

Census 2011 Briefing Note: RELIGION IN SOMERSET

1. Introduction

On 11 December 2012, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) began the release of the second phase of results ('Key Statistics', at local authority level) from the national census carried out on 27 March 2011. Statistics for lower level geographies (e.g. electoral wards and LSOAs) followed on 30 January 2013. This briefing note looks at the religion of Somerset residents.

Note: the question asked was simply "What is your religion?", in line with the 2001 Census. This was the only voluntary question on the survey.

2. Key Messages

- In line with the national trend, the proportion of Somerset people saying they were Christian dropped sharply since 2001, from 76.7% to 64.0%.
- This is still one of the highest figures in the South West region.
- Christian prevalence is relatively high in rural or suburban areas such as Exmoor, Bridgwater Wyndham ward and the south eastern corner of Somerset.
- The proportion claiming no religious affiliation rose from 14.9% to 26.6%. Figures were particularly high in parts of Frome, Taunton and Bridgwater.
- Although overall numbers were relatively small, there were substantial increases in the number of Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu people in Somerset in the last decade.
- Somerset has a high proportion of the population affiliated to one of the other religions, relative to the national average. This is true of all five districts in the county.
- Based on 'write-in' responses, there are 1,147 followers of Paganism, more than the combined total of those of Hindu, Sikh and Jewish faith.
- Mendip had the fourth highest proportion of the population affiliated to one of the other religions of any LA in England and Wales. It was number one for Paganism (0.4% of the population) as well as Mixed Religion, Shamanism and the Druid religion.
- The four wards in Somerset with the highest proportions of people following non-Christian religions were all in Glastonbury. In St. Edmunds ward, the figure was 8.3% (four times the county average), most of whom were Mixed Religion or Pagan.
- Yeovil Central was the ward with the highest number of both Muslim and Hindu followers in Somerset.
- Street South was ranked in the top five wards in Somerset for the numbers of each of the four major non-Christian religions: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish.

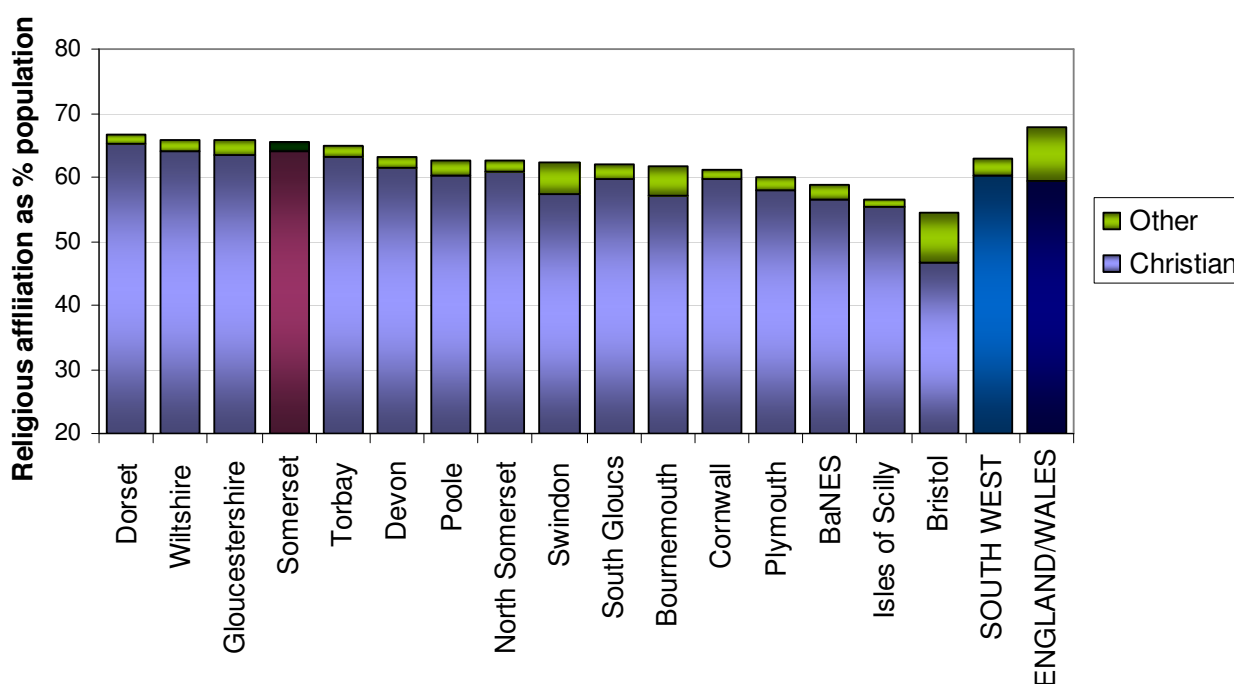
3. Key Statistics

Table 1: Religion of Somerset residents

Religion	2001 %	2011 %	2001 Number	2011 Number	% change
Total Population	100.0	100.0	498,093	529,972	+6%
Christian	76.7	64.0	381,842	339,211	-11%
Buddhist	0.2	0.3	1,025	1,612	+57%
Muslim (Islam)	0.2	0.3	938	1,470	+57%
Hindu	0.1	0.1	420	506	+21%
Jewish	0.1	0.1	349	337	-3%
Sikh	*	*	95	100	+5%
Other Religions	0.4	0.6	1,889	3,361	+78%
No Religion	14.9	26.6	73,945	141,070	+91%
Not stated	7.6	8.0	37,590	42,304	+13%

