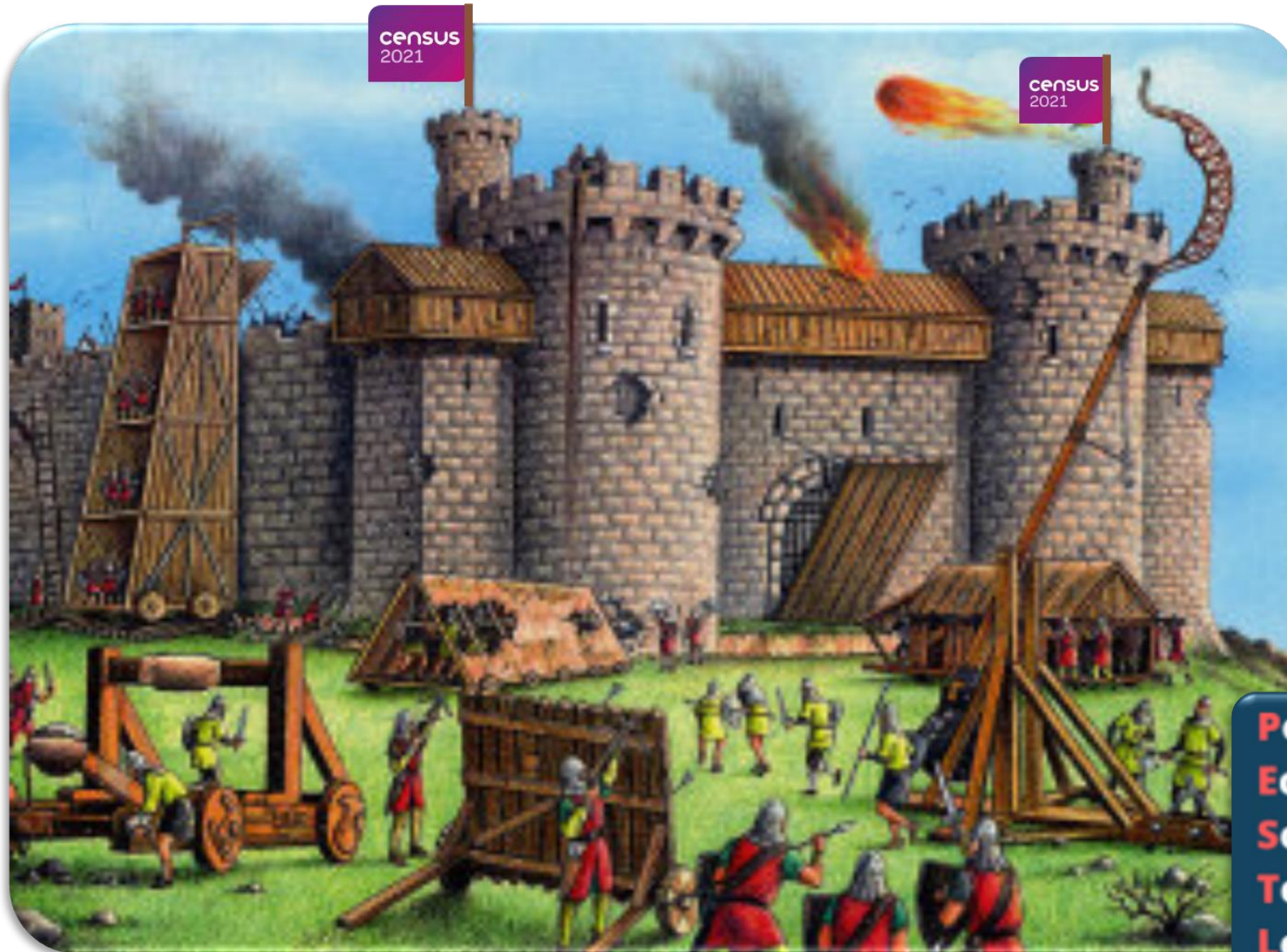


# Census 2021 Collection Operation

## *Controlling the Uncontrollable*

Jason Zawadzki  
Deputy Director, Census 2021 Operations

@Census2021 | @Cyfrifiad2021



**Political**  
**Economic**  
**Sociological**  
**Technological**  
**Legal**  
**Environmental**

6000 years  
ago

1086,  
Doomsday  
Book



Nativity Story  
in the Bible

1800, First  
ever Census  
Act

census  
2021





**The census** is a **unique survey** that takes place every 10 years in **England and Wales**.

By taking part, you'll help inform decisions that shape your community.

**census** 2021



# A count of the whole population

Every Village



Every Town



Every Street



**Accurate, small area, small group, population characteristics**

- 27 million households
- 500,000 communal establishments
- 8 week collection period

# Why have a census?



**Underpins national policy making**



**Planning investment and service delivery across public, private and voluntary sectors**



**Used to allocate funding to local areas**



# CENSUS SIMPLIFIED



# To be successful we must be 'fully inclusive'

census  
2021



## Population Groups:

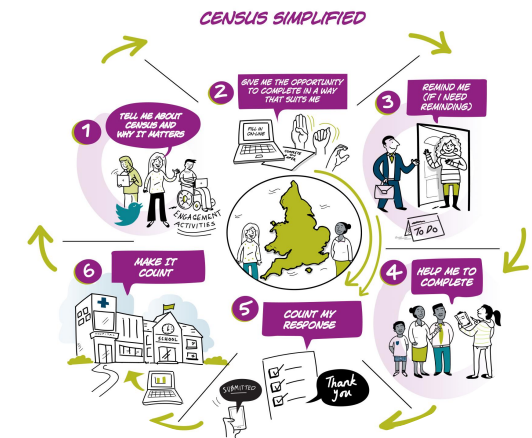
- students
- young adults
- adults 80+
- recent migrants
- minority ethnic groups
- certain religious groups

