

Embargoed until 3:00pm – 07 October 2009

Content report for 2011 Census released

Statistics New Zealand has today released its report on the content that will be included in the 2011 Census. The census is the official count of population and dwellings in New Zealand and gives a 'snapshot' of our society at a point in time. It is taken every five years and counts everyone in New Zealand on census night.

The information collected in the census is used to help make a wide range of decisions, ranging from large scale ones like location and funding of hospitals and schools, through to which books to buy for community libraries.

Government Statistician Geoff Bascand said the report is the result of public consultation, evaluation, and testing by Statistics NZ staff.

“As part of that process we took a good hard look at the 2006 Census, the issues people raised, and how useful the information that we ended up with was,” he said.

“One of our key aims for the next census is to produce information that is really useful to organisations as they make key decisions. We also have to keep the census affordable.

“With that in mind, we decided we would make no major changes to the census content and would not introduce any new topics. Instead we have improved questions to enhance the quality of information we gather so it is more useful to decision makers.

“We are also looking at ways of making it easier to take part in the census including improving our online option, forms, and processes,” Geoff Bascand said.

Alongside the census content development, Statistics New Zealand has reviewed the way official ethnicity statistics are collected and reported.

During the 2006 Census there was some debate about the 'New Zealander' answer to the census ethnicity question. The review considered, among other things, whether a tick-box for 'New Zealander' should be provided.

Geoff Bascand said testing showed that adding a tick-box would change the meaning of the question for some people and would alter the information produced.

“This wouldn't be useful to the people who need it to help them make important decisions. For example, monitoring improvements in Māori health.

“In the interests of maintaining consistency over time, we will not make any changes to the ethnicity question in the 2011 Census,” Geoff Bascand said.

For further information see: [2011 Census Content Report](#) and [Final Report of a Review of the Official Ethnicity Statistical Standard 2009](#)

Geoff Bascand
Government Statistician

7 October 2009
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