Middle-aged abandon 'Club 18-34' city centres

Nicholas Hellen, Social Affairs Editor

Chris Hodkinson and Julia Champagne, who live near the national assembly building in Cardiff, say most of the people in their area are of a similar age.

The young and elderly have grown so far apart in Britain's cities that young adults are effectively living in "Club 18-34" neighbourhoods.

A report by the Intergenerational Foundation charity says mixed communities are dying out, with city centres increasingly dominated by the under-30s as the middle-aged move to the suburbs.

The study argues that a sharp rise in age segregation over the past 25 years has undermined trust and understanding between generations as they have less face-to-face contact. Older people in the UK now have a less positive impression of the young than anywhere else in Europe.

Nigel Wilson, chief executive of the financial services company Legal & General, which funded the research, said: "We have created an inter generationally unfair society."

While racial segregation is a familiar concern, the rise of age segregation and its impact has been little studied.

In many districts of London, the older generation is all but disappearing

Researchers found Cardiff is the most age-segregated city in England and Wales. While the average age of a Briton is 40, the average in the Cardiff Bay area of the Welsh capital has fallen to below 30 since its redevelopment during the 1990s.

Across the city a typical 18 to 34-year-old lives in a neighbourhood where 80% are in the same age group.

It is a similar story in Brighton, the second most age-segregated city, where the average age of people living in a corridor connecting the coast with the East Sussex village of Falmer is also below 30. Both Brighton and Sussex universities have campuses in the area.

Nationally, the level of segregation in cities between 18 to 34-year-olds and pensioners has doubled in 25 years. A typical child grows up in neighbourhoods where only 5% of people are pensioners.

Half the population in the centres of London, Manchester and Birmingham is under the age of 30, while in areas of Newham, east London, half the population is under 25.

By contrast, rural areas have aged nearly twice as fast as urban ones over the past 25 years. The median age is now 50, compared with 38 in the main urban areas. The gap has risen from seven years to 12 years since 1991.

Along the Suffolk coast between Ipswich and Lowestoft, the average age of the whole population has risen between 10 to 15 years over that period.

In many districts of London, however, the older generation is all but disappearing. The average age in large swathes of east London has dropped by up to five years and two neighbourhoods have seen a fall of up to a decade.

The report, entitled Generations Apart?, measured age segregation using techniques developed to calculate racial segregation in America.

Recommendations in the study to revive mixed communities include the provision of additional two-bedroom homes for "downsizers", the building of more properties to buy and rent and the lifting of building restrictions on "environmentally poor" parts of the green belt.

@nicholashellen

comments

Drunken Max Sep 18, 2016
What an ill thought out article. Its all about the growth in city centre apartments which younger people prefer. If you mapped the population growth against age they would match. Older people want a garden etc. I bet you would also see a correlation between couples with and without children with those with kids needing schools etc. moving out.

Alan Thorpe Sep 18, 2016
From experience, never live in a university city. I live away from the universities in Brighton and there are endless complaints about the areas taken over by students. They should pay council tax if not living on campus. That would wake them up to the realities of life. I have a friend in Bournemouth and that is no different.

Heather Sep 18, 2016
This wouldn't have anything to do with the massive increase in the educational sector (more universities)? There's money in training and education.

Many cities are over-run with students and student accommodation, for e.g. Canterbury, Chester.   The locals get edged out.   A consequence is that the city centres become more expensive to rent or buy in, and accommodation gets scarcer for the residents as whole areas get taken over by students.

Eating places, pubs, entertainment is geared towards the late teens and early twenties groups. It's no wonder people move out.

Martin Bell Sep 18, 2016
Sounds like Earls Court in the 1970s. Young people will always gravitate to inner cities where they can find work, education, bed sits and other young people. Couples with school age children will generally move out to the suburbs and rural commuter villages with mono cultural schools. The retired, who don't have to work, have taken their pensions and house equity to picturesque rural areas and the coast, where they have group medical practices, Tesco online, U3A, fast broadband in the local flea pit streaming from the ROH, and Skype to talk to the grandchildren. It's called the IT revolution. Get used to it.

Peter Wright Sep 18, 2016
The problem with being 18-34 is that one day you will be 60-76 and at the tender age it is hard to see that what goes around comes around.

Iwona Stephenson Sep 18, 2016
I need to feel the wind in my greying hair. I want to pick strawberries barefoot. That's a big ask in Newham.

Kalobo Sep 18, 2016
Now, there's a surprise: there are more young people in areas with universities. Well, I never! Furthermore, what about that maybe people above a certain age prefer to have some greenery around them and start to re-evaluate their life's and what is important to them?

Heather Sep 18, 2016
@Kalobo
It's more to do with life being made uncomfortable being surrounded by silly and noisy students, who think they're the only ones that matter.

I had to move out of the city centre because of them, not only are they noisy and thoughtless they all appear to have cars, poverty stricken though they are said to be. I used to finish work on some shifts at 2am and started to be unable to get a parking spot. They park on two spaces as well.
I've also been kept awake until the early hours with noise, when I was on a 6am start.

Since I left (15 years ago) the whole area has been taken over by students. It used to be an area where single people could always find a room to rent. No more.
All the pubs and eateries are geared towards them. The mix of age groups has disappeared on the social scene.

All their accommodation is advertised as being convenient for walking to the city centre, rail station, shops, etc. The locals are

pushed out and have to use transport.

And students don't pay council tax!

Thomas Ballantyne Sep 18, 2016
Nice picture. I'm guessing that they're not truly representative of the population of inner cities. The reality is, those who can, are fleeing to the suburbs to escape the encroachment of so called diversity and multiculturalism, which is turning large swathes of the nation into another country.

John Halpin Sep 18, 2016
The older generation resident inowner occupied former council properties within city centres like London are selling up and to moving near to their children and grandchildren who have previously moved to the suburbs .
It makes sense the value of these properties enables the owners to buy cheaper properties in suburbia releasing a considerable amount of surplus cash at the same time.
The older generation has no desire to live on the 15th floor of a new residential block in the City centre overlooking grid lock traffic and high levels of pollution hence the exodus from the city. On the other hand it appears young people are happy to rent in the city centre near their workplaces. From what I can see there is no evidence to suggest the young are avoiding the old.

Newminster Sep 18, 2016
But that is the effect if not the intention.
And the less contact there is between age groups the less understanding. So my age group gets howled at by "the young" for betraying their future by voting leave in the referendum when in reality the majority of people that I know voted remain. (Never mind that they didn't bother to vote at all, half of them!). And

there are other examples. We tend to stereotype people we don't come into contact with because it is easier than making the effort to understand them.