

APPROACH AND STRATEGY FOR DESIGNING CENSUS AREA STATISTICS

This short information paper is to inform Advisory Group members of the approach and strategy being taken for the design of Census Area Statistics tables.

Advisory Group members are asked to

- a) note the paper, and**
- b) forward any comments within two weeks of the Advisory Group meeting to:-**

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Approach and strategy for designing Census Area Statistics.

1. Introduction

This short information paper is to inform Advisory Group members of the approach and strategy being taken for the design of Census Area Statistics tables. Any comments on the paper should be sent to Dave Blythe, Output Policy and Dissemination, Census Division, ONS within 2 weeks of the Advisory Group meeting.

2. Background

For the 2001 Census, Census Area Statistics (CAS) will be produced for Output Areas (OAs). They will be the replacement for the 1991 Small Area Statistics that were produced for Enumeration Districts and above.

3. Size of Output Areas

The size of Output Areas (which was the subject of a paper for the Autumn 1999 Advisory Groups) has been agreed at approximately 100-125 Households in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This will mean a population of approximately 250 people per Output Area. There will also be a limited number of smaller size OAs to meet particular requirements, for example in some rural areas. This is covered in more detail in a separate Output Working Group paper available to Advisory Group members on request.

The size of Output Area in Scotland will be approximately 50 Households. This will mean populations of approximately 130 people. The one set of core CAS tables will apply to all Output Areas across the UK.

4. Content of Census Area Statistics

CAS tables will relate to the Key Statistics and Standard Tables*. All Key Statistics will feature within the CAS tables, and all counts within the CAS will be available within the Standard Tables. The consultation process on both sets of statistics will be run in parallel, and any proposals for additional information in CAS that is not currently in the Standard Tables will be considered for inclusion in both CAS and Standard Tables. In keeping with the approach adopted for agreeing the Standard Tables, requests for information that has a strong case, but is limited in terms of applicability (e.g. tables on armed forces and detailed ethnic group information) will not be included within the core set of CAS tables, but can be given priority for 'special outputs'.

* The 2nd draft of proposed table outlines for Key Statistics and Standard Tables was circulated on 18th February 2000. If you have not received a copy and would like one, please contact Customer Services, ONS. Phone 01329 813800.

In creating the initial draft of CAS tables, the UK Census Offices will be consulting with users over possible new additional ways of showing Census information for these small areas. This includes the possibility of combining simplified Standard Tables with a number of more detailed univariate tables. Other options include the possibility of including some ranking type information (e.g. area classifications or information of the type 'this area is in the top quintile for characteristic X'), and the inclusion of deprivation indices. Particular attention is being made to developments in areas such as social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal. A meeting has already been held with a Census Area Statistics focus group which set the criteria for CAS tables (see Annex A). Further meetings will be held with representatives of the Policy Action Team looking at 'Better Information' for identifying and measuring social exclusion, and comments and views are also being sought from the 2001 Census Output Working Group.

5. Consultation Process

The consultation process for CAS tables will be a similar process to that being run currently for the Key Statistics and Standard Tables. Draft CAS tables will initially be sent to all users that commented on the first round of Key Statistics and Standard Tables. All census users that were invited to the Spring 1999 Census Roadshows will also be informed of the CAS tables by letter. In addition, details will also be posted up on the ONS website and in Census News (no 44) to give any other interested users details of how to receive a copy. With the close relationship between the two sets of outputs, the Standard Tables will not be signed off until consultation on the CAS tables is completed.

6. Timetable

It is anticipated that the first draft of CAS tables will be circulated to users for comments in early April, with feedback asked for by early May.

Criteria for Census Area Statistics

The following criteria was agreed by a meeting of the Census Area Statistics focus group (which was set up from members of the 2001 Census Output Working Group) on the 3rd November 1999.

1. Feedback from the Output Roadshows has strongly indicated that:
 - there is a wide requirement for a standard and consistent set of CAS tables;
 - standard CAS tables would be a better way to meet specific local requirements.
2. The importance of a Standard set of output tables from the 2001 Census is underlined by **Census Access**- a bid for Invest to Save 2 (ISB2) funding for a project to provide a 2001 Census public sector dataset.
3. Assumption that tables will be designed based on the 100-125 household (approx. 250 people) OA size for England and Wales and Northern Ireland with Scottish OAs being approximately 50 households (approx. 130 people).
4. Number of individual cells for each table (excluding totals) would not exceed 250, i.e. would not exceed average population. However, there will be OAs that are below this average population size.
5. CAS will be a sub-set of the Standard Tables and 'nest' within them for comparability (para 3.23 of the Discussion Paper).
6. OAs will nest within present administrative boundaries. NOTE: Scottish users are still to discuss issues relating to this for Scottish areas.
7. CAS will have broad banding or collapsing of classifications used in the Standard Tables.
8. CAS tables would be designed to exploit the 'richness' and inter-relationships between census variables.
9. Whilst recognising differences between different parts of the UK, there will only be one set of CAS tables for the UK.
10. For such small populations in an OA, account will be taken of:
 - the accuracy and reliability of the statistics;

- the need to reduce the actual and perceived risks of inadvertent disclosure of information about identifiable individual people and households. Broad brush consideration is being given to reducing the number of individual, rare or unusual counts;
 - having a content that that would meet needs of a range of customers across the country as whole - recognising rural populations.
11. There are currently no plans to produce information on levels of imputation at the OA level.
 12. At this stage, no detailed consideration has been made on principles for screen-based design.
 13. The Census Offices are prepared to consider other non-tabular formats for outputs, for example,
 - multi-variate area classifications;
 - digital geographies allowing opportunities to visualise population densities.
 14. General acceptance that there will be a more cost-effective fast tabulation system to design and produce tables.