national STATISTICS

Census 2001

One Number Census Quality Assurance information: Quality Assurance themes

Babies in area with large ethnic populations

Problem

The QA panel paid particular attention to the ONC estimates for 0-year-olds when they were reviewed during the QA process as this was a group that, in the past, has been found to be difficult to enumerate. Of particular concern, were the cases where the ONC estimates were lower than the birth registration data, which records all new births in the population adjusted for infant deaths and migration. This comparator data source was regarded as key when quality assuring the ONC estimates for children aged less than one.

There was a recurring pattern noted particularly in London and Bradford where the ONC adjusted estimates for 0-year-olds were lower than the birth registration data. This was despite a plausible underenumeration pattern. There was speculation that this could, in part, be attributed to certain cultural practices amongst ethnic minority groups living in London and Bradford. One possible explanation was that children of ethnic minority groups were born in England and hence registered in England but were then subsequently sent abroad to be raised by other relatives. This would have implications for the enumeration of these children in the census. Another possible explanation was that women from different ethnic groups would come to England, give birth and then return to their country of residence. Again children would be registered but not necessarily enumerated in the census. Another possible explanation, of course, is that babies have been under-enumerated in the census.

Actions

Academics working in this field were contacted in order to explore the proposed theories that children of ethnic minority groups are born in England and then sent abroad to be raised by other relatives or return with their mother to the mother's country of residence.

An analysis was conducted using the Census and CCS data to examine the patterns of babies and ethnicity in London. Several different factors were investigated and these included looking into:

- the extra babies found by the CCS in Census households i.e. where babies are not counted by the census but may have been picked up by the CCS;
- CCS households with babies i.e. households that were missed entirely by the Census but counted by the CCS;
- the proportion of babies in the census in London
- babies compared to older children; and
- the proportions of ethnic minority groups in London.

Results

There was no known empirical evidence to suggest that any of the proposed theories was occurring in London, Bradford or any other EA. The results from the further analysis into babies and ethnicity in London revealed that the proportion of babies missed by the Census did vary between ethnic groups although there

was no clear patterns from which to draw any conclusions. However, the overall proportions of ethnic minorities within these areas were plausible and were similar to independent distributions, for example London Research Centre ethnic projections were used.

Following this inconclusive investigative work to look at babies and ethnicity no additional adjustments made to the ONC estimates for this age group because there was insufficient evidence that adjustment was required. Subsequent contact with the Millenium Cohort research team, who have attempted to contact a sample of births from 2000 registration data, have highlighted that some of the babies cannot be traced. This work is ongoing and therefore no firm conclusions can yet be drawn.

However, the overall estimated underenumeration for babies was generally at the level that would be expected, and was consistent with the underenumeration pattern across similar areas without large ethnic minority populations. The underenumeration implied by the birth registration data in some areas was implausible in both extent and in comparison with underenumeration of those age-sex groups corresponding to the parent(s). There is also no qualitative information from the fieldwork that indicates that counting babies was a particular problem.