

An aerial photograph of a dense, lush green forest, showing a variety of tree species and vibrant foliage. The image is used as a background for the text in the banner.

2022 Greater Evansville

Faith & Flourishing Study

a Welborn Baptist Foundation community data initiative

This report highlights findings from the 2022 Greater Evansville Faith and Flourishing Study. The study was commissioned by the Welborn Baptist Foundation in partnership with Diehl Consulting Group. In the fall of 2021 (October through December), surveys were completed by more than 1,800 adults across Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh, and Warrick counties in Indiana and Henderson County in Kentucky. Detailed methods related to the study are presented at the end of this report.

Welborn Baptist Foundation, Inc. (2022). Faith & Flourishing Survey - 2022 Edition

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FAITH & FLOURISHING SURVEY

Why this matters...

The Faith & Flourishing Survey was conducted to provide meaningful, thought-provoking, and hard-to-get data about the region's faith profile for those who serve in a Christian faith-leadership role. The results are offered to encourage insights and conversations about topics important to faith leaders such as:

- Engaging and motivating self-identified Christians to move from belief to action; to become more practicing and committed to their faith.
- Engaging and motivating Christians to engage in service and giving.
- Engaging and motivating churches to work in partnership with others to serve the community.
- Engaging and motivating residents of all generations to be more engaged with the Christian faith.
- Understanding how residents view the Christian Church; and what roles Christians want their churches to play.
- Understanding in what ways residents are flourishing in our region.

This survey was developed by the Welborn Baptist Foundation in consultation with Diehl Consulting Group (DCG), Evansville, IN. DCG also managed the data collection and analysis. In late 2021, 1,832 adults aged 18 and older from Vanderburgh, Warrick, Gibson, and Posey Counties in Indiana and Henderson County, Kentucky completed a paper, mailed survey. See *Methods* section for a full description.



FAITH IDENTIFICATION & COMMITMENT

84%

OF ALL RESIDENTS
SELF-IDENTIFY AS CHRISTIAN

64%

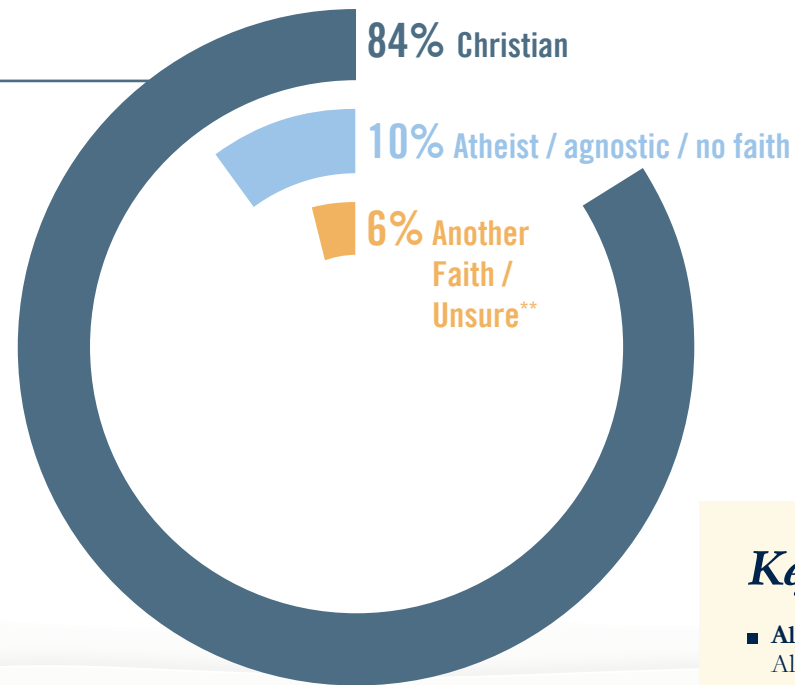
OF ALL RESIDENTS ARE “ABSOLUTELY
COMMITTED” TO THEIR FAITH* (ACROSS ALL FAITHS)

53%

OF RESIDENTS HAVE GROWN IN THEIR FAITH*
OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS (ACROSS ALL FAITHS)

* Rates are similar (i.e., 65% and 52%, respectively) among Christians

**“Another faith” percentage includes less than 1% (0.6%)
identifying as Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist.



