



The 2011 Census: Final questionnaire content for England and Wales

October 2009

1. Summary

This paper provides:

- Details of the work to develop the 2011 Census questionnaire for England and Wales
- The recommended content of the 2011 Census questionnaire for England and Wales
- The population bases to be used for enumeration and outputs

This paper is supported by a series of other papers, also available on the National Statistics website, which discuss the development of questions for specific topics in detail.

2. Introduction

The questionnaires to be used in the 2011 Census were finalised following an extensive, four year, programme of consultation and testing to ensure that the questions asked will meet user requirements and be acceptable and understandable to respondents. This work was carefully managed to ensure that the key aims of the Census were met, which constrained the amount and scope of information that was considered for collection. This was made clear to users throughout the development process, with the following statement included in the consultation documents referenced in later sections:

The key requirement of the 2011 Census is to provide a robust estimate of the population count, and a benchmark for key population statistics, on a consistent and comparable basis for small areas and small population groups. This will require the collection of information on sex, date of birth, students, ethnicity and marital or civil partnership status.

To meet this requirement, ONS aims to maximise response rates in all areas and from all population sub-groups, and minimise differential non-response. The collection of any additional information should not jeopardise this aim.

To help achieve this, ONS will seek to minimise respondent load, whilst maximising the value of the information collected, by ensuring that the questionnaire is clearly presented and contains an acceptable number of questions.

There were several factors considered when developing the questionnaire for the 2011 Census to achieve this aim. These factors applied both when deciding how many pages to include in the questionnaire, which questions to ask and what response options to include. The various factors are outlined below:

- Impact on respondents:
 - acceptability of questions; and
 - respondent burden (dependent on questionnaire length and questions asked).
- Data quality:
 - questions will only be included where ONS is confident that the information collected will be of sufficient quality to be of use to users.
- Operational considerations:
 - cost of printing, delivery and collection (dependent on questionnaire length); and
 - cost of processing (dependent on questionnaire length and questions asked).
- Time:
 - for delivery and collection (dependent on questionnaire length); and

- for processing (dependent on questionnaire length and questions asked).

The questionnaire for the 2011 Census will be 32 pages long and will include four pages of questions for each of six respondents (the questionnaire for the 2001 Census in England and Wales was 20 pages long and included three pages of questions for each of five respondents).

3. Questionnaire development for 2011 Census

The development of the questionnaire for the 2011 Census is a culmination of a programme of consultation, research and testing including:

1. Consultation
 - 2005 topic consultation
 - 2007 open meetings on census content
 - 2008 workshop on census content with representatives of census advisory groups
 - Census advisory groups
 - Topic-specific consultation
 - Meetings with Statistical Heads of Profession
 - Meetings of working groups
 - Ad hoc meetings with stakeholder organisations
2. Question testing
 - Cognitive question testing
 - 2007 Census Test and 2007 Census Test evaluation survey
 - Postal tests
 - Omnibus Survey testing
 - Focus groups
3. Work to harmonise with Scotland and Northern Ireland where possible
4. Quality review of questionnaires
5. Equality Impact Assessment on development of questions

3.1 Initial User Consultation

In May 2005, the questionnaire development programme began with the publication of a consultation paper:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/consultations/closed-consultations/2011-census---content/index.html>

This consultation asked users to respond separately for each topic of interest, using a template provided, to ensure that the information collected would help ONS to accurately assess these requirements against pre-defined criteria:

- user requirement – for example, whether information would be used for central government resource allocation, local government policy development, academic research etc.
- whether information is required for small population groups or geographies
- whether any alternative sources are available and have been considered
- whether this topic needs to be analysed in conjunction with other census data
- whether UK-wide information is required
- whether the information would provide continuity with previous censuses.

This consultation was widely publicised by ONS, with links sent to all registered census users (around 7,000 people and organisations) and a press release issued. This consultation was supported by a series of open meetings across England and Wales and received significant national media coverage. As a result, responses

were received from almost 500 users, requesting the inclusion of around 70 topics (over 2,000 'topic responses' were received).

These responses included requests for the retention of all existing census topics, and a wide range of new information. If all of these requests were met, the questionnaire would need to include more than six pages of questions per respondent, which would be unaffordable to ONS, unacceptable to respondents and risk data quality.

As a result, the consultation responses were assessed against the criteria outlined above, to assess the strength of the requirement for information, and a range of other factors that ONS had to consider before including a question in the 2011 Census:

- whether data collected would be of sufficient quality to produce useful outputs
- whether collecting the information would be acceptable to respondents
- whether collecting the information would significantly increase the burden on respondents
- whether collecting the information would significantly increase the length of the questionnaire or coding costs.

