

About the Northern Ireland Census 2011

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The Census 2011 took place on 27 March 2011. All households in Northern Ireland were issued with a questionnaire. Questionnaires were received back from households in spring 2011. The Census 2011 was designed to collect statistics about, for example, households, health, migration, length of stay (year of entry to NI), ethnic groups and national identity, religion, qualifications, employment, transport and visitors.

The data to produce the Census 2011 statistics are still being processed, undergoing cleaning, validation and statistical estimation processes to provide the robust statistics that users expect. The Census 2011 fieldwork in Northern Ireland was successful and NISRA is confident that it has reached a broadly similar response rate for that obtained in the 2001 Census.

The Census 2011 statistics will provide a detailed snapshot of the population of Northern Ireland, and through comparison will reveal changes in society since the last census in 2001. The information is used extensively across a number of different sectors to support the development of policy, planning and delivery of services.

Additional information

NISRA is currently evaluating the Northern Ireland Census 2011. A series of evaluation reports will be published during 2012 and 2013. You can also read more about the design and operation of the Census 2011 [here](#).

As part of NISRA's commitment to confidentiality, the census [Privacy Impact Assessment](#) was published in May 2010. The census [Independent Information Assurance Review](#) (IIAR) first phase was published in February 2011 and a final report was published on 14 June 2012.

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About the questions

There were 58 questions on the Census 2011 questionnaire: 14 about the household and its accommodation and 44 for each member of the household.

Questions included those about work, health, national identity, passports held, ethnic group, education, language, religion and marital status. All these things are important in capturing a true snapshot of the population as it stood on census day.

How the Census 2011 questions were chosen

Some questions have been evolving from previous Censuses. Some newer questions were carefully researched and developed in consultation with colleagues in England, Wales, and Scotland, and with the organisations that will use the census statistics.

Census provides answers to some of the fundamental questions about our society and to some very specific questions. These are questions that central and local government, businesses, charities, academics and communities are asking.

Each question was assessed to ensure that:

- there is a high demand for the answer (that the information is really needed and who needs it)
- the answer will provide statistics of high quality
- there is no other way of answering the question (there are no suitable alternative sources of data)
- the question would be acceptable to the public

Only after these, and other, criteria had been met – and after the question had been tested – was it included.

NISRA consulted with many groups and organisations when planning the content of the Census 2011. The questions were developed to ensure the Census 2011 meets as many needs as possible. Where there was a demand for information for new topics, new questions were developed.



Northern Ireland Census 2011 Output Prospectus

About the Northern Ireland Census 2011

Additional information

[Testing](#): The Census 2011 questions were tested and rehearsed to ensure the questions were understood by, and acceptable to, the general public and would generate the statistics users require.

[Legal approval](#): The final content of the questionnaires for Northern Ireland was approved by the Northern Ireland Assembly, through a Census Order and Census Regulations.

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Address register

How and why we developed the census address register

The 2011 NI Census address register was created to try to make sure that every household and managed accommodation in Northern Ireland received a census questionnaire. This register is a list of residential addresses in Northern Ireland and was developed specifically for the Census 2011.

Census Office used, as a starting point, the Land and Property Services' POINTER address product. (The POINTER address database has been created from a series of address datasets maintained by OSNI, Royal Mail and the Valuation & Lands Agency).

Census Office analysed POINTER for accuracy and added value to the register using information received from and assistance provided by the NI Local Government Districts, Royal Mail, NISRA's Central Survey Unit and the Electoral Office.

Additionally field checks were also carried out in some areas to improve the accuracy of the overall register. The process of comparing, matching and updating the register continued into 2011. The aim was to make sure the address register was the most accurate it could be for the post out of Census 2011 questionnaires. Additionally, during Field Operations, Census Enumerators carried out a full address check across all Northern Ireland to identify addresses which were missed from the register or those which were duplicated, mis-classified or did not exist.

The accuracy of the census address register was vital to ensuring all households received a Census 2011 questionnaire. It provided information for the Census 2011 questionnaire tracking system which recorded the questionnaires that were distributed and returned. The system also helped NISRA to identify households which hadn't returned a census questionnaire. These households were visited by census staff.

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What the census is for

The census provides a detailed snapshot of the population and its characteristics. For example the census will show the balance of young and old people, what types of work people do, and what type of housing they live in.

What the statistics are used for

These statistics can be used to identify needs within an area, such as more school places in areas with young children. The statistics also feed into planning decisions like where to build new housing for families, or where to provide more managed care homes for elderly residents.

The census tracks changes in society and provides the relevant details for decisions to be made about what is needed to help tomorrow take shape.

The Census 2011 collected valuable information about the population on Sunday 27 March.

Why a census is the best way to collect information

The census is unique because it collects comparable statistics about the population's characteristics at the Northern Ireland regional and local level. This level of detail is not currently available from any other data sources.

The consistency of the census makes it the best source of statistics available.

There are other administrative data sources, like the electoral register, which could be used to count some of the population. But the census is unique because:

- it asks the same questions of everyone;
- it is confidential; and
- it produces statistics at a local level to truly understand an area's characteristics.

The census snapshot

Northern Ireland has been taking these snapshots since 1926 when the first census was undertaken since the partition of Ireland in 1921. Previous to that Censuses were undertaken on an all- Ireland basis. Ireland's first census was held in 1841 and subsequently was held in Ireland decennially until 1911.

The census is used to look at a local area's characteristics and what needs to be planned for the people who live there. It is the only source of accurate information about local populations which allows comparison between different communities and areas.



Beyond 2011

Currently, the census is the only method available for collecting the range and extent of statistics that the census can provide. NISRA is participating in the Beyond 2011 project, alongside the Office for National Statistics, which has been looking at alternative methods of data collection for future years.

Keeping informed

For general information about the Census 2011 statistics and developments visit the Census pages on the NISRA website: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/census>

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