

RESPONDENT: 2940657892 – Megan Roberts
SECTOR: Unknown - Individual

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

I believe that a census conducted every ten years as in 2011 is the optimum approach because: (a) "Large Annual Compulsory Surveys" - The existing census is compulsory, but always has a large number of non returns that have to be chased up. To suggest that this could be done annually on a compulsory basis is a recipe for disaster and huge administrative costs, (which have not been properly taken into account), being incurred in chasing up non returns or indeed taking enforcement action. (b) Existing census approaches allow obvious and often deliberate misinformation or inadvertent mistakes to be challenged, because there is a name and address attached to each return. (c) Recognising that it is census data which is used to distribute funds to local authorities etc., it cannot be beyond the wit of Governments and its agencies to recognise that sudden and unplanned influxes of population into an area, or out of an area, can be accommodated without the need for an annual survey, which actually will prevent local authorities etc from undertaking any meaningful medium or long term planning, because ever statistic could change each year.

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

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

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.

Inevitably the small populations areas (e.g. rural communities) will be further marginalised and ignored on the basis that they don't fit the "norm" for large conurbations. Many of these areas are already suffering economic and social decline because every policy or priority is set by, principally, what London and the Home Counties want.

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?

No Additional Benefit

If medium or high please give further information.

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

Census information allows us to look back and see how our predecessors thought, what was important to them, and indeed to challenge modern day perceptions of how times and people have changed. A very brief review of the 1911 census shows that whilst many were still in service, it was

not always to the "upper class", and indeed many were working for families much lower down the social class. We can also see that despite modern preconceptions that there was a ruling class and everyone else did what they were told, there were plenty who were prepared to express their political views on the census returns by refusing to fill them in and stating why. For example suffragettes said such things as "if we aren't able to vote, then we aren't able to fill in this form". The fact that this information could be checked and verified at the time it was taken makes it invaluable to historical and social research.

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?

Absolutely none. A bunch of statistics gathered for some other purpose and not capable of being interrogated or verified, makes it useless. There is a very old saying amongst statisticians "rinput = RUBBISH IN RUBBISH OUT", and frankly without being able to verify the veracity of the inputs, which won't be possible for an annual return, even if names and address were supplied, because of the sheer scale of data collected will mean that the output, even for the purposes stated, can't be relied upon.

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

Historically the public sector has not managed large scale projects well. Too often the original fanfare, which greeted its introduction, turns into a public trust nightmare as the project falls over. How can tax payers trust that their money will not be squandered on systems that don't work and with organisations that have little accountability? We know that the census works, so why change it if it isn't broken?

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