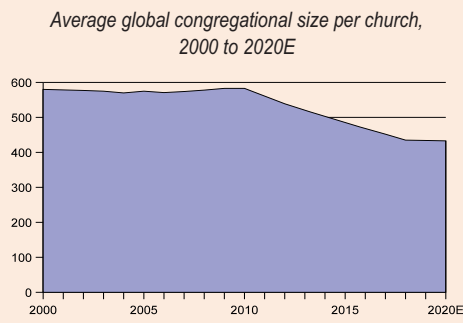


## GLOBAL CONGREGATIONS

According to the published data from the Global Christian Database (GCD), in the year 2000 there were 2 billion Christians in the world, many of them nominal, a third, 33%, of the world's then population of 6.06 billion people. Some 1.9 billion of these were counted as church members. The GCD reckoned there were about 33,800 denominations, and some 3.4 million congregations or churches. That would mean an average of some 580 people per congregation and over 59,000 per denomination.

Almost 20 years later, in 2019, these numbers have changed somewhat. There are now reckoned to be 2.5 billion Christians globally (an increase of 25%), still a third, 33%, of the world's present population of 7.7 billion. They are now spread across 49,000 denominations (a 45% increase) and attend some 5.8 million churches (an increase of 69%). It is perhaps ironic that while the Developing World has largely spent its energy in starting new churches, the Developed World has been starting denominations! Each church in 2019 had an average of 434 members (a decrease of -25%), and each denomination an average of 51,600 members (a -14% decrease). With "members" and "denominations" both increasing, these negatives simply mean they are not changing at the same rate.

The decline in the average number of Christians per congregation has not been smooth, as the graph clearly shows. It remained at about the same level between 2000 and 2010, then dropped quite rapidly till 2018 and has remained flat since.



What caused the decline? It has been due to two main factors:

- The number of new churches started in the last 10 years has been much greater than in the previous 10 years. Between 2000 and 2009, world congregations increased by just over 300,000 people. Between 2010 and 2019 they increased by 1.9 million – six times as many! That growth has especially been seen in Africa and Asia.

- Secondly, the number of new Christians has slowed. Between 2000 and 2009 the number of Christians increased by 15% (2.3 billion to 2.0 billion). Between 2010 and 2019 the number has increased by 10% (2.3 billion to 2.5 billion).

Fewer Christians being shared across more congregations means a smaller number per congregation. The future tentative figures for 2020 and 2025 would suggest that the rate of growth in number of congregation is slowing while the rate of increase of Christians is being maintained. After any period of expansion there is frequently a period of consolidation, and it may be that that is what is happening globally.

SOURCE: Annual figures published in January edition of the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*. Overseas Mission Study Centre, Connecticut.

## Collapse of Judaeo-Christian Culture?

Speaking at the 2008 Lambeth Conference, when representatives of most of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion had gathered together, the then Bishop of Durham, the Rt Rev Tom Wright, looked ahead into the 21st century, and drew a conclusion from the demise of the British Empire ("on which the sun never set") in the mid-20th century.

He envisaged the possible passing of the then current American status as the sole world super-power, that "the next great superpower ... whether it is India or China ... (means that) the world will be dominated for the first time since ancient Rome by a superpower that does not stand within the Judaeo-Christian tradition." With the arrival of President Trump (which he didn't foresee!) the possibility of a non-American superpower has become much closer to reality in spite of the latter's avowed election slogans to "Make America Great" and "Keep America Great."

The decline of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is a potential trend exemplified especially perhaps in the continent of Europe (at least since the Middle Ages), long the centre of Christianity, where people were "believing without belonging" (Grace Davie's well-known phrase), but where now commitment to and involvement in institutional religion are both in very serious decline. However, the overall trend is not totally clear nor the outcome obvious.

European institutional religion is unquestionably declining, but other types of Christianity are emerging. The gender of those involved is key – women carry on believing much longer than the men, and they live the longest. Immigration is impacting Europe almost more than anywhere else, except perhaps America. An interesting book, *Religious America, Secular Europe?*, contrasting American and European faith experiences, written a decade ago, ultimately concluded that some kind of Christian faith will remain in Europe, and it will not become totally secular, as other observers, such as Philip Jenkins, suggest.

That is not to minimise the seriousness of the situation. On 11th December 2008 in the UK, 80 Christian leaders from most branches of the church, and from both Houses of Parliament, as well as from business and education, met in the House of Lords to consider the moral and spiritual implications of the financial crisis. They looked at the five major social institutions underpinning the structure of society: the economy, family, education, law and government, and religion. All had changed radically over the previous decades and "this had changed Britain from its centuries-old Judaeo-Christian heritage to a polycultural, multi-religious society with no fixed standards of personal or social morality." It is this conclusion that makes this general trend so important, and much wider than just the UK, and even the Developed World.

