

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources  
Number 102 – March 2024

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## OPINION POLLS

### **Attitudes to assisted dying: Opinium Research poll for Dignity in Dying**

On behalf of Dignity in Dying, Opinium Research has undertaken a survey of public attitudes towards assisted dying among an online sample of 10,897 UK adults aged 18 and over on 9–22 February 2024. Eleven questions were posed on the topic, each of which was analysed by a full range of demographic variables, including religious profession. The first (and most general) question asked was: ‘To what extent would you support or oppose making it legal for someone to seek “assisted dying” in the UK, and how strong is your view?’ Among religious groups with sufficiently viable cell sizes, support was expressed by 75% of all adults, 66% of all religious, 69% of Christians, 76% of Church of England adherents, 65% of Roman Catholics, 55% of other Christians, 34% of Muslims, and 84% of the non-religious. Full data tables will be found at:

- <https://www.opinium.com/polling-tables-archive/>

### **Religion and life satisfaction: Ipsos global happiness survey, 2024**

In a 30-nation survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform between 22 December 2023 and 5 January 2024, respondents (including 1,000 aged 16–74 in Great Britain) were asked: ‘Overall, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your life?’ Twenty-seven aspects of life were investigated, the satisfaction levels in Britain ranging from a high of 87% satisfied with their living conditions to a low of 34% satisfied with the economic situation in the country. Ranked nineteenth equal was satisfaction with ‘my religious faith or spiritual life’, with 70% satisfied (close to the global average of 72%), 11% dissatisfied, and the remainder (presumably) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Despite its relatively lowly ranking, this 70% score in Britain was still greater than satisfaction with ‘my financial situation’ (65%) and ‘my romantic/sex life’ (63%). Notwithstanding, the meaningfulness of including such a religion-related question in more secularized countries such as Britain, where such vast numbers of people profess to be neither religious nor spiritual, must surely be doubted. Is the implication that such folk had to answer the question in terms of *not* having a religious faith or spiritual life, and being satisfied/comfortable that they did not? Topline data only are available at:

- <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-03/Ipsos-happinessindex2024.pdf>

### **HarrisX/Faith and Media Initiative global faith and entertainment study**

*The Global Faith and Entertainment Study* was conducted by HarrisX on behalf of the Faith and Media Initiative. It was based upon 9,945 online panel interviews with entertainment media consumers aged 18 and above in eleven countries (including 1,000 in the UK, 51% of whom identified as spiritual, religious, or a person of faith) between 26 July and 22 August 2023, as well as thirty in-depth interviews with entertainment industry leaders. Among the UK sample: 66% thought that entertainment perpetuates religious stereotypes (against 34% who said it

accurately portrays religion); 74% deemed it important the entertainment industry makes portrayals of faith more accurate; 62% wanted more diverse perspectives about various faiths; and 49% claimed they had learned something they did not know about another religion from seeing it in a movie or show. Topline results are available at:

- <https://www.faithandmedia.com/research/harrisxentertainment>

**Fall-out from Israel-Hamas conflict: where do British public sympathies lie?**

British public opinion towards the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas has been tracked by YouGov since it erupted on 7 October 2023. Online samples of adults have been asked on which side their sympathies mostly lie. Recent data points (the last three reported on BRIN for the first time) are shown in Table 1, below. It will be seen that, in all instances, including the don't knows, the majority of respondents continues to sympathize with neither side against the other. However, support for the Palestinians has clearly grown, while that for the Israelis has diminished. The data table for the latest study can be found at:

- [https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/Internal\\_IP\\_RU\\_240319\\_W.pdf](https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/Internal_IP_RU_240319_W.pdf)

**Table 1: British public's sympathies in Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 2023–24**

% down	9/10	1/11	7/11	15/11	20/12	13/1	12/2	29/2	7/3	15/3
N =	2,046	2,045	2,080	2,007	2,085	1,751	2,092	2,073	2,070	4,061
Israeli side	21	19	19	19	16	19	16	15	15	15
Palestinian side	15	19	21	20	22	27	28	26	28	29
Both sides equally	20	31	32	30	32	30	22	28	27	25
Don't know	45	31	28	31	29	24	34	31	30	31

Source: YouGov.

Notes: Dates represent the first day of fieldwork and month. In the January 2024 survey, the response option 'both sides equally' was replaced by 'neither'.

