

# 21st Century Evangelicals

A snapshot of the beliefs and habits of  
evangelical Christians in the UK - Summer 2012

## The world on our doorstep?



Research by the Evangelical Alliance

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# Foreword

Early in 2011 the Evangelical Alliance produced the report of our groundbreaking snapshot survey of some 17,000 *21st Century Evangelicals*. Now in partnership with 10 of our member organisations who have come together to form our Research Club we are committed to an ongoing programme of research based on quarterly online surveys with our research panel of evangelical Christians.

Each survey covers one of a range of different issues which help map out the beliefs, habits and practices of evangelical Christians in the UK today. This fourth report in the series asks: “Are we going global?” In what is an exciting time for the world Church, it looks at the UK’s links with the worldwide Church overseas through missions and development work, support for the persecuted Church, awareness of the global village in our own neighbourhoods and churches, and attitudes to various international issues.

The focus is timely. This summer will see the arrival in London of thousands of sportsmen and women and millions of spectators for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our survey includes a whole section dedicated to engagement with this great international event and explores the opportunities for mission that might arise.

The research shows a fascinating picture of trends and concerns about the worldwide Church. While it is encouraging to see how many people pray for and donate to other Christians around the world, especially when there is persecution, war or famine, there is limited evidence of deeper, practical engagement such as political lobbying or missionary service. There are also signs that younger evangelicals may not be as committed to supporting world mission as the older generation.

Even so, there is much to celebrate. Christians on the whole have a good awareness of the wider world and the Church overseas. There is widespread support for continued government commitment to international aid and development. Many have travelled and visited churches across the world, or have personal connections through their families, friends or churches. Attitudes towards the developing world, towards immigration, and towards Muslim neighbours are largely positive, reflecting the grace and love that is in Christ.

Those surveyed showed little sign of a Christianity which is merely a traditional national religion. Instead, they related to a global Church.

We hope that our report will spark greater interest in world mission, and that it will strengthen further the strong relationships between Christians in the UK and our brothers and sisters in other countries.

**Steve Clifford**  
General Director,  
Evangelical Alliance





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# About the survey

We are thankful to those who participate in the research panel for these reports.

In early February 2012, just under 3,000 members of the *21st Century Evangelicals* Research Panel were invited to take part in the latest wave of our online survey. The topic this time looked at our links with the global church.

By the end of the month 1,151 people had responded. The overall response rate was an excellent 38.5% which included nearly three quarters of the people who had taken part in our autumn survey on the family, and more than four out of every five of the people who had subsequently signed up to join the survey panel.

As usual in these surveys we need to begin with a warning that because we are using an opportunity sample of self-selecting volunteers, we cannot say that these findings are fully representative of the whole population of evangelical Christians in the UK. We can hope however, that it does paint a fair picture of keen and committed evangelicals, the kind of people who are likely to be influential in their local churches and communities. The sample is large

enough to explore in a meaningful way significant differences of attitudes and behaviour between various sub-groups in the sample. As usual in these surveys we shall look at differences by gender, age group and denomination, and in addition because of the current topic we will use length of residence in the UK in the breakdown of data.

The demographics analysis of the panel suggests:

An almost equal number of men and women, although men outnumber women by three to two among the over-55s and women predominated in the younger age groups. The proportion of men is relatively high compared with churchgoers as a whole, particularly for the older group. (In the last church census about 42% of evangelical churchgoers were male, with the percentage reducing with age). It may well reflect the greater likelihood of (older) men to engage with such surveys, particularly when they are carried out online.

A concentration of respondents in London and south-east England

(in line with the overall population distribution) with the East Midlands and south-west England well represented and a noticeable shortage of respondents in the north-east England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

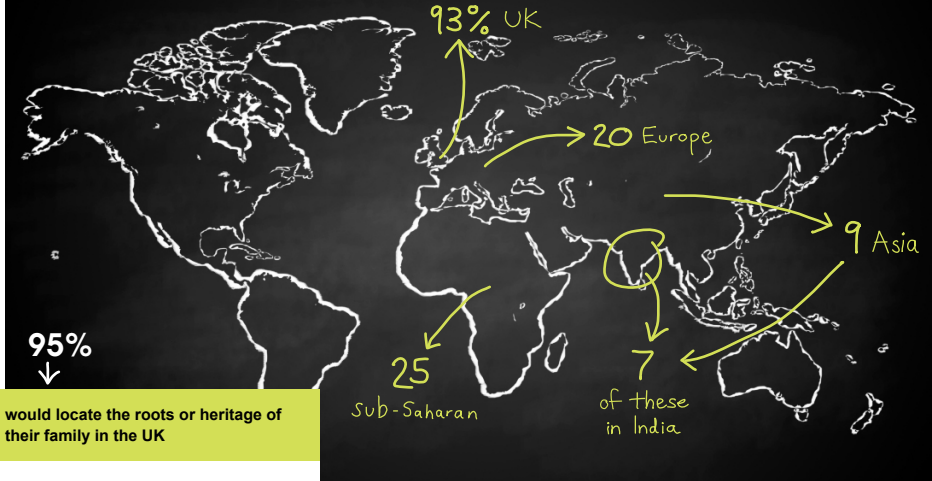
There is a wide spread of denominations represented with Anglicans accounting for a third of the sample, Charismatics for one on five, followed by Baptists and other Free Church denominations. Pentecostals, at only 6% were probably under-represented.

