

Church Cohabitation

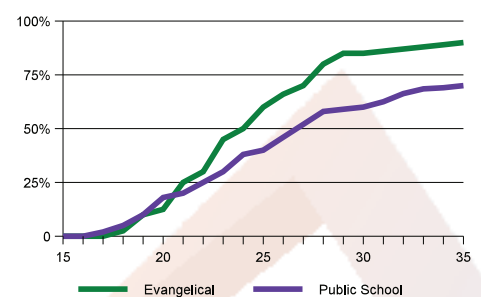
Cohabitation among the general population has increased hugely over the past 20 years, and is highest as a percentage among those in their 20s, put at 22% for this age-group for 2011 by the Office for National Statistics. The percentage of those in their 20s going to church is the smallest percentage of any decadal group in the population, just 3% in 2013.

Perhaps these two percentages are linked. Are some of those in their 20s put off church because most churches do not look approvingly on cohabitation? Nevertheless, some churchgoers do cohabit, although the percentage is difficult to quantify. A detailed survey of all the Anglican churches in three Deaneries in Kent in 2001 found 2% cohabiting (based on personal information from 2,700 active churchgoers across 39 churches). That percentage is likely to have increased since then as cohabitation has become more accepted and popular.

However, a detailed survey across 7 Evangelical churches and 1,100 people in 2012 found just 1% cohabiting, although this was an average across 3% of those under 40, 1% of those aged 40 to 59 and 0% of those older. This suggests fewer cohabiters in Evangelical churches. Does this suggest more positive Scriptural teaching on marriage in Evangelical churches or, perhaps, earlier marriage in lieu of cohabiting?

This latter has now been measured in a sample of 1,500 Americans who were asked among many questions on their education, when they had married and whether they had attended an evangelical or public or Catholic school. The results for the first two categories are shown in the graph (the Catholics were somewhere between the two).

Percentage married by age and type of school attended, 2011



How typical these results are is not known, and Americans may well be different from Britons in their speed of marriage, but this evidence does suggest that Evangelicals tend to marry much more quickly than others, and therefore presumably cohabit less. This, of course, begs the question for Evangelicals of whether even though marrying at an earlier age, a shorter length of co-habitation took place beforehand.



SOURCES: Congregational Attitudes and Beliefs Survey, Diocese of Rochester, 2001; *Living the Christian Life*, Survey for Langham Partnership, Brierley Consultancy 2012; *How... Marital Status... has changed*, ONS, March 2014; article "Religious Schools... and the Timing of First Marriage" in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 56, No 2, June 2014.

The Gender of Churchgoers

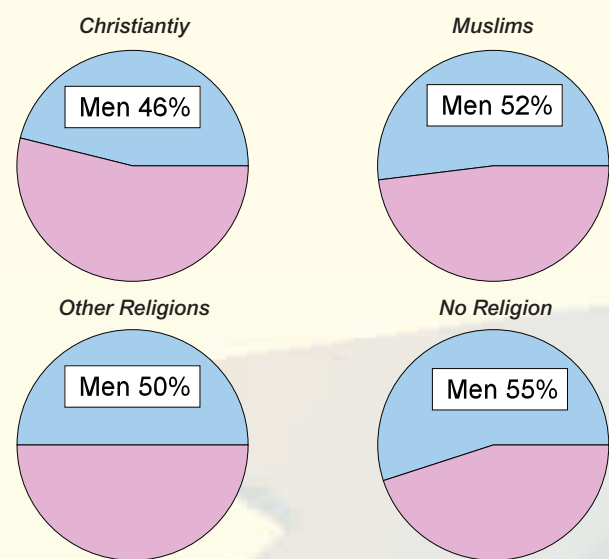
It is frequently said that women go to church more than men, and, statistically, that is true. In 2005, 57% of English churchgoers were women, in 2002 60% of Scottish churchgoers were. The percentage has increased slightly over the years – it was 55% in England in 1979, and 52% in Scotland in 1984.

This is an average across all denominations. In some denominations the sexes reach parity – New Churches (in England), for example, are 50-50; Pentecostals are similar 49-51 (male-female), as are Independent churchgoers (48-52). Some denominations are better than their "group". Baptists, for example, are 59% female, but Grace Baptists (about 4% of total Baptists) are only 54%. All these are in comparison with a national population proportion of 49% men, 51% women.

The same ratio was seen in the 2011 Population Census. In England, of those saying they were Christian, 54% were women, 46% men. Both Wales and Scotland had the same proportions, but in N Ireland it was 52% women, 48% men.

