



ONS(ONC(SC))99/06

ONE NUMBER CENSUS STEERING COMMITTEE

Report on One Number Census Consultation including the Workshops, April/May 1999

1. This paper reports on the One Number Census Workshops which were held in April/May 1999 as part of the Census Output Roadshows. Also included is an update on recent consultation activities and future plans.
2. **The Steering Committee are asked to:**
 - a) **note the report**
 - b) **provide any comments at the meeting on the 1 July 1999, or in writing by 15 July 1999.**

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Report on One Number Census Consultation including the Workshops

1. One Number Census (ONC) Workshops, April/May 1999

1.1 As part of the Census Output Roadshows, four One Number Census (ONC) Workshops were held in Manchester, Cardiff, London and Glasgow (In Northern Ireland, a session on the ONC was included in the Census Output Roadshow). The workshops consisted of a presentation of the key areas of the methodology followed by a structured Question and Answer session. This provided Census Users with the opportunity to discuss the methodology in greater depth and to question members of the Project Team. The workshops were well attended (approximately 240 people) by a broad range of Users and a summary of the questions asked is presented below. Also included are comments received on the ONC as part of the User response to the Census Roadshows.

1.2 'A Guide to the One Number Census' was prepared and distributed to all attendees at the workshops and other interested parties. It was also made available on the ONS Website. This twenty-page document provided an overview of the methodology and included an annex of 'most frequently asked questions'. A two page summary document was sent out with the documentation for the Census Output Roadshows.

1.3 The ONC was well received with Users acknowledging that a lot of work was being undertaken to address the issue of underenumeration and adjusting the census before 2001 in contrast to 1991. Some said that they felt confident that ONS had learnt from the mistakes of 1991 and that the approach now being taken was sensible and thorough and would ensure that the same problems are not encountered in 2001. There was a general feeling that this was vital to ensure confidence in the quality and reliability of the 2001 Census outputs and that the ONC would provide a definite advantage over 1991 when the lack of consistency between tables caused considerable problems.

1.4 Users welcomed the opportunity to discuss the methodology and to question the Project Team and thought the Workshops a worthwhile platform for this. Some said that they would welcome further details of the ONC methodology particularly following the 1999 Census Rehearsal when the 'fine-tuning of the process has been completed.

2. Summary of Questions asked at ONC Workshops and Comments Received

2.1 Although the response to the ONC Workshops was overwhelmingly positive, attendees took the opportunity to ask a broad range of questions. This section outlines these focusing on the questions most asked. It should be stressed that overall the questions in 2.5 – 2.12 were asked only by a few attendees but these are recorded here for completeness.

2.2 A number of attendees took the opportunity to ask more general questions about the Census itself. It was suggested that the Census Offices should put more resources into the census to find the missing people in the first place. Users also asked if there were any initiatives to measure over-enumeration due to second homes etc. There was a general concern that the inclusion of the income question may result in a reduced response rate which could affect the ONC estimates.

2.3 A wide range of questions were asked on all aspects of the ONC. In general, attendees wanted to know if a final decision would be made after the Census Rehearsal (CR) on the methodology itself, or whether to implement it. There was a concern that the ONC may result in a possible delay to output and Users wanted a timetable for the release of data. In Scotland the LAs asked for information on the differences and reasons for these between the application of the ONC methodology to Scotland and England and Wales. They were keen that differences were kept to a minimal to ensure comparability across countries.

2.4 Users felt that it was important that ONS must be 'transparent' regarding the ONC so that the process can be fully understood and Census Users can have full confidence in the results. Some were concerned that any release of unadjusted figures would cause confusion whilst other felt that not publishing Census counts would deprive researchers of the opportunity to make their own judgements regarding underenumeration within their areas and the efficiency of the methods being adopted to correct this.

2.5 Users also wanted details on how the ONC would cope with communal establishments (CEs) and migration in the time between Census Day and the Census Coverage Survey (CCS) (particularly amongst students, with the CCS being close to end of term, and transient populations living in CEs).

2.6 On the design of the CCS, several people attending the Cardiff Workshop were concerned about postcodes, which straddle the England/Wales border. Work is currently underway to estimate the number of postcodes that straddle the England/Wales and England/Scotland borders so that the size of this potential problem can be assessed.

2.7 Users at the London Workshop were worried that the design would not cope with the substantial differences between postcodes in the same area. There was a general comment that the Hard to Count (HtC) index is based on 1991 data and some Users from Local Authorities (LAs) wanted to know if they could help with the process by providing information on pockets of difficult areas known to them.

2.8 Attendees were puzzled as to why interviewers were recruited with similar characteristics to enumerators instead of using extra resources to employ better quality interviewers. They also wanted assurance that the CCS would find the people the Census missed and were interested to know how likely it is that the CCS will find 2/3 of people the Census missed and how the CCS would address the problem of finding those people who do not want to be counted. Some felt that as the CCS is voluntary it too would be prone to problems of bias through non-response.

