

# Thinking faithfully about politics

A snapshot of how  
evangelicals think and act  
as they engage in politics



# Introduction

**Evangelical Christians care about politics.** We see this through the very high engagement anticipated with the coming election, their participation beyond voting and the range of issues they are passionate about.

**Evangelical Christians think faithfully about politics.** It's not just a practical engagement but one that is rooted deeply in their faith – that impacts all of the world around them.

**There is great diversity in how evangelicals engage in politics.** There is no monolithic evangelical vote; their spread of support for different parties is not dissimilar to that of the general public.

The Christians we surveyed would be more likely to vote for parties that protected free speech in the workplace, opposed assisted suicide, reduced the time limit for abortion, supported safe and legal routes for asylum, backed religious freedom in trade deals and increased the minimum wage. This is not a portfolio of policy preferences that neatly map onto any party platform.

When asked to imagine how Jesus would engage with politics today, the diversity of responses could be read as uncertainty – while evangelicals are confident Jesus would befriend politicians and protest against injustice, and just over half think He would use His vote, far fewer are confident to say what party Jesus might vote for.

What comes through clearly from these results is that alongside commitment to political engagement and a diversity of interests and priorities, there is deep distrust and hesitation about contemporary politics in the UK. For most evangelicals, neither party leaders nor local candidates provide a strong motivation to vote a particular way. A quarter of respondents are undecided about how to vote, and more than 30% are either floating voters or will vote tactically.

And yet despite this hesitation, 93% want to see more Christians engaged in politics and standing for election. While not always hopeful about the future of the country, evangelicals have hope as to what can be achieved through politics. The coming election provides an opportunity for evangelical Christians to demonstrate their commitment to their communities and wider society. In turn, candidates seeking election and politicians seeking to lead the country are provided with an opportunity to see the depth and breadth of the church's response to the challenges and opportunities that are before us.

## Methodology

The Evangelical Alliance surveyed 1,469 people in November and December 2023, 1,380 of whom described themselves as evangelical Christians. These respondents included some who are part of an existing research panel, as well as others who responded through email or social media prompts. Throughout this report we will refer to statistics from the 1,380 evangelical respondents. In reporting party vote preference, we follow the norm for polling companies and the headline figure is of those who are likely to vote, state a preference and live in Great Britain.

# 10 key statistics



**93%** of respondents are certain or likely to vote in the upcoming general election.



A quarter (**25%**) of respondents are undecided on who they will vote for.



The biggest factor influencing how evangelicals will vote is the impact that their vote will have on others. **58%** of respondents say that one of the main factors that determines which party they vote for is who they believe will best help those most in need.



**10%** of respondents are members of a political party and/or campaign for one.



Respondents view topics relating to the economy, poverty and inequality as being the most important issues facing the UK today.



Only **12%** of respondents say they trust politicians – only marginally higher than 9% of the general population who say they trust politicians.



**38%** of respondents are engaged in politics beyond voting in elections.



**76%** of respondents believe Jesus would befriend politicians of all parties.



**87%** of respondents say that a commitment to protect free speech in the workplace would make them more likely to vote for a party.



**70%** of respondents believe that the church should not be confined to preaching and teaching the gospel and that political issues should not be left solely to politicians.

# How are evangelicals using their vote?

## Likelihood of voting in the next general election

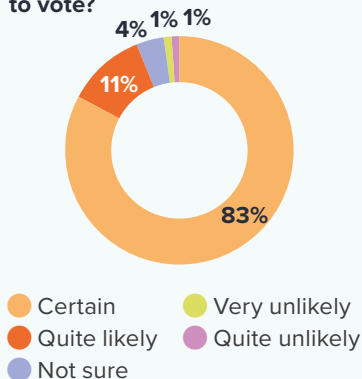
A very high proportion of evangelicals are likely to vote at the next general election.

83% of respondents say that if an election was held tomorrow, they are certain they would vote. A further 11% say they are quite likely to vote.

The turnout of the general population has ranged between 65% and 69% over the last four elections – which makes the figure of 93% of evangelical respondents an exceptionally high and encouraging one compared to the general population.

**Evangelicals want to have an influence on who is representing them and leading the country.**

**If there was an election tomorrow, how likely are you to vote?**



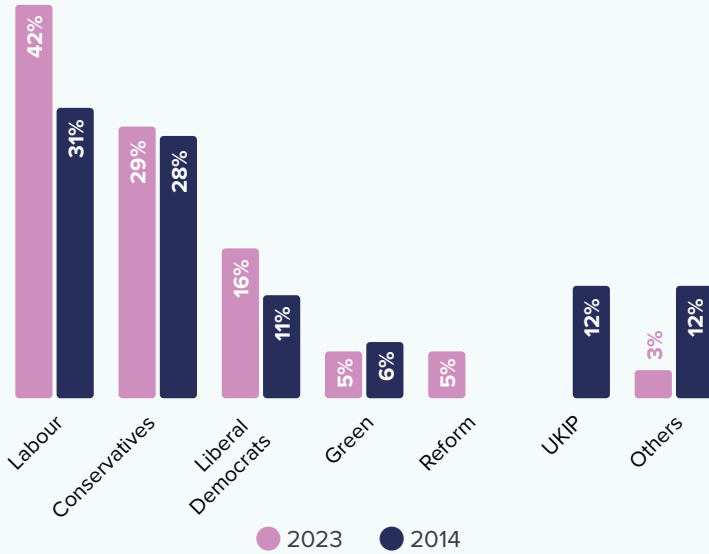
## Who are evangelicals voting for?

**Despite being highly likely to engage in the upcoming election, many evangelicals are unsure how they will be using their vote.** In fact, a quarter (25%) of evangelical respondents who plan on voting in the upcoming election are undecided on who they will vote for. For those who have decided who they will vote for, the following graph shows their voting intentions.

Comparing voting intentions of respondents now with those of respondents that took part in a similar survey conducted by the Evangelical Alliance in 2014,<sup>1</sup> the number of respondents expressing an intention to vote for Labour has risen by 11%. Meanwhile, the evangelical vote for the Conservatives has remained relatively static, with only a 1% increase in support since 2014.

<sup>1</sup> Evangelical Alliance, *Faith in politics? A snapshot of the beliefs and habits of evangelical Christians* – spring 2015

### If there was an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?

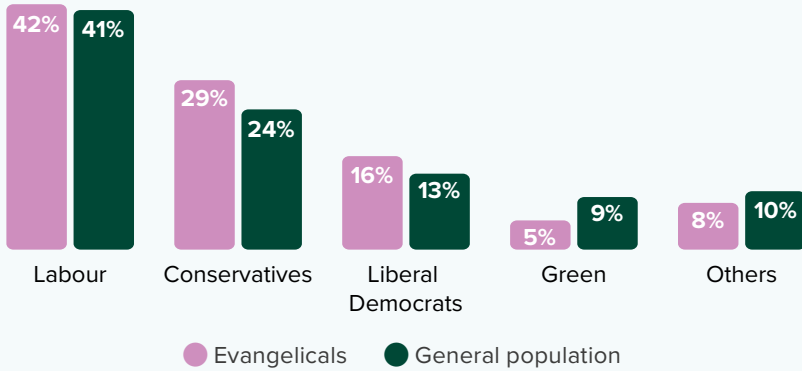


Where 12% of evangelicals surveyed in 2014 expressed support for UKIP, these votes have not all been transferred over to Reform – who are only receiving 5% of respondents' votes.

**British evangelicals do not always vote for the same party.** 21% of respondents said that although they have decided who they will vote for in this election, they are a floating voter – who does not always vote for the same party. 9% said that they are voting tactically to keep another party from winning. Less than half of respondents (44%) are planning to vote for a party that they identify with and/or are a member of.

**British evangelicals do not vote uniformly** – there is a mix of voting intentions. In fact, based on the voting behaviour of respondents to the survey, the way that evangelicals vote is not dissimilar to the way that the general population of the UK votes. The most significant difference is that 5% more respondents plan to vote Conservative than the general population.

## Evangelicals' voting intention vs general population's voting intention<sup>2</sup>

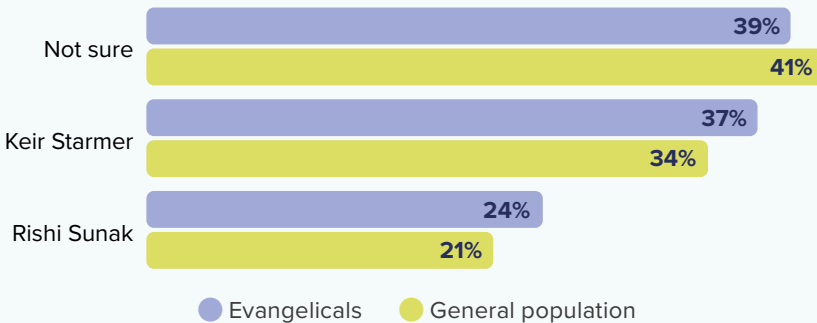


## Who do evangelicals want to see as prime minister?

**There is an appetite for a change in leadership of the country amongst evangelicals.** On the question of who would make the best prime minister, Labour party leader Keir Starmer has a 15% lead amongst respondents against current prime minister and Conservative party leader Rishi Sunak.

Similarly, statistics taken from the end of November 2023 show that Keir Starmer had a 13% lead against Rishi Sunak amongst the general population.

## Who would make the best prime minister?<sup>3</sup>



<sup>2</sup> General public statistics taken from Ipsos Mori Latest UK Opinion Polls: Government approval recent changes [ipsos.com/en-uk/uk-opinion-polls](https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/uk-opinion-polls)

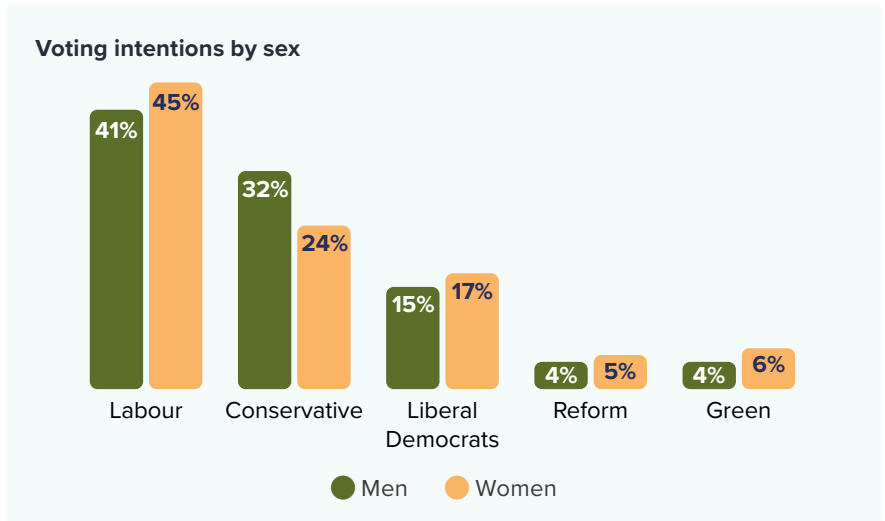
<sup>3</sup> General public statistics taken from YouGov Sunak vs Starmer 2024: how have attitudes changed since the PM took office? [yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/48452-sunak-vs-starmer-2024-how-have-attitudes-changed-since-the-pm-took-office](https://www.yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/48452-sunak-vs-starmer-2024-how-have-attitudes-changed-since-the-pm-took-office)



## Do men and women vote differently?

There is a difference in voting intentions between female evangelicals and male evangelicals.

Among female respondents, Labour has a 21% lead, whilst among male respondents, Labour only has a 9% lead. Male respondents are 8% more likely to vote Conservative than female respondents, and female respondents are 4% more likely to vote Labour than male respondents.



# What determines how evangelicals vote?

## What determines which party respondents vote for?

Respondents were asked to choose the top three factors that determine their vote.

### I believe the party I plan to vote for...



**Evangelicals care about the impact that their vote will have on others, and vote with this in mind.** 58% of respondents said that one of the main factors that determines which party they vote for is which one they perceive to be best at helping others who are most in need. Only 11% said that their vote is based on which party will help them and their family most.

**Evangelicals often vote for parties that, in their view, will lead with biblical values.** 54% of respondents say they vote for the party who is most closely aligned with Christian/biblical values. Since no party receives over half of the evangelical vote, it can be concluded that there are different opinions amongst evangelicals as to which party best reflects biblical values.

**Party leadership or the local candidate are not highly influential in the way that evangelicals vote.** 22% of respondents expressed that the local candidate is more important than the party or party leader. 21% of respondents expressed that the party they plan to vote for has the leader they most want to be prime minister.

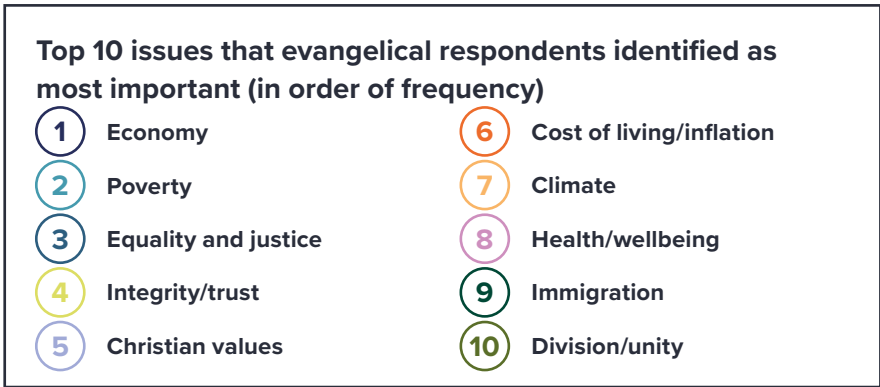




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# What do evangelicals see as the most important issues facing the UK today?

Respondents were asked what they see as the most important issue facing the UK, their responses were categorised into themes.



The responses to our survey of evangelicals were not dissimilar to the responses from a survey conducted with the general public.



4 General public statistics taken from Ipsos Mori, Ipsos Issues Index: December 2023: Public concern about immigration reaches a six-year high [ipsos.com/en-uk/ipsos-issues-index-december-2023](https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/ipsos-issues-index-december-2023)

**Issues relating to the economy and poverty are the most important issues facing the UK today, according to evangelical Christians.** Issues relating to climate change, healthcare and immigration are also seen as highly important.

There are similarities in the key issues identified by evangelicals when compared to those identified by the general public. The economy, cost of living, poverty, immigration, trust in politicians, climate and healthcare are prominent concerns for both evangelicals and the general public.

Housing, education and crime appear to be concerns that are higher on the radar of the general population than they are for evangelicals. Meanwhile, Christian values and unity are more prominent issues for evangelicals than they are for the general population.

**Evangelicals care about values, as well as policy.** Evangelicals see the integrity of political leaders, upholding Christian values and creating unity as some of the most important issues facing our nation. There has been a shift since 2014, when the focus of evangelicals was policy issues and not values.



## What manifesto commitments would affect the way evangelicals vote?

Amongst evangelicals, there is great strength of feeling around the protection of single-sex spaces, free speech within the workplace, and opposition to assisted suicide. Over half of respondents said that they are much more likely to vote for a party if they make a manifesto commitment on any of these three issues.

The asylum system has been a significant area of focus in politics in this parliamentary term and has caused division amongst government and political parties. It proves to be an issue that has a significant role in the way evangelicals vote. Amongst those intending to vote Labour, this policy would have significant sway on the way that they vote (88% said it was likely to influence their vote). It is also an important policy for Conservative voters, with 61% saying it would influence their vote. Amongst Reform voters it was less likely to sway them to vote for a particular party (42% said it was likely to influence them).

A commitment to leave the European Convention on Human Rights is the policy that is most likely of those listed above to deter respondents from voting for a party – 58% of respondents said it would make them less likely to vote for a party.

