

**Church of England**  
**clergy with**  
**disabilities audit**  
**2005**

*Research & Statistics Department*  
*Archbishops' Council*

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# **Contents**

## **1. Introduction**

## **2. Background**

## **3. The Survey Questionnaire**

- 3.1 Methodology
- 3.2 Questionnaire design
- 3.3 Survey responses

## **4. Results**

- 4.1 Disability
- 4.2 Disability by age
- 4.3 Disability by gender
- 4.4 Disability by diocese
- 4.5 Disability and appointment

## **5. Appendices**

- Survey form and covering letter
- Clergy with disabilities by diocese

## 1. Introduction

1. In July 2003 the General Synod approved the recommendations of *Called to Act Justly*<sup>1</sup>. One of the recommendations was that an audit of the clergy should be carried out. The audit was intended 'to establish the proportion who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the offices they hold to establish a baseline, with special reference to gender and whether such clergy are British born'. The scope of the audit was then extended. Questions on country of birth, gender and age were included at General Synod's request and a question about disability was included at the request of the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council.
2. In January 2005 the Archbishops' Council discussed the implementation of the recommendation and gave approval for the initial audit to be carried out that year.
3. The audit covered all licensed Church of England clergy in active ministry (except for those who have retired from stipendiary ministry) and was carried out by means of a confidential postal questionnaire.
4. This statistical report presents the findings relating to clergy with disabilities. The findings from the questions relating to ethnic background and country of birth are being reported separately.

## 2. Background

5. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the disability question on the audit for a number of reasons. Clergy may be reluctant to admit disability in case it affects their career prospects, if for example the support that they require in a parish is expensive to provide, e.g. interpreters for Deaf clergy or alterations to Church buildings to enable access. There may be reluctance in some dioceses to find their share of Access to Work funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Called to Act Justly: A Challenge to Include Minority Ethnic People in the Life of the Church of England, A report from the Stephen Lawrence follow up staff group to the Archbishops' Council, GS 1512, published 2003 by the Archbishops' Council.

6. There may still be some prejudice against people with disabilities in the Church. It is not possible to be sure whether all appointments are subject to proper equality of access guidelines, especially when jobs are not advertised.
  
7. The Employers Forum on Disability was approached for information on the proportions of people in professional positions who are disabled to help set the findings from the audit in context. The Forum quoted the Labour Force Survey carried out in Spring 2002. This indicated that 11% of managerial and senior official positions, 10% of positions in professional occupations and 11% of positions in associate professional and technical roles, were held by people with disabilities.

### **3. The Survey Questionnaire**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

8. The *Clergy Diversity Audit 2005* used a voluntary, confidential questionnaire form. This was sent to all active licensed ministers in the Church of England (except those retired from stipendiary ministry). For the main postal mailing the Crockford's clerical database was used to identify all non-retired, licensed ministers in active ministry for whom an individual UK address was held. The group of clergy identified includes stipendiary clergy, non-stipendiary clergy, and chaplains other than those in the Diocese in Europe and the armed forces. The main mailing was sent to 12,021 such clergy on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005 and a follow-up letter was sent to the 3,251 of these who had not responded by the beginning of July.
  
9. The questionnaire asked for the participants' gender, date of birth, ethnic group, country of birth and disability status (see paragraph 1). The form was pre-printed with the participants' national insurance number (and date of birth where available) so that incoming data could be linked to existing information held on the Crockford's database regarding the appointment and active diocese of that respondent. It was mailed with an explanatory letter signed by the Bishop of Chelmsford, Chair of the Ministry Division (see Appendix 1).
  
10. Information on clergy appointments from the Crockford's database was used to help identify those to include in the mailing and also in the analysis of the returns. For clergy with more than one appointment the details of just one appointment, normally the main appointment, were used.

11. An e-mail including the Bishop's letter and the questionnaire was sent to the 138 ministers who are registered within the Diocese in Europe on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. A reminder e-mail was sent to the 91 who had not responded by 15 July 2005.
  
12. In order to include armed services chaplains in the audit, the chaplaincy organisations for the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force were contacted. The RAF supplied relevant information on all its chaplains. The Royal Navy and the Army distributed copies of the questionnaire and original covering letter to their chaplains for individual completion and return.
  
13. Some clergy expressed concerns that linking the forms to Crockford's records meant that the audit was not anonymous and so might be open to misuse, either now or in the future. It is worth noting that all information will be held in accordance with UK data protection law regarding data on ethnic origin and physical and mental health. Only anonymous and aggregated statistics will be published from the data set, and the original data were seen only by data processors and staff of the National Church Institutions directly involved in the project.
  
14. Other concerns focussed on possible future action that might result from the statistics gathered. In particular, some ministers indicated they did not support the use of quotas. The most frequently aired argument was that all are equal in the eyes of God, and that it is God (rather than the Archbishops' Council) who calls people to ministry. Another concern was that the relationship between ethnicity and religion might be ignored in any future policy. Some respondents indicated that they had suffered from discrimination within the Church due to their ethnicity and others wrote that they were glad the survey was being carried out.

### **3.2 Questionnaire Design**

15. The questionnaire form itself was largely based on tick boxes so that the data could be scanned electronically to increase the efficiency of the exercise. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 1.

16. The fifth question asked, firstly, whether the respondent had a disability, as defined by the UK Disability Discrimination Act 1995; and secondly, whether the respondent was willing to be contacted by an advisor to the Archbishops' Council on deafness and disability issues in relation to this. 'Disability' has an element which is subjective but our working definition was provided by the Archbishops' Council on deafness and disability issues and is taken from the Disability and Discrimination Act code of practice. Responses to the question were solely taken from the checkbox which was ticked. Written descriptions of illnesses and other health problems were not recorded.

### 3.3 Survey Responses

17. The response rates for this survey have been high. 74% of those sent questionnaire in the main mailing had replied by early July, the reminder mailing then brought the response rate up to 86%. For clergy in the Diocese in Europe, contacted by e-mail, the response rate was 82%. Finally information was received for around 60% of armed service chaplains. In total replies relating to 10,574 clergy were analysed, representing an overall response rate of **86%**. The concise form and the reply paid envelope included in the first mailing no doubt helped to generate this very high response rate.

18. Some questions received more answers than others. 12% of respondents did not indicate their gender, possibly because the question was situated above a pre-printed date of birth. For these people gender information from the Crockfords database was subsequently used so that all data could be analysed by gender. On the other hand, only 0.2% of people did not indicate their ethnicity. Country (or continent) of birth was not indicated by 6.8% of people (perhaps because people might have felt this was obvious from the preceding section). Only 3.7% of respondents did not indicate whether they had a disability. A significant proportion of these gave written descriptions of their health, but this information was not transformed into a yes/no answer.

19. As far as it is possible to tell, the survey respondents seem to provide a good sample of the underlying clergy population. Broad comparison with existing information by age, appointment and diocese shows that all groups were equally likely to complete and return the questionnaire. 25% of replies to the audit were from women slightly higher than the proportion of all licensed clergy (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) who are women (20%). It seems that women are slightly more likely to participate in this audit exercise.

