

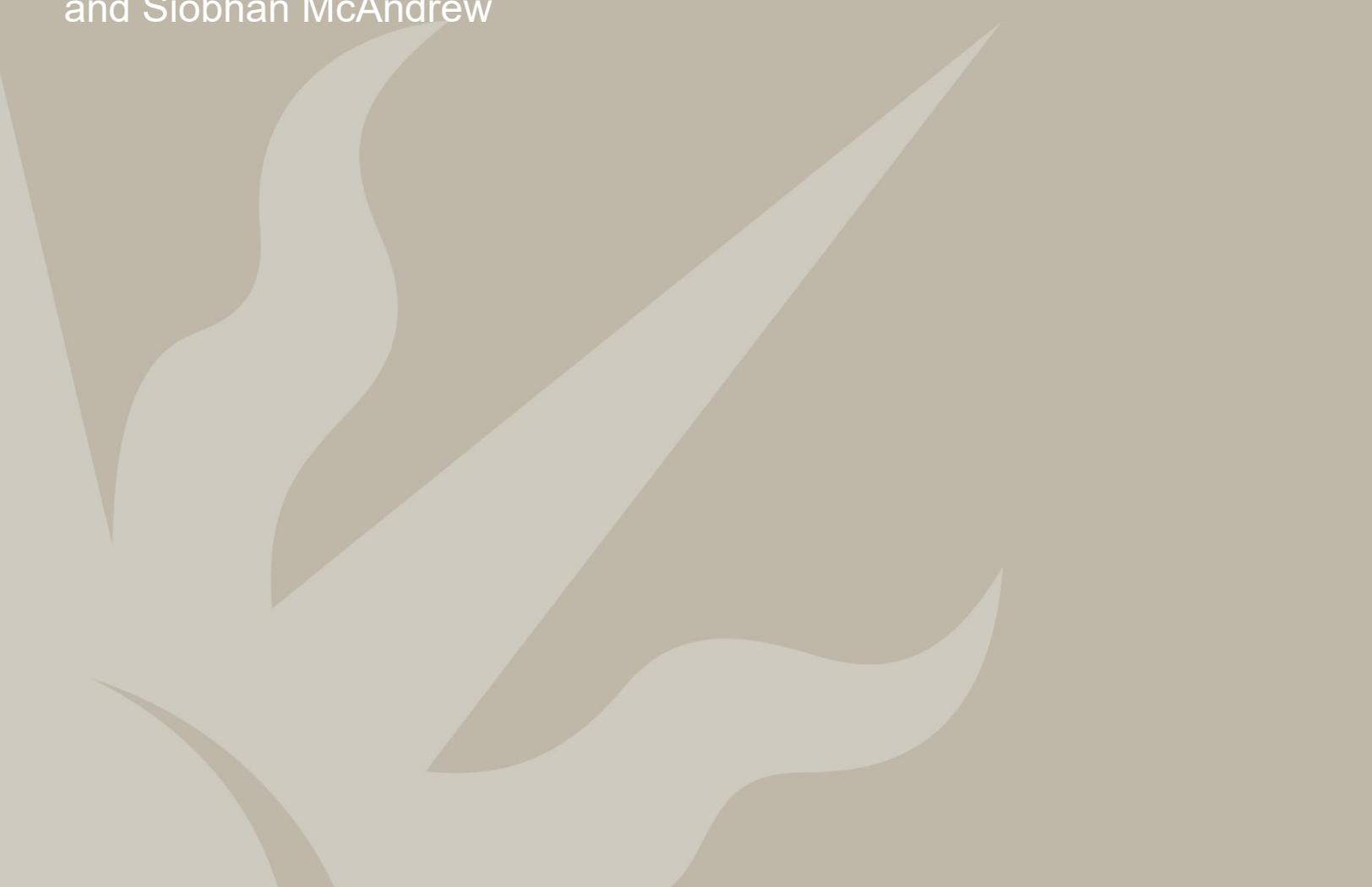
Faith and Welcoming

Do the religious feel differently about immigration and immigrants?

Executive Summary

A report by students and staff at the University of Bristol

Wing Chan, Harry Drake, Lucy Moor, Tom Owton, Silvia Sim
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1. Immigration has been very high on the public agenda in Britain, particularly since the accession of the A8 countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) to the European Union in 2004, heralding a rise in immigration. Many political scientists argue that public response to immigration helped drive the Brexit result of June 2016.

2. Extensive research in the social sciences has separately established that having a religious affiliation rather than no affiliation may be associated with anti-immigrant attitudes, in contexts as varied as the US, Britain and across Western Europe, when controlling for church attendance. However, church attendance has been found in many studies to predict warmer attitudes towards immigrants. This is perhaps unsurprising: most of the major religions incorporate some form of ‘the golden rule’, to behave unto others, as you would have them to you. Major world religions work across national borders and foster community and fellowship among their adherents regardless of nationality.

3. Britain is a highly secular society, and religion has traditionally not been highly politically-salient. However, religion has been rising up the public agenda. On the one hand, British society demonstrates slow and steady secularisation as older, more religious generations die out and younger, less religious generations take their place. Nevertheless, religion still matters, and arguably is increasing in salience in public life. With the passing of the Equality Act in 2010, the right to be free from religious discrimination was reasserted and codified.

4. Religion also continues to structure social attitudes. For the UK, political scientist Rob

Ford examined feelings of ‘social distance’ in Britain: respondents to the 1983-1996 British Social Attitudes surveys were asked their attitudes towards having an Asian or Black employer or in-laws. Anglican affiliation predicted lower tolerance than having no religious affiliation, while having a Catholic affiliation had no effect. However, religious practice predicted higher tolerance: the ‘Anglican in name only’ were very different to those who actively practised.

