

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 26 – November 2017

© Clive D. Field, 2017

OPINION POLLS

Good life

What makes for a good life in the eyes of the public? GfK set out to find the answer to this question in a global poll conducted during summer 2017, for which 23,000 adults from 17 countries were interviewed online, including 2,175 in the UK. Respondents were given a list of 15 factors which might make for ‘the good life’ (specified as the life they would like to have) and asked to choose those which were most significant for them. The UK’s selection was headed by good health (82%), financial security (75%), and leisure time (68%), with spiritual enrichment in eleventh place, on 26%, compared with the multinational mean of 39% (the national peak being in Brazil at 47%). The importance attached to spiritual enrichment did not differ between the sexes in the UK, but it was surprisingly low for the over-60s (21%) and high among under-20s (30%). GfK’s press release, including a link from which to download a free copy of the full report on the survey, is at:

<http://www.gfk.com/en-gb/insights/press-release/health-financial-security-and-free-time-are-top-factors-for-the-good-life-say-uk-consumers/>

Royal family

The recent announcement that Prince Harry is to marry American actress Meghan Markle in 2018 prompted *The Times* to commission YouGov to repeat some of its standard questions about attitudes to the royal family, in an online poll of 1,575 Britons on 27-28 November 2017. The topics covered included reactions to a member of the royal family marrying a person from various backgrounds. Just over two-thirds (68%) deemed it acceptable for a member of the royal family to wed somebody of a different religion, which was three points less than in November 2016, with 16% opposed (among them 22% of Conservatives) and a further 16% unsure. This was a similar proportion as in favour of a member of the royal family marrying someone of a different ethnicity (69%). A blog about the survey, containing a link to the full data tables, is at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/11/29/5-charts-british-reaction-prince-harrys-engagement/>

Protection of churches

Notwithstanding low and declining church attendance, cathedrals and churches rank second only to castles in a list of ten categories of UK historic buildings which the public considers should be protected for future generations. Asked to identify the first, second, and third most important category, 69% in aggregate opted for castles, 60% for cathedrals and churches, and 49% for royal palaces. Support for cathedrals and churches varied by age, rising from 49% among under-35s to 74% for over-65s. Findings derive from a ComRes survey commissioned

by the National Churches Trust, for which 2,062 adults were interviewed online on 21-22 June 2017. The data tables are at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/National-Churches-Trust-Historic-Buildings-Survey.pdf>

Trust in clergy

The latest annual Ipsos MORI Veracity Index, compiled from face-to-face interviews with 998 adults on 20-26 October 2017, has revealed clergy and priests to be the tenth most trusted of the 24 professions included on the list. Two-thirds (65%) of the public trusted them to tell the truth (four points less than in 2016 and twenty points lower than in 1983, when the index began), against 30% who did not trust them and 4% who were unsure. The net veracity score of +35% for clergy and priests was way behind that of nurses (+89%), doctors (+84%), and teachers and professors (+76% each). The most negative scores were for government ministers (-59%) and politicians generally (-63%). At present, topline results only are available at:

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/politicians-remain-least-trusted-profession-britain>

Thought for the Day

Thought for the Day is a regular faith-based slot in BBC Radio 4's flagship *Today* programme, broadcast continuously (under different titles) since 1939. Its appropriateness in a news and current affairs programme is periodically challenged, and it has recently come under attack from some of *Today*'s own presenters. This prompted YouGov to include a question in an app-based poll reported on 1 November 2017, the British public being divided between those who wanted *Thought for the Day* removed from the schedules (44%) and those wishing to retain it (47%), 9% being undecided. Topline results only are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/11/01/are-modern-women-fragile-thought-day-facebook-list/>

Religious education

YouGov ran an app-based poll on the back of news that schools in Staffordshire are to offer virtual tours of mosques after some parents refused to allow their children to visit them during school religious education trips. Three-fifths of respondents thought that parents should have the right to withdraw their children from school visits to certain places of worship while a third suggested they should not be allowed to do so. Topline results were posted on 16 November 2017 at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/11/16/information-war-between-west-and-russia-religious/>

Christmas

The vast majority of Britons (83%) still prefer to describe the period around 25 December as Christmas, according to an online poll of 3,372 adults taken by YouGov on 17 November 2017. The proportion was lowest among under-25s (76%), Scots (78%), and Scottish National Party supporters (72%). It peaked (at 95%) with UKIP voters. Another 5% of the whole sample opted for Xmas while 9% gave other answers. Results, with breaks by demographics, are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/42e1403b-cb80-11e7-bdbe-dfebc9b5b055>

