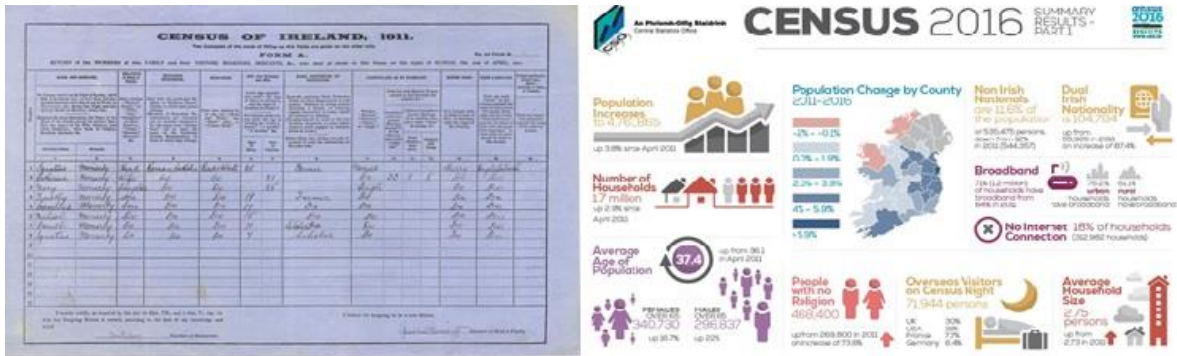


Introduction to Irish Family History: 1 Evidence in the Census



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Census of Ireland

Almost all the 19th century Census of Ireland was destroyed. Less than 1% of the original survives, and is published online on www.findmypast.com

The first complete census of Ireland that survives is 1901 and then 1911.

There was no census in 1921 because of the War of Independence. The next Census of Ireland was in 1926, and only covers the territory of the Irish Free State (later the Irish Republic).

The Census form that we are all familiar with, is the Form A, for individual households or families.

Form A Return of the Members of the Family, their Visitors, Boarders, Servants [present on the census night]

- ▶ search by forename and surname; county; townland; DED;
- ▶ By gender or age cohort.
- ▶ Relationship to head of household ; Religion; Literacy; Occupation; Marital status; County of birth; Language proficiency; Illness.
- ▶ And in the 1911 Census, search the question asked of married women – the Number of years married; Number of live births; Number of children still living at time of census.

Don't pass over the B1 and B2 forms, they contain a lot of evidence about living conditions and the type of farming / manufactory that was practised.

Form B1 House & Building Return

The B forms contain detailed evidence about your ancestors' living conditions.

I've assigned a number of each cell, reading from L-R of the form.

Cell #1: Number of house or building (will corroborate with Form As, and with the name of 'head of household' in cell #13).

Cell #4 records the number of outhouses attached to each building. (This is done in even more detail in the B2 forms).

(Cells#6-#11) Particulars of inhabited houses.

- Walls - built of Stone/Brick/ Concrete OR of Mud (Cob)/ Wood/ Perishable material
- Roof – Slate/ Iron/ Tile OR Thatch/ Wood / Perishable material
- Number of windows to the front of the house.
- Rating of house - this information was used to compile statistics of national housing stock, and was shared with local government.

(Cells #12-18) Information on Families

#12 the number of families in a tenement building

#13 Name of head of household – this is useful when looking at families in tenements.

#14 Number of rooms occupied #15

Number of people in family

#18 Name of landowner on whose holding the building is situated. If you compare the evidence in 1901 and 1911, you will often see that your ancestor bought the land / holding in the intervening decade.

Form B2 Return of Outbuildings & Farm-steadings

The B2 provides rich details on farming and manufactory in Ireland.

It records the number of each type of outbuilding that each household had:

Every Stable, Coach House, Harness Room, Cow House, Calf House, Dairy, Piggery, Fowl House, Boiling House, Barn, Turf House, Potato House, Workshop, Shed, Store, Forge, Laundry, Others.

The total number of outbuildings for each household is recorded. As a rule of thumb, the more outbuildings a family/ household has, the more prosperous they are. You can

The range of outhouses can indicate whether your ancestors practised mixed farming, or if they specialised.

In the countryside, even people on small-holdings might have a pig-house or Fowl-house, in which case we know they probably had regular protein in their diet.

If your family had a 'turf-house' then this was probably how they heated their house, and cooked their food. Turf-smoke has a distinctive woody odour, so now you may even be able to say what your ancestors house smelt like.

The Census of Ireland has other forms, for Shipping and for residents of institutions:

Many institutions don't name their residents and recorded only their initials. Depending on the type of institution, other information may be recorded in the census, that allows you to identify your ancestor (age, occupation, marital status, place of birth).

- ▶ Form B3: Shipping return.
- ▶ Form C: Return of the sick at their own homes.
- ▶ Form D: Return of lunatics and idiots not in institutions.
- ▶ Form E: Workhouse return.
- ▶ Form F: Hospital return.
- ▶ Form G: College and Boarding-School return.
- ▶ Form H: Barrack return.
- ▶ Form I: Return of Idiots and Lunatics in institutions.
- ▶ Form K: Prison return.

Using the Census

For the best research results, always use the Form A, with the B1 (House & Building Return) and B2 (Our-offices & Farmsteading) forms.

1. Read every cell carefully.
2. Don't rely on the index or transcript, read the original record.
3. Search for all variant spellings of family names, including with and without the O and Mac. Also, if you can't find your ancestor or person of interest, extend out the ages of the people you're searching for; or work out from a central district (townland/ parish/ barony/ county).
4. These are primary sources – contemporary to events and made by eye-witnesses. Even contemporary sources can contain errors/ typos.
5. Compare the 1901 and 1911 Census, for changes in family circumstances.
6. Ask questions of your sources/ use deductive reasoning.
7. The census defines family relationships relative to the 'head of household'. Look to see who are the other people in the house?
8. Use other sources to verify information in the census.

Further reading:

The CSO has published *The History of Census in Ireland*

<https://www.cso.ie/en/census/censusthroughhistory/>

Counting the People: A survey of the Irish Censuses, 1813-1911, E. Margaret Crawford, (Four Courts, 2003).