All except three respondents were happy to call themselves committed Christians, and 91.7% to describe themselves as evangelicals. Only 2.1% rejected the label 'evangelical' but 6.2% were hesitant about applying it to themselves.

*For anyone with an interest in more detailed research, additional data tables can be made available on request. Please email [g.smith@cauk.org](mailto:g.smith@cauk.org) for further information.*

# Overseas experience

Where were our respondents born?



although 120 people (10.6%) mentioned another heritage country – half of them alongside the UK and half without mentioning the UK. Again Europe was most often mentioned (with Ireland being the most frequently named country) followed by African nations and India. The respondents with some roots outside the UK were well spread across the country, although there was some concentration of them in London.

81%

had lived in the UK all their life

and a further 17% for more than 15 years. Less than 1% had never left these shores, and

62%

had travelled abroad within the last year.

It is significant that over-55s and under-35s are more likely to be recent overseas travellers, possibly as a consequence of lower disposable income plus work and family ties among the middle age group. Those who have lived overseas are also more likely to have been recent overseas travellers.

66%

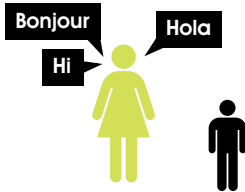
could speak only English

23%

could speak one additional language

11%

could speak two or more additional languages



In our sample, women appear to be rather more fluent linguists than men. And it is clear that those who have some roots or period of residence outside the UK are also more likely to be bi- or multilingual.

After French with 194 speakers, German (69) and Spanish (39) the other languages spoken are illustrated below.





**68%**

**had a family member or close friends who either in the past have served or are currently serving Christ overseas.**

Some 8% have a family member currently overseas, and 29% a close friend.

Over 98% have been to Europe and nearly 75% to North America. Women were less likely to have been to North America and the Middle East (muslim majority context), possibly as more men have travelled on business. Older people were more likely to have travelled to most of these places, perhaps because they have had more years and money with which to do so.

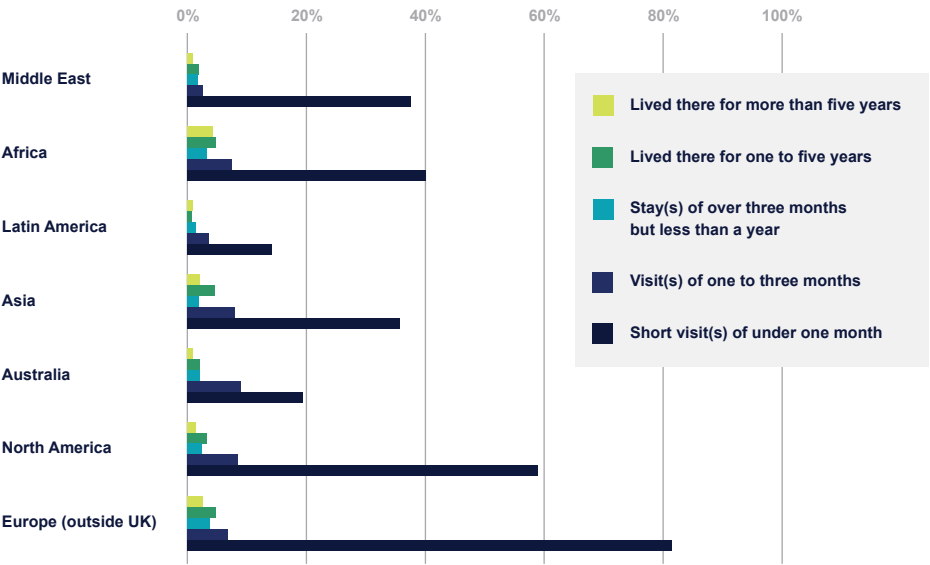
**42%**

**had been involved in some form of Christian mission or aid and development activities overseas.**

Of these 5% said they had done long-term overseas service of more than two years, and a further 5% had done medium-term (between three months and two years). A further 20% had been on a single short visit of up to three months and 13% had done this more than once. Charismatics appeared more likely than average to have done one or two short trips, and the middle age group (35-55) least likely to have done any such trips, presumably as younger and older have fewer financial, work, family and other responsibilities.

Just over 25% said they were planning a short visit in the next couple of years and 4% that they were considering offering for medium or long-term Christian service overseas. Charismatics and Pentecostals appeared most likely to plan a short trip (36% and 39% compared with the 25% average). Also the under-35s are more likely than average to be planning this (33% compared to the 25% average).

**Patterns of Overseas Travel**



# Global village: The world on our doorstep



Over the last 50 years the UK has become a much more diverse and multicultural society, as a result of immigration. Immigration has also brought religious diversity, both in the presence of non-Christian faith communities and in the growth of churches where the majority of worshippers are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Significant numbers among them are evangelical and Pentecostal.