Clifford Hill, who has long maintained a prophetic watch over the UK, underscored the above when he wrote (in 2009), "Our great Parliamentary traditions that have guaranteed our freedoms and rights as individuals and have guarded our values, principles and beliefs, founded upon our Judaeo-Christian heritage are all being swept away at a stroke by the most godless Government in recent history. ... Please do not think that I'm advocating a mere change of Government to save this nation! We have reached such a stage of degradation and depravity that only God can heal our nation." A change of Government has indeed taken place since he wrote this and the new one is no more able to "heal the nation" than the previous one. Indeed, with the Brexit debate the divisions have become both much greater and more obvious, as well as more acrimonious.

What are the implications of such a slide in the basic cultural tradition? George Barna identified five:

- The absence of a shared vision of the future
- Confusion regarding appropriate values for decision-making
- The elimination of a sense of the common good
- The deterioration of respectful dialogue and the fruitful exchanging of competing ideas
- The abandonment of moral character and personal decency.

George wrote these words also in 2009, and the way British society has developed in the ten years since then has proved them all true! A possible sixth "slide" ten years ago was perhaps the usurpation of the Judaeo-Christian ethos by an increasing Islamisation, but this has slowed somewhat at least in the UK with the rise of "The Nones" which has affected Muslims as well as Christians. The Judaeo-Christian decline has created a vacuum in which other ideologies, belief systems and secularism can flourish.

Hastening the demise especially of the Christian part of the joint ethos has been the constant reporting of personal and institutional failures of sexual abuse by those held in authority and respect, and especially among the Catholic and Anglican denominations. The various trials of senior persons have brought shame and despair to many, and this rampant area of abuse has been proved much more extensive than just the church but in wider society also. In an article Rev Dr Jeremy Morris, Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, wrote "Is this how churches die? When the cultural hinterland of historic Christian faith is thinned out almost to vanishing point, will a crisis of confidence in the Church's leadership administer the final coup de grace?"

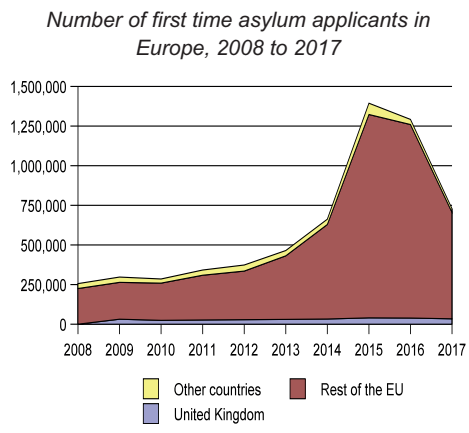
There are, however, a number of individual and corporate efforts to show a radical alternative and that the Christian side at least is far from over. Compare, for example, J John's football stadium evangelism, the 2019 "Thy Kingdom Come" event in Trafalgar Square, central "Days of Prayer" organised by many Pentecostal churches, organisations such as David Hathaway's and the World Prayer Centre in Birmingham, outreach among young people through summer camps and student missions, Spring Harvest, New Wine and others. All this is in addition to the many new churches being started every year and the mushrooming of Messy Churches with its literally thousands of regular meetings.

SOURCE: *Global Religious Trends 2020 to 2030*, Brierley Consultancy, ADCB Publishers, forthcoming, 2019.

## MIGRANT CRISIS

Migrants are those who choose to move not because of a threat or persecution but because they wish to improve their lives. An asylum seeker is one who claims to be a refugee but whose claims to such have yet to be evaluated. A refugee is a person seeking international protection under international, national or regional law.

The number of first time asylum applicants across the European Union since 2008 has been enormous. The figures are reflected in the graph, and the total of 5.4 million in the 10 years 2008 to 2017 is an average of over half a million a year, but showing desperate numbers in 2015 and 2016 when the total was twice the previous annual figure in 2014.



Of the 5.4 million total, the European Union (EU) accounted for 94%, with just 33,200 coming each year to other countries in Europe. Of those coming to the UK, they were 5% of the total, averaging 28,200 a year. Where did these asylum applicants come from? The number from each country varies as political crises, war, persecution pressure and other facts impinge in different areas and at different times. In 2016, the peak year, half, 50%, came from just four countries: Syria with 340,000 (24%), Afghanistan with 190,000 (13%), Iraq with 130,000 (9%) and Pakistan with 50,000 (4%).

The above numbers reflect the number of asylum applicants, which is not the same as the number of immigrants, which is greater. In 2017, for example, there were 2.4 million immigrants into the EU but only a total of 730,000 asylum requests, 30% of the immigrant numbers; the amount of work and time it takes to process all the immigrants is very great.

Many immigrants would call themselves Christian or Muslim, the two dominant faiths, with probably more Muslims in the European total than in those travelling to the United States which also sees substantial numbers of immigrants each year, together with Canada.

The impact of large numbers of Muslim immigrants in some countries has been quite severe. For instance, France passed a law in 2010 banning face veils, the Swiss banned construction of new mosque minarets in 2009, Austria proposed prohibiting foreign funding for Muslim organisations in 2012, Russia has passed laws favouring the Orthodox Church, Italy tried banning the display of crucifixes, and so on. The issues have not reached legislation in the UK yet.

