

Demographic Statistics Advisory Group Meeting**Date:** 28 January 2022**Time:** 10:00am**Location:** Virtually via Microsoft Teams

Present	Dr David Marshall (Chair) Sandy Fitzpatrick Dr Daniel McConville Richard Elliott Dr Ian Shuttleworth Prof David Martin Jahnet Brown	NISRA, Director of Census and Population Statistics NISRA, Head of Census NISRA Census Office NISRA Census Office School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University University of Southampton Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Secretary	Mark Hunter	NISRA Census Office
Apologies	Siobhan Carey Tony Dignan Michael Gallagher Prof Adele Marshall Prof Dermot O'Reilly	NISRA Chief Executive and Registrar General Economic Research and Evaluation Derry & Strabane Council Queens University Department of Epidemiology & Public Health, Queens University

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Dr Marshall welcomed members and opened the meeting by introducing the attendees from NISRA Census Office. Apologies were received by Tony Dignan, Prof Adele Marshall, Michael Gallagher and Siobhan Carey.

Apologies were also received from Prof O'Reilly, Dr Shuttleworth and Sandy Fitzpatrick who had to leave the meeting early due to other engagements.

2. Minutes from previous meeting and action points

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 June 2020 have already been published in draft form with the agreement of members. This draft publication took place given interest from the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), who are the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. OSR are interested in the work of DSAG to support the 2021 Census and review the published minutes from DSAG meetings. These minutes were agreed without amendment and will now be published as the official minute of the meeting.

There was one outstanding Action Point from the previous meeting. Dr Marshall stated that he would be address this action as part of the Census External Quality Assurance update at Agenda Item 6.

3. Census 2021 – Operational Report

Dr Marshall explained that a [presentation \(PDF 850 KB\)](#) covering each Agenda item had been prepared for members.

Dr McConville commenced the presentation by giving an Operational Report update providing information on Response Rate, the Electronic Questionnaire and Contact Centre (See slides 2 – 9). The Operational Report will be published on Monday 31 January.

Prof Martin enquired as to any discernible rhythm to Census returns for example, higher returns at weekends. In response Dr McConville stated that it is not fully clear. However, there was a noticeable increase in returns following high profile media items such as “The One Show” etc.

Prof Martin remarked that the Operational Report is really useful. He made the point that Page 3 of the report makes reference to plans for census delivery being changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it may be useful to be more explicit about these changes.

Action 1: Dr McConville will review the “Impact of COVID-19” paragraph of the operational report and consider changes.

Jahnet Brown enquired about Quality Assurance of the Address Register. Richard Elliott explained that detailed evaluation of the address register has not yet taken place as the full picture will not be clear until coverage work is complete. Dr Marshall remarked that the

lesson learned is that lots of resource is needed for addressing work but that the overall picture of only finding less than 1% additional addresses in live operation was very positive.

Jahnet stated that it would be very useful for practitioners looking at housing stock to see numbers, for example, a table showing residential or non-residential stock.

4. 2021 Census – Data Processing Update

Richard Elliott presented an update on the Data Processing phase of Census 2021 that explained Data Processing, work completed to date, work still to be done and Quality Assurance that has been carried out (See slides 10 – 20).

Prof Martin acknowledged the complexity involved in the enumeration of students and the robust actions taken in this area. He went on to stress the importance of the narrative in documentation addressing Quality Assurance, especially where NISRA have diverged from ONS.

Prof Martin went on to ask about the Census Coverage Survey (CCS) response rate. Richard replied that an 88% response rate was achieved and he is confident that the CCS – Census matching will provide accurate results.

Jahnet Brown asked if the COVID-19 pandemic affected NISRA access to Administrative Data. Dr Marshall replied that there was both a positive and negative affect, for example, Universities wanted to help and support Census 2021 and this led to a positive return. However, registration with family doctors will have been impacted as surgeries will have been closed to the general public though 2020-2021.

Dr Marshall noted that the online collection system had led to very high quality respondent data. This along with the high response rate had meant that the processes described in the presentation will have a much smaller impact than planned for. Dr McConville added that although 80% of households had returned online this accounted for around 85% of person and thus the overall data collected will be of very high quality. Richard further added that thought had been given to recovery from a lower response but contingencies had not been needed with the exception of new methods to accurately place students.

Jahnet Brown remarked that these are amazing numbers with a robust quality. Dr Marshall made the point that the labour market question in 2021 will be impacted by the pandemic and

that this will be the start of a long-term change in the world of work. This will require further monitoring post-Census to fully understand some of these long-term impacts. Jahnet Brown noted that similar findings had been made in the English House Condition Survey and this could be useful to NISRA.

Action 2: Jahnet Brown to send link to NISRA on English House Condition Survey.

5. 2021 Census – Outputs Plan

Dr McConville provided an update on the 2021 Census Outputs Plans including Outputs Consultation, Outputs Prospectus, Output Geography and National Statistics accreditation (See slides 21 – 40).

Jahnet Brown made the point that Local Government District Boundaries are used a lot but are being reviewed at present. Dr McConville replied that there is no plan from the Boundary Commission for significant changes to Boundaries prior to our outputs. Dr Marshall added that he understands that any changes to Boundaries will be minor to reflect changes at the edges of current Boundaries. The census will provide data for Local Authorities and therefore, NISRA will stick with the current boundaries.

Professor Martin asked if microdata and flow data work will come after census releases. Dr McConville replied that Longitudinal Study and flow data work has already begun in the background but they will not be released until at least 2023 (after the main outputs).

Professor Martin raised the question that NISRA might be more explicit in signalling what could and what could not be done. Dr Marshall noted that microdata products cannot be released until the Flexible Table Builder is ready for the public but that Professor Martin's point about more information in the prospectus is accepted. Dr Marshall noted that the Outputs Prospectus is a living document and Census Office will provide further information on these matters when it is available.

6. Census 2021 Quality Assurance – Update

Dr Marshall informed members that Census Office is currently engaged in significant work quality assuring all collection and processing methodology and results. Furthermore, internal quality assurance is taking place on outputs to ensure that the figures are correct. Subject to

resources and capacity an external quality assurance panel will also be set up. This panel will report to the Registrar General to give further assurance on the results.

The ONS position differs as Local Authorities are planned to have access to a limited census data set for assurance purposes. The NISRA view is that given initial work on the Census address register, Local Authorities in Northern Ireland are not sufficiently equipped to do similar work here.

Dr Marshall noted that the Presentation Slides would be circulated to all members including those not in attendance.

Action 3: NISRA to send presentation slides to DSAG members.

7. AOB

Prof O'Reilly was unable to attend the meeting but asked a question in regards to when census microdata would be available for secondary analysis.

Action 4: Dr Marshall noted that he would write to Prof O'Reilly in response to his question – noting that he would arrange a meeting in autumn 2022 to plan for these specific user needs.

Professor Martin asked for any update on the future of Census. Dr Marshall replied that the level of work and scrutiny needed is not being carried out at present due to capacity and resources needed. Census Office are aware of work in this area in ONS, Statistics New Zealand and elsewhere. To assist members a future DSAG meeting will include a specific agenda item on this when colleagues from ONS or elsewhere will be invited to talk about their work.

Dr Marshall brought the meeting to a close by passing on the thanks of Siobhan Carey to members for their advice and support. The next meeting of DSAG is planned for June-July 2022, in the period between the first and second release of census outputs. This will allow members to provide feedback on the first release and provide advice on the second release.

Mark Hunter (Secretary)

February 2022