In our survey we wanted to find out how far the evangelical constituency as a whole was aware of and in touch with this diversity, and the impact this is having on church life.

It's encouraging that the vast majority of our panellists have a positive view of immigration and diversity and the contribution recent migrants have made to the Church. There is little evidence of racism or xenophobia on a widespread scale.

For example 54% agree and 18% strongly agree that:

**'immigration has led to vibrant diverse society in the UK'.**

The proportions are significantly higher among women, younger people and those who have family roots outside the UK.

Roughly the same number support the statement:

**'the Church in the UK has benefited greatly from the contribution of immigrants over the last 50 years',**

though the proportion agreeing strongly rises to 21%. For this statement there is no age difference and it is the men who are most likely to agree.

Next we wanted to find out what people thought about the diversity within the area they live, their church and among their friendship groups.

Many respondents overestimated the proportion of the population of the country who are born or have parents or grandparents brought up outside the UK. Government statistics estimate the number who are not of white British heritage lies between 12% and 20%. However, a third of our respondents believed that more than a quarter of the national population fell into this category.

At the more local levels there was a wider variation depending to a large extent on where the respondent lived and the well-documented patterns of diversity in different regions of the country. People from London, the West Midlands, Yorkshire and the north-west of England tended to estimate higher than average; with the south-west England, north-east, Scotland and Wales the lowest.

Almost 40% of our panel reported more than 5% such people in their church congregations, almost identical to their estimate for work colleagues or fellow students. Along with regional and age differences, denomination seemed to make a difference - with Pentecostals, Baptists and Charismatics more likely than average to have larger proportions of minorities, with respondents from the Church of Scotland least likely. People with family roots beyond the UK were also likely to report higher proportions. And 14% of those born outside the UK attended a church where more than half the congregation came from an ethnic

minority, compared with 5% for the UK-born. These figures provide very little support for the idea that evangelical churches exclude minorities or are segregated by ethnicity to any greater degree than localities, though there is some evidence that some minority groups continue to cluster together to worship together with others from their own cultural backgrounds.

Similar patterns could be found when the questions focused on friendship circles, close friends and family ties. However 49% of respondents had less than 5% of minority background people among their wider circle of friends and acquaintances, while the figure rose to 70% for close friends and 80% for extended family connections.

Those who reported the highest proportions of minorities in their locality and among their social networks were based in ethnically diverse areas such as inner London boroughs, Birmingham, Bradford, Blackburn or Oldham.



## Local religious diversity

We asked respondents to assess religious diversity in their local neighbourhoods. It's striking how much our evangelicals see themselves as in a lonely minority, as well over half (57%) thinking less than 5% of people around them are committed Christians. There are some regional differences, with people from Northern Ireland likely to estimate highest proportions – while those in south-east England, East Anglia, the East Midlands, Yorkshire and Scotland estimate lower than average.

It's quite surprising that respondents appear to see themselves surrounded by greater proportions of atheists and agnostics than of nominal Christians **57% of our panel thought over 25% of people in their local area were of no religion and 28% that over 50% were.** There is a mismatch here with national statistics. The British Social

Attitudes survey of 2007, for example, showed 47.5% identified themselves as Christian (although only 12% claimed to belong to a church).

For minority religions the perceptions of our panel appear more plausible – over three quarters believed that Muslims accounted for less than 5% of their neighbourhood population and over 90% that Sikhs, Hindus and Jewish people were in similar tiny minorities. The estimates were higher among people living in London and the West Midlands, and among under-35s. The fact that these estimates identify the non-Christian faiths as small minorities in most localities where evangelicals live offers little support for the suggestion that our country is being 'taken over by Muslims (Sikhs and Hindus)'

In fact there appears to be a surprising level of positive acceptance of Muslim neighbours. **Half agreed and 23% strongly agreed** with the statement that:

**'Christians in the UK should see their Muslim neighbours as friends and allies rather than the enemy'.**

There is a general uncertainty about the prevalence of racism in the Church in the UK. Around **23% agreed or strongly agreed** with the statement -

**'there is an unacceptable level of racism in the Church in the UK',**

compared with **34% who disagreed or strongly disagreed** while 43% were not sure.

## Multicultural mission and ministry

### How far are evangelical Christians engaged in mission and ministry that touch minority communities?

The short answer from our panel is: not much and not enough. Only a third of churches (and one in five individuals) is involved in evangelism or community service that touches these communities and the level of involvement in training, partnership or interfaith networks is lower still. People in London and Yorkshire reported

higher levels of involvement. There are also age differences with over-55s more likely to be involved in evangelism and community service but less likely to be involved in partnership, interfaith networks or awareness training. This possibly suggests a more nuanced and tolerant view of mission among younger people.

However, detailed breakdowns do suggest the level of engagement rises for those who live in areas of substantial minority settlement. For example, where

the local population of minorities is thought to be between 25% and 75% the proportion of churches involved in evangelistic outreach rises to over half and of individuals involved to over one in three.

