CRES

This session will be recorded

Presentation at the study day of the Christian Rural and Environmental Studies programme 14 Nov 2020, with additional notes for offline reading.

Christian Engagement with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Ian Brooks. 14 Nov 2020 v1.2

Contents

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Researching Christian Engagement with the SDGs
- Literature / Resources
- Interviews
- Website engagement
- Themes
- Breakout / discussion

Ian Brooks

- IT and Business Strategy consultancy with PricewaterhouseCoopers and IBM
- MSc Environmental Consultancy
- Senior Lecturer in Sustainable IT, University of the West of England
- Senior Teaching Fellow, University of Bristol
- PhD research. UN Sustainable Development Goals as requirements in Systems Engineering
- Local Tutor, Christian Rural and Environmental Studies
- Previously Mission Team & Environmental Team lead at large Anglican church in Bristol
- Email: ian.brooks@uwe.ac.uk Twitter: @sdg_brooks

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

- Adopted by 193 countries in 2015. The world we want by 2030.
- Developed by largest global consultation ever but low involvement of faith-based organisations.
- Leave No One Behind
- 17 Goals
- 169 Targets
- 247 Indicators
- *aka* Global Goals
- Decade of Action 20-30

Sources: United Nations, 2015

Your Church Engagement with the SDGs?

24 of the participants at the study day took part in an anonymised survey.

Christian Engagement with the SDGs?

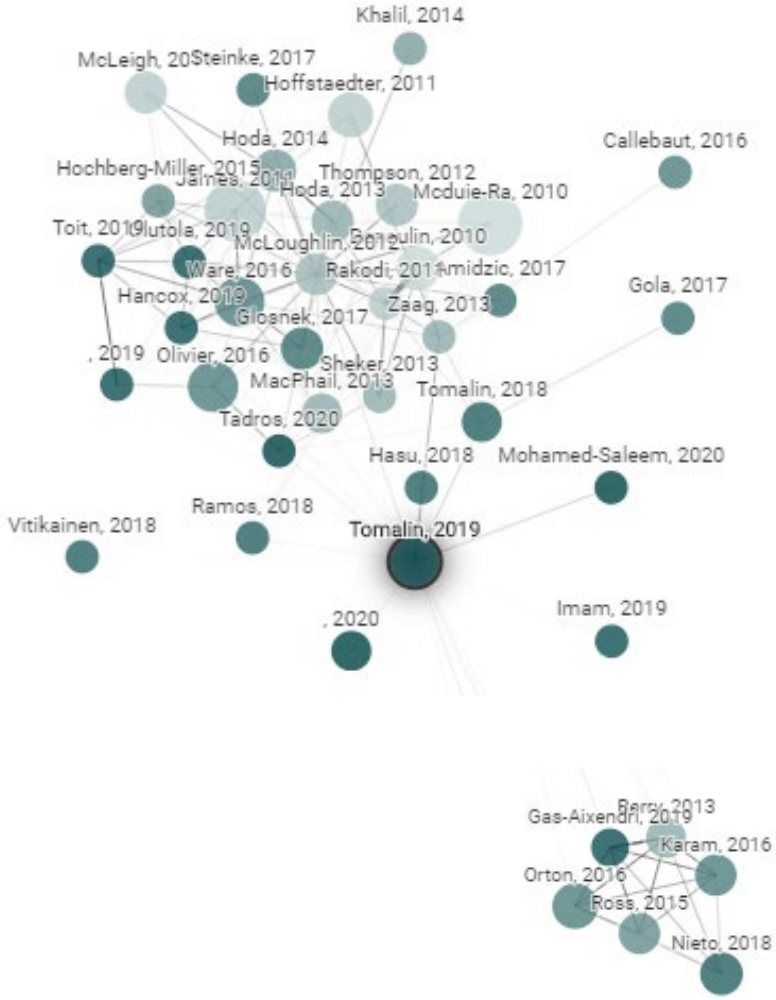
- Research Question: What is the state of Christian engagement with the SDGs? (Focus on the UK)
- Literature Review: Who is already looking at this topic?
- Interviews: with relevant stakeholders engaged with the SDGs
- Website engagement measure:
- What evidence on church websites of engagement? Google search on “sustainable development goals” site:*churchdomain.org*

Potential problems with this approach

- Engagement? Actions which support sustainable development may not be labelled with SDG terminology
- Literature Review: Academic publishing cycle is slow.
- Interviews: selected individuals generally in favour of SDGs. May not be representative.
- Website engagement: Google search counts vary. Page totals imprecise. Websites not always representative of church activity. Individual churches not on major domains.
- The researcher: analysis done by one researcher, no peer review. Researcher is broadly supportive of SDGs.

