Census data:
a guide for Swansea University students and staff.

What is the UK Census of Population?

The Census has taken place every 10 years throughout the UK since 1801. It is a count of people and households. The Census is important because it aims to include every member of the population. The data gathered provides a detailed picture of the entire population, and is unique because it covers everyone at the same time and asks the same core questions everywhere, making it easy to compare different parts of the country.

The Census gives the policy and decision makers in the UK the information they need to make informed decisions and target public money effectively.

The Census provides invaluable facts about:

- Population
- Health
- Housing
- Employment
- Transport
- Ethnic group
- Households
- Welsh language

The most recent 100 years of census data is “anonymised”, but the Census from 1901 and earlier can be used for tracing family histories.

UK Census data is available from various sources:

- **The Office for National Statistics** – key statistics for the 2001 Census are available on this website as they are published. [http://www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

- Researchers who need more in depth Census information can access the [JISC Census of Population Programme](http://www.jisc.ac.uk), sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council, available to the UK Higher Education community, free of charge. However you must first complete a brief registration procedure. This only takes about 5 minutes. Login to the [Census Registration Service](http://census.data-archive.ac.uk) with your personal Athens username and password and complete a brief online form. [Contact your Subject librarian if you don’t have a personal Athens username.]

Once registered you will be able to access any of the following four Census services which make up the [JISC Census of Population](http://www.jisc.ac.uk)
LIS guides: Census

Programme, based at the University of Southampton. Data are available for 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001:


  http://census.ac.uk/cdu/

- Census Geography Data Unit (UKBORDERS) based at EDINA, Edinburgh. UKBORDERS provides digitized boundary datasets of the UK, available in many Geographic Information System (GIS) formats, and associated look-up tables.

  http://edina.ac.uk/ukborders

- Census Interaction Data Service, based at the Universities of Leeds and St. Andrews, providing access to the origin-destination statistics for 1981, 1991 and 2001. The data relates to flows of people between one location and another so is useful for studying migration or travel to work.

  http://census.ac.uk/cids

- Samples of Anonymised Records from the Census Microdata Unit at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research at the University of Manchester. Available for 1991 and 2001. SARs are examples of individual records.

  http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars/

Print copies of the Census of Population are available in the Library & Information Centre from 1801 up to 1991, shelved at HA1121, Folios, on Level 2 of the West wing.

Teaching materials and tutorials are available through the Collection of Historical & Contemporary Census Data and Materials (CHCC) project at http://www.chcc.ac.uk/CAS/resources.html

National Archives
Census returns for 1901, 1891, 1881, 1871 and 1861 can be searched online on the National Archives website by name, address or place. Useful for historians and genealogists. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/

Further reading: