

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources  
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## OPINION POLLS

### **Coronavirus chronicles: attending places of worship after lockdown**

Restrictions on the opening of places of worship for services (albeit without live singing) have been lifted in all parts of the UK. On behalf of *The Observer*, Opinium Research has conducted six online polls, each among a sample of around 2,000 UK adults, to see how far people already have taken advantage, or intend to avail themselves, of the opportunity of attending public worship again. Topline results from the first five surveys were reported in the July and August 2020 editions of *Counting Religion in Britain*. A sixth data point has now been added, for 9–11 September 2020, with similar findings to the previous studies: 54% admitted that they did not ordinarily attend places of worship at all, with most of the remainder unsure or vague about their intentions to go in future (including 18% who made their ‘return’ contingent on coronavirus safety).

Opinium’s next poll for *The Observer*, on 23–25 September 2020, posed a slightly different question on the same topic, asking how often its interviewees had been visiting places of worship since lockdown restrictions were eased in July. In reply, 61% said that they did not visit places of worship at all. Of the remainder, 17% claimed to be visiting them a lot less than before lockdown, 6% a little less, 12% about the same, and 3% more often; this represents a net reduction of 19% in that part of the population formerly attending religious services, rising to –29% in London. Moreover, worse may still be to come, for, among the sub-sample who ever visited places of worship, 26% expected to visit them a lot less over the next few months than they currently did and 16% a little less, against just 15% anticipating they might go more frequently. Thus, the pandemic may have long-term adverse consequences for religious practice. Data tables for all the surveys can be accessed via Opinium’s political portal at:

<https://www.opinium.com/political-polling/>

### **Coronavirus chronicles: has good neighbourliness increased during the pandemic?**

On behalf of Christian Aid, Savanta ComRes conducted an online poll among 2,315 UK adults on 4–7 September 2020 to determine the extent to which the pandemic had increased the sense of local and global neighbourliness. Asked whether community spirit in their immediate neighbourhood had changed since the coronavirus lockdown had been imposed in March, 44% replied that it had improved a great deal or a little (including 50% of Christians, 40% of non-Christians, and 37% of religious nones), while 33% regarded it as unchanged, and 10% thought it had decreased. When it came to feeling more or less part of a global community, 29% did so (31% of Christians, 34% of non-Christians, and 25% of nones), with 12% feeling less part of a global community, and 51% unaffected. Data tables are available at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/christian-aid-good-neighbours-poll/>

### Coronavirus chronicles: religion and volunteering before, during, and after lockdown

According to reports in some religious media, Faiths United (a coalition of faith leaders and activists responding to the Covid-19 crisis) commissioned Savanta ComRes to survey an online sample of 4,575 UK adults in August 2020 on the subject of volunteering. The headline finding was that religious people were more likely than the population at large to report that they volunteered (for example, by shopping for the vulnerable) before the imposition of lockdown, with the same differential apparent with regard to intended behaviour after lockdown. However, during the course of lockdown itself, the gap between the two groups narrowed, as the non-religious stepped up more to the volunteering plate. Data tables are not available on the pollster’s website, as yet, nor is there a press release on the Faiths United website.

### Perceptions of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as problems in the UK

For the fourth consecutive month, the Savanta ComRes political tracker has asked its respondents whether they regarded anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as problems in the country. Online fieldwork was undertaken on 18–20 September 2020 among 2,109 UK adults, 55% of whom said that anti-Semitism was a problem and 59% Islamophobia, with, respectively, 16% and 21% thinking they were big problems. Data tables are available at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/savanta-comres-political-tracker-september-2020/>

A similar proportion of the country’s residents, 54%, regarded Islamophobia as either a big or a moderate problem in Britain, according to an online survey of 2,010 adults by Focaldata for Hope Not Hate on 7–11 August 2020. A further 24% viewed it as a small problem and only 10% as not a problem at all, with 12% unsure what to think. Data tables are embedded in the documentation for Hope Not Hate’s assessment of the extent of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party (reported in the next item).

