

**Scotland's Census 2021
Ethnicity, National Identity and Religion
Topic Event Summary**

May 2017

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Topic Consultation	3
1.2 Topic Consultation Follow-up Events.....	4
2. Ethnicity.....	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 User requirements for 2021	5
3. National Identity.....	6
3.1 Introduction	6
3.2 User requirements for 2021	6
4. Religion.....	7
4.1 Introduction	7
4.2 User requirements for 2021	7
5. Next Steps.....	8

1. Introduction

1.1 Topic Consultation

National Records of Scotland (NRS) invited views on [Scotland's Census 2021 – Topic Consultation](#) (PDF) between 8 October 2015 and 15 January 2016.

The consultation document presented the initial views from NRS on the topics under consideration for collection in the census in 2021, with the aim of encouraging discussion and to help build strong cases to justify the inclusion of topics. The consultation was a first step towards understanding what information users will need. The focus of the consultation was on information required at topic-level, not the detail of the questions that should be asked on the questionnaire.

In total, 113 responses were received to the consultation; 91 of these were from organisations and 22 were from individuals. On 15 February 2016, NRS published the responses of those organisations and individuals who had indicated they were content for us to do so. These responses can be viewed on the [Citizen Space website](#). On 15 August 2016, NRS published the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF). This report presented an overview of the evaluation process used to assess Topic Consultation responses and outlined NRS's response to the consultation, updated view on topics under consideration for collection in Scotland's Census 2021 and NRS's intended next steps.

NRS received a strong response from stakeholders on a range of topics, some of which have not been included in Scotland's Census before. In the introduction to the consultation document, we said:

“Changes to the content of the questionnaire will be considered to address:

- where questions didn't work well in 2011, particularly where there were issues with data quality and/or they didn't support users' requirements for outputs,
- new or emerging policy requirements that cannot be addressed through the use of alternative sources,
- changes in international guidelines (e.g. around the labour market topic) and in legislation.”

The consultation was a key step towards understanding what is needed from the census in 2021. In order to develop the question set that will be recommended for inclusion in the census questionnaire, NRS will work with stakeholders and undertake research, question testing and consideration of acceptable burden. The final decision on the content of Scotland's Census 2021 questionnaire will ultimately be made by the Scottish Parliament, likely in late 2019.

As in previous years, there will be separate censuses in England & Wales and Northern Ireland and the three census offices will work together to develop a set of questions that, wherever possible and necessary, deliver harmonised outputs across the UK.

Consultations on the content for the 2021 Censuses in England & Wales and Northern Ireland also took place last year. On 23 May 2016, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published their response to the consultation for England & Wales¹. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) published their response to the consultation for Northern Ireland later on 30 August 2016².

1.2 Topic Consultation Follow-up Events

In the Topic Consultation, NRS outlined the next steps for each topic or sub-topic where question changes or new questions may be required. For Ethnicity, National Identity and Language this included further discussion with stakeholders in light of a limited number of requests which were made for additional information to be collected and to better understand the exact nature of user need. The census question on Religion is part of this topic area, and is included for further discussion alongside Ethnicity and National Identity.

We recognised that it was vital to ensure that our follow-up discussions included a wide range of stakeholders. Respondents to the Topic Consultation who indicated that they were happy to be contacted by NRS about Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and/or Religion were invited to attend a Topic Consultation follow-up event on 20 April 2017.

The event was also widely promoted through the [Scotland's Census newsletter](#) which has a distribution list of around 2,000 contacts and by the [@NatRecordsScot](#) Twitter feed.

In order to capture the requirements of users who could not attend the event, and to capture further detailed requirements from those who did, a paper (event only) and an online survey was provided. This survey, which asked similar questions to the Topic Consultation, was widely promoted through the Scotland's Census newsletter and was available online until 19 May 2017.

The materials from the [Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion Topic Event](#) held on 20 April 2017 are available on the Scotland's Census website.

This report summarises the further discussion with stakeholders from the Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion Topic Event and the responses gathered through the paper and online survey for the census topics Ethnicity, National Identity and Religion.

The report summarising further discussion with stakeholders about the census topic Language can be found on the [Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion Topic Event](#) page on the Scotland's Census website.

¹ 'The 2021 Census – Assessment of initial user requirements on content for England and Wales: response to consultation' [2021 Census topic consultation - Office for National Statistics](#)

² 'Assessment of the responses received – Response to Consultation' [2021 Census Topic consultation – Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

2. Ethnicity

2.1 Introduction

Ethnic group is one of the most widely used census variables. In the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF) NRS proposed to continue to collect information on ethnic group in 2021, and stated that NRS would consider question testing and research requirements in light of the limited number of requests which were made for the response options to be reviewed and/or additional information to be collected. This work will involve further discussions with stakeholders and consideration of the impact on others who use the question, including Scottish surveys. The following sections summarise the main stakeholders requirements and comments about the Ethnic Group Question from the Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion Topic Event and survey.

2.2 User requirements for 2021

As captured in the [Topic Consultation](#), stakeholders at the event and respondents to the event survey expressed a wide range of uses for ethnic group data from the census including policy development, service planning, research and equality monitoring to meet statutory requirements and perform Equality Impact Assessments. Use of these data in reporting on demographic trends was also highlighted.

