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Research

Articles in Faith & Christianity August 25, 2021 ow are U.S. Christians currently thinking about "making

disciples of all nations?"

leaders to be curious about how Christians' thoughts on the topic of missions are evolving. sustainable global missions, beginning with Barna's Activating Missions CoLab. As a starting point, here's what Barna's previous studies have revealed about the U.S. Church's relationship to sharing faith, locally and

Much of international missions work adapted or was even put on hold last

year due to the pandemic. Yet, even well before then, the overall perception

of how to practice missions and global evangelism has been shifting,

especially among younger generations. There are plenty of reasons for

Barna has partnered with Mission India to explore ideas about effective and globally. Barna

BEGINS SEPT 7TH CoLab | Activating Missions The pandemic has changed everything about how we do missions.

Discover what's working and what's not in your global missions strategy. LEARN MORE ->

Half of Churchgoers Do Not Know the Great Commission Data from Barna's Translating the Great Commission report, created in

partnership with Seed Company, show that, as of 2018, only 17 percent of

churchgoers had heard of "the Great Commission" and knew what the term meant. The remainder of churchgoers largely had never heard of it (51%), with a quarter (25%) saying that they had heard of it but couldn't recall the exact meaning. KNOWLEDGE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION Barna -2018

Have you heard of the Great Commission? % among churchgoers I'm not sure (6%) -Yes, and it means... (17%)Yes, but I can't

No (51%)

Correctly identify the Great Commission

Do not know the Great Commission

of faith conversations.

Definitely not (2%)

Group | Download image

n=1,004 U.S. churchgoers; October 2017. | Source: Barna Group | Download image

from a list

recall the exact

meaning (25%)

41%

42%

48%

56%

Barna

Not sure (6%)

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PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE OF

EVANGELISM

26%

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19%

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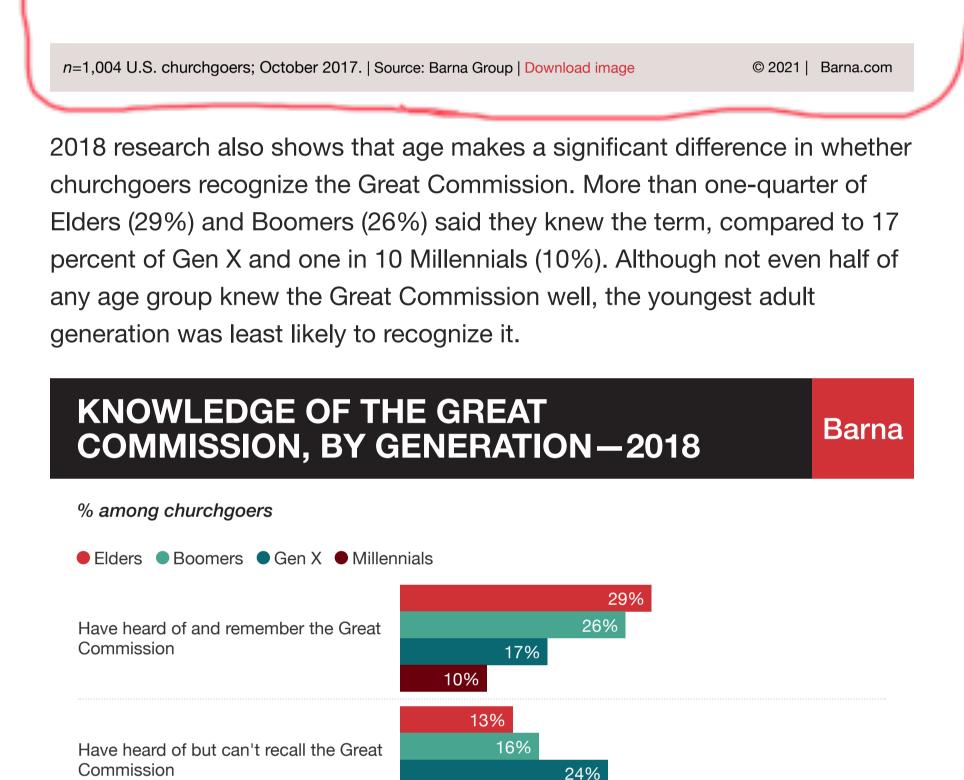
53%

© 2021 | Barna.com

41%

41%

34%



Gen Z Feels Equipped for Faith Conversations, but Not Necessarily for **Evangelism** Barna has reported on how younger generations—Millennials and Gen Z think about and practice evangelism differently than older Christians, with significant percentages of practicing Christian Millennials specifically being opposed to evangelism. Even so, when young people do desire to share their faith with others, the local church seems to be a partner in this endeavor.