* denotes <0.05%

Figure 1: Comparison of Religious affiliation in the South West, 2011 Census



Nationally, Muslims comprised 4.8% of the population (2.7 million) while Hindus numbered 817,000 (1.5%). Non-Christian religions tend to be stronger in cities (for example, Bristol and Swindon) as these are often where ethnic minority populations cluster.

Table 2: Most common individual religions (including write-in responses)

Religion	2011 Census
Christian	339,211
Buddhist	1,612
Muslim (Islam)	1,470
Pagan	1,147
Mixed Religion	750
Hindu	506
Spiritualist	369
Jewish	337
Spiritual	200
Wicca	158
Sikh	100
Druid	87
Rastafarian	54
Taoist	54
Other religions (27)	350

Note: Amongst those saying they had 'no religion', 1,924 wrote in Jedi Knight, 352 agnostic, 247 atheist and 193 humanist.

Table 3: Comparison of Religion by District (% total population)

Religion	Somerset	Mendip	Sedge-moor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
Total Population	529,972	109,279	114,588	161,243	110,187	34,675
Christian	64.0	61.9	64.6	65.9	62.1	65.5
Buddhist	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
Muslim (Islam)	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.1
Hindu	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	*
Jewish	0.1	0.1	*	0.1	0.1	0.1
Sikh	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other Religions	0.6	1.1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6
Pagan	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Mixed Religion	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Spiritualist	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
No Religion	26.6	27.4	26.5	25.2	28.5	25.0
Not stated	8.0	8.7	7.7	7.7	7.9	8.4

Table 4: Comparison of Religion by District (numbers)

Religion	Somerset	Mendip	Sedge-moor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
Total Population	529,972	109,279	114,588	161,243	110,187	34,675
Christian	339,211	67,683	74,069	106,336	68,419	22,704
Buddhist	1,612	510	256	376	357	113
Muslim (Islam)	1,470	270	341	417	399	43
Hindu	506	113	74	135	179	5
Jewish	307	81	45	124	69	18
Sikh	100	14	48	15	14	9
Other Religions	3,361	1,224	577	808	557	195
Pagan	1,147	416	186	281	196	68
Mixed Religion	750	386	83	177	72	32
Spiritualist	369	56	107	91	77	38
No Religion	141,071	29,913	30,399	40,637	31,436	8,686
Not stated	42,304	9,471	8,779	12,395	8,757	2,902

