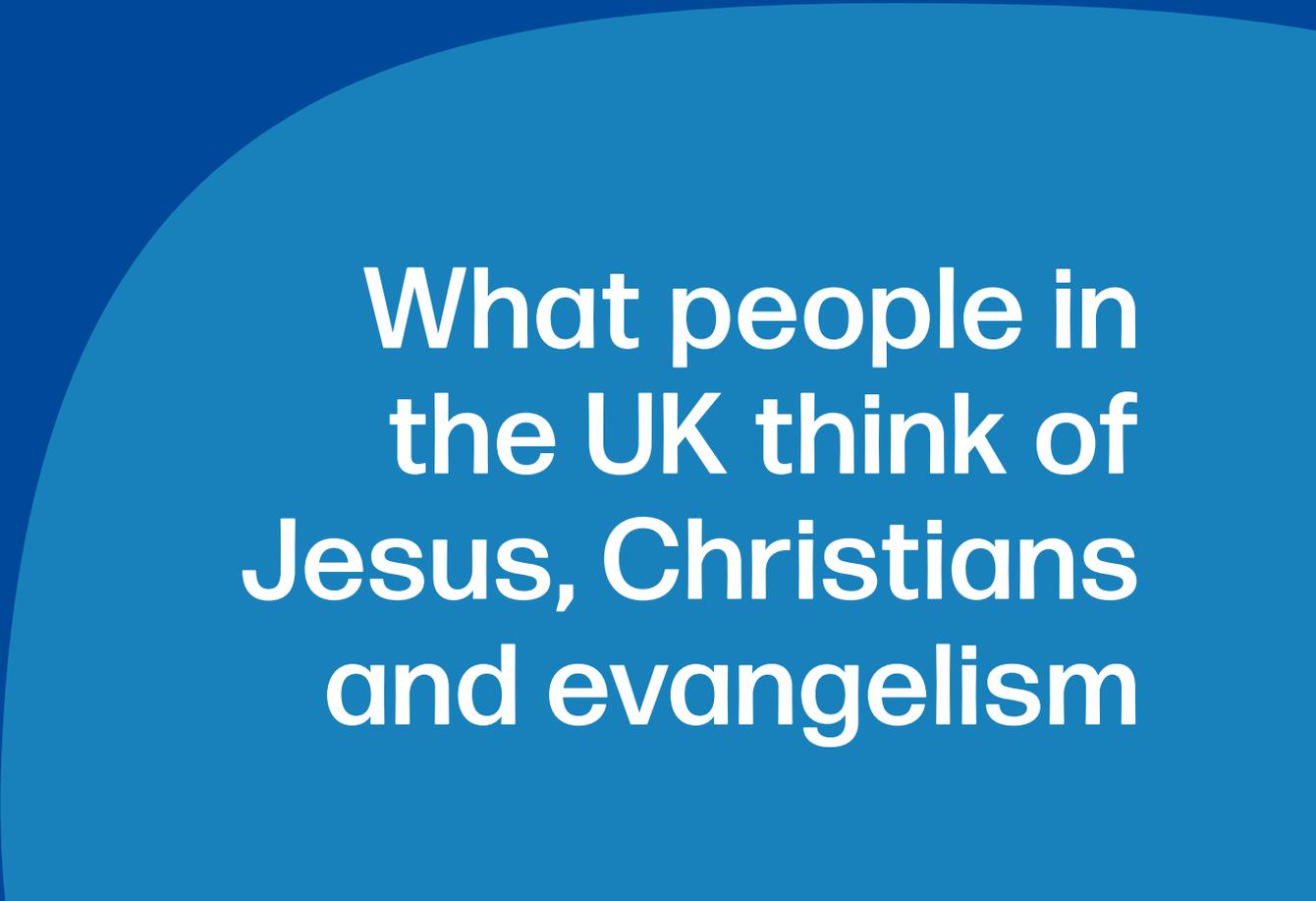




**Talking
Jesus**

Talking Jesus Report 2022



**What people in
the UK think of
Jesus, Christians
and evangelism**

Introduction

The Talking Jesus research was first carried out in 2015 for a group of leaders from across many denominations. When we first saw the results, they were so astonishing that we had to re-do the research to see if it really could be true! Did 43% of the population really believe in the resurrection? Were practising Christians really speaking about their faith to their friends and family on a regular basis? Was there a growing number of young adult Christians? The answer was yes, and you'll be pleased to know that the answer is still yes.

Since then, the research has been presented hundreds of times. It has changed our thinking and strategy around evangelism and those initially startling facts have become widely accepted.

The original partners in this research always intended to track the results to measure the churches' impact in evangelism. This was planned for 2020 but, due to the pandemic, we waited. During the wait we gained more partners - new organisations interested in the research. This new research is brought to you by Alpha, the Evangelical Alliance, HOPE Together, Kingsgate Community Church and the Luis Palau Association. We're excited by it, and we know you will be too.

We are passionate about this research because we know that facts can change people's understanding and behaviour. This research can bring confidence to the church and to all of us who follow Jesus and who long to see others come to faith.

This booklet will introduce you to the Talking Jesus research, so you can understand the reasoning behind the research and how it can be used to help in the task of evangelism. Most of the questions that we asked are identical to those in 2015, but a few are new or have asked for additional information. We'll compare where we can, and point out any differences that matter, as we go along. To make this comparison we are using UK data from 2015.

The report is in five parts:

- 1 The state of faith in the UK **p4**
- 2 Those outside the church **p12**
- 3 Conversations about Jesus **p20**
- 4 How people come to faith **p30**
- 5 Next steps **p36**

How the research was undertaken:

Savanta ComRes conducted one 10-minute online survey among a total of about 4,000 UK adults. Fieldwork mainly took place between 28th January and 13th February, with some supplementary fieldwork taking place between 28th March and 5th April. Respondents were recruited into two samples. Sample one, the Nat Rep sample, was designed to be nationally representative of the UK, numbering 3,115 people. In addition to this, Savanta ComRes also recruited a Boost Sample of 917 practising Christians. Following fieldwork these two samples were combined into a single combined dataset. Practising Christians were weighted so that the proportion of practising Christians in the dataset as a whole was equal to the proportion of practising Christians recruited by chance in the nationally representative sample. Then, the whole combined dataset was weighted by gender, age, and region, ensuring that the data would provide a representative picture of the whole UK population.

The data has a margin of error of 1.54%, meaning that in reality, all percentages presented below could be 1.54% higher or lower than presented.

The key groups that we refer to in this research are as follows:

Practising Christians - those who attend church monthly and pray and read the Bible weekly

Non-Christians - all those who don't describe themselves as a Christian

Non-practising Christians - those who describe themselves as Christian but who don't meet the full definition of a practising Christian

No-religion - those who do not describe themselves as Christian or of another faith

Other faiths - those who describe themselves as of a faith other than Christian

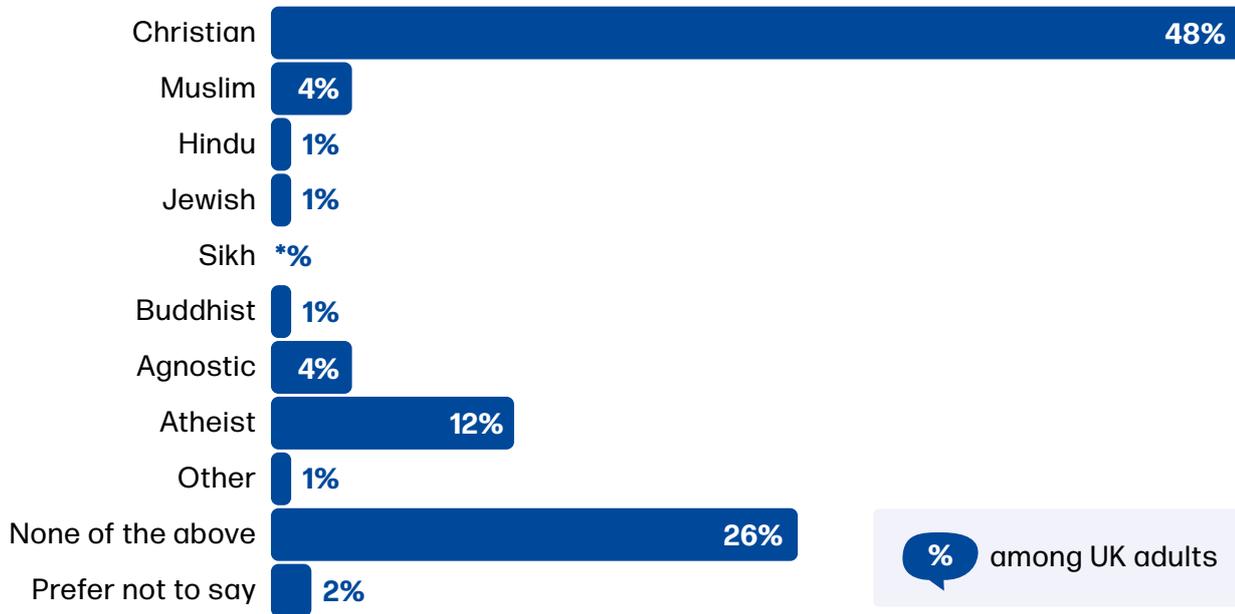
Part 1

**The big picture
– the state of
faith in the UK**

**Talking
Jesus**

Section 1

What is the state of faith in the UK?



The first question that we asked was about the religious affiliation of the population. We discovered that 48% of the population choose to describe themselves as Christians. This is down from 58% in 2015.¹ The Christian faith is chosen by many more people in the older age brackets - 60% of those aged 55-64, going up to 63% of those 65+, whereas it is 29% of those aged 18-24. This is a significant drop in the number of people choosing to affiliate themselves with the Christian faith.

As the church, it is important to know all we can about those we are trying to reach. If 48% of the population associate themselves with the Christian faith, what about the other 52%?

26% of the respondents didn't affiliate with any of the main religions or define themselves as either an atheist or agnostic. They are the next largest group after the Christians, they are the 'none' group. This group has grown in number significantly since 2015, where they were only 11% of the UK population. The age break 18-24 has the highest percentage of those choosing 'none', 27%; also the highest percentage of atheists 20% and of Muslims 14%. In comparison only 4% of the whole population describe themselves as Muslims; they tend to be younger and centred in London with 12% of Londoners being Muslim. Our 18-24-year-old Christians have a more challenging environment to practise their faith in than any other age group.

¹ In 2015 we published the England-only statistics, but we had UK data and as this 2022 report is UK wide we are now comparing with the UK data from 2015.

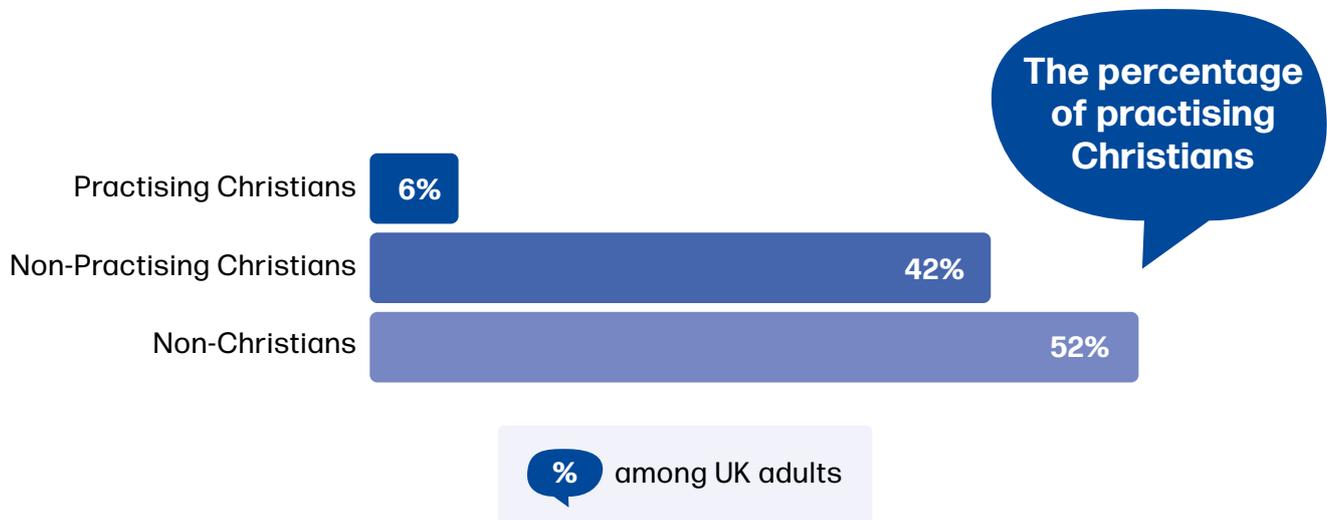
Section 2

How many people are practising Christians?

If 48% of the population choose to associate themselves with the Christian faith, how many of them can be described as practising Christians, and therefore how many could we view as part of the team in the task of mission and evangelism? We chose some credentials to help us measure this and they had to be easily calculated from a poll. These were: those who were worshipping

regularly as part of a church community at least monthly, and praying and reading the Bible at least weekly. This fantastic group of adults are 6% of the population of the UK. That's a reasonably-sized, active, committed team.²

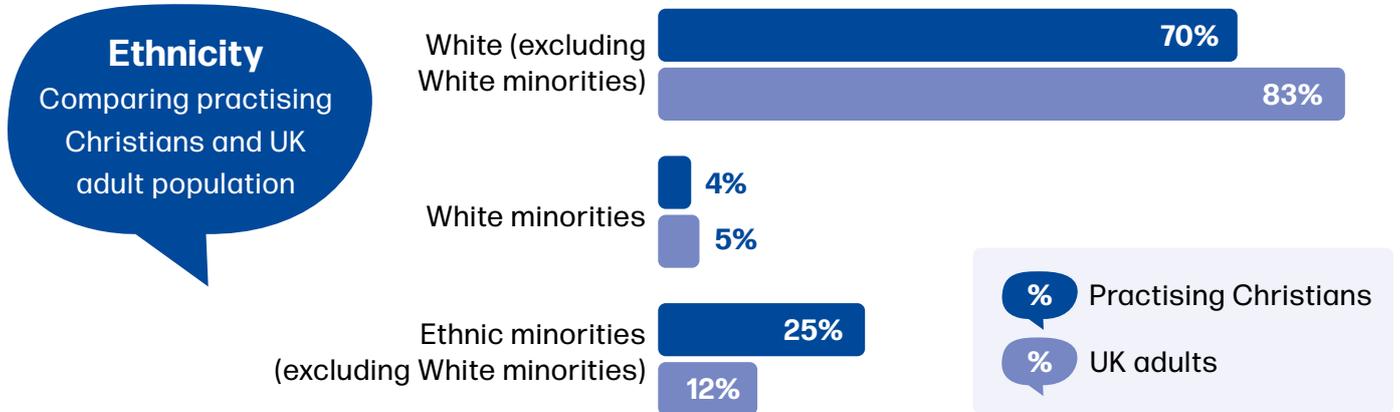
This team is evenly represented throughout the generations, there are also more women 53% compared to 45% men.



² In 2015 7% of the English population met our description of practising Christian.

The ethnic breakdown of practising Christians is also significant; 25% of practising Christians are from black and non-white ethnic minority groups, which make 12% of the UK population. This shows

that ethnic minority groups are more strongly represented as practising Christians and have a higher reach than the white practising Christians amongst their percentage of the population.



In 2015 7% of the English population met the criteria to be included as practising Christians. In 2022 6% of the English population meet the criteria to be practising Christians.³ With the level of accuracy of the research this is not a significant change over seven years. Each year there are many wonderful practising Christians who pass

away. With an ageing population in England, this could have led to a noticeable decline in the number of practising Christians in England over the seven years since we carried out the original research. This means we have replaced many of our ageing, practising Christians with new younger practising Christians.

³ Unfortunately we don't have these figures for the UK wide population in 2015.

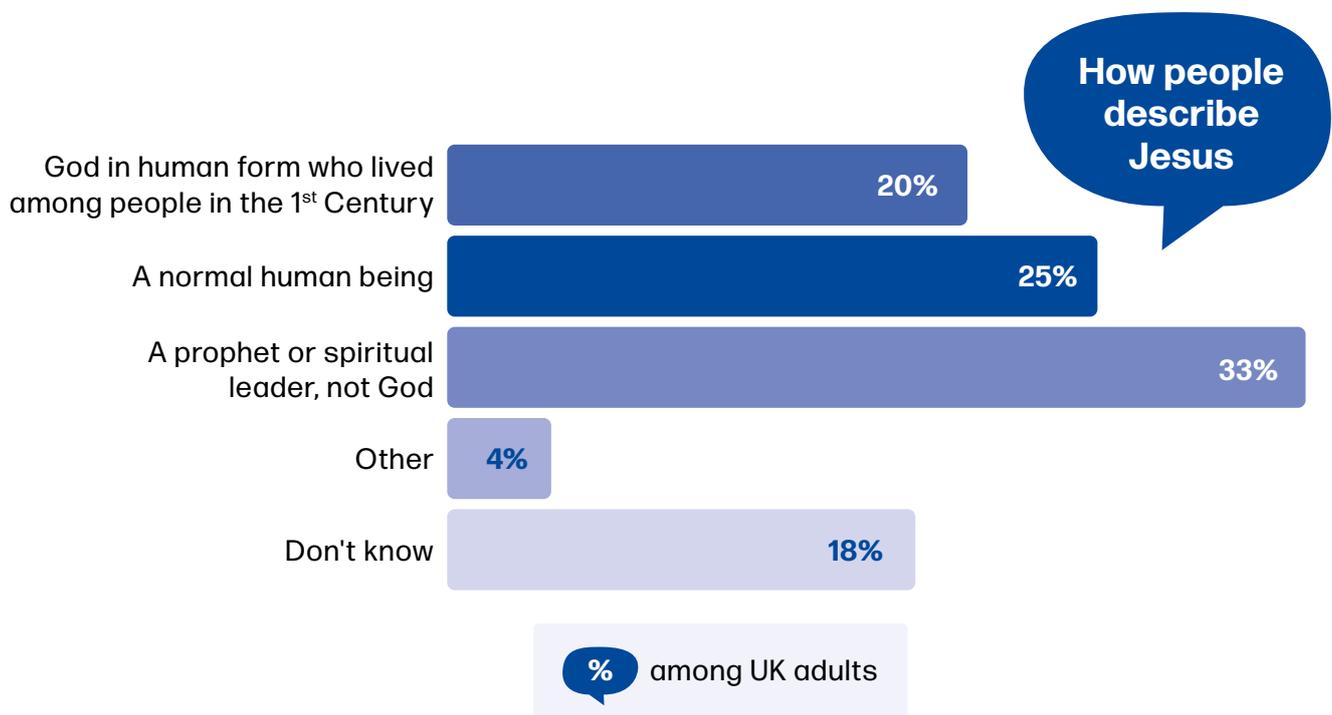
Section 3

What do people think about Jesus?

Section 3a – Is Jesus God?

20% of the UK population think that Jesus is God in human form, who lived among people in the first century; 21% of the UK population thought this in 2015. Across all generations this percentage is

similar, in fact it is slightly higher in the younger generations and shows that the church has held its ground on this core belief.



Section 3b – Was Jesus a historical person?

At the same time as this good news, there is a challenge to the church on the general knowledge held by the population about the historicity of Jesus. In 2015 61%⁴ of the UK population believed that Jesus was a real human being, but that has fallen to 54% of the UK population. Those who believe Jesus is a mythical or fictional character has risen from 22% of the UK population in 2015,

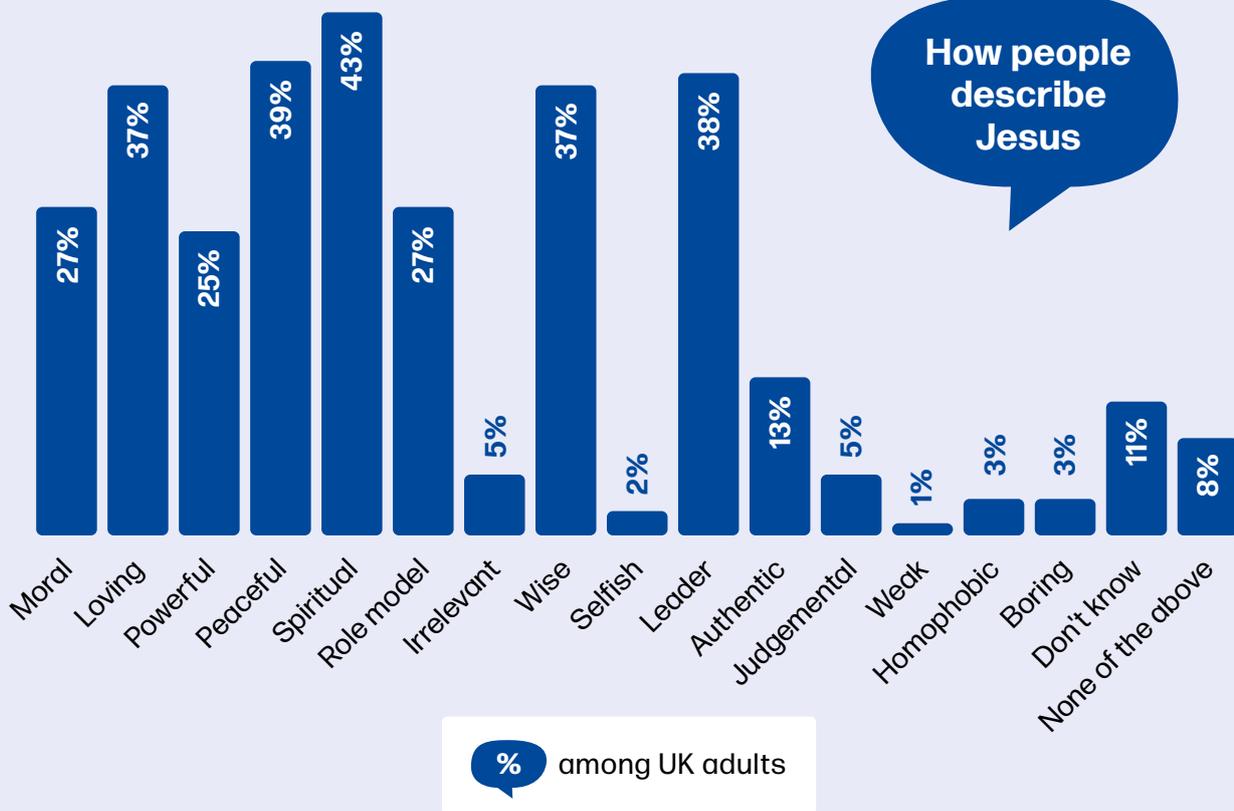
to 28% of the UK population in 2022. There is a challenge to the church to help people understand that Jesus was a real person who lived and walked on earth. The age bracket where this is the biggest challenge is again those aged 18-24 where only 49% believe in the historicity of Jesus. When we work with younger generations we need to talk about Jesus as a historical figure.

⁴ In the 2017 report "Talking Jesus, What Can I Do", we used the England only data and this statistic in 2015 was 60% for England only.

Section 3c – How do people describe Jesus?

We asked our research sample to tick from a list of attributes to describe Jesus, or to say that they didn't know. The top traits

were all positive – that Jesus was spiritual, 43%; peaceful, 39%; a leader, 38%, and loving 37%.



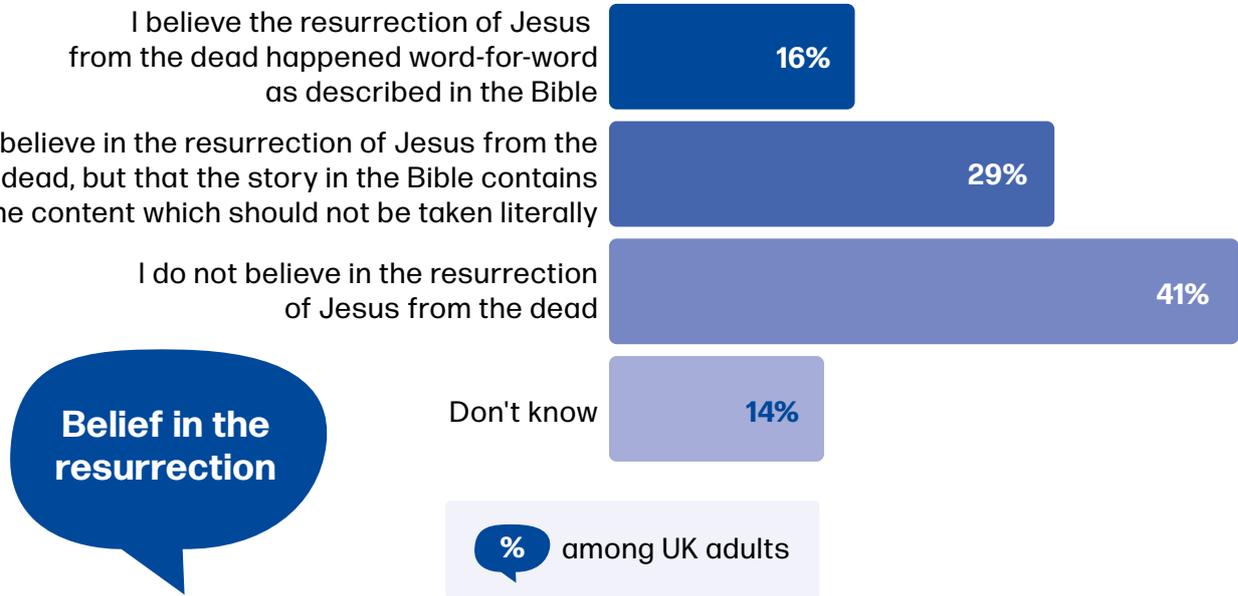
When you look at the responses from non-Christians, 15% of them said they didn't know how to describe Jesus and a further 13% said that none of the options that were listed were how they would describe him. Still the top three traits that were chosen were the same as the whole population: spiritual, 31%; peaceful, 27%, and a leader, 26%. Loving was the option fifth most likely to be chosen, with 22% of those with no religion selecting it.

Although some didn't know, or didn't agree, with the options, there was a considerable number who felt the same as the rest of the population.

The top trait for practising Christians, on the other hand, was that Jesus was loving, 76%. This shows very clearly the difference that knowing Jesus personally makes in someone's life – Christians know they are loved; their understanding of Jesus is personal.

Section 4

The resurrection of Jesus



The answers to this question amazed us in 2015 and are still astonishing today.

16% of the population believe in the resurrection of Jesus, word for word, as it is described in the Bible. A further 29% say they also believe in the resurrection, but that some content of the biblical account should not be taken literally - that's 45% percent of the population who are willing to tick a box saying they believe in the resurrection. A further 41% say they don't believe and 14% don't know.

Only 41% of the population clearly don't believe Jesus rose from the dead! That is extraordinary, in an age where faith was supposed to be dying, and where science could have disproved such things

as resurrection, still 45% of the population believe Jesus rose from the dead.

In 2015 44% of the UK population were indicating that they believed in the resurrection and in 2022 this figure is 45%. The fact that this level of belief has remained consistent over the last seven years is significant.

43% of those over the age of 55 don't believe in the resurrection - whereas this figure falls to 39% of those aged 18-34. There is more belief about the resurrection in the younger generations than the older. Another interesting fact is that 17% of the 18-24-year-olds don't know what they believe about the resurrection - the age-group with the highest percentage of people undecided.

A warm welcome

Ann has lived on the same estate in London for more than 30 years. She's always believed in God, but never felt connected to God or the church. She was befriended by Shane, a London City Mission (LCM) missionary, and their conversations often turned to life's bigger questions. One Sunday, Ann took a big step. She decided to give church a go. She received such

a warm welcome that she kept coming. Eventually she started reading the Bible with Shane and came to the decision that Jesus went through so much torture, all for her. She felt like he really wasn't asking much, so she gave her life to him. Now Ann can't keep quiet about her new life, even on the bus, she's talking about Jesus.

[Ann's full story >](#)



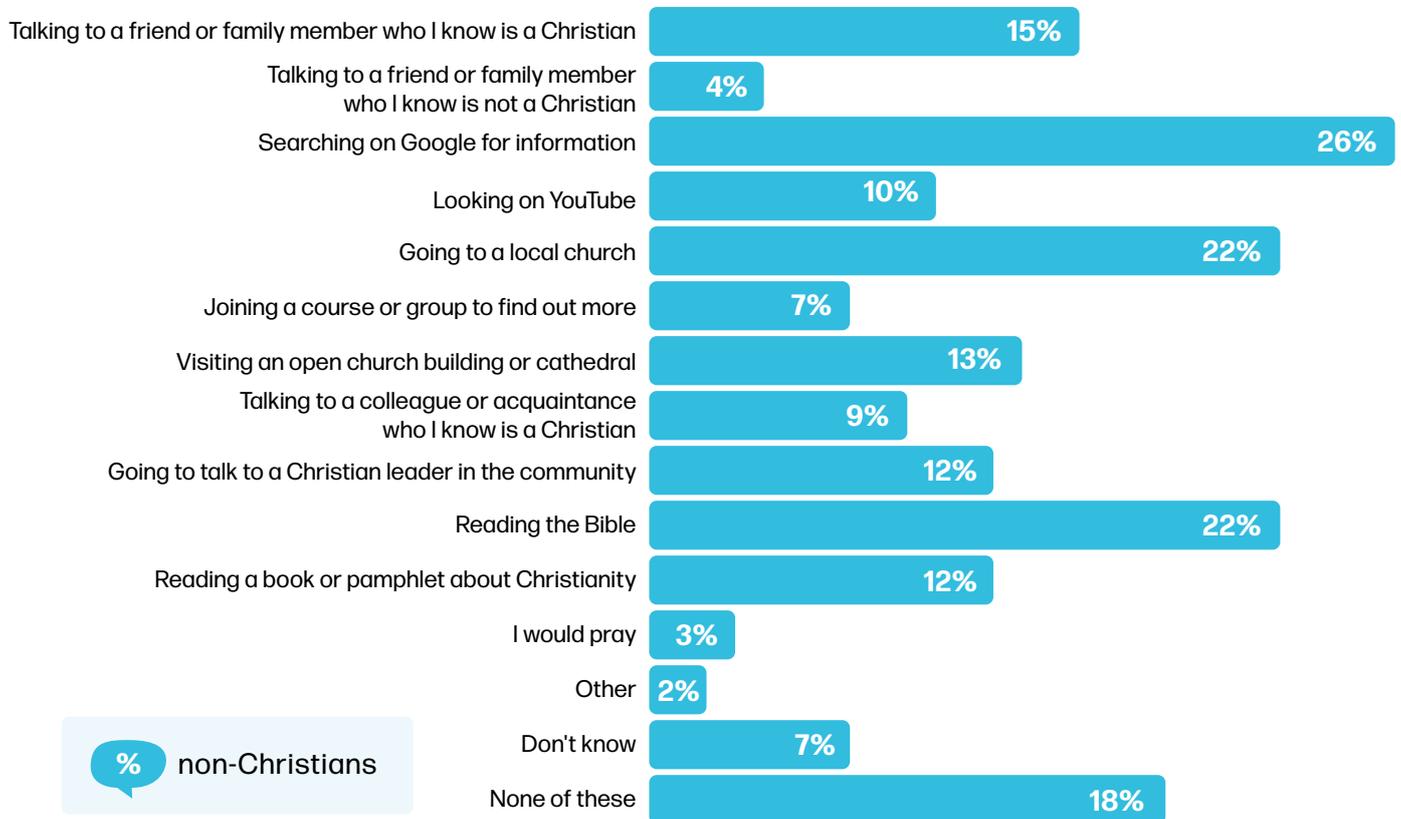
Part 2

Those outside the church

Talking
Jesus

Section 1

Where would people go to find out about the Christian faith?



This was a new question added for 2022. We asked this question of all those who would not describe themselves as a Christian, but also of all those who didn't fit the definition of a practising Christian. Of those who do not describe themselves as Christian (i.e. the non-Christians) we can also see when those of other religions, and those of no religion, give significant answers.

Overall, searching on Google is the top way that non-Christians say they would find out about the Christian faith (26%). This reflects how, in our culture, we now use Google or another search engine to find out about everything from holidays to shopping. The next two top ways that non-Christians would find out about the Christian faith were reading the Bible (22%) and going to a local church (22%). The next leading answers

were both about talking with someone to find out about faith: 15% said talking to a friend or family member who they know to be a Christian; 12% said talking to a Christian leader in the community and 9% said talking to a colleague or acquaintance who they knew was a Christian. (That's a lot of talking options); 13% said visiting an open church or cathedral, and a further 12% said reading a book or a pamphlet about Christianity.

Those who were non-practising Christians favoured going to a local church (43%); reading the Bible (35%); 24% said they would talk to a Christian leader in the community; 21% would talk to a friend who was a Christian. This shows us that non-practising Christians are highly likely to be part of our church services.

Those non-Christians aged 18-24 were the ones most likely to say they would talk to a friend or a family member who they knew to be a Christian (21%). This was also high for those non-Christians aged 25-34 (18%) and those aged 35-44 (19%); this is significantly higher than older age brackets. 16% of non-Christians aged 18-24 said they would search on YouTube, significantly more than the proportion aged 45-54, 55-64 and 65+ who say

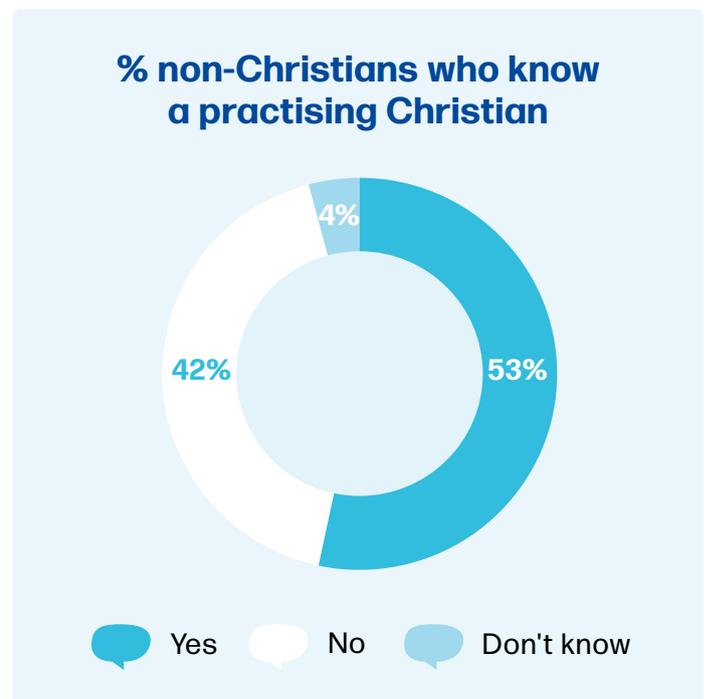
that they would use YouTube. 33% of 25-34-year-olds said that they would search on Google, as would 31% of those aged 35-44. Saying that they would read the Bible to find out more is highest for 25-34-year-olds (27%) and saying they would visit a local church is highest for those non-Christians aged 35-44 (28%). These findings are important when we look at evangelism strategy.

Section 2

Do those outside the church have good contact with us?

We saw very clearly in the original Talking Jesus research in 2015, that the reach of the church was greatest through all the normal everyday relationships of practising Christians. This is still the same in 2022. We asked all the non-Christians and non-practising Christians if they knew someone that they would call a practising Christian. 53% of those who are non-Christians know someone who is a practising Christian in the UK. This is a significant drop from the 68% of non-Christians who knew a practising Christian in the UK in 2015.⁵ This could be an impact of the pandemic and the last two years of isolation. This is something that we need to watch and think about in our churches. We need to work to keep our links outside of our own church communities.

The people who are least likely to know a practising Christian are those who do not have a university or higher education. In fact the more highly educated a person is, the more likely they are to know a practising Christian. This follows into socio-economic grade where those who are DE professions are also least likely to know a practising Christian; 42% don't know a practising

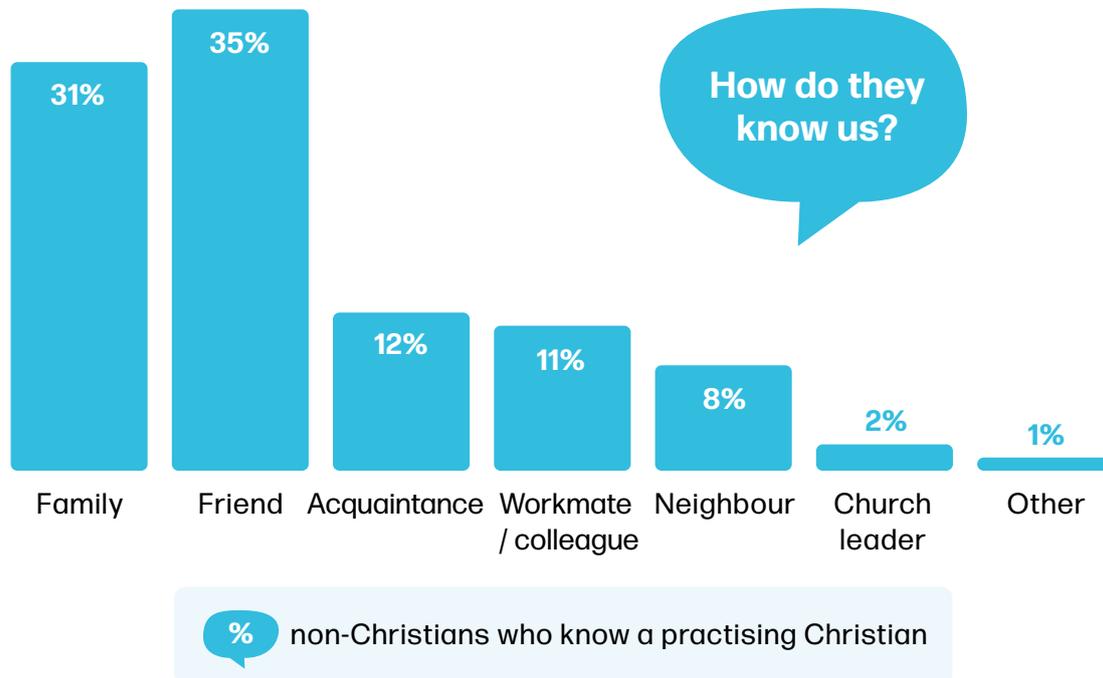


Christian. The other key categories are those who are aged 45 or above, those who are White (excluding White minorities) or Asian / Asian British, and those who have no religion (44%). These statistics should help us to think about strategies for pioneering and church planting to the least reached groups in our country.

⁵ This was 66% of English non-Christians in 2015 – in 2017 report “Talking Jesus – What Can I Do”.

Section 3

How well do they know us?



53% of non-Christians know us, but how well do they know us? Do we have the sort of relationships that are close enough for faith sharing and other ways of outreach? The good news is that the first active and practising Christian that non-Christians know and thought of was close to them; the majority were their family and friends. 35% said the active and practising Christian they knew was a friend; 31% said a family member.

There is one change from our data in 2015 that could be a direct result of the pandemic. In 2015 only 4% of non-Christians in the UK thought of a neighbour as the person that they knew, who was a practising Christian, but in 2022 it has doubled to 8%. New local links may have been created as we have reached out during the pandemic to those who live near us.

2% of those who are non-Christian thought of a church leader as the Christian they knew well. This shows us that we cannot rely on church leaders to do the work of evangelism; it needs to be the whole church, the whole body of Christ, as we are spread

throughout the nation and have close relationships with those who are not yet Christians. Interestingly though, 12% of non-Christians, as seen in part 2, section 1, did say that they would talk to a Christian leader in the community to find out more about the Christian faith, so Christian leaders do have a role in evangelism.

One more important factor that the research shows is that most non-Christians thought of someone in their own age group as the practising Christian they knew. Whether they were old or young, the person that came to mind, who was a practising Christian, was mostly likely to be in their own age bracket. For example 61% of those aged 65+ thought of someone who was also aged 65+ and 57% of those aged 18-24 thought of someone also aged 18-24. For the majority, evangelism and relationship-building with those outside the church is done within generations. Peer to peer evangelism is critical.

We need to keep reaching outside our church communities and increasing our links and friendships intentionally.

Seeing the impact of Jesus

Megan didn't have anyone share Jesus with her until she went to university. When she saw the impact that faith had on her friends, she thought that if it works for them, it could work for her too. Since giving her life to Jesus, it feels like

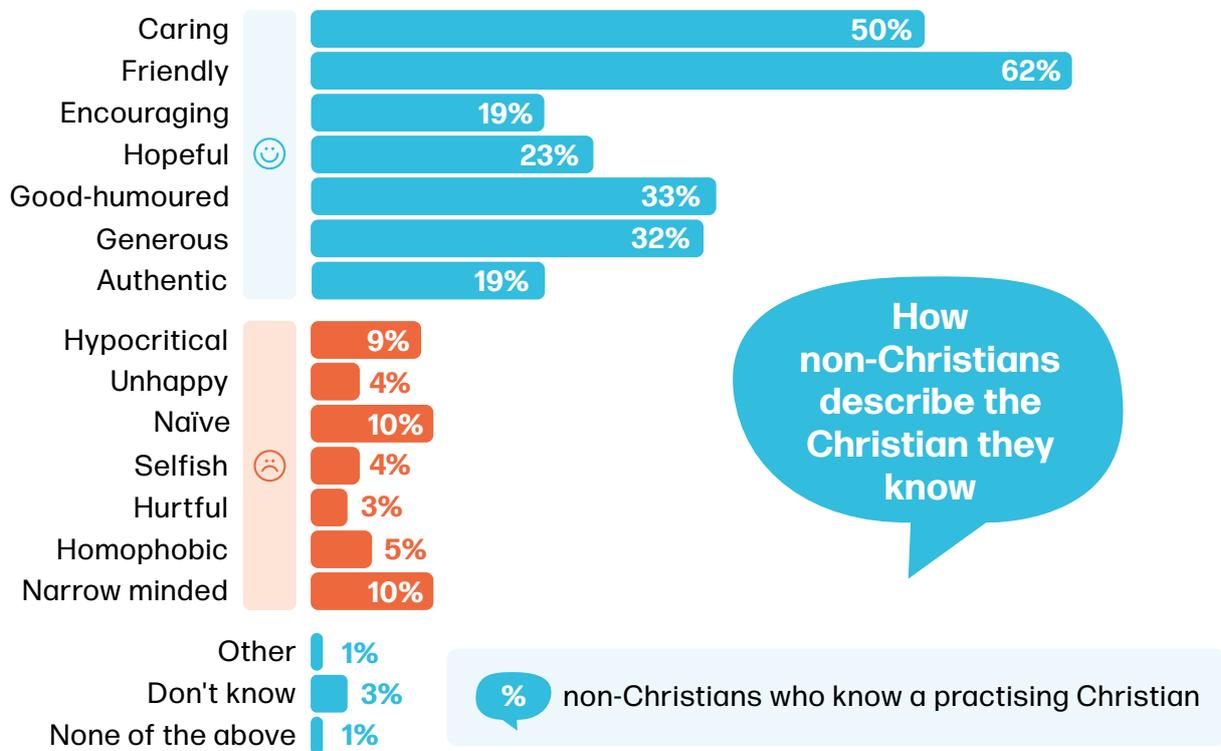
everything has shifted into focus and makes more sense. She now feels content in not knowing all the answers to her questions, and at peace knowing that God is with her in the complexity of life.

[Megan's full story >](#)



Section 4

What do they think about us?



