

Questions and Answers from the 2011 Census Content Workshop Friday 29th February 2008

General

Q1. If central government departments do not contribute funding will there not be a 4th page of census questions per person?

The inclusion of a 4th page of questions per person is dependent upon central government departments contributing funding.

Q2. What will be the situation if we only have three pages?

The aim of the workshop is to provide information on ONS' priorities for content and gather feedback on these priorities. There will be some difficult decisions to make if the funding cannot be secured for the 4th page.

Q3. Why hasn't the timeliness of data been considered as a criterion for the inclusion of a topic, for example in the case of migration data when the situation would have changed by the time the census results are published?

These issues have been considered when prioritising topics for inclusion, but ONS has received strong demand to provide better information on migration and anticipate that the current increase in requirement for migration data will continue to exist in 2011.

Q4. Why are academics not sufficiently represented at this workshop?

ONS did invite representatives from the academic advisory group but unfortunately many of them were unable to attend. The workshop was not publicised as an open meeting so a number of other academics may not have been aware of the event.

Q5. If the questionnaire only has three pages of questions per person will there be a clear public statement made as to how the content has been prioritised?

If a decision is taken that the 2011 Census questionnaire will contain three pages of questions per person, then ONS will need to reassess priorities against criteria and a document will be published detailing this.

Q6. If the questionnaire contains four pages, will the Treasury ask for funding from departments or insist that they contribute?

HMT is discussing this with the Permanent Secretaries of the relevant departments. If it can't be resolved at Permanent Secretary level then it will go to Ministerial level for resolution.

Household questions

Tenure

Q7. In 2001 there was an over-reporting of the number of people living rent free, as some people on housing benefit did not consider themselves to be renting. Will the issue be addressed for the next census?

The wording of the rents category has now been amended to read rents (with or without housing benefit) to overcome this problem. Cognitive question testing has shown that this question is now working well.

Number of bedrooms

[Q8. Number of bedrooms wasn't previously identified as a priority topic. Is it not easier to just ask the number of rooms question?](#)

ONS are still proposing to collect information on number of rooms but an additional requirement for number of bedrooms has been expressed by the Department for Communities and Local Government. ONS acknowledge that it is a difficult concept to collect and are currently awaiting the results of qualitative testing before making a final decision on the inclusion of this topic.

Individual questions

Sexual identity

[Q9. Why has a question on sexual orientation not been considered for inclusion? Could this decision be revisited?](#)

ONS have strong concerns regarding data quality, acceptability issues and possible effects on response rates by including a question on sexual orientation in the Census. In the GROS 2006 Test, 2.5 per cent of respondents identified themselves as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual, whereas 7 per cent chose not to complete this question at all. There are also conceptual issues to consider, i.e. what would be measured, identity or behaviour. ONS have launched a sexual identity project to see if an appropriate question can be developed for household surveys.

The final content of the 2011 Census cannot be confirmed until the questionnaire has been agreed by Parliament in 2010, although the ONS view is that Census is not the correct vehicle to collect this information for the first time.

Hours worked/part-time/full-time

[Q10. Where does the breakdown of part-time/full-time hours come from? The market research industry uses a different cut-off for full-time and part-time working than the census question.](#)

There is no standard definition of full-time and part-time across ONS. The 30 hour cut-off was advised by the topic experts in the labour market division of ONS following a small consultation with users. It allows comparable outputs with the 2001 Census data and meets the majority of census data users' requirements. The National Statistics Harmonisation Working Group are currently addressing the issue that there is no harmonised question on hours worked.

[Q11. Why is ONS intending to include a question on part-time/full-time rather than hours worked?](#)

The 2001 Census Quality Survey indicated that there were data quality issues with the hours worked question used in 2001. The Labour Force Survey asks hours worked, but this is interviewer led and has a lot more instructions than can be provided on a self-completion form. A consultation with users was undertaken on the proposed full-time/part-time question and it was shown to meet the majority of users' requirements.

NB: Since the workshop ONS are now testing a banded hours worked question.

Second Residences

Q12. Will the inclusion of a question on second residences mean we have a count of all holiday homes?

The second residence question focuses on people with second addresses rather than the second properties. The question asks people to record second addresses where they spend more than 30 days per year so some second residences will not be recorded.

Q13. Will the second residence information be used mainly for the population count, or will the information be provided as outputs as well? Will these outputs have the same strict disclosure control restrictions as for the main residence information?

If a decision is taken that a second residence question will be included then the next step will be to find out what outputs users require. A decision on disclosure control will be taken at a later stage.

Visitors

Q14. Is the note about calling for an extra form for further visitors really necessary? Would a count of additional visitors be more useful?

Question testing has suggested that it is uncommon for people to have more than three visitors. Further work is being conducted to consider whether information on additional visitors is necessary or whether a count would suffice.

Q15. Will the visitor information be collected across the UK?

Visitors form part of the population base for the 2011 Census and so information on visitors will be collected in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Migration

Q16. International migration is so volatile, the real interest is in what happens quarter by quarter. Would migration information not be better gained from admin sources?

Migration is shaping communities and users want local level information on this. The census data will provide a point in time snapshot for local areas which will provide a useful benchmark for other surveys.

Q17. Will the inclusion of a lot of identity and migration questions in the Census not be damaging to response rates?

ONS have been testing the current suite of identity and migration questions during small scale cognitive testing and have not encountered any problems with respondents indicating they would not respond to these questions or to the census. There was also no indication from the 2007 Census Test that response rates were affected by the inclusion of these new questions, although some additional migration questions have been proposed since the 2007 Test. One of the key aims of the census is to get an accurate population count and so

questions will not be included if there is any possibility that they might impact on response rates and jeopardise the population count.

