

Why We Need a Census

How the Census benefits us all

We all use public services at various times - including schools, health services, roads and libraries. These services need to be planned, and in such a way that they keep pace with the fast-changing patterns of modern life. Yet it is impossible to plan services for 'invisible' people. We need accurate information on the numbers of people, where they live and what their needs are.

Every ten years the Census sets the record straight. Uniquely, it gives us a picture of the entire nation. It counts the numbers of people living in each city, town and country area. It tells us something about each area and its population, including the state of their health, what jobs they do and the type of housing they live in.

Because the same questions are asked and the information is recorded in the same way throughout the UK, the Census allows us to compare different groups of people across the entire nation.

Although the Census costs some £255 million for the UK as a whole, the information it provides enables billions of pounds of taxpayers' money to be targeted to areas of greatest need. The Census gives us invaluable data in the following areas:

Population

An accurate count of the population in each local area helps central government to calculate the size of grants it allocates each local authority and health authority. In turn, these authorities use census information when planning services within their areas.

Housing

A count of the various types of dwelling and of the people in them helps planners to identify inadequate accommodation and assess the demand for new housing.

Other factsheets:

1. The Census
3. Census 2001
- What's New?
4. Counting Everyone In
- the Big Challenge
5. The Census
Organisation
6. Census jobs
7. The Census and the
Law
8. Census Taking
Through the Ages

Employment

The Census shows how many people work in different occupations and industries throughout the country, helping government and businesses to plan jobs and training policies and to make informed investment decisions.

Transport

Information collected on travel to and from work, and on the availability of cars, contributes to the planning of roads and public transport.

Health

Data on general health, long-term illness and provision of care will enable the Government to plan health and social services and allocate resources to best effect.

Ethnic group

Data on ethnic groups help to identify the extent and nature of racial disadvantage in Britain and to measure the success of equal opportunities policies. The information helps central and local government to allocate resources and plan programmes to take account of the needs of minority groups.

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