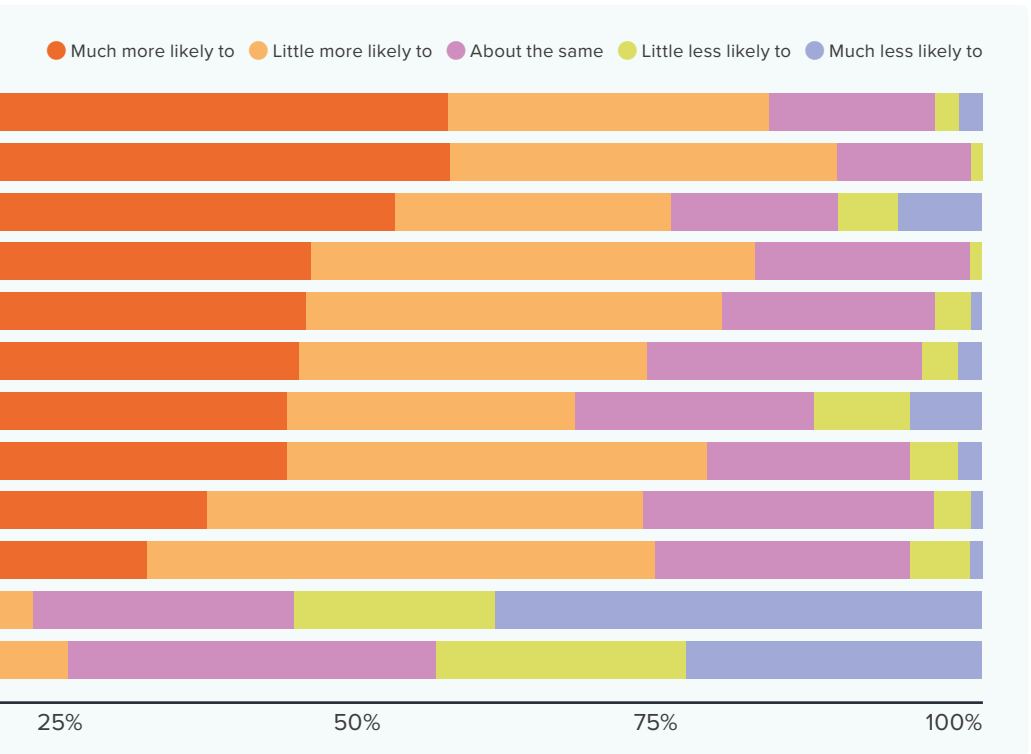
### Would a manifesto commitment to (...) make you more or less likely to vote for a party?



For a full percentage breakdown of each result within this graph, access the appendix to this report on our website: [eauk.it/GE24](http://eauk.it/GE24)

A manifesto commitment to ban the sale of all petrol or diesel cars is likely to have the most mixed reaction from evangelicals. For 31% of respondents, it would have very little influence over which party they vote for and for a further 46% it either makes them a little, or much less likely, to vote for a party. This perhaps suggests that while evangelicals identify climate as one of the most important issues facing the UK today, the backing of this specific policy is less likely to win votes for parties.

In order to understand which issues impact the way evangelicals vote, we asked a number of questions about potential manifesto commitments and how they would impact voting. The results of these questions do not necessarily gauge the support that each of these policies may receive but instead show how much of an impact they would have on the way evangelicals vote. For instance, there may be support for a policy that would restore overseas development aid to 0.7% of GDP, yet a commitment to this within a party's manifesto may have very little weight in persuading a person to vote for said party.



# What outcomes do evangelicals want to see from the election?

When asked what they would like to see from the election, respondents primarily focused on three areas, summarised in the quotes below:

## The character of leaders...



“A government that values fairness, truth, mercy, and justice above all else.”

“Politicians with integrity.”

“For godly men and women to stand and be elected.”

## The values that they wish to see in decision making...



“More plurality in parties represented in parliament.”

“...Less division, facing challenging conversations and disagreements without turning to hatred and slander.”



“I would like to see proportional representation that better suits the country and its feeling towards the political landscape.”

“A politics which engages and represents the majority of the population, not just an elite, select group...”



“Unity in promoting a just society and God-honouring ethics.”



## The policy outcomes they wish to see in the next parliamentary term...

“Finding a viable and fair solution for refugees. Boosting the economy in a way that benefits everyone. Revamping social security to the benefit of the poorest.”



“A reform of the child welfare system...”



“...reorganisation of the NHS.”



“A change of direction in favour of the disadvantaged; less influence for those with privilege; more action towards justice and preparation for climate change.”

“A strengthening of central issues, as opposed to fringe ideologies.”



“Maintenance of the rights of Christians to proclaim and live out their faith.”

“I hope that more support is given to those with mental health issues and there is better support for those struggling with homelessness.”



# The role of Christianity in public life

“Christianity has deeply shaped the UK’s political culture and democratic process.”



● Agree ● Disagree

“We need to see more Christians willing to get involved in party politics and stand for election.”



● Agree ● Disagree

Most evangelicals think that Christianity has deeply shaped the UK’s political culture and democratic process. Even more think that we need to see Christians involved in politics and standing for election. There is recognition of the role that Christianity has played in the past and of the need for it in the future, but what can we say about Christianity in public life today?

Politicians are fond of recognising churches and Christian ministries for their effective social action and commitment to communities, but less comfortable when it challenges political priorities or interferes with electoral convenience.

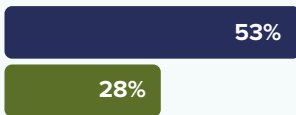
The experience of politicians who hold to biblical beliefs demonstrates that it is possible for evangelicals to contribute meaningfully to politics at the highest level. But their experiences also illustrate the friction that exists when counter-cultural values and beliefs are lived out in contemporary politics. Sometimes this is about a lack of understanding of their beliefs, and sometimes it verges on hostility towards them for not keeping such beliefs private.

