

The 
CONNECTED
Generation 

**How Christian Leaders Around the World Can
Strengthen Faith & Well-Being Among 18–35-Year-Olds**

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Preface

BY TIM PILKINGTON



TIM PILKINGTON
World Vision UK,
Chief Executive

Millennials and their Gen Z counterparts may be the most talked about and talked to of all generations – but how often are they really listened to and heard? With interviews of more than 15,000 young adults across 25 countries, this project represents the most significant research into emerging generations from every corner of the world and the role of faith in their lives. Through it, we are truly able to listen, and listen widely?

This research reveals a generation that is globally minded and connected like never before, yet hungers for more authentic community and relationships. They long to make a difference, especially on global issues affecting the world's vulnerable, yet are often anxious and pessimistic about their own future. We also find a generation that is surprisingly open to spirituality, but unsure of the Christian Church's relevance to society or their own daily lives. Among respondents with some form of connection to Christianity, most feel the Church cannot answer their questions. When asked what's missing from their communities of worship, these respondents cite

opportunities to fight injustice and for other Christians to join them.

Jesus was a revolutionary who cared about exactly these things and seeking to follow his example is why I left a job in the corporate world to join World Vision. My desire is for World Vision to partner with churches making a difference in the world today, that together with the emerging generations, we will fight injustice and change the lives of the world's most vulnerable children while simultaneously deepening and strengthening our relationships with God. Through this report, we hope to uncover ways in which the Church can be more relevant to engage and disciple the emerging generations.

‘EVERYONE SHOULD BE QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK
AND SLOW TO BECOME ANGRY.’ (JAMES 1:19, NIV)

Engaging a generation that often feels marginalised by the Church must start by listening. We are proud to have partnered with Barna Group on *The Connected Generation* project. Barna not only has the expertise and experience to lead a research project of this magnitude, but they are driven by a shared desire to understand how God is moving within the times in which we live. Our prayer is that this resource will help you to better understand and

serve emerging generations. Our hope is that you will work through this guide with others, particularly young adults within your church and your community. As World Vision, we would love to partner with you in fighting social injustice throughout the world. We pray that God will inspire your ministry as, together, we walk alongside this connected generation. ●

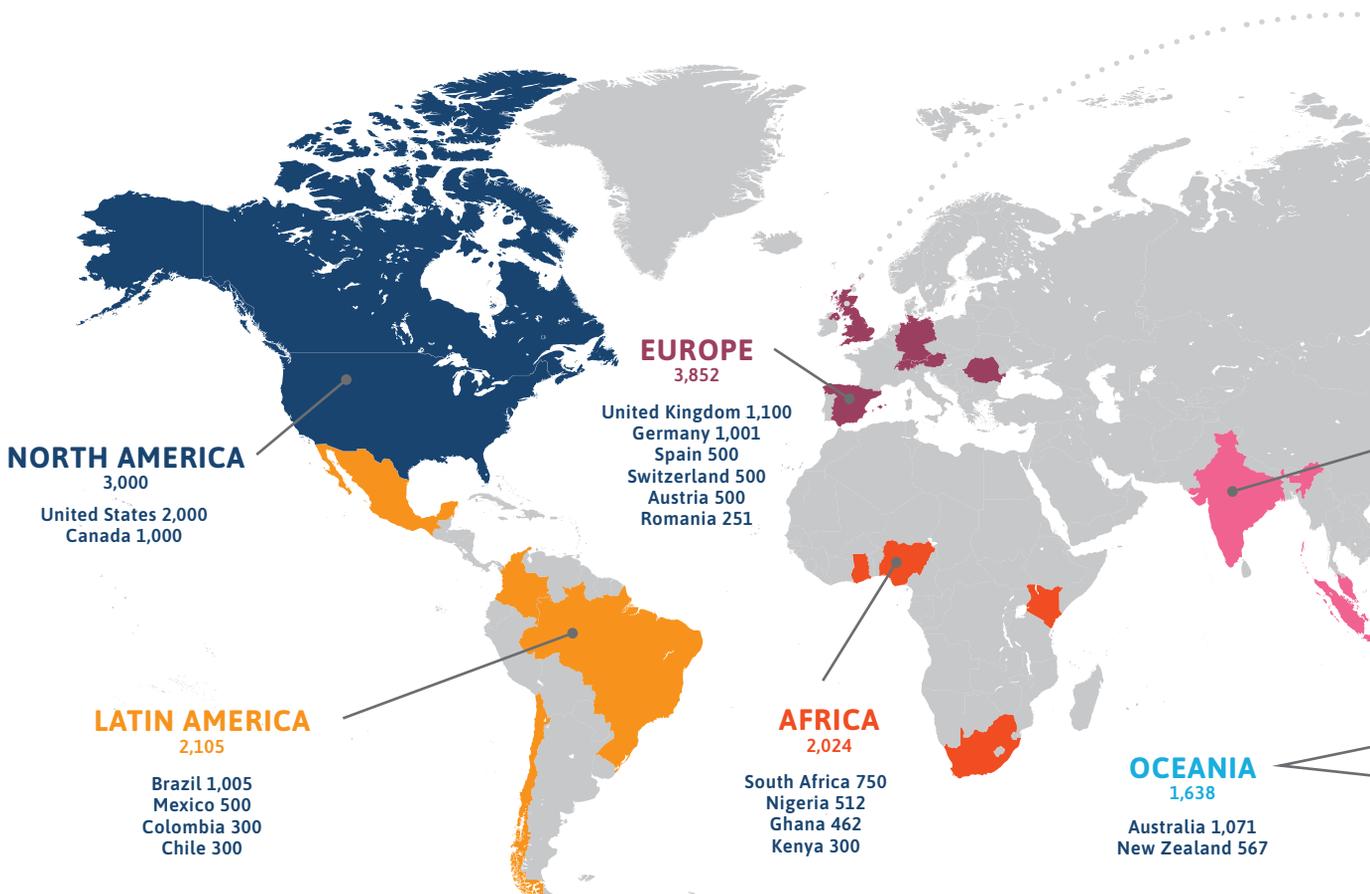
MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTED GENERATION

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY'S SAMPLE BY REGION AND COUNTRY

For more than a decade and across multiple projects, Barna Group has kept a close eye on the generation known as Millennials (defined in the United States as those born between 1984 and 1998). We've watched them navigate new technology, develop passions for community and justice, and balance particularly high ideals and ambitions. Our recent research has tracked their entrance into adulthood, career and family – and, among a

significant proportion, a simultaneous departure from religion. We see similar trends now among the leading edge of Gen Z (born between 1999 and 2015), who, so far, are even less inclined toward religion than their Millennial peers.

Barna partnered with World Vision, a leading voice in global activism with a shared vision of engaging the next generation, to dramatically widen – and focus – the lens with which we view



young adults around the world. We interviewed more than 15,000 adults ages 18 to 35 in 25 countries and nine languages, asking them about their goals, fears, relationships, routines and beliefs. This report represents a comprehensive summary of the findings specific to the United Kingdom.

Though some themes vary by country and context, there are other similarities across borders. In the following pages, you'll meet maturing respondents who don't just want to be 'reached' – they want to be involved and make a difference. Many of these driven adults are wary and weary, wrestling with questions, longing for deeper relationships and facing significant

societal, professional and personal obstacles. Yet we see that faith is one important factor associated with their well-being, connection and resilience. When – or, for many, if – they walk into a church, they'll need concrete teaching from leaders they can trust and meaningful opportunities to contribute to a faith community.

Through this report, Barna's aim is not only to help the global Church to better understand 18–35-year-olds around the world, but to truly partner with them in discipleship and activate them in leadership. We invite you to join us in learning more about, and from, this connected generation. ●



THIS REPORT REPRESENTS
A COMPREHENSIVE
SUMMARY OF THE
FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO THE
UNITED KINGDOM

The sample includes:

- **15,369** adults ages 18 to 35 in **25** countries
- **7,841** males and **7,479** females (49 'Other / Prefer not to respond')

SECTION ONE

LIFE IN AN ANXIOUS AGE

A CONFLICTED
EXPERIENCE
OF CONNECTIONS

'I often feel ...'

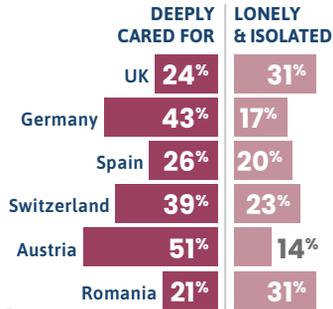
NORTH AMERICA

	DEEPLY CARED FOR	LONELY & ISOLATED
U.S.	36%	34%
Canada	35%	29%

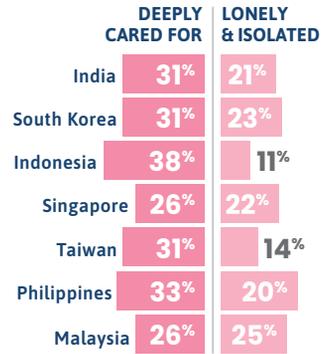
LATIN AMERICA

	DEEPLY CARED FOR	LONELY & ISOLATED
Brazil	26%	16%
Mexico	22%	13%
Colombia	30%	16%
Chile	30%	28%

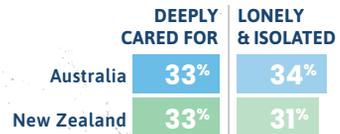
EUROPE



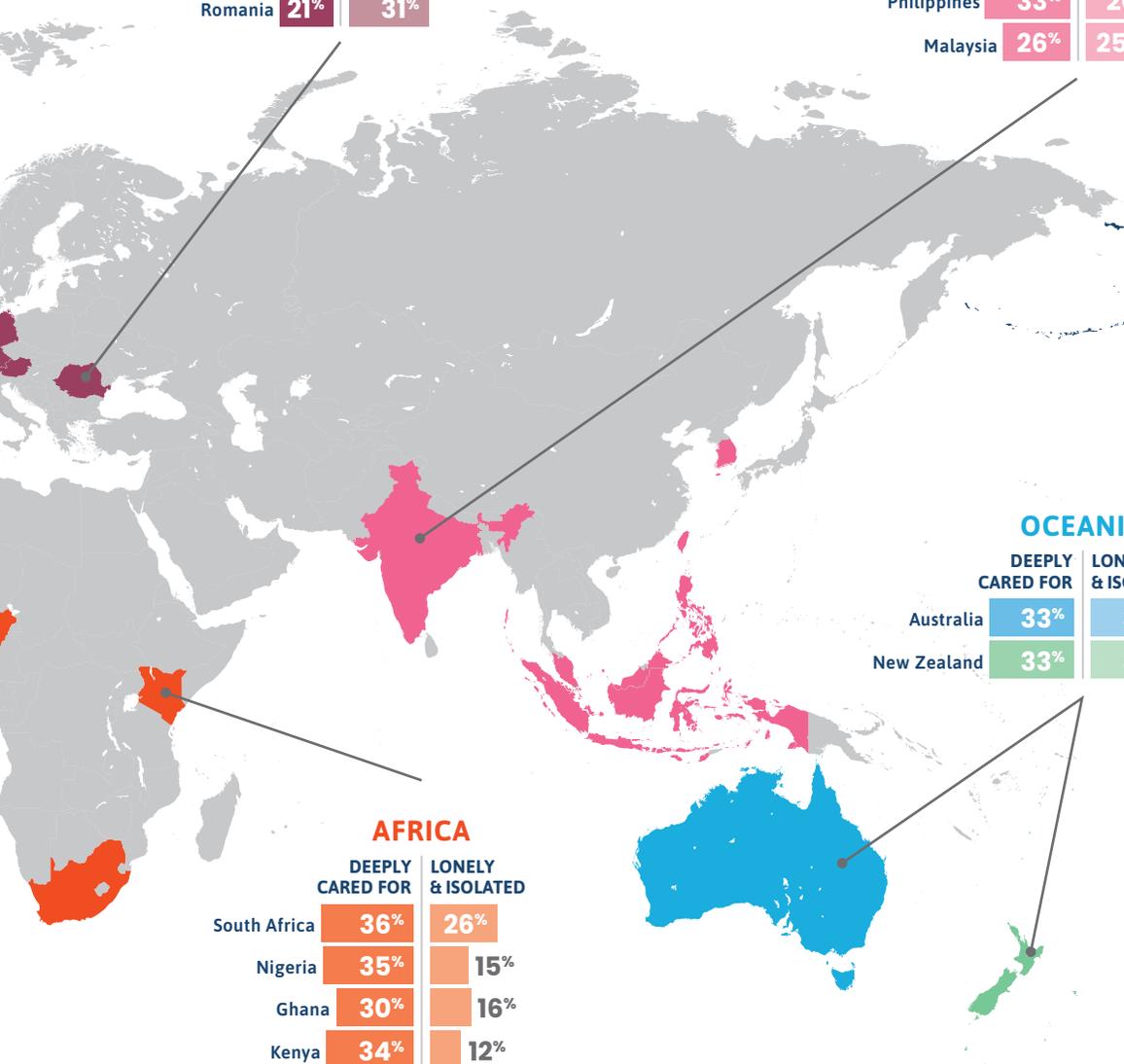
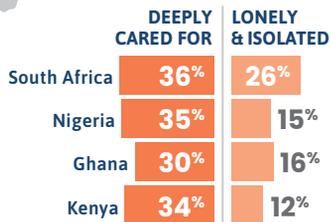
ASIA



OCEANIA



AFRICA



A Global & Local Profile of Young Adults

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF A TRULY GLOBAL GENERATION

Eighteen–35-year-olds around the world follow many of the same trends in terms of stage of life. The priority of their early adulthood has been establishing themselves financially and professionally, as many delay getting married or having children. Young adults value building their vocational foundation before turning toward home.

YOUNG ADULTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM STRONGLY ALIGN WITH THE GLOBAL PROFILE, THOUGH THEY ARE LESS LIKELY THAN AVERAGE TO LIVE IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AMONG 18–35-YEAR-OLDS



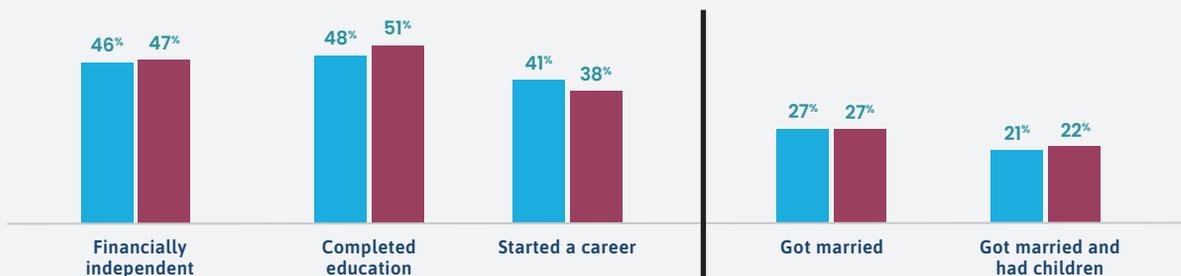
Looking ahead, young adults point to goals centred around personal development, family and following their dreams. Home ownership, marriage and parenting all rise in importance.

Entrepreneurship also emerges as a primary goal, likely tied to the emphasis on finishing education, starting a career and gaining financial independence. ●

ACCOMPLISHMENTS THUS FAR EMPHASISE FOUNDATIONAL MILESTONES

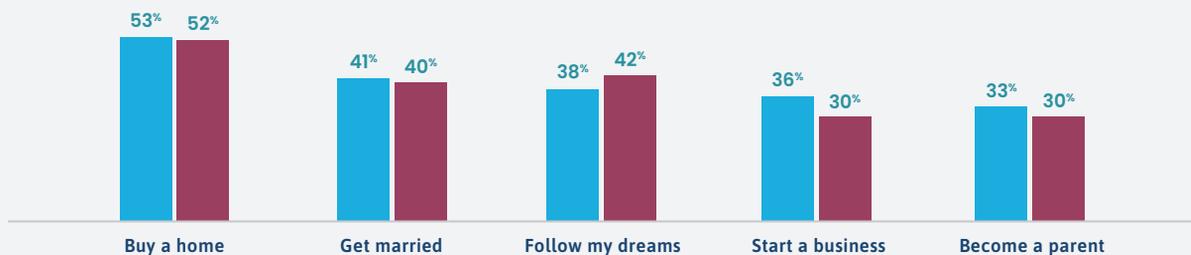
'What have you accomplished?'

● Global ● United Kingdom



FUTURE GOALS SHIFT TOWARD THE PERSONAL

'What would you like to accomplish in the next 10 years?'



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

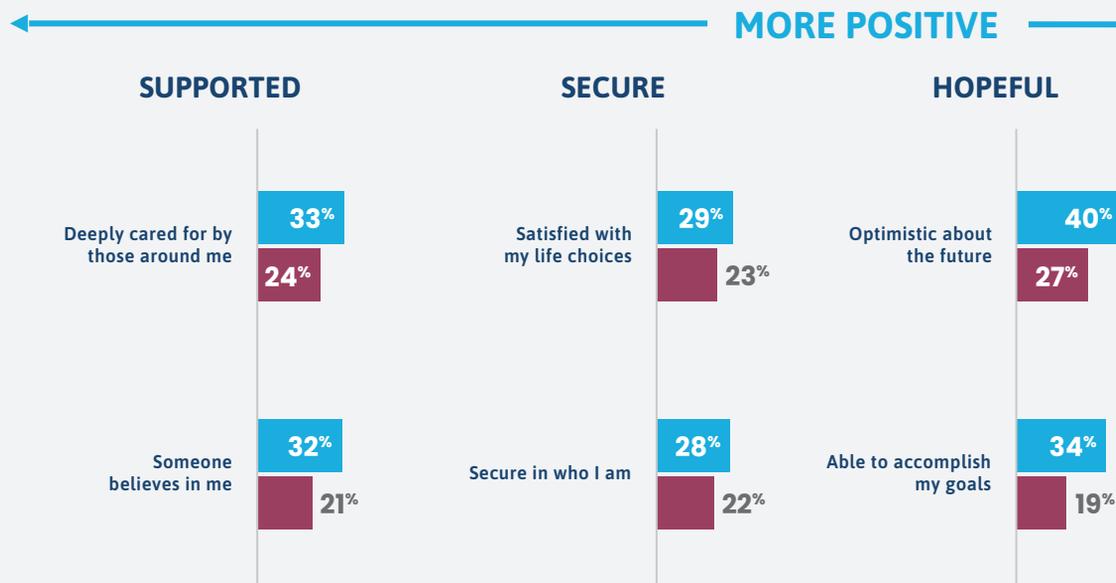
Inside Young Adults' Hearts & Minds

A GENERATIONAL STRUGGLE TO BALANCE HOPE & ANXIETY

THE EMOTIONAL PORTRAIT OF YOUNG ADULTS

'I often feel ...'

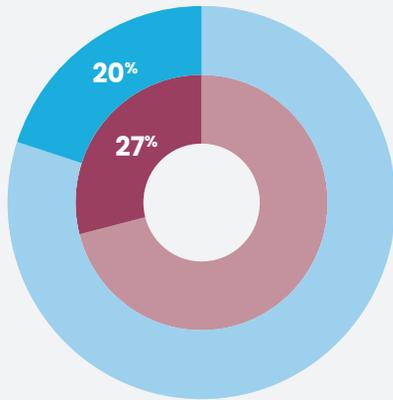
● Global ● United Kingdom



What is the emotional climate of this connected generation? Their self-reported feelings indicate some serious challenges come from within; inner battles with anxiety and fear often exceed levels of hope or optimism and hinder the well-being of young adults.

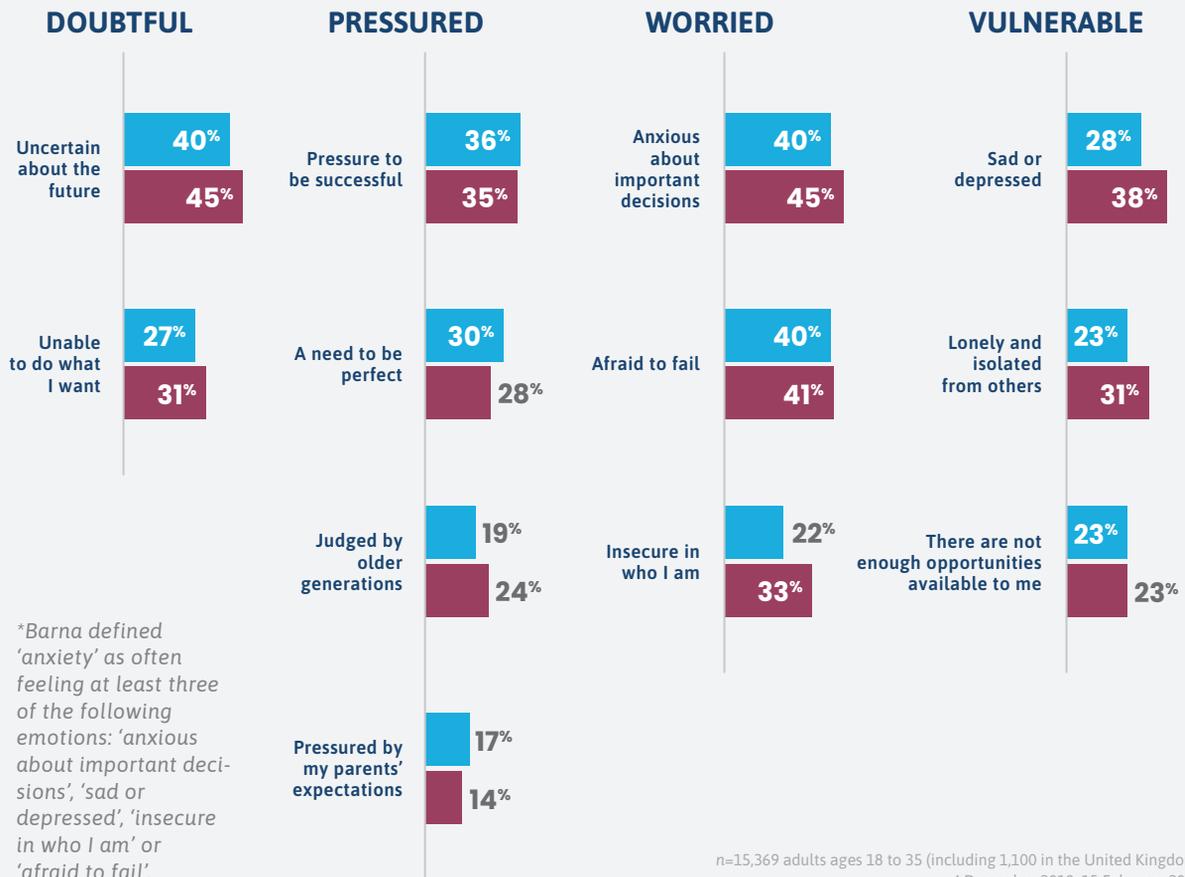
The research shows that those facing anxiety lag in connection and community – and accordingly, when they engage with a place of worship, they are motivated to find meaningful relationships. ●

PROPORTION OF ANXIOUS* YOUNG ADULTS



ANXIOUS FEELINGS ARE MORE COMMON IN THE UNITED KINGDOM THAN THE GLOBAL AVERAGE, AFFECTING MORE THAN ONE-QUARTER*

MORE NEGATIVE



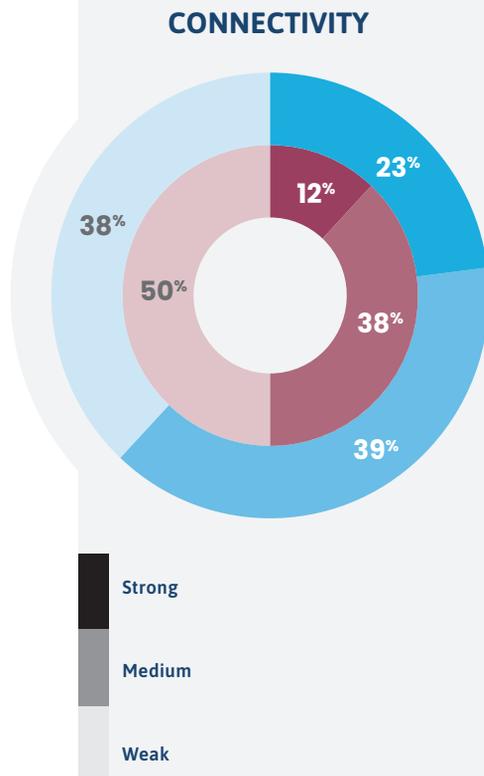
n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom),
4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

Barna's Connectivity Index

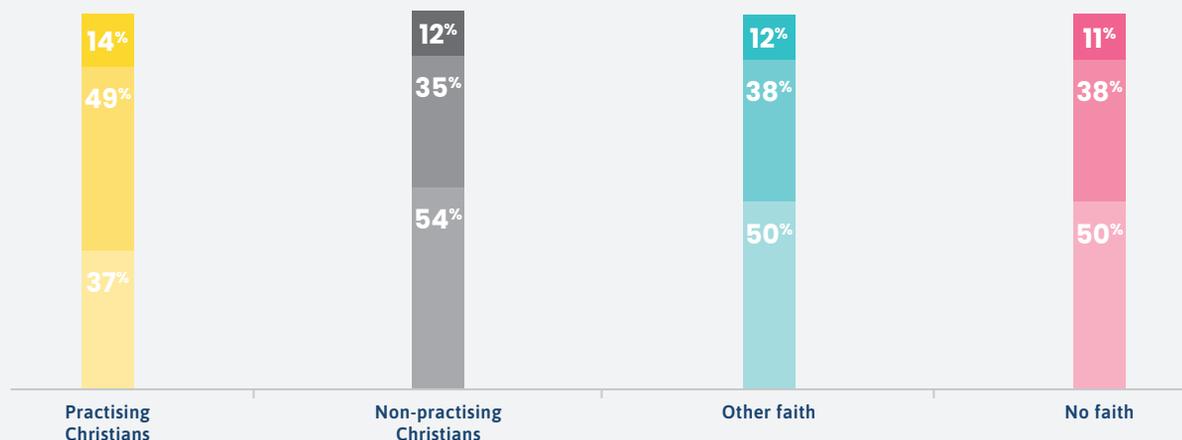
UNDERSTANDING & SUPPORTING HEALTHY,
HOLISTIC CONNECTIONS

Many respondents across the 25 countries in this study appear to share a sense of global connectedness, so the researchers hypothesised this might serve as a lens to bring this generation into clearer focus. The researchers developed a 'connectivity index', based on a series of eight factors in four categories that speak to the unique risks and potential rewards presented to this generation. Each factor concerns a different aspect of how a person perceives their connection to the world.

Young adults who qualified as having weak or even medium connectivity lack both a feeling of optimism and strong interpersonal relationships. Meanwhile, those with strong levels of connectivity experience boosted well-being across several realms of life. ●



PEOPLE OF FAITH HAVE STRONGER CONNECTIVITY



CATEGORIES OF CONNECTION

● Global ● United Kingdom



*The average 18–35-year-old regularly participates in three charitable activities related to donating, volunteering or advocating. Those who are 'others oriented' participate in four or more.

n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

FIELD GUIDE 1: Life in an Anxious Age

REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS INSPIRED BY THE RESEARCH

In this connected generation, pessimism about the future runs rampant; fears and worries drive decisions; and isolation and loneliness are creating a significant population of people who feel they have to make it on their own. This field guide will help you and your team think through how some of these concerns might be answered by your specific community. In other words, this guide is designed to help your church better discern how it might be the Church in your specific context.

This guide will be best read through as a team or presented to a team – no individual church leader ought to try to answer generational problems on their own! As you read through these questions and begin to form a plan for your church, consider the giftings of your community and how those might address some of the real needs that young adults have.

Guiding questions

As you begin, answer the following questions:

- What are your thoughts and feelings after reading this section? Does it reflect the reality you've seen and experienced in your own context? How so, or how did it differ?
- If 27 percent of young people in your surrounding culture often feel a range of anxious emotions, what might be some reasons for this anxiety? How does that mirror or stand in contrast to fears expressed by other generations in your community or congregation? Where might the wisdom of the past have something to offer to young adults, and where might new strategies be needed?
- Connection to others is a clear felt need for many people in the 18–35-year-old age range. In what ways do you think your church or

gathering is equipped to address this need? What are some other ways you might be able to more intentionally answer this need?

Forming a plan

The data in this report show two clear trends that you and your team can address through the context of your faith community. The first is that those who are anxious may be predisposed to seek out community. And the second is that connectivity for young adults is a key factor in their optimism about the world, and in feeling cared for. These two factors are intimately related, and your expression of the local church is uniquely suited to help 18–35-year-olds navigate these difficult questions.

Cultivating connection

If a young adult feels they're facing an uncertain reality with no support and a limited amount of opportunity, it's no wonder they feel anxious about the future. The Church is called by God to address this disconnection. A participant in your community ought to have immediate access to multi-generational connection and shared purpose. This is not to say anxiety will disappear, but the call of Christ is one that perseveres despite an uncertain future. If disconnection may be a root cause of young adults' anxiety and pessimism about the future, then the relationship and connections offered by church communities may be a potent antidote.

For this antidote to work, you'll need to ensure connection can flourish within your context. And here, it's best to take a hard look at what your church is offering to young adults and where you have room to grow.

Multi-generational wisdom: One source of connection may be the older adults in your church, who

can offer wisdom and discernment to the Millennials and Gen Z in your midst. Avoid being patronizing or dismissive to the concerns of the young adults in your context – inside or outside of your church community – and instead focus on real relationships and deep connections between people of different ages and experiences. Practise listening, understanding and cultivating a community of compassion and empathy.

Bearing burdens, navigating milestones: Research shows that many 18–35-year-olds are hoping for vocational security before marrying, having children or owning a home. While these markers are of course not necessary for any person – much less any Christian – they are still fraught for people trying to navigate them alone. Your community can help equip young adults find a sense of stability and discern how best to pursue their hopes (or discern how to change those hopes!), while offering a safe, helpful place to do the hard work of discernment. For instance, if someone in your context is burning out or fearful about making a marriage commitment or having children because of financial stressors, provided those desires are not counter to God’s call, your church could help bear financial burdens or bless young adults with marital guidance, childcare or other practical aid.

Common purpose: At their best, church communities provide a sense of purpose and meaning to all participants in their community and invite outsiders into a shared sense of mission. While this has value to everyone, it may hold particular meaning for a generation where many feel an acute lack of connection to a larger purpose or community. Discern how your church’s mission is invitational and aspirational, and how you can disciple people in your church context into a welcoming community that fosters connection and hope. ●

HOW CAN YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY BE AN ANSWER FOR THE FOLLOWING FEELINGS REPORTED BY MANY YOUNG ADULTS?

‘I’m uncertain about the future’

‘I feel pressure to be successful’

‘I feel sad or depressed’

‘I’m afraid to fail’

‘I feel anxious about important decisions’

SECTION TWO

ENGAGEMENT WITH SPIRITUALITY & THE CHURCH

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ACROSS THE CONNECTED GENERATION



CHRISTIAN | OTHER FAITH | ATHEIST, AGNOSTIC, NO FAITH

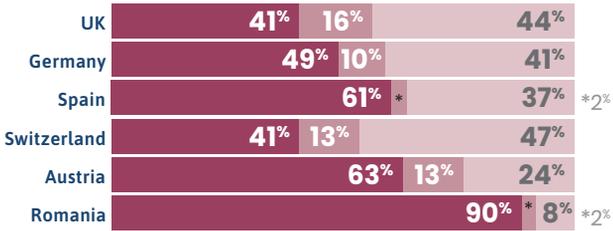
NORTH AMERICA

U.S.	53%	12%	35%
Canada	51%	13%	36%

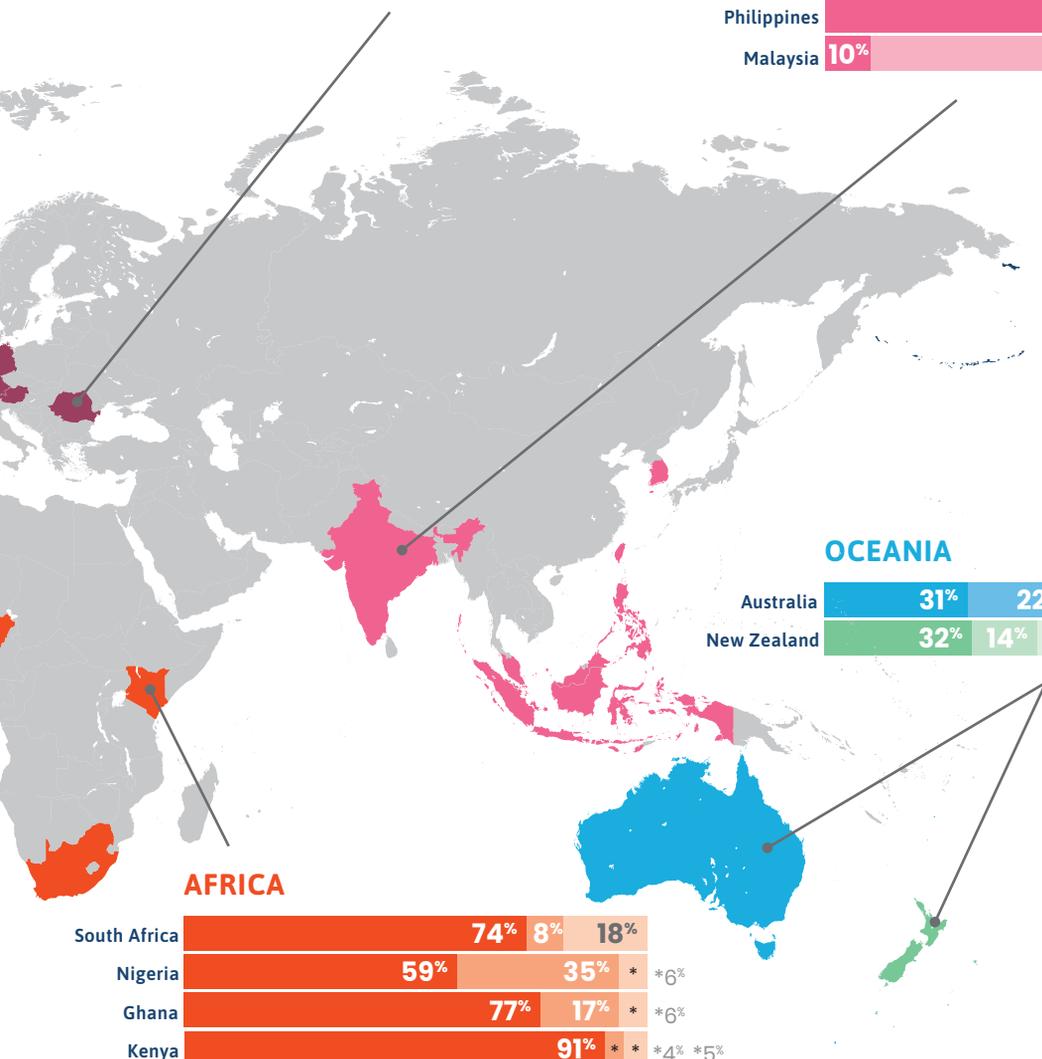
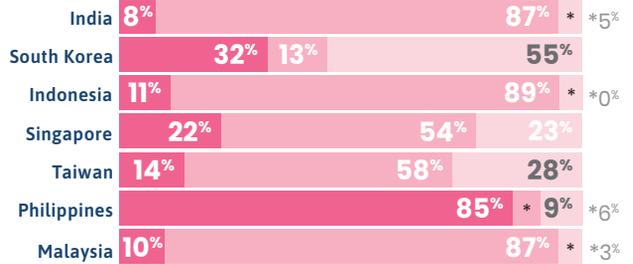
LATIN AMERICA

Brazil	74%	10%	17%	
Mexico	73%	*	22%	*5%
Colombia	70%	*	26%	*3%
Chile	58%	*	37%	*5%

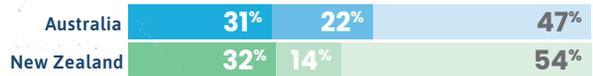
EUROPE



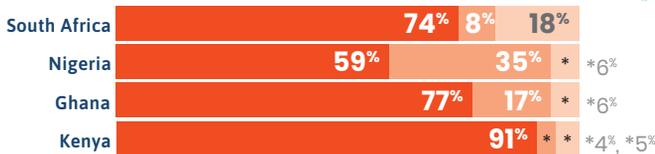
ASIA



OCEANIA



AFRICA



Relationship to Faith

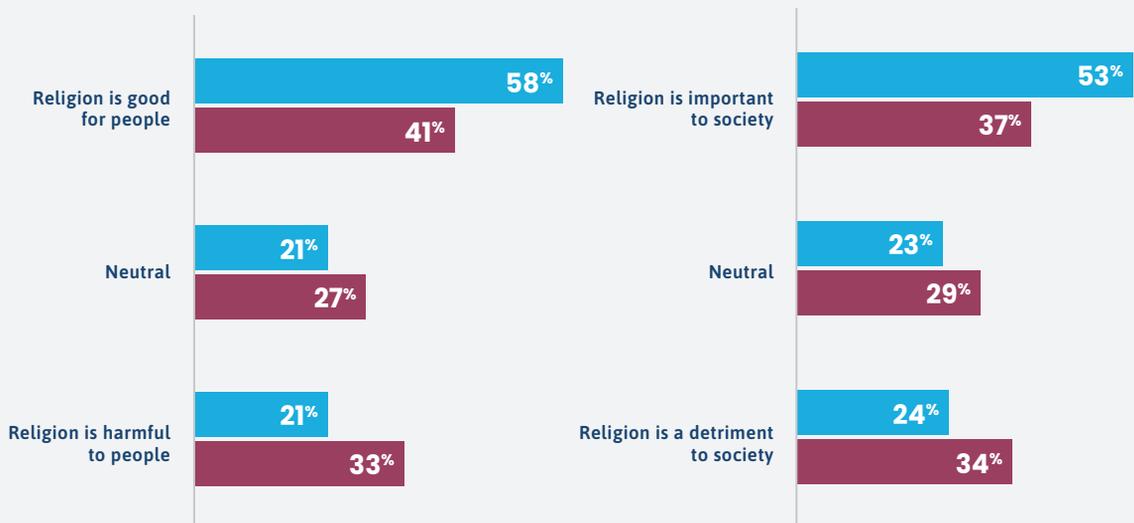
THE SPIRITUALLY OPEN STANCE OF THE CONNECTED GENERATION

DESPITE BEING A GENERATION OFTEN CHARACTERISED AS ANTAGONISTIC TO RELIGION, THE MAJORITY (BOTH GLOBALLY AND IN THE UNITED KINGDOM) IS QUITE CONFIDENT IN THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRITUAL FORCES

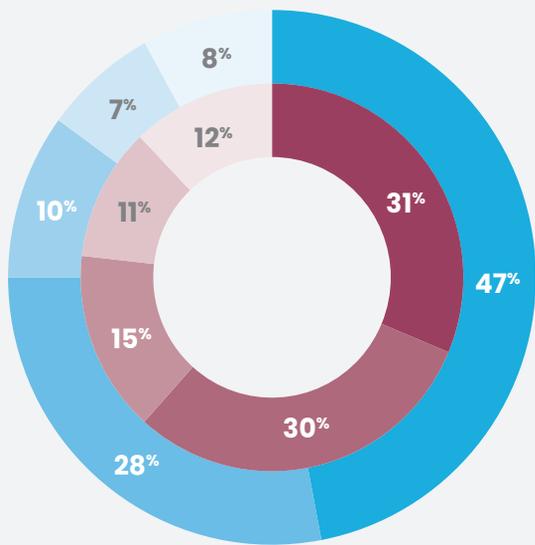
THE CONNECTED GENERATION'S OPINIONS OF FAITH VARY



