

Taking action

What we want to lobby national church organisations to do:

- ✦ Undertake a national audit of marital status to see if the Church is reflecting the 1 in 3 single adults or is losing single adults at a time when they are increasing in number.
- ✦ Commission a theological perspective and, if necessary, a national action plan
- ✦ Provide training for church leaders and members about singleness

What we encourage church leaders to do:

- ✦ Be intentional about welcoming and accepting single adults
- ✦ Appoint a member of leadership team to be accountable for single adults in the congregation, including the over 30s.
- ✦ Review church programme to ensure either blindness to marital status or events for those of different marital status.
- ✦ Encourage sharing meals together and formation of friendships in the church
- ✦ Support single adult Christians in their singleness and facilitate them meeting and dating others if they wish to find a partner

What we urge single adult Christians to do:

- ✦ Take results of the Christian Connection survey to their church leaders and discuss
- ✦ Get connected with other single Christians, in church, locality or national organisations
- ✦ Follow passion, giftings and ministry opportunities.

Contact us

If you are interested in finding out more, getting involved, or if you would like more leaflets like this, please either contact us at:

single@christianconnection.co.uk

or go to

christianconnection.co.uk/single

Support and interest is welcome from anybody. You don't even have to be single!

CHRISTIAN CONNECTION

www.christianconnection.co.uk

All data from the Christian Connection 2012 survey Singleness and the Church. Supporting data from Office of National Statistics, UK.

The Single Adult in Church

What's the story?
What needs to happen?
Taking action

1 in 3 people in UK are neither married nor cohabiting.

For every family or couple, there is a single person, including those who have never married, divorced and not remarried, single parents, and the widowed. Their number in society is increasing.

In 2012, **Christian Connection**, the leading UK Online Christian Dating site ran the first large survey of single adult Christians in UK on their experience, thoughts, beliefs and behaviour.

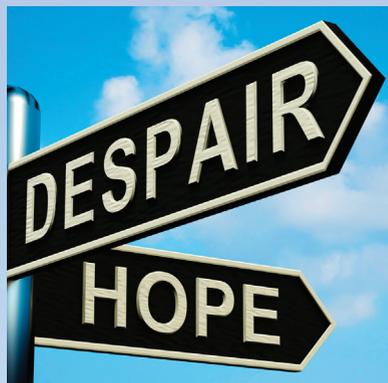
Over 3,000 people responded.

Committed single adult Christians often feel alienated, isolated and lonely in their churches and left out. Protestant churches in particular are often

family-based and celebrate aspects of family life. Over half of our single respondents say that they felt the church does not know what to do them, particularly 30-60 year olds. However, some churches support single adults well and we can learn from them what to do well.

A fully inclusive ministry?

Single adults want be included fully into the life of the church. Churches that do singleness well have been praised for:



1. Making no differentiation between people based on their marital status, for example by treating everyone as individual rather than as a member of a family group and not having any compartmentalised programming based on marital status.

2. Developing a church programme that addresses all marital status groups equally, whether married, single, divorced, parent or widowed.

A singles ministry?

Nearly 2 out of every 3 single adult Christians say that a member of the church leadership should be specifically accountable for singles ministry.

Men want and need the ministry more than women. Men (on average) manage being single less well than women, in terms of happiness, acceptance of being single, management of their day to day lives, and their faith.

Part of the problem for men in the church is the gender imbalance. The lack of men in most churches leads to a lack of good role models, weak attraction to the church for those not yet members and absence of men with whom to form the usual patterns of male friendship.

Women realise they are likely to remain single much earlier because of the gender imbalance and get on with organising their lives to be fulfilling as far as possible. They also socialise and enjoy spending time with friends more.

Overcoming the false stereotype of a 'single'

There is a false stereotype of the single adult, social psychologists report. Married people can think of

them as immature, selfish, emotionally illiterate with a need to overcome childhood traumas. There is no evidence for this. Christian books trying to 'fix' single people are based on a false premise. There is no current scientific evidence that single people in general (there may be a tiny percentage) have any more difficulty in maintaining close and personal relationships than those who are married.

In the church, there are more women than men. Anyone could get married. However, most Christians seek a partner who shares their faith, preferring to stay single than marry out of the faith. Most are single by circumstance and choice. Other Christians should honour their faithfulness and support them fully.

Act as well as teach

There are big differences between types of church. Traditional churches are much more accepting of all irrespective of their marital status. Those described as evangelical, charismatic, student-focused or lively teach marrying in the faith and sexual abstinence before marriage.

Some give good guidance and advice on how to live well as a single and support in finding a partner. Others, including many evangelical churches, generally do not - probably because there is little in the Bible on the topic.

If it is taught that members of the church should marry in the faith, then there should be support for developing a Christian culture of meeting, dating and marrying.

