

World Christian Encyclopaedia for 21st Century

The third edition of the World Christian Encyclopaedia (WCE) has just been published in January 2020 by the Edinburgh University Press, but only available since February. Like other EUP statistical volumes it is not cheap – £164 from Amazon. It is, however, 1,008 pages long, weighs 9½ pounds, has pages measuring 12½” x 10” and is 2 inches thick!

The first edition of the WCE was edited by Dr David Barrett and was published by the Oxford University Press in 1980, the second with joint editorship with Todd Johnson, was also published by OUP in 2001 but in two volumes, and now the third has arrived. It is the only publication covering every single country in the world, 18 different religions but majoring on Christianity, and has historical, demographic, social and mission articles.

The statistical high point of Christianity was in 1900 when 34.5% of the world’s population were Christian adherents, which had dropped to 32.2% by 2015, but is now projected to increase to 35.0% by 2050. This is because the decline of Christianity in the Global North is being outpaced by its growth in the Global South, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa with its high birth rates. In 1900 18% of world Christians lived in the Global South; by 2020 67% do with a projection of 77% by 2050.

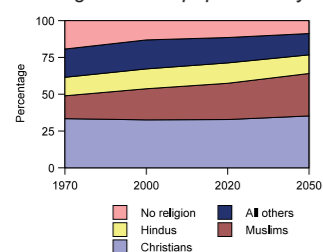
One of the key elements in this volume is the portrayal of increasing religiosity among the world’s population. In 2020 some 89% of people worldwide profess a religion, up from 81% in 1970. The pivot event was the collapse of Communism, and the opening of China to the world, in both of which a huge resurgence of religions of all kinds has occurred in the last 50 years.

A second key element is the fact that the world is becoming more religiously diverse, especially in Asia but increasingly also in Germany and the United States. Singapore is the most diverse country with 7 religions claiming over 1% of the population: agnosticism, Buddhism, Chinese folk-religion, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and New Religions. The first graph shows the changing proportions across the globe.

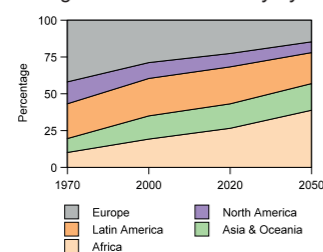
The third key element is that religious liberty is on the decline worldwide, resulting in increased persecution, especially of Christians, raising grave concerns about religious freedom. Russia, Egypt, Pakistan, Nigeria and North Korea are the countries with the highest levels of government restrictions. Persecution is also gender-specific with men subject to socioeconomic harassment for their faith and women more likely to experience sexual violence.

Christians and Muslims together represented 33% of the world’s population in 1800, but were 57% in 2020 and likely to be 66% by 2050. Christian-Muslim relations therefore are increasingly important in local, national and international contexts.

Percentage of world population by religion



Percentage of world Christianity by continent



The first chart shows the static state of Christianity, the Muslim increase and the decline of No religion; the second shows the drastic decline in European Christianity and the rapid growth of African. Total Christians in 2020 are put at 2,520 million out of world population of 7,800 million. A fuller evaluation will be given in a later issue of *FutureFirst*, but the basic global numbers are given in the Table.

Note that the world terminology and emphasis has changed. It used to be First World and Third World where “First World” was Europe, North America and Oceania; then it became the Developed World and the Developing World, respectively, but it has now changed to Global North and Global South where Oceania, despite being very Westernised is (naturally) part of the Global South.

Number of Christians in millions, by continent, 1970-2050E

Year	Global South				TOTAL	Global North			WORLD TOTAL	% of population		
	Latin America	Africa	Asia	Oceania		Europe	North America	TOTAL		Global South	Global North	World
1900	62	9	22	5	98	381	79	460	558	8.6	95.0	34.5
1970	271	140	96	18	525	492	212	704	1,229	18.7	79.2	33.2
2000	486	383	280	24	1,173	562	254	816	1,989	23.0	78.5	32.4
2015	583	581	353	27	1,544	570	264	834	2,378	24.6	76.0	32.2
2020	612	667	379	27	1,685	566	268	834	2,519	25.2	75.0	32.3
2050	703	1,325	571	35	2,634	502	285	787	3,421	30.6	68.4	35.0
% increase per annum 1900-2050	1.6%	3.3%	2.2%	1.3%	2.2%	0.2%	0.9%	0.4%	1.2%			

Some of these figures seem unlikely – for instance that 95% of Europe and North America’s 500 million people in 1900 were Christian, even Christian adherents, does stretch the credibility! Also the suggestion that three-quarters, 75%, of today’s population (2020) are Christian adherents in these two continents! Other American surveys suggest, however, that a percentage in the mid-70s is not actually unreasonable, whatever being “Christian” in this context might be thought to mean.

