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FUTURE FIRST



FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

Ethnicity and Religion

SNIPPETS

1) A survey of 2,000 Muslims aged 16 to 24 found 89% regularly pray at home and 75% regularly attend mosque.

2) In West Bengal, India, cows must have a Photo ID card, to prevent smuggling across the border into Bangladesh!

3) Experts predict that by the end of the 21st century, cities will account for 85% of Earth's 10 billion inhabitants (in 2008 it was 50%).

4) A Pew Research survey found 35% of US citizens viewed Jews favourably or somewhat favourably and 6% unfavourably. Catholics were 34% and 18% respectively. Views about Evangelicals were 28% and 27%.

5) The number of believers associated with churches in France numbered 745,000 in 2022, up from 50,000 in 1950.

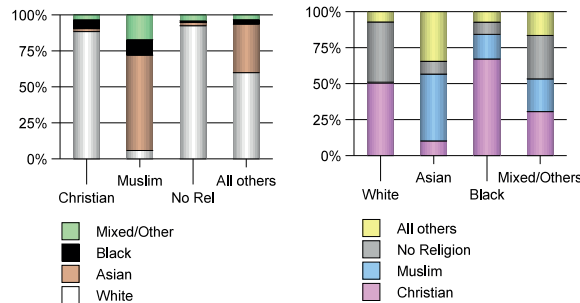
6) Two-thirds (67%) of parents thought that RE was an important part of life teaching at school, and three-quarters (76%) when their children were at a faith-based school.

7) According to Open Doors, there were 5,900 killed for their faith in 2021 and 5,600 in 2022, a -5% reduction. There were also 3,800 faith-related abductions in 2021 and 5,300 in 2022, a +37% increase.

SOURCE: 1) Survey by hyphenonline.com quoted in Religion Media Centre 31st March, 2023; 2) and 3) *Connected*, The Frontiers UK Magazine, Issue 19, April 2023, Pages 11 and 7; 4) Reported in *The Tablet*, 25th March 2023, Page 24; 5) From France Mission quoted in *World Prayer News*, Global Connections, March/April 2023, Day 17; 6) *The Tablet*, 21st April, 2023, Page 6; 7) *World Watch List*, compiled by Open Doors; this extract from *Plain Truth*, Spring 2023 issue, Page 7.

The 2021 Population Census result that only 46% of those living in England describe themselves as Christian has been well publicised. However, this figure does not convey the impact of the huge number of non-White people living in our land. The White English population has decreased by -1.7 million between 2001 and 2021 while the non-White population has increased by +6.2 million. (We focus on the English figures here so that equal comparisons can be made with previous census years).

Ethnicity by Religion and Religion by Ethnicity, England, 2021



White population

The first chart clearly shows that the majority of Christian people are White. White English people are still three-quarters of the population, 74% (88% in 2001 and 80% in 2011), the decline reflecting the extent of the huge number of immigrants we have sustained in the last 20 years. While a proportion of Black immigrants are Christian, the majority of Asian immigrants are Muslim.

However, the White dominance of Christians need to be set alongside the fact that the chart equally shows that the large majority of those with No Religion are also White people, 93%, in 2021 (95% in 2001 and 93% in 2011), suggesting that White Christians are not seeing many of their neighbours coming to Christ. The second chart clearly shows that Christians and No Religionists are almost equal among White people.

White people were also a substantial proportion, 86%, of the Jewish population, although only two-thirds, 67%, of these are actually British, the remainder being mostly American or Jewish. There are very few Asian or Black Jews in Britain.

Asian population

The Asian community in England has grown from 5% of the population in 2001, to 8% in 2011 and to 10% in 2021. Half of these, 46%, are Muslim, with a substantial proportion being Hindu (18%). The Muslim numbers come especially from Bangladesh and Pakistan, totalling some 2.2 million people, 4% of the entire population.

Large numbers of Asians also come from India, 1.8 million in 2021, 3% of the population, two-fifths, 43% in 2021, of whom are Hindu and another fifth, 21%, Sikh, with both

percentages slightly decreasing over the last 20 years, although numbers have increased (from 300,000 to 380,000 for Hindus). Some of the Indians are Christian, 12% in 2021, up from 5% in 2001, seen in the growing number of Indian churches in the Midlands.

The percentage of Chinese Christians in Britain is decreasing, from 22% in 2001 to 17% in 2021, but because of the surge of immigrants the number has actually increased by 52% from 49,000 to 75,000. Again this is reflected in the growth of some Chinese churches, although some of this growth will be increased numbers of newly arrived people rather than the conversions of existing population.

The key aspect of the Chinese population, however, is their high percentage who say they have No Religion, a reflection of the Communism in their homeland. In 2001, 53% of the English Chinese said they had No Religion, 56% in 2011 and 62% in 2021 (270,000 people) owing to a large influx of students in the last few years. When the 2011 results came out Norwich was branded "the most godless city" in the country, but this was due to the many Chinese students then at Norwich University indicating they had No Religion. That didn't happen in 2021, as that designation went to Brighton and Hove, though for the same student reason.