## Usual residence:

- travellers
- on canal boats
- sleeping rough
- in prisons
- on military bases
- in care homes
- show people
- sofa surfers

## Accessibility:

- Language
- Seeing challenges
- Hearing challenges
- Cognitive challenges
- Digitally disadvantaged
- Economically disadvantaged
- Trust and fear challenges





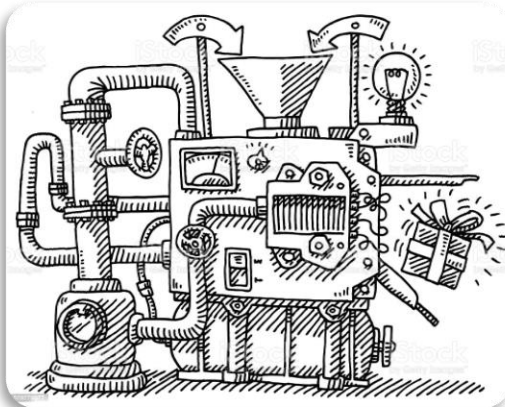
# The Census Challenge

census  
2021

## Fully Inclusive



## Big Complex Operation



## Fixed Timeline



8 week  
collection period

## Fixed Quality



## Fixed Cost



HM Treasury

## Risk Exposure

Political  
Economic  
Sociological  
Technological  
Legal  
Environmental

# Things do go wrong, in a big way, and very publicly

census  
2021



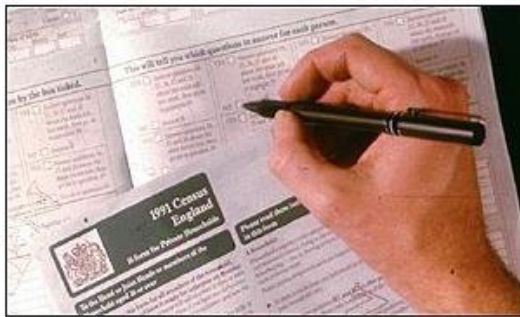
## England & Wales 2001

BBC NEWS

You are in: UK

Monday, 9 April, 2001, 08:53 GMT 09:53 UK

### Census begins despite foot-and-mouth



All households must complete the forms



## Australia 2016

### #CensusFail year at ABS: \$24m blow-out, missed targets and people hit by moving objects

By political reporter Jackson Gothe-Snape  
Posted Thu 19 Oct 2017 at 9:06am, updated Thu 19 Oct 2017 at 10:12am



## New Zealand 2018

NEW ZEALAND | Politics

### Political Roundup: Statistics NZ and a census failure of 'epic proportions'

16 Apr, 2019 02:15 AM

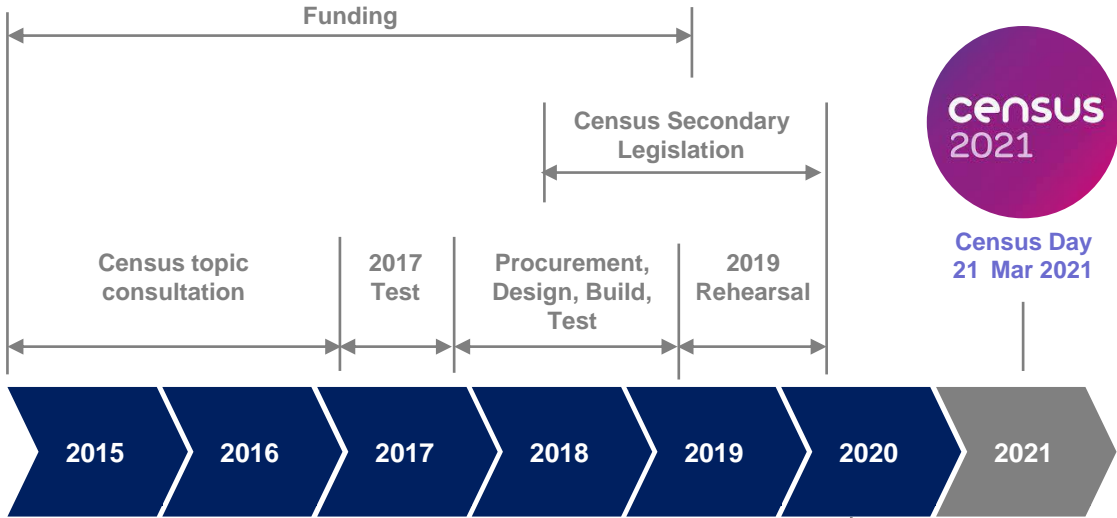
8 minutes to read



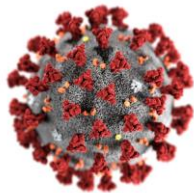
One in seven New Zealanders failed to fully complete Census 2018.

