

Religion and Faith Workforce Report 2024

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Background

This report has been created for the second year running to go alongside the national mandated reporting of WDES (Workforce Disability Equality Standard) and WRES (Workforce Race Equality Standard) to gain an insight into staff demographics and experiences in the context of their religious belief and faith.

The Department of Health have released a practical guide to help NHS organisations address responsibilities relating to religion and belief, both as an employer and providing care¹.

In 2022, Dr. YingFei Gao Héliot published a report about supporting religious identity in the NHS². This research was conducted across five NHS trusts, highlighting the benefits of adopting a faith and belief competency framework in the NHS. This followed a 2020 report from NHS Employers and the University of Surrey into religious identity and working in the NHS.³

A further survey by NHS Employers and the University of Surrey closed in April 2023 and was open to all NHS staff to understand the importance of faith and belief networks in the NHS⁴. While the results have not yet been published, below are the key findings from NHS Employers:

- 19% belong to a faith and belief staff network.
- Although 39% think that religious beliefs should be expressed at work, 21% think they should not be expressed at work.
- 71% are familiar with issues of religious expression.
- 83% believe that religious expression should not be against NHS policy or practice.
- 78% stated faith and belief networks have a positive impact on their personal wellbeing.
- 46% think that religious beliefs can currently be openly discussed in the workplace; however, 22% think they cannot be openly discussed.
- 66% think that religious expression is not too divisive to be allowed at work.

St. George's University of London have also released a religion and belief code of practice that may be helpful when considering dress codes and clinical considerations.⁵

Analysis

The workforce data from this report is a snapshot from the 31st March 2024. The staff survey results are taken from the latest staff survey that took place at the end of 2023. This report excludes bank staff.

¹<https://www.clatterbridgecc.nhs.uk/application/files/7214/3445/0178/ReligionorbeliefApracticalguidefortheNHS.pdf>

²https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359396269_Influencing_Supporting_Religious_Identity_in_the_NHS_through_Faith_Competency

³ <https://openresearch.surrey.ac.uk/esploro/outputs/report/RELIGIOUS-IDENTITY-AND-WORKING-IN-THE-NHS/99512632702346>

⁴ <https://www.nhsemployers.org/news/survey-faith-and-belief-staff-networks>

⁵ <https://www.sgul.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/documents/religion-belief-code-of-practice.pdf>

Workforce Data

The total number of staff employed by Royal Devon as of 31st March 2024 is 13,869, of which 59.9% have disclosed a religious belief. 31.22% of staff preferred not to disclose and 8.88% have not input any option on ESR.

Below are the percentage breakdowns compared with the 2023 religious belief report:

	2023	2024
<i>Atheism</i>	15.87%	14.71%
<i>Buddhism</i>	0.48%	0.50%
<i>Christianity</i>	39.83%	36.36%
<i>Hinduism</i>	0.77%	0.76%
<i>Islam</i>	1.03%	0.97%
<i>Jainism</i>	0.01%	0.01%
<i>Judaism</i>	0.07%	0.09%
<i>Sikhism</i>	0.10%	0.11%
<i>Other</i>	6.70%	6.39%
<i>Do not wish to disclose</i>	27.96%	31.22%
<i>Unknown</i>	7.18%	8.88%

As we can see from the above the largest changes have been a **3.47%** decrease in staff identifying as Christian and a **3.26%** increase in staff not wishing to disclose their religious belief. There has also been a smaller decrease in staff identifying as atheist and those with an unknown religious belief.

Staff Survey Data

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	46.64%	48.30%
<i>Christian</i>	42.72%	41.34%
<i>Buddhist</i>	0.49%	0.54%
<i>Hindu</i>	0.51%	0.75%
<i>Muslim</i>	0.62%	0.71%
<i>Any other religion</i>	1.37%	1.49%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	5.97%	5.84%

Please note other religious groups (Jewish and Sikh) are not included in the analysis due to low response rates.

Self-describing

In the staff survey there is an option of a free text box when selecting 'any other religion'. **58** respondents entered text in this box in 2023, below are the results grouped as appropriate:

	Number		Number
<i>Agnostic</i>	4	<i>Methodist</i>	3
<i>Agnostic-Atheist</i>	1	<i>Norse</i>	1
<i>Catholic</i>	8	<i>Pagan/Wiccan</i>	12
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	7	<i>Protestant</i>	1
<i>Deist</i>	1	<i>Quaker</i>	1
<i>Druid</i>	1	<i>Spiritualist</i>	9
<i>Humanist</i>	1	<i>Taoist</i>	2

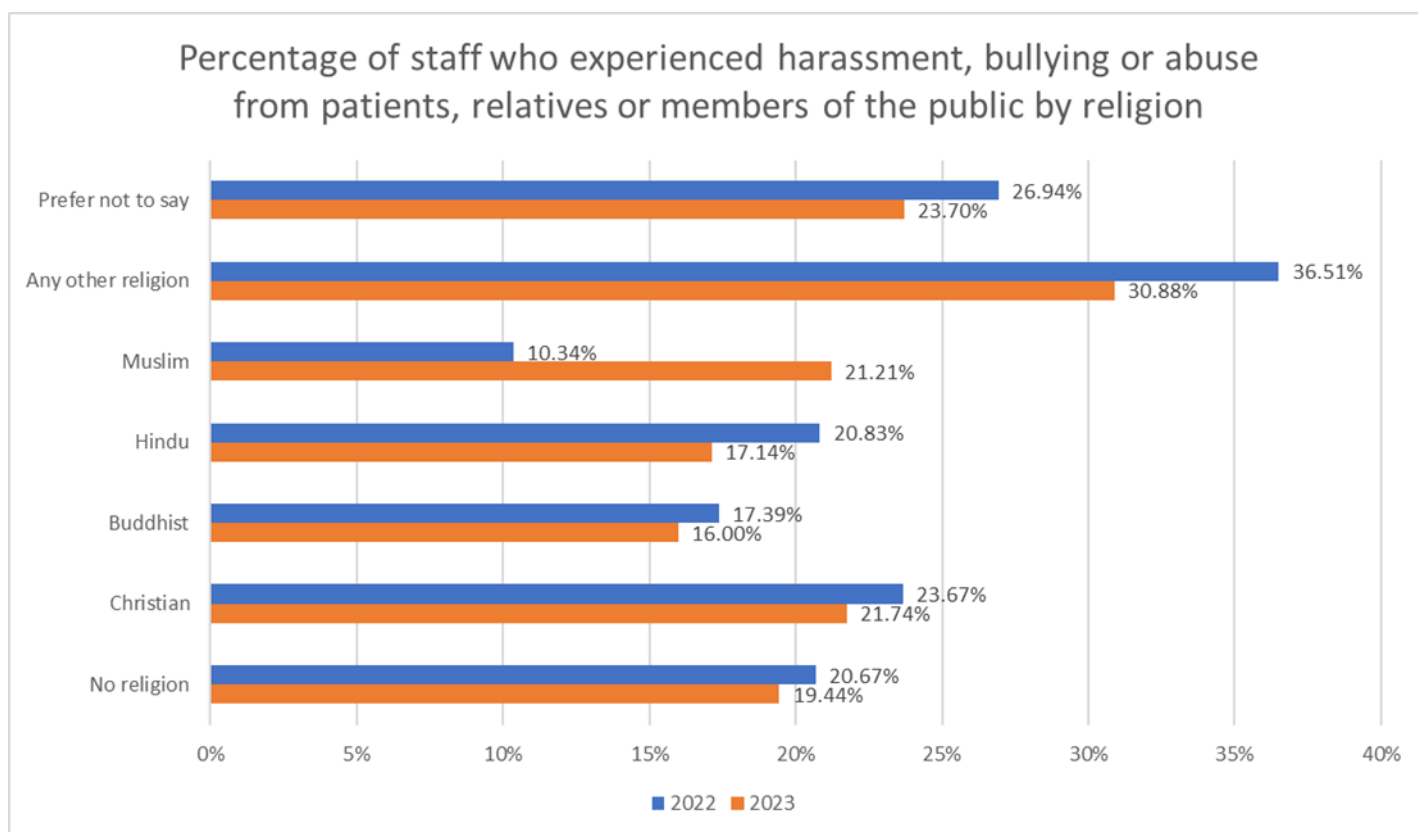
<i>Jedi</i>	4
<i>Jehovah's Witness</i>	1
<i>Meditation</i>	1

Bullying, Harassment or Abuse

Please note that due to a national issue with the staff survey⁶ the results for this section contain a statistical bias and may not be accurate. An estimated 4% (184) of responses were affected by this issue.

Percentage of staff who experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from patients, relatives, or members of the public

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	20.67%	19.44%↓
<i>Christian</i>	23.67%	21.74%↓
<i>Buddhist</i>	17.39%	16.00%↓
<i>Hindu</i>	20.83%	17.14%↓
<i>Muslim</i>	10.34%	21.21%↑
<i>Any other religion</i>	36.51%	30.88%↓
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	26.94%	23.70%↓



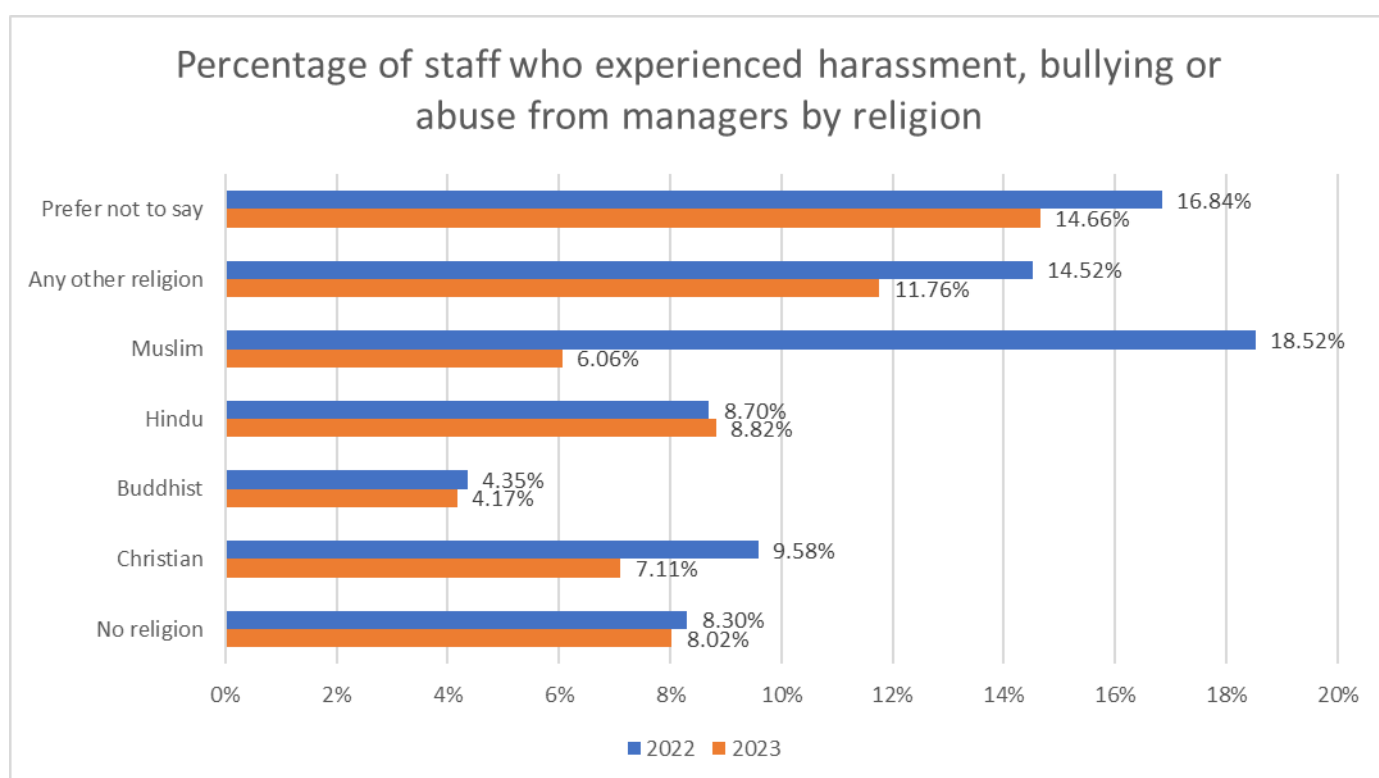
There has generally been a reduction for staff experiencing bullying, harassment, or abuse from the public, aside from Muslim colleagues who have reported a **10.87%** increase from the previous year.

⁶ <https://www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/static/cb25daf2e7e2b7e1115b0aad5e3483c/NHS-Staff-Survey-2023-Additional-information-regarding-data-collection-issue.pdf>

The largest reduction is for respondents of any other religion with a **5.63%** reduction but who remain the highest group for the second year.

