

# **Bible Confidence: Its Nature & Implication for Discipleship**

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# Outline

1. Introducing Bible Confidence
2. Key empirical findings
3. Moving on
4. Q&A



# The Bible Confidence Project:

- Inspired by the Quiet Revival
- Two surveys in England & Wales in 2024-25, with YouGov
- Sample=3,374 active Christians (attend church at least monthly)
- Advanced statistical modelling is employed to address three key questions regarding the nature of Bible confidence (*incl. spiritual, social, economic, demographic factors*)

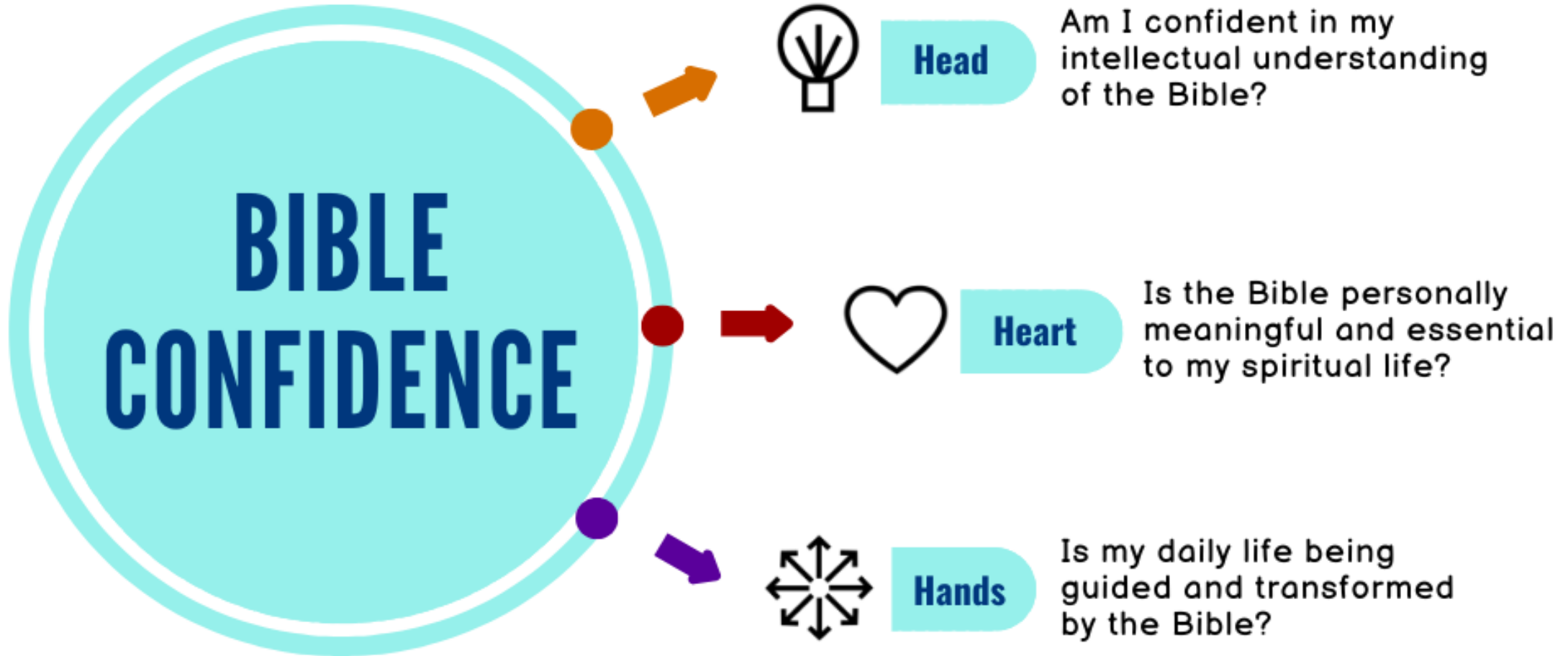
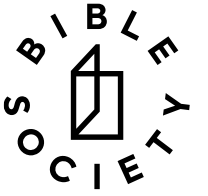


**What is Bible Confidence?**

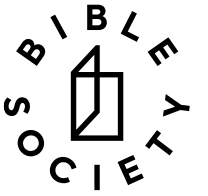
**Who are (not) Bible Confident?**

**How is Bible Confidence developed?**

# The research model reveals three correlated dimensions of Bible Confidence among churchgoing Christians



# Bible Confidence of a typical churchgoing Christian in England and Wales



We created four **Bible Confidence Score (BCS)** scales (Head, Heart, Hands, and Overall), ranging from 0 (extremely unconfident) to 100 (extremely confident), centred at 50 (neutral)

