



Cambridgeshire  
County Council



# Online Share of Census 2021 Responses, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

## Census 2021: the first digital-first census

Census 2021 was the first digital-first census. Households across England and Wales were encouraged to respond to the census online rather than completing a paper copy, if able to do so. Not all households were contacted and asked to complete the census in the same way. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) sent out a paper copy of the census questionnaire first (alongside an online access code) to households in some specified Lower Super Output Areas (each LSOA contains an average of 1,500 residents or 650 households), and in other specified LSOAs households were sent a paper copy as a reminder.

The means of communication was determined by two 'hard to count' indices that the ONS produced. The ONS 'willingness hard to count index' assessed the relative likelihood of households, by LSOA, who were likely to respond without reminder letters or field visits. The 'digital hard to count index' assessed the relative propensity of households in an area to respond to Census 2021 online. The two indices were used together to determine where to send paper first and where to send paper questionnaires as a reminder. (In addition, at all times a household could request a paper questionnaire via the contact centre or the website, and census officers also had paper questionnaires available if requested on the doorstep).

The maps below provide an analysis of data published by the ONS on the online share of responses to Census 2021 in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by LSOA. These maps do not show the overall response rates to the census, as this data is not available yet, although the ONS has stated that there was a 97% household response rate for England and Wales as a whole, and over a 90% return rate in every Local Authority. The maps show the proportion of those households that did respond to the census who did so online.

