

PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUAKERS

A Survey Conducted by DVL Smith Ltd

DVL Smith Ltd, an independent market research agency run by Dr David Smith, a former Chairman of the Market Research Society, has undertaken a survey of 1000 individuals living in England, Scotland and Wales to assess their perceptions of the Quakers. This size of sample provides a robust platform upon which to assess individual's awareness, and understanding, of the Quakers. The survey was conducted in June 2009. Presented below are the key findings of the survey.

1. Awareness and perceptions of the Quakers

77% 'aware' of the Quakers (when name mentioned)

<u>Total Sample</u>	
	%
Salvation Army	98
The Mormons	86
The Methodists	84
The Quakers	77
The Baptists	66
The Wesleyans	47
The Elims	13

Awareness of Quakers rises to 80% on a prompted basis

	Total Sample %	Religious Beliefs	
		Yes %	No %
Initial awareness	77	81	70
Total awareness	80	84	74

Note: of the total sample: 59% have a religious belief and 41% do not

Lower awareness of the Quakers among the 18 – 34 age group

% of each group

Total	80
Gender	
Male	79
Female	80
Age	
18 – 34	49
35 – 60	88
61 +	96
Social Class	
AB	86
C1C2	74
DE	80

But perceptions of the Quakers are often inaccurate

Classification of descriptions:	Total aware of Quakers %
'Accurate'	55
'General'	15
'Inaccurate'	59

Note: Some people gave more than one answer

55% of people cited (at least) one 'accurate' description

	Total aware of Quakers %
Religion / Religious Group	30
Peaceful / Pacifists	9
Quiet / Silence / Non – Verbal	5
Christian / Christian based	4
Society of Friends / Friendly Society	3
Chocolate /Cadbury's / Elizabeth Fry / Rowntree	2
No Minister / Preacher	1
Liberal / Free thinking	1

15% of people cited (at least) one 'general' description

	Total aware of Quakers %
Helpful / caring / humanitarian / nice people	5
Clean living / simple life / abstinence	4
Meeting halls	4
Charitable / charity work	1
Involved in business / industrialists	1

59% of people cited (at least) one 'inaccurate' description

	Total aware of Quakers %
Porridge Oats	13
Black/ Grey clothing / hats / old fashioned dress	10
America	9
Old fashioned lifestyle / avoid modern technology etc	6
Strict / Puritanical	4
Went to / founded America / Pilgrim Fathers	4
Closed Community	4
Village / Countryside / Rural based	3
Like the Amish/ Jehovah's Witnesses / Mormons	2
Cult / Sect	2
Strange / Weird	1
Shaking / quaking / moving	1

2. Attitudes towards specific dimensions of the Quakers

The attitudes we explored

We looked at whether the Quakers are seen as

- An historical or active movement?
- Peacemakers / pacifist
- A 'strict' or 'liberal' religious group
- A 'closed' group or 'open' and engaged in action?

The Quakers are seen as still 'active'

'The Quakers are an active religious group'	Total Aware %		'The Quakers are an old historical group that are no longer in existence'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	24	}	Strongly Agree	1
Agree	47		Agree	5
Neither agree or disagree	22		Neither agree or disagree	19
Slightly disagree	5		Slightly disagree	22
Strongly disagree	2		Strongly disagree	53
		}		75%

The majority see the Quakers as pacifists / peacemakers

'The Quakers are a pacifist organisation'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	22
Agree	38
Neither agree or disagree	33
Slightly disagree	5
Strongly disagree	2

} 60%

There is a mix of views about whether the Quakers are a religious or non religious group

'The Quakers are a <u>non</u> religious group who try to do good in the world'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	4
Agree	18
Neither agree or disagree	25
Slightly disagree	25
Strongly disagree	28

} 22%

} 53%

The Quakers are seen by the majority as a 'strict' religion

'The Quakers are an orthodox religious group who interpret religion in a very strict way'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	15
Agree	37
Neither agree or disagree	31
Slightly disagree	11
Strongly disagree	6

} 52%

There is a spread of views on whether the Quakers are 'Evangelical'

'The Quakers are a radical evangelical group who exist to promote the word of God'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	32
Neither agree or disagree	34
Slightly disagree	18
Strongly disagree	11
	37%
	29%

There is uncertainty about whether the Quakers are 'liberal'

'The Quakers are a religious group who interpret the Bible in a very liberal way that relates to today's world'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	25
Neither agree or disagree	46
Slightly disagree	16
Strongly disagree	8
	30%
	24%

There is a spread of views on whether the Quakers are a closed group

'The Quakers are a closed group that do not allow people from outside into their own community'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	18
Neither agree or disagree	38
Slightly disagree	21
Strongly disagree	18
	23%
	39%

There is uncertainty about whether the Quakers are involved in social action

'The Quakers are a humanitarian organisation involved with social action'	Total Aware %
Strongly Agree	10
Agree	26
} 36%	
Neither agree or disagree	48
Slightly disagree	11
Strongly disagree	5
} 16%	

Some surprised by what they learnt in the survey

What learnt:	Total Sample %
That they still exist / are still active	13
Liberal / not strict	10
They are religious	4
No set creed / everyone welcome	4
Helpful / caring people / wanting to improve society	2
They are pacifists	1

3. The relevance of the Quakers to people's lives

How relevant are the Quakers to people's lives?

We read out the following statement:

- *Now I would like to tell you something about the Quakers. They are a religious group with no set creed. They believe everyone can have a direct experience of God, and this leads them to take action for change the world.*

21% claim that the Quakers are 'relevant' to their lives?

	Total Sample %	Religious Beliefs	
		Yes %	No %
Considerable relevance to your life	2	3	1
Some possible relevance to your life	19	26	10
No relevance to your life whatsoever	79	71	89

Why Quakers seen as relevant?	
	Total Relevant %
Agree with their philosophies	23
I am religious	18
Helping others/ helping society / world as a whole	15
They are tolerant of other peoples view's / open / welcoming	11
Agree with their pacifism	8
I'm a Christian	7
Because they are liberal minded	6
Have friends who are Quakers / have contact with Quakers	6
I am / family are Quakers	2
Other	19
Don't Know	7

Why Quakers not seen as relevant?	
	Total not Relevant %
Not religious / no religious beliefs	34
Have my own religion/ beliefs	21
Don't know enough about them	13
Not interested / not relevant to me	5
Never had any contact with them / never met any	5
Do not agree with their beliefs	3
Other	1

Relevance of the Quakers across different supgroups	
Considerable or some relevance	
	% Of Each Group
Total	21
<u>Gender</u>	
Male	20
Female	22
<u>Age</u>	
18 – 34	24
35 – 60	20
61 +	21
<u>Social Class</u>	
AB	26
C1C2	19
DE	19

We have reported that eight in ten people are 'aware' of the Quakers. But comparatively few have a fully 'informed' view of the Quaker philosophy and beliefs. A key issue is that so many people carry in their heads a wide range of inaccurate, and arguably unhelpful, images of the Quakers, including, for some, the perception that they are a 'puritanical sect'. Thus the core communications challenge for the Quakers centres on addressing the uncertainty and confusion that exists about whether the Quakers is an open, liberal movement *or* a more fundamentalist, strict, even 'weird cult'.