

Single friendly Church

Including single people at Christmas





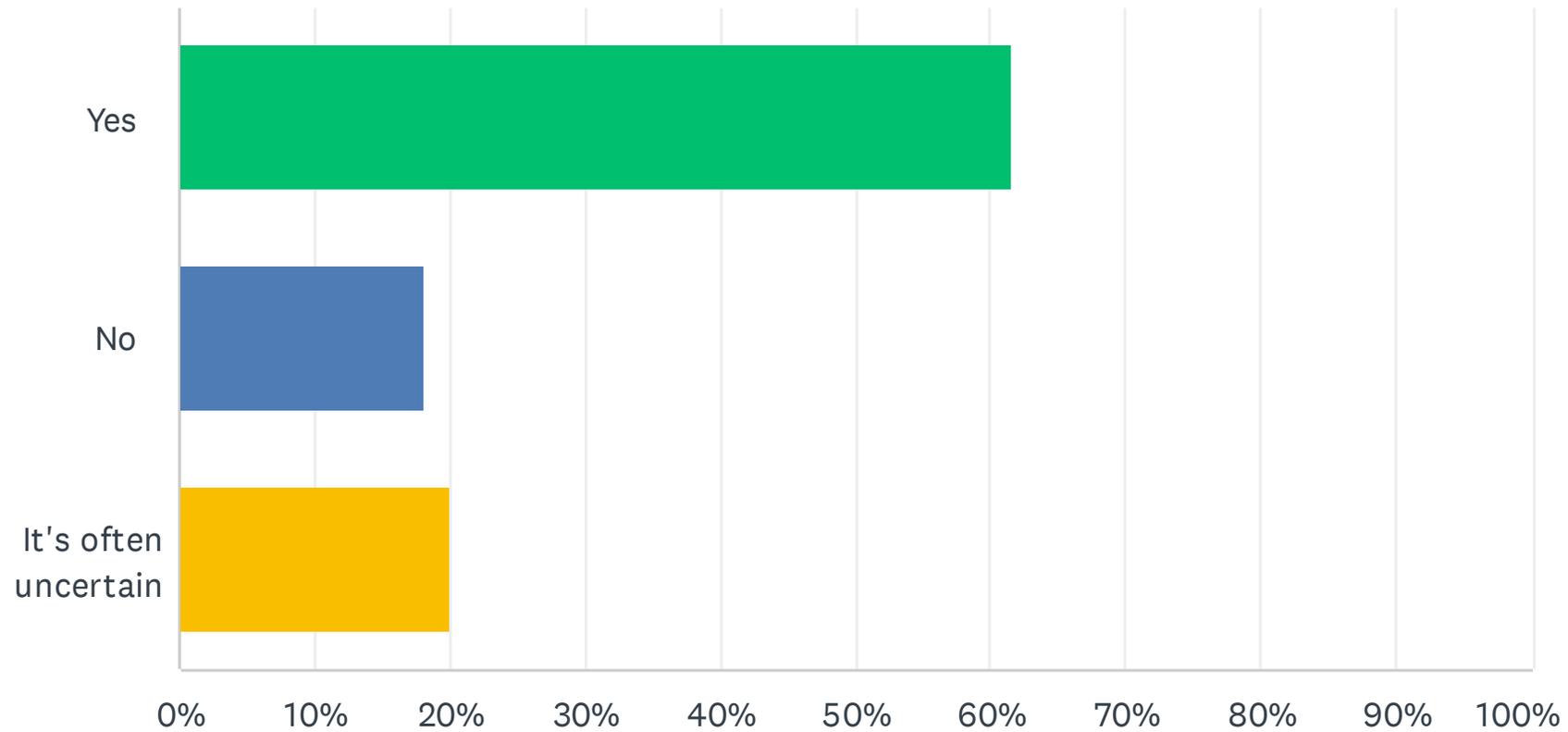
Christmas survey

488 people responded to the survey

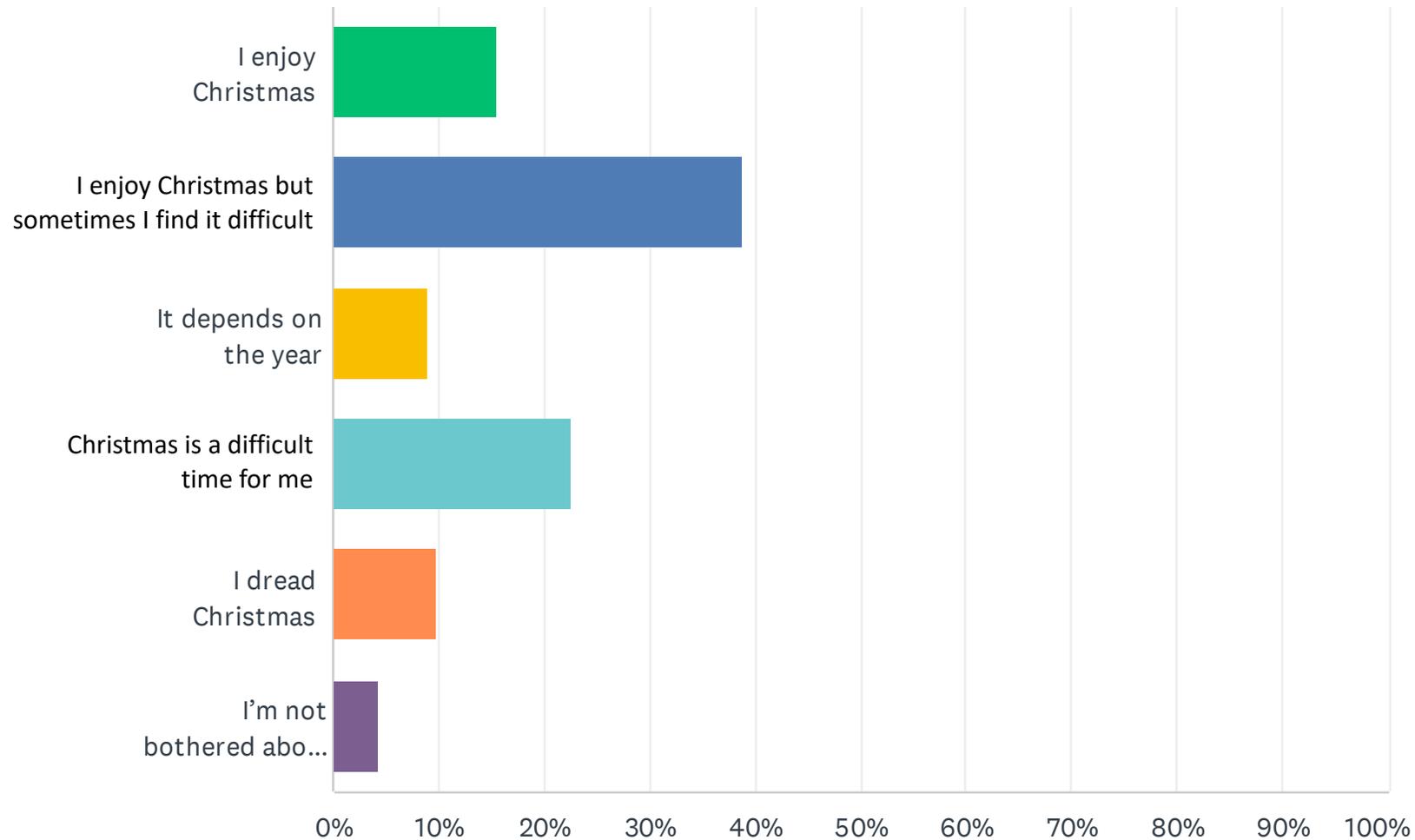
We wanted to find out how single Christians feel about