

## Number of motor vehicles

### 2001 Census question

**17** How many motor vehicles (not counting motor bikes or scooters), do the people who live here have available for their use?

DON'T count

- vehicles that belong to visitors
- vehicles that this household borrows occasionally from another household
- vehicles that can be used ONLY for work
- motor bikes, motor scooters

none

1

2

3 or more

### Background

This question is used to gather information about the 'number of motor vehicles' available to a household and has not been redeveloped since the 1996 Census.

During the 2006 content consultation round it was suggested that the 'number of motor vehicles' category be amended to include either additional response categories of 'four' and 'five or more motor vehicles', or space for respondents to state the number of motor vehicles available per household. A change to the highest 'number of motor vehicles' category has the potential to measure increasing vehicle ownership and its impact on demand for road space and congestion. The feasibility of this amendment was considered during the development of the 2006 Census questionnaire.

### Development objectives/plan

The objectives identified for the 2006 development were to trial replacing the various number category response options with a write-in box for respondents to state the 'number of motor vehicles' available per household. This would:

- increase the amount of information collected about the 'number of motor vehicles' available per household
- reduce the amount of space needed on the form.

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.

The 'number of motor vehicles' question was redeveloped and tested during rounds two, three and four of the cognitive testing programme.

## **Cognitive testing results**

### **Round two: June to December 2003**

In this round, the tested question required respondents to write in the 'number of motor vehicles' they had access to instead of ticking a listed number response option.

Overall, the vast majority of respondents tested did not appear to have any problems counting the number of motor vehicles, and their responses were clearly written in. However, one respondent wrote in '00' instead of marking the response option 'none', while another respondent missed the 'DON'T count vehicles that can be used ONLY for work' instruction.

Most respondents said they saw the words 'not counting motor bikes or scooters' in brackets and read the DON'T count list. No respondents questioned why this instruction was repeated.

There was a range of responses about what a motor scooter was, although generally respondents understood the concept reasonably well. Changing the question did not appear to effect respondents' ability to answer correctly.

### **Round three: March to July 2004**

For this round references to scooters were removed from the brackets in the question and the DON'T count instructions.

As found in round two, results indicated that the removal of these words did not appear to effect respondents' ability to answer correctly, although only a small number of tests were undertaken.

All respondents tested clearly wrote in the number of motor vehicles. However, one respondent said that counting the number of vehicles could be confusing in relation to using a work vehicle for private use. The vast majority of respondents said they read or noticed the DON'T count list.

### **Round four: November 2004 to May 2005**

For round four the numbered category response options were returned to the form and stacked vertically. A write-in response option was also included for respondents to record three or more motor vehicles. The response options were 'none', '1', '2', or 'print number of motor vehicles'.

The majority of respondents tested in this round answered as intended and virtually all of them said they read or noticed the DON'T count instructions. Results confirmed the findings from the previous rounds that changing the question did not appear to effect respondents' ability to answer correctly.

## Field test results

### Dress rehearsal: 8 March 2005

Analysis of the dress rehearsal data showed that there was a:

- slightly higher percentage of dwellings with more than two motor vehicles available for use compared with 2001
- slightly lower percentage of dwellings with one or no vehicles available for use compared with 2001
- the number of 'not stated' responses was similar to 2001.

The write-in response option did appear to have caused some issues, with a small proportion of people writing in numbers that were already available on the form as listed response options.

## Changes made for the 2006 Census

**18** How many motor vehicles (not counting motorbikes) do the people who live here have available for their use?

**DON'T count**

- vehicles that belong to visitors
- vehicles that this household borrows occasionally from another household
- vehicles that can be used **ONLY** for work
- motorbikes

none  
 1  
 2  
 or  print number of motor vehicles

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For 2006 the response option '3 or more' has been replaced with the write-in response option 'print number of motor vehicles'.

The word 'scooter' has been removed from the brackets and DON'T count instruction list.

## Future development

Analysing the 2006 data will identify how useful the extra information captured was and whether the use of write-in answer boxes caused any data quality problems.