

# Census 2001 Review and Evaluation

February 2002

## Data Needs: Executive Summary

ONS is carrying out a review and evaluation of the 2001 Census in England and Wales which will culminate in a Data Quality report and a General Report being published.

Plans for individual reports on specific aspects of the Census operation and a timetable for release have been published.

Each report is written in isolation and is subject to amendments as processing progresses and further information comes to light.

Reports will be released on the ONS website in the form of a high level Executive Summary and a more detailed Evaluation Report.

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## Project Objectives

The Data Needs Project was set up to:

- identify users' requirements for information from the 2001 Census;
- develop questions which would provide good enough data to meet users' needs and which were acceptable to the public; and
- design forms which were clear, easy to complete and capable of being scanned using the latest technology.

This paper outlines the processes affecting key decisions in England and Wales.

## Background

The project took account of the results of a detailed evaluation of the 1991 Census. In particular, the value of building on the successful programme of user consultation was recognised together with the need to overcome problems with the design of the census forms and the wording of individual questions.

## Methodology

Co-operation characterised the work undertaken during the life of the project from early-1995 to mid-2000. Key decisions took account of the views expressed by users, internal and external experts. An extensive programme of consultation was complemented by a comprehensive programme of research and question testing. In particular, attention focused on:

- identifying users' requirements for information;
- developing suitable questions using a variety of techniques including focus groups, cognitive interviewing, small-scale and large-scale tests;
- designing census forms which were suitable for scanning and met agreed print and technical standards.

## Implementation

Although the comprehensive programme of consultation and question testing was carried out concurrently, the following key stages may be identified:

- identification of users' requirements for information and priorities for small-scale testing;
- preparation and testing of questions for the 1997 Census Test;
- the 1997 Census Test including detailed assessment of reactions to a new question on income, alternative questions on ethnicity and new form layouts;
- the preparation of detailed business cases for census questions;
- further testing of key questions and forms;
- the Census Rehearsal;
- final series of small-scale tests on the provision of care, academic, vocational and professional qualifications.

Decisions affecting the selection of questions were based on this detailed work.

## Results

The Government set out proposals for the 2001 Census in a White Paper published in March 1999. Decisions about the content of the Census, including details of the questions, were set out in the Census Order approved by Parliament on 15th March 2000. Copies of the Census forms became available when the Census Regulations came into force on 27th June 2000. The information was updated to take account of the subsequent decision to include a voluntary question on religion.

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## Lessons Learned

Despite some unexpected problems with specific questions, most notably the adverse reaction to the absence of a Welsh tick-box, the work was completed successfully. Among the main lessons learned were:

- the importance of the advice and guidance provided by users and the need to build on the strengths of the 2001 consultation programme;
- the advantages of working with members of the Question Testing Unit of the Office for National Statistics and the value of their advice and support;
- the need to retain independent print and processing experts;

## Conclusion

Staff from the Census Office worked co-operatively with users and others to develop effective questions, design suitable questionnaires and put forward proposals for the 2001 Census which would meet identified needs.

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Census Topics	Target Dates for Release
Legislation	Published
Non-Compliance (Executive Summary Only)	Published
Data Needs	Published
Geography	Published (Executive Summary)
Publicity	Published
Data Collection Development	Published
Data Collection Support	Published
Census Coverage Survey	Published
Processing	Published
Annex: Quality of Data Capture and Coding	Published
Downstream Processing	Published (Executive Summary)
Data Quality	
- Question non-response rates	Published
- Disclosure Control (Executive Summary only)	Published
- Data Validation (Executive Summary only)	Published
Edit & Imputation	Published
One Number Census	
- Quality Assurance	Published
- Lessons learnt (Executive Summary only)	Published
Output Policy	Published (Executive Summary)
Output Production	
- Part 1:Review of Output Released to date	Published (Executive Summary)
- Part 2:including Sample of Anonymised Records (SARs)/Origin Destination Matrices	Published
Census Access	Published
Programme Management	Published (Executive Summary)
Quality Report	Published
General Report	Published

Please note that the dates for release of individual evaluation reports noted above are target dates, and therefore subject to change. For the latest information please visit [www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/reviewevaluation.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/reviewevaluation.asp)