

Using Numbers

Chris Maynard, Transforming Information

There is sometimes a resistance to using numbers in mission and in Christian work in general, some quoting David's sin in taking a census among his people. But it is worth exploring other reasons for antipathy to the use of numbers in Christian ministry.

1) "We don't use numbers in mission." Bob Waymire says that using numbers in mission is relatively new and therefore suspect. Some even think that research is unspiritual. Bertil Ekström notices that European Christians often have a stronger suspicion of statistics than those on other continents. Is this the usual European scepticism? Or is it part of the "post-modern" mind-set?

2) "You use numbers because you don't have real experience." David X has learned from his relatives who are farmers. Sometimes "experts" come to them and use numbers to speak about farming, without real "dirt on the boots" experience. Remember, says David, that we need the numbers and insights we get from them, but we also need people who experience the daily grind of farming. And we need to connect the two together. Do the numbers actually make sense in the real world?

3) "We smell Bad Data." Bob, Bertil and David all know of people who have tested numbers and found that they are wrong. In the Lausanne Cape Town 2010 Congress, the morning session on unreached people groups was poor. Bertil thinks that, because of past experience of inaccuracies, some people now react badly every time someone shows them numbers.

4) "We disagree with your assumptions." David notes that numbers are associated with "managerial missiology" – a perceived attempt to impose a business form on the work of the Body of Christ. Many Christians resist assumptions that others consider obvious – such as looking for unreached people groups or taking a church planting approach to

evangelism. Mark Avery notes that people usually don't read your well-developed write up. So they don't listen to your assumptions, but they make their own assumptions about your assumptions.

5) "Your numbers may not tell the whole story." Tim Halls notes that using numbers can give a distorted picture of mission and a distorted picture of the people we are counting.

6) "Data is a threat to us!" Mark Avery comments that the person who comes with real information carries an authority. This is a threat to people who have never really tested what they think they know. They begin to get your message and they don't like it. They might have to change, and change is uncomfortable.



So we have a problem. If someone resists our numbers, it could be for any or all of the reasons above ... or some other reason! Such responses need to be understood, not just "brushed under the carpet" as ignorance, prejudice or traditionalism and each needs a different, always gracious, response. Convincing of the accuracy of the data, for example, is different from explaining the assumptions behind such data.

SOURCE: Based on article in the email magazine *Correct Me If I'm Wrong* available at www.globalcmin.org or by emailing cmiw@worksmail.net.



Book Review

Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox
Grace Davie
Wiley Blackwell, Oxford, 2015
264 pages, ISBN 978-1-4051-3596-2, £21.99

This is the second, and much updated, edition of the book first published over 20 years ago, *Religion in Britain Since 1945*: Believing without Belonging. Professor Emeritus Grace Davie, formerly head of the Department of Sociology of Religion at Exeter University, has many key books to her name. This book is as relevant as the first book by this title, and gives a clear, lucid account of religious changes over the recent decades. It is a masterly review of the contemporary situation – Britain's ongoing Christian heritage and the changes recently seen. The majority of the text has been rewritten, but it retains its same sharp sociological perspective.

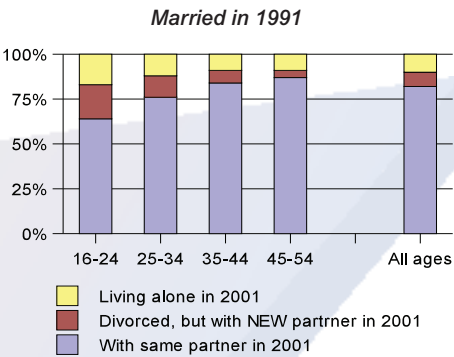
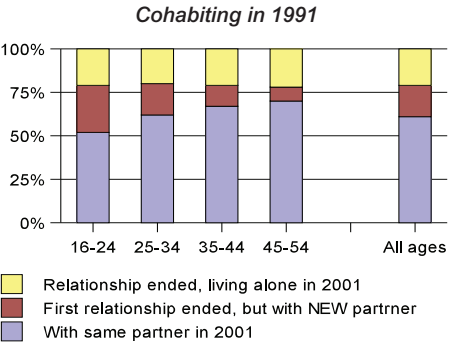
While Britain is noticeably more secular than 20 years ago, religion is more present in public debate. The current edition includes discussion on rural decline, new arrivals, the growth in London, and a multiplicity of references to other pieces of research – there are over 330 references to other work. A very varied picture is painted, and the book discusses the fluctuating fortunes of the Church of England as well as the other religions now in Britain. This book describes and explains the religious situation of 21st century Britain and is essential reading for all involved in the current Christian scene.

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COHABITEES

While the number of people cohabiting was ascertained and published through the 1991 Population Census, the long-term stability of such partnerships has not been fully documented. Extra data supplied through a longitudinal dataset enabled their marital status 10 years later to be identified, based on a large sample of over 300,000 individuals. The differing status of those who were either cohabiting or married in 1991 with their situation in 2001 is shown by age-group in the charts.



These indicate that about a fifth, 21%, of those who were cohabiting in 1991 subsequently ended that relationship (or a subsequent one) and were living alone in 2001, a percentage which was about the same whatever their age (between 16 and 54), whereas the proportion of those married in 1991 and living alone in 2001 decreased with age.