... AND SUGGEST A DEEP AMBIVALENCE ABOUT RELIGION

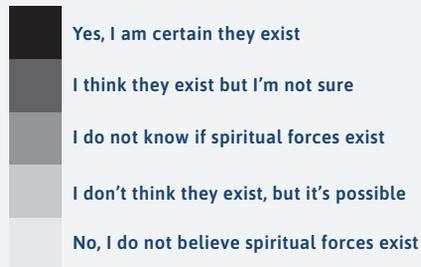


MOST YOUNG ADULTS BELIEVE IN SPIRITUAL FORCES



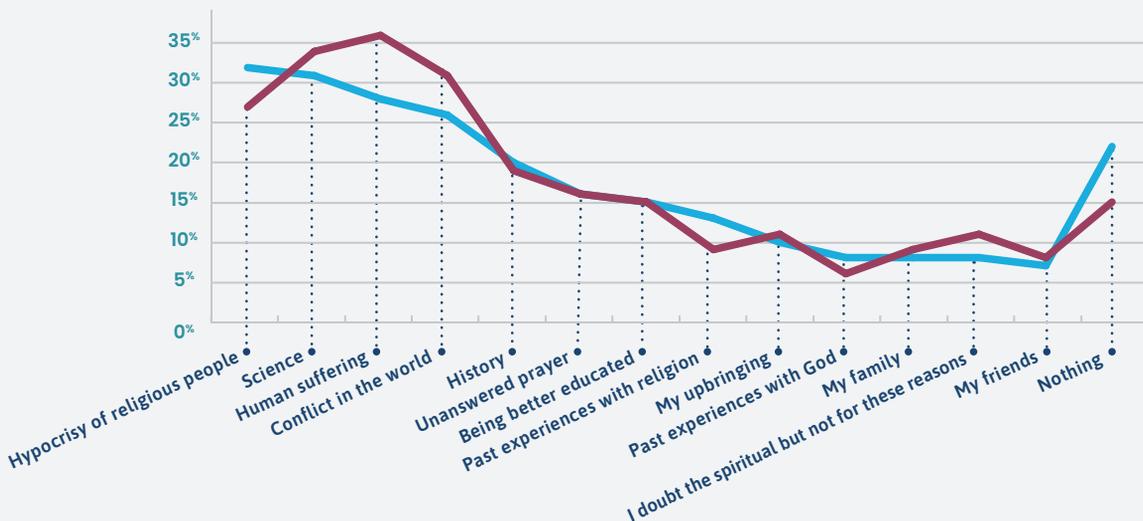
Only about one out of 10 is completely certain they do not exist. Young adults' feelings toward faith specifically are more complex, but they lean toward seeing religion as good and important. ●

Do you believe in spiritual forces?



... BUT ARE STILL WRESTLING WITH SIGNIFICANT DOUBTS

'What makes you doubt things of a spiritual dimension?'



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

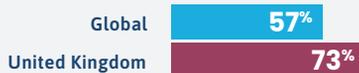
The Church's Mixed Reputation

VIEWS OF – AND BARRIERS TO – THE CHURCH, FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE FAITH

Young adults with some proximity to religion in general or Christianity specifically hold respect for the Church, while those furthest from religion – and particularly those who have detached from it – show great opposition.

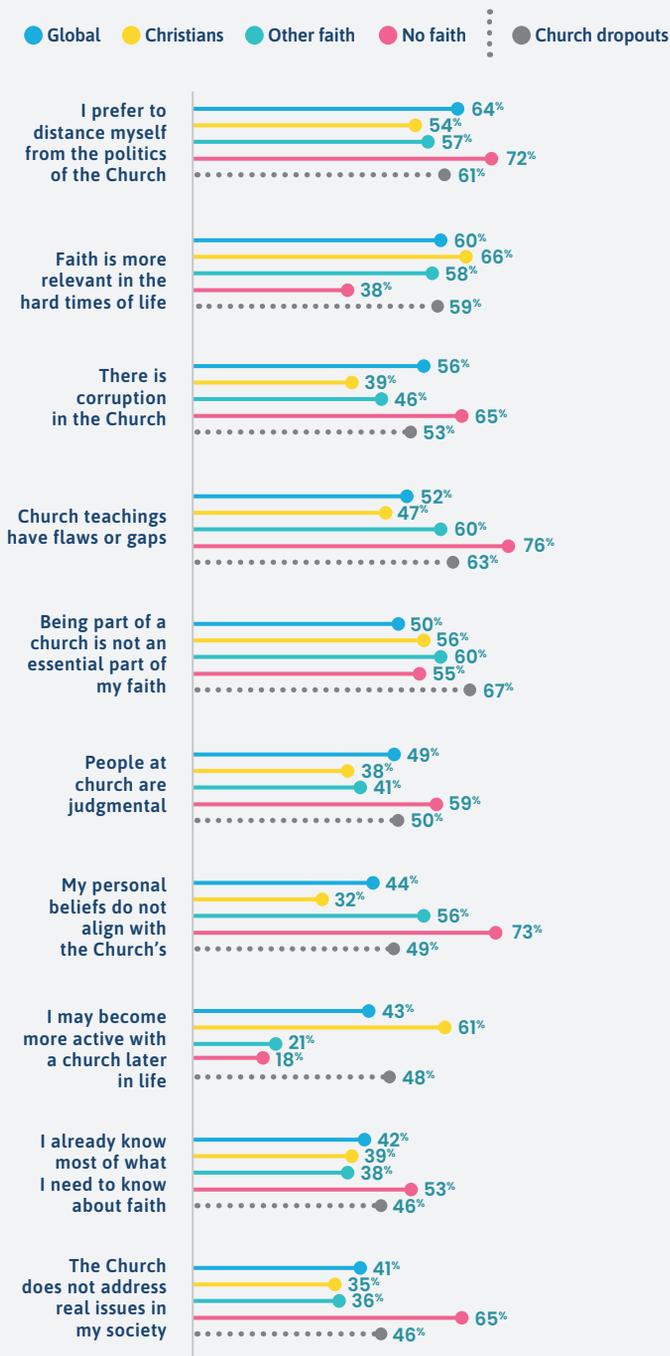
Many young Christians are considered church dropouts' – respondents who either grew up Christian and no longer affiliate with the Church or still identify as Christian but attend a place of worship infrequently (less than every few months). ●

DROPOUT PERCENTAGE

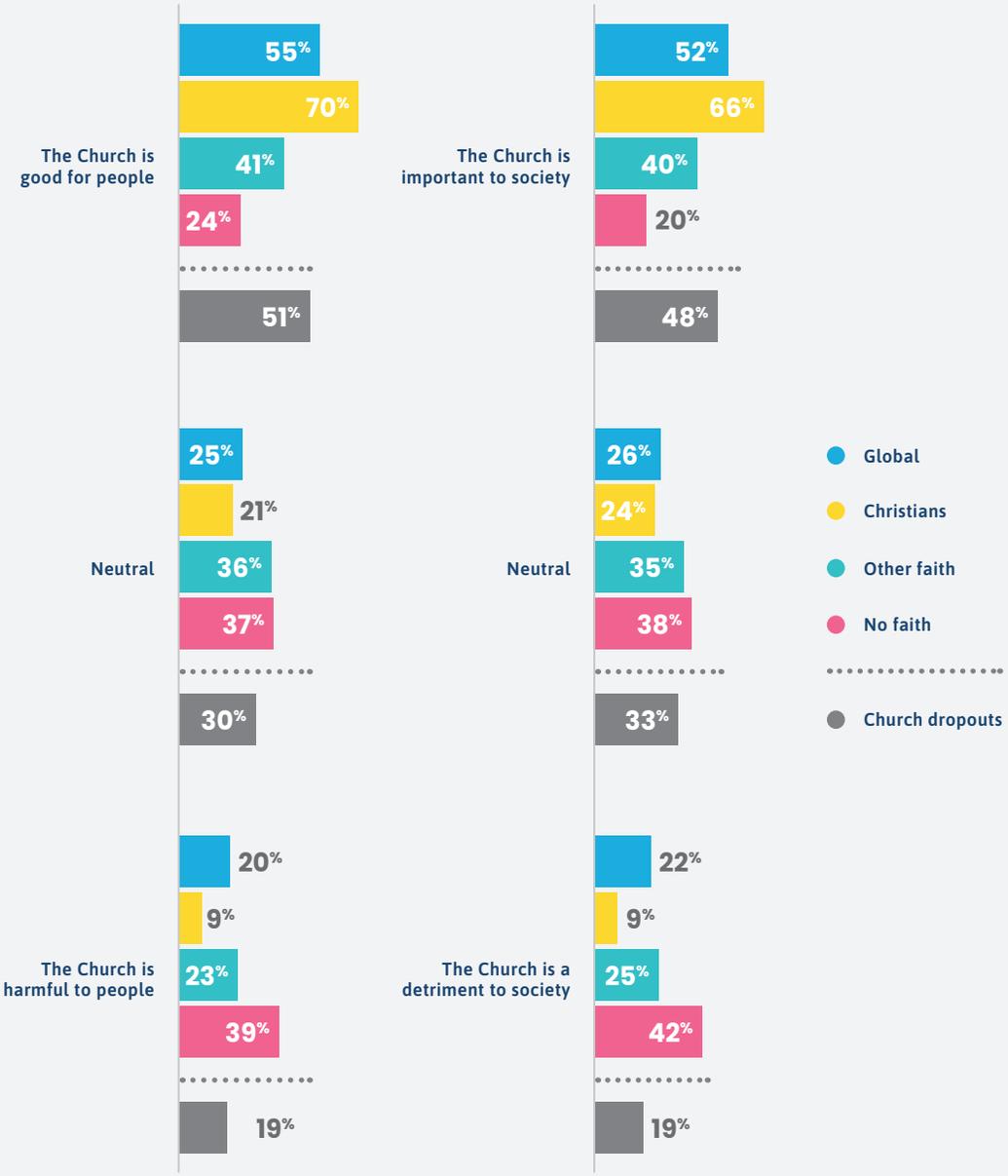


JUST OVER HALF OF CHRISTIANS IN THE TOTAL SAMPLE MEET THE CHURCH DROPOUT DEFINITION. IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, HOWEVER, THE RATE CLIMBS TO NEARLY THREE-QUARTERS.

CHURCH TEACHINGS COMMONLY POSE CHALLENGES TO ENGAGEMENT



OPINIONS OF THE CHURCH PRESENT A CLEAR DIVIDE



n=13,798 adults ages 18 to 35 with a Christian background or connection (including 929 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

Ideas About Christianity, Christians & Christ

CONFUSION ABOUT WHAT AND WHO THE CHURCH SHOULD REPRESENT

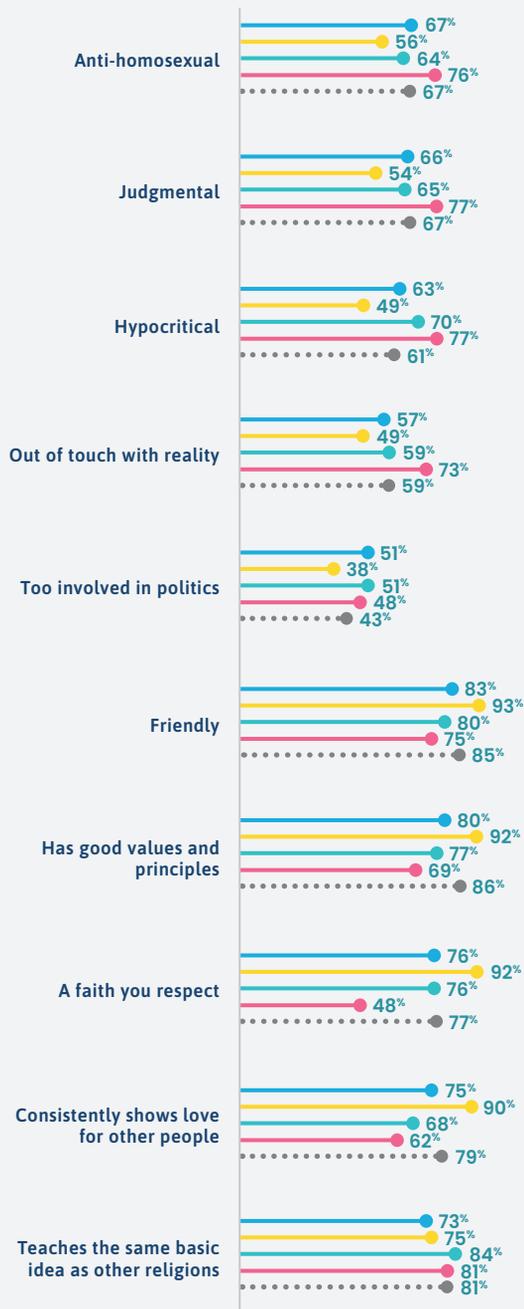
Groups who are distant from the Church struggle not only to see value in the institution but to connect to its tenets. Many young adults who aren't part of the Church identify Jesus as a historical figure or just a man, and their metric for Christian identity is built around church attendance, rather than certain beliefs or virtues that Christians indicate is central to their faith expression. ●