What is the impact of Christian immigrants into the UK? There have been substantial numbers of new churches started, especially by the Roman Catholics. Between 2005 and 2012 the Catholics opened chaplaincies in more than 35 different languages in the Diocese of Westminster, London, alone. They have started over 25 new churches in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to meet the spiritual needs of the hundreds of thousands of immigrant Poles working in the oil industry and military bases in that part of Scotland.

Some of the Orthodox churches in the UK have grown as well, particularly the Romanian Orthodox Church which has seen its numbers quintuple from 18,000 in 2008 to 95,000 by 2017, the main Orthodox beneficiary once Romanians were allowed to migrate into the UK in 2008.

Many evangelical churches have also benefited with larger congregations, as well as new churches being started. The number of Koreans in the UK (rising from 12,000 in 2001 to over 45,000 in 2011) has strengthened the Korean churches, for example. Likewise the large numbers of Chinese (many of whom are students), rising from 230,000 in 2001 to 380,000 in 2011, have been the focus for outreach by the many Chinese churches in the UK. The African Pentecostal churches have been challenged by the considerable numbers coming from especially West Africa to Britain – there were 480,000 Africans in the UK in 2001 and 980,000 in 2011, from the Population Census in those years.

Though European governments may be concerned about immigrant numbers and how to reduce/accommodate them, Western European Christians need to welcome overseas believers and others not patronizingly but compassionately and humbly willing to learn from them. "Be prepared to learn from people who do not look, sound, teach, train and practise the way you always have," implores Usha Reifsnider (from the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World), who argues that since "the highest proportion of Christ followers are now from the Majority World and women, then theology and mission should follow suit."

SOURCES: Vista, Redcliffe College, Issue 33, June 2019, Page 4; Office for National Statistics website; International Association of Religion Journalists website and "European Migrant Crisis" Wikipedia website both accessed June 2019.

## OPTING OUT

Some things from 40 years ago are occasionally worth repeating for fun. The following came originally from **Christ Church, Winchester, and was used by Rev Eddie Gibbs when teaching church growth in 1980:**

There are **566** members in our church,  
But 100 are frail and elderly,  
That leaves **466** to do all the work,  
But 80 are young people at college,  
That leaves **386** to do all the work.  
But 150 are tired business men,  
So that leaves **236** to do all the work.  
And 150 are busy housewives with children,  
That leaves **86** to do all the work.  
And a further 46 have most important outside interests,  
That leaves **40** to do all the work,  
But 15 live too far away to come regularly,  
So that leaves **25** to do all the work.  
And 23 say they've already done their bit for the church.  
That leaves you and me,  
And I'm exhausted.  
Good luck to you!

P6:FUTUREFIRST|0819

## THE FUTURE IN THE PAST

Twenty five year ago, in 1993, an employee of the charity World Vision was asked what would be the major impact of Christian churches in the decade ahead on World Vision's work? Seven answers were given, not focussing just on World Vision's work, but the impact of church life generally. These answers were as follows:

1) "The increasing role of women leaders in the Church worldwide." Women clergy in the Church of England were not even allowed back in 1993! Today a sixth, 16%, of UK ministers are female, let alone the numbers worldwide.

2) "The Pentecostal/Charismatic churches will continue to grow worldwide." That they have done – up from 2% of the world's population in 1970 to 9% by 2015! And from 5% to 27% of the world's Christians in the same period.

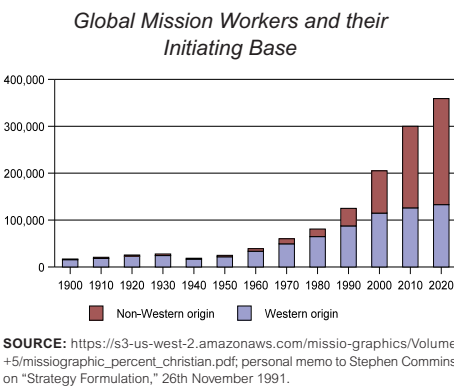
3) "A continuing multiplication of churches and denominations worldwide." That also has happened – from 3.4 million churches worldwide in 2000 to 5.8 million in 2019, and from 34,000 denominations to 49,000.

4) "The continuing major growth of the different cults and non-Christian religions." This has been less true of the major "cults" (which would include Jehovah's Witness and the Mormons) but certainly has been true of Muslims who were 1.3 billion worldwide in 2000 and will be 1.9 billion in 2020.

5) "The Christian churches in the West are likely to see declining resources." This also has happened. The percentage of Christians in Europe, North America and Oceania has shrunk from 76% of the population in 2000 to what will be about 72% by 2020, against a rise in the Developing world from 23% to 26% of their (much larger) population. Fewer Christians means fewer resources.

