



# Introducing new survey technologies into the Church of England

Social Research Association conference workshop  
*December 2014*

# Key themes

## Background and context



Society is changing and the Church needs to respond

## Digital opportunity



Increasingly connected citizens offer opportunities to innovate

## Challenges and outcomes

Barriers encountered and what has emerged so far



## Learnings

Key reflections and initial results from evaluation survey  
Moving towards Church census in future



# Background and context



# Church of England



## Governance

Episcopally-led, synodically governed, Established church (in 1534)  
Canon Law approved by Parliament  
26 bishops are also part of House of Lords  
6 state offices are also ex officio Church Commissioners  
Archbishops' Council appointments, elected positions and staff

## Geography

All of England arranged into Parishes  
Two provinces  
42 dioceses, including Europe (with another 43 member Churches and Provinces of the international Anglican Communion)  
16,000 churches and 42 mainland cathedrals  
Each work relatively autonomously

## Attendance

1.7m attend each month, although relatively stable, long-term trend towards falling congregation size  
'Open door' approach  
Electoral roll for each Parish (opt-in)  
Implications for measuring membership

# Rationale for capturing diversity



## Gaps persist

- Last diversity audit in 2007
- No evidence on levels of disability
- Demographic composition continues to change



everyone counts 2014  
Growing the church for all

# So where next?

This left us with a pressing need to update our knowledge on the current demographic profile of congregations. This information also needs to be compared to known resident populations (derived from Census data)



Although churches have their own 'electoral roll' system, no sampling frame of church attendees formally exists. This leaves the church building itself as the only known sampling point to attempt an intercept

In addition, we appreciated that ownership and attitudes towards technology had changed considerably in seven years. This field had not been systematically explored for use with congregations



# The digital opportunity



# Increasingly connected... in personal and business lives

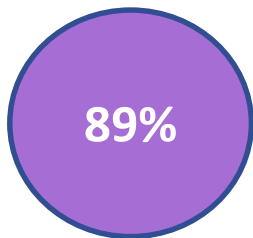
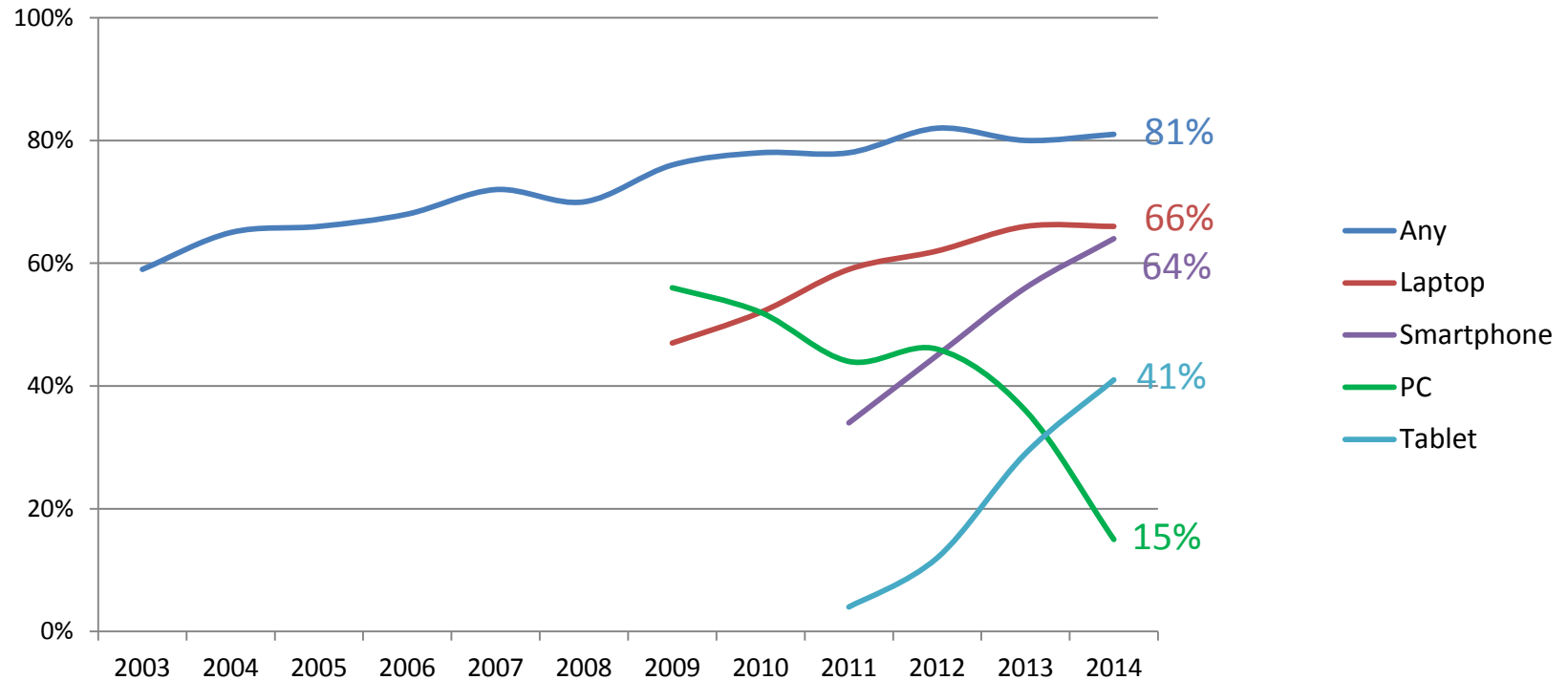




