BAPTISTS TOGETHER

Faith And Society Files: Obtaining Demographic Data from the Office for National Statistics

A resource to help you access online information for profiling your local community, which will provide insights into its needs and the opportunities this offers the church.

Understanding the neighbourhood within which a church is located can provide helpful insights into the needs and opportunities it faces. There is a wealth of online information available that allows you to profile the local community in terms of its demographic, social and economic characteristics. A fellowship whose membership closely mirrors that of the surrounding area in terms of age and social class, for example, will have very different opportunities for outreach to one whose congregation differs greatly from its neighbourhood. This type of analysis is well understood by major supermarket chains who will adapt the format of their stores and even the mixture of goods on its shelves to attract customers in each catchment area. It is not possible – or desirable – to push this analogy too far, but there is plenty of helpful information available without needing the skills for a sophisticated neighbourhood analysis. Census data and neighbourhood statistics are freely available for a wide range of geographical areas. It is generally best to attempt a definition of the catchment area of the church and then to match this as closely as possible by building up from the smallest areas to create your neighbourhood profile.

Examples of questions that may guide you in what to look for include:

What is the effective catchment area of the church?

This is generally only discernible by talking with church leaders and members: some rural and city-centre churches will draw their congregation from a wide area, while suburban fellowships may effectively serve only a single housing estate. The answer to this question will probably alert you to some aspects of the next:

Does the catchment area have distinctive socioeconomic characteristics?

Are there specific demographic, ethnic, social class or employment factors that stand out? It is helpful to compare the catchment area with regional or national reference values – this can help explain apparently large differences between one fellowship and another. Are there distinctive sub-groups such as students or asylum-seekers?

How does the profile of the congregation differ from that of its catchment area?

Churches whose congregation 'commutes in' may differ greatly from the people who live immediately around them, while others may be drawn from very specific social class or other groups within an immediate neighbourhood. Does this impact on the fellowship's capacity to engage in day-time activities or to build relationships with local residents and businesses?

Are there significant unreached groups within the church's locality which might represent an important mission or service opportunity?

It can be helpful to reflect back to a local fellowship how its activities appear to meet the profile of its local community. It does not follow that every fellowship should be a reflection of its neighbourhood, but churches surrounded by retirement homes, local authority housing with young families or a lunchtime population of office workers might need to consider quite different strategies.

The Office for National Statistics has now made some Census data from the 2011 Census available on the 'Neighbourhood Statistics' website. It is the most comprehensive free demographic information currently available, and includes several ways to access local area information. Through this website you will be able to find summary statistics for an area through a postcode or town search and find more detailed statistics by subject name, administrative area name or by using an interactive map. The results provide the headline figures for each topic covered in the Census.

The website is being updated continually, as new information becomes available, and you may find that the website looks slightly different from the description given here. If this is the case, assistance is available in the User Guide in the Help section.

The Neighbourhood Statistics web site is best viewed using Internet Explorer version 5.5 or higher, with popups, JavaScript, images and cookies enabled. The website can also be viewed using Netscape 7.0 and Mozilla Firefox 1.0. MacIntosh users with Safari or Firefox installed will be able to access a Neighbourhood Profile for an area, or browse and download ready made tables, although they may encounter some display problems. If you access the site with another configuration, some elements of the site may not work as well, or not work at all.

Users with appropriate browsers and JavaScript enabled will have exclusive access to create their own tables using a selection of topics and areas (both pre-defined and constructed). These tables can also be used in the generation of related maps and charts.

If you get stuck, please feel free to email faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk or contact the Office for National Statistics direct on: 0845 601 3034 or email info@statistics.gov.uk

Go to:
www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

There are several options for accessing the statistics at different levels:

1 Neighbourhood Summary

Select this option for summary information about your area, on the following topics:
- People and places
- Health
- Local economy
- Education
- Housing
- Crime and safety
- a range of other topics under 'More...'

