

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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OPINION POLLS

Christian England?

Christianity no longer seems central to Englishness, according to an online poll by YouGov for the BBC, for which a large sample of English adults was asked: ‘how strongly, if at all, do the following contribute to your English identity? England’s Christian tradition’. In reply, 36% said strongly (12% very and 24% fairly) and 58% said not very strongly (28%) or not at all (30%), with 6% as don’t know. The numbers saying strongly were highest for Conservatives (50%) and over-65s (53%), while those saying not very strongly or not at all peaked at 68% with the under-25s and 70% among people who regarded themselves as British not English.

A further question was also asked of samples of Welsh and Scottish adults, as well as in England: ‘how strongly, if at all, do these things add to your sense of belonging to where you live now? People share my religion.’ Topline results are tabulated below, with more than seven in ten in all three home nations responding not very strongly or not at all.

% down	England 9-26/3/18	Wales 25/4-1/5/18	Scotland 25-30/4/18
Very strongly	5	5	4
Fairly strongly	13	9	15
Not very strongly	26	30	23
Not at all	46	47	51
Don’t know	10	9	8
N =	20,081	1,036	1,025

This second question was also polled in Northern Ireland, in a survey by LucidTalk in partnership with YouGov. A full report can be found at:

<https://www.lucidtalk.co.uk/images/News/BBCProject-FullReportBNonP.pdf>

Detailed tables for the three other home nations, giving breaks by demographics (but not by religious affiliation), are available via the links in the following news posts:

England: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-44142843>

Wales: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-44369889>

Scotland: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-44300916>

Royal wedding

American bishop Michael Curry’s powerful sermon on love at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle on 19 May 2018 turned heads among the guests and commentators. Some have viewed it as a model (in terms of message and delivery) which clergy here should emulate in their preaching. Just how big an impression Curry made on the British public has been tested by ComRes for Theos in an online poll of 2,007 adults on 25-28 May 2018. The headline findings are tabulated below, indicating that the sermon positively impacted only a minority of Britons, with improved understanding of Christian beliefs its least likely outcome. As in many other surveys about religion, the most striking feature of the results was the very large number of undecideds (or persons feeling indifference). Full data tables are available at:

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/OtherFiles/Theos-Royal-Wedding-Survey-2018.pdf>

% agreement with statement	All adults	Professing Christians	Churchgoers
Curry’s sermon improved my understanding of Christian beliefs	12	16	17
Appropriate for Church leaders to use occasions like the Royal Wedding to mix religion and politics	22	25	28
I would be more likely to go to church if I thought preaching would be similar to Curry’s sermon	16	21	24
Tone and content of Curry’s sermon were appropriate for an important state occasion	26	31	31
Curry’s sermon expressed ideas people can agree with	34	40	40
Appropriate for Curry to address both social and political issues in his sermon	29	32	34

Religion in education

The Government may have decided recently against lifting the 50% cap on religious selection for new free schools in England, but the National Secular Society (NSS) is continuing its campaign to roll back religious influence in schools. It commissioned Censuswide to undertake an online survey on the subject among 2,003 UK adults aged 16 and over on 18-21 May 2018. Asked whether ‘publicly funded schools should be able to select pupils on the grounds of their religious beliefs’, just 17% of respondents agreed (against 49% who disagreed and 35% who were undecided). Even when the question was rephrased, no more than 29% said they thought ‘faith schools should be able to select pupils on the grounds of their religious beliefs’, with 30% opposed and 41% undecided. The majority (52%) considered that school assemblies should explore moral questions, but no more than 26% wanted them to feature religious worship (with 33% opposed and 40% undecided). And just 14% disagreed with the proposition that ‘state-funded faith schools should be obligated to teach RE in a way that is inclusive of all religious and non-religious belief systems’, 47% being in favour. No data tables have been posted online, as yet (although they have been shared with BRIN), but the NSS press release can be read at:

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2018/06/british-public-opposes-religious-influence-in-education-poll-finds>

