national
STATISTICS

2011 CENSUS OUTPUTS USER CONSULTATION STRATEGY

Introduction

1   The vast investment of time and resources in a Census can only be justified if the results are made accessible and if the outputs produced meet user needs.

2   This strategy document describes the approach that will be taken to engage and consult with users to understand their output requirements from the 2011 Census, to enable the planning, design, production, and dissemination of appropriate user-focused products and services.

Action

3   **Census Advisory Groups are invited to comment on the proposed strategy at the meeting and to suggest other means by which the ONS might engage with users.**

Scope of the strategy

4   The Registrars General's Statement of Agreement on the Conduct of the 2011 Census (available at http://www.statistics/about/census/census2011/2011census_prog.asp) includes the aim to achieve harmonisation of outputs:

        "The final product should be consistent, coherent and accessible statistics for the UK and for each component country, a joint database (and/or a common data schema) being a desirable way of facilitating that outcome, with a common approach taken to output specifications, quality, data format and timing of releases."

5   Although the strategy set out in this paper describes user research and consultation plans for England and Wales, in order to further the above aim it is planned to work collaboratively as far as possible with the Census Offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland to understand user requirements across the UK and to aim to co-ordinate user consultation timetables.

Development of the strategy

6   The strategy described has been developed drawing on:
        * user consultation experience with 2001 Census products and services;
        * user consultation experience within other ONS divisions, in particular Neighbourhood Statistics and Communications Division;

- user consultation models used by other National Statistics Institutes, in particular Statistics New Zealand; and
- National Statistics guidance for better user consultation across the ONS.

7 Collaborative working and knowledge-sharing both within ONS and across the Census Offices will be on-going throughout user consultation on 2011 Census output. Internal working groups have been established to facilitate this approach.

Evaluation of 2001 Census products and services

8 ONS Census Division have undertaken an evaluation of 2001 Census products and services in England and Wales and joint-UK outputs, based on both ONS and external user reviews and feedback.

9 This revaluation will be used as the starting point in the user consultation process on 2011 Census products and services.

Identification of user communities

10 A comprehensive understanding of the census users and their requirements is essential for the development of user-focused products and services.

11 Census user communities are diverse and vary considerably in the amount and complexity of their output requirements and in terms of their technical expertise. Users of census data include;

- Central government;
- EU/International bodies;
- Local government;
- Health service;
- Commercial organisations and businesses;
- Academic and education community;
- Charities and the voluntary sector;
- The Media; and
- The general public

12 Improved identification and segmentation of census audiences is considered key to a comprehensive understanding of user needs. Direct communication with those accessing and using census data (end users) is also considered essential for the design of products and services to meet their needs.

13 ONS Census Customer Services has accumulated a very good knowledge of previous census users from the different sectors and their use of census outputs but knowledge of the current market for census information is arguably less good than in the past. Ironically, making standard output from the 2001 Census so freely accessible and so widening access and use of the output has made the monitoring of such use and the users of census data less easy, particularly among those not necessarily affiliated to known user communities, such as community or voluntary groups.

14   Research will be undertaken to investigate if ONS's current understanding of the census user community is comprehensive, utilising findings from the Mori pop-up survey on the NS and NeSS website. We will also interview those intermediaries likely to be contacted by community/voluntary/education groups and members of the general public for information, such as libraries and the LA Research Officers. Direct links with end users in known user groups will also be re-established through targeted communication and consultation with users on the Census Customer Services customer database.

Communication and Consultation with users

15   Consultation is only one element of communication with users. An NS paper *User consultation: Proposals for better consultation across ONS* (October 2005 recommended that there should be interaction with users at all levels and stages of the statistical process and led to the setting up of the RSS Statistics User Forum.

16   Users should be confident that they can communicate their needs and views to ONS and, conversely, ONS must be confident that its communication channels mean that census updates, planned consultations and output results are reaching all users.

17   A number of different strategies will therefore be employed to identify user requirements for:

- statistical products (standard tables, flexible tables, microdata samples);
- metadata (including quality reporting); and
- dissemination methods and media.

2011 Census Output User Champion

18   A member of the 2011 Census team will be designated 'the user champion', who will act as a focal point for user communications about Census outputs.

19   This person would act as the voice of Census output users within the ONS and the public face of Census outputs by:

- Channelling user enquiries and comments to the correct people within the ONS;
- Attending all Census user meetings where possible;
- Liaising with the Census Communication team to provide a united approach to communications with users; and
- Understanding the different user communities and their requirements

'User persona' research

20   A sample of 50 users will be drawn from the Census Customer Services user database, covering the following sectors.

- Local authorities
- Central government
- Value added resellers
- Commercial

- Academics
- Education/schools
- Health Service

Interviews will be held with these users in their workplace, using a combination of directed discussions and observation. This will provide an understanding of their requirements based on how they actually access and use census products in their work situation.

21   The potential census output requirements of public and community/voluntary groups will be explored via a small number of focus groups

22   Findings will be analysed for common themes in order to reveal clusters of needs, uses and expertise both within and across sectors. These clusters will form the basis for the development of user personas.

"Personas are a precise descriptive model of the user, what he/she wishes to accomplish and why" (Cooper and Reimann, 2003). This makes them powerful design tools.

