

Census Advisory Group Meeting

Tuesday, 12 December 2017, CSO Swords, 10am

Attendees

Richie McMahon, CSO

Deirdre Cullen, CSO

Cormac Halpin, CSO

Dermot Corcoran, CSO

Kathleen Hanney, CSO

Eileen Murphy, CSO

Brendan Murphy, CSO

Declan Smyth, CSO

Marcella Joyce, CSO

Sinéad McGarvey, CSO

Aideen Sheehan, Dept. of Transport, Tourism & Sport

Brid Ní Chonghaile, Dept. of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht

Nicola Tickner, Dept. of Children & Youth Affairs

Diarmuid Reidy, Dept. of Education and Skills

Alan Cahill, Dept. of Health

George Hussey, Dept. of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Cormac Nolan, Dept. of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Sarah O'Halloran, Dept. of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Martina Shaughnessy, Dept. of the Taoiseach

Barry Colleary, National Transport Authority

Dr. Conor O'Toole, Economic and Social Research Institute

Laurence Bond, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

David Howard, Irish Business and Employers Confederation

Dr. Grainne Collins, National Disability Authority

Cllr. Damien Geoghegan, Association of Irish Local Government

Sandy Fitzpatrick, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

Apologies

Rob Kitchin, AIRO (NUI Maynooth)

Peter Rigney, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Una Ní Dhubhghaill, Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration

John Manning, Pobal

Jasmina Behan, Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform

Welcome/Overview

Richie McMahon on behalf of CSO welcomed everybody and thanked them for taking the time to attend. Richie outlined the backdrop to the Census, and how the consultation and the census pilot work together as a process. He also described the regulatory and space constraints which affect the design of the Census form and advised that the Census is not suited to all topics. Deirdre Cullen spoke in general terms about the upcoming census before suggesting that CSO are inclined to retain the 3 page per person, 6 person format. Deirdre also spoke of the challenges facing Census 2021 and stressed that the census is a point in time. She also pointed out the tension between retaining comparability of data over time versus updating a question.

Housing Questions H1 – H11

H1 (Type of Accommodation)

CSO suggested in order to save space, this question could be dropped from the form and the information captured by the enumerator in the field by observation. There was general agreement with this position.

Action: CSO to further the above proposal and proceed without the question in the Pilot

H2 (Year Built)

This information was traditionally collected for National Accounts purposes within CSO. It is also an EU regulatory requirement. CSO suggested this information could potentially be captured from a combination of existing Census 2016 data, administrative data and Geodirectory data on new dwellings. This approach will require further development by CSO but may allow the question to be dropped in 2021. There was a discussion and some minor issues raised but the general consensus was that it would be ok to drop. A suggestion from the Dept of Housing representative that the Building Control Management System - with permissions - could also be examined.

Actions: CSO to examine the above proposal and proceed without the question in the Pilot.

H3, H4 (Tenure)

Following submissions requesting the inclusion of mortgage information, there was a discussion on including mortgage information and the challenges this presented, in particular around what figure should be entered and how this would be communicated. There was a general view that it would be valuable information however. The potential for alternative sources was discussed, in particular the Central Bank. The submission regarding inclusion of tenant in the relationship question (Q5) was also discussed as a possibility. It was flagged that this may lead to an overlap in relationship statuses (e.g. nephew and tenant), so new categories of tenant-related and tenant-unrelated may be required.

Action: CSO to explore sourcing mortgage data from administrative sources and look at including tenant as a category in the relationship question.

H5 (Rooms)

CSO suggested the possibility of including the number of bedrooms and possibly drop the number of rooms. The number of bedrooms could be used as a proxy for levels of crowding in dwellings. There was discussion around the issue of how a bedroom would be defined and the use of living areas as bedrooms.

Action: CSO will look at testing the inclusion of number of bedrooms in the Pilot and will liaise with IBEC and Pobal to develop the question.

H6 (Central Heating)

Renewable energy, supplementary heating systems and insulation, were among the submissions received in this area. There was a detailed discussion on these topics including a suggestion to collapse some categories. However, it was agreed that it was difficult to accommodate the submissions. The Dept. of Housing representative mentioned the potential availability of records through SEAI. There was also strong support for retaining the question from CSO's Environmental Statistics Division.

Action: CSO to discuss with SEAI the possibility of collapsing categories for testing in the Pilot.

H7, H8 (Water & sewerage)

CSO had considered dropping these questions, but the results are used extensively by Irish Water. Their retention is also supported by CSO's Environmental Statistics Division. The CSO is now looking at simplifying the wording and possibly revising the categories.

