

# Census 2031 Design & Innovation – early thinking

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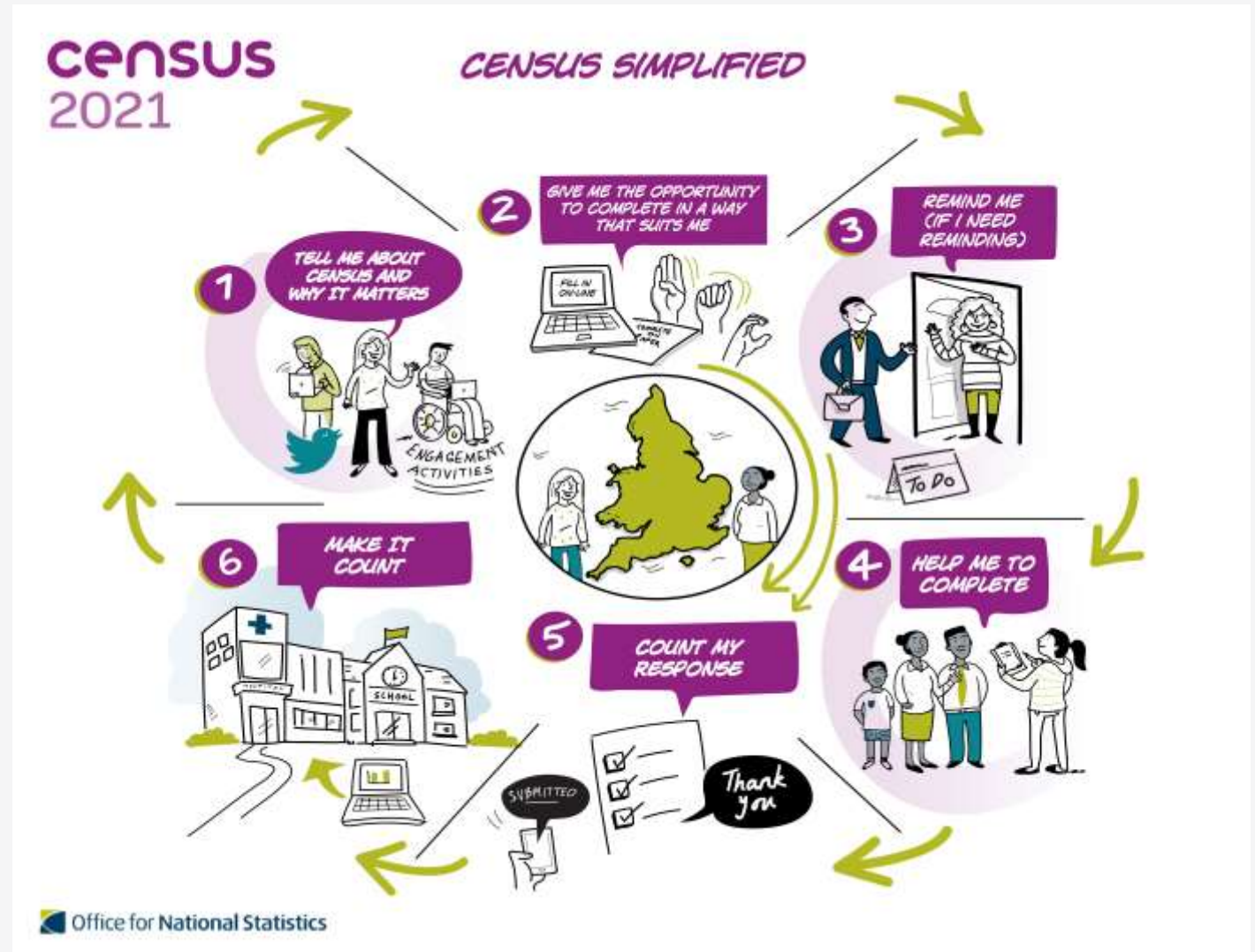
Census 2031 Taskforce

Statistical Design

21 July 2025



# Building on success of 2021





## The Challenge

Producing high quality outputs in an increasingly challenging respondent environment



## The Opportunity

Capitalising on advancements in technology and alternative data quality and availability to target resources, reduce burden and drive up data quality