Black population

4% of those in England identified as "Black or Black British" in 2021, doubling the 2% in 2001. It has the highest percentage of any ethnic group in England who say they are Christian, 67%, and, as the second chart shows, this is much higher than in the White population, who only manage 51%! This high percentage is reflected across those from Africa (66%), from the Caribbean (69%) or elsewhere (also 69%). This high percentage follows that in 2001 (71%) and 2011 (69%) so the percentage is decreasing.

That is because an increasing number of Black people are Muslim, that percentage rising from 9% in 2001 to 14% in 2011 to 17% in 2021. Many Blacks from Africa are Muslim (25%), some 370,000 people. Of the various ethnic groups they have the smallest percentage who have No Religion (just, 8.5%, against the Asians 8.9%).

Mixed population

Intermarriage between different ethnic groups is quite common and of course gives rise to those with a mixed heredity. 3% of English people have a mixed background, and nearly two-fifths, 37%, of those are Christian. Of these Christians, a third, 31%, are White and Black Caribbean, a fifth of these, 20%, are White and Black African, another fifth, 21%, are White and Asian, and the remaining 28% mixed in other ways. Among the general mixed population, these percentages are, respectively, 30%, 15%, 28% and 27%, showing that the White and Black Caribbean dominance is true in Christian circles also. The Black Africans in England are well represented among larger Black Pentecostal churches.

The main percentage of the mixed population, however, is the 44% who have No Religion, though this is much

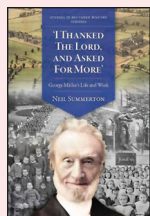
less among the White and Black Africans (33%). Just 8% of the mixed population are Muslim.

Other ethnic groups

The remaining 2% of the population are in what the Office for National Statistics simply calls “other ethnic groups,” a quarter, 26%, of whom are Arabs, and the remaining three-quarters from all the remaining countries. Over a quarter, 29%, of these (non-Arabs) are Christian, 28% Muslim, and 10% Sikh. 15% have No Religion. These are combined with “Mixed” in the two charts.

SOURCE: *Population Census 2021*, Office for National Statistics, Ethnicity by Religion, released 28th November, 2022.

Book Review 1



“*I thanked the Lord, and asked for more*” is the very apt title for a biography of George Müller by Neil Summerton CB, published by BAHN in 2022, ISBN 978-1-7391283-0-2 with 382 pages. “George Müller’s Life and Work” is not just a biography but may become **the** biography of this renowned Christian who ran an orphanage in Bristol from 1840 to 1875 for eventually 2,000 needy children by casting himself in prayer upon God alone without asking publicly for funds for the work.

The Christian Brethren is a global denomination reaching into 138 countries in 2018 with some 2.7 million adult attenders. Its particular practical and theological teaching began in the 1830s and was hugely influenced by George Müller and his companions. The book describes his life and faith in detail with almost 1,200 references, with supporting statistical tables.

It paints a warm, sympathetic prayer warrior from whom we can learn much today. Müller and his colleague Henry Craik were involved in leading a large (600) congregation in Bristol in the 1830s, his ministry expanding into the building of 5 orphanages (which still stand today although now used differently). The book describes Müller’s spirituality, how he lived by faith, and the development of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution which enabled him to promote mission at home and abroad.

He believed strongly in education, supporting numerous schools. He was committed to spreading the gospel through print, with literally 115 million tracts printed and circulated as well as books and Bibles. He wished to “demonstrate God” and did so through his children’s work. The final two decades of his long life (1805-1898) were spent in an extensive preaching and teaching ministry both at home and abroad. He was thoroughly evangelical, but also showed what this meant in compassion, support for others, and with a strong desire to help children develop their God-given potential. An exact time-keeper, a model of integrity, he found daily reading of the Scriptures and a life of prayer both a spiritual necessity and a constant delight. A challenging and soul-warming read!

Yes, I’m an Atheist Churchgoer

An English vicar had a regular church attender, coming on average twice a month, who volunteered to keep the church hall tidy, and frequently helped with practical repairs or improvements, but he didn’t believe in God, Jesus or the Bible! The same vicar also had a similar experience in another church when, discussing worship among the church leaders, the lady Church Treasurer suddenly said, “Yes, that’s all very well, but what about those of us who don’t believe?!”

An American university survey undertaken in 2022 by the Public Research Institute found that 29% of people who said they were atheists “sometimes” went to church. Another survey by *Christian Today* found that 1% of atheists went to church regularly, even weekly! The obvious question to these findings is “Why does someone who doesn’t believe in God go to a church set aside for the worship of God?” An article published in *Backyard Church* on 3rd April 2023 suggested three reasons:

- 1) Some go to keep their spouse happy, usually the wife dragging the husband along. One man always came in as the service was ending, saying, “My wife needs a lift home.”
- 2) Some go for the sake of their children, giving them support in order to increase family bonding.
- 3) Some say they go because they want to feel part of a community, and church communities are usually very friendly, welcoming and open.

