Inclusive Data Taskforce:
How can we be more inclusive in our data?

Easy read booklet

September 2021

Contents

Words

In this easy read document, words that might be hard to understand are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean after they have been used.

Who we are and what we did

We are a group of people called the **Inclusive Data Taskforce**. **Data** are facts or figures.

We wanted to understand what data there are in the UK about different types of people. We also wanted to know where there are gaps and how things can be improved in the future to be more inclusive.

The UK **National Statistician** asked us to look at how to help make UK data better and include more types of people. We did this by asking **4** questions about data in the UK.

The **National Statistician** is responsible for collecting information about people living in the UK.

We worked with the Office for National Statistics to complete this work.

In this booklet we tell you what we found out. We also tell you about the changes we think should be made so that data can be collected and used in the best way in the future.

What we wanted to know

The **Inclusive Data Taskforce** wanted to know:

1. What data are missing that would help to better understand people's needs.

2. What makes it difficult for people to provide data.

3. How to better use the data that already exist to understand the needs of different types of people.

4. How to learn from examples of good work.

Who we spoke to

We spoke to lots of people from different backgrounds in all the parts of the UK.

We spoke to people who might use data, such as community organisations and charities. We also spoke to **the public**, who might provide data.

The public means ordinary people such as the people in your local area.

We spoke to the government and other groups of people who collect and use data.

We spoke to people online and some people also wrote to us to tell us what they think.

The better data we have, the more understanding we will have on what people think and the needs of different groups of people.

We found that data are missing in the UK for some groups. For other groups, there aren't enough data or the data are not of good enough quality.

These groups include people such as:

- people who are transgender

- people who live in care homes

- people who have been in prison

- people who are homeless

- people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

- people who have left home because someone there hurt them

There also aren't a lot of data on some children, such as:

- disabled children

- children who are in care

- children who have moved here from another country

- young **carers**

- children of people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

A **carer** looks after and supports another person who needs help with their daily life.

Data are also missing from people who don't or can't go online. **COVID-19**, which is also called coronavirus, might have made this worse.
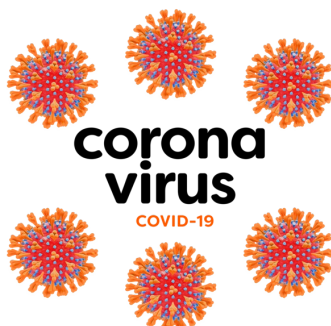
COVID-19 is a virus affecting people all over the world. People had to stay at home a lot more because of it so more data are now collected online.

We also found out there aren't enough or good quality data on some topics. For example, data are missing about how much money people have*.*

Data are missing about people's sexual orientation and whether they are treated differently because of it.

Data are missing about how new mothers and women who are pregnant are treated.

Data can be missing because questions are **voluntary**.

Voluntary means you only answer the question if you want to.

Data are missing about people's religion and whether they are treated differently because of it.

Data provided on behalf of other people can sometimes be incorrect and incomplete. This might happen if people answer questions for someone else, such as parents responding on behalf of their children.

With gaps in information or low quality data, we might not know the best ways to help people with different types of needs.

2. What makes it difficult for people to provide data

It's important to collect data from different groups of people and to make sure that these data are useful to understand their characteristics and circumstances.

There are a lot of reasons why people don't provide data. People might not want to or might not be able to provide data.

Some people might not want to provide data because they don't think the government treats them fairly. Or they think the government might use their data to make life harder for them.

This could happen with all people, and particularly with groups of people who are **under-represented**.

Under-represented means we have less data about these types of people compared to other types of people.

Some people might not want to provide data because they are asked too often. They may feel that no one is listening to them because they keep being asked the same questions.
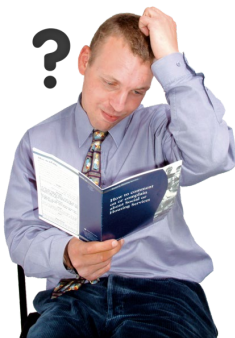
Some people might not want to provide data because they don't think anything good will happen for them or their **community** if they do.

Your **community** is the area where you live and the people you know.

Some people might not provide data because the way data are collected stops them. This might include:

- written **surveys** when people can't read

- surveys in languages people don't understand

- online surveys when people don't use computers

- survey questions that are hard to understand

- surveys that have been made without fully understanding the needs of a group and their community

A **survey** collects data by asking people questions. A survey can help to gather information about different topics.

