

JPIT research results

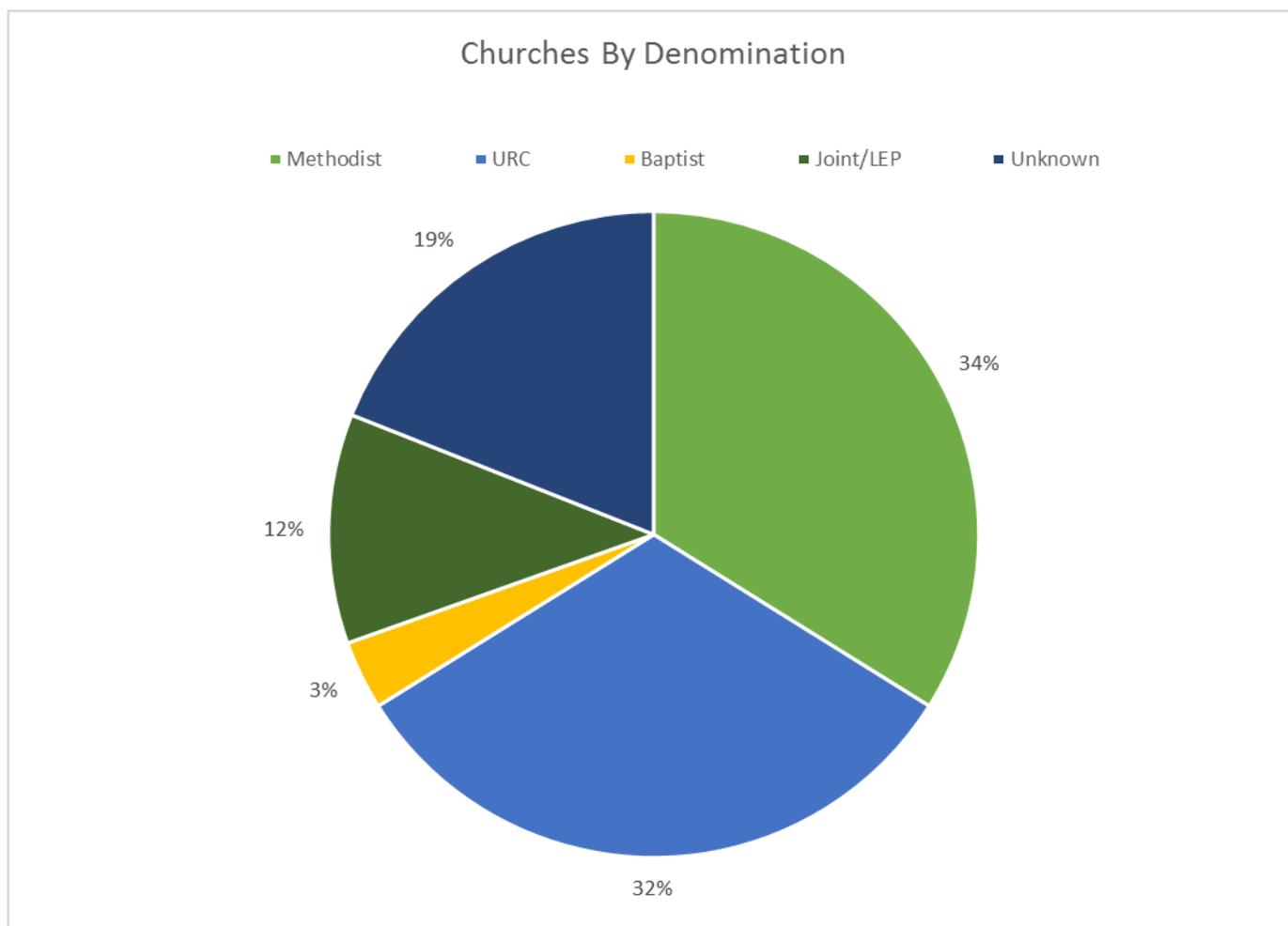
Introduction

This document sets out to display the results given from a questionnaire distributed throughout Baptist, Methodist and URC churches within the West Midlands during 2014. Each church was given the opportunity to comment on twelve areas affecting society. The results from this questionnaire look at the top responses given, and whether each church chose to agree, disagree or chose to not comment.

153 churches responded to this questionnaire, with 129 completing all questions. Two churches chose not to comment throughout the questionnaire, and one church answered only the first question. The results shown are from each individual questionnaire received.

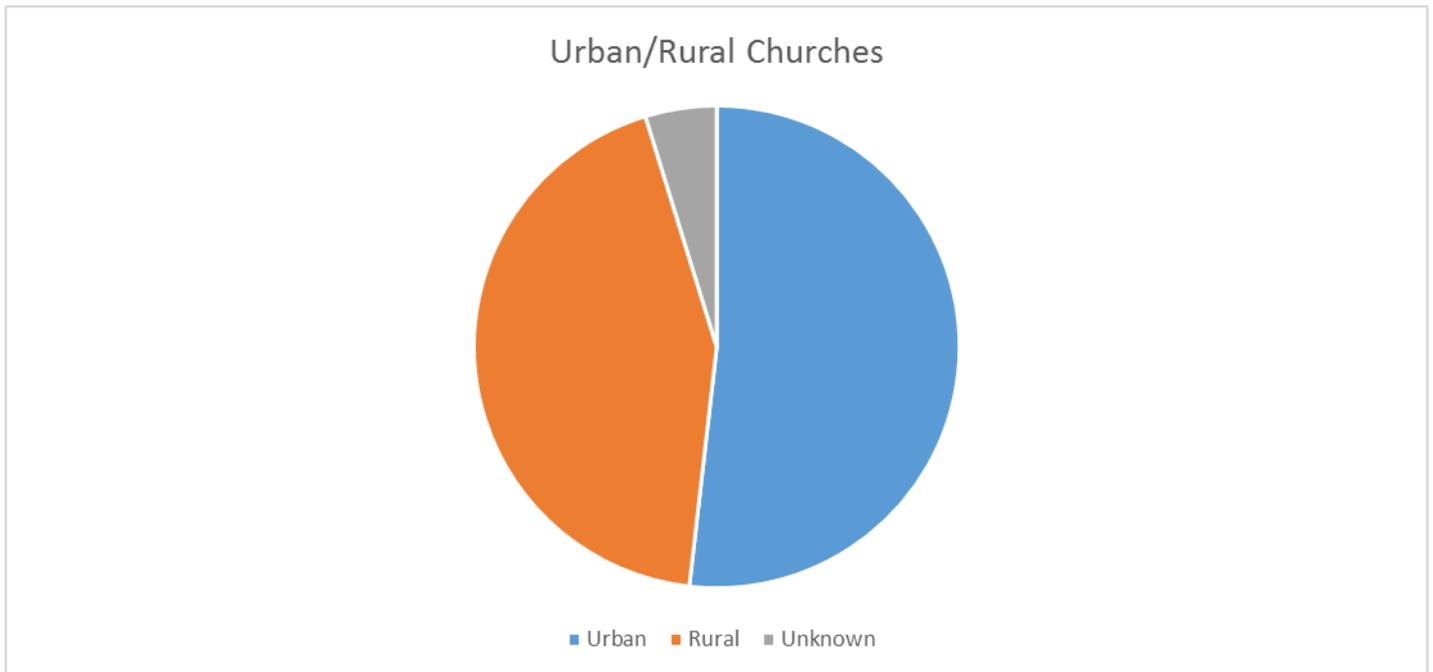
The expected response rate was that from around ten people per church, however it is not apparent from the results of some churches whether this was achieved. From the questionnaires returned, it appears that there were 490 individuals expressing their views. Some churches chose to record only one suggestion per box, giving the impression it was a unanimous decision or that it is the opinion of just one person. Taking into account this number, it averages as just three individual responses per church.

The following graph shows a break down of the churches by denomination. This is by individual churches, and so when a church returned individual questionnaires from the same congregation, it has been counted as one. For those which are listed as unknown, they either did not choose to write a location, or stated that they wished to be anonymous.

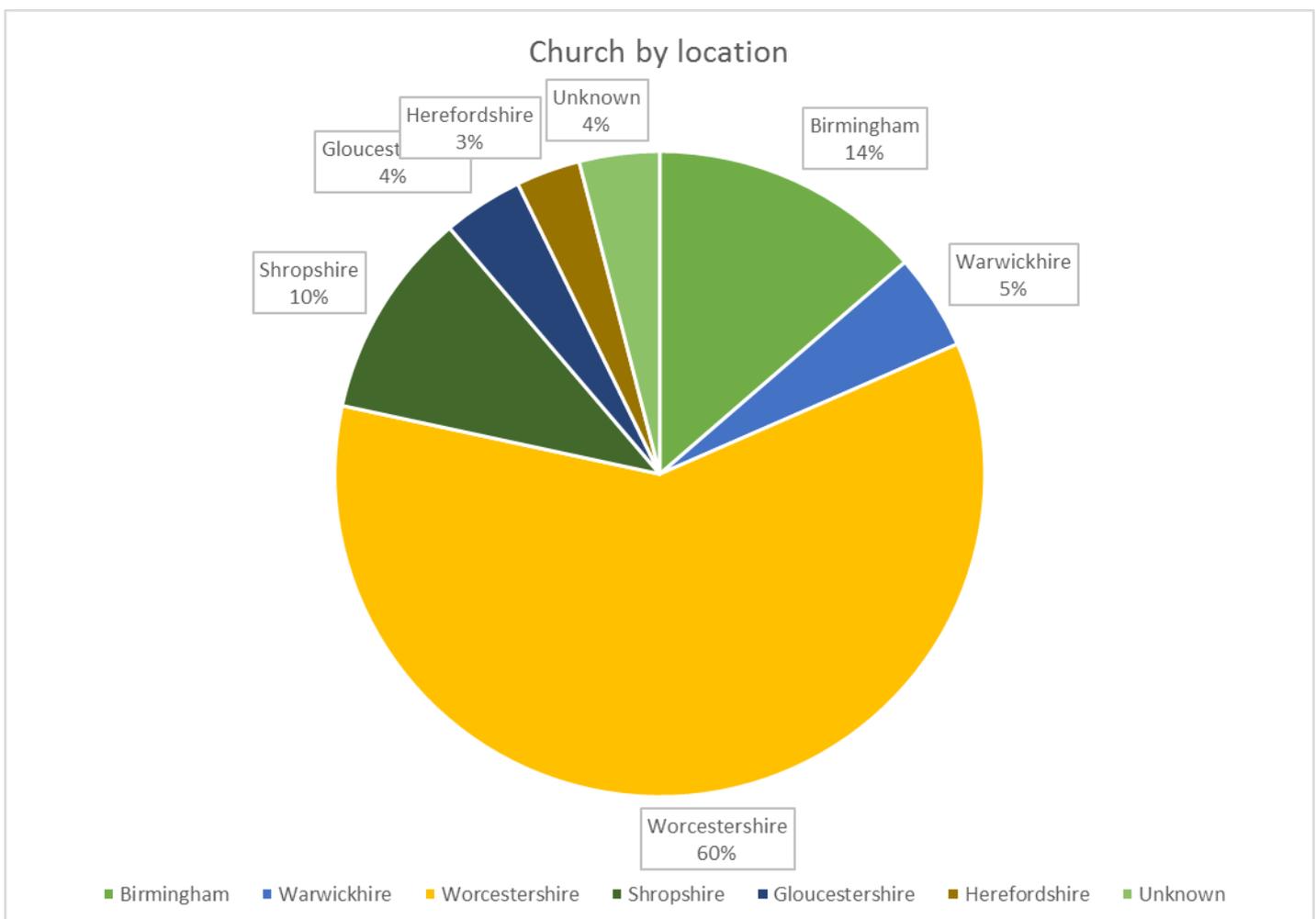


Urban/Rural breakdown

This graph shows the breakdown between rural churches and urban churches.

