

# Voting and Values in Britain: Does religion count?

Ben Clements and Nick Spencer

Theos 



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# Voting and Values in Britain: Does religion count?

Ben Clements and Nick Spencer

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# executive summary

## introduction

- The 'religious vote' in America is a well-researched and well-recognised phenomenon, even if popular conclusions about theo-political alignment are exaggerated.
- The 'religious vote' in Britain – if it exists – is less well-researched and less understood. This report, drawing on extensive data from the British Election Survey and the British Social Attitudes survey, is the first step towards rectifying that.

## the religious vote: by affiliation

- Britain never developed a tradition of Christian Democracy or a major Christian party because, by the time this happened in Europe, it already had three – Anglican Tory, Nonconformist Liberal, and Nonconformist and Catholic Labour. Although correlations are perhaps weaker, this is still the case today.
  - ♦ (Self-identifying) Anglicans have been more likely to vote Conservative than Labour, the exceptions being in 1966 and 1997. In 2010, they were nearly twice as likely to vote Conservative as Catholics were.
  - ♦ (Self-identifying) Catholics generally have preferred to vote Labour, often by large margins, since 1959 (the exception being in 1979) and have generally shown lower support for the third party than have other Christian denominations.
  - ♦ (Self-identifying) Nonconformists have shown greater voting fluidity than either Anglicans or Catholics, with a marginally stronger association with the third party than these denominations.
- Voting patterns are also discernible among the non-Christian and non-religious populations, though any analysis of non-Christian religious groups must be undertaken with caution on account of low sample sizes.

- ◆ In 2010, Muslims favoured Labour, whilst the Jewish vote was more for the Conservatives. The Hindu vote tended to Labour, although was more balanced in 2010. The Sikh vote was evenly split between the two main parties, whilst the Buddhist vote was disproportionately for the Liberal Democrats.
- ◆ Those who do not identify with any religious group have also fluctuated over elections, although their support for the Conservatives has been lower, while that for the third party, particularly recently, has been higher.
- Anglicans follow the national pattern of reporting a higher level of support for the Conservative Party among women than among men.
  - ◆ This gap is also evident for Catholics, and is slightly larger, with 33.3% of women voting Tory compared to 24.5% of men.
  - Among other religious groups, women tend to be less likely than men to vote Tory. There is no gender divide within the non-religious vote.

## the religious vote: by attendance

- Electoral behaviour can be measured by attendance as well as affiliation.
  - ◆ Regularity of attendance makes a difference among Anglicans. Those who attend services regularly have historically been more likely to vote for the Conservatives than those who attended less often. In other words, practising Anglicanism is more Tory than nominal Anglicanism.
  - ◆ Attendance made no difference among Catholics, with regular and irregular attenders generally being equally likely to vote for the Labour party.

## voting intentions

- These patterns tend to hold for current voting intentions, although these data must be treated with caution as the way someone claims they intend to vote in 18-24 months does not necessarily correlate with the way they will vote (if they do turn out to vote).
  - ◆ Even taking this mid-term of the electoral cycle in account, Anglicans clearly demonstrate greater support for the Conservative Party than all other

groups. Catholics, similarly, show most support for Labour (as do members of non-Christian religions) reflecting their historical tradition of voting Labour at general elections.

- ◆ While the Liberal Democrats suffer from low levels of support across the board, 'Other Christian' groups are more likely to say they would vote for them in a hypothetical election compared to those affiliated with the two main Christian denominations.
- ◆ Support for the Liberal Democrats is also higher amongst those who belong to some other religion, those who do not reveal their religious affiliation and those with no religious affiliation.
- ◆ There are noticeable differences within some denominations based on whether a respondent adheres to a traditional belief in God or not (which reminds us of the problems with affiliation).
  - ✦ Amongst Catholics and Nonconformists, levels of support for the Tories are noticeably higher amongst those with a traditional belief in God. The opposite is the case for Church of Scotland/Presbyterian affiliates.
  - ✦ This is not the case for Anglicans, who show similar levels of support for the Conservatives whether or not they believe in God.
  - ✦ Amongst members of non-Christian religions, there is a stronger link to electoral support for Labour amongst those who express a firm belief in God.

## issues

- What drives these electoral allegiances? Is it possible to analyse this by looking at political issues and underlying political values?
  - ◆ In terms of political issues, in 2010 all groups, irrespective of religiosity, placed the economy as their most important issue, followed by immigration, the outcome of the election itself, and the budget deficit. There was some difference over the fifth most important issue, either unemployment or consumer debt, or both of these ranked equally.

- ◆ What are known in the US as ‘values voting’ issues (e.g. those relating to family, sexuality, abortion, etc.) were mentioned by very few respondents across the board.
- ◆ Not surprisingly, people’s evaluations of which party was best able to deal with these issues followed existing lines of party support. Thus, Anglicans were most likely to rate the Conservative party as best able to handle their chosen issue, Catholics most likely to rate Labour as best able to deal with theirs (although in 2010 they only had a slight advantage over the Conservatives here).

## values

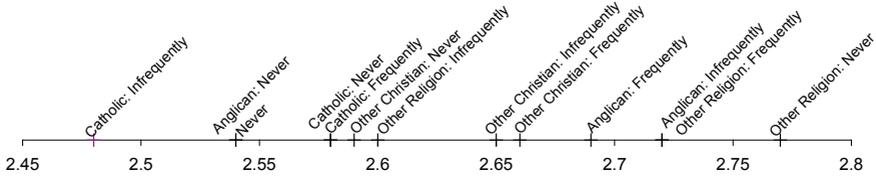
- Analysis of values allows us to position different religious groups (groups of affiliation and attendance) on three major political spectra – left-right, libertarian-authoritarian, and welfarist-individualist – the data for which are drawn from 19 statements asked annually in British Social Attitudes surveys.

## left-right

- On the left-right scale (based on five statements<sup>1</sup>), we can see that among the affiliation groups:
  - ◆ People who consider themselves belonging to the ‘other religion’ group (a large proportion of whom are Muslim) are most consistently left in the left-right axis.
  - ◆ Catholics are next most consistently left in the left-right axis.
  - ◆ Anglicans are most consistently right in the left-right axis.
  - ◆ People of no religion tend slightly to be to the left in the left-right axis.
  - ◆ These differences, with the exception of the first, are not particularly large or consistent.
- These opinions also change when people are asked the more policy-specific question relating to tax and spend.

- ◆ Catholics were slightly more pro-tax and spend when compared to the other groups but, interestingly given the positions outlined above, it was the 'other religion' group that tended to be slightly – and at times noticeably – more hostile to tax-and-spend.
- ◆ Overall, the direction of public opinion was firmly against more tax-and-spend. Most wanted to keep tax-and-spend at the same level, rather than reducing it.
- On the left-right scale, religious attendance is a better indicator of left-right views than simply religious affiliation.
  - ◆ Those people who never attend a religious service are more likely to be on the left of the political spectrum, particularly when it comes to abstract opinions on poverty and wealth, than are other groups.
  - ◆ That noted, when it comes to the policy-specific question, non-attenders have fallen out of love with tax-and-spend just as much as other groups have over the last decade. Similarly, the rise of people who agree that government should keep tax and spending the same has been even across groups, with no difference by frequency of attendance.
- It is possible to combine affiliation and attendance to get a more detailed analysis of where people sit on the left-right scale, although this comes at the cost of sample size (and, therefore, also of the robustness of the result). That noted, we can see from Figure 0.1 that:
  - ◆ Infrequently-attending (i.e. less than once a month) Catholics were the most left-wing group (in 2011), followed by purely nominal (i.e. never attending) Anglicans, and people who are consistently non-religious (i.e. non-religious and never attend).
  - ◆ At the other end, purely nominal people of non-Christian religions were the most right-of-centre (though this was a particularly low sample size), followed by infrequently-attending Anglicans, and committed (i.e. frequently-attending) people of other religions.
  - ◆ Committed (i.e. frequently-attending) Christians, whether Anglican, Catholic or another denomination, were more 'centrist', though Anglicans were more right-of-centre, and Catholics more left-of-centre.

figure 0.1: left (1) – right (5) scale, by affiliation and attendance, in 2011



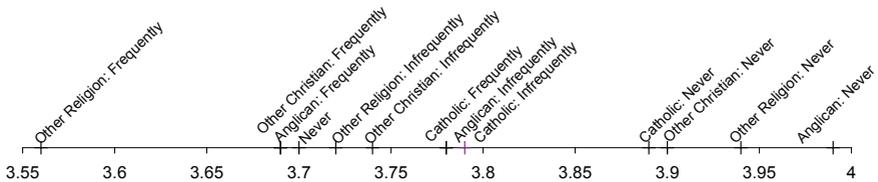
Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

## libertarian-authoritarian

- On the libertarian-authoritarian scale (based on six statements<sup>2</sup>), by affiliation:
  - ♦ The population is generally more authoritarian than it is libertarian, and has become slightly more authoritarian over the last ten years.
  - ♦ Anglicans tend to be most authoritarian, although unlike the other groups, they have not become more authoritarian over the last decade.
  - ♦ The ‘No religion’ group tends to be most libertarian, although it has shifted more towards authoritarianism than have other groups over the last decade.
  - ♦ Other groups, in particular the ‘Other religion’ group tends to oscillate between these poles (though in the case of the ‘Other religion’ group this is likely to be on account of the small sample number)
  - ♦ The differences between groups on these matters tend not to be substantial or consistent, the exception being regarding censorship where there is and has long been a deep and significant difference between non-religious (against) and (all) religious groups (for).
- On the libertarian-authoritarian scale, by attendance:
  - ♦ Those who never attend have been more libertarian over the last decade, although this has not universally been the case. They have, however, become more authoritarian over time, and in particular in 2011. The result of this was that the most recent data show non-attenders as the most authoritarian, with the ‘frequent-attenders’ least authoritarian.

- ◆ The ‘infrequent-attenders’ also moved sharply towards authoritarianism in 2011, whereas the ‘frequent-attenders’ moved away, and became the most libertarian group.
- ◆ These recent data do seem to be comparatively volatile, however, and they do not change the fact that all groups are more authoritarian than they are libertarian.
- On the libertarian-authoritarian scale, by affiliation and attendance, Figure 0.2 shows that all groups are notably more authoritarian than libertarian.
  - ◆ The only real single outlying group is ‘frequent-attenders’ from non-Christian religions who, in 2011, had a more distinctly libertarian position (though note the small sample size in this instance).
  - ◆ At the other end, nominal Anglicans were the most authoritarian group.
  - ◆ Indeed, nominal believers of all religious groups were more authoritarian than ‘infrequently-attending’ believers, who tended to be slightly more authoritarian than ‘frequently-attending’ believers.

figure 0.2: libertarian (1) – authoritarian (5) scale, by affiliation and attendance, in 2011



Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

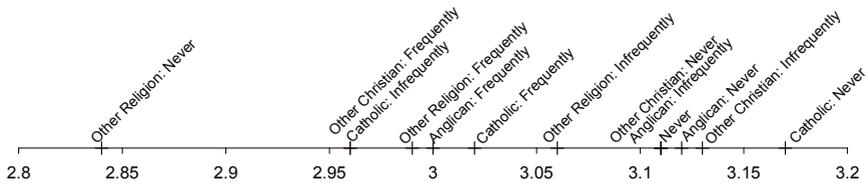
## welfarist-individualist

- On the welfarist-individualist scale (based on eight statements<sup>3</sup>), by affiliation:
  - ◆ The overall trend in public opinion is away from welfarism and towards individualism. This trend has been significant and reasonably consistent over the last decade, although it has slowed somewhat over the last few years.

- ◆ Differences of opinion between religious groups here are almost always much smaller than the general shift in public opinion. However else religious affiliation shapes people's opinion in this area, it does not decide it.
- ◆ As a general rule, Anglicans were more anti-welfarist than other groups and Roman Catholics more welfarist, though the differences are not huge or consistent.
- ◆ One of the few genuinely consistent differences is in the fact the 'No religion' group is significantly less inclined to agree that the creation of the welfare state is one of Britain's proudest achievements.
- On the welfarist-individualist scale, by attendance:
  - ◆ The more religiously observant respondents were more likely to have a positive attitude to state welfare. For example:
    - ✦ 'Frequent-attenders' were more willing to countenance the government spending more on welfare benefits for the poor even if it leads to higher taxes;
    - ✦ 'Frequent-attenders' were more likely to disagree that most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one;
    - ✦ 'Frequent-attenders' were more sceptical concerning the claim of people dole-fiddling;
    - ✦ 'Frequent-attenders' were more likely to disagree that "if welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet";
    - ✦ 'Frequent-attenders' tended to believe that cutting welfare benefits would damage many people's lives;
    - ✦ 'Frequent-attenders' were more likely to think that "the creation of the welfare state is one of Britain's proudest achievements".
  - ◆ On the welfarist-individualist scale, by affiliation and attendance:
    - ✦ As Figure 0.3 shows, the various different groups are a) comparatively clustered together and b) highly centrist.

- ✦ The single outlying group here were the nominal 'other religion' group (i.e. those who nominally belonged to a non-Christian religion), who were most welfarist (though NB the low sample size again).
- ✦ At the other end, nominal Catholics were most individualist.
- ✦ Practising believers of all denominations tended to be among the more welfarist groups.

figure 0.3: welfarist (1) – individualist (5) scale, by affiliation and attendance, in 2011

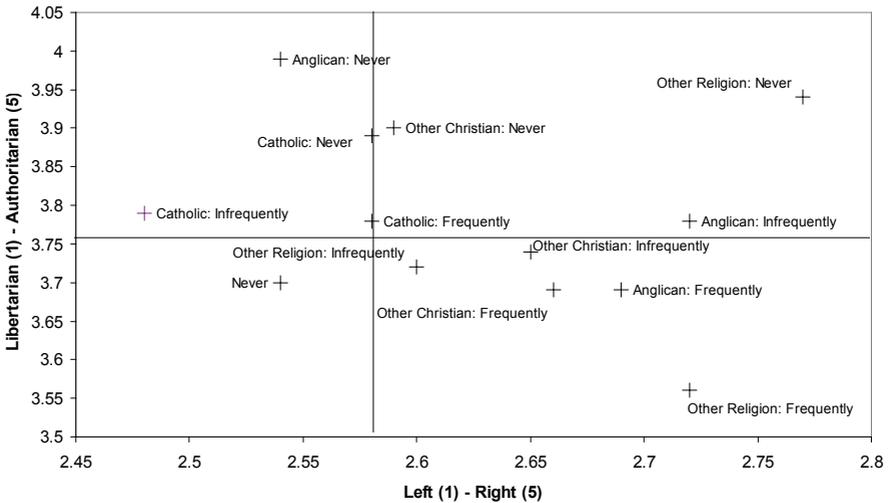


Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

## summary of political values

- Although each of these three scales is important, political positioning has often, historically, been constructed on the first two scales – left-right and libertarian-authoritarian. Accordingly, it is possible to plot the different groups according to these two scales and compare them to the national average to get an idea of where they sit.

figure 0.4: left-right & libertarian-authoritarian scatter graph, by affiliation and attendance, in 2011



Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

- This shows that in 2011 the only group securely in the right-authoritarian quadrant is the nominal non-Christian religious group.
- Infrequently-attending Anglicans are right of centre but neither especially libertarian nor authoritarian.
- The only group securely in the right-libertarian quadrant is the committed non-Christian religious group.
- The only group securely in the left-libertarian quadrant is the non-religious group, and even then this group is not massively left or libertarian.
- No groups are securely in the left-authoritarian quadrant, although infrequently attending Catholics are disproportionately left (but not authoritarian) and nominal Anglicans are disproportionately authoritarian (but not left).

## executive summary references

- 1 Specifically: "Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers"; "Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance"; "Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off"; "Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth"; and "There is one law for the rich and one for the poor".
- 2 Specifically: "People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences"; "For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence"; "Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values"; "Schools should teach children to obey authority"; "Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards"; and "The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong".
- 3 Specifically: "The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other"; "The government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes"; "Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one"; "Many people who get social security don't really deserve any help"; "Most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another"; "If welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet"; "Cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives" and "The creation of the welfare state is one of Britain's proudest achievements".

# introduction

Ask someone their religion in America and you can have a reasonable guess as to their politics. Faith is not an infallible political guide, and there are signs that it may be becoming more fallible, but it nevertheless remains useful.

According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, the 2012 Presidential Election saw religious voting patterns similar to those of 2008 and 2004.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, 57% of Protestants, 69% of white Protestants, and 79% of evangelicals/born again Protestants voted for Mitt Romney, a commitment to the Republican party more or less identical to that shown in 2004 (with George Bush) and slightly greater than that of 2008, when John McCain was standing.

Catholic commitment was more ambiguous. In 2012, 59% of white Catholics voted for Romney, but only 21% of Hispanic Catholics did, making the overall Catholic vote slightly in favour of Obama. Similarly, the white non-evangelical Christian vote was less Republican (54% for Romney) than the white evangelical vote (79% for Romney), whilst the black Protestant vote was overwhelmingly Democrat (95% for Obama). When it comes to non-Christian affiliations, the US Jewish vote is clearly pro-Democrat (69% Obama vs. 30% Romney in 2012), as is the vote from the 'other faiths' and 'unaffiliated' categories. By contrast, and not surprisingly, a large majority of Mormons (78%) voted Republican in 2012.

In short, if an American tells you their religion, you can have a good guess at their politics – but it will remain a guess, and you would be well advised to know at least their ethnicity before placing any bets.

The situation in Britain is more complex and suffers from a comparative dearth of research. Some surveys, notably the British Election Study (BES), permit analysis of British electoral opinion by religious adherence and attendance, but even here the measures have not been asked in every survey and there has been no coverage of religious belief. The surveys obviously do not permit the same level of granularity as is available in the US, with the American National Election Studies.

This has not prevented informed speculation on the nature and influence of the religious vote. According to Renard Sexton, “only about 2-5% of the variation in Conservative and Labour constituency vote-shares since 1992 can be explained by the proportion of self-identifying Christian voters in those districts,” with other factors, such as income levels, educational achievement, unemployment or ethnic make-up “all outstrip[ing] religion in terms of explanatory power by a significant margin, for all parties”.<sup>2</sup>

This conclusion differs locally. Scotland is seen to be atypically sensitive to the religious vote<sup>3</sup> and those constituencies with a concentration of religious minorities may also be more open to religiously-motivated voting patterns. In advance of the 2010 General Election, Geoffrey Alderman speculated that the Jewish vote was small but concentrated and could swing a handful of important seats.<sup>4</sup> During the same period of pre-electoral speculation, Anas Altikriti commented that “Muslims around the country are likely to play a significant role in influencing the outcome of dozens of seats”, with foreign policy remaining the issue “of pivotal importance” for the Muslim electorate.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, a few months earlier, Terry Sanderson of the National Secular Society explained in the *The Guardian* that there was no religious vote because “people are too independent-minded now to be herded into the voting booth by religious considerations alone.”<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the truth of the matter concerning the religious vote – whether there is one, or was one, or looks like there will be one, or whether its significance is limited and highly localised, or simply a rhetorical device with no serious electoral impact – the question of its size and significance is clearly a live one.

## voting and values

In early 2012, Theos published a report by Andy Walton exploring whether a US-style Religious Right was emerging in Britain, as a number of commentators had intimated. The conclusion it reached was that, whilst there appears to be some justification for this claim – there was evidence of greater co-ordination among Christian groups with a socially-conservative commitment, in particular relating to human sexuality, marriage, family life, and religious freedom, about which they are vocal and often willing to resort to legal action – closer inspection showed that claims of an emerging Religious Right were misleading. The report outlined the various reasons for this, pertaining to the different historical, ecclesiastical, and media contexts that prevailed in Britain. The British religious landscape appeared to be changing, but there was little sign of the kind of theo-political symbiotic relationship that emerged in and transformed the American political scene in the 1970s and 80s.

This research invited a significant subsequent question. If we don't have a US-style Religious Right, what do we have? What is the lie of the theo-political land in Britain or, more precisely, how does religion (and non-religion) affect the vote, if at all? These are the questions that this report examines.

There are some long-established historical associations between Christianity and different British political parties. It has sometimes been said that, unlike much of continental Europe, Britain never developed a single tradition of Christian Democracy or a major Christian party because it already had three.

The Church of England was long known, partly playfully but also with good reason, as the Tory Party at prayer, an association that pre-dates the modern Conservative Party and can be traced into the 18th century.

By contrast many, though by no means all, Nonconformists favoured the Liberal Party when it emerged in the late 19th century, holding William Gladstone in saintly esteem and helping to take the party to unprecedented electoral success in 1906, the association finally weakening with the decline of Nonconformity and then the near-death of the Liberal Party in the second quarter of the century.

The Labour Party also drew on Nonconformist support but supplemented this with considerable Catholic loyalty from the later 19th century onwards, as millions of immigrants found a natural political home in the party of workers and Trades Unions. It was still newsworthy when, in the late 1990s, Cardinal Winning signalled a shift in allegiance away from the Labour party.<sup>7</sup>

*Britain never developed a single tradition of Christian Democracy or a major Christian party because it already had three.*

These historic associations are picked up in the post-war period (from the early-1960s, to be precise) through BES data, which show that 'denominational voting' is still evident, with Anglicans more likely to vote Conservative and Catholics more likely to support Labour. Chapter 1 tells this story, taking it into the 21st century, looking at the historical patterns of voting at General Elections based on religion. It examines the evidence for the traditional associations between Anglicans and the Conservative Party, and Catholics and the Labour Party.

Chapter 2 updates the narrative, looking at the most recent General Election (2010) in greater detail, examining more recent (post-2010) surveys, and asking what does the religious electoral landscape look like today? Do the historical associations still hold? Where do atheists or religious minorities sit? What are the contemporary trends? The chapter then goes on to pose further key questions. Might it be the case that religious

voting is actually just a cipher for class voting? Anecdotally, that would make historical sense: establishment Anglicans and upper/middle class Methodists voting Tory; trading/middle class Nonconformists voting Liberal; immigrant and working class Nonconformists and Catholics voting Labour. Assuming these associations were true, do they still hold in a less class-conscious age?

Chapter 2 places these questions in a wider context, first, of changing voting behaviour (is there, for example, a general shift from 'class voting' to 'issues voting' as has been claimed, and can this be seen in the 'religious vote'?) and second, of wider social attitudes (how, for example, does 'religious' opinion – however defined – differ from that of that of other people, to what strength, and in which areas?).

Together, these electoral and social trends seek to offer an overview of the religious vote (in General Elections: local and European elections are not under the microscope here) today, in a context that may help us understand the longer term trends in this area. Accordingly, the final section within the chapter examines the direction of travel, or tomorrow's religious vote. Nate Silver may have called every single state in the 2012 US election accurately, thereby giving hope of a brave new psephological world, but predicting voting behaviour, particularly over the longer term, remains a precarious business. Only the brave will forecast how the religious vote will fall in 2020 or 2025, let alone which issues will drive that pattern. That recognised, we hope to give some general indication of the direction of travel and, in particular, whether historical trends offer a reliable indication for future ones.

Having examined the religious vote, past and present, the report moves on to look at what values underline that vote. 'Values' is a slippery word, particularly in an electoral context where it is sometimes understood to mean personal, moral values. In America, the values voter is a specific thing, and the Values Voters Summit a major annual political event for social conservatives.