Evangelicals are uncertain about what role Christian values should play in politics. Just over half of respondents think that the UK is a Christian country and that this should be reflected in its laws – this topic itself raises many more questions. Defining a ‘Christian country’ is not straightforward, and what role faith should play in creating laws is a fascinating question for Christians themselves to consider.





**“The UK is a Christian country and this should be reflected in its laws.”**



● Agree ● Disagree

**“There are some issues where it is right for Christians to resist or disobey the law.”**



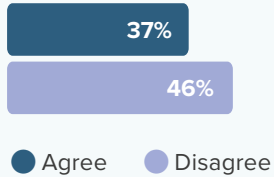
● Agree ● Disagree

There appears to be a shared discomfort amongst evangelicals over some of the laws of this country. More than 75% of respondents expressed a willingness to resist or disobey the law on some issues. This is a reminder that while we seek to engage in our political system, we do not put our hope in it and that although we have a responsibility to adhere to the laws of the land, it is secondary to our allegiance to God. That means the role of Christianity in public life should be hopeful, but it is unlikely to always be comfortable.

# How much do evangelicals trust politicians and the political system?

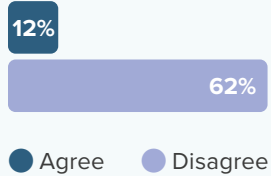
## “The political system of the UK works well.”

Evangelicals are divided over the efficiency of the political system in the UK. Some respondents to the survey expressed a desire to see a form of proportional representation being used within elections to ensure a parliament that better reflects the outcomes of elections.



## “I trust politicians.”

Similarly to the general population, of which only 9% say they trust politicians to tell the truth,<sup>5</sup> evangelicals also have a distrust towards politicians. In our 2014 survey, only 6% of respondents expressed a trust in politicians to keep the promises they make in their manifesto, suggesting that trust in politicians has been low amongst evangelicals for quite some time.

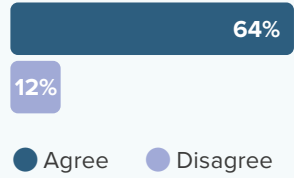


Following significant political scandals in recent years, more work needs to be done to build trust between politicians and the electorate. Churches and individual Christians should consider the role that they can play in building relationships with their local political representatives and calling on them to put integrity at the heart of their policymaking.

<sup>5</sup> General population statistic taken from Ipsos Mori, Trust in politicians reaches its lowest score in 40 years [ipsos.com/en-uk/ipsos-trust-in-professions-veracity-index-2023](https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/ipsos-trust-in-professions-veracity-index-2023)

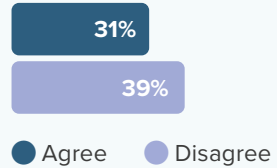
**“The current political parties discourage me from becoming more engaged in politics.”**

Only 12% of evangelical respondents said that current political parties do not deter them from getting involved in politics. If current political parties want to see evangelicals more involved, there needs to be a shift in how they seek to do this.

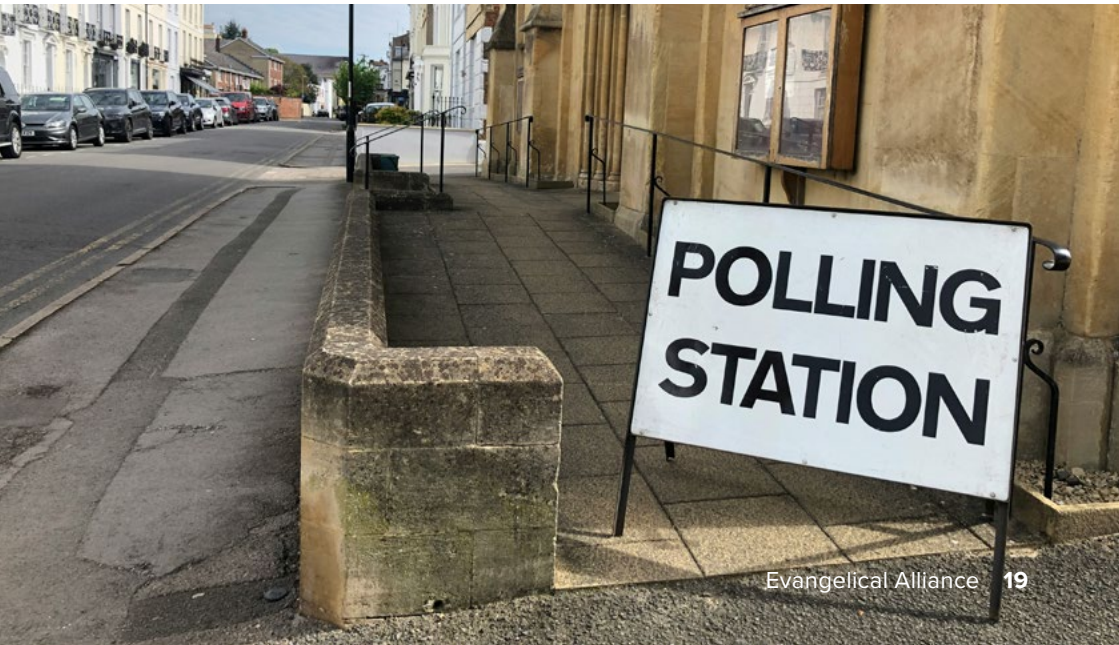


**“I am hopeful about the future of the country.”**

Evangelical respondents are divided over whether they are hopeful about the future of the country. There are many factors that may contribute to this.



