

Definitions

Classification by Religious Denomination

The formulation of the question on religious denomination was as follows:

RELIGION

State the
particular
denomination.

If none write
"None".

No further notes or instructions were given. The census enumerators were instructed not to insist on the completion of this section of the form in cases where householders were reluctant to give the required information. This was similar to the instruction given at the 1981 Census of Population, the most recent previous census at which a question on Religion was included on the census schedule.

The classification of religious denominations introduced for the 1991 Census is more detailed than for previous censuses in which the question on Religion was asked. The full breakdown is given in Table 4.

The 1991 classification separately distinguishes persons described generally as "Protestants", without a particular denomination being indicated. However, in order to facilitate comparison with the results of previous censuses, Protestants have been included in the "Church of Ireland" category. This category also covers persons whose denominations were given as Church of Ireland, Church of England, Anglican, Episcopalian and Catholic Church of Ireland.

The category "Presbyterian" covers persons whose denominations were given as Free Presbyterian, Reformed Presbyterian and Church of Scotland. The category "Methodist" includes Wesleyan. Persons whose denominations were described as "Lapsed or non-practising Catholics" are shown separately in Table 4. The relatively small number of such persons in 1981 was included in the "Roman Catholic" category. Persons described as having no religion are shown accordingly, while those for whom no information was recorded are shown as "Not stated".

Commentary

Changes 1981-1991

Table A summarises the numbers of persons of different religious denominations in the State in 1981 and 1991.

Table A Persons classified by religious denomination in 1981 and 1991 showing percentage change in that period

Religious Denomination	Persons		Percentage change 1981-1991
	1981	1991	
Catholic	3,204,476	3,228,327	0.7
Church of Ireland (including Protestant)	95,366	89,187	- 6.5
Presbyterian	14,255	13,199	- 7.4
Methodist	5,790	5,037	- 13.0
Jewish	2,127	1,581	- 25.7
Other stated religions	10,843	38,743	257.3
No religion	39,572	66,270	67.5
Not stated	70,976	83,375	17.5
Total	3,443,405	3,525,719	2.4

A total of 3,228,327 persons were returned as Catholics in the 1991 Census, an increase of 23,851 or 0.7 per cent on the corresponding 1981 figure. The number of persons returned under all other stated religions totalled 147,747 in 1991, a rise of 19,366 or 15.1 per cent on the 1981 figure. However, this category comprised two distinct components. The combined number of adherents to the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Jewish denominations fell by 8,534 or 7.3 per cent between 1981 and 1991. "Other stated religions", on the other hand, increased by 27,900 or 257.3 per cent over the same period.

The number of persons who indicated "No religion" increased by over two thirds between both censuses while the number of "Not stated" increased by slightly more than a sixth. In total, these two categories combined accounted for almost 150,000 of the total population in 1991 compared to 110,000 in 1981.

The extent of the "Not stated" category is an important factor in comparing the population classified by denomination. The growth in this category from 2.1 per cent of the population in 1981 to 2.4 per cent in 1991 may have affected the trend in individual denominations to a greater or lesser extent. This qualification should be borne in mind in interpreting comparisons between the 1981 and 1991 figures for individual denominations.

Regional Variations

Table B below shows the percentage change which took place between 1981 and 1991 in each County at the overall level and for major groupings of denominations. The categories shown are Catholics; "Other traditional religions" comprising Church of Ireland (including Protestants), Presbyterians, Methodists and Jews; "Other stated religions" and those for whom no religion was indicated or no information provided. Most of the declines in the number of Catholics between 1981 and 1991 were associated with overall population declines. The exceptions were Offaly, Westmeath and Limerick where modest falls in the number of Catholics occurred against a background of minor overall population increases. The number of adherents to the "Other traditional religions" decreased in all but seven counties between 1981 and 1991. These counties were Kildare, Kilkenny, Wexford, Wicklow, Clare, Kerry and Galway.

The number of adherents to "Other stated religions" more than doubled in all counties between both censuses. There were also increases in all counties in the number of persons classified as "No religion or religion not stated"; the lowest being Louth (+3.0 per cent) and the highest being Sligo (+112.1 per cent).

Table B Percentage change between 1981 and 1991 in the number of persons classified by religious denomination in each county

Province or County	Religious denomination				
	Total	Catholic	Other traditional religions	Other stated religions	No religion and not stated
Percentage change 1981-1991					
Leinster	3.9	2.4	- 8.3	247.6	26.6
Carlow	2.8	2.3	- 5.4	258.9	22.5
Dublin	2.2	0.2	- 13.1	238.1	27.0
Kildare	17.8	17.0	2.2	308.1	30.5
Kilkenny	4.0	1.7	11.2	270.2	74.2
Laoighis	2.2	1.7	- 4.3	157.9	38.5
Longford	- 2.7	- 3.4	- 11.5	168.3	36.1
Louth	2.5	1.8	- 7.6	336.1	3.0
Meath	10.4	9.8	- 2.7	328.5	20.7
Offaly	0.3	- 0.4	- 9.9	184.7	52.7
Westmeath	0.6	- 0.4	- 7.3	228.7	27.8
Wexford	3.0	2.3	0.0	193.1	21.1
Wicklow	11.2	10.3	0.2	310.4	17.4
Munster	1.1	- 0.9	- 5.1	268.9	53.3
Clare	3.8	1.1	7.4	293.2	64.4
Cork	2.0	0.0	- 7.6	318.6	48.9
Kerry	- 0.7	- 3.1	16.0	223.9	58.5
Limerick	0.2	- 1.3	- 16.0	222.7	36.5
Tipperary	- 1.8	- 3.6	- 1.8	289.9	69.8
Waterford	3.4	1.1	- 1.6	177.1	73.3
Connacht	- 0.3	- 2.2	- 2.9	341.3	51.9
Galway	4.9	2.4	18.7	338.6	50.2
Leitrim	- 8.4	- 9.5	- 15.8	900.0	62.6
Mayo	- 3.5	- 4.8	- 7.5	341.9	39.4
Roscommon	- 4.9	- 5.6	- 4.1	531.4	15.1
Sligo	- 1.3	- 4.1	- 7.9	270.8	112.1
Ulster (part of)	0.9	0.6	- 7.2	215.4	31.1
Cavan	- 2.0	- 2.7	- 9.8	258.2	85.4
Donegal	2.4	2.2	- 5.5	271.7	21.3
Monaghan	0.2	0.2	- 9.2	126.7	22.9
Total	2.4	0.7	- 7.3	257.3	35.4