23   It is intended that 2011 Census products and services will be designed specifically for the personas that have been developed so that they can be targeted to specific audiences.

Consultation on output requirements

24   The topics to be included in the 2011 Census will be finalised in the spring of 2008 and will be announced in the Census White Paper in October 2008. A further outputs consultation, (similar to the 2011 Census topic consultation that ran from April to August 2005 to give ONS' views and invite responses) is planned for shortly after this time.

25   Results from this consultation will expand ONS's understanding of user output product requirements gained in the persona research phase.

26   Census users will be asked to make a case for specific outputs from each topic including why they need it and the level of detail required. The responses will be evaluated and ranked according the strength of user requirement.

Data distributors workshops

27   The potential for a more joined-up dissemination model for 2011 Census output will be explored with external data distributors.

28   As a first step in improving understanding of current dissemination methods for census data and how they meet the needs of different user groups, ONS intends to hold a one-day workshop with different data distributors, to include representatives from the Census Offices, Local Authorities, Academic and Commercial sector etc in January 2007. ONS is viewing the workshop as part of the process of gathering user requirements from a provider's angle.

Census News

29   *Census News* on the NS website will continue to provide a means of communicating information to Census users. Alerts to each issue are sent to some 5,900 identified users, making this a valuable and instantaneous means of communication. *Census News* will also be used to alert known users to planned and active consultation.

Roadshows

30   Roadshows will be planned to take place at key points in the consultation process, in a variety of regional locations across England and Wales. These will follow a similar format to the census topic roadshows that took place in 2005. They will be used as a means of communicating and consulting on various aspects of 2011 Census development including outputs. These will be open to all census users and widely publicised.

31   It is also intended that there will be an evaluation roadshow following release of standard 2011 Census outputs in 2013.

User Groups

32   Established expert user groups such as the Census Advisory Groups (CAGs) (which cover government departments, local authorities, academics, health service, business and community groups), the RSS Statistics User Forum, meetings of the Association of Census Distributors (ACD) and Market Research Society's Census Geodemographics Group (CGG) will all continue to be important channels for engagement with users on output plans. The SARs User Group will play a similar role with regard to understanding user requirements for Census microdata samples.

2011 Census Output User Council

33   A Census Output User Council will be established, meeting biannually, to provide strategic guidance and feedback about output plans and developments. It will replace the Output Working Group that existed for the 2001 Census. It will play a similar role to the former Output Working Group, but aims to include broader representation from a cross-section of user communities. Membership will include representatives with statistical expertise and previous census experience.

SARs Project Board

34   The SARS project board will be a continuation of the 2001 board. It will meet biannually to provide strategic guidance and feedback about SARs output plans and developments, and discuss issues raised at the SARs User Group. Membership will include representatives from ONS, GROS, NISRA and the Centre for Census and Survey Research (CCSR)

Progress to date

35   Work to agree a UK wide Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) policy for 2011 Census outputs is nearing completion and a paper presenting the agreed policy position will be made public in January 2007. A two year programme of research evaluating SDC

methods that conform to this policy will follow. Users will be updated and consulted on the methodology as the work progresses.

36   Consultation on coverage assessment and adjustment is commencing in the Autumn 2006 with a paper presented to Census Advisory Groups (2011 Census UK Census Coverage Assessment and Adjustment Strategy – Advisory Group paper 06 16).

37   User consultation on Census output geographies is timetabled to commence later this month (November 2006). Details of this consultation will be presented in a paper to CAGs this Autumn (Advisory Group paper 06 14).

Meeting user requirements

38   Clearly, it will not be possible to meet all the user requirements that emerge from the consultation process. Resource constraints, technical feasibility and disclosure control considerations will all be factors that may limit what can be achieved.

39   User requirements will therefore be prioritised in terms of the strength of the requirement and assessed according to their costs and benefits.

40   Consideration will also be given to which output products, services and functionality should be provided by ONS and which could be provided by external Census data distributors.

41   Final proposals will be fed back to users for consultation via the forums described above.

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2011 Census Outputs

November 2006

High level output consultation timetable

Nov 06	• Consultation on proposed geography for Census outputs • Consultation on Coverage Assessment and Adjustment commences
2007	January: • UK SDC Policy Position Statement Summer: • 2011 Census Output User Council (COUC) set up • SARs Project Board set up • Geography Policy for Census Outputs Sign-off Autumn: • Update and Consultation on UK SDC methodological research • Proposed approach to Output Funding • User Quality Assurance of Personas
2008	• Consultation on proposed UK SDC Methodology • Consultation on Coverage Assessment and Adjustment • Finalised Output Funding Model • Update and consultation on dissemination model development • Report on high level user output requirements • Report on high level microdata sample requirements • Commencing consultation on detailed user requirements for outputs
2009	• Update on UK SDC methodology for tabular output • Report on detailed user requirements for tabular output (derived variables, cross tabulations) • Report of ONS view of outputs to be produced and dissemination model
2010 - 2011	• Finalisation of tabular outputs to be produced and dissemination model • Microdata sample specification • SDC system development and testing • Dissemination systems development and testing
2012	• First outputs

References:

Cooper, A & Reimann, R (2003). *About Face 2.0: The Essentials of Interaction Design*. Wiley Publishing Inc, Indianapolis.