

CENSUS 2021 Local Authority Partnership Survey Report

Headlines

- 50% response rate to our survey ¹
- 91% of respondents rated our engagement activities for Census 2021 as either good or excellent
- Over 50 LAs represented at our focus groups
- 99% of LAs nominated either a Census Liaison Manager (CLM), Assistant Census Liaison Manager (ACLM) or both

In June 2021 we invited all local authorities in England and Wales to complete our Office for National Statistics (ONS) LA Partnership survey as part of our Census 2021 evaluations. We were interested in how different stakeholders felt about the census operation.

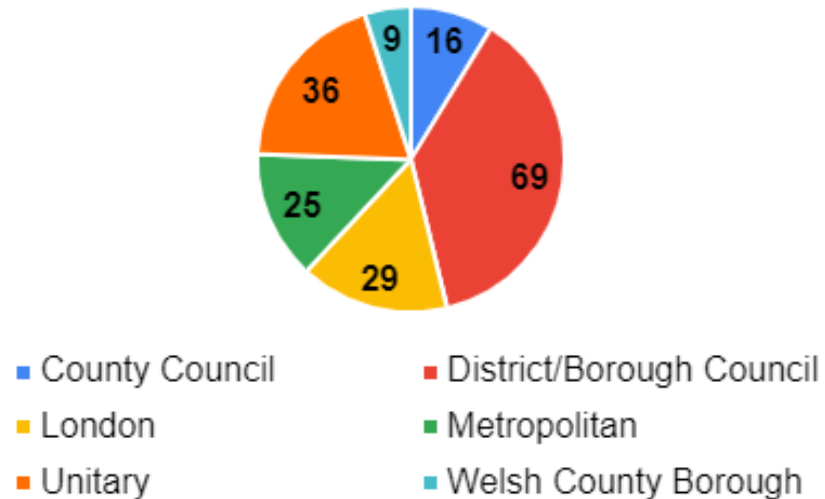
We were delighted to receive over 180 responses covering 177 councils. More than 50 local authorities also offered to join one of 14 focus groups where more detailed feedback was given. The results of both the survey and focus group discussions are contained in this document.

¹ Note - figures throughout are rounded and survey results are based on 361 LAs in place at time of survey

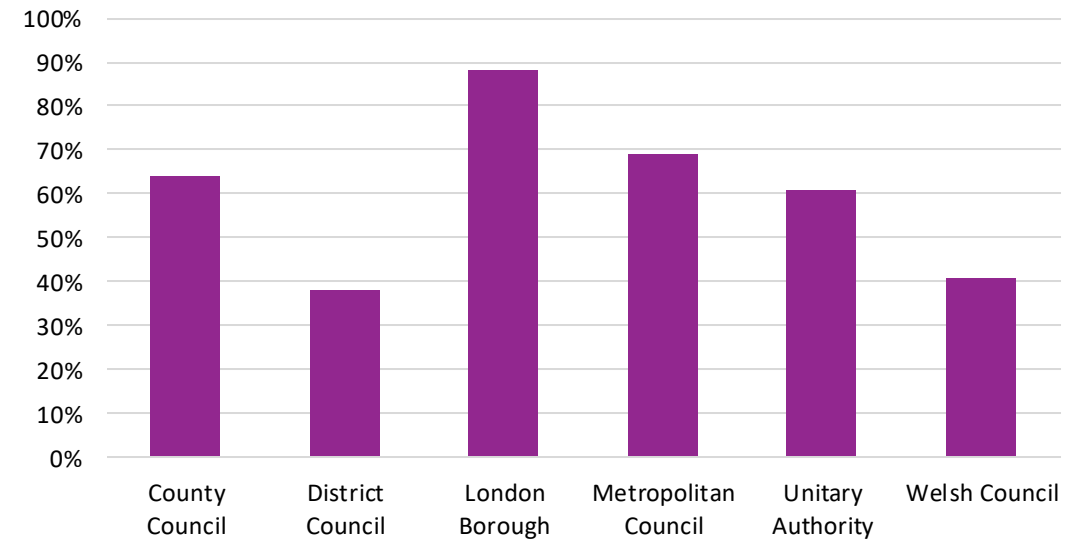
184 Local Authority responses – who replied?

The majority of respondents were ACLMs at 64% with CLMs at 33%

Number of Responses by Council Type



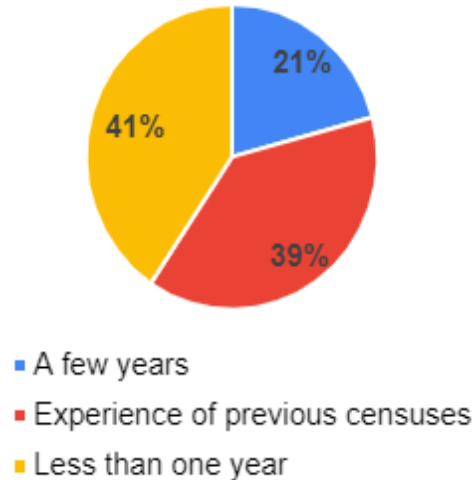
How well was each type of LA represented?



