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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

### **Conference of European Statisticians**

#### **Group of Experts on Migration Statistics**

#### **Work Session on Migration Statistics**

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

#### **Experiences with using data from the 2010 round of censuses for measuring migration**

## **Collecting migration data in the United Kingdom Census**

### **Note by the Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom**

#### *Summary*

Since 1841, the United Kingdom has traditionally collected information on migration in its census, but particularly so in the last fifty years since this now accounts for much of the growth or decline of the population of local areas.

The census is the only current source of reliable migration data for small areas in the United Kingdom, and the analysis of migrants by their demographic characteristics and type of move provides more information on this important group of people, for planning purposes, than is available from any other source. The information collected in the census allows inferences to be made about the level and pattern of migration in intercensal years, and provides a better understanding of the numbers of people and households moving in the year prior to the census, particularly short-term migrants – the estimation of which is a focus of particular attention in the 2011 Census.

This paper describes the range of questions included in the 2011 United Kingdom Census, highlighting those that were new to the census this time, and setting these into an historical context. It notes how these questions both comply with the Conference of European Statisticians' *Recommendations for the 2010 Census of Population and Housing* and will allow the United Kingdom to fulfil its obligations to provide Eurostat with statistics arising from the new European Union (EU) Regulation, (EC) no. 763/2008, on population and housing censuses.

## 1. Introduction

1. Migration has become an increasingly important phenomenon for European societies. Patterns of migration flows can change greatly over time, with the size and composition of the migrant population reflecting both current and historical patterns. Combined with the complexity and long-term nature of the migrant integration process, this can present challenges to policy makers who need good quality information on which to base decisions. It is important that the statistics should go beyond the basic demographic characteristics and present a wider range of socio-economic information on migrants and their descendants.<sup>1</sup>

2. The national census of population offers a major opportunity to provide such information. Indeed, in the United Kingdom the census has been used to collect information relating to migrants since 1841.

## II. Purpose of the census

3. The primary purpose of the census in the United Kingdom (as elsewhere throughout the world) is to give an accurate and authoritative count of the number of people and to show where they usually live. This provides a new and up-to-date benchmark each ten years for annual mid-year population estimates for local areas. It is widely accepted that population estimates are central to every national system of official statistics. They are used in statistical formulae that allocate the vast sums of public money to the devolved administrations and to local government and the health service; they provide the basis for deriving many social and economic indicators; and they drive the targeting of local services such as health, education transport, and community support.

4. The particular value of the census is that it provides a rich data set that allows for multivariate analysis of particular (and sometimes small) population groups (such as migrant and ethnic groups) across a wide range of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Such analysis at the small area level is not possible using sample survey data.

## III. Population groups relevant to measuring migration and migrant stocks

5. In particular, the census is generally able to identify the two population groups relevant for measuring international migration. The foreign born is the group of persons who were born in another country and who corresponds to the stock of international migrants that have migrated at least once in their life and live outside their country of birth at the time of the census. Whereas foreigners are those persons who do not have the citizenship of the country (and who may or may not be foreign-born). The census will often need to include a suite of questions to distinguish between the two.

6. For the purpose on determining the foreign born, the current *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Recommendations* indicate that countries should include, as being core to the census, questions on:

- country of birth;
- ever resided abroad; and
- year of (most recent) entry into the country,

while also suggesting that other (non-core) questions can be included to provide more detailed characteristics of immigrant flows:

- country of previous residence;
- duration of residence; and
- reason for migration.

7. Additionally, for the purpose of determining the stock of foreigners, the UNECE has identified country of citizenship (core) and acquisition of citizenship (non-core) as recommended topics. Furthermore, for those countries with a significant number of immigrants, the *Recommendations* go on to suggest that information on *country* of birth of parents may also be collected (non-core) in the census. Such a question permits the identification of the group of descendants of the foreign born since it is based on a more objective assessment than, for example, ethnicity. However, data on ethnic group and other ethno-cultural characteristics (such as religion and mother tongue) are becoming increasingly relevant to countries in the ECE region in the context of migration, integration and minority policies. (The background to, and form of, the ethnicity question in the United Kingdom census is briefly discussed below.)

