

Poll: U.K. Christians Face Rejection, Discrimination

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A new poll of Britain's churchgoers found that Christians there believe they are being discriminated against and turned down for promotion because of their faith. One in five said that they had faced opposition at work because of their beliefs. More than half of them revealed that they had suffered some form of persecution for being a Christian, The Sunday Telegraph reported.

Five percent of the 512 churchgoers interviewed in the ComRes poll for the U.K. newspaper said they had been turned down for promotion due to their faith. The same percentage said they had been reprimanded or cautioned at work for sharing their faith.

In recent months, reports have revealed Christians being suspended after expressing their religious views, including a teacher who complained that a staff training day was used to promote gay rights.

Churchgoers believe that these incidents reflect growing intolerance towards Christianity in Britain.

Nearly three out of four of those questioned believe there is less religious freedom in the United Kingdom now than 20 years ago, and one in five said persecution of Christians is worse in this country compared to other European nations.

The new guidelines issued by the Government only adds to the concerns of churchgoers. They warn that employees will face dismissal and are "highly likely" to be accused of harassment if they share their faith with colleagues at work. The guidelines were drawn by the British Humanist Association (BHA) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a taxpayer-funded body, contributed funds for them.

"The law specifically protects people from being intimidated or confronted with a hostile environment in the workplace," said Andrew Copson, director of education at the BHA, referring to the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, according to The Sunday Telegraph.

"Systematically undermining someone's beliefs or persistently attempting to convert someone would lead to the creation of a hostile environment," he added.

However, legal experts have attacked the guidelines as "nonsense" and Christian groups have condemned them as "propaganda."

An EHRC spokesman responded, "The commission's funding program supports a wide range of organizations, both faith and non-faith groups, in keeping with its aim of promoting good relations and a better understanding between those from different religions and beliefs.

"This is one of many such projects to that end. This isn't about supporting a particular belief or lack of belief over another, but encouraging debate."

Other findings in the poll, conducted April 21-May 1, revealed that one in ten churchgoers also said they have been rejected by family members because of their religious beliefs.

Nearly half (44 percent) said they had been mocked by friends, neighbors or colleagues for being a Christian, and 19 percent said they had been ignored or excluded for the same reason.

<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20090601/poll-u-k-christians-face-rejection-discrimination/index.html>