You will need to enter your full postcode to obtain a written report or 'profile' with a map of the area.
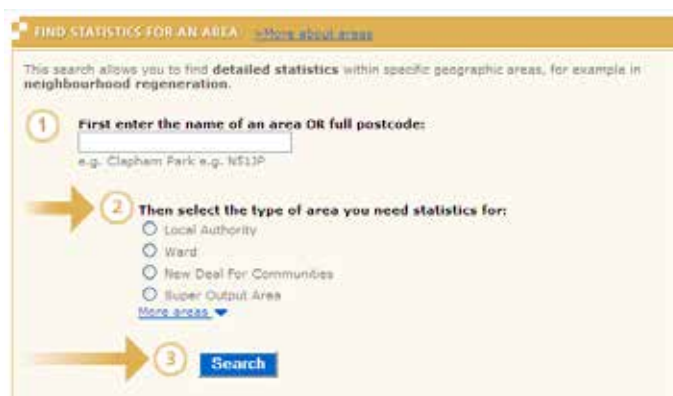

- The profile will be based on areas known as Lower Layer Super Output areas (LSOAs) hich contain around 1500 people, with some items based on ward and local authority information.
- When creating a neighbourhood profile in this way you will be presented with a map of the area to which most of the data relate: it is very important to consider how well the area covered by the data match your area of interest. The realistic 'catchment area' of most churches will cover more than one super output area or ward, but will rarely be as large as a local authority district. Changing the area covered by the statistics can dramatically alter the neighbourhood profile.

- Information about population is available annually from the mid-year population estimates. These estimates are only available by five year age bands at a local authority level, and do not provide the detailed breakdowns available from the population information collected via the Census, last carried out in 2011. This section uses both these sources of information to provide as broad a picture as possible of the area.
- A 'printer friendly' version of these results is available by clicking on the printer icon at the top right of the screen.

2 Find statistics for an area

Here the individual reports of topics covered by the 2011 census are set out by subject for the whole of England and Wales, and also broken down by individual regions of the countries.

1 From the Home page you will need to input the place name or postcode to browse these tables and download the statistics.

2 Unfortunately, UK geography is far from simple and there are many different geographic unit types to choose from:

Local Authority

In general terms 'local authority' can refer to any local government area in the UK. In the Neighbourhood Statistics context, however, it only refers to the lower tier of local government. This includes non-metropolitan districts, metropolitan districts, unitary authorities and London boroughs in England; unitary authorities in Wales; council areas in Scotland; and district council areas in Northern Ireland.

Super Output Areas (SOAs) are small areas specifically introduced to improve the reporting and comparison of local statistics. (To obtain this level of detail, you will need to provide a postcode rather than a place name.)

Within England and Wales there is a **Lower Layer** (minimum population 1000) and a **Middle Layer** (minimum population 5000). Unlike electoral wards, these SOA layers are of consistent size across the country and are not subjected to regular boundary change.