We had more responses from district councils, but they were proportionately lower than other types of LA.

CLMs and ACLMs

Census Experience of CLM/ACLM



CLMs and ACLMs were nominated from a variety of council departments including:

- Chief Executive's Department/Governance
- Business Intelligence/Insights
- Communications
- Communities
- Corporate Strategy/Service/Policy/Research
- Data Intelligence/Analysis
- Democratic/Electoral Services
- Legal
- Performance
- Planning
- Public Health

LA feedback:

- The majority of CLM/ACLMs felt that the job description was accurate
- Some CLM/ACLMs were appointed quite late and felt they did not know enough about the role

Attendees at the focus groups were nominated for the role of CLM/ACLM for many reasons including:

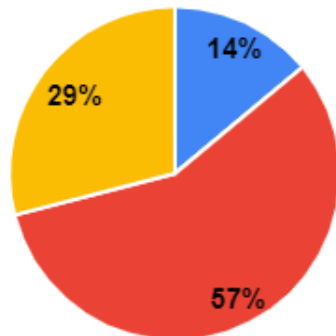
- Had the role in 2011/previous census experience
- Job was within data, analytics or geography teams so a user of census data
- Job was within corporate, business or strategy teams so central within the LA

The role of Chief Executives

LA feedback was that most chief executives were supportive of the census without playing a hands-on role. Many LAs felt that they had the backing of the chief executive or other senior members of staff if they needed their influence, but the CLM/ACLM was trusted to get on with census activities.

Several LAs commented during the focus groups that the bulletins sent to chief executives by ONS helped raise the profile of the census and kept senior management informed. According to the survey, 90% of LAs thought that these updates were worthwhile.

The impact of COVID-19 on LA's capacity to work on Census



■ No impact ■ Some impact ■ Serious impact

Councillor engagement

89% of respondents told us that their councillors were engaged in the census project.

82% of respondents used the councillor handbook, making it our second most used resource.

During focus group discussions, many LAs noted that webinars had been organised for councillors.

Others felt that local elections and COVID-19 had been a priority for many councillors.

The impact of COVID-19

We asked you about the impact of the pandemic on the LA's capacity to work with ONS on Census 2021 activities. Some LAs felt that pandemic restrictions had enhanced their digital provision, others felt that resources were stretched because of the council response to COVID-19.

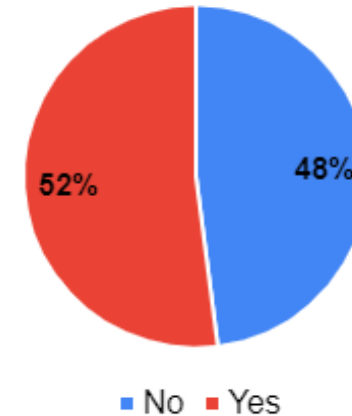
Collaboration across councils

We asked you whether you had collaborated with other local authorities on this census. 57% of you said that you had. Responses included collaboration with groups such as:

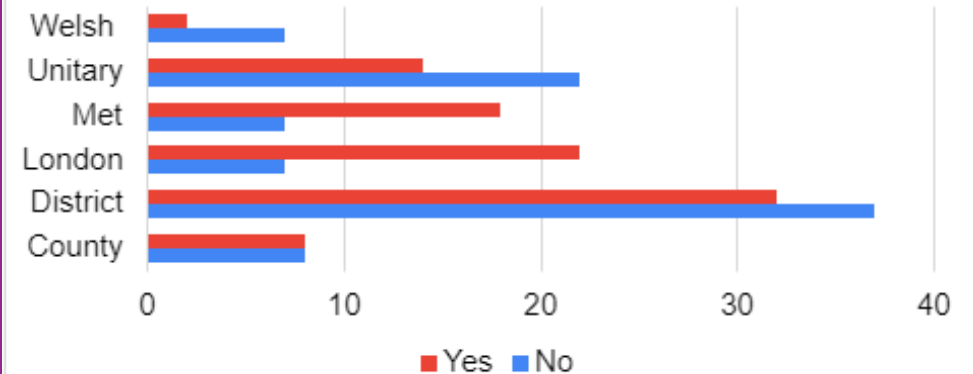
- Informal meetings with neighbouring councils
- Regular meetings with other councils in the region
- Combined authorities, for example, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- LARIA, Census Advisory Group (CAG) and other organisations
- Meetings between county councils and districts

"This forum was very helpful, and useful for sharing information, advice and guidance."

Would you have liked greater collaboration between local authorities?



Should there have been more collaborative working between LAs?
(by LA type)



Communications with us – ONS LA Partnership Team

Overall, you were happy with the LA Partnership team's communications with 90% of respondents ticking either good or excellent.

