

First space census launches today

- UK space sector aims to create 30,000 new jobs in next decade and is reliant on a diverse workforce
- The census launch comes during UN-backed World Space Week (WSW) 2020, which celebrates the contribution made by satellites to everyday lives

The first ever UK Space Census launches today (7 October 2020) to survey the diversity of the UK space sector and help inform future space policy.

Coming during World Space Week, the 2020 Space Census will collect for the first time anonymous information from space sector professionals to build a comprehensive picture of the UK space job market; covering demographic characteristics from age and gender to race and sexuality.

Once complete, the Space Growth Partnership – a network of government, industry and academia that informs national space policy and sector strategy – will use this intelligence to develop actions to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in the UK space sector.

The UK space sector is aiming to create 30,000 new jobs in the coming decade and this ambition relies on it having a highly-skilled and diverse workforce, with jobs from satellite builders and rocket scientists to accountants and business development managers.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

I am delighted to mark the launch of the UK Space Census, the first detailed study into the make-up of our brilliant space industry.

This new census will be critical in driving forward diversity right across the sector, bringing new ideas to help tackle some of our greatest challenges that will cement the UK as a space superpower for decades to come.

Diversity in businesses is a proven driver of economic growth, and research shows that more diverse and inclusive workplaces are more productive and more likely to achieve longer-term growth.

Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, added:

The UK has bold ambitions in space, but in order to grow our sector further we need to properly champion diversity, equality of opportunity and make sure our space businesses truly reflect our society as a whole.

We need to drive change for the future of our sector in a way that is not just us ticking a box and this census will play a vital role

in helping us understand the demographics of space in the UK and, most importantly, what the challenges are.

Earlier this year, the Government committed almost £3 million and a package of business support to help turn inspiring ideas into thriving businesses, backing new inventions by women and young people like clean energy solutions and healthcare services.

Of the Government's funding commitment, £2.2 million will go to the Young Innovators' Awards. In partnership with The Prince's Trust, the Government-backed award will support young people with creative and ground-breaking business ideas to turn these into reality.

Nick Shave, Chair of UKspace, said:

Understanding the make-up of our space sector is critical to us collectively developing a clear and transparent approach about how best to support those individuals and groups throughout their careers. We already recognise that the BAME community is underrepresented in the sector, but we are determined to address this, working in partnership with other key industry stakeholders.

This census will provide us with a vital benchmark of our sector, giving us the impetus to ensure there are equal opportunities for everyone and measure the success of our efforts to improve diversity over the next few years.

The 2020 Space Census is carried out by the Space Skills Alliance and sponsored by the University of Leicester, and will run until the end of the year.