What is CensusPlus?

Our 2011 CensusPlus dataset includes more than a thousand popular variables that analysts and marketers rely on from the Census, plus valuable additional variables from the National Household Survey (NHS). Due to changes in methodology, Statistics Canada is not officially releasing dissemination area (DA) data from the 2011 NHS, which replaced the long-form census. CensusPlus offers enhanced data for the most important NHS themes for all DAs in Canada, fills in missing values and eliminates random rounding in both NHS and Census data. The result is a comprehensive set of demographic variables available for any geographic level—be it standard census and postal geographies or custom client trade areas.

How is this release of CensusPlus different?

In 2011, Statistics Canada replaced the mandatory long-form census with the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). But due to large variations in response rates among population groups, Statistics Canada chose not to officially release DA-level data from the 2011 NHS because they did not meet their traditional quality standards. To fill the gap, Environics Analytics (EA) developed processes to produce DA data for the most popular NHS data themes used by marketers. CensusPlus includes variables from the 2011 Census, plus enhanced data from the NHS.

Why do marketers and analysts need these data?

EA's CensusPlus provides extensive socioeconomic and demographic profiles of Canadian consumers for small and custom areas for the census year 2011—including DAs. Analysts use these data to enhance their customer databases, target markets for direct mail, analyze trade areas, build statistical models and make varied business decisions. In addition, the income data in CensusPlus are essential to both businesses and not-for-profits. With detailed multicultural data, CensusPlus also helps users understand their ethnic customers as well as the diversity within ethnic segments.

Aren't the census-tract level data that are available from StatsCan sufficient?

No. A census tract (CT) contains about 4,000 people or 1,800 households—and is roughly six times larger than a DA. A CT may be diverse and contain a number of single-family homes as well as a few high-rise buildings. A DA is more homogeneous, so it's more effective for understanding residents and executing marketing campaigns. When we examined CT- versus DA-level data, we found that the diversity that exists within CTs is better captured by DA-level data. The granularity demonstrates that DA data are essential for a range of small-area analysis and marketing applications.

Why are Census data needed when there are so many other sources of data?

Some people have expressed the belief that we don't need government statistics because of all the data available from other sources. Unfortunately, we can't estimate population based on "likes" and tweets. And we can't identify employment from Kijiji or economic trends by aggregating online shopping trends.Big Data can only be leveraged for quality analytics when those databases are weighted, benchmarked and analyzed using a known, accurate, comprehensive universe—derived from a Census or other official statistical databases. Essentially, there is no substitute for data derived from government sources.

Can you give me a non-technical explanation of how Environics Analytics created DA-level data?

Basically, we had to create estimates of many household variables at the DA level—not all the NHS variables but more than one thousand of the most important variables for marketers. We started with the complete 2011 Canadian Census and combined it with the raw NHS data. Then we developed a set of proprietary algorithms for adjusting Census and NHS data to make them more usable. These algorithms filled in missing values where data are suppressed by Statistics Canada, and they also corrected for random rounding. As a result, there are no missing values in CensusPlus and the variables add up within thematic categories and across levels of geography. Finally, EA developed or implemented three additional processes to produce DA-level NHS data that are reliable and consistent with the Census:

1. The NHS variables in CensusPlus were adjusted to match the Census household and household population universes. The 2011 Census universes are higher quality than those in the NHS because of the latter's smaller sample size and voluntary nature.

2. EA did not use NHS income data. Instead, we used Canada Revenue Agency files along with 2006 Census and other sources to model 2011 CensusPlus income data. These data are consistent with the estimates produced in our sophisticated WealthScapes dataset.

3. We adjusted NHS immigration themes and visible minority data based on 2011 Census mother tongue counts, Citizenship and Immigration Canada statistics, and Statistics Canada's published intercensal statistics.

Is the NHS-type data in CensusPlus as good as previously available Census long form data?

No, it's not, although we have no way of knowing. We have a significant number of analysts with extensive expertise in this field. We employed best practices and external sources to develop CensusPlus. And we think that most experts would agree that the approaches we have taken are reasonable and reliable. The mandatory long-form census would have resulted in a better database, but in its absence CensusPlus offers marketers and social scientists the best alternative.

How can people purchase CensusPlus?

CensusPlus data are available on demand through our website **CensusPlus.ca**.

For further information:

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