

BUILDING TOMORROW'S CHURCH TODAY



The views and experiences of young
adults in the UK Church

At the Evangelical Alliance we're passionate about unity.

And we believe we cannot be truly united unless we represent the UK Church in all its vibrant diversity. That's why we started the One People Commission – a body of key national leaders committed to celebrating ethnicity while promoting unity. I'm so privileged to be part of this exciting move of God, as his brothers and sisters come together as one, bringing into reality the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17.

But this is not just about unity for unity's sake; it's about unity for mission. For the UK to be transformed with the good news of Jesus Christ.

As we've met regularly for prayer and fellowship over the last few years, we've heard many around the table sharing their heartfelt desire for their churches and denominations to be places where young adults are engaged, valued and disciplined into following Jesus and becoming leaders in both the Church and society.

This resource has come out of these honest conversations, and shows our commitment as heads of denominations and networks, as church leaders and as a wider Evangelical Alliance to hear from the millennial generation in our churches (those in the 18 to 30s age bracket), to understand their experiences and concerns, and to prayerfully reflect on the implications for each of us in our own contexts.

Steve Clifford, general director of the Evangelical Alliance



As a father of three British-Nigerian millennials, I am keenly aware of the pressures and realities of life for this generation living in the UK today, and that their experiences and views of church are often very different from those of my own generation.

As a church leader and director of the One People Commission, I have heard the same questions from leaders across the country: how can we make sure our churches are relevant to young adults? How do young adults engage with church and live out their faith? How do they differ to the generations that have come before them?

This resource goes some way to answering these questions – making space for millennials to speak to us directly, and for us to hear their experiences, joys and struggles, both in faith and in church life.

My prayer is that this resource will inspire you to examine how your church is engaging with young adults, and to consider how you can listen more to this next generation. For we all want to see our churches become places where generations learn from one another in love and where millennials can grow into all God has for them – moving them from being the missing generation to the leaders of today and tomorrow.

Rev Yemi Adedeji, director of the One People Commission of the Evangelical Alliance



evangelical alliance
better together

Unity is the heartbeat of all we do as an Evangelical Alliance. Find out more via our One People Commission video, available at eauk.org/opcunity

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This online research survey was conducted between October and November 2014, and also in March 2015 when the survey was re-launched for one month. By the end of this period, 2,206 people had responded. **A total of 1,703 were aged 18 to 37, living in the UK and described themselves as Christians, and the findings in this report are based on this group.**

As 94% told us they attend a specific church, and 98% attend church at least once a month (with 89% attending weekly), this panel is best described as **active churchgoers**.

More details on our panel:

- **Gender:** 63% female and 37% male.
- **Age:** 23% aged 18-21, 30% aged 22-25, 23% aged 26-29, 17% aged 30-33 and 7% aged 34-37.
- **Ethnicity:** 78% white British, 6.2% black (African), 4.3% other, 3.3% black British (African), 2.9% white other, 1.8% mixed race, 1.1% black British (Caribbean), 0.8% South Asian, 0.6% Asian British, 0.5% East Asian (including Chinese), 0.4% black (Caribbean) and 0.1% Arab British.

- **Nation:** 94% live in England, 3% in Scotland, 2% in Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland.
- **Faith:** 96.9% consider themselves to be a Christian, 2.6% said "not sure/it's complicated" and 0.5% said they "used to be".
- **Denomination:** Church of England 36%, independent evangelical 15%, other 13%, Newfrontiers 10%, Baptist 7%, RCCG 5%, Vineyard 4%, Methodist 2%, other Pentecostal 2%, Elim 2%, AOG 1%. Presbyterian 1%, Salvation Army 1%, URC 1%.

Researcher and writer: Lucy Olofinjana.

ETHNIC AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

We've found some significant differences between white British and BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) respondents, and therefore thought it was important to include these within the resource. We've also found some significant gender differences which are also included.

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR SURVEY OF 1,703 UK CHRISTIANS AGED 18-37

-  **47%** give away at least a tenth of their money (rising to **60%** for BMEs)
-  **72%** say faith is the most important factor in the decisions they make
-  **30%** don't have a Christian mentor or group of friends they are honest and accountable to about their life and faith
-  **93%** say there are people they can look up to and learn from in their church
-  **23%** feel older people in their church struggle to relate with them
-  **36%** say their church is not really helping them have opportunities to meet a marriage partner
-  **77%** have shared their faith in the past month – but **60%** feel nervous and awkward when taking the opportunity to share
-  **84%** are serving in their church in activities that benefit the church family
-  **34%** of BMEs say they rarely doubt any aspect of their faith, compared to **13%** of white British
-  **73%** of BMEs agree the Bible in its original manuscript is without error, compared to **52%** of white British

TOP REASONS WHY MILLENNIALS ATTEND THEIR CHURCH:

- because the people are loving and supportive
- because they specifically felt God called them to be a part of that church
- because they feel their spiritual needs are met there

YOUNG ADULTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO SAY THAT THEIR CHURCH DOES NOT REALLY HELP THEM:

- have opportunities to meet a marriage partner
- in their personal evangelism
- to engage in social action
- in living out their faith at work
- in developing leadership skills and experience

TOP REASONS FOR LEAVING THEIR PREVIOUS CHURCH:

- moving location
- feeling God calling them to move on
- feeling they weren't growing spiritually

FOR THOSE NOT ATTENDING A CHURCH AT THE MOMENT:

- 39% say it is in part because they really struggle with the way churches are run
- 22% say it is in part because they have been hurt by a church in the past

PASTOR CHRISHANTHY SATHIYARAJ

BETHANY FAITH MINISTRIES, SOUTHALL

Every so often we all need a lesson, and as a pastor I believe listening is vital if we are to build the kingdom of God. I hear church leaders say "Young people are leaving the Church", but how many of us have stopped and asked ourselves why?

This resource is a great mine of information put together by the Evangelical Alliance, and it has the potential to be a great blessing to the churches if we take the time to listen and reflect on what the lessons are for each of us in our own context.

At the end of the day we are all working hard and have the same goal; to build the kingdom of God and see all generations loving and serving Him. Together we serve better, and I commend the Evangelical Alliance for bringing us together at such a time as this to dwell on this important issue.



DEFINITIONS

BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) – respondents who described their ethnicity as black or black British (African or Caribbean), Asian or Arab

NB – it cannot be assumed that BME respondents attend ethnic minority churches – in fact they are more likely to say "most people in my church are of a different ethnicity to me"

WHITE BRITISH – respondents who described their ethnicity as white British

MILLENNIALS – the young adult Christians who took part in our survey, aged 18-37 and living in the UK

ICONS USED IN THIS BOOKLET

Where you see these icons, it will highlight a higher or lower than average response from those listed. For example, from white British respondents.



Higher for BME



Higher for white British



Higher for men



Higher for women

MILLENNIALS LIVING OUT THEIR FAITH

Many millennials experience **doubts** within their faith, with almost a third (30%) saying they have frequent or continual doubt, although their faith is strong enough to cope. Doubts are less common among BMEs (34% say they rarely doubt, compared to just 13% of white British) and males (21% rarely doubt, compared to just 14% of women).

Lots of millennials are **sharing their faith** – with more than three quarters (77%) saying they've shared their faith in the last month. But 60% say they feel nervous and awkward doing so – interesting when we consider that more than a quarter (27%) feel their church does not really help them in their personal evangelism.

It's great that more than nine in 10 (91%) of Christian young adults feel they've **grown in faith** in the last year, with 52% saying their faith has grown a lot. And almost three quarters (72%) said faith is the most important factor in the **decisions** they make, with just 2% saying their faith is not a particularly important factor.

Bible-reading seems to be less popular with millennials than **prayer** – with just 25% reading their Bible every day, compared to 63% praying daily. We've found that BMEs are more likely to read the Bible at least several times each week (74% compared to 65% of white British), and men are more likely to read it daily than women (31% versus 23%).

It's encouraging to see that millennial Christians are extremely **generous** with their money – with almost half (47%) saying they give away at least a tenth. BMEs are markedly more generous – with 60% giving away at least a tenth, compared to 44% of white British.

Read more on pages 6-11...

Does your church provide space for young adults to talk honestly about their beliefs and doubts?



MILLENNIALS' BELIEFS

Theologically, in many areas millennials' **beliefs** are largely biblically orthodox. The vast majority agree that Jesus rose from the dead, that Jesus was fully human and fully God, that the Bible is the inspired word of God and that on the cross Jesus received God's punishment for our sins.

But for certain issues, both theological and ethical, there is a **wide variety of opinion**, with particularly marked differences between white British and BMEs – white British being consistently much less conservative in their views. Areas of disparity include views on the authority and inerrancy of the Bible, evolution, the nature of hell, homosexuality, assisted suicide, cohabiting and marrying non-Christians.

Read more on pages 12-13...

Are theological and ethical issues discussed in your church, or are there assumptions about what people believe?



MILLENNIALS AND OTHER GENERATIONS

Almost a third (30%) say they don't have any kind of **mentor** or a group of friends they are honest and accountable to about their life and faith.

We're so encouraged that eight in 10 say their **church is family** to them, and a substantial 93% say there are people they can **look up to and learn** from in their church. And almost nine in 10 (89%) feel their **church leaders** care about members and make an effort to get to know them.

But it's disheartening to hear that a quarter (23%) feel that older people in their church **struggle to relate** with them.

Read more on pages 8 and 18-19...

How can positive relationships and mentoring between different generations be encouraged in your church?



MILLENNIALS AND CHURCH

The millennial Christians we surveyed are committed **church attenders**, with 94% saying they attend a specific church and 89% attending church weekly (with another 10% attending at least monthly). A substantial 84% are **serving** in their church in activities that benefit the church family, and eight in 10 (80%) have **leadership responsibilities** of some kind.

The top three **reasons why they say they attend their church** are encouraging to hear: because the people are loving and supportive, because they specifically felt God called them to be a part of that church and because they feel their spiritual needs are met there.

Less than half (49%) said that the **teaching** they find most benefits them is teaching from their church – meaning leaders can't assume that it is their church's teaching that most influences millennials in their congregation. Other forms of teaching that millennials benefit from are podcasts (17%), online blogs (15%), other forms such as books (13%) and social media (4%).

Read more on pages 10 and 14-17...

MILLENNIALS WHO DON'T ATTEND CHURCH

A minority of 6% of our panel said they **don't attend a specific church**. Of these, the top reason they don't attend a church is because they struggle with the way churches are run. And more than one in five (22%) of those not attending a church at the moment say it is because they have been hurt by a church in the past. Others said it's because they've moved and are still looking for one, or believe they can be a strong Christian without going to church.

Read more on pages 16-17...

CHURCHES EQUIPPING MILLENNIALS

It's encouraging to hear the ways in which young adults feel equipped by their church. The young adults who took our survey are most likely to say that their **church helps them a lot** to: connect with God (63%), connect with other Christians (63%), use their skills and gifts to serve God (58%), increase their understanding of the Bible (52%) and transform their life to become more like Christ (50%).

We found some significant differences in terms of ethnicity. BME young adults are more likely to say that their church helps them a lot to: increase their understanding of the Bible (59% compared to 51% of white British), transform their life to be more like Christ (60% versus 47%), develop leadership skills and experience (53% versus 44%), live out their faith at work (45% versus 31%) and have opportunities to meet a marriage partner (22% versus 11%).

And page 21 also reveals some fascinating differences in these results depending on whether millennials are attending a church where others are predominantly of the same ethnicity as them, of a different ethnicity to them, or whether they would describe their church as ethnically diverse.

Women are significantly less likely to say their church helps them a lot to develop leadership skills and experience (43% compared to 51% of men), or to have opportunities to meet a marriage partner (10% compared to 19% of men).

Read more on pages 20-21...

Do young adults in your church feel equipped in areas such as personal evangelism, social action or living out their faith at work? How could you find out?



MILLENNIALS' FRUSTRATIONS WITH CHURCH

Churches don't seem to be doing as well in helping young adults in other areas of life and faith – a challenge to reflect on and learn from. One in five (19%) say **their church is not really helping them** to live out their faith at work, and the same proportion say their church is not really helping them develop leadership skills and experience. Even more say their church is not really helping them in social action (23%), in their personal evangelism (27%) and in having opportunities to meet a marriage partner (36%). And one in five (19%) say they are often **frustrated** with their church and think of leaving.

The main reason for **leaving a previous church** was because of moving location. However others said it was because they weren't growing spiritually or struggled with the way their church was run.

Nearly half the millennials who took our survey have been **really hurt** by others in a church they attended. In terms of dealing with the situation and its aftermath, the minority in our panel who don't currently attend a specific church are more likely to say they continue to struggle with the hurt and less likely to say that God grew their faith through the experience.

Read more on pages 16-23...

Does your church deal well with hurtful situations that arise?



MILLENNIALS, ETHNICITY AND GENDER

This research has revealed some fascinating differences between **white British and BME respondents**. These include the fact that 54% of BMEs said their ethnicity is an essential part of their personal sense of identity, compared to just 13% of white British. We've also found some significant differences by **gender**.

These differences are highlighted throughout the report.

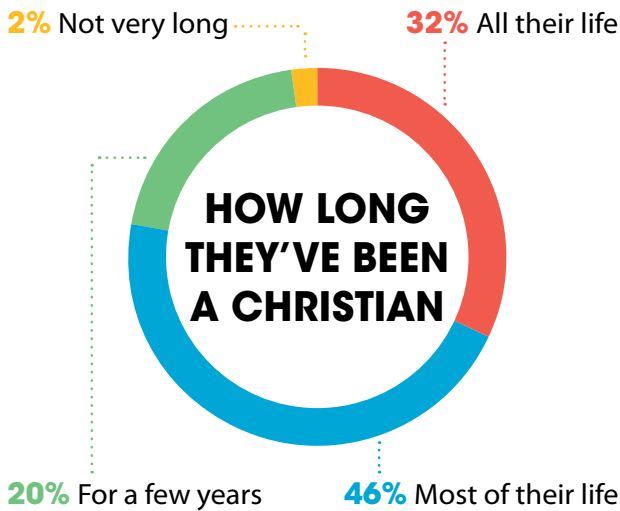
GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS RESOURCE IN YOUR CHURCH

- Download or order copies online at eauk.org/tomorrowschurch
- Give a copy to all your leaders and encourage them to read it through and note any areas they think are relevant for your church, or any questions it raises
- Ask a group of young adults to do the same
- Think about how you can listen more to young adults – both within your church and in your wider community
- Gather together your leaders to discuss how your church can respond and what may need to change – consider inviting young adults to join this discussion
- Let other church leaders know about this resource (available at eauk.org/tomorrowschurch) and the opportunity it provides for reflection and challenge

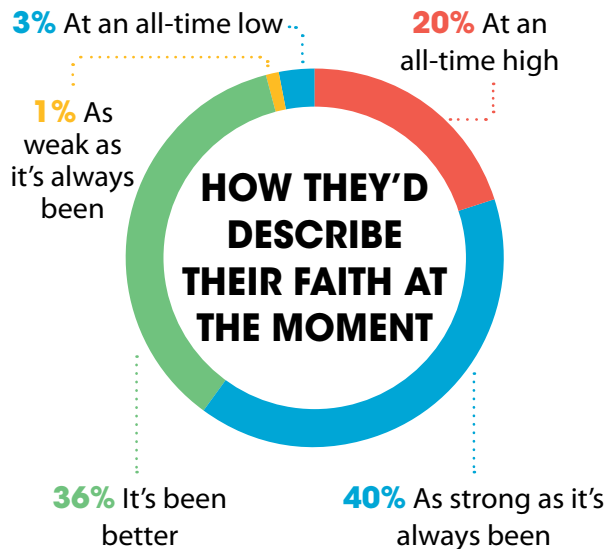


IDENTITY AND FAITH

STATE OF FAITH

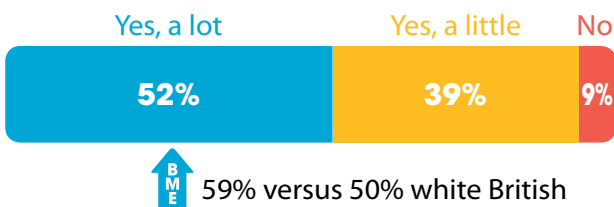


A third (32%) have been Christian for **all their life**, and almost half for most of their life (46%). A fifth say they became a Christian a few years ago, and 2% not long ago. BME respondents are more likely to say they have been a Christian all their life (41% compared to 30% of white British).



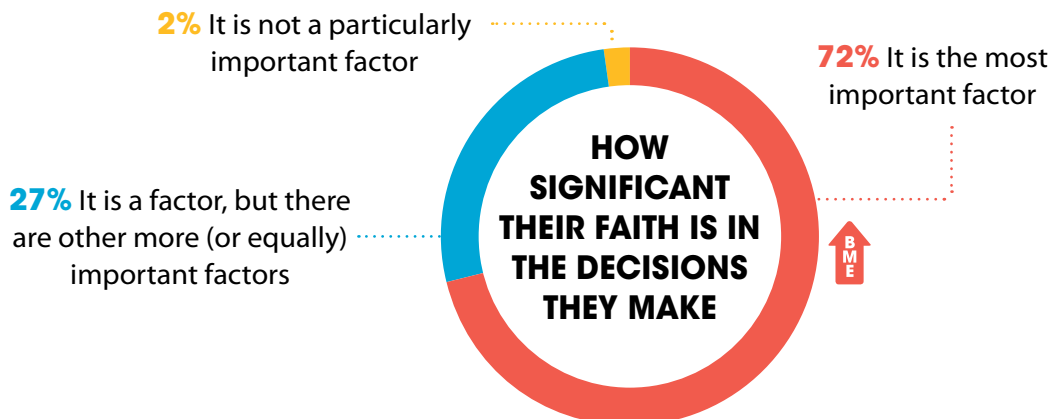
Six in 10 say their **faith is strong** at the moment, though 36% say it has been better, and 4% describe their faith as weak.

DO THEY FEEL THEY'VE GROWN AS A CHRISTIAN IN THE LAST YEAR?



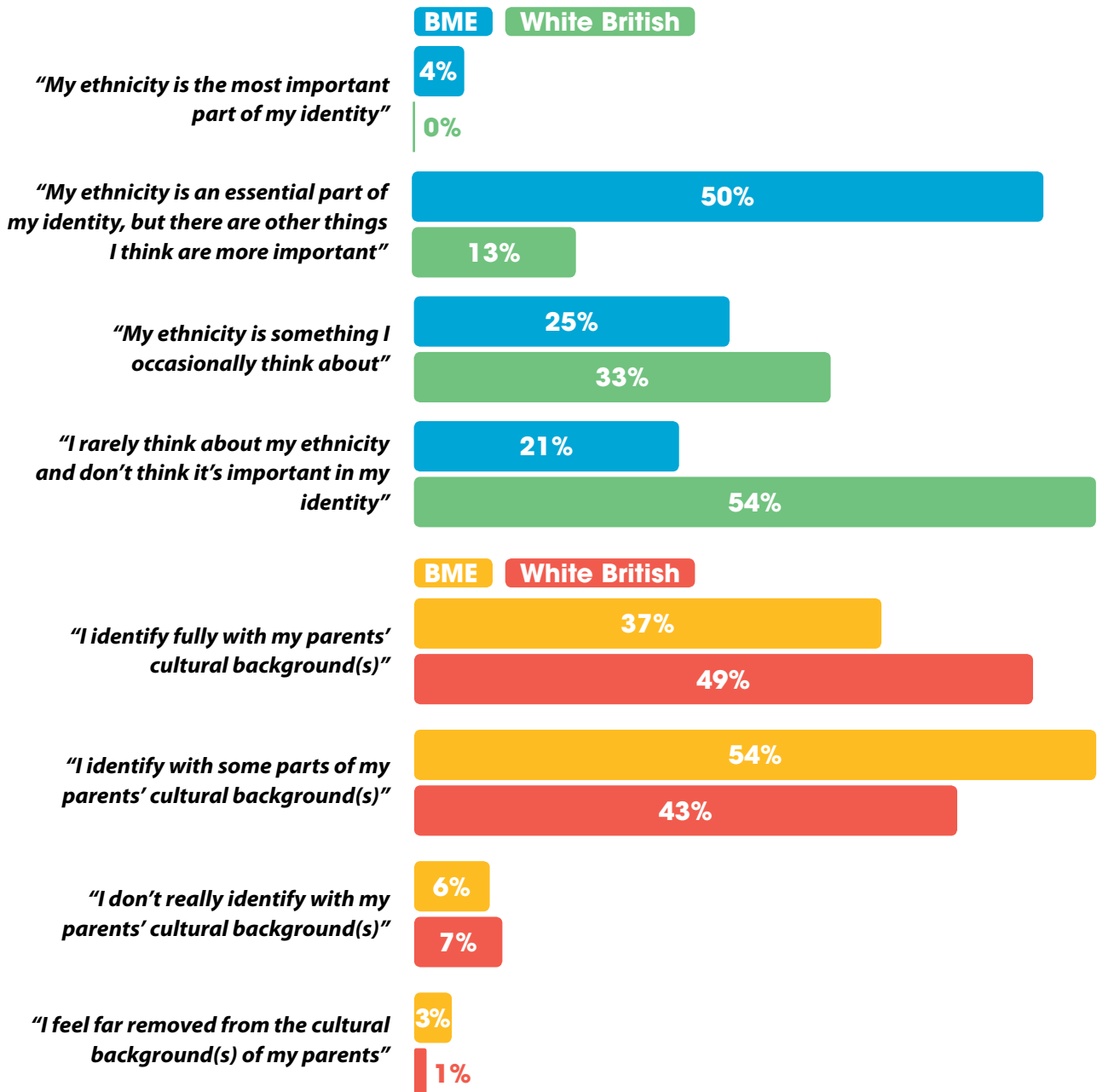
It's encouraging that more than nine in 10 (91%) Christian young adults feel they've grown in faith in the last year, with 52% saying their faith has grown a lot.