# Everything was going quite well...

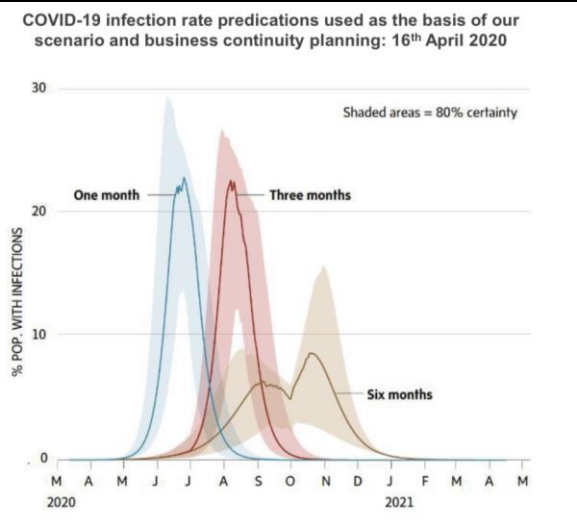
census  
2021



16:56, Monday  
16 Mar 2020







**BBC NEWS**

You are in: UK  
Monday, 9 April, 2001, 08:53 GMT 09:53 UK

Front Page  
World  
**UK**  
England  
Northern Ireland  
Scotland  
Wales  
UK Politics  
Business  
Sci/Tech  
Health  
Education  
Entertainment  
Talking Point  
In Depth  
AudioVideo

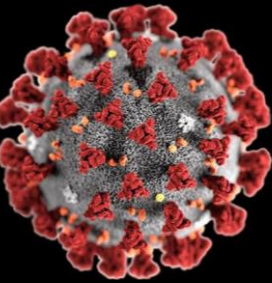
### Census begins despite foot-and-mouth

**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

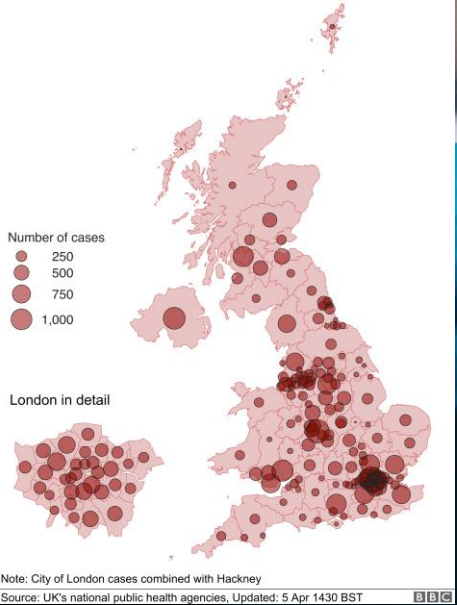
### "Pay the wi-fi or feed the children": Coronavirus has intensified the UK's digital divide

### #CensusFail year at ABS: \$24m blow-out, missed targets and people hit by moving objects

By political reporter Jackson Dothe-Snape  
Posted Thu 19 Oct 2017 at 9:06am, updated Thu 19 Oct 2017 at 10:12am

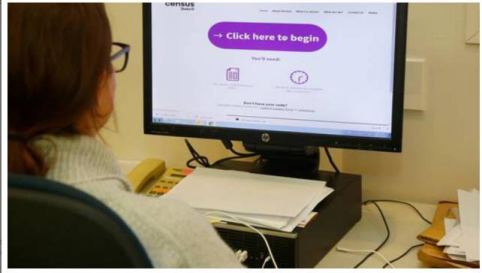


### Confirmed coronavirus (Covid-19) cases



### Political Roundup: Statistics NZ and a census failure of 'epic proportions'

16 Apr, 2019 02:35 AM © 4 minutes to read



One in seven New Zealanders failed to fully complete Census 2013.

# Our response

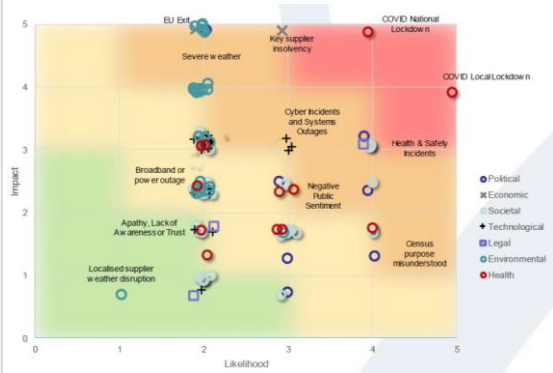
**census**  
2021

1. **Design out** as much risk as possible
2. **Protect our people**, our most precious resource
3. **Deepen our partnerships** with suppliers, Local Authorities, and Community Groups
4. **Prepare ourselves** to manage a very complex and volatile risk profile



# Getting “Ready for Anything”?

## Studied external risk



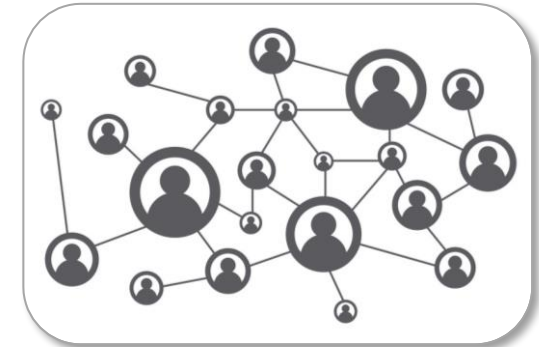
## Invested in training



## Progressive programme of wargames



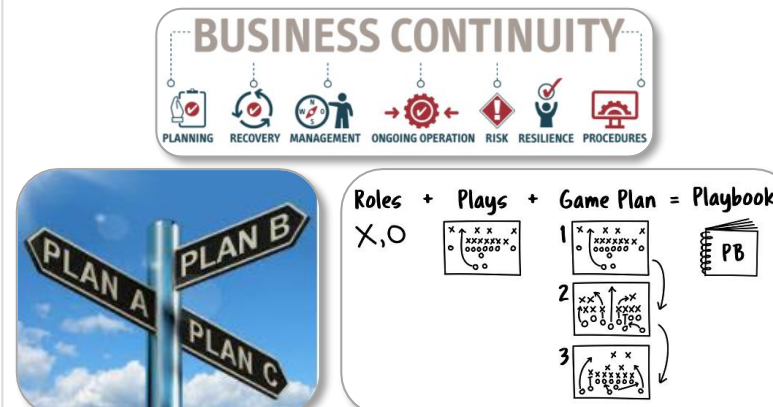
## Invested in our ability to communicate accurately and at pace