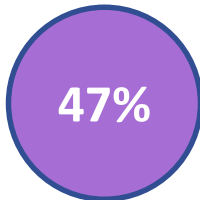
# Household ownership of technology

## Household ownership of connected devices (2003-2014)

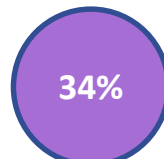
Adults 16+ (OFCOM data, n=2879 latest quarter)



AB social class,  
female, 25-34 yrs



AB social class,  
female, 55-64 yrs



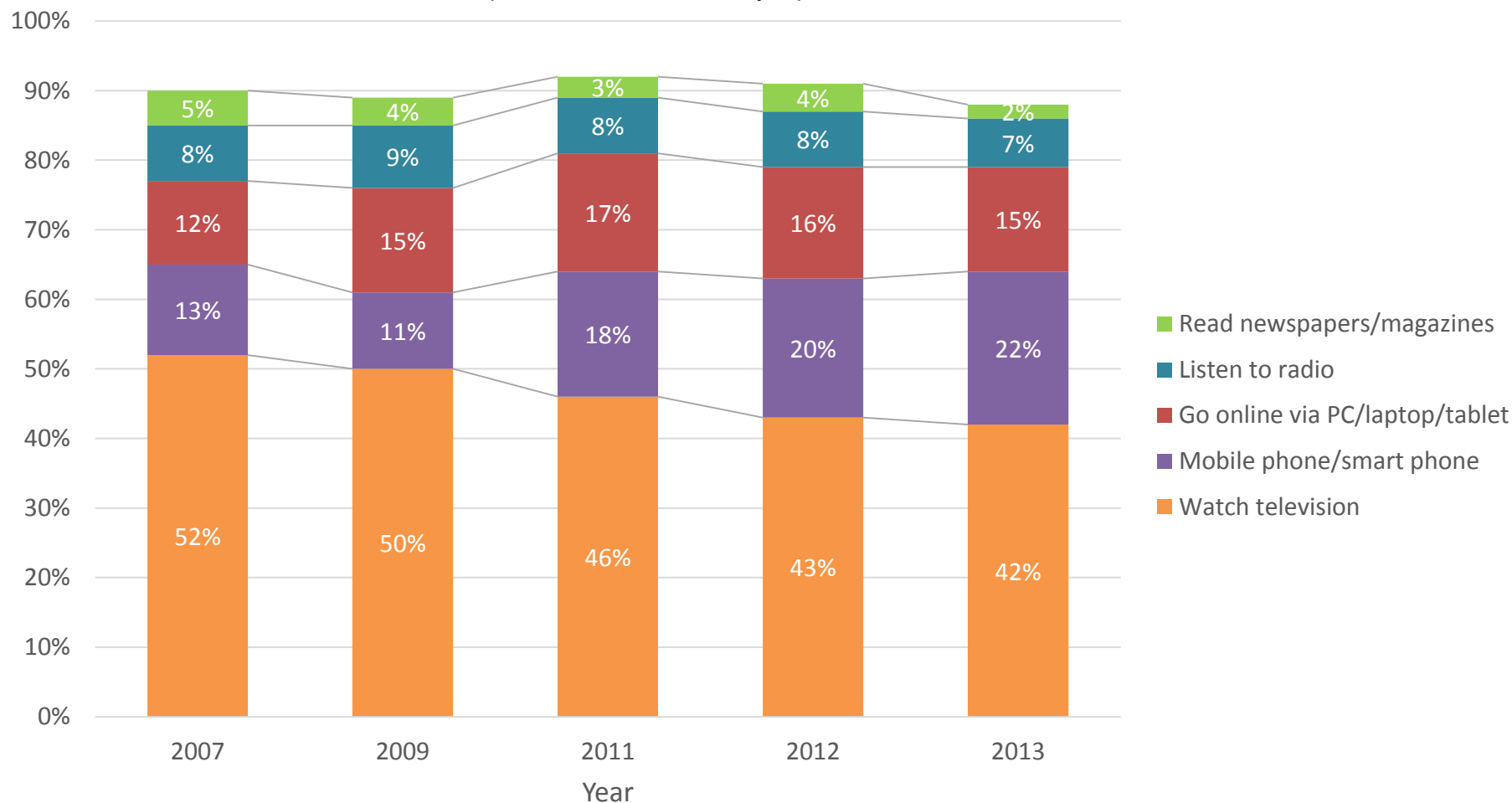
AB social class,  
female, 65+ yrs

Smartphone  
ownership

# Engagement with smartphone technology growing

## Which device would you miss the most?

Adults 16+ (OFCOM data, n=1642 latest year)



# Mobile goes from strength to strength

Examples of the growing strategic importance of mobile and tablet technology



Four in ten adults access their bank account from their mobile – immediacy and control are two key drivers. The rate of adoption has been rapid - it took 13 years for Barclays to encourage 2 million users to adopt internet banking, but only 2 months to get the same number of users to adopt mobile banking



Just Eat, the huge disruptor in the UK takeaway industry now takes 57% of orders from mobile devices (source: October 2014) – which is interesting for a product that you need to be in the house to receive delivery



# A split sample approach was designed

## Paper (traditional)

Designed to be suitable for self completion

Harmonised questions, permission to opt-out clearly labelled

Distributed to randomly selected churches

Churches asked to print out copies and hand out before/after Sunday service

Post back and machine scannable

Self-standing randomly stratified sample

A method that churches and churchwardens comfortable and familiar with

## Digital (app)

Experimental design, never been attempted in church environment before. Interviewer or respondent led