Literature Review

- SCOPUS "sustainable development goals" AND christian OR church OR faith OR religious = 83 papers + 12 other documents.
- Key researchers: Prof Emma Tomalin, Dr Jörg Haustein. UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)—"Keeping Faith in 2030: Religions and the SDGs."
- Tomalin, Haustein and Kidy (2019) 'Religion and the Sustainable Development Goals'
- "Understanding … the role of faith communities and actors is crucial for sustainable development." p101
- Seven recommendations including "In building partnerships with faith actors, it is important that they are listened to and included on their terms rather than being instrumentalized to achieve pre-defined development goals." p115



Sources: Connected Papers, 2020. Tomalin, E., Haustein, J. and Kidy, S. (2019)

Literature Review

- Gas-Aixendri and Albareda-Tiana (2018) The role of religion in global sustainability: A study on Catalonia's contribution to sustainable development goals.
- Low visibility of religious contributions. High publicity of religiously-motivated violence.
- Analysed underlying activities found on 449 religious websites in 2015 and allocated to SDGs
- More contributions of a social nature, few related to environment.

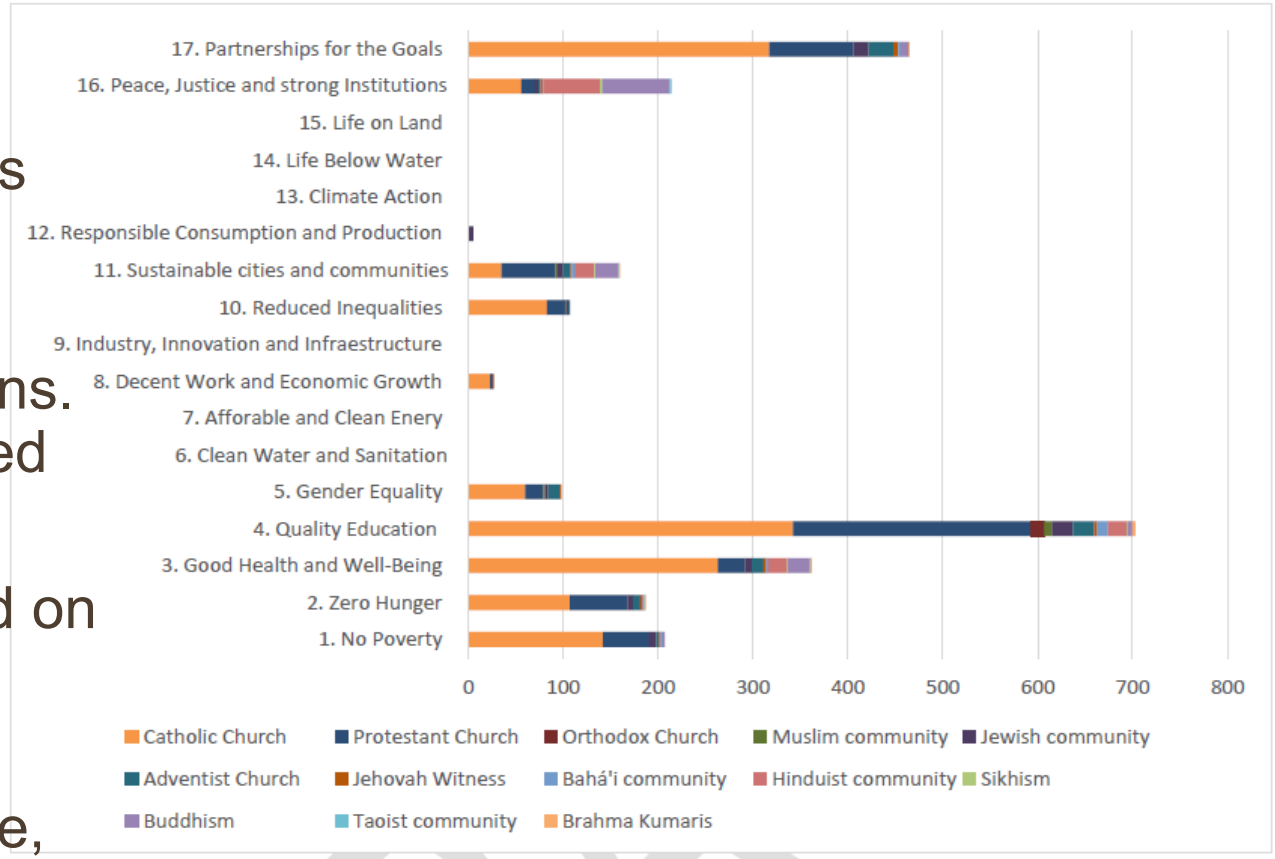


Figure 2. Religious institutions contribution to SDGs

Sources: Gas-Aixendri and Albareda-Tiana (2018)

Literature Review

- SDGs as “a new global morality”. (Redo, 2015)
- Role of Faith Based Organisations (FBO) in Sustainable Development
- Contributions to specific SDGs e.g. SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing
- Highlighting understanding and acting on *Diakonia* e.g. healthcare and education (Leer-Helgesen, 2018)
- Critical engagement with the SDGs e.g. assumed link of consumption and development (Leer-Helgesen, 2018), (Tomalin, Haustein and Kidy, 2019)

Resources

