

Scotland's 2011 Census Progress Report

March 2012

Introduction

1. This paper provides a brief update from the National Records of Scotland (formerly GROS) on its work on Scotland's 2011 Census.

Processing census questionnaires

2. Processing of census questionnaires completed in December 2011 and decommissioning of the CACI's site in Livingston is now almost complete. Images of census questionnaires have been quality assured for all twelve processing units. Creation of the image archive will complete in April. As part of

our evaluation process, we will undertake a Post Implementation Review of the processing site operations with CACI before our contract with them completes.

2011 Census Data Quality assurance

3. Since the beginning of the year, the Census Downstream Processing (DSP) team has carried out a recruitment exercise and has gained an additional seven members. A number of staff are already in post, and we anticipate that the DSP team will be at full strength at the beginning of April.

4. We have received the captured and coded census data from the contractor. This data has been run through the initial stages of downstream processing system, and a series of quality assurance checks have been carried out on the data. These include comparing census data to administrative and other trusted sources of demographic information, reviewing the responses to each of the topic areas, investigating particular sectors of the population, for example students, armed forces and communal establishments. The initial analysis has identified a number of areas where the quality of the data can be improved, and these changes are now being made to the data in advance of the next stages of processing.

5. We plan to arrange meetings of our external data quality advisory group, at the stage when the estimation process has been applied and initial census estimates are available. It is anticipated the first of these meetings will be held in July, although we may have a pre-meeting if advisory group members would find this useful.

Release of outputs

6. We had previously been aiming to publish the first release of the 2011 Census results for Scotland in July 2012, to coincide with the planned first releases for England & Wales and Northern Ireland. However, as reported to the Population and Migration Statistics Committee (the main advisory committee on the census in Scotland) in November, we have been faced with a number of technical and resource challenges in carrying out the data processing and quality assurance tasks that are essential if we are to produce high quality and trusted statistics from the census. As noted above, extra resources have now been deployed to these areas of work, but the revised timetable means that first release of census results for Scotland will not now take place until late 2012. Confirmation of this, together with further details on all other census output products, will be provided in the outputs prospectus which we plan to publish on our website in the next few months.

Pre-defined statistical census tables

7. Initial designs of the 500 or so tables it is proposed to include in the pre-defined set of standard table outputs of the 2011 Census results were published on the NRS website¹ last June. Work continues on reviewing and updating these designs, including checking for layout consistency and flagging up any potential statistical disclosure control issues. The associated tasks involved in developing the specifications for the outputs database and in planning the table build process for outputs production is now well advanced. We also continue to work closely with the other UK census offices to harmonise as far as possible on UK-wide statistical outputs.

2011 Census output areas

8. Testing of the IT application to create the 2011 Census output areas continues; further phases of testing are planned for April and the summer. The system has been designed to maintain as high a degree of comparability as possible with the set of output areas produced for 2001, with amendments only where required to meet minimum thresholds for confidentiality or to take account of council area boundary changes and some suggestions received from individual councils to improve the design of a relatively small number of specific output areas.

2011 Census dissemination system

9. A working first prototype of the dissemination system which will be used to provide users with online access to the main statistical outputs from the 2011 Census has been developed. The system will be a successor to Scotland's Census Results Online (SCROL) used to disseminate the results from the 2001 Census. While the prototype is still very much "work in progress" at this stage – for example, it does not yet include mapping and some other functionality that will be included in the final version - we have now reached the point where we are keen to carry out some user testing to determine whether or not we are on the right track.

10. Our hope is that we can reach a good mix of users, including those with no particular background in census or in statistics. Immediately prior to the test, participants will be sent a link to the online prototype system, asked to carry out a short set of tasks and to complete an electronic feedback questionnaire (e.g. on how easy they found it to carry out the task and to navigate round the system.) It should take around 30 to 45 minutes to carry out the allocated tasks. We will then evaluate all feedback and use that as the key driver for informing further system development.

11. We aim to carry out this round of user testing in the second half of April. All staff in NRS will be invited to take part together with a group of Scottish

Government statisticians and members of the PAMS committee. Later versions of the prototype will be exposed to further user testing as they are developed, including to the external user community.

Quarterly update notes

12. The first in a series of quarterly progress notes will be published in April. It will:

- keep users informed about ongoing work on the development of statistical outputs from Scotland's 2011 Census
- consult users about specific issues relating to census outputs, e.g. specialist products and services such as census microdata and origin-destination flows
- provide advance notice of workshops and other public events relevant to census outputs.

National Records of Scotland Census Division March 2012

1. <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/preparations/consultation-and-research/formal-consultations-supplementary-work/feb-2011.html>