

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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OPINION POLLS

Frequency and subjects of prayer: Savanta ComRes poll for Premier Christian Media

Just under one-quarter (23%) of Britons claim to pray regularly (at least monthly), according to a survey by Savanta ComRes for Premier Christian Media, for which 2,023 adults aged 18 and over were interviewed online on 17–20 January 2020. The proportion was highest among Londoners (38%), Christians (38%), non-Christians (57%), and regular attenders at religious services (92%). At the other end of the spectrum, 57% of the sample acknowledged that they never prayed, including 68% of Scottish residents, 78% of non-attenders at religious services, and 89% of those professing no religion. Respondents were then asked whether any particular (recent) circumstances had caused them to pray, and, from a list, they selected: Australian wildfires (21%), London Bridge terror attack (18%), social media campaigns like #prayfor . . . (15%), US/Iran conflict (11%), Brexit (10%), flooding in Derbyshire and Yorkshire (10%), Sri Lanka bombings (9%), Prince Philip's illness (5%), and train strikes (3%). Full data tables, incorporating breakdowns by demographics, religious affiliation, and frequency of attendance at religious services, are available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/premier-christian-media-prayer-survey/>

Monarchy and Supreme Governorship of the Church of England: *Daily Express* poll

As part of a more general enquiry into attitudes towards the royal family, another Savanta ComRes survey, this time commissioned by the *Daily Express* and conducted online on 22–23 January 2020, asked 2,039 Britons whether the monarch should be stripped of the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England, so that the royal family might better reflect the current diversity of the UK. Opinion was somewhat split on the matter, 29% agreeing with the proposition, 29% disagreeing, with 28% neutral, and 15% undecided. Most in favour were the top (AB) social group (36%) and Scots (43%), while most opposed were residents of Eastern England (37%) and the over-55s (42%). Full data tables are available at:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/daily-express-royals-poll/>

Attitudes to people holding opposite views about the existence of God

In its most recent Political Pulse, conducted among an online sample of 1,142 adult Britons on 28–30 January 2020, Ipsos MORI included a short module designed to measure tolerance towards people who held opposing views on eight different topics, one of them being whether God exists or not. Three-fifths (61%) of respondents indicated that it would not matter to them if somebody held the opposite view to their own on whether God exists or not, the most tolerant position for any of the eight topics. Just 13% agreed that they would find it hard to respect individuals who held the opposite view on the existence of God, and no more than 9% of over-

65s and Liberal Democrats. The topic that brought out least tolerance was whether climate change is real and dangerous to the planet. Survey toplines and full data tables are available at:

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/tolerance-across-values-divide>

Anti-Semitism and Lord Ashcroft's diagnosis of Labour's defeat in the general election

Lord Ashcroft has published a new report, *Diagnosis of Defeat: Labour's Turn to Smell the Coffee*, offering an autopsy of the Labour Party's defeat in the December 2019 general election, based on two online quantitative surveys (by Lord Ashcroft Polls) and a series of 22 focus groups (not discussed here). The main survey was conducted on 14–20 January 2020 with 10,107 adults aged 18 and over, who were asked to judge the extent to which Labour's failure to address convincingly the controversy surrounding anti-Semitism in the party contributed to its electoral defeat. On a scale running from 0 (not a reason at all) to 10 (an extremely important reason), the mean was 6.6, being highest among Conservative voters (7.7) and the over-65s (7.5); the mean for Labour voters in 2019 was lower, at 5.8, but for Labour defectors (those who had voted Labour in the 2017 general election but not in 2019) it was 6.4. The second sample was of 1,073 Labour Party members, interviewed on 10–14 January 2020. Their mean was lower still, at 5.3, and, in reply to a follow-on question, only 22% acknowledged anti-Semitism to be a real problem in the party, 73% agreeing that it had been invented or wildly exaggerated by the right-wing media and opponents of Jeremy Corbyn. The report and data tables are available at:

<https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2020/02/diagnosis-of-defeat-labours-turn-to-smell-the-coffee/#more-16420>

Electoral damage from anti-Semitism assessed by Labour Party members and affiliates

