

THE CENSUS CAMPAIGN



“NO RELIGION”

The Census Campaign wants as many non-religious people as possible to tick "No religion" in the 2011 Census. *If you're not religious, for God's sake say so.*

A FLAWED QUESTION

We want people to know why the question on religion is flawed and why so many non-religious people didn't tick "None" in the 2001 Census.

REAL DECISIONS

We want people to know that real decisions on resource allocation and policy are based on Census data and if it's wrong we all stand to lose out.

HOW TO ORGANISE A PUBLIC MEETING ON THE CENSUS

1. KEY OBJECTIVES/ MESSAGES OF THE CAMPAIGN

- To get people to answer the religion question.
- To get people to tick the 'No religion' box.
- 'If you mean No religion, for God's sake say so!'
- The Census is wrong- many other surveys and statistics recognise a lower figure for Christian and a higher figure for no religion.
- This inaccurate Census data is used by government and local authorities to legitimise bad policy decisions which affect people by over-emphasising the importance of religion in the majority of people's lives.
- Everyone should fill in the religion question, even though it is not compulsory, to try and get more accurate data.
- People who do not practice any religion or hold strong religious beliefs should tick the 'No religion' box.

2. ORGANISING A MEETING

Tell people what it is about and what you hope to achieve from it. Have a clear agenda set out and tell people how long the meeting will take.

Try to find someone well-known who is willing to speak at your meeting, for example a local MP or author. The BHA may be able to help find a speaker. This will help encourage other people to come along and may even get the press interested.

Once you have decided on a date and place for your meeting, advertise it in the community, for example on noticeboards, in the local press, online and in shop windows. Your aim is to get maximum attendance, so you can really get a proper feel as to what the community at large thinks.

Make sure you also invite people who have some influence or interest - e.g. local councillors and other local groups such as interfaith groups or equality networks. You should be able to find out how to contact them via your local council website.

3. CHOOSING A VENUE

The place where you hold your meeting is very important. The venue must be easy to reach, accessible and have adequate parking. Local community halls should let you use one of their rooms, and your local council may have a list of rooms for hire.

The room should be a comfortable size but not too big. Try and decide before the event how many people you would like to attract and plan accordingly. Try and use a theatre-style room as this means more people can attend.

4. CHAIRING THE MEETING

Someone will have to chair the meeting. This means they will be in charge of making sure that everything runs smoothly. Their responsibilities include:

- Opening the meeting
- Keeping the meeting focused on the agenda
- Making sure that everyone who wants to speak gets a chance, and that no-one speaks for too long
- Stopping personal attacks
- Drawing the meeting to a close at the appropriate time

5. MEETING FORMAT

The chairman or chairwoman should introduce themselves and the speakers and set out the agenda and how the meeting will be run. Then make any announcements or campaign reports before moving on to the main topics for discussion.

The key messages that should come across from the speakers and discussion are above.

Make sure you take along some factsheets and information about the campaign which you can download at www.census-campaign.org.uk/support-the-campaign/ Put a leaflet about your local group or the BHA on each chair. Contact the office if you need any BHA leaflets or merchandise.

6. CONCLUDING THE MEETING

When the meeting time is up, summarise the main points of the discussion.

End the meeting on a positive thought or fact that will help encourage people to get involved.

If there is time after the meeting, try to talk to some of the people who have attended to see what they thought of the meeting and if they need more information.

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