

Living for Jesus at work

Research report



evangelical alliance together making Jesus known



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Introduction

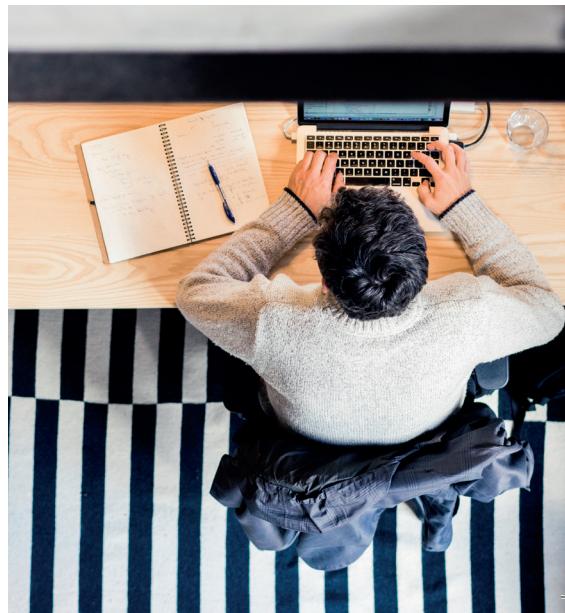
The Evangelical Alliance in partnership with the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship (LCF) have created a resource to equip and empower Christians to glorify Christ as they live for Him in their workplaces. This resource makes clear the rights and freedoms Christians have in the workplace. It provides guidance to Christian workers and employees about how they can share the good news about Jesus with their colleagues, as well as offering wisdom to enable them to respond to tricky issues they might face at work.

Before creating the *Living for Jesus at work* resource, the Evangelical Alliance, together with LCF and Transform Work UK (TWUK) conducted a survey designed to inform the resource. In order to produce a useful resource, we needed to gather insights and experiences of Christians in the workplace to understand the issues, questions and challenges that people face as they aim to live for Jesus at work.

The survey was written by the Evangelical Alliance, LCF and TWUK. The Evangelical Alliance distributed it through email subscription lists, and on social media. LCF and TWUK distributed it amongst their networks through emails. Due to the nature of LCF and TWUK's work, a proportion of people who completed the survey will already be specifically interested in bringing their Christian faith to the workplace, however, as the survey was shared by individuals and many completed it through the Evangelical Alliance's broader networks, the survey results are not disproportionately affected.

581 individuals completed the survey, which included four open-ended questions. Some of the answers to these questions can be found in the report and/or the resource itself, but we have not released all these results for privacy reasons and/or because of the volume of responses.

This report will demonstrate what we learnt from the survey, and how it corresponds with and has impacted the resource.



Workplace cultures

Chapter two of *Living for Jesus at work* is dedicated to thinking about the cultural context of today's UK workplaces, and how as Christians we might engage, building bridges with people for the sake of the gospel. As well as providing a brief analysis of UK social culture, and a biblical basis for why Christians should be engaging in the world around them, we wanted to examine and comment on the felt experience of real people in UK workplaces today.

In the survey we asked participants to, “Please give examples of the most common misconceptions your colleagues have about Christianity.”

When it came to how they were perceived by others, the participants could largely only give subjective answers, but we still hoped that useful patterns would emerge. Additionally, we saw in a later question that Christians' concerns about how they will be perceived are in themselves a barrier to speaking about their faith. So we hoped that in tackling these suggested perceptions, Christians might feel better equipped to talk about their beliefs.

This was an open-ended question and therefore the results were varied, but through the responses a pattern took shape. The three most common answers could be summarised as such:

- That Christians are bigoted, with hateful views.
- That Christianity is all about following rules and trying to be a 'good person'.
- That Christians are boring and look down on others.



Some examples of answers from the survey:

“Small minded, bigoted.”

“Christians are not tolerant.”

“Christians hold hateful, bigoted views.”

“It’s about keeping rules, bigoted views on sexuality, not appropriate to discuss at work.”

“Christians dislike others different to them.”

“It’s all about rules and regulations, not joy and peace.”

“Narrow-minded and exclusive.”

“Bigoted, for stupid people.”

“Big list of dos and don’ts. Legalistic. Killjoy.”

“We are goody two shoes.”

“It’s about being a good person.”

“It is boring and all about not doing things.”

“Christians are hypocrites and think they are better than others.”

“We are dull.”

“Self-satisfied and condemnatory.”

