

# Mapping Intercultural Mission: Leeds

A collaborative research report



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# Executive Summary

It is estimated that by 2050, 30 per cent of the UK population will be from an ethnic minority background, up from 11 per cent in 2010 (Coleman 2010). As the UK grows in diversity, there is a need to better understand how the UK Church is – and is not – effective in crossing cultural, racial, and ethnic barriers. This need has grown even more pronounced since the intensification of the Black Lives Matter movement in May and June 2020. While this report does not concentrate on racial justice specifically, it does stress several related questions. To what extent is the Church serious about building multicultural (and multiethnic and multiracial) communities? How committed is it to reaching minorities? How are mission agencies serving alongside and responding to the evolving needs and opportunities that churches see? And how can the UK Church be better equipped to pursue mission across racial, cultural, and ethnic divides in the future?

In order to answer these questions, SIM-UK, AWM-Pioneers, OMF, AIM Europe, and London City Mission, asked Eido Research to map churches' and mission agencies' attitudes towards intercultural mission, as well as the actions they were taking towards pursuing it in Leeds. This research seeks to help churches cross barriers more effectively and better connect with global mission resources to reach out in communities where the need is greatest.



## Attitudes towards intercultural mission

Overall 59 per cent of organisations said intercultural mission was a high or moderate priority. Likewise, 38 per cent of organisations said they were willing and able to direct resources towards intercultural mission.

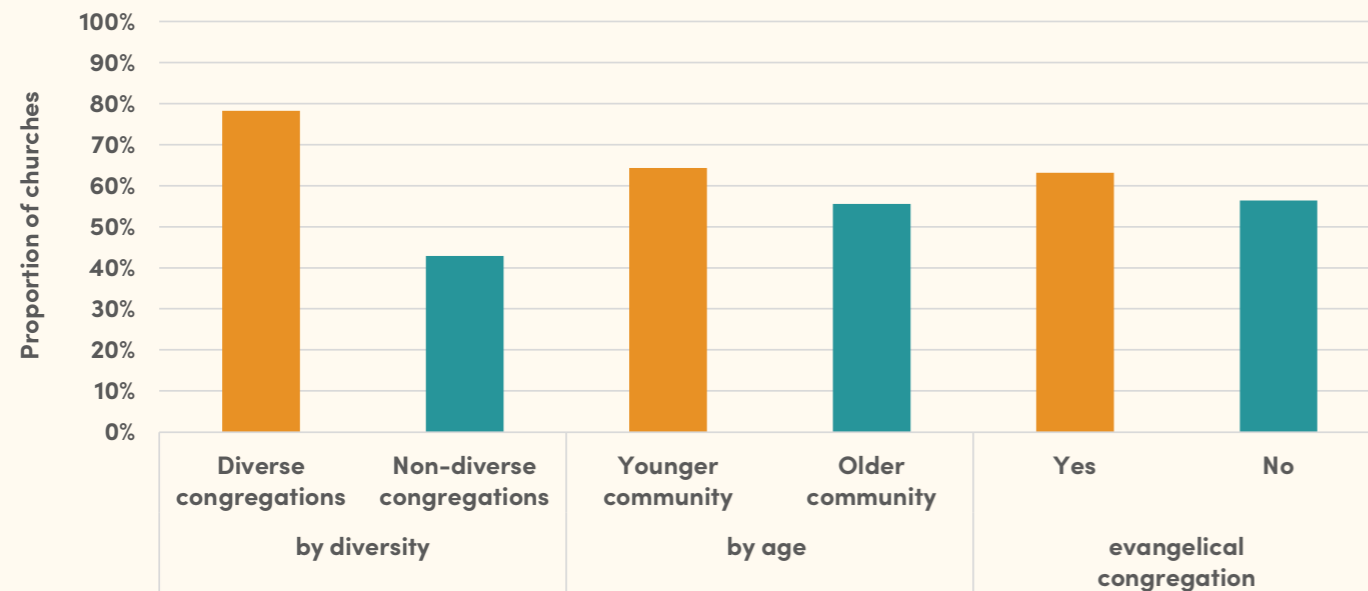
### These attitudes varied significantly by parliamentary constituency:

- Churches in Leeds North East, Leeds Central, and Elmet and Rothwell were most likely to say that intercultural mission was a priority. However, many churches in these same constituencies were significantly less likely to give to intercultural mission: while 85 per cent of churches in Leeds North East, for instance, said they prioritised intercultural mission, just 38 per cent said they would donate considerable resources to it

### Attitudes also varied by demographics and denomination:

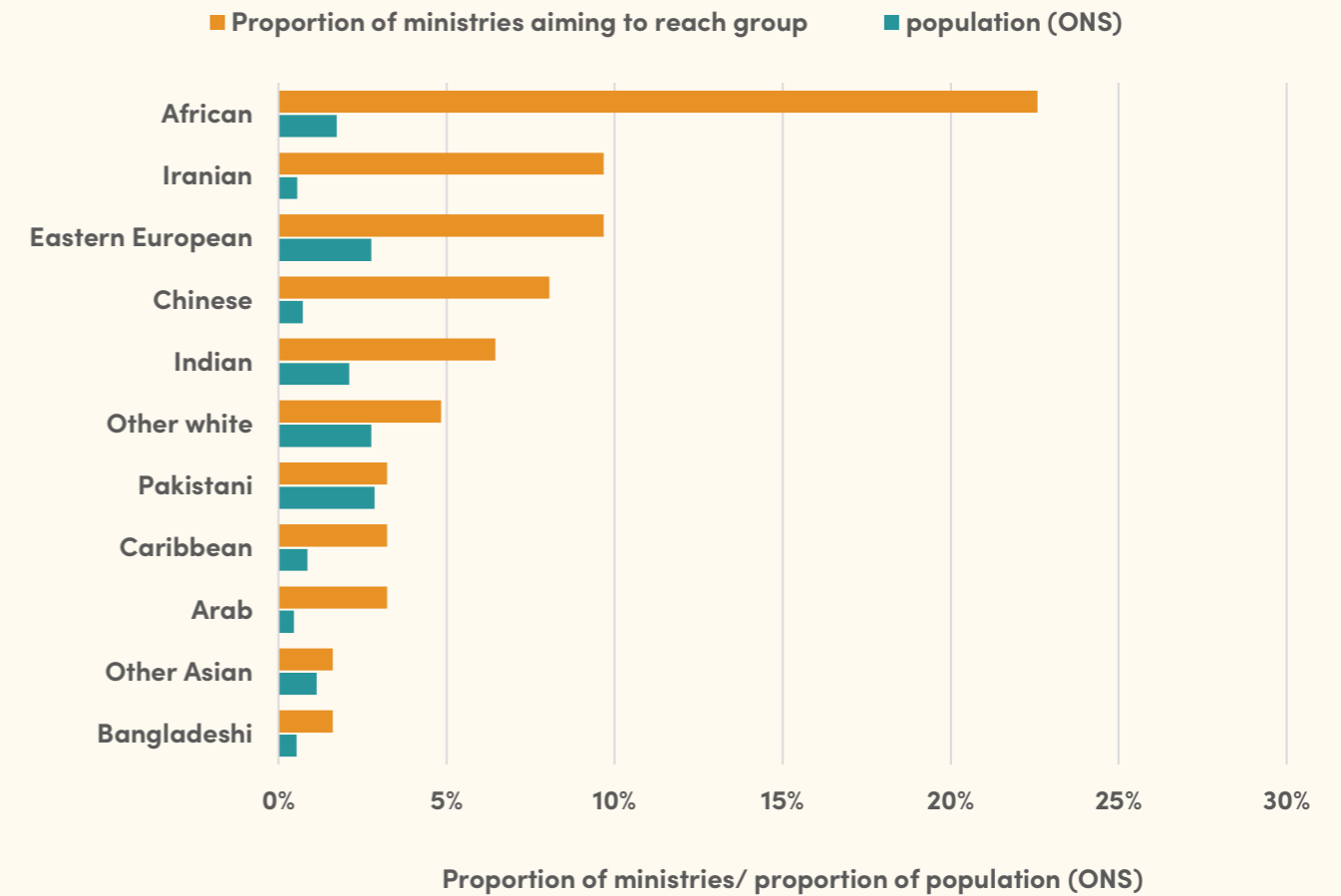
- Diverse congregations, younger congregations, and more evangelical congregations were more likely to view intercultural mission as a priority and more willing to dedicate resources to seeing it happen

Proportion of churches which said ICM is a moderate or high priority (by diversity/ age/ evangelicalism)



## Specific groups and areas of focus

### Which specific ethnic groups are ministries in Leeds trying to reach?



Organisations listed a wide variety of ethnic and religious groups that they were trying to reach. The research compared this focus with ONS population data.

- Churches in Leeds North East, Leeds Central, and Elmet and Rothwell were most likely to say that intercultural mission was a priority. However, many churches in these same constituencies were significantly less likely to give to intercultural mission: while 85 per cent of churches in Leeds North East, for instance, said they prioritised intercultural mission, just 38 per cent said they would donate considerable resources to it

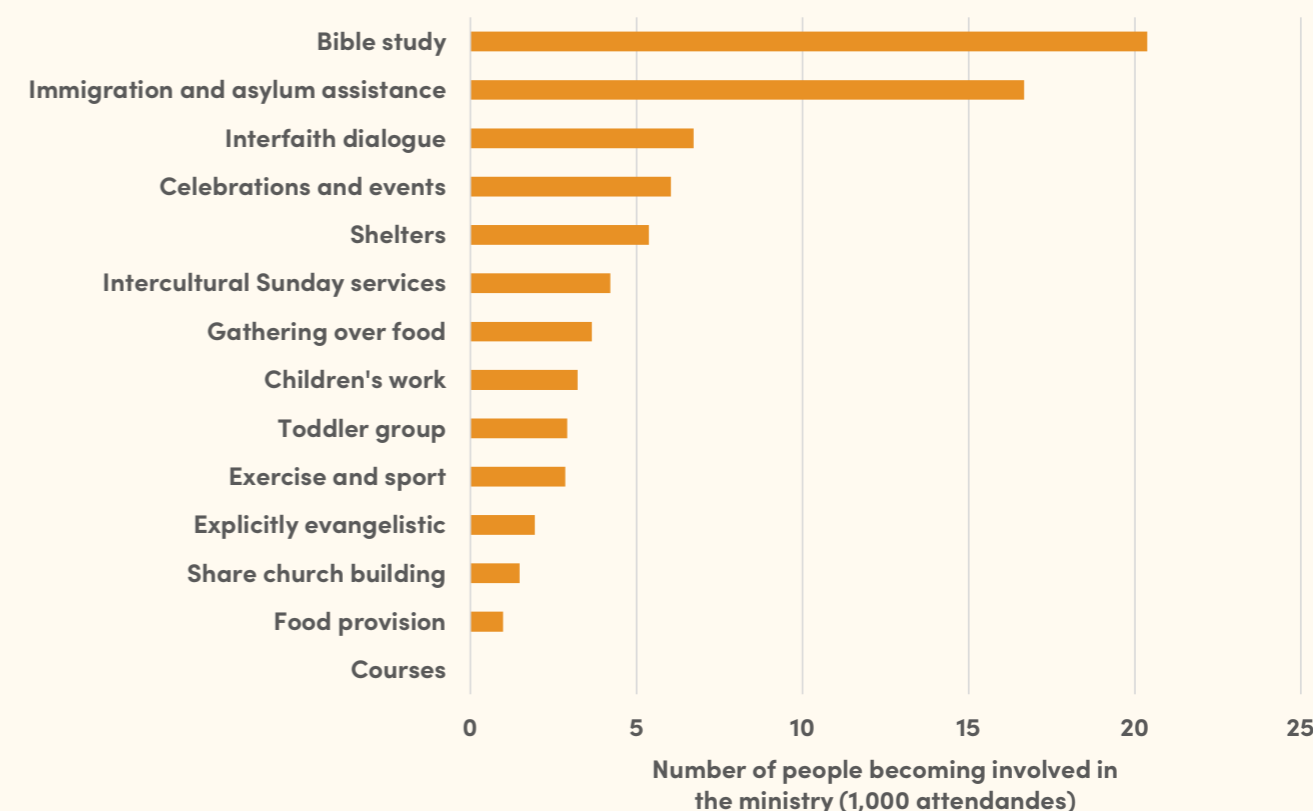
- However, the largest ethnic minority group in Leeds (people of Pakistani descent) had been largely ignored by Christian organisations, and a much smaller ethnic group (people of African descent) had attracted much of churches' and mission agencies' attention. Only 3 per cent of organisations were attempting to reach Pakistani groups (3 per cent of the population), but 23 per cent were trying to reach African groups (2 per cent of the population)
- Interestingly, there was little to no correlation between the ethnicity of the congregation, and the ethnic group that churches were trying to reach

## Activities and impact

A wide variety of intercultural mission activities were occurring in Leeds.

- The most popular intercultural activities for Christian organisations in Leeds were celebrations and events (such as street parties and alternative Halloween events) and programmes involving "gathering over food" (such as cafes or intercultural meals). Twenty-two per cent of churches and mission agencies engaged in each of these activities
- The programmes that were most likely to facilitate participants starting to follow Christ, however, were Bible study programmes. On average, church leaders estimated that 21 people became Christians per every 1,000 attendances at these events
- Bible studies and immigration and asylum assistance were the activities most associated with new believers becoming involved in ministry. On average, 20 people joined church ministries for every 1,000 attendances at Bible studies, and 17 joined for every 1,000 attendances at immigration and asylum activities
- The activities that participants subjectively rated as the "most impactful", however, were immigration and asylum assistance, as well as food provision programmes (such as soup kitchens and food banks)

Number of people becoming involved in ministry (per 1,000 attendances)



## Keys to impact and success

Participants noted five keys for success in intercultural mission:

- **Inclusiveness:** welcoming and actively pursuing relationship with people of other ethnicities and cultures
- **Being present and consistent:** remaining available to their communities on a day-to-day basis and being persistent in sharing Christ
- **Being invested and trained:** having leadership teams and congregations that were committed to and trained for mission
- **Concentrating on evangelism:** actively committing to sharing Christ
- **Remembering God's agency in mission:** recalling that mission was ultimately God's work and did not depend on human efforts

Some of these themes starkly divided organisations which had scored highly on our metric of success in mission from those which had not: for example, organisations which scored highly were more likely to mention inclusiveness, and no organisations who scored poorly discussed evangelism or God’s agency in mission.

## Barriers to mission

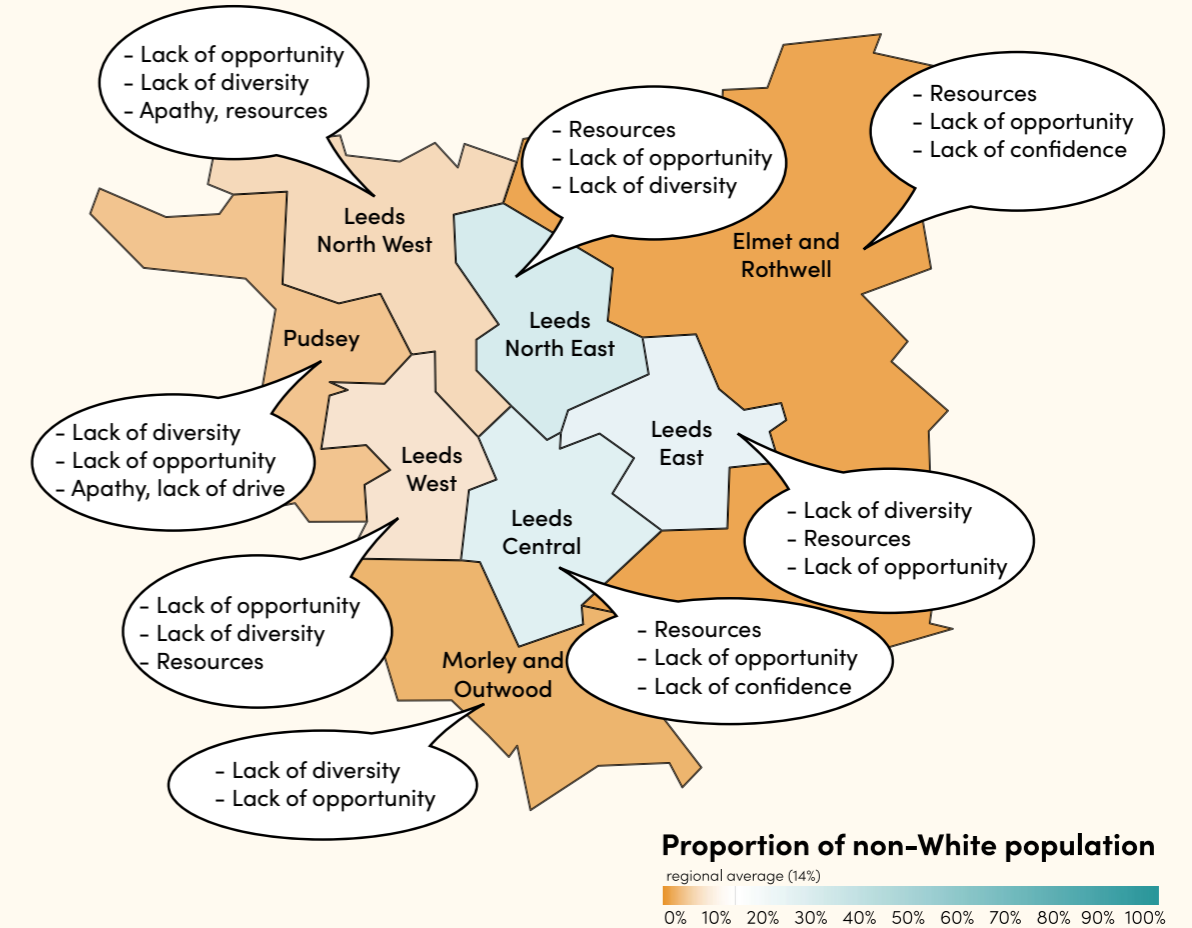
Participants also believed that five barriers prevented their organisations from engaging in intercultural mission:

- **Lack of opportunities for mission:**  
a perception that (as a result of factors including limited ethnic diversity and a lack of interest in Christianity) there were few opportunities for mission in their area
- **Lack of resources:**  
an absence of funding, time, and (especially) personnel
- **Fear and lack of confidence:**  
anxiety about engaging with other faiths and cultures, and an absence of knowledge about how to do so
- **Apathy:**  
leaders and congregations that were not committed to intercultural mission
- **Active resistance:**  
prejudice that prevented churches from reaching their communities

Interestingly, organisations which scored the lowest on our metric of intercultural mission were especially likely to believe that there was a lack of opportunity for intercultural outreach in their area (although, as we suggest below, this belief may not be grounded in reality).

