

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 1 – October 2015

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OPINION POLLS

Human rights

An online poll by ComRes for Amnesty International, undertaken among 2,051 adults in Britain on 2-4 October 2015, probed attitudes to the proposed British Bill of Rights, which the Government intends as a replacement for the current Human Rights Act. Specifically, respondents were asked whether they considered that rights which are presently protected by the Act, among them the right to freedom of religion and thought, should *not* be included in the Bill. Data tables are available at:

http://www.comres.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Amnesty-International_Data-Tables-Human-Rights-Act_October-2015.pdf

Religious pluralism

A ComRes poll for the BBC explored perceptions of: (1) contemporary children's understanding of religion and faith, and different faith communities; and (2) the effects of the changing religious make-up of Britain on moral standards, shared values, acceptance of people from different backgrounds, and understanding of different cultures. Fieldwork was conducted by telephone on 18-28 September 2015 among a sample of 2,016 adults aged 18 and over. Data tables are at:

http://www.comres.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/BBC_Public-Opinion-Poll_Sept-15_TABLES.pdf

Religious discrimination

In 2006, 2009, and 2012 the European Commission included a module on discrimination in its regular series of Eurobarometers of public opinion in all member states of the European Union. It has now published a report on a fourth and extended study of the same subject: *Special Eurobarometer 437: Discrimination in the EU in 2015*. United Kingdom fieldwork was conducted by TNS UK by means of face-to-face interviews with 1,306 adults aged 15 and over. Questions covered attitudes to and experience of discrimination on several grounds, including on the basis of religion or beliefs; and reactions to efforts to promote diversity on the same grounds in the workplace, schools, and media. Respondents were also asked about their attitudes to a range of people (among them atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and Muslims) as prospective work colleagues or as partners in a love relationship with their children. The report is available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2077>

Data are available at:

http://open-data.europa.eu/en/data/dataset/S2077_83_4_437_ENG

Regulating supplementary religious schools

Prime Minister David Cameron's commitment, made in his speech to the Conservative Party's autumn conference, to regulate supplementary religious schools (such as Islamic madrassas) in England was well received by the electorate, securing 62% endorsement. This was according to a Suration poll for the *Huffington Post UK*, for which 1,031 adult Britons were interviewed online on 7 October 2015. Data tables are at:

<http://suration.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Cameron-Speech-Poll-Tables.pdf>

Islamic State (1)

A trio of online polls of adult Britons by YouGov on behalf of YouGov@Cambridge, and published on 2 October 2015, explored public attitudes to British involvement in military action (by air, sea, and ground) against Islamic State (IS) in three Middle Eastern countries. Fieldwork was conducted on 4-5 August in the case of intervention in Iraq (n = 1,707), 5-6 August about Libya (n = 1,972), and 24-25 September about Syria (n = 1,646). The full data tables are available under 'Latest Documents' on the YouGov@Cambridge website at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/cambridge/>

Islamic State (2)

Notwithstanding serious tensions between Russia and the West elsewhere in the world, the majority of Britons approved of Anglo-American co-operation with Russian military forces in the fight against Islamic State (IS). This was according to a YouGov poll published on 1 October 2015, for which 2,064 adults were interviewed online on 29-30 September, presumably mostly before news broke of the start of Russian air strikes against IS in Syria. Other questions covered attitudes to British military involvement against IS in Iraq and Syria. YouGov's analysis of the survey, with a link to the data tables, is at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/10/01/cooperation-russia-syria/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Millennial Christians

The Evangelical Alliance has reported on the religious beliefs, practices, opinions, and experiencers of millennial Christians: Lucy Olofinjana, *Building Tomorrow's Church Today: The Views and Experiences of Young Adults in the UK Church*. It is based upon an online survey completed by a self-selecting (and thus potentially unrepresentative) sample of 1,703 churchgoing, evangelical Christians aged 18-37 in the UK in October-November 2014 and March 2015. The report, which especially highlighted gender and ethnic differences, is available at:

<https://www.eauk.org/church/one-people-commission/upload/Building-tomorrow-s-Church-today-PDF.pdf>