The Sunday Assembly, begun by two comedians in 2013, was a secular gathering modelled on the church. It initially grew rapidly with many groups and a speaker each Sunday, but then attendance began to drop off, and many congregations have closed, presumably becoming non-viable. It would seem that in order to build community you have to build it around something or someone, and Jesus Christ is of course the main focus of a church community. The Sunday Assembly did not have that, and, without it, enthusiasm for community fizzled. There were only 8 groups still active in the UK in April 2023 according to their website.

Various British surveys between 1982 and 1994 consistently found that about 5% of respondents would describe themselves as atheists. If the American 29% was applicable that would reduce the 5% to perhaps 1.5% who might occasionally go to church. In the 2021 Census, while 37% of English people said they had No Religion (which is not the same as being an atheist), just 14,000 (0.02% of the population) wrote in the word “Atheist” in answer to “other religion.” No survey in Britain seems to have ever asked atheists if they go to church!

There are, however, many people who say they are “spiritual, but not religious,” which is not a definition of atheism either but does indicate perhaps a fluidity of meaning in these terms. In a 2011 study 12% of the UK population said they were spiritual AND religious and 34% said they were spiritual but NOT religious. Clearly this is a debatable topic!

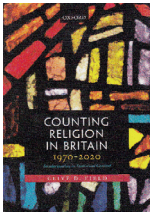
SOURCES: Article by Paul Walker, *Backyard Church*, 3rd April 2023 from Steve Roderick; Office for National Statistics 2021 Population; *Does the Future have a Church?*, Brierley Consultancy, 2019; Sunday Assembly website. Humour

FutureFirst is a bimonthly bulletin for those concerned with the future of the church. 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.

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Book Review 2



Counting Religion in Britain 1970-2020 – Secularisation in Statistical Context – published last year, gives a unique collection of religious statistics. It divides into three sections, on Belonging, Behaving and Believing, but giving copious footnotes virtually for every fact stated. There are 229 in the first two introductory chapters, then

respectively 227, 523 and 624 for the 3 sections, with 20 more for the Conclusion (a total of over 1,600!), a prodigious effort of compilation and accumulated knowledge over a life-time.

These chapters are supported by no fewer than 180 Tables of Statistics, updating Robert Currie's Churches and Churchgoers for a further generation. The Tables list the figures published for every year between 1970 and 2020 (although not as many were collected during the 2020 Covid lockdown year). The Tables give the official figures published by the various denominations (so, in theory, can be supported elsewhere, but cumulated here for convenience), some 43 of these.

The remainder of the Tables give the figures from an immense variety of sample surveys ever since such market research began in 1937. This compilation brings together all the answers to surveys asking the same questions in different years – an incredible exercise of cumulating surveys from every source imaginable and presented neatly in tabular form to show trends readily. It also provides data from non-recurrent surveys. This part of the book is totally one-of-a-kind and the result of a dedicated researcher and interpreter of religious data across an enormous field. If your religious question can't be answered from these tables it probably hasn't been asked (in the UK)!

Two-thirds of the book looks at the significance of all this information. The first section on Belonging looks at saliency, affiliation and membership, noting the quality of the data sourced. The second section on Behaving looks at attendance and rites of passage (baptisms, marriages and funerals). This section also includes measurements about prayer, the Bible, religious broadcasts, and Christian festivals. It also covers the social dimensions of religion in the home, church and school.

The third section on Believing looks at the many sample surveys asked by numerous agencies over the years. It covers both orthodox and alternative beliefs, religious experience, attitudes towards churches and clergy, Sunday observance, religion and politics, and religious prejudice, especially towards Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims and Atheists. If you want religious data, in the broad arena of secularisation, this book will be an incredible starting point for your thesis! Such information also provides ready accessibility and illustrations for sermons, lectures, articles, broadcasts, discussions and other similar needs.

It was compiled by Dr Clive Field OBE, who is responsible for the British Religion In Numbers website which gives comments on virtually all newly published religious figures. The book is published by Oxford University Press, 2022, ISBN 978-0-19-284932-8, 496 pages, at £110 from Amazon.



The good news is I've let ChatGPT write this week's sermon... the bad news is, it's about 3 hours long!

CORONATION STAMPS



Royal Mail issued stamps specially designed to celebrate the Coronation (of King Charles III on 6th May 2023) for only the third time in its history (previously for George VI and Elizabeth II). Of the four stamps issued two were for first class postage, and one of these seeks to represent the diversity and community of our nation.

In it there are six people representing, respectively, the Jewish, Islamic, Christian, Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist religions all standing together. In the background among the houses and parks are different places of worship, such as a church, mosque, synagogue and temple. The King is known for his commitment to promoting multi-faith tolerance.

These are the 6 religions as listed in the 2021 Census. Those indicating they were adherents were, of those answering the question (so not the usual published figures), respectively, 0.5%, 7.2%, 49.3%, 1.0%, 1.9% and 0.5% of the English population, a total of 11.1% non-Christian and 49.3% Christian, so three-fifths (60.4%) claiming a faith of some description, along with 0.6% of other religions and 39.0% with No religion. Such is our diversity, which was also represented in the Coronation ceremony on May 6th.

