

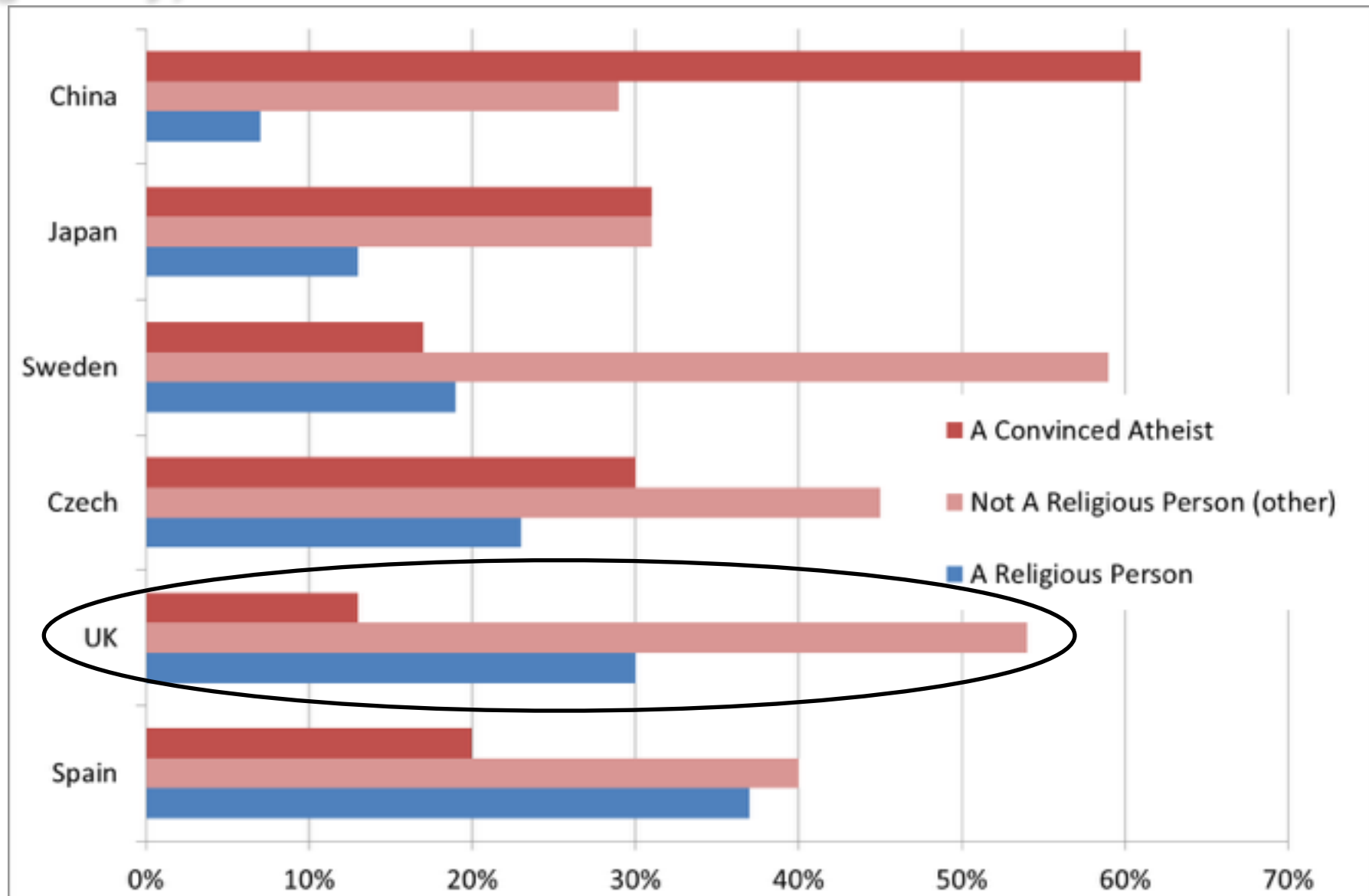
# Why We Need Dialogue: The Big Change in Religion & Belief In Britain

