

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

State of, and prospects for, the United Reformed Church

Nathan Mladin's *The United Reformed Church: A Paradoxical Church at a Crossroads* (London: Theos, 2023, ISBN: 9781838255961, 83 pp.) is the outcome of a partnership research project between the United Reformed Church (URC) and Theos into 'the life, identity, and flourishing' of the URC at the half-century of its birth. It is based upon a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods, which are drawn upon to identify barriers and pathways to flourishing. Specifically, there were 39 individual and 17 group interviews; 402 responses to an online survey sent to all URC churches (highlights from which are presented in appendix 1, pp. 66–72); and a mapping of URC church closure data to deprivation data for 2013 and 2022 (appendix 2, pp. 73–81). The summative assessment (p. 64) is that the URC 'is top-heavy, with structures forged in, and arguably fit for a different era, yet vibrantly activist at the level of local congregations. It is people poor, as a result of on-going congregational decline, yet ... "cash rich", with a solid financial situation resulting in part from the sale of closed church buildings.' The report can be found at:

- <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/URC-report-Final.pdf>

Patterns of membership in the Religious Society of Friends, 2022

The 2022 *Tabular Statement* was published in advance of the recent Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Membership at the end of 2022 was 11,491, representing a 2.8% decline on the previous year, largely attributable to deaths and terminations of membership combined with very limited recruitment. The number of adult attenders who were not members fell more steeply, by 6.6%, to 6,049 in 2022. The full report, disaggregated to regional and area meeting levels, is at:

- <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/tabular-statement-2023>

Scale of Jewish migration from the UK and Europe

Jewish Migration Today: What it May Mean for Europe, written by Daniel Staetsky, is the latest report from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research's European Jewish Demography Unit. It explores patterns of migration from fifteen European countries (including the UK) in recent years, looking for any signs of a Jewish exodus from Europe (implicitly to Israel). The UK is one of several countries (another being Germany) where Jewish migration has been stable for almost four decades. Particularly noteworthy is the lack of any surge in Jewish migration from the UK during the period of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party or consequent upon Brexit (the UK's departure from the European Union). The report can be downloaded from:

- <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jewish-migration-today-what-it-may-mean-europe>

Virtues of faith project: responses from UK faith communities

The 23-page *Virtues of Faith: Survey Findings* is the outcome of a research collaboration between the Good Faith Partnership and the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre for

Character and Virtues. It presents the results of an online survey conducted in March 2023 that asked a self-selecting sample of UK adults aged 18 and over to choose and rank their six most important virtues from a pre-set list of twenty-four. There were 3,038 valid replies, comprising 1,680 Christians, 405 Muslims, 331 Hindus, 295 humanists/nones, 223 Jews, 94 Sikhs, and 10 others. The nature of the methodology employed means that the results will be of indicative value only; they are unlikely to be fully representative of the UK population as a whole or of particular belief groups. Key findings from the study were: no single virtue was selected by more than half of respondents; honesty was the only virtue in the top six across all six belief strands; all five religious groups chose devotion within their six virtues; justice and then charity were the next most selected virtues among religious groups; virtues most commonly selected by Christians evidenced a strong civic emphasis; those picked by humanists/nones had a strong intellectual leaning; Muslims and Jews had five of the top six virtues in common, as did Muslims and Sikhs. The report is available at:

- <https://goodfaith.org.uk/case-studies/virtues-of-faith>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

UK Armed Forces biannual diversity statistics, April 2023

The Ministry of Defence has published a statistical report and data tables on *UK Armed Forces Biannual Diversity Statistics, April 2023*. With reference to religious affiliation, the statistics relate to those personnel making a voluntary declaration of their belief (an exceptionally high 99.3% of UK Regular Forces and 98.8% of Future Reserves 2020). In the case of UK Regular Forces, 57.4% professed to be Christian, down 2.7% on the previous year, while the number of religious nones was 38.2%, more than double the 15.5% in October 2012. Other religions accounted for 4.4% of UK Regular Forces. Full details available at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-april-2023>

Hate crime in Scotland, April 2022–March 2023

A report and data tables on *Hate Crime in Scotland, 2022–23* has been published by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Of the 5,738 charges containing at least one element of hate crime during that year, 576 had a religious aggravation, 8% more than in 2021–22. Court proceedings were commenced in 82% of these religious cases. The overwhelming majority involved threatening or abusive behaviour. Full details available at:

- <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/hate-crime-in-scotland-2022-23/>

NEW DATASET

UK Data Service, SN 9066: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2019

The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey has been conducted by ScotCen Social Research in most years since 1999. The 2019 survey was undertaken on behalf of a consortium of funders, but principally the Scottish Government. Fieldwork took place between August 2019 and March 2020, and face-to-face interviews were achieved with 1,022 adults aged 16 and over in Scotland, representing a 41% response. The main questionnaire covered attitudes to a range of social, economic, and political issues, with religion included as one of the background variables. Respondents were asked to say to which religion (if any) they currently belonged, and whether they had been brought up in any religion; all those indicating they had or

previously had a religion were also asked about the frequency of their attendance at religious services. Additionally, a self-completion postal questionnaire explored the importance of various factors as opportunities for getting ahead, one of which was the importance of a person's religion. Fuller information is available in the catalogue description at:

- <https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=9066>

APPENDIX
KEYWORDS/TAGS

Armed forces, attendance at religious services, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Daniel Staetsky, Good Faith Partnership, hate crime, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Jews, migration, Ministry of Defence, Nathan Mladin, Quakers, religious profession, Religious Society of Friends, ScotCen Social Research, Scotland, Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, Theos, UK Data Service, United Reformed Church, University of Birmingham Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, virtues