

AGE DIFFERENCES

Summary

Major changes for single adult Christians in their experience of church occur at 30, 45 and 60.

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | | most say they are not treated as church 'family' members | |
| | | least feeling part of church community | |
| | most feel there is a presumption that something is wrong with them | | |
| | socialise less than others | | |
| most say the disappointment of being single causes them to doubt God has a plan for their life | | | most stop being worried about the future |
| most struggle with faith issues because single | | | most stop doubting God has a plan for their lives |
| most say they have problems with self-esteem | | | |
| < 30 | 30 - 44 | 45 - 59 | 60 + |

[Note: by 'most' it means that more agree with a statement than those that disagree.]

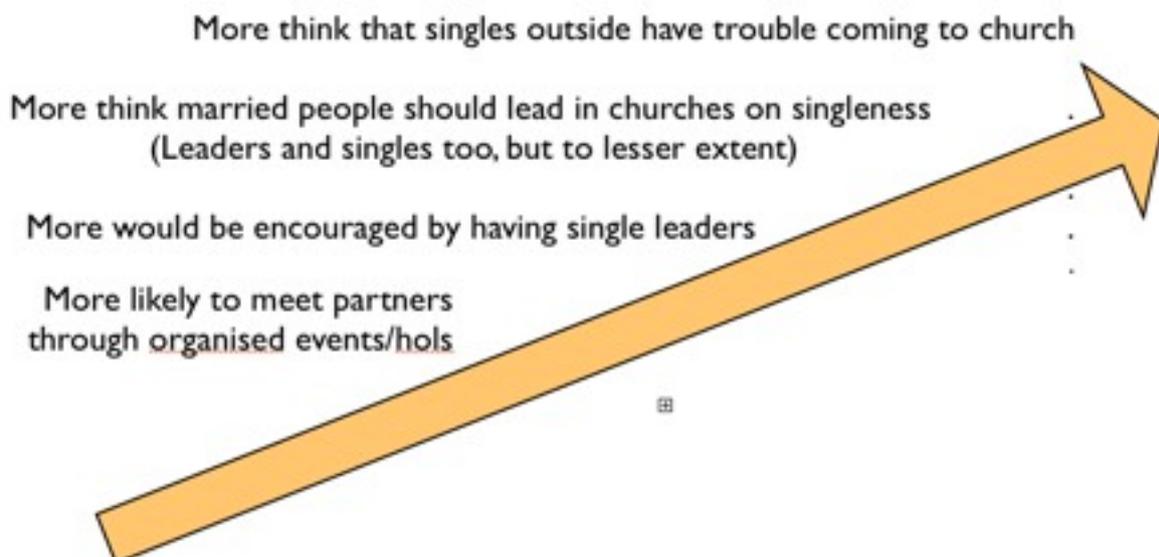
There are some general trends through the age groups.

About singleness:



About church:

Supporting singles:



Overview

One would expect there to be differences in attitude, views and behaviour between single adult Christians of different ages and there are.

First we tested at which age points such differences emerge, looking at bands starting 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45....etc. It would, for example, have been convenient to have tied results to the official UK National Statistics ten-year age bands. However, statistical analysis shows that there are four clear main groups <30, 30 - 44, 45 - 59, 60+ with changes of attitude and behaviour happening at 30, 45, and 60.

One can speculate about these particular points in relation to singleness, but some known factors are the following:

- The average age of first marriage in UK is 30 (slightly more for a man, slightly less for a woman). So someone single will move from being the majority to being in the minority.
- The age of 45 has two reasons for being distinctive. The first is it is the time when most women know that they will almost certainly not have children. The second is that it coincides with the deepest point of men's self-esteem [DN check recent data] - the so-called midlife crisis.
- The age of 60 has been the UK retirement age for working women until recently and is also reported to be the time when many both genders start making preparation for post-working life.

Although there are many general trends through age, some unexpected, there are specific changes that occur at 30, 45 and 60. We first address the general trends and then look at what happens that is distinctive for the different age bands.

General trends

There are some general trends across the age groups, whether increasing or decreasing:

A drift from Emerging, Student and city/town centre churches

- The numbers attending Emerging churches/ alternative worship and Student-focused churches both decline gradually. However even in the 60+ group, over 1 in 20 say they attend an Emerging church and just under 1 in 20 say they attend a student-focused church. They also move gradually away from City/town centre churches, from 5 in 10 to 4 in 10.

Single christians feel less part of their church community as they get older

- Single adult christians are (on average) positive about feeling part of the church community, however this declines over time, with a sharp drop at the age of 30. In parallel to this, as single Christians get older they think that single people outside the church find problems going to church just because they are single.

