

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources
Number 74 – November 2021

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OPINION POLLS

Latest updates to YouGov tracker polls on religious issues

From summer 2019, several religious topics have been included in YouGov's online tracker polling among Britons aged 18 and over, with new data points added as follows since our last general update in the March 2021 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*:

- *Influence of religion* (28–29 July 2021, N = 2,022): 58% believed that religion on the whole has a negative influence on the world, 17% a positive influence, with 25% undecided or preferring not to say – full tables available at <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/philosophy/trackers/the-influence-of-religion-on-the-world-according-to-brits>
- *Belief in God* (4–5 August 2021, N = 1,968): 25% believed there is a God or gods, 22% did not believe in a God or gods but did believe there is some sort of spiritual greater power, 41% did not believe in any sort of god(s) or greater spiritual power, and 12% were undecided – full tables available at <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/philosophy/trackers/brits-beliefs-about-gods>
- *Religious Studies* (23–25 October 2021, N = 1,776): 55% considered it not very important (31%) or not at all important (24%) to teach Religious Studies at secondary school, while 39% judged it very important (10%) or quite important (29%) and 5% did not know what to think – full tables available at https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/0bar7ngaqn/P_Main_Political_Tracker_Survey_Rotation6_sr_2.pdf
- *Sunday trading* (13–15 November 2021, N = 1,782): 47% thought that shops in England and Wales should be allowed to open for as long as they wanted on Sundays, 29% that shops should only be able to open for six hours on Sundays (in accordance with the 1994 legislation), while 15% opposed shops opening at all on Sundays and 9% were undecided – full tables available at https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/trno19p4wg/P_Main_Political_Tracker_Survey_Rotation6_sr_5.pdf

Popularity of national and religious events: YouGov Ratings data for quarter 3, 2021

Newly-released YouGov Ratings data reveal the popularity of selected national and religious events among Britons during the third quarter of 2021. Topline findings (excluding 'don't knows') are shown in Table 1, below, while additional information and links can be found at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/ratings/arts/popularity/national-and-religious-events/all>

Table 1: popularity of national and religious events, Great Britain, third quarter 2021 (percentages)

Event	Heard of	Popularity Rank	Liked	Disliked	Neutral
Remembrance Day	98	1	79	6	13
Christmas	98	2	74	10	14
Boxing Day	94	3	69	5	20
Mother's Day	96	4	66	7	22
Shrove Tuesday	93	5	62	6	26
Easter	96	6	61	9	27
New Year's Eve	98	7	60	16	22
Guy Fawkes Night	97	8	57	18	22
Father's Day	97	9	55	11	30
Halloween	98	10	47	25	27
Saint Patrick's Day	96	11	44	11	41
Valentine's Day	97	12	36	27	34
Black History Month	79	13	35	20	25
April Fool's Day	96	14	34	25	37
Ramadan	95	15	28	24	43
Hanukkah	79	16	28	8	43
Eid al-Adha	54	17	18	9	26
Holi	32	18	15	5	12

YouGov@Cambridge Globalism Project, 2021: conspiracy theories

YouGov has recently been reporting the results of the wide-ranging YouGov@Cambridge Globalism Project for 2021, including a module on conspiracy theories. This was fielded in 24 countries, online interviews being conducted with 1,062 Britons aged 18 and over on 4–21 August 2021. Three of the conspiracy theories investigated had religion-related overtones, as follows, with the headline British findings shown after each statement:

- ‘Humans have made contact with aliens and this fact has been deliberately hidden from the public’: definitely or probably true 16%, definitely or probably false 56%, don’t know either way 29%
- ‘The official account of the Nazi Holocaust is a lie and the number of Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II has been exaggerated on purpose’: definitely or probably true 4%, definitely or probably false 81%, don’t know either way 14%
- ‘A secret group of Satan-worshipping paedophiles has taken control of parts of the US government and mainstream US media’: definitely or probably true 8%, definitely or probably false 69%, don’t know either way 24%

The topline results for all countries can be found at:

https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/567k6nmnvf/Globalism21_ConspiracyTheories_AllCountries.pdf