SOURCE: Article by Todd Johnson, Gina Zurlo and Peter Crossing in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, Volume 44, Issue 1, Jan 2020, Page 8; *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, Edinburgh University Press, 2020, Pages 4, et al.

Sad Seasonal Statistics

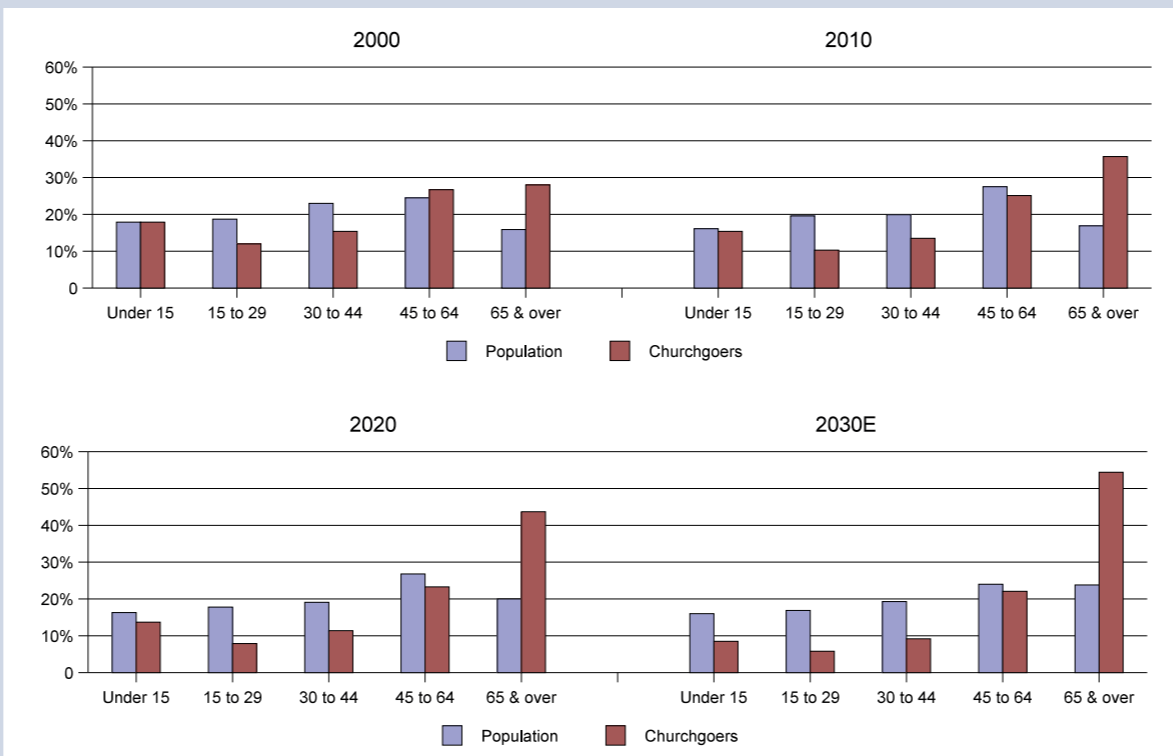
- 58 British people were injured last year by using sharp knives instead of screwdrivers.
- 31 British people have died this century by watering their Christmas trees while the fairy lights were plugged in.
- 19 British people have died since 2016 believing that Christmas decorations were chocolate.
- British Hospitals reported 4 broken arms in 2018 after cracker-pulling accidents.
- 18 British people had serious burns in 2000 trying on a new jumper with a lit cigarette in their mouth.

SOURCE: Email from Margaret Price, New Zealand.

Age of Scottish Churchgoers

Apologies! In the February 2020 issue we had an article on the age of English churchgoers, with a diagram comparing their proportions by age with the general population over various years. The chart was labelled “Age-groups in the British population ...” which was incorrect and should have read “English.” I am grateful to one of our Scottish readers for querying this, and since giving British figures is not possible because the age of churchgoers in Wales and N Ireland is simply not known, the following diagram gives the same data as graphed previously but for Scottish churchgoers where the information is known from the Scottish Church and Population Censuses.

Age-groups in the Scottish population and in the church, 2000 to 2030E



The population proportions in Scotland across these years are not very different from the English proportions except that there is a smaller proportion of children in 2020 and 2030, and a slightly higher proportion who are 65 and over.

The churchgoing proportions are very different from those in England, however. There are smaller proportions aged 30 to 44 especially in 2020 and 2030, and in younger age-groups, but much larger proportions who are 65 and over. For example, in 2030 some 45% of English churchgoers are likely to be 65 and over, but in Scotland it could well be 54%. That difference began in 2010 and has continued since.

The implications of having so many older people in church are considerable both for England and Scotland – in terms of transport to church, physical facilities at church, pastoral care, leadership training, financial support for the church and its long-term viability, ability to help in church activities midweek, perhaps the retirement age of leaders and elders, working with grandparents (and great-grandparents?), as well as the best ways of elderly evangelism.