However, this is not true for all religions. As the chart shows, in Islam, Other Religions and those with No Religion, males are either in the majority or equal.

Percentage of men in each religious group, UK, 2011



In other studies, the same phenomenon occurs, if with different percentages. In the British Social Attitudes' Survey 58% of Christians are women, 50% of those in other religions, but only 43% of those with no religion. A small study of churches in Sheffield showed that men were more likely to attend church less than once a month (54% to 46% women), and that women were more likely to be small group leaders (53% women to 47% men).

Why are there more women in church? An unpublished small study in Scotland in the 1980s asking the question found that men, especially if they were Catholic, saw women in church as "representative of the family", and if the wife was in church praying there was no need for the husband to go too! Some say that church culture, tradition, worship is female. Others consider that women are better at building community, are more family-orientated, better at keeping to a rhythm or cycle of attendance. Each of these reasons have counter arguments.

Further suggestions put forward the view that husbands regard Sunday as their rightful "day off" for sport, entertainment, DIY etc. after a hard week's work, while wives are so used to full-time occupation (running a household, looking after children, holding a full-time job, etc) they don't really need a "day off" and can fit in church attendance with the rest of their activities, after the pattern of the ideal woman in Proverbs 31!

Proverbs 31 (New English Bible)	What does that mean?
V 16a: After careful thought she buys a field	She does a market assessment and invests
V 16b: and plants a vineyard out of her earnings	She makes a profit and reinvests
V 18: She sees that her business goes well	She keeps books and manages cash flow
V 24a: She weaves linen and sells it	She is involved in manufacturing and retail
V 24b: and supplies merchants with their sashes	She has set up a supply chain
V 15a: She rises while it is still night	She is the bread maker of the family
V15b: and sets meat before her maidens	She provides employment
V20: She is open-handed to the wretched and generous to the poor	She uses part of the profit for charitable work
V31: Extol her for the fruit of all her toil, and let her labour bring her honour in the city gate	Her work in business should be recognised and is certainly commendable

SOURCES: Religious Trends Nos 4 and 6; Office for National Statistics; UK Church Statistics No 2; Grace Baptist Church Census, Brierley Consultancy, 2014; *The Clue is in the Pew: A Sociological Analysis of Gender Differences...*, Jordan Betts, Dept of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield; *Business as Mission*, Mats Tuneberg, www.MatsTuneberg.com, Page 7.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RS (Religious Studies) is an increasingly popular subject, both for GCSE and A Level. In 2005 2.6% of students took GCSE exams in RS out of all the GCSEs taken that year. By 2009 that had risen to 3.3% and by 2014 it was 5.4%. That doubling is quite an impressive increase. It represents in 2014 more than 280,000 students – some 13 times the number of 16-year olds attending church! Absence from church is not because of disinterest in the broad subject of religion.

A Levels are likewise popular, going from 1.4% of all A Levels taken in 2005 to 2.5% in 2009 and 3.7% in 2014, almost a tripling of numbers in the 10 years. In 2014 the number represented 24,000 students, or 15% more than the number of 18-year olds attending church.

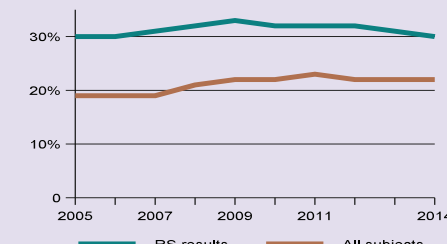
With both GCSE and A Level RS a greater percentage of girls take the exams than boys. 150,000 girls took RS as a GCSE subject in 2014 against 130,000 boys. With A Levels, however, the disparity is much greater, with more than twice the 7,400 RS A Levels taken by boys in 2014 being taken by girls – 16,800.

The grades obtained by students taking RS as a GCSE subject are generally high, and much higher than the average GCSE results as the graph shows. The comparison for A Levels is much closer. The A Level results in 2014 are slightly lower than in 2013 for both boys and girls.

RS is generally regarded by the Universities as a "middle-difficulty" subject, harder than English but about the same as Geography. Both Oxford and Cambridge include RS in the top-level of "generally suitable" Arts A Levels,

and the Russell Group of Universities generally value RS as a suitable preparation for University.

Percentage of students getting A/A* at GCSE, 2005-2014



Dr Peter Vardy, former vice-principal of Heythrop College, London sees the long-term outlook of numbers studying RS as declining because the English Baccalaureate excludes it. Independent, Catholic and Christian schools will probably still teach it, but with pressure to do well in league tables other schools may drop it.