Percentage of staff who experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from managers

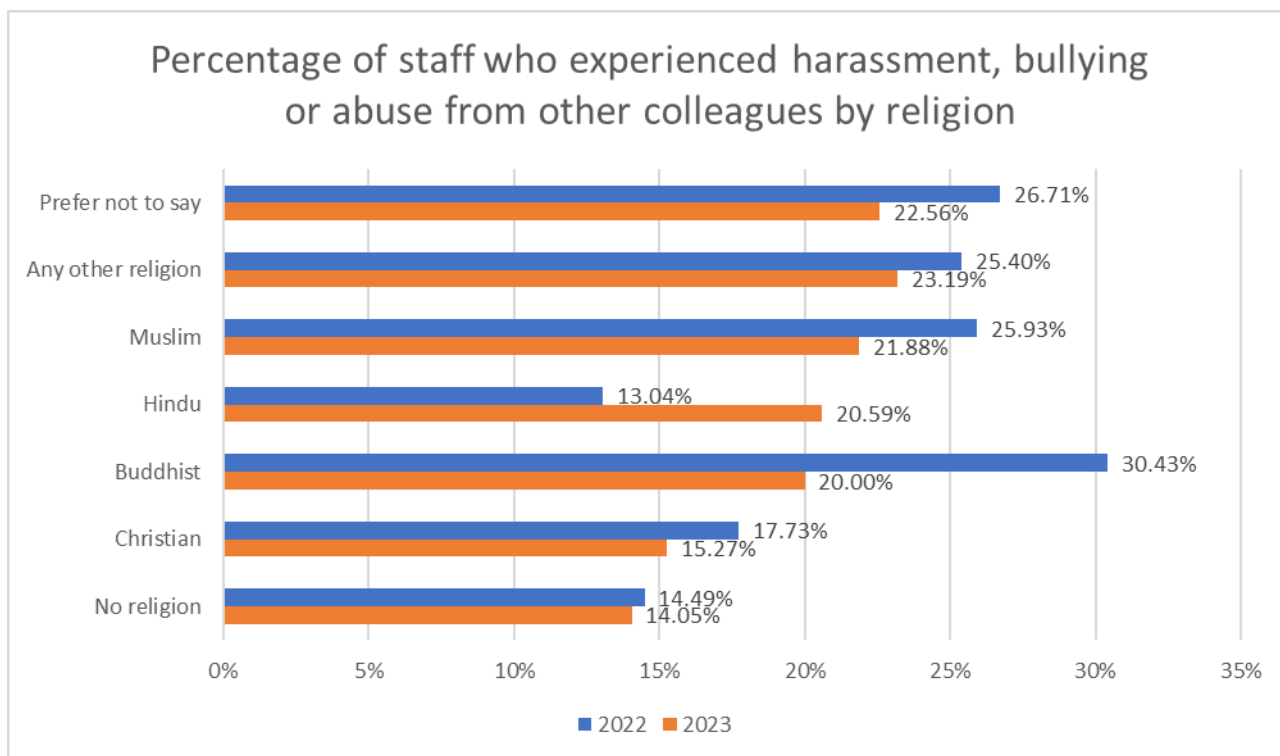
	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	8.30%	8.02% ↓
<i>Christian</i>	9.58%	7.11% ↓
<i>Buddhist</i>	4.35%	4.17% ↓
<i>Hindu</i>	8.70%	8.82% ↑
<i>Muslim</i>	18.52%	6.06% ↓
<i>Any other religion</i>	14.52%	11.76% ↓
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	16.84%	14.66% ↓



The majority of groupings report a reduced rate of bullying, harassment or abuse from managers compared to last year with the exception of a slight increase of **0.12%** from Hindu colleagues. The largest reduction was for Muslim staff with a **12.46%** reduction.

Percentage of staff who experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from other colleagues

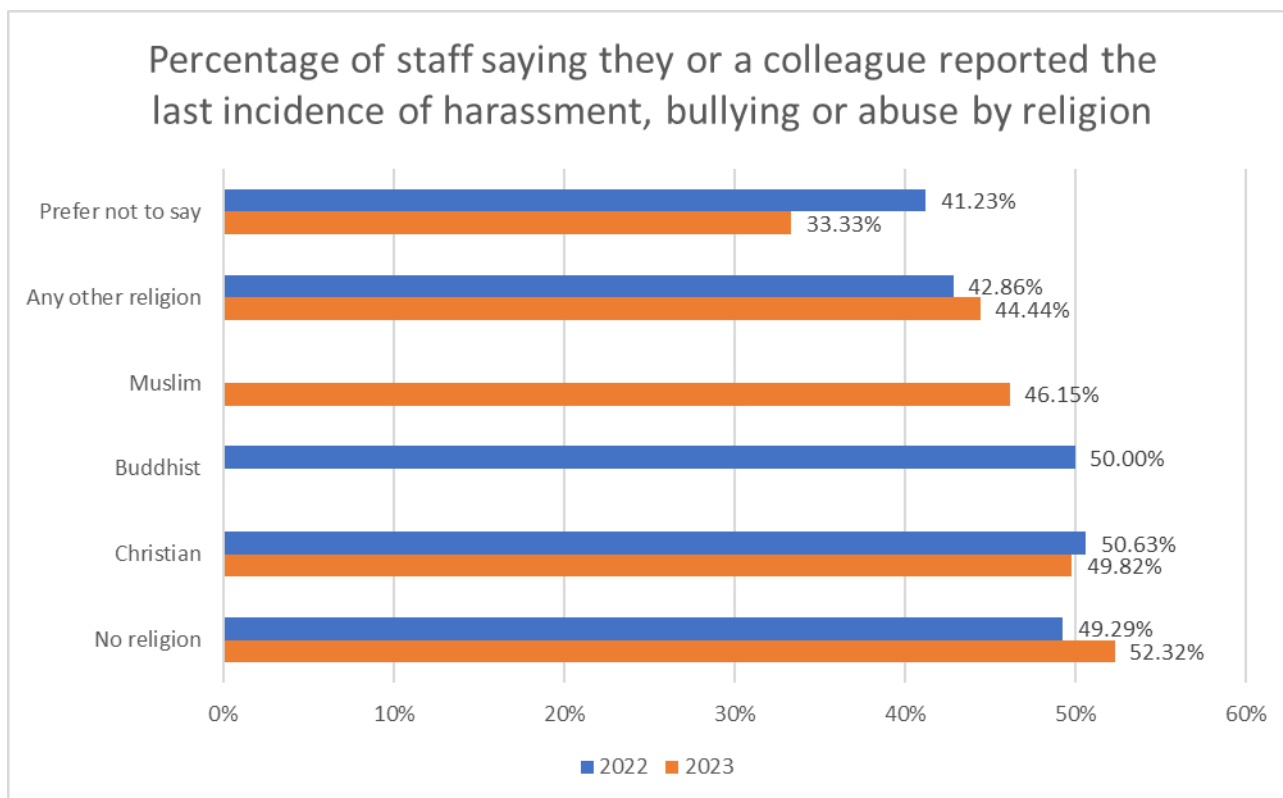
	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	14.49%	14.05% ↓
<i>Christian</i>	17.73%	15.27% ↓
<i>Buddhist</i>	30.43%	20.00% ↓
<i>Hindu</i>	13.04%	20.59% ↑
<i>Muslim</i>	25.93%	21.88% ↓
<i>Any other religion</i>	25.40%	23.19% ↓
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	26.71%	22.56% ↓



As above, Hindu staff are the only staff group that have reported an increase in experiencing bullying, harassment, or abuse from other colleagues since last year with a **7.55%** increase. Those of any other religion and who prefer not to disclose are the most likely to report harassment, bullying and abuse this year.