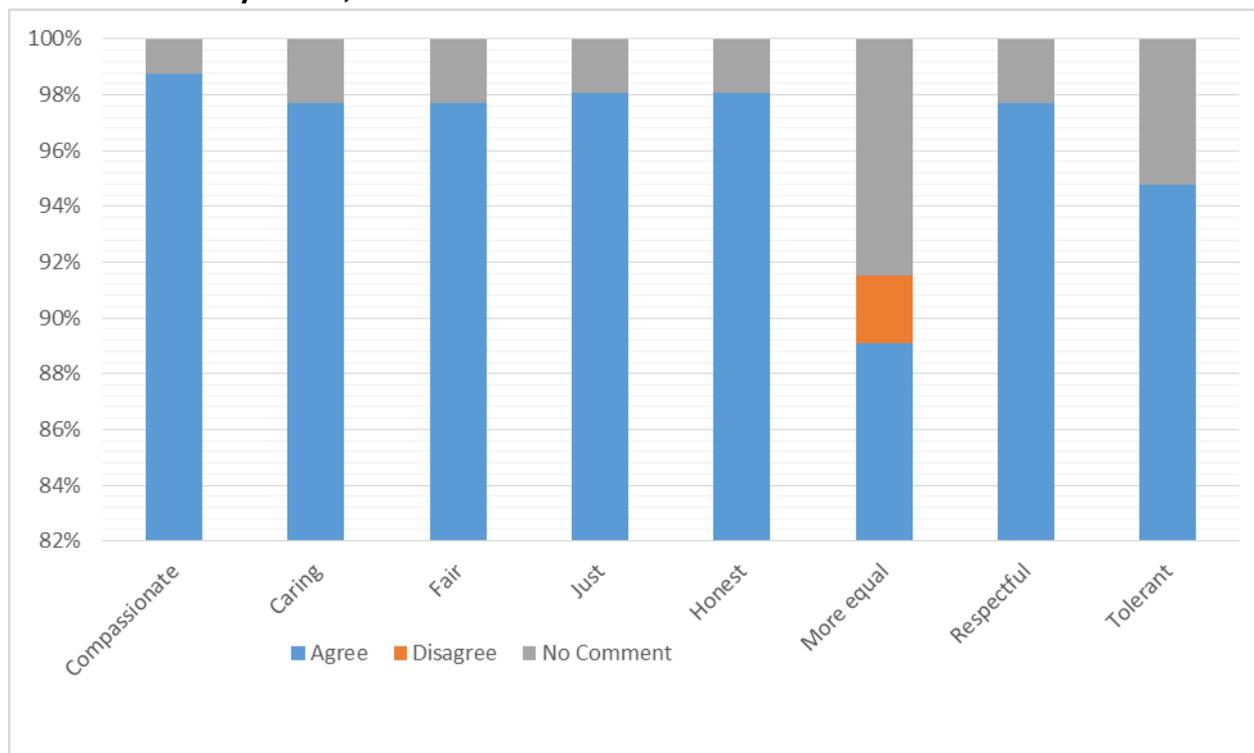


Church by location:



Analysis

1. We want a society that is;



The results shown in the graph above cover the first question asked. Each church answered this question, with just 1% of churches choosing “No comment” for the concept of a compassionate society.

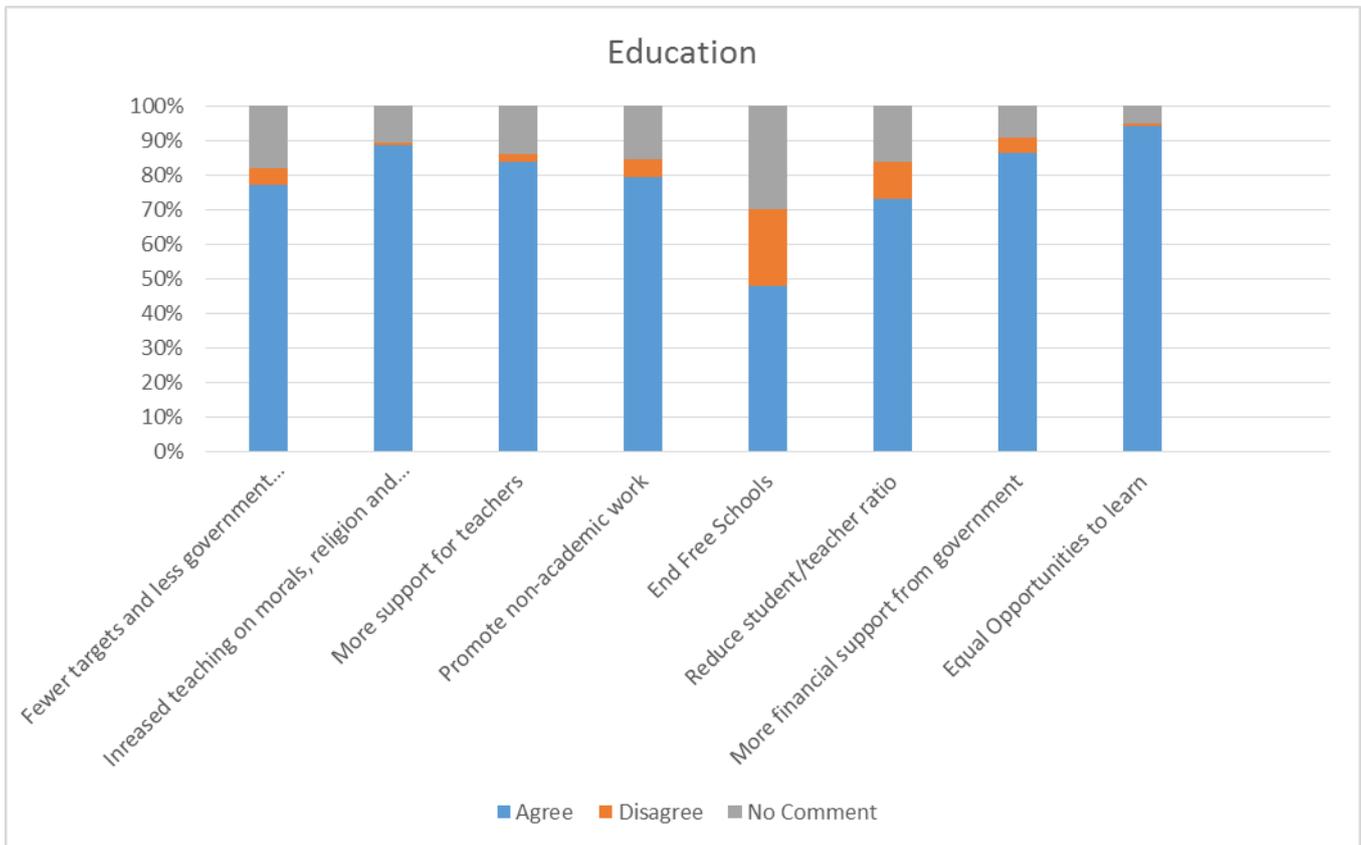
As it can be seen, the area with the most mixed views is that of a “more equal” society. 3% of responses were that of not wanting society to become more equal. Each commented that they did not feel it was possible to be equal.

Each questionnaire completed included responses to the first question. Additional comments were also given by 13% of responders. These were mainly focused the area of equality. One church wrote “It is not possible for society to be equal, Jesus and the bible has taught us that”, with another putting “We may wish for our world to be this way, and churches should be setting the example, but this is not always possible”

The top three responses for this area were;

1. A compassionate society
2. A just society
3. An honest society.

Education



When looking at the subject of education, it can be seen that some areas were more controversial than others, although predominantly each church agreed with the suggestions.

Regarding the option of “End Free Schools”, 22 individual questionnaires stating that they did not know enough about free schools to comment.

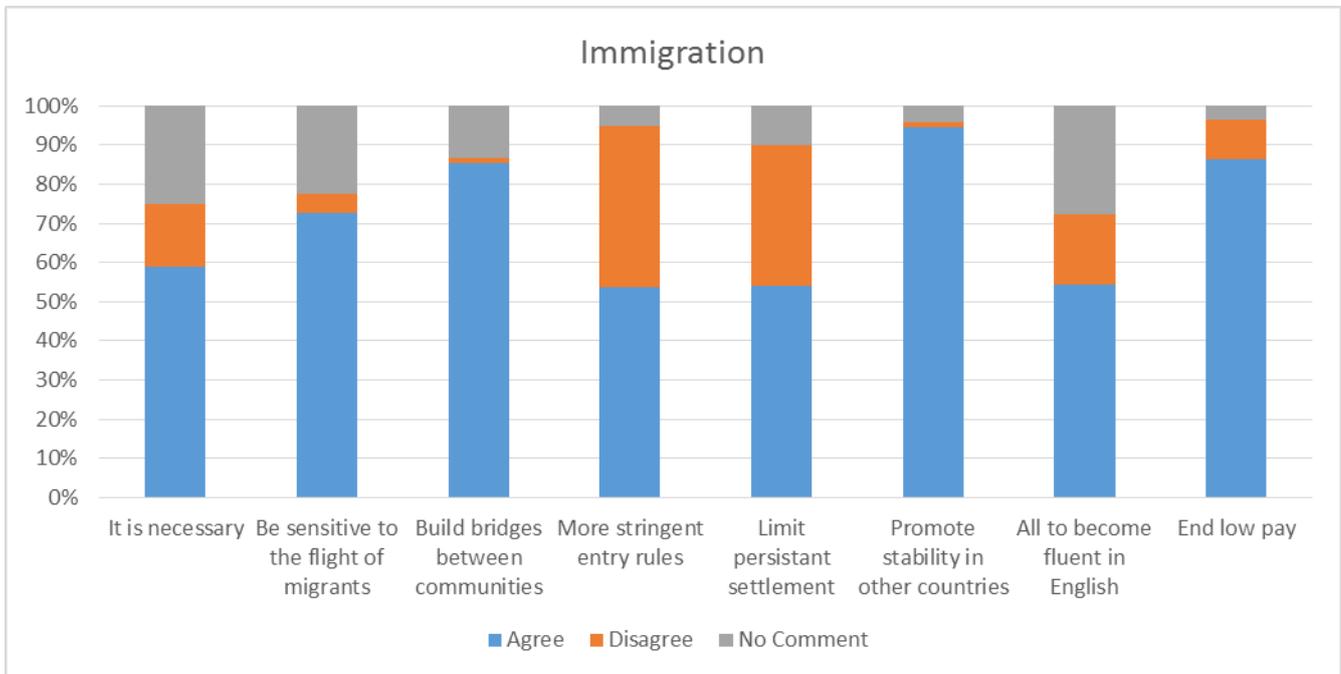
Two others also wrote that they were not aware of the support teachers currently had, and therefore did not feel able to comment on it. Three questionnaires mentioned the need for “ending Ofsted”.

An increased teaching on morals was mentioned by twenty-four churches, each mentioning the desire for more teaching on morals.

The top responses for this area were:

1. Equal Opportunities to learn
2. Increased teaching on morals, religion and respect.
3. More financial support from government.

Immigration



Despite the results being somewhat mixed in responses, very few additional comments were given around the area of immigration. Concern was expressed that it would not be possible for “all to become fluent in English” however twenty-two questionnaires expressed the need for all to be able to communicate in English, as a need, rather than fluency.

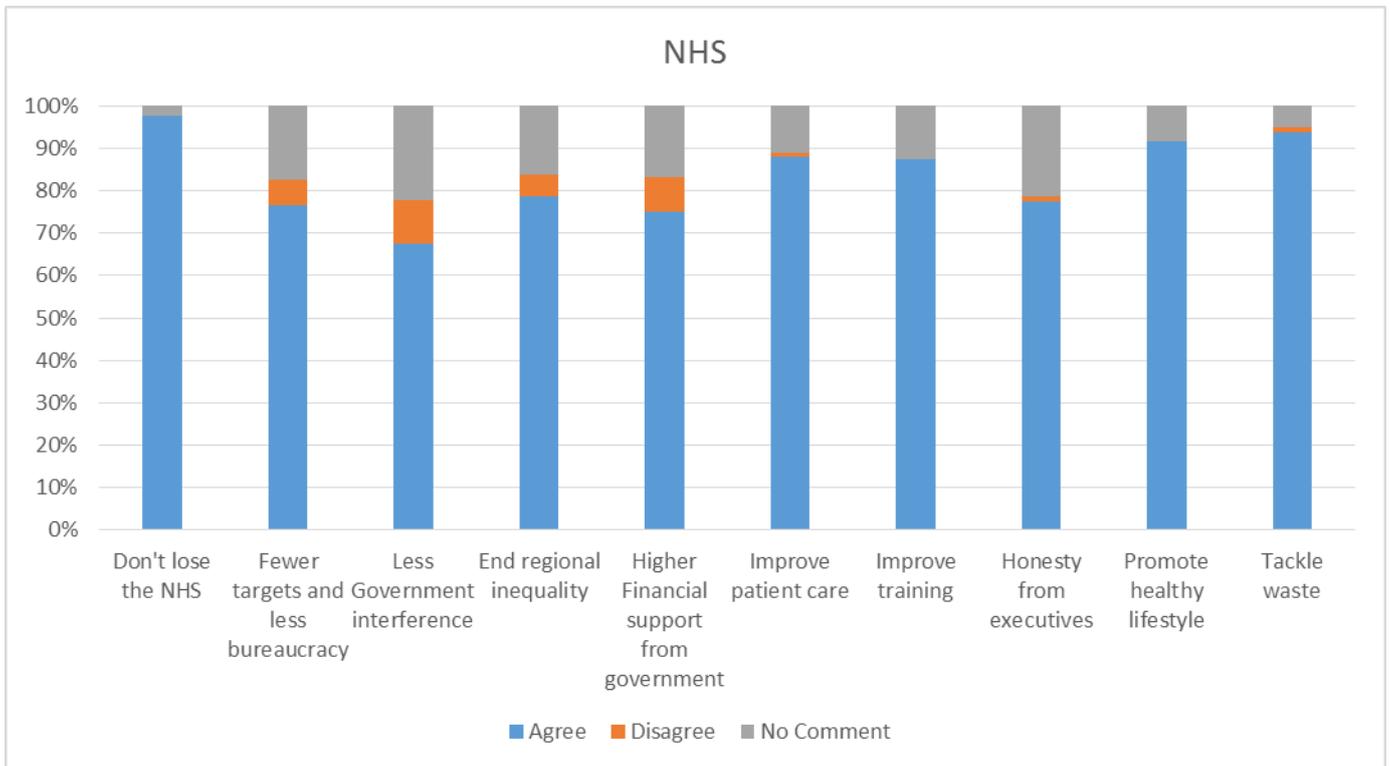
Questions were raised by two churches regarding the limitation of permanent settlement. Both asked what the need of that would be, and whether it was a priority currently.

Five churches felt that low pay was not an area to be discussed within Immigration

The top three responses for this area were;

1. Promote stability in other countries
2. End low pay
3. Build bridges between communities.

NHS



The responses gathered regarding the NHS were highly in favour with the majority of responses agreeing with the suggestions given. The concept of losing the NHS received over 97% of agreement. Those who responded with “no comment” also chose not to comment on the other areas of the NHS as well.

One church wrote that by lessening the government's intervention would lead to “confusion and privatisation”, including the need for “a complete restructuring to ensure compatibility throughout the country”. Two churches however both wrote an additional comment that there needed to be “less interference and staffing of health trusts”.

The area of higher financial support from government gave way to concerns that this would be at the detriment of other services.

The top three responses are;

1. Don't lose the NHS
2. Tackle Waste
3. Promote healthy lifestyle

Housing



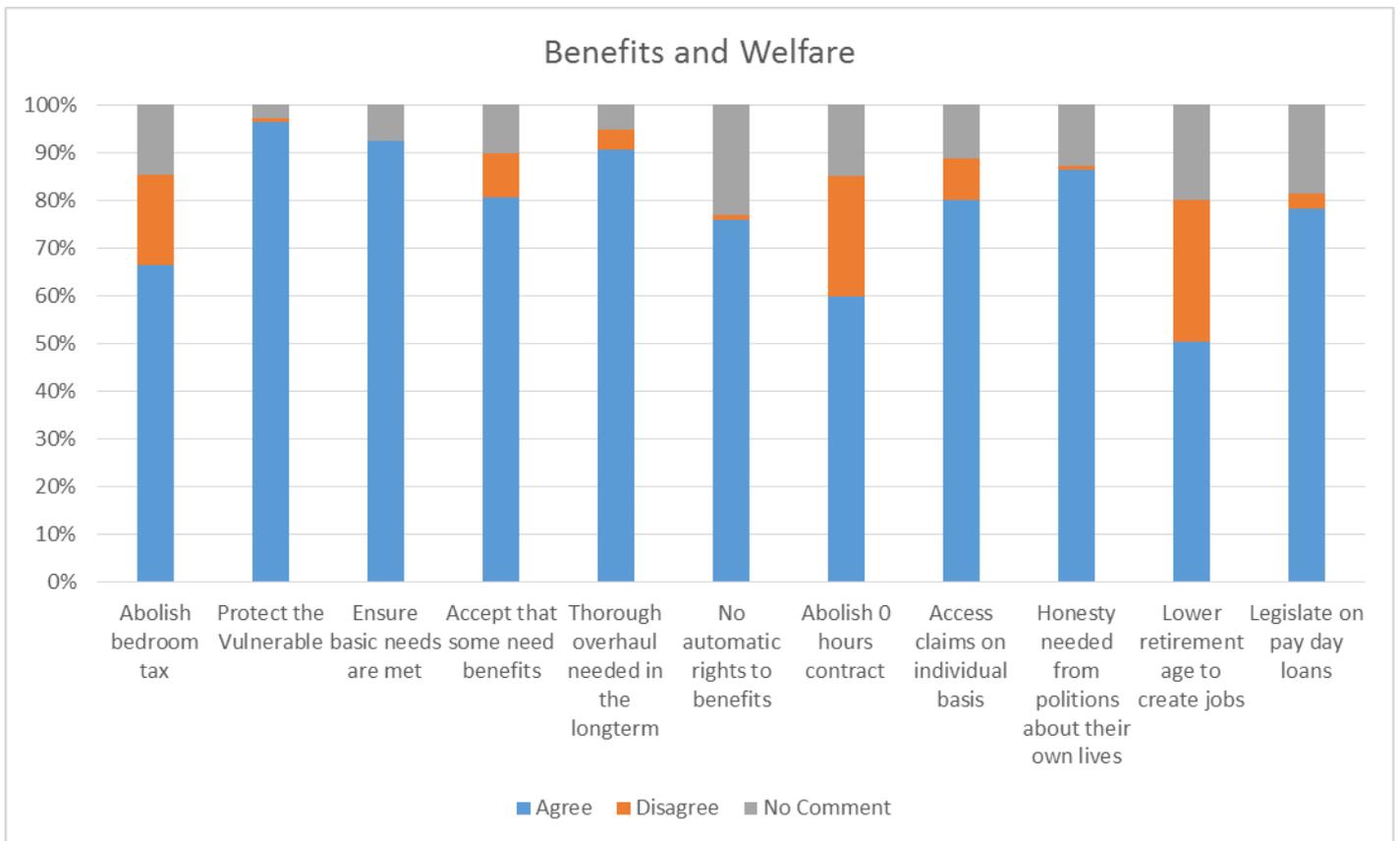
The area of bedroom tax received the most mixed results, with seven questionnaires being returned with including extra notes on this area. Two asked what bedroom tax was, and with the other five commenting that it was an area that they did not know enough about it to comment on.

Five comments were made regarding the need for properties currently unoccupied to be improved and made habitable prior to being let or sold, with another two commenting on the need for social housing to be increased by using existing properties rather than any new built.

The top three responses were;

1. More housing for first time buyers
2. Improve social housing
3. Occupy more empty properties

Benefits and Welfare



The area of lowering retirement age to create jobs was controversial for some individuals, with it providing the most additional comments. Of these, some were focused around older people teaching skills to younger people, and the possible skills transfer available.

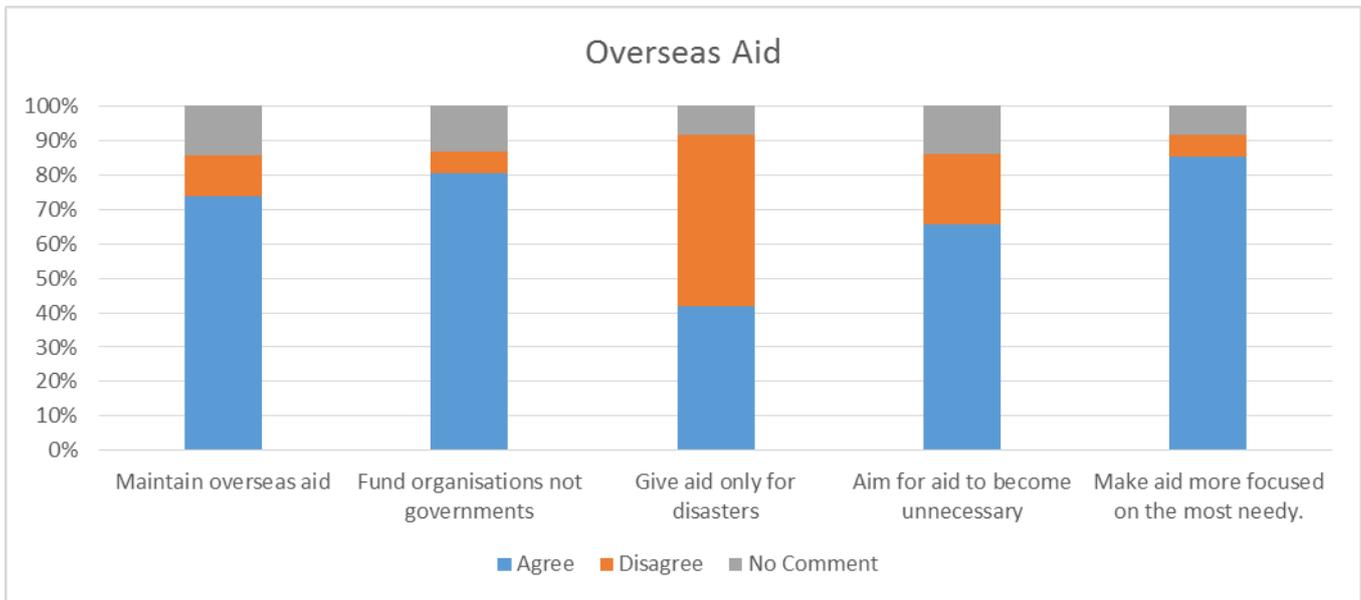
The need to “protect the vulnerable” has over 95% of agreement. The one comment disagreeing with this explained “It is not possible to know who the vulnerable are”.

Two comments were made regarding pay day loans, with both asking what they were. This was also replicated within the area of abolishing zero-hour contracts.

The top three responses were;

1. Protect the vulnerable
2. Thorough overhaul needed in the long term
3. Ensure basic needs are met

Overseas Aid



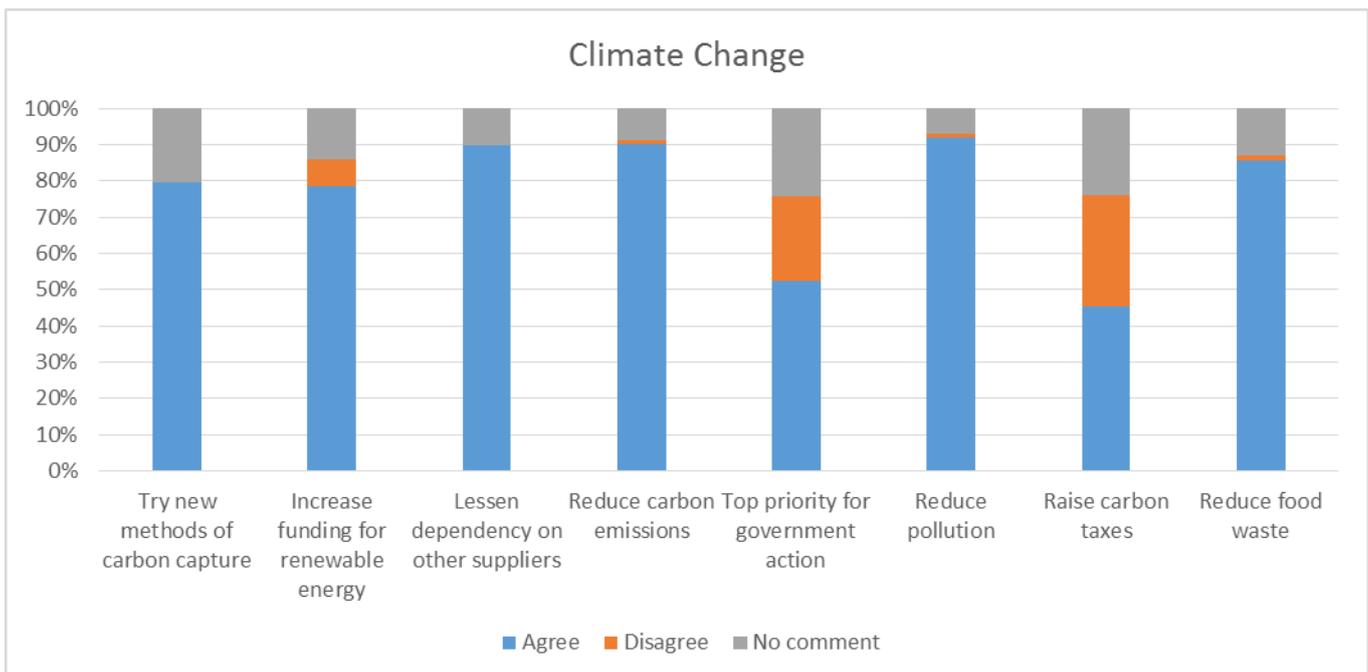
Overall, Overseas Aid received a very mixed response from those completing the questionnaire. Despite this however, few additional comments were received. Those which were were mainly focused around the area of aiming for aid to become unnecessary. This was felt by 11 questionnaires to be “impossible” and “not something we should be aiming for, there will always be those in need”.

It appears that the area of overseas aid received the most “disagree” comments. This however, may be due to wording of the responses.

The top three responses were;

1. Make aid more focused on the needy
2. Fund organisations not governments
3. Maintain overseas aid.

Climate Change



Like other areas, there was a hesitancy to comment on the area of Climate Change, with around 15% of responses being “No Comment”. Overall, 31 questionnaires were returned with additional comments,

