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FUTURE FIRST

FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

SNIPPETS

1) "Paul Bendit remarks that the beauty of the metric system is the relationship between volume and weight, a litre of water weighing a kilogram. The beauty of the imperial system is that 50 pints occupy one cubic foot."

2) In 2005, a 2,000-year-old date palm seed was recovered from Herod the Great's palace in Israel. It was successfully planted and sown. The plant's nickname: Methuselah!

3) 6% of British under-15s of Indian origin live in lone-parent households, as do 19% of white British children, and as do 63% of children of Black Caribbean heritage.

4) 93% of UK men in 2020 said they were heterosexual, down from 95% in 2014, when it was first measured. The percentages for women were 94% and 96% respectively.

5) There were 9.5 million children living with their families in the UK in 2021, of which 3.6% or 340,000 were living with same-sex couples.

6) Research firm Gallup, in a 2022 poll of American adults, found 81% believed in God, the lowest percentage since they started 75 years ago, against 87% in 2017 and 92% in 2011.

7) Barnabas Fund, now called Barnabas Aid, had sent 850 tonnes of aid (food, medicine and blankets) to churches in and around Ukraine by end of May 2022.

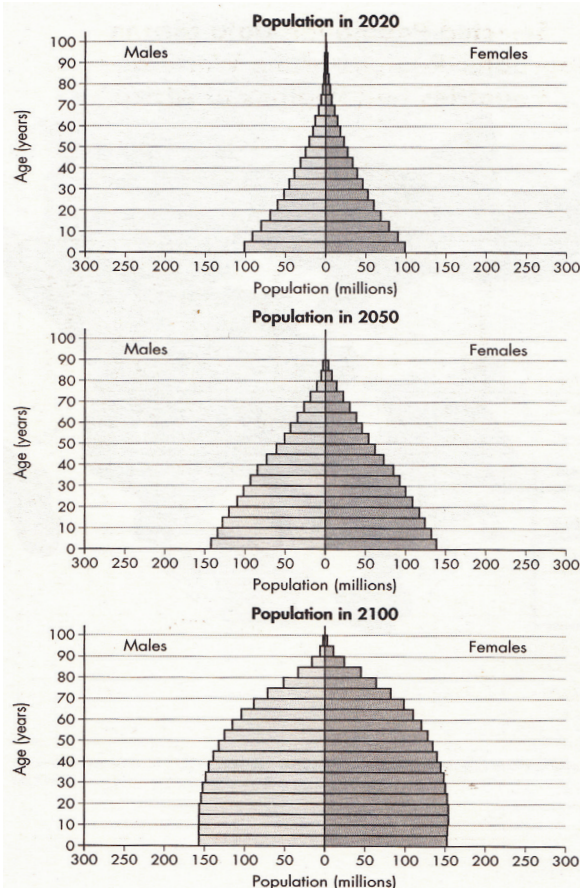
SOURCES: 1) Letter from John Davison in New Zealand in *The Daily Telegraph*, 4th June, 2022, Page 21; 2) Item in *Answers*, April-June 2022, Vol 17, No 2, Page 21; 3) Item in "Statistics of the week" in *The Week*, 11th June, 2022, Page 19; 4) "Sexual Identity in the UK," Office for National Statistics, 25th May 2022; 5) *Families and Households* Dataset, Office for National Statistics, accessed June 2022; 6) Gallup research cited by *Religion Media Centre*, 21st June 2022; 7) Report in the *Church Times*, 17th June, 2022, Page 6.

Africa: Problem or Potential?

Is Africa going to become a mega global problem, or will it provide potentially hope for the world? At this juncture, it seems it could go either way. There are two key factors behind the two positions – the population problem and the permeating of the spiritual potential. Let's look at these two major factors.

The population problem

In some ways the population pyramids in the diagram say it all. The first shows the population of the African continent in the year 2020, broken down by age and gender. In total the number was 1,340,610,000 (= 1.34 billion) or one-sixth, 17%, of the world's population, growing at an average rate of +2.5% per year since 2000.



Source: UNPD, *World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision, Vol II - Demographic Profiles*.

The second part of the diagram shows how that will have changed by the year 2050. Then the 2.48 billion Africans will be a quarter, 26%, of the world's population and growing at an average rate of +2.1% per year. If you think such a rate of increase is unlikely, please bear in mind that over half, 54%, of those that will be alive in 2050 in Africa have already been born!

The third part of the diagram shows just how much the African population will balloon in the second part of the 21st century. By the year 2100, if these forecasts by the UN Population Division and other global authorities prove correct, the African population will be 4.29 billion or two-

fifths, 39%, of the global population, having grown at an average rate of +1.1% over the preceding 50 years.

Consequences of huge growth

The astonishing growth is primarily due to the huge number of children being born. The average African fertility rate between 2015 and 2020 was 4.4, almost double the global rate of 2.5, and while that fertility rate is declining, it is doing so far more slowly than elsewhere. It is expected to be 3.1 per woman between 2045 and 2050 (against 2.2 globally) and 2.1 for the period 2095-2100, against 1.9. The enormous number of children impacts in many ways:

- The mortality rate used to be high in Africa, but through medical science is reducing, so more conceptions lead to births, and infant mortality will be decreased, leading to more survival by the time children reach 5 years old.

- Many children means more have to be fed. Where is that food to come from? It will be a continual struggle to feed one's family, leaving little time or resources for other things.

- Growing children need to go to school. That means more school places – more schools, or larger schools, or bigger classrooms. Most African countries do not have the resources for such a building programme, nor necessarily the political will or priority needed for it.

- More children require an increase in the number of teachers (more teaching colleges as well). An increased number of teachers will require salaries. Not every country has a large enough educational budget to cope.

- Primary children go on to secondary school, and some go further into college or university. All student places will need to be supported, funded and accommodated, also an increasing demand on government expenditure.

- Students graduate and require jobs. There is a paucity of relevant employment outside agriculture, and the labour pool will be too large to be utilised in this way. Unemployment often increases the rate of urban migration. So there will be the need for increasing commerce, industrialisation, development in every way, the failure of which may well lead to emigration to other continents.

The greatest increase will be among those aged 25 to 64. In 2020 there were 490 million Africans in this age group, 37% of the population. By 2100 there are expected to be 2.14 billion (more than a four-fold increase) and 50% of the then population. Older people, 65 and over, will increase from 47 million in 2020 to 600 million (a 13-fold increase), and will require carers, support and help.

Demographically, the numbers are huge, and the implications are great.

African spirituality

What of the African church? It is growing! Apart from tiny Oceania, it is the main engine of growth worldwide. Take Africa out of the global Christian scene and Christian numbers are reducing; it is only because of Africa's growth that globally Christianity is growing. In 2020 670 million Africans were Christian, which is half, 49%, of the total

Christian population, compared with 29% in the rest of the world. By 2050 it is predicted there will be 1.33 billion African Christians, 52% of the global Christian population, a growth rate of an average +2.3% per year.

