

New Insights into the Generation
of Growing Influence:

Millennials In America

*A Research Report by
George Barna*



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*A Research Report by George Barna,
Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University*



*Foundations of Freedom is a peer-to-peer platform where
believers in traditional American Values unite, maximizing
our collective influence and impact on society.*

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**Cultural
Research Center**



*The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian
University exists to advance the Kingdom of God by
conducting culture and worldview studies that provide
research and resources to inform and mobilize strategic
engagement in cultural transformation.*

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A Welcome from the Author

Good research both answers important questions and raises new ones. The goal of such research is to inform and guide decision-makers to lead as wisely, efficiently, and effectively as possible.

I believe the research described in this document can help you do that.

Conducted at the request of Foundations of Freedom, this study addresses various aspects of the life of the Millennial generation. Why them? Because Millennials, while much studied, have also been much misunderstood and maligned. Yet, with all of the members of that generation now adults, they are entering the defining period of any generation – the high-energy, high-stakes, and high impact years of their 20s and 30s. This season will define the cohort once and for all – and, in all likelihood, will determine the course of our nation for many years to come.

In that context, this research provides more than a few unexpected outcomes. Personally, that's the most exciting type of research – that which uncovers surprising facts that lead to positive and practical direction for the future.

Among the many discoveries in these pages are revelations about Millennials concerning their struggle to nail down their purpose in life; the mental and emotional fragility of the generation; their appreciation for Jesus Christ and the Bible, but not for organized Christianity; and the daunting challenges they face with relationships.

Anyway, you'll read about all of this and much more. Don't miss the Afterword that I wrote to discuss, in greater detail, the outcomes that stood out to me, why they strike me as particularly meaningful, and ways in which we might reasonably respond to those opportunities for transformation.

I hope this report is as eye-opening and helpful to you as it is to me. I am indebted to Foundations of Freedom for requesting and underwriting the project, and for giving me the leeway to take the research in any direction that seemed to promise the greatest dividends for our nation. As always, the project would not have been possible without the help of my colleagues at the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University.

Make the most of today,

George Barna

Professor, Arizona Christian University

Director of Research, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University

Founder, The Barna Group





“Millennials represent roughly one-quarter of the nation’s total population, and about one-third of the adult population... Their influence in the marketplace, despite their relative youth, is undeniable.”

Introduction

Despite this being an era characterized by the presence of more information than humans can usefully process, many Americans harbor caricatures of the youngest of our nation’s adult generations: the Millennials. With social media and instant punditry running amok, generating a multitude of unsubstantiated and often-conflicting opinions, analyses, and observations about the generation, such confusion and misunderstanding are to be expected. Perhaps our first clue to the burgeoning Millennial misrepresentation is that social scientists do not even agree on the age cohort that defines the generation!

But there are some facts that seem beyond controversy. For instance:

- Millennials are presently the most populous generation in American society. Depending on what birth cohort you assign to them, Millennials represent roughly one-quarter of the nation’s total population, and about one-third of the adult population. If you consider Millennials to be the niche born from 1984 through 2002 – as this report does – then they include about 78 million individuals.
- Their influence in the marketplace, despite their relative youth, is undeniable. They constitute close to four out of every 10 working-age Americans and about three out of every 10 registered voters. They are the prime segment of consumers in a nation built on consumption.

- Every generation is shaped by major world events that occur during the formative years of its members. For Millennials, some of the most important events have been the end of the Cold War, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the destruction of the Berlin Wall (1991); the Rodney King beatings and subsequent riots (1992); the public release of the Internet (1993); the mass shooting at Columbine High School (1999); the 9/11 terrorist attacks (2001); groundbreaking technology for young people, such as the iPod, Play Station, and iPhones (2001-2007); game-changing Internet apps like Facebook (2004) and Twitter (2007); the destructive fury of Hurricane Katrina (2005); the economic crisis of 2008; and the election of Barack Obama (2008).

- Millennials are significantly reshaping the brand landscape of America in response to their unique blend of needs. For instance, their lifestyle and dietary preferences have had a radical impact on brands such as Diet Pepsi (unhealthy additives), Victoria’s Secret (sexual exploitation), Campbell’s Soup (high sodium content), Harley Davidson (environmentally harmful machines), Tiffany (fewer marriages, luxury jewelry less appealing), and GameStop (replaced by online gaming). All of those and many other famous brands have become high-profile victims of young adult idiosyncrasies. Even shopping malls, a long-time anchor for the nation’s economy, are struggling to stay afloat as consumers under 40 take their business online.

Introduction

- As the youngest adult generation in the nation, they wield another type of influence: they comprise the primary parenting-age segment in the United States. More than one-third of the generation already serves as parents. But fewer Millennials than was true at the same age for people of prior generations have an interest in having children, and when they have them they are having fewer of them and mothers start bearing their children at an older average age.
- This group is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in our history. More than four out of 10 Millennials are non-white. Further, a large share (more than 40 percent) of Millennials are foreign born. These factors provide the impetus for their energetic drive for racial equality and reconciliation.

“Perhaps no generation has emerged under a constant and wide-ranging cloud of threats as have the Millennials”

- Two attributes that characterize their life foundation are technology and fear. No prior generation has grown up with the breadth and pervasiveness of digital technology. And while prior generations have all experienced an array of personal threats to their well-being – including the likes of war, terrorism, droughts, racial discrimination, economic chaos, and political turbulence – perhaps no generation has emerged under as constant and wide-ranging cloud of threats as have the Millennials. In addition to the past threats – most of which remain very real challenges – there are many new forms of victimization such as cyber-bullying, digital identity theft, random school shootings, pandemics, and more. The sheer breadth of such hazards, as well as their devastating effects, has raised the daily tension level of young adults.

- The generation is redefining sexuality – their own and how to perceive and respond to the gender identity and sexual-orientation choices of others. With that have come new ideas and choices regarding marriage and family. Consequently, a social institution that used to be a safe harbor has now become a battleground.
- More Millennials have attended college – and graduated from a four-year college – than any previous generation. However, because of changes in teaching methods, assessment standards, and performance expectations, there remains a healthy debate as to whether the amount of time spent in the classroom has actually produced the “best-educated” generation.

- They are more likely to seek collective action than individual exploits and heroism. Attributes like unity, community, and togetherness are pervasive elements of the Millennial consciousness and a foundational element of their vision for the future.
- The driving values of the generation are a blend of old and new – and are often in conflict with the values of prior generations – and are even sometimes contradictory to their own values set. Examples of this new values platform include rewriting the rules of employment by valuing achievements (rather than hours worked) and the social value of the tasks performed; preferring pets to children; and advocating tolerance while displaying little of it in their own behavior and attitudes.

- Immersed in the personal drama and conflicts facilitated by being tethered to social media, Millennials respond to authenticity and seek people whom they believe to be genuine.
- The faith alignments and activities of the generation bear only limited resemblance to

those of prior generations. There are fewer self-professed Christians as well as a large and growing mass of people who do not believe in a supernatural God (especially not the God of Israel) or the Bible as a source of unquestioned truth.





Introduction

But there are still areas of the mind, heart, and soul of Millennials that have not been studied. That’s where this project comes into the picture. This research was commissioned by Foundations of Freedom to understand our youngest adult generation at a deeper level. Foundations of Freedom is a peer-to-peer platform where believers in traditional American values unite, maximizing their collective influence and impact on society. The United States is a nation of faith, liberty, and virtue; Foundations of Freedom considers it the duty of all of us to restore those values to their rightful place at the forefront of American culture and society. In essence, the Foundations of Freedom mission is to restore the promise of America.

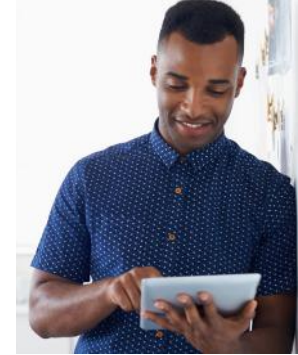
Toward that end, this research examines elements of the Millennial experience such as the lifestyle, hopes for the future, emotional and mental health, relationships, personal faith, and political attributes and perceptions of this group.

Directing the exploration process was veteran public opinion researcher George Barna, who worked with his team from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. Having previously examined the worldview and political preferences of the generation, this project offered an opportunity to gain a broader perspective on the inner workings of the generation. To round out the perspective shared in this report, some of the previous insights gleaned by Barna and the Cultural Research Center are incorporated for consideration.

The partnership between Foundations of Freedom and the Cultural Research Center reflects a shared interest in going beyond the mere collection and reporting of information. The objective of offering this information to the public is to achieve three outcomes:

- **Education** – provide an accurate, current, and broader understanding of Millennials and their life context.
- **Motivation** – provoke readers to reconsider who Millennials are, what they need, and to identify ways in which all Americans can be supportive of the group.
- **Activation** – stimulate a commitment to interact more knowledgeably, honestly, and effectively with Millennials, while empowering them to pursue appropriate changes in personal lives, in their generation, and throughout the world they influence.

This report is divided into topical chapters based on the research findings, followed by an Appendix that contains research details (methods and data), an introduction to some related resources, and brief introductions to the individuals and organizations behind this study.



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Quick Takes



Close to one-half of young adults say they prefer socialism to capitalism.

VERY SATISFIED

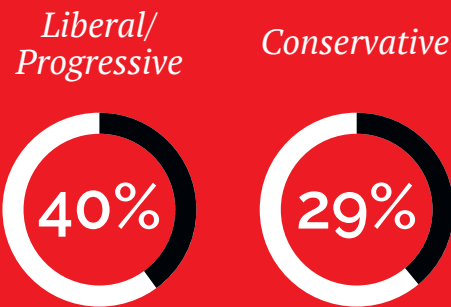
Intimate Relationships & Friendships

LEAST SATISFIED

State of the Nation

Less than one-third say they are very satisfied, overall, with their life. The areas with which they are most likely to be “very satisfied” are their intimate relationships and their friendships. The area with which they are least satisfied is the state of the nation.

Politically, this generation is more likely to be liberal than conservative regarding fiscal matters, social issues, and governance. The biggest gap relates to social issues, with 40 percent self-identifying as liberal or progressive compared to just 29 percent who claim to be conservative.



Further, those who think of themselves as Democrats outnumber those who identify as Republicans by a two-to-one margin.



A majority of Millennials held a **positive** opinion of Jesus Christ, the United States of America, and the Bible.



They were more likely to have a **negative** than positive impression of atheism.

THE DON'TS

A record-breaking 40 percent of young adults fit the “Don’ts” category:



People who don’t know if God exists, don’t care if God exists, or don’t believe that He exists.

Only one-third of Millennials claimed to believe in God



as the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect and just creator of the universe who still rules the universe today.



39% of 18-24 year olds identify as LGBTQ

Quick Takes

Three out of four Millennials believe that all religious faiths are of equal value.

A majority admit to often feeling

ANXIOUS
DEPRESSED
OR
FEARFUL



3 OUT OF 4 MILLENNIALS
said that they are still searching for their
purpose in life.

2 OUT OF 3 YOUNG ADULTS
admitted to avoiding interaction with
someone if it was likely to produce conflict.



Roughly *two-thirds*
of the young adults align
themselves with the
Christian faith. Just over
one-quarter of them said
they do not associate
with any religious faith.



Most Millennials
reject the existence of
absolute moral truth

and identify feelings, experiences,
and advice from family and friends
as their most trusted sources of
moral guidance.

Seven out of 10
Millennials claimed that
they are willing to sacrifice
their life for something.
The things they were
most likely to die “to
save, protect, or defend”
were family members and
their freedom. They were
least likely to make that
sacrifice for their country
or their most cherished
possessions.

MOST LIKELY



LEAST LIKELY



The personal changes most likely to be
described as “extremely desirable”, listed
in descending order of frequency, were:

- > GREATER FINANCIAL EASE OR COMFORT
- > BETTER, DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS
- > BETTER PHYSICAL HEALTH
- > BETTER PAYING JOB
- > BETTER MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL HEALTH.

The most important
issues facing the
nation, in descending
order of importance,
were identified as:

- > CORONAVIRUS MANAGEMENT
- > CLIMATE CHANGE
- > RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
- > ABORTION
- > THE ECONOMY



Issues listed by less than 2 percent
of Millennials as being among
the most important included:

2%

- > INCOME INEQUALITY AND REDISTRIBUTION
- > THE PARTISAN DIVIDE AND NATIONAL UNITY
- > INFRASTRUCTURAL NEED
- > RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
- > POLICIES RELATED TO ISRAEL
- > RULE OF LAW
- > NATIONAL DEFENSE
- > FEDERAL ENTITLEMENT PROGRAMS
- > NATIONAL VALUES AND MORALS
- > MEDIA STANDARDS

Of the nine cultural influencer categories tested,
none of them were trusted by a majority to “always
or almost always tell the truth or do what is right.”

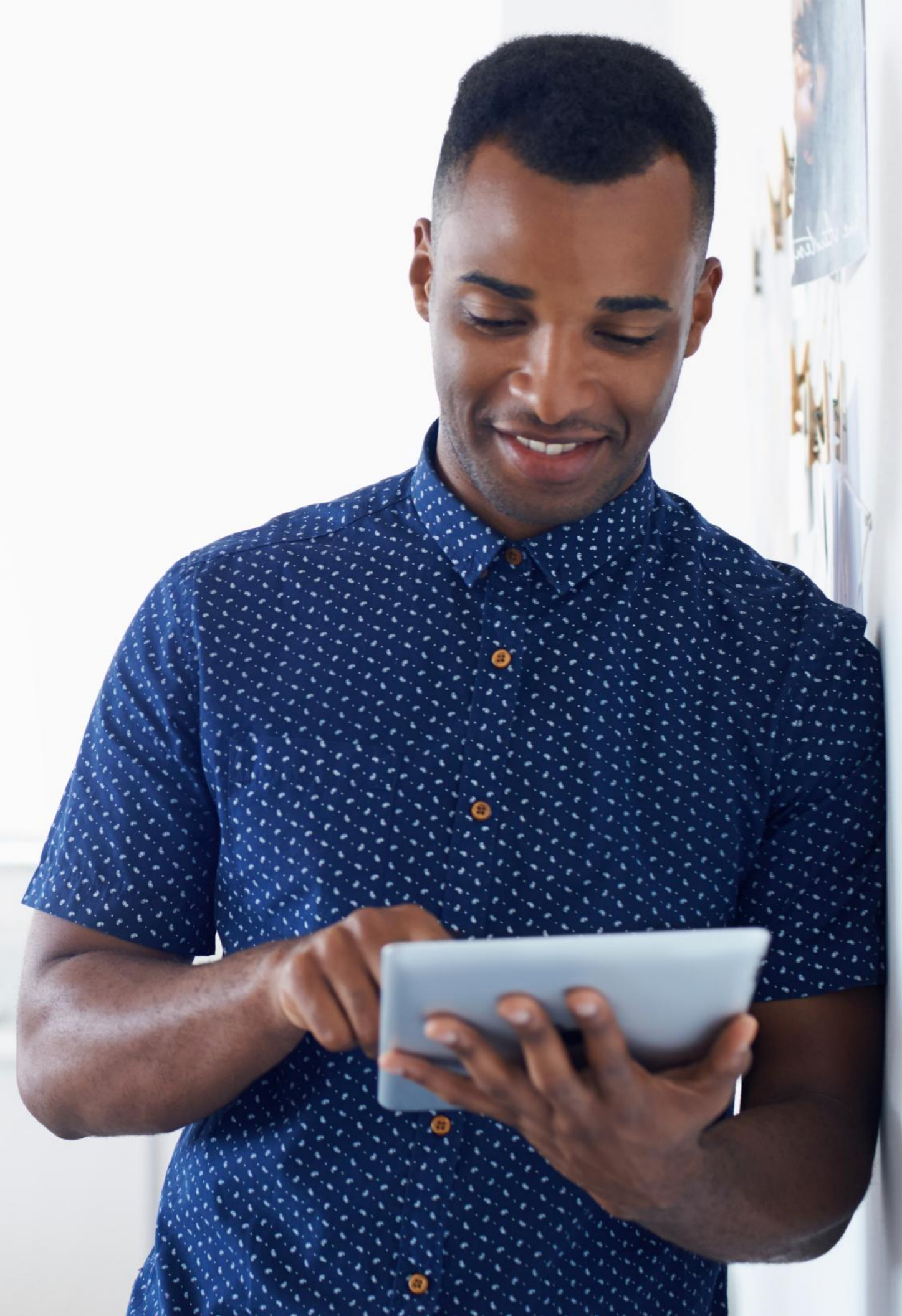
The most highly trusted
influencers were their
parents and friends.

The least trusted entities were entertainment
celebrities, popular social media personalities,
and elected government officials.

Section 01:

Lifestyle

Every new generation likes to create a signature lifestyle and philosophy that displays their uniqueness and independence. Millennials are no different. But as the reigning “young adult generation” their lives have been under the cultural microscope for a few years. The information that follows, derived from our national survey of Millennials, provides more insights into critical elements of how this generation lives.





01: Lifestyle

Searching for Purpose

One of the most attention-grabbing attributes revealed in this research regarding the Millennial way of life is their widespread desire to identify a purpose for living. While much has been made of the fact that suicide rates have been climbing amid their adoption of the nihilistic notion that life is not worth the struggle, the foundation of that notion may be the absence of clear and compelling sense of why living makes sense.

Indeed, data from the *American Worldview Inventory*ⁱ showed that Millennials, more than any other generation, question the very reason for living. Less than one out of five Millennials (22 percent) contend that life is sacred, while half of the generation (50 percent) argues that “life is what you make it; there is no absolute value associated with human life.” (In comparison, just one-third of adults from older generations – 32 percent – hold that same view.)ⁱⁱ

Add the fact that three out of four Millennials (75 percent) admit to “searching for a sense of purpose in life” and it brings back memories of Gen X – the generation preceding them that was well-known for its inner angst and lack of direction in life. However, Gen X never reached such lofty levels of doubt about either the value of life or their personal purpose for being on the planet.

This outcome invites a comparison of how each generation handled its doubts about the value of life and their ambiguity regarding personal purpose. Gen X was known to succumb to bouts of despair and pessimism.

Millennials have taken a different, more optimistic tact: greater self-confidence, uplifting sloganeering (e.g., “be the change,” “be kind,” “live the life you imagine,” “follow your passion, not a paycheck,” “do what makes you happy,” “you can make a difference,” “you got this”), heightened social consciousness, and less emphasis upon economic ascendancy (with its attendant pressures).

