

Census 2001 Review and Evaluation

February 2002

Legislation: Executive Summary

Content	Page
Project Objective.....	2
Legislative and Parliamentary Framework..	2
Date of Census	3
Security and Confidentiality	3

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.

Census Customer Services
ONS
Titchfield
Fareham
Hants PO15 5RR

Telephone: ++44 (0) 1329 813800
Fax: ++44 (0) 1329 813587
Minicom: ++44 (0) 1329 813669
E-mail: census.customerservices@ons.gov.uk
Website: www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001

Census 2001 Review and Evaluation

Project Objective

The aim of the Legislation Project was to ensure that:

- the legislative procedures necessary to put into effect the arrangements to carry out the 2001 Census were followed to an agreed deadline;
- the arrangements conformed to other relevant legislation and confidentiality requirements; and
- Ministers were kept fully informed with the plans for, and progress on, the Census, and Ministerial and Parliamentary decisions were made in good time.

The prime aims of the project were achieved. There was extended Government consideration of the census proposals, particularly those reflecting the requirements for new questions on income and religion, the revisions to the ethnic group categories, and the date of the census.

The built-in contingency for delays in these processes were adequate to ensure that final deadlines were met, though the amendment necessary to the Census Act to provide for a question on religion in the census involved additional legislative procedures, which did put at risk the inclusion of the question in the 2001 Census as proposed.

Though the project liaised with many other projects, this report is written independently and therefore should be considered within the context of their evaluations.

Legislative and Parliamentary Framework

The key milestones required to establish the legislative and Parliamentary framework for the 2001 Census were achieved. These included:

The White Paper

The White Paper on the 2001 Census of Population drew on the consultation process for data needs and set out the Government's proposals for the questions to be covered, together with a background to the need for information. It also covered confidentiality issues, the arrangements for conducting the census in the field, the processing of the data and disseminating the results, and the requirements for legislation to give effect to these arrangements.

The White Paper was published in March 1999, two years before the Census, in order that there should be time for public discussion of proposals.

Census Order and Regulations

Parliamentary approval for the Census Order is required in order that:

- the date on which the Census is to be taken;
- the persons by whom, and with respect to whom, the returns for the purpose of the Census are to be made; and
- the particulars to be stated in the returns; the matters in respect of which particulars may be required are set out in the Schedule to the Act may be specified in secondary legislation.

A change to primary census legislation was needed to provide for a question on religion in the 2001 Census. A subsequent amendment had to be made to the Order to add 'religion' as a particular to be supplied.

The Order was made in March 2000 which provided sufficient time for the subsequent Regulations to be made, enabling the appointments of field staff to be made on schedule.

Census 2001 Review and Evaluation

Census (Amendment) Act

An amendment to the Census Act was required to put into effect the proposal to include a question on religion in the 2001 Census. The draft legislation was introduced as a Private Member's Bill in the House of Lords, and gained Royal Assent in July 2000, in time for subsequent amendment to the secondary legislation to be made.

Other public and Parliamentary activities

A case was made by representatives of the Sikh and Kashmiri communities that the question on ethnic group should separately identify these categories. Parliamentary time was given to debate the issues of the 'Welsh' tick box and under-coverage in London.

Date of the Census

There was only a limited choice for the most suitable date for the 2001 Census and a date of 29 April was announced in 1996. This date was close to the 2001 local elections in England, which were originally planned to take place on 7 May. However, in the event the outbreak of foot and mouth disease led to postpone both these elections until 7 June, and so the overlap of census and election campaign activities was largely avoided.

Security and Confidentiality

The confidentiality and security of personal census information is protected by means of several measures and procedures. There are statutory provisions that protect against the disclosure of confidential information collected in the census, and security and disclosure control measures are adopted to protect the physical security of the forms and the data during processing and the integrity of the resulting statistical information made available in output.

All such measures were subject to independent review and the results of these were reported to Parliament prior to the Census itself.

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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