Action: CSO will test new wording in the pilot.

H9 (Cars)

In order to save space, CSO are considering changing this question to a write in. There was a discussion around the topic. The National Transport Authority representative engaged extensively on this question and was in agreement with testing the write in option.

Action: Use the pilot to test the write in option.

H10, H11 (PC /Internet)

CSO had several submissions on the topic of internet access and use and there was a general recognition that the current questions are dated and need to be looked at. It was acknowledged that access to broadband and not the device is key, as well as the quality of the broadband and how people are using the internet. The CSO household ICT survey provides good information on the area and it was agreed to examine the possibility of leveraging the questions used in this survey for the Census. It may be difficult to accommodate an internet use question in the household questions part of the form.

Action: CSO will review the questions in conjunction with the ICT survey.

CSO concluded that there may not be a need to convene a housing subgroup as most of the issues raised could be developed internally by CSO or through bilateral engagement with other organisations prior to reverting to the CAG.

Individual Questions 1-35

1 (Name)

CSO received an internal submission to provide separate boxes for first name, surname etc. This would improve character recognition during census processing.

Action: CSO to test inclusion in the Pilot, if it can be fitted in.

3 (Date of Birth)

CSO received an internal submission to provide an age write in box as well as date of birth. This would be useful as a proportion of householders fail to provide their full date of birth, requiring CSO to impute the value during processing. Having an age value would improve the accuracy of this data.

Action: CSO to test inclusion in the Pilot, if it can be fitted in.

4 (Relationship)

This question is an EU requirement under regulation. CSO suggested dropping infrequently used categories (e.g. grandparents, son/daughter in law,) in order to include the submission requesting tenant as a relationship status. The issue previously referenced about related/unrelated tenants will be accounted for.

Action: CSO to examine the possibility of adapting as per above suggestions for the Pilot.

5 (Marital Status)

There was some discussion around this question regarding keeping Category 4 (same sex civil partnership) in light of the marriage referendum. The group deemed that it was appropriate to keep as same sex civil partnership is still a legal marital status.

Action: Category 4 (same sex civil partnership) will be kept in the question for Census 2021.

6 (Place of Birth)

There was some discussion around the possibility that the county of birth is not required and that country would be sufficient. EU regulation requires country of birth and nationality is also asked on the Census form. It was suggested that Edgar Morgenroth (ESRI) may have a view on the value of retaining the requirement to provide county of birth to inform research on internal migration patterns. Some of the group felt that the public would also have a connection with county of birth and that it should be retained as part of the Census data suite.

Action: CSO to discuss bilaterally with Edgar Morgenroth (ESRI).

7/8/9 (Usual Residence)

Ireland is a de facto census - others (including UK and Northern Ireland) are conducted on a usual residence basis. CSO is not in favour of changing this basis as the de facto nature of the Irish Census and the importance of Census Night is well understood by the Irish public. Attempting to change the Census to a usual residence basis would risk contamination of the data and a diminution of quality. CSO explained that it does produce data on a usually resident and present basis using absent person data and it is examining ways of producing a full usual residence count through data capture in the field. There was some discussion around amending questions 7-9 in light of internal submissions received by CSO from the Demographic Statistics Area. CSO will examine and revert to the group with proposals.

Action: CSO to examine the merit of rewording the usual residence questions and will revert to the group.

10 (Nationality)

Following a submission from the Demographic Statistics area of CSO to include citizenship rather than nationality, there was a discussion on whether both should be asked. Asking for citizenship rather than nationality would be coherent with the Labour Force Survey and would better meet EU regulation requirements. CSO pointed out that it was not likely there would be room on the form for both. A wide ranging discussion followed on the benefits/drawbacks of citizenship v nationality. It was suggested that an explanatory note could be included, as some people may not be sure what citizenship is or that the approach taken in the UK be examined for potential inclusion. Ultimately, several contributors agreed that nationality should be retained over citizenship as it is a well understood concept and delivers consistent and robust data.

Action: CSO to look at approach taken elsewhere. It may be possible to test both nationality and citizenship in the pilot.

11 (Ethnicity)

There were multiple submissions on this topic and several suggested the need to add Roma as a tick box option. This received strong support among several group members. There was some discussion around the topic but ultimately it was decided that it would be appropriate for a subgroup of domain experts to convene with a view to framing a revised question. CAG members were invited to partake in the subgroup or nominate a representative from their organisation to the meeting in January.

Action: Subgroup to meet in January to assist CSO in framing a revised question for testing in the Pilot. CSO will invite organisations not represented at the main CAG meeting but who made a submission as part of consultation to the sub group meeting.