5. Sociologist Ingrid Storm investigated the effects of religiosity on perceptions of immigration as a threat to national identity, using data from the 2008 British Social Attitudes survey. She found that Anglicans were more likely to see immigrants as a threat to national identity, as compared to those with no religion or those from other denominations or religions. Catholics, however, were no different to those of no religion, or other religious groups. More frequent church attendance was associated with being less likely to see immigrants as a threat to national identity.

6. In this report, we focus on attitudes to immigration policy and immigrants in particular. We use a range of sources for the 2010-2017 period to examine the relationship between religious affiliation and attitudes to immigration, and religious attendance and attitudes to immigration: the British Social Attitudes surveys (BSA), European Social Survey (ESS) and Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES) in particular. All are high-quality studies which have been fielded face-to-face, to representative samples of the British public. When investigating the post-2016 Referendum landscape, we draw upon the BSA and also the British Election Study (BES) Online Panel 2014-2018.

7. We used a range of questions to capture attitudes to immigration:

- perception of whether immigration numbers should be increased or reduced (BSA, BES);
- perception of whether immigration is good for the economy (BSA, EMBES);
- perception of whether immigration is good for cultural life (BSA);
- attitudes towards accommodating asylum seekers (BSA, ESS and EMBES);
- perception of whether immigration is an issue of particular concern or worry (BSA).

Immigration attitudes: bivariate analysis

8. We began with a broad question fielded on the British Social Attitudes survey in 2011 and 2013. Respondents were asked:

Should the number of immigrants to Britain nowadays be increased?

9. It is thought that religiosity and strength of attachment does matter irrespective of denomination. Of those who attend weekly or more often, 64 per cent say that the number of immigrants should be reduced. Of those who never attend, 81 per cent the number should be reduced. This suggests that regular attendance at a place of worship encourages tolerance towards immigration and immigrants, beyond the effect of religious identity.

10. This 81 per cent figure combines in the ‘never attends’ group the highly-secular who are often found to be relatively educated and liberal

with those reporting a religious affiliation who do not attend. But when providing a similar breakdown for those reporting a Christian affiliation only, screening out the unreligious and non-Christians, we see similar differences by frequency of church attendance. To clarify further the contrast between religious attenders and the nominally-religious, we classified our respondents into religious *type*, dividing up the BSA sample as follows (2010-2015 waves merged):

	Percentage of respondents (%)
No religion	48.5
Has an affiliation, but attends less than monthly/never	34.3
Has an affiliation, attends at least monthly	17.2
N = 20,306	

Table 1. Religiosity type in Britain. British Social Attitudes surveys 2010-2015.

11. Figure 2 shows how attitudes to whether the number of immigrants should be increased or decreased varies by religious type. The rate responding that immigration should be reduced is highest for those who report an affiliation, but who never attend. It is lowest for those who attend church monthly or more often.

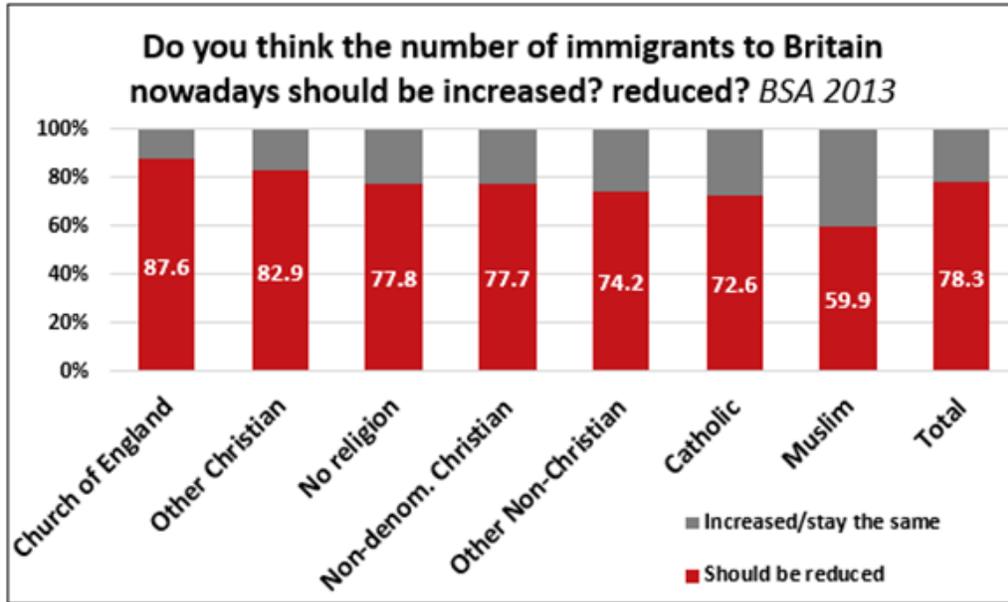


Figure 1: Attitudes to whether the number of immigrants to Britain should be reduced/increased by broad religious tradition. British Social Attitudes survey 2013. N = 3244. Differences across groups found to be highly statistically-significant ($p < 0.001$).

