

STATISTICS FOR MISSION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

News and updates to the statistics site

- **News and updates** are disseminated via email to Membership Secretaries, Chairs of District, District Administrators, Superintendents and Circuit Administrators and also available on www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/news.
- **Technical glitches** are noted on www.methodist.org.uk/onlinesuite.

Getting started & time scales

- **I am new to statistics. Where do I start?**
A good place to start are the statistics pages on the Methodist website, especially the online data entry section, which includes guidance notes, downloadable forms, and guidance on how to register as a web user:
www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/online-data-entry
- **When in the year do I start counting?**
For the 2021 statistics collection, the following time scales apply –
Membership changes: data should be given for 1 November 2020 to 1 November 2021; the actual membership figure should be recorded as it was on 1 November 2021.
- **Recording attendance in times of Covid-19**
Due to the ongoing restrictions relating to group gatherings, we are not collecting attendance data in the 2021 statistics collection. Online and paper forms have been amended accordingly.
- **Can I enter statistics all year?**
No. The data entry site opens around the beginning of October each year, and closes at the end of January the following year. However, static data, which does not follow an annual cycle, such as office holders or church details (e.g. website address) can be edited at any time.

Going online & completing forms

- **I want to enter my church's statistics on the online data entry site but I haven't got any login details or authorisation. How do I proceed?**
Follow the registration process as per the Registration and Login guide within the online data entry section of the statistics for mission pages of the Methodist website:
www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/online-data-entry
- **Accessing other parts of the Online Suite of Applications**
The Methodist logo in the top left corner of the of the red Methodist banner acts as a "Home" button, and clicking on it takes you back to the Online Suite welcome page. This is useful if you are also using the other functions of the Online Suite of Applications (for example annual returns or property consents).

- **I am responsible for collecting my church's statistics but I don't have the means to go online. What can I do?**

Ask your minister to provide you with the downloadable paper forms, which are updated each year.

- **I've got lots of forms left over from last year's statistics collection. Can I use them again?**

No. There are often subtle changes to the questions we ask each year, and you might be collecting information we don't require, or missing something out. Please download the current form which is available on the Methodist website:

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/online-data-entry

- **Where can I record a detailed October count?**

Since 2018, it is not required to submit a detailed October attendance count anymore. However, you can still record this for your own purposes. A template is available on

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/online-data-entry.

Web user management

- **I want to register someone who has moved to my church from another circuit. I see an error message that tells me that they are already registered, but I can't see them in my list of users. How do I proceed?**

When someone moves to another circuit, all that needs to change is their permissions. You do not need to start from scratch. Web users can request to have their permissions amended via the [Edit My Profile](#) link which appears in the top right corner of the screen when logged into the Online Suite.

Alternatively, email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk for assistance.

- **My Superintendent has authorised me but when I try to access my church the system tells me that I have "insufficient permissions". What is wrong?**

You may have been authorised to access a particular church, but it could be that none of the options (statistics, returns, consents) had been ticked. Please check with the person who has authorised you.

- **There are several people listed as web users for my church / circuit / district who have long moved away or rescinded their role. How do I remove them?**

You need user management permissions to do this. It's important to ensure that no one has permissions they don't need any more. While it may not be critical for statistical purposes, it is vital from a (property) managing trustee point of view. You may not be able to delete their account altogether but if you have given them permission to access churches' data, you can also remove these.

Alternatively, email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk for assistance.

- **One of the web users in my circuit needs new permissions. I have deleted their old permissions but I can't see them on my list of users any more. What can I do?**

You need to ensure that new permissions are added BEFORE outdated ones are removed. If a web user does not have any church/circuit/district permissions attached to their account, they will become "invisible".

Email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk for further assistance.

Office holders & pastoral contacts

- **Who can access office holders' data?**

Once entered via the statistics for mission site, the data is securely stored on one of the web servers in the Methodist Church House. It can be accessed by authorised members of the Connexional Team immediately after you have submitted it.

In addition to this, all web users with permission to access your church's, circuit's or district's data can view and edit standing information such as office holders' details throughout the year, and edit statistical data during the months when the site is open for data entry. Each church record has a "time stamp" that shows who has last edited the page.

- **Do I need to inform you of all office holders in my church?**

Before entering contact details of church, circuit or district office holders, ensure that they know and have agreed to this process.

The Methodist Online Portal is password-protected, so only people with the necessary permissions can see information about a particular church, circuit or district. In order to see e.g. a Circuit Meeting Secretary's details, that person will need to have circuit-level or district-level access to statistics, which would have been given to them by someone authorised to do so (either within the circuit or district itself, or by the Connexional Team). Within the Methodist Church House itself, only specific members of staff have either read-only or editing permissions to the relevant section of our internal database which is fed by the information entered by church, circuit and district web users. Personal details are never given out to any third parties.

The office holders section is mainly there to add information flow within the circuit/district and between local churches and the Connexional Team. There is an option to list the church ("office") address rather than someone's home address, and it is not mandatory to include a telephone number as most communications would be conducted via email.

- **What happens to the office holders' records when a society closes?**

When a Methodist society or an LEP ceases to meet, all office holders at that time are automatically removed. In case of the society merging with another or becoming a class, the office holders are moved across unless advised otherwise.

- **How do I change the surname of an office holder?**

This type of change cannot be made via the website. You do not need to register that person again. Email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk for assistance.