Christmas, and what their experience of church has been

Positive ideas - what has worked well?

Do you have someone or a group you usually spend Christmas with?



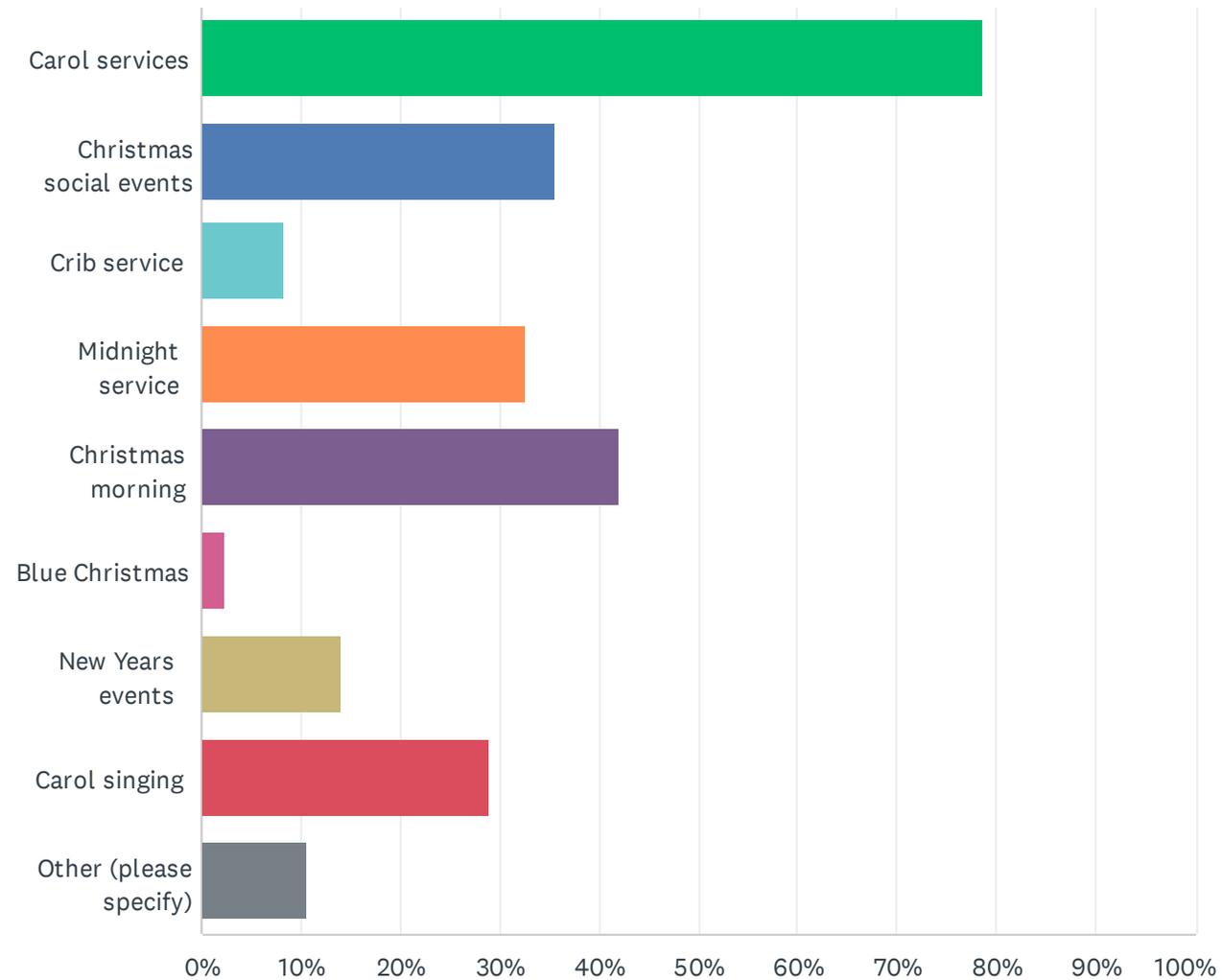
How do you find the Christmas season as a single person?



