



**The Faraday Institute
for Science and Religion**

- PRESS RELEASE-

Muslims and Evangelicals reject evolution LESS if they attend faith schools

A newly-published study examining attitudes to evolution in Britain reveals that faith school attendance is associated with more acceptance of evolution for Muslims and evangelical Christians. The study is the first in the country to analyse attitudes to evolution among Christian, Muslim and non-religious groups.

Dr Amy Unsworth and Prof David Voas, authors of the peer-reviewed study published online today in the journal *Public Understanding of Science*, analysed the effect on acceptance of evolutionary theory of attending a religiously affiliated school ('faith school').

The authors report that acceptance of evolution is low among the conservative Protestant groups surveyed, higher among Muslims and higher still among Catholic, Anglican and non-religious respondents. The most significant factor associated with a higher evolution acceptance score among Muslims was attendance at an Islamically-affiliated school age 11-16. A similar, though smaller effect was seen for Independent Evangelicals who had attended a church school.

Project lead Dr Amy Unsworth says, "The finding that faith school attendance is associated with less rejection of evolution may sound surprising. But religious students who find themselves in a minority at a non-religious school may be more likely to develop a strong, defensive religious identity. If, additionally, they hear that you can't accept evolution and have religious faith, then rejection of evolution may become a part of that strengthened religious identity."

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The survey was carried out by YouGov amongst 6020 individuals comprising a nationally-representative sample plus oversamples of selected religious affiliations.

Human evolution was rejected by 70% of respondents from the conservative Protestant groups surveyed ($n = 854$), by 44% of Muslims ($n = 815$), 13% of Catholics ($n = 978$), 8% of Anglicans ($n = 1247$), and 4% of the non-religious ($n = 1633$).

Dr Amy Unsworth is a Post Doctoral Research Associate at The Faraday Institute, St Edmund's College, Cambridge. Her background is in molecular biology and science communication and her research focuses on public engagement with science in culturally and religiously diverse societies.

Prof David Voas is Head of the Department of Social Science at University College London, Chair of the Theory Group of the European Values Study and Co-Director of British Religion in Numbers (www.brin.ac.uk). He uses survey data to study religious change in modern societies.

The full journal article is at: <http://bit.ly/2yBcmXN>

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