Figure 2 Wards with the highest proportions of Christians in Somerset

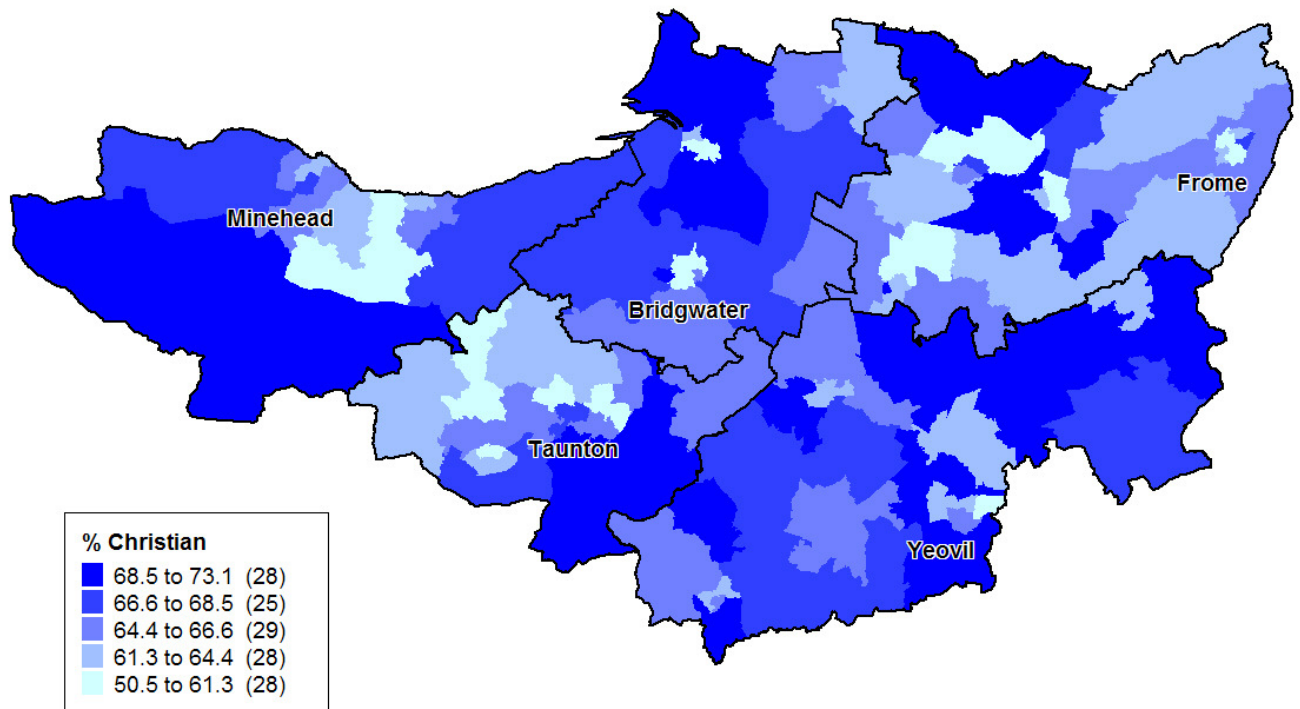
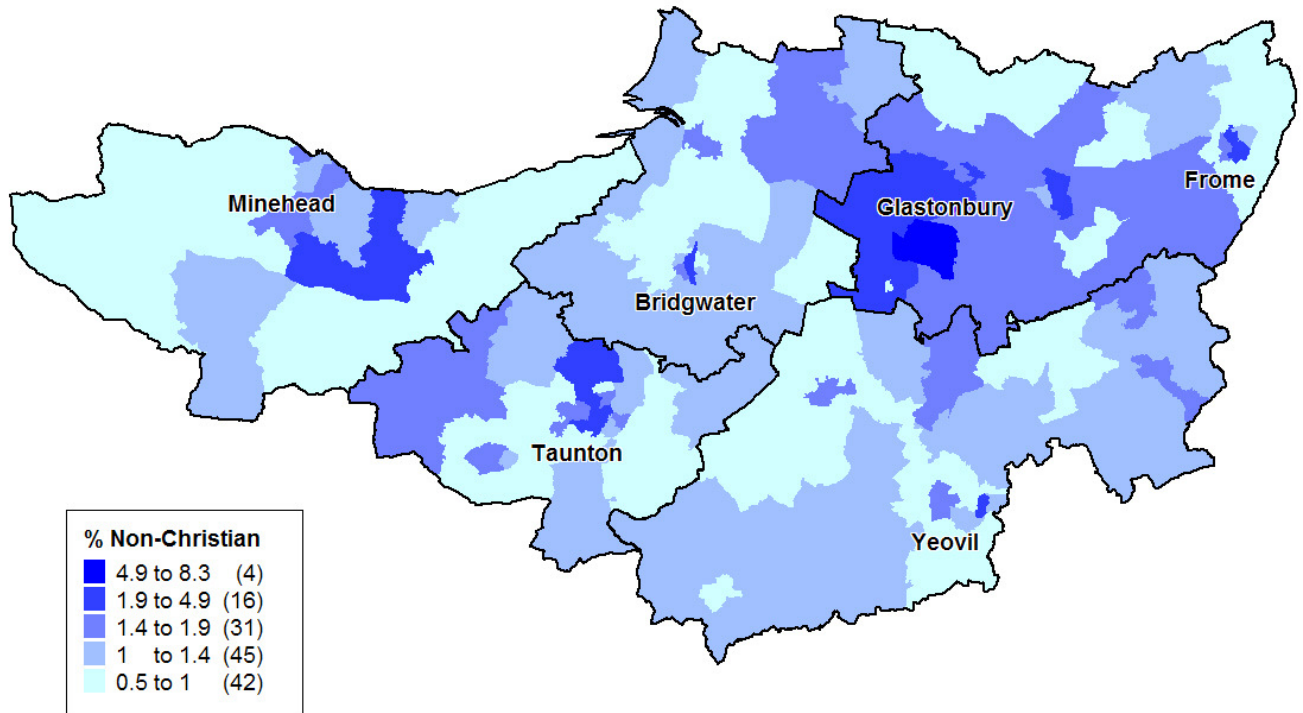


Figure 3 Wards with the highest proportions of Religious followers other than Christians in Somerset



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4. Further Information

Somerset Intelligence Network (SINe) – Census 2011:

www.sine.org.uk/census2011

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Census 2011:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>

Mike Smith
Partnership Intelligence Unit
MJSmith@somerset.gov.uk
01823 355589