



Ministry  
of Justice

**DATA FIRST**



Office for  
National Statistics



# Research Fellowship 2025 - Data First: Family Court-Cafcass-Census 2021 England and Wales Dataset Briefing Webinar

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7 November 2025



# What will be covered?



- Overview of the Data First family court dataset
- Overview of the Cafcass dataset
- Overview of Census 2021 dataset
- Overview of family court-Cafcass-Census 2021 linked dataset
- Research priorities for family court-Cafcass-Census 2021 linked dataset
- Research examples
- Applying for access and finding further information
- Q&A

# Overview of the Data First family court dataset



## Data First family court dataset overview

- Source: FamilyMan
- Geographical coverage: England & Wales
- Period covered: 1 January 2011 to 31 January 2021 (based on the date an event was entered into the FamilyMan system) and we hope that a refreshed version of the dataset running until 31 March 2023 will be available before the fellowship begins
- Deduplicated and de-identified dataset / impact of missingness on linkage
- 76 variables spread across 3 tables – cases, events & people

Cases

Events

People

- For further details of the variables included in the Data First family court dataset, please view the [Data First family court data catalogue](#) on GOV.UK

## Data First family court dataset overview – Cases table

### Cases

#### Case information

- Case type
- Number of hearings
- Court name
- Fee paid or exemption

#### Key dates

- Case creation
- Receipt
- Issue
- Case closed

#### Divorce & marriage information

- Marriage date
- Marriage type
- Divorce grounds
- Age

#### Flags

- Legal representation
- Contact activity provider
- Litigation friend
- Unpaid work facilitator

- Can join between the events & people table

## Data First family court dataset overview – Events table

Events			
<b>Case and event information</b>	<b>Key dates</b>	<b>Hearing, application and order information</b>	<b>Court information</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case type</li><li>• Event description</li><li>• Event court</li><li>• Number of children involved</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receipt</li><li>• Entry</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hearing type</li><li>• Application type</li><li>• Withdrawn application type</li><li>• Order type</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Court name</li><li>• Tier of judiciary</li><li>• Event heard at high court</li><li>• Fee paid</li></ul>

- Can join to the cases table

## Data First family court dataset overview – People table

People		
<b>Personal information</b>	<b>Role information</b>	<b>Case information</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender</li><li>• Month/year of birth (for children only)</li><li>• LSOA of residence</li><li>• Local authority of residence</li><li>• Unique party ID</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Role name</li><li>• Role model</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case type</li></ul>

- Can join to the cases table

# Overview of the Cafcass dataset





## About the Cafcass dataset

- Cafcass population data in SAIL covers the period from 1 April 2007 – 31 October 2025.
- Data contains both case-level and person-level information:

### Case-level information

Local authority and court involved

Type of case: public or private

Applications: type, date of receipt, the applicant, the respondent(s), the subjects, date completed

Hearings

Legal outputs (e.g. orders, directions etc: date made, type of legal output, what application and who the output relates to)

Work carried out by Cafcass for the court: e.g. reports/addendum, safeguarding letters, position statements

If any, the type of experts involved as well as solicitors

### Person-level information

Week of date of birth

Diversity characteristics (if recorded) such as ethnicity, language spoken, religion, disability

Relationships between people, e.g. who is parent to which child

Yes/no indicators of what contact information has been recorded

The Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) ID of the postcode for the associated address

Whether or not the residential address is an institution

Week of date of death (if applicable)

A limited Cafcass Data Dictionary is available through [Health Data Gateway](#)