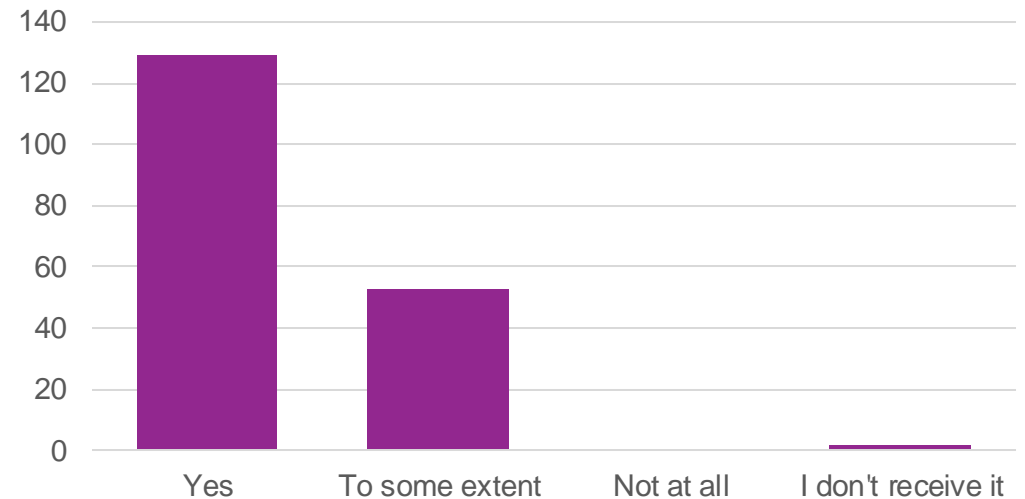
91% felt that they had received the right amount of communications from us. 8% of respondents would have liked more communication and 1% felt it was too much.

65% of respondents had emailed or phoned our team regularly or occasionally.

For those that had been in touch with us directly, 51% felt our responses were excellent and 33% felt they were good.

The newsletter we produced for you was well received and was mentioned by many LAs, during focus groups, as a useful checklist that helped them ensure they had done everything needed each week. Given that most CLMs/ACLMs were carrying out the role in addition to their main job, the newsletter provided a helpful reminder of key requirements.

Does the newsletter give you the information you need?



- 82% read our newsletter regularly with 16% reading it sometimes.
- 89% of respondents felt that our decision to change the newsletter from monthly to weekly was beneficial during the operational phase.

Workshops and Roadshows

We held workshops and webinars between 2018 and 2021. These were well attended, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive in both our surveys and focus groups.

- In 2018/19, we ran Census 2021 roadshows. 62% of respondents had attended one of these.
- From April to June 2020, we ran 13 regional workshops. There were over 400 attendees representing 83% of LAs.
- Between August 2020 and March 2021, we ran 11 specialist workshops – these were attended by 93% of LAs.

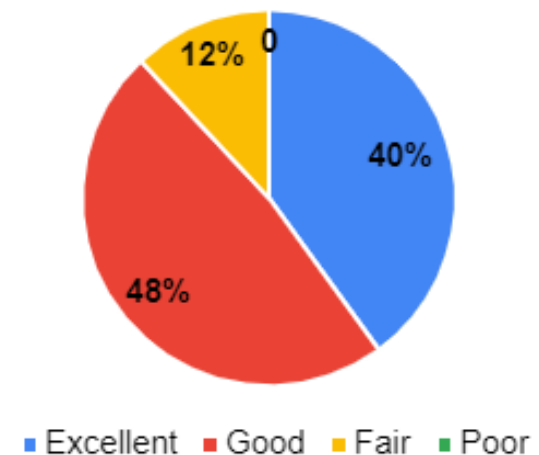
We asked you to tell us what workshop topics you would have liked to see - some of your suggestions were:

- An earlier session on what was expected of LAs and what was the role of the CLM/ACLM
- How to complete the Local Authority Partnership Plan (LAPP)
- RAG/Heat maps and ongoing fieldwork
- Communal establishments and students

"The workshops were very informative as I had very little knowledge of the process when I was appointed as CLM"

"They needed more detail on what was expected from LAs, as you seemed to focus more on what ONS was doing!"

How would you rate our census workshops?



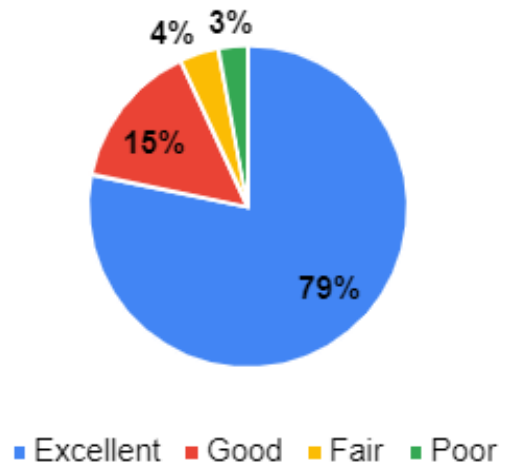
Census Engagement Managers (CEMs)

Overall, respondents gave very positive feedback about the CEM(s) they worked with; 79% rating their relationship with their CEM(s) as excellent. The comment boxes and focus groups backed up this positive feedback; many CLMs and ACLMs wanted to give them a special mention.

