



BBC Religion & Ethics Review

December 2017

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I. FOREWORD

The start of a new Charter period is a good time for the BBC to assess how we are delivering on the religious and ethical aspects of our public service mission.

We know – our research tells us – that today’s audiences are interested in learning more in this area. People of all ages, and of all faiths and none, think it is important to learn about religion in general. They recognise that, if we truly want to make sense of the world, we need to understand the systems of belief that underpin it.

For the BBC, this is a fundamental part of our responsibility. It has also perhaps never been more important for us to get it right.

In today’s complex society, we need to work harder than ever to understand ourselves and each other – not least the role that religion plays in everyday life, the beliefs that define us, and the certainties that guide us in uncertain times.

At the same time, religion continues to play a key role in shaping events and policy across the globe. In a fast-changing world, we need to do more than ever to understand the role of different beliefs and the impact they have on global events.

That’s why, over the past year, the BBC has carried out a review of all our output that features religious or ethical topics and ideas. Our aim is to reassess our role and strategy in this area, and reconsider how best to deliver our public service mission.

This publication summarises the findings of this review and how the BBC plans to respond. Our commitment to Christianity is undiminished. We want to do more about Christianity and other beliefs as well.

It is based on extensive consultations. We have talked to over 150 senior external stakeholders around the UK (see Appendix 1), run sessions with groups of younger adults, and carried out detailed audience research (see Appendix 2). This work has underlined how vital it is that we engage openly with audiences and stakeholders as the picture in the UK and globally continues to change.

The BBC has already started to make significant changes, with new leadership in TV and some outstanding radio and TV programmes that

present religion for a mainstream audience as well as those with a faith perspective.

We believe that the plans we have set out will build on this to deliver an even more profound approach. They will ensure that the BBC better reflects the UK, the world, and the role that religion plays in everyday life. They will also raise understanding of the impact religion has on decisions made at home and abroad.

Getting this right won't be easy, but we believe this approach will significantly enhance what the BBC is able to deliver. We are extremely grateful to everyone who has helped to inform and shape our plans.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the name, there is a single horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

Tony Hall, Director General

2. INTRODUCTION

Globally, 84% of people affiliate with a religion and this is predicted to rise above 90% over the next few decades¹. It can be hard to appreciate the importance of this whilst living in the UK, where the figure is around 50%², but if we really want to understand what is going on in the world and what the future holds, then we need to be able to make sense of our beliefs and those of others.

The BBC has always done great work in the area of Religion & Ethics. As UK society becomes more diverse and complex, with so many passionately held, conflicting views, our role in helping audiences to understand belief in a fast-changing world has perhaps never been more important. However, until a couple of years ago, there was a risk that Religion and Ethics might become too focused on its core audience or even marginalised, as it has been by other mass broadcasters.

We have made changes over the past two years to respond to this, including new leadership in TV. Now, through the review that we have undertaken over the past year, we have sought to reassess the BBC's overall strategy and revitalise our offer.

The progress we have already made is exemplified in new programmes such as *Boy with the Topknot*, *Muslims Like Us* and *Dangerous Borders* on TV and *Living with the Gods* on Radio 4. This new activity complements the topical agendas of long-running strands such as *Sunday* and *Beyond Belief*, which explore religious beliefs and practice across all faiths and none, from major religions to humanism and atheism.

Now we want to increase our ambition for religion and ethics further, and realise the opportunities created by the rapidly changing environment in the UK and abroad.

Extensive audience research, and discussions with a wide range of stakeholder groups, shows a fluid picture, with one in four people saying that they have significantly changed their mind about their faith over their lifetime. It also shows generational differences, regardless of belief, when it comes to social attitudes and openness to other belief systems and cultures.

¹ Pew Research Center: The Future of World Religions report, April 2015

² <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/news-media/press-releases/2017/september/british-so>

Our audiences are interested in moral questions, but are living in a less structured moral environment. Our goal is to help people understand the world they live in better, and provide tools and knowledge that will inform their lives.

Beyond Belief, Radio 4

The range of subjects covered over the last few years has been very broad, from religion in children's literature to sharia councils to yoga to religious practices in countries such as China, Iran, Somalia and France. It brings religious and community diversity, as well as new voices to air.



Beyond Belief engages our listeners' emotions by reflecting people's experiences and beliefs back to them. It mixes historical and theological background to a subject with lived experience and the contemporary questions arising. This means that the programmes remain relevant for many years and there is now a vast archive with huge potential to support religious literacy in schools, colleges and beyond. It reaches more than 900,000 listeners weekly.

The challenge for the BBC as a broadcaster is to meet the sheer range of needs as people's beliefs become more fluid and individual. For example, the needs and preferences of older audiences in this area are often very different to those of younger audiences that respond to different subjects, different treatments and different presenters.

This will require us to reset our ambition with innovative, high quality output that helps people celebrate, interrogate and understand the world around them through the lens of different beliefs and religion in all their forms – including people who do not see themselves as belonging to a particular religion.

In practice, that means the BBC will:

- **Raise our game across all output** – Increase specialist expertise with a new Religious Affairs Team and Religion Editor in News (p19); Create networks of specialists (p27); Develop stakeholder relations (p27)

- **Reach as many people as possible** – Landmark series and programmes (p21); Cross-genre commissions (p16), A ‘Year of Beliefs’ in 2019 (p23); Content and social media aimed at a next generation audience (p23)
- **Portray the diversity of beliefs and society** – Diversify our range of contributors (p14); Increase coverage of religious events (p15); Enhance portrayal in mainstream programming (p17)
- **Help people understand their values and decisions** – Innovative content that works across genres (p17); Innovative online services that include archive content that is still relevant (p25)

3. THE ROLE OF THE BBC

The BBC produces over 7,000 hours of Religion & Ethics programming each year. On the whole, it is well-liked and considered good value for money. Other mass media broadcasters no longer provide much of this kind of content, which means there is a lot of scrutiny on the BBC's output – and in particular on volume, quality and how we represent the changing nature of the UK.

The BBC's role in relation to Religion & Ethics runs across all of the five public purposes which define the BBC's public service mission, from news and education to creating the highest quality, distinctive content.

In some cases it plays a central role, for example in helping us to understand other cultures, and in some it is a lens through which to understand global events. It is not enough simply to consider neatly categorised Religion & Ethics output but also the wider impact the BBC can have, e.g. with mainstream drama, soaps and comedy.

The BBC's Public Purposes

To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them.

To support learning for people of all ages.

To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services

To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the UK.

To reflect the UK, its culture and values to the world.

This raises important questions: Is the BBC's main role to delight a core audience that wants to consume clearly categorised Religion & Ethics output? Or is it to try to reach a broader audience to increase understanding of and question religion and beliefs? How should the BBC balance its focus on these over the next ten years in a constrained funding environment?

