

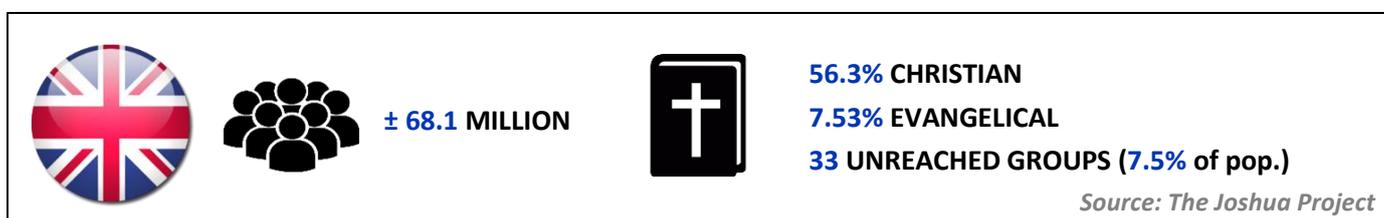
## ENGLISH CHANNEL CROSSINGS BY MIGRANTS REACHES NEW DAILY RECORD



On Thursday 11 November, the number of migrants crossing the English Channel to enter the UK reached a new daily record of 1,185 migrants. Lifeboat crews and Border Force boats spent many hours throughout the day and evening rescuing or intercepting boats and processing the arrivals, including children, on shore. Three people reported missing by other migrants are feared to be lost at sea, as two kayaks were found adrift off the coast of Calais. The total number of migrants crossing from

France to the UK on small boats this year is estimated to be more than 23,500, a sharp rise from 8,404 in 2020. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the number of deaths or missing persons this year will surpass 1,313. In 2019, UK Home Secretary Priti Patel pledged to make migrant crossings an “infrequent phenomenon” by March 2020. In August last year, she promised to make the route across the Channel “unviable”, which included paying France millions of pounds to increase security on its northern coast. The Home Office reiterated this past week that the UK’s New Plan for Immigration, currently passing through the House of Commons, will “fix the broken system” that encourages migrants to make the dangerous – sometimes fatal – journey by boat. A Home Office spokesperson stated that the British public “have had enough of seeing people die in the Channel while ruthless criminal gangs profit from their misery.” Of those who arrive via the Channel, 98% apply for asylum in the UK. The New Plan for Immigration would make it harder for migrants reaching the UK by boat to successfully claim asylum. Refugee and rights groups have condemned the Bill as cruel and unjust. It is noteworthy that while the number of migrants arriving in the UK continues to rise – with people fleeing from countries including Yemen, Eritrea, Chad, Sudan, and Iraq – it still receives far fewer asylum claims than many other European countries.

### FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE



Some refugee and rights organisations oppose the prospect of the government prohibiting migrants who arrive by what it considers illegal means from the same right to claim asylum as those who arrive legally. There is often a lack of safe and legal routes available to migrants as they flee war and terror, demonstrated by their willingness to risk their lives in the hope of gaining safety. Welcome Churches – a national charity that runs a network of over 275 churches committed to following the Biblical mandate to welcome the stranger – issued a press release in March in response to the New Plan for Immigration explaining why it opposed the bill. They acknowledged the complexity of implementing immigration policy amidst many differing views but affirmed the unchanging Christian principles of

hospitality, dignity for all, and compassion expressed in God's loving concern for the stranger and refugee. They believe that the proposed policies have the potential to unfairly punish people who have already fled exceptionally difficult circumstances. Furthermore, they argued that it "isn't clear how the UK will continue to uphold its long-held values of being a safe haven for those who need it", because the government did not provide much detail on any additional commitments on resettlement through alternative legal routes. In September this year, twelve bishops of the Church of England published a letter expressing concern over the government's approach to migrant crossings of the Channel. They were particularly responding to the controversial Nationality and Borders Bill submitted to parliament, which would not only unjustly criminalise asylum seekers who arrive by "irregular means" (such as boats) but also criminalise 'Good Samaritans' who seek to save the lives of migrants. The bill would penalise people who participate in the rescue of boats in distress at sea. In this bill – which would potentially contravene international and maritime law – the new 'turn back' policy, which will require boats to be forcibly returned to France, also raises significant moral concerns and increases the risks at sea. The bishops supported a multilateral approach that instead promotes safe routes and values human life and the dignity of the vulnerable. The global Church can pray that decision-makers will earnestly consider how the UK can sustainably show hospitality to those in need and work together with the many churches and organisations willing to practically help on the ground.

Please pray with us for the following:

- For the UK government making policies around migrant crossings to prioritise God's values – including justice and mercy – over worldly self-preservation and reasoning
- For the British Church to continue being a voice for the vulnerable (including the stateless) and demonstrate Christ's love and compassion to the displaced, stateless, and needy
- For the Church to continue seizing opportunities to share the hope found in Christ with those desperate for safe refuge and a new life

Image: REUTERS/Peter Nicholls