

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 45 – June 2019

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OPINION POLLS

Conservative Party, Muslims, and Islamophobia: the views of Party members

Although allegations of Islamophobia against the Conservative Party have yet to reach the same intensity as charges of anti-Semitism levelled against the Labour Party, they are slowly moving up the political agenda. At present, however, Conservative Party members do not appear to regard this as a serious issue, according to an online survey by YouGov of 864 Party members undertaken on behalf of Hope Not Hate on 14-18 June 2019. More than three-quarters (79%) of the sample did not think there was a problem of Islamophobia or racism towards Muslims in the Conservative Party, while 76% claimed that the Party was already doing all it reasonably could to address any such tendencies in the Party. At the same time, members exhibited some personal suspicions or negativity towards Muslims: 40% wanted to see the UK take in fewer Muslim migrants than currently (compared with 5% saying the same about Christian and Jewish migrants); 39% agreed that Islamist terrorists reflected a widespread hostility to Britain among the Muslim community; 43% preferred not to have a Muslim prime minister of the UK (at a time when Sajid Javid, the Home Secretary and a Muslim, was still a contender for leadership of the Conservative Party and, thus, to become prime minister); 67% were convinced there are areas of Britain which operate under Sharia law; and 45% that there are areas which non-Muslims are not able to enter. Full data tables are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/5261yd2zof/HnHResults_190618_ConMembers_web.pdf

Terrorism in London: YouGov poll for the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

Religious fundamentalism is the biggest single cause of an individual's involvement in carrying out or promoting terrorism, according to an online survey by YouGov among 1,090 London adults on 2-5 October 2018 (the results of which have only just been released). The proportion rose to 71% among Conservative voters at the 2017 general election and with Londoners aged 50 and over. This preoccupation with terrorism's supposedly religious roots also helps to explain why faith groups were identified as the fourth most important agency with responsibility for preventing the spread of extremism, hate, and terrorism in the capital, their rating of 54% being marginally ahead even of the Mayor of London's role in this regard. Multiple answers were permitted for both questions. Full data tables are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/5h3fiq3l43/MOPACResults_181005_Extremism_London_W.pdf

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Allchurches Trust survey of children's and young people's ministry in UK and Ireland

The Allchurches Trust surveyed more than 800 churches in the UK and Ireland in April 2019, in order to gain insight into their work with children (aged 0-10) and young people (aged 11-18) and in preparation for the launch of the Trust's Growing Lives grants programme. Two-thirds (67%) of churches reported that they had five or fewer young people in their worshipping community (with 26% having none) while 45% had five or fewer children (and 15% none). Only 58% of places of worship offered any activities for young people, and 41% acknowledged that their provision in this area was inadequate. Rather more, 82%, put on activities for children, albeit just 58% rated this ministry as good or excellent. Overall, the biggest barrier that churches faced in organizing high-quality activities for children and young people was the lack of leaders to run them (75%), coupled with a lack of young people (59%) and children (52%) attending church. However, for churches in the most disadvantaged communities, the biggest challenge was lack of funding (73% against 48% for all places of worship). A full report on the survey has not been published, but there is a press release from the Trust at:

<https://www.allchurches.co.uk/news/growing-lives-helping-churches-connect-young-people>

Church of England's digital outreach: LentPilgrim and EasterPilgrim reflections, 2019

The Church of England's 2019 series of print and digital Lent and Easter reflections, respectively entitled LentPilgrim (focusing on the Beatitudes) and EasterPilgrim (focusing on the Lord's Prayer), had an overall reach of 6.9 million, through the Church's national social media, a dedicated app, email, and Alexa. More than 40,000 copies of the accompanying booklets were sold, while a survey sent to the 26,000 subscribers to LentPilgrim emails elicited an appreciative response. The Church's press release is at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/stories-and-features/lent-and-easter-reflections-reach-nearly-7-million>