## Deepened our understanding of critical vulnerabilities and scenarios

#	Scenario				
1	Public can't respond digitally	Can't navigate or direct the operation	Address Risk	Letter Rage	Severe Weather
2	Public can't get support	Data Loss	Assumed volume not as expected	Media Attacks and misinformation	Geographical Access Restriction
3	Insufficient Field Staff Capacity	Cyber Attack	Unable to access HQ Offices	Mass Anti-Census Sentiment	Major Civil Unrest and Terrorism
4	Can't allocate work to the field	Staff Injury and Physical Attacks	Critical need for Political Will	Critical need for effective IA Partnerships	Infectious Disease/ Pandemic
					Death of a Monarch

## Created simplified, flexible and robust plans to respond to incidents & scenarios



## Built ‘active’ risk management into the heart of what everyone did daily





July 2020

Aug 2020

Sep 2020

Oct 2020

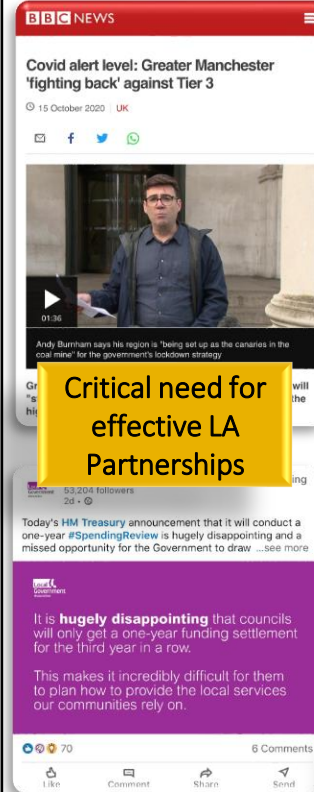
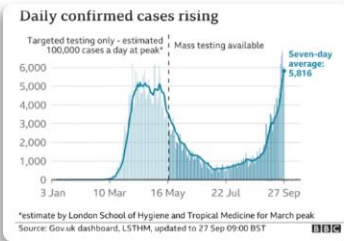
Nov 2020: 16 weeks to go

Dec 2020

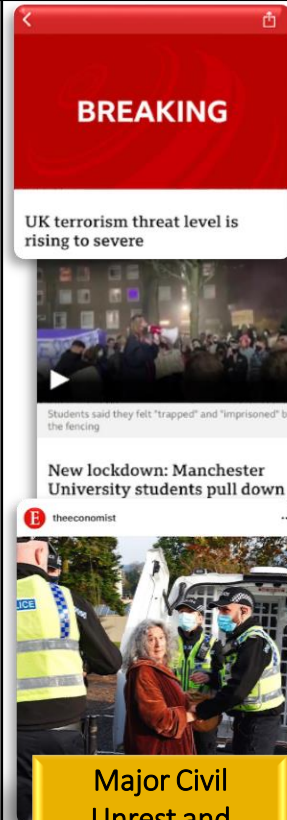
Jan 2021



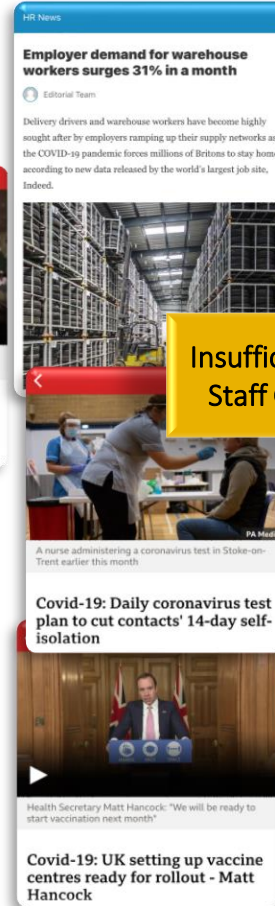
Critical need for Political Will



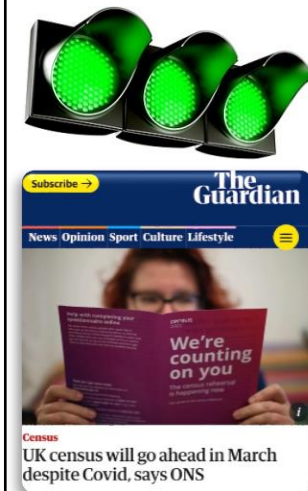
Second Lockdown



Major Civil Unrest and Terrorism



Insufficient Field Staff Capacity



Cyber Attack

## Feb 2021

Tue, 2 Feb



Wed, 10 Feb



**Census**  
Call for England and Wales census to be postponed amid Covid concerns  
Exclusive: civil service union urges ON Scotland's lead and delay census by a year