After evaluating the responses to this consultation, ONS published its response to the consultation in an information paper 'The 2011 Census: Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England and Wales' on the ONS website in March 2006:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/consultations/closed-consultations/consultation-on-2011-census---responses/index.html>

This paper summarised ONS's judgement of the possibility of each topic's inclusion in the 2011 Census, which was reached using a clear, transparent and understandable process. The paper explained the factors considered and scoring mechanisms used in this evaluation, and the rationale for every decision. It also outlined the testing planned to inform subsequent re-assessment of requirements and decisions on final questionnaire content.

The Welsh Assembly Government also published an information paper specifically for Wales to coincide with the ONS release:

'2011 Census Topic Consultation: Summary of responses from Wales or about Welsh issues' to coincide with the ONS publication on their website:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/pop-2007/pop-2006/hdw200603081/?lang=en>

These papers outlined ONS's assessment of the consultation responses, detailing the factors considered, and giving users the opportunity to comment on ONS' understanding of requirements.

The publication of these papers was supported by a press launch in March 2006 by ONS and the Welsh Assembly, in London and Cardiff, and received widespread media coverage.

3.2 Consultation with key/specific users

In addition to this consultation exercise, ONS had more focused discussions with some users through a range of forums:

3.2.1 Census advisory groups

One of the ways in which the ONS consults with census users is through a number of census advisory groups that represent the interests of the main user communities.

These currently cover:

- Central government departments
- Local authorities
- Health service
- Business sector and professional interests
- Academic community
- Organisations with interests in special needs and minority populations
- Users in Wales.

Meetings are usually held twice a year, often to coincide with particular developments or key events in census planning. Summaries of the topics covered in the most recent round of meetings are available on the National Statistics website:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/consultations/user-adv-groups/index.html>

3.2.2 Meetings with statistical heads of profession

Meetings took place in September 2006, June 2007 and November 2007 with statistical heads of profession (or their representatives) from key government departments and the Local Government Association, in order to discuss competing priorities for the content of the 2011 Census questionnaire.

3.2.3 Meetings with stakeholder organisations

Specific stakeholder meetings have also taken place with a number of communities where meeting user requirements would pose the greatest problems for question design and/or comparability. This included meetings requested by representatives of the British Sikh Federation, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the British Humanist Association, Stonewall, and the Cornish and Kashmiri communities. A meeting also took place with various community groups to discuss the acceptability of colour terminology within the ethnic group question.

3.2.4 Consultation within Wales

There has also been further consultation, within Wales, with Welsh census users and stakeholders. A paper on preparations for the 2011 Census was discussed at National Assembly for Wales subject committees, and the Welsh Assembly Government organised workshops with users in both north and south Wales to discuss proposed census content.

3.3 Questionnaire Testing and further consultation

After the initial consultation exercise, a range of qualitative and quantitative testing was undertaken to develop questions to help meet the identified user requirements. This testing was supported by further, targeted, consultation exercises to ensure understanding of detailed requirements and assess where compromises could be made if testing highlighted any difficulties.

A number of topic specific UK working groups were established to manage the development of questions to meet user requirements, and included user representation from topic experts from across or outside ONS as appropriate. These working groups reported to the UK Census Questionnaire Design Working Group,

which had responsibility for overall questionnaire development, ensuring that the needs for different topics were balanced appropriately, with no topic area asking too many questions. These groups are discussed in more detail in section 3.4.2.

The topic experts representing user interests on these working groups conducted further consultation with a range of census users, as required to inform and assess the final question development.

3.3.1 Cognitive testing

The data collection methodology (DCM) team within ONS carried out a large programme of cognitive testing of census questions, in both English and Welsh, between February 2005 and July 2009.

The purpose of this testing was to explore, understand and explain the ways in which respondents answer questions, to ascertain whether or not a question is acceptable and works as intended. Cognitive testing usually takes place as a one-to-one interview to maximise its effectiveness.

This testing helped develop questions to collect accurate and meaningful information that meets user requirements, are readily understood, easy to answer and conform as closely as possible to international best practice of questionnaire design.

3.3.2 2007 Census Test

A large scale census test covering 100,000 households was carried out in England and Wales on 13 May 2007. The questionnaire that was used for the test was 24 pages long, and included four pages of individual questions per person for five respondents, which allowed the opportunity to test a number of new and updated questions.

Not all of the questions tested have been included in the proposed questions for the 2011 Census, due to the results of testing together with further consultation and re-evaluation of user requirements.

The detailed evaluation of the 2007 Test questionnaire can be found on the ONS website:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/2011-census-project/2007-test/2007-test-questionnaire-evaluation.pdf>

3.3.3 Postal tests

A number of small-scale postal tests have also been conducted to help collect sufficient quantitative information to inform specific decisions on questionnaire design or content, and to collect further information on the success of all new questions.