The diagrams are slightly misleading in that the cohabiting chart represents only about a quarter of the population for those aged 16 to 24 (26%), two-fifths (42%) of those aged 25 to 34, a quarter (26%) of those aged 35 to 44 but only 6% of those over 45. The marriage chart on the other hand represents an increasing proportion of the population, rising from 4% of those aged 16-24 to virtually half for those aged 45 to 54.

Nor does the cohabiting chart show the proportions of cohabitees who change their relationship from cohabiting to married. Almost two-thirds (64%) of those cohabiting got married in this 10-year period, and of those whose relationship ended and they subsequently formed a new one, half of these got married.

What causes a breakdown in the cohabitation? A number of factors, measured in the 2001 Census, were examined. Adults were less likely to remain with the same partner in 1991 if they were younger, cohabiting instead of being married, had no dependent children, had a limiting long-term illness, had previous experience of partnership dissolution, had no higher qualification, had a lower social class or were unemployed.

SOURCE: Article in *Population Trends* No 139, Spring 2010, Pages 43-51.

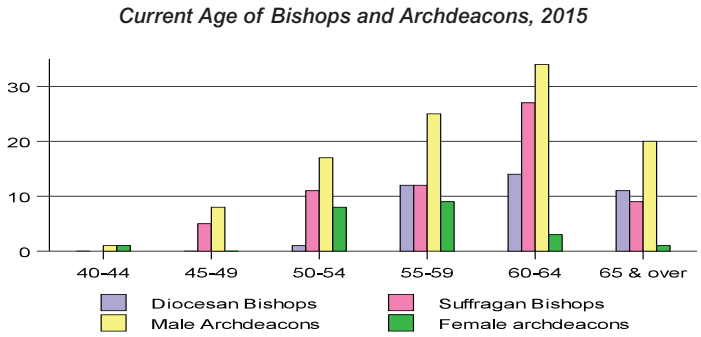
Bishops and Archdeacons

At the start of 2015, the Church of England was led by 114 Bishops and 132 Archdeacons, an increase of 9 posts over 2012, since in the interim some new Suffragan Bishop and Archidiaconal posts had been created. The number of Diocesan Bishops was reduced by 2 when 3 Dioceses (Ripon and Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield) merged into one (West Yorkshire and the Dales) in 2014.

Not all the posts were filled – at the time of writing, 4 Archdeacons and 12 Bishops were to be appointed, three Diocesan and 9 Suffragan. However, over the next 10 years some 58 Archdeacons and 60 Bishops are due to retire, the numbers currently over 60 years of age. The numbers include Archdeacons serving in the Armed Forces and the Diocese of Europe.

One Archdeacon in 6, 18%, was female at the beginning of 2015, a smaller percentage than the proportion of female Anglican clergy, which was then 24%. The first woman Bishop, Rt Rev Libby Lane, was consecrated as Suffragan Bishop of Stockport in January 2015.

Almost half, 46%, of the current serving Bishops have been appointed in the last 5 years, but a quarter, 24%, have served for over 10 years. The longest serving Diocesan Bishops are the Rt Hon and Rt Rev Richard Chartres, who has been the Bishop of London since 1995, followed by the Rt Rev Dr Peter Foster, who has been the Bishop of Chester since 1996. The average current time in post is 6.1 years for Suffragan Bishops (it was 7 years in 2009) and 6.6 years for Diocesan Bishops (it was 13 years in 2009), the overall average being 6.3 years of experience as a Bishop. Male Archdeacons have served for an average of 6.9 years, female Archdeacons for 4.4 years, both about the same as in 2009, averaging 6.5 years for an Archdeacon.



WHY VOTE?

The General Election on Thursday, 7th May 2015 even creeps its way into *FutureFirst*! As election fever leaves many unmoved, why, in fact, do people vote? Research by what is now called the National Centre about 30 years ago showed that people voted for one of the following four reasons:

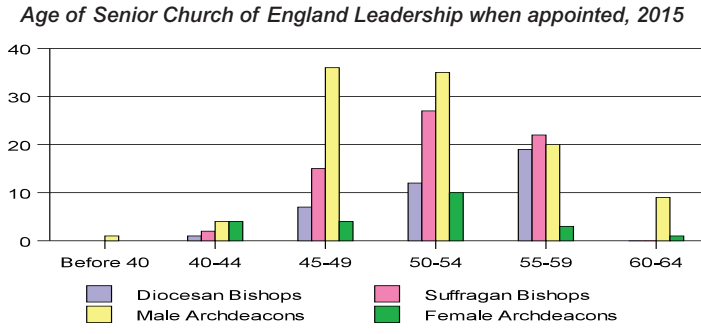
- 1) They wanted a certain person **to be Prime Minister**, and would vote for whichever party he/she represented. Central leadership and national interest was all important to them.
- 2) They wanted to vote for **their local MP** whoever he or she was and whatever party they stood for. Maybe they had met that person, or been impressed when they heard the MP speak, or perhaps they supported him or her out of loyalty because they had been MP for their area for some while. Perhaps they had written to their MP and received a helpful reply, or they simply wanted a person in Parliament who understood the complexities of their neighbourhood. It was the value of local representation that they felt was important.
- 3) They would vote for the party which they felt best reflected **their values** or whose **policies** they most favoured. This was less about a person and much more for what a particular party stood for. Principles and electioneering promises are important for these voters.

