

OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS

MULTI-SOURCE TOPIC REPORT ON 'RELIGION' – SCOPING NOTE

A Response from the
Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR)

September 2002

1. This response is submitted by the Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR), a Muslim advocacy group, established in 2001, that is committed to tackling Islamophobia and racism and to promoting a tolerant multi-faith and multicultural society. Our projects include awareness raising, media monitoring, victim-centred casework, monitoring institutional discrimination and policy research.
2. We value the inclusion of the questions relating to religion in the 2001 Census and the latest Labour Force Survey, and welcome the idea of a multi-source report on 'Religion'. We take this opportunity to respond to the Scoping Note on this multi-source report on 'Religion' recently circulated by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).
3. The Scoping Note invites views on whether 'religion' should be treated in a separate report or whether it should be combined with the report on 'ethnicity and identity'. **We strongly recommend that whilst considerable liaison must be maintained between the two topic reports in order to ensure that the relationship between them is fully explored, religion be treated in a separate report** for the following reasons:
 - An increasing number of people actually self-define their identity by their religion¹ as opposed to other racial or ethnic distinctions, as acknowledged by the Scoping Note itself. Such self-identification ought, in our view, to be respected in studies carried out on citizenship and identity equally to, if not over and above, identity defined and attributed by other means.
 - Recent evidence would suggest that religion is increasingly a ground for prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and violence.² Larger, more comprehensive and detailed studies are necessary to establish the extent and impact of such prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and violence on people's lives.
 - As indicated by a whole host of recent initiatives, policy makers and legislators are already aware of the role played by religion in societal dynamics in Britain and Europe.³ A significant drawback to their work is the lack of available statistical data on religion. Better data on religion would help to sharpen their efforts to address

¹ *A Voice for Britain – A research study conducted for the CRE by MORI*, London: Commission for Racial Equality, 2002.

² *Islamophobia – A Challenge for Us All*, Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, London: The Runnymede Trust, 1997; P. Weller, A. Feldman and K. Purdam, *Religious Discrimination in England and Wales*, Home Office Research Study 220, London: Home Office, 2001; *The Parekh Report – The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain*, The Runnymede Trust Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, London: Profile Books, 2000; *Final Declaration*, UN's World Conference Against Racism, Durban, South Africa, Sept 2001; C. Allen and J. S. Nielson, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after September 11 2001*, Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, May 2002; *Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion*, London: Home Office, 2001; *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, Chaired by Ted Cantele, London: Home Office, 2001; L. P. Sheridan et al, *Effects of the Events of September 11 2001 on Discrimination and Implicit Racism in Five Religions and Seven Ethnic Groups*, Leicester: University of Leicester, August 2002.

³ *General Policy Recommendation No. 5: Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims*, European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Strasbourg: Council of Europe, April 2000; B. Hepple, M. Coussey, T. Choudhury, *Equality: A New Framework*, Report of the Independent Review of the Enforcement of UK Anti-Discrimination Legislation, Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2000; B. Hepple and T. Choudhury, *Religious Discrimination: practical implications for policy makers and legislators*, Home Office Research Study 221, London: Home Office, 2001; EU Framework Employment Directive, Council Directive 2000/78/EC, 27 November 2000; Equality Bill, Draft by the Independent Review of the Enforcement of UK Anti-Discrimination Legislation, Cambridge University, London: The Odysseus Trust, July 2002.

religious prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and violence through further policy and legislative initiatives.

- Questions on religion have already been introduced to the Census and Labour Force Survey. A multi-source report specifically on 'Religion' could play a crucial role in identifying where exactly more statistical data on religion would be helpful, how appropriate questions could be framed and where exactly (e.g., ONS household surveys, Home Office Reports, etc.) those questions could be best placed.

4. **We recommend that the range of data sources to be used for the multi-source report on 'Religion' be broadened to include administrative and/or survey data on housing conditions, health care and social services, access to resources, access to public services and social advantages, political participation, representation in the media and protection from crimes.** This would allow religion to be considered in a much wider context. Additional sources might include:

- Administrative and survey data sources mentioned in the 'Ethnicity & Identity' Scoping Note but not the 'Religion' Scoping Note – e.g., Electoral Commission Reports, British Election Survey, British Crime Survey, Family Resources Survey, Health Survey for England, Survey of English Housing Conditions, etc.
- Administrative data sources not mentioned in either Scoping Notes – e.g., law enforcement agencies, like the Police, Probation and Prison Services.
- Government commissioned reports on, or touching on, religion and religious discrimination – e.g., the Home Office commissioned report on *Religious Discrimination in England and Wales* and the Cabinet Office *Interim Analytical Report on Improving Labour Market Achievements for Ethnic Minorities in British Society*.
- Work undertaken by national (and international) inter-faith organisations in the UK, e.g., the Inter-Faith Network (see <http://www.btinternet.com/~ifnet.uk/>), and Government initiated faith bodies, e.g., the Inner Cities Religious Council (see <http://www.urban.odpm.gov.uk/community/faith/index.htm>).
- Think tank, policy, academic and other reports – e.g., the Fourth National Survey on Ethnic Minorities