That meaning is not the one adopted in this report. Rather, we have chosen to focus on three major values spectra which underpin people's political opinion and behaviour, each drawn from the rich data available in the annual British Social Attitudes Survey. The first is the left-right scale, which seeks to position people on that spectrum through their responses to five attitude statements and one further question specifically relating to tax and spend. This set of values is examined in chapter 3.

Chapter 4 looks at the next set, where people sit on a libertarian-authoritarian scale, as calculated from their responses to six statements, and chapter 5 looks at the final spectrum, the individualist-welfarist scale, which is based on eight statements. Each of these three chapters explores the values underpinning political behaviour, analysing first

by affiliation (whether people call themselves Anglican, Catholic, Other Christian, Other Religion, or No Religion), second by attendance (whether people attend a religious service frequently, infrequently, or not at all) and third and briefly, for 2011 only, by attendance and affiliation. There are certain limitations with this analysis – such as the precision of some categories and the sample sizes of others – and these are discussed in the relevant place in the text. These notwithstanding, however, the analysis of political values provides crucial detail and context to our understanding of the religious vote.

## data sources

Several data sources have been used for this report, in particular the British Election Survey (BES) and the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA). The BES has been conducted at every General Election since 1964. Its main goal is “to describe and to explain why people vote, why they vote as they do, what affects the election outcome, and what are the consequences of elections for democracy in Britain.”<sup>8</sup> The British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey series began in 1983, and has been conducted nearly every year since then. It is the primary social research survey in Britain, which continually monitors and interprets change and continuity in the British public’s attitudes towards social, economic, political, and moral issues.<sup>9</sup>

Between them, these sources provide the best means of analysing the ‘religious vote’ in contemporary Britain. As mentioned at the start, British analysis of this area is some way behind that in America, and thus prey to misunderstanding, oversimplification, and wishful thinking. *Voting and Values in Britain: Does religion count?* should help rectify this, as will Ben Clement’s forthcoming monograph on the subject. Between them these publications should work towards one of Theos’ main aims, of making the conversation about religion in public life better informed.

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# the religious vote yesterday

## summary

- There have always been strong connections between religion and party politics in Britain, most clearly between Anglicanism and the Conservative Party, Nonconformism and the Liberal party, and Catholicism and the Labour party.
- (Self-identifying) Anglicans have long been more likely to vote Conservative than Labour, the exceptions being in 1966 and 1997. In 2010, they were nearly twice as likely to vote Conservative as Catholics were.
- (Self-identifying) Catholics generally have preferred to vote Labour, often by large margins, since 1959 (the exception being in 1979) and have generally shown lower support for the third party than have other Christian denominations.
- (Self-identifying) Nonconformists have shown greater voting fluidity than either Anglicans or Catholics, with a marginally stronger association with the third party than these denominations.
- Those self-identifying as Church of Scotland or Nonconformist have fluctuated in their allegiance to Labour and Conservatives in the post-war period, although their electoral support for the latter has been in steady, overall decline. Their support for the third party has been marginally higher, while support for the SNP has also fluctuated over time although has remained more steady since the mid-90s.
- Those who do not identify with any religious group have also fluctuated over elections, although their support for the Conservatives has been lower, while support for the third party, particularly recently, has been higher.
- Regularity of attendance (as opposed to just self-identification) seems to make a difference among Anglicans, with those who attend services regularly being historically more likely to have voted for the Conservatives than those who attend less often. It made no difference among Catholics, with regular and irregular attenders being equally likely to vote for the parties.

- Historically, the overall religious minority vote has been disproportionately for Labour (although caution must be taken here on account of low sample sizes in research). In 2010, the largest religious minority (i.e. Muslim) vote was more for Labour, whilst the Jewish vote was more for the Conservatives. The Hindu vote tended to Labour, although was more balanced in 2010. The Sikh vote was evenly split between the two main parties, whilst the Buddhist vote was disproportionately for the Liberal Democrats. There are some signs that the overall religious minority vote was becoming more evenly split between the three main parties.

## introduction

Social class has long been the primary determinant for how votes have been cast at British General Elections in the post-war era. As Peter Pulzer once remarked, “class is the basis of British party politics; all else is embellishment and detail.”<sup>1</sup>

That recognised, religion has, historically, been an important social factor. Prior to social class becoming the dominant social factor, religious divisions had important consequences for electoral behaviour, being “once the principal source of party division”.<sup>2</sup>

In Britain, the historic competition between Tories and Whigs reflected the division between the Church of England and Nonconformity. The Tories consistently opposed Whig efforts to remove Nonconformist disadvantages. From the 19th century and into the 20th, there was a strong association between Nonconformism and electoral support for the Liberals.<sup>3</sup> In the 20th century, as the Liberal Party was displaced as an electoral and political force by Labour, Catholics became an important source of support for the Labour Party.<sup>4</sup> Religious divisions also interacted with region, due to the geographical concentration of particular faith communities, with religious voting more pronounced in Scotland and Wales.

Even if religion is no longer the principal divide structuring party competition and voting alignments:

Members of particular religions or denominations may nonetheless continue to identify with and support specific political parties perhaps as a result of long-standing loyalties or associations...In this sense, the persistence of religious cleavages in contemporary political behaviour may be a relic of past political controversies.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter looks at recent associations between religious groups and support for political parties, as expressed by voting in post-war General Elections, focusing on those

taking place from the 1960s onwards. It examines data on voting behaviour from the best available source of nationally-representative survey data, the British Election Study (BES), building on recent scholarly work. Throughout, it mainly focuses on voting for the two major parties in post-war British politics – Conservative and Labour – but also looks at voting for the third party: the Liberal Party up to the 1970s, its 1980s alliance with the SDP, and its successor, the Liberal Democrats. The review centres on four areas of survey data:

1. Religious affiliation and voting behaviour;
2. Religious affiliation, attendance at religious services and voting behaviour (for Anglicans and Catholics);
3. Religious affiliation, geographical location and voting behaviour (for Catholics);
4. Non-Christian faiths and voting behaviour.

## religious affiliation and voting behaviour

This section of the chapter examines the voting behaviour of five groups classified by religious affiliation, what we might term ‘belonging’. The religious affiliation of respondents has been asked about in every BES survey since its inception. The five groups looked at here are as follows:

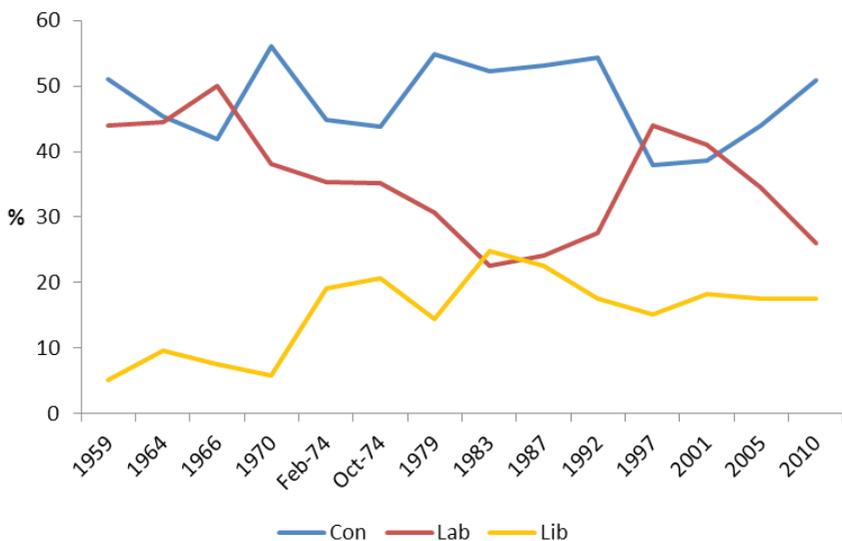
- Anglicans
- Roman Catholics
- Members of Nonconformist churches
- Church of Scotland/Presbyterian
- Those with no religious affiliation

We look at fourteen General Elections in total, stretching from 1959 to 2010. Members of non-Christian faiths are not compared here in detail as they often comprised very small numbers of respondents in the earlier BES survey samples, but where there are relevant figures they are reported for illustrative purposes. It is important to reiterate that the geographical coverage of the BES surveys excludes Northern Ireland, so all of the data reported here relates to voting behaviour of the British – not the United Kingdom – electorate.

In order first to look at the historical picture for each group, figures 1.1-1.5 chart the proportions (%) voting for the largest parties – Conservatives, Labour and the third party – between 1959 and 2010. Due to changes in the wider party-political landscape the voting data refer to the Liberal Party for the 1959-1979 elections, the Alliance (comprising the Liberal Party and Social Democratic Party) for the 1983 and 1987 elections and to the Liberal Democrats from the 1992 election onwards. The percentage base used here includes voting for minor parties but their vote share is not charted in the figures. All of the voting data presented here come from the BES post-election cross-section surveys.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1.1 looks at voting behaviour amongst Anglicans. We can see that, across elections, Anglicans have been more likely to vote Conservative than Labour. However, this is not a uniform tendency. At elections where Labour have won clear victories – such as in 1966, 1997 and 2001 – Anglicans were slightly more likely to vote for the winning party. Hence, the evidence that Anglicans have always voted as a denominational ‘bloc’ is questionable. The characterisation of the Church of England as the ‘Conservative Party at prayer’ is more apposite for those elections when the Conservatives gained significant victories – such as those in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992. The Conservative Party’s share of the Anglican vote also increased at the most recent election in May 2010.

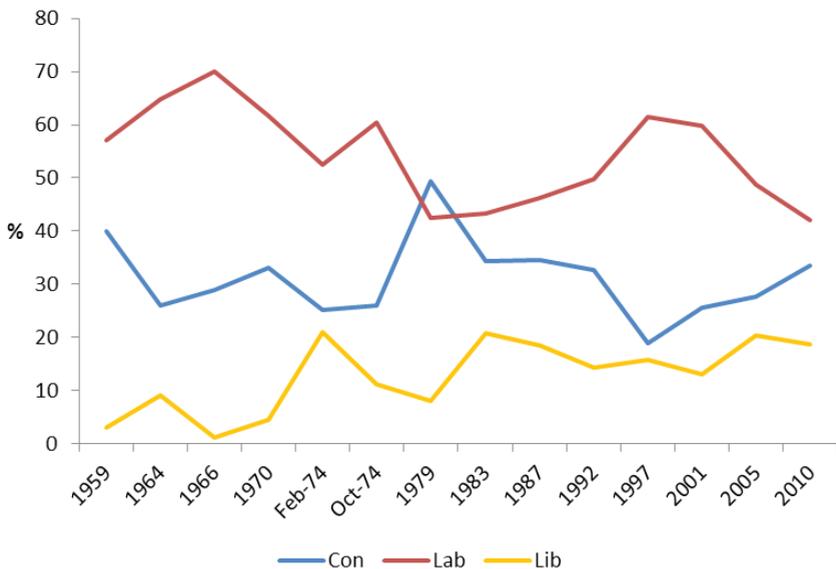
figure 1.1: voting behaviour of Anglicans at General Elections, 1959-2010



Source: BES surveys. Weighted data.

Looking next at the voting behaviour of Catholics in Britain, charted in figure 1.2, it is clear that, although the level of support for Labour has fluctuated between elections, at most elections since 1959 Catholics have preferred Labour, often by large margins. While Catholic support for Labour was noticeably lower at the 1970 and 1979-87 elections, instances of Conservative victories, it increased markedly for the 1997-2001 elections, falling away again since 2005. It is worth noting that support for the third party amongst Catholics has been generally lower than that evident for Anglicans and Nonconformists.<sup>7</sup>

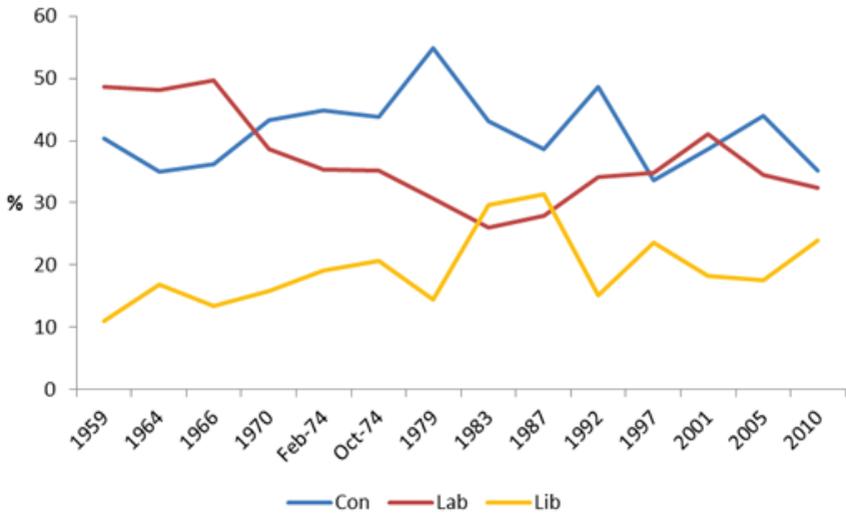
figure 1.2: voting behaviour of Roman Catholics at General Elections, 1959-2010



Source: BES surveys. Weighted data.

Figure 1.3 shows the voting behaviour of members of the Nonconformist churches at elections between 1959 and 2010, a relatively small group (meaning that data are based on small sample sizes). As with the other groups looked at here, the Liberal Party and its successors have been very much the 'third party' in the voting behaviour of Nonconformists, although in 1983 and 1987 the vote share for the Alliance did eclipse that of Labour for second place (as it did in 1983 among Anglicans).

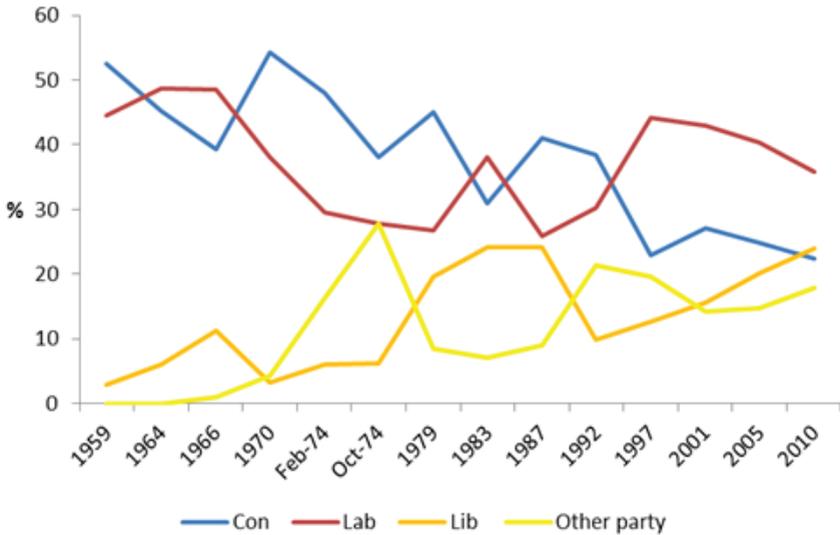
figure 1.3: voting behaviour of Nonconformists at General Elections, 1959-2010



Source: BES surveys. Weighted data.

Figure 1.4 charts the party vote share for those who report an affiliation with the Church of Scotland or call themselves Presbyterian. Given the presence of a fourth major party – the SNP – in the Scottish context, this chart shows four rather than three lines, the fourth line is labelled ‘other parties’ but generally represents support for the SNP. Again, we can see a mixed picture whereby at some elections a greater proportion has voted for Labour, while at other contests the Conservatives have won more votes from this religious group. There is no evidence of consistent voting in favour of a particular party, Labour or Conservative. It is also notable that support for the third party has fluctuated over time (particularly during the time of the ‘Alliance’, at the 1983 and 1987 elections, as well as more recently for the Liberal Democrats). Similarly, support for ‘other parties’ (in essence, the SNP) has also been volatile – reaching its highest level at the October 1974 election, then falling away for a period, before rising again and broadly maintaining a higher level from 1992 onwards.

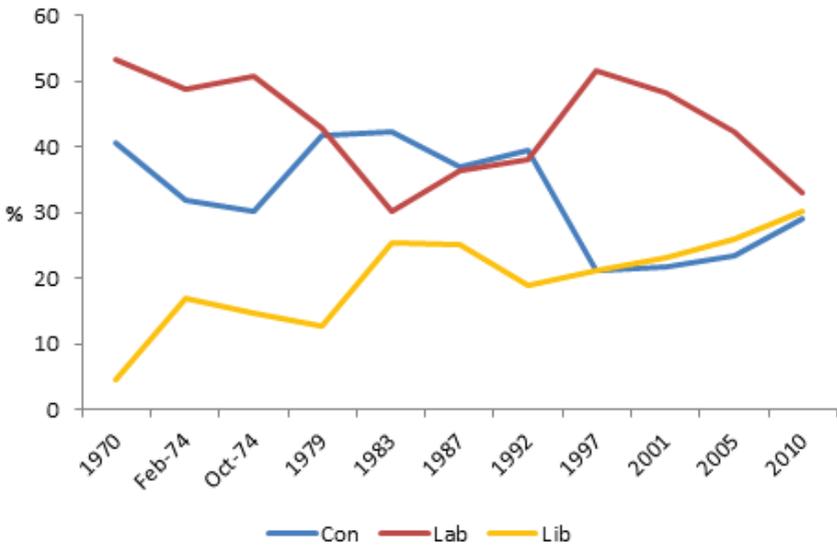
figure 1.4: voting behaviour by Church of Scotland/Presbyterian at General Elections, 1959-2010



Source: BES surveys. Weighted data.

Finally, Figure 1.5 charts party vote shares for the period 1970-2010 for those with no religion, a segment of society which has grown with successive BES surveys. It is worth noting that the proportion of the BES samples reporting that they have “no religion” has increased over the course of the survey series from just 3.8% in 1964 to 47.5% in 2010. The voting behaviour of those with no religion has fluctuated over time. As with other religious groups, both Labour and the Conservatives have secured greater vote share in different post-war contests. One interesting trend has been growing support for the Liberal Democrats at recent elections, (which has been on a par with or slightly higher than support for the Conservatives).

figure 1.5: voting behaviour by those with no religion at General Elections, 1970-2010



Source: BES surveys. Weighted data. Note: The figures are based on small numbers of cases for the earlier BES surveys.

Table 1.1 provides a summary of the historical voting data presented in figures 1.5-1.5. It shows the average vote share for the three main parties for each religious group for the period 1959-2010. The higher Anglican support for the Conservatives is clear with an across-election average of 47.4% compared to 35.5% for Labour. The figures for Catholics present the reverse picture compared to Anglicans: the average vote share for Labour is 54.2% compared to 30.8% for the Conservative Party. Nonconformists have shown, on average, a similar pattern to Anglicans, although with slightly more support for the third party. Church of Scotland/Presbyterianism has been most closely divided between Conservative and Labour, whereas the non-religious group has shown a left-of-centre voting preference comparable to that of Catholics.

table 1.1: average party vote share by religious group, 1959-2010

	Anglicans (%)	Catholics (%)	Non-conformists (%)	Church of Scotland/ Presbyterian (%)	No religion (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	47.8	31.1	41.5	37.9	32.6
<i>Labour</i>	35.5	54.3	36.9	37.3	43.2
<i>Liberal/Liberal Democrat</i>	15.4	12.8	19.3	13.3	19.9

Source: BES surveys. Weighted data.

Note: Figures for the no religion category cover 1970-2010.

## religious affiliation, attendance at religious services and voting behaviour

Religious affiliation is not, of course, the same as religious 'behaviour' (or belief). As well as looking at evidence for 'denominational voting' by analysing voting based on religious affiliation, therefore, we can also utilise data from the BES surveys on frequency of attendance at religious services, based on questions asked in most surveys. This measure of 'behaviour' can be used to indicate the degree of religious commitment or involvement and takes the form of questions asking how often a respondent attends religious services. The BES response options usually range from 'do not attend at all' through to 'attends once a week or more'. In order to provide greater clarity of presentation, the various response options have been combined into two broader groups:

*Anglicans who attend services regularly were consistently more likely to have voted for the Conservatives than those who attended less often or not at all.*

- **Regular attenders:** those who go to religious services once a month or more.
- **Irregular attenders:** those who go to services less often or do not go at all.

By combining these categories with information on religious 'belonging', we can get a picture of regular and irregular attenders within the two largest denominational groups, Anglicans and Catholics.

The data reported in table 1.2 cover the period 1983 to 1997 (frustratingly, questions on religious attendance were not asked in the 2001 and 2005 BES surveys). These data show

that Anglicans who attend services regularly were consistently more likely to have voted for the Conservatives than those who attended less often or not at all, and consistently less likely to have voted Labour (there was little discernible difference in third party voting). Conversely, those who attended less often or not at all showed a greater tendency to support Labour at elections in the 1980s and 1990s (being three times as likely in 1992) compared to frequent attenders.

When classified by their religious attendance, irregularly-attending Catholics tend to be more supportive of Labour in elections than regularly-attending ones, although this is not a consistent pattern (figures were slightly reversed in 1992).

**table 1.2: vote choice by religious denomination and attendance, 1983-1997**

		Regularly-attending Anglicans (%)	Irregularly-attending Anglicans (%)	Regularly-attending Catholics (%)	Irregularly-attending Catholics (%)
1983	<i>Conservative</i>	64.9	49.8	34.3	34.5
	<i>Labour</i>	12.1	24.7	38.8	47.4
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	22.2	25.3	25.8	16.5
1987	<i>Conservative</i>	59.8	51.7	36.0	33.1
	<i>Labour</i>	17.9	25.3	42.7	49.4
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	21.8	22.6	20.1	17.5
1992	<i>Conservative</i>	61.8	52.8	30.3	35.0
	<i>Labour</i>	10.0	31.2	50.8	48.8
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	27.1	15.6	15.6	13.0
1997	<i>Conservative</i>	46.5	36.4	18.6	19.2
	<i>Labour</i>	31.0	46.4	55.1	67.1
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	18.7	14.7	20.3	11.6

Source: BES. Weighted data. Vote share for other parties not shown.

A similar pattern can be seen when the data are extended back to earlier elections. Table 1.3 provides a summary of these data from 1964 onwards, showing the average vote shares of the three parties for the four groups in question, and then calculating the net Conservative vote in each case. This shows that over this period, regularly-attending Anglicans were consistently more likely to vote Conservative; irregularly-attending Anglicans were slightly more likely to vote Conservative; and while Catholics were more likely to vote Labour, their regularity of attendance made little difference.

table 1.3: average party vote share by religious affiliation and attendance, 1964-1997

	Regularly-attending Anglicans (%)	Irregularly-attending Anglicans (%)	Regularly-attending Catholics (%)	Irregularly-attending Catholics (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	57.6	46.4	30.8	31.0
<i>Labour</i>	24.1	38.2	54.0	56.1
<i>Liberal/Liberal Democrats</i>	17.1	15.6	13.6	12.0
<i>Net Con vote share*</i>	+33.5	+8.2	-23.2	-25.1

Source: BES surveys. Weighted data.

\*Average % Conservative vote share minus average % Labour vote share.