### Islamophobia in the Conservative Party: Hope Not Hate report

The latest research report from Hope Not Hate takes the form of a submission of written evidence to the Conservative Party’s internal investigation into racism in its midst: *Conservative Party Inquiry on All Forms of Racism Including Islamophobia: Hope Not Hate Submission of Evidence*. The 28-page document provides an analysis of the Party’s disciplinary processes; presents findings from YouGov polling conducted in July 2020 among 1,213 Conservative Party members and a sample of 1,658 adult Britons; and (in the longest section) offers 40 case studies of Party MPs, councillors, and activists who have been the subject of complaints. As the table below indicates, negative views towards Muslims and Islam are more common among the Party’s members and voters than in society at large. Additionally, a feeling thermometer of the members alone revealed that the mean score of feelings towards Muslims was only 43, compared with 65 towards atheists, 68 towards Hindus, 70 towards Jews, 70 towards Sikhs, and 74 towards Christians. The report and survey tables are available at:

<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/09/30/the-deep-roots-of-islamophobia-in-the-conservative-party/>

**Table 1: Agreement with three Islamophobic statements, Great Britain, July 2020 (percentages)**

Statement	Conservative members	Conservative voters in 2019	British population
Islamist terrorists reflect a widespread hostility to Britain amongst the Muslim community	36	33	22
There are no go areas in Britain where Sharia law dominates and non-Muslims cannot enter	58	56	37
Islam is generally a threat to the British way of life	47	48	30

### **Resonating narratives: Islamist and far-right extremism among young people**

The latest report from the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change is Cristina Ariza and Sam Alvis, *Resonating Narratives: The Scale of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism among British Young People*. Based on online fieldwork conducted by Savanta ComRes on 3–24 May 2019 among two samples of young Britons aged 18–30 (1,011 Muslims and 1,011 white non-Muslims), it reveals the extent to which Islamist and far-right ideas are resonating with these groups. One-fifth of both samples agreed with extreme positions across themes depicting Islam and the West in conflict, promoting feelings of victimization and anti-establishment sentiment. More specifically, 34% of Muslims thought they were systematically targeted in the UK, and 31% of white non-Muslims held very negative views about Islam. The 42-page report (including summation of the data on pp. 15–33 and description of methodology on pp. 35–7) can be found at:

<https://institute.global/policy/resonating-narratives-scale-islamist-and-far-right-extremism-among-british-young-people>

There are 3,434 pages of data tables at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/tony-blair-institute-for-global-change-resonance-of-extremism-and-other-issues-september-2020/>

### **World's most admired people: YouGov's annual global poll**

Since 2014, except for 2017, YouGov has compiled annual rankings of the most admired living global leaders and celebrities by polling representative online samples of the populations of the UK and many other countries, with separate ratings of male and female figures from 2015. The UK listing of most admired men has always included two world religious leaders, Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama, with Billy Graham also featuring until his death. In the UK, Pope Francis (who was placed ninth in 2015, eleventh in 2016 and 2018, and tenth in 2019 and 2020) has consistently trailed the Dalai Lama (who came fifth in 2020) by several places. The same has been true at global level (where the Dalai Lama was eighth in 2020, across the 42 countries and territories surveyed, and Pope Francis eighteenth). David Attenborough and Barack Obama were the big scorers in the UK's list of most admired men and Queen Elizabeth II and Michelle Obama topped the most admired women. For further information about results and methodology, see the blog at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2020/09/23/worlds-most-admired-2020>

### **Belief in the existence of life on other planets**

A plurality (46%) of the 4,282 adult Britons interviewed online by YouGov on 15 September 2020 said they thought life existed on other planets in our solar system, peaking at 56% among the under-25s and falling to 34% of the over-65s. One-quarter (26%) of the entire sample did not believe life existed on other planets, while 29% expressed no opinion. Detailed figures are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/philosophy/survey-results/daily/2020/09/15/448f0/3>

