

Dwelling type

2001 Census question

5 Mark the space by the one that best describes this dwelling.

a detached house or town house (NOT joined to any other)

a house or flat joined to one other house/flat

a house or flat joined to two or more other houses/flats

a house or flat joined to a business or shop

bach, crib or holiday home

other, such as yacht, etc. Print what it is:

Is the building as a whole:

one or two storeys

three or more storeys

6 If this is a private dwelling such as your family's house or a council flat, go to **8**

7 If this is a non-private dwelling, such as one of those listed in this question, mark the space by the one that best describes it.

hotel, motel or guest house

home for the elderly

other such as boarding house, public hospital, etc. Print what it is:

Background

'Dwelling type' information was collected in field books by collectors in 1996. However, the 'dwelling type' question was returned to the dwelling form for respondents to answer for the 2001 Census (as per 1991 and previously).

Redeveloping the 'dwelling type' questions was a high priority for the 2006 Census. The factors influencing redevelopment were:

1. Data quality issues: Item non-response and response error in 2001 suggested that the private/non-private dwelling distinction was confusing for some respondents, as evidenced by respondents in private dwellings answering the Non-private dwelling question. This raised concerns among internal and external data users about data quality.
2. Review of the standard classification: This review was driven by the need to distinguish more clearly between the structure and function of dwellings, and by real world change within New Zealand's housing stock, for example the rise of inner-city apartment living. These changes have made it increasingly difficult to

collect housing information reliably and consistently in a self-administered questionnaire. There were also some new information requirements, such as 'multiple structures' and 'number of storeys' data.

Development objectives/plan

The objectives identified for the 2006 development were to:

- enhance data quality by improving respondent comprehension of key concepts
- ensure the questions meet the classification
- investigate using more 'simple task' questions for complex concepts
- examine placement of questions on the questionnaire.

To meet these objectives a comprehensive programme of testing was conducted including cognitive testing, analysis of data from field tests and consultation with key stakeholders.

Cognitive testing

The cognitive testing programme was conducted between April 2003 and May 2005 with respondents of varied age, gender and ethnicity. Interviewers observed respondents' form-filling behaviour and asked a series of follow-up questions.

The 'dwelling type' questions were redeveloped and tested during all rounds of the cognitive testing programme.

Cognitive testing results

Rounds one and two: April and May 2003 and June to December 2003

The 'dwelling type' questions generally worked well, particularly those with formats similar to 2001:

- The dwelling structure question was answered well by respondents and no particular problems were found with comprehension of key concepts in the response options ('stand alone house', 'house not joined to any other', 'mobile dwelling', 'other').
- The 'bach, crib, or holiday home' indicator worked as intended. The majority of respondents thought a 'bach, crib or holiday home' was defined by the amount of time spent there, ie somewhere that you do not live permanently. However, in the case of a small number of respondents who were living in a motor camp permanently, most incorrectly marked 'yes' to this question. One respondent was not sure whether the 'bach, crib or holiday home' question should be answered for the same dwelling they had answered for in the dwelling structure question.
- The 'dwellings joined to a business or shop' question appeared to be answered well, with most respondents giving the example of a dairy with the owner's home attached. However, respondents who considered business in a wider sense were unsure how to answer, for example a home-based Internet business. Some thought the question extended to include these situations, and some did not as they interpreted the word 'joined' in a strictly physical sense.
- In round two, respondents were asked to consider (hypothetically) how they would answer this question if they had a home business. About half the respondents answered 'yes' and gave reasons such as, 'it is joined to the house', 'if run from a garage' and 'if I worked from it'. Respondents who answered 'no'

gave reasons such as 'because joined means structural', 'because an office at home is not the same thing as a dwelling attached to a shop' and 'this would be more like a dairy'.

- Comprehension of 'semi-detached' was mixed, with most respondents mentioning two or more dwellings joined by a garage or sharing a wall, while a smaller number of respondents thought this concept included sleepouts, dwellings with shared front access, or other non-joined structures.

Testing highlighted some issues around the understandability and fitness for use of the newer 'dwelling type' questions:

- Those with single-storey houses found the 'number of storeys' question straightforward and when questioned, most respondents tested said they would not count split levels as separate storeys. However some respondents equated storeys with levels and were unsure whether to count basements and under-house garages.
- The 'private dwelling in a motor camp' question proved problematic with diverse and often incorrect interpretation of the concept 'private dwelling', and many respondents read only as far as 'Is this a private dwelling....?' and answered 'yes', even when they did not live in a motor camp.
- Respondent understanding and answering of the 'multiple structure dwellings' question was inconsistent. Those living in single-structure dwellings (stand-alone houses) generally found this question straightforward. However, some respondents had difficulty answering. For example, there was confusion about garages (if only used sometimes); granny flats – distinguishing between a separate flat and a sleepout; rooms used on census night (which are not usually used); and the word 'building' in the question suggesting another dwelling. Comprehension of this question appeared to rely heavily on respondents reading the instruction boxes (count, don't count), although some respondents also found the instructions unclear.

