

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 20 – May 2017

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OPINION POLLS

Global Trends, 2017

Results from the second wave of the Ipsos MORI Global Trends Survey (the first wave being in 2013) have recently been published, based on online interviews with 18,180 adults aged 16-64 across 23 countries between 12 September and 11 October 2016, including 1,000 in Great Britain. Abbreviated topline results for the three specifically religious questions are tabulated below, for Great Britain, the United States, and the all-country mean. They confirm the international relative irreligiosity of Britons. Britain ranked eighteenth on interest in having a more spiritual dimension in life and nineteenth on the importance attached to religion. Full topline data can be found at:

<https://www.ipsosglobaltrends.com/data/>

% down	Great Britain	United States	All countries
<i>Religious affiliation</i>			
No religion	48	18	26
Spiritual but not religious	5	11	8
Christian	41	62	47
Non-Christian	5	9	19
<i>Interest in having more spiritual dimension in daily life</i>			
Agree	40	67	58
Disagree	53	28	35
Neither/don't know	7	5	7
<i>Religion/faith very important</i>			
Agree	30	68	53
Disagree	65	28	41
Neither/don't know	5	4	6

Supernatural beliefs

The incidence of various supernatural beliefs has been gauged by BMG Research in an online poll of 1,630 Britons on 13-16 May 2017. Topline results are tabulated below, revealing a span of belief from 16% in astrology to 51% in karma. Disbelievers outnumbered believers with regard to astrology, ghosts/spirits, and life after death. Women were far more likely to believe than men, apart from in life on other planets, when the positions were reversed. In terms of age, and somewhat curiously, the greatest level of belief in life after death was actually among under-35s (39%), falling away through successive cohorts to reach 21% for the over-75s. A similar pattern obtained for belief in life on other planets, held by 55% of under-35s. Breaks

were also given for social grade and past voting (in the general election and European Union Referendum). Data tables are at:

<http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/british-public-reveal-beliefs-new-survey/>

% across	Believe	Disbelieve	Unsure
Karma	51	30	19
Life on other planets	49	22	29
Fate/destiny	47	34	19
Ghosts/spirits	36	41	23
Life after death	34	36	30
Astrology/horoscopes	16	66	17

Trust in the Church

The Church ranked seventeenth in nfpSynergy’s latest survey of public trust in 24 institutions. Of the 1,000 Britons aged 16 and over interviewed online in February 2017, 33% said they trusted the Church a great deal (9%) or quite a lot (24%) while 58% trusted it not much (28%) or very little (30%). The most trusted institutions were the National Health Service (71%) and the armed forces (70%), the least trusted multinational companies (18%) and political parties (12%). A report on the survey can be downloaded from:

<https://nfpsynergy.net/free-report/trust-charities-and-other-public-institutions-may-2017>

Churches and communities

Despite their scepticism about the Church as a *national* institution, one-half of UK adults claim they would consider the closure of their nearest church a significant loss to their local community and one-third would campaign against its closure (the same proportion who said they would provide financial support if their local church experienced financial difficulties). This is according to research commissioned by Ecclesiastical Insurance from OnePoll, for which 4,500 UK adults were interviewed online in February 2017. Local churches were regarded as part of the history of their community by 51% of respondents and as part of the fabric of their community by 36%. Data tables are not available but Ecclesiastical’s press release will be found at:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/images/churches%20a%20significant%20to%20local%20communities.pdf>

Funerals

Kate Woodthorpe’s *Keeping the Faith* surveys the role of religious beliefs in contemporary UK funerals. It was prepared for Royal London, which is the country’s largest mutual life, pensions, and investment company. Although the report is essentially qualitative, there are occasional glimpses into quantitative online research commissioned by Royal London from YouGov among three separate samples (cumulating to 3,240 individuals) who had been responsible for organizing a funeral in recent years. The report can be found at:

<https://www.royallondon.com/Documents/PDFs/2017/Royal%20London%20-%20Keeping%20the%20Faith.pdf>

Talking Jesus

Insights into the religiosity of 2,000 English young people aged 11-18 are provided by a newly-released online ComRes survey undertaken between 7 and 19 December 2016 on behalf of HOPE and the Church of England. A majority (51%) was not religious in the sense of being disbelievers or uncertain believers in God, the remainder comprising 20% Anglicans, 11% Roman Catholics, 10% other Christians, and 8% non-Christians. Irreligiosity increased with age, being 48% among 11-13-year-olds, 51% for 14-16-year-olds, and 57% for 17-18-year-olds. A majority (54%) also doubted that Jesus Christ was a real person who had actually lived while 63% disbelieved in, or were unsure about, His Resurrection. Of the 825 Christians, 51% described themselves as an active follower of Jesus, with 47% claiming to read the Bible at least monthly, 65% to pray with the same frequency, 51% to attend church once a month or more, 40% to participate in church-related youth activities, and 41% to have talked about Jesus with a non-Christian within the past month. Full data tables, extending to 208 pages, are available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Hope-Church-of-England-Perceptions-of-Jesus-Survey-Data-Tables.pdf>

Papal power

United States President Donald Trump and Pope Francis recently held their first face-to-face meeting at the Vatican. Asked on 26 May 2017 which of these two world leaders has the more power, 49% of 7,134 YouGov British panellists replied the United States President and 16% the Pope, with 15% regarding them both as equally powerful and 20% undecided. Only in Scotland (22%) and among Scottish National Party voters (29%), both sub-samples with (in all likelihood) an above-average number of Catholics, did the Pope fare a little better. Data are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/88c1aff0-41f4-11e7-94a8-2ab0a50a8b9c>

Jewish vote

The overwhelming majority (77%) of Jews intend to vote for the Conservatives in the forthcoming general election (8 June 2017), 13% for Labour, 7% for the Liberal Democrats, and 2% for another political party. This is according to a telephone poll of 515 self-identifying British Jews undertaken by Survation on behalf of the *Jewish Chronicle* on 21-26 May 2017, once electors who were unlikely to vote or undecided or refused to say had been excluded from the calculation. There appeared to be two main reasons for the Jewish disinclination to support Labour. One was Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, with 44% of respondents agreeing they would be much or a little more likely to vote for the party were he not its leader. The other was the perceived level of anti-Semitism among Labour Party members and elected representatives, 39% rating it at the highest point on a five-point scale. Full data tables are available at:

<http://survation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Final-JC-VI-Poll-5c1d5h.pdf>

Ramadan

Asked by BMG Research which religious group is served by Ramadan, 27% of 1,374 Britons interviewed online on 19-22 May 2017 were unable to say (15%) or gave an incorrect answer

(12%). People of no religion (70%) were less inclined to know than Christians (76%) that Ramadan is associated with Islam and Muslims. The full data table is available via the link at:

<http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/one-quarter-british-adults-dont-know-ramadan-muslim-celebration/>

Islam and intolerance

Two-fifths (41%) of Britons agreed with the statement ‘Islam is an intolerant religion’ in an app-based survey by YouGov reported on 11 May 2017 at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/05/11/girl-jobs-vs-boy-jobs-home-ai-help-make-decisions/>

Islam and extremism

Four-fifths of Britons are either very (43%) or somewhat (36%) concerned about extremism in the name of Islam, according to the Spring 2017 Pew Global Attitudes survey, for which 1,066 adults aged 18 and over were interviewed by Kantar Public UK by telephone between 6 March and 3 April. The combined figure of 79% was three points less than when the question was last asked in Britain in 2015 and also below the level of concern found in Italy (89%), Germany (82%), Spain (82%), and Hungary (80%), being identical to the median for 10 European Union countries. British results varied by age (from 61% of under-30s to 87% of over-50s) and by political alignment (from 61% of left-leaners to 86% of right-leaners). Remaining Britons were either not too concerned (15%) about extremism in the name of Islam or not at all concerned (5%). Pew’s press release can be found at:

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/24/majorities-in-europe-north-america-worried-about-islamic-extremism/>

On his recent visit to the Middle East, United States President Donald Trump described the world’s fight against Islamic State and Islamist extremism as a battle between ‘good and evil’. One-half of 7,420 Britons interviewed online by YouGov on 22 May 2017 agreed with this description, the proportion being especially high among Conservatives (63%), over-65s (67%), and UKIP voters (71%). The other half of the sample divided between those who rejected the terminology of good versus evil (24%) and don’t know (26%). Full data are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/opi/surveys/results#/survey/775c5c60-3ed4-11e7-bbfa-4e47a0d22bac>

Manchester bomb

On 22 May 2017, an Islamist suicide bomber detonated an explosive device outside the Manchester Arena, killing 22 people. It was the worst terrorist incident on British soil since the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005 and was hailed by Islamic State (IS). In the following days, YouGov ran several online surveys which touched on the event and its implications.

On 24-25 May, on behalf of *The Times*, 2,052 Britons were asked about the advisability of implementing specific new measures to combat terrorism in Britain. Among the options was encouraging imams in mosques in Britain to preach solely in English. Only 37% deemed this ‘the right thing to do’, including a majority of over-65s (55%) and UKIP voters (70%). A plurality (41%) was opposed, considering it would be an over-reaction, peaking at 60% of

Liberal Democrats and 63% of under-25s. The remaining 22% were unsure. Thinking about how the rest of the world deals with the threat posed by IS, a plurality (46%) judged it likely to be solved by military force whereas 18% advocated dialogue with 37% uncertain. Two-thirds of interviewees viewed the threat of IS as arising wholly or partially from social, religious, and political issues in the Middle East. Data tables are at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/dcfgflapq2/TimesResults_170525_VI_Trackers_Terrorism_W.pdf

On 25 May, YouGov asked respondents to an app-based survey whether they thought religion-motivated terrorism could ever be stopped. The majority (68%) doubted that it could be while 23% thought it could be halted and 9% were unsure. Anger (71%), concern (57%), and shock (56%) were the commonest reactions to the Manchester outrage, although 71% said their personal confidence had been unaffected by it. Topline results are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/05/25/religion-motivated-terrorism-personal-confidence-r/>

On 25-26 May, on behalf of the *Sunday Times*, YouGov asked 2,003 Britons whether they approved of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy of early identification of people in danger of being radicalized, including a requirement for schools and social projects to report extremist sympathies to the authorities. The overwhelming majority (73%) approved of this approach, but there was a minority of 10% who deemed it inappropriate, on the grounds that it intruded too much into the lives of those who had not committed any crime and risked alienating law-abiding British Muslims. The proportion rose to 14% for under-25s, 15% for Liberal Democrats, and 17% for Labour voters. The remaining 17% of the entire sample was undecided. For further details, see p. 11 of the data tables at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/fpwbs2u7v8/SundayTimesResults_170526_VI_W.pdf

On 26 May, YouGov asked respondents to an app-based survey whether terrorist attacks by IS should be considered as a criminal act or an act of war. The majority (58%) opted for the former description, 34% for the latter, with 8% undecided. Topline results are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/05/26/terrorism-uk-who-has-more-power-pope-or-us-preside/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Faith in Research

The Church of England's annual Faith in Research Conference was held in Birmingham on 17 May 2017 and attended by 95 delegates. As usual, there was a mix of plenary sessions and parallel streams showcasing the most recent qualitative and quantitative research into faith matters, not exclusively Anglican-related. Highlights of the 17 presentations included first results from wave 1 of the longitudinal panel survey into 'Living Ministry' and from the 'Talking Jesus' study among 11-18-year-olds in England fielded by ComRes (noted above). Slides from the majority of the presentations are already available at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics/faith-in-research-conferences/faith-in-research-2017.aspx>

Belonging to church

The Faith in Research Conference was chaired by David Walker, Bishop of Manchester, whose recent book is an example of the genre of empirical theology: *God's Belongers; How People Engage with God Today and How the Church Can Help* (Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2017, 158 pp., ISBN: 978-0-85746-467-5, £7.99, paperback). In it, Walker proposes a fourfold model of belonging to church, through relationship, place, events, and activities, replacing the traditional dichotomy between church members and non-members. His particular concern is with Anglican occasional churchgoers, investigated through his surveys of attenders at harvest festival services in the Diocese of Worcester in 2007 and at cathedral carol services at Worcester in 2009 and Lichfield in 2010. The detailed findings from these studies have been reported in a series of academic papers, listed in the bibliography on pp. 156-7, but, selectively and relatively unobtrusively, they are drawn upon to help sustain the argument in this book, whose purpose is essentially missional. The volume's webpage can be found at:

<https://www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857464675/>

Godparents

In advance of special services to celebrate Godparents' Sunday on 30 April 2017, the Church of England released a calculation that at least six million people have been godparents at a Church of England christening since the start of the new Millennium. This reflected that there were more than two million baptisms of infants and children between 2000 and 2015, with a minimum requirement of three godparents for each person baptised. The Church of England's press release is at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2017/04/church-services-to-celebrate-role-of-godparents.aspx>