**Fall-out from Israel-Hamas conflict: perceptions of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia**

Below, we have extended by another month the two tables about anti-Semitism and Islamophobia being perceived as problems in the UK that we published in the October 2023 and subsequent editions of *Counting Religion in Britain*. This latest Savanta political tracker was undertaken online on 22–25 March 2024, the degree to which anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are perceived as problems remaining at three-fifths. This latest dataset is available at:

- <https://savanta.com/knowledge-centre/published-polls/westminster-voting-intention-political-attitudes-poll-daily-telegraph-26-march-2024/>

**Table 2: Perceptions of anti-Semitism as a problem in the UK, July 2023–March 2024**

% down	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Big problem	16	15	14	17	22	21	16	21	21
Somewhat a problem	34	35	37	37	35	36	41	38	40
Not really a problem	25	25	23	21	18	21	22	19	18
Not a problem at all	7	9	8	8	7	7	7	6	7
Don't know	18	17	18	18	17	14	15	15	15
<i>A problem</i>	50	49	51	53	57	57	56	60	61
<i>Not a problem</i>	32	33	31	28	25	29	27	25	24

Source: Savanta political tracker.

**Table 3: Perceptions of Islamophobia as a problem in the UK, July 2023–March 2024**

% down	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Big problem	20	21	22	20	23	21	<u>19</u>	22	23
Somewhat a problem	35	35	36	37	36	37	<u>37</u>	39	37
Not really a problem	21	21	19	19	18	21	<u>20</u>	18	19
Not a problem at all	9	9	10	9	10	10	<u>10</u>	8	9
Don't know	15	14	13	14	14	12	<u>13</u>	13	12
<i>A problem</i>	55	56	58	57	59	58	<u>56</u>	61	60
<i>Not a problem</i>	30	30	29	28	28	30	<u>30</u>	26	28

Source: Savanta political tracker.

### Fall-out from Israel-Hamas conflict: More in Common polling

Ahead of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia on 15 March, More in Common (a fairly new entrant to the British polling scene, but already a member of the British Polling Council) carried out a survey, in partnership with the Together Coalition, to explore the prevalence of anti-Muslim attitudes in Britain (with some comparative questions about Jews, also). The measures of anti-Muslim prejudice that the pollster deployed were tried and tested ones: reactions to a member of the respondent's family marrying a Muslim (27% being very or somewhat uncomfortable at the prospect); degree of positivity towards Muslims (21% being somewhat or very negative); the belief that British Muslims are more loyal to other Muslim countries than to Britain (held by 42%); the belief that Muslims can never be as British as other British people (held by 28%); and the belief that most British Muslims do not share British values (held by 36%). A blog about the survey can be found at:

- <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/blog/how-prevalent-is-anti-muslim-prejudice-in-the-uk/>

The dataset is available at:

- <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/polling-tables/>

A second More in Common poll fielded on 8–11 March 2024 among an online sample of 2,027 adults. The main focus of this investigation was the debate about extremism in contemporary British society. One-third of respondents considered the UK to be an unsafe place for Jews and one-quarter said the same about Muslims. Anti-Semitism was regarded as a very or somewhat serious issue in the UK by 61%, Islamophobia by 56%, and divisions between different religions generally by 63%. A majority (55%) deemed it unacceptable for protests to take place outside synagogues or mosques. Given a list of divisions in modern society, and invited to select up to three which seemed important, one-quarter of the sample chose divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims. The dataset is available at:

- <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/polling-tables/>

### Social contribution of British Muslims: Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life report

The Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life has published a 62-page report on *The Social Contribution of British Muslims*, written by Rakib Ehsan and Jake Scott, and based on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative element, whose findings are summarized on pp. 13–32, comprised telephone and online interviews conducted by TechneUK on 22 January–2 February 2024 with UK samples of (a) 1,001 Muslim adults aged 18 and over and (b) 1,012 members of the general population aged 18 and over. 'The surveys explored forms of social belonging, attitudes towards family and community, and views on the degree to which Britain offers opportunities for people to fulfil their potential. Respondents in both the general population and British Muslim surveys were asked whether they engaged in the following civic behaviours over the past twelve months: given a charitable donation; unpaid volunteering work in the local community; provided care to an elderly relative; gifted money to a friend (with no desire for and expectation of repayment); and shared homemade food with

someone who is not a family member. In addition to this, the British Muslim respondents were specifically asked about their views on domestic interfaith relations and whether they felt Muslims in Britain were better able to respect their faith whilst participating in wider public life when compared to their co-religionists living in other European countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands.’ The qualitative component of the research included twenty-eight semi-structured interviews with British Muslims (pp. 33–42) and ten case studies of British Muslim organizations (pp. 43–57). The report and datasets are available at:

- <https://www.techneuk.com/archive/iifl/>

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **Church of England parish finance statistics, 2022**

Church of England Data Services have published a 33-page report by Alan Pigott on the Church of England’s parish finance statistics for 2022, based upon 87% returns from parishes. Real terms income was 14% lower and expenditure 15% lower than in 2019, the last year before the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of regular givers fell by 17,000 to 401,000, compared with 572,000 in 2013. The report is available at:

- <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/parish-finance-statistics-2022.pdf>

### **Lapsed Catholics: Diocese of Brentford case study, 2023**

The Centre for Ecclesial Ethics at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology in Cambridge has published the 138-page report *Believing Not Belonging: A Research into Why Catholics No Longer Come to Church—Ecclesial Drift, Estrangement, and Disaffiliation, Diocese of Brentwood, Summer 2023*. Written by Liam Hayes, it is based upon an online survey, hosted on the Qualtrics platform from 7 May to 7 August 2023, of (in essence) an opportunity sample of non-practising baptised Catholics aged 18 and over who lived or had lived in the diocese and who responded to an invitation to participate. In reality, 128 of the 498 valid respondents were still practising their faith at least once a week, leaving 370 (two-thirds of them female) who met the research criteria. Hayes offers a rich and structured quantitative and qualitative analysis of this dataset, with detailed quotations from the surveys, summarizing the causal factors advanced for the drift from the Church, and including a section on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research questionnaire is reproduced on pp. 115–33. The report can be found at:

- [https://www.mbit.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CEE-Believing-Not-Belonging-Final-Report\\_2023.pdf](https://www.mbit.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CEE-Believing-Not-Belonging-Final-Report_2023.pdf)

### **Catholic Education Service digest of 2023 census data for Catholic schools and colleges**

The Catholic Education Service (CES) has published its latest annual digest of census data for Catholic schools and colleges, both state-funded and independent, with separate reports for England (61pp.) and Wales (29pp.). In England, there were 2,087 Catholic schools and colleges in 2023, educating 821,549 pupils (56.3% of whom were Catholic), and employing 51,650 teachers (44.3% of whom were Catholic). In Wales, there were 82 Catholic schools, educating 28,755 pupils (48.1% of whom were Catholic), and employing 1,642 teachers (42.7% of whom were Catholic). Links to both reports are embedded in a CES press release, which headlined ‘Catholic schools educate 50% more of the most deprived pupils than the state’ at:

- <https://catholiceducation.org.uk/about-us/news-items/item/1004202-catholic-schools-educate-50-more-of-the-most-deprived-pupils-than-the-state>

### **Fall-out from Israel-Hamas conflict: claimed UK and international media bias**

Faisal Hanif (edited by Rizwana Hamid), *Media Bias, Gaza, 2023–24* (ISBN: 9781905461097) is published by the Centre for Media Monitoring, a project of the Muslim Council of Britain Charitable Foundation, and thus (potentially, at least) not an independent source. It is a 147-page analysis of UK and select international television and online media coverage in the month after the Hamas attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent Israeli invasion of and airstrikes on Gaza. The methodology is described on pp. 14–15, supplemented by the appendices on keywords (pp. 144–7). Attention is also drawn to the note on limitations on p. 16. Although much of the text is essentially qualitative, there are twenty ‘statistical insights’ (summarized on pp. 20–1). The underlying theme of the report is that media coverage has been biased against the Palestinian interest. There is likewise condemnation of what is described as ‘the weaponisation of anti-Semitism’. As yet, there appears to have been no substantive critique published of these findings and interpretations. The report is available at:

- <https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CfMM-Report-Final-MEDIA-BIAS-GAZA-2023-24-ePDF.pdf>