Key Terms

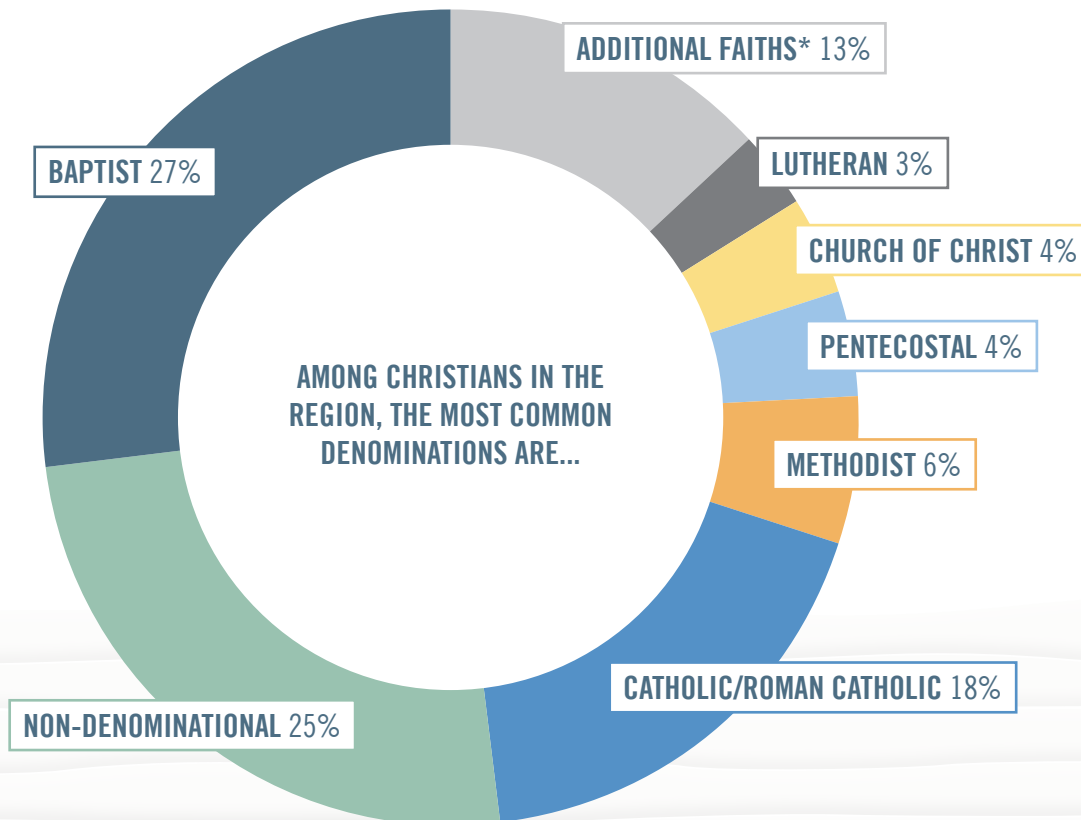
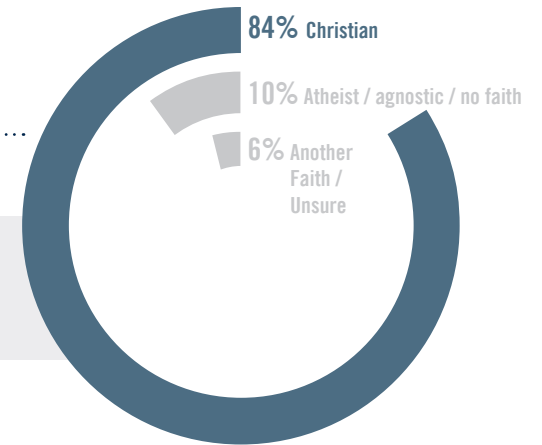
- **All Residents**
All respondents, regardless of faith beliefs or practices
- **Christians**
Respondents who report identifying with a Christian faith family on the survey



FAITH IDENTIFICATION & COMMITMENT

SURVEY QUESTION:

With what faith family [denomination], if any, do you most closely identify?



