

**Pearn Kandola**

**Religion at Work:  
Experiences of Christian  
employees**

**December 22**



Difference inspires business

### Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
The current study	3
Report structure	3
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
Quantitative survey methodology	4
Qualitative survey methodology	4
<b>Combined UK and US Quantitative Survey Findings</b>	<b>5</b>
Celebrating religious festivals	5
Wearing religious dress	6
<b>UK Quantitative Survey Findings</b>	<b>7</b>
Celebrating religious festivals	7
Wearing religious dress	8
<b>US Quantitative Survey Findings</b>	<b>9</b>
Wearing religious dress	10
<b>Comparison of UK and US Survey Findings</b>	<b>11</b>
Celebrating religious festivals	11
Religious dress	13
<b>Qualitative Survey Findings</b>	<b>16</b>
Experiences of Expressing Religious Beliefs	16
Barriers to religious expression	19
How can organisations support Christian employees?	22
<b>Summary of Findings</b>	<b>26</b>
Quantitative survey findings	26
Qualitative survey findings	26
<b>References</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Christianity Participant Demographics</b>	<b>28</b>
1a. Quantitative survey demographics	28
1b. Qualitative survey demographics	28
<b>Appendix 2: Full Breakdown of Quantitative Survey Findings</b>	<b>29</b>

## Introduction

### Background

An increasing number of employers are understanding the value of creating an inclusive work environment, where all employees feel valued, supported, and comfortable in expressing their authentic identity. However, compared to other identity groups such as gender or race, religious diversity and inclusion at work is often overlooked by researchers, practitioners, and employers (Héliot et al., 2020). Pearn Kandola's 'Religion at Work' research project aims address this issue by raising awareness around employee experiences of expressing religious identity at work.

Christianity is the largest religion in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2012) and US (Pew Research Centre, 2022) and many organisations' schedules are centred around Christian holidays. However, there is a lack of research into the experiences of Christian employees at work, perhaps due to an assumption from researchers that, as a majority group, Christians would be less likely to experience discrimination.

### The current study

This overall project was designed to highlight the experiences of UK and US employees in relation expressing their religious identity at work, and to provide recommendations to assist organisations in creating a workplace culture which welcomes religious diversity and encourages employees to freely express their religious identity. This report focuses solely on the experiences of Christian employees in the UK and US.

### Report structure

The first half of the report presents the methodology and findings of the initial quantitative survey, conducted in 2021. Firstly, combined UK and US findings will be reported, before breaking down findings by country. The results of statistical analyses are then reported to explore gender differences and variations between UK and US responses. The second half of the report presents the key themes and subthemes that emerged from our qualitative survey data, before concluding with recommendations to help organisations understand the ways by which they can support their Christian employees.

## Methodology

### Quantitative survey methodology

#### Participants

In 2021, 1,042 Christian participants took part in the survey (see Appendix 1a for a breakdown of participant demographics) out of a total of 6,315 participants across the six religious groups specified below. Participants were eligible to participate if they worked and lived in the UK or US and were a follower of Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism or Christianity.

#### Procedure

Focus groups were conducted with individuals who met the inclusion criteria above to understand the factors that impacted on the expression of religious beliefs at work, which informed the development of survey items. Participants also provided demographic information to enable the investigation of group differences. The survey was created using Survey Monkey and distributed via Prolific and various faith groups in the UK and US.

### Qualitative survey methodology

#### Participants

In 2022, 110 Christian participants took part in our qualitative survey (see Appendix 1b for a breakdown of participant demographics). Participants were eligible to participate if they worked and lived in the UK or US, were in paid employment and were a follower of Christianity.

#### Procedure

A qualitative survey was designed to explore the experiences of Christian employees across the UK and US in more depth. The survey consisted of four broad, open-ended questions:

- What is your organisation doing well to support the expression of your religious identity at work?
- What barriers are there in your organisation which make the expression of your religious identity at work difficult?
- What has been the impact of expressing your religious identity at work?
- Is there anything that your organisation could do differently to support you in expressing your religious identity at work? If so, what could be done?

The survey was created using Survey Monkey and distributed via Prolific in 2022. Data was then analysed to identify the key themes in relation to Christian employees' experiences of sharing their religious beliefs.

## Combined UK and US Quantitative Survey Findings

This section highlights and summarises the key findings from the quantitative survey (with UK and US findings combined). A full breakdown of findings can be found in Appendix 2.

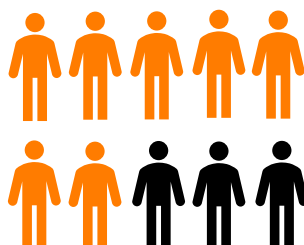
### Celebrating religious festivals



**2.5%** of Christian employees have had a request to take annual leave to celebrate a religious festival rejected.

97.5% have never had a request to take annual leave to celebrate religious holidays or festivals rejected.

---



**70%** of Christian employees felt their organisation was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.

8% felt that their organisation was *not* happy, whilst 22% neither agreed nor disagreed that their organisation was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.

---



**Just 52%** of Christian employees felt that their line manager was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.

6% felt that their line manager was *not* happy, whilst 42% neither agreed nor disagreed that their line manager was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.

---



**Just 37%** of Christian employees felt comfortable discussing the religious festivals they celebrate at work.

14% did *not* feel comfortable discussing the religious festivals they celebrate at work, whilst 49% felt neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.

## Wearing religious dress or symbols

When responding to the following items, participants were advised that 'religious dress' included the wearing of religious symbols, such as wearing a cross or crucifix.



**26%** of the Christian employees who wear religious dress or symbols chose to do so at work, whilst **74%** chose not to.



**29%** of Christian employees felt that their organisations could do more to make people feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols.

49% felt that there was nothing more that their organisation could do, whilst 23% neither agreed nor disagreed that their organisation could do more.



**45%** of the 154 Christian employees who wear religious dress or symbols at work did not feel comfortable doing so.

29% felt comfortable wearing religious dress at work, whilst 26% felt neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.



**32%** of the 154 Christian employees who wear religious dress at work did not feel comfortable reporting an incident involving religious dress or symbols.

52% felt comfortable, whilst 16% felt neither comfortable nor uncomfortable reporting an incident involving their religious dress or symbols.



**98%** of the 492 Christian employees working for an organisation with a restrictive dress code were satisfied that this was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

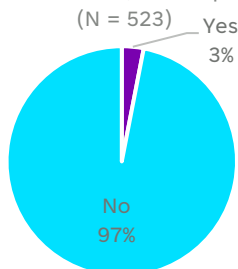
2% were dissatisfied with the reasons behind their organisation's dress code.

## UK Quantitative Survey Findings

This section highlights and summarises the key UK findings from the quantitative survey. A full breakdown of findings can be found in Appendix 2.

### Celebrating religious festivals

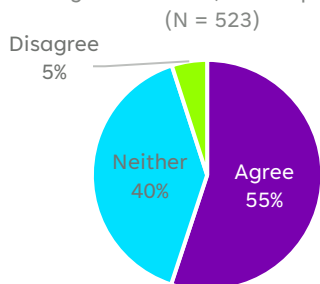
Figure 1: Item 1, UK Responses



We asked participants ‘Have you ever felt that time off for religious holidays and/or festivals was rejected without good business reason?’.

**3% of UK-based Christian employees stated that they have had a request to take annual leave to celebrate religious festivals rejected.**

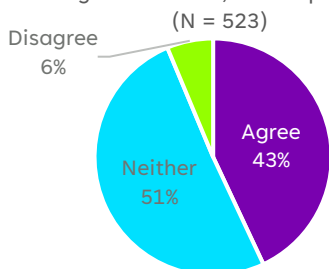
Figure 2: Item 2, UK Responses



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement ‘I feel my organisation is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate my religious festivals’.