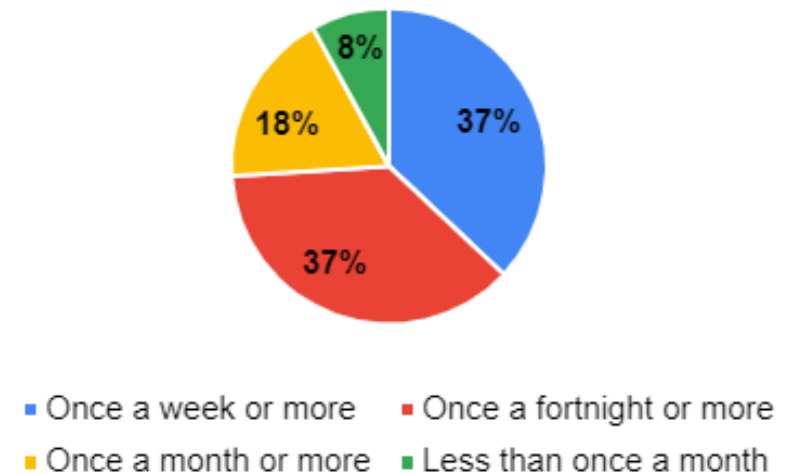
85% of respondents thought the CEMs started at the right time, while 13% thought they should have started earlier.

Most respondents met with their CEM(s) once a week or once a fortnight.

How would you rate your relationship with the CEM(s) in your area?



How often did you meet with the CEM(s)?



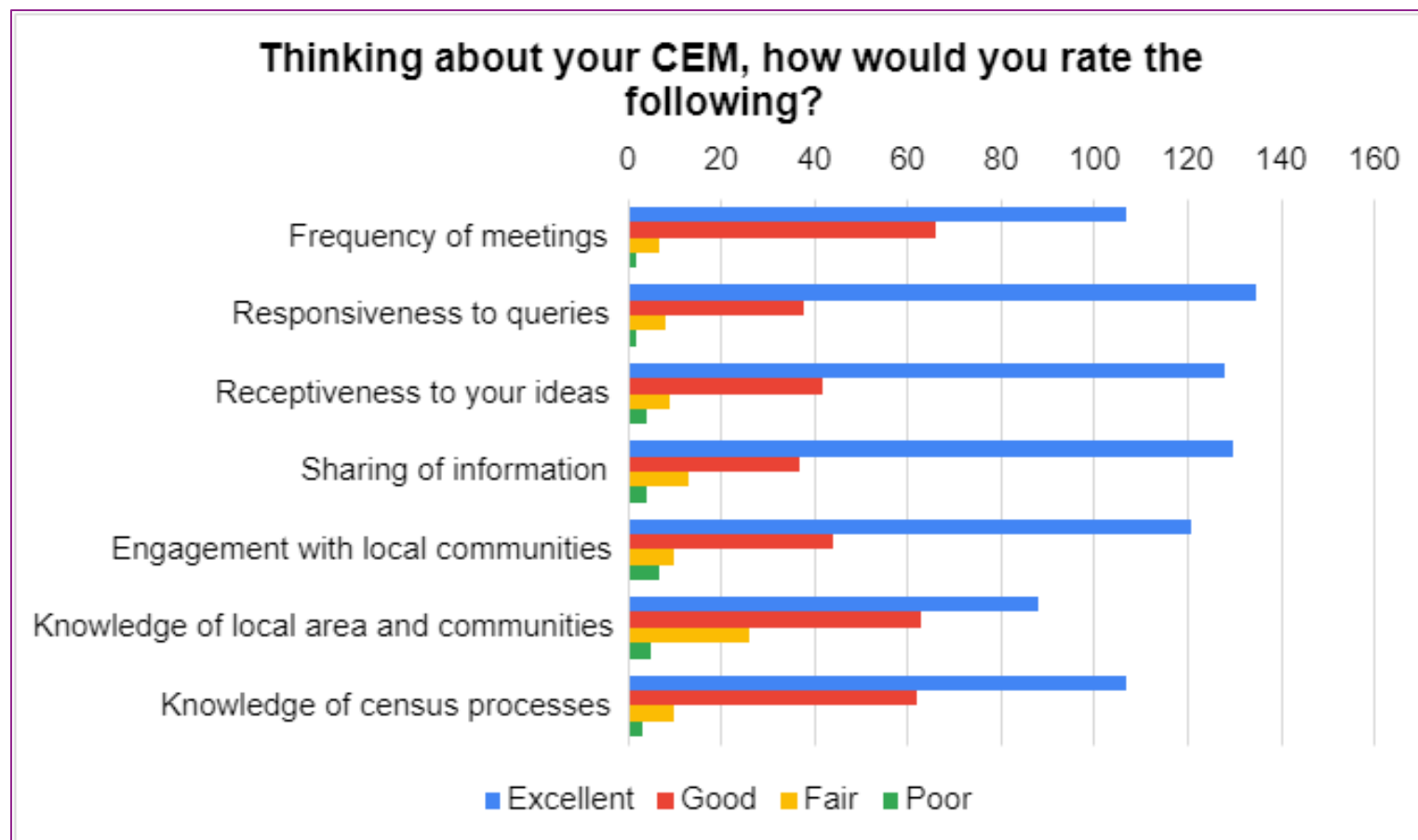
Census Engagement Managers (CEMs)