## 4. Results

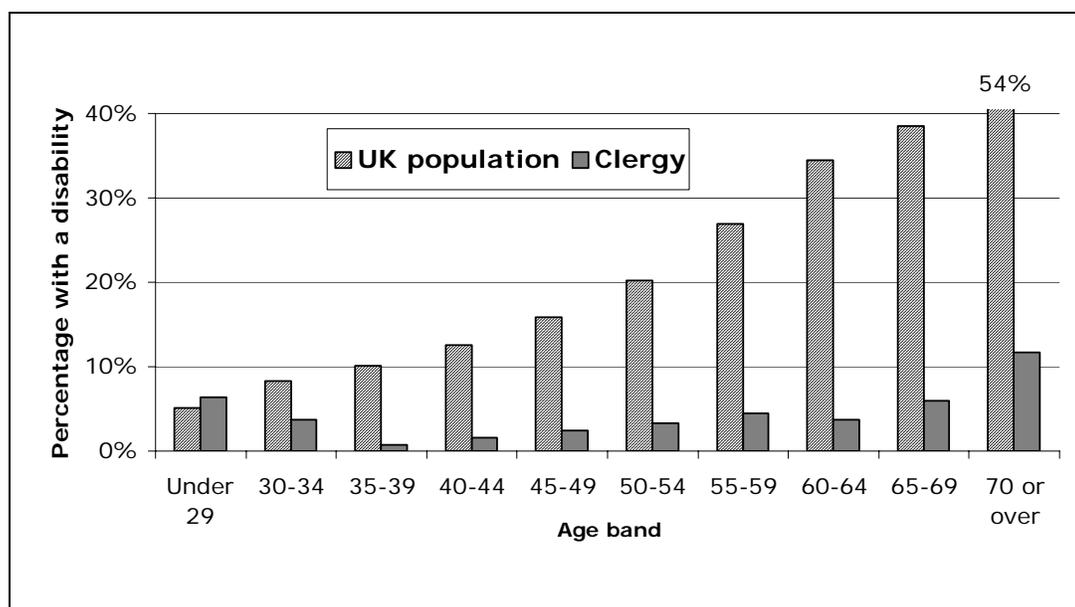
### 4.1 Disability

20. Two questions on the form were designed to collect information on clergy with disabilities. The first asked clergy if they had a disability and the second asked whether they wished to be contacted by the advisor to the Archbishops' Council on deafness and disability issues. Overall 3.4% of respondents indicated that they had a disability. Table A in Appendix 2 shows the percentage of clergy with disabilities separately for each diocese.
  
21. A number of respondents gave brief notes on their health, or indicated that they would be happy to be contacted by the advisor to the Archbishops' Council on deafness and disability issues, but did not indicate definitively whether they had a disability. The contact details for the 377 people who were happy to be contacted were passed to the advisor (around three-quarters of these reported they had a disability).
  
22. Some respondents said they were not sure whether they fell within the definition of disability being used. Only those that actually ticked the box on the form to say 'Yes' they had a disability have been counted in the 3.4%.
  
23. Overall 3.7% of respondents to the survey did not indicate whether or not they had a disability. While some of these may not have been sure whether they were covered by the definition others may have simply omitted to complete the question. It is not possible to deduce whether a significant proportion of the 3.7% have disabilities.
  
24. Comparing the 3.4% of clergy in the audit with disabilities with the 10% of people in professional occupations with disabilities (Spring 2002 Labour Force Survey) suggests that the proportion of clergy with disabilities is less than half the proportion of other professionals with disabilities.

## 4.2 Disability by Age

25. The following graph, chart 1, compares the proportion of clergy who have disabilities with the proportions of the UK population who have disabilities in various age bands.
26. Chart 1 shows that in each age band, except for those aged under 29, the proportion of clergy who have a disability is smaller than the percentage of the population who have a disability.
27. In general the percentage of clergy with a disability increases with age. However higher rates of disability were reported by clergy under 34 than by clergy in their late 30s or 40s. As the numbers of clergy under 34 are small it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about disability among young clergy from this single point in time audit, however it may indicate that it is becoming less difficult for people with disabilities to enter ordained ministry.
28. Further investigation would be needed to determine whether the rates for younger clergy are significantly different and then to study whether it is now less difficult for people with disabilities to enter ordained ministry than it was in the past or whether there are other reasons for the higher rates of disabilities among younger clergy. One possible factor contributing to the different rates could be that younger clergy may be less reluctant than their older colleagues to report disabilities.

**Chart 1: Disability rates by age for clergy and for the UK population**



### 4.3 Disability by Gender

29. The proportions of male and female clergy who reported having a disability are similar; 3.3% of male clergy and 4.0% of female clergy reported a disability. As the overall numbers are relatively small it is not possible to tell whether the slightly higher percentage of female clergy with a disability is significant.

