

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources Number 105 – June 2024

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OPINION POLLS

UK general election, 2024: Survation/*Jewish Chronicle* poll of Jewish voting intentions

A Survation poll, conducted on 9–14 June 2024, mainly by telephone, among a weighted sample of 504 self-identifying Jewish adults (predominantly members of Survation’s pre-recruited Jewish panel), and on behalf of the *Jewish Chronicle*, has revealed a 50% reduction in voting intentions for the Conservative Party over the Labour Party compared with the equivalent survey of Jews undertaken before the 2019 general election (when Jeremy Corbyn was leader of the Labour Party). Nevertheless, Jewish electors remain more drawn to the Conservative Party (42%) than the Labour Party (33%), with 11% favouring Reform UK, 7% the Liberal Democrats, and 7% other parties (all figures based on respondents likely to vote, excluding the undecided and refused). Moreover, Jews also trust Rishi Sunak (Conservative Party leader) somewhat more than Keir Starmer (Labour Party leader), albeit 54% said they felt safer voting Labour than during Corbyn’s time and the identical proportion acknowledged the success of Starmer’s efforts in rooting out anti-Semitism in his party. Three-quarters (77%) claimed that the UK’s relationship with Israel would be very or fairly important in determining how they cast their vote at the general election, but a much smaller number (11%) identified the Israel-Hamas war as their single most important election issue. Coverage of the poll in the *Jewish Chronicle* can be read at:

- <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/poll-jews-still-favour-tories-despite-huge-swing-to-labour-pontq82g>

while the full dataset can be found at:

- <https://www.survation.com/https-www-survation-com-archive-2024-2/>

UK general election, 2024: Savanta/Hyphen poll of Muslim voting intentions

In a special general election poll, undertaken by Savanta on behalf of Hyphen, among samples of all UK adults and Muslims, most voters who ranked the conflict in Israel-Palestine as one of their top five election concerns said they would consider voting for a pro-Palestine independent candidate in the coming election, given the chance. Among Muslim voters, 44% gave the situation in Israel-Palestine as one of their top five election concerns, 86% of whom claimed they would consider backing an independent candidate running on the issue. In the general population, of the 12% who listed Israel-Palestine in their top five concerns, 64% said they would consider voting for a pro-Palestine independent candidate. Apart from Israel-Palestine, both Muslims and UK voters as a whole were broadly aligned on the key policy issues affecting the election, namely the National Health Service, inflation and the cost of living, and the economy. Notwithstanding their preoccupation with Israel-Palestine (21% citing it as their biggest single concern), and some planned defections of 2019 Muslim Labour voters to the Green Party or Liberal Democrats, 63% of all Muslims still intended to vote for the Labour Party in the general election on 4 July. The survey, conducted online between 24 May and 3 June 2024, interviewed 2,862 UK adults in all, comprising 1,366 Muslims and a national cross-section of 1,496, both samples including boosts of 18–24-year-olds. Hyphen’s press release is available at:

- <https://hyphenonline.com/2024/06/11/poll-most-voters-concerned-about-the-crisis-in-gaza-would-consider-voting-independent-muslim-vote-uk-election/>

and the full dataset at:

- <https://savanta.com/knowledge-centre/press-and-polls/cultural-issues-poll-hyphen-11-june-2024/>

UK general election, 2024: deselection of David Campanale as a LibDem candidate

David Campanale, a former BBC and Premier journalist, was chosen as the Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate for Sutton and Cheam in 2021 but was subsequently deselected by the party, with his local party overwhelmingly endorsing a new candidate. Campanale has claimed a campaign against him by party members and activists who are said to have objected to his Biblical views on issues such as abortion and euthanasia. Campanale is now suing the Liberal Democrats for allegedly discriminating against someone based on their Christian faith. The case has already reached the ‘court of public opinion’, for, on 5–6 June 2024, Whitestone Insight asked a representative sample of 2,001 UK adults what they thought about the affair. Among those who expressed a view in the matter, 75% opposed Campanale’s deselection, while 25% supported it. Among Liberal Democrat voters, these proportions were, respectively, 57% and 43%. This information has been extracted from reports appearing on several Christian news sites. The full data have yet to be posted online.