Church Commissioners

The Church Commissioners, who manage investable assets amounting to £7.9 billion and who contribute some 15% of the Church of England's income, have presented to Parliament their annual report for 2016. The total return on investments for that year was 17.1%, compared with 8.2% for 2015, and well ahead of the target of inflation plus 5%. Indeed, the Commissioners notched up their strongest performance for more than three decades, with notable successes in global equities, timber, and indirect property. The report can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/3983111/cc-annualreport-2016.pdf>

Ethnic churchgoers

In his latest monthly column for the *Church of England Newspaper* (12 May 2017, p. 9), reprinted in No. 51 (June 2017, p. 2) of his bimonthly magazine *FutureFirst*, Peter Brierley usefully collates the statistical evidence from church censuses about the proportion of BME churchgoers since 1998. Although the picture is mixed, Brierley contends that there has been especially rapid growth of Black Christians, both within White congregations and in Black

churches. In England in 2017, Brierley estimates, 30% of all church attenders are BMEs (and 40% of evangelicals) while in London the majority (51%) are.

Youth culture

A parallel piece of research to the ‘Talking Jesus’ study, mentioned above, is Youth for Christ’s *Gen Z: Rethinking Culture*, based on a survey completed by 1,001 Britons aged 11-18 in November-December 2016. The questionnaire, covering four core areas (culture, influences, priorities, and religion and faith), was scripted, hosted, and managed by DJS Research while using the Youth for Christ online platform. Almost half (46%) of respondents professed no religion, 43% were Christian, and 7% non-Christian. With regard to beliefs, 32% said they believed in a God, 22% in ghosts and spirits, and 47% in neither. Among believers in God 59% considered themselves a follower of Jesus and the Christian faith but just 41% prayed (four-fifths of them at least once a week). The 44-page report can be downloaded from:

<https://yfc.uk/gen-z-rethinking-culture-report-released/>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Religious nones

In Catholic Research Forum Reports, 3, published by the Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society at St Mary’s University Twickenham, Stephen Bullivant analyses *The ‘No Religion’ Population of Britain: Recent Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey (2015) and the European Social Survey (2014)*. The British Social Attitudes Survey revealed that 49% of adults identified as belonging to no religion. They were predominantly white (95%) and male (55%), although among under-35s men and women were equally likely to be religious nones. Three-fifths had been brought up with a religious identity whereas fewer than one in ten of those reared nonreligiously currently subscribed to a religion. For every one person brought up with no religion who had become a Christian, 26 people brought up as Christians professed no religion at the time of interview. On the other hand, according to European Social Survey statistics, 15% of nones still rated themselves as religious and/or prayed monthly or more. The report is available at:

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2017-may-no-religion-report.pdf>

Religious affiliation and party political liking

In a blog on LSE’s Religion and the Public Sphere website, Siobhan McAndrew utilizes data from wave 10 of the 2015 British Election Study Internet Panel (with fieldwork conducted by YouGov between 24 November and 12 December 2016) to investigate the liking of adults for the main political parties. Scores, on a scale running from 0 to 10, were generally below 5, with the exception of a score of 5.6 by Anglicans towards the Conservative Party. The lowest score was 2.3, by non-Christians towards UKIP. Non-Christians and Catholics showed a stronger liking for Labour while there was little variation between religious groups when it came to the Liberal Democrats. Factoring in other demographic variables, identities, and values tended to attenuate these associations. The post can be found at:

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/2017/05/religion-and-party-liking-how-members-of-different-faith-communities-feel-about-different-political-parties/>

Religious affiliation and Brexit

In his latest blog on the British Religion in Numbers website, Ben Clements offers an analysis of the voting of religious groups in the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU), based upon data from wave 9 of the 2015 British Election Study Internet Panel (with fieldwork conducted by YouGov between 24 June and 6 July 2016). The most pronounced findings were the predisposition of Anglicans to leave and of non-Christians and no religionists to remain in the EU. The post can be found at:

<http://www.brin.ac.uk/2017/how-religious-groups-voted-at-the-2016-referendum-on-britains-eu-membership/>

Catholic vote

In another blog for the LSE's British Politics and Policy website, Ben Clements examines the party political preferences of Roman Catholics, mainly based on trend data from British Election Studies and British Social Attitudes Surveys. He shows that, historically, Catholics have disproportionately favoured the Labour Party, especially in Scotland, but that the link has become weaker in recent years, as expressed both in voting behaviour at general elections and overall party allegiance. Scotland apart, older and female Catholics have been most drawn to the Conservative Party. The post can be found at:

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/catholic-voters-in-britain-what-are-their-political-preferences/>

