

Census Stakeholder Information Day, Monday 5th November 2012

Question and Answer Sessions

Q: What was done to maximise Census participation from hard-to-count groups such as gypsy travellers and how successful has it been?

A: There are groups which are recognised internationally as being hard to count, e.g students, ethnic minorities, homeless people. There were specific workstreams put in place to identify best approach for each of the hard-to-count groups including gypsy travellers, involving dedicated liaison and extensive consultation with support groups and local authorities. This included the Census Test in 2006 in which a range of potential questions were tested on sample user groups including gypsy travellers. This led to the development of different enumeration strategies for different groups. It is difficult to judge the extent of successful coverage of those groups until imputation work. We will consider this during the quality assurance process and will look to evaluate the quality of the results going forward.

Q: How reliable can imputed data be in respect of more subjective topics such as ethnicity, language and religious beliefs, compared to more objective demographic and economic factors?

A: Office for National Statistics (ONS) have undertaken extensive research and academic consultation on the subject of imputation and a number of relevant methodology papers have been published on the topic. There are a range of approaches which can be applied including using similar characteristics to compare and match to other records. National Records of Scotland (NRS) intends to publish a range of information around quality including response rates to individual questions and levels of imputation.

Q: Will copies of the slides from today's event be made available?

A: Yes, copies of the slides and other supporting information will be published on both our NRS website and our Scotland's Census website, www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk as soon as possible.

Q: Much of the discussion has been around Local Authority areas but will data be available to Health Board area geographies?

A: NRS will look at the possibility of including Health Board area information in Release 1C. However on current plans it will be released as part of Release 2.

Q: Did NRS take the right decision in opting to carry out downstream processing itself instead of ONS undertaking the task on behalf of NRS?

A: Whilst it was clear that this is a complex process, particularly through the experience of the 2001 Census which was the first 'one-number' Census, the potential benefits and cost-savings and overall control which could be obtained for NRS were considerable. The evaluation of 2001 census operation indicated the same. The knowledge and experience gained from this work will be invaluable to the organisation and the wider Scottish Government going forward. The majority of the difficulties encountered during downstream processing have been unforeseen from both NRS and ONS perspectives.

Q: In terms of data quality is there a case for Census to be conducted using doorstep surveys?

A: Research and previous experience has shown that people are uncomfortable answering questions on the doorstep and indeed relying on this type of personal contact as the only means of collecting census data would take much longer and use much more resource than that used for the 2011 Census.

Q: How will the statistics be rounded?

A: This is still under consideration and NRS hopes to provide a high level of clarity around this topic in the coming weeks. The earlier Processing Units (PU's) will be assessed to determine the extent to which results would change under rounding. It may be that data for local authority areas will have to be split into size-tranches and different rounding decisions made accordingly. Further information on rounding will be made available prior to the release.

Q: Previous data releases have included an early-release mechanism under which users are given early sight of results to enable local Public Relations (PR) and related work to be aligned to release. Will this mechanism be available again for 2011 data?

A: NRS will confirm pre-release arrangements as soon as possible.

Q: If ground is recovered against processing timetables will NRS release data earlier than stated in the latest timetable?

A: For December release this will not happen, but for subsequent releases every consideration will be given to an earlier release if circumstances allow. However, the release dates will always reflect what NRS are confident in meeting to produce high quality statistics.

Q: Were residents of communal establishments able to be returned via electronic means?

A: No, the internet completion option was not extended to communal establishments on this occasion, due to the security measures needed to ensure we could tie a questionnaire to a household address, but this will be the subject of further evaluation.

Q: There was anecdotal evidence that many carers were unclear as to whether they could complete on behalf of their dependents. Did this issue have a significant impact on returns?

A: We were surprised to hear this as many people had phoned the call centre for advice on this and there was no issue with carers, etc filling out the questionnaire on behalf of others.

Clear instructions were also provided to members of the public and NRS did not consider this as a major issue in enumeration.

Q: Is there an indication of the proportion of the population who had to be followed up as part of the Field operation following non-return of questionnaires?

A: Figures will be provided to confirm this, but early indications are that around 4% of records will need to be wholly imputed which fits with the estimated 96% return rate of questionnaires we received in 2011.

Q: Are multi-member wards replacing Census wards as output areas?

A: Yes.

Q: Will comparison of 2011 data with similar from 2001 and 1991 be straightforward?

A: We are planning to include 2001 data in the new the Outputs Dissemination Service (ODS) currently under development but it is not our highest priority at this time. We will be considering if it is feasible to add a level of 1991 data in the future.

Q: Will there be a facility for origin destination data?

A: Ultimately yes.

Q: Will Small Area Statistical Package (SASPac) users be catered for?

A: Yes.

Q: Will steps be taken to minimise the use of acronyms in release literature?

A: Yes, metadata will be designed to provide extensive explanation and background information to support the data.

Q: Will the Scotland's Census website run alongside the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) website?

A: Yes.

Q: Will the proposed data warehouse facilitate bulk data download?

A: Yes. Data will also be made available via optical media.

Q: What are the plans for a mapping solution?

A: It may be that the demonstrated ODS Beta version will be the preferred solution, or we may consider a different product altogether for Release 3 onwards. This is still under consideration. NRS will look to maximise flexibilities in tailoring dissemination solutions to different releases of data, and so functionality will be added gradually. It should be noted that the ODS system currently under development will be further enhanced in the future to support a wide range of statistical products and outputs across NRS and potentially the wider Scottish Government.

Q: Will there be an opportunity to comment on datazones once drafted?

A: The earlier consultation process was run by the SNS team in Scottish Government as they hold the responsibility for creating and maintaining Datazone geography. SNS plan to update Datazones based on new Census Output area geography, which will be created in 2013.

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