

Needs Assessment Report

Winter 2022

**JUST
LOVE**

Just Love Needs Assessment Report

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1. Executive Summary

This report is summarising a survey of 184 Christian students about their opinions on social justice. It covers the methodology, results and recommendations that arose. There were a few interesting key findings.

- Christian students care about social justice and most commonly define it linked to equality. There was a wide variety in the issues they thought were most important.
- Most respondents hold the belief that social justice should be important to Christian students, but that does not translate into an active pursuit in the lives of individual Christian students.
- Christian students are changing their consumer habits, engaging in large-scale politics and seeking out content from marginalised groups. Far fewer students are volunteering regularly and giving money to charities.
- Christian students' understanding of social justice is influenced by their faith, but much of this influence occurs outside of preaching and teaching in the Church.
- Christian students believe that the Church is paramount to bringing justice, however most Christian students are not convinced that the Church is currently achieving this.

From the analysis, there are six recommendations for Just Love:

1. To carefully re-consider a) the nature of their role in students' understanding of social justice, and b) the extent of their role in shaping and equipping students in issue selection.
2. To steer groups more into helping a belief become a practice, or plans to put their belief into practice after graduation.
3. To help students and alumni to pursue the things they currently do not by a) look to better coordinate volunteering and campaigning opportunities, b) continue to lean into teaching and language around the "whole life, life-long pursuit" of social justice, and c) put more effort into linking giving to social justice.
4. To consider what part it should play in influencing understanding and engagement of social justice
5. The alumni department within Just Love to work to set up mentoring relationships between students and alumni.
6. To carefully consider designing a condensed version of this survey and a survey for alumni to gather data on a regular basis and adapt at a faster rate

2. Introduction

The following report presents results from the needs-assessment of Christian students currently studying in the UK.

The results are based on a survey of 184 current Christian students. Of the 184 students surveyed, 90 identified themselves as having been involved in Just Love before.

To support the results of the survey, we also conducted a focus group of student workers in England and Scotland. The focus groups involved 4 student workers each from a different student work background.

2.1 Research questions

The following report seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What do Christian students understand social justice to mean?
- To what extent do Christian students care about social justice?
- What actions does their understanding of social justice lead them towards?
- To what extent (and how) is their understanding of social justice (and motivation to engage in it) influenced by their faith?
- What else is influencing students' understanding of justice and motivation to engage in it?
- How are churches equipping students for justice?

3. Methodology

This needs-assessment report presents the findings of research seeking to understand the current UK Christian, undergraduate student context. The data that informed the report was primarily collected through an online survey, co-designed and written by Eido Research, and was supplemented by two online focus groups.

The survey was distributed by Just Love staff to para-church organisations, churches, chaplaincies and charity sector organisations for circulation among students. The survey was filled in by 184 respondents. These responses provide the qualitative and quantitative data analysed in this report. The qualitative data used in the report was sampled via random selection from the 184 survey responses and was analysed by inductive data coding.

Both focus groups were carried out online via Zoom, with participants who are currently working with students in church, para-church and chaplaincy contexts. Focus group participants were recruited through Just Love networks. The focus group data was intended to be supplementary to the data from the survey, seeking to supplement data from students, with observations from non-student Christians working in the student context. However, as we were not able to get as many student workers in focus groups as we would have liked, the data collected in the focus groups has not been used as part of the qualitative data informing the conclusions reached in this report, but rather to comment on the data gathered in the survey.

There may be data biases as there was a higher proportion of female respondents, and 73% of the respondents were white, but we think this is roughly reflective of UK Christian undergraduates. We are also reassured that there was an equal split in respondents that had been part of Just Love, so results are not skewed by or limited by influence from Just Love.

4. Results

4.1 What do Christian students understand social justice to mean?

The first research question seeks to understand how Christian students understand social justice and how much variety there is within that understanding. We have broken this down into two sections. Firstly, how do Christian students define the term “social justice”? And secondly, what do they see as the most important justice issues of our time?

4.1.1 How do Christian students define social justice?

Equality

Overwhelmingly, the students we surveyed felt that the definition of social justice is intimately tied to equality. This was by far the most commonly mentioned theme in our sample. 65% of respondents included language linked to equality or inequality in their answer to the question, “how would you define social justice?”. This suggests a high degree of agreement amongst our student sample in how they would define social justice.

One respondent defined social justice as:

“...everyone, regardless of who they are, where they're from, or their current circumstances, should have equal access to basic human needs, rights, and opportunities.”

Similarly, another used the definition:

“Equality for all within society and fair rights for everyone.”

This degree of similarity of answers was common in many of the definitions we received.

Within the theme of equality, there were some differences. 5 respondents explicitly named equality in the face of discrimination:

“...no one would be disadvantaged or discriminated against in society...We would have full equality of every person”

We feel that this is natural given how broad the theme of equality is. There are many different kinds of equality - equality of opportunity, wealth, power, human rights, access to services etc. However, it is interesting to note that 5 respondents explicitly mentioned

discrimination in their definitions suggesting that this is particularly important to a number of students.

Challenging Systems

Whilst equality was by far the most significant theme to come through in the definitions of social justice, it was not the only one. 5 respondents picked up on the theme of challenging systems - the second most mentioned theme. For example:

"The state of living free from structural oppression."

However, it is interesting to note that even where respondents mentioned challenging systems of oppression, many also mentioned equality.

