

## Religion in numbers (Part 2)

### How many people are there in each of the major world religions across the world and within the UK?

#### INTRODUCTION

Remind the students that they are looking at the relevance of using statistics to investigate big questions about the demographics of religious belief.

This session is designed to give students a clear understanding of the numbers of people who follow each of the world's major religions in the UK and across the world. This is important because it gives students a context when they go on to learn about the different beliefs and practices of the various religions in RE lessons and throughout the course of their lives.

#### ACTIVITY

Begin this session by reminding the students that there are roughly 8 billion people on Earth. Next ask the students to make a list of all the religions they can think of and then rank the religions they have listed according to the number of followers they think each of the religions from the largest religion to the smallest. Once they have completed their list get them to compare their list to the facts according to Wikipedia:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_religious\\_populations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religious_populations)

Then ask:

- *How does this list compare to the list you created?*
- *Is there anything in this list that really surprised you?*
- *Are there any faiths on the list that you haven't heard of before?*

It is also worth asking the students about the strengths and weaknesses of using Wikipedia for this sort of internet search. Stress that the site can be useful but that you need to know what you are looking at is accurate. It is also worth stressing that these figures are ESTIMATES for all the same reasons that last week's figures about the global population are estimates. This would also be a good time to point out that the third session in this series will explore the reasons for the geographical distribution of religious believers around the world.

Once the students have finished taking in the information about

global religions it is time to turn to the number of followers of each religion in the UK. This time the information is much more accurate in that it is based on the 2011 census.

## ACTIVITY

It is very much worth asking the students whether they know what a census is and why census data is more accurate than estimations about global statistics.

Before they look at the census data it is worth asking them to rank the religions (including a box for 'No religion') in terms of the number of followers they think each of them have in Britain. You may well need to tell them that the UK population at the time of the census was 63.2 million but, equally, it can be quite fun to discover that some classes think that, for example, there are 100 million Jews in the UK!

Show the students the information from the 2021 census via Channel 4's summary of the religion data:

[www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1311611309601778](http://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1311611309601778)

Find the complete census data about religion in the UK here:

[www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS031/editions/2021/versions/4](http://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS031/editions/2021/versions/4)

Ask them to make notes on some key facts about which religions / worldviews are growing / shrinking in numbers.

Once students have watched the video the same discussion you had about religious adherence across the world is appropriate. Ask, for example:

- *How does this list compare to the list you created?*
- *Is there anything in this list that really surprised you?*
- *Are there any faiths on the list that you haven't heard of before?*
- *The established religion of the UK is Christianity. Should this change now that there is no longer a majority of people in the country who identify as Christian? Why / why not?*

## CONCLUSION

Finally, finish this session by asking what the most fascinating thing the students discovered today was.