

# Reflecting on the future of the census

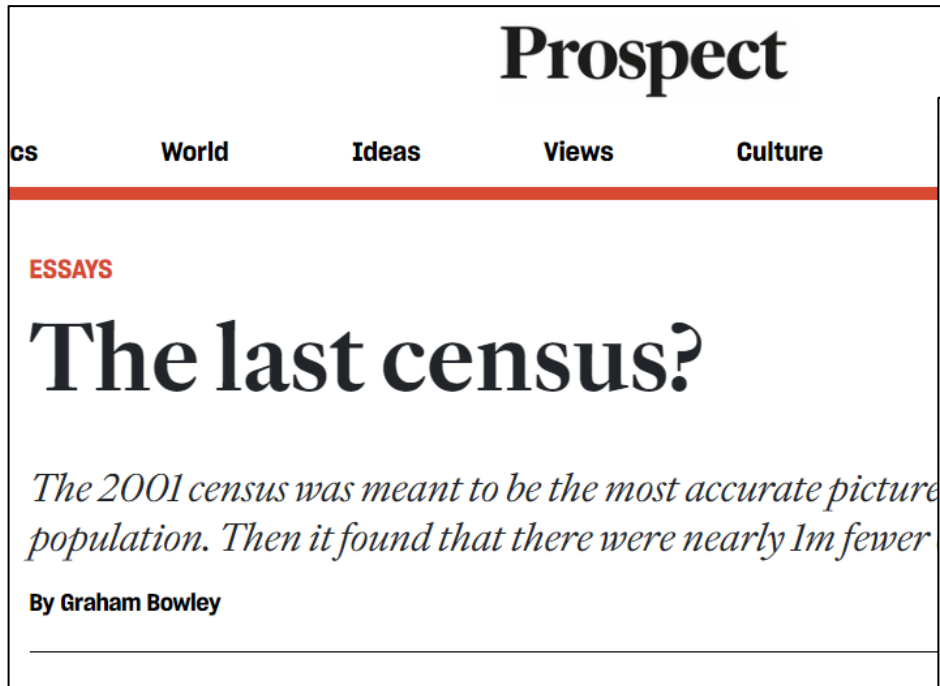
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Only Connect, BBC (2020)

# The future's uncertain...



## National census in 2011 could be last of its kind

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The census of all households is held every 10 years



Source: BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/10584385>

Source: Prospect, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/essays/59217/the-last-census>

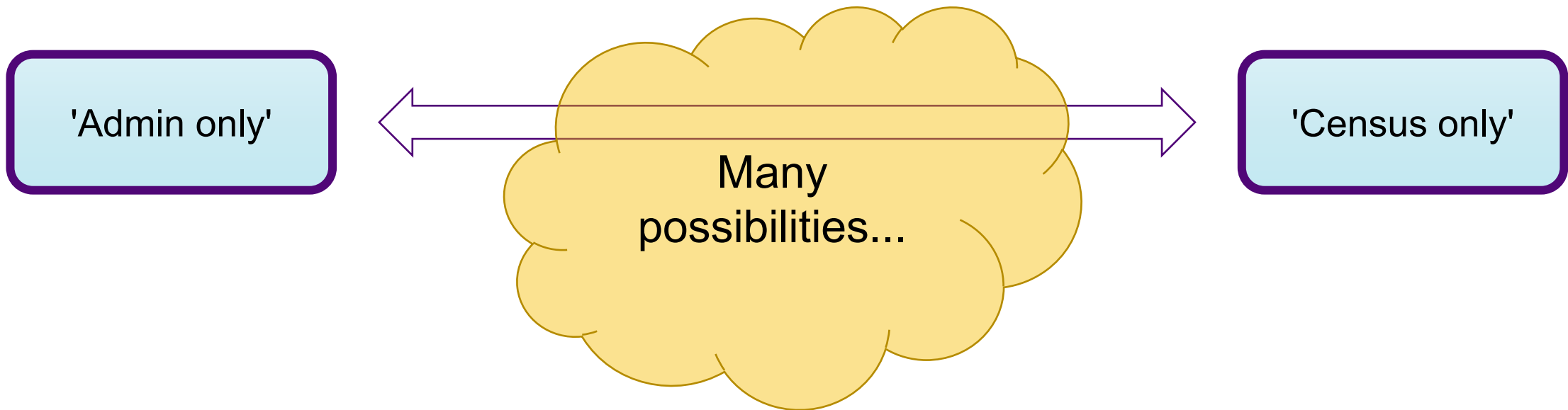
Source: BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-51468919>

# The long future of the census

Census	
1921	Opened 2022; first census conducted under the Census Act 1920
1926	Census of Northern Ireland – records reported lost
1931	Records for Scotland to be opened 2032; records for England & Wales destroyed; no census in NI
1937	Census of Northern Ireland – to be opened 2038
1941	No census
1951	To be opened 2052 (E&W;Sc,NI)
1961	To be opened 2062 (E&W;Sc,NI)
1966	To be opened 2067; 10% sample census (E&W;Sc,NI)
1971	To be opened 2072; first census conducted post Lord Chancellor's Instrument (100yr rule) (E&W;Sc,NI)
1981	To be opened 2082; 1981 form first to explicitly refer to 100 year retention (E&W;Sc,NI)
1991	To be opened 2092 (E&W;Sc,NI)
2001	To be opened 2102 (E&W;Sc,NI)
2011	To be opened 2112; c. 85% of returns on paper (scanned) (E&W;Sc,NI)
2021	To be opened 2122; c. 11% of returns on paper (scanned); last (form-based) census? (E&W;NI;S: 2123)

# Alternative futures

- Current consultation and statements do not explicitly rule anything in or out



# How we have got to where we are

- Consultation directly on future plans [706 responses][ (ONS, 2023)
  - Led / Provided Evidence to Responses – UK Data Services, CeLSIUS, BSPS, Academy of Social Sciences, and individual

Individual response	366
Local government	147
Charity or voluntary	52
Central government	34
Other public body	31
Business, industry or commercial	21
Academia or research	18
Religion or faith	8
Devolved administration and associated bodies	9
Other	20

# Recent discourse

- Diverse consultations / proposals etc on 'data' issues (typically requiring population denominators)
  - E.g. Sudlow Review, 2023, National Data Library ongoing
- First UK Statistics Assembly January 2025
- Review of UKSA/ONS (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee) May 2025 (short deadline 23 working days: constrained to brief response)
- BSPS Meeting co funded ONS, UK Data Service and CeLSIUS 10 July 2025

# Hypothetical A

- If we switched to admin-based population statistics
  - What current work would be harder / not possible?
  - What work would be enabled by greater availability of admin data?

# Hypothetical B

- If we had a further census broadly similar to that of 2021...
  - What admin data would you like to be linked?
  - If you could add a question to the census, what would it be?



# Brief audience responses

- Slido
  - Go to **slido.com**
  - Enter code **2238223**