**A typical churchgoing Christian's BCSs in England & Wales are:**

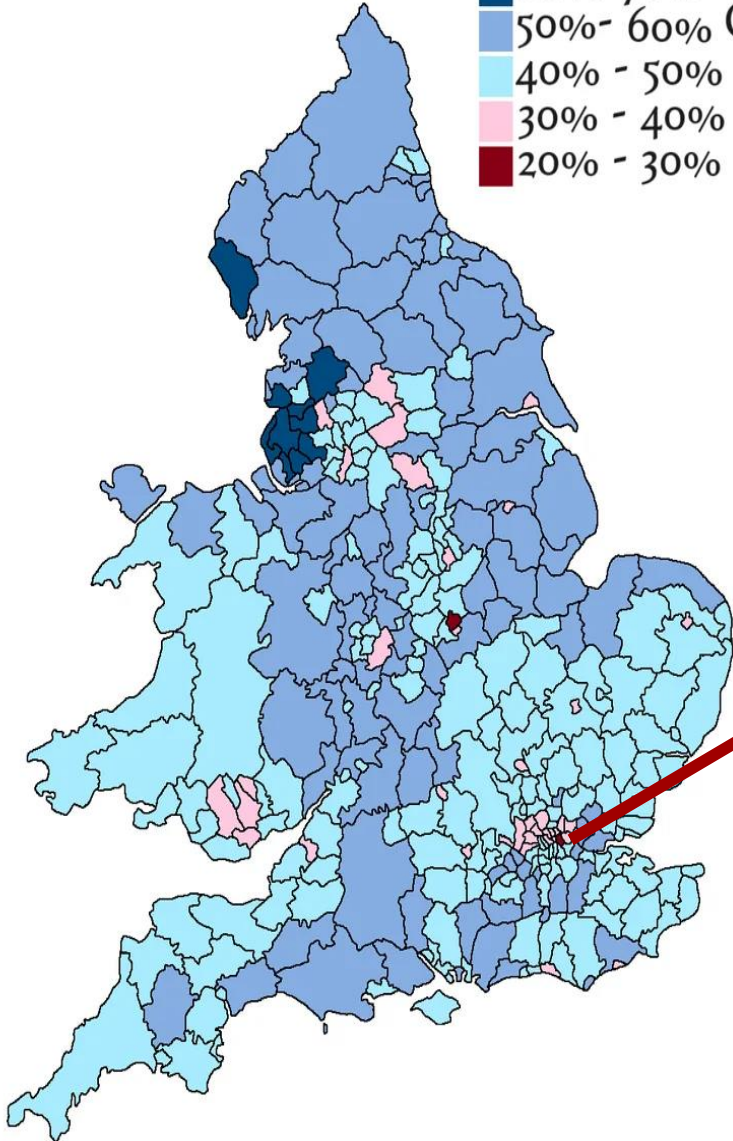
- Head: 48
- Heart: 47
- Hands: 47
- Overall: 47

**In England and Wales, over half of churchgoing Christians have lower-than-average Bible Confidence**

# Population that identified as Christian (2021 census)

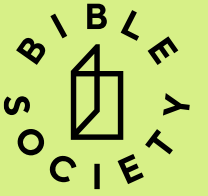
- 60%-70% Christian
- 50%- 60% Christian
- 40% - 50% Christian
- 30% - 40% Christian
- 20% - 30% Christian

# Overall Bible Confidence in England & Wales



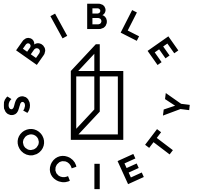
**Fewer Christians does not mean lower Bible Confidence**  
(e.g. London, also Eastern and North West)