## Top three barriers to churches engaging more in intercultural mission

(by parliamentary constituency)



## What can agencies do to help?

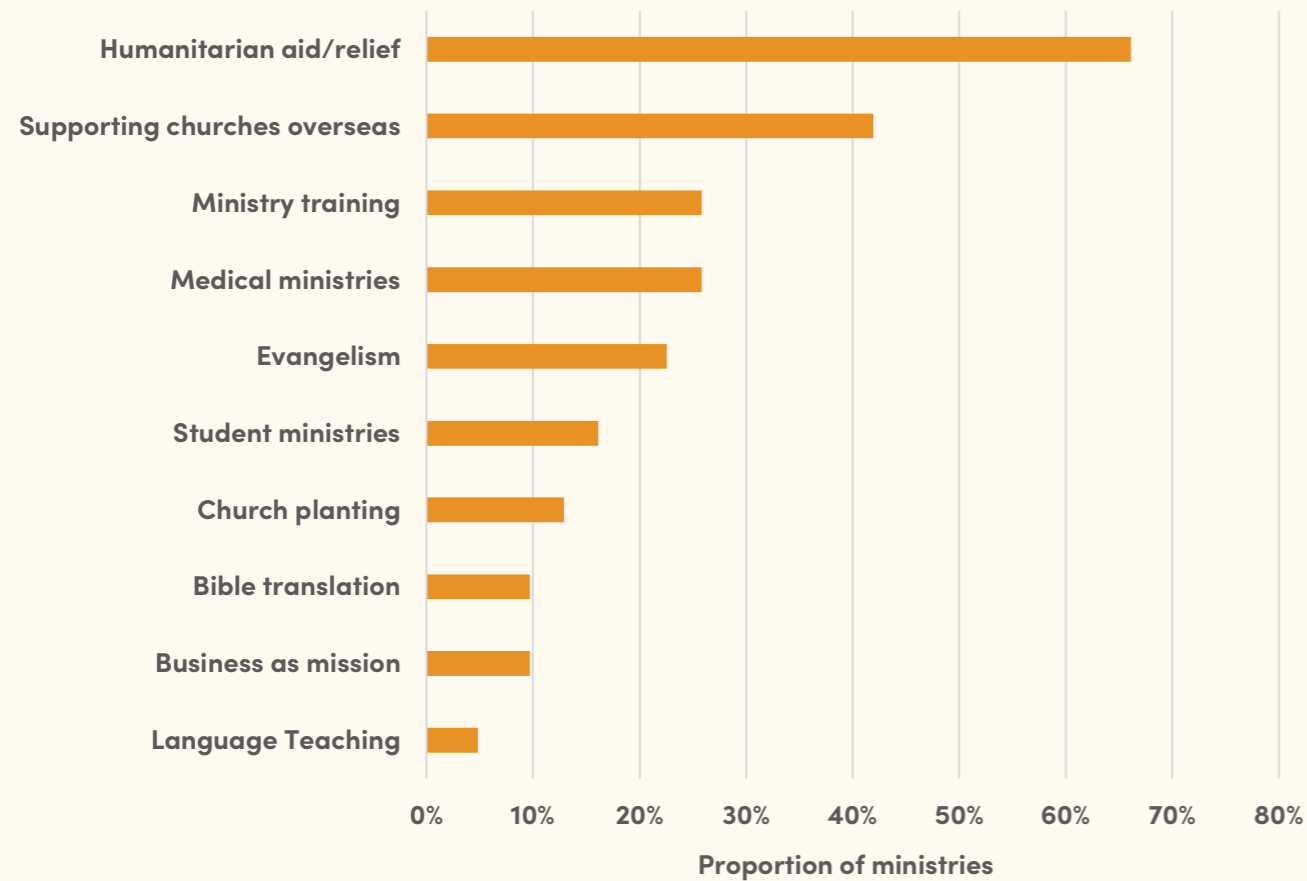
While many churches and mission agencies were sceptical of receiving support from external agencies, those who were not mentioned that they would appreciate the following forms of assistance:

- Training and inspiration
- Personnel
- Resources
- Networks
- Funding

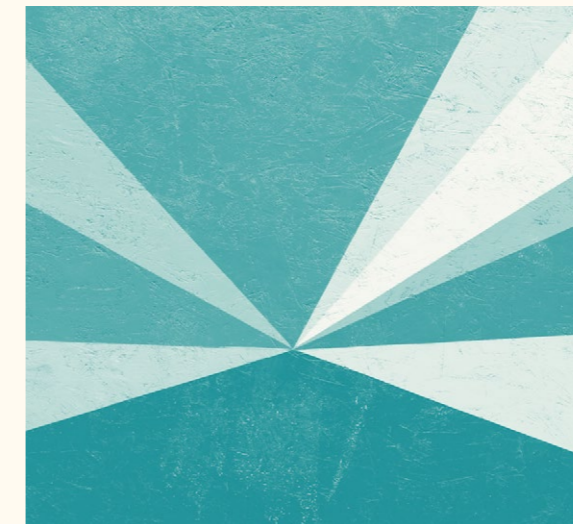
Participants also commented that, in previous partnerships with other organisations, they had especially appreciated being able to benefit from these organisations’ expertise in mission and ability to expand their reach.

## Global mission

Areas in which ministries are involved in global intercultural mission



- Sixty-six per cent provided humanitarian aid and relief (presumably through partner organisations), 42 per cent supported churches overseas, and 26 per cent were involved in medical ministries. The proportion of respondents which supported evangelism and overseas church planting was, however, surprisingly low, with only 23 per cent and 13 per cent respectively involved in these activities
- The areas in which participants would most appreciate help from outside organisations were not necessarily the areas in which they were most involved. Despite low levels of current involvement in overseas evangelism, respondents were more interested in receiving evangelism support than in any other activity (with 18 per cent of participants saying they would welcome assistance in this area)



# Introduction and literature review

## Introduction

It is estimated that by 2050, 30 per cent of the UK population will be from an ethnic minority background, up from 11 per cent in 2010 (Coleman 2010). As the UK grows in cultural and social diversity, there is a need to better understand how the UK Church is – and is not – effective in crossing cultural barriers. In what ways are churches engaging with people from different backgrounds and incorporating the richness of cultural diversity? How are mission agencies serving alongside and responding to the evolving needs and opportunities that churches see? And how can the UK Church be better equipped to reach out amongst diverse communities in the future?

In order to answer these questions, SIM-UK, AWM-Pioneers, OMF, AIM Europe, and London City Mission, asked Eido Research to map churches' and mission agencies' attitudes towards intercultural mission, as well as the actions they were taking towards pursuing it in Leeds. This research seeks to help churches cross barriers more effectively and better connect with global mission resources to reach out in communities where the need is greatest.

## Literature review

Home to more than 790,000 people, Leeds is the third-largest city in the UK (Council of Europe n.d.). Unlike other large cities, however, Leeds is not exceptionally diverse: White British people compose 81 per cent of its population – as compared to 80 per cent for England and Wales (ONS 2011c).<sup>1</sup> Much of Leeds' diversity is also relatively recent: 13 per cent of its population was born outside the UK, and the proportion of people born overseas has doubled since 2001 (Council of Europe n.d.). Amongst the most common ethnic minorities are Pakistanis (composing three per cent of the population), non-British or -Irish White ethnicities (three per cent), and Indians (two per cent) (ONS 2011c).

Leeds is also slightly less Christian than other areas of the UK, with 57 per cent of its population describing itself in these terms – as compared to 59 per cent for England and Wales (ONS 2011b). Nearly three in ten people in Leeds (28 per cent) claim to have no faith, and the largest non-Christian religious groups are Muslims (5 per cent of the population), Sikhs (one per cent), Hindus, and Jews (each one per cent) (ONS 2011b).

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, 2011 is the most recent year for which census data is available. Population figures in this report should therefore be taken as approximating, rather than fully capturing, the sociodemographic makeup of Leeds and the UK.

## Intercultural mission in Leeds

While Leeds is less diverse than other cities of its size (including Manchester, for which see our forthcoming report), it is still essential to understand how churches and mission agencies are reaching minorities in the area – especially in light of recent research forecasting that the UK will continue to grow more diverse through 2061 (Lomax et al. 2019). As Kwiyani (2020) has observed, 'cultural diversity within the landscape of British Christianity is the new normal and is here to stay'.

In this context, the good news is that the UK Church is committed to mission: as a recent Barna report indicates, 85 per cent of active UK Christians feel a responsibility to evangelise, and two-thirds have spoken about their faith with a non-Christian in the past month (Barna 2016). Another two-thirds believe that global and local mission should be equally prioritised, with younger Christians slightly more likely to emphasise the importance of local mission (Barna 2018). Encouragingly, many of these active Christians see an equal role for the Church in social justice and evangelism, while smaller proportions believe that the Church should focus on one or the other of these dimensions of mission (Barna 2018).

Nonetheless, the Church's efforts at intercultural mission are often unsuccessful: as the same report cited above underlines, in conversations about Jesus, two-fifths of non-Christians felt glad they did not share the faith of their Christian friends, and six in ten did not want to know more about Jesus Christ (Barna 2016). Moreover, churches and mission agencies often struggled to translate their faith across cultural contexts: as Kwiyani (2020) notes, 'British churches will send missionaries to Africa while neglecting their African neighbours on their streets in Britain'. In this report, we find that one in five ministries spontaneously mentioned a lack of confidence in engaging in intercultural mission, and that others may have failed to see opportunities for mission in their area.

This is not merely a problem for white-majority churches: in 2012, Hope for the Nations published a report showing that churches led by ethnic minorities often felt they were 'struggling to break into the white community', feared failure and rejection in working with other churches, and wanted to adapt their ministry to reach other ethnicities in Leeds (Hope for the Nations 2012). Across cultures and ethnic groups, therefore, there is a need to better equip Christians for mission, and to help them understand what has worked in the past. It is our hope that this report helps to accomplish both of these ends.



# Methodology

## Research design

To capture the attitudes and actions of churches and mission agencies throughout Leeds, a cross-sectional research design was chosen. Data was collected in three stages.

The first stage involved telephone interviews with a selection of key leaders in the city. During the research, these leaders were referred to as “gatekeepers”. As every large city has its own unique history surrounding ethnic and religious diversity, the purpose of these interviews was to map the context of intercultural mission in Leeds. Secondly, however, as the name “gatekeepers” suggests, another main goal was to build rapport with these leaders who could in turn facilitate the second and third stages of the research.

The second stage of this design was therefore to conduct telephone interviews with a representative sample of churches and mission agencies in Leeds. These telephone interviews were the focus of this study, and provided the primary answers to the research questions described above.

Finally, following the overview provided by stage two, follow-up interviews were conducted with churches and mission agencies that were seeing significant impact in intercultural mission. The purpose of these “hotspot” interviews was to further understand these organisations’ success, and to delve deeper into stories of impact in the city.

## Research population and sampling

Each of the stages outlined in the research design required their own sampling strategy. In all three, we defined our research population as churches and mission agencies located within Leeds City Council boundaries. From this area, a sample of 246 churches and mission agencies was taken from a series of online databases including [www.findachurch.co.uk](http://www.findachurch.co.uk) and [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com). Subsequently a more detailed Google search for churches and mission agencies checked for missing organisations in the database. To ensure that this sample was representative of all church and mission agencies in Leeds, the sample list was tested for church size, denomination, and ethnicity, and found to be comparable to regional norms.

## Questionnaire design

Once the research design had been finalised, the next step was to build the questionnaire that would be used in the telephone interviews.

To that end, a series of discussion groups were held with key stakeholders and funders to explore which questions they wanted answered throughout the research. Following these discussions, several drafts of the questionnaire were produced, circulated, and revised. They were then piloted with several of the gatekeepers, and finalised based upon their edits and recommendations. However, this level of analysis was not possible for the scope of this research.

## Response rate and representativeness

During the first few weeks of February 2020, over 700 calls were made to sampled churches and mission agencies in Leeds. On average each organisation was called three times, with some organisations replying immediately, and others replying after five calls. In total, 62 organisations responded, resulting in a response rate of 25 per cent.

Following this, 13 in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with those organisations that were deemed to be “hotspots” in the city.

To understand whether these respondents were representative of the research population, a series of statistical tests was conducted. These tests found that respondent proportions closely matched the denomination, ethnicity, and church size of the research population. They also revealed that there was no significant difference between those who completed the telephone interview immediately, and those who completed the telephone interview after several phone calls. Encouragingly, participants also voiced a wide range of opinions – from criticism of all intercultural mission efforts to enthusiastic advocacy of mission – suggesting that our sampling method had not merely selected for organisations already interested in mission.

However, there was a lower response rate from mission agencies, as well as a slight level of non-response bias in those who explicitly refused to complete the telephone interview.

While the research results discussed below thus cannot be considered perfectly representative of all organisations, they do helpfully represent many churches’ and mission agencies’ attitudes towards intercultural mission, as well as what they were doing to reach their communities in Leeds.

# Local intercultural mission

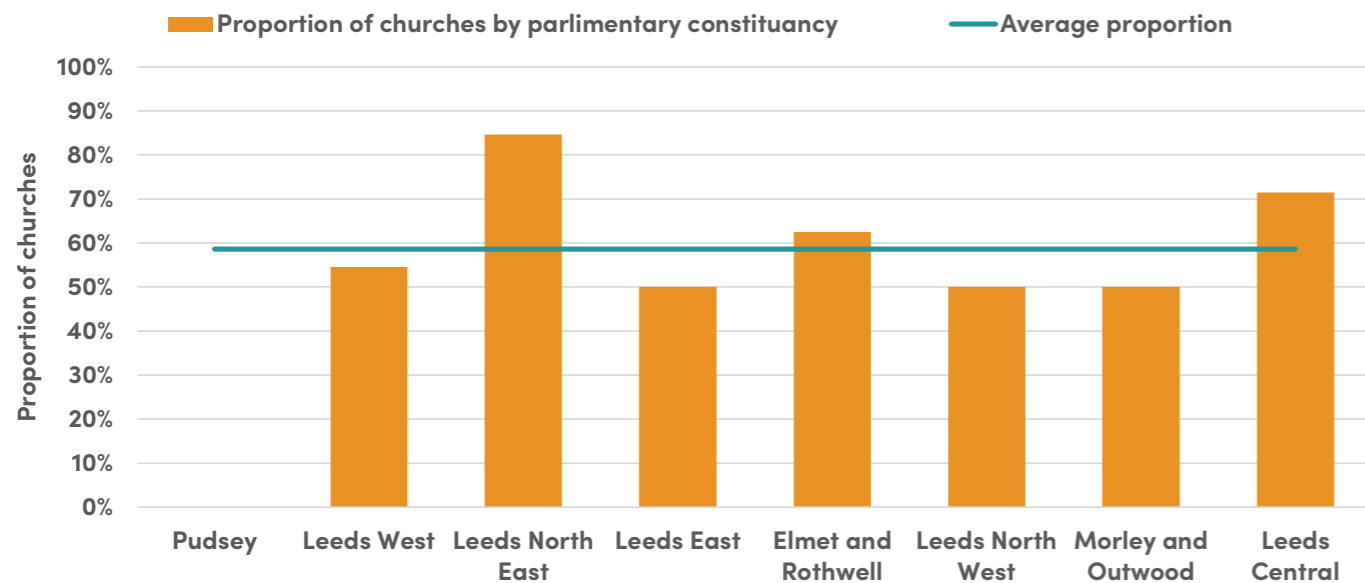
To understand how churches and mission agencies in Leeds approached local mission, we asked respondents about their **attitudes** towards mission and the **actions** they were taking to pursue intercultural mission in their communities.

## Attitudes

### Is intercultural mission a priority?

Although six out of every ten churches in Leeds (59 per cent) considered intercultural mission a priority, there was significant variation by constituency. In Leeds North East, more than eight in ten churches (85 per cent) claimed that intercultural mission was at least a moderate priority; in Pudsey, on the other hand, no respondents thought the same.<sup>2</sup>

Proportion of churches which said ICM is a moderate or high priority (by parliamentary constituency)



The extent to which churches prioritised intercultural mission also seemed to vary by the diversity and age of their congregations, as well as by church tradition. To understand these differences, we drew a distinction between “diverse” congregations (churches whose non-white population exceeded Leeds’ regional average of 14 per cent) and “non-diverse” congregations (whose non-white population fell below that average). Interestingly, diverse churches were almost twice as likely to prioritise

<sup>2</sup> These findings were likely influenced by our relatively small sample size for Pudsey.

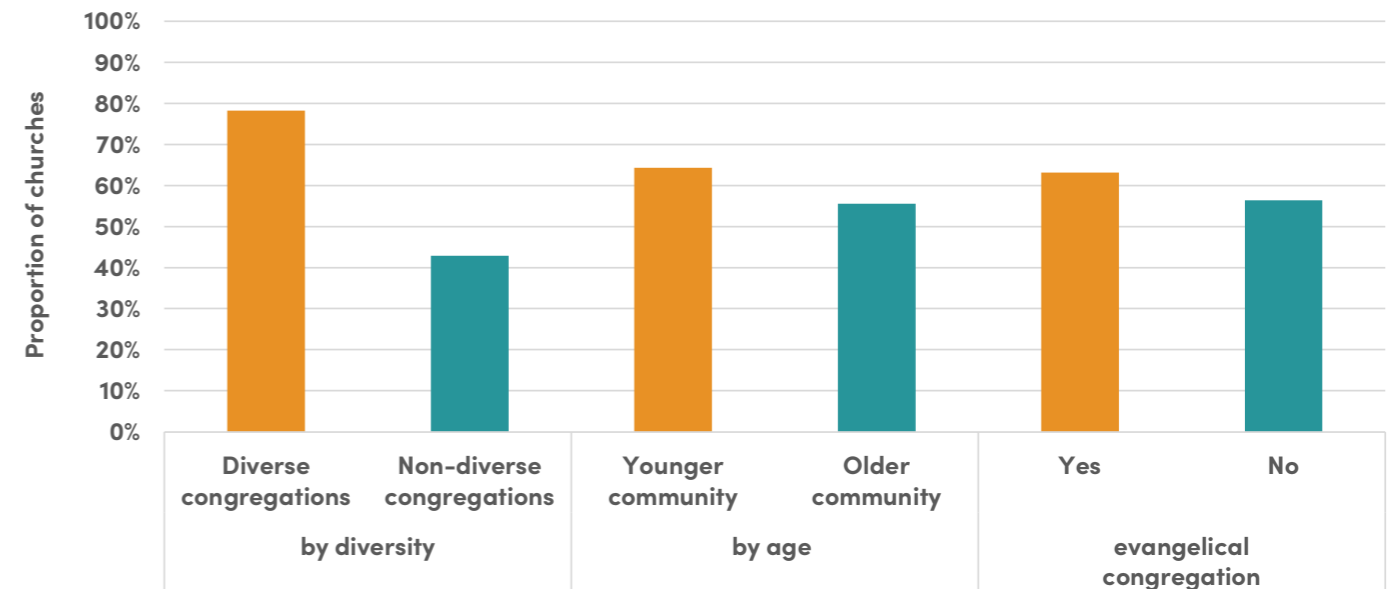
*six out of every ten churches in Leeds (59 per cent) considered intercultural mission a priority* ”

intercultural mission as non-diverse ones: it seemed that churches that were already racially integrated were more committed to including other races and ethnicities than majority-white churches.

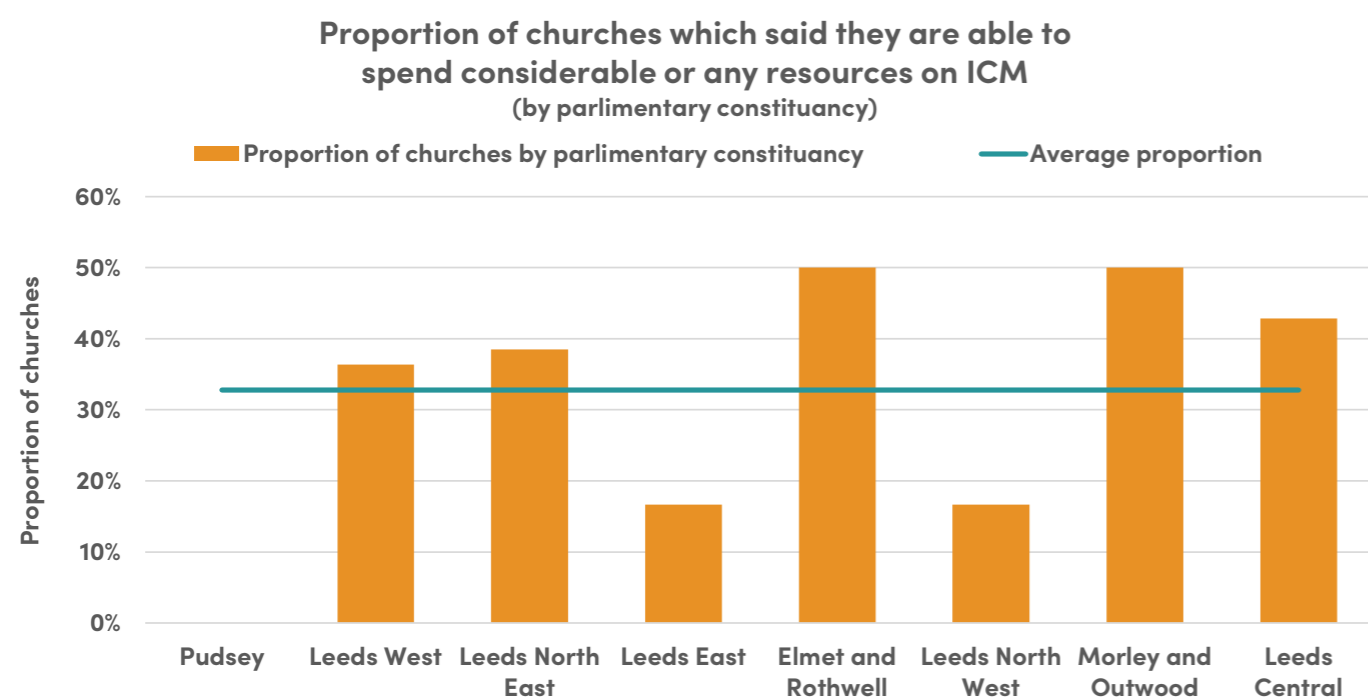
We also compared younger churches (defined as churches where the majority of the congregation was under 40 years of age) with older ones (where the majority of the congregation was over 40). While younger churches were only slightly more likely to consider intercultural mission a priority (64 per cent of younger churches as opposed to 56 per cent of older churches), they were significantly more likely to think of it as a high priority. Fifty per cent of young churches described intercultural mission in these terms, as compared to just 31 per cent of older churches.

Finally, we separated evangelical churches from churches with more liberal beliefs. Surprisingly, there was not much difference in these churches’ commitment to intercultural mission. While evangelical churches were slightly more likely to say that they considered intercultural mission a moderate or high priority (63 per cent of evangelical churches claimed they did), 56 per cent of non-evangelical churches said the same.

Proportion of churches which said ICM is a moderate or high priority (by diversity/ age/ evangelicalism)



## To what extent is your organisation willing to spend resources on intercultural mission?



Noticeably fewer churches, however, said they would be willing to spend significant resources on intercultural mission. To measure church leaders' commitment to giving, we included five response options describing the amount of resources participants would be willing to dedicate to mission: (a) no resources, (b) few resources, (c) some resources, (d) considerable resources, and (e) almost any amount of resources. Of these options, only 33 per cent of churches claimed that they would be willing to give at least a considerable amount of resources to mission, although responses varied markedly by constituency. In Elmet and Rothwell, for instance, half (50 per cent) of churches said they would be willing to give considerable resources, while in Pudsey no churches said they would give this amount.<sup>3</sup> Particularly notable were constituencies, such as Leeds North East and Leeds East, which were appreciably less likely to give to intercultural mission than to consider it a priority. While 85 per cent of churches in Leeds North East thought that intercultural mission was a priority, only 38 per cent said they would dedicate at least a considerable amount of resources to it. Likewise, while 50 per cent of churches in Leeds East claimed that intercultural mission was a priority, just 17 per cent said they would give at least a considerable amount of resources to it. In some cases, this discrepancy seemed to relate to the relative income of these constituencies: Leeds East, for instance, was one of the most deprived constituencies in the area, with average weekly earnings of just £394.30 (£121.20 less than Elmet and Rothwell). This is almost certainly not a complete explanation, however, as giving in Leeds North West decreased by the same amount as in Leeds East – despite the fact that Leeds North West was the wealthiest constituency in our sample.

A table summarising average weekly earnings in each of these constituencies, the extent to which they prioritised intercultural mission, and the proportion that were willing to give considerable amounts to intercultural mission may be found below.<sup>4</sup>

	Average weekly income	Per cent prioritising intercultural mission	Per cent willing to give at least a "considerable amount"	Per cent change
Leeds West	£451.20	55	36	-19
Leeds North East	£470.30	85	38	-47
Leeds East	£394.30	50	17	-33
Elmet and Rothwell	£515.50	63	50	-13
Leeds North West	£517.10	50	17	-33
Leeds Central	£412.40	71	43	-28

<sup>3</sup> Results from Morley and Outwood have been omitted because the sample size for this constituency (two respondents) was too small for statistical analysis. As noted above, Pudsey's sample size was also small, so these results should be taken as preliminary and not necessarily descriptive of the constituency as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> Morley and Outwood and Pudsey have been omitted from this table because of the small sample sizes for these constituencies. Data on weekly household income comes from ONS figures – see ONS (2019) in the bibliography for details.

As in the previous section, we also examined whether churches' willingness to give varied with race, age, and church tradition. Once again, congregations with a high non-white population were almost twice as likely to dedicate significant resources to intercultural mission as white-majority churches (46 per cent and 25 per cent said they would give, respectively). Interestingly, however, churches with a significant non-white population were also far less likely to give than to say they prioritised intercultural mission. Understanding why these churches did not feel able to translate their enthusiasm for intercultural mission into financial support may therefore be vital: amongst other explanations, it is possible that non-white churches simply did not have as much disposable income, as recent research has shown substantial pay gaps between White British people and people of other ethnicities.<sup>5</sup>

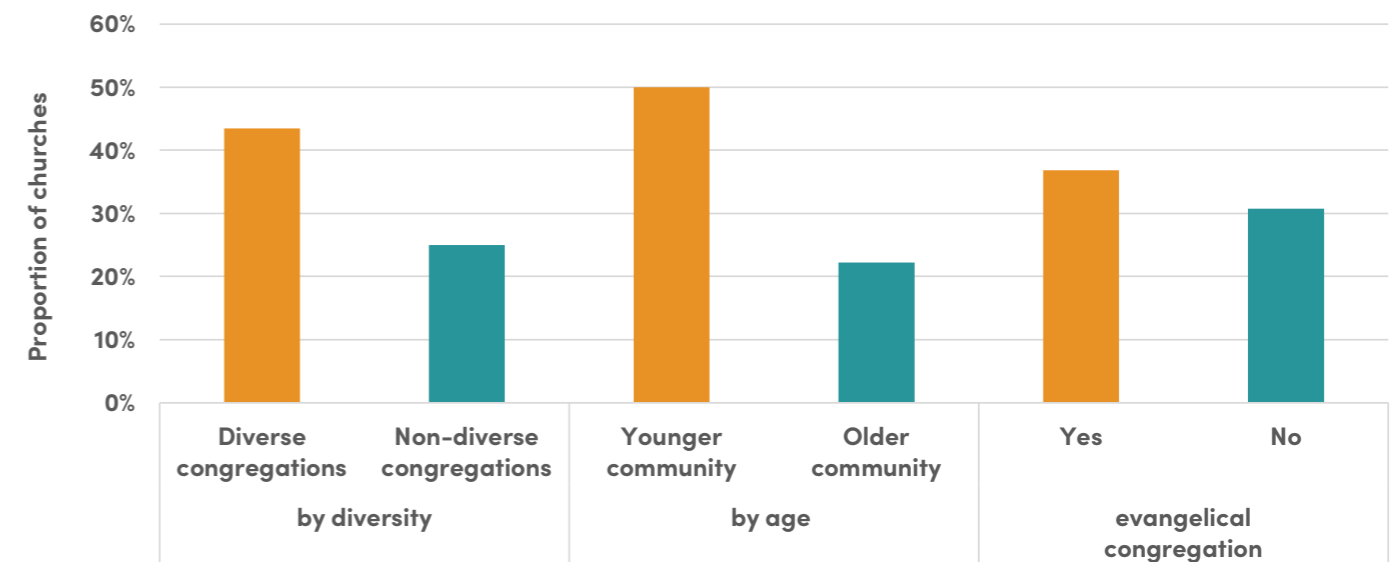
Younger churches were, by contrast, remarkably consistent in their giving, with 50 per cent of respondents saying they would contribute at least considerable resources to intercultural mission. These churches were also twice as likely as older congregations to support intercultural mission. Although it is difficult to know precisely why younger churches were more inclined to give, youth may have functioned as a proxy for wealth; young people may, for instance, have attended more affluent, city-centre churches that had more resources to promote mission in their area. Other explanations, such as genuine value differences between older and younger churches with regard to evangelism and diversity, are also possible. Regardless of the specific reasons, there seems to be room to capitalise on the enthusiasm of young churches for intercultural mission, as well as to listen to older churches to understand whether they could develop a greater capacity to give.

Finally, our analysis revealed a slight discrepancy between evangelical and non-evangelical churches' willingness to support intercultural mission: while 37 per cent of evangelical churches said they would devote at least considerable resources to intercultural mission, this was true of only 31 per cent of non-evangelical churches. This difference is much smaller than the disparities observed between (for example) older and younger churches, and suggests that churches in Leeds' willingness to support intercultural mission was not primarily determined by whether they identified as evangelical.

*Once again, congregations with a high non-white population were almost twice as likely to dedicate significant resources to intercultural mission as white-majority churches (46 per cent and 25 per cent said they would give, respectively).*



**Proportion of churches which said they are able to spend considerable or any resources on ICM (by diversity/age/evangelicalism)**



## Which groups are you aiming to reach?

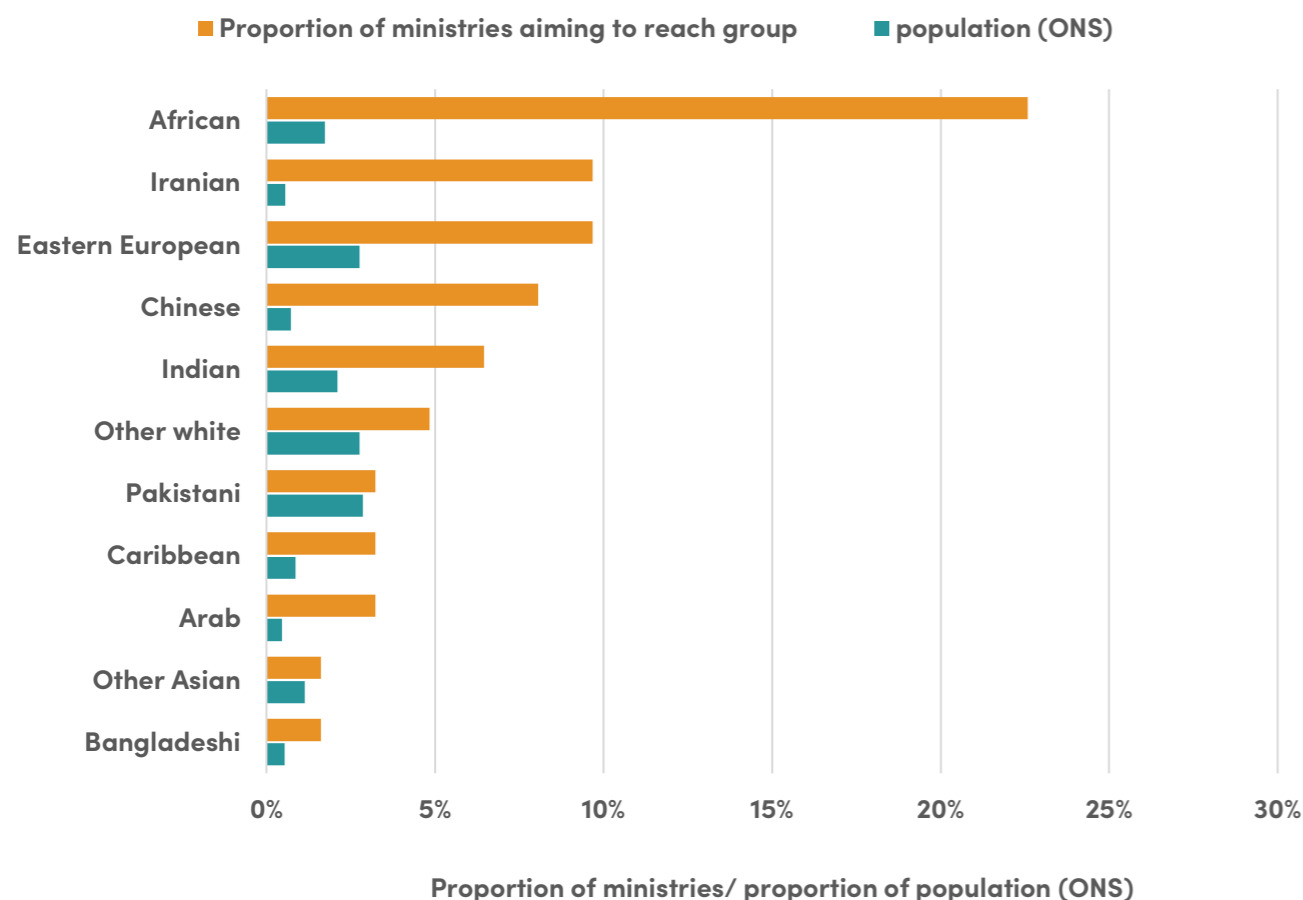
We then asked churches and mission agencies about the specific ethnic groups that they were trying to reach. On the whole, participants were reaching an encouraging range of nationalities. The proportion of organisations attempting to reach a given nationality also tended to exceed the actual representation of that nationality in Leeds. This can be seen in the graph below: while people who identified as Chinese, for instance, composed only one per cent of the population of Leeds, they were reached by eight per cent of organisations in our sample.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, while people who identified as Indian made up two per cent of Leeds' population, they were reached by six per cent of organisations.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2018. "Ethnicity Pay Gaps in Great Britain: 2018." Accessed June 5, 2020. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2018>

<sup>6</sup> The "Eastern European" group in the graph below was composed of all references to Eastern European countries (including Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Poland) in response to this question. Some respondents also mentioned "Eastern Europeans" as a generic category. However, since there was no ONS ethnic category with which to compare these responses, we paired it with the category "Other White". While "Other White" certainly includes non-Eastern Europeans, it is notable that the proportion of churches interested in reaching Eastern Europeans still exceeded the share of "Other White" people in Manchester. Similarly, since there was no ONS category with which to compare the proportion of churches interested in reaching Iranians, we contrasted it with the category "Any other ethnic group". Once again, the proportion of churches interested in reaching Iranians significantly exceeded the representation of "Any other ethnic group" in Manchester – despite the fact that this category also included many non-Iranian people groups.

<sup>7</sup> In our initial presentation of the data, respondents asked whether there was any outreach to South American minorities. There was not, but one church mentioned aiming to reach Central Americans.

### Which specific ethnic groups are ministries in Leeds trying to reach?

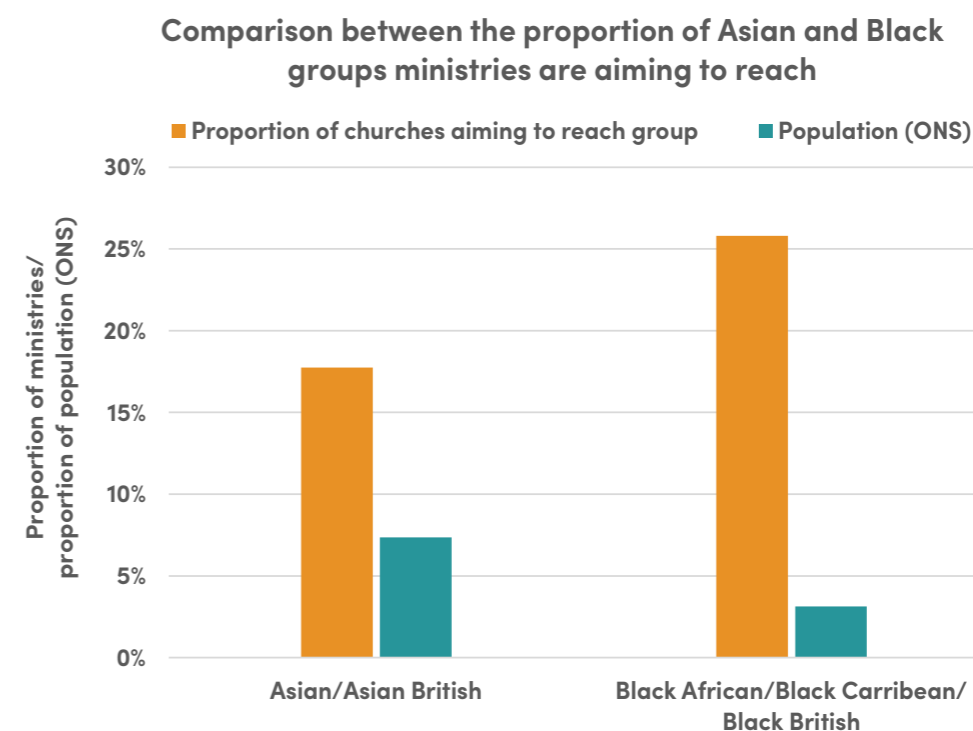


However, certain groups seemed vastly overrepresented in the data. Twenty-three per cent of organisations, for example, claimed to be reaching people of African ethnicity, despite the fact that these people composed only two per cent of Leeds’ population. Likewise, 10 per cent of organisations expressed an interest in reaching Iranians, although Iranians represented less than one per cent of Leeds’ population. On the other hand, other groups, such as Pakistanis, seemed to receive relatively little attention from Christian organisations, with only three per cent of churches and mission agencies claiming to reach this ethnicity. As one respondent suggested, this may have resulted from a perception that Pakistanis were ‘hard to reach’ and ‘keen to maintain their own culture’ – although, as this same participant also noted, significant numbers of Pakistanis had also begun to come to faith in Leeds.

*Twenty-three per cent of organisations, for example, claimed to be reaching people of African ethnicity, despite the fact that these people composed only two per cent of Leeds’ population.*



In general, churches and mission agencies seemed much more interested in reaching Black groups than Asian ones, as shown in the graph below. While 26 per cent of organisations wanted to reach Black African, Black Caribbean, or Black British people, just 18 per cent said they were attempting to reach Asian or Asian British people – despite the fact that Asian ethnicities made up twice the population of Black ethnicities in Leeds (seven per cent as compared to three per cent).



These results are somewhat difficult to explain. In our initial presentation of the data, we were asked whether they might result from there being a greater number of Black-majority churches in our sample. If there were more Black-majority churches, the logic ran, and if these churches primarily reached people of their own ethnicity, then this might explain the greater proportion of churches aiming to reach Black community members. However, both of these premises turned out to be false. The number of Black-majority churches (just three churches, or five per cent of our total sample) was too small to account for the discrepancy in the proportion of organisations interested in reaching Black and Asian groups. Furthermore, one of these Black-majority churches was not even interested in reaching Black groups, and almost all churches in our sample (including Black-majority ones) were interested in reaching more than one ethnic group. Consequently, it is not possible to establish a one-to-one relationship between the presence of Black-majority churches and the share of participants interested in reaching Asian and Black groups.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The one Asian-majority church in our sample was interested in reaching other Asians, but also discussed several other groups that it would like to reach.

Paradoxically, respondents' interest in reaching Africans and other Black ethnicities may actually have derived from a perception that many Africans were already Christian and thus might be more willing to become involved in church activities. It was certainly the case that when participants discussed specific African countries, they often focused on ones with large Christian populations: respondents mentioned, for example, the 'Eritrean Coptic community', and 'Ghanaian' and 'South Africa[n]' people as groups they would like to reach. However, this theory cannot entirely explain the data, as other participants discussed people from countries such as Mali and Morocco which have only tiny Christian minorities.

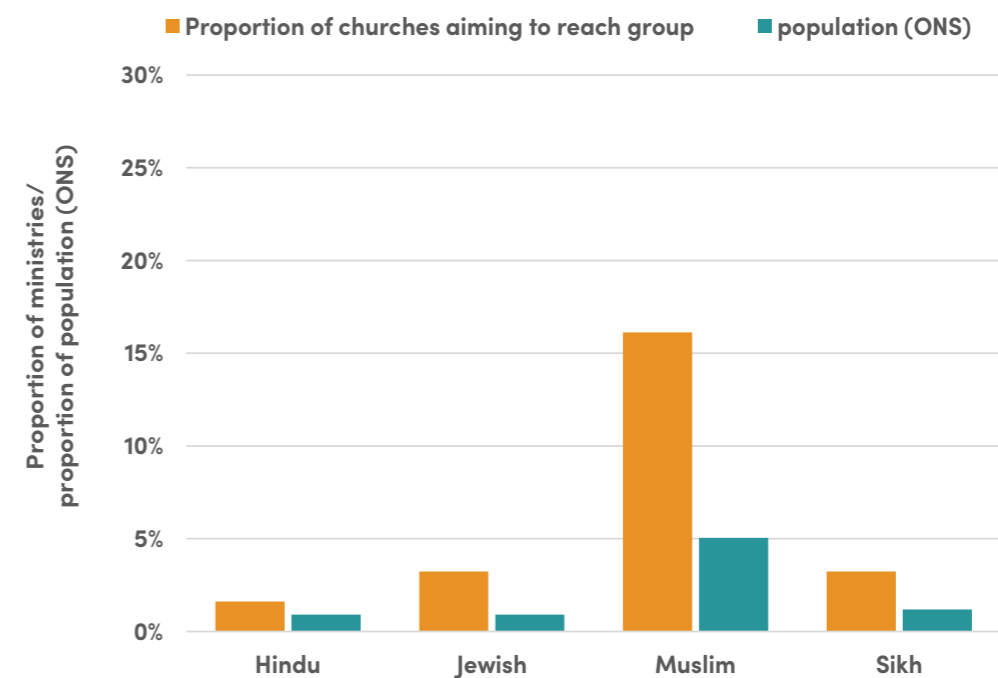
It is also difficult to determine precisely why churches and mission agencies tended to under-emphasise Asian ethnicities. As our survey asked only what groups participants were attempting to reach, it is possible that respondents classified people from certain countries in religious, rather than national, terms. Around 16 per cent of organisations in our sample, for instance, claimed to be reaching Muslims – and it is therefore conceivable that they may have included people from Muslim-majority countries, such as Pakistan, in this category. On the other hand, this would not explain why other Muslim-majority countries were mentioned by name and received so much attention. It may be that participants perceived these countries as especially hostile to evangelism and consequently saw reaching out to immigrant nationalities in the UK as a particularly important opportunity. In any case, there is likely a need to direct more attention to groups that are not already Christian as well as to Asian groups that are currently being neglected.