**55% of UK-based Christian employees felt that their organisation was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.**

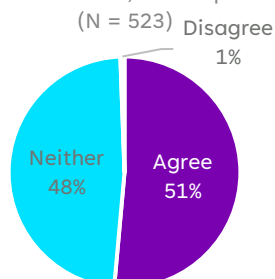
Figure 3: Item 3, UK Responses



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement ‘I feel my line manager is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate my religious festivals’.

**43% of UK-based Christian employees felt that their line manager was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.**

Figure 4: Item 4, UK Responses

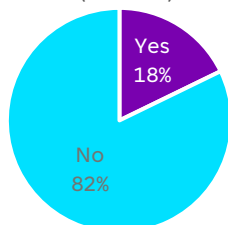


We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement ‘I feel comfortable discussing the religious festivals I celebrate in the workplace’.

**51% of UK-based Christian employees felt comfortable discussing religious festivals at work.**

## Wearing religious dress or symbols

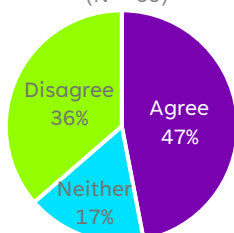
Figure 5: Item 5, UK Responses  
(N = 371)



Participants who stated that they wore religious dress affiliated with their religion were asked whether they wore religious dress at work.

**82% of the 371 UK-based Christian employees who wear religious dress or symbols do not do so at work.**

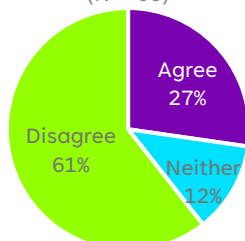
Figure 6: Item 6, UK Responses  
(N = 66)



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement 'I feel comfortable wearing religious dress at work'.

**Of the 66 UK-based Christian employees who wore religious dress or symbols at work, 36% did not feel comfortable doing so.**

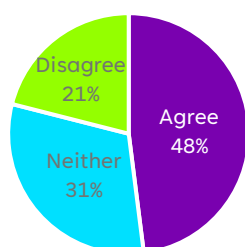
Figure 7: Item 7, UK Responses  
(N = 66)



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement 'I feel comfortable reporting an incident that involves my religious dress'.

**Of the 66 UK-based Christian employees who wore religious dress at work, 61% did not feel comfortable reporting an incident involving religious dress or symbols.**

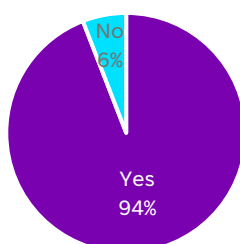
Figure 8: Item 8, UK Responses  
(N = 523)



Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement 'I feel my organisation could do more to make employees feel more comfortable wearing religious dress'.

**48% of UK-based Christian employees agreed that their organisation could do more to make employees feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols.**

Figure 9: Item 9, UK Responses  
(N = 51)



Participants who worked for an organisation with dress restrictions were asked: 'Do you feel there are good business reasons which are proportionate, appropriate and necessary?'

**94% of the 51 UK-based Christian employees working for an organisation with a dress code were satisfied that restrictions were proportionate, appropriate and necessary.**



## US Quantitative Survey Findings

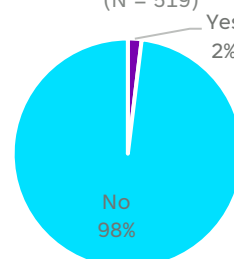
This section highlights and summarises the key US findings from the quantitative survey. A full breakdown of findings can be found in Appendix 2.

### Celebrating religious festivals

We asked participants ‘Have you ever felt that time off for religious holidays and/or festivals was rejected without good business reason?’.

**2% of US-based Christian employees stated that they have had a request to take annual leave to celebrate a religious festival rejected.**

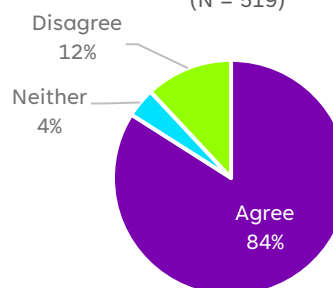
Figure 10: Item 1, US Responses (N = 519)



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement ‘I feel that my organisation is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate my religious festivals’.

**84% of US-based Christian employees felt that their organisation was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.**

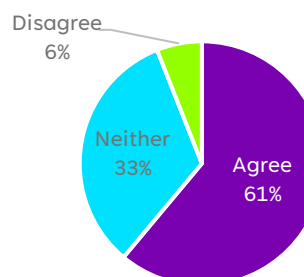
Figure 11: Item 2, US Responses (N = 519)



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement ‘I feel that my line manager is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate my religious festivals’.

**61% of US-based Christian employees felt that their line manager was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals.**

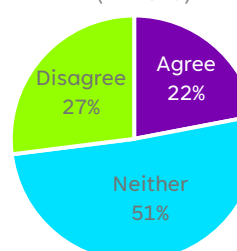
Figure 12: Item 3, US Responses (N = 519)



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement ‘I feel comfortable discussing the religious festivals I celebrate in the workplace’.

**Just 22% of US-based Christian employees felt comfortable discussing religious festivals at work.**

Figure 13: Item 4, US Responses (N = 519)

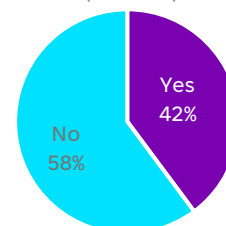


## Wearing religious dress or symbols

Participants who stated that they wore religious dress affiliated with their religion were asked whether they wore religious dress at work.

**42% of the 211 US-based Christian employees who wear religious dress or symbols do so at work.**

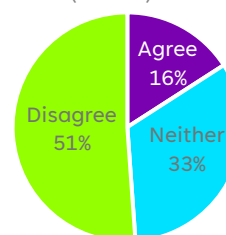
Figure 14: Item 5, US Responses (N = 211)



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement 'I feel comfortable wearing religious dress at work'.

**Of the 88 US-based Christian employees who wore religious dress or symbols at work, 51% did not feel comfortable doing so.**

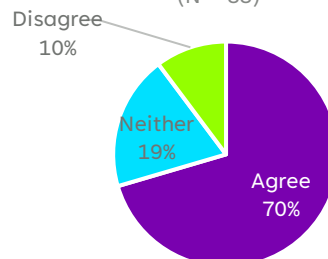
Figure 15: Item 6, US Responses (N = 88)



We asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement 'I feel comfortable reporting an incident that involves my religious dress'.

**Of the 88 US-based Christian employees who wore religious dress at work, 70% felt comfortable reporting an incident involving religious dress or symbols.**

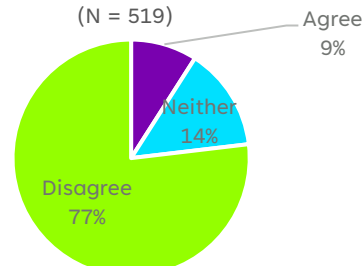
Figure 16: Item 7, US Responses (N = 88)



Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement 'I feel my organisation could do more to make employees feel more comfortable wearing religious dress'.

**Only 9% of US-based Christian employees agreed that their organisation could do more to make employees feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols.**

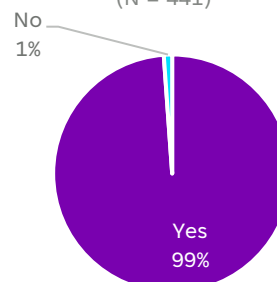
Figure 17: Item 8, US Responses (N = 519)



Participants who worked for an organisation with dress restrictions were asked the question 'Do you feel there are good business reasons which are proportionate, appropriate and necessary?'

