

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 30 – March 2018

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OPINION POLLS

Mothering Sunday

Mothering Sunday, aka Mother's Day, has a mix of ecclesiastical and secular origins. In the UK, it was observed on 11 March 2018, preceded by a couple of opinion polls.

On behalf of the Church of England, ComRes asked an online sample of 2,015 Britons on 2-4 March what is or was the most important thing their mother had ever done for them, and who they would name as the ideal mother, past or present (three-fifths said nobody, but some nominated Mother Teresa or the Virgin Mary). Data tables are available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/church-of-england-mothering-sunday-poll/>

YouGov asked 1,598 members of its British online panel on 5-6 March whether Mother's Day and other festivals were 'proper' special occasions or merely celebrated because of pressure from commercial entities such as greetings card companies. Only 40% regarded Mother's Day as a 'proper' occasion compared with 80% who thought Christmas 'proper' and 57% Easter. Birthdays (90%) and wedding anniversaries (77%) also scored highly as 'proper' special occasions. Four in five respondents felt that the observance of Valentine's Day and Halloween had been manufactured by commercial interests. Data tables are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2018/03/07/most-brits-dont-think-mothers-day-proper-special-o/>

Church schools

The majority (56%) of 3,526 Britons interviewed by YouGov in an app-based poll on 9 March 2018 deemed it unacceptable for parents to attend church specifically to get their child into an affiliated school. Opposition was strongest among those aged 50-65 (64%) and over-65 (70%). The practice was judged acceptable by 22% with another 22% undecided. Data tables are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/87b2d367-238b-11e8-8a6e-8926cf68558a>

Charity Awareness Monitor

The Church is the seventeenth most trusted (of 24) public bodies and institutions in Britain, according to the February 2018 wave of nfpSynergy's Charity Awareness Monitor, for which 1,000 adults aged 16 and over were interviewed online. About one-third of Britons now trust the Church a great deal (8%) or quite a lot (26%) compared with 58% who trust it not much (27%) or very little (31%). As they were in 2017, religious charities are also the least trusted of 15 charity sectors, 32% trusting them a great deal (8%) or up to a point (24%) against 40%

who trust them not very much (22%) or not at all (18%), with 27% unsure. Topline results only are available at:

<https://nfpsynergy.net/press-release/trust-charities-and-overseas-development-sector>

An earlier nfpSynergy report into religious charities, seemingly not in the public domain, was also briefly noted on pp. 2-3 of the *Church Times* for 30 March 2018 at:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/29-march/news/uk/religious-charities-least-trusted-in-the-sector>

Labour Party and anti-Semitism

The row about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party has reignited. The response of *The Times* was to commission YouGov to undertake an online survey of 1,156 Labour Party members on 27-29 March 2018. This seemed to reveal that very many Party members did not share the concerns being widely expressed within the Jewish community, by politicians generally, and in the media. For, although 66% of members acknowledged that anti-Semitism was a genuine problem in the Labour Party, 77% believed that its extent was being deliberately exaggerated in order to damage Labour and its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle criticism of Israel. As many as 78% also said that anti-Semitism was either not a problem in the Labour Party or no bigger a problem than in other political parties, while 55% believed the Party had done well in reacting to claims of anti-Semitism and 61% said the same about Corbyn's performance. Two-thirds labelled Israel (the Jewish state) a force for bad in the world and one-third favoured the reinstatement as a member of the Party of Ken Livingstone, former Mayor of London, who has been suspended since 2016 for his comments about anti-Semitism. Data tables are available at:

http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/a1lnfhilsh/TimesResults_180329_LabourMembers_W.pdf

Influence of Islam

In answer to a somewhat ambiguously-worded question, 46% of 1,646 adult Britons interviewed online by YouGov on behalf of *Handelsblatt* on 27-28 February 2018 said that, relative to a few years ago, Islam now has more influence on the British government, the proportion being slightly lower than in France and Germany. Just 7% thought Islam has less influence, with 24% sensing there is no difference and 22% undecided. Topline data for all eight nations in the survey are on p. 21 of the tables at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/zck4tfs6qs/HandelsblattResults_Feb18_Topline_client_w.pdf

