

# Under-35s more likely to adopt (and drop) religion

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Religion is no longer something inherited from parents but is more of a lifestyle choice for under-35s, who feel freer to adopt — and abandon — a faith to suit their mental health needs, a study has found.

Generation Z and younger millennials are 38 per cent more likely than older generations to adopt or convert to a faith because they have a desire for “personal transformation or healing”. However, they are more than twice as likely to abandon that faith if they feel “a lack of belonging or support in the community”.

They are also reluctant to follow the call for religious faith to become a core part of their identity.

The study, conducted by the Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL), found participation in a religion was “no longer solely approached as a matter of doctrine, social inheritance or community” among younger people.

Instead, those aged between 18 and 35 saw faith as “a deliberate and personal tool for fostering emotional wellbeing and fulfilment”, researchers said.

The proportion of Christians has fallen to a record low in Britain, overwhelmingly driven by the rise in people who say they have no religion.

Surveys suggest those aged between 35 and 60 — older millennials and Generation X — are among the least religious generations in

British history and the most likely to identify as atheists.

This also means they are less likely to have a faith to pass on to their children.

This may also reduce the pressure on them: 37 per cent of under-35s said they felt “free and supported” in choosing to join or leave a religion compared with 24 per cent of over-65s.

Charlotte Littlewood, director of research at IIFL, said: “Today’s younger generations prize the freedom to choose, or not to choose, faith, and are doing so through a wellbeing-led lens.”

Older generations appear less inclined to give up religion and more likely to value the “communal and social bonds that it provides”, according to the report, to be published this week.

The report is based on a survey of 2,774 adults by Whitestone Insight, a polling company.