



THE BIG CHANGE IN RELIGION & BELIEF HOW MIGHT A HUMANIST RESPOND?

Isle of Wight Humanists

Jeremy Rodell

12 September 2017

curious

The last twenty-five years have witnessed some of the most significant shifts in religious belief and practice since the Reformation, as traditional forms of religious authority, and uniformities of doctrine and practice, have given way to a much wider and more diverse range of religious and non-religious commitments.

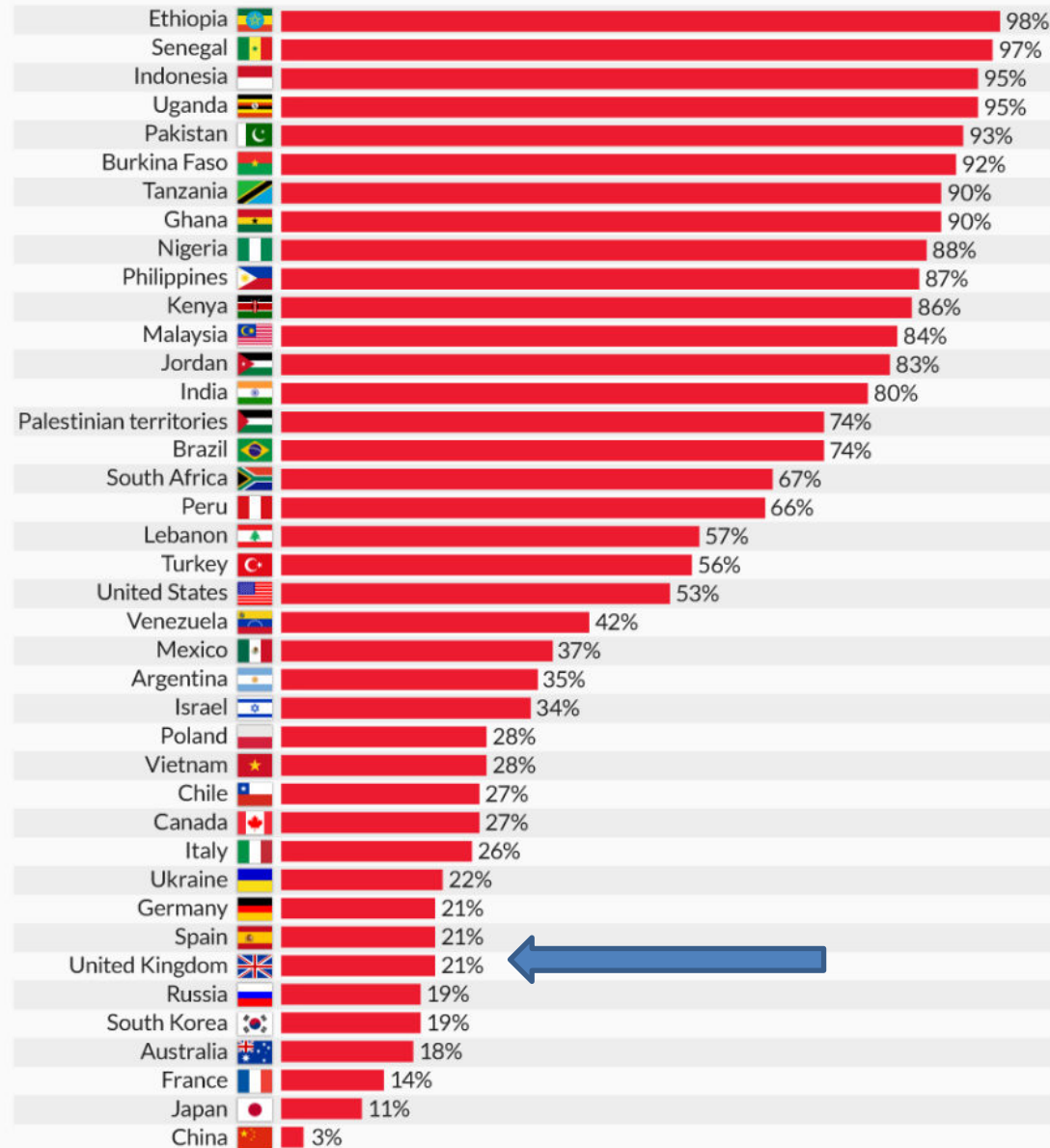
A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools

CHARLES CLARKE AND LINDA WOODHEAD

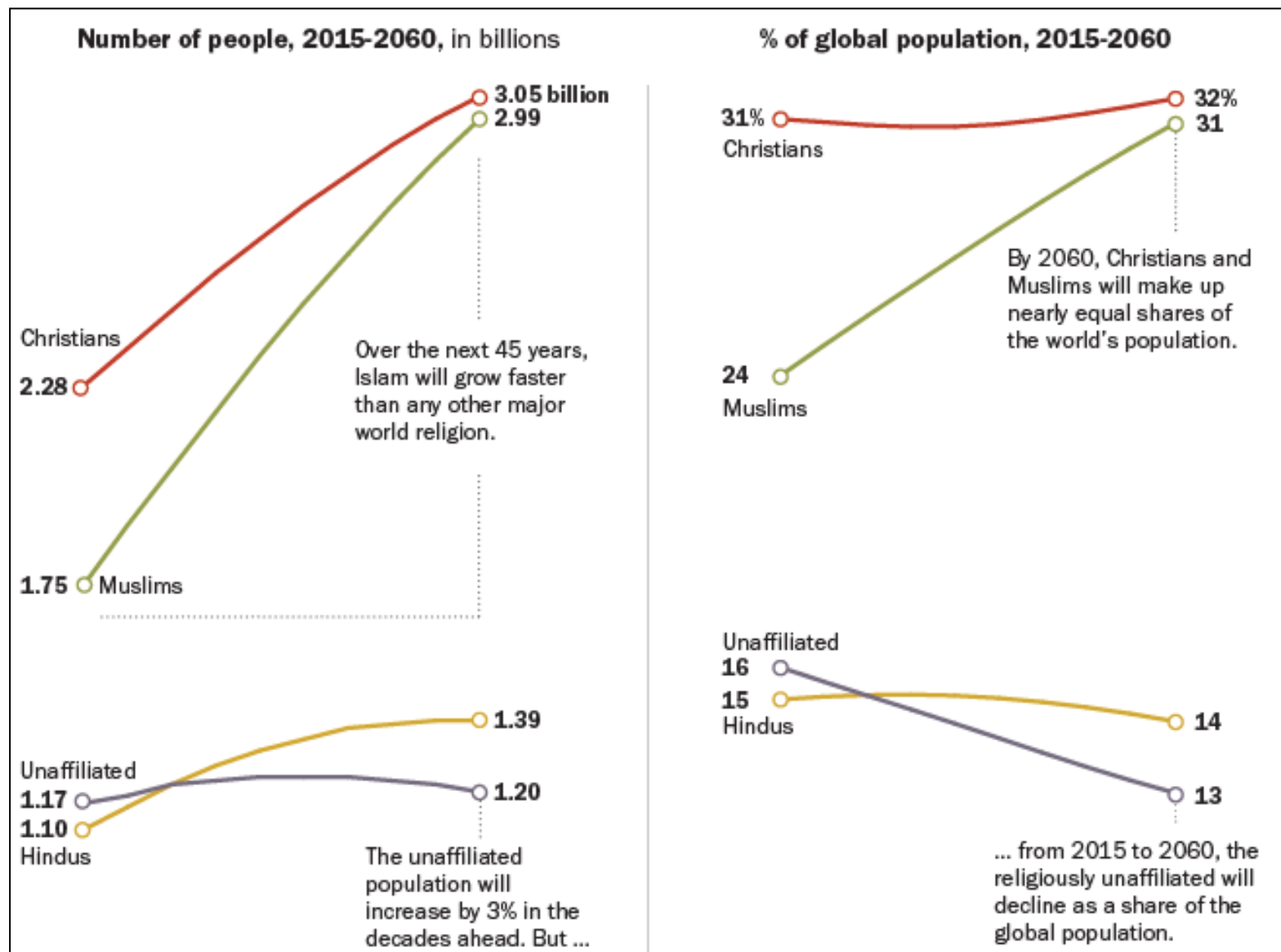
Charles Clarke (former Sec of State for Education) & Prof Linda Woodhead (Prof of Sociology of Religion at Lancaster University) ["A New Settlement: Religion & Belief in Schools"](#).

