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# **The Changing Landscape of Faith in Britain: Rebirth, Renewal and Reimagining**

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# Executive Summary

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Britain is undergoing a profound reconfiguration of religious identity. Although the 2021 census revealed a historic decline in Christian affiliation, this development does not reflect a disappearance of religion but rather a diversification and personalisation of belief. Drawing on a unique survey of 2,774 adults who self-identified as having experienced a change in their religious belief, this report presents the most detailed picture to date of how, why, and in what direction Britons are moving between faiths, spiritualities, and non-belief.

The largest single movement is away from organised religion. Many respondents left Christianity, usually towards atheism, yet the landscape is far more dynamic than a simple narrative of secularisation suggests. A substantial number shifted into new frameworks, including Islam, Dharmic traditions, and eclectic spiritual identities. Christianity emerges as the most active corridor of movement, undergoing the greatest losses but also attracting a striking number of new or returning adherents. Those who move into Christianity tend to do so not through denominational loyalty but through experiential and personalised belief, often motivated by bereavement, emotional crisis, or encounter with the divine.

Islam shows a modest but clear net gain, driven mostly by conversions from other faiths, most frequently Christianity, and with almost no exits to other faiths. Its appeal lies in its sense of purpose, moral clarity, and ritual discipline. Most conversions to Islam are relatively recent, compared to the timelines of movement into other faiths, and converts in this survey cite contemporary global conflicts and perceptions of injustice as having featured during their faith journey into Islam. Dharmic traditions, particularly Buddhism, also attract converts seeking improved wellbeing.

Alongside these religious movements, spiritual-but-not-religious identities, such as Paganism, Wicca, and broad spiritualism, show noticeable growth. These identities often emerge from disillusionment with doctrine and/or moral conflict with institutional religion. Spiritualism produces particularly strong post-transition wellbeing outcomes and appears durable over time, with low rates of exit. Atheism, meanwhile, represents the single largest endpoint of belief journeys, driven largely by disbelief in God, doctrinal conflict, or intellectual disagreement. While atheism tends to provide cognitive clarity, it rarely brings the emotional, communal, or psychological benefits associated with faith-based transitions; most atheists in the survey reported no significant post-transition wellbeing gains.

Each pathway reflects a different model of how Britons seek meaning, identity, and stability in an age of rapid cultural change. Taken together, the findings reveal that Britain is not secularising in a straightforward way. Instead, the country is undergoing a re-composition of belief, a shift away from inherited institutional structures towards personalised, practice-based, and wellbeing-oriented forms of faith. Religion in contemporary Britain functions less as a set of communal obligations and more as an existential toolkit, an array of resources for healing, clarity, purpose, and identity. Far from fading, faith is being remade according to one's own needs.



## Key findings

### **Islam's growth is outward-facing; Christianity's is inward.**

- 73% of new Christians were already Christian (deepening faith or changing denomination), while Islam (59%), Dharmic traditions (55%), and spirituality (62%) drew converts from other or no faiths.

### **Secularisation is the main destination.**

- The largest single shift is away from organised religion: 39% of participants became atheist.
- Christianity recorded the heaviest outflow, with 44% of all respondents leaving the faith, usually into no faith rather than another religion.

### **Dharmic faiths form a quiet growth lane compared to other faiths.**

- 3% adopted Hinduism, Buddhism, or Sikhism with three in four of these becoming Buddhist.
- Mental health was the top reason cited for conversion (35%), the highest across all traditions.

### **Spiritual-but-not-religious identities are on the rise.**

- Nearly one in ten respondents became spiritual, split between a number of self-identified beliefs, including spiritual (51%), Pagan (40%), and Wiccan (9%).
- The most cited reason for leaving a faith for spiritualism was disillusionment with doctrine (41%) and value clashes (38%).

### **Motivations and outcomes differ sharply by tradition.**

- Bereavement (31%) and mental health (23%) drive most Christian conversions; global conflict (20%) and mental health (18%) were the most often cited life events considered to have marked a respondent's faith change journey into Islam (47% selected "none"); For those adopting Dharmic traditions these were mental health (35%) and conflict (16%); while spiritual converts move away from their faith of origin due to doctrinal conflict (41%).

- Muslim converts are around two-and-a-half times more likely than Christian converts to cite rituals as playing a role in their faith change (27% vs. 11%), highlighting the appeal of structured, embodied practices. Christian converts, by contrast, emphasise a personal connection with God (45% vs. 33% among Muslim converts), making this Christianity's most distinctive draw, alongside community being the highest cited relative to all other faiths (36%).
- Across the majority of faiths, conversion is linked to greater purpose and wellbeing, with spiritual paths producing the strongest gains in emotional health (58%) and outlook (55%). However, those leaving Islam<sup>1</sup> were significantly more likely to report improved emotional health (43%) than those becoming Muslim (29%).

### Summary of survey respondent's faith movements

Faith category	% becoming/ strengthening (n)	% becoming (n)	% strengthening (n)	% leaving / weakening (n)	% leaving (n)	% weakening (n)	Direction of change
Christianity	36% (1,005)	17% (471)	19% (534)	55% (1,531)	44% (1,232)	11% (299)	Net loss
Islam	2% (51)	1% (36)	0.5% (15)	1% (23)	0.8% (22)	0% (1)	Net gain
Dharmic (Hindu/ Buddhist/ Sikh/Jain)	3% (84)	2% (66)	0.6% (18)	1% (19)	0.6% (18)	0% (1)	Net gain
Spiritual (non-religious, eclectic)	8% (215)	7% (198)	0.6% (17)	1% (16)	0.5% (14)	0.1% (2)	Net gain
Atheist/ agnostic	39% (1,080)	38% (1,053)	1% (27)	13% (351)	13% (350)	0% (1)	Net gain

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the sample size for leaving Islam was small (23 respondents).

# Introduction

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The 2021 England and Wales census revealed that only 46.2% of people identified as Christian, down from 59.3% in 2011.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, 37.2% stated they had “no religion,” a 12-point rise from 2011.<sup>3</sup> These figures prompted many observers to suggest Britain was moving rapidly toward a post-Christian, non-religious society. However, this narrow focus on declining Christian affiliation masks a more complex picture. In particular, differing age profiles, birth rates, mortality, and especially migration patterns are driving much of this change. London, for example, remains highly diverse, and over a quarter of its residents now report a religion other than Christian.<sup>4</sup> In short, while the Christian label is falling, religion itself has not simply vanished: it is changing form.

In fact, the census shows vigorous growth in many other faiths and spiritualities. The number of self-identified Muslims jumped from 2.7 million (4.9%) in 2011 to 3.9 million (6.5%) in 2021,<sup>5</sup> and Hindus increased from 818,000 (1.5%) to 1 million (1.7%).<sup>6</sup> Sikhs, Buddhists and other world religions also saw modest gains (e.g. Sikhs now comprise 0.9% of the population).<sup>7</sup> Perhaps most strikingly, smaller faiths have sharply risen in relative terms. For example, Shamanism grew more than tenfold, from just 650 adherents in 2011 to 8,000 in 2021, the largest percentage increase of any group.<sup>8</sup> Paganism (including Wicca and Druidry) numbered about 74,000 people, making it the single largest “other religion” category.<sup>9</sup> Altogether, the 0.6% of respondents who ticked “Other Religion” (348,000 people) included not only Pagans and Shamanists, but also 32,000 identifying as agnostic, 14,000 as atheist and 10,000 as Humanist.<sup>10</sup>

This mixed picture aligns with global demographic projections. The Pew Research Center forecasts that, worldwide, the share of people with no religion will actually shrink, from 16% of the global population in 2010 to about 13% by 2050,<sup>11</sup> because of higher birth rates in many religious communities and ageing among the non-religious. In other words, the “nones” may be

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2 Office for National Statistics, *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021* (Statistical bulletin, 29 November 2022), accessed November 5, 2025, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>

3 Ibid.

4 Office for National Statistics, *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021*

5 Ibid.

6 Office for National Statistics, *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021*

7 Office for National Statistics, *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021*

8 Pat Ashworth, “2021 Census: Christianity now a minority religion in England and Wales,” *Church Times*, 29 November 2022, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/2-december/news/uk/2021-census-christianity-now-a-minority-religion-in-england-and-wales#:~:text=The%20,14%2C000%20Atheists%2C%20and%2010%2C000%20Humanists.>

9 Ibid.

10 Pat Ashworth, “2021 Census: Christianity now a minority religion in England and Wales”

11 Pew Research Center, “*The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050*,” April 2, 2015, accessed November 5, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

growing in absolute numbers (especially in societies with low birth rates) but are declining as a global share.<sup>12</sup>

Many analysts note that the census still shows a majority of Britons identifying with some faith or spiritual tradition. As the Bible Society observed, the census “definitely does not show that we’re living in a society that turned its back on religion.”<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, there have been widespread claims of a rise in conversions to Islam amid the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict,<sup>14</sup> as well as assertions that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a renewed turn to faith.<sup>15</sup>

In short, Britain today is neither uniformly secular nor unambiguously Christian. It is religiously plural, with Christianity no longer dominant and non-affiliation at record highs, but with many other faiths and new spiritualities on the rise. The idea that religion will soon be extinct oversimplifies this complex transition.

This report draws on a survey of adults in the UK that have gone through a faith change, and that asks which religion they were raised in (if any), which (if any) they follow now, when any change occurred, and the factors that influenced their decision to change their religious identity. It also asks about their post conversion outcomes or outcomes post leaving their faith. Using this unique data, we will probe the changing face of faith in Britain by answering questions such as:

- Which religious transitions are most common?
- Where in Britain are faiths resurging or waning?
- Why are people choosing certain faiths and what are different faiths delivering?
- What impact have recent events had? Is there evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic, or international crises like the Israel-Gaza conflict, have driven people toward or away from particular faiths?
- Why do people leave faith?

The report proceeds in eight parts. Chapter one maps the overall scale and direction of religious movement in Britain, setting our survey findings against official census trends to show where belief is weakening, strengthening, or changing form. Chapter two turns to geography, examining how regional patterns - from the stability of Wales and Northern Ireland to the

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12 Ibid.

13 Pat Ashworth, “2021 Census: Christianity now a minority religion in England and Wales”

14 Jessica Roy, “On TikTok, an Unlikely Call to Islam Emerges,” *New Lines Magazine*, December 1, 2023, <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/on-tiktok-an-unlikely-call-to-islam-emerges/>. *New Lines Magazine*: OnePath Network, People converting to Islam because of Palestine? YouTube video, duration 40:39, posted by OnePath Network, December 2, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsGsFB5I7yI>.

15 Miriam Partington and Sebastian Shehadi, “How Coronavirus Is Leading to a Religious Revival,” *The New Statesman*, April 27, 2020, <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2020/04/how-coronavirus-leading-religious-revival>.

dynamism of London and the South East - shape the likelihood and character of faith change. Chapters three through seven then provide detailed profiles of each major pathway identified in the dataset: becoming or leaving Christianity, becoming or leaving Islam, adopting Dharmic traditions, becoming spiritual, and becoming atheist. These chapters analyse timelines of change, influential life events (events considered to have marked their faith journey), first points of contact, demographic patterns, worldviews, and post-conversion outcomes for each group. Finally, Chapter eight draws these strands together, offering a cross-faith comparison that highlights the distinct psychological, social, and moral logics underpinning each pathway of belief transition.

By combining the census-based context above with fresh survey data, we aim to paint the most in-depth and nuanced picture yet of Britain's evolving religious landscape. The aim of this report is to chart these movements and provide a clear, data-driven account of what faith in Britain looks like today, what is being practiced, by whom, and how this is evolving.

## Methodology

Whitestone Insight, a member of the British Polling Council, surveyed 2,774 adults living in the United Kingdom who self-identified as having a change in religious belief online. Polling ran from 24th-27th June and from 9-17th July 2025.

## Sample Design

Participants were categorised into five distinct "faith movement" groups based on a screening question about their religious history:

1. Moved from a faith to atheist/ agnostic.
2. Moved from atheist/ agnostic to a faith.
3. Changed from one religion to another.
4. Raised in a faith, now significantly less religious.
5. Raised in a faith, now significantly more religious.

The following questions were posed to the final pool of participants after the initial screening question. Participants were asked their current and previous faith affiliation, ethnicity, region within which they live, and age.

Questions:

**1) To the best of your knowledge, when did this faith journey take place?**

- a. Within the last year.
- b. 1-2 years ago.
- c. 3-5 years ago.
- d. 6-10 years ago.
- e. More than 10 years ago.
- f. Can't recall/not sure.

**2) Which of the following apply to you? (multiple choice)**

- a. I was raised in a religious household.
- b. I first engaged with religion through school or university.
- c. I first encountered faith through friends.
- d. My first exposure to religion was through public outreach (e.g., faith stalls, street preaching, leaflet distribution).
- e. I primarily engaged with religion through social media or online platforms.
- f. None of the above apply to me.

**3) Please indicate which, if any, of the following apply to you (multiple choice)**

- a. Global events have made me feel the world is increasingly unfair.
- b. I feel personally affected by events such as war, injustice, or disaster.
- c. Faith or belief helps me make sense of suffering and injustice.
- d. I distrust mainstream news sources.
- e. My faith community and/or leaders speak often about global events.
- f. None of these

**4) If you have previously left a faith, which of the following reasons influenced your decisions? (multiple choice)**

- a. Lack of belief in God or the supernatural.
- b. Doubts about key doctrines or teachings.
- c. Conflict between personal values and faith teachings.
- d. Negative experience with faith leaders or members.
- e. Lack of belonging or support in the community.
- f. Intellectual or philosophical disagreements.
- g. Other (please write in).
- h. Not applicable.