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Religion Media Centre

After a long period of gestation, the Religion Media Centre (RMC) was officially launched on 27 March 2018, with Ruth Peacock as inaugural director. It is an independent and impartial body seeking to help journalists and other media professionals cover religion. Its website

already includes several factsheets which summarize the statistical and other background to various religious topics. They include one on secularization in Britain by BRIN co-director Clive Field, who is also a member of the RMC's advisory board. The RMC website is at:

<http://religionmediacentre.org.uk/>

Premier Media Group audience

An online survey of 8,159 Britons conducted by ComRes between 19 January and 1 February 2018 has enabled Premier Media Group to estimate that the number of regular listeners to its three Christian radio stations (Premier Christian Radio, Premier Praise, and Premier Gospel) now exceeds the Church of England's weekly congregations. In all, 6.6% of the adult population claims to listen to one or more of the stations, with 4.1% tuning in to all three. Premier Christian Radio has the biggest regular audience of the three (2.4% listening weekly or more), followed by Premier Praise (1.9%), and Premier Gospel (1.5%). Data tables (whose labelling might perhaps have been a little clearer) are available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/premier-media-group-listeners-poll-2018/>

Christian nominalism

In his monthly column in *Church of England Newspaper*, 9 March 2018, p. 7, church statistician Peter Brierley revisited the incidence of Christian nominalism in Britain. For each of the five decennial years from 1980 to 2020 (estimated), he sub-divided the population into eight religious categories. Based on past trends, his forecast for 2020 is that 50% of people will believe in a Christian God and 50% will not (with 9% of the latter belonging to other religions and 41% non-religious). Of the 50% who believe in a Christian God, 5% will be regular churchgoers (3% being church members and 2% not) and 45% will not (6% being nominal church members and 39% notional Christians). The article is not freely available online, although short-term access can be purchased by non-subscribers from the newspaper's website. A repackaged and longer version of the article has subsequently been published in the latest edition (No. 56, April 2018, pp. 1-2) of *FutureFirst*, the bimonthly bulletin of Brierley Consultancy; a copy can be requested by emailing peter@brierleyres.com

Church attendance

In *8 Measures of Church Attendance* (Tonbridge: ADBC Publishers, 2018, 12pp., ISBN: 978-0-9957646-2-0, £2), church statistician Peter Brierley synthesizes the data he has collected about churchgoing in Britain since 1980. The eight short sections cover attendance over time and by geography, age, gender, ethnicity, environment, denomination, and churchmanship. The overall picture is presented as one of challenge, notwithstanding pockets of church growth. The pamphlet is available from ADBC Publishers, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 4PW (cheques payable to 'Peter Brierley').

Women in church

Three-fifths of women claim to have experienced sexism in the Church, and 53% feel there is institutional sexism there. This is according to a new report by the Sophia Network, entitled *Minding the Gap: Women in the Church – Experiences, Barriers, and Hopes*. The research was conducted online, via Survey Monkey, in May-June 2017, and the 1,211 respondents were

entirely self-selecting and disproportionately (85%) in leadership positions, paid or voluntary, in the Church, one-fifth being ministers or pastors; three-quarters were aged 25-54. The report can be downloaded at:

<http://mindingthegapuk.com/>

Church tourism

The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, whose members include some cathedrals and other major churches, has published its visitor figures for 2017. In London, somewhat bucking the overall metropolitan trend, St Paul's Cathedral reported an increase in visitor numbers of 3.4% over 2016 and Westminster Abbey one of 4.6%. Outside the capital, Canterbury Cathedral was down 3% but York Minster was up 13.4% and Glasgow Cathedral up 36%. The full figures are available at:

<http://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=423>

Church music

Billed as the first serious empirical investigation into church music for many years, *The InHarmony Report: A Survey of Music for Worship in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich* has been researched and written by Richard Hubbard, music development director for the diocese. It is based on a survey distributed in 2016 to all parishes in the diocese, to which 444 replied (a very high response rate of 94%). Of these, 28% had to use recorded music to accompany the congregation. The report is published by St Edmundsbury Cathedral and can be purchased in ePub or printed formats, at £5 and £10, respectively. Orders can be placed at:

<http://www.stedscathedral.uk/inharmony/inharmony-report.html>

Christians and debt

Debt counselling charity Christians against Poverty (CAP) has published the latest in a series of client reports, *Bringing Restoration to Desolate Homes*, principally based upon management information relating to 5,413 CAP client households in 2017 and 1,080 responses to a postal and online survey of clients' experience of indebtedness between September and November 2017. The 42-page report is available at:

https://capuk.org/fileserver/downloads/policy_and_government/client-report.pdf

Jewish charities

A survey of the country's 80 biggest Jewish and pro-Israel charities has revealed that 32% of their trustees are women, up from 29% in 2017 but still below the national average of 36%. Sixteen of the charities have all-male boards and another 14 have only one female trustee each. The research was conducted by Ben Crowne and published in the *Jewish Chronicle* for 9 March 2018 (pp. 4-5) at:

<https://www.thejc.com/news/news-features/only-32-per-cent-of-jewish-charity-trustees-are-women-figures-reveal-1.460277?>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Young adults and religion

The Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society at St Mary's University Twickenham has published, in association with the Institut Catholique de Paris, Stephen Bullivant's *Europe's Young Adults and Religion: Findings from the European Social Survey (2014-16), to inform the 2018 Synod of Bishops*. The first of three short chapters provides an overview of the religiosity of adults aged 16-29 in 22 countries, the second investigates Catholics, and the third offers a comparative study of the UK and France. In the UK, 70% of young adults professed no religion (one-fifth of whom had a religious upbringing), with 21% self-identifying as Christians (half of them Catholic) and 6% as Muslims; 59% never attended religious services; and 63% never prayed outside religious services. The report can be downloaded from:

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-mar-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf>

Bullivant also had an article about this research in the *Catholic Herald* for 23 March 2018 at:

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/issues/march-23rd-2018/the-scary-truth-about-young-europeans-and-the-church/>

Domestic abuse in churches

Kristin Aune and Rebecca Barnes, *In Churches too: Church Responses to Domestic Abuse – A Case Study of Cumbria* reports on a research project carried out by Coventry University and the University of Leicester in association with Restored and Churches Together in Cumbria and with financial support from four funding bodies. The empirical data derive from a paper and online survey into the experiences, impacts, and attitudes towards domestic abuse of an essentially self-selecting (and not wholly representative) sample of 438 regular churchgoers in Cumbria, three-quarters of them female. Almost half (48%) of all respondents (rising to 57% of women) claimed to have experienced domestic abuse in a current or previous relationship, emotional abuse being the commonest form, while 38% thought that domestic abuse affected people in their own church. The 72-page report is available at:

https://restored.contentfiles.net/media/resources/files/churches_web.pdf

Review of survey research on Muslims

The Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute has prepared *A Review of Survey Research on Muslims in Britain* on behalf of the Aziz Foundation, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, and Unbound Philanthropy. The report is certainly useful as a consolidation of some existing knowledge in the field but it is far from comprehensive, being restricted to secondary analysis of just 14 existing datasets of academic sample surveys or ad hoc opinion polls conducted between 2004 and 2016 (mostly at the end of that period). Although both British Muslim and national cross-sectional samples are considered, the emphasis is very much on reprising what is known about Muslim experiences, civic engagement, and opinions. Only in the final chapter are public attitudes towards Muslims addressed and then rather sketchily. The report is available at:

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/review-survey-research-muslims-britain-0>

NEW DATASET

UK Data Service SN 7348: European Quality of Life Survey Integrated Data File, 2003-2016

This third edition of the European Quality of Life dataset incorporates results from the fourth survey, undertaken in 33 countries in 2016-17 on behalf of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by Kantar Public with adults aged 18 and over, including 1,300 in the UK. Questions were asked about frequency of attendance at religious services (other than for rites of passage) and perceived tensions between different religious groups. A catalogue description is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=7348&type=Data%20catalogue>