Muslim women

Muslim women's civic and political involvement in Britain and France, with particular reference to Birmingham and Paris, is investigated by Danièle Joly and Khursheed Wadia in *Muslim Women and Power: Political and Civic Engagement in West European Societies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, xviii + 322 pp., ISBN: 978-1-137-48061-3, hardback, £86). Harnessing Joly's expertise as a sociologist and Wadia's as a political scientist, it distils their and others' secondary literature and reports on fresh empirical research, notably participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and a questionnaire completed by 119 Muslim women in Britain and 107 in France (the results from which are described as 'reliable rather than statistically valid'). The demographic context is derived from census and other sources. The authors argue that Muslim women's interest in and knowledge of politics and their participation in both institutional and informal politics is higher than expected. The book's webpage is at:

<http://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9781137480613>

Ministerial deployment

Despite their frequent assertions of a priority for the poor, religious groups distribute their active stipendiary ministers inversely to socio-economic deprivation (measured at household and neighbourhood levels) and (implicitly) to pastoral care needs, and it seems unlikely that

this relationship has occurred by chance. So claims Michael Hirst in his analysis of data, aggregated to local authority areas, from the 2011 census of population in ‘Clergy in Place in England: Bias to the Poor or Inverse Care Law?’ which is published in the ‘early view’ edition of the journal *Population, Space, and Place*. Parallels are drawn by the author with the concept of inverse medical care law proposed by Julian Hart. By its very nature, the primary source deployed cannot differentiate between ministers who live in less deprived areas but who work in more deprived ones. It also necessarily excludes retired, self-supporting, and non-stipendiary ministers. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/psp.2068/full>

Comparative historical secularization

The seemingly greater religiosity of the United States over Western Europe has been a central element of investigation and debate in the scholarly literature of secularization. A comparative religious history of these two areas, noting both parallels and divergences, is now attempted in *Secularization and Religious Innovation in the North Atlantic World*, edited by David Hempton and Hugh McLeod (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, xiv + 407 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-879807-1, £75, hardback). It comprises an introduction by McLeod followed by nine pairs of chapters, eight pairs exploring particular themes (such as evangelicalism, gender, and popular culture) and the last offering a separate conclusion by each editor which, notwithstanding their different approaches and emphases, provides a degree of coherence to what might otherwise be quite a disparate volume of insightful case studies. Of the 17 individual contributors, the solitary sociologist of religion is Grace Davie; the rest are essentially religious historians. Although chronological coverage starts with the eighteenth century, there is a special focus on the second half of the twentieth century. Likewise, consideration of Western Europe is disproportionately about Britain. Descriptive statistics are referenced throughout the work but there are no tables, while several opportunities are missed for systematic comparative quantitative analysis, notably for the past half-century, which might simultaneously have provided some common criteria for measuring secularization. The volume’s webpage can be found at:

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/secularization-and-religious-innovation-in-the-north-atlantic-world-9780198798071?cc=gb&lang=en&>

David Martin on secularization

David Martin is a notable absentee from the line-up of Hempton and McLeod’s book, notwithstanding he has written extensively about secularization, including about the comparative experience of Europe and America. In his *Secularisation, Pentecostalism, and Violence: Receptions, Rediscoveries, and Rebuttals in the Sociology of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2017, xi + 194 pp., ISBN: 978-0-415-78859-5, £115, hardback), Martin, who is now in his late 80s, offers an autobiographical cum bibliographical retrospect of the three core themes of his scholarship during the past half-century. The 10 chapters include one (pp. 57-85) which recapitulates the sociology of religion in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s and briefly considers the contribution of religious statistics, of which Martin was evidently initially quite sceptical, and specifically references British Religion in Numbers. The book’s webpage can be found at:

<https://www.routledge.com/Secularisation-Pentecostalism-and-Violence-Receptions-Rediscoveries/Martin/p/book/9780415788595>

NEW DATASET AT UK DATA SERVICE

SN 8168: Scottish Household Survey, 2015

The Scottish Household Survey, initiated in 1999, is undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government by a polling consortium led by Ipsos MORI. Information is collected about the composition, characteristics, attitudes, and behaviour of private households and individuals in Scotland; and about the physical condition of their homes. For the 2015 survey (January 2015-March 2016) data were gathered on 10,330 households and 9,410 adults. The specifically religious content of the questionnaire covered: religion belonged to; experience of discrimination or harassment on religious grounds; and incidence of volunteering for religious and other groups. A catalogue description for the dataset is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8168&type=Data%20catalogue>