Electoral wards

Electoral wards are the base unit of UK administrative geography, being the areas from which local authority councillors are elected. They are commonly referred to just as 'wards' and vary greatly in size (from fewer than 100 residents to more than 30,000).
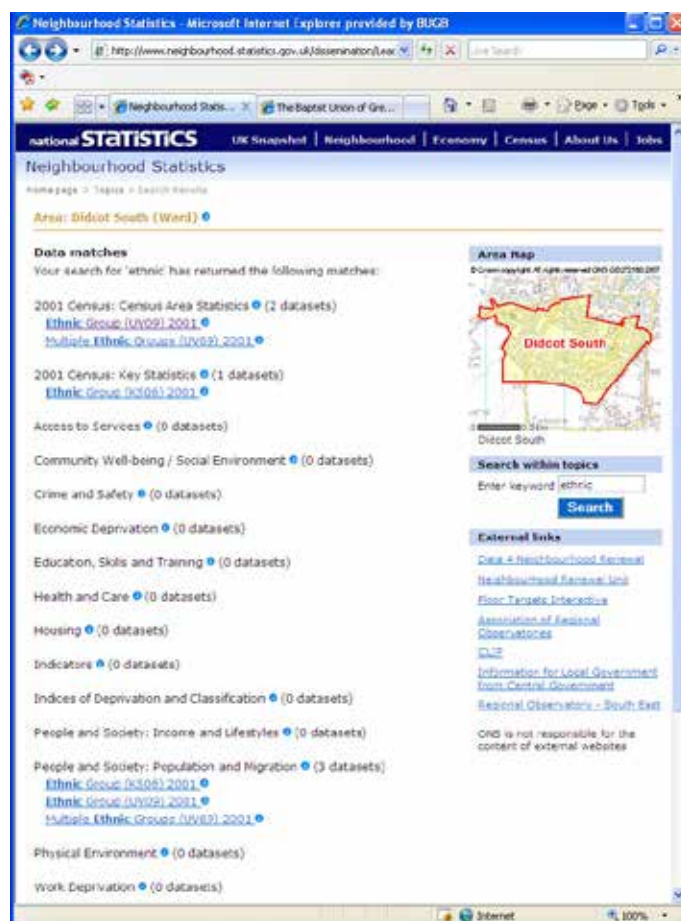
Additional areas which can be selected now include:
- Output Area (smaller divisions of the Super Output Areas)
- Primary Care Organisation
- Health Authority
- Education Authority
- Westminster Parliamentary Consituency
- Parish

These are worth exploring if their boundaries may be of relevance to your search.

- It may only be through trial and error that you discover the most appropriate type of area to use to obtain the statistics you require for your community. Once you have selected the type of area, click 'Search' to find the statistics by topic for this area.

- One option to find specific data is to enter a search term into the box provided to locate the most relevant dataset(s) to your requirement and then press Return. This will then detail the datasets which include this information. For example, if searching for references to 'ethnic' within the South

Didcot ward area, the following results are obtained:

To access the data contained within these datasets, click on the underlined links. The data provided will be presented for the output area which you had previously specified, along with comparative figures for the local authority, region and country.

- For more information about what is included in the topic's dataset, click on the 🔵 at the end of the title. This provides information on who supplied the data, how and where the data was collected, the variables and any other important supplementary notes.

- When you have selected the topic you require, the dataset will be displayed and you will be given the option to print the data or download it so that it can be saved in a suitable location on your computer.
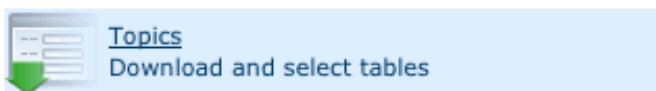
  If you choose to download the data, it will be downloaded as a Microsoft Excel file (.csv). Using this, you will be able to

produce your own graphical representation of the data, or to incorporate figures within a presentation.

It is not recommended that you download large amounts of data unless you are confident that you will be able to use a spreadsheet such as Excel or other software to extract the information that you need. In particular, most of the data are counts of people for each area (for example, counts of people in different age groups). In order to make sense of these data, or to compare different areas, it is usually necessary to express the counts as percentages (for example, the percentage of the population in each age group).

3 Find detailed statistics by Topic
If you would find it useful to view or download statistical information for a range of larger geographical areas, in order to make detailed comparisons by topic, use the 'Topics' section at the bottom of the screen.

Topics
Download and select tables

From the next screen you can click on the main titles to see the individual topics available.

Neighbourhood Statistics **Topics** Help

2011 Census Guidance

If you have never used Neighbourhood Statistics before, or are unsure of the best way to get the data you require,you may find it useful to view the Neighbourhood Statistics census guidance pages before you start.