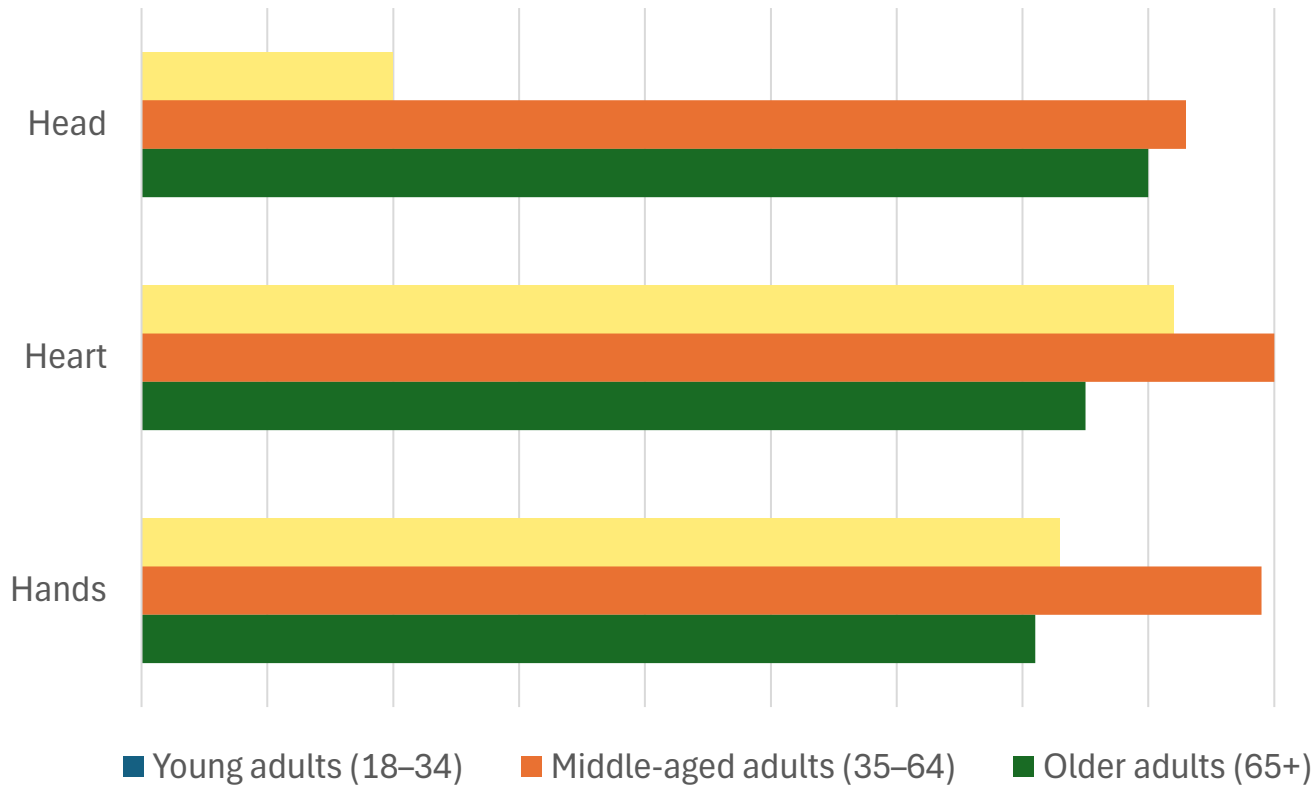


# Who are (not) Bible confident?

# Generational difference

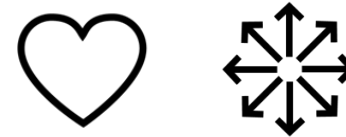


Predicted BCS by age



**Overall, Bible confidence exhibits a 'Reverse-U' trend throughout the Christian life span**

**Young adults (18-34)**



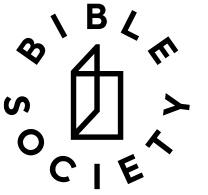
**Middle-aged adults (35-64)**



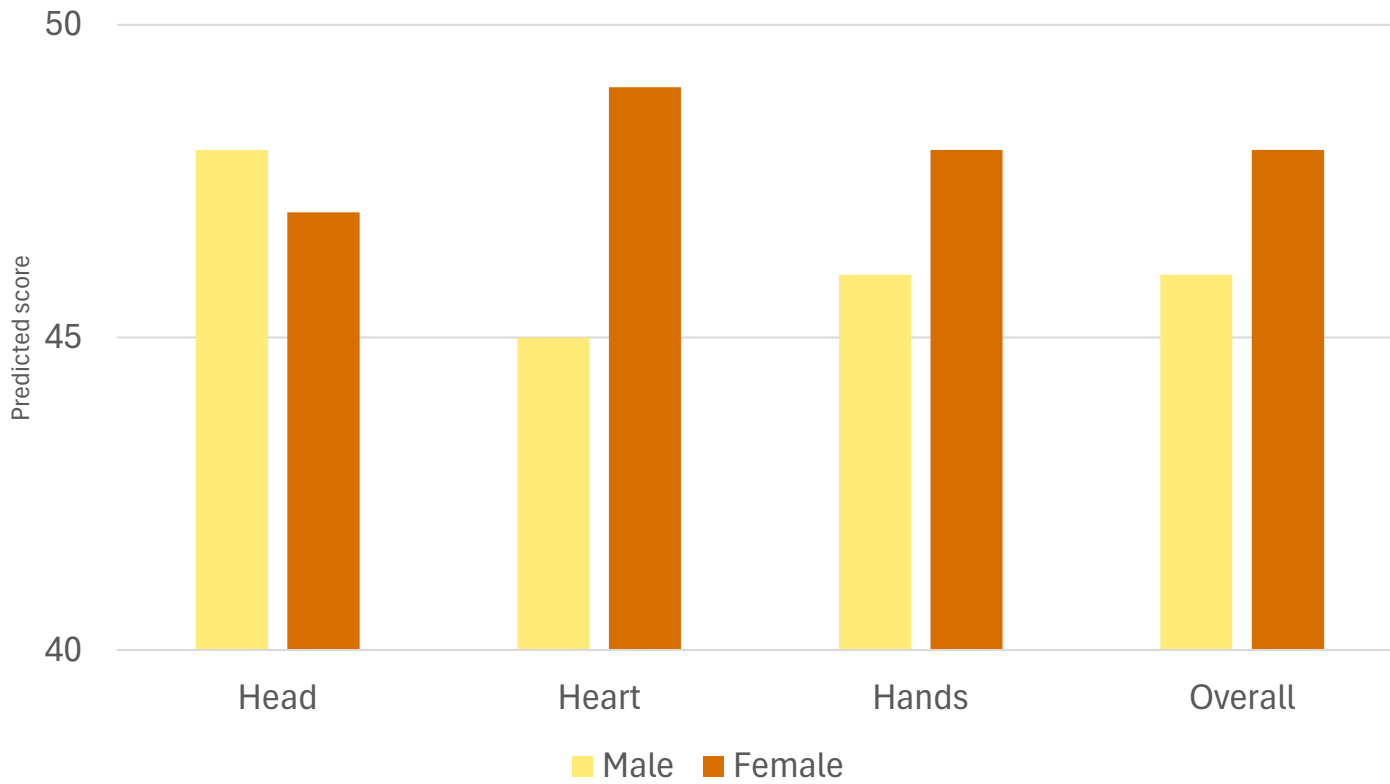
**Older adults (65+)**



# Gender difference



## Predicted BCS by Gender

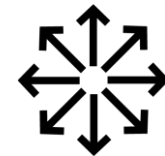


**Men and women excel in different aspects of Bible confidence**

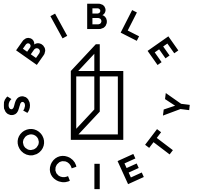