The growth in African Christianity is mainly in the Eastern, Middle and Western Regions. Why the growth? Africa is a continent of young people. In 2020, 40% of its population were 15 or younger (half billion in number!), compared with 25% in the rest of the world. These young people will grow up in a world where paid employment is unlikely (unemployment rate for those between 15 and 25 is thought to be 60% in some countries); most will want to leave home and will try to build their own mud hut if they can afford it. Many will marry or live together (with or without permission from a priest) and start a family.

Secondly, not only are there lots of young people, but the fertility rate is high as we have seen. The high HIV/AIDS rate will lead to many early adult deaths, leaving many orphans. Thirdly, although life is very tough for millions of these youngsters, many will go to church. Numbers in Africa attending a place of worship (not always Christian) at least monthly are of the order of 60% from the World Values Survey in 2000, against half of that or less in the rest of the world. Many may be nominal Christians, but they are accepting Christian values and Christian ideals.

Fourthly, there is a historical aspect. The underlying philosophy and culture of many African countries is still theoretically Christian, the foundation having been laid, some might feel, partly as the result of the sacrificial and prayerful mission input, both spiritual and humanitarian (especially in education and medicine), of the past two centuries.

The nature of the growth

The source of the following figures measures global Christians

by denomination, using six groups to do so. In Africa, these are the Anglicans (whose average annual rate of growth between 1970 and 2020 was +4.1%), other Protestants (+3.6%), Independents (+3.6%), Roman Catholics (+2.8%), the Orthodox (+2.3%) and those who belong to no denomination, called the Unaffiliated (0.0%), so the Anglicans grew fastest across these 50 years. But among these denominations (but very few if any among the Orthodox) there are also those who are Pentecostal or Charismatic who have increased on average at +4.8% per year in this period and the Evangelicals (+4.0%). There will be considerable overlap in the numbers between these last two.

By a comparison with similar global percentages the African growth rates are especially different for the Anglicans (+4.1% to +1.3% globally), Protestants (+3.6% to +1.6%), the Roman Catholics (+2.8% to +1.1%) and the Orthodox (+2.3% to +1.3%). Anglican Africans are growing three times faster in Africa than elsewhere in the world and thus are likely to be particularly influential.

African Anglicans have grown fastest in the Eastern Region (an average annual increase of +4.6% between 1970 and 2020), and within that Region especially in Burundi (+7.3%), Kenya (+5.3%), Uganda (+5.3%), Rwanda (+5.1%) and Tanzania (+5.1%). In the GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) movement, 6 of their Primates Council of 10 Archbishops, are African, 4 of which are from the Eastern Region. In 2020, Anglicans were almost half, 44%, of all the African Evangelicals.

Africa's Christians are expected to be two-fifths, 39%, of the world's Christians by 2050, a growth rate averaging +2.3%, against a growth rate of +0.4% for Christians in the rest of the world. The dominant parts of this increase are the Pentecostals. Future global leadership may well come from Africa, especially in either Eastern or Western Africa.

SOURCES: *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, edited by Gina Zurlo and Todd Johnson, EUR, 2020; *World Population Prospects*, UN Population Division; *Youthquake*, Edward Paice, Head of Zion, 2021; *Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Todd Johnson et al, EUR, 2017.

CHURCH BUILDINGS

There were an estimated 45,500 churches in the UK in 2021. But the word "church" can mean either a church building, that is, "a building designed to be used for the worship of God," or the congregation that may or may not meet in a church building. The National Churches Trust is primarily interested in church buildings, and reckoned there were 39,500 of such in the UK in 2021, that is 87% of the total, or, to put it another way, one congregation in 8 does not meet in a building designed to be a church.

Of these 39,500 buildings in the UK, perhaps some 36,000 are in England. Of these, some 15,500 are Church of England (C of E) properties, a little more than two-fifths, 43%, of the whole. Four-fifths, or 12,300, 78%, of these properties are listed buildings, that is, they are "recognised as being of national importance." Buildings with listed status are recorded in an official register called The List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. Listed Church of England churches are 2.5% of the half million listed buildings in the country in 2021, or 1 in every 40.

Listed buildings come in different grades. Grade I is the top grade and 4,300 C of E churches are in this category, a quarter, 27%, of all C of E churches, and almost half, 47%, of the total of 9,000 Grade I buildings in England. Grade II buildings are in two groups, Grade II* and Grade II, respectively 5.5% and 94.5% of the total. There are also about 4,300 Grade II* C of E churches, about a sixth, 16%, of the 27,000 Grade II* buildings in England in 2021. There are some 3,800 Grade II C of E churches, but these are less than 1% of all the Grade II buildings.

The Church of England does not just have a high number of listed buildings but a high proportion of the buildings especially

recognised as being of major national importance. Looking after them fairly carefully is therefore particularly important, even if very costly. A 2019 survey report by Historic England evaluating the cost of maintenance and repair of some 30 churches reported an average cost of just over £270,000 each. If this is a true average cost then some 12,000 listed buildings would require £3.3 billion!

In an article by Anne Tyler in the very first issue of *LandMARC*, the precursor of *Quadrant* and *FutureFirst*, a survey of December 1984 found 1,200 listed Free Churches as well as the 12,000 C of E churches. Admittedly this is a long while ago and numbers may have changed, but most of the 1,200 non-C of E were Methodist churches which had the next highest number of listed buildings, but only a fraction of what the C of E had – just 600 or 8% of the 7,400 churches they then had.



In 2014, just 12 of the C of E 40 dioceses (excluding Sodor & Man and Europe) had less than 70% of its churches which were not listed, and the map, from the 1986 article, shows the counties where 80% or more of Anglican churches were listed buildings. St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese has the highest percentage of listed buildings, 95%, followed closely by Norwich with 94%, Ely,

Hereford, Lincoln and Salisbury Dioceses all with 92% and Peterborough with 91%. The Diocese of Liverpool had least with just 45% listed, or 107 churches, still costing £28 million to maintain and repair if the same average price held!

In November 2021, the National Churches' Trust held a survey on "The Future of the UK's Church Buildings" and had a good response of 1,250 replies. It asked the following questions:

- 1) What ... are the main purposes of church buildings? Places of worship 93%; Community hubs 72%; and National heritage 71%.
- 2) Are church buildings assets or burdens? Assets 88%; Burdens 12%.
- 3) Who should be responsible for funding the repair and maintenance? Congregations 80%; Heritage Bodies (like the Lottery Fund) 80%; Charitable Trusts 73%; Central Government 54%; Denominations 50%, etc.
- 4) Have digital services reduced the need for church buildings? No 80%; Yes 10%; Don't know 10%.
- 5) Should congregations share church buildings so that fewer buildings are needed? Yes 47%; No 32%; Don't know 21%.
- 6) If a local church was threatened with closure, should local people be able to take ownership of the building so it can be used as: A community asset 90% Yes; A place of worship 79% Yes; In other ways 13% Yes.

