

2001 Census Debriefing Programme – Monday 10th April 2006

“A review of 2001 and looking towards 2011 – a perspective from different sectors – what was good, what was less good and what users want for the future”

Organised by SASPAC, MRS, ESRC/JISC Census of Population Programme, RSS/SUF, ACD – in liaison with ONS/GROS/NISRA.

Presentation Abstracts

2001 Geography: the good, the bad, the ugly?

Professor David Martin

University of Southampton and ESRC/JISC Census Programme

2001 output geography in England, Wales and Northern Ireland was produced by an entirely different methodology to that used for previous censuses. Automated zone design procedures were applied to artificially generated postcode polygon boundaries in order to create a nationally consistent output geography. This approach led to the best ever match between census and postcode geographies while respecting ward and parish boundaries, ensured that all output areas contained above-threshold populations and provided a degree of control over social homogeneity and geographical shape. The boundaries were integrated with the postcode and higher-area lookup tables and were produced to specification and on time. In many respects this represents a remarkable series of successes. However, the absence of definitive postcode boundaries and limited input of topographic map features nevertheless led to many output areas having highly irregular shapes. Some postcodes are split across ward and parish boundaries so a perfect match between census and postcode geographies was not possible, nor do they always respect social divisions apparent to those who know an area well. The complete change of methodology made comparison with 1991 enumeration districts very difficult and the automated process provided no opportunity for local consultation on boundary placement. Subsequent to the census, the output area boundaries have been further aggregated to create the super output areas used by the Neighbourhood Statistics Service and many users have been encouraged by the promise of boundary stability, yet important decisions are still to be made regarding the maintenance strategy for the 2001 output areas. Key to 2011 census output will be the very challenging need to address the principal shortcomings of the 2001 geography without losing its major advantages.

2001 Data Delivery

Eileen Howes

Greater London Authority, Principal Census Analysis

The aim of this presentation is to set out what the basic requirements are, for what we, as users, would consider a successful delivery of census data. It sets out some basic minimum standards for the format and delivery of these enormous datasets, which we have to re-process into a more usable format before any serious analysis can be undertaken. It then goes on to look at what was actually received, where it met the basic requirements and where it did not. It also sets out the case for involving a small number of expert users in the checking and pre-processing of the census data so that all users have proper access to the data at the same time, and that the majority of serious users (e.g. using SASPAC, CASWEB, WICID etc) do not have to wait any longer than

necessary for the data. Finally, it makes some positive suggestions for the successful delivery of 2011 Census data.

2001 Statistical Aspects

John Hollis

Greater London Authority, Demographic Consultant

This presentation will cover the following points:

1. Definitions
2. Enumeration
3. One Number Census
4. Disclosure Control
5. Content

2001 Census Interaction data: Retrospect and Prospect

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The aims of this presentation are three-fold. Firstly, the 2001 interaction data or 'Origin-destination' statistics are introduced. They are larger and more complex than from previous censuses. In all, there are three sets of data: (i) Special Migration Statistics (SMS), (ii) Special Workplace Statistics (SWS), and (iii) Special Travel Statistics (STS), this last being for Scotland only and including journeys to place of study as well as place of work. The large size of the interaction data is partly because of the flows produced at Output Area level in the UK (apart from SWS in Northern Ireland). Also, in comparison with the 1991 Census, there are considerably more counts, and all counts are now 100%.

Secondly, the paper examines some important issues facing users. Particularly problematic, as there is no previous experience to guide users, is the impact of the Small Cell Adjustment Method adopted for disclosure control (SCAM). SCAM has distorted frequency counts. In Table MG301 for England and Wales, for instance, there were no cells with counts of 1 or 2, 1.76m cells with a count of 3, and just 38k cells with counts of 4 or more. There are also problems when comparing flows between tables at one scale and flows between tables at different spatial scales, because SCAM is applied independently to each table at each scale.

Big problems also emerge when trying to make simple comparisons with data from the 1991 Census. The main changes in 2001 relate to (i) the definition of variables, (ii) the measurement and adjustment of counts, and (iii) inconsistency in geographical areas. Particular attention is given to new categorisations of variables, the inclusion of infants, the migration effects of using termtime address for students' usual address, the use of new concepts of 'no usual address one year ago' and 'moving group', and local government re-organisation in the 1990s.

Thirdly, these issues provide a context for thinking ahead. A successful 2011 Census will add to the rich set of interaction data provided by previous censuses. The most important step towards this achievement is to scrap SCAM or at least consider a less damaging method of disclosure control that produces consistent counts across different tables at the same spatial level (if not between levels), and that has less dramatic impact on OA-OA flows. Alternatively, there should be access to unadjusted interaction data in a safe setting.

Other recommendations include: (i) adding a question on economic or occupational status one year ago, or a question to identify those who were students one year ago; (ii) extending the journey to place of study across the rest of the UK; (iii) maintaining the classification systems used in 2001 as far as possible e.g. for ethnicity, occupation; (iv) breaking down country/region of origin for immigrant counts in SMS; (v) including questions on other homes/workplaces and duration of stay.

Outputs, Access and Licensing

Barry Leventhal* and Peter Sleight**

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**Association of Census Distributors

This presentation will cover the following points:

1. Introduction
2. ONS Distribution Licence
3. OA boundaries – O.S. licence to re-supply
4. Social Grade output on 2001 Census
5. Other user-defined classifications
6. Outputs – bulk delivery & error management
7. Commissioned Tables – the private sector view
8. Conclusions and look forward

Note some of you may be aware of the document entitled 'A User's View of the 2001 Census', which was produced in February 2005. This was jointly written by the ACD and the MRS Census & Geodemographics Group, and forms the basis of our presentation at this event. It was sent to Len Cook, and subsequently debated with Len and some of his team. The document is available in pdf form on the MRS website (www.mrs.org.uk).

Association of Census Distributors - Member Companies: Acxiom, Beacon Dodsworth, CACI Information Solutions, EuroDirect Database Marketing Ltd., Experian, Business Strategies, MapInfo Limited, SPA Marketing Systems Ltd.

A full paper discussing the details presented above is available from:

<http://www.saspac.org/2001debrief.html>

ONS/GROS/NISRA - Looking towards 2011

Ian Cope, Project Director, 2011 Census England & Wales

The session will identify some of the key challenges for the 2011 Census and how these are being addressed, whilst highlighting the current constraints that we are working within. In addressing the key challenges, the session will highlight work already completed or initiated, identify some of the key issues, outline rough development dates and when users can expect to be involved. The main topics that will be covered are:

Topic consultation - A short summary of the results from the recent round of topic consultation and how and when the final topics will be decided.

Address register - A high quality address register/list is essential to the post-out design for England & Wales. Some of the work we've already done to assess the quality of existing address registers and what we'll be doing to take this forward will be outlined.

Coverage assessment and quality assurance - Although overall the 2001 ONC project was a success, there are a number of specific challenges that need addressing for 2011, such as use of visitor information, administrative sources, overcount and the quality assurance of the data.

Outputs - There are many lessons to be learned from 2001 about outputs. However, work on outputs is just getting started in earnest and we will be focussing on key stages in the development of a UK disclosure control policy and method, developing a dissemination system and user consultation.