

BACKGROUND TO THE RELIGION AND 'RELIGION BROUGHT UP IN' QUESTIONS IN THE CENSUS, AND THEIR ANALYSIS IN 2001 AND 2011

January 2013
Updated June 2017

Guidance Note

1. Introduction

The 2011 Census contained a question on current religion and a supplementary question on 'religion brought up in' that was asked only of those respondents who had no religion. This short paper describes the background to the religion questions in the Census, and their analysis. The paper covers the background to the inclusion of the question and its form, a description of the statistical analysis of the question in 2001 and 2011, and a short discussion of the results from 2001 and 2011.

Figure 1 2011 Census questions on Religion Belong to (Question 17) and Religion Brought Up (Question 18)

17 What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?

Roman Catholic ➔ Go to **19**

Presbyterian Church in Ireland ➔ Go to **19**

Church of Ireland ➔ Go to **19**

Methodist Church in Ireland ➔ Go to **19**

Other, write in ➔ Go to **19**

None

18 What religion, religious denomination or body were you brought up in?

Roman Catholic

Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Church of Ireland

Methodist Church in Ireland

Other, write in

None

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2. Why does the Census have separate questions for 'religion' and 'religion brought up in', and separate outputs for 'religion' and 'religion or religion brought up in'?

A religion question has been included in every Northern Ireland Census. The Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969¹ indicates that, unlike other questions in the Census, there is no penalty for not completing the question about religion. Accordingly in recent Censuses, a number of respondents have not answered the religion question, and further respondents have indicated "None". In line with the Census experience in other western countries, the proportion of the population who do not identify with a particular religion has increased in recent decades. In the 1991 Northern Ireland Census, for instance, these levels reached 7 per cent of respondents who declined to answer the religion question and 4 per cent who indicated "None".

Equality legislation, in particular The Northern Ireland Act 1998², makes it an offence to discriminate on the grounds of religion, and leads to the requirement, for example, for employers to maintain monitoring information on the religion of their employees. In this respect, guidance documents from the Equality Commission³ refer to the 'community background' of employees. The Equality Commission document notes that (with regard to equality monitoring forms):

"Regardless of whether we practice religion, most of us in Northern Ireland are seen as either Catholic or Protestant. We are therefore asking you to indicate your community background by ticking the appropriate box below".

In response to the increasing proportion of the population who indicated that they had no religion or did not reply to the question, and to aid equality

¹ 'The Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969' is available from:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/apni/1969/8>

² 'The Northern Ireland Act 1998' is available from:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/contents>

³ More information is available from 'A Step by Step Guide to Monitoring' – Appendix 3, Page 38:

<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/Monitoring%20and%20review/StepbyStepguide2011updated26-2-14.pdf?ext=.pdf>

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monitoring, it was proposed that an additional question be asked in the 2001 Census – about religion brought up in – but asked only of those who indicated that they did not belong to any current religion. This was announced in the White Paper⁴ published in 1999 that contained proposals for the 2001 Census.

Accordingly two sets of outputs associated with religion were produced for the 2001 Census. The first output was based solely on the 'current religion' question. The percentage of the population who either did not complete the religion question, or indicated 'None' as their religion, was 14 per cent compared with 11 per cent in 1991. A second output was produced entitled "Community background (religion or religion brought up in)" that combined the responses to the questions on religion and 'religion brought up in'. Further detail on the analysis of the religion and 'religion brought up in' questions in 2001 can be found in 'The methodological approach to the 2001 Census' paper on the NISRA website⁵.

A similar approach has been taken in the 2011 Census, as indicated in the Proposals Paper⁶ published in 2010 and the Privacy Impact Assessment⁷ for the 2011 Census.

The publication of two distinct outputs, based respectively on religion and 'religion or religion brought up in', provides users with a range of information designed to meet their specific requirements.

⁴ More information is available from 'The 2001 Census of Population' – Section 66:
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2001-census-white-paper>

⁵ More information is available from 'The methodological approach to the 2001 Census' – Appendix B: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/Methodological-approach-to-the-2001-census.pdf>

⁶ 'The 2011 Census of Population in Northern Ireland – Proposals' is available from:
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2011-census-proposals-document>

⁷ 'Privacy Impact Assessment' is available from: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2011-census-privacy-impact-assessment>

3. The analysis of the religion question in 2001

This section summarises the analysis of the religion question in the 2001 Census; it largely reproduces material originally presented within a paper published at the time of the 2001 Census – The methodological approach to the 2001 Census⁵ – and the summary below is presented here for the sake of completeness.

