

Why UK plc should 'count itself in'

Next April will see perhaps the biggest peace-time exercise ever conducted in the UK. The 2001 Census of Population, due on Sunday 29 April, will seek to count everyone who is resident in Britain.

This huge exercise will provide a vast new source of data on the state of the nation – covering population, ethnicity, health, qualifications and employment to name a few.

Ten-yearly Census data provide the benchmarks by which social and economic change in Britain is measured. This makes it a vital resource for planners, managers and marketers throughout the private, public and voluntary sectors.

Taking part in the Census and promoting it to others is in everyone's best interests. It helps communities obtain public funds for everything from schools and hospitals to roads and social services. Around £50 billion of local authority expenditure is allocated every year using Census data.

Why Census 2001 needs business

The advertising campaign launched by the Government to inform society about the Census is unlikely to reach all of those who need to be counted. In order to achieve the most complete and accurate Census possible, Census 2001 must therefore recruit strong partners. As a key stakeholder in society which is in regular contact with both employees and customers, business is an ideal partner for this exercise.

Why business needs Census 2001

The Census will produce no fewer than 2 billion individual statistics, and will publish results covering areas as small as about 100 households through to the national level. Privacy and confidentiality of the personal information supplied will be maintained.

Business is a major user of Census data: companies of all types combine the data with statistics from other sources to build a demographic picture of the UK. Results from 2001 will start to be published in Spring 2003.

Uses made of Census data include:

- evaluating potential markets
- locating new offices, branches, shopping centres, factories and distribution centres
- making sure advertising campaigns reach the right communities.

No fewer than 16 of the 41 questions on the 2001 Census form in England relate to employment, including occupation, industry, supervisory experience, and mode of travel to work. As a result, the Census is the most comprehensive source of labour market information at the local level. Personnel departments use Census data to monitor labour market trends, including reserves of labour and skills in specific areas.

Other factsheets:

1. The Census
2. Why We Need a Census
3. Census 2001 – What's New?
4. Counting Everyone In – the Big Challenge
5. The Census Organisation
6. Census Jobs
7. The Census and the Law
8. Census Taking Through the Ages
9. The Census Questions

How business can help

Marketing and PR departments can:

- Print Census messages on product packaging, bags, invoices, websites and other customer communications.
- Display Census point-of-sale material in-store.

Personnel/Internal Communications departments can:

- Place Census messages in company newspapers, magazines, payroll envelopes, and on intranets.
- Encourage employees and retired staff to take part-time, temporary jobs with the Census. Census 2001 will need a fieldforce of some 70,000 Enumerators (Census takers) and Team Leaders in England and Wales, and recruitment will begin in January 2001. Work as an enumerator can be fitted in around an existing job.

Workplace postcodes

One question on the Census form asks people who are in work to give the address of their workplace, including the postcode. Since many of us do not know our employer's full postcode, reminding all employees of this will be of real practical help towards achieving a complete and accurate Census.

Contact for further information:

Press enquiries only:
Tel: 020 7533 5160

Public enquiries only:
Census Customer Services
Room 4300S
Office for National Statistics
Segensworth Road
Titchfield
PO15 5RR

Tel: 01329 813800
Fax: 01329 813587

email: census.customerservices@ons.gov.uk
website: www.statistics.gov.uk