

The Census questions

A look at the questions asked in Northern Ireland and why we ask them



The 2001 Census form contains a total of 42 questions in Northern Ireland, the majority of which only require tick-box answers. Most of the questions were previously asked in the 1991 Census. The aim of the questions is to present as detailed a picture as possible of people, households and housing in Northern Ireland. All questions have been selected following consultation with users of the data and advisory bodies. To be included, the questions must meet the needs of a substantial number of users, be acceptable to the public and yield good-quality data.

The broad topics covered by the questions are:

- Household accommodation.
- Relationships within the household.
- Demographic characteristics (e.g. sex, age, marital status).
- Health/long-term illness/provision of care.
- Qualifications.
- Cultural characteristics (e.g. ethnic group).
- Migration.
- Employment.
- Work place and journey to work.

Note: On the first page of the Census form the Enumerator (Census taker) will write in the full postal address of the household and the name of the person responsible for completing the form. All other sections of the form will be completed by a member(s) of the household.

The address and postcode help ensure the correct handling of the forms by the field staff and enable the Census Office to check the receipt of forms returned by mail. The information on address is also used to derive statistics on travel-to-work and those moving house in the year before the Census.





How the form is structured

The Census form consists of five parts:

- Section 1** **Table 1:** A list of the names of all people usually living at the address.
- Section 2** **Table 2:** (not compulsory) Names and usual addresses of any visitors on Census Night.
- Section 3** **Household accommodation:** This part has 10 questions which ask about the type of accommodation occupied by the household.
- Section 4** **Household members and their relationships:** Each person will be asked to identify his or her relationship to other members of the household.
- Section 5** **Individual questions:** Each person in the household aged 16 or over will need to answer a maximum of 31 individual questions. An adult should answer questions on behalf of children under 16. Fewer questions will be asked of those aged under 16 or 75 and over, and for those not in work. The Census form has space for six people to record their answers. Extra forms will be issued, if necessary, to larger households.

Details of each question included in the Census are given below, together with the reasons for asking them.



Section 1

Table 1

The person responsible for completing each Census form is required to enter the name of each person who usually lives at the address. This will help the form filler(s) to complete information for all members of the household in the same order throughout the form.



Section 2

Table 2

This table may be used to list the name and address of each visitor who is staying with the household on Census Night. This serves as a double check for the form filler that everyone staying at the address on Census Night is accounted for – either as a household member or a visitor.



Section 3

Household accommodation

The Census is the only source of comparable information on housing at the local level. Its results will identify changes in the state of the housing stock, provide a firm basis for assessing current and future demand and contribute to the allocation of improvement grants.

Type of accommodation occupied by the household

This question will provide information about the type of accommodation, e.g. terraced house, purpose-built flat, caravan.

Is accommodation self-contained? This question identifies whether the household's accommodation is separate from that used by other households in the same building, i.e. its rooms are behind a door which only that household can use.

Number of rooms for sole use by household (excludes bathrooms, toilets, landings and storage rooms). When combined with data on the number and characteristics of people in each household, answers to this question will help show the degree to which accommodation in an area may be overcrowded.

Sole use of bath/shower and toilet Households will be asked whether they have exclusive use of either a bath or shower and toilet. Shared or exclusive use of basic amenities remains a fundamental indicator of the state of the housing stock, and is an important tool in the allocation of resources for housing development and regeneration.

Lowest floor level of accommodation This question will provide a measure of households and people living in potentially unsuitable accommodation, for example, young children, elderly residents, or people with a disability living in high-rise flats.

Accommodation on more than one floor This question determines whether the rooms used by the household are located on more than one floor. This provides further information on the suitability of multi story housing for elderly or disabled residents.

Central heating A question will be asked on the availability of central heating. This will provide useful information about housing standards.

Car/van ownership This question will ask how many cars or vans are owned or available for use by the household. The returns will be used to project future levels of car ownership for studies of road use and to assess the need for future investment in public transport.

Ownership of accommodation and type of landlord These questions will show how much of the housing stock in each area is owner-occupied, owned by Northern Ireland Housing Executive or by other organisations such as housing associations or rented from a private landlord, employer, relative, etc.



Section 4

Household members and their relationships

The Census will include a question on the relationship between members of the household (e.g. husband, grandchild).

