

Scotland's Census 2021 Ethnic Group Topic Report

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1. Main Points

- Ethnic group is one of the most widely used census variables. A question on ethnic group was first introduced in 1991.
- Strong user need was identified for this information.
- In the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF) NRS proposed to continue to collect information on ethnic group in 2021.
- Research and analysis does support taking a question on this subject further at this stage.
- As the 2021 Census will be digital first, question testing has had a focus on online format of the question. A two-stage ethnic group question performed well in testing.
- The digital first approach for 2021 requires further development and user testing to fully understand the best way to present the questions online to maximise response, minimise respondent burden and ensure good quality data which meets user needs. An on-going programme of question development, focusing on sensitive or complex questions will further inform the specific question wording.
- Further investigation is on-going for the response options to be reviewed and/or additional information to be collected for Scottish Show people, Roma, Sikh and Jewish groups.

2. Introduction

This topic review sets out the evidence gathered in developing the ethnic group question for Scotland's Census 2021.

Question development for the 2021 Census began in 2015. An iterative and comprehensive process of user consultation, evaluation and prioritisation of user requirements, and qualitative and quantitative question testing has been carried out to inform decisions on the questions to be recommended for inclusion in the 2021 Census. More information about [research and preparation](#) and [question development](#) for Scotland's Census 2021 can be found online.

The 2021 Census will be digital first. The Census 2021 questionnaire must gather high quality data that meets user needs. More information about [key elements of the design](#) for 2021 can be found online.

Two frameworks have been published by National Records of Scotland (NRS) to evaluate the effectiveness of [question design for existing, alternative and new questions](#) (PDF) and to evaluate the effectiveness of [question design of tick box response options](#) (PDF).

Questions and their response options are evaluated against five main themes:

Strength of user need

- ✓ Data collected by the census must meet a user need for equality monitoring, policy development, resource allocation and/or service planning and delivery.

Suitability of alternative sources

- ✓ Data collected by the census must meet a user need that cannot be met elsewhere.

Acceptability, clarity and data quality

- ✓ Questions asked in the census must be acceptable to the majority of the public, clear and be designed with minimal respondent burden in order to obtain good data quality that meets user needs.

Comparability

- ✓ Data collected by the census should be comparable over time where possible, and harmonised across the UK where reasonable.

Operational considerations

- ✓ Census questions must be considered as part of the census as a whole, where effective digital and paper design, space and financial constraints must be considered. Additionally, some questions may be required for operational purposes in the process of conducting the census.

The final decision on the content of Scotland's Census 2021 questionnaire will ultimately be made by the Scottish Parliament.

As in previous years, there will be separate censuses conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in England and Wales, and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in Northern Ireland. The three census offices work together to develop a set of questions that, wherever possible and necessary, will deliver harmonised outputs across the UK.

3. Background

3.1 Ethnic group in the census

Ethnic group is one of the most widely used census variables. Information from this question is used for resource allocation, to inform policy development and make service planning decisions. It also helps organisations meet and monitor their statutory obligations arising from the Race Relations Act 1976, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and [Equality Act 2010](#)¹. Race, which includes ethnic group, is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

Collecting this information in the census is particularly important because many minority ethnic groups in Scotland are too small to be effectively captured by sample surveys, and the census gives the only robust information on size of groups at small area level. Extensive multivariate analysis is undertaken with ethnic group data and other census variables.

The measurement of ethnicity in the UK is influenced by the legal framework (The Equality Act 2010), which specifically refers to 'racial grounds' – namely colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins.

A question on ethnic group was first introduced in 1991. The ethnic group response options used in the 1991, 2001, and 2011 Census questions combined concepts of colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins.

Ethnicity is a complicated and sensitive concept. Peoples' concept of their ethnicity, and the way that they choose to express it, changes over time. The format and content of this question has changed with each census to reflect this and best meet user needs, while retaining an element of comparability over time and with the rest of the UK.

Following the 2001 Census, in 2002 the then Communities Minister promised to review the way that Scottish surveys classify ethnicity, to ensure that they reflected modern circumstances, met user needs and had broad community support. This followed recommendations by the Race Equality Advisory Forum (REAF) and some community concerns about the classification used in the 2001 Census. In particular, about the different use of colour and geography across the ethnic group categories.

The Scottish Government worked in partnership with the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS), now National Records of Scotland, to conduct the review. The details of this review were published in [Scotland's New Ethnicity Classification for Scottish Official Statistics and Recommended for Scotland's 2011 Census](#) by the Scottish Government in July 2008.