Whilst not being ignorant to the challenges facing the nation today, Christians ought to seek to bring more hope into the political space. Perhaps a starting place is to build relationships with political representatives, encouraging them to create positive policy solutions to some of the country’s biggest challenges. Perhaps it is even for more Christians to stand for election themselves.



# How involved are evangelicals in politics more generally?

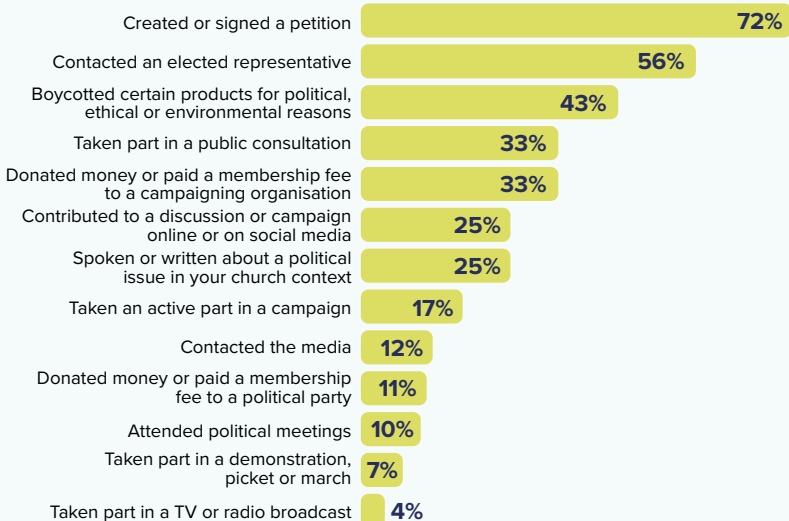
## A significant number of evangelicals are involved in political parties.

11% of respondents said that they have donated money or paid a membership fee to a political party. This is a much higher proportion of party involvement than that of the general electorate – 1.5% of the general population are members of either the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party or Conservative Party.<sup>6</sup>

## Evangelicals' engagement with politics goes beyond simply turning up to vote in elections.

When asked whether they were engaged in politics beyond the election, 38% of respondents expressed that they are. However, we suggest that this number does not truly reflect the higher level at which evangelicals are engaging with politics outside of elections. The following graph shows that 72% of respondents have created or signed a petition, 56% have contacted an elected representative and 43% have boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons – all actions that have been taken in order to influence political decisions.

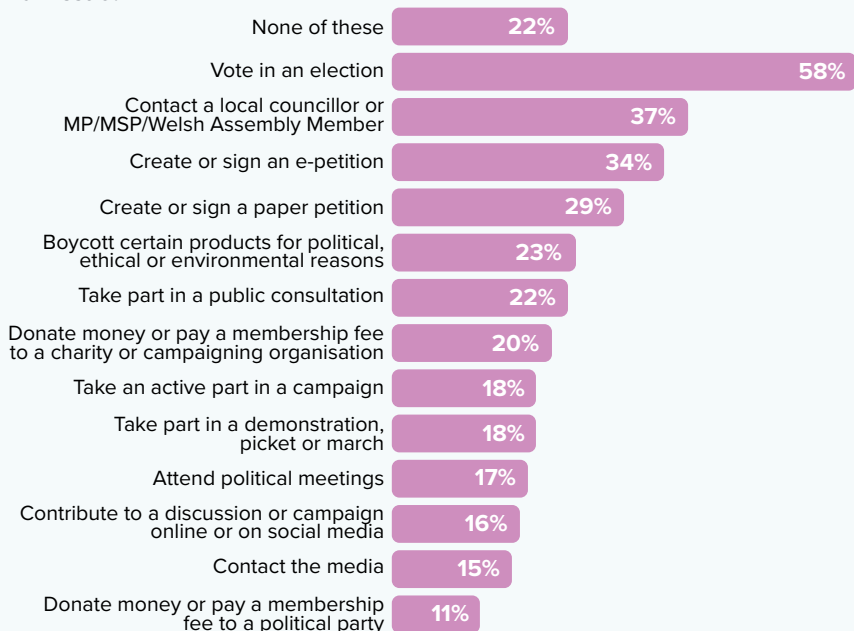
### In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies?



## There is greater willingness amongst evangelicals to engage in politics over and above voting in elections, than there is amongst the general population.

72% of our respondents said they had created or signed a petition over the last 12 months. A survey conducted by the Hansard Society in 2019 found that only 28% of the general population had signed an e-petition in the previous year.<sup>7</sup>

**In 2019, the Hansard Society asked the general population: “which of the following would you be prepared to do if you felt strongly enough about an issue?”**



Comparing these findings from the general population to how evangelical respondents have taken action over the past 12 months, it can be concluded that there are ways in which evangelicals are significantly more likely to engage with politics. Evangelicals are more likely to contact a local representative, boycott products for political, ethical or environmental reasons, take part in a public consultation, and donate money or a membership fee to a campaign. The only action that evangelicals are significantly less likely than the general public to take is join a demonstration, picket or march.

6 Statistic taken from House of Commons Library Membership of political parties in Great Britain [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05125/](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05125/)

7 Hansard Society Audit of Public Engagement 16: the 2019 report

# Connect

## A guide to engaging with MPs

When considering how you can engage with politics, building a relationship with your local political representative is a good place to start.