SOURCES: *Growth Amidst Decline*, Brierley Consultancy, AD/BC Publishers, Tonbridge, 2017; *UK Church Statistics*, Brierley Consultancy, Table 13.1.2; David Kellock, East Lothian.

Growing Pornography

The global pornographic industry was worth about £80 billion in 2018, with at least 30% of all internet traffic going to pornographic websites. Of this total, £10 billion came from the United States. More than three-quarters, 77%, of Americans view pornography at least once a month.

Two-thirds, 64%, of American self-identified Christian men watch pornography once a month, compared with 65% of non-Christian men! For women it is 15% compared with 30%. One in six, 18%, of American clergy visit explicit web sites at least twice a month. Seven out of eight, 86%, of American pastors offer pastoral counselling on porn topics.

The problem continues to grow. 4.8 million new porn videos were uploaded to Pornhub in 2018, and it has 960 searches every *minute*, over 33 billion in 2018, up from 28 billion in 2017. The United States has the highest daily traffic. Pornhub gets more traffic than Netflix, Amazon and Twitter combined each month. Pornhub videos were watched 92 million times in 2018, and that number is growing – equivalent to 13 videos for every person on the planet!

The UK NSPCC says that a child first sees porn on average at 11 years of age, and 94% have seen it by the age of 14. Boys aged 12 to 17 are at greatest risk. Four-fifths, 79%, of exposures to porn occur at home. Two-fifths, 40%, having an unwanted exposure tell a parent. Only a third of home computers, however, have filtering or blocking software.

A recent report says that children as young as six in the UK are sexting – sending nude pictures of themselves to their friends without knowing they could be breaking the law. In another study, half, 46%, of teenagers, especially those aged 16 and 17, said they preferred to access pornographic material on social media websites rather than “adult” (dedicated porn) websites as it is easier to do so.

These kinds of statistics go on and on, and are becoming much more readily available than was the case even a few years ago. The need for Christian awareness remains high, the need for discussions on tackling the issue in Christian youth groups remains high, the need for pastoral counselling also continues to remain high, and the whole is like an engulfing flood. The figures are included here simply to say this issue must continue to be at HIGH ALERT for positive action.

SOURCE: Article in *Ministry*, November 2019, Page 19; website www.roadtoGrace.net/current-porn-statistics; reports in the *Daily Telegraph* 31st January and 15th February 2020, Pages 11 and 4.

CONTENTS

Young People in Wales	P1
Cathedral Mini-Golf Works	P2
Young Catholics	P2
Measuring UK Christianity	P3
Gen Z	P3
Snowflakes	P4
World Christian Encyclopaedia for 21st Century	P5
Sad Seasonal Statistics	P5
Age of Scottish Churchgoers	P6
Growing Pornography	P6



FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

ISSN 2040-0268 | Number 68, April 2020

YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALES

By Rev Dr Mark Griffiths, Church in Wales

The lack of young people in church is becoming an issue across most Western countries, and not least in Wales. Many church bodies are looking at the issue strategically and early in 2019 the Church in Wales Governing Body decided to spend “at least £10 million” on evangelism. At a meeting in June 2019 representatives from various Welsh youth organisations were invited to address the question, “Given unlimited resources what would you do to better enable young people to encounter Jesus across Wales?” A rare (but wonderful) question indeed!

It was felt research was needed and a meeting was convened and overseen by Rev Dr Mark Griffiths, who is Dean for Discipleship at St Padarn’s Institute, Cardiff, in June 2019. He oversees training for children, youth and family ministries, training for Newly Licensed Ministers and Discipleship for the Church in Wales. This is a summary of the paper he subsequently produced from that meeting for the Governing Body.

Basic Numbers

The population of Wales in 2017 was 3.1 million people, of whom an estimated 4.8% attended church on a Sunday. As with the rest of the UK, that percentage is decreasing, and was perhaps 6.7% in 2005. The total now is about 150,000 people, of whom 45,000 are Anglican (Church in Wales), 23,000 Roman Catholic, 10,000 Baptists, 9,200 Messy Church, and 63,000 others. It includes a number of larger churches with congregations over 500.

Research questions

Four questions were asked:

- How do we better communicate with young people today?
- Are our existing churches up to the task?
- What are the primary issues young people are facing?
- The question given above – Given unlimited resources ...

Answers to the first two questions came from youth ministry specialists, and to the third from a group of people developing youth ministry across the whole of Wales. For the fourth question the entire group was split into focus groups seeking as many answers to the question as possible, which eventually coalesced into 35 different answers, with everyone then voting on the three they agreed with most.

