

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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OPINION POLLS

Climate change: the views of active Christians and the general public

On behalf of Christian Aid, ComRes interviewed 2,072 UK adults online between 19 and 21 July 2019 on their attitudes to climate change. Alongside the breaks by standard demographics, ComRes inserted a column for the views of ‘active Christians’, who constituted around 10% of the entire sample. They emerged as slightly more engaged with the topic than the population as a whole: 54% of active Christians agreed that ‘I care more about climate change than Brexit’ (compared with 49% of all adults); 65% agreed that ‘the UK Government is not doing enough to prioritise climate change’ (against 61%); 72% agreed that ‘climate change should be a top priority for the next Prime Minister’ (66%); 78% disagreed that ‘I do not think climate change is an issue’ (77%); and 73% agreed that ‘in the long term, climate change will be more important than Brexit’ (71%). Data tables are at:

<https://www.comresglobal.com/polls/christian-aid-climate-change-poll/>

Anti-Semitism and the Labour Party: the views of the general public

Allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party have remained in the spotlight during the summer, notwithstanding the diversions of Brexit and the Conservative Party leadership race. In the latest test of public opinion, by YouGov for Hope Not Hate among an online sample of 1,675 adult Britons on 11-12 July 2019: 49% of respondents agreed that the Labour Party should be doing more to tackle anti-Semitism in its midst (just 11% saying it was already doing all it reasonably could); 42% considered that anti-Semitism was a genuine and serious issue in the Labour Party and only 16% thought it was being exaggerated in order to undermine the party’s leader, Jeremy Corbyn; and 33% judged the Labour Party as anti-Semitic (and 21% not). Full breaks by demographics are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/rpjpsgvkqu/HopeNotHate_190712_Anti-Semitism_w.pdf

Anti-Semitism and the Labour Party: the views of party members

Needless to say, members of the Labour Party had a somewhat different take on the controversy, and this was confirmed by an online survey of 1,114 of them undertaken by YouGov for *The Times* on 17-19 July 2019. In fact, 73% of these members assessed that the issue had been deliberately exaggerated or hyped up in order to damage the Labour Party and Corbyn. Only 24% acknowledged that anti-Semitism was a serious and genuine problem that the party leadership needed to take urgent action to address. At the same time, 55% accepted that the Labour Party had responded badly to claims of anti-Semitism and 48% said the same about Corbyn (albeit 84% did not believe that he personally was anti-Semitic). Full data tables are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/xi390k7ca3/TheTimes_190719_LabourMemberResults_ww.pdf

Islamophobia and the Conservative Party: the views of party members towards Islam

The Conservative Party has also been having its own difficulties with religious prejudice, standing accused of Islamophobia by a section of the Muslim community (and others). A little light was shone on the matter by a YouGov poll for Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme, conducted online among a sample of 892 Conservative Party members on 11-14 June 2019. It focused on their attitudes to current socio-political issues, including the compatibility of Islam with the British way of life. In reply, 56% of the party's membership judged that Islam was generally a threat to the British way of life, just 22% regarding it as compatible, and 19% agreeing with neither statement. Full data tables are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/7sjh8k3ibc/ITNResults_190614_ConMembers.pdf

Religion and mental health issues

A Populus poll for the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, undertaken online on 12-13 June 2019 among a sample of 2,093 UK adults, included breaks by religious affiliation for the two key questions on personal experience of a mental health problem and the need for help from a friend or family member for aspects of money management. Reported experience of a mental health problem was higher among religious nones (43%) and non-Christians (37%) than for Christians (33%), possibly a function of the younger age profile of the former two groups. The data can be found in tables 59-60 of the survey documentation at:

<https://www.populus.co.uk/polls/>

Religion and dietary preferences

An ORB International poll on environmental and rural issues, commissioned by the Countryside Alliance and conducted online on 17-23 June 2019 among a sample of 4,323 UK adults, included breaks by religious affiliation for 'lifestyle' (i.e. diet – the options being vegan, semi-vegan, vegetarian, flexitarian, pescatarian, meat eater, and other). Meat-eating was more widespread among Christians (86%) than among religious nones (79%) or non-Christians (73%), a margin probably explicable in terms of age and culture. The data can be found in table 51 of the documentation at:

<https://www.orb-international.com/2019/07/16/orb-countryside-alliance-poll-unpacking-the-environment/>

