

How to compare your church demographic with your local area

40% of society is single but in the church it is often much lower. You may wish to carry out some research to find out whether your church reflects the types of people in your local community. Doing a comparison of these demographics is a fantastic way to really understand who is sitting in our churches and how we can reach new groups. You may find you have more single people in your area than you think!

To do this you will need to find out and compare two basic pieces of information – the demographic of your church, and the demographic of your local area. If your congregation is roughly the same as the statistics of your area then your congregation is representative. If the numbers are different (remember quite small changes in percentages actually mean a lot of people are missing) then your congregation is not yet fully representative.

STEP 1 - Find out who is in your church.

There are a number of ways you can do this, but to be accurate you need to find an anonymous way of surveying your congregation. You're unlikely to be able to identify everyone who is or isn't single without asking because there are so many categories of people who count as single (never married, divorced, widowed etc.). To do this you need to do four things.

A - Establish purpose and explain why you are doing the survey

It is essential that reasons are given for the survey to the congregation and this will also shape the data collected. Examples include:

- To ensure your church is appealing to your parish, area or type of person you want to attract
- To see if there is any section of community who are not currently being reached.
- To find out if there are needs within the congregation that might have been overlooked
- To compare with other churches in the immediate vicinity or in similar situations across UK

B - Establish a procedure for confidentiality

People may not wish to say what their marital status is, particularly if they expect the church to be judgmental about their situation in some way. A process should be put into place that allows them to answer honestly but anonymously.

C – When and how to conduct the survey.

We suggest that the easiest and most effective way you can do this is to use the Big Church Survey project. This is an interdenominational project run by Church of England's Statistics and Research Unit in conjunction with other denominations. (<https://www.bigchurchsurvey.org/>)

This will answer such questions and also allow you to compare your church with those around or in similar situations - so it will give you some idea of how representative your congregation is

Whilst we suggest using the Big Church Survey project, if you would rather run your own survey, you should consider the following ideas when developing your own:

Questions to ask

- Gender: Male/Female
- Age bands as follows: 16 - 29; 30 - 44; 45 - 59; 60 - 75; 75+
- Marital status: Never Married, Married, Cohabiting; Remarried, Widowed, Divorced, Separated
- Responsible day to day for dependent children (under the age of 16): Y / N
- Some may want to add the option of saying whether they are gay or not.

When to conduct the survey

There are number of options in deciding when and how to do the survey, which include:

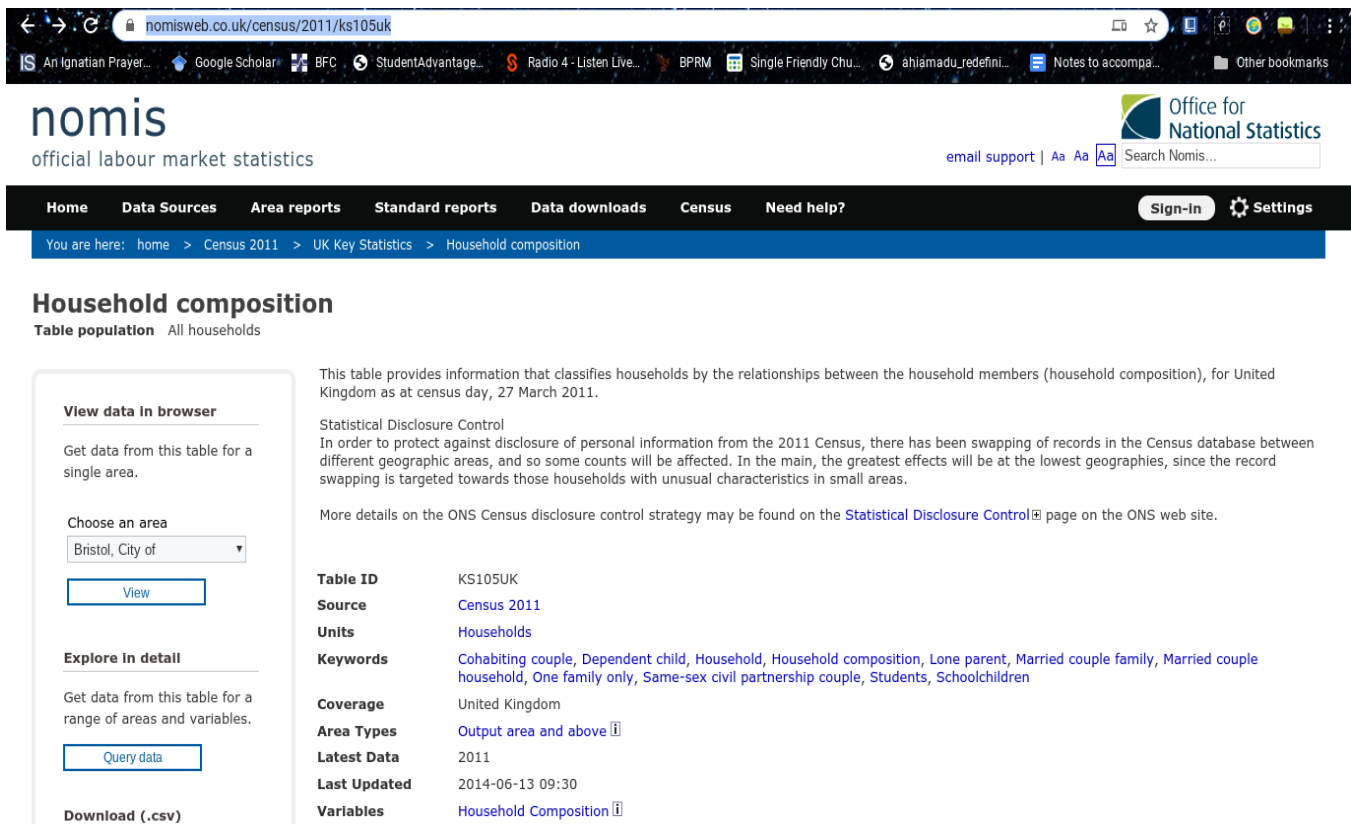
- At a service, with a piece of paper
- At a general meeting, when the majority of the members are gathered, again probably with paper
- Online through a free service such as <https://www.surveymonkey.com> (a number are available). The address could be given to the congregation by Sunday notice sheet or on the church website for a limited period. If this is used, then some checking qualification should be made, such as a code word, to prevent random entries.

