

New polling – London, a city of surprises, is more religious and socially conservative than the rest of Britain

London is more religious and more socially conservative than the rest of the country, despite the city's progressive reputation, according to new report published by the think tank Theos.

It is time to rethink prevailing views of the capital as a secular and progressive centre, the Theos report argues. Instead, the polling paints a more complex picture of Londoners, who are both significantly more religious (62% identify as religious compared to 53% across the rest of Britain ex. London) and who hold some surprisingly conservative views on social issues.

The polling, conducted for Theos by Savanta ComRes, shows that:

- most Londoners are religious (62% identify as religious compared to 53% across the rest of Britain ex. London)
- Londoners are nearly twice as likely to say that sex before marriage is at least sometimes wrong compared to the rest of Britain (24% vs 13%)
- Londoners are more likely to say that same-sex relationships are at least sometimes wrong compared to the rest of Britain (29% vs 23%)
- Londoners are more likely to say that assisted suicide in the case of an incurable illness is at least sometimes wrong compared to the rest of Britain (38% vs 27%).

The findings also unearth some interesting insights about London's religious demography. The data found that Religious Londoners were 48% BAME compared to just 27% of non-religious Londoners. Christianity in particular was significantly more ethnically diverse in the city (31% Christians in London are BAME vs 2% across the rest of Britain. ex London)

Theos also identifies further insights around the nature of religious practice, finding that Londoners are more intensely practicing, more likely to pray, and more likely to attend a religious service than those outside the capital.

- 1 in 4 Londoners attend a religious service at least once a month vs 1 in 10 in rest of Britain (ex. London)
- Religious Londoners are twice as likely as religious people in other parts of the country to attend a service twice a month or more (31% vs 15%)
- 56% London Christians pray regularly compared to 32% of Christians in the rest of Britain

Religious Londoners are also good neighbours.

- Christian Londoners are more likely to say that they will donate to a charitable initiative than non-religious Londoners (76 vs. 68%).
- Christian Londoners are more like to say that they would help their neighbours with a simple task than non-religious Londoners (92% vs. 86%)
- Half of Christians (49%) and non-Christian religious adults (53%) say that they are likely to volunteer regularly for a local charitable initiative, compared to 40% of non-religious Londoners.

The report argues that London's leaders and policy makers should take more account of religious communities and their role in providing social welfare.

Elizabeth Oldfield, the director of Theos, said:

“When we think about London, we might think about the global city with a reputation for progressive politics. But this is only half the story. London is also a city of surprises. This polling shows that London is in fact more socially conservative than the rest of the country.

“There is no doubt religion has an impact on this. Religious Londoners drive more conservative social views, even when those views are held by a minority of Londoners overall.

“The great success story of London has been its ability to welcome and accommodate opinions from across the political spectrum. The city still has the capacity to shock us – and this is one of the things which makes London one of the most dynamic, complex and interesting cities in the world.”

[ENDS]

[Notes to editors]

1. Theos' new report, *Religious London*, will be published on 24 June 2020. An advanced copy of this report and data tables are attached under embargo.

2. For more information, or to arrange an interview with the report's author Paul Bickley please contact **Lizzie Stanley**, Theos Head of Communications, 07778 160 052 lizzie.stanley@theosthinktank.co.uk

3. Paul Bickley is Research Fellow at Theos. His background is in Parliament and public affairs, and he holds an MLitt from the University of St Andrews' School of Divinity. Paul is the author of *Building Jerusalem? Christianity and the Labour Party* (2010), *People, Place, and Purpose: Churches and Neighbourhood Resilience* (2019) amongst other Theos reports.

4. Theos is the UK's leading religion and society think tank. It has a broad Christian basis, and exists to enrich the debate about faith and society.

Methodology:

Savanta ComRes interviewed 2,023 British adults aged 18+ online between 17th-20th January 2020 and 1,005 London adults aged 18+ online between 17th-23rd January 2020.

GB data are weighted to be representative of all British adults by key demographic categories including age, gender, region and social grade. London data are weighted to be representative of all London adults by key demographic factors including age, gender and social grade.

You can find the data tables for this research here: <https://comresglobal.com/our-work/poll-archive/>

Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.