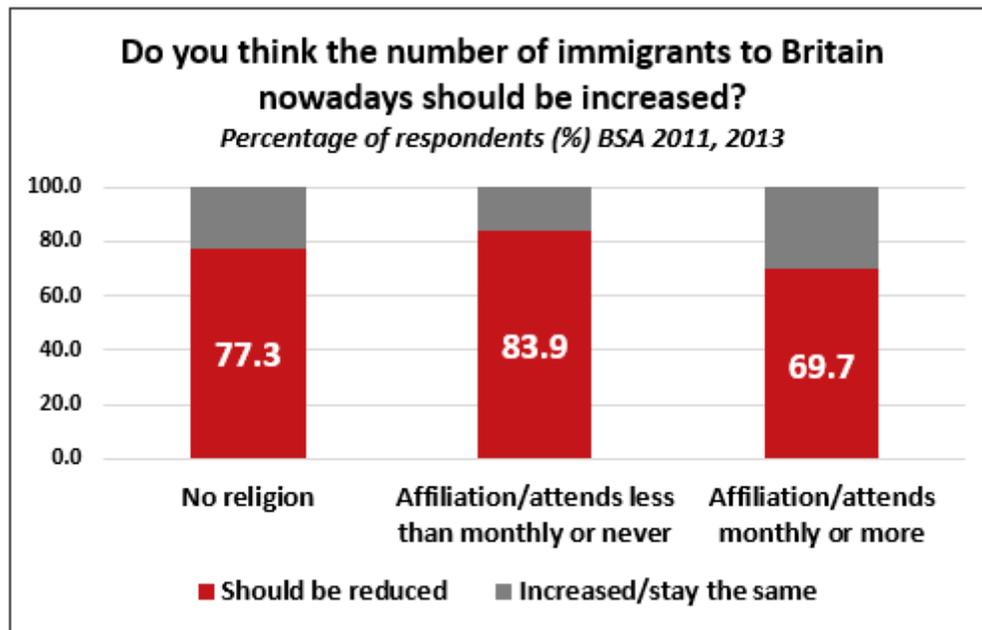


Figure 2: Attitudes to whether the number of immigrants to Britain should be reduced/increased by religiosity type. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013. N = 6436. Differences across groups found to be highly statistically-significant ($p < 0.001$).

12. We also investigated whether members of faith communities differ in terms of *how* they think immigrants benefit Britain. The British Social Attitudes survey included two measures to capture this, in 2011, 2013 and 2015:

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely bad and 10 is extremely good, would you say it is generally bad or good for Britain's economy that migrants come to Britain from other countries?

And on a scale of 0 to 10, would you say that Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries?

Responses by religious type are graphed in Figures 3 and 4.

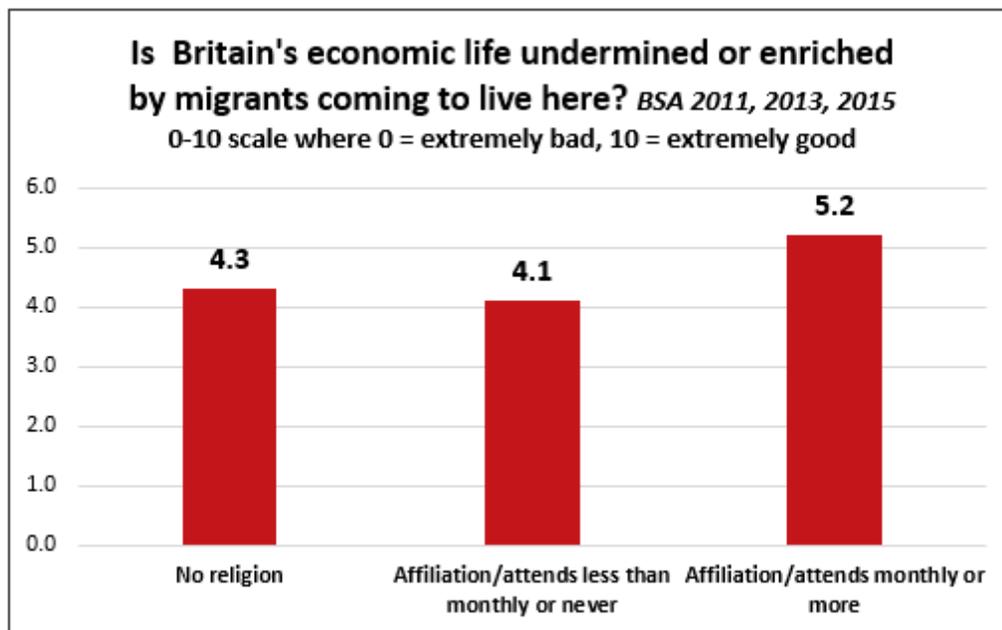


Figure 3: Attitudes to whether immigrants benefit Britain's economy by religiosity type. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013, 2015. N = 8626. Differences found to be highly statistically-significant ($p = 0.001$).

