

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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## OPINION POLLS

### **Crossing religious divides: multinational survey by Ipsos for the BBC**

In connection with the BBC Crossing Divides season, Ipsos conducted an online poll of adults aged under 65 in 27 countries between 26 November and 7 December 2018, including 1,490 in the UK (with boosts in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). One question was: ‘What proportion of your friends share the same religious faith or beliefs as you?’ Globally, 38% replied that almost all or over half were of the same religion, but the number was slightly lower (34%) in the UK as a whole, with a range from 33% in England to 44% in Northern Ireland (with Wales on 37% and Scotland on 39%). Turkey (67%) and Poland (56%) recorded the largest figures for the majority of friends drawn from the same religion, while Japan (10%) and South Korea (17%) had the smallest. Topline results are available at:

[https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-03/bbc\\_crossing\\_divides\\_2019\\_0.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-03/bbc_crossing_divides_2019_0.pdf)

### **Humanist weddings: Humanists UK’s new poll and analysis of Scottish divorce data**

Humanist marriage ceremonies have been legally recognized in Scotland since 2005, and they now surpass those conducted by the Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Church in Scotland combined. They are also legal in Northern Ireland and Jersey but, to date, not recognized in England and Wales. In March 2019, Humanists UK released two new sets of evidence to underpin their campaign for extending legalization to England and Wales.

First, the organization commissioned YouGov to survey an online sample of 2,038 adult Britons on 19-20 November 2018, 68% of whom in England and Wales supported legal recognition of humanist marriages in these home nations, an increase of 17% over a similar poll in 2013. There was a majority in favour among all the main religious groups, with a range (excepting self-reporting humanists on 97%) from 55% of non-Christians to 79% of religious nones. Opposition stood at 13% (including 18% of over-55s, retired persons, residents of Wales, and Roman Catholics and 23% of Anglicans), with the undecided on 19%.

Second, Humanists UK obtained, from a Freedom of Information request to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, statistics of divorces in Scotland in 2017-18 by duration and type of marriage. They were then compared with annual figures of the number of marriages by religion or belief, published by the National Records of Scotland. The comparison showed that Scottish couples who had a humanist marriage appeared to be, on average, three and a half times less likely to get divorced than all other couples and four times less likely to get divorced than couples who had civil weddings. The differential was attributed to the greater degree of planning which goes into humanist weddings, resulting in more personal and meaningful

ceremonies. The inferences drawn from the data have been disputed by spokespersons for the Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Church.

A press release from Humanists UK, embedding links to full data tables from the 2018 poll (and also those for 2013) and a briefing paper on the divorce statistics (with a methodological annex), can be found at:

<https://humanism.org.uk/2019/03/10/humanist-marriages-least-likely-to-end-in-divorce-official-statistics-reveal/>

### **Self-understanding of anti-Semitism: Deltapoll for *Jewish Chronicle***

Notwithstanding extensive coverage of anti-Semitism in the news and public discourse recently, 53% of 2,001 British adults interviewed online on 8-11 March 2019 had no real comprehension of what it is. Asked by Deltapoll on behalf of the *Jewish Chronicle* to express in their own words what they understood by anti-Semitism, 47% of respondents described it as discrimination against Jewish people, 13% gave other answers without mentioning Jewish people, and 40% admitted that they did not know. Conservative voters (63%), baby boomers (63%), and over-65s (71%) were most likely to give the correct answer, while under-25s (51%) and non-voters in the 2017 general election (64%) were most likely to say they did not know. A report on the survey appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* for 15 March 2019 (pp. 1, 10), and full data tables are available at:

<http://www.deltapoll.co.uk/polls/anti-semitism>

### **Jews, political parties, and anti-Semitism: Survation poll for Jewish Leadership Council**

A Survation poll for the Jewish Leadership Council, mainly conducted by telephone between 18 February and 15 March 2019 among a sample of 757 self-identifying Jews aged 18 and over, has reaffirmed the depth of Jewish concerns about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. Unprompted, 28% of respondents said that anti-Semitism was the single most important issue in determining how they would vote in an election; prompted, 82% answered that anti-Semitism would be very important in deciding which political party to support. More than three-fifths (62%) agreed that there are high levels of anti-Semitism among the Labour Party's members and elected representatives. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was deemed anti-Semitic by 87% of Jews, and 42% claimed they would seriously consider emigrating if he ever became Prime Minister. Full data tables are available at:

<https://www.survation.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Jewish-Leadership-Council-Poll-Tables.pdf>

### **YouGov@Cambridge tracker on Islam's perceived compatibility with British values**

A plurality (45%) of Britons continues to think that 'there is a fundamental clash between Islam and the values of British society', peaking at 55% of over-65s, 60% of Conservatives, and 64% of 'leave' voters in the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. The alternative proposition, that 'Islam is generally compatible with the values of British society', attracted 24% support, disproportionately from under-25s (41%). Just under one-third (30%) of the whole sample agreed with neither statement or expressed no opinion. For this latest

