



Intercultural Church Research

The Harper Results

Research By

Eido Research



Background

During 2022 Harper Church participated in an Intercultural Church research project. The project was run by Eido Research on behalf of Sim and the Intercultural Hub. The project was trying to reach Christians in churches across the UK. Eido have kindly given us the “Harper Data” so that we can understand our own church context.

There were 37 full or partial Harper responses to the survey. This represents 26% of our membership figure (though there is no way of knowing if the respondents are all members).

The sample is 19% of an average Sunday morning congregation attendance and 14% of all the adults who are associated with Harper. This is a reasonable sample of Harper people and means that results should be generally representative. For most of the questions there were 30 responses.

Those who answered the survey questions described themselves in the following ways:

Which of the following best describes your role at your church?



Ministry Leader



Volunteer



Church Goer



Church Leader or
Associate Leader

The above chart shows that the sample might slightly over represent leadership views since 19% of respondents described themselves as some kind of leader. On the question of ethnic background there were 30 responses, 15 indicating white and 15 indicating non-white.



Section 1

Church Barriers to Engaging in **Intercultural** Mission

Respondents were asked to assess different potential barriers to churches engaging in intercultural mission and assess the extent to which these were barriers at Harper.



Question 1a

To what extent are the following barriers to your church engaging more in intercultural mission?

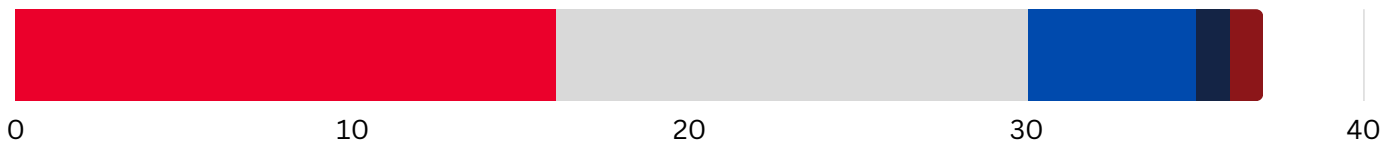
Lack of intercultural mission activities to get involved with at my church



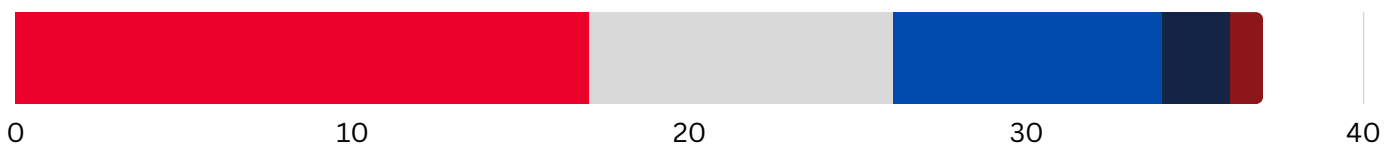
Lack of ethnic diversity in the local area



Lack of guides and training resources on how to engage in intercultural mission



Fear of making mistakes (doing / saying the wrong thing)



Lack of understanding of different ethnicities

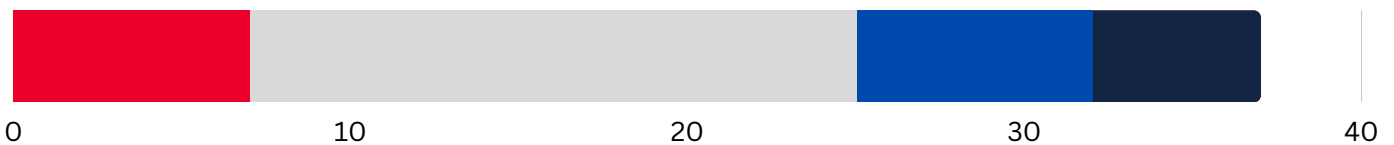


■ Not a barrier ■ Somewhat of a barrier ■ Moderate barrier ■ Significant barrier ■ Extreme barrier

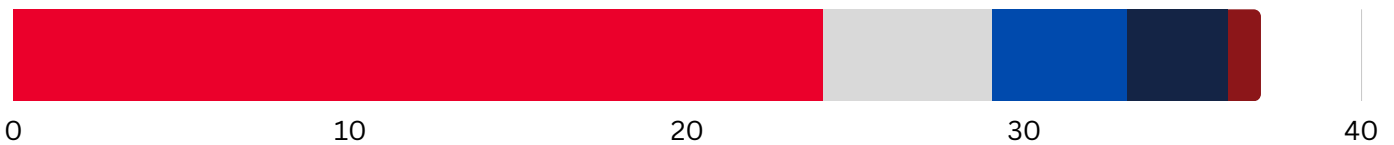
Question 1a

To what extent are the following barriers to your church engaging more in intercultural mission?

Lack of understanding of what local ethnicities need



Lack of desire / conviction to reach out to different ethnic groups



Lack of desire / conviction to engage in outreach in general



Different ethnic groups won't feel welcome in our church (due to a lack of diversity in leadership)



Different ethnic groups won't feel welcome in our church (due to a lack of diversity in the congregation)



■ Not a barrier ■ Somewhat of a barrier ■ Moderate barrier ■ Significant barrier ■ Extreme barrier

Summary

The issues perceived by Harper people to be the most significant barriers were:

- > A lack of understanding of what local ethnicities need
- > A lack of guides and training resources on how to engage in intercultural mission
- > A lack of understanding of different ethnicities
- > Fear of making mistakes (doing/saying the wrong thing)

The response of those who selected 'non-white' in the ethnicity question were then examined to compare with the sample as a whole.



Question 1b

To what extent are the following barriers to your church engaging more in intercultural mission? Those responding 'non-white' to ethnicity question.

Lack of intercultural mission activities to get involved with at my church



Lack of ethnic diversity in the local area



Lack of guides and training resources on how to engage in intercultural mission



Fear of making mistakes (doing / saying the wrong thing)



Lack of understanding of different ethnicities



■ Not a barrier ■ Somewhat of a barrier ■ Moderate barrier ■ Significant barrier ■ Extreme barrier

Question 1b

To what extent are the following barriers to your church engaging more in intercultural mission? Those responding 'non-white' to ethnicity question.

Lack of understanding of what local ethnicities need



Lack of desire / conviction to reach out to different ethnic groups



Lack of desire / conviction to engage in outreach in general



Different ethnic groups won't feel welcome in our church (due to a lack of diversity in leadership)



Different ethnic groups won't feel welcome in our church (due to a lack of diversity in the congregation)



■ Not a barrier ■ Somewhat of a barrier ■ Moderate barrier ■ Significant barrier ■ Extreme barrier



Summary

The results are broadly similar to the full sample, though understandably lack of ethnic diversity in leadership is seen as an extreme barrier which might result in people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds not feeling as welcome in the church.



Section 2

Church's Perceived Commitment to an **Intercultural** Approach

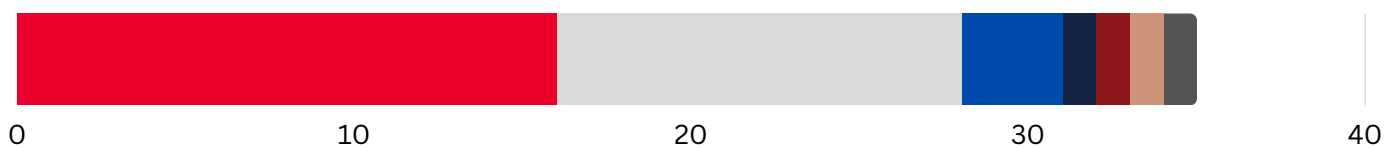
In order to gain an understanding of the congregational perception of the church's commitment to an intercultural approach, the following question was asked.



Question 2a

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

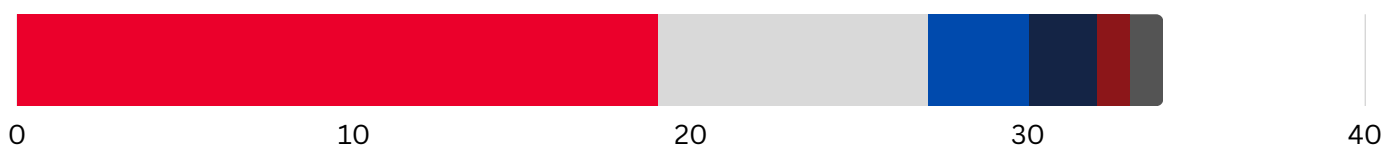
Intercultural mission is a priority for our church