Global ●
 Christians ●
 Other faith ●
 No faith ●

 Church dropouts ●

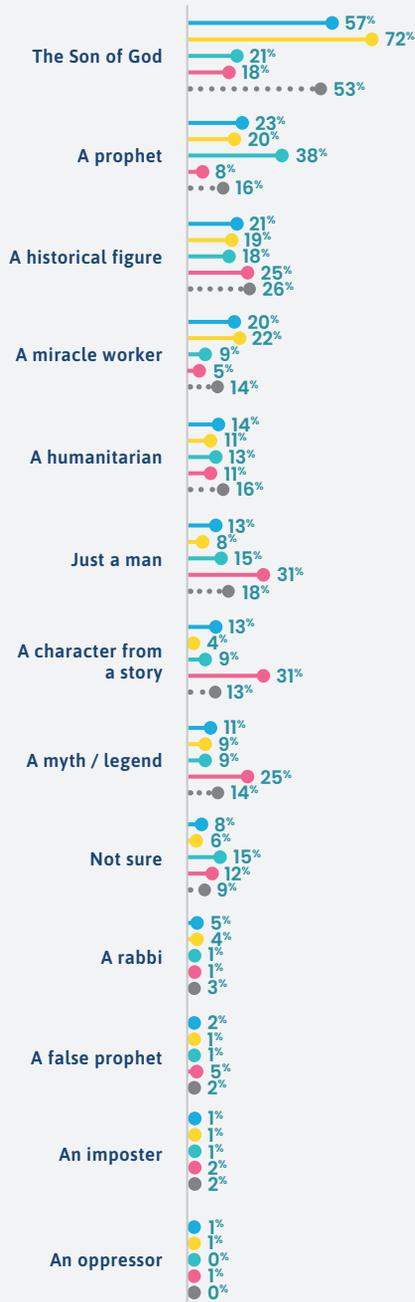
NON-RELIGIOUS YOUNG ADULTS SEE THE MODERN CHURCH DIFFERENTLY

% say this term describes present-day Christianity 'a lot' or 'some'



THERE IS UNCERTAINTY ABOUT JESUS' NATURE

'Who do you say Jesus is?'



... AND NO CLEAR CONSENSUS ON THE PRIMARY MARKERS OF CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

'How do you know someone is a Christian?'



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom),
4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

Resilient Discipleship & the Impact of Church

SIGNS OF DEEP, LASTING FAITH AMONG THE CONNECTED GENERATION

In *Faith for Exiles*, Barna president David Kinman examines four groups who grew up with Christian backgrounds. This study extends those categories across 25 countries and observes similar groups and patterns of Christian faithfulness around the world, among:

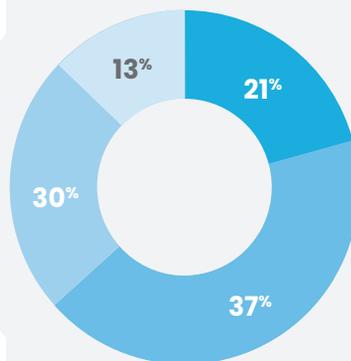
Prodigals – grew up Christian but no longer identify themselves as Christian.

Nomads – identify as Christian but do not regularly attend church.

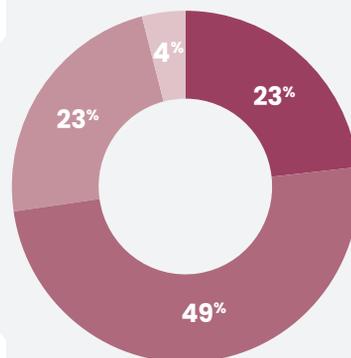
Habitual churchgoers – identify as Christian and attend church at least once a month, but do not qualify as resilient disciples.

Resilient disciples – identify as Christian and (1) attend a local church regularly and engage with their faith community above and beyond worship services, (2) trust firmly in the authority of the Bible, (3) are committed to Jesus personally and affirm his death and resurrection, and (4) express a desire for their faith to impact their words and actions. ●

THE UNITED KINGDOM HAS A LOW PROPORTION OF RESILIENT DISCIPLES. HALF OF YOUNG ADULTS IN THE UK WITH A CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND, HOWEVER, ARE NOMADS, MEANING THEY STILL IDENTIFY AS CHRISTIAN.



- Prodigals
- Nomads
- Habitual churchgoers
- Resilient disciples



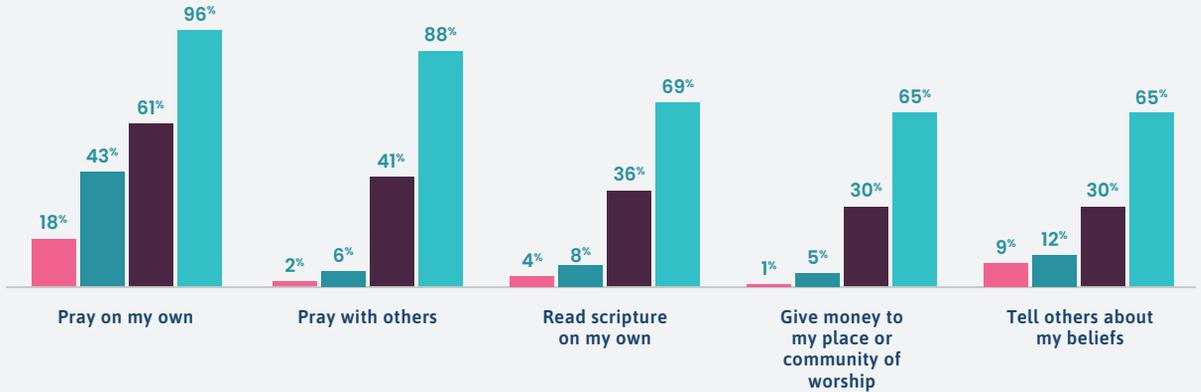
- Global
- United Kingdom

n=9,787 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 588 in the United Kingdom) who grew up with some type of Christian background, 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

PRAYER & SCRIPTURE ARE THE FOUNDATION OF RESILIENCE

'At least once a month I...'

● Prodigals ● Nomads ● Habitual churchgoers ● Resilient disciples



n=1,460 adults ages 18 to 35 in the United States who grew up with some type of Christian background, December 4, 2018–February 15, 2019.

CHURCH IS DEEPLY IMPACTFUL ON IDENTITY & VOCATION

● Total (United Kingdom) ● Habitual churchgoers ● Resilient disciples



n=161 adults ages 18 to 35 in the United Kingdom who have attended a church in the past month, 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

Worship Practises & Perceptions

WHAT DRAWS RESILIENT DISCIPLES AND WHERE HABITUAL CHURCHGOERS CAN GROW

Why do resilient disciples in the United Kingdom continue to attend their place of worship? Learning about God and commitment to their faith top their list of reasons.

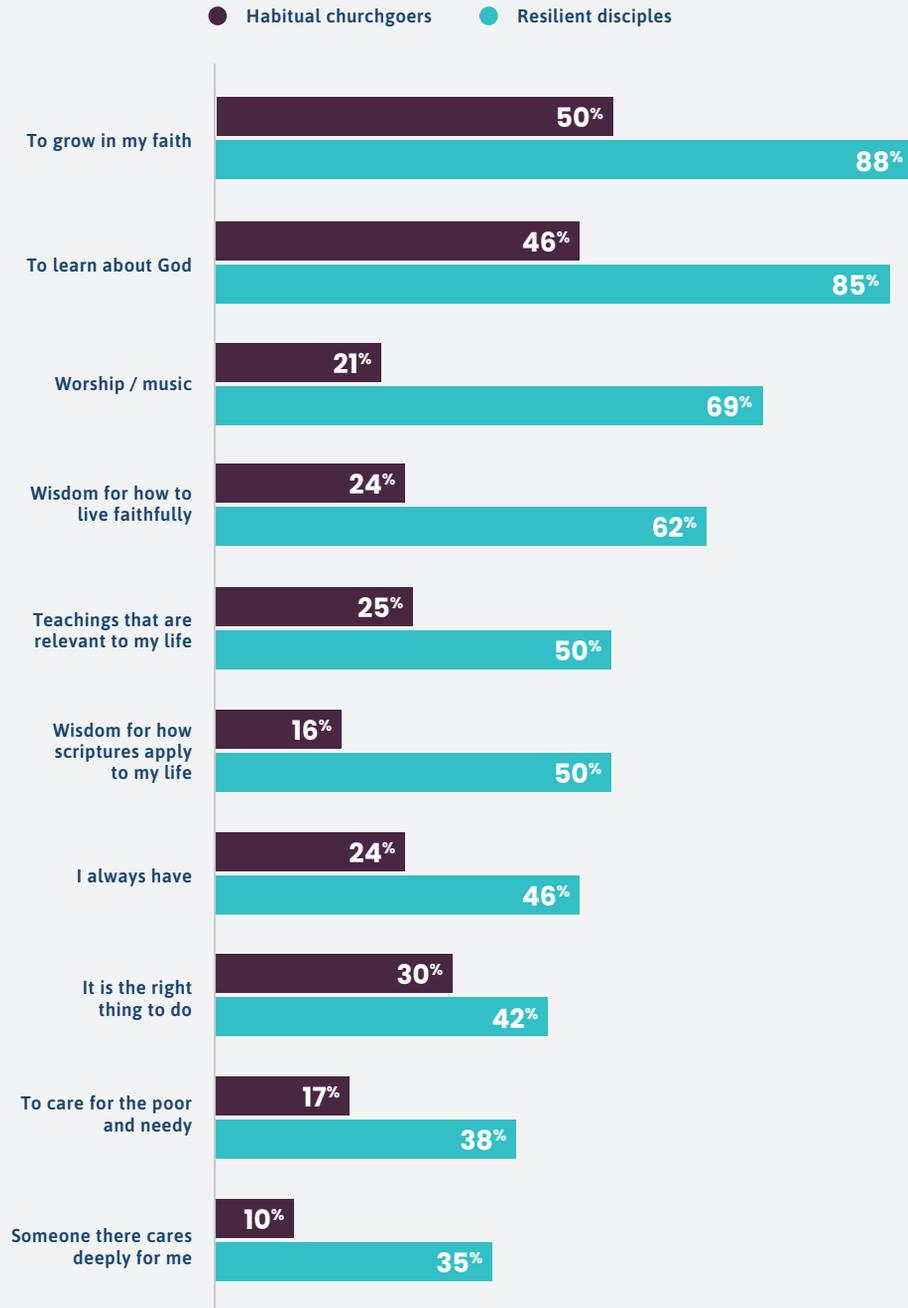
Friends are the primary thing missing from their experiences with a place of worship. Habitual churchgoers also seek community, including friends, family and support groups. Both resilient disciples and habitual churchgoers agree they are missing opportunities to fight injustice. ●

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS SAY IS MISSING FROM WORSHIP COMMUNITIES

● Habitual churchgoers ● Resilient disciples



WHY YOUNG ADULTS PARTICIPATE IN WORSHIP COMMUNITIES



n=156 adults ages 18 to 35 in the United Kingdom who have attended a church in the past month, 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

FIELD GUIDE 2:

Engagement with Spirituality & the Church

REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS INSPIRED BY THE RESEARCH

In the first part of this field guide, we explored how a lack of connection may be contributing to the anxiety that many 18–35-year-olds feel. We also looked at how your community could offer a real and authentic source of connection and hope to young adults.

Now comes the difficult part: making a case to young adults that there is value in being associated with a place of worship in the first place. Field Guide 2 will help you think through some practical steps your church can take toward this end.

Guiding questions

Before you dig into this field guide, consider the following questions as a team:

- What is the perception of our surrounding culture toward Christianity? Do the findings of the study we just read about match our ideas of that perception? How are they similar or different?
- Do you think young adults' ambivalence or negative feelings toward religion and Christianity is fair? Why or why not? How has the Church in your region contributed or defended against those feelings?
- How is your church equipped – or not equipped – to minister to and foster reconciliation with those who have been wounded by Christians or churches? With the high number of dropouts in your cultural context, what are some ways you feel your community or the broader church in your society can begin to help in healing the wounds of the dropouts?

Ambivalence ... and antagonism

Many members of this generation show a deep ambivalence toward religion – and in some cases, a deep antagonism. While a majority of young adults says they believe in spiritual forces, when that spirituality is tied to a religious group, doubts and opposition crop up. Young adults say the hypocrisy of religious people is the biggest reason they doubt there is anything spiritual. There is even a large minority – around one-third of young adults in the United Kingdom – who believe that religion is harmful to people and detrimental to society.

The situation for churches is even more stark when it comes to trying to address people who grew up in the Christian faith but have left, or those who don't attend church very often despite identifying as Christian. This group views the Church as politically problematic, judgmental and insulated from real problems in society. Church teachings, likewise, are considered flawed or insufficient.

The reality is hard for many churches. Yet there are still steps you can take to help the young adults in your midst seek and know God.

An unfair responsibility

Addressing church wounds is never easy. A person might have burdens from a different tradition or theology you personally find abhorrent; there might be hurt from a situation that is completely indefensible. You and your church might be made a scapegoat for the sins of others, and that will feel unfair.

But it's also an opportunity to show how the Church works. As a global body, every Christian expression is responsible for fostering reconciliation for past sins.

