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Churchgoing in London: The Statistical Record, 1830s to Present

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Part of a series of longitudinal studies of churchgoing in British towns and cities, this article traces the statistical history of church attendance in London over the past two hundred years. Among other sources, it utilises national religious censuses in 1851 and 1979–2005 and metropolitan ones in 1886–7, 1902–3, 1933–4 and 2012, presenting results as an index of attendance (IA), expressing attendances as percentage of population. Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, London's IAs fell continuously and were mostly below those in other conurbations. Following an uptick around the millennium, net decline resumed after 2012.

For over half a century, academic historians, theologians and sociologists have debated the nature, scale and periodisation of religious change in modern Britain.[1] They have drawn upon a range of competing quantitative and qualitative sources and applied alternative hypotheses as frameworks for evaluating their evidence. An especially contested concept has been secularisation, which came to the fore during the 1960s, when it was popularised by sociologist Bryan Wilson, initially as a descriptive shorthand for 'the process whereby religious thinking, practice, and institutions lose social significance'.[2] Secularisation was subsequently, first by Wilson and then by Steve Bruce, refined in a paradigmatic sense, and presented as an inevitable (yet unintended) consequence of modernity. Such a master narrative commanded widespread scholarly acceptance

BPP = British Parliamentary Papers; IA = Index of attendance; LCM = London City Mission; MO = Mass Observation; TNA = The National Archives; uSa = Usual Sunday attendance

[1] Recent historiography is outlined in C. Field, *Counting religion in Britain, 1970–2020: secularization in statistical context*, Oxford 2022, 1–13.

[2] B. Wilson, *Religion in secular society: fifty years on*, ed. S. Bruce, Oxford 2016, 6.

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until the 1980s but has been increasingly rejected or significantly modified since.

At the heart of these academic disagreements have lain difficulties in isolating longitudinal metrics of religious change in Britain. Although there is a comparatively large number of key performance indicators available for recent decades,[3] they become scarcer as researchers work backwards from 1970. Over longer time spans, historians and sociologists have typically relied upon two quantitative measures: church membership and church attendance. Since its publication in 1977, the major source for membership trends has been the ambiguously titled *Churches and churchgoers*.[4] However, church membership is problematical in terms of comparability because there is no common criterion of what constitutes 'membership'. By contrast, churchgoing is a more compelling measure because all major Churches and faiths have expected their followers to participate in collective public worship, and thus it has become a common denominator of religiosity. More specifically, applied to Christianity, Hugh McLeod has argued that Sunday church attendance should be regarded as 'the main index of church attachment' for 'all churches made Sunday worship the chief focus of their activity'.[5]

In England, churchgoing was, theoretically, compulsory for all citizens after the Reformation, according to statutes designed to underpin the new Protestant state and established Church. In practice, enforcement was always selective and virtually non-existent after 1689 when toleration was extended to Nonconformists.[6] In consequence, records of prosecutions for non-attendance at church before ecclesiastical or civil courts offer no real guide to the participation of ordinary people in public worship. For the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a variety of fragmentary local evidence exists, including some Church of England episcopal visitation returns,[7] while for the mid-nineteenth century there is the 1851 religious census, part of the official decennial census of population.[8] Politico-sectarian

[3] Field identified twenty-one in *Counting religion*.

[4] R. Currie, A. Gilbert and L. Horsley, *Churches and churchgoers: patterns of church growth in the British Isles since 1700*, Oxford 1977.

[5] H. McLeod, *Class and religion in the late Victorian city*, London 1974, 23–4.

[6] C. Field, 'A shilling for Queen Elizabeth: the era of state regulation of church attendance in England, 1552–1969', *Journal of Church and State* l (2008), 213–53.

[7] Briefly reviewed in Field, 'Shilling' and *Periodizing secularization: religious allegiance and attendance in Britain, 1880–1945*, Oxford 2019, 30–40. London was not one of the six English dioceses with a question about absenteeism from public worship in its eighteenth-century visitations. London only recorded communicants, an ambiguous metric of religious practice. See V. Barrie-Curien, *Clergé et pastorale en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle: le diocèse de Londres*, Paris 1992, 312–19, 431.

[8] D. Thompson, 'The religious census of 1851', in R. Lawton (ed.), *The census and social structure*, London 1978, 241–86; K. Snell and P. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: the geography of Victorian religion*, Cambridge 2000, 23–53.

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rivalries prevented the experiment from being repeated, and, when (in 2001) a religion question was again inserted in the population census, it related to religious profession and not attendance.[9] Notwithstanding, some local censuses of churchgoing were undertaken, with large clusters during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras,[10] many of them investigated by Robin Gill.[11] In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, between 1979 and 2005, Peter Brierley organised four ecumenical England-wide enumerations of church attendance.[12]

The foregoing brief historiographical background provides essential context for this local and longitudinal study of churchgoing in London, which forms part of a series of case studies of religious attendance in English and Scottish cities and towns between the early nineteenth century and the present.[13] As the historically dominant urban community in Britain, by far the largest city and the capital of England, and seat of the UK parliament and government and home to many national institutions, London's selection needs little justification. The population of the area that became Greater London rose strongly between the first official census in 1801 and 1939, when it peaked at 8,615,000, before declining until the late 1980s and recovering thereafter, standing at 9,300,000 in 2025. Its growth has been driven by a constantly changing mixed economy of trade, manufacture, service industries and educational and cultural provision which has been an employment magnet for large-scale internal and overseas migration, adding considerably to the city's racial and religious diversity.

Much has been written about London's religious history,[14] although the most recent attempt to summarise it leaves something to be desired.[15] The

[9] A. Christopher, 'The religious question in the United Kingdom census, 1801–2011', this JOURNAL lxv (2014), 601–19.

[10] C. Field, 'Religion at the *fin de siècle* [part 1]: a checklist of local newspaper censuses of church attendance, October 1881–March 1882', *Local Historian* xlix (2019), 57–72; 'Religion at the *fin de siècle*, part 2: a checklist of local newspaper censuses of church attendance, 1882–1900', *Local Historian* liv (2024), 162–74; 'Religion in the Edwardian age: a checklist of local newspaper censuses of church attendance, 1901–1913, part 1 – England', *Local Historian* lv (2025), 39–50; and 'Religion in the Edwardian age: a checklist of local newspaper censuses of church attendance, 1901–1913, part 2 – Wales and Scotland', *Local Historian* lv (2025), 155–66.

[11] R. Gill, *The myth of the empty church*, London 1993, revised as *The 'empty' church revisited*, Aldershot 2003.

[12] P. Brierley: *Prospects for the eighties*, London 1980–3; *'Christian' England: what the 1989 English church census reveals*, London 1991; *The tide is running out: what the English church attendance survey reveals*, London 2000; and *Pulling out of the nosedive … what the 2005 English church census reveals*, London 2006.

[13] Longitudinal evidence is lacking for churchgoing in Welsh cities/towns.

[14] H. Creaton (ed.), *Bibliography of printed works on London history to 1939*, London 1994, 365–433.

[15] P. Bernard, *Mithras to Mormon: a religious history of London*, London 2018.

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nineteenth century has attracted particular attention from church historians, as it did from contemporary ecclesiastics and social investigators perturbed by the perceived deficit of religious belief and practice among the city's working-class residents.[16] The Victorian era witnessed concerted campaigns of evangelism, church-building and outreach, recapitulated by William Jacob in his monograph on 'religious vitality', which also briefly considered church attendance.[17] With some exceptions in suburban areas,[18] these denominational and collaborative efforts receded during the early twentieth century, exposing London as a region of overall low religiosity. Only as the new millennium approached were there apparent signs of religious resurgence, reflected in John Wolffe's research, which highlighted a movement of religious pluralisation, including spectacular growth of Pentecostal and ethnic minority churches.[19] In parallel, public opinion polls of Londoners suggested the city's longstanding reputation for irreligion may have been (momentarily) exaggerated.[20]

Privileging quantitative sources, this study assembles evidence about the extent of churchgoing in London over two hundred years, typically measured by an index of attendance (IA), expressing attendances as a percentage of the city's population within its administrative boundaries as constituted at any given time. The focus is on censuses of churchgoing, national in 1851 and 1979–2005, metropolitan in 1886–7, 1902–3, 1933–4 and 2012, together with some other statistical enquiries. The arrangement is chronological. Because of the vastness of London, and the number of places of worship, findings are mostly summarised at city-wide level, and variations between individual districts/boroughs cannot be explored; however, churchgoing

[16] D. Lewis, *Lighten their darkness: the Evangelical mission to working-class London, 1828–1860*, Westport, CT 1986.

[17] W. Jacob, *Religious vitality in Victorian London*, Oxford 2021, 40–6. See also McLeod, *Class and religion*, 23–41, 299–308, 313–14, 323, and *Piety and poverty: working-class religion in Berlin, London and New York, 1870–1914*, New York 1996, 29–48, 91–6, 107–11, 149–63.

[18] R. Walford, *The growth of 'new London' in suburban Middlesex (1918–1945) and the response of the Church of England*, Lewiston 2007.

[19] J. Wolffe and B. Jackson, 'Anglican resurgence: the Church of England in London', in D. Goodhew (ed.), *Church growth in Britain, 1980 to the present*, Farnham 2012, 23–39; J. Wolffe, 'Plurality in the capital: the Christian responses to London's religious minorities since 1800', in C. Methuen, A. Spicer and J. Wolffe (eds), *Christianity and religious plurality* (Studies in Church History li, 2015), 232–58; 'Towards the post-secular city? London since the 1960s', *Journal of Religious History* xli (2017), 532–49, and 'Church decline and growth in London: taking the long view', in D. Goodhew and A.-P. Cooper (eds), *The desecularisation of the city: London's churches, 1980 to the present*, London 2019, 331–44.

[20] C. Field, 'Faith in the metropolis: opinion polls and Christianity in post-war London', *London Journal* xxiv (1999), 68–84; P. Bickley and N. Mladin, *Religious London*, London 2020.

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and religious practices have been investigated by other scholars in a handful of boroughs.[21] For identical reasons, the fortunes of individual denominations cannot be commented upon in depth, although their raw data are captured in the tables.

