

# Young Finnish women associate ‘religiosity’ with patriarchal values, study suggests

BY REBECCA PAVELEY 07 JANUARY 2022

YOUNG women are turning away from the Church because of its association with patriarchal values, a study in Finland suggests.

The four-year study from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland, *Religion in Daily life and in Celebration*, analysed data from existing surveys, including Gallup Ecclesiastica, the European Values Survey, and its own church statistics, to study shifts in values between generations, from the generation born after the First World War through to Generation Z, born in the 1990s.

The most stark difference was found in attitudes to religion. More than three out of five people in the post-First World War generation considered religion to be important. In contrast, this view was held by less than one in five in Generations Y and Z.

The decline in those prepared to identify themselves as religious was sharpest of all among young women, researchers found.

“These findings suggest that the perceived association of religiosity with patriarchy is a factor that strongly alienates people from Christianity. At least at the level of imagination, Finns still associate ‘religiosity’ with patriarchal values. It is symptomatic that in European comparison Finnish women belonging to the youngest generations were the least prepared to identify as religious. Women’s identification as religious has collapsed more sharply in Finland than anywhere else in Europe,” the study says.

The decline, it suggests, has been driven by huge shifts in family values. While the family was still considered important, perception of family happiness now centred on gender equality and opportunities for individual fulfilment, compared with previous generations’ emphasis on children and stable finances, researchers said.

Millennials — those aged between 30 and 40 in Generation Y — are the least religious generation in Finland. This, with young women’s hostility to religion, is expected to have a significant impact on the handing down of Christian traditions to future generations. The researchers urged the Church to listen closely to millennials.

“These are the Finns of the optimal age for starting a family and in their work life. Their views are increasingly reflected in the societal debate on both family life and work culture. Their approach to religion will affect many issues central to the Church in the near future. Young women’s reluctance to be identified as religious

especially will quickly be reflected in the handing on of the Christian tradition in Finland.”

Religion had reached a “cultural tipping point” in Finland, and being religious would now be increasingly seen as an anomaly; cultural Christianity had collapsed, and, in some ways, Christianity was now “countercultural”, researchers said.

The report recommends that the Church respond by listening to millennials and speaking up more on moral challenges, including human rights and climate change. The Church should also “strongly emphasise” non-patriarchal forms of Christian spirituality and develop ways to “make spiritual life meaningful in modern times”.

“It must consider both the individual’s need of silence and withdrawal from a multitude of stimuli, and the opportunities for action for the benefit of the environment and creation,” it says.

Churches should be left open for silent meditation, worship must take account of the increasing number of people living alone, and online services should continue beyond the pandemic, the report recommends.

[https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/7-january/news/world/young-finnish-women-associate-religiosity-with-patriarchal-values-study-suggests?utm\\_campaign=Church%20Times%20RSS%20Daily%20bulletin%202.0&utm\\_source=emailCampaign&utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/7-january/news/world/young-finnish-women-associate-religiosity-with-patriarchal-values-study-suggests?utm_campaign=Church%20Times%20RSS%20Daily%20bulletin%202.0&utm_source=emailCampaign&utm_content=&utm_medium=email)

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