Downloadable survey app to avoid problems associated with poor 3G or Wi-Fi in rural areas

Instructions issued to download app at home or in Wi-Fi area beforehand

Adaptive technology to ensure a professional appearance and feel across different devices

Separate stratified sample, designed not to overlap with main (paper) based sample

Considerable cost and time efficiencies

# Everyone Counts 2014 was launched in November



everyone counts 2014  
Growing the church for all

**This church is taking part in Everyone Counts 2014**  
Everyone in this church is invited to complete a short survey about what we are in our congregation.

We will be taking part electronically, which means we need people to download the app and if possible help others by sharing their device for a few minutes. It doesn't use much data (about 2.5MB) to download and takes about 2-3 minutes to complete.

If you have a smartphone or tablet, you can download the app. Just search for Everyone Counts 2014 in iTunes or Google Play and install it. Please bring your phone or tablet along, fully charged and installed on:

Don't worry if smartphones and apps are unfamiliar, we'll help you get involved. Don't forget your reading glasses!  
The app is designed to make sure that lots of people can type in their survey answers confidentially on a shared device, so no-one will be able to see your information even if you use someone else's phone or tablet.

You can also complete the survey online at [www.churchofengland.org.uk/everyone-counts](http://www.churchofengland.org.uk/everyone-counts)

Whichever way you take part you will need our church code. This makes sure that the responses are grouped to our congregation.