The answer to the first question was that social media was seen as the prime conduit for communication, websites being an outdated vehicle. Most Welsh Christian organisations working with young people have up to 1,500 people on their Facebook pages, but far fewer via social media, while YouTube is the communication method used by most young people. Most (Welsh) churches use their website, if anything, for communication, not social media or YouTube. The gap between how young people communicate and how churches in general communicate is very great, and the fact that so many under 40s were not in church not really surprising; the church does not communicate with them. Churches need to get their communication act together.

The second question was also key. Gary Smith of Message Wales (part of the Message Trust) shared the story of 100 unchurched young people who decided to follow Jesus, and went to church (as had been suggested) the following Sunday. They went again a week later to find the church locked – the congregation had changed the service time so that they “didn’t have to cope with boisterous young people in their service”! So the Message Trust started a new congregation – a new wine skin to hold new wine. The answer to the basic question was obvious.

Answers to the third question had to come from personal issues individuals involved in youth ministry had actually encountered in their day to day work over the previous six months, and the Table gives the 25 topics that emerged, grouped as necessary. Of these two were causing particular concern in the Welsh context – Self-harm (as part of mental health issues), and Sexting.

Abuse	Gangs (peer pressure)	Radicalisation
Addictions	Grooming	Relationships
Children in care	Health (healthy food access)	Pregnancy
Church (lack of welcome)	Lack of positive role models	Sex, sexuality and gender
Church youth work ineffective	Loneliness	Sexting
Crime (knife, drugs)	Mental Health Issues	Trafficking
Education (pressure to succeed)	On-line (social media, harmful content)	Unemployment
Family relational breakdown	Pornography	
Funding shortfall for services	Poverty	

SOURCES: 1) Report in *The Week*, 26th October 2019; 2) *School Leadership in England* 2010 to 2016, Department for Education, April 2018, Page 25; 3) *Impact*, Market Research Society, Issue 28, Jan 2020, Page 9; 4) Felix Richter, *Statista*, 7th February 2020; 5) *The Week*, 15th February 2020, Page 16; 6) *The Economist*, 8th February 2020, Page 45; 7) *Natsal* 3, Jan 2015, and report in the *British Medical Journal Sexual and Reproductive Health*, *Daily Telegraph* 14th January, 2020, Page 10.



Cathedral Mini-Golf Works

In the summer of 2019, Rochester Cathedral installed a mini-golf course inside its building for 36 days to see if it would attract more visitors. Did this rather visionary innovation work?

The Cathedral had 30,800 visitors in that period against 17,500 the previous year over the same length of time (+76%).

These visitors are counted during the time the Welcome Desk is open from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm, that is 6 hours.

However, the Cathedral is open (as was its mini-golf course) from 7.30 am to 6.00 pm, that is 10½ hours. Some visitors would have attended during the hours the Welcome Desk was not operating. Suppose these extra visitors were at only half the rate at which visitors came during Welcome Desk hours. That would have meant a total of 42,400 visitors (up +142%)!

Attendance at services also increased from 6,100 to 7,100 (up +16%).

Perhaps because of the publicity there were also larger numbers at Easter services four months earlier, up from 2,100 to 2,500 (up +17%).

The Cathedral also had an external national sculpture on view called Knife Angel, highlighting knife crime. That was in place for 28 days and drew 45,000 visitors, including 2,500 school children, much greater than the 7,900 visitors in September 2018 when there was no equivalent sculpture.

Is innovation attractive? The international exhibition "The Museum of the Moon" is already planned for the Cathedral in February 2021!

Source: Article in the *Church Times* 17th January 2020, Page 9.



'...there have been a couple of hiccups... but overall it's been a great success!'

Young Catholics

The Southwark Catholic Youth Service undertook a substantial piece of research in 2018 in which it identified 8 types of Catholic young people. These are described below; would some of these types be appropriate to the young people in your church?

The survey focussed on interviewing over 1,000 young people aged 15 to 25, as it had done 10 years previously. It concentrated on three broad areas – churchgoing, personal praying, and “acting against injustice,” to reflect belief, behaviour and attitude (that is, acting out their faith). To make it more realistic each type was personalised into a named individual, although conscious that young people move from one type to another.

Name	Go to church?	Pray regularly?	Stand up for justice?	Age	Gender	Number	Identifies as a Catholic?
Lucy	✓	✓	✓	15-19	M or F	8%	✓
Beth	✓	✗	✓	15-19	M or F	3%	✓
Anna	✓	✗	✗	15-19	M or F	11%	✓
Caitlin	✗	✗	✗	15-19	F	47%	✓ or ✗
Greg	✓	✓	✗	15-25	M or F	14%	✓
Ryan	✗	✓	✓	15-25	M or F	2%	✓
Callum	✗	✓	✗	15-25	M or F	7%	✓?
Benji	✗	✗	✓	15-25	M or F	8%	✗

Several things emerge from such an identity parade:

- Caitlin, the one who is negative in all three areas, is most likely to be female. Such youngsters simply find as they grow up that their faith is irrelevant to them, and they are now very busy in other things. This is almost half the young people in this survey, who have left the church in their teenage years. “What can God offer that I can’t find elsewhere?” Most likely to talk to a friend before making an important decision.
- Lucy, the one with three ticks, is most likely to be part of a supportive, practising churchgoing family who regularly talk about their faith. However, the new horizon of adulthood may dilute her beliefs and practices, particularly if such commitment lacks depth.
- Anna, still going to church, but without deep connections, could easily drift when she goes to university. She may stop before then if there’s a change in family circumstances, not rejecting the church, but just drifting out of it. Church “makes me feel calm.” The researchers found one in every 9 young people in this “in-between” situation.
- Beth, the only other teenager in the group, is probably a modern material-driven young woman. She’ll give money to charity rather than get involved, wants to help but her actions are not really faith-driven. Would probably volunteer for a youth ministry. Would probably simply say, “It’s good to be nice.”
- Greg, one of those who could be in their 20s, believes he is a Christian, and is confident in that faith, and will talk to others about it. Greg is maybe engaged in global issues and will gladly write to his MP. If Greg was a female, she would be active online, sharing about world topics and asking for prayer. Whether male or female, such might possess possible leadership abilities.
- Ryan probably has a difficult home life which is why justice is important for him. Very happy to help others, but not by giving money – give him a job at school or university and he’ll take it very seriously. Wants to make a difference and prays spasmodically to that end. Doesn’t have to go to church to pray.
- Callum may well often feel lonely, a type difficult to get to know, as often withdrawn. He shares his story with God, but no-one may know he prays. He needs time to build up trust in someone else; might well go to a Christian event if invited, so long as it’s not too “churchy.” He may sense an angelic presence, “God, the one thing that doesn’t let me down.”
- Benji wants to stand for justice but may not know how to do so. Without a church focus, he may not be able to keep that commitment alive. He needs support for his commitment to justice but set in the wider context of a personal faith.

Perhaps the main value of such an analysis is to illustrate the danger of teenagers and young adults simply being classified as “Youth Ministry” in a church’s programme without the complexities of this age range being better understood and provided for.

To put these numbers into context, in 2020 some 740,000 people are likely to be attending Catholic Mass on a Sunday each week, across some 2,750 churches in England, or an average attendance of 270, more than 4 times the size of other non-Catholic congregations. About 6% of these are probably between 15 and 25, a higher percentage than in the Church of England or Methodist Church or those in the United Reformed Church, but rather less than the estimated 14% who are Pentecostal, but, because of the sheer size of the Roman Catholic Church likely to be over a quarter (28%) of all the young people in this age-group attending church on a Sunday.

SOURCE: *Complex Catholicism*, Discovering the reality of young Catholics, Danny Curtin and Stephen Davies, CYMFed and Camino House, 2018.

Measuring UK Christianity

The most usual sources of information about religion in the UK are the national Population Censuses through the question requesting a person’s religion, which only indicates the number of Christian adherents, nominal and otherwise. See Table 1 Pop = Population is in millions.

Table 1: Christian Adherents as given by Census of Population

Year	England		Wales		Scotland		N Ireland		UK	
	Pop	% Cian	Pop	% Cian	Pop	% Cian	Pop	% Cian	Pop	% Cian
2001	49.1	71.7	2.9	71.9	5.1	65.2	1.7	85.2	58.8	71.6
2011	53.0	59.4	3.1	47.6	5.3	53.8	1.8	82.3	63.2	59.5
2021E	57.0	49 ?	3.2	46 ?	5.5	44 ?	1.9	79 ?	67.6	49 ?

For further information other sources have to be consulted. Among other analyses, publications such as *Religious Trends* and *UK Church Statistics* have sought to trace membership by asking individual denominations, usually about every two years, how many members they have, and then totalling all the numbers. The figures from the latest publications are:

Table 2: Church Membership in millions as given by Individual Denominations

Year	England		Wales		Scotland		N Ireland		UK	
	Num-ber	% of ad-ult pop	Num-ber	% of ad-ult pop	Num-ber	% of ad-ult pop	Num-ber	% of ad-ult pop	Num-ber	% of ad-ult pop
2001	3.75	9.3	0.29	12.3	1.00	24.0	0.95	72.0	5.99	12.7
2011	3.68	8.4	0.22	8.6	0.78	17.5	0.84	57.6	5.52	10.7
2021E	3.40	7.3	0.17	6.4	0.57	12.4	0.73	47.6	4.87	8.9

However, what “membership” means varies between denominations – Roman Catholics use Mass Attendance figures instead; the Church of England does not recognise Electoral Roll as a valid figure; others are guesstimated from average congregation size; many Pentecostal groups have no formal membership and use attendance instead, and so on. The above figures are thus a heterogeneous collection, which show an obvious and rapid decline over time. The percentages are of the population aged over 15 since children are assumed not to be members. The overall decline works out at an average rate of -1.0% per year on the total.