Although the BES did not ask questions about religious attendance in 2001 and 2005, the British Social Attitudes survey asked about voting behaviour in the 2001, 2005 and 2010 elections in their surveys whilst also regularly measuring religious affiliation and attendance at services. Data for these three elections are shown in table 1.4, using the same classification of adherence and attendance for Anglicans and Catholics.

These data show a similar pattern to those presented above, with regularly-attending Anglicans more likely to vote for the Conservatives than those who attend less often. At each election, irregularly-attending Anglicans were more likely to vote Labour than Conservative (with the exception of 2010). The differences between regularly- and irregularly-attending Catholics in voting for Labour are less apparent for recent elections (with the exception of 2005).

table 1.4: vote choice by religious denomination and attendance, 2001-2010

		Regularly-attending Anglicans (%)	Irregularly-attending Anglicans (%)	Regularly-attending Catholics (%)	Irregularly-attending Catholics (%)
<b>2001</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	39.6	32.8	20.5	16.6
	<i>Labour</i>	29.3	44.5	59.6	54.4
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	20.1	12.0	14.4	8.8
<b>2005</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	49.1	41.0	23.8	27.1
	<i>Labour</i>	28.8	38.6	58.1	50.0
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	17.8	17.8	14.3	20.3

table continues overleaf

2010	<i>Conservative</i>	51.6	55.6	25.0	21.4
	<i>Labour</i>	19.4	21.8	44.4	46.4
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	25.8	15.5	25.0	32.1

Source: BSA surveys. Weighted data. Vote share for other parties not shown.

Overall, then, attendance makes a difference for Anglicans (regularity inclining them towards the Conservative party) but not for Catholics, where how often one attends church makes no difference to one's loyalty towards the major parties.

## religion, region and voting behaviour

Another important factor which intersects with religious denomination and may cause different patterns of party support is geographical location, specifically the concentration of religious communities in Britain. Traditionally, historical patterns of emigration and settlement have seen Roman Catholics concentrated in urban areas in Scotland and in north-west England. Table 1.5 presents the vote shares for Labour, Conservative and Liberals/Liberal Democrats for Catholics living in England or Scotland. Data are shown for the 1997 to 2010 General Elections.

There is a clear geographical division in the levels of support for Labour amongst Catholics residing in Scotland and England. Levels of support for Labour are consistently higher in Scotland, as is clearly demonstrated by the difference scores reported in the bottom row. This is calculated as the vote share for Labour in England subtracted from that in Scotland, so a positive figure shows higher Catholic voting for Labour in Scotland and a negative figure higher voting in England. The difference on each occasion shows much higher levels of Catholic support for Labour in Scotland, ranging from a low of 19.8% in the 2001 election to a high of 28.7% in the 2010 election.

table 1.5: party vote share for Roman Catholics in England and Scotland, 1997-2010

		1997 (%)	2001 (%)	2005 (%)	2010 (%)
England	<i>Conservative</i>	20.6	27.9	35.8	32.4
	<i>Labour</i>	58.4	56.9	39.4	36.3
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	17.8	14.2	23.6	25.6

table continues overleaf

Scotland	Conservative	5.1	10.0	11.1	7.7
	Labour	79.6	76.7	66.7	65.0
	Liberal Democrat	4.1	3.3	14.8	7.7
Difference		22.5	19.8	27.3	28.7

Source: BES surveys; Scottish Election Survey 1997. Weighted data.

Note: vote share for other parties (including SNP) not shown.

Difference=% vote share for Labour in Scotland minus % vote share for Labour in England.

## minority faiths and voting behaviour at General Elections

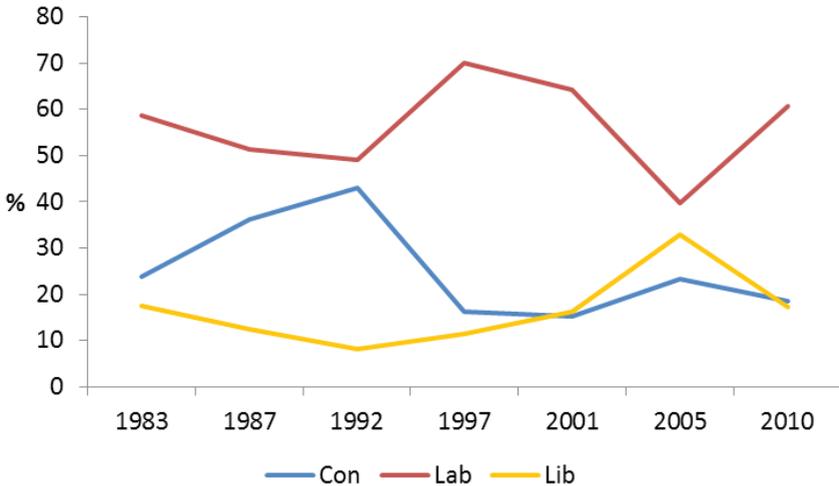
The difference in denominational Christian votes in different regions leads us toward the wider question of minority faith voting during General Elections.

To provide a longitudinal view of this, we first present voting behaviour data for those belonging to non-Christian religions in figure 1.6, covering the period from 1983-2010. We should caution that the numbers of respondents in the BES surveys who are adherents to minority faiths – for example, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus – comprise very small proportions of the overall sample so these figures should be used with caution.

*Inter-election fluctuation notwithstanding, religious minorities have tended to give their support to the Labour Party.*

However, even if only in an illustrative sense, **figure 1.6** does underline the ‘received wisdom’ about the voting habits of religious minorities: that is, inter-election fluctuation notwithstanding, they have tended to give their support to the Labour Party. This becomes clearer when we average the parties’ minority religion vote shares for this period: Labour, 51.5%; Conservative, 27.0%; and Liberal Democrat, 18.5%. It is worth noting the increased support for the Liberal Democrats in the 2005 election, although this fell back in 2010.

figure 1.6: non-Christian faiths and voting behaviour at General Elections, 1983-2010



Source: BES surveys. Weighted data. Note: members of non-Christian religions comprise a very small proportion of each BES survey sample.

We can look more robustly and reliably at the voting behaviour of religious minorities using two additional sources, which both sampled the major ethnic minority groups in Britain. These are:

- The 1997 BES Ethnic Minority Booster Sample.
- The 2010 Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBEs).

Both of these sources allow us to examine the voting behaviour of those who belong to non-Christian faiths, as well as ethnic minority members who affiliate with a Christian denomination. The data from these two sources are presented in table 1.6 and table 1.7.

Table 1.6 reports voting behaviour for five groups based on the 1997 study (no religion, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh). It presents party vote shares for the 1997 election and also from a recall question on voting at the 1992 election. We can see that the strong tendency to vote Labour is present for every group in 1992, when the Conservatives retained office with a much reduced majority – and is even more emphatic in 1997 when Labour achieved a landslide victory. The lowest level of support for Labour in both elections comes from Hindus, who evince the highest level of support for the Conservatives. Support for the Liberal Democrats is at very low levels in the 1992 and 1997 elections, never rising above 6.0% for any group.

table 1.6: ethnic minority voting behaviour at the 1992 and 1997 General Elections

		No religion (%)	Christian (%)	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)	Sikh
1992	<i>Conservative</i>	17.3	26.9	34.8	25.6	16.7
	<i>Labour</i>	76.9	67.6	60.9	73.6	81.8
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	5.8	4.6	4.3	0.8	1.5
1997	<i>Conservative</i>	7.6	8.8	21.6	9.0	9.0
	<i>Labour</i>	92.4	87.6	72.5	83.3	91.0
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	0.0	3.5	4.9	5.6	0.0

Source: BES 1997 ethnic minority booster sample. Weighted data. Data for other party vote share not shown.

Table 1.7 presents results from the EMBES for the 2010 and 2005 elections (the latter again based on a recall question which could be subject to the vagaries of memory). The EMBES survey allows us to use a more differentiated set of religious affiliation categories. We can differentiate between Sunni Muslims and those who belong to another (Shi'a) or no particular tradition; we can also separate members of the two largest Christian denominations in the sample – Catholics and Pentecostals – from other Christians.

table 1.7: ethnic minority voting behaviour at the 2005 and 2010 General Elections

		No religion (%)	Hindu (%)	Sikh (%)	Muslim: Sunni (%)	Muslim: Other (%)	Catholic (%)	Pentecostal (%)	Other Christian (%)
2005	<i>Conservative</i>	6.3	25.7	10.1	6.1	5.7	4.0	3.6	5.6
	<i>Labour</i>	79.7	67.8	84.8	79.9	79.5	87.9	87.8	90.9
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	11.7	6.5	4.5	12.4	11.4	7.1	2.9	2.8
2010	<i>Conservative</i>	12.2	36.2	19.7	13.7	8.4	5.6	8.8	9.4
	<i>Labour</i>	67.3	49.0	68.2	64.4	72.3	80.8	80.5	81.8
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	19.7	14.4	9.9	17.6	16.0	12.0	6.3	7.1

Source: EMBES 2010.

Once again, Labour's electoral dominance amongst minority religious groups is clear. At the 2005 election its vote share was around 80% or higher for each group with the exception of Hindus, who again were most likely out of all the groups to vote Conservative. In 2010, similarly, Labour secured vote shares in the region of 60-80% for all groups except for Hindus, with around half of the latter voting for Labour and over a third voting Conservative.

There are very similar levels of support for Labour across the different Muslim and Christian groups. At both elections, support for the Liberal Democrats, although low across the board, is noticeably higher amongst those with no religious affiliation and Muslims.

One final BES study from 2010 – an internet campaign survey, which had a much larger sample size and asked a question on religious affiliation but not about religious attendance – offers a more detailed analysis by denomination/minority faith, and thus, for example, reveals a picture of the Jewish vote.<sup>11</sup> Table 1.8 has these data.

As other BES data showed, (self-identified) Anglicans were considerably more likely to vote Conservative, and Catholics to vote Labour. Among other Christian denominations, Baptists, Brethren and, perhaps more surprisingly, Methodists were more likely to have voted Conservative, whilst Free Presbyterian and Presbyterian/Church of Scotland were more likely to have voted Labour. Only the URC vote was more likely to be for the Liberal Democrats, although the Methodist vote was also disproportionately for the third party.

Among minority faith groups, the Jewish vote was heavily Conservative and the Muslim vote heavily Labour. The Sikh vote was evenly split between the two main parties, whilst the Buddhist vote was disproportionately for the Liberal Democrats. Finally, and in contrast with the main face-to-face BES survey, the Hindu vote was considerably more for Labour in 2010 than for the Conservatives.

**table 1.8: vote choice in the 2010 General Election by religious affiliation**

Party	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Presbyterian/Church of Scotland (%)	Methodist (%)	Baptist (%)	United Reformed Church (%)	Free Presbyterian (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	45.5	29.3	22.5	37.2	40.5	39.3	25.0
<i>Labour</i>	25.5	39.9	37.6	26.4	25.4	12.5	50.0
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	20.5	23.2	20.8	31.2	23.1	42.9	25.0
<i>Other party</i>	8.5	7.6	19.1	5.2	11.0	5.4	0.0
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>3,253</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>13</b>

*table continues overleaf*

Party	Brethren (%)	Jewish (%)	Hindu (%)	Muslim (%)	Sikh (%)	Buddhist (%)	Other (%)
<i>Labour</i>	33.3	21.0	47.4	36.6	42.9	19.0	25.8
<i>Conservative</i>	46.7	58.0	23.7	7.3	42.9	23.8	28.0
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	13.3	16.0	26.3	52.4	14.3	38.1	31.7
<i>Other party</i>	6.7	5.0	2.6	3.7	0.0	19.0	14.5
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>361</b>

Source: BES 2010 CIPS. Weighted data.

## conclusion

Electoral data from the post-war period up to 2010 confirm that there is such a thing as a religious vote – in as much as voting patterns by religious adherence and attendance are detectable – and that that vote broadly confirms the historic picture of an Anglican preference for the Conservative party and a Catholic preference for the Labour party. The weaker and more fluctuating position of the third party over this time makes the firm association that was historically the case between it and the Nonconformist churches more difficult to detect. In addition to this, religious minorities have on balance favoured the left, traditionally the Labour Party, although there are clear differences within the overall religious minority vote.

## chapter 1 references

- 1 Peter Pulzer, *Political Representation and Elections in Britain* (Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 102.
- 2 David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain* (Pelican Books, 1971), p. 155.
- 3 Stephen Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* (Batsford, 1975); D. W. Bebbington (1984). 'Nonconformity and Electoral Sociology, 1867–1918', *The Historical Journal*, 27, pp. 633–656.
- 4 M. Hornsby-Smith, *Roman Catholics in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 164–65.
- 5 A. Heath, B. Taylor, and G. Toka, 'Religion, Morality and Politics' in R. Jowell, L. Brook and L. Dowds (eds.) *International Social Attitudes: The 10th BSA Report*. Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, pp. 49–80.
- 6 For Figures 1.5-1.5, the data for the 1959 and February 1974 surveys are based on retrospective questions asked in the BES 1964 and BES October 1974 surveys (the February 1974 BES survey did not ask a question on religious affiliation). The question for the 1970 General Election is also based on a recall question asked in the October 1974 survey.
- 7 Ipsos MORI data on party support by religious affiliation at the 1992-2005 General Elections also show Catholics' tendency to support Labour: <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oltemID=2370&view=wide>.
- 8 It is also possible to do this for Nonconformists but partly for reasons of sample sizes (Nonconformists cut by attendance results in low samples) and clarity of presentation we have limited this to the two main denominations.
- 9 It should be noted that for the 1970 and the 1974 elections, data on which come from the October 1974 survey, Anglicans and Catholics are subdivided based on their responses to the following question: 'To what extent would you say you are now a practicing member: very much so, to some extent, or not really?'. They are similarly divided into two groups (i) those who responded 'very much so' or 'to some extent' and (ii) those who responded 'not really'. A question asking directly about religious attendance was not available in the October 1974 survey.
- 10 The EMBES study was obtained from <http://bes2009-10.org/>.
- 11 For more historical analysis of Jewish voting behaviour, see G. Alderman (1995), 'Jewish Political Attitudes and Voting Patterns in England 1945 1987', in R. Wistrich (ed.), *Terms of Survival: The Jewish world since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1995) pp. 249–268.

# the religious vote today

## summary

- The influence of non/religiosity on voting is shaped by other socio-economic factors.
- Anglicans and Catholics follow the national pattern of reporting a higher level of support for the Conservative Party among women than among men. Among other religious groups, women tend to be less likely than men to vote Tory. There is no gender divide within the non-religious vote.
- There is a clear generational increase in support for the Conservative Party amongst Catholics, Anglicans and those of no religion, i.e. older people in each of those groups are more likely to vote Conservative, in a way that again follows the national pattern.
- There are noticeable regional variations in support. For example:
  - support for the Conservative Party in 2010 was generally highest amongst Anglicans in the party's traditional electoral heartlands in Southern and Eastern England.
  - By contrast, Labour secured higher levels of support from Catholics in areas of traditional Labour Party loyalty (e.g. North West England, North England and Yorkshire and Humberside), whereas Catholics showed much greater inclination to support the Conservative Party in other areas (e.g. the East Midlands, Greater London, South East and the South West).
  - For Scotland, there was a preponderant support given by Catholics to Labour.
  - In Wales, Conservative support rests disproportionately on the Anglicans, whereas that of other parties is more evenly spread.
- There is clear evidence of how strong social class is as a determinant within religious groups, as it is within any other. This would not necessarily eradicate existing voting patterns, but it would shape them. For example:

- Anglicans in non-manual occupations were more likely to support the Conservative Party, whilst their co-religionists in manual occupations gave about equal support to the two largest parties.
- Roman Catholics in white-collar employment were slightly more likely to vote Labour than Conservative, whereas the differential in party support was much larger amongst Catholics in manual employment.
- Among Nonconformists, those in white-collar work were more likely to support the Conservatives, but, as with Catholics, those in manual work preferred Labour in 2010 by a large margin.
- A similar class-influence is evident, by proxy, through the data on housing tenure. Thus, for example:
  - Anglicans who rent in the public sector are less likely to vote Conservative than their co-religionists who rent privately or who are owner-occupiers.
  - Similarly, Catholics who are owner-occupiers or are in the private rental sector voted in greater numbers for the Conservatives in the 2010 election, compared to their co-religionists in the public rental sector.
  - This influence is not ubiquitous, however. Among Protestants in Scotland, there is higher support for Labour than Tories among owner-occupiers.
- Overall, therefore, analysis shows that religious affiliation does exercise an influence on electoral behaviour, in the directions already noted, although it tends to be less than traditional electoral influences such as current issues, perceptions of leadership and the socio-economic background of voters (though NB these factors were not controlled for in our analysis).
- For all groups (religious and non-religious) the same series of issues in the same order – the economy, immigration, the election outcome, the deficit – were judged to be the most important issues facing Britain in 2010 (i.e. in the run up to the election). It is worth remembering that this was an unprompted question so the convergence of opinion is all the more notable. Opinion only differed about the fifth most important issue (consumer debt and unemployment).
  - Personal ‘moral concerns’ or ‘family values’ issues, which are often considered to be closer to the heart of religious political concern, were mentioned by very few respondents across the board.

- Not surprisingly, the evaluations of issue competence tended to match the traditional denominational lines of support for the political parties. So, for example, Anglicans were most likely to rate the Conservative party as best able to handle their chosen issue; Catholics did the same for Labour; Nonconformists gave better evaluations to the Conservatives; and those affiliated as Church of Scotland or Presbyterian were more likely to have preferred Labour.
- Looking forward to voting intention – albeit with less robust and comprehensive surveys and subject to mid-term parliamentary conditions – data confirm that Anglicans still express a clear preference for the Conservatives over Labour and the Liberal Democrats, and Catholics register greater support for Labour over the other two main parties – results that are not significantly changed by the introduction of other factors such as religious involvement or belief.

## introduction

This chapter provides a more detailed assessment of the role played by religion at the 2010 General Election, as well as assessing the contemporary evidence on party support by religious affiliation for the post-2010 election period. This section focuses on four aspects of religion and contemporary electoral behaviour:

1. The relationship between religion, other sociological factors and party choice at the 2010 election.
2. Multivariate analysis of how religious affiliation and sociological factors are associated with voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election.
3. Religious groups and the issue agenda at the 2010 General Election.
4. Religion and the next General Election, based on analysis of contemporary polling and survey evidence on voting intention.

## voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election: religion and social factors

This section provides a more detailed focus on the role that religion played in the 2010 General Election, looking in particular at how it interacted with the other sociological characteristics of the British electorate, drawing on the BES Campaign Internet Panel Survey (BES CIPS) undertaken for the 2010 General Election.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, we examine

how the patterns of voting by religious affiliation vary by factors such as gender, age, region, social class, housing tenure, and education. In essence, for each table presented and discussed below we are introducing a third variable alongside voting behaviour and religious affiliation, to look at how religion interrelates with other socio-structural factors.

Given the BES CIPS 2010 comprises such a large sample<sup>2</sup> (much bigger than those for the traditional BES face-to-face cross-sectional surveys), we could present a much more detailed set of categories for religious affiliation in the tables. However, for presentational clarity, and given that we are introducing a series of social characteristics into the analysis, we employ a six-fold classification, largely similar to that used in chapter 1.<sup>3</sup> The categories are as follows:

- Anglicans
- Catholics
- Nonconformists
- Church of Scotland or Presbyterian
- Non-Christian religions (specifically: Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist)
- Those with no religion

Note that each table also presents the overall breakdown of party vote share for each social group category (presented in the 'All' column).

The first two tables look at religion and voting by two demographic factors, gender and age. Gender has the straightforward categories of male and female, while we have divided age into four broad cohorts (18-29 years, 30-49 years, 50-64 years, 65 and older).

## gender

Traditionally, in post-war elections, women were more likely than men to support the Conservative Party, giving rise to the notion of a 'gender gap' in voting behaviour.<sup>4</sup> Is there evidence of such a gap across different religious groups? The data are presented in table 2.1.

There is a small gap for Anglicans, with women more likely than men to vote for the Conservative Party (47.2% compared to 43.3%). This gap is also evident for Catholics, and is slightly larger with 33.3% of women voting Conservative compared to 24.5% of men. Interestingly, where a noticeable gap exists within other religious groupings, it is

usually reversed, with women less likely than men to vote for the Conservatives. There is no gender divide within the non-religious vote.

**table 2.1: voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election by religion and gender**

		All (%)	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Non-conformist (%)	CofS/Presbyterian (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)	No religion (%)
<b>Male</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	32.3	43.3	24.5	41.1	24.8	35.0	28.3
	<i>Labour</i>	28.3	26.4	42.8	15.7	41.4	29.2	27.2
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	28.3	19.7	22.7	34.5	17.2	29.9	33.1
	<i>Other party</i>	11.1	10.6	10.0	8.6	16.6	5.8	11.4
<b>Female</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	35.2	47.2	33.3	36.8	20.0	35.0	29.8
	<i>Labour</i>	27.9	24.7	37.3	30.4	33.6	30.7	27.6
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	28.7	21.2	23.6	26.4	24.3	29.9	33.7
	<i>Other party</i>	8.2	6.9	5.8	6.4	22.1	4.4	8.9

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data.

## age

As well as a traditional ‘gender gap’, there has also been a generational divide in British electoral politics, with older groups more likely to vote Conservative than younger generations. Is this long-standing association found across different faiths and denominations? The data are presented in table 2.2.

There are generational differences in party support across all different religious groups, but the nature of the disparity differs. For example, there is a clear generational increase in support for the Conservative Party amongst Catholics, Anglicans and those of no religion. Amongst Nonconformists, though, the key difference is between those 65 and older and all younger age groups.

Amongst members of non-Christian faiths, the highest levels of support for the Tories are amongst those aged 30-44 years and those 65 and older. There are, then, generational variations in support for the Conservative Party, with the highest levels usually – if not invariably – found amongst those aged 65 and over.

table 2.2: voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election by religion and age group

		All (%)	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Non-conformist (%)	CofS/Presbyterian (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)	No religion (%)
18-29 years	<i>Conservative</i>	29.8	41.9	20.0	35.6	14.3	23.4	24.6
	<i>Labour</i>	27.3	25.8	39.2	15.3	38.1	33.8	23.9
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	36.8	28.9	40.0	47.5	28.6	39.0	43.8
	<i>Other party</i>	6.1	3.4	0.8	1.7	19.0	3.9	7.7
30-44 years	<i>Conservative</i>	31.0	43.4	25.7	34.7	25.0	39.4	27.8
	<i>Labour</i>	32.0	28.7	42.3	22.2	33.3	23.9	30.7
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	25.7	20.8	26.1	36.1	27.1	33.8	34.0
	<i>Other party</i>	11.4	7.1	5.8	6.9	14.6	2.8	7.5
45-64 years	<i>Conservative</i>	39.3	44.9	29.5	35.9	20.0	30.0	29.1
	<i>Labour</i>	24.1	24.9	40.0	29.8	43.9	41.3	28.4
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	24.7	20.4	19.9	24.1	18.7	23.8	29.6
	<i>Other party</i>	11.9	9.8	10.5	10.2	17.4	5.0	13.0
65 years and over	<i>Conservative</i>	44.4	50.3	39.5	46.7	27.8	53.3	41.0
	<i>Labour</i>	24.0	23.6	36.3	19.7	27.8	15.6	21.2
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	20.6	17.2	15.9	28.7	18.1	20.0	24.7
	<i>Other party</i>	11.0	8.8	8.3	4.9	26.4	11.1	13.1

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data.