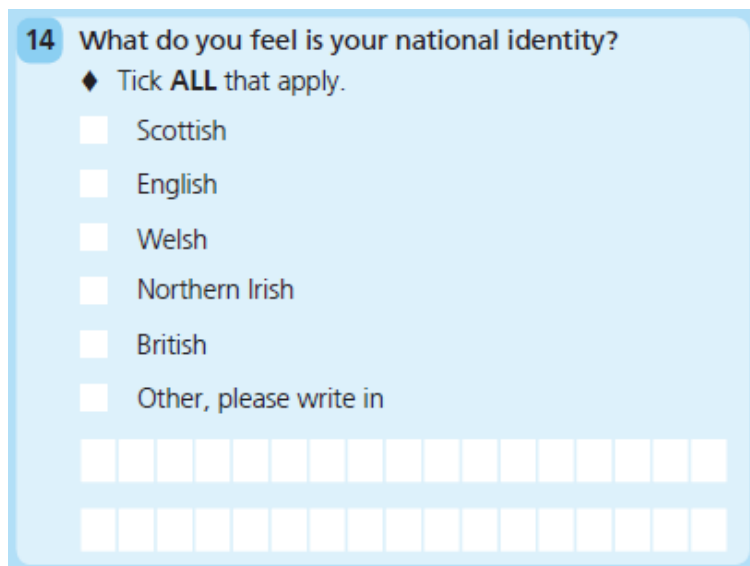
The classification was discussed by members of the Scottish Parliament during consideration of the 2011 Census in Scotland and was subsequently amended for use in the census. These changes are detailed in the [Report on changes to Government Statement published December 2008](#) (PDF), published in November 2010.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

3.2 The 2011 Ethnic Group and National Identity Questions

In 2011 a National Identity Question was included for the first time. This question immediately preceded the 2011 ethnic group question. The two questions are interlinked, such that wherever possible, a national identity question should be asked as a companion to the ethnic group question. The 2011 National Identity Question is shown in Figure 1. More information about the National Identity Question can be found in the [National Identity Topic Report](#) (PDF).

Figure 1: 2011 Census National Identity Question



14 What do you feel is your national identity?

◆ Tick **ALL** that apply.

- ☐ Scottish
- ☐ English
- ☐ Welsh
- ☐ Northern Irish
- ☐ British
- ☐ Other, please write in

Two rows of 12 small boxes for writing in the answer.

The 2011 Census ethnic group question was broadly comparable to the Scotland's Census 2001 question. These questions are shown in Figure 2.

The 2011 Census ethnic group question asked "What is your ethnic group?". Response options were organised into the high level categories "White", "Mixed or multiple ethnic groups", "Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British", "African", "Caribbean or Black", and "Other ethnic group". Tick box response options and write in fields were available under these categories.

In 2011, the online version of the ethnic group question had the same layout and content as the paper question shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: 2011 (left) and 2001 (right) Census ethnic group questions

15 What is your ethnic group?

◆ Choose **ONE** section from A to F, then tick **ONE** box which **best describes** your ethnic group or background.

A White

☐ Scottish

☐ Other British

☐ Irish

☐ Gypsy / Traveller

☐ Polish

☐ Other white ethnic group, please write in

B Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

☐ Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups, please write in

C Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

☐ Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British

☐ Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British

☐ Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British

☐ Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British

☐ Other, please write in

D African

☐ African, African Scottish or African British

☐ Other, please write in

E Caribbean or Black

☐ Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British

☐ Black, Black Scottish or Black British

☐ Other, please write in

F Other ethnic group

☐ Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British

☐ Other, please write in

15 What is your ethnic group?

◆ Choose **ONE** section from A to E, then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background.

A White

☐ Scottish

☐ Other British

☐ Irish

☐ Any other White background, please write in

B Mixed

☐ Any Mixed background, please write in

C Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

☐ Indian

☐ Pakistani

☐ Bangladeshi

☐ Chinese

☐ Any other Asian background, please write in

D Black, Black Scottish or Black British

☐ Caribbean

☐ African

☐ Any other Black background, please write in

E Other ethnic background

☐ Any other background, please write in

3.3 Questions in other UK 2011 Censuses

Questions on ethnic group produce broadly comparable data across the UK². Due to country specific requirements and user needs there are differences in question layout, ethnic group categories and labelling, category allocation and data collected.

The wording of the question stem used in the 2011 Census was consistent across the UK, as shown in Figure 3.

The question asked in England and Wales was similar to the question asked in Scotland. Ethnic groups were arranged into higher level categories containing tick box options and write in fields. The question asked in Northern Ireland did not contain higher level categories.

Figure 3: 2011 Census ethnic group questions – England (left) and Northern Ireland (right)

16 What is your ethnic group?

Choose **one** section from A to E, then tick **one** box to best describe your ethnic group or background

A White

☐ English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

☐ Irish

☐ Gypsy or Irish Traveller

☐ Any other White background, write in

B Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

☐ White and Black Caribbean

☐ White and Black African

☐ White and Asian

☐ Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background, write in

C Asian/Asian British

☐ Indian

☐ Pakistani

☐ Bangladeshi

☐ Chinese

☐ Any other Asian background, write in

D Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

☐ African

☐ Caribbean

☐ Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, write in

E Other ethnic group

☐ Arab

☐ Any other ethnic group, write in

16 What is your ethnic group?

Tick **one** box only.

