

User Engagement on a new United Kingdom Output Area Classification

February 2012

1. Introduction

A joint funded project has been set up by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and University College London (UCL) to create a new Output Area Classification (OAC) using 2011 Census data. The original classification was created for the ONS by Dr Daniel Vickers at the University of Leeds using 2001 Census data. The undertaking of the 2011 Census provides an opportunity for the 2001 Output Area Classification to be updated using 2011 Census data, and for the methodology used to create the OAC to be reviewed.

It is intended that following the creation of a 2011 OAC, that area classifications for higher geographies such as Super Output Areas/Data Zones and local authorities will also be revised in a similar way.

1.1 Topic and scope

To help with the construction of this new open-source classification, and to better understand user requirements for it, ONS and UCL would welcome your thoughts, expectations and requirements for this new geodemographic classification. By answering any or all of the questions below you can help to shape the proposed Output Area Classification for 2011. Please use the section after question 20 to address any relevant points that you think may not have been addressed by the other questions.

1.2 Who we are seeking views from

We would particularly like to receive responses from users of the current OAC. However this user engagement exercise is also relevant to anyone interested in social area classifications, encompassing geodemographics and neighbourhood classifications, for public sector or commercial purposes.

1.3 Consultation timetable

This consultation will run for six weeks from 17 February 2012 to 30 March 2012.

1.4 After the consultation

Responses will be analysed by ONS and UCL, and ONS will publish a summary of the comments made approximately one month after the user engagement closes. The response template asks whether or not you agree to your responses being made public.

1.5 How to respond

Interested parties are invited to respond using the template in **Appendix 1** by the closing date via email to:

2011OAC@ons.gov.uk

or by post to:

Andy Bates
Regional and Local Division
Office for National Statistics
Segensworth Road
Fareham
Hampshire
PO15 5RR

1.6 Confidentiality and data protection

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you would like the information, including personal data, that you submit to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, among other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. Before we disclose any information that is personal to you, we will inform you in advance of any disclosure. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Office for National Statistics.

Please ensure that your response is clearly marked if you wish your response and name to be kept confidential. Confidential responses will be included in any summary of numbers of comments received and views expressed.

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Appendix 1: User Engagement response template

Interested parties are invited to respond using this template by the closing date via email to:

2011OAC@ons.gov.uk

or by post to:

Andy Bates
Regional and Local Division
Office for National Statistics
Segensworth Road
Fareham
Hampshire
PO15 5RR

Your name (*optional*)

Organisation and Role (*optional*)

Do you wish your responses to be kept confidential?

- Yes
 No

The current 2001 Output Area Classification

1. Do you know what the current Output Area Classification (2001 OAC) is?
 Yes
 No
2. Do you (or your organisation) **currently** use the Output Area Classification?
 Yes
 No

If you answered "Yes" how long have you (or your organisation) been using the 2001 OAC for?

- 1 year or less
 2 to 5 years
 Over 5 years

If you answered 'Yes' then please go to Question 4.

3. If you answered "No" to Question 2 have you (or your organisation) **previously** used the Output Area Classification?

- Yes
 No

If you answered "Yes" how long ago did you (or your organisation) stop using the 2001 OAC and why?

- 1 year or less
 2 to 5 years
 Over 5 years

Why did you stop using the Output Area Classification?

If you answered "No" why have you never used the Output Area Classification?

4. What alternative commercial geodemographic classifications do you (or your organisation) use?

Select all that apply

- ACORN by CACI
 Mosaic by Experian
 People & Places P² by Beacon Dodsworth
 PersoniX by Acxiom
 Other (please specify)
- None – I/we do not use any commercial geodemographic classifications

Please briefly explain why you either do or do not use commercial geodemographic classification products:

5. Please indicate the geographical coverage(s) you favour when using a geodemographic classification?

Select all that apply

- UK
 Country
 Regional
 County
 Local Authority
 City, Town or Village
 District or Area of a City, Town or Village

6. Would you welcome a new version of the 2001 OAC?

- Yes
 No

7. Should a new 2011 Output Area Classification (2011 OAC) be a general purpose classification (like the 2001 OAC), or should it focus on producing specialised variants (such as health, education, crime etc.)?