**Men**



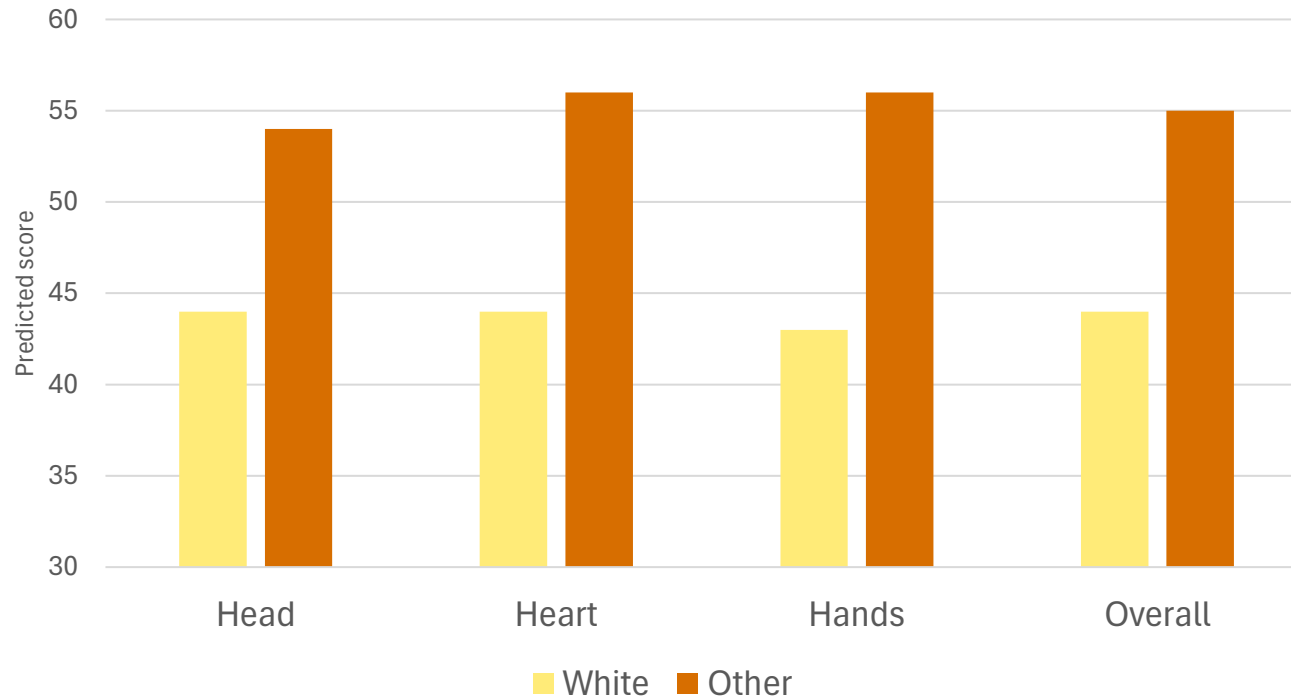
**Women**



# There is a notable ethnic gap



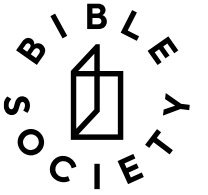
## Predicted BCS by ethnicity



**Bible Confidence varies strongly by ethnicity**

- Note the growing share of ethnic minorities and immigrants among UK Christians in the 2021 Census

# Social class difference



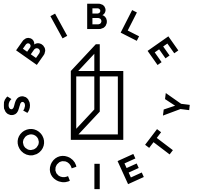
## Predicted BCS by Social Class



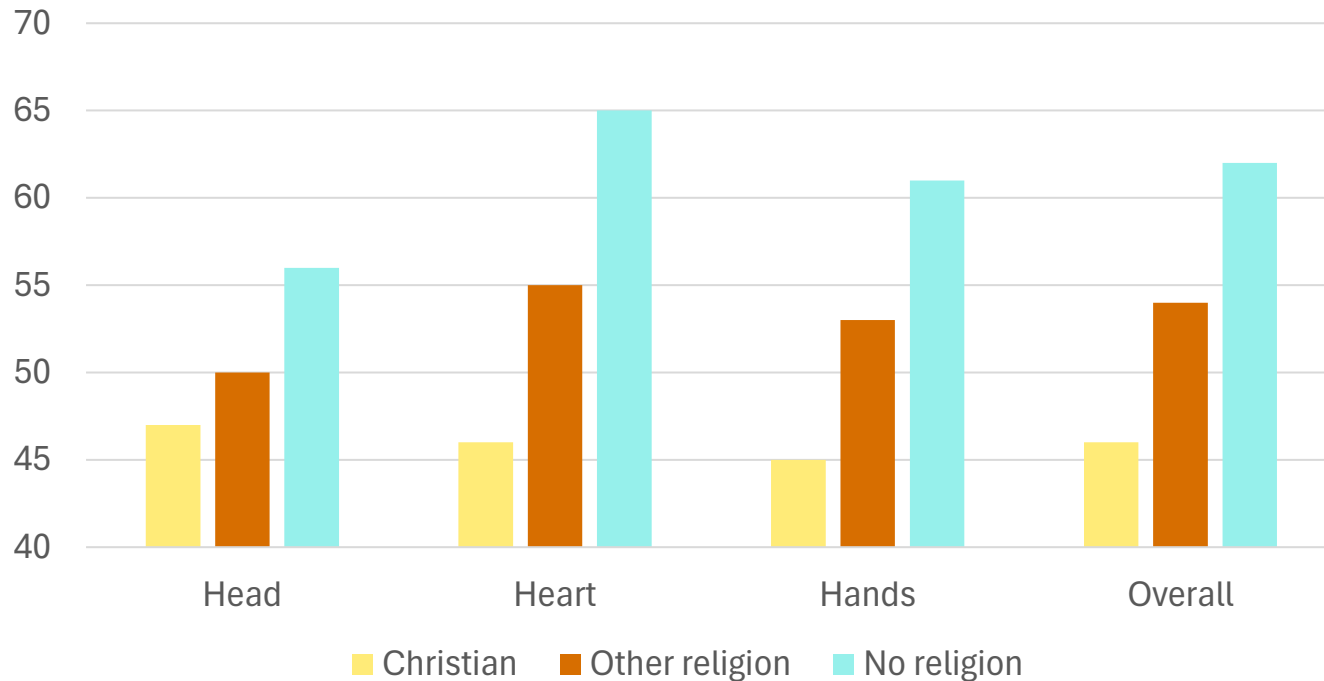
**Bible confidence is a privilege of the higher social class, especially in Head**

The middle-upper class displays significantly more confidence than the others. The most notable gaps are seen in Head and Hands.