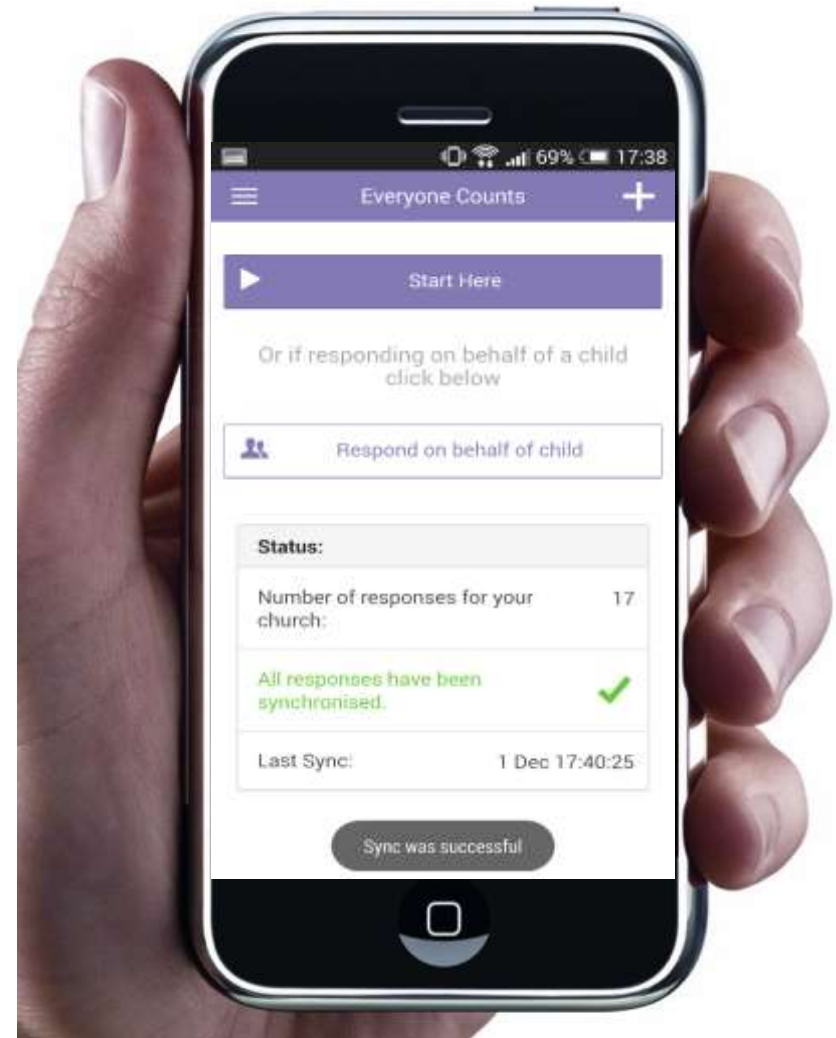