Knowledge and awareness of the Holocaust: multinational survey including the UK

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany has recently released the headline results of a survey it commissioned from Schoen Cooperman Research on knowledge and

awareness of the Holocaust in the UK, alongside parallel studies in Austria, Canada, France, and the USA. In the UK, a total of 3,780 interviews with adults aged 18 and over was achieved (by an unexplained methodology) between 29 September and 17 October 2021, including over-samples in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Although 89% of respondents had definitely heard about the Holocaust, and 75% were aware that it referred to the extermination of Jewish people, knowledge of specifics was often relatively hazy. For example, 52% did not select six million as the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust, and comparatively few individuals could name any Nazi concentration camps other than Auschwitz-Birkenau. Moreover, 57% believed that fewer people seemed to care about the Holocaust than they used to, and 56% that something like the Holocaust could happen again today. Almost one person in ten (9%) even agreed that the Holocaust had been a myth or the scale of murders of Jews greatly exaggerated. More generally, 65% acknowledged that anti-Semitism existed in contemporary UK society, with 22% saying it was more widespread than ten years before. A press release and the executive summary, with links to documentation for the other four countries surveyed, can be found at:

<https://www.claimscon.org/uk-study/>

Savanta ComRes polling for the Centre for Enterprise, Markets, and Ethics

‘Church leaders are out of touch with Christian opinion. Clergy convey a lack of understanding of key aspects of business, display excessive reliance on the power of taxation and government, and lack confidence in larger and global businesses – and, indeed, in Britain as a nation. A message is being preached that is not believed by most of its recipients.’ So writes Richard Turnbull, Director of the Centre for Enterprise, Markets, and Ethics (CEME), in a blog for *Christian Today*, and based upon the results of polling commissioned by CEME from Savanta ComRes between 10 May and 5 August 2021. Six discrete UK audiences were surveyed: 2,215 members of the general public, 724 regular (at least once a month) churchgoers (a sub-set of the general public sample), 331 business leaders, 513 Muslims, 329 Jews, and 61 Church leaders. In-depth interviews were also conducted with ten Anglican and Catholic bishops. The total sample size was just short of 3,500 persons.

Turnbull’s blog focuses on the dichotomy in attitudes towards business, enterprise, and tax between Church leaders (only a problematically small sample of whom were reached) and people in the pews, and certainly some of the divergences are, on the surface, strikingly large. For example, whereas 54% of regular churchgoers believed that employers care about their employees, the proportion fell to 30% among church leaders; likewise, 73% of regular churchgoers expressed trust in multinationals yet just 30% of church leaders. These findings sit within a relatively long tradition of research studies, including the Westminster Faith Debates, which have shown that clergy opinions on politico-economic issues often sit to the left of the laity over whom they exercise pastoral oversight. Turnbull’s blog can be read at:

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/when.it.comes.to.business.the.clergy.and.the.flock.see.things.very.differently/137740.htm>

Full data tables for all six audiences, constituting a rich resource for investigating the relationship between religious variables and attitudes towards business and business leaders, are available on the Savanta ComRes website at:

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/the-centre-for-enterprise-markets-and-ethics-the-ethics-and-morality-of-business/>

Other Savanta ComRes polling

- *Home for Good* (UK, 24–26 September 2021, N = 2,093 adults aged 18 and over), covering attitudes to hospitality, fostering, and supported lodgings, with the results for all questions disaggregated by religious affiliation (Christian/not Christian) and frequency of churchgoing (at least weekly/fortnightly/monthly/annually):
<https://comresglobal.com/polls/home-for-good-supported-lodgings/>
- *Marriage Foundation* (UK, 7–23 July 2021, N = 2,027 adults aged 18 and over who were or had been married), concerning reasons for marriage, preparation for marriage, wedding celebrations, and so forth, with the results for all questions disaggregated by religious affiliation (by major world faiths or none):
<https://comresglobal.com/polls/marriage-foundation-poll-november-2021/>
- Political omnibus (UK, 12–14 November 2021, N = 2,207 adults aged 18 and over), including anticipated attendance at a place of worship over the Christmas period as part of an annual (Q1_4) or weekly/monthly (Q1_5) routine:
<https://comresglobal.com/polls/corruption-hol-reform-and-mps-salaries-november-2021/>
- Political tracker (UK, 19–21 November 2021, N = 2,184 adults aged 18 and over), including perceived extent to which anti-Semitism (Q28_8) and Islamophobia (Q28_9) are problems in the UK:
<https://comresglobal.com/polls/savanta-comres-political-tracker-november-2021/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Perceiving the Church of England: an insider's reading of outsider views

Although not especially quantitative in its approach, a recent pamphlet by Stephen Hance, the Church of England's National Lead for Evangelism and Witness, offers some fascinating insights into the current health and future prospects of England's established Church. It is informed by three main empirical sources: monthly media evaluation reports produced by the Church's communication team between March 2019 and May 2020; thirteen statistical research reviews undertaken during the years 2013–20 by agencies such as Britain Thinks and Savanta ComRes; and five round-table discussions. Hance identifies four key findings, including that the most common perception of the Church of England is one of benign indifference; and he proposes ten trends for the future, outlining their implications. Copies of *Seeing Ourselves as Others See Us: Perceptions of the Church of England* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2021, 28 pp., ISBN: 978–1–78827–185–1, £3.95, series code MEv135) can be ordered online at:

<https://grovebooks.co.uk/collections/evangelism>

Church of England's energy footprint: annual report for 2020

The Church of England's General Synod has committed the Church to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The Church's Research and Statistics section has devised an energy footprint tool to assist in monitoring progress against this goal, and the second annual report, written by Samuel Nunney, has just been published. Based on energy use alone, and grossing up from the 25% response rate, it is estimated that the net carbon footprint for the Church of England's church buildings in 2020 was 137,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases, which was 27% smaller than in 2019, seemingly a good outcome. However, it is calculated that, had 2020 been a 'normal' year, unaffected by the lockdowns and closures arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, then the adjusted total net carbon footprint would have been around 189,000 tonnes, almost exactly the same as the 2019 figure, implying little progress towards the stated objective. The 12-page 2020 energy footprint report is available at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/EnergyFootprintTool2020.pdf>

Evangelical Alliance survey of Christians and climate change

In the wake of the COP26 global conference on climate change, the Evangelical Alliance UK (EA) has released a 12-page report distilling 10 key points from an online survey it ran in May 2021, when many Covid-19 restrictions were still in force, among self-selecting samples of church members (N = 722) and church leaders (N = 185) who responded to a link on the EA's website and social media platforms. Key point 2 indicated that 98% of informants believed that the Bible teaches us to care about God's creation, yet key point 3 revealed only 14% of members and 16% of leaders felt their church was doing enough to address climate change, with 77% and 72%, respectively, contending (key point 6) the issue is not considered a priority within the church. The report is available at:

<https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Changing-church-climate-change-10-key-points.pdf>

Coronavirus chronicles: children's ministry and the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected the faith formation of the majority of children and weakened religious nurture in families, schools, and churches alike. So concludes a new 20-page report from a multinational team of academic researchers and ministry practitioners: *Do We Need a New Plan for Children's Ministry?* They investigated the situation in four countries (UK, USA, Canada, and Brazil) by means of an online survey of church leaders, schools, and Christian parents in June 2021, supplemented by earlier national surveys (limited in the UK to 55 interviews). It is acknowledged that respondents are likely to have been more interested in the topic, potentially skewing data collection. The UK evidence is primarily of qualitative and indicative value. Moreover, while the situation described by the authors may have been exacerbated by the pandemic, it is certainly not new; the decline in religious socialization, at least in Britain, has been a long-term phenomenon. The report is available at:

<https://scriptureunion.ca/wp-content/uploads/Multi-national-Childrens-Ministry-Report-2021.pdf>

Mapping England's spiritual needs: estimates by Peter Brierley

The current edition (No. 78, December 2021) of *FutureFirst*, the bimonthly e-newsletter of Brierley Consultancy, features (on p. 3) a short article by Peter Brierley on the 'Spiritually Neediest Parts of England', which is illustrated by a map exhibiting the percentage of the population attending church by county before the onset of Covid-19. This is supported by a separate attachment comprising two pages of raw data, extracted from Brierley's *UK Church Statistics*, tabulating the estimated number of churchgoers by county and region in England from 1989 to 2020. Across England, churchgoing in 2020 stood at 4.9% of the population, according to Brierley, but in 32 of the 47 counties the figure was actually below the mean, dropping to 2.7% in South Yorkshire. The map, and the tables, are interesting in establishing relativities, albeit they are perhaps more contestable as calculations of current absolutes. For a start, there has been no church census in the whole of England since 2005, and none in London since 2012, so estimating contemporary trends becomes increasingly problematical (except where denominational counts are available). Also, of course, we lack concrete statistics about how far attendance at religious services has survived the Covid-19 pandemic, either in the form of the ambiguities of a return to in-person worship (discussed on pp. 4 and 6 of the same edition of *FutureFirst*) or presence at some kind of alternative digital service. Moreover, there are broader theological and methodological questions to be asked about how far the absence of churchgoing can be taken any longer as a proxy for spiritual need. The Victorians may have been able to get away with such a definition, but in the more pluralistic and individualized religious/spiritual landscape of the early twenty-first century, a broader basket of criteria may be required. To obtain a copy of *FutureFirst*, contact peter@brierleyres.com

