

BY PROFESSOR STEVE BRUCE AND TONY GLENDINNING, SOCIAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Measuring religiosity is difficult. Even if we leave aside a range of conceptual problems and focus just on communal religious activity (which in England will most likely be churchgoing), different methods of enquiry produce very different results. Asking survey respondents directly if they went to church the previous week can produce figures almost twice as high as those arrived by asking clergy to count and report attendances. Here we report some arguably more reliable findings from the UK Time Use Survey (TUS).¹

The TUS survey offers a uniquely detailed daily account of the ways in which English people use their time. The survey was based on a national sample of households selected at random. Every adult in each household — which is important for examining the extent to which partners cooperate — was provided with two diaries. First, they were asked to record their activities for either a Saturday or a Sunday. Second, they were asked to record their activities for one randomly selected weekday.

Diarists recorded their main and secondary activities for each of 144 separate 10-minute blocks on the two designated days, starting from 4:00 am - 4:10 am in the morning to 3:50 am - 4:00 am the next morning. They also recorded with whom and where the activity took place. Diaries were completed without any survey field workers being present. Fieldwork took place over an extended period in 2000 and 2001 until a sample of diaries had been collected for each day of the year so that any “typical day” was covered.

In broad terms, some 6,500 weekend (and a corresponding number of weekday) adult diaries are available for analysis. Samples of households and individual diarists can be weighted to be representative of the general population in England using the 2001 Census as a benchmark. In addition, samples of diaries can be weighted to produce comparable aggregate distributions across the seven days of the week.

The records in each diary were coded up by the research team afterwards using standardised nested schema. Care was taken to separate out activities and practices such as “meditation” which according to diarists had been done for reasons of personal wellbeing and relaxation and which, unlike time spent on personal prayers for example, diarists had not recorded as being “religious” either as a primary or a secondary activity.

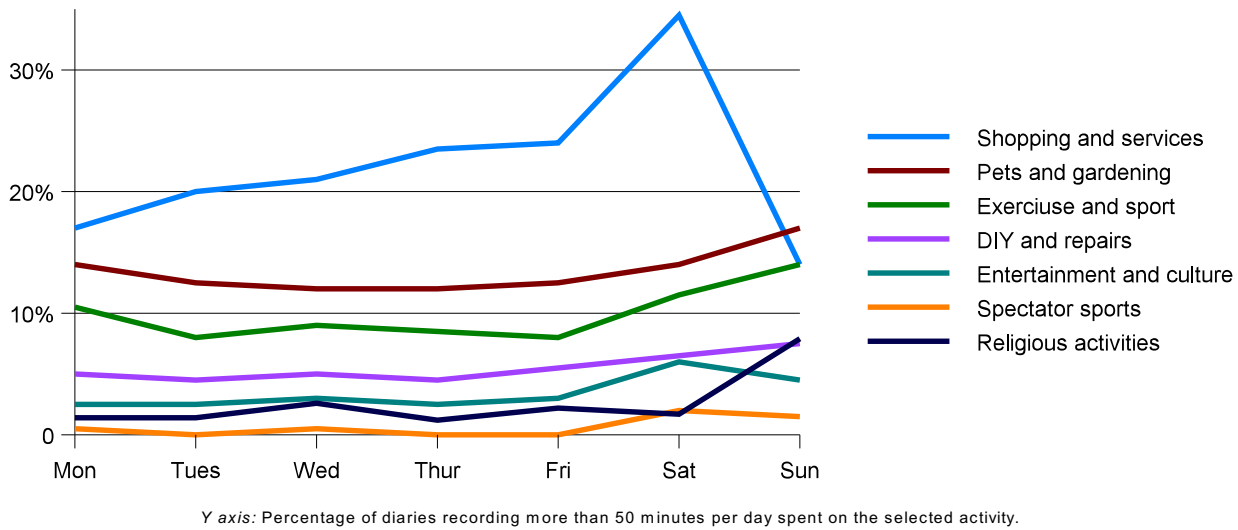
The dependent variable in our analysis is religious activity which can be characterised in a number of ways. First, the number of minutes spent on any form of religious activity at all on the day the diary was kept can be totalled. That total is split up into three categories: “none”, “between 10 and 50 minutes” or else “more than 50 minutes”. Second, computer programs were written to produce counts of episodes and amounts of time spent doing religion when alone or in the company of others, and more particularly at places of worship. In sum, the TUS study design allows the analysis of people’s typical religious activity on a daily basis, set in its social context because diarists were also interviewed separately about their households and circumstances. Children from eight years of age and above also kept diaries in a different format.

