



Funding opportunity

Enable discovery and use of UK census 2021/2 data: outline stage

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£2,400,000
Award range:	£150,000 - £500,000
Publication date:	6 June 2023
Opening date:	6 June 2023 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	8 August 2023 4:00pm UK time

Timeline

- **6 June 2023 9:00am**
Opening date: outline stage
- **8 August 2023 4:00pm**
Closing date: outline stage
- **11 September 2023**
Selected applicants are invited to submit full proposals (provisional date)

Apply for funding for tools, services and activities that enable researchers to find, use and analyse data from the 2021 and 2022 UK censuses for social science-led research.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for ESRC funding.

The full economic cost of your project can be up to £500,000. ESRC will fund 80% of the full economic cost.

This opportunity uses a two-stage approach. See 'How to apply' for details.

Funding is available until March 2026.

○ **Week commencing 6 November 2023**

Deadline for full proposals (provisional date)

○ **Late January 2024**

Outcomes communicated (provisional date)

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

Who can apply

Before applying for funding, check the following:

- [the ESRC eligibility guidance for applicants](#)
- [the eligibility of your organisation](#)
- [the remit query form](#), if you are unsure whether your proposed research falls within the remit of ESRC

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is introducing new role types for funding opportunities being run on the new Funding Service from 22 May 2023.

For full details, visit [Eligibility as an individual](#).

Who is eligible to apply

The funding opportunity is open to an individual or small team based at eligible institutions in the UK.

For further information please see [ESRC's research funding guide](#).

International applicants

Project leads from non-UK organisations are not eligible to apply for funding for this opportunity.

Project co-leads based in non-UK organisations can usually be included in research grant applications, unless otherwise stated within this opportunity. Read [our guidance on the inclusion of international co-investigators](#) for details of eligible organisations and costs.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

Find out more about [equality, diversity and inclusion at UKRI](#).

What we're looking for

Scope

The aim of the opportunity is to enable the use of UK census 2021/2 data for excellent social science-led research.

Within the constraints of time and budget; the opportunity pursues the following outcomes:

- services are in place to support researchers who wish to use UK census 2021/2 data for social science-led research
- tools and research-ready datasets that enable research with census data have been created
- researchers are more aware of the wide variety of census data that will become available and understand how to access and maximise their use of it
- researchers are more aware of the services and support (including training) that is available

This funding opportunity relates to census data produced by the 2021 censuses in England and Wales, and in Northern Ireland; and by the 2022 census in Scotland. This data includes:

- aggregate and individual-level census data
- census data linked to other sources of data (including government administrative data)
- census data linked longitudinally, including through the existing census longitudinal studies

We encourage projects that take a UK-wide approach. However, projects that do not cover all UK nations or regions are within scope: this should be justified in your outline application.

What we will fund

ESRC could fund activities such as:

- new data services
- user support services
- methodological research to solve challenges in processing census data for research purposes
- research-ready data products, including linked datasets
- software and other tools to support the creation or use of census data infrastructure
- training and networking related to the use of census data infrastructure, including coordination of, or signposting to, existing training opportunities
- development of guidance on how to use census data for research
- communications and engagement to facilitate data use, particularly across the UK censuses collectively (including pre-2021 records)

What we will not fund

Duplication of existing and planned delivery

We will not fund proposals that duplicate current or planned service delivery by other agencies or UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) investments.

The statistical agencies that run the UK censuses are custodians of their data. They provide support and advice to users and communicate actively with wider audiences. They also operate data processing activities and services that enable census data to be used for research. It is essential that

current or planned activity by the agencies is not duplicated by proposals funded under this opportunity.

We will involve the agencies in the review of outline proposals to this funding opportunity. We encourage direct engagement with the agencies by applicants to identify potential duplication.

Information about data from each of the UK censuses and contact details for specific advice can be found on the following websites:

- [NISRA](#)
- [ONS](#)
- [Scotland Census](#)

We are a long-standing funder of support services for census data. Our current investments with significant relevance to census data include:

- the [UK Data Service](#)
- Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK) (which in turn funds [Trusted Research Environments in all four UK nations](#)) through which census data can be accessed
- three UK census longitudinal studies support units: [CeLSIUS](#), [NILS-RSU](#) and [SLS-DSU](#)
- adding 1921 census data to the [Integrated Census Microdata Project](#)

Our existing census-related investments are funded through other means. The purpose of this funding opportunity is not to replace such funding.