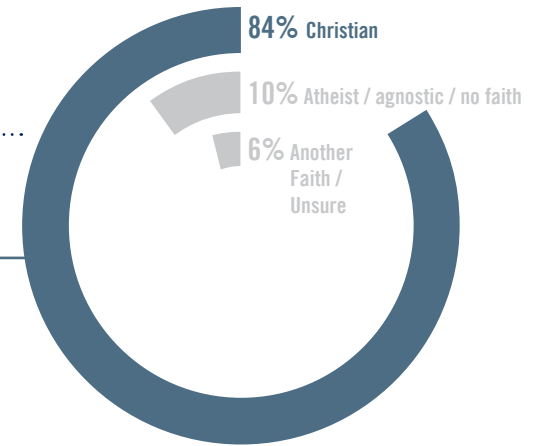
**includes less than 3% each of Assemblies of God, Bible Church, United Church of Christ, Church of God, Presbyterian, and other.*



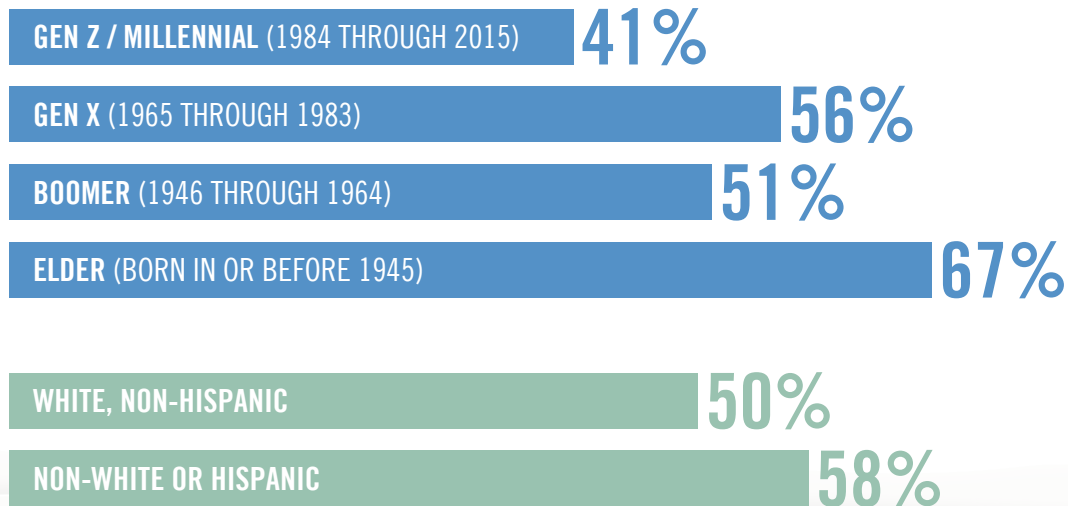
FAITH IDENTIFICATION & COMMITMENT

51%

OF CHRISTIANS IN THE REGION MEET CRITERIA FOR "PRACTICING AND COMMITTED CHRISTIANS"



AMONG CHRISTIANS, PERCENTAGES MEETING THE CRITERIA FOR "PRACTICING & COMMITTED" ARE:



Key Terms

- **Practicing & Committed Christians**
 - identify as Christian
 - report being absolutely committed to their faith
 - report attending religious services at least monthly

