

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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## OPINION POLLS

### **Spring 2019 Eurobarometer: what value do we place on religion?**

Standard Eurobarometer Wave 91.5 included 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 Kantar UK via face-to-face interviews with 1,032 adults aged 15 and over between 7 and 18 June 2019. The survey was also undertaken in the 27 other member states of the EU, five candidate countries, and the Turkish Cypriot community. In the 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 5% of UK respondents selected religion, the EU28 average being 6%. This represented no change since the Autumn 2018 Eurobarometer poll. Topline results can be found on pp. T132-7 of the annex at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD>

### **School assemblies: should they include acts of religious worship?**

Britons think religious worship is the least appropriate activity for school assemblies, ranking it last of thirteen possible topics or activities, according to an opinion poll undertaken by YouGov for Humanists UK, for which 1,613 adults were interviewed online on 5-6 August 2019. Just 28% of the whole sample considered acts of religious worship appropriate for inclusion in school assemblies, and no more than 29% of parents of school-aged children; one-half of each group said they would not be appropriate. The proportion in favour of including acts of worship was highest among self-identified Christians (46%) and lowest for religious nones (16%). Respondents were told by YouGov that state schools in England and Wales are legally required to hold an assembly each day but not that it should incorporate an act of religious worship of a broadly Christian character. The topicality of the issue arises from a legal challenge being mounted in the High Court by Lee and Lizanne Harris against their children's school assemblies. For a press release, including a link to the full data, see:

<https://humanism.org.uk/2019/08/09/parents-say-religious-worship-is-least-appropriate-activity-for-school-assemblies-new-poll-reveals/>

The data tables can also be accessed via the YouGov website at:

[https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/avskc5j50e/HumanistsUK\\_Results\\_190806\\_w.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/avskc5j50e/HumanistsUK_Results_190806_w.pdf)

### **Religion in schools: views and experiences of teachers**

Meanwhile, Teacher Tapp, a self-selecting (and thus potentially unrepresentative) opinion panel for teachers working in English schools, whether state or private, has posted the results of a series of app-based surveys in late July 2019 of teacher attitudes to collective worship, religious education, and faith schools. Each three-question daily survey attracted just under 4,000 teacher responses. With regard to the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship in schools, non-compliance was greatest in schools with no religious character; 43% of primaries and 87% of secondaries in this category reported they never held such a daily act. On the allegiance of teachers, although 65% had been raised in a religious household, 61% currently considered themselves to belong to no religion. Even 57% of respondents who taught some religious education classes professed no religion, with just 25% regularly attending religious services. Full results can be accessed via the blogs at:

<https://teachertapp.co.uk/teachers-are-losing-their-religion-how-religious-are-teachers/>

<https://teachertapp.co.uk/teachers-are-losing-their-religion-part-two/>

### **Support for vulnerable children overseas correlated with frequency of churchgoing**

ComRes has just released the results of year-old polling for Home for Good, undertaken among an online sample of 6,120 British adults between 17 and 23 August 2018. Respondents were asked in which of six possible ways they supported vulnerable children overseas. The results were broken down by frequency of churchgoing, as well as the usual spread of demographics, yielding a sub-sample of 563 regular (monthly or more) churchgoers. On each of the six measures, regular churchgoers were more disposed than the population as a whole to support vulnerable children overseas. However, the proportion of regular churchgoers claiming to be actively involved in any particular form of support never exceeded 28% (in respect of donating or sending items to charities that run family- or community-based projects). Data tables are available at:

<https://www.comresglobal.com/polls/home-for-good-vulnerable-children-survey/>

### **Political and diplomatic fallout from the defeat of Islamic State's caliphate**

British and foreign governments are continuing to wrestle with the consequences of the overthrow of the so-called Islamic State caliphate in the Middle East, and a couple of aspects of the problem caught YouGov's polling attention during the course of the month.