The world's most admired people: results of YouGov's latest annual survey

YouGov has published the results of its latest (2019) annual survey of the world's most admired living public figures. This year, the study expanded to 41 countries, with an average 1,000 individuals interviewed online in each between March and June. Given a list of pre-nominated admired people, respondents were asked two questions: 'who do you truly admire?' (where multiple selections could be made) and 'who do you most admire?' (where only one name could be chosen). The two sets of numbers were then combined into a percentage share of

admiration, separate scales being produced for the most admired men and women. In the UK, as in previous years, two international religious leaders featured in the list of most admired men, the Dalai Lama in sixth place (with an admiration score of 5.6%) and Pope Francis in tenth position (on 2.3%). In the world rankings, they came eighth and fifteenth, respectively, with percentage shares of admiration of 4.2 and 2.4. David Attenborough headed the UK list of admired men, with an admiration score of 25.8%. There were no religious figures in the UK table of admired women. Further information can be found in the blog at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2019/07/18/yougov-worlds-most-admired-2019>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Anti-Semitic incidents recorded by Community Security Trust, January-June 2019

The Community Security Trust has published a report on anti-Semitic incidents in the UK between January and June 2019. The number of recorded incidents during these six months was 892, which is 10% more than in the first half of 2018 and the highest total ever for any January-June period. The rise in incidents is attributed in part to greater reporting of online expressions of anti-Semitism, of which there were 323 in this half-year, not far short of the 384 online incidents for the whole of 2018. The 16-page report is available for download at:

https://cst.org.uk/data/file/3/d/IR_Jan-Jun_2019.1564410415.pdf

Media reporting of Islam and Muslims: launch of new monitoring centre

The Centre for Media Monitoring, a project of the Muslim Council of Britain that was launched in Parliament on 9 July 2019, has published its first quarterly review of the *State of Media Reporting on Islam and Muslims*. It is written by Faisal Hanif and covers the period October-December 2018. All main British media outlets are monitored, including 31 online media platforms and five broadcasters, using 50 keywords and their plural forms. Each article and broadcast clip is assessed against five metrics and rated according to its perceived degree of bias. During this initial quarter, 10,931 articles and clips were analysed, 59% of which were judged to associate Muslims with negative behaviours. The report can be downloaded at:

<https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CfMM-Quarterly-Report-Oct-Dec-2018.pdf>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Religious backgrounds of Civil Service staff

The Cabinet Office has published a statistical profile of the Civil Service as at 31 March 2019. Total headcount was 445,500. Reporting rates for religion and belief were, at 55%, lower than for other personal characteristics. The majority of staff providing information on this topic self-identified as Christian (51%), with 38% having no religion and 4% being Muslims. Further details are given in the bulletin and tables at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2019>

Religious backgrounds of UK armed forces

The Ministry of Defence has published biannual diversity statistics of UK armed forces as at 1 April 2019. Among regular forces, 68% professed Christianity, 3% some other religion, and 29% no religion. When the current cycle of tri-service (Army, Navy, Air Force) reporting began in 2007, the proportion of Christians had been 89% and of religious nones 9%. A similar trend is evident for the reserves. A report and tables on the latest statistics are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-2019>

Number of faith schools and their pupils in England: results of 2019 annual census

The Department for Education has published the results of the latest (January 2019) annual census of schools, pupils, and their characteristics in England. This includes details of the number of primary and secondary schools with a religious character, and of pupils being educated at them, differentiated by the religious denomination or grouping of the school. In 2019, 28% of primary and 18% of secondary pupils attend what are now usually designated as faith schools. Twenty years previously, the proportion at primary schools was exactly the same but the secondary school figure was somewhat higher, at 20%. Although there has been some diversification of religious providers during this period, the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church remain dominant. The 2019 data are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019>

Religious hate crime in Scotland, 2018-19

The Scottish Government has published details of hate crime in Scotland in 2018-19. There were 529 charges with a religious aggravation in that year, a fall of 18% compared to 2017-18 and the lowest number since 2004-05, shortly after the relevant legislation was introduced. In 2018-19, court proceedings were commenced in respect of 86% of religious charges. For further information, see:

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/images/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202018-19%20PDF.pdf>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

British Social Attitudes Survey and International Social Survey Programme, 2018

Although the underlying dataset has not yet been released for secondary analysis, the latest annual report from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey has recently been published: John Curtice, Elizabeth Clery, Jane Perry, Miranda Phillips, and Nilufer Rahim eds., *British Social Attitudes, 36, 2019 Edition* (London: National Centre for Social Research, 2019, 240p., ISBN: 978-1-5272-4448-1, ebook, free). Its six thematic chapters summarize key findings from the 2018 BSA Survey, which was undertaken between July and November by means of face-to-face interviews with 3,879 adults aged 18 and over living in private households in Great Britain, representing a 42% response rate. Some questions were put to the whole sample, but others were asked only of one or more of four equally sized sub-samples (A, B, C, and D). In addition

to the personal interview, a self-completion questionnaire was also returned by approximately four-fifths of each of the sub-samples. The self-completion questionnaire for sub-samples A and B contained the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) Religion IV module, the three previous modules having been fielded in 1991, 1998, and 2008. The Religion IV module was completed by around two-fifths (or 1,552) of the entire British sample.