These are interesting answers, but with dwindling congregations in many listed churches, funding usage of such buildings is not an easily solved problem.

SOURCES: Wikipedia for general UK listed numbers; *Church Buildings Review Group Report*, 2015; *UK Church Statistics* No 4, 2021 Edition, Page 2.3; article "Beautiful but deadly?" by Anne Tyler, *LandMARC*, Autumn 1986, Page 2; *The Value of Maintenance*, Historic England, September 2019; *The Future of the UK's Church Buildings*, Consultation Analysis, April 2022.

ONLINE WORSHIP

The past two years have seen a rapid rise in on-line or live-stream worship. Before the Covid restrictions were enforced in March 2020, relatively few churches publicised services in this format; during the Covid restrictions estimates suggest that about 80% of churches began holding at least occasional services this way. Now, 2½ years later, with the relaxation of Covid restrictions, perhaps some 20-30% of churches continue to live-stream some of their services.

Many ministers and clergy had to undertake a rapid learning curve in the modus operandi of 21st century technology, as well as in adapting their services to the needs of the watching community. Many services were reduced in length, which usually meant fewer hymns and shorter sermons. Music was a problem and "canned" music (produced to professional standards and available for hire or purchase) offered a variety of hymns and songs.

A large survey, by the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, of 5,500 respondents, many over 60 years of age, which included church leaders, church members and also the general public, asked about on-line worship. In this sample, some 91% of church leaders had provided on-line worship and teaching, 73% on-line prayer and pastoral support. When respondents were asked which church activities had helped them to feel still connected to their church community, 63% mentioned such on-line activities. Many church leaders, as well as viewers/listeners, though still felt the need for digital training.

However, some 35% said they felt isolated because they either didn't have, or didn't know how to use, the necessary equipment to receive on-line involvement. It is not always appreciated that many people, particularly the elderly, simply do not have a computer, ipad, or even smart-phone. For those who are deaf the need to lip read is important, but watching for a long time can be difficult for concentration in a domestic environment.

For many this was a new approach to church life, and most found it spiritually helpful and socially creative. In rural areas it was a way of uniting multiple congregations for a single service, though this didn't resolve isolation or loneliness. Another survey published in 2021 found that the experience of on-line worship was "one of loss, not gain," it being "less meaningful, less communal, less spiritual and less effective."

On the other hand, numbers watching on-line sometimes went above normal attendance showing not only interest by the regular congregation, but perhaps those from other churches joining in and sometimes non-church people also watching. On resumption of services in 2022, some churches have found new people in their congregations simply because of their on-line teaching during Covid shut-downs. A few churches have also welcomed newly converted people who came to faith from their on-line opportunities.

The positives of on-line worship

- It provides the opportunity to bring people closer together (especially from different congregations) and, if Zoomed, the ability to see each other easily and to feel connected;
- Greater numbers of people than normal (and some from much further away, even from overseas!);
- Services were inclusive, including young people, the housebound, shift workers, families with children (screens can always be muted if children make a noise), etc.
- Flexibility and convenience of watching on-line at home, and if the service was recorded it could be watched at whatever was the most convenient time;
- Enabled people to "test the water" of church with no immediate sense of obligation or commitment, and new people could join unnoticed.

The negatives of on-line worship

- "Virtual worship doesn't satisfy my need to sing!" exclaimed one respondent, and was probably speaking for many.
- There is a loss of relationship, for which Zoom does not adequately compensate. Direct human contact is part of the Christian faith; loving our neighbour needs to be personal, whenever possible.
- On-line worship promotes individualism which is antithetical to joint worship. Such services can be more akin to entertainment than involvement.
- Celebrating communion "feels bogus, almost sacrilegious," even if via Zoom. It may suit clergy but it is not the same for lay people.
- It may produce a habit of "church-hopping," sampling different "successful" churches and preachers, without personal involvement.

The broad conclusion from several studies is that the benefits of on-line worship are confirmed and tangible and should continue even if "real" church takes place in a building with a congregation. What the experience has done is to stimulate change, and a challenge for churches to think in different ways as the world it seeks to win has moved on. While praying and praising together is crucial, the value and impact of on-line teaching sessions can be considerable, leading to growth in discipleship, understanding of leadership, and the opportunity to draw in others. Children may also be more actively attracted by on-line programmes, though there may be the danger of their classing such with their other on-line entertainment and fantasy viewing.

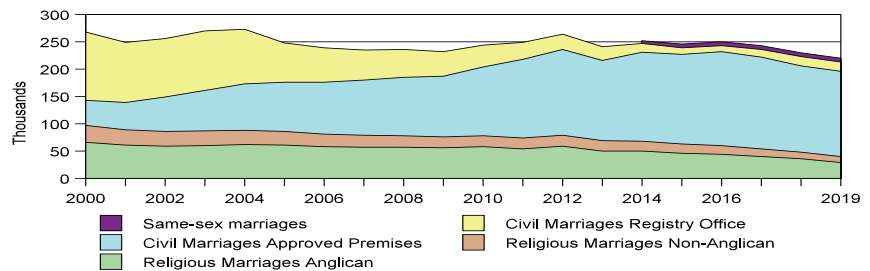
SOURCE: Articles in *Rural Theology*, Volume 20, No 1, 2022, especially one headed "Adapting to and Assessing Online Worship" by Ursula McKenna.

Fewer Marriages

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published its latest figures on the number of marriages in England and Wales, for 2019, some 2½ years after that year ended. It showed a declining number of marriages. Apart from the WWII years in 1939 and 1940 when the number of marriages was exceptionally high, the highest number was exactly 50 years ago, in 1972 when 426,000 got married, and 55% of these were in a church.

Since then the number of marriages has varied, and goes up and down as shown in the graph. In 2000 there were 268,000, in 2004 273,000, and in 2019, there were just 213,000 marriages. This is 60,000 fewer than in 2004, just 15 years earlier! The number partly varies by the number of immigrants (a huge number, 590,000, in 2004). There was an exceptional number of babies born in 1990, resulting in an increase in the number of marriages 22 years later in 2012. That year 8% of those marrying were aged between 20 and 24, while in 2019, only 4% were of that age.

Number of marriages in England and Wales, Civil and Religious, 2000 to 2019



How significant is it that the number of marriages is unquestionably declining at the moment? The number has gone down at an average annual rate of -1.2% since 2000, and -2.9% per year since 2014. In 2014, same-sex marriages became possible, so opposite-sex and same-sex numbers have to be kept separately. In 2014, same-sex marriages were 1.9% of the total; in 2019 they were 3.1%, so the proportion is slowly growing, even if the number in 2019, 6,700, is 200 fewer than in 2018.

