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| **Religiosity and Social Groups** |
| **GENDER DIFFERENCES** |
| **Davie (2013)*** Most churchgoers are female, and attend more regularly than men (outnumbering men by almost half a million)
* 55% of women say they have a religion, vs 44% of men (British Social Attitudes survey, 2012)
* 38% of women say religion is important to them, vs 26% of men, and 40% of women describe themselves as spiritual vs 28% of men
* 34% of women are agnostic or atheist, vs 54% men
* In all major religions, except for Sikhism, women are more likely to practise their religion
* Women express greater interest in religion and have a stronger personal commitment

**Reasons:*** ***Risk, Socialisation and Role:*** Miller and Hoffman suggest that as men are less risk-averse than women, they are more likely to take the risk of ‘going to hell’ by not being religious. Women are also more passive, obedient and caring which are values valued by most religions. Lastly, women’s gender roles mean that they have more time to incorporate religion into their lives i.e. they can organise their time around part-time work or care work at home, as well as finding a source of gender identity within the church. Davie (2013) also argues that women closer to birth and death e.g. child-bearing, and caring for the elderly so religion can answer the ‘ultimate’ questions for them.
* ***Paid Work:*** Bruce (1996; 2011) argues that women have less of a role in full-time paid work and so have more time to practise ‘privatised’ religion at home. Although since the 1960s there has been an increase in females in the work place, meaning there has been a steady decline of women in religion. However it is suggested that religion is still more attractive to women for two reasons:
* Religion has a strong affinity with values such as caring for others – a primary role still adopted by women
* Men’s withdrawal form religion means the church has become more feminised, so concerns such as caring and relationships were focused on more. This coupled with the introduction of female priests in the Church of England in 1994 and women bishops in 2015 meant that female strength in religion was reinforced
* ***Women and the New Age:*** New age movements incorporate more feminine ideas e.g. ‘nature’ and healing (80% of members in the holistic milieu in Kendal were female). This gives women a higher self-worth. Women may also feel torn between their instrumental role in the work place, and their expressive role at home so Woodhead (2001) proposed that New Age religions create a ‘third sphere’ for women known as the *individual sphere* (concerned with autonomy and personal growth rather than role performance). Callum Brown (2009) states that New Age religions appeal to women to allow for further autonomy, however some women may be attracted to fundamentalism because of the traditional gender role it provides. But, there is also a difference in class systems of women; white middle-class women are attracted to New Age beliefs because of the focus on autonomy and self-development, whereas working-class women are more attracted to ideas that give them a passive role such as a belief in and all-powerful god or fatalistic ideas such as superstition, horoscopes and lucky charms.
* ***Women, Compensators and Sects:*** Bruce estimates there are twice as many women as men in sects. Stark and Bainbridge (1985) argue that people may participate in sects because they act as a compensation for relative deprivation. These forms of deprivation are more common among women:
* Organismic deprivation: stems from physical and mental health problems – sects offer healing.
* Ethical deprivation: women are more morally conservative, so see the world more in moral decline which is the view of most sects also.
* Social deprivation: sects attract poorer groups and women are more likely to be poor
* ***The Pentecostal Gender Paradox:*** Pentecostalism has grown since the 1970s, and is a male-dominated church with all its clergy being male. However, it has appealed to women because it demands that it’s followers adopt an ascetic (self-denying) lifestyle. It also insists on a traditional gender division of labour that requires men to provide for their family. Pentecostal women use the ideas to combat machismo in Latin America where men spend 20-40% of their income on alcohol, tobacco, gambling and prostitutes. These Pentecostal men are then pressured by the church to change their ways, act responsibly and redirect money into the household, which improves the standard of living for women and children (Elizabeth Brusco, 1995; 2012). Ann Drogus also explains that although the official doctrine is that men should have authority over women, the church magazines and educational materials often encourage more equal relations in a marriage.
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| **ETHNIC DIFFERENCES** |
| * The largest religious group in the UK are those referring to themselves as Christians (72%), but there are significant numbers of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, almost all of whom belong to ethnic minorities originiating in the Indian subcontinent, while many Christians are black African or Caribbean origin
* In London, Brierley (2013) found that black people are twice as likely to attend church as whites
* Muslims, Hindus and black Christians are considerably more likely than white Christians to see their religion as important and ato attend a place of worship every week
* Among Christians, blacks are more likely than whites to be found in the Pentecostal churches (they make up 40% of membership)
* However, Modood et al (1994) found some decline in the importance of religion for all ethnic groups, and that fewer were observant, especially among the second generation

**Reasons:*** ***Cultural Defence:*** religion can offer support and a sense of identity in an uncertain or hostile environment. Bird (1999) explains that religion can act to enforce community solidarity for minorities, preserving the culture and language, and coping with oppression in a racist society. White Christian churches have been known to be unwelcoming to black African and Caribbean Christians, and so these minorities turned to founding or joining black-led churches, especially Pentecostal churches (recent immigration has seen a significant growth of new churches in London catering for specific languages and nationalities as a result of recent immigration)
* ***Cultural Transition:*** Religion can help ease people into a new culture by supporting the individuals and giving a sense of community in their new environment. Bruce saw this pattern in the Irish, African Caribbean, Muslim, Hindu and other communities. However once a group e.g. Irish Catholics has made the transition into the wider society, religion may lose its role and decline in importance.
* Ken Pryce (1979) studied the African Caribbean community in Bristol and argues that Pentecostalism is a highly adaptive ‘religion of the oppressed’ that provided migrants with values appropriate to the new world in which they found themselves. It helped African Caribbeans to adapt to British society, encouraging self-reliance and thrift. It gave people mutual support and hope of improving their situation. On the other hand, Rastafarianism represented a different response for some African Caribbeans radically rejecting the wider society as racist and explosive.
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| **AGE DIFFERENCES** |
| * The general pattern is that the older a person is, the more likely they are to attend religious services
* However, the under 15s are generally more likely to go to church than those in most of the age groups above them – they may have less choice and be made to go by their parents
* There is a clear trend, however, in all other age groups apart from those aged 65 and over whereby church attendance is falling sharply (especially among the young)
* The number of 15-19 year olds is projected to fall by half between 2015 and 2025 (from 126,000 63,000)
* As Brierley describes it, by 2025 15-19 yr olds will make up just 2.5% of all churchgoers. Half of all English churches will have no-one under 20 attending

**Reasons:*** ***Voas and Crockett (2005):*** Suggested three reasons:
* ***The ageing effect:*** People turn to religion as they get older, because they become more interested in spirituality, and as we approach death we ‘naturally’ become more concerned about spiritual matters and the afterlife, repentance of past misdeeds and so on, so we go to church
* ***The period or cohort effect:*** people born during a particular period will be more religious e.g. war, social change
* ***Secularisation:*** as religion declines in importance, each generation becomes less religious than the one before. This is the most commonly used explanation, with the most evidence.
* ***Arweck and Beckford (2013):*** Describe the ‘virtual collapse of religious socialisation’ after the 1960s e.g. Sunday School have all but disappeared, when in the 50s enrolled 1/3 of 14-yr-olds. According to Voas (2003) even parents who share the same faith have only a 50/50 chance of raising their child to be a churchgoer as an adult. When they are of different faiths, the chances fall to one in four.
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