

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

## Executive Summary

The publication of the 2021 census on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 provides a useful source of information for SACRE. The 2021 census provides a snap shot of 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. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:

- Review the data from the census as it applies to Shropshire
- In a future meeting consider whether the membership of Committee A is appropriate and, in particular, if SACRE should recommend to the Council that a representative of any other religion or belief system should be sought.

### 2. 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.

### 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 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. We do this through adapting our constitution and then proposing changes to the council.

3.2 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 for example

Paganism: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination> If the council were to receive an application from a Pagan to serve on SACRE then these legal matters would need to be considered. SACRE has not received such an application recently. This would also be true if an application was made from a non- religious worldview. Note that we have a member who represents Humanists.

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

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.

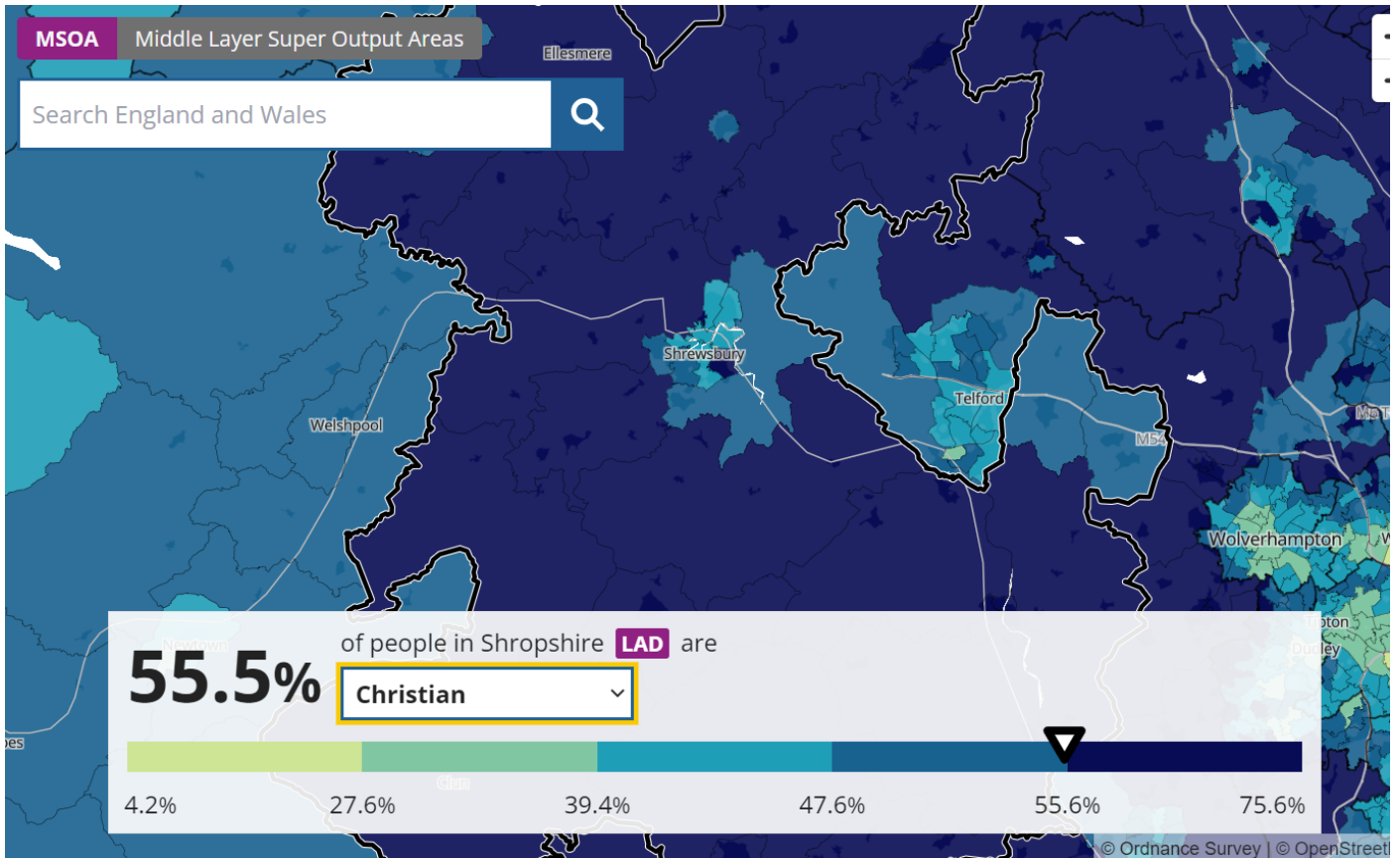
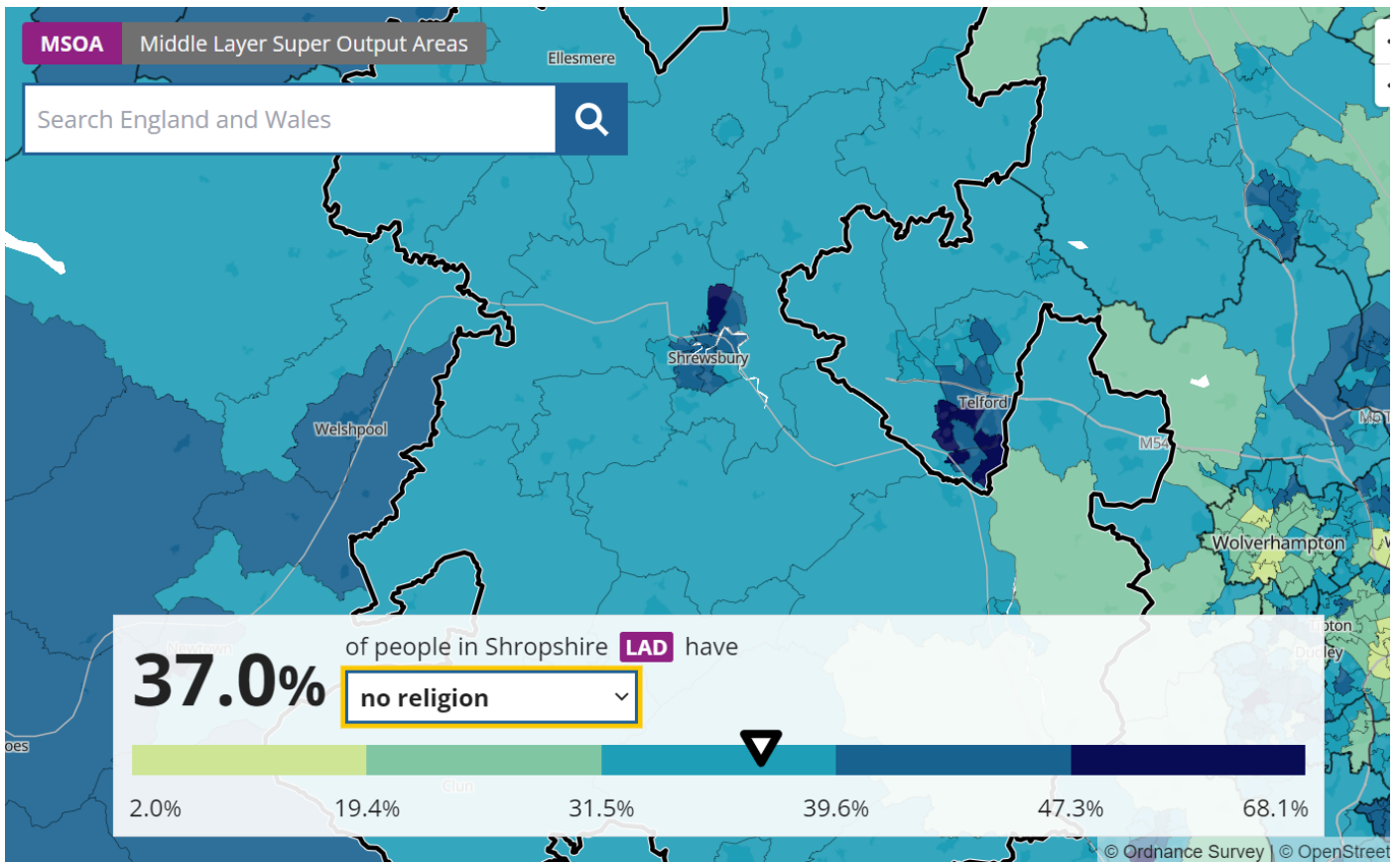
- In Shropshire the proportion of the population responding "Christian" fell by a slightly smaller margin than in England as a whole and the proportion of the population affiliating with Christianity

(55.5%) is considerably higher than that in the population of England where (46.32%) responded 'Christian'.