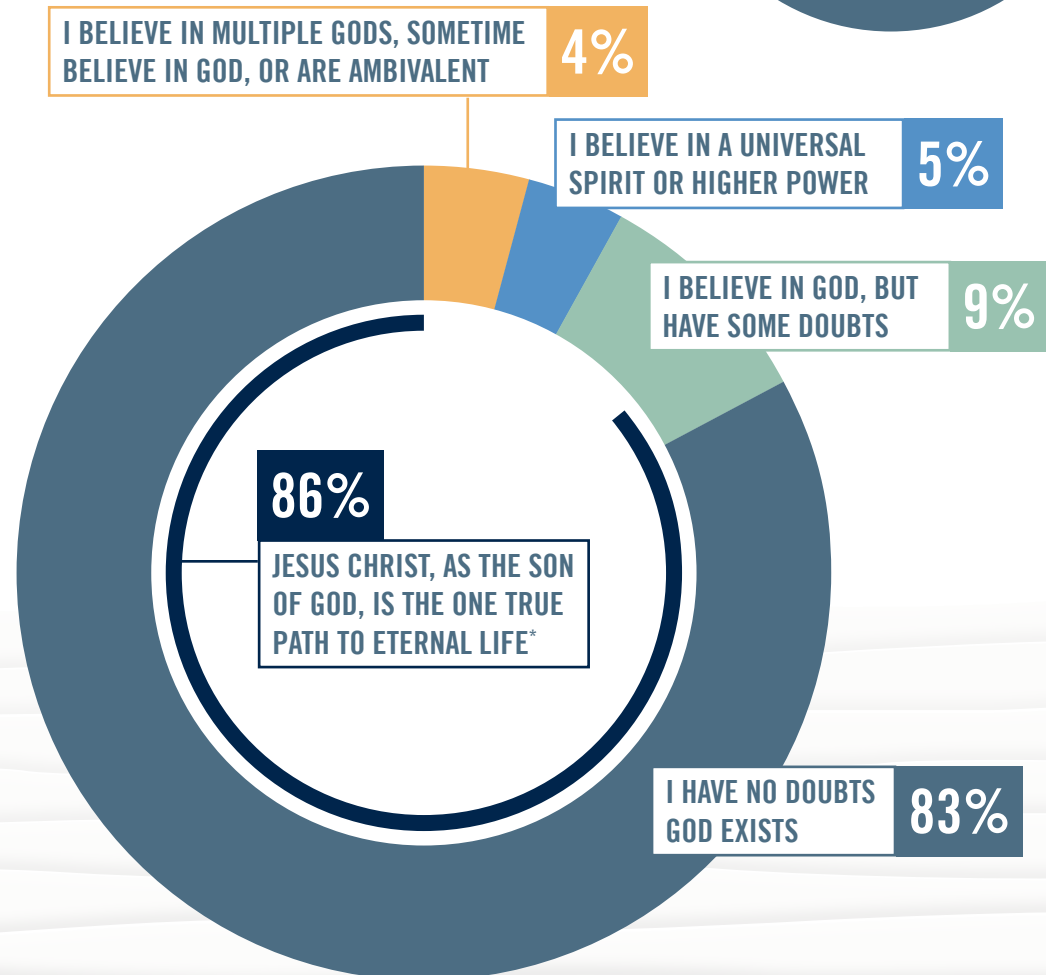
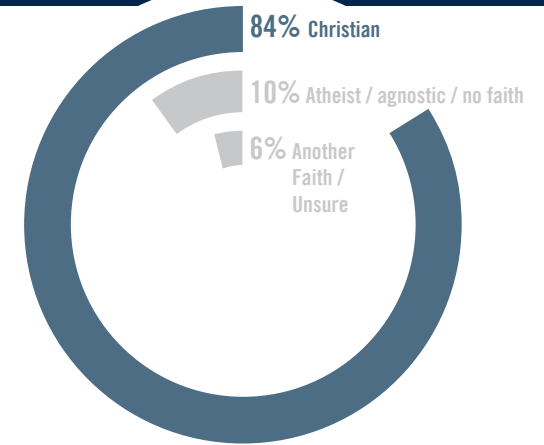
* Because this study targeted adult residents, the birth year for the combined Gen Z / Millennial respondents could have been no later than 2004



FAITH BELIEFS OF CHRISTIANS

SURVEY QUESTION:

Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs [about God and Jesus]?

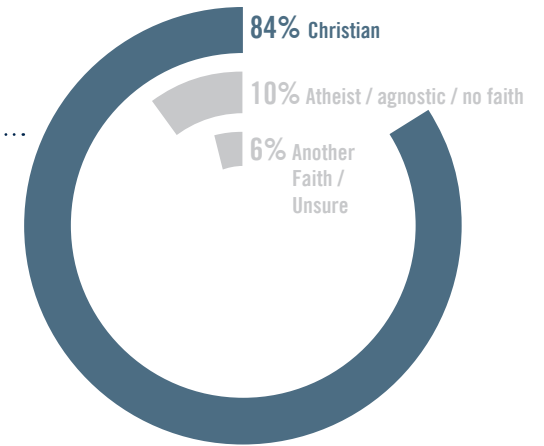


From a list of possible beliefs, respondents indicated the statement came closest to their personal beliefs.

** An additional 6% of Christians believe Jesus was a messenger or prophet of God, while 6% were ambivalent and the remainders held other opinions.*



FAITH BELIEFS OF CHRISTIANS



Christians in the region believe God...



Conversely, only 10% of Christians in the region agreed that God “seems impersonal” to them.

