

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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OPINION POLLS

Coronavirus chronicles: are things really looking up that much for the Churches?

On 21 February 2021, to mark the launch of the Give Hope Campaign, YourNeighbour (a project of the Good Faith Foundation and comprising a network of more than 1,000 mainly evangelical churches from over forty denominations in the UK) issued a press release entitled ‘Things are looking up’. It drew upon an online poll of 2,170 UK adults interviewed by Savanta ComRes on 12–14 February 2021 on behalf of YourNeighbour and the charity World Vision UK. The press release headlined the improving public perceptions of the Church, and this message was reinforced in subsequent media reportage, for example, ‘Covid pandemic brings British Churches back to life’ (*Sunday Express*). Regrettably, the press statement was full of quotes but short on basic statistics, and Savanta ComRes has yet to post the complete data tables on its own website (which hopefully it will do very soon). One of the few figures actually cited is that (only) 36% of all adults agreed that the Churches are making a positive difference in the world. In reality, this is not much more than the 33% recorded in a comparable poll in 2017 (*The UK Church in Action*, Barna Group, 2018, p. 73), and is hardly a ringing endorsement. Somewhat more, but still just a plurality (42%), considered local churches were making a positive difference in their communities, representing an increase on the 35% of four years before. The press release can be found at:

<https://yourneighbour.org/news/looking-up>

Coronavirus chronicles: Christian Aid poll on Covid-19 vaccines in developing nations

Christian Aid commissioned Savanta ComRes to undertake an online survey of 2,119 UK adults on 5–7 February 2021 to ascertain the general public’s views about the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines in developing nations. As well as being analysed by standard demographics, responses to the five Likert-style questions were also disaggregated by religious affiliation (Christian, non-Christian, and no religion). On the whole, the religious differentiation was not very marked. However, non-Christians were slightly more likely than the other two groups and the national average to agree that the UK government should (a) be doing more to help poorer developing countries access Covid-19 vaccines, and (b) once high-risk people were vaccinated in the UK, to help vaccinate the population of those countries as quickly as possible. Full data tables are available at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/christian-aid-rollout-of-covid-19-vaccine-in-developing-nations/>

Coronavirus chronicles: returning to places of worship after lockdown

The three home nations in Great Britain have announced plans progressively to ease coronavirus restrictions, but the country is not exactly fired up at the thought of being able to attend places of worship again, according to a survey by Ipsos MORI of an online sample of 1,074 adults aged 18–75 on 19–22 February 2021. Given a list of twenty-three activities, and asked which they were looking forward to doing post-lockdown, attending places of worship was ranked bottom, selected by 25%, a long way behind meeting with friends and family outside one’s household and not having to think about coronavirus or social distancing, in joint first place on 83%. Respondents were also invited to say how comfortable they would feel doing each of nineteen activities ‘in the same way as you did before the coronavirus pandemic began’. Attending places of worship was in penultimate position, with 29% feeling comfortable at the prospect and a further 2% claiming already to be in the pews. Only going to large public gatherings, such as sports or music events, received a lower discomfort score. Topline data are available at:

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/britons-are-excited-see-family-and-friends-spontaneous-day-trips-and-dining-out-when-lockdown-ends>

Coronavirus chronicles: Survation on lockdown of Scottish places of worship

As part of the current coronavirus lockdown in Scotland, places of worship are permitted to conduct weddings or funerals in person, with a limited number of attendees, but have to broadcast all other services online. The Scottish Government has come under pressure from religious leaders to allow places of worship to reopen but is standing its ground, even in the face of the legal action against it which has been threatened by some of the leaders. In an online poll conducted by Survation for the Humanist Society Scotland between 29 January and 2 February 2021, the overwhelming majority (76%) of the 1,012 Scottish residents aged 16 and over who were interviewed opposed the exemption of places of worship from restrictions on public gatherings, with only 17% in favour (and no more than 24% in any demographic subgroup). The data table is available at:

<https://www.survation.com/archive/2021-2/>

Coronavirus chronicles: religious correlates of attitudes to abortion in England

In the January 2021 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*, we featured a poll by Savanta ComRes on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) about home abortion arrangements in Scotland. An equivalent study was also conducted in England, among 1,046 adults on 16–23 December 2020, asking various questions about ‘telemedicine abortion’, which is currently (in view of the pandemic) permitted up to ten weeks in pregnancy. The answers to each question were disaggregated by religious profession, as well as by the standard range of demographics, albeit only the sub-samples of Christians (517) and religious nones (406) are large enough to yield meaningful breaks. The latter group, being younger, were slightly less concerned (66%) about a woman undergoing a medical abortion at home than either Christians (72%) or the overall national cross-section (71%). Particular issues of concern were the possibility of abortion pills being falsely obtained for another person (Christians 84%, nones 78%) and a woman being at risk of coercion into an abortion by a partner or family member (Christians 86%, nones 81%). Detailed tables are available at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/spuc-england-polling/>

Perceived importance of religion for getting ahead in life: KCL inequality poll

Only 14% of all Britons, and no more than 21% in any demographic sub-group, consider a person's religion is of any importance for getting ahead in life, according to an online survey by YouGov on behalf of King's College London, undertaken among 2,226 adults on 11–12 November 2020. Almost four people in five answered that religion is either not very important (35%) or not at all important (43%) for getting on. The question was very similar to one that has been asked in the British Social Attitudes Surveys in 1987, 1991, 2009, and 2019, with equivalent results. Detailed findings from the question, part of a broader investigation into inequality, can be seen on p. 14 of the tables at:

https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/kzi666gg1s/KCL_Inequality1stRelease_201113.pdf

The Together Initiative's *Our Chance to Reconnect* report: religion questions

Buried within a major report on social cohesion in pandemic-hit UK, prepared by British Future on behalf of the Together Initiative, will be found a couple of religion questions from an online survey of 2,373 UK adults undertaken by ICM Unlimited on 16–18 December 2020. One asked respondents about the importance of religion or faith in their lives, 67% replying that it was not too or not at all important, and only 31% saying it was very or somewhat important. Probed about the divisions in the UK that worried them most, 23% admitted to concerns about divisions between people with different religious beliefs; these were ranked sixth out of eight divisions included in the question, divisions between rich and poor being the greatest worry (45%). Toplines appear on pp. 168 and 172 of Jill Rutter and Jake Puddle, *Our Chance to Reconnect: Final Report of the Talk/Together Project* at:

<https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Our-Chance-to-Reconnect.Final7MB.pdf>

ICM/Henry Jackson Society poll of UK adults and Black Britons: religion comparisons

The Henry Jackson Society's latest report is *BLM: A Voice for Black Britons?* by Rakib Ehsan. It is based upon online fieldwork by ICM Unlimited among two samples on 6–18 January 2021, a cross-section of 1,000 UK adults and a booster sample of 558 Black Britons. As the document's title implies, its main focus is on the Black Lives Matter movement in Britain and questions of racial diversity. However, BRIN readers may be especially interested in comparisons between the two samples in a few matters of religion that are touched upon. Relative to the general population, Black Britons were inclined:

- to attach greater importance to their religious identity (56% versus 37%)
- to be more favourable towards Christians (62% versus 54%) and Muslims (44% versus 34%)
- to be less favourable towards Jews (44% versus 46%) and atheists (43% versus 46%)
- to perceive much higher levels of Jewish control of the global banking system, global political leadership, global media, and global entertainment and music

The report can be downloaded from:

<https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BLM-A-Voice-for-Black-Britons-00000002.pdf>

Savanta ComRes report on Church Leaders Panel for 2020

The Savanta ComRes opt-in Church Leaders Panel has launched in a relatively modest way with a profile of 201 ordained (or equivalent) church leaders in Britain who completed online interviews between 3 September and 5 November 2020. Information was gathered about the age, gender, highest education level, region, and length of time since ordination of respondents, and about the denomination and size (in terms of the average monthly attendance) of their church. They were asked whether they had voted in the 2019 general election (93% had) and, if so, which party they had voted for (28% Conservative, 25% Labour, 15% Liberal Democrat, 15% another party, and 17% prefer not to say). They were also invited to assess their mental health during the two years before the onset of Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020 and in the immediately ensuing months, the proportion rating their mental health as poor increasing from 7% to 15%. The social issues with which the leaders most commonly engaged (via their church) were older people (65%), poverty in the UK (65%), children (61%), and homelessness (60%). A presentation and spreadsheet containing the survey results can be found at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/church-leaders-panel-2020/>