What is more encouraging is the detailed, open-ended answers from over 270 of our respondents which document a wide range of community engagement and outreach activities that do indeed make contact with people from ethnic and religious minorities.

## Are you and your church involved locally with any of the following activities?

	Personally involved	My church is involved	Not involved or not sure
Evangelistic outreach to people of minority ethnic or religious groups	18%	32%	65%
Community activities serving people of minority ethnic or religious groups	20%	33%	64%
Community partnership activities involving organisations run by people from minority ethnic or religious groups	10%	17%	80%
Interfaith forums or networks	10%	19%	77%
Activities in schools or other educational institutions where ethnic and religious diversity is an issue	12%	29%	66%
Training courses or sessions to improve understanding of other communities	10%	12%	82%

For all of these questions, the proportion answering 'not sure' was remarkably high (ranging from 12% to 21%). This is also of concern as it denotes a certain level of disengagement and lack of awareness of the issue of mission in a diverse society.

# The persecuted Church



Followers of Jesus should not be surprised if they are despised or persecuted. But in numerous countries around the world the persecution of Christian believers is a daily reality. How far are evangelicals in the UK aware of and active in supporting the persecuted Church around the world?

The short answer is that awareness seems to be very high (90% have heard something about persecuted Christians in church in the last year), and prayer support is widespread (78% say they have prayed for persecuted Christians within the last month). It is interesting that most people will pray for the persecuted Church while 80% have not volunteered their time and 57% have given no money in the last year to an organisation supporting the persecuted Church. Only 22% have been actively involved in regular prayer meetings, groups, activities or fundraising efforts (with a further 20% aware that their church runs such activities). On the other hand 90% agree or strongly agree that:

**'The UK government should speak out more strongly on issues of human rights and religious liberty in countries with oppressive regimes'**

while just under half have:

**'Taken political action (such as emailing an MP, signing a petition) on behalf of the persecuted Church'**

in the last year to raise concerns. A much smaller number (28%) have done something to support prisoners of conscience or oppressed groups who may not be Christians.

Do we think that prayer alone is sufficient to help the persecuted Church?

While it may be natural enough to concentrate energies on fellow Christians, should we be limiting our concerns about oppression to them alone?

"We should be aware that the government increasingly does view religious freedom as a priority human rights issue and has appointed staff within the Foreign Office to defend and promote religious liberty in its foreign policy. There is high awareness of persecution in a relatively small number of countries, mainly in Asia and the Middle East, with North Korea, China, Iran, Pakistan and Nigeria being mentioned most often and Burma, India, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea also frequently appearing. However, in other countries where persecution is acute, such as Somalia, Uzbekistan, Laos and the Maldives, awareness of persecution among Christians is worryingly low."

Allen Moxham, Open Doors

## When did you last...



# WILL YOU BECOME PART OF THEIR STORY?

AROUND THE WORLD CHRISTIANS ARE PERSECUTED, BEATEN, DISOWNED, TORTURED, IMPRISONED, JUST FOR FOLLOWING JESUS.

**Fadi and his wife Hanna are Christians.** One night militia came to their door and threatened to take their children. They had no choice but to escape. Open Doors supported the family with food and medical treatment, and now after trauma counselling, they are helping others.



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# Churches in mission and partnership

What are the links between individual believers and their churches with the Church overseas? Are contacts mainly through individuals, through partner churches and projects or through international mission societies, charities and development agencies?

There is an overwhelming commitment in principle to global evangelisation.

**71% strongly agree and 27% agree that**

**God still wants the Church in the UK to be active in world evangelisation.**

And the task is still unfinished.

**62% strongly agree and 34% agree that**

**there is still a lot to be done before the Great Commission is fulfilled and the gospel is proclaimed to all the nations.**

And as individuals our panel are committed to prayer for this.

- 50% say they have prayed for a particular missionary, church, mission or project overseas within the last week and a further 31% within the last month.

- 32% say they have used a prayer letter or diary sent by an organisation working overseas within the last week and a further 29% within the last month.

When asked:

**'Which of the following regions should be the highest priority for your church's mission, prayer and support? (Tick up to three)',**

**68% mentioned the UK** followed by 48% mentioning Africa, 41% the Middle East/ Islamic countries and 28% Asia. Europe came next with 20% and Latin America only got 11% with minimal mentions for North America and Australasia. These figures seem to suggest that despite general support for world mission in most people's minds Britain comes first. The focus on Africa may suggest compassion, aid and development may be more salient than evangelism. Likewise we can suspect the high priority of the Islamic world may reflect concerns for world peace and news coverage as much as real commitment to evangelistic mission.

**95% agree (50% of them strongly)**

**Christians in the UK can be inspired and learn from the Church abroad.**

**74% of people think**

**we need missionaries from other countries to come and bring the gospel to people in the UK.**

What is this saying about the state of the UK Church and how we have been doing evangelism? This was nicely captured in the recent BBC TV series *Reverse Missionaries*.

Their churches too seem very committed to the global Church as illustrated in the graph. Almost all pray for international situations and over 75% of our panel belong to churches which have significant relationships with at least one other church or Christian project in a foreign country.