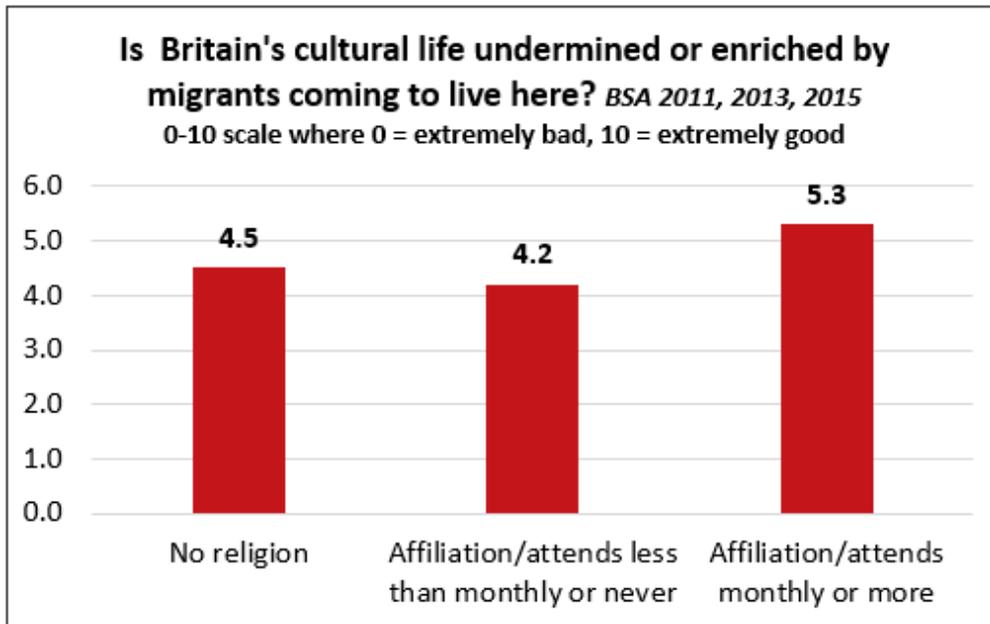


Figure 4: Attitudes to whether immigrants benefit Britain's cultural life by religiosity type. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013, 2015. N = 8603. Differences found to be highly statistically-significant ($p < 0.001$).

13. The British Social Attitudes survey and European Social Survey both include measures which help us to explore further to establish whether the relationship between religiosity and immigration attitudes depends on the type of immigrant under question. The British Social Attitudes survey asked the following question in both 2011 and 2013:

Should asylum seekers escaping persecution be able to stay in Britain?

Similarly, in 2014, the European Social Survey asked respondents in Britain whether they agreed that:

the Government should be generous judging applications for refugee status

Responses are graphed below in Figures 5 and 6. The pattern seen above, whereby the actively-religious are the most positive, followed by the unreligious, and lastly the nominally-religious, is evident in Figure 5. Figure 6 suggests interesting differences by religious affiliation, with the lowest rates of agreement exhibited by 'other religion' members and Protestants, while Muslims appear most positive.

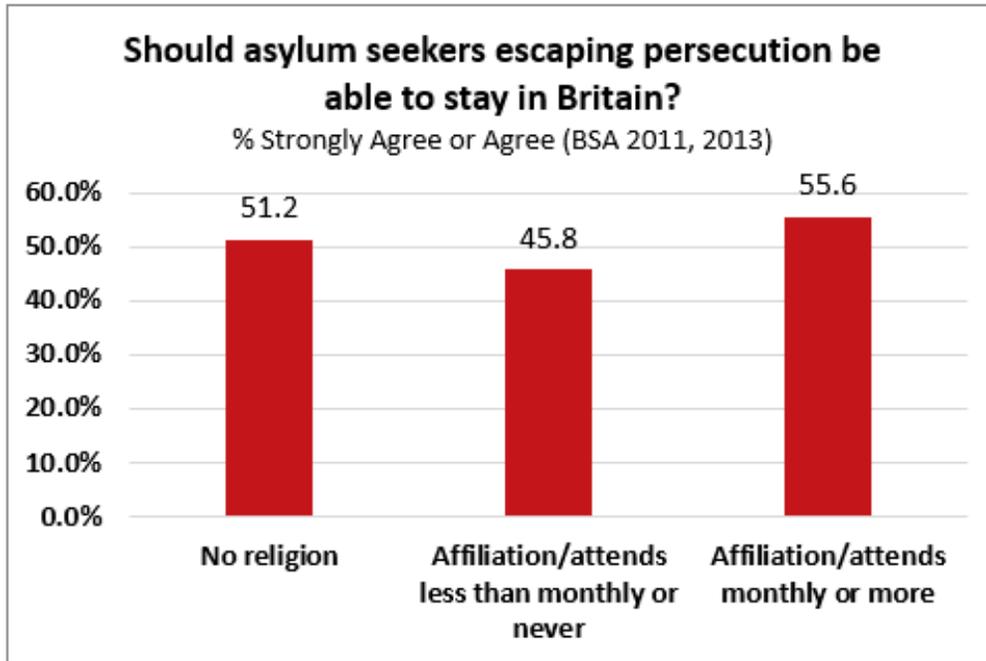


Figure 5: Attitudes to whether asylum seekers should be able to stay in Britain: percentage agree or strongly agree. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013. N = 6502 (p < 0.001).

