

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 80 – May 2022

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## OPINION POLLS

### **Attitudes to continued presence of Church of England bishops in the House of Lords**

On behalf of *The Express* newspaper, Techne UK surveyed, by a combination of telephone and online interview, a sample of 1,631 UK adults on 20–21 April 2022, asking: ‘Do you think that Bishops should still have a place in Parliament in a modern democracy?’ More than three-fifths (62%) responded in the negative, with the remaining 38% equally divided between supporters of the status quo and undecideds. Breaks by demographics are available at:

- <https://www.techneuk.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EXPRESS-2022-4-22-DATA-1.pdf>

### **Attitudes to existing Sunday trading hours in England and Wales**

The latest bimonthly YouGov tracker on current Sunday trading arrangements in England and Wales, enacted in 1994, was conducted on 30 April–2 May 2022 among an online sample of 1,780 adults aged 18 and over across Britain. A plurality (49%) favoured unrestricted Sunday trading, while 28% endorsed the status quo (limiting large shops to six hours of trading), 13% were opposed to shops opening at all on Sundays, and 10% were unsure. Breaks by demographics are available at:

- [https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/6sbzxs3wq/P\\_Main+Political\\_Tracker\\_Survey\\_Rotation7sr\\_5.pdf](https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/6sbzxs3wq/P_Main+Political_Tracker_Survey_Rotation7sr_5.pdf)

### **Perceptions of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as problems in UK society**

Savanta ComRes has been tracking public perceptions of various phobias and prejudices (including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia) as problems in the UK on a monthly basis for two years. In its latest political tracker, among an online sample of 2,195 UK adults on 13–15 May 2022, 51% reported anti-Semitism to be a problem in the UK, with 29% saying that it was not and 20% undecided. In the case of Islamophobia, 57% of respondents considered it to be a problem, 27% not, and 16% unsure. These figures have proved to be fairly stable over time. The dataset is available at:

- <https://comresglobal.com/polls/savanta-comres-political-tracker-may-2022/>

### **Perceptions of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as problems in UK professional football**

In a parallel poll, conducted among 2,124 adult Britons on 18–19 May 2022, YouGov explored perceptions of various phobias and prejudices, again including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, in relation to professional football in the UK. With regard to anti-Semitism, 34% of the whole sample (and 33% of football fans) judged it to be a serious problem in football, but 30% did not and 36% could not make up their minds. For Islamophobia, 38% overall (and the identical proportion of fans) viewed it as a serious problem, 27% not, while 36% were

unsure. During the past ten years, the situation was felt to have worsened by 10% for anti-Semitism and 17% for Islamophobia. Full data tables are available at:

- <https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/d4kj72cqql/YouGov%20-%20Homophobia%20in%20football.pdf>

### **Science and religion: more results from YouGov/Theos/Faraday Institute polling**

Further to our coverage in the April 2022 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*, Theos has published two briefing papers containing additional analysis of, and commentary on, the YouGov poll which it commissioned in May-June 2021 as part of its three-year partnership project with the Faraday Institute. The first paper is by Hannah Waite and Nick Spencer and entitled *Spiritual Silicon: Could Robots One Day Have Souls?* The two questions that are discussed relate to whether robots will one day have souls (a statement with which only 5% of respondents agreed and 75% disagreed) and will need to be accorded human rights (with which 17% agreed and 56% disagreed). The paper is available at:

- <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2022/05/20/briefing-paper-spiritual-silicon-could-robots-one-day-have-souls>

The second paper, also by Hannah Waite and Nick Spencer, is *The Promise of Scientific Immortality: Who Wants to Live Forever?* This explores the public's desire: to live forever if scientists were able to engineer it (disapproved of by 60% and approved by 19%); to be cryogenically frozen after death and revived centuries later (disapproved of by 72% and approved by 12%); or to clone themselves (disapproved of by 81% and approved by 7%). This paper is available at:

- <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2022/05/20/briefing-paper-the-promise-of-scientific-immortality-who-wants-to-live-forever>

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **Mapping Christian youth ministry in south-west England**