6) "The continuing increase of new Christian organisations." While this also has happened it is against the decline of many existing Christian organisations, and the latter was not foreseen to the extent to which it has happened, largely because of failing finance and lack of suitable successors to the CEOs.

7) "The readiness of the Third World to send missionaries to the needy First World." This also has happened with a burgeoning of mission workers from the Third World, some of whom have indeed come to the First World. There are a number of very successful "reverse mission" groups in the UK, for example, like the Redeemed Christian Church of God which came to the UK in 1993 and has planted over 850 churches at the present time. The chart below shows the huge increase in such in the past 30 years.



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## FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

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# FUTURE FIRST

## IS LONDON AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE?!

Grace Davie, Professor Emeritus, University of Exeter

The religious development of London has caught the imagination of activists and commentators alike. In the 1960s, London was considered a quintessentially secular city.<sup>2</sup> It is now a giant market in religion, teeming with representatives of all faiths and none. How has this come about? And is London an exceptional case?

To answer these questions this article is divided into two sections. The first recaps very briefly the key factors to take into account if the religious situation in Britain is to be properly understood. The second looks in more detail at the rebalancing of these factors in London. A short conclusion considers possible futures.

### Religion in Britain: the factors to take into account

The full story of the British case can be found in my *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*.<sup>3</sup> This argues that there are six factors that shape the religious life of Britain, which not only change and adapt over time but push and pull in different directions. They are:

1) The role of the historic churches in forming British and indeed European culture. This is easily illustrated in the sense that the Christian tradition has had an enduring effect on time (calendars, seasons, festivals, holidays, weeks and weekends) and space (the parish system and the dominance of Christian buildings) in this part of the world.

2) An awareness that the historic churches still have a place at particular moments in the lives of British people, though they are no longer able to discipline the beliefs and behaviour of the great majority of people. Nor should they in a modern democracy where freedom of belief and the right to choose, join or leave a religion is paramount.

3) An observable change in the churchgoing constituencies of this country, which operate increasingly on a model of choice rather than a model of obligation or duty. As a result, the membership of all churches is changing in nature; increasingly it is chosen rather than inherited, though more so in some places than in others.

4) The arrival into Britain of groups of people from many different parts of the world. This is primarily an economic movement, but the implications for religion are immense. The growing presence of Christians from the global South alongside significant other faith communities has altered the religious profile of this country. Some of these communities are – simply by their presence – challenging some deeply held assumptions, notably the notion that religion should be considered a private matter.

5) The reactions of Britain's more secular voices to this shift, that is, to the increasing significance of religion in public as well as private life. This growing constituency did not anticipate a shift of this nature, but see it as their duty to question what is happening, sometimes aggressively, sometimes less so.

6) A gradual, but growing realization that the patterns of religious life in modern Europe (including Britain) should be considered an "exceptional case" – they are not a global prototype.

It is important that we consider these factors alongside one another in order to get a rounded picture of what is happening. The future is uncertain. Indeed, the current state of religion in Britain is paradoxical. On the one hand, religion has re-entered the public square and demands a response. On the other, a largely unchurched population has difficulty dealing with these issues in the sense that it is rapidly losing the concepts, knowledge and vocabulary that are necessary to talk well about religion.

### The six factors applied to London

Does the distinctiveness of London mean that the six factors no longer apply? The answer is "no," but they do need to be re-balanced.

The cultural heritage continues to exist: the rhythm of the working week remains the same, and the parishes of the Church of England are still there, lying beneath – and working with – the myriad activities of different faiths that take place both within and across their boundaries.

Many of these parishes become themselves part of the market that is London, whether in religion or in anything else. And as expected, choice abounds. Congregations emerge both within and without the established church to meet very different needs: of language and ethnicity, of profession and predilection (actors, artists and journalists etc.), of musical styles, of churchmanship and spirituality, of tradition and innovation, of gender and sexualities, and of families and friendship groups.

Continued on page 4



## Who influences teenagers?

The American Barna Research Agency undertook a fascinating survey in April 2018 interviewing 2,350 teenagers aged between 13 and 17, 450 personally and the remainder online, coming from “vibrant households” where their faith was regarded as very important and who went to church at least once a month. The results were only released in May 2019.

The survey looked at the role different relatives play in influencing teenagers, and did this in four broad areas – what it called “one-on-one time”, supporting teens, whom teens talk to and where teens receive spiritual guidance. Mothers scored highest in three of these areas, and ran a very narrow second (57% to 58%) in the fourth. They were beaten to second place, 57%, only in one-on-one time where Friends came top.

Otherwise Mothers scored high in encouraging teens to go to church (99%), giving advice (97%), setting an example (92%), giving encouragement (93%) and sympathy (90%), answering questions about faith (89%), and when things are bothering a teenager (89%), talking about the Bible (88%), eating meals together (84%), watching TV or movies (82%), talking about God’s forgiveness (83%), teaching teens about traditions (79%) and faith (70%), praying together (63%), confronting each other (63%) and calling each other on the phone (61%). This is a list which shows that mums are indispensable in helping teenagers grow as Christians! It is not clear whether these mums are full-time or working mums.