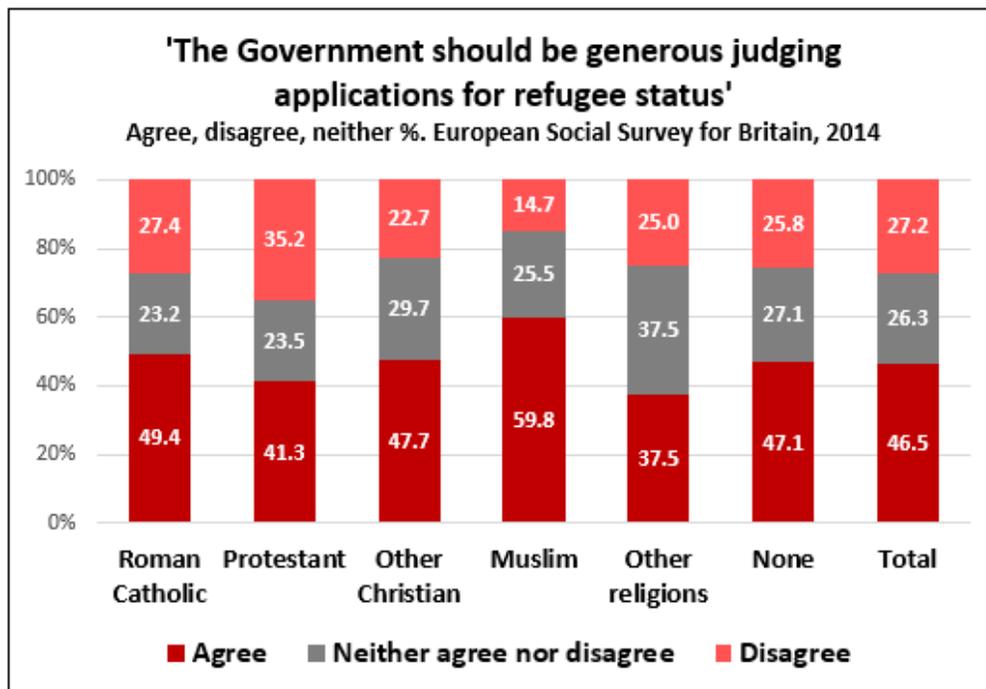


Figure 6: Attitudes to whether the British government should be generous in judging asylum applications: percentage agree, neither agree nor disagree, and disagree. European Social Survey 2014. N = 2213 (p < 0.001).

14. To establish whether frequent attendance at a place of worship indeed has a pro-tolerance effect, rather than being confounded by education or age and so on, regression analysis is required. Prior to this, we examined differences according to whether the respondent is part of the unreligious majority, the largest religion (Christianity) or other than Christian, using two-way tables. Results are given in Tables 2-5 below.

	Agrees number of immigrants should be reduced Percentage of respondents (%)
No religion	77.3
Christian, attends less than monthly/never	84.4
Christian, attends at least monthly	58.7
Other than Christian, attends less than monthly/never	68.8
Other than Christian, attends at least monthly	58.7
N = 6436	

Table 2: Percentage agreeing number of immigrants to Britain should be reduced a little/a lot by no religion/Christian/other than Christian affiliation and level of attendance. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013.

	Agrees economic life enriched Average score on 0-10 scale
No religion	4.3
Christian, attends less than monthly/never	3.9
Christian, attends at least monthly	5.1
Other than Christian, attends less than monthly/never	5.2
Other than Christian, attends at least monthly	5.6
N = 8626	

Table 3: Attitudes to whether immigrants benefit Britain's economy by no religion/Christian/other than Christian affiliation and level of attendance. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013, 2015.

	Agrees cultural life enriched Average score on 0-10 scale
No religion	4.5
Christian, attends less than monthly/never	3.9
Christian, attends at least monthly	5.1
Other than Christian, attends less than monthly/never	5.7
Other than Christian, attends at least monthly	5.8
N = 8603	

Table 4: Attitudes to whether immigrants benefit British cultural life by no religion/Christian/other than Christian affiliation and level of attendance. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013, 2015.

Agrees asylum seekers should be able to stay in Britain	
Percentage of respondents (%)	
No religion	47.4
Christian, attends less than monthly/never	43.3
Christian, attends at least monthly	59.7
Other than Christian, attends less than monthly/never	47.3
Other than Christian, attends at least monthly	58.5
N = 6502	

Table 5: Percentage agreeing asylum seekers escaping persecution should be able to stay in Britain by no religion/Christian/other than Christian affiliation and level of attendance. British Social Attitudes surveys 2011, 2013.

These breakdowns are strongly suggestive that attendance *does* have a pro-tolerance effect (perhaps less so for the non-Christians in Table 5) - and also that non-practising Christians tend to be the coolest towards immigrants overall. For greater precision on the separate impacts of affiliation and attendance we moved to regression analysis.

Multivariate Analysis

15. We conducted multiple regression analysis to examine the association between religious type and immigration attitudes when controlling for socio-demographic confounders. We also examined the effect of faith community membership, distinguishing respondents according to whether they were of no religious

affiliation, Christian, Jewish, Muslim or another religious affiliation, controlling for attendance.

16. From the multivariate analyses, using both the threefold religious typology and fivefold affiliation measure in turn for our set of models, we find that **frequent attendance has consistent and strong effects on pro-immigration attitudes, across every measure of attitude.**

17. When comparing religious communities, when we control for attendance we find that differences between these communities are somewhat smaller and more mixed depending on the measure in question. Jewish affiliation (compared with none) is predicted to have a positive effect on attitudes to the cultural benefit of immigration, but otherwise there are no significant differences between Jewish respondents and nones for the other measures of immigration attitudes once controlling for socio-demographic and religious attendance differences.

18. Christians responded similarly to the unreligious on the items capturing perceptions of the economic benefits of immigration, and welcoming of asylum seekers. They are however on average more sceptical than the unreligious regarding increase of immigration numbers, and the cultural benefits of immigration (again, holding attendance constant across groups). Members of other religions appear no different to those of no religion for all measures except that of support for asylum seekers, where they are marginally more negative. Muslims are no different to those of no religion with regard to perceptions of the cultural benefits of immigration and whether asylum seekers should be admitted, but more positive regarding immigration numbers and the perceived economic benefits of immigration. The detailed

model results are available in the Appendix to the full report.

19. A significant proportion of people with a religious identity of course *do* attend a place of worship, and for them the effects appear to balance out. But to the extent that we *can* conceive of religious affiliation and attendance as working separately, these are the differences we identify in our analyses.

