

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 41 – February 2019

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OPINION POLLS

Multinational surveys of attitudes towards major world religions

YouGov has released the results of two multinational surveys exploring attitudes to the major world religions, coinciding with the first ever papal visit to the Arabian peninsula. Online fieldwork for the main study, commissioned by the Muslim Council of Elders, was undertaken in four Western countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States) and four in the Middle East and North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates); in Britain, 1,754 adults were interviewed for this on 7-8 January 2019. A second survey was commissioned by YouGov@Cambridge to add further comparative data, and conducted only in Britain (1,650 interviews on 30-31 January 2019) and the United States. YouGov has a blog post about the surveys, with links to full data tables, at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2019/02/03/westernmena-attitudes-religion-portray-lack-faith->

The consolidated topline for Britain are shown below. They confirm the findings of most other polling that Islam enjoys a relatively lower standing in the court of public opinion than other world religions, notwithstanding that three-fifths of Britons now claim personally to know a Muslim:

- Very or fairly familiar with basic teachings of: Christianity 78%, Islam 32%, Judaism 31%, Buddhism 25%, Hinduism 18%, and Sikhism 15%
- Not very or not at all familiar with basic teachings of: Sikhism 76%, Hinduism 71%, Buddhism 66%, Judaism 60%, Islam 58%, and Christianity 13%
- Holding a very or fairly favourable opinion of: Christianity 39%, atheism 37%, Buddhism 31%, Hinduism 23%, Judaism 22%, Sikhism 22%, and Islam 13%
- Holding a fairly or very unfavourable opinion of: Islam 32%, Judaism 14%, Christianity 12%, Hinduism 11%, Sikhism 10%, Buddhism 9%, and atheism 8%
- Very or fairly concerned about possible rise of extremism in: Islam 66%, Christianity 21%, Judaism 18%, Hinduism 16%, Sikhism 12%, and Buddhism 9%
- Perceived compatibility with UK values of: Buddhism 44%, Sikhism 39%, Hinduism 36%, and Islam 24%
- Fundamental clash with UK values of: Islam 38%, Sikhism 8%, Hinduism 8%, and Buddhism 6%
- Most people would mind a lot or a little if a close relative married a: Muslim 50%, Sikh 34%, Hindu 34%, and Buddhist 21%

Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 2018 – international concerns, including ISIS

The Pew Research Center has released a further tranche of results from its Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey. The study was undertaken in 26 countries, including in Great Britain (where 1,005 adults aged 18 and over were interviewed by Kantar Public UK on the telephone between 24 May and 29 June 2018). Respondents were given a list of eight international concerns and asked whether each was a major threat to their country, a minor threat, or not a threat. One of the eight was Islamic State (ISIS) which, at the time of fieldwork, remained a potent (if diminishing) force. Indeed, in Britain, ISIS was still perceived as a major threat by 64% (albeit down from 79% in 2016 and 70% in 2017), and ranked second equal with cyberattacks from other countries but trailing global climate change on 66%. Concern about ISIS was more pronounced among Britons on the ideological right (68%), women (69%), and over-50s (77%). Of all the nations investigated in 2018, the French (87%) were most inclined to regard ISIS as a major threat. Pew's report, incorporating topline data, can be found at:

www.pewglobal.org/2019/02/10/climate-change-still-seen-as-the-top-global-threat-but-cyberattacks-a-rising-concern/

Three surveys on consequences of the erosion of the ISIS caliphate

The impending battleground defeat of ISIS in its last enclave in Syria, however welcome in the West, has brought consequences in its wake, some of which have been explored by YouGov in three recent online polls.