The estimated Census Day population in 2001 was 1,685k, of whom 1,604k (95 per cent) were enumerated in Census returns. The responses to the religion question for the enumerated population are summarised in Table 1 below. Respondents could reply stating that they had 'no religion'. Further, as described above, Census legislation states that there is no penalty for not responding to the question on religion. Accordingly, a Census return that leaves the religion question unanswered ('not stated') was accepted and treated as a valid response.

Table 1 'Religion' (2001 Census) – enumerated population

	Number	Percentage
Catholic	640,025	39.9
Protestant and other Christian	741,940	46.3
Other religions and philosophies	4,662	0.3
No religion or not stated	217,013	13.5
Enumerated population	1,603,640	100.0

Early in the processing of the 2001 Census data, the 'no religion' responses and blank ('not stated') responses were inadvertently collapsed together, and consequently cannot be reported separately. Analysis of raw data returns suggests that approximately 10 per cent of the enumerated population stated 'no religion' and 4 per cent left the question unanswered ('not stated') – these figures are based on raw non-cleansed data and should be treated as

indicative of the distribution of the 217k people in the penultimate row in Table 1.

The remaining 82k unenumerated people (5 per cent of the Census Day population) were statistically imputed. For each case, a complete Census return was created through statistical modelling. This imputed Census return included religion – both 'no religion' and 'not stated' were permissible imputed values. Aggregating the enumerated returns and the imputed cases gives the best estimate of the religion of the Northern Ireland population on Census Day 2001, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 'Religion' (2001 Census) – whole population

	Enumerated persons	Enumerated persons (per cent)	Imputed persons (persons)	Imputed persons (per cent)	Whole population (persons)	Whole population (per cent)
Catholic	640,025	39.9	38,437	47.1	678,462	40.3
Protestant and other Christian	741,940	46.3	25,984	31.8	767,924	45.6
Other religions and philosophies	4,662	0.3	366	0.4	5,028	0.3
No religion or not stated	217,013	13.5	16,840	20.6	233,853	13.9
Population	1,603,640	100	81,627	100	1,685,267	100

The final two columns of Table 2 above reflect the published Census output for Religion from the 2001 Census. The published outputs also provide a breakdown of the main denominations within 'Protestant and other Christian'. The outputs can be accessed through the NISRA website⁸.

⁸ More information on 2001 Census results is available from: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2001-census/results>

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The religion outputs include 234k people (13.9 per cent) who were either 'no religion' or 'not stated'. These people were invited to indicate the religion in which they were brought up. Some 153k of these people (66 per cent) provided information on the religion in which they were brought up ('none' was a valid response), while the information was not provided by remaining 81k people (34 per cent). The item imputation methodology, employed for all other Census variables, was used to impute a 'religion brought up in' for these 81k people. The distributions for these two groups are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3 'Religion brought up in' (2001 Census) – those who stated 'no religion' or did not reply to the 'current religion' question

	Gave religion brought up in (persons)	Gave religion brought up in (per cent)	Did not give religion brought up in – imputed (persons)	Did not give religion brought up in – imputed (per cent)
Catholic	27,044	17.7	31,906	39.6
Protestant and other Christian	82,680	54.0	44,773	55.5
Other religions and philosophies	1,075	0.7	466	0.6
None	42,384	27.7	3,525	4.4
All religions brought up in	153,183	100	80,670	100

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Bringing together the data for those who stated a current religion (Table 2) and the 'religion brought up in' for the others (Table 3), produces the 'Religion/Religion brought up in' output from the 2001 Census, summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4 'Religion/Religion brought up' – 2001 Census

	Religion (persons)	Religion (per cent)	Religion brought up in (persons)	Religion brought up in (per cent)	Religion or religion brought up in (persons)	Religion or religion brought up in (per cent)
Catholic	678,462	40.3	58,950	3.5	737,412	43.8
Protestant and other Christian	767,924	45.6	127,453	7.6	895,377	53.1
Other religions and philosophies	5,028	0.3	1,541	0.1	6,569	0.4
None	-	-	45,909	2.7	45,909	2.7
Population	1,451,414	86.1	233,853	13.9	1,685,267	100

Note that in Table 4, all percentages are based on the Census Day population of 1,685,267 in order to demonstrate how the population percentages for each grouping were accumulated. The final two columns of Table 4 correspond to the published output for 'religion/religion brought up in' in 2001 (also termed Community Background at that time).

4. The analysis of the religion question in 2011

The section below describes how the published 'religion/religion brought up in' figures were constructed in 2011.