# You may inherit a Christian label, but not Bible Confidence

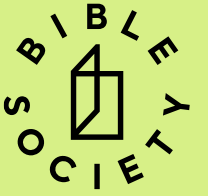


## BCS by Religious Upbringing

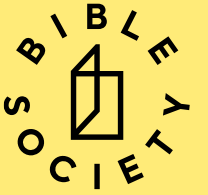


**Converts have significantly higher BCS than those brought up as Christians, especially in Heart**

- This is particularly evident in the case of 'former nones' whose religious upbringing is 'no religion'



# Bible Confidence & Discipleship



# MEASURING DISCIPLESHIP

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FR. Robert Barron speaks of **intentional discipleship** as *The idea that discipleship is a conscious process of formation, not just inherited or passive.*

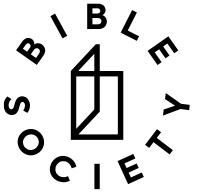
# Discipleship in Empirical Terms: *The Measurement of Spiritual Maturity*



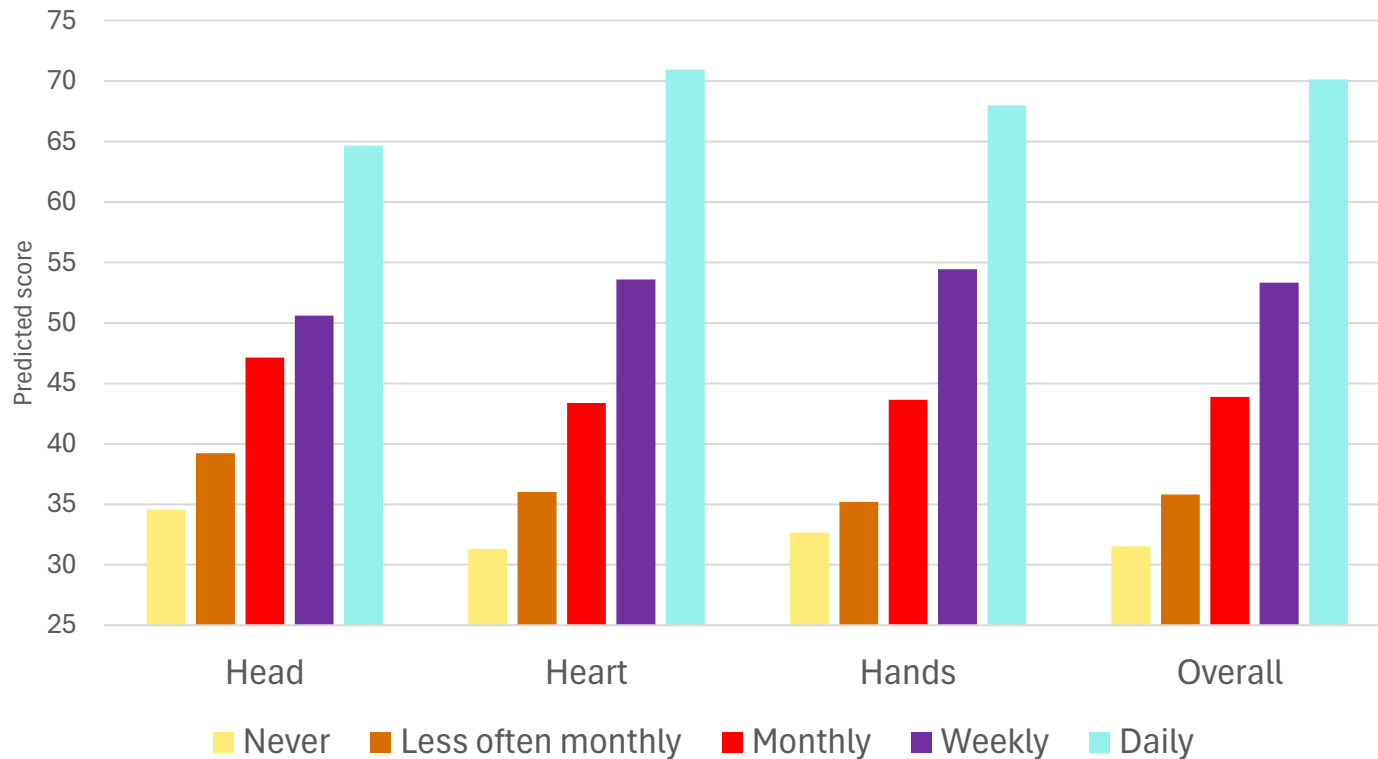
- **Formation of individual faith and character**
- **Participation in Christian life**
- **Mission in the wider community**