Trends in issues about singleness

- Work extra hours at least once each week to fill in the time, but steadily decreasing
- Enjoy less the freedom to make their own choices
- Become less worried about the future
- Have fewer problems with self-esteem
- Find it less difficult to go on holiday alone
- Increasingly think that married people should take lead in addressing needs and issues of singleness, with single people and leaders both increasing too, but much at much lower levels than the thinking that married people should do so.
- Decreasingly think that Christian organisations outside individual churches should do so.
- Increasingly feel that their own church can encourage single members by having singles in leadership roles.

Marriage trends

- Decline in being married as the expected and accepted lifestyle of the church
- Decline in hearing church leaders teach that Christians should only marry those who share their faith.
- Increasingly think best way to meet potential partners is through organised events and holidays

Specific issues for different age groups

< 45

- More than any other age group <30 and 30-44 year olds say that being on their own has made them struggle with their faith.
- In particular the disappointment of being single has caused them to doubt God has a plan for their lives.
- It is the age group that say it would help them to have more teaching, guidance or study materials to understand their faith in the context of being single.

30-60 year olds

- More 30-60 year olds agree than disagree that they feel as if there is a presumption there must be something wrong with them because they are single.
- They socialise less than the under 30s and over 60s.

45-60 year olds

- 45-60 year olds particularly say that they feel less accepted member of the congregation because single.
- However, they do enjoy the aspect of being single of having a more peaceful home than other age groups do.
- They participate in hobbies or sports once a week far less than others.

45-60+

- At the age of 45 and over, more people agree than disagree that the church says it is a family but doesn't treat singles as family members.
- They start to enjoy less the benefits of independence in singleness than those of younger ages.
- However, they more report they have less problems with self-esteem than younger age groups.
- Fewer report that being on their own has made them struggle with their faith.

60+

- Up to the age of 60, more people agree than disagree that they are worried about the future. This reverses at 60, and more report as being less worried.
- The disappointment of being single causing them to doubt God has a plan for their lives also changes, with fewer agreeing with this for the first time through the age groups.

AGE DIFFERENCES

Methodology

All relationships presented below are derived from identified associations which are significant at the $P < 0.001$ level.

(Although $P < 0.05$ is the conventional level of significance employed in scientific research, a more stringent threshold was used in this study, in order to account for multiple testing. Applying this more stringent P -value threshold substantially reduces the amount of false-positives reported from the data / information collected in this survey).

The following statistically significant differences by age were identified:

- Description of church most often attend:

| Emerging | |
|-----------|------|
| Age Group | % |
| <30 | 14.0 |
| 30-44 | 7.4 |
| 45-59 | 7.9 |
| 60+ | 6.4 |

| Student focused | |
|-----------------|------|
| Age Group | % |
| <30 | 18.0 |
| 30-44 | 10.9 |
| 45-59 | 5.4 |
| 60+ | 4.5 |

- Church location:

| City or Town Centre | |
|---------------------|------|
| Age Group | % |
| <30 | 50.1 |
| 30-44 | 49.0 |
| 45-59 | 42.8 |
| 60+ | 40.1 |

- Do you think that single people outside the church find particular problems about Christianity or to going to church simply because they are single:

Yes

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 22.9 |
| 30-44 | 28.0 |
| 45-59 | 34.4 |
| 60+ | 39.2 |

- Acceptance by the church:
 - I feel part of the church community (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 77.1 |
| 30-44 | 69.6 |
| 45-59 | 66.1 |
| 60+ | 67.3 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | 0.49 |
| 30-44 | 0.37 |
| 45-59 | 0.34 |
| 60+ | 0.34 |

- Being married is the expected and accepted lifestyle in the church (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 79.2 |
| 30-44 | 70.9 |
| 45-59 | 61.3 |
| 60+ | 55.7 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | 0.44 |
| 30-44 | 0.42 |
| 45-59 | 0.27 |
| 60+ | 0.17 |

- It feels as if there is presumption that there must be something wrong with me because I am single (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 35.1 |
| 30-44 | 44.5 |
| 45-59 | 36.4 |
| 60+ | 28.5 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | -0.05 |
| 30-44 | 0.06 |
| 45-59 | 0.03 |
| 60+ | -0.18 |

- I feel that I am a less accepted member of the congregation because I am single (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 19.0 |
| 30-44 | 28.0 |
| 45-59 | 30.3 |
| 60+ | 28.1 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | -0.32 |
| 30-44 | -0.18 |
| 45-59 | -0.15 |
| 60+ | -0.18 |

- The church says it is a family but doesn't treat singles as family members (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 24.6 |
| 30-44 | 36.9 |
| 45-59 | 44.4 |
| 60+ | 41.1 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | -0.23 |
| 30-44 | -0.04 |
| 45-59 | 0.04 |
| 60+ | 0.01 |