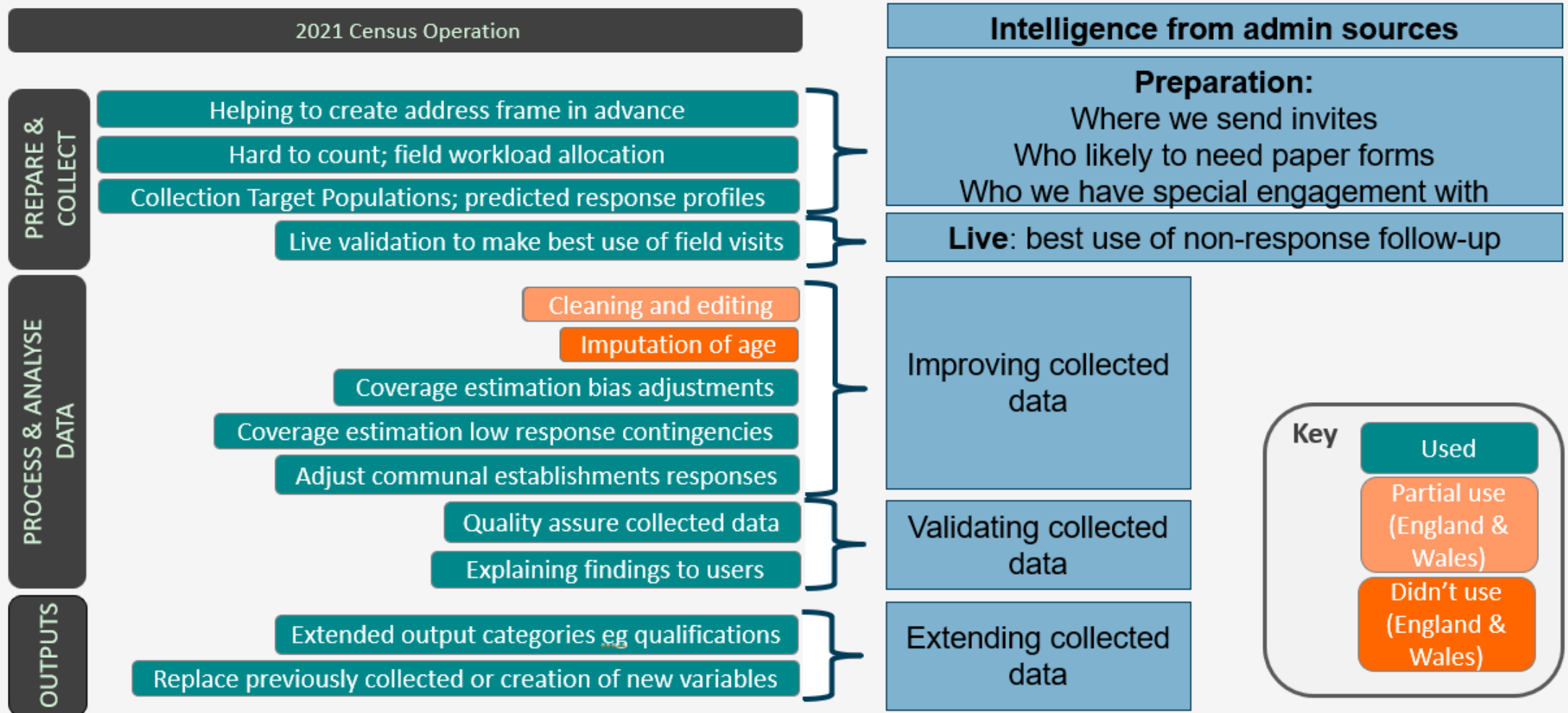
## The Approach

Surface as many ideas, potential innovations and improvements as possible now before narrowing down the options to inform the 2031 design

# Potential Areas for Innovation

- Making the most of administrative data to improve operational efficiency and data quality, and reduce costs and respondent burden
- Reducing reliance on paper questionnaires
- Enumeration of communal establishments

# Use of admin data in Census 2021



# Potential areas for further admin data usage in 2031

## Prepare & Collect

### Address frame improvements

- Identification of vacant addresses
- Classification of communal establishments



## Process & Analyse

### Targeting of Response Chasing

- Predicting patterns of response
- Reducing bias by minimising response variability
- Adaptive & Responsive design

## Outputs



# Potential areas for further admin data usage in 2031

Prepare & Collect

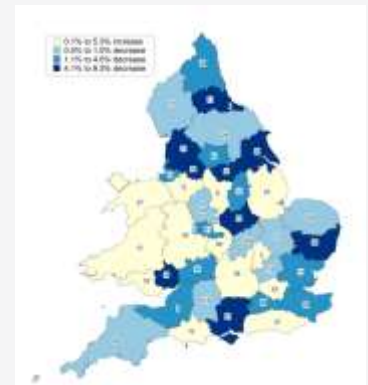
Process & Analyse

Outputs

Statistical contingencies for low response

Quality assurance

Coverage assessment & adjustment, particularly to enhance the Census Coverage Survey



# Potential areas for further admin data usage in 2031

Prepare & Collect

Process & Analyse

Outputs

## Question replacement and reduction

Reducing burden where we have other data sources

## Additional content through integrated outputs

Better meeting user needs by producing estimates for variables not collected on the census





# Paper questionnaires



- 89% of households completed online in 2021
- 11% of households were sent paper questionnaires as initial contact
  - Significant variation by area – 50% in Wales
  - Areas targeted based on predicted digital propensity and expected patterns of response



**Scotland approach** – no paper questionnaires sent as initial contact but all non-responding households received paper by end of the operation. 89% of households responded online.