Users at the event conveyed their need to obtain data at small area levels, for minority ethnic groups with small population sizes and for multivariate analysis, making the census a particularly important data source.

Some need for UK comparability was expressed, and a requirement for maintaining comparability with the 2011 and earlier censuses was captured.

The majority of stakeholders felt that the information captured in 2011 fully met their needs. Stakeholders who said that the 2011 data only partially met or did not meet their needs communicated their requirements for data about particular sub-groups that were not represented by tick-box response options in the 2011 question, including 'Jewish' and 'Roma', or expressed that particular sub-groups would prefer to identify in particular ways (for example 'Deaf', 'Arab African').

Some stakeholders expressed difficulty in finding and accessing 2011 data, and were unaware of the level of detail published from text-box responses (for example [Table AT_005_2011_Ethnic_Group_\(detailed\)](#) (Excel document)). Some were also concerned about the cost of commissioning specific multivariate tables and said this limited their access to census data.

A number of stakeholders highlighted concerns about the complexity of asking a question about ethnicity, the meaning of 'ethnic group' and the subjective nature of responses. Some stakeholders also highlighted concerns about the 2011 high level categories ('White', 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups', 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British', 'African', 'Caribbean or Black' and 'Other ethnic group') including the mix of

colour, geographical and cultural terms, the order of the categories, the differing number of tick-box response options under each high level category and the difficulty in capturing respondents with complex ethnic diversities.

Stakeholders also noted that the current high level categories “encourage the use in public policy of a binary categorisation” and that there is a lack of consistency in the groupings of these categories used across organisational analysis.

However, stakeholders were typically positive about the separation of the ‘African’ and ‘Caribbean or Black’ categories. They were also positive about the inclusion of ‘...Scottish’ and ‘...British’ in the response options and Asian category (i.e. ‘Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British’).

User need was identified for having separate tick-box responses for ‘Scottish’ and ‘Other British’ under the White category, however, some stakeholders communicated that there were complaints about the other British countries not having individual tick-box response options for each country.

Some stakeholders expressed interest in obtaining more detailed data about ethnic groups within the tick-box response options, particularly within ‘African, African Scottish or African British’.

3. National Identity

3.1 Introduction

Information about national identity complements information about ethnicity. In the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF) NRS proposed to continue to collect information on national identity in 2021. The following sections summarise the main stakeholder requirements and comments about the National Identity Question from the Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion Topic Event and survey.

3.2 User requirements for 2021

As captured in the [Topic Consultation](#), stakeholders at the event and in the event survey reported a more limited use of data from the National Identity Question than from Ethnic Group. The most common use of the data captured at this event and in the survey was service planning and delivery. Other uses included equality monitoring, policy development, resource allocation and research.

Some stakeholders expressed a requirement for obtaining this information at small area levels and for small population sub-groups. Many stakeholders use the data in multivariate analysis with other census variables, particularly ethnic group, religion and country of birth.

Some need was identified for UK comparability, while stronger requirements were identified for continuity with the 2011 Census.

Most stakeholders were content with the data from the 2011 Census. Some concern was expressed about the ordering of the response options and the different wording between the question asked in Scotland and the question asked in the rest of the UK.

4. Religion

4.1 Introduction

Information on religion is widely used. In the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF) NRS proposed to continue to collect information on religion in 2021. This section summarises the main stakeholder requirements and comments about the Religion Question from the Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion Topic Event and survey.

4.2 User requirements for 2021

As captured in the [Topic Consultation](#), a range of uses of religion data were identified by stakeholders at the event and in the event survey. Service planning and delivery, and equality monitoring were the most common uses identified at this event, with other uses including policy development, resource allocation and research.

Many stakeholders expressed a need to obtain data at small area level or for multivariate analysis with other census variables, including demographics (for example age, sex and family size), ethnic group, country of birth, employment, economic activity and general health.

Some requirement for both UK comparability and continuity with the 2011 or earlier censuses was identified.

Many stakeholders felt that the data collected in the 2011 Census fully met their needs. Those for whom the data only partially met requirements expressed issues with the wording of the question or noted that the response options available in 2011 did not meet their needs.

There were concerns from some stakeholders that asking about 'belonging' excluded individuals who do not currently 'belong to' or attend a place of worship but would 'identify' with a religion, religious denomination or body and therefore respond differently if the question was worded differently. Some stakeholders expressed an interest in capturing data about 'belief' or 'identifying with' rather than 'belonging to'. However, issues about the type of data captured by a question asking about 'belief' were raised. Other stakeholders did not think that the wording made a difference to the way respondents answered the question.

The Pagan Federation requested that a 'Pagan' tick-box response option be added to the Religion Question for 2021.

Some concern was expressed by some stakeholders about difficulties for non-denominational Christian respondents when provided only with denominations.

Some stakeholders also questioned whether non-religious groups should be captured by this question, for example Atheists or Humanists.

5. Next Steps

NRS are continuing to engage with stakeholders in planning for Scotland's Census 2021. NRS will be updating users on progress as this process continues.

More information and details about upcoming events can be found on the [Scotland's Census website](#), by subscribing to the [Scotland's Census newsletter](#) and following us on Twitter [@NatRecordsScot](#).