

2011 Census Questionnaire Development

Introduction

1. This paper provides an update on the progress with topic consultation and question development as well as the likely length and content of the 2011 Census questionnaire.
2. **Advisory group members are asked to:**
 - **Note the work carried out on topic consultation and question development;**
 - **Comment at the meeting on the proposed content of the 2011 Census questionnaire, and on the questions being developed.**

Consultation

3. March 2007 open meetings

The summary of the March 2007 open meetings and a record of all the questions asked along with answers will be published during the winter. The slides from the meeting are available on the National Statistics website.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census/2011Census/CollectingtheInfo/downloads/question_content_slides.ppt

4. Consultation on ethnicity, identity, language and religion

A three-month consultation took place on the ethnicity, identity, language and religion topics between December 2006 and March 2007. Over 500 responses were received. A summary of the responses was published on 31 October on the National Statistics website at

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/Census/2011Census/Consultations/ethnicidentconsultation.asp>

5. Consultation on NS-SEC

A consultation on the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) took place during January 2007. Over 50 responses were received and a summary report is available on request.

6. Consultation on long-term illness/disability

A consultation on long standing illness or disability took place during August 2007. Over 50 responses were received and a summary report is currently being drafted.

Question development

7. Cognitive question testing

Cognitive question testing to develop questions for the 2011 Census questionnaire is ongoing. Three waves of testing have taken place during 2007, involving around 170 respondents. Annex A contains the most recent versions of new or revised questions that have been tested.

8. Focus groups

Focus groups took place in England during April and May to discuss the acceptability of colour terminology within the ethnicity question. The summary report is currently being finalised.

9. Omnibus survey

The ONS has included some questions in the Omnibus Survey starting in September to further investigate issues regarding ethnicity, identity, religion and citizenship.

Questionnaire length

10. The current working assumption is for a 24-page household questionnaire with three pages of individual questions for six usual residents (with an additional six pages to record household members, visitors, relationships between household members and housing questions). This formed the basis of the ONS bid for Census funding from Treasury.

11. However, it has been clear from consultation with users that there is significant demand for more topics than can be accommodated within three pages of individual questions.

Work has therefore been undertaken to inform the decision-making on the length of the questionnaire including:

- Research into the effects of questionnaire length on response rates (including international experience);
- Costings for 2011 on the difference between a 24 page questionnaire and a 32 page questionnaire;
- Research into the need to increase from five to six people per questionnaire;
- A split-sample postal test in April where half the sample of 10,400 households received a 24-page questionnaire and the other half a 32-page questionnaire

12. In summary, there is no evidence that a longer questionnaire on its own would reduce response rates. Other factors such as a cluttered design or the choice of topics have been shown to have more of an impact on response rates. However, the cost of an extra page of individual questions is likely to be in the region of £22 million. The use of six people per questionnaire would reduce costs associated with continuation questionnaires as well as improve coverage.

13. The April postal test showed that increasing the length of the questionnaire from 24 pages to 32 pages did not have a significant effect on overall response rates. The response rates were 31.1 per cent for the 24 page questionnaires and 31.5 per cent for the 32 page questionnaires. There were also no obvious effects on item level response. However, the sample of respondents in the test was relatively small and there were a greater proportion of elderly respondents. In addition to this, the test was voluntary and it is possible that the type of people that responded would complete a census questionnaire regardless of its length. For these reasons, it is not possible to conclude that a longer questionnaire does not impact on response rates, however it does provide a useful indication that response rates may be affected by factors other than questionnaire length.

14. On behalf of ONS, the Registrar General and National Statistician, Karen Dunnell, wrote to the Permanent Secretaries for eight key government departments in August to ask for a contribution to the funding for a fourth page of individual questions. Responses were requested by the end of September. However, this process has been further complicated by the ONS seeking funding for other activities. Karen has therefore written to Permanent Secretaries again, outlining a wider process for discussion of all of ONS' requests for

funding, over the entire statistical work programme. Responses to this have been requested for the end of October.

Questionnaire content

15. Individual pages

Table 1 summarises ONS current thinking on the likely content of the 2011 questionnaire for England and Wales for both three pages and four pages of individual questions. A fourth page of questions will only be possible if additional funding is obtained.

It is recognised that the current proposals for a three page per person questionnaire would exclude topics for which there are strong user requirements. These needs will be revisited before a final decision on content is taken.