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

For the ninth 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 12–14 February 2021 among 2,170 UK adults, 51% of whom said that anti-Semitism was a problem and 54% Islamophobia, with, respectively, 16% and 22% thinking they were big problems. On the Labour Party's handling of the anti-Semitism issue since the December 2019 general election, just 23% of the sample judged it had performed well and 35% badly, with 43% neutral or undecided. Data tables are available at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/savanta-comres-political-tracker-february-2021/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Coronavirus chronicles: reaching for the Bible in a time of pandemic

The Bible has proved a source of comfort for many practising Christians (persons attending church services and reading the Bible at least monthly) amidst the pandemic, according to an online survey by Christian Research of 1,123 UK members of its Resonate panel in November 2020. A sizeable minority of respondents reported that they had read the Bible more often (35%) and for longer (27%) and that this had a positive effect on their mental wellbeing, sense of loneliness, confidence in the future, and hope in God. Three-fifths had seen their engagement with the Bible remain the same, while 5% conceded it had declined. The Bible Society has issued a press release about the survey at:

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/latest/news/christians-are-gaining-hope-and-confidence-during-the-pandemic-through-reading-the-bible-a-survey-finds/>

Christian Research has posted details of demographics and some additional results at:

<https://www.christian-research.org/reports/recent-research/>

Coronavirus chronicles: Church of England discussion paper on its prospects

A ‘restricted’ internal discussion paper from the Archbishop of York’s Vision and Strategy Group, originally distributed to Church of England bishops and diocesan secretaries on 18 January 2021, has been published in full on the *Church Times* website, following a partial leak of the document to the *Sunday Times*. The paper, *Perspectives on Money, People, and Buildings*, gave some insight into the scale of the possible impact of Covid-19 on the Church of England. On the financial side, parish share income at the end of November 2020 was 8.1% down on the previous year in aggregate (10.5% in the northern and 7.4% in the southern province), while budgeted income for 2021 was projected to be reduced by 10% with expenditure projected to decrease by only 3%. In terms of churchgoing, the paper estimated that online worship during the first English lockdown had attracted between 200,000 and 300,000 people who were new to church or had attended irregularly before, 100,000 to 200,000 of whom intended to continue with online services or to attend in person after the pandemic. However, the same number of individuals in the pre-Covid-19 worshipping community were not planning to return to church in any form. The projection for the post-lockdown worshipping community was thus between 1,000,000 and 1,200,000, with 160,000 to 200,000 of them worshipping online only. The reduction in physical attendance, it was suggested, could affect the sustainability of many local churches. The paper, preceded by an article about it in the *Church Times*, can be read at:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/5-february/news/uk/financial-crisis-threatens-church-s-strategic-plans>

Coincidentally, the Church of England has published *Parish Finance Statistics, 2019*, in 12 figures and 9 tables, and based upon an 81% return from parishes. Total parochial income in 2019 was £1,097 million and expenditure £1,071 million, with considerable variation between dioceses. The report is available at:

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Parish%20Finance%20Statistics%2019_0.pdf

Coronavirus chronicles: the attitudes of churchgoing laity in the Church of England

Andrew Village and Leslie Francis have reported (in the *Church Times* for 12 February 2021, p. 13) further results from their ‘Coronavirus, Church, and You’ survey in May-July 2020, this time comparing the attitudes of a self-selecting sub-sample of 924 Church of England churchgoers under 60 years of age with those of 867 aged 70 or over. The older group was found to be less positive than the younger about the national Church’s handling of the Covid-19 crisis, more positive about church buildings and thus less positive about their enforced closure, less positive towards an online future for the Church, and less hopeful about the post-pandemic sustainability of their church in terms of volunteers and finance. The article by Village and Francis can be seen at:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/12-february/comment/opinion/shielding-but-not-shielded>

Coronavirus chronicles: survey of the views of Christian event organizers

A survey of 161 Christian event organizers, conducted by the Christian Conference Trust between 3 and 11 December 2020, revealed that 92% of the churches and Christian organizations that responded had lost connections with some of their people because they were unable to meet face-to-face, with 83% claiming their ministry had become more difficult without such face-to-face contact. As to the future, 98% still planned to hold face-to-face conferences, while 91% did not believe that video conferencing would replace face-to-face contact. A news report about the survey is at:

<https://www.cct.org.uk/about-us/latest-news/post/240-92-have-lost-connection-by-not-meeting-face-to-face>

Coronavirus chronicles: Jewish mortality from Covid-19

The Board of Deputies of British Jews has continued to monitor the number of UK Jews who have died from Covid-19, whether in hospitals or other settings, and who subsequently received a Jewish burial. The most recent cumulative death toll figures from the start of the pandemic are: 783 on 22 January, 816 on 29 January, 830 on 5 February, 854 on 12 February, and 867 on 19 February 2021. For a fuller explanation of the method of compiling the data, see the Board's most recent press release at:

<https://www.bod.org.uk/jewish-covid-19-mortality-total-for-19th-february-2021-867/>.