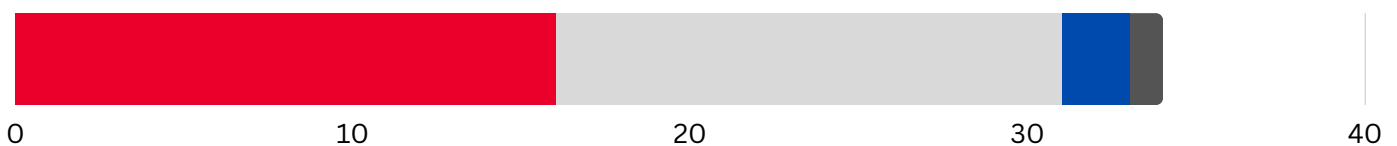
Intercultural mission is stated as part of the vision and values of our church



We engage in intercultural mission because of a deep conviction that it is the right thing to do



Our leadership team have a conviction to engage in intercultural mission



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Slightly Agree ■ Unsure ■ Slightly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Summary

A significant majority of respondents agreed (whether strongly, slightly or simply agreed) with all of these statements. There was strongest agreement with the statements:

- > Our leadership team have a conviction to engage in intercultural mission
- > Intercultural mission is a priority for our church

When looking specifically at the responses of those who selected 'non-white' on the ethnicity question the following outcomes were identified.



Question 2b

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Those selecting 'non-white' as ethnicity.

Intercultural mission is a priority for our church



Intercultural mission is stated as part of the vision and values of our church



We engage in intercultural mission because of a deep conviction that it is the right thing to do



Our leadership team have a conviction to engage in intercultural mission



Strongly Agree Agree Slightly Agree Unsure Slightly Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Again, there was general agreement with all of the statements, with strongest agreement for:



- Our leadership team have a conviction to engage in intercultural mission
- Intercultural mission is a priority for our church



Section 3

Perceptions of **Ethnic** Make-Up

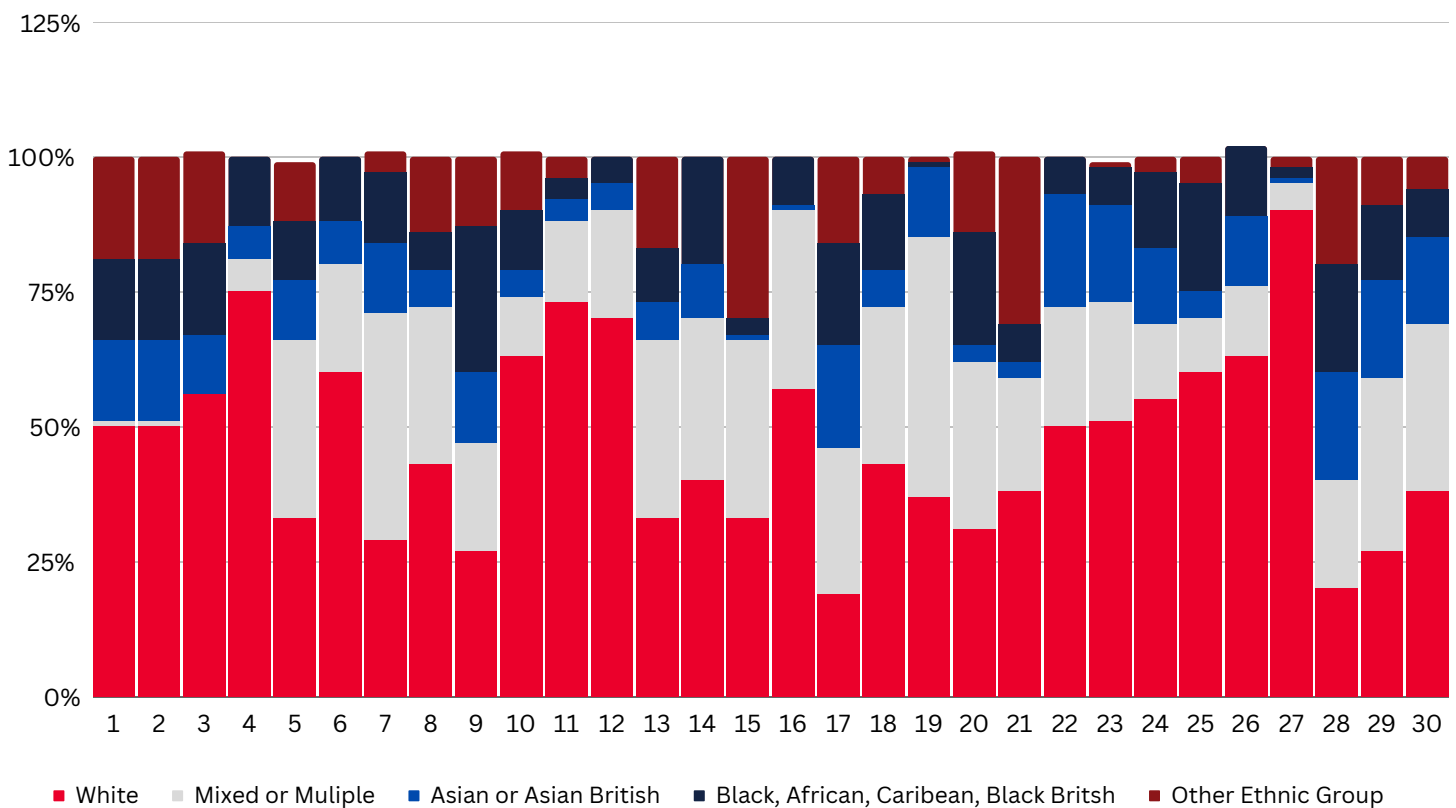
Participants were asked to make an assessment of the representation of different ethnic groups in the congregation at large and in the church leadership in particular.



Question 3a

Perceptions of Ethnic Mix of Congregation.

Respondent were asked to outline the percentage of different ethnic groups within the church congregation.

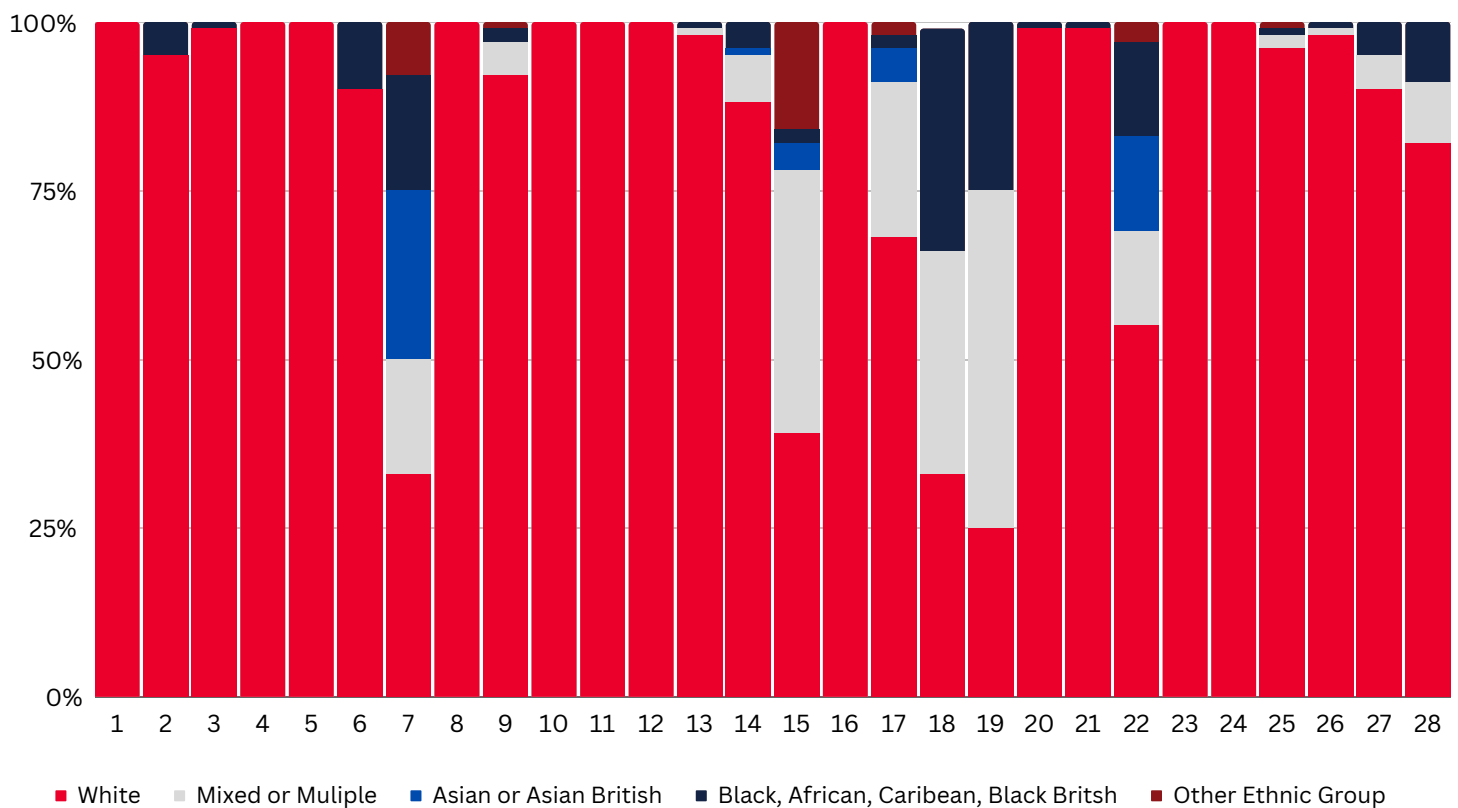


Generally, respondents reflected a diverse congregation. Respondent 17 and 27 seem very strange perceptions, but by and large, the congregation perceives itself as substantially ethnically diverse..

Question 3b

Perceptions of Ethnic Mix of Leadership.

Respondent were asked to outline the percentage of different ethnic groups within the church leadership.



As can be seen from the results above, the vast majority had the accurate perception that the leadership of the church was substantial from the white ethnic group. Again there are some unusual results here with four separate respondents reporting the leadership as minority white.



Section 4

General Statements

Respondents were asked to consider the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements.



Question 4a

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

At my church we have addressed issues of cultural prejudice and discrimination and the importance of welcoming and including others who are different to us



At my church we regularly celebrate that we are part of a global faith



Believers from different ethnic backgrounds feel at home in my church



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Slightly Agree ■ Unsure ■ Slightly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree



Summary

It is encouraging to see that there is a strong perception that believers from different ethnic backgrounds feel at home at Harper and also that we celebrate that we are part of a global faith.

There is a perception that we have addressed issues of cultural prejudice and discrimination and the importance of welcoming and including others who are different from us.

Question 4b

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Those selecting 'non-white' as ethnicity.

At my church we have addressed issues of cultural prejudice and discrimination and the importance of welcoming and including others who are different to us



At my church we regularly celebrate that we are part of a global faith



Believers from different ethnic backgrounds feel at home in my church



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Slightly Agree ■ Unsure ■ Slightly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree



When responses from those selecting, 'non-white' in the ethnicity question were considered, there was no substantive difference from the whole sample as illustrated above.

Question 4c

Rank the following areas of your church.

Overall church leadership



Typical friendships, social groups



Small groups/core group leaders



Congregation make up



Worship styles and teams



Ethos, Vision of our church



- Multiple ethnicities represented with a high level of shared identity and co-creation
- Multiple ethnicities represented
- One ethnicity represented but actively trying to change
- One ethnicity represented but open to change
- One ethnicity represented because this is just the way it is
- One ethnicity represented because this works best for our church

Summary

It is clear from the above results that a number of aspects of life at Harper are genuinely multi-ethnic, in some cases with a high level of shared identity and co-creation. These include:

- > Typical friendships and social groups
- > Small groups/core group leaders
- > Congregation make up
- > Ethos, vision of the church

Areas where greater diversity might be needed include worship styles and teams and overall church leadership.





Section 5

Intercultural **Testimony**

Respondents were asked to give stories, testimony, examples and comment on their intercultural experiences.



Intercultural Testimony



- > Cultural Evening where 70 people came along to a Friday night worship event. Each national grouping shared about their country and customs. There was singing and dancing and food from culture.
- > Our church has helped a number of asylum seekers over the years. We are baptising an asylum seeker from Iran in the coming weeks.
- > The Sunday ministry by different tribes was awesome and would want you to want to know God more and more.
- > African fellowship, meets monthly.
- > We have a large number of Iranians many of whom had to flee their country after being saved, others have been converted after coming here. Many have been baptised and become members of the church family.
- > African evenings.
- > Our African night fellowship was the best, we get to sing and cook our traditional meals and praise and dance like the way from back home.
- > Currently a successful event to introduce the African culture to the church community.
- > Mission Sunday.