“Stuffy, boring, rules and regulations, hypocritical.”

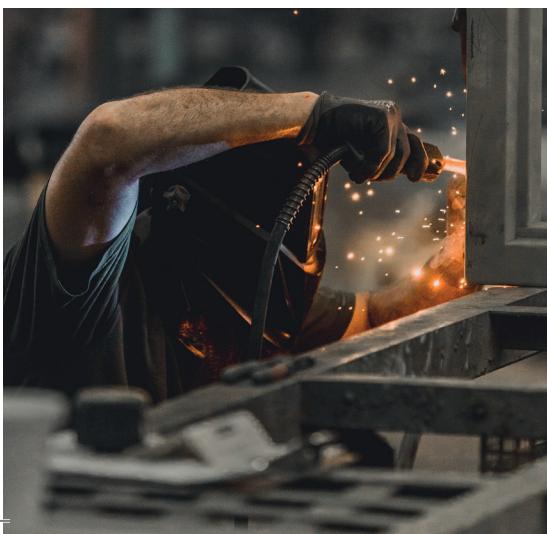
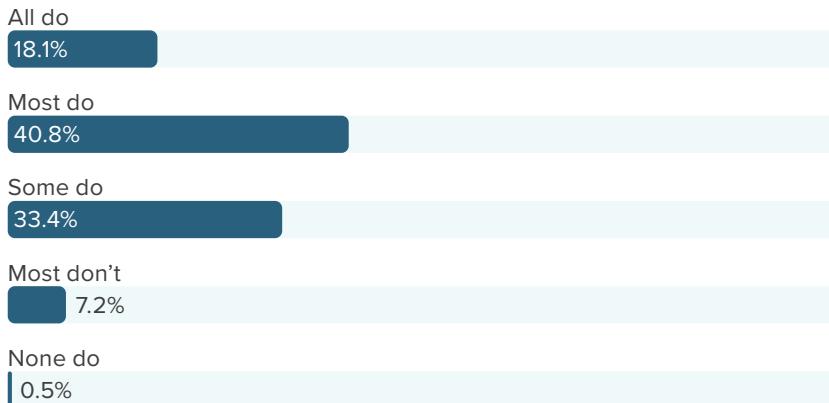
Through the answers and the patterns that emerged, we were able to see either how Christians thought they were perceived, and specifically tackled each of the three answer summaries under the subheading ‘Misconceptions and assumptions we may face’.

Sharing your faith

Chapter three of the resource is focused on encouraging readers in how they might actively share something of their faith at work, through word and action. We wanted to make sure the resource was as useful as possible, and therefore we needed to know people's experiences of sharing their faith at work, as well as the barriers they felt to doing so.

58.9% of respondents say all or most of their colleagues know that they are a Christian.

To what extent do your colleagues know that you are a Christian? 581 out of 581 answered



Over a third of respondents said that some colleagues know that they are a Christian, and only three respondents out of 581 said that none do. It is worth bearing in mind that many people will have been doing more remote working between March 2020 and November 2021 (when this survey was conducted), which presents new challenges to having personal conversations with colleagues.



What factors have prevented you telling your colleagues that you are a Christian? 555 out of 581 answered

There hasn't been the right opportunity to talk about it

54.8%

I don't want people to make assumptions about me

22.9%

Doesn't seem appropriate for the workplace

20.2%

I'm worried people will take offence

13.7%

I'm worried it will limit my opportunities

4.9%

I've never wanted to tell my colleagues that I am a Christian

0.5%

Other

21.1%

The most common factor preventing people from sharing their Christian faith with their colleagues is that they feel there “hasn't been the right opportunity”.

This represented 54.8% of respondents, followed by, “I don't want people to make assumptions about me” at 22.9%. Over a fifth of respondents selected “other” and provided a range of reasons ranging from being private about their faith and not open to sharing it with others, to those who felt limited or restricted in sharing their faith, as a result of working remotely or in an isolated job role.

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82.7% of respondents have taken an opportunity to explain the good news of Jesus to a colleague. 10 respondents shared that they'd seen colleagues become Christians.

When spending time with your work colleagues, how frequently have you been able to explain the good news of Jesus?

581 out of 581 answered

Often

 6.7%

Sometimes

 25.3%

Rarely

 30.6%

Once or twice

 20.1%

Never

 17.2%

51.2% of respondents with external facing roles have discussed their Christian faith with an external individual.