Pre-1851 estimates and censuses

It was during the second quarter of the nineteenth century that initial attempts were made to quantify the scale of non-churchgoing in London. Several calculations were made, deceptively precise yet varying widely. In 1827, the Congregational minister John Blackburn estimated there were 400 places of worship in the city each attended by 500 regular and 250 fluctuating hearers, representing 300,000 attenders from a population of 1,274,800, equivalent to an IA of 23.53.[22] Five years later, a writer in the *Congregational Magazine* subdivided London's population into 458,411 young children and elderly persons who could not attend church, at least 700,000 adults who did not do so, and 230,000 who did, an IA of 16.72.[23] Baptist Noel, an Evangelical Anglican minister, was more sanguine in 1835, proposing 566,145 orthodox (Anglican/Nonconformist) regular worshippers, 300,746 orthodox occasional worshippers, 74,400 unorthodox (Roman Catholic/others) worshippers, amounting to an IA of 64.47, leaving 518,850 non-worshippers.[24] However, James Grant, author and journalist, inclined to pessimism, reckoning in 1839 that only 344,000 Londoners attended places of worship (150,000 Anglicans, 158,000 Nonconformists, 26,000 Roman Catholics and 10,000 Jews), an IA of 17.25, the residual 1,650,000 going nowhere.[25] Four years later, the London City Mission (LCM) suggested 350,000 Londoners frequented church services at any one time, an IA of 16.67,[26] subsequently raised

[21] C. Marchant, 'Interaction of Church and society in an East London borough (West Ham)', unpubl. PhD diss. London 1979; J. Cox, *The English Churches in a secular society: Lambeth, 1870–1930*, New York 1982; A. Bartlett, 'The Churches in Bermondsey, 1880–1939', unpubl. PhD diss. Birmingham 1987; J. Morris, *Religion and urban change: Croydon, 1840–1914*, Woodbridge 1992; S. Williams, *Religious belief and popular culture in Southwark, c.1880–1939*, Oxford 1999. On churchgoing see R. Gill, 'Churchgoing decline: a case-study' [Bromley], in his *Changing worlds*, London 2002, 73–86, and K. Bailey, 'Religious attendance in Victorian Battersea', *Local Historian* li (2021), 193–206.

[22] J. Blackburn, *Reflections on the moral and spiritual claims of the metropolis*, London 1827, 34.

[23] 'Ecclesiastical statistics of the city of London and its adjacent boroughs', *Congregational Magazine* n.s. viii (1832), 797–823 at p. 822.

[24] B. Noel, *The state of the metropolis considered*, 2nd edn, London 1835, 11.

[25] [J. Grant], *Travels in town*, London 1839, ii. 322–4.

[26] 'Proceedings at the eighth annual meeting of the London City Mission', *L[ondon] C[ity] M[ission] Magazine* viii (1843), 81–99 at p. 82.

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to 400,000 (19.02).[27] However, in 1847 the LCM revised its estimates, 'to allow for the attendance of different individuals at separate services': 1,400,000 neglectors of public worship, 60,000 communicants, 800,000 attenders, an IA of 38.05.[28]

Obviously, limited reliance can be placed on such uncertain estimates. More exact statistics might have been expected from censuses of church attendance, but the only agency known to have undertaken any in the capital before the mid-nineteenth century was the LCM. By definition, its sphere of operations concentrated on areas of poverty and destitution, and thus the relatively few censuses it undertook during these years, while of illustrative value, may not have been representative. In the united parishes of St Margaret and St John, Westminster, in 1840, average attendance at the fifteen places of worship was 6,160 from a population of 54,000, an IA of 11.41.[29] LCM's survey of morning and evening services in thirty-six churches of Spitalfields district in 1843 enumerated 18,688 adults and children, an IA of 16.20.[30] In Greenwich in 1846, morning, afternoon and evening congregations (adults and children) amounted to 13,960, an IA of 43.20,[31] while in Hammersmith in 1848 they numbered 4,232, an IA of 25.70.[32] The IA for Chiswick in 1848 was 32.09 (1,975 attendances from a population of 6,155),[33] and in Cripplegate Without in 1849 it was 34.94 (4,940 from 14,140).[34]

The 1851 religious census

The 1851 religious census, coordinated by Horace Mann, was one of two special enquiries (the other on education) launched that year alongside the decennial census of population in Britain. In England and Wales,

[27] 'An appeal for the London City Mission', *LCM Magazine* xi (1846), 1–14 at p. 3.

[28] 'The comparative state of religion in the world and in London', *LCM Magazine* xii (1847), 221–8 at p. 225.

[29] G. Wilson, 'The state of Westminster, with some account of the labours of the London City Mission', *LCM Magazine* v (1840), 97–102 at p. 98. In a separate enquiry, in the same parishes, 52.43% of principal members of working-class families claimed to attend public worship and 47.57% did not: 'Report of a committee of the Statistical Society of London on the state of the working classes in the parishes of St Margaret and St John, Westminster', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* iii (1840–1), 14–24 at p. 19.

[30] 'What is the London City Mission?', *LCM Magazine* ix (1844), 1–14 at p. 2.

[31] 'Greenwich', *LCM Magazine* xi (1846), 273–96 at p. 286.

[32] 'Descriptive report of Hammersmith', *LCM Magazine* xiii (1848), 223–35 at p. 229.

[33] 'Chiswick', *LCM Magazine* xiii (1848), 273–82 at p. 276.

[34] 'Descriptive report of Cripplegate Without', *LCM Magazine* xiv (1849), 67–86 at p. 80.

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30,610 enumerators were tasked with identifying all places of worship in their districts and delivering, to the minister or other responsible official of each, the appropriate form for recording details of religious accommodation and attendance at morning, afternoon and evening services on 30 March (both in general congregations and at Sunday schools). In view of the bitter controversy surrounding the principle of covering religion in the census, law officers of the Crown advised the religious schedules need not be completed under penalty, resulting in some non-compliance by local clergy, especially Anglicans, including many examples in London. The frequency of rounding of attendances also suggests an actual count of congregations was not always made.

Results of the religious census in England and Wales were analysed and tabulated in considerable detail in a parliamentary paper in December 1853.[35] In London's case, the volume included tables for the metropolitan area (Inner London) and its thirty-six constituent registration districts. A collapsed version of the published summary for general congregations and Sunday scholars is reproduced as Table 1 (*see* Appendix). Denominational shares of attendances on the day were: Church of England, 56.64 per cent; other Protestants, 36.64 per cent; and Roman Catholics, 6.38 per cent. The overall IA across three services was 37.01, which was much lower than the average of 60.8 for England and Wales and of 50.8 for all large town districts, seemingly confirming London's reputation for religious destitution.[36]

In reality, the picture was bleaker than Table 1 suggested. For London's IA of 37.01 did not imply this was the proportion of the capital's population who worshipped on census Sunday, as the IA was based on *attendances* rather than individual *attenders*. It took no account of the fact that it was common for people to frequent more than one service on Sunday (a practice known as twicing), effectively resulting in them being double counted. The scale of twicing is unknown in the mid-nineteenth century. Although Mann proposed a formula for correcting for twicing,[37] it was rightly criticised for failing to make sufficient allowance for regional and denominational variations in the number and timing of services, not least the popularity of evening worship among Nonconformists. At one level, all that can be said with certainty from Table 1 is that the number of individual attenders will have been somewhere between 504,914, being the sum of attendances at the single best attended service in each denominational

[35] *Census of Great Britain, 1851: religious worship, England and Wales*, BPP 1852–3, lxxxix.

[36] Ibid. clv, clxxxii.

[37] Whole of morning + half afternoon + one third evening: ibid. clii; H. Mann, 'On the statistical position of religious bodies in England and Wales', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* xviii (1855), 141–59 at pp. 147, 151.

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grouping (equivalent to a single-service IA of 21.37),[38] and 874,339 (the tri-service total).

Among modern day historians, Michael Watts was especially critical of Mann's formula, dismissing it as 'arbitrary in conception and unfair to Nonconformists in operation'.[39] Arguably, the alternative formula Watts proposed, although less biased against Nonconformity, also lacked strong evidential basis. For each registration district in England and Wales, Watts used totals for the best attended services for each denomination and added a third of attendances at all other services.[40] In London, this method of correcting for twicing reduced the IA to 27.0, ranging from 15.3 in Shoreditch to 48.9 in Hampstead. The Church of England accounted for the majority (15.6) of this revised IA, with other religious bodies contributing 11.4.[41]

There is a further complication, affecting comparability of the 1851 religious census with later Victorian and Edwardian enumerations of church attendance, the overwhelming majority of which were confined to what Mann described as the 'general congregation', i.e. omitting Sunday schools. The aspiration in 1851 had been to record general congregations and Sunday scholars separately, but, as many informants returned a combined total for both, Mann was forced to do likewise, only disregarding Sunday scholars for any place of worship when they did not assemble at the same time as a general congregation.[42] With the release of the original schedules of the religious census by The National Archives after an embargo of 100 years, it became possible to analyse results for general congregations alone.[43] Based on such general congregations (*see* Table 2), the IA for London in 1851 was 32.72, unadjusted for twicing, ranging (*see* Table 3) from 15.41 in Shoreditch to 83.17 in the City of London (which drew many of its worshippers from beyond its boundaries). The number of individual attenders in general congregations in London in 1851 will have been somewhere between 410,766, the sum of attendances at the single best frequented service in each denominational grouping, and 773,003, the total of all services, perhaps just under 600,000 persons, equivalent to an IA of about 25. Shares of attendances for general congregations were: Church of England, 54.52 per cent; other Protestants, 35.38 per cent; and Roman Catholics, 9.75 per cent.

The original schedules provided space for informants to add remarks, but only a relatively small minority elected to do so in London. Regarding

[38] *Census … 1851: religious worship, England and Wales*, ccc.

[39] M. Watts, *The dissenters*, II: *The expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, Oxford 1995, 26–7, 671.

[40] Ibid. 27, 671–2.

[41] Ibid. 682–3.

[42] *Census … 1851: religious worship, England and Wales*, clxxi.

[43] TNA, HO 129/1–36. There are critical editions for metropolitan parts of Surrey and Kent, but not for Middlesex: *The 1851 religious census: Surrey*, ed. D. Robinson (Surrey Record Society xxxv, 1997), 1–62; *Religious worship in Kent: the census of 1851*, ed. M. Roake (Kent Records xxvii, 1999), 1–37.

