

# SARs Newsletter

Samples of Anonymised Records from the 1991 and 2001 Census

## International Census Conference

### Census Microdata: findings and futures

#### Keynote speakers

Ian Diamond, Chief Executive,  
Economic and Social Research Council

Professor Denise Lievesley, Special  
Advisor, United Nations Economic  
Commission for Africa

Census microdata, like the Public Use Microdata Samples in the USA and Samples of Anonymised Records in the UK, has made a substantial contribution to social science on an international basis. Census Microdata: findings and futures will provide an opportunity to hear about and discuss research undertaken with census microdata internationally and consider the future role of census microdata.

The conference, hosted by the Samples of Anonymised Records support group at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, will include presentations from international census offices such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques and Statistics Canada.



The conference starts with coffee and registration at 11.30am on Monday 1 September and closes at 1.30pm on Wednesday 3 September. The cost for the full conference is £95 which includes lunch on Monday and Tuesday and refreshments on all three days. A three-course conference dinner is available on Monday night at a cost of £20.

[www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars/conference](http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars/conference)

## Call for papers

Papers are invited for this conference which will provide a timely opportunity to reflect on findings from work using census microdata internationally and to look forward to the next round of censuses. Papers should either seek to describe substantive or methodological research undertaken using census microdata, or to explore issues around the production and future of census microdata.

Submissions should be made by email to [Gillian.meadows@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Gillian.meadows@manchester.ac.uk)

Please provide:

- 1: Your name (as presenting author)
- 2: Your email address and telephone number (including local area code, and international dialling code if outside the UK)
- 3: Organisational affiliation
- 5: Paper title
- 6: The names of any joint authors
- 7: An abstract/summary of your paper of no more than 500 words

Authors of accepted spoken papers will have the conference fee waived.

Individuals wishing to participate in another format should contact the administrator:

[Gillian.meadows@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Gillian.meadows@manchester.ac.uk).

**Deadline for submissions: 14 April 2008**

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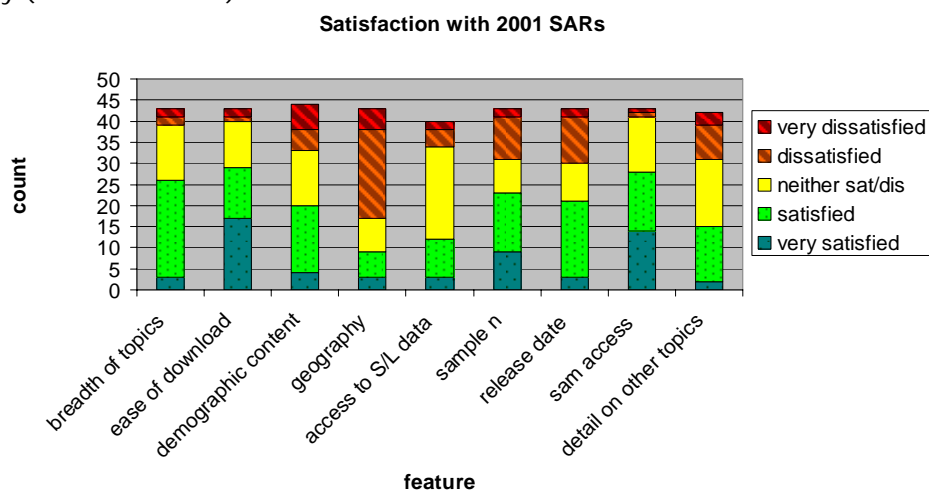
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## 2011 Census Microdata: Seeking your views

In order to make the case for microdata from the 2011 Census we have started a process of consultation. The first wave involved an open invitation to complete a questionnaire which asked respondents to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the 2001 data and to identify priorities for 2011 data. 106 of the 130 respondents (81%) were aware of the SARs microdata at the time of completing the survey. Of these 46 respondents had used 2001 SAR data.

The most commonly mentioned advantage of the SARs was the sample size, which was raised by 11 respondents. Twelve respondents identified microdata flexibility as important. Four respondents identified the SARs use in ethnicity research as a particular strength. The most commonly reported obstacle to using the data is the lack of geographical detail in the 2001 files followed by lack of detail on other variables.

Generally, levels of satisfaction with most features of the 2001 data were reasonably high, with the notable exception of geography (see chart below).



