

Most young people in UK have no religion, says survey

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The National Secular Society has called for "a rethink of religion's public role" after a report found that almost three-quarters of young people in the UK say they have no religion.

According to [Europe's Young Adults and Religion](#), 70% of 16- to 29-year-olds in the UK say they have no religion and 59% say they never attend a religious service. Just seven per cent said they were Anglican; 10% described themselves as Catholic; and six per cent said they were Muslim.

Only seven per cent said they attended religious services on at least a weekly basis.

A majority of young people in 12 of the 22 European countries the report studied said they had no religion. Only in Poland, Portugal and Ireland did more than 10% of young people say they attend religious services at least once a week.

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans called the report "an important reminder of the need for a rethink of religion's public role, not least the public funding of faith schools".

"Separating religion from public life is the only way to protect everyone's right to freedom of and from religion fairly. That means it's the right thing to do no matter what surveys such as this find. But this is the latest in a series of reminders that the way the UK treats religion in public life is incongruous with the views of its people – particularly the next generation of citizens and parents.

"Those who defend the establishment of the Church of England, the presence of bishops in the House of Lords or the fact that faith groups run large numbers of publicly-funded schools are going to be left making increasingly tenuous arguments in the years ahead. Politicians should take note: the UK is ready to stop deferring to them and embrace a secular state."

The report's findings add weight to the arguments made in the NSS's recent report, [Rethinking religion and belief in public life: a manifesto for change](#). They are also roughly in line with those from other sources. Last year's British Social Attitudes survey found that a [majority](#) of Britons had no religion, including over 70% of 18- to 24-year-olds and over 60% of 25- to 34-year-olds. Just three per cent of those aged 18-24 described themselves as Anglican.

In October a report by the polling firm Ipsos [found](#) that 62% of under-65s in Britain thought religion did more harm than good. In the same study fewer than a quarter of British people agreed that 'my religion defines me as a person'.

Stephen Bullivant, a professor of theology and sociology at St Mary's University in London and the author of the latest report, said religion was "moribund" in much of Europe.

"With some notable exceptions, young adults increasingly are not identifying with or practising religion. Cultural religious identities just aren't being passed on from parents to children. It just washes straight off them."

The report was based on data from the European social survey of 2014-16.

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