Age Groups

The population classified by religious denomination and age group in 1981 and 1991 is given in Table C along with derived percentage changes. The classification is the same as that given in Table B.

Table C Persons classified by religious denomination and age group showing percentage change 1981-1991

Religious Denomination		Age group							
		Total	Under 15	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Catholic	1981	3,204,476	985,464	564,827	434,118	330,746	280,717	268,872	339,732
	1991	3,228,327	874,613	556,142	445,238	414,777	313,142	255,237	369,178
	% change	0.7	-11.2	-1.5	2.6	25.4	11.6	-5.1	8.7
Other traditional religions	1981	117,538	25,266	15,978	15,733	13,865	11,945	13,110	21,641
	1991	109,004	21,214	14,411	13,299	15,144	13,220	11,038	20,678
	% change	-7.3	-16.0	-9.8	-15.5	9.2	10.7	-15.8	-4.4
Other stated religions	1981	10,843	2,609	1,954	2,708	1,518	718	605	731
	1991	38,743	8,967	6,339	8,931	7,222	3,469	1,883	1,932
	% change	257.3	243.7	224.4	229.8	375.8	383.1	211.2	164.3
No religion	1981	39,572	7,690	7,572	13,071	5,628	2,433	1,608	1,570
	1991	66,270	11,091	11,696	16,336	15,186	6,776	2,842	2,343
	% change	67.5	44.2	54.5	25.0	169.8	178.5	76.7	49.2
Not stated	1981	70,976	22,700	12,225	12,381	7,996	5,717	4,677	5,280
	1991	83,375	24,689	13,010	11,588	11,243	7,961	6,115	8,769
	% change	17.5	8.8	6.4	-6.4	40.6	39.3	30.7	66.1
Total	1981	3,443,405	1,043,729	602,556	478,011	359,753	301,530	288,872	368,954
	1991	3,525,719	940,574	601,598	495,392	463,572	344,568	277,115	402,900
	% change	2.4	-9.9	-0.2	3.6	28.9	14.3	-4.1	9.2

The changes in the age structure of the Catholic population closely follow the changes in the age structure of the population as a whole. This is to be expected since 91.6 per cent of the population were returned as Catholic. The decline in the annual number of births between 1981 and 1991 which was largely responsible for the fall of about one tenth in the number of children aged under 15 was also reflected in the 11 per cent decline in the number of Catholics in this age group. Conversely, the ageing process which added 28.9 per cent to the 35-44 year age group also caused the number of Catholics in this age group to increase by just over a quarter in the period 1981-1991.

The decline in the number of persons classified to the "Other traditional religions" occurred in all age groups apart from the 35-44 and 45-54 year age groups. In the latter two age groups the impact of demographic ageing outweighed the changes taking place in religious adherence. The 35-44 and 45-54 year age groups also accounted for the highest percentage changes between 1981 and 1991 in the number of persons with "No religion".

Table D shows the number of persons in each age group as a percentage of the total population of each religious denomination in 1981 and 1991

Table D Persons in each age group as a percentage of the total population in each religious denomination

Religious Denomination		Age group							
		Total	Under 15	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Catholic	1981	100.-	30.8	17.6	13.5	10.3	8.8	8.4	10.6
	1991	100.-	27.1	17.2	13.8	12.8	9.7	7.9	11.4
Other traditional religions	1981	100.-	21.5	13.6	13.4	11.8	10.2	11.2	18.4
	1991	100.-	19.5	13.2	12.2	13.9	12.1	10.1	19.0
Other stated religions	1981	100.-	24.1	18.0	25.0	14.0	6.6	5.6	6.7
	1991	100.-	23.1	16.4	23.1	18.6	9.0	4.9	5.0
No religion	1981	100.-	19.4	19.1	33.0	14.2	6.1	4.1	4.0
	1991	100.-	16.7	17.6	24.7	22.9	10.2	4.3	3.5
Not stated	1981	100.-	32.0	17.2	17.4	11.3	8.1	6.6	7.4
	1991	100.-	29.6	15.6	13.9	13.5	9.5	7.3	10.5
Total	1981	100.-	30.3	17.5	13.9	10.4	8.8	8.4	10.7
	1991	100.-	26.7	17.1	14.1	13.1	9.8	7.9	11.4

Given that Catholics account for over 90 per cent of the population their age structure is similar to that of the overall population. Over 44 per cent of the Catholic population was under 25 years in 1991. This compared with about a third for the "Other traditional religions" and nearly 40 per cent for "Other stated religions". The proportion of persons aged 55 years and over varied from 29.1 per cent for the "Other traditional religions" to 19.3 per cent for Catholics and less than 10 per cent for "Other stated religions".

More than four in five of persons with "No religion" were aged less than 45 years in 1991.