We had overwhelmingly positive feedback on CEMs in the seven categories. Respondents also commented that CEMs were generally quick to find out information they did not know and liaised well with contacts in other departments within the local authority.

“excellent”

“invaluable”

“a joy to work with”



Census Community Advisers (CAs)

As CEMs maintained the relationship with LAs, CAs often had little interaction directly with LAs. Where respondents were able to comment, the comments were generally positive. There was also feedback that some communities would have benefitted from a CA but were not allocated one.

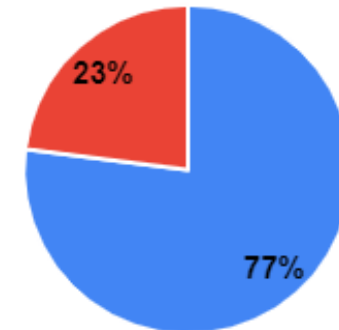
Census jobs

97% of respondents used their council's website and/or social media to promote census jobs. However, we did have some feedback that the job descriptions could not be adapted to suit local areas.

Communal Establishments and Special Population Groups

Throughout our engagement, LAs were very interested in our approach to communal establishments (e.g., student halls, care homes) and to special population groups (e.g., rough sleepers, Gypsies and Travellers).

Do you feel you had enough information on how ONS approached communal establishments and special population groups?



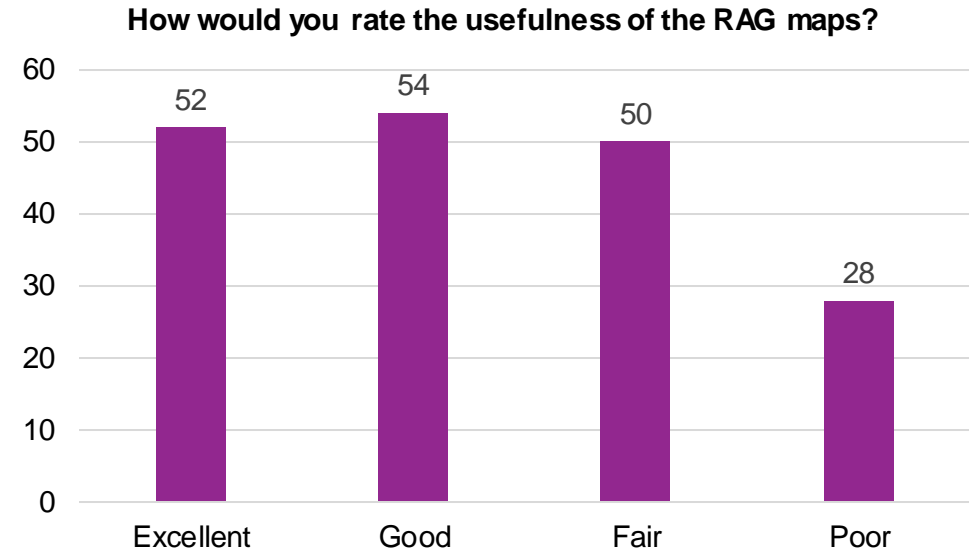
■ Yes ■ No

Red Amber Green maps showing status of census returns

ONS shared three Red Amber Green (RAG) maps with local authorities following Census Day, via Census Engagement Managers. Opinion on the utility of these maps was divided.

In written responses and the focus groups, respondents told us:

- The concept of the maps was good and they were useful to give a quick, indicative view of how things were going.
- However, a substantial number of you would have liked more detail such as actual return rates or the expected return rates against which the maps were RAG rated.
- Some respondents told us that the red / amber / green categories were not clear.

