

ONS response to Phase II requirements of the UK Statistics Authority special assessment of the 2011 Censuses in England and Wales

Introduction

On 30 June 2011, the UK Statistics Authority published its report on Phase II of the special assessment of the 2011 Censuses in the UK¹. This assessed compliance with those practices not covered by the first assessment phase including plans for quality assurance of the census and the publication of census outputs.

The outcome of the Phase II report was that the Statistics Authority determined that the 2011 Census outputs could be designated as National Statistics provided that ONS, GROS and NISRA provided evidence to the Authority by May 2012 that they had met the ten requirements listed in section 1.5 of the report.

This paper sets out ONS's response to the requirements for the census in England and Wales. NISRA and NRS (formerly GROS) will publish their own responses to the requirements for the censuses in Northern Ireland and Scotland respectively, as the approach to meeting the requirements has been different across the census offices.

1 Background

Under the provisions of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007, the UK Statistics Authority has a statutory function to assess sets of statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics² with a view to determining whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated, or to retain their designation, as National Statistics. As the census is not a regular statistical output the normal assessment process is not applicable. Therefore, as part of this obligation, the authority is undertaking a series of 'special' assessments of the 2011 Censuses in the UK to assess compliance with the code of practice by looking at the censuses' plans and processes over three phases:

- Phase I – assessed compliance with the Code of Practice in respect of those aspects of the code for which it was practicable at December 2009
- Phase II – assessed compliance with the remaining practices of the code, including provisional assessment of plans for the publication of various census outputs. This phase allowed the Statistics Authority to decide whether the census outputs could be designated as National Statistics in accordance with the requirements of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007
- Phase III – will be carried out after census outputs have been published, and will involve an assessment of these outputs in light of users' views. The Authority expects to publish an assessment report on these outputs by mid-2013

¹ The Phase II assessment report (number 115) is available on the UK Statistics Authority website at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

² The Code of Practice is available at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

2 ONS response to requirements

ONS's responses to each of the individual UK Statistics Authority's requirements are set out below.

2.1 ONS response to requirement 1

Requirement 1 states:

'Publish information about the outcomes from user consultations in a timely manner and explain clearly their decisions based on these consultations.'

A document summarising the two consultations on the main statistical outputs in England and Wales was published in *Update: 2011 Main Statistical Outputs Consultation*³. This covered the consultations carried out between December 2009 and March 2010 and February to April 2011.

The *2011 Census Geography Outputs Consultation*⁴ in England and Wales finished on 29 April 2011 was published on 16 August 2011. This summarised the results of the user consultations and specific issues to be addressed.

A high level summary of the outcomes of the user consultation on the main statistical outputs was published by ONS in July 2012 in *2011 Census Main Statistical Output Consultation, Analysis*³

ONS has also agreed to publish information on the outcomes of any future consultations relating to the 2011 Census within four months of their closing dates.

2.2 ONS response to requirement 2

Requirement 2 states:

'Inform users about any changes to plans for publishing the outputs prospectus and timetable, and explain clearly the reasons for any changes.'

ONS informed users of the output timetable on the 2011 Census Outputs web page³ and at a series of road shows held in September 2011.

Further information about the timetable was published in the *2011 Census Prospectus*⁵ in April 2012.

³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/producing-and-delivering-data/2011-census-outputs/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/producing-and-delivering-data/output-geography/2011-census-consultation-summary/index.html>

⁵ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/2011-census-prospectus/index.html>

2.3 ONS response to requirement 3

Requirement 3 states:

'Publish more information about Census Advisory Groups and about the UK Census Outputs Working Group.'

Information about the Census Advisory Groups⁶ and Census Outputs Working Group⁷ has been made available on the ONS website. ONS has also committed to publishing minutes of these groups within four weeks of a meeting.

2.4 ONS response to requirement 4

Requirement 4 states:

'Adopt clear pricing policies for any supplementary statistical services related to Census outputs.'

The charging policy for providing commissioned tables of census results was published in April 2012 in *Census Commissioned Table Price List*⁸.

2.5 ONS response to requirement 5

Requirement 5 states:

'GROS and NISRA should improve the signposting to relevant methodology papers on ONS's website.'

No action required for ONS.

2.6 ONS response to requirement 6

Requirement 6 states:

'GROS and NISRA should publish details of quality assurance advisory groups and accessible information about plans for quality assuring Census data.'

No action required for ONS.

⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/census-consultations/uag/census-advisory-groups/index.html>

⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/producing-and-delivering-data/2011-census-outputs/2011-census-outputs-working-group/index.html>

⁸ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/2011-census-prospectus/release-plans-for-2011-census-statistics/commissioned-tables/index.html>

2.7 ONS response to requirement 7

Requirement 7 states:

'Publish accessible information about census output geography to help users understand the policies and why key decisions were made.'

ONS published the full and final Geography Policy⁹ following the consultation.

The best-fit methodology¹⁰ and its impact on users is also explained.

ONS has also published more information about the maintenance of output areas and workplace zone creation¹¹.

2.8 ONS response to requirement 8

Requirement 8 states:

'Publish information about statistical disclosure control methodology to help non-expert users understand the methods and why they were chosen.'

ONS has published a paper detailing the analysis that was undertaken to choose the statistical disclosure control methodology in *Statistical Disclosure Control for 2011 Census*.

A *Statistical Disclosure Control for 2011 UK Census - Q&A* question and answer guide has also been produced which will be updated as and when additional Q&As are added¹².

2.9 ONS response to requirement 9

Requirement 9 states:

'Publish plans to develop commentary and analysis that aid interpretation of the Census results.'

ONS's plans for commentary and analysis of the census have been published. This is included in the *Census Outputs Prospectus*¹³.

⁹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/producing-and-delivering-data/output-geography/output-geography-policy/index.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/producing-and-delivering-data/output-geography/best-fit-policy/index.html>

¹¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/producing-and-delivering-data/output-geography/index.html>

¹² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/processing-the-information/statistical-methodology/index.html>

¹³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/2011-census-prospectus/release-plans-for-2011-census-statistics/index.html>

2.10 ONS response to requirement 10

Requirement 10 states:

'Publish a list of administrative sources which will be used to quality assure the census results, and information about the quality of these sources.'

Summary information about the coverage, accuracy and timeliness of administrative data sources used in the quality assurance of the 2011 Census has been published in *Overview of Administrative Comparator Data Used in 2011 Census Quality Assurance*¹⁴.

A high level summary of administrative sources used by ONS is also found in the *Statement of Administrative Sources*¹⁵.

3 Summary

The board of the Statistics Authority reviewed ONS's responses as above and on 20 June 2012 confirmed that the 2011 Census statistics covering England and Wales complied with the Code of Practice and could therefore be designated as National Statistics. The remaining phase of the Special Assessment will take place in line with the release of 2011 Census products to ensure that the 2011 Census outputs continue to comply with the Code of Practice.

¹⁴ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/the-2011-census/processing-the-information/data-quality-assurance/index.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/the-national-statistics-standard/code-of-practice/statement-of-administrative-sources/statistical-usage-of-administrative-or-management-sources/index.html>