## Online participation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 91.4% of households who responded to Census 2021 did so online. Accounting for only the LSOAs where households received an online code as the first means of contact, the proportion of online responses was 94.4% of total responses received. 32 out of 487 LSOAs were first sent a paper copy of the census. For these LSOAs online response rates were all below 75% of total responses received. Those areas that received a paper copy of

the census first or as a reminder saw markedly lower online participation by households.

## Insight into digital accessibility and activity in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

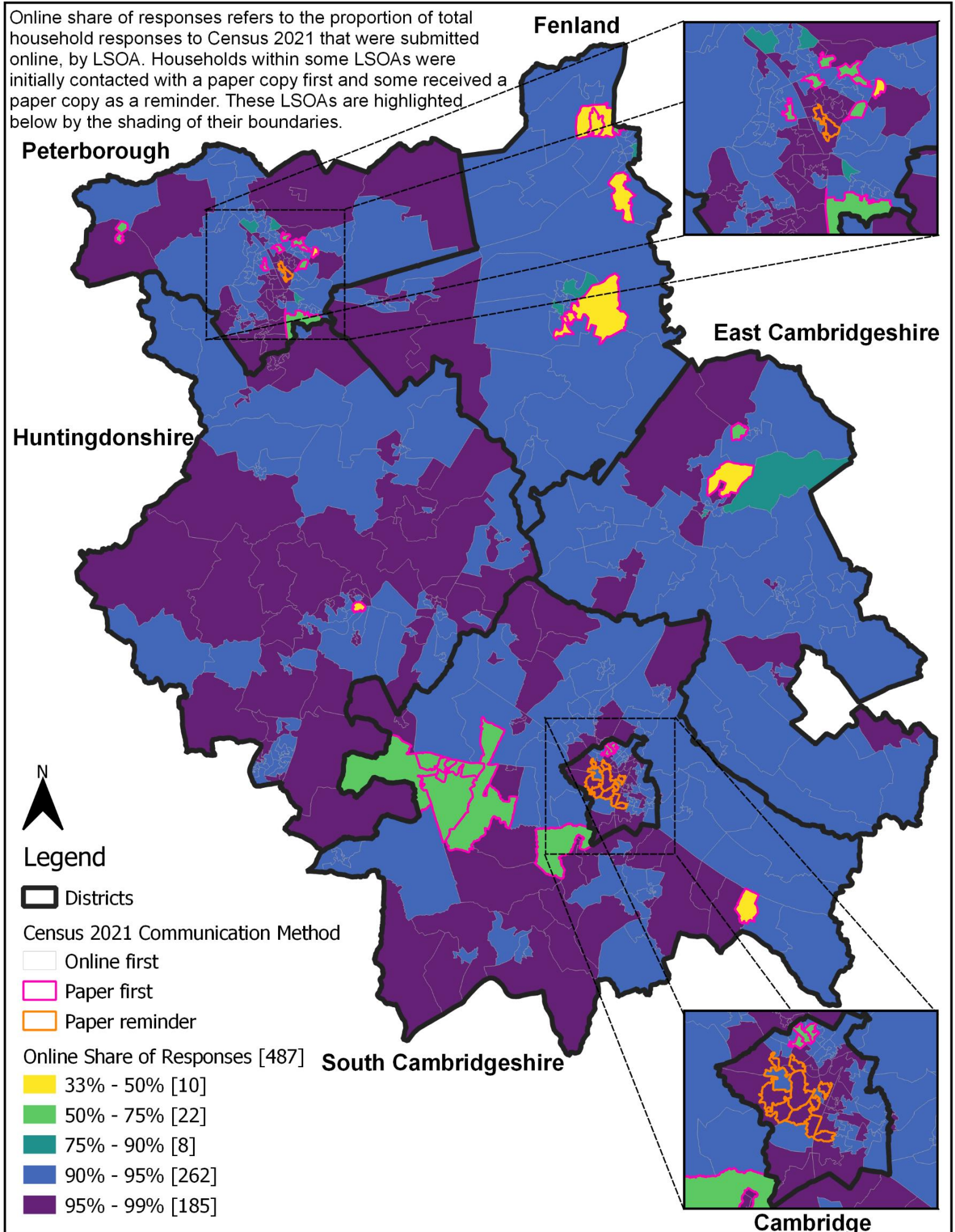
We still need to wait for the full detail on total Census household response rates to fully analyse and understand online participation by residents at small area level. The data so far indicates a high propensity by Cambridgeshire's and Peterborough's residents to be able to access online services and to interact digitally, in an environment where comprehensive support mechanisms were in place. The census is unique as it is a national survey in which it is mandatory to participate – the ONS undertook a high level national communications campaign and there was a network of support mechanisms to maximise participation. This all contributed to an overall high level of online participation amongst Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's residents, as outlined above and shown in the following maps.