- "No religion" was the second most common response, increasing by more than 48%, from around 13m to almost 21m between 2011 and 2021
- In Shropshire "No religion" was the second most common response (After Christian) and increased from 22.7% to 36.92%, a proportionally larger increase than the rest of England.
- 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 Shropshire is the second largest single religious group although Muslims still make up just 0.5% of the population. Proportionally this figure has grown at an increased rate to the country as a whole – although the 5 of people who ticked Muslim on the form is still far fewer than the national percentage.
- The Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Sikh populations population of Shropshire have all increased numerically but are all below the national average for people of those religions.
- 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".
- Shropshire is not very religiously diverse- see maps below.
- In Shropshire the proportion of residents responding that they had a religion (57.17%) broadly the same as the national average (57.31%).

Regional data can be found here which demonstrates that there are very few areas that have much religious diversity. There are certain areas eg Shrewsbury Town where you can identify larger numbers of members of particular communities.

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



Appendix A

<b>Figure 1: Shropshire: Religion question in %</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Change</b>
Christian	68.7	55.5	Christian	59.38	46.32	-21.99
Buddhist	0.26	0.3	Buddhist	0.45	0.46	3.21
Hindu	0.12	0.2	Hindu	1.52	1.81	18.79
Jewish	0.04	0.1	Jewish	0.49	0.48	-3.28
Muslim	0.32	0.5	Muslim	5.02	6.73	34.10
Sikh	0.08	0.2	Sikh	0.79	0.92	16.15
Total Pagan Traditions <sup>i</sup> (write in)	0.17	0.13	Total Pagan Traditions (write in)	0.14	0.18	24.07
Total other religions excluding Pagan Traditions (write in)	0.20	0.24	Total other religions excluding Pagan Traditions (write in)	0.29	0.41	43.39
Humanist (write in)	0.040	0.028	Humanist (write in)	0.03	0.02	-36.95
No religion excluding those who wrote in Humanist	22.7	36.92	No religion excluding those who wrote in Humanist	24.71	36.65	48.33
Religion not stated	7.3	5.9	Religion not stated	7.18	6.02	-16.11

<b>Figure 2: Shropshire: Religion question in numbers (pop 2021: 323,601)</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Change</b>
Christian	210,268	179,516	Christian	31479876	26167904	-5311972
Buddhist	792	895	Buddhist	238626	262437	23811
Hindu	378	557	Hindu	806199	1020539	214340
Jewish	127	182	Jewish	261282	269295	8013
Muslim	989	1708	Muslim	2660116	3801182	1141066
Sikh	256	760	Sikh	420196	520090	99894
Total Pagan Traditions (write in)	515	705	Total Pagan Traditions (write in)	76336	100920	24584
Total other religions excluding Pagan (write in)	598	773	Total other religions excluding Pagan (write in)	151489	231470	79981
Humanist	123	92	Humanist (write in)	14252	9575	-4677
No religion excluding those who wrote in Humanist	69,602	119,482	No religion excluding those who wrote in Humanist	13099980	20706073	7606093
Religion not stated	16,184	18,931	Religion not stated	3804104	3400553	-403551

---

<sup>i</sup> Pagan Traditions include the following categories: Other religion: Animism, Other religion: Druid, Other religion: Heathen, Other religion: Mysticism, Other religion: New Age, Other religion: Occult, Other religion: Pagan, Other religion: Pantheism, Other religion: Reconstructionist, Other religion: Shamanism, Other religion: Thelemite, Other religion: Vodun, Other religion: Wicca, Other religion: Witchcraft