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attendance, the commonest gloss was to the wet and stormy weather that affected most parts of the metropolis on 30 March, keeping some potential worshippers at home. Another general deterrent was the prevailing influenza outbreak. Other respondents, particularly Nonconformists, blamed lower than average turnout on competition from neighbouring places of worship. A few ministers referred to unfavourable social conditions, such as Sunday trading in Bethnal Green.[44]

Revelations about ostensibly low levels of churchgoing in London were deeply shocking to many contemporaries. They were vigorously debated in both religious and secular print media. They also led to one parliamentary follow-up, a select committee of the House of Lords in 1858 into the 'Deficiency of means of spiritual instruction and places of divine worship in the metropolis, and in other populous districts of England and Wales'. The committee took the majority of its oral evidence from incumbents and officials connected with London parishes, presenting general and statistical overviews, sometimes citing usual congregations. However, there was no systematic aggregated analysis of attendance data, and only occasional information about Nonconformists and Catholics.[45]

Among religious agencies, the main focus of activity after publication of the 1851 religious census was to multiply the number of places of worship and sittings therein in an attempt to keep pace with London's rapidly growing population. Tables 4 and 5 reveal the extent of their success. Table 4 shows the average number of people per place of worship remained high throughout the second half of the nineteenth century; although the ratio certainly dropped from the 1880s, this was mainly due to proliferation of small and relatively humble local missions, particularly Anglican or interdenominational, rather than the more famous central missions operated by Wesleyans and other Nonconformists. Statistics of sittings are only available for all denominations until the 1880s (*see* Table 5), indicating rather modest gains towards raising accommodation in places of worship to around a third of the population. It seems unlikely this ratio was ever improved upon thereafter.

The 1886–7 religious census

Thirty-five years elapsed after 1851 before the next attempt to enumerate churchgoing in London. The only tiny exception was a census by the *St James' Gazette* of morning worship in the City of London one Sunday in May

[44] TNA, HO 129/21-3-1-1.

[45] *Report from the select committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the deficiency of means of spiritual instruction and places of divine worship in the metropolis, and in other populous districts of England and Wales*, BPP 1857–8, ix. 1–558.

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1881.[46] When a nationwide movement to undertake religious censuses by local newspapers sprang up in autumn/winter 1881–2, the London press were bystanders; the scale, complexity and cost of organising such a venture in London were doubtless deemed too challenging.[47] So it was left to the religious journalist William Robertson Nicoll to rise to the task when he launched a religious census of London as a means of promoting the *British Weekly*, his new weekly Nonconformist newspaper, in 1886.[48] Nicoll was highly critical of the methodology employed by the 1851 religious census, which he judged 'comparatively worthless and very misleading … it rested on estimates, often mere guesses, made by officials of particular churches. These, as a rule, are far in excess of the facts'.[49] He was determined to adopt a more scientific approach.

For the main part of his own religious census of London, attendance at the principal morning and evening services of churches and chapels on Sunday, 24 October 1886, Nicoll relied upon a network of independent enumerators directed by Major Colquhoun of Lyons, who had previously superintended a similar project in Glasgow in 1882 and was to do so again in 1896.[50] Results for this part of the census were serialised in the *British Weekly* between 5 November and 17 December 1886, not without some criticisms, although there were also endorsements from prominent figures such as William Gladstone and William Booth. However, for the second part of the census, the survey of missions on the morning, afternoon and evening of Sunday, 27 November 1887, Nicoll abandoned the principle of independent enumeration and permitted the parties in charge of the missions to self-report. Mission data were initially serialised in the *British Weekly* between 13 January and 20 February 1888. Results from both parts of the census were consolidated into a single volume in 1888, prepared by George Stevenson, a leading Wesleyan layman, and incorporating corrections of the serialised findings.[51]

[46] 'Census of congregations of the City churches and chapels', *Journal of the Statistical Society* xliv (1881), 596–601. [47] Field, 'Religion at the *fin de siècle* [part 1]'.

[48] G. Lawrence, 'William Robertson Nicoll (1851–1923) and religious journalism in the nineteenth century', unpubl. PhD diss. Edinburgh 1954, 90–1, 95, 100, 128–30; R. Higgins, 'William Robertson Nicoll and the Liberal Nonconformist press, 1886–1923', unpubl. PhD diss. St Andrews 1995, 14; K. Ives, *Voice of Nonconformity: William Robertson Nicoll and the 'British Weekly'*, Cambridge 2011, 68, 273. Jane Stoddart, Nicoll's assistant editor at the *British Weekly*, subsequently wrote 'The *Daily News* census (1902–3) compared with the *British Weekly* census (1886)', in R. Mudie-Smith (ed.), *The religious life of London*, London 1904, 280–93. [49] *British Weekly*, 17 Dec. 1886, 1.

[50] Methodology in *British Weekly*, 5 Nov. 1886, 1–2. For Glasgow religious censuses, see *North British Daily Mail*, 18 Jan. 1882, 4; *Glasgow Herald*, 18 Jan. 1882, 9; *Christian Leader*, 21 Jan. 1897, 58; 28 Jan. 1897, 82.

[51] *The religious census of London, reprinted from 'The British Weekly'*, London 1888.

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Summary data from the 1886–7 religious census of Inner London are presented in Table 6. The overall IA, unadjusted for twicing, was 29.25, which was 3.47 points less than the equivalent figure for general congregations in 1851 (*see* Table 2).[52] Shares of attendances in 1886–7 were: Church of England (including public institutions), 49.10 per cent; other Protestants, 45.95 per cent; and Roman Catholics, 4.57 per cent. Other Protestants were obviously fast closing on the Church of England, which no longer commanded an absolute majority of metropolitan churchgoers. The reduction in the Catholic share from 9.75 per cent in 1851 to 4.57 per cent in 1886–7 is more apparent than real, reflecting the fact that, whereas in 1851 Catholics returned congregations at all morning masses, in 1886–7 only the 11 a.m. high mass was counted. A comparison of the overall IA of 29.25 with other British cities with populations of 100,000 and above around the same time shows the rate of church attendance in London was: higher than in Liverpool (26.3 in 1881, 26.7 in 1891); strikingly close to Birmingham (29.4 in 1892) and Glasgow (30.1 in 1896); but lower than in Sheffield (31.4 in 1881), Bradford (32.2 in 1881), Bolton (32.5 in 1881), Nottingham (36.0 in 1881), Hull (40.9 in 1881), Portsmouth (41.9 in 1881), Leicester (44.1 in 1881), Edinburgh (44.6 in 1882) and Bristol (56.2 in 1881).[53]

Nicoll continued to proclaim the value of the 1886–7 religious census for some years afterwards, which ultimately led him to cross swords with Charles Booth, the pioneering social scientist and author of *Life and labour of the people in London*, the fieldwork for the Religious Influences series of which was undertaken in 1897–1900, with the findings published in seven volumes in 1902–3.[54] Booth's methodology for the series was qualitative; after five years of researching the capital's religious life, he concluded: 'Spiritual influences do not lend themselves readily to statistical treatment … The subject is one in which figures may easily be pressed too far, and if trusted too much are likely to be more than usually dangerous.'[55] This approach displeased Nicoll; writing in the *British Weekly* in 1903, he expressed regret that Booth had not attempted to provide any quantitative record of church attendance nor even to mention the 1886–7 religious

[52] In making this comparison, it should be borne in mind that the 1851 census was largely based on estimates but did not include estimates for missing or defective returns, whereas the 1886–7 census mostly derived from an enumeration but undercounted Catholics.

[53] Field, *Periodizing secularization*, 79–81, 84, 91. All IAs uncorrected for twicing.

[54] C. Booth, *Life and labour of the people in London, third series: religious influences*, London 1902–3. Secondary analysis in R. O'Day and D. Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's inquiry: life and labour of the people in London reconsidered*, London 1993, 159–98.

[55] Booth, *Life and labour*, i. 7.

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census. Nicoll added: 'while church-going is not a test of religion, without it religion perishes'.[56]

The 1902–3 religious census

The religious censuses of Inner London in 1902–3 and Outer London in 1903 were undertaken by the *Daily News*, a national newspaper originally founded by Charles Dickens but owned since 1901 by George Cadbury, Quaker chocolate manufacturer and philanthropist, who moved the title in a politically Liberal and Nonconformist direction. Cadbury had been the inspiration and the money behind the 1892 Birmingham religious census,[57] and he was equally the driving force behind the London religious census of 1902–3, although operational command lay with Richard Mudie-Smith, estate agent turned journalist, who was on the staff of the *Daily News* in 1902–6 and 1910–12. Mudie-Smith also edited the definitive volume of census results in 1904.[58]

The *Daily News* census has tended to be regarded by historians as a 'gold standard' in enumerations of churchgoing. Hugh McLeod described it as 'probably the fullest and the most accurate census of church attendance ever taken in Britain'.[59] While it was undoubtedly more sophisticated than any religious censuses that had gone before, and it was emulated by many provincial newspapers in the early Edwardian era,[60] it was not beyond criticism. Most notably, there are doubts about its completeness of coverage of places of worship, partly arising from Mudie-Smith's inheritance of Charles Booth's listings.[61] Perhaps the worst oversight in this respect, and somewhat ironic given Cadbury's own religious allegiance, is that the 1902–3 census omitted forty of the seventy metropolitan Quaker meetings.[62]

In both Inner London and Outer London, the census was conducted independently of clergy and officials of each place of worship, a team of 400 men being engaged as paid inspectors, supervisors and enumerators.[63]

[56] T. Simey and M. Simey, *Charles Booth, social scientist*, London 1960, 154–5.

[57] R. Peacock, 'The 1892 Birmingham religious census', in A. Bryman (ed.), *Religion in the Birmingham area*, Birmingham 1975, 12–28.

[58] Mudie-Smith, *Religious life*. Denominational commentaries at 'Symposium on the religious census of London', *Daily News*, 16 July 1903, 8–9 and 'A *Sunday Strand* symposium: is church-going unpopular?', *Sunday Strand* ix (1904), 50–4, 156–60, 250–3, 351–6, 446–7.

[59] McLeod, *Class and religion*, 25.

[60] Field, 'Religion in the Edwardian age … England'.

[61] O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's inquiry*, 170.

[62] J. Chadkirk, 'Patterns of membership and participation among British Quakers, 1823–2012', unpubl. MPhil diss. Birmingham 2014, 123–34.

[63] R. Mudie-Smith, 'The methods and lessons of the census', in Mudie-Smith, *Religious life*, 1–14 at pp. 2–6.