**Northern Ireland approach** – 20% of households sent paper as initial contact using address and area level targeting. Areas with low digital propensity and households aged 65+ sent paper, except where households had engaged with government services online. 80% of households responded online.

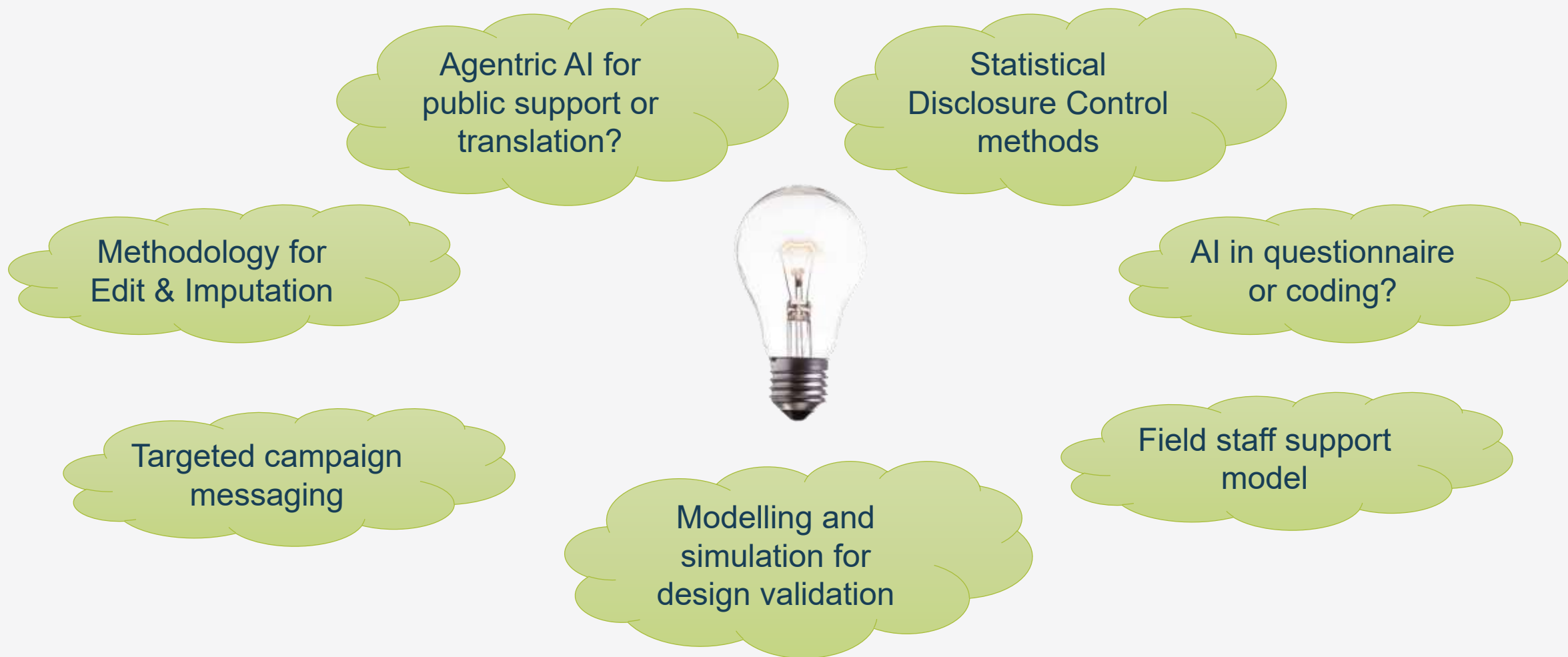
**2031 Aim:** To reduce paper where possible to reduce processing time, operational complexity and cost, while ensuring everyone can still take part

# Communal Establishments



- Addressing was a challenge in 2021, especially for students
- Challenging to chase responses without knowing who hasn't responded
- Communal establishments comprise a very broad range of establishment types with a very varied range of respondent needs
- Further work to do to understand data quality and user needs
  - E.g. clear user need to understand prisoner characteristics but responses are often of poor quality
  - E.g. Care home residents – do we/can we ask fewer questions of this group?
- How can we capitalise on admin data available for particular CE population groups?

# Many other potential areas of innovation



# Next steps