Those who are not Christian and who knew a practising Christian were asked what they thought of that practising Christian. The top traits were friendly (62%), caring (50%), good-humoured (33%) and generous (32%). The most negative traits were that 10% thought the practising Christian they knew was narrow minded or naïve and 9% said they were hypocritical. Overwhelmingly the practising Christians that are known by non-Christians are considered by non-Christians to have positive traits.

When we look at the non-practising Christians, the numbers get more positive - this shows that those

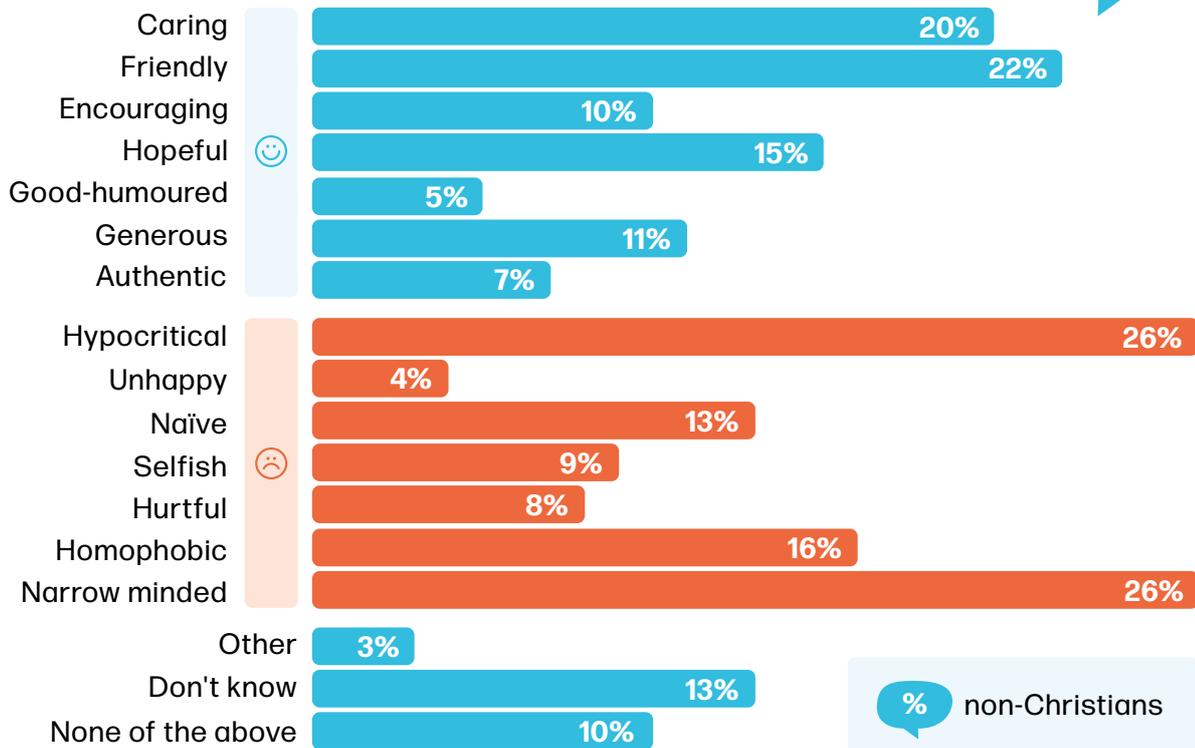
who call themselves Christian, but who are not regularly practising their faith, have an even more positive view of the Christians that they know who are practising; 72% of non-practising Christians think the practising Christian that they know is friendly.

In 2015 in the UK the top traits of the practising Christians that non-Christians knew were also friendly, caring, good-humoured and generous. Little has changed since 2015; practising Christians are still thought of positively in 2022 by those who know them.

Section 5

What do people think about the church?

How non-Christians describe the Christian church



We asked a new question in 2022 to discover the words or phrases those who are either non-Christian or are non-practising Christian associate with the church. Non-Christians have a more negative view of the church than the individual Christian that they know. The top two traits for the church are negative - hypocritical (26%) and narrow minded (26%), but the third trait is positive, 22% said the church was friendly.

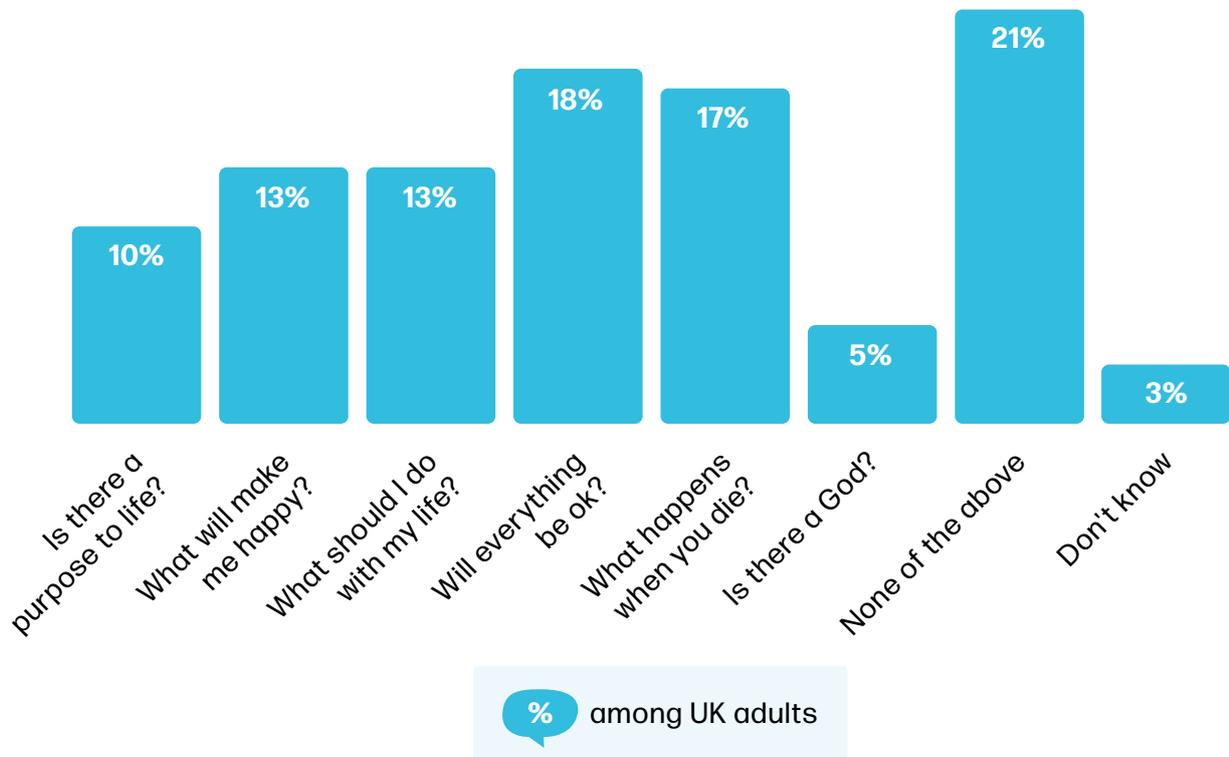
This means that it is the individual Christian who is the best bridge for evangelism. There is a positive relationship and identification with that person,

over a more negative perception of the church. Relying on a more general draw from the church is going to be more problematic in reaching non-Christians and shows why personal evangelism, invitation and witness is so vital.

The non-practising Christians, however, have a more positive view of the church - 47% think that the church is friendly and only 12% said it was hypocritical or narrow minded. The closer people are to Christian faith, the more positively they view the church.

Section 6

What questions are they asking?



This is a new question for Talking Jesus in 2022.

We wanted to understand people outside the church better and to discover if there were any big questions that they were asking in common?

We also asked these questions of all those on the survey to better understand both non-Christians, non-practising Christians and practising Christians.

Although 'Will everything be ok?' was the highest scoring question for the whole population of the UK at 18% (not counting 'None of the Above'), which is probably a reflection of the current changes across the world with the Covid 19 pandemic. 'What should I do with my life?' was the highest scoring question for practising Christians at 19% (not counting 'None of the Above') and 'What happens when you die?' was the highest scoring question for non-practising Christians at 22%.

'What should I do with my life?' was key to those

aged 18-24 and 25-34, as was, 'What will make me happy?' - a question also being asked by those under the age of 34. 19% of those aged 18-24 also asked 'What happens when you die?' In fact, the question holds up reasonably strongly across most age groups (e.g. 17% of those aged 65+ asked it) except for 25-34s (13% asked it, significantly less than 18-24s, 45-54s, 55-64s, and 65+). This shows us that it is an important question to many across the generations and one that we should be answering clearly.

The questions that we listed were more in tune with those in the younger generations. 22% of all respondents said that they weren't asking any of the questions, yet only 5% of those aged 18-24 and only 8% of those aged 25-34, selected this option, in contrast to 38% of those aged 65+. These questions will help with age specific mission, evangelism, and discipleship. More research would need to be done to understand other generations better.

Part 3

Conversations about Jesus

Talking
Jesus

Section 1

Is the team talking about Jesus?

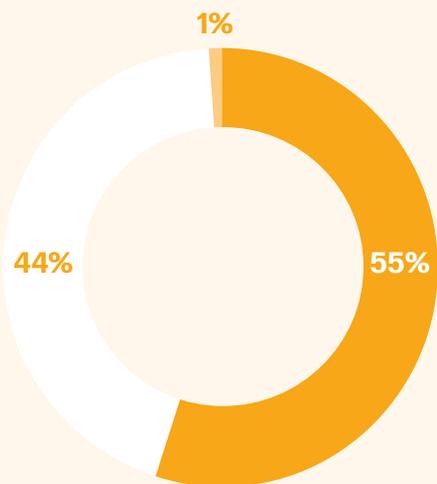
Of the 52% of those in the population who are non-Christians but who know a practising Christian – 55% have had a conversation with that Christian about that person’s faith in Jesus Christ, but 44% said they had not had a conversation about faith. This falls to 53% of those of no-religion who knew a practising Christian. However, 61% of those of another faith have talked with a practising Christian about their faith in Jesus Christ.

Non-Christians under the age of 44 are more likely to have had a conversation with the Christian that they know about their faith in Jesus Christ, than those aged 45 or above. In fact, 62% of those aged 18-24 have had a conversation, 62% of those aged 25-34, and 61% of those aged 35-44. These conversations are likely to have happened amongst peers, and this shows that practising Christians under that age of 44 are talking more about their faith amongst their non-Christian peers.

A further 36% of those non-Christians who don’t know a practising Christian have had a faith conversation about Jesus with a practising Christian that they didn’t know.

This shows us clearly that practising Christians are talking about their faith; not all of us, but many of us. There are still those who have never had a conversation about our faith; we still need to encourage faith-sharing conversations.

Has this Christian you know ever talked to you about their faith in Jesus?