**5) If you have adopted a new faith or deem your faith to have considerably strengthened, which of the following factors would you say played a role in this change? (multiple choice)**

- a. Doctrinal teachings or theological coherence.
- b. Religious rituals and practices.
- c. A personal connection of God or the divine.
- d. A sense of meaning, purpose, or moral clarity.
- e. A welcoming community and sense of belonging.
- f. Desire for personal transformation or healing.
- g. Not applicable.

**6) Which if any of the following experiences were part of your faith journey?  
(multiple choice)**

- a. My family or friends opposed my change in belief.
- b. I felt pressured by my family and/or social circle to change my belief.
- c. I felt free and supported in making my decision.
- d. I lost my friends and social circle as a result of my decision.
- e. I felt supported and welcomed by my new religious community.
- f. I converted with another friend/family member.
- g. None of these.

**7) Since adopting your new belief, which, if any, of the following have you experienced? (multiple choice)**

- a. I feel a stronger sense of purpose.
- b. I feel more mentally and emotionally healthy.
- c. I feel part of a supportive community.
- d. I have a more positive outlook on life.
- e. My relationships with others have improved.
- f. I can make sense of the world around me.
- g. I feel a sense of joy.
- h. None of these.

**8) Have any of the following experiences marked your faith journey? (multiple choice)**

- a. Moving house or city.
- b. Changing jobs or careers.
- c. Starting or finishing university.
- d. Bereavement (loss of close family or friends).
- e. Struggles with addiction.
- f. Mental health challenges.
- g. Financial hardship.
- h. Change in gender identity/sexual orientation.
- i. Global events such as war.
- j. None of these.

*NB: There is a 1% margin of error in all statistics provided to account for rounding values to the nearest whole number, and unintelligible response to write in prompts.*

# Chapter one: Overall trends in faith change

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Britain's religious landscape is undergoing a quiet but profound transformation. The story is no longer one of simple decline but of diversification, from organised religion toward personalised meaning systems that combine elements of faith, spirituality, and moral individualism. This chapter maps the overall direction of religious change in contemporary Britain, comparing survey data with the 2021 census to show how the national picture of faith loss, retention, and reinvention is playing out.

Comparing our survey with the 2021 census provides a useful calibration. Both sources register the same directional shifts: Christianity has declined (ONS: -13 percentage points), and 'no religion' has expanded markedly (+12.0 percentage points). Smaller religions such as Islam and Dharmic traditions also show modest upticks in the census, matching our finding of net gains for those faiths.

Christianity continues to contract institutionally yet belief itself is not disappearing; it is becoming more fluid and personalised. This aligns with what Grace Davie calls "*believing without belonging*"<sup>16</sup> and what Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead describe as the *subjective turn* in late modernity,<sup>17</sup> where meaning is sought through individual experience rather than collective authority. In this light, secularisation operates less as a process of erosion than one of recomposition. Formal religious adherence gives way to moral individualism, wellbeing-led spirituality, and post-institutional forms of faith that coexist with, rather than replace, traditional belief. Britain is not becoming less spiritual, it is becoming differently spiritual.

Across Britain, patterns of religious change reveal a dynamic and asymmetric landscape. Out of 2,774 participants who described themselves as having experienced a significant faith change, the data shows movement both within and beyond Christianity, with secularisation emerging as the dominant direction of travel. Of all participants, 39% described shifting into atheism, while 8% moved toward a spiritual but non-religious identity. Meanwhile, 36% reported becoming or deepening their commitment to Christianity, with smaller proportions doing so within Dharmic traditions (3%) or Islam (2%). With respect to leaving a faith, 44% reported leaving or weakening in Christianity, while only 1% reported leaving Islam.

Secularisation remains the main direction, with Christianity serving as the busiest corridor in both directions, exhibiting substantial inflow alongside substantial outflow. This reflects a faith marked by internal dynamism, as individuals switch denominations, deepen commitment, or disengage altogether. Islam, by contrast, shows greater stability, reflecting modest inflow paired with minimal outflow. The gains observed tend to occur through conversions from another faith into Islam, often from Christian backgrounds, while exits remain comparatively few. Dharmic traditions show gradual but steady growth, largely from individuals adopting Buddhism,

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16 Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

17 Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

while the spiritual category reflects an expanding preference for individualised, eclectic, and practice-based forms of meaning-making.

Christianity remains the most popular faith to move into, followed by spiritual and Dharmic traditions. However, it is also the faith with the largest outflow. Meanwhile, the data illustrates that many participants who now identify as Christian do so in non-traditional or self-defined terms. Among those who became Christian, the most common denomination selected was “Other,” surpassing Anglican, Catholic, and Pentecostal categories. Textual responses within this group often referred to a personal connection with Jesus or to Jesus as “light and saviour,” coupled with a conscious distancing from formal denominations. This trend points toward a repatterning of Christian identity, rather than institutional loyalty, where the emphasis lies on direct spiritual experience and a personal relationship with Jesus over institutional belonging.

Among those adopting Dharmic traditions, respondents identified as Sikh, Buddhist, or Hindu, with no participants identifying currently or previously as Jain. Of these, Buddhism accounted for 73% of conversions, followed by Hinduism at 17% and Sikhism at 11%. This tilt towards Buddhism aligns with practice-based and wellbeing-oriented pathways, emphasising meditation, mindfulness, and ethical living rather than institutional affiliation. The findings, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five, suggest that Buddhism’s perceived alignment with mental health, balance, and self-development has positioned it as a gateway for spiritual engagement among those seeking meaning outside of traditional religions.

The 8% of respondents who identified as spiritual reflect a growing constituency of Britons pursuing spirituality in flexible, eclectic forms. Entries included, for example, Wiccan (10%), Pagan (39%), and Christian Spiritualist (2%), indicating a diverse blend of nature-based, esoteric, and individualised practices. Chapter six will demonstrate that this movement represents more than a soft exit from organised religion, it signals a reorientation of the sacred from institutional authority to personal experience and emotional wellbeing, complementing the findings of IIFL’s report on changes in faith amongst the youth that 18–34 year olds are approaching faith for personal wellbeing reasons over doctrine, ritual or social belonging.<sup>18</sup>

Taken together, these findings suggest that Britain’s faith landscape is not simply secularising but transforming. The predominance of “Christian-other”, the rise of spiritual and nature-based practices, and the quiet growth of Buddhism all point to a repatterning of belief rather than straightforward decline. While secularisation remains the main highway, the faith traffic that persists is increasingly individualised, experiential, and practice-based. For many, the organising unit of religion is no longer denomination or doctrine but personal wellbeing, community onboarding, and experiential meaning.

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<sup>18</sup> Rania Mohiuddin-Agir, *The Next Generation of Faith: Journeys, Meaning and Wellbeing* (London: Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life [IIFL], November 2025), <https://iifl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Report-The-Next-Generation-of-Faith.pdf>.

# Chapter two: The geography of faith - regional shifts in belief and belonging

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The geography of faith in Britain is undergoing a period of marked transformation. Patterns of religious affiliation and disaffiliation reveal clear regional variations, suggesting that the dynamics of belief, belonging, and secularisation are deeply influenced by local social, cultural, and demographic factors.

The census underscores how urban and diverse regions such as London and the South East are likely to show accelerated religious change. Although the ONS dataset does not provide change by faith “exit” vs “entry” at the regional level, the sharp decline in Christian identification and rise in non-religion across metropolitan hubs aligns with our survey’s finding that the South East and London exhibit the greatest faith mobility. Conversely, the relative stability of Wales and Northern Ireland, where Christian identity remains higher and non-religion lower, is also mirrored in the census’s regional breakdowns.

## Regions of stability: Wales and Northern Ireland

Among survey participants who reported a change in their religious or belief identity, those from Wales and Northern Ireland were the least represented across all categories, indicating comparatively low levels of movement among respondents from these regions.

Of all those who communicated a conversion into or significant strengthening of their Christian faith, 4% of survey respondents were from Wales and 3% were from Northern Ireland, figures mirrored by low rates of departure (6% and 3%).

Similarly, with respect to Dharmic traditions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism), only 2% of those who moved into these traditions or significantly strengthened them were from Northern Ireland and none were from Wales.

For spiritual but not religious identities, Wales and the North East reported minimal conversion or significant strengthening (5%), while Northern Ireland was again lowest at 1%.

Even in cases of change to atheism, respondents from these regions remained few: 4% from the North East and 3% from Northern Ireland, compared to 7% from Wales and 6% from London.

## Regions of transformation: The South East and London

At the opposite end of the spectrum, respondents from the South East and London exhibit the greatest overall movement in faith identity, both in strengthening and leaving religious traditions.

Among those who said they had converted to or deepened their Christian faith, 17% were from the South East, while the same region also accounted for 15% of those who reported weakening or leaving Christianity.

For Islam, respondents from London and the South East each represented 22% of those who said they had become Muslim or had strengthened their Muslim faith. While the total numbers remain modest, these proportions suggest ongoing vitality and consolidation of Muslim identity among participants from areas already home to large and diverse Muslim populations.

In Dharmic traditions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism), respondents from the West Midlands formed the largest share of those reporting entry into or deepened commitment to these practices (18%), followed by London (13%). With respect to growth in spiritual practices, the East and South West lead with 14%, followed closely by the South East (13%).

Finally, with respect to atheism, the South East held the second-highest rate of movement into atheism (14%), just behind the North West (15%).

Taken together, the data portrays the South East and London as the most dynamic and fluid regions in Britain's faith landscape, where religious commitment, spiritual exploration, and secular identity are all actively negotiated.

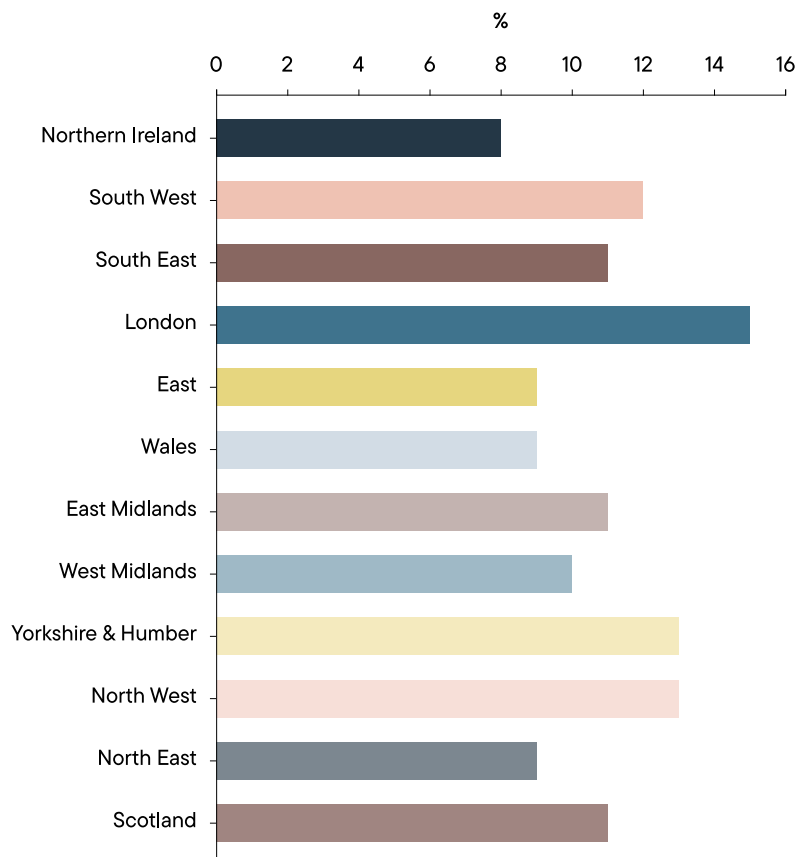
The data reveals that Britain's religious geography is increasingly plural, fluid, and regionally differentiated. The South East and London represent zones of high transformation, marked by both renewal and decline across multiple traditions. By contrast, Wales and Northern Ireland remain centres of continuity and religious stability.

The findings herein complement the findings of the Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life in September 2024 that showed London to be the region of highest levels of religious change and Northern Ireland as the lowest.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Murjan, Amanda. 2024. "Seven months of IIFL's religious attitudes tracker: a review of our findings". Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life. December 17, 2024. <https://iifl.org.uk/blogs/seven-months-of-iiflreligious-attitudes-tracker-a-review-of-our-findings/>.

**I have changed religion at least once in my life [% of respondents surveyed in IIFL's monthly attitudes tracker between May - September 2024 by REGION]**



Faith shifts in London and the South East indicates the interplay of migration and religious diversity. Owing to the fact that this study enquires only after faith change, rather than observing births into faith or families of faith moving to Britain, these changes reflect how areas of greater diversity foster experimentation and transition. By contrast, the relative stability of Wales and Northern Ireland may stem from stronger community continuity and lower population change. Taken together, these findings illustrate a nation in transition, one where religion is neither disappearing nor reviving uniformly, but rather reshaping itself through regional contexts of culture, migration, and identity. This report will now turn to each faith and analyse responses of participants who fall into the categories of either converting into/ significantly strengthening that faith or leaving that faith.

# Chapter three: Becoming Christian and leaving Christianity

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In recent years Britain's Christian landscape has been the subject of intense scrutiny, with commentators divided between narratives of decline and those pointing to moments of revival. On the one hand, studies from institutions such as the Policy Institute at King's College London reveal that the share of Britons identifying as Christian has nearly halved since the 1980s, and belief in God has dropped from three-quarters in 1981 to just under half by 2022.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, recent research suggests a "quiet revival" among younger adults: for example, one report found that monthly church attendance rose by 56% between 2018 and 2024, notably among men aged 18-24.<sup>21</sup> These studies suggest that Christianity is simultaneously contracting in broad cultural affiliation and yet showing signs of renewal through more intense, younger converts or people re-engaging with their faith. Our own survey in May 2024 found that 69% of respondents aged 18-24 believe their faith significantly impacts their lives, compared to 44% of respondents aged 55-64.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, 72% of respondents within the 18-24 year old bracket find faith helps them find purpose in life, in contrast to 47% of respondents aged 65+.<sup>23</sup>

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has added to the discussion on faith growth. Whilst congregation attendance inevitably dropped, belief was said to have increased, and prayer intensified.<sup>24</sup> Against this backdrop, the findings herein on "becoming Christian" and "leaving Christianity" gain sharper resonance.