Post-Referendum Analysis

20. A reasonable question is whether the religious effects on immigration attitudes we see in data from 2010-2015 still hold in the post-Brexit period. In the 2016 British Social Attitudes survey (fielded after June 2016), the questions posed in 2011, 2013 and 2015 were not available. However, respondents were asked:

Which, if any, of these [matters] would you say you are concerned or worried about at the moment? ...your physical health; your mental health; housing or your home; work or finding a job; money or debt; your family or partner; your friend(s); caring for your family, or another person; education (for yourself or your family); immigration; crime in your local area; something else (write in); no concerns or worries.

21. 32 per cent indicated that it was *one* area of concern (of 2938 respondents), and 9 per cent indicated that it was the area of *most* concern (of 2923 respondents). We broke these down by religious affiliation and attendance (Table 6).

	Percentage reporting immigration as an area of concern (%)	Percentage reporting immigration as area of most concern (%)
Anglicans	42.9	11.2
Roman Catholics	32.9	10.1
Other Christian	32.4	10.6
Non-Christian	28.0	7.3
No Religion	28.3	8.0
Unweighted N	2929	2923
Attends a place of worship at least monthly	28.7	7.9
Attends a place of worship never/less frequently	32.2	9.3
Unweighted N	2938	2935
Reports Christian affiliation and attends a place of worship at least monthly	30.1	8.1
Reports Christian affiliation and attends a place of worship never/less frequently	39.6	12.0
Unweighted N	1306	1303
No religion, does not attend	28.3	8.1
Has a religious affiliation, does not attend	39.0	11.5
Has a religious affiliation, attends at least monthly	28.8	8.1
Unweighted N	2915	2909

Table 6: Reported identification of immigration as an area of concern by religious affiliation/attendance. Survey weights applied. British Social Attitudes survey 2016.

22. The differences by religious group and frequency of attendance here indicate that the breakdowns are as expected from our earlier bivariate and multivariate analysis. Anglicans are more likely to choose immigration as an area of concern/most concern; the unreligious and non-Christians less likely. More frequent attendance at a place of worship is associated with being less likely to identify immigration as an area of concern/most concern.

23. Moving to regression analysis, we use the same controls as those used in Section 5 of the full report, although note that religion is coded differently in the 2016 dataset (Anglican, Catholic, Other Christian, Non-Christian and No Religion). Here, we include individual controls for each level of attendance (weekly, monthly or fortnightly, at least annually, less often vs never) rather than monthly or less than monthly.

24. We found that:

- Anglicans were significantly more likely than those without a religious affiliation to identify immigration as an area of concern, controlling for socio-demographic factors including church attendance;
- Members of other religious groups were also more likely than those with no religious affiliation to identify immigration as an area of concern, but these differences were *not* statistically-significant;
- Those attending a place of worship were significantly *less* likely than those never attending to report immigration as an area of concern, controlling for socio-demographic factors and church attendance;
- Those reporting less frequent attendance were, however, not significantly different to those who never

attend in their likelihood of choosing immigration as an area of concern.

25. In Figure 7 below, we use the model results to predict the likelihood of identifying immigration as an area of concern for each of the three religious types, setting third variables to their mean values. On these terms, we predict that 30 per cent of non-adherents would identify immigration as an area of concern; 38 per cent of those with a religious affiliation who do not attend a place of worship regularly identify immigration as an area of concern; and 32 per cent of those who report both a religious affiliation and who attend at least monthly.

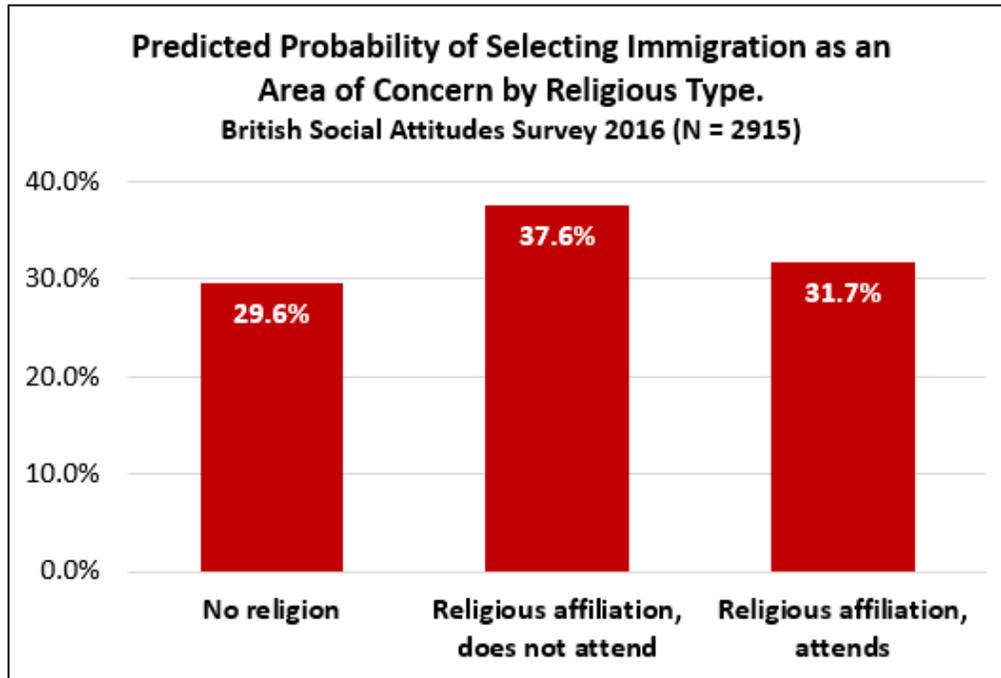


Figure 7: Predicted probability of choosing immigration as an area of concern or worry in 2016 by religious type, taking socio-demographic controls into account. British Social Attitudes survey 2016.