4) **Historically**, for family or loyalty reasons, they have always voted for a certain party, and will simply continue to do so. It's the custom for those living in their area, or belonging to their "tribe" (however defined) to vote for such-and-such a party, and they aim to do so this time also. This principle is followed very much in other countries – those voting in Presidential elections in Kenya, for example, invariably do so along tribal lines, so the biggest tribe always secures the leader.

Conversely, why do people *not* vote? Recent research suggests reasons are boredom with the whole political scene, "can't be bothered", disillusionment (MP expense scandals, failure to keep election promises), "my vote won't make any difference", inability to agree with party policies, disenchantment with the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader, as well as physical difficulties (eg being housebound).

The first chart shows the current age of Bishops and Archdeacons, Archdeacons tending to be younger than Bishops. The reason why so many Bishops and Archdeacons have under 10 years of experience is because they were appointed when older rather than younger, as the second chart shows. Appointments to senior leadership take in many factors, but one of them is length of existing prior experience.

Those who have come into the church after a period in teaching or industry or other work experience are usually expected to have two or three years training followed by at least one curacy of three years, and naturally are often in their forties before first becoming a vicar. Archdeacons must have been vicars for at least 6 years before they can be considered. But in 2012, 55% of those recommended for ordination training were 40 or over. In 2012, 13% of serving clergy were under 40, and a further 25% were in their 40s, so the "promotion pool" if confined to those under 50 is relatively small.



The current average age of a Diocesan Bishop is 62, of a Suffragan Bishop 59, and of a male Archdeacon 59, and a female 56. The average age of appointment of the present Diocesan Bishops was 55, a Suffragan when 53, and an Archdeacon, male or female, when 52. Two-thirds (67%) of Archdeacons are appointed between the ages of 45 and 54; two-thirds (69%) of Bishops between 50 and 59. No appointments were made when a person was over 64.

The longest serving Archdeacon, for 18 years, is Ven Trevor Jones, Archdeacon of Hertford, followed by two of 16 years each, Ven John Reed, Archdeacon of Taunton, and Ven Richard Seed, Archdeacon of York.

The right leadership is crucial for the well-being and future of the church. Please do pray for those serving as senior leaders and for the appointment of future leaders of God's choice, not only in the Church of England but across all Christian denominations.

SOURCES: Figures published by the Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops' Council.

These may be helpful Books and reports received

The Marriage Files, by Patricia Morgan, Wilberforce Press, 2014. Sub-titled "The Purpose, Limits and Fate of Marriage" this is a brilliantly argued book looking at the consequences of the same-sex marriage legislation on married life in both Britain and the Western World. ISBN 978-0-9575725-3-9.

Atonement, God's Means of Effecting Man's Reconciliation, 2015, a further volume by Dr Chris Woodall, Wipf & Stock, through orders@wipfandstock.com; ISBN 978-1-4982-0795-9.

Is the Bible Becoming a Closed Book?, British Opinion Poll Evidence by Dr Clive Field, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol 29 No 3, 2014, available on line <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2014.945735>.

Humour

The most effective way to remember your wife's birthday is to forget it once ... (Nash)

I had some words with my wife, and she had some paragraphs with me. (Sigmund Freud)

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

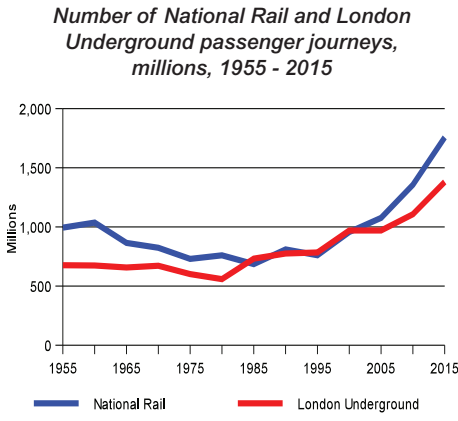
SOURCE: Various

SNOWFLAKES

Happiness. In a worldwide survey of 64,000 people (1,000 in each of 64 countries), Gallup found 70% of the people in the world "Happy" compared with 60% in 2013. Africans were happiest at 83%, compared with 49% in the UK. Africans were also optimistic – 75% thought 2015 would be better than 2014, against 33% in the UK. Also half, 51%, of UK citizens said they would NOT be willing to fight for their country.

SOURCE: Article in *Church Times*, 9th January, 2015, Page 9.

Railway Lines. Church of England clergy have generally had a reputation as being both railway and cricket enthusiasts, neither of which has ever been unambiguously demonstrated, as far as is known. But the use of national rail routes open to the public over the last 60 years in Great Britain may be of interest, not only to clergy!