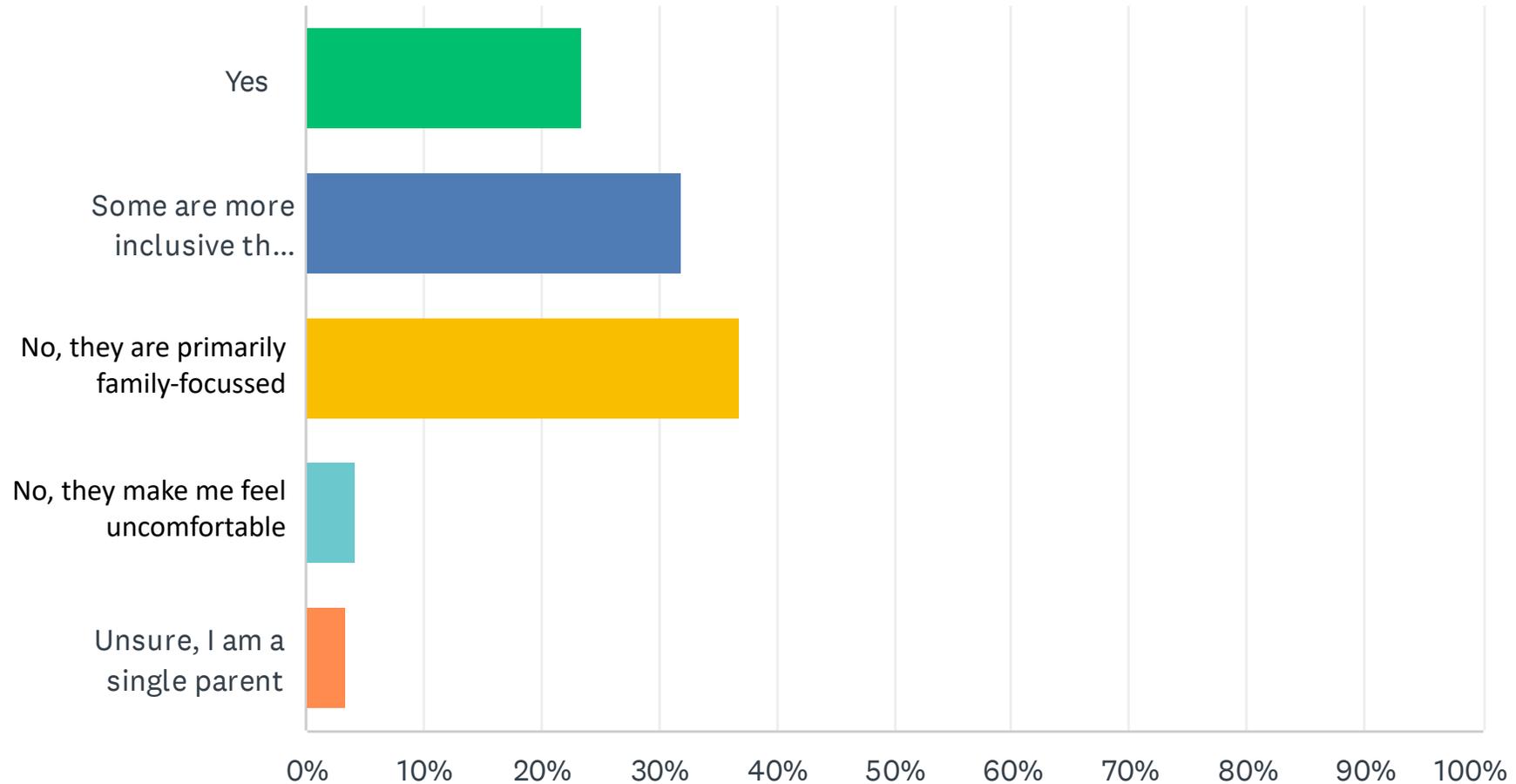


"I think it's one of the harder times of the year (if not the hardest) for single people."

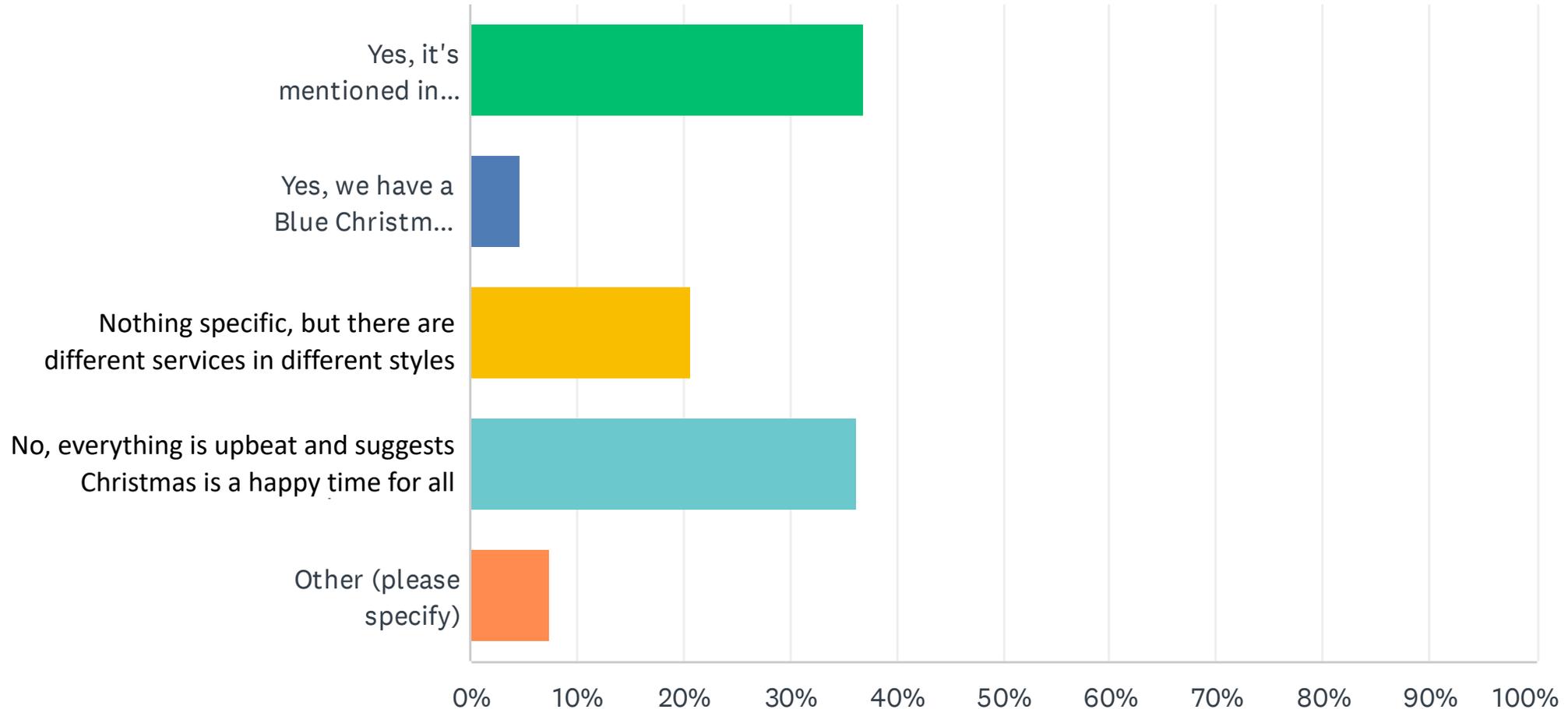
What church events do you enjoy attending at Christmas?



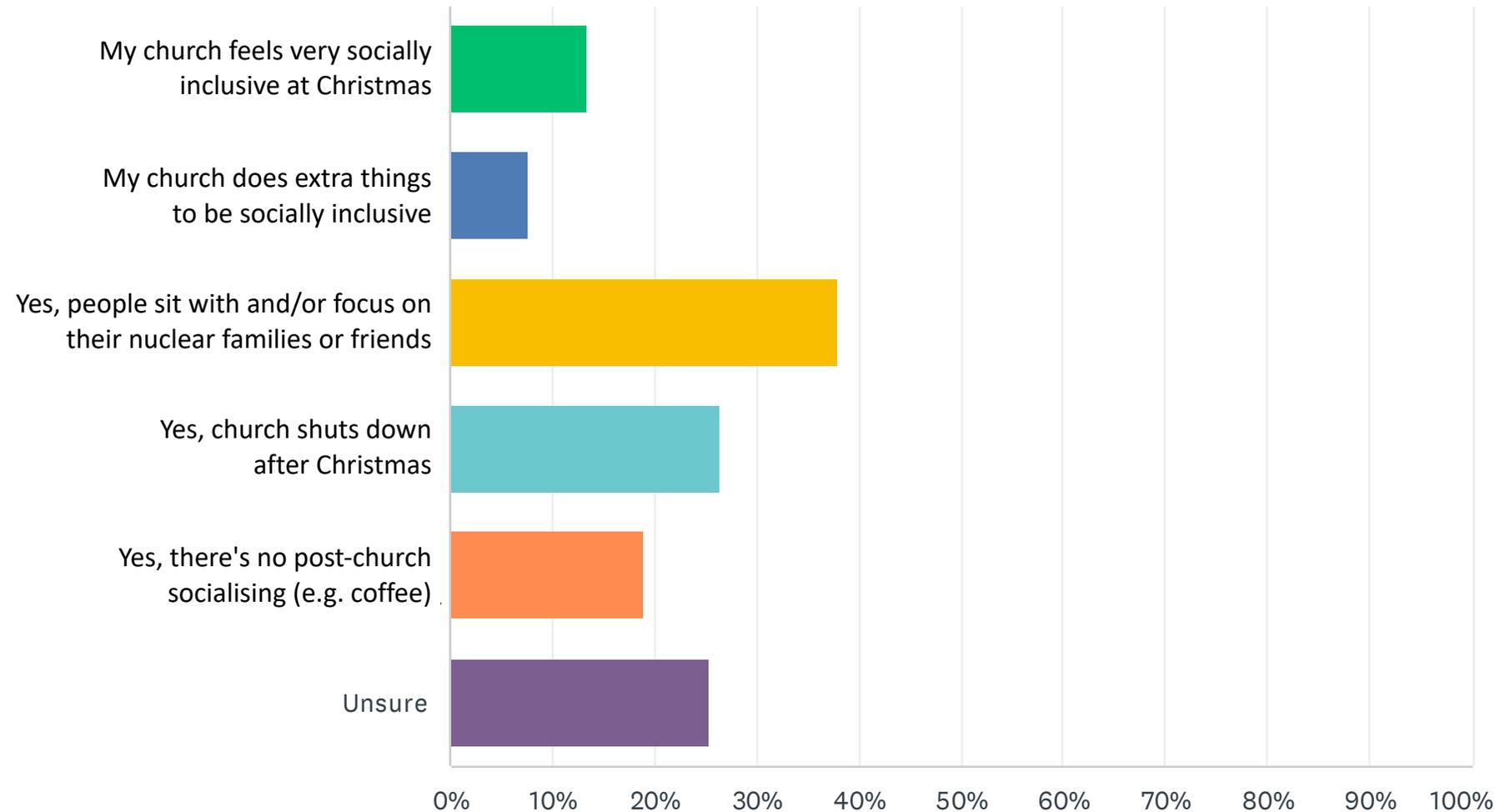
In your most recent experience of Christmas services in church, were they inclusive of those without children?