☐ White

☐ Chinese

☐ Irish Traveller

☐ Indian

☐ Pakistani

☐ Bangladeshi

☐ Black Caribbean

☐ Black African

☐ Black Other

☐ Mixed ethnic group, write in

☐ Any other ethnic group, write in

² For more information the Office for National Statistics 2011 Census UK Comparability Report is available online at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census/2011ukcensuses>

3.4 Alternative sources

An ethnic group question is commonly included in social surveys or administrative data collections across the UK, with or without a preceding national identity question.

Since 2012, a set of core questions has been used to provide information on the composition, characteristics and attitudes of Scottish households and adults across a number of topic areas through the three largest surveys in Scotland:

- the [Scottish Household Survey](#) (SHS)
- the [Scottish Health Survey](#) (SHeS)
- the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#) (SCJS)

A set of core and harmonised questions is recommended in order to provide comparable estimates across Scotland. More information can be found on the Scottish Government website ([Core Survey Questions](#)).

Ethnic group is a core Scottish survey question. The core ethnic group question is the Scotland's Census 2011 question.

The [Labour Force Survey](#) is a quarterly survey of households living at private addresses in the UK. The Labour Force Survey asks a variation on the Scotland's Census 2011 question. The question is asked in two stages. The first stage categories vary from the 2011 Census higher level categories.

In some data collections the 2011 Census question asked in England and Wales question is used in Scotland rather than the Scotland's Census 2011 question.

In some cases the text fields for respondents to write in their "other" identity are not included.

4. Understanding user need for 2021

NRS invited views on [Scotland's Census 2021 – Topic Consultation](#) (PDF) between 8 October 2015 and 15 January 2016. The consultation was a key step towards understanding what information users will need from the census in 2021, and helped to build strong cases to justify the inclusion of topics. The focus of the consultation was on information required at topic-level, not the detail of the questions that should be asked on the questionnaire.

There were 38 responses received through the topic consultation about ethnic group. A summary of these responses can be found in the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF).

In the [Topic Consultation Report](#) (PDF) NRS proposed to continue to collect information on ethnic group in 2021, and stated that NRS would consider question testing and research requirements in light of the limited number of requests which were made for the response options to be reviewed and/or additional information to be collected.

Following the consultation, NRS worked closely with stakeholders through follow-up events, meetings, focus groups, and online surveys to gather more detailed information about data requirements to ensure user needs were understood. Information about these events can be found on our [Get Involved pages](#) online.

An [Ethnicity, National Identity, Language and Religion \(EILR\) Topic Event](#) was held on 20 April 2017. In order to capture the requirements of users who could not attend the event, and to capture further detailed requirements from those who did, a paper (event only) and an online survey ran alongside this event. A summary of this event and the follow-up survey is available on the Scotland's Census website.

NRS has engaged with range of stakeholders who have expressed requirements for additional information or made requests for change to the ethnic group question in 2021.

Focus groups were held with members of the [African](#) and [Caribbean](#) communities in Scotland to discuss some of the issues raised and how to best meet their needs with Scotland's Census 2021.

An [African Ethnic Groups Focus Group](#) was held with members of the African community in Scotland to discuss some of the issues raised and how to best meet these needs. The summary of this focus group is available online.

A limited number of requests which were made for the response options to be reviewed and/or additional information to be collected are being considered by NRS, and are discussed in Next Steps.

5. 2017 Question Testing

It is recognised a digital first census for 2021 provides opportunities to improve question format online in order to minimise respondent burden and therefore improve data quality. The question testing reported below focused on an alternative digital design. Further investigation into requests for further information is on-going.

This section provides evidence from the question testing process carried out by NRS in the question development process for Scotland's Census 2021.

Cognitive testing and quantitative testing processes are used in developing census questions:

- Cognitive testing is a form of in depth interviewing with a small number of respondents. It aims to provide an insight into the mental processes respondents use when answering questions. This helps us to identify if there are any problems with a question or question design and gain an insight into the source of any difficulty respondents are having.
- Quantitative testing is undertaken primarily to identify data quality concerns. NRS included feedback questions in the quantitative testing in order to gather further information on public acceptability and to identify specific difficulties respondents faced if they were unable to answer a question easily.

In 2017 NRS commissioned ScotCen Social Research to conduct cognitive and quantitative testing of selected questions for potential inclusion in Scotland's Census 2021. Information about this testing can be found in the [2017 Cognitive and Quantitative Testing Report](#) (PDF).

5.1 Cognitive testing

Two versions of the 2011 Census ethnic group question were included for cognitive testing to explore:

- how a two-step question online compares to the single list approach on paper, and
- whether this impacts data quality or ease of navigation.

These questions are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

There were no data quality issues or mode effects detected in either version during the cognitive interviews. Respondents coded consistently using both versions tested, with no evidence of different answers between the two versions. Suggesting that both designs may be suitable, subject to quantitative testing.

Full details of the results of the 2017 Cognitive Testing are available in Annex A.

Figure 5: 2017 Cognitive Testing - Online ethnic group question

Stage one**Q9i. What is your ethnic group?**Select **one** section.