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To spread the workload, the census was staggered, the twenty-nine boroughs of Inner London being surveyed between 30 November 1902 and 21 June 1903, and fifty-two districts of Outer London (including two county boroughs and four metropolitan boroughs) between 19 July and 8 November 1903. The counts were restricted to the principal morning and evening services at churches, chapels and missions (but omitting public institutions), congregants being divided into men, women and children (judged to be below fifteen years). The major exception was that, in the Roman Catholic Church, every Sunday morning mass from 6 a.m. to 12 noon inclusive was enumerated, thereby correcting a shortcoming of the 1886–7 census. Synagogue attendance was taken on the first day of Passover week 1903. Children's services distinct from Sunday schools and held at the hour of the main Sunday morning or evening services were recorded but Sunday schools were excluded, precipitating a disagreement between Mudie-Smith and Charles Masterman, one of his leading contributors.[64] Only in Chelsea was a full count made of attendance at all religious activities on Sunday (including Sunday schools); otherwise, meetings and services other than the principal acts of worship on Sunday morning or evening were just noted on a sample basis.

Topline results for Inner London are displayed in Table 7 and Outer London in Table 8. The IA for Inner London, unadjusted for twicing, was 22.13, almost a quarter less than the figure of 29.25 in 1886–7 (*see* Table 6). The Church of England had sustained the biggest net losses, absolutely and relatively, since 1886–7, with 23.65 per cent fewer attendances and its denominational share reduced from 49.10 per cent to 42.84 per cent. In terms of share, the Anglicans had now been overtaken by other Protestants who stood at 45.18 per cent, albeit several constituent groups (Congregationalists, Baptists, Wesleyans) were already in absolute decline, and the Salvation Army's impact was limited. The Roman Catholic Church accounted for 9.33 per cent of attendances, its share boosted by continued immigration but also inclusion in 1902–3 of all Sunday morning masses. Also of note was the six-fold increase in synagogue attendance since 1886–7 (to 2.65 per cent of the total), reflecting rapid growth of the Jewish population through immigration since the 1880s. The Inner London IA of 22.13 can only meaningfully be compared with three other English cities at this time, Hull (1903–4), Liverpool (1902) and Portsmouth (1902). In Hull, the religious census was abandoned two-thirds of the way through, and the IA of 20.5 is this author's estimate of what the completed figure might have been, which may or may not be accurate. In Liverpool, the IA

[64] C. Masterman, 'The problem of south London', in Mudie-Smith, *Religious life*, 187–218 at p. 189.

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was 25.3, surpassing Inner London's on this occasion, unlike 1886–7. The Portsmouth IA was 27.0.[65]

At 26.61, the Outer London IA (*see* Table 8) was one fifth above Inner London's. Denominational shares of total attendances were: Church of England, 45.86 per cent; other Protestants, 48.05 per cent; and Roman Catholics, 6.09 per cent. The flight of the upper working class and lower middle class from downtown areas of Inner London to the suburbs of Outer London had given other Protestants the edge over the Church of England, while Inner London remained the stronghold of the Roman Catholic poor and working class. Overall, however, Outer London's results must have seemed disappointing in comparison with some other south-eastern communities where churchgoing was enumerated in the early Edwardian years.

So far, we have considered only IAs unadjusted for twicing in 1902–3. We now need to factor in findings from a pilot study to quantify twicing undertaken as part of the *Daily News* census. Mudie-Smith's description of methodology was brief and his application of results rather muddled.[66] The 'sample' of sixty-nine places of worship seems unlikely to have been representative of the universe of 4,026 churches, chapels and missions in Inner London and Outer London, and it certainly constituted a tiny fraction thereof. The selection was confined to Protestant churches, reflecting Mudie-Smith's understanding that the number of Catholic twicers was negligible,[67] with which later historians such as Gill have concurred.[68] The pilot revealed twicing was marginally more common in Inner London than Outer London, and significantly more common among other Protestants than Anglicans. Based on these data, grossed up for the full census returns, an approximate adjustment for twicing is presented in Table 9, suggesting the number of unique attenders in 1902–3 on an average Sunday was 875,971 in Inner London (equivalent to an IA of 19.32) and 450,484 in Outer London (23.27).

Another important feature of the 1902–3 census was the categorisation of worshippers by age and gender. In this respect, the *Daily News* was not breaking new ground, for the same disaggregation had already been implemented in the large number of religious censuses taken in Scotland in 1901 by the *Aberdeen Journal* and two Dundee newspapers.[69] The London breakdown is given in compressed form in Table 10. A third (32.15 per cent) of worshippers were children, the proportion being much the same among Anglicans and other Protestants, with Catholics and Jews somewhat

[65] Field, *Periodizing secularization*, 125–6. IAs uncorrected for twicing.
[66] Mudie-Smith, *Religious life*, 6, 15, 17 (methodology), 449–50 (data).
[67] Ibid. 18.
[68] Gill, *'Empty' church revisited*, 117, 133.
[69] Field, 'Religion in the Edwardian age … Wales and Scotland'.

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lower. Of the remaining two thirds who were adults, just 38.85 per cent were men and 61.15 per cent were women (slightly less in Inner London and slightly more in Outer London). The proportion of females among adults was 65.62 per cent in the Church of England, 58.15 per cent for other Protestants, 63.27 per cent for Roman Catholics, but just 22.40 per cent for Jews. Using data for twenty-eight boroughs in Inner London in 1902–3 (omitting the City of London), Callum Brown has asserted the primacy of gender as a determinant of churchgoing in particular locations. Especially interesting is his discussion of how the duties of preparing Sunday lunch and baby-minding, by domestic servants in affluent households or wife-mothers in servant-less working-class households, shaped the relative sizes of morning and evening congregations in Protestant churches.[70] In stressing gender, Brown has downplayed the contribution of social class to churchgoing which has been key to McLeod's analysis of this and other religious censuses.[71]

A methodological by-product of staggering the 1902–3 census over such a long period, and in different meteorological conditions, was that it facilitates examination of the weather's effect on churchgoing. Many contemporaries readily assumed that, the worse the weather, the lower the numbers in the pews, particularly in areas where roads were bad and distance from home to church was long. Such an assumption has recently been questioned by Gill who argued the impact was less than expected, and more on Nonconformists than Anglicans.[72] Mudie-Smith's opinion was that 'adverse weather conditions do not affect church attendance to the extent generally imagined'.[73] He failed to reach definite conclusions about the weather's influence in Inner London, while observing that, in Outer London, the districts with the highest and lowest attendance ratios (Barnet and Tottenham) were enumerated on the same day and under identical weather conditions.[74] At the same time, when four places of worship (one St Paul's Cathedral) were counted on both fine/fair and wet days, congregations on the latter were reduced by 35.4 per cent.[75] Reviewing the 1902–3 Inner London census, Brown found very weak correlations between churchgoing and the weather and season.[76] The present author's analysis of Inner London data showed the collective IA in thirteen boroughs enumerated in fine weather was actually *lower* (21.86)

[70] C. Brown, *The death of Christian Britain: understanding secularisation, 1800–2000*, 2nd edn, London 2009, 156–61.

[71] Ibid. 151–3; McLeod, *Class and religion*, 25–8, 299–307, 323; 'White collar values and the role of religion', in G. Crossick (ed.), *The lower middle class in Britain, 1870–1914*, London 1977, 61–88 at pp. 87–8 and *Piety and poverty*, 32–3.

[72] Gill, *'Empty' church revisited*, 20–3, 231–2. [73] Mudie-Smith, *Religious life*, 15.

[74] Ibid. 18. [75] Ibid. 16–17. [76] Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 155, 262 n. 42.

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than in twelve boroughs where the count was taken under showery, wet or very wet conditions (22.29).[77] However, the reverse was true in Outer London, in many parts of which population was more dispersed; here, the IA in thirty districts counted in fine weather was 30.93, whereas in fifteen districts where the census day was wet it was 28.73.[78] Seemingly in confirmation, in Croydon the state of the weather is one credible explanation for the substantially lower IA in a census taken by the Croydon Religious Discussion Society on an exceedingly wet Sunday in November 1902 than in the *Daily News* count on a fine day in October 1903 (22.0 versus 37.8).[79]

The 1913 religious census (abandoned)

In 1912, the *Daily News* merged with the *Morning Leader* and was renamed the *Daily News and Leader*. On 22 October, the newspaper announced its intention to replicate the 1902–3 religious census.[80] Managerial oversight was entrusted to Henry Wilson Harris, who had joined the *Daily News* as news editor in 1908.[81] On this occasion, the enterprise was to be confined to Inner London, undertaken with fewer paid and more voluntary staff, and conducted over a shorter timeframe, commencing in Paddington on 19 January 1913. Soon afterwards, on 30 January, the *Daily News and Leader* decided to abandon the census, in the face of growing hostility towards it in Anglican and, especially, Nonconformist circles. Opposition culminated in an unprecedented joint letter to the editor, urging cancellation of the project, from Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram (bishop of London) and Frederick Brotherton Meyer (secretary of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches). Although initial ecclesiastical reaction to the census had been mostly positive or neutral, it turned sharply against after 13 December 1912, when the *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury* published results of its latest census of churchgoing in that Merseyside city, revealing a substantial decline in attendance since 1902. To many observers, this seemed ominous; as John Clifford, prominent Baptist minister, told his congregation: 'The Liverpool census is most discouraging, and everybody is apprehensive of a similar or worse state of facts being discovered by the statistics to be given us about

[77] Mudie-Smith, *Religious life*, 268. [78] Ibid. 443.
[79] *Croydon Guardian and Surrey County Gazette*, 6 Dec.1902, 2; Mudie-Smith, *Religious life*, 382–5.
[80] C. Field, '"A tempest in the teapot": London churchgoing in 1913 – the census that never was', *London Journal* xli (2016), 82–99.
[81] W. Harris, *Life so far*, London 1954, 94–5.