Both of these roles continue to matter. The increasing number of people in the UK that do not affiliate with a particular religion means that the BBC needs to reflect not only beliefs which aren't founded on religion,

but also engage people who are not engaged with traditional religion but are spiritual and interested in the big issues affecting them.

The BBC is now the main mass audience provider of Religion & Ethics content in the UK, which means that any decline in output or a downgrading of its importance will not be made up by another broadcaster. Covering a broad range of issues is therefore important, across documentary, debate, news and other output, from Local Radio to *Sunday* on Radio 4 to *Sunday Morning Live* on BBC One.

The BBC's output is also evolving to reflect the increasing diversity of belief and makes a real difference in the BBC's ability to deliver on our purpose to "reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions" so that they are "accurately and authentically portrayed in the BBC's output and services to raise awareness of different cultures [and] contribute to social cohesion...".

***The Boy with the Top Knot*, BBC Two, November 2017**

A one-off 90 minute drama based on the memoirs of the British journalist Sathnam Sanghera, who was born to traditional Punjabi Sikh parents in Wolverhampton, this critically acclaimed film explores the religious and cultural differences between two generations and had a reach of 2.8 million – above the average for a BBC Two drama.



Sathnam was the first member of his family to go to University and from there to a very different life in London. Excelling in his career as a columnist for *The Times* and living with a white girlfriend, he kept his private and family life separate. Sathnam starts to realise he doesn't know as much about his family as he thought, and he struggles to reconcile his two worlds.

In addition to this, applying the lens of religion and beliefs is particularly important for the BBC's role to "help people understand and engage with the world around them" with news, TV and Radio programming,

“so that all audiences can engage fully with issues across the UK and the world.”

When we get this right, we help people understand why things are happening as well as what has happened. This requires specialist expertise and a commitment to tackling tough, contentious topics, as evidenced by the *Moral Maze*.

The BBC’s role must balance delivery of these purposes through a combination of specialist output and content that appeals to a broader audience. Our overall objectives with this are to:

- Explore the big and sometimes controversial religious and ethical issues of our time;
- Reflect the diverse and complex expression of belief and religious practice;
- Broaden appeal to all audiences, including under-45 and BAME audiences
- Help people understand the commonalities and differences between beliefs;
- Celebrate a diverse range of religious culture, music and worship in action, both in the UK and around the world;
- Reveal a close-up picture of what people and institutions really believe and how this guides their life and decisions;
- Give people the tools they need to make informed, moral decisions and examine their beliefs.

4. THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

With these aims in mind, we wanted to consult a wide range of our audience and stakeholders. We have spoken to more than 150 stakeholders across the UK and analysed the following sources of audience research:

- BBC audience insight from the past decade;
- Quantitative data from the BBC's Pulse survey carried out from 17-23 April 2017 amongst a representative sample of 1,367 adults with a range of faiths and none;
- Publicly available sources of statistics and opinions around religious identity, religious belief and religious practice in the UK – including a summary of this and other research carried out by ComRes Faith Research Centre in May 2017;
- Qualitative research by Craft Strategy Ltd. on how audiences define the territory of 'belief' and 'faith', what they find interesting within it, and to identify the topics, tones and treatments of most interest to a mainstream audience.

This work highlighted a combination of views about the issues and opportunities across our services, as summarised below. Please note that here we are reflecting the views that we have heard whether, after analysis and reflection, we agree with them or not. Even where they do not necessarily reflect the actual situation, they remain invaluable as perceptions of the BBC's output and therefore useful in helping the BBC, as a learning organisation, refine and improve its approach.

4.1 Perceptions of the BBC

- **Our culture:** There is a perception among some religious stakeholders that the BBC has a more secular culture than the UK as a whole. The statistical evidence is not conclusive but talking to BBC teams shows a range of different cultures and mindsets across the 7,000 hours of output broadcast each year.
- **Our commitment:** Stakeholders question whether the BBC will be able to deliver on its ambition in this area. One example cited is changes to the World Service in 2007, where specialist programme departments were cut with a public commitment to fill the gap with a wider range of news stories. Another example is the question of why

there is no Religious Affairs editor in BBC News when many other subject areas are led by an editor.

- **Our expertise:** Our specialist teams in Religion & Ethics Radio make a wide range of high quality programmes across Radio 2, 3 and 4 but there is a perception that the rest of the BBC's in-house expertise is spread thinly across the BBC in small groups of one or two people. We need to find new and more effective ways for teams to collaborate and share expertise across the organisation.

4.2 The reputation of BBC content

- **Breadth of focus:** On balance, audiences view our output as catering for the more cerebral, older end of the market and having a relatively narrow focus on the main organised religions.
- **Faith's everyday role:** Many stakeholders feel that the BBC doesn't reflect the everyday role of faith or diversity of communities in our mainstream drama and comedy and people of faith are often absent, poorly presented or satirised. Others cite *Rev, Broken, The Archers, Father Brown* and *CBBC/CBeebies* as examples of where we do it well.
- **Depth and precision:** There is recognition that we have started to reflect the increasing diversity of community life and personal beliefs but some people feel that we are not precise enough with language, images or how we explain issues, for example Christian Church and same-sex marriage or Hinduism and caste.

4.3 What audiences feel are issues to be addressed

- **Broader appeal:** The perception is that our traditional worship and discussion programming (which makes up the bulk of current hours) skews towards older groups that already consume a lot of BBC programmes. Our audience research shows that there is an opportunity to increase impact with a more mainstream audience, and that this will require new talent, formats and approaches.
- **More issue-led approach:** Audiences tell us that they are interested in how religion and ethical beliefs shape world events and our hopes, dreams and fears. Audiences and stakeholders expect more from us on the difficult, important subjects (e.g. radicalisation)

and want these explored through a lens of beliefs alongside other perspectives.

- **More inclusive language:** The terms ‘religion’, ‘philosophy’ and ‘ethics’ are not felt to be engaging to the broader audience – they feature low down on areas of interest and can be a barrier for audiences, with connotations of war, conflict and organised religion. Many feel that there is a need to shift the language towards more mainstream appeal.
- **A clear digital strategy:** There is a general feeling that the BBC’s digital services do not make the most of this content to reach younger audiences, for example through social media or topic-based approaches. Younger audiences that we have spoken to have said that this should feature in the BBC’s future strategy.

5. HOW WE WILL RESPOND

In response to the challenges set out in Section 4, we plan both to reinvigorate our core output and to broaden our audience reach and impact with new content and approaches to distribution.

5.1 Represent the plurality of beliefs in the UK

The social scientist Peter Berger argues that ‘*Modernity is characterised not by less religion but by an increasing plurality, within the same society, of different beliefs, values and worldviews.*’ We need to reflect an increasingly pluralistic UK society. We want to do more to help people understand the role of Christianity in today’s world, and more to understand other faiths and beliefs as well.

Progress is already being made in this area. For example, on local radio and Nations TV and radio services, the 5,000+ hours of Religion & Ethics programming that we broadcast each year reflect beliefs from around the UK in programmes such as *Inspirit with Jumoke Fashola* (BBC London), *Alleluia* (BBC Alba), *Praise Revival* (Radio Ulster/Foyle) and *All Things Considered* (BBC Radio Wales).

Building on this, we will enhance our output by working with faith groups and the expert network scheme in BBC News to broaden the range of interviewees and contributors and represent a wider range of opinions and practices, with particular focus on bringing in the young and female voices which are less frequently heard.

Another essential factor will be to use national programme series to develop the overall diversity that we represent on-air. We will try out new contributors from a wide range of backgrounds on programmes such as *Good Morning Sunday* (Radio 2), *Beyond Belief* (Radio 4) and *Sunday Morning Live* (BBC One).

We will continue to develop Faith Films on TV – outstanding single documentaries that explore issues of faith within all the major religions in the UK. These will nurture new voices on and off screen and work with promising new directors. Recent commissions include how a small Irish community deals with the arrival of Syrian refugees and Hassidic Jews seeking a new home in Canvey Island.

We already produce popular programmes around key moments in the Christian calendar: Holy Week, Easter Sunday, Advent, and Christmas. We will continue to innovate at these times, building on the success of wide reaching programmes such as *Mary Berry at Easter* and *Fern Britton in the Holy Land* on TV and *At The Foot Of The Cross*, *Good Friday Meditation* and *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* on Radio. Future commissions include an inside view of St Paul's at Christmas.

Snapshot of BBC Diwali coverage, 19th October 2017

- On CBBC, *Newsround* featured a piece broadcast over two days looking at Diwali celebrations in Leicester.
- CBeebies celebrated Diwali with themed links throughout the day and features within programmes such as *Postman Pat*.
- *The One Show* featured Diwali and looked at the rise in burglary of Indian jewellery during this period.
- *Prayer for the Day* on Radio 4 featured Shaunaka Rishi Das, the Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, and Akhandadhi Das, a Hindu priest and theologian, featured on *Thought for the Day*.



- Asian Network created special Diwali music playlists and reviews of recent Diwali-related Bollywood film releases as well as exploring why some Sri Lankan Hindus don't celebrate Diwali.
- All areas of BBC Local Radio from Newcastle and Hull to Guernsey and Wiltshire had special programmes looking at wide-ranging issues such as Diwali cooking and safeguarding pets from fireworks, live broadcasts from Hindu temples in London, Bolton, Bradford and Watford, and a special feature from Radio Northampton about how Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Hindus celebrate Diwali.

We will also extend current coverage of non-Christian religious calendars. We will create specific features and content for major festivals such as Diwali, Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Ramadan, Eid and Vaisakhi. These will feature across mainstream programmes such as *The One Show*, *The Chris Evans Breakfast Show*, and *Newsround*. We will also explore the audience appetite for specialist documentaries and other archive material.

5.2 Provide greater insight on the big issues of our time

Our research shows that people are interested in programmes about issues that directly affect their lives. People find these programmes most engaging when we use a contemporary approach to make difficult subjects accessible, for example by focusing on the underlying human drama, as with *Boy with the Top Knot*, or using a well-known presenter, as with *A World Without Down's Syndrome*?

The BBC already tackles a wide range of issues as a normal part of its output and will continue to do so. An area we will develop further is explaining and representing the underlying viewpoints, especially where the issues that people are most interested in have a clear link with religious and other beliefs – such as ageing and death, moral choices around medical advances, or social injustice.

In many cases, our audience does not begin with a clear view, maybe because there is a wide range of different viewpoints and the facts, if known, do not point to a clear answer. 61% of those who identify with no religion say they believe there are things in life that we simply cannot explain with science or other means.³

An example of the difference that the BBC can make in helping people to form and develop their views can be seen in recent programming to mark the 50th anniversary of the legalisation of abortion in most of the UK. As part of the programming, the BBC commissioned an ICM poll in which 45% of people responded that they “didn’t know” when asked “Generally, what do you think the legal time limit for having an abortion should be based on (except when a woman's life is in danger)?”.

This programming on Radio and TV was supported by an innovative online offering, with *Moral Maze* working in conjunction with the Centre for Argumentation at Dundee University, about how to win a moral argument. It was the best-performing innovation on the BBC Taster site with 54% of people saying that their views on abortion had changed as a result and 88% saying that the BBC should do more like this. It attracted a younger audience than the linear programmes, with 69% of users aged under 44.

³ Spirituality Survey, ComRes, 2013, 2036 GB adults interviewed aged 18+

Bringing this level of insight and support in decision making to a larger audience will require coordination and forward planning across a range of different BBC output, especially where the issues are significant or complex. Audiences will also benefit from the BBC creating lasting resources that people can easily access when they need to.

We cannot predict when an individual will want to engage with an issue like abortion or pre-natal screening but there may be triggers in their life that spark an interest. We will experiment with services that help people make sense of the issues and make sure they can also access relevant content from the BBC archive.

We plan to place less emphasis on adversarial debate programming and explore other approaches, such as observational documentaries and programmes that crossover with genres such as science and sport.

An example of this is BBC2's *Abortion on Trial* in which people shared their own experiences and tried to understand viewpoints different to their own. We will also do this through existing output such as *Sunday Morning Live*, which we plan to make more welcoming and invitational, with a less confrontational approach and a refreshed presenter line-up.

5.3 Help people develop their religious literacy

Our research shows that only 14% of the UK consider it unimportant for people to learn about 'issues of religion and religious beliefs'. However, the same survey also shows that 51% of people have no interest in learning more about this themselves. This shows a difference between what people see as good for society compared to what they personally are willing to spend time on.

The risk is that people remain locked in their own filter bubbles and fail to understand other beliefs beyond their own. The BBC can help with this through its mainstream programming, specific slots in primetime (*Pause for Thought* and *Thought for the Day*) and a diverse range of religious and ethical content for children on CBeebies, CBBC and BBC Learning.

Representing everyday faith in the BBC's mainstream output can reach and affect large numbers of people. This can sometimes be as simple as

Reverend Kate Bottley on *Celebrity Masterchef* or Nadiya Hussain on *Bake Off*. However, in most cases it demands a level of expertise and confidence from writers and producers, as well as higher production costs.

Sister Rita To The Rescue, BBC One, 2016-2017

From her base at the Lalley Community food bank and drop-in centre in inner city Manchester, the series focuses on how Sister Rita and her team of volunteers tackle the major social issues of our time, including themes such as benefits and poverty, unemployment and alcoholism, mental health and social welfare.



An inspirational example of faith in action, this series is on weekday mornings on BBC One. A real-life 'Call the Midwife' meets 'Benefits Street', each episode follows Sister Rita fighting for the people of Collyhurst.

This approach has clearly struck a chord and the series has been extremely popular, with audience appreciation figures of 87 (out of 100). Audiences say they have been touched, humbled and inspired by what they have seen. Indeed many viewers – entirely unsolicited – have gone on to send donations to the Lalley Centre to enable the work carried out by Sister Rita and her team to continue.

Programmes such as *Broken*, *EastEnders*, *Sister Rita to the Rescue*, *A World Without Down's Syndrome?* and *The Archers* demonstrate that we are capable of doing this well. We will support writers and production teams in tackling difficult subjects and in sourcing the right expertise and contacts.

Thought for the Day and *Pause for Thought* will continue as religious slots in primetime radio, with speakers from a wide range of faiths reflecting on an issue of the day. It is important that these slots are grounded in

different lived experiences of faith and philosophical underpinning aimed at resonating with the whole audience, so that the item is not just a reflection on current events, but also a chance to learn more about other religious beliefs.

We will support contributors in addressing topical and religious issues in ways that encompass underlying teachings to help people learn about different faith perspectives. We will also continue developing the stable of contributors with voices from different communities and religious traditions, including younger voices and women.

There will also be occasions where we bring these slots closer to relevant news items. A recent example of this was Lucy Winkett talking about the nature of forgiveness for Christians in *Thought for the Day* and linking this to a report on *Today* about Egypt's Coptic Christians. This was a special report by Frank Gardner, on how the largest Christian community in the Middle East is suffering bombings, shootings and stabbings by ISIS and other groups but chooses to forgive rather than blame their persecutors. We will look for occasions where this type of linkage can help to explain the 'why' as well as the 'what'.

The BBC will also continue to support curriculum-linked religious studies education for children and young people in the UK.

BBC Bitesize is our online study resource designed to help students aged 16 and under across the UK prepare for schoolwork and exams, and here we are updating our range of content – guides, films and quizzes – aimed at students who are studying the religious studies curriculum in their respective nation.

BBC Teach is our resource for teachers to use in the classroom, and here we have recently launched two series focusing on religious studies – the *A to Z of Religion* and *Religion Stories*. These films have been added to our existing bank of short educational films and clips for use by teachers. We will monitor curriculum developments and also explore the potential to incorporate this into our plans for lifelong learning.

5.4 New and expanded team covering religion in News

BBC News and Current Affairs content reaches a large number of people, including younger audiences, and is widely trusted. Across Radio, TV and Online it covers news and insight about religion and ethics as part of its daily coverage.

The BBC works hard to maintain a balanced, impartial approach. This is vital in a pluralist society where on-air representation and portrayal matters, especially to smaller cultural and religious groups that may be generally less well-known and understood. For example:

- 46% of Muslims feel that being Muslim in Britain is hard due to prejudice against Islam;
- Two-fifths of people in Great Britain feel that anti-Semitism is worse than 10 years ago.⁴

All of the stakeholder groups that we consulted during this review told us they recognise that the BBC works hard at this but also that we do not always get it right. They feel that we do not always explore the underlying religious or cultural dimensions of a story in sufficient depth or accurately enough. To respond to this, the two aspects for us to resolve are depth of expertise globally and space in news coverage to explain how different beliefs are shaping world events.

We have therefore decided to create a global team containing new reporters, with specific religious expertise. Their activity will be coordinated centrally by a religious affairs producer. We will also upgrade the Religious Affairs Correspondent role to Editorship level, with the new title of Religion Editor.

This will help us to deepen our global understanding of the Islamic world, the thinking within different Christian churches worldwide, the views and practices of Hindu and Sikh, Jewish and Buddhist communities, as well as other religions and the beliefs of atheists and humanists.

We will aim for more of a 'slow news' approach to give space in news coverage to explain how religious and non-religious worldviews are

⁴ [All-party parliamentary inquiry into anti-Semitism, Poll summary, January 2015](https://www.antisemitism.org.uk/files/cj3e6rg8y906h0104uh8bojao/cj4mufcx0000x0137udffdsa4)
<https://www.antisemitism.org.uk/files/cj3e6rg8y906h0104uh8bojao/cj4mufcx0000x0137udffdsa4>

shaping world events – i.e. ‘why’ things are happening rather than simply ‘what’ is happening. We will look behind the immediate story in order to offer deeper understanding of long-running issues and global events.

It will develop more global news stories and support programming in a global context, primarily for BBC News and BBC World Service. World Service will also run additional versions of *Heart and Soul* and create digital content aimed at younger audiences. It will also support programming on other services such as BBC Two and BBC Radio 4, particularly with the global context. An example of this is the *Dangerous Borders* series, which combines documentary, current affairs and religion content to deliver contemporary documentary.

5.5 Broaden audience reach and impact with ambitious Radio and TV

We will expand our ambition with landmark series and programmes that explore religion in all its forms. The aim will be to attract a broader audience with engaging subjects and formats, convenient scheduling and clear promotion.

We will tackle ambitious ideas, such as Neil MacGregor in the landmark series, *Living With The Gods* (Radio 4). Other examples include an ambitious TV series which reveals the wonders of sacred sites around the world, Radio 4 broadcasting a major series on morality in the 21st Century presented by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and Radio 2 developing a collaboration to engage young people in discussing issues around building peace as part of *Faith in the World Week*.

Living With The Gods, Radio 4, October to December 2017

What role have shared beliefs – and the rituals that express those beliefs – played in the creation, and sometimes the destruction, of societies? Are we humans distinguished not just by a capacity to think, but by our need to believe, where believing is almost synonymous with belonging?



In his landmark 30-part series, *Living With The Gods*, Neil MacGregor, in partnership with the British Museum, explores the role of global beliefs on lives and communities throughout history. It starts over 40,000 year ago with the Lion Man; a small ivory figure with a human body and a lion's head. Subsequent programmes examine festivals, pilgrimages and sacrifices; the creation of sacred spaces and the role and power of images; and the faiths which focus on the use of words over religious idols. The series concludes with a discussion on religious leadership, power struggles and political battles between beliefs, and the sometimes uneasy relationship between faiths and nation states.

On TV, we will work across genres such as history, science and other lifestyle genres to broaden impact with audiences that would not automatically choose to consume Religion & Ethics programming.

The BAFTA-winning *Muslims Like Us* is an example of a new approach to religion – provocative, contemporary, and taking on one of the most important questions of the 21st century. The programme was successful with younger and more diverse audiences, with 41% of viewers being under 45 and 28% BAME. We will soon be broadcasting *The Pilgrimage* which also brings a fresh approach to an important question, asking what relevance a medieval rite of passage has for today.

We plan to show the personal role that beliefs play in people's lives in the way that we have done with *An Island Parish* and *The Selfless Sikh*. We are developing more people-led stories that have warmth and depth, ranging from observing vicars and their work in local communities to exploring potential radio formats based around humour and a "been there, done that" honesty.

There is evidence that this ambition can work well for audiences if we apply the right approach to the right subjects. Some examples which have reached large audiences in recent years are: *The Chronicles of Nadiya* (4.6m); *The Real Marigold Hotel* (5.3m); *Paul O’Grady – The Sally Army and Me* (3m).

We will build on these new approaches to make 2019 ‘A Year of Beliefs’ where we look at how people make judgements about the big decisions in their lives and where they get their moral values from. We will aim for this to appeal to mainstream TV and Radio audiences, in particular audiences aged under 45. We will aim to reset the BBC’s approach, as we did with the ‘Year of Science’ in 2010/11, to become more inclusive and engaging and experiment with new commissions and special programming.

We are exploring the potential to generate mass audience engagement during the year around big moral questions and will create innovative programming that is varied and looks at a wide range of viewpoints and personal experiences. This will build on the innovation already being delivered in 2017 and 2018 and will create opportunities to develop new talent with mainstream appeal. We have managed this in other factual genres and are excited about the potential to develop a new generation of brilliant communicators who are passionate about this subject area.

5.6 Create a better offer for under-45 and BAME audiences

Audiences under 45 have told us that most of what we do in this genre is targeted at older audiences and that the BBC does not deliver what they need. They consume content related to religion and beliefs from a huge range of services, mainly online, but also from TV and Radio when the treatment and subject matter connect with them. The BBC’s response therefore needs to be focused both on content and on digital distribution.

***Muslims Like Us*, BBC Two, January 2017**

What does it mean to be Muslim and British? Can a gay Muslim be devout? Do Muslim women feel that Islam treats them differently? What does it mean when politicians say we need to adhere to British values? Do we protect extremists in our community?

For ten days, ten British Muslims with contrasting world views lived and argued together in a house in York. They represented a carefully chosen group of authentic voices from a range of contrasting backgrounds: men and women; old and young; gay and straight; Sunni and Shia - together representing the pluralism of the Muslim faith. What emerged were passionate debates, honest disagreements and a powerful insight into what it means to be a Muslim living in the UK today.



It broadened appeal with under-45 and BAME audiences. 41% of the audience was under 45, nearly twice the average for BBC factual programmes and 28% was BAME, over 5 times the BBC two factual average of 5%.

Muslims Like Us was recognised by BAFTA, winning the award for best reality and constructed factual programme in 2017.

We aim to reach these audiences with content that reflects the fluid nature of beliefs in the UK both on our mainstream services and our youth-focused services, such as *II!*, Radio 1, CBBC and Asian Network, as well as with specific content such as guides, films and quizzes on BBC Teach.

Programmes on BBC1 such as *EastEnders* and *Call the Midwife* reach a younger and BAME audience and often explore issues through a lens of different beliefs and culture. The same is true for BBC News Online, in particular with *BBC Stories*, and youth-focused services focusing on identity as we have done successfully with programmes such as *Does God hate me?*, *My Big Gay Jewish Conversion* and *High Street Hijabis*.

However, we can do more to create content that will appeal to these audiences. We will explore stronger tie-ins with music and comedy, for example, with positive role models (e.g. *Beards, Bails and Boundaries*:

England's Muslim Cricketers on Asian Network), with celebrity beliefs (e.g. interview with Stormzy), and with broader questions of belief and identity.

Online, we will develop digital-first video content and build our social media presence – one medium used by all the groups we interviewed and where they felt the BBC should be more present –working closely with *BBC Stories*, *BBC News Online* and *iPlayer*. We also plan to syndicate content where appropriate, and explore the potential of personalised BBC online services so that users can pull in content and information directly relevant to their beliefs and the topics that interest them.

6 CHANGING HOW WE DO THINGS

6.1 Improve religious literacy inside the BBC

There is a perception among some religious stakeholders that the BBC has a more secular culture than the UK as a whole, which they perceive to have an impact on religious literacy and on our corporate mindset.

Comparing internal and external survey data to try to pin down the actual position does not give a definitive answer. Surveys ask the question about religious affiliation in different ways and internal BBC surveys allow the answer, “prefer not to say”. Depending on how you adjust for the differences, the BBC can be viewed as being roughly in line with the UK as a whole⁵.

However, we think there is more we can do to increase levels of religious literacy within our teams:

- Create religion and beliefs case studies to be used in the unconscious bias training that forms part of the BBC’s basic journalism, induction and leadership training programmes. This is being worked through with the external provider of the course. It will also be built into the Journalism foundation course and, where relevant, supported by specialist online training in religious literacy at the discretion of divisional directors and editors;
- Establish an ongoing cycle of briefings with external figures from religious and secular groups talking to relevant BBC teams on a particular theme. The BBC can learn from organisations such as Google and the Foreign Office which are already doing this on a regular basis. We will work with external organisations to explore making this more formal, with standing invites to selected representatives from different stakeholder groups;
- Create an audience portal that brings together audience data, qualitative and quantitative surveys, and external material to inform creative decision-making.

⁵ The 2017 British Social Attitudes Survey

6.2 Strengthen our networks of expertise

More competitive commissioning frameworks means that expertise is spread across in-house and independent production bases, with the result that our programming relies more heavily on expertise outside the BBC than in the past.

There are a number of questions to consider: What level of Religion & Ethics expertise is needed? Where should this be based across commissioning, indies and in-house production and journalism teams? Where is coordination useful?

It is clear that the level of expertise needed is high, especially for tackling difficult or contentious issues. Alongside the Religion & Ethics team in radio production, making the most of the BBC's in-house expertise requires us to find new ways of collaborating across divisions, as well as bringing in expertise from elsewhere.

The BBC's response will be to make the most of in-house expertise by creating 'internal specialist networks' that work across the BBC to pull together subject experts, assess opportunities and issues, share knowledge and support relationships with external stakeholders. They will work closely with experts outside the BBC and groups such as the Religion Media Centre. These networks will be established and managed by the new team covering religion in News.

The specialist networks will also support teams across the BBC in developing more precise use of language and imagery – particularly important where some UK communities feel they are unfairly associated with violent or negative events elsewhere in the world. There will be clearer points of contact for outside groups so that they can alert us to complaints or new opportunities.

6.3 Broaden the BBC's engagement with stakeholders

We are grateful that all external stakeholders have welcomed the chance to engage with the BBC in an open way as part of this review.

We recognise their need to be confident that the BBC will continue to think about its overall offer and how it is meeting the needs of religious groups and of the broader audience. We want to continue to have candid relationships with our stakeholders in this field, to ensure they are able to feed into our ongoing thinking, and be heard when they think we are getting it wrong.

We will therefore build on the work of this review to create a more formal and comprehensive engagement plan based on:

- Inviting faith and secular belief groups to programme screenings and corporate events at BBC Buildings around the UK;
- A combination of one-to-one and roundtable meetings to discuss issues and opportunities, working with BBC teams in the Nations and English Regions, aiming at broad engagement beyond just the largest community groups;
- Continuing to work with established groups such as the Scottish Religious Advisory Committee and Sandford St Martin;
- Pulse research to assess the impact of new formats and presenters, and engage with audience groups, in collaboration with existing BBC engagement teams (e.g. Radio 1 / 1Xtra outreach in urban areas).

Overall accountability for delivery of this review's proposals will be the responsibility of the Directors of the BBC's output divisions. On top of this, the responsible BBC Director, currently James Purnell, will lead on strategy development, ways of working, and performance reporting, including:

- Build constructive ongoing dialogue with religious and secular stakeholders;
- Coordinate research, insight and learning for the BBC's overall offering;
- Lead development of the BBC's overall strategy and track delivery in the context of BBC divisional strategies and performance;
- Coordinate the (internal and external) expertise required to address major issues, working with output divisions and internal specialist networks;
- Shape the digital offer and coordinate with relevant BBC online teams and partners;
- Assess BBC training programmes.

As part of this, the BBC will partner with other organisations to host a summit that brings together leaders, creatives, innovators and policymakers from across the UK and around the globe to inform our understanding of the role that different beliefs play in our society, now and future.

This Belief Summit will build on the BBC Re:Think festival in 2012 which explored themes such as the role of religion in society, science vs religion, and what religion will mean for the next generation. It will address concrete issues and use film screenings, interactive exhibitions and a specially-created lecture series to broaden its impact. We will make this an inclusive conversation by weaving the themes and output into BBC programming.

We are planning for this Summit to take place every two years.

Appendix I – External stakeholders consulted

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Christine Abbas | Baroness Haleh Afshar OBE | Farooq Aftab |
| Omar Afzal | Abdul-Azim Ahmed | Dr Ashraf Ahmed |
| Bishop Joe Aldred | Noorah Al-Gailani | Lord Alton of Liverpool |
| Arun Arora | Guvna B | Bishop Nicholas Baines |
| Rev Linda Ballard | Simon Barrow | Yahya Barry |
| Fr Timothy Bartlett | Aaron Bass | Alan Bayes |
| Professor Robert Beckford | Nasima Begum | Lord Karan Bilimora |
| Canon Joseph Boardman | Roger Bolton | Rev Kate Bottley |
| Ben Bradshaw | Dr Nicola Brady | Micheline Brannan |
| Sir Julian Brazier | Dr Derek Browning | Bishop Paul Butler |
| Erin Byrne | Francis Campbell | Rev Dr. Lesley Carroll |
| The Rt Revd Richard Chartres | Very Rev John Christie | Father Paul Clayton-Lea |
| Rev Dr Richard Clutterbuck | Rev Roy Cooper | Andrew Copson |
| Lord Patrick Cormack | Bishop Stephen Cottrell | Bishop Tim Dakin |
| Very Rev Principal Stafford Carson | Dr. Ahmed Darwish | Alexander DesForges |
| The Rt Revd Dr Gregor Duncan | The V. Rev. Dr. John Dunlop | Dr. Andrew Edgar |
| Mr Aled Edwards OBE | Rev Canon Ian Ellis | Frank Field |
| Robb Flett | Colin Flinn | Dr Gladys Ganiel |
| Dr. Craig Gardiner | Lisa Gerson | Professor Sophie Gilliat-Ray |
| Elfed Godding | Angela Graham | Rev Trevor Gribben |
| Very Rev Dr. Norman Hamilton | James Harris | Sam Harris |
| Katie Harrison | Dr Paul Harron MCIPR | |
| Jonathan Hellewell | Rev Jane Howitt | Dilwar Hussain |
| Bishop John Inge | | Kuppuswamy Jagannathan |
| S. Jagannathan | Bishop Graham James | Esmat Jeraj |
| Simon Johnson | Glenn Jordan | Lord Frank Judd |
| Peter Kearney | Harun Khan | Saleem Kidwai MBE |
| Jay Lakhani | David Lammy | Rev Derek Lamont |
| Sir Edward Leigh | Evelyn Liston | Dr Leon Litvack |
| Brett Lockhart QC | Martin Long | Peter Lynas |
| Martin Mansell | Michele Marken OBE | |
| Robert Marshall | Mark McCleary | Brian McClinton |
| Bishop Jan MacFarlane | Rev Cheryl Meban | Loretta Minghella |
| Chief Rabbi Efraim Mirvis | Meirion Morris | Judith Morris |
| Javaid Naveed | Baroness Julia Neuberger | Cardinal Vincent Nichols |
| Dr. Catriona Noonan | William Nye LVO | Malachi O'Doherty |
| Baroness Nuala O'Loan | Fr Eugene O'Neill | Baroness Onora O'Neill |
| | Nor'dzin Pamo | Naran Patel |
| Ed Petersen | Professor Glen Pettigrove | Kristine Pommert |
| John Pugh | Katy Radford | Ernie Rae |
| Sonti Ramirez | Christina Rees CBE | Josh Richards |
| Kathy Riddick | Rabbi Michael Rose | Philip Rosenberg |
| Simon Round | Baron Johnathan Sacks | Joel Salmon |
| Dr. Atul K. Shah | Satish K. Sharma | Rt Rev Dr Frank Sellar |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Professor Mona Siddiqui | Dr Maureen Sier | Lord Indarjit Singh |
| Dr Jassan Singh | Hardeep Singh | Jasvir Singh |
| Dr Satyavir Singhal MBE | Boyd Sleator | Bishop Dr Alan Smith |
| Mark Smith | Dame Caroline Spelman | Nick Spencer, Theos |
| The Most Reverend George Stack | Rev Dr Fiona Stewart | Dr Saleem Tareen |
| Yas Tazerhadeh | Revd Sally Thomas | Wallace Thompson |
| Geraint Tudur | Lord Paul Tyler | Baroness Manzila Uddin |
| Michael Wakelin | Rt Rev David Walker, Bishop of Manchester | Rev Simon Walkling |
| The Revd Canon Dr James Walters | Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby | Rev Sam Wells |
| Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg | Rev Dr George Whyte | Revd Canon Jenny Wigley |
| Dr. Stephen Wigley | Rev Lucy Winkett | Diane Wolfson |
| Professor Linda Woodhead | Rt Rev Graham Usher | Rev Dr. Adrian Youings |

Appendix 2 - Key Themes from Audience Insight

Background

As part of the review into the BBC's coverage of Religion and Ethics, BBC Marketing & Audiences carried out a number of strands of audience insight to ensure that the audience perspective was reflected in the deliberations:

- A review of existing audience insight in this area, mainly from BBC sources
- A quantitative survey on the BBC's Pulse survey carried out from 17th-23rd April 2017 amongst a representative sample of 1367 adults with a range of faiths and none
- A qualitative investigation by Craft Strategy Ltd. to explore how audiences define the territory of 'belief' and 'faith', what they find interesting within it, and to identify the topics, tones and treatments of most interest to the wider audience
- A summary of some key sources of statistics and opinions around religious identity, religious belief and religious practice in the UK which was carried out by ComRes Faith Research Centre in May 2017. Much of their data was focused on Christianity – reflecting the dominance of this religion in the UK and the focus of much of the academic research available

This document summarises the main themes from each of those pieces of work.

I. Key themes on religion from existing BBC audience research

- **The term 'religion' isn't engaging to the broader audience** – it features low down on areas of consumption/appeal/news interest and can have negative connotations/prove a barrier
- This means that when people are asked to evaluate what the BBC does in this area it is **often not based on actual experience**
- **It is also not a major issue in terms of what the audience complain to the BBC about** – despite some high profile incidents in the past it has been low down the list of issues coming in to Audience Services for the past 5 years
- It's **not possible to talk of a unified view of those with 'belief'** – one's own particular religion (or lack of one) frames the perspective
- And **within a particular religion there is a wide spectrum** of practice, affiliation, strength of belief etc. – which also frames the perspective
- Religion is seen to **serve a variety of roles beyond personal belief** – including moral, family bonds, tradition, and a sense of community and belonging
- Therefore it has both a **personal and societal dimension** – in general people rate the societal benefits of religion above that of the personal
- There is **professed interest in learning more in this area**, particularly about other religions (current perceived knowledge of Christianity is pretty high) – though looking at **consumption suggests people are more likely to follow content about their own religion**
- Audience see **6 broad types of programme in the area of religion** - worship, documentaries about issues, discussion and interview programmes, debates, lifestyle documentaries, and lifestyle entertainment. Documentaries have the widest appeal; worship is most polarising
- **Reasons for consumption are also broad** – for worship (relatively narrow), seeking out thought-provoking and inspiring content, a desire to learn, a desire to be moved – or just to be simply entertained
- **Audience value content that has an impact ('effect') on them** – not least in them being inspired and helping shape their wider beliefs (not just spiritual), but also in just having learnt something
- Another **important driver of consumption is the desire to monitor portrayal of one's own religion** (particularly cited by minority religions) – related to wider concerns around representation and portrayal, as the latter is seen as telling others about what they are like
- **BBC felt to have a central role** – to inform educate and represent, not least for 'public good'
- **Lots of concerns around representation and portrayal** – Sikhs and committed Christians most critical of amount, Jewish most critical of quality
- And the BBC is **often more likely to catch attention when they are seen to 'get it wrong'**
- There is a slight **bias towards wanting targeting over mainstream** – to avoid misrepresentation

2. Key Themes from the Pulse survey

There is a wide diversity of perspectives

- Having actual faith is a minority position, and those without faith are equally split between agnostics and atheists
- Within faith category there's a wide range – of affiliation, strength of belief, practice
- The number with a 'professed faith' is a bigger group than those with 'actual faith' – for many their religion is a label/part of their cultural background, rather than representing actual belief
- Faith isn't fixed – it changes over time
- The non-Christian faiths are generally more enthusiastic about their faith – in terms of their strength of belief, in their practice, and in its importance to their lives
- And there are differences in the demographic make-up of different faith groups – particularly around age

Labels can be a barrier

- As a programme category, 'Religion' can restrict the potential audience – particularly for those without faith
- Potential interest in the substance covered by this category is much higher – there is a wider appetite for dealing with the big questions/how to live morally

There's a need for education in this space

- Most think it's important to learn about faith/religion 'in general' – even atheists are split down the middle, and younger people think this as well as older people
- There is a low level of knowledge of faiths outside of Christianity
- Younger people often want to find out more about non-Christian faiths
- Buddhism is a particular gap
- The primary role of the BBC in this area is felt to be as 'educator' – both by those with faith and those without

- There appears to be a desire for a wider range of coverage – of festivals, voices, experts, and non-faith perspectives

Traditional media is not the only source of knowledge and inspiration


- Friends/family are the most important sources of information – particularly to those who have a faith, non-Christians and younger people
- Online is second – and particularly important for younger people/non-Christians
- News is at least as important as general programming as a source of information

The audience see the BBC’s role as

- An educator
- Helping promote social cohesion
- Giving both current and historical perspectives
- Challenging and exploring
- General preference for mainstreaming of coverage of different faiths rather than ‘ghettoising’ – for both Christians and (particularly) non-Christians

3. Key themes from qualitative research by Craft Ltd.

Craft spoke to a broad range of people, with the sample designed to cover as much as practically possible the breadth of the UK’s beliefs (religious and non-religious) and demography. The range of the sample was to canvas a broad range of views – **it was not intended to be strictly representative of the religious make-up of the UK population.** Participants were drawn from three broad catchment areas: London and its satellites, Cardiff and South Wales, and the West Midlands. The research was in 3 phases, with detailed discussion workshops at the heart of the process.



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Online pre-work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biographies • Understanding worldviews and beliefs • Exploring areas of topical interest | 12 x 2.5hr x 4 person workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining and mapping the territory • Identifying appealing topics • How media delivers | Online content analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic evaluation of clips to explore the range within the 'genre' • A variety of topical, tonal and treatment approaches |
| Demographics | Belief | Devotion |
| Age | Christians | Devout practitioners |
| Gender | Hindus and Muslims | Casual practitioners |
| SEG | Buddhists, Jews and Sikhs | Ethno-cultural identification |
| Ethnic origin | Agnostics and Atheists | No belief |

Key Themes

- This is an area characterized by great diversity, between and within beliefs. Amongst those who do affiliate themselves with a religion, there is large variance in beliefs, devotion and reasons for believing. The majority of people do not believe in or do not meaningfully practice a religion, and serious devotees are in the minority
- The range of different faiths in the UK is generally welcomed and seen as something to be celebrated and encouraged – this is particularly true of younger people
- Most people don't have a singular, coherent conscious belief system or worldview – they have complex, fluid identities and are magpie-like in developing their worldviews
- Many religious people appropriate concepts from other faiths e.g. Muslims and Jews talking about “karma”, atheists and agnostics leaning on religious concepts and spirituality e.g. yoga
- The most devout tend to be least interested in understanding more about other religions – it is *their* religion they are interested in, and representation and accurate portrayal of their religion is key
- Religion is not the only influence on most people's worldview, nor necessarily the most important one – most people see the world through a number of lenses, including education, the media, politics, psychology and philosophy.
- There is a group of people for whom the humanities, arts and culture, education/learning and philosophy and ethics are interesting in and of themselves – this is a small but passionate group

The role of the BBC

- Many believe the BBC should offer content in this area, but it's not seen as its role to help people worship or further a particular set of religious beliefs or worldview.
- People think it's the BBC's place to produce documentaries in this area, but the perception is that while this programming is of high quality, it can be reminiscent of a school textbook, worthy and earnest, appealing to the more cerebral and associated with BBC4 and Radio 4

How do people define the territory?