- Waking the Giant. Lutheran World Federation. https://wakingthegiant.lutheranworld.org/
- THE SUSTAINABILITY BOOK. A Christian faith perspective on the Sustainable Development Goals. http://sdgbook.com/
- The Bible and the SDGs. 17 DAYS - 17 GOALS - 17 BIBLE REFLECTIONS - 17 PROJECTS - 17 ACTIONS. https://wea-sc.org/en/biblesdgs
- Prayers for each of the Global Goals. World Council of Churches. http://xn--brekraftsboka-3fb.no/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Prayers_-for_each_goal_WCC.pdf

Resources

- God's Global Goals? By End Poverty 2030 https://www.endpoverty2030.com/ and on CRES website for student use
- All Things Are Possible. USPG https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/uspg/content/pages/documents/1594211782.pdf
- Goals, targets and indicators https://sdgs.un.org/goals
- Downloadable SDG icons https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/

SDG Voluntary National Reviews

- Searched the Voluntary National Reviews database for mentions of…
- “Church” or “Christian”: =20 Bahamas, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Latvia, Lebanon, Malta, Norway, Singapore, State of Palestine, Sweden, Tonga, Vanuatu
- “Religious”=31
- 197 countries adopted the SDGs

Sources: United Nations, 2020

Interviews

- Low awareness in churches of SDGs, particularly UK.
- Widespread misperception that SDGs don't apply to UK.
- Well received when introduced, a sign of hope for the 'big problems' such as poverty.
- More engagement in churches with well developed concept of *diakonia* / community service.
- Some objections encountered by contributors included 'distraction from personal gospel', 'kingdom without the King', secular origin of SDGs.
- International church bodies and development organisations make more extensive use. A common language with Governments and funders.
- Potential for churches to use SDGs to celebrate what they already do.