Religious marriages

Marriages are deemed to be either civil or religious, where civil can mean in a Registry Office or in Approved Premises, the definition of which is currently being widened. The latter has proved more and more popular as the light blue section of the graph clearly shows. Some 17% of marriages in 2000 were in Approved Premises; in 2019 73% were.

The number of religious marriages is also declining. In the year 2000 they were 36% of the total; in 2019 just 19%, essentially half that figure. They have been declining at a rate of -4.6% per year on average since 2000, and -10.2% since 2014. Some same-sex marriages are religious, but the number is small. There were just 23 religious same-sex marriages in 2014, 0.5% of all same-sex marriages (0.01% of all marriages), and 48 or 0.7% of same-sex marriages in 2019, so this number and proportion are also increasing, even if slowly (0.02% of all).

ONS records the denomination of marriages, as Anglican, Roman Catholic, Other Christian (which includes Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and Unitarian marriages), and Other Religions ("Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and unattached bodies"). In the year 2000, of the total of 36% religious (opposite-sex) marriages, the proportions were 67% Anglican, 12% Catholic, 18% Other Christian and 3% Others.

In 2019 they were 73%, 10%, 12% and 5% respectively, but this may suggest some of these groups are growing. They are not; all are declining, at an average annual rate of -4.2%, -5.3%, -6.5% and -0.9% respectively, which simply also reflects the relative rates of decline of these various denominations, and that while the non-Christian groups are also declining, they are doing so at nothing like the same rate as the Christian groups.

While, therefore, the ONS counts of marriages are bad news for the churches, the overall picture of total marriages also tells a sad story and one of social gravity – the declining popularity of marriage itself, with cohabitation now taking an increasing part in couples living together – some 16% of families in 2019 (and 10% in the year 2000). The other types of households ONS measures are either one-person or multi-family households – 17% in 2000 and 19% in 2019, reflecting the rapid increase in cohabitation against the decline of marriage per se.

Future figures will show the impact of the Covid pandemic on marriage rates. Harry Benson, research director of the Marriage Foundation, the family breakdown charity, said that "most young adults still want to marry," which may well be true but at an average age of 38 for men and 36 for women in 2019, against 34 for men and 32 for women in 2000. In consequence, fewer children are being born, although many cohabiting couples have children and function as a family unit in the current tolerant climate.

SOURCE: *Marriages in England and Wales 2019*, Office for National Statistics, released 19th May 2022; article in *The Daily Telegraph*, 20th May 2022, Page 5.

Influencing Others

This is the name of a research study organised by Scripture Union, Alpha, Church Army, Youth for Christ, Church of England, HOPE Together and Youthscape and undertaken by 9 Dot Research in 2021. Its purpose was to “understand how young people (aged 13-18) have been influenced by peers in their journey towards becoming a Christian, and to understand how they influenced peers themselves.” There were two on line surveys, one of 480 young people aged 13 to 18, and one of 255 church leaders, and 16 young people who took part in a 7-day online learning community.

Of the 480 young people, 36% had grown up in a church family, and 48% had not, and 16% were not sure. Nearly two-fifths, 38%, of young people from both church and unchurched backgrounds said that peers had had some influence on them becoming Christians. How? Half, 56%, said their peers had been helped to “develop” their faith and half, 51%, had been helped by inviting them to do something. Three-quarters, 73%, were introduced to other Christians of their age, and half, 52%, were introduced to their church leader.

How had this helped the Christians themselves? Three-fifths, 59%, said it gave them the confidence to believe, 56% the confidence to pray, and half, 50%, it helped them “get to know Jesus.” What did they share? Their faith 75%, and how their faith helped them 67%. What did they invite their friend to? Three-quarters, 77%, said, “Church.”

What was known about the young people who were sharing their faith? Four-fifths, 79%, said they prayed on their own. Most, 87%, said they had become Christian before they were 11 years of age, which age is lower than has been found in earlier studies. 9% of them said all their friends were Christians, 43% said most of their friends were, 34% said some of their friends were, and 14% said only just a few of their friends were Christians.

Had sharing their faith influenced non-Christians to become Christians? Yes, in a big way, said 11%, in a small way, 49%, not much 30% and not at all 10%. What did Christians do for non-Christians? Over two-thirds, 71%, told their peers about their own faith, 41% showed them the practical outworking of their faith, 35% invited them to a meeting, and 30% talked about developing their faith. What did they tell their non-Christian peers? Three-fifths, 61%, said why they were a Christian. How show them their faith? By sharing their love for others 64%, and by sharing their hope 59%. What were non-Christians invited to? Church 77%, a Youth Group 56%, Sunday School or similar 48%, a Christian festival or camp 33% or a Bible Study group 32%.

Did they share their faith by social media? Yes! Instagram was the most popular, 77%, followed by WhatsApp, 43%, and Snapchat, 40%. What did they share? Bible quotations, 73%, stories of faith, 47%, and thoughts about God, 46%.

What were the barriers for young people sharing their faith? Not knowing the answers to some of the questions asked, 38%, finding their peers weren't interested, 36%, not feeling confident, 31%, or the fear of embarrassment, 29%. A third, 30%, of young Christians agreed others should become Christians, and witnessing to others “helps me remember I'm a Christian,” 51%, and it “strengthens my faith,” 47%.

Three-quarters, 77%, of youth leaders felt young people hesitated in witnessing because of lack of confidence, or the fear of embarrassment, 70%. How could youth leaders encourage more peer-sharing? By encouraging them to do it, 81%, and helping them actually do it, 51%.

Of the young people (11-18s) reached through church-based activities, about how many were in each of the following groups?

- 44% Active disciples (or 11 in a youth group of 25)
- 30% Faith explorers (or 7 in 25)
- 19% Fringe engagers, (5 in 25)
- 7% Not engaged (2 in 25).

What can youth leaders and church leaders do with a multiplicity of statistics like these? The Scripture Union report recommends:

- 1) Recognise the peer group as a key part of church young people's faith journeys.
- 2) Encourage those who are “the one Christian.”
- 3) Support those who want to re-balance youth ministry more towards outreach.

SOURCE: Scripture Union website <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/story/new-research> accessed June 2022; webinar held on 8th June 2022 in which hundreds participated.

SNOWFLAKES

A Church in Every Community was suggested as an outcome of the new church planting enthusiasm by Will Foulgar in a webinar from St John's College, Durham. Some 1,600 new Anglican churches had started since 2014, he claimed. But they were seriously deficient in new leaders. What should churches do? Run food banks, debt advice, children's work, fix it café, feeding programmes were all mentioned, thus actively helping people to try and get through often massive Covid anxiety and depression.

SOURCE: A Zoom seminar from St John's, Durham on recent research, 9th May, 2022.

Barriers to Church Planting. The 2012 London Church Census asked those who had planted a church if they would do it again. While 97% said YES, they also said, “It was very hard work!” That might help explain the results of the inaugural National Ministry Survey last year which found three barriers to starting a church plant: (A) 48% said not having the right person to lead a new plant, (B) 47% said they were too small or fragile to afford losing a significant number of good people, and (C) 47% said not having a launch team of 20 or more people.