Recent data published in Reviving Evangelism in the Next Generation, a

journal created in partnership with Alpha USA, show that Christian Gen Z

teens 13-18-years-old are relatively open to having faith conversations with

non-Christians. When it comes to whether or not their faith community had

prepped them for spiritual discussions, the majority (47%) notes that their

U.S. TEENS ON THE CHURCH EQUIPPING

THEM FOR FAITH SHARING

faith with someone who is not a Christian?

% among church self-identified Christian teens

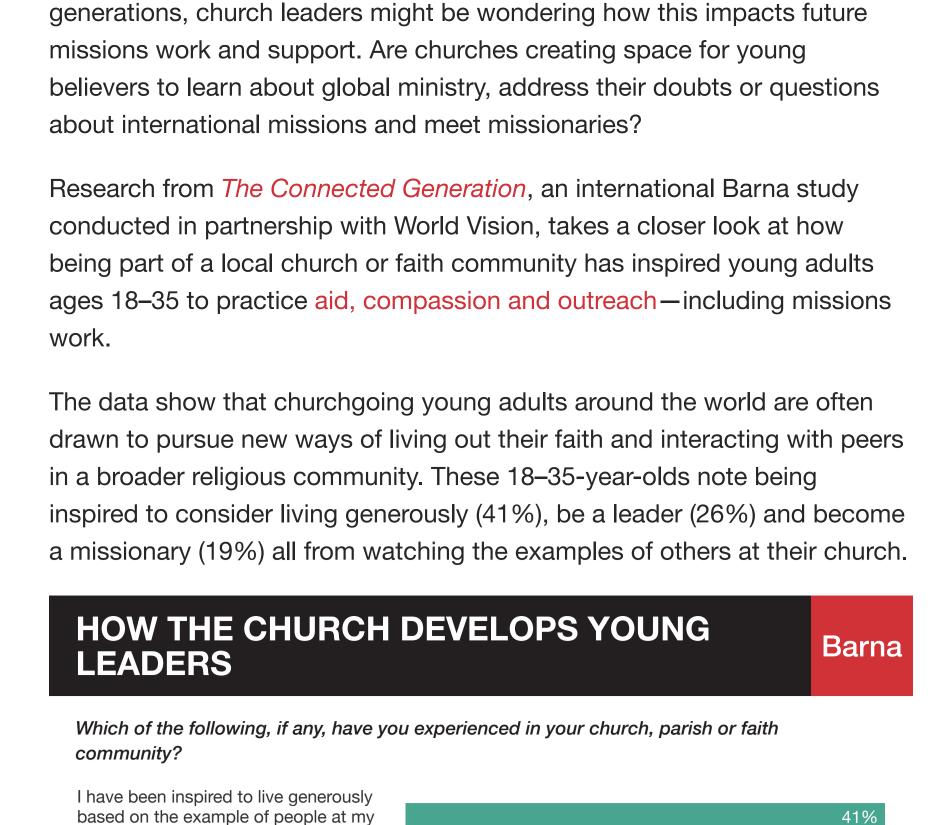
church has "definitely" done a good job equipping them to have these types

Do you think your church does a good job of equipping you to have conversations about your

Probably not (6%) **Definitely** (47%) Probably (39%)

n=701 churched Christian U.S. teens ages 13–18; March 5–April 16, 2021. | Source: Barna

Despite most saying their church has done a good job equipping them to talk about faith (47% definitely, 39% probably), a large percentage of Christian teens (68%) still shares that they have never had training specifically for evangelism, with another 13 percent saying they are "not sure." This is true even among those who are actively having faith conversations with non-Christians. Overall, roughly one in five Christian teens (19%) has had this sort of training, with that number rising just slightly to 23 percent among teens who have had a faith conversation with a non-Christian within the past year. **U.S. TEENS ON RECEIVING EVANGELISM** Barna **TRAINING** Have you ever received training to do evangelism? % among self-identified Christian teens Yes
NoNot sure All Christian Gen Z 19% 68% 13% Christian Gen Z who have had faith conversations with non-Christians in the 23% 64% 13% past year n=890 Christian U.S. teens ages 13–18; March 5–April 16, 2021. | Source: Barna Group | © 2021 | Barna.com



19% of Global Churchgoers Ages 18–35 Say Others' Examples Inspire

With evangelism perceptions and preference shifting among younger

Them to Be a Missionary

church

I have been inspired to be a leader based

on the example of someone at my church

I have been inspired to be a missionary

based on the example of someone else

Further resources on missions:

sponsored by Mission India.