- Have you heard your church leader(s) teach that Christians should only marry those who share their faith? Yes, strongly

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 51.6 |
| 30-44 | 51.3 |
| 45-59 | 42.6 |
| 60+ | 36.7 |

- Being single I enjoy:

- The freedom to make my own choices (strongly agree/agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 69.0 |
| 30-44 | 65.5 |
| 45-59 | 64.7 |
| 60+ | 55.7 |

- A more peaceful home life (strongly agree/agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 32.9 |
| 30-44 | 45.3 |
| 45-59 | 49.5 |
| 60+ | 45.2 |

- Having my independence (strongly agree/agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 67.2 |
| 30-44 | 69.1 |
| 45-59 | 61.8 |
| 60+ | 54.5 |

- Problems due to singleness:
 - I am worried about my future (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 58.1 |
| 30-44 | 54.7 |
| 45-59 | 42.5 |
| 60+ | 36.0 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | 0.20 |
| 30-44 | 0.17 |
| 45-59 | 0.17 |
| 60+ | -0.06 |

- I have problems with self-esteem (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 57.2 |
| 30-44 | 47.6 |
| 45-59 | 42.7 |
| 60+ | 34.6 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | 0.20 |
| 30-44 | 0.07 |
| 45-59 | -0.03 |
| 60+ | -0.13 |

- Difficulty in doing hobbies / activities:
 - Going on holiday alone (Very difficult / difficult)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 16.2 |
| 30-44 | 13.8 |
| 45-59 | 7.8 |
| 60+ | 4.6 |

- Frequency in doing hobbies / activities:

- Socialising generally (At least once each week)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 52.6 |
| 30-44 | 40.5 |
| 45-59 | 34.0 |
| 60+ | 44.6 |

- Hobbies or sports (At least once each week)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 47.1 |
| 30-44 | 51.2 |
| 45-59 | 42.9 |
| 60+ | 50.0 |

- Working extra hours to fill time (At least once each week)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 24.2 |
| 30-44 | 23.3 |
| 45-59 | 20.1 |
| 60+ | 13.0 |

- How has being single impacted your faith:

- Being on my own has made me struggle with my faith (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 41.1 |
| 30-44 | 45.2 |
| 45-59 | 35.7 |
| 60+ | 27.0 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | 0.02 |
| 30-44 | 0.04 |
| 45-59 | -0.10 |
| 60+ | -0.19 |

- At times the disappointment of being single has caused me to doubt God has a plan for my life (Strongly agree / agree)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 49.8 |
| 30-44 | 57.9 |
| 45-59 | 44.3 |
| 60+ | 33.5 |

| Age Group | Positivity Rating |
|-----------|-------------------|
| <30 | 0.07 |
| 30-44 | 0.18 |
| 45-59 | 0.00 |
| 60+ | -0.14 |

- Best way to meet potential partners:

- Going to pubs or clubs

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|-----|
| <30 | 7.5 |
| 30-44 | 6.1 |
| 45-59 | 3.0 |
| 60+ | 3.7 |

- Through organised events and holidays

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 15.3 |
| 30-44 | 24.6 |
| 45-59 | 30.2 |
| 60+ | 34.7 |

- Do you think the church's teaching on sex tends to deter people making or staying with their Christian commitment:

- I think it has this effect for many people today (Yes)

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 56.3 |
| 30-44 | 46.2 |
| 45-59 | 42.3 |
| 60+ | 42.7 |

- Would it help to have some more teaching, guidance or study materials to help you understand your faith in the context of being single:

Yes, I would like to learn more in this area

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 53.7 |
| 30-44 | 54.4 |
| 45-59 | 40.4 |
| 60+ | 29.7 |

- How do you feel your own church could better encourage its single members? (you can select more than one option):

Encourage singles in leadership roles

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 67.4 |
| 30-44 | 67.3 |
| 45-59 | 70.5 |
| 60+ | 78.7 |

- Who do you feel is responsible for addressing the needs of single Christians and reaching out to single people outside of the church?

- Leaders in the church

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 19.3 |
| 30-44 | 16.4 |
| 45-59 | 26.2 |
| 60+ | 30.1 |

- Single people in the church

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 26.4 |
| 30-44 | 26.0 |
| 45-59 | 33.5 |
| 60+ | 34.2 |

- Married people in the church

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 54.8 |
| 30-44 | 56.2 |
| 45-59 | 66.2 |
| 60+ | 77.0 |

- Christian organisations outside of individual churches

| Age Group | % |
|-----------|------|
| <30 | 68.1 |
| 30-44 | 56.9 |
| 45-59 | 51.7 |
| 60+ | 45.4 |