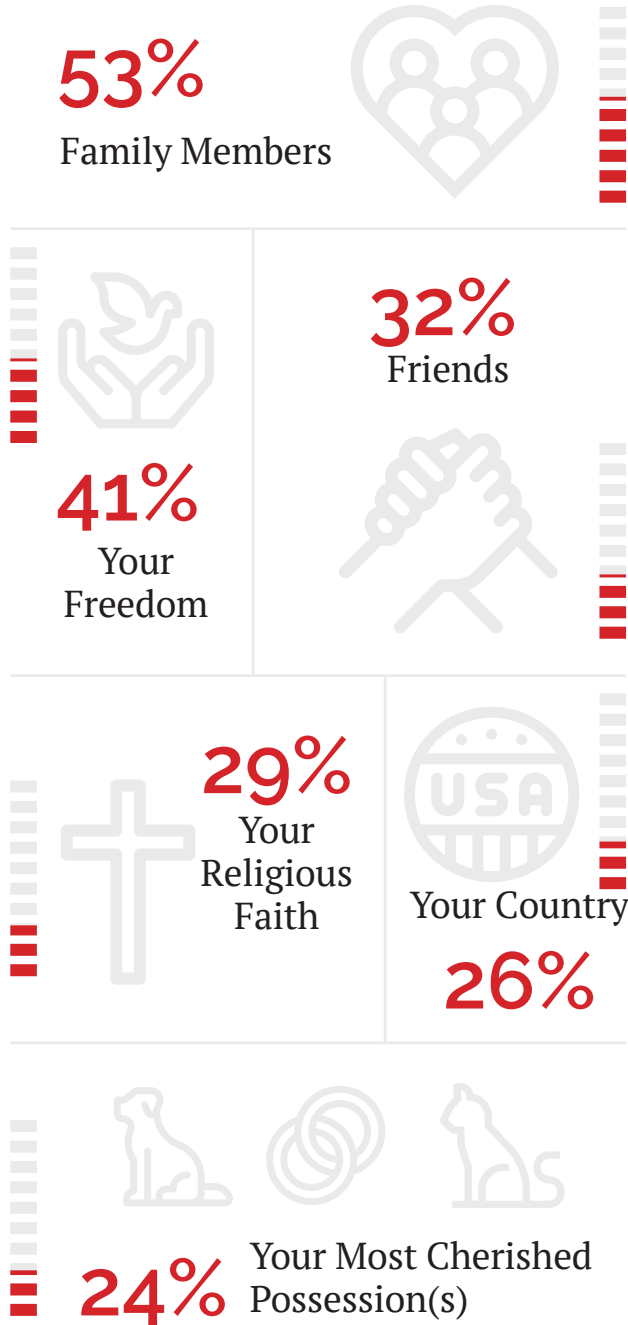
Worth Dying For

The underlying hopefulness of the Millennials helps to explain why seven out of 10 of them (69 percent) believe that there are people or conditions they would sacrifice their life to preserve.

What would they be willing to die for? Slightly more than half of them (53 percent) said they would be willing to die to protect their family. Of the six items evaluated, family was the only thing that a majority of Millennials were willing to sacrifice their life to protect.

Four out of 10 said they would sacrifice their life in defense of their freedom. One-third claims they would go to their grave in order to protect their friends. Fewer than three out of 10 Millennials said they would sacrifice their life for their religious faith (29 percent), their country (26 percent), or their most cherished possessions (24 percent).

What’s Definitely Worth Sacrificing Your Life For?





01: Lifestyle

How Millennials Engage

The research briefly explored the engagement of Millennials in three dimensions of life: religious, political, and community.

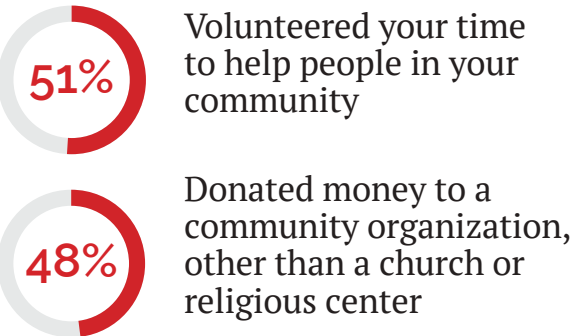
About half of the generation claims to be active within the community in a typical month through either volunteering their time to a community organization or donating money to such an organization (other than a church or religious organization).

Interestingly, while half of the generation describe themselves as “deeply committed to practicing their religious faith” during a typical month, engagement in the religious behaviors tracked seems less robust. Just four out of 10 said they had attended a Christian church service or event in the past month; four out of 10 had spent at least an hour reading the Bible; and four out of 10 had donated money to a church or other religious organization.

Meanwhile, various forms of political or civic engagement showed even higher levels of participation among Millennials. About half admitted to boycotting the products or services of companies because of the organization’s position on matters of importance to the individual. More than four out of 10 had engaged in persuasive dialogue with others regarding points of view related to moral, social, or political issues. One-third of the group had personally participated in some type of civil protest activity – a march, rally, or demonstration that had been held during the prior month.

Lifestyle Activities

Forms of Civic Engagement*:



Forms of Religious Engagement:



Forms of Socio-Political Engagement:



* Activity undertaken in the respondent’s past month.

01: Lifestyle

Life Improvements

Americans tend to believe their life can be improved. Millennials are not about to change that condition: just 5 percent say that their life is great and not in need of any significant changes.

What kinds of changes are most highly desired by Millennials? Categorically, issues related to money and personal finances headed the list, led by a desire for greater financial ease or comfort (mentioned by 37 percent of the generation). Having a better-paying job (17 percent) and having less debt to pay off (15 percent) were also frequently identified as highly desirable life upgrades.

As noted by other research efforts, one of the defining stresses for Millennials is excessive college debt. Between college debt payments and tax burdens, millions of Millennials have been forced to live with their parents well into their twenties and even thirties. The domino effect of that debt has been to delay marriage, child-bearing, home ownership, and retirement savings, among other conditions. The overall perspective of the generation is that an increase in income might alleviate many of the pressures that have pushed the group to feel heightened levels of anxiety, and which has produced record levels of suicides and addiction.

Improvements in relationships were the category of changes next most commonly listed. Developing better, deeper relationships was a desire of nearly three out of 10 Millennials (28 percent). Experiencing fewer tensions related to their race, ethnicity, gender, age, or sexual orientation was listed by half as many people

(13 percent). A similar proportion (12 percent) wants to be included in a community of people who know, appreciate and respect them for who they are. About one out of 10 young adults listed having a wider circle of reliable friends as a significant desire.

Health and well-being was ranked third among the categories of desired changes. Having better physical health as well as better emotional and mental health were each named by one out of every six Millennials as highly desirable life changes. One out of 10 listed the hope of experiencing higher self-esteem as an issue of choice.

Spiritual matters were the next most prolific category of desired changes. The biggest issue identified was having a better relationship with God (14 percent). Half as many identified the need to live out their faith more consistently. Other concerns in this realm included having a religious community that better met their needs, and identifying a religious faith that they want to commit themselves to. Concerns about life after death were on the radar of just 2 percent of Millennials.

Family issues emerged as a fifth-ranked category of concerns. One out of 10 young adults said that they want a better relationship with their spouse or significant other. Other desired changes in this realm included a better relationship with their parents; better relationships with their children; and having children.

A similar number of Millennials indicated that changes in their lifestyle are on their radar.

There was no particular change in this regard that was common to a substantial percentage of respondents. The types of changes desired included moving to a different location; having a more satisfying sex life; living in better housing; experiencing more pleasing leisure activities; and having hobbies that gave them greater satisfaction.

Interestingly, the category of change that attracted the fewest Millennials was related to personal development. The big items on the wish list in this regard were having a more fulfilling career or job and gaining a more comprehensive or deeper understanding of what is happening in the world. Completing more advanced education was also an alternative desired by about one out of every 20 Millennials.



Most Desirable Changes in Your Life

37% Greater financial ease/comfort

28% Better, deeper friendships

17% A better-paying job

17% Better physical health

16% Better mental and emotional health

15% Less debt to pay off

13% Few tensions with others regarding your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation

12% Inclusion in a community that knows, appreciates, and respects you

10% Higher self-esteem

10% A better relationship with your spouse/significant other

01: Lifestyle

Emotional and Mental Well-Being

It would be easy to overlook one of the most significant findings of this research – the apparent need for better mental and emotional health among young adults.

Perhaps you noticed that this need was the (statistically tied) third-highest ranked desirable change listed by Millennials. Pause for a moment and think about the last time you heard a rational and compelling conversation – based on research data, no less – that identified mental health as a critical, widespread need.

To underscore the importance of that result, consider the fact that a majority of young adults (54 percent) admitted to “often feeling anxious, depressed, or unsafe.”

We saw earlier that relationships are a point of concern for large numbers of Millennials. But do not lose sight of the fact almost two-thirds (64 percent) admitted that within the past month they had “avoided interacting with someone because it was likely to produce conflict.” Again, the likelihood of feeling distanced from others by the inability to effectively and positively communicate with others – is highlighted for our consideration.

Later in this report we will consider data regarding levels of trust associated with nine divergent people of influence with whom Millennials have regular contact. The statistics point out that young adults are, at best, wary of public influencers other than parents and friends. The levels of trust they have in most of the leaders they encounter from day to day are limited.

Add to these factors that nearly one-third of the Millennial cohort (30 percent) describes itself as LGBTQ – and you have the makings of constant emotional turbulence and relational turmoil. The proportion of young adults who identify as LGBTQ is roughly three times the proportion identified among the combined older adults of the nation. Given the moral and political implications of such an identity, that self-characterization alone raises a range of emotional challenges.

Challenges to our mental health are to be expected. After all, most adults – and especially younger adults – now believe there is no absolute moral truth. A minority accept the Bible as a true and reliable guide for determining right and wrong. Only one-third of Millennials say they choose to always respect God and other people. No wonder young adults are feeling anxious, depressed and unsafe. Their own attitudes and those of other Americans have created an environment that cannot help but produce such feelings. Without any anchors for truth, emotions, decision-making, relational boundaries, or purpose, a sense of anomie and disconnectedness is only natural.



Life Satisfaction

Although most Millennials can name a few highly desired upgrades for their life, the generation is moderately satisfied with the diverse aspects of their life. Two-thirds of them (66 percent) said they are satisfied with their life overall: 29 percent are very satisfied and a slightly higher proportion (37 percent) is somewhat satisfied. Not quite one-third of the generation claim to be either not too (20 percent) or not at all satisfied (11 percent).

When the life satisfaction of Millennials is broken down into seven specific aspects of life, a majority claims to be “very satisfied” with none of those seven life dimensions, but a solid majority is either very or somewhat satisfied with six of the seven dimensions, ranging from 56 percent to 67 percent.

The highest levels of satisfaction (“very satisfied”) were accorded to their interaction with people – i.e., intimate relationships (38 percent) and friendships (35 percent). The next dimensions providing the broadest degree of high satisfaction related to their spiritual life (31 percent), personal health (30 percent), and career (27 percent). The lowest levels of high satisfaction were awarded to their community (23 percent), personal finances (22 percent), and the state of the nation (15 percent).

The aggregate disenchantment of Millennials with the state of the nation is exemplified in the fact that half of them (50 percent) are dissatisfied while just 43 percent expressed some degree of satisfaction. That was the only life dimension for which a larger share of the generation held a negative rather than positive perspective.

Satisfaction with Life Elements

	Very	Somewhat	Not Too	Not At All
Your life, overall	29%	37%	20%	11%
Your personal health	30%	37%	20%	10%
Your friendships	35%	31%	17%	12%
Your spiritual life	31%	34%	19%	6%
Your intimate relationship(s)	38%	25%	15%	15%
Your community	23%	40%	20%	11%
Your career	27%	32%	20%	15%
Your personal finances	22%	34%	23%	19%
The nation	15%	28%	28%	22%



Section 02:

Ideology & Politics

Because of the contentious times in which we live, more has been written about the social and political views of Millennials than anything else. They are generally described as progressive, sympathetic to the Democrat Party, highly opinionated, activist, and concerned about the future. Like most Americans, Millennials are typically more interested in domestic than international issues.

02: Ideology & Politics

Ideological Leanings

Journalists often simplify the process of describing people's political positions by mashing all of their views into a single characterization, such as liberal or conservative. However, more detailed analysis of people's views shows that we often hold inconsistent views across issues.

In asking people to describe their political views on three axes, the statistics indicate that Millennials lean left in all three areas.

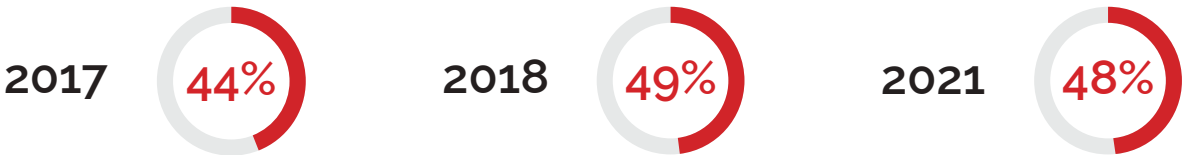
- Four out of 10 young adults say they are liberal on social issues, like abortion and same-sex marriage, while three out of 10 say they hold conservative views on those matters. Two out of 10 claimed to have views somewhere in-between.
- On fiscal issues, such as taxes and government spending, about one-third (34 percent) have liberal views compared to slightly fewer (30 percent) claiming to be conservative. Nearly as many (27 percent) said they hold views somewhere in-between.
- Regarding the size, reach, and power of government, the results were almost identical to those regarding positions on fiscal matters: 33 percent liberal, 30 percent conservative, and 28 percent in-between.

The outcomes also indicate that Millennials have their most intense feelings related to social issues. Four out of 10 (39 percent) portrayed themselves as either “very liberal” or “very conservative” on such matters. In comparison, fewer Millennials took positions on the end of the ideological spectrum regarding government (31 percent were either “very liberal” or “very conservative”) or fiscal issues (29 percent). While the “extreme” positions were about evenly split between liberal and conservative for fiscal and government issues, there was a slightly larger share of Millennials leaning to “very liberal” on social issues (22 percent versus 17 percent).

The progressive leanings of the generation are no more obvious than in regard to their feelings about socialism. Over the past five years, more than one-third of Millennials has consistently favored socialism over capitalism. However, the current research generated the highest proportion of support yet for socialism: 48 percent.



How Many Millennials Prefer Socialism to Capitalism?



Sources: Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, 2021; American Culture & Faith Institute, 2017-2018.

Party Preference

During the frenetic, emotion-charged 2020 presidential election cycle, a large number of Millennials registered to vote for the first time. It is estimated that about three-fourths of the generation – all of whom are of age to register – are now registered. Despite the recent uptick, Millennials remain the generation least likely to be registered to vote.

Those who are registered are nearly twice as likely to align with the Democrat Party (40 percent) as the Republican Party (21 percent). Nearly as many say they are independent of a party affiliation (18 percent) as say they are Republicans. (That excludes the 3 percent who simply stated that they have no party affiliation at all.) Perhaps most surprising, though, is that almost one out of 10 young adults (8 percent) claim to be Democratic Socialists – the home base of generational heroes such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. A few Millennials labeled themselves Libertarian (4 percent).

Regardless of their party identification, a surprisingly small proportion of Millennials describe themselves as an “American patriot.” Only slightly more than half (55 percent) embrace that label. This fits with data from a national survey regarding patriotism in which we found that Millennials were consistently less likely than older adults to be supportive of the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ Specifically, we learned that people in the 18-to-37 age group are less likely than their elders to:

- feel proud to be an American
- believe in and obey the U.S. Constitution
- express a personal willingness to die to protect our freedoms
- accept America’s enemies as their enemies
- join the military to defend the nation if called upon to do so
- and consider themselves to be “extremely” or “very” patriotic

02: Ideology & Politics

Reactions to Terminology

The fact that only a slight majority consider themselves to be patriots makes more sense in the context of the reactions of Millennials to a handful of political words and phrases.

When asked to provide their reaction to “United States of America,” barely half (53 percent) had a positive reaction. Further, only half (50 percent) had a favorable reaction to the term “democracy.” In both cases, the positive reactions outweighed the negative by about a 2:1 margin. But the research also revealed that a very small proportion of Millennials had a “very positive” reaction to either the “United States of America” (just 23 percent) or “democracy” (18 percent).

Positive opinions of both liberals and conservatives were even more suppressed. Overall, only about one-third had favorable impressions of either conservatives (33 percent) or progressives/liberals (36 percent). Very small percentages held a “very positive” view of conservatives (13 percent) or progressives/liberals (10 percent).

The other term explored was “socialism,” which generated a positive impression among one-third of young adults (33 percent) and nearly as widespread of a negative impression (28 percent).

It is noteworthy that Millennials are more willing to express their preference of socialism to capitalism in spite of the fact that fewer of them have a positive point-of-view on socialism. As noted, a previous study found that most Americans – and Millennials, in particular – who generally express a preference for socialism do not actually know what socialism entails in practice.^{iv}

These rather uninspiring views of elements within the political sphere match the view that Millennials possess of elected government officials. Less than one out of every five Millennials (15 percent) said they “always or almost always” trust elected government officials to tell the truth or to do what is right, while twice as many (28 percent) said they “sometimes” trust such officeholders. That positioned elected officials as among the least trusted influence agents in our culture.

The same ambivalent outlook toward contemporary America is reflected in the willingness of Millennials to sacrifice their life for either the good of the country (26 percent would “definitely” do so) or their freedom (41 percent).

Reactions to Political Terminology

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
United States of America	53%	17%	26%
Democracy	50%	23%	20%
Conservatives	33%	27%	29%
Progressives/Liberals	36%	24%	29%
Socialism	33%	27%	28%

Issues of Greatest Concern

Asked to identify the one or two issues that they consider to be the most important ones facing the United States today, six issues were named by at least 10 percent of Millennials. Those issues were:

- 24% Managing the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic
- 20% Climate change/Global warming/Environmental care
- 20% Racial/ethnic discrimination
- 16% Abortion/right to life
- 15% The economy – growth, jobs, taxes, trade
- 10% Discrimination regarding sexual orientation or gender identity

Only three other issues were chosen by at least 5 percent of young adults: character of government (integrity, corruption, trustworthiness, accountability – listed by 7 percent); health insurance/health care (6 percent); crime solutions/enforcing law and order (6 percent).

Meanwhile, there were more than 30 other issues that were deemed to be top-two priorities by less than 5 percent of the generation. Some of the more unexpected items in the non-priority category included public policies related to China (4 percent); government spending (3 percent); gun policies (3 percent); immigration policies and programs (3 percent); policing (3 percent); public education reform (2 percent); income inequality and redistribution (1 percent); national unity (1 percent); and policies related to Islamic nations (1 percent).

02: Ideology & Politics

Social Activism

While impressively large minorities of the Millennials are engaged in civic activity, it should be recognized that political activism is not a driving force in the lives of most members of the generation. Less than half (44 percent) said that in the previous month they had talked to people outside of their family to try to persuade them to adopt the respondent's position on a current social, moral, or political issue. This may well relate to the widespread tendency among Millennials of avoiding interaction that they believe will cause friction or conflict; two out of three young adults seek to avoid such exchanges.

The most common of the socio-political responses tested was intentionally refusing to buy a company's product or service because of the organization's position on an issue that

matters to the Millennial. All told, nearly half (47 percent) admitted to engaging in such boycott activity during the past month.

Further, one out of every three young adults (33 percent) said they had personally participated in a protest march, rally, or demonstration during the prior month. While that is well below a majority level of action, it represents an enormous number of individuals who took some physical action to display their disenchantment with some aspect of society.

Notice that the most likely forms of political engagement were those which allowed the individual to be active but not necessarily directly confrontational with a perceived opponent.

“One out of every three young adults (33 percent) said they had personally participated in a protest march, rally, or demonstration during the prior month.”



Section 03:

The Faith Factor

One's relationship to the Christian faith has historically been a defining factor in the lives of Americans. In a nation whose history is one of a passion for religious freedom and world-class spiritual engagement, the decline of spiritual commitment and engagement in America has been a pillar of the nation's moral and cultural decline. That downward spiral has been fortified by the dramatic reshaping of the faith domain by Millennials.



