

## Modernity and secularism

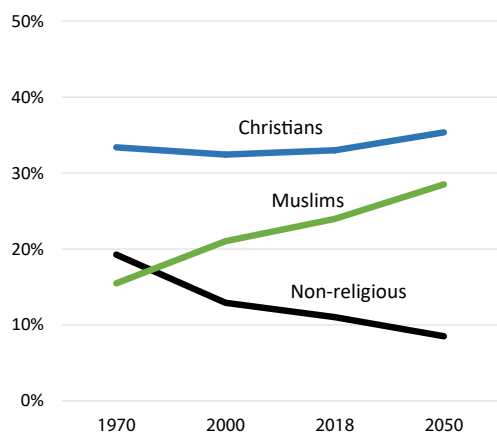
People who say they are 'non-religious' or 'not religious but spiritual' make up about 11% of the world's population. They were less than 0.2% in 1900. Many of these non-religious have a Christian background. But at the same time, other people are turning away from non-religious beliefs - often tied to Communism - and putting their faith in Christ. Also, non-religious populations have a lower birthrate than the world as a whole. The net effect is that the non-religious proportion of human population peaked around 1980 and is now in relative decline globally, even though it is growing fast in some places.

The challenge posed to the Church by the rise of the post-Christian non-religious is formidable, and a challenge the Church has yet to rise to; it is one of the great calls to prayer and action for the 21st century.

### Modernity, secularism and urban youth

The rise of non-religious, post-Christian ways of thinking and living is strongest among young people. The emerging global youth culture, connected by consumerism, social media, and the entertainment industry, forms the largest global culture ever to exist. It spans the world, embracing the same values, listening to the same music, subscribing to the same YouTube

Religious Affiliation as % of Global Population



channels, and following the same influencers on social media.

The global youth culture is impacting cultures in urban centres in every region, in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, as well as in the West.

Pray that the Church will learn to effectively communicate Jesus as the truth and hope for the non-religious, through loving actions even more than through profound words.

The need for a globalized, youth-oriented and viral incarnation of the gospel to reach millions has never been more urgent. Pray for a great work of God!

## FRANCE



This European nation of 65 million people is one of the world's leading economic, cultural and military powers. It is the world's favourite tourist destination. Along with Germany it has been the main driver for European integration. Though France is rich, educated, and free, an inability to reform may be storing up debt and decline for the future.

France is a secular country living in the shadow of the Catholic Church. Religion was removed from state schools in the 19th century and only one state university (Strasbourg) has a theology department. Around half of French people claim to be Catholic, but churchgoing is very low. The non-religious percentage is climbing fast towards 40%. Yet the Christian decline has brought humility and a desire for renewal in the churches. Many French Catholics have started to use the Alpha Course effectively.

The Protestant Reformation, initially tolerated, was stifled in France when Louis XIV (1638-1715) persecuted and then expelled the Protestant community. In today's less turbulent times, evangelicals are growing again but from a low base. There is a vibrant church planting movement among evangelicals in France.

Islam is growing and France's 8% or so Muslim population is the largest in Europe, made up of people of North African heritage who typically crowd into the larger cities and are poorer and less well-integrated than the norm.

- Pray for the steady flow of French people meeting Christ to deepen and grow!
- Very few Christians are working among France's Muslim community. Pray for this to change, and for the Holy Spirit to work powerfully.

## FINLAND



This prosperous Northern European state of five million people often tops the world in measures of human development. Its

state Lutheran Church is more evangelical than many in Europe. It has a strong Pentecostal tradition also. Yet fewer than 2% of Finns are weekly church attenders and numbers of 'non-religious' are rising, especially among the young. Finland experienced revival in the 1960s.

- Pray for a new awakening in Finland that will turn many back to Christ.