Windsor Humanists  
9 February 2016

Jeremy Rodell  
BHA Dialogue Officer

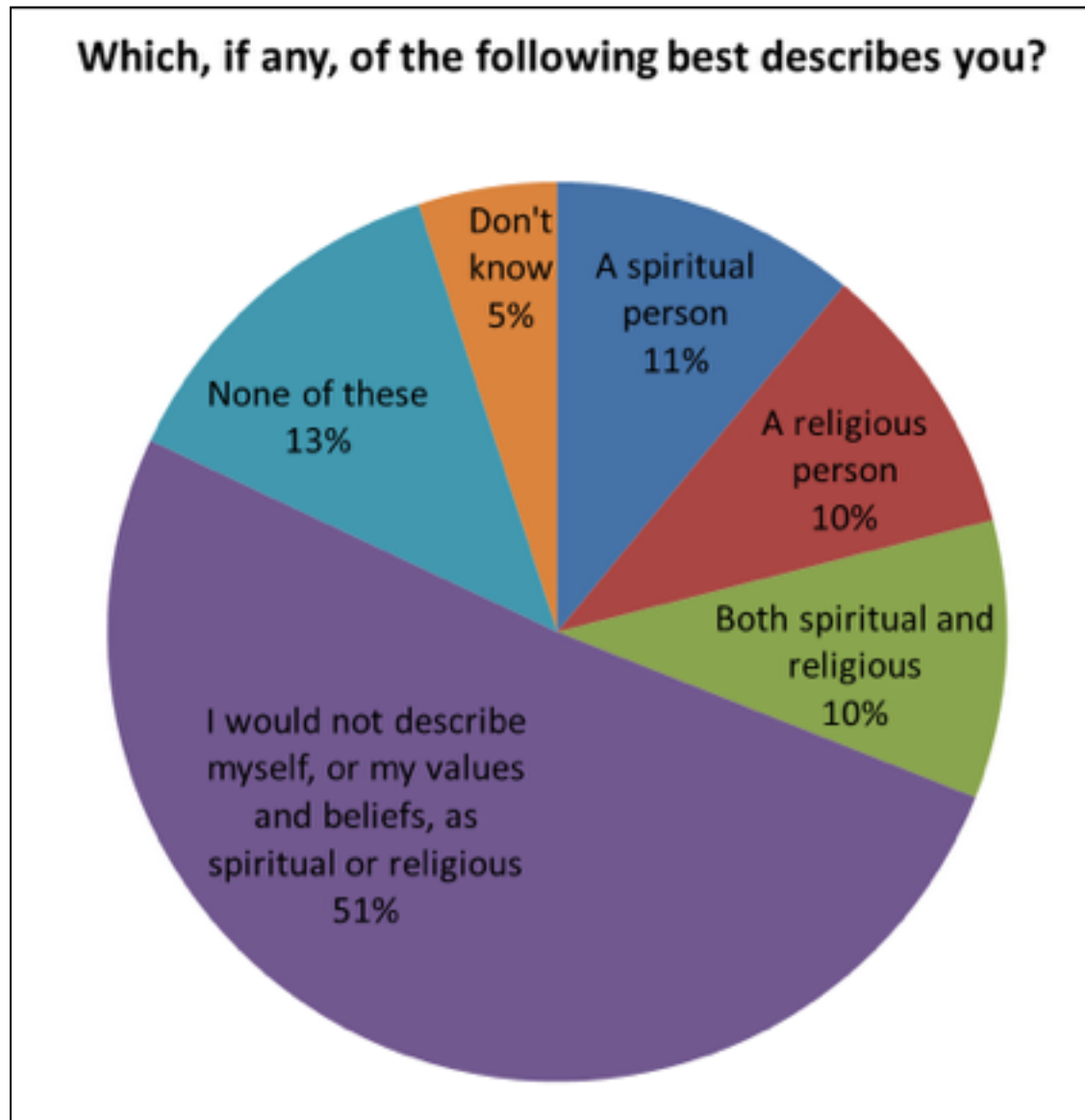
# UK now one of world's least religious countries (5<sup>th</sup> globally)...

*"...or, if you do not attend a place of worship or do not believe in any religion, would you say you are...?"*

