Recognition of the Cornish as a National Minority in the 2021 Census: the case for a tick-box

Supplementary evidence

22/02/2018

1. Introduction

1.1 Cornwall Council submitted information to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to support the case for a Cornish tick-box within the national identity section of the 2021 Census in November 2017 (see attached). We would like to take the opportunity to provide supplementary information to support our original submission.

1.2 This submission has been approved on behalf of the Council by Cllr Julian German (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder), Cllr Jesse Foot (Chair of the Cornish Minority Working Group), and the members of the Cornish Minority Working Group.

1.3 The Census Transformation Programme, Topic Report on Ethnicity and National Identity (May 2016) sets out the following evaluation criteria:

- Purpose
- Small geographies or populations
- Alternative sources
- Multivariate analysis
- Comparability beyond England and Wales
- Continuity with previous censuses

1.4 This submission addresses each criterion through the provision of additional and complementary information to that provided in November 2017.

2. Purpose

2.1 Within the Census Transformation Programme, Topic Report on Ethnicity and National Identity (May 2016) it is stated that:

“Data users, including central government and devolved administrations, told us that the information is used in relation to resource allocation and service planning.”

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has stated that:
“Lack of comprehensive and sufficiently granular information on these sub-topics (Ethnicity, National Identity) would hinder the Government’s and the Department’s capacity to identify and address issues connected with the multi-cultural nature of British society in areas such as housing, Local Government services, social integration, neighbourhood relations, local participation, women issues, equality, deprivation, etc.”

The lack of a Cornish tick-box means that currently **Cornish identity is not properly recognised within central government processes**, and government departments have not included Cornish within policy considerations, monitoring or data collection activities. This has led to a **lack of data/information, which both inhibits a proper understanding of the risks of relative deprivation amongst the Cornish, as well as potentially negatively impacting upon funding decisions for the region.**

3. **Small Geographies or Populations**

3.1. Whilst there are significant numbers of residents who identify as Cornish across Cornwall, appendix 1 clearly highlights that there are areas where identification is much higher. This type of information, alongside multivariate analysis, where available, can assist the Council and its partners in targeting policies, service and resource allocation; assessing inequalities between areas; and identifying local needs.

4. **Alternative Sources**

4.1 Cornish ethnicity was introduced as a tick-box within the Census and Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) across Cornwall in 2006. Parents and guardians determine the ethnic background for their children at primary schools with pupils at secondary schools deciding their own ethnicity. Annual data shows that those identifying themselves as **Cornish has increased** since the tick-box option was introduced from **23.7% in 2006 to 51.1% in 2017.**
4.2 14% of the population living in Cornwall self-identified as Cornish in the 2011 census – a significant number considering no tick-box option was available, with people having to write in ‘Cornish’ under the ‘Other’ option. Drawing on the Welsh example, in 2001 14.4% of residents in Wales wrote in their national identity as Welsh, yet this rose to 66% following the inclusion of the Welsh tick-box in 2011.1

4.3 Based on the Welsh example and the PLASC example we believe that the **Census figure for Cornish would be significantly higher if a tick-box was provided**, similar to the levels represented in the PLASC. Appendix 1 highlights the areas where there are consistently high areas of identification in the 2011 Census and latest 2017 PLASC.

4.4 As highlighted above, **Government data collection systems often align with census definitions**. Inclusion in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) is supposed to ensure that the Cornish are afforded the same protections as the Welsh, Scottish, and the Irish. Currently, **despite the Framework Convention status, Government departments are not collecting information on the Cornish in line with that collected for the Welsh and Scottish. This results in a lack of information relating to those who identify as Cornish within equality impact assessments, service planning, and routine data provision.** As a minority group, the Cornish are therefore unable to secure relevant data in line with other minority groups for ongoing monitoring, needs assessments, and equality impact assessments.

4.5 Whilst data is collected locally on Cornish identity; currently there is no other source of information of large scale, reliable, multivariate analyses that will adequately support the Council and other partners to identify the issues specific to Cornish identity. This leaves us at a disadvantage compared to other groups with similar status and as such we argue that this impact justifies a change to Census questions.

5. **Multivariate analysis**

5.1 Cornwall Council, as part of its responsibilities under the Framework Convention, needs to be able to access comprehensive and disaggregated data to compare the Cornish ethnic group on a range of measures, which cover topics such as housing, migration, education, health, carers and the labour market.

5.2 The information and intelligence gained aids the authority in assessing the needs of those who identify as Cornish which can result in targeted service delivery or indeed changes in policy.

