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online all areas

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Other changes include the addition of 'User Tips' on how to get the best out of the site, and a new look to comply with the National Statistics style. Hosting has been outsourced to improve the speed of the service and to ensure stability.

Future updates to the Neighbourhood Statistics site will be based on this new look and feel, and users should be able to move easily from the current version of the site to the next.

New data

Key Statistics for the 2001 Census covers all main Census topics, with indicators expressed as percentages, together with denominator information for the user to work out counts if required. There are 33 tables in all, and information is available at national, regional and Local (or Unitary) Authority level.

Other new datasets uploaded to NeSS include the Mid 2000 Ward Level Benefits and Working Families Tax Credit, in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Inland Revenue. The data covers all Wards within Great Britain and includes Income Support, Child Benefit, Attendance Allowance, Job Seeker's Allowance and Working Families Tax Credit among others.

Lots more data are still to come, and 2001 Census Key Statistics will be expanded over the coming months to cover more geographic areas, including Wards and Census Output Areas (which will be around 125 households in size). Other 2001 Census outputs will also be added to the site, including more detailed cross-tabulations of variables.

As always, if you would like to suggest improvements or otherwise comment, please mail us at better.info@ons.gov.uk



on the road

Putting the Neighbourhood into Statistics with Census 2001 is the theme of our roadshow touring England and Wales in March:

Wrexham <i>Bangor racecourse</i>	4 March
West Midlands <i>Coventry City FC</i>	5 March
Bristol <i>Bristol Rovers FC</i>	6 March
Darlington <i>Dolphin Centre</i>	11 March
Harrogate <i>Moat House Hotel</i>	12 March
Manchester <i>Lees Common Room</i>	13 March
East Midlands <i>Sunley Management Centre</i> <i>Northampton University</i>	18 March
Southampton University <i>Hartley Room</i>	25 March
London <i>Local Government Association</i>	26 March
London <i>Royal Statistical Society</i>	27 March

Aimed at the public sector, researchers and academics, the 10 workshops will bring people up-to-date on the latest Census release through Neighbourhood Statistics. The workshops run for a day and include highlights of the Census results, progress reports on Neighbourhood Statistics and tips on how to maximise the potential of both NeSS and Census 2001.

Interest in NeSS and Census is high as almost all the events were booked out weeks in advance. With this in mind, NeSS is considering running another roadshow in the autumn. If you would like to know more about the roadshows, please contact us on 01329 813 800 or email census.customerservices@ons.gov.uk

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pooled knowledge to crack poverty

The NRU's Head of Research and Development, Raj Patel, on his vision for neighbourhood renewal

'Over the past 20 years we had seen an increase in the concentration of deprivation, and we were less able to accurately target resources,' says Raj Patel, Head of Research and Development at the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), explaining the importance of NeSS to the Government programme which aims to improve the lives of millions living in the most deprived areas.

'We didn't have data which was robust enough to tell us what was going on at a small area level.'

This is why NeSS was set up. NeSS will help inform decisions made by those in government, public services and in business, and in particular will focus resources on deprived areas.

It is part of Policy Action Team 18 (Better Information), one of 18 groups working under the auspices of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, and involves central and local government and public bodies and services. The NRU co-ordinates the National Strategy, oversees the progress of all 18 Policy Action Teams and is responsible for delivering the 105 policy objectives recommended by the 18 Policy Action Teams.



'We are developing other tools to work alongside NeSS and relate to it,' Raj continues. 'NeSS will enable Government Departments and other stakeholders to look at how deprivation is changing on a small area basis. It will enable communities to identify some of the key needs, where services may need to be delivered differently for example, and this works well with the approach we are taking in neighbourhood renewal through [Renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net) [www.renewal.net], where communities are engaged in the whole process. It becomes a tool for policy makers and the communities themselves.'

Renewal.net is an evidence-based resource examining what works in relation to a specific problem, for example antisocial behaviour, tackling long-term unemployment and so on. It brings together evidence from a wide variety of sources including NRU research, and will give users new ideas, as well as provide a forum to pool knowledge, both good and bad experiences. With NeSS, it will form a powerful tool which will help deliver neighbourhood renewal. By identifying a need through NeSS, policymakers and communities will be able to search [Renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net) to find interventions which might fulfil their need.

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'When we were setting up [Renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net), an interesting statistic found by our research was that only eight per cent of surveyed respondents said they used evidence on which to base their neighbourhood renewal policies and projects, which is very low,' Raj says.

'The same survey found over 80 percent would use evidence if it was easily available. We weren't very good at learning lessons from previous regeneration projects, but NeSS and [Renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net) were created to reverse that trend.'