Q18. What happens about agricultural workers, as these will not be included in the Census, due to the time of year it takes place?

It is recognised that the population in 2011 will be different from 2001. Currently, different sources report different information relating to the number of short term migrants in the UK. The Census provides a point in time snapshot that will not pick up seasonal workers and therefore won't provide a full picture of migration in the UK. However, if information on short term migrants is collected in the census it will provide a useful benchmark.

Q19. Users require information on the numbers EU immigrants but the Census may not be the best place to collect this. Would it not be better to gain this information from landing cards or a travel survey?

Landing cards, and travel surveys such as the IPS don't provide information on people that are already resident in the Country. Also, ONS consider that respondents may have a better idea of how long they are going to be staying when they are in the country, rather than when they have just arrived in the country. Surveys only collect information from a sample of migrants so they are less comprehensive than the census and cannot provide the small area data that users require.

Q20. If ONS are proposing to include a question on intention to stay in the UK will there also be a question on intention to leave?

ONS are proposing to ask a question on intention to stay in order to be able to separately identify short term migrants from the usually resident census population on census night. Collecting information on intention to stay is a more effective and appropriate way to meet the user requirement than asking when someone intends to leave the country. ONS are not attempting to measure future emigration in the census.

Q21. Including a question on intention to stay in the census is unlikely to give all the information we really need. Short term migrants are hard to track down and may be dubious about answering the questions on citizenship and intention to stay.

ONS acknowledge that it may not be possible to collect information on short term migrants if they are not willing to complete the census and are planning to conduct research to determine whether or not it is possible. If a decision is taken to collect the information there will need to be effectively targeted publicity.

Q22. What is the need for a question on citizenship?

The Home Office supports the inclusion of citizenship for service planning and targeting of resources. The ability and right to travel is determined by citizenship, and this is of increasing importance since the enlargement of the EU.

Q23. If a respondent has entered the country on a spouse's visa, and they then have split up, the respondent does not get to stay in the country. Will the intention to stay results be broken down and matched against citizenship for this information?

If intention to stay and citizenship are both collected in the 2011 Census then it will be possible to produce cross tabulations of these two variables.

Q24. Why are ONS proposing to include a question on intention to stay? The Census is not an appropriate place to collect this information.

The debate on this issue within ONS has been strong and the views are polarised. Whether or not an intention question will be asked explicitly, we will still be asking people to make that judgement elsewhere when deciding whether or not they intend to be here for 6 months or more to be counted as a usual resident.

Q25. If there is such a pressure on space, why do migration questions take up so much of the questionnaire? Further work needs to be done on how migrants move around the country but Census is not the right vehicle.

ONS acknowledged at the event that the strength of feeling suggests that if there is only room for 3 pages of questions per person then fewer migration questions should be asked. This will be taken into consideration by ONS when recommending the final census content after a decision on the length of the questionnaire has been made.

National Identity

Q26. If space is so limited why is information on national identity being collected? There is no policy need for the information and it is unlikely to produce usable statistics because the question allows multiple responses.

The national identity has been used successfully in the Labour Force Survey. It is a subjective and self-perceived question that is distinct from legal nationality. A new depth is thereby brought to the groups with which respondents can identify, allowing greater accuracy in the recognition of small and previously unidentifiable communities. Question testing has shown that respondents prefer to indicate their national identity before answering the ethnic group question. As well as these reasons for including the question, many users have expressed a need for information on national identity.

Q27. It appears that the main user need for the national identity question is in Wales rather than England. ONS should be careful not to exaggerate the strength of user need for this question.

The user need for this question is not as strong as for other topics but the acceptability issues and the improvements in response to the ethnic group question are strong enough to justify its inclusion in England.

Income

Q28. The user demand for information in income is still apparent. Why is an income question not being considered for inclusion in the 2011 Census? It does not seem that there was any public outcry to the income question in the 2007 Test and income has been asked in other countries.

Glen explained that the ONS view is that income is not going to be included in 2011 due to the potential impact on response rates. The overriding priority is to get the population count right.

With regard to comparability with other countries, the press and the public are both very different in the UK in terms of the acceptability of asking questions on income.

Q29. Why can an income question not be included in the blank space (question 17 for England)?

ONS conduct the Census on behalf of England and Wales and are obliged to include a question on Welsh language proficiency in Wales. This space is left blank in England because we cannot collect additional information in England that users in Wales would also be interested in.

Q30. If GROS go ahead with a household income question why can ONS not fit one in?

ONS have strong concerns over the collection of income data at household level and would not propose to collect income information in this way. Additionally, ONS is testing a question on number of bedrooms in addition to number of rooms which does not leave sufficient space for any additional questions.

Q31. Is the 2.7 per cent significant difference in response rates weighted or unweighted? 46.1 per cent is a low response rate, but then the Test was skewed to harder to count areas and this therefore justifies to some extent the non-response levels.

ETC5 (the hardest to count area) produced a lower non-response rate than some of the other ETC levels. The weighted impact was very similar.

Travel to study

Q32. Why are England and Wales not proposing to collect information on travel to place of study when Scotland are?

There are issues surrounding the quality of data received from a question including both transport to work and place of study, and it would be more difficult to get the postcode. Also ONS has not received a strong user requirement for this information.

Travel to study could only be effectively collected in a separate question. Also, by 2010, information on mode of travel to school will be collected through the Census in Schools.