

WHAT HAVE WE FOUND?

Disillusioned with politics

Only 6% think politicians can be trusted to keep their manifesto promises and half are less likely to believe what a politician says than they were five years ago (see page 16). Some six in 10 say they've become less trusting of the government and only a quarter think the secular political system is fair to Christians. And almost six in 10 believe none of the major parties support Christian values (see page 14).

Time to consider: Do you trust politicians and the political system? Do your complaints inspire you to act? Do you pray for our local and national leaders?

Engaged in politics

Yet, despite obvious disillusionment, Christians are not shying away from engaging in politics. Eight in 10 said they are certain to vote in the next general election – double that of the national population. Almost a quarter said they are more aware of how they can get involved in political issues than they were five years ago, and three in 10 say they are very interested in politics, with another 56% fairly interested (see page 6).

We've found that evangelicals are a lot more engaged in political activity than the average person, with 78% having signed an e-petition last year (compared to 9% of the general population), 57% having contacted a local parliamentarian or councillor (compared to just 2% – see page 12). A substantial 4% also said they have served as an MP or local councillor (see page 8).

Time to consider: How can we make sure our engagement with politics is more than an occasional vote, petition-signature or prayer? How can you make a difference in tackling local or national issues?

Looking for honourable public leaders

Personal integrity is clearly very important to evangelicals. When deciding which candidate to vote for, the most highly-ranked factors were: being honourable and not corrupt, having clear convictions and sticking to them and having a good record as a local MP or councillor.

Interestingly only a third said it was very important to be a Christian (see page 11). A huge 92% agreed that we need to see more Christians willing to get involved in party politics and stand for election, but just 7% said they had been explicitly encouraged by their church to get involved in party politics (see pages 18 and 20).

Time to consider: How can we identify, mentor and properly support public leaders and politicians of integrity and faith drawn from our churches and communities?

Prioritising the common good

When choosing which party to vote for in a general election, the highest proportion (39%) select the party most helping others in need, with just 5% selecting the party that will most help them personally (see page 11).

Our panel consider poverty/inequality the most important issue facing the UK today, contrasting sharply with the general population. Some 32% chose it as the most important issue compared to just 4% of the national population. The highest-ranked issue by the national population was race/immigration (selected by 21%), but just 6% of evangelicals thought this was the UK's key issue (see page 12).

More than seven in 10 say that policies ensuring religious liberty are very important and would affect their vote, making this the highest-ranking issue. Ranked second were policies likely to make a positive difference to the poorest people in the UK, and third were policies to eliminate human trafficking (see page 13).

Time to consider: How do you decide who to vote for? What issues are important to you and why? Do you consider God's view on these issues?

Voting differently

A quarter (24%) are still undecided which way they will vote, indicating a large proportion of the evangelical vote is still to be decided. Only 55% say they are going to vote for the same party as they did in 2010, and there is evidence of a shift away from the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. It's clear evangelicals are not a block vote, and (discounting the undecideds), if there was a general election tomorrow 31% said they would vote for Labour, 28% for Conservative, 12% for UKIP and 11% for Liberal Democrats (see pages 22-23).

Time to consider: As Christians how do we deal with disagreement in politics and relate well with others who have very different views?

Politics and the pulpit

While evangelical churches will speak publicly about some political issues and may organise hustings or prayer for the general election, it's clear they steer away from being party political or partisan.

A third of our panel have been explicitly encouraged by their church to vote, and 30% to support or oppose a particular policy. But only 2% said their church had explicitly encouraged them to support or oppose a particular candidate (see pages 20-21).

Time to consider: Does your church teach on political issues? Are there creative ways your church can encourage people to think through political issues and to engage in politics?

Show Up

The Show Up campaign calls Christians to more positive engagement in politics and was launched by the Evangelical Alliance and Christians in Politics, supported by a wide range of Christian organisations and church networks.

For more information including resources visit our dedicated election website: election2015.eauk.org

Public Leadership

The Evangelical Alliance is passionate about seeing God's people become effective voices for good in society and wants the UK Church to have a strong culture of Public Leadership.

Visit www.thepublicleader.com to find out more and access stories and resources.