- ☐ **White**
(Including any white ethnic group)
- ☐ **Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**
(Including any mixed or multiple ethnic group)
- ☐ **Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British**
(Including Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian ethnic group)
- ☐ **African**
(Including African, African Scottish, African British or any other African ethnic group)
- ☐ **Caribbean or Black**
(Including Caribbean, Black or any other Caribbean or Black ethnic group)
- ☐ **Other Ethnic Group**
(for example Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British, or any other ethnic group)

Stage two: White**Q9ii. Which one best describes your white ethnic group or background?**Select **one** only.

- ☐ Scottish
- ☐ Other British
- ☐ Irish
- ☐ Gypsy / Traveller
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Other white ethnic group, please enter:

Stage two: Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**Q9ii. Please enter your mixed or multiple ethnic groups:**i. ii.

Stage two: Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

Q9ii. Which one best describes your Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British ethnic group or background?

Select **one** only.

- ☐ Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British
- ☐ Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British
- ☐ Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
- ☐ Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Stage two: African

Q9ii. Which one best describes your African ethnic group or background?

Select **one** only.

- ☐ African, African Scottish or African British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Stage two: Caribbean

Q9ii. Which one best describes your Caribbean or Black ethnic group or background?

Select **one** only.

- ☐ Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
- ☐ Black, Black Scottish or Black British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Stage two: Other ethnic group

Q9ii. Which one best describes your other Ethnic Group or background?

Select **one** only.

- ☐ Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

5.2 Quantitative testing

Following cognitive testing, these questions were included for quantitative testing. Minor changes to the appearance of the questions were made for the paper and online quantitative testing questionnaires, as seen in Annex B. Guidance was included to indicate that there will be a second stage to the question.

The main aim of quantitative testing was to examine whether a two-stage question online would impact on data quality by analysing:

- the distribution of responses, including similarities and differences in distribution by mode;
- item non-response rates and invalid responses as a measure of data quality and acceptability; and
- the percentage of potentially backcodable responses as a measure of data quality.

Full details of the results of the 2017 Quantitative Testing are available in Annex B.

Key results: distribution of responses

- Approximately 98% of respondents provided a valid response to the question on ethnic group.
- There were no large differences in the distribution of valid responses compared to the 2011 Census.
- No significant differences in response by mode were observed.

Key results: invalid responses

- An invalid response was given by roughly 2% of respondents.
- Over half of invalid responses were non-response.
- The response rate was similar to the 2011 Census.
- No obvious distribution of non-response by mode was observed.
- The remaining invalid responses were cases of multi-ticking (11 cases). Multi-ticking was only possible for the paper questionnaire.
- Of those who multi-ticked, the majority selected “Scottish” and another identity in the “White” category or “Scottish” and “Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups, please write in”. However, these respondents did not provide write-in information.
- The small number of cases (less than 1% of all respondents) indicates that this is unlikely to have an impact on data quality.

Key results: backcodable write-in responses

Some respondents used the available text fields to specify their ethnic group. Text responses that can be coded to an existing category may highlight possible issues with the question content or design, and result in additional coding.

- In total, 63 respondents (around 4% of all respondents) wrote in their ethnic group.
- Of those who wrote in, a small number (nine responses) could be coded back to an existing category. All of these would be coded to “Other British”.
- This may reflect some respondents’ wishes to identify their specific British identity. These numbers were very small and therefore not considered to impact data quality or cost of coding.

6. Next Steps

Research and analysis does support taking a question on this subject further at this stage.

The digital first approach for 2021 requires further development and user testing to fully understand the best way to present the questions online to maximise response, minimise respondent burden and ensure good quality data which meets user needs. An on-going programme of question development, focusing on sensitive or complex questions will further inform the specific question wording.

A limited number of requests which were made for the response options to be reviewed and/or additional information to be collected are being considered by NRS, and are detailed below:

(1) Roma

A number of stakeholders have expressed their requirements for capturing information about the Roma population in Scotland. They expressed user need for information on health status, qualification levels, employment, overcrowding, tenure, and housing, to improve education and housing services for this population and to contribute to policy development and monitoring. There is evidence that this group experiences significant disadvantage in multiple areas.

(2) Scottish Showpeople

The Cross Party Group on Scottish Showmen’s Guild in the Scottish Parliament and the Showmen’s Guild requested that “Showpeople” or “Scottish Showpeople” be added as an option in the census in 2021.

A lack of information about this group across surveys and administrative data collections was raised as a concern. A need for this information to inform policy, housing and service delivery was expressed.

(3) Sikh

Some stakeholders in Scotland have indicated support for a “Sikh” tick box in the ethnic group question in the census, in order to provide an accurate depiction of the community and composition of Scotland's ethnic makeup, enable targeted funding and service provision, and to improve support services. There is evidence that this group experiences disadvantage.

