

# Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

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## OPINION POLLS

### Is ‘God’ making a comeback among the young? OnePoll survey seems to suggest so

Claims that ‘organised religion may now be on the way back’ and that ‘a religious revival may already be underway’ do not often appear on BRIN’s website. However, these are the interpretations by author Christopher Gasson of a major OnePoll survey he commissioned in connection with the launch of his book *The Devils’ Gospels: Finding God in Four Great Atheist Books* (Christian Alternative Books, 2025, 192pp., ISBN: 9781803412795, £11.99, paperback). A sample of 10,000 adults aged 18 and over in the UK was interviewed online during December 2024 and January 2025, with selected findings and accompanying ‘thoughts’ by Gasson set out in the 28-page report *Belief in Britain: A Look into the Religious and Spiritual Landscape of the Nation*. Neither the survey questionnaire nor the full dataset has been published as yet, and it is to be hoped that they will be in the near future, both to facilitate secondary analysis and to validate the rigour of the survey’s methodology.

Gasson summarizes his principal conclusions thus: ‘(1) Young people are both more spiritual and more religious than older people; they also report becoming more spiritual and more religious in the past five years. (2) Atheism appears to be most popular among people in the 40s and 50s; younger people seem less interested. (3) Nevertheless, Britons young and old are highly critical of religion, and pessimistic about its outlook.’ Respondents were categorized into four groups: ‘*Non-believers* (30%): Participants who consider themselves atheist, or recognise religion and religious holidays but only from a cultural perspective. They do not believe in a “God”. *Uncommitted* (40%): Participants who consider themselves religious or spiritual, but who do not ascribe to a specific belief system. *Religious* (17%): Participants who worship regularly and ascribe to a specific belief system. They may not recognise every aspect of their religion but respect the authority of their religious leaders. *Spiritual* (70%): Participants who to varying degrees seek a deeper connection with the universe, nature, or a higher power, though this may extend beyond the confines of organized religion.’ The ways in which such spirituality was expressed were: enjoying nature (45%), mindfulness (31%), connecting with other people (29%), enjoying music or art (26%), meditation (25%), exercise (25%), getting involved in good causes (24%), participation in religious practices (22%), and supporting a sports team or fandom (10%). With such a wide self-definition of what constitutes ‘spirituality’, it is no wonder that 70% of the population is classified by Gasson as ‘spiritual’. The report can be found at:

- <https://thedevilsgospels.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/The-Devils-Gospels-Report-final.pdf>

### The world of Gen Z as illuminated by Channel 4 and Craft

BRIN readers may like to know that Channel 4 and the strategic insight agency Craft have partnered for a third time to investigate the world of Gen Z by means of a mixed methods research project. The quantitative element comprised two surveys in 2024 of UK-wide representative samples of 2,000 young people aged 13–27 and 1,000 adults aged 28–65. Questions focused particularly on Gen Z’s activities, identity, and worldviews. Judging by Channel 4’s published report of the study, religious matters were not to the fore (in stark

contrast to the study for *The Devils' Gospels*). However, a key finding was that Gen Z's values were still fluid in relation to those of older generations, one of the examples given in illustration being that, whereas only 2% of Gen X said they had changed their mind in the past year about whether they believed in God or not, as many as 22% of Gen Z admitted doing so. The report can be found at:

- [https://assets-corporate.channel4.com/flysystem/s3/2025-01/Gen%20Z%20Trends%20Truth%20and%20Trust\\_0.pdf](https://assets-corporate.channel4.com/flysystem/s3/2025-01/Gen%20Z%20Trends%20Truth%20and%20Trust_0.pdf)

### **Pew Global Attitudes Survey, Spring 2024 wave: further releases**

The Pew Research Center has released further findings from the Spring 2024 wave of the Pew Global Attitudes Survey. This was undertaken in 36 countries, including the UK, where 1,017 adults aged 18 and over were interviewed by telephone between 11 January and 9 March 2024, fieldwork being arranged by Langer Research Associates.

The release on 9 January 2025 focused on perceptions of inequality and discrimination. This module included a question about the extent to which respondents viewed discrimination against people based on their religion as a problem. In the UK, 62% perceived religious discrimination as a very (27%) or moderately (35%) big problem, compared with a global median of 57%, while 37% saw it as a small problem (26%) or none at all (11%). In many nations, including the UK (where the differential was greatest), there was a correlation between the importance attached to religion in personal lives and the perceived strength of religious discrimination of people in the country. The report and topline data are available at:

- <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2025/01/09/global-perceptions-of-inequality-and-discrimination/>