Attitudes to faith in public life: another Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life poll

Further to our coverage in the May 2024 edition of *Counting Religion in Britain*, the Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL) has released findings from a second Whitestone Insight online poll it commissioned, among 2,064 UK adults between 31 May and 2 June 2024. The June questionnaire comprised two main halves, the first being a replication of much of the original May questionnaire, which dealt with attitudes to personal faith and to aspects of faith in relation to public life. Among key points from the first half of the poll publicized by IIFL in blogs or press releases on its website, we may note the following: although ‘many results between the May and June surveys remained the same’, ‘the June survey reported a lower impact of faith on people’s lives and the sense of purpose it had offered within the last four weeks’; and ‘51% of religious people who believe their faith is the only true religion say their faith will shape the way they will vote in the 2024 general election’, albeit the proportion was lower (24%) among all religious people, rising to 38% for those of them who were aged 25–34. The press release about religion and voting can be found at:

- <https://iifl.org.uk/press-releases/new-poll-reveals-the-hidden-positivity-of-multi-faith-life-in-the-uk/>

while the dataset for the entire first half of the poll can be found on the Whitestone website at:

- <https://www.whitestoneinsight.com/iifljune>

The second half of this latest IIFL/Whitestone poll focused on faith and environmental sustainability, i.e. climate change. Among the principal findings singled out by IIFL are: (a) as a faith group, Hindus lead in personal environmental actions and environmental concern; (b) climate change denial is highest among exclusivist Christians; (c) belief in faith’s requirement to care for the world is consistent across religions, yet it does not translate into consistent action; and (d) youth is more environmentally minded and more likely to connect their faith with environmentalism. A report (by Charlotte Littlewood) and dataset for this section of the survey can be found via the links at:

- <https://iifl.org.uk/reports/report-sustainability-exploring-faith-and-sustainability/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

UK general election, 2024: more briefings from Theos

The Theos think tank has released four additional *Religion Counts* briefings in connection with the impending UK general election on 4 July 2024. They have been written by Paul Bickley, George Lapshynov, and Yinxuan Huang and draw upon findings from recent waves of the British Election Study (BES) Internet Panel. Briefing No. 3 asks *Do the Religious Feel Like They Can Make a Difference?* It argues that Christians appear to be significantly more civic-minded than religious nones, especially measured in terms of political efficacy and political trust. Briefing No. 4 investigates *Economic and Social Values* by calculating an economic left-right index and a social authoritarian-libertarian index, concluding that religious Britons place more emphasis on authority and traditional values than do the nones and that, on the whole, they are also more economically right-wing. Briefing No. 5 asks ‘What Do the Religious Think About Key Election Issues?’, answering the question with reference to the economy/cost of living, the National Health Service, and immigration, and noting that Christians are marginally more positive than the non-religious about the incumbent (Conservative) government’s performance on these issues, albeit within the context of high levels of public dissatisfaction. Briefing No. 6 concerns *National Identity and Scottish Independence*, revealing that, in Scotland, only Anglican Scots feel predominantly British; Presbyterians attending church weekly feel significantly more Scottish than Presbyterians who never attend church; and Scottish Christians are strongly against independence. The briefings are available at:

- <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/religion-counts-2024>

UK general election, 2024: briefings from the Religion Media Centre

The Religion Media Centre has also launched a series of briefings for the general election, focusing on what is known about the past and intended voting behaviour of particular faith communities in the UK.

