

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 82 – July 2022

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OPINION POLLS

Perceptions of prejudice against religious groups as a problem in contemporary society

A majority (57%) of the population considers that prejudice against Muslims is a major or significant problem in British society today, far more than the 31% who regard it as not much of a problem or none at all. By contrast, only 15% of the 1,751 adults interviewed online by YouGov on 19–20 May 2022 assessed prejudice against Christians as a problem and 70% not. Full data tables are available at:

- https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/74125pslh3/Internal_TransgenderIssues_220720_final_extraXbreak_FINAL.pdf

Analogous questions have been posed monthly by Savanta ComRes over the past couple of years in respect of Jews and Muslims. In the latest wave of this political tracker, fielded among 1,980 UK adults on 15–17 July 2022, 52% deemed anti-Semitism to be a problem in the UK and 58% Islamophobia. Full data tables are available at:

- <https://comresglobal.com/polls/savanta-comres-political-tracker-july-2022/>

Importance of a British prime minister being a Christian: Deltapoll for *Mail on Sunday*

The current contest for the leadership of the governing Conservative Party, following the resignation of Boris Johnson, has prompted several public opinion polls probing the attributes that a future prime minister should have. In one of them, undertaken by Deltapoll for the *Mail on Sunday* on 21–23 July 2022, a sample of 1,588 Britons was asked whether it was important that a British prime minister should be a Christian. In reply, 71% said that it was not at all important or not very important, with 23% considering it either quite important (14%) or very important (9%). The minority deeming it important was highest, at 30%, among Londoners and the over-65s. Full data tables are available at:

- <https://deltapoll.co.uk/polls/conleadership220725>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Coronavirus chronicles: Easter church attendance before and after the pandemic

The Church Pastoral Aid Society has published a significant 12-page research paper by Bev Botting and Bob Jackson on *Easter Church Attendance, 2019 and 2022: Patterns and Trends*. It is based upon an analysis of data gathered from 755 churches in four Church of England dioceses (Canterbury, Lichfield, Oxford, and Rochester). In-person attendance at services at Easter 2022 was 75% of the level three years earlier (taken as a ‘normal’, pre-pandemic Easter), with recovery from the impact of Covid-19 stronger in smaller churches than larger ones. Factoring in online services (Church at Home or CAH in Anglican parlance) offered at Easter 2022 raised the estimated attendance to 101% of the 2019 total, albeit this is deceptive since the figure was inflated by the national/international online ministry of a few very large churches such as Canterbury Cathedral (omitting these, and including only local CAH provision, reduced the combined number to 94%, compared with 2019). The report is available at:

- <https://www.cpas.org.uk/browse-everything/easter-church-attendance-2019-and-2022-patterns-and-trends>

Peer evangelism among young people in the UK

Influencers: Peer Evangelism amongst Young People in the UK is a 33-page report of the key findings from research commissioned by a consortium of seven Christian organizations (including the Church of England and Scripture Union) and undertaken by 9 Dot Research between December 2021 and February 2022 among self-selecting online samples of 480 active Christians aged 13–18, which is admitted to be ‘not representative of all young Christians in the UK’, and 255 Christian youth leaders. Appendix 1 (pp. 30–2) describes the research methodology and its limitations in some detail. Headlines are presented on pp. 5–6, revealing that only 34% of young Christians shared their faith regularly, notwithstanding that 70% agreed they should try to encourage others to become Christians and 65% claiming they had confidence to do so. The report is available at:

- <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Influencers%20final%20report.pdf>

Anti-Semitism in English secondary schools and colleges: Henry Jackson Society report

Charlotte Littlewood has written the Henry Jackson Society’s latest Research Brief, on *Antisemitism in Schools*, based upon Freedom of Information requests to all secondary schools and further education colleges in England, to which there was a 39.4% response. Among responding schools, there were 1,077 recorded anti-Semitic incidents between 2017/18 and 2021/22, 22.1% of schools reporting at least one such incident during this quinquennium. Only 3.4% of schools had a policy that specifically referenced anti-Semitism, in view of which it seems likely that cases will have been underenumerated. The paper is free to download at:

- <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Antisemitism.pdf>

Merseyside Jewish community census, 2021: summary report

The Merseyside Jewish Representative Council has released the summary report of a voluntary census of the Merseyside Jewish community that it undertook, through its demographics officer (Philip Sapiro), between August and November 2021, obtaining a response of 40%. The overall Jewish population in Greater Liverpool (including Wirral and Chester) is estimated to comprise 1,980 individuals in 1,020 households, representing a decline of one-fifth during the last ten years (exemplifying a long-term rebalancing of the UK’s Jewish community, away from the provinces and towards Greater London and its Hertfordshire suburbs). A majority (54%) of this population is aged 60 and over, the median age for all Liverpool Jews being 64 compared with 35 for the city as a whole. The census also gathered a range of other demographic and lifestyle information about Merseyside Jews. The summary report is available at:

- <https://repcouncil.co.uk/summary.pdf>

Attacks on mosques and Islamic institutions in the UK: Muslim Census survey

Attacks upon Mosques and Islamic Institutions in the UK is the latest report from Muslim Census, summarizing the findings of an online survey it conducted between June and September 2021, in collaboration with MEND. Replies were received from 113 mosques, just a fraction of the UK’s 1,800 mosques and possibly not fully representative of them. Among responding mosques and Islamic institutions, 42% reported experiences of religiously motivated attacks during the previous three years, most commonly taking the form of vandalism, closely followed by burglary and online abuse. One-third (35%) of mosques claimed to be subject to a religiously motivated attack at least once a year. The majority (85%)

of mosques that experienced a religiously motivated attack/threat of attack contacted the police, but only 55% were satisfied with the police response. The 16-page report is available at:

- <https://muslimcensus.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/MuslimCensus-x-MEND.pdf>

OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Coronavirus chronicles: vaccination rates by religion as at 31 May 2022

The Office for National Statistics has published the latest monthly dataset, to 31 May 2022, of *Coronavirus and Vaccination Rates in People Aged 18 Years and over by Socio-Demographic Characteristic and Region, England*. In terms of religion, the proportion of the population which had received three vaccinations against Covid-19 by 31 May 2022 ranged from 40.9% among Muslims and 69.2% among Sikhs to 79.1% for Jews and 79.2% for Christians. For the full range of metrics over time, go to:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-and-vaccination-rates-in-people-aged-18-years-and-over-by-socio-demographic-characteristic-and-region-england--2>

Civil Service statistics, 2022: profile by religion or belief

Statistical Bulletin, Civil Service Statistics, 2022 includes a profile of employees in the UK Civil Service by religion or belief, based upon the 69.9% of them who reported this information (1.7% more than in 2021). The largest groups in 2022 were Christians (45.5%) and nones (41.4%). Table A3 gives a breakdown of religion or belief by department and Table A4 by responsibility level. The bulletin and data tables are available at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2022>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Coronavirus chronicles: Covid-19's impact on the body, mind, and soul of Anglicans

In their latest research output from the 'Covid-19 and Church-21' survey, undertaken online among self-selecting (and thus potentially unrepresentative) samples between January and July 2021, Leslie Francis and Andrew Village suggest that 'Benefits of Soul Care Are More than Spiritual' (*Church Times*, 22 July 2022, p. 12). Their analysis of the responses from 1,878 Anglicans living in England indicated that sudden adversity through the pandemic had led to an improvement in self-reported spiritual health for many people, which was also connected with improvements in physical and mental health. The article is available at:

- <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/22-july/comment/opinion/benefits-of-soul-care-are-more-than-spiritual>

Analysing the 'Muslim penalty' in the British labour market

In a recent article in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 16, 2022, pp. 359–88, Samir Sweida-Metwally poses the question: 'Does the Muslim Penalty in the British Labour Market Dissipate after Accounting for So-Called "Sociocultural Attitudes"?' Utilizing multilevel modelling of data from the first ten waves of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, the author confirms the reality of the Muslim penalty in the labour market, in terms of unemployment and economic activity among men and women, attributing it to a combination of colour and religion (the latter especially affecting women) that, it is alleged, requires systemic anti-black and anti-Muslim racism to be addressed. The article is available on open access at:

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01419870.2022.2097887>

Relationship between religiosity and Parkinson's disease in England and the USA

In an open access paper published in the online first edition of *Journal of Religion and Health*, 2022, Abidemi Otaiku investigates 'Religiosity and Risk of Parkinson's Disease in England and the USA', drawing upon a pooled longitudinal sample of 9,796 participants in the English Longitudinal Study of Aging and the Midlife in the United States Study, who were free of Parkinson's disease (PD) at the baseline and completed a questionnaire on self-reported religiosity. Among this sample, 0.8% had developed PD during a median follow-up of 8.1 years. Despite the small numbers involved, the author claims that the research 'provides evidence for the first time that low religiosity in adulthood may be a strong risk factor for developing PD'. The article is freely available at:

- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10943-022-01603-8>

Effectiveness of school mindfulness programmes in minimizing mental health risks

Research among 8,376 students in 85 UK secondary schools has seemingly found no evidence that school-based mindfulness programmes are superior to traditional teaching methods in promoting mental health during adolescence. The full text of Willem Kuyken et al., 'Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Universal School-Based Mindfulness Training Compared with Normal School Provision in Reducing Risk of Mental Health Problems and Promoting Well-Being in Adolescence: The MYRIAD Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial', *Evidence-Based Mental Health*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 2022, pp. 99–109 is freely available at:

- <https://ebmh.bmj.com/content/25/3/99>

Reviewing the statistics of the secularization history of Britain

Steve Bruce, 'Mapping Religious Change in the UK: The Work of Clive Field', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2022, pp. 357–61 is a review article of Field's four chronological monographs, published between 2015 and 2022, on the secularization history of Britain from the eighteenth century to the present, as viewed from the perspective of religious statistics. The review article can be found at:

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13537903.2022.2069326>

Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion, Volume 32 (2022)

The latest volume of this annual serial has now been published by Brill, on the theme of 'Lesser Heard Voices in Studies of Religion', and edited by Ralph Hood and Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor. Its 28 contributions are divided into four sections: a miscellany plus three sub-themes, on religion or belief in higher education (which perhaps will be of most interest to BRIN readers, containing several chapters by British authors and/or on British subjects), cultural blindness in psychology, and religious authority in practice in contemporary Evangelical, Charismatic, and Pentecostal Christianity. The complete contents are itemized in the preliminaries for this volume, which are freely available at:

- <https://brill.com/view/title/61509>

Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion, Volume 13 (2022)

This is another of Brill's annual serials, the current edition being devoted to 'Jews and Muslims in Europe: between Discourse and Experience', and edited by Samuel Sami Everett and Ben Gidley. It features 12 chapters, four each on Germany, France, and the UK. The UK essays have a qualitative focus, including one based on an interview with Michael Keith. The complete contents are itemized in the preliminaries for this volume, which are freely available at:

- <https://brill.com/view/title/62205>