What are Dads good for? The Barna research shows that fathers score less well on one-to-one time with their teen offspring, but are crucial when it comes to money (92%), setting an example (89%), encouraging teens to go to church (88%) and in other ways (83%), eating meals together (80%), logistical help (79%), watching TV together (76%), politics (75%), the Bible (74%), answering questions about the faith (71%), encouragement (69%), teaching about traditions (67%) and the Bible (63%) and giving advice (63%).

Grandparents are useful too! Their strong points are encouraging teens to go to church (88%), setting an example (87%), eating together (85%), having fun together with teenagers (84%), giving general encouragement (83%), teaching about traditions (83%), watching TV and movies (79%), answering questions about the Bible (76%), talking about God’s forgiveness (74%) and the faith (68%), giving encouragement (76%) and sympathy (64%), advice (62%) and money (61%).

Siblings also have their uses, especially in eating meals together (85%), having fun together (84%), watching TV or movies together (79%), giving encouragement (61%) and exchanging text messages (60%).

Friends were important for having fun together (85%), talking about something that bothers (84%), giving advice (84%), general advice (75%) and sympathy (74%), exchanging text messages or emails (73%), or interacting on social media (73%),



## AGE OF CONVERSION

While some can give a specific age when they came to Christ – from very young (under 4) to old age (over 75) – others can only give approximations, such as in their teens, in their twenties, etc. Yet others feel they have always known Christ, and an experience related to age is irrelevant. Of the former group, though, what is the average age, or most likely age, when they made a real commitment to Christ? There have been a number of studies seeking to answer this question. One of the earliest was in 1899 when Prof Edwin Starbuck of the University of Iowa published the results of his survey finding the average age at 15.6 years.

One of the earliest studies in the UK looking at the age of conversion was in the wake of the Billy Graham campaign in the mid-1960s, when the Evangelical Alliance surveyed 4000 people and found 17% of Christians were converted before they were 12, and a further 59% in their teenage years. The Luis Palau Mission to London surveys in the 1980s, with a sample of 12,500, found that 48% of those receiving Christ were under 14.

The TEMA Congresses in the 1980s and early 1990s had 200 attenders from the UK each time. Surveys of these found 91% had been converted between 6 and 25, with 50% by the age of 15. A large study of over 3,000 by Churches Together in England in 1994 found that 26% of respondents said they “first knew I was Christian” before they were 10, and a further 25% between the ages of 11 to 15.

A survey by Agape in 1997 of 700 churching young people found that 43% had made a personal commitment before they were 11, and a further 43% between the ages of 11 and 14. John McDowell commissioned a detailed survey, “Attitudes to Morality and Religion,” in 2005 among 1,400 young people of whom 28% had made a commitment to Christ, 82% before the age of 14.

A survey by the American National Association of Evangelicals in 2016 found that 1% knew they were Christians from before they were 4 years old, 63% when aged between 4 and 14, 34% between 15 and 29 and 2% when 30 or over.

This is a very mixed bag of surveys, but the overall average, insofar as it can be estimated, shows that the majority are indicating that most conversions take place in the teenage years, and probably early teenage years (12 to 15).

Do such conversions last? Two surveys in the 1990s found that perhaps 40% drop away, but some 80%, dubbed “reconverts,” later return, after an average of 10 years and “with much less spirituality.” This is an area where further, and more recent, comprehensive research is required.

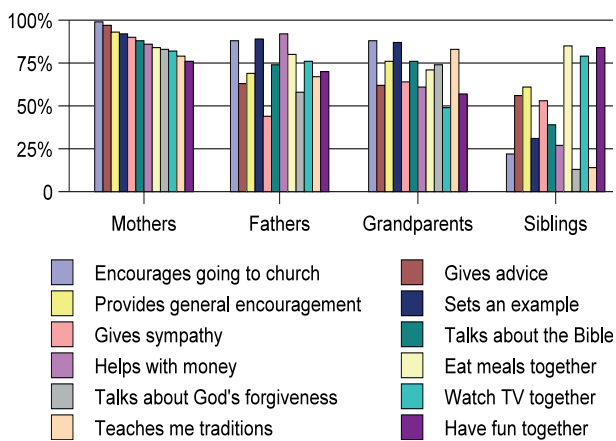
**SOURCES:** *Background to the Task*, Scripture Union, 1968; *Mission to London*, Phase 2, *Who went forward?*, Peter Brierley, 1984; *Mission 93*, What UK delegates thought, Report; *Finding faith in 1994*, the Lent '94 Research Project Technical Summary; *Right from Wrong*, Agape, 1997; *Attitudes to Morality and Religion*, Josh McDowell, Christian Research, 2005; *Website*.

for encouraging churchgoing, setting an example and providing money, while grandparents are important also for encouraging churchgoing (something backed up by other research), setting an example, teaching traditions, providing general encouragement and talking about the Bible. Siblings primarily eat with teenagers, watch TV and movies together and have fun together – important but totally different roles.