The predominance of "Christian-other" as a destination, the strong role of personal connection rather than doctrine, and the triggers of bereavement or mental-health crisis align with a broader pattern of individualised, therapeutic faith emerging in an age of institutional decline. At the same time, the generational difference in leaving motivations (younger citing cognitive or moral clashes; older citing experiential disillusionment) mirrors the polarised literature on both Christian decline and revival. The pandemic context further suggests that some of these pathways are shaped by existential shock.

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20 Bobby Duffy, "God, Heaven and Hell, and Life After Death: Data Reveals U.K.'s Low Religious Belief Compared with Other Nations," *King's College London News*, 19 May 2023, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/god-heaven-and-hell-and-life-after-death-data-reveals-uks-low-religious-belief-compared-with-other-nations/>

21 Bible Society, *The Quiet Revival* (Swindon: Bible Society, 2025).

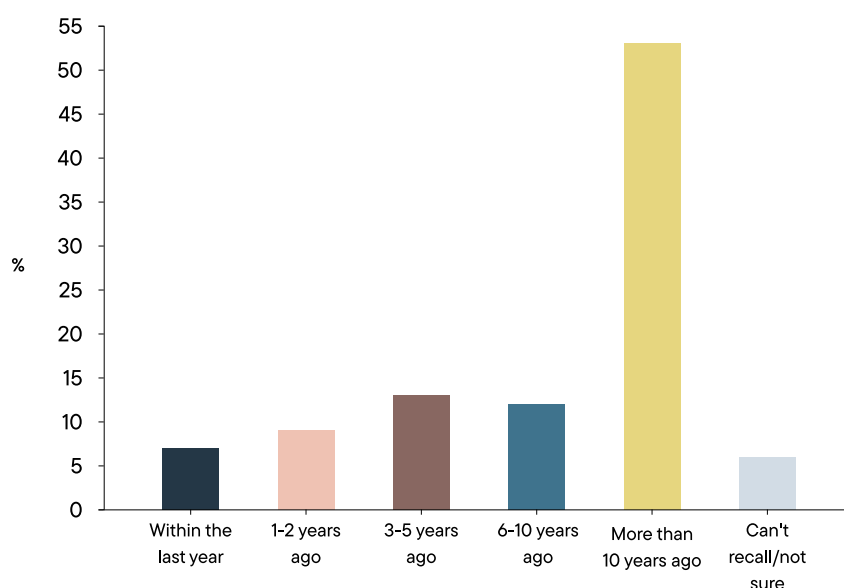
22 Murjan, Amanda. 2024. "Seven months of IIFL's religious attitudes tracker: a review of our findings". Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life. December 17, 2024. <https://iifl.org.uk/blogs/seven-months-of-iiflreligious-attitudes-tracker-a-review-of-our-findings/>.

23 Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL), *Britain's Attitudes to Faith in Public Life – May 2024* (London: IIFL, 15 May 2024), <https://iifl.org.uk/reports/britains-attitudes-to-faith-in-public-life-may-2024/>.

24 Bentzen, Jeanet Sinding. "In crisis, we pray: Religiosity and the COVID-19 pandemic." *Journal of economic behavior & organization* vol. 192 (2021): 541-583. doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2021.10.014

In this study, “becoming Christian” covers new entrants to Christianity as well as those whose existing commitment strengthened enough to count as a change. It is worth noting that Christianity is the largest religious group in the UK, comprising most of our sample, and therefore will demonstrate the greatest movement. Most of those reporting this change say it occurred more than ten years ago (53%). However there is a trickle in recent years, as the graph below shows.

**To the best of your knowledge, when did this faith journey take place? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Christian faith]**



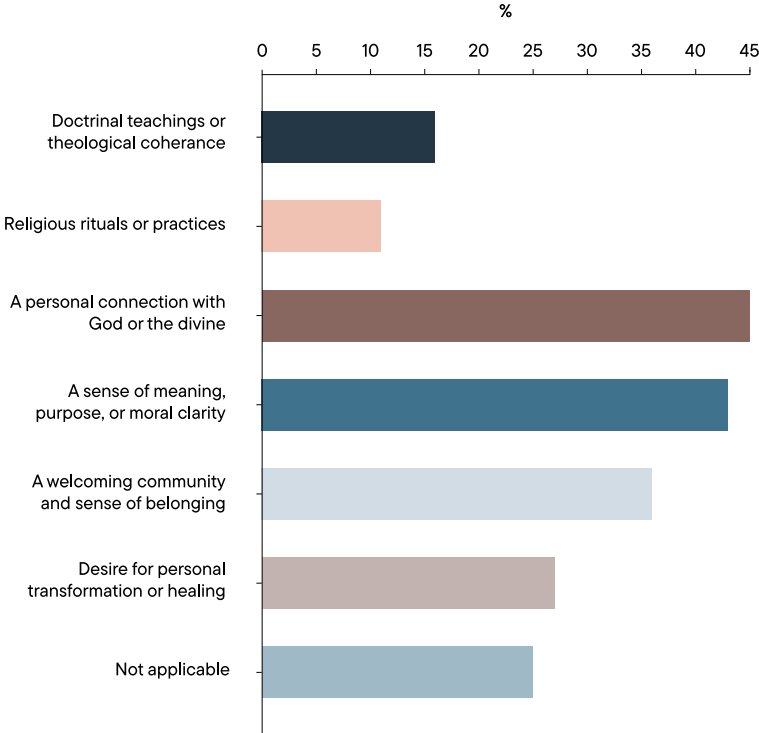
The denominational pattern of Christian conversion in Britain underscores the individualised character of religious change. Among those who became Christian, the most frequently chosen destination was “Christian-other” (42%), surpassing more established traditions such as Catholicism (18%), Anglicanism (33%), or Pentecostalism (8%). Respondents who selected this category often elaborated in text responses, citing personal connections to Jesus over formal denominations, for example, “my faith is complete unending never changing faith in Jesus” and “I had demonic attacks and Christ appeared to me out of a blinding ball of light and saved me!” This suggests that movement within Christianity is often less about particular denominations and more about a personal connection or experience of God. The “Christian-other” designation highlights both the weakening of denominational boundaries and the rise of more fluid, self-directed forms of religious belonging.

Age plays a role in who reports this change, with 25% of all participants under 35 moving into Christianity compared to 41% of those older than 35. However, the difference in how people first encountered faith is marginal: both under-35s and over-35s most often cite being raised in a Christian household as an early point of contact, while social media and public outreach sit at the bottom. This is unsurprising as 73% of those who consider themselves to have changed faith and become Christian have done so through changing denomination or significantly strengthening the faith they were born into, rather than converting into Christianity from no-faith or another faith.

Looking more closely at the impact of gender, the data suggests that gender does not necessarily have a strong influence on an individual’s likelihood of embracing Christianity. 35% of all female respondents in the survey became Christian, or reported a strengthened Christian faith, compared to 38% of all males surveyed.

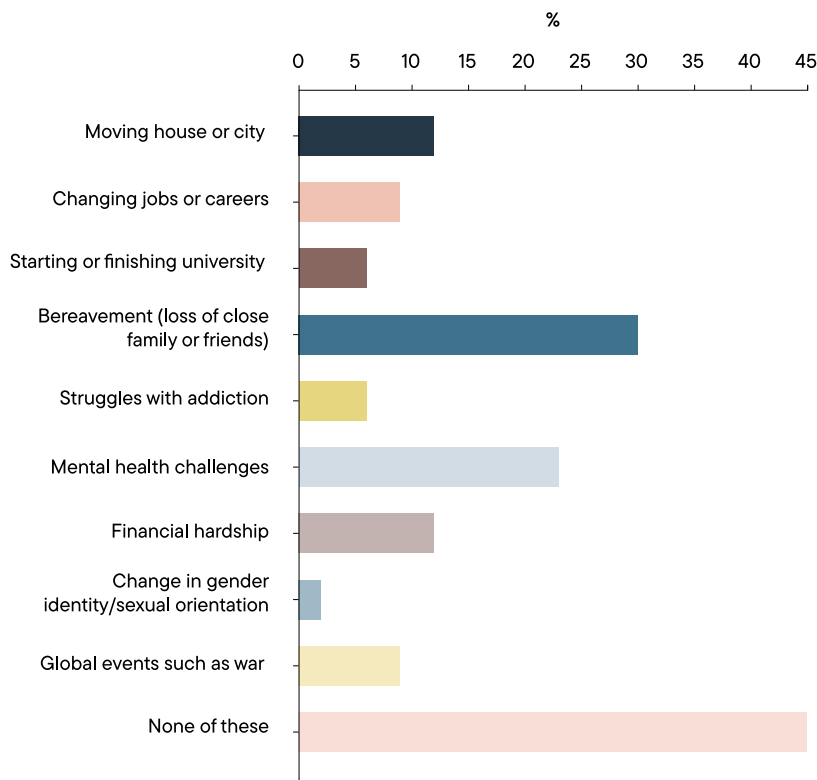
Reasons for becoming Christian included a personal connection with God as the most selected reason (45%), followed by a sense of purpose (43%), a sense of community (36%) and for healing and personal transformation (27%). Rituals and doctrine were the least selected options at 11% and 16% respectively.

**Which of the following factors played a role in your faith change? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Christian faith]**



Life events considered to have marked one’s faith change journey centre around bereavement (30%) and mental-health pressures (23%), with additional triggers including financial challenges (12%), moving home (12%) and global events such as war (9%). 45% selected “none,” indicating many changes emerge from a range of factors rather than a single event.

**Which of the following experiences marked your faith journey? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Christian faith]**



At the decision point, 41% said they felt free and supported in their conversion. After the decision, 36% report feeling supported and welcomed by their new community, and 7% report opposition from family.

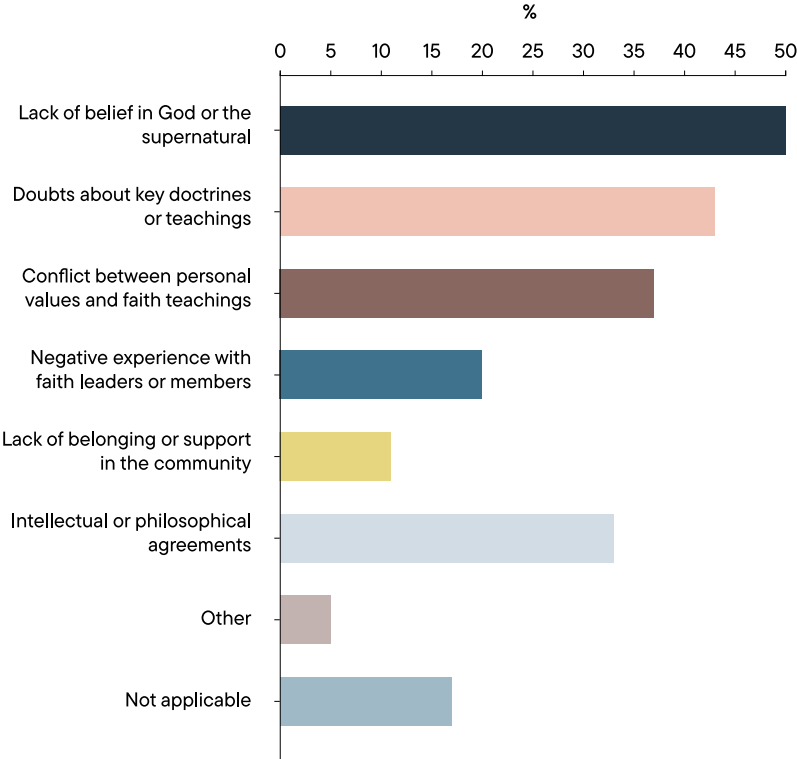
This clarifies how pandemic-era and generational dynamics intersect with these trends. The same mental health and bereavement catalysts that drove many toward Christianity reflect broader societal vulnerabilities amplified during COVID-19, confirming other research that found religious commitment can provide psychological stability in crisis<sup>25</sup>. The recent conversions may reflect seeking faith at a time of external crisis.

For those who selected that they have left Christianity (this includes those who have selected that their faith has sufficiently weakened to be considered a faith change), 67% became atheist/agnostic, 20% experienced weakened faith, 9% adopted a form of spiritualism such as Wicca or Pagan, 3% became Buddhist and just 2% became Muslim.