03: The Faith Factor

Indifference to Faith

Religious faith is not a driving force in the life of a large share of Millennials. Only half of them (52 percent) say they are deeply committed to their faith. Even though two-thirds of the group claims to be satisfied with their religious life, less than half of that sum (31 percent) describes themselves as being “very satisfied.” One gets the sense that their religious satisfaction is more attributable to lowered expectations and standards than to robust spiritual fulfillment.

In fact, the ambivalence of the age group toward faith is evident in that more than one-quarter (27 percent) portray themselves as not associating with any religious faith or tradition. That religious indifference is further amplified by the research revealing that three-quarters (74 percent) of the generation believes that all religious faiths are of equal value. And when asked whether or not they would die for their faith, a mere three out of 10 (29 percent) claimed they would – one of the life elements they were least willing to sacrifice their life to save or protect.

Another line of inquiry examined the major, significant life changes Millennials would like to make. Identifying changes related to their faith or religious life was comparatively uncommon. In fact, less than one-third of Millennials included at least one faith-related change to their top life change priorities.

Easily the most pervasive religious change desired was that of developing a better relationship with God. That upgrade was listed by one out of seven Millennials (14 percent). But besides that improvement in their God connection, little else made the radar in relation to faith. The other changes listed were living out their faith more

consistently (named by 7 percent); having a religious community that better meets their needs (4 percent); identifying a religious faith they want to commit to (4 percent); and developing a sense of certainty regarding what will happen to them when they die (2 percent).

Christian Connection

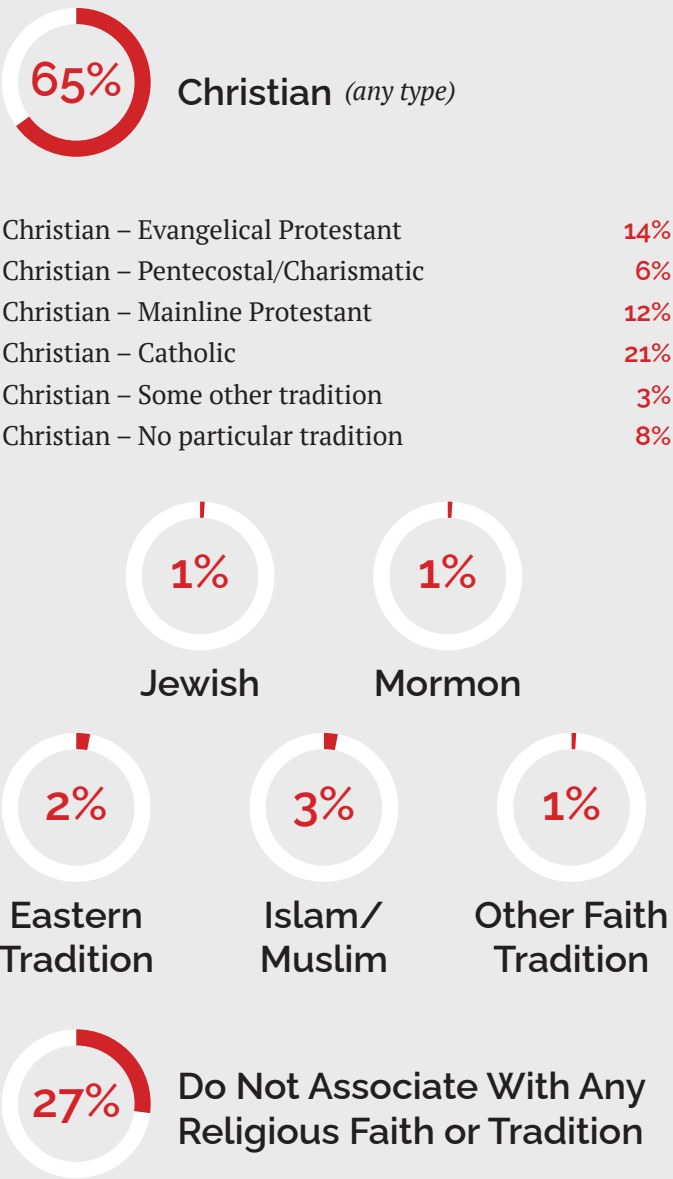
A superficial reading of their spirituality might not suggest severe deficiencies or unsettling faith issues to address. For instance, about two-thirds of Millennials (65 percent) say they are Christian. That proportion is marginally less than the national average (currently 69 percent). Denominationally, they have similar leanings to those of older adults – perhaps a bit less likely to align with the Catholic Church, but generally presenting a similar church profile to what emerges from the nation at-large.

Favorability and Trust

However, one of the most important insights from the study is that Millennials do not seem to have a problem with Jesus Christ as much as they have problems with Christian churches, Christian individuals, and some biblical principles that directly conflict with popular culture perspectives. Even the Bible fares relatively well with the group – although companion research suggests that they are ill-acquainted with its contents.

Upon asking Millennial respondents to indicate their reaction to four religious terms, the survey discovered that six out of 10 young adults (59 percent) maintain a positive perspective on

Religious Alignment



Without digging too deep, though, it becomes evident that their commitment to the Christian faith is tenuous. The caution in interpreting religious activity statistics at the time the survey was conducted is that the nation was still wrestling with COVID-19 restrictions and restoration. Given that a large share of Millennials was particularly concerned about the effects of the Coronavirus, they may be a bit slower to return to prior routines than older generations, who have remained more skeptical of government claims and solutions. Nevertheless, taking those factors into account, it seems fair to say that Millennials are currently less engaged with the Christian faith than are older adults. Exploring how many had engaged in specific faith-related activities in the past month, the survey reports that only four out of every 10 (43 percent) had attended a Christian church service or worship event. Similarly, just four out of 10 (40 percent) had spent at least an hour reading from the Bible in the past month and the same proportion (40 percent) had donated money to a church, religious center, or faith-based organization in the past month. Those figures are all substantially below the national norms among older adults, which tend to be closer to six out of 10 for each of the activities evaluated. And the bar was set rather low in relation to those endeavors: attending a single church service in a month, reading the Bible for at least an hour, or donating any money at all to a religious organization.

Jesus Christ; just one out of six (16 percent) had a negative view of Jesus; and nearly one-fourth (23 percent) had no particular sentiment toward Him. For someone who has been in the global spotlight for more than two millennia, and whose life and teachings have stirred curiosity and controversy on every continent since his ministry

began, that is a strikingly favorable profile awarded by a religiously turbulent population segment. But it also contains an unexpectedly large share – one out of four – who have yet to form a substantive opinion about Jesus.

View of Religious Concepts

	Very Positive	Mostly Positive	A Little Positive	Neutral	A Little Negative	Mostly Negative	Very Negative
Jesus Christ	39%	12%	8%	17%	6%	4%	6%
The Bible	29%	12%	10%	21%	8%	5%	9%
Christianity	26%	15%	9%	19%	9%	5%	10%
Atheism	8%	7%	10%	31%	11%	8%	12%

In comparison, the Christian faith fared notably less well than did Jesus. In total, just half of the young adults (50 percent) had favorable impressions of Christianity, one-quarter (24 percent) had negative views, and the remaining one-fifth (19 percent) claimed to be neutral or undecided in their view.

The Bible placed in between those two elements, generating barely more than half (51 percent) espousing a positive viewpoint, slightly more than one out of five (22 percent) holding a negative view, and the rest (30 percent) not taking a position.

Rounding out the list of four religious concepts was “atheism.” Although there has been a precipitous rise in the number of young adults who generally fit in the “godless” camp, the concept of atheism did not sit well with the generation. Overall, only one-quarter of them (25 percent) held a positive view of atheism, compared to 31 percent who possess a negative view and the same proportion harboring a neutral stance. Overall, given that 27 percent of the generation admitted to not being associated

with any particular faith, and that 65 percent of them do not endorse a biblical view of the God of Israel, the 25 percent favorable rating is surprisingly low.

Another way of considering those ratings is to consider the positive-to-negative ratio for each factor. In doing so we learn that Jesus Christ had a 51 percent vs. 16 percent outcome – slightly better than a 3-to-1 ratio (3:2:1). The Bible landed with a 51 percent vs. 22 percent measurement, which roughly equates to a 2¼-to-1 ratio (2:3:1). Christianity received a 50 percent vs. 24 percent rating, which was a bit lower than the Bible rating (2:1:1). Atheism got a 25 percent vs. 31 percent combination, for a negative ratio (0.8:1).

The other important reading from the favorability data is that 39 percent said they have a “very positive” reaction to Jesus Christ – far outdistancing the “very positive” response awarded to the other terms tested: the Bible (at 29 percent), Christianity (26 percent), and atheism (8 percent).

Views at the other end of the continuum are very important as well: Only 6 percent had a “very negative” impression of Jesus Christ, compared to 9 percent for the Bible, 10 percent for Christianity, and 12 percent for atheism.

It also bears mentioning that when including the five socio-political terms measured in the survey, Jesus Christ still emerged with the best rating. The 59 percent positive score associated with Jesus Christ bested the aggregated positive views assigned to the United States of America (53 percent); democracy (50 percent); liberals/progressives (36 percent); conservatives (33 percent); and socialism (33 percent).

A final consideration regarding faith imagery relates to trust in the pastors of Christian churches. Pastors were one of nine cultural influencers whose levels of trust was measured in the survey. Pastors placed in the middle of the pack.

The good news for pastors is that Millennials, on balance, are somewhat more likely to trust them than to not trust them: 54 percent said they would trust pastors of Christian churches to do what is right or to tell the truth at least sometimes. In comparison 37 percent said they would not afford pastors even that minimal level of trust.

Millennials Have Guarded Trust Toward Christian Pastors

	Positive	Negative	Pos-Neg Ratio
Christian pastors	54%	37%	1.46
Other 8 influencers*	57%	32%	1.78

* The “other 8 influencers” were: journalists, elected government officials, college professors, their parents, entertainment celebrities, authors of non-fiction books, their friends, and popular social media personalities.



03: The Faith Factor

The more challenging news for pastors, though, is that the most important response (the “top box” response on the scale, indicating that the respondent would “always or almost always trust pastors of Christian churches to tell the truth or to do what is right”) reached only 26 percent. Phrased differently, three out of four Millennials do not have consistent trust in the words and decisions of Christian pastors.

Using ratios again to provide comparative context, those who always or almost always trust Christian pastors outnumber those who never trust them by a 26 percent to 14 percent outcome. That is a 1.8 positive-to-negative ratio – a solid outcome, but not sufficient to suggest consistent and widespread cultural influence.

A different ratio, though, suggests that pastors may need to rethink their practices and reputation. The positive-to-negative ratio of the other eight influencers studied in the research was 1.78 – notably higher than the 1.46 achieved by Christian pastors.

Belief Profile

While Millennials appear to have a positive reaction to Jesus Christ and even the Bible, their behavior highlights the relatively minimal effort they put in to knowing, loving and serving Christ through biblical principles.

The Millennial survey underscored the errant views the generation possesses on some basic Christian teachings. Let’s explore a few of their major religious perspectives.



“For the past decade, belief in an orthodox, biblical view of the God of Israel...has been on the decline.”

God Views

- For the past decade, belief in an orthodox, biblical view of the God of Israel – that He is “the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect and just creator of the universe who rules that universe today” – has been on the decline. While Gallup and other surveys show that well over eight out of 10 Americans believed in God in the 1940s and 1950s, America has recently entered an era where for the first time in known U.S. history a minority of American adults believe in such a characterization of God. The *American Worldview Inventory*, the annual faith survey of Americans produced by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, currently pegs this orthodox perspective at 46 percent of adults!
- The slow and virtually invisible growth of eastern religious beliefs and practices is also evident in relation to beliefs about God. The eastern perspective is comprised of ideas such as every human being divine (5 percent), or the idea that “God” simply refers to each of us reaching our full potential or a state of higher consciousness (12 percent). Various Eastern traditions – although they are not alone in doing so – also teach that there are many different gods or deities (8 percent). Combined, these three points of view represent one-quarter of the Millennial base. That percentage is expanding and is coming unnervingly close to the proportion that believes in the traditional, biblical view of God.
- Leading the parade in nouveau views of deity and divinity are Millennials. The current survey indicates that barely one-third of them (35 percent) possess the traditional, biblical view of God (as described above).
- The fastest-growing God-view comprises a segment we have labeled the Don’ts. These are people who don’t know if God exists; don’t care if God exists; or don’t believe that God exists. More than four out of 10 Millennials (41 percent) fit this category. Notice that there are more Millennials in the Don’ts category than there are in the traditional-God definition category.
- Interestingly, the big growth in the community of Don’ts has been among those commonly perceived to be agnostics (i.e., nobody really knows if a divine being or supreme power exists). That fits with the relative indifference of this generation to faith commitment.
- In fitting with the “Me Generation” for which Millennials have become known, one might argue that close to one out of five Millennials (17 percent) have embraced a God-view that is anthropocentric. That level of human-centeredness related to God views is unprecedented.
- Marxists, who have had such an influence on the young adult generation, have not had as much impact on God views as they have in other dimensions of the lifestyle of this age block. Currently, only 5 percent argue that there is no such thing as God.

Various Beliefs about God or A Higher Power



It is normal in contemporary Western society to dismiss God-view as a significant piece to the cultural puzzle. But that, of course, is part of the problem. By “canceling” God, we seek to empower ourselves and replace His authority with our own through feelings, human rationale, or expedience as viable justifications for unbiblical choices. By denying His existence we alleviate any personal responsibility to a Creator for our actions. When we replace God with people – or nothing – we become moral free agents with no higher calling, no slate of moral imperatives or guidelines, and no eternal consequences for our temporal choices.

What we believe about God is foundational to who we are and how we live. That is just as true for Millennials as every other generation.



Beliefs about Eternal Destiny

Americans tend to be focused on the here and now – and each new generation over the past 70 years or so seems to be moving toward an increased pre-occupation with “living in the moment.”

One of the tradition emphases of Christian ministry has been understanding humans as sinners in need of a savior, and that Jesus Christ is that savior, and that salvation through Christ is a free gift offered by God to those who are willing to accept the gift on His terms.

But over the past century or so, a review of historical data suggests that Americans have become less God-dependent and more self-dependent regarding their eternal outcome.

Presently, the *American Worldview Inventory* confirms that very few Americans – just 2 percent – believe that they will go to Hell, or some place of eternal torment, after they die. At the same time, fewer individuals are accepting the idea that they must acknowledge their sinfulness to God and embrace Jesus Christ as their savior. In fact, a greater proportion of people now believe that they hold the key to their eternal consequences, with or without Jesus Christ being part of that equation.

The *American Worldview Inventory 2021* among Millennials revealed that a shrinking minority of the generation believes that when they die they are certain they will go to Heaven but only because they have confessed their sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Whereas 28 percent of all adults embrace that perspective – itself a substantial decline from the 45 percent who adopted that belief just 15 years ago – barely half as many Millennials (16 percent) hold that view.

Millennials are not opposed to the idea of salvation by grace alone. In fact, when the question is posed differently than the standard measure, we found that close to half of them (46 percent) agreed that their eternity is based on confession of sin and acceptance of Christ – almost three times the number of young adults who said in the standard measure that Christ alone is their pathway to salvation.

Without a doubt, Millennials are struggling to make sense of both this world and the next – a struggle certainly not limited to that generation, but clearly more urgent among young adults. They inhabit a culture that rejects Christ and grace, yet they were raised at the tail end of an era when eternal security through Christ’s grace was widely understood and accepted.

Which way should they go? Indisputably, they now live in the crosshairs of cultural influencers whose urgent messages about independence and self-reliance conflict with the biblical themes of Christ-dependence and personal spiritual insufficiency, resulting in widespread confusion and angst.

From an evangelistic standpoint, though, that spiritual struggle indicates that the game is not over and the generation is not lost. Millennials simply will not be won over by outdated or unpersuasive arguments, especially when those verbal assaults are mouthed but not modeled by their contemporaries. In fact, the verbal jousting that was once the dominant mode of evangelism is unlikely to succeed with this group: they seem far more interested in observing and reflecting on real Christianity in practice.

03: The Faith Factor

Truth and Morality

For some time, Americans have been turning their back on the notion that absolute moral truths exist. Millennials are leading the charge. Close to six out of 10 young adults (56 percent) contend that “identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time.” The spirit of relativity has comfortably settled in among Millennials – although it should be noted that more than one-fifth of them (22 percent) have yet to figure out where they stand on moral truth. But among those who have taken a stand, rejecting rather than accepting moral absolutes is the dominant perspective by a 5:2 ratio (56 percent vs. 22 percent).

To those who have “ears to hear and eyes to see,” it is incomprehensible that intelligent people would base moral choices on such fluid and unreliable influences as personal emotions, past experiences, and the advice of other people. Yet those are the primary inputs on which Millennials rely when making their moral decisions. Nearly two-thirds of young adults (63 percent) identified those influences as driving their moral choices while only one-fifth (19 percent) said they depend on a different source of moral input.

While Christians might hope that the youngest adult generation would turn to the Bible for moral guidance, a minority of the segment (46 percent) say that they do so. In fact, past research shows that even among people who believe that the Bible is the actual, true word of God that is a relevant and reliable guide for their life these days, many treat the scriptures as

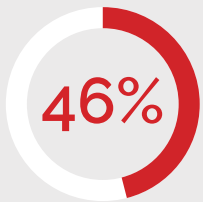


more of a back-up or emergency plan than their definitive moral guide. Once again, nearly one-quarter of Millennials (23 percent) have yet to land on an unwavering point-of-view about the role of the Bible in their moral reflections.

One example of how such perspectives become translated into real life is their views on marriage. A minority of young adults (47 percent) stated that they “believe in the marriage of one man to one woman because it is God’s only acceptable plan for humanity, applicable to all cultures on earth.” That number may be higher than many would expect, given the solid majority of Millennials that has been shown to support gay marriage and other forms of nouveau sexual orientation and gender identification.



A Decreasing Reliance on the Bible



Primarily turn to the Bible for moral guidance



Mostly lean on personal emotions, past experiences, and the advice of other people when making moral choices



Believe only in the marriage of one man to one woman

“For some time, Americans have been turning their back on the notion that absolute moral truths exist. Millennials are leading the charge.”