Community Security Trust's anti-Semitic incidents report for 2020

The Community Security Trust recorded 1,668 anti-Semitic incidents in the UK in 2020, the third highest total in a single calendar year, albeit it represented a decrease of 8% on the 2019 figure. Only in December 2020 were there fewer than 100 incidents each month, the number tending to be higher in months when Covid-19 lockdowns either did not apply or were being loosened. The overwhelming majority of incidents (84%) were for abusive behaviour, with a further 5% involving threats and 6% violence. For a comprehensive analysis of the data, including annual comparisons back to 2007, see the 51-page report at:

<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/7/2/Incidents%20Report%202020.1612785103.pdf>

Coronavirus chronicles: the Muslim experience of Covid-19

The All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, which was launched in 2017 and is chaired by Wes Streeting MP, has published an 86-page report entitled *Rising to the Challenge: A Community's Response to Covid-19*, which celebrates the reactions to the pandemic of British Muslim civil society. The document synthesizes a range of oral and written evidence (as listed on pp. 81–2), as well as official and other secondary sources (pp. 83–6), and highlights the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAME groups in general and Muslims in particular, including higher mortality from the virus. The report includes some statistical material, mostly previously published, but notes the limitations of data recording on religion or belief by Government and public health bodies (which is the subject of the second of its ten recommendations). It is available at:

[APPG+Rising+to+the+challenge+final+\(1\).pdf \(squarespace.com\)](https://www.squarespace.com/APPG+Rising+to+the+challenge+final+(1).pdf)

Notwithstanding their heightened risk from Covid-19, there has been some evidence that Muslims have been reluctant to contemplate vaccination against the virus. Some light into this matter is shone by a survey from Muslim Census, an independent and self-funded organization that has already produced reports on the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Muslim community (September 2020) and Islamophobia and the government (in January 2021). The vaccination study was conducted among an online sample of 1,026 British Muslims aged 16 and over on 5–10 February 2021. Of these, 15% had already been vaccinated, 56% were willing to be, 13% were unwilling, and 16% were unsure. At 29%, the degree of vaccine hesitancy was smaller than might have been expected, although it rose to 35% of those aged 28–45 and 42% among Black Muslims (of whom there were only 68 in the sample). The primary reason given for hesitancy was fear of the possible side effects of vaccination (66%), followed by the speed at which vaccines had been developed (51%). A press release on the survey is available at:

<https://muslimcensus.co.uk/muslims-have-a-positive-sentiment-towards-the-covid-vaccine>

Attitudes of young British Christians towards climate change

Nine in ten (92%) of British Christians aged 14–19 claim they are concerned about climate change, and 84% deem it important for Christians to take action in response to it, yet only 9% think their own church is doing enough to address the issue. This is according to a new report from the Youthscape Centre for Research and Tearfund: *Burning Down the House: How the Church Could Lose Young People over Climate Inaction*. The self-selecting online sample of 630 (which was ‘not representative of all Christian teenagers in Britain’, see the methodology notes on p. 20) was even more concerned about discrimination (96%) and poverty (94%), with slightly fewer troubled by global pandemics (88%), conflict and war (87%), and extremism and terrorism (82%) . The report is available at:

<https://weare.tearfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Burning-Down-The-House-Youthscape-and-Tearfund.pdf>

Church of England’s carbon footprint: first year’s data from energy tool

One year after the Church of England’s General Synod committed to planning towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030, its Research and Statistics team has published a 15-page report by Samuel Nunney on *Energy Footprint Tool, 2019: Results and Understanding Concerning the Carbon Footprint for Church Energy Use*. Based upon usable data from 28% of places of worship, the report calculates that the total net carbon footprint for the Church’s buildings in 2019 was 185,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases, which is 12.5% smaller than an equivalent estimate made in 2006. The top 13% of church buildings by size accounted for almost a third of the Church’s overall carbon footprint, with churches in urban parishes having a much larger carbon footprint than those in rural ones. The report is available at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Energy%20Footprint%20Tool%202019.pdf>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

On your marks! The decennial population census of England and Wales is on 21 March

The next decennial population census of England and Wales takes place on Sunday, 21 March 2021 (the census in Scotland has been postponed until 2022). This time, the aspiration is that it will primarily be conducted online, although provision is also being made for completion on paper (as has hitherto been customary). As in 2001 and 2011, there will be a voluntary question on religious profession: ‘What is your religion?’