**99% of the 441 US-based Christian employees working for an organisation with a dress code were satisfied that these restrictions were proportionate, appropriate and necessary.**

Figure 18: Item 9, US Responses (N = 441)



## Comparison of UK and US Survey Findings

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether the variation in responses between different groups (i.e. male/female and UK/US) were statistically significant. A statistically significant result suggests that the differences between groups are unlikely to be due to chance. We could not conduct chi-square tests for the item 'Do you feel there are good business reasons (for your organisation's dress code) which are proportionate, appropriate and necessary?' due to the small number of UK participants working for an organisation with a dress code.

As only a small proportion (< 2%) of participants identified as a gender other than male or female, only male and female responses were analysed when exploring gender differences to enable us to make meaningful comparisons between different gender groups.

### Celebrating religious festivals

#### 'Have you ever felt that time off for religious holidays and/or festivals was rejected without good business reason?'

There were no statistically significant differences between UK and US responses, suggesting that **country of residence did not affect the likelihood of having a request to take time off for religious festivals rejected**. There were also no statistically significant differences between male and female responses in the US. However, **in the UK, women are significantly more likely to have a time off request rejected than men** ( $\chi^2(1) = 5.722, p < .05$ ).

Figure 19: Item 1, UK and US comparison (N = 1,042)

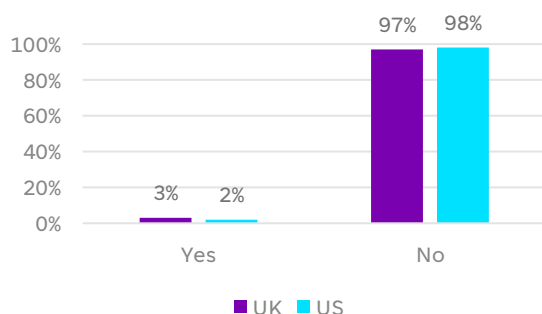
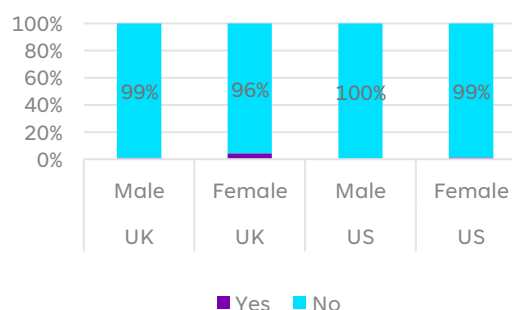


Figure 20: Item 1, Gender differences in the UK and US (N = 1,025)



#### 'I feel that my employer is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate religious festivals'

**US participants were more likely than UK participants to feel that their organisation was happy for them to take time off to celebrate religious festivals**. The difference between UK and US responses was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 198.639, p < .001$ ).

Gender also had a significant impact on whether participants felt supported by their organisation to take time off for religious festivals. **In both countries, men were more likely than women to feel that their organisation was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals**. These gender differences were statistically significant in both the UK ( $\chi^2(2) = 64.250, p < .001$ ) and US ( $\chi^2(2) = 69.711, p < .001$ ).

Figure 21: Item 2, UK and US comparison (N = 1,042)

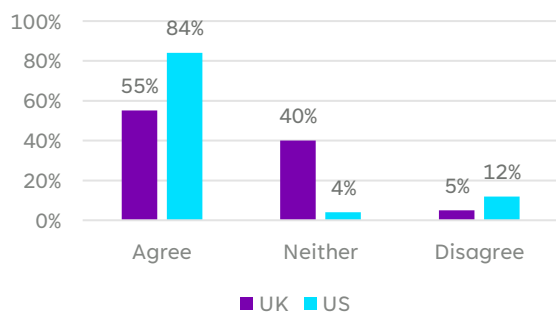
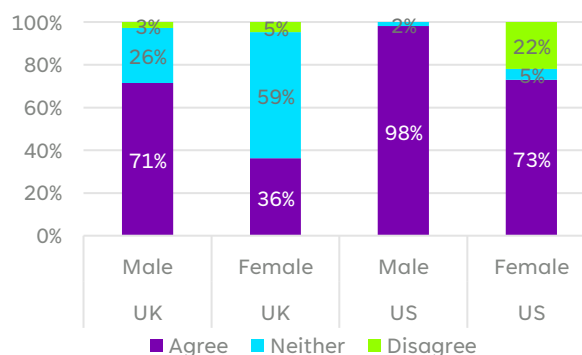


Figure 22: Item 2, Gender differences in the UK and US (N = 1,025)



### ‘I feel that my line manager is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate religious festivals’

US participants were also more likely to feel that their line manager was happy for them to take annual leave to celebrate religious festivals. The difference between UK and US responses was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 36.643, p < .001$ ).

Similarly, in both countries, men were more likely to feel that their line manager was happy for them to take annual leave to celebrate religious festivals. The differences between male and female responses were significant in both the UK ( $\chi^2(2) = 50.604, p < .001$ ) and US ( $\chi^2(2) = 90.086, p < .001$ ).

Figure 23: Item 3, UK and US comparison (N = 1,042)

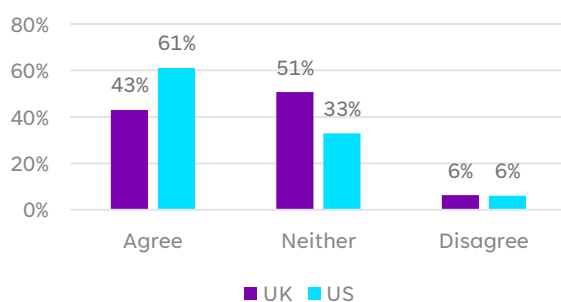
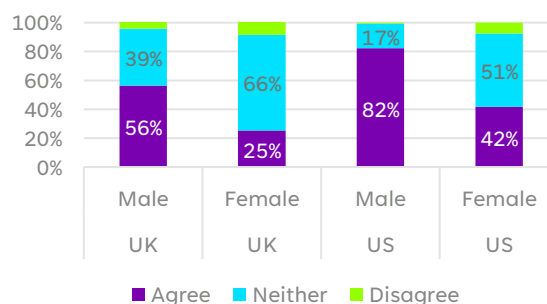


Figure 24: Item 3, Gender differences in the UK and US (N = 1,025)



### ‘I feel comfortable discussing the religious festivals I celebrate in the workplace’

Although the responses to previous items suggest that US employees feel more supported than UK participants in relation to celebrating religious festivals, **UK participants were more likely to feel comfortable discussing the religious festivals they celebrate at work.** The difference between UK and US responses was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 194.348, p < .001$ ).

Gender also had an impact on how comfortable participants felt talking about religious festivals at work. **Overall, men were more likely than women to feel comfortable discussing religious festivals at work** and the difference between male and female responses was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 85.260, p < .001$ ). We were unable to explore gender differences within each country as the data did not meet the conditions required for chi-square analysis.