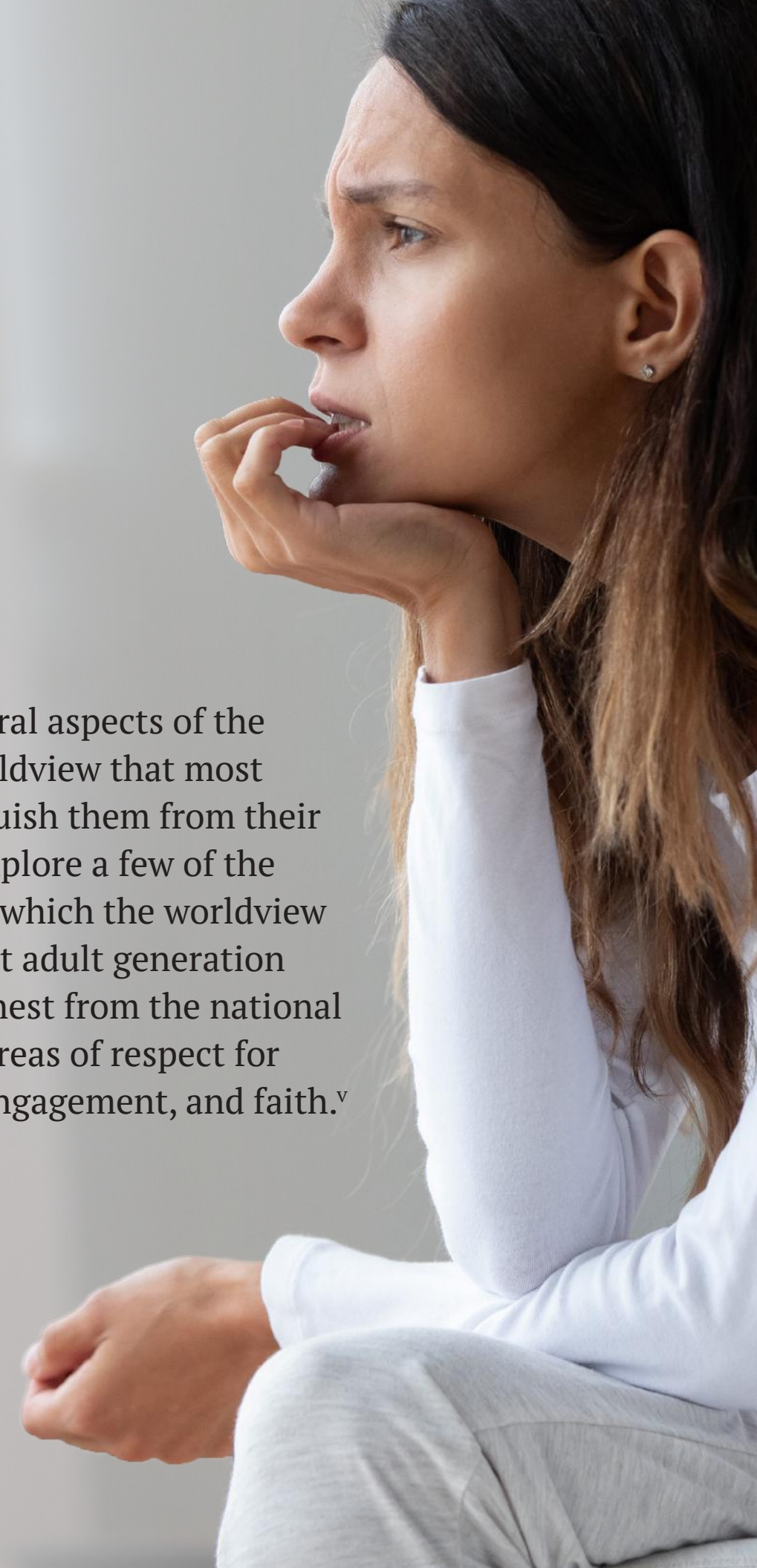


Section 04:

Worldview Considerations

As alluded to earlier, the *American Worldview Inventory* has consistently shown that Millennials are far less likely than people of other generations to possess a biblical worldview. While an estimated 9 percent of adults across the older pair of living generations (all of whom are now in the mid-50s or older) have a biblical worldview, that figure drops to 5 percent among those in Generation X and just 4 percent among Millennials. In fact, it drops even lower among the youngest one-third of the Millennials – namely, people in the 18-24 age niche – to a microscopic 2 percent!

There are several aspects of the Millennial worldview that most clearly distinguish them from their elders. Let's explore a few of the dimensions in which the worldview of the youngest adult generation strays the farthest from the national norms in the areas of respect for people, civic engagement, and faith.^v



04: **Worldview Considerations**

Respect for People

Millennials do not have as much respect for human beings as do adults from other generations.

That insight is based on a combination of beliefs and behaviors that distinguish the perspective of Millennials from that of older adults. For instance, Millennials are 15 percentage points less likely than Gen Xers to say they treat other people the same way they want to be treated, and are 28 points less likely than Baby Boomers to embrace that approach (known to Christians as the “Golden Rule”).

Millennials are also twice as likely as other people to say that the kind of people they always respect are those who hold the same religious and political views as they do. Despite their well-known advocacy of “tolerance,” they emerged from the survey as the generation that is the least tolerant—by their own admission—of people who possess different views than they do.

Further, Millennials also stood out as the generation that is most likely to acknowledge that they are “committed to getting even” with those who wrong them—in fact, 28 percentage points more likely than Baby Boomers to hold a vengeful point of view.

Millennials indicated that they have less respect for life, in general. For instance, they are less than half as likely as other adults to say that life is sacred. They are twice as likely as older adults to diminish the value of human life by describing human beings as either “material substance only” or their very existence as “an illusion”.

While most Americans believe that “people are basically good,” that point of view conflicts with the biblical teaching that human beings are sinful and need to be forgiven for and saved from the consequences of their sins. A smaller proportion of Millennials believes that people are basically good, but their questioning of the “goodness” of humanity view is unrelated to people’s sin nature. Their perspective is simply that people are not inherently valuable creatures; they are neither made in the image of God nor imbued with value due to their creation by God and being loved by Him.

“Millennials do not have as much respect for human beings as do adults from other generations.”

America’s youngest generation simply accepts the existence of humanity without assigning any spiritual or innate value to the human race.

Honesty and trust are practical demonstrations of respect toward others. However, the survey also revealed that Millennials are less likely than any of the other three adult generations to claim that they keep the promises they make or to repay a loan. They are more likely than any of the other three generations to lie in order to protect their reputation or best interests.

When considered in combination, then, these findings suggest that Millennials are the generation least likely to respect other people.

Millennials are less than

1/2

as likely as other adults to say that life is sacred

While also being

2X

as likely to say that the people they always respect are ones who hold the same religious/political views as they do

Disengagement from Christianity

A second and more obvious distinction between Millennials and older Americans is the generation’s concerns about the Christian faith. Beyond the factors described in the preceding section of this report, the *American Worldview Inventory* identifies a long list of religious distinctions between Millennials and other generations. Compared to other adults, Millennials are significantly **less likely** to:

- Accept the person of God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect, and just creator of the universe who still rules that universe today
- Believe in the existence of absolute moral truth
- Believe that God is the basis of all truth
- Consider the Bible to be a reliable source of moral guidance
- Believe that every moral choice we make either honors or dishonors God
- Believe that human beings were created by God, in His image, but are undermined by personal sin and therefore need to be redeemed through Jesus Christ
- Believe that God loves them unconditionally
- Say they have a unique calling or purpose from God

- Accept the idea of “original sin”
- Seek to avoid sin because it breaks God’s heart
- Confess their sins and embrace Jesus Christ as their savior, believed to be their only means to eternal salvation
- Accept the Bible as the inerrant word of God
- Consider themselves to be deeply committed to practicing their faith
- Pray during a typical week
- Worship or thank God during a typical week
- Study the Bible during a typical week
- Seek and pursue God’s will
- Acknowledge, confess, and ask for forgiveness of their sins each week
- Believe that Satan is real and influential
- Define success as consistent obedience to God
- Believe that the universe was designed, created, and is maintained by God
- Agree that the universal purpose of humanity is to know, love, and serve God with all of our heart, mind, strength and soul

Some of the Important Theological Differences Between Millennials and Other Adults

	Millennials	Other Adults	Difference
Pray during a typical week	48%	71%	23 points
Worship or thank God during a typical week	42%	65%	23 points
Seek to avoid sinning because it breaks God’s heart	42%	59%	17 points
Possess a biblical view of the nature and character of God	38%	55%	17 points
Seek and pursue God’s will each week	41%	58%	17 points
Acknowledge and confess my sins each week	40%	57%	17 points
Deeply committed to practicing my faith	47%	63%	16 points
Accept the Bible as the inerrant word of God	28%	44%	16 points
Human beings were created by God, in His image	45%	59%	14 points
Have confessed my sins and embraced Jesus Christ as my savior	23%	37%	14 points
Believe God loves me unconditionally	60%	74%	14 points
Primary purpose of life: know, love, and serve God	18%	31%	13 points
God is the basis of all truth	31%	44%	13 points
Believe that Satan is real and influential	46%	59%	13 points

Source: American Worldview Inventory 2020; N=2,000 adults, 18 or older; conducted by Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; www.culturalresearchcenter.com

Compared to other adults – and especially Boomers and Elders – Millennials are substantially more likely to:

- Wonder if God is really involved in their life
 - Believe that there is no absolute value associated with human life
 - Believe that having faith matters more than which faith they have
 - Consider an abortion performed to reduce personal economic or emotional discomfort to be morally acceptable
 - Consider premarital sex with someone expected to be their future spouse to be morally acceptable
 - Deem reincarnation to be a real possibility
 - Champion liberal theology
 - Be counted among the “Don’ts”—people who either do not know if God exists, do not believe that He exists, or do not care if He exists
- Contend that horoscopes provide useful guidance for their life
 - Say that getting even with those who offend or harm them is defensible
 - Believe that God is not involved in people’s lives
 - Claim that allowing people to own property facilitates economic injustice
 - Karma is an undeniable, active life principle
 - Conclude that the Bible is not the accurate and reliable words of God
 - Believe the Bible is ambiguous in what it teaches about abortion
 - Possess the idea that human beings have developed over a long period of time from less advanced life forms to our current condition



Examples of Some Spiritual Differences Between Millennials and Boomers

	Millennials	Boomers	Difference
Human life is sacred	19%	50%	31 points
Pray during a typical week	48%	69%	21 points
Worship or thank God during a typical week	42%	61%	19 points
Possess a biblical view of the nature and character of God	38%	54%	16 points
Seek to avoid sinning because it breaks God’s heart	42%	57%	15 points
Believe God loves me unconditionally	60%	74%	14 points
Wonder if God is really involved in my life	43%	57%	14 points
Human beings were created by God, in His image	45%	59%	14 points
Have confessed my sins, embraced Jesus Christ as my savior	23%	36%	13 points
Deeply committed to practicing my faith	47%	60%	13 points
Seek and pursue God’s will each week	41%	53%	12 points

Source: American Worldview Inventory 2020; N=2,000 adults, 18 or older; conducted by Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; www.culturalresearchcenter.com

A New Generation Gap

The deterioration of the Christian belief and practices in American society has been in progress for more than half a century. However, the pace of that dissipation has greatly accelerated with the coming of age of the Millennials.

During their teens and 20s, Boomers also showed signs of turning their backs on the Christian faith. But they slowly morphed into a mirror image of their generational predecessors in their worldview, core religious beliefs, and most common religious practices. In fact, Boomers and Elders are surprisingly similar in their views on most of the items tested. Of the 56 questions related to religious beliefs and behavior there were statistically significant differences between the two generations regarding just 12 of the worldview factors evaluated.

In comparison, there is a somewhat wider gap between Gen X and Boomers on these matters. The generation born between Boomers and Millennials – known both as Gen X and Baby Busters – was statistically farther apart from Boomers than Boomers were from the Elders. Overall there were 17 worldview elements for which there were statistically significant differences between Boomers and Xers.

But the faith gap between Millennials and the two earlier generations (i.e., Gen X and Baby Boomers) is the widest intergenerational difference identified at any time in the last seven decades. Statistically, Millennials are more substantially different from Gen X than Boomers had differed from the generations born immediately before or after them.

The largest generational gap of all is between Millennials and Boomers. (Is this where they mockingly say, “OK, Boomers”?) Of the 56 variables studied, there were significant differences related to 48 of those 56 factors between Millennials and Boomers! Further, the size of the difference between Boomers and Millennials on those items was also larger than the average magnitude of the differences between any other pair of generations.



“The faith gap between Millennials and the two earlier generations is the widest intergenerational difference identified at any time in the last seven decades.”

04: **Worldview Considerations**

If Not the Biblical Worldview, Then What?

The *American Worldview Inventory 2021* not only tracked the incidence of biblical worldview possession but also examined the popularity of worldviews other than the biblical worldview. Most analysts who have recognized that Americans do not have a biblical worldview have named alternatives that have lured the public. Among the options most often cited as the flavor of the day are Postmodernism, Secular Humanism, Marxism (and its newest version, Critical Theory), Eastern Mysticism (or New Age), and Nihilism.

The overarching conclusion of the research was that most Americans have not been seduced into fully embracing any of those particular competing worldview as much as they have simply taken bits and pieces from each of the alternative life philosophies and woven them together into a customized blend of beliefs and behaviors. That resulting worldview is known as Syncretism. The *Inventory* estimated that while only 6 percent of adults possess the biblical worldview, an overwhelming 88 percent are characterized by Syncretism.

In studying the worldviews upon which each generation is most dependent, the Cultural Research Center reached another surprising conclusion, as well. Millennials (along with Gen Xers) are considerably more likely than older generations to rely more upon Moralistic Therapeutic Deism for worldview guidance than upon any of the other worldview alternatives tested.^{vi}



Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) is a worldview initially identified and named by sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Denton. They introduced their findings and conclusions in their book, *Soul Searching*, published in 2005 and which was based on national research among the teenagers of the turn of the millennium. In the course of their research, the two academicians identified several core beliefs that characterized the thinking and behavior of the group. Those components included:

- belief in a God who remains distant from people’s lives
- people are supposed to be good to each other (i.e., moral)
- the universal purpose of life is being happy and feeling good about oneself
- there are no absolute moral truths
- God allows “good people” into Heaven
- God places very limited demands on people

Consistent with other worldview research, the current Cultural Research Center findings confirm that even though those perspectives developed two decades ago, during the preteen years of that generation (the group we now call Millennials), they have held on to those beliefs as they have aged.

That follows the well-established worldview developmental pattern. Research conducted by

George Barna, and subsequently others, has shown that a person’s worldview develops before they become teenagers, is refined during their teens and 20s, and then serves as a decision-making foundation for the duration of a person’s life. Without intentional and consistent recasting, it is unlikely that their worldview will change significantly during a person’s lifetime.

The Worldviews Heavily Relied Upon by Generation

<i>Percentage who rely heavily on the worldview shown</i>	<i>Mill</i>	<i>GenX</i>	<i>Boomers</i>	<i>Builders</i>
Moralistic Therapeutic Deism	44%	38%	32%	29%
Biblical Theism (or Biblical Worldview)	9%	22%	42%	47%
Postmodernism	18%	13%	14%	17%
Secular Humanism	15%	11%	14%	19%
Eastern Mysticism	12%	7%	9%	6%
Nihilism	11%	8%	8%	13%
Marxism	10%	9%	9%	14%

Generation abbreviations and definitions: Mill = Millennials – born 1984-2002; Gen X = Generation X – born 1965-1983; Boomers = Baby Boomers – born 1946-1964; Builders – born 1927-1945.
Source: *American Worldview Inventory 2021*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; conducted February 2021, N=2,000 adults 18+.

04: **Worldview Considerations**

In fact, the worldview research showed that Millennials are less than half as likely to draw heavily from the biblical worldview as are adults from each of the other generations. Further, the study revealed that Millennials are less likely to rely upon the biblical worldview for guidance than from any of the six competing worldviews measured. Roughly five times as many adults in their mid-50s or older are likely to draw heavily from biblical teachings as are Millennials. Whether that is because Millennials have not had sufficient exposure to biblical teaching or because they intentionally reject those teachings is still open to speculation.

Postmodernism and Secular Humanism emerged as the other competing worldviews, besides Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, on which young adults are most likely to depend for guidance. Millennials were more likely than older Americans to lean on postmodern perspectives and behaviors.

Eastern Mysticism, Nihilism, and Marxism were equally likely, if not slightly more likely, than the biblical worldview to be relied upon by Millennials. Eastern Mysticism, in particular, has relative appeal to young adults: they were nearly twice as likely as older Americans to draw inspiration and guidance from Eastern philosophies and behaviors.

These Choices Have Serious Consequences

The Cultural Research Center’s generational analysis of worldview preferences produced a revealing portrait of the world through the eyes of each generation. Millennials have clearly gone farther than any recent generation in cutting ties

with traditional Christian views and normative biblical teaching, and have developed a very different vision of what America should become.

The research indicates that the kind of world that Millennials are seeking – and are likely to produce, as they assume greater influence in shaping our culture – would be characterized by significant changes to what currently prevails in America.



1 Government with expanded reach, authority, power, and spending, in the expectation that it will facilitate a more desirable way of living.



2 Flexible and fluid public policies and programs. The syncretistic worldview that most Millennials possess means that American

culture will probably become less predictable and consistent than has been the case in the past, owing to the inherently contradictory and sometimes ambiguous worldview positions adopted by young adults.



3 Episodes of violence and combativeness would be more common in a Millennial-led nation. Such conditions would be the

outgrowth of various realities: a heightened degree of self-righteousness and the sense of personal sovereignty maintained by emergent adults; their dismissal of the legitimacy of institutional authority; their antipathy toward law and order agencies and officers; and their desire to rewrite criminal laws to reflect their more liberal worldview. The youngest adult generation is not likely to embrace one of the

hallmarks of governance – i.e., progress through negotiated compromise. But they are likely to act boldly to implement their points of views given their tendency to interpret not getting their way as a personal insult or threat.



4 Political tensions will be inescapable in the short-term due to Millennials’ divergent views of core perspectives related to national

vision, disdain for compromise, national moral recalibrations, and their revisionist view of U.S. history.



5 The national Christian community will become smaller in numbers, less influential, and less economically robust. Some of the

more tangible and dramatic changes resulting from the reshaping of American Christianity will include fewer people and less money being designated for global Christian missions; the reduction or elimination of existing privileges received by churches, such as tax exemptions and land-use exceptions, consistent legal challenges faced by faith-based institutions, such as Christian schools and healthcare entities; the diminished presence of prayer, the Bible, and pastors in public events; and the continued reduction in the size of historically-dominant Christian denominations.



6 Interpersonal relationships will be more difficult to sustain due to declining levels of trust, diminished

willingness to compromise, heightened reliance of technology for communication, and disappointments produced by the lack of moral consensus.



7 The family unit will be reshaped due to fewer formal marriages, increased levels of divorce and separation, liberalized sexual morality, and the reduced appeal of raising children.

As worldview goes, so goes society. Consequently, the importance of tracking, understanding and responding to the worldview inclinations of Millennials cannot be overestimated. Despite daily news reports positioning the tensions among Americans as predominantly political in nature, a more astute interpretation is that the differences are driven by the distinct worldviews held by important segments of our society, such as Millennials.

As our study of worldview conditions has emphasized, people do what they believe. Over the past several decades Americans have gradually but consistently abandoned a range of foundational, biblical beliefs in favor of a consensual, emotion-driven, human-focused understanding of and response to the world. That transition has been highly visible in relation to moral and political preferences, but it has affected every dimension of the American life just as profoundly.

“As worldview goes,
so goes society...
people do what
they believe.”

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair sitting on a blue couch, covering her face with her hands. In the background, a man with a beard is sitting on the same couch, looking away. The scene is lit with warm, soft light from a window.

Section 05:

Millennial Connections: Examining Their Relationships

Relationships are a big deal for all of us, but they seem especially central in the minds and hearts of Millennials. But doing well in this area is perhaps more difficult for this generation than for their predecessors. While healthy and supportive relationships are certainly considered a central part of a meaningful and fulfilling life, Millennials' rearing and current cultural perspectives have made the development of positive relationships a point of hardship and frustration for millions of them.

05: Millennial Connections: Examining Their Relationships

Think about how different it is for Millennials to form deep, lasting, reliable connections compared to the relevant conditions faced by Boomers when they were of the same age.