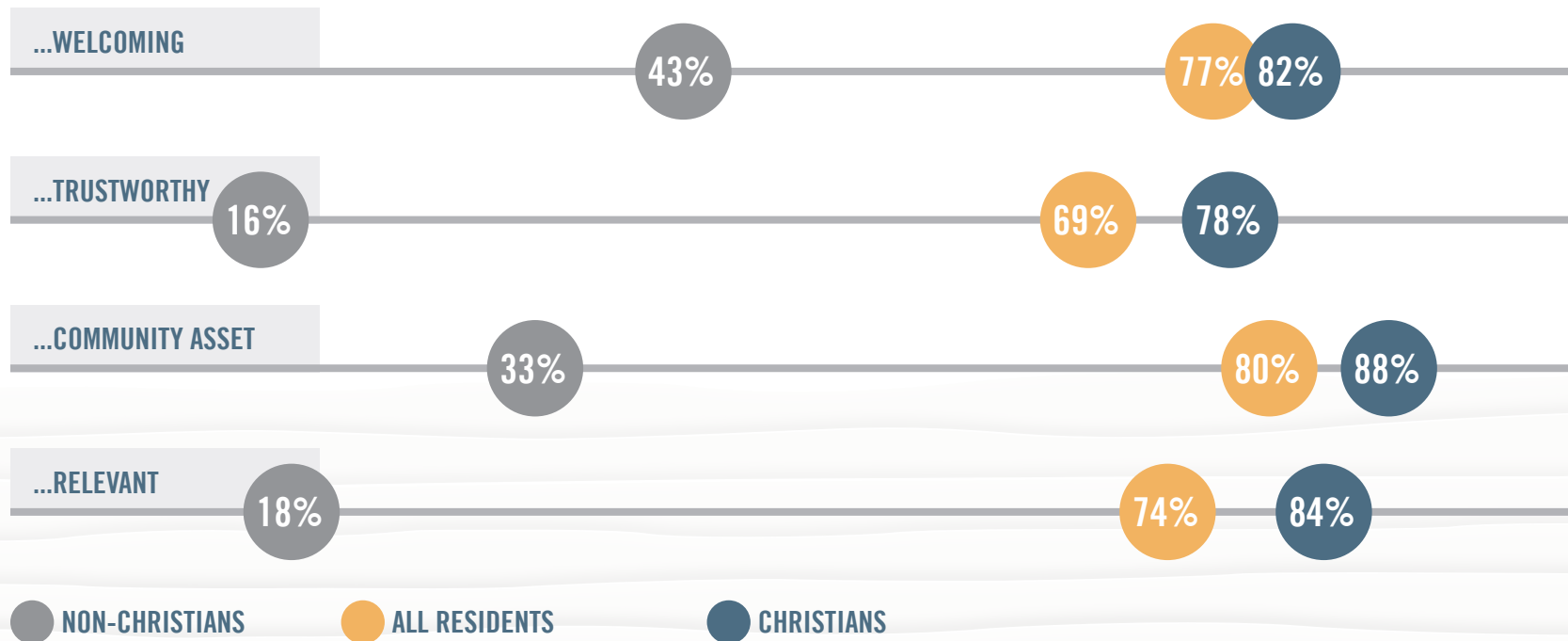


PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

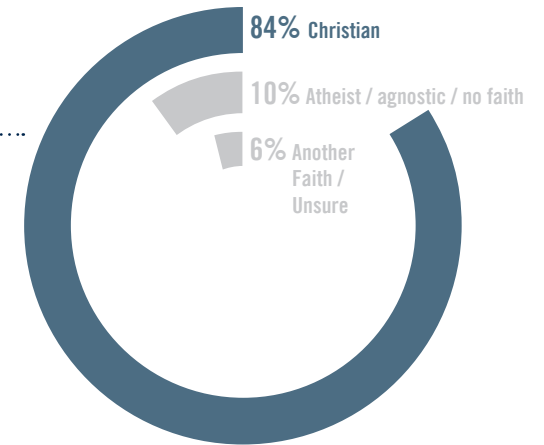
SURVEY QUESTION:

In my opinion, the Christian Church is...

The majority of residents view the Christian Church as welcoming, trustworthy, a community asset, and relevant. Non-Christians are much less likely to view the christian church in these ways.

