

CENSUS ADVISORY GROUP

Advisory Group Paper (08)02 - 2011 CENSUS HIGHLIGHT REPORT

Summary

- 1 For the spring 2008 round of Census Advisory Group meetings ONS has prepared this Highlight Report on progress on a number of 2011 Census and other census-related issues not covered by agenda items. The paper covers:
 - **Statistical Disclosure Control**
 - **Census Regional Champions**
 - **Census White Paper**
 - **EU Census legislation**
 - **Procurement**
 - **ONS independence**
 - **Treasury Sub Committee: Counting the Population**

Update on progress on Statistical Disclosure Control

- 2 As previously reported the Registrars General (RsG) of England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have agreed to aim for a common approach to Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) for the 2011 Census. Quantitative work is currently underway to evaluate three short-listed SDC methods for protecting tables. The methods are:
 - Record swapping
 - Cell Perturbation (developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics)
 - Over-Imputation
- 3 A fourth approach, Record Swapping in combination with Small Cell Adjustment, is being used as benchmark. This approach was used for protecting 2001 Census data.
- 4 Interim results will be discussed at a UK SDC working group meeting on the 31 March. This meeting will include representatives from NISRA, GROS and WAG.

- 5 Each of the four methods is being tested on 2001 Census data. A number of 'protected' census tables are being created at different geographical levels in order to examine what level of disclosure risk remains, and secondly, the statistical impact in terms of data utility. The methods will be broadly comparable in terms of level of perturbation. A number of factors are being varied including both the level of perturbation and whether record selection is at random or from the risky population (the latter applies to swapping and over-imputation). The outcome of this work will be to discount any of the three methods which may be deemed unsuitable because the tables are damaged too severely with respect to a particular utility measure, or because the method does not provide enough protection.

Census Regional Champions

- 6 As has been previously discussed at Advisory Group meetings ONS recognises the critical importance of the involvement and engagement of Local Authorities (LAs) and their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) members and relevant Community Groups to help achieve the overall strategic aims and objectives of the 2011 Census - to maximise overall response rates and minimise non-response in specific areas and among particular population sub-groups.
- 7 To facilitate this, promote partnership working and improve communications with LAs at Chief Executive level, it is planned to use Census Regional Champions (CRCs) as an integral part of ONS's communications network and plans. The CRC network is based upon the Regional Returning Officers (RROs) for each of the nine Government Offices for the Regions (GORs) and the Returning Officer for Wales.
- 8 Broadly, the role of the CRCs would be to use their expertise and networks to:
 - create awareness of the 2011 Census amongst LAs and their strategic partners and community groups;
 - assist ONS in creating effective partnership working with local authorities;
 - effect introductions and facilitate meetings and the staging of events;
 - generate a mutual understanding of what constitutes a successful Census;
 - encourage the mutual benefits of working with Census to help engender LA management buy-in and engagement;
 - advise ONS on communications strategies and engagement plans with LAs;
 - share best practice across regions and with other CRCs – providing expertise, advice and guidance to help resolve difficulties LAs may encounter; and
 - assist ONS in communicating ONS' approach and methodology with LAs.

- 9 To date, two meetings have taken place with the Electoral Leadership Forum. The members of the Forum - the potential CRCs – recognise that the appointment of the CRCs is an excellent way to progress and also that the function of the CRCs should be an inherent part of the role of RROs for the next three to four years. The next meeting with the potential CRCs is now likely to take place in mid-May by which time it is hoped that they will have been confirmed in their roles as the RROs (and hence as the CRCs) for their respective regions.
- 10 The role of the CRC will be the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding between Census and the individual CRC. This is currently in the process of being drawn up by ONS procurement. Following confirmation of the CRCs and the use of the CRC network, future meetings agenda and planned communications via the CRC network will be put in place for the remainder of 2008 and 2009. They will form part of the overall stakeholder communications and engagement programme and plans.

Census White Paper

- 11 The schedule for submitting the proposals for the 2011 Census to Cabinet Committee (Domestic Affairs Committee) and presenting them to Parliament has been deferred for six weeks to allow the new ONS Minister and the newly created Statistics Board (UK Statistics Authority) to become more familiar with the Census, following ONS Independence and the transfer of Ministerial responsibility for the Census from the Treasury to Cabinet Office on 1 April (see item below).
- 12 The draft White Paper is now planned to be submitted by the UK Statistics Authority to the CO Minister and Welsh Ministers towards the end of June with a view to publishing it laying before Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales before the Christmas recess. The document in Wales will be published in bilingual format. The slight delay will, serendipitously, allow firmer proposals to be made on the topic content, the choice of the main supplier of outsourced services and confidentiality issues.

EU Census Legislation

- 13 A Council (Framework) Census Regulation was approved by the European Parliament on 20 February. It will take effect once it had been published in the European Journal. As reported in Paper AG (07) 06, the Regulation provides for the specification of outputs, the means of submission of these to Eurostat, and the requirement to provide metadata and quality reports, to be prescribed by subordinate Commission (Implementing) Regulations. These are currently being drafted within input from the EU Legislation Task Force of which the UK is a member.

14 The Council Regulation does, however, itself prescribe the reference year for the next round of censuses as being 2011. Thereafter, reference years will be determined by subsequent Commission Regulations. The Regulation also requires Member States to make available the results of their census by end of March 2014.