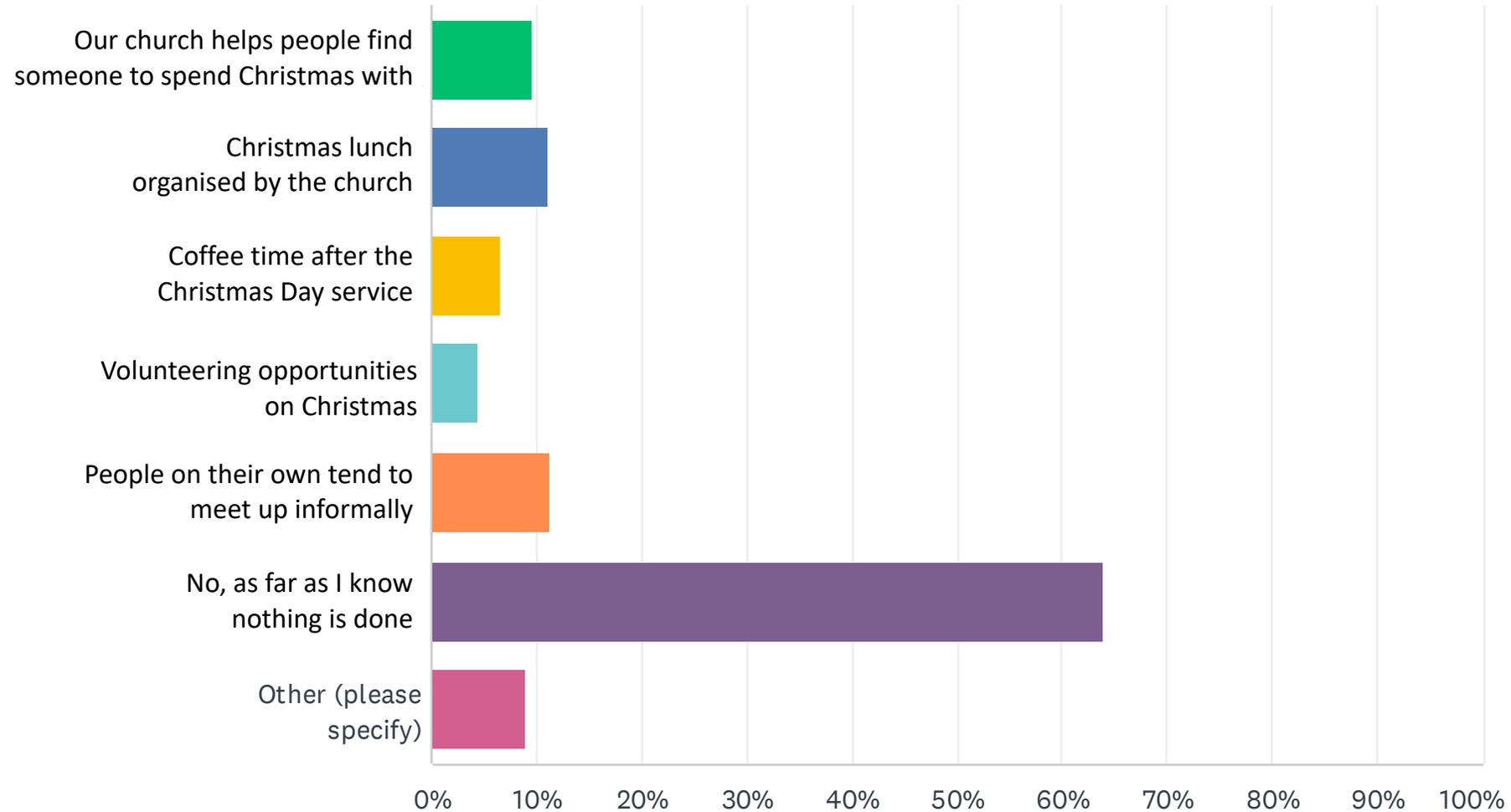
Does your church do anything in their services to recognise Christmas can be a difficult time?