The picture for organised church support is patchy. Generally larger churches are significantly more likely than smaller ones to have a range of groups and activities. In almost all cases females are more likely not to take part or to be unsure about what is on offer in their churches.

In terms of regular prayer meetings, groups, activities or fundraising efforts to support different types of worldwide links:

	Churches involved	Individuals involved
Individual missionaries who you have links with - Over-55s, Baptists, Church of Scotland and other evangelicals score significantly higher.	62%	32%
Partner churches in other countries - The respondents with personal and family roots outside the UK are most likely to be involved.	41%	16%
Overseas missionary societies - Such links are less known and supported by younger people, and Charismatics are the denomination least likely to be involved, but are also the ones most likely to make short trips to visit linked overseas churches and projects.	47%	20%
Overseas aid or development charities - Again, such links are less known and supported by younger people, and Charismatics and Pentecostals are the denominations least likely to be involved.	47%	24%
Fair trade companies - Charismatics and Pentecostals are the denominations least likely to be involved, but the strongest support comes from the 35s to 55s.	42%	20%
Campaigns on global issues - With support stronger among older people.	27%	13%
The persecuted Church - With support stronger among older people.	42%	22%

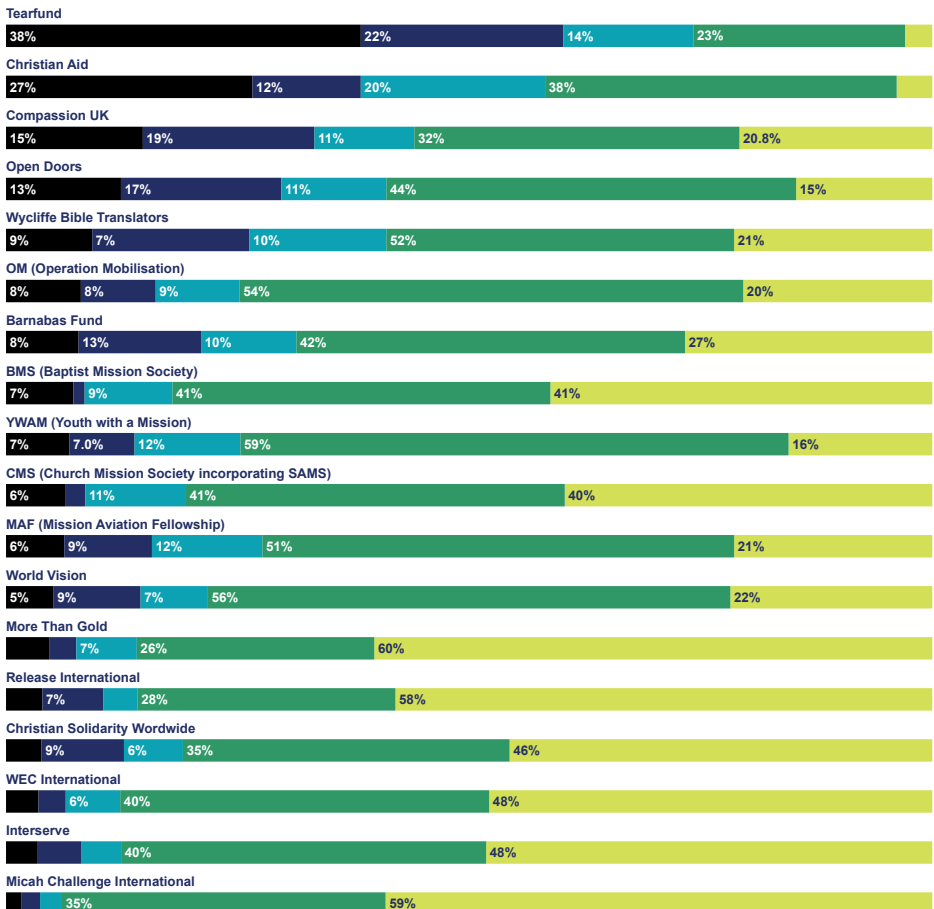


“This research is showing that almost all our panel’s churches are praying for international situations and over 75% are part of churches with significant relationships with projects and churches abroad. This is encouraging news to receive, as we continue to seek ways to engage young people in mission, as well as encourage older generations to support evangelism and discipleship abroad.”

Ruth Whitaker, MAF UK CEO

- My church is involved with them AND I support them personally
- I support them personally but my church is not involved
- My church is involved with them but I am not very involved
- I know of them but my church is not involved
- I don't really know much about them

In terms of awareness of and organised support for particular organisations, Tearfund and Christian Aid, followed by Compassion and Open Doors are most widely known and supported. It seems significant that international aid and mercy ministries are more popular than the more evangelism-focused mission societies, probably because of the scale of their size and public profile.



# Giving globally

What are the patterns of giving to overseas causes found among evangelicals? How do they show their financial commitment to the global Church and what is the balance between support of evangelistic missions and mercy ministries?

Most of our panellists appear to be generous financial supporters of overseas causes, and generally are more likely to give through Christian organisations. Indeed less than 2% agreed with the view that *Charity begins at home and it's best if it ends there* while nearly two thirds strongly disagreed.

**Giving money was not the only way people had tried to offer support**

**76% had bought fair trade products**

**And 45% had chosen not to buy a product for environmental or ethical reasons.**

In the last month:

**56% had given money to a mission society or organisation working overseas.**

**50% had given money to a Christian development or aid organisation working overseas.**

**46% had given money to support individual missionaries working overseas.**

**45% had given money through an organisation to sponsor a child in a less developed country.**

**14% had given money to a secular aid or development organisation charity working overseas.**

**14% had taken part in a fundraising effort for an overseas cause or project.**

## Motives and patterns in giving

What motivates evangelicals in their decisions to offer financial support to overseas causes? Is their giving well planned or mainly spontaneous? How has the recession affected their generosity?

Over the last five to 10 years I have started to give more generously to overseas causes than to UK ones.

I am reluctant to give to overseas causes because of what I have heard about corruption levels in foreign countries.

Because of the recession and government cuts it is now more important for me to give to UK causes.

Because money is tight these days I have recently had to cut back on my financial giving.

Over the last five to 10 years I have started to give more generously to UK causes than to overseas ones.

I tend to give more money to evangelistic mission and church work overseas than to aid and development projects.

Each pound given to an overseas cause does more good than the same pound given to support work in the UK.

When there is a major disaster overseas I usually make a substantial donation to help with the emergency.

I support at least one overseas project because I have (or someone very close to me has) visited it recently.

I think campaigning for fair trade and international justice will achieve more than just giving money to overseas aid charities.

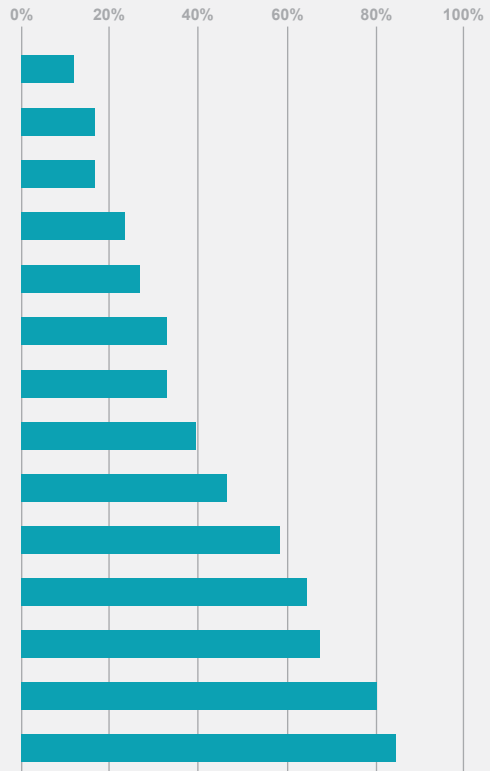
In my planned giving my own church always gets the vast majority of my donations.

I like the idea of giving money to sponsor a particular child in a less developed country.

I am much more likely to support a missionary effort if I have a personal contact with someone who is working for it.

I always prefer to give money to a Christian organisation than to a secular charity.

proportions agreeing or strongly agreeing



# International issues



What do Christians think about some of the great international and foreign policy issues of our time? We checked this out by asking them whether they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements.

In broad terms there was strong support for concerns of international justice and for action against global poverty.

**91%** wanted the UK government to speak out more strongly on human rights and religious liberty.

**91%** agreed or strongly agreed that we need to continue to campaign hard if we are to make poverty history.

**82%** agreed or strongly agreed that the international system of banking and trade is unfair and the poorest people in the world suffer as a result.

**75%** agreed or strongly agreed that the international arms trade is immoral and should be stopped.

**56% agreed and 9% strongly agreed** that the UK government has a good record of providing financial aid to the poorest countries in the world, amounting perhaps to an acknowledgement that the UK is not doing badly but might do better.

**56%** agreed or strongly agreed that it is not acceptable for this country to benefit economically from trade with undemocratic regimes.

**64%** understood the connection between the environment and poverty and agreed that unless we act to reduce global warming many of the poorest countries will suffer major disasters in the next 100 years.

There was perhaps more uncertainty over the statement UK overseas aid should not go to countries with a poor record on human rights, with over 35% disagreeing and 40% unsure. However this can be interpreted as a generous opinion which for many respondents may be seen as endorsing the idea that despite oppressive governments we should still continue to aid the poorest people in those countries through local church and community projects.

Surprisingly on the statement *the rise of China, India and Brazil is a good thing*

for the world as a whole, 38% agreed compared with only 7% who disagreed with more than half uncertain.

In general then we see that evangelicals have a generous internationalist orientation, strongly in favour of justice, peace, human rights and the care of creation. There are few signs of an uncaring attitude or of a desire to dominate other less fortunate nations. There may be less certainty on the practicalities of policy, and this orientation may not always be converted into active campaigning. It is probably the result of long-term exposure through the churches to the work and campaigning of international development agencies such as Tearfund, Christian Aid and World Vision. Politicians and commentators need to take note that on these topics evangelical Christians tend to be radical rather than reactionary.