The maps below show the online share of responses to Census 2021 in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by LSOA. The LSOAs that were sent a paper copy first or as a reminder have been highlighted showing the impact of the means of contact on response mode

# Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

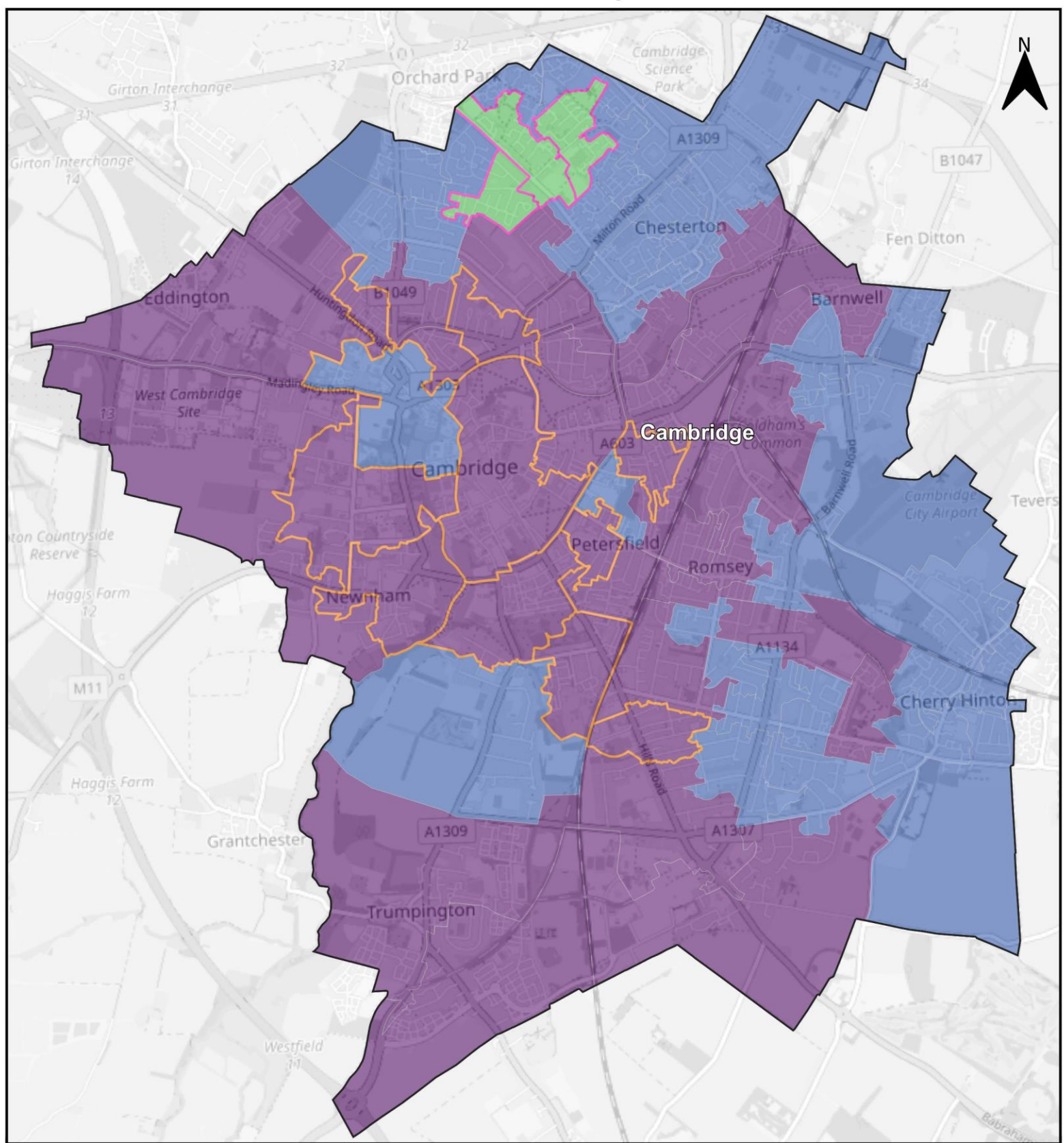
## Census 2021 Online Share of Responses