*It is also difficult to determine precisely why churches and mission agencies tended to under-emphasise Asian ethnicities. As our survey asked only what groups participants were attempting to reach, it is possible that respondents classified people from certain countries in religious, rather than national, terms.*

*In general, survey responses concentrated on the four major non-Christian religious groups in Leeds (Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, and Hindus), and the proportion of organisations attempting to reach these groups was consistently two to three times greater than the actual representation of these religions in the city.*

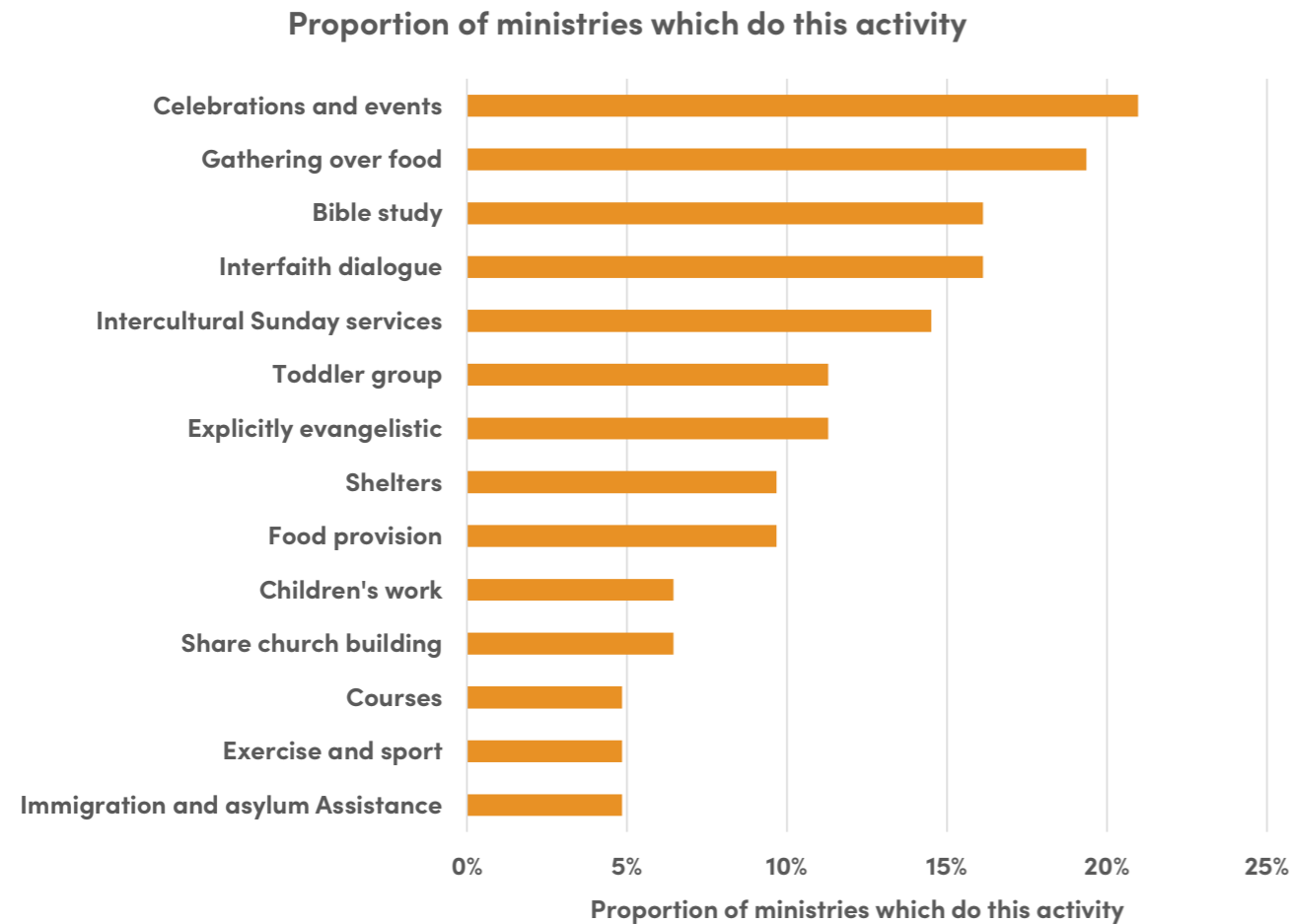
Efforts to reach other religious groups, however, did seem to more closely match the religious makeup of Leeds. In general, survey responses concentrated on the four major non-Christian religious groups in Leeds (Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, and Hindus), and the proportion of organisations attempting to reach these groups was consistently two to three times greater than the actual representation of these religions in the city. While Muslims made up of 5 per cent of Leeds' population, for instance, 16 per cent of churches were attempting to reach this group; similarly, while Sikhs composed around one per cent of the population, three per cent of churches were attempting to reach them.

Which religious groups are ministries in Leeds aiming to reach?



## Actions

### What activities are you doing?



When discussing specific activities to reach people of other faiths and ethnicities, churches and mission agencies were most likely to mention celebrations and events, “gathering over food”, Bible studies, and interfaith dialogue. Celebrations and events (discussed by 21 per cent of leaders) was a rather broad category encompassing everything from seasonal events – such as ‘handing out goody bags at our local school to parents and children for Christmas’ – to ‘community fun days’. “Gathering over food” was another relatively large category centring on activities that sought to create community by sharing food: one Catholic priest, for example, detailed how his church ‘share[s] cultural foods’ after Mass and another leader recounted how their church hosted a ‘lunch drop-in session... for people who live on their own and need community’. This activity appeared in 19 per cent of responses. Sixteen per cent of organisations also mentioned Bible studies, and another 16 per cent discussed interfaith dialogue, which could occur in a variety of forms, from dinner with a local Muslim family to a ‘ladies group’ in cooperation with a nearby synagogue.

## Success as defined by church leaders themselves

To better understand the effect of the activities discussed above, we also included an open-answer question on what leaders considered to be the most significant impact of their intercultural ministries. Participants tended to concentrate on four primary changes in their communities which they attributed to their intercultural ministries: **better relationships with the community, social impact, evangelism and discipleship, and more integrated churches**. One leader, for example, recounted how a parenting group had resulted in a ‘breakdown of preconceived stereotypes of people from other cultural backgrounds by bringing them together around a shared experience’. Similarly, another respondent explained that their ministries had led to a ‘sharing of skills’, including ‘music, cooking, conversation, [and] stories’. Often, these better community relations had also improved non-Christians’ perceptions of the Church and caused new people to join local churches. As one leader commented, ‘I think people’s image has changed of what white middle class Christians are like’. Likewise, others observed that ‘lots of children [were] coming to worship’, there was a ‘strong attraction of [the] Indian community to the church’, and that students were also ‘getting involved in church’.

With regard to social impact, many respondents emphasised the role of intercultural ministries in promoting social inclusion. One church, for example, thought that their community cafe had ‘reduced social isolation through relationship building’, and another respondent felt that church community had helped foreign students ‘have a home away from home, a second family, people looking out for them’. Other participants underlined that their intercultural ministries had reduced food poverty, built relationships with asylum seekers, and helped people in their area recover from addiction.

Still others concentrated on the effects of their intercultural ministries in terms of evangelism and discipleship, stressing their excitement that ‘people [were] coming into relationship with God’ and at the ‘stories of personal salvation’ they had witnessed. Many of these participants also expressed their enthusiasm that people of other ethnicities had grown in their faith through these programmes; as one respondent noted, ‘many Iranians’ lives [have been] changed for [the] better through discipleship’.

*four primary changes in their communities which they attributed to their intercultural ministries: better relationships with the community, social impact, evangelism and discipleship, and more integrated churches.*

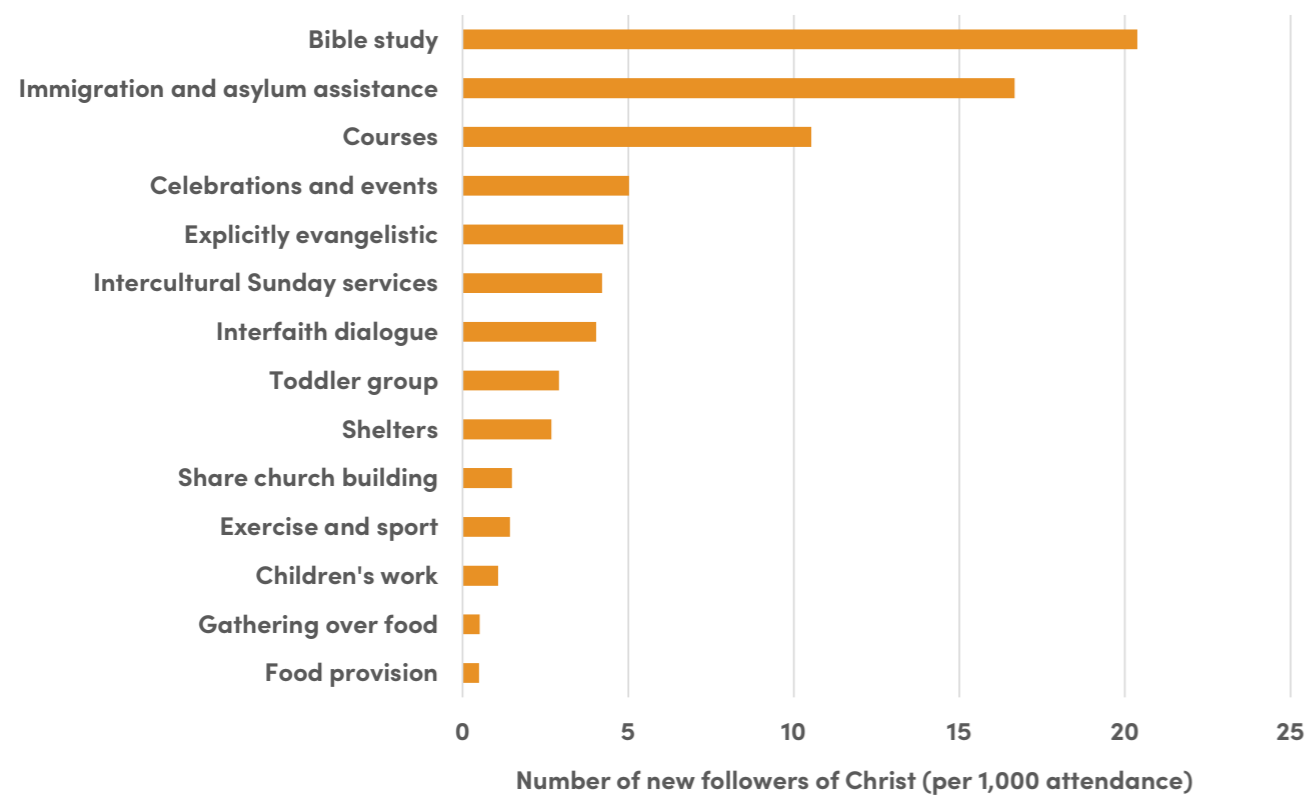


Lastly, some respondents emphasised that a commitment to intercultural ministries had helped them establish more integrated church communities. One leader explained that their church had consciously decided to include a 'Ghanaian worship style', and another commented that 'the church is very culturally diverse, so everyone feels welcome'. Often, this commitment to inclusion played out on a personal level, instead of through church programmes. A third leader, for example, recounted how, since 'one lady in our church... from a minority background has three cleaning jobs', 'another member of the church picks up her son from school to make life a little easier'. As a result, this leader concluded, 'trust has been built'.

### Success as defined by evangelism and ministry involvement

In addition to understanding leaders' own ideas of success, we also wanted to capture which specific activities were associated with people coming to faith or becoming involved in ministry. In doing so, we sought to honour the Holy Spirit's role in conversion: as Myers has observed, 'only the Holy Spirit has the power to call people to repent and turn to a relationship with Jesus Christ and thus become part of the church. Any human efforts... cannot cause conversion and thus should not be evaluated on this basis' (2011, 302). By comparing the number of people who became Christians through specific activities, therefore, our focus was on whether these activities facilitated (read, "did not get in the way of") the work that the Spirit was already doing, not on whether they were ultimately (or directly) responsible.

Number of new followers of Christ (per 1,000 attendances)



As can be seen in the graph above, the activity most associated with people coming to faith was Bible studies. While it is important to not attribute ultimate agency to this programme – the Spirit could, for instance, bring more people to faith through this same activity in a time of revival – this research may hint at how the Spirit is currently working in Leeds: for every 1,000 Bible study attendances, 21 people were coming to faith.

Bible studies in Leeds had some additional characteristics which may have made them available for the work the Spirit was doing in Leeds. First, they were often explicitly evangelistic or designed for people with little or no background in Christianity. One church, for example, described how they ran a 'Bible study group for people who know nothing and want basic knowledge' and commented that 'a Muslim couple came along one time'. Similarly, another leader described how one member of their congregation 'is retired and gives his life full time to reaching the Arabs in Leeds' through discipleship-focused Bible studies.

Secondly – and as hinted above – these studies were often explicitly designed to meet the needs of particular ethnicities or cultural groups. Church leaders mentioned that they hosted a 'Bible study for Iranians and [people from the] Middle East', an 'Eritrean Bible study', and 'Bible studies in foreign languages'. As one participant emphasised, these studies created a sense of 'fellowship' in which 'people of different ethnic minorities are experiencing a sense of belonging through listening ears and a safe space for their questions and level of English'.

People also seemed to be coming to faith in programmes offering immigration and asylum assistance, with 16 new Christians for every 1,000 attendances at these activities. One church, for instance, described 'hosting 10 asylum-seeking men' as part of 'a shared project with different churches in the city'. While the qualitative data does not provide many clues on how specifically the Spirit was using these programmes, it is possible that they provided a tangible demonstration of God's love to people in a vulnerable situation.

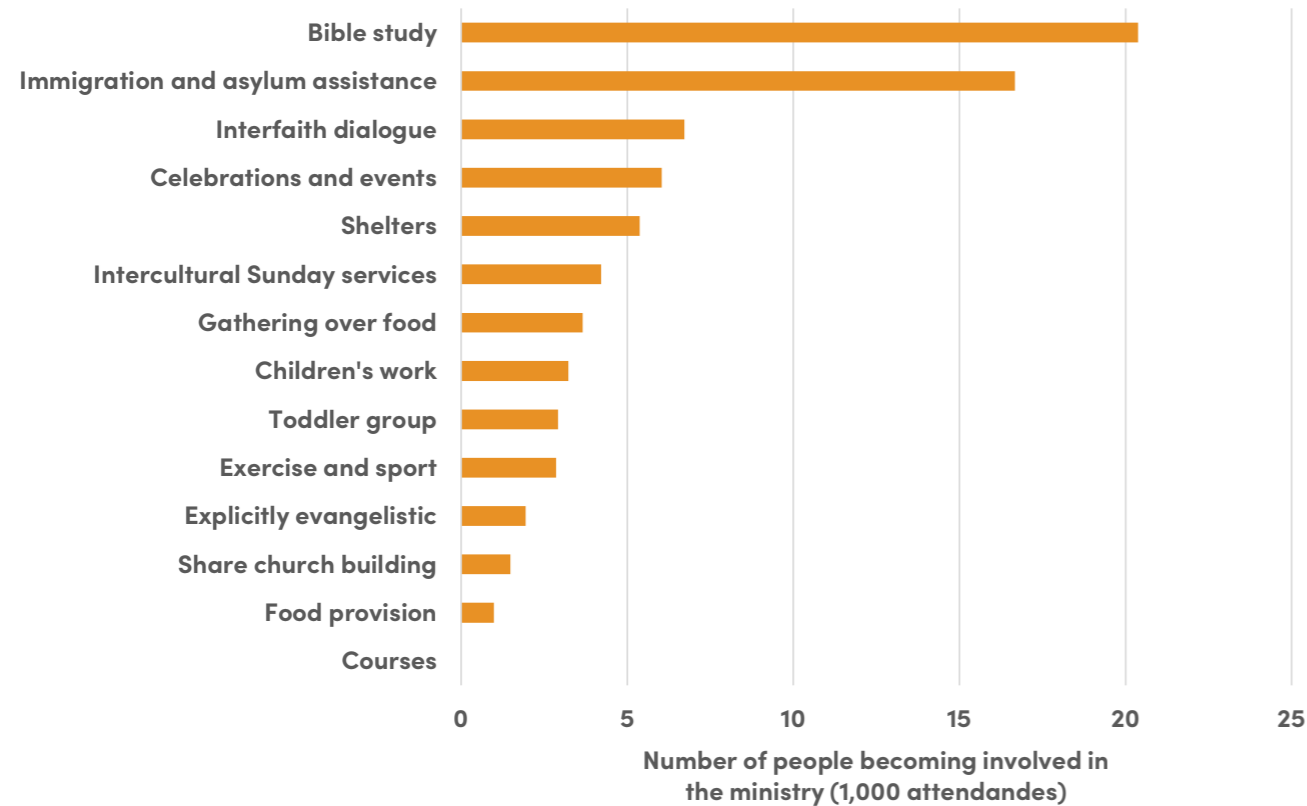
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In fact, it bears emphasising that even activities that were not associated with large numbers of people coming to faith (e.g., food provision and gathering over food) may have softened non-Christians' attitudes towards the Church so that they were ready to respond when they were given the opportunity to accept Christ in activities such as Bible studies. In that sense, the activities most associated with people coming to faith above should probably be seen as those in which the Spirit brought about conversions, as opposed to the activities which the Spirit may have initially used to inspire non-Christians' interest in faith (but were not themselves associated with conversions).

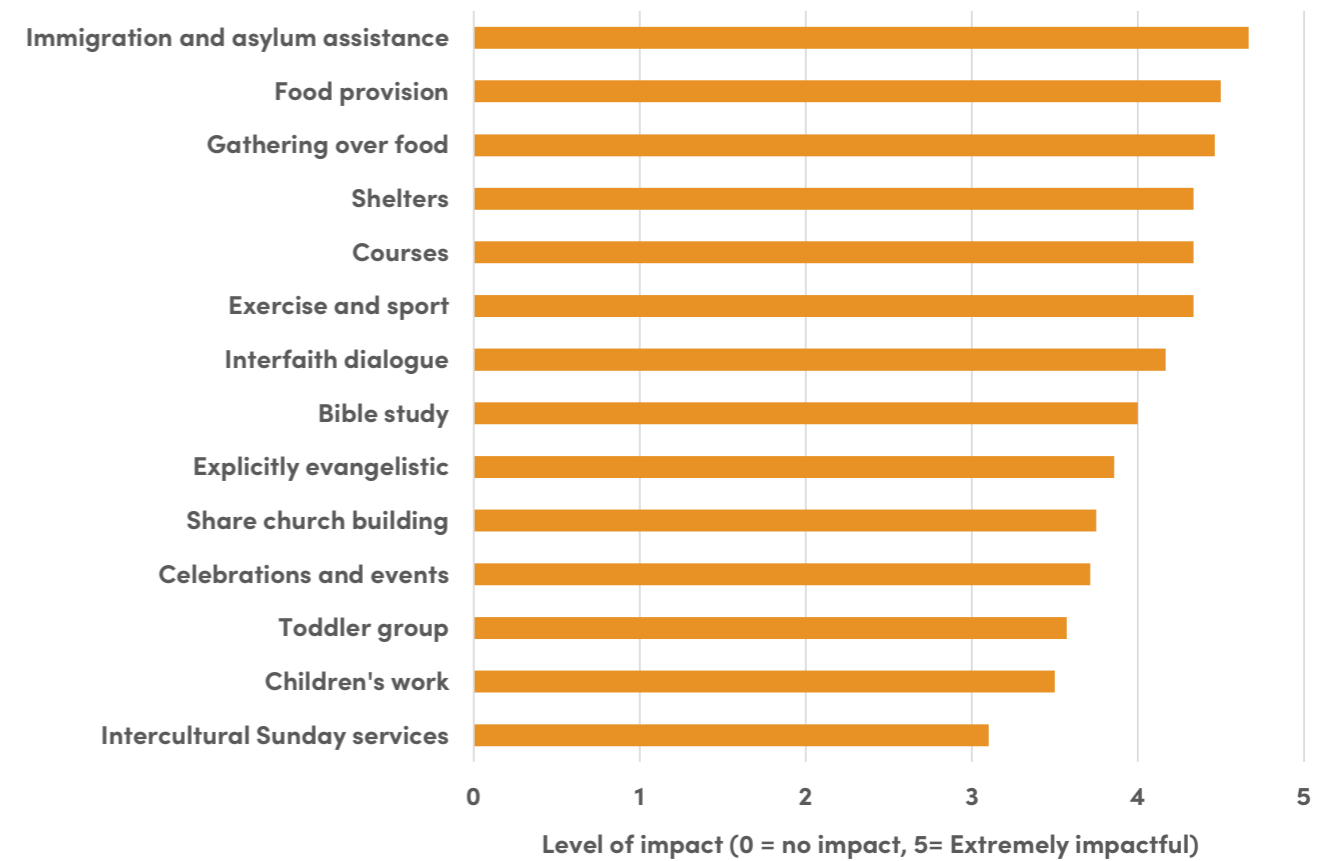
**Number of people becoming involved in ministry (per 1,000 attendances)**



*As shown in the graph above, 20 people joined church ministries for every 1,000 attendances at Bible studies, and 17 joined for every 1,000 attendances at immigration and asylum activities.*



**Perceived impact by church leaders**



Church leaders seemed fully aware of the benefits of immigration and asylum programmes, and rated them more highly than any other activity in terms of reaching ethnic minorities. Interestingly, however, they tended to underestimate the effectiveness of Bible studies: although they still considered them to be effective activities, they ranked them lower than programmes, such as exercise and sport initiatives, which were associated with far fewer people coming to faith or becoming involved in church ministries. Once again, it is worth stressing that church leaders were not necessarily wrong to rate activities such as food provision, gathering over food, and shelters as highly as they did: although these activities were not directly associated with people coming to faith or volunteering in church activities, the Spirit may have used them to interest people in Christ or to address social injustices.

*[church leaders] tended to underestimate the effectiveness of Bible studies*



## What are the secrets to success we can learn?

To better understand what contributed to churches' and mission agencies' success in intercultural mission, we examined data from three sources: (1) "successful" churches and mission agencies, as defined by the metric below, (2) "gatekeeper" churches and ministries in Leeds, and (3) a subset of "successful" churches and mission agencies selected for follow-up interviews. In the rest of the report, we will refer to this subset as "hotspot" churches and organisations.

### Defining "successful churches"

To define what constituted churches' "success", we ranked data from our telephone interviews according to the following criteria:

1. **The perceived effectiveness of an organisation's intercultural ministries (according to its leaders)**
2. **Organisations' success in integrating minorities in church communities (also according to leaders)**
3. **The number of people who began to follow Christ through these activities (although as noted above, this was ultimately a sign of whether the Spirit was working through a particular church or ministry and not of the ministry's own success)**
4. **The number of people who became involved in the ministry of the church as a result of these activities**

We also chose to concentrate on the responses of churches and mission agencies which had scored highly on our metric (i.e., in the top 50 per cent). Although at certain points we contrast these responses with those of organisations who did not rank as highly, we thought it would be more fruitful to focus primarily on the factors to which already successful ministries attributed their impact – on the principle that these organisations would know how to replicate these results.

<sup>9</sup> In our initial presentation of the data, we were asked whether diverse churches tended to score higher on our metric of success than non-diverse ones. While the answer is technically "yes", this is not a particularly helpful finding as our definition of success included measures of diversity. It is therefore somewhat tautological to say that diverse churches scored higher on this metric.

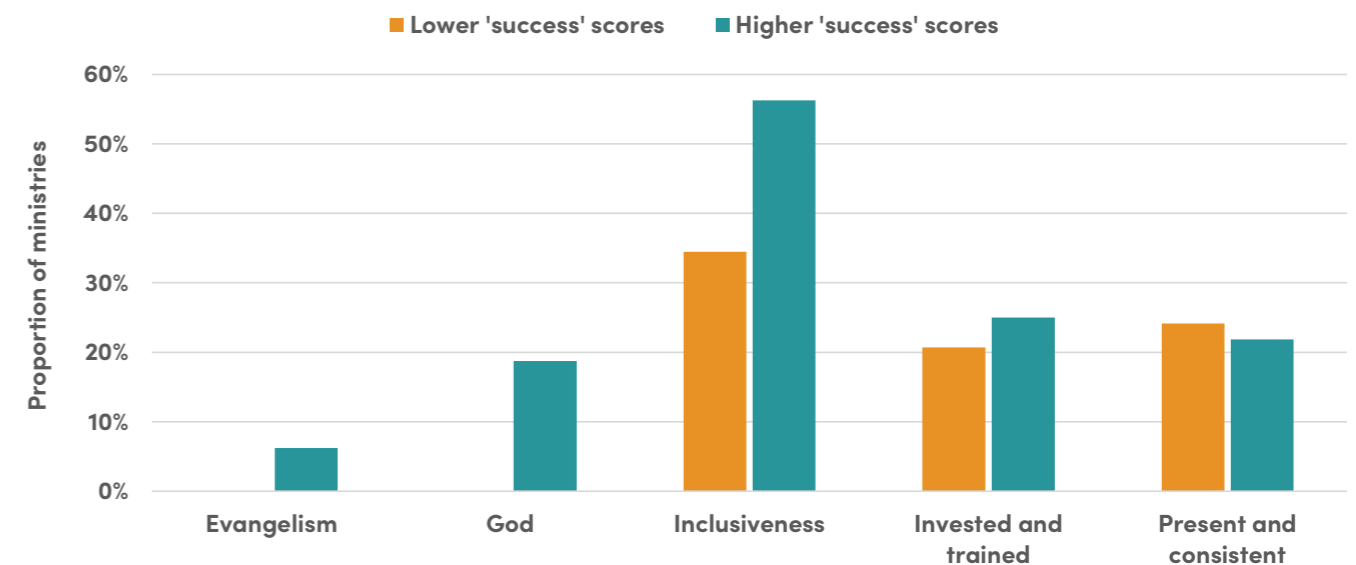
## Defining "gatekeeper" ministries

To complement our study of the organisations discussed above, we also interviewed a group of particularly influential churches and ministries in Leeds. These participants were initially identified by SIM-UK, and tended to be larger organisations with well-established intercultural ministries. (Henceforth, we will refer to these participants as "gatekeeper organisations", as they also provided helpful context on mission in Leeds and introductions to other organisations.) In interviewing them, we sought to build on what we had learned from "successful" ministries in the previous section: what might intercultural mission look like when it was pursued by these highly experienced and dedicated organisations?

## Defining "hotspot" organisations

Lastly, we included data from a selection of particularly successful ministries with which we conducted further interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to understand more about what motivated churches and mission agencies to engage in mission, what support they might appreciate from other organisations, and their approach to global mission specifically.

What do ministries believe have been the keys behind their impact?



*evangelism and God's role in mission were not discussed at all by ministries in the bottom 50 per cent of success scores.*



### Understanding success

Participants across all three groups identified five traits that were essential to intercultural mission: inclusivity towards ethnic minorities, remaining present and consistent in one's community, being invested and trained for mission, remembering the importance of evangelism as well as social justice, and concentrating on God's role in mission. Ministries that scored highly on our metric above tended to mention inclusiveness much more frequently than ministries which did not – and evangelism and God's role in mission were not discussed at all by ministries in the bottom 50 per cent of success scores.

#### Inclusiveness

The theme of inclusivity was mentioned by 56 per cent of ministries with high success scores, 11 of 13 hotspot interviewees, and 5 of 10 gatekeeper interviewees – remarkably high rates for the type of open-answer question which produced these results. As can be seen above, ministries that scored highly on our success metric were noticeably more likely to discuss this theme than those which did not (of which only 34 per cent mentioned it). Specifically, participants concentrated on three ideas within this theme: **actively welcoming and listening** to ethnic minorities, **ensuring ministries were accessible**, and **promoting minorities' agency in intercultural activities**.

#### *Actively welcoming and listening*

Several participants stressed the importance of intentionally making space for people of other ethnicities: one church, for instance, advocated for 'a focus on the ministry of welcome', and a hotspot interviewee underlined that this kind of welcome was most important when first coming into contact with ethnic minorities:

[The] first few weeks are vital: we are most aware of identities when in a minority. [It's important to] go out of [one's] way to be welcoming to those from other nationalities, without being patronising.

Other ministry leaders focused specifically on the importance of hospitality, and discussed 'showing that you care for them, having them around in your home, show[ing] Christ to them'. As these leaders suggested, actively demonstrating an interest in ethnic and religious minorities was crucial to building relationships in which Christ could be shared.

*'spending time with guests at their pace' and 'allowing [them] to be who they are whatever that means' was 'hard work but really worth it'.*



Still other respondents pointed to the value of listening to and making time for people from other backgrounds. One church leader, for example, believed that success in intercultural mission depended partly on 'listening, understanding, accepting, being there for those who need care'. Similarly, a church which operated a ministry for people with dementia found that 'spending time with guests at their pace' and 'allowing [them] to be who they are whatever that means' was 'hard work but really worth it'.

#### *Ensuring ministries were accessible to minorities*

Moreover, participants stressed that it was vital to ensure churches and other ministries were accessible to minorities. As one church leader commented:

We include the minority groups in the service in different ways, to share something from their culture, to show that people are welcome here. For example, someone from Iran or Central America might share their testimony.

Likewise, other church leaders noted that they had 'a policy not to set up different sections of the church for international people' and attempted to 'incorporate different worship styles' in their services. This could be done through selecting songs in 'different language[s]', members of the congregation singing the 'same song in [their] own language', writing 'new worship songs with [another] culture's language', or adopting 'instruments' and 'rhythms' from another culture. Other respondents recommended investing in translation equipment or celebrating ethnic minorities' 'own celebrations amongst us' as a means of creating a 'sense of ownership' and cultural education for people who did not belong to these minorities.

#### *Promoting minorities' agency in mission*

Perhaps most importantly, however, participants claimed that it was not enough to simply adapt their services to meet the needs of other ethnicities: **when possible, they underlined, these ethnicities must be included in the leadership of the church itself**. 'If [you] want to be an integrated body', said one leader, it is essential for leadership to 'reflect [the] mix of [the] congregation', instead of 'just having white guys in charge'. Sadly, this leader continued, while his church had once included many Iranians, 'a non-diverse leadership team [had] contributed to [a] move away towards [their] own Farsi church'.

Other participants echoed his words: ‘representation from the front’ was essential, said another church leader, although it was also vital to ‘avoid tokenism’ or giving minorities ‘too much responsibility too soon if [they are] new Christians’. Yet another leader found that ‘being Indian-led’ allowed them to successfully pursue intercultural mission in their context.

Hotspot and gatekeeper interviewees were especially likely to concentrate on ensuring that ethnic minorities had agency in intercultural mission. In addition to repeating the emphasis on leadership above – one leader, for example, noted the importance of ‘investing in each of them [and] giving opportunities to lead’ – they insisted that minorities be involved in designing and carrying out church ministries. In the words of one participant, **churches should ‘do things with not to the community’**: ministries should be ‘less event/project based [and] more about sharing [and] breaking down barriers’. Similarly, another leader encouraged churches to ‘resist the middle-class power of charity’: to be ‘with, not for’ minorities and ‘give them a voice and agency’ in how the church was run. Churches, these leaders implied, faced a temptation to treat minorities either as projects to which things could be done or victims for which programmes could be undertaken; instead, they underlined, churches must see people of other ethnicities as fellow members of the body of Christ with whom they could advance God’s Kingdom.

Finally, many of these same participants felt that, whenever possible, churches should provide opportunities to serve as part of their intercultural ministries. Even when serving did not involve the kind of leadership opportunities discussed above, respondents observed that the ‘feeling [one] can make a difference is second only to friendship as [the] reason people come back’ to intercultural ministries. Furthermore, these leaders stressed, service could help ethnic minorities ‘feel included’: one respondent, for example, described how ‘three out of six leaders in [their] welcome group are non-British economic migrants’ and their church practised ‘positive discrimination to give internationals certain responsibilities’.

*Churches, these leaders implied, faced a temptation to treat minorities either as projects to which things could be done or victims for which programmes could be undertaken; instead, they underlined, churches must see people of other ethnicities as fellow members of the body of Christ with whom they could advance God’s Kingdom.*

*intercultural mission relies on ‘deep, no-strings-attached, committed long-term friendship’ and ‘living in community’.*



#### Remaining present and consistent

In addition to including people of other ethnicities, participants suggested that merely being present in one’s community on a consistent basis could create opportunities for intercultural mission. This theme was mentioned with similar frequency by ministries with high and low success scores (high: 24 per cent; low: 22 per cent), although just one of 13 hotspot interviewees and one of 10 gatekeeper interviewees discussed it. It also bears emphasising that these interviews were conducted before the onset of Covid-19 in the UK, and therefore some of the specific advice participants offered – e.g., to ‘just get out there: go into Leeds city centre and be part of a wider culture’ – no longer seems as applicable. Nonetheless, the question of how churches can remain present in their communities when they are obliged to make many of their activities virtual is still pertinent: how can the Church provide ‘consistency in our welcome’, establish and ‘build... upon relationships’, and be a ‘good neighbour’ in the midst of the pandemic? Although the data in this report does not provide suggestions on how to do this while complying with current government restrictions, the extent to which church and ministry leaders emphasised this theme revealed how essential being available to one’s community is to intercultural mission specifically. As a gatekeeper interviewee summarised, intercultural mission relies on ‘deep, no-strings-attached, committed long-term friendship’ and ‘living in community’. While the ways in which this friendship and community living manifest themselves have changed, the need for them has not.

#### Being invested and trained

##### *Trained and committed volunteers*

Many participants also stressed the need for volunteers and leaders who were invested in and trained for intercultural mission. In particular, several leaders attributed their success to their volunteers’ commitment to intercultural relationships and genuine desire to serve others: in the words of one leader, ‘volunteers within the church are genuinely compassionate and empathetic, and they have a welcoming attitude towards others’. However, as several participants commented, commitment to intercultural mission was not enough: one gatekeeper interviewee, for instance, underlined that ‘having a designated evangelism team’ and ‘intentionality’ were vital to actually sharing Christ with non-Christians in Leeds. Similarly, another church pointed out that their volunteers were ‘highly skilled and receive ongoing training’ for mission.



*churches should ‘convince people that investment now has long-term benefits for the visiting students. Get them to consider the Great Commission’.*



#### *Committed leaders*

Perhaps even more importantly, respondents emphasised that, in order for churches and mission agencies to succeed in intercultural mission, leaders themselves needed to be committed to reaching their communities. As they explained, this ‘clarity of communications and purpose’ was essential to helping their congregations see the need for mission and build relationships with people of other ethnicities. In pursuit of this clarity, one church leader avowed that they were ‘deliberately making their focus cross-cultural work’, and another had observed a ‘commitment from leadership to serve different groups’.

#### *Preaching and training*

Moreover, respondents suggested that, as part of pursuing intercultural mission, churches should provide preaching and training on intercultural mission. As these participants made clear, the purpose of this training was (1) to convince congregations of the necessity of intercultural mission, and (2) to give them the resources to actually reach their communities. In the words of one leader working with university students, churches should ‘convince people that investment now has long-term benefits for the visiting students. Get them to consider the Great Commission’. Likewise, another participant underlined the importance of ‘teaching about... the inclusivity of the body of Christ, the Church’: if congregations did not see the Church as fundamentally welcoming entity, this respondent implied, they would have little motivation to include people who were culturally different. Once this rationale for mission had been established, a third leader noted, there was a need for ‘practical training’ as they were ‘surprised by how many people are frightened by talking to someone from [a] different background’. Since few congregation members were likely to begin the hard work of reaching other cultures and ethnicities on their own, these respondents suggested, leaders needed to equip them to do so.

#### *God’s role in mission*

Surprisingly, very few leaders mentioned God in their accounts of what produced success in intercultural mission. Nonetheless, this was one of the themes which most differentiated organisations which scored highly on our metric from those which did not: while no ministries which scored poorly discussed God’s role in mission, 19 per cent of ministries which scored well did.

*while no ministries which scored poorly discussed God’s role in mission, 19 per cent of ministries which scored well did.*



(Three of 13 hotspot interviewees and one of 10 gatekeeper interviewees also mentioned this theme.) In particular, respondents proposed that mission should make room for God’s agency and be Christ-centred. One participant, for example, spoke of the importance of:

*Making sure that people’s horizon is very broad, helping people see that it is God’s work that we are a part of and that we do our part. This happens through teaching, speaking visits, collaborating with charities and projects, prayer, special collections, etc.*

This leader suggested that one way of reminding people that mission was ultimately God’s endeavour was to expose congregations to the work that God was doing outside their church: in ‘charities and projects’ and hearing from other organisations through ‘speaking visits’. This point could also be made through ‘teaching’ (about God’s role in mission?) and by encouraging congregations to ‘pray’ and give ‘special collections’ to ministries occurring beyond their church. Similarly, another leader discussed ‘what God is doing in cities like ours’, and added, that as an organisation, they had ‘to catch up with what He’s doing, not what we are’. Mission, this leader implied, belonged fundamentally to God, and not to their organisation.

Other leaders suggested that to be effective in mission, they had to be focused on Christ. In the words of one leader:

*The only key thing that brings people together from different ethnic backgrounds to worship is the person and work of Jesus Christ. I don’t believe it is a formula or system or something man-made. It is purely the love of God expressed in Jesus.*

Another participant agreed: ‘in a world which seems to have nothing in common, we can have Jesus in common’. While there may be a ‘right to recognise differences’, this leader continued, ‘Jesus also reconciles the irreconcilable’.

#### *Evangelism*

Churches and mission agencies which scored highly on our metric of success were also more likely to discuss evangelism in their open-answer questions. While no organisations which scored poorly explicitly mentioned evangelism, six per cent of

organisations which scored highly did. In a sense, this is not especially surprising, as our metric was partly designed to capture whether people were coming to faith through particular ministries, but it does reveal one important principle: **people were more likely to come to faith in organisations which were explicitly committed to sharing the Gospel.** Evangelism, that is, did not seem to happen accidentally.

Participants shared several encouraging stories of people accepting Christ; one hotspot interviewee, for instance, related how a 'Chinese man came to faith through Alpha [and] started leading an international student group. [He] invited friends, some of whom converted through Explore, [and is] now a key evangelist' in their church. Likewise, a ministry leader described how their organisation encouraged British students in:

*Hosting international students over Christmas. One high-caste Hindu student came to faith in Jesus in part due to the generosity he was in shown in that time. [We] have been able to put him in touch with people in India to support him: [the] International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.*

Hotspot and gatekeeper interviewees also stressed the importance of persistence and specificity in evangelism. Respondents suggested that ministries should 'invite people [i.e., non-Christians] more than once', and 'keep in contact' with people exploring Christianity. Similarly, gatekeeper organisations, in particular, emphasised 'specific projects' and 'focusing on certain nations and language groups'. As well as recognising differences between cultures, they stressed, intercultural ministries also needed to recognise differences between churches and individuals. In the words of one gatekeeper interviewee:

*I think it's also distinguishing between sometimes particular culture[s] as far as ethnicity is concerned, or a particular church culture, or again an individual because sometimes you get all those things wrapped up together, and we think that's that particular culture when it isn't necessarily; you know, it gets over-generalized.... I've just been to South Korea, and I've been asking that particular question with one particular church: how much is this this church culture and how much is it Korean culture?*

To effectively share Christ with people of other ethnicities, this respondent suggested, intercultural ministries needed to understand all the layers of these people's identities: while some aspects of who they were may be a result of their national culture, other aspects may derive from their individual personality or their immediate context (the 'church culture' to which this participant referred). Although differentiating between ethnicities could be helpful, intercultural ministries needed to resist the temptation to consider people solely in terms of their ethnicity and not as individuals.

## Evangelism, that is, did not seem to happen accidentally.



### What specific activities worked?

To understand which specific activities were most effective in reaching people of other ethnicities and faiths, we also asked gatekeeper interviewees a follow-up question on which activities worked (or not) in their context.

#### *Activities that worked*

Gatekeeper organisations identified three especially helpful activities for intercultural mission: (1) activities that produced a social impact, (2) culture and food, and (3) Gospel proclamation. Notably, these activities corresponded closely to our analysis of which activities leaders considered most effective above, but not to our analysis of which activities were most associated with people coming to faith or joining church ministries. (Few mentioned Bible studies, for instance.) It is possible that gatekeepers underestimated the extent to which certain activities were associated with people coming to faith, or that they saw other activities (such as sharing food and culture) as indirectly effective, even if they did not directly lead to people coming to faith or joining church ministries.

#### *Social impact*

In discussing activities that were designed to bring about social change, many participants concentrated on immigration and asylum assistance, reflecting the emphasis on these activities above. Gatekeeper organisations commented that they were working with 'asylum seekers and refugees', or that they were 'serving weekends with charities' focused on 'asylum seekers'. Another respondent noted that they had created a 'shop-front space against isolation', as well as 'work[ing] with...addicts' and 'helping people into rehab'

#### *Culture and food*

Several other ministry leaders suggested that culture and food might provide an opportunity for intercultural mission. Specifically, they mentioned 'music events' and 'acoustic nights', 'sport', and 'hog roasts and carols', as well as allowing people to gather over food.

### *Gospel proclamation*

In addition, some gatekeepers explicitly referred to Gospel proclamation: one, for example, remarked that 'Alpha courses' were responsible for the 'bulk of people coming to faith' and recommended holding 'exploratory Bible studies' in 'neutral space[s]', where it was 'easier to have open discussions'. Another respondent felt that 'door-to-door work' was sometimes an effective approach, although (as we shall see below) other gatekeepers strongly questioned this method of evangelism.

### *Activities that did not work*

Gatekeeper organisations discussed three approaches to intercultural mission that had not worked in their context: (1) attempting evangelism outside a relational context, (2) one-size-fits-all approaches, and (3) initiatives done in isolation.

### *Evangelism outside relationship*

Unlike the participant above who felt that door-to-door evangelism could sometimes be effective, at least one respondent believed that street preaching and door-to-door evangelism 'belong[ed] to a bygone era'. As another participant observed, street preachers 'see only a couple of people a year come to faith, but are off-putting to many more'. This ministry leader also thought 'unaccompanied Alpha courses, where people don't have friends to support them on it', were often not productive.

### *One-size-fits-all approaches*

Likewise, respondents were clear that approaches that did not pay close attention to the identity and cultural context of the people they were trying to reach were often ineffective. As an example, one ministry leader referred to the Christianity Explored course, which:

*Starts with the question: 'If you could ask God a question, what would it be?'; and students turn to me and say, 'Well, which God? How many – there are lots of different gods', so if you're a Hindu; if you're a Muslim, that's disrespectful: 'How dare you ask God a question?'*

Not only did ministries need to adjust their evangelism techniques to reach specific faiths and people groups, he suggested, they also needed to take into account economic factors that might prevent ethnic minorities from hearing the Gospel. In particular, he pointed to the white, middle class assumption that 'everybody has a car and everybody can get everywhere':

*I think that doesn't help if places, you know, are too far from the city centre, or just far from public transport.... There must be five or six Nigerian churches in Leeds now, and if you ever pick up some of their publicity, it will always tell you what bus route it's on, and always can tell you how to get there.*

Churches as a whole, he emphasised, should learn from this Nigerian example: if the lack of a car, or other resources, prevented minorities from hearing the Gospel, then churches needed to adjust their activities so they were accessible to people beyond their usual congregations.

### *Initiatives done in isolation*

Furthermore, several church and ministry leaders cautioned against "initiatives done in isolation": that is, one-off events, or programmes attempted by single churches, without inviting other churches and organisations to participate. 'We've tried to do a couple of... events', one leader admitted, but:

*In our area certainly, that's not been something that's been hugely successful, so kind of outdoor events and things like that, where you've got somebody who's got a Good News message to share might not have been particularly well attended or well responded to.*

Similarly, another participant mentioned that a large event that his organisation had hosted had not gone as planned, although he held out hope that attendance might improve in the future:

*We had an intercultural concert recently where we had six different nationalities, with bands and musicians and so on, and it didn't work as well because we were wanting to sort of draw people in, particularly students, international students.... [But] this idea only started this year, so it could gather momentum as time goes on.*

Furthermore, leaders suggested that Christians might be more effective when working in partnership. As one participant observed, 'if people work on their own, it can often fail because... they don't have [a] broad enough spectrum' of organisations: partnerships, on the other hand, could be 'more fruitful because you then get different perspectives'.

## How can this city improve / what are the main problem areas?

As well as capturing what enabled ministries to succeed in intercultural mission, we also wanted to understand what prevented them from reaching other cultures and ethnicities. In general, churches and Christian organisations were hindered by five barriers to intercultural mission: a perceived **lack of opportunities for outreach**, a **lack of resources**, a **lack of confidence and understanding**, **apathy**, and **active resistance to mission**.

### Lack of opportunities for outreach

A sense that there were few opportunities for intercultural mission in their area was discussed by around four in ten churches and mission agencies (44 per cent). Intriguingly, organisations with low success scores were far more likely to mention this theme, with six in ten ministries (62 per cent) which scored poorly on our metric discussing it, as opposed to just under three in ten (28 per cent) which scored well. Ministries in the bottom quintile were most likely to take up this theme, with seven in ten (70 per cent of) respondents commenting on it in their open-answer responses.

Naturally, this raises questions of causality: did organisations' belief that there were few opportunities for mission in their area cause them to miss the chances that actually existed? Or did ministries score poorly on our metric because intercultural mission was, in fact, extremely difficult in their context? Our analysis suggests that both of these explanations may be partly correct, but that organisations often failed to see opportunities in their area and could be reluctant to adapt in order to welcome other cultures and ethnicities.

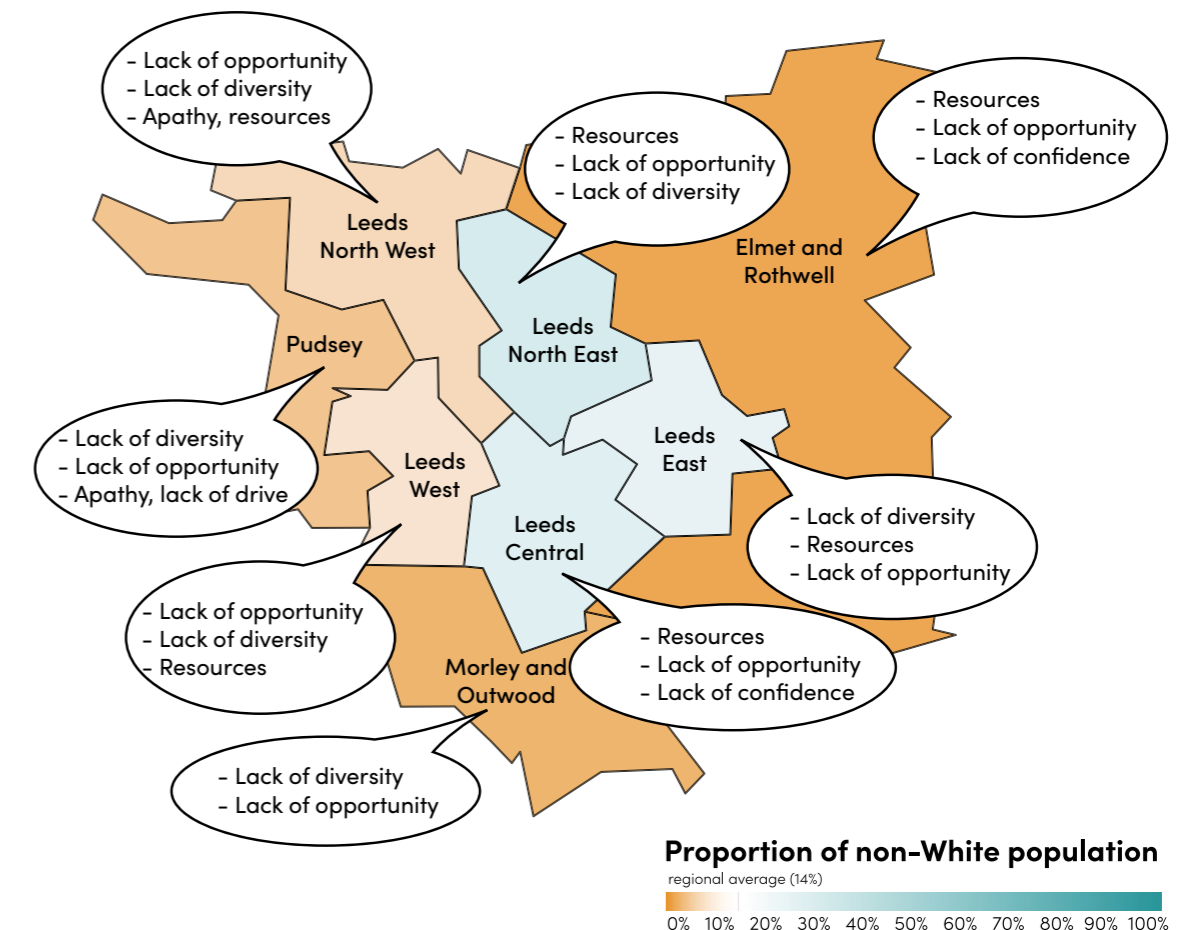
### Lack of diversity?

Most commonly, churches and mission agencies felt that there was a lack of ethnic diversity in their areas. Once again, this theme was frequently mentioned by organisations which scored poorly on our metric of success: 45 per cent of these ministries discussed it, as opposed to 22 per cent of ministries which scored well. **Fifty per cent of organisations in the bottom quintile of success scores believed that there was a lack of diversity in their community.** 'We live in quite a white neighbourhood', one respondent said, and others thought that there were 'not many different ethnic groups around for local intercultural mission'.

To discern whether participants' sense that there was an absence of diversity corresponded with Leeds' actual ethnic makeup, we conducted a demographic analysis of the city by constituency.

*Fifty per cent of organisations in the bottom quintile of success scores believed that there was a lack of diversity in their community. 'We live in quite a white neighbourhood'*

The results of this analysis can be seen in the diagram below. While there were constituencies in which organisations' claim that there was a lack of diversity corresponded to reality (Morley and Outwood, Pudsey), there were others where it did not. In fact, in two of the most diverse constituencies (Leeds East and Leeds North East), ministries believed that there was little opportunity to reach people of other faiths and ethnicities. Although it is possible to interpret these findings generously – churches and mission agencies may, for instance, have perceived a lack of diversity in their immediate area, as opposed to their city constituency – it is also possible that organisations were simply not aware of the opportunities for mission that surrounded them.





*their ‘cultural expression of church’, including their leadership, was ‘very white, so people don’t see themselves in the context of leadership in the church’.*



#### Non-Christians uninterested

Other participants (and especially gatekeeper organisations) asserted that there were few opportunities for intercultural mission because non-Christians in their community were uninterested in faith. Respondents suggested that non-Christians often wanted ‘to live their lives without Jesus’ and did not have a ‘perceived need’ for Christ, that ‘the secular culture around us’ could be an obstacle, and that there could be ‘difficulty and fear around engaging the Muslim population’ in particular. These participants often noted resistance to Christianity that was specific to ethnic and religious minorities, such as cultural suspicion of Christianity for people from non-Christian countries.

#### Churches not accessible to minorities

Moreover, leaders often thought that the way their ministries were structured could make them inaccessible to minorities. As one participant admitted:

*I think our service time, 9.30 on a Sunday, is too early for the cultural community [sic]. People of minority groups usually work cleaning jobs or in hospitality, which means they work early or late hours or they’re a parent which can make it hard to come as well.*

While this leader’s assumption that ethnic minorities ‘usually work cleaning jobs or in hospitality’ is much too broad, if minorities were to hold these jobs more often then it might prevent them from attending early services. Other leaders explained that their choice of worship style, or not having ethnic minorities in leadership, could also result in minorities feeling uncomfortable. ‘There’s quite a large African population in the area, but they are looking for quite a different worship style to us, so most of them go to a Pentecostal church’, said one participant. Another reflected that their ‘cultural expression of church’, including their leadership, was ‘very white, so people don’t see themselves in the context of leadership in the church’. Similarly, some non-church ministries confessed that they were better at reaching some ethnic groups than others: one university ministry, for instance, claimed to have more success ‘engaging East Asian than European or Middle Eastern groups’ – in part because the activities they conducted did not appeal to people who spoke English fluently. Perhaps most seriously, one leader admitted that ‘people serving together [are] not necessarily friends’, and that international students had ‘felt left out by British students’ on a recent weekend away.

## Absence of resources

Many organisations claimed that their ability to participate in intercultural mission was further diminished by an absence of resources. This theme was mentioned in 39 per cent of telephone interviews, and an even higher proportion of hotspot and gatekeeper interviews (six of 13 hotspot interviews and six of 10 gatekeeper interviews). Organisations with high and low success scores were roughly equally likely to say they suffered from a lack of resources.

#### Personnel

In particular, several ministries ascribed their difficulties in mission to a lack of personnel. For one church, ‘not having many enthusiastic, committed volunteers to set up and run the ministries’ was a major hindrance; another claimed that there were simply ‘not enough people coming alongside us to help’. Still other churches admitted that they sometimes struggled to mobilise the people who were present in their congregation; as one gatekeeper interviewee noted:

*We’ve got to get better at just delegating and trusting. It’s like any church, isn’t it, there’s always sort of a percentage of people where all they do is [come to church on Sundays], and the challenge all the time is to try and increase that percentage and have less people just on the bus for the ride.*

Interestingly, this participant saw two obstacles to mobilising his community for mission: church leaders who were unwilling to ‘delegat[e] and trust’ their congregations, and congregations which were ‘just on the bus for the ride’ and unwilling to set aside time to serve. Overcoming both of these obstacles is therefore crucial to increasing churches and mission agencies’ effectiveness in mission.

In several cases, leaders suggested that their need for personnel was exacerbated by the community’s demographics: one leader, for example, felt their ‘age profile’ could be a hindrance: since there were ‘lots of elderly people in the church’, they had a ‘need [for] younger people’. Nonetheless, another leader (a hotspot interviewee) strongly felt that elderly church members were an asset for intercultural mission – and, in fact, lamented that there were ‘fewer older couples’ in his congregation ‘to reach out to international students’. There may therefore be a need to encourage churches to consider how to equip older members of their congregations for mission.

#### Time

Even when congregations were mobilised for mission, however, busyness and a lack of time could still inhibit their ability to participate in mission. As one hotspot interviewee noted, congregations’ ‘time capacity is limited’, although ‘they all do as they are able’. Furthermore, church leaders themselves often did not have time to work with others on intercultural mission; in the words of one gatekeeper interviewee,

*‘people are too busy with their own meetings.... They have meeting after meeting, conference after conference’*



‘people are too busy with their own meetings.... They have meeting after meeting, conference after conference’. As this participant suggested, this dynamic could be even worse for leaders from ethnic minorities, as many were unable to concentrate on ministry full-time:

*These ethnic [sic] leaders are doing two jobs; they’re not full-[time] church work; they are basically working in all the hours they can to make a living; I mean that’s a big challenge for them, and so they’ve got very little capacity even though their heart might be in it.*

To make matters worse, leaders claimed that busyness amongst non-Christians also made them more selective about which evangelistic activities they attended. ‘People are very busy’, said another gatekeeper interviewee, ‘and I think... they’re going to want to make sure that what they’re coming along to is worth coming along to’. The combination of these factors could therefore create an extremely challenging environment for intercultural mission: with the little time available to them, leaders were often asked to inspire busy congregations and attract similarly busy non-Christians. Naturally, attempts to do so were not always successful.

#### **Funds**

A lack of funds could also impede ministries’ attempts to reach other cultures and ethnicities. As leaders explained, this lack of funds could sometimes result from other financial obligations: in the words of one respondent, ‘we used to budget for giving 20 per cent to global missions; currently we need to prioritise paying legal fees to our solicitors, something that should have been done long ago before our time’. Likewise, another explained that the reason they had ‘no finances’ is that ‘we’ve got massive issues with our building so [we need] to raise money for that’.

#### **Lack of confidence and understanding**

One in five organisations (as well as three of 13 hotspot interviewees and seven in 10 gatekeeper interviewees) also felt that a lack of confidence and understanding could hinder intercultural mission. Once again, this theme was discussed with almost equal frequency by organisations with high and low success scores (19 per cent of ministries which scored well on our metric mentioned it, as opposed to 21 per cent of those which did not).

*‘You don’t want to feel that you are questioning their culture too much, [and] don’t want to put too much pressure on them’*



Participants spoke of two primary issues: **fear and lack of confidence** and a **lack of understanding**.

#### **Fear and lack of confidence**

##### *Fear of the culturally unknown*

Sometimes, church members were reluctant to relate to people of other cultures simply because these cultures were unknown. ‘Fewer people in the congregation are comfortable with interacting with people from different cultures’, one church leader observed, and another commented that their congregation suffered from ‘fear of the unknown’.

##### *Fear of causing offence*

More commonly, however, leaders claimed that fear of causing offence hindered their communities in intercultural mission. ‘You don’t want to feel that you are questioning their culture too much, [and] don’t want to put too much pressure on them’, one church leader said. Gatekeeper interviewees were particularly likely to discuss this theme: one, for example, wondered if the history of the British Empire might cause Christians to feel awkward about sharing their faith with people of other cultures:

*I have this perception that the British, maybe because of the past history of the Empire, are so afraid that people will be offended if they speak out the truth. But I feel that the truth needs to be shared, the truth needs to be spoken.... I have this feeling [Christians] are saying, “Who am I to--?” [...]They are very apologetic if they want to speak out the truth.*

While this participant spoke of a fear of offending non-Christians, another gatekeeper found that a fear of offending Christians of other ethnicities could also be an impediment in intercultural mission. Specifically, this respondent spoke of:

Not wanting to insult a culture or not understanding how people of a certain culture might take things, how they might approach things, and so maybe a fear of stepping on some sensitive things, [which] might put people off, might put churches off who want to engage cross-culturally with other churches.

In this case, the fear particularly seemed to centre on putting 'churches off who want to engage cross-culturally' and thereby endangering future partnerships.

#### Lack of confidence in mission

Furthermore, even congregations that had overcome their fear of offending other cultures often doubted their ability to reach other cultures and ethnicities. As one participant admitted, 'church members don't feel confident that they could get involved in missions work'; another similarly noted that their congregation had a 'lack of confidence in our ability to share our faith'. One respondent felt that these low levels of confidence stemmed from a lack of training: "'professional" evangelists [were] not briefing them', they said. As we shall see in the **What can agencies do to help?** section below, training was a major need for many Christian organisations.

#### Lack of understanding and skills

Many of these issues were further exacerbated by a need for greater understanding and skills for mission. One woman, for example, worried that she did not have the cultural literacy to engage with people in her community, and feared 'misunderstanding':

*(I am a white woman in my 60's) Is it okay for me to see an African man on my own? How do I not send the wrong messages when I don't know what means what in a different culture?*

Even more commonly, participants noted that language skills separated them from certain ethnicities. As one church leader observed:

*We can offer easy English, openness and warmth and connection, but to really reach across the barriers we would need someone Farsi-speaking that could work for the Farsi community, to do stuff with them that we can't do with our limited knowledge and skillset.*

Similarly, other respondents acknowledged that there could be a 'language factor' in mission: although not sharing a common language with all people in their area did not prevent churches from reaching these ethnicities at all – as the respondent above granted, 'we can offer easy English, openness and warmth and connection' – it did prevent them from being as effective in evangelism as they would like.

*(I am a white woman in my 60's)  
Is it okay for me to see an African  
man on my own?*



## Apathy

In many contexts, apathy could be an additional barrier to mission. Ministries with high and low success scores were roughly equally likely to mention this theme (21 per cent of low-scoring organisations discussed it, as compared to 16 per cent with high scores), and it was also commented on by five of 10 gatekeeper interviewees and one of 13 hotspot interviewees.

#### Comfortable with community

Some leaders attributed this apathy to a satisfaction with their existing communities: 'people are protective of their community' one said, and a second noted that the 'priority and mentality of the congregation' was sometimes on 'looking inward rather than outward'.

#### Lacking leadership

Strikingly, many respondents also confessed that their own (or others') lack of leadership had also sometimes diminished their churches' ability to reach their community. One participant, for example, admitted that 'being without [a] vicar/ church leader' had been hard: 'no one on our team of two [has] theological education', they said. Similarly, others associated their congregations' apathy with a 'lack of initiative [and] dynamic leadership' or a sense that there was 'not enough shared leadership' with their community. Still others noted that non-white people often did not stay long enough in their church to become leaders:

*People from various backgrounds don't stay long enough to move into leadership - which is the sadness. I think the reason is that people want to be within their own grouping, but also because of economics, find a [pull] in a different direction. They have not put down any roots.*

Interestingly, this participant seemed to describe a vicious cycle: partly because minorities did not feel they were 'within their own grouping', they moved on to other churches. Consequently, any future minorities which visited that church would also not see people of a similar ethnic background and would be similarly inclined to move on.

#### Other priorities

In other cases, ministry leaders claimed that other priorities kept churches and other organisations from devoting time to mission. As church leaders explained, 'other priorities come in the way of this as a focus – we have a lot of lonely and elderly people in our community and youth that we try and engage, for example'.

Some churches and ministries were also frankly unconvinced of the benefits of intercultural mission: the ‘church [is] not interested in investing time in people who won’t end up at their church’, said one, and another admitted that intercultural mission was most effective when people committed to it for the long term – but worried whether the church would make this commitment when there was no certainty of results.

#### Lack of mission focus and vision

Still other participants commented that they had observed a lack of mission focus and vision. One, for instance, spoke of ‘a narrowness on the outlook of what faith is: that it’s personal rather than something you share and pass on to others’, and another remarked that even in churches that had once been committed to reaching their communities, ‘it’s easy to drift off from the urgency or excitement of mission’. Some participants also commented that they encountered people who were not sure that people of other faiths needed Jesus, or simply did not see the importance of mission.

#### **Active resistance to mission**

Finally, seven per cent of churches and two in ten gatekeeper interviews claimed to have experienced active resistance to mission. (Not surprisingly, this response was more common amongst organisations which scored lower on our metric, of which 10 per cent discussed this theme, as opposed to 3 per cent of high-scoring organisations.) Most often, this resistance to mission emerged from racism or prejudice; in the words of one leader:

*There’s hesitation and prejudice amongst the White British in our church: ‘What are they doing in our country?’ I spoke last Sunday on the Holocaust, [and] talked about the Jewish children to try and raise awareness. Some people from minority backgrounds have been through hell on earth, and I would say that the community is not educated on how to receive them.*

Similarly, another participant found that ‘overcoming a level of patronising racism’ could be a major issue in their congregation:

*People don’t mean to be nasty, yet we used to have a Black curate who experienced brothers and sisters patronising her. So there’s a need to encourage the church to stand up for differences and to overcome their prejudice.*

In addition to negotiating barriers to mission (i.e., external or unintentional hindrances), ministries may therefore also benefit from recognising that members of their congregation may be firmly opposed to welcoming or relating to people of other ethnicities – and from doing what they can to change these attitudes in their communities.

## **What can agencies do to help?**

Although previous sections concentrated on how both churches and mission agencies were advancing intercultural mission in Leeds, we also wanted to understand more about how mission agencies, specifically, might help churches reach their communities. Consequently, we asked church leaders about what had worked well (or not) in previous partnerships and what support they would appreciate in sharing the Gospel across religious and ethnic divides.

#### **Experience of previous partnerships**

Surprisingly few participants answered our survey question on what had worked well in previous partnerships with external agencies, and some seemed to have misinterpreted the question, focusing on which agencies they had partnered with, and not what had enabled their partnerships’ success. Church leaders who did answer this question emphasised that they valued (1) the knowledge and experiences these agencies had shared, (2) the results of the partnership, and (3) good communication of impact.

#### Sharing knowledge and experience

As church leaders underlined, one of the principal benefits of partnering with mission agencies was the opportunity to learn from these agencies’ knowledge and experience. Therefore, churches commented that they appreciated ‘having [agencies] share their experience and skill with us’, and referred to several specific instances of this “sharing”: one respondent, for instance, noted that a local organisation ‘helped women at the church learn how to work with people of different cultures’, and another appreciated mission agencies’ ‘knowledge and resources’ for work with students particularly.

#### Results of the partnership

Several church leaders also felt that partnering with mission agencies had expanded their reach and produced results that they would not have been able to achieve on their own. As one leader explained:

*Working with [a local organisation] has been a good vehicle for building relationships with and in the community. There have been people coming along to church or people we continue to connect with in different ways off the back of working with this charity.*

Similarly, another church leader found that:

*Most things have worked well. We’re a part of a local community charity that hosts Christmas dinners that Muslims come along to for example. It’s a beautiful time of connecting across religious differences.*

In fact, at least one leader doubted whether their church would be able to participate in intercultural mission at all were it not for outside organisations: as this leader observed, 'I don't think it's likely for intercultural mission to happen around here unless we do it through outside agencies'. While not all participants were this pessimistic, many felt that partnerships with other organisations had allowed their churches to be more effective in mission.

#### Good communication of impact

Since churches could not always see the results of their partnerships with outside organisations, many leaders also highlighted how much they appreciated good communication about these organisations' impact. As one church supporting a ministry in Indonesia reflected, 'it's great when the guys... come and visit us to share about what they do; that's working really well'. Similarly, another participant especially valued being in touch with 'someone who can tell you precisely what the situation is' with partner organisations' work; this 'personal contact', they explained, allowed their church to 'see the benefits from our gift'.

#### What did not work well

However, many participants also found that partnerships with outside organisations could flounder due to differences in expectations and difficulty crossing cultures. Differences in expectations seemed to be a particularly pressing issue, with one leader noting that outside organisations often failed to understand their church's context: as this leader noted, these organisations 'come with an agenda and expect a certain response that cannot be given from our minority groups due to language barriers and cultural differences'. Other participants similarly found that 'challenges can arise from cultural differences between their church and an external agency'; for example, one leader described how:

*The other volunteers at [a partner organisation] are not necessarily Christian, and the organisation is not, either. This means that evangelism is not a part of the gig, so we don't reach people directly with the Gospel, even if it definitely could lead to that through relationship building.*

As this respondent suggested, there seemed to be a certain rub between church volunteers' hope that volunteering with this charity might result in opportunities for sharing their faith, and their partner organisation's expectation that 'evangelism is not a part of the gig'. Although this discrepancy had not prevented Christians from sharing the Gospel, it had obliged this church to carefully manage its expectations to fit the policy of the partner organisation.

Not unrelatedly, poorly communicated roles could also sour partnerships between churches and other organisations. One church leader, for instance, recalled that 'roles and responsibilities and training had not been clear' in their partnership with a local charity: 'early on', this leader remembered, 'the charity they partnered [with]

*these organisations 'come with an agenda and expect a certain response that cannot be given from our minority groups due to language barriers and cultural differences'*



were quite disorganised, so the running of the charity was quite unsteady and required lots of support – more than what was first believed'. Communication was often especially difficult across racial boundaries: as another leader noted, 'trying to work with the Black Pentecostal leaders/churches has not be[en] so simple. I'd be grateful for any advice on how to connect with them and be able to work together'.

#### **Support appreciated from external agencies**

In terms of support from external agencies, churches were most interested in training and inspiration, personnel, mission resources, networking, and funding. A large proportion of respondents, however, did not want to receive any support.

#### Training and inspiration

Around one in five churches (23 per cent) mentioned that they were interested in training and inspiration from outside organisations. Specifically, these churches hoped that mission agencies and other organisations would provide training on relating to people of other cultures and faiths, as well as helping to inspire their congregations for mission.

#### Training on relating to other cultures and ethnicities

'If the occasion arose, we would look for expertise, training, and teaching on how to be sensitive to other cultures', said one church leader. Others agreed, noting that they would appreciate 'help with building relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds', 'knowing what the cultural differences are', and 'training... that would teach church members how to work well with and meet the needs of children and young adults from all ethnic backgrounds in their local community'. Often, leaders seemed just as interested in learning how to improve relationships with ethnic minorities in their own congregations as they were in reaching unchurched people of other ethnicities: one participant, for instance, mentioned that they were in need of 'wisdom in how... [to] engage in worship and discipleship' and help 'to encourage other ethnicities to be on the leadership/PCC'. Somewhat intriguingly, these leaders also seemed more committed to avoiding failure than seeking success: 'teach us to avoid mistakes and failures', said one respondent, and others wanted to learn what experienced missionaries would 'do differently' and how to avoid 'causing offence'. This commitment to avoiding failure is not surprising given contemporary research on human tendencies towards failure avoidance (e.g., Thompson 2004; Heimerdinger and Hinsz 2008), but it may be inhibiting churches' ability to take risks and succeed in intercultural mission.

### *Training on relating to other faiths*

Many participants also hoped that outside organisations might be able to inform them on relating to people of other faiths. Churches wanted 'to be sensitive', and thought it might be 'helpful to... learn about other faiths'. One leader said they would welcome:

*Help with knowing what's appropriate when approaching or inviting people with [an] Islamic or Jewish background. Training in cultural knowledge. Perhaps having one person to contact and ask questions.*

Some respondents especially wanted to learn how to build relationships with Muslims: two participants, for example, spoke of 'help with how to reach Muslims without damaging relationships/appearing disrespectful of their tradition' and 'help engaging with the Muslim population'.

### *Inspiration*

Moreover, several churches saw a role for outside agencies in inspiring their congregations for mission, and thought these agencies might help 'open our eyes to the depth of need and what's already being done'. One participant suggested a specific means of inspiring their church community: 'testimonies make people think', this leader said, and offered the example of 'people that have left prison'. Another respondent simply referred to 'training and inspiration' as the primary role they saw for an outside organisation.

### Personnel

Furthermore, many churches seemed to be in real need of personnel to support their efforts in intercultural mission – a theme which was discussed by 16 per cent of respondents. In particular, participants expressed a desire for 'personnel working specifically with the intercultural mission in our city' and 'people who come to live in the community'. Sometimes, this request for personnel was more specific: certain churches, for example, discussed a desire for 'Farsi missionaries' to reach the local Iranian community, and others mentioned 'translators'. Similarly, one participant acknowledged that they needed non-white people to expand their leadership team:

*We've identified the problem: a very little percentage in Anglican leadership is from a minority background. It's a big issue and we are conscious that we've not got a good representation. We would want people in this position, who are ordained and [have] got the authority and credibility to represent the community and lead a proper change. People who know the language of the people and that can teach and connect across the barriers.*

As these respondents suggested, inviting non-white people to lead in intercultural mission might lend their efforts an 'authority and credibility' that they would not already have. Furthermore (as we have already seen above), diverse leadership teams were crucial to ethnic minorities feeling included in majority-white churches.

### Resources

Around one in ten respondents (11 per cent) also discussed a need for audiovisual resources and books to help churches engage in mission. Outside organisations could supply 'church resources in different languages (e.g. Bibles) to make services more accessible for people who aren't fluent in English', 'access to resources that explain the Gospel in a simple way', or a 'resource that explains the beliefs and practices of other faiths'. In some cases, respondents hoped that external agencies would be able to provide these resources for free.

### Networks

In addition, several churches hoped that mission agencies might share their relational capital. Leaders noted that:

*More connection with others might be helpful, but not sure what that would look like – [maybe a] central database of what's going on, how to connect, etc.? [...] Most things happen through relationships, so introductions would be helpful.*

One leader particularly connected this interest to a desire to coordinate with the activities of other faith groups, commenting that they 'would find it helpful to receive information on what occasions and opportunities there are for churches to get involved with the[ir] activities'. Nonetheless, many of these same leaders also expressed scepticism about the extent to which outside organisations could substitute for their own efforts in getting to know their communities; as one respondent observed, while these organisations could provide introductions, one 'can't outsource a relationship!'

### Funding

About five per cent of churches proposed that an external organisation might be able to support their work financially. In particular, these churches were interested in 'funding to enable someone to be committed long-term to the cause' of intercultural mission and 'practical resources to fund events'.

### Not interested

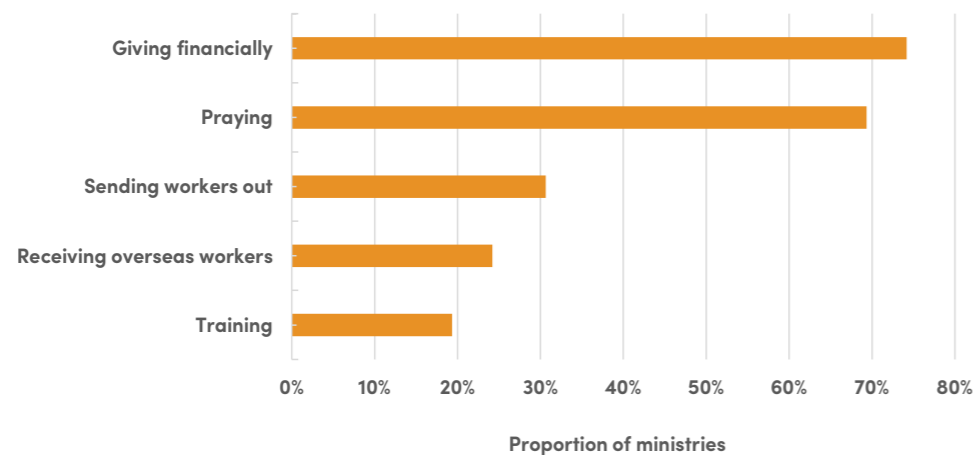
Finally, a relatively large proportion of churches (18 per cent) were not interested in receiving help from outside agencies. This may have been a result of the way that interviews were conducted: since respondents were contacted by phone, and generally had no previous contact with partner organisations, they may have been afraid that they would be asked for money if they indicated any interest in receiving help. Specifically, churches claimed that they were not interested in help because they thought that outside support would not be useful, were satisfied with the assistance they were already receiving from other charities, or had other priorities.

# Global mission

While we have so far concentrated primarily on local intercultural mission, many ministries in Leeds were also deeply involved in global mission. **Three-quarters (75 per cent) gave financially**, slightly less than seven in ten (69 per cent) prayed for mission overseas, and **three in ten (31 per cent) sent out missionaries**. Significant proportions also received overseas workers (24 per cent) or provided training on mission (19 per cent).

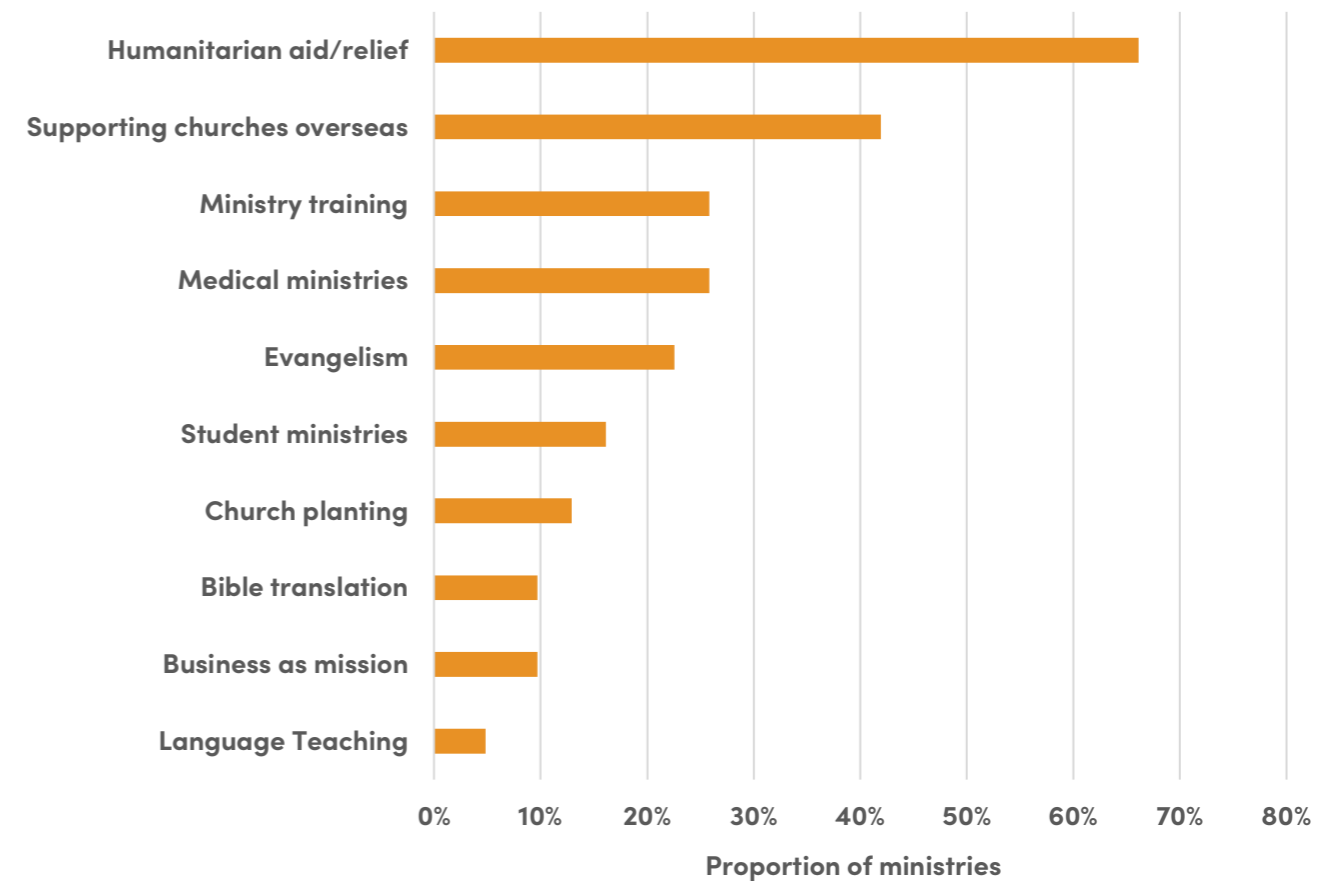
Interestingly, sending workers out and receiving workers from overseas did not seem to be mutually exclusive: around 10 per cent of organisations had both sent workers out and received overseas workers. Churches and mission agencies, that is, did not send workers merely because they had an abundance of resources, or receive them because they lacked staff. Instead, some organisations seem to have realised that they would benefit from receiving help from overseas even if they had plentiful workers of their own. Sending and receiving workers should therefore not be seen so much as a question of scarcity or abundance as an opportunity for local ministries to gain from exposure to other parts of the global Church.

Type of activities ministries do towards global intercultural mission

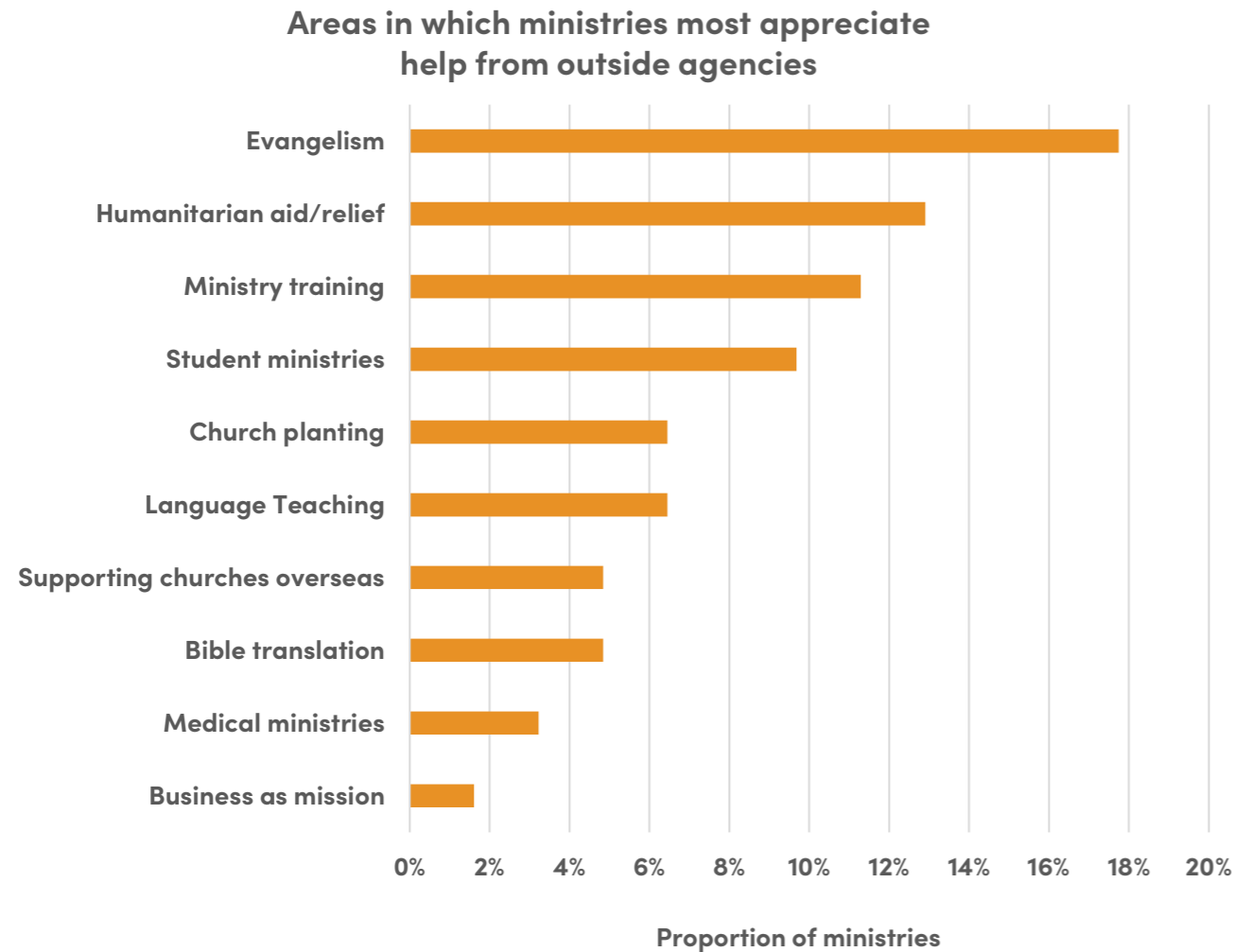


Organisations in our sample were also involved in an impressive range of ministries. Sixty-six per cent provided humanitarian aid and relief (presumably through partner organisations), 42 per cent supported churches overseas, and 26 per cent were involved in medical ministries. The proportion of respondents which supported evangelism and overseas church planting was, however, surprisingly low, with only 23 per cent and 13 per cent respectively involved in these activities.

Areas in which ministries are involved in global intercultural mission



As was the case in the Manchester report, however, the areas in which participants would most appreciate help from outside organisations were not necessarily the areas in which they were most involved. Despite low levels of current involvement in overseas evangelism, respondents were more interested in receiving evangelism support than in any other activity (with 18 per cent of participants saying they would welcome assistance in this area). On the other hand, the proportion of participants interested in support for their humanitarian aid and relief activities was just 13 per cent – 53 percentage points below the share currently involved in this activity. Around one in ten respondents also indicated that they would appreciate support in ministry training and student ministries (11 and 10 per cent, respectively).



To further understand participants' attitudes towards global mission, we asked our hotspot interviewees follow-up questions on their vision for global mission, how they mobilised people in their communities for mission, and what support they would appreciate from outside agencies. Most of these organisations (11 out of 13) were churches, although we also spoke to two mission agencies.

**Vision for global mission**

In describing their vision for global mission, many churches concentrated on a desire to share the love of God. One leader, for example, spoke of a longing 'to see people transformed by an encounter [with] Jesus in a real and living way: not just religion or head knowledge, but that [others] encounter Jesus in their everyday life'. Another underlined his sense that 'the message of the Gospel is that we are all God's children', as well as his yearning to 'show [the] goodness and love of God wherever we are' and 'to reach people with this message at home or overseas'. In at least one instance, this desire also motivated churches to give or pray: the first respondent quoted above, for instance, also shared that his church was 'supporting mission partners to facilitate this' vision, especially those who were working with the persecuted church.

*One leader, for example, spoke of a longing 'to see people transformed by an encounter [with] Jesus in a real and living way: not just religion or head knowledge, but that [others] encounter Jesus in their everyday life'.*



In terms of the specific ministries churches saw as part of their vision, many participants echoed the themes uncovered in the quantitative analysis above. Churches wanted to give, pray, participate in short-term mission, and, sometimes, equip longer-term missionaries. One church, for example, spoke of how it had a 'missionary policy for sending people' and connections with AIM. Other churches, however, felt there were sometimes limitations in how successfully they could pursue global mission, noting that it was 'not as much of a structural priority as it should be' and that they were often 'too focused locally to think much about [mission] globally'.

**Mobilising others for mission**

One of the primary ways that churches sought to equip those in their communities for mission was through mentoring and accountability. As one participant reflected:

*Supporting others would depend on the person and situation, but would have a chat to them, point them to agencies, walk them through the discernment process..... [We would also] go to [the] church council and church body, [and say] 'Here's someone who wants to talk about the love of Jesus. How can we help them?'*

This process seemed to fill some respondents with real enthusiasm: one, for example, said that he was 'excited to bring people on [the] journey of loving the whole world' and wanted to focus on the question of 'who can I bring to where I'm at, rather than where can I go next'. Another agreed: 'we'd be thrilled', he said, and indicated that his church would be willing to fully support potential missionaries financially.

While both mission agencies in our sample were also excited about the possibility of equipping others, they also emphasised that they would 'test [community members'] call' to mission by offering them 'short-term mission opportunities as experience'. If that call were confirmed, one, a local ministry, said it would 'serve as a bridge' to other mission opportunities, while another (a global agency) would be interested in 'resourcing' and 'educating' potential missionaries, as well as 'sending and supporting them in the field' and helping them raise financial support.



*one, for example, said that he was ‘excited to bring people on [the] journey of loving the whole world’ and wanted to focus on the question of ‘who can I bring to where I’m at, rather than where can I go next’*



#### How might external agencies be helpful?

When asked how external agencies might be helpful in accomplishing their vision for global mission, churches suggested that they might help ‘maintain personal connections’, both with the mission organisations themselves, and with overseas missionaries and churches, ‘so mission organisations have a face and a story, not just a charity number’. As another church leader reflected, mission organisations ‘don’t come to our doorstep and make a difference to our lives. [There’s] not the same emotional connection as when hosting somebody for a week’. Specifically, churches discussed links with missionaries and churches in Uganda and Zambia, and indicated that they would appreciate mission agencies’ support in building relationships with churches and ministries in other parts of the world.

In at least one case, churches also hoped that external agencies might provide the ‘theological resources to think through’ global mission; since their congregations were not necessarily committed to mission, they implied, it could be valuable to have external support in helping them justify why they should ‘bother doing it’.

Finally, two churches expressed scepticism about their ability to partner with more mission organisations, either because they were already partnering with other mission agencies or because of their socioeconomic makeup of their congregations. As one leader explained, he did not lead a ‘wealthy church’, few members of his congregation could ‘afford overseas travel’, and one-fifth were asylum seekers. Therefore, he did not want to ‘elevate something which not all can take part in’. This leader was particularly hesitant to partner with external agencies because a relationship with another mission agency had already ‘lapsed due to lack of interest’.

*Specifically, churches discussed links with missionaries and churches in Uganda and Zambia, and indicated that they would appreciate mission agencies’ support in building relationships with churches and ministries in other parts of the world.*



## Feedback from study participants

To share the results of this research, we held a Zoom conference in June 2020 with study participants. In addition to presenting our findings and hearing from experts in intercultural mission, we intentionally set aside time for respondents’ questions and observations about the research.

#### Direct comments on the research

##### *‘I’m quite shocked... how many leaders think there’s a lack of opportunities’*

Several participants emphasised their astonishment that some leaders thought there was a lack of opportunities for intercultural mission. ‘When I look on this Zoom call and think about [how] people that I know... have put opportunities for cross-cultural mission in front of people year after year after year’, one said, ‘I actually find [that] quite extraordinary’. These participants’ surprise led them to recommend that our report include a list of opportunities for churches to engage in intercultural mission in Leeds (which may be found in the **Appendix**).

##### *‘We just don’t connect [with] the Pakistani community’*

Interestingly, this conference also helped us understand one of the more perplexing findings in our research: that respondents often believed that there was a lack of diversity in their area despite living in constituencies with high proportions of ethnic minorities. As one conference participant reflected:

*I think the first thing is this process of learning who’s around you, who’s living in your city, and who’s in your neighbourhood, and sometimes that means going a little bit outside of your locality. Sometimes people say, “Oh, there’s no one in my area”, but actually you only need to go, you know, two miles into the city centre, and you’re in a totally different mission field.*

As this leader explained, Christians often only needed to ‘go... a little bit outside of [their] locality’ to find greater ethnic and cultural diversity: even travelling ‘two miles into the city centre’ was often sufficient.

## [New ideas](#)

*'I'm just wondering whether we actually believe... that God could... use [ethnic minorities] to reach the British people?'*

Many conference participants also raised some ideas about intercultural mission which had not appeared in our earlier findings. Perhaps most interestingly, some respondents suggested that the UK Church's failings in intercultural mission might derive from the fact that it had sometimes not encouraged ethnic minorities themselves to take an active role in these efforts. As one conference participant observed, 'I'm just wondering whether we actually believe that the ethnic minorities that we see in our communities could actually – that God could actually use them to reach the British people?' Other respondents suggested that the Church's attempts at mission may have been hindered by an unwillingness to appear weak. 'How do you help a culture really do the complete about-face and become humble recipients... [so that it can] really open up all the relationships that that brings?' one said.

*'I had not picked up the message... that you are wanting an ongoing relationship, these mission agencies, with what's going on in Leeds, which, you know, is fantastic'*

Finally, some leaders had not understood the extent to which the partner agencies initiating this research and other mission agencies had wanted to use this research to begin an ongoing relationship with churches and local mission agencies (through supplying missionaries from overseas, creating partnerships, etc.). These participants seemed grateful for the support, which they described as 'fantastic'.

## Conclusion and recommendations

As the previous sections suggest, there is much to celebrate about churches and mission agencies' engagement with intercultural mission. **Nearly six in ten churches considered local intercultural mission a priority**, with this proportion increasing to **nearly eight in ten** for churches with above-average levels of diversity. Furthermore, organisations in our study were committed to reaching a wide variety of people groups, and the proportion of ministries attempting to reach people of a given ethnicity generally exceeded the actual representation of that ethnicity in Leeds. Many of these same organisations were also highly faithful in supporting global mission: three-quarters (75 per cent) gave financially, nearly seven in ten (69 per cent) prayed for mission overseas, and three in ten (31 per cent) sent out missionaries.

To build on their effectiveness in mission, churches and mission agencies may wish to consider the following recommendations, which are divided into three categories: (1) negotiating barriers, (2) keys to success, and (3) support from mission agencies.

### [Negotiating barriers](#)

- **Creatively seek opportunities for mission**  
Our research suggests that churches may want to reconsider the assumption that there was a lack of opportunity for intercultural mission in their area: as the data indicates, many churches which made this claim actually lived in highly diverse constituencies. Furthermore, in some cases the absence of opportunity seemed to result not so much from a lack of diversity as from churches' unwillingness to adapt (by making their services accessible to minorities, incorporating different worship traditions, etc.). Churches may be able to overcome these barriers by creatively seeking ways to reach people of other ethnicities and include them in church activities.
- **Confront fear, apathy, and prejudice through training**  
To that end, church leaders may wish to directly confront the fear of the culturally unknown, fear of causing offence, apathy, and prejudice noted in the **How can this city improve?** section above by providing training to prepare and encourage their congregations for mission. This training would also provide an opportunity for further cooperation with mission agencies.

- **Equip older churches for mission**

Several churches also commented that they were unable to reach their communities because their congregations were aging, and only 30 per cent of older congregations said they were willing to give considerable resources to mission. Mission agencies may thus wish to listen to older churches to understand why they did not feel able to give, and encourage and equip older congregations who do not feel they have a place in mission

#### Keys to success

- **Focus on the five keys to success: inclusivity, remaining present and consistent, being invested and trained, remembering evangelism and God's role in mission**

Churches might also benefit from respondents' suggestions for success in mission: specifically, inclusivity towards ethnic minorities, **remaining present and consistent** in one's community, **being invested and trained** for mission, remembering the importance of **evangelism** as well as social justice, and concentrating on **God's role in mission**. Since inclusivity, remembering the importance of evangelism, and concentrating on God's role in mission differentiated participants which scored highly on our metric from those which did not, these may be particularly important points to emphasise.

- **Capitalise on the strengths of young and diverse churches**

Younger and more diverse churches were far more likely to give to and prioritise mission than older and more monocultural congregations. They may therefore be especially good partners for mission agencies.

#### Support from mission agencies

##### *Local mission*

- **Provide training and resources**

- **Set clear roles and expectations**

With regard to local mission, churches underlined that they appreciated when outside agencies **provided training and resources for mission** and **established clear roles and expectations**.

##### *Global mission*

- **Concentrate on evangelism, humanitarian aid and relief, ministry training, and student ministry**

- **Maintain connections with international mission partners**

Our quantitative analysis revealed that churches were most interested in help from outside agencies in the areas of evangelism, humanitarian aid and relief, ministry training, and student ministry. Additionally, hotspot interviewees appreciated when mission agencies helped their churches maintain connection with international mission partners.

##### *Both*

- **Clearly communicate impact**

For both local and global mission, churches valued when external agencies clearly communicated their impact. Mission agencies may therefore wish to direct additional resources towards capturing the results their ministries are producing and communicating these results to churches.

#### Conclusion

As this report has indicated, there is a good reason to be hopeful about what God is doing in Leeds. Participants noted that 'people [were] coming into relationship with God' and that they had seen 'stories of personal salvation' – findings that were echoed in our quantitative data, which showed a high degree of commitment to mission and significant numbers of people coming to faith through church activities. While there is much to celebrate, our hope is that this report helps churches and mission agencies in Leeds build on what God is already doing in their city so that they might become still more effective in mission.

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# Appendix

ORGANISATION	RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION AND LINKS
SIM-UK	Intercultural Ministry (ICM) Training	SIM's ICM training was originally planned as a series of four day-workshops held over a six-month period for pastors and leaders of Christian organisations. These are being adapted for online delivery as twenty 90-minute interactive sessions over the same six-month timeframe. The aim of the workshops is to equip participants to lead, or contribute to, a change process in their churches or organisations so that the church or organisation transforms to embrace and propagate truly intercultural ministry. LINK: <a href="mailto:info@sim.co.uk">info@sim.co.uk</a>
SIM-UK/ Two:Nineteen	Two:Nineteen	2:19 is an organisation set up to help local churches embrace the nations by promoting Christian engagement between members of local churches and the international people in their communities. Such engagement is encouraged through equipping churches to run English language teaching activities and other means of stimulating gospel outreach and cultural integration. 2:19 place special emphasis on two different aspects – reaching out and integrating within. LINK: <a href="http://www.twonineteen.org.uk">www.twonineteen.org.uk</a>
SIM-UK	ENGAGE	SIM's Engage project aims provide workers to help churches with gospel outreach into cross-cultural communities where Christ is least known. With workers sent from more than 35 countries, we can look for those with experience among particular people groups or faith backgrounds, or those with gifts in evangelism and discipleship. For more info contact Tim Barrow: <a href="mailto:engage@sim.co.uk">engage@sim.co.uk</a>
AWM Pioneers	Short Term Mission Trips	Sending church members on a short-term mission trip can be a great way to open their eyes to the reality of cross-cultural ministry. We run organised teams, known as Edge, and custom-made placements, known as Venture. Both of these are designed to deepen your heart for mission, working alongside long-term workers and learning from them. LINK: <a href="http://www.awm-pioneers.org/go/">www.awm-pioneers.org/go/</a>
AWM Pioneers	Equip: UK	Our Equip:UK training opportunity is a nine month placement in a multicultural city in England. This gives the participant the experience of ministry to Muslims, in an environment where they can learn and develop their own connections. LINK: <a href="http://www.awm-pioneers.org/go/go-short-term/internships-and-training-programmes/">www.awm-pioneers.org/go/go-short-term/internships-and-training-programmes/</a>
AWM Pioneers	Resourcing Churches	We have a passion to help churches to engage with those from other nations that are on their doorstep. We can offer training and teaching in areas related to Islam, working cross-culturally and missional practices. We can also provide speakers for services, to explain more about our work and encourage you with what God is doing among Arab peoples. LINK: <a href="http://www.awm-pioneers.org/books-and-resources/">www.awm-pioneers.org/books-and-resources/</a>
Eido Research	Impact Strategy Framework	Eido helps faith-based organisations measure and improve their impact. They do this through bespoke research, impact strategy workshops, and consultation. LINK: <a href="https://www.eidoresearch.com">https://www.eidoresearch.com</a>
Transformations Leeds	Intercultural Church Planting	Transformations Leeds helps churches and Christians to bring God's transformation to people's lives around the world. We train, resource and support people to reach out cross culturally with the good news of Jesus and equip emerging leaders to be godly influencers in their own cultures. LINK: <a href="https://transformationsleeds.org.uk/">https://transformationsleeds.org.uk/</a>

AIM	Four Fields Strategy Framework Resource	Training resource for Intercultural and Diaspora Mission. LINK: <a href="https://globalfrontiermissions.org/church-planting/four-fields-training/">https://globalfrontiermissions.org/church-planting/four-fields-training/</a>
AIM	Connect Junior	Connect Junior is Africa Inland Mission's new quarterly magazine for children. LINK: <a href="https://eu.aimint.org/pray/connectjunior/">https://eu.aimint.org/pray/connectjunior/</a>
OMF	Local Training	Gerard and Sarah Charles represent OMF in the North of England and are committed both to inspiring and equipping Christians to engage in cross-cultural ministry. They regularly deliver training for Christians, whether in churches, student groups or Bible colleges, on engaging with people of other faiths (particularly with Muslims), on communicating the gospel to people of other cultures and worldviews (particularly Chinese, East Asian and Islamic worldviews), and on cross-cultural communication. They are available to any church leader in the North of England for an initial conversation as to how they might be used as a resource to inspire and equip that church in its current missional context. LINK: An example of the intercultural mission resources that Gerard and Sarah can help a local church engage with can be found here <a href="http://omf.org.uk/worldview/">omf.org.uk/worldview/</a>
OMF	Resources: A Taste of Asia	"A Taste of Asia" is a new devotional adventure book for 5-10-year olds and their parents. It combines prayers, Bible readings, true stories and fun activities. This is a resource to help families discover more about God's plan to share Jesus with the whole world and how he invites us to participate in that through prayer as well as exploring people and places around the world. LINK: See here for more details <a href="http://go.omf.org/tasteofasia">go.omf.org/tasteofasia</a>
London City Mission	How to Guides and Training Resources	LINK: <a href="https://www.lcm.org.uk/what-we-do/how-to-guides">https://www.lcm.org.uk/what-we-do/how-to-guides</a> <a href="https://www.lcm.org.uk/what-we-do/training">https://www.lcm.org.uk/what-we-do/training</a>
Evangelical Alliance	The (Im) Possible Dream Book	The (Im)Possible Dream from EA's One People Commission (OPC), written by Rev. Yemi Adedeji and Steve Clifford, aims to equip and enable all Church Leaders, heads of organisations and heads of networks to work towards unity, genuine integration, and greater ethnic diversity. LINK: <a href="http://www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/the-impossible-dream">www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/the-impossible-dream</a>
Welcome Churches	Refugee Ministry	Welcome Boxes is a great way for churches to connect with refugees in their area. The Welcome Network enables refugees to find a church that is ready to welcome them. Free resources like contact cards in different languages and Refugee Worker Training. Resources to help Farsi speaking refugees. Safeguarding guidelines for churches working with refugees. LINKS: <a href="https://welcomeboxes.org/run/">https://welcomeboxes.org/run/</a> <a href="https://welcomechurches.org/churches/join-the-network/">https://welcomechurches.org/churches/join-the-network/</a> <a href="https://welcomechurches.org/updates/covid19/">https://welcomechurches.org/updates/covid19/</a> <a href="https://welcomechurches.org/updates/farsi-support-for-churches/">https://welcomechurches.org/updates/farsi-support-for-churches/</a> <a href="https://welcomechurches.org/updates/safeguarding-guidelines/">https://welcomechurches.org/updates/safeguarding-guidelines/</a>
Intercultural Church Planting Network	Intercultural Church Planting	LINK: <a href="https://www.icpnetwork.eu/">https://www.icpnetwork.eu/</a>



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