A 38-page profile of youth ministry among persons aged 0–19 in south-west England has been compiled by South West Youth Ministries: *Mapping the Landscape: Second Class Ministry? A Snapshot of How Churches and Christian Organisations Are Working with Young People across the South West of England*. The report is based upon responses, by a self-selecting sample of 972 churches (seemingly disproportionately evangelical) and 48 Christian organizations, to an online survey that was open between 1 November 2021 and 1 February 2022. Lack of volunteers was found to be a significant challenge to a majority of churches, especially to those with smaller congregations, which were also the least likely to be employing somebody to work with young people. The recruitment and retention of paid youth staff was itself proving problematical. The report is available at:

- <https://swym.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Mapping-the-Landscape-Report.pdf>

### **Annual report of Church Commissioners for 2021**

*The Work and Mission of the Church of England: The Church Commissioners for England Annual Report, 2021* incorporates the customary financial statements for the year preceded by commentary and overview of investment strategy and governance arrangements. The value of the Commissioners' investment fund was £10.1 billion with total charitable expenditure of £147.3 million. The report is available at:

- [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/5950\\_CofE\\_Church%20Commissioners%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/5950_CofE_Church%20Commissioners%20FINAL.pdf)

### **Church of Scotland congregational statistics for 31 December 2021**

A fairly detailed overview of Church of Scotland congregational statistics for 2021, disaggregated by presbytery, is given in section 6 of the *Supplementary Report of the Assembly Trustees, May 2022*. There were 283,600 members (communicants) at the year-end, representing a fall of 4.6% from 2020. In the congregations that responded to the questions about attendance at services, the equivalent of 22% of members worshipped in person during a ‘regular week’ and a further 19% online or offline. The report is available at:

- [https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/93750/supplementary-report-of-the-assembly-trustees.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/93750/supplementary-report-of-the-assembly-trustees.pdf)

### **Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) membership statistics for 31 December 2021**

In preparation for the 2022 British Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers have published *Patterns of Membership, Including the 2021 Tabular Statement*, with trend data going back to 1935. Membership at the year-end was 11,828, a decrease of 2.4% on 2020, with 267 incomings being offset by 540 outgoings. In addition, there were 6,479 adult non-member attenders, down by 6.1% on the year. The report is available at:

- <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/tabular-statement-2022>

### **Growth of strictly Orthodox Jewry: European Jewish Demography Unit estimates**

The proportion of UK Jews who are strictly Orthodox (or *haredim*) has now reached 25%, and is expected to grow to 40% by 2040, according to a recent report from the European Jewish Demography Unit: Daniel Staetsky, *Haredi Jews around the World: Population Trends and Estimates*. This compares with a current global average of 14%. However, the UK estimate of 76,000 *haredim* is dwarfed by the 1,200,000 who live in Israel and 700,000 in the USA, the two latter nations accounting for 92% of all *haredim* in the world. The increase in strictly Orthodox Jewry is said to be driven by a combination of ‘high fertility, high longevity, and high rates of lifestyle retention’. The report is available at:

- <https://www/jpr.org.uk/publication?id=18073>

### **Performance measures of religious education in England and Wales**

An updated report card on the state of religious education in England and Wales has been published by the Religious Education Council for England and Wales. It summarizes a range of current statistics, including: provision for teaching the subject; examination entries and results in Religious Studies; and public opinion about education in worldviews. The report card, which concludes with a four-point action plan, is available at:

- <https://www.rethinkre.org/re-report-card>

## OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

### **Marriages in England and Wales, 2019**

The Office for National Statistics has published its report and dataset on marriages in England and Wales in 2019. They reveal a continuation of trends from previous decades, with diminutions in both the numbers and proportions of people getting married at all (marriage rates for opposite-sex couples falling to their lowest on record since 1862), and in couples getting married according to religious rites. In 2019, for the first time, more than four-fifths of marriages were solemnized in civil ceremonies and only 18.2% in religious ones. Among

opposite-sex couples that year, 72.5% opted to get married in places of worship of the Church of England or Church in Wales, 22.2% in those of other Christian denominations, and 5.4% in non-Christian premises. It should be noted that, unlike in Scotland, humanist weddings are not yet legal in England and Wales. Full results are available at:

- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/marriagesinenglandandwales2019>