Another measurement, more in favour, and requested much more frequently, is attendance at church, usually taken as Sunday church attendance. That also has been measured actually in real depth over many years. Initially it was from going to every church in England in 1979 (with a 39% response from 38,000 churches) and again in 1989 (with a 70% response) and again in 1998 and 2005, and also four times in Scotland (1984, 1994, 2002 and 2016), twice in Wales (1982 and 1995), and once just in London alone (2012).

Table 3 gives such numbers as have been measured or may be estimated for England, Scotland and Wales for 2000 and 2010, where the number is again given in millions and “% att” is percentage of the entire population attending church on a Sunday since, unlike membership figures, attendance figures include children. Estimates are coloured in grey.

Table 3: UK Church Attendance in millions as given by individual church count

Year	England		Wales		Scotland		N Ireland		UK	
	Num-ber	% of pop	Num-ber	% of pop	Num-ber	% of pop	Num-ber	% of pop	Num-ber	% of pop
2000	3.52	7.1	0.22	7.7	0.62	12.3	0.62	36.9	4.98	8.4
2010	3.07	5.8	0.18	5.8	0.47	9.0	0.49	27.0	4.21	6.7
2020E	2.79	4.9	0.14	4.4	0.35	6.4	0.37	19.2	3.65	5.4
2030E	2.40	4.0	0.11	3.5	0.24	4.2	0.25	12.6	3.00	4.2
Per yr		-1.3%		-2.3%		-3.1%		-3.0%		-1.7%

Northern Ireland is variously estimated, and was thought to be over 40% 40 years ago, but will be less than that today. But suppose N Ireland was three times the Scottish percentage (as shown in the grey column). Then the UK percentages work out as in the final column in bold.

Whatever measure one uses it is obvious numbers are going down. The figures in the bottom row, labelled “per yr,” show the average rate of decline per year across the 30 years 2000 to 2030 for each country, and show that the declines in both Scotland and N Ireland are particularly severe, more than double the decline in England. Wales is in between. England is not declining so fast because of the number of new churches starting, especially in the first 15 years of the 21st century both in London and other cities.

SOURCES: *Religious Trends* No 7, Christian Research, London, 2007/2008, Tables 2.21.1 and 2.24.2; *UK Church Statistics* No 2: 2010 to 2020, Table 1.1.1; *UK Church Statistics* No 3, Table 1.1.1 and *UK Church Statistics* No 4, Table 14.9.

GEN Z

If there was a prize for the number of key people you’ve influenced before you are 18, Greta Thunberg would probably be a strong contender. She has had an extraordinary time in the last year speaking at major conferences, going to key venues and meeting many important world leaders. It’s sometimes hard to remember she will only be 18 later on in 2020. She is part of the “Gen Z” generation.

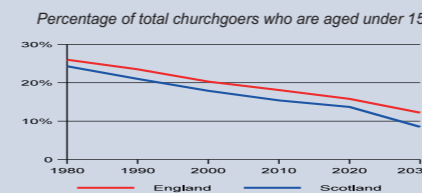
What is “Gen Z”? The large numbers of people born after the end of the Second World War, especially in the UK, caused the phrase “baby boomer” to be popular for a while, quickly shortened to just “boomer.” Births in the latter half of the 1960s and 1970s were far fewer in number; they “stopped the boom”, or “busted” it, and so for a while were called the “Baby Busters”. This is a disparaging title, however, and when Douglas Coupland published his book *Gen X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* in 1991 the phrase instantly stuck and they became “Gen X” (born 1964 to 1982) from then on.

The children of Gen X could naturally be called Gen Y and they were for some time, and their grandchildren Gen Z, but with the Gen Y cohort being those born between 1983 and 2001, around the time of the dawn of the new Millennium, the term “Millennials” became fashionable and has stuck ever since. Different people give slightly different years of birth for each cohort, but the years for Gen Z are here taken as 2002 to 2020, that is, they are all 21st century!

Note that they weren’t born when 9/11 happened (that is history for them); only a few were born when Concorde was mothballed in 2003 and someone born in 2005 was only 11 when the Brexit Referendum took place! In 2005 39% of the churches in England had no-one attending under the age of 11, and 49% had no-one between 11 and 14, so the number of Gen Z children in church is alarmingly few. A General Synod Report in 2005 found half the Church of England churches had no children in attendance.

The latest large scale count of numbers of children at church was the 2016 Scottish Church Census where, as an overall percentage, rather more go to church than in England (nationally 6.4% across all ages in 2020 compared with 4.9%). The Scottish Census, however, broke down the numbers of children under 16 attending into three age-groups. It showed there was very little difference between boys and girls but a quarter, 27%, of all children in church were under 5, half, 52%, were between 5 and 11, and the remaining group, a fifth, 21%, were between 12 and 15. Collectively they were 15% of all Scottish churchgoers in 2016. In England the percentage in 2020 is estimated at 16%.