Figure 24: Item 4, UK and US comparison (N = 1,042)

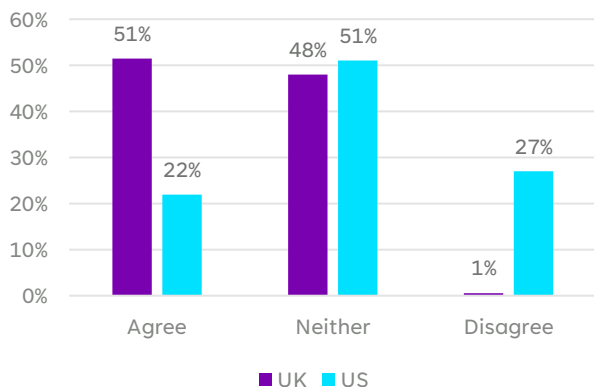
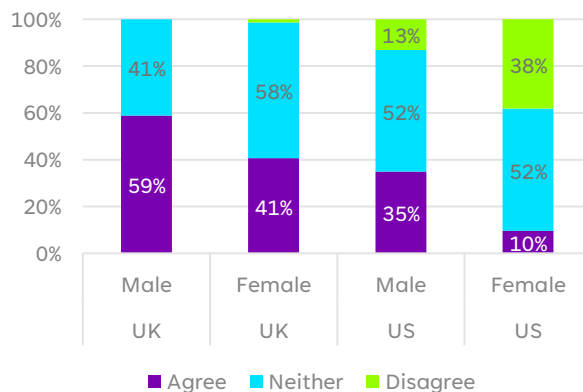


Figure 25: Item 4, Gender differences in the UK and US (N = 1,025)



## Wearing religious dress or symbols

When responding to the following items, participants were advised that ‘religious dress’ included the wearing of religious symbols, such as wearing a cross or crucifix.

### ‘Do you wear religious dress in the workplace?’

Of the 582 participants who wear religious dress, 154 do so at work. **US employees were significantly more likely to wear religious dress or symbols at work** ( $\chi^2(1) = 39.537, p < .001$ ).

In the UK, gender had no significant impact on whether employees chose to wear religious dress at work. **However, in the US, women were significantly more likely to wear religious dress or symbols than men** ( $\chi^2(1) = 46.264, p < .001$ ).

Figure 27: Item 5, UK and US comparison (N = 582)

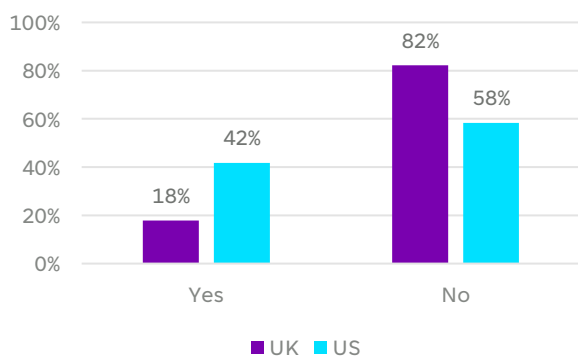
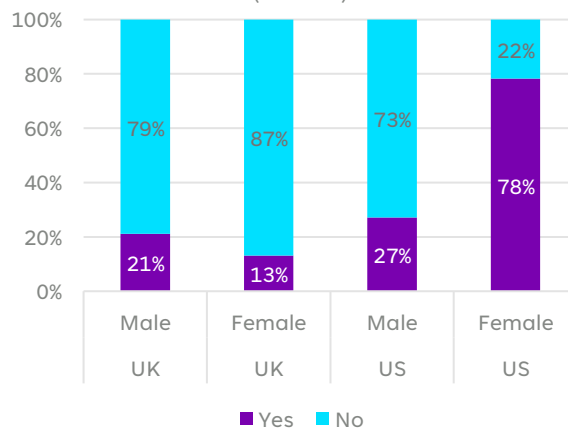


Figure 27: Item 5, UK and US comparison (N = 575)



## ‘I feel comfortable wearing religious dress in the workplace’

**UK employees were more likely than US participants to feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols at work.** The difference between UK and US responses was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 18.141, p < .001$ ).

**Overall, men were more likely to feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols at work** and the difference between male and female responses was significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 6.946, p < .001$ ). We were unable to explore gender differences within each country as the data did not meet the conditions required for chi-square analysis.

Figure 29: Item 6, UK and US comparison (N = 154)

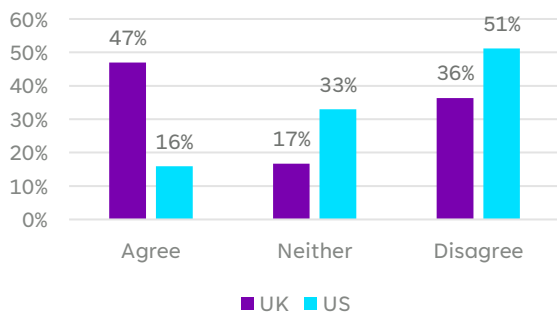
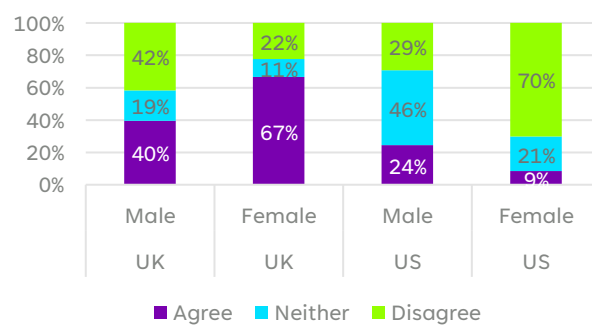


Figure 30: Item 6, UK and US comparison (N = 154)



## ‘I feel comfortable reporting an incident that involves my religious dress’

**US employees were more likely than UK participants to feel comfortable reporting an incident involving their religious dress or symbols.** The difference between UK and US responses was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 44.824, p < .001$ ). We were unable to conduct further tests to explore gender differences as the data did not meet the required conditions.

Figure 31: Item 7, UK and US comparison (N = 154)

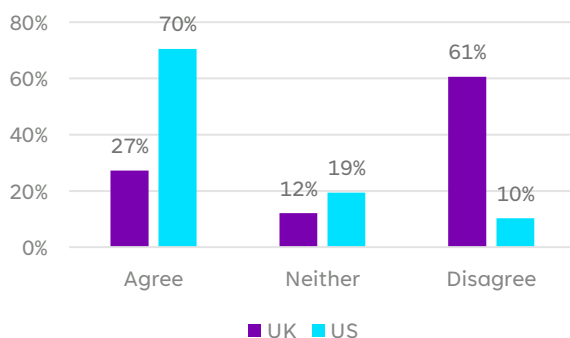
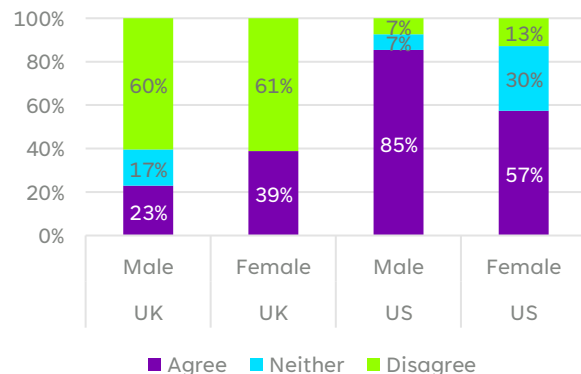


Figure 32: Item 8, Gender differences in the UK and US (N = 154)



## 'I feel my employer could do more to make employees feel comfortable wearing religious dress'

There was a significant difference between UK and US responses ( $\chi^2(2) = 337.435, p < .001$ ), with UK participants more likely to feel their organisation could do more to make employees feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols.

There were also varying gender differences in the UK ( $\chi^2(2) = 250.717, p < .001$ ) and US ( $\chi^2(2) = 105.609, p < .001$ ). In the UK, women were far more likely to feel that their organisation could do more to make employees feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols, whereas in the US, men were more likely to feel their organisation could do more.