In Scotland, the religion question is a core Scottish Survey question. Proxy information through this question is available across social surveys and in the census. However, stakeholders raised concerns that religion and ethnicity are not necessarily interdependent. The voluntary nature of the religion question and the risk that this therefore undercounts the population was raised as a concern.

(4) Jewish

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (ScoJec) expressed a requirement for capturing Jewish ethnic group in Scotland's Census 2021. One of the primary concerns expressed was the risk that using religion as a proxy undercounts this population.

Accurate information about the size of the Jewish community was required for organisations and charities to plan policy, deliver services and allocate resources. Organisations monitoring antisemitism require an accurate understanding of the size of the Jewish population in order to assess rates and prevalence. There is evidence that this group experiences disadvantage.

(5) African and Caribbean or Black

A number of stakeholders expressed a requirement more detailed data about African ethnic groups to meet requirements for data for a range of purposes, including health analysis, equality monitoring, service provision and for increased consistency with how data is collected across the ethnic group question.

The size and complexity of the African population of Scotland was noted. The aggregate level of data available for this group was considered to mask specific African ethnic groups that have particular needs. There is evidence that some of these groups experience significant disadvantage.

The final decision on the content of Scotland's Census 2021 questionnaire will ultimately be made by the Scottish Parliament.

More information about preparation for Scotland's Census 2021 and details about upcoming events can be found on the [Scotland's Census website](#), by subscribing to the [Scotland's Census newsletter](#) and following us on Twitter [@NatRecordsScot](#).

Annex A: 2017 Cognitive Test

In 2017 NRS commissioned ScotCen Social Research to conduct cognitive and quantitative testing of selected questions for potential inclusion in Scotland's Census 2021. Information about this testing can be found in the [2017 Cognitive and Quantitative Testing Report](#) (PDF).

1. Questions tested and measurement aims

A question on ethnic group was included for cognitive interviewing. To ensure the target populations were reached, several recruitment strategies were adopted. The table below shows the sample achieved for cognitive testing.

Table A1: Sample composition achieved

Characteristics	Number
Sex	
Male	17
Female	15
Age	
18-34	5
35-64	22
65+	5
Highest qualification	
Further or higher education (degree, masters, PhD, professional quals, SVQ level 5)	21
Upper secondary school qualification (e.g. Highers, A-Levels)	6
Lower secondary school qualification (e.g. Standard Grade, Intermediate 2s, O grades, GSCE, National 4/5) or below/none	5
Religion	
None	14
Church of Scotland	6
Roman Catholic	1
Other Christian	4
Muslim	1
Buddhist	1
Sikh	2
Hindu	1
Other	2

Table A1 continued: Sample composition achieved

Characteristics	Number
Ethnic Group	
White	25
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	5
African	1
Other ethnic group	1
Passports held	
United Kingdom	24
Ireland	1
Other	5
None	2
Use language other than English at home	
No, English only	26
Yes, British sign language	-
Other	6
Computer Skills	
Has difficulty managing basic computer tasks/cannot manage basic computer tasks	-
Can manage basic computer tasks such as browsing the internet and word processing	10
Can manage more complex computer tasks	22
Tenure	
Owns with a mortgage or loan	11
Own outright	7
Own with shared equity	
Rent (with or without housing benefit)	12
Part own and part rent (shared ownership)	1
Live here rent free	1

An online version was tested where the question was split over multiple screens, the first screen showing high level ethnic group categories and a follow-up question collecting second-level response options. A paper version of the question was also tested in which all ethnic groups were shown in a single list with response options falling under different category headings to encourage ease of navigation. The paper version of the question was the same as the 2011 Census ethnic group question. The questions tested are shown in Table A2.

Table A2: Questions tested on Ethnic Group

Online version- Two step question

Q9i. What is your ethnic group?Select **one** section.

- ☐ **White**
(Including any white ethnic group)
- ☐ **Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**
(Including any mixed or multiple ethnic group)
- ☐ **Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British**
(Including Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian ethnic group)
- ☐ **African**
(Including African, African Scottish, African British or any other African ethnic group)
- ☐ **Caribbean or Black**
(Including Caribbean, Black or any other Caribbean or Black ethnic group)
- ☐ **Other Ethnic Group**
(for example Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British, or any other ethnic group)

Q9ii. Which one best describes your white ethnic group or background?Select **one** only.

- ☐ Scottish
- ☐ Other British
- ☐ Irish
- ☐ Gypsy / Traveller
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Other white ethnic group, please enter: _____

Q9ii. Please enter your mixed or multiple ethnic groups:i. ii. **Q9ii. Which one best describes your Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British ethnic group or background?**Select **one** only.

- ☐ Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British
- ☐ Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British
- ☐ Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
- ☐ Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
- ☐ Other, please enter: _____

Q9ii. Which one best describes your African ethnic group or background?

Select **one** only.

- ☐ African, African Scottish or African British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Q9ii. Which one best describes your Caribbean or Black ethnic group or background?

Select **one** only.

- ☐ Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
- ☐ Black, Black Scottish or Black British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Q9ii. Which one best describes your other Ethnic Group or background?

Select **one** only.

