



Census 2011 and Counting Lesbian and Gay Couples and Families

The [Census](#), held every five years and held this year on Sunday 10th April, is a critically important opportunity to gather information on same-sex couples sharing the same household, and in particular on same-sex headed families with children sharing the same household. The census will help to identify a very large but historically hidden population group.

Strong visibility of the numbers of same-sex couples and numbers of same-sex headed families with children and the other demographic information collected in this Census will be critically important in helping to promote further change for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Since the commencement of the Civil Partnership Act from 1st January this year, the legal category of 'marital status' has changed to 'civil status', and now incorporates the previous marital status categories of single, married, widowed etc. and the new categories relating to civil partnership – e.g. in a civil partnership, survivor of a civil partnership etc.

However this has not been included in this census. GLEN, in a submission to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), had sought to include the new legal status in the upcoming census (along with other issues, see below), and a question was included in the Pilot in 2009. According to the CSO, the new legal status has not been included due in part to the fact that the census forms were being finalised and printed in 2010 when it was not yet clear when Civil Partnership would be commenced, and in part to the outcomes on this question from the Census Pilot undertaken in 2009 (see below).

There is however, according to the CSO, an opportunity in the Census for a same-sex couple to record their relationship and it also provides an opportunity to note the relationship with children in the household. This can be done in the two areas of the Census that relate to relationships:

1. Section on Relationship to others in the household, including children.
2. Section on Marital Status

These questions, and other queries about this Census, including issues of confidentiality, are discussed below. Further information on other questions is available at the Census [website](#).

(i) Relationship to Others in the Household Question

This question is filled out by or for all occupants of the household on census night, other than the first person, and asks for the relationship to the first person on the form and between other persons who are in the household.

This question does not fully take into account the new legal status of Civil Partnership, however it does include the category of “Partner (incl. same sex partner)” and allows you to note your relationship to children in the household.

The question on the form is: “**What is your relationship to Person 1?**” (and also to other persons in the household)

4 What is your relationship to Person 1?

Mark one box only.

Relationship of PERSON 2 to	Person 1
Husband or wife	1 <input type="radio"/>
Partner (incl. same-sex partner)	2 <input type="radio"/>
Son or daughter	3 <input type="radio"/>
Step-child	4 <input type="radio"/>
Brother or sister	5 <input type="radio"/>
Mother or father	6 <input type="radio"/>
Grandparent	7 <input type="radio"/>
Step-mother/-father	8 <input type="radio"/>
Son-/daughter-in-law	9 <input type="radio"/>
Grandchild	10 <input type="radio"/>
Other related	11 <input type="radio"/>
Unrelated (incl. foster child)	12 <input type="radio"/>

According to the CSO, if you are a same-sex couple living together or if you are filling out the form for a child or children in the household, you can answer this question in a number of ways:

- If you are in a legal same-sex marriage from another country with ‘Person 1’, or in an Irish civil partnership, or in a [civil partnership from another country that is recognised in Ireland](#) with ‘Person 1’ you can tick the ‘Husband or Wife’ box, or the ‘Partner (incl. same-sex partner)’ box.
- If you are the cohabiting partner of, but not in a legal relationship with ‘Person 1’ you can tick the ‘Partner (incl. same-sex partner)’ box.

- If a child for whom you are filling out the form is your biological or adoptive child, you can tick the 'Son or Daughter' box.
- If a child for whom you are filling out the form is not your biological child, but you are parenting the child, you can tick the 'Step-child' or 'Unrelated' box, whichever is considered appropriate to the situation.

The same patterns of completing the form would apply for the relationships between other members of the household.

The CSO will report on the overall total of same-sex couples who are cohabiting partners, whether they are in a legal relationship or not.

(ii) Marital Status Question

The question on the form is: **"What is your current marital status?"**



5 What is your current marital status?
Answer if aged 15 years or over.
Mark ☒ one box only.

1	<input type="radio"/> Single (never married)
2	<input type="radio"/> Married (first marriage)
3	<input type="radio"/> Re-married (following widowhood)
4	<input type="radio"/> Re-married (following divorce/annulment)
5	<input type="radio"/> Separated (including deserted)
6	<input type="radio"/> Divorced
7	<input type="radio"/> Widowed

According to the CSO you can fill this out in a number of ways:

- If you are in a legal same-sex marriage from another country, you can tick the 'Married' box
- If you are in a legal same-sex civil partnership, either an Irish civil partnership, or one from another country, you can tick the 'Married' box
- If you are cohabiting with your same-sex partner and are not in any legal relationship with them, you can tick the 'Single' box, and you can note your relationship to your partner in the section on relationship to others in the household, as above.
- If you were in a foreign legal same-sex marriage or civil partnership which is now dissolved, you can tick the 'Divorced' box.
- If you were in a foreign legal same-sex marriage or civil partnership and your partner has died, you can tick the 'Widowed' box.
- For some people, for example those who have been or are still in an opposite-sex marriage, other options may be more appropriate (e.g. Separated, Divorced, Widowed).

(iii) No Question on Sexual Orientation.

The Census does not include a specific question on sexual orientation. The issues around including such a question are complex and raise questions around possibilities of non-response etc. It has not been successfully included in any Census in the world to date.

(iv) Results from Previous Census.

The 2006 Census revealed that there were 2,090 same-sex cohabiting couples living in Ireland, which was a significant increase from the 1,300 in 2002 and 150 in 1996. Nearly two thirds of the 2006 couples were male. Interestingly, in an analysis of the US Census of same-sex couples where one or both were Irish, two thirds were women. That [analysis by Dr. Gary Gates of the Williams Institute at UCLA for GLEN](#) showed that there were 1,173 US resident same-sex couples with either both partners Irish (45) or one partner Irish (1,128).

(v) Confidentiality.

The Census Enumerators, who deliver the forms and will collect the completed forms, follow strict confidentiality protocols. If you have concerns about confidentiality in the context of the questions above, there are possibilities for returning the form other than to the Enumerator. Please ask the Enumerator who calls to your house.

(vi) Census Pilots.

GLEN developed a [submission](#) to the CSO in 2008 on the 2011 census which asked the CSO to include any new legal status which would arise from the then forthcoming Civil Partnership Bill, to specifically ask a question on same-sex cohabiting couples, and also asked for a question on sexual orientation to be piloted.

The [CSO piloted two Census forms in April 2009](#) and in those forms tested questions on a new legal marital/civil partnership status and on the relationship between people in the household that took specific account of same-sex couples. The [results](#) of those pilots showed that there was some confusion on the legal status question but that the relationship question including same-sex partner was successful, and was thus included in the final census questionnaire.