26. A final question can be raised over whether the relationship between religion and immigration attitudes were *changed* by the Brexit result. For this we turned to the British Election Study online panel, fielded by YouGov, which has posed a number of immigration-related questions repeatedly to the same respondents since 2014. Our measure of immigration attitudes is drawn from the following question:

Some people think that the UK should allow many more immigrants to come to the UK to live and others think that the UK should allow many fewer immigrants. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Respondents could choose a value between 0, representing ‘many fewer’, and 10, representing ‘many more’. This was fielded in every wave of the panel study from Wave 7; we use the Wave 8 and Wave 11 responses in this report. With a reasonably large sample size of 8960 respondents, we differentiated most faith communities, but with some too small for reliable analysis we combined them as follows:

- Free Presbyterian, Brethren, Orthodox Christian, Pentecostals and Evangelical Christians each featured small numbers and were combined into a single ‘other Christian’ group;
- Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs were combined into a single ‘other non-Christian’ group.

27. The results of regression analysis are given in Table A.11 in the full report. Here, religious

effects are summarised in Table 7 below for both the pre-and post-Referendum samples.

28. In summary, having a religious affiliation tends to be associated with supporting lower immigration numbers than the unreligious, at least for Anglicans, Catholics, Church of Scotland adherents, 'other Christians', Muslims and 'others' in both waves, as well as Methodists (Wave 11 only). This is when controlling for third variables including church attendance. Those who report attending a place of worship however support significantly higher numbers of immigrants than those who never attend. Indeed, those attending as rarely as at least once a year is associated with supporting higher numbers than those who never attend.¹ The direction of effects is summarized in Table 7.

29. We also repeated the analysis using our threefold religious typology (see Table A.12 in the full report). In May-June 2016, the effect of being a regular attender compared with being unreligious was significant and positive, while that of being 'religious in name only' was significant and negative. By April-May 2017, the effect of being 'religious in name only' is still negative, but the differences between the unreligious and the actively-religious have attenuated. These effects are also graphed in Figure 8, illustrating increasing warmth for each religious type over the eleven months between the survey waves.

¹ It is not surprising that the effects of church attendance appear clearer in this analysis of the BES than in BSA analysis. This is likely due to the much

Conclusion

30. We found consistently that attendance at a place of worship does indeed promote greater warmth towards immigrants and asylum seekers. We also find that having a religious affiliation rather than identifying as secular is associated with significantly less warmth, on immigration numbers, immigrants' cultural contribution, and immigration as an issue of concern, once church attendance has been taken into account. Effects are summarised in Table 8 below (see also Tables 5.5 and 7.5 in the main report).

31. In our exploratory analyses, Anglicans appeared to be more anti-immigration across virtually all measures than the unreligious, likely due to a 'Christian nationalist' effect motivated by cultural defence. In our multivariate analysis, distinguishing those of no religion ('religious nones'), Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions, Christians are more negative than religious nones in their support for increasing immigration numbers, and in perceptions of the cultural benefits of immigration. Muslims are more positive than religious nones in their support for increasing immigration numbers, and on perceptions of the economic benefits of immigration. Jewish respondents are more positive than religious nones in their perceptions of its cultural benefits.

32. Regarding support for asylum seekers, attitudes tend to be more warm across the

greater sample size, which allows us to be more precise regarding small effects.

Significantly different from the unreligious, controlling for attendance?	May-June 2016 analysis	April-May 2017 analysis
Church of England	Yes: more negative	Yes: more negative
Roman Catholic	Yes: more negative	Yes: more negative
Church of Scotland	Yes: more negative	Yes: more negative
Methodist	Non-significant	Yes: more negative
Baptist	Non-significant	Non-significant
United Reformed Church	Yes: more negative	Non-significant
Other Christian	Yes: more negative	Yes: more negative
Judaism	Non-significant	Non-significant
Other non-Christian	Non-significant	Non-significant
Islam	Yes: more negative	Yes: more negative
Other	Yes: more negative	Yes: more negative

Significantly different from those who never attend a place of worship, controlling for affiliation?	May-June 2016 analysis	April-May 2017 analysis
Attends less than once a year	Non-significant	Non-significant
Attends at least once a year	Yes: more positive	Yes: more positive
Attends at least twice a year	Yes: more positive	Yes: more positive
Attends at least once a month	Yes: more positive	Yes: more positive
Attends at least once a fortnight	Yes: more positive	Yes: more positive
Attends weekly or more often	Yes: more positive	Yes: more positive

Table 7: Summary of effects of religious affiliation (compared with no religious affiliation) and frequency of attendance at a place of worship (compared with attending never) in Waves 8 and 11 of the British Election Study Online Panel. Wave 11 weights applied.