Online share of responses refers to the proportion of total household responses to Census 2021 that were submitted online, by LSOA. Households within some LSOAs were initially contacted with a paper copy first and some received a paper copy as a reminder. These LSOAs are highlighted below by the shading of their boundaries.



# Cambridge

## Census 2021 Online Share of Responses



### Legend

□ District

Census 2021 Communication Method

□ Online first

□ Paper first

□ Paper reminder

Online Share of Responses

33% - 50%

50% - 75%

75% - 90%

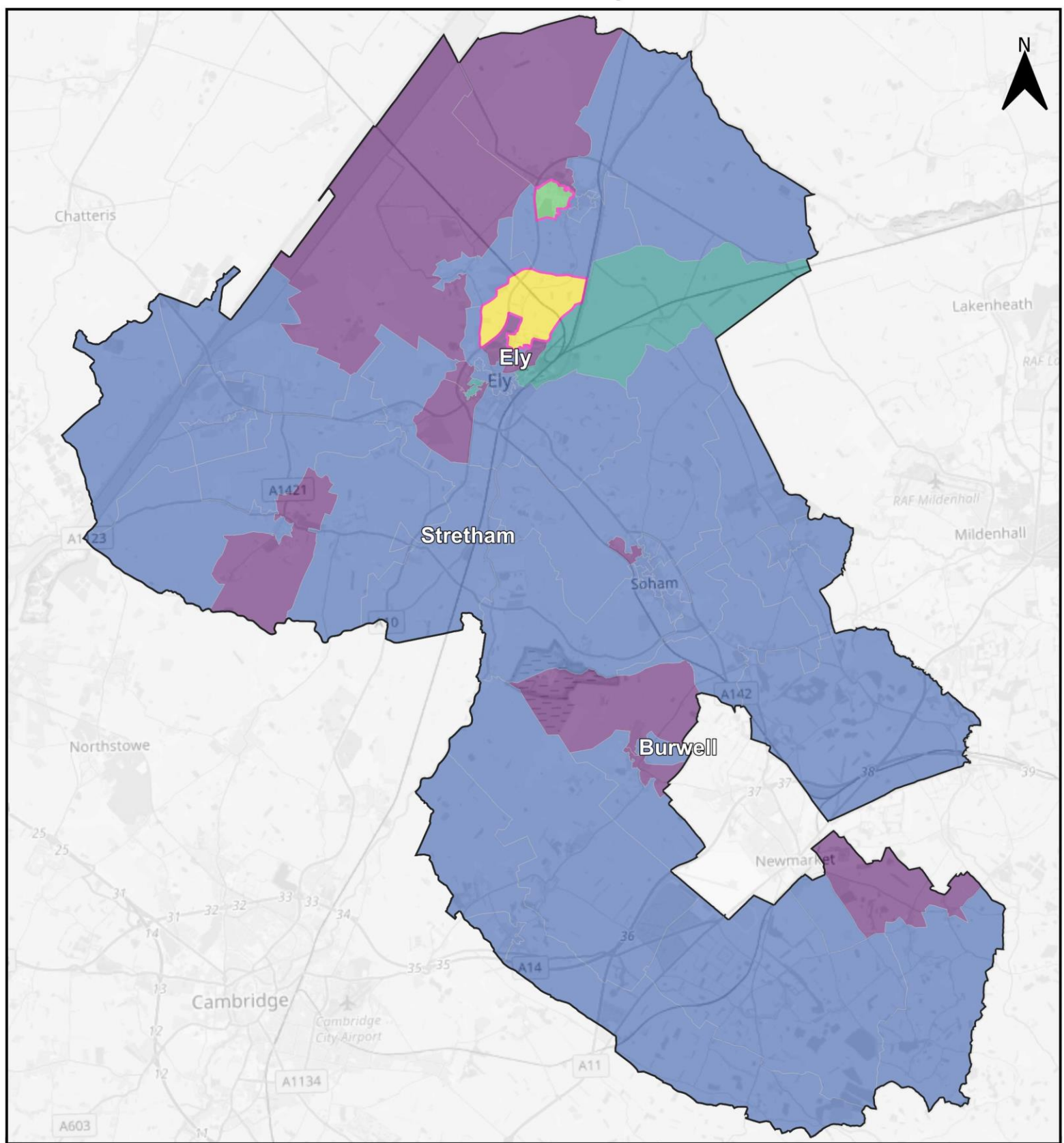
90% - 95%

95% - 99%

Of the households that responded to the census in Cambridge, 93.7% did so online. Of the 69 LSOAs in Cambridge, 3 had an online response rate lower than 90% of total responses, yet all 3 of these were sent a paper copy of the census first. Looking at the 'online first' LSOAs, the online share of total responses was 95.5%.