*Please select **one** option only*

- General purpose*
 Specialised variants

8. Flexibility in specifying the variables that are to make up the 2011 OAC would open up a range of options for area classification using Open Government Data. Is it important to you that the 2011 OAC be directly comparable – in terms of similar census data being used to construct it - with the 2001 OAC?

- Yes
 No

If you answered 'No' then what are the other priorities that are important to you in the construction of the 2011 OAC?

- Updateable*
 Better variables
 Other (please specify)

9. The 2001 OAC divides the population of the UK into 7 Supergroups, 21 Groups and 52 Subgroups. How would you describe this framework when using the 2001 OAC for your particular purposes?

- Extremely limited*
 Limited
 Satisfactory
 Good
 Excellent

New for the 2011 Output Area Classification

10. Thinking about how you use and interpret the 2001 OAC, how useful do you think each of the following options would be to you for the 2011 OAC?
Please tick a number from 1 to 5 or 'Don't know' to indicate your view. The equally spaced scale ranges from 1 = Not at all useful to 5 = Extremely useful.

Maps in PDF (or similar) format that are not interactive

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Online interactive maps with clickable details (such as the one found here for the 2001 OAC www.maptube.org/map.aspx?mapid=960)

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Mapping against different backdrops (such as Google Maps or OpenStreetMap)

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Correlation tables (showing to what extent the variables within the classification correlate with each other)

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Bar graphs of the group's attributes ([click here](#) for an example)

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Radial plots of the group's attributes ([click here](#) for an example)

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

11. Thinking about your own understanding of the existing 2001 OAC, how useful do you think each of the following options would be to you for the 2011 OAC?

Please tick a number from 1 to 5 or 'Don't know' to indicate your view. The equally spaced scale ranges from 1 = Not at all useful to 5 = Extremely useful.

Group Name

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Graphical Representation (radial plots and bar graphs)

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Group definitions (a written summary of the key characteristics of each group)

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Key points of characteristics you would expect to find in each group

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Written 'pen portraits' of typical households found within each group

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Written 'pen portraits' of typical housing and built environments found in each group

1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

12. Do you agree with the view that it would be helpful to adjust the composition of each group for different parts of the UK (so, for example, there might be separate classifications made for London, or Scotland)?

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

13. Please identify what, if any, extra features would you like the 2011 OAC to have when compared with the 2001 OAC:

Dissemination of the 2011 OAC

14. Which methods of dissemination for the 2011 OAC would you be most likely to use?

Select all that apply

Online interactive mapping (such as the one found here for the 2001 OAC www.maptube.org/map.aspx?mapid=960)

Enhanced online interactive mapping – with additional features that allow for you to search and identify the national 2011 OAC for a ward, county, local authority or region for example.

Microsoft Excel/CSV file(s) containing the 2011 OAC classification for each of the UKs 2011 Census Output Areas)

Software to append the 2011 OAC codes to a list of postcodes provided by the user (similar to the OAC Coder available at www.publicprofiler.org)

Digital Boundary Data (eg a shapefile – a computer readable map that would provide the outline of Output Areas along with the 2011 OAC data – this would require the use of GIS software such as ArcGIS or MapInfo)

15. Other data sources could be used to give greater context to the 2011 OAC. Rather than contributing to the classification itself, these could be used to help visualise the 2011 OAC in different ways. What (if any) data sources would you like to be able to use alongside the final 2011 OAC output?

Select all that apply

Index of Multiple Deprivation (the LSOA, Data Zone or SOA which the Output Area lies within)

Temporal data – to attempt to distinguish different periods in a day

Other (please specify)

Construction of the 2011 OAC

16. There are multiple levels of spatial resolution that data can be produced at (see Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms for further information). In addition to Output Areas are there any other spatial resolutions you believe would benefit from having their own classification?

Select all that apply

- Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in England & Wales / Data Zones in Scotland / Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland
- Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs)
- Wards
- Local Authorities
- Counties
- Regions
- Other (please specify)

17. The 2001 OAC uses only 2001 Census data in its construction. It has been suggested that, in addition to using 2011 Census data, it might be possible for the 2011 OAC to be enhanced with supplementary non-census open data sources, and updated periodically over time. Would you find this beneficial?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please briefly explain the reasons for your answer:

18. It is unlikely that many open data sources will offer UK wide coverage. What extent of coverage do you believe is a minimum requirement for an acceptable general purpose OAC classification?