Church of England buildings

The first attempt in many years to audit the Church of England's stewardship of its 15,700 church buildings was published on 12 October 2015: *Report of the Church Buildings Review Group*, chaired by the Bishop of Worcester and established by the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners. It surveyed the statistical and theological context before setting out general principles and specific recommendations for the management of the Church's places of worship. Future closure of some churches is envisaged and the downgrading of others to 'festival church' status, involving the cessation of regular worship in favour of occasional offices and major seasonal services only. The report, which includes data disaggregated to diocesan level, is available at:

https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2383717/church_buildings_review_report_2015.pdf

Cumbrian churches

One day after the Church of England national buildings report was published, the Churches Trust for Cumbria, an independent charity established in 2008, very belatedly released the results of its own interdenominational church buildings survey, the fieldwork for which was conducted as far back as 2012-13. The research covered two-thirds of the 600 Anglican, Methodist, and United Reformed churches in the county, highlighting the immense challenges which they face in terms of financial viability and ageing congregations. The report, which is somewhat lacking in terms of data and confusing in its presentation, can be viewed at:

http://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/uploads/1356/Churches_Trust_for_Cumbria_Report_2015-pdf.html

Pastoral Research Centre publications

The Pastoral Research Centre Trust, which undertakes socio-religious research into Roman Catholicism in England and Wales with particular reference to statistical sources, has posted on its website an up-to-date list of its own reports and those of its predecessor, the Newman Demographic Survey (1953-64), the latter documents only declassified by the Catholic Church in recent years. These publications provide a much sounder basis for the quantification of the Catholic community during the past half-century than the data to be found in successive editions of the *Catholic Directory*. The list can be found on the Trust's homepage at:

<http://www.prct.org.uk/>

Strictly Orthodox Jewry

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) has published a major report on Orthodox Jewry: Daniel Staetsky and Jonathan Boyd, *Strictly Orthodox Rising: What the Demography of British Jews Tells us about the Future of the Community*. It explores the implications of the 'extraordinary demographic growth of the strictly Orthodox sub-population' in British Jewry, which is attributed to its high birth rate and low mortality. Making particular use of population pyramids, the authors assess the current and possible future numerical relationships between,

and respective characteristics of, the strictly Orthodox and non-strictly Orthodox Jewish communities.

The evidence base mostly comprises estimates derived from the 2011 census of England and Wales, including what is claimed to be the first presentation in the public domain of estimates of British Jewish fertility. The latter show that the strictly Orthodox possess the highest fertility of any religious group in the country and, all other things remaining unchanged, it is set to become the majority of British Jews during the second half of this century. The picture which emerges, through the growth of the strictly Orthodox, is thus one of reversal of the long-standing contraction of British Jewry and of its increasing religiosity.

According to the *Jewish Chronicle* (16 October 2015, p. 14), aspects of the tone and content of the research have come under fire from the Interlink Foundation (an Orthodox charity). This is especially true of JPR's estimate of the current maximum size of the Orthodox sub-population (43,500) and of the point at which it will account for half of Jewish births (2031). Interlink calculates that there are actually 58,500 Orthodox Jews and that they will provide the majority of births much sooner than 2031. JPR's report can be downloaded from:

http://www.jpr.org.uk/publication?id=4222#.Vh_ayMtdHX6

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Religious hate crimes

Home Office Statistical Bulletin 05/15 is on *Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2014/15* by Hannah Corcoran, Deborah Lader, and Kevin Smith. Of the 52,528 hate crimes recorded by the police in that year, 3,254 (6%) were religion- or belief-related, a rise of 43% on 2013/14. The increase is mainly thought to reflect improved police recording but there was almost certainly some genuine growth in religion hate crimes, linked to trigger events leading to Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. However, even these figures still represent a significant under-count, due to under-reporting, the Crime Survey for England and Wales suggesting that the true number of incidents of religiously-motivated hate crime each year may be as high as 38,000, fairly evenly split between household and personal crimes. The Statistical Bulletin and associated tables can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2014-to-2015>

Scottish Gaelic and religion

The Scottish Government has published a report and data tables relating to the results of the Scottish Gaelic questions in the 2011 Scottish census. Five data tables give breaks by religion for Scottish Gaelic for the population aged 3 and over. They are:

- AT 250 2011 – Gaelic language skills by religion (council areas)
- AT 251 2011 – Gaelic language skills by religion (civil parish bands)
- AT 275 2011 – Use of Gaelic language at home by religion (council areas)
- AT 276 2011 – Use of Gaelic language at home by religion (civil parish bands)
- AT 277 2011 – Gaelic language skills by religion by age (Scotland)

These tables can be accessed, in Excel format, under the ‘language’ heading of the 2011 Scottish Census Data Warehouse at:

<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-web/data-warehouse.html#additionaltab>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Christian beliefs and religious debates

In his second book, Ben Clements quantitatively illuminates several key aspects of religion in post-war Britain, especially since the 1980s, on the basis of four recurrent historical sample survey sources (Gallup Polls, British Social Attitudes Surveys, European Values Studies, and Eurobarometers) and multivariate analysis of several contemporary non-recurrent polls. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the correlates of theistic and other traditional beliefs (God, atheism, life after death, hell, heaven, sin, the Devil, and the Bible), while chapter 4 reviews the attitudinal evidence for three areas of religious-secular debate (religion and science, faith schools, and disestablishment). There are 38 tables in all. *Surveying Christian Beliefs and Religious Debates in Post-War Britain* is published by Palgrave Macmillan at £45 (x + 144pp., ISBN 978-1-137-50655-9, hardback, also available in EPUB and PDF formats), and the book’s webpage is at:

<http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/Surveying-Christian-Beliefs-and-Religious-Debates-in-PostWar-Britain/?K=9781137506559>

Anglican cathedrals

Social scientific interest in the ministry and witness of cathedrals, especially in the contemporary Church of England, is continuing to grow. The latest offering is a series of ten research-focused (often quantitative and survey-based) studies of cathedrals in England and Wales by members of the research group around Leslie Francis, together with introductory and concluding chapters by Francis and Judith Muskett. Topics covered range over both the spiritual and touristic dimensions of cathedral life, and the perspectives are those of empirical theology, sociology of religion, and psychology of religion. Some authors report on individual cathedrals (including three in Wales – Bangor, Llandaff, and St Davids), while others range more widely. All show familiarity with relevant secondary literature, which is usefully listed in the bibliography. *Anglican Cathedrals in Modern Life: The Science of Cathedral Studies* is edited by Francis and published by Palgrave Macmillan at £57.50 hardback (xiv + 267pp., ISBN 978-1-137-55301-0, also available in PDF format). The book’s webpage is at:

<http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/anglican-cathedrals-in-modern-life-leslie-j--francis/?sf1=barcode&st1=9781137553010>

Education and secularization

David Voas has replied to an article by James Lewis in *Journal of Contemporary Religion* in which, utilizing census data from Anglophone countries, Lewis reasserted the thesis that higher education appears to have a secularizing effect. In his response Voas reiterated his own previous argument, that religious ‘nones’ are becoming normalized in their characteristics. He suggests that the approach adopted by Lewis, a cross-sectional snapshot of the whole

population undifferentiated by age together with an over-dependence on write-in replies which are the census exception rather than the rule, misses the generational dynamics of religious change. His own analysis of the 2011 census for England and Wales, one of the sources drawn upon by Lewis, demonstrated that, whereas older ‘nones’ are more educated than Christians of the same age, younger ‘nones’ have fewer qualifications than their Christian counterparts. ‘The Normalization of Non-Religion: A Reply to James Lewis’ was published in *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2015, pp. 505-8, and access options are outlined at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13537903.2015.1081354>

Congregational bonding social capital

A seven-item measure of congregational expressions of Robert Putnam’s theory of bonding social capital was proposed and empirically tested (on 23,884 adult churchgoers in the Church of England Diocese of Southwark) in Leslie Francis and David Lankshear, ‘Introducing the Congregational Bonding Social Capital Scale: A Study among Anglican Churchgoers in South London’, *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2015, pp. 224-30. The research data supported the internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the scale. No significant differences in congregational bonding social capital were found between the sexes, but levels did increase with age and frequency of church attendance. Previous attempts to develop measures of congregational bonding social capital were also briefly reviewed. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13617672.2015.1041786>

New Churches in the North East

The final report on the *New Churches in the North East* project has been published, written by David Goodhew and Rob Barward-Symmons of the Centre for Church Growth Research, Durham University. It lists and profiles 125 new churches founded in the region between 1980 and 2015, and with a combined usual Sunday attendance of around 12,000. The majority of these places of worship were started by non-mainline Churches or as independent congregations, and they are disproportionately BME in composition and evangelical-charismatic in churchmanship. The report is available at:

<http://community.dur.ac.uk/churchgrowth.research/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NCNereportFINAL.pdf>

Holocaust education

University College London’s Centre for Holocaust Education has published a major (273-page) report about young people’s engagement with the Holocaust: Stuart Foster, Alice Pettigrew, Andy Pearce, Rebecca Hale, Adrian Burgess, Paul Salmons, and Ruth-Anne Lenga, *What Do Students Know and Understand about the Holocaust? Evidence from English Secondary Schools*. Deriving from survey responses of 7,952 students aged 11-18 in 74 schools between November 2013 and October 2014, and 49 focus groups involving 244 students, it claims to be the largest single-nation study in the field. It finds that ‘despite the Holocaust being a staple in the curriculum for almost 25 years, student knowledge and conceptual understanding is often limited and based on inaccuracies and misconceptions’. The report is available at:

<http://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/What-do-students-know-and-understand-about-the-Holocaust1.pdf>

Muslims in the labour market

British Muslims are proportionately less well represented in top managerial and professional jobs than any other religious group. They are also disproportionately likely to be unemployed and economically inactive, and to have the lowest female employment participation rate of all religious groups. So claim Louis Reynolds and Jonathan Birdwell in their *Rising to the Top*, a new research report from think-tank Demos, based upon a review of the academic literature and secondary analysis of data from the census, Labour Force Survey, Higher Education Statistics Agency, Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, and other sources. Demographic, cultural, and other factors contributing to Muslim under-representation are explored, and a series of recommendations made to help redress it. The report is available at:

<http://www.demos.co.uk/project/rising-to-the-top/>

NEW DATASET AT UK DATA SERVICE

SN 7786: 21st Century Evangelicals

Since 2010 the Evangelical Alliance, in association with research partners, has conducted a series of online surveys among self-selecting (and thus potentially unrepresentative) samples of self-identifying evangelical Christians in the UK. Surveys have mostly been carried out quarterly, with each devoted to a particular theme. An overview of the findings of the research programme, which is still ongoing, can be found in *21st Century Evangelicals: Reflections on Research by the Evangelical Alliance*, edited by Greg Smith (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2015). The individual datasets for the surveys to 2015 have now been made available on a Special Licence access basis, together with reports, questionnaires, and other documentation. The dataset description is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=7786&type=Data%20catalogue>

SN 7799: National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, 2010-2012 (NATSAL III)

NATSAL III was conducted, through a combination of face-to-face interview and self-completion questionnaire, by NatCen Social Research between September 2010 and August 2012 among a sample of 15,162 adults aged 16-74 in Britain (including two booster samples of younger cohorts). The response rate was 58%. Three background questions on religion enable religious attitudes to a wide range of sexual issues to be explored, especially contraception, homosexuality, and sexual experiences. These questions enquired into: the personal importance of religion and religious beliefs; religious affiliation (using a 'belonging' form of wording); and frequency of attendance at religious services. The dataset description is available at:

<http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=7799&type=Data%20catalogue>

SN 7809: British Social Attitudes Survey, 2014

The British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey commenced in 1983 and has been undertaken annually ever since, apart from in two years. The latest BSA was conducted by NatCen by means of face-to-face interview and self-completion questionnaire between August and November 2014, among a sample of 2,878 adults aged 18 and over in Britain. The standard questions on religious affiliation and attendance were asked of the whole sample; these have both an intrinsic interest but can also be used as variables for analysing replies to other topics. A few other religion questions (for example, about attitudes to religious extremists) were put to sub-samples. The dataset description is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=7809&type=Data%20catalogue>