



## CENSUS ADVISORY GROUPS

Advisory Group Paper (07) 03

### 2011 Census Statistical Disclosure Control: update report

#### Summary

- 1 **Census Advisory Group members are invited to note the governance and timetable for a programme of research and user involvement in developing a statistical disclosure control methodology for the 2011 Census.**

#### UK policy position agreed

- 2 As reported at the last round of Census Advisory Group meeting, The Registrars General of Scotland, England and Wales and Northern Ireland have agreed to aim for a common Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) methodology for 2011 Census outputs. An important step towards achieving this aim was the agreement by the Census Offices of a UK SDC policy position setting out what constitutes a disclosive risk in a census context. (See link at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census/2011Census/producingdata/outputconfidentiality.asp>)

- 3 The aim of the SDC programme is to design a UK SDC strategy in accordance with the agreed policy which protects against disclosure in the 2011 Census outputs whilst maintaining maximum utility of the data. The strategy will need to cover pre-defined tabular outputs, microdata samples and possibly flexible user-defined tabular outputs, whilst taking into account the impact of interactions between these types of output. The strategy will also be designed to address the concerns of users whilst adequately protecting the data.

#### Governance

- 4 An SDC Working Group with representatives from each UK Census Office has been formally established. The purpose of this group is to provide advice, review and to steer work associated with developing the disclosure control methodology for the 2011 Census. A Disclosure Control Subgroup of UKCDMAC (UK Census Design and Methodology Advisory Committee) will also be set up shortly. This group will be responsible for providing advice on methodological issues and will act as a formal quality review panel for the SDC work programme.

- 5 The work to develop the 2011 Census UK SDC strategy will take into account the Downstream Processing schedule and the work on 2011 Census Outputs and 2011 Census Geography. The UK Census Offices have agreed to work together closely throughout the development of the SDC strategy. Within ONS the Statistical Policy Committee (SPC) will be responsible for signing off the recommended UK 2011 SDC strategy. Census Project Boards within the UK Census Offices will also be responsible for signing off the strategy prior to final sign off by the UK Census Committee (UKCC).

## **Methodological research**

- 6 The first stage of methodological research has involved producing a review of SDC in a census context which addressed;
  - research conducted prior to 2001;
  - 2001 SDC methodology (tabular outputs and microdata);
  - lessons learned from SDC in 2001; and
  - work conducted in the lead up to 2011.

This review will be used to facilitate the development of the 2011 Census UK SDC Strategy.

- 7 The second stage of research involves producing a high level review of the advantages and disadvantages of a wide range of SDC techniques. The report will address methods for protecting all types of 2011 Census outputs and the issues concerned with implementation and the interactions between the outputs. This review will result in a shortlist of methods which can be taken forward for quantitative evaluation using a disclosure risk – data utility framework. The short-list will be agreed by the UK Census Offices and quality assured by the SDC Subgroup of UKCDMAC. Short-listing will commence in **June 2007** and will be taken to UKCDMAC for final quality assurance in **October 2007**.
- 8 The third stage of research will be a quantitative evaluation of the short-listed SDC methods using a disclosure risk – data utility framework. This quantitative evaluation will be used to inform the recommended SDC method(s) for the 2011 Census for all types of census outputs, although the focus will be on tabular outputs. Findings from user consultations will be incorporated into the evaluation to ensure we take into account users views of desirable features of a disclosure control strategy. A draft report of high level user requirements is due to be produced in **April 2008**.
- 9 A further stage of research will be conducted to develop methods for the protection of 2011 Census microdata samples in accordance with the 2011 microdata strategy developed by the Census Microdata Working Group. This phase of the research will commence in **February 2009** and will run concurrently with user consultation and sign-off phase of SDC strategy for tabular outputs.

## **Proposed timetable for development of UK SDC strategy**

10 The proposed timetable for development of UK SDC strategy is

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- February 2007 – August 2007 – Conduct Persona Interviews to better understand users high level output requirements
- Autumn 2007 – Update users on methodological SDC research and results to date
- April 2008 – User perspectives on SDC fed into SDC research from output user consultation
- September 2008 – End of methodological research phase for the 2011 Census UK SDC Strategy
- February 2009 to April 2009 - User consultation, communication, education and feedback
- Spring/ Summer 2009 – Finalise UK SDC strategy for tabular outputs

**ONS**

**July 2007**