The impact of the Beeching cuts on rail travel in the 1960s is readily seen, as well as the increase in passenger journeys since the turn of the century. The London Underground was carrying as many passengers as the entire rail network between 1985 and 2000, though, while its numbers are still increasing, they are not going up as fast as on National Rail. With the prospects of more disused rail network lines being re-opened, the current difference may well escalate.

SOURCE: *Rail Statistics*, Department for Transport Statistics, Table RA10101, December 2014.

Well-being. In a subjective measure of well-being, boys aged 10-13 scored higher than girls of the same age. They were more likely to say they were happy (8.8 to 8.5) and be full of energy (8.8 to 8.4), scores being out of 10. Appearance was twice as important for girls than boys (18% to 9%). Those who never had access to the internet or who never played sport were more likely to have lower happiness and lower life satisfaction.

SOURCE: *Good Childhood Report*, 2014, The Children's Society, Pages 5, 7 and 8.

Internet Games. Whether it is Sniper Game, judged the most addictive game in 2013, or one of the hundreds of others available on the web, there has always been a chronic shortage of games reflecting Christian values, ideas of right and wrong, and behaviour which is morally acceptable for Christians. After many years of work, Scripture Union has now produced a Christian game for 8 to 11 year olds called *Guardians of Ancora*, which is a world-class game of a virtual world in which the challenge is to find lost Bible stories. The aim is to reach 80,000 youngsters in the UK in 2015 and 18 million worldwide by 2020. Let us pray they manage to reach, or exceed, these targets, and for the impact such a game could have.

SOURCE: *Guardians of Ancora*, Scripture Union leaflet, 2015, info@scriptureunion.org.uk.

Middle-class Christians. A YouGov survey recently found that 62% of churchgoers are middle-class. Unfortunately the phrase "middle-class" is notoriously difficult to define, so different people have different perceptions about it. The web "answers" feature, however, says 71% of the British population are middle-class, meaning that the church has an above average number of *working* class people attending, though in Christ such secular definitions should lose any supposed significance.

SOURCE: *Christianity*, March 2015, Page 13.

Women's words. A study by four American women attending the same Episcopal church has listed all the words spoken by women in the Bible. Some 93 women say something, and 49 of them are named. The Shulamite woman in the Song of Solomon says most (1,400 out of a total of 14,000 words), followed by Esther with 1,200. Mary, Jesus' mother, has only 200 words recorded.

SOURCE: *StarTribune Lifestyle*, web accessed 24th February 2015.

Religious words. A totally different study by Dr Will Bissett asked people how far various phrases described present-day Christianity, and broke the answers down by whether they attended church regularly, occasionally or not at all. His findings were:

Phrase	Regular %	Occasional %	Never %
Judgmental	49	70	85
Old-fashioned	38	66	74
Hypocritical	41	50	74
Good values and principles	98	89	74
Anti-homosexual	53	61	74
Out of touch with reality	28	51	73
Friendly	88	71	64
A faith you respect	90	86	41
Consistently shows love for others	84	61	31
Transforming lives	89	69	29
Relevant to your life	96	53	9

The survey was conducted on the web, and had a relatively small UK sample, 228, of respondents, but had support from the Willow Creek Church in Chicago. However, it is salutary to note how non-churchgoers view those who embrace Christianity to ponder how far such assessments are prejudiced or accurate.

SOURCE: *What do People think of Christianity?*, Dr Will Bissett, Lead Learn, Willow Creek website, accessed 24th February 2015, www.willowcreekevents.org.uk

Motherhood. The average age of a UK woman giving birth to her first child was 26 in 1975, and 30 in 2013. Women born in 1958 (so 57 this year) first became mothers when they were 32 if a graduate and 22 if a non-graduate. Similar trends are likely in the church, meaning more older mothers today.

SOURCE: *Management Today*, March 2015, Page 30 quoting figures from the Office for National Statistics.

Family Life. A study of 150,000 teenagers across 44 countries found that two-thirds (68%) of them had married parents, but a quarter (26%) were expecting them to divorce. Only half (56%) said they felt loved in their home, a percentage which echoes British research among school-children.

SOURCE: Results of global research from the Metadine Research Group, the research arm of One Hope who focus on communicating the Word of God to the world's youth. See <https://onehope.net/research/>

Continued from page 1

than younger people, and religious attenders are generally older than non-religious attenders. The ISSP data showed that reporting of fair or poor health by attendance at religious services was only significant for those under 40, but this might simply reflect the fact of very few regular attendees under 40!

In Australia younger people with chronic health problems were significantly more likely to attend religious services monthly or more often than young people without such problems. Indeed, 29% of all young people who attended a church frequently reported that they had chronic illnesses or disabilities, and it seems that many of these have turned to the churches for support. This has not happened in the UK.

Conclusion

The results from this analysis suggest that attendance at religious services has little impact on health. However, we know that there are significant differences between those people who

Christians viewing pornography. Very little firm information on this is available, but a small sample undertaken by *Christianity* magazine showed that:

• 30% of Christian leaders accessed porn more than once a month

• 42% of Christian men said they were "addicted" to porn

• 75% of Christian men view pornography at least sometimes

• 90% feel the church does not really help those who struggle with pornography

These percentages are not very different from secular surveys of pornography use showing that in this respect Christian behaviour is not very different from non-Christian.