Figure 17.5.1 on the next page shows the TUS diary records for the amount of time spent on religious activities on different days of the week as compared to other activities such as shopping, pet-care and gardening, physical exercise and sport, DIY and repairs, going to the cinema, theatre, concerts, museums and galleries or attendance of sporting events as a spectator. Shopping stands out among the various activities represented in Figure 17.5.1, peaking at 35% of diaries which record an hour at least on that activity on Saturday but then dipping to 14% of diaries on Sunday.

The only activity which appears consistently less popular than engaging in an hour of religious activity across the week between Monday and Saturday is attending a sporting event, and even then, spectator sports top religion on Saturdays. Religious activity is much more prevalent on Sundays (7.9% of diaries record an hour or more on that day). Religion eclipses spectator sports, cinema, theatre, concerts, galleries and museums or undertaking DIY and repairs as a Sunday activity, but not other popular Sunday activities, such as gardening. Of course, religious and other activities, such as shopping and sport, are no longer mutually exclusive on Sundays in England.

The TUS estimates in Table 17.5.1 show that only 10.2% of diaries record 10 minutes at least of religion during Sundays as either a primary or secondary activity.² Table 17.5.1 also shows us that diaries record either no time at all or else a significant amount of time on religion on a Sunday: only 2.3% of diaries lie in between the two, recording more than a minute but less than an hour. Table 17.5.1 also shows very little weekday religious activity: as few as 4.5% of diaries record any on Wednesdays and Fridays and about 2.5% record any for Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. It is important to realise that “religious activity” here includes anything at all which could be coded as “religious”: not just attending services or meetings associated with one’s religion, but also praying alone and watching or listening to religious programming. Looked at the other way round, the weighted TUS estimates in Table 17.5.1 suggest that almost 90% of adults in England do no religious activity at all on a Sunday; more than 95% do none on Saturdays, Fridays or Wednesdays; and some 98% do none on Thursdays, Tuesdays or Mondays.

Figure 17.5.1: Selected activities undertaken for more than 50 minutes on the day the diary was kept



Notes: Weighted by diaries, N = 14,140. Watching TV and pre-recorded media was ubiquitous, and so is not included in Figure 17.5.1. Most diaries record an hour at least of viewing on a weekday (81%), slightly less on Saturdays (79%) but more on Sundays (86%). Source: UK Time Use Survey, age 16+ years, England

Table 17.5.1: Proportions of diaries which record more or less religious activity by the day the diary was kept

Length	Day of the Week						
	Monday %	Tuesday %	Wednesday %	Thursday %	Friday %	Saturday %	Sunday %
None	97.4	97.5	95.5	97.5	95.5	96.5	89.8
10 to 50 mins	1.2	1.1	1.9	1.3	2.4	1.8	2.3
More than 50	1.4	1.4	2.6	1.2	2.2	1.7	7.9
Base (= 100%)	1,989	2,042	2,050	2,011	2,001	2,007	2,041

Weighted by diaries, N = 14,141. Using individual rather than diary weights the estimates for any religious activity on a Sunday are: None, 90.2%; Between 10 to 50 minutes, 2.3%; and More than 50 minutes, 7.7% (N = 3,272). Source: UK Time Use Survey, age 16+ years, England.

Rather than provide an aggregate picture of all religious activity on a daily basis, Figure 17.5.2 and Table 17.5.2 match the individual entries of TUS diarists on a Sunday with the entries of those same diarists on a randomly selected weekday, that is Sunday with Monday, or Sunday with Tuesday, or Sunday with Wednesday and so on. Individual diarists' entries can be matched throughout both days, 10-minute by 10-minute interval, beginning from 4:00 am through to 3:50 am the next morning. The TUS sample of Sunday diarists is weighted to be nationally representative of England.

