

Māori descent and iwi

2001 Census question

16 Are you descended from a Māori (that is, did you have a Māori birth parent, grandparent or great-grandparent, etc)?

yes, go to **17**
 no, go to **18**
 don't know, go to **18**

Remember to mark your answer like this:

17 Do you know the name(s) of your iwi (tribe or tribes)?

yes. Print the name and home area, rohe or region of your iwi below:
 no, go to **18**

A list of iwi can be found in the Help Notes.

Iwi

Rohe (iwi home area)

Iwi

Rohe (iwi home area)

Iwi

Rohe (iwi home area)

Iwi

Rohe (iwi home area)

Iwi

Rohe (iwi home area)

Background

Māori descent is collected as a statutory requirement under the Electoral Act 1993 and is used to assist in setting electoral boundaries for Māori seats in Parliament. In 2001 there was a higher non-response rate for the 'Māori descent' question than in 1996.

High item non-response for the 'Māori descent' question also impacts on the quality of iwi information, as Māori descent is considered a prerequisite for obtaining a valid iwi response.

Development objectives/plan

The objectives identified for the 2006 development were to:

- reduce item non-response rates and improve data quality for both the 'Māori descent' and 'iwi' questions
- facilitate correct routing between the 'Māori descent' and 'iwi' questions
- highlight the 'yes/no/don't know' response options to help respondents see them.

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. For the 'Māori descent' and 'iwi' questions, testing focused heavily on respondents of Māori descent. These questions were redeveloped and tested during all rounds of the cognitive testing programme.

Cognitive testing results

Round one: April and May 2003

In the first round of testing the 2001 'Māori descent' question was revised to ask respondents to select one of two statements: either 'I am descended from a Māori' or 'I am NOT descended from a Māori'.

Testing throughout round one suggested that respondents generally had a very good understanding of the 'Māori descent' question. When asked 'what did you understand the words 'descended from' to mean?' respondents typically made mention of ancestors, family trees or blood ties.

However, testing also showed that some non-Māori respondents thought the question did not apply to them, and that it should be answered by Māori respondents only. This was particularly apparent when testing those who had recently settled in New Zealand. These respondents commonly failed to answer the 'Māori descent' question.

Routing instructions may also have contributed to the problem, as a number of respondents followed the correct path but failed to mark their answer. This may have occurred because their attention was diverted to the routing task, or they may have simply read the question as a 'statement' that did not require an answer. Additionally, several respondents completely missed reading the routing instruction, thereby failing to route correctly when required.

Round two: June to December 2003

For this round of testing the 'Māori descent' question was moved to the top of the column on page two so that it would be clearly visible to respondents.

Improvements were also made to routing instructions to make them more noticeable to respondents. These included changes to the font, colour and size of the instructions. Prompts were also included at the beginning of the question, asking respondents to look for routing instructions once they had answered. For both the 'Māori descent' and 'iwi questions', further prompts were added into the instruction text reminding respondents to mark their answer before routing.

In testing it was found that many respondents continued to miss out these questions because they thought they were not applicable. However, those respondents who did answer the questions were more inclined to route correctly and remembered to mark their answers.

Rounds three and four: March to July 2004 and November 2004 to May 2005

The 'yes/no' format of the 'Māori descent' question (as used in 2001) was reinstated for rounds three and four. This format required less reading so the routing instructions were more visible.

The position of the question was changed to come later in the series of questions, appearing immediately after the major routing point in the questionnaire (where overseas residents are directed to the end of the form). The aim of this was to ensure that respondents routing from page one would know they had routed correctly before reaching the 'Māori descent' and 'iwi' questions.

Testing found that respondents generally understood and answered the question as required. However, some respondents still failed to provide an answer before routing, and a number made comments suggesting they felt the question was one for Māori only.

Respondents routing to the 'iwi' question sometimes forgot to mark the iwi indicator, and appeared to be distracted by the write-in task.

Adding an instruction box alerting respondents to the iwi list contained in the Guide Notes appeared to be effective, and a number of respondents asked to see the Guide Notes in testing.

Field test results

Field test: November 2003

Item non-response rates for 'Māori descent' in the November test showed some improvement when compared with data from 2001. However, it should be noted that item non-response rates are usually lower for tests than for the census proper as people have already volunteered to participate. Therefore, it was difficult to tell if the apparent improvement was real due to the new routing instructions or if it was a result of the nature of the test.

Field test: March 2004

A split-test format was used to test new routing instructions in this test. It 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 question. Findings from this test indicated that routing instructions helped improve response rates to the 'Māori descent' and 'iwi' questions, with more respondents routing correctly when using the new format compared with those using the 2001 format.

For 2006 the 'Māori descent' question has been repositioned on the form and a prompt has been included at the beginning of the question directing respondents to look for routing instructions. The salience of the routing instructions has been improved with the use of colour and arrows, and an additional prompt has been included encouraging respondents to mark their answer. A reminder that the iwi list can be found in the Guide Notes has also been added.

Future development

Analysis of the 2006 Census data will determine whether the non-response rate has decreased and data quality has improved. This analysis will inform any redevelopment work required for 2011.