- UK only
- Countrywide coverage for England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland
- Regional (ie classifications pertaining to parts of England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland)
- Local Authority
- Other (please specify)

19. If the 2011 OAC could be updated with new data, how frequently should this be done?

- Once a year
- Every two years
- Every three years or longer

20. Change in the social, economic and demographic structure of areas in the UK occurs at different rates. Instead of updating the 2011 OAC it might be possible to use non-census sources to flag areas where population changes have occurred, enabling the user to recognise parts of the UK where the classification had probably become unreliable. Would you find this helpful?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know*

Any Other Comments

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

2001 OAC

The 2001 Output Area classification is a geodemographic classification that distils key results from the 2001 Census for the whole of the UK at a fine spatial level of granularity to indicate the character of local areas. It was created in collaboration between the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the University of Leeds

2011 Census

The 2011 Census was a count of all people and households in the UK. It provides population statistics from a national to neighbourhood level for government, local authorities, business and communities. It was carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in England and Wales, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) in Scotland and the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) in Northern Ireland.

2011 OAC

The 2011 Output Area Classification is planned to be a geodemographic classification utilising data from the 2011 Census along with a variety of open-data sources to provide an indicator of local area characteristics. Particular focus will be on new modes of dissemination that better utilise Web technologies and new advances in GIS and geodemographics. It is being created as collaboration between the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and University College London (UCL).

Administrative Geographies

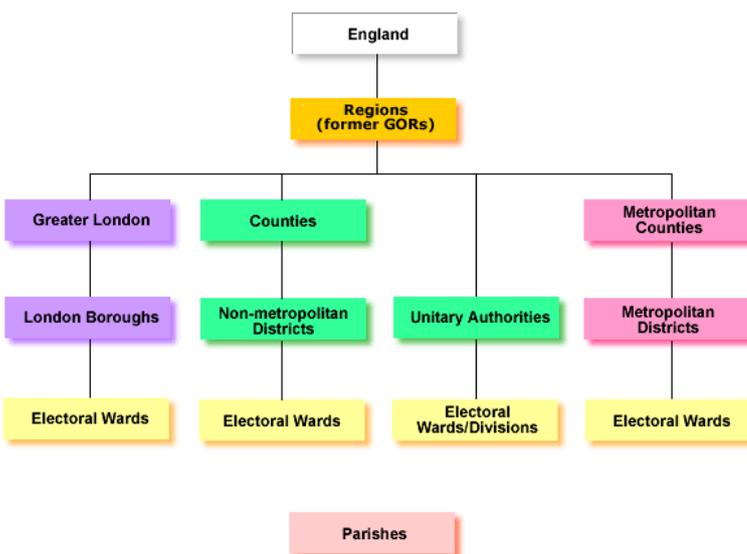
England

England does not have its own devolved parliament and is thus entirely subject to the administration of the UK Government in Westminster.

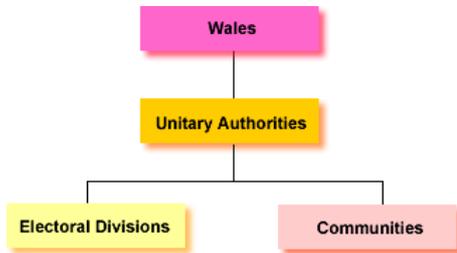
Note however that the diagram shows the geographic structure rather than the administrative reporting structure.

In practice, neither metropolitan counties nor Regions (former Government Office Regions) are truly part of the administrative hierarchy, and electoral wards/divisions are simply the 'building blocks' from which higher units are constituted.

Parishes on the other hand can have their own council, but have been isolated from the geographic structure as, unlike electoral wards/divisions, they are not found across the whole of England.



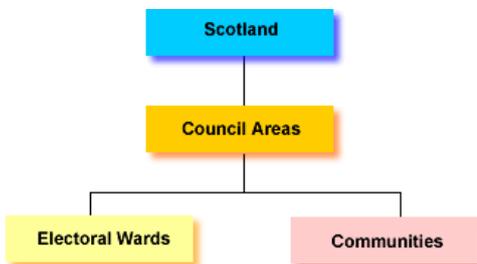
Wales



Wales is subject to the administration of both the UK Government in Westminster and also the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff.

Wales is subdivided into 22 unitary authorities, which in turn are divided into electoral divisions and communities.