You might not have the same theology or church polity as the churches you see have truly hurt people, but you do have a responsibility to work toward making things right with those willing to listen in your context or circle.

Think about how your community can repent for the sins of the global Church. Think about what seeking reconciliation and asking forgiveness looks like (and how it may look different from place to place). And then do the hard work of continuing that ministry each day, as you continually follow the sanctifying power of the Spirit.

Disliked for the wrong reasons

There are plenty of ways that churches in any culture will stand in opposition to some surrounding cultural values. A community of peacemakers seeking to do justice, show mercy and walk closely with God will naturally fall outside the norm! Yet many young people are suspicious of Christianity for reasons beyond the gospel. Some of this is theological variance; some of it is carelessness. Often churches are unclear in their treatment of issues that need to be addressed with deep sensitivity. Work on your church's words and deeds. Make sure that when you hear opposition, it's because your community is following Jesus, not because people think you believe something you don't.

Help people find what they're missing

Even the young adults who are active and happy at churches still report some things they miss. And these aren't just preferences – going to church without any friends or family for support is hard! Where can you easily offer new opportunities for young adults to find community and connection in your church? ●

DOES YOUR CHURCH HAVE:

Social gatherings?

Support groups?

Opportunities for social action?

Vocational training?

Opportunities to connect?



SECTION THREE

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

DISCONTENTMENT
WITH THE STATE OF
LEADERSHIP

0-69 70-79 80-89 90-100 %

'Our society is facing a crisis in leadership because there are not enough good leaders right now'

% strongly or somewhat agree

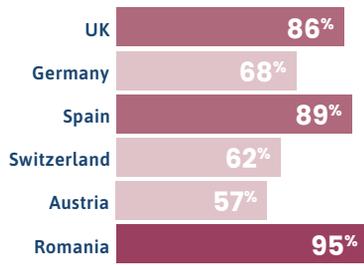
NORTH AMERICA



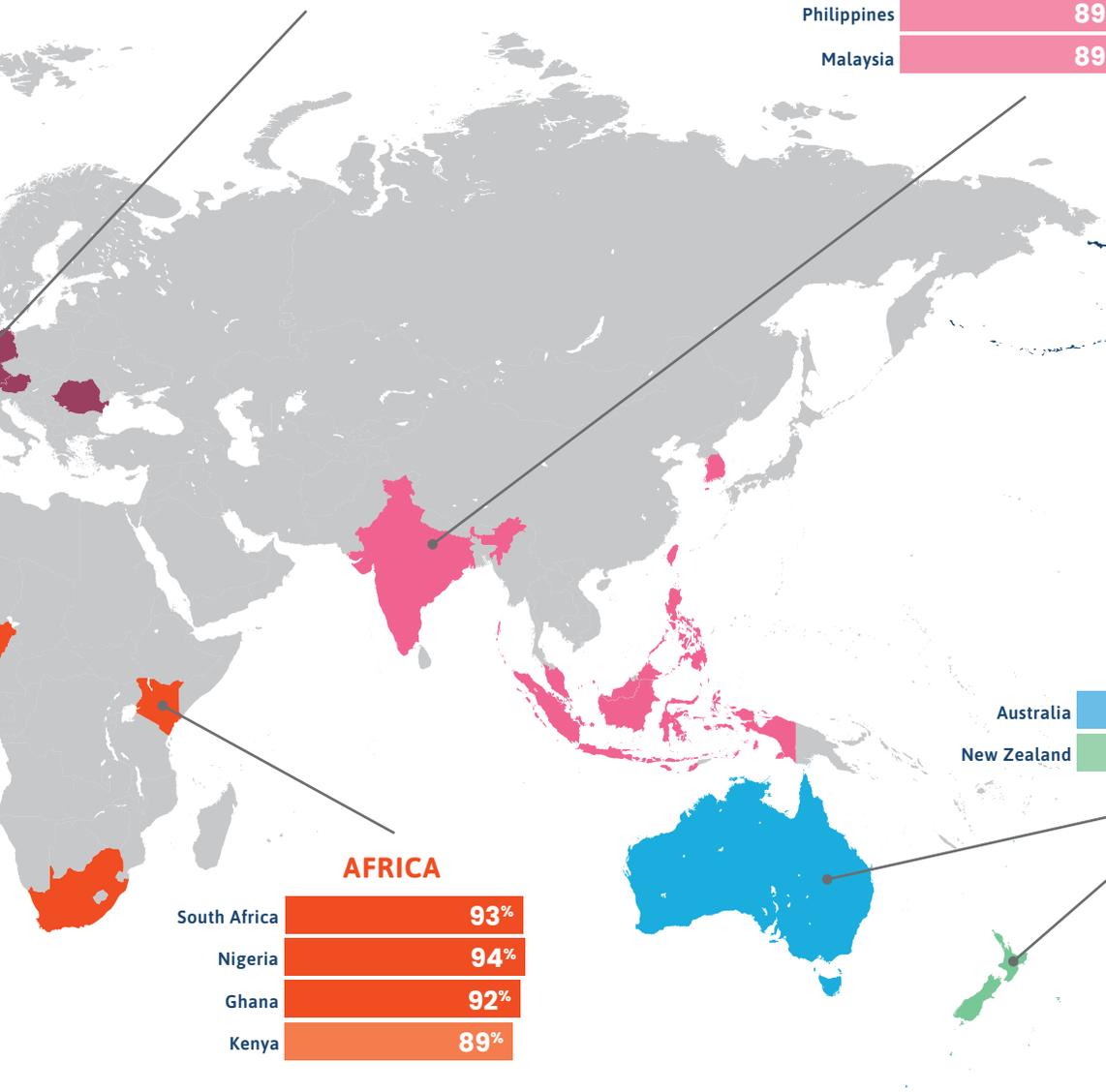
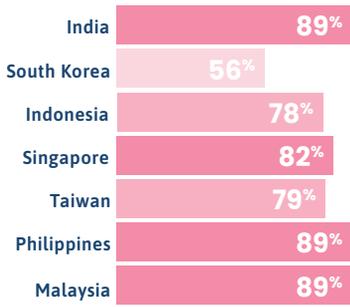
LATIN AMERICA



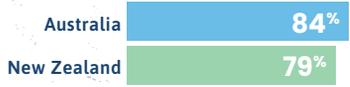
EUROPE



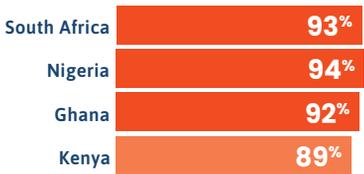
ASIA



OCEANIA



AFRICA



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35, 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

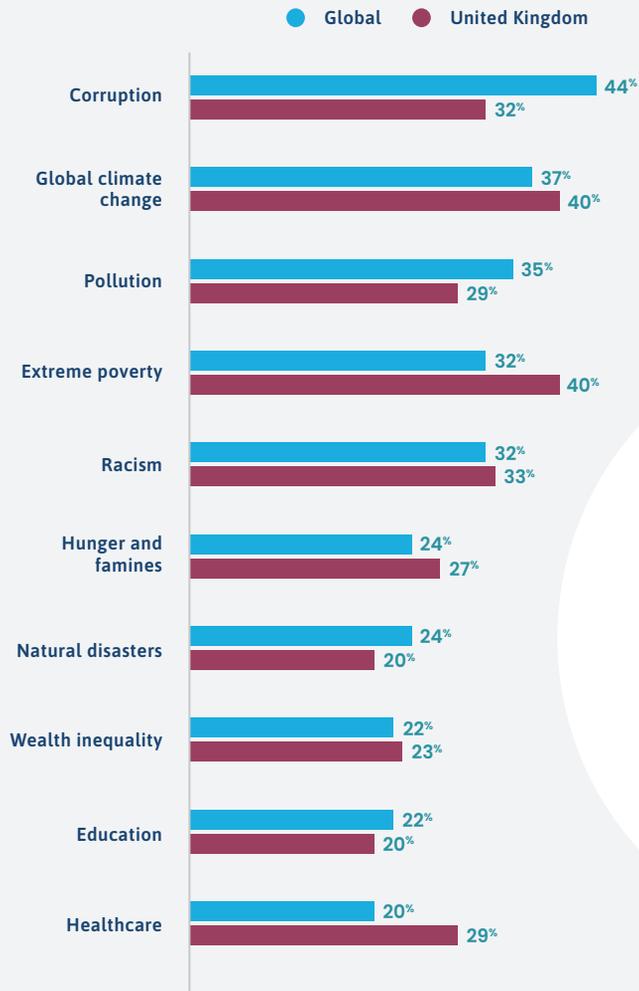
Global Concerns & Generosity

HOW YOUNG ADULTS SEE SOCIETAL PROBLEMS AND THEIR POTENTIAL TO BE INVOLVED IN SOLUTIONS

This generation closely aligns on what they perceive as the most pressing issues facing the world's future, just another indication of their global mindset.

Nearly half of this generation is involved, in some way or another, in causes they care about. They are especially likely to invest in local initiatives. ●

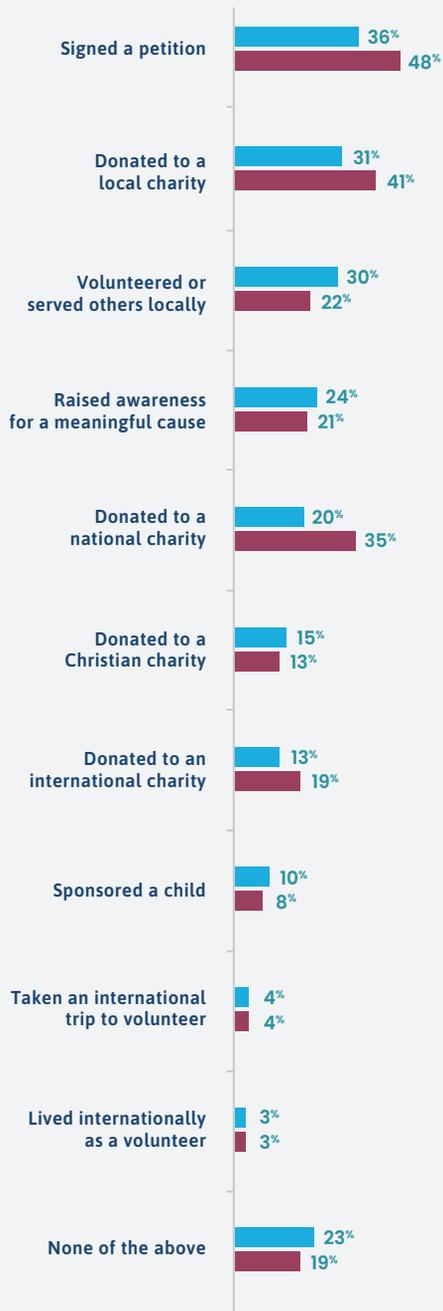
FEARS ABOUT THE WORLD'S FUTURE



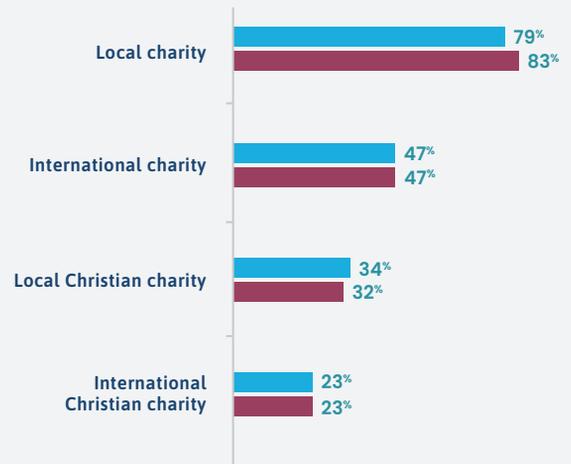
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND EXTREME POVERTY STAND OUT AS TOP REASONS FOR CONCERN. YOUNG ADULTS IN THE UK ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY THAN THE GLOBAL AVERAGE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT HEALTHCARE.

READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

'In the last three years, I have ...'



THE CHARITIES YOUNG ADULTS ARE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING



PARTICIPATION IN CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom),
4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

The Changing State of Leadership

CHALLENGES YOUNG ADULTS PERCEIVE AND HOW THE CHURCH CAN OVERCOME THEM

In an effort to better understand, disciple and empower young adults – representatives of the present and future of leadership – we asked them what they identify as barriers to leadership, in both local and global contexts. ●

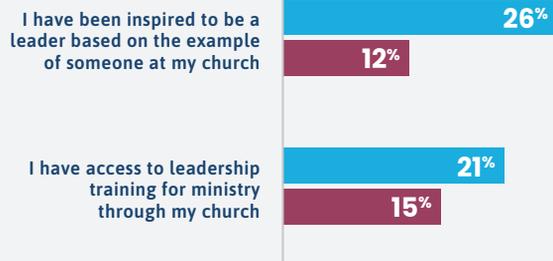
OVER ONE-THIRD HAS EITHER NEVER FELT LIKE A LEADER OR CANNOT SAY WHERE THEY LEAD

'Where do you consider yourself a leader?'