Churches need to encourage family life but also to have an ethos which includes the increasing number of single parents with teenagers, co-habiting families, divorced families, dysfunctional families, broken families and others where teenagers lack the security of both parents and close family ties.

**SOURCE:** *The Powerful Influence of Mums in Christians’ Households*, Barna Research, 13th May 2019, [www.barna.com/research](http://www.barna.com/research).

*Influences of parents, grandparents and siblings*

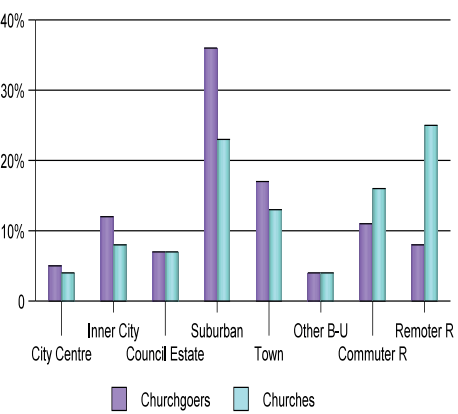


## Environmental Changes

One of the questions in the initial Church Censuses was the environment in which a church was located. While this is obviously linked to its geographical location, the question allowed for a slightly greater discrimination in that it tried to subdivide the concepts of “urban” and “rural.”

Eight categories of “environment” were used, shown in the Table below. Accordingly, they showed that a quarter, 24%, of all churchgoers go to a City Centre, Inner City or Council Estate church. Outside the City Centre, over a third, 36%, of churchgoers are in Suburban areas, and virtually half as many, 17%, in Separate Towns. That’s over 1.1 million people in the suburbs going to church and over half a million in towns, with another 120,000 in Other Built-up areas. Rural areas were divided into two – Commuter Rural and Remoter Rural equivalent to quarter of a million people.

*Percentage of Churchgoers and Churches by Environment, England, 2010*



The number of churches is not spread out in the same way. So while the proportion of churches in the City Centre is about the same as attendance percentage, only 8% of churches are in Inner City areas. A quarter, 23%, of churches are in Suburban areas, but only 13% in Towns. It is the Rural areas which have a much greater difference, with a sixth of churches, 16%, in Commuter Rural areas and a quarter, 25%, of all churches in Remoter Rural areas.

These two pieces of information enable the average attendance to be worked out, shown in the Table, not just for 2010 but also for the year 2000 and estimated for 2020.

While the average congregation has declined wherever their church may be located, it has declined most for those on Council Estates, in Other Built-up areas or in Remoter Rural parts. Such declines are not universally true – in the rural District of Ryedale, in North Yorkshire, for example, church attendance increased between 1998 and 2005, largely because of families “green shifting”, moving from suburban or urban locations to a healthier, more rural and less polluted setting.

It is in the Inner City where congregations have decreased least. This is because it is one of two environments where the number of new congregations has increased by at least 5% in the last 20 years, the other being in Separate Towns. There are over 3,200 churches in Inner Cities and

5,000 in Towns in 2019 while in all other areas the number of churches has declined (except marginally in Other Built-up areas).

Why do the Inner City churches have a similar size average congregation to Suburban churches? Because this is where the majority of immigrant churches are located, and especially many of the BAME congregations. Some of these black congregations are quite large. Jesus House for All Nations, in Brent, for example, has a congregation of over 4,000, and Ruach Ministries in Brixton has over 5,000. Matthew Ashimolowu’s Kingsway International Christian Centre has moved to Chatham, Kent where the Sunday congregation is into five figures. There are several others in four figures in London, and some are now this size in other cities also.

Separate Towns are seeing more congregations as this is often where new church plants are begun. However, the average town congregation is decreasing so that financial viability for some of these plants will be difficult. Messy Churches, one very popular type of Fresh Expressions (there are well over 2,000 of these in England, half of them attached to Anglican churches), are not included in this analysis because they are often seen as the outreach activity of an existing congregation rather than a separate church.

*Average number of people attending per church on a Sunday, by environment, in England*

Environment	Attendance per church			
	2000	2010	2020	Change %
City Centre	104	96	92	-12
Inner City	125	117	116	-7
Council Estate	106	86	72	-32
Suburban	140	127	118	-16
Separate Town	122	107	96	-21
Other Built-up	103	82	66	-36
Commuter Rural	62	52	47	-24
Remoter Rural	33	27	23	-30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>-18</b>

It is obvious that many of the rural churches are struggling, and at some stage their congregations will get below a viable group. This is already happening, as a letter received in reply from a church when asked if they could distribute a leaflet:

*“Dear Sir, As Deacon to our local Chapel I receive many invitations and many suggestions, none of them feasible. We have a regular attendance of 5 people, all over 70. Our oldest lady is 83, and my wife is disabled. May I suggest that the place for children to come to know God and His Son Jesus Christ is in the schools as we were. We were given that chance, today’s children are not. With all due respect,” [Name supplied].*

The challenge for such congregations is huge, but is it insurmountable?