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London.'[82] The *Daily News and Leader* capitulated and cancelled its 1913 census, substituting a qualitative survey of the religious and social work of the metropolitan churches, based on responses to a lengthy questionnaire from just over one third of places of worship, which was published in January 1914.[83]

The 1915–16 and 1927 surveys by Arthur Black

Arthur Black was a leading Baptist and Free Church layman, who became involved with religious statistics in Liverpool, where he was a dentist and Sunday school worker until 1914. He then relocated to London, becoming assistant secretary (1914–19) and secretary (1919–38) of the Shaftesbury Society and Ragged School Union. During 1915 and the first half of 1916, he enumerated Sunday morning or evening services at 200 churches, chapels or missions in London, mostly north of the River Thames, and nearly all in poorer areas. Comparing his data with the *Daily News* census of 1902–3, Black discovered there had been a substantial decline in churchgoing, by 50 per cent in poor districts, with generally no more than a quarter of sittings occupied even at the better attended evening services, including in flagship central halls. Enlistment in the armed forces was not the sole or primary explanation for the decrease. 'It is not merely a question of the rapid disappearance of men of military age, but also of all other classes, including children.'[84] Black's research was corroborated by a census taken in all metropolitan Primitive Methodist chapels towards the war's close, Sunday morning and evening congregations in Inner London more than halving between 1902–3 and March 1918.[85]

Black undertook additional fieldwork in 1927, which was written up in a series of articles for the religious press between November 1927 and April 1928.[86] Of particular importance were three articles commissioned by the *British Weekly*, published in March-April. Its editor asked Black to carry out in-depth surveys of churchgoing in two contrasting London districts, one a poor industrial area and the other a suburban area. These are now thought to be, respectively, a poor parliamentary division of the borough

[82] Field, '"Tempest in the teapot"', 89.
[83] W. Harris and M. Bryant, *The Churches and London*, London [1914].
[84] A. Black, 'A great British Church: the argument from London', *Liverpool Post and Mercury*, 5 July 1916, 8.
[85] *Primitive Methodist Church, statistics supplied by circuits in the metropolitan area, March 1918*, London 1918.
[86] Reprinted in A. Black, *London church and mission attendances*, London [1928].

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of Battersea and Putney/Roehampton in the borough of Wandsworth.[87] In the former, congregations at morning and evening services decreased by 61.81 per cent overall during the previous quarter-century (69.90 per cent in the Church of England, 74.76 per cent in the Free Churches), with an estimated one in twenty-two of the Protestant population worshipping on any given Sunday in 1927 (after adjusting for twicing).[88] In the latter, the drop in churchgoing since 1902–3 had been less steep, partly due to growth among Catholics and newer Protestant sects, but it was still a substantial 33.43 per cent (and 44.06 per cent for Free Churches), with one in eleven of the Protestant population in the pews weekly in 1927.[89] By way of cross-check, Black also visited more than 180 Protestant churches in poor industrial areas of twelve London boroughs; here there had been near universal decline in attendances at morning or evening services since 1902–3, by 63.89 per cent overall (58.39 per cent in the Church of England, 66.61 per cent in Free Churches).[90] Black concluded: 'London is becoming paganised in its disregard of the outward corporate forms of religion.'[91]

The 1933–4 religious census

Surprisingly little is known about a census of Inner London and Outer London churches begun in 1933–4. The project neither gained much news coverage at the time nor did it leave much documentation behind. It was the brainchild of Thomas Cochrane, former medical missionary in China, who was founder and president of the Mildmay Movement for World Evangelisation, housed at the Mildmay Centre in Islington (which Cochrane bought in 1931).[92] He was convinced that 'London is the most pagan city in the country.'[93] The census of churchgoing was taken in stages during 1933–4, across three Sundays in each area, concentrating on areas where Mildmay evangelistic campaigns were about to be held. First results, for eight anonymised boroughs (*see* Table 11), were published in October 1934, accompanied by a metropolitan projection seemingly based on doubtful statistics.[94] From such garbled data emanated the deduction that only one Londoner in twenty went to church, which was probably not the case.[95] Almost six months later, it was reported that only eight boroughs

[87] Districts identified by Gill, *'Empty' church revisited*, 59, 140–2.
[88] Black, *London church and mission attendances*, 7–12. [89] Ibid. 12–15. [90] Ibid. 16.
[91] Ibid. 1.
[92] F. French, *Thomas Cochrane, pioneer and missionary statesman*, London 1956, 104–14.
[93] *Taunton Courier*, 19 Sept. 1934, 5.
[94] Scrutineer, 'Disquieting figures about London', *World Dominion* xii (1934), 415–18.
[95] *Yorkshire Post*, 30 Oct. 1934, 8.

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had still been surveyed; the likelihood, therefore, is that the initiative had petered out.[96]

The eight boroughs in Table 11 did not constitute a cross-section of Inner London and Outer London, and they underrepresented areas (particularly the most well-to-do) likely to have the highest rates of churchgoing. In aggregate, attendance in the boroughs decreased by 41.15 per cent between 1902–3 and 1933–4 while population had risen by 18.61 per cent; accordingly, the collective IA had halved, from 22.96 to 11.39. Individual borough IAs in 1933–4 ranged from 4.12 in Bermondsey to 19.47 in the unidentified borough 7. Cochrane was fond of highlighting the challenges faced in Islington, where he was based, the 132 churches left in 1933–4 competing with 312 public houses and eighteen cinemas, the latter alone attracting nearly twice as many patrons on Sundays as the churches did worshippers. Although Cochrane was incorrect in claiming Islington's churchgoing had dropped from 25 per cent to 5 per cent in thirty years,[97] the enumeration of the eight boroughs is consistent with other English evidence that the interwar years were significant in the history of churchgoing decline.[98]

The 1939–45 Mass Observation studies

The social research organisation Mass Observation (MO), founded by Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge in 1937, undertook considerable religion-related research during the Second World War, a few examples of which are relevant in a London churchgoing context.[99] A series of church censuses was arranged at morning services in Paddington in 1941, worshippers numbering 3,347 on 23 March (a National Day of Prayer, the weather wet and cold), 2,058 on 13 April (Easter Day, warm and dry), 1,254 on 11 May (aftermath of heavy bombing) and 1,808 on 8 June (a 'normal' Sunday, with fine weather). Morning and evening attendances combined on 8 June were 3,398, under 4 per cent of estimated population. Peak congregations on a National Day of Prayer were not unexpected; in a vox pop of Londoners, three-fifths told MO they considered such days a 'good thing' and a quarter participated in them, although only a minority had such confidence in the power of prayer as to think it would

[96] Address by Lionel Fletcher, Mildmay evangelist, at Sun Hall, Liverpool: *Liverpool Daily Post*, 13 Mar. 1935, 5.

[97] Address at Albemarle Baptist church, Taunton: *Taunton Courier*, 19 Sept. 1934, 5.

[98] Field, *Periodizing secularization*, 192–8.

[99] Idem, 'Mass Observation, religion and the Second World War', in M. Snape and S. Bell (eds), *British Christianity and the Second World War*, Woodbridge 2023, 99–116 at pp. 107–8, 114.

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shorten the war. Insights into churchgoing towards the end of the war can be gleaned from MO's *Puzzled people* study, based on interviews with Hammersmith residents in 1944–5; 28 per cent self-reported they had attended church within the past six months, compared with three-quarters who had been to the cinemas and three-fifths to public houses during the same period. Three-fifths admitted they never went to church or did so only for rites of passage, to the despair of local clergy: 'they think about churchgoing as a sort of harmless hobby'.

The 1945–79 data vacuum

The third quarter of the twentieth century witnessed no censuses of church attendance in London and few elsewhere in England. This is frustrating given claims by Callum Brown that the period between the end of the Second World War and the late 1950s was one of 'religious boom',[100] a thesis contested by Simon Green and Clive Field.[101] Large-scale evangelistic crusades were certainly in vogue at the time, but there is little evidence they helped boost churchgoing in the long term. In London, American evangelist Billy Graham pulled in the crowds at his crusades in March–May 1954, May 1955, June 1966 and June 1967, but this did not swell numbers in the pews afterwards. For instance, during the twelve-week Greater London Crusade in 1954, 1,872,000 attended meetings addressed by Graham, just 36,431 of whom responded to his invitation to come forward, nine-tenths of them already in some church connection.[102] Evangelistic crusades were largely jamborees for the faithful.

In the absence of religious censuses for London in the third quarter of the century, it is tempting to turn to opinion poll evidence for church-going, often an inaccurate guide, prone to overstated self-reporting.[103] Two local surveys in Outer London touching on claimed church

[100] C. Brown, *Religion and society in twentieth-century Britain*, Harlow 2006, 177–223, and *Death of Christian Britain*, 5–7, 11, 14, 170–5, 187–9, 212–15.

[101] S. Green, 'Was there an English religious revival in the 1950s?', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* vii (2006), 517–38, and *The passing of Protestant England: secularisation and social change, c.1920–1960*, Cambridge 2011, 242–72; C. Field, *Britain's last religious revival? Quantifying belonging, behaving and believing in the long 1950s*, Basingstoke 2015, and 'A secularizing society? Case studies of English northern industrial towns in the 1950s', *Historical Research* xcvii (2024), 550–72.

[102] F. Colquhoun, *Harringay story: the official record of the Billy Graham Greater London Crusade, 1954*, London 1955, 231–3.

[103] C. Field, *Secularization in the long 1960s: numerating religion in Britain*, Oxford 2017, 95–101, and *Counting religion*, 104–9.

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attendance by adults are known, at Dagenham (a predominantly working-class area, centred on the Becontree council estate) in 1958–9, where just 8 per cent frequented services at least monthly and 82 per cent not at all; and Woodford (more middle-class) in 1959, where 15 per cent went weekly, 12 per cent monthly and 46 per cent never.[104] However, the most general poll was conducted by Associated Rediffusion as part of the late David Glass's unpublished Third Londoner Survey, for which 5,879 adults aged between twenty-two and fifty-nine were interviewed in 1960. Professed weekly or fortnightly churchgoing then stood at 16 per cent, with 57 per cent worshipping less often and 26 per cent never.[105]

1979–2012 religious censuses

Peter Brierley is a church statistician who, after eleven years in the civil service, became programme director of the Bible Society (1978–82), director of MARC Europe (1982–93), director of Christian Research (1993–2007) and director of Brierley Consultancy (since 2007). Among his many projects, Brierley managed four ecumenical religious censuses of Trinitarian churches in England between 1979 and 2005, which naturally covered Greater London. Additionally, he organised a further census just in Greater London in 2012, on behalf of the LCM. The methodology was the same in each case, a questionnaire sent to the minister or other official of each place of worship, requesting statistics of churchgoing by adults and children (including Sunday scholars) at morning and afternoon/evening services for the census date. This date varied: a normal Sunday in November 1979, 15 October 1989, a typical Sunday in September 1998, 8 May 2005 and 14 October 2012. Response rates were also variable: 74 per cent in 1979, 70 per cent in 1989, 33 per cent in 1998, and 50 per cent in 2005 (national figures; unknown response rates for London) and 54 per cent in 2012.[106] Results were grossed up by Brierley for missing and defective returns and adjusted for twicing.

Table 12 provides an overview of attendances in Greater London at each census according to the denominational groupings assigned by Brierley, with national comparisons. The 1979 and 1989 censuses suggested

[104] P. Willmott, *The evolution of a community: a study of Dagenham after forty years*, London 1963, 86, 140; P. Willmott and M. Young, *Family and class in a London suburb*, London 1960, 93, 116.