# East Cambridgeshire

## Census 2021 Online Share of Responses



### Legend

District

Census 2021 Communication Method

Online first

Paper first

Paper reminder

Online Share of Responses

33% - 50%

50% - 75%

75% - 90%

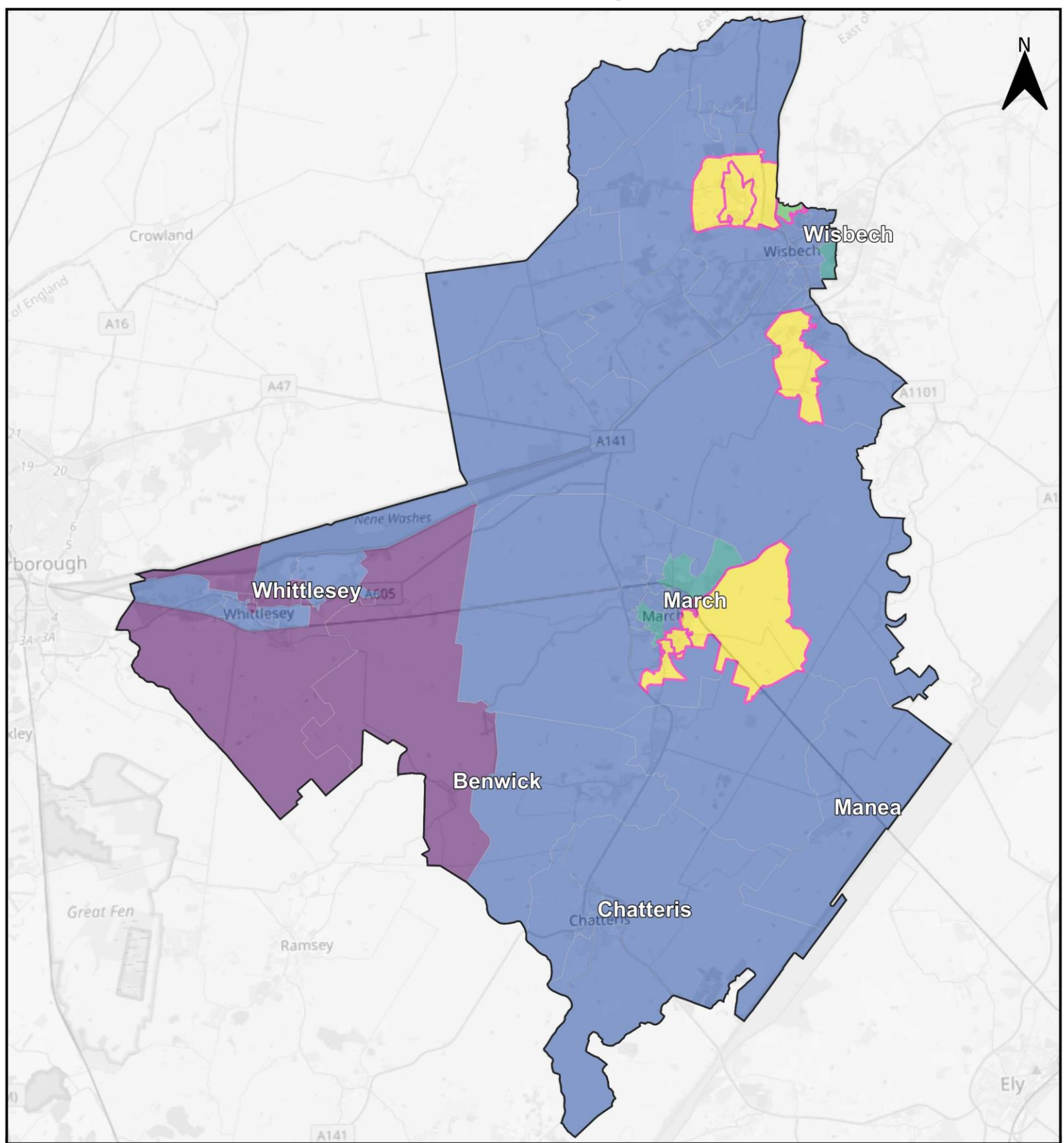
90% - 95%

95% - 99%

Of the households that responded to the census in East Cambridgeshire, 92.1% did so online. Of the 50 LSOAs in East Cambridgeshire, 2 had an online response rate lower than 87% of total responses, yet both were sent a paper copy of the census first. Looking at the 'online first' LSOAs, the online share of total responses was 93.8%.

