

RESPONDENT: 2938897641 – Catherine Sharples
SECTOR: Unknown - Individual

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

The census based on administrative data and annual compulsory surveys will rely heavily on the accurate collation of often incomplete data. I assume that the collation of data will be achieved by an IT project - these are not noted for their success in either on-time completion or delivery within budget. Data from tax returns, benefits claims, migration, etc are often incomplete or inaccurate. The current system seems to already have the facility to update the data from other sources. As a family historian (a selfish point of view I know) the detail on the census once a decade is invaluable and I would like to think that my descendants will still have access to an individual's data rather than a sterile set of numbers. More and more people are becoming willing to submit data online. I personally found the online version much easier to complete than the paper version; I began to rough out my answers on paper but got hopelessly lost trying to explain that I was retired but still working part-time; the online version led me through this seamlessly. Adjusting the data by use of surveys of only 1% or 4% of the population seems statistically insignificant but I am not a statistician.

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?

Medium

If medium or high, please give further information.

Less accurate and less detailed results.

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?

Low

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.

Detailed information about individuals allows data to be verified.

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?

None.

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

Census each decade - risk of a low percentage of online submissions could be reduced by not automatically providing a paper copy but making it very easy for people to obtain one if necessary. Census based on administrative data and annual compulsory surveys is only as good as the data collected by various departments - Garbage In, Garbage Out.

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

The census based on administrative data and annual compulsory surveys will rely heavily on the accurate collation of often incomplete data. I assume that the collation of data will be achieved by an IT project - these are not noted for their success in either on-time completion or delivery within budget. Data from tax returns, benefits claims, migration, etc are often incomplete or inaccurate. Thank you for considering the use of census data by genealogists.