**How do Bible Confidence and Spiritual Maturity work together?**

# Bible Engagement



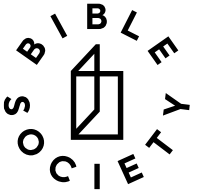
## Predicted BCS by Bible Engagement



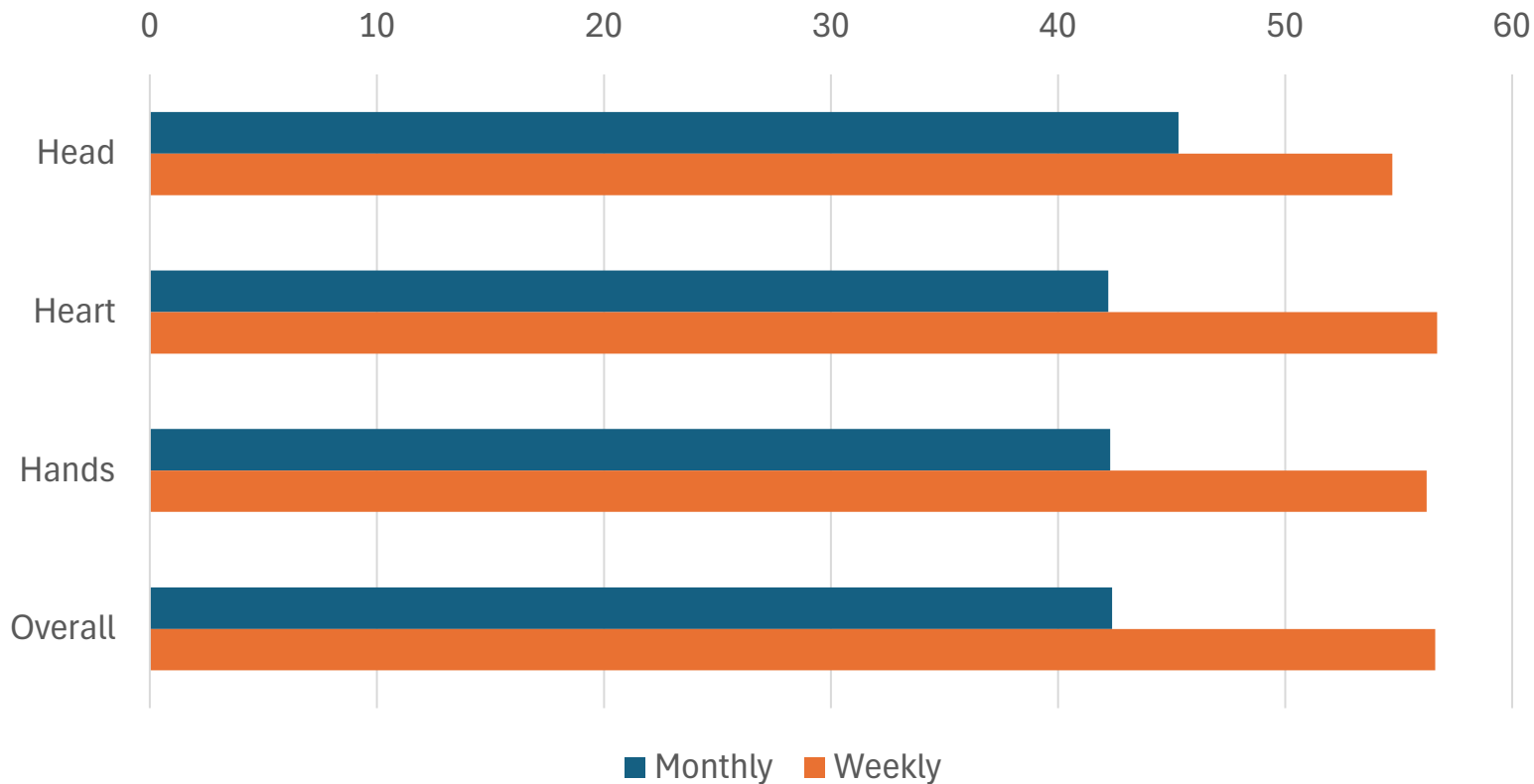
**Bible engagement\* is the single most important correlate of Bible Confidence**

\*How often, if at all, do you normally read or listen to the Bible outside of a Church service?

# Church attendance



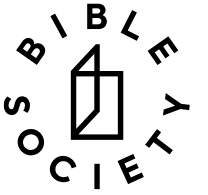
## Predicted BCS: Monthly vs. Weekly Churchgoers



**Bible confidence is associated with active church attendance**

Weekly church attenders have much higher Bible confidence as compared to their monthly-attending peers.

# Bible Confidence is a catalyst for both church and social involvement



Guide non-Christians in how to understand the Bible and Christian faith



Volunteer/donate to a church



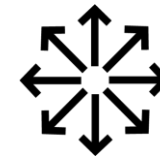
Believe Christianity plays a positive role in modern Britain

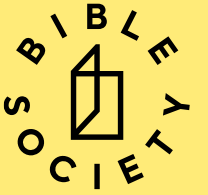


Help strangers



Take part in local environmental improvements





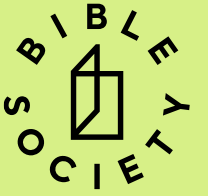
## THE ALGORITHM SAYS

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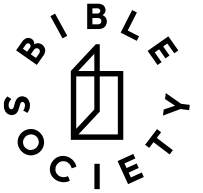
*Conceptually*, Bible Confidence and discipleship are distinct concepts, but they **overlap in key ingredients** — such as Bible engagement.

*Empirically*, Bible Confidence acts both as a **driver and a result of discipleship**.

*Practically*, **strengthening Bible Confidence multiplies spiritual maturity, while deepening discipleship would evidently increase Bible Confidence.**



# Moving On: How can we support Bible Confidence?



# Bible Confidence Warning Signs: Relevance

Hard to  
*navigate*

**32%**

of churchgoers say they're **not confident** they could **find** relevant Bible passages

'The difficulty in finding passages which apply to everyday life at that point in life; if experiencing an emotion like **jealousy**, what part should I read?'

