



Community Background and Religion

A new output variable Community Background, based on religion and religion brought up in, was introduced for the 2001 Census. A religion question has always been included in the Census in Northern Ireland. Since 1971 a sizeable proportion of the population have declined to answer the question. In addition, the 1991 Census included a 'None' category and together with the 'Not Stated' responses these accounted for 11 per cent of the population. To facilitate statutory equality monitoring the 1999 Census White Paper announced that the religion question in the 2001 Census would be extended to include an additional question on religion brought up in, to be asked only of those without a current religion.

The Community Background variable records a person's current religion, if any, or the religion brought up in for those people who do not regard themselves as currently belonging to any religion. 'None' is a valid Community Background category. The other categories are 'Catholic', 'Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)' and 'Other religions and philosophies'. However, as for the use of all statistics, the choice of appropriate data should be informed by the objectives of the research, and there will be occasions when use of the religion variable is more appropriate than the use of the Community Background variable.

The published Standard Tables report at Northern Ireland Level includes several tables cross-tabulating Community Background with other Census variables. Where a similar table is included for religion the same table number is used with the addition of an 'A' (e.g. S305 and S305A). For those tables in the report presented using Community Background only, equivalent tables by religion are available on the website. These are included in the main list of tables for each geographical level and have the same table number, as the corresponding Community Background table, with the addition of an 'A'. The Key Statistics product also includes tables for both Community Background and Religion (KS7b and KS7a).