This information will identify changes in family/ household composition and the structure of society. It will be used by a range of organisations responsible for meeting the needs of different types of family. Uses include planning accommodation and services for lone parents and the elderly, as well as the assessment of potential demand for housing from young families.



Section 5

Individual questions

Everyone will need to answer about half of the remaining 31 questions on the Census form on topics such as age, sex, religion, ethnic group and health.

Those aged 16 to 74 will need to answer further questions on qualifications, economic activity, occupation and industry of employer.

Basic Population Characteristics One of the most important tasks of the Census is to give an accurate count of the number of people in the country and where they live. This provides the key basis for planning public services and allocating resources.

Sex, date of birth and marital status The number of people classified by sex, age and marital status will facilitate analysis of different types of household, such as those with pensioners, children or single people. The data provide a basis for measuring demographic changes and calculating rates of morbidity, mortality, fertility, marriage and divorce. They will also be used, with other Census data, to estimate the size and age of the work force and the numbers employed in particular occupations or industries.

Country of birth This question will provide information on whether those resident in Northern Ireland were born in England, Wales, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere (including details of the relevant country).

The information provides a basis for estimating the numbers and circumstances of sometimes small immigrant communities who may have particular needs or require special services.

Migration – address one year ago The question will ask the usual address of each person one year ago. If this is different from the current address, statistics will be produced identifying the numbers and characteristics of people and households who have moved from one area to another. The data will show arrivals from outside the UK (but not those leaving) in the year before the Census.

Migration is often a major component of population change in local areas in the period between censuses. The information collected will allow inferences to be made about the level and pattern of migration in other years, and provide details about the characteristics of migrants.

Cultural Characteristics

Irish language This question will only appear on the Northern Ireland Census form, and will ask whether each person understands, speaks, reads or writes Irish.

The Census is the main source of information about Irish speakers and will be used to measure change in the use of the language and to help plan provision for it.

Religion These questions are important in monitoring a range of policies on equality issues. In addition to the question on religious denomination, respondents who indicate 'no religion' will be asked to record the religion in which they were brought up (if any). This information will help provide a more complete picture of community background across Northern Ireland.

Ethnic group For the first time in Northern Ireland the 2001 Census will include a question on ethnic group.

Information derived from the ethnic group question will enable government and health authorities to take account of the special needs of ethnic minority groups in allocating resources and planning programmes. Responses to the question also provide information to monitor possible racial disadvantage and measure changes over time.

Health

Limiting long-term illness This question will ask whether the person has any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits his or her daily activities or the work he or she can do. Combined with data from other questions, it will provide information on the circumstances in which those with long term illness or disability live, as well as details by age, gender and economic circumstances.

The information will be used by both the public and private sectors to measure the need for health and personal social services for such people.

General health This new question will ask the respondents to assess their own health over the preceding 12 months and to indicate whether it was either 'good', 'fairly good', or 'not good'.

This information has been demonstrated to be a good predictor of demands for health services.

Provision of care This new question will ask whether or not the person looks after, or gives any help or support to family, friends, neighbours or others because of long term physical or mental ill-health, disability or problems related to old age.

An increasing amount of unpaid personal help is given to others by carers. Responses to this question will provide detailed information about these carers and the amount of care being given, to inform policy initiatives and resource allocation by health and social services.

Questions to be answered by those aged 16-74 only

Qualifications

Academic and vocational qualifications This question will ask about the level of academic and vocational qualifications achieved, such as GCSEs, A levels or NVQs.

Information from the question will be used to measure levels of educational attainment, progress towards the National Learning Targets, shortfalls in education and training provision, and in monitoring the take-up of government training and education initiatives. It will also help in assessing the reserves of skilled and qualified people.

Employment The Census is the most comprehensive source of labour market information at the local level. It provides data about the ages and occupations of workers in different industries, presented both by area of residence and by work place. Census results also cover other groups including the unemployed, students, people looking after the home and family, the retired, and those with a permanent illness or disability. The Census is also a key source of information about subgroups of the population (e.g. the over-50s, ethnic minorities) for whom sample sizes in other surveys are often too small to provide reliable estimates at the local level.

Another function of the Census is to provide statistics

on the pool of labour and potential reserves of labour in all areas. These are used in drawing up structure plans and by companies making investment decisions.

The majority of questions refer to a person's main employment in the week before the Census, or (for those not currently employed) to their most recent job.

