

ONS Census Consultation. Response from Natural Resources Wales

5.1 General comments

Q1: What are your views of the different census approaches described in this document?

NRW: Natural Resources Wales welcomes the opportunity to consider and respond to the two options for the future of the Census, and recognise that there are strengths and challenges associated with both approaches. Our purpose is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future, and as part of our work we make use of Census data (and associated annual population estimates) in limited, but important, ways. This includes use of census data to inform to our household and site-based surveys and the development of the index of vulnerability to flooding.

On balance, our preference would be for the first option for ‘an online survey once a decade’. This preference is based on the importance of continuity of data with previous census data, our need for data for small area geographies and small population groups, and utilising a tried and tested method.

Although we recognise the benefits associated with the second option of using administrative data in combination with a limited household survey, particularly in relation to an increased frequency of data collection, we also have a number of concerns. These concerns relate to the challenge of ensuring the accuracy and consistency of administrative data, and the limitations that this approach presents in relation to data availability for small area geographies. In Wales, we would also have concerns about sample size of the supplementary surveys, which would only be for 1% and 4% of households.

5.2 Uses and benefits of population and housing statistics

A good understanding of uses and benefits is critical to understanding the relative merits of each method. These questions ask you to tell us about any uses or benefits of census statistics that we have not yet fully understood.

In your answers, please provide as much evidence as possible. Uses that fulfil a regulatory or legal requirement are also of particular interest.

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

NRW: In addition to our use of census data to adjust for bias in responses to our household surveys, we use census data at small area level, in combination with flood risk maps was used, to create an index of vulnerability to flooding. Census items used include; lone parent households, older population (75+), long term sick, no car, not a home owner, unemployed, overcrowding. We have been informed that "the register created is being used at a national (Wales) level to inform the strategic investment plan which will spend £14million on capital schemes in the next financial year. It is also used to prioritise work at a local level in all flood risk departments and influences the remaining spend of the order of £20million. Misdirecting this investment will result in loss of effectiveness, though this has not been quantified".

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

NRW: No comment

5.3 Impact of different census approaches on statistical uses

These questions ask for your views on the real impact the different census approaches would have on operational or business decisions.

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?

NRW: Medium Impact

Q4.1 If medium or high, please give further information.

NRW: Please see our response to Q2 regarding the importance of census data at a small area level for our index of vulnerability to flooding.

Q5: What would the additional benefit be if more frequent (ie annual) statistics about population characteristics were available for areas like Local Authorities and Electoral Wards? High, medium, low, or no impact?

NRW: Low Impact

Q5.1 If medium or high, please give further information

NRW: Not applicable

5.4 Impact of different census approaches on historical research

ONS has worked with The National Archives and genealogists to understand how census information is used in historical research. These questions ask you to tell us about any uses or benefits of census information that we have not yet fully understood and to share your views on the potential impact of the different census approaches.

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

NRW: No Comment

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?

NRW: No Comment

5.5 Managing risks

As described in section 3, there are risks and opportunities with both census approaches. These questions give an opportunity to comment on these and to raise any other issues.

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

NRW: See our response to Q1 General Comments

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

NRW: See our response to Q1 General Comments

5.6 How to respond

Please submit your views via the [online survey](#) by 13 December 2013.