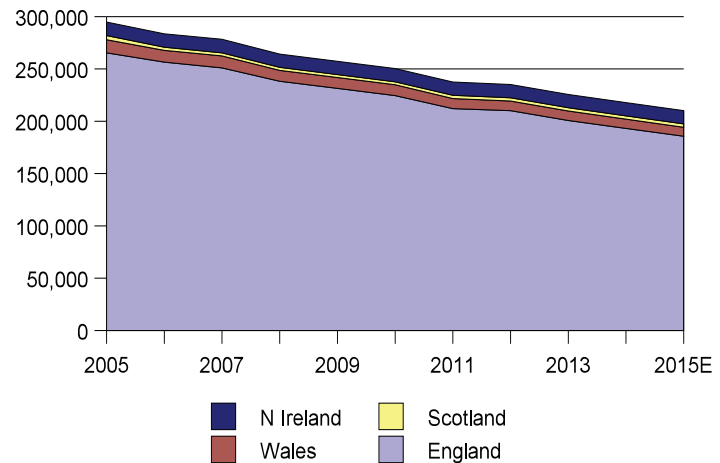
How best can the churches use this broad interest in religion (for RS is not just about Christianity) to help young people learn more about what it means to follow Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life?

SOURCES: Results from web-site www.bstubs.co.uk/gender/male-q.htm and those linked to it; articles in the CEN 29th August, 2014, Page 4 and *The Tablet*, 23rd August 2014, Page 27.

Methodists: Stemming the Tide?

The 2013 issue of *Statistics for Mission* has been published by the Methodist Church with a challenge – what can be done to change the direction of the graph of their church membership?

Membership of Methodist Churches, by country, UK, 2005 to 2015E



While the decline in membership over the last 10 years of the order of a third, and -15% over the last 5 years, is a cause for deep concern, this is but symptomatic of a much longer decline, not just for Methodism but of British church life generally. From a high of almost 30% of the adult population being church members in 1930, that is now 10% in 2013.

A decline of the magnitude shown in the above graph is not unique to Methodism. The membership of the United Reformed Church dropped -13% to 62,000 in the five years 2008 to 2013, the Church of Scotland's membership dropped -29% in the same period to 340,000 (twice the rate of Methodism), the Union of Welsh Independents dropped -23% to 23,000 members in 2013, and the Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland have seen a drop of -20% in the past 5 years. In every part of the UK, some denominations are declining as fast.

What are some of the reasons? Methodist membership is not known by age in detail, but the various English Church Censuses carried out between 1979 and 2005 have provided basic information. In 2005, 47% of those attending Methodist churches were 65 or over, of whom half were 75 or over. That's 9 years ago! Older people are "promoted to glory" in the words of the Salvation Army, and it is a fact that for every person who has joined the church generally in the last 10 years, 4 people have died. That is why the Population Census recorded a drop in the number ticking "Christian" from 72% in 2001 to 59% in 2011.

Some of the reasons are structural. Methodist ministers are frequently asked to move on after serving for five years, but church growth research has shown that the most likely period for growth occurs after a minister has been present for between 7 and 10 years.

Methodist ministers are frequently appointed to a Circuit, not a single church, yet the most recent Church of England research, *From Anecdote to Evidence*, has shown that growth is most likely when a minister is responsible for just a single church.

Part of the reason is theological. The 2005 Census showed that 51% of Methodists were Broad or Liberal (terms the ministers themselves chose), 24% Low Church, and 18% Evangelical. But across the country it is the Evangelicals which are growing (from 30% of all churchgoers in 1989 to 40% in 2005) while those who are Broad or Liberal have stayed at 19% in both years.

Can the situation be redeemed? Yes! Methodists have invested heavily in "Messy Church" and "Fresh Expressions", having nearly 900 such units in 2009. Church Army research has shown that nationwide (a) these are growing very rapidly, and (b) about two-fifths of those attending are new to the church. The average size is about 40 people so this represents a welcome influx of fresh faces, although not yet in sufficient numbers to offset those ageing and dying. Many of those attending these churches have young families and Messy Church has yet to see if such will continue to attend when these young people leave Junior and start Secondary School. If they do stay, there is great hope for the future even if "institutionalism" will have to be re-invented as Fresh Expressions is anything but institutional! Instead it stands for – Fun, Food, Families and Fellowship.

SOURCE: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/statistics-for-mission>.