While this means that two-fifths do not align with any faith, David Gold, spokesman for the Royal Mail, said, "It is not uncommon now for people to say they perhaps have spirituality but they don't have a faith," justifying the inclusion of this stamp along with the others. These show the crowning of the King in the Coronation Chair (first class), the Commonwealth (£2.20) and our sustainability and biodiversity (also £2.20) with a beekeeper in the foreground and a wildflower meadow in the background to show the importance of wildlife conservation and traditional crafts.

SOURCES: Royal Mail website, *Daily Telegraph*, 28th April, 2023, Page 3.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is much in the news these days. If Chatbox (technically ChatGPT) can answer legal exam questions sufficiently well to fool the examiner, or to write a speech for the Prime Minister which he accepts, or a successful proposal for a new and expensive project, clearly all those in the relevant authorities need much wisdom to evaluate their incoming mail. It now appears that it can also handle incorrect information in a similar fashion which can mislead, misdiagnose or simply be totally incorrect. The huge attraction of Chatbox and its competitors is that they produce human-like responses, and can translate from one language to another instantly.

Would Chatbox obtain approval for deep theological essays if asked to write one? Doubtless in terms of content, yes. Could it give the necessary Bible verses which would help lead a person to Christ? Probably. Could the Lord have let this new instrument be discovered so that, in time, it might be a mechanism of reaching countless souls for Christ as a new medium for communication? Equally could false information purporting to be the truth be used by Satan in his war against God's Kingdom and His Christ? There are numerous similar questions about this new discovery, first released in November 2022.

Chatbox is owned by OpenAI a company which was started December 2015 by 6 entrepreneurs, with Elon Musk an initial board member until February 2023. Microsoft has supported it with billions of dollars. An American webinar by Statista on AI in March 2023 suggested it could be used by over a quarter of companies (27%) worldwide by 2030. The top five global organisations – Amazon, Apple, Alphabet (parent company of Google), Microsoft and Meta (previously Facebook) – are all intensely involved in developing AI, and each desperate to attract interest from investors. As an indication of its likely popularity, ChatGPT gained a million customers in its first 5 days after launch. Netflix took 3.5 years to have the same!

How did it achieve this? Largely by OpenAI re-training its former transition staff. The way AI had developed by March 2023 was considered to be only 5% of its eventual potential. To be developed are its ability for human conversation, the power to generate computerised vision, the whole world of robotics, along with machine learning and "deep learning." What has made it successful thus far? The huge resources thrown at the topic, the large amounts of data electronically available, cutting edge chip technology, supercomputers and the cloud, and the availability of huge quantities of energy.

It is estimated that the AI impact on global GDP by 2030 could be as much as £13 trillion. A key challenge? Seeking to use AI to evaluate climate change (and slow or stop it?). Its impact is likely to be felt in manufacturing, protected services, both wholesale and retail. Where will its impact be felt least? The continent of Africa. AI will accelerate the shift in skills that some say the work force needs. AI is constantly evolving information on neural networks, genetic algorithms, as it seeks to generate a market above rule-based systems. Which company will develop it most? What place is there in all this for the growth of the Kingdom of God?

An example of how ChatGPT works was given in *The Economist*. Continue this sentence: "The promise of large language models [LLM] is that they ..." – what word would you use? A LLM, of which ChatGPT is an example, answers the question by breaking down the multiple meanings of each word, mapping their unique identities, builds them into a "meaningful space," identifies the best connections, and after trillions of calculations in a few micro-seconds suggests "can" on 62% of occasions, "will" on 11%, "are" on 7%, "capture" on 2%, "could" also 2% and then myriads of others on smaller percentages. How might it complete: "Christian salvation is to be found in ..."?

SOURCE: Statista webinar, 30th March 2023, entitled "Artificial Intelligence: Creators, Company Landscape, and Consequences," Webinar ID: 368-144-875; *The Economist*, 22nd April, 2023, Page 70.

Australian Clergy

The population of Australia in 2021 was 25.4 million; that of England and Wales was 59.6 million over twice as many. The Australian Census asks for occupation as one of its questions; the number of ministers in Australia in 2021 was 16,957 or 0.07% of the population; in England and Wales they totalled 30,858 or 0.05% of the population. So Australia has slightly more ministers than England and Wales, pro rata.

Australia publishes a more detailed list of occupations than does England, so that Australia can categorise "minister" as such, while for England we have to use "professional occupations." The average age of an Australian minister in 2021 was 49, the same as it was in their 2006 and 2011 censuses. In England and Wales the average professional worker's age was 42 in 2021. The average age of a minister in 2005, by the English Church Census that year, was 54.

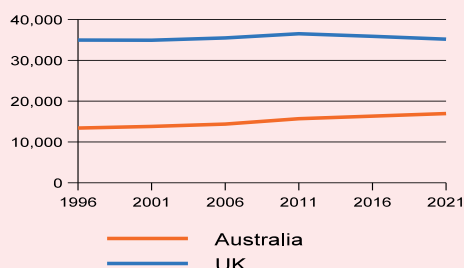
In Australia the oldest clergy were those in the Uniting Church (average age 56), Eastern Orthodox (54), Lutheran (53), Roman Catholic and Salvation Army (both 52). In England the oldest clergy were the Orthodox (63), Roman Catholic (59), Independent (57) and the United Reformed Church (55). Thus broadly the same denominational average ages, in both our countries. They did not agree on the youngest, however – Pentecostals in Australia were 47 but 54 in Britain.

