

2011 Census questionnaire development

Introduction

This paper outlines the ONS recommendations for the content of the 2011 Census questionnaire in England and Wales, the likely areas of divergence across the UK as well as providing an update on topic consultation and question development.

Advisory group members are asked to:

- Note that the ONS has now obtained funding for a fourth page of individual questions
- Note the final proposed content for the 2011 Census questionnaire in England and Wales
- Note the likely differences in content across the UK
- Note the work carried out on topic consultation and question development
- Note the latest version of the questions being developed for the 2011 Census questionnaire

Questionnaire length

The ONS has now obtained funding for a fourth page of individual questions. Several central government departments have agreed to contribute towards this.

The current working assumption is for a 32-page household questionnaire with four pages of individual questions for six usual residents (with an additional eight pages to record household members, visitors, relationships between household members and housing questions). It should be noted that questionnaires in multiples of 8 pages are the most cost-effective in terms of printing and collation. A final decision on the need to include six usual residents rather than five (as was the case in 2001) will be made in May 2008.

Questionnaire content in England and Wales

The ONS will be making the following recommendations for the content of the 2011 census questionnaire in England and Wales. The recommended content for Wales is awaiting Ministerial views. The inclusion of all topics in the 2011 Census is ultimately subject to the approval of Parliament.

Individual pages

Table 1 summarises ONS' recommendations for the topics for the individual pages in comparison to 2001. The only 2001 topic which is missing is number of employees. This was poorly answered in 2001 and it has been estimated that the removal of this question would only reduce the quality of NS-SEC by 1.8%.

The new topics that can be included in 2011 with an additional page of individual questions are:

- Civil partnership incorporated within the marital status question.
- Second residences – to identify and avoid double-counting within the census; and to reconcile population estimates with administrative sources (such as council tax).

- Month and year of entry into UK –to enable new migrants to be identified and their characteristics to be analysed.
- Intended length of stay in UK (subject to further testing) – to enable identification of different population bases (eg UNECE definition of short-term migrant is 3-12 months).
- Citizenship - to identify those eligible to vote and receive services from the government.
- National identity – to allow the indigenous and migrant population to state their identity as English, Welsh, British etc; and make the ethnicity question more acceptable to ethnic minority communities.
- Language – to improve targeting and provision of services for minority groups.

Table 1: Proposed content for individual pages in England and Wales

Topic	2001	2011
Name	✓	✓
Sex	✓	✓
Date of birth	✓	✓
Marital/civil partnership (new) status	✓	✓
Student status	✓	✓
Term-time address	✓	✓
Second residence (new)	x	✓
Country of birth	✓	✓
Address one year ago	✓	✓
Month/year of entry into UK (new)	x	✓
Intended length of stay in UK (new) ¹	x	✓
Citizenship (new)	x	✓
Ethnicity	✓	✓
National identity (new)	x	✓
Religion	✓	✓
Welsh language proficiency (Wales only)	✓	✓
Language (new)	x	✓
Health status	✓	✓
Long-term illness/disability	✓	✓
Carers	✓	✓
Qualifications	✓	✓
Economic activity status	✓	✓
NS-SEC (self-employed, occupation, supervisor status, ever worked)	✓	✓
Number of employees	✓	x
Industry/name of employer	✓	✓
Workplace address	✓	✓
Transport to work	✓	✓
Hours worked	✓	✓

Household pages

Table 2 summarises ONS' recommendation for the content of the household pages in comparison to 2001. This proposal excludes two topics which were included in 2001; namely lowest floor level and access to shower/bath and toilet. There was little user requirement for these topics in the 2005 topic consultation and the question on access to shower/bath and toilet is no longer considered a useful measure of deprivation.

¹ Subject to further testing

The proposed new topics are:

- More detailed visitor information (sex, date of birth, usual address in UK or country if overseas) – to ensure the best possible count of usual residents
- Type of central heating – to provide more information on central heating than was collected in 2001.

Table 2: Proposed content for household pages in England and Wales

Topic	2001	2011
Visitor information (new)	x	✓
Relationships	✓	✓
Accommodation type	✓	✓
Self-contained accommodation	✓	✓
Number of rooms	✓	✓
Central heating	✓	x
Type of central heating (new)	x	✓
Tenure	✓	✓
Landlord	✓	✓
Number of vehicles	✓	✓
Access to shower/bath and toilet	✓	x
Lowest floor level	✓	x

Questionnaire content across the UK

Table 3 outlines the likely differences across the UK in terms of questionnaire content. The 'amber' shading indicates where there is divergence across the UK which could be considered to breach the RGs' agreement to 'common questions' and 'coherent statistics', but would not significantly affect the population estimates (which would be a 'red' status). There are also other concerns surrounding divergence in terms of harmonised outputs and potential lobbying from stakeholders. It should be noted that Northern Ireland has not yet confirmed their topics for inclusion and there may be some changes.

