Submission on Census 2006: Preliminary Views on Content (June 2003)

Introduction

The Cycling Advocates' Network of NZ (CAN) Inc. is this country's national network of cycling advocate groups. It is a voice for all cyclists - recreational, commuter and touring. We work with central government and local authorities, on behalf of cyclists, for a better cycling environment. We have affiliated groups and individual members throughout the country, and links with overseas cycling organisations. In addition, several national/regional/local government authorities, transportation consultancies, and cycle industry businesses are supporting organisations.

CAN is pleased to present this submission on the above discussion document. The national committee of the group has prepared this submission, with feedback from CAN members. CAN has based its submission on reviews of the relevant discussion document and background research material. If you require any clarification of the points raised by us, please feel free to contact us as detailed below.

General Comments

Specific proposed amendments to the Census questions follow separately in the format prescribed. However we'd also like to take this opportunity to make some general comments below.

1. Motor vehicle numbers as a "measure of deprivation"

CAN has some significant concerns about the implications of the statement on p.35 of the consultation document, *viz:*

> *"Information on the number of motor vehicles is used... as a measure of deprivation."*

While we concede that motor vehicle ownership is partly affected by socio-economic circumstances, there are also many instances of people who *choose* not to own a car (or more than one car), despite being financially able to do so if they wished. Clearly these people do not see themselves as being "deprived"; indeed, the subsequent reduction in their transport costs allows them to spend more of their income on other items instead.

Our recent CAN members' survey provides a case in point. Although a fifth of our respondents did not own or have first access to a motor vehicle, 64% of these "car-free" homes had household incomes greater than $30,000 pa, including 44% greater than $50,000 pa and 26% greater than $70,000 pa. While we don't pretend to accurately represent all those without motor vehicles, it highlights the fact that a significant proportion of people don't own motor vehicles for other than financial reasons.

2. LTSA Travel Surveys & Motor Vehicle Registry

We note that Appendices 3 & 4 refer to LTSA's Household Travel surveys and indicates that these are held approximately every 10 years. LTSA have just begun undertaking "continuous" rolling travel surveys, surveying a smaller sample each year, so that a more up-to-date indication of people's travel habits can be provided at any time. This new approach will in particular provide more accurate information on walking and cycling trips, which are poorly recorded by many other means (including the Census). The Census however still provides an important regular comparison and validation point, by virtue of its near-total sample size.

It should also be noted that motor vehicle numbers are also available via the LTSA's Motor Vehicle Registry. The linking of vehicle data with owner addresses allows for various analyses to be made, such as district comparisons of vehicle ownership.

Glen Koorey
Technical & Policy Advisor

for CAN

PO Box 6491; Wellesley St; Auckland
E-mail: secretary@can.org.nz
Website: www.can.org.nz

(specific submissions follow)

2006 Census Submission Questionnaire

1. Details of Submitters

Glen Koorey, Technical & Policy Advisor
Cycling Advocates' Network (CAN) Inc.

PO Box 6491, Wellesley St, Auckland
E-mail: secretary@can.org.nz
Ph: 04-385 2557
Fax: 04-385 2557

2. Topic Area of this Submission

Work - Main means of Travel to Work

3. Description of Proposal

We are proposing amendment of a recommended topic to include a wider range of travel. There are a number of possible options:

a) As a minimum, we propose that the question should ask about travel to both work places and educational places, i.e.:

> *On xx March 2006, what was the one main way you travelled to **a place of work or study** - that is, the one you used for the greatest distance?*

This may also require some amendment to other questions and survey instructions to ensure that all suitable respondents (including children) answer this question. The existing question on workplace addresses (Q.34 in 2001) may also need to be revised to obtain information on the location of educational institutions visited.

b) We also suggest that you consider asking for details about multi-mode trips, i.e.:

> *On xx March 2006, what was the main way you travelled to a place of work or study - that is, the one you used for the greatest distance? **(put a "1" next to this means of travel). If there was another way you travelled for part (at least five minutes) of your trip, put a "2" next to this means of travel.***

