



Ein cyf/Our ref MDFWL/00338/25

Sir Robert Chote
Chair
UK Statistics Authority
Robert.Chote@Statistics.gov.uk

4 July 2025

Dear Sir Robert,

Thank you for the letter of 17 June regarding the UK Statistics Authority's recommendation to the UK government about the future of population and migration statistics in Wales and England.

I welcome the thorough and transparent process that has underpinned this recommendation, including the extensive research by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the engagement with expert advisory bodies, and the wide-ranging public consultation including with stakeholders here in Wales. The Welsh Government recognises the importance of timely, inclusive, and high-quality population statistics to inform policy, allocate resources, and support the delivery of public services across Wales.

I welcome the recommendations to plan for a questionnaire-based census of population and housing in Wales and England in 2031, as well as the further development of statistical outputs using administrative data. Not only will this ensure that the statistics that the ONS produces about Wales are more frequent and timelier but will also ensure that they continue to meet user needs for inclusive, accurate and granular statistics, building on the successes and lessons learnt from Census 2021.

I particularly welcome the emphasis on the continued development of high-quality statistics about the Welsh language. This remains a priority for the Welsh Government, and I look forward to continuing our close collaboration with the ONS on this. This will ensure that future outputs will support our measurement of Welsh language ability and use, and enable us to monitor progress towards our target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

As plans for the 2031 census progress, it is vital that the ONS engages early and meaningfully with Welsh users and considers the Welsh context in both the content and conduct of the census. I hope lessons from Census 2021, including around the ethnicity question and bilingual addressing, will inform future improvements.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I note the reference in the recommendation to the UK government's digital ambitions and the potential for developments in digital identification to support the future statistical system. Our Chief Digital Officer will work closely with the UK government on these plans and consider how Welsh services can benefit from common platforms. But nevertheless, the ONS must be mindful of where such plans may relate to English services only and ensure the quality of Welsh statistical estimates also remains a priority.

The success of the digital-first approach in 2021 shows the public's willingness to engage online. We see potential for further innovation in 2031, both in question design and in the integration of administrative data. However, it remains essential that people unable to respond digitally are fully supported through alternative means. Welsh Government officials will continue to work closely with the ONS to ensure effective communication and engagement with all population groups in Wales.

I am also aware of the challenges faced by traditional statistical production techniques in recent years. Therefore, the continued commitment to develop the use of administrative data is fundamental. It ensures we have a statistical system which can provide the data we need to understand and improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and make decisions in the years ahead, particularly in areas where the census cannot capture particular topics.

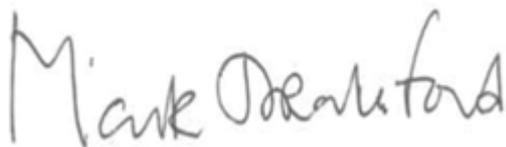
The Welsh Government will commit to the recommendation to provide a regular, reliable and ongoing flow of the critical administrative datasets. Officials will continue to work with the ONS and with our partners here in Wales to support this work. We have already demonstrated our commitment to this over the years, for example, in our work in supplying datasets to the ONS to support the delivery and quality assurance of Census 2021.

I have already written to both the acting National Statistician, Emma Rourke, and the Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office, Georgia Gould MP, outlining the Welsh Government's support of the Authority's recommendations. I look forward to the UK government's response to the recommendations.

Thank you again for your continued engagement. We look forward to working together to deliver a modern, inclusive, and trusted statistical system that meets the needs of all users in Wales and across the UK.

This letter has been copied to the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee for information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark Drakeford AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language