STEP 2 - Find out who lives in your local area

Now to compare these figures you need to gather a second set of data. The second is the people who are single in a local area. Unfortunately at the moment the easiest to access data is from the 2011 Census, so it is likely there are now more single and cohabiting households in your area than this data suggests.

To find the data for your area go to this page on the nomis (labour market statistics website) <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks105uk>

It should look like this:



The screenshot shows the nomis website interface. The browser address bar displays 'nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks105uk'. The page header includes the 'nomis' logo, 'official labour market statistics', and the 'Office for National Statistics' logo with a search bar. A navigation menu contains links for Home, Data Sources, Area reports, Standard reports, Data downloads, Census, and Need help?. Below the menu is a breadcrumb trail: 'You are here: home > Census 2011 > UK Key Statistics > Household composition'. The main heading is 'Household composition' with a sub-heading 'Table population All households'. The page content is divided into three sections: 'View data in browser', 'Explore in detail', and 'Download (.csv)'. The 'View data in browser' section includes a dropdown menu for 'Choose an area' (currently set to 'Bristol, City of') and a 'View' button. The 'Explore in detail' section includes a 'Query data' button. The 'Download (.csv)' section includes a 'Download (.csv)' button. To the right of these sections is a text block providing information about the table, including a 'Statistical Disclosure Control' warning and a link to the 'Statistical Disclosure Control' page. Below this text is a table of metadata for the data.

Table ID	KS105UK
Source	Census 2011
Units	Households
Keywords	Cohabiting couple, Dependent child, Household, Household composition, Lone parent, Married couple family, Married couple household, One family only, Same-sex civil partnership couple, Students, Schoolchildren
Coverage	United Kingdom
Area Types	Output area and above
Latest Data	2011
Last Updated	2014-06-13 09:30
Variables	Household Composition

Select an area from this drop down box and click select (I have selected the City of Bristol)

View data in browser

Get data from this table for a single area.

Choose an area

Bristol, City of

View

Explore in detail

Get data from this table for a range of areas and variables.

Query data

Download (.csv)

You should then be taken to a page that looks like this:

nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS105UK/view/1946157348?cols=measures

Nomis official labour market statistics

National Statistics email support | Aa Aa Aa Search Nomis...

Home Data Sources Area reports Standard reports Data downloads Census Need help? Sign-In Settings

You are here: home > 2011 Census > UK Key Statistics > KS105UK > Data Viewer

KS105UK - Household composition

Show / Hide Tools

Download (.xlsx) - or older .xls format
Table population: All households
Household Composition by measures
Units: Households

Date 2011
Geography Bristol, City of

	value
All categories: Household composition	182,747
One person household	61,607
Aged 65 and over	20,272
Other	41,335
One family household	99,663
All aged 65 and over	10,147
Married or same-sex civil partnership couple	47,427
No children	17,772
Dependent children	22,373
All children non-dependent	7,282
Cohabiting couple	21,556

The data you need is in the table on this page.

STEP 3 - Now compare your data.

You can just use the titles from the table on the nomis website and make a chart that looks like this. However, as there are probably less people in your church than the total population of the area it is important you use percentages as well as complete numbers. Your comparison table could look something like this:

	In the local area	Percentage of people living in the local area	In the church	Percentage of people in the church.
One person household	61607	$=100 \times (61607 / 182747)$ =33.71%	180	$=100 \times (150 / 600)$ =25%
(one person household aged 65 or over)				
(one person household not aged 65 or over)				
One family household				

As you can see in the example given above 33% of the local area live in one person households, whereas only 25% of those in church do. This means that people who are living in one person households are 8% less likely to attend church than people who live in one family households (a significant difference!)