[105] Unpublished (in author's possession).

[106] Direct response to 2012 mailshot was only 14% (9% from the diocese of London and 31% extrapolations from earlier information); P. Brierley, *Capital growth: what the 2012 London church census reveals*, Tonbridge 2013, 157 n.13.

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ongoing decline in metropolitan churchgoing, with the Greater London IA lagging behind England's, albeit the gap between them was narrowing. However, by 1998 Greater London's IA was superior to England's IA (remaining so in 2005), and between 1998 and 2005 aggregate attendances in London rose by 0.83 per cent, despite the IA continuing to fall (to 8.29 in 2005).[107] Then came unexpected growth in London churchgoing, both absolutely and relatively, from 2005 to 2012, with total attendances rising by 15.81 per cent and the IA climbing to 8.67. Underpinning this trend was a gradual reversal of the longstanding shift in the balance of attendances from Inner London to Outer London, as the churchgoing classes sought a brighter future in outlying suburbs. Between 1989 and 2012 Inner London's share of worshippers actually increased from 38.73 per cent to 44.48 per cent.

The primary drivers of these changes were large-scale immigration and heightened ethnic diversity, including rapid development of black majority churches, whose flourishing was in stark contrast to the relative failure of an earlier generation of black immigrants to assimilate into (and be welcomed by) white majority churches.[108] The success of the millennium era migrants was exemplified in the 49.97 per cent increase in Pentecostal worshippers between 2005 and 2012 and of 30.14 per cent for a cluster of 'other denominations' (Independent, New, other Protestant and Orthodox). Several useful case studies of this socio-religious transformation appear in a recent monograph on contemporary London Churches, although the overarching editorial argument for desecularisation is far from proven.[109] Among the mainstream Churches in Table 12, only Baptists effectively held their own in absolute terms between 1979 and 2012. Anglican attendances in Greater London contracted by 39.64 per cent over this period, United Reformed by 59.18 per cent, Methodist by 47.71 per cent and Roman Catholic by 40.58 per cent (Catholic decline concentrated in 1979–2005 before flattening out).

Summary to 2012

The index of attendance (IA) has been our key metric for quantifying London churchgoing, expressing attendances on an average Sunday as a percentage of

[107] In about 1996–7, 400 Londoners were questioned about reasons for church-leaving and likelihood of church-returning: P. Richter and L. Francis, *Gone but not forgotten: church leaving and returning*, London 1998.

[108] C. Hill, *West Indian migrants and the London churches*, London 1963.

[109] Goodhew and Cooper, *Desecularisation of the city*, critiqued in *Modern Believing* lx (2019), 271–3.

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population. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, IAs were erratic, but fewer than half of Londoners attended church weekly and often less than a quarter. A clearer pattern emerges from subsequent religious censuses (*see* Table 13). In Inner London, unadjusted for twicing, the IA in 1851 was one third, falling to one fifth by the turn of the century, when discounted for twicing. Attendance declined further before, during and after the First World War (as revealed by the Black and Mildmay studies) and, adjusted for twicing, the Inner London IA had reached 11.1 in 1989 and 8.9 in 1998 before a small uptick to 9.0 in 2005 and a larger one (principally fuelled by immigration) to 9.9 in 2012. In Greater London, the IA, again adjusted for twicing, halved between 1902–3 and 1979, continuing its shrinkage to 2005 (8.3) before rising to 8.7 in 2012. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, churchgoing rates in London were mostly beneath those in other major British conurbations; not until 1998, 2005 and (presumably) 2012 did London seemingly exceed England's IA (*see* Table 12).

Alongside changing IAs, there has also been redistribution of denominational shares of attendances (*see* Table 14). The Church of England has been the clear loser in this process. In the mid-nineteenth century, and doubtless long before, it commanded a majority position, but it progressively ceded ground to other Protestants thereafter and was overtaken by them around the 1902–3 census. By the early twenty-first century, only one in eight church attenders in Greater London was Anglican. In the twentieth century, other Protestants also lost market share as the historic Free Churches (particularly Methodist and Reformed traditions) contracted sharply, reaching a low of 31.11 in 1979, but the other Protestants sector was then re-energised by newer manifestations of Protestantism, including Pentecostal and black majority churches, which had secured it a majority position by the early twenty-first century. In the nineteenth century, Roman Catholics accounted for almost a tenth of attendances (the low proportion in 1886–7 was the result of undercounting morning masses), their share expanding substantially in the twentieth century until they, too, were affected by churchgoing decline from *c.*1980, their 2012 share being almost half that in 1979.

2012 to present

There has been no English church census since 2005 and no further London census either. Churches no longer have the appetite for ecumenical statistical projects that produce depressingly predictable results. So, what is known about the level of London churchgoing between 2012 and the present?

Five things seem clear. The first is that the pool of potential churchgoers has been reduced by deChristianisation in London. As the decennial

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censuses of 2001–21 have revealed (*see* Table 15), the proportion of professing Christians in the capital has decreased over two decades from 58.23 per cent to 40.66 per cent while religious nones and non-Christians have increased from, respectively, 15.76 per cent to 27.05 per cent and 17.34 per cent to 25.30 per cent.

Secondly, in London as elsewhere, the Covid-19 pandemic adversely affected in-person attendance at church, in that habits of churchgoing were broken by lockdowns and restrictions on public worship in 2020–1 and deaths from the disease disproportionately occurred among the elderly and ethnic minorities who constituted the backbone of most congregations. Alternative online/offline forms of worship showed initial promise during the pandemic but proved relatively unpopular with the faithful and have been progressively withdrawn.

Thirdly, denominations which collect and publish their own attendance statistics confirm ongoing decline in London since 2012. Three examples must suffice. In the Church of England, combined usual Sunday attendance (uSa) of the dioceses of London and Southwark decreased by 8.78 per cent between 2012 (year of last Brierley census) and 2019 (last year before the pandemic). Because of Covid-19, the uSa was not recorded for 2020–1, but when next measured in 2022, it stood 20.07 per cent below the 2019 level. The figure recovered somewhat in 2023 (last year available) but was still 15.85 per cent below 2019 and 23.23 per cent below 2012.[110] In the Methodist Church, collection of attendance data ceased in 2019, but between 2013 and 2019 average congregations in the London district fell by 33.17 per cent on a slightly inconsistent criterion.[111] In the Roman Catholic Church, mass attendance in the dioceses of Westminster and Southwark fell by 10.54 per cent between 2012 and 2019 and 22.77 per cent between 2019 and 2023 (again, the last year available); from 2012 to 2023, the drop was 30.91 per cent.[112]

Fourthly, the large-scale immigration of people of Christian heritage underpinning much of the surge in London churchgoing in the early twenty-first century may not persist. Tighter immigration controls by government in response to the emergence of Reform UK and wider public concerns about legal/illegal migration may reduce the number of arrivals, just as implementation of Brexit curtailed migrants from EU countries. Current data suggest that net migration to the UK has fallen substantially since 2023, while the capital's share of it decreased from nearly half in 2017 to a quarter in 2022–3.

[110] <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/data-services/key-areas-research>.
[111] <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/statistics-for-mission/>.
[112] *Westminster Year Book* and *Southwark Catholic Directory*, 2014, 2021, 2025 edns.

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Fifthly, Brierley, architect of the 1979–2012 censuses, is sceptical about prospects for churchgoing growth. When preparing the 2012 figures, he made a projection for 2020, anticipating an absolute decline in attendances in Greater London of 2.41 per cent over eight years and a fall relative to population (IA) from 8.67 to 7.94 (*see* Table 12).[113] In his chapter on the 2012 census in *The desecularisation of the city* (2019), Brierley swam against the tide of fellow contributors and his editors in counselling: 'It is by no means certain that such growth will continue.'[114] Reviewing the situation in 2025, he thinks that, overall, London church attendance exhibits net decline, notwithstanding pockets of expansion. Black majority churches seem to have lost some of their former momentum and also lost many members from the inner city to suburbs. Brierley adds that the high cost of public transport and of vehicle taxation and parking inhibits travelling large distances to church, particularly into central districts of London.[115]

This appraisal thus points towards the post-2012 era as one of net decline in church attendance in the capital. If we accept Brierley's London IAs of 8.67 in 2012 and estimate of 7.94 in 2020 (*see* Table12), then the likelihood is that churchgoing on an average Sunday in 2025 is 6 per cent (maximum) of the population, but with a broad range from borough to borough. This is a higher proportion than in some other contemporary British cities, testimony to the brief uplift in religious practice around the millennium. Before that, religious census and other evidence synthesised here depicts fairly continuous relative decline (measured by IAs) since the late nineteenth century. The optimistic readings of London's modern religious history proposed by William Jacob, John Wolffe and David Goodhew tend to confuse 'religious vitality' with religious advance. Our statistics of church attendance, a key metric of secularisation, confirm that, so far as this facet of organised Christianity is concerned, metropolitan culture and the secular society have converged.

[113] Brierley, *Capital growth*, 53–6; P. Brierley (ed.), *UK church statistics, 3, 2018 edition, 2012 to 2022*, Tonbridge 2017, 13.7.

[114] Idem, 'The 2012 London church census', in Goodhew and Cooper, *Desecularisation of the city*, 60–85 at p. 66.

[115] E-mails from Brierley, 6 Feb., 12 May 2025.

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APPENDIX

The Statistical Record

Table 1. Church attendance, general congregation and Sunday scholars, Inner London, 1851

Denomination	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Total	IA
Church of England	261,426	76,666	157,135	495,227	20.96
Congregationalists	69,631	6,684	61,863	138,178	5.85
Baptists	32,801	5,466	32,440	70,707	2.99
Presbyterians	10,527	100	7,244	17,871	0.76
Wesleyans	24,507	2,454	23,135	50,096	2.12
Other Methodists	11,242	866	9,048	21,156	0.90
Other Protestants	11,888	3,420	7,044	22,352	0.95
Roman Catholics	36,494	4,660	14,594	55,748	2.36
Orthodox	180			180	0.01
Jews	1,472	539	813	2,824	0.12
Total	**460,168**	**100,855**	**313,316**	**874,339**	**37.01**

Source: *Census of Great Britain, 1851: religious worship, England and Wales*, BPP 1852–3, lxxxix, p. clxxxiv.
Notes: Population 2,362,236. Attendance based upon general congregations and Sunday scholars assembling at same time as general congregations (but not otherwise). Returns of estimated attendance were self-reported by ministers/other officials of each place of worship. However, attendances were not given for fifty-three of 1,097 places of worship for which returns were made in Inner London, thirty-nine of these non-respondents from the Church of England, and no estimates for them have been made. Presbyterians include English and Scottish varieties. Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and Lady Huntingdon's Connexion are included with other Methodists. Typographical/arithmetical error in original total of morning attendances has been corrected.