Similar Australian figures are available for 2006 and 2011. In both years the Pentecostals were also the youngest, and the Catholics were the oldest, followed by the Uniting Church and the Eastern Orthodox. Their 2006 figures are close to the English figures for 2005.

The gender proportions of Australian clergy have changed over this period also. They had 22% women ministers in 2006 and 31% in 2021, a trend which is followed in the UK, but at a much lower level – 12% in 2005 and 19% in 2020. In both countries, the Salvation Army has the highest percentage of women ministers – over 50% – but were followed by the Pentecostals in Australia (40%) who had only 14% in the UK in 2020. Third with women ministers in Australia was the Uniting Church with 38%. Second (and second equal) in the UK were the Methodists and United Reformed Church both with 36%. The Army and the Uniting Churches are similar in the two countries.

In Australia the number of clergy has increased over the last quarter century, whereas in the UK numbers have been virtually static with a small rise in 2011, as the graph shows. In Australia in 1996 there were 13,400 ministers, and in 2021 17,000, an increase averaging +0.9% per annum. In the UK it was 35,000 and 35,200 respectively, an increase of +0.02%!

Number of clergy in Australia and UK, 1996 to 2021



In both countries there is a small increase in the number of ministers, but a decline in the number of members! It would be spurious to say one causes the other! The increasing age of members (who thus die off) and the lack of fresh younger members to replace them is almost certainly the cause.

SOURCES: Australian Census 2021; *Pointers*, magazine of the Christian Research Association, Vol 33, No 1, March 2023, article by Rev Philip Hughes; relevant editions of *Religious Statistics*, Christian Research, London, and *UK Church Statistics*.

SNOWFLAKES

Dating fancies. The League app is one of the larger sites for dating. In a survey of 80,000 users in January 2023 they analysed the kind of features daters liked. Before they matched A and B they asked each about preferences for age, ethnicity, height, etc. and only when these matched were A & B put in touch with each other. Women who are 5' 5" turn away 17% based on height, while those 5' 10" turn down 45% on height. Women in their 50s turn down 86% of users based on age, while only 48% do so if aged 25 to 34. Women block 70% of potential matches; men only 55%. If religion was a filter, how many would get blocked out just for being "Christian"? Presumably Christians would prefer to use a Christian dating agency!

SOURCE: *The Economist*, 25th March, 2012, Page 81.

Billionaires. For the 2023 World Economic Forum (WEF) held in Davos, Switzerland, 116 billionaires were registered, 18 of whom were European. There were 84 in 2013. Commentator James Delingole said, quite astutely, it was "(w)here billionaires lecture millionaires on how ordinary people live"! The WEF was begun in 1971 by a German Professor, Kalus Schwab, an engineer and economist at the University of Geneva.

SOURCES: Article by Malcolm Baker in *Sword*, March/April 2023, Page 20; wikipedia.

International students. The 2021 Census, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports showed there were over 370,000 non-UK-born, non-UK passport holding international students in England and Wales, 0.6% of the population or one person in every 160. 12% of these came from India, 11% from China, 10% from Romania and 5% from Nigeria, the top 4 countries. A third, 34%, lived in London. A third were also in employment while studying (74% of Romanians, 62% of Bulgarians, 57% of Polish students and 56% of Lithuanians). Unfortunately ONS does not allow this relatively small number of people to be broken down by religion, only those who have a non-UK passport which is a larger number.

SOURCE: Office National Statistics, email blog issued 17th April, 2023.

No to same-sex. A survey by Christian Concern of 33 Church of England churches with more than 100 children in attendance found that 20, or three-fifths (61%), "clearly identified as supporting the church's historic view that sex is reserved for a man, one woman marriage," and commented that "young people are drawn to teaching that says something different to the society around them." The views of the other 13 churches or its leaders could not be found online.

SOURCE: Christian Concern survey summary issued 3rd February, 2023, of a 2022 survey.

Future predictions. Twenty years ago an article predicted what the 2020 church would look like. It predicted the Christian community being under

half the population, 12% belonging to a non-Christian religion (it turned out to be 11%), 40% not believing in God (actually 39%), and ethnic churches still expanding (they are). However it also put congregations averaging 45 (it's actually 77), Songs of Praise discontinued (it hasn't closed), and funerals still a huge opportunity (they may be but the percentage of church and crematoria departures has fallen from 78% in 2000 to 43% in 2020). Then came Covid! Looking a long way ahead is a dubious exercise sometimes.

SOURCE: *Religious Trends* No 5, The Future of the Church, Christian Research, Page 12.3.

Owning your own home. The 2021 Census showed that Christians are more likely to own their homes, largely because they have a higher average age than those in other religions. About two-fifths (36%) own it outright, and a third (33%) own it via a mortgage or shared ownership. Sikhs (50%) and Hindus (48%) have the most mortgages; Muslims socially rent more than others (21%). The overall figures are Own outright (27%), Own with a mortgage etc (36%), socially rent (16%) and privately rent 21%.