Respondents were asked how important different features were for future census microdata. Table 1 shows that the large sample size and appropriate geographical detail were most prized, followed by detailed demographic content. Respondents' needs vary considerably; few do work without a geographical component and users appear to have greater demand for smaller rather than larger areas.

**Table 1: How important are the following features for 2011 census micro-data?**

Feature	Count			
	Very Important	Fairly Important	Not Very Important	No Response
Data is released quickly following the completion of the census	38	46	5	41
Ease of registration for the data	43	36	10	41
Ease of downloading data	51	31	7	41
Manageable file size (i.e. in megabytes)	14	32	42	42
Large sample size	72	17	0	41
Hierarchical household files	28	34	27	41
Availability of appropriate geographical detail for your work	65	17	7	41
Detailed demographic information	60	24	4	41
Detailed socio-economic information	45	40	2	43
Wide breadth of topics	50	31	5	44

It is hard to generalise about users' most pressing requirement from 2011 microdata, as responses to a question asking them to identify what they most needed in 2011 data varied too greatly. Readers may be interested in the report of the findings given at the SARs User Meeting. Slides containing more results are available at [www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars/events/2007-11-12/](http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars/events/2007-11-12/).

### SARs Usage Audit: What do you use the SARs for?

Are the SARs useful? How are they being used? We need to answer these questions to justify future census microdata provision. Can you help us by spending a few minutes to tell us how the SARs have helped your research?

Please let us know what you have used the SARs for since 2005. A short description of the research project, or better still your findings, is all that is required.

Please visit [www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars/why/](http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars/why/) and complete the online form.

## Requirements for 2011 cross-sectional microdata – Initial View

A first document outlining the principles underlying a strategy for 2011 census microdata has been published on the SARs website. This document was presented to the SARs user meeting on 12 November in London. It is now being considered by the UK Census Offices and we anticipate that an initial response will be made this spring. Following this response, we will engage in further consultation with users to try to achieve the best outcome for SARs users. In no small part, the recommendations reflected views of users as reported in the User Survey (see article on page 2).

In order to preserve the qualities that have proved important to users in the past we recommended a portfolio of products/services representing a balance between the requirements of the general user and the more specialised user. We believe the portfolio should include some combination of the following products.

### Secure-setting files: controlled access population microdata

In order to maximise the utility of these data and make them more attractive to potential users we propose that such a file contains 100% of Census respondents, but that these could be subsetted for specific user purposes. A single master file would contain information necessary to link persons in households; as a hierarchical file it would be possible to analyse at both the individual and household level. The normal output from analyses of these data would be model results or complex tables all checked for disclosure risk. Providing a single file in this format also opens up the opportunity for an alternative output format, bespoke samples, which, in themselves, present no risk to disclosure but contain detail on certain variables as required by the user at the expense of loss of information on other variables.

### Special Licence files

For users for whom access via the VML or similar is not suitable we recommend retaining a second tier of access which is more secure than public use but less restrictive than secure setting access. SL applications are screened by UKDA and ONS and data are only released to those researchers requiring data for statistical research purposes and who can justify their need for the SL data. These would include a Special Licence Household SAR (similar to 2001) and one or more Special Licence Individual microdata files (with LAD geography and/or a reasonable amount of individual level data). If necessary additional specialised versions of the file without geography but including further variable detail on specific topics might be considered to allow retention of, for example, full employment related data such as on industry, occupation at unit level and hours worked.

### General purpose public microdata file

This individual level file would be freely available for download and contain data which reaches the strictest disclosure risk conditions.

## Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007

The Statistics and Registration Service Act is now law and comes into force on 1 April 2008. The Act creates a new body known as The Statistics Board (Y Bwrdd Ystadegau or Am Boërd an Staitistig). At this time responsibility for the conduct of the Census previously prescribed by the Census Act 1921 is transferred to The Board.

Section 39 of the Act states that The Board has responsibility for maintaining the confidentiality of personal information held by it. Personal information is that which identifies an individual, either alone or in combination with other published information.

Access to personal information can be made by an 'Approved Researcher'. 'Approved Researcher' means an individual to whom the Board has granted access, for the purposes of statistical research, to personal information held by it.

### What does it mean for SARs Users?

- **End User Licence Data:** The definition of 'Personal Information' clarifies the boundary beyond which it is not possible to obtain data under a standard End User Licence.

- **Special Licence Data:** The Special Licence procedure is being redesigned to adhere to the Act. From 1 April 2008 applicants for the Special Licence Household SAR will be licensed as Approved Researchers. Further information about the new procedure can be found at [www.data-archive.ac.uk/orderingdata/specialLicence.asp](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/orderingdata/specialLicence.asp).