# Fenland

## Census 2021 Online Share of Responses



### Legend

District

Census 2021 Communication Method

Online first

Paper first

Paper reminder

Online Share of Responses

33% - 50%

50% - 75%

75% - 90%

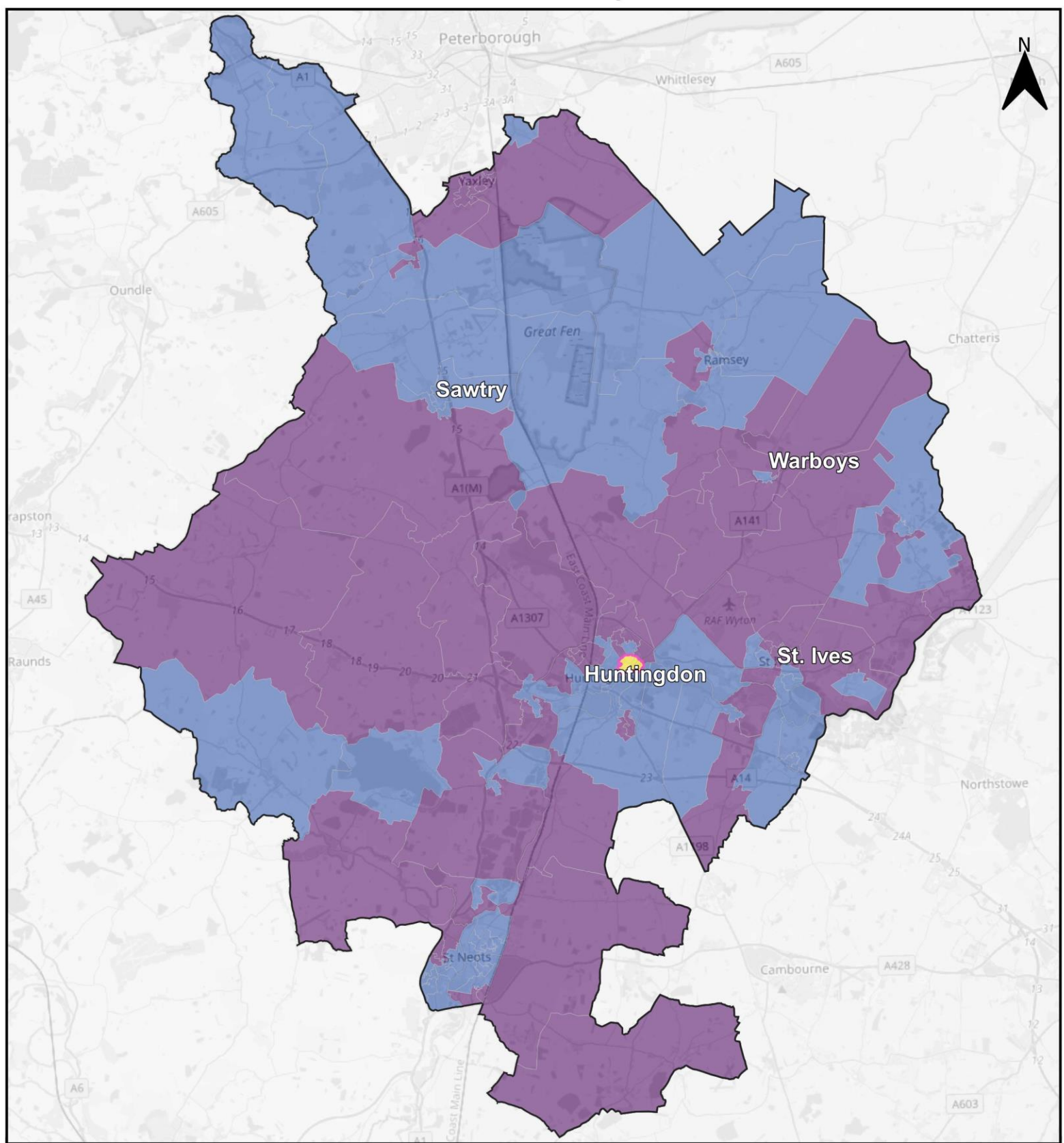
90% - 95%

95% - 99%

Of the households that responded to the census in Fenland, 85.6% did so online. Of the 55 LSOAs in Fenland, 7 had an online response rate lower than 89% of total responses, yet all 7 of these were sent a paper copy of the census first. Looking at the 'online first' LSOAs, the online share of total responses was 92.5%.

