

What is a Census?

A census is a count of how many people are living in the country at a set time. It is the most complete source of information about the population that we have.

- The first census was held by the British Government In 1801.
- Since then a census has been held every ten years – the only exception being in 1941, during the Second World War.
- Between 1801 and 1831 the census contained only general information about numbers of people.
- The 1841 census was the first to list the names of every individual in a household, including their addresses, ages, where they were born and their profession. During the following years further questions were added, such as marital status and relationship to the head of the family.
- The latest census was held on Sunday 27 March 2011.

How does it work?

- Personal details which are collected for the census are kept secret for 100 years afterwards: only statistical extracts are published.
- From 1841 to 1901 a pre-printed census schedule was left to be completed by each household. It was then collected by the enumerator who copied the information into an enumeration book. It is these enumeration books that we consult today online and on microfilm.
- If there was no one in the house who could read or write, the enumerator helped to record the information.
- Unfortunately, there can be mistakes in the records, as the enumerator would be transcribing the information from the original schedules and could be recording incorrect information from illiterate households

1801: The First Census

- This was taken on 10th March 1801 as part of the Population Act of 1800.
- It may have been prompted by a fear that the population was growing so quickly that there would not be enough food.
- Details were recorded by *"the Rector, Vicar, Curate, or Officiating Minister, and Overseers of the Poor, or (in Default thereof) by some substantial Householder, of every Parish, Township, and Place...in England; and by the Schoolmasters or other Persons to be appointed...for every Parish in Scotland;..."*
- Individuals and their names were not recorded.
- The census asked just 5 questions to find out the number of:
 1. Inhabited houses, occupied by how many families.
 2. Persons, male and female, in each area.
 3. People employed in agriculture, trade, manufactures, or handicraft; and how many in none of these.
 4. Baptisms and burials in the years 1700-1800, distinguishing males from females.
 5. Marriages in each year from 1754-end of 1800.

1841 Census

This was the first census to ask detailed questions about individuals. It recorded:

- Name and surname.
- Age (rounded down).
- Gender.
- Occupation.
- Whether born in the county.
- Whether born outside England & Wales.

Limitations of census:

- Relationships were not collected.
- Ages were unreliable: the age of individuals older than 15 years were rounded down to the lower multiple of 5.
- Specific birthplaces were not provided.

County *Stafford* 90
City or Borough of *Stafford*
Parish or Township of *West Bromwich* Enumeration Schedule 53

PLACE	HOUSES		NAMES of each Person who abode therein the preceding Night.	AGE and SEX		PROFESSION, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT, or of INDEPENDENT MEANS.	Where Born		
	Number of Houses in Building	Number of Houses Inhabited		Male	Female		Within this County	Within England & Wales	Foreign
<i>Millington</i>	1		<i>John Holland</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Coal Miner</i>			
			<i>Mary do</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>F</i>				
			<i>John do</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>M</i>				
			<i>Eliza do</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>F</i>				
			<i>William do</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>M</i>				
			<i>Thomas do</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>M</i>				
			<i>Harriet do</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>F</i>				
<i>West Bromwich</i>	1		<i>Robert Waller</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Laborer</i>			
			<i>Mary do</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>F</i>				<i>France</i>
			<i>William do</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>M</i>				
<i>do</i>	1		<i>Thomas Hester</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Boysman</i>			
			<i>Mary do</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>F</i>				
			<i>Mary Jane do</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>F</i>				
			<i>John do</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>M</i>				
TOTAL in Page 90			<i>13</i>		<i>169</i>				

1911 Census

This is the first census where the householder's schedule has remained the master entry, rather than the enumerator's notes. This means that if the householder was literate, it is their actual handwriting on the entry.

Additional information provided:

- For married women
 - How long they have been married
 - Total number of children
 - How many are still surviving
 - The number that have died

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in INK.

Number of Schedule... 159
(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is divulged with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND RESIDENCE	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	SEX and AGE	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Person aged ten years and upwards				BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every Person	DEFICIENCY
			Married	Widow	Single	Divorced	Profession or Occupation	Industry or Service with which worker is connected	Employment Status	Employment Status			
Joseph Brambley	Head	55	Married	16	3	2	1	Domestic Engineer	850	170	Widow	England	
Joseph Brambley	Wife	43	Married	16	3	2	1	Domestic Engineer	850	170	Widow	England	
John Brambley	Son	11	Single					Domestic Engineer	850	170	Widow	England	
John Brambley	Son	7	Single					Domestic Engineer	850	170	Widow	England	
Elizabeth Brambley	Daughter	9	Single					Domestic Engineer	850	170	Widow	England	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: Joseph Brambley
Printed Name: Joseph Brambley
Printed Address: 12, Corporation Street, Dudley

- Relating to professions or trade
 - Rather than simply stating "occupation" as in the previous census, the 1911 census asks for the "Industry/service with which worker is connected" and the "Employment status".

