



# **Anglo-Indian Religion Research**

**A project to understand the role of religion in Anglo-Indian identity, today and yesterday**

## **Report of Survey Results**

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## ANGLO-INDIAN RELIGION RESEARCH REPORT ON SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 515<sup>1</sup> Anglo-Indians of all ages, from India and all around the world, responded to the survey that we ran from early December 2012 until the end of April 2013. It provides a revealing overview of the place of religion in the lives of Anglo-Indians. In what follows, we will outline the methods we used, the demographic data we obtained, and some of the most interesting and significant findings.

### METHOD

We created a WordPress (WP) website (<http://angloindianreligionresearch.net>) to provide information about the project, along with a dedicated FaceBook page (<https://www.facebook.com/AngloIndianReligionResearch>) which advertised the project and directed people to the WP site. The survey itself was hyperlinked to the WP site. Respondents completed the survey either electronically, using Qualtrics survey software hosted by Massey University, or by filling in paper forms. The paper forms were distributed around the time of the World Anglo-Indian Reunion in Kolkata, and in Asansol in early February, and were completed mainly by rest-home residents, school and university students, and at two community housie sessions. A little under half (206 of the 454) were completed as paper copies, which were later entered electronically into the Qualtrics survey database. After the survey closed we used the software programme SPSS (Statistics Package for the Social Sciences) to organise and analyse the resulting data.

### REPRESENTATION

Of the respondents 295 (63.3%) were domiciled in India (mostly in West Bengal – because we distributed paper copies of the surveys there – but the survey also reached others places including Agra, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Devlali, Goa, Hyderabad, Jamshedpur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Pondicherry, Pune, Ramchandapur, Secunderabad, and Visakhapatnum) while 171 (36.7%) were overseas residents. Of those from abroad 87 were from Australia, 26 from both the United Kingdom and Canada, 14 from the United States, eight from New Zealand, three from the United Arab Emirates, and one each from Denmark, Germany,

Portugal, the Philippines, Singapore and Mexico. With 222 male (47.5%) and 245 female (52.5%) respondents, a good gender balance was achieved. The age of the respondents ranged widely from secondary school children to rest home residents in their nineties, as can be seen in the table below.

Age Groups (years)	Number of Respondents	Percentage of total Respondents
16 – 25	48	10%
26 – 35	33	6.9 %
36 – 45	53	11 %
46 – 55	84	17.5 %
56 – 65	118	24.6 %
66 – 75	94	19.6 %
76 – 85	40	8.3 %
86 – 95	8	1.7 %
96 and above	2	0.4 %

## FINDINGS

**Schooling:** Of those who responded at least 80% had ‘completed secondary schooling’ and most of the rest had ‘some secondary schooling’. 377 respondents (80.9%) said they had attended (or were attending) a church-based school. Almost all of those who had been to, or were attending, church-based schools reported that school had influenced their religious beliefs and practices. Interestingly, the Loreto schools accounted for 64 out of the 186 (34%) female respondents’ schooling, indicating that the Loreto schools have had a significant influence over the survey respondents. There was more variety than this in the schools that male respondents had attended.

**Religious affiliation:** 457 (94.8%) identify with ‘a particular religion’, with 455 (99.3%) of these identifying as Christian. Of these, an overwhelming majority, 355 (82.8%), stated that they identify as Catholic. Breaking this figure down further reveals that in India 88.5% of respondents are Catholic, while 74.6% of those living out of India are Catholic. Of the non-Catholics, 7.6% are Anglican (28 of the 34 identifying as Anglican,

living out of India), 3.9% CNI or CSI (all except two of these are living in India), 1.9% identify as Assembly of God (AG), and there were another 4.5% who were either Methodist (one respondent), Baptist (two respondents), Presbyterian (one respondent) or 'other' (ten respondents, about equal number in India and abroad).

### *FAITH PRACTICES*

**Church service attendance:** Of those who identify with a religion, a very substantial 75% (337) responded that they attend a service at least once a week. It is interesting to note the difference in church attendance between respondents living in India and those living abroad. The breakdown of figures for religious service attendance is below:

<b>How often do you attend religious services?</b>	Living in India	Living abroad	Total
Almost every day	24	7	31
More than once a week	36	17	53
Once a week	183	61	244
Most weeks	12	13	25
About once a month	17	10	27
Once or twice a year (e.g. on festivals)	9	25	34
Only for weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc.	6	12	18
Never or practically never	4	4	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>440</b>

We looked at the figures of those living out of India and broke them down further by their country of residence. While we don't have sufficient data to draw statistically significant conclusions, there were some interestingly tendencies. For example, it seems that Anglo-Indians in Canada are much more likely to attend church services than Anglo-Indians in the United Kingdom.

We also looked at the combinations of denomination differences with country of residence and it appears that there are significant trends in practices. For example,

while 83% of those who identify as Catholic and live in India are likely to be weekly or more frequent church attendees, 57% of the Catholics living outside India are 'once a week' or more mass attendees.

While regular church attendance is lower for respondents living outside of India than in India, they attend church very much more often than the rest of the population in the countries that Anglo-Indians are mostly living in. For example, a 2011 survey of Australian Catholics shows that only 12.5% attend mass weekly.<sup>2</sup> So Anglo-Indian migrants are four times more likely to be weekly church-goers than Australian Catholics.