Figure 33: Item 8, UK and US comparison (N = 1,042)

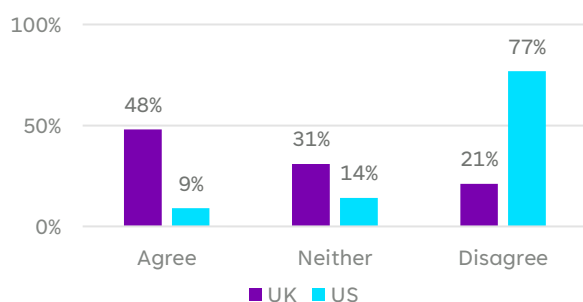
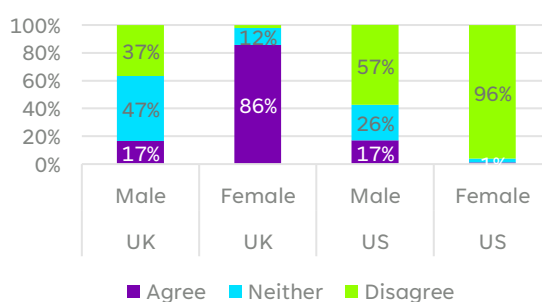


Figure 34: Item 8, Gender differences in the UK and US (N = 1,025)



## Qualitative Survey Findings

This section of the report presents the findings from our qualitative survey, which asked a sample of participants from the UK and US (see Appendix 1b for participant demographics) to explain more about their experiences of expressing their religious beliefs at work. Participants were asked to explain what their organisation was doing well, what was not going well and what could be done differently in relation to religious expression at work.

## Experiences of expressing religious beliefs

The key themes and sub-themes which emerged from our qualitative survey data in relation to participants' experiences of sharing their religious beliefs are summarised in Table 1 and reported in further depth below.

Table 1: Experiences of sharing religious beliefs

Theme	Subtheme
Improved connections with co-workers	Opportunity for positive discussion
	Support and encouragement from co-workers
	Strengthened bonds
Impact on mental wellbeing	Positive impact own mental wellbeing
	Providing emotional support
Negative treatment from co-workers	Stereotyping
	Harassment
Choosing not to share beliefs	Preference
	Fear of causing offense

### Improved connections with co-workers

#### Opportunity for positive discussion

Many participants explained how working for an organisation with an open, welcoming and inclusive culture made people feel comfortable expressing their religious beliefs, which opened up opportunities for insightful discussions with their co-workers. Several participants stated that whilst their religious beliefs and opinions may differ, they appreciated the opportunity to have open, respectful discussions to share and learn about different experiences and beliefs.

*'We have actual conversations about our differences and most of the time we invite one another to our worship services. There are a few non-religious people that work here, and they are just as open about their lack of faith'*



*‘Expressing religious identity has allowed others to understand and accept the viewpoint of different faiths and supports an open and frank discussion of beliefs and values’*

### Support and encouragement from co-workers

Many participants found that co-workers were supportive upon learning their religious beliefs. Participants found that their co-workers encouraged them to express their religious identity and demonstrated their support (for example, by attending Christian events outside of work).

*‘My current organization actually makes it very easy to express yourself. For example, I have a colleague who recently adopted a new religion, and we were all by her side and supporting her through the whole process, including the final ceremony celebrating her success and "new life"’*

*‘When my Church have put on dramatic performances, I have been able to invite colleagues many of whom have attended despite not being of the same faith. I was also able to comfortably share my son’s religious album (Spotify etc) and receive encouragement from colleagues’*

### Strengthened bonds

Several participants felt that their bonds with co-workers were strengthened after sharing their religious beliefs. Discussing their beliefs gave participants the opportunity to connect with co-workers who shared their beliefs and strengthened bonds with other co-workers who were interested to hear their experiences.

*‘When I do talk about it, my coworkers are incredibly receptive and understanding. Amongst my coworkers, sharing cultural and religious beliefs can be a way to bond’*

*‘I have had great experiences because on multiple occasions, I have come to know people that share my religion, and it creates that bond between us’*

## Impact on mental wellbeing

### Positive impact on wellbeing

Some participants reported that sharing their religious beliefs at work had improved their mental wellbeing. Participants referred to feeling happier, more productive and at peace as they were accepted for being their true self.

*‘I am much happier and more work gets done because I feel as if I am accepted from my peers’*

*‘Being able to express my religious beliefs at work has been liberating and allowed a sense of peace’*

### Providing emotional support

Several participants referred to experiences of providing their co-workers with support and guidance in times of need. Many of these participants felt that their co-workers were more likely to approach them for support as they perceived them to be a compassionate person, partly due to their religious identity. Participants who referred to such instances were happy to provide their support and appreciated the opportunity to help their co-workers.

*‘I believe that people see me as a kind, understanding, compassionate person in part because they know my religious beliefs. I think because I am also open about other religious beliefs, people feel comfortable coming to me to discuss their own beliefs, whether for understanding or friendly debate’*

*‘Most people seek my help and advice at work due to my attitude norms and activeness towards religion. In so doing it brings good will to me’*



## Negative treatment from co-workers

### Stereotyping

The negative treatment that participants have experienced or witnessed appears to stem from negative stereotypes that their co-workers hold about Christians, or those with religious beliefs. Whilst some participants had referred to positive stereotypes, such as the perception that Christians were caring or 'good people', one participant explained that this led them to feel under closer scrutiny and pressure to live up to this standard.

*'I think my manager thinks I'm quaint or old fashioned for being religious'*

*'My co-worker has said some disparaging things as she feels that people who come from my religious identity must be bigots or even fascists'*

### Harassment

Some participants had witnessed or experienced ridicule or antagonism in relation to their religious beliefs, which sometimes went unchallenged by management. Some participants felt that people with any form of religious belief were mocked, rather than Christians specifically.

*'I have only told my very closest friends the depth of my beliefs because of the way the vast majority of the staff there have ridiculed religion so publicly and so viciously'*

*'I have had a few snide comments here and there about how I live my life due to their negative perception of Christians'*

## Choosing not to share beliefs

### Preference

Many participants chose not to share their religious beliefs at work because they had a personal preference to keep the two areas of their lives separate.

*'I have not shared my personal religious beliefs with people at work and I don't plan to. It is not a subject that ever comes up and I am okay keeping it completely private and out of the workplace'*

*'I tend not to impose my religion on people - it is not something that I think is important to my job and therefore it remains as a private matter'*

### Fear of causing offense

Many participants who had decided not to share their religious beliefs did so to avoid causing offense to others. Some participants feared that expressing their religious beliefs may make some co-workers with different religious views feel uncomfortable and worried that this may instigate conflict, which they wished to avoid.

*'I really don't get into sharing my beliefs with my co-workers because I do want to get into any potentially contentious discussions at work'*

*'I would say the main barrier is the fear of causing offense to anyone'*

## Barriers to religious expression

The key themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data in relation to barriers to religious expression are summarised in Table 2 and reported in further depth below.

Table 2: Barriers to religious expression

Theme	Subtheme
Lack of support	'Silence' around religion
	Lack of interest
	Lack of accommodation for religious observance
	Comparisons with other religious groups
Religious festivals	Awareness of religious significance
	Time off for religious festivals
Nature of role	Workload
	Role restrictions
	Remote working

### Lack of support

#### 'Silence' around religion

Several participants felt the norm in their organisation was to avoid discussing sensitive topics such as religion. Whilst this was an 'unwritten rule', rather than an enforced silence on the topic, participants felt it would be inappropriate to go against the culture of their organisation by expressing their religious identity. A lack of clear guidelines and policies around religious expression, combined with a culture that does not encourage expression, led many employees to feel they should avoid the topic of religion at work.