Percentage of staff saying they or a colleague reported the last incidence of harassment, bullying or abuse

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	49.29%	52.32% ↑
<i>Christian</i>	50.63%	49.82% ↓
<i>Buddhist</i>	50.00%	-
<i>Muslim</i>	-	46.15%
<i>Any other religion</i>	42.86%	44.44% ↑
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	41.23%	33.33% ↓

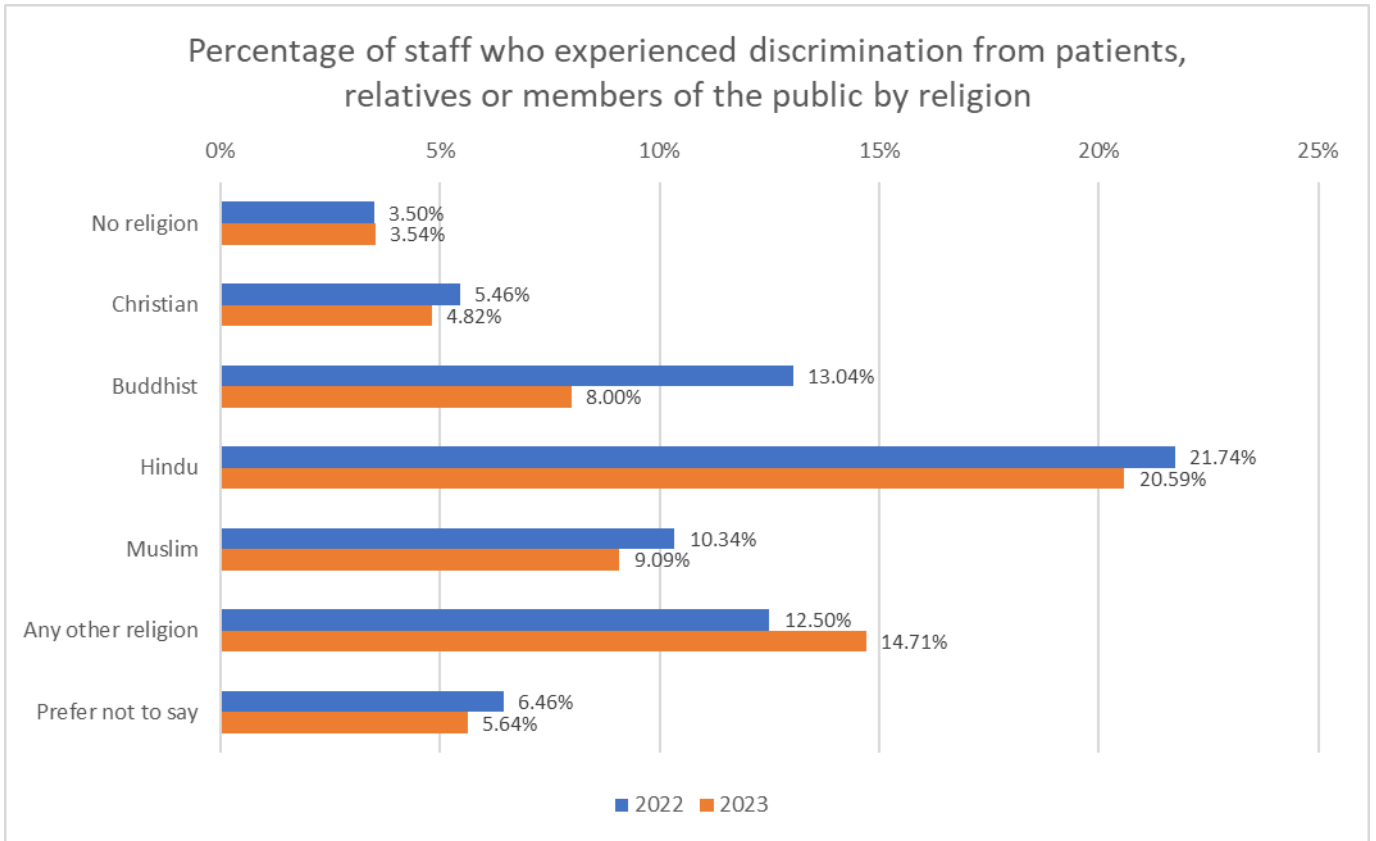


For the second year, those who prefer not to disclose their religion are less likely to report the last incidence of harassment, bullying or abuse they experienced, and this has decreased by **7.9%** compared to last year.

Discrimination

Percentage of staff who experienced discrimination from patients, relatives, or members of the public