The first survey, undertaken among 4,292 Britons on 18 February 2019, concerned the hundreds of European citizens who joined ISIS but who have now been captured in Syria by forces allied to the USA. The USA has been pressing Europe to take back their own citizens and to prosecute them, but European nations (including the UK) have been dragging their feet. The majority of adults interviewed by YouGov in Britain (51%, peaking at 66% of Liberal Democrats) agreed that these prisoners should be prosecuted by the countries they are from, but 29% wanted them to be prosecuted by the USA, with 3% saying neither and 17% undecided. Full data are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/4jd16cypcu/InternalResults_190218.pdf

The second and third surveys related to the specific case of Shamima Begum, the former Bethnal Green schoolgirl (now aged 19) who ran away to join ISIS and marry a Dutch jihadist, and who is currently languishing in a refugee camp. At the time of YouGov's initial fieldwork, on 14 February 2019 (when 4,772 Britons were interviewed), she was heavily pregnant but has subsequently given birth to a boy. She had expressed no real regrets about her past actions yet indicated she wished to return to the UK with her child. The British public was overwhelmingly (73%) against her being allowed to return, with opposition particularly strong among over-65s (82%), Conservatives (88%), and 'leave' voters in the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (89%). Just 13% considered she should be permitted to come home, and no more than 21% in any demographic sub-group, with the remaining 14% uncertain. Full data are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/326d8b99-3044-11e9-99f8-01e7f8f09add>

By 19 February, it had been announced that the Government had revoked Begum's British citizenship, thereby preventing her return to the UK. YouGov interviewed 6,381 of its panel members on 20 February 2019, 76% of whom supported the decision to strip Begum of her British citizenship, including 83% of over-65s and 92% of Conservatives and 'leave' voters. Only 12% opposed the decision, peaking at 25% for Liberal Democrats, with the final 12% unable to express a view. Full data are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/f6385dae-34fd-11e9-af57-67fad969c339>

The Begum case displaced Brexit as the most noticed news story of that particular week in online polling by Populus of 2,039 adult Britons on 20-21 February 2019. In an open-ended question, 39% of respondents mentioned Shamima Begum, 23% Brexit, and 19% the emergence of the Independent Group of MPs following resignations from both Labour and Conservative Parties.

Hope Not Hate's report on *State of Hate*, 2019

Edited by Nick Lowles, *State of Hate, 2019: People vs. the Elite?* offers snapshots of hate crimes, the far right, paramilitaries, anti-Semitism, and Islamist extremism. It draws upon a range of evidence, including sundry polling commissioned by Hope Not Hate and not previously reported. One example (featured on p. 97) is the short module on conspiracy theories inserted into an online survey undertaken by YouGov in July 2018 among 10,383 Britons aged 18 and over. Two of the conspiracies investigated had a religious dimension. The trope that 'Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world's banking system' was judged to be true by 13% of all respondents (peaking among Muslims, being 48% for British Bangladeshis and 41% for British Pakistanis), false by 47%, with 41% uncertain. However, as many as 32% considered it true that 'there are no go areas in Britain where sharia law dominates and non-Muslims cannot enter', rising to 47% of Conservatives and 49% of those who voted for the UK to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum, with 31% overall saying the statement was false and 37% undecided. The same peaks were found with another question about the compatibility of Islam with the British way of life (p. 23); whereas, 35% of the whole sample perceived Islam as generally a threat to the British way of life, the proportion rose to 49% of Conservatives and 54% of 'leave' voters. The report is available at:

<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/state-of-hate-2019-final-1.pdf>

YouGov/Jewish Labour Movement survey of anti-Semitism and the Labour Party

On behalf of the Jewish Labour Movement, YouGov has replicated a survey of public attitudes towards the Labour Party and anti-Semitism originally commissioned by Labour against Antisemitism in September 2018. A total of 5,360 adults were interviewed online between 12 and 15 February 2019, with the results disaggregated by standard demographics and the likelihood of voting Labour at the next election. Almost four-fifths (78%) of Britons had seen news coverage in the past few months about accusations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, and 60% judged Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to have been incompetent in handling those accusations, with 56% also agreeing his response to them had lacked honesty and transparency. One-third (34%) labelled Corbyn as anti-Semitic, rising to 50% of over-65s, 59% of those least likely to vote Labour, and 65% of Conservatives. One-quarter (24%) deemed the Labour Party to be anti-Semitic, including 37% of over-65s, 44% of those least likely to vote Labour, and 47% of Conservatives. Among solid Labour voters, few were prepared to accept that Corbyn

