

## **Religion In The Uk**

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The topic of the research is 'Religion in the UK'. It is topical because religion has deep roots and it is part of the history of the United Kingdom. It affected the development of life and traditions in the society, its ethical and esthetic standards, culture, and also sometimes effectiveness of some historic events.

The subject matter is religions in different parts of UK.

The aim of the survey is to study the existing religions in the United Kingdom and their impact on the society. To achieve this aim the authors fulfil the following tasks:

1. to study the origin and the formation of various religious communities;
2. to conduct a systematic research on connection between religion and society and to reveal on this basis the importance of existence of God and belief in it;
3. to define the percentage of the people believing in God, the dominating religion and church attendance in the UK;
4. to review existing and ever existing religions.

Pre-Roman forms of religion in Britain included various forms of ancestor worship and paganism. Ancient faith was influenced by the natural world and the threat posed by the elements. Little is known about the details of such religions. The priests are known as the druids. The inhabitants of Britain originally worshipped their ancestors, burying them in long barrows and performing rituals to influence the weather and the harvest. But when Britain's climate changed radically around 3,000 BC, the ancestor cult came to an end and Britons looked to nature itself to influence their fortune [2, p.1].

Forms of Christianity have dominated religious life in what is now the United Kingdom for over 1,400 years. It was introduced by the Romans and the British church was a missionary church with figures such as St Illtud, St Ninian and St Patrick evangelising in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, but the invasions by the pagan Angles, Saxons and Jutes in the fifth century seem to have destroyed the organisation of the church in much of what is now England. In 597 a mission sent by Pope Gregory the Great and led by St Augustine of Canterbury landed in Kent to begin the work of converting these pagan people. What eventually became known as the Church of England was the result of a combination of three streams - of Christianity, the Roman tradition of St Augustine and his successors, and the Celtic tradition coming down from Scotland [4]. Roman Catholicism remained the dominant form of Christiani-

ty throughout the Middle Ages, but the Anglican Church of England became the independent established church in England and Wales from 1534 as part of the Protestant English Reformation after the break with Rome when Henry VIII rejected the supremacy of the pope. The catalyst for this decision was the refusal of the Pope to annul the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. The Church of England is still the state church in England, it retains a representation in the UK Parliament and the British monarch is its Supreme Governor. The Church of England is divided into two provinces: Canterbury and York. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the spiritual leader of the Anglican Church, and the archbishop of York is the leader of the northern province.

In Scotland the Reformation gave rise to the Church of Scotland, which was governed by presbyteries—local bodies composed of ministers and elders—rather than by bishops, as was the case in England. By the end of the 16th century, the Protestant Church of Scotland had developed into a Presbyterian Church, with a system of courts (today the General Assembly, presbytery and kirk session), and a strong tradition of preaching and Scriptural emphasis. After the succession of William and Mary to the throne in 1688, the reformed Presbyterian Church was established as the national Church of Scotland. The monarch even today has a special relationship with the Church of Scotland and renews that every year by sending a representative to attend the General Assembly [3, p.51].

Today there are two established churches in the UK: in England – the Anglican Church of England, and in Scotland – the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The (Anglican) Church in Wales was disestablished in 1920 and, as the (Anglican) Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1870 before the partition of Ireland, there is no established church in Northern Ireland. In the 17th century further schisms divided the Church of England as a consequence of the Puritan movement, which gave rise to so-called Nonconformist denominations, such as the Baptists and the Congregationalists that reflected the Puritan desire for simpler forms of worship and church government. The great Evangelical revivals of the 18th century led to the foundation of Methodist churches, particularly in the industrial areas. Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire in northeastern England and Cornwall in the southwestern peninsula still have the largest percentages of Methodists. Nowadays there is also a growing number of independent, charismatic churches that encourage Pentecostal practices as part of their worship. There are many Russian, Greek, Serbian and Coptic Orthodox Churches in the United Kingdom.

In the 19th century various fundamentalist faiths developed and there was a marked increase in the practice of Judaism in Britain. Nowadays more than half of all British Jews live in Greater London, and nearly all the rest are

members of urban communities. Britain now has the second largest Jewish community in Europe.

The British tradition of religious tolerance has been particularly important since the 1950s, when immigrants began to introduce a great variety of religious beliefs. Particularly since the twentieth century, immigration and demographic change have contributed to the growth of other faiths, including Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism. The largest number of Muslims came from Pakistan and Bangladesh, with sizable groups from India, Cyprus, the Arab world, Malaysia, and parts of Africa. The large Sikh and Hindu communities originated in India. There are also many Buddhist groups. This, and the relatively large number of individuals with nominal or no religious affiliations has led commentators to variously describe the United Kingdom as a multi-faith, secularized, or post-Christian society [5, p.12].

The highest concentration of other religions is found in London. The capital has the highest proportion of the nation's Muslims (8.5%), Hindus(4.1), Jews (2.1%) and Buddhists (0.8) percent. Muslims have now emerged as the second largest religion in the UK, comprising 2.7 percent of the population and some 1.5 million people.

Growing numbers of people across the UK no longer believe in the need for church membership and virtues of church attendance. They still, overwhelmingly, believe in God or a higher power, but, increasingly, they do not complement this with membership of an institutional church or regular attendance.

Only 10% of the UK adult population goes to church at least weekly. 15% attend church at least monthly. 26% attend church at least yearly. 59% never or practically never go to church. One in four of the UK adult population say they go to church at least once a year and 59% never or practically never go to church.

In 2004, the BBC commissioned an ICM poll in ten countries examining levels of belief, participants from the United Kingdom tended to display markedly less religious belief than many of their counterparts. In response to the question "A belief in God (higher power) makes for a better human being", 43% participants from the UK disagreed with this statement, substantially more than any other nationality. For example, in the United States the picture of belief is quite different, in the USA only 3% of people questioned in the American Religious Identification Survey stated they did not have a belief in God, and only 8% were doubtful.

There is a consensus in the UK that abortion is justified in cases of a health risk to the parent or a defect has been diagnosed, with the British Social Attitudes Survey finding that, 78% of the UK population supports choice in cases of a health risk to the parent or a defect has been diagnosed.

In the British Social Attitudes Survey, when asked “medical research on embryos should probably or definitely be allowed”, 61% of religious respondents agreed, compared to 77% non-religious respondents [1].

As you can see, the number of religious and non-religious membership is practically equal. The analysis allows to come to the following conclusions:

- the most wide-spread religions are Christianity, Islam and Hinduism;
- the primary religion is Christianity – 71, 6 %.
- growing numbers of people across the UK no longer believe in the need for church membership and virtues of church attendance;
- 23 % of population are non-religious.

Religion may play role in minds of the UK-citizens, but not in their souls, moreover, belief in God makes no sacred contribution to them. Religious belief is declining faster than attendance at services in the UK.

Thus, the assigned tasks have been fulfilled and the assigned aim has been achieved.

#### References

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