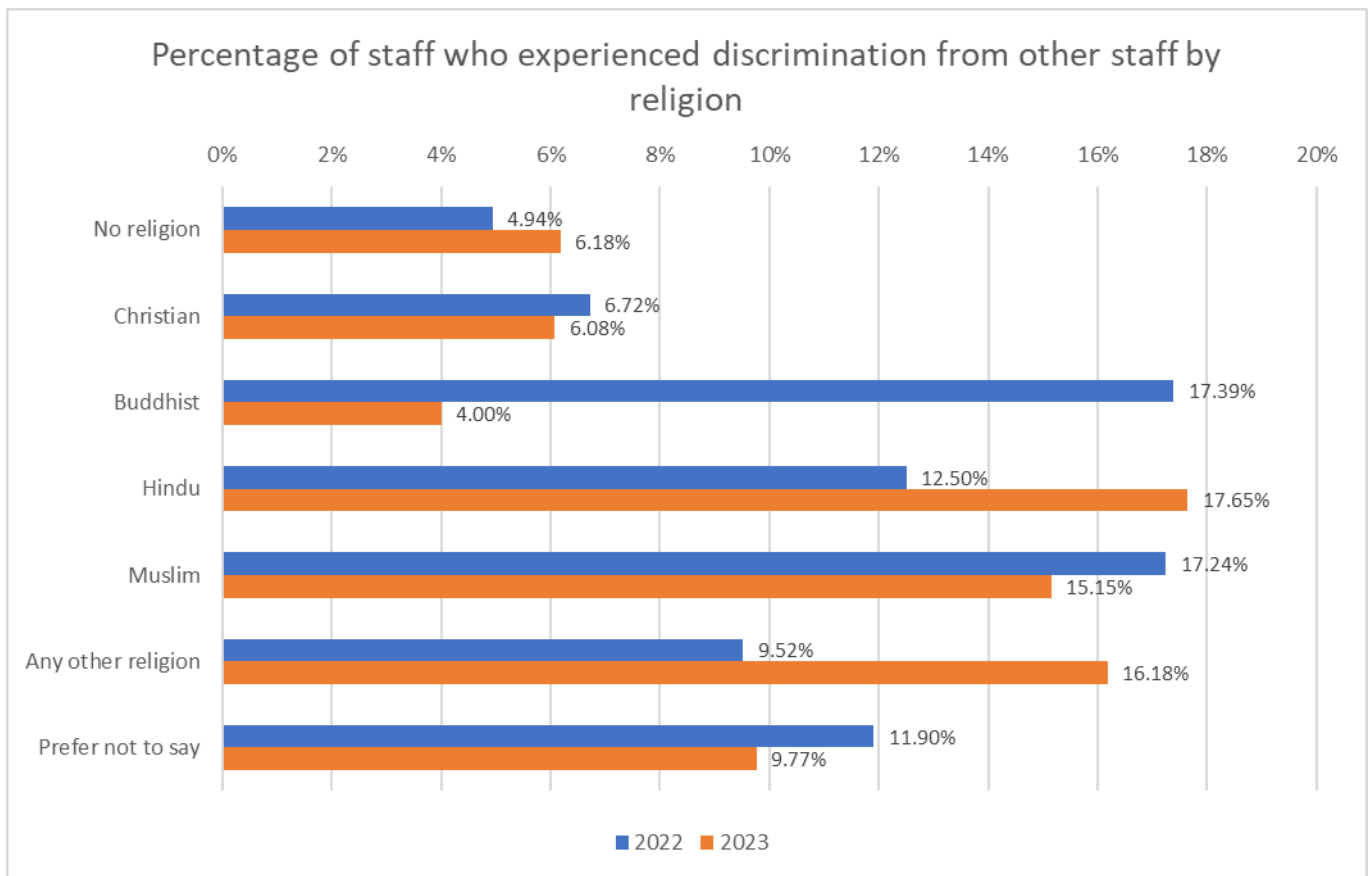
	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	3.50%	3.54% ↑
<i>Christian</i>	5.46%	4.82% ↓
<i>Buddhist</i>	13.04%	8.00% ↓
<i>Hindu</i>	21.74%	20.59% ↓
<i>Muslim</i>	10.34%	9.09% ↓
<i>Any other religion</i>	12.50%	14.71% ↑
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	6.46%	5.64% ↓



Incidences of discrimination have decreased for most staff groups from 2022 data with the exception of a slight increase for those of no religion and a **2.21%** increase for those selecting any other religion. For the second year, it is Hindu colleagues who are most likely to experience discrimination from patients or the public, being **15.43%** above the Trust average of **5.16%**.

Percentage of staff who experienced discrimination from other staff

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	4.94%	6.18% ↑
<i>Christian</i>	6.72%	6.08% ↓
<i>Buddhist</i>	17.39%	4.00% ↓
<i>Hindu</i>	12.50%	17.65% ↑
<i>Muslim</i>	17.24%	15.15% ↓
<i>Any other religion</i>	9.52%	16.18% ↑
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	11.90%	9.77% ↓

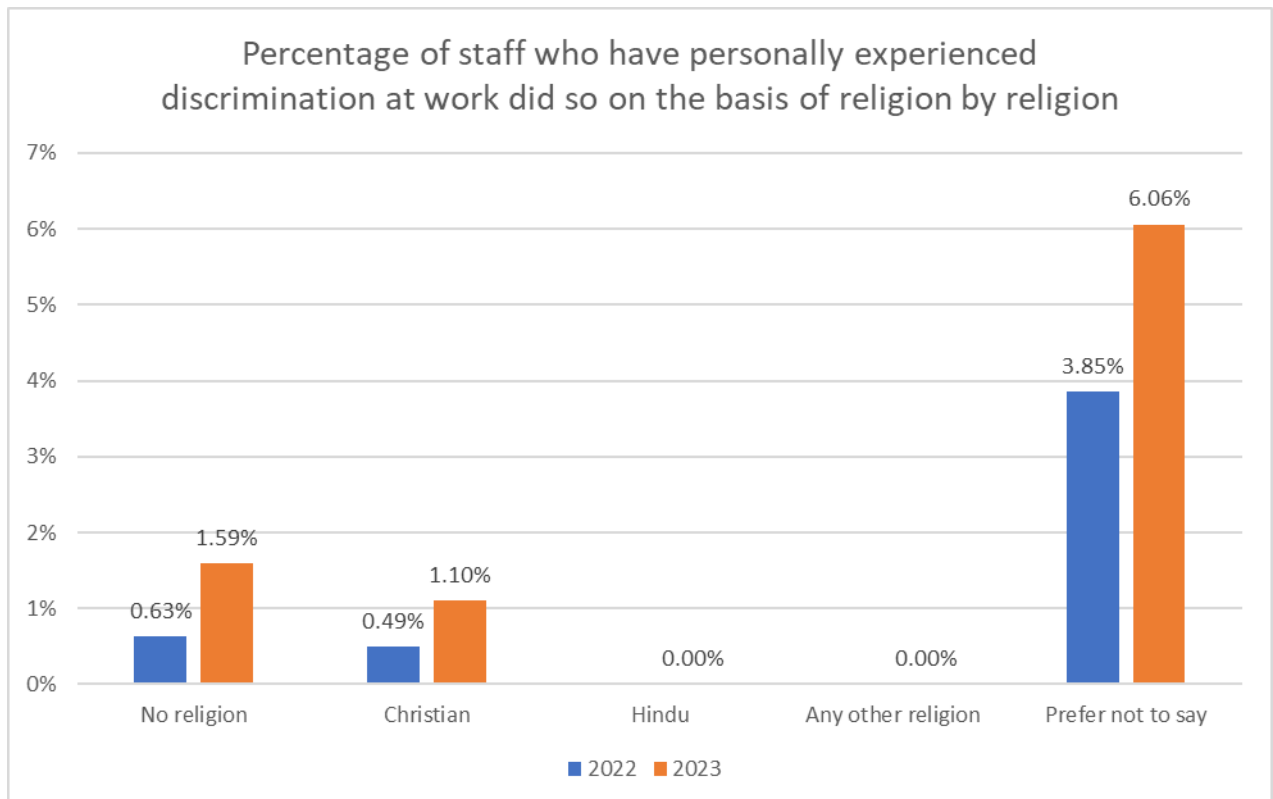


There have been mixed results when looking at discrimination from other staff. While the Trust average has remained the same at **6.69%** from 2022 to 2023, there have been reductions for Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and staff who prefer not to disclose. This is in contrast to increases for Hindu and staff of any other religion.