SOURCE: nationalmissionsurvey.org quoted in *Ignite*, Counties, Summer 2022, Page 12, *Capital Growth*, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, 2013.

No Religion in the USA. A Pew Research Center survey found 23% of United States adults saying they had no religious affiliation in 2016 and 29% in 2021. The change was largely seen in the Millennials generation, whom faith leaders are particularly seeking to reach.

SOURCE: *Watch Live* press release, 31st December, 2021.

Practising Christians. A 2021 survey of 4,000 adults found that 48% said they were Christian, but the number of practising Christians, defined as attending church at least monthly and praying and reading the Bible at least weekly, was just 6%, down from 7% in 2015. A quarter of practising Christians were either Black or other ethnic groups. Non-Christians were asked where they would go to find out about Christianity: 22% said their local church; 22% said they would read the Bible. 4% said they came to faith through seeing Christian content on social media.

SOURCE: The *Talking Jesus* survey was carried out by Alpha and four other agencies; details from report in *Church Times* 20th May 2022, Page 6.

Are Machines “Human”? A Theos think-tank survey of 5,000 people asked if they thought “intelligent” machines have a soul. “Intelligent” machines can, for example, detect disease or drive a car. Three-quarters of respondents, 75%, said NO, machines do not have a soul. What then are “humans”? In a briefing held by the Religion Media Centre, theologians and scientists said it was the ability to feel vulnerable, have relationships, imagine things, be amazed, have sentience (=able to perceive or feel things), and above all, breathe. Nothing spiritual apparently!

SOURCE: Media Centre Report issued on 25th May, 2022.

“Big Name Spirituality” is declining according to an American journalist, Douglas Todd, who says it is “confirmed by, among others things, Google analytics, which measures how often celebrities' names are searched online.” The same seems to be happening also in the UK, where the names of “big” churches, or key leaders, are perhaps being used less often now (but this needs to be confirmed by research).

SOURCE: *Religion Watch*, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, Vol 37, No 6, April 2022.

The United Methodist Church (UMC) in America had a proposal on 3rd January 2020 to allow pastors to perform same-sex marriages. A vote on this was scheduled for May 2020, but postponed because of Covid, and it eventually took place in 2022. It was passed, and 70 UMC churches in the North Georgia UMC Conference disaffiliated from the church on 30th June 2022. This is 3% of that Conference's membership of 219,000 but 9% of its 972 congregations (an average congregation membership of 76, attendance 19).

SOURCES: *UK Church Statistics* No 4, 2021 Edition, Page 15.9; Religion Media Centre report, 7th June 2022; email from UMC North Carolina; <http://www.umdata.org/UMFactsHome.aspx>.

Mobile Phones. An Ofcom survey in 2021 found that by the time they reach the age of 10, three-fifths, 61%, of children own a smartphone. It was 24% in 2015. Even by the age of 4, 39% of children can use a smartphone, rising to 50% of 5-7 year-olds and 59% of 8-11 year-olds. Although social media sites enforce a minimum age of 13, a third of parents of 5-7 year-olds said their child had a profile on at least one app. A third of those aged 8 to 15 had seen “something worrying or nasty” online in the past year.

SOURCE: Article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 8th June, 2022, Page 10.

Living for ever. About a quarter of those under 40 agreed they would “like to live for ever if scientists were able to engineer it.” Only 10% of those over 60 wished to, however. A fifth, 22%, of those under 30 agreed they “would like to be cryogenically frozen after my death so that I can be revived centuries later,” but only 2% of those over 70 wished to. A fifth, 19%, of British adults said they would like to live for ever, three-fifths, 60%, would not, and the rest were undecided. Men were keener than women (25% to 12%), and those without a religious faith more than those with one.

SOURCE: “Poll watch” item in *The Week*, 11th June, 2022, Page 4.

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The Elderly in the Church

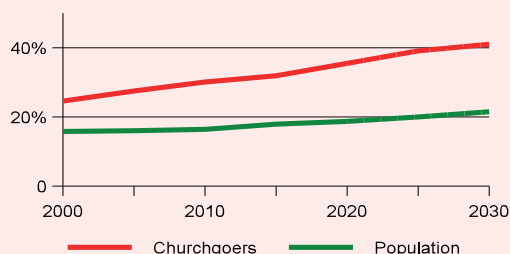
In this millennium, the UK population is growing age-heavy! Some 15% of the population was 65 or over in the UK in 2000, ten years later in 2010 it was 17%, and in 2020 it was 19%. And the Office for National Statistics predicts that by 2023 it will be 22%, over a fifth. It is already obvious from the pandemic crisis that the Government has real problems providing enough Care Homes for the many who need them, and staffing them adequately, so the numbers of elderly are already posing a dilemma! The numbers affect all sections of society. The latest figures show that over 10% of the “elderly” are now working beyond 65 years of age.

It might be asked, “What constitutes old age?” An interesting question in a major survey of 2,200 people in 2008 found that just over a third (33%) of the sample put 70 as the time when people become “seniors,” and a further quarter (23%) put it later. In 2020 there were 10.7 million people 65 and over in England, but only 10.2 million children under 15. Too many grandparents or too few grandchildren! (Though a number of 65 and overs will not necessarily be grandparents).

What may surprise is that this is a global phenomenon. In 2010 11% of the world’s population was over 60; by 2050 it will be 22%, this doubling in proportion means increasing numbers from 750 million in 2010 to 2 billion by 2050. Perhaps, though, in the light of sustainability issues featuring widely in climate change responsibilities as well as acceptance and inevitability of contraceptives, the global situation is not so surprising after all!

Among English churchgoers, the proportions are higher. In the year 2000, 25% of those attending was 65 or over, by 2010 it was 30%, and by 2020 it had reached 36%. The huge acceleration is due partly to the fact that elderly churchgoers continue to come to church despite getting older, but mainly because there are too few younger people joining to compensate. If current trends continue then by 2030 it could be two-fifths, 41%, who will be 65 or over. The seriousness of the situation is shown in Figure 1, which gives the figures for England. Of those 65 or over, two-fifths are male and three-fifths are female.

Fig 1: Those over 65, England, 2000-2030



What does this mean for **churches**? Older people value handrails they can cling to; they prefer slopes to steps; toilets not too far away; non-slip floors; and a place to put their sticks when sitting down and a comfortable seat (ideally with a cushion!). Churches will need to cater not just for more older people, but in the years ahead more older people. There were 88,000 people 85 and over going to church throughout England in 2010, but 140,000 in 2020, increasing at the rate of +5% per year.