The latter went live in the autumn, and is still very much in its infancy compared to NeSS, but evidence-gathering from government departments, academic and NRU research, Local

Authorities, trade bodies and others continues, constantly helping to expand the knowledge base available to users. A chat room and message board are also available.

'It provides a one-stop-shop for solutions, instead of having to trawl around different departments and other sources,' explains Raj. 'It is critical suppliers visit both NeSS and [Renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net) and feedback their findings, so that we can learn lessons and act accordingly.'

'The next big phase for us is to try to get much stronger policy input, to find out what policy makers feel are the most critical issues regarding neighbourhood renewal, so that data can be prioritised to meet those needs. A big part in this process will involve feedback from

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), which set neighbourhood renewal priorities in their neighbourhoods of greatest need. We will ask them if they have used NeSS when setting their priorities, and of their experiences of the service so that it best meets their needs in the future.'

'There are a lot more tools and support mechanisms in place to help deliver neighbourhood renewal than there has ever been before. The National Strategy includes more focused floor targets for deprived areas, so that continuous assessments can be made of the areas worst affected at a neighbourhood level across a wide range of issues, rather than at a higher geographic level,' he says.

2001 Census update

Key Statistics for Local Authorities were released on 13 February. They are the first detailed results from the 2001 Census, and provide information on each topic covered, including ethnicity and religion; occupation and industry of employment; household composition; and health and provision of unpaid care. Results are given for a range of administrative geographies, from Local Authority district to national level. These results are available in a variety of formats, including as a printed report with accompanying CD from The Stationery Office

bookshops, as a stand-alone CD-ROM, or over the web through the Neighbourhood Statistics Service. Supporting information to the results, including information on the Census methodology, response rates and commentaries on the results is also available on the National Statistics site.

More detailed results, and those for other geographies in England and Wales, will be published over the coming months. Again, the results will be available in a variety of formats aimed at different types of user, with the bulk of output being made available through

Neighbourhood Statistics, integrating the statistics with reference geography and other supporting information. This output will include statistics down to 'Output Area' level (areas containing around 125 households), as well as more detailed cross-classifications of variables to give the richness of information only possible from the Census. Users will be notified of the more specific schedule for release of Census output on NeSS through updates on the site, and future editions of **access small areas**.

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the right tools for the job

Part of the Neighbourhood Statistics project involves the development of tools that will help stakeholders pass their data to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to upload it onto NeSS as quickly as possible.

The NeSS project is based on data from many sources, including government departments, Local Authorities and emergency services. Some data suppliers use computer systems and software which won't work with those used by ONS, and there are many different ways to categorise data used, such as by region, county and Local Authority. Neighbourhood Statistics aims to make datasets comparable and consistent across time series, which these tools will help achieve.

Recommendations from a feasibility study into the best ways to make freely available distributed tools to assist with:

- data extraction;
- geo-referencing;
- aggregation/disclosure control;
- metadata;
- data transfer; and
- delivery

were recently accepted by the PAT 18 Programme Board. These will be introduced in two stages, the first being May 2003 in readiness for the release of the third version of the NeSS site this summer. This will feature

Census Output Areas – geographic areas of roughly 125 households – for the first time. The second phase will coincide with the launch of the fourth and final NeSS site in spring 2004, when a defined group of central government users will receive the distributed tools. Other providers will receive the tools soon after.

Each of the elements involved in the tools project are examined in more detail below.

Data extraction

It was felt that data owners already have data extraction software, so new tools are not needed. ONS will therefore produce guidance notes to set data extraction standards which must be followed when compiling NeSS statistics. These will cover issues such as format and individual fields, and will ensure consistency across datasets – especially important where datasets are formed from a combination of other datasets from separate sources.

Geo-referencing

A two-stage system was agreed. In the interim period to May 2003, ONS will accredit address-matching software tools which can:

- work with ONS reference data;
- use an acceptable property gazetteer;
- be updated on a quarterly basis;
- achieve acceptable address-matching performance on a test dataset; and
- offer commitment to training and support.

ONS will develop ways to allow data providers to pass their data from their own address-matching software to a separate process to add standard ONS geo-codes.

The second phase will involve the accreditation of software capable of performing all listed data validation criteria plus the geo-codes process in one stage, based on the interim ONS development project. So if an existing system can be accredited, it can continue to be used, but if it is incompatible, NeSS will provide a solution by 2004.

Aggregation/disclosure control

These tools must consist of ONS standards, aggregation and frequency data disclosure control and aggregation and magnitude data disclosure control. A procurement exercise involving tailored existing commercial tools for aggregation and frequency disclosure control is underway.