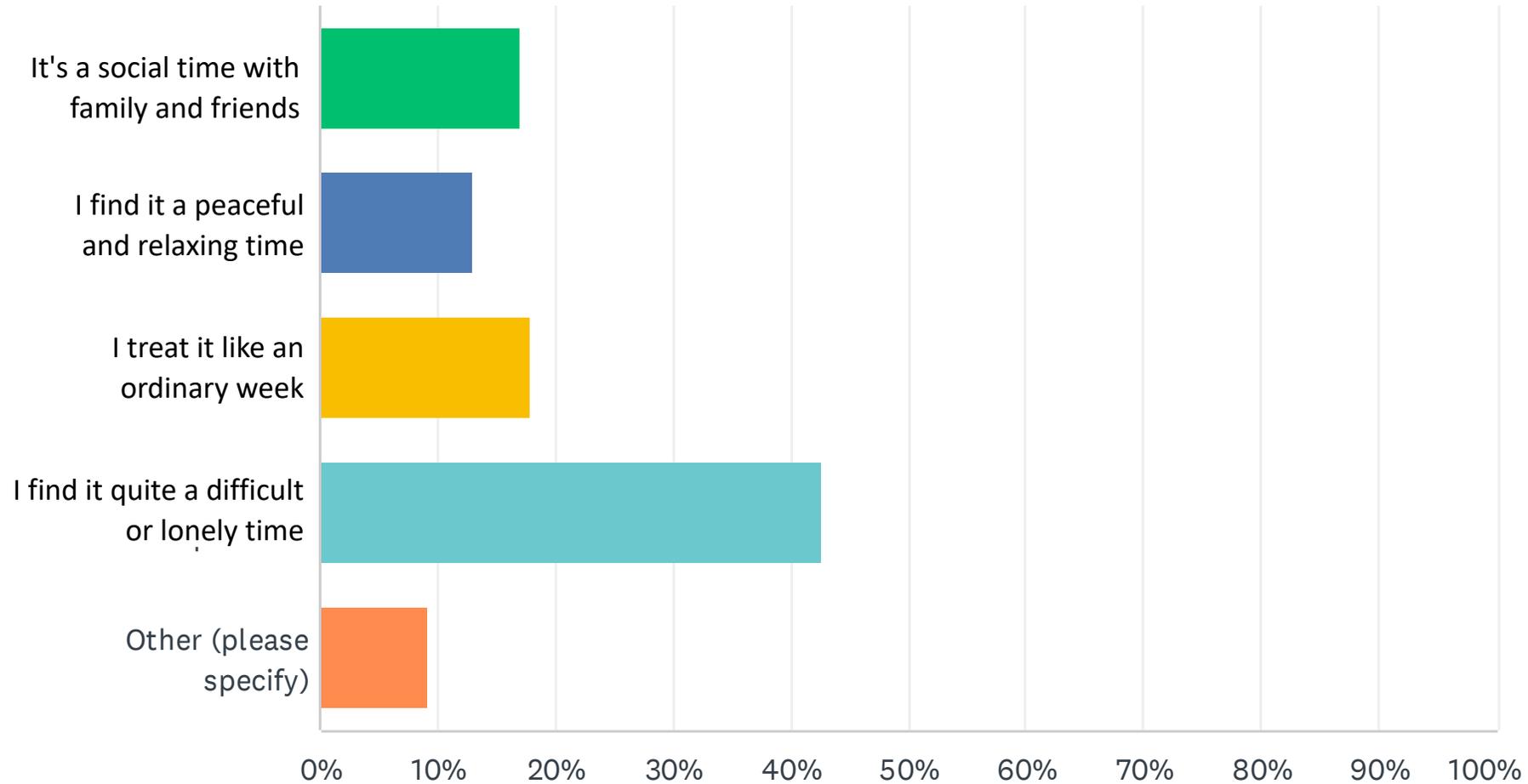
Does your church feel less socially inclusive at Christmas?



