

## Questions, Questions, Questions: What the 2007 Census Test Will Ask and Why it Will Ask it

### Your role in shaping the Census

Some questions can change your life. 'Will you marry me?' is one. Others, like 'What's for dinner?', may seem important at the time, but don't really make a difference in the long run.

The questions in the 2007 Census Test fall mainly in between. When you receive your Census Test questionnaire, you might wonder why we ask about things such as how many rooms do you have, or how many cars or vans are available for use by members of your household. Yet answers to these questions can provide key information on whether housing is overcrowded and bring about better planning for public transport.

### How we assess the Census Test

We are testing both new and revised questions from 2001. Based on what we find from the Census Test and the questions that have worked well in previous years, the 2011 Census will include:

- some questions from the 2007 Census Test;
- some from the 2001 Census;
- others developed through a programme of small-scale testing.

### How the Census Test questions will work

The Census Test questionnaire contains 12 questions about your household and accommodation. These are then followed by a maximum of 29 questions for each individual (adults and children) living within the household which should be completed by a responsible member of the household (ideally someone aged over 16).

The aim of the questions is to paint as detailed a picture as possible of people, households and housing in Northern Ireland. All questions have been developed following detailed consultation with government, universities, health authorities, the business community and voluntary groups and others with special interests or concerns. To be included in 2011, the questions must meet the needs of several users, be acceptable to the public and produce good quality data.

New questions to be tested in 2007 include:

- Second address - do you have a second address, why do you stay there and how much time do you spend there. This will provide information on the need for services
- Income band to provide information to target programmes aimed at alleviating relative deprivation
- What you consider your national identity to be to promote information on the range of nationalities now living in Northern Ireland
- Language - asking about the languages you can understand, speak, read or write



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## Questions – why they are asked and how are the answers used?

The most important task of the Census is to provide an accurate count of both the population and characteristics of the people in the country and where they live. This information is used to work out how much money is needed to pay for the services that you may use in your local community.

## Why do you need to know about my accommodation?

The Census is the only source of information on housing that can be compared at a local level. Information from questions such as the type of house that you live in, how many rooms you have, if you share any rooms with another household and whether you have central heating, can be put together with data about the number and characteristics of the people in a household to provide information about overcrowding, housing quality and deprivation.

Such statistics inform central and local government about current and future needs for housing and contribute to the allocation of improvement grants.

## Why do you need to know how many cars or vans are available to my household?

This information will be used to assess the demand for public transport, develop transport policies such as parking, consider the need for new/improved roads and deal with congestion.

## Why do you need to know what sex I am, my date of birth and whether I am married or not?

A breakdown of the population by sex, age and marital status means that government can plan according to the different types of household within different areas, such as those with pensioners, children or single people.

The data also provides a base for measuring changes and calculating rates of morbidity, mortality, fertility, marriage, civil partnerships and divorce.

## Why is it so important to know what ethnic group I belong to?

Information from the ethnic group question will allow government to take account of the special needs of ethnic minority groups in providing resources and planning services. Responses to the question provide baseline figures against which the government can monitor that all ethnic groups are treated equally.

## Why do I need to tell you about my qualifications?

Information on qualifications allows government to allocate resources to improve skills in particular areas and plan education services.



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