Some 1,721k people were included on processed Census returns, of which 68k people were estimated through administrative data from the Health Card Register. Further detail on this is provided in the Quality Assurance Reports that have accompanied Census outputs. In essence, for addresses from which a Census return was not obtained, data from the Health Card Register were examined for people at that address who were active (for example, visiting a dentist within the recent past, obtaining a prescription etc...). For any such address where an 'active' person was identified, the Health Card Register was used to create a skeleton Census return (including age and sex) for all persons at that address. Throughout the rest of the Census process, these records were treated as full Census returns albeit containing just the key demographic variables of age and sex. Accordingly, 1,721k people (95 per cent) were treated statistically as having made a Census return. The responses to the religion question are summarised in Table 5 below. Note that 'respondents' generated from the Health Card Register were all considered as having not completed the religion question.

Table 5 'Religion' (2011 Census) – enumerated population

	Number	Per cent
Catholic	696,581	40.5
Protestant and other Christian	728,315	42.3
Other religions and philosophies	13,482	0.8
No religion or not stated	281,907	16.4
Enumerated population (including those from Health Card Registers)	1,720,645	100

A further 90k unenumerated people (5 per cent of the Census Day population) were estimated to be resident in Northern Ireland on Census Day, leading to a Census Day population estimate of 1,811k. As in 2001, full Census records were generated statistically for these 90k imputed cases, including a response to the religion question that may have been 'no religion' or 'not stated'. Table 6 below summarises the Religion or Religion Brought Up of the imputed persons, and aggregates this with the statistics for the enumerated population.

Table 6 'Religion' (2011 Census) – whole population

	Enumerated persons	Enumerated persons (per cent)	Imputed persons (persons)	Imputed persons (per cent)	Estimated population (persons)	Estimated population (per cent)
Catholic	696,581	40.5	41,452	45.9	738,033	40.8
Protestant and other Christian	728,315	42.3	24,240	26.9	752,555	41.6
Other religions and philosophies	13,842	0.8	1,017	1.1	14,859	0.8
No religion or not stated	281,907	16.4	23,509	26.1	305,416	16.9
Population	1,720,645	100	90,218	100	1,810,863	100

The final two columns of Table 6 reflect the published figures for Religion in the 2011 Census.

As in 2001, those who did not have a current religion, or did not respond to the religion question, were asked about in which religion they had been brought up, with 'none' being a valid response. Of the 305k people who did not have a current religion, or did not respond to the religion question, 171k answered the question about the religion in which they were brought up (56 per cent), while the information was not provided by the remaining 135k (44 per cent). For the

latter group, statistical item imputation techniques – as applied to all other Census variables – were applied to impute a 'religion brought up in'.

Table 7 below summarises the statistics from the 'religion brought up in' variable, for those who had 'no religion' or did not respond to the religion question in 2011.

Table 7 'Religion brought up in' (2011 Census) – those who with 'no religion' or did not respond to the 'current religion' question

	Gave religion brought up in (persons)	Gave religion brought up in (per cent)	Did not give religion brought up in – imputed (persons)	Did not give religion brought up in – imputed (per cent)
Catholic	24,007	14.1	55,345	41.1
Protestant and other Christian	63,327	37.1	59,835	44.4
Other religions and philosophies	792	0.5	941	0.7
None	82,663	48.4	18,506	13.7
All religions brought up in	170,789	100	134,627	100

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Bringing together the religion for those who stated a current religion (Table 6) and the 'religion brought up in' for the others (Table 7), produces the 'Religion/Religion brought up in' output from the 2011 Census, summarised in table 8 below.

Table 8 'Religion/Religion brought up' – 2011 Census

	Religion (persons)	Religion (per cent)	Religion brought up in (persons)	Religion brought up in (per cent)	Religion or religion brought up in (persons)	Religion or religion brought up in (per cent)
Catholic	738,033	40.8	79,352	4.4	817,385	45.1
Protestant and other Christian	752,555	41.6	123,162	6.8	875,717	48.4
Other religions and philosophies	14,859	0.8	1,733	0.1	16,592	0.9
None	-	-	101,169	5.6	101,169	5.6
Population	1,505,447	83.1	305,416	16.9	1,810,863	100

Note that in Table 8, all percentages are based on the population of 1,810,863 in order to demonstrate how the population percentages for each grouping were accumulated. The final two columns of Table 8 correspond to the published output for 'religion/religion brought up in' in 2011.

5. Comparing and reconciling the statistics on 'religion/religion brought up in' from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses

The 'Religion/Religion Brought up in' figures from 2001 and 2011 are summarised in Table 9.

