

Godless UK: A quarter of Britons have no religion with Christians increasingly likely to be retired people

- One in four people in Britain no longer believes in any religion
- Figure rises to more than a third of under 25s
- 2011 census shows number of Christians fell by 4.1million

By Steve Doughty

One in four people no longer believes in any religion, official analysis of national census returns found yesterday. It revealed Christianity is in decline and Christians are increasingly likely to be older or retired people. Many young people, young men in particular, appear to be rejecting religious belief altogether. Nearly one in three under-25s – 32 per cent – say they do not have a religion.



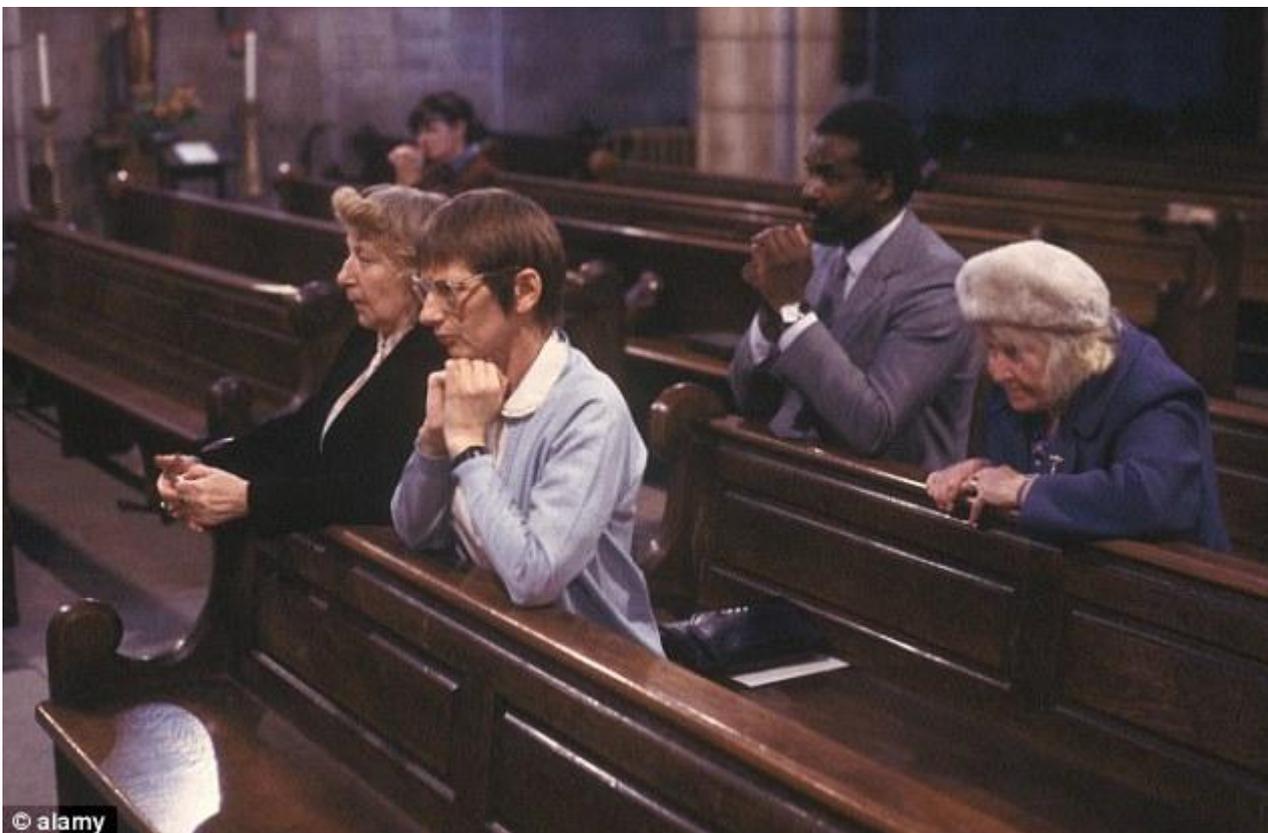
Dwindling: The number of Christians in Britain has fallen by 4.1million in the past decade

The rise of atheism has gathered pace in the decade since 2001, the census showed, a period when churches found themselves under pressure from equality laws and secular groups. At the same time the UK's second-biggest religion, Islam, frequently found itself on the defensive because of the actions of extremist groups. The 2011 census showed the number of Christians fell by 4.1million to 33.2million. Of these, only a third attend church outside of weddings, baptisms or funerals.

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There was a 45 per cent rise over the same period in those who say they have no religion, to 14.1million in 2011. While the decline of religion was at its fastest among young people, there has been 'an increase in the reporting of no religion across all groups between 2001 and 2011', the Office for National Statistics said.



Change: Christianity is in decline and Christians are increasingly likely to be older or retired people

More than nine out of ten of those without religion are white and born in Britain, and they include the highest proportion of people who are in work of any group of believers or non-believers. The city where religion is in the greatest decline is Norwich, where 42.5 per cent of the population say they have no belief.

But there are five areas where more than half those under 25 say they have no religion: Norwich and Brighton and Hove in England, and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, and Rhondda Cynon Taf in Wales. The most Christian area in England and Wales was Knowsley on Merseyside, where more than four out of five people, 81 per cent, professed Christianity.