was anti-Semitic (9%) or that the Labour Party was anti-Semitic (6%), and no more than 15% were willing to acknowledge that the Party has a problem with anti-Semitism (compared with 25% of Labour waverers, 30% of potential Labour voters, and 43% of the electorate as a whole). Data tables are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/pdlza6bfhk/JLM_190215_LabourMerge_w.pdf

Darwin Day poll – belief in evolution and knowledge of Charles Darwin

One-half of Britons are ‘certain’ that evolution is true, while 31% do not believe in it at all, according to an opinion poll of 1,500 adults commissioned by Puffin Books to coincide with Darwin Day and the launch of a children’s picture-book adaptation of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. Belief in creationism was measured at 12% (or 17% for the under-29s). Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents could not recognize Darwin from a picture, and 29% were unaware that he was famous for his theory of evolution (9% associated him with Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity and 7% as the author of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*). Details of methodology and fieldwork and full results of the survey have not been published. The above account is based upon reporting by various print and online media outlets.

Religious affiliation

An aggregate analysis by BRIN of nine published Populus online surveys for the period July to December 2018, covering 22,970 respondents, reveals the following pattern of religious affiliation in response to the question ‘which of the following religious groups do you consider yourself to be a member of?’ – Christian 48.4%, Muslim 2.7%, other non-Christian 3.7%, none 42.8%, and prefer not to say 2.4%. In BRIN’s first aggregate of Populus polling, in January-June 2011, Christians accounted for 56.6% of the combined sample and religious nones for 32.8%. Christians have thus reduced by more than 1% per cent per annum over the seven years and nones increased by more than 1%.

Londoners’ interactions with people from different backgrounds

The overwhelming majority of the 1,023 Londoners interviewed online by ComRes on 23-27 January 2019, on behalf of the St Paul’s Institute, claimed to interact in some way with people from different backgrounds. More than nine in ten (92%) said they engaged with persons of a different ethnic origin, 90% with those of a different religion or belief system, 89% with people of a different social background, 87% with persons whose first language was different, and 82% with those of a different political leaning. In the case of religion or belief, the commonest forms of mixing were through socializing (59%), as neighbours (57%), and work colleagues (50%), but 14% were married or in a romantic relationship across the religious divide and 11% interacted at a place of worship. Full data tables are available via the link at:

<https://www.comresglobal.com/polls/st-pauls-institute-brexit-poll-of-londoners-february-2019/>

Popularity of religious education and other subjects with older teenagers

Survation was commissioned by L&Q to undertake an online survey of 1,095 16-18-year-olds across the UK on 8-21 January 2019, primarily to gauge attitudes towards STEM subjects and

construction. The opening questions asked respondents which had been their favourite and their least favourite subject to study, giving 13 options. Religious education received the lowest favourability rating (1.9%) and the third highest unfavourability rating (10.4%, after mathematics and English). Full data tables are available at:

<https://www.survation.com/archive/2019-2/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Ozanne Foundation's National Faith and Sexuality Survey, 2018

The Ozanne Foundation has released the results of the National Faith and Sexuality Survey which it undertook online between 9 and 31 December 2018. It was designed to examine the role which religious belief has on people's understanding and acceptance of their sexual orientation. Promoted through a range of social media platforms and national newspapers, it attracted responses from 4,613 adults aged 16 and over currently resident in the UK. They were entirely self-selecting and thus a representative national cross-section was not achieved. In particular, informants were disproportionately white, English, and Christian and there was a significant under-representation of over-65s. One-fifth identified themselves as non-religious. Two-thirds professed to be very or fairly satisfied with their religious or spiritual life. Heterosexuals were more likely to practise a religion than those in the LGBTQ+ category. The questionnaire and analysis focused especially upon the 458 individuals who had undergone efforts to change their sexual orientation and the impact which this had on them. A majority (51%) of all respondents thought sexual orientation change therapy should be made a criminal offence. A full set of documentation from the survey is available at:

<https://ozanne.foundation/faith-sexuality-survey-2018/>

Women speakers on Christian conference platforms in 2018

Project 3:28 has published its 2018 report on the gender balance of speakers at UK national Christian conferences, revealing a generally upward trend in the proportion of women on platforms since Natalie Collins first launched the annual survey in 2013 (when the figure was only 25%). Of the 1,337 speakers at 34 events in 2018, 38% were women, albeit this was actually 1% fewer than in 2017. The report series is available at:

<https://www.project328.info/reports>

Church Army Research Unit report on Messy Church

Messy Church was begun by Lucy Moore in 2004 and there are currently more than 2,800 Messy Churches registered in England. The movement's impact has been evaluated over a two-year period by the Church Army Research Unit and is reported in a series of research papers and a summative document entitled *Playfully Serious: How Messy Churches Create New Space for Faith*. Data were gathered by telephone interviews with the leaders of 174 Church of England Messy Churches, 49 of which have since closed, supplemented by other means. The principal statistical output is the 47-page research paper *Painting with Numbers*, which concludes that: Messy Churches flourish in all contexts; are disproportionately led by women

and laity; and more than three-fifths of their attenders have not recently engaged with any form of church. The research project's website is at:

https://churcharmy.org/Groups/319979/Church_Army/web/What_we_do/Research_Unit/Playfully_Serious/Playfully_Serious.aspx

Census of Catholic schools and colleges in England and Wales

The annual online census of Catholic schools and colleges in England and Wales, undertaken by the Catholic Education Service (CES) for England and Wales, ran from mid-January to mid-February 2019. Since 2014, the response rate has been 100%. Last November, the CES also published digests, separately for England (47 pages) and Wales (26 pages), of the results from the 2018 census, with an extensive range of statistics about schools, pupils, and staff, at both national and diocesan levels. They are available at:

<http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/ces-census>

Projections of demand for places in state-funded Jewish secondary schools in London

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research has published L. Daniel Staetsky's *Projections of Demand for Places in State-Funded Mainstream Jewish Secondary Schools in London: An Update*. The projections cover five Jewish secondary schools and span a five-year horizon, from 2018/19 to 2022/23. The 11-page report can be found at:

https://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR.Projections_of_demand_for_places_in_state-funded_mainstream_Jewish_secondary_schools_in_London.pdf

Community Security Trust's anti-Semitic incidents report, 2018

The Community Security Trust recorded 1,652 anti-Semitic incidents in the UK during 2018, an increase of 16% on 2017, and the highest annual total since monitoring began in 1984. Over 100 incidents were logged in every single month of 2018. Although there was no sudden trigger event to explain the rise, the months with the largest number of incidents appeared to correlate with periods when political and media debates over allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party were at their most intense. There also seemed to be a coincidence with escalations of violence on the border between Gaza and Israel, which resulted in Palestinian casualties. Almost three-quarters of incidents occurred in Greater London and Greater Manchester, home to the two largest Jewish communities. The commonest type of incident involved verbal abuse directed at random Jewish people in public. The Trust's 44-page report is available at:

https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/c/7/IR_2018_Web.pdf

Anti-Semitism in the Labour Party

In response to concerns expressed by Labour MPs about allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, the party's general secretary (Jennie Formby) recently supplied them with statistics for complaints of anti-Semitic behaviour by party members which had been received by the party between April 2018 and January 2019 inclusive. There were 673 members who were the subject of complaint during this period, equivalent to 0.1% of the party's membership. Of these, 96 were immediately suspended (12 of whom were eventually expelled), 211

informed they would be investigated, and 146 given a first warning. In the remaining 220 cases, there was insufficient evidence of any breach of party rules. The party also received a further 433 complaints of anti-Semitism which were not about party members. According to Formby, the party has no information about complaints of anti-Semitism against its members prior to April 2018. For additional coverage, see the BBC blog at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47203397>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Latest Food Standards Agency statistics of ‘religious’ slaughter of animals

