

## Sector of the landlord

### 2001 Census question

**10** Who owns this dwelling?

- private person
- private trust
- Local Authority or City Council
- Housing New Zealand
- other state-owned corporation or state-owned enterprise, or government department or ministry
- a business or other organisation
- don't know

### Background

Five questions from the 1996 and 2001 Censuses covered the broad topic of tenure, including one to identify the landlord. 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.

### Development objectives/plan

The objectives identified for the 2006 development were to:

- improve the quality of the 'sector of the landlord' data
- facilitate correct routing through the series of tenure questions.

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 'sector of the landlord' question was redeveloped and tested during all rounds of the cognitive testing programme.

## **Cognitive testing results**

### **Round one: April and May 2003**

In round one the 2001 'sector of the landlord' question was tested without change. During testing a notable number of respondents reported that they found it difficult to answer the question because they were unaware of their landlord's financial arrangements. These respondents were unable to say whether the property was held by their landlord privately as part of a family trust, or as part of a business operation. Generally respondents preferred to 'guess' (usually selecting 'private person') than to select the 'don't know' option.

These results confirmed that it is difficult to collect accurate information on the 'sector of the landlord' from proxies. Findings cast some doubts on the quality of data collected for the 'private person or trust' and the 'business or other organisation' categories.

### **Rounds two, three and four: June to December 2003, March to July 2004 and November 2004 to May 2005**

Identical questions were tested in all remaining rounds of cognitive testing with similar results; therefore, results are discussed jointly.

For these rounds of testing the three categories of 'private person', 'private trust' and 'business or other organisation' were combined into a single category. Results from testing indicated that respondents were more readily able to provide an answer and felt confident that it was correct.

In these rounds a 'detection' statement was also added to the question to facilitate routing. This strategy involved the addition of the words 'If nobody here owns it' to the beginning of the question, so that respondents who owned their homes would be alerted to their mistake when reading the question. This statement had been used in the 1996 Census.

Testing confirmed that respondents would pause and review their previous answers if they came to the 'sector of the landlord' question via incorrect routing. However, because respondents were being observed by an interviewer it is possible that they paid greater attention to the routing task than they would have under normal conditions.

## **Field test results**

### **Field test: November 2003**

Given the significant changes to the series of tenure questions, response distributions for this question were not comparable with 2001. However, results from this test showed that significantly fewer people answered the 'sector of the landlord' question when they should not have. Only a small percentage of respondents had routed incorrectly in November compared with a much higher number in 2001.

**Field test: March 2004**

A split test format was used to test the 'detection' statement 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 a 'detection statement' was included to alert respondents to routing errors. Results from this test were influenced by changes to routing formats in earlier questions. However, findings tended to suggest that this new strategy had helped improve routing accuracy. Fewer respondents who owned their own home provided answers to this question when completing the version of the form with the new wording, compared with those completing the version with the 2001 wording.

**Dress rehearsal: 8 March 2005**

The response distributions obtained for this question were not strictly comparable with 2001 results as a new question was included on the dress rehearsal form to collect information about properties held in trust. However, distributions approximately matched those observed in 2001.

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

**Other testing**

Testing the 'sector of the landlord' question also involved some qualitative testing using eye-tracking software to understand how respondents read and followed routing instructions. The number of tests conducted was small and therefore results were indicative only. However, a comparison of formats between the new and old versions of the question suggested that respondents were more likely to stop and adjust when completing a form that included the 'detection' statement.

**Changes made for the 2006 Census**

10 If nobody who lives here owns this dwelling, who owns it?

- private person, trust or business
- Local Authority or City Council
- Housing New Zealand Corporation
- other state-owned corporation or state-owned enterprise, or government department or ministry
- don't know

For 2006 the first response option is a combination of three categories used in 2001 – 'private person', 'private trust' and 'business or other organisation'. A 'detection' statement has been added to the beginning of the question to provide clarity for respondents and to help respondents who do not follow the routing instructions self-correct.

**Future development**

Analysis of 2006 data will determine if any further redevelopment work is required for the 2011 Census.