## → Graph analysis

The graph makes clear how four in every five respondents prefer to give through a Christian organisation and where they have had personal contact with the work. Two thirds like the idea of individual child sponsorship (though the over-55s significantly less so than younger age groups). About the same

proportion prioritise their own church in their planned giving (Pentecostals most of all). Over half think campaigning is as important as giving financial help. Only 39% usually make spontaneous substantial donations in response to a disaster appeal, while 32% prioritise giving to evangelism over aid and development projects (men and the over-55s are more likely to do this).

Although 23% say they have had to reduce giving in the current financial crisis there is no evidence of a trend to reduce overseas giving – if anything the trend is the other way.

A wide range of organisations benefit from this support. Tearfund is the most frequently mentioned (by 357 people) followed by Compassion (244), Christian Aid (142) and Open Doors (131).

# Olympic opportunities?



The Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place this summer will bring competitors and spectators from all over the world to London. Are evangelicals interested in this global festival of sport and are they going to take the opportunity for special mission events in their local communities?

**43%** were interested in sport (women significantly less so than men). In view of the relative absence of men from most churches noted in our previous report *How's the family?* one wonders how far sport plays the role of religion for men - offering identity, belonging, participation, worship and sometimes faith and hope.

**13%** regularly take part in competitive sport (with under-35s more likely to do so)

**69%** agreed that they would be cheering on all the British competitors in the games.

**1 person** was hoping to be a competitor.

There was a degree of ambivalence about the Olympic ideal and current realities:

**79% agreed or strongly agreed that**

international sport is an excellent way for building friendship between the nations.

**79% agreed or strongly agreed that**

in sport taking part is more important than winning a gold medal.

**But only 24% agreed**

the £ billions of public money spent on the Olympics is money well spent.

**43% not sure and 33% disagreeing.**

And opinions were divided over the statement that:

the Olympic movement is spoiled because competitors cheat and take drugs.

**with 30% in agreement and 40% disagreeing.**

In April 2012, **Steven Yetman**, who is supported by Prospects, was awarded Sports Personality of the Year in County Down, Northern Ireland, taking over the title from the celebrated golfer, Rory McIlroy. Steven is from the world of the Special Olympics, in 2011 representing Ireland at the World Special Olympic Games. He secured bronze in the dressage competition, silver in trail riding and gold in equitation. Two supreme sports personalities, for a moment recognised as equal.



We know every person is made in the image of God, that we are all equal, but how good are we at following this through in the worship, work and life of our churches? When do we celebrate the gifts of people with disabilities in our church membership?

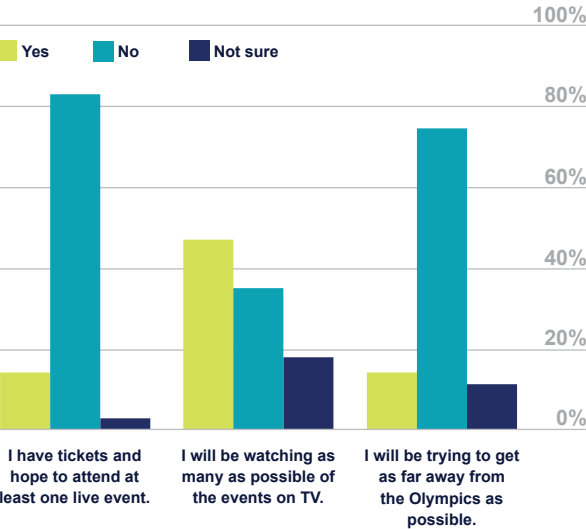
Our *How's the family?* report found just 1% of respondents were in churches that marked Disability Sunday. Is this year the opportunity to change? This year, Disability Sunday (2-9 September) falls right in the heart of the Paralympic Games. For resources, visit:

[www.churchesforall.org.uk](http://www.churchesforall.org.uk)

[www.morethangold.org.uk/your-church/paralympics.html](http://www.morethangold.org.uk/your-church/paralympics.html)



# How will you be involved with the Olympics?



**76% of people agreed that the Olympics provides a great opportunity for Christians to communicate the gospel.**

However, only 30% were definite that their church would be holding some event to make use of the opportunity. Around 44% were unsure, which is perhaps unsurprising in a survey completed nearly six months before The Games.

The most common ideas for events were:



Setting up large screens to watch the games



Having an Olympic theme to youth events and holiday groups

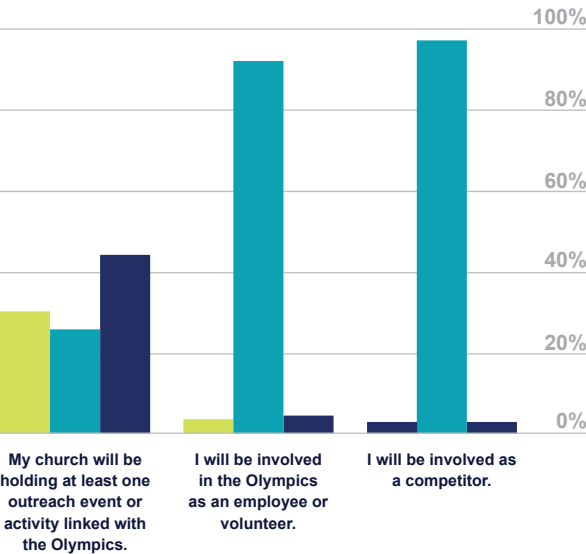


Working with More than Gold



Sports days

However, the More than Gold brand was not well recognised – 60% overall and 43% of Londoners said they didn't know much about them and only 10% across the country and 20% in London said their churches were involved.



