

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 28 – January 2018

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## OPINION POLLS

### Religious affiliation

For a current snapshot of religious affiliation in Britain, we can merge the weighted data from 13 polls undertaken among the Populus online panel between July and December 2017, with an aggregate sample of 29,000 adults aged 18 and over. They were asked ‘which of the following religious groups do you consider yourself to be a member of?’ The answers are tabulated below:

	%
Christian	50.7
Muslim	2.5
Hindu	0.7
Jew	0.6
Sikh	0.3
Buddhist	0.6
Other non-Christian	1.5
No religion	41.5
Not answered	1.6

It will be noted that the proportion with no religion is, at just over two-fifths, lower than the one-half recorded in recent British Social Attitudes (BSA) Surveys, and there are perhaps four factors which might contribute to an explanation of this difference:

- The wording of the question is different, BSA employing the concept of ‘belonging’ and Populus of ‘membership’
- The form of the question is different, BSA’s being two-stage with a binary form in the first stage while Populus is single-stage
- The interview mode is different, face-to-face in BSA and online with Populus
- The sampling mode is different, probability in BSA and a volunteer panel with Populus

### Prayer

One-half (51%) of the population claim to pray at some time and 20% to do so regularly (at least monthly), according to a ComRes poll for Tearfund with an online sample of 2,069 UK adults on 1-3 December 2017. The self-reported incidence of regular prayer was greatest for over-65s (24%), residents of London (26%) and Northern Ireland (43%), Roman Catholics (42%), non-Christians (53%), and regular churchgoers (87%). Among those who ever prayed, 54% disagreed that they did so more often than five years ago and 32% acknowledged that it had been harder to make time to pray in recent years. Family (71%), thanking God (42%), friends and healing (40% each) were the commonest subjects of prayer, while the principal

reasons for prayer were given as personal crisis or tragedy (55%) and belief in God (39%). However, the efficacy of prayer seemed often to be doubted since, in the sub-sample of those who ever prayed, only 49% believed that God heard their prayers, 45% that God could answer their prayers, 40% that they had witnessed answers to their own prayers, 40% that prayer changed what happened in their lives, and 39% that prayer changes the world. Although 67% of this sub-sample asserted that prayer helped them to find peace, in practice it left just 33% with a sense of peace and contentment and 40% with reassurance and hope. Two sets of data tables, one for all UK adults and one for self-identifying Christians, are available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/tearfund-prayer-survey/>

### **YouGov Christmas religion poll – more results**

In *Counting Religion in Britain*, No. 27 we briefly reported on a religion poll undertaken by YouGov for *The Times* on 11-12 December 2017 and published in the newspaper's Christmas Day online edition. Full data tables from this survey have now been released, giving breaks by standard demographics (gender, age, social grade, region, and voting). They cover the four questions noted in our report (concerning religion and politics, the presence of clerics in the House of Lords, belief in God, and intended churchgoing over Christmas) plus three more – on the frequency of churchgoing and prayer and attitudes to state-aided faith schools. Three-fifths of the 1,682 Britons who were interviewed admitted they never attended religious services with another fifth going once a year or less; 10% claimed to worship at least monthly. The majority (54%) acknowledged they never prayed (including 62% of men and under-25s) and a further 24% did so less than weekly, 17% praying more often. On faith schools, a plurality (46%) opposed Government funding, the proportion being especially high among men (56%) and Scots (58%); 29% supported Government funding and 25% were undecided. The tables are at:

[https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/uz340ezwgn/TimesResults\\_171212\\_Religion\\_w.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/uz340ezwgn/TimesResults_171212_Religion_w.pdf)

### **Religious broadcasting**

On 20 December 2017, the *BBC Religion & Ethics Review* was published, announcing ambitious plans to enhance and diversify the Corporation's programme output in these areas. They were underpinned by qualitative and quantitative attitude research, which was summarized in Appendix 2 (pp. 32-40) of the report. This research included: a BBC Pulse survey of 1,367 adults on 17-23 April 2017, demonstrating that 'having actual faith is a minority position, and those without faith are equally split between agnostics and atheists'; and a digest of existing sources of UK data on religious identity, belief, and practice, prepared by the ComRes Faith Research Centre in May 2017, and drawing on an earlier ComRes poll for the BBC in February 2017. The review can be found at:

[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/pdf/religion\\_and\\_ethics\\_review.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/pdf/religion_and_ethics_review.pdf)

Publication of the BBC review prompted YouGov to ask a sample of Britons, in an app-based poll released on 21 December 2017, whether they approved of the Corporation's specific plan to increase prime-time coverage of non-Christian festivals. In reply, the majority (53%) endorsed greater air-time for religious festivals, made up of 16% who wanted more coverage of all religious festivals, 20% of Christian festivals only, and 17% of non-Christian festivals

only. Less coverage of all religious festivals was sought by 44% while 4% were undecided. Answers were possibly affected by the survey's proximity to Christmas. Respondents were not asked whether they had any intention of watching or listening to the broadcasts. Topline results only are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/12/21/bbc-primetime-coverage-religious-festivals-favouri/>

### **Trust in the Church**

The Charity Awareness Monitor (CAM), from nfpSynergy, includes a regular module on trust in public bodies and institutions, and headline findings from the October 2017 fieldwork, for which 1,000 Britons aged 16 and over were interviewed online, have just been released. Respondents were asked to rate the trustworthiness of 24 organizations. The proportion expressing quite a lot (10%) or a great deal (24%) of trust in the Church was 34% compared with 57% who had very little (28%) or not much (29%) trust. The Church lay in seventeenth position in terms of trustworthiness, the most trusted bodies being the National Health Service (72%) and the armed forces (70%). Although it has slipped three places in the league table within the past year, the Church's rating has actually been fairly stable in recent CAMs, being trusted by 35% in October 2016 and 33% in October 2015. The latest report from nfpSynergy can be found at:

<https://nfpsynergy.net/free-report/trust-charities-2017>

### **Relationships education**

Against the background of a Government requirement that primary schools in England teach a new course on relationships education to all children, the Evangelical Alliance commissioned ComRes to survey an online sample of 2,036 Britons on the subject on 19-21 January 2018. One of the questions asked was whether the content of this relationships education should respect the diverse religious and cultural backgrounds of children and their families. In reply, 71% of adults agreed that it should, with 16% dissenting and 14% undecided. Data tables, with breaks by demographics (but not by religious affiliation), are at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Evangelical-Alliance-relationships-education-research-30012018.pdf>

### **Illicit encounters**

Adultery may be prohibited in the Ten Commandments, but, in a recent survey, 35% of 2,000 members of IllicitEncounters.com, the UK's leading dating website for married people, claimed to be Christians, 12% of whom were consoled by the fact that God would forgive them for cheating on their spouse. The finding was widely reported in print and online media during January 2018, but the website's press office has yet to post its press release online.

### **Muslim values**

In two surveys recently commissioned by Peter Kellner, YouGov panellists were asked to make a series of ideological choices after being presented with pairs of opposing statements. Among other topics, the survey on 20-21 November 2017 required the 1,670 respondents to decide which of two statements about the upbringing of Muslim children they felt closer to. Statement

A was: ‘Most Muslim families in Britain these days want their children to grow up with fundamentally similar values to those of British children generally’. Statement B was: ‘Most Muslim families in Britain these days want their children to grow up with fundamentally different values from British children generally’. A plurality (44%) felt closer to statement B, and this was a majority for certain groups, notably for people who had voted for the UK to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum (63%), Conservatives (60%), and over-65s (60%). Just under one-third (31%) felt closer to statement A, including 51% of Liberal Democrats, while 25% could not make up their minds. Full data tables are at:

[http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/4b0fz1wav2/PeterKellnerR esults\\_171121\\_IdeologyStatements\\_w.pdf](http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/4b0fz1wav2/PeterKellnerR esults_171121_IdeologyStatements_w.pdf)

### **Donald Trump and Jerusalem**

A plurality of UK adults (45%) disagrees with US President Donald Trump’s recent decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to relocate the US embassy there, just 12% approving it, with 23% neutral and the remainder undecided. A much higher proportion, 74%, considers the decision will lead to increased terrorism in the Islamic world, compared with 24% thinking it will have no impact in that regard. ORB International conducted 2,109 online interviews in the UK on 15-17 December 2017 as part of a global (24-nation) poll by the Gallup International Association on the subject. Topline findings only are available at:

[http://www.gallup-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017\\_USA-Decision-on-Jerusalem.pdf](http://www.gallup-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017_USA-Decision-on-Jerusalem.pdf)

