US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF

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FOREWORD

From a cultural relations perspective, it's important to remember that more than eight out of ten people worldwide identify with a religious group and that religion is an essential component of individual and group identity for many.[1] Indeed, it is projected that the share of the world's population that identifies with a religion is likely to increase in the coming decades.[2]

As delegates gathered in 1948 to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a strong consensus emerged that the freedom of thought, conscience and religion should be assured to all. However, considerable differences remain over what this means in practice. While there is almost universal recognition of the freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) as a fundamental human right, several global studies have concluded that violations of the freedom of religion and belief are worsening, in both depth and breadth.[3] The chasm between aspiration and practice remains wide. Millions of people across the world, believers of all faiths and none, are victims of persecution or discrimination because of their religion or belief with no particular religion or belief as the primary offender or victim.

The promotion of freedom of religion or belief forms an increasingly important component of the UK's international human rights programme. This commitment to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) advocacy is illustrated by the recent appointment of the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief. It is also evident in the three-fold growth to more than 120 members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (APPG FoRB) over the past 5 years.

The British Council's surveys in this report demonstrate that vast majorities of Brits and Americans agree that freedom of religion or belief is both a fundamental human right and a fundamental guiding principle of the UK and the US. However, the British Council's convenings of experts working at the nexus of religion and international affairs suggest that foreign policy bureaucracies remain ill-equipped to engage effectively with religious actors.

While the UK and the US have very different church-state histories and institutional arrangements, these differences can be a source of strength. Increasing transatlantic cooperation on FoRB advocacy can demonstrate that a wide variety of historical paths and church-state arrangements can produce freedom of religion and belief. However, we must also recognize that while the UK and the US enjoy some of the strongest protections of FoRB, it took centuries for these to take root domestically and they remain far from perfect in the present day.

Leigh Gibson
Director USA
British Council

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[1]   The Changing Global Religious Landscape." 2017. Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 8.

[2]   ibid.

[3]   For an overview of recent reports, see Idris, Iffat. 2018. "Threats to and Approaches to Promote Freedom of Religion or Belief." DFID.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings of the British Council's convenings of expertise in religion and international affairs highlight the need for a much better appreciation of the role of religion in international affairs among foreign policy establishments. It is suggested that this will require developing more robust religious literacy training for diplomatic personnel than those currently available. Finally, the British Council's convenings suggest that it is important to enhance capacities for 'religious engagement.' Experts note that religious engagement can create the preconditions for FoRB and thus provide a more organic, bottom up, approach to promoting FoRB internationally.

Public opinion surveys commissioned by the British Council and conducted in the UK and US suggest that Brits and Americans share overall similar attitudes toward the importance of religion and religious tolerance within their societies.

Still, while vast majorities are in overall agreement that freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right and a foundation of the UK and the US, Americans are far more likely to strongly hold these attitudes.

For example,

- 80% of people in the UK and 89% of people in the US are in overall agreement that freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right. However, 64% of Americans "strongly agree" freedom of religion is a basic human right compared to 46% of people in the UK.

- 73% of people in the UK and 86% of people in the US also agree freedom of religion is an important foundation of their respective societies, yet 57% of Americans "strongly agree" with this assertion compared to 37% of people in the UK.

The British Council's surveys of Brits and Americans also examined public perceptions of the relationship between freedom of religion and a variety of socio-economic outcomes and found opinions on several concepts fairly divided.

Overall, people in the UK and the US are more likely to agree than disagree that "countries with more religious freedoms are more peaceful than countries with fewer religious freedoms." Nearly half in the UK (48%) agree there is a relationship between religious freedoms and peaceful societies, but only one-in-five (19%) "strongly agree," while one-in-four disagree (27%) or say they are "not sure" (25%). A greater percentage of Americans agree overall (56%) and "strongly agree" (26%) that countries with more religious freedoms are more peaceful than countries with fewer religious freedoms, though one-in-five disagree (22%) or say they are "not sure" (21%).

- When asked to rank the greatest threats to peace within the UK, the British public puts religious extremism on top (20%) followed by international terrorism (18%) and immigration (17%).

- Americans rank racism (20%), domestic terrorism (19%) and political extremism (19%) as the three greatest threats to peace in the US.

Brits and Americans are also more likely to agree than disagree that countries with greater religious freedoms have stronger economies and are more innovative societies than countries with fewer religious freedoms. At the same time, there are significant percentages who indicate they are "not sure" if these benefits can be correlated with greater religious freedoms.

Having a Prime Minister of the United Kingdom or President of the United States who shares the moral values and religious beliefs of its citizens is relatively important to Brits and Americans, from 57% of people in the UK to 67% of people in the US, but many, including more than four-in-10 of those who are not religiously affiliated, report it is not important to have leaders who reflect their values or beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

The fact that more than 8 out of 10 people worldwide identify with a religious group underlines the importance of taking religion into account as a key component of cultural relations work.[4] In spite of the increasing number of people who do not affiliate with any religion in many parts of the Global North, the so-called religious 'nones' (shorthand for those who identity as atheist, agnostic, or have no particular religion) are in fact projected to decline as a share of the world's population in the coming decades.[5]

The British Council-commissioned surveys that form the basis of Sections 1, 2, and 3 of this report gauge prevailing public attitudes in the UK and the US toward selected policy-relevant aspects of religion and belief. Two waves of surveys were conducted in each country by Ipsos Public Affairs, using Ipsos' proprietary, non-probability, consumer online panel.[6]

By examining public attitudes towards various aspects of religion and belief, we hope to prompt transatlantic dialogues on key aspects of the perspectives presented in this report. For example, are prevailing assumptions about the positive benefits of promoting freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) supported by the existing body of social science research on the correlations between FoRB and economic growth, innovation, and peace?[7] To what extent do public perceptions of the groups suffering the most harassment and discrimination reflect the reality insofar as we can measure it? How is the interplay between religion and the rise of social media likely to (re)shape religious practice and belonging? This report hopes to prompt new dialogues between academics, policy makers, and transatlantic publics on these and other questions raised by the selected topics addressed in the surveys.

In 2016, a panel of academic and policy experts convened by the British Council's Bridging Voices project concluded that increased collaboration in promoting FoRB "...powerfully demonstrates that a wide variety of historical paths and church-state settlements

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[4] "The Changing Global Religious Landscape." 2017. Washington DC: Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, 5.

[5] Ibid, 5.

[6] For additional information, see the methodology section at the end of this report.

[7] In this report, we use the term "freedom of religion or belief" to refer to the right to have, adopt, change, or renounce a religion or belief; to be free from coercion and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief; to manifest and practice one's religion or belief; and to ensure the religious and moral education of one's children. For more, see "International Standards on Freedom of Religion or Belief." United Nations Human Rights; Office of the High Commissioner.

can lead to robust religious freedom."[8] Their final report also suggested that FoRB advocacy take into account "… which state or states are best positioned—by virtue of their history, demographics (including diaspora communities), church-state arrangement, or particular diplomatic leverage—to engage a third party country on a given religious freedom concern."[9] While many countries play an important role in FoRB advocacy, we believe that the stark differences in the church-state trajectories of the UK and the US, as well as the nature of the 'special relationship' that underpins postwar international human rights frameworks, provides specific opportunities for deeper and more effective governmental cooperation on FoRB advocacy.[10]

We believe that enhancing FoRB advocacy and religious engagement—and attention to religious engagement more broadly—is of increasing importance for two reasons. First, we operate in a global environment where overall levels of restrictions on religion are increasing,[11] whether resulting from government actions or from hostile acts by private individuals, organizations, and social groups. The Pew Research Center estimates that the share of countries that exhibit high or very high levels of overall restrictions on religion rose to 83 countries (40%) in 2016 up from 58 (29%) in 2007.[12] Of particular concern in recent years is the egregious treatment of Uighur Muslims in China, Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and Christians, Yazidis and other religious minorities at the hands of ISIS. This worrying trend requires us to reassess the efficacy of current strategies and models of FoRB promotion.

Second, the demise of the secularization-modernization thesis, which erroneously predicted the disappearance of religion from the public sphere, compels renewed attention to international FoRB advocacy—and religious engagement more broadly. New post-secular understandings demand that policy makers, practitioners, and academics be more mindful of not projecting outmoded domestic understandings of secularism into the international arena, explore ways to broaden and deepen engagement with religion and religious actors, and re-examine a lingering tendency to treat FoRB as a "lesser right."[13] These post-secular understandings also prompt us to survey other emerging topics, such as the role that social media and other information communication technologies may be playing in (re)shaping the ways in which people of all faiths and none embody and live their religion or belief.

This report will first provide an overview of religious affiliation and attendance in the US and the UK. Here, not surprisingly, we see that the characteristics of religious identification and practice substantially differs across the two countries and over time. However, it bears repeating that the "rise of the religious 'nones'" in both countries belies a global landscape where the share of religious 'nones' is predicted to decline. In Section 1, we move to examine public attitudes as to whether (or not) respondents in the UK and the US consider Freedom of Religion and Belief to constitute (1) a fundamental right and (2) an important foundation of the UK and the US. In Section 2, we examine public attitudes toward specific correlations between freedom of religion or belief and peaceful societies, strong economies, and innovation. In Section 3, we look at perceptions of harassment and discrimination, attitudes on whether (or not) it is important for leaders to reflect respondents' values and beliefs, as well as the use of the internet and social media for information about religion. Finally, Section 4 of this report distills selected findings of 5 years of British Council convenings of experts working at the intersection of religion and international affairs.

Before we delve into recent data on affiliation and attendance, however, we would like to take a moment to compare and contrast the divergent church-state paths followed by the UK and the US and sketch a broad overview of the emergence of the rich religious pluralism enjoyed in both countries in the present day. The purpose here is to highlight that strikingly different paths can lead to religious pluralism and religious freedom, bearing in mind that freedom of religion and belief is far from perfect in both the UK and the US in the present day.

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[8]   Petito, Fabio, Daniel Philpott, Silvio Ferrari, and Judd Birdsall. 2016. "FoRB – Recognising Our Differences Can Be Our Strength: Enhancing Transatlantic Cooperation on Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief." Policy Brief. University of Sussex and University of Notre Dame.

[9]   Ibid.

[10] The right articulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is typically referred to as "freedom of religion or belief" in Europe and "religious freedom" in North America. This subtle difference in terminology reflects differences in the history of religion, politics, and demographics in each context. For a more thorough discussion, see Petito et al. 2016. "FoRB – Recognising Our Differences Can Be Our Strength: Enhancing Transatlantic Cooperation on Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief." Policy Brief. University of Sussex and University of Notre Dame.

[11] For the purposes of this report, we define 'religious engagement' as a more broad-based analysis of religious dynamics that involves dialogue with diverse religious actors on a wide range of issues in a given context.

[12] "Global Uptick in Government Restrictions on Religion in 2016." 2018. Washington, D.C: Pew Research Center.

[13] For an excellent discussion, see Petersen, Marie Juul, and Katherine Marshall. 2019. "The International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief." Copenhagen: Danish Institute for Human Rights, 8-13.

RELIGION AND STATE IN THE UK AND THE US

The arrival of religious refugees on Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts represents an iconic moment in the cultural relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. The distinct legacies produced by this critical juncture—and later solidified by the Enlightenment rationalism of Jefferson and Madison along with the religious revivals of the 'Great Awakening' of the 1740s—drove popular support for disestablishment in the American colonies in the last half of the eighteenth century.[14] The Declaration of Independence in 1776, the enactment in Virginia of Jefferson's "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" in 1785, and the ratification of the First Amendment to the Constitution in 1791, cemented the divergent path of church-state institutions and religiopolitical culture in the United States. Separation of church and state in the US remains a fundamental and defining feature of American democracy, an institutional arrangement designed with the intention of protecting religious liberty and helping religion to flourish.