- ***Having been raised to expect the best*** – and to believe they deserve it – Millennials have struggled in their quest for lasting intimate/romantic/spousal relationships. Their perceived mission is monumental: to find “the right one.” This pressure has raised fears and anxieties – and sometimes depression – over their apparent inability to do so. Even the connections they do form eventually falter as they question whether there is a better relational possibility awaiting them. This “failure is not an option” mindset has plagued many young adults.
- ***With more than 20 million Millennials raised in a broken family*** – and virtually all of the individuals in the generation grew up close to peers who experienced divorce or other severe family dysfunction – they are understandably gun-shy about marriage. They do not want to repeat the same mistake made by the millions of divorced or unhappily married adults who preceded them. While that commitment to establishing a lasting positive relationship with a spouse is commendable, the fear of making the wrong choice is relationally paralyzing millions of young adults.

- ***Communication is an art that has been undermined***, rather than enhanced, by technology. Sociologists have confirmed that a large share of communications among Millennials takes place through their tech devices: social media, texting, phone calls, chat, etc. A growing body of research is explaining how our reliance on machines for communication greatly hinders the development of healthy interpersonal connections.
- ***Financial challenges*** have made marriage, in particular, difficult. Young adults, products of their culture, worry about a variety of financial considerations associated with their relationships: control, the power balance, dependency, pre-existing debt (e.g., student loans), and the insecure economics of the gig economy.
- ***Issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity*** were not nearly as widespread or high profile for people of prior generations. Blazing new territory – such as championing divergent identities and relationships based on innovative definitions of sexuality – has substantially increased the number of minefields scattered about in the relationship game.

- ***Hovering parents*** – the much-caricatured “helicopter parents” – are a reality and they continue to exert a withering degree of pressure on their children to find someone with whom they can build a future. Especially if that future will finally move the adult-child out of the parents’ home.
- ***The impact of being the first generation to grow up with comprehensive “Disney influence”*** – i.e., you can be anything your heart desires, you can win the person of your dreams, good always defeats evil, dreams and fairy tales come true, physical beauty is the pathway to happiness, there is one right person waiting for you, and so forth – has distorted their sense of genuine relationship, caused an excessive emphasis on self, and increased the felt need to prove self-worth. (Disney, by the way, had lots of help in conveying these concepts to a culture eager to embrace such fantasies and deceptions.)

The result of all of these challenges concerning family formation has been fewer Millennials getting married; fewer having children; more having children outside of marriage; more cohabitation; marriage, when it occurs, happening later in life; an increase in pre-nuptial agreements, even among working and middle-class Millennials; and fewer faith-based weddings. The impact of such pressures on friendships has been no less dramatic, with a regularly-shifting base of individuals deemed their “core relationships.”



05: Millennial Connections: Examining Their Relationships

Relational Satisfaction

Compared to other aspects of their life, Millennials are prone to believe that their relationships are in good shape. About two out of every three described their friendships as either very or somewhat satisfying (68 percent) and nearly as many claimed their intimate relationships to be similarly satisfying (63 percent). Note that those two types of relationships were more likely than any other dimension in their life to register as “very satisfying” (35 percent and 38 percent, respectively).

Yet, the life changes they described as “extremely desirable” were more likely to relate to relationships than to any other aspect of their life in need of improvement. Close to six out of 10 Millennials mentioned a relationship change as being “extremely desirable” – and that does not count those who listed their personal relationship with God (which generated a 14 percent response).

The only thing that more Millennials are desperate for than better and deeper relationships was financial comfort. In total, about three out of 10 young adults said having better, deeper friendships was an “extremely desirable” change they desire. It appears that one factor hampering their relational capacity are prejudices against them based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation – a concern listed by 13 percent. A similar proportion said they desire to be part of a community that “knows, appreciates, and respects” them – a wish expressed by 12 percent.

Those three desires were among the top 10 listed by all Millennials. The survey also found

that close to one out of every 10 (9 percent) has an extreme desire to have a wider circle of reliable and enjoyable friends.

Family relationships weigh heavily on the minds of about one out of five Millennials. Specifically, the most desired family connections they would like to upgrade include developing a better relationship with their spouse or significant-other (mentioned by 10 percent); growing a better relationship with their parents (7 percent) or their children (5 percent); and having children (4 percent). While not necessarily a relational issue, 6 percent also said that having a more satisfying sex life was an extremely desirable change they would like to experience.

The importance of family and friends to Millennials is demonstrated by the fact that more of them – in fact, a majority of them – said they’d be willing to give up their life for family members than for anything else. Friends didn’t rate nearly as dear to their hearts – supporting the clear message that Millennials are struggling to have the quantity and quality of friendships that they want – but one-third of the generation said they’d be willing to sacrifice their life for that of their friends.

Because trust is such a vital aspect of friendship, the survey data on trusting different influencers provides additional insight into their relational condition. By far the people most trusted by Millennials are their parents: 46 percent said they could be trusted to tell the truth or to do what is right either always or almost always, with another 32 percent saying they could be trusted sometimes. The second-most trustworthy type of influence in their life was friends, for which

36 percent said they could always or almost always be trusted, and 40 percent said they were sometimes trustworthy. There were no other influence entities evaluated that generated trust levels close to that accorded to family and friends.

Some of the other trust levels awarded were either unexpected or disappointing – or both. For instance, college professors ranked third among the nine influencers tested, well above pastors. Speaking of pastors, as noted earlier in the report, they placed fourth in this line-up,

with only one-quarter of young adults feeling pastors are consistently trustworthy, and one-seventh of them saying they can “never” trust Christian pastors.

What was not unexpected, though, were the lukewarm grades assigned to the bottom three entities assessed. Elected government officials, popular social media personalities, and entertainment celebrities were all described as not trustworthy by half or more of the Millennials.

How Much Millennials Trust Influencers to Tell the Truth or Do What is Right

	Always or Almost Always	Sometimes	Not Too Often	Never	Don't Know
Your parents	46%	32%	12%	6%	4%
Your friends	36%	40%	16%	4%	4%
College professors	27%	39%	18%	6%	10%
Pastors of Christian churches	26%	28%	23%	14%	9%
Authors of non-fiction books	18%	39%	22%	8%	12%
Journalists	17%	36%	28%	11%	9%
Elected government officials	15%	28%	32%	17%	8%
Popular social media personalities	15%	27%	31%	19%	8%
Entertainment celebrities	13%	27%	34%	18%	8%



Afterword: **A Personal Response from George Barna**

Let me suggest that the readers of research studies typically fall into one of three camps.

The first segment is comprised of people seeking knowledge. They read the pages of the research to glean facts that provide insight and understanding. They are less interested in acting on the research than keeping a mental catalogue of the details.

The second group is the debaters. They use the research as fodder for conversations. Sometimes those exchanges are meant to clarify their own perspectives, but more often the research is a foundation for their critique of the entities examined. This group is less interested in applying the insights to correction responses than in quoting the findings in support of pet narratives.

The third faction consists of transformers: people who want to take action in response to the challenges and opportunities identified through the research. More often than not, individuals in this category and who are driven by their faith represent a body of servant-healers – people who want to put the love of God into action, serving those in need,

and bringing about the spiritual healing and wholeness that might be possible through appropriate active responses.

This final section of the text is targeted to people in that third niche. These closing pages are a more subjective, personal response to the research outcomes in which I share my ideas about the most important results and what we may consider doing to provide practical assistance to Millennials.

Research that does not lead to corrective action is just an exercise in gathering information for its own sake. Who has time for that? This study represents a resource that is rich with insights into the present and future of Millennials – our emerging parents, intellectuals, powerbrokers, voters, consumers, professionals, church leaders, and more. For us to fail to strategically respond would be to squander an opportunity to serve God and His people.

So join me as we recap what we have discovered, consider different ways of joining together these pieces of the Millennial puzzle, and generate ideas about how to better address the felt and real needs of Millennials.

“For us to fail to strategically respond would be to squander an opportunity to serve God and His people.”

Afterword: A Personal Response from George Barna

The Context

As we prepare to enter 2022, the mood of the United States is ugly. Over the past decade-plus, the United States has become more ideologically, spiritually, politically, and morally divided. Millions of people admit to feeling that they have to tread carefully, even in the most innocuous of circumstances, from having spontaneous conversations with co-workers, to interacting with fellow parents at youth activities and events, to participating in public information meetings, or even when discussing current events in church-based small groups. Social media has done much to foment the division and to facilitate not only ideological echo chambers, but the micro-segmenting of the American people.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, America has become more tribal. We act as individuals, but derive our strength and courage from the sense that we are part of one or more micro-communities that will “have our back” in the face of push-back. As Americans evaluate their social context it has become common for them to mentally, if subconsciously, assign everyone to one or more social segments: “old, white evangelicals” and “working class, single, black mothers” are just two popular ones that come to mind. Once someone is thus labeled, we tend to treat them the same as others in that niche, but perhaps differently than those in other niches. The consequence of the loss of uniqueness and the prevalence of social labeling has hindered our ability to transcend the false boundaries that separate us.

That is the cultural milieu in which the Millennials have been raised and indoctrinated. They never asked to be coddled and over-protected by their parents. They were not born

perceiving others on the basis of the cultural categories they filled. They had no intention of becoming lightning rods for social change. They are largely the product of the unaddressed dysfunctions of the generations that came before them – the generations that raised the Millennials to become who they are today.

As research projects like this one come along, it is a natural response to scour the data in order to identify the perceived shortcomings of the subject population and criticize those alleged failings. But all that does is stretch the culture gap a bit wider and harden the protective shields the cultural combatants have seized.

In this brief section I’d like to encourage you to look upon the Millennials as a generation that has inherited a cultural war zone but not the tools to bring peace to that war. I invite you to look upon our youngest adults as a group

“(Millenials) had no intention of becoming lightning rods for social change.

They are largely the product of the unaddressed dysfunctions of the generations that came before them...”

that we might be able to help navigate through the challenges in which we have immersed them. Rather than blasting them for a range of perceived inadequacies, perhaps we can support them with perspective, solutions, resources, and encouragement.

Those of us who are older must recognize Millennials as part of our legacy to the world. The more we can empower our young adults to champion what matters, and to live in ways that will foster human flourishing, the more assured we can be that they will become the people God created them to be, and that this great nation can again be ground zero for realistic hope, tangible love and understanding, demonstrable compassion, creativity and innovation, and humble righteousness.

Perhaps you don’t struggle with this problem, but I (and, it seems, many other American Christians) have to constantly remind myself that this life is not about me, it’s all about God. My role is to know, love and serve Him with all of my heart, mind, strength, and soul. That means doing more than talking the talk. Actively searching for ways to bless Millennials is a tremendous opportunity to be Christ-like to a fragile and desperate generation. It may be our greatest chance to contribute to the advancement of God’s kingdom on earth. We are called to do everything with love and excellence, as if we are serving the Lord Himself.¹ Investing in the well-being of Millennials is a tangible means of doing so.

But what does that look like?



Afterword: A Personal Response from George Barna

The Challenges

We might start by identifying the variety of threats and challenges facing Millennials. Remember, this research was conducted only among members of the generation, so this is a glimpse inside their minds and hearts about their present condition.

One of the most alarming outcomes of the research is the prevalence of mental health issues that Millennials acknowledge. If this survey finds that 54% of the group acknowledges some degree of emotional fragility or even mental illness in themselves, it seems reasonable to believe that the number who struggle with such issues is even higher given the tendency of people to downplay their personal struggles and deficiencies. When individuals possess significant mental and emotional obstacles, they are not automatically precluded from leading a productive and successful life, but doing so becomes much more taxing and daunting.

Consider the common types of mental and emotional challenges indicated by the survey respondents: fear, anxiety, depression, and emotional abandonment. As a father and relative whose family members have wrestled with all of those maladies, I have first-hand knowledge of the uphill climb involved in overcoming those obstacles to wellness. And it has become apparent to me that the most common suggestion – medication – may be part of the answer, but pills are often inadequate to deal with the depth of the issue.

Indeed, other personal struggles of this generation that are identified in the survey, such as low self-confidence and the fear of conflict,

are frequently consequences of the underlying mental and emotional health issues.

But a number of the daunting challenges raised by Millennials have to do with their spiritual perspectives. For understandable reasons, millions of Millennials reject organized religion, or have qualms about religious leaders, and especially about religious people who may prove to be hypocritical. Their experiences, observations and assumptions regarding religion, spiritual beliefs, and faith practices have produced a turbulent spiritual experience. An historically large proportion of the generation is disengaged from spiritual teaching and practice, resulting in a paucity of knowledge, understanding, experience, and growth in this realm.

The resultant spiritual illiteracy virtually resigns them to a superficial worldview in which they grasp at ideas and practices that provide immediate comfort rather than lasting truth and peace. The moral chaos that characterizes the generation can likewise be traced to a dearth of coherent and pragmatic religious instruction abetted by the absence of mature moral reflection. The consequence is a generational moral code driven by comfort and convenience rather than truth and righteousness – and accepted because truth and righteousness are not regarded as necessary precedents, or even attainable realities.

That spiritual illiteracy has other dramatic effects as well. For instance, the widespread confusion among young adults regarding aspects of their identity – spiritual, sexual, and also related to their sense of purpose in life – are

a direct outgrowth of that spiritual wisdom vacuum. It seems that often young adults fill the void by creating a self-image that is built upon self-centeredness, self-reliance, and independence. That may be perceived as arrogance, but as much as anything it may also be a defense mechanism covering up their personal deficits with which they wrestle.

Another significant revelation from the research is the difficulty they face regarding meaningful, lasting relationships. Friendships are typically fluid among Millennials, a revolving door of intimates and acquaintances. The low level of trust that young adults exhibit toward people of all types and roles is facilitated by the hardships they experience in nurturing and retaining long-term, meaningful relationships. Their unwillingness, generally, to make lasting commitments hinders their associations. This has led to a widespread sense of disconnection.

Of course, their relational challenges can be traced to some of their behavioral tendencies. Their admission of intolerance and disrespect, for instance, deters the development of lasting bonds with others. Their low view of the value of

human life contributes significantly to suffering a series of short-lived, unsatisfying connections.

These matters work hand-in-hand to undermine lifestyles that incorporate marriage and children.

Their reliance on technology in every dimension of life has done little to promote deeper and more permanent ties. As has been widely noted, they are the first generation to grow up with computers, mobile phones, and other high tech devices as a ubiquitous and unquestioned part of their life. But the undeniable benefits derived from those devices also exact a cost in the quality of life that most Americans (not just Millennials) fail to consider.

All of these realities converge into what could be summarized as defining elements of the Millennial lifestyle. That pathway includes an apprehensive acceptance of materialism; a universal integration of technology; hyper-sensitivity to generational norms and attitudes; a knee-jerk rejection of the traditions of prior generations; and a novel fusion of ideas into new morals and values.

“Spiritual illiteracy virtually resigns them to a superficial worldview in which they grasp at ideas and practices that provide immediate comfort rather than lasting truth and peace.”

Afterword: A Personal Response from George Barna

The Root Issues

It would be unnecessary to seek a new set of strategies and action points if Millennials, as a generation, were generally pleased with their life trajectory – but they are not. The reasons seem obvious: the absence of a sense of purpose, meaning, and vision; emotional and mental health challenges; spiritual turbulence; relational hardships and dissatisfaction; and an expansive identity crisis.

In a situation with as many facets and complications as that facing Millennials, a simple answer is rarely imaginable, much less feasible. Yet, I am going to propose such a simple – though not simplistic or easy – solution to place our young adult generation on the path to wholeness.

It all comes down to worldview.

Your worldview is the foundation of your decision-making. Every choice you make emerges from your worldview, which serves as the filter through which you experience, observe, imagine, interpret, and respond to reality. And every one of the thousands of choices you make every day have consequences. That means worldview is at the heart of everything we are considering in relation to the well-being and development of the young-adult generation.

Given the centrality of worldview to the human experience, there can be no improvements to the life Millennials lead without addressing the fundamental role of worldview. And because worldview is developed and carried out in the competitive marketplace of beliefs and behaviors, think about the pervasive consequences for Millennials of rejecting the biblical worldview in favor of other, more popular alternatives.

Worldview and Purpose

The generation clearly struggles with purpose and meaning. Everyone needs a reason to get out of bed in the morning. The fact that three out of every four Millennials are, by their own admission, still seeking to know their life purpose is reflected in some of the unexpected, unpredictable, radical, and novel exploits of the generation. You might expect such qualms in the minds and hearts of children, or even teenagers. Something is amiss when it characterizes a large majority of people in their 20s and 30s.

Throughout the nation we find that more than one-third of adults in pre-Millennial generations (37 percent) have discovered their purpose and are making the most of their life. While that proportion is not as high as desirable, it does give greater hope that discovering personal purpose is achievable – and the experience of those who have done so also supports the notion that the process is worth pursuing.²

Millennials have largely bought into worldviews that teach “life is about me.” They contend that the purpose of life is to experience maximum happiness, often through personal accomplishments or comfort. They tend to view themselves as “basically good” people – we all are, in the Millennial estimation – and that we will derive insight and meaning in life through satisfying dialogue and voluntary acts of good will.

Unfortunately, that perspective leads to emptiness. Life is not about us; it’s about knowing, loving, and serving a gracious, mighty, forgiving, and supportive Creator.³ He, alone, determines our purpose in life – the purpose for which He created and gifted each of us, and a life

to which He calls us.⁴ We extract meaning from life by relating to and serving Him. Anything less is bound to result in frustration and despair. God, rather than us, must be at the center of our life in order to experience genuine purpose and meaning.⁵

In fact, our obsession with happiness – perceiving it to be the height of success, the mark of a life well-lived – is one of the significant obstacles to actually being happy. God has ordained a superior alternative for us: joy. By prioritizing happiness we – Millennials included – are missing out on the real treasure.

Happiness is an emotional state that is fleeting and circumstantial. It is dependent on our ability to facilitate that emotion, based on who we are and how we respond to situations and people. It comes and goes, sometimes unexpectedly or seemingly without reason. Even the definition of happiness is a moving target: what makes us happy today may not be enough tomorrow.

Joy, in contrast, is a lasting state of being, based on our connection with God and His principles. It is dependent upon our willingness to accept God’s

sovereignty over our lives, giving Him control and adopting His perspectives and purposes as our own. Joy is a more consistent state of well-being, providing a deeper sense of strength and assurance. It is the realization that things are well with your soul.⁶

One of the realities that baffles many young adults is that joy is most efficiently derived from obedience to God. While few Millennials perceive success to be founded on obedience to His principles, my past research has revealed that those who have pursued that route – sometimes out of the sheer lack of remaining alternatives – typically discover that the obedient life is, indeed, a more fulfilling and fruitful existence. People who seek to intensely live for and with God more often experience high levels of life fulfillment in life. Among the lessons they often divulge from their journey is the importance of giving rather than receiving. The data from this study confirms that most Millennials are open, if not enthusiastic, about serving others, so helping them to find their true purpose and to experience deeper meaning by blessing others has tremendous potential.



Afterword: A Personal Response from George Barna

Worldview and Identity

In that framework, the identity crisis that is devastating the Millennial cohort is due to an ill-conceived perspective about self. The worldly view is that we must have faith in ourselves, as discerning individuals and free (read: unrestricted) moral agents. As such, a person receives their identity from the attributes they choose to emphasize: gender, age, race, intelligence, education, income, personal accomplishments, titles, and so forth.