Three-quarters of 1,323 Labour Party members and affiliates, interviewed online by YouGov for Sky News on 20–25 February 2020, believed that the party would have done better in the December 2019 general election had there been no accusations of anti-Semitism within the party. This total comprised: 11% who thought that, without such accusations, Labour would have won a majority of parliamentary seats; 21% predicting that Labour would have won more seats than the Conservatives but not have secured a majority; and 44% anticipating that Labour would have done better than it did electorally while still trailing the Conservatives in terms of seats. Just 17% of this Labour electorate claimed that the general election result would have been much the same even had there been no accusations of anti-Semitism. Full data tables are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/0iwr4ut5hg/SkyResults_200225_LabMembers_wv.pdf

Public attitudes to Labour Party's response to allegations of anti-Semitism

A majority (55%) of UK adults is negative towards the Labour Party's response to allegations of anti-Semitism in the party, including four-fifths of Conservative voters and almost three-quarters of people aged 55 and over. Of the remainder, 12% were positive (no more than 26% even among Labour voters), 18% neutral, and 15% undecided. Fieldwork was conducted by Opinium Research, with 2,002 adults being interviewed online on 15–17 January 2020. Data tables are available at:

<https://www.opinium.co.uk/political-polling-15th-january-2020/>

Public support for a Labour Party plan to tackle anti-Semitism

On behalf of Peter Carpenter, Survation carried out an online survey of 1,005 UK adults between 31 January and 3 February 2020, in connection with the contest for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party. As well as specific questions relating to the candidates for that role, respondents were asked whether they supported some of the policy proposals that had been advanced during the parallel contest for the Labour leadership. The degree of support was measured on a scale running from 0 (completely oppose) to 10 (completely support). One of the proposals was ‘having a plan to tackle antisemitism’. This attracted a mean score of 7.77, indicative of broad endorsement, albeit it was higher among Conservative voters than Labour ones. Data tables are available at:

<https://www.survation.com/archive/2020-2/>

Knowledge of the Holocaust: YouGov poll to mark Holocaust Memorial Day

In a survey conducted in advance of Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January), 65% of the 2,663 Britons interviewed online by YouGov on 24 January 2020 claimed to know a great deal or a moderate amount about the events of the Holocaust, a proportion that peaked at 70% of men, 71% of Scots, 72% of non-manual workers, 73% of persons aged 50–65, 76% of over-65s, and 78% of Liberal Democrats. Almost one-third of respondents admitted they had only a small amount of knowledge or none at all, including 38% of women, 38% of Northerners, 39% of under-25s, 40% of those aged 25–49, and 42% of manual workers. Results are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2020/01/24/f6daf/1>

Affluence and wellness priorities: YouGov study of wealthy households

At the very beginning of the New Year, YouGov reported the results of a study into happiness among 655 Britons whose household income exceeded £100,000. They were asked which of five elements of personal wellness constituted a focus in their lives. Spiritual wellness was ranked bottom, selected by only 15% of respondents, compared with 73% choosing physical wellness, 63% emotional wellness, 47% intellectual wellness, and 35% social wellness, with 9% opting for none of them. The survey tables are available at:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/dp0hbld0jc/YouGov%20-%20Affluent%20Britons%20and%20happiness%20Results.pdf

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

SunLife’s *Cost of Dying Report, 2020*: the diminishing religious aspect of funerals

SunLife’s *Cost of Dying Report, 2020* is the latest in an annual series that began in 2007. It has mainly been compiled from an online survey of 1,503 UK adults who were responsible for planning a funeral and administering an estate within the past four years, and telephone interviews with 100 funeral directors across the UK. The content is not merely confined to the financial aspects of organizing funerals but also briefly illuminates their ever diminishing religious element. The overwhelming majority of funerals in 2019 were cremations, 4% of which were direct cremations, involving no funeral service whatsoever (and thus no clerical or

secular officiant). Awareness of direct cremations is growing, 13% of funeral planners instinctively saying they wanted one for themselves, a figure that rose to 42% when the concept was explained. Two-thirds (68%) of funeral directors noted a decline in traditional religious services, while just 21% of funeral planners described the service arranged for their own loved one as religious in character, with 18% saying it was explicitly non-religious. When a cross-section of the population was asked about the song they would like played at their funeral, only 25% said they wanted a hymn, compared with 47% preferring a modern song and 17% instrumental music. The report is available at:

<https://www.sunlife.co.uk/siteassets/documents/cost-of-dying/sl-cost-of-dying-report-2020.pdf>