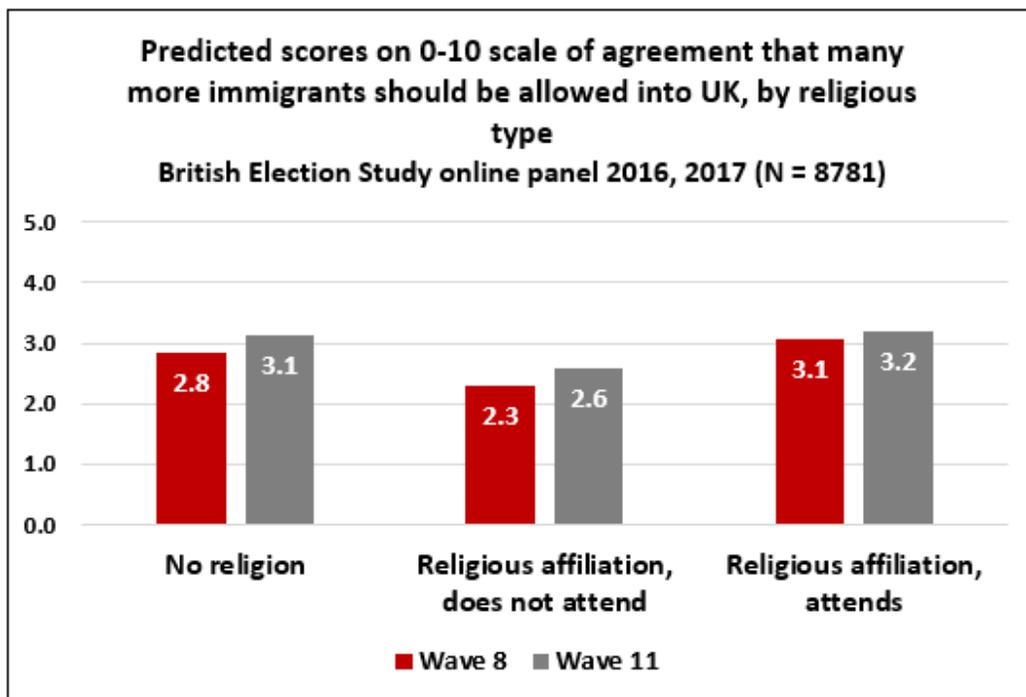


Figure 8: Predicted score on 0-10 scale of agreement that more immigrants should be admitted to UK, May-June 2016 (Wave 8) and April-May 2017 (Wave 11) by religious type, taking socio-demographic controls into account. British Election Study Online Panel 2014-2018.

Outcome of interest, data source	Compared with non-attending 'religious nones'	More positive or likely, more negative, or no difference	Outcome of interest, data source	Compared with non-attending 'religious nones'	More positive or likely, more negative, or no difference
<i>Support for increasing immigration numbers</i> BSA 2011, 2013 Tables A.1, A.2	Religious in name only	More negative	<i>Whether immigration is identified as an issue of concern or worry</i> BSA 2016 (post-Referendum) Tables A.9, A.10	Religious in name only	More likely
	Religious affiliation and frequent attendance	More positive		Religious affiliation and frequent attendance	No difference
<i>Perceive that migrants bring economic benefits</i> BSA 2011, 2013, 2015 Tables A.3, A.4	Religious in name only	No difference	<i>Whether agrees immigration numbers should be increased: pre-Referendum survey</i> BES Wave 8, May-June 2016 Tables A.11, A.12	Religious in name only	More negative
	Religious affiliation and frequent attendance	More positive		Religious affiliation and frequent attendance	More positive
<i>Perceive that migrants bring cultural benefits</i> BSA 2011, 2013, 2015 Tables A.5, A.6	Religious in name only	More negative	Anglican	Anglican	More negative
	Religious affiliation and frequent attendance	More positive		Catholic	More negative
<i>Support for asylum seekers</i> BSA 2011, 2013 Tables A.7, A.8	Religious in name only	No difference	Church of Scotland	More negative	
	Religious affiliation and frequent attendance	More positive	Methodist	No difference	
	Christian	No difference	Baptist	No difference	
	Jewish	No difference	URC	More negative	
	Muslim	No difference	Other Christian	No difference	
	Other religion	More negative	Judaism	No difference	
	Christian	No difference	Other non-Christian	No difference	
	Jewish	No difference	Islam	More negative	
	Muslim	No difference	Other	More negative	
	Other religion	More negative	Attends at least once a year or more often (vs never)	More positive	
			Attends less than once a year (vs never)	No difference	

Table 8: Summary of direction of effects of religiosity type and religious affiliation controlling for frequency of attendance. For post-Referendum analyses, additional summary of direction of effects for frequency of attendance, controlling for religious affiliation.

board, and here differences between religious groups are less perceptible. However, members of other religions (a group combining Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and others) appear slightly less supportive than religious nones.

33. In sum, across a range of surveys fielded between 2010 and 2017, we find that religious affiliation and frequent attendance at a place of worship affect attitudes towards immigration. The actively religious are more supportive of increasing immigration numbers, more supportive of the economic and cultural benefits of immigration, and more supportive of accommodating asylum seekers than the unreligious and the religious in name only.

34. Religion is often seen as a source of division in British society. Our results demonstrate that for those who identify with a religion and who do not attend a place of worship regularly, attitudes to immigrants tend to be more hostile, perhaps because a religious identity is chosen to signal a particular ethnic or national heritage, one which is conceived as exclusive of ‘outsiders’ or ‘newcomers’. But for those who practice what they preach, their attitudes are in almost every case presented here clearly more welcoming than those of the unreligious and ‘religious in name only’ alike – and this is an effect which does appear to be due to their regular participation. Whether similar effects might be found from secular participation is another question, deserving of further research.

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For full bibliography, see full report.

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Corresponding author: Siobhan McAndrew, School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol, 2.02 Priory Road, Bristol BS8 1TU.
Email: siobhan.mcandrew@bristol.ac.uk

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