## regions

Table 2.3 looks at patterns of voting by religious adherence (excluding Church of Scotland/ Presbyterian) in more detail for the English regions (divided into nine areas (East Anglia, East Midlands, Greater London, North, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside) and Wales. Chapter 1 presented evidence showing that Catholics in Scotland have traditionally exhibited higher levels of voting for Labour at General Elections than Catholics in England. Can we see any such patterns amongst the English regions and in Wales? For example, do those belonging to the traditionally Nonconformist churches exhibit higher levels of voting for the Liberal Democrats in particular regions where Nonconformity, historically, was a strong socio-political force?

We can see that there are regional variations in support for the Conservatives amongst Anglicans. For example, support for the Conservative Party in 2010 was generally highest amongst Anglicans in the party's traditional electoral heartlands in Southern and Eastern England (where it is often over 50.0%). Conversely, the party's support was lower in the regions of northern England.

Labour secured higher levels of support from Catholics in North West England, North England and Yorkshire and Humberside, areas of traditional Labour Party loyalty at General Elections. Catholics showed much greater inclination to support the Conservative Party in the East Midlands, Greater London, South East and the South West. Support for the Liberal Democrats from Nonconformists also varied by region, being highest in the North and lowest in East Anglia.

**table 2.3: voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election by religion in the English regions**

		All (%)	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Non-conformist (%)	CofS/Presbyterian (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)
<b>East of England</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	43.3	58.2	39.4	55.0	71.4	38.0
	<i>Labour</i>	18.5	15.6	21.2	17.5	0.0	16.8
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	28.9	20.7	27.3	20.0	28.6	34.5
	<i>Other party</i>	9.3	5.5	12.1	7.5	0.0	10.7
<b>East Midlands</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	36.5	50.4	34.8	35.8	15.4	31.0
	<i>Labour</i>	28.2	24.2	28.3	26.4	30.8	28.7
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	26.7	15.8	28.3	28.3	53.8	32.2
	<i>Other party</i>	8.6	9.6	8.7	9.4	0.0	8.1
<b>Greater London</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	37.6	41.9	39.5	44.9	39.2	31.5
	<i>Labour</i>	27.0	27.8	31.4	28.6	34.2	25.9
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	29.3	24.8	25.6	24.5	22.5	35.8
	<i>Other party</i>	6.0	5.5	3.5	2.0	4.2	6.9

table continues overleaf

<b>North East</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	21.2	27.7	14.0	22.7	20.0	19.8
	<i>Labour</i>	39.4	42.2	56.1	22.7	0.0	42.0
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	31.4	22.9	28.1	50.0	80.0	30.2
	<i>Other party</i>	8.0	7.2	1.8	4.5	0.0	8.0
<b>North West</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	27.4	35.6	21.1	38.3	36.7	24.7
	<i>Labour</i>	41.6	40.5	49.7	21.7	33.3	40.4
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	25.2	18.2	21.6	35.0	23.3	29.1
	<i>Other party</i>	5.8	5.7	7.6	5.0	6.7	5.8
<b>South East</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	44.7	53.6	48.1	44.9	31.0	40.3
	<i>Labour</i>	15.4	16.8	24.4	17.9	16.7	16.0
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	31.2	20.8	21.5	29.5	45.2	33.3
	<i>Other party</i>	8.7	8.8	5.9	7.7	7.1	10.4
<b>South West</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	37.4	50.0	40.8	47.1	50.0	30.2
	<i>Labour</i>	16.2	16.7	22.4	13.7	25.0	14.7
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	37.4	23.9	32.7	31.4	0.0	47.4
	<i>Other party</i>	9.1	9.5	4.1	7.8	25.0	7.7
<b>West Midlands</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	35.8	50.2	25.4	34.6	25.0	29.3
	<i>Labour</i>	29.3	21.6	37.3	36.5	45.8	28.9
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	25.3	17.9	32.8	25.0	29.2	30.1
	<i>Other party</i>	9.6	10.3	4.5	3.8	0.0	11.8
<b>Yorkshire and Humberside</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	30.1	38.4	20.6	35.7	52.9	25.5
	<i>Labour</i>	34.0	32.5	42.6	28.6	29.4	33.4
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	26.4	19.8	29.4	31.0	17.6	31.9
	<i>Other party</i>	9.5	9.3	7.4	4.8	0.0	9.2

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data.

## Scotland and Wales

Building on this evidence, tables 2.4 and 2.5 display vote share by religious affiliation for, respectively, Scotland and Wales. Given the religious composition of their respective societies, we use slightly different sets of categories for religious affiliation. For Scotland (using the following categories: Catholic, Church of Scotland or Presbyterian, other

denomination or religion, no religion), we can see again the preponderant support given by Catholics to Labour, which is similar to that reported for the BES 2010 in-person survey above, with very little support for either the Conservative or Liberal Democrat parties.

Support for the Conservatives is noticeably higher amongst the other groups, and is highest amongst those who belong to some other denomination or faith. Liberal Democrat support is highest amongst those with no religion or who belongs to some other denomination or faith. Separate figures are also given for the SNP, whose strongest support came from those affiliated as Church of Scotland or Presbyterian and those without a religious affiliation.

**table 2.4: voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election by religion in Scotland**

	All (%)	Catholic (%)	Church of Scotland/ Presbyterian (%)	Other denomination/ religion (%)	No religion (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	14.7	7.7	17.1	25.0	13.2
<i>Labour</i>	41.1	65.0	41.3	29.0	38.9
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	22.6	7.7	19.6	27.0	25.9
<i>SNP/other party</i>	18.8	17.9	21.3	11.0	19.0
<i>Other party</i>	3.0	1.7	0.8	8.0	3.1

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data.

Looking at voting behaviour in Wales (using the following categories: Anglican, other Christian, other religion, no religion), we can see that in no group does Labour obtain the high levels of support given by Catholics in Scotland. Its highest level of support at the 2010 election came from other Christian denominations (which includes a few Catholic respondents), but generally its vote share does not exhibit much variation across groups. Not surprisingly, support for the Conservatives is highest amongst Anglicans, and support amongst other groups is considerably lower.

Support for the Liberal Democrats is highest amongst the other Christian and other religion categories, the former including some respondents belonging to Nonconformist denominations. Support for the national party, Plaid Cymru, is highest for those belonging to some other religion, and much lower amongst Anglicans and those with no religious affiliation.

**table 2.5: voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election by religion in Wales**

	All (%)	Anglican (%)	Other Christian (%)	Other religion (%)	No religion (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	22.9	36.5	21.9	15.4	17.8
<i>Labour</i>	34.0	32.1	38.4	33.3	34.2
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	29.0	16.1	26.0	25.6	35.1
<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	7.6	7.3	11.0	15.4	6.1
<i>Other party</i>	6.5	8.0	2.7	10.3	6.7

## social class

**Table 2.6** examines religious voting patterns by social class, an area of considerable interest to previous studies of electoral behaviour in Britain. Here, we have used a dichotomous classification of social class, based on a detailed categorisation of occupational grade used in the BES CIPS.<sup>6</sup> Respondents were asked to best describe the sort of work they did from a list of categories (or, if not working, based on what they did in their last job). We have classified respondents as either in non-manual or manual employment, traditionally labelled as ‘white-collar’ or ‘blue-collar’ work, respectively (excluding those who said they did ‘other’ work and who are not readily classifiable, or who had never worked).<sup>7</sup>

We can see that there are clear variations in party support within religious groups. For example, Anglicans in non-manual occupations are more likely to support the Conservative Party, whilst their co-religionists in manual occupations gave about equal support to the two largest parties.

Roman Catholics in white-collar employment were slightly more likely to vote Labour than Conservative, whereas the differential in party support was much larger amongst Catholics in manual employment (51.3% for Labour compared to 19.8% for the Tories).

Among Nonconformists, those in white-collar work are more likely to support the Conservatives, but, as with Catholics, those in manual work preferred Labour in 2010 by a large margin. Amongst those who affiliate as Church of Scotland or Presbyterian, support for Labour is higher amongst both non-manual and manual workers, but once again the differential in party support is much the greater amongst the latter group.

We also find that amongst those with no religious affiliation, there is higher support for the Conservatives within the non-manual grouping and for Labour amongst those in manual employment, although the differentials are certainly more modest than those found

amongst the Christian denominations. Amongst those with a non-Christian faith, the Conservatives received slightly higher support than Labour amongst both occupational groupings.<sup>8</sup>

table 2.6: voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election by religion and social class

		All (%)	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Non-conformist (%)	CofS/ Presbyterian (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)	No religion (%)
Non-manual occupation ('white-collar')	<i>Conservative</i>	35.6	49.1	31.1	35.5	24.6	35.8	30.3
	<i>Labour</i>	26.1	22.2	37.6	26.4	33.3	30.9	25.8
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	29.8	21.6	23.3	31.2	22.1	28.9	35.0
	<i>Other party</i>	8.5	7.1	8.0	6.9	20.0	4.4	8.9
Manual occupation ('blue-collar')	<i>Conservative</i>	27.9	34.6	19.8	51.8	19.7	38.2	24.3
	<i>Labour</i>	34.8	35.7	52.5	22.4	48.5	29.4	32.2
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	23.4	16.0	20.3	14.1	19.7	20.6	28.1
	<i>Other party</i>	13.9	13.8	7.4	11.8	12.1	11.8	15.4

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data.

## housing tenure

Social class is not the only way to examine differences by socio-economic status in society. We can also look at other indicators of material circumstances, such as housing tenure and level of education. Table 2.7 examines voting patterns by religion based on housing tenure, divided into three categories: owner-occupier (either owning the property outright or has a mortgage), renting in the private sector, and renting in the public or social sector (either from the local council or a housing association).<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that, as with socio-economic status measured by occupation, there are differences within religious groups based on housing tenure. Anglicans who rent in the public sector are less likely to vote Conservative than their co-religionists who rent privately or who are owner-occupiers.

We can also see that Catholics differ in their support for Labour and the Conservatives depending on their housing tenure. Those who are owner-occupiers or are in the private rental sector voted in greater numbers for the Conservatives in the 2010 election,

compared to their co-religionists in the public rental sector. Indeed, 50.9% of the latter group voted for Labour compared to just 17.3% who chose the Conservative Party.

We can also see a similar pattern for Nonconformists, with owner-occupiers much more likely to have voted Conservative over Labour and vice versa for those in the public rental sector.

Amongst the other groups, we also see higher support for the Tories in 2010 amongst those who are owner-occupiers, with the exception of Protestants in Scotland. Here, there is actually considerably higher support for Labour amongst owner-occupiers, and those in the private rental sector actually exhibit a higher vote share for the Tories. Interestingly, amongst those in the public rental sector, support for Labour is actually slightly higher than that registered amongst Catholics in the corresponding group (at 58.6%).

**table 2.7: voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election by religion and housing tenure**

		All (%)	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Non-conformist (%)	CofS/Presbyterian (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)	No religion (%)
<b>Owner-occupier</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	36.5	47.3	31.5	42.0	22.4	37.7	31.8
	<i>Labour</i>	27.1	24.1	38.7	21.6	35.9	28.8	26.8
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	27.3	20.9	22.5	29.5	22.4	29.3	31.5
	<i>Other party</i>	9.1	7.7	7.3	6.9	19.2	4.2	9.8
<b>Private rental</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	26.2	42.4	26.6	25.6	33.3	19.0	21.9
	<i>Labour</i>	26.1	26.2	34.2	32.6	28.6	23.8	25.2
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	38.8	22.3	29.1	34.9	14.3	47.6	44.7
	<i>Other party</i>	8.8	9.2	10.1	7.0	23.8	9.5	8.3
<b>Public rental</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	24.1	36.2	17.3	20.0	13.8	44.0	19.3
	<i>Labour</i>	38.4	34.8	50.9	45.0	58.6	40.0	37.2
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	23.3	14.9	23.6	22.5	13.8	8.0	27.7
	<i>Other party</i>	14.2	14.0	8.2	12.5	13.8	8.0	15.8

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data.

## assessing a sociological model of voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election

The following section provides a multivariate analysis of religion and voting behaviour at the 2010 General Election. The next step on from the analyses undertaken in chapter 1 and the previous section in chapter 2 is to examine whether and in what way religious affiliation affected party choice in the 2010 election. By undertaking multivariate analysis, we can see what effect religion has when accounting for the relative impact of a range of sociological factors which may also influence voter choice (these factors include those looked at in conjunction with religious affiliation in the tables above, as well as additional controls).

Three separate analyses were run to examine how religion affects support for the three largest parties: Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat, who between them command the vast majority of the vote share at General Elections. A series of binary logistic regressions were estimated which examine the factors that increase or decrease the probability of having voted for each of the major parties. This involved regressing a series of explanatory (or independent variables) on the dependent variable, which in each case is a dichotomous measure, scored as 1 if a respondent voted for the particular party and 0 if the respondent voted for any other party (major or minor).

The analysis excludes those respondents who reported they did not vote in the election or who could not remember or did not want to say which party they supported. The models provide a rigorous examination of the sociological factors which influence voting behaviour, though the focus here is obviously on the direction and significance of the effects for religious affiliation. In particular, at the 2010 election, when controlling for other social factors:

- What, if any, is the association between Anglicans and voting Conservative?
- What, if any, is the association between Catholics and voting Labour?
- What, if any, is the association between Nonconformism and voting Liberal Democrat?

The results from the model estimations generally confirm the expected associations between religious affiliation and party support (and are reported in the Appendix), even when accounting for the influence of different indicators of socio-economic status (housing tenure, occupational grade and education).

Looking at the model of voting Conservative versus all other parties, we can see that all groups are less likely to report voting Conservative in 2010 compared to Anglicans, with the exception of those who affiliate as Church of Scotland or Presbyterian.

The results are similarly clear-cut when looking at voting for Labour: all groups are less likely to have supported Labour compared to Catholics, while accounting for the influence of voters' social characteristics.

The traditional denomination association is partly supported for Nonconformists and electoral support for the Liberal Democrats. In this model, both Catholics and Anglicans are less likely to have voted Liberal Democrat. Interestingly, there are no significant differences between, on the one hand, Nonconformists and, on the other, members of other religions and those with no affiliation.

Based on the sociological models of voting presented here, there are significant effects for the religious affiliation categories, which are generally in the expected direction. Moreover, these effects are still present when accounting for other socio-demographic traits which are established correlates of religious orientations (such as age and sex).

We can also pay closer attention to the regional patterns of religion and party support by examining voting behaviour for the Scottish subsample within the BES CIPS. This is facilitated by the large overall sample size, which permits more detailed analysis of the specifics of voting in geographical regions. The Scottish subsample consists of 1,162 respondents. Results from this supplementary analysis are again presented in the Appendix.

Here, given the presence of genuine four-party competition in Scotland at General Elections in recent years, we also separately examine the factors which predict support for the SNP. Therefore, four separate binary logistic regression models were estimated, also using a different set of categories for religion given Scotland's differing religious fabric. Specifically, four dummy variables were produced: for Catholics, Church of Scotland or Presbyterian, other denomination or religion (including those belonging to other Christian denominations, which were relatively few in number), and no religion. Again, the chosen reference category for religion varies by model. The models include a similar set of sociological characteristics to those used above, with the obvious exception of regional location, as well as omitting ethnic group (with very few respondents in Scotland reporting having a non-white ethnic background).

The main finding in the results for voting in Scotland in 2010 is the effect for Catholics, as indicated by the evidence presented in the previous chapter. We can see that all groups are less likely to have voted Labour compared to Catholics in 2010, while the latter are less likely to have voted either Conservative (compared to Church of Scotland/Presbyterian) or Liberal Democrat (compared to those with no religion). The only notable finding for support for the SNP is that those belonging to the other religion group are less likely to have cast their ballot for the nationalists compared to those with no religion.

## religious affiliation and the issue agenda at the 2010 election

Another way of exploring the interaction of religion and the 2010 election is by examining the issue agenda of the contest, focusing on which issues were of greatest importance to the different religious groups. In particular, was there uniformity or variety in perceived issue importance? We again rely on evidence from the BES 2010 CIPS, using the same set of religious affiliation categories employed in previous sections of the chapter.

Table 2.8 shows responses to a question asking about the most important issue currently facing Britain (note the question does not ask about which issue is personally most important to the respondent or their family). This question was open-ended, meaning respondents could mention any issue unprompted and were not presented with a list of options to select from. The top five issues are shown rank-ordered in table 2.8, which also shows the proportions in each category mentioning other broad issues – lack of family values, morals and youth – areas that have often been deemed as central to religious political attitudes and ‘values voting’.

*For all religious groups, then, it was very much the ‘bread-and-butter’ issues which predominated as the most pressing national issues at the 2010 election.*

The data are notable for the consistency in relative issue importance across the different religious groups. All groups placed the economy as their most important issue, followed by immigration, the election outcome, and the deficit. There was some difference over the fifth most important issue: either unemployment or consumer debt or both of these ranked equally. Interestingly, moral concerns or family values, issues which could engage traditionalist worldviews based on faith or denomination-specific teachings, were mentioned by very few respondents across-the-board.

For all religious groups, then, it was very much the ‘bread-and-butter’ issues which predominated as the most pressing national issues at the 2010 election. Unfortunately, there was not a question available in the BES 2010 surveys which asked directly whether a respondent’s religion was important for or helped to influence, their party choice.

table 2.8: most important issue in the 2010 General Election by religious affiliation

Rank order	Issue	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Non-conformist (%)	CofS/ Presbyterian (%)	Non-Christian faith (%)	No religion (%)
1	<i>Economy in general</i>	45.9	50.5	46.0	58.1	51.6	47.3
2	<i>Immigration</i>	20.1	17.0	14.3	12.1	10.2	14.1
3	<i>Election outcome</i>	7.1	7.0	9.5	5.7	6.5	7.4
4	<i>Deficit</i>	6.6	3.2	7.7	5.4	5.5	5.2
5	<i>Various*</i>	3.8a	2.6b	3.6b	3.4c	3.6b	3.4b
	<i>Family values – lack</i>	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.1
	<i>Morals</i>	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.0	0.4	0.0
	<i>Youth</i>	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data. Base: those who voted in the General Election.

Question: 'Now, a few questions about the issues and problems facing Britain today. As far as you're concerned, what is the SINGLE MOST important issue facing the country at the present time?'

\*a Consumer debt.

b Unemployment.

c Consumer debt and unemployment equally ranked.

As a follow-up to the question on the most important issues, respondents were probed as to which party was, in their view, best able to handle that issue. Responses for this question by religious affiliation are presented in table 2.9. This shows the general evaluations of the parties for each group – regardless of the issue selected – and is not broken down by each specific issue, which would necessitate a plethora of tables.

We can see that, not surprisingly, the evaluations of issue competence tend to match the traditional denominational lines of support for the political parties. So we find that Anglicans are most likely to rate the Conservative party as best able to handle their chosen issue (43.7% compared to 23.0% for Labour). Catholics are most likely to rate Labour as the party most able to deal with their most important issue (though they only have a slightly advantage over the Conservatives). Nonconformists gave better evaluations to the Conservatives whilst those affiliated as Church of Scotland or Presbyterian were more likely to have preferred Labour. The other groups all favoured the Conservatives over Labour but only by small margins.

The Liberal Democrats were rated the best party by relatively small proportions of each group, only rising above 10% for Nonconformists, members of other religions and those with no affiliation.

table 2.9: party best able to handle the most important issue by religious affiliation

	Anglican (%)	Roman Catholic (%)	Non-conformist (%)	CofS/ Presbyterian (%)	Non-Christian faith (%)	Other religion (%)	No religion (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	43.7	29.2	35.8	27.9	31.5	24.2	28.1
<i>Labour</i>	23.0	34.4	25.4	41.3	30.0	20.8	25.3
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	5.3	8.3	11.3	6.7	8.8	15.2	13.0
<i>Other party</i>	8.2	6.3	5.0	6.0	4.8	12.1	8.3
<i>None</i>	6.1	7.8	7.6	7.0	9.9	12.1	8.1
<i>No important issues</i>	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.7	1.1	0.0	0.3
<i>Don't know</i>	13.8	13.9	14.7	10.4	13.9	15.5	16.9

Source: BES CIPS 2010. Weighted data. Base: those who voted in the General Election.  
Question: 'Which party is best able to handle this issue?'

Overall, analysis of the 2010 electoral behaviour in this section has shown that religious groups differ in their support for political parties on the basis of characteristics such as age, region, social class and housing tenure. This was always going to be the case – even in the US there is noticeable voting variation within religious groups by socio-economic factors. It is clear that there is even more in Britain and that whatever else it is, the religious vote is not a bloc vote.

Multivariate analysis of voting in 2010 showed that, when including a series of other sociological factors which might affect party choice, there were significant differences between religious traditions. These were generally in the expected direction given traditional associations. This was the case for both the British electorate as a whole and for voters in Scotland.

The analysis also demonstrated that there is no obvious evidence of concerns which might narrowly appeal to religious voters – such as moral questions or family values – being of particular importance. Across religious groups, it was the 'bread-and-butter' concerns which featured on their personal issue agendas.

## the religious vote tomorrow

This chapter has so far looked at the religious vote up to the 2010 General Election. Examining 'the religious vote tomorrow' – how religious identities might shape the next General Election (fixed for May 2015) and beyond – is a rather different proposition. Having

used data based on questions probing voting behaviour, we now turn to analysis of current or future voting intentions, which are not, of course, always realised at a later date.

Recent surveys and polls may shed light on religion and contemporary party choice but they are also vulnerable to 'mid-term' conditions, when governments are often trailing in the polls, opposition parties appear on the up, and local issues, which disappear by the time of the next election, loom disproportionately large.

Such caveats noted, this section assesses the best available evidence to document the non/religious patterns of party support over the last three years, with data coming from a variety of national surveys and opinion polls, drawing especially on the Westminster Faith Debates survey conducted in January 2013.<sup>10</sup>

This asked about current voting intentions ('If there were a General Election held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?') and, importantly for our analysis, contained a rich set of questions on different aspects of religion. We use information on respondents' religious affiliation, whether they are involved in group activity, and their beliefs in God or a higher power. By combining this information, as we did with affiliation and attendance in chapter 1, we can see whether there are intra-group differences in party support. For example, are those Anglicans or Catholics who participate in group activity or who maintain a traditional belief in God more likely to express support for Conservative or Labour, respectively, compared to their less active or more sceptical co-religionists?

Table 2.10 presents the evidence for current voting intention (early-2013) by religious affiliation. We can see a similar pattern to what has gone before. Even taking into account the wider political context – the mid-term of the electoral cycle – Anglicans clearly demonstrate greater support for the Conservative Party than all other groups. Catholics, similarly, show most support for Labour, as do members of non-Christian religions, reflecting their historical tradition of voting Labour at General Elections.