5. In terms of content, we suggest that whilst the multi-source report on 'Religion', as presently outlined, may provide important basic information on different religious groups in Britain, it will not reflect the far more comprehensive and detailed nature of the equally important report on 'Ethnicity and Identity'. We believe that, for reasons already mentioned above, such a comprehensive and detailed report on 'Religion' is equally necessary. **We recommend below, in line with the cross-cutting themes running through the various multi-source reports, how the content of the multi-source report on 'Religion' may be further developed to meet the urgent needs of faith communities.** What we consider to be priorities are highlighted in bold.

6. **Preliminaries** – As this is the first report of its kind on 'Religion' to be produced by the ONS, and likely to set important precedents for the future for its own work and the work of others (policy makers, academics, etc.), **we strongly recommend that sufficient time and effort is spent to ensure that the preliminaries for the report are well identified and spelt out. In our view this includes:**

- **Identification and development of key definitional concepts and classifications that will form the primary unit of analysis**

- **Identification and definitional development of the scope of the principal themes running through the report, which in our view should include: population, identity, working lives, living standards, well-being, and community and citizenship**
 - **The focus of the report equally divided between differences amongst minority faith communities and differences in relation to majority faith communities—although it is appreciated that where bases are small or groups are very similar categories may be combined**
7. *Population* — In analysing the main demographic features of the various religious groups we recommend consideration of three main categories: individuals, families/households and communities. In addition to that already stated in the 'Religion' Scoping Note, consideration should also be given to the following elements of the main categories:
- Individuals – **patterns of migration** (including country of birth and proportions born in the UK); **numbers born into religion compared to converts to religion**
 - Families/households – family formations (married—forced, arranged or love marriage, co-habiting, separated and divorced; inter-religious and/or inter-ethnic partnerships and children of these partnerships); **household structures** (including dependency ratios)
 - Communities – **geographical distribution of religious groups** (possibly with cluster analysis down to ward level); **distribution by type of area** (physical environment, wealth and living standards of residents, access to facilities/services)
8. *Identity* — In considering the issue of identity dynamics in the various faith communities, we believe the Scoping Note has rightly identified the essential variables (religion, ethnicity, country of birth and nationality) that compete with or complement each other to form broader conceptions of identity. We recommend, however, that consideration be given to developing the scope of these variables as follows:
- Religion – **age of religious group in Britain and migration history of individuals**; geographical spread of religions and **number of places of worship**; level of understanding of religious texts and **active religious practice**, including contact with religious organisations and places of worship—preferably by age and sex; **Government, media and public response to national and international events involving or affecting particular religious groups**
 - Ethnicity – country of birth and **generational differences**; **treatment of ethnic group by British institutions and society**; wearing of distinctive clothing and language spoken at home
 - Country of birth – **last and frequency of visit to country of birth**; family connections to country of birth
 - Nationality – **passport(s) and citizenship(s) held**; **understanding of the notion of 'Britishness'** and impact of devolution on identity

We also suggest that some consideration be given to notions of allegiance and loyalty in discussions around identity, and particularly that the notion of multiple (or multi-faceted) identity, allegiance and loyalty be further explored, where identity, allegiance and loyalty are each a bundle of markers as opposed to single markers.

9. *Working Lives* – Broadly focusing on education and employment, in addition to that already stated in the ‘Religion’ Scoping Note, consideration should also be given to the following elements of the main categories:

- Education – levels of literacy and numeracy amongst parents; **faith background of teachers and pupils** by geographical distribution and sector, i.e., primary, secondary, etc.; collective worship, RE classes and citizenship classes; languages spoken at home and in schools; **school based qualifications**; **access to training**, vocational qualifications and work based training; participation in full-time post-compulsory education, **further education and successful entry to higher education** proportionate to all applicants; level of educational attainment and **highest qualification**; participation in **faith/supplementary schools** by source of funding, time demands on pupils and ultimate performance; participation in different forms of **adult learning** including English as Second Language courses
- Employment – **economic activity**, and rates and trends (hours worked, full time, part time and casual work, second jobs and self employment) in economic activity, by age, sex, education and geographical area; **economic inactivity** by causes for such inactivity; **unemployment** by qualifications, type of work, age, sex and geographical area; **industry type and job levels** by age, sex, education and geographical area; **representation in mainstream public sector organisations by grade and rank**; average hourly pay/**gross weekly pay** by industry type, job levels and area