Hard to  
*understand*

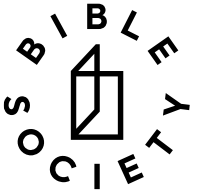
**33%**

of churchgoers say the Bible is **difficult to understand**

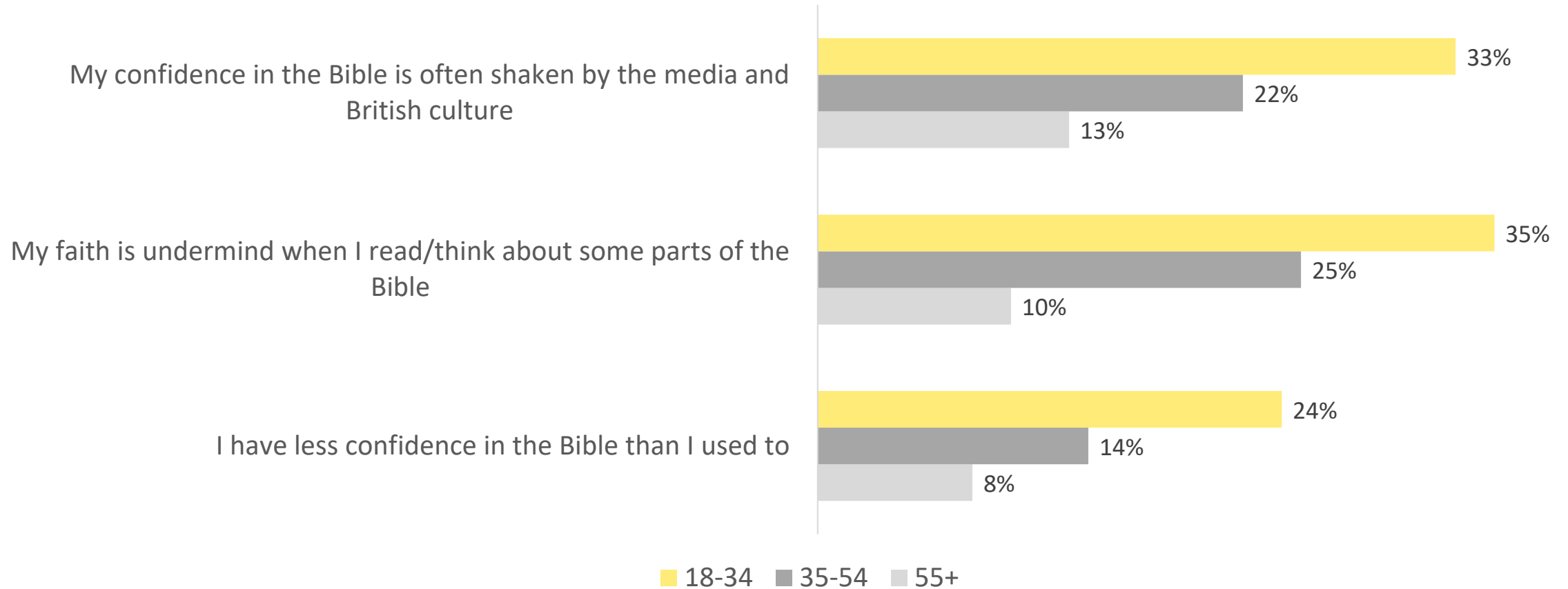
'Lots of the language is heavy and old fashioned; it **does feel like a chore**'

Bible Society/YouGov polling 2024. Base: churchgoing Christians in England & Wales, n=1555

# Bible Confidence Warning Signs: Generation



How does Bible Confidence vary by age? Shown: Agree



Bible Society/YouGov polling 2024. Base: churchgoing Christians in England & Wales, n=1555

# The Path Dependence and the Power of Upbringing



- **Consistent youth (11-17) attendance** (*vs. childhood attendance*) doubles Bible confidence



- **Early Bible engagement** strongly predicts adult Bible Confidence and makes church volunteering 1.7× more likely.

# Contact Matters: The (missing) Power of Influence



- **Having Christian friends who communicate the Bible with you** is the strongest predictor of Bible Confidence, a gatekeeper for de-churching, and an incubator for new converts.



- **Influential Christians** offset the most negative determinant of Bible Confidence - internet and social media consumption as sources of truth.



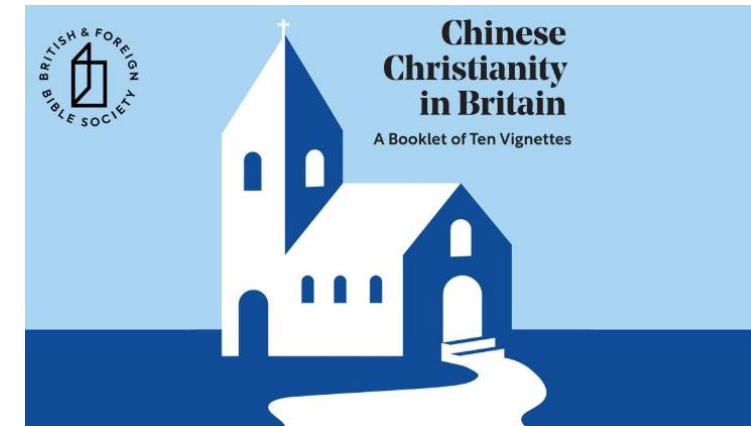
- **Parents and church leaders** are the weak link: model shows no significant impact from their involvement on respondents' Bible Confidence.