One was the generic issue of whether children born in warzones to Britons who had left to fight for Islamic State (IS) should be brought to the UK or not. A majority (55%) of YouGov's 3,109 panellists interviewed online on 15 August 2019 was opposed to these children being brought to the UK, the proportion peaking at 67% of over-65s and 74% of Conservative voters. One-fifth (21%) favoured 'repatriation' of the children, with 24% undecided. Full data are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/78cdb4b7-bf40-11e9-a1e5-8b75adf1a6c0>

The second issue related to Jack Letts, a dual British-Canadian citizen who had travelled to Syria in 2014 and joined IS. In echoes of the Shamima Begum case earlier in 2019, the British Government has recently stripped Letts of his British citizenship, preventing his return to the

UK (where he was born and brought up). On 19 August 2019, 3,328 YouGov panellists were asked for their views on the matter. Overwhelmingly (73%), they supported the decision to revoke Letts's British citizenship, over-65s (84%) and Conservatives (90%) being especially hawkish. Just 11% opposed the British Government's action against Letts, with 16% uncertain. When it was explained that Canada had accused the UK of 'off-loading its responsibilities' by stripping Letts of his British citizenship, leaving the Canadians alone to address the question of what to do with him, YouGov's respondents expressed a degree of sympathy with the Canadian authorities. A plurality (45%) judged Canadian criticism of the UK in the case to be 'a fair assessment', 36% deeming it unfair and 19% being undecided. Full data are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/6efc4203-c262-11e9-8dbb-0186bef89c67>

### **ComRes polling on attitudes to Islam and Islamophobia**

ComRes surveyed 2,077 UK adults online on 12-14 July 2019 concerning attitudes towards Islam and Islamophobia. Full results have yet to appear on the pollster's website, albeit there has been a placeholder there since 5 August, indicating an expectation of doing so in due course. Some headline findings were published on the BBC and other news sites on 2 August 2019, including that 48% of respondents disagreed with the statement that 'Islam is compatible with British values'. Just under one-third (30%) agreed with the proposition, with 23% undecided. Men were more likely than women to regard Islam as incompatible with British values (54% versus 42%) and also to agree that Islam encourages Muslims to carry out acts of violence against non-Muslims (33% of males against 25% of females and a national mean of 29%). Two-thirds of the sample (67%) acknowledged that most people in the UK have a negative view of Islam and 58% recognized that Islamophobia is widespread. The survey was commissioned by the leadership of Ahmadiyya UK, part of an international community which mainstream Muslims do not regard as 'orthodox'.

### **Enhancing the visitor experience? Rochester Cathedral and that mini-golf course**

The YouGov poll of 19 August 2019 (see link, above), which explored the case of Jack Letts, also canvassed opinions on Rochester Cathedral's summer installation of a mini-golf course, as an encouragement to visitors, but around the serious theme of building bridges. Rochester was one of several English Anglican cathedrals to have mounted a special summer installation (Norwich Cathedral, for example, built a helter-skelter in its nave), but it was the only one to be named specifically in YouGov's question. The pollster's respondents were evenly divided as to whether it was 'appropriate' (37%) or 'inappropriate' (39%) 'to install such incentives within religious settings', the remaining 24% offering no views. Variations between demographic sub-groups were not large, albeit a slight majority (51%) of over-65s labelled the innovation as 'inappropriate'.

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### ***Burying Traditions*: Co-operative Funeralcare's latest report on funeral trends**

Co-operative Funeralcare, the UK's largest firm of funeral directors, has published a further assessment of funeral trends: *Burying Traditions: The Changing Face of UK Funerals*. It is based on Co-op's business data since 2014, a survey of its funeral arrangers and directors in June and July 2019, and an online poll by YouGov of 4,186 British adults on 9-11 July 2019.

The report reveals a diminishing market for the ‘traditional’ funeral, with the associated religious ‘trappings’. According to 77% of the funeral directors, requests for funerals to take place outside religious settings have increased during the last five years. They also noted a growing demand for celebrants – rather than religious leaders – to conduct funerals. Among the general public, 51% anticipated that more funerals will take place outside religious settings and 27% expressed a preference for a non-religious service for their own funeral. *Burying Traditions* can be accessed via the press release at:

<https://www.co-operativefuneralcare.co.uk/campaigns/funeral-trends/>

***Normalising Hatred: Tell MAMA Annual Report, 2018***

Tell MAMA recorded and verified 1,072 anti-Muslim incidents in 2018 (11% fewer than in 2017), 745 of which were categorized as street-based (offline) and 327 as online. Women were the main victims and white men the main perpetrators. There were two spikes in incidents during the year, one occasioned by the distribution of the ‘Punish a Muslim Day’ letters in March and May, the other following publication in August of a column by Boris Johnson (who has since become Prime Minister) which drew analogies between veiled Muslim women and ‘letterboxes’ and ‘bank robbers’. In addition, Tell MAMA was notified by twenty police forces about 1,891 anti-Muslim crimes and incidents which they had logged in 2018. The annual report is available at.

