

We Need Information

Discuss the questions below in a group. As you agree the points write them down on your sheet. Be prepared to present your answers to the rest of the class.



- 1** What sort of questions can be answered using information from a census? Decide on at least three more questions that could be answered by looking at the categories of questions?

- 2** What questions cannot be answered from looking at census data? Decide on a question which your group would want to know about the population of the UK. Why do you think the government did not put this in, or other extra questions?

- 3** How old will you be in Spring 2003 when the results of the census become available? How old will you be in 2013? What would you be interested in then? Which of the decisions made using census information will directly affect you in 2003 and 2013?

- 4** Do you think everyone knows about the census? Find out from an adult at home whether they are aware of the census in April 2001 and why they think it is happening. Write down their answers below.

We Need Information

Theme Understanding the reasons for collecting data

Good surveys collect the minimum of information required to meet specific purposes. The census is an example of a survey which targets the whole population rather than just a sample of people. Information is required by a wide variety of government and voluntary agencies and by the private sector.



Curriculum context Mathematics data handling at key stages 3 and 4.

Guidance below follows the National Numeracy Strategy extension for Y7 pupils. Students should be taught to identify which data need to be collected and how. Programmes of Study: Ma4 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b (KS3), Ma4 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b (KS4F) and Ma4 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b (KS4H)

Classroom ideas

Introduction

- Ask students to think about a recent local development (a new road or shopping centre, or alterations/improvements to the local hospital service).
- What sort of information would have been considered before the decision was taken to carry out the project? How was the information obtained?
- Explain briefly that although most information is collected from asking a sample of people, when the Government carries out a census everyone is asked for information.

Main activity

Divide the class into groups of four. Distribute a large sheet of paper (1 per group), copies of the accompanying resource sheet (1 per group) and activity sheets (1 each). Students should work through the activities together, making notes as they go.

Plenary

Each group presents its conclusions to the rest of the class. Each student could be asked to report back on one of the questions. Try to reach agreement as a class about the importance of having reliable information available, the difficulties of collection and the scale of the census task in general.

Homework task

Ask an adult at home to answer the questions devised in part 4 of the activity sheet. The homework task is an attempt to introduce the ideas behind questionnaire design and should form the basis for a short discussion at the start of the next session based upon Unit 2.

We Need Information

Questions the 2001 Census will help to answer.

The 2001 Census will be a huge undertaking. It will cost over £250 million (40p per person) over a ten year period and involve a fieldforce of about 70,000 temporary employees. There has been a census every 10 years since 1801 (except for 1941 during the Second World War) - SO WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

1

The main categories of questions in the 2001 Census are:

- Names and addresses
- Housing
- Basic population characteristics (sex/ age/country of birth)
- Cultural characteristics (ethnic group)
- Health
- Qualifications
- Employment
- Journey to work

The form is 20 pages long and takes about 30 minutes to complete.

Where should we place TV and radio transmitters?

Are there refugees in the area who need extra care?

Should there be more investment in public transport?

How much state pension will have to be provided in the future?

Are peoples' standards of living improving?

Where shall we put a new sewerage treatment plant?

How could this area be improved?
What's needed?

Do we have to build nursery schools?
Old people's homes?
Hospitals?

In which areas should we direct help for the unemployed?

Should we build a new shopping centre in this area?

Is government spending going to the areas of greatest need?

Where do we need to build new houses?

Where should new roads be built?

2

How do they make sure all the data is collected?

- 62,000 enumerators will be appointed. Each one will be responsible for a specific number of addresses.
- Every household will have to provide information about the people staying at the address on Sunday 29th April 2001.
- Returned forms are checked. The enumerators go back to addresses which have not returned completed forms until they find someone at home.
- Help will be given to people who can't fill in the form.
- Interpreters help anyone who doesn't speak English.
- Visitors to the U.K. who expect to stay in the country for six months after census day will be included.
- People with no fixed address (the homeless and travellers) will be asked to fill in a form.
- Special forms will be filled in for hostels and university halls of residence.

It takes a long time to collect and process all of the census forms. 14 miles of shelf space would be needed if all the forms were kept! The main information from the census will be released in Spring 2003 both on paper and on the Internet.