### **Religious correlates of attitudes to sex education in the Scottish school curriculum**

On behalf of the Scottish Family Party, 1,000 Scottish adults were interviewed online by Savanta ComRes on 22–27 July 2020 to ascertain their views on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of informing pupils about specific aspects of sex education in Scottish primary and secondary schools. Answers to all the questions were disaggregated by three religious groups: any religion, no religion (46% of the sample), and Christian (47%). Detailed computer tables can be found at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/scottish-family-party-sex-education-poll-august-2020/>

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **Coronavirus chronicles: Catholic Voices report on Catholic experiences of the pandemic**

Catholic Voices has published a 21-page report on the *Coronavirus, Church, and You Survey: Catholics in the UK*, one of several strands in a research project conceived by Andrew Village and Leslie Francis at the start of the pandemic. The survey of the Catholic community in England, Wales, and Scotland (a separate strand covered the whole island of Ireland) was launched on 19 May 2020 and closed on 26 July, by which time 2,292 fully complete responses had been received, 93% of them from England and 93% from laity. The sample was self-selecting, so is unlikely to be entirely representative of the Catholic population at large. Questions covered experiences of, and attitudes to, the national lockdown imposed by the government on 23 March (resulting in the closure of places of worship). Among headline findings for Catholics were: 93% had accessed services online during lockdown while 63% had some contact with clergy or a lay representative; 61% endorsed the closure of church buildings but 84% rejected the suggestion they were an unnecessary burden and expense; 53% thought their Church at national level had responded well to the pandemic; and 50% claimed that lockdown had made them feel closer to God and 54% more prayerful. For some measures, comparisons are drawn with the parallel Anglican strand. The report can be downloaded from:

<https://www.catholicvoices.org.uk/survey>

### **Coronavirus chronicles: round-up of the Jewish experience of Covid-19**

The Board of Deputies of British Jews has continued to monitor the number of UK Jews who have died from Covid-19 and who subsequently received a Jewish burial. At the end of August, the Jewish death toll in the pandemic stood at 509, but one further death had been reported by 11 September, bringing the current figure to 510. None appears to have been notified since. To contain transmission of coronavirus, concerted efforts have been made to minimize face-to-face social interactions in the community for the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah (18–20 September), Yom Kippur (27–28 September), and Sukkot (2–9 October).

Meanwhile, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) has published a 10-page paper by Daniel Staetsky entitled *Jews and Coronavirus in England and Wales: What the ONS Study of Covid-19 Mortality Comparing Different Religious Groups in England and Wales Tells Us about British Jewish Mortality*. The author reaches three conclusions: '(1) Even though Jewish mortality from Covid-19 is high, as it is for other Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, Jews are a completely different case and should be analysed and understood as such.

(2) The high mortality levels found among Jews is not caused in any significant way by any particular developments occurring in the strictly Orthodox (*haredi*) population. (3) Elevated mortality among Jews may in part be due to the interconnected and contact-rich social and religious lives that Jews have, but further analysis is required to confirm this.’ The report can be downloaded from:

<https://www.jpr.org.uk/publication?id=17473>

The JPR has also published the first in a series of Coronavirus Papers, based on an online survey of a self-selecting sample of 6,984 self-identifying UK Jews aged 16 and over on 9–31 July 2020, with results weighted by age, gender, and geography to match the profile of the Jewish community at the 2011 census. Written by Jonathan Boyd, Carli Lessof, and David Graham, the 14-page report is entitled *Renew Our Days as of Old: Will We Go Back to Jewish Activities and Events?* Respondents were asked to position themselves on a scale from 0 (very comfortable) to 10 (very uncomfortable) to indicate how comfortable they felt about returning to in-person Jewish activities and events as lockdown restrictions were eased (as they were being when the survey launched). There was a clear leaning towards the uncomfortable end of the scale, especially on the part of the over-60s, those with underlying health conditions, people with uncertain employment prospects (on furlough, made redundant, or self-employed but not currently working), young persons in education, the religiously less attached, and Jews showing signs of psychological distress. The paper can be downloaded from:

<https://www.jpr.org.uk/publication?id=17563>

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Institute for Health Research have announced funding of £5.3 million to support eight projects investigating different aspects of the spread of coronavirus, with a view to informing policy decisions about Covid-19, including infection prevention strategies and containment measures. One of the research strands, to be led by Michael Marks of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, will focus on the strictly Orthodox Jewish community. The £249,000 project will survey 500 households in this community to understand how their internal structures and inter-connectedness may contribute to transmission of the virus. For further details, see the UKRI press release at:

<https://www.ukri.org/news/5-million-for-new-research-projects-investigating-how-coronavirus-spreads/>

### **Gendered Islamophobia: Muslim women’s experiences of hate and hate crime**

Citizens UK is a grassroots campaigning organization for the common good. Its latest report, by Farhan Samanani and Sylvie Pope, concerns *Overcoming Everyday Hate in the UK: Hate Crime, Oppression, and the Law* and particularly addresses the targeting of women and Muslims. The research base for the study comprised a self-selecting sample of 1,030 individuals, who completed an online survey about their experiences of, and attitudes to, hate crime, together with 246 attendees at focus groups across five English cities. The survey respondents, recruited largely by snowballing techniques among Citizens UK member institutions, were not representative of the population at large but disproportionately female, young, non-heterosexual, and from migrant or minority backgrounds, groups that are often victims of hate crimes. Muslims were the most represented religious group in the survey, with 491 participants (88% of whom were women), and thus the chapter on Islamophobia (pp. 52–62) will be of special interest in terms of the impacts of targeting on the basis of race and/or

religion, with statistical comparisons drawn between Muslims and non-Muslims. The survey questionnaire, which is date-stamped June 2019, is reproduced in Appendix A (pp. 69–94). The 102-page report is available at:

<https://www.citizensuk.org/misogyny-hate-crime-report-launch>

### **Youthscape report on Christian youth ministry and missional practice**

Lucie Shuker's *We Do God: The Role of Practice in Missional Youth Ministry* offers a fresh assessment of the missional practice aspects of Christian youth work. It is based on a literature review, an online survey of a self-selecting (and acknowledged to be unrepresentative) sample of 235 youth workers across the UK in November and December 2019 (exploring their engagement with young people inside and outside the Church), and a series of 13 case studies. The report costs £10 for a hard copy and £5 for a full download, but a lengthy free sample (giving a reasonable overview of the contents) can be downloaded from the blog at:

<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/research/we-do-god>

## OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

### **Non-stun slaughter of animals: Food Standards Agency discontinues reporting data**

According to a statement by the National Secular Society (NSS), the Food Standards Agency has stopped collecting and publishing, in its quarterly reports on animal welfare non-compliance, statistics of the number of animals being slaughtered without pre-stunning. This exemption from normal legal requirements to stun farm animals is permitted to meet the dietary customs and preferences of Jews and Muslims. The NSS statement can be found at:

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2020/09/nss-criticises-lack-of-transparency-over-non-stun-slaughter>

### **Religious affiliation in Scotland: results of 2019 Scottish Household Survey**

According to the 2019 Scottish Household Survey, whose findings have just been released by the Scottish Government, 56% of the 9,780 Scottish adults interviewed professed no religion, five points more than in 2018 and 16% more than in 2009. Affiliates of the Church of Scotland, who numbered 34% in 2009, have now reduced to 20%, but the figures for Roman Catholics (13% in 2019), other Christians (8%), and non-Christians (3%) have been relatively stable over recent years. The survey's webpage can be found at:

<https://www.gov.scot/news/living-in-scotland-in-2019/>

### **Religious hate crime in Scotland, 2019–20**

*Hate Crime in Scotland, 2019–20*, compiled by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service of the Scottish Government, records 660 charges of religiously aggravated crimes brought in Scotland during that year, 24% more than in 2018–19. The overwhelming majority (93%) of these charges resulted in court proceedings, either in their own right or incorporated into other charges. The report is available at:

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/equality-and-diversity>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Miscellany of recent academic journal articles

- Leslie Francis, 'Parental and Peer Influence on Church Attendance among Adolescent Anglicans in England and Wales', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, May 2020, pp. 61–73: based on a survey in 2011–12 of 645 students aged 13–15 who self-identified as Anglicans, concluding that parental example and support were critical in underpinning their churchgoing, while peer support was a relatively insignificant factor. Access options outlined at:  
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-anglican-studies/article/parental-and-peer-influence-on-church-attendance-among-adolescent-anglicans-in-england-and-wales/5FDE97D489277C550DFFA4AC7B4FC352>
- Yinxuan Huang, 'How Christian Upbringing Divides the Religious Nones in Britain: Exploring the Imprints of Christian Upbringing in the 2016 EU Referendum', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2020, pp. 341–62: uses data from the 2016 British Social Attitudes Survey to investigate internal variations in the EU referendum turnout and voting of religious nones, dependent upon whether they received an Anglican, Catholic, other Christian, or non-religious upbringing, and revealing that Christian upbringing still serves as a proxy for national identity among nones who were formerly Anglican or Catholic. Access options outlined at:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13537903.2020.1765499>
- Leslie Francis, Ursula McKenna, and Elisabeth Arweck, 'Countering Anti-Muslim Attitudes among Christian and Religiously Unaffiliated 13- to 15-Year-Old Students in England and Wales: Testing the Contact Hypothesis', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2020, pp. 342–57: based on a survey in 2011–12 of 5,811 students self-identifying as Christian or no religion, demonstrating the positive effect that having Muslim friends has on lowering anti-Muslim attitudes. Access options outlined at:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13617672.2019.1653062>
- Marc Helbling and Richard Traunmüller, 'What is Islamophobia? Disentangling Citizens' Feelings toward Ethnicity, Religion, and Religiosity Using a Survey Experiment', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 3, July 2020, pp. 811–28: based on online interviews with a sample of white British in a survey of 4,500 UK adults by YouGov in June 2015, the article explores, through a combination of fictional vignettes, the relative drivers of hostility to Muslim immigrants, concluding that 'a large part of the current political controversy over Muslim immigration . . . is less about immigrants versus natives or even Muslim[s] versus Christians than about political liberalism versus religious fundamentalism.' Access options outlined at:  
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-political-science/article/what-is-islamophobia-disentangling-citizens-feelings-toward-ethnicity-religion-and-religiosity-using-a-survey-experiment/FCABF1218C7D1D23AD582379F4C53007>
- Julian Hargreaves and Daniel Staetsky, 'Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Measuring Everyday Sensitivity in the UK', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 12, 2020, pp. 2176–98: claiming to be 'the first known comparative study of antisemitism and Islamophobia to use statistics', the article explores how anti-Semitism was constructed

and understood by 1,468 Jews in 2012 and how Islamophobia was constructed and understood by 995 Muslims in 2016–17, each sample being asked to respond to six critical statements about their respective communities, Muslims exhibiting less certainty and offence than Jews. Access options outlined at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01419870.2019.1682177>

- Daniel Allington, ‘Judeophobic Antisemitism among British Voters, 2016–2020’, *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2020, pp. 31–8: this is a secondary analysis of data collected by YouGov for the Campaign against Antisemitism, correlating the extent of Judeophobic anti-Semitism in each of five years with voting patterns at the general elections of 2015, 2017, and 2019. Available on an open access basis at:

<https://journals.academicstudiespress.com/index.php/JCA/article/view/56/pdf>