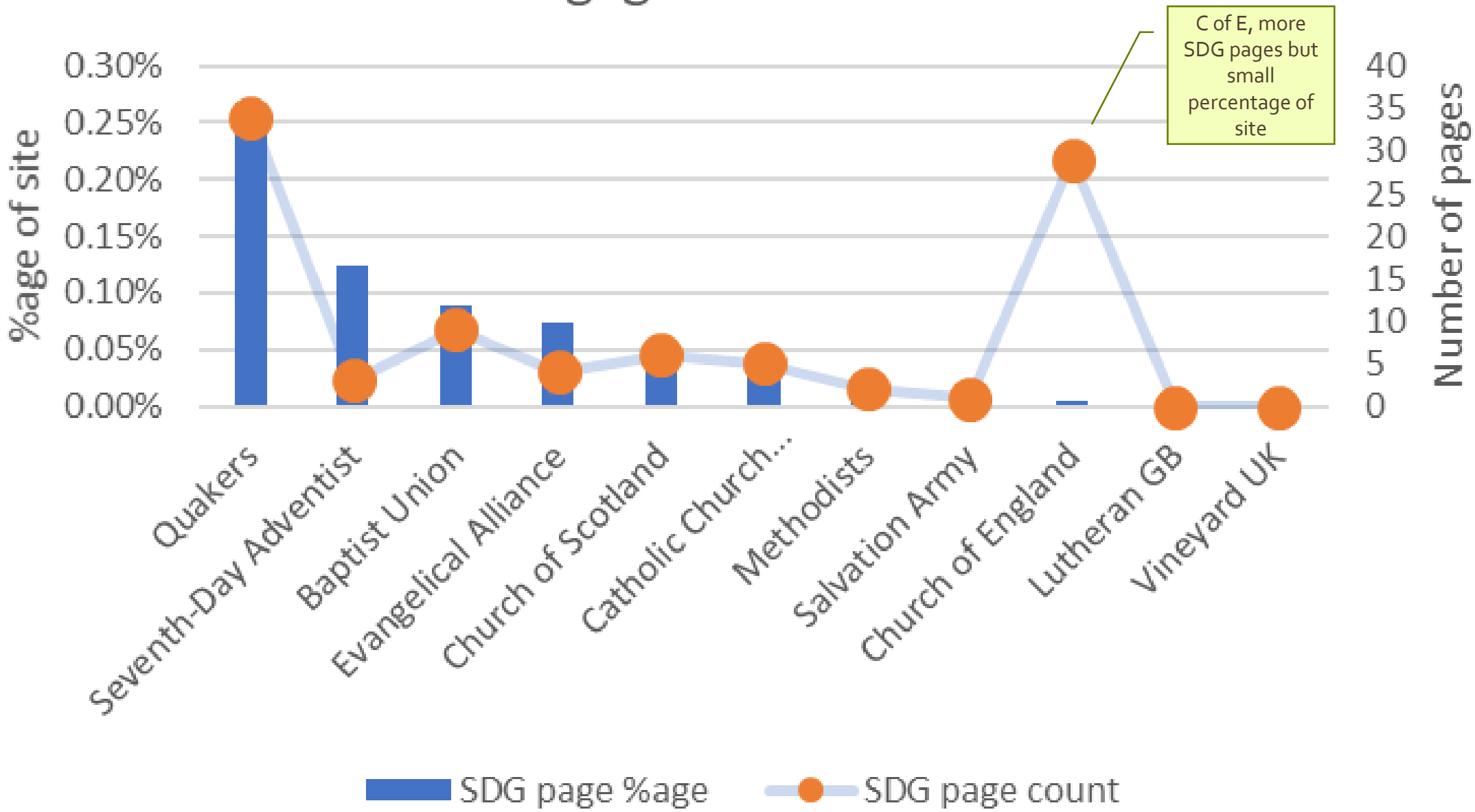
Dave Bookless, A Rocha. Leena Luukkonen, Lutheran World Federation. Jenny Foster, Global Goals Centre. Allan MacLeod, University of Bristol. Kjell Nordstokke, Diakonhjemmet University College Oslo. Emma Tomalin, University of Leeds. Ian Hamlin, End Poverty 2030.