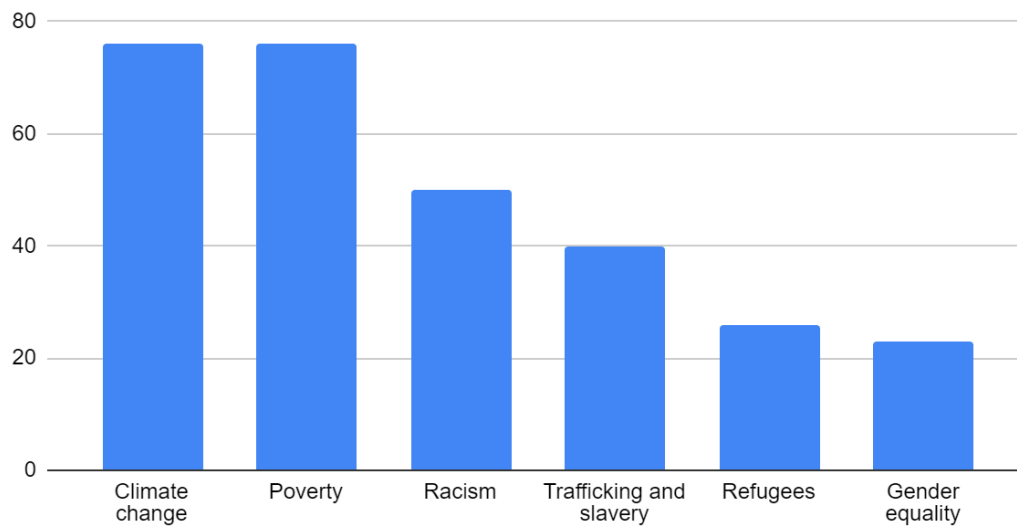
"Actively working towards eradicating inequality...challenging institutions, companies and individuals..."

Even where the definition of social justice was oriented towards challenging systems, equality remained a key theme for many of the respondents. This confirms the high level of agreement amongst our sample that Christian students in the UK would define social justice as the drive for equality amongst all people.

4.1.2 What justice issues do Christian students in the UK think are important?

To support the definitions above, we also wanted to find out what social justice issues Christian students in the UK believe are the most important. The graph below shows the most popular answers to the question, "what do you think are the three most important social justice issues of our time?"

What do you think are the three most important social justice issues of our time?



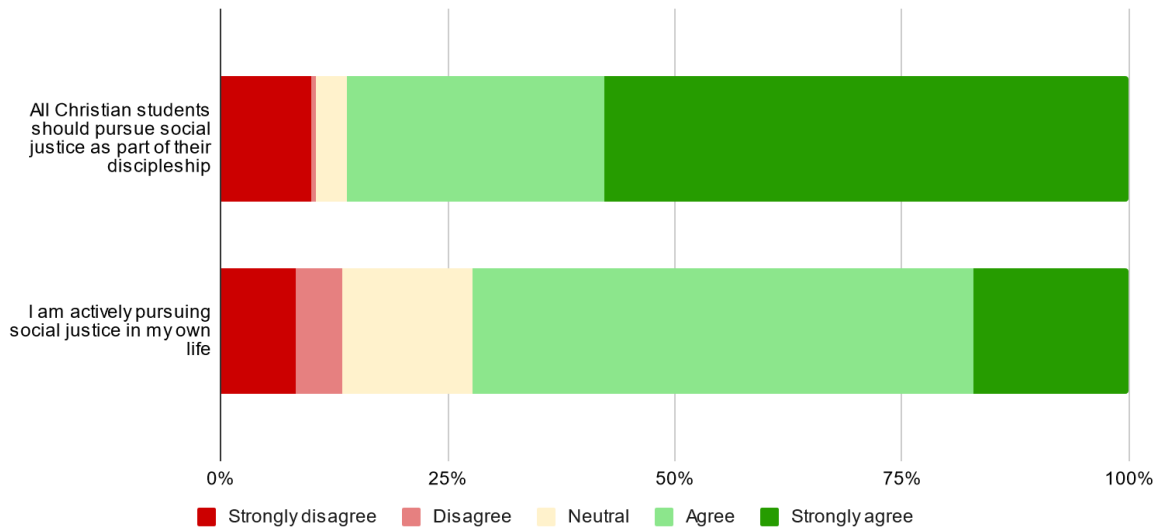
In our analysis of this question, three issues were clearly seen as the most important by our sample. These were: climate change, poverty and racism with at least 40 respondents mentioning each of them. The next most popular were food poverty, inequality and gender inequality.

However, it should be recognised that there was a lot less agreement on this question than there was on the previous question asking them to define social justice. Even climate change, the most popular answer, was only mentioned by 15% respondents. In total, 25 different issues were named by 37 respondents suggesting a far greater level of variety amongst the sample on which justice issues are most important.

It is interesting that there is a large amount of agreement on how to define social justice, but far less agreement on what issues are most pressing. This suggests that Christian students understand social justice broadly as a similar concept, but when it comes to choosing where to focus within social justice, there is more confusion or disagreement.

4.2 To what extent do Christian students care about social justice?

With our second research question, we wanted to understand the extent to which UK Christian students care about social justice.



We discovered that across the board, Christian students in the UK believe that Christian students should pursue social justice as part of their discipleship. Overwhelmingly, the respondents agreed with this statement. 86% of the 180 respondents at least agreed with this statement with 58% strongly agreeing. There is no question that Christian students do believe that social justice matters for them.

Interestingly, respondents who have been involved in Just Love are more likely to strongly agree (76%) than students not involved in Just Love (38%). However, the impact of this is limited as across the board, roughly 85% respondents agreed with this statement. This suggests that Just Love does have a positive impact on causing students to care more about social justice, but that the belief is already there for the majority of students. Just Love is able to strengthen that resolve.

A comparison of the two questions represented in the graph above shows a difference between belief and action. In answer to the statement, "I am actively pursuing social justice in my own life", 72% of respondents agree or strongly agree. Whilst this is still broad agreement, it is a 14% drop compared to the previous question. Additionally, the proportion of respondents strongly agreeing drops even more significantly. 58% of respondents strongly agree that all Christian students should pursue social justice as part of their discipleship, whereas only 17% strongly agree that they are pursuing social justice in their own life.