Some people might not want to provide data because they don't like the words used to describe things about them like **personal characteristics**.

Age, religion and background are examples of **personal characteristics**.

Some data collection activities need to update the words or phrases they use to describe people when talking about things such as **ethnicity** and disability. This will help to better understand what people need.

Your **ethnicity** is the culture you feel connected to, which might link to where your family comes from.

It's important that the options given for personal characteristics reflect how people think about themselves.

What we found out
3. How to better use the data that already exist to understand the needs of different types of people
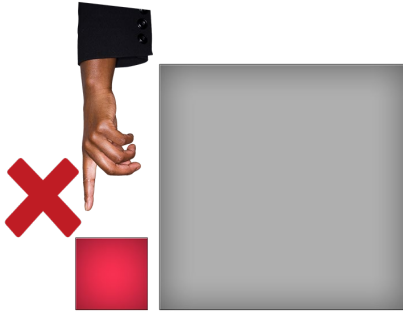
It's important to use similar descriptions when collecting data in all parts of the UK for things like personal characteristics.

If different descriptions are used, it's hard to compare data.

It's important that, when we compare data, we understand exactly what has been collected. For example, people have different ideas about what disability means.

When data come from only a small number of people, this can reduce the quality. You might not have enough data to understand what they show.

With small numbers you might also miss data from groups of people or areas of the UK that are important.

With small numbers you might not be able to understand and compare groups and their personal characteristics properly.

It's important that data are recent and up to date. If data are old, they might not be right or useful anymore.

It's important to collect different types of data to understand people's lives.
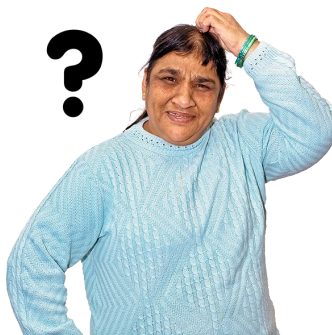
People told us that they think there should be more information about how people describe their lives in their own words.

Training Room

It's important that people who collect and explore data are trained and have enough resources.

?

Some people who want to use and compare data find it hard to get the data they want. They don't know what data there are or where they are.

Communicate

It's important to use language that is easy to understand when talking about data and what they show.

Booklet

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It's important to show data and ideas in different languages and formats so everyone can read and understand them.

4. How to learn from examples of good work

It's important to learn from other people's experiences to make the way we collect and use data better.

We can use our own experience and the experience of other people.

Some people told us about some good ways of working that we hope to learn from in the future.

By learning from others' successes, we can include more types of people in future and have better information about them.
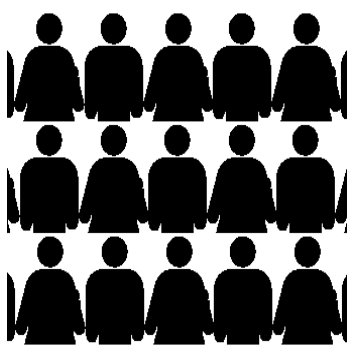
Changes we recommend

1. Make sure people can provide their data safely and will be treated fairly.

2. Work together to make changes to the way we collect and use data across the whole of the UK at the same time.

3. Make sure data are collected from all the different groups of people.

4. Make sure enough good quality data are collected. This will help get a better understanding of how people's different personal characteristics relate to each other and how they can have an impact on people's lives.
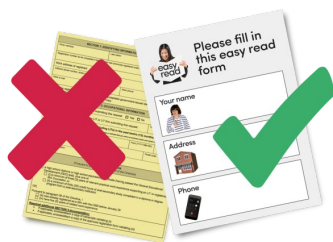
5. Make sure people use the right words and phrases to describe things and that they are easy to understand.

6. Try different and new ways of collecting data so we can understand more people and what they need better.

7. Regularly check that the information collected and how it's described is still relevant. Check whether changes need to be made to stay up to date.

8. Make sure data and information are offered in different languages and formats so everyone can read and understand them.

If these 8 things are done, this should help make the UK data better in the future and mean more types of people can be involved.

More information

Thanks to everyone who helped us.

You can read more information about our work online:
uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

If you want this information in another language or format, send an email to this address:
equalities@ons.gov.uk

Or call this telephone number:
0800 298 5313