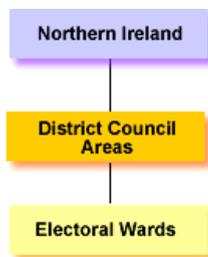
Scotland



Scotland is subject to the administration of both the UK Government in Westminster and also the Scottish Government in Edinburgh.

Scotland is subdivided into 32 council areas, which in turn are divided into electoral wards and communities.

Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland is subject to the administration of both the UK Government in Westminster and also the Northern Ireland Executive in Belfast.

Northern Ireland is subdivided into 26 district council areas (although within Northern Ireland they are also known as 'local government districts', which in turn are divided into electoral wards.

Census Geography

In the context of this user engagement exercise 'census geography' refers to the base unit for census data releases, namely Output Areas (OAs). In addition Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in England & Wales, Data Zones in Scotland, Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland and Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are considered to be part of census geography as they are formed using Output Areas.

County

Please see 'Administrative Geographies' which details the hierarchical nature of different levels of local government in England.

Data source

In the context of this consultation, 'data source' refers to an online location where multiple datasets can be accessed and downloaded.

Data Zones

The Scottish equivalent of Lower Layer Super Output Areas in England and Wales. Constructed using Output Areas there are 6,505 covering Scotland with an average resident population of 750.

Dataset

In the context of this consultation, 'dataset' refers to a single table of data. An example would be a key statistic table from the 2001 UK Census.

Geodemographic classification

The description of people according to where they live derived from the study of spatial information.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

Separate country Indexes of Multiple Deprivation measures relative deprivation across the UK. They separately combine a number of the same or similar indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England, Wales (for LSOAs), Scotland (for Data Zones) and Northern Ireland (for SOAs). This allows each area to be ranked relative to one another in each country according to their level of deprivation.

Local Authority

In England there are five different types of local authority: metropolitan, unitary, London boroughs, county councils and district councils. These different types are all included under the umbrella term 'local authority'. Please see 'Administrative Geographies', which details how these different types of local authority fit into the hierarchical nature of local government in England. These divisions and names can differ in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but follow a similar hierarchical structure.

Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)

Constructed using Output Areas. There are 34,378 in England and Wales with an average population of 1,500 and an average number of households of 400 (as at 2001).

Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs)

Constructed using Output Areas. There are 7,193 in England and Wales with an average population of 7,200 and an average number of households of 2,000 (as at 2001).

Non-Census data

In the context of this consultation form 'non-census data' refers to all available data (normally freely available open data) that are not derived from any UK census sources. An example would be administrative data from central or local government.

Open Data

In the context of this consultation, 'open data' refers to data that are freely available (although may require a fee to access). They may supplement or substitute for (freely available) census data. 'Open data' usually derive from any of a range of government agencies, and are provided in the interests of creating more accountable, transparent, participatory and collaborative government.

Output Areas (OAs)

The smallest dissemination units available for census data. They were designed to have similar population sizes and to be as socially homogenous as possible. Based on 2001 Census data and postcodes in use in 2000-2001, there are 223,060 Output Areas covering the UK with an average population of 264 and an average number of households of 110 (as at 2001).

Regional

Please see 'Administrative Geographies' which details the hierarchical nature of different levels of local government in England.

Super Output Areas (SOAs)

In the context of this consultation SOAs are referring to the areal units created by the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA). Like LSOAs in England and Wales they are constructed using Output Areas with 890 covering Northern Ireland with an average population of 2,000. SOAs were also created for England and Wales, but due to the larger population are sub-divided into LSOAs and MSOAs that are referred to in this consultation form.

Wards

A constituent part of an electoral district that is the primary unit of UK administrative and electoral geography.

The differences between [Output Areas \(OAs\)](#), [Lower Layer Super Output Areas \(LSOAs\)](#) and [Middle Layer Super Output Areas \(MSOAs\)](#)

Clicking on the links above will display maps are using the population of White British in London in 2001 to illustrate the differences in using OA, LSOA and MSOA output geography.

To give you an idea what the differences are in numbers; in London there are currently 24,140 OAs, 4,765 LSOAs and 983 MSOAs based on postcodes in use on the day of the 2001 UK Census.

These numbers are likely to change slightly as they are updated for use with the 2011 Census data outputs. To put this change into context nationally, less than 5% of the current 223,060 Output Areas will be modified. This means at least roughly 212,000 Output Areas will remain consistent across the UK.