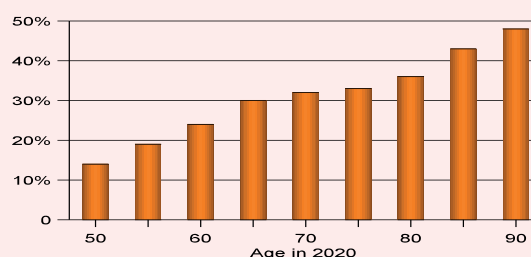
What does this mean for the **older people themselves**? Book your place in your Care Home quickly if you need to! Funerals will become more frequent; if you can't attend, watch on a laptop or smart phone, and if you haven't one, get such and learn to use it as quickly as you can. While many churches are claiming more people are watching their live-streamed services than used to attend personally, it is also clear that live-streamed services are simply not

the same as person-to-person services. Live-streamed services have become a sort of another *Songs of Praise* – to watch but not participate. While it may be easy to “drop out,” it is important for a person's well-being to continue being able to “connect-in.”

What does this mean for **church leaders**? Helping people to retire, and for some the loss of work, companionship, compensation and routine may be difficult to adjust to. Others will continue working; employers find them experienced, more reliable, more confident, with a stronger work ethic, better interpersonal skills and working better in teams. On the other hand they may be less healthy, less energetic, slower to learn, harder to train, less able to use new technology, less creative, less co-operative and more resistant to change. Similar characteristics might apply to older churchgoers in relation to their service with the church.

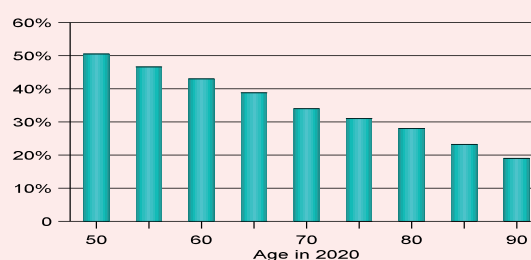
Many older people went to Sunday School when they were young. Figure 2 shows how that number varies with current age. A person aged 90 in 2020 was born in 1930, a person aged 70 was born in 1950, and a person aged 50 was born in 1970. That memory can still be an aid for evangelism in today's church work.

Fig 2: Percentage of people who went to Sunday School when they were younger



However, as churchgoers become older, their feeling of belonging to a church grows less, as is illustrated in Fig 3. The older a person gets, the less they feel they belong, these figures coming from a detailed Methodist Homes survey some years ago. Churches seek to mitigate this by live-streaming services, arranging “Senior Teas,” pastoral visits etc. but such attempts do not really meet the underlying hurt of feeling “superfluous,” and sometimes even “patronised.”

Fig 3: How having a sense of belonging to the church varies with age



The challenge therefore is real. Remaining connected is not only good for a person's social well-being, it is essential for a person's spiritual well-being also. Helping older people keeping any former links with a church alive therefore becomes a crucial part of the church's role as the “Body of Christ.”

This article first appeared in *Plain Truth* Spring 2022 edition.

SOURCES: *Religious Trends* No 2, 2000/2001, Christian Research, Table 2.15; *UK Church Statistics* No 4, 2021 Edition, ADBC Publishers, Section 13; MHA Care Group *Strategy for the Future* Report, Christian Research, 2003.

These may be helpful - Books/papers received

Growing HEALTHY Churches, Jonathan Lamb, Partnership, 2022, ISBN 978-1-916013-09-4. Sub-titled “Urgent Biblical priorities for local congregations” this is a short but excellent summary of talks and articles written with discussion questions to aid application. 104 pages.

Living Stones, Living Hope, A brief study course exploring contextual theology: African Women's Theology, Korean Theology, Liberation Theology, Celtic Spirituality and Dalit Theology, from USPG, www.uspg.org.uk/lent.

Growth, Decline and Extinction of UK Churches, is one of two similar papers on Church Growth Modelling, published by Dr John Hayward on 15th and 20th May 2022, <http://churchmodel.org.uk/2022/05/15/>.

Humour

An experienced pilot, showing off his flying skills, looping the loop, etc., said to his nervous passenger, “I bet 50% of the people down on the ground thought we would crash.” The passenger replied, “50% of the people up here thought so too!”

There was a blinding flash of lightning, and Emily, aged 5, rushed into the house shouting, “Mummy, Mummy, God has just taken my picture!”

SOURCE: *Humour. Clerical and General*, John M Barnes.

Abortion Statistics

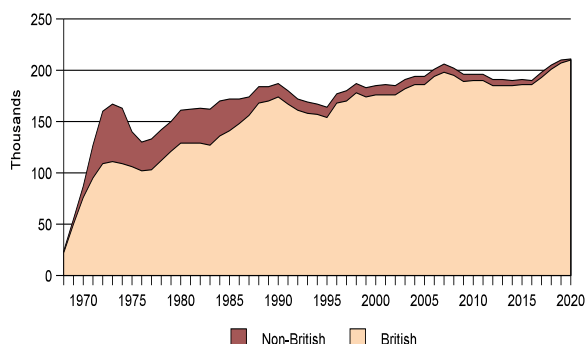
Abortions were legalised in Great Britain in 1968 and in N Ireland in 2020. In the 52 years 1968 to 2020, there were 38.8 million births in Great Britain (including those in N Ireland for 2020), meaning there were 210 abortions for every 1,000 live births, indicating that of conceptions which would have led to a birth in all probability, one-sixth, 17.4% were aborted. Has this rate continued?

Between 1973 and 2020 there were 63.6 million abortions in the United States, which is 15.7% of conceptions, so lower than in the UK. US figures report 2,550 abortions every day, 1.4% for all women aged 15 to 44.

The UK Office for National Statistics reported some 501,000 conceptions in England and Wales in 2020, of which three-fifths, 61%, were outside marriage, although 2% led to births which were, by then, inside marriage. A third of these, 35%, led to abortions. Not all conceptions could lead to a birth, but of the potential births conceived in 2020, some 26% were aborted, a much higher figure than the average over the last 50 years.

There was a total of 211,000 abortions which took place in England and Wales in 2020, the highest number ever since abortions became legal in 1968. Over these 52 years a total of 9.1 million abortions have taken place legally in England and Wales, not all to British people, however. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s many travelled to this country to have an abortion. Of the total, some 10% were to those who were not British but came from elsewhere, especially European countries and the Irish Republic in particular. Outside Europe, many came from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Number of abortions in England and Wales, by British and non-British people



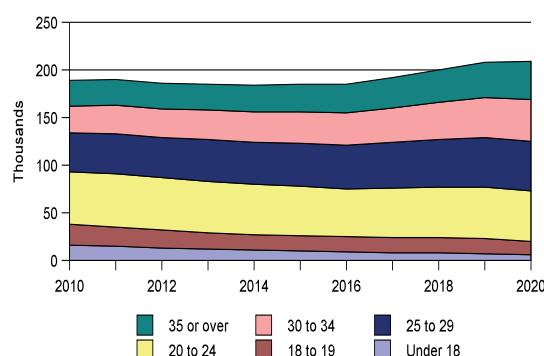
We have lost 8.2 million children over this period of time – equivalent to losing today all the children in the UK 10 years of age or under! The numbers are shown in the graph and it is obvious that the numbers are increasing. This helps to explain why the fertility rate is so low (at 1.58 its lowest level ever in the UK) and going down. The decrease in children is not due to a curtailment in sexual activity, but rather a denial of the expected fruits of that activity.