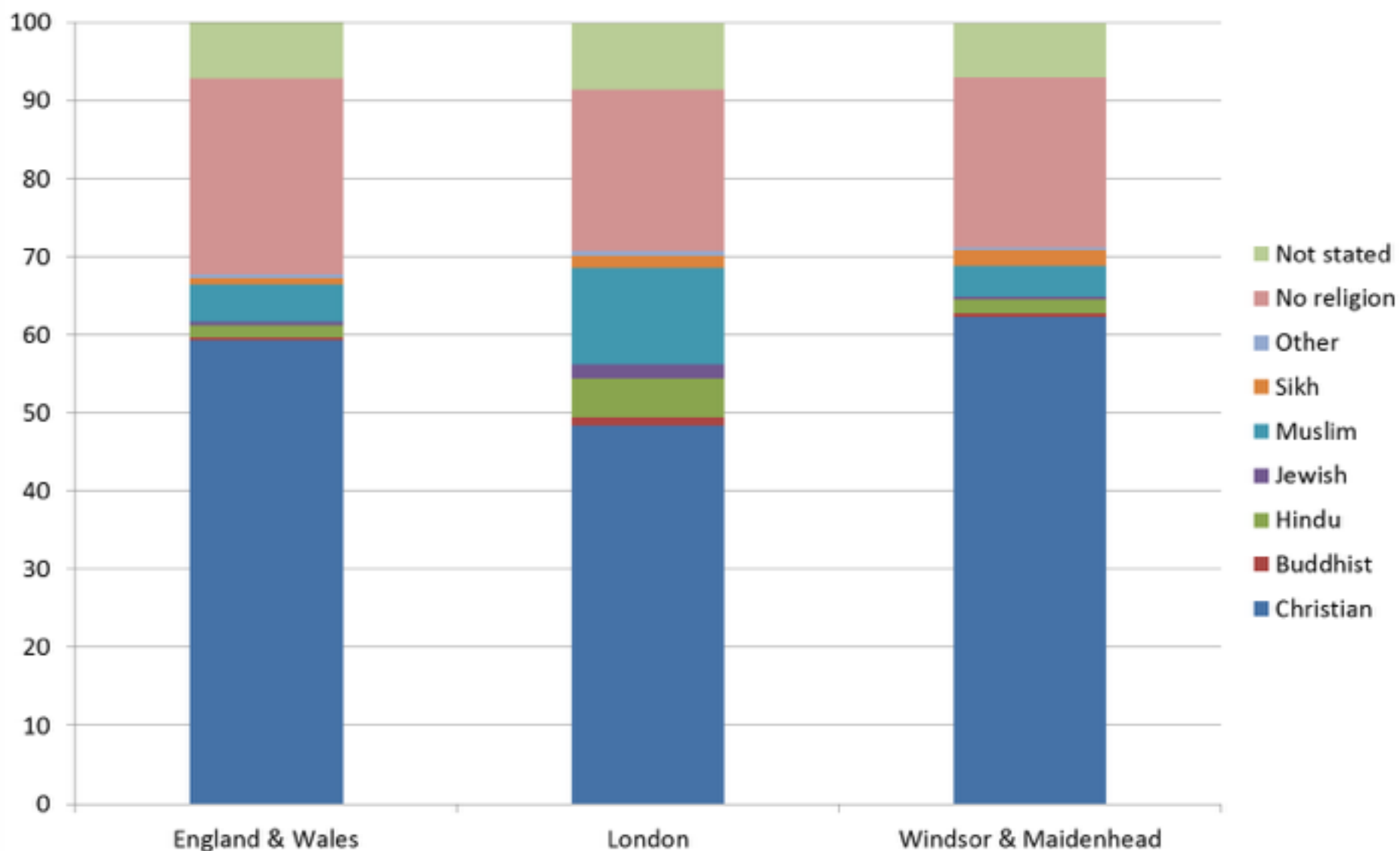


[The Independent report](#) of [WIN/Gallup poll issued April 2015](#) 63,000 people, 65 countries (excl many in Africa/Middle East)

## ...another way of looking at it...



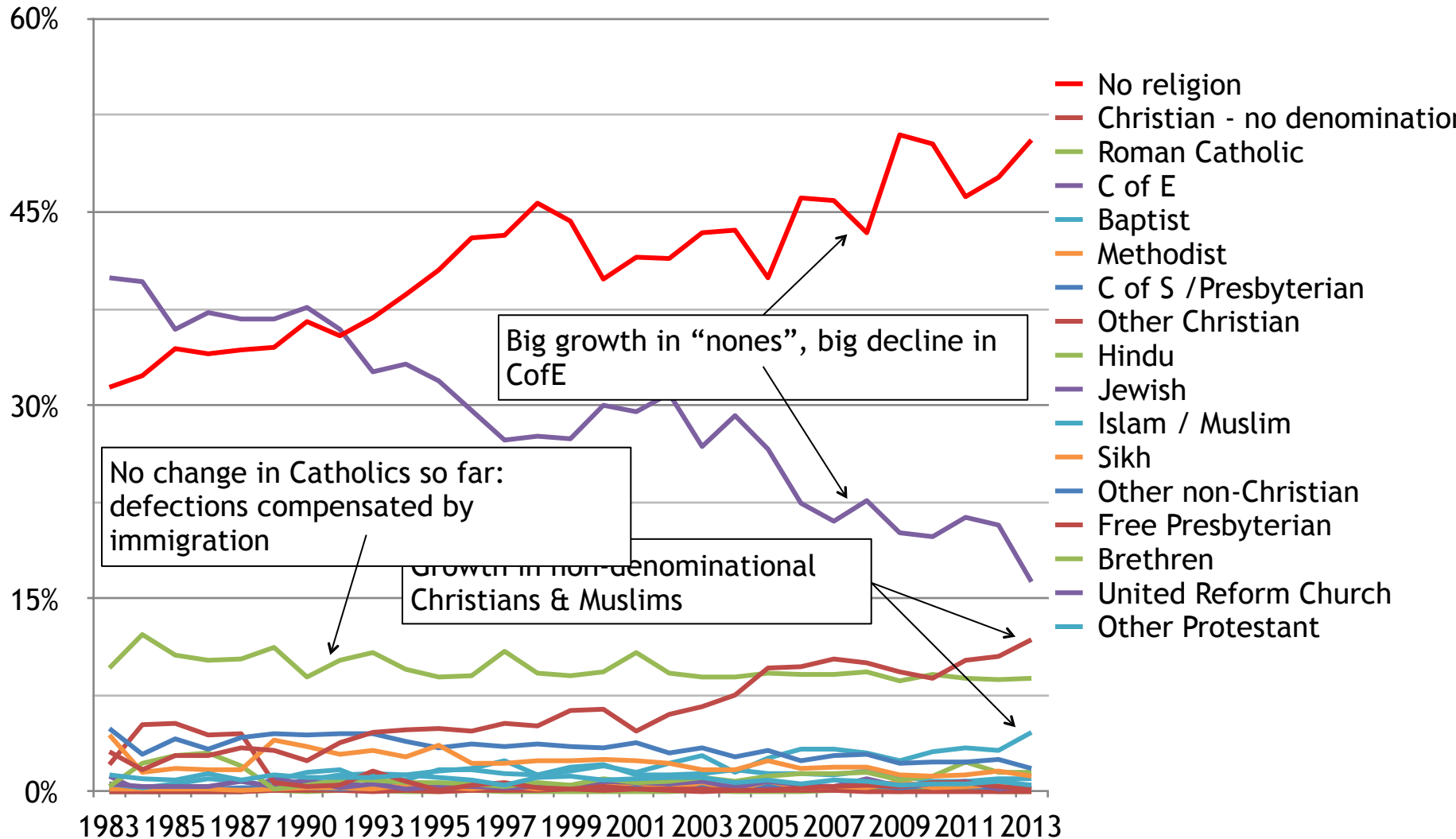
**Census 2011 - England & Wales, London, Windsor & Maidenhead (%)**



