

Review and Evaluation of the 2001 Census

Introduction

- 1 This paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of our plans for the review and evaluation of the 2001 Census.
- 2 **Advisory Group Members are invited to note the timetable for the publication of key outputs and the plans for a General Report in England and Wales.**

Review and Evaluation

- 3 Systematic and continuous review has formed a fundamental part of the Census programme. Each stage of the process of planning and implementation has been subject to rigorous analysis and evaluation, and the post-Census Day phase of this evaluation is already under way.
- 4 ONS is committed to providing users with comprehensive meta-data in order to help them understand and make effective use of all Census results. Details from the comprehensive programme of review and evaluation will form an essential part of this meta-data. More specifically, ONS will record information on key decisions, consultation and operational processes, methodological developments, data definitions and classifications, processing arrangements and quality assurance procedures.
- 5 Four key types of meta-data have been identified:

Geographical Meta-data - details on all aspects of Census geography, including those relating to the planning and implementation of systems for data collection and distribution in all parts of the United Kingdom. Special attention will be given to cross-country variations and the implications of changes for output production processes.

Operational Meta-data - will deal with key activities such as data collection, field procedures and processing arrangements, as well as complementary information on legislative matters, publicity and training. It will be particularly important to provide information on new initiatives such as the community liaison programme, new methods of working, new management and administrative systems.

Statistical Meta-data - will cover a range of issues, including methodological developments, data definitions and classifications, question testing and evaluation, guidance on the quality of outputs, and the impact of edit, imputation and disclosure control procedures. This material will provide a basis for the interpretation of Census returns, as well as a means of understanding change and assessing backward comparability.

Technical Meta-data - will include advice on hardware and software specifications as well as instructions on how to load and run the different Census products.

- 6 Although information will be collected in a modular way, on a project-by-project basis, it will be used flexibly to meet a range of internal and external requirements and to develop both integrated and stand-alone products. For example, specific sub-sets of the data will be brought together to meet users' needs for standard and customised products, to fulfil our obligation to produce the *Quality Report* and to deal with the requirements of Census managers. In evaluating each project, due regard will be paid to the four strategic aims of the Census, which are:

Content - to ensure that the question content of the Census is appropriate to meet the demonstrated requirements of customers, taking into account value for money;

Results - to deliver Census products and services to meet legal obligations and customers' needs within stated quality standards and to a pre-defined timetable;

Data Protection - to ensure that all aspects of the Census collection operation and the dissemination of results are acceptable to the public and comply with data protection law;

Value for Money - to demonstrate that the Census represents value for money.

- 7 A key feature of the review programme is that meta-data will be linked to Census outputs. Information on all aspects of the Census operation will be easily accessible. While the format for the dissemination of outputs will take account of user requirements, preference will be given to the use of electronic media.

Timetable for the publication of key outputs

- 8 The 2001 Census will provide a wealth of comparable data from the national to the local level. Details of the overall timetable for the production of key outputs is set out below:

August 2002 - Mid-year population estimates for 2001 based on One Number Census results rolled forward to 30 June;

Early December 2002 - *Key Statistics* for areas throughout the United Kingdom, with separate reports for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, to be laid before the respective legislatures. In addition, all data will be made available on the National Statistics website;

First half of 2003 - Main national and local results delivered (*Standard Tables* and *Census Area Statistics*, via the web and other electronic media, and to DTLR for Standard Spending Assessment purposes.

Quality Report and General Report

- 9 These outputs will be supported by the comprehensive meta-data referred to above. In addition, ONS intends to publish other information using material from the comprehensive programme of review and evaluation. In particular, it is intended to publish two high-level reports on the Census: the *Quality Report* and a *General Report*.
- 10 Whereas the *Quality Report* will bring together all available information on data quality, (see Annex A of AG (01) 07) the *General Report* will provide details on all aspects of the Census operation. More specifically, the preparation of a *General Report* will enable ONS to provide a strategic overview and an integrated review of specific issues such as foot and mouth disease and the Welsh tick-box. Both reports are scheduled for publication by **June 2003**.
- 11 The scope of the proposed content of the *General Report* will cover:

Using the Census results

Geography
Output Policy and Dissemination
Census Access

The quality of the Census results

Census Coverage Survey
Processing
Edit and Imputation
One Number Census
Downstream Processing (including IS strategy)
Development of Census Questions (results from testing programme)
Data Quality (including disclosure control)
Output Production

The Census operation

Planning and Consultation
Publicity
Data Collection Development
Data Collection Support
Legislation
Programme Management

- 12 In many respects this document will be similar to the *1991 Census General Report*¹. ONS will draw upon the meta-data provided by individual census projects to compile the General Report. As a result individual sections or chapters will be published on the National Statistics website as they become available. The complete report, including the strategic overview, will be published in hard-copy form.

Conclusion

- 13 As part of its commitment to meeting users' requirements for information efficiently and effectively, ONS conducted a user-consultation programme this Autumn. In this way, data users' views will be taken into account in reviewing proposals for Census output products. In addition, a post-product consultation is scheduled for 2003.

Action

- 14 **Advisory Group Members are invited to note the timetable for the publication of key outputs and the plans for a General Report in England and Wales.**

ONS
31 October 2001

¹ OPCS/GRO(S). *1991 Census General Report, Great Britain*. HMSO, 1995. ISBN 0 11 691616.