At what age do women have abortions? Half of all the abortions, 50%, in 2020 were to women in their 20s, half of these to women aged 20 to 24 (down from 29% in 2010) and the other half, 25%, was to those aged 25 to 29 (up from the 22% in 2010). Those under 20 had 10% of all the abortions, only half the 20% they had in 2010. So abortions have become fewer among those under 25, down from 49% to 35%, a significant drop over the decade (at an average annual rate of -2.3%). Please see the second graph.

The implication behind fewer abortions is probably those under 25 are having less unprotected sex as they are not having more babies. Casual sex may be less popular than it was, perhaps because of the fear of being reported on Facebook or whatever, but the actual number of conceptions has dropped significantly – even if there are more abortions among those that conceive!

On the other hand, for those 25 or over the number of abortions increased. From just over half, 51%, of all the abortions in 2010, the percentage rose to two-thirds, 65%. Those aged 25 to 29 increased by an average annual rate of +2.4%, those aged 30 to 34 at almost twice that rate, +4.6% and those 35 and over at an average annual rate of +4.0%.

Legal abortions of residents of England and Wales, by age

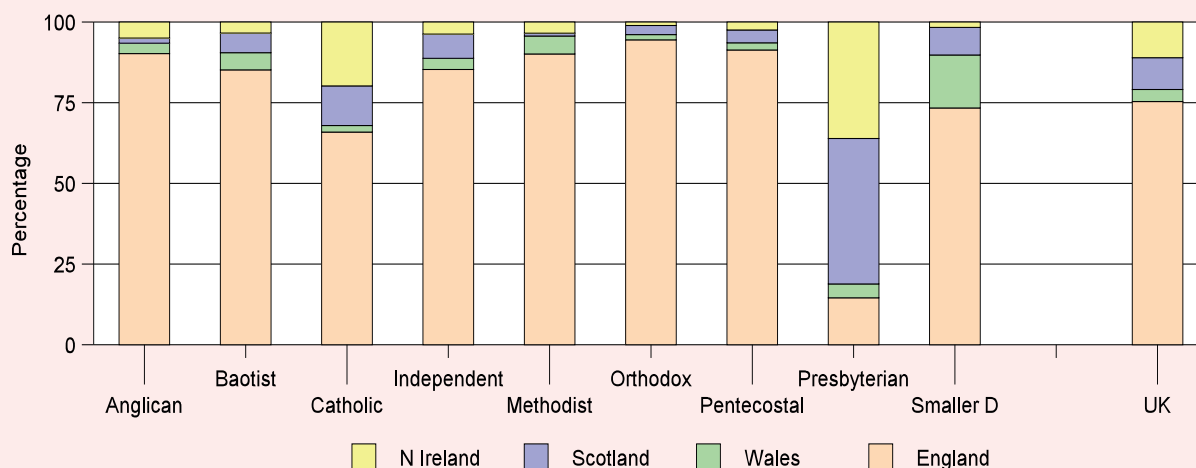


So more abortions are taking place among women in their early 30s, when many are marrying for the first time, although they will probably have cohabited first. The abortion statistics are not now broken down for those 40 and over, but 3% of all births were to those over 40 (against 4% in 2010) while the proportions of births to those aged 35 to 39 remained at 16% in both years, so perhaps abortions have increased among those 40 or over.

In 2020, 85% of abortions were induced by medical drugs (mifepristone and misoprostol), and 88% were under 10 weeks gestation. A temporary measure in March 2020 allowed the use of these drugs at home without the need for a prior medical consultation, made permanent in March 2021, and enabling 52% of abortions in 2021 to take place at home.

SOURCES: "Abortion Statistics" on the web; *Abortion Statistics in England and Wales*, Office for National Statistics website, accessed June 2022; report in the *Daily Telegraph*, 22nd June 2022, Page 10.

Proportions of each denominational group among churchgoers, by countries of the UK, 2020, pre-Covid



Percentage each is of the UK Total: Anglican 21%; Baptist 8%; R Catholic: 29%; Independent 10%; Methodist 5%; Orthodox 1%; Pentecostal 13%; Presbyterian 8% and Smaller Denominations 5%. Smaller D = Smaller Denominations