# “Future of religion in Britain is Islam and black majority churches”

Ruth Gledhill

British Social Attitudes Survey  
“Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?”



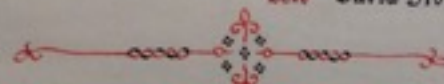
# Historic change - cultural heritage...



## ST. AGATHA'S CHURCH COATES

### ♦ ♦ ♦ INCUMBENTS ♦ ♦ ♦

1387. William Doger, [exchange].	1662. Samuel Pomphrett.
1387. Robert Ryder.	1664-5. Thomas Musgrave.
1388. Thomas Palmer.	1666-71. William Simcox.
1407. John Broker.	1693. Aley Baguley.
1491. Robert Heade.	1713. Henry Wright. A.M.
1502. Robert Mery, [resigned].	1718. John Backshall.
1502. William Godewyn.	1739. Edward Stuart. B.A.
1509. Edmund Leyland, [resigned].	1740. John Pannell. B.D.
1509. Brian Wyswill.	1793. Nicholas Turner.
1511. Julian Dubost.	1819. John Pannell.
1522. Thomas Bradshawe.	1872. William Thomas Charles Brande. M.A.
1544. John Bradshawe, [died].	1890. Cecil Brereton.
1555. Ralph Post.	1919-26. Howard Beech. M.A.
1616. Gabriel Taynton. M.A.	1902. Barzillai Beckerleg. M.A.
1629. William Beeping.	1904. Harold Walter James Maple.
1633. Christopher Elderfield. A.M.	1967. Guy Saunders.
1652. John Sefton,	1982. Ronald George Johnson.
[appointed by Commonwealth]	1993. Geoffrey Holmes
	1996-7. Richard Derek Payne
	1998. William Elliot
	2008. David Brown