Wed, 17 Feb



## Mar 2021

Mon, 1 Mar



Wed, 3 Mar



Public can't get support

SYSTEM OVERLOAD

Fri, 5 Mar



2,552 Field Officers withdrawn from the field

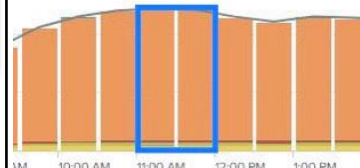
SYSTEM FAILURE

Mon, 8 Mar



Insufficient Field Staff Capacity

Sat/Sun, 20 & 21 Mar



70% Response Rate  
Zero Major Incidents

Tue, 23 Mar

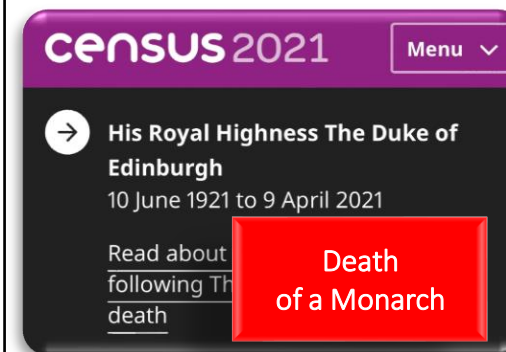


Reminder Rage



## Apr 2021

Fri, 9 Apr



Wed, 14 Apr

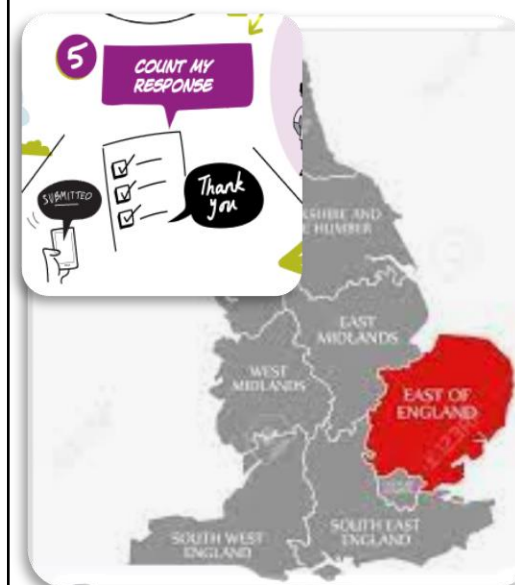


Media Attacks

Twitter Explosion

MP Letters

Sat, 3 Apr



340 Scam Websites



# 14 of our 21 critical vulnerabilities were exposed

census  
2021





# census Census Weekend 2021

Locations around England and Wales lit up purple for the census



Census

**A Covid snapshot: 28m UK households to take part in census unlike any other**

Pandemic likely to skew answers on work and health in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

- Coronavirus: latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage



5 days ago

Hull city centre to turn purple in ...  
hullccnews.co.uk

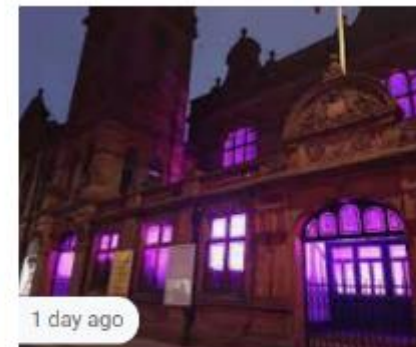


2 days ago

National Library lit up in purple to ...  
cambrian-news.co.uk

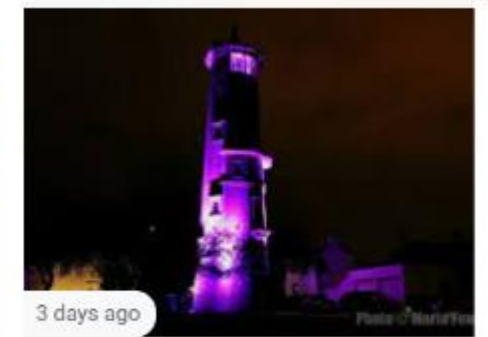


Hull city centre to turn purple in ...  
hullccnews.co.uk



1 day ago

Town halls lit up in purple in ...  
stourbridgenews.co.uk



3 days ago

Harwich High Lighthouse goes purple i...  
harwich-society.co.uk



# Media and PR Highlights



**CENSUS LIVE** Census 2021: Deadline PASSES as Brits risk £1k fine for failing to submit form



## Census

### A Covid snapshot: 28m UK households to take part in census unlike any other

Pandemic likely to skew answers on work and health in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