This suggests that whilst **the belief that social justice should be important to Christian students is strong, that does not translate into an active pursuit in the lives of individual Christian students.**

Again, in this question, students who have been involved in Just Love are slightly more likely to strongly agree, but the impact of being involved in Just Love is less on this question than on the previous question.

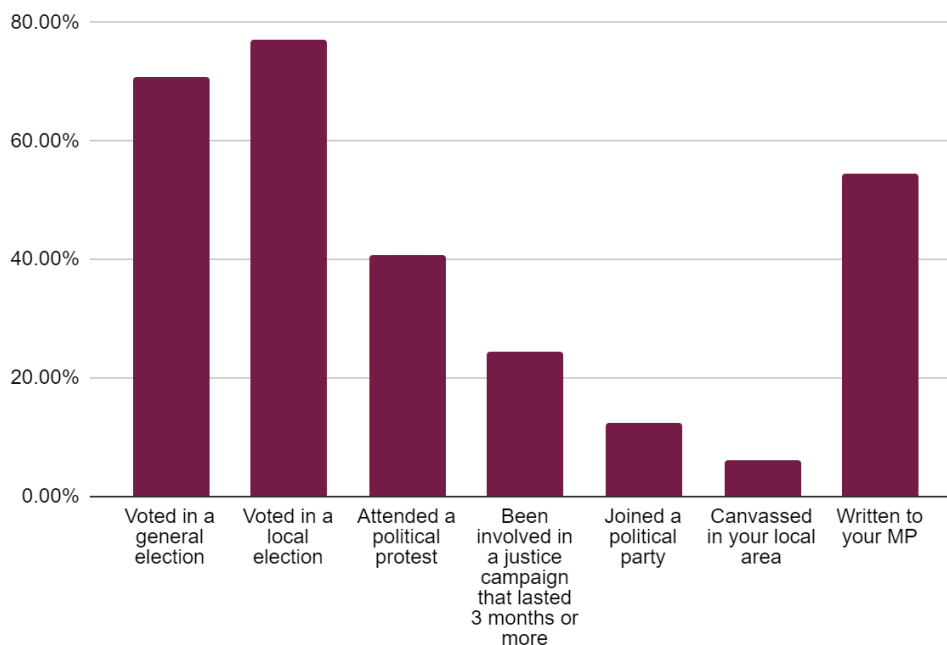
Interestingly, the group who were most likely to strongly agree that they are pursuing social justice actively is the 24+ age group. Perhaps it is the case that an active pursuit of justice grows over time and comes with a greater maturity. Regardless, our research suggests that Christian students of all ages and types do care about social justice. However, far fewer are confident that they are actively pursuing justice in their own lives.

4.3 What actions does their understanding of social justice lead them towards?

The third research question seeks to understand what actions and choices Christian students are making as a result of their passion for social justice. We have separated this out into two sections. Firstly, what actions are they currently taking to pursue justice? And secondly, how is the pursuit of justice shaping their life choices?

4.3.1 What actions are students currently taking to pursue justice?

Politics



The graph above shows which political actions the respondents have taken. As might be expected, the majority of respondents have voted in either a local or general election. The next most popular action is to have written to an MP (54%), closely followed by attending a political protest (40%). Overall, this suggests that Christian students in the UK are politically active at both a local and national level. For the majority of Christian students, this goes beyond voting in major elections.

Consumer choices and diet

We asked respondents numerous questions about whether they consider their consumer choices as part of their pursuit of justice. We found that the majority of respondents have altered their consumer habits to be more justice oriented. 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *"In the past month, I have consciously tried to ensure that everything I have bought is fairly produced and environmentally friendly"* and 60% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *"I have changed my diet (e.g. gone vegetarian, vegan or reduced meat consumption) in order to have less negative impact on the world"*.

Within this, male respondents, those who identified as reformed Christians, and those not involved in Just Love were less likely to have consciously tried to consume fairly and environmentally friendly products.

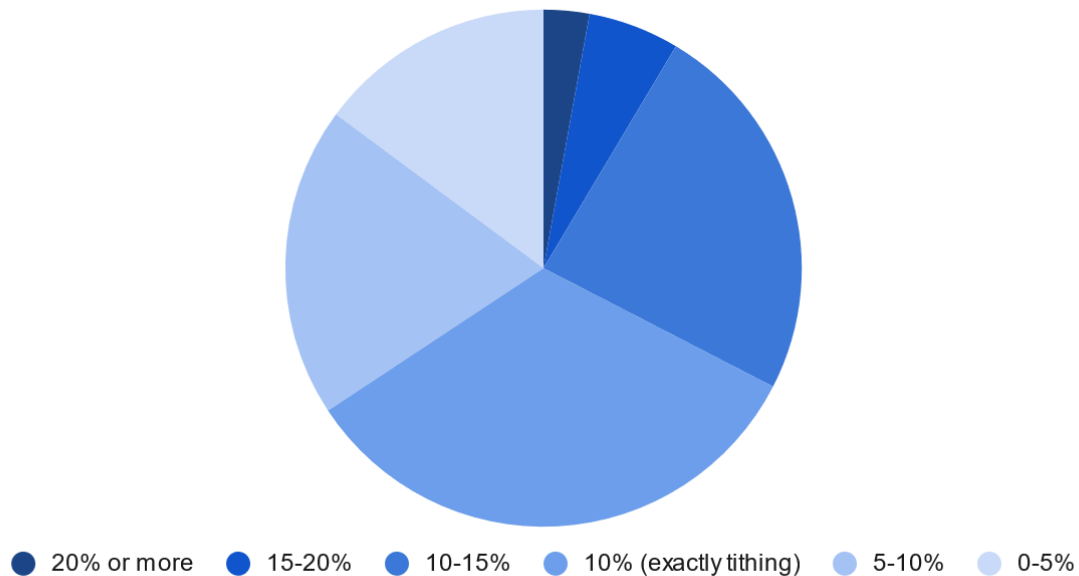
Those involved in Just Love were far more likely to have changed their diet than those not involved in Just Love and again, female respondents were slightly more likely to have made this change. However, across the board, the majority of respondents (88%) believe that they will be able to sustain these changes after graduation with little to no difference between different groups of students.