# Non-denominational Christianity - evangelical & charismatic....



Prayer Hopeline: 0203 151 3798



# “Christian persecution” narrative...



Christian Legal Centre

*Standing with Christians for Life and Liberty*



Lillian Iadele



Shirley Chaplin



Nadia Eweida



Peter Bull and Hazelmary

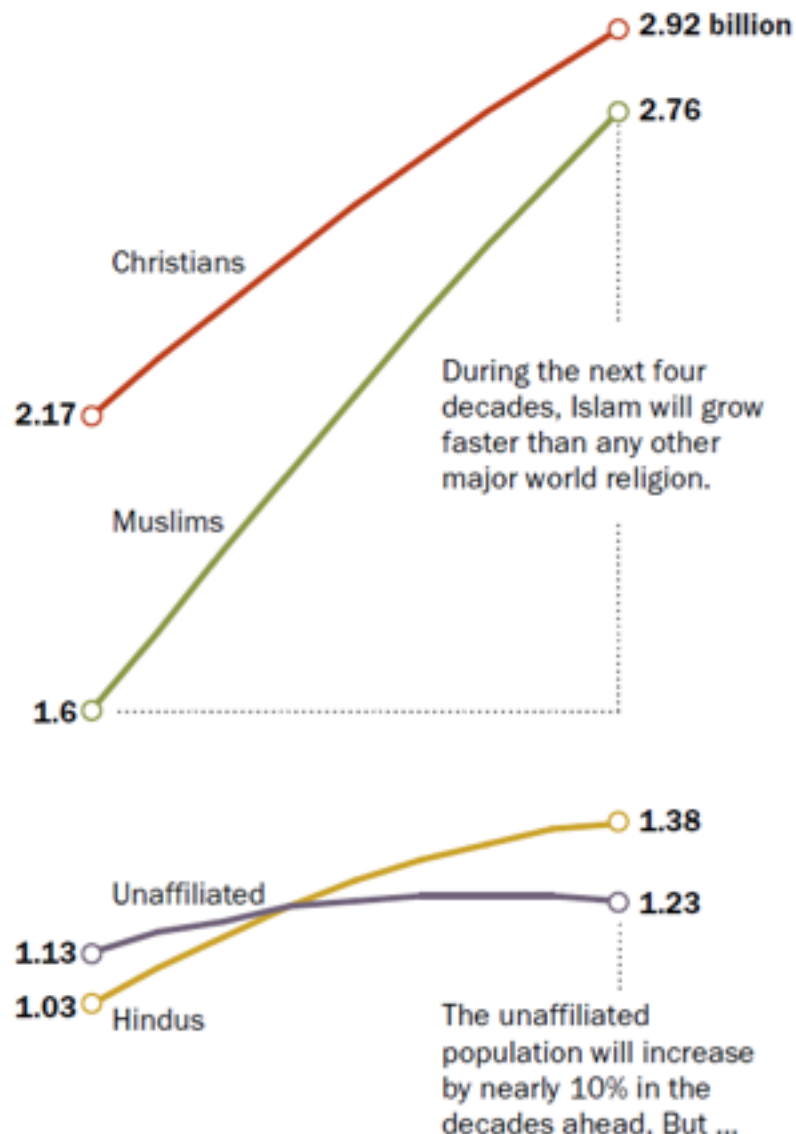


Gary McFarlane

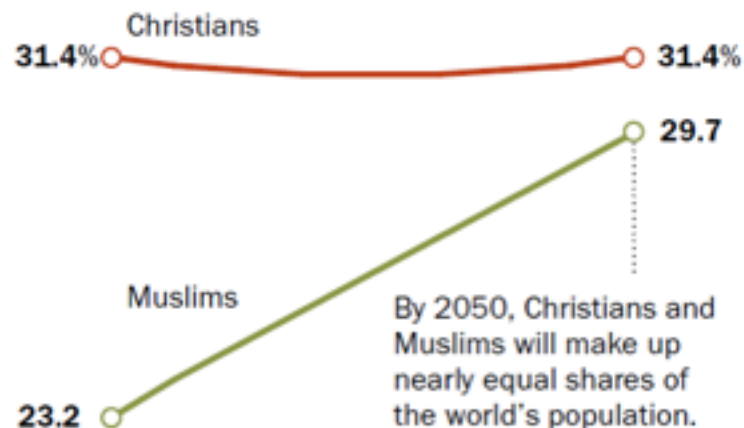


# Islam: growing in UK & globally....

Number of people, 2010-2050, in billions



% of global population, 2010-2050



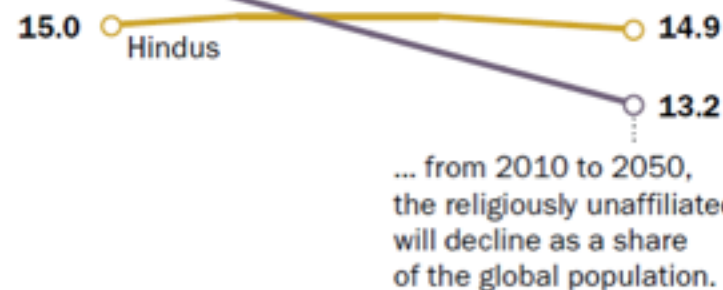
**UK Muslim population** (Pew, based on Census)