- Coronavirus - latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage





# census 2021 Social media influencers





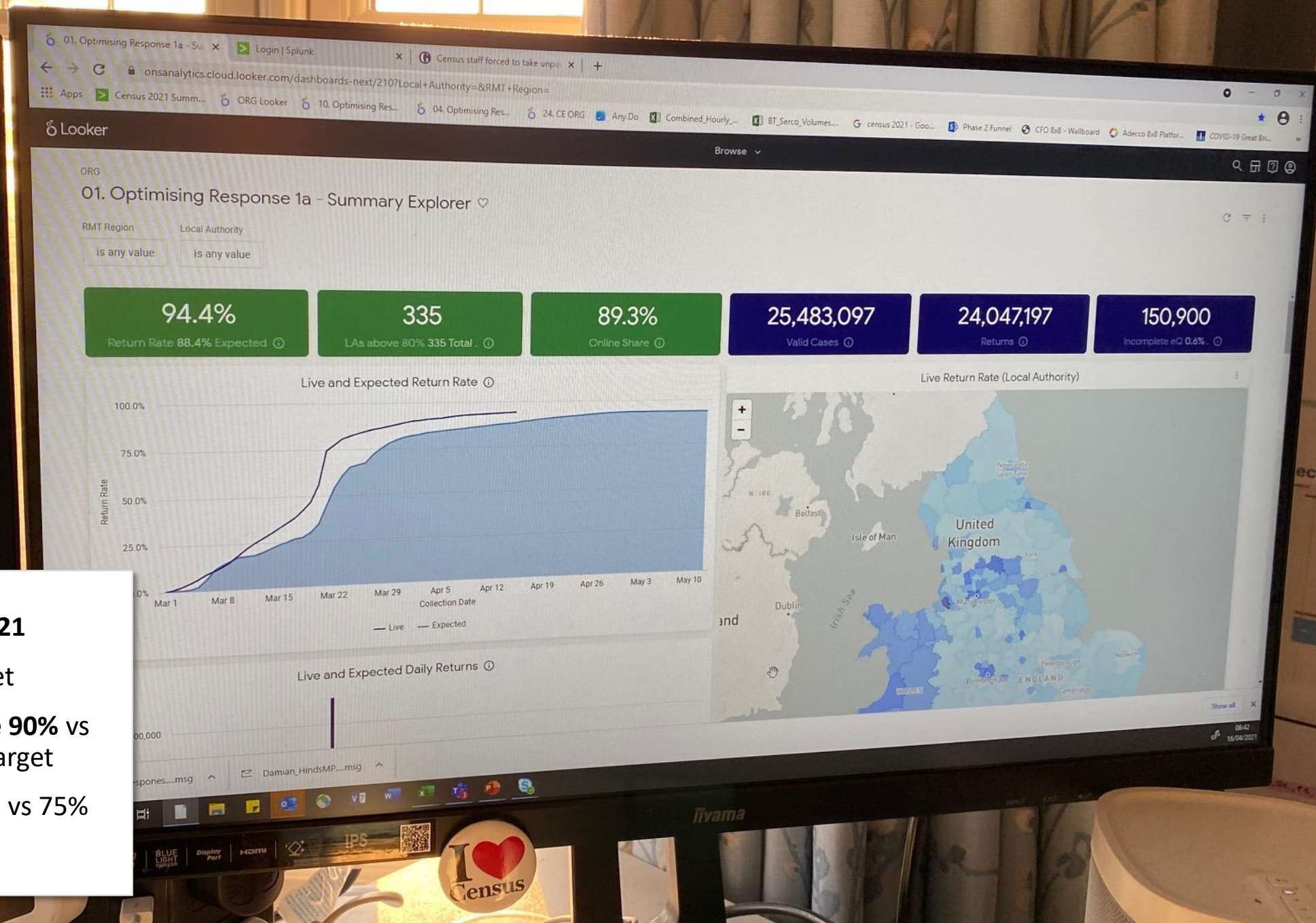
census  
2021

# Huge support from Local Authorities





Friday, 06:42  
16<sup>th</sup> April 2021



### By the end of April 2021

- **97.6%** vs 94% target
- **100% of LAs above 90%** vs 100% above 80% target
- **89.3%** online share vs 75% target

**Q.** So how did you control the uncontrollable?

**A.** We didn't, you can't

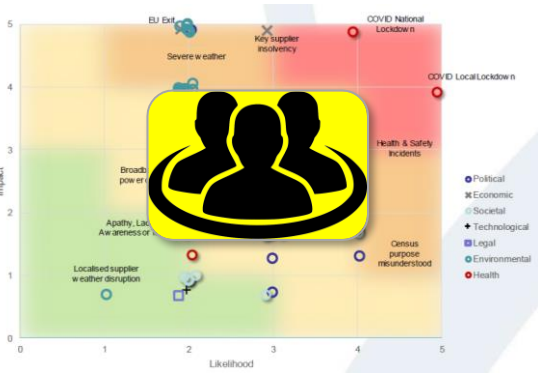
**Q.** So how did you pull off the most successful census ever in one of the most turbulent periods of modern times?

**A.** We controlled what we could control, in a really smart way

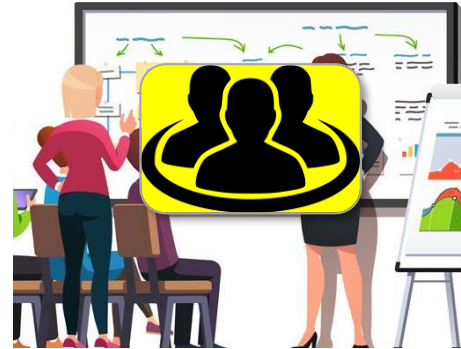


# We controlled our preparations

## Studied external risk



## Invested in training



## Progressive programme of wargames



## Invested in our ability to communicate accurately and at pace



## Deepened our understanding of critical vulnerabilities and scenarios

#	Scenario
1	"Order almost restored" (better case scenario in which the health situation has improved but there are still economic and political issues)
2	"Weathering the storm" (base line scenario in which severe weather threatens Census operations, but all other scenario themes materialise as expected)
3	"Persistent pandemic" (worse case scenario in which the health situation deteriorates with knock-on impacts on societal feeling)
4	"Political turmoil" (worse case scenario in which the health situation materialises as expected, but there are widespread economic, political and societal issues)