- ☐ Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Paper version

Ethnic group question paper version

9 What is your ethnic group?

◆ Choose **ONE** section from A to F, then tick **ONE** box which **best describes** your ethnic group or background

A White

- ☐ Scottish
☐ Other British
☐ Irish
☐ Gypsy / Traveller
☐ Polish
☐ Other white ethnic group, please write in

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- ☐ Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups, please write in

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

C Asian, Asian Scottish, Asian British

- ☐ Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British
☐ Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British
☐ Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
☐ Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
☐ Other, please write in

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D African

- ☐ African, African Scottish or African British
☐ Other, please write in

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E Caribbean or Black

- ☐ Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
☐ Black, Black Scottish or Black British
☐ Other, please write in

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F Other ethnic group

- ☐ Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British
☐ Other, please write in

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

The aim of testing these questions was to:

- Explore how the two step question used online compared to the single list approach used on paper and whether there are any differences in terms of answers given, ease of navigation and respondent preference.

In addition some respondents spontaneously commented on the types of response options listed under the 'white' heading. The findings which emerged during the cognitive testing are discussed in further detail below.

2. Comparing the online and the paper approach

Respondents were able to locate their ethnic group in both versions of the ethnic group question, with all answering consistently between the paper and online formats. However, respondents had different views regarding which format of the question they thought worked best.

Some respondents preferred the online format of the ethnic group question. The main reason for this was that respondents generally felt that the paper version was too long and cluttered to be understood easily. Indeed, respondents often hesitated for long periods of time when answering in the paper format, with many having to read the question several times before answering. Respondents used words such as '*cumbersome*', '*overwhelming*', and '*daunting*' to describe the paper version of the question, and discussed how they lost concentration when reading through the options due to there being too much information on one page.

In contrast, these respondents found the online question far easier, quicker and simpler to answer. At this question, respondents commented how it was more straightforward to select a top-level ethnic group category and go on to a follow up question to input their second-level response rather than having to read through every single category with its response options and choose an option, as was required on paper. Some respondents suggested that a similar routing-style question would work well on paper. It is important to note, however, that although most respondents found the online version easier to answer than on paper, there was no evidence of different answers at the paper version.

However, there were some respondents who preferred the paper format of the ethnic group question. While acknowledging that the paper version was a substantial amount of information to have on one page, these respondents commented that because most people are aware of their own ethnic group, they will automatically gravitate towards this upon reading the question. For this reason, these respondents found the paper format quicker to answer than the two-step online question. Other respondents said that they preferred the paper format because it allows you to consider all of the possible answer categories before coming to a decision. Finally, some respondents preferred answering the ethnic group question on paper because online, it is not clear that you will have the option to specify your ethnic group in more detail. For example, one respondent discussed finding the paper version clearer because the 'Other white ethnic group' option was immediately noticeable and easy to fill in.

There was no consensus on preference among respondents between the two question formats.

No data quality issues detected in either version during the cognitive interviews. Respondents coded consistently using both versions tested, with no evidence of different answers between the two versions.

The advantages and disadvantages of the online and paper formats of the ethnic group question are summarised in Table A3.

Table A3: Advantages and disadvantages of the different formats of ethnic group question

	Paper version	Online version
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quicker – all information can be viewed on one page • Allows you to consider all possible options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quicker – less information to read • Less information to read – easier to understand
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much information on one page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear that there is going to be a second stage

3. Other findings on ethnic group question

Some other findings emerged during the cognitive testing of the ethnic group question. Firstly, many respondents commented on the ethnic groups listed under the 'White' category. Under the 'White' category there are six groups: 'Scottish', 'Other British', 'Irish', 'Gypsy/Traveller', 'Polish' and 'Other'. Although some respondents assumed that Irish, Gypsy/Traveller and Polish were listed because proportionally, these are the next highest ethnic groups living in Scotland, others felt that these categories seemed '*arbitrary*'. Many queried why other European ethnicities were not listed, and suggested that Americans and Canadians living in Scotland may feel alienated by this question. Others felt that it was unfair to have ethnicities such as Polish and Irish listed but then to have English, Welsh and Northern Irish condensed into one 'Other British' group. As put by one respondent: '*It doesn't bother me but it's a clear indication that there's a growth. There's not an English or Welsh option but a Polish option? Obviously people are going to notice that.*'

It was suggested that if Irish, Gypsy/Traveller and Polish are to be included on the list of White ethnic groups in Scotland's Census 2021, other white ethnic groups should also be listed and 'Other British' should be disaggregated into English, Welsh, and Northern Irish. Some respondents also commented that the groups listed under the 'White' category conflate ethnicity with nationality. For example, one respondent discussed how they feel that Scottish is their nationality but not their ethnicity.

4. Summary

In summary, there was no consensus among respondents regarding which version of the ethnic group question was easier to navigate. Some preferred the online question because there was less information to read on each screen, making it

quicker to answer and easier to understand. However, others preferred the paper version because all of the information was on one page. These respondents liked being able to consider all possible answer options and felt that having all of the information available made the question quicker to answer. Although respondents varied in which version they preferred, no data quality issues were detected in either version, with respondents able to code consistently using both versions tested. There was no evidence of inconsistent answering across the versions.