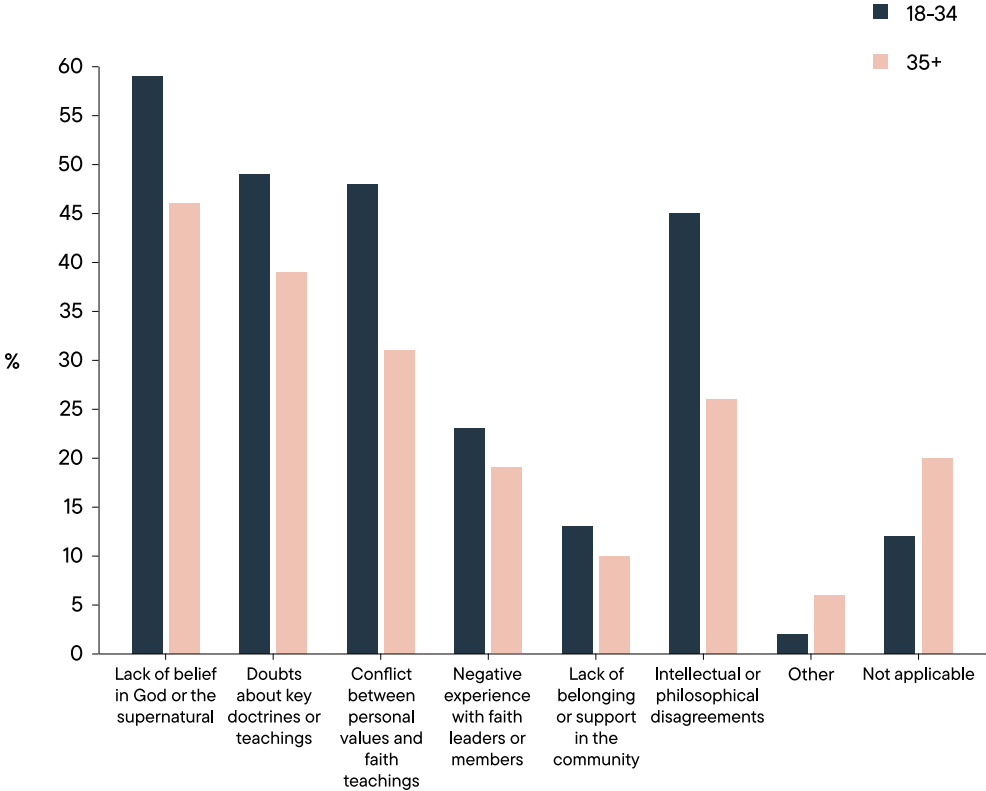
The most cited reason for leaving was a lack of belief in God or the supernatural (50%), followed by doubts about key doctrine or teaching (43%). Clashes with personal values and intellectual and philosophical disagreements were selected similarly at 37% and 33% respectively. Sadly, 20% of respondents selected that a negative experience with faith leaders or the community caused them to leave the faith and 11% selected a lack of support from their faith community.

<sup>25</sup> Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL), *Faith & Happiness: How Religious Belief Shapes Britain's Emotional Well-being* (London: IIFL, July 2025), <https://iifl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Faith-Happiness-How-Religious-Belief-Shapes-Britains-Emotional-Wellbeing.pdf>.

**If you have previously left a faith, which of the following reasons influenced your decisions? [% of respondents who identified themselves as leaving or significantly diminishing their Christian faith]**

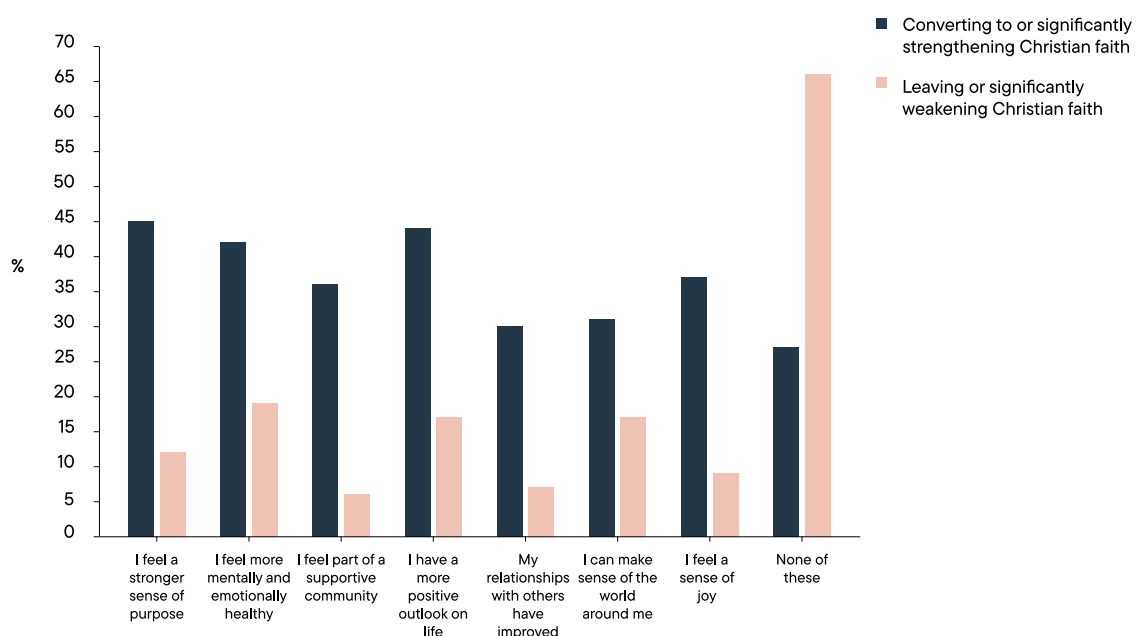


**If you have previously left a faith, which of the following reasons influenced your decisions? [% of respondents who identified themselves as leaving or significantly diminishing their Christian faith by AGE]**



63% of all respondents aged 18-34 were moving away from Christianity, into different faiths, or experiencing weakened faith. A closer look at their reasons for leaving reveals that those under 35 are most likely to leave Christianity due to doctrinal disagreement (39%), followed by value clashes (31%), and intellectual disagreements (26%). Meanwhile, 52% of all respondents older than 35 were moving away from Christianity, with lack of belief (59%), doctrine (49%), and a clash with values (48%) the most important factors in their decision. These results indicate that the younger generation is more strongly driven by cognitive dissonance when it comes to making the decision to leave Christianity - they are 10 percentage points more likely to leave because of doctrine than someone aged over 35. Moreover, the fact that older respondents were most likely to leave due to a lack of belief demonstrates a more relational and emotive attachment to their Christian faith. Overall, the findings reveal that moral and intellectual credibility have become critical factors in sustaining faith engagement, particularly among younger generations.

**Since adopting your new belief, which, if any, of the following have you experienced?  
[% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to/significantly strengthening or leaving/significantly weakening their Christian faith]**



The contrast between those leaving and those entering Christianity reveals a striking reversal in life satisfaction and wellbeing outcomes. Among those who have left the faith, two-thirds report no positive outcomes at all, and measures such as emotional health, sense of purpose, community, and joy remain markedly low; only 12% describe a greater sense of purpose, 19% feel emotionally healthy, and just 9% report stronger community connections. In contrast, post-conversion respondents display a much more positive pattern: 45% report a renewed sense of purpose, 44% a more positive outlook, and over a third describe improvements in emotional

wellbeing, relationships, and community belonging. 31% say they make better sense of the world, and 30% report improved relationships; 27% select “none.” Together, these patterns depict a pathway often rooted in family exposure, activated by personal crisis or long-term search for meaning, and consolidated through community onboarding and pastoral care. Conversion into Christianity appears to provide meaning, coherence, and social integration, whilst leaving the faith often coincides with disorientation and emotional decline.

# Chapter four: Becoming Muslim and leaving Islam

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Recent population data and the scholarly literature converge on two broad facts about Islam in Britain: it is growing in absolute terms, and conversion into Islam, while not the primary source of that growth, remains a pathway for some Britons. The 2021 census recorded a substantive increase in the number and share of Muslims in England and Wales (rising from roughly 4.8% in 2011 to 6.5% in 2021), an increase driven primarily by demographic growth and migration but also encompassing conversion and identity shifts.

More recently, media coverage of the Israel-Gaza war and broader geopolitical events has been implicated in shaping religious identity and political positioning. Reports and monitoring projects have documented how coverage can amplify grievances and spur politicised identifications, while some community bodies and media actors have suggested a rise in expressions of interest in Islam in the wake of the conflict between Israel and Gaza.<sup>26</sup> These claims require careful empirical verification because social media anecdotes and organisational claims vary widely in reliability.

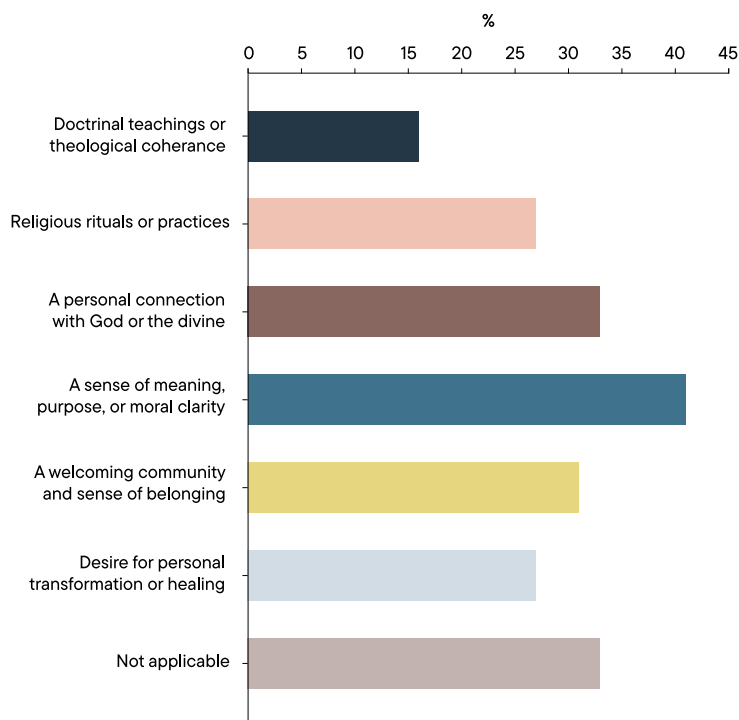
Our survey data demonstrates that a majority of Muslim converts entered Islam from another faith, and within that group, 53% were formerly Christian; intra-Islamic conversion is rare in this sample (three respondents). An early point of contact often lies in being raised in a religious household (37% cite this), whilst the majority of those who became Muslim or significantly strengthened their faith did so more than ten years ago (41%).

Reasons for becoming Muslim included a sense of purpose as the most selected option (41%), whilst not applicable and a personal connection to God were the second most selected options at 33% each. The high selection of 'Not applicable' indicates that the response options may not have fully captured respondents' experiences; for instance, there was no option for influences such as marriage or family ties. A sense of community followed at 31%, then both healing and rituals at 27% with doctrine being selected by only 16% of those who converted to Islam.

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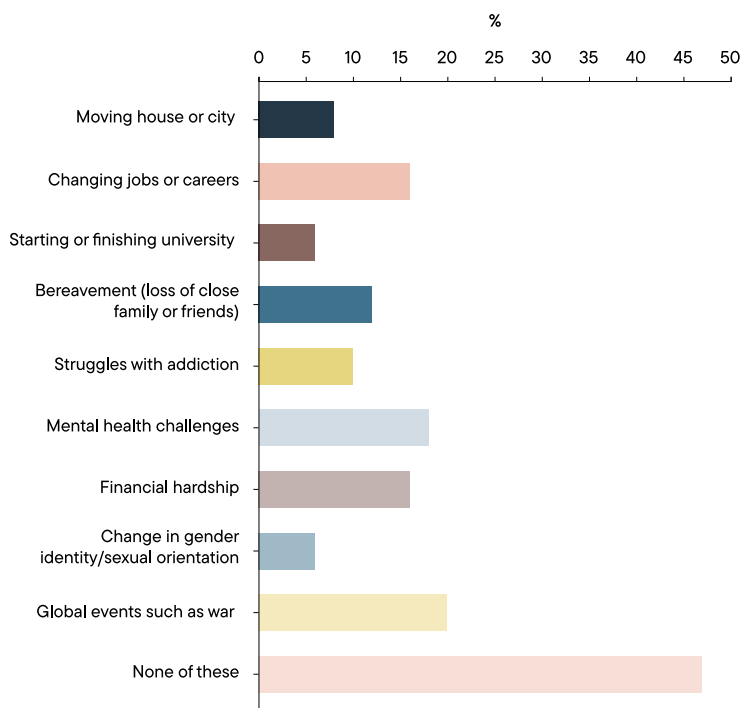
26 Alaina Demopoulos, "Young Americans Are Picking Up the Qur'an 'to Understand the Resilience of Muslim Palestinians'," *The Guardian*, November 20 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/nov/20/palestine-quran-islam-americans-tiktok>; Green Lane Mosque (@greenlanemosque), "Since the Gaza war, the number of conversions to Islam has shot up by 400%, according to the President of European Islamic Organizations...," *Instagram*, April 8, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5glBF4t9JX/>.

**Which of the following factors played a role in your faith change? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Islamic faith]**



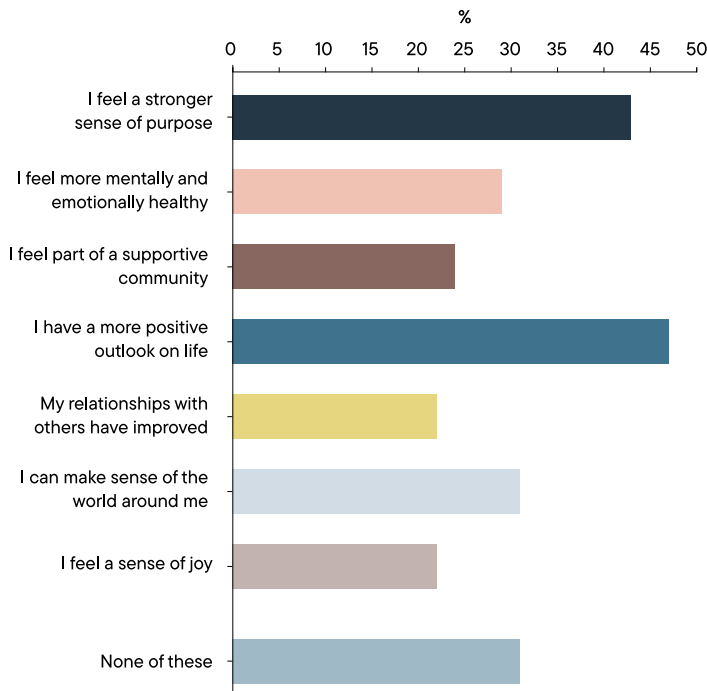
Life events considered to have marked one’s faith change into Islam include a mix of macro and personal stressors: global events such as war (20%) is the most distinctive single factor, followed by mental health (18%), career change (16%), financial challenges (16%), bereavement (12%) and addiction (10%); 47% selected “none.” At the decision point, 39% say they felt free and supported to convert.