Acute NHS chaplaincy pastoral, spiritual, and religious care services in England

The Network for Pastoral, Spiritual, and Religious Care in Health (NPSRCH) has published *Fit for the Twenty-First Century? The State of Inclusion for Acute NHS Chaplaincy Pastoral, Spiritual, and Religious Care Services in England*. Its lead author is Simon O'Donoghue, who is chair of the NPSRCH, but who was commissioned as lead project planner for the study following an open tendering process. Using quantitative data obtained from NHS trusts under FOI requests in July 2019, the 75–page report (incorporating eight tables and eleven figures) highlights inequalities in the provision of NHS chaplaincy services, which are said to remain overwhelmingly Christian in terms of their staff and users, in relation to the current religion or belief profile of NHS patients (it is calculated that 94% of chaplaincy interactions are with those holding Christian beliefs, whereas one-third of patients do not hold those beliefs). The thirty recommendations include a call for an urgent reprioritization of pastoral, spiritual, and religious services to address the needs of underrepresented groups in the care of the NHS (defined as minority faith groups, non-religious groups, minority groups within faiths, and groups that experience discrimination or disadvantage). The report has upset the Church of England, which has branded it ‘fundamentally flawed in its premises, methodology, content, and governance’. It is available at:

http://dharmicweb.com/network-health.org/documents/NPSPCH_report_web.pdf

Barna Group and *The Connected Generation* research project: UK report

The California-based Barna Group has recently published, in e-format only (48pp., ISBN: 978–1–945269–59–2, \$19.00), the UK report on *The Connected Generation* research, conducted in partnership with World Vision (which provided the funding). The project has explored the concerns, religious convictions, and potential impacts of Millennials and Gen Z members by means of online interviews with more than 15,000 adults aged 18–35 in 25 countries across the globe between December 2018 and February 2019, including 1,100 in the UK. The questions asked in the survey, as well as the accompanying preface, field guides, and commentaries in the report (which somewhat overshadow the presentation of data), are written from an evangelical perspective. In the UK, 44% of young people professed no religion and 73% were categorized as church dropouts (former Christians or Christians who were infrequent church attenders). Just 4% met the demanding criteria for ‘resilient disciples’ (persons who identified as Christian; attended church regularly and engaged with their faith community above and beyond worship services; trusted firmly in the authority of the Bible; were committed to Jesus Christ personally and affirmed his death and resurrection; and expressed a desire for their faith to impact their words and actions). One-third of the whole sample said that religion is harmful

to people and detrimental to society, and somewhat bigger numbers voiced sundry criticisms of the Church. The report can be purchased via the following link:

<https://theconnectedgeneration.com>

Children and youth ministry in the Church of England: General Synod paper

In advance of a debate on the issue at General Synod on 12 February 2020, the Church of England published GS 2161, *Children and Youth Ministry*, comprising a 6-page paper from the Evangelism and Discipleship Team followed by a 42-page report from Research and Statistics, primarily based on an analysis of the annual Statistics for Mission for 2013–18. The headline finding was that the number of under-16s in the Church of England is decreasing year on year at almost twice the rate of adults, to the extent that there are now only 903 churches and parishes that have an average Sunday attendance of 25 or more under-16s, the majority of which are experiencing decline. Although these churches and parishes represent just 6% of the whole, they contain 44% of all under-16s in the Church. The paper can be downloaded from the General Synod agenda for 12 February at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/work-general-synod/agendas-papers/general-synod-february-2020>

Church Buildings Council report on struggling Church of England places of worship

The Church Buildings Council, created in 2007 through a merger of two previous Church of England agencies, has published a useful 66-page report by Guy Braithwaite on the *Struggling, Closed, and Closing Churches Research Project*. It was undertaken in 2019 by means of a statistical analysis of the 552 cases handled by what is now the Council in 2004–18, together with a survey of 87 diocesan and other stakeholders. The analysis provides an interesting profile of struggling and closing places of worship in terms of their geographical distribution, population, deprivation score, urban/rural character, listing status, and historical period. With 10% of the Church of England's buildings closed in the half-century since 1969, often in piecemeal fashion, Braithwaite identifies 'a major structural change taking place in slow motion'. The report is available at:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Struggling closed and closing churches report.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Struggling%20closed%20and%20closing%20churches%20report.pdf)

