

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Coronavirus chronicles: Covid-19 and the Christian Church

The impact of Covid-19 on the Christian Church has recently been measured in two separate waves of Christian Research's online Resonate panel, a self-selecting (and thus potentially unrepresentative) sample of church leaders and other Christians.

In March 2021, panellists were asked to report on the state of church finances one year after the start of the pandemic. In the majority of churches, income had decreased, either a little (42%) or a lot (30%), but 49% of respondents were still hopeful that the financial position of their church would return to normal after the pandemic, more than the 38% who said that it probably or definitely would not. The Christian Research press release is at:

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

In May 2021, a module, commissioned by Ecclesiastical Insurance and completed by 1,132 church leaders, was fielded about the digital transformation of the Church as a result of the pandemic. The overwhelming majority of participants reported they had adopted new digital communication channels such as Zoon and Facebook to stay in touch with their congregations during the coronavirus crisis, and 43% noted increases in 'attendance' compared with pre-pandemic levels. Ecclesiastical has issued a brief press statement at:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/media-centre/social-media-sermons-and-zoom-communions/>

There is also a fuller account in the online version of the *Church Times* for 16 July 2021 at:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/16-july/news/uk/lockdown-sees-church-leaders-use-email-and-zoom-for-the-first-time-ecclesiastical-survey-finds>

Coronavirus chronicles: the Jewish experience of Covid-19

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) has published the sixth of its reports about the impact of Covid-19 on the UK's Jewish community, derived from an online survey of a self-selecting sample of 6,984 Jews conducted on 9–31 July 2020. Written by David Graham and Jonathan Boyd, this is the 15-page *Lasting Effects: Experiences of Covid-19 Infections and Long Covid Symptoms among Jews in the UK*. Five months into the pandemic, one-quarter of UK Jews noted that they had experienced Covid-like symptoms, three-fifths of whom had actually tested positive for the virus. Of those with symptoms, 84% claimed (at the time of interview) to have made a full recovery, but 13% were experiencing persistent health problems they did not have before the pandemic, with 3% still suffering from the primary symptoms of the virus. The report is available at:

<https://www.jpr.org/publication?id=17863>

The United Synagogue, a union of 62 British Orthodox Jewish congregations, conducted an online survey of its members during May 2021, receiving 5,400 responses (equivalent to 15% of the universe), half of them from adults aged 61–80 years. One-quarter claimed that they felt much less (10%) or a little less (15%) connected with their community than before the pandemic, while 19% did not anticipate attending their community’s programmes and activities at all in future, with a further 6% thinking they would participate in them online only. A majority (58%) foresaw they would engage in a hybrid of in-person and online activities post-pandemic, with just 17% wanting in-person provision only. The United Synagogue has yet to release a report on the survey, but selected findings have been published in the *Jewish News* (29 July 2021, p. 3) and *Jewish Chronicle* (30 July 2021, pp. 22–3).

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 total had reached 906 by 13 July and 907 by 28 July 2021.

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Office for National Statistics consultation on 2021 census outputs

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has initiated a public consultation (with a closing date of 5 October 2021 for responses) on a set of draft proposals for the design and release of the census 2021 outputs for England and Wales. A topic summary for ethnic group, national identity, language, and religion is intended to be made available as a second order of priority (after demography and migration) towards the start of phase 1 of the results process, with multivariate and cross-tabulated data available in phase 2, and small population tables in phase 3. For details of the consultation questionnaire and background documentation, go to:

<https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/external-affairs/census-2021-outputs-consultation/>

The National Secular Society was quick off the mark to write and publish its response, calling for (a) census 2021 outputs to refer to ‘religion or belief’ where possible and appropriate, and (b) the ‘religion question’, and subsequent outputs, in all future censuses to be phrased in a manner that is inclusive of the non-religious. This response is available at:

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/ons-census-2021-nss-response.pdf>

Religious marriages in England and Wales, 2018

There were 3.4% fewer marriages of opposite-sex couples in England and Wales in 2018 than during the preceding year, according to the Office for National Statistics, but the decline was greater for religious marriages (down by 11.4%) than civil ones (down by 1.0%). Just 21.1% of all opposite-sex marriages in 2018 were solemnized according to religious rites, a record low proportion (it was 32.0% in 2010). The Church of England and Church in Wales remained the dominant faith providers of opposite-sex marriages, but even their combined market share is now reduced to 15.6% (from 23.6% in 2010). For same-sex couples, a mere 0.9% had a religious wedding. The raw data for opposite-sex couples since 2010 are shown in Table 1, below, while the full dataset back to 1837 is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/marriages-in-england-and-wales-2018>

Table 1: Mode of solemnization of opposite-sex marriages, England and Wales, 2010–18

Year	Civil	Religious	Church of England/Church in Wales	Roman Catholic	Other Christian	Non-Christian	Total
2010	165,680	78,128	57,607	8,622	9,032	2,867	243,808
2011	174,681	74,452	54,463	8,390	8,844	2,755	249,133
2012	184,167	79,473	58,797	8,664	9,027	2,985	263,640
2013	172,254	68,600	50,226	7,550	8,035	2,789	240,854
2014	179,344	68,028	49,717	7,598	7,895	2,818	247,372
2015	176,406	62,614	45,901	7,001	6,937	2,775	239,020
2016	182,766	60,008	44,392	6,513	6,616	2,487	242,774
2017	181,607	54,303	40,051	5,841	6,103	2,308	235,910
2018	179,752	48,118	35,536	4,958	5,345	2,279	227,870

Source: Office for National Statistics.

