

20-30's and the church: A statistical overview
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20-30's in the UK today

Unemployment

Some 930,000 people aged between 16 and 25 were out of work in the three months to May 2009.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article6792754.ece>

University

The number of UK students at UK universities fell from 1.97 million in 2007 to 1.96 million last year. The number of British part-time students in the UK fell 3% between 2007 and 2008, to 762,340.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7859034.stm>

Women and men in full time education

Across Britain 49.2% of women aged 17-30 have been or are currently in higher education, compared with only 37.8 % of men of the same age. For white working class males the number is only 6.4%'

Sunday Telegraph as reported in Quadrant Jul 09

Spending and attitudes to money

How young adults would tighten their belts if forced to: "Assume for a moment that due to recession, money became tight for you and you ha to give up/cut back on some things. Please indicate what you'd do with each of the following:

| % among young adults 18-29 | Wouldn't change no matter what | Would downgrade to something less expensive | Get rid of/ stop doing this altogether |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Your internet connection | 61% | 34% | 1% |
| Your mobile/smart phone | 35% | 46% | 13% |
| Cable/satellite TV | 20% | 29% | 13% |
| Buy new clothing | 13% | 53% | 30% |
| Go out to movies | 10% | 28% | 39% |
| Holidays | 9% | 42% | 31% |
| DVR/TIVO subscriptions | 8% | 25% | 20% |
| Gym membership | 8% | 15% | 25% |
| Attend sporting events | 8% | 18% | 26% |
| Taxi/cabs | 8% | 13% | 43% |
| Movie rentals | 6% | 19% | 38% |
| Dine out | 6% | 36% | 44% |
| Clubbing | 6% | 32% | 34% |
| Pay to download music | 5% | 13% | 29% |
| Magazine subscriptions | 5% | 8% | 34% |
| Alcohol | 4% | 38% | 32% |
| Cigarettes | 4% | 17% | 9% |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----|-----|-----|
| Buy video games/equipment | 3% | 20% | 39% |
|---------------------------|----|-----|-----|

The above figures come from online research done by the JWT Anxiety Index with young people in 5 countries in February 2009. Results featured are from the British cohort (1250 young people) only.

<http://www.jwtintelligence.com/blog-thanks2.htm>

Research conducted by T-Poll on behalf of the Post Office People's Panel during late March 2009 found that the credit crunch has impacted young adults (18-24s) in the following ways:

- More than twice as likely to have borrowed money from a friend (12 per cent) than older age groups.
- 11 per cent cite the decision to put off getting married or starting a family as a direct result of the current economic climate, more than twice the level of any other age group.
- Their greatest fear is the risk of losing their job, this is in line with older age groups; for a third (32 per cent) losing their job is something they are extremely concerned about.
- Overall, 70 per cent of under-24s are concerned about becoming unemployed.

http://www.news.royalmailgroup.com/news/article.asp?id=2537&brand=Post_Office_network

Average income 2008

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Men aged 22-29 years | Women aged 22-29 years |
| £432.90 | £359.90 |

Source ASHE 2008 ONS

Debt.

YouGov poll conducted a poll in 2008 for young people's charity Rainer and found that:

- 90 per cent of young people questioned were in debt by the age of 21.
- Almost half of 18 - 24 year olds (46%) have owed more than £2,000
- One in five have owed more than £10,000.
- There were high levels of current debt.

Why do Young People Pay More? Rainer May 2008

Marriage

The average age for getting married for the first time in England and Wales is 31years for men and 29 years for women.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/relationships/couples/life_whymarry.shtml

Babies

Number of live births to women in their 20's in 2007:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Age 20-24 yrs | Age 25-29 years |
| 130,784 | 182,510 |

Average of for women giving birth to first child:

| | |
|------|---------|
| 2007 | 29.3yrs |
| 1997 | 28.3yrs |
| 1971 | 26.6yrs |

Source Social Trends 2009 ONS

Number of legal abortions for women in their 20's in 2008

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | 20-24 yrs | 25-29 yrs |
| Total number | 56,171 | 41,896 |
| Rate per 1,000 women | 32 | 24 |

Source Abortion Statistics England and Wales 2008 Dept. of Health

Living with parents

Number of young adults aged 20-34 yrs living with parents in 2008

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Men | Women |
| 1.8 million | 1.1 million |

Source Social Trends 2009 ONS

Total Number attending church on a Sunday

The numbers attending church in the 20-29 age group has declined from 520,900 in 1985 to 230,600 in 2005, a decline of 62%.

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 1985 | 1995 | 2005 |
| 520,900 | 376,700 | 230,600 |

Frequency of churchgoing declines rapidly in the 20-29 age group so that by the time they are in their 30's they are the least frequent churchgoers of any age group.