30. In total 25% of respondents in the audit were female and 75% male. Of the respondents with a disability 29% were female and 71% were male.

### 4.4 Disability by Diocese

31. The percentage of clergy with disabilities varies from diocese to diocese. In six dioceses fewer than 2% of clergy have disabilities. In five dioceses 5% or more of clergy have disabilities. The percentage in each diocese is shown in table A in Appendix 2 (dioceses with under 2% of clergy with disabilities are shown in *italic* and those with over 5% are shown in **bold**).

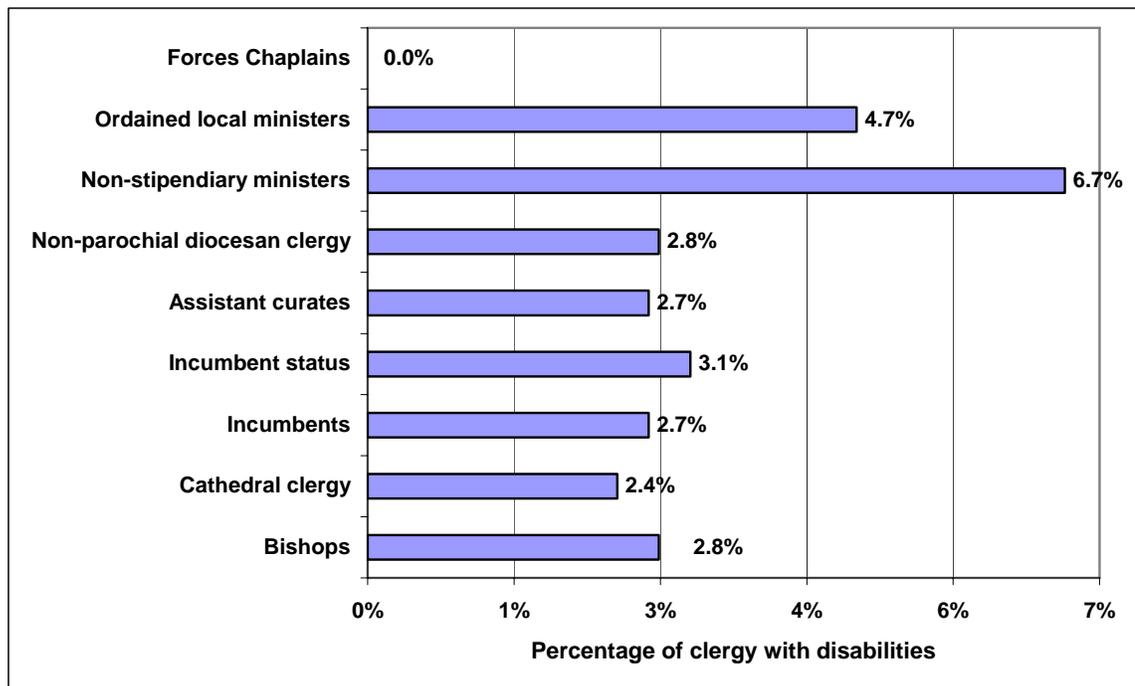
## 4.5 Disability and Appointment

32. The following chart, chart 2, shows for different types of appointment the percentage of clergy with disabilities. It shows that there is little difference between the percentages of clergy with disabilities in the main stipendiary appointment types. In general for these appointment types the percentage is just under 3%.

33. The exception in stipendiary appointments is for military chaplains (for whom strict medical fitness is likely to be required). The survey did not find any military chaplains with a disability.

34. The proportions of non-stipendiary clergy (6.7%) and ordained local ministers (4.7%) with disabilities are noticeably higher than the proportions for stipendiary clergy.

**Chart 2: Disability rates by type of appointment**



35. The following chart, chart 3, shows the distribution of clergy with disabilities between different types of appointment. It shows that nearly a half of clergy with disabilities are either incumbents or in incumbent status appointments; and a third are either non-stipendiary ministers or ordained local ministers.

**Chart 3: Clergy with disabilities by type of appointment**