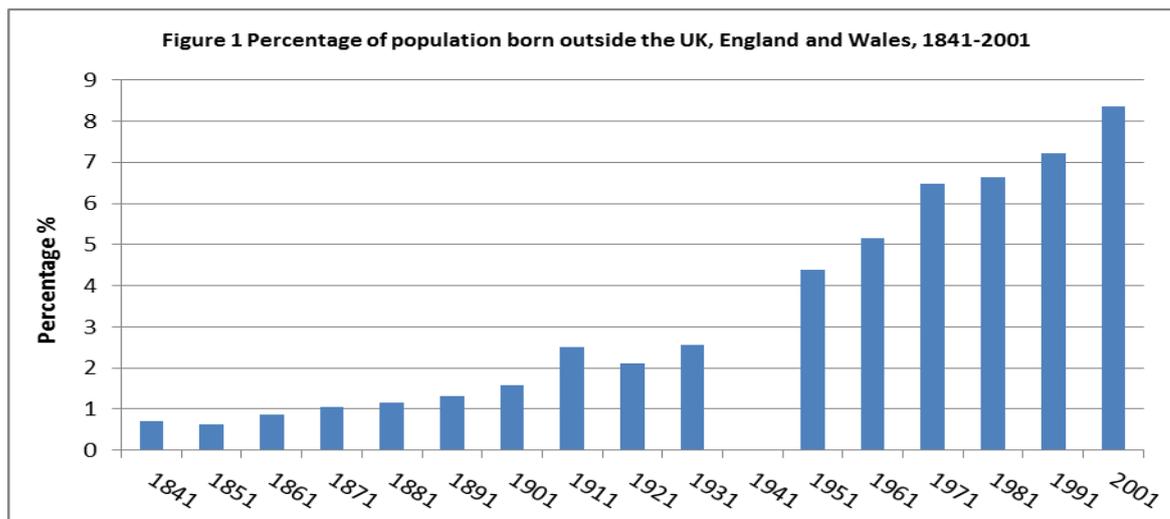
8. For the purposes of measuring internal migration, the census will usually include the more general (core) topic covering previous place of usual residence and date of arrival at current usual residence. In practical terms this topic can be implemented in one of two ways; either by enquiring directly into the year and month of arrival at the current place of usual residence and the place of previous residence, or indirectly by asking about place of usual residence at a period of time prior to the census (usually one year, five years or ten). The question on reason for the migration may then similarly apply.

9. A question on place of birth for persons born within the country will also provide a basic measure of internal migration. However, in countries with very mobile populations, such information may be less valuable for the purposes of assessing recent migration patterns. The European Commission recognised this when considering what topics to prescribe as mandatory in the drafting of the Census Regulation (EC) no. 763/2008, on population and housing censuses. Nevertheless, many ECE countries continue to collect this information (such as Albania and Ireland, for example), though the United Kingdom has not included such a question in its census since 1966.

#### **IV. Migration questions in the UK Census**

10. All the migration topics identified as core in the *ECE Recommendations* are prescribed as mandatory in the EU Census Regulations. The 2011 United Kingdom Census generally reflects this, although the separate questionnaires used in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland had slight variations in the information collected.

11. The long-standing question on country of birth was included throughout the United Kingdom. Though the information from the 2011 Census on this topic is not yet available, Figure 1 shows (for England and Wales) the trend of a more or less steadily increasing proportion of non-United Kingdom-born residents at each successive census in the period 1841-2011. It is anticipated that the percentage for 2011 will show a significant increase, reflecting the high levels of migration that have occurred in decade since 2001 and which has resulted in the highest percentage intercensal increase in population (7.1 per cent) in the last hundred years.



12. Linked to the 2011 country of birth question, the United Kingdom asked for the first time in its census additional questions on month and year of entry to the United Kingdom, and length of intended stay, for those persons not born in the United Kingdom (though this second question was not asked in Scotland). Not only does information from such questions make it possible to analyse migration patterns longitudinally, but can also enable the population of short-term migrants (referred to as ‘non-United Kingdom short-term residents’ – those persons intending to stay three or more months but less than a year) and visitors (persons staying less than three months) to be removed from the usually resident (de jure) population base.

13. Also new to the census in the United Kingdom was a question (asked in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but not in Scotland) designed to collect information on country of citizenship. Though questions on nationality were regularly included in the United Kingdom census from 1841, such information has not been collected since 1961. Interestingly, the inclusion of such a question historically was not for the purpose of collecting information specifically on the numbers of foreign nationals from particular countries, but was more to distinguish aliens from those people of British nationality born in the many colonies and dependencies overseas. Table 1 shows those countries from which the five largest proportions of foreign nationals were recorded in the census in England and Wales over the period 1861-1961, together with the foreign-born for 2001.

