

# Counting Religion in Britain

## A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources Number 113 – February 2025

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### OPINION POLLS

#### **Public opinion towards the Church of England: a further YouGov poll**

Public confidence in the Church of England appears to have been significantly undermined by recent revelations of its failings in safeguarding matters. According to an online survey of 2,223 adults on 2–3 February 2025, almost half (49%) of Britons now hold an unfavourable opinion of the Church of England, up by 10 points on the previous poll on 6–7 November 2024, while just 25% have a favourable opinion, a reduction of 7 points. Only among professing Anglicans were the proportions reversed (32% unfavourable and 54% favourable). Half of the population as a whole also thought the time had come for the Church of England to be separated from the State, or disestablished, the same as three months earlier, with 23% wishing the connection to continue. Full breaks by demographics are available at:

- <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/51521-church-of-england-just-25-now-have-a-favourable-view>

#### **Attitudes and worldviews of Gen Z: YouGov poll for *The Times***

During the course of February 2025, *The Times* ran a week-long feature on the attitudes and worldviews of Gen Z, based on quantitative and qualitative research the newspaper had commissioned. The statistical element took the form of a YouGov poll of 1,161 adults aged 18–27 in Britain interviewed online between 23 September and 1 October 2024. More than fifty questions were put to the sample, three of which directly concerned religion. Asked whether they considered themselves to be religious, 70% of Gen Z members replied in the negative, the range by demographics being from 55% (among Conservative voters) to 77% (with Liberal Democrats). The professedly religious numbered 23%, which was 5% more than the 18% who claimed to have attended a place of worship (other than for a rite of passage) in the past month, albeit (in line with most previous self-reported religious attendance) this is likely to have been inflated. Almost one third (32%, or 9% more than acknowledged they were religious) thought there probably is an afterlife, the peak believers (46%) being with Reform UK voters and the peak disbelievers (54%) with residents of northern England. Full breaks by demographics are available in the dataset at:

- [https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/FINAL\\_Times\\_GenZSurvey\\_Results\\_Sep24.pdf](https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/FINAL_Times_GenZSurvey_Results_Sep24.pdf)

#### **Ipsos Valentine's Day polling: love across the religious divide**

In its Valentine's Day poll, conducted online among 2,160 British adults aged 18–75 on 7–11 February 2025, respondents were asked about the relative importance of 16 characteristics when it came to choosing a romantic partner. Personal hygiene and caring topped the rankings, on 95%, but religion was judged the least important attribute of a partner, mentioned by just 32%, with 64% saying it was not important. The importance attached to religion declined across the generations; whereas in Gen Z, 49% of men and 43% of women thought a partner's religion was important, for baby boomers 79% of men and 73% of women were clear that religion was unimportant in a romantic relationship. Charts and tables are available at:

- <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/love-across-political-divide-not-so-easy-say-britons>

### **Importance of teaching religious studies in secondary schools: YouGov tracker**

Whereas four fifths of adult Britons judged it very important to teach English and mathematics at secondary school, only one tenth said the same about religious studies, according to the latest YouGov tracker on the issue. Even if ‘very important’ and ‘quite important’ answers are combined, the proportion of people thinking religious studies to be an important subject to teach at secondary school did not rise above 40%, with the majority (57%) regarding it as ‘not very important’ or ‘not at all important’, peaking at 67% in Scotland. Only among younger adults aged 18–24 (61%), for whom memories of being taught religious studies were doubtless freshest, and Londoners (51%) did a majority attach importance to the teaching of religious studies. YouGov interviewed 1,688 adults online on 15–16 February 2025 and published the full results at:

- <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/love-across-political-divide-not-so-easy-say-britons>

### **Impact of summer 2024 riots on UK Muslim communities: Survation poll**

The mass stabbings in Southport on 29 July 2024 that resulted in the deaths of three young children triggered a wave of civil unrest during the following weeks, widely blamed by sections of the public and media on far right elements. These ‘far right demonstrations’ had a profoundly unsettling effect on the safety and security of the UK’s Muslim communities, according to a Survation poll commissioned by Tell MAMA, the monitoring and support agency for anti-Muslim hate incidents. A total of 750 UK Muslim adults aged 18 and over was interviewed by telephone or online between 30 September and 14 October 2024. About one quarter of them claimed to have personally experienced anti-Muslim hatred online or offline since the riots had begun, while three fifths thought the potential of risk of harm to Muslim communities had increased significantly or somewhat since they started. One third even said they had contemplated leaving the UK as a direct consequence. Nevertheless, a clear majority (63%) of respondents still felt safe as Muslims living in the UK. A press release with link to the full dataset is available at:

- <https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mamas-survey-finds-that-1-in-3-british-muslims-are-considering-leaving-the-u-k/>

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **Snapshot of the musical life of (mostly) the Church of England**

The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) undertook an online survey in November 2024 primarily to gather empirical data to inform its revision of guidance on church musicians’ fees (the so-called ‘RSCM rates’), but also shedding light on the state of church music more generally. Each of the 1,161 respondents in the RSCM’s convenience sample represented a place of worship or a group of churches, with nine tenths drawn from Anglican places of worship and four fifths being organists or music leaders. A statistical summary of some of the key findings has been published on the RSCM’s website at:

- <https://www.rscm.org.uk/our-resources/guidance-information/paying-church-musicians/the-2024-rscm-church-musicians-fees-survey/>

### **Community Security Trust’s anti-Semitic incidents report, 2024**

The Community Security Trust (CST, which monitors the safety of British Jewry) has published a 48-page analysis of anti-Semitic (increasingly referred to as anti-Jewish hate) incidents in the UK during the 2024 calendar year. The number of such incidents investigated, validated, and recorded was 3,528, which was the second highest total ever reported in the four decades of the CST’s existence, albeit it was 17.9% down on the all-time peak of 2023