# Huntingdonshire

## Census 2021 Online Share of Responses




### Legend

 District


Census 2021 Communication Method

 Online first


 Paper first


 Paper reminder


Online Share of Responses

 33% - 50%

 50% - 75%

 75% - 90%

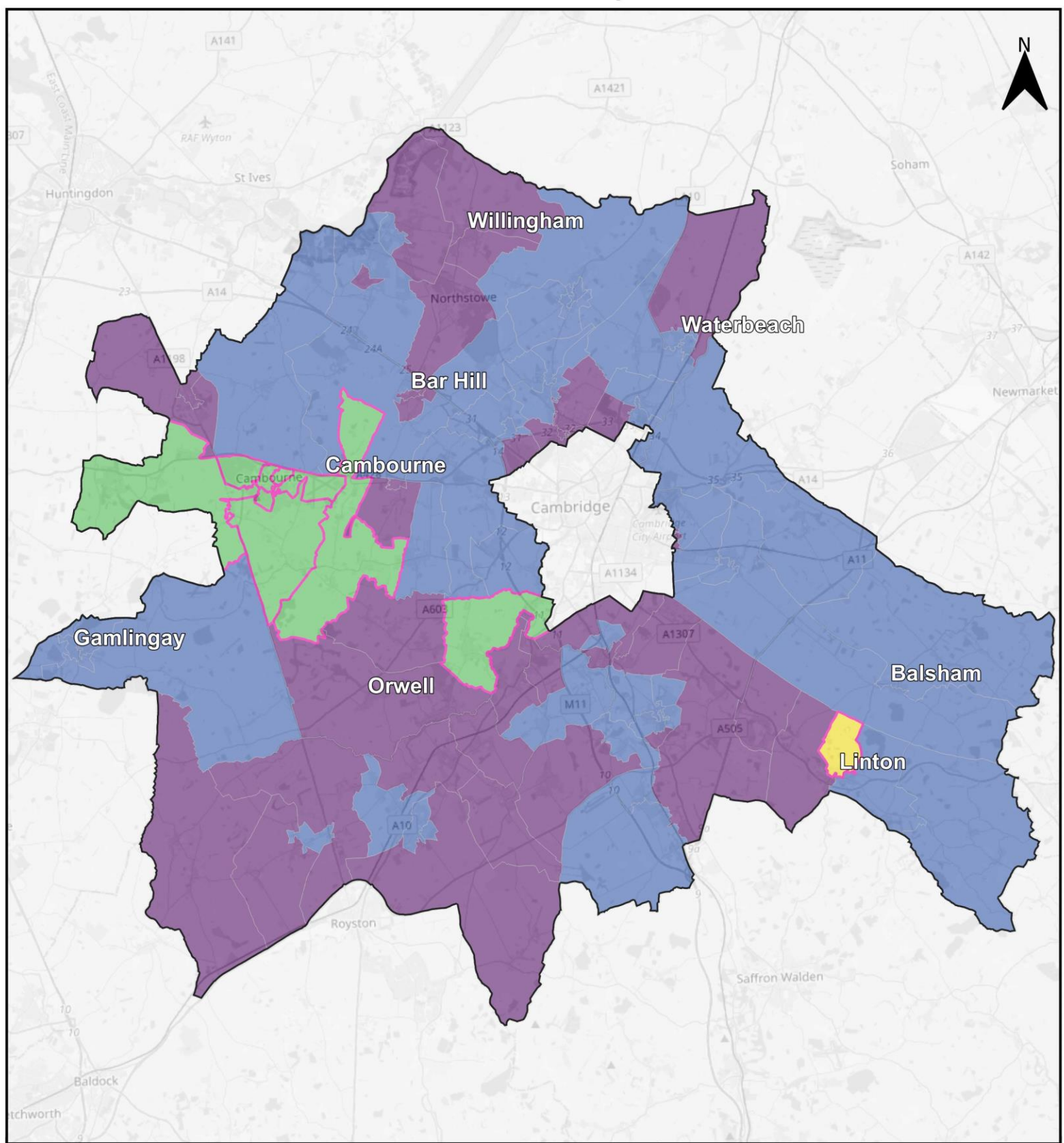
 90% - 95%

 95% - 99%

Of the households that responded to the census in Huntingdonshire, 94.6% did so online. Of the 105 LSOAs in Huntingdonshire, 1 had an online response rate lower than 90% of total responses, yet this was the only LSOA to be sent a paper copy of the census first. Looking at the 'online first' LSOAs, the online share of total responses was 95.1%.