Connected Generation.

Barna store.

n=4,091 adults ages 18 to 35 who identify as Christian and have attended church in the last

six months; December 4, 2018 to February 15, 2021. | Source: Barna Group | Download image

Christians' perceptions of missions are indeed changing, especially as

look like on their terms. These data should act as a reminder to church

leaders to consider how they define and sustain a healthy, effective

missions culture through their church and across generations.

younger generations ponder what global missions and evangelism efforts

Register for Barna's Activating Missions CoLab, a six-week cohort

designed to help prepare your church for an impactful missions future,

Read *Translating the Great Commission*, available for purchase in the

Check out Reviving Evangelism in the Next Generation to discover how

Learn more about how the Church is developing the most globally

connected generation into future world and Church leaders in The

Gen Z teens think about and practice evangelism in 2021.

Comment on this article and follow our work: Twitter: @davidkinnaman | @barnagroup Instagram: @barnagroup Facebook: Barna Group **About the Research** Translating the Great Commission data: This study involved qualitative and quantitative research with pastors, churchgoers and U.S. adults. In

initial research, an open-ended online survey was conducted in July 2017 to

explore perceptions of missions and Bible translation. The 84 participants

churchgoing Millennials. Subsequently, Barna surveyed the same types of

end quantitative questions. These interviews were conducted in October

619 U.S. Protestant senior pastors (senior, lead or executive roles) and

total of 692 Millennial churchgoing respondents.

respondents in a comprehensive online survey made up of primarily closed-

2017 with a nationally representative sample of 1,010 U.S. adults, as well as

1,004 U.S. adult churchgoers (who have attended a regular church service

Reviving Evangelism in the Next Generation - U.S. data: Research for

survey of 1,324 13–18-year-olds currently residing in the U.S., between

this study, conducted in partnership with Alpha USA, is based on an online

March 5 and April 16, 2021. A random sampling methodology was observed

for parent recruitment. Quotas and minimal weighting were used to ensure

data are representative of known Census ethnicity, gender, age and region.

referenced in The Connected Generation were collected by Barna, among a

nationally representative sample of the population identified. For this study,

The study used online national consumer panels that are representative by

Barna relied on online collection methods, including mobile phone users.

age, gender, region and ethnicity. Respondents were fully verified by the

checked that respondents were completing the survey at an appropriate

nine different languages, (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, German,

pace and paying attention to the questions asked. The survey was offered in

representative sample sources. Additionally, quality control measures

Error rate is plus or minus 2.8 percentage points at the 95-percent

The Connected Generation data: This study is based on online,

within the past six months). An oversample of young adults contributed to a

included 25 pastors, 31 practicing Christians (of any age) and 28

representative public opinion surveys conducted by Barna Group. A total of 15,369 respondents ages 18 to 35 across 25 countries were surveyed between December 4, 2018 and February 15, 2019. See full details of sample distribution based on continent and country at theconnectedgeneration.com. Unless otherwise noted, all data

confidence level.

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Peabody & Derek Sanford on Volunteer

Romanian, Korean, Indonesian and Taiwanese), translated by a trusted translation service and verified by local partners in every country for context-specific nuance. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base, the CIA World Fact Book and available census data from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Chile, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, the UK, Germany, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Romania, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, India, Philippines and Singapore, quotas were designed to ensure the final group of adults interviewed in the study reflected each country's distribution of adults nationwide based on age, gender, ethnicity and region. Online surveys necessitate literacy and an internet connection, which means the sample reflects adults who have those capabilities and does not reflect those who are unable to read or lack connectivity to respond to online surveys. Thus, in spite of a robust methodology, this sample is not meant to be representative of entire national populations, regions, continents or the world. The countries selected for this study were based on countries and regions where Barna and World Vision receive frequent requests for research-based insights. These and other concerns or limitations were respectfully considered while interpreting the data. Churchgoers are defined for these samples as those who have attended church within the past six months. Photo by Fikri Rasyid from Unsplash. About Barna Barna is a private, non-partisan, for-profit organization under the umbrella of the Issachar Companies. Located in Ventura, California, Barna Group has been conducting and analyzing primary research to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984.

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