

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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## OPINION POLLS

### Being Christian in Western Europe

The Pew Research Center has released the second tranche of findings from its 2017 Religion in Western Europe study, comprising a 168-page analytical report entitled *Being Christian in Western Europe* and a 191-page topline. The first tranche of results examined the persistence of the Catholic-Protestant divide 500 years after the Reformation and was featured in the August 2017 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*. Fieldwork for the study was undertaken by telephone (both landline and cellphone) in 15 Western European countries under the direction of GfK Belgium, the British sample consisting of 1,841 adults aged 18 and over interviewed between 12 April and 1 August 2017.

The second tranche of data concerns a wide range of religious beliefs, practices, and opinions, as well as attitudes to a few secular issues analysed by religious variables. Particular attention is paid to differences for each nation between church-attending Christians, non-practising Christians, and the religiously unaffiliated. Breaks for non-Christians are not given, since they would have been based on extremely small cell counts. It should be noted that the religious belonging question ('what is your present religion, if any?') was of the variety which typically maximizes religious allegiance, and this explains why 'only' 23% of Britons self-designated as religious nones, about half the proportion revealed in some other surveys, and 73% claimed to be Christians. Very few Britons (6%) were categorized as spiritual but not religious, perhaps further undermining the case for a 'spiritual revolution'.

Particular interest attaches to two scales which Pew has constructed from the data. One relates to religious commitment, a composite of the importance attached to religion, attendance at religious services, prayer, and certainty of belief in God; just 11% of all Britons (and no more than 13% of Christians) exhibited a high level of religious commitment, 31% a moderate one, and 58% a low one (the same as the median for Western Europe). The second scale was derived from 22 questions about nationalist, anti-immigrant, and anti-religious minority sentiments, which, superficially, were most pervasive among churchgoing Christians and least among religious nones. Highly committed Christians were also the least likely to favour abortion and same-sex marriage. The full documentation relating to *Being Christian in Western Europe* can be found at:

<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/>

### Religious affiliation of young people

Twice as many UK adults aged 18-35 now profess no religion as self-identify as Christians, 59% versus 30%, according to an online survey of 1,666 such young people by Populus between 9 and 28 March 2018. Non-Christians numbered 9%. The question-wording was: 'which of the following religious groups do you consider yourself to be a member of?' For

breaks by demographics, see table 20 in the New Farming Techniques report (conducted on behalf of the Agricultural Biotechnology Council) at:

<https://www.populus.co.uk/polls/>

### **Faith-based charities**

A recent blog by Jenny Smith offers a few insights into public attitudes towards faith-based charities, derived from nfpSynergy's November 2017 Charity Awareness Monitor, for which 1,000 Britons aged 16 and over were interviewed online. The blog, which focuses on ways in which faith-based charities could broaden their appeal and attract supporters who are not necessarily religious, is at:

<https://nfpsynergy.net/blog/faith-based-charities-reaching-colder-audiences>

### **Royal family and diversity**

A substantial majority (72%) of the British public thinks it acceptable for a member of the royal family to marry someone of a different religion, according to an online poll by YouGov of 1,648 adults on 8-9 May 2018. Just 16% view the prospect as unacceptable, disproportionately Conservatives (24%), leave voters in the 2016 referendum on membership of the European Union (23%), and over-65s (22%), while 12% are undecided. Full data tables are at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2018/05/17/almost-third-country-has-seen-or-met-queen-real-li/>

### **Islam and British values**

A plurality (44%) of Britons continues to think there is a fundamental clash between Islam and the values of British society, according to a YouGov@Cambridge poll of 1,640 adults on 28-29 March 2018. This view was particularly widely held among those who voted for the UK to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum (65%), Conservatives (63%), and over-65s (58%). One-quarter of respondents felt that Islam is generally compatible with British values while 31% were undecided or held another opinion. Full data tables are at:

[http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/xpnh9hdtey/YGC%20Tracker%20GB%20Mar%202018.pdf](http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/xpnh9hdtey/YGC%20Tracker%20GB%20Mar%202018.pdf)

For trend data on the same question, see:

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

### **Sikhs and alcohol**

It is generally supposed that the Sikh faith prohibits the consumption of alcohol, but a new poll conducted by BMG Research for the BBC has found that, of a sample of 1,049 UK Sikhs, 61% consume alcohol at least occasionally (men more than women), 49% feel under pressure to drink at social events, and 27% have an immediate family member suffering from an alcohol problem. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22 December 2017 and 14 January 2018 by a combination of face-to-face and online interview. The definition of Sikh was relatively broad, embracing those who self-identified as such or who had a parent or grandparent from a Sikh

background. Full data tables and description of methodology are not yet available but BMG has a press release at:

<http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/bbc-bmg-research-survey-more-than-a-quarter-of-uk-sikhs-say-that-they-have-a-family-member-with-a-drinking-problem/>

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **Rites of passage**

Over the past decade, the Church of England has made great efforts to reinvigorate its ‘occasional offices’, the services which it provides in connection with the so-called ‘rites of passage’, amidst evidence of a long-term decline in their take-up. Notwithstanding, it is estimated that even today the Church potentially encounters 15 million individuals each year through such life events, almost six times the number attending Anglican worship at Christmas. A range of quantitative and qualitative research has been commissioned by the Church to investigate people’s attitudes to baptisms, weddings, and funerals. This underpins Sandra Millar’s *Life Events: Mission and Ministry at Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals* (London: Church House Publishing, 2018, xi + 191pp., ISBN 978-1-78140-033-3, £14.99, paperback). However, the focus of the book is essentially practical and pastoral, and the research itself is not systematically presented therein. The book’s webpage is at:

<https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/books/9781781400333/life-events>

### **Sex education**

Most faith schools are distorting sex education. So claims the National Secular Society in a recent report: *Unsafe Sex Education: The Risk of Letting Religious Schools Teach within the Tenets of their Faith*. It is based upon quantitative and qualitative analysis of the policies on sex and relationship education, as displayed on their websites, of 634 secondary and all-through state schools in England with a religious character between February and April 2018. Basic statistics are presented in chapter 3. The report is available at:

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/unsafe-sex-report-april-2018.pdf>

### **Church Commissioners annual report and review**

The Church Commissioners, who contribute 15% of the running costs of the Church of England, have published their annual report and review for 2017. Their total return on investments was 7.1%, two points below both the target for the year and the thirty-year average return. For a press release, with links to the two documents, see:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-commissioners-announce-return-71-investments-2017>

### **Quaker membership statistics**

The 2018 Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain was held in London on 4-7 May, and one of the documents under consideration was *Patterns of*

*Membership, including the 2017 Tabular Statement.* Such statements have been produced annually since 1862. The Quakers have never been a large movement but gained a reputation historically for punching well above their numerical weight in terms of socio-political impact and influence. Membership of the Yearly Meeting at the end of 2017 was 12,934, a decrease of 254 from 2016, together with 9,461 attenders. There has been a ten-year decline of 9% in members and attenders combined. The report can be found at:

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/documents>

### **Humanist marriages in England and Wales**

According to data released by Humanists UK (formerly the British Humanist Association), the number of marriages solemnized by humanist celebrants in England and Wales increased from 287 in 2004 to 975 in 2015, representing 1.6% of all opposite-sex religious marriage ceremonies in the latter year and making humanists the seventh largest provider of such ceremonies (after the Church of England, Roman Catholic Church, Church in Wales, Methodists, Sikhs, and Baptists). In 2016, when humanist weddings topped 1,000, humanists were allegedly (official figures for 2016 have yet to be released) the fifth largest provider. This is notwithstanding humanist ceremonies are currently not legally recognized in England and Wales (unlike in Scotland), necessitating parties undergoing them to enter into a parallel civil marriage in order to gain legal recognition and protection. The data also include a much more granular picture of religious marriages for each year between 2004 and 2015 than is ordinarily published by the Office for National Statistics. The Humanists UK press release is at:

<https://humanism.org.uk/2018/05/09/revealed-how-many-marriages-each-religious-group-and-humanists-uk-do/>

## OFFICIAL STATISTICS

### **Religion in the armed forces**

The latest edition of *UK Armed Forces Biannual Diversity Statistics* includes details of the religious profession of the UK's regular forces (table 4) and reserve forces (table 18) as at 1 April 2018. Although the number of religious nones is increasing year-on-year in all three armed services, Christian self-identification remains strong and much higher than in the general population (71% of regulars and 74% of reserves). The spreadsheet can be downloaded from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-2018>

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

### **Dissent in 1851**

A local study based on the 1851 religious census of accommodation and attendance is Kate Tiller, 'Patterns of Dissent: The Social and Religious Geography of Nonconformity in Three Counties', *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, Vol.13, No. 1, 2018, pp. 4-31, the three counties concerned being Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. Seven significant determinants of Dissenting experience and its locations are identified and discussed.

An appendix lists modern scholarly editions of the manuscript returns of the census. Access options to the article are outlined at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20514530.2018.1451444>

### **Sexual attitudes**

To mark International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, the University of Manchester released new research by Laura Watt and Mark Elliot revealing that in 2010 a person's religion and ethnicity were more strongly associated with their attitude towards homosexuality than their level of education, a reversal of the situation in 1990. The findings derived from secondary analysis of the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles for 1990, 2000, and 2010. Among 16-44-year-olds, just 11% of those who did not identify as religious viewed homosexuality as always wrong in 2010 compared with 60% of weekly attenders at religious services (only marginally down from 68% in 1990). The University's press release is at:

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/peak-acceptance-of-homosexuality/>

### **Labour and the Jewish vote**

The ongoing row about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party cost the party dear in the local council elections held on 3 May 2018 in the London Borough of Barnet, which has a sizeable Jewish population, according to two blog posts by Daniel Allington. His analysis of ward-by-ward voting in relation to the 2011 census showed that Labour picked up votes only in those parts of Barnet where there were relatively few Jews; the more Jews there were within a ward, the more likely it was for Labour to lose votes, most of them transferring to the Tories, thereby enabling the latter to retake control of the council. The blogs are at:

<http://www.danielallington.net/>

### **Muslims and stop and search**

Muslims in England and Wales are among the least likely ethnic and religious group to be stopped by the police, but they are among the most likely to be searched once stopped (by a factor of eight in respect of foot searches). So concludes Julian Hargreaves in 'Police Stop and Search within British Muslim Communities: Evidence from the Crime Survey, 2006-11', an advance article in the *British Journal of Criminology*, 2018. This claims to be the first known study to model large-scale police stop and search data for British Muslims. However, the author acknowledges the limitations of the Crime Survey as a source for 'minority' populations, especially in respect of low cell counts. The article is freely available at:

<https://academic.oup.com/bjc/advance-article/doi/10.1093/bjc/azy013/4999978?guestAccessKey=2bfebb1e-cb67-47b8-80a7-19fd09251c7c>

NEW DATASETS

**UK Data Service SN 8156: Millennium Cohort Study, Sixth Survey, 2015**

The Millennium Cohort Study, an initiative of the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at the University of London, is tracking the lives of a sample of individuals born in the UK in 2000-01. The sixth sweep was conducted, by a mixture of methods, between January 2015 and April 2016, when the cohort members were aged 14, 11,884 responses being obtained. Information about religious affiliation was collected from both cohort members and their parents, which can be used as a variable for the analysis of replies to other questions. The modules in the young people's self-completion questionnaire covered activities (including attendance at religious services), attitudes, education, identity, family/friends/relationships, victimization/risky behaviours, health, and personality/well-being. A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8156&type=Data%20catalogue>