12 (Religion)

CSO received a substantial amount of submissions on the topic of religion and outlined the different suggestions for changes to be made. There was a detailed discussion on the question including whether there should be a 'yes/no' filter, the order in which the religions are listed on the form and the challenges in capturing the level of religious practice. CSO proposed a subgroup should be formed to advise on the formulation of the question for testing in the Pilot and all interested CAG members were invited to attend or nominate a person in their organisation.

Action: Subgroup to meet in January to assist CSO in framing a revised question for testing in the Pilot. CSO will invite organisations not represented at the main CAG meeting but who made a submission as part of the consultation to the sub group meeting.

13 (Children born alive)

CSO indicated that this question would be discussed along with submissions received on shared parenting.

14/15 (The Irish Language)

CSO suggested that changing the current question to gain new information could make comparability over time very difficult. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht indicated that they were not anxious to change the question from its current format. However, the Department suggested that there would be value in also capturing the level of competency in Irish, possibly in a similar fashion as is done in the second part of Q15.

Action: CSO to discuss introducing the capture of level of Irish competence bilaterally with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

16/17 (Disability)

There was a high volume of submissions on disability. Many of the submissions referenced the Washington set of short questions. The National Disability Authority, while they were happy with the disability question in its current format, suggested part of the Washington set could be incorporated into the question, in particular the introduction of three response categories (e.g. No difficulty, Yes a little difficulty, Yes a lot of difficulty). The NDA also suggested removing the filter in Q17. CSO indicated that a person was categorised as having a disability if any 'Yes' box was ticked in Q16 or Q17. It was agreed the disability questions would be reviewed by a sub-group. CAG members were invited to partake in the subgroup or nominate a representative from their organisation to the meeting in January.

Action: Subgroup to meet in January to assist CSO in framing a revised question for testing in the Pilot. CSO will invite organisations not represented at the main CAG meeting but who made a submission as part of consultation to the sub group meeting.

18 (General health)

The health question was introduced in Census 2011 and mirrors the question asked in Northern Ireland, facilitating all island analysis. Retention of the question received strong support from the

Department of Health. In this consultation process several submissions have been received in relation to smoking habits. It was agreed that the disability sub-group would examine this topic.

Action: The disability sub-group will consider smoking habits and if it would be appropriate to include a question on this in the Pilot.

19-21 (Travel to work, school or college)

A number of submissions were made in relation to travel to work, school or college, mainly focusing on changing work patterns and life styles. CSO suggested testing the possible removal of tick boxes to be replaced with a write-in option for questions 19 and 20. This created the possibility of adding significant extra space and could assist in capturing shift workers and their various work patterns. There was concern at the prospect of dropping the tick box options in Q19 as it could lead to detail being lost in distinguishing driving a car and being a passenger in a car. The NTA indicated that a return from work, school or college time would also be valuable.

Action: CSO to discuss testing new versions of questions 19 and 20 bilaterally with the National Transport Authority.

22 (Carers)

A number of suggestions were made in relation to the question on carers including the removal of the word 'unpaid' from the question. CSO indicated that the question was not designed to capture paid carers. It was also suggested that the word 'problem' should be removed. The Irish Health Survey in 2015 also asked a question on carers which resulted in significantly different figures for carers than the Census. CSO questioned whether there may be scope to bring the two questions more closely in line. Overall the inclination of the group is to retain the question, possibly with a reference to whom the care is provided.

Action: CSO to co-ordinate with Carers Ireland on a revised wording for testing.

24-26 (Education and Field of Study)

No submissions received on these questions. The level of education question is required under EU legislation, but CSO will examine the possibility of reducing the amount of text contained in the question. The FETAC reference is no longer appropriate. This should be reviewed together with how lifelong learning can be captured. The Department of Education and Skills indicated that the data captured in the Field of Study question is valuable for the HEA and Solas and should be retained in 2021.

Action: CSO to examine reducing the amount of wording in the level of education question and will revert to CAG with proposal for testing.

27 (Principal Economic Status (PES))

CSO indicated that the ILO suite of categories had been tested in a previous pilot and had not worked well. Capturing a second economic status had also been tested in the 2009 Census pilot and had also not worked well. However the group discussed the value of recording mixed statuses and

the possibility of gathering information on working arrangements such as the gig economy. The NDA reflected that the time series continuity of the question is important.

Action: CSO to examine the possibility of capturing mixed/dual PES and revert to the group.

