

YWCA drops Christian affiliation from name

by [Al Webb](#)

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LONDON (RNS) The British branch of the YWCA has dropped "Christian" from its official name because it "no longer stood for what we are or what we do," the women's charity has announced.

After 155 years, the Young Women's Christian Association will now be known as Platform 51, the charity says in an announcement carried on its website.

The organization said its new name "more accurately represents what we are or what we do -- 51 percent of people are female, and girls and women use us as a platform to have their say."

There was no immediate indication that the YWCA's male counterpart, the Young Men's Christian Association, or YMCA, was considering a similar name switch in the area.

Last summer, the U.S. branch of the YMCA decided to rebrand itself as simply the "Y," although officially it still identifies itself as the YMCA.

The YWCA of England and Wales, however, decided that the original name coined in 1855 by its founders, a pair of English women, "no longer stood for who we are or what we do" in the 21st century.

But according to the Daily Mail newspaper in London, the name change underscores a growing rift between the charity's members in England and Wales and the global YWCA.

The newspaper quoted YWCA spokeswoman Sylvie Jacquat at the organization's headquarters in Geneva as saying none of the YWCA's other 124 branches around the world are contemplating a similar change."

"The name has been there for more than 150 years," Jacquat said, "and we are not even discussing a change."

Erasing "Christian" from its name drew fire from the Christian Institute research organization, whose spokesman, Mike Judge, told journalists that "many believe there is an anti-Christian bias among those who decide which charities get (British) state funding."

"It was the Christian character of the YMCA that made it great," the spokesman said in a statement. "It is a shame that it is turning its back on those values."