



Northern Ireland
Statistics &
Research
Agency

2001 Census Review and Evaluation

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NORTHERN IRELAND CENSUS PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A detailed Review and Evaluation of the 2001 Census is underway, and information on projects within the 2001 Census is gradually being released.

This report provides a high level overview of the Northern Ireland Census Publicity Campaign.

Each report is written in isolation and is subject to amendments as processing progresses and further information comes to light.

Reports will be released on the NISRA website in the form of a high level Executive Summary and a more detailed Evaluation Report.

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Census Customer Services
NISRA
McAuley House
2-14 Castle Street
Belfast
N.I.
BT1 1SA

Telephone: 02890348160
Fax: 02890348161
E-mail: census.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk

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Strategic Aims and Objectives

The Census White Paper (Cm4253) published in 1999, recognised that the Census would rely heavily on public co-operation and a publicity campaign was required to convey to the public the importance of the Census. Preliminary research carried out by the Census Offices indicated that there was limited awareness among some members of the public about the nature and purpose of the Census and a clear need to educate and promote the importance of participation. The aims of the Northern Ireland Census Publicity Campaign were to:

- To ensure there was a critical level of awareness of the Census throughout the population; and
- To influence positively any potentially difficult to enumerate groups.

Background

Experience from the 1991 Census and the Census Rehearsal in 1999 had emphasised the importance of a core message and creative concept in raising awareness of the Census to influence participation. The need to introduce a local dimension to advertising and promotion was also identified and highlighted the need to take into account characteristics specific to Northern Ireland.

Methodology

A Census Publicity Board was set up to co-ordinate the activities of the three Census Offices. It was agreed that the core concepts of the publicity campaign for England and Wales would apply throughout the UK with regional campaigns being developed and implemented by the Census Offices. The NI

publicity campaign included an associated Public Relations campaign. The main creative idea of the England and Wales publicity campaign was a ‘Count me In’ slogan, considered to be effective as it presented the Census in terms of an event that everyone would want to participate in, and a logo. While Northern Ireland would benefit from general UK coverage of the Census, the specifics of the Northern Ireland market led to the production of local advertisements and materials. The new NI logo incorporating a raised arm in the “Count me in” slogan integrated well with the campaign message.

Campaign Strategy

A publicity campaign to improve the overall understanding and awareness of the Census was developed across a wide range of outlets including television, radio, print, posters and the “through the door” materials delivered by Enumerators. In addition, account was taken of the need to target groups who were most liable to be missed such as students and babies. The lack of awareness of the purpose of the Census also influenced the decision in NI to introduce an “Advance Round” leaflet, which (uniquely in the UK) was posted to every household just before the Enumerator deliveries of Census forms commenced.

Media Plan

The media plan was developed to reflect the different fieldwork stages and the public’s involvement with the Census to ensure the correct messages were received at the appropriate time and encourage compliance throughout. A detailed Publicity and Public Relations calendar incorporating both paid and free media activity ensured that a mix of media with television at the core would

achieve maximum impact. TV production emphasised the link between the Census and the provision of services. Posters, radio, the press and media briefings formed the basis of the media plan.

Public Relations

PR was designed to support and develop the key messages in the core advertising campaign via editorial and other coverage on TV, radio and print. It was seen as another less formal means of engaging the attention of the public and of focusing on specific aspects of the enumeration less suited to traditional advertising. This included the School Census, and the Census Babies initiative for babies born on Census Day. Pre-Census briefings provided throughout NI by Census Office proved very useful in conveying the Census message directly to the press. Throughout the Census there was a dedicated line in Census Office to receive calls from the media and these were dealt with promptly.

Foot and Mouth Outbreak

With the first 'Foot and Mouth' outbreak in NI on 18 February, revised procedures for the delivery and return of Census forms were introduced for the farming community and those in affected areas. The Census fieldwork arrangements in respect of households in surveillance or exclusion zones and for farms in general had to be well publicised. This resulted in greater press activity than originally envisaged. There was an impact on the public relations aspect of the campaign with a high level of interest from journalists on the effect the outbreak might have on the conduct of the Census. Within this context the publicity campaign proceeded largely as planned.

Lessons Learned

Essentially, both the publicity and public relations campaigns went well. From an NI perspective, there was a definite benefit in deciding to take the already well-developed ONS creative material and adapting it.

The 'Count me In' slogan was effective in that it presented the Census as an event that everyone would want to take part in. The NI logo incorporating a raised arm in 'Count me in' integrated well with the slogan and campaign message.

Within the Census publicity campaign, time was limited for the preparation and development of news materials and background information to fully exploit opportunities to promote the Census.

The interface between the publicity project and the data collection project operated well. The 'Through the door' materials were specifically designed to assist in the fieldwork and were generally well received.

Additional emphasis should have been given during the advertising campaign indicating that the Census form was to be returned as soon as possible after April 29th 2001. The pre-Census day post back indicated some of the public may have thought forms needed to be returned by 29th April. Similarly, householders should have been informed that planned deliveries of Census forms continued up to Friday 27th April.

Having a Press Office representative in Census Office was beneficial in dealing with press and media contacts. For future census planning it would be essential to have at least six months lead-in time for a similar attachment.

Not enough coverage was received out of the PR events as might have been expected. Where good coverage was received it was usually as a result of making direct approaches to individual journalists.

Media training was an essential item in the publicity preparations.

Conclusions

The publicity campaign was one of a number of projects that aimed to encourage participation to maximise coverage of the

population and in this respect it appears to have been successful.

The publicity campaign was also intended to promote post-back of Census forms and this was achieved with around 92% of forms received having been posted back.

The final aim of the campaign was to increase organisational effectiveness with regard to the fieldwork. The branding of the fieldwork materials and the 'Through the door' materials undoubtedly assisted fieldstaff and made them instantly identifiable.

The advertising message clearly linked the Census with the provision of services and the branding was successful in enabling a high level of integration to be achieved across all media. Further consideration of the best way to emphasise further some of the details of the delivery and return date should be considered in any future Census.

Overall, the scale and promptness of the post back response suggested that the weight of advertising and the level of awareness created were high. The public did appear to respond positively to the 'Count me In' call and it is estimated that 98% of forms were received from households from which a Census form was expected.

A final measure of the extent of coverage will not be available until late summer 2002 when the results of the Census Coverage Survey will be published.