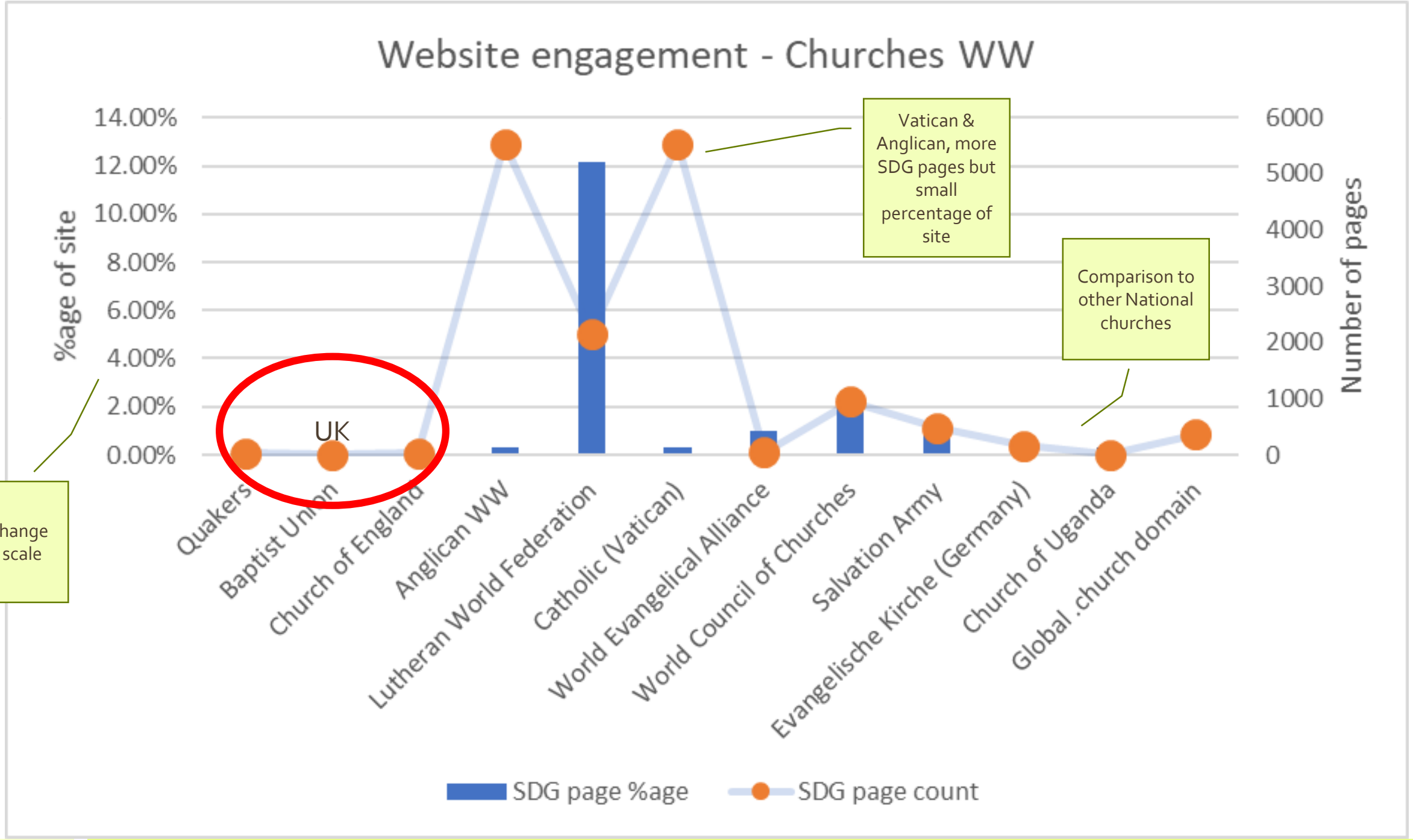
Primary Research

Method

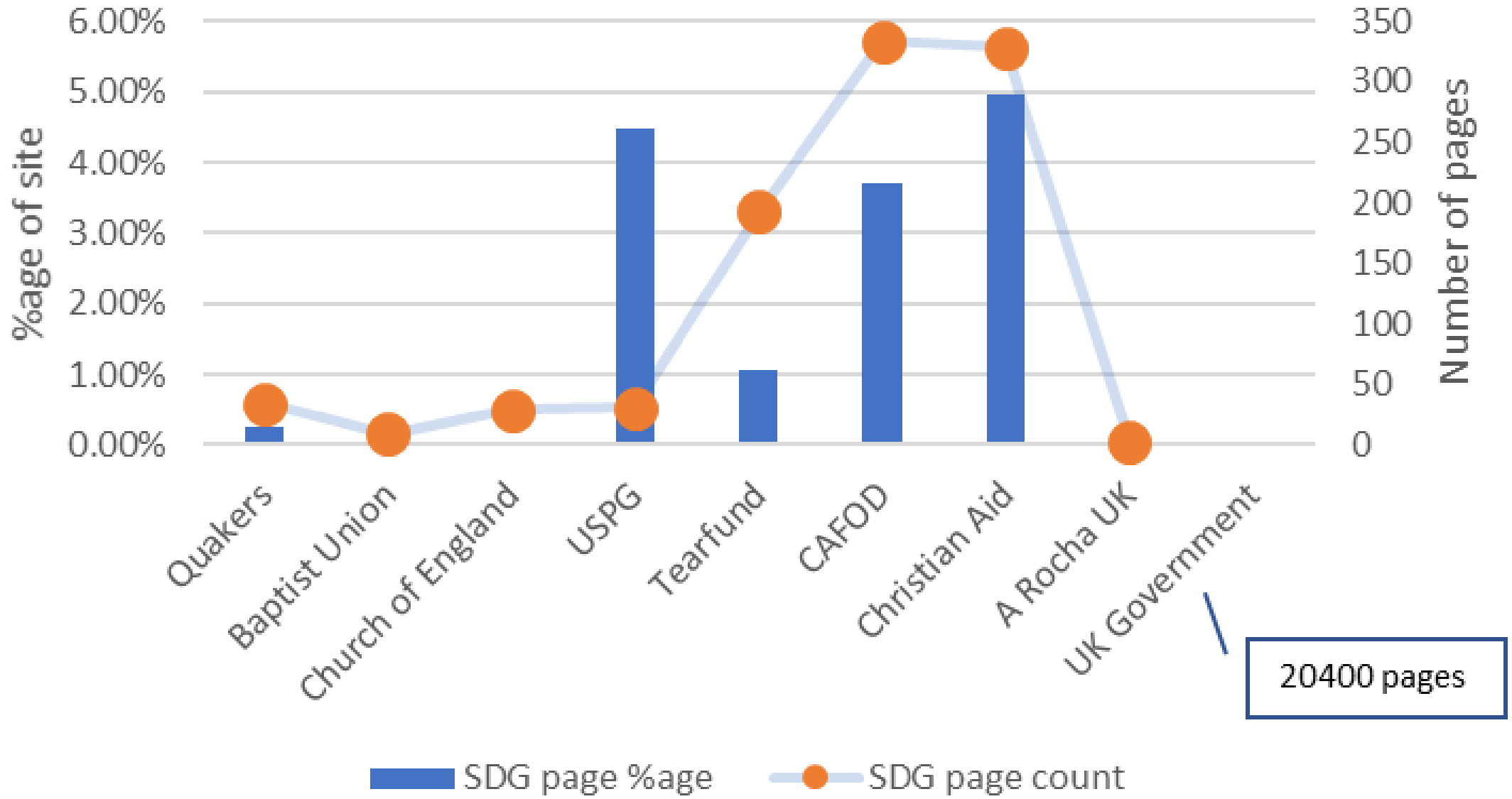
1. Identify major Christian web domains from https://ctbi.org.uk/member-churches/ and similar sources
2. Count number of web pages in domain mentioning SDG. Google search on “sustainable development goals” site:*churchdomain.org* take number of results from top of first page.
3. Count number of web pages in domain. Google search on site:*churchdomain.org* take number of results from top of first page.
4. Calculate percentage of site = (result of 2. / result of 3.) *100

