

Response to consultation on possible content of 2011 Census

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Organisation(s) represented

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Topic or classification

Category 1 topics: Religion

If responding about a classification, which topics are required to derive it?

1. Why is the information required?

Please indicate if the information is used for resource allocation purposes.

The MCB reaffirms the importance of the Religion question in the 2011 Census. The census output is essential for resource allocation, service delivery, the work of community voluntary organisations and for the provision of goods and services in the commercial sector.

A. Some examples of the use of religion data in resource planning and allocation are:

1. Employment/labour market

See 'British Muslims and the labour market' in 'Muslims in the UK: Policies for Engaged Citizens', Open Society Institute (2005)

2. Housing

See 'Briefing on the census profiles of Muslims in London' by the Data Management and Analysis Group (DMAG) of the Greater London Authority (2005)

See report of the Housing Corporation, 'Muslim Housing experiences' (2004)

3. Healthcare

Report of the London Health Commission 2004

<http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/assetRoot/04/01/76/01/04017601.pdf>

Response to Q1. continued:

4. An understanding of Muslim demographic profile for the academic community and policy researchers

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sociology/ethnicitycitizenship/intromuslims_census.pdf

B. Service Delivery by Central and Local Government

This is best highlighted by the publication of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which relies on census data and census geographies (super output area). The young age profile of the Muslim community (one third are aged under 15) means that it is a highly dynamic group and it is vital to be informed of its changing characteristics in future Census.

C. Community voluntary organisations

Institutions such as the Muslim Council of Britain have found census output invaluable for its advocacy work and in planning community development projects. The Census provided the first authoritative data on Muslim demographics. The ONS's decision to make census output freely and easily available through CDs and its web site has made a qualitative difference in the way community organisations can make their case to funding agencies and central and local government. The report from the ONS 'Focus on Religion' (October 2004) has been much appreciated, highlighting problems in health, employment and educational attainment. A Muslim community portal has described it as a "land-mark report that is essential reading for service providers in local government and advocacy bodies in the community".

D. Provision of goods and services by the private sector

Muslim demographics have been extensively used by financial institutions offering shariah compliant products to the community. Census data has helped in deciding on the location of retail outlets and marketing campaigns.

[A comprehensive list of literature citations to religion data in the 2001 Census in reports relating to resource planning and allocation can be provided on request]

2. Why is this information required for small population groups and/or small geographies?

Cross-tabulations of religion against other census variables are needed at ward and census output area level (subject to confidentiality and disclosure criteria) because of the nature of settlement patterns and the geographical targeting levels with higher deprivation. Analysis of 2001 data has shown that within a ward, there are marked differences in the characteristics of its constituent census output areas and super output areas. The use of SOA's by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 demonstrates the need for greater granularity than available at ward level – see (http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=4610&l=3)

3. What assessment of alternative source of information has been carried out? What would be the impact of using the next best alternative?

The MCB acknowledges that surveys such as the Labour Force Survey, Home Office Citizenship Survey and the Health Survey for England include a religion question; there is no substitute to the 100% sample size and breadth provided by the national census. In fact the religion question in the national census is essential for the survey design of other smaller sample size surveys.

4. Which other topics, if any, are required for multivariate analyses together with this topic?

This is an important area for further research. The MCB would encourage studies that explore the relationship between religion and ethnicity in terms of socio-economic outcomes, particularly in the labour market. Cross tabulations providing greater ethnic breakdowns of current ethnicity categories by religion and other variables is of particular importance for Muslims as many groups are 'hidden' under umbrella categories such as white or white other. Studies have shown that Muslims from a wide array of groups, such as Arabs and Eastern Europeans classify themselves under such broad heading when asked to. This however does not allow for exploration of disadvantage amongst specific Muslim ethnic communities.

5. Why is it important that this information is available for the UK as a whole?

- (i) Religious (faith) communities are to be found in all parts of the UK
- (ii) It is important to have the ability to compare different regions and localities e.g. in terms of monitoring effectiveness of service delivery.
- (iii) Religion is increasingly being recognised as an important variable for measuring and understanding the socio economic positions of communities

6. Will this information ensure continuity with previous Censuses?

Yes

7. Do you have any other comments relevant to this consultation?

1. The religion question was the only voluntary one in the 2001 Census. The low level of null responses confirms the acceptability of the question. It should be a mandatory question in the 2011 Census. If there are additional voluntary questions in the 2011 Census then there will be more non-responses because of the inclination to ignore all voluntary questions.
2. The way the question was phrased should stand i.e. seeking to establish religious affiliation rather than depth of practice.
3. There is no desire to include denominational breakdowns.
4. It would be desirable to have consistency in the wording of the question for England & Wales and Scotland
5. More cross tabulations at the Ward (and subject to confidentiality, COA level) for religion against other census variables i.e. for a given religion-ethnicity combination, data on health, economic activity, housing tenure.

Responses may be made public and may be attributed to respondents

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