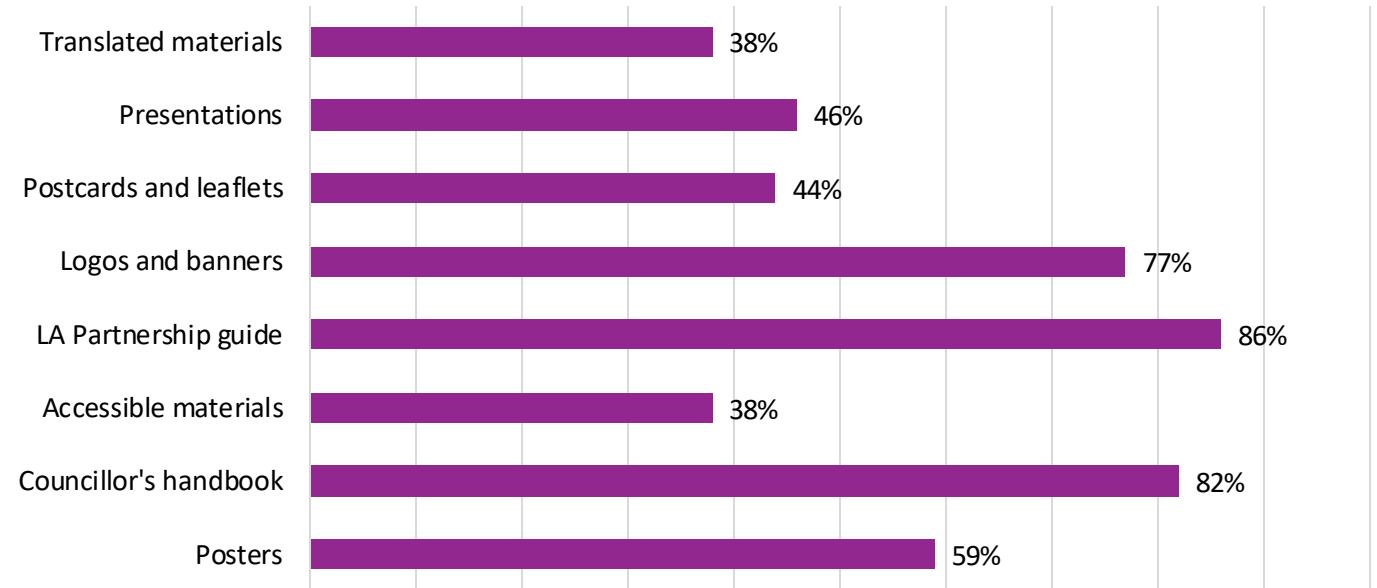


"It was a great infographic that I could show to the cabinet members and senior leadership teams"

"Response rates would have been more useful rather than performance against ONS's targets"

Communications resources

Downloadable resources used



A range of resources were available to download from the census website, and these were well used by local authority partners.

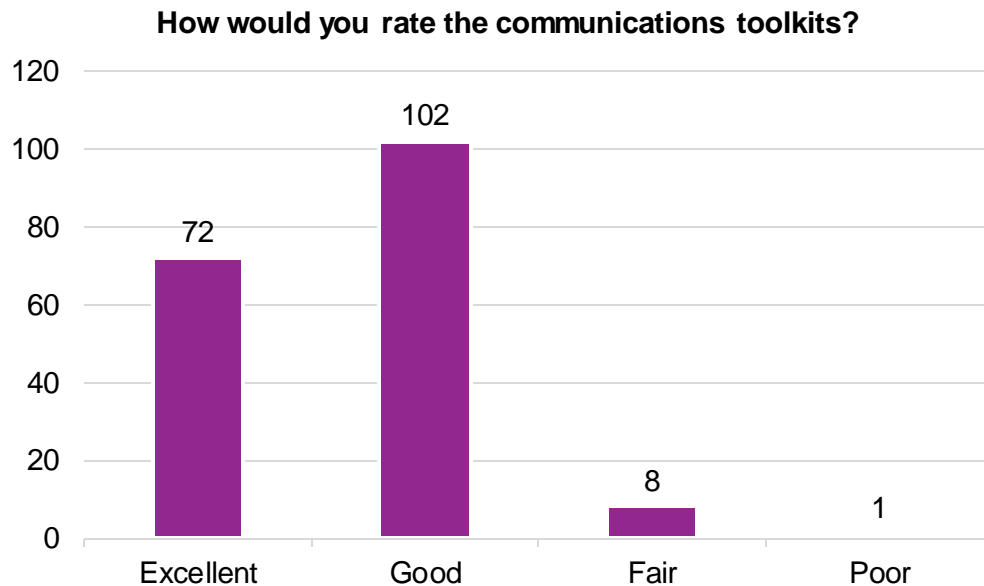
The ONS produced bilingual Welsh/English materials for use in Wales; two thirds of respondents rated these excellent.

91% of respondents rated the **LA Partnership guide** 'excellent' or 'good'.

59% of respondents ordered **printed posters and leaflets** from us, and many displayed these in vaccination centres. Many of those who did not order printed materials told us that this was because council buildings were closed to the public. Some urban LAs gave us feedback that the setting used for the posters and leaflets were not suited to their area.

