



**Possible Content Of 2011 Scotland Census:
Consultation Response
To The General Register Office For Scotland.**

June 2007

Name

Keith Porteous Wood, FCCA, Executive Director

Organisation(s) represented

National Secular Society

Address

5 Atholl Crescent

Edinburgh EH3 8EJ

e-mail address

kpw@secularism.org.uk

[Consultation document
<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/census-consultation/formal-consultations/index.html>]

This response deals solely with CONSULTATION POINT 5:

What impact would dropping the question on religion of upbringing have for you or your organisation?

1 Some background

The National Secular Society is the longest established (1866) and best known organisation representing the non-religious of all strands UK-wide.

Unless otherwise specified, comments below relate solely to the section of 2011 Census or the Census consultation on religion and belief.

Recommendations are in bold

1.1 The inclusion of any question on religious adherence

Before the 2001 England and Wales Census we formally opposed the question on religion being included. The reason for this is that religion or belief is a private and sensitive matter and it is an intrusion of privacy for the state to collect such data in a manner which requires this information to be given to or by the head of the household for completion on the form. A further concern was that the question proposed for England (and for Scotland in 2011) would produce an exaggerated perception of the level of religious adherence and that this would be exploited by both the Government and religious bodies to increase further the influence of religion in the public sphere. The question was asked as proposed, with the exaggeration and exploitation we predicted (for evidence see 2.1 below).

However, given that the question has now been asked, Government agencies are unlikely now to abandon collecting data on religion in any part of the United Kingdom. We therefore wish to make the case for questions to be asked which will enable more accurate and therefore more useful statistics to be produced, while continuing to oppose a census question on religion of the crude type used in the 2001 census of England and Wales.

We still object to questions of religion and belief being addressed to the 'head of household' since we are convinced that in many households collecting data in this

way is highly likely to result in the views of other household members being distorted or misrepresented.

We develop these points in what follows.

2 Uses of statistics

We need to draw a much more accurate and detailed picture about the nation's beliefs than the one derived from the census of 2001 because:

a) The Government is committed to introducing faith-based welfare and increasing the proportion of religious schools, which will entail substantial capital expenditure. Whatever the Society's views on the merits of such policies, a much greater understanding of the religious landscape is needed to ascertain the extent to which such changes are appropriate, and, to the extent that they are adjudged appropriate, to plan for them using properly researched evidence. The necessary information for resource allocation could, in our view, be adequately achieved only from a survey of the whole population, allowing detailed geographic subsets to be extracted.

b) Anti-discrimination regulations were introduced in 2003 (Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003) and in 2007 (The Equality Act – Sexual Orientation). For efficient management of the resources required to implement and monitor such Equality measures, we need a far more detailed analysis of the nation's religions and belief systems.

c) Over recent decades, the emergence of identity politics has changed the way in which the Government and those in minority ethnic groups relate to each other. Many who had previously regarded themselves primarily as belonging to geographic identities now prefer to be addressed as part of a religious minority. Such evolving complexities require the Government to have a much more detailed picture of the relationship between the two types of identity. In particular much more needs to be known about the extent to which particular minority ethnic groups identify with and practise the predominant group religion. Detailed geographic information would also be useful to central government in this aspect.

d) The more unambiguous, consistent and detailed the information is on which measures to analyse and alleviate ethnic and religious tensions are based, the more likely the measures are to succeed. What we are recommending should assist in this process.

e) The Home Office's own Citizenship Survey¹ published in 2001 concentrates on religious adherents but provides scant information about the significant proportion, about a fifth, who are not. Even this fraction is an understatement, since the survey did not differentiate between those who consider themselves vaguely as adherents and those who actively practise a religion. When the "don't cares" or non-practitioners are taken into account, the proportion of those who are not actively religious rises considerably.

