Census & demographic data

The Census is the most complete source of information about the population of the UK that we have. There are other national statistics that are collected in England, Wales and Scotland on a more regular basis, but they may not provide the same level of detail in spatial terms as the Census. The Census has data on households, including the age and gender of individuals, and also information on cultural characteristics such as ethnicity and religion, state of health, educational qualifications, employment and economic activity, and journeys to work. The Census data is set out ward by ward.

The Census data and other national statistics are an invaluable resource in helping to identify what social mix would be representative for a particular area, the target audience, and also the non-users of forest and woodland services. As a context setting and planning tool demographics provides forest and woodland managers with a means of learning more about an area, so it is not a participatory technique beyond showing the rationale for how and why certain groups and individuals were invited to take part. Population data from the Census should be used as a first step in the early stages of planning to:

- define target groups that may previously have been under-represented;
- identify hard to reach groups to ensure engagement is inclusive of the entire community.

Census and other population data can be accessed through Neighbourhood Statistics for Scotland, England and Wales. Data is presented in the form of:

- key statistics at ward, middle output area (collection of wards or section of an authority area) and local authority level;
- special reports and theme tables, which look at particular topics such as faith and religion or ethnicity in greater detail;
- standard tables of data, which are specially designed for social equality and inclusion purposes at the different scale levels.

Resources and requirements

Skills
- Ability to use spreadsheets and databases

Equipment
- Access to a networked computer.

Level of engagement

INFORMING: ★

CONSULTING:

INVOLVING:

PARTNERSHIP:

Strengths

- Information is easy to access and manipulate.
- This is a rapid method of assessing key stakeholder and social groups of importance in a particular area.

Weaknesses

- Ward and local authority boundaries may not be the same as woodland and forest boundaries, so some degree of skill and judgement is needed to build an accurate picture.
- Latest information is not always available – the Census data may be out of date.

Forest Research

Time
- This is a quick way of gathering relevant information.

Costs
- Staff time.

Useful sources of information

Web
- Census for England and Wales: www.ons.gov.uk/census/index.html
- Census for Scotland: www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/index.html
- Neighbourhood Statistics for England and Wales:
  www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination
- Neighbourhood Statistics for Scotland: www.sns.gov.uk
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/SIMD
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation:
  http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/wimd/?lang=en

This toolbox is designed to assist Forestry Commission staff when they are considering which tools they could use to involve the public in the forest and woodland planning process. For more information please visit the website at:
www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox