
Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National Statistician

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

14 June 2023

Dear Mr Betts,

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is transforming the way it produces statistics about the population and migration to better meet the needs of users. High quality, timely population and migration statistics are essential to ensure people get the services and support they need within communities and nationwide. It is vitally important that population and migration statistics reflect the needs of everyone in society, and to support key government priorities. You will be aware that they provide evidence for policies and to plan public services.

Our ambition is to provide estimates that are more frequent, flexible, and timely, and to improve their accuracy and granularity. We will be launching a public consultation on our proposal for the future of population and migration statistics on 29 June 2023. We propose a new, sustainable and future-proofed system for producing essential population and migration statistics, with administrative data at its heart, complemented by survey data. This would radically improve the statistics we produce annually and replace the current reliance on the census every ten years, which can reduce in reliability through the decade.

Our proposed system will provide insights on the changes and movement of our population across different seasons and in due course, times of day. For many topics, it will provide more reliable, local information more frequently. It will explore topics in new detail, using the full breadth of administrative, health and transactional data available enabling us to expand insight into areas not recorded by the Census, such as income combined with traditional elements such as address and ethnicity.

The public consultation will determine how far our proposed system meets users needs for statistics about the population and migration and will be a key opportunity to influence our future research plans on population and migration statistics. Responses to this consultation, and the feedback provided at our engagement events, will inform my recommendation to Government, as discussed in the 2018 Census White Paper 'Help Shape our Future', on how the ONS should produce statistics about the population and migration.

I am incredibly keen that the views of Parliament are represented in the responses to the consultation and would encourage this Committee to provide a response. My

colleagues and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you and the Committee. We are attending Evidence Week in Parliament on 5 July from 12:30-16:00 in the Jubilee Room which provides an opportunity for you and your colleagues to speak directly to representatives from the ONS. You can either drop-in on the day or book an appointment¹. If unable to attend, my parliamentary team would be happy to arrange a separate private briefing for the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Diamond', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

¹ <https://senseaboutscience.org/evidence-week/institution/the-future-of-population-statistics-in-england-and-wales/#book>