Age gap in religion

One of the Pew Research Center's latest reports examines *The Age Gap in Religion around the World*, based on secondary analysis of pre-existing Pew datasets for 2008-17. It calculates the points difference between younger (aged 18-39) and older (40+) respondents for a range of measures (religious affiliation, religion very important in life, weekly religious attendance, and daily prayer) across 106 countries and territories. The headline British results (taken from the 2017 religion in Western Europe study) and global mean are tabulated below. The report can be found at:

<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/>

%	All	18-39	40+
<i>Global</i>			
Affiliate to a religion	88	85	90
Attend services weekly	39	36	42
Pray daily	49	44	54
Consider religion very important in life	54	51	57
<i>Great Britain</i>			
Affiliate to a religion	77	67	82
Attend services weekly	8	7	9
Pray daily	6	4	7
Consider religion very important in life	10	8	11

Values in Europe

Standard Eurobarometer Wave 89.1 includes a trio of questions asked fairly regularly by the European Commission about values (including religion) deemed of most importance personally and best representing the European Union (EU), and the factors (including religion) creating a feeling of community among EU citizens. The UK fieldwork was conducted by TNS (now Kantar Public UK) by means of face-to-face interviews with 1,337 adults aged 15 and over between 17 and 26 March 2018. The survey was also undertaken in the 27 other member states of the EU, five candidate countries, and the Turkish Cypriot community. In the vast majority of nations, religion was deemed of very limited significance. Asked to pick the three most important values to them personally, from a list of twelve possibles, only 4% of UK respondents selected religion, the EU28 average being 5%. Topline results can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instrument_s=STANDARD

Inclusiveness of nationalities

Britain lags behind quite a lot of other Western countries (including several Commonwealth members) in terms of its religious inclusiveness, according to the latest Ipsos Global Advisor survey into the inclusiveness of nationalities, conducted in 27 countries among online samples of 500/1,000 adults each between 20 April and 4 May 2018. An inclusion index of six components was devised, one of which asked respondents to say whether they regarded a Christian, an atheist, a Muslim, a Jew, a Buddhist, and a Hindu as a 'real' Briton (or the appropriate national demonym). An inclusiveness score was calculated for each component. The religious inclusiveness score for Britain was 38, the best figures being for Canada (52) and

France (51) and the worst for Saudi Arabia (-46). Topline religious data for Britain are tabulated below, from which it will be seen that Muslims are the religious group least likely to be regarded as ‘real’ Britons, while the full report is available at:

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/britain-lags-behind-canada-and-us-new-inclusiveness-index>

Regard as a ‘real’ Briton (% across)	Yes	Unsure	No
Christian	65	30	5
Atheist	57	34	9
Jew	51	34	15
Buddhist	48	35	18
Hindu	48	34	18
Muslim	46	33	21

Attitudes to Islam

A plurality (46%) of Britons continues to think that there is a fundamental clash between Islam and the values of British society, according to the latest YouGov@Cambridge Public Policy Tracker, conducted online on 20-21 June 2018 among 1,638 adults. The proportion rises to a majority of Conservatives (62%), ‘leave’ voters in the 2016 referendum on European Union membership (67%), men (51%), the over-50s (53% for those aged 50-64 and 58% of over-65s), and manual workers (52%). Just 25% of Britons believe that Islam is generally compatible with British values, Liberal Democrats (43%) and ‘remainers’ in the 2016 referendum (42%) being most optimistic. Full data tables and trend data back to 2015 can be found at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/02/19/tracker-islam-and-british-values/>