While whether one lives in India or not does seem to be significant, respondents living outside India nevertheless reported, in the main, that migrating had little impact on their faith practices, when responding to the question phrased: 'Did your faith practices change after leaving India?'. 71% said their faith practices had not changed and 28.4% said that they had. In response to the question, 'In what ways were your faith practices changed?' some of the reasons given for the changes were:

Mass here is not as frequent as in India. The Christian culture here is very much different. There are no Christmas carol groups going house to house. No cribs for Christmas. Not many Anglo-Indian families to have get-togethers or parties with. (Female, New Zealand, 16-25 years old)

I'm more able to practise it because I don't have to hide it, or worry about Hindu/Islamic sensibilities. (Male, New Zealand, 56-65 years old)

Stopped going to church regularly. (Male, USA, 66-75 years old)

More keen to live an outwardly Christian life as this country becomes less Christian by the day. (Female, UK, 46-55 years old)

I was affected by the secular nature of the society I now lived in. I perceived that Christianity was not practiced with the fervour and traditions as it was in India. (Male, Australia, 66-75 years old)

We also looked at attendance in terms of age and of gender. Neither seem to be determining factors in attendance at religious services. On the whole, male and female respondents attend religious services with nearly equal frequency. Among those who reported they are daily church-goers, women do have a very slight majority. Among

those who reported they only go to church once or twice a year, men had a very slight majority. Age also proved to have virtually no correlation to attendance at religious services, as there was near uniformity of service attendance across all age groups.

**Practices in respondents' wider family:** We also asked about the religious practice of respondents' wider family. Virtually every Anglo-Indian family (96%) has at least 'some' practicing family members, with 76.9% reporting that 'most' family members practice a religion. Of the Christian denominations practiced, respondents overwhelmingly practiced Catholicism, at 84.9%. The next most significant in number were the Anglican practitioners at 7.5% (and 1.8% of CNI or CSI, and 2% Assembly of God). Not surprisingly, those who identified as Anglican, rather than CNI or CSI, mostly lived outside India.<sup>3</sup>

We specifically asked about the church attendance of respondents' children. The results indicated that 84% of Indian-resident respondents reported that 'all' of their children attend church services regularly, and an additional 10% said 'some' of their children do. The vast majority of their children are regular churchgoers. By contrast, only 25% of respondents in the diaspora claimed that 'all' of their children are regular churchgoers, but an additional one-third (33%) reported that 'some' of their children are. Virtually no respondents resident in India reported that 'none' of their children attend religious services regularly, but a full 33% of Anglo-Indians in other countries did.

**Roles and responsibilities:** Of those who do identify with a religion about one third (34.9%) take a role or responsibility in a religious organisation. This figure is about the same in India as abroad. Many Anglo-Indians are involved in liturgical ministries such as usher/greeter, lector, Eucharistic choir member or instrumentalist. Anglo-Indians both abroad and in India often volunteer in church leadership roles such as parish council, finance and vestry committees, or as catechists. Many engage in charitable work such as visiting the sick, or serving in established charities such as St. Vincent de Paul. Anglo-Indian women both in India and Canada report taking on leadership in the Catholic Women's League of each country respectively. Those resident in India, appear especially likely to be involved in prayer and faith sharing groups, charismatic prayer groups (e.g., centred on the Sacred Heart Devotion), sodalities, confraternities,

bible studies and the Legion of Mary, when compared with their counterparts living outside India. This suggests that Anglo-Indian religiosity in India is expressed in more social rather than private forms of prayer and devotion.

**Change of denomination:** The responses to our question about changes in denomination indicated that 20.4% of respondents had family members (or had themselves) changed denomination. The changes were reportedly from Catholic to non-Catholic, almost as often as from non-Catholic to Catholic. Of those who had changed denomination, the reasons for the change were almost equally split between 'marriage to someone from a different denomination' (37.2%) and 'because of their beliefs' (40.4%). Another option provided was 'As a result of the school you/they attended' which was selected by just 1.1% of respondents. 19% selected 'other' reasons for the change in denomination, with elaborations such as disillusionment with clergy or church doctrines, and feeling more comfortable in other religious establishments. One woman said that "after 6 sons Great Gran prayed for a daughter and promised to become Roman Catholic". Presumably she had a daughter, and changed denomination.

**Change of religion:** 43 (9%) of the survey respondents said they had relatives (which could include non-Anglo-Indians who had married into their family) who had changed religions. Of these, the majority (28 altogether) said they had changed because of 'marriage to someone of another religion'. There were seven cases of non-Christians becoming Christian, fourteen changed from Christianity to Islam, eight from Christianity to Hinduism, and there was also one who changed to Buddhism.

## CONCLUSION

Based on our sample of 515 respondents from India and the Anglo-Indian diaspora it appears that the claim that 'all Anglo-Indians are Christians' is largely accurate. Not only were our respondents almost entirely Christian, they also mostly *practice* their faith. Particularly in India they are regular and frequent church goers, and even outside of India their church going practices are far more frequent than the general population of Christians in the countries in which they live. The trend that is even stronger than we anticipated is the number of Anglo-Indians in our sample who are Catholic, particularly in India. We are now beginning phase two of this research in which we will

explore some of the trends that we have uncovered in this this first phase, the survey. We are extremely grateful to all of those Anglo-Indians who assisted us in this research by responding to the survey.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 515 that were started 454 were completed in full.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference – Office of Pastoral research, "A Profile of the Catholic Community of Australia", (2011), <http://pro.catholic.org.au/pdf/ACBC%20PRO%20Catholic%20profile%202013.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The CNI (Church of North India) and CSI (Church of South India) were formed several decades ago to include several protestant denominations, chief among them what had earlier been known in India as the Anglican Church or Church of England.