

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.

INTRODUCTION

Working with the media is all about communicating your message above all the other media messages out there. People who work in the media are usually time-poor and need you to communicate quickly and effectively. They are looking for stories that their audience will be interested in and it is your job as a local campaigner to help them find such stories.

WHAT KINDS OF LOCAL MEDIA EXIST?

Types of local media include:

- **NEWSPAPERS:** free or low cost local papers have a huge readership and are interested in current affairs issues that affect local people.
- **RADIO:** regional, local and students' radio reaches a huge number of listeners
- **TELEVISION:** local news and current affairs programmes are looking for visual content or people to interview
- **WEBSITES** for organisations, clubs, news, or local event information can be useful for starting discussions on issues or advertising an event.
- **ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA:** blogs by influential individuals (journalists, academics, students, etc.), Twitter, Facebook, etc.

WHAT KINDS OF MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS ARE THERE?

In general, there are two types of media engagement:

- **PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION** is when you hold an event, make a statement or organize an action to generate interest among partners and the media. Proactive communication is normally easier to plan than reactive communication, but both are essential tools.
- **REACTIVE COMMUNICATION** is when you comment on an outside event, announcement or incident. Reactive communication often means you have to react very quickly to make the most of the opportunity – sometimes a call to the relevant journalist is enough, as at times a press release takes too long, though press releases are always useful as they remain on record.

WHAT SHOULD YOU TELL THEM?

Journalists need quick and detailed communication that tells them what they need to know to write a story. Any communication with them needs to include-

- A contact number where they can get more information- preferably a mobile so they can get hold of someone out of hours. The BHA's phone number for media enquiries about the Census is 0207 462 4992.
- Details such as what happened/is happening, who said what, who is speaking, when etc
- What you as a group think of what has been said/done/is going to happen etc
- Backgrounds details to the campaign including a link to <http://www.census-campaign.org.uk/>
- Keep it as simple as possible and remember to keep to clear messages.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND THEIR CONTACT DETAILS?

The BHA has a directory of media details that we can search by area and region. If you would like us to send a communication out to your local press on our list, email us at pepper@humanism.org.uk

WHAT TOOLS CAN YOU USE?

MEDIA ADVISORY

A media advisory is a short announcement for an upcoming event. It includes information on:

- What the event is
- When it will take place
- Where it is
- Who will be involved in the event and available for interviews such as: experts, local personalities, groups
- Why the event is interesting for the media or how it relates to a current event or news trend
- If there is any photo opportunity.

You should also include any details about filming or photography- check with the venue to see if there are any restrictions and let the press know what they can and can't do.

PRESS RELEASE

A press release is used to let the media know of something new that is happening. This could be a new development on an issue, a new action that has been taken, or a reaction to a current event. Journalists get dozens of press releases every day, and they cannot spend a lot of time reading them. So the most important information in your press release should be in the first paragraph and highlighted in the title (called a “headline”). The vocabulary and ideas should be easily understood by people who are not experts on the topic, and your main messages should be clear and concise. Press releases are sent out on the day of your news or dated for release on the day of your news.

They should be structured:

TOP LINE:

Press release- date for release (either today’s date or the date they are allowed to use the information e.g. embargoed until midnight on 12th November means that the journalist may not release the information until after that time).

HEADLINE:

Something short and catchy which sums up what has happened/is happening

FIRST PARAGRAPH:

This is the most important bit- it needs to grab attention and succinctly give all the details needed for people who don’t have time to read the full thing. It also needs to be attention grabbing so that they read on.

SECOND PARAGRAPH:

Should include a short note with more background information.

QUOTE:

From someone involved in the story that can be pasted into a news story easily. It should be short and give the opinion of the group/person quickly and include key messages. This may be the only bit of the release that makes it into the story so spend some time getting it right.

NOTES:

This section should include contact details, sources of more information and any other information that is relevant to the story but not needed in the body text.

A sample press release can be [downloaded here](#).

INTERVIEWS

These take many forms and can be done live for TV or radio or pre-recorded. They can also be done over the phone, in person or by email for printed press.

While preparing for interviews:

- Decide on 1-2 key messages that you want to communicate
- Know your background information
- Practice your messages with someone
- Get the questions ahead of time if possible

When being interviewed:

- Keep calm
- Give the important information first
- Give short answers and examples
- Be yourself
- Use simple language, avoid acronyms or technical words
- If you don't know the answer, it is fine to say you are not sure and to continue with general facts related to the question or with your main message. If relevant, you can offer to find out the answer and get back to the journalist before his/her deadline.
- Remember that everything you say can be used by the journalist, even things you say after the interview is over. If you think you need to correct something you said, it is fine to come back to the question and correct your answer.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The letters page is one of the most read pages of most publications. Local publications like them particularly because it means they are engaging with their readership and local issues. Adding something relevant to the local area can help to improve chances of publication.

Letters to the editor can be used to either bring up issues or comment on existing articles. If they are a comment they should be sent as soon as possible after the publication of the article you are commenting on. Keep letters as short as possible and the tone friendly and helpful – even when it is something you disagree with. It is better not to be seen as having a 'rant.'

Many newspapers have a specific editor who deals with letters or at least a specific address to send letters to. You should be able to find the right address from the newspaper's website.

Sample letters to the editor can be [downloaded here](#).

OPINION EDITORIAL

Opinion editorials (also known as commentaries or “op-eds”) allow you to express a more in-depth opinion on a current event or issue. If you want your opinion editorial to be run during a specific time period, for example during the Census itself, contact the editor a few weeks in advance and see if there is space available during that time and if there is any interest in your article.

They should be able to tell you how long it should be and exactly what they need you to do.

ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Increasingly, people are communicating and consuming messages on the internet. There are a number of tools that local campaigners can use to spread the word, for example Twitter, Facebook, flickr and youtube. You can also download tools to [spread the word online here](#) – and if you have a blog you can write about the campaign there.

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This guidance is based in part on the Cluster Munition Coalition and International Campaign to Ban Landmines guidance entitled- *Getting coverage: a practical media guide for CMC & ICBL campaigners*



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