5.3 We have data on Cornish ethnicity from the 2001 and 2011 censuses and analyses have demonstrated the value of this, particularly as a predictor of ill health and social disadvantage.

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1 Section 2 of November Submission
5.4 Some specific examples of where the Council and other partners require this information include:

- **Housing** availability and affordability are significant issues across Cornwall, particularly in areas of second home ownership. There is a risk that the impact of second-home ownership upon the housing market may adversely impact Cornish residents by potentially pricing them out of the local market, thus affecting the cultural balance between the Cornish and non-Cornish. The significance of this is emphasised by the **Council of Europe’s Advisory Committee** in the FCNM’s latest report, which reminds the UK Government that **Article 16** aims to protect national and ethnic minorities against measures that change the proportion of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities, including – but not limited to – expropriations, evictions and expulsions. The availability of **longitudinal data relating to housing and Cornish is essential for the identification of trends and future monitoring in order to ensure compliance with Article 16**.

- **Skills** development is one of the cornerstones of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership’s **strategy for economic growth in our area**. Figures from the 2011 Census show a skills **inequality between those identifying as Cornish and the wider resident population across Cornwall**. Those areas identifying as Cornish had higher proportions of individuals without qualifications and thus lower proportions with qualifications (level 1-4). Data from the 2011 Census shows that in some middle layer super output areas (MSOAs) the proportions of Cornish without qualifications is nearly double that of the overall population (e.g. in Falmouth North 30% of Cornish are without qualifications compared to 14.2% overall). We need to ensure that we have robust data to monitor whether our interventions are helping to address this gap and reduce inequalities.

- Monitoring and identifying health inequalities is a core Public Health function. Whilst the Census does not provide the detailed health condition-based data required for these types of assessments, much of the Census-based data feeds into data which informs some of the considerations around wider determinants of health such as built environment, work, the labour market, and education.

6. **Comparability beyond England and Wales**

6.1 ONS state that:

"the list of tick-boxes is designed to enable the **majority of the population to identify themselves in a manageable way**. The lengthy but non-exhaustive nature of this list is not intended to exclude any groups of the population, but rather to prevent the collection of

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2 [http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/europe/docs/coe_2017-02-27_fcnm-uk.pdf](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/europe/docs/coe_2017-02-27_fcnm-uk.pdf)
information on ethnic groups from becoming overly complex and confusing, while ensuring the majority of the population can record themselves accurately."

The Cornish are afforded the same status under the Framework Convention as the UK’s other Celtic persons - the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish. However, the Cornish are the only group not to be afforded a tick-box within this Celtic cluster. The inclusion of a tick-box should not merely be a matter of size or national application, but should also reflect the parity of status accorded under the FCNM. There is a risk that under the current arrangements a significant proportion of our population are deterred from recording themselves accurately due to the use of the write in option. The write-in option may thus be a barrier to those wanting to identify as Cornish by adding to relatively greater complexity to self-identification than that experienced by the UK’s other Celtic persons. This will also impair the accuracy of the data and our ability to draw robust conclusions from the data presented in order to monitor compliance with the FCNM.

6.2 The Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the FCNM makes a specific recommendation in regards to the Census, namely that the authorities "take the necessary measures to include the possibility to self-identify as Cornish, through a ‘tick-box’ in the next census, and to facilitate the expression of self-identification of any other group because data collection is relevant to the application of minority rights.”

6.3 Although the Cornish were not afforded a tick-box in 2011, through the write-in option the Cornish returned over 73,000 usual residents. Gypsy or Irish Traveller accounted for 58,000 usual residents making it the smallest ethnic category, with a tick box, in 2011. Whilst we fully support the continued inclusion of a Gypsy or Irish Traveller tick-box it would seem perverse not to grant the Cornish the same consideration.

7. Continuity with Previous Censuses

To reiterate what was said in our original submission in November 2017 and conclude, Cornish identity has been captured since 2001 through a write-in option. The 2014 decision to recognise the Cornish as a national minority in the UK affords them the same status under the Framework Convention as the UK’s other Celtic people - the Scots, the Welsh, and the Irish.

The 2021 Census, therefore, provides the first opportunity since the 2014 decision to improve the collection, use, and visibility of Cornish identity data within Government Departments.
Appendix 1

DFE Schools Census Spring 2017, Those who identify themselves as Cornish

Census 2011, Those who identify themselves as Cornish

GP February 2018
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