Click **here** for further details

Click on main titles to see topics:

Search for: [   ] **Search**

Select

⊞ Census

⊞ Crime and Safety ❶

⊞ Economic Deprivation ❶

⊞ Education, Skills and Training ❶

⊞ Health and Care ❶

⊞ Housing ❶

⊞ Indicators ❶

⊞ Indices of Deprivation and Classification ❶

⊞ People and Society: Income and Lifestyles ❶

◀ Back Next ▶

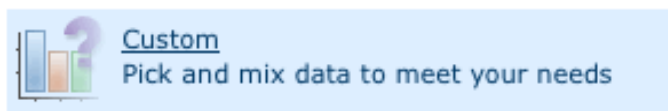From this screen there are two options for selecting the data you require:

• The first option is to enter a search term into the box provided to locate the most relevant dataset(s) to your requirement and then press Return or click the 'Go' button.

• Alternatively, you can browse the datasets available using the ⊞ and ⊟ icons to expand and collapse the view.

• For more information about what is included in the topic's dataset, click on the ❶ at the end of the title. This provides information on who supplied the data, how and where the data was collected, the variables and any other important supplementary notes.

• When you have selected the topics you require, click in the Select circles on the right hand side of the screen and click 'Next' at the lower right of the screen.

• On the next screen you have the option to view the data or download it so that it can be saved in a suitable location on your computer. When you have made your selection, click on 'Next' at the lower right of the screen.

• If you select 'View', there is an option to enlarge the table on screen to make it easier to see. Please also note that on large tables only some of the columns will be visible, and you can access the next range of columns by clicking on Next at the upper right of the screen. At the upper left of the screen you can also change the number of columns being displayed.

• To find data for your chosen area, click on the higher geographical area which contains the chosen area. For example, to get data for 'Middlesbrough' click on 'North East' and the screen will refresh to show the same table, for the geographical areas that make up that higher area. Some layers of the hierarchy may not contain data (and will show as double dots '..' to show 'not available'), but there may be data for lower levels of the hierarchy.

• You can print the data by clicking on the Print icon at the upper right of the screen.

• When you select 'Download', you have the option to download the data in two file types:
  - csv - unformatted, compatible with most databases
  - xls - formatted, not compatible with all databases.

All files are zipped (compressed) to make them quicker to download, and include information stored in Acrobat PDF format. You may need to download software to open zipped files or read PDF.

The data is organised according to geographic area and the area you are interested in is likely to be represented by just a few lines in a much larger dataset. Depending on the dataset, you may be able to download the data by area, for example London or East Midlands, or by area type, for example local authorities or health areas. Some sets of data have been broken up into smaller files to make them easier to download.
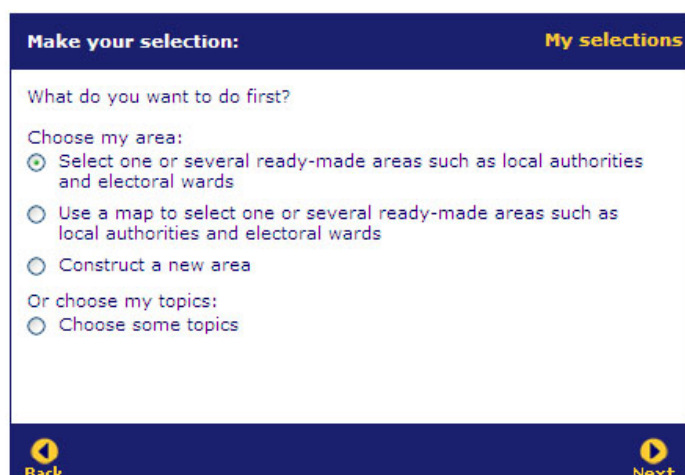
4 Customised Tables, Charts and Maps

To create a table using a mix of different areas and topics click on the 'Custom' link from the bottom of the homepage.

Custom
Pick and mix data to meet your needs

You need to select one or more areas or topics in order to generate your table. Your selections will produce a table combining the topics and areas you choose.
Caution: data are not always available for some small, local areas (eg wards). If your request is unsuccessful, try again using larger areas (eg local authorities) or select a different topic.