(triggered by the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October that year and Israel's subsequent military operations in Gaza). Besides the 3,528 incidents in 2024, the CST was notified of a further 2,479 potential incidents that were ultimately judged as failing to evidence anti-Semitism in motivation, language, or targeting. The report is available to download at:

- <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/6/1/Antisemitic%20Incidents%20Report%202024.1738928091.pdf>

### **Tell MAMA's Islamophobic incidents report, 2024**

Meanwhile, Tell MAMA (the equivalent monitoring agency for British Islam) has published the 112-page *The New Norm of Anti-Muslim Hate*, recording and verifying 5,837 incidents of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in the UK during 2024, up by 55.0% on 2023 and the highest annual figure in Tell MAMA's 12-year history. Of these verified cases, 60.5% occurred offline and 39.5% online, the majority of the latter emerging after the murders of three children in Southport on 29 July 2024 and subsequent civil disorder. Abusive behaviour continued to be the commonest form of all incidents. The report (which also includes selected findings from two Survation polls among British Muslims commissioned by Tell MAMA in 2024) is available at:

- <https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/TheNewNormofAnti-MuslimHate-TellMAMAREport2025.pdf>

### **Latest JPR research report: numbers of Jewish children in Jewish schools**

*Numbers of Jewish Children in Jewish Schools: Statistical Bulletin for 2021/22 to 2023/24*, written by Carli Lessof and Adam Possener, is a 28-page report from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. It enumerates a population of 36,064 Jewish pupils enrolled at 136 state registered Jewish schools in the UK in 2023/24 (of which 45 were 'mainstream' and 91 Strictly Orthodox schools). The number of pupils declined by 1.3% between 2022/23 and 2023/24, the first decrease since data were collated annually in 1995/96. Possible explanations for this fall are considered, including a growth of Jewish pupils attending unregistered Strictly Orthodox educational establishments (currently invisible in official data but helpfully estimated by the authors in Appendix B). The report is available at:

- <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/numbers-jewish-children-jewish-schools>

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

### **Demographic potential of non-parochial registers: the case of pre-1837 Methodism**

Vital registers have proved an essential historical resource for demographers in calculating and mapping the size and profile of the population of England and Wales before detailed official censuses began in 1841. However, they have typically relied disproportionately on Church of England records. Apart from the Quakers (whose registers have been subject to exhaustive quantitative analysis), registers of Protestant Nonconformists and Catholics have been less frequently scrutinized. In 'Total Surrender? The Survival of Methodist Registers from Before 1837 in England and Wales', *Local Population Studies*, No. 112, Spring 2024, pp. 55–90, Philip Thornborow investigates and maps the extent to which the registers (mostly baptismal but including some burial) of the various branches of Methodism were surrendered to the state after 1837 (as directed), ultimately residing in The National Archives. He concludes that, while the majority of Wesleyan registers were surrendered and have survived (except for parts of Yorkshire and south Wales), there were significant omissions among the Methodist New Connexion and Primitive Methodists.

### **Historical statistics of the Independent Methodist Connexion**

In ‘Independent Methodist Connexion: The Statistical Record, 1864–2023’, *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol. 65, Part 1, Spring 2025, pp. 14–19, Clive Field has assembled the principal statistical series from 1864 of the Independent Methodist Connexion, a federation of self-governing churches that emerged spontaneously from the end of the eighteenth century and formed themselves into an association meeting annually from 1806. Historically, and still contemporaneously, these churches have mainly been situated in northern England. They have never been part of what is now the Methodist Church in Great Britain and their data were not included in the quantitative appendix to the standard reference work *Churches and Churchgoers* (1977) by Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley. For each year (when collected) statistics are given for churches, missions, sittings, ministers, adult members, junior members, and Sunday scholars. PDF copies of the article can be requested from the author via the BRIN website.

### **Churchgoing in Edwardian England: a checklist of local newspaper censuses**

Church attendance and church membership were the two key metrics of the strength of organized religion in Britain until just after the Second World War. The 1851 official census of religious worship and accommodation was never repeated, encouraging some contemporaries to arrange local censuses of churchgoing instead. These endeavours reached a high point during the Victorian *fin de siècle* and the Edwardian era. Clive Field, continuing his earlier articles on the theme, has recently published ‘Religion in the Edwardian Age: A Checklist of Local Newspaper Censuses of Church Attendance, 1901–1913, Part 1—England’ in *The Local Historian*, Vol. 55, No. 1, February 2025 (with part 2 on Wales and Scotland following in a subsequent issue). Field identifies 90 English censuses during these years, the majority deriving their inspiration from the *Daily News* religious census of London in 1902–3. The article’s introductory section offers essential contextual and methodological information before proceeding to an alphabetical listing of the scope and sources of each census and calculating its index of attendance for all places where two or more services were enumerated on the same day.

#### APPENDIX: KEYWORDS/TAGS

Adam Possener, afterlife, anti-Muslim hatred, anti-Semitic incidents, anti-Semitism, attendance at places of worship, Carli Lessof, churchgoing, church music, Church of England, Clive Field, Community Security Trust, Edwardian age, far right demonstrations, favourable or unfavourable opinion, Gen Z, importance of religion in choosing romantic partner, importance of teaching religious studies in secondary schools, Independent Methodist Connexion, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Ipsos, Islamophobia, Jewish schools, Local Historian, Local Population Studies, Methodism, Muslims, newspaper censuses of church attendance, non-parochial registers, Philip Thornborow, Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, registers of baptism and burial, religious education, religious prejudice, Royal School of Church Music, self-assessed religiosity, separation of Church and State, Southport, Survation, Tell MAMA, The Times, Valentine’s Day, YouGov