Table 3: Proposed content for 2011 questionnaire across the UK

Individual topics	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
Name	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sex	✓	✓	✓	✓
Date of birth	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marital/civil partnership (new) status	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student status and term-time address	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country of birth	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month/year of entry into UK (new)	✓	✓	x	✓
Month/year of entry and country of last previous residence for those who have lived outside country for continuous period of one year or more (new)	x	x	✓	x
Intended length of stay in UK (new) ²	✓	✓	✓	x
Address one year ago	✓	✓	✓	✓
Citizenship (new)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Second residences (new)	✓	✓	✓	x
National identity (new)	✓	✓	x	x
Ethnicity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religious affiliation	✓	✓	✓	✓

² Subject to further testing

Religion born into	x	x	✓	x
Welsh language proficiency	x	✓	x	x
Gaelic language proficiency	x	x	x	✓
Scots language (new)	x	x	x	✓
Irish language proficiency	x	x	✓	x
Ulster Scots language proficiency (new)	x	x	✓	x
Language (new)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health status	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term illness/disability	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nature of long-term illness/disability (new)	x	x	✓	✓
Carers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Qualifications	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic activity status (five questions)	✓	✓	✓	✓
NS-SEC (self-employed, occupation, supervisor status, ever worked)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Industry/name of employer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Workplace address	✓	✓	✓	✓
Place of study (2001 topic in Scotland)	x	x	x	✓
Transport to work	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transport to place of study (2001 topic in Scotland)	x	x	x	✓
Income (new)	x	x	x	x
Hours worked	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of employees (2001 topic)	x	x	x	x
Voluntary work (new)	x	x	✓	x

Household topics	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
Visitors	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relationship matrix	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accommodation type	✓	✓	✓	✓
Self-contained accommodation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of rooms	✓	✓	✓	✓
Type of central heating	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tenure	✓	✓	✓	✓
Landlord	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of vehicles	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to shower/bath and toilet (2001 topic)	x	x	x	x
Accommodation on more than one floor (2001 topic in Northern Ireland)	x	x	x	x
Lowest floor level (2001 topic)	x	x	x	x
Accessibility for disabled (new)	x	x	✓	x
Household income (new) ³	x	x	x	✓

ONS and NISRA position on inclusion of income in 2011 Census

The ONS and NISRA are not recommending the inclusion of income as either an individual question or household question for the 2011 Census. Previous extensive testing has indicated problems in terms of data quality and public acceptability.

Cognitive question testing carried out in 2005 and 2006 led to the income topic group recommending that an individual banded question to collect gross income and a separate sources of income question should be included in the 2007 Census Test. Testing showed

³ Subject to findings from 2009 Rehearsal

that a sources of income question is needed to increase the quality of data on income level as it encourages respondents to think about all their potential sources of income. Respondents reacted negatively to the idea of a household question, with many being concerned about answering such a question on behalf of others.

ONS carried out topic-specific consultation with those users who requested the inclusion of income during the original 2005 topic consultation and all respondents supported the collection of individual income rather than household income as it is less of a burden on respondents, individuals would be able to retain their privacy, and the question would produce more reliable results. Users also didn't want to include the topic at the expense of response rates or poor quality data.

The 2007 Test in England and Wales showed evidence of a significant decrease in response rates (2.7% difference) between households which received an income question and those that did not. It has been estimated that the cost of additional follow-up would be in the region of £2 million per 1% drop in response rate. Non-response to the income question in the 2007 Test was also high (9%) in comparison to other topics and this was higher still for the unemployed, ethnic minorities and the less educated. The Test Evaluation Survey showed a low level of re-test reliability for the income question (64%) and of those people unhappy with answering one or more questions, the majority were unhappy with the income question.

The 2007 Test findings are supported by similar findings prior to the 2001 Census. Cognitive testing showed that a household question was less acceptable to members of the public and more likely to generate inaccurate responses. Results from this testing were used as a basis for deciding to include a question on individual income in the 1997 Census Test. The 1997 Test showed a 2.8% difference in response rates between households which received an income question and those that did not although this was not statistically significant. Non-response to the income question was 22%. This Test included households in Scotland as well as England and Wales. The 1999 Rehearsal also generated a high non-response rate to the income question (16%) and the Quality Survey found that 15% respondents objected to this question.