Percentage of staff who have personally experienced discrimination at work did so on the basis of religion

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	0.63%	1.59% ↑
<i>Christian</i>	0.49%	1.10% ↑
<i>Hindu</i>	*	0.00%
<i>Any other religion</i>	*	0.00%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	3.85%	6.06% ↑

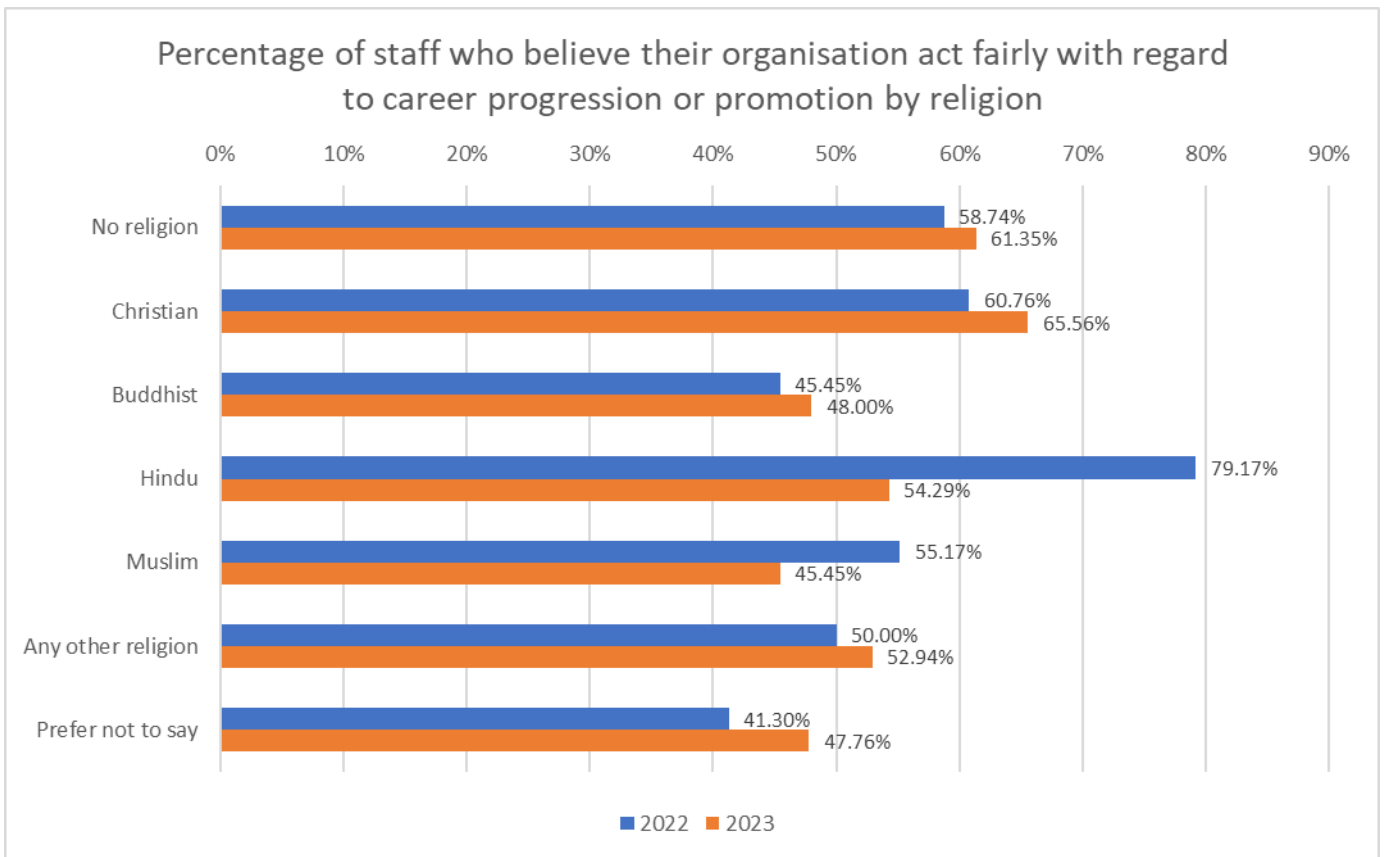
* There were not enough respondents in the grouping to provide analysis.



An increased percentage of staff have indicated that they believe the discrimination they faced at work was due to their religion for those of no religion, Christian and most notably for those who prefer not to disclose (an increase of **2.21%** from 2022). While there were not enough Hindu or any other religion respondents for analysis in 2022, no respondents in these categories reported that discrimination was due to their religious belief in 2023.

Percentage of staff who believe their organisation act fairly with regard to career progression or promotion

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	58.74%	61.35%↑
<i>Christian</i>	60.76%	65.56%↑
<i>Buddhist</i>	45.45%	48.00%↑
<i>Hindu</i>	79.17%	54.29%↓
<i>Muslim</i>	55.17%	45.45%↓
<i>Any other religion</i>	50.00%	52.94%↑
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	41.30%	47.76%↑



Most religion groupings have increased their rating for the Trust on the fairness of career progression or promotion; however, there have been decreased scores for both Hindu (**24.88%** decrease) and Muslim colleagues (**9.72%** decrease).