Gender fluidity

In recent guidance issued to its own schools, the Church of England has stated that children should be free to try out ‘the many cloaks of identity’ without being labelled or bullied. This statement was approved of by 71% of respondents to an app-based poll by YouGov reported on 14 November 2017, with 21% disapproving and 7% unsure. Topline results only are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/11/14/coes-statement-regarding-gender-traffic-lights-mot/>

Sexual orientation and identity

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA) has released the results from the ILGA-RIWI Global Attitudes Survey on Sexual, Gender, and Sex Minorities, 2017, conducted in partnership with Viacom, Logo, and SAGE. Data were gathered, by means of opt-in online interviews, from 116,000 adults aged 18 and over in 75 countries plus Hong Kong and Taiwan. By virtue of the patented Random Domain Intercept Technology employed by RIWI, which targets web users bypassing search engines (see pp. 13-14 of the global report for a description of methodology), these do not comprise nationally representative samples. There were 6,483 respondents from the UK, although not everybody answered all the questions (partly because of the use of a combination of fixed and rotating modules).

Two statements with Likert-style answers specifically addressed religion. The first related to sexual orientation: ‘it is possible to respect my religion and be accepting of people who are romantically or sexually attracted to people of the same sex’, with which 58% in the UK agreed and 15% disagreed, 27% being neutral. The second statement concerned gender identity: ‘it is possible to respect my religion and be accepting of people who dress, act, or identify as one sex although they were born as another’, with which 59% in the UK agreed and 12% disagreed, 29% being neutral. The global report and country-specific data (in Word and Excel formats) can be downloaded from:

<http://ilga.org/what-we-do/ilga-riwi-global-attitudes-survey/>

Schoolchildren and the hijab

Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills in England, has recently recommended its inspectors to question Muslim primary school girls if they are found to be wearing a hijab, in order to ascertain whether they have been forced to do so. In response to a YouGov app-based poll whose results were posted on 21 November 2017, a plurality (47%) of Britons thought the school inspectors should not be interviewing hijab-wearing Muslim primary school girls in this way. Two-fifths considered they should be interviewed while 14% were uncertain. The topline findings only are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/11/21/hijabs-schools-counter-terrorism-classes-poetry/>

Islamic State

When they met in Vietnam recently, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin resolved to defeat Islamic State in Syria. However, a plurality of Britons (43%) thinks they will fail in this goal, with 42% having confidence they will succeed and 15% unsure. The poll was conducted by Yougov's app and reported on 13 November 2017 at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/11/13/trump-and-putin-vs-isis-next-conservative-leader-f/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Voting of churchgoers

Christian Research has posted a summary of its online poll of 1,512 UK practising Christians (church leaders and churchgoers) conducted, during week-commencing 29 May 2017, in the immediate run-up to the 2017 general election. Respondents were drawn from the Resonate panel, which is self-selecting, and were disproportionately male, Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist. The overwhelming majority (96%) of practising Christians said they intended to vote in the election. Just 10% stated they always voted for the same political party. With only days to go, 24% had still not decided how to cast their vote. Of those who had already made up their minds, 37% opted for the Conservatives, 32% for Labour, and 22% for the Liberal Democrats (the last figure significantly above the national average, reflecting the legacy of Free Church electoral habits). Managing the National Health Service was the most important policy factor in determining voter preference, followed by Brexit and ensuring the benefits of economic growth were felt by all. The post is available at:

<http://www.christian-research.org/reports/election-2012/>

Church of England cathedral statistics

The 44-page *Cathedral Statistics, 2016* reports on attendance at services (Sunday, midweek, and festival), rites of passage, visitors (9,030,000 plus 1,100,000 at Westminster Abbey), educational outreach, events, volunteers, choristers, and musicians. Ten years of trend data are included. The report is available on the recently revamped Church of England website at:

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/2016cathedralstatistics_0.pdf

In accordance with current fashion, the new Church website is mobile-friendly and shifts the emphasis in content away from words to images and sounds. To that end, a lot of documentation on the old website appears to have been dropped. Fortunately, the Research and Statistics pages have not been too adversely affected, but it would seem logical to complete the online backfile of *Church Statistics* and perhaps even to add digitized editions of the forerunner *Statistical Supplement to the Church of England Yearbook*. The Research and Statistics pages do serve an important archival function. They can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/research-and-statistics>

