

This methodological note explains changes made to the headline ethnicity questions on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) during 2011 and their subsequent effect on Annual Population Survey (APS) estimates published on Nomis.

Issue

Changes were made to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) questions on ethnicity in January 2011 to bring them more in line with the questions collected on the 2011 Census. Further changes were made in April 2011 to bring them in line with the 2011 Scottish Census.

This paper explains these changes and the impacts they have had on the ethnicity estimates published on Nomis for the Annual Population Survey (APS):

Background

The main ethnicity question asked in the LFS/APS was altered from:

“To which ethnic group do you consider you belong?” prior to 2011 to

“What is your ethnic group” from January 2011 onwards.

Categories asked in January 2011 to March 2011:

The available options for both old and new questions were very similar:

1. White
2. Mixed (from Jan 2011: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups)
3. Asian or Asian British
4. Black or Black British (from Jan 2011: Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British)
5. Chinese
6. Other ethnic group

Northern Ireland had an additional category included for “Irish Traveller” which was coded as White in all derived variables. The more detailed breakdowns from options 2 to 5 and 6 e.g. Indian, Pakistani etc. were unchanged.

Categories asked April 2011 onwards:

In April 2011 additional changes were made with the addition of the option for “Arab” in all countries and the removal of “Chinese” in Scotland. This results in different sets of questions being asked in England and Wales; Scotland; and Northern Ireland.

England and Wales:

1. White
2. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
3. Asian/ Asian British
4. Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British
5. Chinese
6. Arab

7. Other ethnic group

Scotland:

1. White
2. Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups
3. Asian/ Asian Scottish/ Asian British
4. African
5. Caribbean or Black
6. Arab
7. Other ethnic group

Northern Ireland

1. White
2. Irish Traveller
3. Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
4. Asian/ Asian British
5. Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British
6. Chinese
7. Arab
8. Other ethnic group

Estimates for Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are derived using a subsequent question asked of those who have stated their ethnicity as Asian/ Asian British. Estimates for Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Chinese in Scotland are derived using a subsequent question asked of those who have stated their ethnicity as Asian/ Asian Scottish/ Asian British.

Impact

To ensure that there is sufficient survey coverage the ethnicity categories on Nomis have been combined to produce six categories.

1. White
2. Mixed ethnic group
3. Indians
4. Pakistanis/ Bangladeshis
5. Black or Black British
6. Other ethnic group

The changes to the above series of questions should not alter the number or categories of individuals who are allocated to each of the Nomis categories. It is not practical to produce more detailed estimates (e.g. for Chinese) from the other ethnic group due to the relatively small estimates at local levels of geography.

The table below shows that there are inconsistencies between estimates produced using the different questions. The estimates are also affected by a slight increase in the number of individuals

for who no ethnicity information was available. This is due to an increase in the non-response to the ethnicity questions and to a methodological change where ethnicity data has not been carried forward when a household only partially responds to the survey.

UK estimates for people aged 16+ in each ethnic group as published on Nomis.

	White	Mixed	Indian	Pak/Bang	Black	Other ¹
Apr09Mar10	44,653	366	1,063	927	1,135	1,319
Jul09Jun10	44,706	370	1,064	926	1,161	1,335
Oct09Sep10	44,740	366	1,069	952	1,157	1,376
Jan10Dec10	44,796	365	1,063	976	1,162	1,395
Jan11Dec11	44,665	403	1,127	1,014	1,241	1,447
Apr11Mar12	44,687	411	1,168	1,041	1,238	1,486

Source: Annual Population Survey

1. Includes Chinese, Other Asian, Other ethnic groups.

Conclusion

Due to these inconsistencies ONS has decided not to publish estimates for the APS periods April 2010 to March 2011; July 2010 to June 2011 and October 2010 to September 2011 on Nomis. Instead these estimates will appear with a break in the series. Also, due to the inconsistencies in these estimates they **should not be used as a timeseries** but as one-off estimates of the relative levels of economic activity of the different ethnic groupings. A footnote has been added to the relevant Nomis tables to reflect this.

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