Three years' worth of Church of England national safeguarding data

The Church of England has published *Diocesan Self-Assessment Key Safeguarding Data, 2015-2017*, a nine-page summary compiled from diocesan returns sent to the Church's National Safeguarding Team (which was formed in 2015). There were 3,287 safeguarding concerns or allegations relating to children, young people, and vulnerable adults notified to the dioceses in 2017, 17% more than in 2016 and 50% more than in 2015. However, the increase between 2016 and 2017 was concentrated among adults, with a decline in concerns or allegations relating to children. More than two-fifths (42%) of the cases in 2017 related to sexual abuse but the figure rose to 53% for those involving children. Of all concerns or allegations in 2017, 28% were reported to statutory authorities. The document is available at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/safeguarding-news-statements/safeguarding-data-report-2015-17>

British Sikh Report, 2019

The team of young Sikh professionals behind the *British Sikh Report* has published the findings of its seventh annual survey. This was completed, primarily online, early in 2019 by 2,487 self-identifying Sikhs aged 16 and over and living in the UK. The sample was self-selecting, recruited by snowballing techniques and social media, and may not be fully representative of the Sikh community in the UK. In particular, there was under-representation of older age groups, relative to the 2011 population census. The questionnaire covered a wide range of demographics; identity, ethnicity, and religious observance; and attitudes to a range of topical issues, this year comprising: 2019 Sikh anniversaries, adoption and fostering, disabilities and caring, drugs and alcohol consumption, mental health and suicide, and organ donation. The 43-page report is available at:

<http://www.britishsikhreport.org/british-sikh-report-2019/>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Gift Aid payments made to charitable sectors, 2014/15 to 2018/19

The Government has published experimental statistics of UK Gift Aid payments made to the various charitable sectors, including religion, in England and Wales for the past five financial years. The proportional share for charities reporting to be in the religion sector rose slightly, from 11.7% in 2014/15 (equivalent to £140 million) to 11.9% in 2018/19 (£160 million). The table is at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811751/Table_9.pdf

Religious profession of UK-domiciled university students in England

The Office for Students has published a brief note on the diversity of UK-domiciled entrants to English higher education institutions, including their religious affiliation. In 2017/18, no religion was the most common self-identification of undergraduate entrants (44.5%), followed by Christianity (29.1%). Among postgraduate entrants for the same year, 39.1% professed no religion and 30.4% Christianity. The note is available at:

<https://officeforstudents.org.uk/media/ade0e0e5-5f2a-4df8-a5ed-f4c261b0d984/ed-summary-document-experimental-may-2019.pdf>

Religious affiliation of Scottish Government workforce, March 2019

As a facet of its diversity monitoring, the Scottish Government has published its latest return of the religious affiliation of its core (directly employed) staff, a series which stretches back to December 2015. During the quarter to the end of March 2019, 40.6% of the 6,689 Scottish Government staff professed no religion, 28.3% identified with some faith (13.4% Church of Scotland, 7.8% Roman Catholic, 5.3% other Christian, and 1.8% non-Christian), with the religion of the remaining 31.2% unrecorded (4.5% prefer not to say and 26.7% unknown). The series may be found in table 9 of *Scottish Government Workforce Information Tables and Charts, Q1 2019* at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/workforce-information/>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Understanding Unbelief Programme: interim findings about atheists and agnostics

The Understanding Unbelief Programme, managed by the University of Kent and funded by the John Templeton Foundation during 2017-20, has published a 22-page report containing initial results from its core research project: Stephen Bullivant, Miguel Farias, Jonathan Lanman, and Lois Lee, *Understanding Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics around the World – Interim Findings from 2019 Research in Brazil, China, Denmark, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States*. In each of these countries, online interviews were conducted with two samples: 900 unbelievers (atheists or agnostics), recruited to match pre-set quotas of unbelievers by sex, age, and region (as determined from replies to belief in God questions in the 2008 International Social Survey Programme and the 2010-14 World Values Surveys); and a national cross-section, by sex, age, and region, of 200 adults, for the purposes of comparison. Fieldwork was conducted via the Qualtrics Panels service in April-May 2019. In the UK, 81% of unbelievers identified as having no religion, but 15% still regarded themselves as Christians (as which 52% were brought up, against 42% who had been raised as religious nones). Given a choice of 12 different labels to describe their unbelief, a wide variety of answers was given, with ‘non-religious’ the commonest self-descriptor for UK agnostics (27%) and atheists (35%) alike. The remaining chapters in this short report cover unbelief in relation to the supernatural, science, worldviews, and personal values. The document can be downloaded from:

<https://research.kent.ac.uk/understandingunbelief/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2019/05/UUReportRome.pdf>

ESRC research grant to open up UK Gallup opinion poll data for 1945-91

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has awarded a £584,500 three-year (April 2019-March 2022) grant to the University of Southampton to enhance access to the post-war data generated by Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Ltd., founded in 1937 as the British Institute of Public Opinion. The organization’s extant wartime datasets have been available for many years, including through the UK Data Service (UKDS), but very few post-war datasets have found their way to UKDS. Among other outputs, this new project, led by Will Jennings, will digitize the codebooks for all surveys conducted by Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Ltd between 1945 and 1991 and convert 700 individual surveys from this period from column binary data to current software and non-proprietary formats. This is potentially good news for followers of BRIN since, largely thanks to its long-time staffer Gordon Heald, Gallup in Britain was very active in conducting investigations into religion and related subjects. Preliminary information about the project is available at:

<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FS000380%2F1>

For a flavour of the religious work of Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Ltd, go to the compendium of data that BRIN collated, in 2015, from published and unpublished sources at:

<http://www.brin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Religion-in-Great-Britain-1939-99-A-Compendium-of-Gallup-Poll-Data.pdf>

Parental right of withdrawal of children from religious education in English schools

The right of parents to withdraw their children from religious education (RE) in state schools was originally conceived as a protection for the interests of religious minorities at a time when religious instruction was predominantly of a Christian confessional nature. But 71% of the 450 school leaders and RE co-ordinators in England who replied to a recent mass email survey thought this right of withdrawal is no longer needed in contemporary multicultural society. Although 71% had experienced a request for full withdrawal from RE and 41% a request for selective withdrawal, currently the right appears to be little exercised, with 62% reporting no children withdrawn from RE in school and 94% fewer than four children. The findings of the survey are analysed by David Lundie and Cathal O'Siochru in their article in the online early edition of *British Journal of Religious Education*. 'The Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education in England: School Leaders' Beliefs, Experiences, and Understandings of Policy and Practice' is freely available at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01416200.2019.1628706>

NEW DATASETS

UK Data Service, SN 8461: Annual Population Survey, January-December 2018

The Annual Population Survey is compiled by the Office for National Statistics in partnership with the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. It incorporates a sub-set of key variables from the several Labour Force Surveys and is designed to be sufficiently robust and large-scale to produce reliable estimates at local authority level. The January-December 2018 dataset is based on 284,104 face-to-face and telephone interviews with adults and young persons living away from the parental home. A question on religious affiliation is included: 'what is your religion?' in Britain and 'what is your religious denomination?' in Northern Ireland. A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8461>

UK Data Service, SN 8464: Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2017-2018

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (formerly the British Crime Survey) is a face-to-face victimization survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a range of crimes during the 12 months prior to interview as well as about their attitudes to different crime-related issues. The series began in 1982. The 2017-18 survey was conducted by Kantar Public (previously known as TNS BMRB) for the Home Office, Ministry of Justice, and Office for National Statistics and achieved 34,715 interviews with adults. In addition to investigating the incidence of religiously-motivated hate crime, respondents were asked to give their religious affiliation, which can obviously function as a background variable for analysing replies to any other part of the questionnaire. A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8464>

UK Data Service, SN 8466: Wellcome Global Monitor, 2018

The Wellcome Global Monitor is the largest survey of how people worldwide think and feel about key science, technology, and health challenges, including such critical topics as public trust in scientists, attitudes towards vaccines, and how inclusive or exclusive individuals believe the benefits of science to be. The study was commissioned by the Wellcome Trust and undertaken by Gallup Inc. with 149,000 persons in 144 countries as a module of the Gallup World Poll. UK fieldwork entailed landline or mobile telephone interviews with 1,000 adults aged 15 and over between 23 April and 22 May 2018. All respondents were asked whether they identified with a specific religion and, if so, whether science had ever disagreed with the teachings of their religion. Data can be freely downloaded from the UKDS website, without any requirement for registration, under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8466>

The Wellcome Trust also has a dedicated website devoted to the methodology and results of the Wellcome Global Monitor, including topline and cross-tabulations for all questions in all countries, at:

<https://wellcome.ac.uk/what-we-do/our-work/wellcome-global-monitor>