Interestingly, while the Liberal Democrats suffer from low levels of support across the board, Nonconformists are more likely to say they would vote for them in a hypothetical election compared to those affiliated with other Christian denominations. Support for the Liberal Democrats is also higher amongst those who belong to some other religion, those who do not reveal their affiliation and those with no affiliation. Support for the minor or nationalist parties is highest amongst those who affiliate as Church of Scotland or Presbyterian, reflecting their proclivity for the SNP in Scotland.

table 2.10: current vote intention by religious affiliation<sup>11</sup>

	Anglican (%)	Catholic (%)	CofS/ Presbyterian (%)	Non-conformist (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)	None (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	43.4	27.3	26.4	29.6	31.4	27.0
<i>Labour</i>	36.1	46.1	32.2	41.4	54.6	45.5
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	7.5	11.0	11.5	17.2	5.8	13.9
<i>Other party</i>	13.0	15.7	29.9	11.8	8.2	13.7

Source: Westminster Faith Debates/YouGov survey, January 2013. Weighted data.

Next, we use questions on belief in God to sub-divide each religious group, in this instance into two groups, the first believing in God, the second who offered another response, such as believing in a higher power, being unsure, not knowing, or not believing in either God or a higher power. The results are shown in table 2.11.

We can see that there are noticeable differences within some denominations based on whether a respondent adheres to a traditional belief in God or not. Interestingly, this is not the case for Anglicans, with similar levels of support for the Conservatives amongst both subgroups. However, when we look at party support amongst Catholics and Nonconformists, we see that the levels of support for the Tories are noticeably higher amongst those with a traditional belief in God; although the opposite is the case for Church of Scotland/Presbyterian affiliates.

Amongst members of non-Christian religions, there is a stronger link to electoral support for Labour amongst those who express a firm belief in God. Of course, as already noted in this report, there are not any measures of religious belief in the BES surveys with which to corroborate these contemporary patterns of party support.

**table 2.11: current vote intention by religious affiliation and belief in God**

		Anglican (%)	Catholic (%)	CofS/Presbyterian (%)	Non-conformist (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)	Other (%)	Prefer not to say (%)	None (%)
<b>Believe in God</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	43.8	33.3	20.0	40.2	26.4	35.7	11.8	26.0
	<i>Labour</i>	39.7	41.1	24.0	43.5	61.8	32.1	52.9	62.0
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	8.0	10.1	0.0	8.7	5.5	10.7	35.3	2.0
	<i>Other party</i>	8.5	15.5	56.0	7.6	6.4	21.4	0.0	10.0
<b>Other response</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	43.1	20.5	30.2	16.9	36.1	25.0	32.0	27.0
	<i>Labour</i>	34.3	51.7	34.9	39.0	45.4	35.4	48.0	44.8
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	7.3	11.9	15.9	27.3	7.2	18.8	10.7	14.3
	<i>Other party</i>	15.3	15.9	19.0	16.9	11.3	20.8	9.3	13.8

Source: Westminster Faith Debates/YouGov survey, January 2013 (n=4,437 GB adults). Weighted data.

Table 2.12 shows party support – again based on current voting intention – for categories based on combining information for affiliation and group activity, this latter category being based on the question, ‘Do you currently engage in any religious or spiritual practices with other people, for example attending services in a place of worship or elsewhere, or taking part in a more informal group?’

It should be noted that this differs from the questions on religious attendance used in chapter 1 which measured the frequency of such behaviour, and is therefore a less finely-grained measure of activity. Each religious group is therefore divided between those who respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the above question, the active and the less active or inactive. Those who did not belong to a religion are excluded here.

Focusing again on support for the Conservative Party, we can see that involvement in group activity is less of a differentiating factor of party support than was the holding of traditional beliefs. Across most groups there are at most only minor differences in levels of support, which are negligible in some cases. The clear exceptions to this pattern are those who identify as Church of Scotland or Presbyterian – a reversal of the pattern for belief in God, and those who have some other affiliation.

**table 2.12: current vote intention by religious affiliation and involvement in group activity**

		Anglican (%)	Catholic (%)	CofS/ Presbyterian (%)	Non-conformist (%)	Non-Christian religion (%)	Other (%)
<b>Yes</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	43.6	29.4	36.8	30.0	33.3	43.3
	<i>Labour</i>	32.7	43.1	26.3	45.0	53.1	33.3
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	10.4	13.7	10.5	15.0	6.3	6.7
	<i>Other party</i>	13.4	13.7	26.3	10.0	7.3	16.7
<b>No</b>	<i>Conservative</i>	43.3	26.3	23.2	29.4	30.0	20.9
	<i>Labour</i>	36.7	47.5	33.3	39.4	55.5	34.9
	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	7.0	9.7	11.6	18.3	5.5	20.9
	<i>Other party</i>	12.9	16.6	31.9	12.8	9.1	23.3

Source: Westminster Faith Debates/YouGov survey, January 2013 (n=4,437 GB adults). Weighted data.

Further evidence on religion and party choice comes from a YouGov survey undertaken for the *Sunday Times* in March 2013, which included a set of questions on religious issues. table 2.13 presents data for religious affiliation and current vote intention. It shows that, whilst there is a preference for Conservative over Labour amongst members of the Churches of England, Scotland and Wales (38% and 33%, respectively), Catholics favour Labour by almost a two-to-one margin (48% compared to 25%). A plurality support Labour amongst members of other religions and those who do not have religion, whilst the Conservatives are marginally ahead amongst 'other Christians'. Liberal Democrat support is highest amongst other Christians – which would include Nonconformists – and non-Christian faiths.

**table 2.13: current vote intention by religious affiliation**

	Church of England, Scotland and Wales (%)	Catholic (%)	Other Christian (%)	Other religion (%)	No religion (%)
<i>Conservative</i>	38.0	25.0	33.0	19.0	28.0
<i>Labour</i>	33.0	48.0	32.0	46.0	43.0
<i>Liberal Democrat</i>	7.0	3.0	23.0	18.0	12.0
<i>Other party</i>	21.0	25.0	12.0	17.0	17.0

Source: YouGov/Sunday Times survey, 14-15 March 2013 (n=1,918 GB adults).

## conclusion

The (albeit limited) contemporary evidence reviewed in this section has shown that there are clear differences in voting intention based on religious affiliation, which to some extent represents 'business as usual'. Polling conducted in early-2013, nearly three years into the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, shows that Anglicans express a clear preference for the Conservative Party over Labour and the Liberal Democrats, and Catholics register greater support for Labour over the other two main parties. The evidence for differences in party support within the main religious groups – whether classified by religious involvement or belief – is very limited and does not provide much evidence for within-denominational differences based on religiosity.

## chapter 2 references

- 1 The dataset and accompanying documentation were obtained from the BES 2009/10 project website: <http://www.bes2009-10.org/>.
- 2 The post-election cross-section used here consists of 13,356 respondents.
- 3 A very small proportion of the sample (3%) was classed as 'other' based on the question on religious affiliation, and they are not included in the analysis undertaken in this section.
- 4 Pippa Norris, 'Gender-A Gender Generation Gap?', in Geoffrey Evans and Pippa Norris eds, *Critical Elections: British Parties and Voters in Long-Term Perspective*, (London: Sage, 1999), pp. 148-163.
- 5 Butler and Stokes, op cit; A. Heath, R. Jowell, J. Curtice, G. Evans, J. Field and S. Witherspoon, *Understanding Political Change*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991).
- 6 The following occupational categories were collapsed into the 'non-manual' group: professional or higher technical work; manager or senior administrator; clerical; sales or services; and small business owner. The following were combined to form the 'manual' group: foreman or supervisor of other workers; skilled manual work; and semi-skilled and unskilled manual work. Those in the BES CIPS who were classified as 'other' in relation to occupation or who said they had never worked are excluded from this analysis.
- 7 The following occupational categories were collapsed into the 'non-manual' group: professional or higher technical work; manager or senior administrator; clerical; sales or services; and small business owner. The following were combined to form the 'manual' group: foreman or supervisor of other workers; skilled manual work; and semi-skilled and unskilled manual work. Those in the BES CIPS who responded 'other' in relation to occupation or who said they had never worked are excluded from this analysis.
- 8 This political balance is different from that observed in chapter 1, where 'religious minorities' were more disposed to Labour than Conservative. The reason for this is that this sample, unlike that in chapter 1, does not take ethnicity into account and therefore has a higher proportion of Jewish voters, who are disproportionately Conservative, thus rebalancing the overall opinion of this category.
- 9 Table 15 excludes the small proportion of respondents who indicated they did rent or own a property but lived in some other form of accommodation (such as a hostel or lodgings).
- 10 The sample consisted of 4,437 adults with fieldwork undertaken online between 25 and 30 January 2013, by YouGov. The survey is representative of all GB adults (aged 18 years and over). The website for the Westminster Faith Debates 2013 is: <http://faithdebates.org.uk/>.
- 11 'Other' and 'Prefer not to say' categories removed from table for clarity.

# political values: left vs. right

## introduction

Voting is arguably the most important, but by no means the only or the subtlest, measure of political attitude. This chapter, and the following two, supplement our study of the religious vote by looking at questions of the values that often underpin political opinion and electoral behaviour.

The British Social Attitudes survey asks a range of questions (usually annually) which it uses to determine people's position on the three major socio-political axes: Left-Right, Libertarian-Authoritarian, and Individualist-Welfarist. These are the subjects of the next three chapters, each of which does three things:

1. Looks at public opinion on the relevant issues, and overall, according to religious affiliation, covering the last ten years for which there are data.
2. Looks at public opinion on the relevant issues, and overall, according to religious attendance, covering the last ten years for which there are data.
3. Combines religious affiliation and attendance to position particular groups on the relevant scale, for the last year for which there are data.

All of this is done with the over-arching question in mind: how far does someone's 'religion' or lack of it make a difference to their political views?

## 'left-right': by affiliation

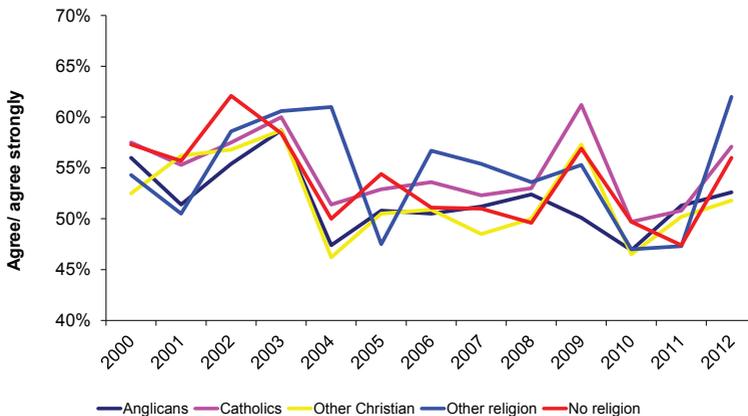
The left-right axis comprises five statements with which respondents are invited to "agree strongly", "agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree" or "disagree strongly". These are:

- Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers.

- Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance.
- Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.
- Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth.
- There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.

Attitudes to business over the last 12 years according to religious affiliation show that, significant fluctuations in public opinion notwithstanding, people from 'Other religions' have tended to have the most sceptical attitude, with Catholics next most sceptical. By contrast, Anglicans and 'Other Christians' have been least likely to agree that "big business benefits owners at the expense of workers", although the difference between groups (excepting 'Other religions') is small.

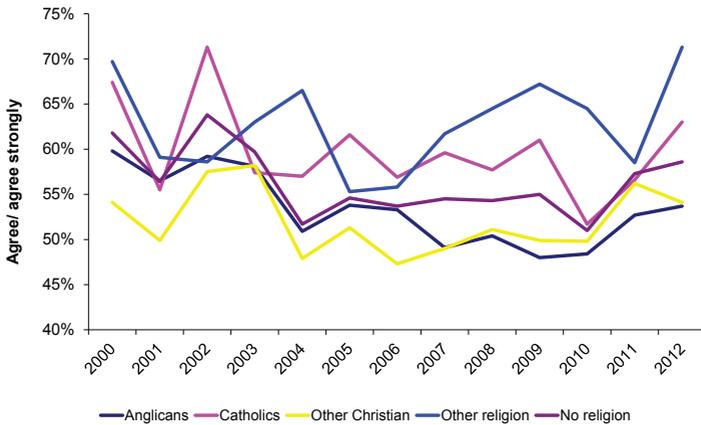
figure 3.1: "big business benefits owners at the expense of workers" (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Attitudes to management show a similar pattern. 'Other religions' are most likely to be sceptical towards management, Catholics being next most sceptical, and Anglicans and "Other Christians" least. In this instance, however, the differences are more significant. In 2012, 71% of "Other religions" agreed or agreed strongly that "management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance", as did 63% of Catholics. This compared with 54% of Anglicans and 'Other Christians'. The results here are also more consistent. 'Other religions' and Catholics have been consistently more sceptical of management over the last decade.

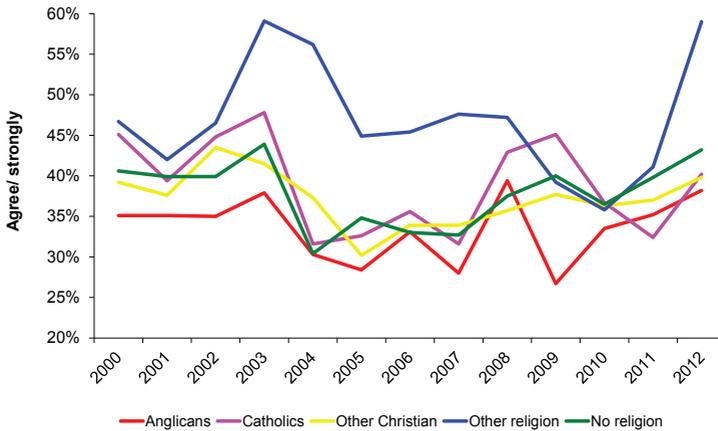
figure 3.2: “management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Moving from business itself to government, respondents were asked whether they think “Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.” Not surprisingly, this has seen a general upward trend over the last five years. The most recent data for 2012 show that, with one exception, there is no real difference between religious groups in their attitudes to the question of government redistribution (four of the five groups were between 38% and 43% in their agreement level). The one exception was, again, the ‘Other religion’ group, 59% of whom agreed/agreed strongly with the idea of government redistribution. Although this was their highest agreement rate to this question since 2003, they nonetheless registered the highest level of agreement in eight of the last ten years, only twice eclipsed by Catholics and only once by any significant margin.

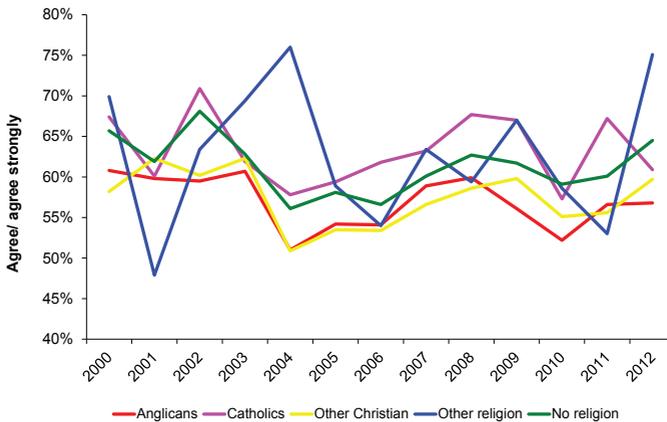
figure 3.3: "government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off" (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

The two final statements comprising the left-right scale were more general. One is the statement: "Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth". In this more generalised statement, 'Other religions' again showed the most distinct views, 75% agreeing or agreeing strongly in 2012, compared to the next highest agreement (this time among the 'No religion' group) which was 65%. The other three groups clustered together with between 57% and 61% agreement, the Anglicans again being least likely to disagree.

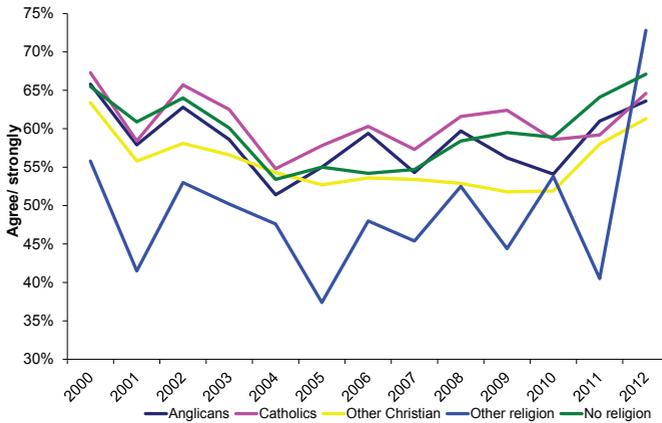
figure 3.4: “ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Finally among the left-right statements is the general attitudinal one, “there is one law for the rich and one for the poor”. The results for this show a similar pattern to previous statements, in that the ‘Other religion’ group showed the greatest level of agreement (73% in 2012), while the others clustered together between 61% and 67%. However, unusually, the ‘Other religion’ group has also consistently shown the lowest level of agreement over the last decade, and had also fluctuated considerably more than the other groups (between 37% in 2005 and 73% in 2012), suggesting that its agreement with this statement is more volatile and unreliable than that of other groups, which remained comparatively constant over the same period.

figure 3.5: “there is one law for the rich and one for the poor” (by affiliation)



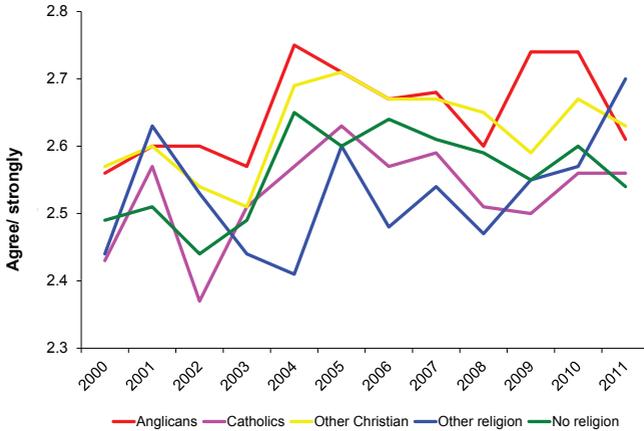
British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

These five statements make up the left-right scale for the British Social Attitudes. Between them they suggest the following initial and tentative conclusions:

- People who consider themselves belonging to the “other religion” group (the majority of whom will be Muslim) are most consistently left in the left-right axis
- Catholics are next most consistently left in the left-right axis
- Anglicans are most consistently right in the left-right axis
- People of no religion tend slightly to be to the left in the left-right axis
- These differences, with the exception of the first, are not noticeably significant and consistent. Indeed, there is little significant and consistent difference in the left-right position between Anglicans, Catholics, Other Christian and No religions.

These conclusions can be seen in the overview of the Left-Right scale, in which the various responses to each of the key statements is aggregated and then plotted on a scale in which 1 is the most left-wing position possible, whereas 5 is the most right wing.

figure 3.6: left (1) – right (5) scale: overall (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

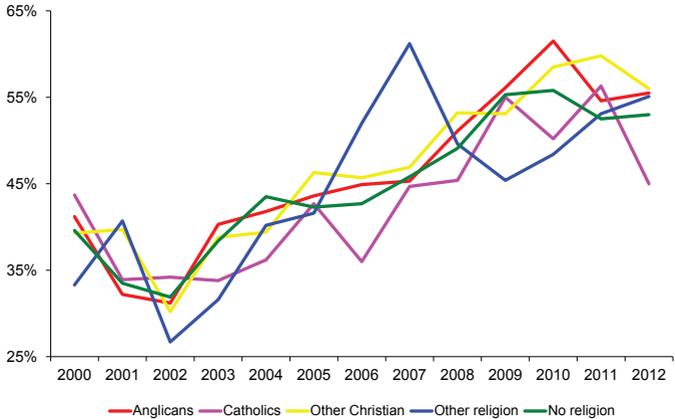
This aggregated response loses the detail of the individual statements, but does at least offer an overview of the left-right landscape according to denominational affiliation.

One other question that the BSA asks is relevant at this juncture. This is the question about tax and spending options, asking respondents which of the following three they think government should choose:

- Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits;
- Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now; and
- Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits.

The results for this are surprising given the opinion data above. As the following chart shows, throughout the 2000s the proposal to keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level was the ascendant option, and although the 'Other religion' and Catholic groups would oscillate around this core (the Catholics tending to favour the option less than other groups), it was clearly growing in popularity across denominations.

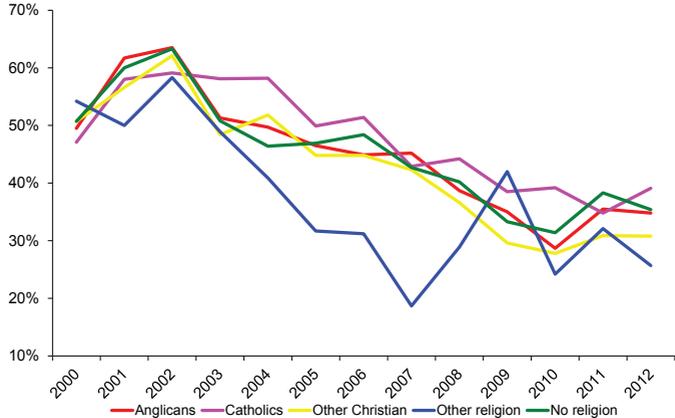
figure 3.7: government should... keep [both tax and spend] the same (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

The ascendance of the status quo option came at the expense of the “tax and spend” option, which fell precipitously over the decade. Catholics were slightly more pro-tax and spend when compared to the other groups but, interestingly, given the theoretical positions outlined above, it was the ‘Other religion’ that tended to be slightly – and times noticeably – more hostile to tax and spend.

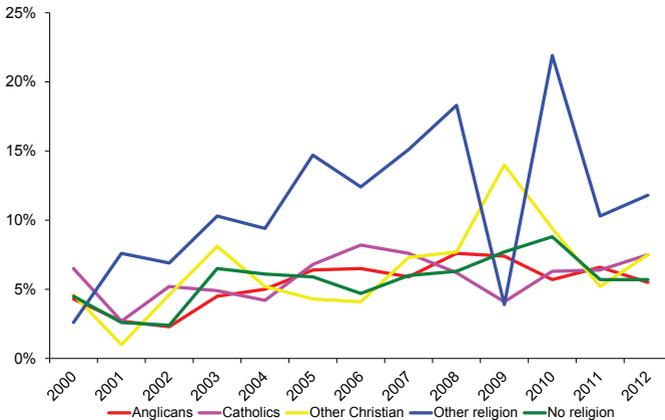
figure 3.8: government should... increase tax and spend more (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

This is confirmed by the data for those who advocate tax cuts and reduced spending. Long the least popular option – at least in opinion polls – this grew slowly over the 2000s, but was usually – and sometimes considerably – more popular among the ‘Other religion’ group, the support of the other four groups hovering around the 7% mark.

figure 3.9: government should... [reduce] tax-and-spend (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

These data on tax and spending serve as a reminder that public opinion on economic, i.e. traditional left-right issues, cannot straightforwardly be translated into clear economic views and that opinions on the concrete issue of tax-and-spend are felt more viscerally (and materially) than abstract ones relating to fairness, wealth and poverty.

