

[What's a Jedi Knight to do?](#) [1]

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The main reason to oppose the intrusive Census 2011 is not privacy. It is also not the cost. It is the existence of the figures themselves.

The Census will have 40-odd questions of varying intrusiveness, including race, civil partnership, and income. The ?religion? question is the only optional one. It is [compulsory to complete the form](#) [3] ? not telling Big Brother who is staying the night at your home on census day will be a criminal offence.

Why does the government need to know? To justify interfering, nannying, taxing, fining and legislating. The Census is there to help the government regulate. And, as Ronald Reagan taught us: ?The nine most dangerous words in the English language are: I am from the government and I?m here to help?.

One hero who realised this was [Sir John Cowperthwaite](#) [4], Hong Kong?s Financial Secretary between 1961 and 1971. He was largely responsible for Hong-Kong?s economic miracle due to his policy of non-interference in the economy. He famously refused to gather all but the most superficial of statistics. When asked what poor countries could do to grow rich, he recommended to abolish the office for national statistics. Statistics would lead the state to fiddle about remedying perceived ills, simultaneously hindering the ability of the market economy to work. A delegation sent by Whitehall to investigate the apparent non collection of statistics was sent back home on the first plane by Cowperthwaite.

So, what to do? Now, as then, it is a criminal offence not to fill in the form. Now, as then, it is the ONS?s policy to only prosecute where there is sufficient evidence to prosecute. In fact, out of the 3 million people who mislaid the form in 2001, only 38 were successfully prosecuted. And most of those were quite extreme cases where census field staff had been intimidated or abused. There is no reason why that number would be higher for the 2011 Census. The Coalition would not survive widespread unrest resulting from mass prosecutions. In fact, whilst in opposition [the Conservatives opposed the intrusive questions](#) [5].

Of course, some of us will want to be counted. The 390,000 Jedi Knights who declared themselves in the 2001 Census will want to stand up for their rights, and be counted as such again.

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[1] <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/justice-and-civil-liberties/whats-a-jedi-knight-to-do>

[2] <http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5887>

[3] <http://2011.census.gov.uk/My-census/Frequently-asked-questions>

[4] <http://www.quebecoislibre.org/06/061029-5.htm>

[5] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8324746.stm>

[6] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

[7] <http://disqus.com>