Substantial redevelopment took place. For example with the problem of diverse and often incorrect interpretation of the concept 'private dwelling in a motor camp', the indicator was moved to the office-use box for use by collectors only. The dwelling structure question response options were amended by:

- changing the 'stand alone dwelling' category to 'house or townhouse (NOT joined to any other)'
- changing the 'joined dwelling' category to 'house, unit or apartment joined to one other house, unit or apartment'. This response option was repeated but asked about dwellings that were 'joined to two or more other' dwellings
- removing the 'semi-detached' and 'mobile dwelling' response options
- changing the 'other' category examples to include mobile dwellings. Respondents who marked 'other' were routed past the number of storeys question.

The use of simpler language and reducing the routing options were trialled in the June 2004 field test.

Testing had highlighted difficulties with the 'multiple structure'; 'Is this dwelling joined to a business or shop?'; and 'Is this dwelling a bach, crib or holiday home?' questions. After the June field test it was decided to remove these questions from the 2006 Census.

Some of the response options in the dwelling structure question were amended to better reflect the classification. The two response categories asking about dwellings joined to one, or two or more other dwellings were collapsed. Respondents were only asked whether their dwelling was joined to one or more other dwellings. 'Moveable dwelling, for example caravan, boat, tent, etc' was reinstated as a listed response option, and the examples provided for the 'other' category were removed but respondents were asked to print what the dwelling was.

The two remaining 'dwelling type' questions were tested in rounds three and four. These were the dwelling structure and number of storeys questions.

Round three: March to July 2004

Testing found that the 'dwelling type' questions were generally well understood.

Dwelling structure question

Most respondents tested were able to identify their dwelling structure correctly. Only two respondents marked the 'other' category. One respondent wrote in 'apartment' having missed the word 'apartment' in the second response option. The other respondent who marked 'other' wrote in 'One house split'.

No respondents who lived in single or stand-alone apartments located within a shopping complex or office block were tested so it is not known how these people would answer this question. These respondents can mark 'other' and write in a response. However, the preference is for them to mark 'house or townhouse (NOT joined to any other)'.

Number of storeys question

Testing highlighted some comprehension issues, particularly for those who lived in split level or architecturally designed homes. A few of these respondents were unsure how to answer. Even though many respondents did not know what the category 'none of these' was for, it did not prevent them answering this question correctly.

To provide clarity for respondents, an embedded instruction box saying 'DON'T count split levels, mezzanine floors or levels below ground' was added to the number of storeys question and was tested during round four.

Round four: November 2004 to May 2005

Dwelling structure question

As found in round three, most respondents tested were able to correctly identify the structure of their dwelling from the list of tick-box categories. Of the three respondents tested who lived in dwellings attached to dairies, all of them wrote in the text boxes to describe their dwelling, but only one also marked the indicator 'other'.

Number of storeys question

The majority of respondents tested said they saw the instruction box 'DON'T count split levels, mezzanine floors or levels below ground'. However, one respondent, when asked what they thought the category 'none of these' was for, said 'if the building is on split levels then it's none of these'.

As found in round three, the 'none of these' category was not well understood by many respondents; however, it did not stop them answering the question correctly.

Field test results

Field test: June 2004

The small sample size of the June test made it difficult to conclude anything concrete from the data although issues were raised. Cognitive testing had also highlighted difficulties with some of the 'dwelling type' questions and after this field test three questions were removed.

Dress rehearsal: 8 March 2005

It was very difficult to compare the dress rehearsal data with 2001 data as the dwelling structure question used had different response options. The majority of respondents marked the 'house or townhouse (not joined to any other)' response option in dress rehearsal.

It was not possible to compare the dress rehearsal data with 2001 data for the number of storeys question as the question was different in 2001. In the dress rehearsal the majority of respondents answered 'one storey', with a much smaller proportion marking 'two or three storeys'. There was a low proportion of respondents who answered 'four or more storeys', although this may have been due to a lack of large apartment buildings as there were very few main urban areas in the dress rehearsal sample.

After the dress rehearsal, the instruction box in the number of storeys question was amended because cognitive testing had highlighted that some respondents interpreted the instructions to mean that homes with split levels should not be counted at all. Therefore, to provide clarity for respondents, the 'don't count' instructions were amended to read:

DON'T count as a separate storey

- mezzanine floors
- split levels
- levels below ground

Changes made for the 2006 Census

4 Mark the space that best describes this dwelling.

house or townhouse (NOT joined to any other)

house, townhouse, unit or apartment joined to one or more other houses, townhouses, units or apartments

moveable dwelling, for example *CARAVAN, BOAT, TENT*, etc

or other. Print what it is:

5 Is this building as a whole:

DON'T count as a separate storey

- mezzanine floors
- split levels
- levels below ground

one storey

two or three storeys

four or more storeys

or none of these

Mark your answer like this:

OFFICE USE

private dwelling in a motor camp

hotel, motel, guest accommodation

residential care for older people

other non-private dwelling. Print what it is:

For 2006 there will be two 'dwelling type' questions. The dwelling structure question has amended response options better reflecting the information needed, and provides clarity for respondents.

The number of storeys question is a new stand-alone question.

Non-private dwellings will be collector-identified and an office-use box has been placed near the top of the dwelling form for this purpose.

Future development

Analysis of 2006 Census data will determine whether data quality has improved and will help inform any redevelopment decisions for 2011.