So far, there has been relatively limited public discourse about this religious aspect of the 2021 census (it will be recalled that the legal campaign mounted by the Sikh Federation UK, which has featured in several editions of *Counting Religion in Britain*, concerned the inclusion of a Sikh tick-box in the ethnicity question). However, in the final weeks before the census, there are increasing signs of efforts (largely made online or via social media) to publicize it to the various faith communities.

A selective round-up of some religious census-related news follows.

Humanists UK are running a campaign along the lines of ‘If you’re not religious, say so! Tick “no religion” in the 2021 census.’ They are claiming that: ‘The data on religion produced by the last census gave a very misleading picture of the UK, *cutting the number of non-religious people in half*. This is because the question is worded in a way that leads people to tick a religious option by *presuming you are religious*.’ There is even a special appeal to the erstwhile Jedi knights of the 2001 and 2011 censuses to consider recording themselves as non-religious on this occasion. In addition to a mass mailshot of their contacts and supporters, Humanists UK have a census website, with FAQs and links to their presence on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, at:

<https://humanism.org.uk/census-2021/>

Atheism UK has a similar blog on the topic, ‘Don’t believe it? Don’t tick it! If you don’t follow a religion, say so!’ at:

<https://www.atheismuk.com/census-2021/>

Census resources for British Hindus are available at:

vhp.org.uk/census-2021/

The Institute of Jainology (which argues that Jains have been undercounted at previous censuses) has advice and videos at:

<https://www.jainology.org/census2021/>

The AHRC and ESRC are supporting fifteen public engagement with research projects with grants of up to £10,000 to inspire public imagination in the census, including one on ‘Engaging Muslim communities with Census 2021: a focus on Somali and Kashmiri youth’, led by Serena Hussain, and another on ‘Census stories: identity, religion, and demographic change in Milton

Keynes’, led by John Maiden and a team at the Open University. Further information is available at:

<https://ahrc.ukri.org/research/readwatchlisten/features/public-engagement-with-the-census-research/>

Serena Hussain is also joint author with Mohammad Seddon and Abderrahmane Labreche of a recently published 33-page report from the British Muslim Heritage Centre on *Engaging British Muslims with the Census*. This derives from research conducted in September and October 2020, including through two small-scale surveys, a paper-based mock census household survey in Greater Manchester and an online attitudinal survey of UK Muslims. The report is available at:

www.bmhc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/HRPI-Census-Report.pdf

Scottish Surveys Core Questions: 2019 results released

The Scottish Government has released the technical report and tables for the 2019 Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ). The SSCQ is an annual compilation of key indicators from three different studies: the Scottish Household Survey, the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, and the Scottish Health Survey. Table 1, below, shows the time series of responses to the question on religious affiliation: ‘What religion, religious denomination, or body do you belong to?’ This charts the relentless growth in religious nones, whose proportion has increased by more than twelve points in the space of seven years. The full data are available at:

<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/About/Surveys/SSCQ>

Table 1: Self-assigned religious affiliation, Scotland, 2012–19 (percentages across)

Year	N =	Church of Scotland	Roman Catholic	Other Christian	Muslim	Other religion	None
2012	20,527	32.1	15.5	7.2	1.5	1.9	41.3
2013	21,038	30.8	15.5	7.3	1.2	2.0	43.0
2014	20,153	29.2	15.0	7.6	1.4	1.7	44.5
2015	20,183	27.5	14.5	7.3	1.7	1.6	46.6
2016	19,532	25.5	13.8	8.0	1.4	2.0	48.7
2017	18,981	24.1	14.5	7.8	1.6	2.3	49.4
2018	20,107	23.2	14.3	8.5	1.6	1.9	50.1
2019	20,200	21.5	13.6	7.4	1.8	1.8	53.7

Source: Scottish Surveys Core Questions.