Giving

Our survey suggests that the most popular frequency of giving amongst Christian students is monthly (42%) but significant proportions of students choose to give to charity quarterly (19%), multiple times per year (20%) and never (13%).

A similar pattern is seen in how much Christian students plan to give to charity after they graduate. The pie chart below shows how much Christian students plan to give to charity after they graduate.

What proportion of your income do you plan to give to charity once you graduate?



The most popular proportion of income to give to charity is 10% but the majority of respondents plan to give either exactly 10% or between 10 and 15% of their income away. This is unsurprising, given the common discipline of tithing that is seen throughout the Church. Interestingly, Russell group students are most likely to give exactly 10% away compared to non-Russell Group students who are most likely to give between 10 and 15% away. It is not clear why students from non-Russell Group universities plan to be more generous after they graduate.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a less popular way of pursuing justice within the students we have surveyed. Only 40% of respondents volunteer monthly or more frequently than monthly, with 18% of respondents not volunteering at all.

The most popular form of volunteering is through a youth club (25%). Other popular forms of volunteering include food banks (14%) and outreach to rough sleepers (13%).

Interestingly, there is a huge difference between the frequency with which Russell Group and non-Russell Group university students engage in volunteering. Russell Group students tended to volunteer on a quarterly basis whilst non-Russell Group students tended to volunteer on a fortnightly or monthly basis. Perhaps there is a greater pressure to achieve academically within Russell Group students and therefore volunteering is devalued.

Seeking content from marginalised groups

Seeking content from marginalised groups is a popular way of pursuing justice amongst UK Christian students according to our survey. 66% of students who identified themselves as having a lived experience of injustice agreed that they have actively sought out content by people (either from their own community or another) who have experiences of injustice. This was slightly lower (63%) amongst students who do not identify with having a lived experience of injustice but still a significant majority.

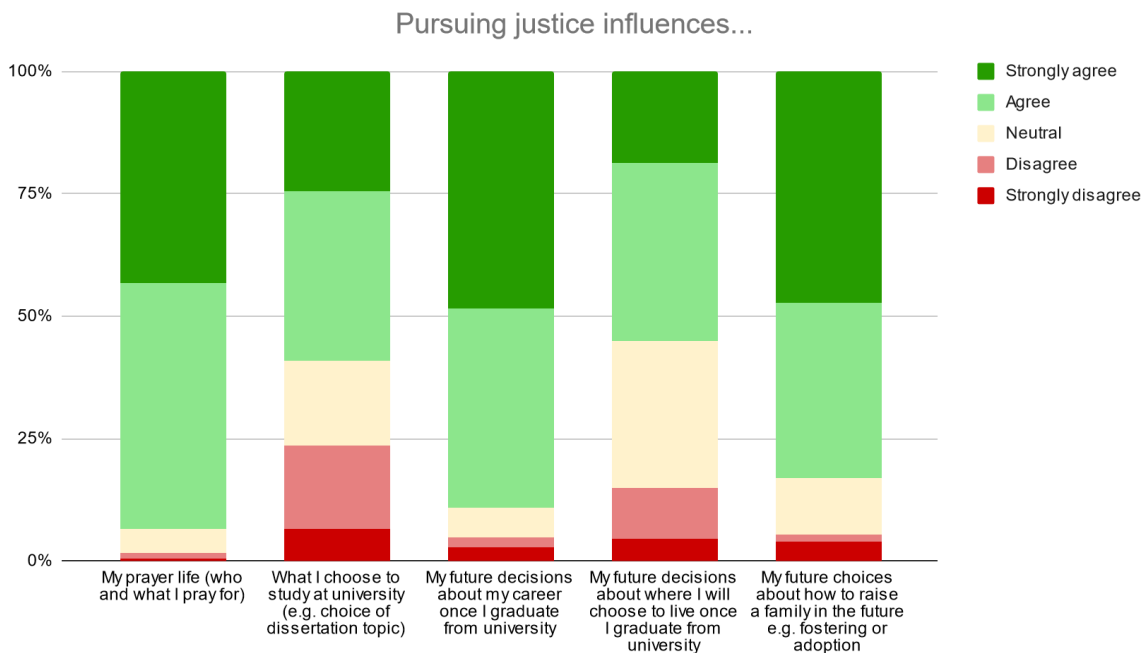
Indeed, this is consistent with our further findings. Respondents who are non-white, have a disability or had access to free school meals were all more likely than their inverse to have sought out content from marginalised groups in the last six months. This is unsurprising given that these factors are more likely to lead to an experience of injustice in the respondent themselves. It is natural that they would want to reach out to find content from other marginalised groups.

It is perhaps more surprising how many students who do not have a lived experience of injustice have sought out content from marginalised groups. From our conversation with student leaders in the focus groups, it seems this is a growing phenomenon in Christian student culture with many more students from white, middle-class backgrounds becoming aware of the privilege they are afforded and seeking to do something about it.

Considering the above five areas of actions, it seems that there are a number of actions that are popular for students to take in their pursuit of justice. In particular, **Christian students are changing their consumer habits, engaging in large-scale politics and seeking out content from marginalised groups. Far fewer students are volunteering regularly and giving money to charities.**

4.3.2 How are Christian students' decisions impacted by the pursuit of justice?

As well as understanding how the pursuit of justice changes Christian students' actions, we also wanted to explore how it influences the longer-term choices they make. The graph below shows how pursuing justice has altered Christian students' life choices across a range of areas.