Muslim marriages

A survey commissioned in connection with Channel 4's *The Truth about Muslim Marriage* programme, broadcast on 21 November 2017, has revealed that 60% of Muslim women married in Britain (and 80% of those under 25) are not in legally recognized marriages. This is because they have not had a civil marriage ceremony alongside their traditional Islamic (Nikah) religious wedding. Many (28%) of these women who were just married religiously were unaware of the fact that, as a consequence, they did not have the same rights and protections afforded to couples marrying in the eyes of the law. Of the 66% who understood their marriage had no legal standing, half had no plans to enter into a civil wedding. The situation arises in part because only one in ten mosques in England and Wales is licensed for the solemnization of marriages and just 31% of Muslim women married in the UK had done so in a mosque.

The study also explored attitudes to polygamy, finding that 89% of the women did not wish to be in a polygamous relationship and that 37% of the 11% who were in such a relationship had not agreed to it.

The interviews, with 923 Muslim women married in Britain, were conducted, face-to-face or over the telephone, by female Muslim community researchers in 14 British cities in two waves between December 2016 and July 2017. Respondents were recruited by snowballing techniques and thus do not necessarily constitute a representative sample. Channel 4's press release is at:

<http://www.channel4.com/info/press/news/new-channel-4-survey-reveals-the-truth-about-muslim-marriage>

Additional survey documentation, including the questionnaire for the second wave and a fuller description of methodology, is available on the website of True Vision Aire, the production company which made the programme, at:

<http://truevisiontv.com/films/details/295/the-truth-about-muslim-marriage>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Armed forces diversity statistics

The Government has published the UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics as at 1 October 2017. In respect of religion, they reveal that 72% of the Regular Forces and 74% of the so-called Future Reserves 2020 self-identified as Christian on that date with, respectively, 25% and 24% professing no religion, together with relatively small numbers of non-Christians. The proportion of religious nones in the Regular Forces continues to be highest in the Royal Navy (31%) and lowest in the Army (22%). The report and tables are at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-2017>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

European Social Survey

The first set of data from Round 8 of the European Social Survey has been released, including those for the UK, where 1,959 adults were interviewed face-to-face by NatCen Social Research between 1 September 2016 and 20 March 2017. This academically-led study, which has been conducted every two years since 2002, always includes a short module on religion, asking about religious affiliation, self-assessed religiosity (on a scale running from 0 = not at all religious to 10 = very religious), attendance at religious services other than rites of passage, and private prayer. The weighted results for Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland) in 2002 and 2016 are shown in compressed form below, the biggest change being the 11-point increase in those self-identifying as non-religious. The figures have been calculated from the Centre for Comparative European Survey Data website at:

<http://www.ccesd.ac.uk>

%	2002	2016
<i>Regard self as belonging to a particular religion</i>		
Yes	48.0	44.5
No	52.0	55.5
<i>Self-assessed religiosity</i>		
Not religious (0-4)	48.0	58.8
Neutral (5)	17.8	11.4
Religious (6-10)	34.2	29.8
<i>Attendance at religious services apart from rites of passage</i>		
Monthly or more	17.8	18.0
Less often	31.6	30.5
Never	50.7	51.5
<i>Private prayer</i>		
Daily	18.5	17.0
Monthly	18.0	15.4
Less often	19.0	16.2
Never	44.4	51.3

Material security and religious practice

In a recent article in *Journal of Religion in Europe* (Vol. 10, No. 3, 2017, pp. 328-49), Ingrid Storm tests three hypotheses linking material security (as measured by household income) with attendance at religious services at least monthly. Using the British Household Panel Survey and UK Household Longitudinal Study datasets for 1991-2012, she found that increased income was weakly associated with declining religious attendance but that reductions in income did not significantly impact attendance. However, the data did suggest that religious attendance improved and maintained life satisfaction in the face of economic loss. Access options to the article, 'Does Security Increase Secularity? Evidence from the British Household Panel Survey on the Relationship between Income and Religious Service Attendance', are outlined at:

<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/18748929-01003004>

Church schools and religious diversity

Further findings from the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project in 2011-12 are presented by Leslie Francis, Andrew Village, Ursula McKenna, and Gemma Penny in 'Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols in School: Exploring the Impact of Church Schools in a Religiously Diverse Society', in *Religion and Civil Human Rights in Empirical Perspective*, edited by Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Carl Sterkens (Cham: Springer, 2018), pp. 157-75. A sub-sample of 2,385 students aged 13-15 from schools in England, Wales, and London who identified as Christian or of no religion was used. The authors conclude that, after controlling for gender and individual differences in personality and religiosity, 'schools with a religious character are a source neither for good nor for ill in terms of shaping student attitudes either toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school or toward religious diversity more generally assessed'. The chapter can be purchased from:

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-59285-5_7

Muslim identity

Data from the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project also form the basis of Leslie Francis and Ursula McKenna, 'The Religious and Social Correlates of Muslim Identity: An Empirical Enquiry into Religification among Male Adolescents in the UK', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 43, No. 5, 2017, pp. 550-65. The authors compared the responses of 158 male students aged 13-15 who identified as Muslim with those of 1,932 male students with no religious affiliation, finding (not unexpectedly) that the former had a distinctive profile in terms of both religiosity (measured across eight themes) and social values (six themes concerning wellbeing and attitudes to cultural and religious diversity). The correlations are presented in 14 tables with commentary. Opportunities for further research into Muslim identity are identified in the form of improved sampling and an elaborated survey instrument. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03054985.2017.1352351>

Muslim population

The number of Muslims in the UK is projected to grow from an estimated 4,130,000 in 2016 to between 6,560,000 and 13,480,000 in 2050, or from 6.3% to between 9.7% and 17.2% of the population. So suggests the Pew Research Center in its latest report, entitled *Europe's Growing Muslim Population*. To arrive at these projections, Pew modelled three scenarios for net Muslim migration (the biggest single factor affecting the size of the Muslim community), depending upon whether it was zero, medium, or high. The UK is currently the top destination in Europe for regular (non-refugee) Muslim migrants. Natural increase was also factored into the calculations, reflecting the fact that Muslims are disproportionately young and still have a higher fertility rate than non-Muslims in the UK (one more child on average). The report is available at:

<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>

Islamophobia

Although racial boundaries between whites, blacks, and Asians have blurred in recent years, Muslims are widely singled out for negative attention by both white people and non-Muslim ethnic minorities in Britain, including a large number who do not express hostility to other ethnic groups. This is according to Ingrid Storm, Maria Sobolewska, and Robert Ford, 'Is Ethnic Prejudice Declining in Britain? Change in Social Distance Attitudes among Ethnic Majority and Minority Britons', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 69, No. 3, September 2017, pp. 410-34. Their evidence concerning attitudes to Muslims derives from a measure of interpersonal social distance, specifically acceptance of an in-law from Muslim versus other ethnic backgrounds, contained in the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey (for whites) and the 2010 Ethnic Minority British Election Survey. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-4446.12250/full>

NEW DATASETS AT UK DATA SERVICE

SN 8280: Health Survey for England, 2015

The Health Survey for England, 2015 is the twenty-fifth in a series of annual studies designed to monitor trends in the nation's health. It is commissioned by NHS Digital and conducted by NatCen Social Research and the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London. It is undertaken through a combination of face-to-face interview, self-completion questionnaire, and clinical and other measurements. A number of core health-related topics are explored each year with additional topics investigated on a more occasional basis (including several in 2015). A question 'what is your religion or belief?' was one of the background variables included in the self-completion booklets given to the 13,748 adults and children interviewed in 2015, with reply options of no religion, Roman Catholic, other Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and any other religion. This permits analysis of the religious correlates of particular health conditions and attitudes. For a full description of the dataset and background documentation, see the catalogue entry at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8280&type=Data%20catalogue>

SN 8290: Scottish Health Survey, 2016

The Scottish Health Survey, 2016 is the twelfth in a series initiated in 1995. It was conducted by ScotCen Social Research on behalf of the Scottish Government, 4,323 adults aged 16 and over living in private households throughout Scotland being interviewed face-to-face between January 2016 and January 2017. A belonging form of question about religious affiliation was asked of all respondents, which can be used as a variable for analysing answers to all other questions, whether health-related or not. A catalogue description of the dataset, with links to documentation, is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8290&type=Data%20catalogue>