That such a survey was commissioned underlines the importance the Government places on having comprehensive information about the population's religion, although it seems, at least at the time this report was commissioned, that the Government was less concerned to learn about the significant proportion without a religious belief, even as a control group. We hope that any further Citizenship Survey shows a more even-handed approach. Since this survey had a much smaller number of respondents than the Census, it could not provide accurate information about ethnic and religious minorities, as random sampling techniques did not select sufficient respondents for the information to be used with confidence. Instead, the researchers were compelled to use rather less refined techniques. It may be possible to reduce the need for such crude techniques to an extent by asking more detailed questions in the Census.

Geographic information is needed, or highly beneficial, for items 2.1 a) to e) above, as well as providing a more accurate picture of the actual geographical distribution of religion/belief in Scotland.

2.1 Inaccurate use of statistics

However, the Society is concerned that any data collected on religion or belief may be misused.

¹ Religion in England and Wales: findings from the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey (Home Office Research Study 274) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors274.pdf>

This is not ungrounded speculation, as evidence below will show.

We contend that asking the proposed single question, following the English model, would not provide the necessary statistics to establish a comprehensive and unbiased picture of the nations' beliefs. Our reasons are as follows:

The statistics arising from using a single question would give a grossly exaggerated picture of religious adherence, as was seen in the use of data from the last England & Wales Census. (See 2.1 below.) As the head of household is likely to be older than the other householders, s/he is more likely to be religious², and more likely to record the religion/belief as s/he would like it, and perhaps even thinks it may be, rather than it actually is. This is likely to apply even more so to minority religions households, as those from minority religions regard their religion as much more fundamental to their identity³.

We make a recommendation in 7.2(c) below on a method of minimising this distortion.

The wording of the question in England & Wales 'What is your religion?' is imprecise to the point of being unprofessional. It is distinctly at odds with the acknowledgement on the Office for National Statistics' own website, which states⁴: 'The way in which people answer questions on religion is very sensitive to the exact question wording. This is particularly true for people who have a loose affiliation with a religion. *Slight differences in question wording can produce large differences in the proportion of people who say they are Christians or have no religion*, although the proportion of people from other religions tends to be more stable.'

The 2001 wording 'What is your religion?' also compounds the potential for overstatement by giving only the option, unless they refuse to answer, of being a particular religion or none.

² 'Levels of religious affiliation were higher for women than men, and for those of middle and older ages. This pattern is most noticeable within the Christian and Jewish faith communities.' Home Office Research Study 274 Religion in England and Wales: findings from the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey (Page viii) <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors274.pdf>

³ 'Only 20 per cent of respondents felt their religious beliefs to be an important part of their sense of self-identity. However, this proportion was significantly higher for members of minority ethnic groups.' Ibid (Page vii).

Ticking the 'None' box will be regarded by many respondents who have no active involvement with Christianity as being tantamount to saying they are without any cultural or moral values—not, presumably, the aim of the question. The vast majority with this concern will tick the 'Christian' box as they will have been brought up in a – however nominally – Christian society where, for example, the provision of a daily act of mainly Christian worship remains a legal requirement in maintained schools. Other 'cultural Christians' will tick the 'Christian' box, because Christian or CofE/ Church of Scotland is regarded in practice as the default option on forms for admission to hospital or when joining the armed forces.

2.2 Evidence bearing out the above

The objections about the methodology resulting in exaggerated figures for religious affiliation (and consequent significant understatement of the number of non-religious) are supported by comparing the census results with those of other surveys, in particular:

- a) comparisons with the more detailed figures for Scotland with those for England & Wales. More details are given in the response to question 5 below.
- b) The Appendix gives a selection of other studies showing much lower percentage figures for Christianity which, when taken in total, bear out the reasons given above why the Christian proportion resulting from the 2001 England & Wales Census was exaggerated and why this model should not be adopted for the Scottish census.
- c) Leading academics in social sciences and census studies have also identified the culture problem. Professor Bruce and Dr Voas describe it as 'National identity and religious labelling', and consider it to be the source of the greatest distortion in the England & Wales Census figures⁵:

⁴ Office for National Statistics Religion data for Great Britain

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=984&Pos=&ColRank=2&Rank=448>

⁵ *The 2001 census and Christian identification in Britain* by Dr David Voas (University of Manchester, Centre for Census and Survey Research) & Prof. Steve Bruce (Head, School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen) Published in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19(1): 23-8, January 2004.