Another release on 28 January 2025 sought to quantify relative levels of 'religious nationalism' by means of an index created from answers to four questions, the UK versions of which were: (1) How important is belonging to the historically predominant religion [Christianity] to being *truly* part of your national identity? (2) How important is it to you for your national leader to share your religious beliefs? (3) How much influence do you think the historically predominant religion's sacred text [the Bible] should have on the laws of your country? (4) When the sacred text conflicts with the will of the people, which should have more influence on the laws of your country? In the UK, only 1% of Christians were classified as 'religious nationalists', on the basis of identifying with the historically predominant religion of Christianity and taking a strongly religious position on all four of the questions, with a further 42% considered members of Christianity but not religious nationalists. UK replies to the specific questions were as follows: (1) 22% important, 77% not important; (2) 22% important, 77% not important; (3) 23% a great deal or a fair amount, 76% not too much or no influence; (4) 11% the Bible, 87% the will of the people. In practice, 36% in the UK felt the Bible had a great deal or a fair amount of influence on the country's laws, 62% saying it had not too much or no influence. Other questions revealed UK respondents as holding fairly negative opinions of religion, with 51% believing it mostly hurts society (46% saying it mostly helps it), 57% claiming it encourages intolerance (41% saying tolerance), and 64% agreeing it encourages superstitious thinking (35% dissenting). The report and topline data are available at:

- <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2025/01/28/comparing-levels-of-religious-nationalism-around-the-world/>

### **Latest (2024) wave of the Anti-Defamation League Global 100 Index of Antisemitism**

The US-based Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has published online a summary of its latest wave of interviews for the ADL Global 100 Index of Antisemitism. A total of 58,000 adults aged 18 and over in 103 countries and territories, representing 94% of the global adult population, were successfully reached between 23 July and 13 November 2024, including 999

by telephone in the UK. The questionnaire comprised three modules. In the first, respondents were asked whether eleven negative stereotypes about Jews were ‘definitely true’ or ‘probably true’, the index of anti-Semitism score being (slightly arbitrarily) based on those who believed in six or more of them. The UK index score was 12, corresponding to 6.7 million people holding anti-Semitic views, rising to 16 among men and persons aged 35–49. The overall UK score was somewhat below the figure for Western Europe (17) and decidedly less than the global index of 46. However, when it came to individual tropes, almost two fifths of UK citizens considered that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the UK. The second module contained eight questions on anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiments, and the third module included five questions on conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial. Partial data only are available at:

- <https://www.adl.org/adl-global-100-index-antisemitism>

### **Memorialization of the Holocaust: Claims Conference multinational survey**

On behalf of the New York-based Claims Conference (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany), Global Strategy Group conducted a survey into the Holocaust among 1,000 adults in each of eight nations between 15 and 28 November 2023. Findings were released in advance of the commemoration (on 27 January 2025) of the eightieth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. The countries investigated were USA, UK, France, Austria, Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Romania. In the UK, knowledge of the Holocaust itself was high (97%), although 53% of respondents did not know that six million Jews were killed during it and 26% could not name a single concentration camp or ghetto where killings took place. Moreover, 17% of all UK adults (and 22% of those aged 18–29) disagreed that the Holocaust happened and that the number of Jews killed had been accurately and fairly described, while 2% and 5% respectively agreed that the Holocaust is a myth and did not happen. As many as 24% of UK adults believed that Holocaust denial was common in the country, with 69% fearful that something like the Holocaust could happen again today. A 43-page executive summary of the survey and topline findings for each country are available at:

- <https://www.claimscon.org/country-survey/#toplines>

A previous (2021) Claims Conference poll on Holocaust opinions in the UK was reported at:

- <https://www.claimscon.org/uk-study/>

### **Memorialization of the Holocaust: Ipsos national survey**

In advance of Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2025, Ipsos interviewed a representative sample of 2,183 British adults aged 16–75 online on 13–17 December 2024. The public was divided about the extent of anti-Semitism in Britain, 39% thinking it was a very or fairly big problem and 40% not a big problem or none at all. Likewise, 38% were very or fairly concerned about anti-Semitism in the UK but 48% were not concerned. When it came to the Holocaust, 73% considered they knew a great deal or a fair amount about it, and 85% judged it very or fairly important that the Holocaust is discussed in the present day. However, while 69% thought the lessons of the Holocaust were completely or mostly remembered today, 47% felt they would be completely or mostly forgotten within fifty years. Half (52%) of Britons believed that the passing of Holocaust survivors would make it harder to educate young people about the Holocaust in future. Charts only (with some breaks by age) are available via the link at:

- [www.ipsos.com/en-uk/majority-britons-believe-it-important-talk-about-holocaust-1-3-fearing-lessons-will-be-forgotten-10](http://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/majority-britons-believe-it-important-talk-about-holocaust-1-3-fearing-lessons-will-be-forgotten-10)

### **Likely causes of human extinction: YouGov restudy**

YouGov has replicated its February 2022 and May–June 2023 polling into its panellists’ views about the likely causes of human extinction. On this occasion, 2,225 adults in Great Britain

were interviewed online on 20–21 January 2025. Eleven extinction events were on its questionnaire, one of which was a religious apocalypse, which was only chosen by 5% of respondents as a whole, albeit by 10% of Reform UK voters. A zombie apocalypse and an alien invasion were deemed even less probable (1% apiece). The most likely scenarios for human extinction were judged to be nuclear war (62%), climate change (46%), and a pandemic (31%). Full data tables are available at:

- [https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/Internal Extinction 250121 public.pdf](https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/Internal%20Extinction%20250121_public.pdf)

## FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

### **United Reformed Church statistics, 2025**

As in previous years, BRIN is greatly indebted to Martin Camroux for sharing his analysis of the latest statistics of the United Reformed Church (URC), as published in its yearbook for 2025. This is a task he has undertaken every year since his ordination in 1975, just three years after the formation of the URC. He warns his readers at the outset that ‘my confidence in the accuracy of the statistics is now at an all time low’, principally arising from the inconsistent methodology for recording the URC share of membership of local ecumenical partnerships. That said, the URC has mostly continued its trajectory of gentle decline, with the number of churches down on the previous year by 2.2%, members down by 2.0%, regular attenders down by 2.2%, and stipendiary ministers down by 7.0%. On the other hand, average congregations grew during the year by 1.8% and children at worship rose by 3.0%, while there was a £23m surplus in the balance sheets of URC synods. Such gains, however, still fell well short of a recovery to pre-Covid-19 levels. The URC is currently engaged in a fundamental Church Life Review, which will report to an extraordinary session of the URC General Assembly in November 2025.

### **Is there a Jewish ‘exodus’ from the UK? Not according to the JPR**

Claims in parts of the media that Jews are leaving the UK in numbers on account of anti-Semitism are ‘simply not true’ and ‘frankly nonsensical’, according to Jonathan Boyd, Executive Director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR). In his recent blog on the JPR’s website, ‘The Data Is Clear: There is No “Jewish Exodus” from the UK’, Boyd shows that just 1% of British Jews have emigrated to Israel over the past seven years, around 500 per annum. Moreover, for every two British Jews relocating to Israel, three Israelis are moving in the opposite direction. The blog can be found at:

- <https://www.jpr.org.uk/insights/data-clear-there-no-jewish-exodus-uk>

The piece was also published in the *Jewish News* at:

- <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/opinion-the-data-is-clear-there-is-no-jewish-exodus-from-the-uk/>

## ACADEMIC STUDIES

### **Methodist historical statistics, eighteenth century to the present**

David Jeremy, ‘A Quantitative Assessment of the Global Expansion of Wesley’s Methodism’, in *The Routledge Companion to John Wesley*, edited by Clive Norris and Joseph Cunningham (London: Routledge, 2025), pp. 497–524 (ISBN: 9781032552644, £43.99, paperback) features thirteen tables of UK, US, and global Methodist statistics from the eighteenth century to the present day, together with commentary and bibliography. The chapter is a development of the

same author's 'Church Statistics and the Growth of Global Methodism: Some Preliminary Descriptive Statistics', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to World Methodism*, edited by William Gibson, Peter Forsaith, and Martin Wellings (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 87–107. It is a useful source of comparative data but naturally does not replace Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers* (1977) as the definitive source of annual British and Irish Methodist data to 1970.

### **Roman Catholic historical statistics: England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland**

In 'Through a Glass Darkly? Modern Catholicism in Britain and Ireland through the *Catholicism in Numbers* Datasets', *British Catholic History*, Vol. 37, No. 1, May 2024, pp. 43–53, Alana Harris, Timothea Kinnear, and Liam Temple provide a helpful introduction to the *Catholicism in Numbers* project, whose outputs (for England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland) are hosted on the Catholic Record Society's website, and to plans for its ongoing development as an online resource. The authors explain the challenges they have faced along the way, not least the variable quality of the underlying primary sources they have used. The impetus for the project was the need to provide quantitative underpinning for the fifth volume in *The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism*, published in 2023, and covering the period since 1914 (see *Counting Religion in Britain*, No. 99, December 2023). The article is available at:

- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-catholic-history/article/through-a-glass-darkly-modern-catholicism-in-britain-and-ireland-through-the-catholicism-in-numbers-datasets/0E3B7031BBE785D4030C5D21D9F6F339>

### APPENDIX: KEYWORDS/TAGS

ADL Global 100 Index of Antisemitism, Alana Harris, Anti-Defamation League, anti-Semitism, atheism, Bible's influence on laws, British Catholic History, Catholicism in Numbers, Channel 4, Christopher Gasson, Claims Conference, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Craft, David Jeremy, Devils' Gospels, Gen Z, Global Strategy Group, God, Holocaust, Holocaust denial, Holocaust Memorial Day, human extinction, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Ipsos, Jewish emigration, Jonathan Boyd, Langer Research Associates, Liam Temple, loyalty to Israel, Martin Camroux, Methodism, OnePoll, Pew Global Attitudes Survey, Pew Research Center, religion and national identity, religion and superstitious thinking, religion and tolerance, religion's helpful or hurtful impact on society, religious apocalypse, religious belief, religious discrimination, religious nationalism, Roman Catholic Church, spirituality, stereotypes about Jews, Timothea Kinnear, United Reformed Church, Yougov