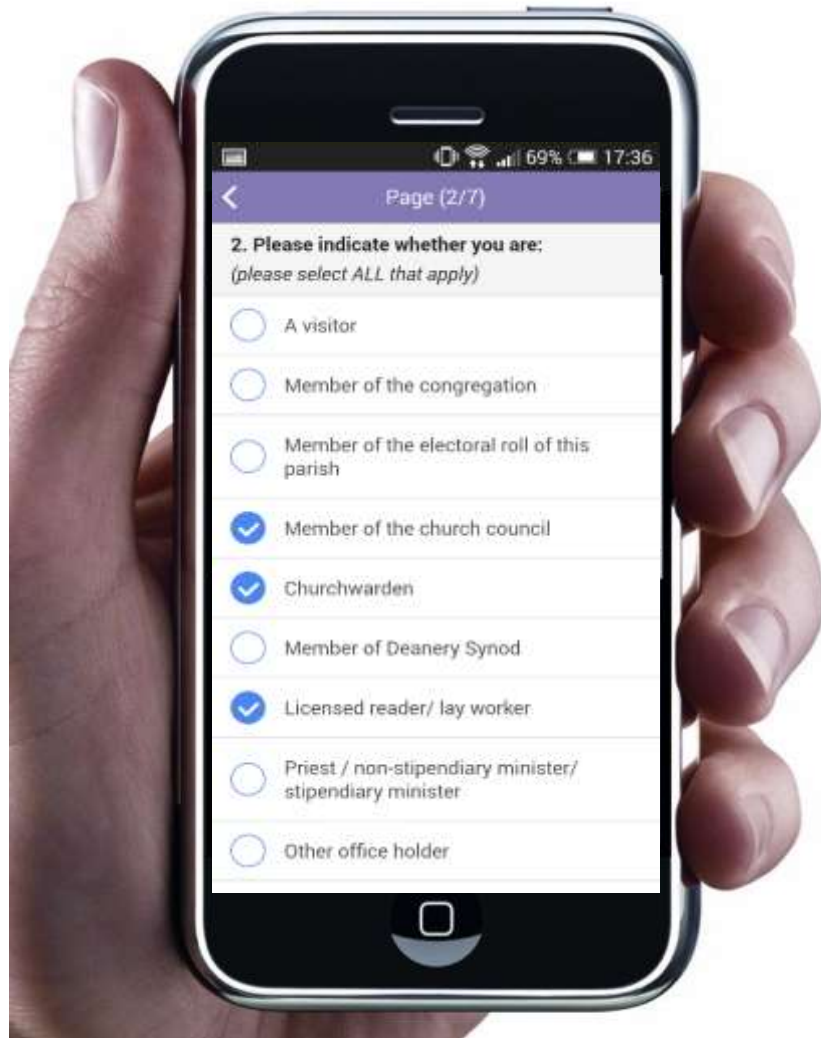
Our church code is:



everyone counts 2014  
Growing the church for all



# Mobile app – user friendly lay out and real time sync functionality



# November fieldwork



# Challenges and outcome





# Key challenges encountered

## Cascade vs. hurdles

- Hierarchical structures to reach congregations
- Gatekeepers' attitudes, assumptions, capacity

## Content

- Objections to the scope of the questions: too far and not far enough

## Resources

- Technology, infrastructure, skills, time, costs, volunteers

## Diocesan needs and priorities

- Pragmatic variations in design

# Outcome...so far



By the end of the original fieldwork period, over 30,000 responses had been received. We have no way of calculating a meaningful respondent-level response rate since no robust denominator exists. Initial results do indicate some diocesan variations across the country

More females than males took part in the survey. In some ways, this is unsurprising given that women are more likely to attend church...



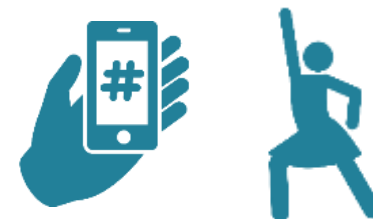
Overall, the digital approach appears to have been more successful amongst younger church attendees



1.45 females to every 1 male

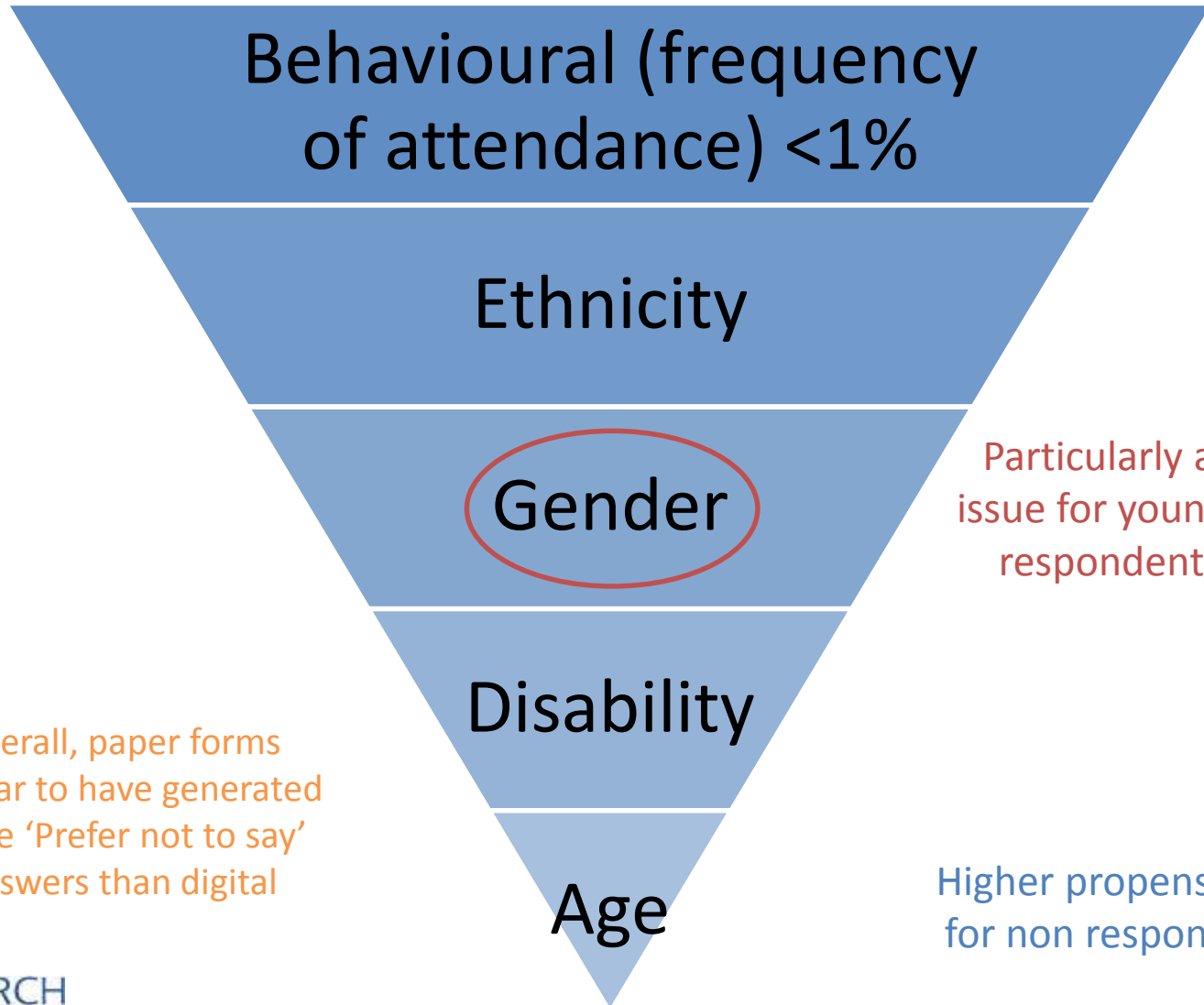


1.74 females to every 1 male



Male: 4 years younger than (paper) average  
Female: 3 years younger than (paper) average

# An emerging hierarchy of item non-response



Overall, paper forms appear to have generated more 'Prefer not to say' answers than digital