'The England and Wales census produced a higher than expected number of non-churchgoers identifying with Christianity at the same time as public opinion was much concerned with the growth and politicization of Islam, race riots in northern England towns, and disputes about asylum seekers. Our own informal questioning of English acquaintances leads us to conclude that the woman who said 'I put down C of E because I wanted to say that this is a Christian country' was not unique. In the Social Attitudes survey people are asked if they regard themselves as belonging to any particular religion: although the interviewer has a set of answers to tick, the respondent is not prompted by seeing a list that includes Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. The person completing the census form in England and Wales was presented with options for ethnic, racial or national identity, and then a check-list for different religions. This method creates a very different context for choosing an option because it highlights what is for many people a crucial issue: how much should Britain change to accommodate non-Christian religions imported in the last 50 years?'

See also **further evidence** in this area given in response to Question 5 on comparisons between Scotland and England & Wales

Recommendation 1 On balance the religious question should be asked in the 2011 census, and it could be improved if the changes to it that we detail below were adopted.

If, however, the only alternative was the model of the England & Wales 2001 religious question 'What is your religion?' we consider that it would be preferable to withdraw any religious question altogether. This recommendation would stand even if the question were cosmetically remodelled for Scotland as 'What is your current religion, denomination, body or faith?', a formulation that neither adds information nor avoids the cited pitfalls of the English formulation.

3 The proposal to remove the question on religion of upbringing

The proposal to remove the question on religion of upbringing, thus bringing Scotland's census results in line with England and Wales' would not provide reliable data, as discussed earlier. Moreover, instead of simplifying analysis by introducing

conformity throughout Great Britain, it would compound the problems addressed in our formal opposition to the 2001 and 2011 England and Wales Census

If changes to the religion section of the 2001 Scottish census are made and the 'religion of upbringing' question is dropped, the problems listed above referring to England and Wales will become relevant to Scotland as well and add to the distortion.

The proposed 2011 wording 'What is your current religion, denomination, body or faith?' also increases the potential for distortion by giving only the option, unless they refuse to answer, of being a particular religion or none.

3.1 Implication of above problems for the 2011 Census

We are convinced that a significant proportion of those without any religious faith who differentiated between their religion of upbringing and current religious practice in the 2001 Census will opt in future Censuses for 'Christian' in order to identify as culturally Western and in order to differentiate themselves from the minority faiths whose visibility is becoming more evident. This will yet further exaggerate the Christian numbers.

Professor Bruce and Dr Voas conclude:⁶ "None of this is intended to deny that there is in all parts of the UK a considerable identification with the Christian heritage beyond the world of church-goers. Church leaders may continue to see that as an opportunity; they may also see it as a rebuke. But in either case, *until the census results are supported with data from other sources we would take them to represent increasing anxiety about national identity rather than increasing commitment to the Christian faith.*"

We contend much needs to be done in the next Census to minimise these distortions, or the question simply should not be asked.

⁶ *The 2001 census and Christian identification in Britain* by Dr David Voas (University of Manchester, Centre for Census and Survey Research) & Prof. Steve Bruce (Head, School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen) Published in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19(1): 23-8, January 2004.

3.2 Why maintain the current dual questioning?

In the 2001 Census the Scottish questions came the nearest to being comprehensive and accurate by acknowledging the statistically significant distinction (both qualitatively and quantitatively) between the subjects' religion of upbringing and their religion at the time of the Census, and asking about both. This double question has enabled research to be undertaken that has given a much better understanding of religious belief and adherence in Scotland, such as that carried out by Prof Steve Bruce and Tony Glendinning at the University of Aberdeen.

