

2011 Census Equality Impact Assessments

This paper provides an update to the approach that the ONS is considering with regard to Equality Impact Assessments during its preparations for the 2011 Census.

Action

Advisory Group members are invited to comment on the proposals, either at the meetings or via correspondence, by the end of June.

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Summary

ONS is committed to delivering a high quality Census. This paper outlines how the project is going to assure itself that the policies, procedures and strategies it implements ensure equality of access and consideration for everyone.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Census is a count of people, households and dwellings across England and Wales and many of these data are produced for very small areas. The data from the Census are employed by a wide range of users, including central Government, local Government, the health sector, businesses, analysts and the general public, for a broad range of purposes. These purposes include the allocation of funds by central Government, targeting investment and service planning.
- 1.2 To effectively fulfil these purposes, the data needs to represent the population. To ensure that it does, everyone must be able to complete their return.
- 1.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is an assessment of policies or procedures, strategies, functions and services, to identify the actual or potential impact of these on different groups of people. The consequences of the policies, procedures, etc, on particular population groups are analysed so that, as far as possible, any negative consequences can be eliminated or minimised and opportunities for ensuring equality can be maximised.
- 1.4 Completing Equality Impact Assessments for various policies, procedures and strategies being implemented by the Census project will help ensure that, as far as possible, the policies, procedures and strategies are equally accessible to everyone.
- 1.5 This paper summarises the work carried out so far and how this will be developed going forward.

2. Equality Impact Assessments

- 2.1 ONS is currently developing an over-arching Equality Scheme, which is in draft form. The Census project will carry out EIAs which fit within this framework and fulfil the requirements of the project.
- 2.2 To support this project, ONS commissioned a report that considered which aspects or themes of the project should, or could be, considered for assessment. The report identified six cross-cutting themes and suggested options for how the assessments might best be carried out.
- 2.3 The themes identified were:
 - ⇒ Communication with communities
 - ⇒ Consultation
 - ⇒ Methodology

- ⇒ Procurement
- ⇒ Fieldwork staff
- ⇒ Dissemination and data outputs

- 2.4 ONS carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on aspects of the Methodology in 2007. This specifically considered the Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion question development. The EIA considered a number of aspects, including data collection, the potential impact of options on groups and communities and mitigation actions. A number of recommendations were made and an action plan has been developed to take this forward.
- 2.5 Work is also underway on developing more detail around what is needed, when and what this may look like for the other themes identified. These have been incorporated into plans where information is available and are being assessed where work is still at an earlier stage.
- 2.6 Specifically for the fieldwork, EIAs are being planned for the procedures to be used by the field staff (at all levels), the recruitment process to be implemented for finding and hiring the field staff, and the training being developed and delivered to staff.

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