Some respondents suggested that to improve the acceptability of the question, other white European ethnicities should be listed in the answer options and 'Other British' should be split into English, Welsh and Irish. However, space constraints preclude the inclusion of a range of other white ethnicities at this question.

Annex B: 2017 Quantitative Test

In 2017 NRS commissioned ScotCen Social Research to conduct cognitive and quantitative testing of selected questions for potential inclusion in Scotland's Census 2021. Information about this testing can be found in the [2017 Cognitive and Quantitative Testing Report](#) (PDF).

1. Question tested and aims of testing

Scottish Census test 2017- Two step ethnic group question (online)

Q23a. What is your ethnic group?

- Select **one** only
 - The next question asks about your ethnic group in more detail
- ☒ **White**
(including any white ethnic group)
 - ☐ **Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**
(including any mixed or multiple ethnic groups)
 - ☐ **Asian**
(including Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian ethnic group)
 - ☐ **African**
(including African, African Scottish, African British or any other African ethnic group)
 - ☐ **Caribbean or Black**
(including Caribbean, Black or any other Caribbean or Black ethnic group)
 - ☐ **Other Ethnic Group**
(including Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British, or any other ethnic group)

Q23b. Which one best describes your white ethnic group or background?

- Select **one** only
- ☒ Scottish
 - ☐ Other British
 - ☐ Irish
 - ☐ Gypsy / Traveller
 - ☐ Polish
 - ☐ Other white ethnic group, please enter:

Q23b. Please enter your mixed or multiple ethnic groups:

i.

ii.

Q23b. Which one best describes your Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British ethnic group or background?

▪ Select **one** only

- ☐ Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British
- ☐ Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British
- ☐ Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
- ☐ Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Q23b. Which one best describes your African ethnic group or background?

▪ Select **one** only

- ☐ African, African Scottish or African British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Q23b. Which one best describes your Caribbean or Black ethnic group or background?

▪ Select **one** only

- ☐ Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
- ☐ Black, Black Scottish or Black British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

Q23b. Which one best describes your other ethnic group or background?

▪ Select **one** only

- ☐ Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British
- ☐ Other, please enter:

A question on ethnic group was included in the individual section of the 2017 Quantitative Testing questionnaire and asked “What is your ethnic group?”

The format of the question differed by mode. On paper it was a single question, while online respondents had a two-step question to complete. The main aims of quantitative testing was to examine whether a two-stage question online would impact on data quality by analysing:

- the distribution of responses, including similarities and differences in distribution by mode;
- item non-response rates and invalid responses as a measure of data quality and acceptability; and
- the percentage of potentially backcodable responses as a measure of data quality.

2. Ethnic group distribution³

Approximately 98% of respondents who fully completed the questionnaire provided a valid response to the question on ethnic group.

‘White’ accounted for the highest proportion of valid responses (around 98%), followed by Asian (around 2%), as shown in Table B1. ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic groups’, ‘African’ and ‘other ethnic group’ accounted for less than 1% of valid responses.

There were no large differences in the distribution of valid responses compared to the 2011 Census.

No respondents selected ‘Caribbean or Black’ or ‘other’ ethnic groups. Small populations selected these options in 2011, with less than 1% of the population choosing these options.

³ All figures in this report have been rounded to one decimal place.

Table B1: Ethnic Group, total valid responses from 2017 test (weighted responses) and 2011 Census⁴

	2017 test (aged 16 and over)		2011 Census (total population)	
	Total	%	Total	%
White: Total	1,362	98	5,084,407	96
White: Scottish	1,096	79	4,445,678	84
White: Other British	119	9	417,109	8
White: Irish	16	1	54,090	1
White: Gypsy/Traveller	1	<1	4,212	<1
White: Polish	38	3	61,201	1
White: Other White	87	6	102,117	2
White: Not-specified	4	<1		
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: Total	1	<1	19,815	<1
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	1	<1	19,815	<1
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: Not specified	0	0		
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Total	21	2	140,678	23
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	1	<1	49,381	1
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	9	<1	32,706	1
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	3	<1	3,788	<1
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	3	<1	33,706	1
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Other Asian	6	<1	21,097	<1
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British: Not specified	0	<1		
African: Total	2	<1	29,638	1
African: African, African Scottish or African British	2	<1	29,186	1
African: Other African	0	0	452	<1
African: Not Specified	0	0		

⁴ Please note that figures are rounded and may not add up exactly to totals or figures quoted elsewhere in the text.