2.9 Some Users felt that the fact that the CCS was not starting until over three weeks after Census would cause problems with migration and others suggested that the length of fieldwork period was not adequate. They were interested to know what the fallback position is if the CCS does not work.

2.10 There was a concern that the CCS interviewers might obtain better quality answers to questions than the Census and that this might adversely affect the matching. Some attendees wanted to know the expected proportion of matches at each of the four stages. There was also an interest in whether a similar matching system was used in other countries.

2.11 Some Users wanted to know if the design groups had been decided on and if LAs would be consulted and also if confidence intervals would be available for estimates when they were released. On the quality assurance of estimates, Users asked if experience had been gained from other countries and whether the LAs, County Councils, Armed Forces would be asked for input. There was some interest in the strategy for resolving any major discrepancies between the mid-year population estimates and the ONC estimates and whether this scenario would define the CCS as a failure. One respondent wrote that although they supported the adjustment of the census counts to reflect the findings of the CCS they objected to further modification using techniques of demographic comparison or data from other sources.

2.12 Many questions were asked about imputation and the ONC. Users asked if a measure of the extent of imputation in the Census output would be given and a table of the levels of adjustment in 1981, 1991 and 2001 presented. They also wanted to know if the other questions not asked in the CCS be imputed. There were still some Users who expressed a preference for weighting rather than imputation.

3. Other Recent Consultation Activities

3.1 Ian Diamond gave an RSS presentation at Exeter University on 11 February 1999 titled 'The Development of a One Number Census in 2001'.

3.2 James Brown presented a paper at the Population Association America conference in New York, 25 - 27 March 1999. This paper, 'The Role of the Dual-System Estimator in the 2001 Census Coverage Surveys of the UK' outlined the proposed methodology for the ONC focusing on the use of combined Dual-System and regression estimators. A copy of this paper ONS(ONC(SC))99/07 has been circulated to Steering Committee members for information.

3.3 Ray Chambers gave the 'keynote' speech at the Statistics Canada Symposium, 2-5 May 1999 – 'Combining Census, Survey, Demographic and Administrative Data to Produce a One Number Census'. At this Symposium James Brown again presented a paper on the use of combined Dual-System and regression estimators 'Dual System Estimation and the 2001 Coverage Surveys of the UK' and Fiona Steele presented a paper on the ONC imputation. A copy of this paper 'A Donor Imputation System to Create a Census Database Fully Adjusted for Underenumeration' ONS(ONC(SC))99/08 has been circulated for information.

3.4 Ian Mate gave an RSS presentation at St. Andrews University on 10 May 1999 titled 'The One Number Census: practical survey and theoretical problems'.

3.5 Donna Kostanich, Assistant Chief, Sampling and Estimation on the US Decennial Census visited 25 – 26 May 1999. She is in charge of the design, estimation and imputation aspects of the US ONC. She attended the ONC Project Board and met with members of the Project team to discuss the similarities and differences between the UK and US approaches to a ONC. She was impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication of the ONC team and found the different approaches fascinating. She is keen to try some of our approaches as a means to verify and better understand their results and was particularly interested in the ONC imputation.

3.6 David Whitford and Jan Jaworski from the US Census Bureau also visited in May. They are responsible for the fieldwork of the ACE (Accuracy and Coverage Survey), the US equivalent of the CCS, and also the matching. They gave a presentation on the ACE and took the opportunity to visit the CCS areas and observed the interviewers in the field.

3.7 Marie Cruddas presented a paper 'The One Number Census in the UK' at the Conference of the Italian Statistical Society, 7 – 9 June 1999 and also gave a presentation 'The methodological approach to a One Number Census in the UK' at the GSS Methodology Seminar on 21 June 1999.

4. Future Consultation Plans

- The paper 'A methodological strategy for a One Number Census in the UK' will be published in the June edition of the Royal Statistical Society Series A.
- Tim Holt will present the paper 'Risk in Official Statistics: A Case Study of the 2001 One Number Census Project' at the plenary session at the RSS Conference on Risk, 12 - 15 July 1999 in Warwick. A copy of this paper ONS(ONC(SC))99/09 will be circulated to Steering Committee members for information.
- A report on the ONC Workshops will be prepared for the Census Advisory Groups scheduled for September 1999.
- A paper 'The Design of the One Number Census in the UK' has been accepted for presentation at the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Research Conference, Arlington, Virginia, 15 - 17 November 1999.
- A paper will be submitted for presentation at the LARIA conference in April 2000 and an RSS Ordinary meeting on the ONC will be held in late 2000.