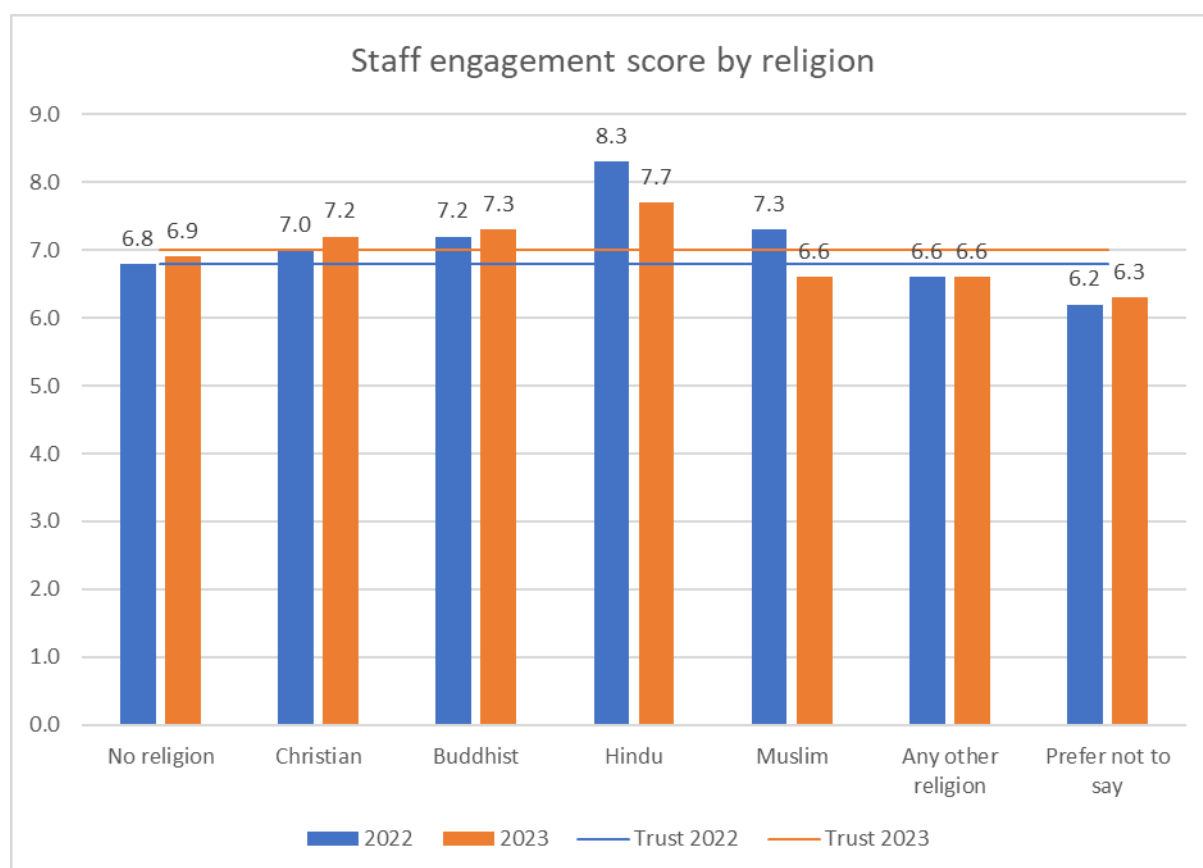
People Promise Scores

As part of the staff survey, People Promise elements pertaining to what we wish to see from our Trust as a place to work have been identified which are calculated from sub-scores. These sub-scores utilise responses to several questions relating to the sub-score theme. Below is the data from 3 of these sub-scores for the groupings previously mentioned, all rated on a scale of 0-10.

Staff Engagement

Staff engagement is a theme identified from the scores of questions relating to motivation, involvement, and advocacy. The Trust combined average for 2023 was **7.0** (6.8 in 2022).

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	6.8	6.9↑
<i>Christian</i>	7.0	7.2↑
<i>Buddhist</i>	7.2	7.3↑
<i>Hindu</i>	8.3	7.7↓
<i>Muslim</i>	7.3	6.6↓
<i>Any other religion</i>	6.6	6.6
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	6.2	6.3↑

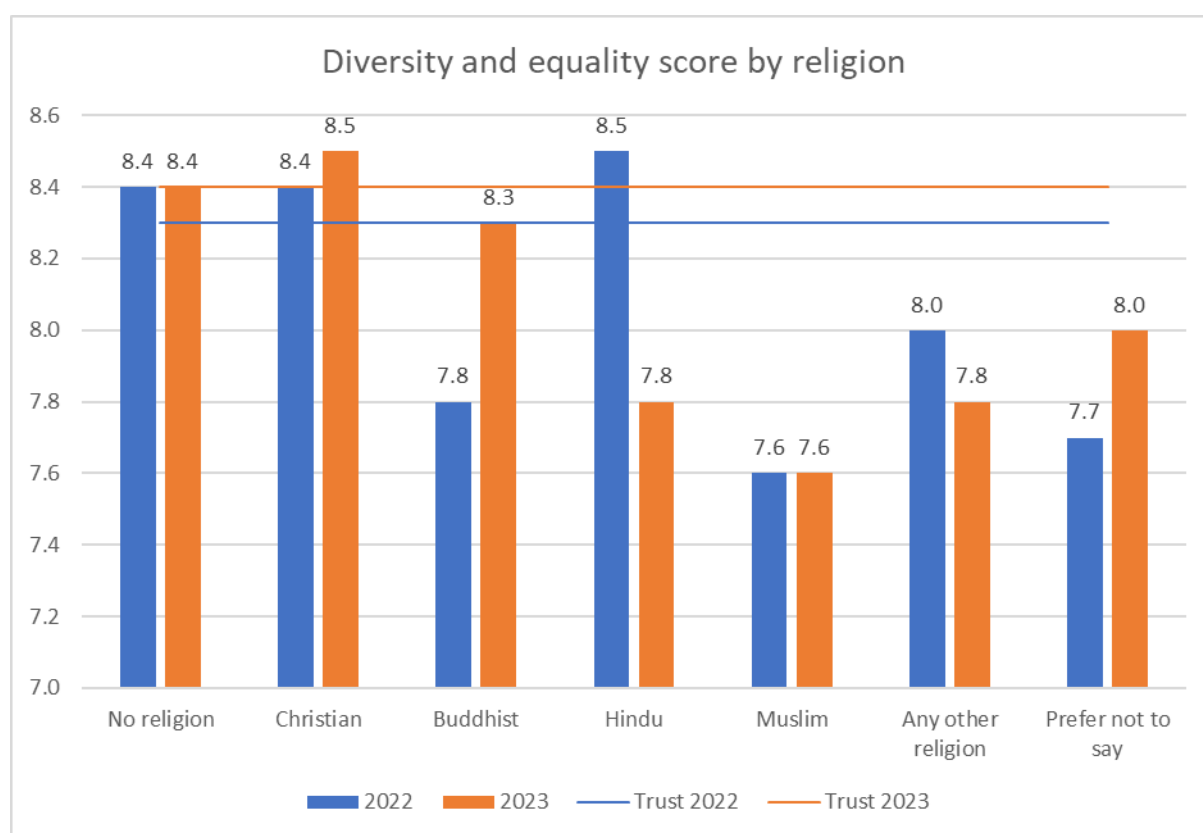


While staff engagement has increased in 2023 Trustwide, there were notable decreases for Hindu (**0.6** decrease) and Muslim colleagues (**0.7** decrease). However, despite this reduction, Hindu staff members remain 0.7 above the Trust average, along with their Christian and Buddhist counterparts.