# Key learnings



# Good practice – gain feedback as swiftly as possible

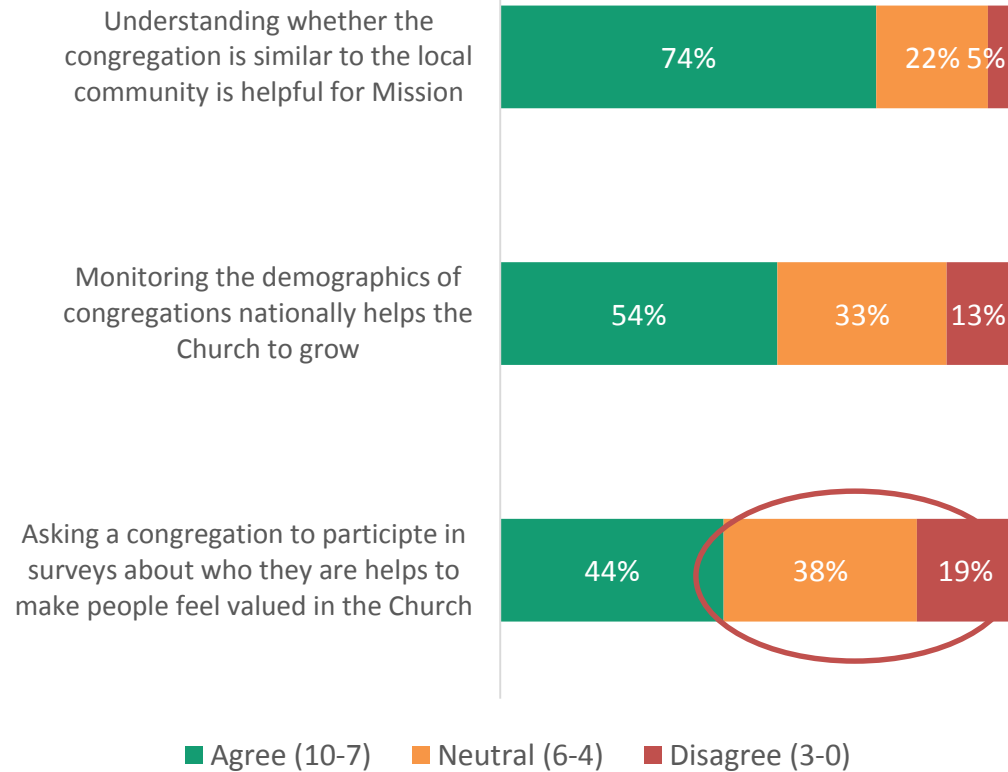


# Feedback survey

Evaluation is still live but feedback has already been obtained from the following sources



## Engagement with strategic drivers for Everyone Counts 2014



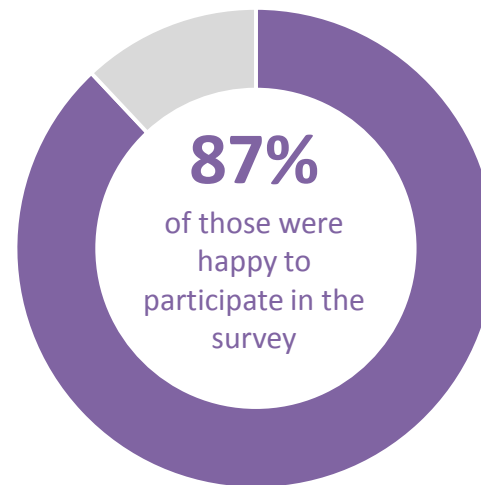
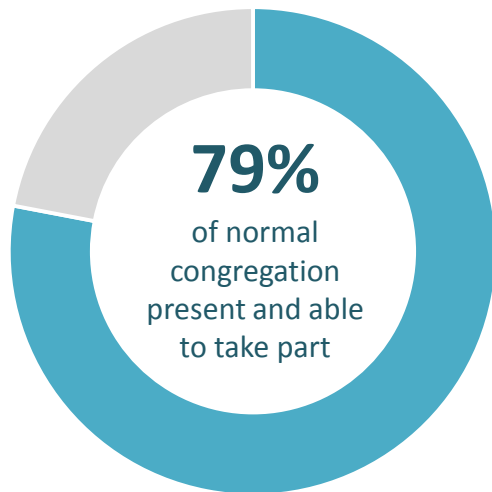
Base: 295

# Overall impressions of Everyone Counts

How would you describe your experience with Everyone Counts?

