

ADVISORY GROUP PAPER (99)08

STRATEGY FOR A DECISION ON AN INCOME QUESTION IN THE 2001 CENSUS

This paper outlines the strategy and timetable for deciding final proposals for an income question in the 2001 Census.

Advisory Group members are asked to note the strategy and timetable of the decision making process and, in particular, when input will be sought from members.

22 June 1999

STRATEGY FOR A DECISION ON AN INCOME QUESTION IN THE 2001 CENSUS

This paper outlines the strategy and timetable for deciding final proposals for an income question in the 2001 Census.

Whilst recognising the importance of ensuring that sufficient research, evaluation and consultation is undertaken to enable an informed decision to be made, the timeframe is constrained by the requirement to finalise the Census Order (listing the questions to be included) which is currently scheduled to be approved by parliament by the end of 1999.

Income Data Working Group

At the October 1998 GSS(S) meeting it was agreed that a working group (the Income Data Working Group) be established to investigate alternative sources of information on income. A report from this group will be produced outlining potential alternative sources (focusing on DSS benefit data) and methods of small-area data modelling. A description of possible outputs will be included, providing information on data quality, and outlining the strengths and limitations of different approaches. The report will also provide an outline of longer-term proposals (extending work primarily to include possible use of information from Inland Revenue, more sophisticated modelling, development of income indicators and possible ESRC research projects). It is intended that the work undertaken by the Income Data Working Group will encompass the whole of the United Kingdom.

A draft report will be circulated to GSS(S) members in **mid July**, with comments required by the **end of July**.

Census Briefing Note

In conjunction with the work being undertaken by the Income Data Working Group, the Census Offices intend to continue evaluating the quality and public acceptability of a question on income in the Census. A briefing note will be prepared which will outline the business case and outcomes from the small-scale testing programme, the 1997 Census Test, the 1999 Census Rehearsal and the Census Quality Survey. Evaluation of the 1999 Census Rehearsal will encompass: question non-response (pending data availability); enumerator de-briefing; calls logged with the Public Enquiries Unit; and issues raised in the media and in correspondence from the public.

User Consultation

The final report from the Income Data Working Group, together with the Census Briefing Note will be circulated to members of GSS(S) and Advisory Groups, and other key users such as the Social Exclusion Unit, in **mid September**.

Comments will be sought from users by the **end of September** regarding the degree to which alternative sources of income data meet their needs. Users will be encouraged to consider the outcomes of the Working Group in the context of what can be done in both the short and in the longer-term.

Ministerial Decision

The decision regarding the final proposal for the income question rests with Ministers.

Timetable

Working Group Report

- draft to GSS(S) for comment
- comments required by

Mid July
End July

Census Briefing Note and final Working Group Report

- to GSS(S), Advisory Groups and key users for comment
- comments required by

Mid September
End September

Ministerial decision

October

June 1999