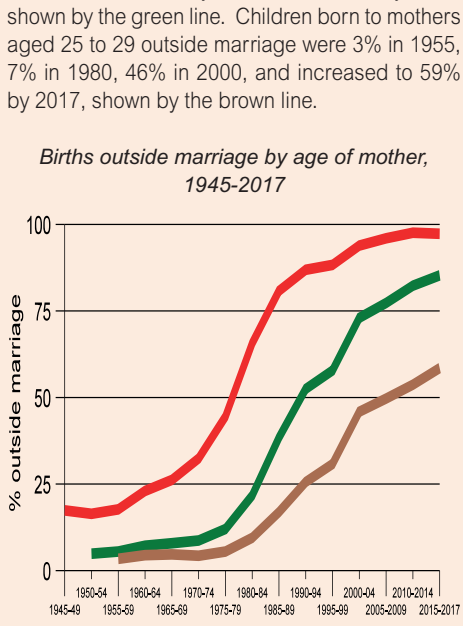
**SOURCES:** *Religious Trends* No 6, 2006/2007, Christian Research, Eitham, London for 2000 and 2010 figures, augmented by 2020 data in *UK Church Statistics* No 3, 2018 Edition, ADBC Publishers, Table 13.6.2.

## Having Children Outside Marriage

About 790,000 babies were born in the UK in 1950, 4% of whom were born outside marriage. Thirty years later, in 1980, there were 750,000 births, with 12% outside marriage, and 30 years later again, in 2010, there were 810,000 births, but this time with 46% outside marriage.

The large majority, 93%, of the number of babies born to teenagers aged 15 to 19 (in 2017 just 4% of all births), were born outside marriage, a huge increase on the 16% born outside marriage to teenage mums in 1945. The percentage increased sharply between 1975 and 1990, shown by the red line in the graph. Likewise the percentage of babies born outside marriage for mothers aged between 20 and 24 increased from 5% in 1950 to 9% in 1975, to 73% by 2000, and to 85% by 2017, shown by the green line. Children born to mothers aged 25 to 29 outside marriage were 3% in 1955, 7% in 1980, 46% in 2000, and increased to 59% by 2017, shown by the brown line.

*Births outside marriage by age of mother, 1945-2017*



## SNOWFLAKES

FMCG, or Fast-Moving Consumer Goods, are products that are sold quickly and at a relatively low cost. Examples include non-durable goods such as packaged foods, beverages, toiletries, over-the-counter drugs, and other consumables. Three-quarters, 75%, of consumption purchase decisions in FMCG are explained by a person’s immediate context and emotions. Only a quarter, 25%, is contributed by demographics or claimed behaviour. How far are charity’s Christian giving similar “spur-of-the-moment” decisions and how far the result of consideration and planning?

**SOURCE:** Article in *Impact*, Market Research Society, Issue 25, April 2019, Page 71.

**Visitors to the UK.** The countries which sent most visitors to the UK in 2018 were the United States (3.9 million), France (3.7 mn), Germany (3.3 mn), Ireland (2.8 mn) and Spain (2.5 mn). Will so many, especially the Europeans, come after Brexit? But it’s the Chinese who spend the most, however, wherever they go, over £2,000 million internationally in 2017!

**SOURCE:** Statista email 30th May 2019.

**Alexa’s answers.** Amazon’s virtual assistant is integrated with the Church of England’s digital media tool for answering questions. In a typical week apparently, Alexa is asked:

- 40% to say a prayer
- 31% to explore the Christian faith
- 16% to read a daily reflection
- 7% to indicate where the nearest church is
- 6% to share a grace before a meal.

**SOURCE:** Report in the *Church of England Newspaper*, 31st May, 2019, Page 4.

**Are Americans Religious?** Seven groups emerged from a survey by the Pew Research Centre. The most religious both went to church and read their Bible – but a fifth of them also believed in re-incarnation and astrology! Even among the 19% who were definitely non-religious, a fifth said they were “somewhat spiritual,” a finding replicated in other studies. Those who were “solidly secular” were more likely to be young, poor, male and white.

**SOURCE:** *The Religious Topology*, Pew Research Centre, September 2018.

**Spanish survey.** A survey of 4,000 Spanish churches in 2017 showed that there were an estimated half million evangelicals in Spain (in a population of 46 million), and some 500

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towns with over half a million population with not a single evangelical church as well as 900 towns with a population between 200 and 500,000 people.

**SOURCE:** Survey by Máximo Alvarez, Lausanne International Researchers’ Conference, Kenya, 2018.

**Ghanaian Christians.** In 1970 half of Ghana’s 8.6 million population were reckoned as Christian. In 1988, a survey found only 11% of the then 19 million population attended church, but there were 7 million nominal Christians, 37%, and 15,000 unchurched towns. 5 million were Muslim. By 2015, 64% of the population of 27 million were reckoned as Christian.