In April 2007, a split-sample postal test of 10,400 households was carried out in order to inform the decision on the length of the 2011 Census questionnaire, which concluded that the length of the questionnaire would not affect response rates if the questionnaire was well designed. This resulted in ONS increasing the length of the questionnaire to 32 pages in 2011 (including four pages of questions for each of six respondents) from the 20 pages used in the 2001 Census (including three pages of questions for each of five respondents).

In July 2008, two postal tests were carried out, one across England, and the other in Northampton - an area which has a high concentration of migrants. The main purpose of this test was to inform the decision on the inclusion of short-term migrants

in the 2011 Census, and concluded that people resident in the UK for less than six months would complete a census questionnaire if asked to do so. Short-term migrants will be included in the 2011 Census for the first time, which means that the enumeration base has been changed from that used in the 2001 Census, as discussed in section 4.

In March 2009 two postal tests were carried out, each with 10,000 households, one across England and one targeted in areas of Durham and Norwich. The main purpose of this test was to explore issues around the enumeration of students, which concluded that it was possible to collect information about students term-time address at their family home and vice versa. This information will be collected in 2011, and will help ensure the accurate enumeration and estimation of the student population.

In July 2009 a postal test of 27,000 households was carried out targeted in areas known to have a high concentration of Pakistanis. The main purpose of this test was to explore the issues surrounding the inclusion of Kashmiri tick box in the ethnic group question. This testing showed that respondents would be significantly more likely to record their ethnicity as Kashmiri if a tick box were available, rather than just a write-in space, but that the user requirement for this additional tick box was insufficient to extend the question. This work is discussed in more detail in a separate paper, available on the ONS website.

3.3.4 Opinions (Omnibus) Survey testing

The Opinions (formerly Omnibus) Survey is an ONS run, multi-purpose survey based on interviews with a monthly sample of around 1200 adults (aged 16 and over) in private households. It currently forms part of the Integrated Household Survey.

The Opinions Survey has been used in 2007, 2008 and 2009 to test new migration questions (year of arrival in UK, citizenship and intended length of stay in the UK); new language, national identity and religion questions, and attitudes towards colour terminology within the ethnicity question. This testing has informed the decisions to include a range of new questions on migration, and to retain the colour terminology in the ethnic group question, as most respondents were happy to answer them and able to do so accurately.

3.3.5 Focus groups

In April and May 2007, ONS held focus groups in England to discuss the acceptability of colour terminology within the ethnic group question and seek to reconcile conflicting views on the issue. The outcome of the focus groups led to a compromise on the descriptors used in the ethnic group question.

The Welsh Assembly Government also conducted a series of six focus groups in Cardiff, Carmarthen and Wrexham specifically with people identifying as 'White Welsh/British' to discuss national identity and ethnicity in November 2007, which concluded that it would be acceptable to include a Welsh tick-box in the National Identity question rather than Ethnic Group question, as ONS had proposed.

In August 2008, the National Centre for Social Research held focus groups and in-depth interviews with migrants and the general population to explore the acceptability of collecting information from short-term migrants in the census, which supported the findings from the postal test discussed in section 3.3.3, that it would be possible to enumerate this population.

In July 2009 ONS commissioned some focus groups and in-depth interviews to explore issues around the potential inclusion of a Kashmiri tick box in the ethnic group question, to help inform the final decision on whether or to include one.

3.4 Work to harmonise with Scotland and Northern Ireland

In 2005, the Registrars General of each of the UK countries signed an agreement to work towards a harmonised set of questions, questionnaires and outputs where possible.

3.4.1 UK Census Questionnaire Design Working Group

The census offices meet regularly to discuss progress through monthly meetings of the UK Census Questionnaire Design Working Group (UKCQDWG). The results of consultation, research and question testing is shared across the UK.

3.4.2 UK topic groups

Eight UK-wide topic groups were set up which normally met on a monthly basis. These topic groups were responsible for establishing and prioritising user requirements for information, researching alternative sources of data, and commissioning small-scale question testing. Each topic group included people with a range of skills and expertise from the following areas:

- ONS census division
 - to co-ordinate the work of the group and provide census expertise for England and Wales;
- ONS business areas
 - to provide expertise in topics covered by each group and consult with users;
- ONS data collection methodology
 - to develop and test questions to meet user requirements and provide expertise in questionnaire design;
- ONS harmonisation
 - to ensure questions developed for the Census are comparable with those from other surveys where possible;
- GROS and NISRA
 - to provide census expertise for Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively and ensure UK consistency where possible; and
- The Welsh Assembly Government
 - to ensure Welsh requirements are met and that questions developed will be acceptable in Wales

The work of these topic groups culminated in the production of question recommendations which were then considered by UKCQDWG.