# Overview of Census 2021 dataset





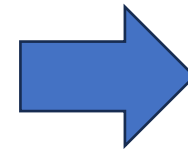
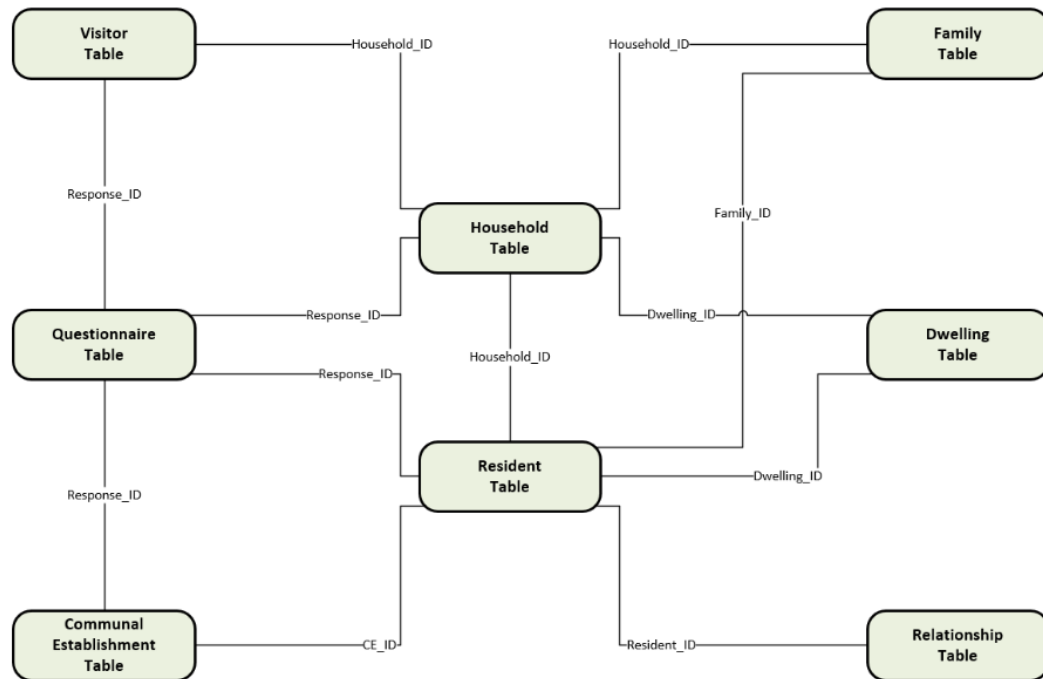
## 2021 Census overview

- 2021 census SAIL data extract includes demographic, cultural and labour market variables across several datasets containing different populations e.g. resident, household, communal establishment.
- The extract goes down to LSOA level, enabling analysis for low levels of geography.

Resident	Household	Family	Communal Establishment
Age	Accommodation Type	Family Type	Nature Of Establishment
Sex	Number of Bedrooms	Size Of Family	Responsible For Management
Marital Status	Heating Type	Grandparent Family	Number Of Residents
Health In General	Ownership Type	FAMILIES AND CHILDREN	MANAGEMENT TYPE
Carer	Number Of Cars	WORKERS IN GENERATION 1	
Ethnic Group	PERSONS PER BEDROOM		
Main Language			
Religion			
Passport			
Qualifications			
Employment Status			
Transport To Work			

## 2021 Census Joining

- Each dataset contains a unique linkage identifier to enable joining between datasets e.g. Household variables can be joined to the resident dataset to allow filtering for all residents who live in rented accommodation for example.



Source	Variable
Resident	Age
	Sex
	Ethnic Group
Household	Accommodation Type
	Number of Bedrooms
Family	Family Type

# Overview of family court-Cafcass-Census 2021 linked dataset



# Family court-Cafcass-Census 2021 linked dataset

## Data First: Family Court linked to Cafcass and Census 2021

### Data First: Family Court-Cafcass linked dataset

Unique ID for party

Divorce, private law and Family Law Act cases

Public law and adoption cases

Family law applications and legal outputs

Marriage and divorce characteristics

Personal-level information

Case events, timeliness and number of hearings

Legal representation



### Census 2021

Ethnicity

Religion

Country of birth

Disability

Health (self-reported)

Housing

Education

Employment

# Research priorities for family court-Cafcass- Census 2021 linked dataset



# Research priorities



- **Characteristics of family court users:** What is the household composition of families in the family justice system? Who are they? Where do they live? What is their journey through the system?
- **Characteristics of cases involving litigants in person or legal representation:** What is the nature of family cases involving litigants in person and how do they differ from cases where there is legal representation? What is the nature of family cases involving legal representation?
- **Inequalities & intersectionality:** How do different groups experience and interact with the family justice system – according to ethnicity, gender, disability and a combination of these protected characteristics?
- **Comparisons with England and Wales population:** How do socio-demographic characteristics; education and qualifications; or employment of family court users compare with the general population? Does this vary by case or role type?
- **Regional variations:** What variation (by local authority and/or court area) is seen in the way family courts are dealing with cases?
- **Use of mediation:** To what extent is mediation being used and in what circumstances? How does the trajectory of a case differ if mediation is used? What are the characteristics of family court users where mediation is being used?