Internationally, other statistical agencies which collect information on income from their Census do this at the individual level rather than the household level.

GROS position on inclusion of income in 2011 Census

GROS will include a household income question, subject to its performance in the 2009 Rehearsal. The 2006 GROS Census Test showed no evidence of a decrease in response rates between households which received a household income question and those that did not.

Recent GROS discussions with key users indicated that they see great value in the collection of income data in the Census, despite its known limitations. It would potentially provide a measure of relative poverty/affluence levels not available from any other census variable and thus greatly strengthen the census as an analysis source. Users understand that the accuracy of the information gained in such a question will be limited; however, it was clear from discussions that they would see income data as very valuable nonetheless. Even if only a simple high/medium/low categorisation of household income was used, it would greatly boost the value that could be obtained from other local area data, such as that held in Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics. Internationally, income questions are included in most censuses, notwithstanding the challenges that they pose.

GROS also, however, has to balance the considerable value that income data would have for users against its limited accuracy and the risk of upsetting a significant proportion of

respondents by asking what some may regard as an intrusive question. While the 2006 Test did not suggest that response levels were reduced by the inclusion of an income question, it did reveal that just under a fifth of respondents, when asked whether there were any questions in the form that they did not like, referred to the income question. Thus inclusion of an income question would carry the risk of alienating, or at least upsetting, a significant minority of respondents, which could feed into any wider campaign of resistance to the census.

Some users have suggested that in view of its sensitivity the income question might be made voluntary, like the question on religion. However, the issue about religion had its roots in the nature of the relevant legislation, which does not apply in this instance, and to have such a prominent question labelled "voluntary", as well as weakening the data gathered, would dilute the important message about the overall compulsory nature of the census, so this is not recommended.

The GROS Census Programme Board considered all these matters carefully when it met on 4 March and decided that a household income question will be included in the 2011 Census in Scotland, subject to the performance of the question in the 2009 Rehearsal.

Consultation

Feb 2008 workshop

A workshop was carried out in February 2008 with representatives of the census advisory groups to discuss the ONS priorities for content for both 3 pages and 4 pages of individual questions. There was support for the inclusion of new questions on second residences and visitors. However, concerns were raised about the number of new migration questions (ie month/year of entry into UK, citizenship, intended length of stay in UK) and the impact this may have on migrants and the general population as a whole. The willingness of migrants to answer a question on intended length of stay was also questioned as well as the likely quality of the answers provided.

In terms of three page content, there was general concern raised about the priority given to new migration questions in comparison to 2001 questions (ie carers, industry and qualifications). The proposed four page content received more agreement although there was still an issue concerning the number of new migration questions along with national identity. The ONS proposal to exclude the topics of income and sexual identity received mixed views in terms of income while the EHRC supported the inclusion of a sexual identity question.

Feedback was provided that the ONS will need to justify its priorities for topics given the changes that have taken place since the original 2005 topic consultation. A small group exercise took place to construct a questionnaire which showed the difficulties in reaching agreement between users with different priorities and viewpoints. The notes and slides from the meeting will be available on the National Statistics website in May.

Question development

Cognitive question testing

Cognitive question testing is ongoing to develop questions for the 2011 Census questionnaire. Two waves of testing have taken place since the November 2007 round of advisory groups involving around 70 respondents. Whole questionnaire testing is due to start in April. The attached paper contains a copy of the relationship matrix, housing and individual questions that are currently being tested. There may well be changes to these questions before the questionnaire is finalised in the autumn.

Other question testing

The ONS will be including some questions in the Omnibus Survey in May to further investigate issues regarding intended length of stay in the UK, language and religion. There are also plans for another postal test in May and possibly focus groups with short-term migrants.

Timetable

An updated timetable for the development of the Census questionnaires is outlined below:

Year	Date	Event
2008	April/May	Publication from February workshop
	May	Postal test and Omnibus question testing
	May	Publication on income evaluation
	June	Publication of Equality Impact Assessment on the development of the questions for ethnicity, national identity, language and religion
	June	Publication on evaluation of Census Test questionnaire
	October	Questionnaires for 2009 Rehearsal finalised
	December	Topics for 2011 Census announced in White Paper
	Ongoing	Cognitive question testing
2009	Spring	Census Rehearsal
2010	Spring	Census questionnaires approved by Parliament
2011	Spring	Census day

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