# South Cambridgeshire

## Census 2021 Online Share of Responses



### Legend

District

Census 2021 Communication Method

Online first

Paper first

Paper reminder

Online Share of Responses

33% - 50%

50% - 75%

75% - 90%

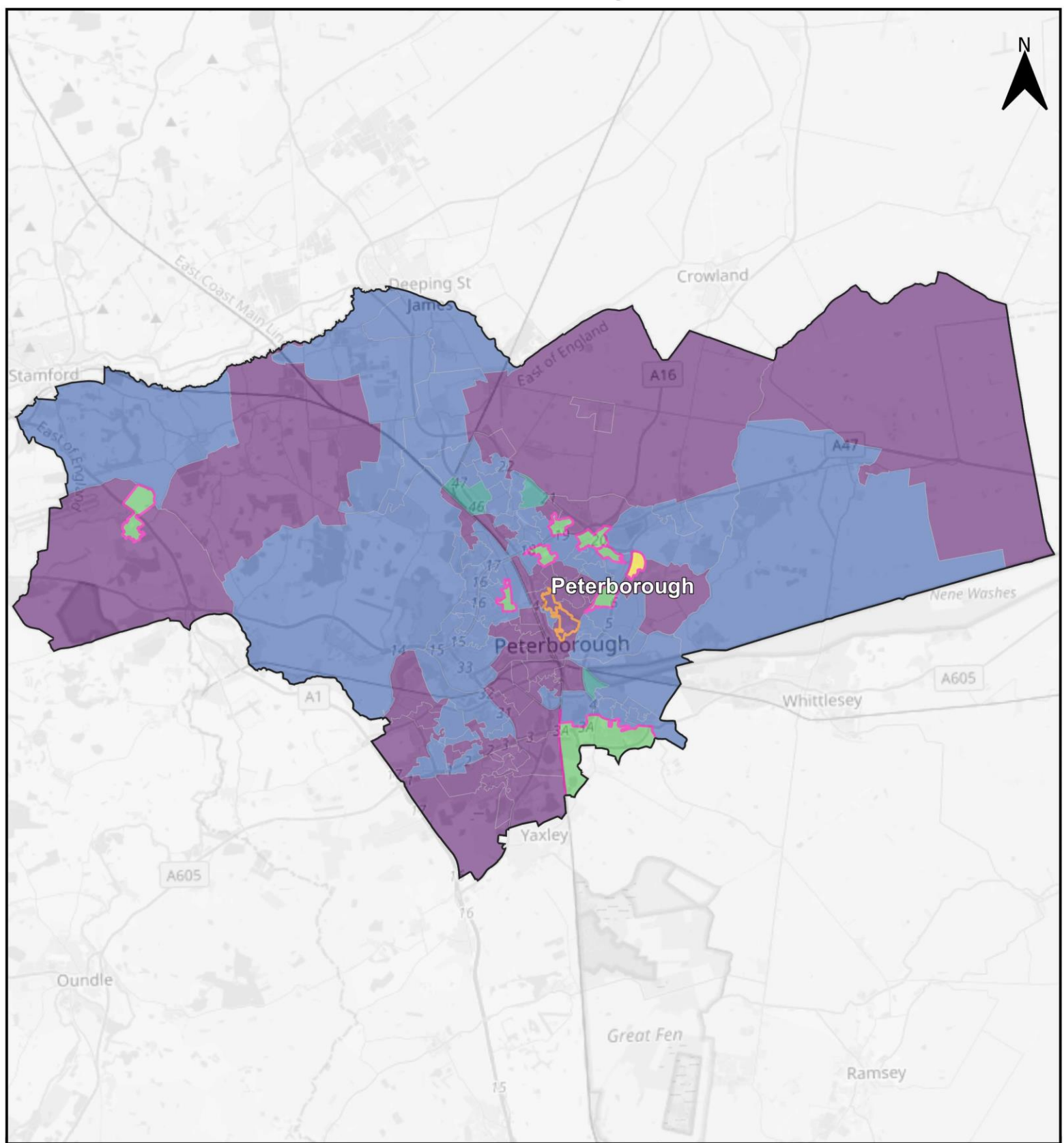
90% - 95%

95% - 99%

Of the households that responded to the census in South Cambridgeshire, 91.0% did so online. Of the 96 LSOAs in South Cambridgeshire, 10 had an online response rate lower than 90% of total responses, yet all 10 of these were sent a paper copy of the census first. Looking at the 'online first' LSOAs, the online share of total responses was 94.8%.

# Peterborough

## Census 2021 Online Share of Responses



### Legend

- District
- Census 2021 Communication Method
  - Online first
  - Paper first
  - Paper reminder

- Online Share of Responses
- 33% - 50%
  - 50% - 75%
  - 75% - 90%
  - 90% - 95%
  - 95% - 99%

Of the households that responded to the census in Peterborough, 91.4% did so online. Of the 112 LSOAs in Peterborough, 9 had an online response rate lower than 88% of total responses, yet all 9 of these were sent a paper copy of the census first. Looking at the 'online first' LSOAs, the online share of total responses was 94.8%.