

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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OPINION POLLS

Belief at work

‘British employers struggle to manage expressions of religion and belief in the workplace’, according to the first major piece of thought leadership from the newly-established ComRes Faith Research Centre – ‘Belief at Work: Faith in the Workplace Study, 2017’ by Katie Harrison and Oscar Watkins. It is based upon online interviews in February 2017 with 251 HR managers, managers, and senior HR decision-makers at British companies with more than 50 employees and with 984 paid British workers at lower than director equivalent level, as well as upon more informal evidence-gathering. The research tested levels of awareness and access to provision relating to seven of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 (including religion or belief). Bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of religion or belief had been observed by 3% of the workers, with the identical number having experienced it themselves or been the recipient of an inappropriate comment about their religion or belief. Religious clothing or iconography was regularly (monthly or more) worn at work by 6% but just 3% often talked about their faith with work colleagues. About one worker in five thought their employer made provision for prayer during working hours or for planning working hours around holy days or religious festivals. The report and two sets of data tables are available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/belief-at-work-faith-in-the-workplace-study-2017/>

Religious symbols in the workplace

Determining a Belgian case involving a receptionist wearing a headscarf to work, the European Court of Justice recently ruled that employers are entitled to ban their employees from ‘visible wearing of any political, philosophical, or religious sign’ in the workplace. A plurality (42%) of the 5,036 Britons questioned by YouGov by means of its mobile app on 14 March 2017 agreed that employers should indeed have the right to be allowed to ban visible religious symbols such as headscarves, reaching a majority among the over-40s and UKIP voters (66% in the latter case). Just over one-third (36%) thought employers should not be allowed to act in this way, including 50% of 18-24s, while 22% were undecided. Results (by standard demographics) are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/199d5070-089c-11e7-80fa-d2249ae0b02d>

The subject was further explored in another YouGov mobile app poll published on 15 March. This revealed that 16% of adults had worn religious symbols at work, evenly split between those who judged they should be allowed and those who understood why they should not. Asked whether the ban on wearing religious symbols should also apply to children in nurseries and schools, 58% agreed that it should, with 33% opposed and 9% unsure. Topline figures only in this instance are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/03/15/eu-courts-workplace-headscarf-ban-ruling-tolerance/>

Religion as conversation topic

A surprisingly large minority (34%) of Britons claim to have had a conversation about religion in the last few weeks, according to a YouGov Daily app-based poll published on 27 March 2017. However, religion was the least talked about of the ten topics on the list, apart from celebrities (18%). The principal subjects of conversation were politics and the weather (82% each). Topline figures are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/03/27/topics-interest-displays-patriotism/>

Islamic terrorism

One-quarter of Britons interviewed by YouGov via mobile app assessed Islamic terrorism as the biggest current threat to the UK. This was the same proportion as were anxious about Brexit negotiations going wrong but less than the 34% who feared the consequences of going through with Brexit. Immigration (19%), a second referendum on Scottish independence (16%), the rise of nationalism across Europe and the West (15%), and Russian meddling in Western politics (12%) were also matters of concern. Topline results only were published on 16 March 2017 at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/03/16/nic-u-turn-and-what-biggest-threat-uk-moment/>

Ken Livingstone

On 30 March 2017 the *Jewish News* published the headline findings of a ComRes poll it had commissioned among an online sample of 2,034 British adults on 24-26 March. The release was timed to coincide with the commencement of a disciplinary hearing against Ken Livingstone, Labour politician and ex-Mayor of London, being conducted by the Labour Party's National Constitutional Committee. Livingstone's current difficulties arise from his defence of a Labour MP who had shared a social media post widely perceived as anti-Semitic and from his own subsequent comments which were construed as linking Hitler and Zionism. One-fifth (22%) of respondents thought those comments were anti-Semitic while 28% judged the Labour Party to have a 'particular problem' with anti-Semitism, to the extent that 34% said they would think twice before voting for Labour. Just under one-third (29%) favoured Livingstone's expulsion from the Labour Party. Although fewer (23%) of Labour voters did so, 37% accepted that the party needed to work harder to repair its relationships with the Jewish community. At the time of writing, the full data tables from this poll have not been posted to the ComRes website but the report in the *Jewish News* is freely available at:

<http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/ken-livingstone/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Visitor attractions

Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral in London were the most visited ecclesiastical buildings in Britain during 2016, according to the latest survey of members of the Association

of Leading Visitor Attractions. They recorded, respectively, 1,819,945 and 1,519,018 visits, ranking them fourteenth and nineteenth in the list of 241 attractions. Outside London, Canterbury Cathedral was the most visited ecclesiastical building, in thirty-eighth position with 903,319 visits. The most visited institutions of any type were the British Museum (6,420,395) and the National Gallery (6,262,839). For the full list, and comparative annual statistics back to 2004, go to:

<http://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=607>

Christian conferences

Women accounted for 36% of the speakers at 22 national Christian conferences in the UK in 2016, the same proportion as in 2015, according to a report from Project 3:28. Only two (The Pursuit and Ichthus Revive) had gender-balanced platforms, with the Keswick Convention having the lowest number of female speakers (13%, seven points less than in 2015). The report, which includes data for all years since 2013 (when the gender audit began), is available at:

https://media.wix.com/ugd/7c3a0c_9b87b27b3dc64c8190acbd4271d6feb8.pdf

Jewish school places

In the Institute for Jewish Policy Research's latest report, Daniel Staetsky and Jonathan Boyd highlight the widening gap between applications and admissions to the six mainstream Jewish secondary schools in the capital and project future demand for places, based on three alternative scenarios: *Will My Child Get a Place? An Assessment of Supply and Demand of Jewish Secondary School Places in London and Surrounding Areas*. The report is available at:

http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/Will_my_child_get_a_place._March_2017.pdf

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Marriages in England and Wales, 2014

The proportion of marriages between opposite-sex couples in England and Wales solemnized in religious ceremonies has fallen again, to 27.5% in 2014 compared with 28.5% in 2013. The figure was lower in England (27.3%) than Wales (31.9%). Hardly any (just 23) same-sex couples married in religious ceremonies in 2014, a mere 0.5% of all same-sex weddings. For further information, including access to a configurable dataset, go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/marriages-in-england-and-wales-2014>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Religious nones

The January 2016 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain* noted Linda Woodhead's lecture to the British Academy on 'Why No Religion is the New Religion', which drew upon the results of YouGov polls she had commissioned revealing that most 'nones' are not straightforwardly

secular. The text has now been published in print in *British Academy Lectures, 2015-16*, edited by Janet Carsten and Simon Frith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, ISBN: 978-0-19-726604-5, £40, paperback) and online in *Journal of the British Academy*, Vol. 4, 2016, pp. 245-61. An eprint of the article, which has been retitled ‘The Rise of “No Religion” in Britain: The Emergence of a New Cultural Majority’, is available at:

<http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/11%20Woodhead%201825.pdf>

Losing religion

At a quick glance, Callum Brown’s *Becoming Atheist: Humanism and the Secular West* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017, x + 231 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4742-2452-9, £21.99, paperback) might easily be dismissed by BRIN users, being neither exclusively about Britain nor particularly statistical, based as it is on qualitative interviews with 85 people of the 1960s generation born in 18 countries. However, it needs to be read as the third and final volume of a trilogy which has taken us on a journey through secularization, starting with a cultural analysis of *The Death of Christian Britain* in 2001 followed by a quantitative and international account of *Religion and the Demographic Revolution* in 2012. *Becoming Atheist* draws on these predecessor volumes and other sources for a certain amount of statistical context as well as providing fascinating insights, by means of the oral testimonies, into the loss of faith in relation to childhood, gender, and ethnicity. The book’s webpage is at:

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/becoming-atheist-9781474224529/>