There are three ways to select an area:

When selecting this first option, you will need to choose the geography hierarchy area(s) from the list of differing boundary types, and click 'Next'.   If you are looking for data based on ward information you will need to select '2003 Administrative Hierarchy'. This used to be the default but has been replaced by the '2011 Statistical Geography Hierarchy', which is based on Output Areas and Super Output Areas. These Super Output Areas allow better comparison over space and time (ie they don't change boundaries like wards, and are also more consistent in size).

Then there are two options for selecting your area(s) – by postcode or by place name.

- Postcode results
  Area results relevant to your postcode are returned in a new window.
  Click on the area relevant to your choice.

The area search result window closes, and you are returned to the 'Select from 2011 Statistical Geography Hierarchy' page with the relevant geographical area expanded to show the area you have selected. The breakdown of statistics does not follow the boundaries for postcodes, towns etc so it is strongly advisable to view the map (accessible by clicking on the 🛈 by the area name and following the link to 'view map') to make sure that the matched areas are suitable.

Tick the box next to the area(s) you require to make your selection. The areas which you have selected will be displayed in the 'My area selections' window on the

right hand side. You can make selections from widely diverse areas in order to make comparisons, if this is relevant to your particular needs.

- Placename results
Area results relevant to your placename are returned in a new window. The results are viewed in a list, starting with placename and ending with the lowest geographic layer available in your selected geography.

Click on the area relevant to your search. The area search result will close the window, and return to the 'Select from 2011 Statistical Geography Hierarchy' page. Tick the box next to the area(s) you require to make your selection. The areas which you have selected will be displayed in the 'My area selections' window on the right hand side. Click the 'Next' button at the bottom right of the screen. You will then be taken to a new screen asking you to select your topics.
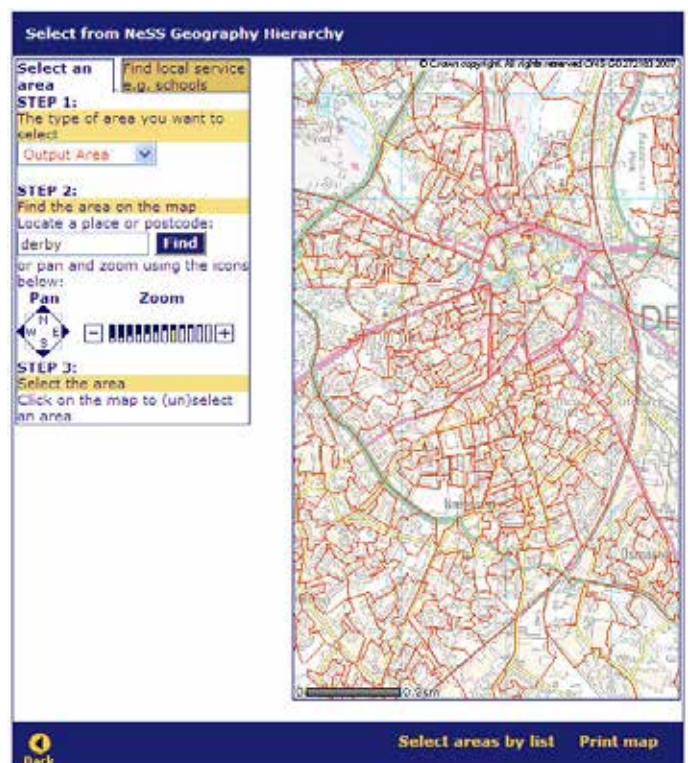
B Using a map
You can also select the option to use a map to define your area. This is by far the most powerful tool for assembling data if you have

a specific 'catchment area' to profile. As with the previous description, you will need to select the geography hierarchy area(s) from the list of differing boundary types.