Table 9 'Religion/Religion Brought up in' – 2001 and 2011 Censuses

	2001 (number)	2001 (per cent)	2011 (number)	2011 (per cent)	Change from 2001 to 2011 (number)
Catholic	737,412	43.8	817,385	45.1	+79,973
Protestant and other Christian	895,377	53.1	875,717	48.4	-19,660
Other religions and philosophies	6,569	0.4	16,592	0.9	+10,023
None	45,909	2.7	101,169	5.6	+55,260
Population	1685,267	100	1,810,863	100	+125,596

In the following section, the four groups above are referred to as Catholic, Protestant, Other and None, and the phrase "Religion/Religion Brought up in" is not used, merely to make the text more readable. Table 9 shows that between Census Day 2001 and Census Day 2011, the total population of Northern Ireland increased by 126k, with increases in the numbers of Catholics (+80k), Nones (+55k) and Others (+10k), and a reduction in the number of Protestants (-20k).

Factors that will cause increases or decreases in population numbers

Changes in the population number will be driven primarily by three demographic factors; namely births, deaths and migration. Some 232,100

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births and 142,800 deaths were registered in Northern Ireland between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. Consequently, a total population change of 125,600 suggests a net in-migration effect of 36,700. To what extent can the effects of these factors be linked to the four population groups in Table 9?

Examination of the 2001 Census statistics show that, overall, Protestants constituted 53.1 per cent of the population. The Protestant population has a relatively old age-profile, demonstrated by the Protestant share of the population being higher among the older age groups. Thus, for example, in 2001 Protestants made up less than 50 per cent of children but constituted 70 per cent of people aged 75 and above, leading to a Protestant/Catholic ratio among people aged 75 and above of roughly 2:1. Conversely, the Catholic share of the population broadly decreases with increasing age. The age distributions from the 2001 Census can be seen in Standard Table 305 on the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) website⁹

It is well established that age-specific mortality rates increase with age, and accordingly that most deaths occur among the older population. Further background on this can be found, for example, in the Annual Report of the Registrar General¹⁰.

Religion information is not collected as part of the death registration process. A reasonable assumption can be made that similar age-specific mortality rates should apply across the population groups. Making this assumption, applying common age-specific mortality rates to the 2001 age distributions, and constraining the number of deaths between the Censuses to 142,800, it is estimated that – of those who died between 2001 and 2011 – there were 95,000 Protestants, 46,000 Catholics, 300 'Others' and 1,100 'Nones'.

Religion information is similarly not collected as part of the birth registration process. However, the Department of Education collect religion information on

⁹ Table 'Age by Sex and Community Background (Religion or Religion Brought Up In) S305 (administrative geographies)' is available from:

[http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/Download/Census%202001_Winzip/2001/S305%20%20\(a\).zip](http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/Download/Census%202001_Winzip/2001/S305%20%20(a).zip)

¹⁰ The 'Annual Report of the Registrar General' is available from:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/births-deaths-and-marriages/registrars-general-annual-report>

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school pupils as part of the School Census. The pre-school and primary school population will be a reasonable proxy for births since the 2001 Census. School Census statistics can be accessed on The Department of Education website¹¹.

Taking the Department of Education figures for pre-school and primary school as a proxy for births since 2001 (and constraining the number to 232,100) suggests 89,000 Protestant births, 118,000 Catholic births, 1,600 Other (Non-Christian) births and 23,000 'Other/No religion/Not recorded' births between the two Censuses. These figures, in particular the last figure, will be affected by the method of collection of the information by the Department of Education, and it is noted that a majority of the last group are recorded in the Controlled Sector.

Table 10 below brings this information together.

Table 10 Changes in population number between 2001 and 2011

	Change in population number (thousands)	Estimated birth effect (thousands)	Estimated death effect (thousands)	Residual (thousands)
Catholic	+80	+118	-46	+8
Protestant and other Christian	-20	+89	-95	-14
Other religions and philosophies	+10	+2	-0.3	+9
None	+55	+23	-1.1	+33
Population	+126	+232	-143	+37

¹¹ The Department of Education website is available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/school-enrolments>

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The 'residual' column in Table 10 is that part of the population change between 2001 and 2011 that cannot be explained by births and deaths. For the total population, the residual effect (+37k) suggests that over the decade migration in to Northern Ireland has exceeded migration out of Northern Ireland by around 37,000 people. For the four population groups within the population shown in Table 10, the residual could have come about from either migration or 'switching' of response to the 'religion/religion brought up in' question between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses.

An analysis of the extent to which the same people provided different responses to the 'religion/religion brought up in' question in 2001 and 2011 cannot be conducted at present – it would require matching of records from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. Matching of a sample of 2001 and 2011 Census records is underway for the purposes of the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Survey (NILS)¹². The NILS is a multi-purposes resource, but could be used to examine the consistency of responses by a sample of the population to the religion questions in the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. The NILS sample will be available for analysis in late 2013.

¹² More information on the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Survey is available at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/support/research-support>