If you have an external facing role, have you ever discussed your Christian faith with an external individual?

389 out of 581 answered

 Yes 51.2%

 No 48.8%

We also asked the questions, "If you have been able to explain the good news of Jesus to one or more work colleague(s), please describe that experience," and, "If you have felt able to mention your faith to individuals who are external to your employer, please describe your experience of this."

These questions provided encouraging insight into what happens when Christians share their faith with those in the workplace. Please read *Living for Jesus at work* to see some of the answers to these questions.

These results suggested a willingness amongst Christians to speak about their faith, but a concern about saying the wrong thing at the wrong time.

While chapter one focuses on building motivational foundations for living for Jesus in the workplace, and chapter two addresses the context in which we work, chapter three looks to combat the concern that sharing your faith “doesn’t seem appropriate for the workplace”, as we share wisdom on how to do this in a gentle and appropriate way that seeks to make the most of opportunities available to speak of Jesus.

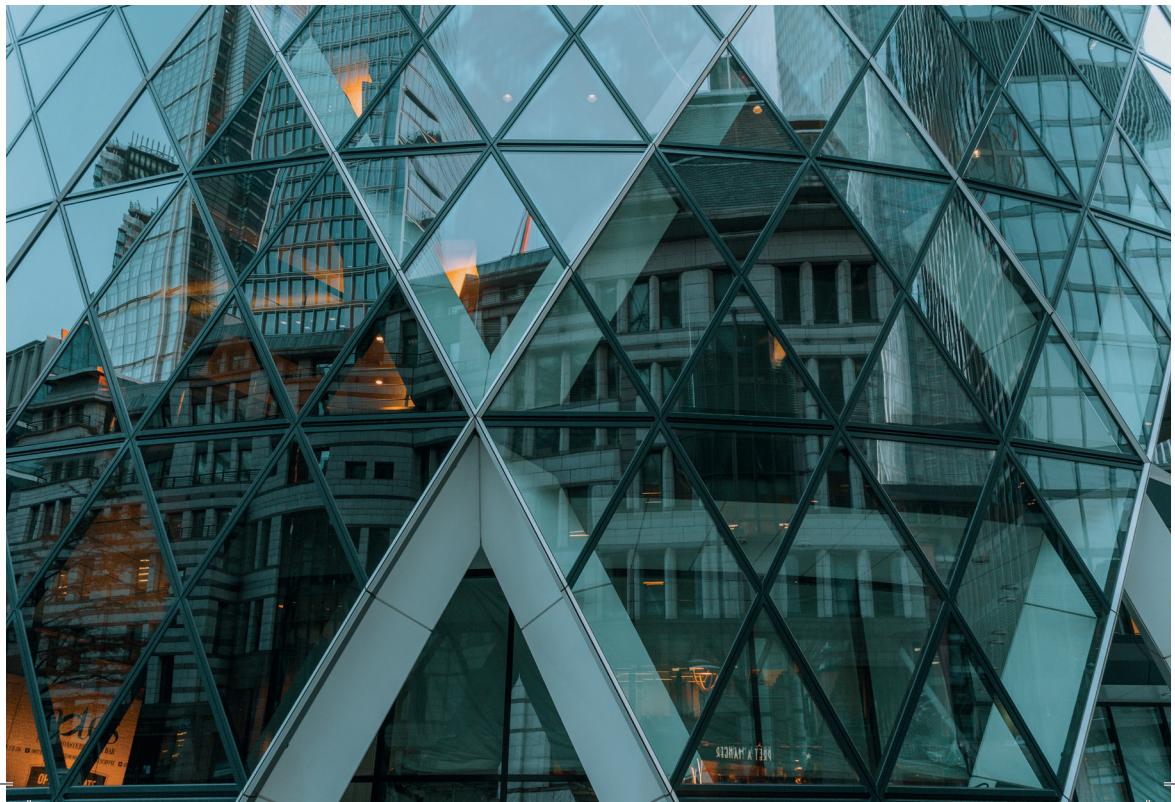
Chapter three also explores how living out the Christian faith can actually benefit those around us, including when it comes to inclusion, diversity and equality. *Living for Jesus at work* offers a biblical framework to engage with inclusion, diversity and equality programmes and how it may be good for the freedoms of Christians as well as others.

73.2% of respondents have had equality and diversity training in the last five years.

In the past five years, have you ever had equality and diversity training at work? 581 out of 581 answered

Yes 73.2%

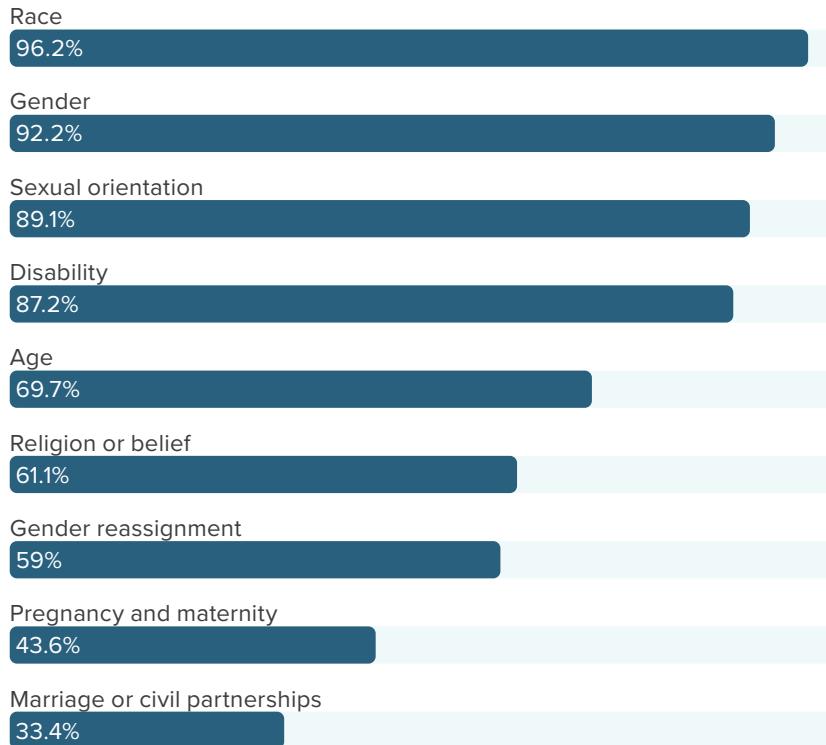
No 26.8%



The top five topics to be covered were race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age. It is worth noting that this question is reliant on the memory of the respondent.

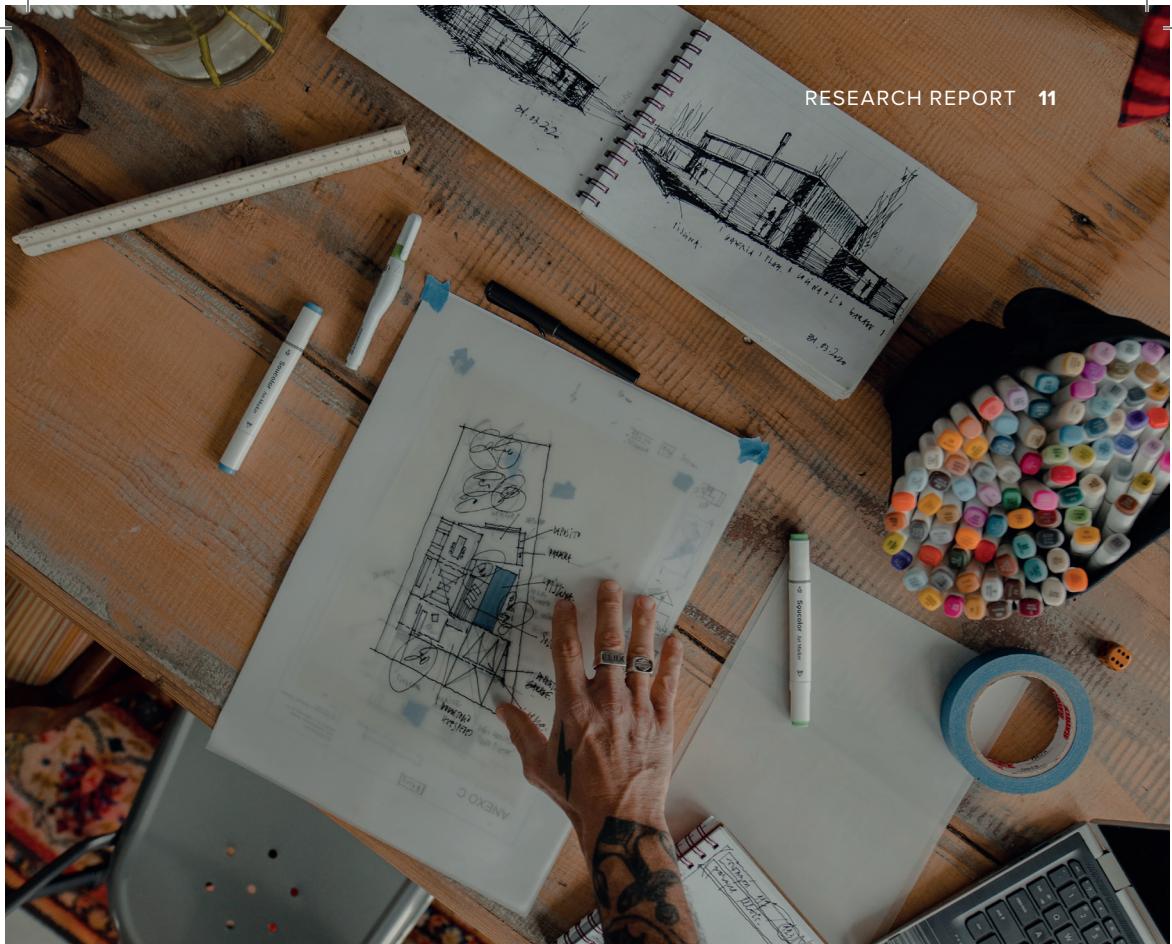
If yes, which of these characteristics were covered?

422 out of 581 answered



61.1% of those who had undergone equality and diversity training in the last five years said religion and belief were covered. Again, as this question is reliant on memory, it is worth noting that most of the respondents to this survey would have a vested interest in training on religion and belief, so they may be more likely to remember that it was covered.

54.4% of those who had training on religion and belief felt it didn't adequately represent their experience of Christianity. We asked the question, "If your equality and diversity training included religion and belief, and you felt Christianity was poorly represented, please describe what was missing or incorrect." Many respondents said that the training focused on other religions, that Christianity was poorly represented, or that the training didn't go into specific religions and beliefs at all.



If religion or belief was covered, did you feel that it fairly and adequately represented your experience as a Christian to other staff? 259 out of 581 answered

Yes 45.6%

No 54.4%

Only 60% had received training on equality and diversity regarding religion and belief, and just over half of that 60% felt that Christianity was either unfairly or inadequately represented. When it came to Christians feeling represented in inclusion and diversity training, experience was either lacking or negative.

A great way for that problem to be tackled is through Christians having better visibility and advocating for inclusion and diversity. Through Christians taking an interest in this area of work culture, we can improve things not only for other Christians, but for those of all faiths and none.

Navigating conscience issues

Chapter five of *Living for Jesus at work* addresses some of the issues of conscience that Christians may encounter in the workplace. The chapter is designed to prepare the reader and help them to think through how to respond with truth and love, should an issue arise.

Our intention is for *Living for Jesus at work* to be useful and practical, and so we didn't want to jump to any conclusions about what those issues might be. We therefore asked, firstly, how often respondents have felt the need to prioritise their job over their faith, and then, "Why have you felt it was necessary to prioritise your work over your Christian faith?"

From the 223 responses to this question, a clear pattern emerged. Most answers could be categorised into one of the following:

- There was a lack of accommodation for their Christian faith practices.
- The pressure of work meant they ran out of time for Christian practices.
- Pressure to compromise their integrity.
- Issues of conscience, specifically on issues of sexuality and gender.

Have you ever discussed a concern at work related to your Christian faith with your employer? 581 out of 581 answered

Yes 22%

No 78%



If yes, which of the following best represents how that conversation went? 123 out of 581 answered

I felt listened to, and action was taken to rectify the situation

44.7%

I felt listened to, but nothing changed as a result

36.6%

I didn't feel listened to, and they were dismissive of my concerns

10.6%

The conversation was awkward, and nothing changed as a result

5.7%

I didn't feel listened to, and my opportunities were limited because of raising my concerns

2.4%

At work, how often do you feel you are in a position where you must prioritise your job over your faith? 581 out of 581 answered

Never

59.2%

Once or twice a year

18.4%

Every few months

9.5%

At least once a month

6.7%

At least once a week

2.1%

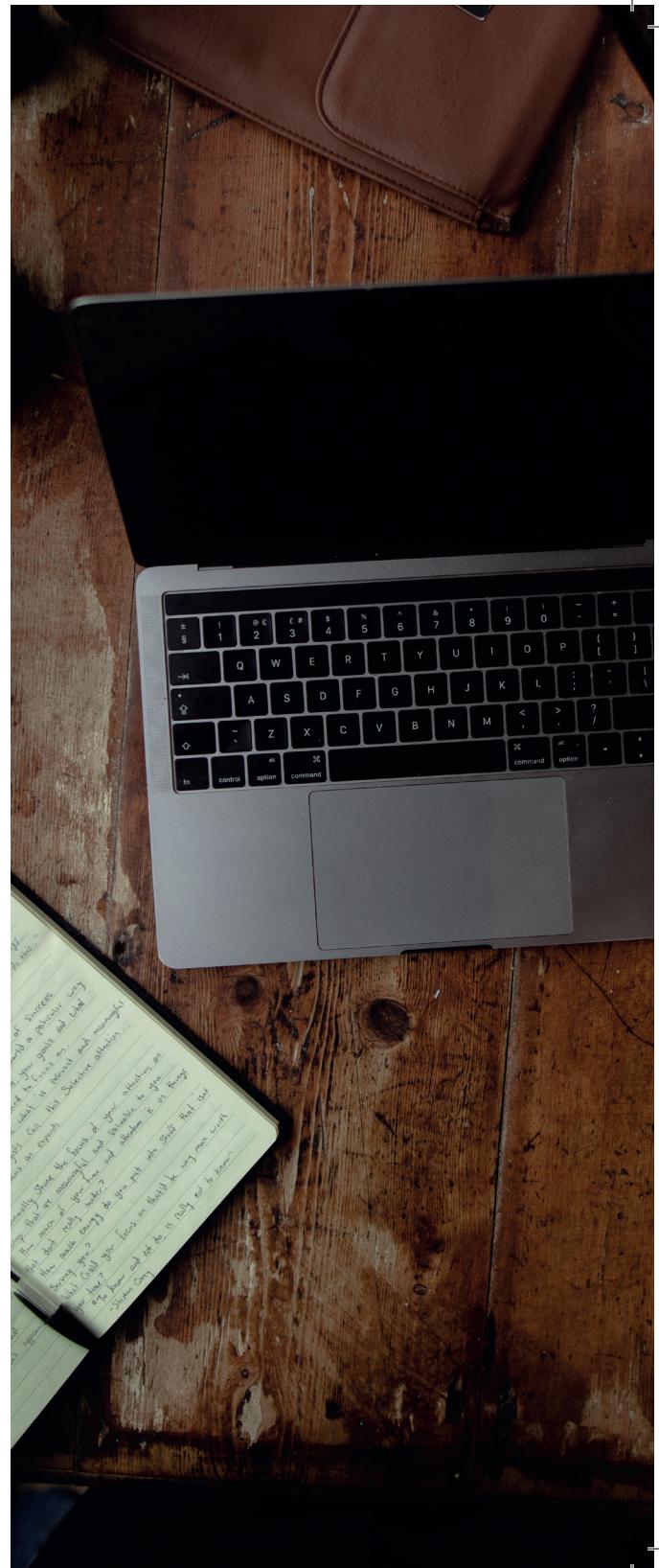
Every day

4.1%

44.7% of respondents who had raised a concern at their place of work regarding their Christian faith had a positive outcome. However, 78% of respondents had never discussed a concern at work related to their Christian faith. Only three people felt their opportunities were limited as a result of raising a concern with their employer.

This was encouraging, however, just over 40% of respondents had felt that they had to prioritise their job over their Christian faith at some point, and we cannot know from this data how many Christians had a concern at work related to their faith but had not felt able to raise it.

Living for Jesus at work aims to make sure Christians feel equipped to have this sort of conversation with their employer in a productive way, for both parties, and therefore we included the section 'Raising concerns about discrimination'.



Conclusion

The survey proved to be immensely valuable for guiding and informing our *Living for Jesus at work* resource. It provided firm foundations on which to build our resource.

The main statistic to take away from this resource is that 82.7% of respondents have tried to tell a colleague about Jesus. This is reflective of the very good news that Christians believe, which when truly known, is difficult to keep to oneself. Therefore, our hope and prayer for the *Living for Jesus at work* resource is that it will equip Christians to share their faith in the workplace with confidence, knowing their freedoms, with wisdom and gentleness, seeking to bless their colleagues with their actions and words.

“Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

– Matthew 9:37–38





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