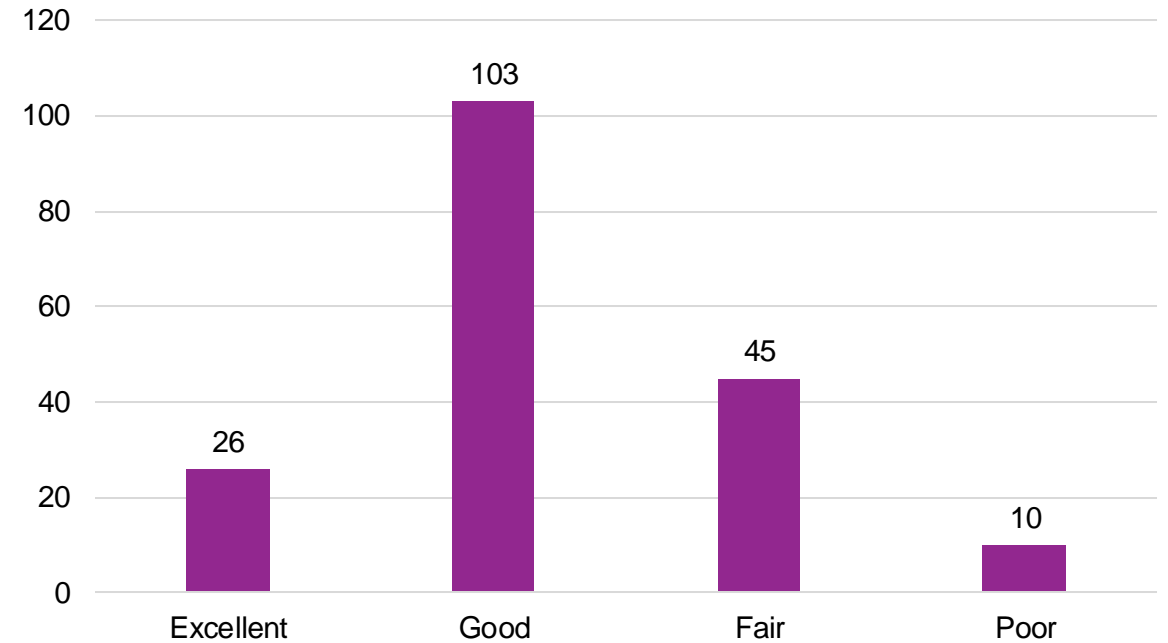
Communications resources

Our **communications toolkits** were used by 99% of respondents and were highly rated:



LAs commented, however, that the toolkits were late arriving.

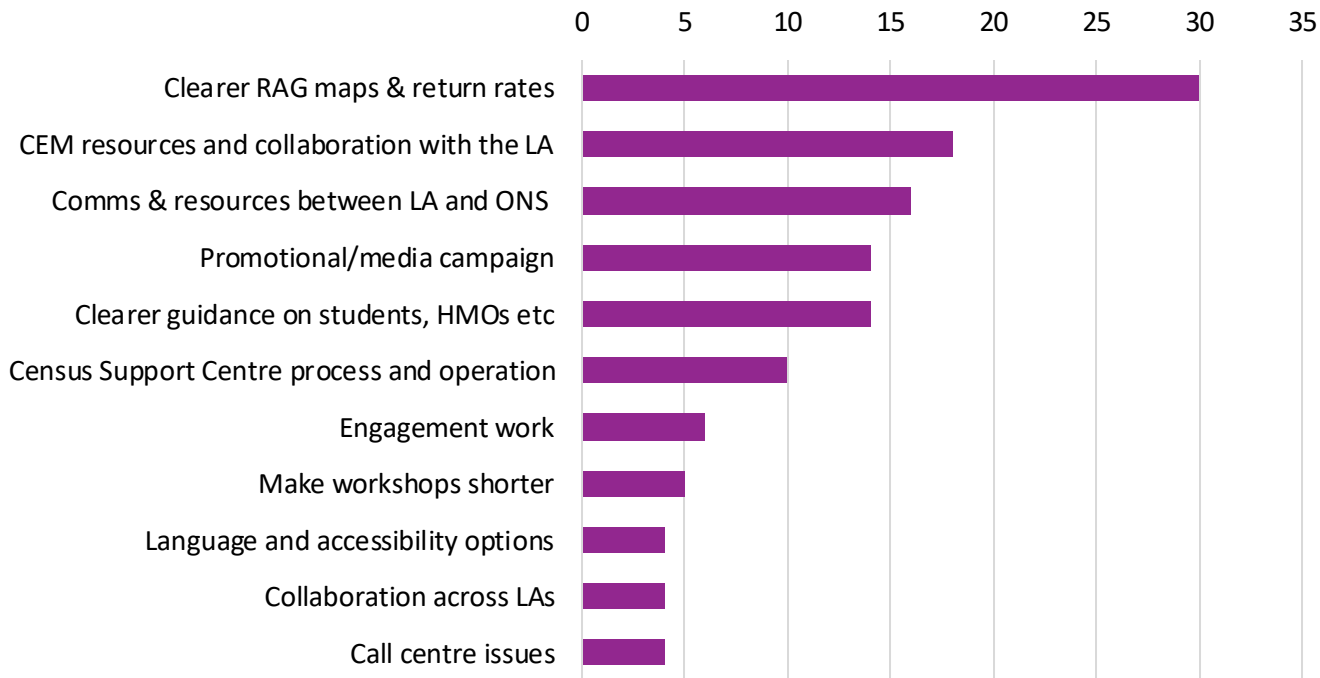
How would you rate the Local Authority Partnership Plan (LAPP) in helping to promote local community engagement and encouraging local authority support and participation?