In the United Kingdom, the 1689 Toleration Act's acceptance of Protestant non-conformity, along with the Roman Catholic and Jewish emancipation movements of the early 19th century, indicated the Anglican establishment's adoption of increasingly permissive policies toward other denominations and religious groups over a 150-year time period. As Steve Bruce and Chris Wright note, "...only when the fragmentation of the religious culture had gone so far as to be obviously irreversible and the price of trying to enforce religious orthodoxy became too great did the establishment accept that there could no longer be an effective state religion."[15] The fact that Anglican establishment has not been politically contentious since the early twentieth century is an acknowledgement of the public character of religion in the United Kingdom today.[16] Indeed, scholars of religion-state relations note that Anglican establishment has created opportunities for other denominations and faiths seeking public space.[17]

As one might expect, the historical origins and trajectories of minority religious communities such as Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu communities are also somewhat different across the US and the UK not only in terms of timing, but also the push and pull factors for original migrations, the socio-economic profiles of migrants, as well as integration regimes and processes. While the accommodation of religious minorities has taken root over the *longue durée* in the United Kingdom, the nascent institutions of the independent United States reflected its founders' wishes to protect the freedom of religion or belief for all. Indeed, in his autobiography, Thomas Jefferson characterized the movement for religious freedom in Virginia as encompassing "within the mantle of its protection the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan, the Hindoo and infidel of every denomination."

It was only in the aftermath of the English Civil War (1642-1651) that a political environment finally emerged that was conducive to the formal readmission of Jews who had been expelled by King Edward I in 1290.[18] After the Restoration, responding to a petition made by London's small Sephardic community, the Privy Council formally recognized the resident status of Jews in England.[19]

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[14] It's important to remember, though, that the colonies were sharply divergent with respect to disestablishment with Massachusetts, for example, retaining an established church as late as 1833.

[15] Bruce, S., and C. Wright. 1995. "Law, Social Change, and Religious Toleration." *Journal of Church and State*. 37 (1): 103–20.

[16] It's important to note that since the Welsh Church Act 1914 came into operation in 1920, there has been no established church in Wales; the Church of Scotland Act 1921 formally recognized the Kirk's status as a national church, albeit independent from the state; while the Church of Ireland was disestablished by the Irish Church Act 1869.

[17] Monsma, S.V., and J. Christopher Soper. 2009. *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield; Fetzer, Joel S., and J. Christopher Soper. 2005. *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press; Minkenberg, Michael. 2003. "The Policy Impact of Church–State Relations". *West European Politics* 26 (1): 195–217.

[18] Roth, Cecil. 1979. *A History of the Jews in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 7.

[19] Neither the petition nor the reply mentioned a Jewish community, a synagogue, or religious observances. It was only in 1674 that the religious status of the Jews in England was legally secured.

Between 1880 and the start of World War I, about 2.5 million Ashkenazi Jews fled from persecution and pogroms in the western regions of the Russian Empire after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II.[20] While the UK was primarily a land of transmigration for Jews at this juncture, many of whom were traveling on to the US, as many as 150,000 settled permanently, radically re-shaping the demographic characteristics of contemporary Anglo-Jewry.[21]

The origins of Jewish communities in the US can also be dated back to the mid-17th century. As in the UK, most of these pioneers were also Sephardim of Spanish and Portuguese origins. By the late nineteenth century, the UK and the US had both developed reputations as safe havens for Jews fleeing persecution. The late 19th and early 20th century saw approximately 2 million Ashkenazim emigrating to the US, fleeing from persecution and pogroms in the Russian Empire.

While there is some evidence that Muslim traders interacted with Britons, with some having reportedly settled in Britain and Ireland as early as the 8th century, the contemporary presence of Muslim and Hindu communities in the UK are inextricably linked to the colonial relationship with South Asia.[22] Indeed, more than 60% of the contemporary British Muslim population traces its origins to the subcontinent.[23] By far the largest migration from the subcontinent to the UK occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War as postwar labor market demands opened up jobs in the textile, metallurgical, transportation, and hospitality sectors. In the early 1970s, almost 30,000 East African Asians— many of them Muslim and Hindu—re-settled in the UK having been expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin Dada. Contemporary British Muslim communities also comprise Turks, Turkish Cypriots, Somalis, Nigerians, Malayans, Iranians, Bosnians, and Arabs of various nationalities as well as a growing number of converts.

Some of the earliest arrivals to the United States were Muslims who were forcibly transported from West Africa as slaves in the transatlantic trade. Descendants of these generations of slaves are estimated to form as much as 20% of the contemporary US Muslim population. Records indicate that several Muslims may have fought on the US side during the Revolutionary War.[24] Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, small numbers of economic migrants from the Ottoman Empire settled in the US and formed the demographic foundation for contemporary Muslim communities in cities such as Dearborn, Michigan. The dismantling of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War brought more immigrants, often relatives of the earlier pioneers.[25] After the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, more migrants arrived from Africa and the Middle East, as well as South and Southeast Asia.

While their religion-state institutional paths have been strikingly different, both the UK and the US benefit from substantial religious diversity in the present day. However, we can see that it took centuries and generations for this rich pluralist tapestry to take root. As the British Council's survey results presented in this report demonstrate, the transatlantic commitments to freedom and religion and belief—commitments that both reflect and promote our own cultural diversity—enjoy robust public support in the present-day. Increasing transatlantic cooperation on FoRB advocacy can help demonstrate that a wide variety of historical paths and church-state arrangements can produce freedom of religion or belief for all. On a final note, it is important to not become complacent about our own protections, which remain far from perfect in the present day.

20   Alderman, Geoffrey. 2008. *Controversy and Crisis: Studies in the History of the Jews in Modern Britain*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 230; Endelman, Todd M. 2002. *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*. Jewish Communities in the Modern World 3. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 128-9.

21   Endelman, Todd M. 2002. *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 127.

22   Hellyer, H. A. 2009. *Muslims of Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 145.

23   Hellyer, H. A. 2007. "British Muslims: Past, Present and Future." *The Muslim World* 97 (2): 225–58.

24   Amon, Ayla. 2017. "African Muslims in Early America." Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History and Culture. February 21, 2017. https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/african-muslims-early-america.

25   Berg, Herbert. 2015. *African American Islam*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND ATTENDANCE AT SERVICES IN THE UK AND US

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN THE UK:

According to the 2014 British Social Attitudes (BSA) research on affiliation in the UK, levels of religious belonging have been declining for over three decades.

- In 2014, the BSA found around half (49%) of the British public reporting they do not affiliate with any religion, up from 31% in 1983. While 43% identify with Christianity, affiliation with the Church of England has

dropped from 40% in 1983 to 18% in 2014, while affiliation with other Christian faiths and the Roman Catholic Church has been stable. Since 1983, there has been a four-fold increase in the share of Brits who affiliate with non-Christian faiths, up from 2% in 1983 to 8% in 2014.

FIGURE 1: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN THE UK

1983

Non-Affiliated 31%

C. of E./ Anglican 40%

Non-Christian 2%

Roman Catholic 10%

Other Christian 17%

Total Christian 67%

2014

C. of E./ Anglican 18%

Non-Affiliated 49%

Other Christian 17%

Total Christian 43%

Non-Christian 8%

Roman Catholic 8%
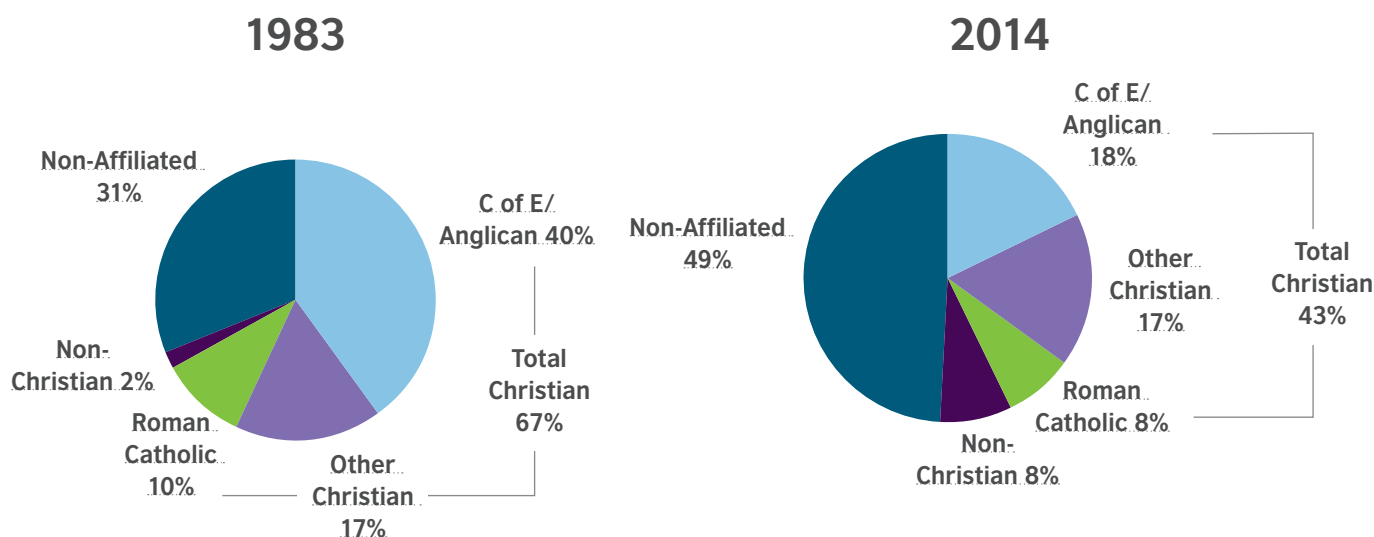
*British Social Attitudes 1983, 2014

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN THE US:

The trend in the US has also been toward a greater percentage of Americans who do not affiliate with any religion, but on a smaller scale than the one seen in the UK. The percentage of Americans who report they are not affiliated with any religion (21%) is less than half the unaffiliated rate in the UK. The Gallup poll also indicates a significant increase over time in the percentage of Americans who claim no affiliation, rising from 7% in 1980 to 21% in 2018.

The same 2018 poll from Gallup reports that 72% of Americans identify with Christianity, down from 76% in

2010 and 89% in 1980. The greatest decline is among those identifying with Protestantism, with a drop from 61% in 1980 to 45% in 2010 to 36% in 2018. The percentage affiliating with Roman Catholicism in the US has held steady since 2010 and in 2018 is down 5 percentage points to 23% since 1980. Those identifyiing as non-Christians in the US has grown from 4% in 1980 to 7% in 2018.

FIGURE 2: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN THE US

1980

Non-Christian 4%
Non-Affiliated 7%
Roman Catholic 28%
Protestant 61%
Other Christian n/a
Total Christian 89%

2018

Non-Christian 7%
Non-Affiliated 21%
Other Christian 13%
Protestant 36%
Total Christian 72%
Roman Catholic 23%
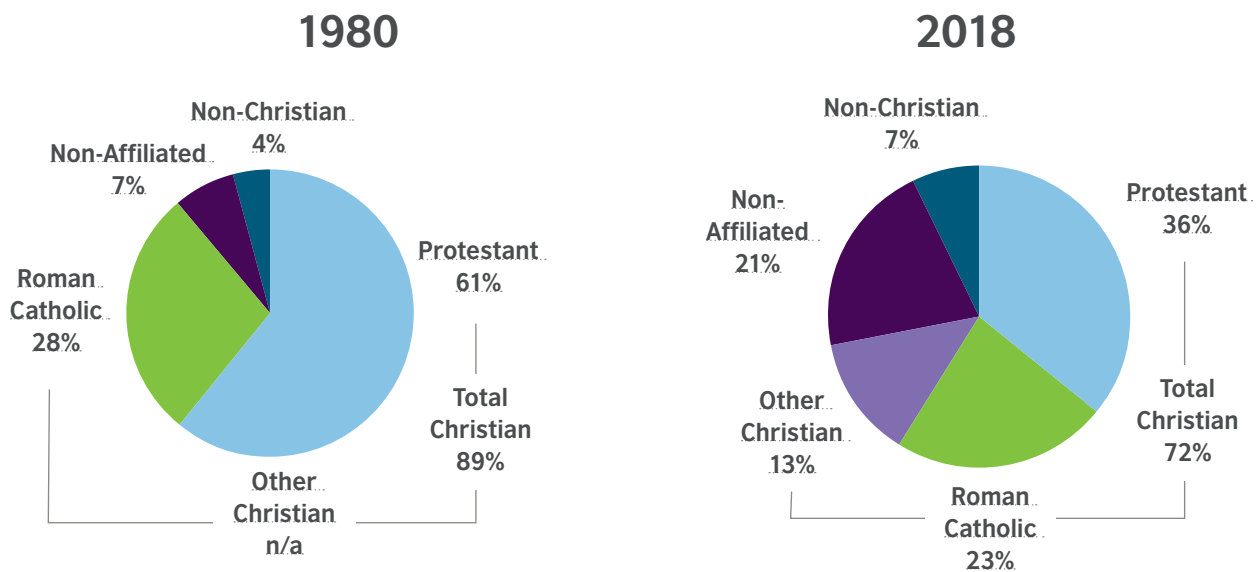
*The Gallup Poll 1980/2018

ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES:

Reported attendance at religious services also varies widely between the UK and the US. According to European Social Survey data from 2016, 12% of the British public attend religious services at least once a week, while 51% never attend religious services (aside from special occasions). Among Americans, 22% attend religious services at least once a week and fewer than three-in-10 (28%) report they never attend services. While attendance at religious services is generally viewed as a reliable indicator of observance within Christianity, Islam and Judaism, it may not be as reliable for Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions.