10. *Living Standards* – As a key indicator of disadvantage, we feel that this theme is currently particularly underdeveloped for our purposes. In our view there are four main areas for consideration under this heading: income, other resources, consumption and housing, and these may be developed as follows:

- Income – sources and total of **gross household income by size of household** and dependents; **households below average income**, receiving state benefits, and other factors associated with poverty
- Other resources – **average household savings**; investments and pension schemes; debt and other financial problems
- Consumption – households with selected consumer durables; number of vehicles owned by household
- Housing - in addition to that already stated in the ‘Religion’ Scoping Note, **location and quality of housing**, including location by levels of deprivation, access to amenities and state of (dis)repair; type of dwelling and trends in owner-occupation

11. *Well-being* – In our view, this is another significant area that is particularly underdeveloped in the ‘Religion’ Scoping Note. We suggest that there are four important areas for consideration under this theme: health, access to health services, caring and health related behaviour. In addition to that already stated in the ‘Religion’ Scoping Note, the scope of these streams may be developed as follows:

- Health – **self-assessed health status** by socio-economic indicators, gender and age; selected **health problems**; mental health disorders; children’s health; **standardised mortality ratios**
- Access to health services – **frequency of GP consultations** by reason; **hospital attendance** rates by in-patient and out-patient visits; proportions accessing **dental services** by frequency; **factors preventing access**

- Caring – receipt of care by social services/care homes; **provision of informal care** by gender, age and economic activity; **health of carers**
- Health related behaviour – **eating habits; smoking, drinking and drug use**; levels of **physical activity and exercise**

12. *Community & Citizenship* – We are concerned that this cross cutting theme across the multi-source topic reports has been replaced in the ‘Religion’ Scoping Note with a section on ‘Life Styles’, which covers some of the areas under Community and Citizenship, but also excludes large sections of the latter which are of particular importance to faith communities. **We would recommend that the cross-cutting theme of Community & Citizenship be retained in full** and its strands be developed as follows:

- Neighbourhood and social support – satisfaction and enjoyment of living in the local area; accommodation of religious needs, e.g., dress and dietary codes; **rating of local services**; social networks, social support (including role of faith groups), proximity and contact with friends and relatives; **feeling of safety and fear of crime**
- Crime and the justice system – **victims of crime** by age, sex, **type of offence** and area of residence; offenders by age, sex, type of offence and area of residence; **crime motivated by religious or racial hatred**, reaction to such crime and **religion and ethnicity of perpetrators** of such crime by type of offence; **contact, satisfaction and confidence with the police**; **religion and ethnicity as predictors of being stopped by the police and reasons for being stopped**; **representation of religious groups within the criminal justice system**; **specific targeting of groups and breaches of basic human rights (e.g., enforcement of anti-terrorism measures and denial of right to trial)**
- Discrimination – perceptions of structural discrimination and **experience of direct, indirect and institutional discrimination** in employment and delivery of goods and services by sectors, i.e., the public, private and voluntary sectors; involvement and **confidence in new race equality schemes** under Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 **and their ability to deliver equal access and opportunity for all**
- Participation and perceptions – **public appointments; membership and involvement in groups, voluntary activities** (e.g., as school governors and lay magistrates) and involvement in local area issues; **participation in political activity, voter engagement, barriers to political participation and electoral representation**; **confidence in political structures, public institutions and ‘fairness’ of society**; **representation in the media**
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers – status by age, gender, qualifications/profession, country of origin/nationality and geographical distribution; duration of arrival and position in application for permanent residence; impact on local community by religion

13. **We appreciate that data on religion may not be available for large parts of our submission. We would recommend, however, that this should not be a reason for proscribing the scope and extent of the report.** As mentioned above, where this is an issue it should be treated as an opportunity to highlight where more statistical data on religion would be helpful to satisfy the needs of faith communities, how appropriate questions could be framed and where exactly (e.g., ONS household surveys, Home Office Reports, etc.) those questions could be best placed. This would ensure that the report on religion is as exhaustive as it could be.

14. We would request that consultation at all stages of the production of the multi-source report on 'Religion' remains as wide and thorough as possible and would welcome the opportunity to write and help identify authors for the more in-depth articles for the final version of the report.

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