

Another sharp fall in religious affiliation in Britain

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The latest edition of the British Social Attitudes Survey, which will be published on Monday (17 September 2012) will show that only about half of Britons as a whole now say they have a religious affiliation, sharply down from 20 years ago when it was two-thirds. Barely a quarter of young people now identify themselves as religious.

Meanwhile, a poll for the BBC's Religion & Ethics Department shows that young people put religion near the bottom of their list of moral priorities.

TNS BMRB polled 585 16-24 year olds for the Corporation. They found that the top priority for 59% of them was "looking after your family". Only 4% said having a religious faith or belief was important for them.

The survey found that more than a quarter of the youngsters (27 per cent) believed that as long as businesses are not breaking the law, they should not concern themselves with ethical issues although 64 per cent thought that they should.

And asked whether they or their parents' generation was the more concerned about morals, more than a quarter (27 per cent) said they thought they were the same, while 13 per cent said they thought young people were more concerned.

Of the "moral issues" mentioned in the poll

- 59% of those questioned said looking after their family was most important
- 12% said it was putting others first
- 8% cited being faithful to a partner
- 5% listed caring for the environment
- 4% cited having religious faith
- 4% felt paying taxes was most important
- 4% said playing a part in the local community
- 1% listed buying ethical products

Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society, said: "The British people are losing their religion at an accelerating pace at a time when, ironically, religion is being accorded increasing privilege in society. Although most people in this country are not in any way hostile to personal faith, it does seem that too much credence is being given to the leaders of organised religions who quite clearly do not speak for the people they purport to represent."

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