<https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-annual-report-2018--normalising-hate/>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

**Mode of solemnization of marriages in Scotland, 2018 – the rise of Humanism**

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) have recently published *Vital Events Reference Tables, 2018*, which contain, in section 7 (Tables 7.05, 7.06, and 7.07), trend and current data on the mode of solemnization of marriages. An extract from them is tabulated below, from which it will be seen that the number of ‘religious’ weddings has exceeded civil ones in 2017 and 2018 – but only if marriages with humanist celebrants are included (as does NRS) in the ‘religious’ total. Humanist marriages, first legalized in Scotland in 2005, now comprise one-fifth of all marriages and two-fifths of ‘religious’ ones. For complete statistics, see:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/vital-events-reference-tables/2018/section-7-marriages>

|      | <b>Civil</b> | <b>Religious</b> | <b>Church of Scotland</b> | <b>Roman Catholic</b> | <b>Other religion</b> | <b>Humanist</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------|--------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 2011 | 15,092       | 14,043           | 5,557                     | 1,729                 | 4,271                 | 2,486           | 29,135       |
| 2012 | 15,592       | 14,942           | 5,508                     | 1,827                 | 4,555                 | 3,052           | 30,534       |
| 2013 | 14,024       | 13,523           | 4,616                     | 1,582                 | 4,140                 | 3,185           | 27,547       |
| 2014 | 15,000       | 14,069           | 4,505                     | 1,555                 | 4,043                 | 3,966           | 29,069       |
| 2015 | 15,583       | 14,108           | 4,052                     | 1,438                 | 4,287                 | 4,331           | 29,691       |
| 2016 | 15,066       | 14,163           | 3,675                     | 1,346                 | 4,602                 | 4,540           | 29,229       |
| 2017 | 14,201       | 14,239           | 3,166                     | 1,182                 | 4,571                 | 5,320           | 28,440       |
| 2018 | 13,596       | 13,929           | 2,789                     | 1,079                 | 4,549                 | 5,512           | 27,525       |

### Religious Studies GCE A Level

Following years of steady advance, Religious Studies (RS) is now losing ground as a subject in the wake of the ongoing reforms of GCE A Level examinations and of secondary education more generally. According to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), there were 19,406 entries for GCE A Level RS in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland in the June 2019 examinations, representing a decline of 5.5% on the 2018 total, compared with a decrease of 1.3% for all subjects and of 2.9% in the population of 18-year-olds in England. RS candidates were predominantly female, at 72.0%, the mean for all subjects being 55.0%. The proportion of RS examinees securing a pass at A\* to C grade was 76.7%, against 75.8% for all subjects, although there were fewer than average RS successes at A\*. Additionally, there were 6,259 entries for GCE AS Level RS, 26.0% less than in 2018. Trends for England and Wales alone since 2011 are illustrated below. Full provisional tables for both A and AS Level in 2019, showing breaks by gender and grade within home nation, are available, together with an important note and press release outlining changes affecting comparability of results year on year, at:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/a-levels/2019>

|      | <b>A Level</b> | <b>A Level</b> | <b>AS Level</b> | <b>AS Level</b> |
|------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|      | <b>England</b> | <b>Wales</b>   | <b>England</b>  | <b>Wales</b>    |
| 2011 | 18,463         | 1,489          | 29,387          | 2,027           |
| 2012 | 18,950         | 1,690          | 28,682          | 2,201           |
| 2013 | 19,173         | 1,678          | 29,889          | 2,151           |
| 2014 | 20,196         | 1,742          | 33,634          | 2,480           |
| 2015 | 21,577         | 1,795          | 34,830          | 2,535           |
| 2016 | 22,957         | 1,892          | 33,234          | 2,446           |
| 2017 | 22,121         | 1,735          | 14,324          | 1,984           |
| 2018 | 17,024         | 1,398          | 4,248           | 1,776           |
| 2019 | 16,214         | 1,276          | 2,462           | 1,449           |