SOURCE: *Christianity*, February 2015, Page 23.

Those who would like a full version of this paper can receive a free copy by emailing peter@brierleyres.com

REFLECTION

The martyrdom of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christian young men in Libya on February 15th 2015 shocked the world. The Bible Society of Egypt subsequently sent out a Newsletter which included a very poignant poem, *Two Rows by the Sea*, which is reproduced below.

Two rows of men walked the shore of the sea,
On a day when the world's tears would run free,
One a row of assassins, who thought they did right,
The other of innocents, true sons of the light,
One holding knives in hands held high.
The other with hands empty, defenceless and tied,
One row of slits to conceal glaring-dead eyes,
The other with living eyes raised to the skies,
One row stood steady, pall-bearers of death,
The other knelt ready, welcoming heaven's breath,
One row spewed wretched, contemptible threats,
The other spread God-given peace and rest.

A Question ...
Who fears the other?

The row in orange, watching paradise open?
Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?

SOURCE: Newsletter, Bible Society of Egypt, 19th February, 2015, Ramez Attallah, General Director.

GLOBAL LONDON

In 2011, only four-fifths, 78%, of Londoners cited “English” as their main language. In total over 300 languages are spoken in the capital, more than any other city in the world. 1.7 million people living in London indicated on their Census form that they originally came from another country even though they were now British citizens. In the Table, Column A lists the 12 countries with the largest numbers. At the same time a number of people indicated they held foreign passports and were temporarily living in London. Column B gives the 12 countries with the largest number of such people.

A: British people born abroad			B: Foreign passport holders		
1	India	139,300	Poland		156,500
2	Bangladesh	78,000	Ireland		141,000
3	Pakistan	67,000	India		123,000
4	Jamaica	62,700	France		85,900
5	Kenya	57,600	Italy		77,100
6	Nigeria	53,000	Nigeria		61,900
7	Somalia	50,900	Portugal		58,900
8	Japan	49,500	Germany		53,400
9	Sri Lanka	49,500	United States		48,000
10	Turkey	43,000	Pakistan		44,500
11	Ghana	33,800	Lithuania		44,000
12	South Africa	30,300	Spain		43,300

It is no wonder that so many different languages are used in London's churches (14% of services are held in languages other than English), nor that so many churches cater for specific nationalities (more than 50 when counted in 2012, with many known to have been missed), nor, as the rumour says, you can walk down Whitehall in the summer and not hear English spoken! We have a wonderful opportunity to reach an enormously wide variety of people.

Why do people choose to live in London? A survey was undertaken of those living in flats in Whitechapel, a particularly mixed ethnic part of London. West Europeans, the British and East Asians said “price” was the dominant factor, Africans and South Asians said, “neighbours”, while those from Eastern Europe said the “institutions” – the schools or mosques and churches.

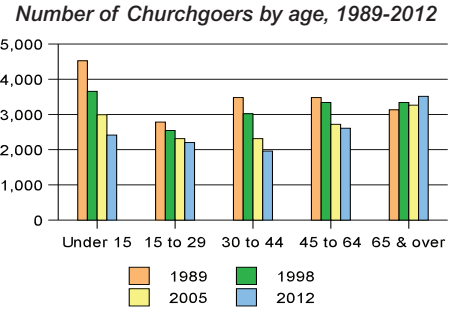
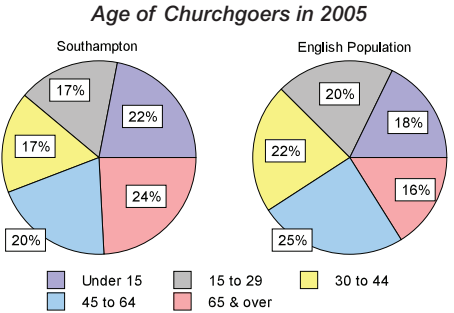
SOURCE: London The Information Capital, James Cheshire and Oliver Uberti, Penguin Books, 2014, Pages 98, 99, 103 and 104.

Southampton

It is not always recognised just how many church statistics are available for towns and cities in Britain. Take the city of Southampton, for example. It is a Unitary Authority and in 2005 had 116 churches. In that year it had 13,600 people attending them on a usual Sunday, an average of 120 each, half as many again as the country average of 80. Those 116 churches were about 10% of Hampshire's 1,138 churches in 2005, a number slowly increasing by a net gain of 4 churches per year.

The number of those actually attending church in Southampton is declining, however. There were 17,400 attending in 1989, the first year for which such figures are available, dropping to 15,900 by 1998 and to an estimated 12,700 by 2012, an average decline of 1.4% per annum, the same as across England as a whole. In terms of the city's population in church, in 1989 it was 8.7% and in 2012 5.4%, not greatly different from the 8.8% and 5.7% respectively for England. Other parts of Hampshire near to Southampton, such as the New Forest or Winchester, had higher proportions of their population attending.

The pie chart shows the age of churchgoers in Southampton in 2005, and the bar chart shows how these numbers have changed since 1989.