This would simply require changing the existing "tick-boxes" to single-character "text boxes".

c) We also suggest that you consider asking for details about a wider range of trips, i.e.:

> *On xx March 2006, **what was your main activity?***
>
> [provide "tick box" categories, such as work, school study, other educational study, shopping, looked for work, social/recreational, stay home, voluntary work, etc]
>
> *What was the one main way you travelled to **that activity**? - that is, the one you used for the greatest distance?*

This may also require some amendment to other questions or instructions to ensure that all respondents (including children) answer this question. The existing question on workplace

addresses (Q.34 in 2001) may also need to be revised to obtain information on the location of places visited.

The question could also be extended like in b) so that information on any secondary mode of travel was also collected.

We also propose that the current option description of *"bicycle"* in this question be expanded to *"bicycle* ***or other unpowered cycle****"*. This reflects the fact that many cyclists now use other 'human-powered vehicles', including tandems, recumbent tricycles and quadricycles. Our recent members' survey for example found that over 10% of respondents owned one of these devices. Given the main uses of this question, it is still reasonable to include these cycles with bicycles.

Similarly, it might be reasonable to include *"used a scooter, skateboard, rollerblades, etc or a mobility scooter"* either separately or with the *"walked or jogged"* option, to reflect the growing diversity of off-road path users.

The topic should be included every Census.

3.1. Why this information is needed

Local and regional authorities need sound information about vehicle use in which to make decisions about transport and land-use planning. The question on travel to work is designed to produce information on commuting, but a more useful and generally accepted definition of commuting includes travel to educational institutions (including schools, universities, polytechnics). There is also a growing concern with the number of "school run" motor vehicle trips being made by adults to ferry children to schools; however it is difficult to obtain clear national data on this.

The proposed extension of this topic will be used to establish what other activities, apart from working, people participate in and will allow monitoring of broader travel trends. Ultimately it will provide a much more comprehensive account of travel patterns and travel demand which will be of great benefit in validating transport models. These transport models form the basis for multi-million dollar investment decisions regarding the future of New Zealand's transport infrastructure.

Data from the LTSA Travel Survey[1] suggests that trips to work make up only about 15-20% of all private trips from home. There are far greater numbers of people making trips for shopping or social/recreational purposes. Some sectors, such as education-based trips have considerably different modal splits to work-based trips. Information on travel to work is therefore a poor proxy for national travel patterns.

By limiting itself to one "main" means of transport, the Census question does not collect valuable information on multi-mode trips. It is increasingly important for transport planners to know, for example, how many people combine private and public transport in their work journeys (e.g. "park'n'ride" or "bike'n'ride") in order to provide appropriate facilities (e.g. parking at stations, bicycle space on trains).

The current focus on work-only journeys and the longest-distance modes has an unfortunate effect on the apparent modal split by cycling and walking. According to the 2001 Census for

[1] Land Transport Safety Authority, *1997/98 Travel Survey Report*, July 2000.

example, there were 65% more public transport (bus or train) journeys to work than cycling journeys. Yet the LTSA Travel Survey found that the splits for work trips were virtually even. Given that both local and central government agencies place considerable weight on the Census information, it is not surprising that public transport has generally been accorded greater priority (and funding) than cycling.

Many journeys encompass a significant walking element (e.g. walking to/from a car-park, bus-stop or train station), yet this is not clearly reflected in the Census data because of the bias towards longer-distance modes as the "main" travel mode. The 2001 Census for example, found that just 7% of people listed walking as their main means of travel to work. Yet the LTSA Travel Survey suggests that 19% of all work trips are walking trips, a number of these clearly being part of larger "trip-chains". These trips do not just include short walks across the road for example; the average walking trip length was about 11 minutes.

One possible way to shift the existing distance-based bias is to ask the question regarding main means of travel in terms of *"the one you used for the greatest **length of time**".* Given the relative speeds of different modes, this may produce a quite different picture. It is acknowledged that this may cause continuity problems with previous Census results; hence our proposed alternatives above to obtain more information *on top of* the existing question.