The areas that are most influenced by the pursuit of justice are career choices (89% agree), prayer life (93% agree) and family life (82%). Far less influenced by pursuing justice are choice of what to study (59%) and choice of where to live (54%), though it should be noted that even these areas are influenced by the pursuit of justice for over half of our respondents.

Students involved in Just Love were more likely to agree that pursuing justice influences all of the areas above, however this was particularly true of future decisions about careers. This is understandable given the emphasis within Just Love on careers, particularly at Just Love national events (e.g. careers panel at committee training events). This is possibly the area in which Just Love speaks most clearly on and perhaps an area that other Christian student organisations speak less on. On the contrary, there are many organisations speaking on how the pursuit of justice influences prayer for example.

On the whole, it is clear that for the majority of students surveyed, the pursuit of justice does influence their life choices in a significant way. This is most acutely felt in decisions around prayer, careers and family.

4.4 To what extent (and how) is their understanding of social justice (and motivation to engage in it) influenced by their faith?

As well as exploring how Christian students in the UK understand and act on justice, we also wanted to question what is shaping this understanding. Importantly, we wanted to know the extent to which their understanding and action of social justice is influenced by their faith. First we looked at a number of different faith-based factors, then we looked more deeply into what makes a Christian response to social justice distinctive. These two areas make up our fourth research question.

4.4.1 Faith-based factors

We found that broadly, Christian students do feel that their understanding of social justice is influenced by their faith. Out of a range of options, our survey respondents rated individual Bible study as the most important factor influencing their understanding of social justice. 64% of respondents rated individual Bible study as either “very influential” or “extremely influential” and only 1% of respondents rated it as “not influential”. This was the strongest area of agreement across the options and there was little variation across different groups of students. The only notable difference is that individual Bible study was particularly influential on international students, more so than any other group analysed.

Additionally, Christian organisations also seem to be particularly influential on Christian student’s understanding of social justice. 57% of respondents rated Christian organisations as “very” or “extremely” influential with only 6% rating Christian organisations at “not influential”. We were particularly interested to find out if Just Love is having an influence on Christian student’s understanding of social justice. 32% of respondents rated Just Love “extremely influential”, a higher percentage than any other factor we looked at. However, a significant number also rated Just Love as “not influential” (21%), larger than any other faith related factor. This was naturally differentiated between those involved in Just Love and those not involved in Just Love. 99% of respondents who were involved with Just Love rated Just Love as influential, and even those who weren’t involved almost 60% rated Just Love as influential.

Broadly, Christian students seem to be strongly influenced by faith-based factors. However, when specifically asked about teaching at their Church, only 33% of respondents rated this as “very” or “extremely” influential with 37% of respondents rating this factor as “somewhat” or “not” influential. Interestingly, those involved in Just Love were most likely to rate preaching or teaching at their Church as only somewhat influential. This is perhaps because they are receiving teaching through Just Love more specifically aiming at deepening students’ understanding of justice and they are comparing this to limited teaching that they

hear in a Church context. Additionally, students with a disability, who had access to free school meals, or who don't attend a Russell Group university, were all more likely than their inverse to rate teaching from Church as more influential. This is an interesting dynamic to observe, but we aren't sure why this is.

Looking across these factors, **we can see that Christian student's understanding of social justice is influenced by their faith. However, the majority of this influence occurs outside of preaching and teaching in the Church.**

4.4.2 The Bible and social justice

To further explore the question of how Christian student's faith shapes their understanding of social justice, we asked them specifically what is distinct in what the Bible or Christianity has to say about social justice.

Within our sample, there were many different themes that came through from this question. There were a lot of different aspects to the respondents' understanding about what is distinctive within the Bible or Christianity's approach to justice. The most commonly mentioned theme was around the example that Jesus has given us in His life and resurrection. Another key theme was the idea of the intrinsic worth and dignity of people, particularly as people made in the image of God. Some respondents talked about God's version of justice as restorative justice, while others talked about the fact that it is for God to judge who has acted justly and who hasn't, and that we can only find true justice through Jesus.

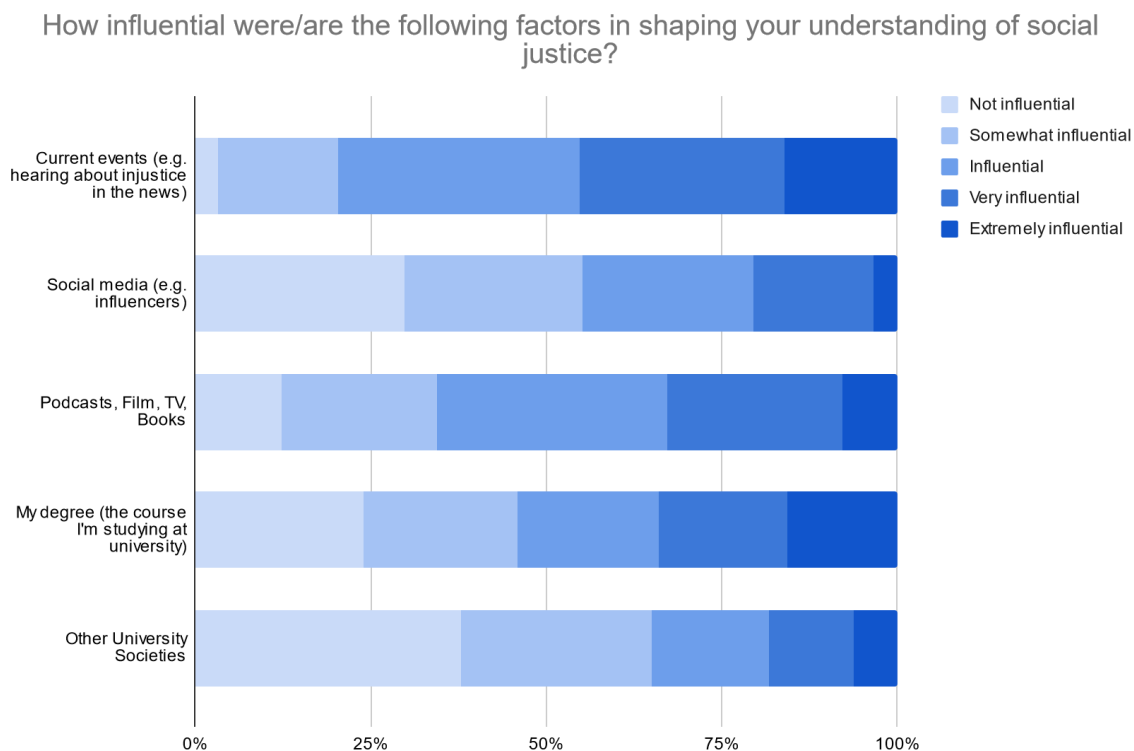
Whilst there are key themes that have come through in this question, the range of answers and lack of clarity even within some answers, suggests that the Christian students we have surveyed are not in agreement about what the Bible and Christianity has to say about justice that is distinctive from secular society. Perhaps this comes from a lack of clear teaching on this topic. This would be consistent with our findings on how influential Church teaching is on Christian students' understanding of social justice. Alternatively, this lack of clarity could reflect a lack of communal understanding within Christian culture as a whole, not just within Christian student culture.

Christian students are certainly influenced and motivated by the faith in their pursuit and understanding of social justice. However, it is clear from our research that there are discrepancies within how this occurs. On the whole, Christian students are more influenced by factors outside of the Church than teaching coming from the Church. This is reflected in the wide variety of opinions on what the Bible and Christianity says distinctively about social

justice. **The majority of Christian students are influenced by their faith when it comes to understanding social justice but this has not led to agreement about what makes a Christian’s pursuit of justice distinctive.**

4.5 What else is influencing students’ understanding of justice and motivation to engage in it?

As well as understanding how faith influences students’ understanding of justice, we also wanted to interrogate what other factors are influencing how Christian students in the UK understand and engage with justice. This forms the focus of our penultimate research question.



Overall, we can see that the survey respondents find current events to be the most influential factor on their understanding of social justice. 45% of respondents rated current events as “very” or “extremely” influential. On the contrary, the students we surveyed rated other university societies as the least influential factor in shaping their understanding of social justice. Only 18% of our respondents rated this as “very” or “extremely” influential.

There are some interesting differences in how different groups of students rated the above factors. We found that students attending a Russell group university are less influenced by the degree they are studying than students from non-Russell group universities. One

possible reason for this is that perhaps courses at non-Russell group universities are more likely to involve practically engaging in issues of injustice rather than just engaging theoretically. It is also possible that our data from non-Russell students is slightly skewed towards students studying at theological universities which would then be expected to be more influential in this area than other universities.

Again, we saw an interesting difference between those involved in Just Love and those not involved in Just Love. Students involved in Just Love were more likely to find current events less influential, and podcasts and books more influential, than those not involved in Just Love. It is possible that this is a cultural influence of Just Love. As an organisation, Just Love promotes exploring justice issues through podcasts and books and often recommends this type of content to students so this is understandable. Additionally, as we saw earlier in the report, students involved in Just Love are more likely to describe themselves as “actively pursuing justice”, therefore it is more likely that they would seek out justice shaping content beyond what is seen in the news.

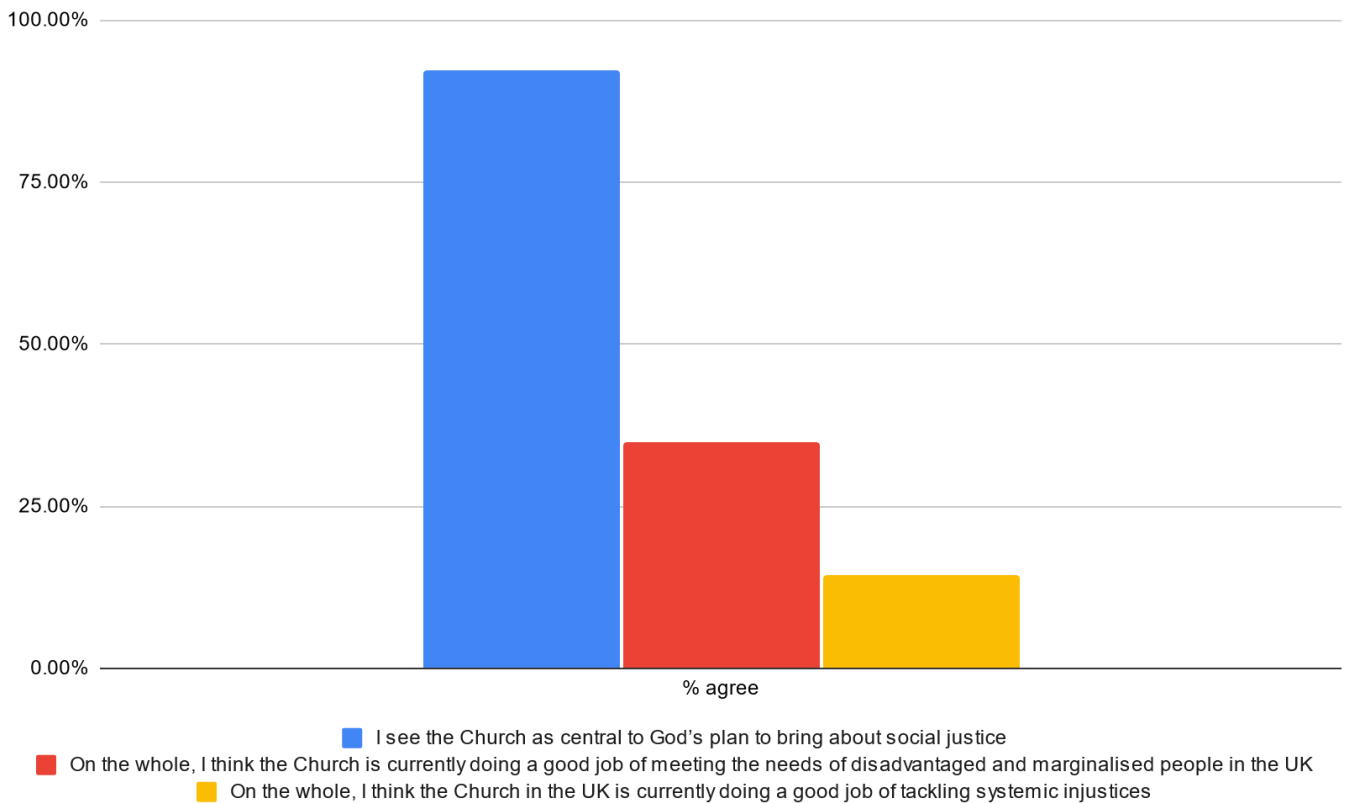
From our results, we can clearly state that the main secular influences on Christian student’s understanding of social justice are current events. For students involved in Just Love, their personal learning through podcasts and books also plays a significant role. However, it is interesting to note that compared to faith-based factors, almost all of these secular factors were rated as less influential. This leads us to believe that **faith-based factors such as individual bible study, the influence of Christian organisations play a far greater role in shaping Christian student’s understanding of social justice than secular factors.**