Economic activity in the week(s) before the Census

A number of questions will be asked to determine whether or not, in the week(s) before Census Day, the person was: in paid work; looking for work; available for work; waiting to start a job; retired; a student; looking after the family or home; or unable to work because of permanent sickness or disability

This information will enable basic labour market analyses to be undertaken according to internationally agreed definitions.

Time since last employment A new question will ask those respondents who were not working in the week before the Census to state the year (if any) in which they last worked. If the person has never worked, no further questions will be asked.

This will help determine local differences in the duration of unemployment. It will also provide information on the characteristics of the long-term unemployed.

Questions for those aged 16-74 who have ever worked

Occupational information

This section asks six separate questions which provide a range of information on occupation and industry.

Employment status This question will ask if the person is an employee or self-employed.

Size of work force at place of work This question asks how many people are employed at the person's work place (in the range 1 to 500 or more).

Job title and work done in main (or last main) job

These two questions will ask people for their full job title and for a description of the things done in their main job. The answers given will provide information about the occupational structure of Northern Ireland.

Supervisor status This question will ask if the person

has/had any supervisory responsibilities in his or her job.

The statistics collected from the questions will be used to assess changes in the structure of the labour force and will contribute to studies of occupational mortality.

Business of employer This question will ask the person the nature of the business conducted by their employer. The information will be used, for example, in the production of the Government's regional accounts and other economic indicators and to monitor changes in the structure of industry such as the shift from manufacturing to service industries.

Questions for those aged 16-74 who are currently working.

Work place and journey to work

This section comprises four additional questions on the name and address of work place, means of travel to work and hours worked in main job.

Name of employer The name of the organisation at which the person is working will aid the accurate coding of industry. Responses to these questions will not be used to produce information on named employers.

Address of work place Responses to this question will provide the basis for measuring commuting patterns and for assessing the balance between housing and jobs.

Census statistics on where employed people live and work are used by government departments in defining local travel to work areas and labour markets.

Travel to work This question will ask about how people travel to work, for use in planning roads and public transport services.

Hours usually worked weekly in main job

The information will help give an understanding of changes in working patterns for different occupations and industries. It will be used in monitoring disadvantage, rural policy and regeneration, and transport planning.

Full list of questions - checklist

The full list of questions to be asked on the form is as follows:

- Section 1** List of all usual residents at the address
- Section 2** List of visitors and their addresses
- Section 3** Household accommodation
 - Type of accommodation
 - Whether accommodation is self-contained
 - Number of rooms
 - Availability of bath, shower and toilet
 - Lowest floor level of accommodation*
 - Location of rooms on more than one floor*
 - Availability of central heating
 - Number of cars and vans owned or available for use
 - Ownership of accommodation
 - Type of landlord (for households in rented accommodation)
- Section 4** Household members and their relationships
- Section 5** Individual questions
 - Name
 - Sex
 - Date of birth
 - Marital status
 - Whether school child or student
 - Term-time address for school children/students
 - Knowledge of Irish
 - Religion or religion brought up in*
 - Country of birth
 - Ethnic Group*
 - General health*
 - Provision of unpaid personal care*
 - Long-term illness, health problem or disability
 - Usual address one year ago
 - Academic and vocational qualifications
 - Whether or not in work (economic activity in the week before the Census)
 - Whether or not looking for work
 - Whether or not available for work
 - Whether or not waiting to start a job
 - Whether retired, student, looking after the family or home, permanently sick or with a disability
 - Time since last employment (if relevant)*
 - Whether an employee or self-employed

- Size of work force of employing organisation*
- Job title
- Description of job
- Supervisor status*
- Business of employer at place of work
- Name of employer
- Address of place of work
- Means of travel to work
- Hours usually worked

Topics marked * were not included in the 1991 Census

Other factsheets:

- 1. The Census*
- 2. Why We Need a Census*
- 3. Census 2001 – What's New?*
- 4. Counting Everyone in
– the Big Challenge*
- 5. The Census Organisation*
- 6. Census Jobs*
- 7. The Census and the Law*
- 8. Census Taking Through the Ages*



Contact for further information:

Press enquiries only:
Tel: (028) 9185 8198

Public enquiries only:
Census Customer Services
Northern Ireland Statistics
and Research Agency
McAuley House
2-14 Castle Street
Belfast
BT1 1SA

Tel: (028) 9034 8160

Fax: (028) 9034 8161

email: census.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk
website: www.nicensus2001.gov.uk