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

Leadership and inclusion

1991 – Seeds of Hope report on racism in the CoE

1993-2002 ad hoc attempts to measure ethnic diversity

2003 – follow up to Stephen Lawrence case – ongoing monitoring

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

Tools for mission at a local level

Church growth – esp. in black majority and immigrant communities

Moral and theological imperative for celebrating diversity

Diversity

Church of England

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 connected devices (2003-2014)

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

- Any: 81%
- Laptop: 66%
- Smartphone: 64%
- PC: 41%
- Tablet: 15%

Source: IPSOS MediaCT Q2 2014
Engagement with smartphone technology growing

Which device would you miss the most?

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Read newspapers/magazines</th>
<th>Listen to radio</th>
<th>Go online via PC/laptop/tablet</th>
<th>Mobile phone/smart phone</th>
<th>Watch television</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: OFCOM, Oct-Nov 2013
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper (traditional)</th>
<th>Digital (app)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed to be suitable for self completion</td>
<td>Experimental design, never been attempted in church environment before. Interviewer or respondent led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonised questions, permission to opt-out clearly labelled</td>
<td>Downloadable survey app to avoid problems associated with poor 3G or Wi-Fi in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed to randomly selected churches</td>
<td>Instructions issued to download app at home or in Wi-Fi area beforehand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches asked to print out copies and hand out before/after Sunday service</td>
<td>Adaptive technology to ensure a professional appearance and feel across different devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post back and machine scannable</td>
<td>Separate stratified sample, designed not to overlap with main (paper) based sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-standing randomly stratified sample</td>
<td>Considerable cost and time efficiencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A method that churches and churchwardens comfortable and familiar with
Everyone Counts 2014 was launched in November
Mobile app – user friendly lay out and real time sync functionality
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...

1.45 females to every 1 male
1.74 females to every 1 male

...but 9% did not complete this question on paper.

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

Male: 4 years younger than (paper) average
Female: 3 years younger than (paper) average
An emerging hierarchy of item non-response

- Behavioural (frequency of attendance) <1%
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Disability
- Age

Overall, paper forms appear to have generated more ‘Prefer not to say’ answers than digital.

Particularly an issue for younger respondents.

Higher propensity for non-response.
Key learnings
Good practice – gain feedback as swiftly as possible

Fieldwork → Anecdotal feedback → Post fieldwork evaluation → Reflect and learn → Church Census
Evaluation is still live but feedback has already been obtained from the following sources:

- Diocese
- Church coordinator
- Evaluation survey respondents
- Data collectors
- Those who chose not to participate in main survey
- Others
- Clergy

Engagement with strategic drivers for Everyone Counts 2014:

1. Understanding whether the congregation is similar to the local community is helpful for Mission:
   - Agree: 74%
   - Neutral: 22%
   - Disagree: 5%

2. Monitoring the demographics of congregations nationally helps the Church to grow:
   - Agree: 54%
   - Neutral: 33%
   - Disagree: 13%

3. Asking a congregation to participate in surveys about who they are helps to make people feel valued in the Church:
   - Agree: 44%
   - Neutral: 38%
   - Disagree: 19%

Base: 295
Overall impressions of Everyone Counts

How would you describe your experience with Everyone Counts?

Important
Administrative
Hassle
Interesting
Supports-Mission
Engaging

Base: 167 (excludes those who did not participate)
Size of the word represents number of times mentioned/selected
Congregation penetration of Everyone Counts 2014

79% of normal congregation present and able to take part

87% of those were happy to participate in the survey

Base: 217 (excludes those who did not participate)
Feedback on operational aspects of survey

Most highly endorsed (78%+)
- Post back arrangements
- Questionnaire layout
- Sufficient time to prepare
- Instructions and guidance

Good endorsement (60%-77%)
- Overall project organisation
- Ability to answer concerns that congregation had
- Additional expenditure reasonable
- Purpose of survey was clear
- App was easy to use*

Weaker endorsement (>60%)
- Questions were appropriate
- Best time of year to conduct such a survey
- App worked on different sorts of devices*

Base: 220 (excludes those who did not participate)
* Denotes smaller base n=26
Modal preferences in the real world

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

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.

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

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

Base: warning low base (n=21)
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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