FIGURE 3: ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Weekly
UK 12%
US 22%

Never
UK 51%
US 28%
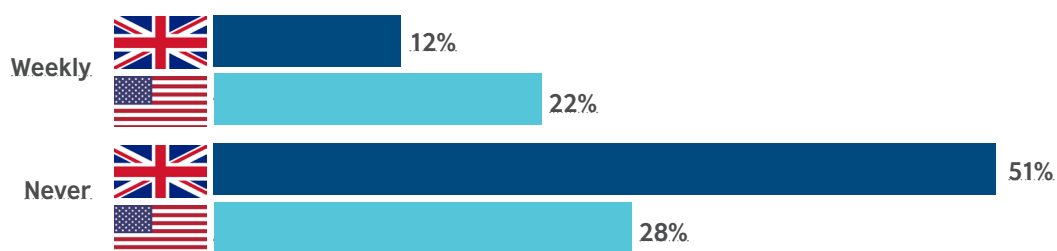
*European Social Survey 2016/The Gallup Poll 2018

SECTION 1
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AS A HUMAN RIGHT

As the postwar and post-Holocaust international human rights regime began to crystallize, the right to freedom of religion emerged as one of its central principles. It was a central feature of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" address in January 1941 and was cited as one of the moral objectives of the Allied war effort.[26] The Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—formed the foundation of the Atlantic Charter declared by Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt in August 1941.

In 1948, freedom of religion or belief was enshrined as a fundamental human right in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic believers as well as those who do not profess any religion or belief. Freedom of religion or belief has been further consolidated in a variety of international legal documents such as the legally-binding 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the U.N.'s 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

Data from the British Council's survey reflect enduring support for these commitments with large percentages in the UK (80%) and the US (89%) either "somewhat" or "strongly" agreeing that freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right, while fewer than one-in-10 disagree that freedom of religion is an essential human right.

- Among Americans, however, nearly two-thirds (64%) "strongly agree" that religious freedom is a basic human right, 18 points higher than the 46% of people in the UK who "strongly agree" that religious liberty is a core human right.

In both the UK and the US, the belief that freedom of religion is a vital human right is held by Christians and non-Christians, as well as those who are not religiously affiliated. In addition, both men and women and people in different age groups broadly agree that religious freedom is a fundamental human right.

FIGURE 4: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT.

	UK	US
Strongly Agree	46%	64%
Somewhat Agree	34%	25%
Somewhat Disagree	6%	6%
Strongly Disagree	3%	2%

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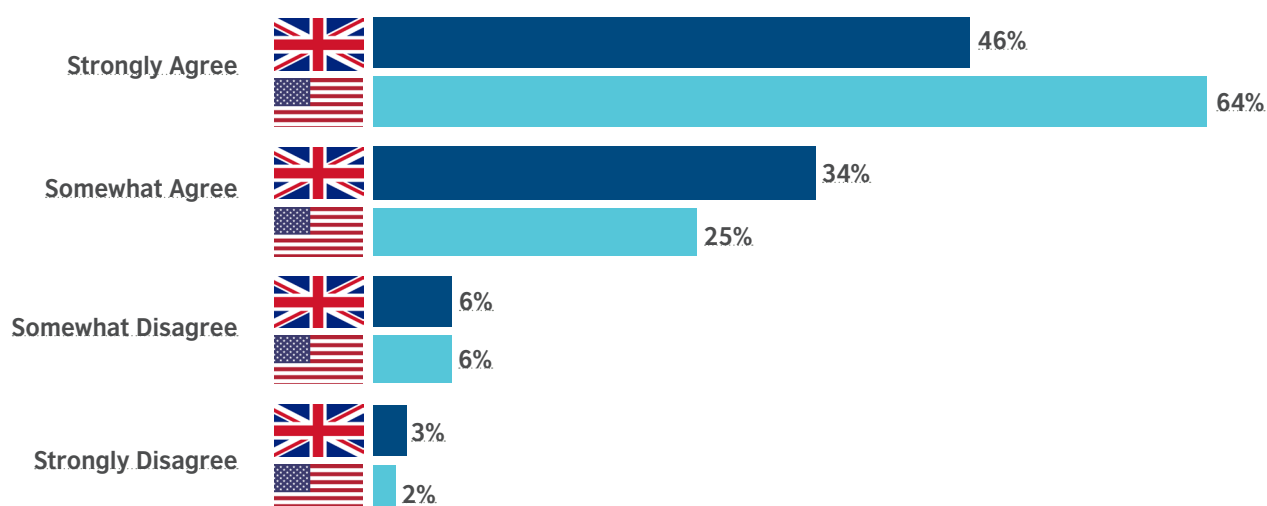
[26]   President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. 1941. "'Four Freedoms' Speech." Annual Message to Congress, Washington DC, January 6. After Roosevelt's death and the end of World War II, his widow Eleanor regularly cited the 'four freedoms' as she advocated for the passage of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

FIGURE 5: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT.

🇬🇧	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL UK	80%	46%	34%	6%	3%	9%	11%
SEX							
Male	82	48	33	6	3	9	9
Female	79	45	35	6	2	9	12
AGE							
Under 35	79	45	34	6	2	7	14
35-49	80	44	36	6	4	10	10
50 and older	82	50	32	7	2	10	9
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	86	51	35	6	2	8	7
Non-Christian	79	47	32	12	5	17	5
Unaffiliated	77	43	34	6	3	9	15

🇺🇸	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL US	89%	64%	25%	6%	1%	8%	3%
SEX							
Male	89	61	27	7	2	9	3
Female	90	67	23	6	1	6	4
AGE							
Under 35	82	58	25	12	2	13	5
35-49	90	63	28	5	1	7	3
50 and older	94	70	24	3	*	3	2
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	90	64	26	6	1	6	3
Non-Christian	90	68	22	6	*	6	4
Unaffiliated	77	52	26	12	3	15	8

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AS AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION OF THE UK AND US

While church-state separation in the US and the progressive dilution of church-state links in the UK have produced distinctive religiopolitical legacies, both the US and the UK share a long-standing commitment to religious pluralism and a cultural assumption that religion performs a valuable public function. Indeed, as we have mentioned, experts have argued that these institutional and cultural differences can be a strategic asset when it comes to advocating for the freedom of religion or belief on the global stage.[27]

Although the British and American people broadly agree that freedom of religion is an important foundation of their societies, Americans hold this view far more intently. This is not altogether surprising given the centrality of religious freedom to the constitutional tradition and national history of the US.

In the US, 86% agree overall with the statement "Freedom of religion is an important foundation of the US," with 57% of Americans in "strong" agreement. Overall, Americans who practice non-Christian faiths are those most likely to agree religious freedom is a core underpinning of the US (93% agree), while Americans

not affiliated with a religion are those most likely to disagree (19%).

In the UK, more than seven-in-10 (73%) agree religious freedom is an important foundation of the UK, but they are significantly less inclined than Americans to "strongly agree"—37% compared to 57% of Americans. Indeed 13% of people in the UK disagree that religious freedom is a foundation of UK society, including 28% of non-Christians who express this point of view.

The British Council-commissioned surveys in both the UK and the US also find that fewer people under the age of 35 than those 35 and older believe religious freedom is an important foundation of their societies.

- Among those under age 35 in the UK, 67% agree freedom of religion is an important foundation of the UK versus 74% of those 35-49 years of age and 78% of those 50 and older.

- Among those under age 35 in the US, 80% agree freedom of religion is an important foundation of the US versus 90% of those 35-49 years of age and 89% of those 50 and older.

FIGURE 6: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF IS AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION OF THE [UK/US].

Strongly Agree — UK: 37%, US: 57%
Somewhat Agree — UK: 37%, US: 30%
Somewhat Disagree — UK: 8%, US: 7%
Strongly Disagree — UK: 5%, US: 2%

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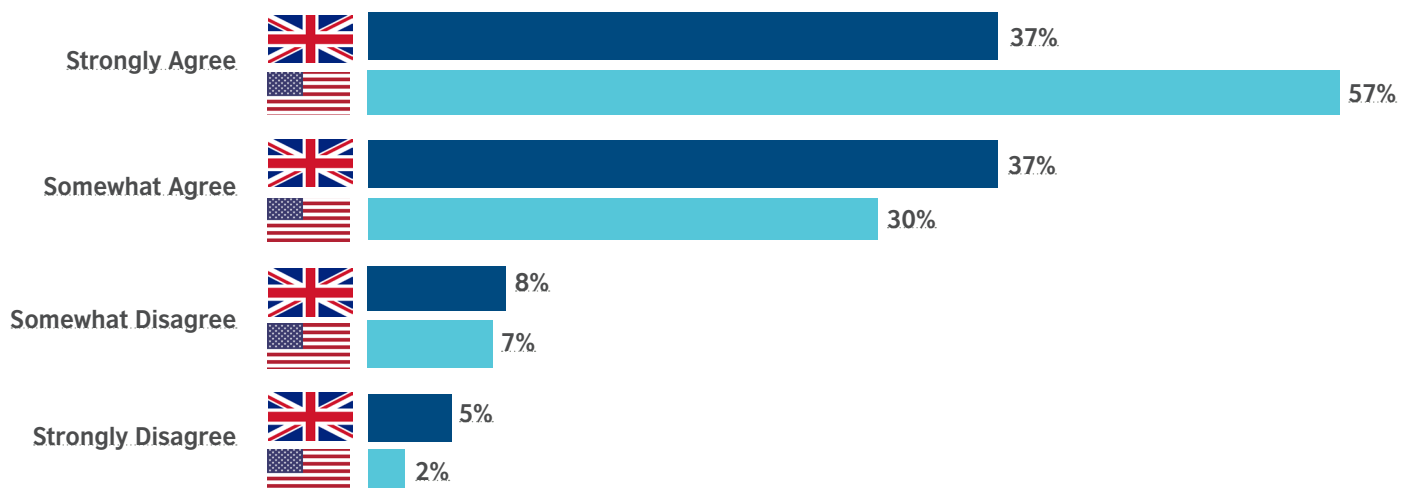
27   For a discussion, see Petito, Fabio, Daniel Philpott, Silvio Ferrari, and Judd Birdsall. 2016. "FoRB – Recognising Our Differences Can Be Our Strength: Enhancing Transatlantic Cooperation on Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief." Policy Brief. University of Sussex and University of Notre Dame.

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FIGURE 7: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT
FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF IS AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION OF THE [UK/US].

🇬🇧	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL UK	73%	37%	37%	8%	5%	13%	14%
SEX							
Male	77	40	38	7	5	12	11
Female	70	34	35	9	5	14	17
AGE							
Under 35	67	33	34	10	4	14	19
35-49	74	35	39	8	5	13	13
50 and older	78	42	37	7	6	13	9
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	82	43	40	6	2	8	10
Non-Christian	68	29	39	19	8	28	5
Unaffiliated	67	33	34	8	7	15	18

🇺🇸	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL US	86%	57%	30%	7%	2%	9%	5%
SEX							
Male	86	60	26	8	2	10	4
Female	87	54	33	7	1	8	6
AGE							
Under 35	80	52	27	11	3	14	7
35-49	90	59	32	6	*	7	3
50 and older	89	59	30	5	1	7	4
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	88	59	29	7	2	9	3
Non-Christian	83	52	31	6	*	7	10
Unaffiliated	75	46	29	15	4	19	6

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SECTION 2
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

Researchers have found that freedom of religion or belief can contribute to peace (and peacebuilding) in two ways.[28] First, the more strongly that religious and political leaders or organizations hold a "political theology of religious freedom," the more they are likely to further peace. Second, the higher the degree of mutual independence between religious bodies and state institutions, the better the conditions for peace. Because religious freedom embodies respect for the autonomy of religious actors, it is closely related to independence. The UK demonstrates that it is possible for a state both to protect religious freedom alongside the partial establishment of a national church—and that there are therefore many paths to freedom of religion or belief. Indeed, scholars consider that the conditions for peace are generally highest when religious freedom is strong and establishment is weak, and is lowest when the opposite conditions obtain.[29]

Analysis of democratic movements for peace reveals that religion often plays a strong role. In one such analysis, forty-eight out of seventy-eight democratic movements surveyed involved religious leaders and organizations exercising important influence, more often than not playing a leading role.[30] As Daniel Philpott notes,

> Conveying the story behind these numbers are memorable images of Pope John Paul II conducting open-air pilgrimages to Communist Poland, Filipino nuns staring down the tanks of dictator Ferdinand Marcos,

> Protestants conducting candlelight services in East Germany's Nikolaikirche, and Muslim popular democratic movements that brought down the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia.[31]

The British Council surveys of Brits and Americans explored public perceptions of the relationship between religious freedoms and positive outcomes on countries and found opinions on these concepts somewhat divided.

Overall, people in the UK and the US are more inclined to agree than disagree with the statement: "Countries with more religious freedoms are more peaceful than countries with fewer religious freedoms." Among UK respondents to the British Council survey, 48% agree with this statement, yet only one-in-five (19%) "strongly agree" with it. Among US respondents, a greater percentage than in the UK agree overall (56%) and "strongly agree" (26%) that countries with more religious freedoms are more peaceful than countries with fewer religious freedoms.

In the UK, one-in-four disagree (27%) or say they are "not sure" (25%) that countries are more peaceful if religious freedoms are less strict. In the US, one-in-five disagree (22%) or say they are "not sure" (21%).

• In both the UK and the US, women are significantly more likely than men to say they are "not sure" about

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28 Here, we draw on Philpott, Daniel. 2007. "Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion." *American Political Science Review* 101 (3): 505–25; Toft, Monica Duffy, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah. 2011. *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton.

29 Saiya, Nilay. 2018. *Weapon of Peace: How Religious Liberty Combats Terrorism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

30 Toft, Monica Duffy, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah. 2011. *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 92, 96.

31 Philpott, Daniel. 2013. "Religious Freedom and Peacebuilding: May I Introduce You Two?" *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 11 (1): 33.

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 2: The Relationship Between Religious Freedoms and Peaceful Societies

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whether there is a relationship between religious freedoms and peaceful countries—30% versus 20% of men in the UK and 25% versus 17% of men in the US.

- And in the UK, those affiliated with non-Christian religions are most inclined to disagree that there is a relationship between greater religious freedoms and peaceful societies. Nearly four-in-10 non-Christians in the UK (38%) disagree with this assertion.

FIGURE 8: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT

COUNTRIES WITH MORE RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS ARE MORE PEACEFUL THAN COUNTRIES WITH FEWER RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS.

	UK	US
Strongly Agree	19%	26%
Somewhat Agree	30%	31%
Somewhat Disagree	18%	16%
Strongly Disagree	9%	6%
Not Sure	25%	21%

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 2: The Relationship Between Religious Freedoms and Peaceful Societies
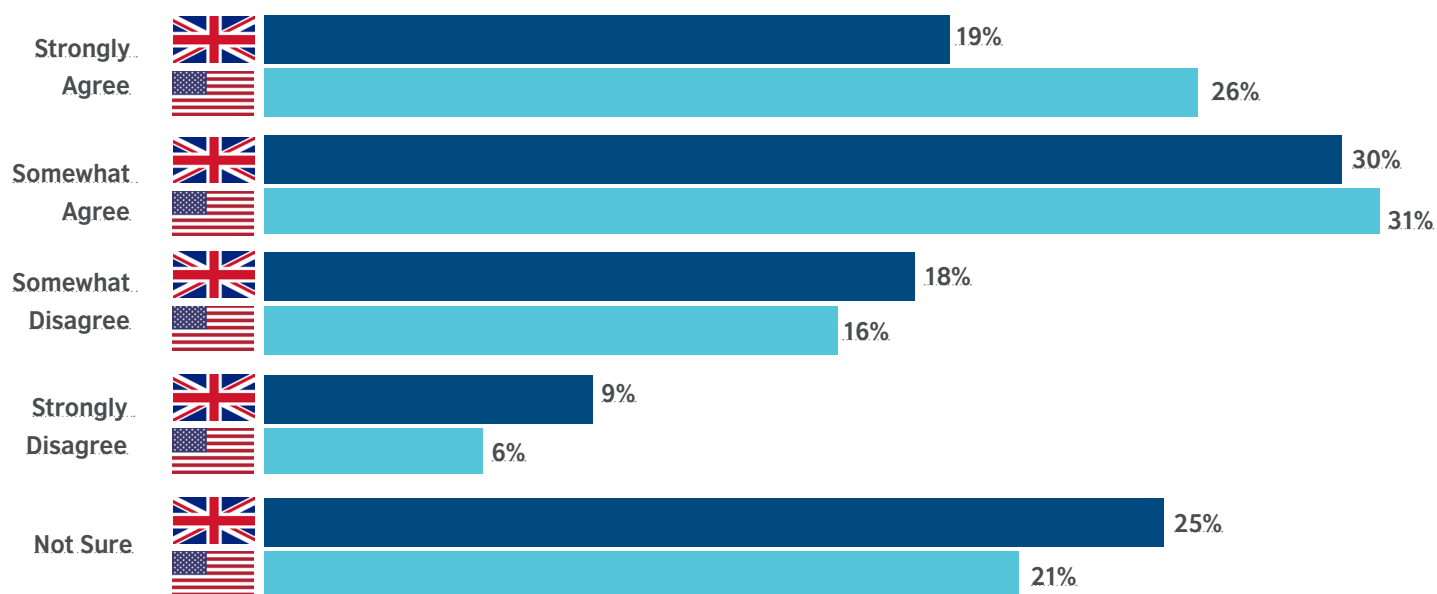
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FIGURE 9: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT COUNTRIES WITH MORE RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS ARE MORE PEACEFUL THAN COUNTRIES WITH FEWER RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS.

🇬🇧	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL UK	48%	19%	30%	18%	9%	27%	25%
SEX							
Male	51	22	29	19	9	28	20
Female	45	15	30	17	8	25	30
AGE							
Under 35	48	17	31	22	7	28	24
35-49	52	18	34	16	8	24	25
50 and older	46	21	25	16	11	28	26
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	52	22	30	18	8	26	22
Non-Christian	47	16	31	24	14	38	15
Unaffiliated	45	17	29	17	9	26	29

🇺🇸	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL US	56%	26%	31%	16%	6%	22%	21%
SEX							
Male	60	30	31	15	8	23	17
Female	53	22	31	17	5	22	25
AGE							
Under 35	60	31	29	16	7	23	17
35-49	57	22	35	15	4	19	24
50 and older	53	24	30	17	8	24	23
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	58	25	33	14	7	21	21
Non-Christian	55	28	27	20	4	24	21
Unaffiliated	46	22	23	17	10	27	27

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 2: The Relationship Between Religious Freedoms and Peaceful Societies

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS AND STRONG ECONOMIES

Several academic studies in the past decade have identified that countries with greater religious freedoms are not only more peaceful, but also have stronger economies and business climates that foster innovation and entrepreneurism.[32]

A number of seminal works of the political science literature suggest a correlation between wealth and democracy.[33] However, there is debate over the causal mechanisms that might underpin these arguments. A 'modernization' approach holds that countries are more likely to transition to democracy as they become economically developed. Another approach posits that transitions to democracy occur regardless of economic development, but that democracy is more likely to survive in developed countries.

However, another literature suggests numerous possible causal models that specifically link freedom of religion or belief with stronger economies.[34] The most direct causal story posits that religious activity is economic activity and therefore if religious freedom results in more religious activity, it will also result in more economic growth. An alternative 'migratory model' considers that individuals with the ability and motivation to move to a region that enjoys freedom of religion or belief are often those who have the most entrepreneurial characteristics that are associated with innovation and growth. Another 'bundling' model holds that freedom of religion is itself dependent upon the existence of other critical freedoms such as ensuring private property rights, support for the rule of law, and promoting other rights such as freedom of assembly and speech. While freedom of religion by itself may not enhance economic growth, the struggle for religious liberty facilitates an environment of general freedom that in turn promotes economic growth.

The British Council surveys of Brits and Americans explored public perceptions of the relationship between religious freedoms and positive economic outcomes on countries and found opinions on these concepts somewhat divided.

When asked whether they believe countries with more religious freedoms have stronger economies than countries with fewer religious freedoms, respondents in both the UK and US are more likely to agree there is a relationship between religious tolerance and stronger economies, though their responses also indicate they are not resolute in their opinions.

In the UK, 40% agree that countries with more religious freedoms have stronger economies than countries with fewer religious freedoms. Still, only 13% "strongly agree" about the relationship between greater religious freedoms and economic strength, while 24% disagree and more than one-third (36%) indicate they are "not sure."

In the US, 50% believes greater religious freedoms relate to stronger economies, yet only 21% hold this view strongly. Like their counterparts in the UK, one-in-four Americans disagree that more religious freedoms yield stronger economies and another 27% indicate they are "not sure." Notably, 43% of women in the UK express uncertainty about whether greater religious freedoms can be linked to stronger economies, which is 13 points higher than men in the UK (30%). The same dynamic between women and men is also found in the US, but not nearly as high as in the UK: in the US, 31% of women are not sure about the relationship between more religious freedoms and stronger economies compared to 23% of men.

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[32] See, for example, Grim, Brian J., and Roger Finke. 2010. *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Gill, Anthony. 2013. "Religious Liberty & Economic Development: Exploring the Causal Connections." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 11 (4): 5–23.

[33] For a seminal work in the 'modernization' vein, see Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review*, 69–105; For the 'survival' approach, see Przeworski, Adam, Michael Alvarez, Jose Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi. 2000. *Democracy and Development : Political Institutions and Material Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[34] This section borrows from the six causal models presented in Gill, Anthony. 2013. "Religious Liberty & Economic Development: Exploring the Causal Connections." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 11 (4): 6.

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- Non-Christians in the UK are also far more likely than non-Christians in the US to disagree that countries with more religious freedoms have stronger economies than countries with fewer religious freedoms (40% and 28% respectively).

Moreover, those with no religious affiliation are less likely than those who are affiliated with a religion to agree there are stronger economies in countries with more religious freedoms only 36% of unaffiliated respondents agree in the UK, and only 39% in the US.

FIGURE 10: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT

COUNTRIES WITH MORE RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS HAVE STRONGER ECONOMIES THAN COUNTRIES WITH FEWER RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS.

	UK	US
Strongly Agree	13%	21%
Somewhat Agree	27%	29%
Somewhat Disagree	17%	17%
Strongly Disagree	7%	7%
Not Sure	36%	27%

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 2: The Relationship Between Religious Freedoms and Strong Economies
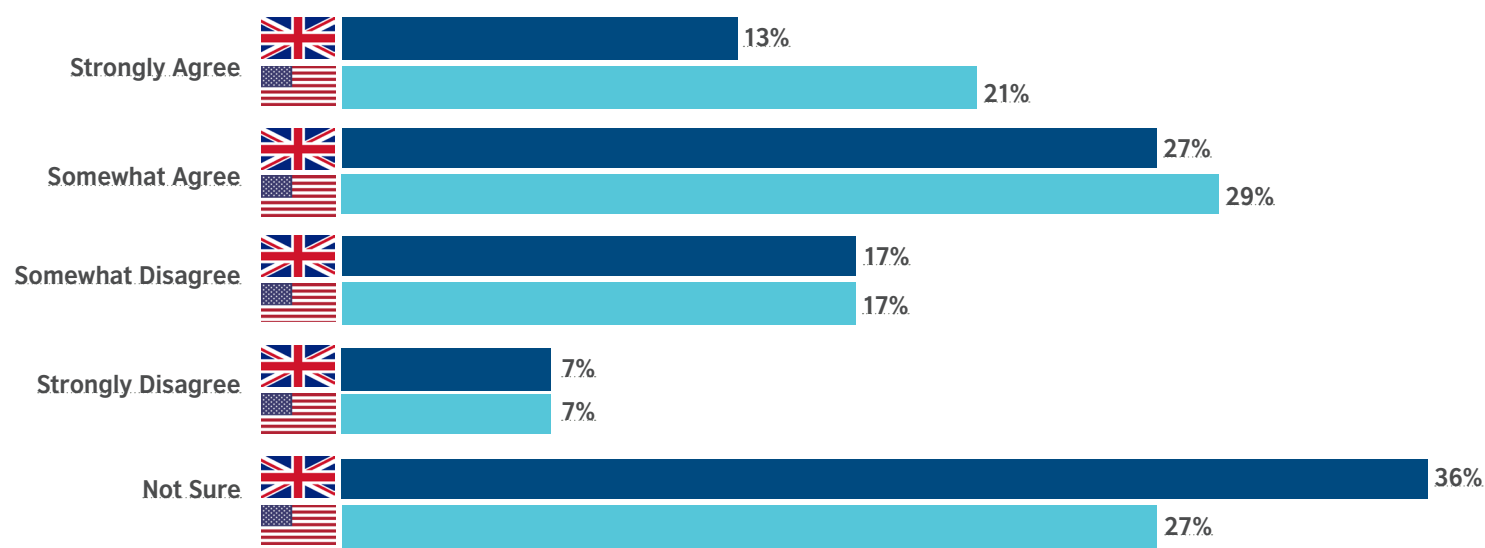
20

FIGURE 11: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT

COUNTRIES WITH MORE RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS HAVE STRONGER ECONOMIES THAN COUNTRIES WITH FEWER RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS.

	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL UK	40%	13%	27%	17%	7%	24%	36%
SEX							
Male	48	17	31	16	7	23	30
Female	32	9	23	17	8	25	43
AGE							
Under 35	40	12	27	16	5	22	39
35-49	44	14	30	14	8	22	34
50 and older	36	13	24	20	8	27	36
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	44	16	29	17	7	24	32
Non-Christian	42	11	31	30	10	40	19
Unaffiliated	36	11	25	14	7	21	43

	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL US	50%	21%	29%	17%	7%	23%	27%
SEX							
Male	54	24	31	14	9	23	23
Female	45	18	27	19	5	24	31
AGE							
Under 35	53	25	29	16	2	21	26
35-49	50	19	31	12	8	20	31
50 and older	47	19	28	20	8	28	26
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	52	20	33	16	6	21	26
Non-Christian	45	25	20	19	9	28	27
Unaffiliated	39	18	21	17	11	27	34

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 2: The Relationship Between Religious Freedoms and Strong Economies

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS AND INNOVATION

Recent scholarship has argued that freedom of religion or belief is not only essential as a human right but also because it enables religious communities to contribute to shaping the conditions necessary for the innovation needed to achieve sustainable development.[35] When it comes to weighing the assertion that countries with more religious freedoms are more innovative than countries with fewer religious freedoms, the British Council finds that respondents in the UK and the US hold different points of view. A majority of Americans believe there is a correlation between greater religious freedoms and countries that are more innovative, while a majority of people in the UK either disagree or are not sure.
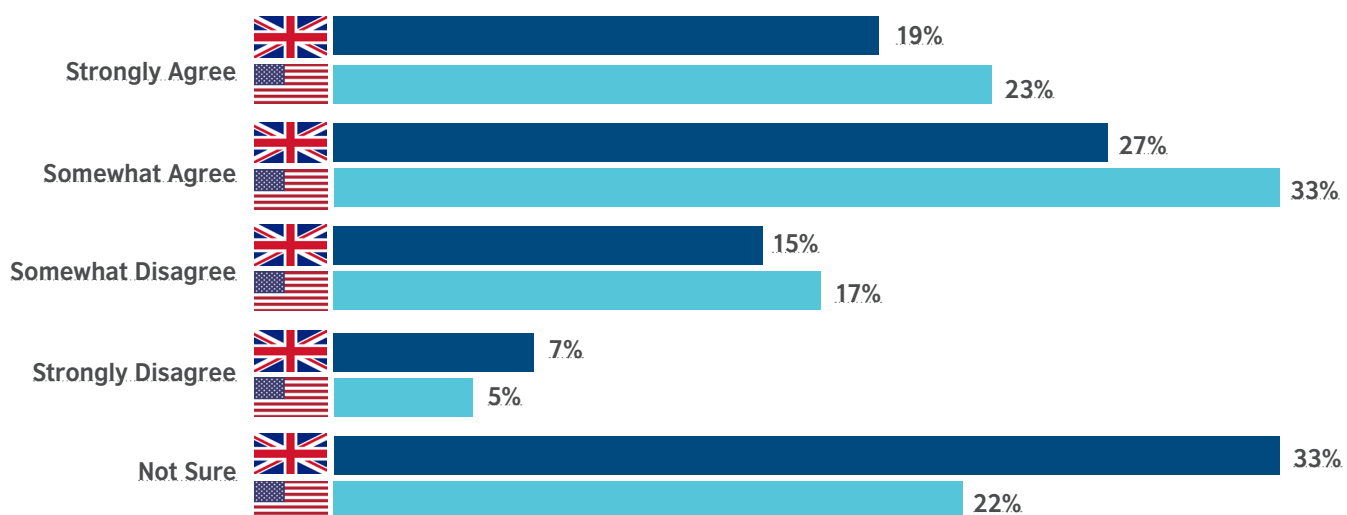
Overall, 46% of people in the UK agree that, "Countries with greater religious freedoms are more innovative than countries with fewer religious freedoms." However, men in the UK are far more likely than women to think there is a link between greater religious freedoms and innovative countries—53% versus 39%, respectively. Nearly four-in-10 women in the UK (38%) are "not sure" if innovation can be associated with greater religious freedoms.

- In addition, half of Christians in the UK (50%) think countries with greater religious freedoms are more innovative than countries with fewer religious freedoms compared to 40% of non-Christians and 41% of those with no religious affiliation.

- Indeed, non-Christians in the UK are most likely to disagree there is a relationship between religious freedoms and innovative societies (30% disagree). Those who are not affiliated are particularly likely to express uncertainty at a high level (38%).

Among Americans, 55% agree, 22% disagree and 22% are not sure whether countries with greater religious freedoms are more innovative than countries with fewer religious freedoms. Americans under the age of 35 (61%), men (59%) and Christians (57%) are more likely than women, older age groups, non-Christians, and those not religiously affiliated to agree there is a relationship between countries with greater religious freedoms and innovation.

FIGURE 12: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT

COUNTRIES WITH MORE RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS ARE MORE INNOVATIVE THAN COUNTRIES WITH FEWER RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS.

	UK	US
Strongly Agree	19%	23%
Somewhat Agree	27%	33%
Somewhat Disagree	15%	17%
Strongly Disagree	7%	5%
Not Sure	33%	22%

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35   Ventura, Marco. 2019. "Religion and Innovation." Trento, Italy: Fondazione Bruno Kessler.

FIGURE 13: AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT

COUNTRIES WITH MORE RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS ARE MORE INNOVATIVE THAN COUNTRIES WITH FEWER RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS.

🇬🇧	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL UK	46%	19%	27%	15%	7%	21%	33%
SEX							
Male	53	24	29	13	7	20	27
Female	39	13	26	16	7	23	38
AGE							
Under 35	46	18	28	15	5	21	34
35-49	50	20	30	11	7	18	33
50 and older	43	19	25	17	8	25	32
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	50	22	31	14	5	19	29
Non-Christian	51	19	32	19	12	30	19
Unaffiliated	41	17	24	15	7	22	38

🇺🇸	NET AGREE	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NET DISAGREE	Not Sure
TOTAL US	55%	23%	33%	17%	5%	22%	22%
SEX							
Male	59	25	34	19	5	24	17
Female	52	21	31	16	5	20	28
AGE							
Under 35	61	22	39	17	4	21	19
35-49	56	25	31	15	4	19	25
50 and older	50	22	28	18	7	26	24
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	57	22	35	18	4	23	21
Non-Christian	54	27	27	14	6	20	26
Unaffiliated	48	21	27	16	9	25	28

SECTION 3
PERCEPTIONS OF GROUPS SUFFERING THE MOST HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

In spite of the institutionalization of freedom of religion or belief, the chasm between aspiration and practice remains wide. Every year, Pew Research Center reports on levels of government restrictions and social hostilities towards religions in 198 countries. In 2016—the most recent year reported on—Pew estimates that almost half of the studied countries exhibited "high" or "very high" levels of overall restrictions on religion:

> In total in 2016, 83 countries (42%) had high or very high levels of overall restrictions on religion – whether resulting from government actions or from hostile acts by private individuals, organizations and social groups – up from 80 (40%) in 2015 and 58 (29%) in 2007.[36]

It is likely that this global trend has been further fueled in recent years by conflict, disaster, and development-induced migration. Restrictions on religion are higher in some regions over others, but every global region experiences versions of such restriction. Religious illiteracy is a global phenomenon that is especially of concern in multi-faith societies where misunderstandings and inexperience can quickly escalate into hostility, abuse, and violence.

According to the results of the British Council's survey, Brits and Americans believe Muslims are the religious group most subject to discrimination in the UK and the US. 57% of Brits and 45% of Americans identify Muslims as suffering the most harassment and discrimination.

- In the UK, six-in-10 of the religiously unaffiliated (61%) and two-thirds of those under age 35 (65%) report Muslims suffer the most harassment and discrimination.

- In the US, women are far more likely than men to think Muslims are the group most discriminated against in America (50% and 39%, respectively).

Other groups identified as facing harassment and discrimination are Jews, mentioned by 11% in the UK and 14% in the US, and, in the US, Christians of Protestant and other faiths (15%).

Two-in-10 of Brits (19%) say no groups in the UK are especially targeted for harassment or discrimination, a view also held by 15% of Americans.

In a separate question asked only in the UK about religious or ethnic groups that are most harassed in the world, 41% mention Muslims, 35% mention Jews and 16% mention Christians. A vast array of specific sects within the Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths were also identified including the Rohingya, Hassidic Jews, Coptic Christians, in addition to other faiths such as Buddhists, Hindus, and Scientologists to name just a few.

An interesting pattern emerged from the responses to this question in that, regardless of affiliation, respondents in the UK and US tended to see their own religious group as suffering the greatest discrimination and harassment. This pattern aligns with the results of other surveys of a wide variety of ethnic, racial, and social groups.

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[36] Global Uptick in Government Restrictions on Religion in 2016." 2018. Washington, D.C: Pew Research Center

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 3: Perceptions of Groups Suffering the Most Harassment And Discrimination

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FIGURE 14: PERCEPTION OF GROUPS SUFFERING THE MOST HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Muslims
- 🇬🇧 57%
- 🇺🇸 45%

Jews
- 🇬🇧 11%
- 🇺🇸 14%

Protestants/Other Christians
- 🇬🇧 5%
- 🇺🇸 15%

Roman Catholics
- 🇬🇧 3%
- 🇺🇸 6%

Other Groups
- 🇬🇧 3%
- 🇺🇸 6%

None
- 🇬🇧 19%
- 🇺🇸 15%

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 3: Perceptions of Groups Suffering the Most Harassment And Discrimination
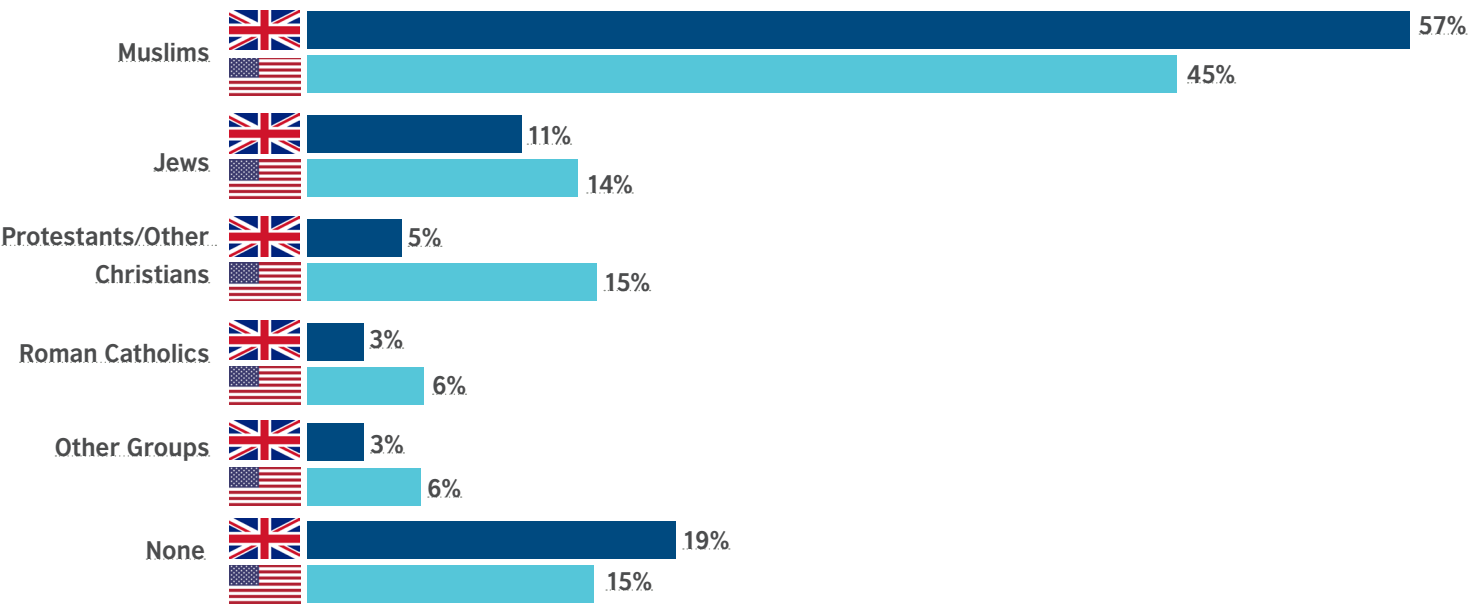
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FIGURE 15

WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING RELIGIOUS GROUPS OR BELIEF SYSTEMS DO YOU THINK SUFFERS FROM THE MOST HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE [UK/US]?

🇬🇧	Muslims	Jews	Protestants/ Other Christians	Roman Catholics	Other Groups	None	Not Sure
TOTAL UK	57%	10	5	3	3	19	33%
SEX							
Male	55	11	7	5	3	18	27
Female	59	9	4	2	3	20	38
AGE							
Under 35	65	5	5	3	3	17	34
35-49	54	12	5	4	2	20	33
50 and older	53	14	5	3	1	19	32
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	52	10	10	6	1	19	29
Non-Christian	59	13	*	9	1	9	19
Unaffiliated	61	10	3	1	3	20	38

🇺🇸	Muslims	Jews	Protestants/ Other Christians	Roman Catholics	Other Groups	None	Not Sure
TOTAL US	45%	14	15	6	6	15	22%
SEX							
Male	39	19	15	10	7	10	17
Female	50	8	15	2	4	21	28
AGE							
Under 35	52	9	11	9	7	13	19
35-49	43	11	16	7	6	16	25
50 and older	40	18	17	4	5	16	24
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	43	10	18	8	4	16	21
Non-Christian	46	27	8	1	9	10	26
Unaffiliated	52	6	2	3	12	25	28

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 3: Perceptions of Groups Suffering the Most Harassment And Discrimination

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THREATS TO PEACE WITHIN THE UK AND THE US

Surveying perceived threats to peace offers a unique look into current attitudes and assumptions and provide a useful point of comparison between the UK and the US. Though the UK and the US share strong cultural ties, the top three threats to peace in both the UK and the US as identified in the British Council survey point to a divergent outlook regarding matters of security and peace.

Survey respondents in both the UK and the US were asked to rank the top domestic threats to peace.

Respondents in the UK ranked religious extremism (20%), international terrorism (18%) and immigration (17%) as the three greatest threats. Americans rank racism (20%), domestic terrorism (19%) and political extremism (19%) as the three greatest threats to peace in the US.

Although "religious extremism" was listed as one potential threat to peace on the survey, the British Council is mindful of the fact that questionable assumptions can often underpin this category. For example, religious or cultural conservatism can often be conflated with "extremism" across religious traditions, which can lead to the inflation of perceived threats and the marginalization of legitimate voices in the public sphere.

However, investigating public perceptions of "religious extremism" as a threat to social cohesion in the US and UK informs a deeper understanding of the current climate surrounding religion—a climate that is often fraught and reactive—as well as the differences in the salience of religion in the construction of identity in both the UK and the US. The complex historical entanglements between religion and race in the US and the UK have produced different boundaries across racial and religious lines between "us" and "them"—boundaries that shift over time.[37] For example, many scholars argue that religious identity became more politically salient in the UK in the aftermath of the Rushdie Affair.[38]

It is also important to note that violent attacks popularly associated with "religious extremism" may in fact have multiple causalities and little to do with religion at all. Indeed, scholars note that in most cases religion is not the primary source of the behaviour of most extremists.[39] Rather, the drivers of extremism can be influenced by specific contexts, often shaped by experiences such as xenophobia, bias and racism, lower employment and educational levels, and lack of a sense of dignity and self-esteem.[40]

[37] Zollberg, Aristide R., and Long Litt Woon. 1999. "Why Islam Is Like Spanish: Cultural Incorporation in Europe and the United States." *Politics & Society* 27 (1): 5–38.
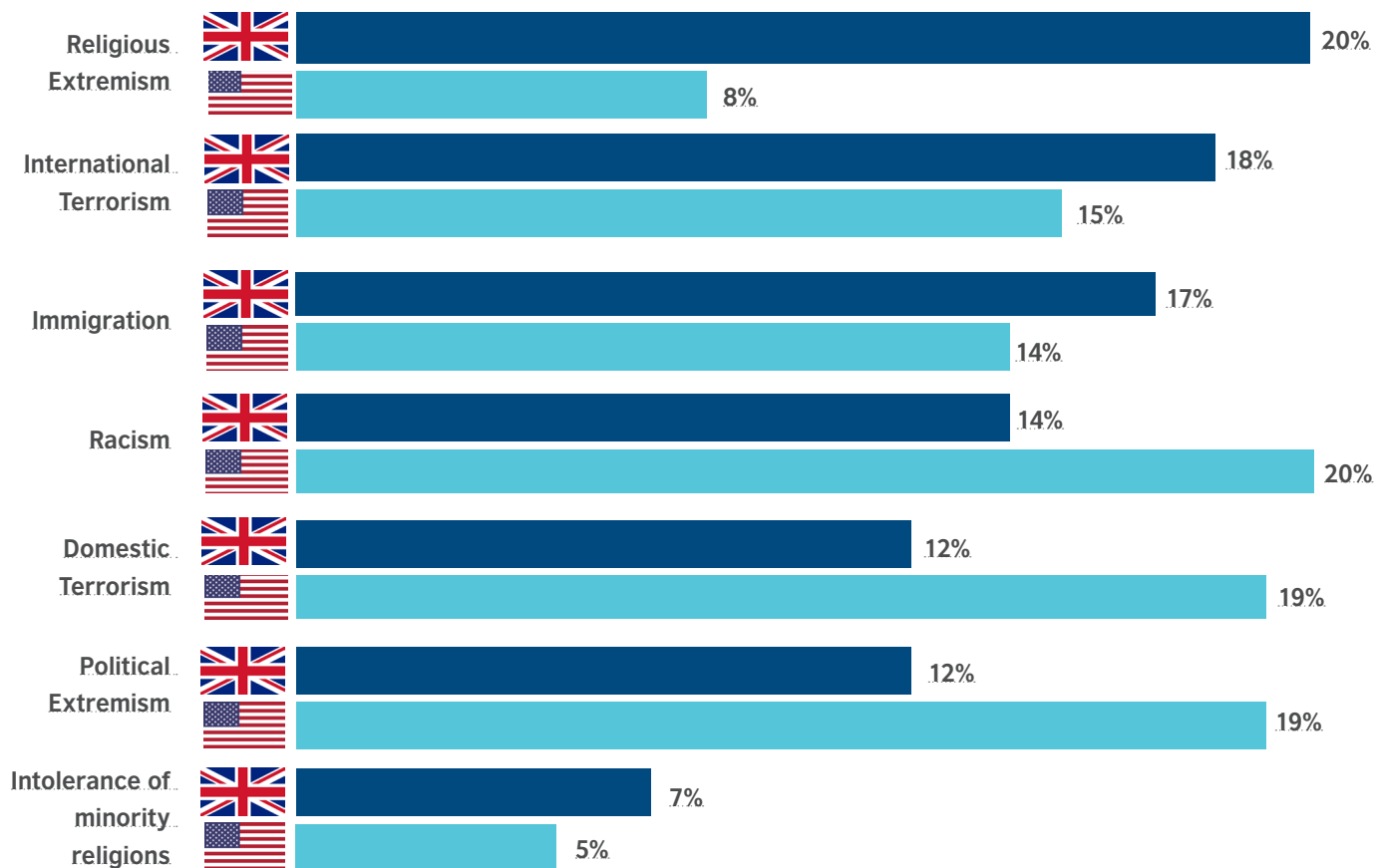
[38] Grillo, Ralph. 2010. "British and Others: From 'Race' to 'Faith.'" In *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European Discourses, Policies and Practices*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, 50–71. London: Routledge; Parekh, Bhikhu. 1990. "The Rushdie Affair and the British Press: Some Salutary Lessons." In *Free Speech - Report of a Seminar.* Discussion Papers 2. London: CRE and the Policy Studies Institute, 4; Also, Poole, Elizabeth. 2002. *Reporting Islam: Media Representations and British Muslims.* New York, NY.

[39] Sageman, Marc. 2017. *Misunderstanding Terrorism.* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press; Pape, Robert Anthony. 2006. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.* New York: Random House.

[40] Esposito, John. 2015. "Islam and Political Violence." *Religions* 6 (3): 1067–81.

FIGURE 16: THREATS TO PEACE IN THE US AND US

PLEASE RANK THE TOP THREE GREATEST THREATS TO PEACE WITHIN UK/US SOCIETY.

Religious Extremism
- UK: 20%
- US: 8%

International Terrorism
- UK: 18%
- US: 15%

Immigration
- UK: 17%
- US: 14%

Racism
- UK: 14%
- US: 20%

Domestic Terrorism
- UK: 12%
- US: 19%

Political Extremism
- UK: 12%
- US: 19%

Intolerance of minority religions
- UK: 7%
- US: 5%

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERS REFLECTING VALUES AND BELIEFS

The relationship between societal leaders and religion is evidently varied and complex, including in the United States and the United Kingdom. However, it is noteworthy that expressions of faith are de rigueur in US Presidential elections, while UK Prime Ministers have generally been more reticent to 'do God' in the public sphere.[41]

In the United Kingdom, several formal links still exist between religion and the state. First, accession to the throne involves the anointing of the monarch during the Coronation Service. Second, twenty-six seats in the House of Lords are reserved for Church of England bishops (the 'Lords Spiritual'). Finally, the Church retains a privileged position in education and maintains a special responsibility in promoting inter- and multi-faith harmony.[42] Addressing the link between religion and British prime ministers, Kevin Theakston notes that,

> For all the downward trend in recent decades in declared formal religious belief and in church attendance in the wider society, the occupants of Number 10 Downing Street since the 1960s have, with a few exceptions, been a group of people with pretty definite personal Christian faith-commitments.[43]

Having a Prime Minister of the UK or President of the United States who shares the moral values and religious beliefs of its citizens is relatively important to the people in the UK and the US, but many are not wedded to the overall concept.

In the UK, 57% report they think it is "very" (19%) or "somewhat" (38%) important for the Prime Minister to share their moral values or religious beliefs, while 37% indicate it is "not too much" (24%) or "not at all" (13%) important to them.

In the US, Americans are more vocal about having a President who shares their values or religious beliefs, with 67% reporting it is "very much" (28%) or "somewhat" (39%) important to them. Three-in-10 Americans indicate it is "not too much" (20%) or "not at all" important (10%) that the President of the United States reflects their moral values or religious beliefs.

- In both the UK and the US, Christians place greater importance (than non-Christians and those who are not religiously affiliated) on having the head of state share their values and beliefs.

- It's also noteworthy that religiously unaffiliated people in both the UK and the US are those who place the least importance on having leaders who mirror their values and beliefs—only 43% in the UK and 45% in the US agree.

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[41]   Spencer, Nick, ed. 2017. *The Mighty and the Almighty: How Political Leaders Do God.* London: Biteback Publishing.

[42]   See Modood, Tariq. 2014. "State-Religion Connexions and Multicultural Citizenship." In *Post-PostSecularism?* edited by Jean Cohen and Cecile Laborde. New York: Columbia University Press.

[43]   Theakston, Kevin. 2014. "'Doing God' in Number 10: British Prime Ministers and Religion." *Political Studies Association* (blog). April 24, 2014.

FIGURE 17: IMPORTANCE OF LEADERS REFLECTING VALUES OR BELIEFS

TO WHAT DEGREE IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT ANY [PRIME MINISTER OF THE UK/ PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES] REFLECTS YOUR MORAL VALUES OR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS?
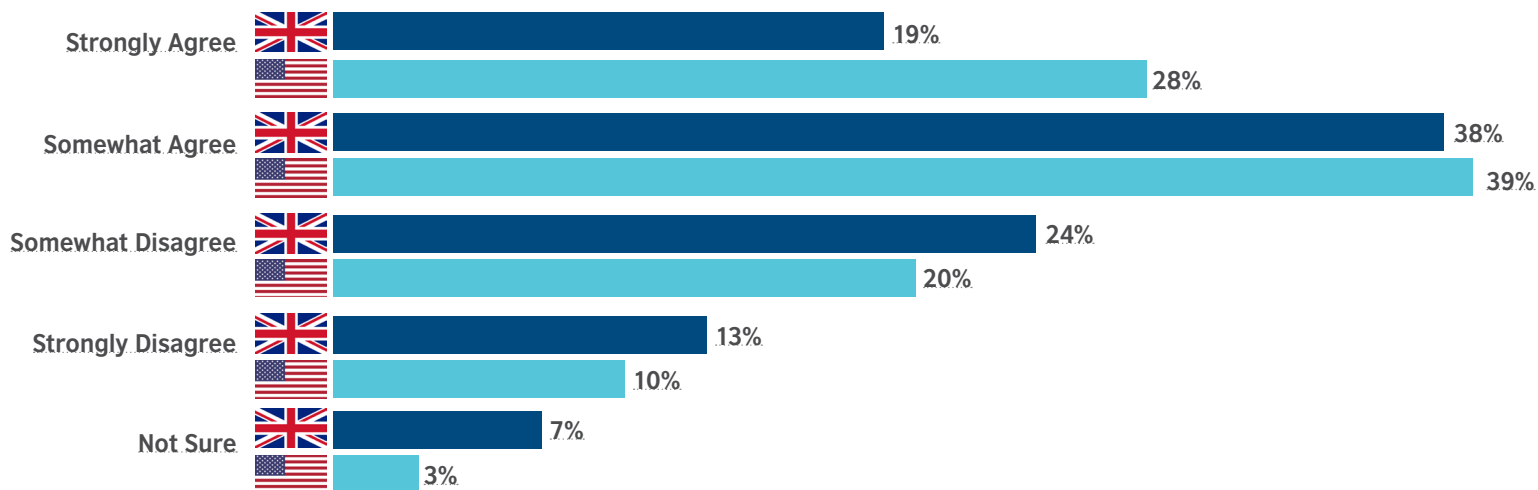
Strongly Agree
🇬🇧 19%
🇺🇸 28%

Somewhat Agree
🇬🇧 38%
🇺🇸 39%

Somewhat Disagree
🇬🇧 24%
🇺🇸 20%

Strongly Disagree
🇬🇧 13%
🇺🇸 10%

Not Sure
🇬🇧 7%
🇺🇸 3%

FIGURE 18: IMPORTANCE OF LEADERS REFLECTING VALUES OR BELIEFS

TO WHAT DEGREE IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT ANY [PRIME MINISTER OF THE UK/ PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES] REFLECTS YOUR MORAL VALUES OR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS?

	NET Very Much + Somewhat	Very Much	Somewhat	Not Too Much	Not At All	NET Not Too Much + Not At All	Not Sure
TOTAL UK	57%	19%	38%	24%	13%	37%	7%
SEX							
Male	58	19	39	24	13	37	4
Female	54	18	36	24	12	36	9
AGE							
Under 35	54	17	37	25	12	37	10
35-49	57	18	39	27	12	39	6
50 and older	61	22	39	21	14	35	5
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	67	25	42	22	7	29	4
Non-Christian	56	22	34	21	10	31	14
Unaffiliated	49	14	35	26	17	43	9

	NET Very Much + Somewhat	Very Much	Somewhat	Not Too Much	Not At All	NET Not Too Much + Not At All	Not Sure
TOTAL US	67%	28%	39%	20%	10%	30%	3%
SEX							
Male	66	26	40	19	13	32	3
Female	68	29	39	21	8	29	3
AGE							
Under 35	63	28	35	22	11	33	4
35-49	68	26	42	19	11	30	2
50 and older	69	28	41	19	10	29	3
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION							
Christian	70	29	41	19	9	28	2
Non-Christian	62	26	36	22	11	33	6
Unaffiliated	52	19	33	24	21	45	3

USE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR INFORMATION ON RELIGION AND BELIEF

Recent research has explored the impact of digital media in encouraging adaptations to changing notions of religious tradition, authority, or authenticity.[44] However, there is disagreement over the nature of the relationship between religion, religiosity, and social media use. Specifically, the British Council wanted to examine whether there are any patterns in online engagement across religious affiliations and practice when viewing the US and the UK in a comparative perspective.

The British Council-commissioned surveys explored use of the internet and social media for information on religion and belief and generally found Americans to be far more engaged in digital sources about religion and belief.

Overall, fewer than half of people in the UK (46%) report they have accessed internet websites or social media platforms related to religion, spirituality or belief systems in the past year. In strong contrast, 61% of
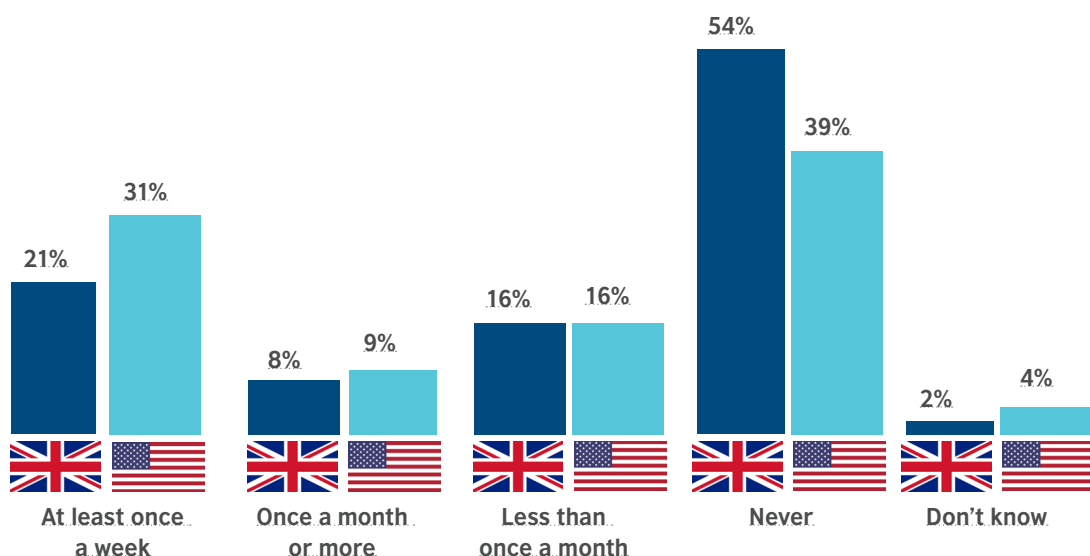
Americans indicate they have visited websites or used social media for information about religion or spirituality in the past year.

Two-in-10 in the UK and three-in-10 in the US report to have accessed digital sources related to religion, belief and/or spirituality at least once a week during the past year.

- In both the UK and the US, men and non-Christians are more likely than women, Christians and those not religiously-affiliated to be accessing websites and social media related to religion, belief and spirituality.

- In both the UK and the US, those under age 35 also report visiting websites and social media platforms related to religion, belief, and/or spirituality at least once a week in the past year far more often than those older than age 35. Still, far fewer of people under age 35 in the UK (24%) are weekly digital consumers of religious/spiritual information when compared to their American counterparts (42%).

FIGURE 19: INTERNET/SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR INFORMATION ON RELIGION AND BELIEF

IN THE PAST YEAR, HOW OFTEN, IF AT ALL, HAVE YOU ACCESSED WEBSITES AND/OR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS RELATED TO RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND/OR BELIEF SYSTEMS (SUCH AS HUMANISM OR ATHEISM) ON THE INTERNET?

	At least once a week	Once a month or more	Less than once a month	Never	Don't know
UK	21%	8%	16%	54%	2%
US	31%	9%	16%	39%	4%

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[44] Campbell, Heidi, ed. 2012. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. Petito, Fabio, Daniel Philpott, Silvio Ferrari, and Judd Birdsall. 2016. "FoRB – Recognising Our Differences Can Be Our Strength: Enhancing Transatlantic Cooperation on Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief." Policy Brief. University of Sussex and University of Notre Dame.

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 3: Use of the Internet and Social Media for Information on Religion and Belief

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FIGURE 20: INTERNET/SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR INFORMATION ON RELIGION AND BELIEF

IN THE PAST YEAR, HOW OFTEN, IF AT ALL, HAVE YOU ACCESSED WEBSITES AND/OR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS RELATED TO RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND/OR BELIEF SYSTEMS (SUCH AS HUMANISM OR ATHEISM) ON THE INTERNET?

	At Least Once A Week	Once a Month or More	Less Than Once a Month	Never	Don't Know
TOTAL UK	21%	8%	16%	54%	2%
SEX					
Male	24	6	17	51	2
Female	16	10	14	57	3
AGE					
Under 35	24	11	18	45	3
35-49	21	9	13	55	2
50 and older	16	4	16	63	1
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION					
Christian	26	9	16	49	1
Non-Christian	36	17	16	30	1
Unaffiliated	14	6	15	61	3

	At Least Once A Week	Once a Month or More	Less Than Once a Month	Never	Don't Know
TOTAL US	31%	9%	16%	39%	4%
SEX					
Male	36	10	16	36	4
Female	27	10	16	43	5
AGE					
Under 35	42	11	15	26	5
35-49	30	11	15	41	4
50 and older	24	9	17	46	4
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION					
Christian	32	10	15	39	5
Non-Christian	37	9	19	33	1
Unaffiliated	10	6	12	62	9

US AND UK PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND BELIEF | Section 3: Use of the Internet and Social Media for Information on Religion and Belief

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SECTION 4
RELIGION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Over the course of the twentieth century, European identity and self-understanding became attached to the idea that 'modernization' would lead to 'secularization' as part of a universal, human, developmental process. The attendant assumption was that the rest of the world would follow a European model of secularity that consigned religion to the private sphere with the United States viewed as the exception.[45] The reality, of course, is complicated by the fact that there is no single model of church-state relations in Europe, or elsewhere, nor is there any linear path of 'modernity' or 'secularization.' However, these erroneous assumptions have become prevalent across governments, academia, and media.

In the 1990s, scholars took notice when Peter Berger, one of the leading contemporary proponents of the secularization thesis, declared that a religious resurgence was underway. In the interim, there has been a paradigm-shift of sorts away from the secularization-modernization thesis. Sociologists of religion now paint a far more complex and fuzzier picture of the global realities of religious affiliation and practice. The secular assumption that religion would become relegated to the private lives of citizens is undermined by this more complicated reality. While some religions have indeed remained 'private' religions of individual salvation, others have been induced by tradition, principle, and/or historical circumstances to enter the 'public' sphere.[46]

According to Professor Adam Dinham of the University of London,

> European and Western thinking has long assumed a post-religious world, and seeks to act as though it is one. But on religion, Europe is the exception, not the rule. It also continues itself to be Christian, more secular, and more plural all at once. [47]

Instead, some prominent sociologists of religion have asserted that we are now living in a 'post-secular' world.[48] Others have pointed to a variety of phenomena such as 'de-churching' and 'believing without belonging' that can simultaneously explain declining attendance at places of worship but also the concurrent persistence of faith and belief.[49] Indeed, while many Christian denominations in the US and the UK are experiencing disaffiliation, research suggests that belief and practice in some minority religious communities in both the UK and the US is growing steadily.[50]

Over the last two decades, successive governments in the UK and the US have moved to incorporate 'religious freedom' or 'freedom of religion or belief' functions, as well as religious engagement functions more generally, within international development agencies and foreign policy establishments.[51] In the United States, the International Religious Freedom Act 1998 established

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[45]   Davie, Grace. 2002. *Europe, the Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

[46]   Casanova, José. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[47]   On Religion. 2016. "What Is Religious Literacy? – Q&A with Adam Dinham," December 6, 2016.

