

Questions, Questions, Questions: What the Census Test Will Ask and Why it Will Ask it

Your role in shaping the Census

Some questions can change your life. 'Will you marry me?' is one. Others, like 'What's for dinner?', may seem important at the time, but don't really make a difference in the long run.

The questions in the 2007 Census Test fall mainly in between. When you receive your Census Test questionnaire, you might wonder why we ask about things such as how many rooms do you have, or how many cars or vans are available for use by members of your household. Yet answers to these questions can provide key information on whether housing is overcrowded and bring about better planning for public transport.

How we assess the Test

We are testing both new and revised questions from 2001. Based on what we find from the Test and the questions that have worked well in previous years, the 2011 Census will include:

- some questions from the 2007 Census Test
- some from the 2001 Census but not tested this time and
- others developed through a programme of small-scale testing

How the Census Test questions will work

The Census Test questionnaire contains 13 questions about your household and accommodation. There are then a maximum of 30 questions for each individual (adults and children) living within the household which should be completed by a responsible member of the household.

The aim of the questions is to paint as detailed a picture as possible of people, households and housing in England and Wales. All questions have been chosen after close working with central and local government, universities, health authorities, the business community, groups representing ethnic minorities and others with special interests or concerns. To be included in 2011, the questions must meet the needs of several users, be acceptable to the public and produce good quality data.

New questions to be tested in 2007 include:

- National identity – are you English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, Irish or something else
- Language – do you speak English, Welsh, British Sign Language and other languages? In Wales, people will be asked how often they use the Welsh language
- Second address – do you have a second address, why do you stay there and how much time do you spend there



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Questions – why they are asked and how are the answers used?

The most important task of the Census is to provide an accurate count of both the population and type of people in the country and where they live. Local authorities use this information to work out how much money they have to spend, when they are planning public services.

Why do you need to know about my accommodation?

The Census is the only national source of information on housing that can be compared at a local level. Information from questions such as the type of house that you live in, how many rooms you have, do you share any rooms with another household and whether you have central heating, can be put together with data about the number and types of people in a household to provide information about overcrowding, housing quality and deprivation.

These statistics will inform central and local government about current and future needs for housing and contribute to the allocation of improvement grants.

Why do you need to know how many cars or vans are available to my household?

This information will be used to plan public transport and develop transport policies such as parking.

Why do you need to know what sex I am, my date of birth and whether I am married or not?

The number of people counted by their sex, age and marital status means that local authorities can plan according to the different types of household within their areas, such as those with pensioners, children or single people.

The data also provides a base for measuring changes and calculating rates of morbidity, mortality, fertility, marriage, civil partnerships and divorce.

Why is knowing what ethnic group I belong to, so important?

Information from the ethnic group question will allow national and local government and health authorities to take account of the special needs of ethnic minority groups in providing resources and planning services. Responses to the question provide baseline figures against which the government can monitor that all ethnic groups are treated equally.

How is information about religion used?

Information on religion is used to ensure that people of different beliefs are treated equally. Government uses the data to allocate resources and monitor policies.

Why do I need to tell you about my qualifications?

Information on qualifications allows government to allocate resources to improve skills in particular areas and plan education services.



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