

## Taking Forward the Content of 2011 Census household questionnaire

### Action for advisory groups

#### Advisory group members are invited to:

- Provide comment on the possible content of the 2011 Census household questionnaire;
- Provide comment on the need for four rather than three pages of individual questions for the 2011 Census; and
- Note the plan to hold further public meetings in early 2007.

### Background

1. Between May and August 2005 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) ran a public consultation on the content of the 2011 Census questionnaire for England and Wales. A higher than anticipated response was received with approximately 2,000 submissions from nearly 500 organisations or individuals across central and local government, academia, business, other groups and the general public. The consultation exercise supported the need for almost all information collected in the 2001 Census. However, strong cases were also made for new topics such as income, language and second residences.
2. Development of questions for the 2007 Test has identified the potential for nearly six pages of questions for individuals were all the requirements of users to be met. Given the basis of the Census funding bid is three pages of individual questions, there is a need to identify the topics that are likely to be taken forward for 2011 so that resources for question development are targeted appropriately. **The ONS is not seeking to make a final decision now on the content of the 2011 household questionnaire but this paper seeks to narrow the uncertainty.** A timetable is included at the end of the paper.

### Three versus four pages of individual questions

3. The current working assumption is for a 24-page household questionnaire with three pages of individual questions for six people (as well as six pages to record household members, relationships between household members, visitors and housing questions). A clear view is needed on the strength of user requirement for a fourth page of individual questions, which would then be assessed against the financial implications and any potential impact on response rates. It is currently estimated that a fourth page of questions would cost an additional £20 million in questionnaire printing, delivery, collection and processing.

## Questionnaire layout

4. The layout of the questionnaire can have an impact on response rates – the less cluttered the questionnaire, the more likely it is that it will be returned. Thus, there is a trade-off between response rates and the number of questions. The current working assumption is of a two-column layout for 2011 with columns of equal width. This allows more flexibility in the placement of questions and makes the form look easier to complete compared to that used in 2001 which used a mixture of two and three-column layout. Initial work on using a similar layout to 2001 has indicated that this would create approximately an extra half column for questions compared with the working assumption for 2011 above, although the form would appear more cluttered.

## Proposal for content of 2011 Census

5. Some options are outlined below on what could possibly be fitted on to three or four pages of individual questions for 2011. It should be noted that this is dependent on being able to reduce the size of some of the questions developed for the 2007 Test and making some compromises on questionnaire layout. It should also be noted that these options do not yet fully take into consideration the required order of some questions.

**Table 1: Content of three pages of individual questions**

<b>Option 1</b>	
Page 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name (1/5 column)</li> <li>• sex (1/16 column)</li> <li>• date of birth (1/12 column)</li> <li>• marital/<i>civil partnership</i> status (1/3 column)</li> <li>• student status &amp; term-time address (1/3 column)</li> <li>• country of birth (1/5 column)</li> <li>• <i>year/month of entry into UK</i> (1/10 column)</li> <li>• ethnicity &amp; <i>national identity</i> (3/4 column)</li> </ul>	Page 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• religion (1/3 column)</li> <li>• Welsh language proficiency in Wales (1/5 column)</li> <li>• health status (1/5 column)</li> <li>• long-term illness/disability (1/8 column)</li> <li>• address one year ago (1/3 column)</li> <li>• qualifications (1/2 column)</li> <li>• workplace address (1/3 column)</li> </ul>
Page 3 : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic activity status questions (4/5 column)</li> <li>• self-employed, occupation, supervisor status, ever worked (2/3 column) (used to derive reduced version of NS-SEC)</li> <li>• transport to place of work (1/3 column)</li> <li>• instructions at end of questions (1/7 column)</li> </ul>	

New topics from 2001 are indicated in italics.

<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>
Income question instead of self-employed, occupation, supervisor status and ever worked questions (used to derive NS-SEC) and the long-term illness/disability question. However, the inclusion of an income question is dependent on the results of testing income in the 2007 Test.	Citizenship and second residence questions instead of qualifications question. However, a second residence question would have to be substantially reduced in size from that used in the 2007 Test.

6. The 2001 topics excluded from both three page options but which could be included on a fourth page are **industry** and **carers**. The user need reported for these topics was not as strong as for other topics included on the three page options (apart from year of entry into UK where a strong requirement has recently emerged in terms of migration statistics). The expressed user need for information on carers was also stronger than for Welsh language proficiency or religion. However, there is a long-standing commitment to include a Welsh language proficiency question within the Census (asked since 1891) while information on religion is needed to facilitate monitoring of equality objectives.
7. Industry is one of the most expensive questions to process and the quality of data from a Census is not as good as from alternative sources. However, there would be reductions in the quality of occupation coding (approximately 7.5%) and NS-SEC (approximately 8%). These figures are based on analysis of 3,000 records from the 2001 Census.

