

Sociological theme: Religious belief

Source: <http://www.mori.com/polls/2003/bbc-heavenandearth-top.shtml>

Key skills:

Communication and application of number

Sociological skill:

Knowledge, understanding and interpretation

Beliefs in various religious and spiritual things

Results are based on 1001 interviews conducted by telephone with a representative sample of British adults, aged 16+

What We Believe In Now?

<i>Q2a Which, if any, of the following would you say best describes you?</i>	
	%
I am a practising member of an organised religion	18
I am a non-practising member of an organised religion	25
I am spiritually inclined but don't really "belong" to an organised religion	24
I am agnostic (not sure if there's a God)	14
I am atheist (convinced there's no God)	12
None of these	7
Don't know	1

<i>Q2b Which, if any, of the things I am going to read out do you believe in?</i>						
	February 1998			August 2003		
	Yes %	No %	DK %	Yes %	No %	DK %
God	64	26	10	60	29	11
Life after death	45	42	13	47	43	10
A soul	67	24	9	68	27	6
Heaven	54	37	9	52	40	8
Astrology	38	53	9	31	66	4
Ghosts	40	52	8	38	56	6
Telepathy	54	37	9	42	51	7
Guardian Angels	31	61	8	40	56	4
Premonitions/ESP	64	29	7	54	41	6
Fortune telling/ Tarot	18	75	7	13	83	4
Deja-vu	66	30	4	57	38	5
Out of body experience	31	58	11	32	61	7
Reincarnation	24	64	12	23	68	9
Hell	n/a	n/a	n/a	32	62	6
Near-death experience	51	37	12	60	34	7
Psychics/ Mediums	28	63	9	28	66	6
Faith healers	32	56	12	24	68	8
That dreams can predict the future	30	60	10	25	69	6

Questions: Knowledge and Interpretation

1. How many respondents took part in this survey?
2. What percentage of those questioned said they were a practicing member of an organised religion?
3. Why do you think the non-practicing members still count themselves as being part of that religion (e.g. traditional reasons or social pressure)?
4. Would you say that these results are typical of the population at large?
5. What percentage of people said they were spiritual but that they do not belong to an organised religion?
6. What percentage of people said they do not believe in God?
7. What percentage of people said that they are agnostic?
8. What percentage of respondents said they believe in God?
9. Although a higher proportion believe in God only 52% believe in Heaven which shows that many theists are neither Muslims nor Christians – what is meant by the term 'theist'?
10. What percentage of people said believe in souls? What does this suggest?
11. Which of the beliefs mentioned in the answers to Q2b are seen as being New Age beliefs?
12. Describe the main patterns and trends that you can discover in the table for Q2b.

Questions: Analysis and evaluation

Outline the main changes in religious belief between February 1998 and August 2003. What reasons could be put forward for these changes?

What evidence can you find in the tables to show an increase in New Age beliefs among people in Britain?