We tend to wrap our identity around characteristics that we believe will elevate our standing in the world. But that also means that our value will constantly change as the world shifts the attributes that it esteems, and as it re-evaluates where we stand in relation to other people. Like happiness, identity and value become moving targets.

The biblical worldview helps us to recognize that through a relationship with Jesus Christ, we are a new creation in God’s eyes – one that never loses its value.⁷ When we anchor our identity to being children of the living God and a disciple of the Lord of Life, we may always stand tall in the world, regardless of its shifting values and identity targets.

Thus, the current obsession with landing on our preferred and ideal sexual identity becomes a moot point. God determined our sexual identity from before the time we were conceived by our parents. In fact, as creatures designed by God for purposes He ordained before time, we have no authority – much less competence – to make that choice. Our sexual identity is a God-determined part of our unique personal profile that requires neither discussion nor self-determination.

This entire chapter of human history is reminiscent of a debate Abraham Lincoln had with a group of obstinate politicians in which the President displayed the folly of their reasoning. “Gentlemen, tell me this. How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg?” Before they could reply, he provided the answer. “Four legs, sirs, for calling a tail a leg does not make it a leg.”

Lincoln taught them a lesson about the discernment of reality. Contemporary arguments about sexual identity are founded on a similar misunderstanding. Choosing sexual identity based upon the emotion of the moment is divorced from the physical realities and eternal plans established by the Creator.

We are told that God has tenderly, carefully, and purposefully crafted us according to His intentions, that He “made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb.”⁸ This was not random or incidental; it was part of His larger plan for us individually and for us collectively, drawn from His inexhaustible reservoir of wisdom and love, and accomplished within the larger framework of the unfolding of His plan for humanity.

Rejecting His intent and living according to our own preferences and desires is rebellious living destined to produce hardship.⁹ When it comes to human sexuality, choosing an alternative, unnatural lifestyle or identity may satisfy the momentary desires of the heart or whims of the culture but they inevitably prove to be unsatisfying choices that deny our reflection of God’s own image and cause internal strife.¹⁰ The fact that He allows us to make those choices cannot be confused with His blessing of those choices.

Worldview and Relationships

Millennials also wrestle with numerous relational issues. That is nothing new to humankind.¹¹ But this generation may have applied a different combination of challenges to their efforts to develop and sustain meaningful relationships. Their emphasis in connecting with others seems to be placed on satisfying their personal needs rather than sharing experiences that meet the needs of both parties. They have acknowledged their intolerance of opposing ideas, a disrespect for humanity, and a willingness to respond to others on an emotional level regardless of the consequences.

“It is exceedingly difficult to build positive, lasting, love-based relationships without recognizing that human life has intrinsic value.”

But the history of relationships suggests that a different set of underlying principles foster positive relational outcomes. One of those that Millennials regard with skepticism is known as the Golden Rule – treating other people the way you want them to treat you. It is a simple but profound construct that has served humanity well since Jesus proposed it more than 2,000 years ago.¹² The popular modern-day alternative – expecting preferred, differential treatment based on personal desire – also has a long history – of failure.

The relational challenges confronting Millennials may well be associated with another fundamental misunderstanding: the definition of love. While modern society has defined love to be a feeling, love is actually a commitment to seek the best outcomes for the other person. God demonstrated genuine love by sacrificing Jesus Christ, His own son, to die for the horrific, hurtful choices and

actions of the people He created, enabling us to be reconciled to Him. As the human embodiment of true love we see that it is characterized by sacrifice, loyalty, consistency, patience, kindness, humility, selflessness, trust, and optimism.¹³ Some analysts have described Millennials as a tribe of narcissists; if so, their relationships are bound to be based on qualities that undermine lasting bonds with others.

Real love for others – that which is based on perseverance and commitment rather than feelings and circumstances – changes the essence

of a relationship. Whether the relationship in question is a friendship or a more intimate connection its chance of survival skyrockets if the foundation is love. But authentic love is a choice.

It is exceedingly difficult to build positive, lasting, love-based relationships without recognizing that human life has intrinsic value; that every human being deserves respect because they were created by God, in His likeness, for His purposes; and that tolerating divergent approaches to life is a prerequisite to seeing the lovable facets of others (without necessarily accepting those choices that are inappropriate). This and related surveys conducted by the author have identified these perspectives as being in conflict with the prevailing ethos of Millennials. Until that conflict is resolved, healthy and lasting relationships will remain an ongoing challenge to America’s young adults.

Afterword: **A Personal Response from George Barna**

Worldview and Mental Health

Research among psychologists, counselors, and psychiatrists parallels recent trends in conclusions from the pharmaceutical industry: increasing numbers of Americans are beset by anxiety, depression, and fear.

The National Institute of Mental Health reports that 21 percent of U.S. adults have some form of mental illness. Narrowing the scope to the younger half of the Millennial generation (i.e., ages 18 through 25), 29.4 percent are counted as having some type of mental disorder and 8.6 percent have a severe mental illness. Looking ahead, a shocking 49.5 percent of American adolescents (ages 13-18) are reported have one or more types of mental illness while 8.6 percent of them are described as harboring a “severe mental illness.”¹⁴ This situation amounts to a silent but life-changing crisis that is confronting – and reshaping – American society.

The mental and emotional health issues raised by this survey have enormous significance regarding the future of Millennials and the nation. While there are indisputably some physical issues that have created these complications for those struggling with mental and emotional issues, worldview certainly factors into how we address these matters.

It is likely that many young people are weighed down by anxieties resulting from their worldview. For instance, the widespread adoption of karma as a life philosophy is bound to produce anxiety and depression; always waiting to get what you deserve is a sword of Damocles hanging over your head! Advocates of karma contend that an impersonal spiritual force – “the universe” or other such descriptions – is responsible for the

outcomes in this inevitable, self-directed cycle of cause and effect.

But the biblical antidote to karma, of course, is the free gift of God’s grace through Jesus Christ. The promise is that through a life transforming, dedicated relationship with Jesus you do not get what you deserve, but instead receive life-giving gifts such as spiritual authority, forgiveness, eternal security, supernatural gifts and guidance, purpose, and much more as a consequence of your Christ connection.

In a world where karma is real, man determines his own future, based on the accumulation of his choices. In a world where God rules, God determines man’s future based on their relationship and the exorbitant love of our Creator.

Everyday circumstances can produce fear, particularly among those prone to bouts of anxiety and depression. Yes, some of that might be attributable to chemical imbalances that can be reduced through medication and exercise, but it is also likely that a biblical outlook on life will eliminate many of those fears and anxieties as well.

Consider a life in which there is no loving and omnipotent God looking out for you; in which there is no truth that is known, accessible, predictable, and reliable to influence your decisions and experiences; and there is nothing to hope for beyond your limited time on earth. Of course that philosophy of despair and detachment causes anxiety, depression and fear! That’s the perspective proposed by the human beings who concocted philosophies of life such as Marxism, postmodernism, secular humanism, nihilism, and other common worldviews.

The biblical worldview, in contrast, gives us the power, authority, wisdom and reason to live our life to the fullest. It is a worldview of hope, but not an unrealistic hope given the 2,000-plus years of testimonies of people just like you and me whose lives have been gloriously transformed by the presence, compassion, guidance and eternal preservation delivered through becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ and following the guidelines provided to us in the Bible. The divine Creator who gives us life and purpose loves us enough protect us even more adeptly than any laudable father on earth would do for his sons and daughters.¹⁵

Realistically, we have to realize that none of these choices – believing in the presence and power of God, in the saving love of Christ, in the truth principles in the Bible, and so forth – will fully shield us from hardship or even persecution.¹⁶ We will never have control over what goes on in our world. Yet, knowing that a sovereign God is in charge and active means that we do not need to be in control: He is there and can be trusted to take care of us in ways we cannot even fathom. That is one practical benefit of knowing God personally and loving Him: we receive His perfect love which dissolves all fear.¹⁷

Life is not the random series of events that millions of Millennials perceive it to be. How overwhelming life must be when that perception prevails. Thankfully, God not only has the power and will to control all things, but that He also has a reason for everything that He allows to happen. That understanding can be a major stress reliever.¹⁸

A Silent Mental Health Crisis?



29.4%

of younger Millennials (ages 18-25) are counted as having some type of mental disorder



8.6%

of younger Millennials (ages 18-25) report a severe mental illness



49.5%

of American adolescents (ages 13-18) are reported to have one or more types of mental illness

Afterword: A Personal Response from George Barna

Worldview and Faith

Naturally, all of these misperceptions about life spring from inadequate spiritual foundation. Millions of Millennials adopt spiritual ideas that unwittingly undermine their lives. Some of those critical views include the belief that there is no objective or absolute moral truth; you can earn your salvation by doing enough good deeds or being a good enough person; there is no omniscient, all-powerful supernatural being (e.g. God); and the Bible is just another book of religious teachings written by men. Accepting these erroneous ideas is harmful to our health and well-being. Eliminating God, the Bible, truth, sin, salvation through Christ, and other fundamental realities from our daily lives is as unfortunate as removing air, water, gravity, and light from our world would be: life without them can neither be successfully lived nor explained.

How different life is when you accept and follow the ways of the Creator – not out of ignorance or group-think but with the passion of someone who has studied human history, God’s principles and exhortations, and alternative ways of living and come to the conclusion that His way is best. It’s not surprising; after all, He provided the guidance found in the Bible as an act of love, setting us up for success, preparing and enabling us to thrive on earth if we simply follow the parameters He sets forth.

It may be that the greatest act of faith on earth is to believe that there is not an omniscient, all-powerful, supernatural deity who is responsible for creating and sustaining the universe. As the Bible notes, there is evidence of God’s existence

everywhere we look: from the beauty and grandeur of nature and the marvel of humanity to the intelligent and complex design of the universe.¹⁹ Mathematicians and scientists have studied the probability of the earth happening by chance, or humanity arising from slime and reported the odds as being minimal, at best. Historians have examined the hundreds of biblical prophecies and recognized the likelihood of those already fulfilled having proven to be true is infinitesimally small.²⁰

How comforting it is to be able to turn to God’s book of truths and discover how to live a productive, joyful, meaningful life. The personal testimonies of millions of followers of Christ throughout the last two millennia provide ample historical support for the veracity of the scriptures. But there are numerous ways of showing the reliability of the scriptures, too. All it takes is the willingness to do the homework and approach the information with an open mind.

“Eliminating God, the Bible, truth, sin, salvation through Christ, and other fundamental realities from our daily lives is as unfortunate as removing air, water, gravity, and light from our world would be.”

God set us free from the pressure of having to earn His favor, realizing that while our sins separate us from Him, only a relationship with Jesus Christ could repair that breach. Thankfully, we do not have to track our good deeds or seek to prove that we are good people; all we have to do is understand the consequences of our failure to live perfectly, and to rely upon the grace of God for forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal hope.

Knowing that 24 out of every 25 Millennials (yes, 96 percent) lack a biblical worldview is the paramount challenge facing the United States today. The most logical way to help Millennials succeed on earth is to help them refine their worldview. Their reliance upon syncretism – i.e., the blending of disparate elements from a variety of competing worldviews into a personalized, custom philosophy of life that is unique but muddled and misguided – is detrimental to their well-being. If we can assist in them grasping baseline truths about life, then perhaps these contingent issues can be resolved efficiently and effectively. Anything short of fixing their decision-making foundation will be little more than placing a band-aid on a gaping, gushing wound.



Afterword: A Personal Response from George Barna

Response to the Worldview Crisis

To address this crisis, a multi-part strategy will have to be carried out by the Church at-large. Some of the components of such a strategy might include the actions that follow.

- Millions of Millennials have no idea what a worldview is, whether or not they have one (they do), which worldview they possess, and so forth. One necessary action step is to increase public awareness and understanding about the basics of worldview (e.g., what it is, how it develops, why it matters, how it changes) and the numerous worldview alternatives that people, often unknowingly, are choosing from.
- Let's challenge theologically conservative churches, Bible-driven Christian schools and colleges, and people who possess a biblical worldview to intentionally, strategically, lovingly, and pragmatically educate the rest of the body of Christ on how to think and act biblically. Starting in-house – that is, with the body of Christ – makes strategic sense; if we cannot get our own house in order, we will waste our time trying to upgrade the rest of society. Remember, just 6 percent of adults have a biblical worldview, but the statistics are almost as disastrous among believers: just 19 percent of born-again Christians (not self-identified but theologically-defined born again individuals) have a biblical worldview as well.
- Although the Bible exhorts parents to embrace the primary responsibility for teaching their children biblical content, most of them don't. What would happen to the United States if parents loved their children enough that they owned that responsibility? How many lives would be changed if parents were dedicated to ensuring that their children knew biblical principles and applied them to all of the decisions they make?
- Imagine the consequences of raising up and supporting cultural leaders who will use their influence to challenge public decisions – laws, media reports, and other public pronouncements affecting society's choices – and promote a biblical approach to the situations in question. Bear in mind that with many public leaders, adopting biblical approaches do not need to be labeled “biblical solutions” since that would inflame the public more than inspire them at this point in history. But enabling them to see the wisdom of principles that are rooted in the scriptures will be more valuable than focusing on “who gets credit” for those principles.
- Believers with good intentions have thus far struggled to effectively bring biblical principles into public conversation and mainstream communications. To do so we may need to consider new ways, new language, and new

ambassadors for this process. But we must also encourage our pastors to preach apologetically – that is, exegeting God's word consistently and faithfully for His people. One series of studies I have conducted showed that conservative Christians are among the least likely adults in America to discuss major political and social issues because they do not know what the Bible teaches about the issues of the day. Such ignorance defiles the nation – and is a disgrace to our churches. But that is something we can easily fix.

- Harkening back to a fundamental research principle – you get what you measure – another valuable action step will be to introduce and promote helpful ways of assessing peoples' worldview. With that knowledge we can then focus on ways to alter existing worldview components to equip individuals to make better choices and to have a more holistic and internally consistent philosophy of life.



Afterword: A Personal Response from George Barna

Investing in Millennials – and Beyond

My experience as a researcher and strategist in a variety of settings – business, non-profit, military, government, church, school, and family systems, among others – indicates that our efforts to help Millennials to grow will fail unless we genuinely care about them as individuals, and demonstrate that we care in practical and tangible ways. Initially this might mean showing an appreciation of their admirable qualities (i.e., character) and individual strengths. We can confidently assume that they have heard enough about being snowflakes, slackers, narcissists, entitled, shallow, whiners, and self-centered.

What can you do today to reflect God’s love for them, to compassionately and substantively bless their heart and soul? For the kinds of reasons identified in this study, Millennials are a generation in distress. Providing a loving and healing presence represents not only a biblical worldview in action, but will also have a dynamic positive influence on them considering the value of living God’s way.

“Model a biblical worldview rather than just talking about it...the ability and determination to consistently live like Christ – is the end game.”

How can you be that presence? Model a biblical worldview rather than just talking about it. Rote answers to tough questions and personal challenges won’t get the job done. Rattling off memorized responses from a catechism won’t impress, much less change, anyone. Consistently putting biblical principles into practice, however, will get noticed – and, most likely, considered and perhaps even imitated.

A biblical worldview starts with embracing biblical principles so that you can think like Jesus. But that’s not the end game. You need to think like Jesus before you can act like Him. And that – the ability and determination to consistently live like Christ – is the end game.

Attributions

¹ Colossians 3:23-25

² Source: American Worldview Inventory 2021, Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, 2021; accessible at www.culturalresearchcenter.com

³ Mark 12:29-30

⁴ Jeremiah 29:11

⁵ Jeremiah 29:13

⁶ Nehemiah 8:10; James 1:2-4

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁸ Psalm 139:13

⁹ James 1:14-15

¹⁰ Romans 1:24-27

¹¹ Ecclesiastes 1:9-11

¹² Matthew 7:12

¹³ 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

¹⁴ Mental Illness,” National Institute of Mental Health; accessed September 1, 2021; https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness?source=your_stories_page

¹⁵ Matthew 7:11

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 2:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 14:12-13

¹⁷ 1 John 4:13-18

¹⁸ Isaiah 14:24; Proverb 16:4; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:15

¹⁹ Romans 1:19-20

²⁰ “Probability of Prophecies Fulfilled,” accessed October 12, 2021, at <https://bible.org/illustration/probability-prophecies-fulfilled>

Appendix

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Research Methodology

This survey was developed and implemented during August 2021 for Foundations of Freedom. The research objective was to obtain insights into the Millennial generation, defined as all adults born from 1984 through 2002. Toward that end, the survey question modules were developed to explore aspects of lifestyle, politics, faith, relationships, and emotional conditions. The information was garnered to be shared with the public in the hope of educating people about Millennials; motivating them to be supportive of the generation; and activating those people in practical and tangible ways.

Toward that end, a survey questionnaire was developed, tested and deployed with a nationwide sample of the general public, aged 18 and over. Individuals who fit within the Millennial age bracket (18 to 37 years of age at the time of the survey) were qualified to complete the survey. The sampling and data collection procedures were designed to provide a base of respondents who basic profile reflected that of the Millennial population in relation to factors such as geographic dispersion, race, and gender.

The data were collected using online capabilities. The survey questionnaire contained 71 questions.

The median length of a completed survey was 17 minutes. The 600 survey respondents were promised anonymity and that their answers would remain confidential.

The research was developed, managed, and analyzed by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, a non-profit research institute associated with the university. The research was led by Dr. George Barna, a professor at the university and Director of Research for the Center. The Cultural Research Center, which specializes in research related to worldview and to cultural transformation, is located on the university's campus in Glendale, Arizona, which is in the Phoenix metropolitan area. For more information about the Center, or to access reports based on its research, visit the Center's website at www.culturalresearchcenter.com.

Some of the questions and data appearing in this study have been drawn from the *American Worldview Inventory*, an annual nationwide assessment of worldview conducted by the Cultural Research Center; that information was used with the permission of the Center.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

First, there are just a few questions we will use for classification purposes.

Which of these categories best describes your age group?

18 to 20.....15%
21 to 24.....20%
25 to 29.....26%
30 to 34.....25%
35 to 3715%
38 to 45.....N/A
46 to 54.....N/A
55 or olderN/A

What do you think of as your primary racial or ethnic background?

White/Caucasian55%
Black/African-American14%
Hispanic/Latino21%
Asian/Pacific Islander6%
American Indian/Native American.....1%
Other2%

What sex are you?

Male.....50%
Female49%
Other/prefer not to answer.....2%

What state do you currently live in?

Northeast.....17%
South38%
Midwest20%
West.....25%

In general, how would you describe your views on the following matters:

	Progressive/Liberal			Conservative		
	Very	Somewhat	In-Between	Somewhat	Very	Don't Know
Fiscal issues, such as taxes and government spending	15%	19%	27%	16%	14%	9%
Social issues, like abortion and same-sex marriage	22%	18%	21%	13%	17%	10%
The size, reach, and power of government	15%	17%	28%	14%	16%	10%

Are you registered to vote from your current address?

