

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 10 am SUNDAY 21 2021

www.sexinthecensus.org

PRESS RELEASE

With a month to go until the census on March 21, campaigners have launched the **Sex in the Census** campaign to protest the last minute decision by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) not to ask people to answer accurately with their biological sex.

Every census since 1841 has asked people what sex they are. In 2011 the ONS published guidance online saying people could answer according to the gender identity they felt best described them. But in 2011 most people did not complete the census online so this wasn't widely seen.

This time around, ONS hope that most people will complete the census online, where the small print will be more prominent. Trans identification has also become more common than it was ten years ago.

The guidance says *"If you are considering how to answer, use the sex recorded on one of your legal documents such as a birth certificate, Gender Recognition Certificate, or passport"*. The ONS do not say what other legal documents might count. A passport can be changed with a simple doctor's note, while NHS records or a student ID card can be changed on request.

Campaigners and statisticians say that this approach is effectively self identification and will erode the quality of sex data that the government needs to plan, run and fund services.

The Sex in the Census campaign is not a boycott of the census but asks people to request a paper copy of the census and return it with a letter that will ask the ONS to confirm that they will only record the respondent's sex as "sex registered at birth".

The group is calling for the mandatory sex question to clearly and accurately count men and women based on sex.

There is a separate, voluntary "gender identity" question. The group is not challenging this question.

Separately, Fair Play for Women plans to challenge the ONS in court. It says the guidance is unlawful because it is for Parliament not the ONS to determine the census questions. Fair Play for Women is calling on the ONS to withdraw the guidance. Otherwise it will apply to the High Court for a judicial review.

ENDS

EDITOR'S NOTES

The Sex in the Census campaign is a coalition of 15 grassroots organisations: Authentic Equity Alliance,

Conservatives for Women, FiLiA, the Institute for Feminist Thought, Labour Women's Declaration, LGB Alliance, Lesbian Labour, Lesbian Rights Alliance, Merched Cymru, Safe Schools Alliance, Sex Matters, Transgender Trend, Women's Human Rights Campaign, Woman's Place UK and Woman Uniting.

Q&A Document: <https://sexinthecensus.org/f-a-q/>

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