

# Why do people pray? Survey data













The 2017 survey by Tearfund and Savanta ComRes asked 2,069 adults about prayer. The sample was weighted to represent the population of Great Britain.

One question asked people how often they pray.

- 51 per cent of people said they pray, at least sometimes.
- 26 per cent of Christians and 80 per cent of the non-religious said they never pray.

The survey then asked all the people who say they pray (1,060 people) some more questions about prayer.

The table below gives data for all those people who pray: Christians, Muslims and non-religious. (The sample sizes for the other religious traditions were too small to make meaningful comparison.)

There are many reasons why people pray. Which of these, if any, are reasons why you have prayed?		Total %	Christians %	Muslims %	No religion %
In times of personal crisis or tragedy		55	57	36	55
I believe in God		39	45	67	6
I believe prayer makes a difference		32	36	56	7
To gain comfort or feel less lonely		29	30	38	23
I believe in a higher power		29	31	45	14
To communicate with God		28	32	66	7
On the off chance that something could change		22	20	6	32
To be still, pause and reflect		21	23	23	11
As a discipline passed down from my family		10	12	25	1
As a last resort		10	7	10	24
It's a discipline of my faith tradition to do so		10	10	46	
As a habit/routine		10	11	21	3
<b>Number of people: all who pray</b>		<b>1,060</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>172</b>

## Thinking things through: interpreting data

Note that the Total column includes the people from other traditions.

- Why do you think many people pray in times of crisis or tragedy?
- Only a small percentage of the non-religious people who pray think that it makes a difference (see Resource 6.9). Use the responses to the other statements to help explain why more than half of these non-religious people pray in times of crisis.
- Create some categories for these reasons: for example, some are religious reasons, some are personal.
- Describe the difference between Christian and Muslim reasons for praying. What explanations can you suggest for these differences? How could you check your interpretation?

Source: Tearfund and Savanta ComRes (2017) [comresglobal.com/polls/tearfund-prayer-survey/](https://comresglobal.com/polls/tearfund-prayer-survey/)