Intercultural Testimony

- > I (and others) have been invited to perform language translation services (sermons/correspondence/admin) to facilitate the communications within the congregation. This has been greatly appreciated by asylum seekers and other foreign nationals and has enabled their involvement in services and other activities. Some of the native speakers are now involved in recording and uploading sermon scripts the translators have translated.
- > I am a Christian long time ago but when I started to living in Glasgow and went to Harper church for the first time I was interested because I received the love of Jesus and nice welcome, without feeling discrimination and sharing with many different nationalities and their flags in the temple. We are now committed members.
- > We also have an English class every week. Lots of people come just because they want to improve their English. They learn English from reading the Bible and a lot of them end up coming along on Sundays, even if they don't understand everything, and even if they're there for the wrong motive, they still come and hear the gospel! And quite a few have become Christians! It's amazing to see God use our small efforts, teaching English, to literally raise the dead!
- > We had a jubilee street party outreach event which was super busy! I ended up chatting to a couple who had fled from Syria and just came from a flyer! They were very interested in the English class and the Sunday service (because there's child care)! It's so cool how God uses everything for His glory! Bringing them right to us and bringing them into church!

Intercultural Testimony

- > We have a large group of Farsi speakers from Iran. They found us through our community meal and engagement with the refugee process.
- > Our small groups include a diverse range of ethnicities, matching the makeup of the church itself.
- > Many asylum seekers have come into the church, a good number have been saved and baptised and are serving in the church.
- > Jubilee party.
- > Harper Church had 4 intercultural ministry event in 6 months. 1. Scotland culture 2. Iran culture 3. African culture 4. Intercultural event.
- > All nationals activities is held in the church.
- > Many asylum seekers and refugees engage initially with our Community Meal, then come to church services and some have come to faith.
- > First African fellowship meeting.
- > Community meal, Tots, Rooted, children's work. Street and door ministry.
- > Start of African fellowship monthly events.
- > African Day.



Intercultural Testimony

- > A Nigerian lady who was ministered to during an outreach programme is now engaged in the life of Harper Church. She currently coordinates the children choreography in the church.
- > African Worship Slot during church service.
- > We have an African fellowship event once every month. It's really cool to praise God in such a different way! Every time I've been I've always met at least one person who is there who doesn't usually come to church or are there because their friend invited them!
- > Many asylum seekers have come into the church, a good number have been saved and baptised and are serving in the church.
- > We had a cultural festival organised by the Harper African Fellowship. People from over 10 ethnic groups were in attendance to worship and Praise God.
- > English class! Over the months many people could learn and make new friends, which continues outside the class- builds bridges. They also discussed bible passages which hopefully reaches them.
- > Success in holding the annual meetings called Women's Weekend , which is usually held in September.
- > Success in leading a multinational church is crucial. Holding celebrations of different nationalities, and supporting them. Classes with translations, sermons with translations, all show the success of the church in its purpose.

Intercultural Testimony

- > We have an SIM engage missionary from Africa who has been highly effective in reaching out to other people with an African background.
- > I have one friend comes from Egipto and she is not Christian but she and her children visit us and like to participate in the activities of Harper Church and ICM activities.
- > A Bible Quiz competition was organised in the church and participants included people from various cultural backgrounds in the church.
- > Other community events like church lunches/ special bbqs/ weekend away.

Additional Comments

- > The main gap is, lack of different ethnicities in main church leadership, which is still white male British. In my opinion that will need to change.
- > This survey is a worthwhile exercise, it is however limited to those who can read and write in English. Any possibility of translation into some key languages will be great.
- > Love having many different backgrounds in the church.
- > Reaching out in engaging with people in making Jesus's salvation known.
- > Am really vouching for my church thank you.



Key Learning Point

The survey is encouraging and if reflected across the congregation as a whole demonstrates that we are making real progress toward to being a genuinely intercultural church.

The key area for development is that our leadership groups i.e. elders, deacons and staff are less ethnically diverse that the congregation as a whole.

This is in part a result of the rapid change that the church has gone through. The diversification of the congregation has really occurred over the past 6 years.

Concrete steps have been taken to develop the Antioch Academy to provide training for people from all of the ethnic groups and nationalities such that in time we expect our leadership structures to be more diverse.