14. The profile of immigration since 1961, and particularly in the last decade, is likely to show a very different picture when the first results on migration are published later in 2012, with nationals from India, Pakistan and Ireland likely to be among the most numerous from the evidence of the country of birth information from the 2001 Census.

Table 1  
**Foreign nationals recorded in the census in England and Wales, selected years 1861-1961; and foreign born, 2001**

| <i>Country of nationality</i> | <i>000s</i>  | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>Country of nationality</i> | <i>000s</i>  | <i>Per cent</i> | <i>Country of nationality</i>  | <i>000s</i>    | <i>Per cent</i> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <i>1861 Census</i>            |              |                 | <i>1881 Census</i>            |              |                 | <i>1901 Census</i>             |                |                 |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>84.0</b>  | <b>100</b>      | <b>Total</b>                  | <b>118.0</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>247.8</b>   | <b>100</b>      |
| Germany                       | 21.4         | 25.5            | Germany                       | 37.3         | 31.6            | Russia*                        | 61.8           | 24.9            |
| France                        | 13.0         | 15.4            | USA                           | 17.8         | 15.0            | Germany                        | 49.1           | 19.8            |
| USA                           | 7.9          | 9.4             | France                        | 14.6         | 12.4            | Poland                         | 21.1           | 8.5             |
| Netherlands                   | 5.5          | 6.6             | Poland                        | 10.7         | 9.0             | France                         | 20.5           | 8.3             |
| Italy                         | 4.5          | 5.3             | Italy                         | 6.5          | 5.5             | Italy                          | 20.3           | 8.2             |
| <i>1921 Census</i>            |              |                 | <i>1961 Census</i>            |              |                 | <i>2001 Census<sup>+</sup></i> |                |                 |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>230.1</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>Total</b>                  | <b>588.3</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>3,143.6</b> | <b>100</b>      |
| Russia                        | 49.4         | 21.5            | Poland                        | 82.9         | 14.1            | Ireland                        | 472.4          | 15.0            |
| Poland                        | 35.5         | 15.4            | USA                           | 76.1         | 12.9            | India                          | 455.9          | 14.5            |
| France                        | 23.7         | 10.4            | Italy                         | 66.2         | 11.3            | Pakistan                       | 308.2          | 9.8             |
| USA                           | 19.2         | 8.3             | India                         | 47.1         | 8.0             | Germany                        | 243.6          | 7.8             |
| Italy                         | 19.2         | 8.3             | Germany                       | 34.3         | 5.8             | Bangladesh                     | 153.0          | 4.9             |

\* Including Finland

+ Country= country of birth

15. However, in order both to respond to increasing pressure from UNECE to collect such information on country of citizenship and to enable the United Kingdom to fulfil its obligations under the EU Census Regulation, a new question was designed to be included in the 2011 Census. But United Kingdom form fillers often find the concept of ‘citizenship’ difficult to understand. Extensive question testing showed that the most accurate information would be obtained by asking instead a proxy question on country of passport held. Without such a question in Scotland, comparable information there will be derived from an algorithm using the responses from the questions on country of birth and national identity.

16. The question on usual address one year before the census, first introduced in the United Kingdom census in 1961, will again provide the main source of information on both internal and international migration. Information from the question is coded down to postcode level (for internal moves) and thus can enable migration flows to be determined between the smallest level of area of origin and destination, subject, of course, to statistical confidentiality disclosure controls. Again, it is too soon to know what the results of the 2011 Census will reveal, but it is anticipated that they will confirm that the United Kingdom continues to have an increasingly more mobile population. In 2001 for example, 12.2 per cent of the population changed their place of usual residence in the year before the census, compared with just 10.5 per cent in 1961.

17. Another measure of ‘mobility’ from the 2011 Census (in England and Wales only) will also be possible with the inclusion for the first time of questions on second address and reason for staying at that address. This innovation was introduced as one of a number of components that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the United Kingdom has developed to improve coverage in the census and to better understand the reasons for under-coverage, by building into the design more ways of assessing usual residency. (Another key component was clarifying the definition of a household while still keeping it in line with the *ECE Recommendations*.)

