

# **THE CONDUCT OF THE 2011 CENSUSES IN THE UK STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REGISTRARS GENERAL**

## **Introduction**

1. This is a statement of agreement between the Registrars General of England & Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland about the conduct of the 2011 Censuses which it is the intention to conduct simultaneously throughout the UK in 2011.
2. A Census is taken by the Registrars General, with the approval of Parliament, under the Census Act 1920 (England, Wales and Scotland) and Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. The necessary subordinate legislation, relating to the specific arrangements for the Census in each country, requires the approval of the UK Parliament in Westminster for England and Wales (and, where agreed, the National Assembly for Wales), the Scottish Parliament and the appropriate legislature for Northern Ireland.

## **Principles**

3. Each country will be autonomous, with the final decision lying with the relevant Registrar General, Ministers or legislature.
4. Subject to that autonomy, the Registrars General agree that the three Census Offices (the Office for National Statistics (ONS), General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)) will aim to work in unison to ensure that the 2011 Censuses are a success in providing high quality population and housing statistics, meeting the needs of UK data users and reflecting UN-ECE and Eurostat requirements.
5. In particular, the Registrars General have agreed that the 3 Census Offices and the Welsh Assembly Government will work together and will reach mutual agreement wherever possible on the points in this Statement of Agreement, which will facilitate harmonisation where that is in the interest of Census users. Other points may be added over time, where that would facilitate harmonisation.

## **Harmonised Aspects**

6. The Registrars General have, subject to the need for approval where appropriate by the relevant legislatures, agreed the following aspects of the Census where they will aim to achieve harmonisation:-
  - **Date.** The 3 Censuses should be carried out on the same date in 2011.
  - **Population Base.** A common population base should be agreed.

- **Topics and Questions.** Common questions should be agreed wherever possible, diverging only in response to clear user needs, with such divergences minimised and the scope for cross-comparison maximised.
- **Census materials.** The design of the Census forms and other materials should be co-ordinated.
- **Definitions.** Common definitions and classifications should be agreed and published.
- **Disclosure Control and Estimation Methodology.** Common methodologies for disclosure control and for estimation should be evaluated, tested and agreed in advance of the Census.
- **Publicity.** A common approach to publicity, tailored to local needs, should be agreed.
- **Procurement of Systems and Services.** The different scale of the Census Offices may dictate different procurement solutions but a common strategy should be adopted and a common approach generally taken where that maximises value for money, operational effectiveness and (especially) consistency of outputs.
- **Outputs.** The final product should be consistent, coherent and accessible statistics for the UK and for each component country, a joint database (and/or a common data schema) being a desirable way of facilitating that outcome, with a common approach taken to output specifications, quality, data format and timing of releases.

### **Cost Sharing**

7. The costs, both contractor and Census Office, of such systems and services will normally be shared between the Census Offices on an actual cost basis, where appropriate, or apportioned according to the population totals (2001 Census). Differences in approach will be kept to a minimum.

### **Governance and dispute resolution**

8. To promote UK harmonisation, every effort will be made to reach agreement in the UK Census Harmonisation Committee and any differences of opinion will be discussed at the UK Census Committee.

**Office for National Statistics**  
**General Register Office for Scotland**  
**Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency**  
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