The debate about Jewish and Muslim exemptions from the legal requirement to pre-stun animals prior to slaughter rumbles on. These dispensations are stoutly defended by the two faith communities as an essential element of their beliefs and customs but are strongly criticized by animal welfare professionals and lobbyists. The debate seems likely to be fanned by the latest official statistics from the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs: *Results of the 2018 FSA Survey into Slaughter Methods in England and Wales*. They derive from a one-week census of all 248 slaughterhouses in England and Wales conducted by the Food Standards Agency. For each of ten species of animal, the numbers slaughtered were recorded under seven categories: (1) standard; (2) Halal stun (for the Muslim market); (3) Halal non-stun (Muslim); (4) Shechita (Jewish); (5) stun (sum of 1 and 2); (6) non-stun (sum of 3 and 4); and (7) religious slaughter (sum of 2, 3, and 4). The biggest proportions of non-stun slaughter were of sheep (25.0%), broilers (9.7%), and goats (7.5%). Factoring in Halal stun slaughter, animals slaughtered according to religious rites and methods were much higher, amounting to 71.3% of sheep, 37.1% of goats, and 22.2% of broilers. The report is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778588/slaughter-method-survey-2018.pdf

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion

The latest annual edition (Vol. 29, 2018) of Brill’s *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* comprises 18 chapters divided between one general and two special (themed) sections. Four essays include quantitative material on the UK scene, as follows:

- Amanda Dawn Aspland, ‘Ordering the Mess: Psychological Type Profiles of Adults in Messy Church Congregations’ (pp. 1-21)
- Gill Hall and Douglas Hall, ‘The Psychological Type of Individuals Attracted to Celtic Christianity Compared with the Psychological Type of Anglican Congregations’ (pp. 34-53)
- Tania ap Siôn, ‘Lighting Candles and Writing Prayers: Observing Opportunities for Spiritual Practices in Churches in Rural Cornwall’ (pp. 54-74)
- Sam Sterland, Ruth Powell, Miriam Pepper, and Nicole Hancock, ‘Vitality in Protestant Congregations: A Large Scale Empirical Analysis of Underlying Factors across Four Countries’ (pp. 204-30) – based on the 2001 International Church Life Survey

The volume's webpage is at:

<https://brill.com/abstract/title/39174>

Ethnic minority voters in the 2015 general election

In the current issue of *Electoral Studies* (Vol. 57, February 2019, pp. 174-85), Nicole Martin uses the extremely large Understanding Society dataset to challenge the widely-reported assumption that the 2015 general election represented a breakthrough for the Conservative Party among ethnic minority voters. She concludes that, although the Conservatives increased their support among Hindus between 2010 and 2015, the Labour Party gained ethnic minority ground elsewhere, due to movement away from the Liberal Democrats since 2010. 'The Conservative Party remained just as unpopular among Muslims and Sikhs in 2015 as in 2010, but became more popular among Hindus (from 20% to 35%).' The text of 'Ethnic Minority Voters in the UK 2015 General Election: a Breakthrough for the Conservative Party?' together with a supplementary file of statistics can be accessed at:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S026137941730063X>

Emergence of the quantitative society – in the long eighteenth century

The growing authority accorded to numbers in British political life and public discourse during the century following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 is charted by William Deringer, *Calculated Values: Finance, Politics, and the Quantitative Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018, xxii + 413pp., ISBN: 9780674971875, hardback, £32.95). If the index is a guide, there are only incidental references to religious affairs, perhaps surprisingly so, given the critical interrelationship of religion and politics at the time. The book's webpage is at:

<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674971875>