### **Hezbollah**

An online poll by ComRes of 2,039 Britons on 17-18 January 2018 on behalf of *Jewish News* found that, among the 54% who had an opinion on the subject (the remainder were don’t knows), four-fifths would support an extension of the British Government’s current designation of Hezbollah (the Lebanon-based Islamist movement which is fiercely anti-Israel) as a terrorist organization from its armed wing alone to cover its political wing, also. There was little to distinguish the views of the three principal faith groupings (Christians, non-Christians, and religious nones). Data tables are available at:

[http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Jewish-News\\_January-2018-poll\\_Hezbollah.pdf](http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Jewish-News_January-2018-poll_Hezbollah.pdf)

### **Science fiction technologies**

On 9-10 January 2018, YouGov asked 1,714 members of its online panel how likely they would be to use each of 11 science fiction technologies. The anticipated level of take-up was relatively low, the most favoured technology to use (by 29%) being an implant to record (and subsequently play back) everything which a person had heard and seen. In addition to the standard breaks by demographics, results were also disaggregated by whether the respondent self-identified as religious (45%) or not (48%). Six of the technologies were more likely to be used by the non-religious than the religious, the margin being as wide as nine points (25% versus 16%) in the case of a virtual reality world, where an individual would live for eternity after death. Four technologies were more favoured by the religious than non-religious, particularly a parental-control installation enabling parents to track their children, filter what

they saw, and see through their eyes; 23% of the religious said they would be likely to use this compared to 16% of non-religious. Full data tables are at:

[https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/elec624uq/InternalResults\\_180110\\_BlackMirror\\_w.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/elec624uq/InternalResults_180110_BlackMirror_w.pdf)

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **Spiritual abuse**

In the first judgment of its kind by a Church of England disciplinary tribunal, a vicar in the Diocese of Oxford has recently been convicted of spiritually abusing a teenage boy by subjecting him to intense prayer and Bible study in an attempt to get him to stop seeing his girlfriend. Quite coincidentally, the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service has published a brief report on *Understanding Spiritual Abuse in Christian Communities*, written by Lisa Oakley and Justin Humphreys, and incorporating the results of online research undertaken by Bournemouth University during the first quarter of 2017. Respondents comprised a self-selecting and denominationally-skewed sample of 1,591 practising Christians (churchgoers or members of a Christian organization) who had heard of the term 'spiritual abuse'. The majority (74%) was confident they knew what the term meant, and 63% claimed to have experienced such abuse themselves. The report is available at:

<http://files.ccpas.co.uk/documents/SpiritualAbuseSummaryDocument.pdf>

### **Church and youth (1)**

The *Church Times* of 12 January 2018 contained several research-focused articles on the Church and young people. The lead contribution (p. 22) was by BRIN's David Voas, drawing on national sample surveys. He emphasized that gains and losses to the Church in adulthood are roughly in balance and that the critical success factor is the retention of the new generation, concluding: 'The Church of England has not done well at keeping the children and grandchildren of its members, and contemporary society offers many competing distractions. It is going to be a challenge.' Other articles in the features section were by Naomi Thompson (p. 23), on the rise and decline of the Sunday school movement, based on her recent book; and Phoebe Hill (p. 25), on the December 2016 Youthscape and OneHope report entitled *The Losing Heart*, for which 2,054 places of worship were surveyed about their youth and children's work by Christian Research in September-December 2015. The Voas article is at:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/12-january/features/features/a-lost-generation>

*The Losing Heart* (which self-describes as 'more a sober warning from a doctor than an autopsy of a dead body') can be downloaded (after registration) from:

<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/research/publications/losing-heart>

## **Church and youth (2)**

*'Not as Difficult as You Think': Mission with Young Adults* is the latest report by the Church Army's Research Unit. It is based on 12 local case studies of different approaches to mission among young adults aged 18-30 which it conducted, between January and September 2017, on behalf of the Church of England's Strategy and Development Unit. Much of the information gathered was of a qualitative nature, but a survey of 489 attenders at 11 of the local projects did support a degree of quantitative analysis, which is summarized in Appendix 2 (pp. 14-20). In aggregate, the case studies' contribution to church growth was described as 'quite modest', 91% of attenders already self-identifying as Christian; of these just 14% claimed to have come to faith at the case study churches, with a further 11% saying the case study had helped them recover a lost faith. Seven in ten attenders had been to, or were currently at, university. The report is available at:

<https://churcharmy.org/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=202434>

## **Digital evangelism**

Adrian Harris, Head of Digital Communications for the Church of England, has prepared a two-page paper (reference GS Misc 1174), for discussion at next month's meeting of General Synod, which summarizes the metrics for the Church's principal digital initiatives as at January 2018. The report covers projects to promote evangelism, discipleship, and the common good as well as efforts to transform the Church's national websites. The report can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/GS%20Misc%201174%20-%20Digital%20Evangelism.pdf>

## **Christian conferences**

Women accounted for 39% of the speakers at 25 national Christian conferences in the UK in 2017, three points more than in 2016, according to a report from Project 3:28. Only one (Church and Media Conference) had a gender-balanced platform, although National Youth Ministry weekend (49%) and New Wine (46%) came close. The Keswick Convention (12%) and Ichthus Revive (17%) had the lowest proportion of female speakers. The report, which includes data for all years since 2013 (when the gender audit began), is available at:

[https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/7c3a0c\\_5c78c1c2aaeb42b6896107f75e1de43a.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/7c3a0c_5c78c1c2aaeb42b6896107f75e1de43a.pdf)

## **European Jewish demography hub**

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) has launched a new interactive online hub for European Jewish demography, research, and current affairs. It encompasses every Jewish population on the continent (including the UK) and links to recent national press coverage about Jewish issues as well as to research documentation in JPR's pre-existing European Jewish Research Archive. The hub can be accessed at:

<http://www.jpr.org.uk/map>

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

### **Religion and modernity**

*Religion and Modernity: An International Comparison*, by Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, xvii + 487pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-880166-5, £95, hardback) is an English-language translation of a work first published in German in 2015. It offers a global perspective on both theoretical and empirical aspects of contemporary religious change. Part I reflects on the concepts of modernity and religion; parts II-IV comprise national case studies of religious change in, respectively, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and outside Europe; and part V gives a systematic overview. Part II, on religious decline in Western Europe, includes a certain amount of data for Great Britain (drawn from the European Values Surveys), although it is not one of the three case studies in this section (which relate to West Germany, Italy, and The Netherlands). The book's webpage is at:

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/religion-and-modernity-9780198801665?cc=gb&lang=en&>

### **Anglican churchmanship**

In what is probably the longest-running panel study of the Anglican ministry, Kelvin Randall has been intermittently surveying the experience and attitudes of clergy ordained deacon in the Church of England or Church in Wales in 1994. His latest report, 'Are Liberals Winning? A Longitudinal Study of Clergy Churchmanship', is published in *Journal of Empirical Theology*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2017, pp. 148-63. Using the answers obtained from the panel in 1994, 2001, 2008, and 2015, he demonstrates that individual clergy – regardless of gender or age – have become less Conservative and more Liberal in their churchmanship over the years. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/15709256-12341355>

### **Church in Wales primary schools**

David Lankshear, Leslie Francis, and Emma Eccles have pilot-tested the inclusion of student input to the evaluation of the quality of state-maintained faith schools in their 'Engaging the Student Voice in Dialogue with Section 50 Inspection Criteria in Church in Wales Primary Schools: A Study in Psychometric Assessment', *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2017, pp. 237-50. By means of an offline English-language questionnaire completed by 1,899 pupils aged 9-11 attending Church in Wales primary schools, six short scales were devised to assess attitudes towards school ethos, school experience, school teachers, relationships in school, school environment, and school worship. The internal consistency reliability of these scales proved satisfactory and they have been recommended for future application. In terms of their personal religiosity, 50% of the pupils never attended church or did so only once or twice a year and 42% never engaged in private prayer or did so once or twice a year. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10656219.2017.1384693>

### **Church of the Nazarene**

In 'Solidarity with the Poor? Positioning the Church of the Nazarene in England in 2003 and 2013', Michael Hirst has sought to test whether this small-scale Church lives up to its self-identification with the socially marginalized by charting the postcode distribution of its churches, clergy, and lay office-holders against a widely accepted index of relative deprivation in small neighbourhoods. 'Findings show that the local presence of the Church of the Nazarene broadly intersects with its self-proclaimed responsibility to the poor. Overall, the distribution of churches and church staff is skewed towards deprived areas. Despite that a substantial minority of lay office-holders and ministers lived at some distance, in socio-economic terms, from the most deprived areas and the churches they served.' The article is published in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2018, pp. 66-84 and can be accessed from the JSTOR platform, for a fee in the case of those without institutional or personal access to JSTOR, at:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/weslmethstud.10.1.0066>