4.6 How are churches equipping students for justice?

Research questions one to five enable us to understand how current Christian students relate to social justice as individuals. Our final research question focuses on what provision exists within the Church to equip students to pursue justice. Given the lack of data collected through focus groups, our data does not fully answer this question. However, there are interesting insights to be gained about how students feel towards the Churches response to justice, and what provision students most want from the Church and other organisations.

4.6.1 How do Christian students feel about the Church in the UK?

The chart below shows the extent to which Christian students agree with statements we gave them about the UK Church’s response to injustice. There is a large gap between how important Christian students believe the Church to be, and how well they think the Church is responding to issues of injustice.



92% of Christian students we surveyed agree that the Church is central to God's plan to bring about social justice, with the majority of respondents (55%) strongly agreeing. In stark contrast, only 35% of respondents agree that the Church is doing a good job of meeting the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged people and only 14% agree that the UK Church is doing a good job of tackling systemic injustices. Across a range of demographics including gender, age and disability, the group most likely to agree that the Church is central to God's plan for justice was students involved in Just Love. However, this was not to a huge degree, and it seems that Christian students across the board agree that the Church is central to bringing about justice. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, the group most likely to agree that the UK Church is doing a good job of engaging with systemic injustice are those who had access to free school meals growing up. This is surprising as this group is potentially more likely to have been on the end of systemic injustice than some other groups.

This leads us to an interesting conclusion. **Christian students believe that the Church is paramount to bringing justice, however the vast majority of Christian students are not convinced that the Church is currently achieving this.**

4.6.2 What do Christian students want from Churches and similar organisations?

We gave our students a list of potential ways that they could develop their pursuit of social justice and asked them to tick which ones they would find helpful. There was no limit to how many they could choose and some students did tick all of the options. However, there were three clear front-runners in the options that students chose. These are: opportunities for volunteering and campaigning (77%), a committed community of peers (72%) and role models (63%). On the other end of the spectrum, only 22% of respondents ticked online communities and 29% ticked online courses suggesting that there is little desire for online resourcing from Churches and other organisations.

Interestingly, and perhaps unexpectedly, the desire for opportunities for volunteering and campaigning increased when looking at students involved in Just Love. This is surprising as in theory, Just Love should be fulfilling this. It's possible that Just Love students are more enthusiastic about volunteering and campaigning and this has produced a greater desire for more opportunities. Alternatively, this could be a learning point for Just Love. Perhaps Just Love's emphasis needs to be shifted more towards finding and providing these opportunities.

Whilst this data does not explicitly show how the Church is equipping students to pursue justice, it is evident that there are ways that students want to be equipped which are not currently being fulfilled. This suggests that across Churches and other Christian organisations, the largest gaps are a lack of opportunities to be actively involved in volunteering and campaigning, a lack of a committed community of peers, and a lack of role models to follow.

This research has shown explicitly the degree to which Christian students feel the UK Church is failing to effectively tackle social justice issues. It is clear that the stark difference between the belief Christian students have in the Church as a concept, and their feelings towards how well the Church is responding to injustice both in their local communities and systemically cannot be ignored. Additionally, the desire from Christian students for more opportunities, more role models and a greater sense of community in their pursuit of justice suggests that there is more that Churches and other Christian student organisations can be doing to deepen the engagement of Christian students in the pursuit of justice.

5. Bivariate analysis

Throughout our analysis, we continually looked for whether there were any particular factors that made a significant difference to the way respondents answered our survey questions. These differences have been included in the results section above, however we wanted to recognise them more overtly. Below are the three areas that created the largest bivariate differences in how respondents answered the questions.

5.1 Russell Group Universities

One of the largest influencing factors on the way students filled out our survey was whether they had attended a Russell group or non-Russell group university. Over multiple areas of the survey, was a marked disparity in how these two groups responded.

In particular, it seems Russell group and non-Russell group students' understanding of the concept of social justice is influenced by different things. Non-Russell group students found the events happening in the news and their degrees more influential whilst Russell group students cited Just Love as a more influential factor. A large part of this may be because Just Love has historically operated mostly in Russell group universities, largely owing to its conception in Oxford. As Just Love expands into a wider variety of universities, it would be interesting to see if this dynamic changes.

However, in contrast to the above, non-Russell group students seemed to be more active in pursuing justice despite Just Love's absence in most of their universities. According to our survey, non-Russell group students are more likely to volunteer, more likely to give larger amounts of their future income away and more likely to seek out content from marginalised groups. This will be a particularly useful piece of information for Just Love to note as we work more and more outside of Russell group universities.

