



Equality Impact Assessment Screening

**2011 Census question development
Date of birth and age**

Equality impact assessment: Screening decision checklist	
Name of policy or practice	2011 Census questionnaire design
Name and contact details of assessor	<p>Caroline Jones, Director Diversity Solutions Consultancy Ltd. Cavell House Stannard Place St. Crispin's Road Norwich NR18 9PJ</p> <p>Email: carolinejones@diversity-solutions.com</p> <p>Tel: 0845 260 0028</p>
Name and contact details of client	<p>Peter Stokes Head of Statistical Design 2011 Census Office for National Statistics Segensworth Road Titchfield Fareham PO15 5RR</p>
Purpose of policy or practice	<p>Date of birth/age question for 2011 Census:</p> <p>Assessment of user requirements related to the date of birth/age question for the 2011 Census, considered by the census demography, families and households topic group.</p>
Date of screening decision	15.10.2008
Proceeding to assessment?	No
Priority level for assessment ¹	Low

¹ Priority levels are generally set at high, medium or low according to the level of actual or potential equality impacts that may be expected. Assessors must use their best judgment to determine the level.

Deadline for completing assessment	Not applicable
If not proceeding to assessment, complete one of the following:	
<p>1. Assessor's reasons for deciding there is insufficient resource to proceed (e.g. insufficient time, staff, competing priorities, etc.):</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>	
<p>2. Assessor's reasons why it is not necessary to do an assessment on this policy (e.g. no adverse equality impacts likely to affect any communities or groups within communities):</p> <p>ONS has recommended that the 2011 Census date of birth question should be the same as that asked in the 2001 Census. Age is derived from the date of birth question and is the age at a person's last birthday. Dates of birth that imply an age over 110 are treated as invalid and the person's age is imputed.</p> <p>The date of birth question to be asked is as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What is your date of birth?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Day <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> Month <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> Year <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p> <p>In the view of the assessor, it would be a disproportionate use of resources to conduct an equality impact assessment on the date of birth question. Adverse equality impacts are not likely to occur for any communities or groups within communities as a consequence of asking this question.</p> <p>The census demography, families and households topic group, which considered the question in detail, has published the following:</p> <p>“Date of birth will be used across all other census outputs to disaggregate and analyse by age. It will also allow the population recorded at census to be aged forward from census date to mid-2011 for the purposes of making population estimates. The information is also vital for data validation within the census (e.g. checking duplicate form completions). Date of birth is also a key linkage variable, in particular for the longitudinal study.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The 2011 Census: Statement of user requirements – Demography, families and households</i>, ONS, November 2007, paragraph 3.1.</p>	

The topic group is considering issues related to asking an additional question on age, as below:

“Work is required to decide how best to validate date of birth and impute missing data. The suggestion of recording age (on the relationship matrix page) as well as date of birth has been made by census but there is a risk of the form seeming repetitious and also of people only answering age rather than giving their date of birth. Further work is required to decide whether age is worth recording, and any decision may be dependent on data validation decisions.”

ibid, paragraph 3.1.2

Adverse equality impacts are not likely to occur for any communities or groups within communities as a consequence of asking a question on age.

However, it is acknowledged that some countries do not have comprehensive civil registration systems, including birth registration. This creates issues for some people from overseas living in the UK, who must use an estimated date of birth to calculate their age.

Unicef estimates that around 51 million births go unregistered every year in developing countries. According to Unicef, South Asia has the largest number of unregistered children, with approximately 23 million births not registered in 2006. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest percentage of children under five who are not registered at birth, at 66 per cent. Groups who have been denied the right of birth registration include children of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, Kurds living in Syria, Tatars in Ukraine and Russians in Estonia and Latvia. See information on the Unicef website: http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_birthregistration.html

Consultation

ONS has conducted extensive consultation on the Census 2011 questions through a number of channels to include the views of as many users as possible. This is summarised in the information paper *The 2011 Census: Statement of user requirements – Demography, families and households*, ONS, November 2007.

Monitoring of screening decision (to be completed by ONS):
ONS comments on external assessor's advice: Comments noted and considered.
Date of scrutiny meeting: 28 November 2008
Actions agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide guidance to the public on answering the date of birth question in the 2011 Census for those who do not know their date of birth.
Recommendations to Committee: N/A
Name and signature of Panel Chair: Peter Benton, Deputy Census Director