HUMOUR

Poster in a public school in South Pasadena, California: "In the event of atomic attack, the rule prohibiting prayer in school will be temporarily suspended."

Thora Hird told this story on a BBC1 programme *Praise Be* about a little girl saying her prayers: "God bless Mummy, God bless Daddy, God bless my brother Tommy, God bless Granny – and God look after yourself, 'cos if anything happens to you, we've had it!"

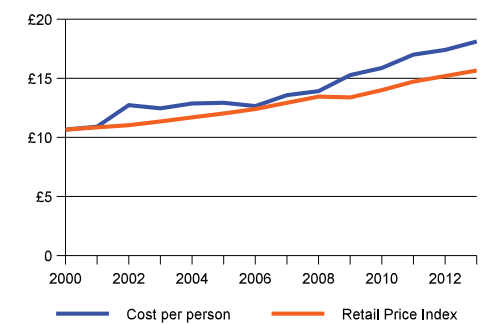
A very earnest member of the local church was praising the obvious spiritual gifts of the new vicar, adding, "We never knew anything about sin until he came."

SOURCE: *Humour, Clerical and General*, by John M Barnes, formerly of the Secretaries' and Administrators' Christian Fellowship.

SNOWFLAKES

Cost of the cinema. The graph shows how the average spend per person in the UK on going to the cinema has increased over the last few years, and how the price has always kept above the average annual rate of inflation.

Price per person for attending cinema, 2000-2013



SOURCES: Screen Digest, quoted in *Impact*, Issue 5, April 2014, Page 45; Office of National Statistics, Retail Price Index.

Redundant Churches. English Heritage maintains a "Buildings at Risk" register across buildings of all types, but roughly an eighth of these are churches. Many such are redundant Church of England churches, which spend 8 to 10 years on the register usually pending a decision on what should be done with them, but in that process many are re-used in totally different ways. About a fifth (21%) continue to be used for Christian worship, a further fifth (20%) are demolished and another fifth (19%) are turned into residential accommodation. Of the remainder, 11% are used for cultural or civic community purposes, 9% are used as offices or for shopping, 8% are retained as monuments, and the remaining 12% become used either as a private chapel, for light industry, sports, education or arts and crafts.

SOURCE: *The reuse of redundant and at risk churches and chapels in London: Principles, Process and Practice*, Sarah Eairney, Conservation Architect, MSc in Historic Conservation, Oxford Brookes University, Sept 2013, Page 18.

Big Data, such as all the products bought by Sainsbury's millions of customers over 5 years, can only be analysed through computers. A study by the CIA found that having more data did not necessarily improve the decision but increased the confidence placed in the answers.

SOURCE: *Article in Management Today*, May 2014.

iPads or Tablets are more likely to be owned by a man, aged between 20 and 39, working in an office. He will have had at least 4 years' experience of such devices and will access it at least 5 times a day on average, and will have at least 15 regular friends. These are the results of a survey looking at social networking.

SOURCE: *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol 56 Issue 3, 2014, Page 326.

Sunday Schools. 1916 Annual Report, National Sunday School Union: "The shortage of male teachers has been interpreted by women as a golden opportunity for the exercise of their gifts, and one hears of some Sunday Schools now entirely staffed by women; whilst in several others the women workers outnumber the men. No historian of the modern Sunday School can fail to record this fact and to pay a tribute of admiration to such noble and self-sacrificing labours".

[Ed: There were far fewer men because the First World War was being fought].

SOURCE: Courtesy Naomi Stanton in presentation on Twentieth Century Sunday Schools, 2012.

Multi-church Benefices. The recent Anglican research *From Anecdote to Evidence* shows that growth is more likely if clergy are responsible for just one church. The 2012 London Church Census found the same. However, in a third of the Church of England Dioceses two-fifths, 40%, of clergy have benefices of 3 or more churches, and in a further half of all Dioceses one-fifth, 20%, do so. The average number of churches per incumbent is 2.5. A forecast of the situation in 2021 was that 90% of clergy would be in multiparish benefices.

British children dropout. About 6.3% of children under 15 in 2010 were involved with church. That dropped to 4.1% for those aged 15 to 19 before falling to 3% for those in their 20s. So half the children in church are "lost" before they reach 20. This comes through a variety of reasons – boredom with Sunday School-type format, lack of relevance in what is taught, and with wrestling with questions of (a) science v Genesis (evolution v creation). If evolution is right, how can we trust the rest of the Bible? (b) the issue of sex/puberty/ sexting/ pornography etc.; (c) "love" – what does married commitment mean if half see their parents split before they take their GCSEs? (d) creation /environment care (very important for some); (e) life questions, like – why am I here? Why suffering? Why so much poverty? Where am I going? Is there life after death?