*'There is a very strong cultural vibe for just keeping it quiet and to yourself'*

*'It is almost as if there is a silence surrounding religion. As it is not referred to it makes it seem like there would be a bigger issue if the subject did come up'*

#### Lack of interest

Participants also referred to a lack of interest from others in relation to discussing religious beliefs. As some participants felt that co-workers viewed their religious beliefs as unimportant, they decided not to share their beliefs with others. Furthermore, some participants also felt that management were not interested in the topic of religion and did not offer any support with issues in this area, such as making adjustments or challenging mistreatment.

*'The barriers are that staff don't really see it as an important topic of conversation so it feels like sometimes you don't want to talk about it because others won't take it seriously'*

*'I definitely would not wish to talk about my religious beliefs with my management team - I guess I wouldn't feel it is of interest to them'*

### Lack of accommodation for religious observance

Many participants also felt that their organisation did not support them by making accommodations to enable religious observance. For example, several participants felt that their organisation would not support requests to pray during work hours and would not be willing to provide a suitable space for prayer. Some participants also referred to being required to work during hours that they would usually attend worship services.

*'I would say that even though they don't directly attack religion, they make it extremely difficult for front line workers to worship. Most front-line workers are stuck doing hours that make it impossible to go to worship services'*

*'I am not sure our company would be very receptive to a potential employee that had a rigid religious structure, such as needing to pray during the working hours'*

### Comparisons with other religious groups

There were conflicting views around the level of support for Christian employees and the level of support for other religious groups. Several participants felt that employees with non-Christian beliefs would experience more difficulty in expressing their religious identity, particularly within an organisation with lower levels of diversity. Taking time off for religious holidays was one of the main areas that participants felt non-Christian employees were disadvantaged.

*'I think more time off could be given to non-Christian employees during their important festivals and they should be allowed to work and be paid during Christian festivals if they don't observe them'*

*'I'm aware as a Christian I don't have set times to pray or anything like that, so it's possibly easier for a Christian to integrate as there is no accommodation needed'*

However, several participants also expressed an opposing opinion that Christian employees were at a disadvantage compared to other religious groups. Some Christian participants felt that they were offered less support and time for religious observance and felt their beliefs were regarded with less sensitivity due to their position as a 'majority' religious group.

*'The major religion in my organisation is Christianity but that does not seem to be supported as much as others. No one of this religion feels that they can have time to pray or have time off to follow their beliefs'*

*'It seems some people tiptoe around other religions, but act like they can be rude about Christianity'*

## Religious festivals

### Awareness of religious significance

Some participants felt that the religious significance of Christian festivals not always considered. Participants described how although some festivals, such as Christmas, were frequently mentioned at work, they were discussed in their relation to public holidays rather than in terms of their religious significance.

*'I am a Christian and I find that Christian festivals are overlooked by the organisation that I work for. Only Christmas and Easter get mentioned and that is mainly because of the public holidays around the dates of these festivals'*



*'I think there is sometimes a feeling that Easter and Christmas etc are not important in terms of religious significance'*

### Time off for religious festivals

Most participants did not report issues with taking time off for religious festivals. However, some participants working in roles that were not automatically entitled to leave on bank or public holidays found that taking time off for religious festivals could be difficult due to the high number of co-workers who also have requested this time off.

*'Sometimes employees are not able to get religious holidays off from work simply because there is no one available to cover their shift or because the days have been previously requested off in advance by other employees'*

*'Managers are not very sympathetic towards colleagues not always wanting to work a weekend shift or the rotas around Christmas - with some colleagues having to work well into Christmas Day which means they couldn't attend church'*

## Nature of role

### Workload

Several participants referred to how the volume or intensity of work made religious observance difficult. Whilst a lot of the time, policies would allow flexibility for religious observance, in reality, employees found it difficult to find the time for discussion or practice.

*'Everyone is so consumed with their job tasks, that there is no time for chit-chat, especially to chit-chat about religion'*

*'The main barriers are finding the time in a busy day to take time out and reflect. The company allows paid time to pray etc. But finding that time spare is very difficult'*

### Role restrictions

Many Christian participants worked within occupations that made expression of religious beliefs difficult. Many worked as teachers and were required to remain impartial at work, which limited their opportunities for religious discussion and expression. Other participants referred to restrictions around wearing religious dress and symbols at work, which may cause health and safety hazards within their role.

*'Since I work at an elementary school, there is a strong separation of church and state. If I were to openly express my religion, it may not go over very well'*

*'We are operational firefighters and health and safety has to come above religious dress for this'*

### Remote working

A small number of participants referred to remote working as a barrier to religious expression. The lack of contact with co-workers made it more difficult for participants to find opportunities to share thoughts and experiences in relation to their religious beliefs.

*'I think for our organization the biggest thing is that since we are remote maybe we can't share ideas and special needs about our religious identity while at work'*

*'I think the biggest barrier, if any, is just a lot of people work remote. There has not been opportunity for people to have opinions or experience any religious culture'*

## How can organisations support Christian employees?

The key themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data in relation to supporting Christian employees at work are summarised in Table 3 and reported in further depth below.

Table 3: Recommendations to support Christian employees

Theme	Subtheme
Embrace diversity and inclusion	Develop an inclusive culture
	Increase diversity
	Improve understanding around religious diversity
Accommodating religious observance	Flexibility
	Prayer facilities
Develop effective policies	Create clear guidelines
	Ensure policies are fair for all
	Ensure management support and enforce policies
Create opportunities for expression	Normalise religious discussion
	Respect preference not to express beliefs

### Embrace diversity and inclusion

#### Develop an inclusive culture

Many participants felt positively towards organisations that embraced different beliefs and backgrounds and made employees feel welcome to be their authentic selves. Working for an organisation which was open, welcoming, supportive and respectful helped employees feel comfortable to express their beliefs at work. Therefore, organisations should ensure that inclusion is embraced at all levels within the organisation.

*'I have nothing but praise for the openness, welcoming attitude and push for tolerance and respect for all people in the organisation that comes from the top down and bottom up'*

*'The culture of our office is very diversified and openly accepting of everyone and their own beliefs. I am glad to be a part of an organization that allows us to feel and think freely and express ourselves as we choose'*

#### Increase diversity

Participants associated a diverse organisation with having a more inclusive culture. Some participants, however, noted that their organisation lacked religious diversity. Whilst this did not impact Christian employees directly if they felt that most employees shared their beliefs,



some participants felt that improving diversity at all levels would help people from other religious groups to feel less isolated and more comfortable in expressing their beliefs.

*'The lack of religious diversity within my workplace can also make expression difficult as one can feel singled out if their religious practices and affiliations don't align with the majority of staff or employees'*

*'Top executives are all white and Christian, so it would be nice for the fellow non-Christians and non-White people to have a person in the executive position that is similar to them'*

### Improve understanding around religious diversity

Several participants felt that their organisation should be doing more to raise awareness and improve understanding in relation to religious beliefs. Participants would appreciate events or initiatives which provide opportunities to learn about a variety of different religious beliefs, to help more people within the organisation to feel included.

*'I would like to see more social gatherings at my workplace with the focus on learning more in detail about all of the varieties of religions that are out there'*

*'I feel that has a company we can reach out more to the local faiths and invite them and their leaders into our location to spread the beliefs that they have and how the workforce can integrate with them more, which would be very beneficial to all concerns'*

## Accommodate religious observance

### Flexibility

Several participants appreciated flexible policies or practices which enabled religious observance, particularly in relation to weekend work. Many Christians regard Sunday as a day of rest and worship and appreciated flexibility with weekend work to allow them to observe this practice. Some participants also appreciated time for prayer within their working day.

