

2011 Northern Ireland Census – Outputs and Dissemination Information Events

22 and 23 March 2011

Report from NISRA

NISRA would like to thank all those who attended the two information events. There were 75 attendees in Belfast on 22 March and 50 attendees in Cookstown on 23 March. All of the slides for the event are available on the 2011 Census website.

This document records the main points raised at the meeting.

Session 1 – Introduction and general update

The first session primarily centred on Census Office providing an update on progress to attendees on the Census process with – at that time – Census Day less than a week away. There was a high awareness of the publicity campaign, people had received their Census forms, and no major issues were raised.

Session 2 – Census Outputs

This session included an overview of NISRA's Output Strategy, a reminder of the outputs from the 2001 Census and then a summary of planned output content for 2011 that focussed on the contrast between 2001 and 2011. There was broad support for, in particular, the intention to have consistent and additive tables, a single point of delivery for the majority of output (NINIS) and more flexible bulk delivery.

The main discussion points were around age groups. With definitions of working-age and pension age becoming less stable, there was a strong user preference for the presentation of outputs by flexible age-defined-ranges, and not by descriptors such as 'working-age'. Users also wanted as much control as possible over the outputs, for example, the provision of single-year-of-age data so that users could create their own output categories. Census Office intended to provide data as flexibly as possible, but cautioned that the protection of confidentiality would remain as the key priority.

In terms of priorities for the order of outputs, there was a general preference for a similar ordering to that used in 2001, ie a series of different outputs over time, with all geographies reported simultaneously for each output.

Session 3 – Census Coverage and Quality

This session was mainly for information. Census Office staff described the planned Census Coverage Survey, and how it would be used firstly to assess the coverage of the Census and then adjust for any Census under-enumeration. Census Office went on to describe how the Census outputs would be quality assured through comparison with a range of other sources including administrative data.

Session 4 – Geography

Census Office began this session by reminding users of the derivation of the Census Output Areas (COAs) and Super Output Areas (SOAs) from the outputs of 2001 Census. Initial planning by Census Office for 2011 output geography had assumed that new local government boundaries – for wards and local government districts - would be in place in advance of the 2011 local elections and consequently in place for reporting the 2011 Census. NISRA informed Census users of this at public meetings around 2006 and 2007, and discussed the options for creating a new sub-ward geography.

There have been subsequent delays to the Review of Public Administration project, and in particular the adoption of new local government boundaries. Government has announced that the elections to local government districts in May 2011 will be based on the existing 26 local government districts and 582 electoral wards. At these March meetings, NISRA confirmed its current planning assumption that 2011 Census outputs would also be based on the current 26 local government districts and 582 electoral wards. NISRA outlined how sub-ward areas (Census Output Areas and Super Output Areas) might be developed for 2011 in the context of the retention of the same wards used to report the 2001 Census. These options ranged from retention of the current COA / SOA set through various levels of change to a complete redraw from scratch. There was a consensus at both meetings around a preference for a solution that retained the 2001 geographic structures as much as possible.

NISRA undertook to inform users further later in the year on progress in this area.

Session 5 – Disclosure control

NISRA noted a strong user demand, based on experience from the 2001 Census, for a pre-tabular statistical disclosure control methodology that would lead to additive and internally consistent outputs. NISRA confirmed at the meetings that the three Census Offices had agreed to the use of record swapping as the primary disclosure control method for the 2011 Census. The presentation demonstrated how the method would be applied. The use of a pre-tabular method was welcomed by users.

Session 6 – Dissemination

NISRA confirmed at the meetings that a new version of the NINIS website was under development as the primary source for outputs from the 2011 Census. A demonstration was given of the new website, based on screen shots, demonstrating the planned range of functionality. NISRA noted its intention to launch the new website well in advance of the scheduled release of 2011 Census outputs so that users could be familiar with the new website.