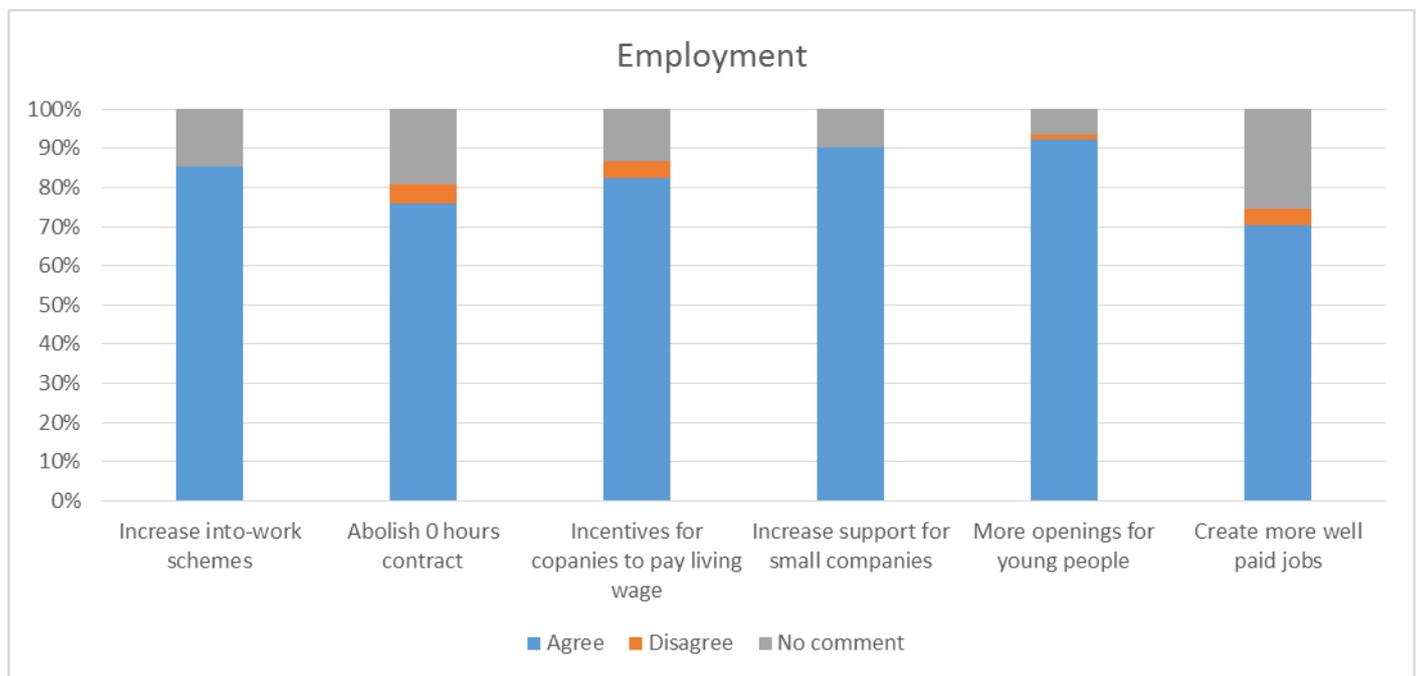
stating that they were not familiar with the government’s policies surrounding climate change, and did not feel able to answer. One wrote that rather than being a top priority for government action “We should make it a high priority, but not top. It cannot be a top priority until all people are informed”.

Five questionnaires expressed a fear that raised carbon taxes would be passed onto consumers, however three mentioned that “raised taxes were the only way forward”, with two requiring that it happened gradually.

The top three responses were;

1. Reduce pollution
2. Lessen dependency on other suppliers
3. Reduce carbon emissions

Employment



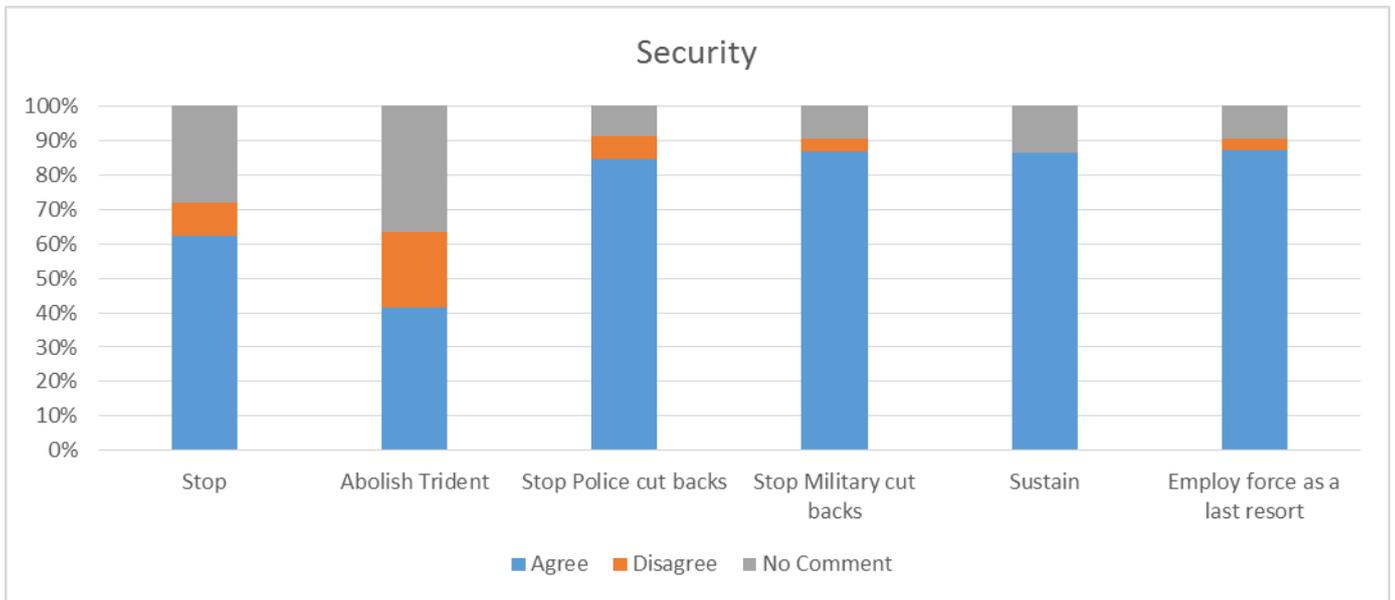
Responses for the area of employment received overall a vote of agreement, with just concern regarding the idea of “creating more well paid jobs”. Thirteen questionnaires were returned with additional comments on this area, including questions around the feasibility of this, and whether it would be at the loss of current jobs.

One rural church wrote that it was important to create jobs within the market with more opportunities for people to have flexible working, rather than jobs being created for the sake of it.

The top three responses were;

