

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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OPINION POLLS

Trust in religious figures

Only a minority (22%) of 1,000 adult Britons interviewed online in February 2017 by nfpSynergy claimed to trust the views of senior religious figures when they commented on UK policy, placing them ninth out of fifteen professional groups. The corresponding statistic in 2016 was 19%. A plurality (47%) of the public in 2017 did not trust senior religious figures very much (29%) or at all (18%) while 32% were not sure what to think. The groups most trusted to comment on UK policy were healthcare professionals (66%), scientists (62%), and academics at universities (50%). The study was undertaken as part of the Charity Awareness Monitor and topline results can be downloaded from:

<https://nfpsynergy.net/press-release/new-research-what-exactly-are-charities-trusted-do?>

Extremist figures

The Evangelical Alliance recently commissioned ComRes to undertake a survey of British attitudes towards extremism, 2,004 adults being interviewed online on 7-9 July 2017. One of the questions asked respondents whether they regarded seven historical leaders and one contemporary leader as extreme. The list comprised a mix of secular and religious figures. The three individuals who topped the extremism list were secular leaders with a reputation for violent action. Of the remaining five, Jesus Christ was most regarded as extreme, by 28% of the whole sample, peaking at 34% of 18-24s. Three-fifths judged He was not extreme, compared with 72% who said the same about the Dalai Lama, who was viewed as extreme by just 13%. Summary results are tabulated below, with the full findings available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Evangelical-Alliance-Public-Opinion-on-Extremism-Survey-Data-Tables.pdf>

Regard as extreme, % across	Yes	No	DK
Pol Pot	58	8	34
Napoleon	51	33	16
Che Guevara	49	19	32
Jesus	28	61	11
Martin Luther King	25	67	8
Nelson Mandela	25	68	7
Gandhi	20	70	10
Dalai Lama	13	72	15

Welsh religious affiliation

It is not often that BRIN can report on a sample survey confined to Wales, but a question about religious affiliation was included in a recently-released ComRes poll for Be Reasonable (a group campaigning against Welsh Government plans to criminalize parents who smack their children). Online interviews were conducted with 1,019 adults in Wales between 13 and 25 January 2017. Overall, 54% of Welsh respondents professed to be Christian, rising to 71% of persons aged 55-64 and 75% of over-65s. Religious nones amounted to 39% but reached 51% for those aged 25-44, who were most likely to be bringing up children, thereby (presumably) negatively impacting the intergenerational transmission of faith. This was more than double the proportion of nones among over-55s (24%). Non-Christians numbered 6%. For additional demographic breakdown, see table 5/1 at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Be-Reasonable-Wales-Survey-Data-Tables.pdf>

Scottish religious affiliation

The number of Scots professing no religion stands at a record level, according to initial findings from the latest Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) Survey, for which 1,237 adults were interviewed face-to-face by ScotCen Social Research between July and December 2016. In that year, 58% of the population of Scotland described themselves as having no religion, an increase of 18 points over 1999, when the first SSA was conducted, and surpassing the previous high of 54% in 2013. Among the under-35s, the proportion rose to 74% compared with 34% for the over-65s (albeit still 11 points more than in 1999). In terms of denominations and faiths, the Church of Scotland has lost most ground since 1999, from 35% to 18%, mirroring the scale of loss of market share experienced by the Church of England south of the border, as reflected in British Social Attitudes Surveys. Scottish adherents of Roman Catholicism (10% in 2016), other Christian faiths (11%), and non-Christian faiths (2%) have remained fairly stable over time. ScotCen's press release and two tables of trend data can be found at:

<http://www.scotcen.org.uk/news-media/press-releases/2017/july/scots-with-no-religion-at-record-level/>

Islam and British values

A plurality of Britons (44%) continues to believe there is a fundamental clash between Islam and the values of British society, the proportion peaking among over-65s (57%) and Conservatives (62%). Only 29% of the whole population contend that Islam is generally compatible with British values, Liberal Democrat voters being the most optimistic (50%), while 26% of Britons are undecided. Data derive from the latest YouGov@Cambridge tracker, for which 1,637 adults were interviewed online on 15-16 June 2017. Full breaks by demographics are available by clicking on the relevant link in the tracker summary at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/02/19/tracker-islam-and-british-values/>

Anti-Semitic attitudes

The Anti-Defamation League has updated its global index of anti-Semitism by commissioning new public opinion research in Great Britain, France, and Germany, 500 adults aged 18 and

over being interviewed in each country by telephone between 16 January and 27 February 2017. Anti-Semitism was defined as agreement with at least six of eleven negative stereotypes about Jews. One-tenth of Britons emerged as anti-Semitic on this criterion, compared with 11% in Germany and 14% in France. The British figure was higher than in 2014 (8%) and lower than in 2015 (12%), but it would be unwise to read too much into these trend data, given the relatively small sample sizes. Anti-Semitism in Britain was at its greatest among those who: were negative about their personal financial situation (13%); attended religious services weekly (15%); were unfavourable to Muslims (17%); had never met a Jewish person (18%); were significantly influenced by the actions of Israel in their opinions of Jews (29%); and knew a lot of people who felt negatively about Jews (31%). Individual stereotypes commanding the greatest support in Britain were that Jews are more loyal to Israel than their own country (held by 32% of the population) and Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust (20%). Four-fifths of Britons believed the treatment of Jews to be excellent or good, although 49% had concerns about violence directed at Jews and 26% detected more anti-Semitic rhetoric in politics recently. A report of the survey, which also included a few questions about attitudes towards Muslims, can be found at:

https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/G100%202017%20EUROPE%20ANALYSIS%20REV_D.pdf

Perceptions of Israel

The Anti-Defamation League survey demonstrated that anti-Semitic attitudes are often inextricably linked with anti-Israel views. Confirmation of Israel's relatively poor standing among Britons has also come in a country ratings study by GlobeScan and the University of Maryland for the BBC World Service. Fieldwork was undertaken in 19 nations between 26 December 2016 and 27 April 2017, including in Britain, where telephone interviews with 1,001 adults aged 18 and over were conducted by Populus between 27 January and 19 February 2017. Two-thirds of Britons said that Israel has a mainly negative influence in the world, 16 points more than the global mean, compared with just one-quarter viewing it positively, the same proportion as the global mean. This was a complete reversal of the position in the United States where 59% judged Israel's influence to be mainly positive and 28% mainly negative. However, British opinions have softened somewhat since the previous study in 2014, when 72% took a mainly negative view of Israel's influence and 19% a mainly positive one. Topline results for all the 16 countries rated (plus the European Union) can be found at:

http://globescan.com/images/images/pressreleases/bbc2017_country_ratings/BBC2017_Country_Ratings_Poll.pdf

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Synagogue membership

There were 454 synagogues in the UK in 2016, supposedly the highest number on record, three-quarters of them in Greater London and the adjacent areas of South Hertfordshire and South-West Essex. However, household synagogue memberships have declined by 20% since 1990 and by 4% since 2010 (when the last census of synagogues was conducted). The decrease in memberships since 1990 was steepest among the Central Orthodox (-37%), contrasting with growth of 139% for the Strict Orthodox. An estimated 56% of households across the UK

containing at least one Jew held synagogue membership in 2016, albeit the proportion was significantly lower in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The overwhelming majority (96%) of synagogue members lived in England and half belonged to synagogues in just five areas: Barnet, Westminster, Hertsmere, Redbridge, and Stamford Hill. The census was undertaken by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research between April and September 2016 on behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and full results can be found in the 43-page report by Donatella Casale Mashiah and Jonathan Boyd, *Synagogue Membership in the United Kingdom in 2016*, which is available at:

http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/Synagogue_membership_in_the_United_Kingdom_in_2016.pdf

Boyd also wrote commentaries on the report for the *Jewish News* (6 July 2017, p. 4) and *The Jewish Chronicle* (7 July 2017, p. 41) at, respectively:

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/slow-erosion-of-middle-of-the-road-orthodox-judaism/>

<https://www.thejc.com/comment/columnists/belonging-to-a-shul-matters-1.441062>

Coincidentally, *The Jewish Chronicle* (21 July 2017, p. 18) published the headline findings from a telephone poll of 783 professing Jews by Survation about the main reasons for belonging to a synagogue. The top reason was to pray, given by 29% overall, including 35% of men, 37% of under-35s, and 39% in the North-West. This was followed by joining a burial society and thus acquiring burial rights (25%), which was especially popular among over-55s (32%). The social aspect was in third place (19% for all respondents and 22% for women). Data tables are not yet available, but the newspaper's coverage can be read at:

<https://www.thejc.com/community/community-news/what-are-the-key-reasons-for-synagogue-membership-1.441921>

Anti-Semitic incidents

The Community Security Trust's *Antisemitic Incidents, January-June 2017* records 767 such incidents in the UK during this half-year, representing an increase of 30% on the corresponding total (589) for the same period in 2016, which was itself 18% up on January-June 2015. This is the highest figure which the Trust has ever registered for January-June in any year since it first started logging anti-Semitic incidents in 1984. From April 2016 there has now been a run of 15 months with more than 100 incidents each month. No single trigger event can be identified to explain the rise in incidents; rather, the Trust highlights the cumulative effect of various long-term factors. The impact of improved reporting of incidents is acknowledged but is not thought likely to account for the full extent of the increase. Eighty of the incidents involved assaults. *Antisemitic Incidents, January-June 2017* is available at:

https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/f/6/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_Jan-June_2017.pdf

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Civil service

Data on the religion or belief of Civil Service employees as at 31 March 2017 have revealed that 23.1% were Christians, 4.8% non-Christians, 14.1% religious nones, with 58.1% undeclared. Breaks were given by department and responsibility level (pay grade). Spreadsheets for 2017 and 2016 can be found at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/datasets/sexualorientationandreligiousbeliefsannexa>

Anti-Semitic crimes

The volunteer-led charity Campaign against Antisemitism has published its second *National Antisemitic Crime Audit*, based on data for 2016 obtained under the Freedom of Information Act from all 49 police forces in the United Kingdom. The 73-page report (mostly comprising statistical tables) claims this was ‘the worst year on record’ for anti-Semitic crimes, with 1,078 logged, representing an increase of 15% on 2015 and 45% on 2014. About one in ten of these crimes in 2016 involved violence, a reduction on the number in the two preceding years. The proportion of all anti-Semitic crimes resulting in charges was 8% in 2016, down by one-third on 2014 and 2015, with one-half of all police forces not charging a single anti-Semitic crime. The number of crimes resulting in prosecution was just 15 in 2016. The report notes that the accurate recording of data about anti-Semitic crime, both by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, still represents a work in progress. This would suggest some caution in deducing trends at this comparatively early stage of data collection and analysis, a caution which is not always exercised by the authors of the report. The document can be found at:

<https://antisemitism.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/National-Antisemitic-Crime-Audit-2016-1.pdf>

NEW DATASET AT UK DATA SERVICE

SN 8202: British Election Study, 2015: Internet Panel, Waves 1-6

The British Election Study is a long-running source of data about electoral behaviour and political attitudes. In recent general elections, an internet panel has supplemented the traditional face-to-face cross-section, and this has the advantage of enabling a very much larger sample to be recruited, incorporating a substantial panel component, with fieldwork taking place in successive waves before and after the general election concerned. The 2015 internet panel survey was undertaken (between 20 February 2014 and 26 May 2015) by YouGov on behalf of an academic team from the Universities of Manchester, Nottingham, and Oxford and with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council. There were approximately 30,000 respondents at each wave, including a national cross-section of around 21,000 electors. Religious affiliation is one of YouGov’s standard demographics, and, as sundry BRIN posts by Ben Clements have already demonstrated, it can be used as a variable for examining answers to the political questions. A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8202&type=Data%20catalogue>