These percentages have declined considerably, as the graph indicates:



A 1994 survey “Finding Faith” asked current churchgoers at what age they had started coming to church. Three-quarters, 72%, said before they were 15. However, some of these had subsequently stopped going to church, but at the time of the survey had returned. Of those who had stopped going to church, 2% had done so when aged between 6 and 10 and 16% when aged 11 to 15.

That survey also indicated that the peak age for ceasing attending church was between 16 and 20, when two-fifths, 42%, had done so. The average length of time “out of church” was 10 years, but for those who had stopped before they were 15 it was longer, some 16 years.

What caused young people to actually find faith? The top ways to faith then were attending church (86%), reading the Bible (68%), friends (60%), worship experience (55%) and attending a church activity (34%). The largest obstacle to commitment was those who had no faith (39%) and didn’t see the need for such.

A further survey along these lines for Gen Z and their parents would be invaluable in clarifying these trends for the new decade. Today the reasons for faith would be different although friends, worship experience and attending a Christian activity would probably still be important. A recent Barna survey showed how important Christian mothers were in encouraging churchgoing (99%!); fathers and grandparents were significant too (88%). Social media would doubtless also feature somewhere, though perhaps more negatively than positively.

SOURCES: *Finding Faith in 1994*, CCB Steering Committee, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 1994 Report; *Quadrant*, Christian Research, March 1999, Pages 1, 5 and 6; *Putting out of the Nosebleed*, English Church Census results, Christian Research, 2006; *The Powerful Influence of Mums in Christians’ Households*, Barna Research, 13th May 2019, www.barna.com/research.

SNOWFLAKES

The Hungarian Fertility Rate at 1.44 (in 2019) is one of the lowest in the world. To help change this, the government is offering a loan of £26,000 to newly weds (where the woman is under 40). The interest on the loan is cancelled if they have a child within 5 years, a third of the loan is written off if they have two and the entire debt is wiped out if they have three! In the first 9 months of 2019 there were 20% more weddings!

SOURCE: *The Week*, 7th December 2019, Page 7.

Other Countries are lower still. Not all countries are taking the action that Hungary is, however, even though their demographic situation is as serious. Italy’s fertility rate is 1.32, Spain’s is 1.30, but South Korea is lowest of all, at 0.88. Many other countries are also well below the reproduction level of 2.1, while a few, in Africa, are well above it – in Niger, for example, it’s 6.9!

SOURCE: *The Week*, 8th February 2020, Page 15.

Conversions. Thomas Rainer interviewed 350 Americans across different churches who had become Christians. What had their various churches in common? Their lead teachers had all spent at least 22 hours preparing each sermon!

SOURCE: *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, T Rainer, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2001, Page 220, quoted in *Perspectives*, Partnership, No 67, Autumn 2019, Page 15.

Trump and 7s. On the day of Donald Trump’s inauguration as President, he was exactly 70 years old, 7 months and 7 days = 777. Some see this as significant, seven being a prominent number in Scripture, while others see it as a coincidence!

Notre Dame Cathedral. For 850 years the Cathedral was a powerful symbol of Roman control and influence over Europe. It survived many centuries but was destroyed on the Monday of Holy Week 2019. Monday is said to be the day when Jesus cleansed the Temple of corruption. Another coincidence?

General Election. The most recent General Election to decide the future of Britain took place on the 12th day of the 12th month on the 12th day of Advent in a year whose digits added up to 12 (2 + 0 + 1 + 9 = 12). 12 is also a special number in Scripture. A further coincidence?

SOURCE FOR LAST 3 ITEMS: Email from Pastor John of Strengthen the Faithful, 17th January 2020. See his website https://cintp.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/wartime-miracles-leaflet-information.pdf

Misunderstanding Data. “The idea that data about you is only about you is the biggest misconception we have. Regulation and the way we talk about ownership is built on that conception and it’s not true – but we don’t know yet how to deal with it.” If a white British male in his 50s says “Yes” in answer to a question, that reply can be interpreted across four different dimensions.

SOURCE: Article by Jeni Tennison in *Impact*, Market Research Society, Issue 28, Jan 2020, Page 86.

Closing Churches. The Roman Catholics have closed a number of their churches in Britain, often because of too few priests, but keep a central church open and many of their flock then come to that church instead on Sunday. However, when the same thing was tried in the Netherlands, it was found that many parishioners gave up going to Mass altogether rather than travel to another village, and joined local secular activities instead, thus breaking their link with church life.

SOURCE: *The Tablet*, 18th January 2020, Page 23.

