

328/01

SOCIOLOGY – SOC 2a
UNIT 2a - SOCIAL RESEARCH

P.M. TUESDAY, 16 May 2006

(1 hour 15 minutes)

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

In addition to this examination paper, you will need a 12 page answer book.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

You are advised to spend 15 minutes reading the passage and then divide your time according to the mark allocation.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

The question carries 60 marks.

The number of marks is given in square brackets at the end of each question or part-question.

You are reminded that marking will take into account the quality of written communication used in your answers.

Read the following passage and then answer **all** the questions that follow.

The 2001 Census.

We need accurate information on the numbers of people in Britain, where they live and what their needs are in order to plan services such as education and hospitals. Every ten years the **Census** is conducted to give us a complete picture of the whole population. It counts the numbers of people living in each city, town and country area. It tells us about each area and its population, including the balance of young and old, what jobs people do, and the type of housing they live in. Because the same questions are asked and the information is recorded in the same way throughout the UK, the Census allows us to compare different groups of people across the entire nation. The Census costs some £255 million for the UK as a whole, but the information it provides enables billions of pounds of taxpayers' money to be targeted where it is needed most.

In 2001, a Census form, which is a detailed **questionnaire**, was delivered to every household, establishment, or to people living anywhere else in the United Kingdom. The forms were designed for self-completion by the respondents in order to provide information which related to Census day - 29 April 2001. Most forms were then posted back to temporary local offices and the remainder collected by a 'field force' of people employed to make sure that the Census was conducted properly.

The form for a household in England asked questions which collected information on household accommodation, relationship, demographic characteristics (e.g. sex, age and marital status), migration, cultural characteristics, health and provision of care, qualifications, employment, workplace and journey to work. In Wales there was an additional question on the Welsh language.

There was a legal requirement for everyone to complete a Census form, and a limited number of people were prosecuted for failing to complete the questionnaire. There was also a major publicity campaign to make people aware that a Census was being taken and why the Census information is important.

The 2001 Census questionnaires were designed to be fed at high speed through scanning machinery which captures all the ticked responses and holds written answers in digital forms. The process of recording all the data from 60 million people was expected to take around 10 months. Once information from the forms has been electronically captured, the paper forms will be pulped and recycled, but the digital images will be transferred to microfilm to be made available as public records after 100 years.

Once the information has been captured from the form and processed into a database from which statistics can be prepared, simple figures such as the total number of people living in a place are prepared on every topic. But the great value of this 'snapshot' of the population, is that combinations of circumstances - such as numbers of single parents with young children living in the upper stories of high rise housing - are recognised and figures produced.

Source: adapted from <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001>

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term **Census**. [5]
- (b) Identify and explain the strengths of the Census process described in the above passage. [10]
- (c) Using both the passage, and your own knowledge, outline and explain the advantages of using postal questionnaires for sociological research. [15]
- (d) Discuss the importance of official statistics to sociological research. [30]