Professor Bruce in collaboration with Dr David Voas from the University of Manchester have also concluded⁷: 'Overall, then, the Scottish Social Attitudes survey and the 2001 census in Scotland give comparable estimates. . . . In England and Wales the census figures for the Christian and No Religion categories only make sense in the context of public concerns about identity, expressed on a census form that was especially well suited to reveal them.'

Recommendation 2 In general, we therefore recommend retention of the 2001 Scottish model of asking about religion:

'What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?'
followed by 'What religion, religious denomination or body were you brought up in?'

We would however urge one small modification. As is shown below, a former Cabinet statistician, Dr Peter Brierley, acknowledges the off-putting nature of the 'none' answer for the non-religious in the English Census.

We would therefore ask that these questions be asked in a more open and less intimidating way. This can be achieved by splitting each question into two stages:

1 a) Were you brought up in any religion, religious denomination or body? (yes/no).

⁷ *The 2001 census and Christian identification in Britain* by Dr David Voas (University of Manchester, Centre for Census and Survey Research) & Prof. Steve Bruce (Head, School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen) Published in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19(1): 23-8, January 2004.

b) If 'yes' What religion, religious denomination or body were you brought up in?

Then

2 a) Do you now belong to any religion, religious denomination or body? (yes/no).

2 b) If 'yes' 'What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?'

Great care needs to be taken with the placing of the religious question in the Census, and it is essential that it precedes and is placed as far away from any ethnicity question as possible. Testing should be carried out to find which presentation minimises the national identity and religious labelling distortion.

The proposed positioning of questions on ethnicity, religion and health on the same page (page 45 of the consultation document) can but reinforce the psychological linkage between race and religion, thus encouraging the public to conflate the two.

In the second question, the Scottish model's use of the phrase 'do you belong to' is in our view an absolute minimum test to obtain an answer that accurately reflects the respondent's current religious beliefs, as opposed to the religion of upbringing (which says nothing about beliefs at the time of the census and is not a realistic basis for any policy-making decisions).

3. We strongly advocate, a further question, 1c) 'Are you a practising member of your religion?' (yes/no).

If a question along these lines were regarded as excessive, the first question should revert to '**what religion do you practise?**' or more accurately, '**what religion do you actively practise?**' as being a more specific question which identifies those for whom religion is a relevant force in their lives. This is surely an important, probably the most important, question to be asked in this area, and indeed we would suggest it if, regrettably, it was decided that only one question were to be asked.

We are aware that suggestions will have been made for a more detailed breakdown of religious denominations/sects. We do not particularly oppose these, provided the much simpler 'practising' question is also included.

4. What assessment of other surveys of religion and belief has been carried out? What would be the effect of using the next best alternative?

A number of irregular but frequent private surveys on religion and belief systems has been, and will continue to be, commissioned from reputable organisations such as MORI, often by the media. They have exposed serious discrepancies with past national statistics. A study of these discrepancies should help improve the quality and value of the national statistics.

The Appendix gives examples of other surveys which show a much greater proportion of non-religious/non-believers.

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

It may be asked whether it is logical or efficient for Scotland to maintain its double question when the rest of Britain is not proposing to format its 2011 census in the same way. There are two elements to our response on this:

1. Our proposals for the two questions to be kept in the 2011 census will ensure uniformity and continuity in Scotland so that historical analysis is possible.
2. Uniformity with England & Wales could be achieved broadly if our proposal for the 2011 England & Wales census to follow the Scottish model were to be adopted. The Scottish model is, to date, the most accurate and comprehensive analysis of the facts. It would be a retrograde step for the Scottish census to imitate the England & Wales census in having a single question on religion.

Forcing Scotland to conform to the English model rather than compelling E&W to adopt the more sophisticated Scottish one shows scant understanding of the statistical limitations of one question or of the potential for distortion of data. Moreover, it will leave the data that is collected vulnerable to manipulation by interested parties.