# Our global village

## summary



- Evangelicals are clearly aware of and engaged in the issues of the world, and many have personal or close experience of overseas mission. International contacts are normal in the everyday life of most churches, probably much more than in social life generally, though they take many different forms.
- There is still plenty of scope to close the gap between attitude and action. There is great concern and lots of prayer about persecution, disasters and international crises, but relatively few have made strong commitments to do something practical about it.
- Many people overestimate the proportion of ethnic minorities and immigrants in the UK, and the proportion of people around them who have no religious belief. Though we should be concerned about the small and reducing number of Britons who follow Christ or belong to a church, there is a danger of becoming paranoid about the onslaught of secularism and/or of other faith traditions.
- Attitudes of evangelicals towards other faiths are generally positive e.g. 3 in 4 agreeing that:

**Christians in the UK should see their Muslim neighbours as friends and allies rather than the enemy.**

- Many evangelicals and churches are not greatly engaged with people of different cultures and faiths, especially when they live in areas where the population is overwhelmingly white

British. However, those who are based in multicultural towns and cities are used to mixing across cultures in churches, workplaces and neighbourhoods and many are engaged in social action and community projects which bridge communities and serve minority groups, and in faith-sharing and evangelism with people of different faiths.

- While there is widespread and significant support (including financial giving) for world evangelism through individual missionaries and missionary societies, there also appears to be some signs of prioritising international aid and development, especially among younger age groups. While this may reflect the recent emphasis on holistic mission, and the sense that Christians from the two thirds world are much keener and better at evangelism than the contemporary British, it could also be a sign of reduced confidence in the gospel or less courage to share it, or of the emotional response to images and news coverage of famine and disasters.
- Christians appear to be generous in giving money to overseas causes, and the survey shows that most people have not reduced their giving in these times of austerity.
- There is a widespread sense that Christians from the two thirds world are much keener and better at evangelism than the contemporary British, and a view that 'reverse missionaries' would strengthen

evangelism in the UK, (or perhaps allow British Christians to avoid responsibility?).

**"I'm with the 95% of the panel who believe we can learn from the Church abroad. Every day in Compassion we're inspired by the Church around the world as it responds to children in the darkest and poorest of circumstances. We see how it's lifting these young people from poverty in Jesus' name and giving them hope for a wonderful future. What a privilege it is, as Christians throughout the UK, to be able to partner with them in this incredible mission."**

**Vikki Davis, Compassion UK**

- There does seem to be a move away from long-term, well-organised mission societies towards individual links with overseas churches and projects and short exchange visits, which might be criticised as 'missionary tourism'.
- Most people seem interested in, though unexcited by, the Olympics at the time the survey was carried out six months before the start of The Games. However, many churches, particularly in London and south-east England are trying to use the opportunity for outreach.



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in Jesus' name

# So what?

In the light of these findings, how should the Church react?

## CELEBRATE

- Our extensive global connections and awareness. Christianity is a world religion and globalisation has brought the whole world into our church life as never before.
- Our strong commitments to global justice. Christians are at the forefront of serving the poorest people in the world and in acting and campaigning for aid, fair trade and development
- Some creative engagements in mission. With growing personal connections with churches and projects overseas, and numerous initiatives in local multicultural communities.
- Our commitment to pray for situations and causes all over the world. We remain confident that "He's got the whole world in His hands".

## RECOGNISE

- Giving to and working on overseas projects competes with local and domestic calls on our time and money.
- The UK is seen as being the most important priority for evangelisation – yet we are not very confident or competent at doing it.

- The Olympics offers some opportunities for evangelism but there is uncertainty about any long-term impact, and whether all the money was really well spent.

## BE CONCERNED

- We'll pray for the persecuted, but often don't do much more – giving time, money and getting involved in campaigning calls for more effort.
- Young people are less concerned than older people about global mission and evangelism, and less involved in organised support for international aid charities and campaigns, though they may be more likely to visit overseas linked projects on a short-term basis.
- There is a limited understanding of the world on our doorstep, and still a tendency for Christians to huddle together with others from their own culture and ethnicity. As a result many British Christians feel they are now in the minority and feel overly fearful and beleaguered.
- Although UK Christians see evangelising at home as a priority, they are tending to rely on 'reverse missionaries' to do the work.

## WHAT NEXT?

- We must confront the potential challenges that the research presents.
- We must prayerfully reflect on what these results say about us as a body of evangelical Christians in the UK. We must stimulate conversation.

And then **we need to take action.**

## Join the panel

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