Losing Anglican activists

Another new book which, in certain respects at least, is complementary to Brown’s is Abby Day’s *The Religious Lives of Older Laywomen: The Last Active Anglican Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, xi + 257 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-873958-6, £50, hardback). It is an ethnographic study of Anglican laywomen from what Day calls Generation A (born in the 1920s and early 1930s), based on interviews and participant observation in the UK and North America (generally written up in the first person), contextualized within discussions of religious gender and generation differences and sociological theory. There are some fascinating insights into the practical and intellectual contributions made to the Church by Generation A, including as ‘pew power’ (contrasting with leading from the front), but perhaps Day has a tendency to exaggerate its uniqueness since there are no directly comparable studies of previous generations, long since dead. Almost by definition, the sub-title’s prediction that this will be ‘the last active Anglican generation’ (indeed, we are told, potentially the final one in mainstream Christianity) was going to be hard to evidence, and Day’s attempts to do so, throughout and in the rather bullish conclusion (where it is anticipated that churches will be increasingly populated by gay men – the new old ladies), are not fully persuasive. Statistically-based actuarial projections, founded in church or sample survey data, might have been equally advantageous. The book’s webpage is at:

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-religious-lives-of-older-laywomen-9780198739586?q=religious%20lives%20of%20older%20laywomen&lang=en&cc=gb>

Rowan Williams and Sharia law

The row over his speech supposedly acknowledging the inevitability of an accommodation with Sharia law in Britain must have been one of the low points during Rowan Williams's time as Archbishop of Canterbury. In a methodologically and historically fascinating essay, Peter Webster has used the JISC UK Web Domain Dataset (an extraction from the Internet Archive) to study online reactions to the speech: 'Religious Discourse in the Archived Web: Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Sharia Law Controversy of 2008', in *The Web as History: Using Web Archives to Understand the Past and the Present*, edited by Niels Brügger and Ralph Schroeder (London: UCL Press, 2017, ISBN: 978-1-911307-56-3), pp. 190-203. Webster's methodology was to analyse the pattern of unique hosts linking to the Archbishop of Canterbury's official website, the number being 49% higher in 2008 (when the speech was delivered on 7 February) than in 2007 and 42% higher than the mean for 2005-07. Of the hosts linking to the site in 2008, 44% were doing so for the first time, the most significant component of which were blogs. *The Web as History* is published on an open access basis at:

<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1542998/1/The-Web-as-History.pdf>

United Reformed Church

In a revision of his doctoral thesis, Martin Camroux offers an ecumenically-framed account of the formation (in 1972) and subsequent 'catastrophic implosion' of the United Reformed Church, of which he is an ordained minister: *Ecumenism in Retreat: How the United Reformed Church Failed to Break the Mould* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016, xi + 238 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4982-3400-9, \$30, paperback). He has utilized a wide range of printed primary and secondary sources, including membership and other statistical indicators, and also conducted an impressive number of oral history interviews. The book's webpage is at:

<http://wipfandstock.com/ecumenism-in-retreat.html>

Prayer

As an additional – and less familiar – key performance indicator of secularization, Clive Field offers a meta-analysis of over-time quantitative data about private prayer in modern Britain, mostly derived from national cross-sectional sample surveys among adults. Despite the fragmentary nature of the evidence, and its methodological challenges, with consequent variability in results, the direction of travel is clear. Self-reported regular (weekly or more) private prayer has declined from one-half to one-quarter of the population over the past half-century, while the proportion never praying has risen from one-fifth to one-half. There have been parallel falls in belief in prayer and its efficacy. Gender, age, and ethnicity are the main secular attributes impacting prayer behaviour, relatively higher levels of which also correlate with above-average religiosity, belief in God, and churchgoing and with being Roman Catholic or non-Christian. Prayer statistics thus corroborate other indicators which suggest that secularization in Britain has been a progressive, rather than sudden, process. 'Britain on its Knees: Prayer and the Public since the Second World War' is published in *Social Compass*, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 2017, pp. 92-112, and access options are outlined at:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0037768616685014>

