

Spring 2010 Census Consultation: Statistical Outputs
Response from the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

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1. Do you have any continuing difficulties in accessing or working with 2001 Census outputs? Are there any specific points you want to (re-) make in connection with the set of 2001 Census output products?

We appreciate the importance of not publishing information that would permit the identification of individuals, but nonetheless regret that none of the religion data, and only a minimal amount of ethnicity data has been made available online, even at large geography level. Even on CD-ROM the data for these subject areas are far from comprehensive, and have therefore not been as useful as might have been envisaged for planning service provision.

2. You are invited to review the list of tables and then (with supporting reasons please):

- a) identify any tables you think are no longer useful;**
- b) suggest changes to existing tables to improve their usability;**

We do not have any comment about a) or b).

c) comment on any 2001-2011 comparability issues envisaged.

As we have stated in response to previous consultations, we are aware that some people interpreted the 2001 question “What faith or religion do you belong to?” in terms of paying a subscription or other active involvement. As a result, many of those living outwith any settled Jewish community did not identify themselves as Jewish in response to this question, but did do so in relation to religion of upbringing. Since the latter question will not be asked in 2011, it will not be possible to draw accurate comparisons about the overall number of Jewish people in Scotland. Comparability is not merely a matter of using the same words, and once it was agreed that there should only be a single religion question, the wording of that question should have been reconsidered.

(We note also that the religion question in England and Wales does not give rise to this problem, possibly because it was designed as a single question in the first instance – which adds weight to the need to reconsider the Scottish wording of a single question. We note also in passing that GROS sometimes justifies its decisions in terms of comparability with 2001 and sometimes with comparability with England and Wales; it is entirely unclear what criteria apply when, as here, these justifications point in opposite directions.)

This has practical implications for planning service provision, since many people who were brought up as Jewish but do not belong to a formal community, or who no longer subscribe to Judaism as a religion, nevertheless prefer to use communal welfare and social facilities where available.

3. Thinking particularly of census questions that will be new in 2011 (see appendix 4 for details), please put forward your suggestions for additional tables to include in the pre-defined set, identifying (with supporting reasons) those you would like to see included as a priority.

In order to obtain as full a picture as possible of minority communities in Scotland, we would urge that full cross-tabulations of religion and ethnicity data are made available.

4. Which of the four data delivery formats mentioned at 3.2.1 do you expect to use? Are there any other specific data delivery requirements that you would like to be taken into account?

We are likely to use all of the data delivery formats listed. In addition, we strongly support the proposal that users may be able to define and generate their own tabulations online, and urge that this facility should include both religion and ethnicity data. In order to prevent abuse of potentially sensitive data, we recommend that users should be required to register to use this facility, but that no charge should be made.

5. Do you foresee any disadvantages with the proposed general approach to geography described for 2011 Census outputs?

We are satisfied with this approach.

6. Are there any additional intermediate geographies for which you would like to have pre-defined census outputs available, and why? Are any of the existing intermediate geographies no longer useful to you?

We do not have any comment on this question.

7. Subject to its feasibility, would you find value in having available a small area geography for reporting workplace data, and why?

We do not have any requirement for this data.

8. Please note any other specific requirements you have in relation to geographical issues for census outputs.

Whilst appreciating the importance of ensuring that individual people are not identifiable, we are concerned that the deliberate misreporting of data for reasons of confidentiality – principally the random reallocation of small numbers of individuals to different geographical areas – gives misleading information about the distribution of small minority communities such as the Jewish community.

Although the smaller the group the more disclosive the data, the more significant the falsehood; i.e. it matters more if the published data switch a Jew from Lewis with a Sikh from Orkney, than if they switch a Catholic from Wishaw with a Protestant from Leith! Taken together with the "localisation" agenda this means that in fact resources could be targeted at communities that do not exist - which vitiates the main public purpose of the census! This is another reason for maintaining central funding for equality and diversity initiatives.

We suggest therefore that confidentiality could be reconciled with accuracy, for example by releasing accurate figures below 200 for broader areas of aggregation, consistent with administrative boundaries for population groups of 30,000 people or more, designated by grouping wards.

9. Do you have any priorities for the order of release of particular census output products?

Since our main interest is in data concerning religion and ethnicity, we would obviously prefer these to be released at an early stage.

10. Are there any other points you want to make in relation to the developing GROS plans for the 2011 Census outputs?

As we have stated in response to previous consultations, we are concerned that the ethnicity categories are at best unhelpful, and at worst, offensive. In particular, the section headings reflect an apartheid view, with "White" first, "Mixed or multiple ethnic groups" second (effectively the apartheid 'coloured'), followed by "Asian", "African", "Caribbean or Black", and "Other". We strongly urge that, as in 2001, these headings should be omitted from released data, and that tables should be ordered so as to show the "Mixed and multiple" category last except for "Other", since logic dictates that these can only be understood in terms of the other responses.

Note: The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland comprising Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee as well as the more loosely linked groups of the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands, and of students studying in Scottish Universities and Colleges. SCoJeC is Scottish Charity SC029438, and its aims are to advance public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community. It works with others to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality, and represents the Jewish community in Scotland to government and other statutory and official bodies on matters affecting the Jewish community.

In preparing this response we have consulted widely among members of the Scottish Jewish community.