

Population and Migration Statistics Committee (PAMS) (Scotland)

Census update – November 2011

Processing census questionnaires

1. Processing of census questionnaires is expected to complete by end November. We have started to check the quality of the questionnaire images and expect to complete that process by mid March 2012. The creation of the associated microfilm, which will provide the image archive from the 2011 Census, is also currently underway and will run sequentially following the image archive quality checks.

2011 Census Data Quality assurance

2. We are currently receiving the captured and coded census data from the contractor. This data is then being run through our downstream processing system to ensure the data is sensible. We are additionally carrying out detailed quality assurance processes and comparing census data to administrative and other trusted sources of demographic information.
3. In the new year we shall arrange meetings of our external data quality advisory group. This group, consisting of Local Authority and academic members, will cast an eye over the data and provide advice and additional quality assurance.
4. At this point in time we are focussing on some challenges with our downstream processing system as census data is rapidly delivered from the processing site. These challenges have come about from the loss of key statistical staff and some complex IT issues.
5. The IT issues have mainly been overcome and our staffing situation is currently being addressed at board level but there will be an impact on the delivery of census data for further demography work, and on the first release of census publications.

Release of outputs

6. Our provisional running order for the release of the main statistical outputs from the 2011 Census was published on the National Records of Scotland (NRS) website¹ on 11 August. Due to the data processing challenges mentioned above, we now expect to publish the first release of census results – census population estimates by age, sex and council area - in Autumn 2012 rather than Summer (July) as initially hoped. We plan to issue a full outputs prospectus and associated dissemination timetable in spring 2012.

Pre-defined statistical census tables

7. At the end of June, we published, on the NRS website², table outlines for all of the 500 or so tables we propose to include in the pre-defined set of standard table outputs that will be made available for a range of geographies. These table designs are still provisional; we are for instance still reviewing them against comments received from users in previous rounds of consultation, and also in the context of seeking to harmonise as far as possible with the census outputs to be produced for other parts of the UK. We are aiming to baseline all of the table designs by the end

of December – it would be helpful to receive any further comments committee members may have on the provisional table designs by 16 December.

2011 Census output areas

8. Testing of the IT application to create 2011 census output areas is currently underway. The system has been designed to maintain as high a degree of comparability as possible with the set of output areas produced for 2001, with amendments only where required to meet minimum thresholds for confidentiality or to take account of council area boundary changes and some suggestions received from individual councils to improve the design of a relatively small number of specific output areas.

2011 Census dissemination system

9. Work is underway to develop a first prototype of the dissemination system – the successor to SCROL - which will be used to provide users with online access to the main statistical outputs from the 2011 Census. We aim to release a first prototype for user testing early in 2012. Further information on this will be provided in the next quarterly update note. If you would like to be involved in testing the prototype, then let us know (if you have not already done so).

Quarterly update notes

10. We aim to publish shortly the first in a series of quarterly progress notes that will:
 - keep users informed about the development of statistical outputs from Scotland's 2011 Census
 - consult users about specific issues relating to census outputs, e.g. specialist products and services such as census microdata and origin-destination flows
 - provide advance notice of workshops and other public events relevant to census outputs.

Evaluation and looking forward

11. We are currently evaluating the data collection phase of the programme. We have yet to confirm a profile and timetable for disseminating evaluation reports, but expect to start publishing them from Spring 2012.
12. The evaluation process has identified a number of lessons which we will take forward into our work on the Beyond 2011 agenda and also use to help inform the development of variant operational designs for any future census. We will soon start a period of research into how advances in technology can improve the way we gather data, more efficiently and with a more sustainable design. We will also engage with other census taking countries to share experiences, discuss their plans and review what could be done in Scotland. This process, combined with our own evaluation, will help us shape options for future data collection.

NRS: Census
November 2011

[Footnote 1] [Scotland's 2011 Census: Proposed Running Order for Release of Statistical Results](#)

[Footnote 2] [2011 Census Outputs – Pre-defined Tables Consultation](#)