**Table 2: Content of potential fourth page of individual questions**

<b>Option A</b>	<b>Option B</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>income</i> (4/5 column)</li> <li>• <i>industry</i> (1/2 column)</li> <li>• <i>citizenship</i> (1/6 column)</li> <li>• <i>carers</i> (1/3 column)</li> <li>• <i>language</i> (1/5 column)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>income</i> (4/5 column)</li> <li>• <i>industry</i> (1/2 column)</li> <li>• <i>citizenship</i> (1/6 column)</li> <li>• <i>carers</i> (1/3 column)</li> <li>• <i>Welsh frequency of use</i> (1/5 column)</li> </ul>
<b>Option C</b>	<b>Option D</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>income</i> (4/5 column)</li> <li>• <i>industry</i> (1/2 column)</li> <li>• <i>citizenship</i> (1/6 column)</li> <li>• <i>second residence</i> (1/3 column)</li> <li>• <i>language</i> (1/5 column)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>industry</i> (1/2 column)</li> <li>• <i>citizenship</i> (1/6 column)</li> <li>• <i>carers</i> (1/3 column)</li> <li>• <i>language</i> (1/5 column)</li> <li>• <i>second residence</i> (1/3 column)</li> <li>• <i>Welsh frequency of use</i> (1/5 column)</li> </ul>

8. Work is planned to assess alternative methods of obtaining information on second residences such as using a household question to identify a sampling frame for follow-up. It is currently proposed to drop 2001 housing questions on access to bath/shower/toilet and lowest floor level which would allow room for such a question. The option of a second residence question retained within the individual questions will also be examined. However, any question will have to be substantially reduced in size from the questions developed for the 2007 Test.
9. The 2001 topics excluded from all the three or four page options are **hours worked** and **number of employees at the workplace** (used to derive full version of NS-SEC). The user need reported for these topics was not as strong as for other topics. Question testing also showed that respondents answered these questions inaccurately or inconsistently. It is estimated that the loss of information on size of workplace will reduce the quality of NS-SEC by approximately 2% (based on analysis of a 1% sample of 2001 Census data).
10. The potential **new** topics requested by users which are excluded from all the three or four page options include:
  - study place address or travel to place of study

- *nature* of long-term illness/disability (although existence of long-term illness/disability is included)
  - nationality (conceptually different to citizenship or national identity)
  - country of previous residence
  - country(ies) of parents' birth
  - change of country of usual residence
  - place of birth (as distinct from country of birth)
11. The user need reported for these potential new topics was not as strong as for other topics. There was also strong demand for information on sexual orientation but the ONS has significant concerns surrounding the issues of privacy, acceptability, accuracy, conceptual definitions and the effect that such a question could have on the overall response to the Census. Therefore, this requirement is being taken forward elsewhere in the ONS with the intention of developing a question for a household survey.

### **Way forward**

12. A workshop with representatives of key government departments and the Local Government Association took place on 29 September 2006 to discuss an ONS proposal for the content of the 2011 Census in order to:
- Confirm the current view of the priorities of central and local government on what information would be collected from three pages of individual questions in the 2011 Census; and
  - Determine the strength of requirement for information that would not, on current expectations, be included in three pages of individual questions.
13. Representatives of all government departments and the Local Government Association are in the process of making a formal response to the ONS proposal on content for 2011. The provisional view from the workshop indicated that each department would be able to meet their information requirements in three pages of individual questions but that there was no shared agreement across departments on the content of these three pages.
14. Wider public engagement on the ONS proposal for the content of the 2011 Census will be through the Census Advisory Group meetings during November and December, followed by public meetings for all users of census data in early 2007.
15. The comments on the proposal will shape thinking on the content of the 2011 questionnaire and the priorities for question testing during 2007. A provisional view on the content is also needed in July 2007 to feed into the statement of requirements for the suppliers of census services (such as printing, data capture) for the 2011 Census.
16. In keeping with the UK Registrars General's commitment to the principle of harmonisation and production of UK statistics, the priorities that emerge for England and Wales will have to be considered alongside those that emerge in both Northern Ireland and Scotland prior to final decisions being taken.
17. It may be possible to meet any information requirements not met by the Census through the use of other surveys (for example, the Integrated Household Survey) or through follow-up surveys to the Census. For example, a disability survey could be carried out

using the long-term illness/disability question as a sampling frame. However, funding from users who want the information would be required for such follow-up surveys.

18. The timetable for the development of the 2011 household questionnaire is provided below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
2007	Spring	Decision on length of questionnaire for 2011 <sup>1</sup>
	May 13 <sup>th</sup>	Census Test
	Winter	Evaluation of Census Test
	Ongoing	Question development and testing
2008	Spring	Topics for 2009 Rehearsal 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

**ONS**  
**October 2006**

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming CSR funding allocation for Census is announced