*'We have a flexible work policy that would allow people to adjust their schedule easily to allow for religious celebrations'*

*'The thing that my organization could do to support religious identity at work is to stop making it impossible to practice our religion on the weekends'*

### Prayer facilities

Participants felt that a designated room for prayer would benefit many employees. However, such facilities must be fit for purpose. Some participants had access to spaces that were not appropriate for their needs, such as a prayer room also used as a meeting room. Organisations should ensure that prayer facilities are private spaces that enable quiet reflection and worship.

*'The only thing that my organisation could do differently to support this was the creation of rooms to pray... It is important to have a calm room where all people know that once in there is to be quiet because we can have people praying or just relaxing'*

*'There is a Prayer room which is used by some of differing faiths, but it is not one which I would consider going to, it's almost as if they have provided a small room, and ticked their own organisational diversity box'*

## Develop effective policies

### Create clear guidelines

Several participants felt uncertain around the extent to which they could express their religious beliefs at work, particularly when working within roles restrictions around religious expression





are anticipated (such as within teaching roles). Organisations should therefore provide clear guidance around the extent to which beliefs can be expressed (for example, through discussion or wearing religious symbols) and adjustments that could be made to support religious observance.

*'I would wish they could be more transparent about the guidelines for what employees can share about to patients. The culture of medicine seems to be the overbearing guide in how employees here act. I believe that the organization could set policies to allow employees to share their own experiences with religion to patients in cases in which the employee deems that such actions would benefit the care of the patient'*

*'I feel the information on religion and expressing this isn't really discussed and provided to employees so it leaves a lot to speculation/ifs and buts. It would be useful to know how flexible and accommodating they would be to a wide variety and volume of religious beliefs and how they would treat all of them individually and as a whole'*

### Ensure policies are fair for all

There were conflicting views around how different religious groups were treated. Whilst some participants felt that non-Christian employees were at a disadvantage, others believed that Christian employees were at a disadvantage in some areas. To overcome any perceptions of injustice, organisations should consult and consider the needs of all religious groups to develop policies that are fair for all.

*'Where they are being inclusive of all religions, it can feel that Christianity is the one that gets the least attention because it's the largest group and the most widely celebrated'*

*'It would be very helpful for other organisations to embrace this diversity and offer the opportunity to individuals who may come from less flexible religious backgrounds to be able to express themselves'*

### Ensure management support and enforce policies

Some participants felt that management should be taking more action to enforce policies, particularly those relating to bullying and harassment, to make it clear that religious beliefs are respected. Participants also felt that managers could be communicating better with employees to understand their needs. A lack of proactive management support often made diversity and inclusion initiatives feel like a superficial 'tick-box' exercise.

*'I think the support from management is very minimal and informal. I think they could set better guidelines. I also believe they should go around the office and ask employees what they think about the current status of religious expression at work'*

*'If management made it clear to staff that ridiculing and being derogatory about religion wasn't acceptable I think people would behave better and keep their opinions more to themselves or at least not express them so strongly'*

## Create opportunities for expression

### Normalise religious discussion

Several participants would like religious discussion to become more normalised. Some participants found working in organisations that suppressed religious discussion difficult and would like the opportunity to discuss their religious beliefs at work. Participants felt that managers could help to normalise discussions by raising the topic of religion within



conversations, such as by sharing their own beliefs or proactively asking whether employees feel able to express their beliefs at work.

*'If I were to give any advice it would be to bring people from all various religious backgrounds to express their passion, beliefs, and differences, to normalize such discussions'*

*'It would be good to hear from senior people within the organisation more about what their beliefs are. This would encourage more of an open attitude towards other people's beliefs'*

### Respect preference not to express beliefs

Many participants felt that their organisation didn't need to do anything differently. Whilst for some, this was because their organisation already offered enough support, others had no desire to express their beliefs at work. Therefore, whilst employees who want to share their beliefs can benefit from having the opportunity to do so, those who do not should not be pressurised.

*'I don't want it to be different. I am there to work not practice my religion'*

*'I don't feel a want or need to express my religion at work so I am okay that it is not something that is talked about or really high on the radar for most people'*

## Summary of Findings

### Quantitative survey findings

#### Celebrating religious festivals

Our findings suggest that taking time off for religious festivals is not a key issue for most Christian employees; only 2.5% of participants have had a request to take time off rejected without good reason. Furthermore, almost three-quarters of employees feel that their organisation is happy for them to take time off for religious festivals, although US employees were more likely to feel supported by their employer and line manager to do so. However, whilst US employees felt more supported to take time off, they were less comfortable discussing the religious festivals they celebrate at work. Gender also impacted on employees' experiences of expressing their religious identity. Men in both countries were more likely to feel supported by their employer and line manager to take time off for religious festivals and were more likely to feel comfortable discussing religious festivals than females. Therefore, females appeared more likely to experience poorer outcomes in relation to celebrating religious festivals at work.

#### Wearing religious dress or symbols

US participants are more likely to wear religious dress or symbols at work and appear to feel more supported by their organisation to do so. Participants in the US were more likely to feel comfortable reporting an incident involving their religious dress or symbols and were less likely to feel their organisation could do more to help them feel comfortable to wear religious dress or symbols at work. However, US participants were less likely than those in the UK to feel comfortable wearing religious dress or symbols at work, which is consistent with our findings in relation to religious festivals. Whilst US participants appear to feel more supported by their organisation when it comes to celebrating religious festivals and wearing religious dress, they feel less comfortable in expressing these aspects of their religious identity at work.

### Qualitative survey findings

Whilst many participants experienced positive outcomes upon sharing their religious beliefs, such as improved wellbeing and better connections with co-workers, some were subject to ridicule and hostility based on their co-workers' stereotypes. Participants also encountered barriers which prevented them from expressing their religious beliefs, such a lack of openness around religious discussion, a lack of management support and restrictions specific to their role. Interestingly, Christian employees had conflicting perceptions about how they were treated at work in comparison to co-workers who held different beliefs. Several participants felt that those who held non-Christian beliefs experienced more challenges when expressing their beliefs at work and requesting paid time off for religious festivals. However, some participants felt that Christian employees were offered less protection against negative treatment at work and experienced more difficulty in securing paid time off within roles where bank or public holidays are not guaranteed, due to the large number of employees who are requesting this period off.

Many participants did not feel their organisation could do anything differently to support them and several preferred to keep religion separate to work. However, some participants would like to share their beliefs, but avoid doing so out of fear of offending others or due to the belief that this would be inappropriate. Organisations may overcome this by championing diversity and creating an inclusive culture, where participants who would like to share their beliefs have opportunities to discuss important aspects of their identity within a safe environment. Organisations should also develop clear guidelines around religious expression that are fair for all religious groups. Managers should enforce and champion such policies and ensure that they are accommodating religious expression wherever possible.



## References

Héliot, Y., Gleibs, I. H., Coyle, A., Rousseau, D. M., & Rojon, C. (2020). Religious identity in the workplace: A systematic review, research agenda, and practical implications. *Human Resource Management, 59*(2), 153-173.

Office for National Statistics (2012). *Religion in England and Wales 2011*.