We will be proposing one consistent – and Scottish – model be used through Great Britain because no meaningful comparisons can be made between the different areas when (as was the case in 2001) substantially different questions are asked. We have seen the contention made in print several times that, based on figures in the Census, Scotland is less religious than England (and sometimes, Wales).

This confusion extends to official documents. The official Chief Statistician in Scotland observed in a report⁸ that: ‘Results from other UK Censuses suggest that people in Northern Ireland, England and Wales are more likely to identify with a religion than those in Scotland. Around 86% of people in Northern Ireland and 77% of those in England and Wales report having a religion, compared with only 67% of people in Scotland. *However, it is difficult to make a direct comparison since there was only one question asked in England and Wales ‘What is your religion?’ as opposed to the two separate questions which were asked in Scotland’*. (Our emphasis)

Other compelling evidence (borne out by anecdotal evidence) points strongly to the opposite conclusion: people in England & Wales (but admittedly not in the much less populous Northern Ireland) are much *less* likely to identify with a religion than those in Scotland. Total Church attendance in 2000 was 11.9% in Scotland, but only 7.3 % in England and 7.7% in Wales. Church membership figures for 2000 were 19.6%, for Scotland as against 7.6% and 9.8% for England and Wales respectively. Each membership figure was lower by around 0.4% in 2001, so the figures for each country remained almost identical relative to each other. Figures for minority faiths would add about 3% for England⁹ and smaller percentages for the other countries of the UK.

⁸ ANALYSIS OF RELIGION IN THE 2001 CENSUS, Summary Report, Office of the Chief Statistician. February 2005, ISBN: 0-7559-3912-3 (Page 7)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00398.pdf>

⁹ UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends 4 2003/2004 Ed Dr Peter Brierley Tables 2.21, 2.24, 4.2 and 10.6

Publ by Christian Research 2003 ISBN 1-85321-149-4 (3% estimate based on 1.6 million membership for minority faiths in England with a population of around 49 million – sourced from the tables shown above in this footnote.)

An academic study from the universities of Manchester and Aberdeen attributes much of the differences between Scotland and England & Wales to methodological factors:

'It is not hard to see how the difference in the census forms between England and Wales on the one hand and Scotland on the other helped to produce very different interpretations of what was being asked. First, the order of questions was not the same. For England and Wales the religion question immediately followed those on ethnicity and seemed to be simply a supplementary question on the same topic, reflecting the intentions expressed in the government White Paper: 'Responses to the question would help provide information which would supplement the output from the ethnicity question ...' (*The 2001 Census of Population*, Cmd 4253, 1999: para. 64). In Scotland, the religion question came first, and hence answers were arguably less contaminated by the desire to make it clear that 'we're white and not Muslim'.

A second difference was possibly even more important. In England and Wales the form offered a single, undifferentiated 'Christian' category. This option, particularly when contrasted with Muslim, Hindu, etc., must frequently have been viewed as part of a system of cultural classification. One could comfortably tick the 'Christian' box without having any affiliation to a specific church. In Scotland, by contrast, the wording (referring to 'religion, religious denomination or body') and the denominational options provided made the question more evidently one on religion *per se*.¹⁰

Recommendation 3. In summary, the clear lack of consistency is a reason for England and Wales to adopt the Scottish model, not for Scotland to conform to the less accurate and less comprehensive English one.

5. Other Comments

The 2001 England & Wales census figures gave an unnecessarily exaggerated picture of the extent of religious belief given on the official website 'Focus on Religion' for the reasons noted above. The concern is that an amended Scottish version would extend the same exaggeration to the whole of Great Britain.

6.1 Inappropriate Presentation of Statistics

The Scottish 'religion of upbringing' statistics, rather than current religion, were used in the synthesis of UK statistics¹¹. We note that the decision to opt for 'upbringing' rather than 'belonging' gave the highest possible percentage of Christians.