## ‘left-right’: by attendance

Religious affiliation is one way of analysing social opinion, one whose deficiencies are well known.<sup>1</sup> Another way of conducting the analysis is by frequency of attendance – what people do (or do not do) about their religion. The British Social Attitudes survey asks respondents, “Apart from special occasions such as weddings, funerals and baptisms, how often nowadays do you attend services or meetings connected with your religion?”, giving them various options to respond:

1. Once a week or more
2. At least once in two weeks
3. At least once a month

4. At least twice a year
5. At least once a year
6. Less often
7. Never

Seven categories is too many for easy analysis (not least as some of the categories return very low sample sizes), so we have combined them in the following way:

“Once a week or more” + “At least once in two weeks” + “At least once a month” = Frequently-attending.

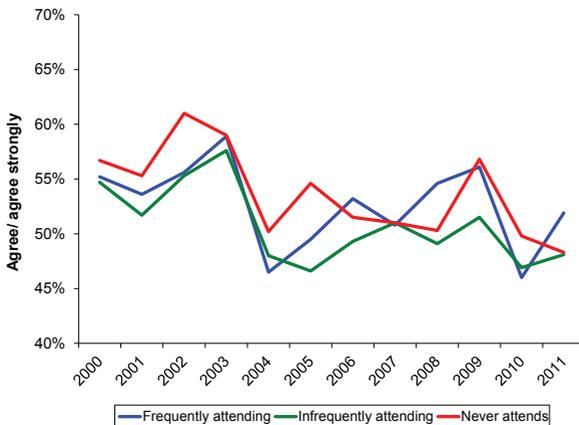
“At least twice a year” + “At least once a year” + “Less often” = Infrequently-attending.<sup>2</sup>

“Never” (which included those who respond ‘never’ to the attendance question and those in the sample who were not asked this question, i.e. so we are looking at the full sample) = “Never attends.”

Using these three categories – ‘frequently-attending’, ‘infrequently-attending’ and ‘never attends’ we have analysed responses on the left-right scale.

Attitudes to Big Business do not vary hugely according to religiosity. In 2011, frequent attenders were most likely to feel that big business benefits owners at the expense of workers, but the margin was not great and the difference with other groups not consistent.

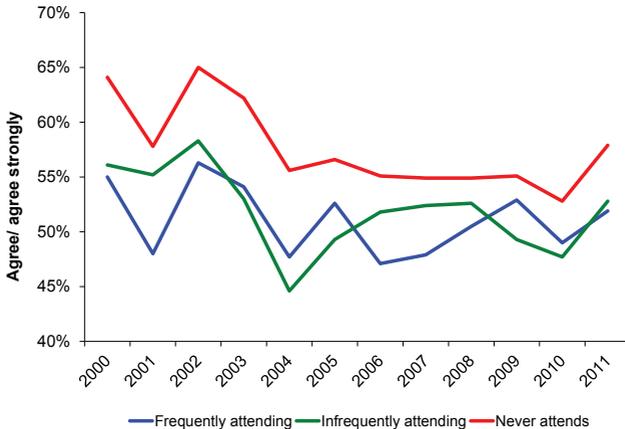
figure 3.10: “big business benefits owners at the expense of workers” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Attitudes to management were more clear cut, with those who never attended a religious service being noticeably and consistently more sceptical in their attitude to management than the frequent and infrequent attenders (between whom there was no notable difference).

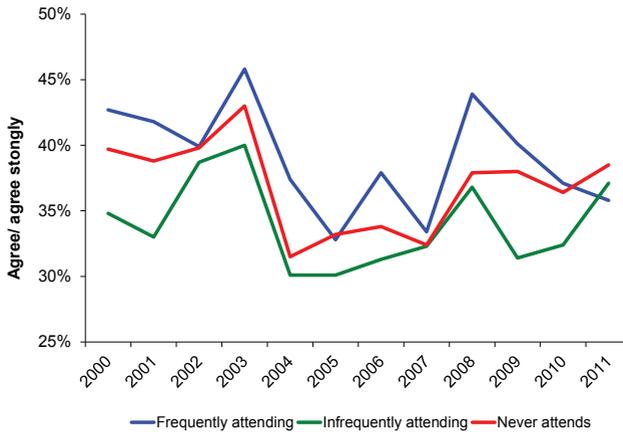
figure 3.11: “management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

There was less clarity in the question relating to whether “government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.” In 2011, the three groups largely agreed on this matter, with 36%-39% agreement in each category. Over the last ten years, however, it was the frequent attenders who tended to agree most consistently with this statement, although the difference between them and the non-attenders has rarely been very large.

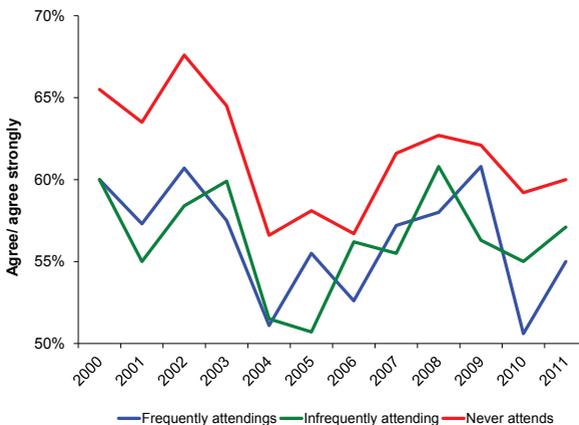
figure 3.12: “government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

A much clearer difference could be seen in attitudes to whether “ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth.” According to this question, non-attenders have been consistently and on occasion significantly more inclined to agree than other groups, and remained so, although not substantially, in 2011.

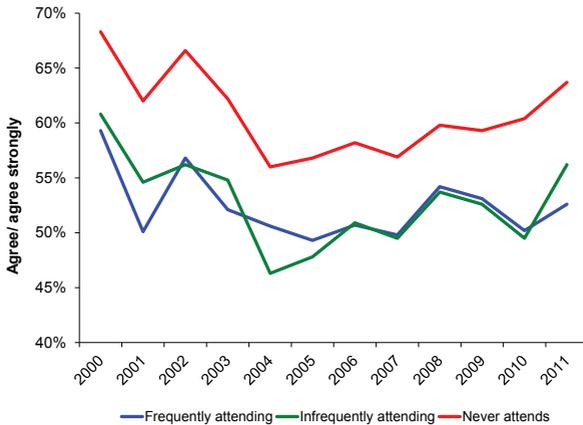
figure 3.13: “ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

This difference was even more notable regarding the issue of whether “there is one law for the rich and one for the poor.” Here, the non-attenders were consistently and significantly more likely to agree (that there was one law for the rich and one for the poor), the difference with the other groups (between whom there was little difference) remaining significant in 2011.

figure 3.14: “there is one law for the rich and one for the poor” (by attendance)

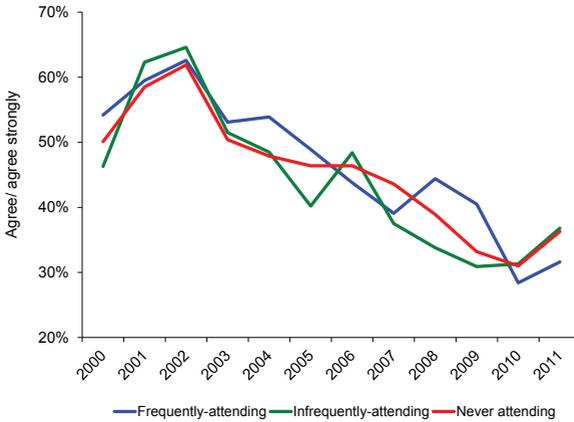


Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Between them, these data show that religious attendance is a better indicator of left-right views than simply religious affiliation. Those views are not consistent in all the issues that make up the left-right axis, and have not been consistent over the last decade. Nevertheless, it is clear that those people who never attend a religious service are more likely to be on the left of the political spectrum, particularly when it comes to abstract opinions on poverty and wealth, than are other groups.

Do these views hold when it comes to the more concrete issue of tax-and-spend? Only partially, is the answer. Non-attenders have fallen out of love with tax-and-spend just as much as other groups have over the last 10 years.

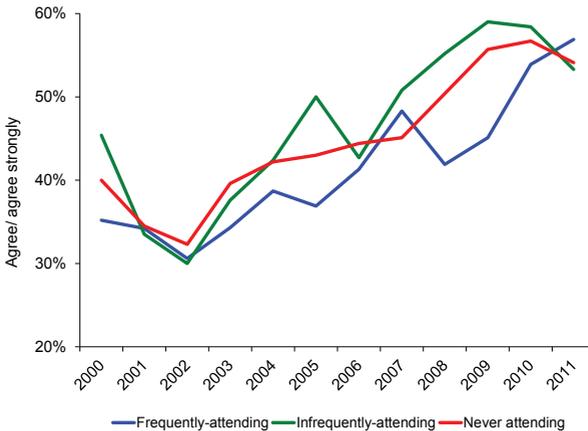
figure 3.15: government should... increase tax and spend more (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Similarly, the rise of people who agree that government should keep tax and spending the same has been even across groups, with no difference by frequency of attendance.

figure 3.16: government should... keep [both tax and spend] the same (by attendance)

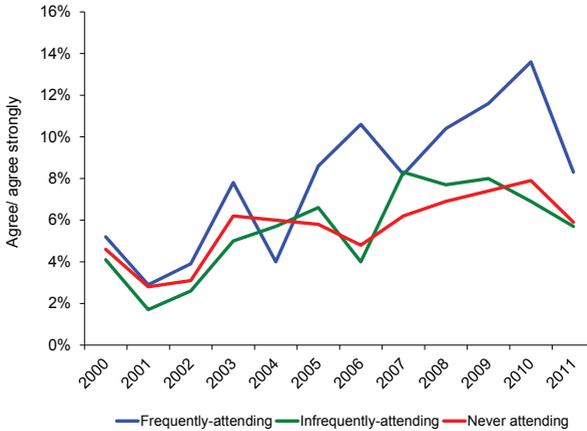


Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

The only instance where there has been a difference is in whether government should tax less and cut spending, and even here the difference (a) was not with non-attenders but

frequent attenders, who consistently thought that was what government should do and (b) was, in any case, very minor.

figure 3.17: government should... [reduce] tax-and-spend (by attendance)

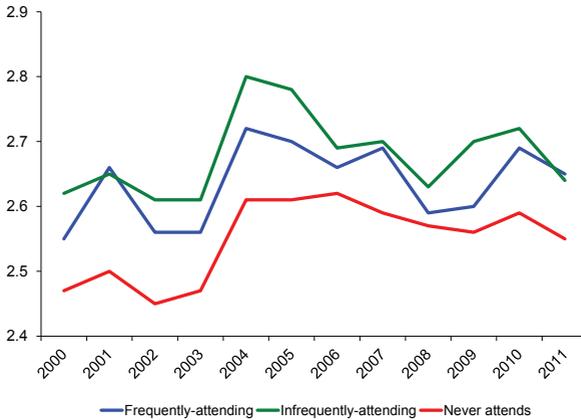


Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

In other words, for all that non-attendance does seem to make a difference on the left-right spectrum, it is felt more in theory than it is in the harder reality of issues of tax and spend.

As with affiliation, it is possible to get an overall picture of how religiosity (i.e. attendance) informs people's views on the Left-Right scale.

figure 3.18: left (1) – right (5) scale: overall (by attendance)



British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

As one would expect, the overall trend is rightwards, irrespective of frequency of attendance. That general trend acknowledged, the clear finding is that those who never attend have been consistently more left-wing in their views over the last decade, whereas those who infrequently-attend have been slightly but consistently more right wing. The 'frequent-attenders' have been closer to the position of the 'infrequent-attenders'.

## 'left-right': by affiliation and attendance

It will be clear from the above data that religious affiliation and religious attendance have a different impact on people's opinions as measured on the left-right scale. It is possible to combine these two criteria to get a more granular analysis of Left-Right views, although doing so comes with two caveats.

The first is that the number of crossbreaks expands from the five (of affiliation) or the (aggregated) three (of attendance) to thirteen. This is unwieldy, but it becomes positively unmanageable when used to analyse each of the attitudinal questions above, let alone over each year.

Consequently, we have limited our analysis to the overall Left-Right (1-5) scale, for the most recent year for which there are data available (2011). This allows us to pinpoint different groups on the scale without going into the detail of which particular issues drive that overall position. This is also the approach we have adopted for the similar analysis on the Libertarian-Authoritarian and the Welfarist-Individualist scales later in the report.

The second caveat is that, although this analysis offers a greater degree of precision, it comes at the cost of a greater degree of uncertainty, generated by smaller sample sizes. Combining two cross-breaks for analysis entails testing the opinions of groups within groups. These sub-sub-groups can vary significantly in size. Thus, of the thirteen tested below, the (unweighted) sample sizes in 2011 were as follows:

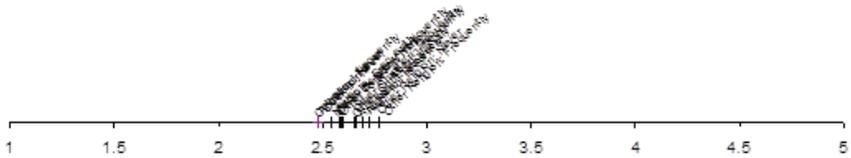
**table 3.1: sample sizes by affiliation and attendance**

<b>Group</b>		<b>Sample size in 2011</b>
<i>Anglican</i>	Frequently	127
	Infrequently	165
	Never	378
<i>Catholic</i>	Frequently	119
	Infrequently	59
	Never	69
<i>Other Christian</i>	Frequently	176
	Infrequently	97
	Never	178
<i>Other religion</i>	Frequently	63
	Infrequently	34
	Never	38
<i>No religion</i>	Never	1170

Some of these groups, such as the no-religion category, are large enough to be robust, whilst others, such as infrequently-attending and never-attending Catholics and 'Other religion' groups need to be treated with much more caution.

With these caveats in place, we can position each of these thirteen groups on the Left-Right spectrum. This can be done in two ways. The first charts all thirteen groups on the full 1-5 left-right scale. This is deliberately unreadable, to make the point that, for all the differences between the various groups, they remain relatively homogenous, clustering to the left-of-centre.

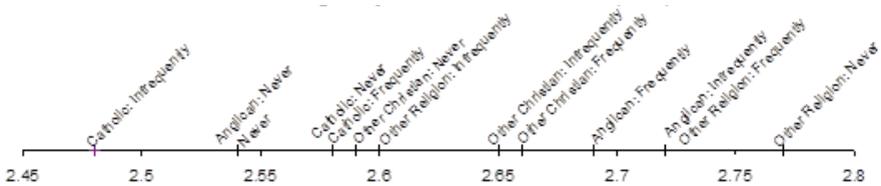
figure 3.19: left (1) – right (5) scale: overall, full spectrum (by affiliation and



Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

Expanding this graph to offer a greater degree of details we can see that infrequently-attending Catholics were the most left-wing group in 2011, followed by purely nominal (i.e. never attending) Anglicans, and people who are consistently non-religious (i.e. non-religious + never attendance). At the other end, purely nominal people of non-Christian religions were the most right-of-centre (though NB the smaller sample size in this group), followed by infrequently-attending Anglicans, and committed (i.e. frequently-attending) people of other religions. Committed (i.e. frequently-attending) Christians, whether Anglican, Catholic or another denomination, were more 'centrist', though Anglicans were more right-of-centre, and Catholics more left-of-centre.

figure 3.20: left (1) – right (5) scale: overall, in detail (by affiliation and attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

## chapter 3 – reference

- 1 A majority of people who call themselves 'Anglican' never attend a church. The same can be said of many who call themselves 'Catholic'. 'Other Christians' are more likely to be church-attenders, although the category is, by its nature, a 'catch-all', as is 'Other religion' even more so.
- 2 There is also a "varies too much to say" category, which usually has a very low number of respondents, which we have coded as Infrequently-attending

# political values: libertarian vs. authoritarian

## ‘libertarian vs. authoritarian’: by affiliation

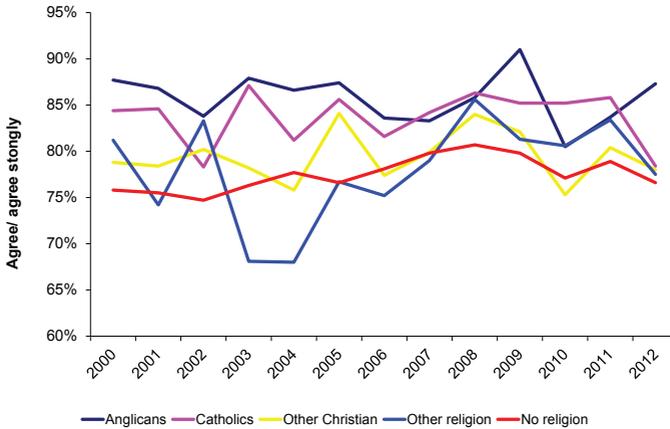
The second major socio-political axis for which there is significant data is the Libertarian-Authoritarian scale. To determine this, BSA presents respondents with six statements for which they have the same range of possible responses (“agree strongly”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “disagree strongly”). These statements are:

- People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.
- For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence.
- Young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values.
- Schools should teach children to obey authority.
- Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.
- The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong.

Between them these statements can be used to chart how libertarian or authoritarian different respondents and groups are.

If we look at the two statements relating to criminal justice first, beginning with the statement about sentencing, we can see that, first, there is overwhelmingly strong public support for stiffer sentencing. As of 2012, there is near-unanimity of opinion between four of the five groups (78-79% agreement), with Anglicans the exception, at 87%. Over the last ten years, Anglicans have tended to be most consistently in support of tougher sentencing, with Catholics coming next. The non-religious have tended towards weaker sentencing, as has the ‘Other Religion’ group, although this group has oscillated considerably.

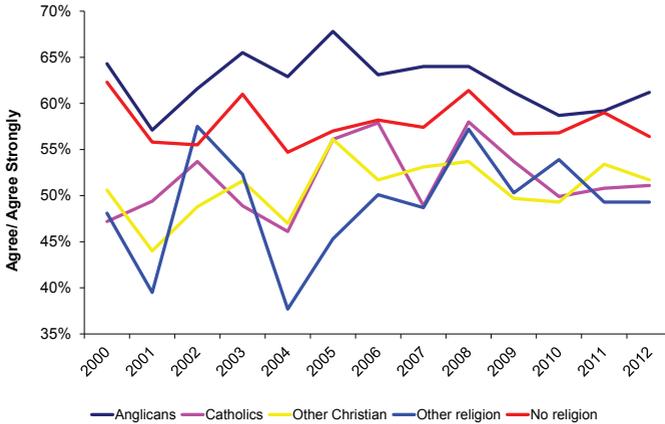
figure 4.1: “people who break the law should be given stiffer sentences” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Attitudes to the death sentence are, predictably, more lukewarm, though it is worth noting that all but one of the groups have been mostly in favour of the death penalty in some circumstances over the last decade. Anglicans have been consistently most in favour, 61% agreeing or agreeing strongly that “for some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence” in 2012, down from 68% in 2005, followed by the ‘No religion’ group at 56%. The other three groups cluster around 49%-51%, with the ‘Other religion’ group having fluctuated most significantly, but tending to have a lower level of support, in particular in the first half of the 2000s.

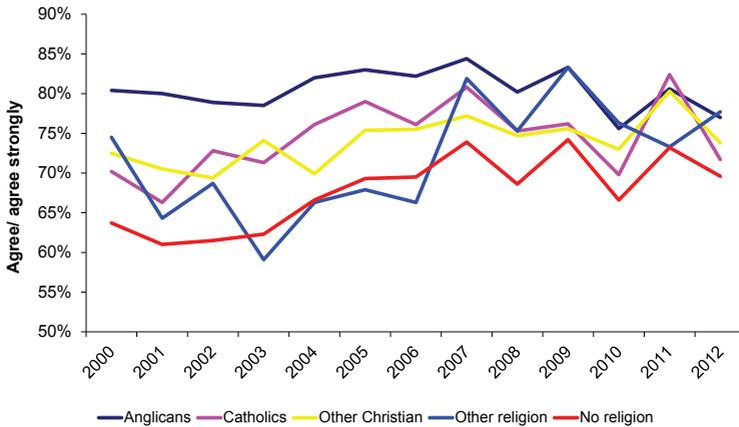
figure 4.2: “for some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Two questions in the Libertarian-Authoritarian scale focus on attitudes relating to young people. One offers the statement, “Young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values.” The different groups having once had discernible and consistent differences in their attitudes to this question, there appears to have been some convergence over recent years, most groups tending to agree more with the idea (except Anglicans, having long been most in agreement with the sentiment in any case). As of 2012, Anglicans and ‘Other religions’ were more inclined to agree or agree strongly (77% and 78% respectively), with the other groups not far behind (between 70% and 74%). In short, any difference between religious groups over this matter is overshadowed by a broader convergence in agreement about the lack of respect among young people for traditional British values.

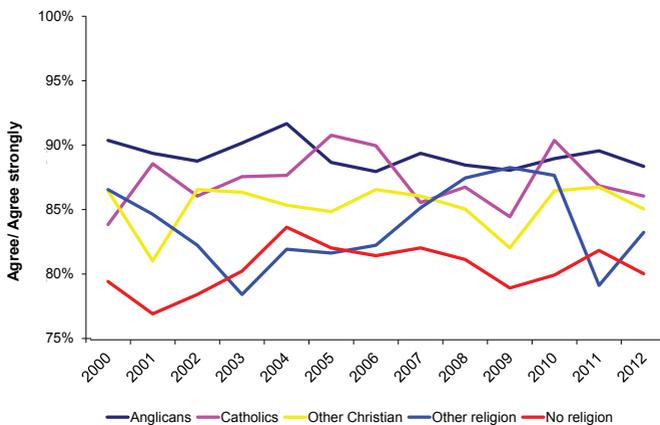
figure 4.3: “young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

The second statement relating to young people is “Schools should teach children to obey authority.” Once again there is overwhelming support for this view. More than 85% agreed among each of the three Christian groups and 83% of the ‘Other religion’ group. Only the ‘No religion’ group has been consistently different over the last ten years over this issue, and even then a very clear majority agreed.

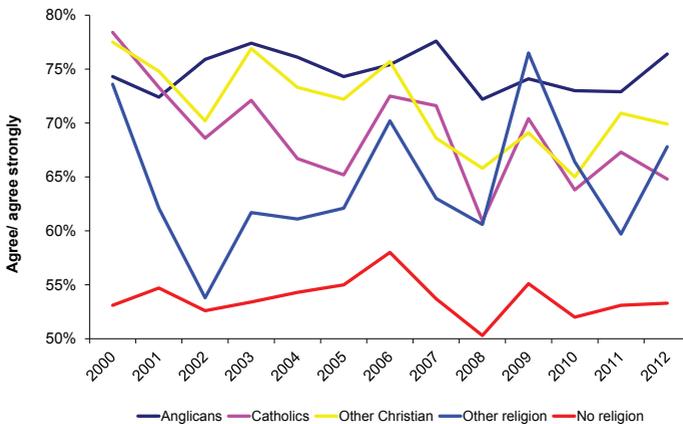
figure 4.4: “schools should teach children to obey authority” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

A fifth statement focused on censorship and specifically whether it was necessary to uphold moral standards. This was one issue of the Libertarian-Authoritarian scale where there was a pronounced difference according to religious affiliation. Each of the four religious groups tended to agree that censorship was necessary, with Anglicans agreeing most consistently and strongly (76% in 2012). By contrast, the 'No religion' group was much less inclined to agree, with a bare majority (53%) agreeing in 2012. Moreover, this group has been consistent over the last 12 years in this view. This is clearly one area where is a strong difference of opinion on 'religious' grounds.