Table B1 continued: Ethnic Group, total valid responses from 2017 test (weighted responses) and 2011 Census⁵

	2017 test (aged 16 and over)		2011 Census (total population)	
	Total	%	Total	%
Caribbean or Black: Total	0	0	6,540	<1
Caribbean or Black: Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British	0	0	3,430	<1
Caribbean or Black: Black, Black Scottish or Black British	0	0	2,380	<1
Caribbean or Black: Other Caribbean or Black	0	0	730	<1
Caribbean or Black: Not specified	0	0		
Other ethnic groups: Total	0	0	14,325	<1
Other ethnic groups: Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British	0	0	9,366	<1
Other ethnic groups: Other ethnic group	0	0	4,959	<1
Other ethnic groups: Not specified	0	0		
Total responses	1,387	100	5,295,403	100

Ethnic Group by mode

The proportion of those providing a valid response to the ethnic group question did not differ significantly by mode, with 50% answering online and 50% on paper.

Of respondents who responded 'White', 50% answered online and 50% answered on paper. Similarly, of those who responded 'Asian', 52% answered online and 48% answered on paper. The number identifying in other groups was small and results are unlikely to be significant.

Ethnic Group by age

Overall, distribution of age by ethnic group largely reflected the distribution of age within the sample. No significant differences were detected by age.

⁵ Please note that figures are rounded and may not add up exactly to totals or figures quoted elsewhere in the text.

3. Invalid responses to ethnic group

All types of invalid response

If a respondent did not answer any questions beyond the marital status question their questionnaire was classified as 'partially completed.' At all questions beyond marital status question, a partial completion was treated as a questionnaire drop out and distinct from item non-response.

An invalid response was given by 4% of the respondents. Most non-response at the ethnic group question (around 2% of respondents) was due to questionnaire drop-out i.e. partially completed questionnaires.

Invalid responses due to full completions was around 2%. Over half of these were non-response (17 cases), the remaining invalid responses were cases of multi-ticking (11 cases).

All types of invalid response by mode

As shown in Table B2 slightly more item non-response from full completions were attributable to the paper mode (10 cases, compared with seven cases online). All instances of invalid response due to multi-tick were the result of the paper mode, as this type of invalid was not possible online.

Table B2 Invalid responses by mode (unweighted counts)

	Mode		
	Number of responses - Online	Number of responses - Paper	Total
Item non response – full completions	7	10	17
Item non-response – partial completions	34	0	34
Invalid multi-tick – paper only, single tick questions		11	11
Invalid combination			
Routing error			
Total invalid responses	41	21	62
Not applicable			
Total valid responses	604	788	1,392
Total responses	645	809	1,454

Non-response⁶

Of full completions, 1.2% were item non-response.

Item non-response at the 2017 test (1.2%) was similar to that for the 2011 Census (2%).

4. Other write-in and backcoding**Analyses of 'other' write in**

Around 4% of total responses to 'White' ethnic group were 'Other white' (57 total cases). For all of these responses, respondents both ticked 'Other White' and provided a write in response.

'Other Asian' accounted for around one in five (24%) of total 'Asian' responses, and all 'Other Asian' responses were comprised of a tick and text response.

There was only one case of a respondent selecting 'Mixed or multiple ethnic group' at stage one of the ethnic group question. This response was comprised of a tick and text, and this respondent then went on to provide a write in of their ethnic group at stage two.

'Other' was not selected by any respondents at the second stage of 'African' ethnic group.

Analysis of back-coded responses

Out of a total of 57 'Other White' write in responses, nine were recodable. Of the nine recodable 'Other White' cases, six were attributable to the online questionnaire, as shown in Table B3. All of the recodable cases were backcoded into 'Other British'. This may reflect some respondents wish to identify their specific British identity. These numbers were very small and therefore not considered to impact data quality or cost of coding.

5. Feedback

The questionnaire was split into four sections and, at the end of each of the four sections; respondents were asked to state if they had found any questions in the section difficult to answer and, if they had, to provide verbatim feedback in an open text box.

The feedback question asked "Did you find any of the following questions difficult to answer?" with "Q23. Ethnic group" as one of the answer options.

Around 2% of respondents ticked that they found the ethnic group question difficult to answer.

⁶ Note that item non-response to the 2017 test and item non-response to the 2011 census are not directly comparable; there was no questionnaire drop-out or partial completion rate estimated for the 2011 census, which was primarily a paper questionnaire.

Table B3: Ethnic group write-ins that could be back-coded (unweighted counts)

		Mode			
		Number of responses - Online	Number of responses - Paper	Total	
Ethnic Group	White: Total		595	776	1,371
		Total other white	40	17	57
		Total text responses	40	17	57
		Recodable	6	3	9
	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: Total		1	0	1
		Total mixed or multiple ethnic group	1	0	1
		Total text responses	1	0	1
		Recodable	0	0	0
	Asian: Total		8	10	18
		Total Other Asian	1	3	3
		Total text responses	1	2	3
		Recodable	0	0	0
	Caribbean or Black: Total		0	1	1
		Total Other Caribbean	0	1	1
		Total text responses	0	1	1
		Recodable	0	0	0
	Other ethnic groups: Total		1	0	1
		Total Other ethnic group	1	0	1
		Total text responses	1	0	1
		Recodable	0	0	0