### Religious Studies GCSE Level

GCSE Level RS is also in relative decline, according to results released by the JCQ the week after the A Level data were published. There were 249,022 entries for the full course GCSE in RS in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland in June 2019, a decrease of 1.8% on June 2018, compared with increases of 1.4% in entries for all subjects and 1.5% in the 16-year-old population. A much smaller proportion of candidates for GCSE RS was female (54.5%) than for GCE A Level RS. The cumulative number obtaining a pass between the legacy system's A\* and C for the full course GCSE RS was 72.4%, five points more than the average across all subjects. The short course in GCSE RS (traditionally equivalent to half a GCSE) is in freefall, with 17.0% fewer candidates in June 2019 than in June 2018, in line with the progressive disappearance of short courses generally. Trends for England and Wales alone since 2011 are illustrated below. Full tables, again with an important note and press release outlining changes in the examination system affecting year-on-year comparability, are available at:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/gcses/2019>

|      | <b>Full Course</b> | <b>Full Course</b> | <b>Short Course</b> | <b>Short Course</b> |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|      | <b>England</b>     | <b>Wales</b>       | <b>England</b>      | <b>Wales</b>        |
| 2011 | 199,752            | 9,727              | 233,998             | 18,318              |
| 2012 | 216,373            | 10,409             | 211,269             | 19,182              |
| 2013 | 239,409            | 11,654             | 150,621             | 18,467              |
| 2014 | 258,067            | 11,427             | 99,661              | 18,820              |
| 2015 | 271,917            | 11,839             | 68,890              | 17,789              |
| 2016 | 270,831            | 12,084             | 52,155              | 18,206              |
| 2017 | 256,729            | 13,110             | 36,962              | 16,109              |
| 2018 | 229,189            | 12,560             | 26,229              | 7,858               |
| 2019 | 227,913            | 9,949              | 21,530              | 5,854               |

The day before the GCSE results came out, Liverpool Hope University (in conjunction with Culham St Gabriel's) published a 10-page report by David Lundie and Mi Young Ahn on *GCSE Religious Studies: At a Crossroads – Mapping the Impact of Change in England, 2017-18*. The authors noted that much of the drop in GCSE RS entries in England between 2017 and 2018 was in schools without a religious character. Within these schools, only 30% of students were entered for GCSE RS, compared with 68% in Church of England schools and 95% in Roman Catholic schools. Examining the 701 schools which entered students in GCSE RS in 2017 but not in 2018, Lundie and Ahn also discovered that these schools performed less well against Progress8, Attainment8, and even the EBacc measures than did schools which participated in GCSE RS in 2018. For a press release, with link to the report, see:

<https://www.hope.ac.uk/news/allnews/new-report-notes-drastic-fall-in-numbers-studying-gcse-religious-studies-.html>

### **Scottish qualifications in Religious Studies**

The sub-degree level examinations and qualifications framework for Scotland is different from the rest of the UK. RS in Scotland is now known as 'Religious, Moral, and Philosophical Studies'. The accreditation and awarding body is the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which is sponsored by the Scottish Government. Examination results ('attainment statistics') for 2019 have been published at:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64717.html>

An archive of results from 1996 to 2018 is available at:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/57518.8313.html>

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

### **Bertelsmann Stiftung Religion Monitor III, 2017: the politics of religious pluralism**

This is proving a busy summer for the dissemination of multinational polling on religion. Last month, in our July 2019 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*, BRIN noted early results from the European Values Study, 2017 and the International Social Survey Programme, 2018. This month, it is the turn of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Religion Monitor III, 2017. All three waves (I and II were conducted in 2007 and 2013) have involved fieldwork in Great Britain. The first wave, and the most geographically extensive (it covered 21 nations), was very accessible in the

Anglophone world, being written up (with accompanying data CD-ROM) in a substantial book, *What the World Believes*, edited by Martin Rieger (2009), while the dataset is available at the GESIS Data Archive for the Social Sciences in Cologne as ZA 4663. The second wave, fielded in thirteen countries, seems to have been less widely publicized, the main English-language output being Gert Pickel's booklet *Religion Monitor, Understanding Common Ground: An International Comparison of Religious Belief* (2013).