Which nationalities consider religion most important?

% who say religion is very important in their lives (2015)



Global population projection



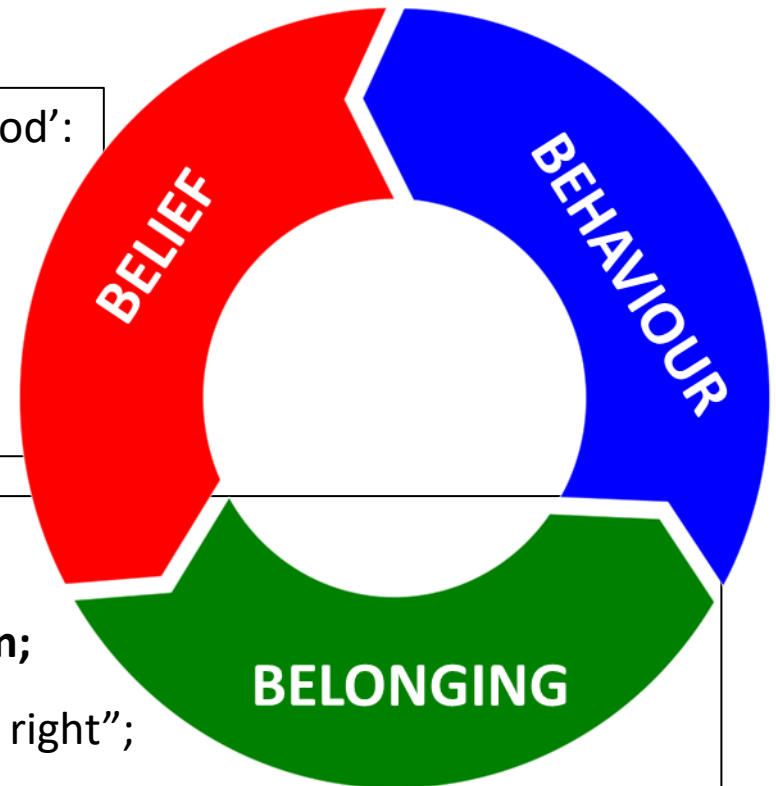
“Belief” one dimension of ‘Religion & Belief’, along with “Belonging” & “Behaviour”

% British people ‘uncertain or with no belief in God’:

- | | |
|-------------|-----|
| • Jews | 40% |
| • Anglicans | 35% |
| • Catholics | 18% |
| • Muslims | 8% |

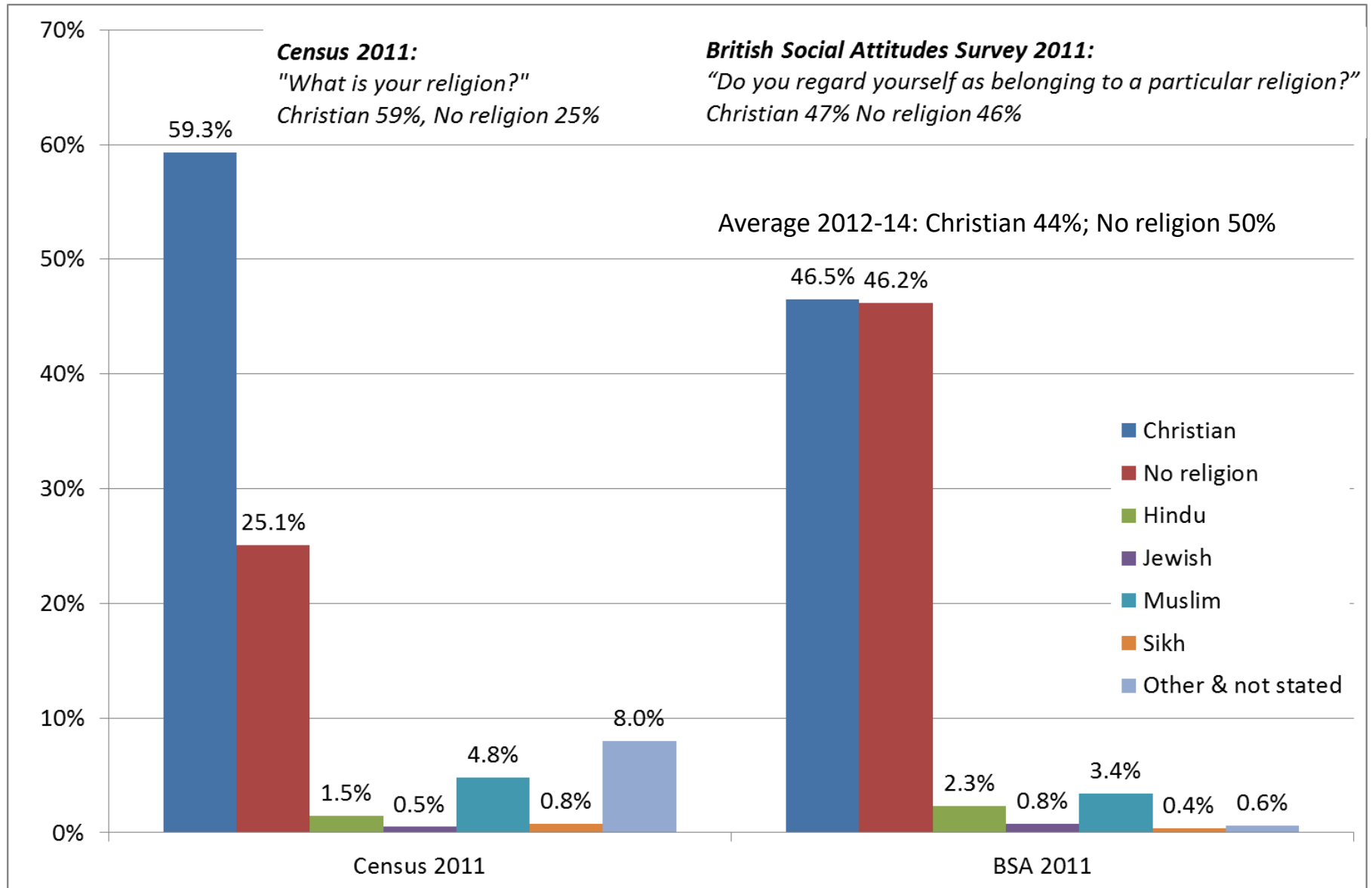
British Catholics :

- Just 14% under-40s support a ban on **abortion**;
- >50% of under-50s say “**same-sex marriage** is right”;
- 58% say the law should be changed to permit **assisted dying** for terminally ill



How many British people identify as non-religious?

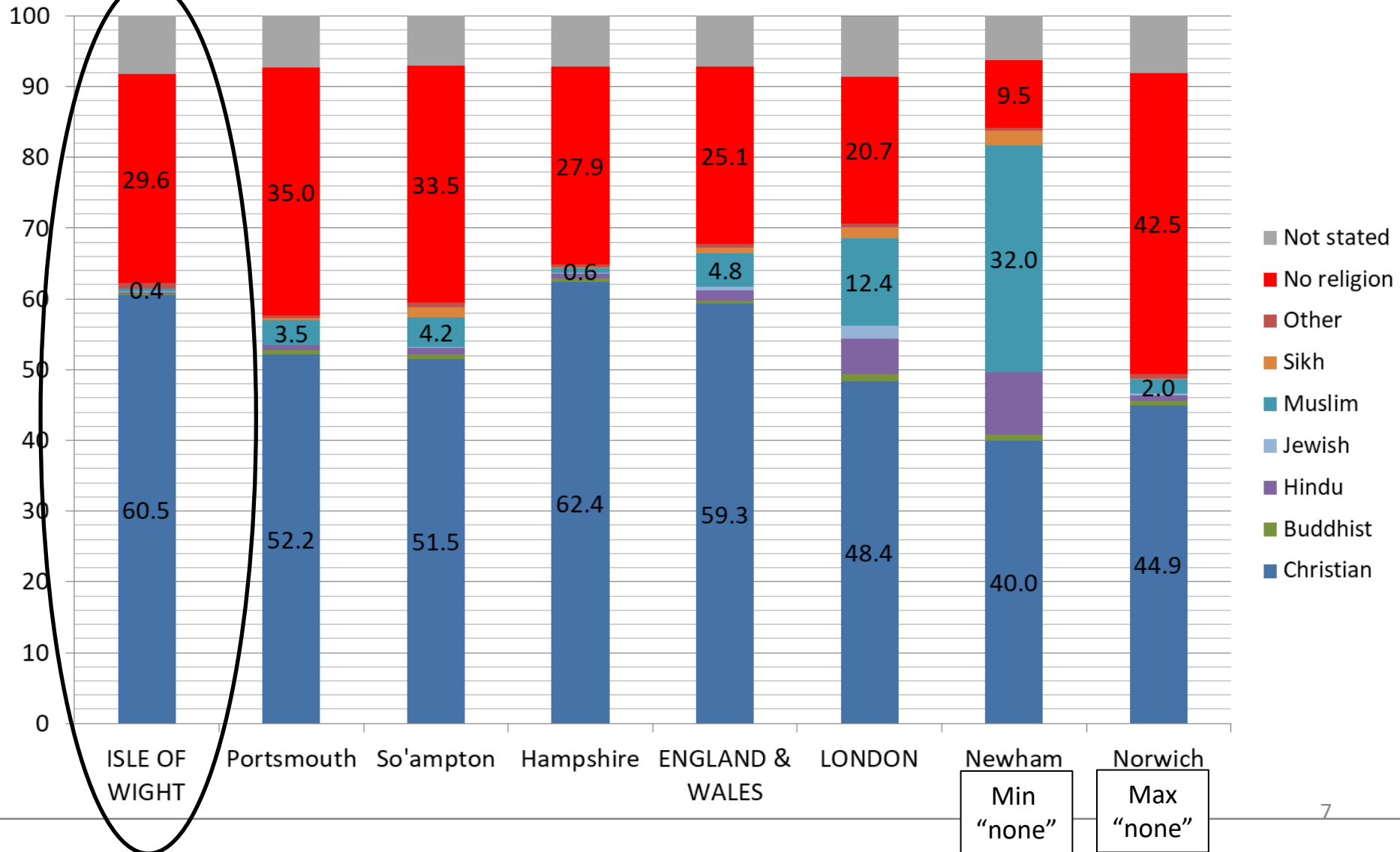
Depends on question asked.....



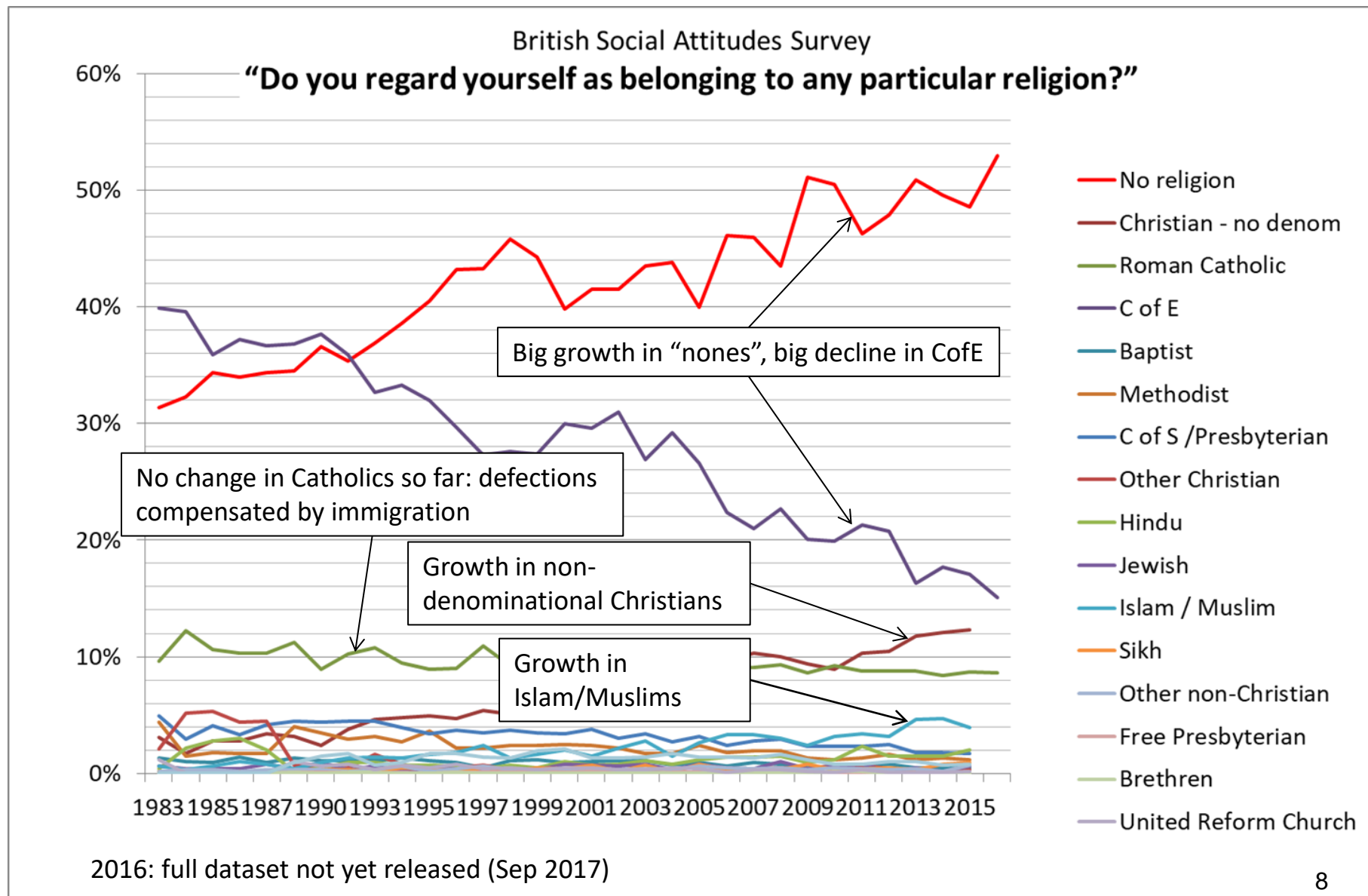
Local Census data...

Census 2011 - Isle of Wight & comparisons

"What is your religion?" (%)

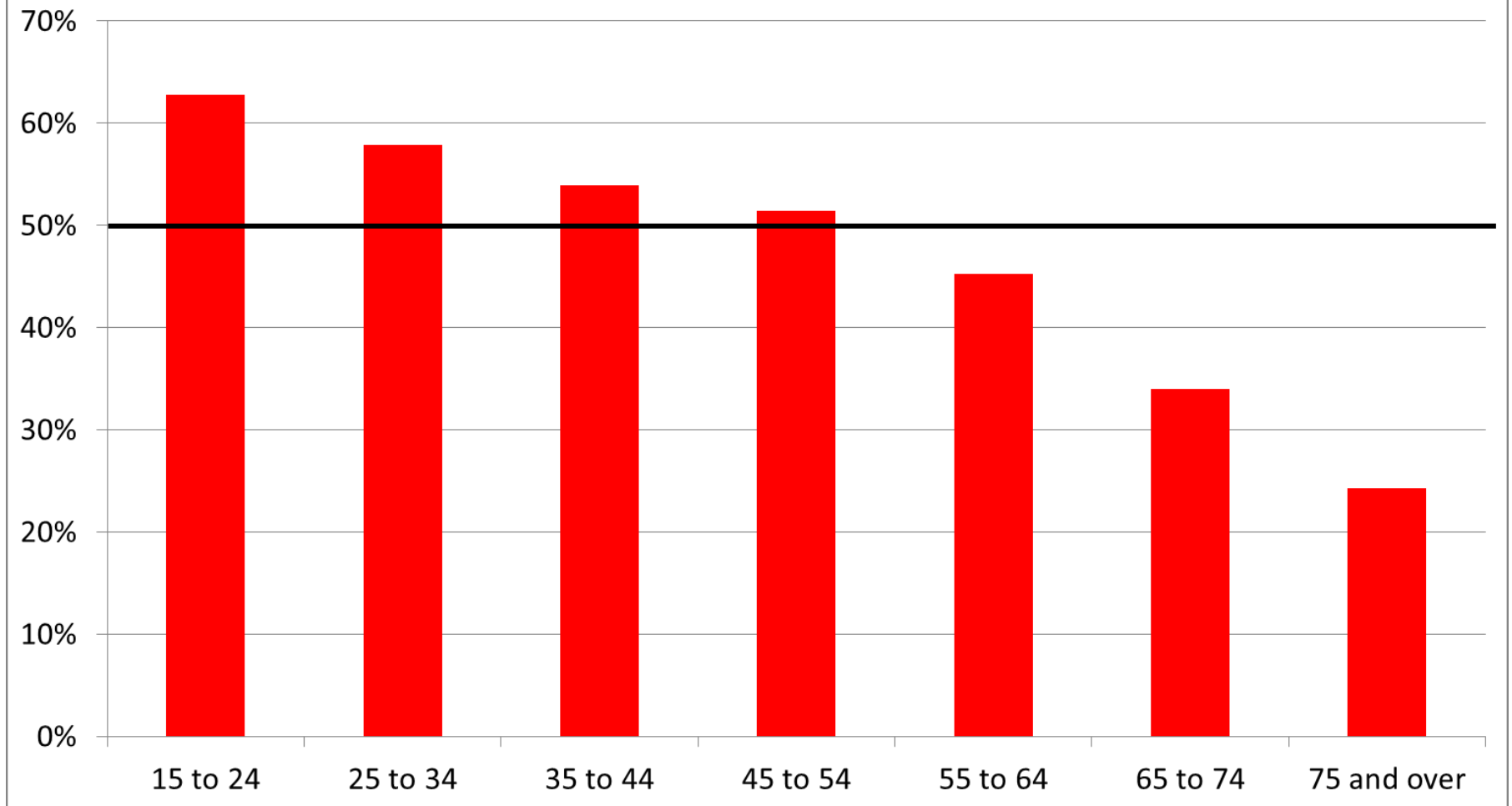


Religion & Belief identity in Britain – 1983-2015/16



Most people under 55 are non-religious....

BSA 2015
"Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?"
% saying "No" by age group



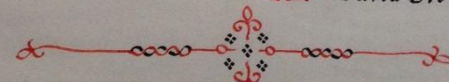
British Christians: historic change – cultural heritage...



ST. AGATHA'S CHURCH COATES

❖ ❖ ❖ INCUMBENTS ❖ ❖ ❖

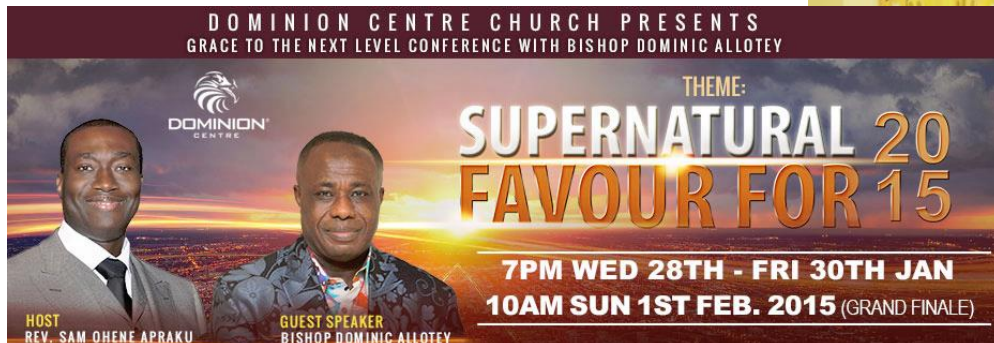
- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1387. William Doger, [exchange]. | 1662. Samuel Pomphrett. |
| 1387. Robert Ryder. | 1664-5. Thomas Musgrave. |
| 1388. Thomas Palmer. | 1690-1. William Simcox. |
| 1407. John Broker. | 1693. Aley Baguley. |
| 1491. Robert Heade. | 1713. Henry Wright. A.M. |
| 1502. Robert Mery, [resigned]. | 1718. John Backshall. |
| 1502. William Godewyn. | 1739. Edward Stuart. B.A. |
| 1509. Edmund Leyland, [resigned]. | 1740. John Pannell. B.D. |
| 1509. Brian Wyswill. | 1798. Nicholas Turner. |
| 1511. Julian Dubost. | 1819. John Pannell. |
| 1522. Thomas Bradshawe. | 1872. William Thomas Charles Brande. M.A. |
| 1544. John Bradshawe, [died]. | 1890. Cecil Brereton. |
| 1555. Ralph Post. | 1919-26. Howard Beech. M.A. |
| 1616. Gabriel Taynton. M.A. | 1962. Barzillai Beckerleg. M.A. |
| 1623. William Beeping. | 1964. Harold Walter James Maple. |
| 1633. Christopher Elderfield. A.M. | 1969. Guy Saunders. |
| 1652. John Sefton, | 1982. Ronald George Johnson. |
| [appointed by Commonwealth] | 1993. Geoffrey Holmes |
| | 1996-7. Richard Derek Payne |
| | 1998. William Elliot |
| | 2008. David Brown |



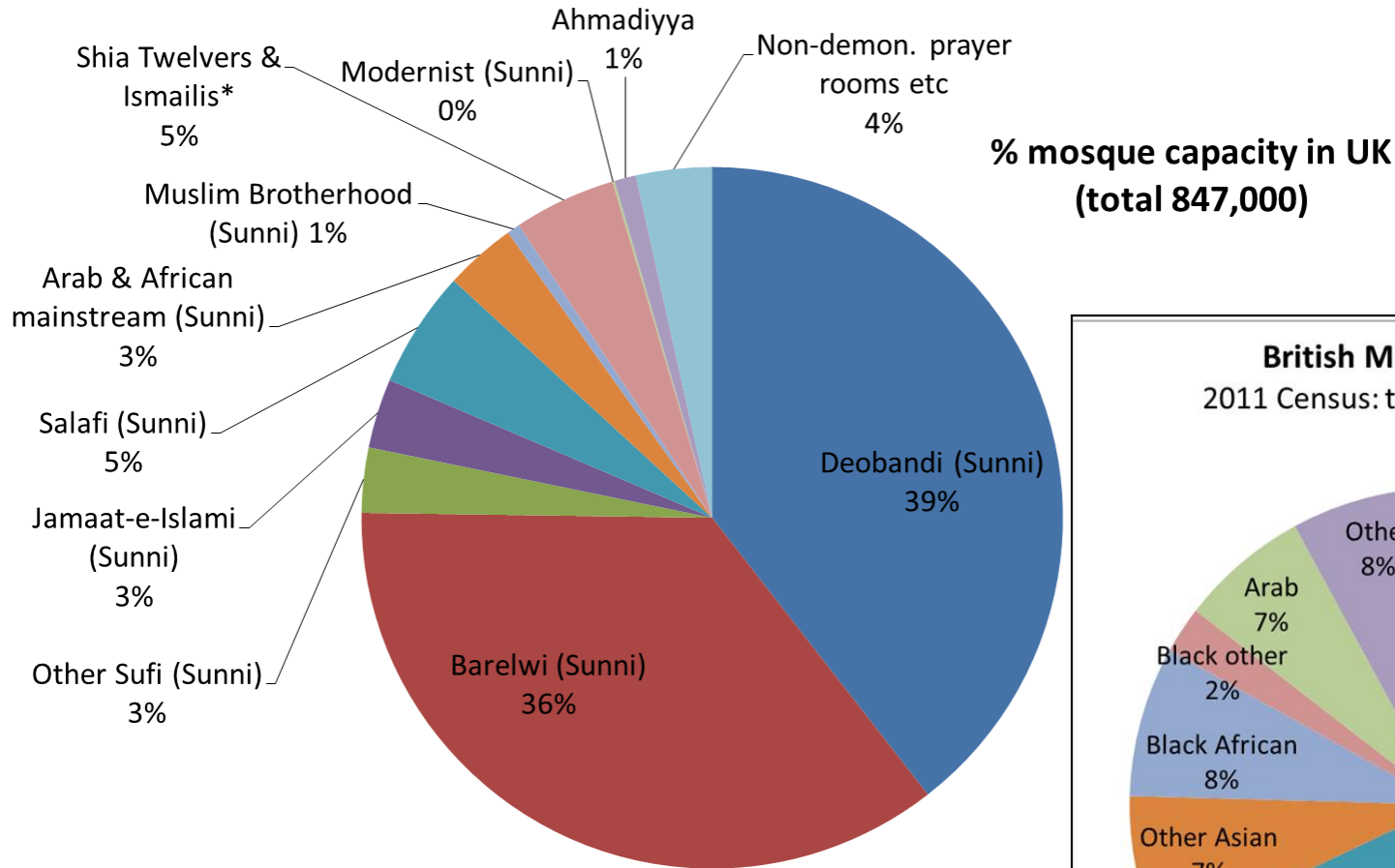
Non-denominational Christianity – evangelical & charismatic....



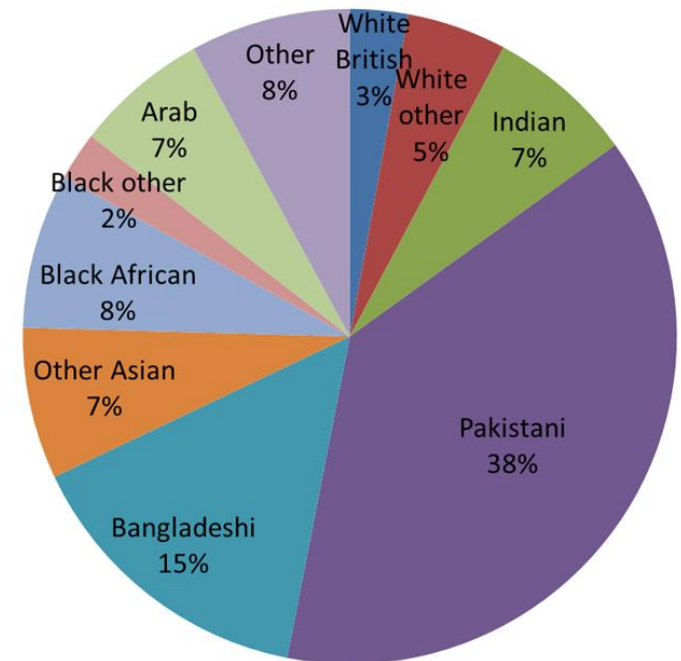
Prayer Hopeline: 0203 151 3798



Diversity within British Islam: sects, mosques & ethnicity

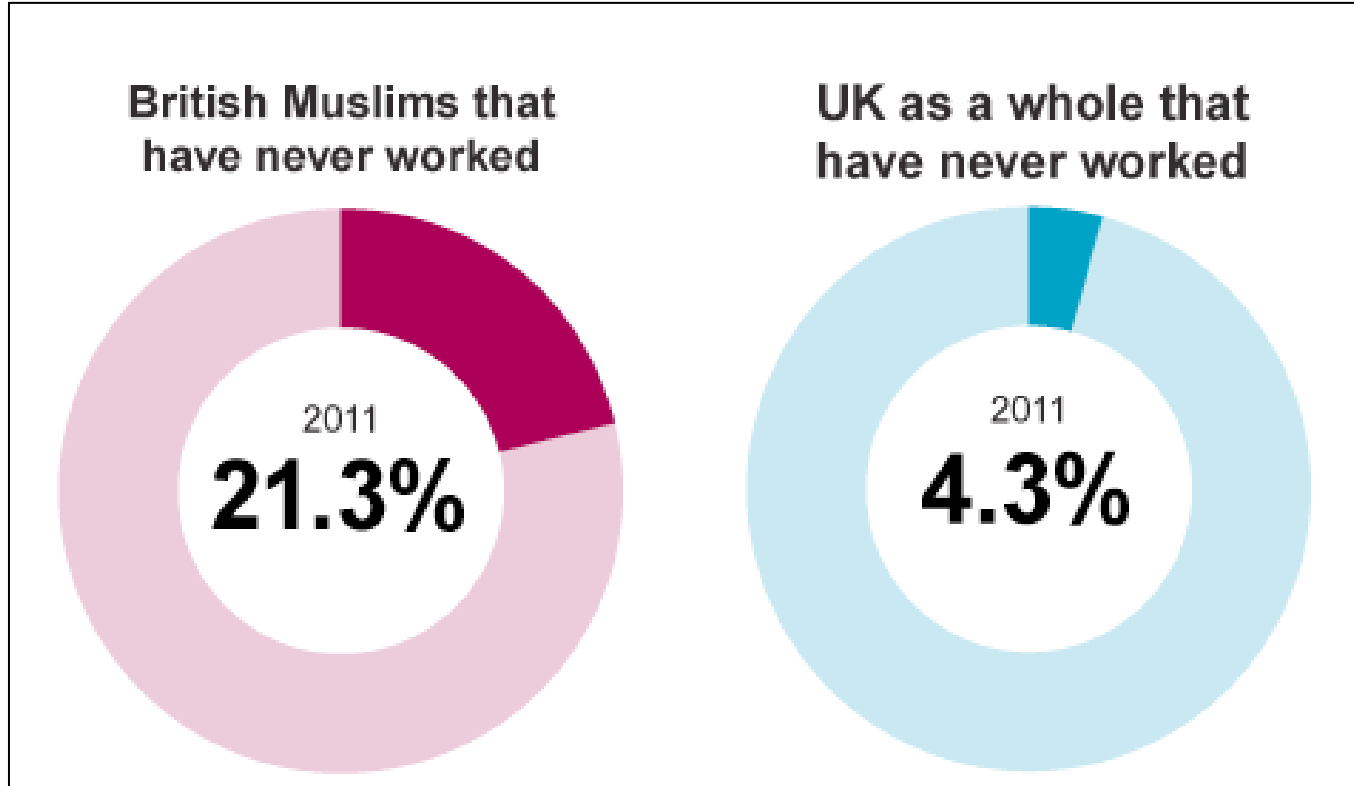


British Muslims: ethnicity
2011 Census: total 2.7 million = 4.6%



Data originated by Mehmood Naqshbandi, quoted by Innes Bowen in "Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent - Inside British Islam"
Adjustments: Shia - corrected as per Bowen from Shia sources;
Ahmadiyya data assumes total = 2x Modern capacity (2x100000)

British Muslims on average relatively disadvantaged...



Another (rough/qualitative) view...

Mainstream (many quite conservative)



Sectarian Fanatics



Nominal Muslims

Progressives

Human rights,
democracy, integration



Salafi Islamists

Want their form of Islam
to be in political control



Violent Jihadis

Islamists who use,
support or
advocate
violence



Another (rough/qualitative) view...

Ex-Muslims



Mainstream (many quite conservative)



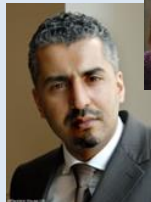
Sectarian Fanatics



Nominal Muslims

Progressives

Human rights,
democracy, integration



Salafi Islamists

Want their form of Islam
to be in political control

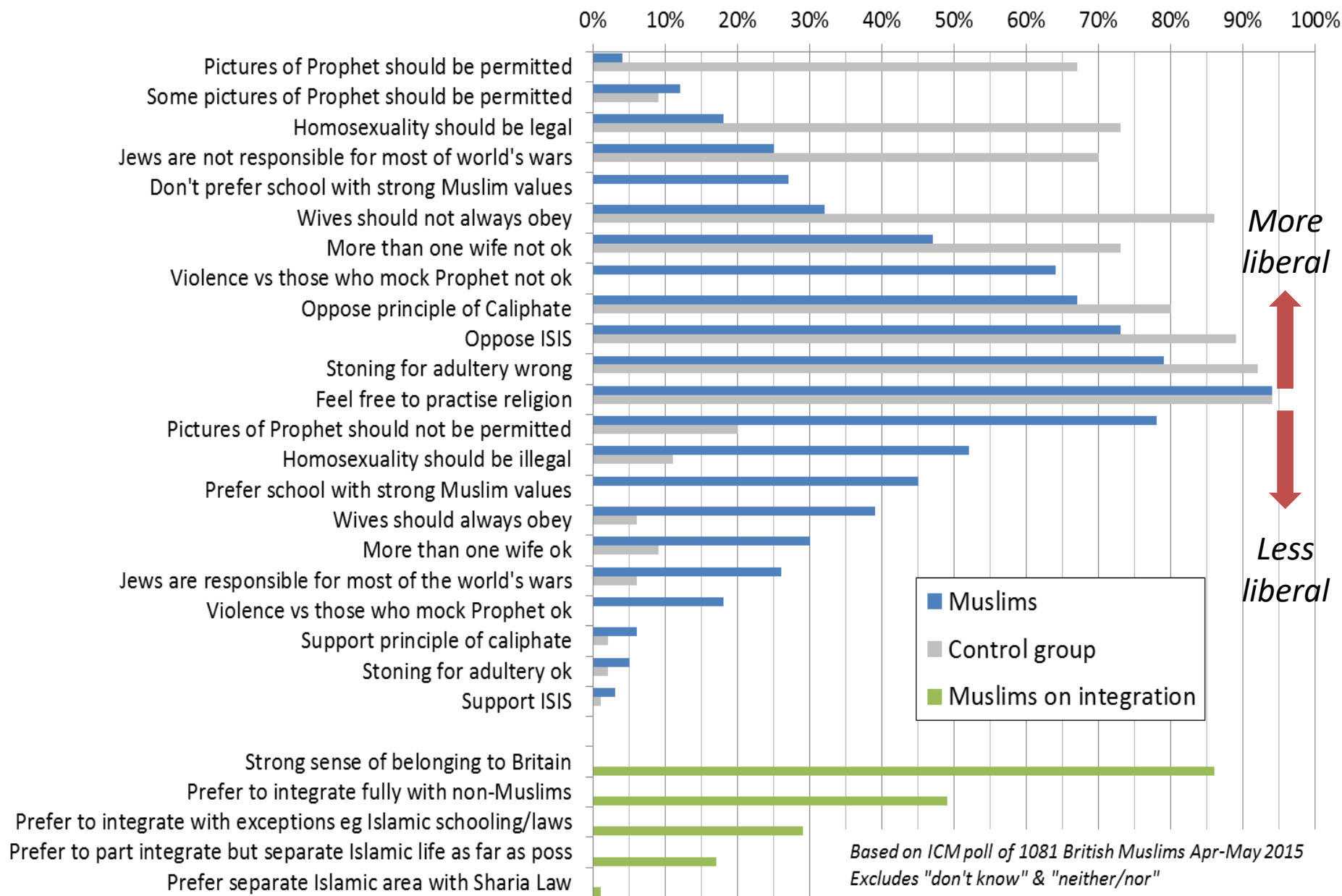


Violent Jihadis

Islamists who use,
support or
advocate
violence



Survey of British Muslims living in $\geq 20\%$ Muslim areas...



Nazir Afzal interview: 'Muslims are offered a cause to die for; I would give them something to live for'

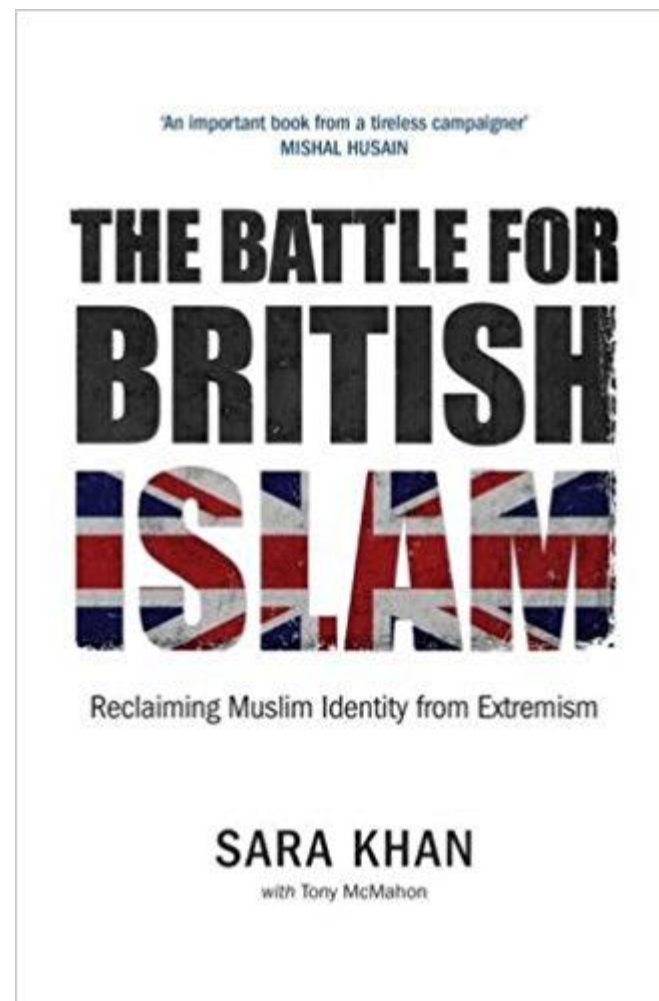
Radicalisation is a critical issue on which Nazir Afzal refuses to be silenced



Nazir Afzal resigned from the police and crime commissioners' association when he was told he could not appear on Question Time after the Manchester bomb

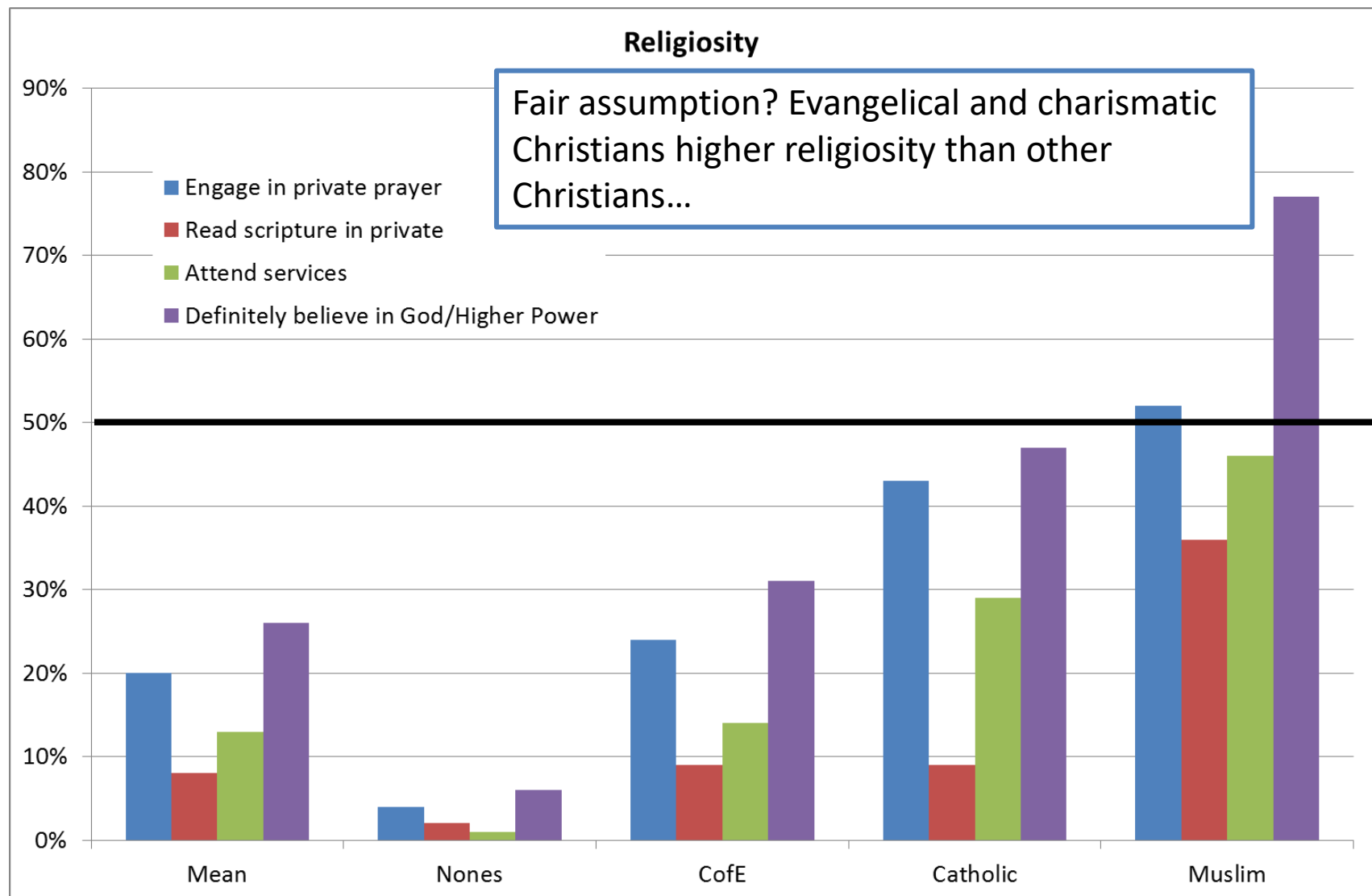
ANDREW MCCAREN FOR THE TIMES

"To my mind, the way you identify radicals is by their attitude to women and girls."

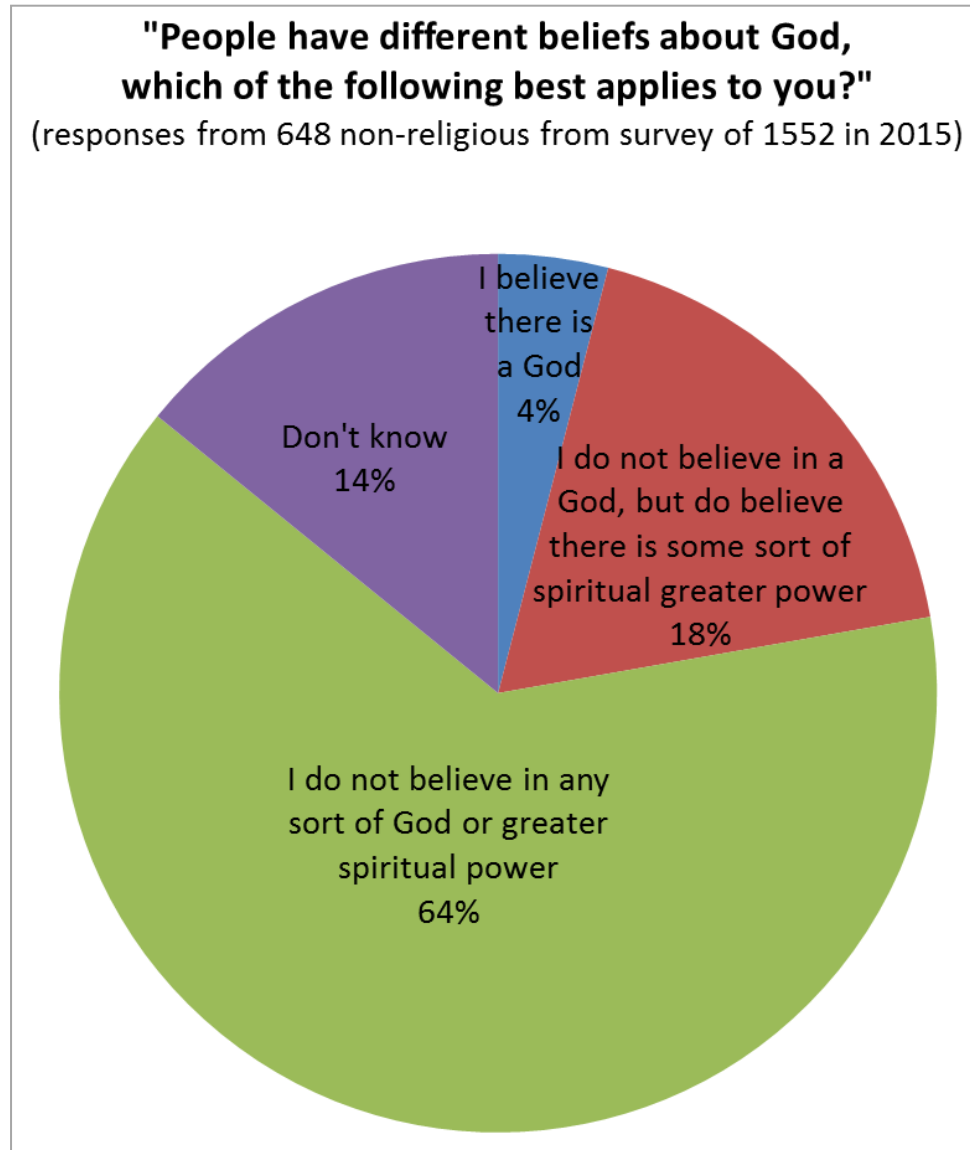


Behaviour: Religiosity

Growth is in stronger, more seriously religious identities, decline in weaker....

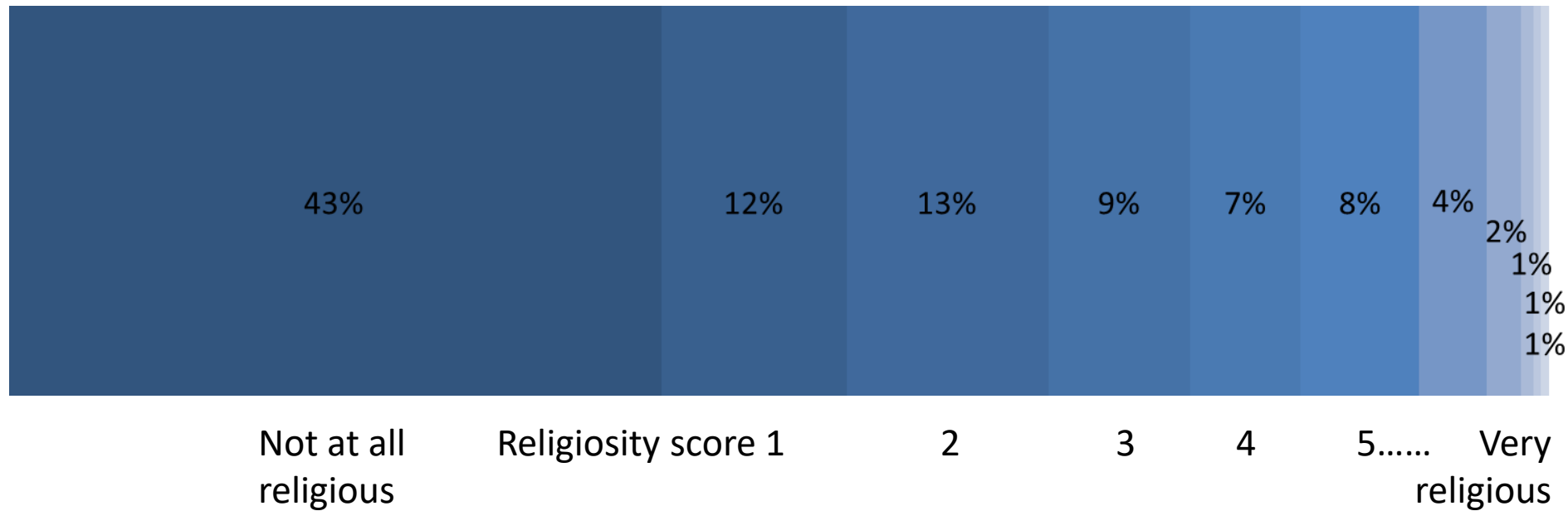


Non-religious complexity....