What can we find out?

1. Information about a particular family or household:

- How many people lived at the address
- Who they were
- Their ages
- Their occupations
- Tracing their movements by comparing census documents from different periods. The 'where born' column can show where the parents came from and where they were living when their children were born.

2. More contextual information about a town, county or country:

- Population statistics
- Rural and urban areas
- Employment trends, including a comparison between male and female roles
- Birth, Marriage, Death (BMD) statistics

What can we find out?

Example 1: The Webb Family in 1901

Administrative County		Civil Parish		Ecclesiastical Parish		County Borough, Municipal Borough or Urban District		Ward of Municipal Borough or of Urban District		Rural District		Parliamentary Borough or Division		Town or Village or Hamlet		Page 7		
Stafford		Sedgley		St. Mary's		Sedgley		St. Mary's		Stafford		St. Mary's		Sedgley				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
Household	Uninhabited	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Sex	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN	Deaf and Dumb		Blind		Lunatic		Imbecile, feeble-minded		
34	1	Elizabeth Wright	Head	W	72				Stafford									
		James B. Wright	Wife	M	23	Iron Works (Hollom)	Worker		Stafford									
		Elizabeth Wright	Wife	M	24				do									
		James B. Wright	Son	M	6				do									
		Infant B. Wright	Son	M	4				do									
35	1	Marion Jackson	Head	W	37	Pattern	Owner		Stafford									
		Robert Jackson	Son	M	8				do									
		Harriet Jackson	Wife	M	35				do									
		Elizabeth Jackson	Wife	M	34	General Domestic			do									
36	1	William Buttidge	Head	M	42	Coal Miner	Worker		Stafford									
		Ann Buttidge	Wife	M	39				do									
		Edith Buttidge	Son	M	5	Iron Works	Worker		do									
		Mary Buttidge	Son	M	10				do									
		Helena Buttidge	Son	M	12				do									
		Eliza Buttidge	Son	M	9				do									
		William Buttidge	Son	M	5				do									
		John Buttidge	Son	M	2				do									
37	1	Henry Webb	Head	M	52	Coal Miner	Worker		Stafford									
		Mary Webb	Wife	M	50				do									
		Samuel Webb	Son	M	25				do									
		Samuel Webb	Son	M	22	Moulder (Sad Iron)			do									
		Helena Webb	Son	M	13				do									
		Mary Webb	Son	M	10				do									
		Samuel Webb	Son	M	10				do									
		James Webb	Son	M	6				do									
		John Webb	Son	M	3				do									
		John Webb	Son	M	2				do									
4	4	Total of Males and of Females...		16	16													

Town: Sedgley

Webb Family
Street address
– 11 Brook
Road

Number of People living at 11 Brook Road (9 in total). Notice they are listed in age order – with the oldest first.

Relationship to Henry Webb (Head of Family). Notice the use of the abbreviation “daur” for daughter.

Whether married or unmarried. This enables us to deduce that Sarah Howarth is Henry’s married daughter.

Occupation:

- Henry Webb is a Coal Miner (Hewer)
- Samuel Webb is a Moulder (Sad Iron)

Place of Birth. (Notice the use of the abbreviation “do” for ditto, to save repeating the same words).

What can we find out?

Example 2: Population Growth in England & Wales

Year	1801 Census	1841 Census	1911 Census
People	8,892,536	15,914,148	36,070,492
Inhabited Houses	1,467,870	2,753,295	Not returned
Families	1,806,723	Not returned	8,005,290

What can we find out?

Example 3: 1911 Employment Statistics

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
Coal & Shale Mine - Workers at the face	503,294	0	503,294
Iron Founders (Of which Moulders, Core Makers)	102,191 56,784	322 281	102,513 57,065
Brass Founders	20,180	2802	22,982
Tube Manufacture	8984	66	9050
Nail Manufacture	2925	1685	4610
Anchor, Chain Manufacture	5194	2129	7323
Lock, Key-Maker	5258	1150	6408
Gas Fittings Makers	4858	3223	8081

Tips to Understanding the Census

Instructions to the census taker were to list only those persons who spent the night in each household when the census was taken. Those traveling, staying at boarding schools, or working away from home were listed where they spent the night. You will notice “visitor” stated on some census records.

Names of individuals can change from one census to another (this can be due to spelling errors or the use of shortened forms of the name or nicknames).

Abbreviation /Symbol	Definition
'do' or “	Short for 'ditto' and means "the same as the above". It saved the enumerator having to repeat the same occupation or the same surname.
Daur	Daughter
M or Mar	Married
U or Un	Unmarried
//	The end of each building is shown with two slashes
/	The end of each household in a building is shown with one slash