Religious hate crimes in Scotland, 2020–21

There were 573 religiously aggravated crimes in Scotland in 2020–21, 14% less than in 2019–20, albeit 7% more than in 2018–19. The majority (81%) of these cases resulted in court proceedings. Details are given in *Hate Crime in Scotland, 2020–21*, published by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service at:

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media-site-news-from-copfs/1957-hate-crime-in-scotland-2020-21>

Entries for Religious Studies in June 2021 school examinations in England and Wales

The traditional summer public examinations in schools across the UK were cancelled for the second consecutive year in 2021, on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, which severely disrupted classroom-based teaching. As in 2020, qualifications were still awarded to pupils who would have sat for those examinations, but on the basis of grades predicted by teachers on the evidence of coursework, mock examinations, and other measures. Such results are not methodologically comparable with those from previous years, and (it has been widely argued) have led to significant grade inflation, so it seems prudent to report only the numbers entered for Religious Studies (RS) examinations in England and Wales at GCE A and AS Levels (Table 2) and for the GCSE Full Course and Short Course (Table 3), with comparisons back to 2015.

Table 2: June examination entries for GCE A (Advanced) and AS (Advanced Subsidiary) Level Religious Studies, England and Wales, 2015–21

Year	A Level England	A Level Wales	AS Level England	AS Level Wales
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
2020	14,564	1,126	1,658	1,312
2021	15,659	986	1,215	1,233

Source: Joint Council for Qualifications.

For GCE A Level, the main point of interest is the 7.5% increase over 2020 in RS entries in England (8.5% for male and 7.1% for female students, although the latter still predominated at 72.6%), but still below the pre-pandemic figure; in Wales, by contrast, there was a 12.4% decline, with both home nations registering falls in AS Level entries. For the full course GCSE in RS, the pattern was reversed, with England down by 2.4% and Wales up by 3.6% on 2020; entries for the short course GCSE fell in both countries. Full details of both sets of results can be found on the Joint Council for Qualifications website at:

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

Table 3: June examination entries for GCSE Full and Short Course Religious Studies, England and Wales, 2015–21

Year	Full Course England	Full Course Wales	Short Course England	Short Course Wales
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	10,129	21,530	6,198
2020	226,767	9,997	18,002	5,439
2021	221,419	10,358	15,672	4,225

Source: Joint Council for Qualifications.

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Four recent articles in religion journals

- Leslie Francis, David Lankshear, Emma Eccles, and Ursula McKenna, ‘Assessing the Impact of the Student Voice Project on Shaping the Ethos of Anglican Primary Schools: a Study Focusing on the Diocese of Llandaff’, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2021, pp. 300–14: comparison between two survey years of student attitudes to five areas of school ethos in 23 schools participating in the project, revealing significant overall increase in scores, relative to students from 41 schools in other dioceses that did not participate in the project;
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13617672.2020.1829268>
- Leslie Francis, Simon Mansfield, and Ursula McKenna, ‘Psychological Segmentation of Cathedral Visitors in England and Wales: Introducing the Visitor Expectations Type Scales 2.0 (VETS 2.0)’, *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 6, 2021, pp. 535–53: employs data from 1,278 visitors to five cathedrals to demonstrate the coherence and internal consistency of the eight measures of VETS 2.0;
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13674676.2020.1776692>
- Christopher Alan Lewis, Leslie Francis, and Alison Geary, ‘Psychological Type Profile of Methodist Churchgoers in England’, *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 6, 2021, pp. 638–46: comparison of the psychological type profile of 263 Methodist and 3,302 Anglican churchgoers, the proportion of sensing types being significantly higher among the former;
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13674676.2020.1846509>

- Stephen Bullivant and Ben Clements, 'The Real Thing', *The Tablet*, 14 August 2021, pp. 7–8: further report of findings from an online survey of 1,837 self-identifying British Catholics aged 18 and over in 2019, revealing that 51% claimed probably or definitely to believe in the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist; <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/20463/the-real-presence-what-british-catholics-believe-about-the-eucharist>

Reminder: most articles in academic journals are still not open access and a personal or institutional subscription, or one-time payment, may be required to read or download them.

APPENDIX
KEYWORDS/TAGS

A Levels, Alison Geary, Ben Clements, Board of Deputies of British Jews, cathedrals, census of population, Christian Research, Christopher Alan Lewis, church finances, Church Times, coronavirus, Covid-19, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, David Graham, David Lankshear, digital transformation, Diocese of Llandaff, Ecclesiastical Insurance, Emma Eccles, GCSEs, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Jews, Joint Council for Qualifications, Jonathan Boyd, Journal of Beliefs and Values, Leslie Francis, Mental Health Religion and Culture, Methodists, mortality, National Secular Society, Office for National Statistics, psychological type profile, public examinations, Real Presence, religious hate crime, religious marriages, religious prejudice, Religious Studies, Resonate, rites of passage, Roman Catholics, Scotland, Simon Mansfield, Stephen Bullivant, Student Voice Project, The Tablet, United Synagogue, Ursula McKenna, visitor expectations