For magnitude disclosure control, the position is more complex. A new version of a package selected for a European Union initiative will offer secondary suppression, but will not be available until the end of 2003 at the earliest. This will not allow enough time for testing before the final NeSS site is released in March 2004, so before this solution can be used (probably in the autumn of 2004), ONS will work with data providers and their existing software based on disclosure control standards

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and guidance, the first of which will be released shortly. These will evolve to reflect the needs of the project and of suppliers.

Metadata

ONS is to develop templates which allow NeSS data to be consistent across different software formats and between suppliers, and which will also indicate file version.

Visualisation

Like geo-referencing, this would involve accreditation of existing software, a solution

rejected by the Programme Board on the grounds that data suppliers already have visualisation tools, and it was felt that NeSS resources could be better targeted elsewhere rather than on the development of a tool which would add little value to the project.

Delivery

Software vendors are to provide training and support throughout the life of the project, and an ONS team will similarly provide support to data suppliers.

Data transfer

Existing ways data suppliers transfer data are to be used, such as by CD-ROM and zip disk. The cost and security implications of web transfer are to be further explored. A NeSS metadata completion spreadsheet template has been designed as an interim solution, containing standard headings for codes, classifications, definitions and contact names among others. This is not compulsory – existing systems which meet the NeSS standard can continue to be used – but assistance is available.

local data study finds promising stats

A study to find locally-held datasets has unearthed scores which could benefit the NeSS service – and therefore the information available to users.

Consultants HEDRA scoured the land for eight months to find data held locally but not previously collected into national datasets. Findings revealed the diversity and variability of administrative data held by charities, commercial sources, the NHS and local authorities. The scoping study identified 182 datasets as having potential to support the NeSS service, of which 77 have been prioritised. These will be subject to detailed research with local authorities and the health sector to see how many would be useful to NeSS

The report shows there are no quick fixes, but there is huge potential to unlock new data for the benefit of NeSS users, and, ultimately,

people in the most deprived areas; by improving the quality of available data, resources can be focused with greater precision.

The study highlighted difficulties registered by interviewees over data confidentiality, and these issues will need to be addressed in a legal framework. Also, the diversity of the data has limited the potential to form an early, accurate assessment of its use at a national level.

The report's findings will contribute to discussions to establish dataset priorities for NeSS; the 77 shortlisted datasets will be assessed in March alongside those currently being developed nationally.

Many local service providers volunteered to take part during the exercise, and we thank them for their support. All stakeholders will be invited to workshops in April and May to discuss the data

scoping study and to act on its recommendations. The record of the issues, concerns and suggestions raised will inform the next phase of the project. We will be in touch soon, but if you haven't already made contact with us and would like to be involved, please call Tricia Parsons, Tel: 01329 813982 or e-mail tricia.parsons@ons.gov.uk

With the input from these workshops, the project team will follow up a proposal by HEDRA to carry out detailed feasibility studies on those datasets considered as having potential for NeSS. This will be done in collaboration with local authorities, probably with contracted assistance to ensure we are in a position to recommend specific datasets to the Data Development Programme Board. Considering all the factors involved, the results are unlikely to be available before 2004.

Register with us to keep up to date with the latest site developments and to make sure you get sent a regular copy of *access small areas*. Go to www.statistics.gov.uk/register



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access small areas

The newsletter for Neighbourhood Statistics

Telephone enquiries: 0845 601 3034

E-mail: info@statistics.gov.uk

www.statistics.gov.uk/neighbourhood

online all areas



Neighbourhood Statistics Business Manager Callum Foster gives you the latest on NeSS website developments.

With a new look and feel to reflect user feedback, the new Neighbourhood Statistics site is now even easier to navigate.

Launched on 13 February, it now includes Key Statistics from the 2001 Census down to Local Authority level.

The updated home page clearly shows the four ways of searching NeSS data:

- by postcode or town name for summary statistics;
- by subject;
- by area name; or
- by area using an interactive map.



Selecting the postcode/town option generates a statistical profile for that area. These snapshots have been significantly updated from previous ward profiles available on the site, and now include a wider range of data (including statistics from the 2001 Census) and both Ward and Local Authority information.

The statistics by subject page is largely unchanged, and allows users to select a dataset by theme (related to social exclusion) and view, download or find out more information about the dataset.

The third option is to select particular areas for analysing within datasets. This has been enhanced, but is similar in approach to the previous version.

The final interactive map option has also been revised, after user testing found this to be an area of particular difficulty. A step-by-step guide has been added to help users search and select areas, then to select statistics to view.

(continued overleaf)