The third wave was undertaken in six nations (Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Turkey) between July 2016 and March 2017. In each country, adult samples of the general population and of Muslims were interviewed, 1,000 and 500, respectively, in Britain. The earliest report on this wave was Yasemin El-Menouar's booklet, *Muslims in Europe: Integrated but Not Accepted? Results and Country Profiles* (2017); this was summarized in the December 2017 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*. More recently (July 2019), the Bertelsmann Stiftung has published the 109-page ebook by Pickel, *Weltanschauliche Vielfalt und Demokratie: Wie sich religiöse Pluralität auf die politische Kultur auswirkt*. This focuses on the political effects of religious pluralization. There is an English-language summary on pp. 20-2. Although disproportionately about Germany, comparative data from the other survey nations will be found on pp. 45, 47, 53, 59, 72, 74-5, 79, 82-3, and 89. Pickel observes that religious toleration in Britain declined between 2013 and 2017, as measured by the proportion believing that every religion has a 'true core', from 80% to 61%. Almost two-fifths (39%) of Britons perceived Islam as a threat; 37% claimed to mistrust Muslims, far more than any other religious group or people in general; and 20% did not want Muslims as their neighbours. The ebook can be downloaded from:

[https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Religionsmonitor\\_Vielfalt\\_und\\_Demokratie\\_7\\_2019.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Religionsmonitor_Vielfalt_und_Demokratie_7_2019.pdf)

### **Recent publications on religious psychology co-authored by Professor Leslie Francis**

Leslie Francis continues to be one of the most prolific, collaborative, and statistically-minded UK academics working in the fields of psychology of religion and religious education. Below are listed some recent published papers which he has co-authored:

- Leslie Francis, Tania ap Siôn, David Lankshear, and Emma Eccles, 'Factors Shaping Prayer Frequency among 9- to 11-Year-Olds', *Greek Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1, April 2019, pp. 39-52. Study of 3,142 pupils attending 88 Church in Wales primary schools in 2016-17. Full text available on open access at: [http://www.gjre.gr/images/documents/2019i/francisetal\\_1030457-30420193.pdf](http://www.gjre.gr/images/documents/2019i/francisetal_1030457-30420193.pdf)
- Leslie Francis and Michael Whinney, 'The Psychological Profile of Church of England Male Archdeacons at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: Drawing on Psychological Type and Temperament Theory', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, May 2019, pp. 74-92. Survey of 186 active and retired male archdeacons in 2009, with comparative data from 626 clergymen. Abstract and references only freely available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-anglican-studies/article/psychological-profile-of-church-of-england-male-archdeacons-at-the-beginning-of-the-twentyfirst-century-drawing-on-psychological-type-and-temperament-theory/3F8E7F293F0880B1AFAE729D5157734E>

- Leslie Francis, Gemma Penny, and Jeff Astley, 'Christian Identities, Theologies of Religion, and Attitude towards Religious Diversity: A Study among 13- to 15-Year-Old Students across the UK', in *Young People and the Diversity of (Non)Religious Identities in International Perspective*, edited by Elisabeth Arweck and Heather Shipley (Cham: Springer, 2019), pp. 87-107. Based on 10,734 cases from the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project (2011-12). The book's webpage is at: <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783030161651>
- Leslie Francis, Andrew Village, and David Voas, 'The Turn toward Extraversion: The Changing Psychological Profile of Anglican Clergy', *Journal of Empirical Theology*, Vol. 32, No. 1, July 2019, pp. 89-104. Reanalysis of data collected within the Church Growth Research Programme (2013) from 1,372 stipendiary clergy in the Church of England who were aged 70 or under. Abstract and references only freely available at: [https://brill.com/view/journals/jet/32/1/article-p89\\_4.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/jet/32/1/article-p89_4.xml)
- Leslie Francis, Simon Foster, David Lankshear, and Ian Jones, 'What Helps Christians Grow? An Exploratory Study Distinguishing among Four Distinctive Pathways', *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 68, No. 4, August 2019, pp. 379-92. Study of 1,123 churchgoers in the West Midlands. Abstract and references only freely available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11089-019-00866-5>
- Ursula McKenna and Leslie Francis, 'Growing up Female and Muslim in the UK: An Empirical Enquiry into the Distinctive Religious and Social Values of Young Muslims', *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2019, pp. 388-401. Comparison of 177 Muslim and 1,183 religiously unaffiliated female students aged 13 to 15, derived from the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project (2011-12). Available on open access at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01416200.2018.1437393>