SOURCE: 2021 Census, Office for national Statistics; article in the *Church Times*, 31st March, 2023.

Growing churches. According to Jason Mandryk, editor of *Operation World*, there are sustained growths of the church in six countries especially at the present time, often because of persecution, but also through a spiritual breakthrough and "relentless prayer": (1) Iran, in part reaction to its ruthless regime of very harsh Islam; (2) Thailand, as its Free in Jesus Christ Association has experienced explosive growth in village-by-village evangelism; (3) Myanmar, which includes strongly Christian ethnic minorities, like the Karen, Kachin and Chin groups; (4) Algeria, through a revival among the Kabyle in eastern Algeria; (5) India, through thousands of Dalit children being taught to worship Jesus, something "often below the horizon"; (6) Africa generally, especially through the Redeemed Christian Church of God, one of whose churches in Lagos, Nigeria, attracts an attendance sometimes over a million people on a Friday night.

SOURCE: Article in *Christianity*, April 2023, Pages 10-13.

Millennial challenges. The latest book by Dr George Barna, who leads the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, *Helping Millennials Thrive*, suggests they are grappling with four defining areas of life – relationships (it's difficult to trust others), mental health (especially anxiety, depression and fear), meaning and purpose (where do they find these in their lives?), and faith (two-fifths, 40%, say they have No Religion).

SOURCE: Monthly email from President Len Munsil, March 28th, 2023.

Humour

At the weekly Husbands' Marriage Group of St Mary's Church, Los Angeles, the priest invited Lugi, a first generation immigrant, now approaching his 50th wedding anniversary, to share some insights into how he had stayed married to the same woman all these years.

Lugi said it was easy. "I maka sure she eata good, havea the nice nice clothes, but best of all for our 20th anniversary I tooka her to Italy."

Saying what an inspiration he was, the priest then asked Lugi, "Now, would you like to share with the group what you are planning for your wife on your 50th anniversary?"

Lugi proudly replied, "I'm a gonna go and get her."

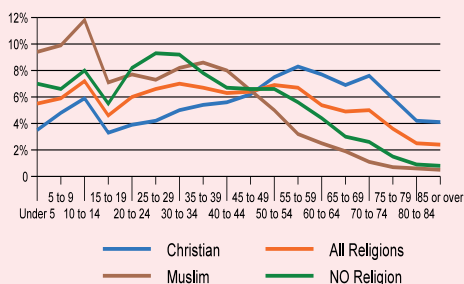
SOURCE: *Futures* bulletin, Autumn 2009, Page 5, courtesy Chris Radley.

Age of those with Religion

The 2021 Population Census asked people their age as well as whether they had a religion. 94% of the population answered both questions. The average age of the population is 41, and the average age of Christian adherents was 48, the oldest of any religion. The youngest are the Muslims with larger families and therefore more children; their average age is 29. Those with No Religion are the next youngest, with an average age of 34. All the other religions have an average age between 37 and 42.

The ages of three groups are plotted in the chart, along with the overall numbers, taking the ages in groups of 5 years.

Percentage of those in different religions in 5 year age-groups, England, 2021



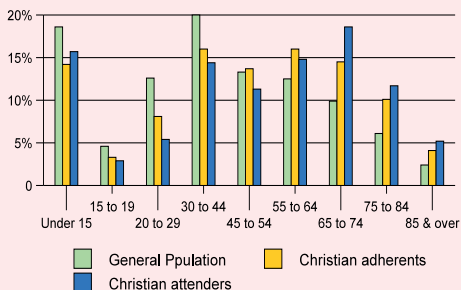
It is interesting that these four graphs all cross between the ages of 45 to 49, as if this age-group is the key one, with people either younger or older. Only the Christians have under half their numbers below 45, just 42%, while the Muslims have 78%, those with No Religion 68%, and Hindus 67%. The overall average (for the population) is 56%, and three groups are close to that number – Buddhists with 53%, Jews with 54% and Other religions with 55%.

These figures re-inforce what is already well known, that church congregations are generally lacking in young people, but the higher percentages of younger people in other religions shows that it is not necessarily religion as such which is alien to young people, but rather the Christian faith. It has been said that it is not the essence of the Christian faith which deter younger people, but rather the Church itself and the lacklustre lives of those who profess to be Christian. In addition, in Western culture, the tenets of Christian belief have been discarded in a modern, secular environment, the Bible has been

largely dismissed and ignorance reigns, particularly among the younger population.

If two-fifths, 42%, of Christians are under 45, then obviously three-fifths, 58%, are 45 or over. The second graph compares the adherent figures shown above with the pre-Covid attendance estimates for 2020 for England, in the age-groups for which the attendance figures are available.

Population and Christian adherents in 2021 and active churchgoers in 2020, by age, England



This is an interesting graph which shows that:

1) Although the numbers represented by the vertical scales are different for each of the three groups depicted, this graph might suggest that some of the elderly attending church may not have ticked the "Christian" box in the Census (see also the atheist article in this issue).

