

Understanding Society User Support - Support #1183

Discrepancies in the distribution of religion between US and UK Census

04/11/2019 12:58 PM - Jing Shen

Status:	Resolved	Start date:	04/11/2019
Priority:	Normal	% Done:	100%
Assignee:	Jing Shen		
Category:			
Description			
I'm currently working on religious variables in Understanding Society, and have found that the distribution of religion based on the survey variables is rather different from that in the Census data. Across waves, I've got a group of "no religion" around 50%, and a group of "Christian" being below or around 40% of the sample size, respectively. However, the 2001 and 2011 Census both report much higher percentages of Christians (73% in 2001 and 61% in 2011) and much lower percentages of having no religion (15% in 2001 and 25% in 2011). Would it be possible to know why such big gaps exist between the US survey and Census data?			

History

#1 - 04/12/2019 04:33 PM - Alita Nandi

- Status changed from New to In Progress
- % Done changed from 0 to 10
- Private changed from Yes to No

Many thanks for your enquiry. The Understanding Society team is looking into it and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

Best wishes,
Understanding Society User Support Team

#2 - 04/17/2019 05:57 PM - Alita Nandi

- Status changed from In Progress to Feedback
- Assignee set to Jing Shen
- % Done changed from 10 to 80

Hello Jing Shen,

The Census question and the Understanding Society questions are slightly different.

In the 2011 Census, the question is "What is your religion?" The proportion with "no religion" among 16+ year olds in 2011 Census for England and Wales: $10909996/45496780 = 0.24$ and so the proportion with any religion is 0.76

In Understanding Society there are 2 questions asked of 16+ year olds.

1. a_oprlg, "Do you belong to a religion?"
2. If they say no (a_oprlg=2), then they are asked, a_oprlg0 "which religion were you brought up in?" where one of the options is "no religion" (a_oprlg0=1)

Not everyone who was brought up in a religion considers belonging to that religion now (that is, at the time of the interview). As the Census question does not ask about belonging, respondents could interpret that to mean either the religion they belong to or were brought up in. So, you could combine these two variables (a_oprlg a_oprlg0) in Understanding Society to produce a religion variable that is more consistent with the Census question:

```
generat anyreligion=1 if a_oprlg==1|(a_oprlg==2 & a_oprlg0>=2 & a_oprlg0<=15)
replace anyreligion=0 if a_oprlg==2 & a_oprlg0==1
```

The weighted estimate of the proportion of 16+ year olds living in England and Wales who say that they either belong to a religion OR were brought up in a religion is 83.1

```
tab anyreligion if inlist(a_country,1,2) [aw=a_indinus_xw]
OR
proportion anyreligion if inlist(a_country,1,2) [pw=a_indinus_xw]
```

As you can see the discrepancy does not disappears but it is now much less.

Hope this helps.

Best wishes,

Understanding Society User Support Team

#3 - 04/23/2019 03:54 PM - Alita Nandi

- *Status changed from Feedback to Resolved*

- *% Done changed from 80 to 100*

Reply via email to usersupport@

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Thank you so much for this very helpful response!

Best wishes,

Jing **