- As a programme category, the label 'religion' can restrict the potential audience, especially those who identify as atheist or agnostic
- 'Philosophy' and 'ethics' can feel distant, academic and inaccessible, appealing only to the most cerebral

- The stories that people tell themselves and each other, which help them make sense of *their* worlds (more than *the* world), is fertile territory for content development – the best word is possibly ‘beliefs’, not ‘belief’.
- Most people are open-minded to, and interested in, the diversity of views more than understanding any one particular belief in depth
- Aside from religious –isms, it’s worth thinking about others - scientific rationalism/humanism; (pop-)philosophy; political ideology/grand theory and issue-based politics. These are all ‘lenses’ through which people see the world – many people apply more than one of these lenses and the lines between them are blurry

The audience are particularly interested in hearing about universal and personal subjects seen through the lens of religion, and especially if they deal with recent developments. This could include (but not be limited to): love, sex and romance; health, life, ageing and death, abortion, euthanasia, the ethics of medical advances, designer babies; how tradition and spiritual belief squares with the innovative and rational; law and order, crime and punishment; consumption and production, charity and giving; current political hot topics – standard of living and economics, migration, tolerance, intergenerational fairness.

4. ComRes review – summary of key messages and statistics

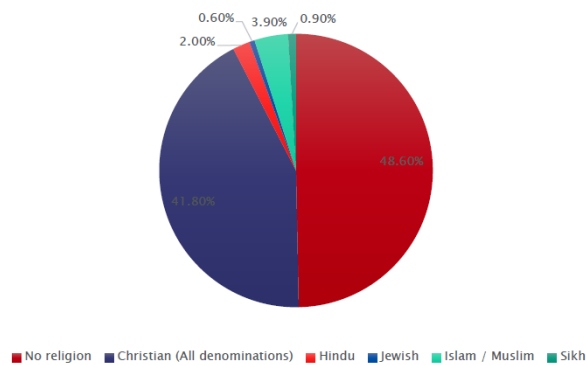
Background

ComRes Faith Research Centre were commissioned by BBC Audiences in May 2017 to provide an overview of some of the key data looking at religious identity, religious belief and religious practice in the UK. This was to inform the strategic review of how the BBC covers the areas of Religion and Ethics. This is a brief overview of the main themes and statistics from the ComRes review. Much of the data is focused on Christianity – reflecting the dominance of this religion in the UK and the focus of much of the academic research available.

Religious Affiliation

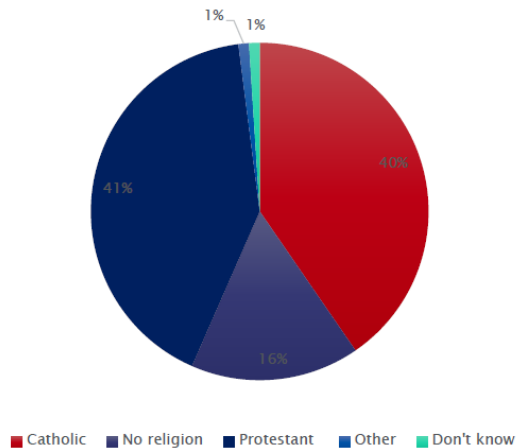
In Great Britain (excluding NI) the 2 largest groups are Christian (all denominations) at 41.8% and ‘No Religion’ at 48.6%⁶

Religious identity in Great Britain 2015



Northern Ireland data from Life and Times (equivalent to BSA) shows a much lower proportion of ‘no religion’:

Religious identity in Northern Ireland 2015



From 2000 to 2015 religious affiliation levels have remained broadly stable, but with significant increases for non-Christian groups (excluding Judaism), which tend to be clustered geographically. This relative stability in recent years is in contrast to a steady growth from 1983 to 2010 in those saying ‘no religion’ (with the greatest decline amongst Anglicans).

⁶ British Social Attitudes Survey 2015

The importance to people of religion/faith is lower in Great Britain (and some other Western European countries) than in the USA.

The 2 primary drivers of levels of religious affiliation in the UK are a) the influence of parental beliefs and practices and b) immigration.

Beliefs

A ComRes survey for the BBC in Feb 2017⁷ found that:

- 44% believe in the resurrection of Jesus (but 23% of people who identify as Christian don't, and 9% who say they have no religion say they do)
- 46% believe in life after death (including 21% of those who say they have no religion)
- 17% believe 'Prayer works in the sense that it can bring about change for the people or situation you are praying for' and a further 51% believe 'Prayer works, in the sense that it makes you feel more at peace'
- 25% believe in angels

Only 5% of those who identify as 'no religion' describe themselves as a convinced atheist.⁸

61% of those who identify with no religion say they believe there are things in life that we simply can't explain with science or any other means.⁹

Religious Practice

50% say they never pray, and 9% say they pray every day.¹⁰

22% of adults in Great Britain say they attend a religious service at least monthly (rising to 30% of those who identify as Christian).

28% of Jews say they attend synagogue at least once a week, and 24% haven't attended in at least a year.¹¹

If neither parent attends church at least once a month, only 3% of their children do so in later life; if both parents attend at least monthly, there is a 46% chance that the child will do so; if just one parent does, it falls to 23%.¹²

78% of people who practice a religion said they had given to charity in the previous month compared to 67% of people who didn't practice a religion.¹³

⁷ <http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/BBC-Religion-and-Ethics-Survey-Data-Tables.pdf>

⁸ http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/files/Believing_large.jpg

⁹ Spirituality Survey, ComRes, 2013, 2036 GB adults interviewed aged 18+

¹⁰ <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/11/24/lords-prayer-and-praying/>

¹¹ <http://www.jpr.org.uk/publication?id=3351>

¹² Voas et al, 2005

Faith and Public Life

79% say they are concerned about extremism in the name of Islam.¹⁴

People estimate that Muslims make up 15% of the British population, when actually less than 5% are.¹⁵

Amongst Muslims themselves:¹⁶

- 46% feel that being a Muslim in Britain is difficult due to prejudice against Islam
- 95% feel a loyalty to the country
- 93% believe that Muslims in Britain should always obey British laws
- 27% have some sympathy for the motives behind the attacks on Charlie Hebdo

Two-fifths feel that the problem of anti-Semitism is worse than it was 10 years ago (16% say it is better).¹⁷

42% of HR managers say they make provision for their employees to pray at work, and 37% make provision for staff to observe holy days and religious festivals (but only 19% of workers agree that this is the case).¹⁸

In England as of January 2017 37% of all state funded primary schools and 19% of state funded mainstream secondaries are faith schools – mainly Church of England and Catholic.

¹³ http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/themes/comres/poll/BBC_Religion_Charitable_Giving_March_2014_Great_Britain.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/24/majorities-in-europe-north-america-worried-about-islamic-extremism/>

¹⁵ <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perceptions-are-not-reality-what-world-gets-wrong>

¹⁶ <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/bbc-radio-4-today-muslim-poll/>

¹⁷ <https://www.antisemitism.org.uk/files/cj3e6rg8y906h0l04uh8bojao/cj4mufcx0000x0l37udffdsa4>

¹⁸ <http://www.comresglobal.com/belief-at-work>