*Connect* is a resource that helps you begin to build relationships with your MPs and encourages you to pray for and support them as they represent you in parliament. Access *Connect* at [eauk.it/connect](http://eauk.it/connect) or request a physical copy by emailing [advocacy@eauk.org](mailto:advocacy@eauk.org)



# CROSS SECTION

conversations at the intersection of faith, news and culture

## Conversations at the intersection of faith, news and culture

Listen to Cross Section, a podcast where members of the Evangelical Alliance's advocacy team and guests discuss the biggest political and cultural conversations of the past week.

Cross Section helps listeners to think faithfully about how to engage with the big news topics of today.

Episodes are released weekly and are available to stream from any major streaming platform.





## Care for others defines the way evangelicals vote

Evangelicals care about others. In fact, they don't just care about others: it defines the way that they vote. Evangelicals seek the common good of all people, particularly those who are most in need.

In a time when much of our political discourse is centred around populism, the idea of “us” and “them”, the “haves” and the “have nots”, politicians would do well to engage with churches and Christians as they seek to bring about a togetherness within society and meet the needs of the less fortunate.

## Evangelicals are spread across the political spectrum

There are some contexts internationally where the term ‘evangelical’ goes hand-in-hand with a political movement or figure. However, this is not the case in the UK, where evangelicals as a collective are neither right-leaning nor left-leaning. Instead, we find individual evangelicals spread widely across the political spectrum – willing to vote for, engage with, and be affiliated to, a variety of parties and movements.

Evangelicals in the UK hold strongly to biblical values, while being able to respectfully disagree on political matters. Representatives of all parties can and should make an effort to listen to the views of evangelicals and to get to know churches in their local area.

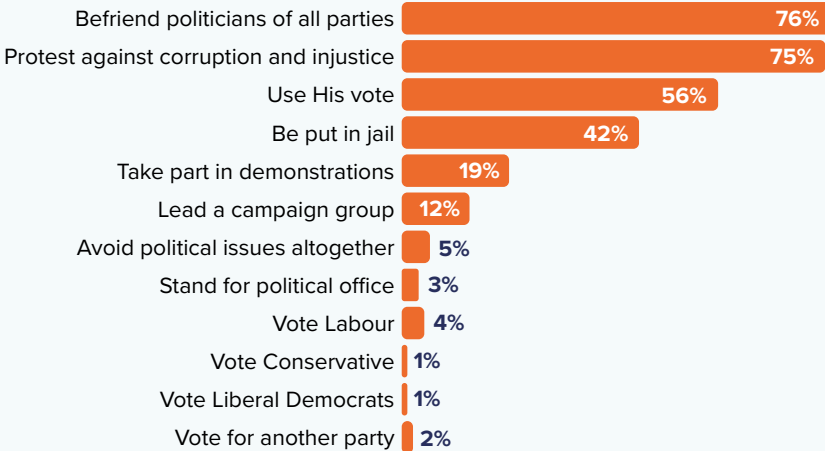
## Trust needs to be built between evangelicals and political representatives

It is the Christian faith, and its central principle of truth, that the UK political system is built on. The legacy of this is seen in the physical structure of parliament; in Central Lobby the words of Psalm 127 (in Latin) are spelled out in the floor mosaic: “unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain.”

The current lack of trust in politicians held amongst evangelicals is something that should sadden both the Christian and the politician alike. Proverbs 23:23 gives the instruction to “buy the truth and do not sell it”. For engagement to be increased and trust to be restored, there must be an active effort made within the political world to restore integrity as a universal principle; truth should be sought after at all costs.

# How would Jesus engage with politics?

If Jesus was living in the UK today, which of the following do you think He would do?



## Following Jesus into political life

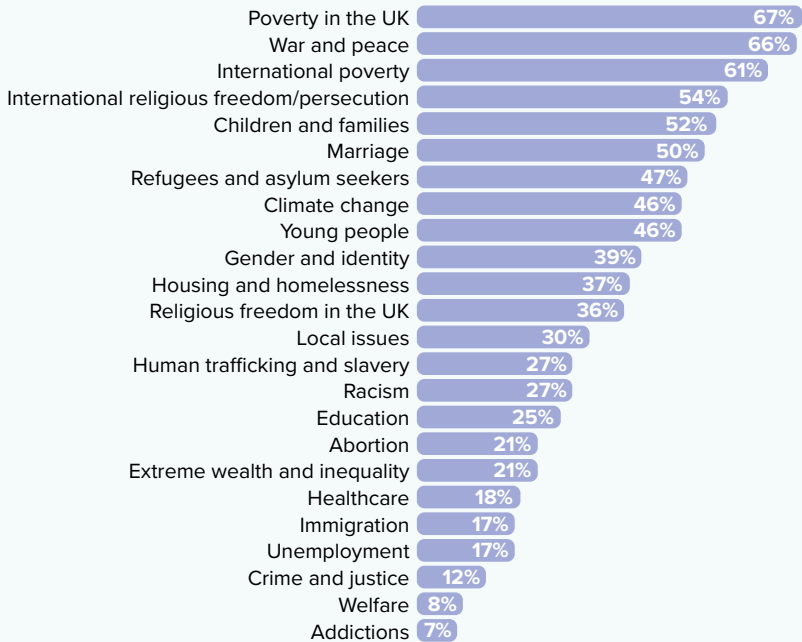
When considering how Jesus would engage in political life, only around one in 20 thought He would avoid political issues altogether, and around one in eight thought He would vote for a particular party. That leaves a large gap in between. Three quarters thought He would befriend politicians and also protest against corruption. We don't have easy answers for what being a follower of Jesus means as we consider how we engage in politics.