### **Social capital in the UK, 2020–21**

A bulletin and associated dataset from the Office for National Statistics illustrate how the UK fares in four domains of social capital: personal relationships, social network support, civic engagement, and trust and cooperative norms. Data are drawn from eight different surveys conducted between April 2020 and March 2021. Results are disaggregated by eight variables, one of which is religious status (religious/not religious). Documentation is available at:

- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/socialcapitalintheuk2022>

### **Response rate to Scotland’s census, 2022 still below target**

In the April 2022 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*, we reported that the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Scottish Government were struggling to secure a viable response to the household schedule for this year’s census of population in Scotland (postponed from 2021), notwithstanding that completion by households is a legal requirement (apart from the questions on religion and sexual orientation, which are voluntary). Despite the original deadline being extended by a whole month, until 31 May, the rate of return was still only 86.6% on the evening of 30 May. This figure is significantly below the minimum completion of 94% that the NRS had deemed necessary before the census was taken (which was pitched 3% lower than the 97% achieved by the Office for National Statistics in England and Wales in 2021). In an interview with BBC Radio, one leading academic expert, Professor Lindsay Paterson of the University of Edinburgh, described the poor response as a ‘fiasco’ and ‘extreme embarrassment’. The Scottish Government has been heavily criticized about the situation by Scottish opposition parties.

### **Results of 2021 Research Excellence Framework published**

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a periodic metrics-based evaluation of the quality and impact of research undertaken by staff at higher education institutions across all four UK nations. It is carried out through a series of subject panels and sub-panels, and its outcomes inform the distribution of future research funding. REF 2021 is the first exercise since 2014. BRIN readers will naturally be especially interested in the results for sub-panel 31 for Theology and Religious Studies (TRS), although it should be remembered that some religion-related research may also have been evaluated by cognate sub-panels. The data are quite complex to interpret, but *THE* (the magazine for the higher education sector) has a useful ‘league table’ of the outcomes for TRS, showing the top three ranked universities in the discipline as Aberdeen, Exeter, and King’s College London, with Durham University dropping from first place in 2014 to eighth in 2021. This table is at:

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/ref-2021-theology-and-religious-studies>

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

### **Calculating decline and extinction potentials for UK Churches**

John Hayward, an academic mathematician specializing in modelling church growth and decline, has published two blogs that incorporate use of the R rate (a concept familiar to us all from those Downing Street briefings during the Covid-19 pandemic) to forecast (Hayward

eschews the word 'predict') decline and extinction potentials for UK Churches, based on annual changes in membership or attendance between 2015 and 2020 (generally as recorded by Peter Brierley). Most UK denominations were found to have a reproduction potential of less than 1 and thus to be heading for extinction, in many instances before the middle of this century (the situation being especially bleak in Wales), although the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church are forecast to persist until the early 2060s. Correlation with churchmanship revealed that any growth potential is confined to evangelicals, while liberal denominations are declining (as are those espousing 'progressive ideology'). The first blog ('Growth, Decline, and Extinction of UK Churches'), with an embedded link to the second post ('UK Church Decline and Progressive Ideology'), is available at:

- <https://churchmodel.org.uk/2022/05/15/growth-decline-and-extinction-of-uk-churches/>

### **Religion and the supernatural during the 1990s: evidence from Mass Observation**

Mass Observation was founded in 1937 as an ethnographic social research organization. It employed a mixture of methods, including recourse to a self-selecting and voluntary panel of observers. After the Second World War, it was transformed into a commercial market research company, mainly generating quantitative data. However, from 1981 it was partially reinvented in its original format, with its refreshed (but unrepresentative) panel giving their thoughts and experiences about a range of topics. In 1996, these observers were sent a 'directive' exploring dimensions of the supernatural, and the 279 responses received underpin James Hinton's *Mass Observers Making Meaning: Religion, Spirituality, and Atheism in Late 20th-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, xii + 190 pp., ISBN: 978-1-3502-7449-5, £85.00, hardback). There are chapters on: belief and disbelief; death and afterwards; religion and science; uses of the paranormal; and moments out of time. The book's webpage is at:

- <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mass-observers-making-meaning-9781350274495/>

