

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources
Number 114 – March 2025

© Clive D. Field, 2025

OPINION POLLS

Religious switching in UK/abroad: more data from Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 2024

The latest release of data from the Spring 2024 wave of the Pew Global Attitudes Survey concerns religious switching, measured between two time points: those brought up in a particular religious tradition and those professing a religious tradition currently (it should be noted that changes *within* the same religious tradition, for example, between one denomination in Christianity and another, were not measured by these questions). Fieldwork was undertaken in 36 nations, including telephone interviews with 1,017 adults aged 18 and over in the UK from 11 January to 9 March 2024. In the UK as a whole, 36% of people had switched religious traditions during their lifetime. Among the UK respondents, 69% were raised as Christians during childhood, but only 43% were currently Christian, 29% having left Christianity while 3% had joined it. Notwithstanding, a majority (58%) of UK adults raised as Christians still identified with that faith, 4% having joined other religions and 38% becoming religiously unaffiliated. Just 19% of the UK sample had been raised as religiously unaffiliated but 46% professed to be so currently, the ranks of the religiously unaffiliated having gained 29% from religious switching and lost a mere 2%. Overwhelmingly (87%), UK adults raised as religiously unaffiliated remained unaffiliated. Pew's report and topline data are available at:

- <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/03/26/around-the-world-many-people-are-leaving-their-childhood-religions/>

Religion of Englishness: More in Common polling

Asked if religion is important to whether someone is English, only 11% of a More in Common online sample of 1,780 English residents on 7–10 March 2025 said that it was. The overwhelming majority (79%) replied that someone can be English regardless of their religion, while 10% were undecided. Breaks by demographics are available at:

- <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/polling-tables/march-2025-polling-tables/>

British beliefs about alien life: new YouGov poll

Three quarters of the 2,244 adult Britons interviewed online by YouGov on 17–18 February 2025 thought it likely that alien life of some kind (including microscopic life) exists somewhere in the universe, and 69% said the same about the existence of intelligent alien life. One third (32%) considered that intelligent alien life has visited earth at some point in history, 22% saying it had done so within the last hundred years, with 14% believing intelligent alien life is currently alive on earth. When asked whether, if humans found proof that aliens exist, that would disprove the existence of God, 17% replied that it would and 42% that it would not, while 41% were undecided. Further analysis and a link to the full data tables can be found at:

- <https://yougov.co.uk/health/articles/51800-do-britons-believe-in-alien-life>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Christian giving in the UK: Stewardship's Generosity Report, 2025

Stewardship's *Generosity Report, 2025: Exploring Christian Giving in the UK* is based upon mixed methods research conducted by Whitestone Insight. The quantitative element comprised online interviews with 6,011 UK Christian adults aged 18 and over on 2–10 September 2024, the sample being sub-divided into four segments according to strength of religious practice. There were 1,217 committed Christians, 487 practising Christians, 1,229 churchgoing Christians, and 3,079 cultural Christians. Christians overall claimed to give an average of £124 a month to Christian and secular causes, which equated to 5.26% of their income, peaking by age at 10.63% among those aged 18–24. By segment, monthly giving rose to £314 for committed Christians (those attending church at least once a week and reading the Bible at least once a week); this representing 11.16% of their income. Cultural Christians (identifying as Christian but attending church less than once a month) were the least generous segment, only donating 0.84% of their income. Interestingly, although there was a correlation between church attendance and Bible reading on the one hand and giving on the other, there was no such correlation between prayer frequency and giving. There were also 50 in-depth virtual qualitative interviews. The report is available to download, after registration, at:

- <https://www.stewardship.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-02/Stewardship%20Generosity%20Report%202025.pdf>

SPCK's claims about a surge in Bible sales and its linkage to Gen Z

On 20 March 2025, SPCK Publishing released a somewhat extraordinary blog, proclaiming 'Bible Sales Surge Among Gen Z: SPCK's Role in the Growing Demand'. The blog comprised two elements. First, using Nielsen BookScan data, there was the claim that 'UK Bible sales grew from £2.69 million in 2019 to £5.02 million in 2024', or by 86.6 per cent. However, this figure was based on value rather than volume and needs adjustment to take account of price inflation during the intervening years, which included a cost of living crisis. SPCK's relatively recent re-entry to the Bible licence market in 2014 may also have been a factor. Second, SPCK sought to link the growth in Bible sales with Gen Z's renewed interest in 'Scripture', without presenting any real evidence, apart from cross-referencing other media reporting, not least the article by Kaya Burgess in *The Times* (15 March 2025, p. 15), which drew upon the OnePoll study for Christopher Gasson in December 2024-January 2025, which employed a dubiously wide definition of 'spirituality' (see *Counting Religion in Britain*, No. 112, January 2025). In turn, this publicity has fed other headlines such as 'SPCK Bible Sales Rocketing, Thanks to Gen Z', *Church Times*, 21 March 2025, p. 6 and 'Gen Z Fuels Surge in Bible Sales', *Methodist Recorder*, 28 March 2025, p. 3. Lack of rigour in statistical method undermines claims such as those made by SPCK and their uncritical reception in parts of the media. Please may we have a robust and transparent presentation of all the data? The SPCK blog can be found at:

- <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/blog/bible-sales-surge-among-gen-z-spck-s-role-in-the-growing-demand.html>

Coronavirus Chronicles: Covid-19 and the ongoing decline of British Methodism

To mark the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain, wrote a blog reflecting on the impact of Covid-19 on the Methodist Church. He felt it too soon to come to a definitive judgement, but he acknowledged that 'we are smaller than we were five years ago – our membership is approximately 40,000 (or 25%) less than it was in March 2020. We know that a significant number (about 500) churches have closed and that in the last few years the numbers of sale transactions going through TMCP [Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes] annually has been

up to twice what they had been.’ He viewed the pandemic as an accelerant of existing trends as much as an initiator of change and argued that other factors had contributed to Methodism’s decline over the quinquennium. The blog, which formed the basis of Gavin Drake’s news article ‘Startling Statistics Show Covid Effect on Church’ in the *Methodist Recorder* (14 March 2025, pp. 1, 3), can be found at:

- <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/5-years-on-from-covid/covid-and-the-methodist-church/>

Facts and figures about the Israeli diaspora: Institute for Jewish Policy Research report

Daniel Staetsky’s 35-page report for the Institute for Jewish Policy Research’s European Demography Unit has revealed that 630,000 Israelis lived outside Israel in 2021–23, of whom 328,000 were born in Israel and another 302,000 were born elsewhere but acquired Israeli citizenship and lived in Israel during their lives. The number of Israelis living in the UK was 23,200, almost double the number in 2001. The report is available at:

- <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/israelis-abroad-transformation-jewish-diaspora>

Value of Ramadan to British society and economy: Equi report

A 22-page research report by Mamnun Khan for think tank Equi has established broad-brush figures for the socio-economic benefit of Ramadan in Britain. Among the key findings: Ramadan’s total economic impact in Britain is estimated to be between £800m and £1.3bn; approximately 2.6 million British Muslims (4% of the UK) fast during Ramadan; supermarkets generate approximately £228m to £342m in Ramadan sales; supermarkets and independent food retailers invest an estimated £159m to £274m in the Ramadan value chain; British Muslims spend an estimated £200m to £300m on clothes, gifts, and travel during Ramadan and Eid; mosques across Britain serve approximately 3.8 million free iftar meals during Ramadan, worth an estimated £15m, with around 125,000 iftar meals provided each day at British mosques, costing an estimated £0.5m daily; and Ramadan drives a charitable contribution of £238m to £359m through donations, volunteering, and social cohesion activities. The full report can be found at:

- <https://equi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/EQUI-Ramadan-March-2025-Report.pdf>