Source Pulling out of the Nosedive by Peter Brierley 2006

Church attendance by age

According to the results of the English Church Census 6.3% of the population of England attend church on Sunday. Here are some figures that divide this figure into numbers and percentages for each age cohort:

| | Number of churchgoers | Percentage of churchgoers | Total population | Percentage of total English cohort who go to church |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---|
| 15-19 years | 158,310 | 5% | 3,322,000 | 4.76% |
| 20-29 years | 230,600 | 7% | 6,569,000 | 3.51% |
| 30-44 years | 506,592 | 16% | 11,225,000 | 4.51% |
| 45-64 years | 759,888 | 24% | 12,490,000 | 5.87% |
| 65-74 years | 538,254 | 17% | 4,191,000 | 12.84% |

Source English Church Census 2005 as published in Religious Trends 6 and UK Population 2006-2071 by the Government Actuary Dept. as featured in Religious Trends 7

The percentage of churchgoers in the 20-29 age group is 7% of the total churchgoing population. The overall percentage of 20-29 year olds in the population as a whole is 13%. Over the last 30 years the percentage of 20-30 age group in the population as a whole who go to church has declined slightly

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| | Percentage of churchgoers | Percentage of total |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------|

| | aged 20-29 years | population aged 20-29 years |
|------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1979 | 11% | 14% |
| 1989 | 10% | 16% |
| 1998 | 9% | 13% |
| 2005 | 7% | 13% |

Source Pulling out of the Nosedive by Peter Brierley 2006 and Quadrant: Special English Church Census edition Sept.2006.

Church attendance in the UK by age

| | All ages % | 16-24 years % | 25-34 years % |
|--|------------|---------------|---------------|
| Weekly churchgoer | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| Regular churchgoer (monthly visit to church) | 15 | 10 | 11 |
| Fringe churchgoer | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Occasional churchgoer | 7 | 3 | 7 |

From churchgoing in the UK Tearfund 2007

Average age of churchgoers

Average age of churchgoers is 45 where as the average age of the population is 40.

Large churches

The larger the church the greater the proportion of those attending will be under 30. 43% of churchgoers in their 20's attend churches outside London and the majority of them large churches with congregations of 200+ which leaves smaller churches outside London with a shortage of young people in their congregations.

"So how do those [small] churches find young people to help with youth clubs or Sunday young people's work, to say nothing of potential ministers or mission workers of the future?"

Quadrant : Special English Church Census edition Sept.2006 and Nov 2006.

London

57% of churchgoers in their 20's attend churches in London. There are a number of reasons for this:

- More young people from this age group are concentrated in Greater London
- The large churches like Hillsong, Kingsway International and Holy trinity Brompton all attract high number of people in their twenties
- There are a large number of Pentecostal churches in London and they tend to have a slightly younger age profile.

Quadrant. Nov. 2006 Christian Research

Other religions

During the research for the 2007 Tearfund "Churchgoing in the UK" report 7000 adults were asked "Do you consider yourself belonging to any particular religion?" 11% of 16-34 year olds responded by saying they belonged to religions other than Christianity compared with an average of 6% for adults of all ages who said they had a religion but it was not Christianity. The Tearfund researchers relate this result to the younger age profile of ethnic minorities in the UK.

Growing up without the "church habit"

The Tearfund report also highlighted the issue of young people growing up without experience of church:

"..younger adults are more likely to have grown up with no experience of church and be closed to the possibility of attending whereas older people are more likely to have experienced church at some point in their life and rejected it."

Research done by David Voas from the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, Manchester University found that *"..on average people experience little change in their beliefs and practices once they reach their early 20's. What secularization does is to change the environment in which children are raised and the likelihood of effective religious upbringing"*

David Voas also states that the decline in church attendance has not happened because adults have stopped going to church instead *"The decline has happened because more and more adults never start attending in the first place"*

Source Quadrant November 2005

The findings reported in Making Sense of Generation Y also support this view:

"The decline in church attendance among young people is a continuation of a trend set by previous generations (which actually encompasses all types of institutional affiliation, not just religious institutions). There has been a progressive atrophying of the churchgoing habit, particularly since the 1960's. This means today there is neither the expectation that young people will go to church, nor a pattern of churchgoing for young people to follow. Even if young people want to go church, the generational decline in church attendance means there is a shortage of adults with the necessary knowledge and skill to accommodate them."

source Making Sense of Generation Y: the world view of 15-25 year olds by Sara Savage, Sylvia Collins-Mayo, Bob Mayo and Graham Cray 2006

Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years. Barna Group 2006

Found that six out of ten twentysomethings in the USA who were involved in a church during their teen years have failed to translate that into active spirituality during their early adulthood.

David Kinnamen director of the research said: *"There is considerable debate about whether the disengagement of twentysomethings is a lifestage issue - that is, a predictable element in the progression of people's development as they go through various family, occupational and chronological stages - or whether it is unique to this generation. While there is some truth to both explanations, this debate misses the point, which is that the current state of ministry to twentysomethings is woefully*

inadequate to address the spiritual needs of millions of young adults. These individuals are making significant life choices and determining the patterns and preferences of their spiritual reality while churches wait, generally in vain, for them to return after college or when the kids come. When and if young adults do return to churches, it is difficult to convince them that a passionate pursuit of Christ is anything more than a nice add-on to their cluttered lifestyle."

From <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/147-most-twenty-somethings-put-christianity-on-the-shelf-following-spiritually-active-teen-years>

US Religious Landscape Survey. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008

17% of the members of evangelical churches in the USA are aged 18-29.

From <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/portrait-Evangelical+Churches.pdf>