

Advisory Groups Paper (97)05**2001 CENSUS : OUTPUT STRATEGY**

A key milestone for the 2001 Census is to settle the output strategy (previously referred to as “the marketing strategy”) by mid 1998 for inclusion in summary in the White Paper. This will provide the framework for the consultations on output that will follow in 1998-99.

The strategy will set out the proposed forms of output, the geographical bases, and scheme for standard and customised products. It will describe plans for marketing, cost recovery, and value added activities. It will also set out a programme for customer involvement in the development and commissioning of output.

The strategy will reflect significant changes from the 1991 Census - such as a one-number approach, free flow processing, and 100 per cent processing of all variables - which would result in a quite different output ‘package’. This paper puts forward a basis for the output strategy. Reaction from census users will be fed into the preparation of more detailed proposals later in the year.

Advisory Group members are invited to:

1. **Forward comments on the proposals in this paper.**

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A 2001 Census output strategy

1. The basic proposal is to process data for the whole country before releasing any results. There would be no earlier serial output and no preliminary counts of the type produced from previous censuses.
2. This strategy would:
 - i) allow the provision of national results as a priority and allow the development of an enhanced set of statistics at local level;
 - ii) allow improved quality checks to be made and the results to be released with the statistical output;
 - iii) allow for the introduction of a one-number census approach if this proves feasible (see paragraph 3 below); and

- iv) allow for free-flow processing (with the inclusion of late returns from the field).

Both free-flow processing and a one-number census approach would result in a national output base being available more or less at a single point in time.

- 3. A one-number approach to the 2001 Census would employ a methodology to estimate the net undercoverage and to supplement the data on enumerated households and people with data on those estimated to have been missed. A project has been set up to carry out methodological research, and its minimum aim is to deliver an agreed approach to adjusting data for the production of population estimates.
- 4. A final decision on a one-number census approach is not due to be made until the end of 1998, which would be after the start of detailed consultation on output, and the proposed strategy avoids the complications of alternative scenarios. It would apply whether or not there was a one-number approach and/or free-flow processing.
- 5. Output options to be considered within the strategy would be on the lines of:
 - a. priority national summary results and key local indicators; and then to follow either
 - b. 'conventional' topic and local statistics produced in agreed series; or
 - c. a series of tranches released simultaneously for all local areas, with national 'topic' summaries; and, concurrently,
 - d. systems to produce customised output from the database.

Output would fall into the broad categories of reports to Parliament and commissioned statistical abstracts as required by Section 4 of the Census Act 1920, but the balance between printed and electronic forms and between standard and customised output is still to be discussed and decided.

- 6. Enhancements to statistics at local level could include measures of relationship to regional and national values, 'added value' content such as area classifications, or some early data based on 'remote' workplace or former residence addresses. Options for delivery media would be wider, and customers would have an immediate opportunity to analyse local data within a wider regional or national context. Trial datasets would be issued in advance to help users become familiar with the range of output.

Issues

- 7. The timetable for processing a 2001 Census which included free-flow processing, 100 per cent processing of all data, and a one-number approach is not yet known, but a reasonable initial assumption is that a fully validated national database would become available somewhat later than the first output under a serial processing approach. Furthermore, a provisional estimate is that the first output based on a one-number process would be available some nine months after that from a database of unadjusted data.
- 8. Adoption of the proposed strategy would mean that, in any circumstances, not all variables could be covered in priority output, and there would be extreme pressure on some or all parts of the output production system once national databases became available. Careful advance planning could alleviate pressure. For example, to make sure that variables which would give the maximum information when linked within a tranche would be co-processed. Other steps to streamline processing, such as modification of records in the database for confidentiality purposes rather than table cells at the output stage, or avoidance of late changes to output areas, could also help. Nevertheless, means of deciding priorities among customers would

have to be established.

9. Finally, at this stage the full implications of a one-number census approach are still to be determined. The methodology and impact will be the subject of further consultation which will start later in 1997. A paper for the Census Advisory Groups, which will be circulated to the OWG, will outline the timetable and agenda for consultation.

Conclusion

10. **Census users are invited to consider the broad implications of the proposed strategy and to indicate whether or not they feel it should be the basis of more detailed proposals for the whole output strategy.**

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