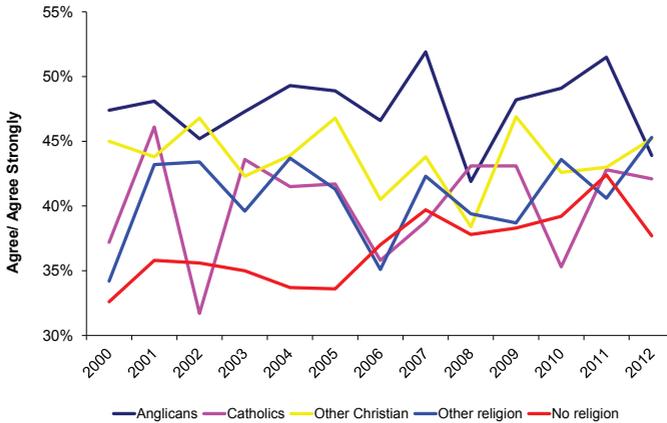
figure 4.5: "censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards" (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Finally, there is a general statement about attitude to the law, specifically whether respondents agreed that the "law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong". This is a difficult and morally complex issue, the consequence being more volatile results from different groups over the years. As a general rule, Anglicans have tended to be most willing to agree with the sentiment over the last decade, with the non-religious being least willing, the other three groups oscillating somewhere in-between. However, over the last five years or so, the 'No religion' group has tended towards a slightly higher level of agreement and Anglicans have oscillated more than they once did. The result is that in 2012 it was in fact 'Other Christians' and 'Other religions' that were most likely to agree.

figure 4.6: “the law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong” (by affiliation)



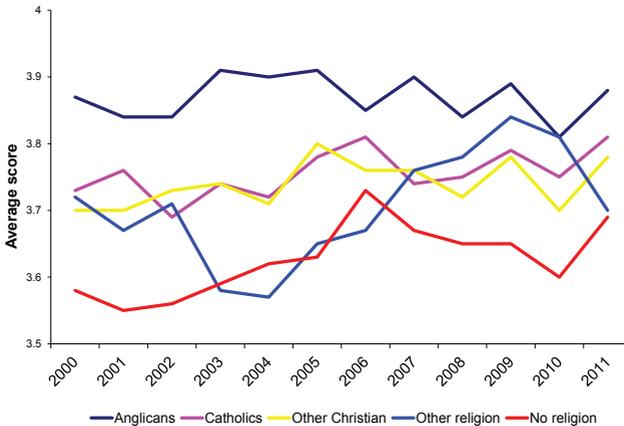
Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

The initial and tentative conclusions that can be drawn from our first investigation to the Libertarian-Authoritarian scale are that:

- As a rule, the population is more authoritarian than libertarian.
- As a rule, the population has become slightly more authoritarian over the last ten years.
- Anglicans tend to be most authoritarian, although unlike the other groups, they have not become more authoritarian over the last decade.
- The ‘No religion’ group tends to be most libertarian, although it has shifted more towards authoritarianism than have other groups over the last decade.
- Other groups, in particular the ‘Other religion’ group, tend to oscillate between these poles (though in the case of the ‘Other religion’ group this is likely to be on account of the small sample number)
- The differences between groups on these matters tend not to be substantial or consistent, the exception being regarding censorship where there is and has long been a deep and significant difference between non-religious and (all) religious groups.

These conclusions can be seen in the aggregate chart for the Libertarian-Authoritarian scale, as it was for the left-right scale.

figure 4.7: libertarian (1) – authoritarian (5) scale: overall (by affiliation)



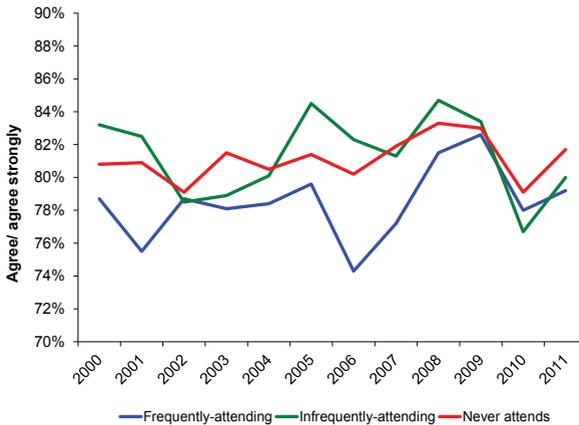
Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

## 'libertarian vs. authoritarian': by attendance

As with the left-right scale, it is possible to chart Libertarian-Authoritarian attitudes according to religious attendance levels, using the same categories as before.

On the issue of sentencing, frequent-attenders have tended to be most hostile to stiffer sentencing over the last ten years, although that was not the case in 2011, when all three groups had converged to a similar level. Either way, any differences between groups have rarely been significant and are dwarfed by the overall support for stiffer sentencing.

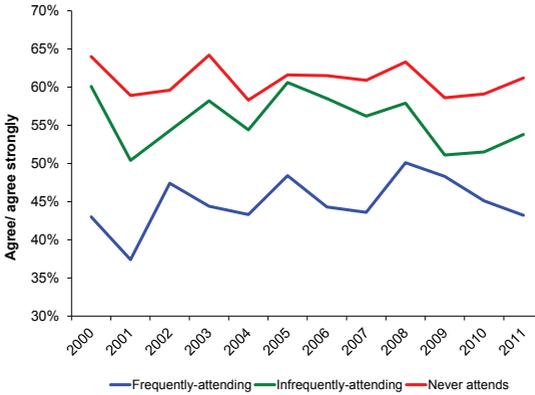
figure 4.8: “people who break the law should be given stiffer sentences” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

On the issue of the death penalty, the results are instructive. In spite of the general sense, evidenced from the previous section, that religious self-identification is loosely associated with authoritarianism, there are clear and consistent data to the contrary when it comes to the death penalty. People who never attend a religious service have been most likely to favour the death penalty in each of the last ten years, compared with ‘frequent-attenders’ who have been consistently and significantly more opposed. ‘Infrequent-attenders’ have come between the two groups, having grown noticeably more opposed to the death penalty over the last ten years. This is one area in which religiosity (in terms of attendance rather than self-designation) appears to make a significant and sustained difference to a particular social attitude.

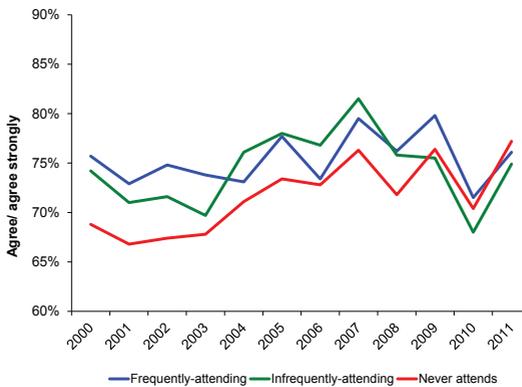
figure 4.9: “for some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

With regard to young people and respect for traditional British values, there is no such notable difference. Although the never-attend group was least likely to agree that young people didn't have enough respect for traditional British values in the early part of the 2000s, they moved towards the view of the other groups in the second part and were in fact most likely to agree in 2011, although the difference between groups in that year was minimal.

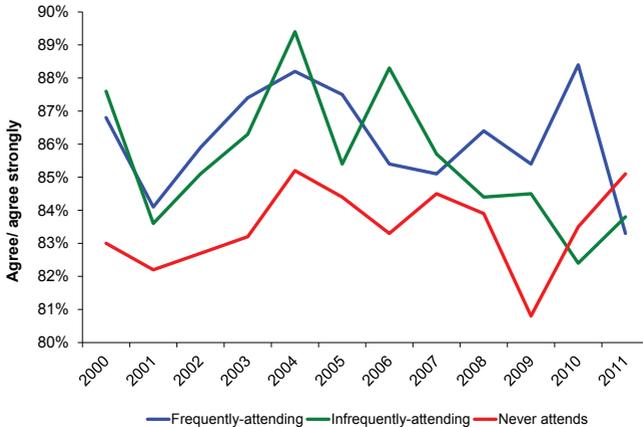
figure 4.10: “young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

With regard to teaching children to obey authority, it was a similar story, with largely similar views between different groups, any differences being outweighed by the overall overwhelming agreement that children should be taught to obey authority.

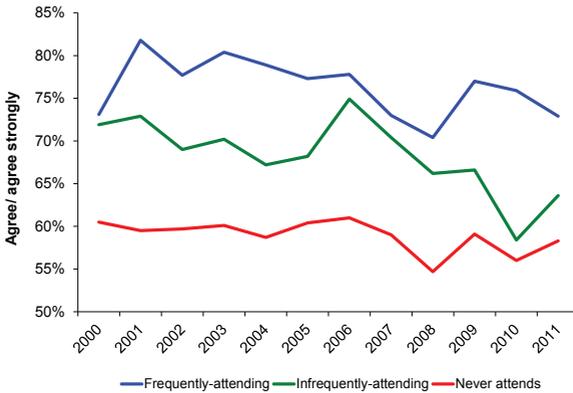
figure 4.11: “schools should teach children to obey authority” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Censorship was an area like the death penalty where there was a consistent and significant difference according to religiosity. This time, however, the order of groups was reversed, with ‘frequent-attenders’ being most likely to agree that censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards, whilst non-attenders were consistently, and by a significant margin, most likely to disagree. Again, the ‘infrequent-attenders’ oscillated between these poles, becoming more antipathetic to censorship over the last ten years.

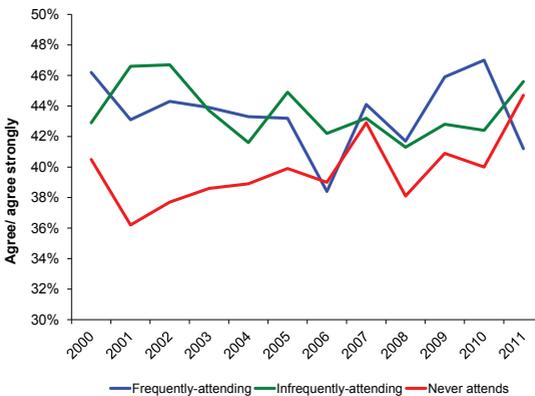
figure 4.12: “censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Finally, regarding the difficult question of whether the law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong, in spite of some oscillation over the last few years, there seems to have been a general convergence of opinion here, with the more significant differences evident ten years ago (non-attenders were consistently less likely to agree) becoming smaller or non-existent in 2011.

figure 4.13: “the law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Overall, data for the libertarian-authoritarian scale over the last ten years show that attitudes measured by religious attendance are slightly more varied and complex than by religious affiliation.

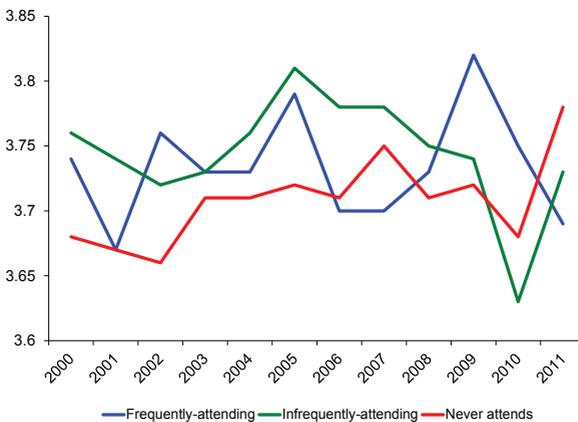
In some areas, especially censorship, non-attenders are notably more anti-authoritarian.

In others, notably the death penalty, 'frequent-attenders' are significantly and consistently more anti-authoritarian.

In still others, law, respect, school authority, and sentencing there has been a general convergence over the last few years (generally towards a more authoritarian position) which has usually meant there is are no significant differences by religious attendance.

It is possible to get an overview of these issues, as we did with the Left-Right scale, by collating responses to the six statements and plotting group views on an overall scale from 1-5, in which 1 is the most libertarian position possible and 5 is the most authoritarian.

figure 4.14: libertarian (1) – authoritarian (5) scale: overall (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

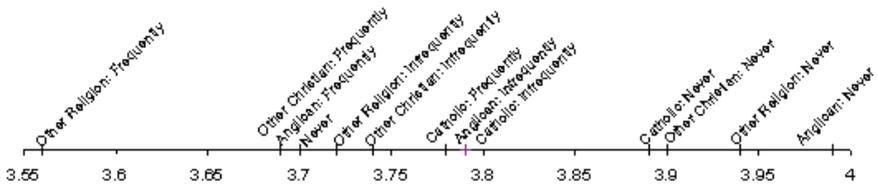
This overall view shows less clarity than did the comparable view of the Left-Right scale.

Generally speaking, those who never attend have been more libertarian over the last decade, although this has not universally been the case. They have, however, become more authoritarian over time, and in particular in 2011. The result of this was that the final time point in the chart shows the non-attenders as most authoritarian, with the 'frequent-



more authoritarian than 'infrequently-attending' believers, who tended themselves to be slightly more authoritarian than 'frequently-attending' believers.

figure 4.16: libertarian (1) – authoritarian (5) scale: overall, in detail (by affiliation and attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

# political values: welfarist-individualist

## 'welfarist-individualist': by affiliation

British Social Attitudes has one final major social scale on which it is possible to chart public opinion. This is the 'Welfarist-Individualist' scale, by means of which we can examine public attitudes to the welfare state, government spending, personal responsibility, personal honesty, and other related issues which, between them, give an idea of whether people (or groups) favour a more centralised/welfarist approach to social security or a more personal/individualised one.

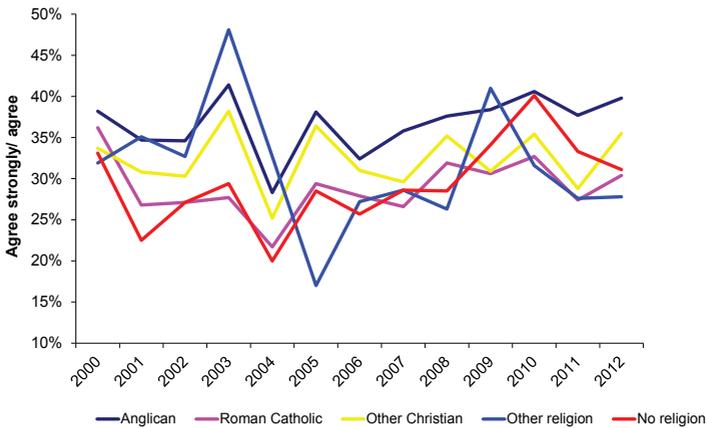
This scale comprises eight statements:

- The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other.
- The government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes.
- Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one.
- Many people who get social security don't really deserve any help.
- Most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another.
- If welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet.
- Cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives.
- The creation of the welfare state is one of Britain's proudest achievements.

In accordance with the pattern established above, we first analysed these data by religious affiliation.

On the first issue, whether the welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other, self-described Anglicans were most likely to agree, and did so consistently over the last decade. Roman Catholics and the ‘No religion’ groups were more likely to disagree, and the ‘Other religion’ group have oscillated between, and sometimes beyond, these two poles (again possibly on account of its small sample size).

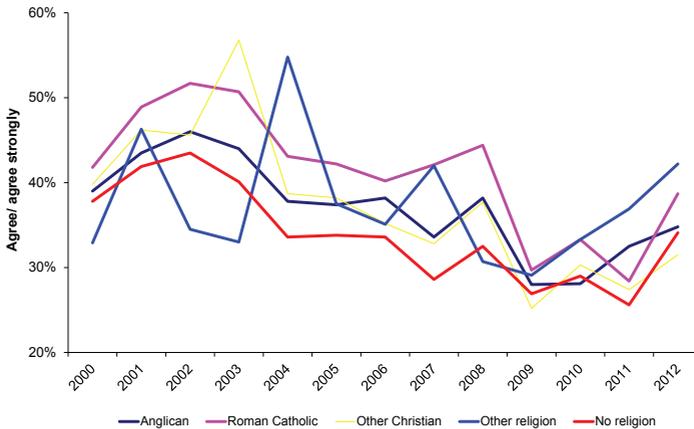
figure 5.1: “the welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Regarding the question of whether government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes, there has been a clear overall move away from this position over the last ten years in all groups. Differences between groups tended to be insignificant in comparison with this, various short-term oscillations aside. As of 2012, people of ‘Other religions’ and Roman Catholics were most likely to support the increased welfare spending on the poor at the cost of higher taxes.

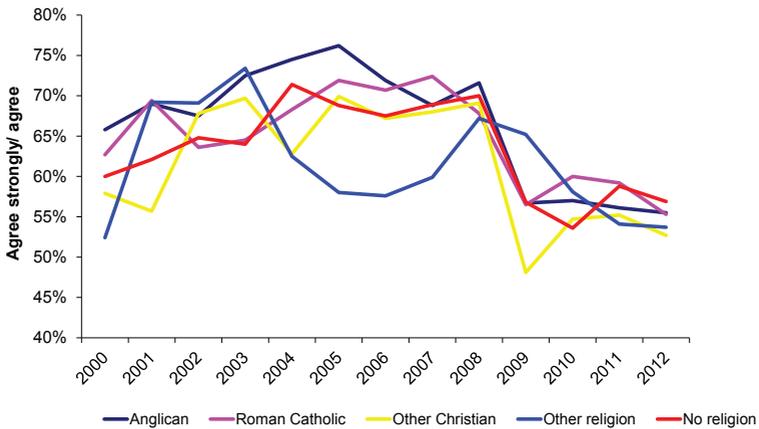
figure 5.2: “the government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

On the issue of finding a job (“Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one”) the inter-group differences have tended to be small compared to the wider social changes that have steered public opinion overall – as one can see in the abrupt change of public opinion over 2008-09. That recognised, it is still noteworthy that over half of all groups agree or agree strongly that in their area most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one. Generally speaking, the ‘Other religion’ group has been most antipathetic to this statement over the last ten years, although that difference is minimal in the most recent year.

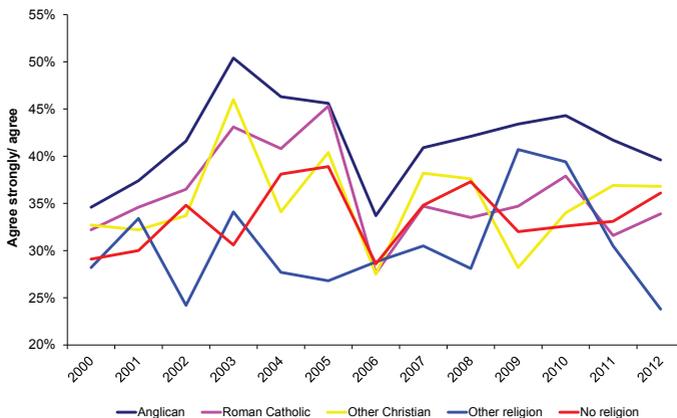
figure 5.3: “around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

With regard to the similar statement that “many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help,” overall opinion is much less supportive. In 2012, all groups reported under 40% of people agreeing or agreeing strongly with this. Anglicans had long been, and remained, most likely to agree with the statement whereas the ‘Other religion’ group were in 2012 least likely to agree, as they had been for much of the last ten years.

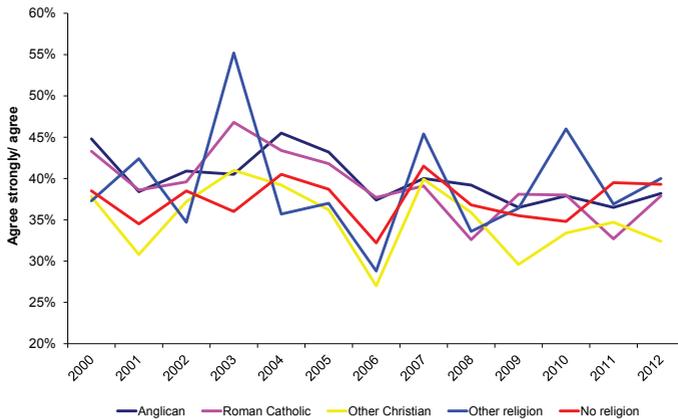
figure 5.4: “many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

A further question probing people's scepticism about welfare related to the statement "Most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another." Here, once again, there was little differentiation by religious affiliation, aside from some high but short-term oscillation from the 'Other religion' group. Overall, public opinion is lukewarm on this question, with the 'Other Christian' group tending, by a small margin, to be more lukewarm than the other groups.

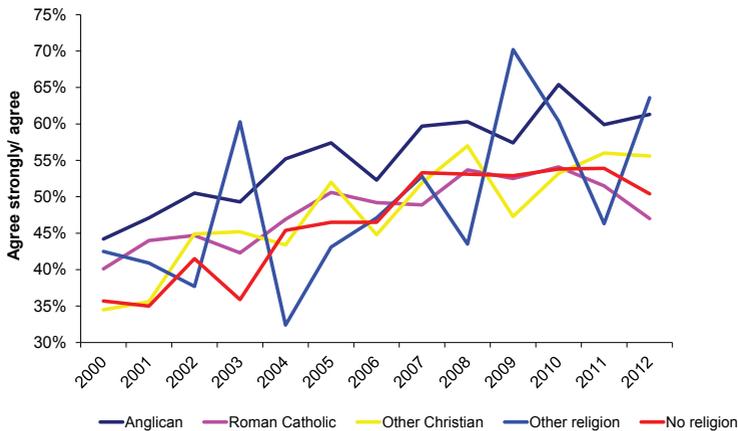
figure 5.5: "most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another" (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

On the direct balance between welfarism and individual responsibility captured by the statement – "if welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet" – the most obvious thing to notice was the steady and significant increase in public opinion here over the last ten years. Generally speaking, Anglicans have been most likely to agree with this statement over the last decade, with no single group being most consistently opposed, and the 'Other religion' group opinion oscillating most violently – again, presumably, due to low sample size (this group was most in agreement in 2012). There remain significant differences between different groups (61% of Anglicans agreed or agreed strongly in 2012, compared with 47% of Roman Catholics).