Yes73%
No22%
Don't Know.....5%

Thinking about your life and commitments, would you describe yourself as:

	Yes	No
Deeply committed to practicing your faith	52%	48%
Believe all religious faiths are of equal value	74%	27%
Prefer socialism to capitalism	48%	52%
Often feel anxious, depressed, or unsafe	54%	46%
An American patriot	55%	45%
LGBTQ	30%	70%
Searching for your purpose in life	75%	25%

Generally speaking, which one of the descriptions listed below best summarizes how you think of yourself these days?

Democrat40%
Republican.....21%
Libertarian.....4%
Democratic Socialist8%
Independent (i.e., registered but no party affiliation)18%
Some other affiliation.....1%
None3%
Don't know5%

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way things are going in:

	Very	Somewhat	Not Too	Not At All	Don't Know
The nation	15%	28%	28%	22%	6%
Your career	27%	32%	20%	15%	6%
Your spiritual life	31%	34%	19%	6%	10%
Your intimate relationship(s)	38%	25%	15%	15%	8%
Your friendships	35%	33%	17%	12%	3%
Your personal finances	22%	34%	23%	19%	2%
Your personal health	30%	37%	20%	10%	3%
Your community	23%	40%	20%	11%	5%
Your life, overall	29%	37%	20%	11%	3%

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Which one or two issues do you consider to be the most important issues facing the country today?

Coronavirus/COVID-19 management (including vaccinations)	24%	Government – size, authority, performance, accountability.....	2%
Climate change/Global warming/Environmental care	20%	Religious freedom/Persecution – in the US	2%
Discrimination – racial, ethnic	20%	Family policies and support.....	2%
Abortion/Right to life	16%	Foreign policy	2%
Economy – growth, jobs, taxes, trade	15%	Marriage and family breakdown	2%
Discrimination – sexual, gender	10%	Income inequality and redistribution.....	1%
Government – integrity, corruption, trustworthiness, accountability	7%	Religious freedom/Persecution – global	1%
Health insurance/Health care	6%	Social Security and Medicare	1%
Crime solutions/Law and order	6%	National defense and security/Military/Terrorism	1%
China – policies related to China.....	5%	National values and morals	1%
Human trafficking/Sex trafficking	4%	National unity; political intolerance	1%
Discrimination – other (e.g., age, economic, religious)	3%	Welfare programs and other federal entitlement programs	1%
Environment – policies and programs	3%	Government – partisan divide, legislative gridlock, productivity	1%
Court nominations and appointments – federal courts.....	3%	Rule of law/Constitutional adherence	1%
Government – spending, deficit, debt, balanced budget.....	3%	Islam – policies related to Islamic nations	1%
Gun policies.....	3%	Russia – policies related to Russia.....	1%
Immigration policies, including border security.....	3%	Infrastructure – roads, waterways, rail, school facilities, electrical grid, etc.....	1%
Police – funding, practices, performance, accountability.....	3%	Media standards and compliance with laws ...	1%
Educational reform.....	2%	Senior citizen support	1%
Poverty reduction, programs, policies	2%	Israel – policies related to Israel.....	*

Which, if any, of the following actions did you, personally, engage in during the past month?

	Yes	No
Volunteered your time to help people in your community	51%	49%
Attended a Christian church service or worship event	43%	57%
Talked to people outside of your family to try to persuade them to adopt your position on a current social, moral, or political issue	44%	56%
Donated money to a community organization, other than a church or religious center	48%	52%
Donated money to a church, religious center, or faith-based organization	40%	60%
Spent at least an hour, in total, reading from the Bible	40%	60%
Intentionally refused to buy a company’s product or service because of their position on an issue that matters to you	47%	53%
Personally participated in a protest march, rally, or demonstration	33%	67%
Avoided interacting with someone because it was likely to produce conflict	64%	36%

Some people talk about being willing to sacrifice their life for something. Is there anything so important to you that you would be willing to sacrifice your life in order to save, defend, or protect that thing?

Yes	70%
No	18%
Don’t Know.....	14%

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Which, if any, of the following would you be willing to give up your life to save, defend, or protect?
(BASE: the 69% who said “yes” to prior question)

	Definitely	Maybe	No	Don’t know
Your country	38%	32%	26%	5%
Your religious faith	42%	24%	27%	7%
Family members	77%	16%	7%	*
Your most cherished possession(s)	35%	30%	31%	4%
Friends	46%	35%	15%	4%
Your freedom	59%	28%	11%	2%

What is your overall opinion of each of the following?

	Very Positive	Mostly Positive	A Little Positive	Neutral	A Little Negative	Mostly Negative	Very Negative	No Opinion
Conservatives	13%	8%	12%	27%	13%	8%	8%	10%
Liberals/progressives	10%	12%	14%	24%	9%	8%	12%	11%
Christianity	26%	15%	9%	19%	9%	5%	10%	8%
Atheism	8%	7%	10%	31%	11%	8%	12%	13%
Socialism	10%	12%	11%	27%	10%	8%	10%	12%
Democracy	18%	17%	15%	23%	9%	5%	6%	9%
United States of America	23%	16%	14%	17%	12%	8%	6%	4%
The Bible	29%	12%	10%	21%	8%	5%	9%	7%
Jesus Christ	39%	12%	8%	17%	6%	4%	6%	8%

In general, how much do you trust each of the following types of people to tell the truth or to do what is right?

	Always or Almost Always	Sometimes	Not Too Often	Never	Don’t Know
Pastors of Christian churches	26%	28%	23%	14%	9%
Journalists	17%	36%	28%	11%	9%
Elected government officials	15%	28%	32%	17%	8%
College professors	27%	39%	18%	6%	10%
Your parents	46%	32%	12%	6%	4%
Entertainment celebrities	13%	27%	34%	18%	8%
Authors of non-fiction books	18%	39%	22%	8%	12%
Your friends	36%	40%	16%	4%	4%
Popular social media personalities	15%	27%	31%	19%	8%

Which three things listed below, if any, would be extremely desirable changes that would make your life substantially better than it is now? Please list no more than three items.

Relationships

Better, deeper friendships	28%
Inclusion in a community that knows, appreciates, and respects you	12%
Few tensions with others regarding your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation	13%
A wider circle of reliable and enjoyable friends.....	9%

Money

Greater financial ease/comfort	37%
Less debt to pay off.....	15%
A better-paying job.....	17%

Health

Better physical health.....	17%
Higher self-esteem	10%
Better mental and emotional health.....	16%

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Faith & Religion

A better relationship with God14%
Having a religious community that better meets your needs 4%
Living your faith more consistently..... 7%
Identifying a religious faith you want to commit to 4%
Certainty about what will happen to you when you die 2%

Personal Development

Completing more advanced education 5%
A more fulfilling career/job 8%
Deeper understanding of what’s happening in the world..... 7%

Lifestyle

Experiencing a more satisfying sex life 6%
Better housing 5%
Living in a different town, city or state..... 7%
More pleasing leisure activities, travel, or vacations 5%
More fulfilling hobbies or leisure activities 3%

Family

A better relationship with your parents 7%
A better relationship with your spouse/significant other 10%
A better relationship with your children 5%
Having children 4%

Other

Other: *%
Nothing; your life is great just as it is..... 5%

Briefly switching the focus to your spiritual life, what faith tradition, if any, do you relate to the most closely?

Christian (any type) 65%
 Christian – Evangelical Protestant..... 14%
 Christian – Pentecostal/Charismatic..... 6%
 Christian – Mainline Protestant 12%
 Christian – Catholic 21%
 Christian – Some other tradition 3%
 Christian – No particular tradition 8%
Jewish 1%
Mormon..... 1%
Eastern tradition 2%
Islam/Muslim..... 3%
Other faith tradition: 1%
Do not associate with any religious faith or religious tradition 27%

Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don’t Know
Identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time	56%	22%	22%
You believe in the marriage of one man to one woman because it is God’s only acceptable plan for humanity, applicable to all cultures on earth	47%	36%	17%
Your most trusted source of moral guidance is your feelings, experiences, or input from family and friends	63%	19%	18%
When you die you are certain you will go to Heaven but only because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior	46%	29%	25%
The Bible is the actual, true word of God that is a relevant and reliable guide for your life these days	46%	31%	23%

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

There are many different beliefs about God or a higher power.
Which of these descriptions comes closest to what you, personally, believe?

- Everyone is god 5%
- God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential or a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach.....12%
- There are many gods, each with different purposes and authority..... 8%
- God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect and just creator of the universe who rules that universe today 35%
- A higher power may exist, but nobody really knows for certain 25%
- There is no such thing as God..... 5%
- Don't know 11%

The remaining few questions will be used for statistical purposes only.

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Attended grade school or part of high school 7%
- Graduated from high school/finished GED 30%
- Attended trade or vocational school..... 5%
- Attended college but did not graduate15%
- Graduated from a two-year/junior/community college 9%
- Graduated from a four-year college/university..... 20%
- Did some graduate studies after completing college 3%
- Completed a graduate degree12%

Which of these best describes your current marital status?

- Married to your original spouse.....31%
- Remarried after a divorce 3%
- Remarried after being widowed 2%
- Single, have never been married.....51%
- Separated..... 2%
- Divorced, currently single..... 2%
- Living with a domestic partner 9%
- Widowed, currently single1%

Are you the parent of one or more children under the age of 18?

- Yes40%
- No60%



CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Ideological self-descriptions

		Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
		Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Fiscal issues	Liberal	36%	33%	32%	35%	32%	35%	40%
	Moderate	21%	32%	30%	25%	24%	26%	29%
	Conservative	24%	28%	26%	32%	37%	28%	19%
Social issues	Liberal	38%	41%	38%	41%	38%	33%	44%
	Moderate	18%	24%	24%	19%	20%	22%	20%
	Conservative	35%	25%	23%	33%	33%	31%	23%
Government issues	Liberal	33%	31%	26%	36%	34%	29%	30%
	Moderate	21%	34%	33%	25%	25%	23%	33%
	Conservative	40%	22%	29%	31%	33%	32%	27%

		Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
		No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Fiscal issues	Liberal	30%	38%	44%	37%	36%	26%	37%	35%	34%
	Moderate	30%	23%	17%	18%	28%	35%	24%	22%	30%
	Conservative	27%	34%	38%	32%	26%	31%	33%	37%	25%
Social issues	Liberal	33%	45%	53%	41%	39%	39%	41%	40%	40%
	Moderate	26%	20%	13%	16%	25%	23%	17%	19%	22%
	Conservative	27%	30%	32%	33%	27%	28%	33%	34%	26%
Government issues	Liberal	31%	32%	40%	31%	31%	34%	35%	34%	31%
	Moderate	29%	29%	21%	25%	26%	31%	29%	25%	29%
	Conservative	27%	33%	36%	32%	32%	24%	31%	35%	27%

Ideological self-descriptions (continued)

		Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
		Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Fiscal issues	Liberal	34%	37%	34%	37%	38%	36%	33%
	Moderate	27%	19%	28%	23%	28%	21%	32%
	Conservative	32%	39%	22%	34%	26%	37%	24%
Social issues	Liberal	39%	40%	41%	38%	44%	36%	43%
	Moderate	20%	17%	24%	16%	21%	16%	25%
	Conservative	33%	35%	18%	40%	24%	41%	19%
Government issues	Liberal	33%	39%	30%	34%	34%	32%	33%
	Moderate	27%	15%	33%	21%	31%	22%	32%
	Conservative	32%	39%	23%	36%	29%	38%	24%

Self-descriptions

		Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
		Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Deeply committed: practicing faith		57%	48%	47%	55%	51%	63%	52%
All religious faiths are of equal value		72%	75%	73%	74%	78%	64%	73%
Prefer socialism to capitalism		49%	46%	46%	49%	50%	49%	49%
Often anxious, depressed, or unsafe		41%	67%	59%	51%	56%	60%	49%
An American patriot		62%	49%	46%	60%	64%	43%	48%
LGBTQ		23%	36%	39%	25%	29%	37%	30%
Searching for your purpose in life		71%	79%	76%	74%	76%	79%	72%

CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Self-descriptions (continued)

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Deeply committed: practicing faith	46%	58%	67%	53%	55%	40%	56%	61%	46%
All religious faiths are of equal value	71%	75%	75%	76%	72%	75%	73%	80%	69%
Prefer socialism to capitalism	45%	51%	65%	59%	46%	45%	47%	58%	41%
Often anxious, depressed, or unsafe	59%	47%	40%	54%	58%	50%	51%	54%	55%
An American patriot	55%	62%	58%	55%	54%	54%	57%	63%	50%
LGBTQ	34%	23%	21%	23%	30%	35%	31%	30%	31%
Searching for your purpose in life	74%	76%	72%	74%	76%	72%	76%	77%	74%

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Deeply committed: practicing faith	63%	67%	21%	71%	38%	73%	35%
All religious faiths are of equal value	75%	79%	69%	78%	70%	75%	73%
Prefer socialism to capitalism	47%	52%	48%	53%	43%	53%	43%
Often anxious, depressed, or unsafe	53%	40%	62%	52%	58%	53%	55%
An American patriot	61%	56%	42%	63%	47%	63%	48%
LGBTQ	27%	29%	38%	28%	32%	27%	33%
Searching for your purpose in life	75%	79%	73%	78%	72%	78%	73%

Satisfaction with the way things are going in each listed area of their life
(Responses indicate percent who are “very satisfied”)

	Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
	Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
The nation	23%	8%	6%	20%	18%	9%	16%
Your career	36%	19%	23%	30%	29%	25%	26%
Your spiritual life	35%	27%	23%	35%	35%	28%	28%
Your intimate relationship(s)	42%	33%	35%	39%	47%	26%	31%
Your friendships	41%	30%	31%	37%	39%	25%	39%
Your personal finances	30%	14%	17%	24%	26%	21%	15%
Your personal health	37%	23%	25%	33%	32%	30%	29%
Your community	31%	16%	15%	28%	26%	18%	24%
Your life, overall	37%	21%	24%	31%	34%	21%	28%

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
The nation	9%	24%	29%	15%	14%	10%	21%	24%	9%
Your career	19%	38%	46%	35%	24%	25%	29%	40%	19%
Your spiritual life	26%	42%	33%	39%	31%	23%	31%	42%	23%
Your intimate relationship(s)	34%	43%	49%	30%	43%	33%	39%	49%	31%
Your friendships	32%	37%	40%	38%	37%	31%	34%	42%	30%
Your personal finances	16%	30%	36%	25%	20%	20%	23%	33%	14%
Your personal health	26%	39%	39%	35%	29%	24%	33%	40%	24%
Your community	19%	29%	36%	26%	21%	23%	25%	35%	16%
Your life, overall	24%	38%	39%	30%	27%	23%	35%	36%	24%

CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Satisfaction with the way things are going in each listed area of their life (continued)
(Responses indicate percent who are “very satisfied”)

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
The nation	18%	23%	6%	24%	7%	23%	9%
Your career	29%	46%	17%	40%	20%	38%	18%
Your spiritual life	32%	42%	23%	41%	26%	42%	21%
Your intimate relationship(s)	39%	44%	33%	45%	35%	45%	32%
Your friendships	39%	48%	23%	45%	26%	44%	28%
Your personal finances	25%	37%	9%	34%	13%	33%	13%
Your personal health	32%	42%	21%	40%	24%	39%	22%
Your community	27%	35%	10%	32%	19%	33%	15%
Your life, overall	31%	40%	18%	42%	17%	39%	20%

The most important issues facing the country today (10 top-rated issues)

	Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
	Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Abortion/Right to life	13%	19%	21%	14%	21%	9%	15%
China – policies related to China	6%	4%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Climate change/ Global warming Environmental care	18%	22%	24%	19%	21%	12%	21%
Coronavirus/COVID-19 management (including vaccinations)	28%	19%	20%	25%	24%	18%	26%
Crime solutions/Law and order	7%	4%	3%	7%	6%	7%	2%
Discrimination – sexual, gender	9%	10%	12%	8%	10%	10%	12%
Discrimination – racial, ethnic	16%	22%	24%	17%	17%	25%	23%
Economy – growth, jobs, taxes, trade	18%	12%	6%	20%	18%	12%	10%
Government – integrity, corruption, trustworthiness, accountability	8%	6%	6%	7%	8%	2%	6%
Health insurance/Health care	6%	6%	4%	7%	6%	2%	7%

The most important issues facing the country today (10 top-rated issues – continued)

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Abortion/Right to life	20%	12%	11%	18%	20%	14%	11%	17%	16%
China – policies related to China	4%	4%	7%	2%	4%	10%	5%	5%	5%
Climate change/Global warming Environmental care	17%	25%	14%	20%	19%	19%	25%	20%	21%
Coronavirus/COVID-19 management (including vaccinations)	19%	26%	40%	27%	19%	19%	31%	28%	21%
Crime solutions/Law and order	4%	7%	11%	8%	4%	7%	5%	7%	5%
Discrimination – sexual, gender	10%	10%	6%	12%	7%	12%	11%	12%	8%
Discrimination – racial, ethnic	21%	19%	18%	19%	22%	16%	19%	17%	22%
Economy – growth, jobs, taxes, trade	13%	18%	17%	13%	17%	20%	10%	17%	14%
Government – integrity, corruption, trustworthiness, accountability	8%	2%	7%	5%	8%	5%	7%	4%	8%
Health insurance/Health care	5%	7%	7%	5%	7%	8%	3%	6%	6%

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Abortion/Right to life	15%	25%	16%	21%	14%	19%	14%
China – policies related to China	5%	15%	3%	3%	10%	4%	6%
Climate change/ Global warming Environmental care	18%	25%	26%	15%	25%	16%	24%
Coronavirus/COVID-19 management (including vaccinations)	25%	33%	18%	27%	19%	27%	21%
Crime solutions/Law and order	6%	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%	5%
Discrimination – sexual, gender							
Discrimination – racial, ethnic	19%	19%	21%	19%	19%	19%	20%
Economy – growth, jobs, taxes, trade	16%	14%	13%	15%	15%	17%	14%
Government – integrity, corruption, trustworthiness, accountability	5%	8%	10%	3%	13%	3%	10%
Health insurance/Health care	6%	6%	5%	8%	3%	7%	5%

CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Actions personally engaged in during the past month:

	Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
	Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Volunteered your time to help people in your community	58%	44%	49%	52%	53%	56%	50%
Attended a Christian church service or worship event	49%	36%	37%	45%	44%	49%	37%
Talked to people outside of your family to try to persuade them to adopt your position on a current social, moral, or political issue	51%	38%	39%	47%	44%	51%	39%
Donated money to a community organization, other than a church or religious center	50%	44%	43%	50%	46%	58%	51%
Donated money to a church, religious center, or faith-based organization	47%	34%	34%	44%	38%	53%	42%
Spent at least an hour, in total, reading from the Bible	48%	33%	32%	44%	39%	47%	40%
Intentionally refused to buy a company’s product or service because of their position on an issue that matters to you	51%	42%	42%	49%	48%	48%	44%
Personally participated in a protest march, rally, or demonstration	37%	27%	31%	33%	32%	38%	35%
Avoided interacting with someone because it was likely to produce conflict	63%	65%	69%	62%	66%	62%	61%

Actions personally engaged in during the past month: (continued)

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Volunteered your time to help people in your community	45%	57%	67%	53%	53%	41%	53%	60%	45%
Attended a Christian church service or worship event	37%	52%	58%	36%	45%	36%	48%	54%	35%
Talked to people outside of your family to try to persuade them to adopt your position on a current social, moral, or political issue	35%	53%	63%	44%	46%	40%	46%	56%	36%
Donated money to a community organization, other than a church or religious center	36%	60%	67%	51%	46%	43%	51%	63%	37%
Donated money to a church, religious center, or faith-based organization	32%	47%	58%	38%	43%	29%	46%	54%	31%
Spent at least an hour, in total, reading from the Bible	32%	48%	60%	40%	44%	29%	41%	51%	32%
Intentionally refused to buy a company’s product or service because of their position on an issue that matters to you	41%	53%	60%	48%	44%	46%	50%	50%	44%
Personally participated in a protest march, rally, or demonstration	29%	38%	50%	29%	35%	29%	35%	42%	26%
Avoided interacting with someone because it was likely to produce conflict	66%	63%	67%	56%	67%	61%	69%	67%	63%

CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Actions personally engaged in during the past month: (continued)

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Volunteered your time to help people in your community	56%	50%	39%	62%	45%	65%	39%
Attended a Christian church service or worship event	55%	48%	11%	59%	28%	64%	24%
Talked to people outside of your family to try to persuade them to adopt your position on a current social, moral, or political issue	47%	58%	34%	54%	42%	54%	36%
Donated money to a community organization, other than a church or religious center	53%	52%	32%	57%	43%	60%	37%
Donated money to a church, religious center, or faith-based organization	50%	52%	13%	58%	26%	60%	23%
Spent at least an hour, in total, reading from the Bible	51%	46%	11%	59%	24%	60%	22%
Intentionally refused to buy a company’s product or service because of their position on an issue that matters to you	49%	50%	39%	52%	47%	50%	44%
Personally participated in a protest march, rally, or demonstration	36%	39%	21%	42%	26%	41%	25%
Avoided interacting with someone because it was likely to produce conflict	64%	62%	66%	64%	65%	67%	62%

Overall opinion of words or phrases

(Positive indicates “very” or “mostly” positive. Negative indicates “very” or “mostly” negative.)

		Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
		Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Conservatives	Positive	28%	14%	15%	24%	27%	17%	14%
	Negative	18%	15%	20%	15%	16%	18%	19%
Liberals/progressives	Positive	25%	18%	21%	23%	24%	18%	17%
	Negative	24%	17%	16%	23%	26%	9%	18%
Christianity	Positive	43%	38%	41%	39%	45%	46%	32%
	Negative	17%	13%	16%	14%	14%	17%	14%
Atheism	Positive	18%	12%	18%	14%	18%	14%	11%
	Negative	22%	18%	13%	24%	20%	23%	20%
Socialism	Positive	28%	16%	17%	25%	23%	21%	23%
	Negative	23%	12%	13%	20%	21%	16%	10%
Democracy	Positive	42%	26%	29%	37%	38%	29%	30%
	Negative	12%	9%	9%	12%	13%	10%	6%
United States of America	Positive	50%	27%	28%	44%	44%	36%	29%
	Negative	12%	17%	19%	12%	12%	20%	18%
The Bible	Positive	45%	37%	37%	43%	44%	45%	37%
	Negative	15%	12%	18%	11%	14%	12%	14%
Jesus Christ	Positive	55%	49%	52%	52%	54%	62%	47%
	Negative	10%	9%	10%	9%	9%	8%	12%

CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Overall opinion of words or phrases (continued)
(Positive indicates “very” or “mostly” positive. Negative indicates “very” or “mostly” negative.)

		Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
		No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Conservatives	Positive	17%	23%	33%	20%	23%	14%	24%	26%	18%
	Negative	13%	18%	26%	23%	14%	15%	19%	17%	17%
Liberals/Progressives	Positive	16%	23%	39%	20%	23%	21%	23%	26%	19%
	Negative	16%	26%	28%	19%	21%	22%	21%	22%	19%
Christianity	Positive	32%	45%	50%	34%	44%	41%	37%	45%	37%
	Negative	15%	16%	15%	14%	13%	19%	13%	14%	15%
Atheism	Positive	15%	15%	19%	14%	17%	12%	16%	19%	13%
	Negative	15%	25%	28%	21%	17%	19%	25%	22%	19%
Socialism	Positive	16%	26%	43%	17%	19%	18%	26%	29%	17%
	Negative	12%	27%	21%	18%	16%	18%	19%	19%	17%
Democracy	Positive	28%	44%	51%	36%	34%	37%	32%	39%	32%
	Negative	8%	12%	15%	11%	9%	10%	13%	13%	9%
United States of America	Positive	34%	43%	56%	41%	37%	35%	41%	47%	32%
	Negative	13%	8%	17%	11%	15%	14%	15%	12%	15%
The Bible	Positive	34%	48%	60%	34%	47%	35%	41%	47%	37%
	Negative	15%	12%	17%	16%	10%	15%	15%	13%	14%
Jesus Christ	Positive	48%	55%	68%	46%	60%	46%	48%	58%	48%
	Negative	7%	12%	10%	10%	6%	11%	14%	11%	8%

Overall opinion of words or phrases (continued)
(Positive indicates “very” or “mostly” positive. Negative indicates “very” or “mostly” negative.)

		Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
		Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Conservatives	Positive	14%	27%	12%	29%	15%	30%	13%
	Negative	14%	27%	22%	15%	26%	14%	19%
Liberals/Progressives	Positive	23%	23%	19%	26%	21%	27%	18%
	Negative	23%	29%	13%	23%	22%	25%	17%
Christianity	Positive	56%	27%	5%	62%	22%	54%	20%
	Negative	9%	21%	25%	11%	26%	10%	19%
Atheism	Positive	13%	18%	20%	14%	23%	14%	15%
	Negative	26%	21%	6%	30%	8%	31%	10%
Socialism	Positive	28%	23%	16%	27%	20%	29%	15%
	Negative	22%	14%	8%	21%	18%	21%	14%
Democracy	Positive	36%	44%	28%	40%	32%	39%	31%
	Negative	11%	19%	7%	13%	13%	14%	7%
United States of America	Positive	44%	46%	23%	40%	28%	53%	26%
	Negative	13%	19%	14%	13%	18%	13%	15%
The Bible	Positive	55%	42%	7%	64%	18%	66%	19%
	Negative	8%	19%	24%	9%	24%	10%	15%
Jesus Christ	Positive	69%	25%	19%	62%	31%	74%	33%
	Negative	6%	23%	13%	9%	16%	8%	11%

How much the respondent has in the types of people listed to tell the truth or to do what is right.
(Responses show those who replied “Always or Almost Always”.)

	Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
	Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Pastors of Christian churches	30%	21%	22%	27%	31%	24%	20%
Journalists	20%	14%	9%	21%	20%	13%	14%
Elected government officials	21%	8%	10%	18%	17%	21%	8%
College professors	31%	23%	27%	27%	29%	20%	25%
Your parents	46%	46%	46%	47%	53%	31%	43%
Entertainment celebrities	19%	8%	7%	16%	17%	9%	7%
Authors of non-fiction books	23%	14%	18%	19%	20%	16%	15%
Your friends	35%	36%	32%	38%	40%	31%	33%
Popular social media personalities	19%	11%	10%	17%	17%	16%	12%

CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

How much the respondent has in the types of people listed to tell the truth or to do what is right.
(Responses show those who replied “Always or Almost Always” – continued.)

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Pastors of Christian churches	19%	34%	32%	28%	28%	19%	25%	37%	18%
Journalists	11%	20%	29%	24%	14%	13%	19%	24%	12%
Elected government officials	11%	16%	29%	18%	12%	10%	21%	24%	8%
College professors	22%	36%	36%	21%	31%	19%	31%	28%	26%
Your parents	41%	48%	58%	52%	48%	46%	40%	48%	45%
Entertainment celebrities	9%	17%	26%	16%	12%	9%	16%	20%	8%
Authors of non-fiction books	17%	20%	31%	15%	20%	18%	19%	22%	1%
Your friends	30%	42%	46%	34%	37%	36%	35%	38%	3%
Popular social media personalities	14%	20%	25%	18%	14%	12%	15%	22%	10%

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Pastors of Christian churches	34%	19%	6%	39%	13%	43%	11%
Journalists	19%	25%	8%	21%	14%	19%	15%
Elected government officials	17%	19%	7%	21%	11%	23%	8%
College professors	30%	35%	18%	36%	21%	34%	21%
Your parents	48%	58%	38%	52%	37%	51%	43%
Entertainment celebrities	16%	15%	4%	21%	7%	21%	6%
Authors of non-fiction books	19%	33%	11%	23%	17%	22%	15%
Your friends	36%	37%	34%	39%	31%	41%	31%
Popular social media personalities	17%	19%	7%	23%	8%	24%	7%

The changes listed that were identified by respondents as being “extremely desirable changes that would make your life substantially better than it is now.”

	Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
	Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Better, deeper friendships	29%	28%	31%	27%	29%	33%	21%
Inclusion in a community that knows, appreciates, and respects you	15%	10%	12%	13%	11%	15%	13%
Few tensions with others regarding your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation	13%	13%	12%	13%	11%	17%	17%
Greater financial ease/comfort	41%	34%	33%	39%	41%	33%	27%
Less debt to pay off	13%	18%	13%	17%	16%	14%	16%
A better-paying job	16%	18%	20%	15%	17%	9%	24%
Better physical health	17%	16%	12%	20%	18%	9%	21%
Higher self-esteem	11%	10%	12%	9%	9%	12%	11%
Better mental and emotional health	11%	20%	19%	15%	16%	8%	20%
A better relationship with God	16%	13%	13%	15%	16%	20%	10%
A better relationship with your spouse/significant other	9%	12%	10%	10%	11%	14%	10%



CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

The changes listed that were identified by respondents as being “extremely desirable changes that would make your life substantially better than it is now.” (continued)

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Better, deeper friendships	29%	29%	35%	35%	29%	25%	25%	33%	26%
Inclusion in a community that knows, appreciates, and respects you	12%	15%	13%	14%	14%	7%	13%	14%	11%
Few tensions with others regarding your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation	13%	13%	17%	13%	13%	13%	13%	14%	12%
Greater financial ease/comfort	37%	33%	38%	42%	38%	38%	33%	39%	36%
Less debt to pay off	12%	23%	17%	15%	17%	15%	13%	14%	16%
A better-paying job	20%	15%	13%	17%	16%	20%	26%	13%	20%
Better physical health	13%	22%	21%	21%	15%	19%	17%	17%	18%
Higher self-esteem	12%	8%	8%	12%	11%	88%	11%	10%	11%
Better mental and emotional health	16%	7%	17%	16%	15%	16%	18%	10%	20%
A better relationship with God	12%	16%	22%	10%	18%	15%	11%	17%	13%
A better relationship with your spouse/significant other	11%	7%	14%	7%	14%	6%	11%	15%	8%

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Better, deeper friendships	28%	25%	30%	32%	23%	32%	26%
Inclusion in a community that knows, appreciates, and respects you	14%	19%	7%	15%	13%	14%	11%
Few tensions with others regarding your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation	13%	17%	12%	13%	13%	14%	12%
Greater financial ease/comfort	36%	39%	41%	34%	41%	32%	42%
Less debt to pay off	15%	17%	15%	13%	16%	16%	15%
A better-paying job	15%	14%	22%	16%	18%	16%	18%
Better physical health	17%	23%	17%	15%	17%	16%	19%
Higher self-esteem	10%	10%	12%	11%	13%	10%	11%
Better mental and emotional health	14%	17%	21%	13%	19%	9%	22%
A better relationship with God	21%	8%	1%	25%	3%	27%	4%
A better relationship with your spouse/significant other	9%	14%	12%	12%	11%	13%	8%

Agreement with each of the statements displayed

	Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
	Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time	63%	49%	48%	60%	59%	59%	51%
You believe in the marriage of one man to one woman because it is God’s only acceptable plan for humanity, applicable to all cultures on earth	58%	38%	37%	52%	50%	55%	39%
Your most trusted source of moral guidance is your feelings, experiences, or input from family and friends	65%	60%	59%	65%	64%	67%	59%
When you die you are certain you will go to Heaven but only because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior	51%	42%	40%	49%	48%	60%	43%
The Bible is the actual, true word of God that is a relevant and reliable for guide for your life these days	54%	39%	41%	49%	46%	64%	44%



CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Agreement with each of the statements displayed (continued)

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time	53%	56%	69%	54%	56%	52%	60%	62%	52%
You believe in the marriage of one man to one woman because it is God’s only acceptable plan for humanity, applicable to all cultures on earth	44%	47%	61%	51%	50%	39%	47%	59%	39%
Your most trusted source of moral guidance is your feelings, experiences, or input from family and friends	61%	65%	74%	67%	65%	56%	61%	69%	58%
When you die you are certain you will go to Heaven but only because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior	42%	50%	58%	45%	50%	40%	46%	53%	42%
The Bible is the actual, true word of God that is a relevant and reliable for guide for your life these days	40%	55%	56%	41%	50%	40%	49%	57%	39%

Agreement with each of the statements displayed (continued)

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Identifying moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time	60%	58%	44%	67%	53%	65%	48%
You believe in the marriage of one man to one woman because it is God’s only acceptable plan for humanity, applicable to all cultures on earth	57%	60%	20%	71%	28%	72%	26%
Your most trusted source of moral guidance is your feelings, experiences, or input from family and friends	65%	69%	55%	75%	52%	71%	55%
When you die you are certain you will go to Heaven but only because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior	61%	37%	12%	100%	*	77%	19%
The Bible is the actual, true word of God that is a relevant and reliable for guide for your life these days	62%	39%	11%	77%	24%	100%	*

Beliefs about God or a higher power that came closest to what the respondent believes

	Gender		Age Group		Race/Ethnicity		
	Male	Female	18-24	25-37	White	Black	Hispanic
Everyone is god	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%	8%	5%
God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential or a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach	13%	12%	9%	14%	11%	14%	14%
There are many gods, each with different purposes and authority	8%	8%	7%	9%	8%	2%	11%
God: all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect, Just creator of the universe who rules that universe today	37%	33%	33%	36%	34%	49%	33%
A higher power may exist; nobody knows for certain	25%	25%	24%	26%	28%	15%	22%
There is no such thing as God	5%	4%	8%	3%	5%	3%	4%
Don’t know	8%	13%	15%	9%	11%	8%	12%

CROSS-TABULATED DATA TABLES

Beliefs about God or a higher power that came closest to what the respondent believes (continued)

	Education			Region of Residence				Kids <18	
	No College	College Grad	Grad Degree	NE	South	Midwest	West	Yes	No
Everyone is god	5%	2%	7%	2%	3%	8%	6%	5%	4%
God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential or a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach	12%	13%	13%	14%	12%	11%	11%	14%	10%
There are many gods, each with different purposes and authority	6%	9%	4%	5%	6%	9%	13%	9%	8%
God: all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect, Just creator of the universe who rules that universe today	29%	39%	53%	35%	39%	28%	33%	40%	32%
A higher power may exist; nobody knows for certain	29%	23%	18%	33%	22%	29%	22%	21%	27%
There is no such thing as God	4%	4%	1%	4%	5%	5%	5%	3%	6%
Don't know	16%	10%	4%	8%	13%	11%	10%	8%	13%

	Faith Affiliation			Born Again		View of Bible	
	Christian	Non Christian	None	Yes	No	Truth	Not Truth
Everyone is god	4%	6%	6%	5%	5%	4%	9%
God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential or a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach	15%	14%	5%	14%	14%	11%	13%
There are many gods, each with different purposes and authority	7%	17%	9%	5%	14%	7%	9%
God: all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect, Just creator of the universe who rules that universe today	46%	31%	8%	56%	15%	59%	14%
A higher power may exist; nobody knows for certain	22%	27%	33%	16%	37%	15%	34%
There is no such thing as God	1%	2%	14%	1%	10%	1%	8%
Don't know	6%	4%	26%	4%	6%	3%	18%



RELEVANT RESOURCES

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Accessible at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/millennials/>

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ABOUT THE RESEARCH SPONSOR

This research was commissioned by Foundations of Freedom to understand our youngest adult generation at a deeper level. Foundations of Freedom is a peer-to-peer platform where believers in traditional American values unite, maximizing their collective influence and impact on society.



ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

The Cultural Research Center (CRC) at Arizona Christian University is located on the school’s campus in Glendale, Arizona, in the Phoenix metropolitan area. CRC is guided by George Barna, Professor and Director of Research, and Tracy Munsil, Associate Professor and Executive Director. Barna also serves as the Senior Research Fellow at Family Research Council Center for Biblical Worldview and as a Fellow of the Townsend Institute at Concordia University. He is the founder of The Barna Group (which he sold in 2009), the American Culture and Faith Institute, and Metaformation Inc. Through those entities he has conducted groundbreaking research on worldview, cultural transformation, ministry applications, spiritual development, and politics. He has provided research and strategy for several hundred parachurch ministries, thousands of Christian churches, the U.S. military, Fortune 500 companies, and has supplied polling and strategy to four presidential candidates.

Barna has authored or co-authored more than 50 books addressing cultural and religious trends, leadership, spiritual development, church dynamics, and cultural transformation. They include *New York Times* and Amazon bestsellers; several award-winning books; and have been translated into more than a dozen foreign languages.

He previously taught at several universities and seminaries; served as the Teaching Pastor of a large, multi-ethnic church; was pastor of a house church; has been an elder in four congregations; and has helped to start several churches.

In addition to conducting the annual *American Worldview Inventory*, CRC also introduced the ACU Student Worldview Inventory (SWVI) in 2020. That survey is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration among students just prior to their graduation. The ACU SWVI enables the University to track the worldview development of its student body and to make changes to that process as recommended by the research. The Cultural Research Center also conducts nationwide research studies to understand the intersection of faith and culture and shares that information with organizations dedicated to transforming American culture with biblical truth.

Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity but serves with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Access to the results from past surveys conducted by CRC, as well as additional information about the Cultural Research Center, can be accessed at www.culturalresearchcenter.com. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.arizonachristian.edu.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Source: American Worldview Inventory is the annual faith survey of American adults conducted by Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; accessible at www.culturalresearchcenter.com.

ⁱⁱ Source: American Worldview Inventory 2020, Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, 2020; accessible at www.culturalresearchcenter.com.

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: American Culture & Faith Institute, Patriotism in America, December 2017.

^{iv} Source: American Culture & Faith Institute, Americans Favor Capitalism, Tempted by Socialism, Ill-Informed about Both; March 2018.

^v Much of the information and data contained in this section is from two reports written by George Barna for the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. Those reports are: “Millennials Have Radically Different Beliefs about Respect, Faith, and America,” dated September 22, 2020; and “The Seismic Generational Shift in Worldview: Millennials Seek a Nation Without God, Bible and Churches,” dated May 12, 2021. Both of those reports, and many other reports regarding worldview and cultural transformation, can be accessed at www.culturalresearchcenter.com. The portions of text used from those reports and the data from those studies are used by permission from the Cultural Research Center and may not be reproduced without written permission from them.

^{vi} More information about Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is contained in “Introducing America’s Most Popular Worldview—Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” by George Barna, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, released April 27, 2021. That report can be accessed at www.culturalresearchcenter.com. The origin of this worldview is the landmark study described in the book Soul Searching, by Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, Oxford University Press: New York, 2005.

^{vii} Source: American Worldview Inventory 2021, Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, 2021; accessible at www.culturalresearchcenter.com.

^{viii} “Mental Illness,” National Institute of Mental Health; accessed September 1, 2021; https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness?source=your_stories_page





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