

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
1st February 2023
Report of the Director for Children and Families
Reflection on Religion and the 2021 census.

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide updated information on religion and the 2021 census

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE are reminded of the following-.

A census is carried out every 10 years. Prior to 2021 census the census was carried out in 2011

The census provides information on many aspects one of which is how the population answers a voluntary question regarding religious affiliation or not.

This voluntary question was introduced in 2001

3 Recommendation

The SACRE members to reflect on the outcomes of the census and its implications.

4 Background

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 Financial implications may be raised by individual items. These have been dealt with elsewhere or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

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Results of 2021 Census

As in 2011, the most common response to the religion question in England and Wales was "Christian" (46.2% of the overall population, 27.5 million people).

This was the most common religious group in both England (46.3%) and in Wales (43.6%).

However, the number of people who described themselves as "Christian" decreased to less than half the population for the first time.

It was a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% in 2011 (33.3 million people). This continues the decrease since 2001, when 71.7% (37.3 million) described themselves as "Christian".

This coincided with an increase in the number of people reporting "No religion" to 37.2% (22.2 million) in 2021 from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.

Again, this continues the trend between 2001 and 2011, when the number of people reporting "No religion" had risen from 14.8% (7.7 million people).

There are many factors that may be contributing to the changing religious composition of England and Wales, such as differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality, and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to answer the religion question between censuses.

Religions in the United Kingdom

Christianity (46.2%)

Irreligion (37.2%)

Islam (6.5%)

Hinduism (1.7%)

Sikhism (Sikhi) (0.8%)

Buddhism (0.5%)

Judaism (0.5%)

Other religious groups

Among the 405,000 (0.7% of the overall population in England and Wales) who chose to write-in a response through the "Any other religion" option were the following religions:

- **Pagan (74,000)**
- Alevi (26,000)
- Jain (25,000)
- Wicca (13,000)
- Ravidassia (10,000)
- Shamanism (8,000)
- Rastafarian (6,000)
- Zoroastrian (4,000)

The largest increase was seen in those describing their religion as "Shamanism", increasing more than tenfold to 8,000 from 650 in 2011.

Of those who wrote-in a non-religious group to "Any other religion", the largest numbers were:

- Agnostic (32,000)
- Atheist (14,000)
- Humanist (10,000)