Figure 17.5.2: 24-hour log in 10-minute intervals of religious activity recorded by the same diarist on a Sunday and on a matching weekday

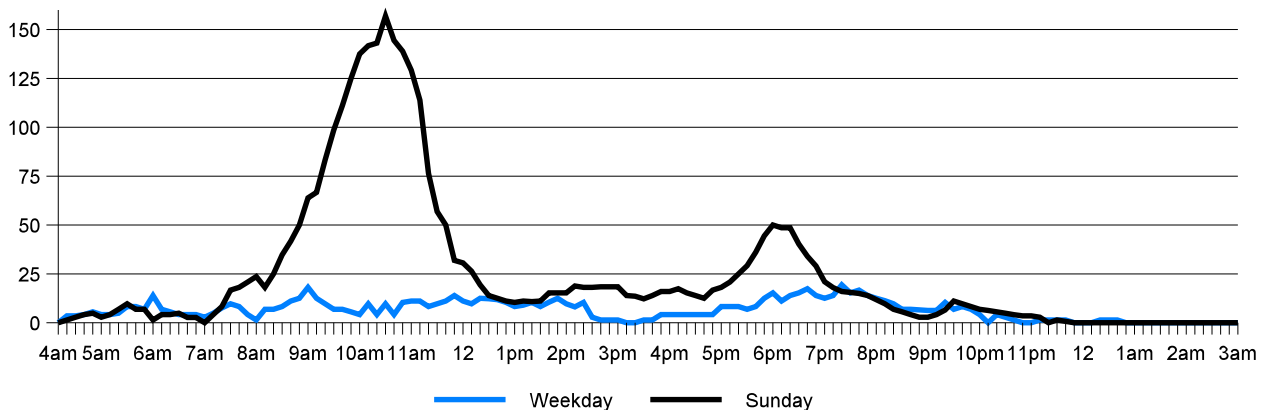


Table 17.5.2: Proportions of diarists recording more or less time on religious activities on a Sunday compared to a randomly selected weekday

	Length of time	Sunday			Total %
		None %	10 to 50 mins %	More than 50 mins %	
Week-days	None	89.2	1.4	5.9	96.5
	10 to 50 mins	0.4	0.6	0.5	1.5
	More than 50	0.6	0.1	1.3	2.0
	Total	90.2	2.1	7.7	100.0

Paired weighted by individuals, N = 3,272.
Source: Figure 17.5.2 & Table 17.5.2: UK Time Use Survey, age 16+ years, England

The peak of religious activity for the week is at 11:00 am on Sunday morning, with a lesser peak at 18:30-19:00 pm on Sunday evening. There is markedly less religious activity recorded by diarists on weekdays, with only minor increases at around 9:30 am in the morning and 19:30 pm in the evening. Table 17.5.2 follows up on Figure 17.5.2 by comparing the total amount of time spent on religious activities on a weekday with the total amount spent by the same diarist on a Sunday. More than 90% of diarists spend no time at all on religious activities on either a weekday or a Sunday. The only other constituency which stands out are those diarists who record no time at all on a weekday but about an hour or more spent on religion on a Sunday, which represents some 6% of our total sample. Conversely, it is also worth noting that those diarists who focus their religious activities on weekdays rather than on Sundays amount to less than 1%. Finally, as a religious core, Table 17.5.2 shows that a little over 1% of diarists record spending an hour or more on religious activities both on a weekday and on a Sunday.

Table 17.5.3 illustrates the distribution of personal and communal religious activity across diaries for different days of the week. It also shows the extent of religious activity done at a place of worship (which is more than 95% in company). Only about 1% of diaries record religion done alone (eg time spent in personal prayer) on any day of the week, whether or not diarists also attend communal services. And there is in fact negligible communal activity during weekdays, or on a Saturday, but as already noted, activity on those days is low even when measured more inclusively as relating to any religious activity whatsoever accumulated as the total number of minutes per day.

Table 17.5.3: Proportions of diaries which record more than 50 minutes of religious activity done: (a) alone; (b) in the company of others; and (c) at a place of worship, by the day the diary was kept.