Abortions in England & Wales 1968-2020

Year	Non-residents		Residents Co B	Residents Cumulative Total	Grand Total (Residents + Non-Res) Col C	% of Residents B ÷ C:	Age group of residents							TOTAL
	Col A	Cumulative Total					Under 16	16-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35 & over	
1965	~	~	~	~	~	~								
1966	~	~	~	~	~	~								
1967	~	~	~	~	~	~								
1968	1,309	1,309	22,332	22,332	23,641	94.5								
1969	4,990	6,299	49,829	72,161	54,819	91.0								
1970	10,603	16,902	75,962	148,123	86,565	87.8								
1971	32,207	49,109	94,570	242,693	126,777	74.6								
1972	51,319	100,428	108,565	351,258	159,884	67.9								
1973	56,581	157,009	110,568	461,826	167,149	66.1								
1974	53,495	210,504	109,445	571,271	162,940	67.2								
1975	33,478	243,982	106,224	677,495	139,702	76.0								
1976	27,761	271,743	101,912	779,407	129,673	78.6								
1977	30,327	302,070	102,677	882,084	133,004	77.2								
1978	29,707	331,777	111,851	993,935	141,558	79.0								
1979	29,135	360,912	120,611	1,114,546	149,746	80.5								
1980	31,976	392,888	128,927	1,243,473	160,903	80.1								
1981	33,899	426,787	128,581	1,372,054	162,480	79.1								
1982	34,492	461,279	128,553	1,500,607	163,045	78.8								
1983	33,786	495,065	127,375	1,627,982	162,161	79.0								
1984	33,605	528,670	136,388	1,764,370	169,993	80.2								
1985	30,772	559,442	141,101	1,905,471	171,873	82.1	4,002	- 34,208 -		41,880	26,009	17,202	17,800	141,101
1986	24,667	584,109	147,619	2,053,090	172,286	85.7	3,894	- 33,819 -		45,316	28,656	18,005	17,929	147,619
1987	18,085	602,194	156,191	2,209,281	174,276	89.6	3,765	- 35,167 -		49,256	31,243	18,960	17,800	156,191
1988	15,500	617,694	168,298	2,377,579	183,798	91.6	3,568	- 37,928 -		54,067	34,584	20,000	18,151	168,298
1989	13,511	631,205	170,463	2,548,042	183,974	92.7	3,383	- 36,182 -		54,880	36,604	21,284	18,130	170,463
1990	13,012	644,217	173,900	2,721,942	186,912	93.0	3,422	- 35,520 -		55,281	38,770	22,431	18,476	173,900
1991	12,146	656,363	167,376	2,889,318	179,522	93.2	3,158	- 31,130 -		52,678	38,611	23,445	18,354	167,376
1992	11,568	667,931	160,501	3,049,819	172,069	93.3	3,000	- 27,585 -		49,051	38,429	23,870	18,566	160,501
1993	10,868	678,799	157,846	3,207,665	168,714	93.6	3,083	- 25,805 -		46,845	38,141	24,689	19,283	157,846
1994	10,337	689,136	156,539	3,364,204	166,876	93.8	3,246	- 25,223 -		44,871	38,081	25,507	19,611	156,539
1995	9,323	698,459	154,315	3,518,519	163,638	94.3	0	0		0	0	0	0	1,599,834
1996	9,579	708,038	167,916	3,686,435	177,495	94.6	34,521	322,567		494,125	349,128	215,393	184,100	TOTAL
1997	9,601	717,639	170,145	3,856,580	179,746	94.7	3,452	32,257		49,412	34,913	21,539	18,410	Average
1998	9,531	727,170	177,871	4,034,451	187,402	94.9								159,983
1999	9,549	736,719	173,701	4,208,152	183,250	94.8	2.1	20.2		30.9	21.8	13.5	11.5	%
2000	9,833	746,552	175,542	4,383,694	185,375	94.7								
2001	9,910	756,462	176,364	4,560,058	186,274	94.7								
2002	9,453	765,915	175,932	4,735,990	185,385	94.9								
2003	9,078	774,993	181,582	4,917,572	190,660	95.2								
2004	8,785	783,778	185,713	5,103,285	194,498	95.5								
2005	7,937	791,715	186,416	5,289,701	194,353	95.9								
2006	7,436	799,151	193,737	5,483,438	201,173	96.3								
2007	7,099	806,250	198,499	5,681,937	205,598	96.5								
2008	6,862	813,112	195,296	5,877,233	202,158	96.6								
2009	6,643	819,755	189,100	6,066,333	195,743	96.6								
2010	6,535	826,290	189,574	6,255,907	196,109	96.7	3,718	12,742	21,809	55,481	40,800	27,978	27,046	189,574
2011	6,151	832,441	189,931	6,445,838	196,082	96.9	3,258	11,341	20,324	55,909	42,321	29,579	27,199	189,931
2012	5,850	838,291	185,122	6,630,960	190,972	96.9	2,925	9,948	18,507	54,558	41,882	30,353	26,949	185,122
2013	5,469	843,760	185,331	6,816,291	190,800	97.1	2,538	9,141	17,332	54,038	43,578	31,377	27,327	185,331
2014	5,521	849,281	184,571	7,000,862	190,092	97.1	2,399	8,649	16,407	52,722	44,157	32,108	28,129	184,571
2015	5,190	854,471	185,824	7,186,686	191,014	97.3	1,853	7,968	16,341	51,525	45,300	33,366	29,471	185,824
2016	4,810	859,281	185,596	7,372,282	190,406	97.5	1,564	7,093	15,714	50,302	46,344	34,108	30,471	185,596
2017	4,653	863,934	192,900	7,505,182	197,533	97.6	1,313	6,616	15,968	51,857	48,497	36,319	32,330	192,900
2018	4,687	868,621	200,608	7,765,790	205,295	97.7	1,267	6,303	15,935	52,988	50,403	39,332	34,380	200,608
2019	2,135	870,756	207,384	7,973,174	209,519	99.0	1,337	6,150	15,733	54,286	51,804	41,549	36,525	207,384
2020	943	871,699	209,917	8,183,091	210,860	99.6	1,158	5,280	14,305	53,413	51,774	43,981	40,006	209,917
2021					TOTAL 2010-2020		23,330	91,231	188,375	587,079	506,860	380,050	339,833	2,116,758
2022					Average 2010-2020		2,121	8,294	17,125	53,371	46,078	34,550	30,894	192,433
2023					Percentage		1.1	4.3	8.9	27.7	23.9	18.0	16.1	100.0
2024														

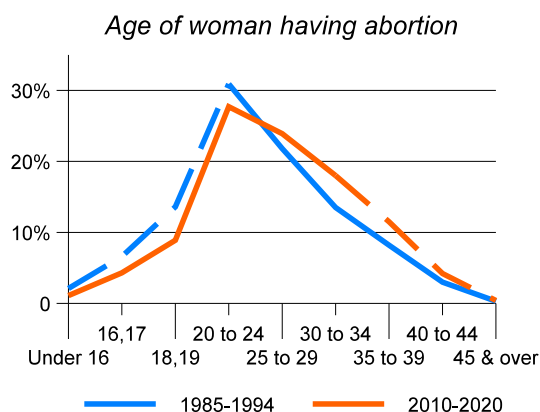
Source: Office for National Statistics, Legal abortions, residents and non-residents, England and Wales, 1968 to 2020

Initiated 08/07/22

Older age-groups of residents having abortions				
Year	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 & over	TOTAL: 35 & over
1985	12,979	4,372	449	17,800
1986	12,977	4,521	431	17,929
1987	12,639	4,757	404	17,800
1988	12,681	5,047	423	18,151
1989	12,713	5,020	397	18,130
1990	12,956	5,104	416	18,476
1991	13,035	4,901	418	18,354
1992	13,252	4,844	464	18,560
1993	13,885	4,890	508	19,283
1994	14,156	5,008	447	19,611
Average	13,127	4,846	436	18,409
Percentage	8.2	3.0	0.3	11.5

The main Table overleaf has been adapted to show some extra earlier results of the age at which abortion was undertaken. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the abortion publications of the various age-groups broke down those aged 35 and over as shown in the Table. The results for the intervening years (1995 to 2009) do not seem to be immediately available, and so the age-groups for which abortions were counted vary slightly in the two sets of figures.

The dotted lines in the chart below take the actual figures and proportions them across the relevant age group by the proportions in the other set of years, these estimates being shown as dotted lines. The results shows that the major age-group for abortions is between 20 and 24 and this has not changed over the last 35 to 40 years. There are now (2020) fewer abortions among those under 20, but more among those in their late 20s and 30s. The proportion in their 40s is small and hasn't significantly altered.



The following Table shows the average age at which abortions have taken place in the two periods with ages given on the previous page. There seems to be no hiatus between 1995 and 2010 in average ages, but otherwise the trend is very clearly an increasing average age over the last 10 years.

Average age of abortions in England and Wales in two recent periods

Year	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Av age	24.9	25.0	24.9	24.8	25.0	25.1	25.4	25.7	25.9	26.0

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Av age	26.0	26.2	26.4	26.6	26.8	27.0	27.2	27.4	27.5	27.7	28.1