The second chart shows that the decline in numbers has hit all age-groups except the oldest whose numbers have increased slightly, something common to many English cities. The pie-chart shows that those aged 15 to 44, 34%, are a smaller proportion than in the population, something also very common in many cities, and usually far more pronounced. There are fewer people aged 45 to 64 in Southampton churches compared with the population, which is somewhat unusual, but the fact that a much higher proportion are 65 and over is not. The average age of churchgoers in Southampton is 41, slightly younger than the English average of 45.

The churchmanship of churchgoers in Southampton is not available, but in 2005 almost half, 49%, of Hampshire's churchgoers were Evangelical, much higher than the 40% across England as a whole. Some of this county evangelicalism is certainly reflected in Southampton which has two or three large evangelical churches. A fifth, 19%, of the county's churchgoers are Broad/Liberal and a quarter, 26%, are Catholic.

This kind of information is available across all cities in England, in relation to the Local or Unitary Authority within which they are placed, and with total church and attendance figures available by denomination as well.

SOURCES: UK Church Statistics No 2 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, and Religious Trends No 6, 2006/2007, Christian Research, Eitham, London, 2006.

THE WORLD WILL GET MORE CHRISTIAN!

At least, that what's the World Christian Database (WCD) at Gordon-Conwell University in the States says! It reckons 33.4% of the world is Christian (defined as those professing an adherence to the faith) in 2015, which will rise to 33.7% in 10 years time, by 2025. It forecasts this will increase to 36.0% by 2050. So where and why will such an increase occur?

The WCD puts the number of Christians in the world in 2015 as 2,400 million people, a huge number which since 2000 has increased at an average annual rate of +1.3%. The religion increasing fastest, however, is Islam at +1.9% per annum, next fastest are the Sikhs at +1.4%, and the Hindus at +1.3%, these three religions being, respectively, 26.2%, 0.4%, and 15.2% of the world's population in 2015, compared to 33.4% adhering to Christianity. The three largest religions (Christianity, Islam and Hinduism) accounted for three-quarters, 75%, of the world's population in 2015. By 2025 that percentage will reach 80% and by 2050, 84%.

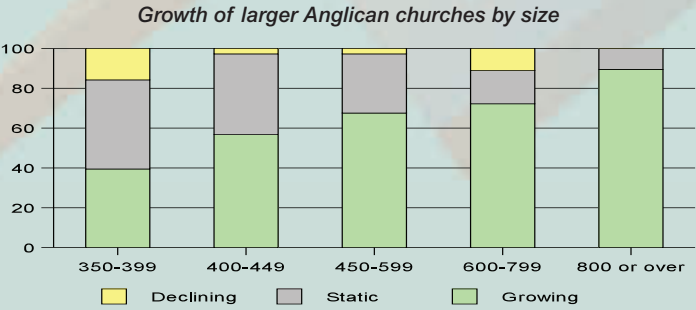
The Table shows the number of Christians in each continental block (the top three lines being the so-called developing areas of the world and the bottom three the developed areas), and the columns between the four dated columns the annual percentage rate of change between each period. It is based on the number of church members and assumes that the non-church members are distributed geographically in the same proportions.

Between 2000 and 2015, and between 2015 and 2020, the change is very much led by Asians and Africans (annual percentage changes over 2%, whereas the other continents are about 1% or less). This is where the growth engine of Christianity is located. Between 2025 and 2050 the WCD predicts it will be mainly the Africans who are responsible for the growth of the faith. The bottom line of the Table shows what the numbers would be of Africa was discounted – Christianity in the rest of the world would continue to grow, but only just. In 2050 African Christians are forecast to be over a third, 35%, of the whole.

Larger Anglican Churches

In 2015 there were 15,800 Church of England churches (in England). Just over 1% of these, 177, were churches with an estimated usual Sunday attendance of at least 350 people, across all services, adults and children. However, that 1% of churches had a total attendance of 13% of all Anglican attenders.

That percentage of attenders these larger churches are attracting is growing. This is similar to larger Baptist churches and larger churches in general. For the Anglicans the percentage has doubled since 1989 when it was 7%, and has increased from the 10% recorded in 2005, and is projected to be 17% by 2025 if present trends continue. That will then be one-sixth of every one going to an Anglican church! And the larger the church, the more likely it is to be growing, as the chart shows.



The question will be asked, “Why are so many of these larger churches so successful?” Though over the past 10 years a third have remained static, and a few (8%, or 13 in total) have declined at least 10%, that still leaves three-fifths, 62%, which have grown, a similar percentage to 64% of churches generally which have “a clear vision” as reported in *From Anecdote to Evidence*, the report of a large Anglican project in 2013. Most of these larger churches have visionary leadership.

Leadership is key, and many of the existing larger church leaders have been in post for many years, so have much experience of leadership in this context. A third, 34%, are 60 or over, so a number of retirements can be expected in the coming months. Two are 40 years old, and a further fifth, 20%, are in their 40s; almost half then, 46%, therefore are in their fifties.

On average they have been in post for 12 years, about double the average for Anglican clergy generally, and 12% have been in post for over 20 years, the longest being the Revd Jonathan Couper, Vicar of Christ Church, Bridlington, for 34 years. This longevity gives stability, as well as experience and the wisdom which comes with that. Most of these churches know what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what they plan to achieve in the next few years. Such characteristics are very attractive.