Global Consumption. In 2017, the latest year for which data is available, 101 billion tonnes of material was consumed by humanity (almost half for the sand, clay, gravel etc used for buildings, 15% for gas and oil, 10% metal ores, with most of the rest for food and fuel). Since 1970 materials consumed by humanity have quadrupled while the world’s population has only doubled.

SOURCE: *The Week*, 15th February 2020, Page 21.

Appealing to Churches. Charities and others sometimes write to individual churches appealing for help. What percentage of churches ever respond to such appeals or even consider them? A large survey some years ago asked this question of church ministers, and found that just 14% considered such appeals. Of this 14% the large majority were Anglican (9%), with Baptists, Methodists and Roman Catholics 1% each and 2% across all other denominations.

SOURCE: Belated analysis from 2005 English Church Census.

Twenty Years Ahead. Patrick Johnstone was asked in 1983 what the world would like in the years ahead. He gave three basic answers: (a) The growth of the church in the Global South (as it is now called), especially Africa and the growth of Evangelicalism; (b) The challenge to Theological Colleges and training, especially re the authority of the Bible and the issue of Creation; and (c) The desperate need to put evangelisation at the heart of churches’ life; God demands obedience! Forty years on, we can see he was 100% correct!

SOURCE: Notes of a talk given to Irish Presbyterians in Dundonald, N Ireland, 6th Oct 1983.

What give up for Lent? A YouGov survey of the general public found that only a quarter of those asked planned to give up something for Lent, more women than men (79% to 73%), with chocolate by far the preferred item (13% women, 7% men). There was no second contention – others things just by a few – alcohol, meat, smoking, etc. Lenten abstinence was most popular with those under 35. Only 10% said they didn’t know what “Lent” meant.

SOURCE: Article in the *Church Times*, 8th February, 2013.

This may be helpful

Book received

What Mums want (and Dads need to Know). Harry and Kate Benson, Lion, Oxford, 2017. ISBN 978-0-7459-6885-8. A book from the Research Director of the Marriage Foundation and his wife. Strongly recommended by Nicky and Sila Lee, authors of the Marriage Course.

Price £8.99.

FutureFirst is a bimonthly bulletin for those concerned with the future of the church published by Brierley Consultancy. Editorial board: Rosemary Dowsett, Anne Coomes and Peter Brierley. The acceptance and publication of copy does not indicate editorial endorsement. Readers are welcome to quote items provided they give the source.

Established 2009. UK subscriptions £20 per annum; overseas £32 per annum. Make cheque out to ‘Peter Brierley’, or contact for BACS details and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: peter@brierleyres.com
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ISSN 2040-0268

Self-harm had become more prominent in recent years. An article in *The Lancet Psychiatry Journal* reported figures rising from 4% of 16-24 year olds in 2000 to 20% by 2019, a five-fold increase. The Scripture Union representative said he was spending much time in schools talking on this issue.

Sexting is where young people take naked pictures of themselves not recognising such might be widely shared. Primary schools are having to handle this issue although it is mostly 13 and 14 year olds who are most vulnerable due to low self-esteem and bullying. It is illegal to possess or show a digital naked or semi-naked picture of someone under 18, even of themselves.

The Big Question

All this led up to answering the major question given in the first paragraph. The top five answers were:

- Hire youth/school workers, evangelists or pastors to get more key people on the ground with a brief to equip and empower others.
- Establish a Youth Worker Network for encouragement and support that transcends denominations and focuses on the goal of seeing young people encounter Jesus.
- Develop high impact evangelistic events (bus ministry, concerts, football cage, etc) that places youth ministry in the heart of our communities.
- Rethink our use of buildings. Creating youth/family centres etc.
- Invest in training. Base level training and continuing professional development.

While it might be said that high profile activities (like bus ministry) were mentioned it was also recognised that for most churches numbers coming would be small, so viability was an issue. The importance that Youth Workers felt for more support was understandable but if they were dealing with difficult self-harm and sexting questions, such support was probably necessary. Always the answer was in effect to such was “talk to someone”, an answer which arose again and again. Generations Y and Z are community focussed, using social media constantly, watching YouTube videos, so solutions are found primarily with people.

Equipping such people, however, takes time. Training programmes have to be set up, investment made in apprenticeships, finding people who in turn will equip and empower others in making disciples. It was suggested that Chaplains should be placed in every school/college/wherever there’s a concentration of young people.

Has this whole process helped the Church in Wales? One Diocese has already used the research to support its bid for finance from the Evangelism Fund. They want to employ 6 new diocesan workers focussing on young people and children. Two other Dioceses are considering buying a bus to be converted in outreach to the young – particularly appropriate to rural Wales. Another Diocese is taking up the challenge of converting a building to a Family Centre. Not always does research lead to such practical outcomes – but the key was the breadth in the initial question!

SOURCE: *The Missing Generations*: The Church in Wales and Young People, by Rev Dr Mark Griffiths JP November 2019, who may be contacted at mark.griffiths@spadarns.ac.uk