1. More openings for young people
2. Increase support for small companies
3. Incentives for companies to pay living wage

Security



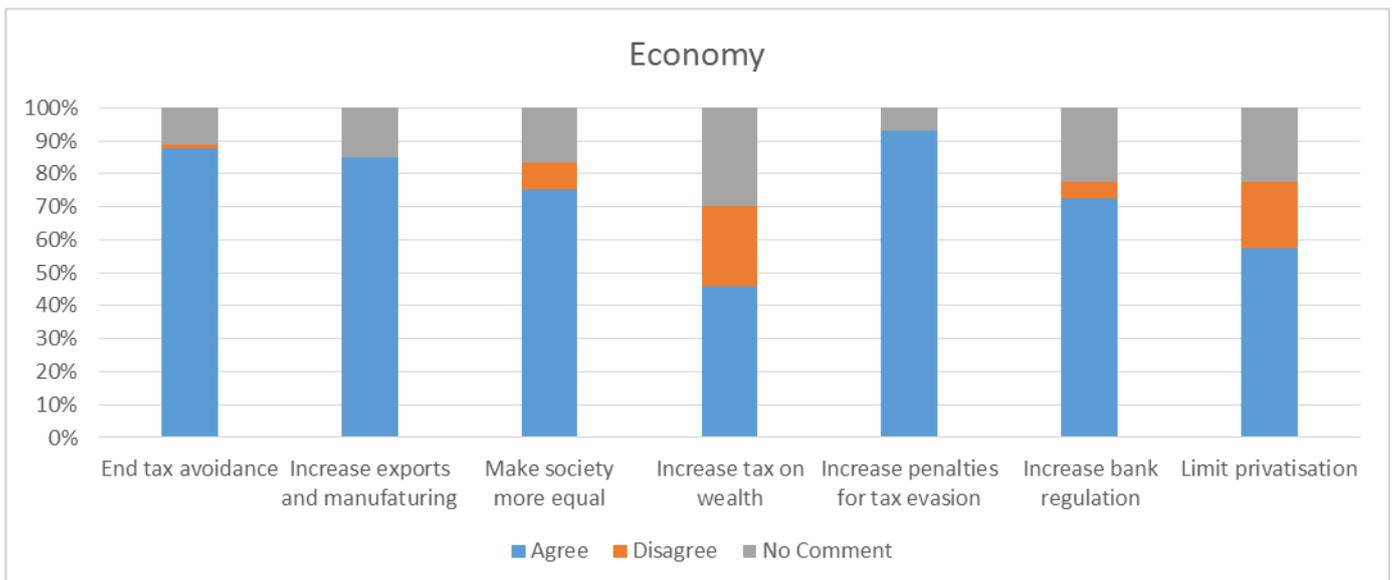
Like others previously, the area of security led to confusion for some individuals. Abolishing Trident received over 30% of “no comment” responses, or which over half of these also included questions asking “What is Trident?”

One church wrote that they felt this was not an area churches should be concerned with, and four others responded that the area was too complex to consider.

The top three responses were;

1. Employ force only as a last resort
2. Stop police cut-backs
3. Stop military cut-backs

Economy



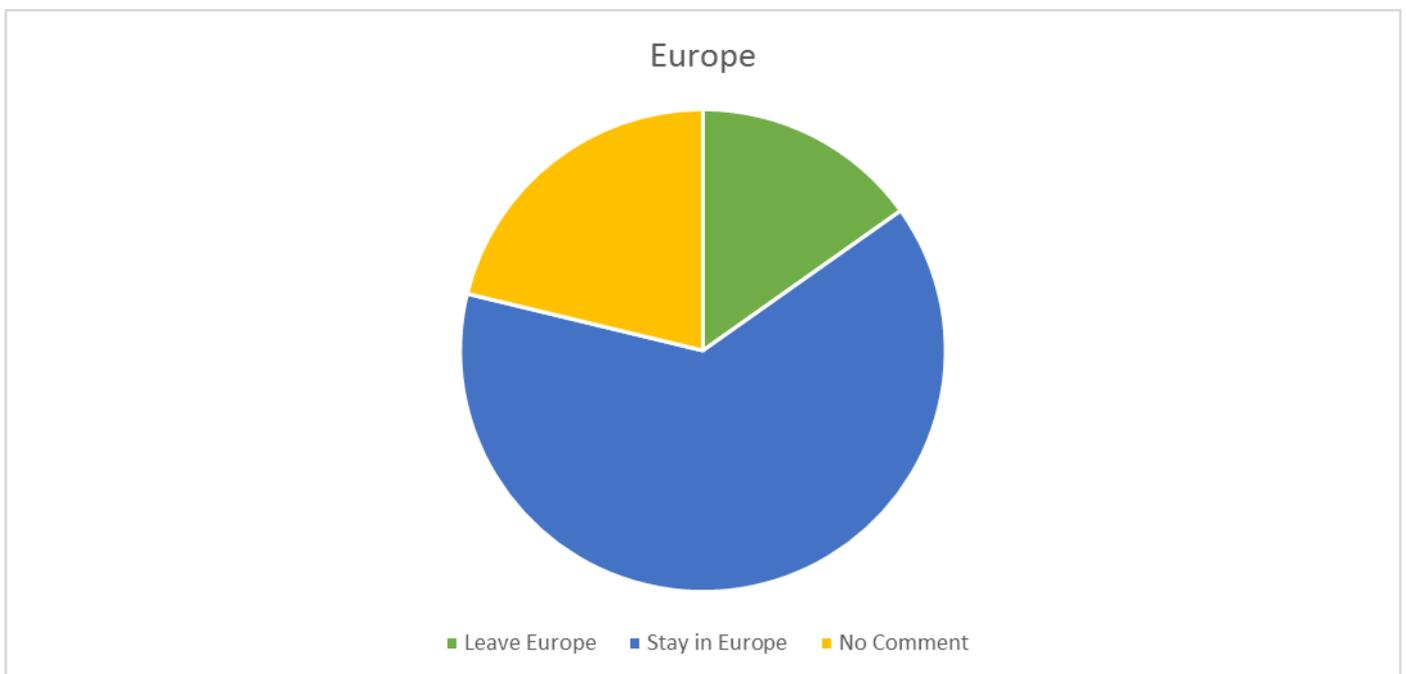
Economy was a controversial area for some questionnaires, with a mixture of responses on the concept of increased tax on wealth. For some (16 questionnaires), it was seen as a good option, allowing finances to be spread more fairly. However, for three churches, it was interpreted as taxing savings, and which they felt was unfair on many.

One church wrote of the importance of bringing public transport back into public ownership, as outsourcing of the key areas of the economy was detrimental to those who are being hit hardest by changes in policy – ie the poorest.

The top three responses were;

1. Increase penalties for tax evasion
2. End tax avoidance
3. Increase exports and manufacturing.

Europe



Within the information regarding Europe, fourteen commented that they felt strongly that it is important to stay in Europe, with three saying that they felt it was important to leave Europe.

Additional Information

From the results gathered, nineteen questionnaires were returned with comments regarding the effectiveness or usefulness of filling out surveys, with another two saying that time should be spent learning, praying and reading the bible together rather than answering questions and ticking boxes.

Summary

The results gathered show a lean towards supporting those who are in need or difficulty, over a long-term basis. This is apparent through the desire to support those in need of affordable housing, making aid focused on those in need and the thorough overhaul of the benefits system.

The areas with high controversy were those that effect people on a day-to-day basis, within local communities, such as ending bedroom tax and raising taxes.

Drafting a manifesto, given the information provided by these churches would be possible. However, some areas would need more discussion, such as the area of Europe.

Taking into account the responses from the areas of Employment, NHS, Benefits & Welfare and Security, it would be possible to see the overall favour and draft a manifesto around that. The other areas however, would need more information to avoid confusion or ambiguity around some terms and ideas such as Free Schools and Bedroom Tax.