Other exclusions

Analysis of census data will not be funded unless this work is solely focused on finding practical solutions to challenges in processing census data so that it can be used for research.

Projects without a primary focus on the data gathered in the UK through the 2021 or 2022 censuses will not be funded.

When grants should start

You should note the funding opportunity timetable. Projects cannot begin until after a grant offer has been made.

We recognise that census data releases are still under active development by the UK statistical agencies, especially in Scotland.

All grants should begin at the earliest opportunity. We will apply the following principles:

1. Projects focused on England, Northern Ireland and Wales should begin immediately
2. Projects focused solely on Scotland may begin later.
3. UK-wide projects should begin work relating to England, Northern Ireland and Wales immediately, with activity relating to Scotland beginning later.

Any requested variations to the above principles should be clearly justified in proposals.

Where there is uncertainty about the nature and timing of future data releases on which proposals have key dependencies, we will agree with grant holders a proportionate gateway review process to release funds.

Duration

We can provide funding until 31 March 2026. All investments should produce outcomes and outputs of public value by the end of their funding. This could include the establishment of prototypes or minimum viable products.

We recognise that some activities may take longer to produce all beneficial outcomes, and that new data services may have the potential to continue delivering value for the research community if they were to operate beyond March 2026.

You should state in your outline application whether your project will be:

- fully complete by March 2026 with no ongoing resource requirement
- capable of continuing to deliver value in the short-term with limited additional time or funding required beyond March 2026 (for example one – two- years)
- capable of delivering value over a longer period (three years or more), if funding were to continue

All outline applications should set out a high-level timetable and state what will be delivered by the end of our funding.

Outputs and outcomes should be delivered at the earliest opportunity: this may be significantly before the grant end date.

We can make no commitment to provide further funding beyond what is offered by this funding opportunity. However, funded projects capable of delivering value beyond 2026 will be asked to develop plans for future work, which it is possible that we may consider funding.

Funding available

The total funding available from ESRC is £2.4 million.

The full economic cost of your project should be in the range £150-500k. We will fund 80% of the full economic cost.

Investment monitoring

We will set out monitoring and reporting requirements in the terms and conditions of the grant award. Grant holders will be required to produce an updated timeline, deliverables list and risk register at the start of the grant, for regular discussion with us.

The grant holders will be expected to provide us with a short, written update on activities quarterly, with the format to be agreed at the outset of the award. More frequent updates will be expected on important activities, risks and major project changes if they present a risk to the grant meeting its objectives. We will assign an investment manager as a lead contact for each funded investment.

We will establish a stakeholder forum in relation to census data which grant holders should attend. Meetings are likely to be in a virtual format, two – three times per year. It is expected that grant holders will provide a short update to this forum.

Grant holders will be expected to engage with the two [Future Data Services](#) strategic fellows (until 2024), and with CeLSIUS, NILS-RSU, SLS-DSU, UK Data Service, [ADR UK](#) and [Smart Data Research UK](#) to identify opportunities to maximise the use of census data.

How to apply

Funding opportunity format

The funding opportunity involves two application stages: outline stage, followed by invited full applications.

Stage one: outline proposals

Outline proposals, which is what this funding opportunity invites, should be submitted in accordance with the guidance below.

Stage two: full applications

We will invite some applicants to submit full applications. We do not recommend that you begin developing full applications until you are invited to do so. Further details about requirements for full applications will be published in due course.

UKRI Funding Service

We are running this funding opportunity on the new UKRI Funding Service. You cannot apply on the Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S) system.

The project lead is responsible for completing the application process on the Funding Service, but we expect all team members and project partners to contribute to the application.

Only the lead research organisation can submit an application to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

To apply:

1. Select 'Start application' near the beginning of this page.
2. Confirm you are the project lead.
3. Sign in or create a Funding Service account. To create an account, select your organisation, verify your email address, and set a password. If your organisation is not listed, email support@funding-service.ukri.org
4. Answer questions directly in the text boxes. You can save your answers and come back to them or work offline and return to copy and paste your answers. All questions and assessment criteria are listed in the 'How to apply' section on this Funding finder page.