Does your church do anything for those on their own on Christmas Day?



How do you feel about the week between Christmas and New Year?



Do you think churches handle Christmas sensitively for those who are single?

Feeling alone in church

Attending Christmas services on your own can feel lonely

"Walking into a carol service can be really intimidating, people bring their extended families, there's a lot of hype and unnecessary expectation that it will be a great time of year"

"Sometimes there is a focus on families, it can be difficult to attend on your own and not feel isolated."

Focus on children can be hard

“The last Sunday before Christmas every child is called up to get an individual gift. That’s the bit I find hardest, while I love that children are valued, as someone who desperately wants a family, it’s hard to watch.”

“The focus on children and the gift of a baby can be a real challenge if you are childless not through choice.

I would love more sermons to focus on Simeon and Anna; figures whose service and sense of completion comes from waiting on and witnessing Christ, which is rather less Christmas card-friendly.”

“Church is all about your family and when you're a single mum it doesn't feel like you have a family. It just feels hard and lonely at Christmas”



Middle years are forgotten in invitations

“My experience is there is support for older single people, but young single people fly under the radar and it is assumed that I have family/friends plans and no needs”

“It's usually only a consideration to elderly people on their own but you don't have to be a pensioner to have no one to spend Christmas with”

Church family is just for Christmas Day

“All activities are cancelled over the Christmas period on the assumption that nobody will be available to meet as people will be with their families. I don't have any family apart from my mum who I see once over Christmas. It's a very lonely time, but because I go to a family church I feel this is overlooked and not understood.”

“I get a few [invitations] now, but it's not really inclusive of the Christmas season, it's just for Christmas Day, the rest of the time is for REAL family.’

Positive ideas for including everyone at Christmas

Find out who will be on their own

Ask people - don't wait for them to ask for an invitation.

“My church asks anyone who doesn't have a group to spend Christmas with to get in touch, and then they hook people up so they're not alone.”

People are on their own at Christmas for many reasons. Don't forget younger single people, single parents, married people whose spouse isn't at home. Bear in mind not everyone wants an invitation.



“Christmas Day doesn't have to be a family-only day. Add a plate, get people to bring dishes to spread the cost, but encourage families to think outside their own kin. And remind that family doesn't necessarily look like a nuclear family: single people can gather and invite too.”

Have a post-Christmas social

Have a mid-week activity. E.g. Boxing Day walk, games night, coffee morning with Christmas cake.

Appoint others to take ownership. It is good to empower people to be part of the solution.

Church family event in December or on Epiphany - emphasise celebrating as a church family.

"I host a lunch every year for all those on their own at Christmas. Some have kids, some are young, some old, some are even married with no kids. People often just need an invitation. As I get older I want Christ to use me to be the solution, not wait for others."



Ensure Christmas services are inclusive

Look out for people arriving alone. Ensure no one has to sit by themselves (unless they want to!)

Sharing the Peace is about welcoming people in. Encourage people to turn and greet someone they don't know first.

Acknowledge the pain and mixed emotions Christmas brings up in the prayers and sermon. Perhaps offer an opportunity to light a candle for someone they've lost, or something they are grieving that they never had.

Opening up Christmas

Mary and Joseph were far from home - Ukrainian refugees in 2022. Focus on welcoming in and including the stranger.

Simeon and Anna anticipated the coming of Christ, found joy and hope in his birth. What could that mean for each of us today?

