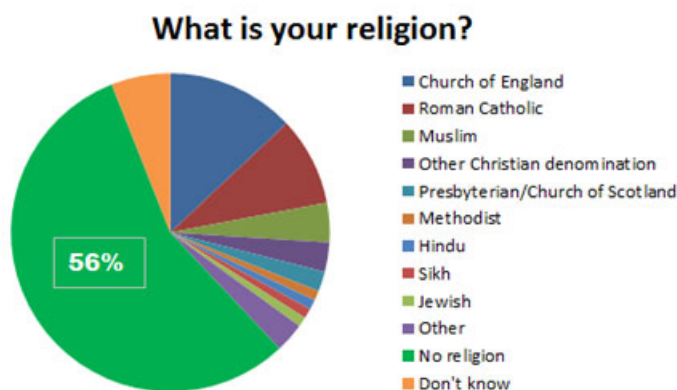


## Survey shows Christians outnumbered by those with ‘no religion’

ALMOST HALF of the adult population in England and Wales now claims to have no religion, although the number of Catholics has remained stable, according to a new analysis, writes Carina Murphy.



The report, The “No Religion” Population of Britain, shows that the proportion of the population who identify in the British and European Social Attitudes surveys as having no religion has reached 48.6 per cent, compared to the 43.8 per cent who identify themselves as Christian – Catholics, Anglicans and other denominations.

The Catholic Church seems better at retaining people, due to “a sense of cultural Catholicism” and the time spent on sacramental preparation, according to Professor Stephen Bullivant, director of the Benedict XVI

Centre for Religion and Society at St Mary’s University, London, who analysed the data.

Catholicism in Britain has also benefited from immigration, particularly by the Polish, Spanish and Irish, he added. The number of Catholics has remained steady at around 9 per cent. Catholic strongholds are East Anglia (17 per cent) and the North West (14 per cent), while the least Catholic areas are the South East (4 per cent), the East Midlands (5 per cent) and Wales (5 per cent).

However, inner-city London is one of the most religious areas in the country due to its diverse population of migrant communities.

Professor Bullivant also highlighted/ the significant growth in “nonverts” – people who were brought up with religion and now identify as non-religious. But, underlining the complexity of nonreligious identity in Britain, almost three in every five non-religious affirm some level of personal religiosity above “none at all”. Of this group 2.8 million say they pray monthly or more often./ The survey also shows that the proportion of self-describing Anglicans in Britain has more than halved, from 40 per cent in 1983, down to 17 per cent in 2015.