Catholic Education Service 2019 census of Catholic schools and colleges

The Catholic Education Service has published the results of its annual census of Catholic schools and colleges in England and Wales for 2019, based upon a 100% response. There are separate reports on England and Wales, each providing commentaries and statistics about institutions, pupils, and staff, including trends from 2014, together with appendices of additional data. In England in 2019, there were 2,117 Catholic schools, equivalent to 10% of all state-funded schools; they educated 825,000 students, 65% of whom were Catholic, and they employed 48,000 teachers, 49% of whom were Catholic. The reports can be found at:

<https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/ces-census>

UK Jews and organ donation

In advance of an imminent change in the law in England, whereby people will be assumed to have consented to donating their organs after death unless they have opted out or are in one of the excluded groups, Jewish Organ Donor Association (JODA) UK has been inviting UK Jews via social media to complete an online survey on the subject, on a self-selecting (and thus potentially not fully representative) basis, since 25 October 2019. The survey is ongoing, but preliminary findings for the 1,106 Jewish adults who had completed the questionnaire by 1 January 2020 showed that 47% already held an NHS organ donor card on an opt in basis, 10% more than the national average, even though there was widespread confusion and lack of awareness around Jewish ethical and medical positions on organ donation. The final results of the study will be presented to the British Transplant Society's annual congress in Belfast in March 2020. In the meantime, further information is available in JODA's press release of 14 January 2020 at:

<https://www.joda.org.uk/>

Community Security Trust's *Antisemitic Incidents Report, 2019*

The Community Security Trust registered 1,805 anti-Semitic incidents in the UK in 2019, 7% more than in 2018 and, for the fourth consecutive year, the biggest number that has ever been recorded. For the second year in a row, more than 100 incidents were logged for each calendar month. An increase in online anti-Semitism, especially on social media, was the largest single contributor to the record total. Four-fifths of incidents took the form of abusive behaviour. Incident peaks correlated with periods when discourse around Jews and anti-Semitism was prominent in news and politics, arising from continuing controversy surrounding allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, and 224 of the 1,805 cases were actually linked with this controversy in some way. The 40-page report is at:

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/9/0/IncidentsReport2019.pdf>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Exploring Religion in England and Wales: equalities data audit by the ONS

On 26 February 2020, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a series of five articles, under the umbrella title of *Exploring Religion in England and Wales*, critically appraising some of the key sources of official and other government-funded statistics concerning religious groups, in an effort to assess the quality of the data and develop plans to build upon their strengths and address their limitations.

The articles form part of a programme of work by the ONS Centre for Equalities and Inclusion to understand the life experiences of people across each of the nine protected characteristics (one of them being religion or belief) covered by the Equality Act 2010. The focus of the exercise is thus not so much with religion in the round but specifically with the quantification of religious equality and inequality.

The five individual articles and their contents comprise:

- *Exploring Religion in England and Wales* (12pp.), covering data on religious affiliation (from the 2011 census of population) and religious attendance (from the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study, or UKHLS, for 2016–18), and outlining current plans to improve data respecting education, health, crime, and living standards
- *Religion, Education, and Work in England and Wales* (21pp.), covering breakdowns by religious groups of data, from the Annual Population Survey for 2012–18, relating to educational attainment, economic activity, earnings, occupational skill level, and managerial status
- *Religion and Crime in England and Wales* (8pp.), covering religion related findings from police records of hate crime for 2018–19 and the Crime Survey for England and Wales
- *Religion and Health in England and Wales* (18pp.), covering breakdowns by religious groups of data, from the UKHLS for 2016–18, relating to satisfaction with health, longstanding illness, smoking prevalence, self-reported physical health state, and self-reported mental health state
- *Religion and Participation in England and Wales* (10pp.), covering breakdowns by religious groups of data, from the UKHLS for 2016–18 and Community Life Survey for 2016–17, relating to participation in political and civic life, and social and community cohesion

Collectively, the articles constitute a helpful audit of available statistics, with some insights into ONS thinking on the scope for their improvement. However, it should be noted that: (a) the analysis in the articles does not exhaust the religious potential of the sources that are mentioned; (b) the breakdowns are by religious groups as defined in the population census, with no differentiation within the Christian community, even when (as with the UKHLS) there is potential to do so; and (c) there are some other official surveys that collect data on religion besides those deployed in the articles. The articles can be accessed via the homepage at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/exploring-religion-in-england-and-wales>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Religious census of Cumbria, 1851: critical edition of the manuscript returns