Coronavirus chronicles: Co-operative Funeralcare's 2021 music charts

Co-operative Funeralcare, the UK's largest funeral provider, has been compiling playlists of music used in funerals for twenty years. Its latest lists, for 2021 and the first since 2019, have just been published, based on research conducted among the company's funeral directors and arrangers in August 2021 and reflecting music choices at approximately 100,000 funerals in the previous twelve months. For the second time running, the overall music chart featured no traditional hymns, being topped by a new entrant, *You'll Never Walk Alone* (by Gerry and the Pacemakers), a song whose haunting melody and lyrics seemed to match the mood of a nation gripped by a deadly pandemic, and displacing to number 2 position the long-standing number 1, *My Way* by Frank Sinatra. Besides the main listing, Co-operative Funeralcare also compiled top tens for four specialist genres: modern pop, classical (including Franz Schubert's *Ave Maria*), film and television (featuring, among others, the *Vicar of Dibley* theme tune), and hymns (favoured for funerals held in a religious setting). The three most popular hymns were *Abide with Me*, *The Lord is My Shepherd*, and *Amazing Grace*. For further information on all the 2021 charts, see:

<https://www.coop.co.uk/funeralcare/music/charts>

Coronavirus chronicles: update on Jewish mortality

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 latest figures of deaths to be released were: 927 on 24 September, 931 on 8 October, 934 on 15 October, 937 on 22 October, 941 on 29 October, 951 on 12 November, and 954 on 19 and 26 November 2021.

Representations of Muslims and Islam in the British media

In a 320-page report for the Centre for Media Monitoring at the Muslim Council of Britain, Faisal Hanif explores *British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018–2020)*. The methodology for the underlying research comprised daily monitoring, between October 2018 and September 2019, of 34 British media websites and 38 television channels using keyword searches, leading to the identification of 47,818 articles and 5,512 broadcast clips referring to Muslims and/or Islam, followed by analysis of each article or clip against five metrics to determine whether it was affirmative or not affirmative in nature. Almost three-fifths (59%) of the articles were found to incorporate negative references to Muslims or Islam, while 21% were judged antagonistic and 14% biased. In his conclusion, Hanif asserts that 'a large section of the media still favours voices that echo colonial era tropes which see Muslims as dangerous fanatics, terrorists and misogynists whilst giving preference to voices which regurgitate these tropes.' He claims not to seek any special treatment for Muslims; rather he wants journalists to depict them consistently as for other social groups. The report is available at:

<https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Crimes in churches, 2020/21: Freedom of Information data

The Countryside Alliance has released its analysis of crimes committed at churches or on church property during 2020/21, based upon replies received from 39 of the UK's 45 police forces to a request made under the Freedom of Information Act. Police Scotland was a notable non-respondent. Among responding forces, there was an aggregate of 1,451 thefts, 1,688 instances of vandalism, 824 physical/violent assaults, and 88 other crimes. The total of 4,051 cases was lower than in 2019/20 (albeit six forces registered an increase), notwithstanding eight months of Covid-19 lockdowns. For a full breakdown, see the Countryside Alliance's press release at:

<https://www.countryside-alliance.org/news/2021/11/over-4-000-crimes-committed-at-churches-in-past-ye>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Round-up of recent publications: four articles, a thesis, and a report

- Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, Kingsley Purdam, and Paul Weller, 'Much More than a Negation of Religion: a Qualitative Exploration of the Diversity of Non-Religious Identities in England and Wales', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2021, pp. 329–48; utilizes evidence from six focus groups of the avowedly non-religious to highlight the diversity of their religious identities:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13537903.2021.1936966>
- Andrew Village and Leslie Francis, 'Exploring Affect Balance: Psychological Well-Being of Church of England Clergy and Laity during the Covid-19 Pandemic', *Journal*

of Religion and Health, Vol. 60, No. 3, June 2021, pp. 1556–75; analysis of an opportunity sample of 4,449 respondents to the ‘Coronavirus, Church, and You’ online survey in May–July 2020, during the first UK Covid-19 lockdown, examining factors that raised or lowered psychological well-being and mitigating support mechanisms: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10943-021-01225-6>