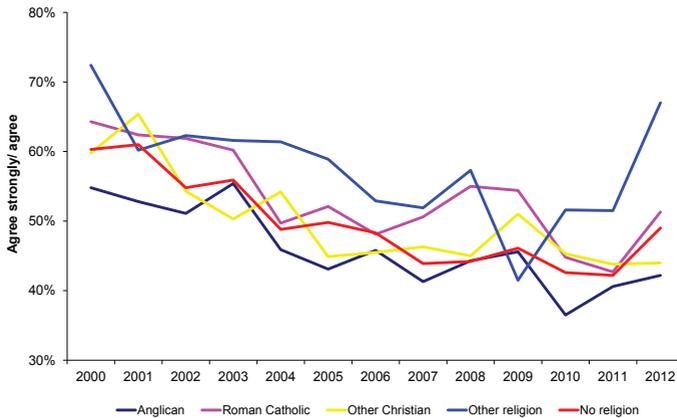
figure 5.6: “if welfare benefits weren’t so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

An entirely different tone is struck with the question of whether cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people’s lives. As one might expect in the light of previous results, there has been a steady move away from this opinion across the public over the last ten years, although that has slowed, and even possibly reversed slightly, over the last 2-3 years. Within the groups, the ‘Other religion’ group were, in 2012, very considerably more likely to agree with this statement (67% agree/agree strongly compared to next highest, Roman Catholics, of 51%). However, as we have consistently seen, the ‘Other religion’ group is again most susceptible to oscillation here. Of the other groups, Anglicans were most likely to disagree, with only 42% agreeing in 2012.

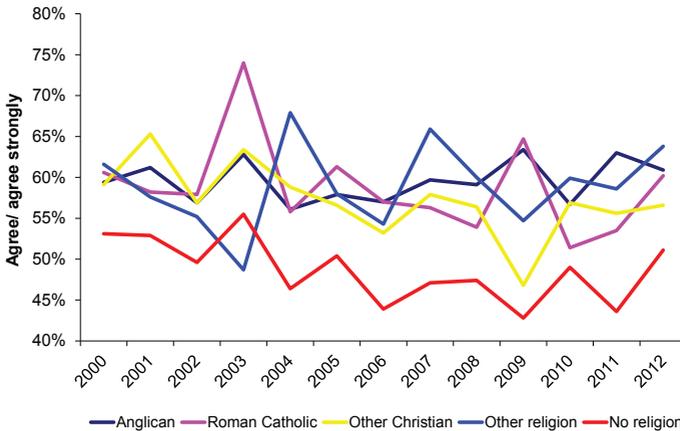
figure 5.7: “cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people’s lives” (by affiliation)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

Finally, regarding the more general opinion concerning the welfare state – “The creation of the welfare state is one of Britain’s proudest achievements” – strikingly, the ‘No religion’ group was in 2012 most critical of this view, as it had been for all but one of the previous 10 years. In comparison, the other groups all reported agreement levels between 57% and 64%. Unlike previous questions, overall public opinion had not shifted in any one direction on this issue over the last ten years. It seems that, however much the British are falling out of love with welfarism in its current format, there remains a reasonably widespread and consistent attachment to welfarism in its ‘original’ post-war incarnation.

figure 5.8: “the creation of the welfare state is one of Britain’s proudest achievements” (by affiliation)



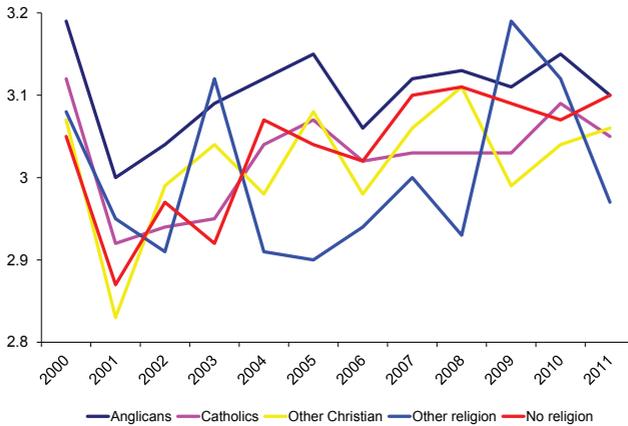
Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2012

In summary, it seems reasonable to draw these conclusions regarding the Welfarist-Individualist view of the British public, as analysed by self-designated religious groups:

- The overall trend in public opinion is away from welfarism and towards individualism.
- This trend has been significant and reasonably consistent over the last decade, although it has slowed somewhat over the last few years.
- Differences of opinion between religious groups here are almost always much smaller than the general shift in public opinion. However else religious affiliation shapes people’s opinion in this area, it does not decide it.
- As a general rule, Anglicans were more anti-welfarist than other groups and Roman Catholics more welfarist, though the differences are not huge or consistent.
- One of the few genuinely consistent differences is in the fact the ‘No religion’ group is significantly less inclined to agree that the creation of the welfare state is one of Britain’s proudest achievements.

It is possible to offer an overview of opinion on this issue, just as it was with Left-Right and Libertarian-Authoritarian issues, again rating people’s opinions from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most pro-state welfare position, and 5 the most anti-.

figure 5.9: welfarist (1) – individualist (5) scale: overall (by affiliation)



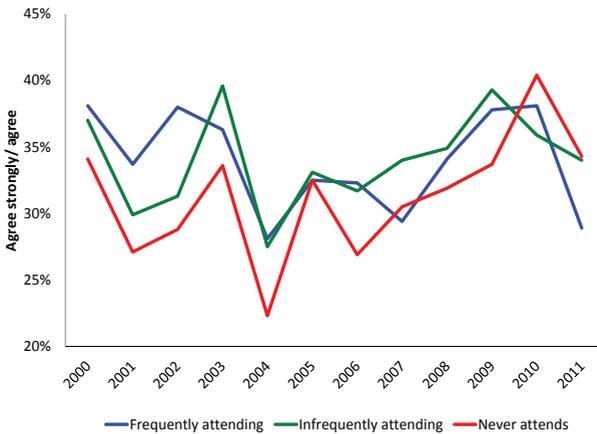
Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

This overall view confirms the general if slight movement of public opinion away from welfare over the last few years. It shows how Anglicans have indeed been most anti-welfare over the last decade, but by 2011 they were joined in that position by those of no religion. Generally speaking, the difference between groups is small, with the possible exception of the 'Other religion' group which oscillates somewhat, for reasons already noted.

## 'welfarist-individualist': by attendance

The final set of data to analyse here is people's position on the welfare-individualism scale according to their patterns of religious attendance. On the first question of whether the welfare state encourages people to stop helping one another, there is little to choose between different groups. In 2011, 'frequent-attenders' were most likely to disagree with this sentiment. However, the difference was not huge or consistent over the previous decade.

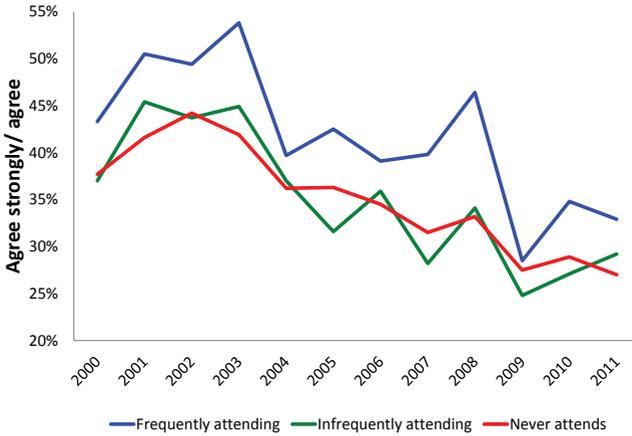
figure 5.10: “the welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

There was greater differentiation on the question of whether government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes. As noted earlier, the overall direction of public opinion has been against this option over the last ten years ago. However, ‘frequent-attenders’ have consistently been more pro-tax-and-spend than either ‘infrequent’ or non-attenders, at times significantly more so. That difference had narrowed by 2011 but it was still noticeable.

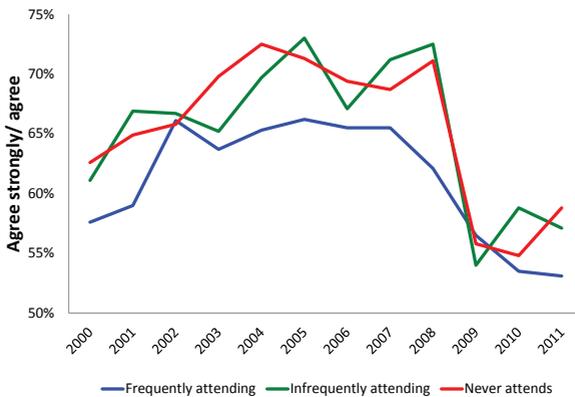
figure 5.11: “The government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

On the question of whether “around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one”, the data are again dominated by the huge shift in public opinion around the time of the banking and economic crisis. Before that point, ‘frequent-attenders’ were more likely to disagree than the other two groups and this pattern emerged again in 2011.

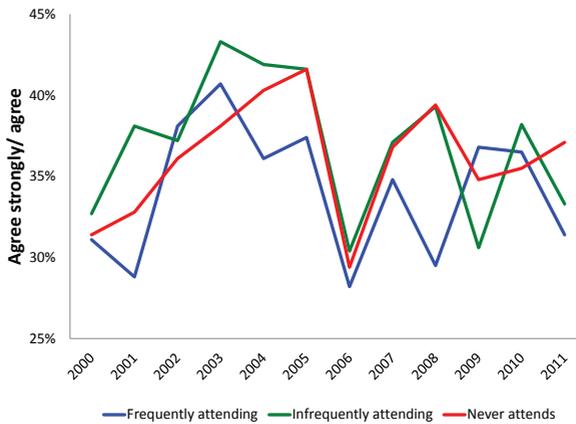
figure 5.12: “around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

On the question of social security and whether people who get it deserve it, public opinion has been particularly volatile over the last ten years, perhaps more susceptible to media scandals here than elsewhere. In 2011, the familiar pattern of non-attenders being sceptical of welfarism and ‘frequent-attenders’ being more sympathetic to those claiming social security reasserted itself. This has tended to be the pattern since 2000, though at times the differences have been small and at times they have been reversed, making this an unsafe question from which to generalise.

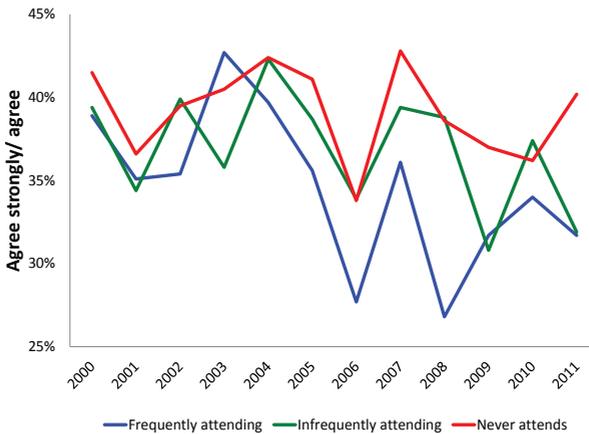
figure 5.13: “many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

On the question of whether “most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another”, those who never attend are again most sceptical, 40% agreeing or agreeing strongly in 2011, compared with 31% of attenders (there was no difference according to the frequency of attenders). These results have oscillated, sometimes quite widely, over the last ten years, but the general pattern of non-attenders being most sceptical of ‘dole fiddlers’, and ‘frequent-attenders’ being the least has held relatively consistently.

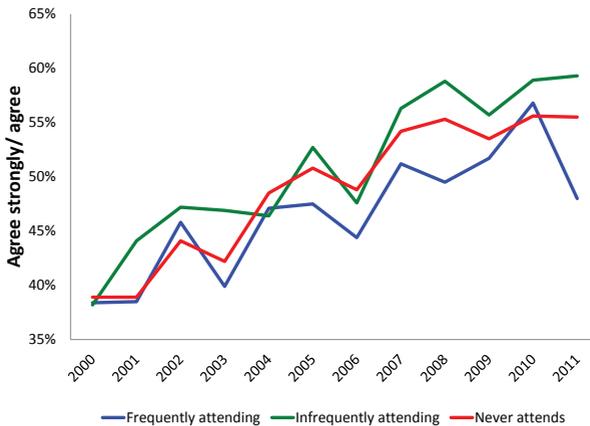
figure 5.14: “most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

As already noted, public opinion regarding personal independence – “If welfare benefits weren’t so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet” – has been steadily more anti-welfare over the last ten years. However, again here, ‘frequent-attenders’ were more welfarist (i.e. more likely to disagree with the statement) than the other groups, among whom ‘infrequent-attenders’ have tended to be more individualist. These differences were particularly pronounced in 2011.

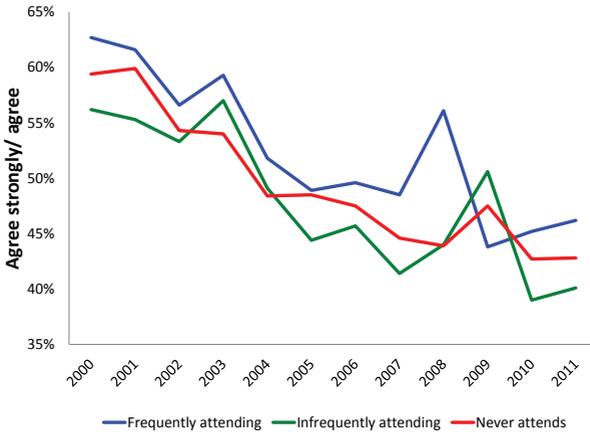
figure 5.15: “if welfare benefits weren’t so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

A similar pattern may be observed over the question of whether “cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people’s lives”. The general direction of public opinion has been against this view over the last ten years, though in 2011, as in most previous years, ‘frequent-attenders’ have tended to believe that cutting welfare benefits would damage many people’s lives. In this instance, however, it was non-attenders, rather than ‘infrequent-attenders’ who were least likely to agree. Again, the general pattern of positive attitudes to welfare being correlated with attendance at a religious service is notable.

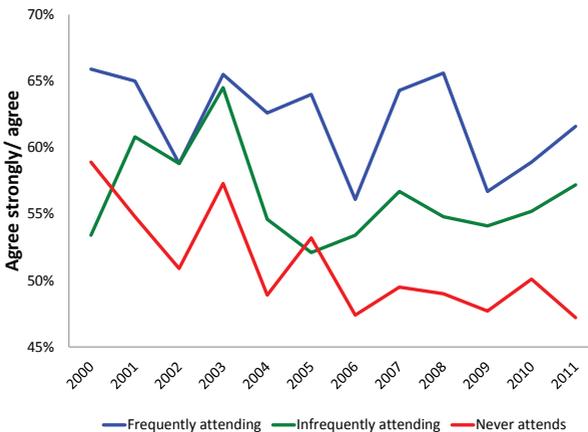
figure 5.16: “cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people’s lives” (by attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

Finally, and very much in line with the previous observation, we can see how attitudes to Britain’s welfare state are strongly correlated to attendance. When asked whether they thought, “the creation of the welfare state is one of Britain’s proudest achievements”, 61% of ‘frequent-attenders’ agreed or agreed strongly, compared to 57% of ‘infrequent-attenders’ and 47% of non-attenders.

figure 5.17: “the creation of the welfare state is one of Britain’s proudest achievements” (by attendance)



The overall conclusion to be drawn from this tranche of data is clear: the more religiously observant one is, the most likely one is to have a positive attitude to welfare/a sceptical one towards individualism.

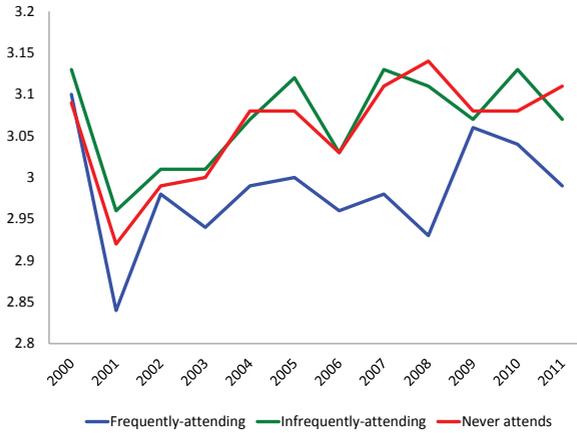
Thus:

- 'frequent-attenders' have consistently been more willing to countenance the government spending more on welfare benefits for the poor even if it leads to higher taxes;
- 'frequent-attenders' are consistently more likely to disagree that most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one;
- 'frequent-attenders' are consistently more sceptical about the claim of people dole-fiddling;
- 'frequent-attenders' are consistently more likely to disagree that "if welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet";
- 'frequent-attenders' have tended to believe that cutting welfare benefits would damage many people's lives;
- 'frequent-attenders' are considerably more likely to think that "the creation of the welfare state is one of Britain's proudest achievements".

In many of these instances, 'non-attenders' have taken position at the other end of the spectrum – i.e. most likely to favour individualism rather than welfarism – although sometimes this position has been most strongly adopted by 'infrequent-attenders'.

These conclusions are supported by the overall Welfarist-Individualist scale. This shows how 'frequent-attenders' have consistently and at times significantly been more welfarist in their political values than the other groups and that, although all groups have become more individualist over the last decade, 'frequent-attenders' remain most disposed towards welfare, and are perhaps becoming more so if the results for the last few years are the indication of a longer term trend

figure 5.18: welfarist (1) – individualist (5) scale: overall (by attendance)

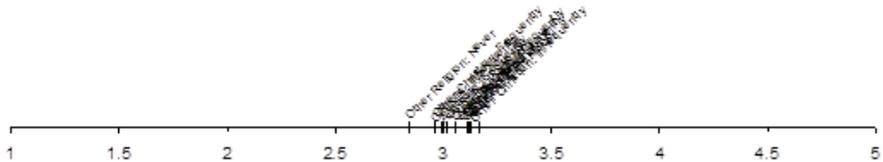


Source: British Social Attitudes 2000-2011

## ‘welfarist-individualist’: by affiliation and attendance

Finally, as with the previous two scales, we can chart the position of groups on the basis of their affiliation and attendance. In the fashion of previous discussions, the first spectrum shows how clustered respondents are (even more so than with the previous two scales) and also how centrist they are on this issue.

figure 5.19: welfarist (1) – individualist (5) scale: overall, full spectrum (by affiliation and attendance)

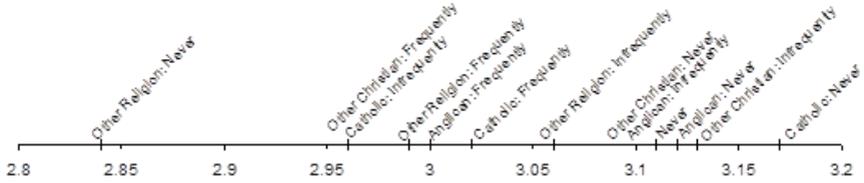


Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

When this scale is expanded, we can see that the single outlying group here were the nominal non-Christians (i.e. those who nominally belonged to a non-Christian religion), who were most individualist (though NB sample size again). At the other end, nominal

Catholics were most welfarist. Practising believers of all denominations clustered around the middle of the spectrum.

figure 5.20: welfarist (1) – individualist (5) scale: overall, in detail (by affiliation and attendance)



Source: British Social Attitudes 2011

# appendix: results from multivariate analysis of vote choice at the 2010 General Election

## voters in Britain

	Voted Conservative (1) versus all other parties (0)		Voted Labour (1) versus all other parties (0)		Voted Liberal Democrat (1) versus all other parties (0)	
	<i>B coefficient (SE)</i>	<i>Odds ratio</i>	<i>B coefficient (SE)</i>	<i>Odds ratio</i>	<i>B coefficient (SE)</i>	<i>Odds ratio</i>
<i>Anglican</i>	-	-	-.51*** (0.08)	.60	-.43*** (0.11)	.65
<i>Catholic</i>	-.52*** (0.08)	.60	-	-	-.28* (0.13)	.75
<i>Non-conformist</i>	-.08* (0.03)	.92	-.17*** (0.04)	.84	-	-
<i>Church of Scotland/ Presbyterian</i>	-.26 (0.17)	.77	-.40** (0.15)	.67	-.09 (0.19)	.92
<i>Other religion</i>	-.36*** (0.10)	.70	-.57*** (0.12)	.57	-.04 (0.14)	.96
<i>No religion</i>	-.58*** (0.05)	.56	-.48*** (0.08)	.62	.13 (0.10)	1.14
<i>Reference category:</i>	<i>Anglican</i>		<i>Catholic</i>		<i>Nonconformist</i>	
<i>Weighted N</i>	11,405		11,405		11,405	

Note: \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ . Standard errors in parentheses.

Other independent variables included in the model: sex, age group, ethnic background, region, housing tenure, occupational grade, and education.

Source: BES 2010 CIPS post-election cross-section. Weighted data.

## voters in Scotland

	Voted Conservative (1) versus all other parties (0)		Voted Labour (1) versus all other parties (0)		Voted Liberal Democrat (1) versus all other parties (0)		Voted SNP (1) versus all other parties (0)	
	<i>B</i> coefficient (SE)	Odds ratio	<i>B</i> coefficient (SE)	Odds ratio	<i>B</i> coefficient (SE)	Odds ratio	<i>B</i> coefficient (SE)	Odds ratio
<i>ratio</i>								
<i>Catholic</i>	-.80* (0.40)	.45	-	-	-1.31*** (0.37)	.27	-.01 (0.28)	.99
<i>Church of Scotland/ Presbyterian</i>	-	-	-.79** (0.25)	.45	-.22 (0.20)	.80	.00 (0.20)	1.00
<i>Other religion</i>	.52 (0.30)	1.68	-1.32*** (0.31)	.27	.15 (0.26)	1.16	-.80* (0.34)	.45
<i>No religion</i>	-.20 (0.23)	.82	-.98*** (0.23)	.37	-	-	-	-
<i>Reference category:</i>	<i>Church of Scotland/ Presbyterian</i>		<i>Catholic</i>		<i>No religion</i>		<i>No religion</i>	
<i>Weighted N</i>	992		993		992		993	

Note: \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ . Standard errors in parentheses.

Other independent variables included in the model: sex, age group, housing tenure, occupational grade and education.

Source: BES 2010 CIPS post-election cross-section. Weighted data.

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# Voting and Values in Britain: Does religion count?

Ben Clements and Nick Spencer

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*Voting and Values in Britain* seeks to rectify that. Drawing on a decade's worth of detailed survey work, from the British Election Study and British Social Attitudes surveys, as well as from other sources, Ben Clements and Nick Spencer examine the true relationship between religious and political commitments in Britain.

The first two chapters look at the religious vote, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Is there such a thing? Do different denominations express a meaningful preference for different parties and, if so, which? Alternatively, is electoral behaviour shaped more by the *level* of religious commitment, such as the frequency of religious attendance? Chapters 1 and 2 answer these questions with reference to electoral survey data from the 1970s to 2010 and beyond.

Chapters 3 to 5 move on to look at the political values that underpin electoral loyalties. In the US, 'values voting' has come to signify people's attitude to a relatively limited number of personal 'moral' issues. This is not the case in Britain, where 'issues' polling shows that religious and non-religious voters are thinking about broadly the same issues when they vote.

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*Voting and Values in Britain* examines these issues, looking at what Anglicans, Roman Catholics, other Christians, people from other religions, and people of no religion think, and whether the level of people's religious commitment makes a difference.

If, as many claim, class is declining as the determining factor in electoral behaviour, identities and values such as those analysed in this report may play an ever greater role. *Voting and Values in Britain* is a major contribution to this issue and will help politicians, strategists, journalists and all other interested parties get an accurate and reliable idea about how far religious and non-religious commitments count in 21st century politics.

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