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Scottish Surveys Core Questions, 2023: religion question

The Scottish Surveys Core Questions 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 2023 SSCQ comprises 19,668 individual responses, revealing the religious profile of Scotland to be as follows: 58.5% none, 18.9% Church of Scotland, 12.0% Roman Catholic, 6.3% other Christian, 2.0% Muslim, and 2.1% other non-Christian. These national topline are broken down by a wide range of socio-geographic variables in Table 12 of the dataset, which is available at:

- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-surveys-core-questions-2023/>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Ethnic harassment, religious identity, and wellbeing in the UK

Summarizing her recent journal article, Ingrid Storm writes: ‘Ethnic harassment is a common experience among ethnic and religious minorities in the UK and can reduce wellbeing. However, previous research on ethnic minorities suggests that experiences of harassment could increase identification with religious minority groups, and that a strong religious identity may buffer against some of the negative effects of harassment. Using panel data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (2009–2021), we investigate whether people who experience ethnic harassment have a subsequent increase in religious identification or practice, and to what extent this affects their wellbeing. We find evidence for a religious buffering effect which reduces distress following ethnic harassment for Christians. Similarly, we observe an increase in religiosity among Christians, but not other religious groups following ethnic harassment. Finally, we examine whether stronger religious identification would increase the likelihood of harassment experiences, and find only partial evidence for this reverse effect.’ Storm’s ‘Reactive Religiosity? The Longitudinal Relationship Between Ethnic Harassment, Religious Identity, and Wellbeing in the UK’ is published in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 5, 2025, pp. 1110–38 and is available on open access at:

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01419870.2024.2347988>

Attitudes of UK Christians towards Jews, Israel, and the Israel-Palestinian conflict

On 22 February 2025, a seminar was held in London on the theme of ‘Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Church’. One of the presentations was given by Motti Inbari (University of North Carolina at Pembroke) and Kirill Bumin (Boston University) on ‘A Survey of British Christian Attitudes Towards the Israel-Palestine Conflict’. The study, funded by a coalition of groups opposing anti-Semitism, was based on online interviews on 9–20 December 2024 with a non-probability sample of 2,062 UK adults aged 18 and over who either had a Christian upbringing or were practising Christians (among them a disproportionate number of Roman Catholics). The sample was provided by Cint Group and administered by Savanta. An equivalent survey of US Christians had already taken place on 8–14 March 2024, and cross-national comparisons were made throughout the presentation. From an extremely busy slide set, it can be noted that significant minorities of the UK sample exhibited negative views towards Jews and Israel and expressed sympathies for the Palestinian cause, and these opinions were more strongly held among younger Christians, Catholics, Asians, and proponents of a left-leaning ideology. The full text of the PowerPoint presentation is available on the ResearchGate site. For anybody having difficulty in accessing it, there is also a range of online media coverage, including the following news articles:

- <https://www.timesofisrael.com/survey-1-3-of-uk-christians-believe-jews-still-talk-too-much-about-the-holocaust/>
- <https://www.christiantoday.com/news/survey-young-british-christians-more-critical-of-israel-and-jews-than-older-generatio>

APPENDIX: KEYWORDS/TAGS

Alien life, anti-Semitism, Bible sales, Christian giving, Christianity, Cint Group, Covid-19, Daniel Staetsky, Equi, Ethnic and Racial Studies, ethnic harassment, Gen Z, Ingrid Storm, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Israel, Israel-Palestine conflict, Israeli diaspora, Jews, Jonathan Hustler, Kaya Burgess, Kirill Bumin, Mammun Khan, Methodist Church, More in Common, Motti Inbari, Pew Global Attitudes Survey, Pew Research Center, Ramadan, religion of Englishness, religious affiliation, religious switching, Scottish Surveys Core Questions, SPCK Publishing, Stewardship, The Times, UK Household Longitudinal Survey, Whitestone Insight, YouGov