It was in 1851 that the government organized the only official census of religious accommodation and attendance in Britain, and this remains a fundamental source for the study of Victorian church life. Information was collected, as part of the decennial population census, from the minister or official responsible for each place of worship. These manuscript schedules for Scotland have been lost, while those for Wales were transcribed and printed in two volumes in 1976 and 1981. Transcription and publication of the English returns, mostly undertaken by county record societies, has moved a step nearer completion with *The Religious Census of Cumbria, 1851: Cumberland, Westmorland, and Furness*, edited by Alan Munden (Publications of the Surtees Society, vol. 223 and Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Record Series, vol. 23, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019, cvi +

381p., ISBN: 978-0-85444-078-8, hardback, £50.00). The core of the text (pp. 1–321) comprises the transcript of the 605 original returns from The National Archives, but there is also a very substantial introduction (pp. xiii–cvi), six appendices (pp. 327–46, including a provisional list of Cumbrian places of worship overlooked by the census), bibliography (pp. 347–61), and indexes of people and places (pp. 362–81). The book’s webpage is at:

<https://boydellandbrewer.com/the-religious-census-of-cumbria-1851-hb.html>

Catholics in the British Social Attitudes Surveys and British Election Studies

Ben Clements has added a couple of posts to the newly-launched *Catholics in Britain* website that may be of interest to BRIN readers. Both derive from the British Social Attitudes Surveys and British Election Studies from 1983 to the present. One focuses on Catholics and religious affiliation, the other on Catholics and church attendance. They can be found at:

<https://catholicsinbritain.le.ac.uk/>

Hypothetical collective action by British Muslims against Islamist extremism

In a survey experiment, based on a hypothetical scenario, Sadi Shanaah and Lasse Lindekilde have investigated the circumstances in which a nationally representative sample of 825 British Muslims, interviewed online in 2017–18, would mobilize in response to action appeals by the government or Muslim Council of Britain to take a collective stand (by participating in a demonstration) against Islamist extremism, following a terrorist attack perpetrated in the UK by a British Muslim. The authors conclude that such ‘action appeals do affect mobilization and that the effect of action appeals on mobilization outcomes is moderated by the level of trust in the actor behind the appeal.’ The article, ‘Standing Up and Speaking Out? British Muslims’ Collective Action against Islamist Extremism’, explores theoretical, methodological, and counter-extremism policy implications of the topic. It is published in the journal *Democracy and Security*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2019, pp. 386–407, and access options are outlined at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17419166.2019.1573680>

NEW DATASETS

UK Data Service, SN 8584: Community Life Survey, 2018–2019

The Community Life Survey (CLS) is conducted annually by Kantar Public on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport. In the latest round, undertaken between 18 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, 10,627 adults aged 16 and over living in private residences in England were interviewed online or by self-completion postal questionnaire. One aim of the CLS is to investigate religion in relation to community life, including volunteering and charitable giving. Questions are also asked about religious affiliation and whether respondents actively practise their religion. Further information about the dataset can be found in the catalogue description at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8584>

UK Data Service, SN 8591: National Survey for Wales, 2018–2019

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 April 2018 and March 2019, 11,922 adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Wales were interviewed face-to-face and by self-completion questionnaire, representing a response rate of 54%. 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?') A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8591>

UK Data Service, SN 8606: British Social Attitudes Survey, 2018

The British Social Attitudes Survey has been undertaken by NatCen Social Research every year since 1983, apart from in 1988 and 1992. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and a consortium of public sector and third sector clients. Fieldwork in 2018 was conducted between July and November, 3,879 adults aged 18 and over being interviewed face-to-face, representing a 42% response. The main questionnaire covered religious affiliation and religious attendance. The remaining religion content in 2018 derived from self-completion questionnaires given to quarter samples. One question, about the extent to which 'we believe too often in science and not enough in feelings and faith', was included in versions A, B, and D of the self-completion questionnaire. The bulk of the religion content, comprising the Religion IV module of the International Social Survey Programme, appeared in versions A and B, thus being answered by a half sample. A catalogue description of the dataset is available at:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8606>

Ben Clements has published, on the BRIN website, an analysis of the key findings from the 2018 ISSP Religion module for Britain compared with those from the first module in 1991. The post is available at:

<http://www.brin.ac.uk/religious-change-in-britain-evidence-from-the-1991-and-2018-issp-religion-modules/>