A copy of the Act can be found at [www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/ukpga\\_20070018\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070018_en_1).

## SARs custom subset tool

The SARs custom subset tool allows you to download a customised subset of the End User Licence SARs. Select the dataset you want, the format you want, and then pick exactly the variables you want – all on your browser.

You can choose from the 2001 Small Area Microdata or 2001 Individual SAR in SPSS or Stata format. The tool is available from [www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars](http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/sars).



Select the variables you wish to download:

Download Selected Variables	Household	Imputation
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Imputation flags</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> acctypa imputation flag (acctypa)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> agea imputation flag (agea)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> bathwc imputation flag (bathwc)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> carsh imputation flag (carsh)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> cenwtp imputation flag (cenwtp)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> cenheat imputation flag (cenheat)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> ceststat imputation flag (ceststat)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> coberta imputation flag (coberta)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> combrn imputation flag (combrn)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> densim imputation flag (densim)</li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Household</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation Type (act128a)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of Bath/Shower/Toilet (bathwc)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Cars/Vans Owned or available for Use (cars)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Type of communal establishment (com13g)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Central Heating (cenheat)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Status in Communal Establishment (cest13a)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> DEPPA: urban/rural type (numercal) (depa)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> No. of Residents per Room (den13a)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> DEPPA: Dispersed Pop (disp)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> DEPPA: Large Market Twin Pop (dgmntn)</li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Imputation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Number of times information donated - edsdono (edsdono)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> One Number Census status (onecnum)</li></ul>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Family</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Family Type (fam13a)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Dependent Children in Family (fndchcfa)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Economic Position of Family Reference Person (frefecon)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> NS-SEC Social-Economic Classifications of Family Reference Person (frefsec)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sex of Family Reference Person (frefsex)</li></ul>	

## Census Portal



The Census team at the UKDA, working with expert staff from other census units, has been holding a series of workshops for those in UK Higher and Further Education who use, or wish to use, the resources provided by the ESRC Census Programme. These workshops provide both an introduction to the wide range of data available from the Programme and more detailed presentations and hands-on exercises relating to specific types of data.

In Manchester, London, Cardiff, Newcastle and Colchester workshops have covered the use of aggregate statistics, digital boundary data, interaction data, and microdata from the Samples of Anonymised Records and the census longitudinal studies for England and Wales and Scotland. The presentations from these workshops are available at [Census.ac.uk](http://Census.ac.uk).

Presentations give information about not only data availability and access, but also the advantages and disadvantages of different data for different types of research. Hands-on exercises allow participants the opportunity to explore the possibilities of census data use and manipulation for their own studies, with key people present to answer questions about the data and provide support in the use of the various software packages developed within the Census Programme - for example Casweb, WICID and GeoConvert.

Feedback from participants has been very appreciative and is leading to improvement and extension of the programme. Three more events are already scheduled for Edinburgh, Belfast and Bristol before the end of May 2008. Full details are available from the [Census.ac.uk](http://Census.ac.uk) web site, where there is an online booking facility.

### Forthcoming events

Census Microdata: findings and futures, University of Manchester, 1 - 3 September 2008 (details on front page).

If you would like to host a workshop or ask us to give a seminar please contact us at [sars-helpdesk@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:sars-helpdesk@manchester.ac.uk) or telephone 0161 275 4735.

### CCSR short courses

CCSR run a programme of short courses on analysis methods relevant to users of the SARs. Courses are offered at introductory, intermediate and advanced level. The complete list of short courses is available at [www.ccsr.ac.uk/courses/](http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/courses/).

Details of ESDS Government events can be found at [www.ccsr.ac.uk/esds/events/](http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/esds/events/).

### Recent publications

Tauris, I. B. (2007) "Child deprivation: Minorities Ten Years On," *Immigration and Race Relations: Sociological Theory and John Rex*, pp 76 - 98.

Forster, J. J. and E. L. Webb (2007) "Bayesian disclosure risk assessment: predicting small frequencies in contingency tables," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series C (Applied Statistics)*, 56, (5), 551-570.

Lampard, R. (2007) "Family structure and family formation - education as outcome and explanation," in *Office for National Statistics (Smallwood, S. and Wilson, B. (eds)) Focus on Families*. Basingstoke: Palgrave (Her Majesty's Stationery Office), pp. 35 - 54.

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