

Census Transformation Programme Update for the 7 October meeting of the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee at Cathays Park, Cardiff

Members are asked to note the following update from the Census Transformation Programme at the Office for National Statistics.

1. Background

The aim of the programme is to make the best use of all available data in England and Wales to enhance the provision of population statistics. The Census Transformation Programme continues the work begun by the Beyond 2011 Programme which closed in 2015. It will:

- provide a predominately online census in 2021, with help for those who need it
- seek to increase the use of administrative data to enhance population statistics
- form plans for the provision of population statistics after 2021

Further information about the Census Transformation Programme can be found here:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/aboutthecensustransformationprogramme>

2. “The 2021 Census – Initial view on content for England and Wales” – public consultation

Between 4 June and 27 August 2015, a public consultation – “The 2021 Census – Initial view on content for England and Wales” was held to help inform our planning and to identify which topics the next census should cover. During June regional road shows were held in Newcastle, Birmingham, Cardiff and London to promote the consultation and to discuss the work of the Census Transformation Programme with stakeholders.

A record total of 1095 responses were received, more than for similar consultations ahead of other census consultations. These responses were analysed and an interim report published in November giving an overview of the responses received:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales>

On 23 May 2016 we published a full response to clarify ONS’s view on the 2021 Census topics and what work will be required before making a final decision. The report provides an overview of the evaluation process we used to assess the responses and summarises the results of the evaluation. It sets out ONS’s updated view on the topics to be included in the 2021 Census, including a summary of proposals for new topics, next steps and an overview of our plans.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/assessmentofinitialuserrequirementscontentforenglandandwalesresponsetoconsultation.pdf>

3. Questionnaire and Question Development

Following the closure of the 2021 Census topic consultation (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales>), engagement continues with interested groups and organisations, and research is ongoing with the aim of developing the questions for the 2021 Census questionnaire.

We plan to finalise the questions and questionnaire (both paper and electronic versions) for the 2017 Test at the end of October 2016. This will incorporate the findings from testing of sexual identity, volunteering, qualifications and introductory household questions (h1-h5 questions).

Workshops have been held with relevant communities, including NISRA and NRS on sexual identity and gender identity. In these, we shared our research and testing plans for both of these topics. Group exercises helped to further our understanding of user needs, concepts, terminology and concerns, and expectations around data. As a result, stakeholders gained greater appreciation of the data collection process and how best to meet data needs. The workshops were very successful and some useful contacts were established.

4. 2016 Census Test

The 2016 Census Test in Telford and the Wrekin marked the start of a period of testing and development for census teams. It was held in June/July 2016 and was the first of several tests, to be followed by the main Census Test in 2017 and the Census Rehearsal in 2019. The 2016 Census Test involved 10,000 households, hotels and care homes and gave us invaluable information for preparing for the 2017 Census Test, which will be on a much larger scale. The Test aimed to evaluate the use of hand-held devices in the field and consisted of initial contact via a letter inviting respondents to complete a brief online questionnaire supported by a questionnaire tracking facility that updated field staff daily through the hand-held devices of where to follow up respondents.

More information is available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/2016censustestintelfordandthewrekin>

The main objectives of the Test were met, and lessons learned. Key decisions were then made and documented, and these will be taken forward into the 2017 Census Test. This will allow us to make critical decisions ahead of the 2019 Census Rehearsal, which will be the last chance to test protocols, systems and processes before the 2021 Census.

5. 2017 Census Test

The 2017 Census Test will take place in April 2017. The seven local authorities participating in the Test were notified in June of their selection before the areas were more widely announced.

Detailed operational planning is now underway, seeking to fully understand all of the interfaces and dependencies in the systems and procedures. Developing and finalising the operational model and systems will continue through the autumn/winter with integration and security testing occurring early in 2017. The go-live date for the online system is currently planned for early March 2017.

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/progressanddevelopment/the2017test>

6. Release of the Annual Assessment of Progress towards an Administrative Data Census post-2021

On May 16 ONS published its first assessment of the ability to move towards an Administrative Data Census post-2021. It was the first in an annual series, and described what we mean by an Administrative Data Census. It provided our first high level assessment supported by evidence, and what we plan to do to meet our expected assessment in 2023. It was supported by a paper summarising the feedback received from the Administrative Data Research Outputs that we published in October 2015, and our plans for the next release of Research Outputs in winter 2016.

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/administrativedatacensusproject/administrativedatacensusannualassessments/annualassessmentofonssprogressstowardsanadministrativedatacensuspost2021.pdf>

7. Census Transformation Programme Research Conference – Transforming the Census – to 2021 and Beyond

The Research Conference took place in Winchester University on June 28 and 29. The conference presented the latest research and thinking from the Census Transformation Programme, in light of the move to predominately online data collection and the increased use of administrative data in 2021 and beyond.

Presentation, key themes and answers to questions raised at the conference have been published at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/progressanddevelopment/2016researchconference>

8. Research Outputs

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/progressanddevelopment/researchprojects/beyond2021researchanddesign>

In July and August, the Admin Data Census team met with Local Authority User Engagement Forums (In Oldham, London and Newport) to give an early insight into what the research outputs will look like this autumn, to seek input on what we are proposing to publish, and the methods used to produce the outputs.

Provisional publication dates are:

- **17 November** Admin Data Population estimates by five year age group and sex for 2015 (National down to LSOA)
- **16 December** Admin Data Income distributions at LA level 2013/14 tax year (PAYE and benefits data only)
- **January 2017** Admin Data Household estimates 2011 and 2015 (Number of households by LA)

9. Update from ONS Geography

ONS Geography has now completed the work in developing a new set of Workplace Zones for Scotland and Northern Ireland. This has included a quality assurance of the methodology and boundaries by National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and they have also agreed that they will host the boundaries on their respective websites. There is no date for this to happen but as everything has now been agreed we would realistically expect the Workplace Zones to be publically available by the end of September. We will look to publicise this new geography through all our available channels when it does become available.

Work has now shifted to completing the Classification of Workplace Zones as part of a collaboration with the University of Southampton. The University of Southampton are finalising the revised groups and super-groups based on the UK level set of Workplace Zones and will provide these to ONS to quality assure. As both NRS and NISRA will need to have sign off of the classification (as a UK level product), the expectation is that the product should be made available early in 2017.

10. 2021 Census Advisory Groups

The next round of meetings with our Census Advisory Groups is provisionally planned for late November/ December 2016 in London and Cardiff. The papers for discussion will include updates on the research outputs, questionnaire development and future plans for Census 2021.

If you have any comments or questions about any of the items contained in this update, please contact us by emailing Census.Engagement@ons.gov.uk

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