5. Send the completed application to your research office for checking. They will return it to you if it needs editing.
6. Your research office will submit the completed and checked application to UKRI.

Watch our [research office webinars about the new UKRI Funding Service](#).

Deadline

We must receive your application by 8 August 2023 at 4.00pm UK time

You will not be able to apply after this time.

Make sure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines.

Personal data

Processing personal data

ESRC, as part of UKRI, will need to collect some personal information to manage your funding service account and the registration of your funding applications.

We will handle personal data in line with UK data protection legislation and manage it securely. For more information, including how to exercise your rights, read our [privacy notice](#).

Publication of outcomes

ESRC, as part of UKRI, will publish the outcomes of this funding opportunity at [Board and panel outcomes – ESRC – UKRI](#)

If your application is successful, we will publish some personal information on the [UKRI Gateway to Research](#).

UKRI Funding Service: section guidance

Summary

In plain English, provide a summary that can be sent to potential reviewers to determine if your proposal is within their field of expertise.

This summary may be made publicly available on external facing websites, so please ensure it can be understood by a variety of readers, for example:

- opinion-formers
- policymakers
- the general public
- the wider research community.

Guidance for writing a summary

Succinctly describe your proposed work in terms of:

- its aims and objectives
- how it addresses ESRC's funding opportunity aim and at least one of the outcomes (set out in the scope subsection)

Please note that this summary will be used by the panel when assessing your outline application.

Word count: 500

Core team

List the key members of your team and assign them roles from the following:

- project lead (PL)
- project co-lead (UK) (PcL)
- specialist
- grant manager
- professional enabling staff
- research and innovation associate
- technician
- visiting researcher

Only list one individual as project lead.

Find out more about [UKRI's new grant roles](#).

Section: Approach

Question: What are your plans to manage the proposed project?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

We expect you to show how your approach includes:

- a feasible outline project plan, which should include a high-level work plan with milestones and deliverables
- identification of risks and appropriate mitigation
- justification of the requested grant start date

Within the Approach section we also expect you to provide:

- a list of partners (if applicable)

We do not require information on costs to be submitted at this outline stage. All projects, as proposed to ESRC at full application stage, should be within the budget range specified above.

Word Count: 1,000

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

Outline proposals will be sifted by a triage group. Representatives of the three UK statistical agencies will be invited to comment on the feasibility of proposals and to identify potential duplication of activities that are planned by the agencies themselves. Selected bids will then be invited to prepare a full application for funding.

The triage group will consider the assessment criteria outlined in 'How to apply'.

Recommendations from the triage group will inform which applicants are invited to submit to the full proposal stage.

Decisions at this stage may reflect ESRC's need to fund a balanced portfolio of investments, which includes all parts of the UK.

We reserve the right to modify the assessment process as needed.

Timescale

We aim to complete the assessment process within five weeks of receiving your outline application.

Principles of assessment

We support the San Francisco [declaration on research assessment \(DORA\)](#) and recognise the relationship between research assessment and research integrity.

Find out about [UKRI principles of assessment and decision making – UKRI](#)

We reserve the right to modify the assessment process as needed.

Contact details

Get help with your application

For help on costings and writing your application, contact your research office. Allow enough time for your organisation's submission process.

Ask about this funding opportunity

Email: support@funding-service.ukri.org

We aim to respond to emails within 2 working days.

Phone: 01793 547490

Our phone lines are open:

- Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5:00pm
- Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

Additional info

Supporting documents

[ESRC equality, diversity and inclusion](#)

[UKRI policies and standards](#)

[Good research resource hub](#)

[ESRC research funding guide](#)

[Funding opportunity equality impact assessment \(PDF, 176KB\)](#)

Updates

9 June 2023

Timeline dates updated for the outline stage closing date, invited full proposals date, closing date for invited full proposals and outcomes communicated date. Sentence added to the 'Approach' sub-section under 'How to apply' to explain that outline costs are not required at this outline stage.

<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/enable-discovery-and-use-of-uk-census-2021-2-data-outline-stage>