### **Young people’s attitudes to religious and social groups: Anne Frank Trust’s impact**

*Educating against Prejudice: The Impact of the Anne Frank Trust UK*, written by Dominic Abrams, Katie Goodbun, and Sarah Walton (all social psychologists at the University of Kent), is the fifth annual report on the impact of the Anne Frank Trust UK’s education programme. Through its teaching about Anne Frank and the Holocaust, the Trust aims to empower young people aged 9–15 to recognize and challenge all forms of prejudice. A key part of the research in 2022/23 was the completion by 2,814 young people from 116 primary and secondary schools in England and Scotland of an evaluation of their attitudes to 12 social groups (among them Christians, Jews, and Muslims) before and after being trained as peer educators by the Trust. Immediately after completing the programme, 87.6% of respondents had progressed in their attitude to at least one social group and 77.3% in their attitude to two or more groups. In particular, 59.8% of all young people became more positive towards Jewish persons, including 65.7% of Muslim young people. Likewise, 52.4% of non-Muslims improved in their attitudes towards Muslims during the programme. More than three-quarters of all the young people also made significant progress in their knowledge of prejudice, their critical thinking, their personal commitment to challenging prejudice, and their confidence to challenge prejudice. The 36-page report is available at:

- <https://www.annefrank.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=a76bbd7a-1fdc-4922-97b7-c5269c79c154>

## OFFICIAL STATISTICS

### **Scottish Surveys Core Questions, 2022: religion question**

It will be a few more months before the National Records of Scotland release the headline findings of the religion question in the 2022 census of population in Scotland. In the meantime, insight into the direction of travel is provided by the recent release of the Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ) for 2022. This is an annual Official Statistics publication for Scotland, pooling responses from identical indicator questions in the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, the Scottish Health Survey, and the Scottish Household Survey. The 2022 SSCQ comprises 19,545 individual responses, revealing the religious profile of Scotland to be as follows: 58.0% none, 19.8% Church of Scotland, 12.1% Roman Catholic, 5.6% other Christian, 1.8% Muslim, and 2.3% other non-Christian. These national topline are broken down by a wide range of socio-geographic variables in Table 25 of the dataset, which is available at:

- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-surveys-core-questions-2022/>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

**Two recent historical studies**

- Jessica Marie Otis, *By the Numbers: Numeracy, Religion, and the Quantitative Transformation of Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), xi + 264 pp., ISBN: 9780197608784, £18.99, paperback: BRIN readers will find this relatively short book (only 160 pp. of actual text) of interest less for specific religious statistics (although the 1676 Compton Census makes brief appearances on pp. 140–1, 152–3) than for the argued centrality of an overarching Christian religious framework shaping the spread of numerical practices and the development of a quantitative culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—by the end of the period, it is claimed, numbers ‘had become the building blocks of God’s Creation and the foundation of English men and women’s efforts to understand their world’.
- Clive Field, ‘Churchgoing in Glasgow, 1836–2016: the Statistical Record’, *Scottish Church History*, Vol. 53, No. 1, April 2024, pp. 1–28: analysis, in 16 tables and commentary on methodology and results, of churchgoing trends in Scotland’s most populous city, as documented by 14 censuses of church attendance over a 180-year period, charting successive Protestant and Roman Catholic decline, and estimating 30,000 weekly churchgoers in the city in 2023 or 4.71% of the population.

APPENDIX  
KEYWORDS/TAGS

Alan Pigott, Anne Frank Trust UK, anti-Muslim attitudes, anti-Semitism, assisted dying, Catholic Education Service, Centre for Media Monitoring, church attendance, Clive Field, Dignity in Dying, Diocese of Brentford, disaffiliation, Dominic Abrams, entertainment, extremism, Faisal Hanif, Faith and Media Initiative, Gaza, Glasgow, happiness, HarrisX, Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life, Ipsos, Islamophobia, Israel-Hamas conflict, Israeli side, Jake Scott, Jessica Marie Otis, Jews, Katie Goodbun, Liam Hayes, life satisfaction, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, media bias, More in Common, Muslim Council of Britain Charitable Foundation, Muslims, numeracy, Opinium Research, Oxford University Press, Palestinian side, parish finance statistics, Rakib Ehsan, religious prejudice, religious profession, Rizwana Hamid, Roman Catholic Church, Roman Catholic schools and colleges, Sarah Walton, satisfaction with religious faith or spiritual life, Savanta, Scottish Church History, Scottish Surveys Core Questions, social capital, TechneUK, Together Coalition, YouGov