Number of Christians by continent and rate of annual change 2015-2050

Continent	2000 millions	C %	2015 millions	C %	2025 millions	C %	2050 millions
Africa	378	2.8	568	2.6	736	2.2	1,254
Asia	285	2.2	394	2.1	486	1.0	622
Latin America	507	1.2	602	0.9	656	0.4	730
Europe	576	0.1	587	-0.3	570	-0.4	520
North America	221	0.6	242	0.4	251	0.4	276
Oceania	22	1.1	26	0.7	28	0.9	35
WORLD Christians	1,989	1.3	2,419	1.2	2,727	0.9	3,437
World less Africa	1,611	0.9	1,851	0.7	1,991	0.4	2,183
World Population	6,128	1.1	7,325	1.0	8,083	0.7	9,551

C = Change per annum

Of the various denominations the Orthodox grows least quickly, followed by the Catholics, who, nevertheless, will still be almost half of the world's Christians in 2050, 47%, a slight drop from the 50% they are in 2015. Protestants (including Anglicans) grow at 1.6% per annum between 2015 and 2025, then at 1.4% to 2050, and the Independents respectively at 2.1% then 1.2%. The Independent movement is predicted to continue to grow most strongly in Asia followed by Africa, at roughly double the rate in the developed countries. This Independent growth is significant because, while 15% of the world's total of Christians in 2000, it is predicted to become 20% by 2050. Within Europe they move from 3% of the total to 6% in the same period. In Asia, on the other hand, they move from a third, 32%, to almost half, 46%.

Christianity as a whole is growing more quickly than the world population, which is why the percentage which is Christian increases, but at the same time the rate of growth is slowing down (as also is the general world population).

They are also heavily engaged in their local community with an enormous variety of opportunities for service, often in very creative and imaginative ways. One larger church in the south reckons on holding over 25 carol services each year in various parts of its town, in various public places and with different organisations, businesses and so on, as a form of witness.

Such activity requires a considerable number of volunteers, but the average congregations of these larger churches have many people in their 30s and 40s (drawn partly because of the quality of the children and youth programmes these churches run), and many are keen to help. That requires good communications and effective administration with up-to-date equipment. As well as ordained staff they have other full-time staff in ministry positions (as well as admin staff), on average about 1 such person for every 100 in their congregation.

Are these larger churches the ideal then? Not necessarily. They would be the first to admit the constant tensions of a 24/7 ministry, the vital need to make every Sunday special, and the sheer burden of being responsible for so much. Among other pressures, such as preaching about 50% of the time, maintaining their own spirituality is a heightened priority for the leaders of larger, and indeed all, churches.

Larger churches grow especially by transfer growth, and less through conversions (though there are exceptions). One large evangelical Anglican church in the north hasn't seen a conversion in the last 5 years. Another evangelical church of 800 only had 5 people who had been Christians for less than 3 years. Only one senior minister in 6 has seen his church grow significantly under his tenure. Of the 177 ministers of larger churches, only 3 are female, against 24% in the church generally.

Two-fifths, 42%, of these churches hold two services every Sunday morning (one often being an early Communion Service), a further two-fifths, 42%, 3 morning services, and the remaining 16% 4 or more every Sunday morning, as well as afternoon services (by a quarter, 27%), and all with one evening service and 12% with two or more.

Five-sixths, 82%, of these churches are evangelical, twice the general proportion of Anglican churches in England, 15% are Broad/Liberal and 6% are Catholic or Liberal Catholic. Oxford Diocese (a large Diocese) has the most of these larger churches with 17, followed by the Diocese of London with 14, the Diocese of Winchester with 11 and the Dioceses of Chichester, Guildford and Southwark with 10 each.

What does all this say? The importance of vision and forward planning which is attractive, good teaching (which is a key attraction also), much local involvement which is reasonably well organised, quality programmes for young people, and for the most rapidly growing churches, a clear emphasis on evangelism.

SOURCES: The Significance of Large Churches, Research Report, Brierley Consultancy, 2009 and updated trend analysis 2015; From Anecdote to Evidence, Church Commissioners' Church of England Research, 2014.



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) The phrase “Be not afraid” occurs 366 times in the Bible – a reminder for every day of the year, plus one for a leap year.

2) A quarter (23%) of men in full-time employment work overtime, while 12% of men are in part-time employment. 15% of women work overtime in part- or full-time employment.

3) Of the 1 billion Hindus in the world in 2015, one in every 1,200 is living in Britain (800,000 in total). Of these 70% are of Gujarati origin and 15% from the Punjab.

4) The number of children adopted in England has increased from 3,200 in 2010 to 5,000 in 2014. The greatest increase was in the age-group 1 to 4 (68% of all in 2010 but 76% in 2014).

5) Evangelicals are younger on average than other churchgoers. In 2005, their average age was 41 against 45 generally, and in 2012 43 against 47. However, they are older than the general population (39 in 2012).

6) Of Australian churchgoers aged 15 to 19 in 2001, 16% had come via Sunday School and 42% through a Youth Group. Of those aged 80 or over that year, 39% had come via Sunday School, and 13% via a Youth Group.

