

# A report on responses to the religion question of the 2021 Census

## Executive Summary

The publication of the 2021 census on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 provides a useful source of information for SACRE. It allows members to consider whether or not the Agreed Syllabus is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of schools serving both religious and non-religious families and where the demographic in relation to different religions varies. The 2021 census also provides a information about the size of some of the smaller groups, allowing members to consider whether to recommend to the local authority that new members be included in Committee A.

### 1. Introduction and Background

Group A of SACRE is required by law to include, "Such Christian denominations and other religious denominations as, in the opinion of the Authority, will approximately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. In respect of Group A, section 390(6) Education Act 1996 states: The number of representative members appointed to any representative group under subsection (4)(a) [referred to as Group A] to represent each denomination or religion required to be represented shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the group's functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the area.

The decision of which groups to include in committee A is a matter for the council but it is within the remit of SACRE to make recommendations on this matter as it sees fit.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against someone because they are of a particular religion, and the guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission makes it clear this applies to smaller religions like

Paganism: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination>

### Main points – From the Office for National Statistics with additional commentary in relation to Lewisham

For the first time in a census of England and Wales, less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as "Christian", a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% (33.3 million) in 2011; despite this decrease, "Christian" remained the most common response to the religion question.

Please note that the methodology for collecting this data means that religious and non-religious traditions other than Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam are not treated equally. For example, to record that your religion is Christian, you can tick a box. However, to record that you are a Pagan or a Humanist, you must write the name of that tradition in a text box. This will almost certainly lead to under reporting of this second group.

- In Lewisham the proportion of the population responding 'Christian' fell by a slightly smaller margin than in England as a whole and the proportion of the population affiliating with Christianity (43.80%) is close to the national average (46.32%).

- “No religion” was the second most common response, increasing by more than 48%, from around 13m to almost 21m between 2011 and 2021
- In Lewisham ‘No religion’ was the second most common response (After Christian) and increased by just over 34.96%
- Nationally there were increases in the number of people who described themselves as “Muslim” (3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021, up from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011) and “Hindu” (1.0 million, 1.7% in 2021, up from 818,000, 1.5% in 2011).
- The Muslim population in Lewisham is the second largest single religious group representing 7.4 %. This figure has not grown at the same the rate as in the country as a whole – increasing by around 14.96% as opposed to over 34.1% nationally.
- Lewisham has small communities of many world faiths. Small changes in these communities can show as large percentage changes. The Hindu population of Lewisham, which represents 2.10% of Lewisham as a whole for example has decreased slightly (-11.71%) with the Jewish population(0.3c%v of Lewisham responses) decreasing by almost 43%.. The proportion of Sikhs and Buddhists in the community has increased slightly mirroring how their share if the national population has grown.
- London remains the most religiously diverse region of England in 2021, with over a quarter (25.3%) of all usual residents reporting a religion other than “Christian”; the North East and South West are the least religiously diverse regions, with 4.2% and 3.2%, respectively, selecting a religion other than “Christian”.
- In Lewisham the proportion of residents responding that they had a religion (55.64%) is fractionally lower than the national average (57.31%).
- Although this data indicates that there are fewer Pagan and Humanist residents in Lewisham than in 2011, these figures should be discounted because of the issue of inequality mentioned at the start of this report.

Regional data can be found here which demonstrates that some areas of Lewisham are far more religiously diverse than others.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>

% Change	-	15.56
% Religion not stated 2021	7.50	7.50
% Religion not stated 2011	8.09	8.09
% Change	34.96	34.96
% No religion other than Humanists 2021	36.70	36.70
% No religion other than Humanists 2011	27.72	27.72
% Change	11.44	11.44
% Humanism 2021	0.02	0.02
% Humanism 2011	0.04	0.04
% Change	59.19	59.19
% other religions other	0.06	0.06
% other religions other	0.03	0.03
% Change	6.65	6.65
% Total Pagan Traditions	0.11	0.11
% Total Pagan Traditions	0.14	0.14
% Change	3.91	3.91
% Sikh 2021	0.02	0.02
% Sikh 2011	0.01	0.01
% Change	14.96	14.96
% Muslim 2021	7.44	7.44
% Muslim 2011	6.44	6.44
% Change	28.72	28.72
% Jewish 2021	0.30	0.30
% Jewish 2011	0.23	0.23
% Change	11.71	11.71
% Hindu 2021	2.10	2.10
% Hindu 2011	2.13	2.13
% Change	-	-
% Buddhist 2021	1.11	1.11
% Buddhist 2011	1.03	1.03
% Change	17.00	17.00
% Christian 2021	43.80	43.80
% Christian 2011	52.77	52.77

SACRE name

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Sham