**Which of the following experiences marked your faith journey? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Islamic faith]**



Post-conversion outcomes again show strong gains on purpose and outlook: 43% report a greater sense of purpose and 47% a more positive outlook. Additional reported gains include making better sense of the world (31%), feeling more emotionally healthy (29%), a stronger sense of community (24%), improved relationships (22%), and more joy (22%); 27% select “none.”

**Since adopting your new belief, which, if any, of the following have you experienced?  
[% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Islamic faith]**



By contrast, only 23 respondents reported leaving Islam, too small a group to draw firm statistical conclusions, yet their responses still offer insight. Of this group, 70% (16 respondents) cited disagreement with core doctrine as the primary reason for leaving, followed by intellectual or philosophical disagreement (57%, 13 respondents) and clashes with personal or moral values (52%, 12 respondents).

After leaving, 52% (12 respondents) felt they had a better understanding of the world, and 43% (10 respondents) reported feeling more emotionally healthy. Overall wellbeing indicators were generally higher for those leaving Islam than for those entering it, with one notable exception: a sense of purpose, reported by only 22% (5 respondents) of leavers compared with 43% (22 respondents) of converts. This suggests that while leaving Islam may bring cognitive clarity or emotional relief for some, akin to the other faiths observed, it also often entails a loss of existential direction that conversion tends to restore.

For many, Islam's disciplined structure provides moral certainty and belonging in a fragmented social landscape, yet the relatively lower emotional health and sense of community suggest that support systems for converts remain uneven. Moreover those converting to Islam are less seeking of healing and more seeking of purpose, measuring high on perceiving the world to be increasingly unjust<sup>27</sup> and citing global events such as war as a life event that featured during their faith journey. This could add weight to claims that conflicts in the Middle East are a part of some recent converts' journey.

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<sup>27</sup> See cross comparative section for stats on perspectives on the world.

# Chapter five: Adopting Dharmic traditions

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In Britain the past two decades have seen steady, if numerically modest, growth in Dharmic faiths, particularly Buddhism and Hinduism. The 2021 census recorded increases across these traditions: Hindus rose from 1.5% to 1.7% of the population, Buddhists from 0.4% to 0.5%, and Sikhs from 0.8% to 0.9%. While these percentages remain small, the expansion contrasts with Christianity's continued decline and underscores Britain's growing religious pluralism. The highest concentration of Buddhists was found in Rushmoor in Hampshire, home to the Aldershot Buddhist Community Centre, where the census counted 4,732, up from 3,092 a decade prior.<sup>28</sup>

Scholarly and media accounts generally attribute this to a selective Western turn toward Dharmic frameworks, particularly Buddhism and Hindu-inflected mindfulness, as pathways to meaning, wellbeing, and moral coherence in a secular age.<sup>29</sup>

The majority of those who have become Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh converted from another faith (55%), of which Christianity was the most selected option at 52%, followed by 23% selecting no faith or atheism (23%). The majority (43%) converted more than ten years ago, whilst 72% of those who moved into Dharmic traditions moved into Buddhism, followed by Hinduism (17%) and Sikhism (11%).

Those who have adopted a Dharmic tradition or significantly strengthened their belief are most likely to have encountered it in the home (35%) followed by selecting that none of the options apply (29%), then school and social media (14%), friends (12%) and public outreach (1%). Despite the home being the most likely place to encounter the faith, it is markedly lower than for other faiths; for example 46% of those who have adopted Christianity selected encountering the faith first in the home. Social media is relatively high compared with respondents moving into other faiths, for those who have adopted Christianity this is just 3%. The points of contact for those adopting Dharmic traditions are therefore more self-driven and marginally less likely to involve a religious household environment.

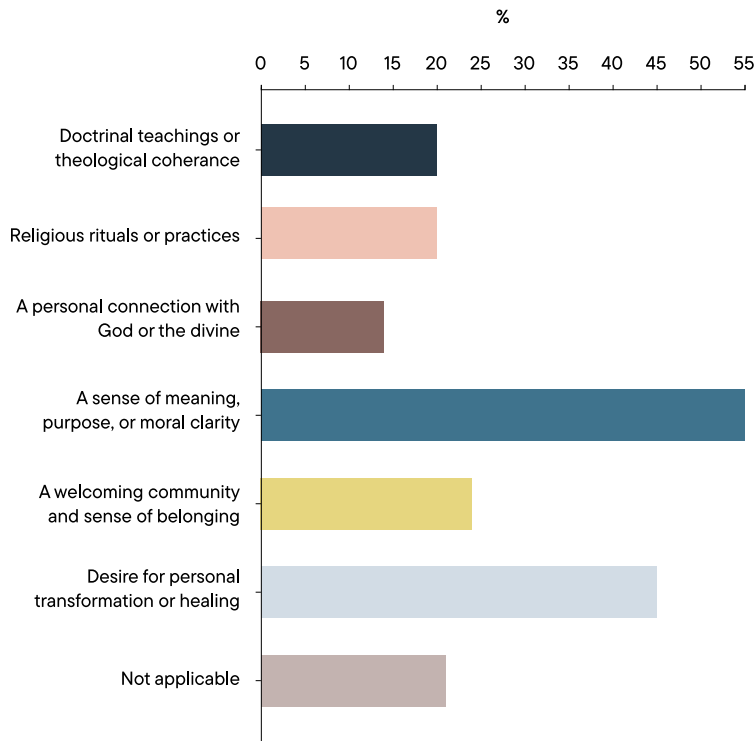
For those entering Dharmic traditions, the primary motivations were a search for purpose (55%) and a desire for personal transformation and healing (45%), with community playing a more modest role (24%). Doctrine and ritual were acknowledged but secondary (20% each), while the least selected motivation was seeking a personal connection with God or the divine (14%).

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28 Robert Booth, Carmen Aguilar García, and Pamela Duncan, "Shamanism, pagans and wiccans: trends from the England and Wales census," *The Guardian*, November 29, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/29/ten-things-weve-learned-from-the-england-and-wales-census>.

29 Aileen Shahab, "Eastern Philosophy Meets Western Mindfulness: Bridging Two Worlds," *Illumination's Mirror*, October 17, 2024, <https://medium.com/illuminations-mirror/eastern-philosophy-meets-western-mindfulness-bridging-two-worlds-6eb11083d982>

**Which of the following factors played a role in your faith change? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Dharmic faith]**

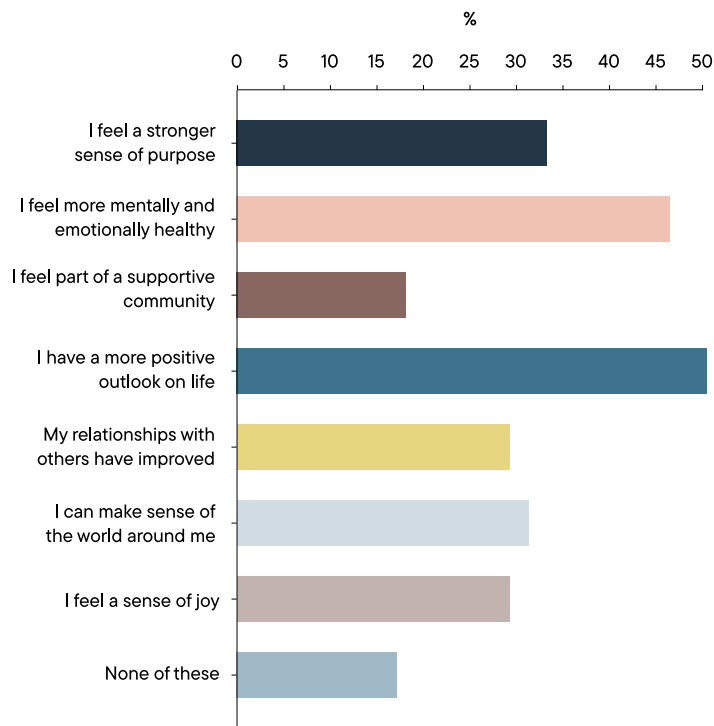


For those who left another faith before adopting a Dharmic tradition, the most commonly cited reasons were doubts about key doctrine or teaching (31%) and conflicts between personal values and faith teachings (29%). This is followed by lack of belief in God or the supernatural (20%) and intellectual or philosophical disagreements (19%). Whilst selected less, negative experience with faith leaders or members is still relatively high at 14%. Most respondents selected that none of these reasons were applicable (40%). High rates of “none of these” perhaps reflects the difficulty in capturing clear reasons for faith exit, by virtue of it being a deeply personal and varied experience.

Post-conversion outcomes point to a distinct pattern of inner balance and existential clarity. The most widely reported gains are emotional health (58%) and positive outlook (55%), followed closely by a renewed sense of purpose (49%). These figures are notably higher than for most other faith-change groups, suggesting that Dharmic frameworks, rooted in mindfulness, cyclical understandings of life, and integrated moral philosophy, may offer a stabilising and psychologically coherent worldview for converts.

Furthermore, 42% say conversion helped them make better sense of the world, and 38% report feeling more joy, while 30% note a stronger sense of community. These outcomes imply that while adoption of a Dharmic belief may begin as an individual spiritual pursuit rather than a communal one, it nonetheless fosters substantial emotional and cognitive integration. Improved relationships (28%) reinforce the impression that conversion into Dharmic traditions delivers both personal and interpersonal dividends, even where institutional belonging is loose.

**Since adopting your new belief, which, if any, of the following have you experienced?  
[% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their Dharmic faith]**



Taken together, this pattern suggests that adopting a Dharmic tradition is less about crisis-driven transformation and more about philosophical alignment, a search for harmony, moral coherence, and mental wellbeing. The relatively high emotional and cognitive wellbeing scores indicate that Dharmic conversions often function as a therapeutic or integrative turn, contrasting with the more externally oriented motivations of those entering Islam (justice, global solidarity and a more structured practice) or the personal-relational recovery seen in Christian converts (bereavement, emotional healing). In this sense, Dharmic adoption appears to represent a form of spiritual rationalism: a calm reconciliation between belief, ethics, and wellbeing.

# Chapter six: Becoming spiritual

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The 2021 census registered a sharp rise in those identifying with “no religion,” yet that does not equate to a decline in all forms of the sacred. Shamanism, for example, has expanded faster than any other spiritual path, with the number of adherents in England and Wales rising from just 650 in 2011 to 8,000 in 2021.<sup>30</sup> More established are Pagans, now numbering 74,000 (up from 57,000 in 2011), and Wiccans, who have increased to 13,000 from 11,800.<sup>31</sup> Concentrated in areas such as Ceredigion, Cornwall, and Somerset, these communities draw on pre-Christian religious traditions, folklore, folk witchcraft, and ritual magic.<sup>32</sup>

Media reports over the past decade document a visible revival of Pagan and Wiccan practices in Britain,<sup>33</sup> particularly among women over 30 and those disillusioned with organised religion but seeking ethical and emotional coherence.<sup>34</sup> Our data adds weight to these observations, capturing a broader movement towards spirituality that is eclectic in form and often rooted in departure from the Abrahamic faiths. Reports of individuals becoming spiritual, or deepening an existing spiritual path, describe not a retreat from meaning but a reorientation toward practices that emphasise healing, balance, and wellbeing.

Women were almost twice as likely to move into spiritual faiths, with 9% of all women surveyed becoming spiritual compared to 5% of all men surveyed. Similarly, 9% of those older than 35 became spiritual compared to 5% of those under 35.

While 27% came from no prior faith, two-thirds originated in another religion, most often Christianity (62%, 133 respondents), and within that group just over half were formerly Anglican. Destinations vary but cluster around identity labels: 51% identified simply as “spiritual,” 40% as Pagan, and 9% as Wiccan.

Spiritual adopters report a sense of purpose (60%), emotional healing (56%), and personal connection (36%) as their dominant motives, with ritual and doctrine chosen by fewer respondents (19% and 9% respectively). This mirrors what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) term “subjective life spirituality,” in which personal wellbeing replaces collective authority as the locus of meaning. Notably, 41% of these respondents left prior faiths due to doctrinal disagreement and 38% due to value clashes.

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30 Office for National Statistics, *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021*

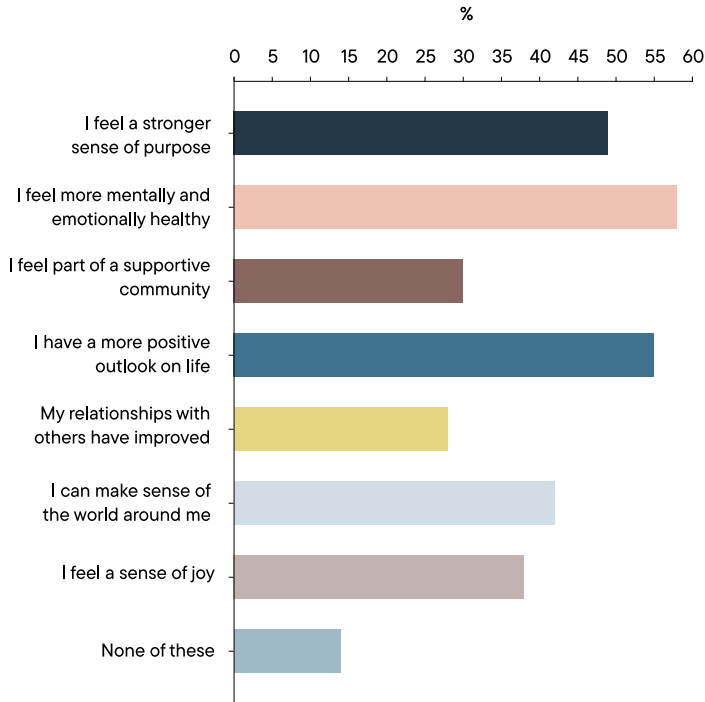
31 Ibid

32 Robert Booth, Carmen Aguilar García, and Pamela Duncan, “Shamanism, Pagans and Wiccans: Trends from the England and Wales Census,” *The Guardian*, November 29 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/29/ten-things-weve-learned-from-the-england-and-wales-census>.