The series was inaugurated by Tim Wyatt with a briefing on ‘The Christian Vote’, drawing disproportionately on the recent analyses of cross-sectional BES data by Theos and a survey of a self-selecting sample of evangelicals by the Evangelical Alliance (covered above and in the May 2024 issue of *Counting Religion in Britain*). This briefing can be found at:

- <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/general-election-2024-the-christian-vote/>

‘The Sikh Vote’ has been written by Hardeep Singh, offering useful coverage of the historical and contemporary background but unable to deploy much empirical evidence about Sikh voting behaviour, apart from the *British Sikh Report, 2023*, which relied upon a self-selecting sample. This briefing is available at:

- <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/general-election-2024-the-sikh-vote/>

‘The Jewish Vote’ has been written by Lianne Kolirin, who, having consulted relevant experts, suggests that, while Jews do not vote en bloc, they do come together around issues of anti-Semitism and support for Israel. This briefing is available at:

- <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/general-election-2024-the-jewish-vote/>

‘The Hindu Vote’ has been written by Naomi Canton, who observes that first-generation Hindu immigrants to the UK were largely pro-Labour Party but that, since 2010, many British Hindus have shifted to the Conservative Party (which is led by a Hindu as it goes into the general election). Although she has to admit we do not know how Hindus will vote in the election on 4 July, she notes that, for the first time, British Hindus have launched a joint manifesto as a single faith community. The briefing is at:

- <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/general-election-2024-the-hindu-vote/>

‘The Muslim Vote’ has been written by Catherine Pepinster, who has also consulted relevant experts inside and outside the Muslim community and trawled through recent polling evidence.

She highlights the efforts being made to get British Muslims more engaged with the political process and emphasizes the issues of most concern to them, including the current situation in Gaza, about which feelings run strong, with a risk of undermining Muslim support for the Labour Party in some constituencies. This briefing is at:

- <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/general-election-2024-the-muslim-vote/>

UK general election, 2024: How might Jewish electors vote?

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) has published a 9-page paper by Carli Lessof and Jonathan Boyd on *Jewish Voting Intentions on the Eve of the 2024 UK General Election*. It is based on the latest data from JPR's research panel (which constitutes a self-selecting and thus potentially not fully representative sample, despite the weighting), gathered from 2,717 UK Jewish adults who responded to JPR's 2024 Current Affairs Survey online between 14 and 20 June 2024. The voting intentions of Jews who had decided how they would vote in the general election were: 29.8% for the Conservatives, 45.8% for Labour, 7.7% for the Liberal Democrats, 6.0% for Reform UK, and 9.9% for the Greens. Relative to UK voters overall (reflected in data from Election Polling), Jews were 7.6% more likely to favour the Conservatives, 3.9% more likely to vote Labour, and 4.1% more likely to endorse the Greens, but they were less likely than average to support the Liberal Democrats or Reform UK. The Labour lead over the Conservatives among Jews was 16.0%, slightly less than the national figure (19.7%). However, given Jewish discomfort with Labour during the era of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the party, this is a surprising turnaround in Jewish opinion; JPR's assessment is that in 2019 the Labour vote was just 11.3% among Jews, with the Conservatives riding high on 61.2%. The paper can be downloaded from:

- <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jewish-voting-intentions-eve-2024-uk-general-election>

Boyd has an opinion piece about the research in the *Jewish News* for 28 June 2024 ('This Election, the Jewish Vote is Remarkably Similar to the UK Population'), albeit he does not remark on differences between the JPR study and the *Survation/Jewish Chronicle* poll published online nine days before (and which had the Jewish Conservative vote 12 points higher than did JPR and the Labour vote 13 points less). Boyd's commentary is at:

- <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/opinion-this-election-the-jewish-vote-is-remarkably-similar-to-the-uk-population/>

Voice for Justice UK report on *The Costs of Keeping the Faith*

Voice for Justice UK (which has launched a Commission of Inquiry into Discrimination Against Christians) has published *The Costs of Keeping the Faith* (2024, viii + 144pp., including useful chapter summaries on pp. 1–8). It is based upon an online survey conducted in July and August 2023 among a self-selecting (and thus potentially unrepresentative) sample of 1,562 UK Christians (disproportionately aged 35 and over and holding socially conservative views, and almost one-third without any denominational attachment). There is a brief description of sample recruitment methodology on p. 9, while the questionnaire is reproduced on pp. 129–44. Respondents often claimed to have experienced intolerance, ridicule, harassment, and discrimination on the grounds of their own Christian faith. The report suggests that this is not taken as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics nor even against other religious groups. Schools and the National Health Service are said to be undermining Christianity and the LGBT+ community to have acquired disproportionate influence in society. Some readers may find the report's style and content imbalanced. It is available at:

- <https://vfjuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/The-Costs-of-Keeping-the-Faith-Report.pdf>

General Synod paper: parlous state of Church of England diocesan finances

A paper, GS Misc 1384, *Diocesan Finances Review Update*, to be presented to next month's meeting of the Church of England General Synod, will sound alarm bells among many Anglicans about the state of diocesan finances in England. Most of the forty-two dioceses are now in a structural deficit position, with thirty of them reporting underlying operating deficits in 2022 and thirty-five expecting to report a deficit in 2024 and beyond. Aggregate diocesan deficits of £29m in 2022 are anticipated to more than double to £62m in 2024. Moreover, half of dioceses face some short-term liquidity risk, with twenty-three holding less than three months' cash reserves, thirteen of which do not have any easily available investment assets to liquidate. Diocesan financial sustainability has been adversely impacted by declining congregations, inflation, Covid-19, and other factors. A large-scale review is in hand to recommend future diocesan funding arrangements. The paper is available at:

- <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/gm-misc-1384-diocesan-finance-review-july-2024-updated-today.pdf>

Fall-out from Israel-Hamas conflict: impact on the UK film and television workforce

The Film and TV Charity has published a 15-page report on *Results of a Survey of Arab, Jewish, and Muslim Members of the UK Film and TV Workforce on Their Experiences Relating to the Conflict in Israel and Gaza on and after 7th October 2023*. The survey was undertaken between 11 December 2023 and 7 January 2024 and elicited 397 responses from Jewish (the majority, 65%), Arab, and Muslim UK-based film and TV workers. They were reached by a combination of 'purposive' and 'convenience' sampling (described on pp. 5–6). Among the headline findings from the survey (outlined in more detail on pp. 7–11) were: the conflict has damaged the mental health and wellbeing of the vast majority of respondents, with 94% claiming it had deteriorated since 7 October 2023; few (23%) felt supported by their employers; and for many Arab, Jewish, and Muslim people, the conflict has surfaced a sense of discomfort in the workplace in relation to their community identity and has amplified previous experiences of discrimination. The report is available at:

- https://filmtvcharity.org.uk/assets/documents/Reports/results_of_a_survey_of_arab_jewish_and_muslim_members_of_the_uk_film_and_tv_workforce.pdf

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Religious marriages in England and Wales, 2021 and 2022

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has released a report and dataset on *Marriages in England and Wales: 2021 and 2022*. There were 246,897 marriages in England and Wales in 2022, a return to pre-Covid-19 levels, the increase probably reflecting marriages delayed during the pandemic. However, the long-term trend in marriage rates (measured as the proportion of men and women marrying per 1,000 unmarried men and women) continues to be downwards. Nine in ten couples marrying in 2021 or 2022 were cohabiting prior to marriage, the highest number since records began in 1994 (when it was three-fifths). Civil ceremonies accounted for 83.0% of all marriages in 2022, with religious ceremonies accounting for 17.0% (17.5% among opposite-sex marriages, compared with 18.4% in 2021), continuing their long-term steady decline. Of the 41,824 opposite-sex marriages solemnized according to religious rites in 2022, 73.6% were taken by a Church of England or Church in Wales officiant, while 20.3% were taken by other Christian celebrants and 6.1% by non-Christian ones (worksheet 1b). It should be noted that any religious marriages that took place in unregistered premises, and therefore requiring a further civil ceremony in order to be legally valid, are treated by the ONS as civil weddings, appearing in the marriage statistics as such. Among the 7,800 same-

sex couples marrying in 2022, just 91 had religious ceremonies (worksheet 1c). The report and dataset are available at:

- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2021and2022>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Churchgoing in Britain during the *fin de siècle*