- **How do I change the gender of an office holder?**

This type of change cannot be made via the website. You do not need to register that person again. Email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk for assistance.

- **I would like to change the Pastoral Contact of my church but their name does not appear in the relevant dropdown menu. How do I add them?**

Additions to the Pastoral Contacts dropdown menu are made by the Conference Office. Please contact conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk with the necessary details.

Finding, adding and removing church records

- **We are forming a new church. What do I need to do?**

Please inform the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (legal@tmcp.methodist.org.uk), the Conference Office (conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk) and Online Suite Support (onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk).

- **How do I register a circuit initiative?**

Circuit initiatives are currently not part of the statistical data collection. Previously recorded initiatives are stored on the Connexional Database but currently not displayed on the data entry site.

- **My church has closed. What's next?**

If a society ceases to meet, becomes a class of another, or if one or more societies merge to form a new church, this change of status needs to be reported via the REPORT CHANGED STATUS button within the church profile. Once the Connexional Database has been updated, the closure will be reflected throughout the Online Suite of Applications. Standing Orders 605 and 943(1) refer (see www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/governance/cpd).

Separate guidance is available on www.methodist.org.uk/onlinesuitehelp.

- **My church has become a class of another society. Do we still need to record individual statistics?**

No. The change will have been reported via the REPORT CHANGED STATUS button within the church profile section (see above). Membership and attendance should then be reported as part of the statistical record of the incorporating church. Once processed, the former society will then be displayed in the Digital Archive tab of its circuit.

- **My church has merged with two other societies but continues to meet as before. Do we need to do anything?**

Any merger of two or more churches becoming a multi-site society needs to be reported via the REPORT CHANGED STATUS function within the church profile. Once processed, the former society will then be displayed in the Digital Archive tab of its circuit.

- **One of my churches has disappeared from the statistics site. Why?**

This might be because the society in question has become a class or merged with another society. In that case, it will be listed in the circuit's Digital Archive tab. Another possibility might be that you have not got sufficient permissions to access the statistics record of that particular church. Please check with your Superintendent or email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk for assistance.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) & Worship premises

- **How do I record LEP membership?**

You need to report both total LEP membership and Methodist membership. Methodist membership includes ecumenical members. If all members are joint members, this number would be equal to the total LEP membership.

The joint figure should not be divided up according to percentages or number of denominations, although some churches make a separate note of this for calculating apportionment and representation.

- **Do in-year changes apply to the total membership or just to Methodist members?**
Transfers in or out, gains and losses as well as deaths and confirmations should be based on all members recorded as Methodist, including ecumenical members.
- **We worship on non-Methodist premises. Do we need to record an attendance figure?**
Yes. Attendance and membership are recorded regardless of the ownership of the premises.
- **My church used to be part of an LEP but this has now been discontinued. How do I report this?**
Use the REPORT CHANGED STATUS function within the church profile, choosing "Ceased LEP" as option.
- **Our building is being sold but the congregation will continue to meet elsewhere. What do I need to do?**
If a building and is being sold, the sale needs to be recorded on the consents site and is primarily dealt with by TMCP.
The new worship site, which may not be under Methodist trusteeship, needs to be reported to onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk so that it can be correctly added and recorded onto the Connexional database, and consequently appear on the Methodist webmap.

Historic statistics & data changes

- **The data collection has finished for this year but I need to make some changes. What do I do?**
Email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk for assistance.
- **I can only see the data I submitted last November. How do I get hold of previous years' information?**
Previous years' church statistics are available in a simplified format via the PRINT REPORTS link, which can be found in the left-hand information / action panel of each individual church record. More detailed church, circuit and district statistics of the most recent collections can be found on www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission.
Historic reports to Conference, membership and attendance trends as well as a selection of tailored reports on specific subjects can be found on www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/historic-data-archive.
For more detailed or historic records as well as district-wide earlier PDF reports, email onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk. Please bear in mind that the electronic collection only started in 2002. Records before that are a lot less detailed.
- **My church's building has closed for refurbishment, but we still regularly meet for worship in a rented venue. What do we need to do?**
A change of worship site, whether temporary or permanent, does not affect the statistics collection, which is about the people rather than buildings. However, your church will still need to update the property/trusteeship details in its annual returns.
Contact onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk with the new details.

- **I have spotted a mistake in my church's address / postcode. How do I correct this?**

This type of change cannot be made via the website.

Contact onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk with the new details.

- **Our church has changed its name. How do I amend this on the website?**

This type of change cannot be made via the website.

Contact onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk with the new details.

Data application & retention

- **What happens to the data that is collected each year?**

From this information, a Connexional-level statistical report is prepared for the Methodist Conference every three years (www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/historic-data-archive/conference-reports). The latest report in this series was presented at the 2020 Conference.

One of the applications which annual statistics are used for is the Methodist Church Advanced Webmap (www.methodist.org.uk/webmap), which visualises statistical data on membership, attendance and other activities via pie charts and graphs, enabling trend comparisons and future mission planning.

The Methodist Church is fully compliant with current data protection regulations.

- **I want to save my statistics before the website closes for data entry. How do I do this?**

Current and previous years' church statistics are available in a simplified format via the PRINT REPORTS link, which can be found in the left-hand information / action panel of each individual church record. Current statistics can also be downloaded via the [Download a spreadsheet of current data](#) link which can be found on the welcome page of each church record. These will show the latest data entered and revert to blank sheets when the new collection starts.

Revised September 2021