The task for Christians is to take politics seriously but to also understand that it is never the final answer. Politics affects many areas of our lives, and we should seek to apply scripture faithfully to our contemporary challenges. While we will often agree with other evangelicals on the principles we are pursuing, we may disagree over particular policies. Where we may share a broad position on policies, we may differ over the priority we give to them. Following Jesus is not dependent on party politics, but as we engage in it we should ensure it is Him we are following.



# What is the church saying about politics?

Which, if any, of the following social or political issues have been publicly profiled or talked about in your church during the last year or so?



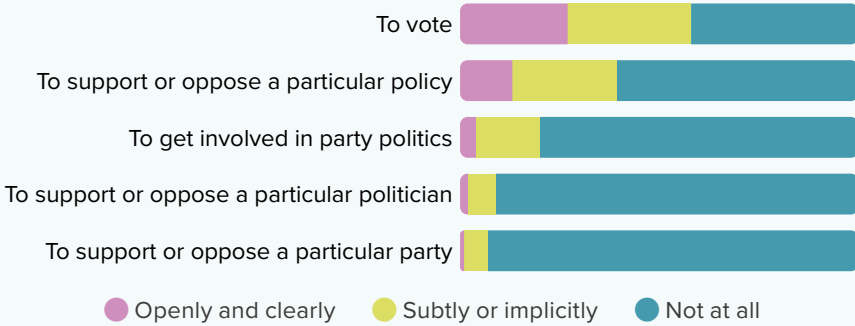
**The church is talking about prominent issues in our society.** Churches care about the biggest issues faced by people in their communities, across the UK and globally. In speaking about these issues and praying over them, churches are showing they care about politics because they care about the decisions that are being made at a top level to address them.

Churches should and do care about all areas of policy because God cares about all areas of policy. From those unable to pay their bills, to those caught up in addiction. From the child in school, to the elderly person in palliative care. Each person matters to God because they are made in His image, and so the experiences they face matter to Him too.

How do churches go beyond caring and praying about policy issues, to a place where they are actively working to influence decisions that are being made around them?

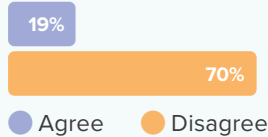
# Could the church be engaging more?

In the last five years has your church leadership encouraged you/your church...?

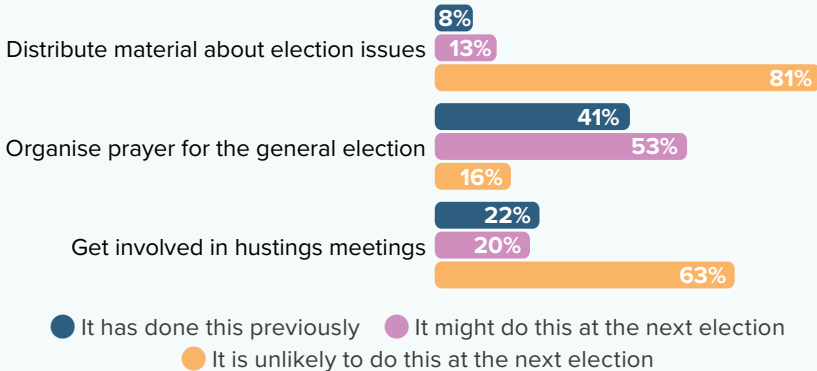


For a full percentage breakdown, see appendix: [eauk.it/GE24](http://eauk.it/GE24).

**“The church should concentrate on preaching and teaching the gospel and leave political issues to the politicians.”**



Does your church do any of the following around the time of general elections?



## How can evangelical Christians and churches engage ahead of the next general election?

Elections are an opportunity to influence how our nation is run, but they are also a time when our attention is more attuned to political matters. Maybe we get frustrated with how politicians appeal for our support, or how the media covers the election campaign, nonetheless, it is a chance for us to think about how politics affects us all and how we can contribute to the life of our country.

Churches are not to become party political actors – not least because charity law would place their status in jeopardy. But moreover, as this research illustrates, Christians support a diverse range of parties for myriad reasons. Churches must not be co-opted into becoming rallying points for political agendas or partisan purposes. Our research shows that this doesn't happen in the UK – more than nine out of 10 said that there was no hint of support for parties or politicians from their church, and fewer than 2% said there was explicit encouragement to support certain candidates or parties.

We must also recognise the place of faith in informing how we engage in politics. Politics cannot be completely shut out of our churches. To separate our faith from politics would be to remove something that is central to our lives and identity from the decisions that impact our families, communities and nations.

1



**Pray for  
politicians**

2



**Learn about  
key policy  
issues**

3



**Hold hustings  
to hear from  
candidates**

Only half of respondents expected their church to organise prayer for the next election, only one in eight expected them to distribute materials relating to the election and only one in five thought they might organise a hustings for candidates seeking election. These are three things churches can do to help their congregation think faithfully about politics. We should pray for our leaders, and for the elections in which they are chosen. We should be informed about the issues at stake and what Christian principles might have to say, and churches are a prime place for candidates to hear from the concerns of the community they are seeking to represent.

# Want to access more resources about the general election?

To help you and your church engage with the general election, visit our website to find resources, articles, commentary and special episodes of Cross Section, our weekly podcast.



[eauk.it/GE24](https://eauk.it/GE24)



## Election 2024

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