

## Data Management and Analysis Group

# Census Information Note CIN 2007-2



**DMAG Briefing 2007/25**

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## **2011 Census Parliamentary Process**

This short information note gives an overview of the 2011 Census Parliamentary approval process.

The 2011 Census is scheduled to take place in March 2011, the exact date has not yet been announced. For the census to take place a number of legal requirements must be completed, these include:

- A Census White Paper needs to be produced.
- A Census Order must be laid before parliament
- The Census Regulations need to be enacted.

The United Kingdom consists of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Each country has their own legislative process, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Parliament in England. The various statistical bodies in these countries have agreed to some common questions being asked in all countries and they will conduct their Censuses on the same day.

### **The Census White Paper**

The White Paper is presented to all for informed debate before formally being presented to the UK Parliament. The White Paper sets out the following topics for debate:

- The date of the Census.
- Strategic aims.
- The population base.
- Questions to be included.
- Those questions considered but not included.
- The field operation (delivering the forms and collecting the completed returns).
- Processing the data.
- Disseminating the results.
- Confidentiality and disclosure control and
- The legislative process.

Following the presentation of the White Paper to the UK Parliament, the processes for the necessary secondary legislation can begin.

### **Legislative procedures**

The Census in England and Wales is undertaken using primary legislation, the Census Act 1920. Before this can be used two pieces of secondary legislation are required, a Census Order and Census Regulations.

## **Census Order**

The Census Order is approved by the Queen's Privy Council, this allows a Census to take place. The Draft Order is laid before both Houses of Parliament under Section 1(2) of the Census Act and states:

- The date of the Census;
- The areas to be covered by the Census;
- The persons required to complete the returns;
- The enumeration base and
- The question items for each person.

Some topics which may or may not be asked are set out in the Schedule of the 1920 Census Act and include:

1. Name, sex, age.
2. Occupation, profession, trade or employment.
3. Nationality, birthplace, race, language.
4. Place of abode and character of dwelling.
5. Condition as to marriage, civil partnership, relation to head of family, issue born in marriage.
- 5A Religion
6. Any other matters with respect to which it is desirable to obtain statistical information with a view to ascertaining the social or civil condition of the population.

The Census Order for England and Wales requires the approval of both Houses of Parliament. Topics 1 to 5A mentioned above do not require formal approval. The questions to be asked in topic 6 can only be included if they receive parliamentary approval. (For the 2011 Census these would include any questions on qualifications, long-term illness, carers and means of transport to work.)

The Census Order precedes the Census Regulations.

## **Census Regulations**

The Chancellor is empowered by Section 3 of the Census Act 1920 to undertake a Census in England. The Regulations cover the data collection activities such as:

- Dividing the country into enumeration areas;
- Employing field staff;
- Arrange for the delivery and collection of the census forms to households and communal establishments. Making special arrangements such as the return of forms in sealed envelopes or on-line; and how to deal with special population groups such as rough sleepers.

- What the enumerators have to do and what information they need to collect. What information needs to be provided by those in charge of communal establishments and boats.
- The Census follow-up procedure and how to deal with non-compliance.
- The management of field materials and documentation.
- The other duties of field staff; and
- How to deal with security and confidentiality.

The Census Regulations need to be approved by Parliament. The Transfer of Functions (No.2) Order 2006, means that separate Census Regulations covering the conduct of the Census in Wales are required to be approved by the National Assembly for Wales, similar arrangements are also undertaken in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Regulations include copies of the final version of the Census questionnaires. All wording of the census questions and instructions need to be finalised before the Regulations are made.

Attached is the timetable ONS are following to get the White Paper, Census Order and Census Regulations to Parliament.

## ONS Timetable as at December 2007:

Key Milestones	Target Date
<b>2007 Census Test</b>	
Statistical Evaluation of 2007 Census Test	Dec 2007
2007 Census Test – Evaluation of the delivery method	Dec 2007
2007 Census Test – Evaluation of the income question	Jan 2008
Evaluation of the 2007 Census Test – Summary Report	Mar 2008
<b>Content Consultation</b>	
Ethnicity Identity Language and Religion (EILR) question recommendations from topic group	Jan 2008
2011 General topics – questions agreed	Jan 2008
UK Census Committee meeting specifically to discuss EILR questions	Feb 2008
Scottish recommendation on ethnicity question presented to Minister	End Feb 2008
2011 Topics – questions agreed	Mar 2008
Possible public statement on likely 2011 content	Mar 2008
<b>Testing</b>	
Whole questionnaire testing starts	Feb 2008
GROS Rehearsal questionnaire finalised	Apr 2008
Final report on whole questionnaire testing	Jul 2008
Rehearsal questionnaire agreed	Aug 2008
Rehearsal questionnaire finalised	Sep 2008
2011 questionnaire agreed	Aug 2009
2011 questionnaire finalised	Sep 2009
<b>White Paper and Parliamentary process</b>	
White Paper final draft agreed, including topics	Mar 2008
Submission of Census draft white paper from ONS Minister to Cabinet Committee (Domestic Affairs Committee and Welsh Assembly Members	Apr 2008
ONS Minister sends out final draft white paper for Domestic Affairs Committee and Welsh Assembly Ministers Approval	Jul 2008
Domestic Affairs Committee and Welsh Assembly Ministers Approval of Draft White Paper	Aug 2008
White Paper published and laid before Parliament / Welsh Assembly and announced by means of a Ministerial statement.	Oct 2008
Census Order final draft (including question response categories)	Autumn 2009
Census Regulations final draft (including questionnaire)	Autumn 2009
Census Order laid before Parliament	Jan 2010
Census Regulations laid before Parliament	Mar 2010
Census Day	Mar 2011

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