The first step is to find the appropriate part of the map in order to start selecting your area(s).
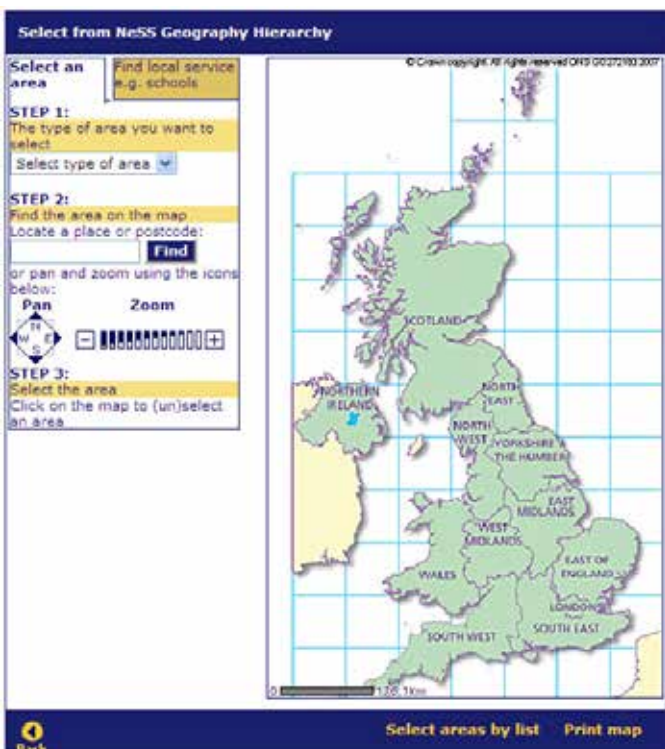
To finely and accurately select specific areas, select 'Output Area' as the type of area and then enter a placename or postcode into the box and click the 'Find' button. If you have entered a placename, you will probably need to select the most appropriate entry on the next screen.

An alternative way to select your area(s) of interest is to use the pan and zoom facilities to get the level of map required.

The second step of the process is to select the Output Areas you wish to form part of your constructed area. This is done by clicking on the areas on the map. The chosen areas will then highlight in yellow on the map. They will also appear on the right hand side of the screen.
To remove a selection, untick the area from

the list. Once happy with the areas chosen, click the 'Next' button at the bottom right of the screen. You will then be taken to a new screen asking you to select your topics.

Further options for obtaining data are available and you may find it helpful to explore the website yourself to find specific pieces of information which are relevant to your area. The website's User Guide will help you to work through these options. A useful feature of the site is to be able to name and save your area definitions for future use. This requires that you register with the Neighbourhood Statistics site.

It may also be useful to investigate the relevant County Council website for local information, although the quality of information available will vary from Council to Council.

ACORN stands for 'A Classification of Residential Neighbourhood' and is a geodemographic classification using census and other data to identify and understand the UK population and the demand for products and services. Businesses use this information to improve their understanding of customers, target markets and determine where to locate operations and this information may also be useful in discovering the needs of a church's community. You can access the website at www.caci.co.uk/acorn/default.asp and will need to register with an email address some personal details before being able to use it. You will be sent a 'passkey' by email which you will enter as your password each time you access the site.

The information available on this website is based on postcodes and so is very localised; you will need to know the postcodes for different areas of the community being served by the church, and enter these separately to give an overview of the community. For each postcode entered you will be given an ACORN classification, and there are further details about the characteristics of each of the fifty-six ACORN types available in a downloadable brochure. You can also find out more about the lifestyle or demographic characteristics of this ACORN type relative to the rest of the UK.

A similar classification of census output areas, produced by the Office for National Statistics is available in the Neighbourhood Statistics topics and can be found in the 'Indices of Deprivation and Classification' heading.

The Baptist Union is very grateful to Professor Dave Martin of Southampton University who has provided much guidance and assistance in the writing of this Faith and Society File.