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# The Census

## A giant snapshot of Northern Ireland



### **What is the Census?**

On Sunday 29 April 2001, every individual who is usually resident in Northern Ireland and Great Britain will take part in the Census.

Every 10 years, one day is set aside for the Census – a count of all people and households. It is the most complete source of information about the population we have.

Every effort is made to include everyone. That is why the Census is so important. It is the only survey which provides a detailed picture of the entire population and it is unique in that it covers everyone at the same time and asks the same questions everywhere, making it easy to compare different parts of the country. It will involve hundreds of thousands of average households but will also include those living under one roof in organisations like care homes and boarding schools. It will also include people sleeping rough. However, visitors, such as tourists, will not be included.

The information the Census provides will allow central and local Government, health authorities and many other organisations to target their resources more effectively and to plan housing, education, health and transport services for years to come. It is particularly important therefore, that every section of the community is fully represented.



### **Who is responsible for taking the Census?**

The Registrar General, an official of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency within the Department of Finance and Personnel, is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for conducting the Census. Elsewhere, responsibility lies with the Registrars General in the Office for National Statistics for England and Wales and the General Register Office for Scotland.



### **How will the Census be taken?**

The Census in Northern Ireland will require a large fieldforce – some 3,000 strong – to carry it out. Most of these are enumerators, who deliver the forms in the weeks leading up to Census Day, and make personal contact with the householder. Enumerators will also return to any households who fail to post the Census form in order to collect it.



### ***What questions will be asked?***

The Census form for Northern Ireland will contain 42 questions. The first set of questions are about accommodation and relationships within the household, and are answered by the householder / joint householder on behalf of the household as a whole. The remaining questions are addressed to each individual within the household and should be answered with regard to each of them in turn. The questions aimed at individuals will cover six broad subject areas: demographics (e.g. age, sex); cultural characteristics (e.g. ethnic group); state of health / long-term illness; qualifications; employment / economic activity; workplace and journey to work.



### ***What will happen on Census Day?***

By 'Census Day' (29 April), every household in Northern Ireland will have received a Census form. The answers people write on their Census form should reflect their circumstances on Census Day and the forms must be posted back in the reply-paid envelope provided, as soon as possible after Census Day.



### ***Will Census returns be confidential?***

The information is used only to produce statistics about the population in general, and nothing will be released which identifies any individual or household. The confidentiality of the information provided is protected by law.



### ***How long will it take to fill in the form?***

The form has been designed to be as clear as possible and questions are mainly tick-box with a few write-in replies. It should take about 30 minutes to complete in the case of the average household.



### ***Is completing a Census form compulsory?***

It is designed to be a complete count of the population, and every household must return a form by law. Failure to complete and post back the form is an offence which can attract a fine of up to £1,000.



### ***What help will be available?***

Instructions included on the Census form itself should answer most queries people may have when filling in their form. However, a telephone helpline (calls charged at local rate) will be available every day during the Census enumeration period to answer public enquiries. A leaflet explaining how to fill in the Census form will be available in a number of minority languages. Bilingual helpline advisers will be available for a number of languages other than English, and special assistance will be provided for the blind and deaf communities.



### ***How will people know about the Census?***

The 'Count Me In' advertising and publicity campaign is planned to raise awareness and understanding of the Census. Our aim is that through paid advertising and free publicity in the media the majority of people will be aware of the Census before Census Day.



### ***What happens after Census Day?***

All forms are collected and delivered to a central processing centre. First the forms will be electronically scanned, the data captured and the write-in responses coded. The images will then be written to microfilm for long-term storage. This phase of the operation is due to be completed by March 2002.



### ***How much will the 2001 Census cost?***

Planned expenditure on the Census in Northern Ireland in the period 1999 - 2002 is approximately £8 million. This investment will give us vital information so that we can be sure that billions of pounds of public money are distributed effectively over the next decade.



### ***How do we know that the Census is accurate?***

Once the Census has been taken, a check needs to be made on how well the Census counted people. This check is called a Census Coverage Survey. In May-June 2001, interviewers will revisit a sample of households and carry out a doorstep interview. The responses to a few key questions will be compared with the returns for the main Census to highlight any differences in coverage, and will be used to estimate any under-count.



### ***When will the results be available?***

From Summer 2002 to Summer 2003 the main national and local results will be released to a pre-announced timetable and will be made available mainly on the internet. Paper publications will also be made available following consultation with users.