Website engagement - Churches UK

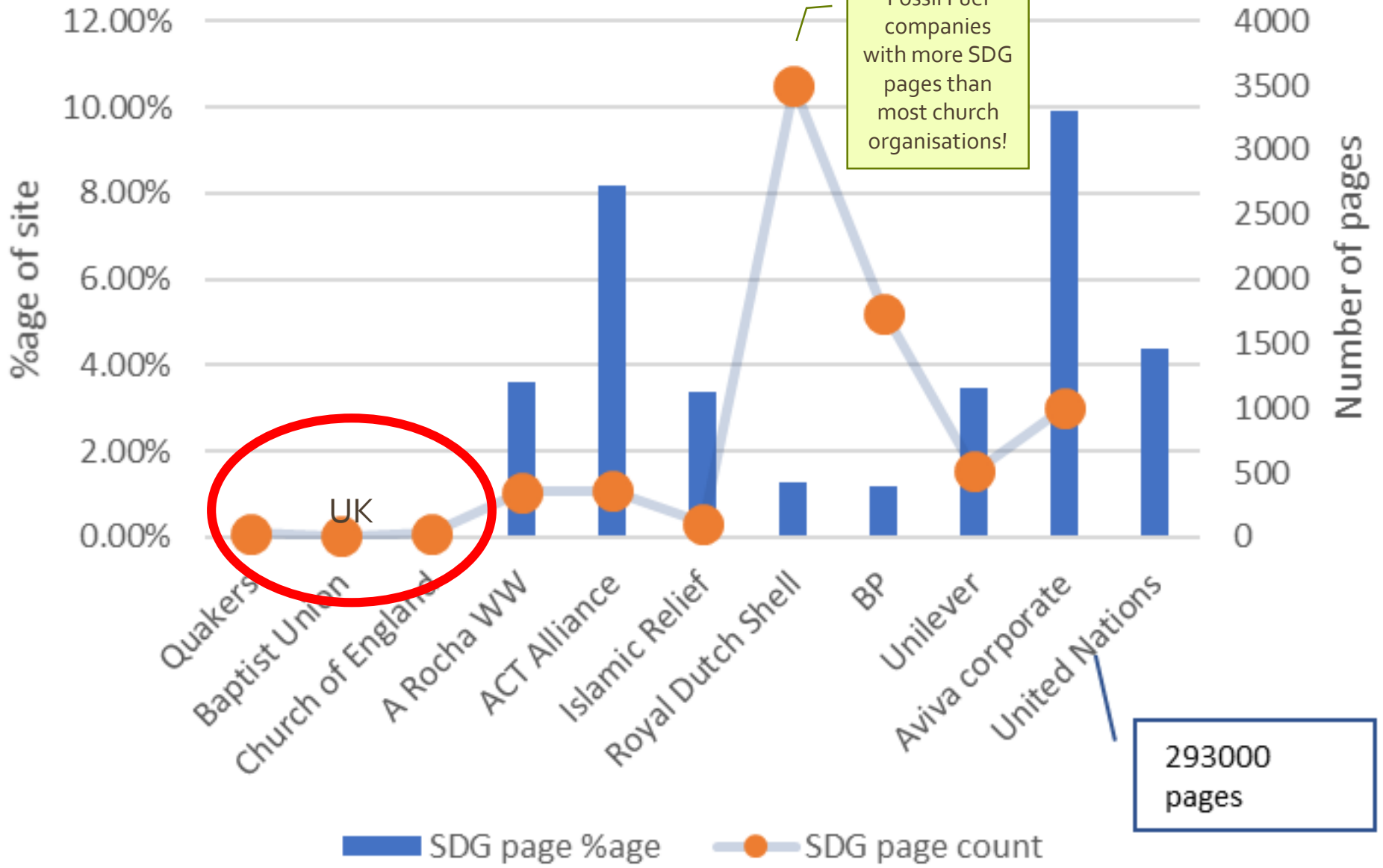



Website engagement - Churches WW
14.00%
12.00%
10.00%
8.00%
6.00%
4.00%
2.00%
0.00%
%age of site
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
Number of pages
UK
Quakers
Baptist Union
Church of England
Anglican WW
Lutheran World Federation
Catholic (Vatican)
World Evangelical Alliance
World Council of Churches
Salvation Army
Evangelische Kirche (Germany)
Church of Uganda
Global .church domain
SDG page %age
SDG page count
Vatican & Anglican, more SDG pages but small percentage of site
Comparison to other National churches
Note: change of axis scale