Children's commitment may also waver through "faith transmission" problems. If both parents work,

Biblical Cooking

If you can prepare this dish without looking up the references in the Bible, you should be on Mastermind! It is suggested the Authorised Version is used.

Ingredient

- 1 ½ lb of Judges 5:25 (end)
- 1 ½ lb of Jeremiah 6:20
- 1 tablespoon of 1 Samuel 14:25
- 3 of Jeremiah 17:11
- 1 ½ lb of 1 Samuel 30:12
- 1 ½ lb of Nahum 3:12 (chopped)
- 2 oz of Numbers 17:8 (blanched and chopped)
- 1 lb of 1 Kings 4:22
- 2 Chronicles 9:9
- 10 A pinch of Leviticus 2:13
- 1 teaspoonful of Amos 4:5*
- 12 tablespoons of Judges 4:19

Preparation

- 1 Mix 8, 9, 10 and 11, and put them aside
- 2 Beat 1, 2 and 3 to a cream
- 3 Still beating add 4, one at a time
- 4 Add 5, 6 and 7 and beat again
- 5 Then add the mixture of 8, 9, 10 and 11.
- 6 Then add 12
- 7 Bake in a low oven for 1½ hours

*Leaven may be taken as baking powder or as yeast, then prepare according to instructions on the package.

SOURCE: *Becket News*, No 57, January 2014, Bulletin of the Hamburg Anglican Church, via Dorothy Harbort.

when is the time for joint Bible reading? Family prayer? Just talking about God and Jesus? Grandparents are a key part of this mix also – and their faith and example are very important in a grandchild's life.

SOURCE: English Church Census data updated in UK Church Statistics No 2, 2010-2020, 2014.

AIDS/HIV. The good news is that the number of deaths worldwide from AIDS has reduced from 2.5 million in 2005 to 1.6 million in 2013. The annual number of new infections has also dropped, from 3 million in 2005 to 2.3 million in 2013. With 35 million people already infected, it's clear that this disease is not going to be eradicated soon. A study in Natal, South Africa, showed that 1% of boys under 15 had AIDS, which increased to 2% of those who were over 20. For girls, however, the percentages were much worse – from 3% to 25%.

SOURCE: Report in *The Economist*, 26th July, 2014, Page 67.

These may be helpful Books and reports received

The Future is Now, How God is Working in the 21st Century, by Dr Kent R Hunter, www.churchdoctor.org. It includes a good description of the various evangelism methods being used in America and the UK.

The J-Dog Journey, Where is Life?, by Dr Kent R Hunter, www.churchdoctor.org. Gives an excellent biographical description from a participant's viewpoint of the one year 2-day a week FORM discipleship programme of St Thomas' Church, Philadelphia, Sheffield. Very modern presentation, and very readable.

Archbishop, Michell Guinness, Hodder & Stoughton, 2014. A fascinating read of the first woman Archbishop, revealing the many intrigues that confront the holder of the office. Builds to an exciting climax, with a well-worked out story all along. Accurately reflects the Church of England.

Another Window on British Secularization: Public Attitudes to Church and Clergy since the 1960s, by Dr Clive Field, published on line June 2014 by Routledge, in *Contemporary British History*, Vol 28, No 2. Downloadable from: www.dx.doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2014.923765. A summary of dozens of studies, with very helpful analysis.

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they would welcome the opportunity "to join a small group of Christians who meet in homes and discuss faith and life together"; 15% said that they would like to attend a church congregation if a different style was available locally; 34% suggested that they would be open to attending church if it fitted with other commitments.

These findings are also the tip of an iceberg. The survey has provided a wealth of invaluable data and a more comprehensive report is available at: www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/mission-research.

If you would like to be kept informed about further developments or share your own reflections on what has been discovered, please contact Mission Development Worker, Steve Aisthorpe: saisthorpe@cofscotland.org.uk.

¹ www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/faith-journeys-beyond-congregations.

² Statistically we can be "95% confident" that the true proportion of all who fit our criteria is in the range 41.93% to 45.67% (that is, c.127,600 to 139,000).

³ The 10-item Hoge Intrinsic Religiosity Scale. See Hoge, D (1972) A Validated Intrinsic Religious Motion Scale in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol 11, p 369-376.

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