**2010: 5%**

**11%**

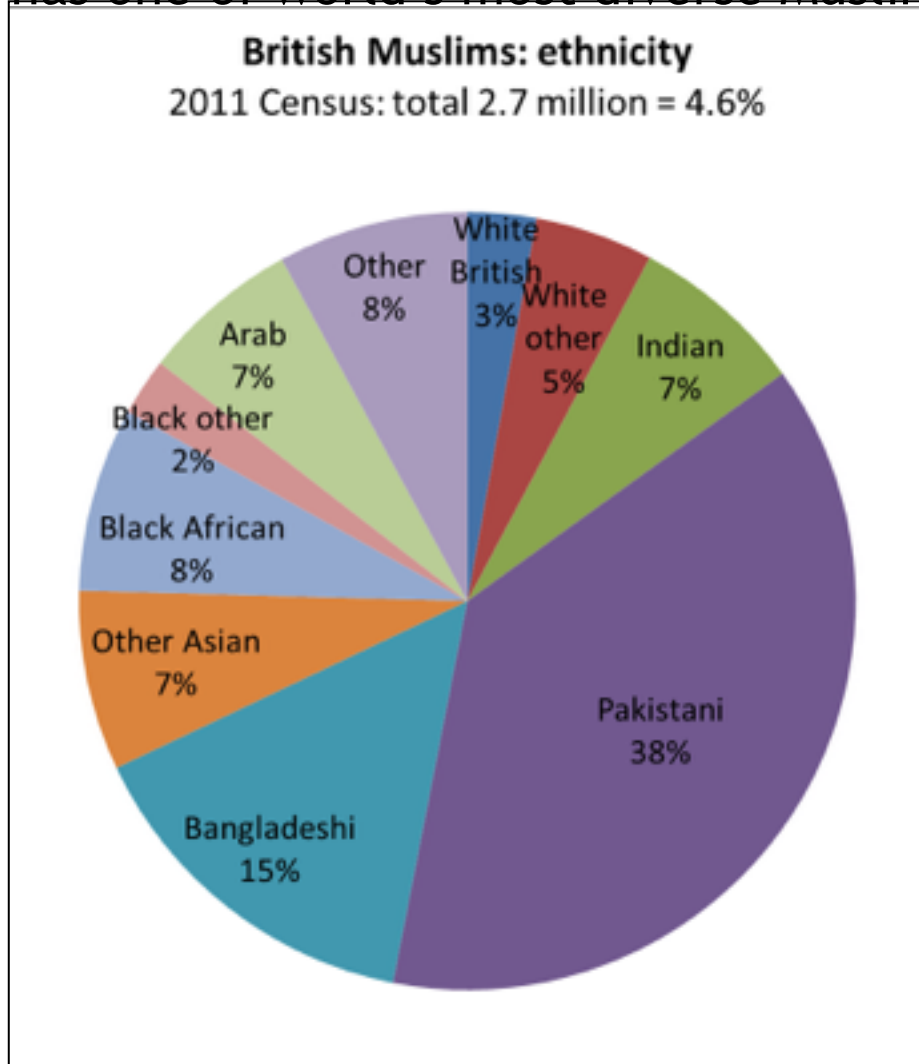
**12.5% of Londoners**

**2050:**



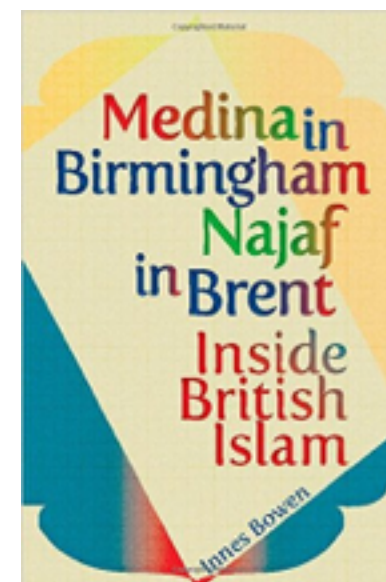
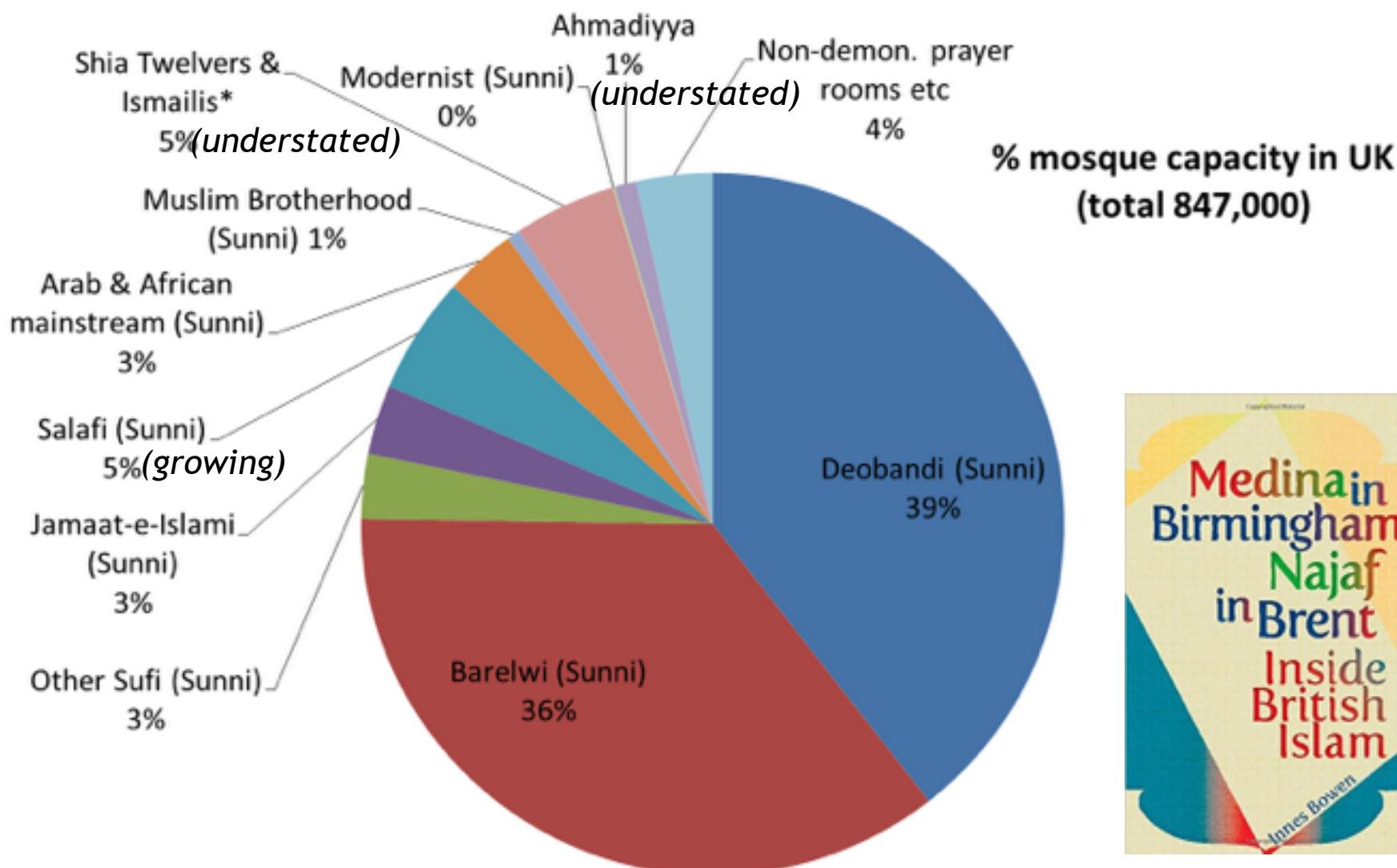
# Diversity within British Islam: ethnicity