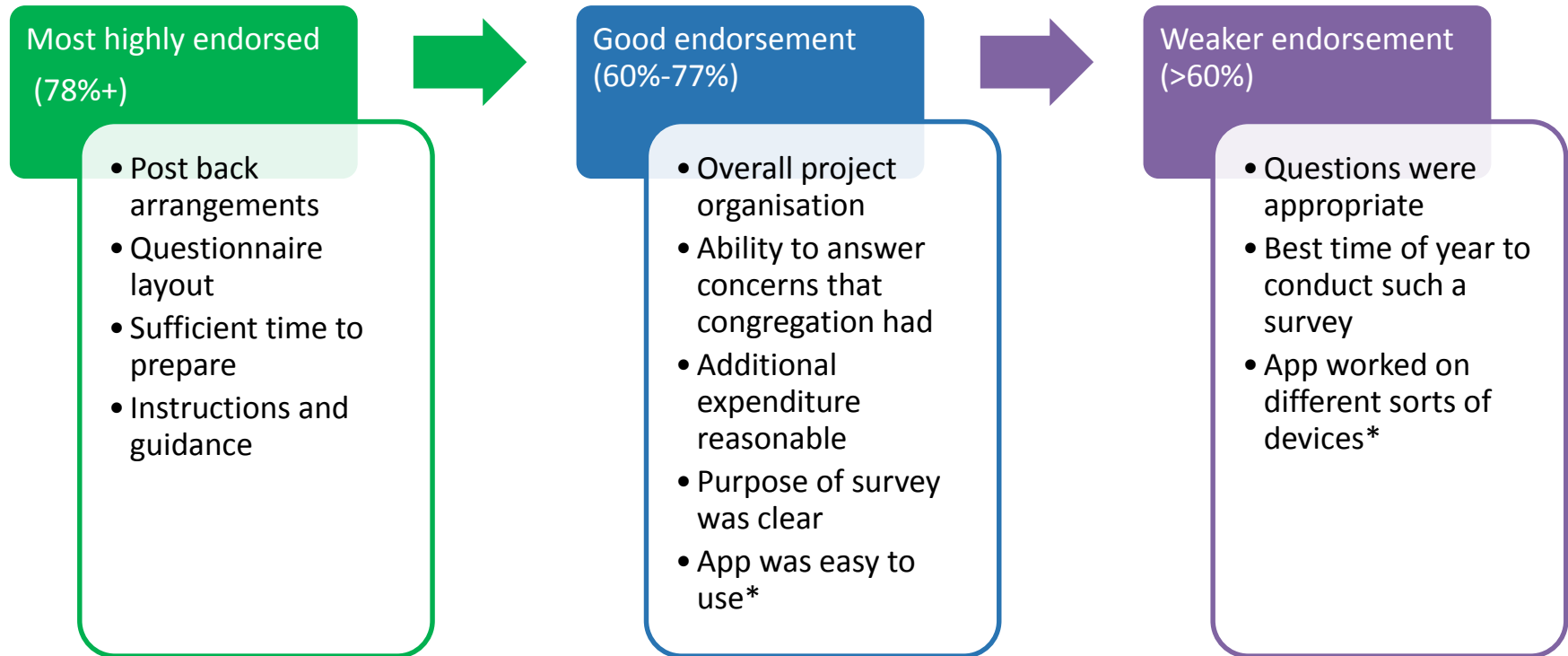


# Congregation penetration of Everyone Counts 2014





# Feedback on operational aspects of survey



# Modal preferences in the real world

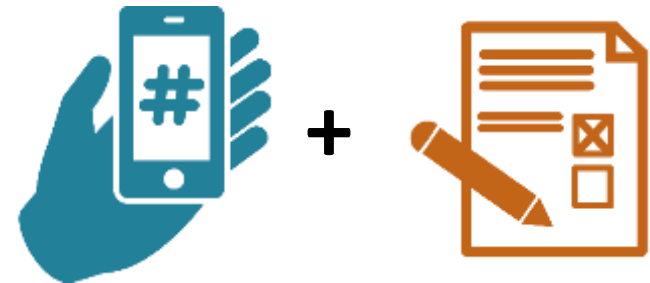
Just over one half of those who used the app approached preferred this option



Around 1 in 3 would have actually preferred paper and one fifth were unsure

*Base: warning low base (n=21)*

Some churches notified us that they had actually utilised both methods



This is likely to be an under-representation as some co-ordinators will have used the digital platform to enter the data from paper forms directly

**7%** of respondents to evaluation revealed that they had actually used both methods

# Summary of key learnings...so far



Start strategic planning early. Secure steering group with strong voice and get this established as soon as possible



Develop a robust comms strategy – this should be executed well before launch, including use of ‘teasers’. Your team also need to be ready to manage buzz immediately post-launch. Consider video/other engaging collateral



Visit stakeholders and observe fieldwork. It’s unlikely you will have the resources to visit a large number of sampling points, particularly within a fixed fieldwork period, but the learnings will be invaluable



Don’t assume you know how modal changes will be received in the field. Challenge others people’s preconceptions and be prepared to adapt and find solutions



Engage with respondents ... and non-respondents. Do this swiftly and then demonstrate that you have listened!

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