

EDS Briefing Note No. 7

THE 2001 CENSUS OF POPULATION

The next Census of Population will take place on 29th April 2001. It will contain several new and revised questions. The geographical “building blocks” for data collection have changed and a good deal of the data will be available on the Internet. Data release is not likely until the end of summer 2002 at the earliest. Until then, researchers and planners will have to work with demographic and socio-economic data that is more than ten years old.

This note applies specifically to arrangements in England, which may not apply in exactly the same way in all other parts of the UK.

Topics Included

The topics covered include population, housing, health, ethnicity, qualifications, transport, economic activity and employment. About half the questions will apply to the whole population: those relating to qualifications, economic activity and employment will only apply to people aged between 16 and 74.

There will be several new questions: others will be revised or extended. New questions include:

- **lowest floor level of accommodation;**
- **general health;**
- **provision of unpaid personal care;**
- **time since last employment;**
- **supervisor status;**
- **size of employing organisation;**
- **religion**

Revised questions include:

- **relationships within households;**
- **qualifications;**
- **ethnic group**

For the ethnicity question, the range of options has been extended following wide consultation. This should allow comparability with the 1991 Census, whilst capturing better quality information on the number of people of mixed origin, sub-groups within the White population (the Irish in particular) and people who prefer to describe themselves as “Black British” or “British Asian”.

A question on income was proposed but not included because of concerns over public opposition following consultation and testing exercises.

Public Involvement

To help reduce double counting, people are required to fill in the form according to where they are usually resident, not where they are on Census night. Students, however, will be counted as resident at their term time address.

The 1991 Census undercounted the population by about 2%. For a variety of reasons, certain groups were disproportionately affected, including men aged 20-29, old people, people from ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities.

It is important that the Census accurately captures the breadth and diversity of society. For the 2001 Census, a Community Liaison Team will work with existing organisations and community groups at national and local level to help ensure the trust and participation of as many individuals from these groups as possible.

This will also link into a national advertising campaign "Count Me In" aimed at stimulating awareness, interest and participation in the Census amongst the public at large.

Geographic Base

For the 2001 Census, Census Area Statistics (CAS) will be produced for postcode-based Output Areas (OAs), which will nest within present administrative boundaries. OAs will consist of around 100-125 households with a population of around 250. This arrangement will replace the 1991 Small Area Statistics produced for Enumeration Districts and above.

The new system uses Ordnance Survey ADDRESS-POINT and digital map data through GIS (Geographic Information System). It produces output for enumerators in the form of a single map sheet with pre-listed addresses and can if required produce digital OA boundaries.

Data Collection, Analysis and Presentation

For the first time, people will be able to return their forms by post. Completed forms will be scanned and the data captured and coded electronically. It will then be stored long term on microfilm and the paper forms destroyed.

Unlike previous Censuses, when certain information was only used from a sample of returned forms, all returned forms will be fully processed to produce information. Much of the analysis will be done using an Australian software package "SuperCross" which will allow very fast tabulation for standard and customised output.

The main Census results will be released over the year from summer 2002 and will be available in a wide range of formats, including the Internet.

The proposed order of publication/supply is:

- Population by age and gender for Local Authority Areas
- Reports with standard statistics covering all areas of England and Wales
- Summary publication for the UK as a whole
- Census Area Statistics (below District level)
- Statistics on migration and workplace
- A service for customised output/workplace and migration statistics
- Topic theme reports focussing on specific subjects, including health and employment.

The End User

A fundamental aim for the 2001 Census project was to “break down barriers” e.g. to work with public sector partners, make Census data more readily available and affordable and encourage its use in conjunction with other information such as Neighbourhood Statistics and Social Exclusion Unit data.

To that end, the Local Government Association is one of five key partners in an “Invest to Save” project called “Census Access”. Its aims are to:

- Simplify cost recovery arrangements, with purchase of data through a limited number of partners;
- Remove barriers to joint working, dissemination and publication for public sector and other agreed purposes;
- Offer an integrated data set to supply whatever is needed;
- Provide a choice of delivery methods with training and facilities for all levels of expertise;
- Share best practice approaches

Partners will get better output and value for money and every end user will have access to the entire standard output of the Census or to a single fact. As part of the increased flexibility of the service, Local Authorities will be able to use “Supercross” online to extend standard tables and produce customised output.

As yet, the cost of access to data by individual Local Authorities has not been finalised but a “high three figure or low four figure sum” has been quoted as a likely final cost.

This is one of a series of Briefing Notes produced by the Economic Development Service on key policy and research issues. For further information please contact:

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