UK has one of world's most diverse Muslims populations...



[Census data via MCB's "British Muslims in Numbers"](#)

# Diversity within British Islam: sects & mosques

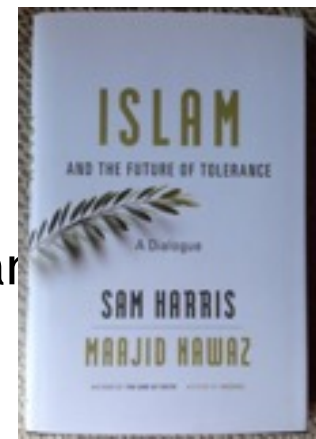


Data originated by Mehmood Naqshbandi, quoted by Innes Bowen in "Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent - Inside British Islam"

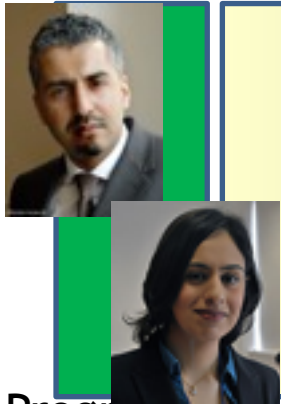
\*Naqshbandi believes this to be an underestimate. Bowen quotes Shia community sources indicating around 50% higher

## Another (qualitative) view

Based on Maajid Nawaz's analysis in dialogue with Sam Harris



Reformers  
Liberals



Progressive  
Pro-integration

Conservative



Traditional community,  
beliefs, practices, values  
& culture

Islamists



Want their  
form of  
Islam  
to be in  
political  
control

Islamists  
who use or  
advocate  
violence  
to achieve  
their aims

Citizens who  
happen to be  
Muslims



# Overall, a major change....

“The last twenty-five years have witnessed **some of the most significant shifts in religious belief and practice since the Reformation**, as traditional forms of religious authority, and uniformities of doctrine and practice, have given way to a much wider and more diverse range of religious and non-religious commitments.”

Charles Clarke (former Sec of State for Education) & Prof Linda Woodhead (Prof of Sociology of Religion at Lancaster University) in [“A New Settlement: Religion & Belief in Schools”](#).

# Summary: what will the future look like?

- Varied religious minority
  - “Stronger” varieties predominate as Church of England declines
- Varied non-religious majority
  - For many non-religious, identity lies elsewhere
  - Variety of beliefs & practices
    - Around 1/3 of population have broadly humanist outlook\*
  - Evolving identities....



[\\*Ipsos-MORI poll for BHA 2007](#)

# Challenges...

- Polarisation, lack of social cohesion
- Uninformed generalisations about “The Other”
- Faith-based & race-based prejudice elide
- Declining institutions defending privileges
- Conflicting values

**Pluralism is a fact of life.**

**How can we help make it work?**



# 1. Explain & promote Secularism

- State neutral in matters of religion & belief
- Universal human rights
  - Freedom of thought/belief & expression
  - Guarantee of religious freedom
- Law applicable equally to everyone
  - Decided by democratic process
- No religious privilege



*Secularism does not mean:*

- *Atheism or Humanism*
- *Denying the role Christianity has played in British/European history & culture*
  - *Art, music, architecture, narratives...*
- *Denying the right of religious individuals or institutions to express their views*
  - *But does mean they are given no special weight simply because they're faith-based*



## 2. Educate

- End:
  - Faith-based admissions to state-funded schools
  - Compulsory “collective worship”
  - State funding for faith schools
- High quality education about religious & non-religious beliefs, values & ethics
  - Based on a national curriculum
  - Including Humanism\*
- Broad preparation for life in a plural society:
  - sex & relationships education
  - curiosity, thinking skills & creativity
  - values & citizenship
- Institutions where core values defended

\*Despite strong representations from all sides, including the RE Council and Rowan Williams, the government excluded Humanism as an option in draft RE subject criteria for GCSE, AS & A level criteria published November 2014



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### A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools

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CHARLES CLARKE AND LINDA WOODHEAD