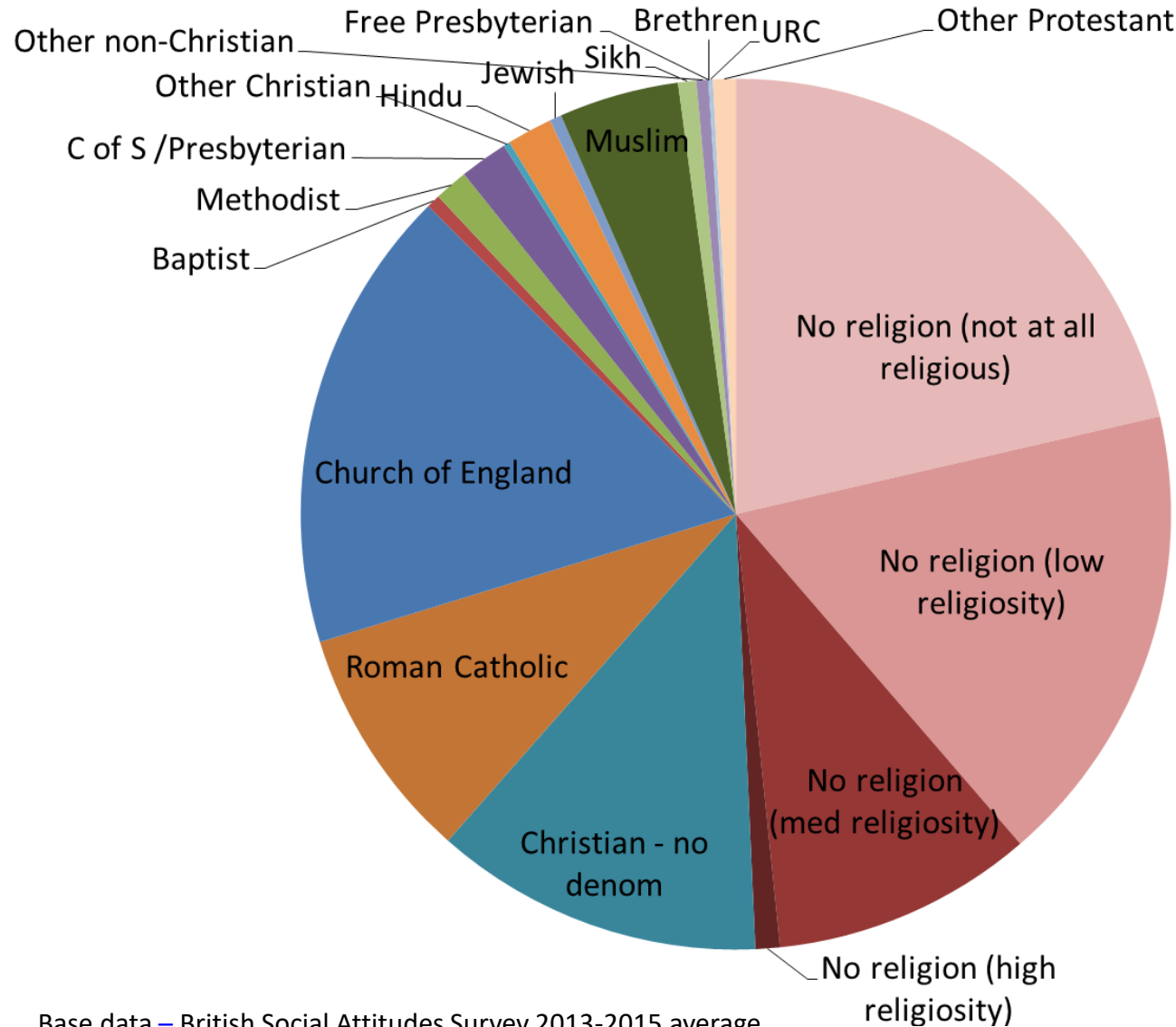


Most “non religious” claim a degree of religiosity.....

**“How religious are you?”
responses from 1147 UK non-religious people in 2014**



Current landscape – complexity in every segment...



- 22% humanist worldview:**
1. non-religious, *and*
 2. say they:
 - use science (not faith) to understand Universe;
 - take consequentialist approach to ethical questions;
 - don't think religion required to understand right from wrong.

Base data — British Social Attitudes Survey 2013-2015 average

Religiosity of “nones” from [European Social Survey](#) 2014 scale of self-identified religiosity: 0 = Not at all religious; 10 = Very religious. Here “low” = 1-3, medium = 4-6, high = 7-10. Ref by [Catholic Research Forum Reports 3 'The "no religion" population of Britain' - Stephen Bullivant \(2017\)](#)

Humanist questions from YouGov survey for Humanists UK

What will the future look like?

Cultural super-diversity:

Substantial religious minority

- Diverse religious identities
- Diverse views within each identity
- Higher average commitment, seriousness



Non-religious majority

- Diverse beliefs & practices
 - Including “don’t care”
- Around half with broadly humanistic worldview
- Many from faith backgrounds
- Evolving...



Conway Hall
Ethical Society



Sunday Assembly
A global movement for wonder and good.



Challenges & responses

Challenges

- Polarisation, lack of social cohesion
- Uninformed generalisations about “The Other”
- Faith-based & race-based prejudice elide
- Declining institutions defending privileges
- Conflicting values

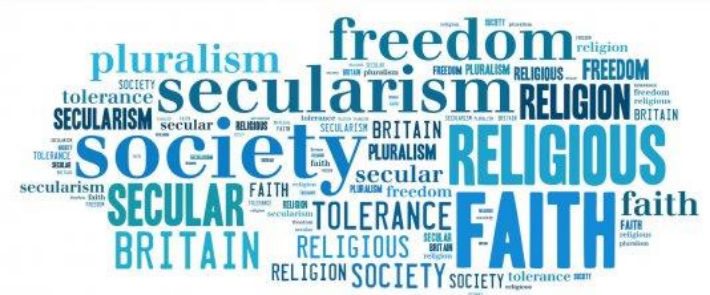


How can humanists respond?

- Humanists UK Strategy: *“We want a world where everyone lives cooperatively on the basis of shared human values, respect for human rights, and concern for future generations.”*
- *Three humanist responses: **Secularism; Education; Dialogue & Participation***

1. Explain & promote Secularism

- State neutral in matters of religion & belief
- Universal human rights
 - Freedom of thought/belief & expression
 - Guarantee of religious freedom
- Law applicable equally to everyone
 - Decided by democratic process
- No religious privilege



Secularism does not mean:

- *Atheism or Humanism*
- *Denying the role Christianity has played in British/European history & culture*
 - *Art, music, architecture, narratives...*
- *Denying the right of religious individuals or institutions to express their views*
 - **But** does mean they are given no special weight simply because they're faith-based

2. Educate

- High quality education about religious & non-religious beliefs, values & ethics
 - Positive contribution to curriculum development
 - Humanist speakers for schools
- End:
 - Faith-based admissions to state-funded schools
 - Compulsory “collective worship”
 - State funding for faith schools
- Broad preparation for life in a plural society:
 - sex & relationships education
 - curiosity, thinking skills & creativity
 - values & citizenship
- Institutions where core values defended



*Despite strong representations from all sides, including the RE Council and Rowan Williams, the government excluded Humanism as an option in draft RE subject criteria for GCSE, AS & A level criteria published November 2014. All Party Parliamentary Group on RE taken over by evangelicals 2015 & excluded non-religious views from scope

3. Dialogue & Participation

- View others primarily as fellow humans
 - Religion/belief one dimension of personal identity
- Seek Dialogue versus Debate
 - Understanding versus “Winning”
- Beware assumptions & generalisations
- Recognise areas of disagreement
- Recognise common ground
- Recognise “Red Lines”
 - Limits to Dialogue
 - No tolerance of bigotry
 - No succour for terrorism



Jim Al-Khalili & Ziauddin Sardar in Conversation Oct 2015

LIVING WITH DIFFERENCE

community, diversity and the common good

Chair: The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE

Convened by The Woolf Institute, Cambridge

Dialogue

6.35 It should be a high priority, not only for interfaith organisations but also for all religion and belief groups, educational institutions, public bodies and voluntary organisations, to promote opportunities for encounter and dialogue. Particularly important needs and priorities include the following:

- that leaders of religion and belief groups should, with appropriate training, have good knowledge of the different traditions and communities within the UK, and should encourage their members to participate in dialogue and to help develop and maintain good relations within society
- that faith communities should consider opening their places of worship at regular intervals to welcome and engage with those from other groups within their locality, and should explore the possibilities of twinning arrangements with other communities
- that in order to supplement existing patterns of dialogue between the Abrahamic faiths there should be more bilateral dialogue between Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions
- that there should be more structured dialogue between those who are religious and those who are not
- that more encounter and dialogue among young people should be promoted
- that more women should become involved in interfaith structures in representative roles and that faith communities should facilitate this.

Dialogue: the case for humanist engagement & leadership

- Humanist engagement in dialogue has two objectives:
 1. Making a positive humanist contribution to building a peaceful, plural, secular society*
 2. Improving others' understanding of Humanism
- Positive engagement complements campaigning
 - Provided we continue to press for what we think is right

**In line with strategy: "We want a world where everyone lives cooperatively on the basis of shared human values, respect for human rights, and concern for future generations."*

Three broad types of dialogue

1. “Interfaith dialogue” & participative action via established organisations

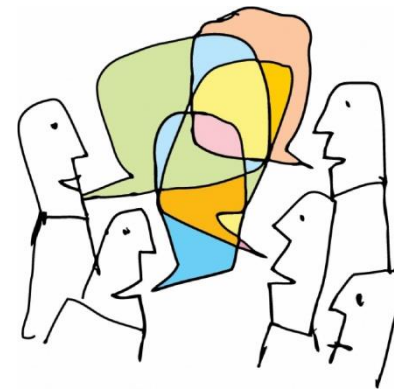


*Humanism as positive presence
in wider community*

2. Public events



3. Private bilateral dialogue series & actions



Big change, we can help determine outcome...

1. Separate, parallel lives
2. Assimilation
3. Messy integration/“interculturalism”