**SOURCES:** The 1970 and 2015 figures come from *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, based on the Global Christian Database, Edinburgh University Press, 2017; the 1988 figures from a survey by Willie Botha reported to the Lausanne International Researchers’ Conference, Kenya, 2018.

**Your major activity.** A secular survey asked people what was their most important activity. First priority for three-fifths, 61%, was “Spending time with friends and family,” second for 27% was wanting to “Eat healthily,” and then came 8% “Exercising,” 3% “Learning new skills” and 1% “Volunteering.” How might Christian answers be different?

**SOURCE:** *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol 60, Issue 5, Sept 2018, Page 510.

**Doing a good job?** Someone asked in a meeting, “How can ministers know they are doing a good job?” Replies were: (a) when someone sends a hand-written birthday card; (b) someone rings up to say so; (c) people saying “thank you” at funerals; (d) people saying “thanks for coming” in schools; and (e) mentoring. How does this compare with Paul’s assessment of “doing a good job”?

**SOURCE:** Personal conversation notes when Trustees of a national Anglican charity were in discussion at a meeting, 2018.

**Muslim Growth.** There are seven towns or cities outside London where Muslims are strongly concentrated, and each grew their numbers from 6 to 11% between 2001 and 2011. These are: Birmingham, Blackburn, Bradford, Leicester, Luton, Manchester and Oldham. In 2001 together they had 359,000 Muslims living in them, 24% of all Muslims in England. By 2011 they had 633,000 Muslims altogether in those cities, a growth of 76%, but still just 24% of all the Muslims.

**SOURCE:** *People and Places*, A 21st-century atlas of the UK, Danny Dorling and Bertnan Thomas, Polity Press, 2016, Page 55.

**Same-sex marriage.** There are 16 countries in Europe where same-sex marriage is legal: Austria (the latest country for it to be so), Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Great Britain. Some form of same-sex unions are legal (but not marriage) in a further 12 countries: Andorra, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, N Ireland, Slovenia and Switzerland. There are 22 further European nations where it is not legal in any way.

**SOURCE:** Pew Research Centre website, Global Trends, [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org), June 2019.

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The market is hugely stimulated by new arrivals. Indeed, for many migrants a religious congregation or its equivalent is a central feature of their journeying, in terms of motivation, welcome and assimilation. This is as true for Christians as it is for those of other faiths, making London one of the most religiously diverse cities in West Europe – with a huge variety of prayer rooms, mosques, gurdwaras and temples. The foregrounding of faith in this story, which was initially articulated in terms of race, ethnicity and culture, is an important element in the story

The turn to religion brings with it new understandings of the secular, as well as the religious. These perceptions vary in nature. On the one hand are those who support the idea of “neutral” space in which expressions of faith are welcomed alongside everyone else; on the other are those who reject the presence of religion in the public sphere on principle. In short, the secular – just like religion – can vary from the generous and accommodating to the excluding and exclusive. London is host to both.

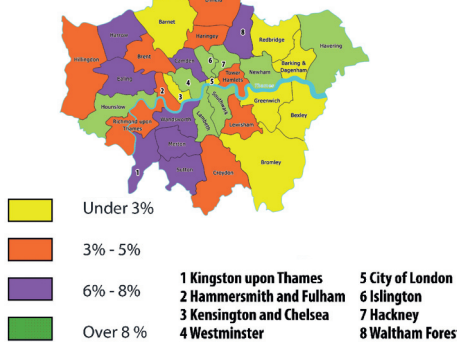
The final factor introduced the notion of exceptionality in terms of Europe. The same question can be asked of London. Is the religious growth of London a sign of things to come, or is it an exceptional case in British terms?

### Possible futures

One point is indisputable: contrary to earlier versions of the secularization theory, there is no incompatibility between being urban and being religious. The mega-cities of the modern world are proof enough of this assertion. London, moreover, is a gateway city – demonstrating global rather than European trends. Will other British cities follow suit? Time will tell, but one fact is clear: growth is much more likely to come from outside than within.

**SOURCE:** Personal conversation notes when Trustees of a national Anglican charity were in discussion at a meeting, 2018.

**The following map** shows the proportion of attenders in new congregations who originally belonged to another religion, by Borough. The Boroughs with the highest percentages are often those with high percentages of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. suggesting that a number of individuals from these communities are for one reason or another attracted to Christianity. Exactly how many requires further research, as indeed do the reasons for such shifts.”



**SOURCE:** *Capital Growth*, What the 2012 London Church Census revealed, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, Kent, 2013.

## Humour

Poster addition: “Keep this bus tidy” Underneath which was written: “Throw your ticket out of the window”

British Airways poster: “Breakfast in London; Lunch in New York.” Someone added: “Luggage in Bermuda”