Where ?	Length of time	Day of the week						
		Monday %	Tuesday %	Wedn'day %	Thursday %	Friday %	Saturday %	Sunday %
Alone	None	99.0	99.1	98.8	99.0	98.6	99.1	98.9
	Any time at all	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.4	0.9	1.1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
In company	None	98.2	98.2	96.1	98.0	96.1	96.9	90.5
	10 - 50 mins	0.7	0.5	1.4	1.1	2.1	1.5	1.9
	More than 50	1.1	1.3	2.5	0.9	1.8	1.6	7.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
At a place of worship	None	99.5	99.4	98.4	98.7	97.6	97.8	91.5
	10 - 50 mins	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.7	1.3	1.0	1.4
	More than 50	0.2	0.5	1.0	0.6	1.1	1.2	7.1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Base (= 100%)		1,989	2,041	2,049	2,012	2,001	2,007	2,040

Weighted by diaries, N = 14,139. Using individual rather than diary weights the estimate for more than 50 minutes of collective activity on Sunday is 7.4% and for more than 50 minutes spent at a place of worship on Sunday is 6.9% (N = 3,272). Using individual weights an estimate for more than 50 minutes of collective activity on a weekly basis comes to 8.5% and for more than 50 minutes spent at a place of worship to 8% of the total sample (N = 6,608). Source: UK Time Use Survey, age 16+ years, England.

Comparisons of the figures in the final columns of Tables 17.5.1 and 17.5.3 show that the estimate of religion on a Sunday drops from 7.9% for more than 50 minutes of any activity throughout the day whether alone or not to 7.6% for more than 50 minutes of collective activity and 7.1% for more than 50 minutes spent at a place of worship. Those estimates become 7.7%, 7.4% and 6.9% respectively, when re-calculated using the weighted TUS sample of Sunday diarists, so as to be nationally representative. It is also possible to estimate a weekly rate for more than 50 minutes of religious activity done in company and at a place of worship by combining the records of diarists on weekdays and at the weekend.³

Once diarists' data have been weighted appropriately we obtain total weekly figures of 8.5% and 8.0% respectively. Looking at continuous episodes of more than 50 minutes of communal religion our total weekly figure comes to 8.25%. Estimates from comparable 2001 British Social Attitudes (BSA) data, which are based on BSA survey participants' reports in structured interview format with a fieldworker about their attendance of services and meetings connected with their religion, stand at 12.5% of the adult population in England when those BSA data are also weighted for representativeness.⁴ The BSA face-to-face interview estimate is at least 50% greater than the TUS personal diary estimate for weekly worship.

Analysis of the TUS data is difficult but our main findings as regard what proportion of the population engage in any sort of religious activity can be summarised as follows. There is little religion of any form practised, public or private. Less than 11% of adults in England engage in any religious activity whatsoever (including personal prayers and meditation and consuming mass media religious programming) of any duration at any point during a typical week. Only 8.25% of adults engage in any episodes of communal practice in the company of others. Less than 7% attend church on a Sunday. Read the other way round – 7% going to church on Sunday, 8% doing some communal religion and 11% doing any religion at all – these data offer little support for the claim that the decline of conventional church-going has been offset by an increase in alternative religious activities.

NOTES

1) Short, S. (2006), *Review of the UK Time Use Survey*. London: Office for National Statistics. TUS includes smaller samples of Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish participants but to clarify the analysis these have been omitted [Un-weighted Ns: 719 out of 4,092 Saturday diarists, and 700 out of 4,017 Sunday diarists].

2) It is interesting to observe that religious activity is greatest on a Sunday for all ethnic groups, including South Asians.

3) We have to interpolate an estimate for those diarists who were active on Saturday only. The study design means direct comparison cannot be made between diarists' Saturday and Sunday activity at the individual level.

4) BSA weighted Ns: total = 2,769; weekly = 271; fortnightly = 167; monthly = 141; biannually = 286; annually = 153; less often = 108. Weekly estimate = $(271 \times 1 + 167 \times .5 + 141 \times .25 + 286 \times .04 + \dots)$ 2,769 = 0.125.