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

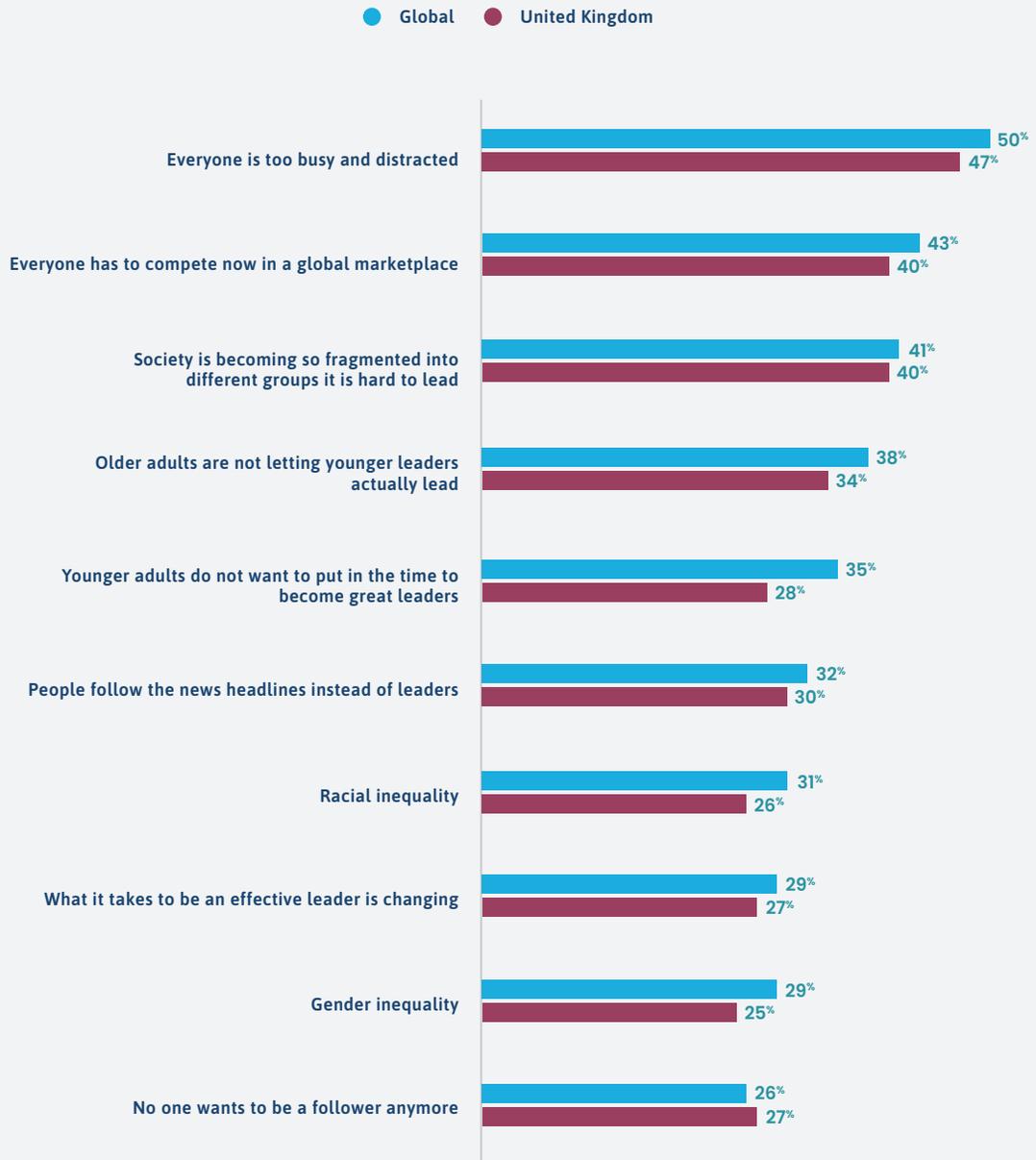
THE CHURCH HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN INSPIRING AND GROWING LEADERSHIP



n=4,092 adults ages 18 to 35 who have attended a church in the past month (including 161 the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

BUSYNESS, DISTRACTION & COMPETITION CULTIVATE A WORLD IN WHICH IT'S MORE DIFFICULT TO LEAD

'What are the biggest challenges to leadership in society today?'



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

Belief in Action

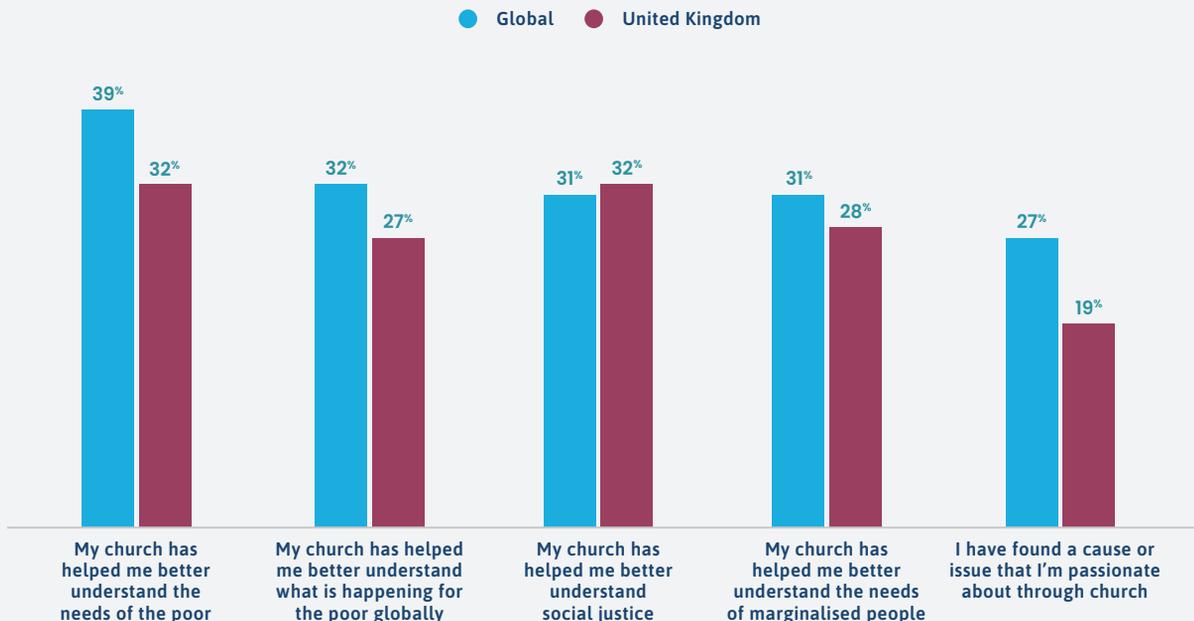
THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH AND THE POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

The connected generation tells us their world-views inspire or motivate them toward a number of charitable activities or attitudes. A deep faith is often accompanied by strong conviction,

while those furthest from religion are less likely to report altruism and activism.

The connected generation is looking for the Church to provide real, meaningful opportunities for development. As David Kinnaman says, ‘They want the Church to be a laboratory of leadership, not just a place for spirituality.’ Churchgoers also indicate a desire for faith to intersect with the realities of life and address social issues. ●

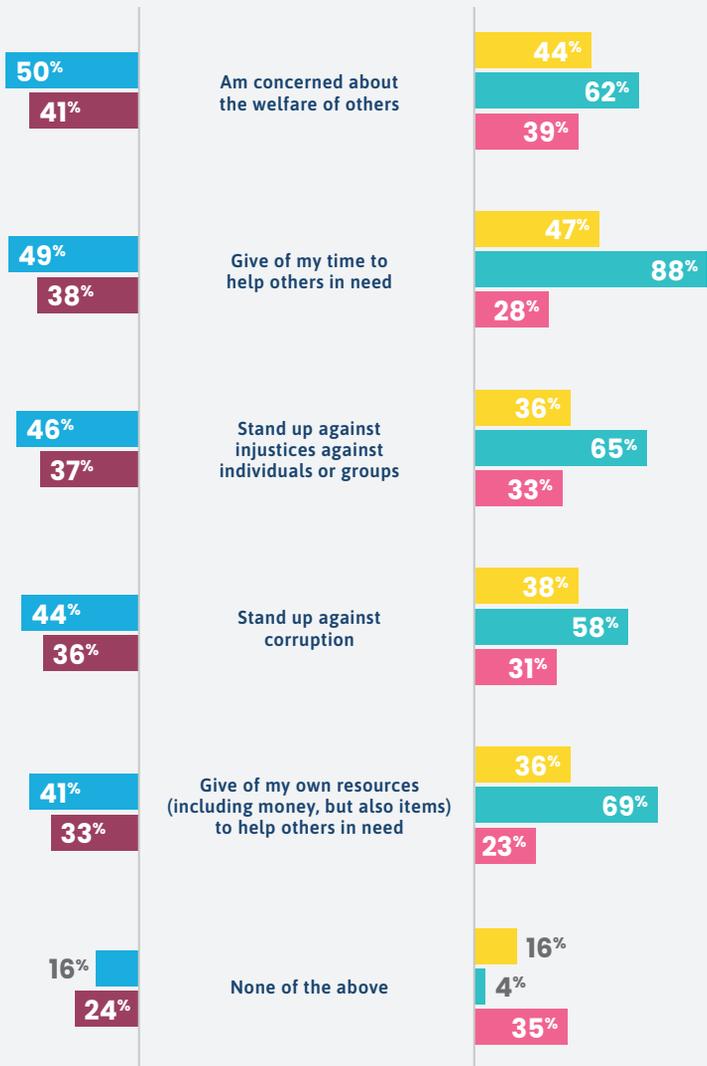
THE CHURCH SERVES AS A PLACE OF BOTH FORMATION & ACTIVATION



n=4,092 adults ages 18 to 35 who identify as Christian and have attended a church in the last month (including 161 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

BECAUSE OF MY BELIEFS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT I...

● Global ● United Kingdom ● Christians ● Resilient disciples ● No faith



n=15,369 adults ages 18 to 35 (including 1,100 in the United Kingdom), 4 December 2018–15 February 2019.

FIELD GUIDE ③: Potential for Impact

REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS INSPIRED BY THE RESEARCH

You've seen how and why many young adults in your context have ambivalent and even negative feelings about religion and church. You've read about a generation wracked by anxiety about the future, and how the connected generation's *lack* of connection might be a part of that. But a big question remains: What *kind* of connection are they looking for?

This generation is clearly engaged (or hoping to be engaged) in making a difference through causes they care about. They show a strong willingness to get involved or even lead when they have a shared sense of mission. Might this be a place of overlap for your community to minister to young adults in your context? Read through this guide as you think about how you can match the passion of young adults in your midst with the call of Jesus.

Guiding questions

Young adults see significant barriers to leadership. Yet many of them claim to feel like leaders in a variety of contexts:

- As this generation comes into positions of leadership in your culture – and in your church – what are some ways you can begin to address these leadership barriers? How can you connect young adults' passion to address world problems with leadership opportunities?
- What do you think about the link between faith and activism? What would it look like for your church to embrace a God-centred activism? Where do you think there would be gospel-based clarity, and where would the risks be with that mindset?
- Read through the list of concerns 18–35-year-olds say they care about. With the

closing exercise, brainstorm some practical ways that your church might be able to engage with these concerns.

Action & activism

The data from this survey strongly suggest that young adults in your cultural context have very specific and sweeping concerns – ones shared by other members of their generation around the world. Things like climate change, pollution, extreme poverty, racism and hunger / famine are all major worries for the connected generation. But God's people are meant to be people who care for creation, work to address poverty, oppose racism in all its forms and work to feed the hungry. Talk as a team about what kind of things you can do in your church to make your Christian commitment in these areas more visible and intentional.

Invite young adults in

One simple way to make these things a priority in your community is to invite the very people who care about them to be part of the solution. Talk to the young adults in your church – are there any who have a passion for addressing any of these issues? Are they ready to be a leader in this area?

This kind of invitational leadership can also help young adults in your community feel they are overcoming the barriers they see to leadership. It also provides an immediate witness to the surrounding culture: You are saying – rightly! – that God is concerned with the fears expressed by young adults, and that you trust their generation to help bring about God's hope in these anxieties.

Provide a real launchpad

Your church can also help young adults learn how to lead and equip them to lead with success. Consider

forming a mentorship program, connecting older leaders in your church with young adults; work on fostering a vocational ministry that can aid in helping Millennials and Gen Z connect their faith with their work and the things they care about. Learn about the causes they care about and support and release them to form their own communities of action. Remind them – in sermons, prayer and budget – that faith and action are absolutely linked. This may become even more apparent once you begin to develop the young leaders

in your midst. As they do their part to carry out God’s mission in the world, they demonstrate that the Christian faith is a driving force for robust engagement with important issues. By offering strong discipleship in how God’s people are commanded to take action in the world around them – peacefully, courageously, compassionately – you’re allowing a leadership platform for young adults who can make a huge difference in the world around them. ●



HOW MIGHT THE CHURCH AND THE WAY OF JESUS OFFER HOPE IN THE MIDST OF THESE CONCERNS?

Climate change

Corruption

Racism

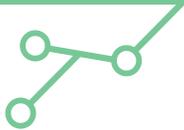
Hunger / famine

Extreme poverty

Wealth inequality

Healthcare

Local Faith Leaders Comment on the Findings



‘The paucity of connectivity is heartbreaking; that so many in our country feel that level of isolation and loneliness. Given the 2017 WHO report revealing the levels of existential anxiety among British teens, it’s perhaps not a surprise, but it is still deeply troubling and striking among the more developed nations. . . Apparently national and global issues, both present and future, are creating a climate of anxiety which is felt acutely among young Britons. It’s a hard time to be young. That those embedded in faith communities seem to be doing better is heartening. The gospel clearly *does* make a difference to their lives and perspectives. We can be confident that we have answers our younger generations need in order to thrive and, regardless of our secular culture, be unapologetic about offering hope in the name of Jesus.’