### **Some psychological insights into churchgoing in the UK**

A convenience sample of 540 UK churchgoers, recruited via social media and disproportionately from the Church of England, forms the basis of Jennifer Brown, Valerie van Mulukom, Jonathan Jong, Fraser Watts, and Miguel Farias, 'Exploring the Relationship between Church Worship, Social Bonding, and Moral Values', *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, Vol. 44, No. 1, March 2022, pp. 3–22. The study was self-funded by the first author as part of ongoing doctoral research. The article is available at:

- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00846724211070858>

### **Coronavirus chronicles: gendered responses to Covid-19 in the Church of England**

In a further report from the 'Coronavirus, Church, and You' survey of May-July 2020, Leslie Francis and Andrew Village explore 'The Pandemic and the Feminisation of the Church? How Male and Female Churchgoers Experienced the Church of England's Response to Covid-19', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2022, pp. 207–16. Men evaluated the Church of England's national and local response to the pandemic less favourably than women, and they were also more critical of the hierarchy's decision to lock up places of worship and less positive about a virtual future for the Church. The data derived from a self-selecting (and thus potentially unrepresentative) online sample of 1,642 female and 854 male churchgoing lay Anglicans in England. The article is available at:

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13617672.2021.1933304>

**Coronavirus chronicles: rural Anglican lay attitudes to online worship during Covid-19**

Likewise based on the ‘Coronavirus, Church, and You’ survey of May-July 2020 is Ursula McKenna, ‘Adapting to and Assessing Online Worship: Listening to Rural Church of England Lay People’, *Rural Theology*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2022, pp. 2–17. However, hers is a qualitative study of (generally positive) comments made by 133 rural lay people about their experiences of the transition to online worship during the pandemic. The article is available at:

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14704994.2022.2048538>

**Coronavirus chronicles: God, prayer, personal wellbeing, and the pandemic**

The following year, in January-July 2021, the same research team recruited a separate online opportunity sample for a follow-up study, entitled ‘Covid-19 and Church-21’, again not necessarily fully representative of the target population. In ‘Prayers for Deliverance during the Pandemic’, *Church Times*, 13 May 2022, p. 16, Leslie Francis and Andrew Village analyse the responses given by 1,841 Anglican clergy and laity living in England to a module exploring certainty of belief in God’s agency during the pandemic and its relationship with personal wellbeing. The article is at:

- <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/13-may/comment/opinion/prayers-for-deliverance-during-the-pandemic>

**Ethos of Anglican primary schools in Wales**

Drawing on data provided by 8,111 year 5 and 6 students attending Church in Wales primary schools, Leslie Francis, David Lankshear, and Emma Eccles report on the six school ethos measures identified by Anglican school inspection criteria, and on significant differences between male and female students and between year 5 and year 6 students: ‘Assessing the Ethos of Anglican Primary Schools in Wales: The Student Voice Project’, *Journal of Anglican Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, May 2022, pp. 80–97. The article is available (on open access) at:

- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-anglican-studies/article/assessing-the-ethos-of-anglican-primary-schools-in-wales-the-student-voice-project.6BAAC89ACAFF4C7647A711D2064542CC>

APPENDIX  
KEYWORDS/TAGS

Andrew Village, anti-Semitism, Archive for the Psychology of Religion, bishops, Bloomsbury Academic, census of population, Church Commissioners, Church in Wales, church membership, church modelling, Church of England, Church of Scotland, Church Times, coronavirus, Coronavirus Church and You, Covid-19, Covid-19 and Church-21, Daniel Staetsky, David Lankshear, Emma Eccles, European Jewish Demography Unit, Faraday Institute, Fraser Watts, Hannah Waite, House of Lords, immortality, Islamophobia, James Hinton, Jennifer Brown, John Hayward, Jonathan Jong, Journal of Anglican Studies, Journal of Beliefs and Values, Leslie Francis, marriages, Mass Observation, Miguel Farias, National Records of Scotland, Nick Spencer, Office for National Statistics, online worship, Parliament, politics, prayers for deliverance, professional football, religious education, Religious Education Council for England and Wales, religious prejudice, Religious Society of Friends, reproduction potential, Research Excellence Framework, robots, Rural Theology, Savanta ComRes, science, Scotland, Scottish Government, social capital, souls, South-West England, South West Youth Ministries, strictly Orthodox Jews, Sunday trading, supernatural, Techno UK, The Express, Theos, Ursula McKenna, Valerie van Mulukom, YouGov, youth ministry