We also note with regret that the use of such figures did not give rise to the table being renamed or subtitled 'religion of upbringing', even though this is what it would most approximate to, given that it is well established from other surveys that Scotland is more religious than England & Wales.

Indeed, this view is not only endorsed by the official Chief Statistician in Scotland, but he indicates that this view is borne out by investigations by the Office of National Statistics (for England & Wales)¹²: 'Investigations by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggest that the responses to the question in England & Wales are most likely to reflect peoples' religion of upbringing¹³ rather than whether they are currently practising in any faith. Thus it is probably more informative to compare the results from the rest of the UK with the response to the Scottish question on religion of upbringing which shows 74% reporting having been brought up in a faith.'

As set out in the final table in the Appendix (Analysis of Religion in the 2001 Census (Scottish figures, from the Scottish Executive) there is a substantial difference between the upbringing and belonging figures. *There is therefore a significant distortion of the England & Wales figures in overstating religious affiliation and substantially understating the No Religion figure. The table suggests the non-religious figure should probably be more than half, in fact 57.2%, higher.*

¹⁰ *The 2001 census and Christian identification in Britain* by Dr David Voas (University of Manchester, Centre for Census and Survey Research) & Prof. Steve Bruce (Head, School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen) Published in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19(1): 23-8, January 2004.

¹¹ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=954>

¹² ANALYSIS OF RELIGION IN THE 2001 CENSUS, Summary Report, Office of the Chief Statistician. February 2005, ISBN: 0-7559-3912-3 (Page 7)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00398.pdf>

¹³ (Ibid Footnote 2 'Investigations were carried out comparing the responses to the religion question in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) with those from the England and Wales Census. The LFS asks people to list their religion, even if they are no longer practising. The proportions responding to each category are very similar to the proportions in the Census suggesting that the England and Wales Census question was completed in relation to religion of upbringing rather than current religion.'

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00398-11.asp>

Recommendation 4 In our view, there is no entirely satisfactory method of compiling UK figures while such inconsistent bases remain for the different countries, but it is preferable for the Scottish ‘belong to’ figures rather than religion of upbringing to be used in compiling all UK totals, and for it to be acknowledged that the figures in total represent ‘religion of upbringing’ rather than current religion.

We also noted that on another ONS website page¹⁴ in the *Focus on Religion* series the percentage figures are based on the population excluding those who did not state their religion. We recognise that this was done to aid comparison with the Labour Force Survey where there was not an option not to state religion, and accept that the ONS has not sought to put forward the higher resultant percentages for religions in any other context.

Nevertheless, for the reasons shown below, we consider both the adjusted Census percentages and the LFS percentages to be distorted. We hope that the LFS figures can in future be collected giving a ‘Not stated’ option, as without this we believe that the religious figure will be overstated and the non-religious figure materially understated. We offer two pieces of evidence to support this contention:

(i) Former Cabinet Office statistician Dr Peter Brierley, Executive Director of Christian Research, which publishes the authoritative *Religious Trends* wrote to me on 8 August 2005 by email: ‘I write to confirm that in my opinion the many who didn’t answer the Religion question in the 2001 Census are very likely to be those with no religion, and simply couldn’t be bothered to tick the (rather definite) ‘No religion’ box. They will therefore include agnostics, and perhaps a few folk, like Jews, who might be afraid to declare their religion (like some Catholics in N Ireland).’ I approached Dr Brierley because he has also expressed a similar view in a newspaper article.

(ii) In the British Social Attitudes Survey 2001, by the National Centre for Social Research, respondents were asked: ‘Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?’ While only 1% Refused/did not answer, 41 % said ‘none’.
(Sources are shown in the Appendix)

¹⁴ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=984&Pos=4&ColRank=1&Rank=176>

Recommendation 5 We recommend that if the ‘Not stated’ figure is eliminated in tables, it should be combined with the ‘None’ figure and described as ‘None/Not stated’ or ‘None’ with an explanatory note along the lines given above by Dr Brierley.