The currently available transport statistics (journey to work) are useful for obtaining trends for travel by car, but provide less accurate statistics on the importance of passenger transport, cycling and walking. Transport planners are starting to move away from investment in roading infrastructure and directing more attention and funds towards encouraging the use of alternative modes of transport. Along with the shift towards sustainable transportation systems, comes a greater need for information about modes such as cycling and walking. The Government has signalled their intention to encourage the use of these modes; hence it makes sense for the Government's statisticians to collect more information in this area.

There is some merit in having this topic ask people how they ***usually*** travel, rather than on the specific Census day. A single day is not a reasonable sample size for a variable that is so dependant on the weather or one-off traffic incidents. If Census day is wet, cold and/or windy, people will take the bus or their car instead of walking or cycling. Research locally and overseas[2] has suggested for example that the presence of rain will cause ~60% of cycle commuters to travel by alternative modes, a significant effect. Local authorities relying on Census data will not get an accurate picture. At the very least, Statistics NZ should also provide with the Census travel results some weather data for Census day (e.g. maximum daily temperature and daily rainfall) for each territorial authority, that can help explain some of the variation between each Census.

An interesting question might be to ask how people would ***prefer*** to travel. For example, it is quite likely that a number of people would rather walk or cycle to work and other places, but feel constrained by fears about personal safety (from traffic or crime) or through lack of adequate facilities (e.g. crossing Auckland Harbour Bridge). From a future planning perspective, this might provide some quite useful insights, however it is acknowledged that there are methodological issues with "stated preference" questions of this nature.

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[2] M. Nankervis, "The Effects of Weather and Climate on Urban Bicycle Commuters' Decision to Ride: A Pilot Survey", *ARRB Road & Transport Research*, Vol.8, No.4, Dec 1999, pp.85-97.

3.2. How this information will be used

Information from this topic will primarily be used by government agencies (including Ministry of Transport, Transfund NZ, Transit NZ), local/regional authorities, transport researchers and community organisations. It should be noted that, despite the current shortcomings in the interpretation of this data, journey to work figures are widely quoted as justification for various transport projects and policies.

Planning groups within these agencies use the means of travel data in many ways, for instance:

- To gauge the importance of different travel modes and changes in modal share over time
- To monitor changes in travel patterns and the effect of transport policies and strategies on these
- To assist in validating transport models and trip matrices
- To assist in planning transport infrastructure, and guiding investment decisions

The proposed wording of the questions should enable the retention of information equivalent to the previously used question (i.e. main mode to work only), thus still enabling comparison with previous Census figures. However it will also provide information on the type and extent of multi-mode travel, and not solely the "main means" of travel (to work or other main activity).

3.3. Why the Census is the best source for this information

Clearly the LTSA Travel Surveys provide more detailed information on aspects of trips and travel choices. However, this information is constrained by the sample size that can be obtained in these surveys, and the subsequent reduction in precision (especially for less-used modes like cycling). By also collating information through the Census every five years, it can provide an important regular comparison and validation point, by virtue of its near-total sample size. The Census can also provide more accurate information when categorised by specific geographical areas and demographics and is therefore of more use for local and regional planning.

Options a) and b) proposed would not require additional space in the Census form. Option c) would require some additional space, although thought could be given to using it to replace the existing Q.41 regarding other activities done in the past four weeks.

All proposed options would involve additional data processing to produce the required information. However, given the Government's new emphasis on better-informed transport policy, the effort involved seems appropriate. It may be that, as major users of the final data, the Ministry of Transport, could contribute to the post-survey processing effort.

3.4. Information on this available from other sources

Some of this information is available from the LTSA Travel Survey, which includes details on parts of trips by each mode, journey purposes, distances and time taken, and demographic information about the travellers. The LTSA has now begun "continuous" Travel Surveys, to enable rolling trends of travel to be identified in an up-to-date manner.