For more information on the research priorities, [click here](#)

# Research examples



# Research questions from previous ADR UK family court-Cafcass linked data research fellowships

## Exploring the family justice experience of young mothers in England

- What are the demographic characteristics of young mothers in the family justice system?
- How frequently are mothers involved in family court cases during their youth and adulthood? Does returning to family court decrease over time, and if so, at what age?
- What are the family justice experiences of, and outcomes for, young mothers in terms of their caregiver relationships with their children?
- What is the risk of termination of parental rights through adoption among young mothers, and what factors moderate this risk?

Dr Mariam Abouelenin

## Domestic abuse proceedings in family courts: Overlap and pathways in private and public family justice

- What are the characteristics of domestic abuse cases in family courts between 2011-2021?
- How do domestic abuse cases overlap with other cases heard in family courts?
- What are the main pathways through the family justice system for individuals and families who experience domestic abuse?
- Can future data users plan to study the outcomes of children potentially affected by domestic abuse?

Dr Ludivine Garside

## Examples of approved projects using family court-Cafcass data on SAIL

- Born into care: Newborns in care proceedings in Wales – Swansea University
- Private family law cases in England and Wales: profiles, pathways and outcomes - Lancaster University
- Pathways of families in private law proceedings in England and Wales - Lancaster University

## Research undertaken using Cafcass data on SAIL



- Lots of valuable research has already been produced using Cafcass data on SAIL
  - [Newborn babies in urgent care proceedings in England and Wales – Nuffield Family Justice Observatory](#)
  - [Uncovering private family law: Who’s coming to court in England? - Nuffield Family Justice Observatory \(nuffieldfjo.org.uk\)](#)
  - [Uncovering private family law: Adult characteristics and vulnerabilities \(Wales\) - Nuffield Family Justice Observatory \(nuffieldfjo.org.uk\)](#)
  - [Older children and young people in care proceedings in England and Wales - Nuffield Family Justice Observatory \(nuffieldfjo.org.uk\)](#)
  - [What do we know about children and young people deprived of their liberty in England and Wales? An evidence review - Nuffield Family Justice Observatory \(nuffieldfjo.org.uk\)](#)
  - [What do we know about ethnicity in the family justice system in England? - Nuffield Family Justice Observatory](#)
  - [Uncovering private family law: Exploring applications that involve non-parents - Nuffield Family Justice Observatory](#)
- **But the Family court – Cafcass – Census 2021 linked dataset can provide even more insights into our understanding of the family justice system.**

# Applying for access and finding further information



# Applying for access to the family court-Cafcass-Census linked dataset via the SAIL Databank

- Stages for accessing data:
  1. Become an [accredited researcher](#)
  2. Complete the [scoping form and Information Governance Review Panel \(IGRP\) form](#) for data held by SAIL Databank
  3. Complete the Research Project Application (RAP) form supplied by SAIL Databank
  4. Complete the MoJ supplementary information form supplied by SAIL Databank
  5. Create a full variable list
  6. Gain approval from data owners
  7. Receive final approval from UKSA Research Accreditation Panel

# Where to access more information

## General project information

- [Data First user guide](#) (PDF, 951 KB, 36 pages)
- [Data First privacy and data protection statement](#) (PDF, 199 KB, 12 pages)

## Datasets

- [Data First magistrates' court defendant data catalogue](#) (ODS, 815 KB)
- [Data First Crown Court defendant data catalogue](#) (ODS, 777 KB)
- [Data First prisoner custodial journey data catalogue](#) (ODS, 205 KB)
- [Data First Family Court data catalogue](#) (ODS, 98.5 KB)
- [Data First probation data catalogue](#) (ODS, 155 KB)
- [Data First criminal courts, prisons and probation linking data catalogue](#) (ODS, 59.1 KB)

## Analytical outputs

- [Data First: Criminal Courts Linked Data](#)
- [Education, children's social care and offending](#)

## Application form

[MOJ: Data First, application form for secure access to data](#)

- Get in touch about Data First family court data: [datafirst@justice.gov.uk](mailto:datafirst@justice.gov.uk)
- Get in touch about Cafcass data: [saif.ullah@cafcass.gov.uk](mailto:saif.ullah@cafcass.gov.uk)
- Get in touch about Census data: [Chris.Stickney@ons.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.Stickney@ons.gov.uk)
- Administrative Data Research UK: <https://www.adruk.org/>
- SAIL Databank: <https://saildatabank.com/>
- Data First: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ministry-of-justice-data-first>
- Cafcass: <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/>

# Q&A