### 3. “Humanise” & understand

- View others primarily as fellow humans
  - Religion/belief one dimension of personal identity
- Seek Dialogue versus Debate
  - Understanding versus “Winning”
- Beware assumptions & generalisations
- Recognise areas of disagreement
- Recognise common ground
- Recognise “red lines”
  - Limits to Dialogue

#### Common ground dialogue: how can humanists and Muslims live and work together in 21st century London?

January 28, 2015 by Jeremy Rodell — 6 Comments



BHA trustee Alon Shaha (centre) led the discussion, joined by several Muslim panellists



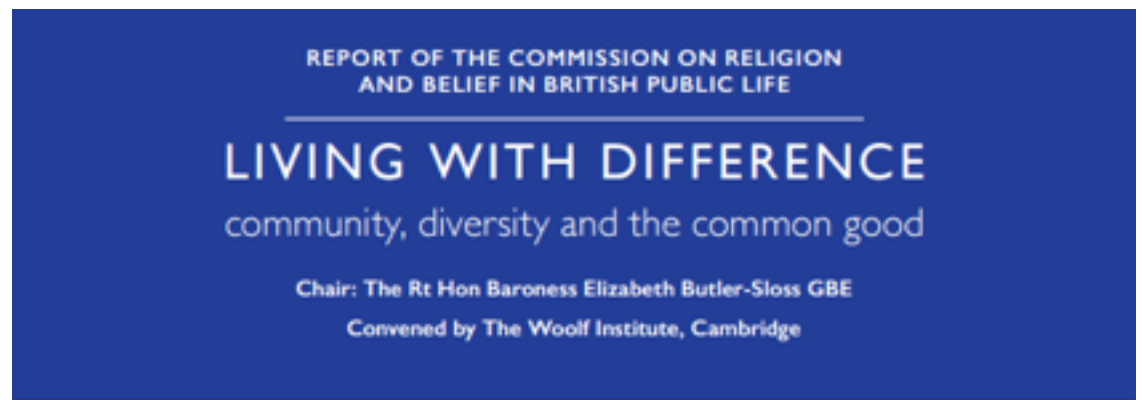
Jim Al-Khalili & Ziauddin Sardar in Conversation Oct 2

<http://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2015/nov/06/humanist-vs-islamic-perspectives-on-science-and-the-modern-world>

# Assumptions?....

- British Anglicans <sup>1</sup>
  - Rev Dr Mervyn Willshaw “It is well established that the world was not created in six days. Literary and theological objections to the idea of the Virgin Birth and the moral inadequacy of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement are clear....” <sup>2</sup>
  - Only 30% “definitely **believe in God/higher power**”; 15% **attend services**; 25% **private prayer**
- British Catholics <sup>3</sup>
  - 90% agree **unmarried couple** with children is a family; 14% under-40s support a ban on **abortion**; >50% of under-50s say “**same-sex marriage** is right”; 58% say the law should be changed to support **assisted dying** in tightly-controlled circumstances.
- British Muslims <sup>4</sup>
  - 95% feel **loyalty to Britain**; 77% **disagree** with cutting off from families those **Muslims** who convert to other religions; 72% **disagree** that “*Western liberal society can never be compatible with Islam*”; 66% **would not prefer a Muslim state school** for their children; 93% think “*Muslims in Britain should always obey British laws*”; 78% find **images of Prophet** personally deeply offensive; 85% do not think organisations **publishing images** of Prophet deserve attack

# Dialogue recommendations



6.35 It should be a high priority, not only for interfaith organisations but also for all religion and belief groups, educational institutions, public bodies and voluntary organisations, to promote opportunities for encounter and dialogue. Particularly important needs and priorities include the following:

- that leaders of religion and belief groups should, with appropriate training, have good knowledge of the different traditions and communities within the UK, and should encourage their members to participate in dialogue and to help develop and maintain good relations within society
- that faith communities should consider opening their places of worship at regular intervals to welcome and engage with those from other groups within their locality, and should explore the possibilities of twinning arrangements with other communities
- that in order to supplement existing patterns of dialogue between the Abrahamic faiths there should be more bilateral dialogue between Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions
- that there should be more structured dialogue between those who are religious and those who are not
- that more encounter and dialogue among young people should be promoted
- that more women should become involved in interfaith structures in representative roles and that faith communities should facilitate this.



## Dialogue: the case for humanist engagement & leadership

- BHA Strategy: *“We want a world where everyone lives cooperatively on the basis of shared human values, respect for human rights, and concern for future generations.”*
- BHA Values include: *“...being cooperative, working with others of different beliefs for the common good”*
- Dialogue promotes understanding of Humanism
- Positive engagement complements campaigning
  - Provided we continue to press for what we think is right

# Big change, we can help determine outcome...

1. Separate, parallel lives
2. Assimilation
3. Messy integration/“interculturalism”

*“Interculturalism is about changing mindsets by creating new opportunities across cultures to support intercultural activity and it’s about thinking, planning and acting interculturally. Perhaps, more importantly still, it is about envisioning the world as we want it to be, rather than be determined by our separate past histories.”*

*Prof Ted Cantle (2012)*