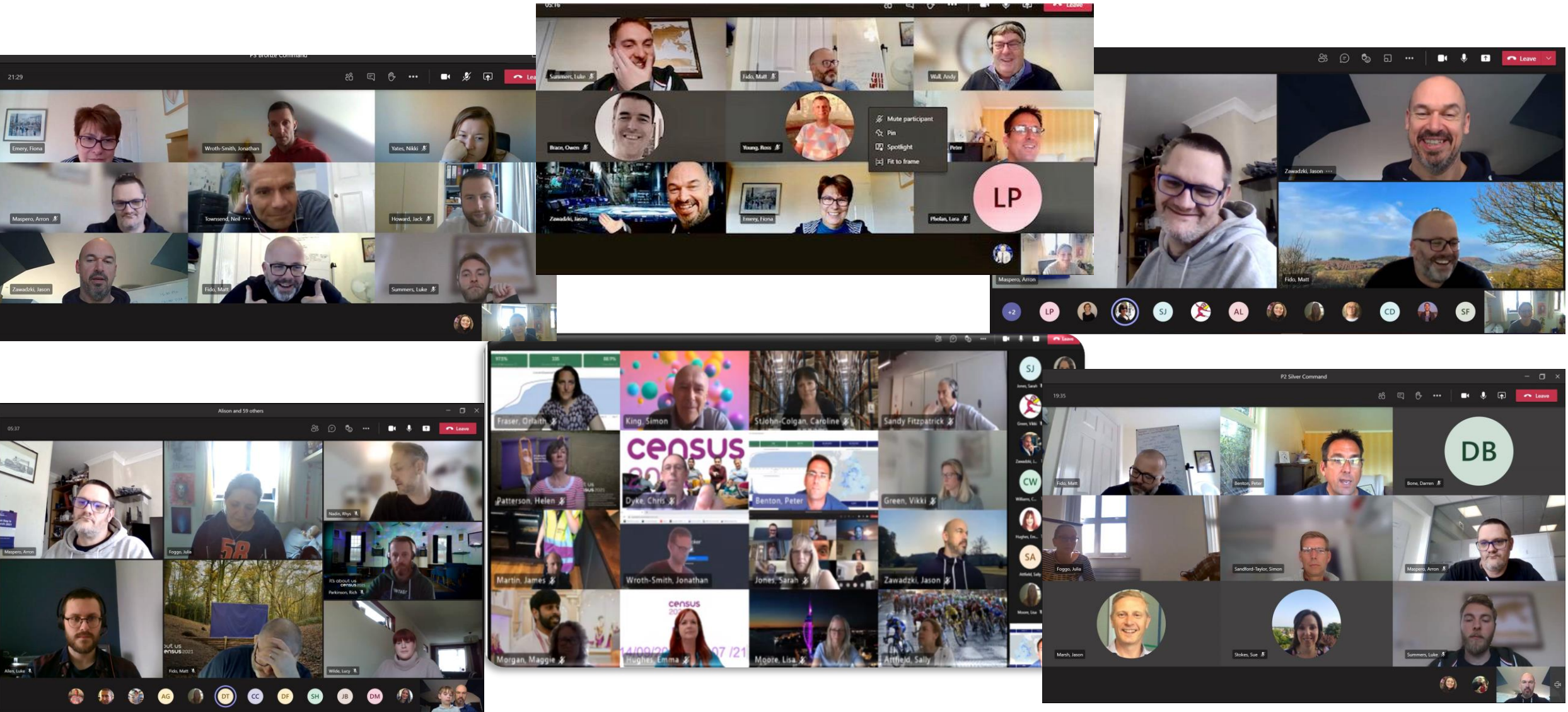
## Created simplified, flexible and robust plans to respond to incidents & scenarios