Religious data feature in several of the chapters of the report (those on science and relationships/gender identity are worth a look from this perspective), but BRIN readers will naturally be primarily interested in the chapter devoted to religion (pp. 17-44), which is written by David Voas and Steve Bruce. This draws upon the relatively few religion questions put to the whole BSA sample (notably concerning religious affiliation and attendance at religious services) and the more plentiful ISSP Religion IV questions answered by the A and B sub-samples, making comparisons with previous BSA/ISSP surveys. The authors reveal ‘a dramatic decline in identification with Christian denominations, particularly the Church of England; a substantial increase in atheism and in self-description as “very” or “extremely” non-religious; and very low confidence in religious organizations, but tolerance of religious difference.’ Their commitment to a generational explanation of secularization is reaffirmed, and they also emphasize how secularization is consolidating as the non-religious ‘become more strident (or at least open) in their non-belief’. The chapter on religion can be downloaded at:

<http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-36/key-findings.aspx>

Science versus religion: meta-analysis of ten years of data on public attitudes in the UK

In *‘Science and Religion’: The Perils of Misperception* (London: Theos, 2019, 114pp., including 46 figures, ISBN: 978-0-9956543-8-9, paperback, £5 plus £1.50 p&p), Nick Spencer offers an invaluable digest of, and commentary on, 18 studies of public opinion in the UK, undertaken between 2009 (when Theos broke new ground with its Rescuing Darwin survey from ComRes) and 2018, that have touched on the relationship between science and religion. The book has been written to coincide with Spencer’s recent three-part BBC Radio 4 documentary *The Secret History of Science and Religion*. Besides an introduction and conclusion, there are substantive chapters on: science, religion, the Bible, God, and faith; evolution and religion; and science and scientific progress. The author’s main point is that, although there are ‘pockets of antagonism’ between science and religion in the UK, the heart of any perceived tension is less about God, the age of the earth, or miracles than about the status and nature of human beings and the implications for scientific progress and social authority. A fair number of the studies reviewed have been covered by BRIN as news stories over the years, but a few have not, including the large-scale (n = 6,020) YouGov poll on attitudes to evolution commissioned by Amy Unsworth in 2014, which is partially reported in her article with David Voas in the January 2018 issue of *Public Understanding of Science* (Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 76-93). One significant piece of research into science and religion that might have been highlighted by Spencer is Ben Clements, *Surveying Christian Beliefs and Religious Debates in Post-War Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 81-96; this is especially rich on the correlates of the British public’s relative trust in science and religious faith. *‘Science and Religion’* can be freely downloaded from:

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2019/06/18/science-and-religion-the-perils-of-misperception>

NEW DATASETS

GESIS Data Archive for the Social Sciences, Cologne, ZA 7500: European Values Study, 2017 Integrated Dataset

This second pre-release of wave 5 of the European Values Study (EVS), for 2017, includes the data for Great Britain, where fieldwork was undertaken by NatCen Social Research between 12 February and 16 July 2018 through face-to-face interviews with 1,788 adults aged 18 and over. The religion-related questions were largely as in earlier waves of EVS, although a few appear to have been dropped in order to make way for new ones. The EVS announcement about the second pre-release, which currently extends to thirty countries, can be found at:

<https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/methodology-data-documentation/survey-2017/pre-release-evs-2017/>

On behalf of BRIN, Ben Clements has kindly taken a preliminary look at the British results for wave 5 (omitting ‘don’t knows’), comparing them with those from the first wave in 1981 (as tabulated below). All the indicators exhibit decline, often substantial.

	1981 (%)	2017 (%)
Belonging		
Belongs to a religious denomination	91	38
Is a religious person	59	37
Behaving		
Member of a religious organization	22	14
Attends religious services once a month or more	22	17
Believing		
Believes in God	83	48
Believes in hell	29	24
Believes in heaven	64	36
Believes in life after death	56	42
There is a personal God	32	23
How important is God in your life? (1-10 scale)	5.7	4.4
Religious institutions		
Confidence in the Church: a great deal or quite a lot	49	32

UK Data Service, SN 8478: Community Life Survey, 2017-2018

This is the sixth annual wave of the Community Life Survey (CLS), initiated by the Cabinet Office in 2012-13 to carry forward some of the questions in the discontinued Citizenship Survey; responsibility for the CLS currently rests with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport. Fieldwork for this wave was undertaken by Kantar Public (formerly TNS BMRB) between 9 August 2017 and 31 March 2018, online interviews or postal questionnaires being completed by 10,217 adults aged 16 and over in England (being a response rate of 19%). Besides demographics, the interview schedule explored identity and social networks, community, civic engagement, volunteering, social action, and subjective wellbeing. More specifically, respondents were asked about their religion and whether they practised it, the proportion of their friends drawn from the same religious group, their participation in and volunteering for religious groups, and their charitable giving to religious causes. A catalogue description of the dataset is at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8478>