

The Census

A **census** is the procedure of systematically recording information about the members of a given population. It usually takes place regularly every few years and is an official count of a particular population.



What is the Census?

In Ireland the Census takes place every five years and counts all the people and households in the country. The census results will give a comprehensive picture of the social and living conditions of our people and will provide vital information necessary for planning Ireland's future.

The census is a detailed account of everybody who is in the country on Census Night. On this night everybody's details are entered on a census form. The census counts everybody so that we know how many people are in the country and we can analyse any changes that have occurred since the previous population counts.

As well as being able to establish our population size, a number of different questions relating to households and individuals are asked in the census. This allows us to find out things such as how people get to work, what sort of accommodation we live in, how many people are in each occupation group and lots more.

When was the last Census?

Census 2006 took place on the night of **Sunday, April 23, 2006**. On that night everybody who was in the country was included in a census form, including people for example staying with friends or relatives, staying in a hotel, hospital, guesthouse or on board a vessel.

The forms were delivered during the month prior to Census Day and collected in the month following the census. The forms were delivered and collected by census enumerators who were employed by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to carry out the census. Enumerators carried official identification and assisted with any difficulties people had in completing the census form.

When is the next Census?

The Government at its meeting held on 11 December 2009 decided that the 2011 census will take place on **Sunday 10 April 2011**.



A major undertaking for the CSO.

The census is the largest statistical operation undertaken by the CSO. It is also the most precise, since the fieldwork must be completed over a relatively short period and a complete count of everybody in the country on Census Night must be obtained.

Why is the Census so important?

The census will give a comprehensive picture of the social and living conditions of our people in 2011. Only a census can provide such complete detail. The census is not, however, an end in itself! Rather the results are essential tools for effective policy, planning and decision making purposes.



Ireland has been conducting Censuses of Population since 1821. This enables us to track developments over a long period of time. The census is therefore a fundamental part of our national heritage and collective knowledge.

At national level current population statistics are essential for planning the provision of health care, education, employment, etc. Regional figures are critical for determining regional policy and for the operation of regional authorities (e.g. Health Boards).

The greatest strength of the census is the detailed population figures it provides, particularly at a local level. These help to identify likely demand for schools and hospitals, areas of relatively high unemployment, the best location for new shops, etc.

Article 16.2 of the Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) lays down that the total membership of Dáil Eireann depends on the population as measured by the census (i.e. 1 TD per 20,000 to 30,000 persons). Constituency reviews normally take place once the definitive results of the census have been published.



The census is also the only means of accurately measuring the exact extent of migration. By comparing the results of successive censuses, and taking account of the number of births and deaths that have occurred over the same period, we get an accurate measure of net migration (the difference between inward and outward migration).

Census History

1821-1831 - After a largely unsuccessful attempt in undertaking a census in 1813, the first full census of Ireland was taken in 1821. The next census was in 1831.

1841 - The first major census, using a household form, was the so-called Great Census of 1841.

1911 - Censuses were subsequently taken at 10 year intervals up to 1911.

1926 - The first census following the formation of the State was undertaken in 1926.

1936-46 - This was followed by censuses in 1936 and 1946.

1951 - Commencing with 1951, censuses have been undertaken at five yearly intervals.

1976 - The census planned for 1976 was cancelled at a late stage as a Government economy measure.

1979 - However, the need for up-to-date population figures resulted in a census being specially undertaken in 1979 with a restricted number of questions.

1981 - This was followed by a full census in 1981. Two censuses 24 months apart should merit a mention for Ireland in the Guinness Book of Records!

1986-96 - The five year interval for holding a census was resumed, with a census in 1986, 1991 and 1996.

2001/2002 - The census was originally due to take place during April 2001. However it was postponed until 2002 due to the foot and mouth disease situation at that time.

2006 - The most recent census was carried out on Sunday 23 April 2006.

(sources: Written document - CSO, Hand image - cdc.gov, group of people - cker.com, silhouette - silhouettesclipart.com, airplane - cso.ie, world map - morriscourse.com)

Census Question Sheet

1. What is a census?

2. How often does a census take place in Ireland?

3. What does the census count?

4. Explain how the data needed for the census is collected.

5. What is Census Night?

6. When was the last census?

7. What is a Census Enumerator?

8. When is the next census of Ireland's population taking place?

9. When was Ireland's first major census?

10. Why is 1926 an important year for the census?

11. Explain what happened in 2001?

12. Explain (in your own words) why the census is so important.

13. In your own opinion do you think the census is necessary, give two reasons for your answer?

14. From working with a census form in class what do you think are the most important sections of the form?

15. At home and at school, how can you make your family and school aware of Census Night?

Mapwork

Using the map of the world below, shade and label clearly TEN countries (excluding Ireland) who are also conducting a census in 2011. Use the internet to help you with this. A very useful website is www.census.gov/ipc/www/cendates