## Built 'active' risk management into the heart of what everyone did daily



# We controlled our perceptions







# Questions



**Paper Services**

**Service  
Management**

**Field  
Operation**

**Communal  
Establishments**

**Online  
Services**

**Response  
Management**

**Public  
Support**

**Community  
Engagement**

**Data Processing**

**National & Local Media Campaign**

Pa

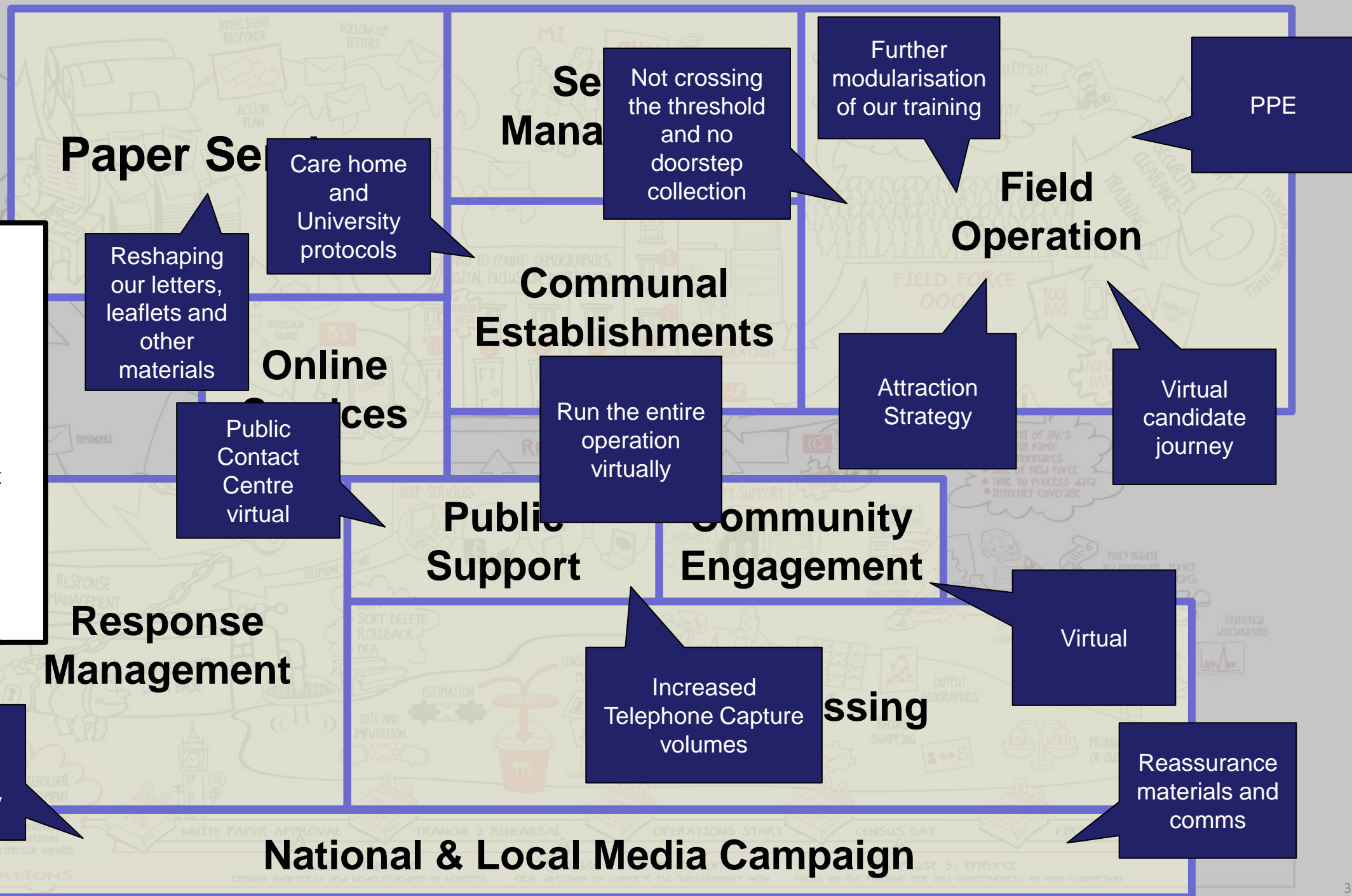
- 27 million households
- c500,000 Communal Establishments
- 335 Local Authorities across England and Wales
- 26 Operational Services
- 400 ONS HQ staff
- 21 key suppliers, with a combined contract value of £228 million

Ro  
Ma

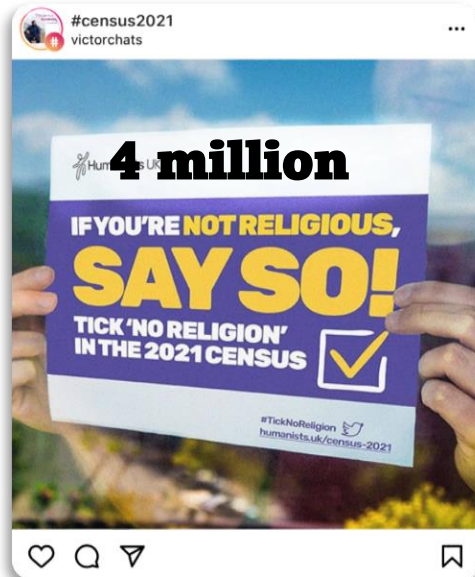
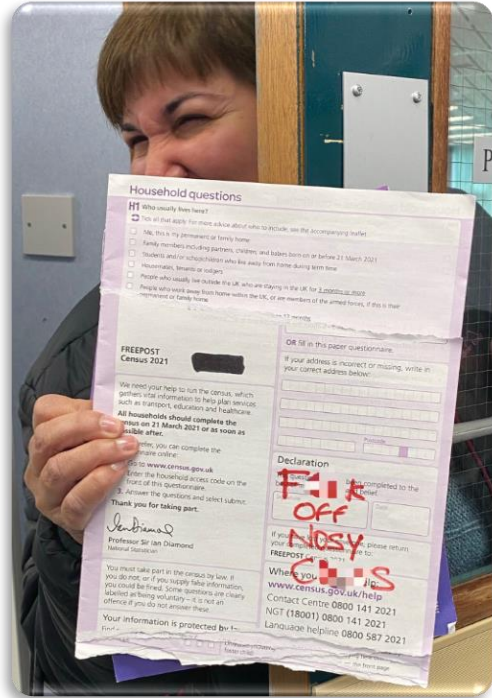
- 8 million paper questionnaires
- 24 million initial contact letters
- 20 million reminder letters
- 6 million contact centre calls
- 30,000 staff in the field
- Total cost estimate of £906 million

## National & Local Media Campaign





# Was it worth it?



Campaign urges Brits to declare themselves 'European' on 2021 census

Jonathon Read



Published: 11:22 AM February 22, 2021 Updated: 4:54 PM February 23, 2021



**We Care Campaign**  
@WeAreCarers

Let's get counted!

It's so important as [#UnpaidCarers](#) to say YES to Question 24 in England & Wales & Question 22 in Northern Ireland & say how much we care for.

That way local authorities, carers organisations and government will know how many carers there are [#Census2021](#)



08:55 · 09/03/2021 · Hootsuite Inc.



**Hafsa Qureshi**  
@MsHafsaQureshi

Declared myself as bisexual and Muslim on the UK census! Feels so pivotal to me. I would never have felt able to do this, even 5 years ago. I'm proud at how far I've come in embracing my own identity.

deafrainbowuk 21 · Twitter for Android

**2 million**

households struggle to afford internet access (Ofcom, 2021)

**10 million**

people don't have the most basic digital skills (Lloyds EDS, 2021)