

RESPONDENT: 2971903689 – Anne Ramon
SECTOR: Unknown - Individual

Q1 - What are your views of the different census approaches described in the consultation document?

As a family historian I value the name, location, relationship and employment details recorded in past and present Censuses very highly and I fear for the future family historian who does not have this information about past 'family' units. The most recent Census of 1911 already illustrates the increasing mobility of our ancestors and the disruption of the two world wars, and the instability of family structure from the mid 20th century onwards will doubtless throw many lines of descent into disarray. Both of the suggested new census methods will be inadequate in the face of these issues, the online survey a little less so.

Q2 - Please specify any significant uses of population and housing statistics that we have not already identified.

Family historians use this type of information to put their own families into context and any reduction in quality of data or frequency of collection will diminish their usefulness. Will the alternative records sources, if the selected route forward, be made available to the public and the search engines of the future? We are used to 100 year closure but I am imaging that some of the information collected in these formats will always be sensitive and have to be redacted. This is well understood by family historians - the people involved may be our family members and we are alert to the sensitivity, but it would be useful to separate out the types of questions for the ease of future production of the information.

Q3 - Please specify any significant additional benefits of population and housing statistics that we have not already identified.

The joy of the old Censuses, especially the 1911, is seeing the handwriting, the crossings out, the corrections, the extra notes like those written by the suffragette supporters, the one day old babies who had died on the night of the Census, the husbands 'away at sea', the 'lodgers' - all so much more than just statistics.

Q4 - What would the impact be if the most detailed statistics for very small geographic areas and small population groups were no longer available? High, medium, low or no impact?

High

If medium or high, please give further information.

I've said 'high' because I am very interested to know the specific house, farm, outbuilding or other establishment my ancestor was living in. It provides information about their economic prospects, employment, social and physical mobility. You have already acknowledged the 'detective' usefulness of the Census data to family historians. Without this our 'little grey cells' will not work!

Q5 - What would the additional benefit be if more frequent (i.e. annual) statistics about population characteristics were available for areas like local authorities and electoral wards? High, medium, low or no additional benefit?

High

If medium or high please give further information.

Annual reports for very local areas would be very valuable as they would help identify local impacts more readily, say the closure of a local industry, a new enterprise with new workers or the spread of a disease, with the consequent movement and social changes to the local labour force.

Q6 - Please specify any significant uses of census information for historical research that we have not already identified.

Thank you. You have recognised the family history interest which would be seriously damaged by any reduction in detail. I am not aware of any complementary records that would plug the family structure gap, especially for 'modern' families which may enjoy several different surnames for its members.

Q7 - What advantages or disadvantages for genealogical or historical research can you see from a move to a solution based on archiving administrative data sources?

This solution is most damaging to the current family history interest as the most vital components (names and ages within family units at a location) are lost. No advantage and no opportunity.

Q8 - What are your views of the risks of each census approach and how they might be managed?

Administrative data. The risk to family history is TOTAL, No mitigation. Online Censuses. Some hope here. There is the risk that incorrect or incomplete Returns made be made, and I do appreciate that this risk has existed since 1841. I think being on-line will exacerbate this risk.

Q9 - Are there any other issues that you believe we should be taking into account?

I am concerned that both options for discussion fail to meet the needs of the genealogical community which is large in number but mostly quiescent. I am hoping that the 'giants' of our community will help defend our interest, like the National Archives.