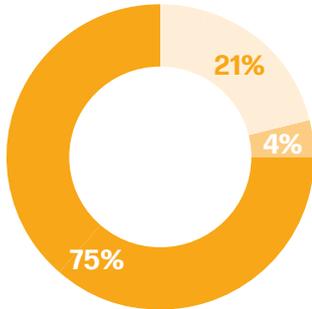


% non-Christians who know a practising Christian

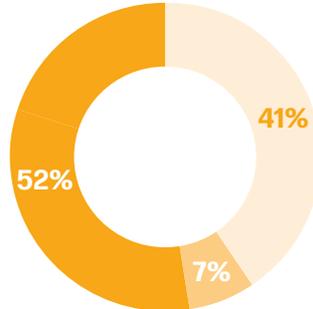
Yes No Don't know

Section 2

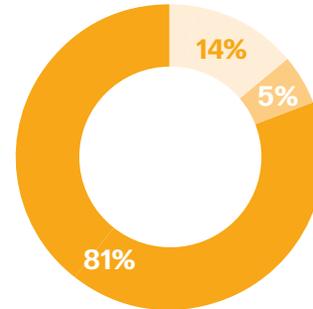
How confident are we?



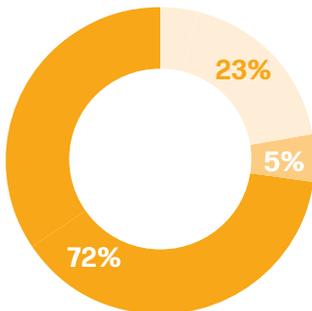
It is every Christian's responsibility to talk to non-Christians about Jesus Christ



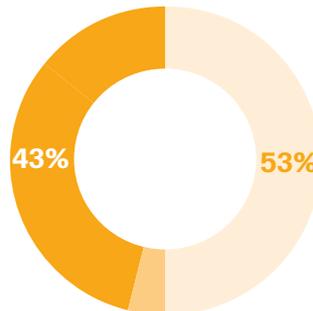
Other believers are better suited than I am to talk to non-Christians about Jesus Christ



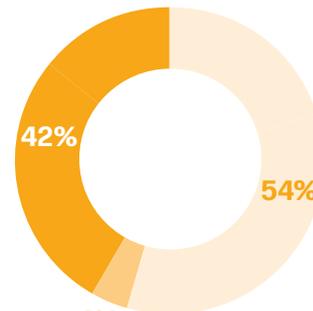
My church offers courses, events and services that I think are suitable for non-Christians to attend



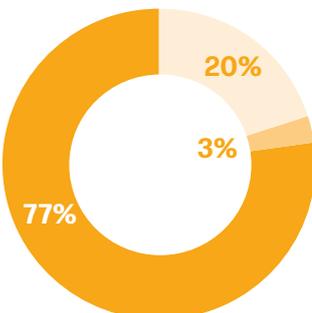
I feel confident inviting non-Christians to suitable courses, events or services at my church



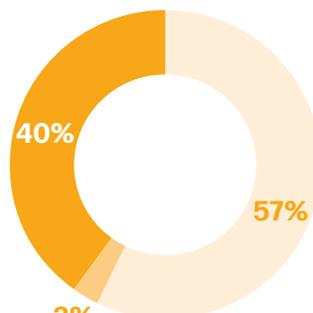
I don't feel I know any non-Christian friends well enough to invite them to a course, event or service at my church



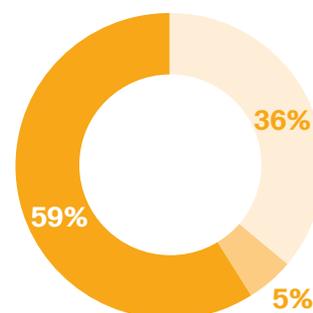
I don't feel I know any non-Christians well enough to talk to them about Jesus Christ



I feel comfortable talking to non-Christians about Jesus Christ



I don't talk to non-Christians about Jesus Christ because I don't feel able to answer difficult questions



I am always looking for opportunities to talk to non-Christians about Jesus Christ

% among practising Christians

Agree Don't know Disagree

Practising Christians report that they agree that it is every Christian's responsibility to share their faith - in fact 75% agree or strongly agree. 77% of practising Christians feel confident to talk to non-Christians about their faith, but 42% of practising Christians say they don't feel that they know any non-Christians well enough to talk to them about Jesus Christ. 80% agree or strongly agree that their church puts on events, services, and courses that they feel confident are suitable for non-Christians to attend and 72% say they are confident to invite non-Christians along. However, 46% of practising Christians also say they don't know any non-Christians well enough to invite them to a Christian service or event. There is obviously a disconnect between confidence and actual connection with people to talk to or invite. This shows that one of the areas that we need to work on is connecting to more people outside our church communities.

40% of practising Christians say they don't feel able to answer difficult questions and therefore don't speak about their faith. There is therefore a real challenge here to equip practising Christians

to handle those conversations, to answer questions confidently, or to have the confidence to say they don't know. The younger generations are significantly more likely to say they are always looking for opportunities to talk to non-Christians about Jesus Christ - 18-24-year-olds (75%), 25-34-year-olds (74%), and 35-44s (66%) - than the older generations e.g. those aged 65+ (41%). Yet 18-24-year-olds are more likely than all other age groups to not talk to non-Christians about Jesus Christ because they don't feel able to answer difficult questions (e.g. 66%, vs 21% of those aged 65+). The older generations, those aged 55 and above, feel more strongly that they know non-Christians well enough to invite them to a church event or service or to talk to them about their faith - this contrasts with the 18-24-year-olds, who feel that they don't have as many good relationships with non-Christians to either invite them to church or talk to them about their faith. Although, it is the younger generations, groups aged between 18-44, who report sharing their faith more recently than the older generations - the highlight of this is that 43% of 18-24-year-olds report sharing their faith within the past week.

The importance of food and friendship

Manoj attended a Christian-run primary school, but it wasn't until 20 years later that he reconnected with the Christian faith. Friends kept inviting Manoj and his family over to share food. In time, he discovered they were Christians. Initially he was concerned about ulterior motives for their generosity, but he soon realised they

wanted genuine friendship. Sometime later, his two-year-old son became critically ill. In desperation, Manoj and his wife welcomed the prayers of their friends and, to their astonishment, their son was healed. Overwhelmed by God's kindness, Manoj gave his life to Christ a few weeks later.

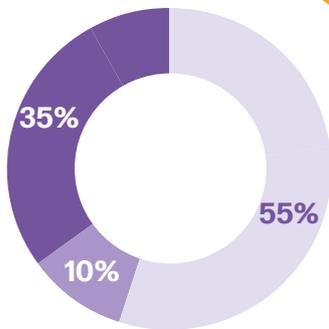
[Manoj's full story >](#)



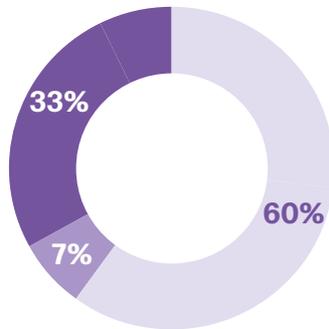
Section 3

How are the conversations going?

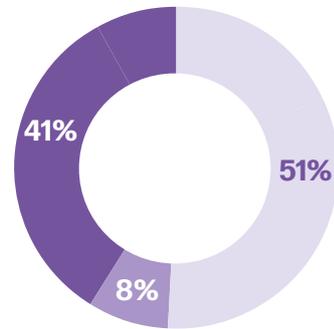
Non-Christians who've had a conversation with a practising Christian about their faith



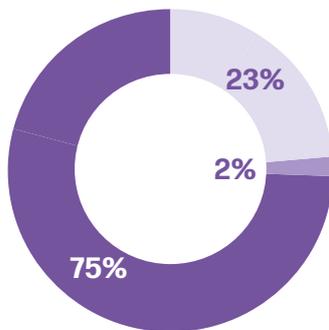
I felt more positive towards Jesus Christ



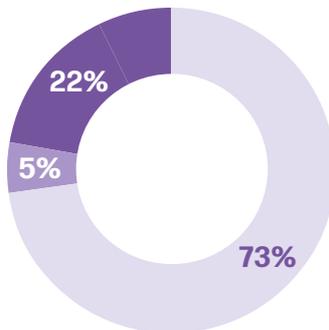
I wanted to know more about Jesus Christ



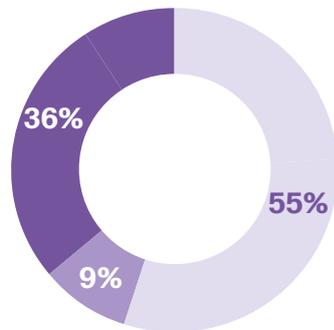
I felt closer to the person in question



I felt comfortable in the conversation



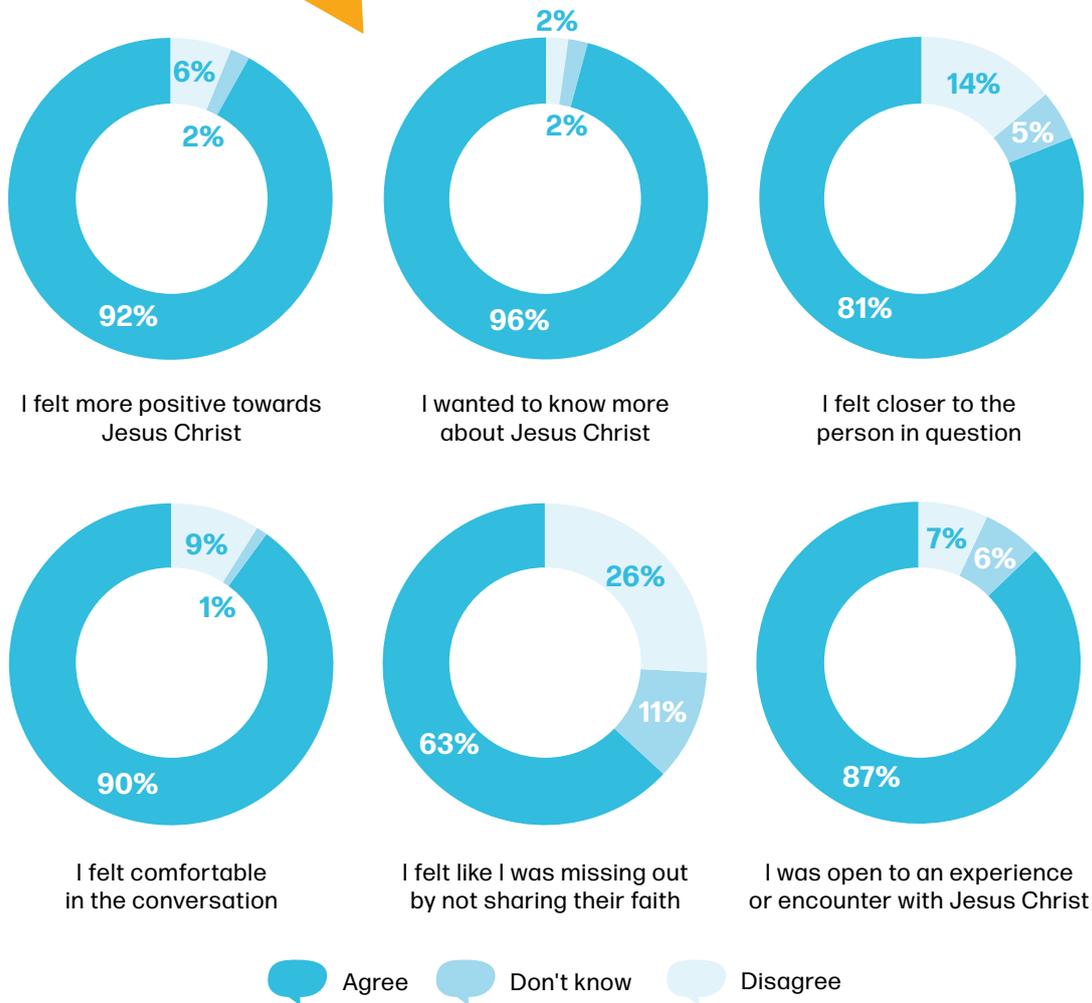
I felt like I was missing out by not sharing their faith



I was open to an experience or encounter with Jesus Christ

Agree Don't know Disagree

Practising Christians for whom a conversation with a Christian was a top-three factor that influenced them to become a Christian



To look at the impact of our conversations, we asked non-Christians, who had had a conversation with a practising Christian and chosen to remain a non-Christian, how they felt during and after the conversation. We also asked practising Christians, for whom a conversation was a key influence in their coming to faith, the same questions about the influence of the conversations they recalled. Both sets of answers are needed to get a full picture of the power of our personal conversations.

We discovered that 75% of non-Christians felt comfortable during the faith conversation and 33%, because of the conversation, wanted to know more

about Jesus Christ; this is about a third. A further 36% were open to an encounter or experience of Jesus for themselves after the conversation; again about a third. 41% felt closer to the person in question, with 51% feeling less close. These statistics are more positive than in 2015. In 2015 approximately 1 in 5 non-Christians, who chose to remain a non-Christian following a conversation with a practising Christian, was open to either knowing more or experiencing/encountering more of Jesus Christ. In 2022 this figure has risen to approximately 1 in 3. This is very good news for the church.

Amongst the younger age groups the responses are even higher, with 46% of non-Christians aged 18-24 or 40% of those aged 25-34 saying that they would like to know more about Jesus Christ in comparison with 21% of those aged 55-64 and 12% of those aged 65+. 46% of those aged 25-44 say they are open to an experience or an encounter with Jesus Christ after the conversation, and 39% of those aged 18-24 say they are open to an experience or encounter. Only 16% of those aged 55-64 and 11% of those aged 65+ report being open to an experience or an encounter with Jesus Christ after a conversation about faith with a practising Christian. This shows a considerably different response depending on the age of the conversants.

For 21% of practising Christians a conversation with a Christian was a key influence in their coming to faith. They recall these conversations much more positively and, to get a full picture of the impact of conversations, we need to see their responses as well: 90% felt comfortable during the conversation; 96% wanted to know more about Jesus, and 87% were open to an encounter or experience of Jesus after the conversation. 52% of these conversations happened with a friend; 26% with a family member; for a further 20% the conversation was with an acquaintance; 19% was with a workmate or colleague and 12% was with a neighbour and 10% with a stranger. This encourages us that conversations are a key influence in bringing people to faith and that we should keep talking!

Some of the groups that we can identify in the research gave distinctly different answers. 58% of those of other religions were open to an experience or encounter with Jesus Christ after the conversation. This shows it is important to make sure that we are connecting and offering this opportunity to those of other faiths.

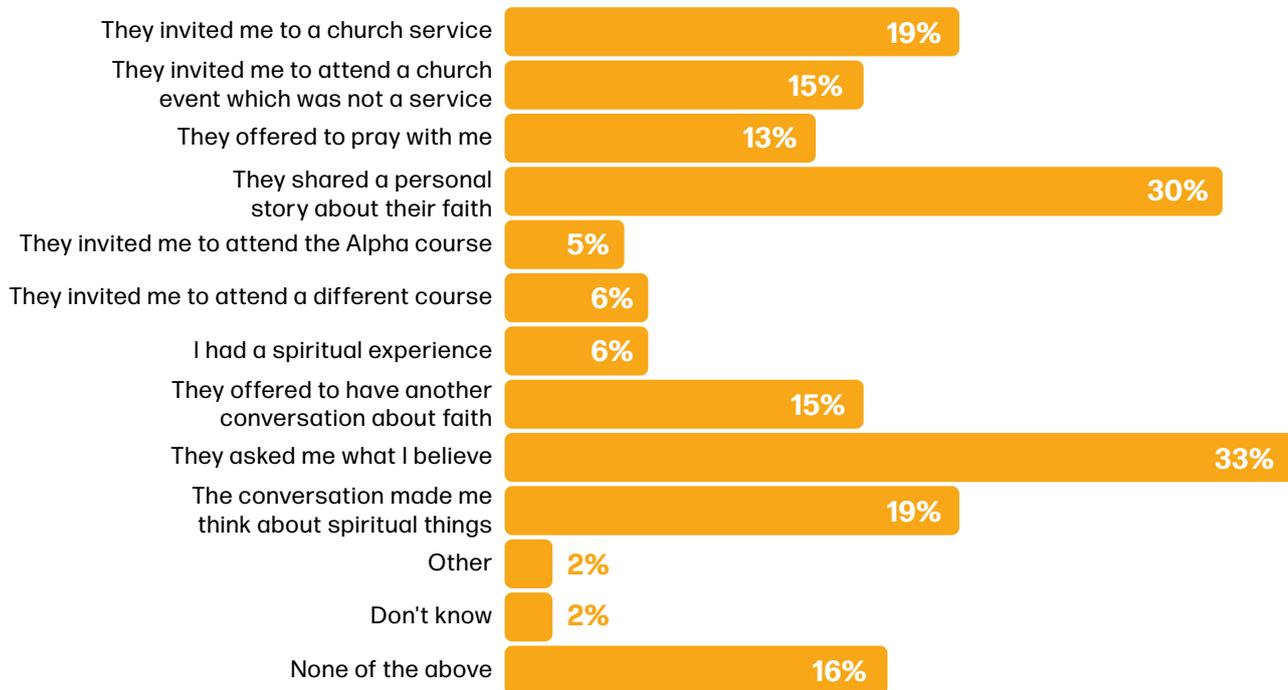
Conversations can bring people to faith or are part of someone's journey.

The challenge for us is to look in our friendship circles and families for the third who, right now, are wanting to know more about Jesus or who are open to an encounter or experience with him. It isn't everyone; two-thirds are not open, but the majority are comfortable in the conversations and so we don't need to fear upsetting people when we share respectfully about our faith. Our role is to find the third who are open and to pray for the two-thirds, that God will work in their lives.

The huge encouragement for the church is the growth in openness that these statistics show since 2015. This could be due to changing world events and the uncertainty that has affected people's lives prompting them to ask more questions and seek answers. What is certain from these statistics is that there is an opportunity now for the church to walk confidently forward, offering more people the life-changing experience of knowing Jesus for themselves.

Section 4

What does everyone remember about the conversations?



% non-Christians who know a practising Christian and have had a conversation with them about their faith and remained a non-Christian after the conversation

We asked the non-Christians what they remembered from the conversations they had had about faith. The top things that they recalled were, that they were asked what they believed (33%) and that the person shared about their personal faith (30%). These are the top two memories and show that Christians are listening as well as conversing, which is excellent practice. It is also good that Christians are sharing their own personal experience of faith as this is easy for people to understand and makes the conversation open and authentic. 19% remembered being invited to a church service and 13% recalled that the person offered to pray for them. 19% of the people questioned said that this conversation helped them to think about spiritual things and shows that the conversations were useful. This research shows that practising Christians are having good conversations with those without Christian faith.

We also asked the practising Christians what they

recall about the conversations they had with non-Christians. 34% of them said that they asked what the other person believed and 44% said they shared a personal story about their faith. 25% said that they invited the person to a church service and 20% said that they offered to pray for them. This shows that both groups have similar memories about the conversations.

Non-Christian 18-24-year-olds were more likely than non-Christians aged between 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65+ to say that, as a result of the conversation, they had had a spiritual experience with 15% saying this. They also recalled that they were offered another conversation, 27% - again much higher than the age brackets mentioned above. They were also more likely to report that the conversation made them think about spiritual things (30%) than non-Christians aged 55-64 and 65+. The 18-24-year-olds were also more likely than 45-54s, 55-64s, and those aged 65+ to have felt more positive towards Jesus Christ having spoken to a Christian about their faith.

More than one way to talk about Jesus

One night, Sudeep encountered the Holy Spirit and was convicted about the way he was sharing his faith. He became determined to show his friends that they were loved by regularly cooking dinner for them, inviting them out for coffee to talk about faith, and

living life generously. After some time, Sudeep invited a friend to Alpha and he said yes. Though his friend hasn't made a commitment to follow Jesus, Sudeep has learned that there are many ways to share the reason for his hope.

[Sudeep's full story >](#)



Part 4

**Coming
to faith**

**Talking
Jesus**

Section 1

How do people come to follow Jesus for themselves?



One of the key pieces of the Talking Jesus research in 2015 and now in 2022 was finding out how practising Christians came to faith. We asked what the key influences were for each person in coming to faith so that in turn we can reflect on how we can help others to come to faith. This is such a key part of the research that we are exploring this more fully in this report.

The biggest influence was a Christian family at 34%. This isn't a surprise, and it points out how important our family life is and how, as churches, we need to support the discipleship of children and young people. This is consistently the greatest influence across all generations. Christian family is most significant for those over the age of 65+ (44%). There is a significant difference between the influence of Christian family for those aged over 65 and those under the age of 44 for whom, although it is still a significant influence, its impact is less. For example, for those aged 18-24, it is 30%. It is also a smaller influence than it was in 2015; 41% of UK practising Christians listed it as a key influence in 2015 compared to 34% in 2022.

The next most important influence was reading the Bible (24%). This is one of those wonderful statistics as we realise again the power of the word of God. This encourages us all to give away the Bible in an accessible format with easy language and good design, and to help people start somewhere appropriately, like the life events of Jesus in a Gospel. This statistic grows to 38% of 18-24-year-olds - it is the singularly largest influence in bringing 18-24-year-olds to faith! This should encourage us all to give out Bibles, leave them in open churches, and to share online versions of the Bible.

Sunday school was a key influence on the journey of faith for 19% of practising Christians. This was especially influential in the older age brackets with 33% of those over 65+ reporting it as a key influence and 9% of those aged 18-24.

A physical church service was reported as a key influence for 19% of practising Christians coming to faith, with an online church service influencing 6%. This shows the impact of our online ministry during

Covid. For those aged 18-24 the online service and the physical, in-person service, had the same influence (9%) in helping people come to faith. This shows the power of online ministry for a younger generation. This difference is also apparent when we look at the influence of Christian media on people coming to faith: 4% of practising Christians said this was influential, (TV, radio, websites etc) but for those aged 18-24 this was 8%. This is similar for social media, 4% of practising Christians saying that social media shared by people that they knew, was influential, which rises to 8% of 18-24-year-olds. Similarly, 5% said that social media shared by people they didn't know was influential, which rises to 6% of 18-24-year-olds. In 2015 social media was a negligible influence that didn't score even 1%. This shows why the church must stay online and not retreat from this space after the pandemic.

Printed forms of media still compare favourably with online and social media with 7% of practising Christians saying this was a key influence and this holds across the generations; in fact it is those aged 65+ for whom this is significantly lower at 4%.

A spiritual experience is a similar influence across all the age groups and 16% say that this was significant in their coming to faith. This encourages us to pray, and let those we know, who aren't yet Christians, know that we are praying for them, inviting God to work in their lives.

Conversations are still key influences in bringing people to faith. For 15% of practising Christians, a conversation with a Christian that they knew well was key, and for 6% a conversation with a Christian they didn't know well was influential in them starting to follow Jesus. Interestingly, conversations with Christians they knew well were more influential in the older age brackets than the younger ones, whereas, as we shall see, other new forms of communication are influencing the younger generations. Conversations are less influential than they were in 2015. This could be a result of the pandemic with fewer conversations taking place and the change to the heightened influence of online, as digital natives are replacing the older generations.

Key life events – both negative and positive – have influenced all generations and were influential for 12% of practising Christians coming to faith. This should remind us to be aware that these moments where we get to celebrate or support are also key moments for people to experience faith – times to reach out and point to all God has to offer.

Responding to the gospel at an event or service was influential for 11% of practising Christians coming to faith. Not every church puts on clear invitational events or takes people to these, so for this number to report them as influential is significant. This is a challenge to all churches to consider specific mission/outreach events that offer people the moment of choice to follow Jesus with a clear representation of the good news of Jesus Christ. It is something that is often best done across a region, town, or area where churches can work together to get traction, influence, and movement.

Attending a church school was also a key influence for 11% of practising Christians. This was again influential across the age ranges and should encourage all those who are part of Christian schools in their service and ministry to school children. The call to churches is to work with the schools where they live to encourage and enable faith to flourish and develop as children grow in these environments.

You might look down this list and think, ‘Oh some of these have a small response’ but not every church is running a Messy Church, so the fact that 4% of practising Christians are reporting it as influential shows it is having an impact. If you look at how age interacts with this data as well, you will see more patterns. 8% of 25-34-year-olds say that Messy Church, or a new form of church, has been

significant in their coming to faith. This is the age group that are mostly likely to be parents, and this shows that Messy Church and other new forms of church are reaching this key generation.

Running an introductory course, like Alpha, has had a significant impact on those aged 25-34. 9% of 25-34-year-olds report it as key, and 10% of those aged 35-44. Not every church runs an introductory course, so this is a good impact from the number of churches that do run them.

It would also be good to mention that 8% of practising Christians said that a youth club was key to their journey of faith as well as secondary school Christian Unions (5%). These may seem like smaller numbers but they still show the importance of working with young people and teenagers in these significant years. We will see in the next part of the report the true importance of these periods as the ages for faith decisions.

In this report we have looked at many of these topics. It is of note that only 2% of practising Christians said that there was another influence other than those listed. The list is long, but it is representative of the top influences that have brought many practising Christians to faith. It can help local churches and practising Christians to focus on what helps people come to faith now.

It cannot report on what new measures might be discovered that have not yet influenced people, like the growth in social media since 2015. So, we still need to keep our hearts and minds open to new ways to communicate the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ, whilst we keep using the methods that we know and trust.

Growing up in a Christian family

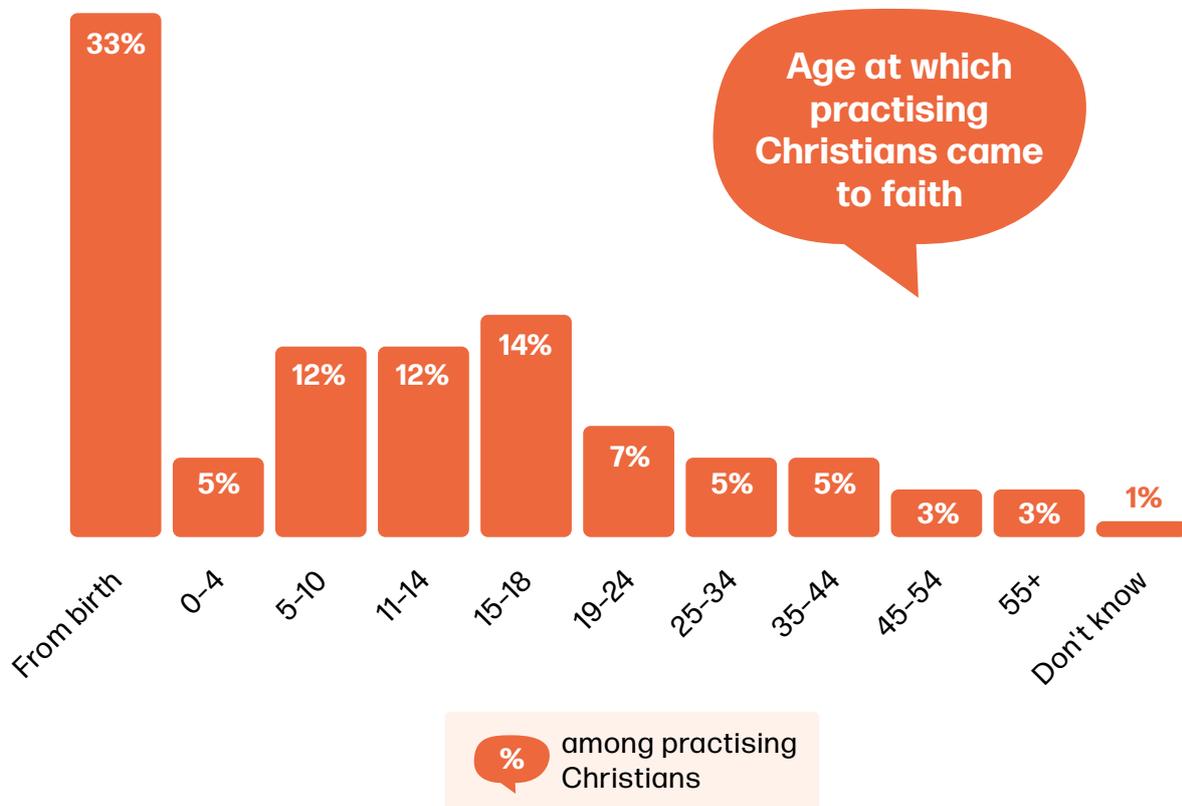
Isaac grew up in a Christian family and enjoyed going to church. His family taught him that it's good to read the Bible as it shows him how to live the right way and how to treat others and himself. He knows that he can trust God and can pray about the many difficult things that are going on in the world. Isaac gave his life to

God when he was six years old and he recently decided to get baptised because he wants to say to God and others that his choice to follow Jesus is for a lifetime.



Section 2

At what age do practising Christians come to faith?



When we look at the age at which practising Christians came to faith, it is at first obvious that the younger years are the most significant. The highest percentage for each age bracket is from birth. The patterns for those coming to faith aged 0-4, 5-10 and 11-14 are also consistently high across all age brackets. This drops as we enter the older teen years but there are still people coming to faith across all the age brackets. The research shows

clearly that most practising Christians come to faith by age 18, although we can see that in the last 10 years people have come to faith across all the age brackets from 18-65+.

There is a clear strong message for the church - don't underestimate the early years, most practising Christians come to faith before the age of 18, but it's never too late for someone to come to faith.

Part 5

Conclusion and next steps

Talking
Jesus

What can we learn and put into practice from the Talking Jesus research?

This research shows us some things that are the same as in 2015 and other things that have changed.

Key findings summary:

Part 1 – The state of faith in the UK

Practising Christian team

48% of the population describe themselves as Christians

Of these, 6% count as our definition of practising Christians in the UK

They are spread throughout the generations

20% of the population believe that Jesus is God

54% believe Jesus is a real historical person

45% say they believe in the resurrection

Part 2 – Those outside the church

53% of non-Christians know a practising Christian; this is fewer than in 2015

Non-Christians like the Christian that they know, but are less positive about the church

Non-Christians are most likely to turn to using Google, reading the Bible, going to a local church, or talking to a friend or family member who they know is a Christian, to find out more about the Christian faith

Part 3 – Conversations about Jesus

55% of non-Christians, who know a practising Christian, have had a conversation with that Christian about their faith

75% of practising Christians think it is every Christian's responsibility to talk about their faith

46% of practising Christians don't know any non-Christians well enough to invite them to church

33% of non-Christians, having had a conversation with a Christian (and choosing to remain a non-Christian), are open to talking more about Jesus Christ

36% of non-Christians, having had a conversation with a Christian (and choosing to remain a non-Christian), are open to experiencing or encountering him

33% of non-Christians recall being asked about what they believe when in a faith conversation with a Christian

Part 4 – How people come to faith

34% of practising Christians say that growing up in a Christian family was the top influence in bringing them to faith

24% say that reading the Bible was a key influence and particularly important among 18-24s

Other key influences in someone's journey to faith, are normal church services, spiritual experiences and conversations about faith

Most practising Christians come to faith before the age of 18

Part 5 – Conclusion and next steps

This research tells us that there are people who want to find out more about Jesus Christ and encounter him for themselves. This means that now is a great moment for personal evangelism and invitation, to reach out to our nation with the love and message of Jesus.

This report shows clearly that lots of wonderful practising Christians are already doing so much to share the good news of Jesus with many – so let's recommit ourselves to:

- Pray for five friends and family members to find faith
- If we don't know enough non-Christians to do this, let's start by making some new friends
- Listen and talk with them to find the third that are open to knowing more about Jesus
- If you want help with this, give them a booklet or something to read to help start the conversation
- Offer to pray for them, offering the third that want to experience or encounter Jesus that opportunity
- Invite them to your church, online or in person, to a service, an event or a course
- Give them an accessible copy of the life events of Jesus Christ to read
- Use your social media and online presence to share stories about the difference knowing Jesus makes in your life

- Support, equip and encourage faith development in families with young children in church and those in fringe families through toddler groups
- Invest, support and encourage both outreach and discipleship of young people, as these are key years when people come to faith
- Encourage, equip and enable our 18-24-year-olds, who have a challenging environment in which to express their faith but also the greatest opportunity, to bring their peers to faith as there is so much openness in their generation
- Consider hosting a mission in 2023/24 with other churches in your area

Tracking the Talking Jesus research has given us the opportunity to stop, reflect and refocus on the task of evangelism in the UK. We can see that there is good news to share with the church to give us confidence and a challenge to keep going and not lose heart at this time of opportunity.

Let's keep going together – together everyone everywhere can know about Jesus

Written by

Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf

Executive Director HOPE Together

Many thanks and grateful acknowledgement to our Consulting Partner, Rev. Stephen Hance and the Church of England, our Data Analysis Partner, Bev Botting, and to our Production partners at CV Global, namely Oliver Raper, James Brazier and James White.



To find out more go to
talkingjesus.org

The Partners who have brought you the Talking Jesus research:

