as described in our [Travel to Work quality information for Census 2021](#). In summary, it is unclear as to how representative the census statistics are of travel to work patterns as at Census Day. Furthermore, the Census data is a snapshot in time, but, given the impact of lockdown and furlough, the census results have limited utility in measuring pre- or post-pandemic travel patterns.

Origin-destination statistics for address one year ago will reflect the impact of the pandemic on international and domestic migration. While the data for this topic is not affected by all of the complexities affecting travel to work, we advise users to be very cautious in assuming that migration patterns seen in the 12 months to Census are representative of patterns seen in other years.

We identified a quality issue in the 2011 census origin-destination statistics for a very small number of areas where an element of some flows had been incorrectly recorded as a flow to another area with the same name. Our quality assurance has not identified this issue arising in the 2021 results.

## Responses from people on furlough

At the Office for National Statistics (ONS), we published extra guidance to help people on furlough to answer the census questions about work. This guidance said that they should identify themselves as "temporarily away from work". This would ensure they were still included in the economically active population.

We are unable to determine how furloughed people followed guidance. However, our research suggests that there are inconsistencies between the number of people answering "Temporarily away from work" in Census 2021 and other administrative data sources. This may result in scattering of furloughed responses through other labour market categories. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) research suggests that furlough is associated with other characteristics, including:

- age
- health
- location
- industry
- occupation

It is possible that the interaction of furloughed responses with technical aspects of census processing, such as edit and imputation, could multiply values in the observed census data. There is no specific flag for furloughed people within the data, and we are unable to quantify the effect that they may have had on the labour market data.

People on furlough also affected travel behaviours. Read more in our [Travel to work quality information for Census 2021 methodology](#).

## Labour market definitions

As the census uses different labour market definitions from those that the Labour Force Survey uses, the estimates differ between these two sources. Further information is provided in our [Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market, England and Wales: March 2021 article](#).

## Employment by industry

Estimates of the number of people employed by industry differ from the official estimates from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). Census relies on respondent information about the business they work for, which may differ from data collected from the business themselves. BRES data are consistent with definitions used in the UK National Accounts.

## Armed forces

Armed forces personnel and defence employees are included in the census and recorded as usually resident using the standard definitions. The instructions given to personnel on how to respond to the census mean that this group cannot be identified in census data on industry and occupation. Information on the size and characteristics of the UK armed forces population is produced by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and available at [MOD National and Official Statistics by topic](#).

## Comparability with 2011 Census

Take care if you compare Census 2021 results for this topic with those from the 2011 Census, as described in our [Labour market variables Census 2021 supporting information](#).

Tell us what you think about this publication by [answering a few questions](#).

## Incorrect classification mapping for occupation\_current and occupation\_flat

We previously advised users that four current occupation classifications had been coded incorrectly: "5221 Metal forming, welding and related trades" and "5222 Tool makers, tool fitters and markers-out" to "521 Metal forming, welding and related trades". The two classifications should have been coded to "522 Tool makers, tool fitters and markers-out". In addition, "2211 Generalist medical practitioners" and "2212 Specialist medical practitioners" to "21 Science, research, engineering and technology professionals". These should have been coded to "22 Health professionals".

These were corrected on 27 July 2023.

## 2 . Related links

### [Travel to work quality information for Census 2021](#)

Methodology | Released 8 December 2022

Known quality information affecting travel to work data from Census 2021 in England and Wales to help correctly interpret them.

### [Quality and methodology information Census 2021](#)

QMI | Last revised 28 November 2022

Details the data strengths, limitations, uses, users and methods used for Census 2021, England and Wales.

### [Travel to work variables Census 2021](#)

Supporting information | Released 5 December 2022

Lists variables and classifications used in Census 2021 data about travel to work.

### [Labour market variables Census 2021](#)

Supporting information | Released 5 December 2022

Lists variables and classifications used in Census 2021 data about labour market.

### 3 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 8 December 2022, ONS website, methodology, [Labour market quality information for Census 2021](#)