Diversity and Equality

The diversity and equality score involves questions about staff facing discrimination at work and if the organisation respects individual differences, the Trust overall score in 2023 is **8.4** (8.3 in 2022).

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	8.4	8.4
<i>Christian</i>	8.4	8.5↑
<i>Buddhist</i>	7.8	8.3↑
<i>Hindu</i>	8.5	7.8↓
<i>Muslim</i>	7.6	7.6
<i>Any other religion</i>	8.0	7.8↓
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	7.7	8.0↑

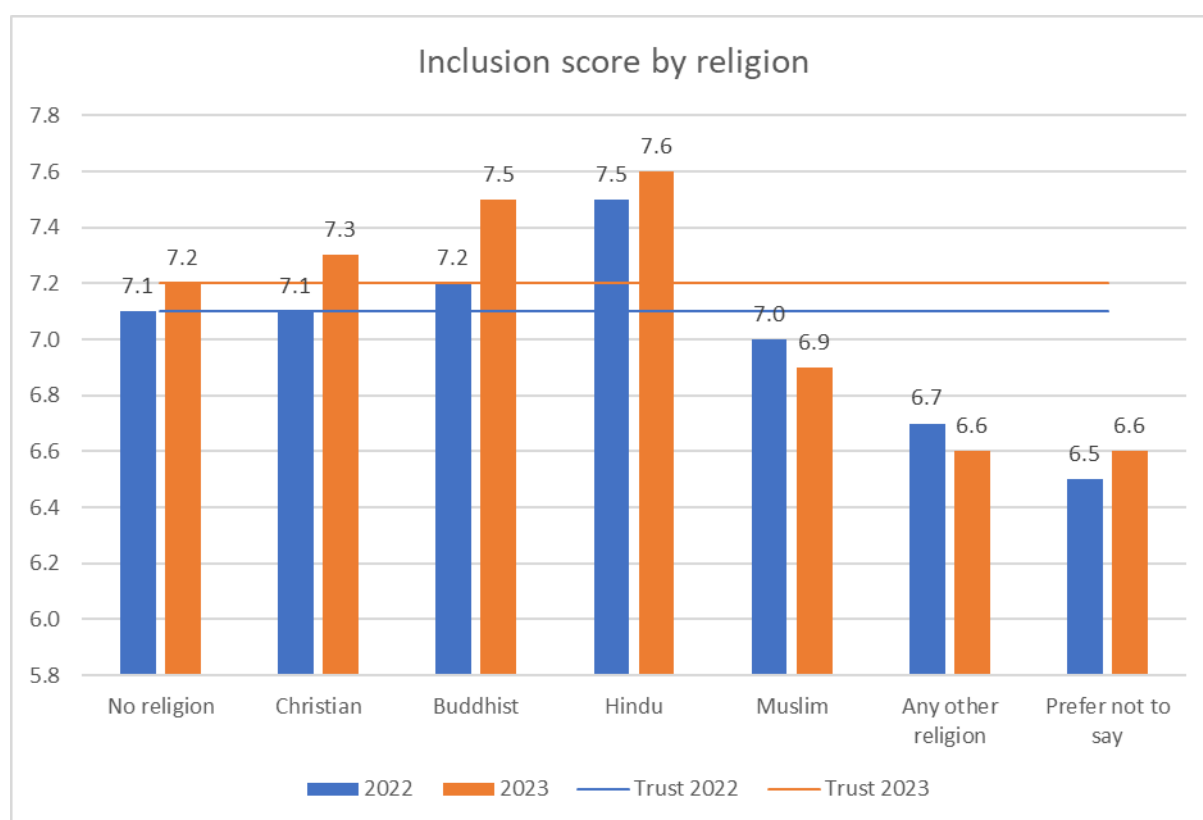


Notable improvements for the diversity and equality score are among Buddhist (**0.5** increase), those who prefer not to disclose (**0.3** increase) and Christian staff (**0.1** increase). In contrast there has been a **0.7** decrease for Hindu staff and a **0.2** decrease for those of any other religion. Muslim staff members report the lowest experiences for diversity and inclusion for the second year running.

Inclusion

The inclusion sub-score relates to how valued staff feel by their team and how their colleagues treat each other, the Trust average in 2023 is **7.2** (7.1 in 2022).

	2022	2023
<i>No religion</i>	7.1	7.2↑
<i>Christian</i>	7.1	7.3↑
<i>Buddhist</i>	7.2	7.5↑
<i>Hindu</i>	7.5	7.6↑
<i>Muslim</i>	7.0	6.9↓
<i>Any other religion</i>	6.7	6.6↓
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	6.5	6.6↑



Inclusion scores have improved for most religious groupings in 2023 compared to 2022, most notably for Buddhist (**0.3** increase) and Christian staff (**0.2** increase). However, there has been a **0.1** decrease for both Muslim staff and those of any other religion. Those of any other religion and those who prefer not to say have the worst experiences for this metric for the second-year running with both **0.6** below the Trust average.

Key Issues

- The number of staff opting not to disclose their religious belief on ESR has increased, which may suggest an issue with staff not feeling comfortable in disclosing sensitive personal information. As with the previous year's report, this is in contrast with increased disclosure rates for the staff survey.
- Looking at questions of discrimination, it is Hindu colleagues and those of any other religion that are more likely to report experiencing discrimination. Those who prefer not to disclose are the most likely to feel discrimination was on the basis of their religion.
- Hindu and Muslim colleagues rate the Trust lowest on the people promise score of diversity and equality and those of any other religion or who prefer not to disclose rate the Trust lowest on the inclusion scores.

Proposals and Actions

This report is currently not carried out widely across the NHS, meaning that we are only able to compare the experience of our staff year on year without a national benchmark. In some categories, the dataset available is fairly small, meaning that we do not have the level of accuracy that we would like when developing our plans. However, there are clear indications of some of the work we need to do including:

- Support the launch of cultural competency training across the Royal Devon.
- Roll out inclusion training across the Royal Devon with a focus on the importance of religion and faith, the experiences of our staff and intersectionality.
- Continue to work on developing our culture and ways of speaking up to ensure staff have confidence in our systems.
- Increase information regarding data recording and understand where there might be gaps or reluctance to share personal information and how we can bridge them.