

11 October 2004

Theme
Population and Migration

One-in-seven in Great Britain have no religion Focus on Religion

Fifteen per cent of people in Great Britain (8.6 million people) said they had no religion, according to the 2001 Census. Seventy-two per cent of people (41 million) identified themselves as Christian, making it the largest religious group. Muslims were the second largest religious group (1.6 million) and the information provided by them shows a young, tightly clustered, and often disadvantaged, community.

Focus on Religion, published today by the Office for National Statistics, provides detailed profiles of the different faith groups in the UK today, comparing and contrasting their characteristics, lifestyles and experiences. It draws on information from the 2001 Census – the first in Great Britain to include a question on religion – and other sources. Figures for Northern Ireland are presented separately.

More key findings include:

Age & Sex Distribution - Muslim population is youngest

About a third of Muslims (34 per cent) were under 16 years of age in 2001, as were a quarter (25 per cent) of Sikhs and a fifth (21 per cent) of Hindus.

Geographic Distribution - Minority religions concentrated in London

The Jewish population was the most heavily concentrated in London, with 56 per cent of the Jewish population of Great Britain living there in 2001. Just over half (52 per cent) of Britain's Hindu population and around two fifths (38 per cent) of Muslims lived in London.

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Ethnicity - Nine in ten Sikhs are from the Indian group

Nine out of ten Sikhs (91 per cent) living in Great Britain in 2001 were from an Indian ethnic background. Hindus were also predominantly Indian (84 per cent). Buddhists were the most ethnically diverse of all the main religious groups.

Country of Birth & National Identity - Hindus least likely to be born in UK

Less than four in ten Hindus (37 per cent) who were living in Great Britain in 2001 had been born in the UK. A similar proportion had been born in Asia (39 per cent), predominantly India (30 per cent), and six per cent had been born in Sri Lanka.

Health & Disability - Muslims report worst health

Age-standardised rates of 'not good' health were 13 per cent for Muslim males and 16 per cent for Muslim females in 2001. These rates, which take account of the difference in age structures between the religious groups, were higher than those of Jews and Christians, who were the least likely to rate their health as 'not good'.

Marriage Patterns – 16 per cent of young people with no religion cohabit

People with no religion were the most likely to be cohabiting (16 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds in 2001). Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims were the least likely to do so.

Households - Muslims have largest households

In 2001, households headed by a Muslim were the largest, with an average size of 3.8 people, followed by households headed by Sikhs (3.6 people) and Hindus (3.2 people). A third of Muslim households (34 per cent) contained more than five people, as did 28 per cent of Sikh and 19 per cent of Hindu households.

Housing - Sikhs most likely to own their own homes

Around three-quarters or more of Sikh, Jewish and Hindu households owned their own homes in 2001 (82 per cent, 77 per cent and 74 per cent respectively). Muslim and Buddhist households were the least likely to be homeowners (52 per cent and 54 per cent respectively).

Education - One in three Muslims have no qualifications

In 2003-2004, almost a third (31 per cent) of Muslims of working age in Great Britain had no qualifications – the highest proportion for any religious group.

Labour Market - Muslim unemployment rate highest

The unemployment rate for Muslim men was 14 per cent in 2003-2004, over three times the rate for Christian men (four per cent). The rate for Muslim women was 15 per cent, almost four times the rate for Christian women (four per cent).

Employment Patterns - Jews most likely to be self-employed

Around one in three Jewish people and around one in five Muslims were self-employed in 2003-2004. This compared with around one in ten Christians, Sikhs and those with no religion.

Communities in Northern Ireland - Protestants largest community

In 2001, 53 per cent of the population was from a Protestant community background. People from a Catholic community background made up the second largest group (44 per cent).

Northern Ireland Labour Market - Unemployment rate higher for Catholics than Protestants

The unemployment rate for Catholic men was nine per cent in 2002/03 compared with five per cent for Protestant men. Among women, the unemployment rates were six per cent for Catholics compared with three per cent for Protestants.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. *Focus on Religion* is the latest in a series of on-line reports available on the National Statistics website.
2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
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