7) 72% of Anglican clergy ordained in the 1960s believed in God, but 90% of those ordained since 2011 do so, according to a YouGov survey.

SOURCES: 1) Nicky Gumbel blog, quoted in the Church of England Newspaper, 9th January, 2015, Page 6; 2) Professional Manager, Winter 2015, Page 31; 3) Go, magazine of Interserve, Oct-Dec 2014, Page 13; 4) Government report SPR 36, 2014, Chart 8; 5) Religious Trends No 6, Christian Research, Eitham for 2005, extrapolated for 2012; 6) Pointers, Christian Research Association, Australia, Vol 24 No 4, Dec 2014, Page 12; 7) Survey reported in Third Way, Dec/Jan 2014/5, Page 5.

DOES FAITH GIVE YOU BETTER HEALTH?

Rev Dr Philip Hughes, Director, Christian Research Association, Australia

In his recent book *America's Blessings*, Rodney Stark, an American sociologist of religion, argued that church attenders have an average expectation of 8 years of life longer when they are 20 than do non-churchgoers. Part of that is due to the “clean living” of religious people, but he also maintains religion contributes to lower blood pressure, and that churchgoers are less likely to have strokes. These positive relationships are due to the fact that religion allays anxiety and tensions, loneliness and depression, while providing social support. The International Social Survey Program (ISSP) public health survey allows an examination of the relationship between religious faith and health among people in other countries including the UK.

Factors in Public Health

Health is not easy to define. In 1946 the World Health Organisation defined it as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity,” thus including mental and social dimensions, and not confining it to physical ability or the functioning of the human body.

Health is influenced by many factors including genetic make-up and our social behaviour; it is influenced by viruses and bacteria, and sometimes by accidents. In the UK, the major positive influence is a high daily intake of fruit and vegetables, and the main negative factors are tobacco use, physical inactivity and the harmful use of alcohol.

Generally, our health is influenced by our involvement in society, our knowledge and beliefs, our education, employment, income and wealth, housing, family and neighbourhood. Our psychological state can also have an impact on our physical health – stress, trauma and depression can all contribute to physical ailments.

How might religion play a role in health? (1) It can motivate people to behave in ways which minimise risks to health – eating healthily, taking regular exercise, and avoiding smoking and drinking alcohol immoderately. (2) Religion generally contributes to a sense of hope and purpose. It provides comfort in the face of disappointment and tragedy. Most religions teach that help is available from God through prayer,

Factors Influencing Health by Frequency of Attendance at Religious Services among British Adults

Factor influencing Health	A %	O %	N %
Have never smoked	66	43	42
Never drink alcohol	64	41	37
Undertake physical activity several times a week	41	44	47
Eat fresh fruit and vegetables daily	66	69	56
A = Attend monthly or more O = Occasionally Attend N = Never attend			
SOURCE: ISSP 2011.			

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meditation or other practices. (3) Religious communities reinforce a sense of belonging; the belief that each individual has a place and is of value. They provide practical support and often people with whom one can share problems.

The ISSP survey measures health by asking people to self-report how frequently in the past four weeks they had (1) Health problems, (2) Bodily aches and pains, (3) Felt unhappy and depressed, (4) Lost confidence, (5) Not overcome those problems, and a general question on the respondent's health status, measured from “poor” to “excellent”. These six items related strongly.

The ISSP survey showed that there are five significant demographic factors in the level of health:

(1) Employment status. (2) Level of education, (3) Age, (4) Gender, and (5) Whether a person is living in a steady partnership. People who are employed or in training, highly educated, and in a steady partnership are more likely to have a high level of health. Age is significant, although not as significant as employment status and education. Women report more health problems, although this may be partly the cultural tendency among men not to acknowledge health problems, especially on a self-reporting survey. These five factors together account for 10% of the variance in reported levels of health.

Research findings

The survey analysis showed what difference behavioural factors made to reported health status. The most important factor, eclipsing all others, was how much a person smoked. A second factor was the consumption of alcohol; people who drink alcohol every day have much poorer health than those who drink moderately. However, there is little difference in the levels of health between those who drink several times a week and those who never drink alcohol. Those who engage in physical activity several times a week had the highest levels of health. Daily activity was not necessary, but less frequent activity was associated with poorer levels of health. On the other hand, eating fresh fruit and vegetables needs to be a daily activity; those who said they eat fresh fruit and vegetables several times a week or less had significantly lower levels of health.

Does the evidence show that attendance at religious services makes a difference to health? The Table shows that 66% of people who attend religious services monthly or more often have never smoked compared with 42% of people who never attend religious services. There is a similar difference in regards to drinking alcohol. These two factors were statistically significant; the bottom two listed, physical activity and fresh fruit, were not.

Different denominations have different expectations in regards to smoking and drinking. The Seventh-day Adventists do not permit their members to either smoke or drink and do encourage vegetarian diets. Many Baptists and people with a Methodist background have been teetotalers, although the expectations that they would not drink at all has weakened in recent decades. Most Catholics and Anglicans drink some alcohol. However, most religious groups have never developed strong expectations about undertaking physical activity or eating fresh fruit and vegetables.

One might expect that older people have more health problems

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