Some respondents felt that the Local Authority Partnership Plan was an improvement from 2011 and liked the spreadsheet format, while others found the template difficult to use. Some people commented that the LAPP demanded more analysis than district councils had the capacity to provide; others found the LAPP a good starting point but commented that it sometimes wasn't utilised.

We asked you if there was anything you felt ONS could have done better

What could ONS have done better?



■ Number of LAs who commented on a topic in the survey

"Much earlier release of the media toolkits so that communications teams had time to prepare and use the physical and digital materials."

"After Census Day there could have been more press releases so we could publish information on our website and social media."

"Future proof posters and leaflets so that they are relevant before and after census day."

"The RAG maps on the level of census returns were quite vague. It would have been better if we were provided with more information so we could discuss with our CEM the best areas to target engagement events and activities."

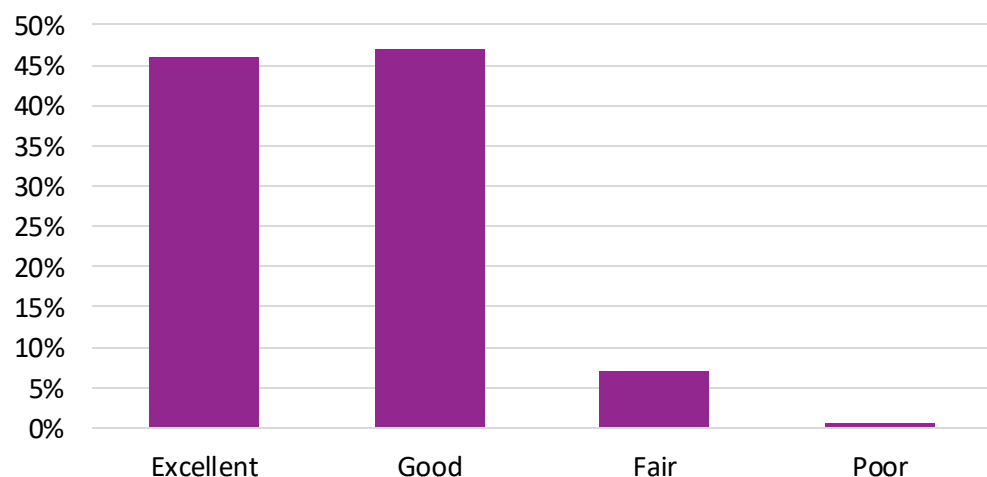
"Make the telephone helpline available from the time that the first Census adverts went out. We had a number of telephone queries from the public before the helpline was up and running."

"We don't feel that we had enough input into the locations of the Census Support Centres, which were especially important given that our libraries were all closed."

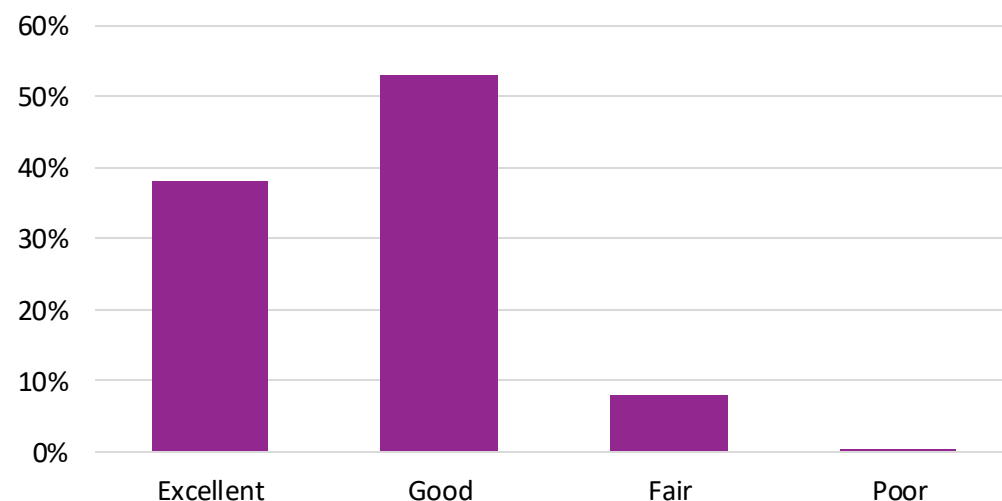
The Census 2021 collection operation was a fantastic success with more than 97% of households in England and Wales completing their questionnaire - but we couldn't have done it without your support.
Thank you!

You told us that our engagement activities overall were either good or excellent. Over 90% of respondents also felt that our partnership with LAs helped to raise awareness of Census 2021.

Through our engagement with local authorities, how effective do you think we were in raising awareness of Census 2021?



Overall, how would you rate our engagement activities for Census 2021?



Your feedback has given us valuable information for our future work so thank you for your responses.