[48]   Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; Habermas, Jürgen. 2008. "Secularism's Crisis of Faith: Notes on Post-Secular Society." New Perspectives Quarterly. 25: 17–29

[49]   Davie, Grace. 1990. "Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?" *Social Compass* 37 (4): 455–69.

[50]   Gilliat-Ray, Sophie. 2010. *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 117; "Majority of Jews Will Be Ultra-Orthodox by 2050." 2007. University of Manchester. "US Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream." 2017. Washington, D.C: Pew Research Center.

[51]   The UK human rights approach has tended to emphasize freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) whereas in the US reference tends to be on religious freedom. Both approaches come together at the global level where common cause is made in international institutions.

the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and the Office of International Religious Freedom (OIRF) at the Department of State, a bipartisan US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), and a Special Adviser on International Religious Freedom within the National Security Council. These efforts to improve diplomatic capacity to enhance 'religion attentiveness' continued with the establishment of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs in 2013. [52]

In the United Kingdom, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) works to promote FoRB as part of a broader human rights remit that also includes other equality issues such as the rights of women and children but "… [has suffered] from insufficient capacity to grapple with the complexities of these issues."[53] In July 2012, British parliamentarians launched the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (APPG FoRB), an informal, cross-party group of members from the House of Commons and Lords concerned about religious freedom internationally for people of all faiths or none.

Since September 2015, membership of the APPG has more than tripled to over 120 parliamentarian members at the time of writing, indicating growing consensus for the message that advancing FoRB as an important element in achieving UK Government foreign policy and international development objectives and priorities. In 2018, the role of Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief was created, demonstrating the UK's ongoing commitment at the highest levels of government to promoting inter-faith respect and dialogue internationally.

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[52] The Office of Religion and Global Affairs was later folded into the Office of International Religious Freedom as part of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's restructuring of the State Department.

[53] Birdsall, Judd, Jane Lindsay, and Emma Tomalin. 2015. "Toward Religion-Attentive Foreign Policy; A Report on an Anglo-American Dialogue." Washington DC: British Council.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND 'BRIDGING VOICES'

Over the past 5 years, under the aegis of the 'Bridging Voices' program, and with generous support of the Henry Luce Foundation, the British Council has funded a series of transatlantic dialogues, including an exploration of bilateral, multilateral, and transnational approaches to religious engagement, FoRB advocacy, and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Expert participants have identified specific opportunities for cooperation as well as challenges faced by those working in these policy areas.[54] In the following sections, we would like to briefly examine some of the most salient themes that have emerged from these expert convenings.

A secular bias in western diplomacy

A better appreciation of the role of religion in international affairs requires that we interrogate prevailing assumptions about the role of religion and its place in public life. Several of the British Council's convenings have noted an entrenched secular bias in western diplomacy with many large foreign policy bureaucracies representing "bastions of secular sentiment." [55] The practical result of this is that governments conduct themselves with a tacit set of assumptions about what religion is, where it belongs (and does not belong), and who or what speaks on its behalf. This secular bias is compounded by the fact that Western diplomats tend to operate in a realpolitik fashion in which issues of identity, culture, and faith are considered largely irrelevant. This realpolitik worldview is perpetuated in academia, especially in the discipline of International Relations where Westphalian presumptions are predominant.[56] Aside from ideological and normative commitments to secularism, the ability of

diplomats to engage with religious actors is often complicated in certain instances by legal constraints, ambiguities, and operational cultures that predispose them to be wary of religion. In the absence of clear guidelines and competences, much is left to individual interpretations of legal codes and norms.

Strengthened understanding of religion and foreign policy

Religious engagement and enhancing 'religion attentiveness' do not involve promoting religion, adopting theological positions, or advancing any religious group. Rather, they involve a nuanced understanding and appreciation for the complex interaction between religion and a wide range of social and political factors and developing competency in knowing when—and when not—to engage religious actors.[57] Foreign policy practitioners need to be mindful of the political ambivalence of religion, which can be can be both a source of extremism, persecution, and conflict, as well as a positive force for democratic stability, economic growth, development, and other social goods.

While some progress has been made over the past 5 years, we suggest that there continues to be an urgent need to enhance religious literacy training among diplomatic and foreign policy practitioners and we suggest that consideration be given to making such trainings mandatory.

Enhancing FoRB advocacy

The British Council's convenings suggest that making common cause together or through international institutions continues to be the most effective means to combat FoRB violations. Indeed, different national traditions of state-religion relations can be an asset for

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[54] "Developing Multilateral Approach to Freedom of Religion or Belief: A European Perspective." 2015. WP1383. Foreign & Commonwealth Office / Wilton Park.

[55] For a more detailed discussion, see Mandaville, Peter, and Sara Silvestri. 2015. "Integrating Religious Engagement into Diplomacy: Challenges & Opportunities." 67. Issues in Governance Studies. Washington, DC: Brookings; Finlow, Pat, and Gerald FitzGerald. 2014. "Religion, Foreign Policy and Development: Making Better Policy to Make a Bigger Difference." WP 1311. Wilton Park.

[56] Scott Thomas defines this as "…the presumption that religious and cultural pluralism cannot be accommodated in international society, but must be privatized, marginalized, or even overcome—by an ethic of cosmopolitanism—if there is to be international order." Thomas, Scott. 2003. "Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Society." In *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, edited by Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

[57] Birdsall, Judd, Jane Lindsay, and Emma Tomalin. 2015. "Toward Religion-Attentive Foreign Policy; A Report on an Anglo-American Dialogue." Washington DC: British Council.

building strategies for the international FoRB advocacy.[58] According to a 2015 policy brief,

> Transatlantic FoRB advocacy should also take into account which state or states are best positioned—by virtue of their history, demographics (including diaspora communities), church-state arrangement, or particular diplomatic leverage—to engage a third-party country on a given religious freedom concern.[59]

However, recent history is such that we need to be mindful of not preaching as though we have a perfect record of FoRB implementation ourselves. Indeed, there is much we can learn from the experiences of others.

We suggest that FoRB cannot be considered in isolation from broader human rights agendas. Not only are FoRB violations generally symptomatic of wider political repression of human rights and fundamental freedoms, but FoRB promotion can be a catalyst for wider acceptance of human rights norms and facilitate other beneficial social, economic and cultural improvements in society.[60]

Finally, the British Council's convenings suggest that it is important to develop and maintain an enhanced and separate capacity for religious engagement. Religious engagement can create the preconditions for FoRB and thus provide a more organic 'bottom up' approach to FoRB advocacy. When coordinated, these approaches can be mutually reinforcing. Some degree of religious freedom is a prerequisite for any meaningful religious engagement, and that engagement, if done well, can generate the trust and respect that cultivate religious freedom.

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[58]   Petito, Fabio, Daniel Philpott, Silvio Ferrari, and Judd Birdsall. 2016. "FoRB – Recognising Our Differences Can Be Our Strength: Enhancing Transatlantic Cooperation on Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief." Policy Brief. University of Sussex and University of Notre Dame.

[59]   Ibid.

[60]   Ibid.

CONCLUSION

As the British Council's survey results presented in this report demonstrate, transatlantic commitments to freedom and religion or belief—commitments that both reflect and promote our own cultural diversity—continue to enjoy robust public support.

In the context of the rise of the so-called "religious 'nones'" in the UK and the US, we would caution that it is important to remember that more than eight out of ten people worldwide continue to identify with a religious group. Indeed, despite people leaving Christianity and other religious groups in Europe, North America, and elsewhere, the share of the global population that does not affiliate with a religion is projected to decrease in the coming decades.[61]

Accordingly, actors in this space need to be mindful of our own secular biases and be cautious not to project these biases internationally in the conduct of cultural relations work or foreign policy more generally.[62] Moreover, as the report of one of the British Council's expert convenings noted, "We need to move beyond a conversation about 'what people believe' to better understand how these beliefs contribute to worldviews, how people live their lives, and how they engage politically."[63]

The data collected by the British Council's surveys reflected an across-the-board tendency to see one's own religious group as the primary victim of harassment and discrimination. It is suggested that policy makers need to remain mindful of the fact that no single religious group holds a monopoly over being the persecutor or victim of discrimination, harassment, or persecution, and that messaging on international FoRB advocacy should be nuanced and reflect a robust understanding that people of all faiths and none are impacted by discrimination, harassment, and persecution.

Drawing on the results of these surveys and 5-years of Bridging Voices expert convenings,[64] it is suggested that actors in this space not become complacent about the domestic advances that have been made over the course of generations to protect religious pluralism—and that this must continue to extend to people of all faiths and none on both sides of the Atlantic.

The findings of the last 5 years of British Council's expert convenings on the role of religion in international affairs suggest that policymakers can help to maintain and enhance the bilateral UK-US relationship in meaningful ways by bolstering UK government participation in—and support for—bilateral and transnational 'networks of exchange' to

- Promote a more nuanced understanding and appreciation of the role of religion in international affairs

- Facilitate the sharing of best practices and enhancing knowledge of—and training on—religious engagement and FoRB among diplomatic and foreign policy practitioners

- Develop enhanced capacities for religious engagement across foreign policy bureaucracies as a compliment to religious freedom and FoRB advocacy functions

Finally, one of our expert convenings noted that, "… [some] degree of religious freedom is necessary for any meaningful religious engagement, and that engagement, if done well, can lead to the trust and respect that fosters religious freedom."[65] The British Council's work in this space prompts our suggestion that 'religious engagement' and 'FoRB advocacy' should be promoted as individually robust and potentially mutually reinforcing functions – not a zero-sum game subject to changing governments or politics.

[61] See "The Changing Global Religious Landscape." 2017. Washington DC: Pew Research Center, page 7.

[62] For a discussion, see Mandaville, Peter, and Sara Silvestri. 2015. "Integrating Religious Engagement into Diplomacy: Challenges & Opportunities." 67. Issues in Governance Studies. Washington, DC: Brookings.

[63] See Finlow, Pat, and Gerald FitzGerald. 2014. "Religion, Foreign Policy and Development: Making Better Policy to Make a Bigger Difference." WP 1311. Wilton Park.

[64] For an overview of British Council convenings in the religion and international affairs space, see Wear, Melissa. 2016. "Bridging Voices 2013-2016 Projects and Partners." Washington DC: British Council. https://www.britishcouncil.us/sites/default/files/bridging_voices_e-book_0.pdf.

[65] Petito, Fabio, Daniel Philpott, Silvio Ferrari, and Judd Birdsall. 2016. "FoRB – Recognising Our Differences Can Be Our Strength: Enhancing Transatlantic Cooperation on Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief." Policy Brief. University of Sussex and University of Notre Dame.

METHODOLOGY

SURVEY ANALYSES

Data in this report are based on surveys of the general population, ages 16 and older, in the United Kingdom and the adult population, ages 18 and older, in the United States.

Two waves of surveys were conducted for the British Council in the UK and the US by Ipsos Public Affairs, using Ipsos' proprietary, non-probability, consumer online panel. In each wave, the sample size was 1,000 adults in the UK and the US for an overall total of approximately 4,000 completes. Results should be considered as directional, not definitive, of attitudes in the UK and the US.

- For the UK sample, data were weighted based on sex, age, education, and UK regions, including England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- For the US sample, data were weighted based on sex and age, race/ethnicity, household income, metro size and four US Census regions including Northeast, Midwest, South and West.

The first wave of surveys in the UK and US were conducted from January 10 to January 14, 2019.

The second wave of surveys in the UK and US were conducted from March 22 to April 5, 2019.

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