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Coronavirus chronicles: University of York’s ‘Covid-19, Churches, and Communities’

The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture (CSCC) at the University of York has recently launched an online survey into ‘Covid-19, Churches, and Communities: Current Needs and Planning for Recovery’, in partnership with the Church of England, Historic England, the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance, and the National Churches Trust. The project’s aims are fivefold:

- to map the extensive impact on the wellbeing of communities and individuals of Covid-19 restrictions on church buildings and activities
- to identify the many creative responses made by churches to the challenges of caring for congregations and the wider community
- to support national and local guidance, decision-making, and planning for recovery
- to supply evidence for presentation to Government of the importance of churches, and the activities they sustain, to the life and wellbeing of communities across the country
- to identify the support needed on the ground if churches are to play a key role in national recovery

Respondents to the survey will be self-selecting. The CSCC ‘wants to hear from everyone whose lives have been affected by the restrictions on access to church buildings and the spiritual, social, and community activities they host. This includes people of all faith/spiritual backgrounds.’ The survey can be taken at:

<https://churchesandcovid.org>

This is the second coronavirus-related survey to have been undertaken by the CSCC. The first, ‘Where Do We Go from Here? Churches, Communities, and Buildings during Covid and beyond’, attracted over 2,500 responses from clergy, church members, and the general public in September 2020.

Coronavirus chronicles: launch of Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS)

The University of Manchester’s Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity, in association with the University of St Andrews and the University of Sussex, has recently launched a new research project: ‘Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS): Documenting the Lives of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in a Time of Crisis’. Funded by the ESRC, and working with a range of partners (including Ipsos MORI, who will be managing the online and telephone fieldwork), EVENS is seeking participation by 17,000 members of ethnic and religious minorities in Britain, between February and May 2021, inviting them to share their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns across a range of areas, including racism and discrimination. The project’s website is at:

<https://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/research/projects/evens/>

Coronavirus chronicles: impact of Covid-19 on London’s Strictly Orthodox Jews

London’s Strictly Orthodox Jewish community has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, it exhibits one of the highest Covid-19 seroprevalence levels in the world to date. This is the conclusion of a preliminary study (yet to be peer reviewed) by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and research partners and reported in a recent eprint: Katherine Gaskell et al., ‘Extremely High SARS-CoV-2 Seroprevalence in a Strictly-Orthodox Jewish Community in the UK’. Serum samples, which were tested for Covid antibodies, were available for 1,242 members of a cross-section of 343 households contacted between late October and early December 2020. The overall seroprevalence (infection rate) for Covid-19 was found to be 64%, five times the national and London averages, and rising to 74% among secondary school pupils and adults. Suspected infections peaked in early March 2020, before the first national lockdown, during which they fell sharply, before rising again throughout the autumn. The reasons behind this high infection rate remain unclear, but the researchers note

that Strictly Orthodox Jews share the characteristics of other ethnic minorities in having larger family sizes, higher rates of household crowding, and relative socio-economic deprivation. The research paper can be viewed at:

<https://datacompass.lshmt.ac.uk/id/eprint/2084/>

Renewal in the Baptist Union of Great Britain during the 1990s

Although the Baptist Union of Great Britain has not been immune from secularization (its membership has shrunk by 45% between 1970 and 2019), it is generally accepted that it has fared less badly than most mainstream Churches in the country and that it has exhibited some counter-currents of growth and renewal. This provides the backdrop to Andy Goodliff's *Renewing a Modern Denomination: A Study of Baptist Institutional Life in the 1990s* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021, xiv + 237 pp., ISBN: 978-1-7252-7982-7, £22, paperback), which is a revision of the author's doctoral thesis at the University of St Andrews. Based on a wide range of archival and published primary sources, this is the first full-length history of Baptist developments during the 1990s. However, the author's principal focus is not to analyse and comment upon the movement of Baptist metrics during the last decade of the twentieth century (albeit there is a basic tabulation of the data in Appendix 3 on pp. 213–14). Rather, he provides a mainly theological and ecclesiological account of the tensions between two competing visions of Baptist renewal that emerged in the 1980s and assumed centre stage in the 1990s under the leadership of two pairs of influential individuals. There are points at which the discussion does touch on the broader issue of church growth and decline, but a somewhat inadequate index may make them hard to locate on a cursory read. The book's webpage is at:

<https://wipfandstock.com/9781725279827/renewing-a-modern-denomination/>

Theology and Religious Studies Provision in UK Higher Education (2019): A response

In the May 2019 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*, we featured a somewhat bleak report by the British Academy on *Theology and Religious Studies Provision in UK Higher Education*. Rather belatedly, the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR), established in 1954, has issued a 36-page response, claiming that the British Academy has 'critically misrepresented', and 'endangered' the wellbeing of, religious studies, a sub-discipline that is portrayed by the BASR as 'a post-war social science', as distinct from theology's status as 'an ancient discipline'. Central to BASR's case is a reworking of HESA enrolment data (presented in appendix 2 on pp. 28–36), which suggest that religious studies 'numbers are holding up much better than it might appear'; moreover, its 'graduates remain highly employable'. The BASR response can be found at:

https://basrblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/basr_response_final.pdf

Three recent articles in academic religion journals

Please note, in each instance access is dependent upon a personal or institutional subscription or is on a pay-per-view basis:

- Leslie Francis, Andrew Village, and David Voas, 'The Changing Psychological Type Profile and Psychological Temperament of Church of England Clergy', *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 31, November 2020, pp. 93–110; comparison

of the psychological profiles of two samples of Church of England clergy, 863 in 2007 and 1,471 in 2013, suggesting some significant changes over time, among both male and female clergy:

<https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004443969/BP000016.xml>

- Leslie Francis and Andrew Village, ‘Viewing the Impact of Covid-19 through the Eyes of Retired Clergy’, *Theology*, Vol. 124, No. 1, January 2021, pp. 24–31; comparison of the attitudes of 231 ministry-active retired clergy in the Church of England and 748 stipendiary clergy to the ‘Coronavirus, Church, and You’ survey in May–July 2020, suggesting that the former espoused the trajectory to the digital age as enthusiastically as the latter but were more likely to adhere to a model of Anglican ministry that valued both local place and sacred space:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0040571X20985698>
- Stephen McKinney, Leslie Francis, and Ursula McKenna, ‘Assessing Sectarian Attitudes among Catholic Adolescents in Scotland’, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2021, pp. 1–18; deploying a newly designed eight-item scale of Catholic sectarian attitudes, and evaluating the influence of five sets of factors, the authors demonstrate the existence of sectarian attitudes in a sub-sample of 797 13- to 15-year-old school pupils in Scotland who self-identified as Catholic as part of the Young People’s Attitude to Religious Diversity Project in 2011–12:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13617672.2019.1678293>

NEW DATASETS

UK Data Service, SN 8767: Community Life Survey, 2019–2020

The Community Life Survey (CLS) is conducted annually by Kantar Public on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport. In the latest round, undertaken between 24 April 2019 and 29 March 2020, 10,243 adults aged 16 and over living in private residences in England were interviewed online or by self-completion postal questionnaire. One aim of the CLS is to investigate religion in relation to community life, including volunteering and charitable giving. Questions are also asked about religious affiliation and whether respondents actively practise their religion. Further information about the dataset can be found in the catalogue description at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8767>

UK Data Service, SN 8772: British Social Attitudes Survey, 2019

The British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) is Britain’s longest-running cross-sectional survey, undertaken annually since 1983 (except in 1988 and 1992). The 2018 BSA was a major source of religion-related data, incorporating, as it did, the ISSP Religion IV module. The 2019 questionnaire reverted to type, asking a sample of 3,224 adults living in private households about their religious affiliation (current and by upbringing) and attendance at religious services. These constitute essential background variables for the analysis of the rest of the questionnaire, especially the sections dealing with social and moral issues. The main fieldwork was conducted face-to-face by NatCen Social Research between July and November 2019. Additional enquiries were made by means of self-completion questionnaires issued to thirds of the main

sample; recipients of versions B and C were invited to assess the importance of various factors for getting ahead, one of which was a person's religion. Further information about the dataset can be found in the catalogue description at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8772>

PEOPLE NEWS

Katie Harrison appointed Archbishop of Canterbury's public affairs adviser

The Archbishop of Canterbury has appointed Katie Harrison, formerly director of the Faith Research Centre (FRC) at the commercial agency of Savanta ComRes, as his new social and public affairs adviser. She had headed the FRC since 2016, where she oversaw a wide range of quantitative projects, the findings of many of which have been featured by BRIN on our news pages. We wish her well in her new role.