

Tenure questions

The broad topic of tenure covers questions relating to:

- dwellings held in family trusts
- ownership of dwelling
- sector of the landlord
- rent paid.

Dwellings held in family trusts

2001 Census question

The 2001 Census did not include a stand-alone question on this topic. However, information on trusts was collected as part of the 'sector of the landlord' question (see page 63 of this report).

Background

Five questions from the 1996 and 2001 Censuses covered the broad topic of tenure. In the 2001 Census revisions had been made to the wording of these questions to address data problems identified in the 1996 Census. However, new data quality concerns were identified in the build-up to 2006 and redevelopment for this series of questions focused on assessing and improving data quality.

As part of this redevelopment work new questions were introduced to collect better information on homes held in family trusts. Data from the 2001 Census was believed to have been an undercount of homes held in trust.

Development objectives/plan

The objective identified for the 2006 development was to design a family trust question that would collect reliable information on the number of homes held in trust.

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 respondent form-filling behaviour and asked a series of follow-up questions.

Questions on dwellings held in family trusts were developed and tested during all rounds of the cognitive testing programme.

Cognitive testing results

Round one: April and May 2003

During this round of testing, the 2001 questions on tenure were used without change. Results showed that respondents would answer the questions on dwelling ownership inconsistently and incorrectly if they had homes in family trusts. Irrespective of their

legal situation, some respondents would answer that they 'owned' their home, while others would answer that they did not.

Round two: June to December 2003

A new question on family trusts was developed to address the problem found in round one. As the question appeared first in a series of tenure questions, all respondents were expected to answer the question. Round two testing, therefore, focused heavily on the understandability of this question for respondents in all tenure categories.

Results indicated that the new question generally worked well, and the clear majority of respondents were able to understand and answer the question correctly.

Round three: March to July 2004

Testing in round three was a repeat of the testing undertaken in round two. Results were consistent with earlier findings and helped confirm that the new trust question was working as expected.

However, after consultation with stakeholders an additional question was added during this round to establish whether mortgages were being paid by the trust. The extra question appeared to be understood well, but further complicated the routing required throughout this section of the form.

The forms development team had added features to the form which aimed to make the routing instructions more noticeable to respondents. Such features included changes to the font, colour and size of the routing instructions. Text instructions were also included asking respondents to look for routing instructions once they had answered the question. However, testing showed that a significant number of respondents continued to route incorrectly when answering the tenure questions.

Round four: November 2004 to May 2005

In the final round of testing, the forms development team tested alternative terminology to address concerns raised by some stakeholders that the term 'held' was vague and ambiguous. To investigate this issue the legal terms 'settler' and 'beneficiary' were tested. However, results showed that respondents misunderstood these terms and the earlier version of the question was consequently reinstated for the dress rehearsal.

Routing errors continued to be a problem in this round.

Field test results

Field test: March 2004

A split-test format was used to test new routing instructions in the March test. This test involved fielding two different versions of the census forms. In version A the 2001 format was used. In version B new routing instructions were added to the questions. Findings from this test indicated that new routing instructions had helped improve routing accuracy. Ninety-seven percent of respondents routed correctly when answering the form using the new format, compared to 93 percent routing correctly when answering the form using the 2001 format.

Dress rehearsal: 8 March 2005

Response distributions in the dress rehearsal were examined and compared with previous years. Data appeared to be reasonable and suggested the question was working as intended.

A lack of attention to skipping instructions continued to be a problem in the dress rehearsal, although the number of routing errors reduced overall.

Changes made for the 2006 Census

7 Look for the 'go to' instruction after you answer the question.
Do you, or anyone else who lives here, hold this dwelling in a family trust?

yes → go to **8**

no → go to **9**

don't know → go to **9**

See the Guide Notes if you need more information

8 Does that trust make mortgage payments for this dwelling?

yes → go to **14**

no → go to **13**

For 2006 there are two new family trust questions in the topic of tenure. Family trust information has been included in the Guide Notes to provide clarity for respondents, and a reminder bubble has been added to the form.

Future development

As ownership patterns become more complex and the alternatives to personal home ownership increase (including the use of Loss Attributing Qualifying Companies), tenure information is becoming increasingly difficult to collect in a self-administered questionnaire. Although the 'family trust' questions appeared to be working relatively well throughout the redevelopment programme, it is recommended that these questions be further reviewed in the 2011 development. In particular, this review might focus on the following:

- validating 2006 counts against alternative datasets to assess data quality
- investigating alternative methods for collecting this information.