

Poll: widespread indifference to Christian beliefs, but Christians feel comfortable discussing their faith

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[Research commissioned](#) by the Church of England ahead of their General Synod has again found widespread public disinterest in religion, and a lack of belief in Christianity's key teachings.

While the findings paint a picture of a largely indifferent society, an overwhelming majority of Christians feel comfortable discussing their beliefs, contradicting those who claim that believers feel side-lined because of their faith in Britain today.

[Forty percent](#) of English people do not think that Jesus was a real, historical person, and a quarter of 18 to 24 year olds believe he was a mythological or fictional character.

Most damningly for the Church, the [research found](#) that "younger people are the most sceptical about Jesus's existence" while "the older you are, the more likely you are to believe Jesus actually walked the earth."

The new findings are in line with a range of other polling and academic research on religiosity and attitudes to religion, which has consistently found young people on average to be far less religious than their parents and grandparents.

While the research found that 57% of English people identified in some way as Christian, the poll found that less than 10% of believers actually attend church services once a month or read the Bible regularly. Church of England [statistics from 2012](#) found that less than 2% of the population claim to attend church weekly.

In mid-2015 the [National Centre for Social Research](#) found that 49% of Britons have no religion, while YouGov polling from [April](#) found 62% saying they are "not religious".

Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith, writing in the [Catholic Herald](#), said that the new polling was "seriously bad news for the Christian religion, because the Christian religion makes historical claims: there was a person called Jesus and he died on the Cross to free us from our sins, and this really happened. If Jesus is a myth, then Christianity is rubbish."

After Christians, atheists were the next largest 'belief' group identified, with 12% of Britons identifying explicitly as atheists, and 9% calling themselves agnostic.

NSS spokesperson Stephen Evans commented: "This poll again confirms a long-turn shift in society away from religious adherence, and widespread disinterest or disbelief in Christianity's central claims. This of course has implications for the way in which society is organised, and raises serious questions about the appropriateness of organised religion's dominant role in state education. A secular political framework is fairest whatever the religious makeup of a society, but such significant and sustained movement away from Christianity makes the case for a secular state even stronger."

Joint research ordered by the CofE and the Evangelical Alliance, conducted by ComRes and the Barna Group, also found that while more than [70% of Christians felt "comfortable"](#) talking about their faith to a non-Christian, efforts to convert non-believers were often counterproductive. Nearly 60% of people "did not want to know more about Jesus" after speaking to a believer about their faith, and just less than one-in-five wished to know more about Jesus after speaking to a practising Christian. 49% were "not open to an experience of or encounter with Jesus Christ" after speaking to a "follower of Jesus about their faith" and, after speaking to a Christian, just 16% of non-believers said they felt sad not to share that person's faith, while 41% "felt glad that I did not share their faith."

Mr Evans added: "We hear a constant narrative that Christians are unable to talk about their beliefs or that they even face persecution in the UK for their religion. The fact that 70% of Christians do feel comfortable discussing their faith is a positive sign and should highlight that the 'persecution narrative' is a minority view among Christians – despite what some Christian organisations claim. This research shows that many people are just not interested in religion."

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