On the other hand, we are not aware of any ways in which the methodology used or presentation of figures has caused the population’s religion to be understated.

6.2 Consultation document 2011 census

(a) Ethnicity identity and religion (point 5.2) p26

From previous samples and surveys over recent years, one third of the UK population do not profess any religion, but do follow strong moral and ethical beliefs. A more accurate title would be ‘belief system’, rather than religion (or in addition to). Or are we to exclude this one third of the population from the survey?

(b) Internet form completion (point 6.6) p 31

- a. If the Internet is to be used to collect information, will it be possible to ensure data security, and to counter the possibility of false entries being used to skew the final statistics in this sensitive area of religion?
- b. If the Internet is used, then does that mean that sample sizes will be significantly bigger, and so results more accurate?

(c) A general point on head of household completion

The use of additional detailed ‘infill’ sampling used in the last census, in the ‘Ethnicity identity and religion’ category raised cause for concern, and questions of bias in data (e.g. as referred to in 2.1 above with questions addressed only to the ‘head of household’, where the views of other household members can be misrepresented). Can this approach be avoided in the 2011 survey?

Recommendation 6 We strongly recommend the investigation of different data collection methods that will enable input by individuals rather than by heads of households. The use of on-line IT solutions may

be one approach provided security is sufficient to eliminate distortion of legitimate data, completion of data on behalf of others by impostors or data being submitted in respect of fictitious individuals.

If it is concluded that the 'heads of households' data collection approach will be used again, we recommend that some more detailed sub-sampling be put in place at the same time, to investigate the impact that it may be having on the final statistics. If, as we have argued, this is significant for some age and ethnic groups, it will also enable realistic correction factors to be applied to the distorted data.

APPENDIX

A selection of different studies showing much lower percentage figures for Christianity

1a. British Social Attitudes Survey, National Centre for Social Research *Belonging to a religion, Great Britain, 2001*¹⁵

<u>Religion</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Church of England / Anglican	29%
Catholic	11%
Other Christian	14%
Other faiths	4%
None	41%
Refused/did not answer	1%

Comment

Leading academics in social sciences have commented on the discrepancies between the above figures and the 2011 Census, corroborating our contention that it is the Census figures that are suspect: 'The discrepancies between the two sets of findings are too large to be dismissed. In any event the BSA results are corroborated by a range of other surveys, from the British Household Panel Study to the 'Soul of Britain' survey conducted for the BBC in 2000 (that showed self-described Christians in an overall minority).'¹⁶

1b. BBC's Soul of Britain (2000)¹⁷ (referred to in above comment):

Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion? (Qu. 20)

Only 48% answered 'yes'.

Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days? (Qu 22) 45% answered 'Never or practically never'.

¹⁵ Source: British Social Attitudes Survey, quoted in UK 2003 (London: TSO 2002), Table 15.1
Answers to 'Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?'

¹⁶ *The 2001 census and Christian identification in Britain* by Dr David Voas (University of Manchester, Centre for Census and Survey Research) & Prof. Steve Bruce (Head, School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen) Published in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19(1): 23-8, January 2004.

¹⁷ The Opinion Research Business (ORB) BBC 'Soul of Britain' Questionnaire Sample: 1000 randomly selected respondents in Great Britain Fieldwork 25th April – 7th May 2000 1000 telephone interviews Reference S/2022

2 MORI - British electors source (Base 4,270) - Source: The Tablet 21 May 2005 page 4.

<u>Share of the Vote</u>	<u>% of adults</u>
RELIGION	
Catholics	11%
Other Christians	56%
All Christian	67%
Other religions	8%
None	24%
OVERALL	100%

3. World Values Survey 2000¹⁸

According to a study by the Swedish-based World Values Survey conducted in 2000, 55% of people in Britain ‘never’ or ‘practically never’ attend church’. Britain had the 2nd highest (after France) percentage of people in this category of the twelve western European countries surveyed.