Table 2. Church attendance, general congregation, Inner London, 1851

Denomination	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Total	IA
Church of England	213,066	61,948	146,393	421,407	17.84
Congregationalists	49,898	4,602	55,169	109,669	4.64
Baptists	26,909	3,725	33,287	63,921	2.71
Presbyterians	12,270	300	10,299	22,869	0.97
Wesleyans	15,828	2,039	21,260	39,127	1.66
Other Methodists	8,158	633	9,367	18,158	0.77
Other Protestants	9,829	2,969	6,919	19,717	0.83
Roman Catholics	54,960	4,399	15,999	75,358	3.19
Orthodox	180			180	0.01
Jews	1,378	451	768	2,597	0.11
Total	**392,476**	**81,066**	**299,461**	**773,003**	**32.72**

Source: TNA, HO 129/1–36.
Notes: Population 2,362,236. Attendance based upon general congregations only, omitting Sunday scholars. Where no estimate of general congregation on 30 March was given, average attendance has been used. Otherwise, no allowance has been made for missing data. Duplicate returns have been identified and weeded out; hence, there are twenty-five fewer places of worship in London than in the religious census parliamentary paper (1,072 compared with 1,097).

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Table 3. Church attendance, general congregation, Inner London, 1851, by registration district

District no.	District name	Population	Churches	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Total	IA
1	Kensington	120,004	56	17,535	4,079	10,806	32,420	27.02
2	Chelsea	56,538	28	11,323	3,067	6,918	21,308	37.69
3	St George Hanover Sq.	73,230	23	13,106	5,039	5,535	23,680	32.34
4	Westminster	65,609	31	12,567	5,153	8,218	25,938	39.53
5	St Martin-in-the-Fields	24,640	15	6,555	817	4,967	12,339	50.08
6	St James Westminster	36,406	14	5,262	823	3,824	9,909	27.22
7	Marylebone	157,696	49	31,165	7,906	19,005	58,076	36.83
8	Hampstead	11,986	12	4,135	929	2,306	7,370	61.49
9	St Pancras	166,956	62	28,954	6,630	23,925	59,509	35.64
10	Islington	95,329	37	17,488	3,397	14,366	35,251	36.98
11	Hackney	58,429	34	14,041	2,618	11,611	28,270	48.38
12	St Giles	54,214	14	8,513	1,606	6,837	16,956	31.28
13	Strand	44,460	17	6,269	1,180	3,960	11,409	25.66
14	Holborn	46,621	21	6,241	1,019	6,555	13,815	29.63
15	Clerkenwell	64,778	18	8,925	1,453	6,395	16,773	25.89
16	St Luke	54,055	22	5,620	1,308	6,380	13,308	24.62
17	East London	44,406	22	5,778	1,619	6,064	13,461	30.31
18	West London	28,790	12	3,583	710	2,950	7,243	25.16
19	City of London	55,932	82	31,418	3,324	11,778	46,520	83.17
20	Shoreditch	109,257	33	7,348	1,496	7,988	16,832	15.41
21	Bethnal Green	90,193	37	7,630	1,263	9,008	17,901	19.85
22	Whitechapel	79,759	30	10,173	1,425	9,936	21,534	27.00
23	St George-in-the-East	48,376	16	3,726	825	4,183	8,734	18.05
24	Stepney	110,775	45	17,607	2,447	16,051	36,105	32.59
25	Poplar	47,162	21	5,213	659	4,591	10,463	22.19
26	St Saviour Southwark	35,731	13	4,314	1,440	4,595	10,349	28.96
27	St Olave Southwark	19,375	12	4,163	1,118	3,317	8,598	44.38
28	Bermondsey	48,128	18	6,004	915	6,327	13,246	27.52
29	St George Southwark	51,824	27	9,854	721	9,324	19,899	38.40

Continued

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Table 3. Continued

District no.	District name	Population	Churches	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Total	IA
30	Newington	64,816	24	8,285	1,494	9,770	19,549	30.16
31	Lambeth	139,325	51	18,942	1,696	18,036	38,674	27.76
32	Wandsworth	50,764	45	13,463	3,821	9,641	26,925	53.04
33	Camberwell	54,667	26	8,069	1,784	5,264	15,117	27.65
34	Rotherhithe	17,805	9	1,445	400	2,158	4,003	22.48
35	Greenwich	99,365	63	20,576	4,366	12,329	37,271	37.51
36	Lewisham	34,835	33	7,186	2,519	4,543	14,248	40.90
	Total	*2,362,236*	*1,072*	*392,476*	*81,066*	*299,461*	*773,003*	*32.72*

Source: TNA, HO 129/1–36.
Notes: See Table 2.

Table 4. Places of worship, Inner London, 1851–1914

Denomination	1851	1865	1886–7	1902–3	1914
Church of England	458	543	841	1,014	1,165
Congregationalists	161	174	256	215	203
Baptists	130	173	266	283	242
Wesleyans	98	96	151	159	141
Other Methodists	62	119	105	116	109
Presbyterians	23	29	62	68	67
Salvation Army			44	93	81
Other Protestants	119	121	533	579	614
Roman Catholics	35	47	71	101	118
Jews	11	14	16	65	70
Total	*1,097*	*1,316*	*2,345*	*2,693*	*2,810*
Population	2,362,236	3,015,494	4,059,000	4,533,600	4,500,000
Population/places of worship	**2,153.36**	**2,291.41**	**1,730.92**	**1,683.48**	**1,601.42**

Sources: (1851 and 1865) *The Nonconformist*, 15 Nov. 1865, 933–40; (1886–7) *The religious census of London, reprinted from 'The British Weekly'*, London 1888; (1902–3) R. Mudie-Smith (ed.), *The religious life of London*, London 1904; (1914) W. Harris and M. Bryant, *The Churches and London*, London [1914], 378–429.

Notes: The area covered comprised the thirty-six districts (in 1851) and the twenty-nine boroughs (at all other dates) of Inner London. Places of worship included churches, chapels and missions. The 1884 statistics were a revision of those published in 1879 by the London Congregational Union and relating to 1878–9. The 1902–3 figures have been calculated afresh by the author and differ slightly from totals published in Mudie-Smith, *Religious life of London*, 447. Other Methodists included Primitive Methodists, Methodist New Connexion, United Methodist Free Churches (and predecessor bodies), Bible Christians and Calvinistic Methodists.

Table 5. Sittings in places of worship, Inner London, 1851–86/7

Denomination	1851	1865	1884	1886–7
Church of England	409,834	512,067	677,645	645,766
Congregationalists	100,436	130,611	172,547	167,942
Baptists	54,234	87,559	136,178	136,823
Wesleyans	44,162	52,454	96,410	98,973
Other Methodists	12,326	34,177	41,995	35,085
Presbyterians	18,231	22,928	32,221	36,675
Salvation Army			35,180	32,830
Other Protestants	37,404	41,757	136,196	153,148
Roman Catholics	18,230	31,100	51,190	47,700
Jews	3,692	5,242	9,230	9,150
Total	**698,549**	**917,895**	**1,388,792**	**1,364,092**
Population	2,362,236	3,015,494	4,019,361	4,059,000
Sittings as % population	29.57	30.44	34.55	33.61

Sources: (1851 and 1865) *The Nonconformist*, 15 Nov. 1865, 933–40; (1884) *The Nonconformist and Independent*, 12 Feb. 1885, supplement, 1–4; (1886–7) *The religious census of London, reprinted from 'The British Weekly'*, London 1888, 52–3 and insert.

Notes: Data refer to the number of sittings in churches, chapels and missions. The 1851 statistics were revised by *The Nonconformist* to take account of omissions from the returns to the official census in 1851. The 1884 statistics were a revision of those published in 1879 by the London Congregational Union and relating to 1878–9. Other Methodists included Primitive Methodists, Methodist New Connexion, United Methodist Free Churches (and predecessor bodies), Bible Christians and Calvinistic Methodists.

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Table 6. Church attendance, Inner London, 1886–7

Denomination	Churches morning	Churches evening	Missions morning	Missions afternoon	Missions evening	Total	IA
Church of England	269,799	265,916	6,049	4,416	16,797	562,977	13.87
Congregationalists	50,051	62,180	1,339	1,948	11,341	126,859	3.13
Baptists	49,188	58,711	3,835	2,375	10,415	124,524	3.07
Presbyterians	14,886	15,541	703	1,061	2,332	34,523	0.85
Wesleyans	33,903	37,538	2,868	2,132	8,093	84,534	2.08
Other Methodists	11,706	12,355	144	36	204	24,445	0.60
Salvation Army			6,987	12,217	25,968	45,172	1.11
Other Protestants	11,597	11,593	12,311	12,144	57,789	105,434	2.60
Roman Catholics	26,090	28,225				54,315	1.34
Orthodox	199					199	0.01
Jews	2,850	1,480				4,330	0.11
Public institutions	12,492	7,465				19,957	0.49
Total	**482,761**	**501,004**	**34,236**	**36,329**	**132,939**	**1,187,269**	**29.25**

Source: *The religious census of London, reprinted from 'The British Weekly'*, London 1888, 52–3 and insert.

Notes: Estimated population 4,059,000. Census was undertaken at morning and evening services on Sunday, 24 October 1886 (churches); and at morning, afternoon and evening services on Sunday, 27 November 1887 (missions). The day of the church census saw many special services, harvest festivals in the Church of England and anniversary services in Nonconformist chapels. In Roman Catholic churches, only Sunday high mass at 11 a.m. was counted, despite every other morning Mass being attended by a distinct congregation; had these earlier morning Masses been enumerated, the *British Weekly* estimated Catholic worshippers would have been treble the number tabulated here.

Table 7. Church attendance, Inner London, 1902–3

Denomination	Morning	Evening	Total	IA
Church of England	220,422	209,400	429,822	9.48
Congregationalists	44,299	61,236	105,535	2.33
Baptists	44,430	64,025	108,455	2.39
Presbyterians	12,078	12,700	24,778	0.55
Wesleyans	31,664	46,475	78,139	1.72
Other Methodists	11,176	17,886	29,062	0.64
Salvation Army	6,927	15,475	22,402	0.49
Other Protestants	27,653	57,331	84,984	1.87
Roman Catholics	73,680	19,892	93,572	2.06
Jews	26,612		26,612	0.59
Total	**498,941**	**504,420**	**1,003,361**	**22.13**

Source: R. Mudie-Smith (ed.), *The religious life of London*, London 1904, 265, 271.