Clive Field, 'Religion at the *fin de siècle*, Part 2: A Checklist of Local Newspaper Censuses of Church Attendance, 1882–1900', *Local Historian*, Vol. 54, No. 2, May 2024, pp. 162–74 is an inventory of 108 local censuses of church attendance conducted in Britain (61 in England, 38 in Wales, and 9 in Scotland), with appropriate historical contextualization and commentary. The censuses covered 97 different places (some being enumerated more than once), of varying sizes and socio-economic characteristics, including some of the nation's greatest conurbations, whose churchgoing had not otherwise been comprehensively surveyed since 1851, especially Swansea (1884), London (1886–87), Birmingham (1892), and Glasgow (1896). An appendix references 16 censuses supplementary to part 1 of the article, by the same author, which dealt with 180 local censuses of church attendance undertaken in 1881–82; this appeared in *Local Historian*, Vol. 49, No. 1, January 2019, pp. 57–72.

Coronavirus chronicles: religious affiliation and Covid-19 vaccine uptake in England

Belonging to a particular religion or denomination is strongly associated with Covid-19 vaccine uptake, according to Martin Ejnar Hansen and Steven David Pickering, 'The Role of Religion and Covid-19 Vaccine Uptake in England', *Vaccine*, Vol. 42, No.13, 10 May 2024, pp. 3215–3219. Using logistic regressions, they analysed data from a survey of 12,268 adults aged 18 and over in England, conducted through the YouGov online panel in successive waves between July 2022 and March 2024. The authors found that respondents who identified as Church of England had significantly more Covid-19 vaccinations compared to the non-religious. Conversely, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Muslims (who were underrepresented in the sample), and other non-Christians had significantly fewer Covid-19 vaccinations. These relationships held even when adjusting for age, education, level of trust, and political affiliation. The paper, with a link to the accompanying data, is freely available on an open access basis at:

- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X24004183?via%3Dihub>

NEW DATASET

Release of European Social Survey, round 11 data for the UK

The European Social Survey (ESS) has announced the release of Round 11 (2023–24) data for the first thirteen (including the UK) of the thirty-one participating countries. The UK survey was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and UK face-to-face fieldwork conducted by Ipsos MORI between 3 July and 9 December 2023. Valid interviews were achieved with 1,684 adults aged 15 and over living in private households in the UK, representing a response rate of 26.9%. The standard ESS module of religion-related questions was included: religious affiliation (current and previous), self-assessed religiosity (measured on an 11-point scale), frequency of attendance at religious services apart from on special occasions, and frequency of private prayer. Data are available from the ESS Data Portal at:

- <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data-portal>

APPENDIX: KEYWORDS/TAGS

Anti-Semitism, Arabs, attendance at religious services, British Election Study Internet Panel, Carli Lessof, Catherine Pepinster, Charlotte Littlewood, Christianophobia, Christians, Church of England, churchgoing, climate change, Clive Field, Conservative Party, coronavirus, cost of living, Covid-19 vaccine, David Campanale, deselection, diocesan finances, European Social Survey, faith and environmental sustainability, faith in public life, Film and TV Charity, fin de siècle, Gaza, general election, George Lapshynov, Hardeep Singh, Hindus, Hyphen, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life, Ipsos MORI, Israel, Israel-Hamas war, Israel-Palestine conflict, Jeremy Corbyn, Jewish Chronicle, Jewish News, Jews, Jonathan Boyd, Keir Starmer, Labour Party, Lianne Kolirin, Liberal Democrat Party, Local Historian, Martin Ejnar Hansen, mental health and wellbeing, Muslims, Naomi Canton, National Health Service, newspaper censuses of church attendance, Office for National Statistics, Paul Bickley, politics, private prayer, religious discrimination, religious prejudice, pro-Palestine independent candidate, Religion Media Centre, religious affiliation, religious marriages, Rishi Sunak, Savanta, Scotland, Scottish independence, self-assessed religiosity, Sikhs, Steven David Pickering, Survation, Theos, Tim Wyatt, UK film and television workforce, Vaccine, Voice for Justice UK, voting intentions, Whitestone Insight, Yinxuan Huang, YouGov