Pew Research Centre (2022). *Modelling the Future of Religion in America*.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/modeling-the-future-of-religion-in-america>

## Appendix 1: Christianity Participant Demographics

### 1a. Quantitative survey demographics

Country	Gender	Count	% of country	% of total
United Kingdom	Male	287	54.88%	27.54%
	Female	229	43.79%	21.98%
	Other	7	1.33%	0.67%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>523</b>		<b>50.19%</b>
United States	Male	258	49.71%	24.76%
	Female	251	48.36%	24.09%
	Other*	10	1.93%	.96%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>519</b>		<b>49.81%</b>
Combined Totals	Male	545		52.30%
	Female	480		46.07%
	Other	17		1.63 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,042</b>		

### 1b. Qualitative survey demographics

Country	Gender	Count	% of country	% of total
United Kingdom	Male	27	48.21%	24.55%
	Female	29	51.79%	26.36%
	Other			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>		<b>50.91%</b>
United States	Male	29	53.70%	26.36%
	Female	25	46.30%	22.73%
	Other			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>49.09%</b>
Combined Totals	Male	56		50.91%
	Female	54		49.09%
	Other			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>		

## Appendix 2: Full Breakdown of Quantitative Survey Findings

*Have you ever felt that time off for religious holidays and/or festivals was rejected without good business reason?*

Country	Gender	Yes (N)	Yes (%)	No (N)	No (%)	Total
UK	Male	3	1.05%	284	98.95%	287
	Female	10	4.37%	219	95.63%	229
	Other	3	42.86%	4	57.14%	7
US	Male	0	0.00%	258	100.00%	258
	Female	3	1.20%	248	98.80%	251
	Other	7	70.00%	3	30.00%	10
Total		26	2.50%	1016	97.50%	1042

*N* = number of participants

*I feel comfortable discussing the religious festivals I celebrate in the workplace*

Country	Gender	Agree (N)	Agree (%)	Neither (N)	Neither (%)	Disagree (N)	Disagree (%)	Total
UK	Male	169	58.89%	118	41.11%	0	0.00%	287
	Female	93	40.61%	133	58.08%	3	1.31%	229
	Other	7	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	7
US	Male	90	34.88%	134	13.18%	34	51.94%	258
	Female	24	9.56%	131	52.19%	96	38.25%	251
	Other	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	10	100.00%	10
Total		383	36.76%	516	49.52%	143	13.72%	1042

*N* = number of participants

*I feel that my employer is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate religious festivals*

Country	Gender	Agree (N)	Agree (%)	Neither (N)	Neither (%)	Disagree (N)	Disagree (%)	Total
UK	Male	205	71.43%	74	25.78%	8	2.79%	287
	Female	83	36.25%	135	58.95%	11	4.80%	229
	Other	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	7	100.00%	7
US	Male	253	98.06%	5	1.94%	0	0.00%	258
	Female	183	72.91%	13	5.18%	55	21.91%	251
	Other	0	0.00%	3	30.00%	7	70.00%	10
Total		724	69.48%	230	22.07%	88	8.45%	1042

*N* = number of participants

*I feel my line manager is happy with me taking annual leave to celebrate religious festivals*

Country	Gender	Agree (N)	Agree (%)	Neither (N)	Neither (%)	Disagree (N)	Disagree (%)	Total
UK	Male	162	56.45%	113	39%	12	4%	287
	Female	58	25.33%	152	66%	19	8%	229
	Other	5	71.43%	2	29%	0	0%	7
US	Male	212	82.17%	44	17%	2	1%	258
	Female	105	41.83%	127	51%	19	8%	251
	Other	0	0.00%	0	0%	10	100%	10
Total		542	52.02%	438	42.03%	62	5.95%	1042

*N = number of participants*

*Do you wear religious dress that affiliates with your religion?*

Country	Gender	Yes	Yes %	No	No %	Total
UK	Male	227	79.09%	60	20.91%	287
	Female	137	59.83%	92	40.17%	229
	Other	7	100.00%	0	0.00%	7
US	Male	151	58.53%	107	41.47%	258
	Female	60	23.90%	191	76.10%	251
	Other	0	0.00%	10	100.00%	10
Total		582	55.85%	460	44.15%	1042

*N = number of participants*

*Do you wear religious dress in the workplace?*

Country	Gender	Yes (N)	Yes (%)	No (N)	No (%)	Total
UK	Male	48	21.15%	179	78.85%	227
	Female	18	13.14%	119	86.86%	137
	Other	0	0.00%	7	100.00%	7
US	Male	41	27.15%	110	72.85%	151
	Female	47	78.33%	13	21.67%	60
	Other	0		0		0
Total		154	26.46%	428	73.54%	582

*N = number of participants*

*I feel comfortable wearing religious dress in the workplace*

Country	Gender	Agree (N)	Agree (%)	Neither (N)	Neither (%)	Disagree (N)	Disagree (%)	Total
UK	Male	19	39.60%	9	18.80%	20	41.70%	48
	Female	12	66.70%	2	11.10%	4	22.20%	18
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
US	Male	10	24.40%	19	46.30%	12	29.30%	41
	Female	4	8.50%	10	21.30%	33	70.20%	47
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		45	29%	40	26%	69	45%	154

*N* = number of participants

*I feel comfortable reporting an incident that involves my religious dress*

Country	Gender	Agree (N)	Agree (%)	Neither (N)	Neither (%)	Disagree (N)	Disagree (%)	Total
UK	Male	11	22.90%	8	17%	29	60.40%	48
	Female	7	38.90%	0	0.00%	11	61.10%	18
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
US	Male	35	85.40%	3	7.30%	3	7.30%	41
	Female	27	57.40%	14	29.80%	6	12.80%	47
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		80	51.95%	25	16.23%	49	31.82%	154

*N* = number of participants

*I feel my employer could do more to make me and/or others feel more comfortable wearing religious dress*

Country	Gender	Agree (N)	Agree (%)	Neither (N)	Neither (%)	Disagree (N)	Disagree (%)	Total
UK	Male	48	16.70%	134	36.60%	105	46.70%	287
	Female	196	85.60%	28	12.20%	5	2.20%	229
	Other	7	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	7
US	Male	44	17.10%	66	25.60%	148	57.40%	258
	Female	3	1.20%	7	2.80%	241	96.00%	251
	Other	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	10	100.00%	10
Total		298	28.60%	235	22.55%	509	48.85%	1042

*N* = number of participants

*Does the dress code in your workplace/organisation include appearance restrictions or requirements?*

Country	Gender	Yes	Yes %	No	No %	Total
UK	Male	18	6.30%	269	93.70%	287
	Female	31	13.50%	198	86.50%	229
	Other	2	20.00%	5	80.00%	7
US	Male	209	81.00%	49	19.00%	258
	Female	228	90.80%	23	9.20%	251
	Other	4	40.00%	6	60.00%	10
Total		492	47.22%	550	52.78%	1042

*N = number of participants*

*Do you feel there are good business reasons which are proportionate, appropriate and necessary?*

Country	Gender	Yes	Yes %	No	No %	Total
UK	Male	18	100.00%	0	0.00%	18
	Female	30	96.77%	1	3.23%	31
	Other	0	0.00%	2	100.00%	2
US	Male	208	99.52%	1	0.48%	209
	Female	225	98.68%	3	1.32%	228
	Other	3	75.00%	1	25.00%	4
Total		484	98.37%	8	1.63%	492

*N = number of participants*





## Difference inspires business

Pearn Kandola LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England No. OC346998.

Registered office: Latimer House, Langford Business Park, Kidlington OX5 1GG

A list of members is available from our Registered Office.

Copyright in these materials is owned by Pearn Kandola. All rights reserved. No part of these materials, including the design and layout, may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of Pearn Kandola

	Latimer House Langford Business Park Kidlington OX5 1GG
	<a href="mailto:info@pearnkandola.com">info@pearnkandola.com</a>
	<a href="http://Pearnkandola.com">Pearnkandola.com</a>
	+44 (0) 1865 399060