15 The topics which are specified by the Regulation cover:

- Place of usual residence
- Size of locality of usual residence (urban/rural)

- Sex
- Age
- Marital status
- Economic activity status
- Occupation
- Industry
- Employment status
- Workplace
- Educational attainment
- Country of birth
- Country of citizenship
- Ever resided abroad and year of entry into country
- Place of usual residence 1 year before census
- Relationship within household
- Status within household
- Status within family
- Type of housing arrangement

- Tenure status of household
- Type of household
- Size of household
- Type of family
- Size of family

- Type of living quarters
- Type of ownership
- Location of living quarters
- Occupancy status
- Floor space/Number of rooms
- Density standard of accommodation
- Housing amenities (water supply, toilet facilities, bathing facilities, type of heating)
- Type of dwelling
- Period of construction

- 16 The statistical detail of the outputs to be provided by Member States on these topics will be set out in subsequent secondary Implementing Regulations, to be prepared by the European Commission later this year. Eurostat currently propose that these will be provided in the form of sets of 'hypercubes' of cross-variables at various geographical levels. Formal consultation on these went out to Member States around mid March inviting responses by 18 April.
- 17 Eurostat has also announced initial proposals for a European Census Hub by which Member States could 'pull' the 2011 Census data specified in the Implementing Regulation. The difficulty of achieving common specifications and applying comparable SDC methodologies across the 27 Member States has been recognised as a major obstacle. Italy and Ireland have offered to take part in the pilot phase of the Project by offering to make a sample of their latest census data available. Further countries have been invited to participate to this pilot phase, and ONS has agreed to prepare a submission to Eurostat setting out its own current thinking on the possibilities for similar domestic access to 2011 Census outputs.
- 18 Eurostat has also circulated a formal consultation document among Member States on the scope and measures of quality reporting, to be prescribed in the Implementing Regulation. Responses have again been invited by 18 April. In its proposals Eurostat has broadly adopted the structure of the ONS 2001 Census Quality report as a model, and the UK thus do not anticipate much difficulty in meeting the Regulation requirements. ONS is liaising with GROS and NISRA in order to present a UK view.
- 19 The EU Task Force is now scheduled to report to the Commission with its recommendations for the scope and content of the Statistical Programme after its next meeting in June, but work on drafting the Regulations has already started on the basis of those elements that have so far been agreed by Member States.
- 20 In fact, two sets of Implementing Regulations will be necessary: one prescribing those elements of the Census reporting which will not require scrutiny by the European Council (covering the topic output classifications, the means of transmission/supply of data to Eurostat, and the structure of the quality reports) – these will be approved solely by the EU Statistical Programme Committee (SPC); and the other which will require scrutiny by, and approval of, the Council, prescribing the programme of statistical data (that is, the hypercube specifications) and metadata.
- 21 Member States will be consulted on the draft Commission Regulations, but the timetable optimistically aims to seek to endorsement of these at the meeting of the Statistical Programme Committee in November 2008. A further report to Advisory Groups will be presented in the autumn 2008 round of meetings.

Procurement

22 A decision on the choice of the successful contractor for supplying the main processing and other related services is expected in June. The assessment of the Best and Final Offer from the two bidders - Lockheed Martin UK and Systems Ltd - is currently underway. As reported in Advisory Group Paper AG(07)06, the main contract covers:

- printing of questionnaires, information leaflets and envelopes;
- data capture;
- operational intelligence support (new for the 2011 Census);
- public interface (contact centre); and
- Internet collection (new).

23 Further contracts to support the field operation will cover:

- field staff recruitment, training and pay; and
- several other contracts to support the field operation, such as distribution, postal services, translation and printing of non-questionnaire material.

24 ONS has started the procurement for Recruitment, Training and Pay and seeks to appoint a supplier late summer in time for the Census Rehearsal. For the 2007 Test this service was provided by Hays Specialist Recruitment. Other contracts, in due course, will cover activities such as managing the publicity and advertising campaign.

ONS Independence

25 ONS became an independent Non-Ministerial Department on 1 April when the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (SRSA) came into force. Advisory Group Paper AG(07)06 reported on the implications for the 2011 Census, for which Ministerial responsibility has transferred from the Treasury to the Cabinet Office and the authority to conduct the Census from the Registrar General for England and Wales to the newly created Statistics Board.

26 The new ONS Minister is Ed Miliband MP. One of his first chief responsibilities will be to present the proposals for the 2011 Census to Parliament in a Government White Paper towards the end of the year.

27 The executive function of the Statistics Board will be carried out under the name of the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) chaired by Sir Michael Scholar. The board of the new body comprises: Partha Dasgupta, Moira Gibb, Sir Alan Langlands, Professor Stephen Nickell, Professor David Rhind, Lord David Rowe-Beddoe,

and Professor Adrian Smith. Lord Rowe-Beddoe occupies a Deputy Chair Post with responsibility for the Governance of ONS. The other Deputy Chair, with responsibility for the wider statistical system is Professor Smith. One of the first decisions made by the UKSA was to agree the future branding for itself and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Statistics quality mark.

- 28 SRSA has other consequences for those other duties formerly carried out by the Registrar General: the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) now moves to the Information Centre, an agency of the Department of Health, while the General Register Office (responsible for the administration of the registration of births, deaths and marriages) moves to the Identity and Passport Service, an agency of the Home Office.

Treasury Sub Committee enquiry into Counting the Population

- 29 The Registrar General and National Statistician, Karen Dunnell and other senior ONS officials, together with the then ONS Minister, Angela Eagle MP and a number of eminent users of census and population statistics, gave evidence before the Treasury Sub-Committee (TSC) as part of its recent enquiry, over the period November 2007-February 2008, into the collection of statistics by ONS relating to the size, age, sex and distribution of the population, and the accuracy, role and value of such statistics.

- 30 At the time of going to press the TSC had not yet reported on its findings but a copy of the written evidence submitted is available at:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmtreasy/183/183we01.htm>

ONS
2011 Census Communications and Stakeholder Management Branch
April 2008