3.5 Quality review

The 2007 test questionnaire and 2009 rehearsal questionnaires were subject to quality review by external experts in questionnaire design. The findings from these reviews informed the final questionnaire design and content and helped to ensure that the questions were clear and understandable.

3.6 Equality impact assessment on development of questions

An equality impact assessment is a systematic way of finding out whether a function, such as a policy or practice, has a differential impact on particular communities, or groups within communities. This enables ONS to eliminate any adverse impact, or reduce adverse impact to the greatest possible extent within its available resources.

The ONS has carried out an equality impact assessment on the development of the ethnicity, identity, language, religion, sex, age and disability questions for the 2011 Census which can be found on the ONS website.

In addition, an equality impact assessment has been carried out on the exclusion of the topic of sexual identity from the 2011 Census and this can be found on the ONS website.

4. Population bases for enumeration and outputs

As a result of strong user requirements on migration in general, and specifically on the population resident in the UK for short periods of time, the population bases to be used in the 2011 Census have changed from those used in 2001.

Following detailed discussions with key users within and outside ONS, and the success of the postal test discussed in section 3.3.3, the population to be enumerated in the 2011 Census will now include all people who have lived, or are present on census night and intend to live, in the UK for a period of three months or more. People who are outside the UK for a period of less than 12 months should also be included at their permanent UK address.

However, users do not want all of the population enumerated included in the main census outputs, as these should only be based on the 'usually resident' population for the purposes of resource allocation, with the short-term resident population included in separate outputs. Therefore, the main outputs from the 2011 Census will only include the usually resident population, which has been specified as those people who have lived, or intend to live, in the UK for a period of 12 months or more. This definition will make the main census outputs directly comparable with the mid-year population estimates at a national level¹ and with other censuses internationally.

These and other definitions to be used in the 2011 Census are discussed in a separate paper, available on the ONS website.

5. ONS recommended content for 2011 Census

The view on 2011 Census content outlined in this document is the final ONS recommendation. The final decision on the content of the 2011 Census will ultimately be for Parliament to make through the legislative process. This process began when the topics to be included in the 2011 Census were announced in a White Paper, and ONS hopes to obtain Parliamentary approval by the end of 2009.

The questionnaire for the 2011 Census will be 32 pages long and will include four pages of questions for each of six respondents (the questionnaire for the 2001 Census in England and Wales was 20 pages long and included three pages of questions for each of five respondents).

¹ Slight differences will exist at a subnational level because population estimates count the population at the address where they spend the majority of their time, whereas the Census counts people at their family home, to enable the production of accurate statistics on household and family structure.

5.1 Recommended content

Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 show the household and individual level questions recommended for inclusion in the 2011 Census in comparison to 2001.

Table 5.1.1: Proposed content for household pages in England and Wales

Topic	2001	2011
Usual residence	✓	✓
Household and family relationships	✓	✓
Accommodation type	✓	✓
Dwellings and self-contained accommodation	✓	✓
Number of rooms	✓	✓
Household tenure	✓	✓
Type of landlord	✓	✓
Number of vehicles	✓	✓
Visitor information (new)	x	✓
Number of bedrooms (new)	x	✓
Type of central heating (new)	x	✓
Central heating	✓	x
Bath/shower and toilet access	✓	x
Lowest floor level	✓	x

Table 1.2.2: Proposed content for individual pages in England and Wales

Topic	2001	2011
Name	✓	✓
Sex	✓	✓
Date of birth	✓	✓
Marital or civil partnership (new) status	✓	✓
Students in full-time education and term-time address	✓	✓
Country of birth	✓	✓
Address one year ago	✓	✓
Ethnic Group	✓	✓
Religion	✓	✓
Knowledge of Welsh (Wales only)	✓	✓
Health status	✓	✓
Long-term illness or disability	✓	✓
Carer information	✓	✓
Qualifications	✓	✓
Economic activity status	✓	✓
NS-SEC (self-employed, occupation, supervisor status, ever worked)	✓	✓
Industry/name of employer	✓	✓
Workplace address	✓	✓
Transport to place of work	✓	✓
Hours worked	✓	✓
Second residence (new)	x	✓
Main Language and English Language Proficiency (new)	x	✓
Month/year of entry into UK (new)	x	✓
Intended length of stay in UK (new)	x	✓
Passports held [as a proxy for Citizenship] (new)	x	✓
National identity (new)	x	✓
Number of employees at the workplace	✓	x

6. Contact details

Any questions or comments regarding this paper should be emailed to ONS at:

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Comments and questions can also be sent to:

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This paper focuses on the census in England and Wales only. Separate user consultation has been undertaken for the census in Scotland and Northern Ireland and queries regarding these should be directed to GROS or NISRA. Their contact details are below:

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