

## Use of Census Data

### Response from the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

#### **If you use census data for funding - what projects is it for? Regeneration, care, housing?**

There are settled Jewish communities in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen, but there are also individual families, and small groups of Jewish people living throughout Scotland quite literally from the Borders to the Shetlands. The Council makes some use of census data in planning for and allocating funding to outreach activities to those living outwith the settled communities, for example, the *Kosher Ceilidh* tour that we organised in November 2009 which included Maybole, Lochgilphead, Portree, Aberdeen, and St Andrews. (For details see [http://www.scojec.org/events/2009/09xi\\_soul\\_train/soul\\_train.html](http://www.scojec.org/events/2009/09xi_soul_train/soul_train.html).)

However, 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 Scottish Government "localisation" agenda this means that our very limited resources could be targeted at communities that do not exist - which vitiates the main public purpose of the census!

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.

#### **If it supports services which ones is it used for? For example, after school or breakfast clubs, help for homeless or disabled people or language services for ethnic groups.**

We are concerned at the loss of the "religion of upbringing" question, the more especially since the wording of the "current religion", unlike the question used in England, will discourage some Jewish people from identifying as such. In our experience, some people living outwith any settled Jewish community without any local synagogue to which to pay membership fees, when asked whether they belong to a religion or faith, reply that they do not, although in fact they may identify very strongly as Jewish. A question asking "what religion or faith are you" rather than "do you belong to" would, therefore, have resulted in a more accurate, and therefore more useful data. In addition, and even in the settled communities, 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. Since the census data is not sufficiently accurate, some communal organisations have had to undertake their own demographic surveys to ensure adequate planning for future demand on welfare services, and other communal resources.

**Has a particular question supported your work in some way? The number of Gaelic speakers in an area for example?**

Despite the fact that data is are incomplete for the reasons detailed above and below, data from the religion and ethnicity questions has provided baseline demographic information to assist in communal planning,

**Do you combine information from one question with another, such as planning transport based on the number of lone parents in rural areas with access to a car?**

We would wish to be able to combine information from the religion and ethnicity questions to gain a better understanding of the demography of the Jewish community. However, the lack of a “Jewish” tickbox in the ethnicity question, even though it is possible to use the “write-in” option results in a reduced count of those who identify very strongly as ethnically Jewish even though they may not regard themselves as in any sense religious. By comparison, the 2001 Canadian census, which included tickboxes for “Jewish” in both the religion and ethnicity questions, found that 27.6% more people described themselves as Jewish by either religion or ethnicity than by religion alone. We know that a significant number of people in the Scottish Jewish community identify as ethnically but not religiously Jewish, and, in default of accurate census data, the community is obliged to extrapolate from such other data when, for example, planning service provision.

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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.