Some region-wide travel data is also available in many urban areas from very infrequent Home Interview Surveys (HISs), often used to develop transport models. Because of the expense,

the HIS usually has a small sample size, which make it impossible to identify meaningful statistics about minor modes such as passenger transport, cycling and walking.

Similar travel data is also often collected via manual or automated traffic surveys. However such surveys often produce data biased against walking and cycling, either because these modes are not explicitly surveyed (or ignored when things are busy) or because the "main routes" surveyed exclude major travel routes for walking and cycling (e.g. off-road paths).

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Glen Koorey, Technical & Policy Advisor
Cycling Advocates' Network (CAN) Inc.

PO Box 6491, Wellesley St, Auckland
E-mail: secretary@can.org.nz
Ph: 04-385 2557
Fax: 04-385 2557

2. Topic Area of this Submission

Household - Motor Vehicle Ownership

3. Description of Proposal

We are proposing amendment of a recommended topic to include a wider range of vehicles, i.e.:

> *How many of the following vehicles do the people who live here have available for their use?*
>
> - *motor vehicles (excluding motor bikes or scooters)*
> - ***motor bikes or motor scooters***
> - ***bicycles (including electric bicycles, recumbent cycles)***

No amendment to other questions and survey instructions should be required.

The topic should be included at least every second Census, and preferably always. One possibility is to alternate the bicycle ownership question with the existing question on motor vehicle ownership (for which data is already available separately via the LTSA Motor Vehicle Registry).

3.1. Why this information is needed

There is currently no way of telling how many households in New Zealand own cycles. The type of information available on motor vehicles (e.g. registrations) is not collected for bicycles. Limited information is available from the cycling industry with respect to bicycle sales, but it is difficult to reconcile that with actual ownership rates.

Local and regional authorities are increasingly providing facilities for cyclists in order to improve safety and encourage cycling. Information on cycle ownership will assist in determining potential for cycling and in identifying areas where ownership is high. It will also be of use in the development of local and national cycling strategies.

There is also an increased focus on encouraging people to take up physical activity, such as cycling, either for recreation/exercise or as part of their normal daily travel. Knowing the numbers of existing bicycles available is important to help determine the potential for people to incorporate cycling into their lives.

The Government has signalled their intention to encourage more cycling; hence it makes sense for the Government's statisticians to collect more information in this area.

3.2. How this information will be used

Information from this topic will primarily be used by government agencies (including Ministry of Transport, Transfund NZ, SPARC), local/regional authorities, transport researchers and community sport/recreation organisations.

Planning groups within these agencies could use vehicle ownership data in many ways, for instance:

- To identify the potential for increased use of cycling by existing owners
- To monitor changes in vehicle ownership patterns and the effect of transport policies and strategies on these

It is clear that many people who own cycles do not use them regularly at all. From the Census data, cycle ownership can be related to cycling use from other questions (e.g. travel to work, physical activity) and other demographic attributes, so that targeted investigation can be undertaken of groups where cycling take-up is not great.

The proposed wording of the questions should enable the retention of information equivalent to the previously used question (i.e. motor vehicle ownership only), thus still enabling comparison with previous Census figures.

3.3. Why the Census is the best source for this information

The Census can provide an accurate indication of the prevalence of cycles in this country, particularly in relation to other demographic attributes. Other transport-specific surveys are not likely to seek any data on this, and they will invariably be limited to a much smaller sample size anyway. The Census therefore will provide an important regular measurement point, by virtue of its near-total sample size.

The proposed question would not require additional space in the Census form. Information on the three different vehicle categories could be recorded side-by-side in the space available.

The amended question would involve additional data processing to produce the required information. However, given the Government's new emphasis on better-informed transport policy, the effort involved seems appropriate. It may be that, as major users of the final data, the Ministry of Transport, could contribute to the post-survey processing effort.

3.4. Information on this available from other sources

Data on bicycle ownership was apparently collected as part of the LTSA Travel Survey[3], however no published figures are readily available. The Travel Survey is also limited by a relatively small sample size. We understand that the Automobile Association may have surveyed their membership on bicycle ownership, but nothing is publicly available.