Table 1: Proposed content for individual pages

Topic	3 pages	4 pages
Name	✓	✓
Sex	✓	✓
Date of birth	✓	✓
Marital/civil partnership (new) status	✓	✓
Student status	✓	✓
Term-time address	✓	✓
Second residence (new)	✓	✓
Country of birth	✓	✓
Address one year ago	✓	✓
Month/year of entry into UK (new)	✓	✓
Intention to stay in UK (new)	x	✓
Citizenship (new)	✓	✓
Ethnicity	✓	✓
National identity (new)	✓	✓
Religion	✓	✓
Welsh language proficiency (Wales only)	✓	✓
Language (new)	x	✓
Health status	✓	✓
Long-term illness/disability	✓	✓
Carers	x	✓
Qualifications	x	✓
Economic activity status	✓	✓
NS-SEC (self-employed, occupation, supervisor status, ever worked)	✓	✓
Industry/name of employer	x	✓
Workplace address	✓	✓
Transport to work	✓	✓

16. A recent addition to the proposed four page content is a question on intention to stay in the UK. There is an increasing demand for information on short term migrants, and a recent interdepartmental migration task force report has recommended that the Census collect information to identify short-term migrants.

17. When defining usual residence, ONS population estimates use a 12 month definition i.e. they do not include someone as a usual resident unless they have been in the country or intend to stay for a period of 12 months or more. Census, however, are currently using a 6 month residence definition. There is a need for Census information on short-term migrants because they are likely to be using local services. If ONS decide to collect a full census return from short-term migrants, then it will be necessary to be able to separately identify them, in order to remove them from the population estimates base (for consistency with their 12 month usual residence definition).
18. In order to identify short-term migrants and understand the differences between the Census and population estimates, ONS would ideally want to know how long someone had been in the country, which could be determined through a question on year/month of entry into UK. Additionally, anticipated total duration of stay would also be required. ONS recognise that asking respondents a subjective question on intended length of stay in a self-completion survey, such as the Census, can be problematic. People may not know how long they intend to stay and the information they provide may be inaccurate. However, ONS are currently testing a question and the outcome of this testing will help inform the decision on whether or not such a question can be included on the Census.

Both the three and four page proposals for content exclude two topics that were included in 2001; namely, number of employees and hours worked.

Other requested new topics, such as income and nature of illness/disability, have also been excluded.

19. Household pages

Table 2 summarises ONS current thinking on the likely content of the household pages for the 2011 Census questionnaire in England and Wales

Table 2: Proposed content for household pages

Topic
Visitors
Relationships
Accommodation type
Self-contained accommodation
Number of rooms and/or bedrooms (new)
Type of central heating (new)
Tenure
Landlord
Number of vehicles

20. ONS has recently been asked to consider the inclusion of a number of bedrooms question by DCLG which is required to meet a proposed new Public Service Agreement target. Other users will be consulted on this before any decisions are made on whether this topic should be included and whether it would replace, or be additional to, a question on the number of rooms.
21. The central heating question has traditionally been used as a measure of housing quality and an additional measure of deprivation. Information on central heating is also an important indicator in relation to the government's policies on fuel poverty. In the 2001 Census, only 8.5 per cent of respondents reported not having central heating available for use. This has resulted in discussions as to whether it may be more useful to collect information on type of central heating available for use, rather than whether a household

has central heating. This proposal excludes two topics which were included in 2001; namely access to shower/bath and toilet and lowest floor level.

Other

22. The ONS is continuing to work with independent diversity consultants to ensure compliance with legal obligations on equality. Work has taken place to produce an Equality Impact Assessment on the development of the questions for ethnicity, national identity, language and religion. This will be finalised over the winter.

Timetable

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

Year	Date	Event
2007	Winter	Decision on length of questionnaire for 2011
	Winter	Publication from open user meetings
	Winter	Publication of Equality Impact Assessment on the development of the questions for ethnicity, national identity, language and religion
	Winter	Evaluation of Census Test
	Ongoing	Question development and testing
2008	Spring	Topics for 2009 Rehearsal and 2011 Census selected
	Summer	Questionnaires for 2009 Rehearsal finalised
	Autumn	Topics for 2011 Census announced in White Paper
	Ongoing	Questionnaire testing
2009	Spring	Census Rehearsal
2010	Spring	Census questionnaires approved by Parliament
2011	Spring	Census day

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Questionnaire Design and Content
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