



# Ten Facts About 200 Years of the Census

1. Census forms are secret for 100 years.
2. 1911-1991 census forms for England and Wales are kept by National Statistics in secure storage. The forms occupy about 60 miles of linear shelving. The Public Records Office stores census forms dating from earlier censuses.
3. The English and Welsh forms from the 2001 Census will occupy over 40 miles of linear shelving. Images of the forms will be stored on 15,000 reels of microfilm and for the first time since 1841, the paper records will be destroyed and the paper recycled.
4. In the 1700s some people believed that a census would bring the wrath of God down on the country because a census of the Israelites ordered by King David was followed by a plague, which killed 70,000 people.
5. From 1871 the census asked if people were 'lunatics' and 'imbeciles' or 'idiots'. In 1881, the then Registrar General commented: "*It is against human nature to expect a mother to admit her young child to be an idiot, however much she may fear this to be true. To acknowledge the fact is to abandon all hope.*" Enquiries into infirmities ceased after 1911.
6. The complete 1881 Census is available on CD-ROM. It took approximately ten years to completely transcribe and index the census records of the 26 million people.
7. Family historians use the census to trace their family trees. There are around 500,000 visits to the Family Record Centre in London each year to view census records, birth, marriage and death registers.
8. The population of Britain has increased approximately 6 fold (ten million to sixty million people) between 1801 and 2001, which is about the same rate as the global population.
9. In 1831, London and Middlesex had a population density of 8 residents per acre, compared with 17 residents per acre in Greater London in 1991. The British average is almost one resident per acre, in Wales it is 0.5. Hong Kong has 24 residents per acre.
10. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, census results were entirely compiled by clerks. In 1911, punched cards were introduced into the processing and the first computer was used in 1961. In 2001, the census data will be scanned straight from forms into a computer.