# The Power of 'Inter-ness': Example from the Chinese Christian Community



## - Chinese Christianity in Britain project (2021-24)

- **Historically a 'gated community', but growing openness to diversity:** e.g. *go to intercultural church (31%), use non-Chinese Biblical resources (42%), explore different traditions (33%)*



- **Diverse churches** create more Bible-engaged young Christians (87% vs. 75%)
- **Intercultural fellowship** is a more powerful generator of close friendships (19%↑) and inter-generational ties (24%↑)
- **Inter-denominational learning** deepens curiosity and increases longevity

# Chinese Christians “Looking East”: The Empirical Evidence 华人基督徒的“东方情结”

By Yinxuan Huang · Jun 02, 2025 · Topic: [Christian Life](#) · Tags: [中文](#), [Chinese Christianity](#), [Chinese Christians](#), [Orthodox Christians](#)



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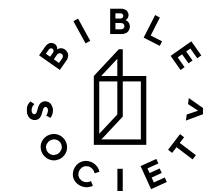
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# More to come

## Motherhood

Led by Chine McDonald ,Theos Think Thank & Rhianon McAleer , Bible Society

## Christian Nationalism

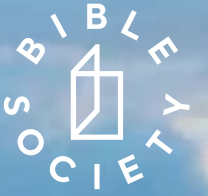
Led by Nick Spencer, Theos Think Thank

## Masculinities in the Church

In collaboration with an international academic team, tbc



# Thank you



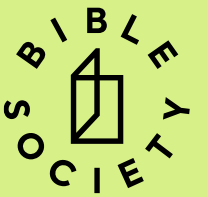
How can a young person stay on the path of purity?  
By living according to your word. Psalm 119:9

**Dr Yinxuan Huang**

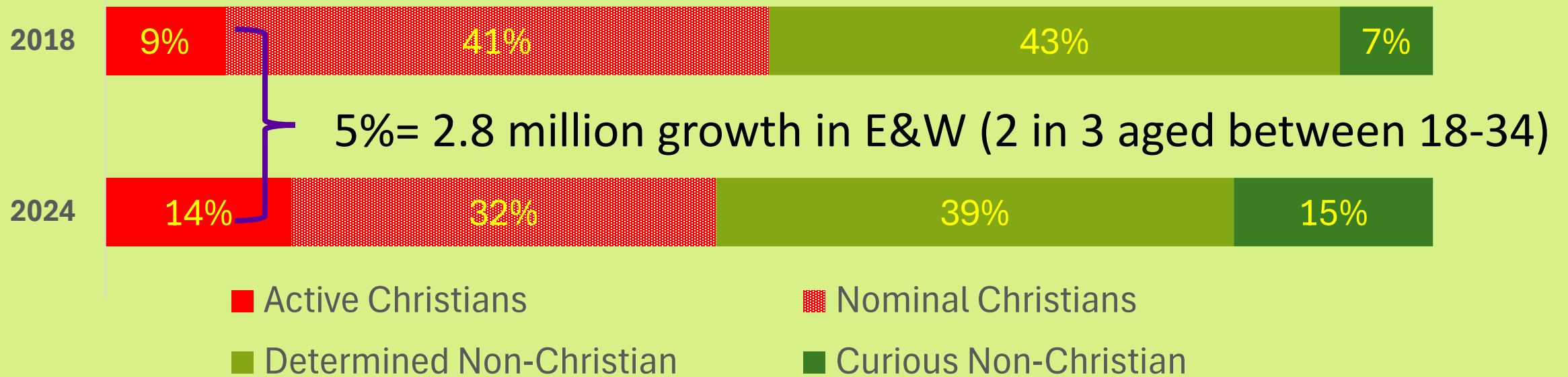
**[Yinxuan.huang@BibleSociety.org.uk](mailto:Yinxuan.huang@BibleSociety.org.uk)**

**Facebook: Yinxuan Huang**

# Lessons from The Quiet Revival

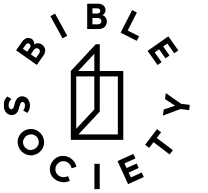


## Projected % of England & Wales Population



- Forget about the 46% (the Census story)
- The real decline: Nominal Christians & Resistant non-Christians
- The Hockey Stick and Bible Confidence

# Head



- 1** I can describe the overall story of the Bible

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- 2** I can usually understand the meaning of a Bible passage without help

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- 3** I know how to navigate the Bible

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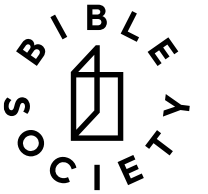
- 4** I consider myself to be knowledgeable about the Bible

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- 5** I am confident defending the Bible in the face of doubts

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# Heart



- 1** The Bible is very relevant to me personally  

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- 2** The Bible is a key source of truth for me  

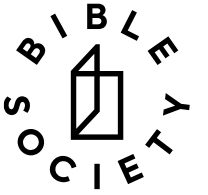
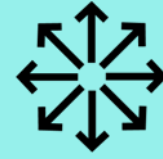
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- 3** Reading/listening to the Bible is a spiritually moving experience for me  

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- 4** Reading/listening to the Bible deepens my relationship with God  

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- 5** Reading/listening to the Bible is an indispensable part of my spiritual life  

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# Hands



- 1** The decisions I make at work or school  

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- 2** How I treat other people  

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- 3** The charitable and/or political causes  
I choose to support  

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- 4** I seek guidance from the Bible when making  
important ethical decisions  

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- 5** The Bible has led to positive changes in the  
way I live my life  

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