33 Deek Hussain Jama, “Revival of Paganism through Wicca,” *Artefact Magazine*, 20 February 2017, <https://www.artefactmagazine.com/2017/02/20/revival-of-paganism-through-wicca/>

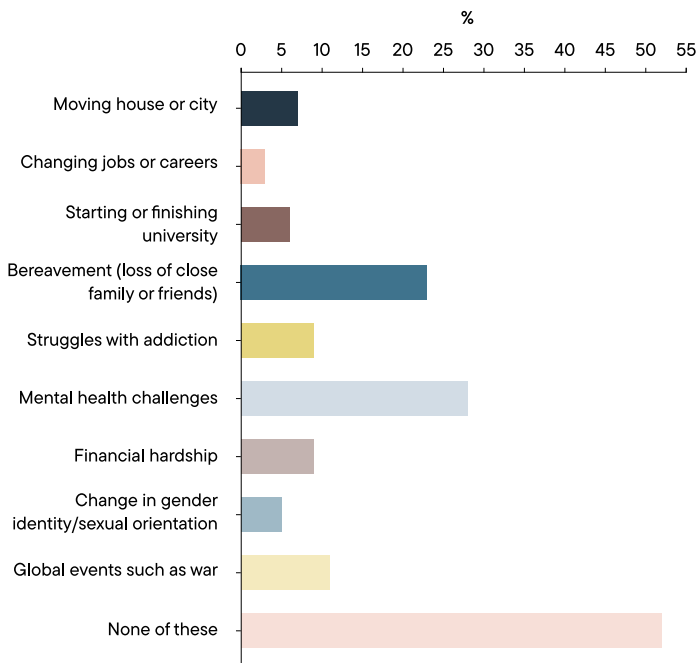
34 Robert Pigott, “Pagans Celebrate Halloween as Part of the Country’s Newest Religion,” *BBC News*, October 30, 2010, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11652512>.

**Since adopting your new belief, which, if any, of the following have you experienced? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their spiritual faith]**



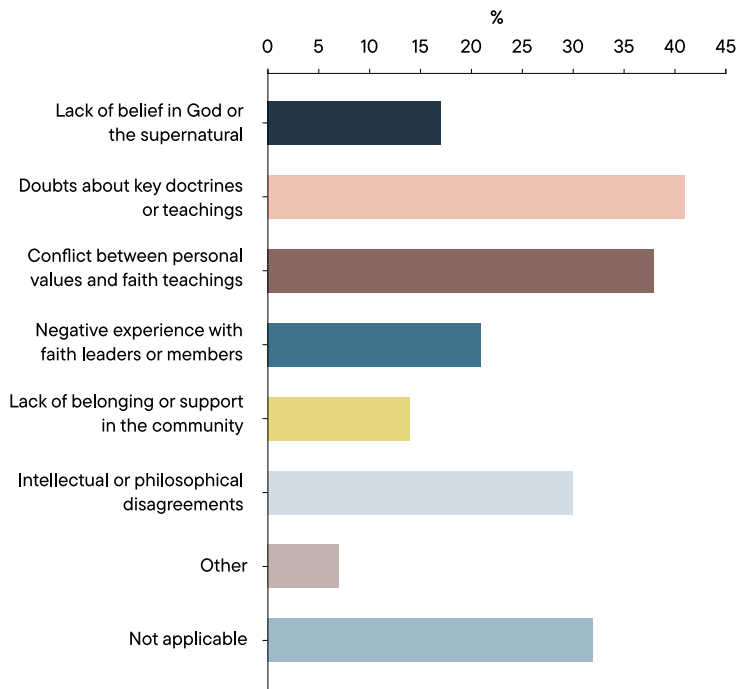
Life events considered to have featured in the journey to becoming spiritual are more diffuse than for those entering formal religions. A majority (52%) report that no single factor marked their journey, though mental health (28%) and bereavement (23%) stand out as common drivers, followed by global events such as war (11%), and addiction and financial challenges (both at 9%).

**Which of the following experiences marked your faith journey? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their spiritual faith]**



Doctrinal concerns (41%) and clashes with personal values (38%) were the strongest reasons cited for leaving their previous religion, supported by reports of intellectual disagreement (30%) and negative experiences (21%).

**If you have previously left a faith, which of the following reasons influenced your decisions? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their spiritual faith]**



Social responses were mixed; 36% felt free and supported in their choice, 24% received community support, 8% experienced family opposition, and 3% lost friends.

Overall, becoming spiritual reflects a pathway largely taken by older women, often exiting Christianity, shaped more by long term disillusionment with doctrine than by acute conversion moments, and reinforced by wider social and global concerns. Its outcomes emphasise healing, purpose, and outlook, with looser community structures than those observed in more institutionalised faith traditions.

Whilst 215 respondents selected becoming spiritual or significantly strengthening their spiritualism, only 16 selected leaving or significantly weakening their spiritualism. Considering spiritualism is a broad category, within which practices often do not have clear communities to belong to or requirements for entry and belonging, the notion of “leaving” is perhaps less tangible than for other more institutionally and/ or communal based faiths. Moreover, the timeline of entry being, for a majority of respondents, more than ten years ago and with such a low exit rate, individualised forms of spiritualism appear to be delivering a sustainable and robust faith practice.

# Chapter seven: Becoming atheist

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Census and survey data confirm that the United Kingdom has undergone one of the most rapid processes of religious disaffiliation in the democratic world. The 2021 census recorded that those reporting “no religion” rose from 25% in 2011 to 37% in 2021, overtaking Christianity for the first time in some regions. This demographic shift echoes findings from the British Social Attitudes Survey and the King’s College London Policy Institute, both of which document declining belief in God and the afterlife, alongside growing moral individualism.<sup>35</sup>

The overwhelming majority of respondents who left religion entirely (94%) were originally Christian, reflecting Christianity’s historical dominance in the British population rather than a uniquely high rate of disaffiliation.

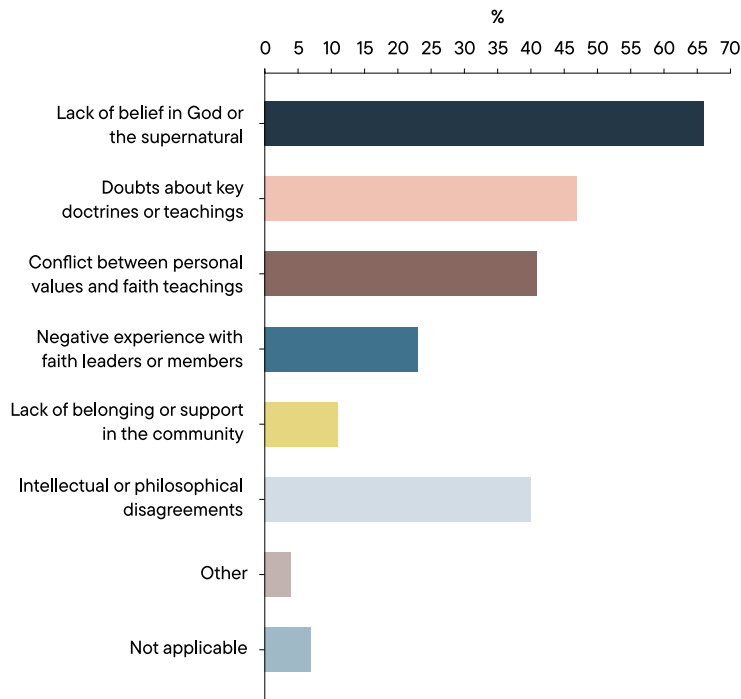
Over half who became atheist (56%) were first introduced to their faith within the family home, underscoring the intergenerational nature of religious transmission. A further 31% encountered religion primarily through school, while exposure through friends (5%), public outreach (1%), or social media (0%) was comparatively rare. These figures suggest that initial religious identity continues to be shaped by traditional socialising institutions such as family and education, even as those same environments produce the majority of those who end up leaving a faith. Interestingly, the juxtaposition of social media interaction leading to zero recorded exits, with over 90% of those who first found faith through social media remaining within it, suggests that online spaces are fostering unusually durable forms of religious commitment or perhaps may reflect that those with a self-driven interest to join a faith are more likely to retain faith than those socialised into it.

Among those who leave religion altogether, atheism most often arises not from hostility toward faith but from a sustained process of intellectual and moral questioning. The leading reason given for becoming atheist was a simple lack of belief in God or the supernatural, cited by two-thirds (66%) of respondents. Nearly half (47%) also identified conflict with doctrine or key teachings, while 40% pointed to broader intellectual/ philosophical disagreement with religious claims. These two factors often overlap, describing a journey in which individuals attempt to reconcile faith with scientific knowledge, and/or philosophical reasoning. Such responses reflect a “cognitive dissonance pathway” to atheism, where belief erodes through engagement and reflection rather than neglect.

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35 Linda Woodhead and Andrew Brown, *Lost Faith? The UK’s Changing Attitudes to Religion* (London: The King’s College London Policy Institute, 2022), <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/lost-faith-the-uk%27s-changing-attitudes-to-religion.pdf>

**If you have previously left a faith, which of the following reasons influenced your decisions? [% of respondents who identified as having become atheist]**



Meanwhile, 41% cited a clash between religion and their personal values, particularly on moral and intellectual questions. This speaks to a growing sense of moral autonomy, where individuals seek to define ethics independently of traditional authority. In this sense, atheism is as much a values-based shift as an intellectual one, rooted in the desire for ethical coherence and personal integrity in a pluralistic world.

Smaller but significant proportions mentioned negative experiences with faith leaders and/or the faith community (23%) and lack of support (11%), underscoring how institutional culture also impacts disaffiliation.

Younger adults are consistently more likely than those over the age of 35 to cite doctrinal conflict (53% vs 43%), clashes with values (50% vs 34%), and intellectual disagreement (49% vs 34%) as reasons for becoming an atheist. Their atheism appears rooted in a combination of moral and rational critique - a conviction that religious teachings conflict with modern ethical norms or fail logical scrutiny. In this younger cohort, disbelief often reflects an assertion of moral independence and cognitive autonomy, aligning with broader generational trends toward self-definition and critical inquiry. It is also worth noting that 67% of participants aged between 18-24 made the decision to become atheist more than 6 years ago - indicating that they left faith before reaching adulthood. This leaves room for wider discussions on the appeal of atheism, or the lack thereof, for faith amongst younger generations.

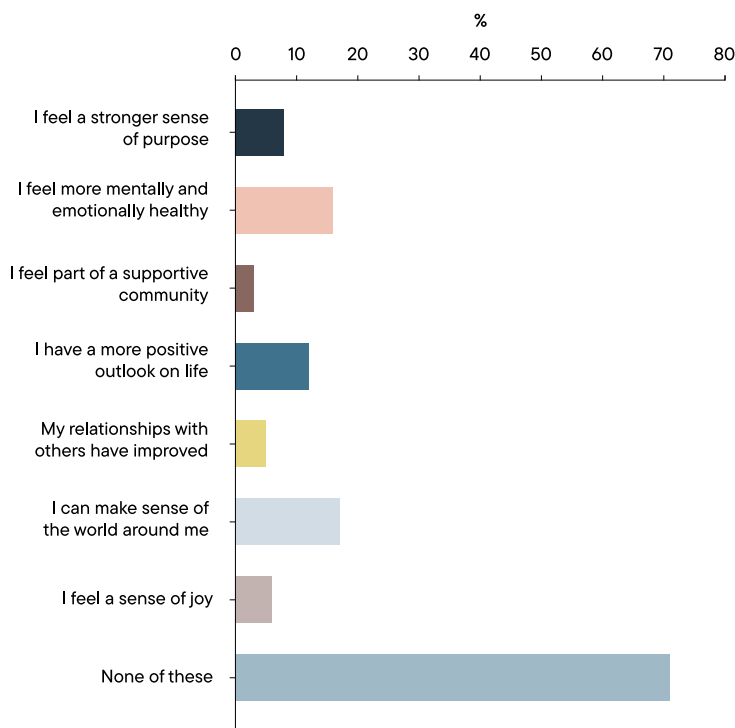
Older adults, by contrast, are somewhat more likely to point to negative experiences with faith leaders and/or the faith community (22%), 'other' reasons (6%), and a higher rate of non-response (8%), suggesting a more experiential and relational departure from faith. For

this group, atheism often arises through disenchantment, disappointment with religious institutions, personal hurt, or gradual erosion of trust, rather than philosophical rejection.

Compared with those who move into faith, individuals who become atheist report far fewer positive outcomes following their transition. More than seven in ten (71%) said they experienced no significant benefits after leaving religion. For atheists, the shift appears to deliver intellectual resolution rather than emotional renewal. It marks an endpoint of belief, not the beginning of a new narrative of purpose or belonging.

The most commonly cited positive outcomes among atheists were a greater ability to make sense of the world (17%) and feeling emotionally healthier (16%), both notably lower than the equivalent figures for Christian converts (30% and 37% respectively). This gap suggests that while atheism can bring clarity and relief from cognitive dissonance, it less frequently provides the sustained wellbeing or life-affirming emotional framework associated with faith. Similarly modest proportions described developing a positive outlook (12%), a sense of purpose (8%), or feelings of joy (6%), again markedly below faith-based conversion outcomes. Indicators tied to social integration were especially low: just 3% reported gaining a sense of community, and 5% said their relationships improved.