### **Muslims and abortion**

Data from the 2009-12 EURISLAM project underpin Sarah Carol and Nadja Milewski, 'Attitudes toward Abortion among the Muslim Minority and Non-Muslim Majority in Cross-National Perspective: Can Religiosity Explain the Differences?', *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 78, No. 4, Winter 2017, pp. 456-91. The focus of the overall project was on cultural interactions between Muslim immigrants and receiving societies in six Western European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, and The Netherlands). Telephone interviews were conducted with samples of (a) Muslims of Moroccan, Turkish, former Yugoslavian, and Pakistani descent, recruited via an onomastic method (n = 798 in Britain); and (b) the non-Muslim majority (n = 387 in Britain). In investigating attitudes to abortion, which were measured on a 10-point scale, the authors carry out much of their (mainly regression) analysis at the aggregate level, examining variables for the five nations combined (The Netherlands are omitted), but some results are also presented for Britain alone (the relative liberality of Britain's abortion laws should be borne in mind in making cross-national comparisons). In general, Muslims were found to be more conservative in their views than non-Muslims. Although valuable insights are offered into Muslim opinions on abortion, the smallness of the non-Muslim majority samples renders them of lesser interest, given that there are other and better sources of cross-national data. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<https://academic.oup.com/socrel/article-abstract/78/4/456/3867006?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

### **Persistence of tolerance**

In an interesting but (for the historian) rather speculative effort to demonstrate the intergenerational persistence of regional variation in prejudice against immigrants, David Fielding has correlated the pattern of medieval Jewish settlements in England prior to the expulsion of the Jews in 1290 with views on foreign immigrants and support for the far right exhibited in the 2005 and 2010 British Election Studies for all English constituencies outside London. He concludes that: 'attitudes towards twenty-first century immigrants are significantly more positive among respondents in constituencies that were home to a medieval Jewish immigrant community. These constituencies also show less support for far-right political parties.' The article, 'Traditions of Tolerance: The Long-Run Persistence of Regional Variation

in Attitudes towards English Immigrants’, is published in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 1, January 2018, pp. 167-88, and access options are outlined at:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-political-science/article/traditions-of-tolerance-the-longrun-persistence-of-regional-variation-in-attitudes-towards-english-immigrants/1A5163A594468BAE5A335D64410C178C>

## NEW DATASETS

### **UK Data Service SN 8301: National Survey for Wales, 2016-2017**

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 March 2016 and March 2017, 10,493 adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Wales were interviewed face-to-face and by self-completion questionnaire. 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?’) There is also a question on volunteering for religious and other groups. A catalogue description of the dataset is at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8301&type=Data%20catalogue>

### **UK Data Service SN 8311: Wellcome Trust Monitor, Waves 1-3: Combined Adults Data, 2009-2015**

The Wellcome Trust Monitor is a survey of public attitudes to and knowledge of science and biomedical research (including alternative and complementary medicine) in the UK. This merged dataset of the adult replies to the first three waves (2009, 2012, and 2015) contains only questions asked in more than one wave. Datasets for each individual wave are also held by the UK Data Service and have been previously reported by BRIN. Four religious topics are included as background characteristics, which can be used as variables to analyse responses to the more purely scientific and biomedical questions. They cover: religious affiliation (using a ‘belonging’ form of wording); attendance at religious services; frequency of prayer; and beliefs about the origin of life on earth. A catalogue description of the dataset is at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8311&type=Data%20catalogue>

### **British Election Study 2017 Face-to-Face Survey**

The British Election Study (BES) 2017 is managed by a consortium of the University of Manchester, University of Oxford, and University of Nottingham. The team has just released the dataset from the BES 2017 face-to-face survey, for which a probability sample of 2,194 electors in Britain was interviewed by GfK between 26 June and 1 October 2017, immediately after the general election; 984 of them also returned a self-completion postal module. A wide range of political questions was asked, the answers to which can be analysed by two religious variables, religious affiliation and (for those professing a religion) frequency of attendance at

religious services apart from rites of passage. The questionnaire, technical report, and dataset (as SPSS and STATA files) are available to download at:

<http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-object/2017-face-to-face/>