Notes: Population 4,533,600. Census was undertaken, at the principal Sunday morning and evening services, on a staggered basis between 30 November 1902 and 21 June 1903. All Roman Catholic Sunday morning masses were counted. Synagogue attendance was taken on first day in Passover week 1903. Children's services distinct from Sunday schools and held at hour of the main Sunday morning/evening services were recorded but Sunday schools were excluded.

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Table 8. Church attendance, Outer London, 1903

Denomination	Morning	Evening	Total	IA
Church of England	114,073	122,136	236,209	12.20
Congregationalists	25,088	29,326	54,414	2.81
Baptists	23,653	31,024	54,677	2.82
Presbyterians	6,355	6,888	13,243	0.68
Wesleyans	19,092	25,408	44,500	2.30
Other Methodists	9,780	13,695	23,475	1.21
Salvation Army	5,247	11,247	16,494	0.85
Other Protestants	13,628	27,091	40,719	2.10
Roman Catholics	22,743	8,635	31,378	1.62
Total	**239,659**	**275,450**	**515,109**	**26.61**

Source: R. Mudie-Smith (ed.), *The religious life of London*, London 1904, 446, 462.
Notes: Population 1,935,900. Figures incorporate late enumerations of thirty places of worship listed in addenda but omitted from main totals. Census was undertaken in fifty-two districts of Outer London at principal Sunday morning and evening services, on a staggered basis between 19 July and 8 November 1903. All Roman Catholic Sunday morning masses were counted. Children's services distinct from Sunday schools and held at the hour of main Sunday morning/evening services were recorded but Sunday schools were excluded.

Table 9. Church attendance, adjusted for twicing, Inner London and Outer London, 1902–3

Denomination	Morning attendances	Twicers	Evening attendances	Unique Attenders	IA
Inner London					
Church of England	220,422	−53,780	209,400	376,042	8.29
Other Protestants	178,227	−73,610	275,128	379,745	8.38
Roman Catholics	73,680		19,892	93,572	2.06
Jews	26,612			26,612	0.59
Total	**498,941**	**−127,390**	**504,420**	**875,971**	**19.32**
Outer London					
Church of England	114,073	−25,365	122,136	210,844	10.89
Other Protestants	102,843	−39,260	144,679	208,262	10.76
Roman Catholics	22,743		8,635	31,378	1.62
Total	**239,659**	**−64,625**	**275,450**	**450,484**	**23.27**

Source: R. Mudie-Smith (ed.), *The religious life of London*, London 1904, 449–50.
Notes: Population 4,533,600 (Inner London), 1,935,900 (Outer London). Estimates for twicers derive from sixty-nine places of worship, of which forty-eight were in Inner London and twenty-one in Outer London. All were Protestant, including seventeen Church of England. They are unlikely to have constituted a representative sample of all Protestant Churches. It was assumed all Roman Catholics were oncers. It is certain all Jews were oncers.

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Table 10. Church attendance by demographics, Inner London and Outer London, 1902–3

Denomination	Men	Women	Children	Total
Church of England	153,375	292,720	219,422	665,517
Congregationalists	46,820	63,649	48,444	158,913
Baptists	45,205	68,052	49,795	163,052
Wesleyans	34,900	46,361	41,346	122,607
Other Methodists	14,127	17,564	20,503	52,194
Presbyterians	12,150	17,710	8,161	38,021
Salvation Army	11,307	14,494	13,095	38,896
Other Protestants	33,808	47,685	41,963	123,456
Roman Catholics	32,276	55,596	36,885	124,757
Jews	15,157	4,375	7,080	26,612
Total	**399,125**	**628,206**	**486,694**	**1,514,025**

Source: R. Mudie-Smith (ed.), *The religious life of London*, London 1904, 265, 271, 446.
Notes: Population 4,533,600 (Inner London), 1,935,900 (Outer London). Attendances were disaggregated by demographics for every place of worship in the census. This table presents a very compressed summary of the demographic data, giving daily totals for the major denominational groups for Inner London and Outer London combined.

Table 11. Church attendance, eight boroughs/districts, Inner London and Outer London, 1902–3 and 1933–4

Borough/district	Year	Population	Churches	Sittings	Attendance	IA
1	1902–3	319,155	181	95,270	72,002	22.56
	1933–4	321,712	132	81,471	41,123	12.78
2	1902–3	102,309	58	25,780	16,863	16.48
	1933–4	157,748	55	25,134	18,302	11.60
3	1902–3	95,333	52	29,500	21,259	22.30
	1933–4	142,460	47	26,330	15,760	11.06
4	1902–3	116,985	80	39,375	31,500	26.93
	1933–4	147,000	54	28,600	15,480	10.53
5	1902–3	45,007	28	11,160	9,858	21.90
	1933–4	77,652	22	9,960	5,937	7.65
6	1902–3	130,760	83	45,480	27,635	21.13
	1933–4	111,526	49	15,150	4,600	4.12
7	1902–3	82,000	56	27,260	23,273	28.38
	1933–4	88,914	58	29,260	17,315	19.47
8	1902–3	10,850	11	6,500	4,762	43.89
	1933–4	23,362	9	5,200	3,400	14.55
All boroughs	***1902–3***	***902,399***	***549***	***280,325***	***207,152***	***22.96***
	1933–4	**1,070,374**	**426**	**221,105**	**121,917**	**11.39**

Source: Scrutineer, 'Disquieting figures about London', *World Dominion* xii (1934), 415.
Notes: Surveys were taken, each across three Sundays, by Mildmay Movement for World Evangelisation. Comparisons made with *Daily News* religious census of London (1902–3). However, researchers in 1933–4 seem to have adjusted some original totals for churches, population and attendance in 1902–3 to reflect boundary changes between 1902–3 and 1933–4 or because only part of particular boroughs was surveyed in 1933–4. Exact/close correlations between population/attendance for 1902–3 suggest following matches: Islington (1), Shoreditch (2), East Ham (3), Woolwich (4), Edmonton (5), Bermondsey (6), East Barnet (8), with borough 7 unidentified.

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Table 12. Church attendance, Greater London, 1979–2012

Denomination	1979	1989	1998	2005	2012	2020E
Anglican	140,500	98,500	101,100	90,300	84,800	78,800
Baptist	46,600	41,100	45,800	46,200	41,900	43,000
United Reformed	19,600	16,400	16,600	9,300	8,000	6,500
Methodist	35,000	25,900	23,700	20,600	18,300	15,200
Independent	29,800	40,900	24,700	29,800	29,500	29,600
New	8,100	26,500	34,600	39,700	43,200	44,500
Pentecostal	57,500	82,700	93,700	152,700	229,000	237,100
Other Protestant	19,900	18,200	24,100	22,400	48,600	34,000
Roman Catholic	333,700	293,000	237,200	195,400	198,300	193,800
Orthodox	5,300	6,400	16,400	16,600	19,900	21,600
Total	**696,000**	**649,600**	**617,900**	**623,000**	**721,500**	**704,100**
London population	6,824,300	6,751,600	7,065,500	7,519,000	8,320,800	8,867,000
London IA	10.20	9.62	8.75	8.29	8.67	7.94
England IA	11.65	9.97	7.61	6.26		

Sources: All written/edited by P. Brierley: *UK Christian handbook: religious trends, no. 2, 2000/01*, London 1999, 12.17; *UK Christian handbook: religious trends, no. 6, 2006/2007*, London 2006, 12.46; *Capital growth: what the 2012 London church census reveals*, Tonbridge 2013, 57; *UK church statistics, number 2, 2010 to 2020*, Tonbridge 2014, 12.0–12.17; 'The 2012 London church census', in D. Goodhew and A.-P. Cooper (eds), *The desecularisation of the city*, London 2019, 60–85 at p. 67. Additionally, Brierley compiled reports on 1979 and 1989 censuses giving somewhat different statistics from the above: *Prospects for the eighties*, London 1980–3, i. 65; ii. 74–5; *Prospects for the nineties*, London 1991, 285–335; *London, borough by borough*, London [1992]; *Churchgoers in England, district by district*, London [1995], 7–8.

Notes: Area covered was Greater London (Inner London and Outer London). Censuses excluded non-Trinitarian Churches. Churchgoers comprised children (including Sunday scholars) and adults. Figures incorporated estimates for missing and defective returns and were adjusted for twicing. IAs recalculated by present author based on official mid-year population estimates. Statistics for 2020 estimates made by Brierley at time of 2012 census.

Table 13. Index of church attendance, London, 1851–2012

	Inner London	Outer London	Greater London
Unadjusted for twicing			
1851	32.7		
1886–7	29.3		
1902–3	22.1	26.6	23.5
Adjusted for twicing			
1902–3	19.3	23.3	20.5
1979			10.2
1989	11.1	8.9	9.6
1998	8.9	8.5	8.7
2005	9.0	7.9	8.3
2012	9.9	8.1	8.7

Sources: Tables 2, 6–9, 12 above; P. Brierley (ed.), *UK church statistics, 4, 2021 edition*, Tonbridge 2020, 13.

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Table 14. Denominational shares (percentages) of church attendance, London, 1851–2012

	Church of England	Other Protestants	Roman Catholics
Inner London			
1851	54.52	35.38	9.75
1886–7	49.10	45.95	4.57
1902–3	42.84	45.18	9.33
Greater London			
1902–3	43.86	46.16	8.23
1979	20.19	31.11	47.95
1989	15.16	38.75	45.10
1998	16.36	42.60	38.39
2005	14.49	51.48	31.36
2012	11.75	58.00	27.48

Source: Tables 2, 6–8, 12 above.
Note: Orthodox and Jews not shown.

Table 15. Religious profession (percentages), Greater London, census of population, 2001–21

	2001	2011	2021
Christian	58.23	48.42	40.66
Buddhist	0.76	1.00	0.88
Hindu	4.07	5.03	5.15
Jewish	2.09	1.82	1.65
Muslim	8.46	12.39	14.99
Sikh	1.45	1.54	1.64
Other religion	0.51	0.59	0.99
No religion	15.76	20.73	27.05
Not stated	8.66	8.47	7.00

Source: England and Wales 2001 census, table ST103; 2011 census, table KS209EW; 2021 census, table TS030; all at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>.

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