29 (Employment status)

This is an EU regulation question that is well understood and provides robust data.

Action: CSO to retain this question in Census 2021

30-32 (Occupation and Industry)

Questions 29 and 30 were reviewed by the group. Both are required under EU regulation. It was suggested that the number of examples listed in the description of question 30 could be reduced to free up space. The hectares option question 30 should also be reviewed for relevance going forward. It was however used to assist in determining farming as an occupation during Census processing in 2016.

Action: CSO to investigate reformatting questions and will revert to CAG with proposals.

34 (Address of place of work etc.)

CSO will continue to capture place of work, school and college in Census 2021 as these are key pieces of data for transport planning. The group discussed the possibility of adding a question on the frequency and mode of childcare provision here and whether additional information could be captured on flexible and part-time working arrangements. CSO suggested household surveys may be more appropriate for collecting some of this data.

Action: CSO to investigate if household surveys are an option for capturing data on childcare and/or flexible working. Incorporating these topics into the Pilot questionnaire for testing will also be examined.

Absent Persons

The Absent persons questions facilitate CSO in compiling data on a usual residence basis. CSO suggested that it would examine the merits of dropping the 4th absent person and also question A8 with a view to including a question on the nationality of the absent person, as requested by the Demographic statistics division of CSO.

Action: CSO to investigate and revert to CAG.

Additional submissions discussed

Time capsule

CSO discussed the possibility of including a time capsule on page 23 of the Census form, to provide a message to future generations. This had been discussed internally previously and could be considered should space permit. The statistical value of this is debateable however.

Actions: CSO to examine in the context of space on the form and revert to the group

Volunteers

There was a high volume of submissions on the topic of volunteering and it was felt the possibility of reviving the question should be examined thoroughly.

Actions: CSO look at the possibility of testing in the pilot.

Shared parenting

Several submissions were received in the area of shared parenting and providing an outlet on the Census form for non-resident parents to indicate their relationship with their children. The topic of children born alive formed part of this discussion. The group discussed devoting space on the form to record this and whether a statistical matching exercise would be possible between the children and their parents, and whether there would be value in capturing this information without such an exercise.

Actions: CSO to examine further and revert to the group at the next meeting with proposals

Sexual orientation

CSO introduced the topic by outlining the experiences of other countries in testing a question on sexual orientation, then discussing the difficulties associated with including a sexual orientation question in a form completed by proxy and whether a Census rather than a survey was the appropriate instrument to introduce this question.

In the group discussion, IHREC questioned when CSO would 'bite the bullet' and introduce a question on sexual orientation and that it would have to be introduced at some point. A discussion followed on the inclusion of the subject in other surveys such as the Health Ireland survey and the Northern Ireland Census test. CSO indicated its view that it was appropriate for a question on this topic to be introduced in a social survey prior to introducing it in a Census.

Actions: CSO committed to follow up on this and revert to the group.

Update: CSO will test a sexual orientation question in its household surveys in 2018.

Gender identity

The discussion moved to the separate topic of gender identity and the ability of persons who cannot identify using the binary classification currently used. CSO outlined experiences in other countries where various approaches have been tested. The group discussed various possibilities including the addition of additional categories including 'other', 'intersex' and retaining the binary classification but indicating that both or neither category to be marked to self-identify as a non-binary gender. D/CYA suggested that a third category should be tested in the Pilot. CSO pointed out that the relatively small size of the Pilot may make analysis of the results difficult, especially in the absence of comparator data and that testing a non-binary gender question in a household survey may be more appropriate.

Actions: CSO committed to follow up on this and revert to the group.

Update: CSO will test a gender identity question in its household surveys in 2018.

Additional submissions

CSO flagged several topics on which submissions were received which it suggested were not appropriate for inclusion on the Census form in the context of space restrictions.

These were political views, number of pets, military service, consumption of culture, organ donation, gambling, second home ownership, income and PPS number.

There was no support among the group for including these topics on the Census form.

A short discussion was held on including a question on smoke alarms. The suggested questions included in the submissions were deemed to be complicated with reference to testing of the alarms. NISRA are not considering including a question on their Census.

The main discussion was wrapped up with the NDA indicating that the current form design led to difficulties for some people in completing it and that it was willing to assist in suggesting improvements to CSO. NISRA flagged that it continues to work on content for 2021 including consideration of a question on dedicated parking places for dwellings and charging points for electric vehicles.

CSO ended the meeting by indicating it would follow up with requests to nominate attendees at the sub-groups on religion, ethnicity and disability. A follow up meeting of the CAG will take place on February 21st in CSO Swords.