YouGov@Cambridge tracker, YouGov interviewed 1,791 adults aged 18 and over online on 12-13 February 2019, and the detailed data table is available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/yougov-cambridge/survey-results>

### **Islamic State: YouGov polling on the death of Shamima Begum's son**

Last month, BRIN reported on Britons' lack of sympathy for Shamima Begum, the London schoolgirl who had joined Islamic State in 2015 and married a Dutch jihadist but now wants to return to the UK. Stripped of her citizenship by the government, she was stranded in a Syrian refugee camp with her new-born son, who soon died. On 11 March 2019, YouGov asked 4,252 of its panellists whether the baby (who was a British citizen) ought to have been brought back to the UK. The majority, 55%, of respondents thought he should *not* have been, with feelings running especially high among over-65s (67%), 'leave' voters in the 2016 referendum on UK membership of the European Union (72%), and Conservatives (73%). Only 24% considered that the baby should have been repatriated and no more than 41% in any demographic sub-group, the under-25s being most favourable to his cause. One-fifth (21%) were undecided. Full results are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/4377a98d-43e8-11e9-b82b-0b6926013ed7>

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **European Jewish Demographic Unit established by Institute for Jewish Policy Research**

The London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) has announced the establishment of the European Jewish Demographic Unit, supported by the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe, and headed by JPR Senior Research Fellow Daniel Staetsky. 'The Unit will generate data to provide insights in several key areas, including elderly care, the development of Jewish schools and educational facilities, patterns of migration and intermarriage and assimilation. It plans to issue up-to-date Jewish population counts for every country in Europe on an annual basis, as well as specialist papers focusing on specific countries and major demographic issues, such as migration, fertility, mortality and intermarriage.'

## OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

### **Mode of solemnization of marriages in England and Wales in 2016**

More bad news for Churches and faith communities. The Office for National Statistics has revealed that, not only have marriage rates in England and Wales generally fallen since their peak in 1972, but that the proportion of couples having their marriages solemnized according to religious rites dipped below one-quarter for the first time in 2016. There were just 60,069 religious marriages in England and Wales that year, 4% fewer than in 2015 and 48% less than two decades ago. All but 61 of these were of opposite-sex couples, 99% of same-sex couples having civil ceremonies. Of the 60,008 opposite-sex religious marriages, the lion's share (74%) were conducted by the Church of England and Church in Wales and 11% by the Roman Catholic Church. Pre-marital cohabitation was almost as high among opposite-sex couples

opting for religious marriages (81%) as for civil ones (90%). A statistical bulletin and Excel worksheet of historical trend data can be found at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/marriagesinenglandandwales2016>

### **Report on diversity of candidates and elected officials in Great Britain**

Research Report 124 from the Equality and Human Rights Commission investigates the *Diversity of Candidates and Elected Officials in Great Britain*. It is written by Chrysa Lamprinakou, Laura Morales, Virginia Ros, Rosie Campbell, Maria Sobolewska, and Stuart Wilks-Heeg. The report synthesizes the available evidence for each of six protected equality characteristics, mostly generated by surveys conducted by academics. In respect of religion or belief, data are available for: (a) 2017 UK Parliamentary candidates (response rate 19%) and elected MPs (response rate 5%); (b) 2016 Scottish Parliamentary candidates and elected MSPs (response rate 21%); (c) 2017 Welsh local government candidates (response rate 23%) and elected councillors (response rate 26%); and (d) 2017 Scottish local government candidates (response rate 17%) and elected councillors (response rate 33%). Besides the difficulties posed by the relatively disappointing response rates (sinking to none of the 631 Conservative UK Parliamentary candidates in 2017), the questions asked about religious affiliation were, with the exception of Welsh local government candidates and councillors, not directly comparable with the wording of the relevant question in the 2011 population census. This is still interesting research, but definitely a work in progress. The report can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/diversity-candidates-and-elected-officials-great-britain>

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

### **The Bible and digital millennials: new survey-based research from CODEC**

A large gap in our knowledge of how contemporary Britons engage with the Bible, including on social media, has been plugged by a new book written by members of the CODEC Research Centre for Digital Theology at Durham University: David Ford, Joshua Mann, and Peter Phillips, *The Bible and Digital Millennials* (London: Routledge, 2019, xi + 126pp., ISBN: 978-1-138-35068-7, £45, hardback). In chapters 1-3, data from a robust national survey of millennials (1,943 UK adults aged 18-35 who owned at least one digital device and made use of social media weekly, interviewed online by ComRes in November 2016) are clearly presented, in non-technical language and figures, and dispassionately analysed. The principal conclusion is that these millennials exhibited a ‘qualified indifference’ towards the Bible. Among secondary findings: non-Christians were relatively positive about the Bible; women were not more Bible-orientated than men; and traditional Bible formats were more popular than digital ones. Meaningful comparisons are drawn with an opportunity sample of 873 predominantly evangelical UK churchgoers (chapter 4) and with recent studies among the US population (chapter 5). The work will be essential (and challenging) reading for empirical theologians and church leaders seeking insights into the future reception of the Bible in a digital world. The book’s webpage can be found at:

<https://www.routledge.com/The-Bible-and-Digital-Millennials-1st-Edition/Ford-Mann-Phillips/p/book/9781138350687>

### **Religion and Brexit: evidence from the 2016 British Election Study Referendum Panel**

Further evidence of the resilience of the religious variable in shaping political attitudes and behaviour is provided in an ‘early view’ article for *Journal of Common Market Studies* in 2019: Ekaterina Kolpinskaya and Stuart Fox, ‘Praying on Brexit? Unpicking the Effect of Religion on Support for European Union Integration and Membership’. Using data from Waves 7-9 of the 2016 British Election Study Referendum Panel, the authors demonstrate that self-reported religious affiliation helped influence public support for, and opposition to, European Union (EU) membership, both in terms of (a) utilitarian assessments of the costs/benefits of EU membership and evaluation of the EU’s performance in delivering policy goals, and (b) affective attachment to the EU. Among the most Eurosceptic groups were adherents of the Church of England (Anglicans) and Church of Scotland (Presbyterians), denominations which have historically strong connections to the state and national identity. Contrary to received wisdom, Catholics were not found to be especially Europhile, once country of birth was accounted for. The article is freely available on an open access basis at:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcms.12836>

### **Gender differences in religion and spirituality among technical and health professionals**

Oliver Robinson, Karina Hanson, Guy Hayward, and David Lorimer have investigated ‘Age and Cultural Gender Equality as Moderators of the Gender Difference in the Importance of Religion and Spirituality: Comparing the United Kingdom, France, and Germany’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 58, No. 1, March 2019, pp. 301-8. Across the three nations, 3,020 technical and health professionals (including 1,000 in the UK) were recruited via ‘a major multinational survey organization’, and completed an online questionnaire about their religious and spiritual beliefs, practices, and experiences. This paper concerns solely a measure of the self-reported importance of religion or spirituality (IoRS) in everyday life, analysed by gender and age group within country. Of the three nations, the UK showed the highest gender difference in IoRS scores, which the authors relate to its lowest rank on gender equality (as assessed by the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report), thus exemplifying (they argue) the socialization theory of religion and gender. Moreover, in the UK, all three age bands exhibited significant gender differences in scores. The article is currently freely available at:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14685906/current>

### **Muslim perceptions of discrimination in Western Europe: revisiting 2006 Pew data**

Hajar Yazdiha revisits a rather old (April-May 2006) Pew Global Attitudes Project dataset of 1,618 Muslims in Britain, France, Germany, and Spain in ‘Exclusion through Acculturation? Comparing First- and Second-Generation European Muslims’ Perceptions of Discrimination across Four National Contexts’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5, 2019, pp. 782-800. Experiences of discrimination were found to be more widespread among Muslims in Britain and France than in Germany and Spain. Second-generation Muslims were found to be more likely to perceive societal hostility than Muslim immigrants in more inclusive (defined by five incorporation policies) countries such as Britain. The author deploys social psychology, migration, and political sociology perspectives to make sense of this pattern. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01419870.2018.1444186>

## NEW DATASET

### **UK Data Service, SN 8450: British Social Attitudes Survey, 2017**

The British Social Attitudes Survey is undertaken annually by NatCen Social Research on behalf of a consortium of government departments and charitable funders. Fieldwork in 2017 was conducted between July and November by means of face-to-face interviews with 3,988 Britons aged 18 and over living in private households (being a response rate of 46%). They were asked about their religious affiliation (current and by upbringing) and attendance at religious services. Two of the four sub-samples were additionally questioned, via a self-completion module, about their attitudes to the provision of public services by religious organizations and frequency of contact with their religious community other than through a family member. A catalogue description of the dataset can be found at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8450>

## PEOPLE NEWS

### **Revd Professor David Alfred Martin, FBA (1929-2019)**

David Martin, a leading light of British sociology of religion, and one of its most prolific authors, since the mid-1960s, died on 8 March 2019. Three subjects dominated his research and writing during this half-century: secularization, the global expansion of Pentecostalism, and the relationship between religion and violence. Although never a heavy user of statistics, his work was always empirically grounded, exemplified by *A Sociology of English Religion* (1967), which remains a classic text, for historians and social scientists alike, and a counterpoise to Bryan Wilson's *Religion in Secular Society* (1966). Among Martin's books are two with an autobiographical focus, and which illuminate his personal and academic development: *The Education of David Martin: The Making of an Unlikely Sociologist* (2013) and *Secularisation, Pentecostalism, and Violence: Receptions, Rediscoveries, and Rebuttals in the Sociology of Religion* (2017). A necessarily preliminary appraisal of his contribution to the discipline can be found in the collection of essays on *David Martin and the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Hans Joas (2018). There is also an appreciation by Grace Davie at:

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2019/03/professor-david-martin-1929-2019/>

There was an obituary by Robin Gill in the *Church Times* for 15 March 2019 (p. 31) at:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/15-march/gazette/obituaries/obituary-the-revd-professor-david-martin>