“Services that simply focus on the beauty of what Christmas actually means, without an over-focus on children and nuclear family, can have such a simple but profound impact. After all, it's the very-inclusive, rejoice-with-those-who-rejoice, mourn-with-those-who-mourn Gospel.”

Single parents and carers

"Some of our church staff will take the kids shopping to buy a present for their single parent."

"My parents' church put on a range of activities (arts and crafts, music) on an afternoon before Christmas for adults with learning disabilities. This allows their carers time off to do their Christmas shopping, other activities or just to chill."

Ensure those single and/or childless are valued all year round

“Having a family invite someone who’s alone at Christmas can feel tokenistic because they are still lonely the rest of the year. We should be bringing others into our families and lives throughout the year so that come Christmas it feels natural because they feel like family anyway.

Single people would also enjoy being invited to school plays the kids are doing etc. If they have no children in their life they don’t get to do things like Easter egg hunts or birthday parties or seeing Santa. It’s the life part people want to also be involved with. True church family. One family. If you get it right it will be transformative!”

5 Steps

to becoming a Single Friendly Church



1. Who is single?



2. Language



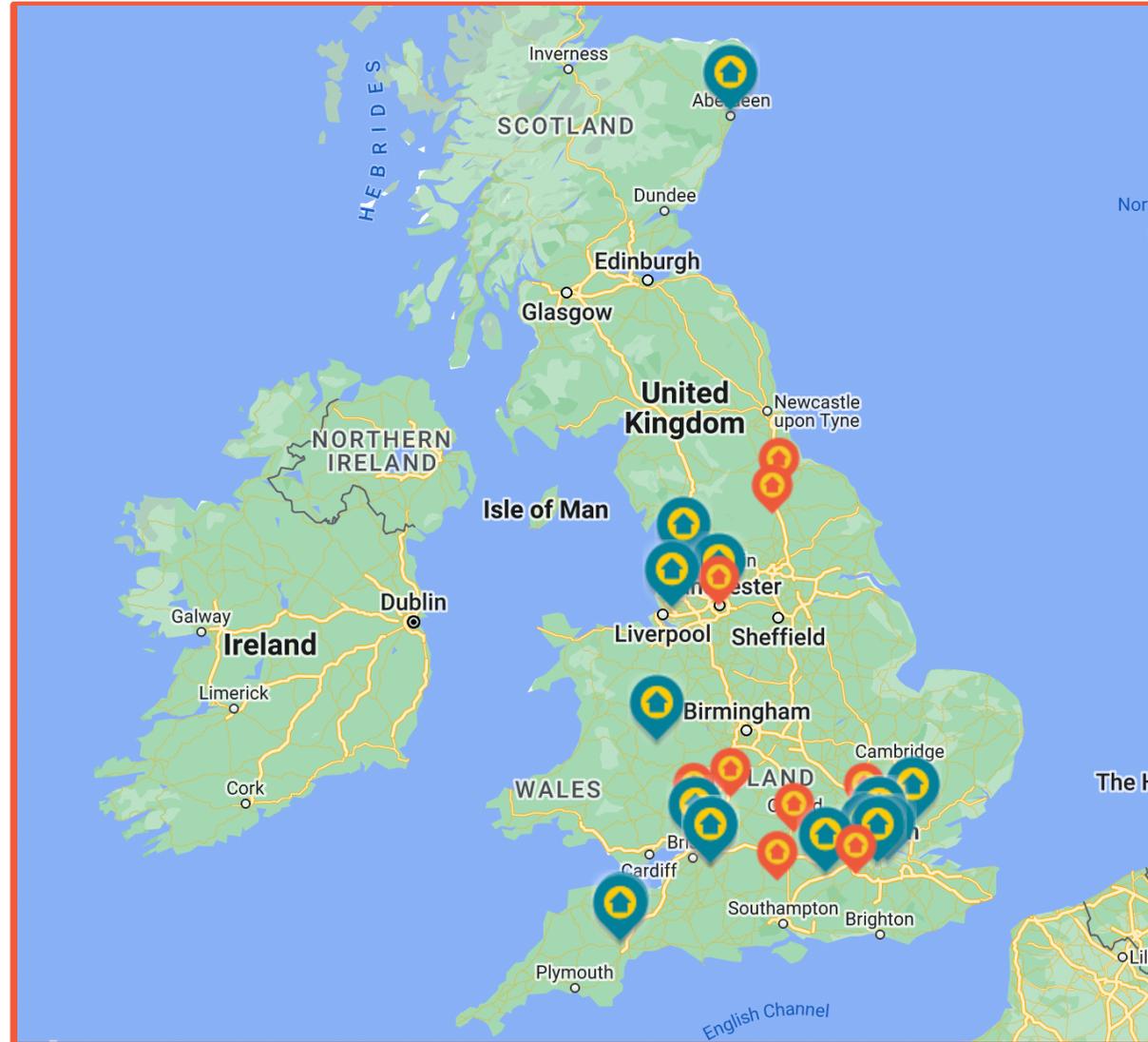
3. Welcome



4. Teaching



5. Leadership



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