18. Critical to the understanding of coverage is a better measure of those dynamics of societal change that affect the previously well-established concept of usual residence, particularly the increasing tendency towards: weekly commuting; children of divorced or separated parents having more than one home; second homes; and global living patterns. Together with the information on usual address, responses to the new second address questions will enable Office of National Statistics to better allocate the population to the appropriate area of usual residence determined by the living patterns of households, and will help reconcile the census figures with the mid-year population estimates. The information will be particularly useful, for housing and transport planning, to local authorities who will want to know the numbers of people who stay within their area and use local services during the week but who have a usual residence elsewhere. The question defined a 'second address' as being one at which the person stayed at for more than 30 days a year for whatever the reason, and so may have included working week-day addresses, holiday homes, students' home or term-time addresses, or (for children) the addresses of separated or divorced parents.

## **V. Ethnicity and cultural identity: a further measure of migration?**

19. A question on ethnic group was first included in the census in Great Britain in 1991 (but not in Northern Ireland) after many years of testing throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The previous more traditional question on parent's country of birth was by then no longer able to provide sufficient proxy information on the ethnicity of third generation immigrants. The new information has enabled national and local government and health authorities to allocate resources and plan programmes taking account of the special needs of ethnic minority and migrant groups. In particular, response to the question has provided baseline figures against which the United Kingdom Government can monitor possible racial disadvantage within minority groups.

20. The question worked well in 1991 (though its passage on to the census questionnaire was not untroubled – but that's another story) and also in 2001, when a question was also included in Northern Ireland. It was again repeated in the 2011 Census by which time it had become well established. However, in order to make provision for those people, regardless of their broad ethnic group, to indicate their identity as being British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish), a new additional and separate component to the question was included about national identity. The classification of ethnic groups used in the census is now widely regarded as a standard for national and local surveys and ethnic monitoring. Both questions (as asked in the census in England) are shown as Figure 2. Slightly different variation in the format and wording of the questions were used throughout other parts of the United Kingdom that reflected local requirements and populations but they were sufficiently comparable for the purposes of providing broad United Kingdom statistics.

21. Table 2 shows the ethnic profile for England and Wales from the 2001 Census. The 2011 Census data on ethnicity, together with those on the other culturally-related questions on religion and main language, will enable the United Kingdom to analyse the sometimes very different characteristics of its migrant population at a level of socio-demographic details for greater richness than has previously been possible.

Table 2  
**Ethnicity profile, 2001 Census, England and Wales**

| <i>Ethnic group</i>         | <i>OOOs</i>     | <i>Percentage of<br/>all groups</i> | <i>Percentage of<br/>non-white groups</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>All ethnic groups</b>    | <b>52,041.9</b> | <b>100</b>                          |   |
| All white groups            | 47,520.9        | 91.3                                |   |
| <b>All non-White groups</b> | <b>4,521.0</b>  | <b>8.7</b>                          |   |
| All Asian groups            | 2,500.7         |                                     | 55.3                                      |
| Indian                      | 1,036.8         |                                     | 22.9                                      |
| Pakistani                   | 714.8           |                                     | 15.8                                      |
| Bangladeshi                 | 280.8           |                                     | 6.2                                       |
| Chinese                     | 226.9           |                                     | 5.0                                       |
| Other groups                | 241.3           |                                     | 5.3                                       |
| All Black groups            | 1,139.6         |                                     | 25.2                                      |
| Caribbean                   | 563.8           |                                     | 12.5                                      |
| African                     | 479.7           |                                     | 10.6                                      |
| Other groups                | 96.1            |                                     | 2.1                                       |
| All mixed groups            | 661.0           |                                     | 14.6                                      |
| Other ethnic groups         | 219.8           |                                     | 4.9                                       |

Figure 2  
**The 2011 Census questions on ethnicity and identity (England)**

#### National identity question in England

15 How would you describe your national identity?

→ Tick all that apply

English

Welsh

Scottish

Northern Irish

British

Other, write in

**16** What is your ethnic group?

→ Choose **one** section from A to E, then tick **one** box to best describe your ethnic group or background

**A White**

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British

Irish

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background, write in

**B Mixed / multiple ethnic groups**

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background, write in

**C Asian / Asian British**

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background, write in

**D Black / African / Caribbean / Black British**

African

Caribbean

Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, write in

**E Other ethnic group**

Arab

Any other ethnic group, write in

## VI. References

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