

## Monthly tracker - June 2024

*Second data set. Tracking questions first asked 31st April - 2nd May.*

### Faith and age focus

There were few changes beyond those that can be attributed to the margin of error. However, certain questions were rephrased to specify “within the last four weeks,” adding insight into the present impact of one’s faith. Additionally, a new cross-section has been included to highlight those who agreed with the statement “I believe my faith to be the only true religion” as “**exclusivists**.” This allows us to differentiate respondents with a high conviction of faith from those who may be considered “cultural” believers, who identify with the faith but are less convinced of its ideology. With this in mind, several conclusions can be drawn:

- **Exclusivist Beliefs:** 80% of Muslims identified as “exclusivist,” meaning they believe their faith is the only true religion. This compares with 37% of Hindus, 25% of Christians, and 10% of Jews. Interestingly, despite the Quran’s inclusive references to “people of the book,” Muslim exclusivity is higher than expected.
  - This may suggest that exclusivity is more of a sociological defence mechanism than a scriptural directive. This could also explain the 37% of exclusivist Hindus, despite Hinduism traditionally being a more inclusive spiritual path, both Hindus and Muslims are minorities in the UK that may inspire them to be more robust in their identity and beliefs.
  - Or a more legalistic approach to Islam compared with other faiths creates a more dogmatic lived experience that lends itself to clearer lines. According to mixed-heritage Muslim researcher Rania this resonates with her experience of Turkish Muslims who can be identified according to how they pray, as to which school of thought they belong to and considered more or less of a Muslim by those of other schools. Rania posits that the mechanisms of Islam, its legal rulings and fatwas, encourage a more exclusive approach to what “is” or “is not” the “true Islam.”
- **Impact of Faith on Daily Life:** The 18-24 age group is most likely to consider their faith impactful in their lives, with 54% reporting a significant impact within the last four weeks, compared to 23% of the 65+ age group. Among

exclusivists, 79% of Hindus, 69% of Muslims, and 63% of Christians reported recent impacts of their faith. For non-exclusivists, 66% of Muslims and 54% of Hindus reported an impact, contrasting sharply with 26% of Christians. This highlights a significant disparity between exclusivist and non-exclusivist Christians compared to a relatively small difference among Muslims.

- **Sharing Faith:** In the last four weeks, 49% of Jewish respondents avoided discussing their faith, compared to 11% of Christians, 22% of Muslims, and 20% of Hindus. This high avoidance rate among Jews may be linked to rising antisemitism, with the Community Security Trust recording 266 violent assaults last year. Despite anti-Muslim sentiment, Muslims and Hindus reported similar levels of reluctance to share their faith, suggesting comparable levels of negativity encountered when discussing their beliefs.
- **Faith and Purpose:** Again, the 18-24 age group and Muslim respondents were most likely to feel their faith had given them purpose in the last four weeks. 59% of 18-24 year olds reported this sense of purpose, compared to 25% of those aged 65 and over. Among exclusivists, 73% felt their faith gave them purpose, underscoring their deep engagement with their beliefs. Muslims reported the highest sense of purpose at 71%, followed by 58% of Hindus and 29% of Christians.
- **Conversions:** 82% of respondents have never changed their belief system and 53% responded that they would not be open to change. Within the minority who have changed faith, 9% of Christians have converted to Christianity, compared to 17% of Muslims who have converted to Islam. The 18-24 age group has the highest conversion rate at 21%, compared to 5% of those aged 55-64 and 6% of those 65 and older. This suggests that Gen Z is converting more, particularly to Islam, which may explain the increased commitment and engagement with faith among younger people compared to older generations.
- **Tolerance:** Agreement was high across the board age and faith-wise for believing that someone of any faith should be allowed to be Prime Minister. With 64% of Christians agreeing and 77% of Muslims and 72% of Hindus. Considering the current Prime Minister is Hindu this shows high levels of tolerance for this from Muslim respondents. Hindus and Muslims are most likely to learn about other faiths from persons of other faiths at 72% and 64% respectively, compared with 35% of Christians.
- **Secularism:** Faith groups felt similarly on the question of whether faith should not be discussed in the workplace: 30% Christians, 33% of Muslims and 43%

of Hindus. Hindu exclusivists were most likely to want faith not to be discussed in the work place at 53% compared with 29% of exclusivist Muslims. This could be owing to the fact that, unlike Christianity and Islam, Hinduism is a non-proselytizing faith and Hindus of Indian origin have a historic and ongoing conflict with proselytisation. Hindu lead campaigns regarding the dangers of proselytisation are seen in the UK, with some going as far as describing conversions out of Hinduism as a form of ethnic cleansing. 50% of Hindus and 52% Christians believe that politicians should listen to what faith leaders have to say on political issues, with 70% of Muslims believing the same.