Death and religion

Jonathan Jong, Robert Ross, Tristan Philip, Si-Hua Chang, Naomi Simons, and Jamin Halberstadt have examined 'The Religious Correlates of Death Anxiety: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis' for the 2017 online edition of *Religion, Brain, and Behaviour*. Their sample of 125 international English-language research articles revealed little consensus about the relationship between death anxiety and religiosity with, in general, weak negative correlations between the two. Their paper is freely available at:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53578960e4b0cc61351ba675/t/58caaf73d1758e9193b019b0/1489678207142/Jong+et+al+2017+-+Metaanalysis.pdf>

Covering similar ground, but in more depth, and reaching similar conclusions is Jonathan Jong and Jamin Halberstadt, *Death Anxiety and Religious Belief: An Existential Psychology of Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, xiv + 233 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4725-7-162-5, £85, hardback). The book's webpage is at:

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/death-anxiety-and-religious-belief-9781472571625/>

Faith schools

Understanding School Segregation in England, 2011 to 2016, prepared by The Challenge, SchoolDash, and the iCoCo Foundation, applies an innovative methodology to the analysis of the latest Department for Education statistics. It finds that, in terms of the ethnicity and socio-economic background of their students, faith schools continue to be more segregated than non-faith schools in the same area, at both primary and secondary levels. Segregation is most pronounced in Roman Catholic and non-Christian faith schools. The report is available at:

<http://the-challenge.org/uploads/documents/TCN-Understanding-School-Segregation-in-England-2011-to-2016.pdf>

Religious education

The Empirical Science of Religious Education, edited by Mandy Robbins and Leslie Francis (London: Routledge, 2016, xxxii + 290 pp., ISBN: 978-1-138-92985-2, £95, hardback) reprints 20 articles originally published in the *British Journal of Religious Education* between 1996 and 2010 (when Robert Jackson was editor) alongside a new introduction by Robbins and Francis (pp. xviii-xxxii) which briefly traces the history of the discipline in Britain since the 1960s and the contribution of the journal to it, as well as explaining the principles informing the selection of the chapters. A majority of them relate to Britain, including several of quantitative interest, notably the overview by Robbins and Francis (pp. 260-72) of the Teenage Religion and Values Survey in England and Wales, undertaken among 34,000 adolescents in the 1990s. The book's webpage is at:

<https://www.routledge.com/The-Empirical-Science-of-Religious-Education/Robbins-Francis/p/book/9781138929852>

Sixth-form values

Longitudinal research among 150 students pursuing a course in Religious Studies (RS) at A Level is reported in Leslie Francis, Andrew Village, and Stephen Parker, 'Exploring the Trajectory of Personal, Moral, and Spiritual Values of 16- to 18-Year-Old Students Taking Religious Studies at A Level in the UK', *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2017, pp. 18-31. Although some values were unchanged over the two-year period, attitudes towards sex and relationships had become more liberal, while students had become less convinced that knowledge of more than one religious tradition enhanced their own spirituality, less certain about life after death, and less open to mystical orientation. There were also significant reductions in their frequency of attendance at worship and in their affirmation of having undergone a religious experience. The authors acknowledge the methodological limitations of the research and are cautious about asserting causality between these changes and pursuing a course in RS. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13617672.2016.1232567>

Religiosity and educational attainment

'Students in Countries with Higher Levels of Religiosity Perform Lower in Science and Mathematics', according to an article in press by Gijsbert Stoet and David Geary published online in the journal *Intelligence*. The authors compared educational performance scores for adolescents in mathematics and science (from the Programme for International Student Assessment and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) with self-assessed religiosity scores for adults from the World Values Survey and European Social Survey. Data are reported for 76 countries (including the United Kingdom, ranked thirteenth in terms of non-religiosity) for three time periods: 2000-04, 2005-09, and 2010-15. Possible causes of the negative correlation between religiosity and educational attainment are discussed, although gender does not appear to be a significant factor. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160289617300247>

Leeds Beckett University, where Stoet works, has issued a press release about the findings at:

<http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/news/0317-research-reveals-students-in-more-religious-countries-perform-worse-in-science-and-mathematics/>

Islamist terrorism

Hannah Stuart's *Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)* (London: Henry Jackson Society, 2017, xxv + 1013 pp., ISBN: 978-1-909035-27-0, £83) is a comprehensive quantitative and descriptive survey of 269 individual Islamist-related offences across 135 distinct terrorism cases. One-third of the offences occurred in 2005-07 and a further 38% in 2011-14. The overwhelming majority (93%) of offences were committed by men while the mean age of offenders was 27 years with a range between 14 and 52. Offences were mostly perpetrated by UK nationals (72%) including 47% born in the UK; 16% were converts to Islam. An extended preview edition of the report, incorporating a full executive summary (pp. viii-xiv) and the statistical section (pp. 918-1010), but omitting the profiles (pp. 1-916), is freely available at:

<http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Islamist-Terrorism-preview-1.pdf>

Historical demography

The historical demography of religion in Britain is a relatively under-researched area, and it is unusual to have a new monograph in this field: Albion Urdank, *Birth, Death, and Religious Faith in an English Dissenting Community: A Microhistory of Nailsworth and Hinterland, 1695-1837* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016, xvi + 133 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4985-2352-3, £49-95, hardback). The book is described as ‘an outgrowth’ of the author’s previous volume *Religion and Society in a Cotswold Vale* (1990), which examined the same Gloucestershire community. The new work offers a comparative study of the life events and experiences, notably fertility and mortality, of Anglicans and Particular Baptists based on a family reconstitution exercise, and by means of both qualitative and quantitative (notably path analysis) techniques. The author’s special interest is the extent to which ‘religious values informed procreative activity’. The principal conclusion appears to be that the likelihood of another birth increased following a religious conversion experience. Church historians will not find the book an easy read, and two-fifths of the short main text comprises endnotes and other ancillary matter. The book’s webpage is at:

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498523523/Birth-Death-and-Religious-Faith-in-an-English-Dissenting-Community-A-Microhistory-of-Nailsworth-and-Hinterland-1695%E2%80%931837>

NEW DATASETS AT UK DATA SERVICE

SN 8139: Smith Commission Survey – Devolution Preferences in Scotland, England, and Wales, 2014

The Smith Commission was established, following the ‘no’ vote in the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence from the UK, to make proposals for further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament. Against this background, the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh secured funding from the Economic and Social Research Council to investigate attitudes to devolution and broader political issues among samples of electors in Scotland, England, and Wales. Fieldwork was conducted online by ICM between 4 and 18 November 2014, and interviews were achieved with 1,500 adults in Scotland and 1,000 each in England and Wales. The questionnaires were, to a certain extent, customized for each home nation, but all respondents were asked to give their religious affiliation (using a ‘belonging’ form of question) and to state how often they attended ‘religious ceremonies’, useful background variables for analysing the answers for the political topics. A catalogue description for the dataset is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8139&type=Data%20catalogue>

SN 8141: Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, 2014-2015

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey was established in 1993 and is now commissioned by the Scottish Government. For the 2014-15 study, face-to-face interviews were conducted by TNS BMRB Scotland with 11,472 adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Scotland. A question on religious affiliation was included as part of a module on identity, and

this can be used to analyse responses to the other modules on experiences of crime and the criminal justice system, attitudes to the police, harassment, drug use, and partner abuse. A catalogue description for the dataset is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8141&type=Data%20catalogue>

SN 8160: Annual Population Survey, January-December 2016

The Annual Population Survey is compiled from variables present in the Labour Force Survey. It is undertaken by the Office for National Statistics Social Survey Division through a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. The 2016 sample comprised a cross-section of 289,176 persons resident in the UK and living in private households or young people living away from the parental home during term-time. This is a sufficiently large total to yield analyses which are robust at unitary or local authority level. Respondents in Britain were asked ‘what is your religion?’ A catalogue description for the dataset is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8160&type=Data%20catalogue>