- Leslie Francis, Andrew Village, and Anne Lawson, ‘Increasingly Fragile? Assessing the Cumulative Impact of the Pandemic on Rural Anglican Churches’, *Rural Theology*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2021, pp. 72–8; comparison of results from the opportunity samples behind the ‘Coronavirus, Church, and You’ (2020) and ‘Covid-19 and Church-21’ (2021) online surveys indicates that both rural Anglican clergy and laity have become more pessimistic about the future of the rural church: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14704994.2021.1980656>
- Keith Bailey, ‘Religious Attendance in Victorian Battersea’, *Local Historian*, Vol. 51, No. 3, July 2021, pp. 193–206; analysis of church censuses in this London borough in 1851, 1886–87, and 1902–03: <https://www.balh.org.uk/publication-tlh-the-local-historian-volume-51-number-3-july-2021>
- Anthony-Paul Cooper, *Exploring the Use of Twitter Data to better Understand Church Attendance* (PhD thesis, University of Turku, 2021, ISBN: 978–951–29–8657–6, 75 pp., PDF, free); content analysis of 1,004 tweets containing geodata and the word ‘church’ written on Sundays by 723 unique users over a ten-week period (commencing Easter Day) in 2014 across all London boroughs, identifying a statistically significant relationship between the sentiment of church-related tweets and the presence of church attendance growth in the borough from which the tweets were posted: <https://www.utupub.fi/handle/10024/152714>
- Mark Plater, *Report on a Survey of the Religious Education ITE Cohort, 2020–21*, Lincoln: Bishop Grosseteste University, 2021, 40 pp.; based upon responses to an online survey in March–July 2021 from 152 of the 662 trainees enrolled in 2020 for initial teacher education as secondary school teachers of Religious Education, exploring their backgrounds (33% professed to be atheists or agnostics and just 29% were strongly committed to a faith perspective), motivations, and experiences of training: <https://bgro.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/881/>

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.

NEW DATASETS

UK Data Service, SN 8867: Community Life Survey, 2020-2021

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 6 April 2020 and 29 March 2021, 10,917 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 practised their faith and mixed socially with different religious groups. Further information about the dataset can be found in the catalogue description at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8867>

UK Data Service, SN 8870: National Survey for Wales, 2020–2021

The National Survey for Wales (NSW) is conducted by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Welsh Government and three of its sponsored bodies. Between May 2020 and March 2021, 15,750 adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Wales were interviewed by telephone, a departure from the traditional face-to-face methodology (necessitated by Covid-19 conditions). From May to December 2020, respondents were those who had completed the NSW in face-to-face mode in previous years and who had agreed to be recontacted for further research; from January 2021, a fresh sample was drawn from the Post Office address file. The NSW now subsumes topics from five predecessor surveys, including local area and environment, NHS and social care, internet and media, children and education, housing, democracy and government, sport and recreation, wellbeing and finances, culture and Welsh language, and population health. Answers for these can be analysed by the single question on religion ('What is your religion?') A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8870>

PEOPLE NEWS

Professor Linda Woodhead MBE, now at King's College London

After a long association with Lancaster University, where she was latterly Distinguished Professor in the Sociology of Religion, Linda Woodhead moved on 1 December 2021 to King's College London to take up the post of F. D. Maurice Professor and Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. Over the years, she has undertaken both qualitative and quantitative fieldwork and surveys in religion, especially in a UK context, and she will perhaps be best known to the BRIN community for her research into spirituality, religious nones, contemporary values, and the Church of England. Her most recent book (co-authored with Roberta Katz, Sarah Ogilvie, and Jane Shaw) is *Gen Z, Explained: The Art of Living in a Digital Age* (University of Chicago Press, November 2021). We wish Linda every success in her new role.

APPENDIX
KEYWORDS/TAGS

aliens, Andrew Village, Anne Lawson, Anthony-Paul Cooper, anti-Semitism, Battersea, Bishop Grosseteste University, Board of Deputies of British Jews, business, carbon emissions, Centre for Enterprise Markets and Ethics, Centre for Media Monitoring, children's ministry, Christian Today, Christmas, church attendance, Church of England, climate change, Community Life Survey, Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, conspiracy theories, Co-operative Funeralcare, coronavirus, Coronavirus Church and You, Countryside Alliance, Covid-19, Covid-19 and Church-21, crimes in churches, energy footprint, Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport, enterprise, Evangelical Alliance, Faisal Hanif, fostering, funerals, FutureFirst, God, Grove Books, Holocaust, Home for Good, hospitality, hymns, influence of religion, initial teacher education, Islam, Islamophobia, Jews, Journal of Contemporary Religion, Journal of Religion and Health, Kantar Public, Keith Bailey, Kingsley Purdam, Leslie Francis, Linda Woodhead, Local Historian, Mark Plater, marriage, Marriage Foundation, media, mortality, music, Muslims, National Survey for Wales, Office for National Statistics, Paul Weller, Peter Brierley, QAnon, religious affiliation, religious education, religious festivals, religious socialization, Religious Studies, Richard Turnbull, Rural Theology, Samuel Nunney, Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, Satan-worshipping paedophiles, Savanta ComRes, Schoen Cooperman Research, spiritual need, Stephen Hance, Sunday trading, supported lodgings, taxation, Twitter, University of Turku, Welsh Government, YouGov, YouGov@Cambridge