2) Christian adherents are clearly much older than the general population, and Christian attenders are much much older! In fact Christian churchgoers are ageing at twice the rate of the general population, especially if 65 or over.

The problem for the small (often struggling) rural churches (not just C of E) with mostly older attenders is also already well known, and plotting the figures over time and projecting them ahead shows how tough the decisions to be taken for (or by) many village churches will be.

A similar graph can be drawn for those in Wales. It shows a slightly more difficult situation since the average age of Christian in Wales is 51 against 48 (because more Pentecostal Christians are in England), while the average age of Muslims is 28 instead of 29. The average member of the Welsh population is 42 not 41.

SOURCES: 2021 Population Census, Office for National Statistics, Age and Religion; UK Church Statistics, No 4 2021 Edition, Tables 13.5.1 and 13.21.2.

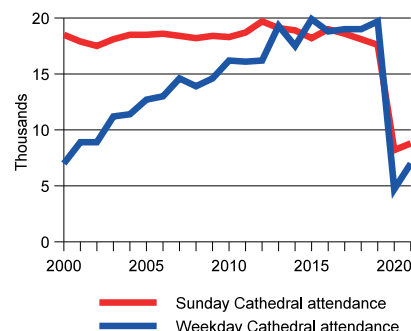
CATHEDRALS

Precisely 110 Cathedrals in the UK were listed in 2006 – 43 of the Church of England (one for every Diocese), 35 for the Roman Catholics (including Scotland), 11 Orthodox (of which 9 were Greek, 1 Russian and 1 Antiochan, one of the smaller Orthodox Churches in the UK), 8 for the Scottish Episcopal Church, 6 for both the Church in Wales and the Church of Ireland (in Northern Ireland), and one for the Church of Scotland (the Presbyterian St Giles in Edinburgh).

A few locations (mostly cities) had more than one – Aberdeen, Argyll and the Isles, Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Norwich, Portsmouth, Southwark and, probably, others.

Since 2000 the Church of England (C of E) has been collecting and publishing details about its Cathedrals. Weekly attendance fell drastically during the Covid restriction years of 2020 and 2021 as the chart shows, although it's clear that in 2021 numbers were a little higher than the year before, with mid-week services responding better than Sunday services.

Average Weekday and Sunday Attendances in C of E Cathedrals, in thousands, 2000-2021



Most Cathedrals also offer on-line services, and these have continued since the cessation of lockdown restrictions, though these have not been included in the above chart.

In the 7 years 2013 to 2019, average total annual regular attendance in the C of E Cathedrals was 511,000 people; it was not measured in 2020, but in 2021, it was exactly half that, 255,000. This excludes the many special services held such as for schools, Diocesan services, graduation services or others, which totalled over 2 million people in 2019, halving again in 2021. Christmas attendance in 2019 was 670,000 and 270,000 in 2021.

Church of England Cathedrals had some 9.7 million visitors in 2019, two-fifths, 39%, of whom paid. In 2021 the number of visitors was 4.6 million, 32% paying. There is natural apprehension whether numbers will have returned when the 2022 figures are known, while charging visitors for admission (although not for services), while controversial, is a matter for the individual Cathedral.

SOURCES: UK Christian Handbook, Christian Research, London, 2005; Cathedral Statistics, 2021, Research and Statistics Dept., Church of England.

Honesty

A survey of children and young people 20 years ago by the Home Office showed the level of honesty then among them. It would be very interesting to see what their replies would be today! These are their answers to the question, "It is OK to ..."

Statement	Age 8 %	Age 11 %	Age 15 %
Keep £5 if found at school	13	16	29
Smoke under the age of 16	~	5	27
Cheat in exams or tests	3	3	3
Tell lies to a parent	9	11	15
Tell a teacher if someone is breaking school rules	82	74	53
Buy alcohol to drink under the age of 18	~	8	31
Tell lies to a teacher	3	9	24
Break school rules	2	7	15

SOURCE: Home Office Citizenship Survey, Home Office with DFES, Christine Farmer, Office for National Statistics, 2003.

Adults Only!

Some questions asked in the 2021 Population Census concerned people’s living arrangements, and for the purposes of these answers children were ignored. The total population of England and Wales was found to be 59.6 million people, of whom 11.0 million were children or 18%. The other 82%, adults, live in one of three types of arrangement (again ignoring any children): (1) by themselves, (2) with one other adult, and (3) in a multi-family household. These are respectively 34%, 64% and 2% of adults and of the entire population they are 41%, 57% and 2%. Within the multi-family households will be those with adult children still living at home, people taking in lodgers or refugees, etc.