Website engagement - Other Organisations UK

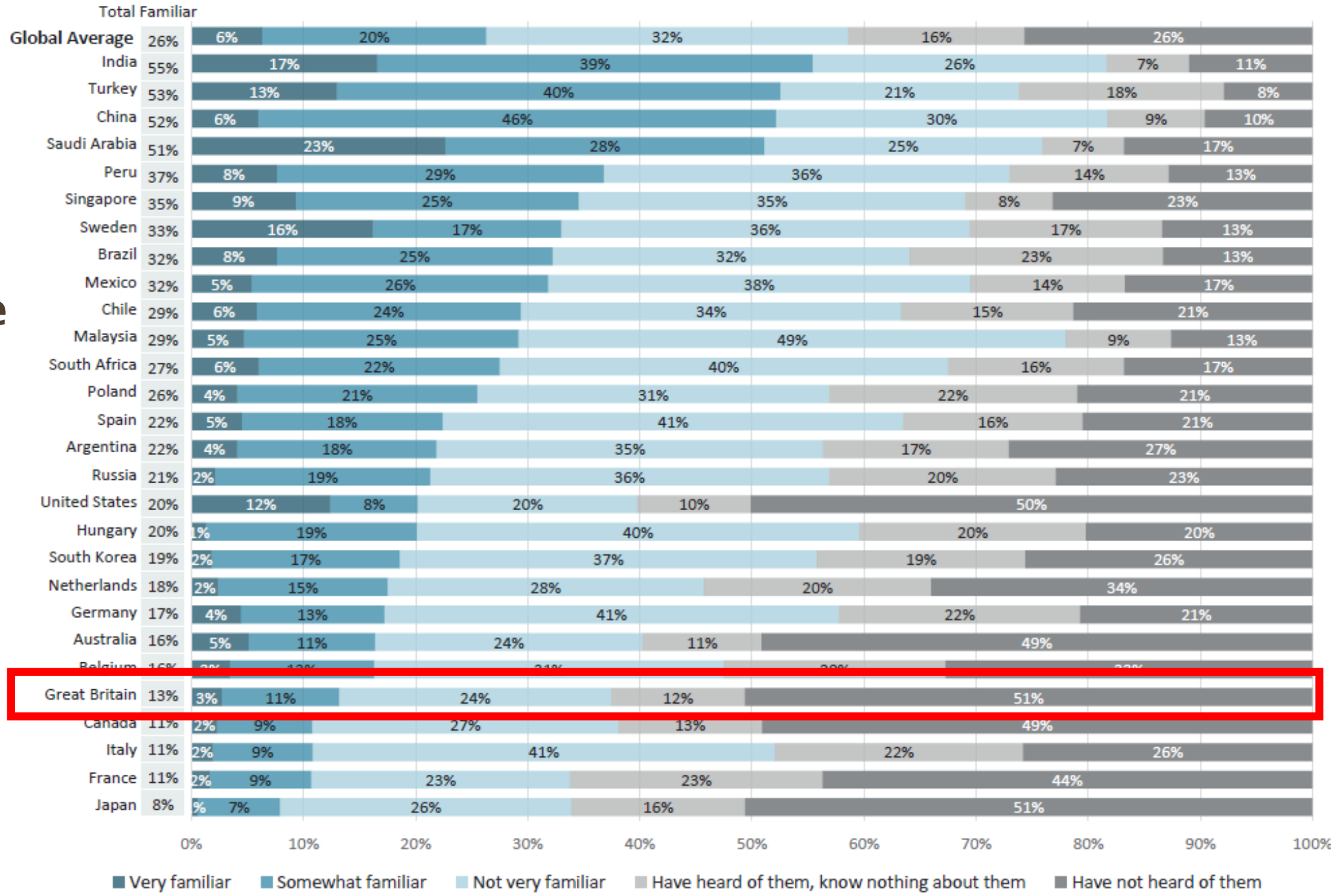


Website engagement - Other Organisations WW



How familiar are you with the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations?

Survey by Ipsos July / August 2019



Low SDG engagement by UK churches reflects low awareness in UK generally.

Base: 19,517 online adults aged 16-74 across 28 countries

Overall themes

- Church social and environmental engagement already contributes to achieving SDGs
- Risk of instrumentalization of Faith Based Organisations
- Concerns are heard about ‘The Kingdom without the King’ / ‘Social Gospel’
- Wide variation in use of SDGs in church communications
- Faith-based Development Organisations and Churches delivering social care, *diakonia*, make more use of SDGs
- SDGs are a useful communication tool to express what Churches are doing and for engagement with secular organisations

Future questions

- Influence of national culture compared to influence of theology on Church engagement with SDGs?
- How to increase familiarity with SDGs, particularly in UK?
- Extent of actual activity by churches in UK when described with SDGs? (use method of Gas-Aixendri and Albareda-Tiana (2018))

Breakouts

- What examples have you seen of church engagement with SDGs?
- What obstacles do you envisage to church engagement with SDGs?
- How might these obstacles be overcome in your church?

Add notes to Mentimeter as you go. www.menti.com code 43 47 83 6

Outcomes of breakouts will be reported later.

Call to action

- Talk to people about the SDGs, including church leaders. Awareness is low in UK.
- Celebrate what your church is already doing, tag with the SDG icons. Example: latest A Rocha annual report https://www.arocha.org/en/publications/annual-review-20192020/
- Share existing resources in your church.

Thank You

- Ian Brooks
- Email: ian.brooks@uwe.ac.uk
- Twitter: @sdg_brooks

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See also resources and links on slides 11 - 12