

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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## OPINION POLLS

### **British Muslim attitudes: Savanta ComRes poll for Hyphen**

In its launch opinion poll, Hyphen, an online journalistic resource focusing on issues of importance to Muslims across the UK and Europe, commissioned Savanta ComRes to undertake an online survey of 1,503 UK Muslims between 22 April and 10 May 2022. The results indicated broad optimism among Muslims about their lives and prospects in the UK. For example, 53% of respondents said their lives were better than five years ago, and 59% that life as a Muslim is generally better in the UK than in other Western European nations. At the same time, Islamophobia is still reported as commonplace, 69% of Muslims in employment having experienced it in a variety of work situations. As with the rest of the UK population, Muslims are also concerned about the cost-of-living crisis. Hyphen has a series of press releases on its website exploring the survey, including:

- <https://hyphenonline.com/2022/06/17/majority-of-british-muslims-believe-that-life-in-the-uk-is-better-than-it-was-five-years-ago/>
- <https://hyphenonline.com/2022/06/07/a-nation-of-optimistic-and-confident-british-muslims/>
- <https://hyphenonline.com/2022/06/07/exclusive-more-than-two-thirds-of-uk-muslims-have-experienced-islamophobia-in-the-workplace/>

while the full data tables, with breaks by demographics, can be found at:

- <https://comresglobal.com/polls/hyphen-uk-muslim-attitudes-survey/>

### **Overestimating demographics: YouGov poll for Campaign for Common Sense**

A recent online YouGov poll, commissioned by the Campaign for Common Sense (CCS) among 1,800 adults, has reaffirmed the findings of earlier surveys (notably by Ipsos MORI) that Britons tend to overestimate the proportion of particular minority groups in the population, as compared with the reality exhibited in current official sources. Media reporting of minorities undoubtedly contributes to these inflated impressions. In this new poll, the number of Jews and Muslims was especially overestimated, at 10% (almost twenty times the actual figure) and 15% (more than three times), respectively. A CCS press release is available at:

- <https://campaigncommonsense.com/resources/overestimating-demographics-new-ccs-poll-by-yougov/>

### **Religious correlates of attitudes to animal testing: Savanta ComRes poll for RSPCA**

On behalf of the RSPCA, Savanta ComRes surveyed public attitudes towards the use of animals in experimentation and non-animal technologies, 2,359 UK adults aged 18 and over being interviewed online on 1–3 April 2022. Answers to each of the five questions were disaggregated by a range of demographic variables, including religious identification. In practice, religion made little difference to opinions on the subject. For example, 76% of the entire sample agreed they were concerned about the use of animals in scientific research and testing, with 75% for religious nones and 76% for the religious (76% among Christians and

74% for Muslims, the only two groups with statistically meaningful cell sizes). The full tables can be found at:

- <https://comresglobal.com/polls/rspca-animal-testing-poll/>

### **Disinclination to marry: are religious factors at play?**

Between 2 March and 23 April 2022, YouGov surveyed an online sample of 8,765 British adults aged 18 and over on the subject of marriage. Of these, 3,759 individuals were single or in a relationship but unmarried, 1,045 (28%) of whom indicated they did not want to get married. This sub-set of respondents was then asked why they did not want to get married, being invited to select from a list of twelve possible options, with multiple answers permitted. The top four choices were: ‘I don’t see the point/reason in getting married’ (50%), ‘I don’t think marriage is right for me’ (36%), ‘I think marriage is outdated/no longer relevant’ (34%), and ‘I don’t think I will meet the right person to marry’ (24%). However, 21% of the sub-set replied: ‘I don’t like the religious element associated with marriage’, rising to 48% among those aged 18–24. Full breaks by demographics are available at:

- <https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/erd7xg2k59/YouGov%20Results%20-%20Marriage.pdf>

## OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

### **Government diversity monitoring data: latest reports**

The protected characteristic profiles (including by religion or belief) of government employees are now a firmly established feature of the official statistics landscape. Two recent exemplars may be briefly noted. The first is *Home Office Workforce Diversity Statistics, 2020 to 2021* (which gives the distribution of staff by religion by grade in percentages) at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/home-office-workforce-diversity-statistics-2020-to-2021>

and the second is *UK Armed Forces Biannual Diversity Statistics, April 2022* (revealing an increase of 21.4% over the past ten years in the proportion of tri-service regular forces professing no religion, to stand at 36.1% in April 2022 compared with 60.3% Christians) at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-april-2022>

### **Response rate to Scotland’s census, 2022 still below target**

As reported in the April and May 2022 editions of *Counting Religion in Britain*, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Scottish Government remain on the back foot over the low completion and return rates of the household schedules for the Scottish population census. First delayed by a whole year on account of Covid-19, householders in Scotland were then given two unscheduled extensions of the 2022 deadline (for six weeks combined, and costing an extra £6 million) to file their returns. Yet, as at 9 June 2022 (when last reported), only 87.9% had done so, falling to 81.7% in Glasgow City. By UK-wide standards, this is a disappointing outcome for an enumeration that is supposed to be universal in coverage and is conducted under penalty (apart from two voluntary questions). It has also emerged that the original design of the Scottish census did not incorporate any statistical safety net to mitigate the risk of flawed data arising from low response. The latest NRS press release on the matter is at:

- <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/news/2022/nrs-releases-latest-return-data-for-scotland's-census-2022>

## NEW DATASETS

### **Opening up the Roper Center's historical archive of British Gallup Polls**

In the June 2019 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*, we reported on the inauguration of a three-year ESRC-funded project at the University of Southampton to enhance access to the post-war datasets of the British Gallup Poll held at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at Cornell University. This project is now nearing completion and has been successful in converting more than 800 of these datasets, spanning 1955–91, hitherto stored in column binary format, to current software versions. Although this still represents just under one-third of all British Gallup datasets held at the Roper Center, the prioritization of polls for conversion has been informed by suggestions made by the UK academic community, with members of the BRIN project team helping to identify those with most potential for research into religious and moral topics. A webinar to introduce this new resource, due for release via the Roper catalogue in the near future, is being held on the afternoon of 13 July 2022, with registration available at:

- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/an-introduction-to-the-uk-gallup-polls-archive-1955-1991-tickets-375252469237>

For additional background, there is also a project website at:

- <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/esrc-project>