DECISION-MAKING



For almost three quarters, faith is the **most important factor in the decisions they make**. BME respondents are more likely to say that faith is the most important factor in their decisions – 77% compared to 70% of white British. And no BME young adults said it was not particularly important, compared to 2% of white British respondents.

ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY



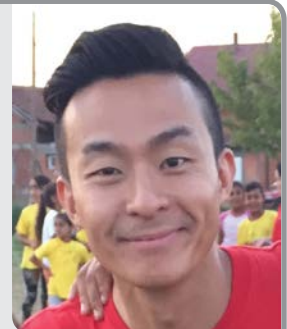
White British respondents are more than twice as likely as BMEs to say that their ethnicity is not important to their sense of identity (54% compared to 21% of white British). Half of BME young adults say their **ethnicity is essential to their identity** (although other things are more important), compared to 13% of white British. And for 4% of BME respondents, ethnicity is the most important aspect of their identity. White British respondents are more likely to say that they identify fully with their parents' cultural background.

WIEN FUNG, CHINESE CHURCH IN LONDON

As we look at this groundbreaking research, it becomes apparent that whether or not one sees their ethnicity as important to their sense of identity (as an individual and as a believer), one's ethnic background plays a crucial role in the spiritual formation and the practice of spiritual disciplines in a believer's life. On the whole, young BME Christians appear to provide more positive responses of faith compared to white British respondents.

Why is this? A number of suggestions come to mind:

- 1) What are the differences in worldview and cultural values between BME and white British people? This is a question of awareness.
- 2) How much of our spiritual formation is motivated or shaped by our ethnic and cultural values masquerading as or perceived to be kingdom values? This is a question of blind spots.
- 3) How can the Church reshape and transform our pre-existing ethnic and cultural values so that we can become more like Christ? This is a question of discipleship.



LIVING OUT THEIR FAITH

PASTOR CELIA APEAGYEI-COLLINS FOUNDER AND CEO OF THE REHOBOTH FOUNDATION

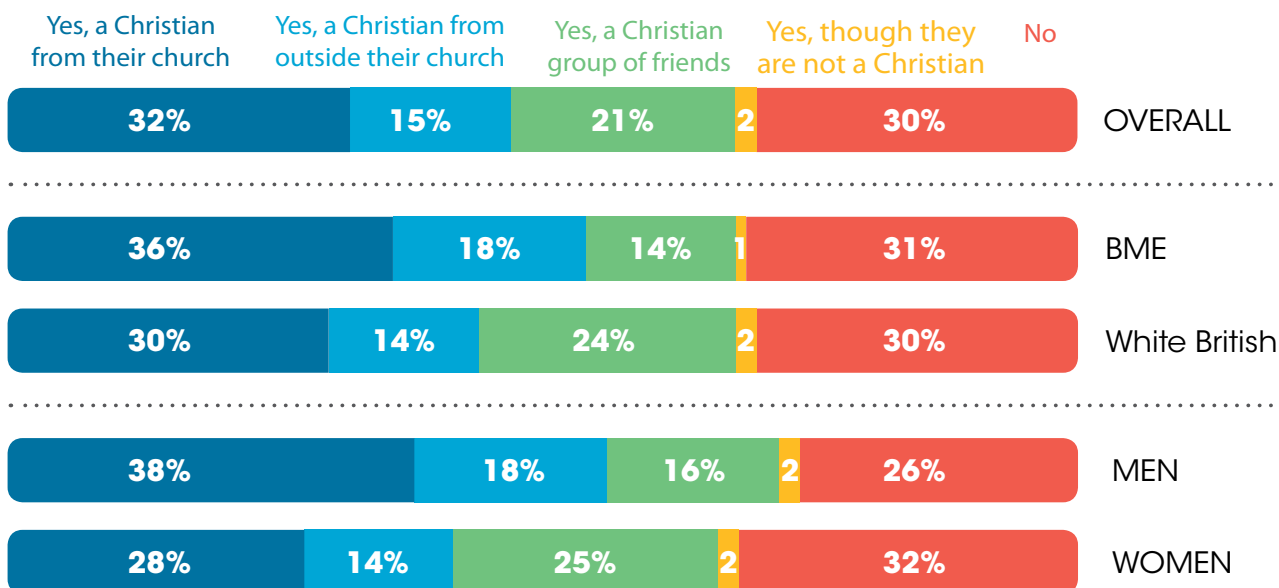
It can't be said that there is a shortage of great, effective, moral, competent and solution-oriented leaders in our world today, even though challenges for these kind of leaders are many and multiplying daily. Could the answer lie in mentoring? In the words of Howard Hendricks: "The greatest means of impacting the future is to build into another person's life". Ask yourself, what will society look like in the future, when 30% of young people surveyed in churches admit that they don't have any kind of mentor to be accountable to about their life and faith?



Mentoring involves the transfer, in an appropriate manner, of insights, values, skills and wisdom gained over a lifetime, as well as providing a listening ear and being a point of accountability for a protégé in order to secure their life and mission for impact and community transformation. It is also the most effective tool in undoing the mistakes that have dominated both the Church and community. What a privilege. Within each Christian leader is the potential for limitless reproduction. We can do this.

"...teach to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others" (2 Timothy 2:2)

ARE MILLENNIALS BEING MENTORED?



Almost a third (30%) don't have any kind of **mentor**. More than two thirds (68%) say they have a Christian mentor – either from their church (32%), outside their church (15%) or a group of Christian friends (21%). And 2% say they have a non-Christian mentor.

BME respondents are more likely to have an individual Christian mentor from inside or outside their church (a total of 54% compared to 44% of white British). However, for those who said they do not have a mentor, there are no major differences in terms of ethnicity. We found that men are more likely to have a mentor than women.

REV JOHN GLASS GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT OF ELIM PENTECOSTAL CHURCH AND CHAIR OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE COUNCIL

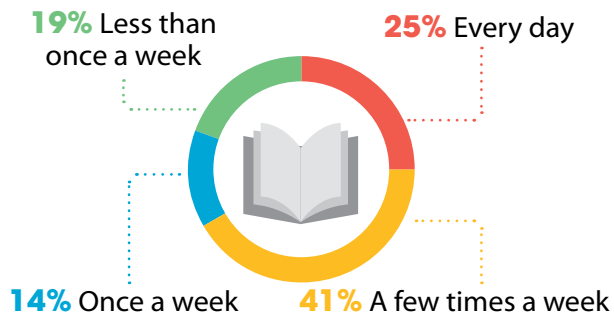
Everyone needs a 'safe place' where they can be real. A fence at the top of a cliff is better than an ambulance at the bottom and, too often, Christian casualties are a result of a failure to embrace the boundaries that friendships – that are willing to challenge as well as affirm – provide.

If Jesus had the 70, the 12, the three and John the 'beloved disciple', we may need to prioritise the layers of relationship that 'growth through connection' makes possible. In the latter cases Jesus is the mentor. In ours, mentors need mentoring too – or at least a robust framework of accountability. However, mentoring is not the solution to all spiritual ills; it is possible to own an umbrella and still get wet. The provision of covering demands that, to be effective, we must be willing to have the humility and grace to seek a landscape inhabited by effective friendships.

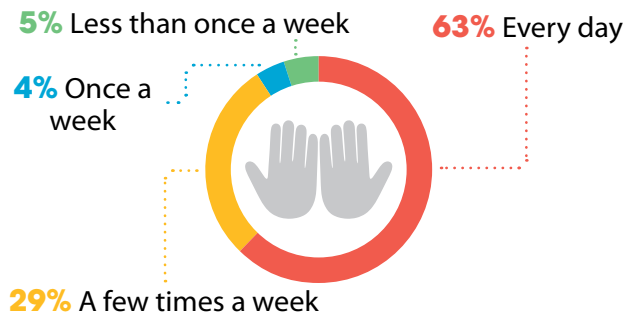


READING THE BIBLE AND PRAYING?

HOW OFTEN THEY'RE READING THE BIBLE



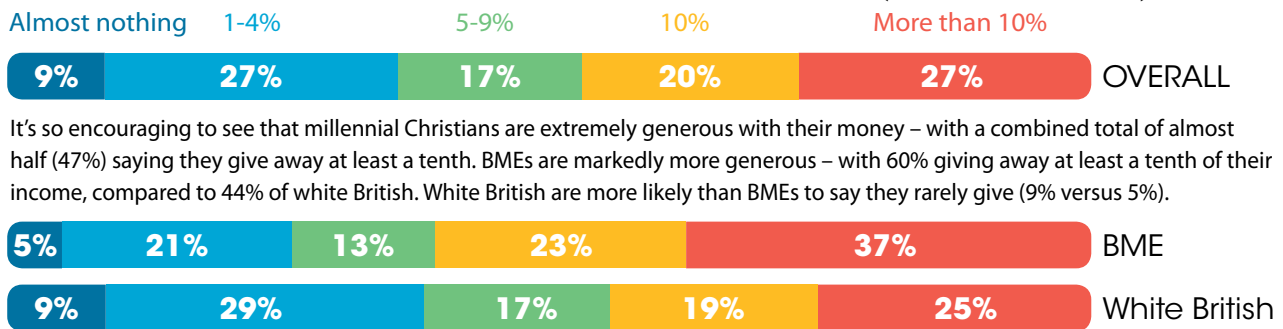
HOW OFTEN THEY'RE PRAYING



Bible-reading seems to be less popular with millennials than **prayer**, with just 25% reading their Bible every day, compared to 63% praying daily. We've found that BME respondents are more likely to read the Bible at least several times each week (74% compared to 65% of white British), and men are more likely than women to read it at least several times each week (73% versus 63%). There are no significant difference in prayer habits by ethnicity or gender.

GENEROUS GIVERS

HOW MUCH MONEY MILLENNIALS GIVE AWAY (APPROXIMATELY)



It's so encouraging to see that millennial Christians are extremely generous with their money – with a combined total of almost half (47%) saying they give away at least a tenth. BMEs are markedly more generous – with 60% giving away at least a tenth of their income, compared to 44% of white British. White British are more likely than BMEs to say they rarely give (9% versus 5%).

HOW MILLENNIALS DESCRIBE THEIR APPROACH TO FINANCIAL GIVING



BMEs are more likely to say that their giving is "organised and I also give as and when I see a need" (52% versus 46%) or that they give just as and when they see a need (32% versus 30%), whereas white British are more likely to say their giving is organised (16% versus 12% of BMEs).

Men are more likely to say that their giving is organised (18% versus 12% of women), and women more likely to say that their giving is "organised and I also give as and when I see a need" (50% compared to 43% of men).

IN THE PAST YEAR, MILLENNIALS HAVE GIVEN MONEY TO THE FOLLOWING...



Nine in 10 have given to their church in the past year, and three quarters to Christian charities. Non-Christian charities are the next biggest recipients, with three in five giving to them.

SHARING FAITH

CHRISTIAN TEACHING

FORMS OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING MILLENNIALS FIND MOST BENEFICIAL



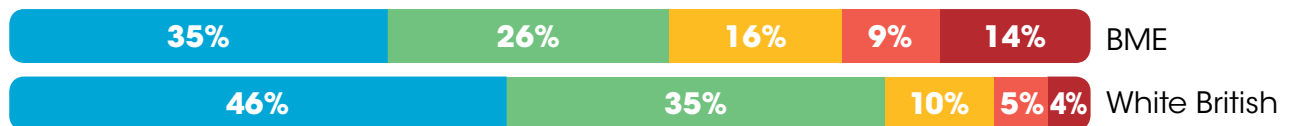
Less than half (49%) said that the **teaching** they find most benefits them is teaching from their church – meaning leaders can't assume that it is their church's teaching that most influences millennials in their congregation. Other forms of teaching which millennials benefit from are podcasts (17%), online blogs (15%), other forms such as books (13%) and social media (4%).

MILLENNIALS SHARING THEIR FAITH

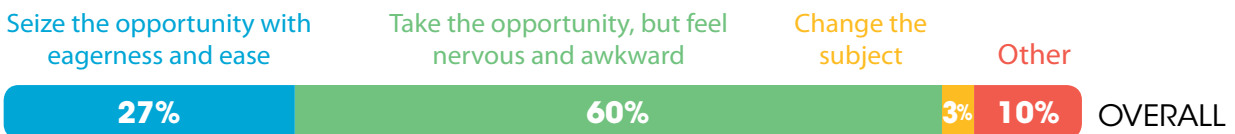
THE LAST TIME MILLENNIALS TALKED ABOUT THEIR FAITH WITH SOMEONE WHO WOULDN'T CALL THEMSELVES A CHRISTIAN



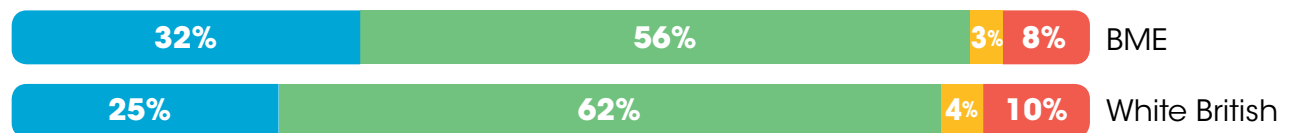
More than three-quarters (77%) have **shared their faith** in the past month – and 44% of these say they've shared in the last week. But white British respondents are much more likely to say they've shared their faith recently – a combined 81% in the past month compared to 61% of BMEs.



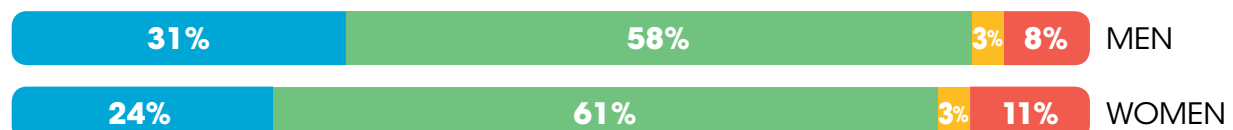
WHEN AN OPPORTUNITY OPENS UP TO TALK ABOUT THEIR FAITH WITH SOMEONE WHO IS NOT A CHRISTIAN, THEY USUALLY...



Millennials are most likely to say they respond to an opportunity to talk about their faith by taking it, but feeling nervous and awkward (60%).



BMEs are more likely to say they seize the opportunity (32% compared to 25% of white British), and less likely to say they feel nervous and awkward. This is interesting considering that BMEs are *less* likely to have shared their faith recently.



Men are more likely than women to say they seize the opportunity to share their faith with others (31% compared to 24% of women).

GAVIN CALVER

DIRECTOR OF MISSION AT THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

This vital research is going to be massively helpful in us understanding new generations more clearly, reaching them with the gospel and empowering those within our churches to reach their generation. I can't encourage you strongly enough to engage with this research and then go about changing the picture moving forward.



THE PLACE OF DOUBT

HOW MILLENNIALS DESCRIBE THE PLACE OF DOUBT IN THEIR FAITH

"I rarely doubt any aspect of my faith"

17%

"I do have occasional doubts, but it never really puts my faith in jeopardy"

49%

"I have frequent (or continual) doubt, but my faith is strong enough to cope"

30%

"I have serious doubts and I am not sure my faith will survive"

4%

OVERALL

Many millennials experience **doubts** within their faith, with almost a third (30%) saying they have frequent or continual doubt but their faith is strong enough to cope. Half of our panel say they occasionally doubt their faith, 17% say they rarely doubt, and 4% say they have serious faith-threatening doubts.

34%

43%

21%

2

BME

13%

51%

32%

4%

White British

BME respondents are much more likely to say they rarely doubt their faith (34% compared to 13% of white British), and much less likely to say they have frequent doubts (21% compared to 32%). Just 2% of BME have serious doubts compared to 4% of white British.

21%

47%

27%

5%

MEN

14%

50%

32%

3%

WOMEN

Gender differences are also marked, with 21% of males saying they rarely doubt, compared to 14% of females. However 5% of males say they have serious doubts, compared to 3% of females.

BISHOP WAYNE BROWN

DIRECTOR OF NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP AND LEAD PASTOR AT LIFE

I find this research fascinating and in a lot of ways it confirms my prevailing thoughts about my millennial generation. It would seem that this next generation are caught between the standard of the Christian beliefs they hold dear and the 'how to' of walking out their faith daily.

Add to this the importance millennials place on cultural identity, the tension between faith and the need to 'fit in' or 'belong' can present a modicum of frustration for them.

It is not frustration with Christianity as a moral standard, or evangelicalism as a theological ideal, but rather a frustration surrounding what is or what is not an acceptable expression of faith: "why should I tithe? What do you mean hell isn't a real place? Must I read my Bible every day?" The answers to these questions, and the very questions themselves, characterise a defining line of choice within evangelicalism today. What impact will this choice have on future generations whose culture is essential to them and what choices will they make? It is clear that we need to take this research, act upon the findings and listen.

This research also begs the question: what faith expression will third and fourth generation BME evangelicals grow to adopt when their culturally diverse peers, work colleagues and Christian counterparts express faith in a distinctively different way? Will they keep to their "handed down" cultural expression of faith or move towards a more liberal expression of their traditional belief? Regardless of the answer, this research is precisely what we need to help us understand issues relating to our current and future unity.



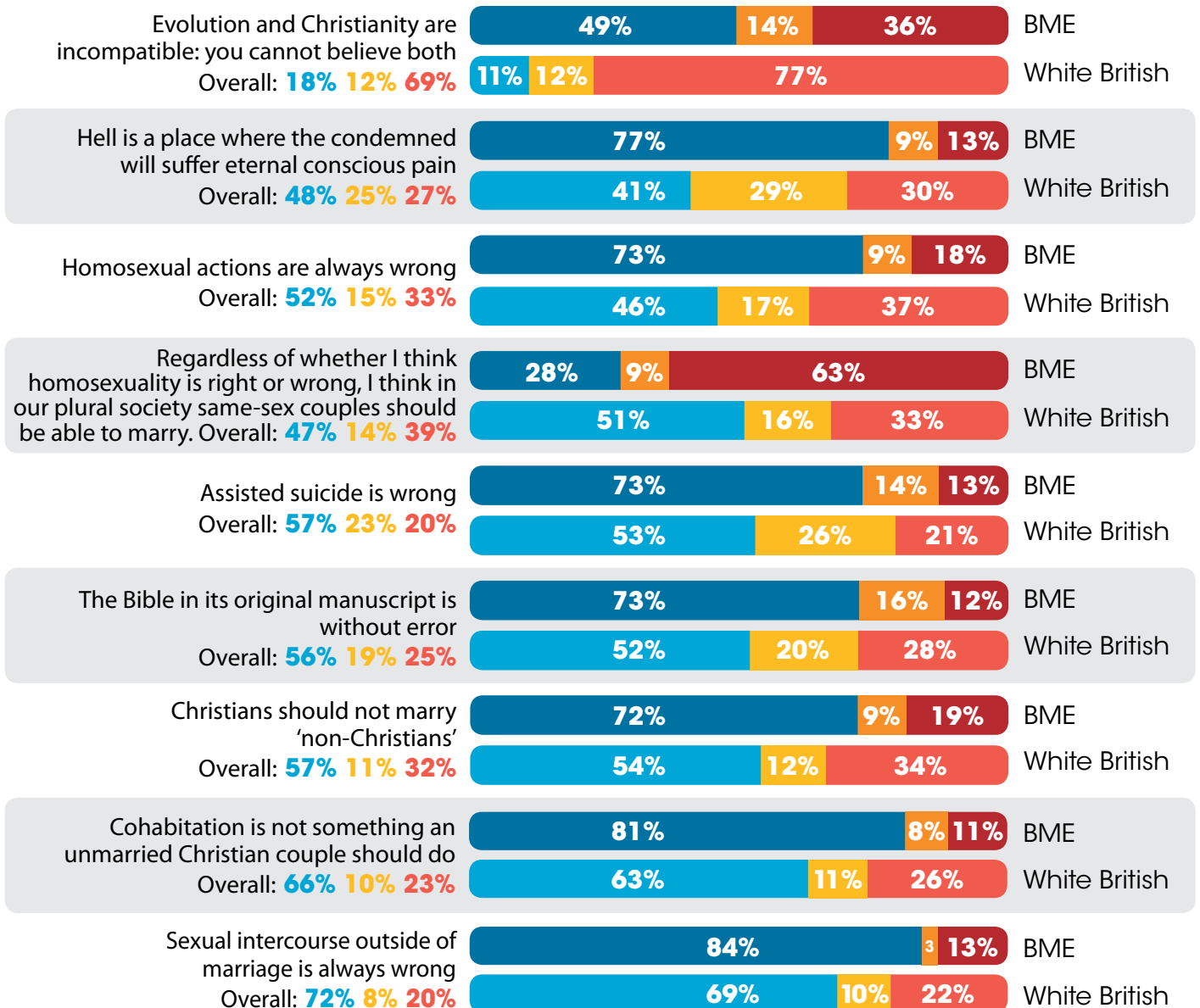
PART II: MILLENNIALS' BELIEFS

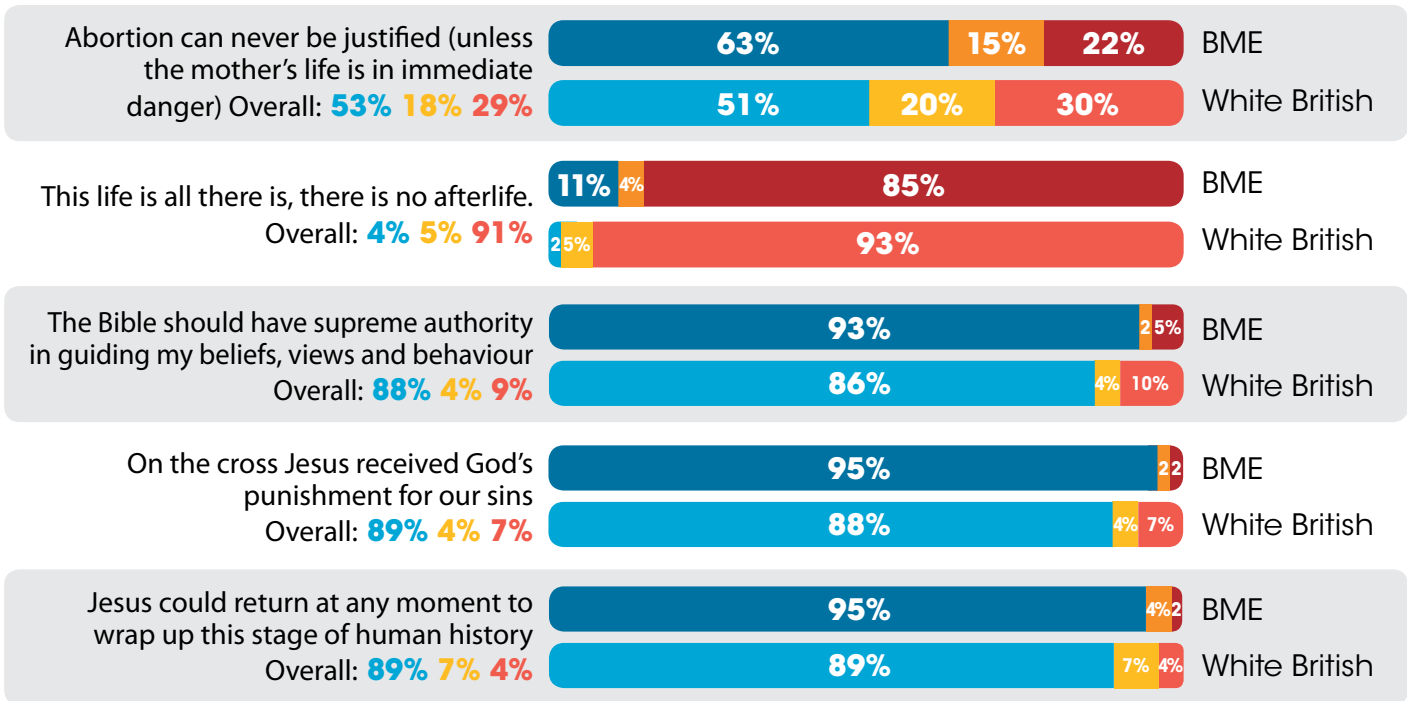
For these issues, there were no significant differences by ethnicity:



For certain other issues, both theological and ethical, there are particularly marked differences between white British and BME respondents. The statements are ranked so that those with the biggest difference between BMEs and white British are near the top.

AGREE **UNSURE** **DISAGREE**





Many of these issues show a wide variety of opinion, with white British respondents being consistently much less conservative in their views. For example, while 73% of BMEs agree that the Bible in its original manuscript is without error, just 52% of white British agree. And 72% of BMEs agree that Christians should not marry non-Christians, compared to 54% of white British.

We also found some significant gender differences. Men are more likely to agree that:

- Humans are separated from God as a result of sin (87% agree compared to 81% of women).
- Homosexual actions are always wrong (61% agree compared to 47% of women)
- The Bible in its original manuscript is without error (63% agree compared to 53% of women)
- Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is always wrong (78% agree compared to 69% of women)
- Abortion can never be justified – unless the mother's life is in immediate danger (61% agree compared to 49% of women)
- Assisted suicide is wrong (66% agree compared to 53% of women)
- Women are more likely to agree that “regardless of whether I think homosexuality is right or wrong, I think in our plural society same-sex couples should be able to marry” (49% agree compared to 41% of men).
- Women are more likely to agree that women should be eligible for all roles within the Church in the same way men are (78% agree compared to 70% of men).

REV DAVID SHOSANYA

REGIONAL MINISTER AT THE LONDON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

This millennial research highlights significant differences in the beliefs and ethical views held by BME and white Christians. These differences are not surprising and can be explained.

Two reasons are worth noting. First, cultures play a significant role in the divergence of opinion. BME cultures continue to retain a predominantly communal, rather than individualistic, view of self/community. Consequently, beliefs are shared and held in common as the essential glue that holds everything together. Take the example of an understanding of God, the Bible and tradition. For the vast majority of BME Christians, God is unchanging in His nature and His word is absolute. Together, they constitute tradition that is sacred in that it connects the present to the past and informs the future – in effect it represents continuity of community, revelation and truth. Therefore, for BME Christians, any deviation from a long-held understanding of God, the Bible and what it advocates is actively resisted, frowned upon and consciously rejected as a threat to the community and society. This is not necessarily the case in white Western cultures where the values of individuality and the notion of ‘progressive’ revelation is more readily embraced. It's therefore clear to see how cultural paradigms inform the beliefs of BME and white British Christians respectively, informing and shaping Christian beliefs and ethics.

Second, the instinctive disposition of millennials to tackle the injustices of contemporary society shouldn't be overlooked. Millennials are inclined towards sharing, community, civic and political mindedness and are technologically-savvy. They are intentionally opposed to discriminatory and oppressive practices and use social media to inform and be informed.

The difference between BME and white Western Christians can therefore be explained by noting the primary socialising influence of African and Caribbean cultures which act as an additional filter through which to process beliefs and ethical convictions.



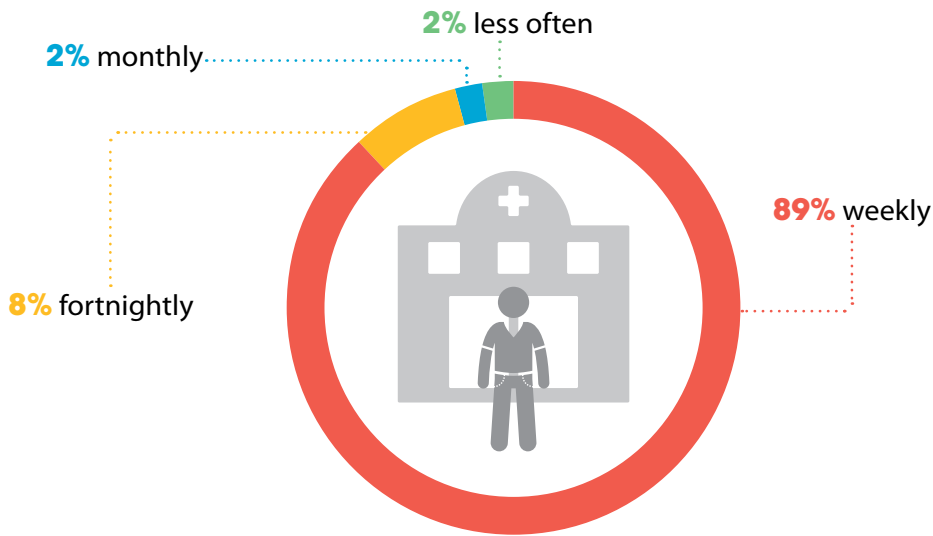
CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

ATTENDING AND SERVING AT CHURCH

The vast majority (94%) say they **attend a specific church**. There are no significant differences by ethnicity, although there are for gender: men are slightly more likely to say they do attend a specific church – 96% compared to 93% of women.

One in 10 say that when they were at university they didn't attend a church, and another 10% said they didn't attend one regularly. However, 80% say they were part of a church or Christian fellowship while at university.

HOW OFTEN MILLENNIALS ATTEND THE MAIN GATHERING OF THEIR CHURCH



LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THEIR CHURCH

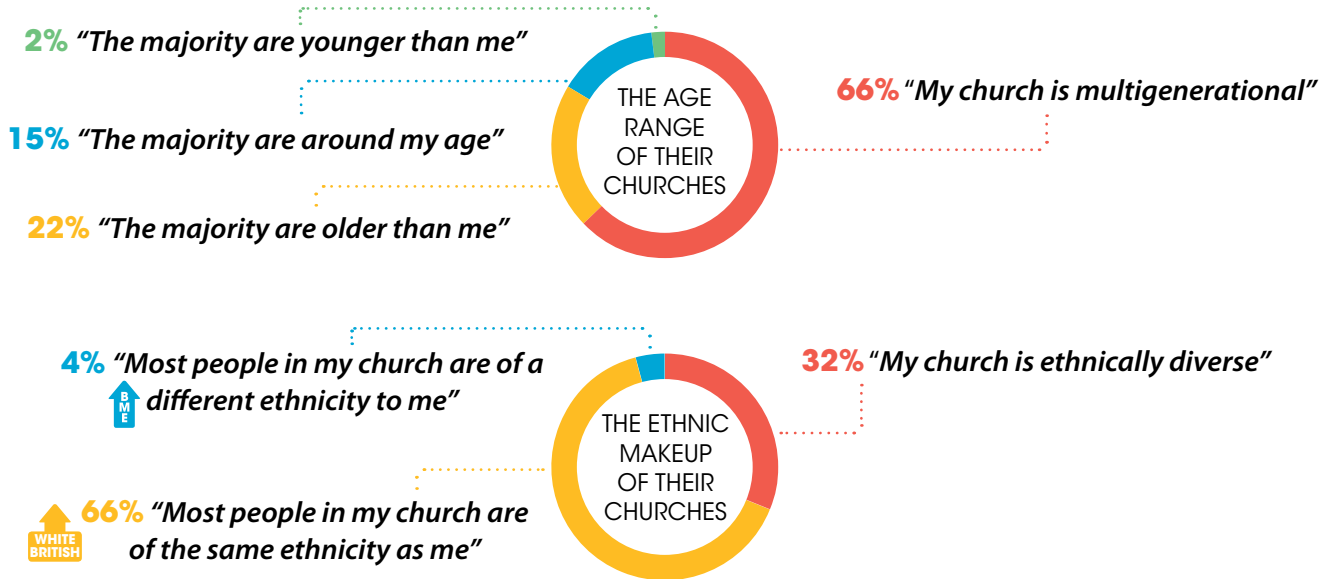


WE ASKED MILLENNIALS IF THEY SERVE AS PART OF THEIR CHURCH IN ACTIVITIES THAT BENEFIT THE CHURCH FAMILY...



The millennial Christians we surveyed are committed **church attenders**, with 89% attending church weekly, with another 10% attending at least monthly. A substantial 84% are **serving** in their church in activities that benefit the church family, and eight in ten (80%) have **leadership responsibilities** of some kind. And while 23% of BMEs said they are a sole or joint leader, 8% of white British respondents said this.

THE DIVERSITY OF THEIR CHURCHES

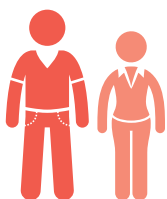


Two thirds (66%) say they attend a multi-generational church, while 22% say most people are older than them, and 15% say most in their church are the same age as them. A third attend an ethnically diverse church, and two-thirds say most people are of the same ethnicity as them (white British are more likely to say this – 55% versus 41% of BMEs). And 4% say that most people are of a different ethnicity from them (although 12% of BMEs say this, compared to 0.6% of white British).

WE ASKED MILLENNIALS WHETHER THEIR CHURCH IS INFLUENCED BY A PARTICULAR CULTURAL BACKGROUND



Overall, 11% say their church is predominantly influenced by a particular cultural background, but this rises to 20% for BMEs compared to 8% for white British. Some 31% say their church is significantly influenced by a particular cultural background (32% for BMEs and a similar 30% for white British), 43% say it is a little influenced (30% for BMEs compared to 47% for white British), and 16% say it is not at all (18% of BMEs compared to 15% of white British).



INVITING FRIENDS TO CHURCH

Three quarters said they would feel comfortable inviting their friends to their church, while **18%** said they would only feel comfortable inviting Christian friends, and **8%** would not feel comfortable inviting any friends.

PASTOR AGU IRUKWU, SENIOR PASTOR OF JESUS HOUSE AND HEAD OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD (RCCG) IN THE UK

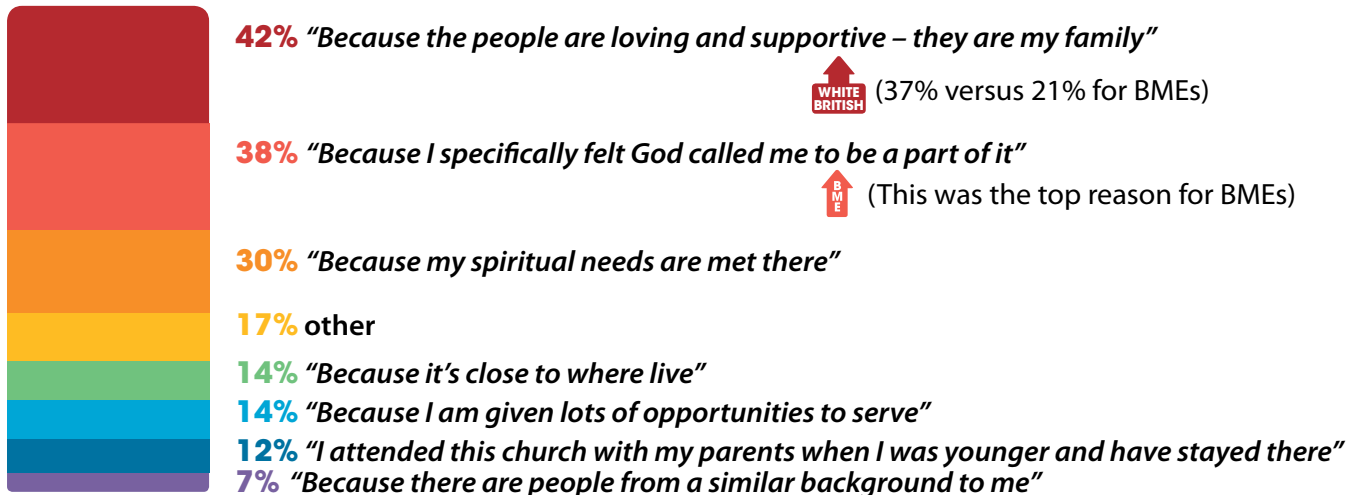
In RCCG, the issue of young adults is at the top of our agenda as we plan for the future of the church. Like many other migrant churches, we are facing the question of how to integrate the younger generation and ensure that we pass on the baton of faith to them and see them deeply rooted in church.

This research has come at the right time to help inform and shape our strategies as we engage with the millennial generation and reflect on how we shape our ministry and church life in a way that will keep young adults and see them, and the Church, continue to grow into the future.



WHY MILLENNIALS ATTEND THEIR CHURCH (AND WHY SOME DON'T)

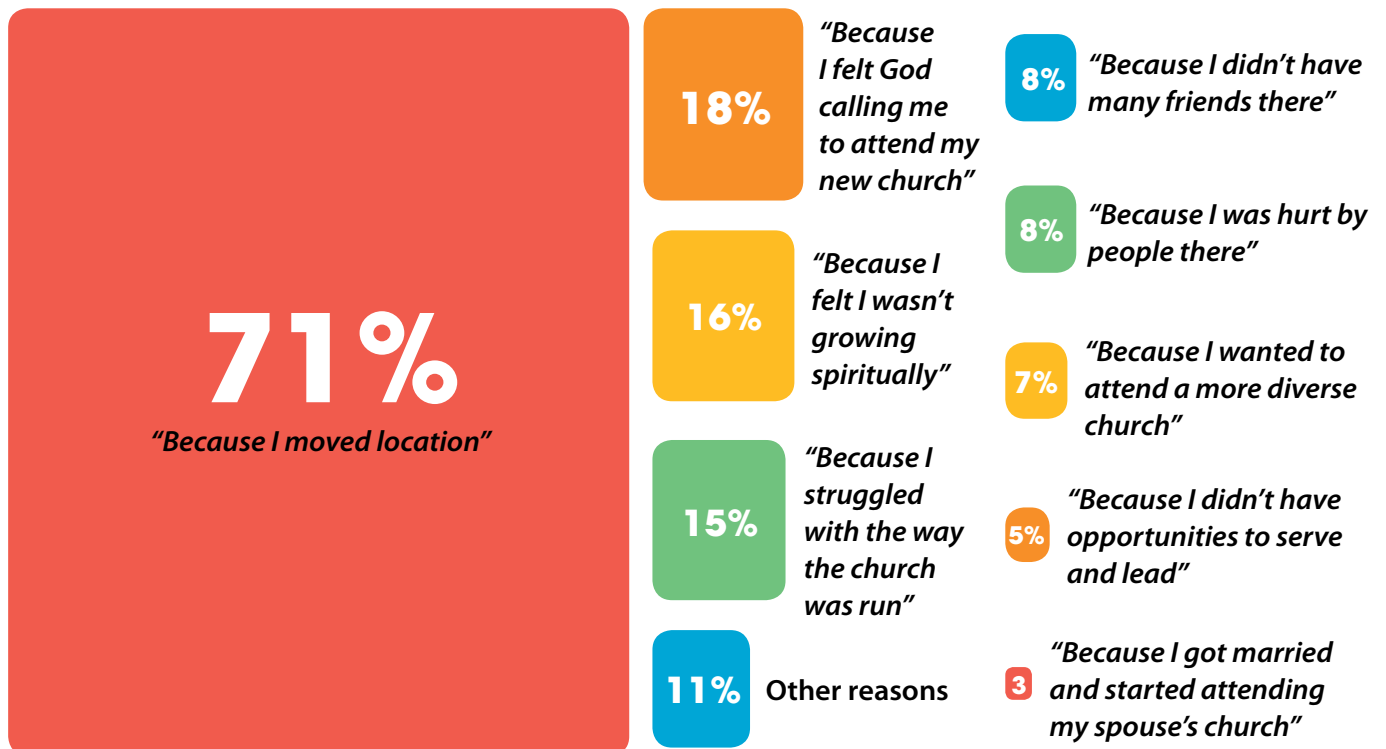
WE ASKED MILLENNIALS TO SELECT THE TOP TWO REASONS WHY THEY ATTEND THEIR CHURCH...



Overall, 84% have regularly attended another church before their current one – although this was substantially lower for BME respondents (75% compared to 86% of white British).

WHY MILLENNIALS LEFT THEIR PREVIOUS CHURCH

They could select all that applied...



The top three reasons millennials give for having **left their previous church** are moving location (71%), feeling God calling them to move on (18%) and feeling they weren't growing spiritually (16%). More than one in 10 say it was due to other reasons than those listed.

MILLENNIALS WHO DON'T ATTEND A CHURCH...

WE ASKED THE MILLENNIALS WHO DO NOT ATTEND A SPECIFIC CHURCH IF THERE WERE PARTICULAR REASONS WHY (THEY COULD SELECT ALL THAT APPLIED), THEY SAID:

39%

"I really struggle with the way churches are run"

32%

Other reasons

30%

"I've just moved and am looking for a new church"

22%

"I don't go to church because I have been hurt by a church in the past"

19%

"I find I can be a strong Christian without going to church"

15%

"I find attending church doesn't help me in my faith"

14%

"I attend different churches each week rather than one particular one"

1%

"I have never attended a church"

17

A minority of 6% of our panel said they **don't attend a specific church**. For this group, the top reason they give for not attending a specific church is because they struggle with the way churches are run (selected by 39%). A third (32%) say it is due to other reasons (for example personal circumstances) and 30% say it is because they have recently moved and are still looking for one. And more than one in five (22%) say it is because they have been hurt by a church in the past, and 19% say they find they can be a strong Christian without going to church.

PASTOR MICHAEL PUFFETT SENIOR PASTOR OF JUBILEE CHURCH, MAIDSTONE

The ability to raise and release the next generation is one of the most important skills of leadership. It has to start with our understanding of 'serving God's purpose in our generation' and then with urgency prepare the next generation to do better, go further and achieve more than we ever could.

Through the years I have seen good churches, ministries and works rise and then fall because of leadership missing this key principle.

We are so busy 'doing what we do' that we forget to raise the sons and daughters in preparation for their release.

If we fail in this area, we face the problem of no one ready, equipped and able to take the work on when we step aside. Leaders then frantically begin to look around, advertise and cry out to God for the next leader, often too late.



MILLENNIALS' EXPERIENCE OF CHURCH

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS AT CHURCH

WE ASKED MILLENNIALS HOW THEY'D DESCRIBE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THOSE IN THEIR CHURCH



42% "I have many close relationships with people in my church"



49% "I have a few close relationships with people in my church"



7% "I don't really know many other people in my church"



2% "I don't have any close relationships with people in my church"

HOW MILLENNIALS FEEL ABOUT THEIR CHURCH

On these areas, there were no significant differences by ethnicity or gender.

AGREE **UNSURE** **DISAGREE**



"I feel my church leaders care about church members and make an effort to get to know them"



"My church gives opportunities for young adults to develop their gifts and take leadership responsibilities"



"My church is a family to me"



"I fully understand and support the vision of my church"



"I am often frustrated with my church and think of leaving"



"Even though I am at church regularly, I am just going through the motions - my heart and mind are far away"

However, for these areas we found some significant differences by ethnicity.

"I feel older people in my church struggle to relate with me"

Overall: **23%** **17%** **60%**



BME



White British

"There are people I can look up to and learn from in my church"

Overall: **93%** **5%** **3%**



BME

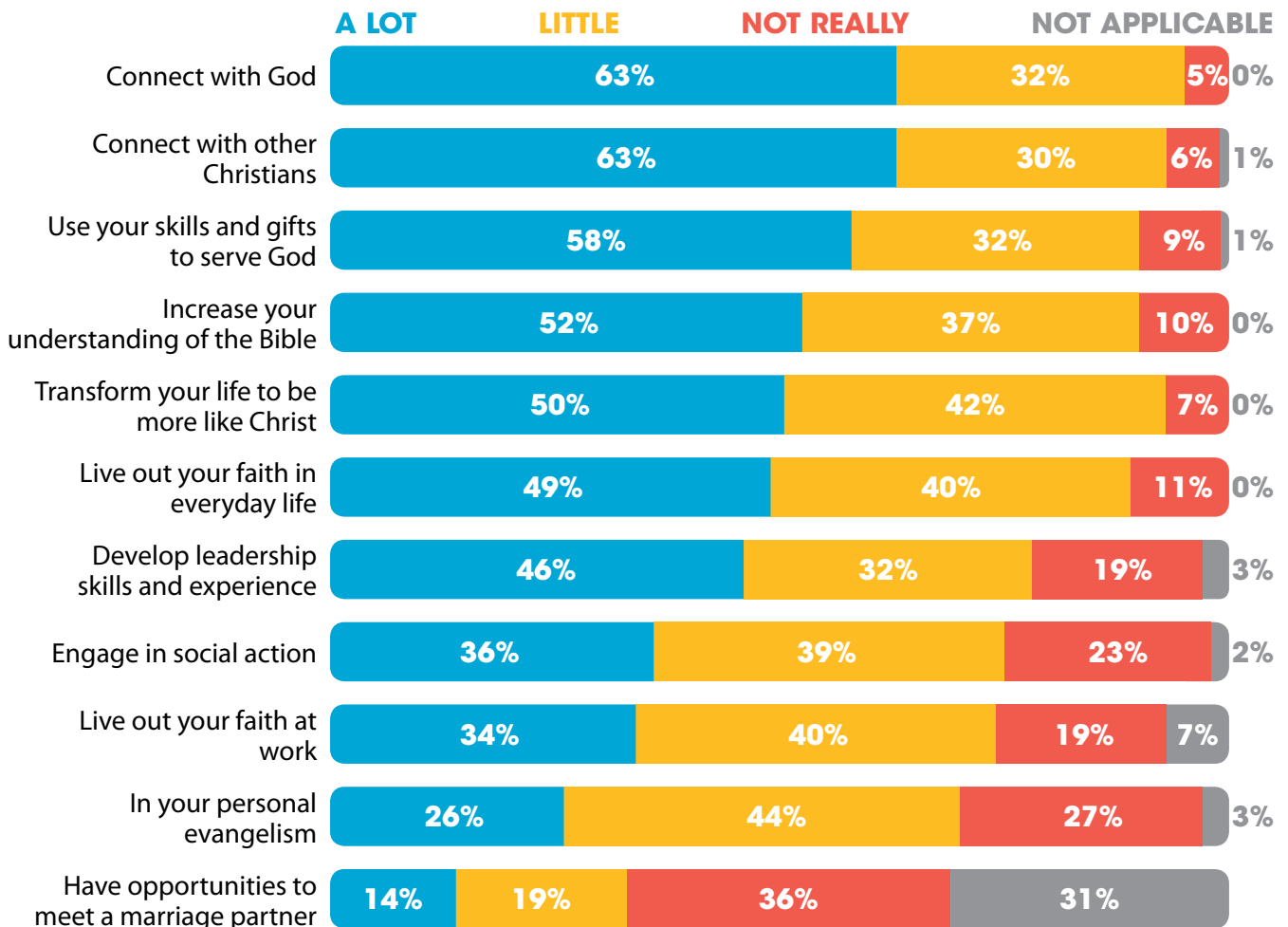


White British

BMEs are slightly more likely to say that they feel older people in their church struggle to relate with them, and slightly less likely to say that there are people in their church they can look up to and learn from.

ARE OUR CHURCHES EQUIPPING MILLENNIALS?

WE ASKED YOUNG ADULTS: HOW WELL DOES YOUR CHURCH HELP YOU...?



The young adults who took our survey are most likely to say that **their church helps them a lot** to: connect with God (63%), connect with other Christians (63%), use their skills and gifts to serve God (58%), increase their understanding of the Bible (52%) and transform their life to become more like Christ (50%).

Young adults were most likely to say that **their church does not really help them**: have opportunities to meet a marriage partner (36% said this), in their personal evangelism (27%), to engage in social action (23%), in living out their faith at work (19%) or in developing leadership skills and experience (19%). This indicates that churches need to do more to equip young adults in these areas.

There were some significant differences in terms of ethnicity.

BME young adults were more likely to say that their church helps them a lot to:

- Increase their understanding of the Bible (59% v 51% of white British)
- Transform their life to be more like Christ (60% v 47%)
- Develop leadership skills and experience (53% v 44%)
- Live out their faith at work (45% v 31%)
- Have opportunities to meet a marriage partner (22% v 11%).

BMEs were less likely to say that their church really helps them to connect with other Christians (57% v 64% of white British).

There were also some significant gender differences:

- Men are significantly more likely to say their church helps them a lot to develop leadership skills and experience (51% compared to 43% of women) – and 20% of women said their church did 'not really' help them in this area, compared to 18% of men.
- Men are also a lot more likely to say their church helps them a lot to have opportunities to meet a marriage partner (19% compared to 10% of women), while women are much more likely to disagree (41% compared to 29% of men).

BREAKDOWN BY CHURCH'S ETHNIC MAKE-UP

For those who said their church helps them a lot, we've found some fascinating differences in the results depending on whether millennials are attending a church where others are predominantly of the *same* ethnicity as them, of a *different* ethnicity to them, or whether they would describe their church as *ethnically diverse*.

We've circled below where there are particularly large differences for that area of equipping – for example, for using their skills and gifts to serve God (row three), 70% of BMEs who attend a church where others are predominantly of their *own* ethnicity, say their church helps them a lot in this, but this figure drops substantially to 32% for BMEs who are attending a church where others are predominantly of a *different* ethnicity to them.

	BME			White British	
	BMEs attending a church where others are predominantly of the same ethnicity as them	BMEs attending an ethnically diverse church	BMEs attending a church where others are predominantly of a different ethnicity to them	White British attending a church where others are predominantly of the same ethnicity as them	White British attending an ethnically diverse church
Connect with God	68%	73%	59%	55%	73%
Connect with other Christians	54%	68%	43%	61%	70%
Use your skills and gifts to serve God	70%	59%	32%	54%	62%
Increase your understanding of the Bible	64%	64%	30%	48%	56%
Transform your life to be more like Christ	66%	63%	32%	41%	59%
Live out your faith in your everyday life	59%	61%	41%	43%	57%
Develop leadership skills and experience	59%	56%	30%	40%	52%
Engage in social action	35%	57%	31%	27%	48%
Live out your faith at work	46%	44%	41%	27%	41%
In your personal evangelism	29%	36%	19%	20%	35%
Have opportunities to meet a marriage partner	22%	27%	8%	9%	16%

These differences may be due to the nature of the churches which have a particular ethnic make-up, rather than because of the ethnicity of the person attending them. The sample size was not large enough to include the results from white British young adults attending a church where others are predominantly of a *different* ethnicity to them.

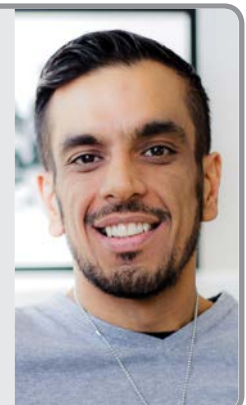
PASTOR STEVE UPPAL

SENIOR LEADER OF ALL NATIONS CHRISTIAN CENTRE, WOLVERHAMPTON

As a church leader I find these statistics insightful, helpful but also uncomfortable. They beg me to ask the questions: "What am I doing?" and "How can I better help the 18 to 35s at my church?"

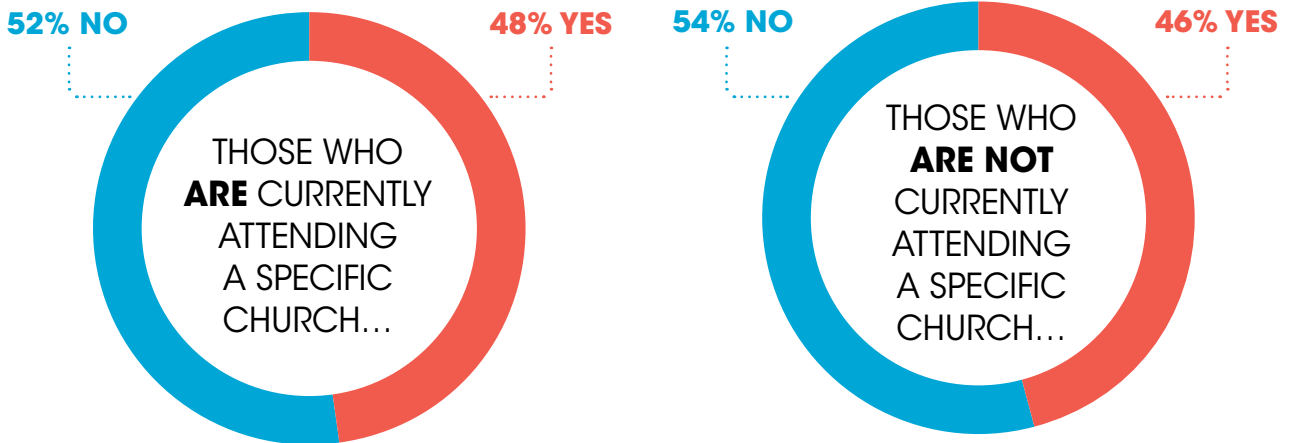
As a leader I want people to have healthy marriages and make good life choices, I want them to use their gifts and skills to serve God and to have a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Yet what I hear through this survey is that I, and perhaps we as church leaders, are found wanting. I feel challenged.

Please allow me to extend this challenge to you. These numbers must not be something we look at and within a few days forget, but we must wrestle with them, pray over them and ask ourselves and our leadership teams how we can respond and what needs to change.



HURTS IN CHURCH

HAVE MILLENNIALS BEEN REALLY HURT IN CHURCH?



Nearly half the millennials who took our survey have been **really hurt** by others in a church they attended. We've found that those who are currently *not* attending a specific church are no more likely to have been really hurt by people in church – in fact their figures are slightly lower (46% compared to 48% of those who *are* currently attending a church).

A few people who I met and trusted with personal circumstance used the information to gossip and spread rumours about me.

The pastor blanks me occasionally (doesn't even say hello), he doesn't remember my name, he doesn't seem interested in why I'm there.

My friends got married and stopped spending time with me.

There was blatant disregard for the gift of women leaders and derision of women who didn't fit the perfect Christian woman role – those who were unmarried mothers, divorced or had high powered jobs.

I was losing my faith and grieving the death of my best friend who had committed suicide. I felt like the church leadership were not understanding of the situation and repeatedly told me I was wrong about all the doubts I had.... It was like the only thing people knew how to do was teach the gospel, but they had forgotten how to love people. I became a project to be fixed. They didn't seem to trust that God was sovereign over my doubts and would work through them to bring me back to him.

CHINE MBUBAEGBU

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

It's difficult for us to realise that the place where we're supposed to find community, refuge and hope – the Church – can often be the places where we encounter our deepest hurts. We know that people fail, but our God alone is the rock on whom we can depend. For some millennials, however, their entire faith is inextricably linked to the church they attend. So when their church fails, their faith is rocked. It's shocking to see that for 18% of those currently not attending church, their experience of hurts in church almost made them lose their faith. We need to do all we can to build a robust faith among young people so that when the storms of life come – the hurts, the depression, the eating disorders, the doubt, the divorce – they stay in our churches rather than leave. The Alliance's 20s and 30s initiative *threads* is addressing these issues and working to rekindle a more vibrant faith among the millennial generation. Spread the word: threadsuk.com



MILLENNIALS' EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING HURTS IN CHURCH



THOSE WHO **ARE** CURRENTLY ATTENDING A SPECIFIC CHURCH...

THOSE WHO **ARE NOT** CURRENTLY ATTENDING A SPECIFIC CHURCH...



"God used the situation to grow my faith"



"I really struggled to deal with the hurt caused, but I am now over it"



"I am still attending that church"



"Other people in the church supported me through that hard time"



"I was able to reconcile with the people who hurt me"



"The situation meant I ended up leaving that church"



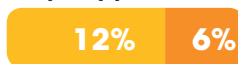
"I continue to really struggle with the hurt caused"



"The situation almost made me lose my faith"



"The church leadership supported me through that hard time"



In terms of dealing with the situation and its aftermath, the minority in our panel (6%) who *do not* currently attend a specific church are almost twice more likely than those who *do* attend a church to say that they continue to struggle with the hurt caused. They are also more likely to say that the hurtful situation led to them leaving that church, and less likely to say that God grew their faith through the experience, or that they reconciled with the people involved. They are also only half as likely to say that their church leadership supported them in the situation (although we do not know whether church leaders were aware of the hurtful situations).

When I had my son, I stepped back from serving on a Sunday and we stopped attending a midweek group due to having a newborn. Attending a very large church we felt instantly forgotten about and as if our old network of friends had left us behind... the latest vision and expansion plan seemed more important than caring for the congregation.

I felt that I didn't belong; people were extremely cliquy and didn't want to branch out of their friendship groups and include others.

IS YOUR CHURCH A MEMBER OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE?

When you join the Evangelical Alliance, your church will get access to a range of inspiring and challenging resources such as this.

You'll also be joining a movement of Christians around the country passionate about changing our communities with the good news of Jesus Christ. We are a growing family of more than 3,500 churches across the UK, representing a diverse range of traditions and styles across 79 denominations. For almost 170 years, it has been our passion to resource and equip the UK Church to be all God wants us to be and to do mission together.

Find out more now by emailing membership@eauk.org or visiting eauk.org/joinus



YOUNG ADULTS AND CHURCH. Often that phrase brings to mind images of young adults leaving the church in their droves, disillusioned and hurt. But, in listening to the voices of the young adults within our churches, we've found that there are many millennials who are still here – actively involved in church life and passionate about being part of their church family.

And while the churches they are part of are by no means perfect, this research tells a positive story of how young adults' faith is developing as they commit to church, serve, give generously and build relationships.

But there is also plenty here to challenge us as a Church, as we hear many young adults say that their churches are not equipping them to share their faith with others, to engage in social action or to live out their faith at work. And we also hear from some young adults who've chosen not to belong to a church because of frustrations or hurts.

This resource provides a timely opportunity for us to reflect on how our own church is listening to and engaging with young adults, prayerfully considering how we may need to change so that we are building tomorrow's Church today.

PASTOR SIEW-HUAT ONG

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE CHINESE CHURCH IN LONDON

The younger generation of 20s and 30s is the future of the UK Church, but also a key part of the Church of today. I am delighted that this research has shone a light into the experiences and beliefs of young adults from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. It is now down to us as church and denomination leaders to reflect on the findings, and prayerfully consider what impact they will have on our own ways of doing church.



KIERA PHYO

HEAD OF THE YOUTH & EMERGING GENERATION TEAM AT TEARFUND

This research tells some important stories about active young Christians in the UK.

We can celebrate that millennial regular church-goers are sharing their faith, taking on roles of responsibility in church, and regularly praying and reading their Bible. But we are also a generation who want to influence society and shift culture. We care about creation and know we are part of a global family. Leadership is informal and digital platforms give us unending opportunities.

These results also present a challenge to the Church. To drive social action, raise up young leaders and equip people in the work place and in their frontline. And also helping us feel confident when we talk about Jesus, rather than awkward.

BISHOP ERIC BROWN

PENTECOSTAL PRESIDENT OF CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

This research should not just be looked at once and then put in a briefcase or on a shelf. I encourage pastors and leaders to take time to reflect on what this research tells us about the upcoming generation of Christian young adults, and consider how we can shape our programmes and church structures to welcome and include them. For we want every young adult who comes through our church doors to develop and grow into all God has for them.



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