4. National Centre for Social Research 2004: *Young People in Britain: The Attitudes and Experiences of 12 to 19 Year Olds* ¹⁹

Nine in ten respondents described themselves as white. Five per cent were Asian, two per cent Black, and three per cent of mixed origin.

A third of young people described themselves as belonging to a religion, with the majority, just over a quarter, belonging to a Christian religion. Two thirds did not regard themselves as belonging to any religion, an increase of ten percentage points in as many years (from 55 per cent in 1994 to 65 per cent in 2003).

5. Religion in England and Wales: findings from a 2001 Home Office Survey (Home Office Research Study 274

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors274.pdf>) This last example does not refer specifically to the percentage of Christians, but it shows how low religious belief is ranked in determining identity.

¹⁸ Source: World Values Survey

'Table 3.1 (extract): Which of the following things would say something important about you, if you were describing yourself?

[Ranking]	<u>Factors</u>	
1	Your family	71%
2	Kind of work you do	48%
3	Age and life stage	42%
4	Your interests	41%
5	Level of education	32%
6	Your nationality	29%
7	Your gender	21%
8	Level of income	20%
9	Your religion	20%

6. University of Manchester, Centre for Census and Survey Research – Study by Dr David Voas and team: *The British Household Panel Study and Key Issues in Religious Changes*²⁰ published August 2005

'Religious belief is declining faster than attendance at services in the UK, according to a new study funded by the ESRC which found that parents' beliefs, practices and affiliations have the biggest impact on children.

'The catchphrase 'believing without belonging' – found in much European research over the past decade – is wrong, at least in its usual interpretation, says a team led by Dr David Voas of the University of Manchester.

'Far from religious belief being relatively strong and robust, fewer people now have real faith than passively 'belong' to a religion. While ethnic minorities are increasingly important to religious life in Britain, the trend for them is similar, albeit from a much higher starting point.'

¹⁹ 2.2.3 Ethnicity, religion and national identity (ISBN 1 84478 291 3)

²⁰ http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2005-08/esr-fap081505.php Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council Economic & Social Research Council Contact: Becky Gammon becky.gammon@esrc.ac.uk tel 01793-413 122 Text selected is extracted from ESRC press release.

7. Analysis of Religion in The 2001 Census (Scottish figures, from the Scottish Executive)²¹ From **Table 1.2: Current Religion and Religion of Upbringing – All People**

	Religion of Upbringing	Current Religion	increase or decrease	relative increase or decrease
	%	%		%
Roman Catholic	16.98	15.88	-1.10	-6.48
Other Christian	8.38	6.81	-1.57	-18.74
Buddhist	0.09	0.13	0.04	44.44
Hindu	0.12	0.11	-0.01	-8.33
Jewish	0.15	0.13	-0.02	-13.33
Muslim	0.83	0.84	0.01	1.20
Sikh	0.13	0.13	0.00	0.00
Another Religion	0.17	0.53	0.36	211.76
All Religions	74.12	66.96	-7.16	-9.66
No religion	17.53	27.55	10.02	57.16
Not Answered	8.35	5.49	-2.86	-34.25
All no relig./ Not Answ'd	25.88	33.04	7.16	27.67

In broad terms, as demonstrated in 7.1 above, the % difference figure also represents the degree of distortion resulting from the use of what approximates to religion of upbringing figures as current figures, as we consider to be the case for England and Wales

As shown, in the case of 'No religion', the figure should be 57.16% higher.

²¹ *Analysis Of Religion In The 2001 Census* Summary Report Office of the Chief Statistician (of the Scottish Executive) February 2005 **Source** <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00398.pdf> The NSS has calculated an additional new final column which expresses the change which has taken place between 'religion of upbringing' and 'current religion' as a percentage of the upbringing column. We have also added positive and negative signs to the penultimate column and emboldened and enlarged some figures add emphasis.