DR. RUTH PERRIN
Researcher into
Millennial faith,
University of Durham

‘For a long time, culture has been driving away from Christianity. On the whole, we’ve become consumed by rationality, and there is a huge emphasis that life’s meaning and purpose must be realised and understood through science alone. Despite this, in my experience amongst friends and the people I work with, there’s still a deep desire, a yearning to find purpose and meaning beyond this. For the most part, this goes unspoken. The challenge today is to find a way to effectively communicate the gospel to individual hearts. As a society, we have access to so many ideas, it doesn’t surprise me that many aren’t enticed by the gospel. It seems to me we generally do not present it very well. I think we have the opportunity to bring the gospel to life for a generation who are desperate for what Jesus brings and to fill the void that has left so many wanting.’



JORDAN KELLY
Coach for Divine
Renovation Leadership
Network UK

‘A substantial portion of our congregation is 18-35-year-olds and when you’re regularly communicating with that audience, what you find quite quickly is that attention isn’t an obligation; it’s a gift. They don’t have to listen to what you have to say. We sometimes say that you have between 60 and 90 seconds to persuade someone to listen to what you have to say. We want to communicate the unchanging truth of the gospel to a rapidly changing generation and a rapidly changing world. We want to be as relevant as possible to what’s going on in people’s lives. We want to be as authentic as possible. We’re not experts; we’re kind of fellow travelers on the way with this generation, trying to work out what it means to follow Jesus in every area of our lives.’

‘Many of this generation have not been exposed to rule-based religion, so when you start talking about a God of Love, they are open to discussion. When we chat [about] Church, they picture a building with stained glass windows and an organ. When we discuss Church being the people and not the place, it causes interest. I believe this is an exciting time for the Church, and I believe we will see multitudes of this generation encounter God’s grace.’

‘It’s lonely to lead without anybody investing in you. It’s hard. I think it was Marian Wright Edelman who said, “You can’t be what you can’t see.” Part of having someone believe in you is someone looking at you and saying, “I see you. I see what you’re about. And I see a way to get there.” Jesus prayed all night about who to invest in, and I think every one of us who call ourselves Christian leaders will do well to do something along those lines. I genuinely do. He was a model for how to raise up a generation of people who would go off and do incredible things. Not only do we believe in him, we believe in his leadership, and we believe in his pattern of doing it. If we have this gift of a generation coming across our power, we should be praying about how to invest in them.’



STEPHEN FOSTER
Alpha International, UK
National Director



DAN BLYTHE
Pastor at Hillsong Church
London



JO SAXTON
Speaker, author,
co-host of
Lead Stories podcast



DAVID KINNAMAN
President at Barna Group
UNITED STATES

What Now?

BY DAVID KINNAMAN

For years now, the Barna team has gone to great lengths to listen to the stories and experiences of teenagers and young adults across the religious spectrum. We've been interested in every aspect of their lives, trying to put the scraps of evidence together to form a coherent picture for Christian leaders to understand and respond to. Now we've added more than 15,000 interviews from 25 countries to the core body of Barna's next-gen research.

Through our careful listening, we've come to hold several core convictions about the connected generation:

- They are misunderstood by older generations of Christian leaders.
- They are coming of age in a radically different context, one that could be defined as *chaotic*.
- Their skepticism is giving way to indifference – a much more intractable problem.
- The challenges and opportunities of discipleship are more complex.
- They are hungry to see courageous leaders in all facets of society.

We must slow down and listen to a generation that is too often talked *at* and talked *about*. We must stop ignoring or dismissing teens, twentysomethings and thirtysomethings who are coming into their own. They are desperately in need of a wise, compassionate, listening ear – and *we* are desperately in need of their partnership as we look to the Church's future.

Cultivate Resilience

Start with resilient disciples. Their faith is much more than what happens in church – though, among the majority, church experiences certainly have much to do with it. More than half say they were 'very active' in practising Christianity in their teenage years (56%), compared with 29 percent of other self-identified Christians (nomads and habitual churchgoers). They also tend to strongly agree they had adult, non-family friends in their church when they were growing up (61% vs. 29%), so parents and grandparents weren't their only models of adult faithfulness.

For faith to grow, church must be the place where young Christians practice following Jesus *alongside other believers* who help them discover how to bring faith into every area of their lives.

Where to start?

1. **Be encouraged.** Young resilient Christians *can* be found in your context. What

can you do to learn from them, to invest in them – not just to solve problems, but to journey together and launch them into their God-ordained destiny? Don't simply try to attract young Christians; engage them in the work. It's not church *for* them. It should be church *with* them.

2. **Understand your context.** Take stock of your surrounding religious climate. What are the forces at work that arrest or accelerate disciple-making where you are? Be ready to adapt your methods and priorities accordingly.
3. **Measure the right things.** You get what you measure. How do you measure effective discipleship? What metrics are you using to evaluate the kind of disciples your ministry is cultivating?
4. **Search the scriptures** for inspiration about the kind of resilient people God is calling us to be. Stories of exile are the place to start: Daniel, Esther, Joseph, Jeremiah, 1 Peter – the biblical witness of faithfulness in exile is a reliable guide for resilient faith.

Raise up Godly Leaders

Some leadership qualities and principles are timeless and rise above cultural or generational differences: honesty, integrity, conviction and courage, to name a few. But other ideas about what makes a good leader are not always applicable everywhere to everyone. Problems with and barriers to leadership often differ, as well. 'Leadership' is a concept highly shaped by culture. For instance, some societies value leaders who exhibit individual merit, personal ambition and orientation toward the

future; others esteem leaders who prioritise continuity with the past and handing traditions and ways of life down from elder to younger.

Whatever your cultural milieu, commit yourself to investing in tomorrow's leaders. What kind of leaders are we hoping to be – and hoping young Christians will become? Here are four aspirations, whether we are part of the connected generation or simply cheering them on. ***We aspire to be and to form leaders who are:***

Connected to God. Our identity is grounded in Jesus and we bring a God-centred presence to a self-centred age.

Connected to ourselves. We are humble, sacrificial people of peace. We reject wrong ideas about leadership and influence that say our worth is what we create and our influence equals the size of our platform. We are conscious of the relentless pull toward anxiety and make deliberate choices to live in sync with an unruffled, unharried, Godward rhythm.

Connected to others. We are emotionally connected to others in our communities and in our households. We have a healthy connection to those we lead, which is neither cold and detached nor codependently enmeshed.

Connected to the world. We are informed about the major problems facing societies, personally impacted by the needs of others and seeking opportunities to serve as agents of godly change. We are courageous and empowered to seek God-honouring solutions.

Even as the world spins toward an uncertain future, these kinds of people can make a difference – as God intends all leaders to do. ●

Methodology

This study is based on online, representative public opinion surveys conducted by Barna Group. A total of 15,369 respondents ages 18 to 35 across 25 countries were surveyed between 4 December 2018–15 February 2019. Sample distribution based on continent and country are shown below.

North America

- United States (2,000)
- Canada (1,000)

Africa

- South Africa (750)
- Nigeria (512)
- Kenya (300)
- Ghana (462)

Asia

- South Korea (500)
- India (500)
- Philippines (250)
- Indonesia (500)
- Singapore (500)
- Malaysia (250)
- Taiwan (300)

Latin America

- Mexico (500)
- Brazil (1,005)
- Chile (300)
- Colombia (300)

Europe

- United Kingdom (1,100)
- Germany (1,001)
- Spain (500)
- Austria (500)
- Switzerland (500)
- Romania (251)

Oceania

- Australia (1,021)
- New Zealand (567)

Unless otherwise noted, all data referenced in *The Connected Generation* were collected by Barna, among a nationally representative sample of the population identified. For this study, Barna relied on online collection methods, including mobile phone users.

The study used online national consumer panels that are representative by age, gender, region and ethnicity. Respondents were fully verified by the representative sample sources. Additionally, quality control measures checked that respondents were completing the survey at an appropriate pace and paying attention to the questions asked.

The survey was offered in nine different languages, (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Romanian, Korean, Indonesian and Taiwanese), translated by a trusted

translation service and verified by local partners in every country for context-specific nuance.

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base, the *CIA World Fact Book* and available census data from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Chile, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, the UK, Germany, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Romania, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, India, Philippines and Singapore, quotas were designed to ensure the final group of adults interviewed in the study reflected each country's distribution of adults nationwide based on age, gender, ethnicity and region.

Online surveys necessitate literacy and an internet connection, which means the sample reflects adults who have those capabilities and does not reflect those who are unable to read or lack connectivity to respond to online surveys. Thus, in spite of a robust methodology, this sample is not meant to be representative of entire national populations, regions, continents or the world. The countries selected for this study were based on countries and regions where Barna and World Vision receive frequent requests for research-based insights. These and other concerns or limitations were respectfully considered while interpreting the data. ●

Acknowledgments

Barna Group is incredibly grateful to World Vision, not only for their partnership on this massive study, but their global leadership in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the kingdom of God. Our gratitude extends to the many World Vision staff members from more than 20 countries who supported this initiative through early input on the study formation, coordination of thought leaders and local contextualization. That lengthy list includes: Jenny Acosta, Asteria Aritonang, Marcela Ballesterro, Christopher Baskeran, Allen Benjamin, Tennille Bergin, Amanda Bowman, David Brown, Nieves Carabaña, James Carroll, Chun-Sen Chang, Wesley Chen, Michael Chitwood, Eu-Lee Chng, Lilian Chung, João Diniz, Lauren Fisher, Anne Fleck, Jonathan Fletcher, Holly Frew, Marcus Frost, Javier Ruiz Gaitán, Jessica Galles, Ivan Gomez, Jun Goodness, Jason Graves, Sam Grimshaw, Cheryl Hotchkiss, KA Jayakumar, Caitie Johnston, Andrea Kaufmann, Kevin King, Esther Lehmann-Sow, André Mebold, Tim Middlemiss, Andrew Morley, Oliver Müller, David Muñoz, John Mwangi, John Northuis, James Pedrick, Tim Pilkington, Raymond Pu, Jill Roche, Raissa Rossiter, Edgar Sandoval Sr, Chris Schroeder, Harold Segura, Weijie Soh, Andrew Streat, Sony Thomas, Ruth Tormey, Michael Wenham, Clarice Ziller and more.

Our findings about the connected generation have been significantly strengthened by the feedback and grounded recommendations of ministers, activists, scholars and other experts spanning

the globe. A heartfelt thank you to the contributors for this particular country report: Dan Blythe, Stephen Foster, Jordan Kelly, Tim Pilkington, Dr. Ruth Perrin and Jo Saxton.

The Barna research team conducted this study with coordination by Brooke Hempell. Traci Hochmuth and Daniel Copeland led development of the questionnaire, with assistance from Susan Mettes. Copeland also served as the lead analyst & writer for this country report. David Kinaman, with Aly Hawkins, wrote other foundational pieces. Ryan Hamm developed the field guides. Alyce Youngblood provided content direction and copy editing. Douglas Brown proofread the manuscript. OX Creative designed the cover, and Rob Williams handled interior layout. Brenda Usery managed production. Mallory Holt coordinated as project manager and assisted in organizing contributors. Special thanks for Rick Iffland for his vision in extending Barna's reach internationally and Gareth Russell for spearheading the Barna Global effort. The project team wishes to thank our Barna colleagues—Amy Brands, Aidan Dunn, Janet Eason, Pam Jacob, Marian Liautaud, Steve McBeth, Rhessa Storms, Verónica Thames, Jess Villa and Todd White—for their support as we've completed our largest study to date. ●

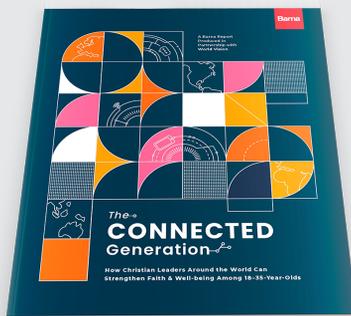
About the Project Partners

Barna Group is a research firm dedicated to providing actionable insights on faith and culture, with a particular focus on the Christian Church. Since 1984, Barna has conducted more than one million interviews in the course of hundreds of studies and has become a go-to source for organizations that want to better understand a complex and changing world from a faith perspective. Barna's clients and partners include a broad range of academic institutions, churches, nonprofits and businesses, such as Alpha, the Templeton Foundation, Fuller Seminary, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Maclellan Foundation, Dream-Works Animation, Focus Features, Habitat for Humanity, The Navigators, NBC-Universal, the ONE Campaign, Paramount Pictures, the Salvation Army, Walden Media, Sony and World Vision.

www.barna.com

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. As an international partnership of Christians, World Vision's mission is to work with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God. For nearly 70 years, World Vision has ministered alongside the Church to answer Jesus' call in Matthew 25 to care for the least of these. Together, with churches, their leaders and others, World Vision has impacted the lives of over 200 million vulnerable children by tackling the root causes of poverty.

www.wvi.org/connectedgeneration



ALSO AVAILABLE

This regional resource is best used as a companion to the global report and other resources based on this research.

STAY IN TOUCH AND LEARN MORE AT
THECONNECTEDGENERATION.COM.