Free speech

The extent to which freedom of speech is being maintained in universities has been in the news quite a lot recently, arising from fears that a ‘snowflake’ generation of students is seeking to shut out views which they deem unpalatable. To gauge whether this is the case or not, YouGov has run an experiment among two online samples of Britons, one a national cross-section of 1,636 adults (on 5-6 April 2018) and the other of 1,004 students (on 4-5 June 2018). Each sample was asked to react to the identical list of controversial scenarios or viewpoints, and to say whether they personally found them offensive or not and whether speakers advocating these positions should be given platforms in universities or not. Three of the scenarios were religion-related, and the results of the experiment for these are tabulated below, revealing a broad similarity between adult and student responses, which was also the case for more secular scenarios. There is thus no evidence, YouGov concluded, that students are more hostile to freedom of speech than the general population. Full data tables can be accessed via the links in the blog at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2018/06/27/are-students-really-more-hostile-free-speech/>

Personally find statement (%)	Offensive	Offensive	Not offensive	Not offensive
	Adults	Students	Adults	Students
Holocaust never took place	81	88	10	7
All religions should be banned	41	51	49	42
Biblical account of creation true	18	19	67	71

Give university platform to (%)	Should	Should	Should not	Should not
	Adults	Students	Adults	Students
Someone denying Holocaust ever took place	26	21	61	68
Someone wanting all religions banned	51	51	32	35
Someone literally believing Biblical account of creation of universe	59	63	19	19

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

UK Church in action

On behalf of World Vision UK, Barna Global has undertaken research into *The UK Church in Action: Perceptions of Social Justice and Mission in a Changing World*, edited by Alyce Youngblood (London: Barna Global, 2018, 102pp., ISBN: 978-1-945260-23-3, £25, paperback). Interviews were conducted, mostly online, in April-May 2017 with three British samples: 2,054 adults, 1,170 active Christians, and 302 church leaders. Presumably in line with the sponsor’s requirements, the focus of the questioning of active Christians and church leaders was on attitudes to local and global mission and social issues. The national sample of Britons was apparently asked solely about their perceptions of the Church in the UK, a substantial minority (one-third to two-fifths) not being able to articulate any clear views. On the positive side, 59% envisaged some role for the Church in meeting community needs. On the negative side, 10% did not, with 33% being unwilling to get involved with any church activity or campaign, and 24% considering the Church hypocritical, 23% judgmental, and 20% as incompatible with science. For more headline findings, and/or to order the report, go to:

<https://www.barna.com/research/what-the-uk-doesnt-know-about-the-church/>

Church’s impact on health and care

The Cinnamon Network has published a 130–page report on *The Church’s Impact on Health and Care, 2017-18*, written by David Simmons. The research, which was funded by the Allchurches Trust, is based upon qualitative and quantitative data gathered from 11 Christian health and social care projects, mostly recognised by or affiliated to the Cinnamon Network, during the autumn of 2017. The focus of the research was on demonstrating the effectiveness, and cost benefits to the National Health Service, of the projects. The report, which is light on statistics, is available at:

<http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Cinnamon-Health-Research-2018.pdf>

Faith school admissions

Two-fifths of all state secondary schools with a religious character, including three-fifths of Roman Catholic schools, are deliberately prioritizing religious over non-religious families, affecting access to 7% of all state secondary school places. So claim Humanists UK following their analysis of the admissions policies of all 637 secondary state faith schools in England. The findings are set out and contextualized in Jay Harman, *Non-Religious Need Not Apply*:

Targeted Discrimination against Non-Religious Families by State Faith Schools, which is available to download at.

<https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018-05-10-LW-FINAL-Non-religious-discrimination.pdf>

Young Catholics

Matthew van Duyvenbode's *Complex Catholicism: The Lives and Faith of Young Catholics in England and Wales Today* is a report on a research project undertaken by strategy consultancy Camino House in partnership with CYMFed (Catholic Youth Ministry Federation). It is based upon two surveys of young Catholics aged 15-25, the first in 2009 (n = 886) and the second conducted online by Research Now between 20 September and 18 October 2017 among 1,005 self-identifying or non-identifying (from a Catholic family or attended a Catholic school) young Catholics. The 2017 cohort expressed lower levels of agnosticism and atheism and higher levels of belief than their 2009 peers, and they claimed to attend Mass more regularly. Young Catholics in 2017 were also more likely than those in 2009 to view 'helping others' as a desirable aspiration and to demonstrate stronger levels of concern about local and global issues, notably terrorism. For a copy of the report and access (on request) to topline data tables from the research, go to:

<https://www.caminohouse.com/complexcatholicism>

There is also a summary of the report in the *Catholic Herald* at:

<http://catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2018/06/12/analysis-rise-in-young-catholics-attending-mass-survey-suggests/>

Jewish vital statistics

The latest report from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), conducted on behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, concludes that, after several decades of demographic decline, during which Jewish deaths consistently exceeded Jewish births, the Jewish population of the UK is now growing again, with births surpassing deaths in every year since 2006. The trend arises from a combination of falling mortality and increasing fertility, Jewish women now having an average of 2.6 children, which comfortably exceeds replacement-level fertility. The Strictly Orthodox (who have six or seven children per family) account for 47% of all Jewish births but only 2% of deaths, reflecting their younger age profile. The most recent birth statistics were derived from the number of Jewish ritual circumcisions for 2012-15, to which a national sex-ratio multiplier was applied, and death statistics from 79 data providers' records of Jewish burials and cremations for 2013-16. Donatella Casale Mashiah's *Vital Statistics of the UK Jewish Population: Births and Deaths* can be found at:

<http://www.jpr.org.uk/publication?id=16582>

A commentary on the research by Jonathan Boyd, JPR's Executive Director, was published in the *Jewish Chronicle* for 22 June 2018 (p. 40), the article also being available at:

<https://www.thejc.com/comment/analysis/jewish-birth-rate-1.465852>

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Marriages in Scotland

Section 7 of *Vital Events Reference Tables, 2017*, newly released by the National Records of Scotland, reveals that, of the 28,440 opposite-sex and same-sex marriages celebrated in Scotland during the year, one-half were civil and one-half were conducted according to the rites of a religion or belief system. Of the 14,239 in the latter category, as many as 37% were humanist weddings, far in excess of the 22% solemnized by the Church of Scotland and 8% by the Roman Catholic Church. Full details are available in Tables 7.05, 7.06, and 7.07 at:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/vital-events-reference-tables/2017/section-7-marriages>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Church of England stipendiary ministry

Over-time changes in the psychological type and psychological temperament of clergy recruits to the Church of England, with a shifting balance from intuitive types to sensing types, suggest that in future the Church will be ‘more tightly managed but less inspirational and less responsive to transformative development’. So claim Leslie Francis and Greg Smith in their ‘Changing Patterns in Recruitment to Stipendiary Ministry: A Study in Psychological Profiling’, *Theology*, Vol. 121, No. 4, July-August 2018, pp. 268-77. The evidence derives from three surveys which are summarized in table 1 on p. 272. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0040571X18765426>

Alternatively, there was coverage of the article in the *Church Times* for 29 June 2018 (p. 3), which can be read at:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/29-june/news/uk/clergy-less-intuitive-more-conventional>

Methodist philanthropy

‘Who were the Benefactors of Wesleyan Methodism in the Nineteenth Century?’ is the question posed by David Jeremy in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol. 61, No. 5, May 2018, pp. 186-200. Using printed donation lists, and against the backdrop of prevailing economic conditions, he examines the pattern of giving to three Wesleyan connexional funds: the Centenary Fund (1839-44), Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Jubilee Fund (1863-68), and the Thanksgiving Fund (1878-83). These had approximately 140,000 donors between them. The article is currently only available in print.

NEW DATASET

UK Data Service SN 8349: Scottish Surveys Core Questions, 2016

Scottish Surveys Core Questions combines into a single dataset the answers to identical questions asked of an aggregate 20,893 adults aged 16 and over in the annual Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (2016-17), the Scottish Health Survey (2016), and the Scottish Household Survey (2016), all undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government. Religious affiliation is one of the 19 core questions. A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8349&type=Data%20catalogue>