5.2 Involvement in Just Love

The second factor that we have picked up on is involvement with Just Love. Students involved in Just Love tended to answer questions slightly differently to those not involved in Just Love. These differences were seen across both beliefs and practices.

Just Love students were more likely to think that all Christians should pursue justice as part of their discipleship. This is unsurprising given that this is one of the primary messages Just Love communicates. Their understanding of justice seems to be shaped quite differently to those not involved in Just Love. Just Love students rated current events as less influential than other groups of students. However, they also rated podcasts and books as more influential. Again, this likely reflects the culture of Just Love as a movement. We advocate for

an attitude of learning and encourage our students to read books and listen to podcasts regularly.

Additionally, according to our survey, Just Love students have slightly different practices of justice than non-Just Love students. Students involved in Just Love were more likely to consume ethically in their shopping habits and to have changed their diet to reduce their impact on the world. Again, this is likely a reflection of the current culture within Just Love. On these questions, Just Love students were also more likely to believe that they would be able to continue these habits after they have graduated from university. Similarly, the Just Love influence could be seen on responses to questions asking about how justice shapes the future of our respondents. Just Love students see their pursuit of justice impacting what careers they choose, where they want to live and what they want to study more than students not involved in Just Love.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there were differences seen in how Just Love and non-Just Love students answered questions about the Church. In one sense, Just Love students are more hopeful about the Church. They were more likely to strongly agree that the Church is central to God's plan to bring about justice. However, it seems Just Love students are also more critical of the Church. They rated preaching and teaching at their Church as less influential on their understanding of justice, suggesting that they feel their Churches are not speaking strongly enough about issues of injustice. Similarly, Just Love students were more concerned about the Church's response to systemic injustice. Indeed, they were one of the groups most likely to strongly disagree with the statement *"On the whole, I think the Church in the UK is currently doing a good job of tackling systemic injustices"*. This all leads us to an understanding that Just Love students are passionate about the Church and believe in its importance, but they are not satisfied with the extent to which the Church in the UK is currently speaking and acting on injustice.

5.3 Experience of Injustice

Throughout this research, we have been particularly keen to understand how a wide variety of Christian students engage with justice. We noted from the beginning that it would be particularly important to find out how students who have experienced injustice in their own lives engage in the pursuit of social justice. As expected, this is another area where we saw distinctions in how respondents approached the questions we asked.

To understand this bivariate, we looked at which demographics are most likely to have experienced injustice and created a "lived experience" code. This includes: those who are non-white, those with a disability, those who are not heterosexual, and those who had access to free school meals as a child. We initially looked at differences between this code

and all other respondents and then looked more closely at the different groups within this code.

We have found that there are interesting differences in how an understanding of social justice is formed. Those with a lived experience of injustice are more likely to see the news and social media as more influential than those without a lived experience. Across most lived experiences of injustice, Just Love was a less significant factor in forming their understanding of justice, aside from students of a non-white background for whom it was more influential than for white students. Students who are more likely to have experienced injustice also rated other university societies as more influential on their understanding of social justice than students who have not got a lived experience of injustice.

Additionally, according to our survey, students who may have experienced injustice are more likely to volunteer more regularly, but less likely to give to charity after they graduate. Students with lived experience are also less likely to see justice as a key factor in deciding what career they pursue or who and what they pray for, but more likely to see it as a factor in deciding how they raise a family and where they would choose to live. This suggests that an experience of justice, or the increased likelihood of experiencing an injustice, does impact the way in which Christian students engage with and understand social justice.

6. Recommendations

Our first research question was, “What do Christian students understand social justice to mean?”, and our results have shown that Christian students, whether involved or not involved in Just Love, have an existing understanding of social justice broadly based around equality, but there is much more diversity in which areas are most important to them. Just Love has previously used a narrative of ‘awakening’ to the pursuit of justice as a major part of what Just Love groups do, but it is clear from our results that broadly, students are both aware and passionate about social justice. Therefore, we recommend that Just Love carefully re-consider a) the nature of their role in students’ understanding of social justice, and b) the extent of their role in shaping and equipping students in issue selection.

We asked, “To what extent do Christian students care about social justice?”, and found that while Christian students believe social justice is important, this didn’t always translate to an active pursuit of social justice. We recommend Just Love steer groups more into helping a belief become a practice, or plans to put into practice after graduation.

Our findings showed that Christian students’ understanding of social justice leads them towards taking action by changing their consumer habits, engaging in large-scale politics and seeking out content from marginalised groups. However, far fewer students are volunteering regularly and giving money to charities. Additionally, their understanding of social justice affects their life choices, particularly in the areas of prayer, family, and career. Just Love encourages students to focus on volunteering and raising money, however, as is clear from the results, this is not the way most students take action on social justice. This suggests that Just Love is therefore not doing enough to encourage students in these areas, so we recommend that Just Love looks to better coordinate volunteering and campaigning opportunities. We also recommend that Just Love continue to lean into teaching and language around the “whole life, life-long pursuit” of social justice. We also recommend putting more effort into linking giving to social justice.

We looked at the influence of faith on Christian students’ understanding and engagement of social justice. We found that faith is a major influence, but most of the influence comes from outside of preaching and teaching in the church. Just Love’s skillset is working with students, but we have developed high quality teaching. We recommend that Just Love consider what part it should play in responding to this need.

Students said that committed community and role models would be most helpful in pursuing justice. We recommend that the alumni department within Just Love works to set up mentoring relationships between students and alumni.



Lastly, we recommend that Just Love carefully considers designing a condensed version of this survey, potentially with further scope, and gathers data using this condensed version on a regular basis, so as to adapt to the needs presented in Christian student culture at a faster rate. It would also be helpful to have some data gathered from alumni to ensure we are also adapting to their needs.

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