Each of the “living in a couple” and “not living in a couple” categories were broken down into 5 sub-groups in the Census, and the results (ignoring children and multiple households) were:

Living arrangements in England and Wales, 2021

Not living in a couple		E	W	E&W	Living in a couple		E	W	E&W
Single	Never married or registered in a same-sex partnership	26.7	25.9	26.7	Opposite-sex couple	Married or in a civil partnership	43.3	43.0	43.3
Married	Or in a registered civil partnership	1.4	0.9	1.4	Opposite-sex couple	Cohabiting	13.4	13.5	13.4
Separated	Including those married or in a civil partnership	1.9	1.7	1.8	Separated	But still married or in a civil partnership	0.1	0.1	0.1
Divorced	Or formally in a civil partnership now legally dissolved	6.6	7.3	6.7	Same-sex couple	Married or in a civil partnership	0.3	0.3	0.3
Widowed	Or surviving partner from a civil partnership	5.6	6.6	5.6	Same-sex couple	Cohabiting	0.7	0.7	0.7
TOTAL		42.2	42.4	42.2	TOTAL		57.8	57.6	57.8

Unfortunately these numbers are not yet available broken down by religion, and ascertaining how Christians live is very rarely asked in normal surveys. One large 2012 survey did ask some of these groups and that suggested some 28% Christians lived alone, a long way short of the 42% in England and Wales, but with a similar 6% who were widowed. The percentage cohabiting then was only 1%, against a much larger percentage given for the country as a whole (14%), but the survey had many more who were married, and same- and opposite-sex were not legal variations then.

The Table shows there were fewer singles in Wales than England in 2021, more divorced and more who were widowed among those not living as a couple. There was no significant differences between the countries for those living as a couple.

SOURCES: People’s living arrangements in England and Wales: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics, 9th February 2023; Living the Christian Life, Langham International Partnership, Brierley Consultancy, 2012, Appendix 2.

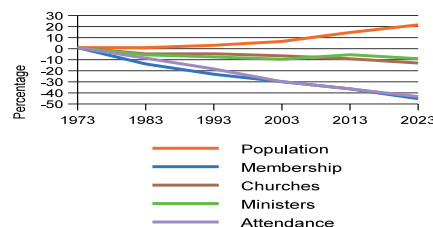
Fifty Years On

With the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and the coronation of King Charles III it is sometimes appropriate to look back. Ideally we should do that for 70 years to match the Queen’s Platinum celebration last year, but some of the data to be looked at didn’t exist for the earliest years, so we have to opt for what is available.

Table and Chart: Population and Church Statistics, UK, 1973-2023

Year	UK Population	Church membership	Column A	Number of churches	Population per church	Number of ministers	Column B	Column C	Column D
1973	55,976,000	8,301,000	14.8 %	51,537	1,090	38,169	74.1 %	4,765,000	10.3 %
1983	56,322,000	7,152,000	12.7 %	49,122	1,150	36,050	73.4 %	4,358,000	9.1 %
1993	57,727,000	6,381,000	11.1 %	49,150	1,170	35,267	71.8 %	3,891,000	8.1 %
2003	59,697,000	5,828,000	9.8 %	48,262	1,240	34,542	71.6 %	3,347,000	6.7 %
2013	64,220,000	5,285,000	8.2 %	46,828	1,370	36,193	77.3 %	3,034,000	5.6 %
2023	68,084,000	4,545,000	6.7 %	44,839	1,520	34,749	77.5 %	2,698,000	4.7 %

Column A = Membership as % of population Column B = Ministers as % of churches
 Column C = Church attendance (England only) Column D = Attendance as % of English population



The graph shows how the years after 1973 vary from that year in percentage terms. It is obvious that the population increases over this period by over a fifth (+22%) while church membership has decreased by almost half (-45%). Many churches were started between 2003 and 2013, and the number of ministers increased accordingly. English attendance has dropped as much as UK membership (-43%).

There is plenty here to discourage – membership down almost 50% in 50 years, and attendance much the same. Attendance is 59% of membership in 2023, but only 57% in 1973, suggesting some nominal church members may have dropped out.

The number of churches has declined by -13% in these 50 years, but the number of ministers only by -9%, suggesting slightly more man/woman power than hitherto – and almost certainly a greater proportion of women in 2023 than half a century earlier. The proportion of women ministers in 1973 and 1983 is not known, but in 1993 it was 9% and 20% in 2023. Extra numbers are also seen in the percentage of ministers to churches – an increasing percentage.

The average church membership (not shown in the Table) is about 100, and average attendance (in England) is 75. If there are 1,500 people in the country per church, that means 1 member to 15 people or 1 attender for every 20. Statistically it ought to be possible to reach those numbers - one person in the population reached by one churchgoer once a year.

Are there any clues which might generate a change? Leading evangelicals have suggested such questions as:

- (1) Is our vision too small – local rather than global?
- (2) What is “mission” – proclamation or focussing on justice and development?
- (3) Is our concern for the immigrant hindering the ability to see millions without Christ?
- (4) Is concern about post-colonial legacy a barrier to taking gospel opportunities?
- (5) Does knowledge of global church growth reduce our ability to see overseas need?
- (6) Does the cost of living stifle support for outreach?
- (7) Are younger “keenites” losing their enthusiasm/commitment as they grow older?

SOURCES: Population figures from Office for National Statistics; church figures from UK Church Statistics No 4 2021 Edition, and its predecessor volumes; learning from Global Connections Listening Exercise, January 2023.