[3] Land Transport Safety Authority, *1997/98 Travel Survey Report*, July 2000.

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E-mail: secretary@can.org.nz
Ph: 04-385 2557
Fax: 04-385 2557

2. Topic Area of this Submission

Health

3. Description of Proposal

We are proposing the addition of a new question regarding personal health and physical activity, i.e.:

> *In the past four weeks, which of the following have you undertaken (for at least fifteen minutes at a time)?*
>
> - *taken part in organised sporting activity or competition*
> - *taken part in casual sporting activity alone or with friends/family*
> - *taken part in active leisure activities (e.g. walking, gardening, gym exercise)*
> - *walked, cycled, skated, etc to other activities or places*

No amendment to other questions and survey instructions should be required.

The question could be amended to obtain more detail about the length of activity (in hours) involved, although a shorter time-frame (such as in the past week) may be more suitable.

The topic should be included at least every second Census. One possibility is to alternate it with the proposed question on cigarette smoking.

3.1. Why this information is needed

Inactivity has increased across the developed world and, linked to this, the number of overweight and obese people is growing. Obesity is an increasing health risk in western nations. In New Zealand, studies show an increase in obesity over the past 20 years, with 65% of middle-aged men and 45% of middle-aged women now overweight or obese[4]. Overall, 1997/98 data from the Hillary Commission estimated that 33% of adults are inactive.

With the shift towards promoting healthier and more active lifestyles, comes a greater need for information about participation in suitable activities such as cycling and walking. The Government has signalled their intention to encourage more physical activity by people; hence it makes sense for the Government's statisticians to collect more information in this area.

[4] Hillary Commission, *Push Play - Facts*, 2000.

Currently there is very limited information on existing activity habits, making it difficult to appreciate the scale of the problem, or to target interventions.

3.2. How this information will be used

Information from this topic will primarily be used by government agencies (including Ministry of Health, and SPARC), sport/recreation groups, social/health researchers and community organisations.

Planning groups within these agencies could use the physical activity data in many ways, for instance:

- To gauge the importance to people of different forms of physical activity
- To monitor changes in physical activity habits and the effect of sport & health policies and strategies on these

Including information on the amount of activity undertaken would enable some assessment of the relative proportion of inactive (sedentary) people, categorised by other attributes such as work category, age, or ethnicity. This would enable "active living" health programmes to be targeted at the most vulnerable groups.

3.3. Why the Census is the best source for this information

The Census can provide an accurate indication of the prevalence of physical activity in this country, particularly in relation to other demographic attributes. Although other more specific health and activity surveys are likely to produce more detailed information in this area, they will invariably be limited to a much smaller sample size. The Census therefore will provide an important regular comparison and validation point, by virtue of its near-total sample size. It can also provide more accurate information when categorised by specific geographical areas and demographics and is therefore of more use for local, regional and national planning.

The proposed question would require additional space in the Census form. However we note that Q.14 (in 2001) on health problems is to be removed, and the new question would be of similar size, allowing a straightforward replacement.

The new question would involve additional data processing to produce the required information. However, given the Government's new emphasis on active living, the effort involved seems appropriate. It may be that, as major users of the final data, the Ministry of Health, could contribute to the post-survey processing effort.

3.4. Information on this available from other sources

In the past some information on sport and physical activity has been obtained via the Hillary Commission[5] (now SPARC), but this only encompassed a national sample of no more than 7200 people (more recent surveys have sampled less). SPARC are planning their next survey in 2004. More information is available at http://www.sparc.org.nz/research.

[5] Hillary Commission, *Sport and Physical Activity Survey*, 1997-98.

Other one-off studies have included related questions, for example the 1996/97 NZ Health Survey (Min. of Health) and recent research into school children's activity[6]. Invariably, these studies are also limited to a small sample size, making it difficult to identify meaningful statistics or trends about physical activity.

[6] Education Review Office, *Physical Activity in Primary Schools*, May 2001.