

MANY BRITS LOOK TO FAITH DURING LOCKDOWN

3 May 2020

- Nearly half of adults in the UK (44%) say they pray
- A quarter (24%) of UK adults say they have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown
- Over half of those who pray (56%) agree that prayer changes the world

Prayer is a vital part of life for the public, with just under half of UK adults (44%) saying they pray, and among those who pray a third (33%) say that they have prayed since the COVID-19 lockdown because they believe it makes a difference, according to a new nationwide poll of 2,101 UK adults by Savanta ComRes¹ for Christian relief & development agency Tearfund.

With churches being closed due to restrictions on social gatherings, thousands of churches are streaming their services online. A quarter (24%) of UK adults say they have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown (on the radio, live on TV, on demand or streamed online), this jumps to three quarters (76%) amongst regular churchgoers. One in twenty UK adults (5%) who say they have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown have never gone to church.

A third (34%) of UK adults aged 18-34 say they have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown (on the radio, live on TV, on demand or streamed online) this compares to one in five (19%) adults aged 55+.

While some may view religion as more appealing to the older generation, the research shows that younger adults aged 18-34 are significantly more likely to say they pray regularly (at least once a month) than adults aged 55 and over (30% vs. 25%).

When it comes to popular topics of prayer among those who say they pray, over half (53%) say they've prayed about family members, a quarter (27%) have prayed for frontline services and one in five (20%) say they have prayed for someone who is unwell with COVID-19. Just over a sixth of those who pray (15%) say they have prayed for other countries with COVID-19, highlighting the challenge for Tearfund to encourage more people to pray for global issues.

The new findings on prayer reveal a strong belief in the power of prayer to bring about positive change in the world. Among those who pray, two thirds (66%) say they agree that God hears their prayers and over half (56%) say they agree that prayer changes the world. Half of those who pray (51%) agree that they've witnessed answers to their own prayers and over two fifths (43%) agree that their prayer changes the lives of people living in poverty in developing countries.

Dr. Ruth Valerio, Global Advocacy and Influencing Director at Tearfund says: "It is encouraging to see the number of people in the UK praying during such a challenging time. Our experience at Tearfund is that prayer and practical action go hand-in-hand, and are both crucial ways of responding. With COVID-19 rates continuing to rise around the world, we are calling more people to pray and take action."

Alongside praying for the situation, Tearfund are responding to the coronavirus pandemic around the world by providing crucial hygiene and sanitation assistance to minimise the risk of infection. To find out more about Tearfund's work and to make a donation, please visit www.tearfund.org/covidinfo.

Other findings from poll include:

- A quarter of UK adults (26%) say they pray regularly (at least once a month).
- One in twenty (5%) of UK adults say they have started praying during the lockdown but they didn't pray before.
- Among those who pray, nearly half (45%) say that they prayed since the lockdown because they believe in God, a third believe that prayer makes a difference (33%), a quarter (26%) say that they prayed in times of personal crisis or tragedy and a quarter (24%) say they have prayed to gain comfort or to feel less lonely.
- A quarter (25%) of those aged 18-24 who pray say that since the COVID-19 lockdown they have prayed about the UK government's response to COVID-19, this exceeds all other age groups (15% for those aged 25-64 and 23% for those aged 65+).
- Men are significantly more likely than women say they have watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown (on the radio, live on TV, on demand or streamed online) (28% vs. 21% respectively).
- Since lockdown, one in five (18%) of UK adults have asked someone else to say a prayer and one in five (19%) UK adults say they have read a religious text during lockdown.
- Top five things to pray about during lockdown among UK adults who pray are: family (53%), friends (34%), thanking God (34%), yourself (28%) and the frontline services (27%).

Ends

For further information or interviews please contact:

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Notes to editors:

1. Poll methodology: Savanta ComRes interviewed 2,101 UK adults aged 18+ online between 24th and 27th April 2020. Data were weighted to be nationally representative of all UK adults by key demographic characteristics including age, gender, region and social grade. Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Full tables at www.comresglobal.com.

To view the full data sets please visit: <https://www.comresglobal.com/polls/tearfund-covid-19-prayer-public-omnibus-research/>

About Tearfund

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency and a member of the Disasters' Emergency Committee. Tearfund has been working around the world for more than 50 years responding to disasters and helping lift communities out of poverty. For more information about the work of Tearfund, please visit www.tearfund.org.