**Since adopting your new belief, which, if any, of the following have you experienced?  
[% of respondents who identified as becoming atheist]**



While atheism satisfies cognitive consistency, it offers limited frameworks for wellbeing and belonging. This presents a sociocultural challenge: as more Britons detach belief from community, the task of meaning-making shifts from churches and mosques to civic and cultural spheres. The question for secular societies is not whether faith declines, but what replaces its integrative functions.

Overall, the data portrays atheism as a multifaceted and reflective process. It is shaped by a convergence of disbelief, doctrinal tension, moral independence, and, for some, institutional disappointment. Faith is not simply being abandoned; it is being reasoned away - replaced by a worldview that prizes intellectual consistency and moral self-determination.

# Chapter eight: Becoming Christian, becoming Muslim and adopting Dharmic traditions cross-comparison

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This chapter brings together the key findings from the preceding faith-change profiles (Christianity, Islam, Dharmic traditions, spiritual but not religious, atheism) to examine how reasons for conversion and disaffiliation, timelines, socialisation contexts, and post-change outcomes compare.

It is important to consider that relative population sizes and the degree to which religious beliefs and practices are culturally ingrained will influence movement into and out of religious groups.

## Directions of movement

Patterns of conversion into Christianity and Islam in Britain reveal strikingly different dynamics. Among those identifying as Christian converts, the overwhelming majority, 73%, did not cross religious boundaries but instead moved between denominations or deepened their commitment within their existing tradition. Conversion in this context is therefore largely intra-faith, reflecting shifts in theological emphasis, community belonging, or personal devotion, but rarely a departure from the Christian framework itself. Only 22% of Christian converts came from another religion altogether, underscoring the relative insularity of Christian conversion in Britain. The evidence suggests that Christianity's growth through conversion in the UK is predominantly a matter of intra-Christian realignment rather than inter-religious flow.

The pattern is almost inverted when examining conversion to Islam. A clear majority, 59%, entered Islam from another faith, with Christianity as the most significant point of origin. Only three respondents in the dataset moved between sects within Islam, underlining how rare intra-Islamic conversion is for these survey participants. The flow into Islam, then, is overwhelmingly a matter of moving from other religions rather than denominational movement within. Most strikingly, 53% of Muslim converts were formerly Christian, whereas fewer than one percent of Christian converts were formerly Muslim.

Similar to becoming Muslim, most people adopting a Dharmic tradition switched in from another religion (55%). A further 23% came from no religion/ atheism, and 22% were people whose existing Dharmic faith deepened enough that they counted it as a change. Similarly, most converted from Christianity (52%), whilst only four of the 982 (0.4%) that became Christian converted from Dharmic traditions.

Most of those becoming spiritual left Christianity (62%) or identified with no prior religion (27%).

This asymmetry highlights the directionality of religious movement in Britain. Whereas Christianity is not significantly replenished by ex-Muslims or former Hindus, Sikhs or Buddhists, Dharmic traditions, spirituality and Islam attract a steady inflow from Christian backgrounds. The movement is not reciprocal: conversion from Islam, spirituality or Dharmic traditions into Christianity is exceptionally rare, while conversion from Christianity into Islam, spirituality or Dharmic traditions is comparatively common. The data suggests that Christianity functions as a largely stable field within which believers move between sects, while Islam, spirituality and Dharmic traditions represent a more porous frontier, drawing in new adherents from outside, and most notably from Christianity. The imbalance underscores the appeal of non-Christian faiths potentially as a counter-cultural or alternative identity, wherein Christianity is the default cultural backdrop.

Owing to the fact that those who became Christian were most likely to have changed denomination within their faith, the reason given for leaving a previous faith is mostly that no response was applicable (74%). As for becoming Muslim, 24% selected doubts about key doctrine or teaching, suggesting those leaving another faith (53% of which selected that this was Christianity) and entering Islam, are most likely to be doing so for its particular presentation of God and its guidance on how to understand and approach the world.

## Conversion timelines

Across all groups, the timing of faith and worldview change shows a clear generational and cultural split. Conversions to Christianity are largely long-established: 53% of respondents converted more than ten years ago, with smaller shares in more recent years (just 7% within the past year and 9% one to two years ago). Similarly, those who describe themselves as spiritual rather than religious also tend to have entered that category some time ago, with 57% of those who converted into spiritualism having done so more than ten years ago. By contrast, conversion to Islam shows a much more even spread over time, with over half (59%) occurring within the last ten years, suggesting more recent movement toward Islam compared to Christianity or spirituality.

Meanwhile, becoming atheist stands apart both in timing and scale. Three-quarters (75%) of atheists say they adopted this worldview more than ten years ago, and only 1–2% describe having done so within the past two years. This points to atheism being a more settled or earlier wave of secularisation, perhaps reflecting earlier phases of cultural and institutional change in the UK.

Taken together, the data suggests that while the decline in belief (atheism) and the shift toward personalised spirituality largely stabilised more than a decade ago, conversions to Islam and, to a lesser extent, renewed Christian affiliation represent the more current forms of faith change. These newer conversions may be driven by the search for clarity, community, and identity in a fragmented moral landscape, while earlier secularisation trends captured a move away from institutional religion altogether.

The timing of conversions into Islam, combined with the featuring of global events such as war in their faith change journey, and their sense that the world is becoming increasingly unfair, indicates

that media suggestions linking interest in Islam to global conflicts involving Muslim communities may hold some weight. Meanwhile, the small recent trickle into Christianity, together with bereavement being one of the most commonly cited life events that marked their faith change, indicates that some may have sought Christianity in the wake of COVID-19–related loss.

## Significant life events associated with faith change journey

As for life events considered to have marked one's faith journey, conversions into Christianity remain closely linked to personal loss and emotional crisis. Bereavement (30%) and mental health struggles (23%) dominate, reinforcing the idea that Christian renewal often arises at points of existential rupture. This pattern echoes Rambo's (1993) model of conversion as crisis resolution,<sup>36</sup> and parallels post-pandemic findings suggesting renewed interest in Christian practice in the West following loss and uncertainty.<sup>37</sup>

Conversion to Islam, by contrast, exhibits a more external and moral orientation. The most distinctive single external life factor marking their faith change are global events such as war (20%), a figure unmatched in any other group, followed by financial and career pressures (16% each). This pattern may support media reports throughout late 2023 and 2024 identifying a visible increase in conversions to Islam following the most recent Israel- Gaza war.<sup>38</sup> The high proportion of younger converts who describe the world as "increasingly unfair" and express media scepticism may further corroborate a more morality and justice centred turn toward Islam.

Dharmic conversion follows a more therapeutic and integrative pattern. Mental health struggles are the leading catalyst (36%), far higher than in any other group, followed by bereavement and financial challenges (17% each). The balanced spread of other life events - career change (14%), global events such as war (15%), and moving house (12%), suggests a reflective orientation: the Dharmic path attracts those seeking philosophical coherence and emotional regulation rather than resolution to sudden crises.

Those becoming spiritual show the most diffuse and non-event driven profile. Over half (52%) select no single life event that marked their faith change journey, but among the remainder, mental health (28%) and bereavement (23%) again are seen as the most selected, followed by

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36 Kahn, Peter & Greene, A.L.. (2004). "Seeing Conversion Whole": Testing a Model of Religious Conversion. *Pastoral Psychology*. 52. 233-258. 10.1023/B:PASP.0000010025.25082.25.

37 Pew Research Center, "More Americans Than People in Other Advanced Economies Say COVID-19 Has Strengthened Religious Faith", Report (January 27, 2021), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/01/27/more-americans-than-people-in-other-advanced-economies-say-covid-19-has-strengthened-religious-faith/>

38 Alaina Demopoulos, "Young Americans Are Picking Up the Qur'an 'to Understand the Resilience of Muslim Palestinians'," *The Guardian*, November 20 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/nov/20/palestine-quran-islam-americans-tiktok>; Green Lane Mosque (@greenlanemosque), "Since the Gaza war, the number of conversions to Islam has shot up by 400%, according to the President of European Islamic Organizations...," *Instagram*, April 8, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5glBF4t9JX/>.

modest references to global events such as war (11%), addiction (9%), and financial challenges (9%). This diffuse distribution underscores that the “spiritual turn” is less a reactive event than a long-term process of personal realignment. Spiritual adopters are less likely to identify external or institutional triggers and more likely to frame change as a cumulative journey toward wellbeing and authenticity.

In sum, when it came to identifying life experiences associated with conversion, Christians were most grief-driven (bereavement at 31%) and Muslims cited concerns over global events such as war at 20%. Those becoming spiritual leaned heavily on long-term disillusionment with doctrine and personal value clashes as reasons for leaving their previous faith (41% and 38% respectively), and with bereavement (23%) and mental health (28%) as events associated with their faith journey. A majority (52%) selected “none,” underscoring that this path is less often sparked by a single crisis and more often by protracted disengagement from organised religion. The emphasis on doctrinal conflict sets spirituality apart from all other traditions studied: the move is less about adopting a new normative structure and more about escaping one.

Across all traditions, three distinct logics of conversion emerge. Christianity and spirituality represent inward and therapeutic conversions, rooted in emotional restoration and personal meaning-making. Islam draws moral-political conversion, a response to injustice and global disorder that transforms suffering into solidarity, alongside the draw of purpose and ritual. Dharmic conversion occupies an integrative middle ground: less about crisis than about synthesis - an attempt to align emotional, philosophical, and ethical life.

**Which of the following experiences marked your faith journey? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their faith by FAITH]**

Life event associated with faith change journey	Becoming Christian	Becoming Muslim	Adopting Dharmic traditions	Becoming spiritual
Bereavement (loss of close family or friends)	30%	12%	17%	23%
Mental health challenges	23%	18%	36%	28%
Global events such as war	9%	20%	15%	11%
Financial hardship	12%	16%	17%	9%
Changing jobs or careers	9%	16%	14%	3%
Moving house or city	12%	8%	12%	7%
Starting or finishing university	6%	6%	10%	6%
Struggles with addiction	6%	10%	11%	9%
Change in gender identity/sexual orientation	2%	6%	5%	5%
None of these	45%	47%	43%	52%

## Reasons for conversion

For both Muslim and Christian converts, the underlying motivations are broadly shared. Similar proportions cite doctrine, a search for meaning, community, and healing as reasons for adopting a faith. The more striking differences lie in the *mode* through which faith is encountered and sustained. Those who became Muslim are around two-and-a-half times as likely as Christian converts to select rituals as a reason (27% versus 11%), pointing to the appeal of structured, embodied practices - daily prayer, fasting, and other observances. By contrast, Christian converts most commonly identified a personal connection with God (45% versus 33% among Muslim converts), emphasizing a more relational and experiential entry point into faith. Indeed, personal connection with God is the distinctive draw for Christianity (45%), the highest across faiths. Christianity also leads on community (36%), suggesting a relational/communal-consolation pathway into faith.

Notably, a sense of purpose is the most frequently selected reason among Muslim converts, suggesting that Islam's clear normative framework and regular practices are experienced as providing direction and coherence to daily life. Yet rituals rank highest when compared with reasons cited for coming into the other faiths (27%). Taken together, these results imply that while both traditions meet similar needs for truth, meaning, community, and repair, they tend to do so through different methods; Islam through disciplined practice and structure, Christianity through personal encounter with God. It also suggests that people are seeking Christianity in the face of mental health decline and personal crisis and are viewing it as a place of healing, whereas this is less prevalent for those becoming Muslim.

Dharmic traditions emphasise meaning and restoration, with a large number of converts citing a sense of purpose (55%) and healing/personal transformation (45%) as reasons for their conversion. Community is lower (24%), pointing to a more individually oriented search, with moderate roles for doctrine (20%) and ritual (20%). Spiritual paths are the most therapeutically focused, with sense of purpose (60%) and healing (56%) being the highest across all the faith groups. Doctrine is lowest here (9%) and community is modest (26%), consistent with eclectic, self-directed practice.

**Which of the following factors played a role in your faith change? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their faith by FAITH]**

Reason for conversion or significant strengthening of faith	Christianity	Islam	Dharmic	Spiritual
A personal connection of God or the divine	45%	33%	14%	36%
A sense of meaning, purpose, or moral clarity	43%	41%	55%	60%
Desire for personal transformation or healing	27%	27%	45%	56%
A welcoming community and sense of belonging	36%	31%	24%	26%
Doctrinal teachings or theological coherence	16%	16%	20%	9%
Religious rituals and practices	11%	27%	20%	19%

In sum, across Britain’s contemporary faith landscape three distinct conversion archetypes emerge. Christianity embodies a pastoral-healing model, and relationship with God, centred on crisis, recovery, and relational faith. Islam represents a normative-structural model, offering discipline, moral clarity, and purpose in a world considered unjust and where the media is not to be trusted. Dharmic and spiritual pathways reflect a therapeutic-individualist model. Religion, in this new configuration, functions less as institutional inheritance and more as existential technology: a framework for healing, for order, or for relationships, and what you choose depends on your views on the world, your personal experiences and grievances and what you seek.

## World views and its intersection with conversion

Perceptions of global unfairness and faith’s role in making sense of suffering show modest but telling differences between groups. Among those who have become Christian, 43% say recent global events make the world feel increasingly unfair and 47% report that their faith helps them make sense of suffering. Among Muslim converts, the share who see the world as increasingly unfair is higher at 51%, while a similar proportion (45%) say their Islamic faith helps them understand suffering.

