

RESPONDENT: 2828531598 – Andy Sloggett
SECTOR: Unknown - Individual

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

I would strongly support the retention of the decennial census.

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

The consultation document is very light on the issue of longitudinal data and research based on this data. Family history research is mentioned, and is important - Britain has a strong tradition of this use of the census - but it does not mention the more academic use of longitudinal data that is available through the ONS Longitudinal Study. This study is limited in some ways but very powerful in others. The quality of this huge dataset is exemplary and although several other countries have some sort of longitudinal study the British one is probably unique in size, length and quality, outside of the Scandinavian countries who have complete population registers. This is something to be proud of, to promote and retain. As such it needs a decennial census.

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.

I think loss of geographic detail is not something a developed and research-intensive nation should be considering. The interesting and powerful use of deprivation indices for academic/social research, including their commercial use by groups such as Experian, would be badly compromised.

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.

I think that more numerous, more frequent, but smaller surveys would actually lead to more fragmentation of research and a false expectation that things would be better - in fact they may be more onerous and substantially less cost-effective in practice than decennial census data. Agreed that they may be available more quickly.

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

Longitudinal research by the availability of record linkage.

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?

Loss of the Longitudinal Study. Risk that numerous admin data and other surveys would in fact be less cost-effective, not more.

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

The issue of the decennial census being too great a time investment for members of the public is irrelevant. It takes a household head perhaps a couple of hours to complete a census form and there is naturally a lot of chit-chat and press comment about this at the time - but when all said and done it is not that bad and it's only once every ten years! There may be more adverse comment about more frequent requests to participate in this or that smaller survey, and more comment about intrusive information. An over-riding issue is that whatever rolling stats are collected, and smaller surveys done, demographers know that stats tend to "drift" - and a decennial census of the whole population allows that drift to be corrected and re-based. This is very important. Other excellent surveys, such as the smaller cohort studies, labour force survey etc. already exist and should of course continue. But the decennial census is a different matter - and it is important that this remains different and comprehensive.