- **Voting:** 64% net disagreed that their faith would influence their voting. However, people of faith of a younger age were more likely than older people of faith to say that their faith would make a difference to the way they will vote in the general election. Almost two fifths (38%) of 25-34s said that it would, compared to only 15% of over 65s saying that it would.
  - With 18-24s at 35%, 25-34s at 38%, and 35-44s at 29%, the three younger age brackets demonstrate a tendency to vote based on their faith that is higher than the UK average (24%). This indicates an increasing trend of voting on the basis of religious beliefs. It is also worth noting that the 18-24s will be voting in a General Election for the first time, establishing the foundation for their future (habitual) voting behaviour.
  - Those who saw their faith as the only true religion (i.e. 'Exclusivists') said that their faith would impact their vote more than those who were not 'Exclusivists'. Half (48%) of Exclusivist Christians said their faith would impact their vote compared to 19% of Christians more broadly. Exclusivist Muslims and Hindus were more likely than Exclusivist Christians to say that their faith would impact their vote, with 57% of Exclusivist Muslims saying it would and 52% of Exclusivist Hindus.

## Regional Focus

These findings did not significantly differ from May. The general trends remain consistent. **London** (including the **South** more broadly) reports higher levels of personal faith, greater faith literacy, and openness to faith in the public arena, including the media.

**Northern Ireland** (NI) scored second-highest across the variables. These results were most significant in attitudes to personal faith, especially in response to faith being tied to cultural heritage and moral values. Yet NI also scored highest in openness to changing faith positions and being less interested in faith with age. NI

may have recorded the second-highest values on attitudes to personal faith and beliefs in religion's positive contribution to society across the sample but showed the greatest resistance to religion in public. Respondents were most likely to resist discussing their faith and want religious discussion omitted from the workplace and politics.

Results for the **North, East/Midlands, Scotland, and Wales** were broadly tied and significantly lower than London/South and NI. There were no significant findings to report in or between these areas.

The results support previous findings that resistance to religion in the public arena is not always correlated with beliefs about the negative impact of faith and religion on individuals and society. In fact, the reverse may be true. Resistance to religion in public life may reflect more a value judgement of individuals and groups to misrepresent religion to potentially significant negative effect than a value judgement of religion itself. Findings also showed a correlation between greater openness to religion in public life/positive experiences of religion and exclusivity. London reported the highest levels of exclusivity (44%). This was 16% higher than NI, and 25% higher than the lowest score given by the East.

- **Attitudes to personal faith:** London (not the South as a whole) scored highest across the 9 positively phrased questions in this section. Londoners also, however, scored highest on one of the negatively phrased questions, with 22% reporting they had avoided talking about their faith in the last 4 weeks – though this figure is still low. **The group most likely to vote in line with their faith were Londoners (36%),** but this did not reflect the South because the South West was least likely to do so (6%).

That being said, while London (and less so the South East and West) gave the highest frequency of positive scores in this section (7/10), all responses were under 50% with one exception - whether faith is a force for good, to which 50% were in agreement.

Northern Ireland scored highest in faith being tied to cultural heritage 66%, shaping moral values 76%, being open to changing mind about faith 32% and being less interested now in matters of faith than when younger 52%. Only 3% of this sample said they had avoided talking about their faith in the last 4 weeks, compared to 22% of Londoners.

The highest scoring questions in this section were for faith being tied to cultural heritage (66% - NI), shaping morals (76% - NI), and a decreased interest in faith with age (52% - NI).

The greatest discrepancies between the highest and lowest scores on a question were on faith tied to cultural heritage (NI 76% compared to Yorkshire/Humberside 57% = 35%), and belief in one's faith being the one true religion (London 44% compared to Eastern 19% = 25%).

- **Attitudes to faith in public life:** The highest scores were largely evenly distributed across these questions. NI gave the highest score in the section in agreement with the statement that someone of any faith should be prime minister (75%). NI was most resistant to people talking about faith in the workplace (59%) and disagreed most strongly that British politicians should listen to faith leaders. The greatest discrepancy was found on whether people should talk about faith in the workplace, with NI in the highest disagreement (59%) compared to the North East at 28%.

NI appeared most resistant to religion in public life. Christian heritage and a belief that faith significantly influences equality and compassion were most important to the East/Midlands and South.

- **Faith literacy:** The South, but especially London, scored highest in this area. The South held the lowest score for one question: I have a poor understanding of religion (28%). There were no significant findings in this area. The highest discrepancy concerned learning about religion from friends of that faith, but both the highest and lowest scores were within the South.
- **Attitudes to faith in the media:** Discrepancy between areas was low. The highest discrepancy (17%) was on whether media portrayal is generally negative and this was between London (28%) and Yorkshire (11%). London scored highest on questions of the media being balanced, disproportionately critical, and generally negative. London also scored highest on wanting to see more religious coverage. Scotland, NI and the North East shared the highest scores on wanting less religious media coverage (58%) - but again, responses on this question showed only an 11% discrepancy.