Faith comprehension of suffering is markedly less pivotal for those adopting or significantly strengthening a Dharmic tradition (29%), despite the Buddha’s teachings being centred on suffering.<sup>39</sup> It may be that a Western approach to Dharmic traditions, and Buddhism in particular, is less engaged with the core teachings and is more experiential. Indeed, academic

39 “Life and Teachings of the Buddha – Edexcel: The Four Noble Truths in Detail,” *BBC Bitesize*, accessed November 11, 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zd8bcj6/revision/7>.

research since the 2010s highlights that most Western converts to Dharmic traditions are drawn less by ritual or theology than by practice-oriented engagement, meditation, yoga, or ethical living, and by perceptions of philosophical rationalism and psychological balance.<sup>40</sup>

For those becoming spiritual, perceptions of global unfairness are even more pronounced (55%), yet just over a third (34%) describe their spirituality as helping them to make sense of suffering, underscoring that this pathway is less about doctrinal interpretation of pain and more about personal coping.

On media scepticism, Muslims again score highest (47%), with Dharmic (34%) and Christian (33%) respondents much closer to each other. Hearing faith leaders regularly discuss global events is far less common among Dharmic respondents (11%) than among Christians (27%) or Muslims (25%). For those becoming spiritual, only 6% say their faith leaders discuss global events, reflecting the absence of structured leadership and highlighting how spirituality functions outside institutional frameworks.

**Which of the following apply to you? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their faith by FAITH]**

Worldview indicator	Christianity	Islam	Dharmic	Spiritual
Global events have made me feel the world is increasingly unfair	42%	51%	46%	55%
I feel personally affected by events such as war, injustice, or disaster	30%	43%	34%	34%
Faith or belief helps me make sense of suffering and injustice	47%	45%	29%	42%
My faith community and/or leaders speak often about global events	27%	25%	11%	10%
I distrust mainstream news sources	33%	47%	34%	50%
None of these	15%	8%	–	–

Age introduces a clear asymmetry. For Christian converts, views on these global issues are broadly stable across age groups, where 42% of Christian converts older than 35 and 43% of those younger than 35 believe ‘global events have made them feel the world is increasingly unfair’. For Muslim converts, however, under-35s are 19% more likely to say global events have made them feel the world is increasingly unfair and 9% more likely to distrust the media than older Muslim converts. This generational pattern is mirrored in religious communication: younger Muslim converts are much more likely to report that their faith leaders regularly

40 Michael Jerryson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta, *Religion and Society in the 21st Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

discuss global events (38%) than older Muslims (17%) and also more than Christian converts under the age of 35 (28%).

In sum, Christian and Muslim converts are similarly likely to draw on faith to interpret suffering, but Muslims register the strongest sense that the world is increasingly unfair and the highest distrust in mainstream news, suggesting a justice-oriented lens shaped by contemporary geopolitics. Dharmic adopters report the lowest reliance on faith to explain suffering and the least leadership commentary on global affairs, reflecting a predominantly practice-centred, therapeutic engagement rather than doctrinal interpretation. Spiritual paths combine the sharpest perception of global inequality with minimal institutional guidance, pointing to an individualised coping strategy more than a communal worldview.

Age accentuates these differences. While Christian views are steady across age groups, younger Muslim converts are markedly more attuned to injustice, more sceptical of media, and more likely to hear global commentary from faith leaders than their older counterparts. The net effect is a generationally asymmetric landscape in which meaning-making, authority, and trust in the media cluster differently by tradition.

## Post conversion outcomes

Perceived freedom at the moment of conversion looks broadly similar across the two groups: 42% of those who became Christian and 39% of those who became Muslim say they felt free and supported to make the decision. The paths diverge after the decision. A larger share of Christian converts report feeling supported and welcomed by their new faith community (34% versus 25% among Muslim converts), suggesting that Christian settings may have more “on-ramps” for newcomers, which is visible through structured classes such as The Alpha course,<sup>41</sup> small groups, and consistent follow-up like the appointment of mentors, that translate intention into belonging. By contrast, those entering Islam are more likely to encounter friction in their immediate social world: 14% of Muslim converts report family opposition, compared with just 6% of Christian converts. With respect to a conversion or significant strengthening of spiritualism, acceptance and support from friends and family is comparatively high: 36% felt free and supported in their choice, 8% experienced family opposition, and 3% lost friends.

Extending that picture into post-conversion outcomes, the data reveals striking differences in how conversion or renewed faith engagement affects wellbeing across traditions. Those entering or strengthening spiritual or Dharmic paths report the most consistent and wide-ranging positive outcomes. A strong sense of purpose (60% and 49% respectively), improved outlook on life (both around 55%), and enhanced emotional health (58%) indicate that these traditions are functioning as holistic frameworks for meaning and personal restoration. The low share reporting no benefits (14%) further suggests that such forms of spirituality deliver tangible emotional and psychological rewards.

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<sup>41</sup> *Alpha*, accessed November 24, 2025, <https://alpha.org.uk>.

Christian converts also experience notable gains, though these are more evenly spread and somewhat less pronounced. Forty-five percent describe a stronger sense of purpose and 44% a more positive outlook, while 42% report improved emotional health.

Muslim converts display a different pattern. Levels of purpose (43%) and optimism (47%) are relatively high, suggesting that Islam provides structure and clarity of belief that help adherents make sense of life. However, emotional health (29%), community connection (24%), and joy (22%) lag significantly behind, indicating that while Islam offers moral grounding, its benefits may be more cognitive than affective.

By contrast, atheism stands apart. Those who have left religion report minimal improvements across all wellbeing measures - only 8% cite a heightened sense of purpose, 12% a more positive outlook, and 16% improved emotional health. Just 3% feel greater community connection and 6% experience more joy, while an overwhelming 71% report no discernible benefit at all. This suggests that secularisation alone rarely produces the psychological or emotional fulfilment that converts in other traditions describe.

Overall, the data highlights a gradient of wellbeing that runs from the therapeutic and experiential (spiritual, Dharmic) through the communal and relational (Christianity), to the structural and moral (Islam), and finally to the disenchanting and atomised (atheism).

**Since adopting your new belief, which of the following apply to you? [% of respondents who identified themselves as converting to or significantly strengthening their faith by FAITH]**

Experience	Christianity	Islam	Dharmic	Spiritual	Atheist
I feel a stronger sense of purpose	45%	43%	49%	60%	8%
I have a more positive outlook on life	44%	47%	55%	55%	12%
I feel more mentally and emotionally healthy	42%	29%	58%	58%	16%
I feel part of a supportive community	36%	24%	30%	30%	3%
My relationships with others have improved	30%	22%	29%	28%	5%
I can make sense of the world around me	31%	31%	31%	42%	17%
I feel a sense of joy	37%	22%	38%	38%	6%
None of these	27%	27%	14%	14%	71%

# Conclusion

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The findings presented across this report reveal a Britain in religious transition rather than decline. While Christianity continues to experience the most substantial numerical losses, religion itself has not receded from public or private life. Instead, belief is diversifying, reshaping into more individualised, experiential, and wellbeing-oriented forms that reflect the cultural, demographic and emotional realities of modern Britain. What emerges is a picture of recomposition rather than erosion; faith is not vanishing but changing form.

The data shows that Christianity remains the most common point of entry and the most common point of exit, serving as the central corridor through which religious movement flows. For many, becoming Christian today means rediscovering faith on a personal, Jesus centred, level rather than returning to institutional religion. Conversions are most often driven by emotional catalysts such as bereavement, mental health challenges or a search for meaning, and sustained through relationships and pastoral belonging rather than doctrinal conviction. By contrast, those leaving Christianity, especially younger adults, do so largely over intellectual or moral conflict, citing dissonance between modern values and inherited teaching. These divergent pathways underscore how Christianity now functions as both a site of revival and release, reflecting Britain's broader negotiation between tradition and autonomy.

Islam presents a different story, one of consolidation and moral purpose. Conversions into Islam are boundary-crossing and more recent in nature, often shaped by an appeal of structure, ritual, and answers on issues of global injustice.

However, the data also suggests that emotional wellbeing outcomes for Muslim converts are lower than for Christian converts. This may stem from the greater social and familial barriers reported by converts to Islam in our study, which also reflect broader racial, ethnic, and religious discourses surrounding Islam in the UK.

Dharmic faiths occupy a middle ground, drawing adherents who seek harmony, rational spirituality, and emotional stability. Conversion here is less crisis-driven and more reflective, aligning more with a philosophical than a doctrinal approach to life. The high emotional and cognitive health outcomes reported by converts indicate that these traditions are functioning as vehicles for integration and mental balance in an otherwise fragmented culture.

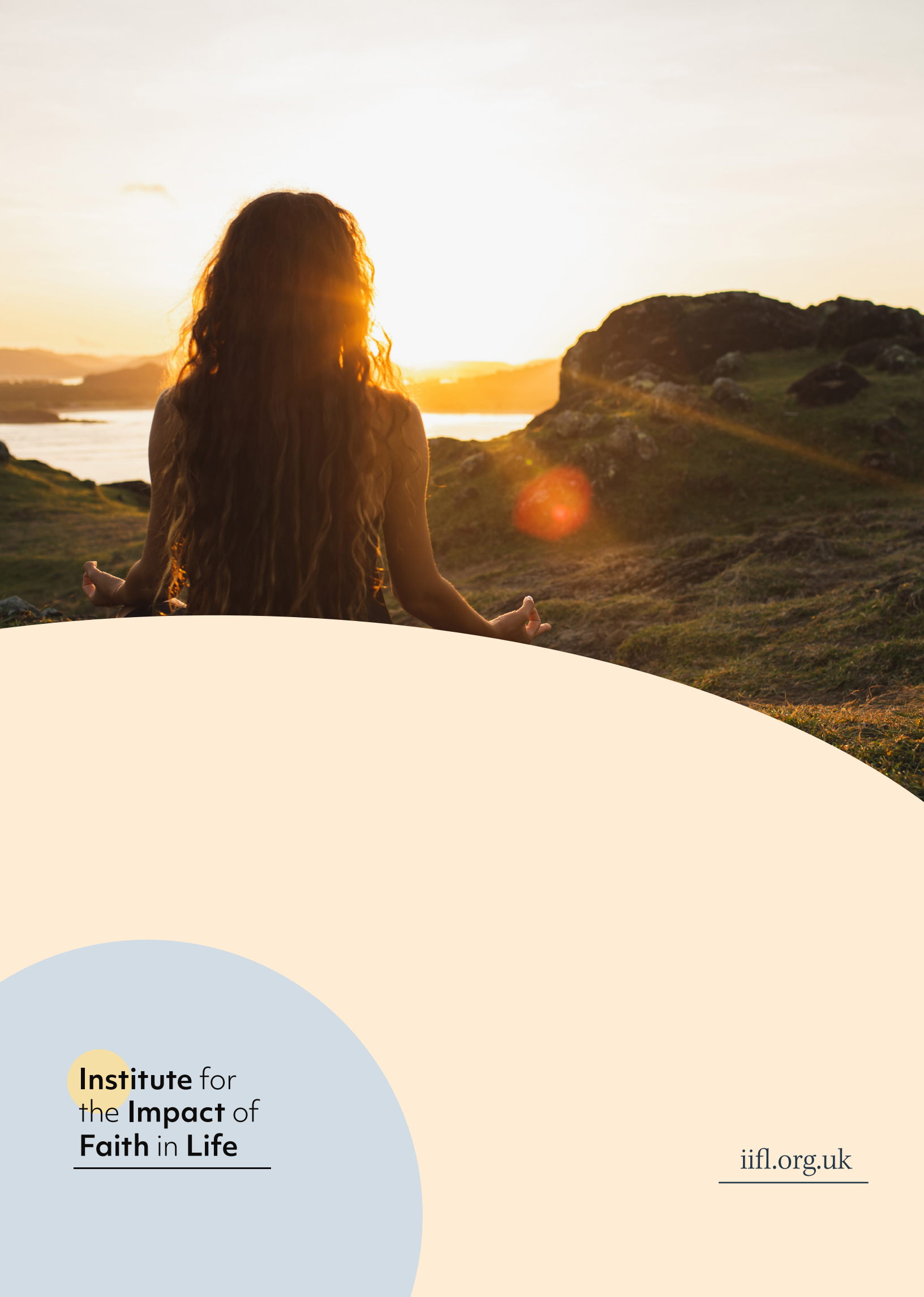
Spirituality, meanwhile, stands as the most individualised and eclectic form of faith change and surprisingly supersedes Islam and Buddhism in terms of numbers of respondents who selected that this is the faith they have adopted. Its adherents, largely older women, emerge from disillusionment with institutional religion to embrace personal healing, emotional health and ethical coherence. With few departures and long-term stability among participants, this growing field of practice reflects an enduring and self-sustaining turn toward inwardly directed meaning-making.

Atheism, while representing the largest single movement overall, offers a different kind of resolution. For most, it is a culmination of long-term intellectual and moral questioning rather than a moment of rupture. It satisfies the need for rational coherence but yields fewer emotional or social benefits.

Three distinct logics of religious change emerge; respondents moving towards Christianity and spirituality reflect inward, therapeutic movements of recovery and restoration; respondents moving towards Islam embody a disciplined, justice-oriented search for structure and purpose; respondents moving towards Dharmic traditions represent integrative and philosophical realignment and respondents moving towards atheism stand apart as a cognitive resolution.

These findings signal that Britain's religious future will not be defined by secularisation alone, but by recomposition. Faith is evolving into a marketplace of meaning, where people select traditions according to what they seek, whether it be structure, solace, balance, or transcendence. Christianity's leavers and new adherents, Islam's modest yet visible rise through younger and globally aware converts, and the growth of Dharmic and spiritual practices such as Buddhism, Wicca, and Shamanism together mark a profound reorientation. Religion is not dying; it is being reclaimed and redesigned, no longer inherited but chosen, no longer collective by default but deeply personal in intent. This is the new face of faith in modern Britain; plural, self-directed, and driven less by social requirement than by the enduring human need for meaning, connection, and coherence.





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