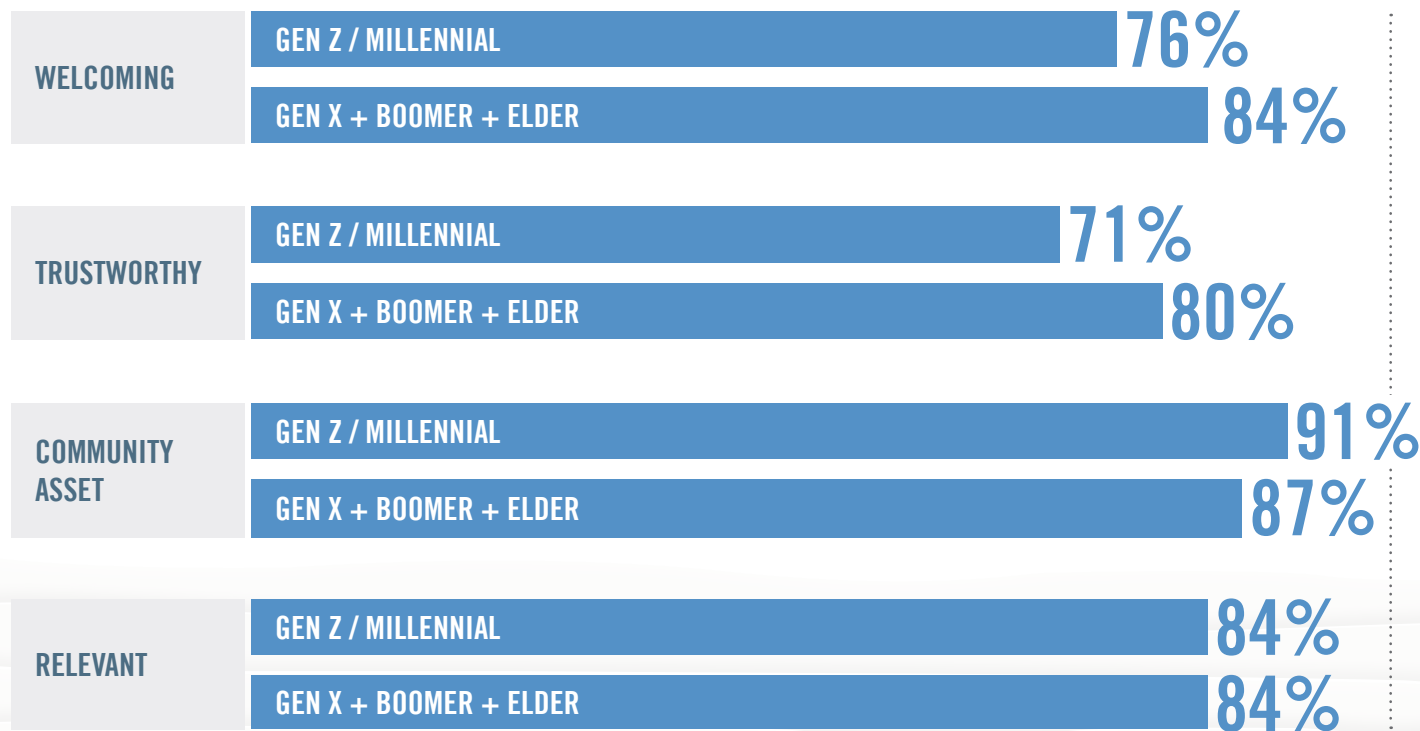


PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Among Christians, Gen Z/Millennial residents are less likely than older generations to perceive the Christian Church as welcoming and trustworthy and slightly more likely to view it as a community asset.

There is no difference between Gen Z/Millennial's and older generations' views of the Christian Church's relevance.



Key Terms

- Gen Z / Millennial
1984-2015 (in this study respondents were born no later than 2004)
- Gen X
1965-1983
- Boomers
1946-1964
- Elders
Born in or before 1945

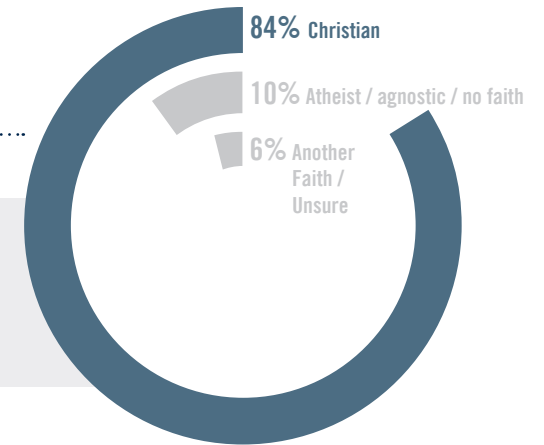
In contrast, Non-Christian Gen Z / Millennial residents are unlikely to view the Christian Church as welcoming (40%), trustworthy (13%), a community asset (27%), or relevant (8%).



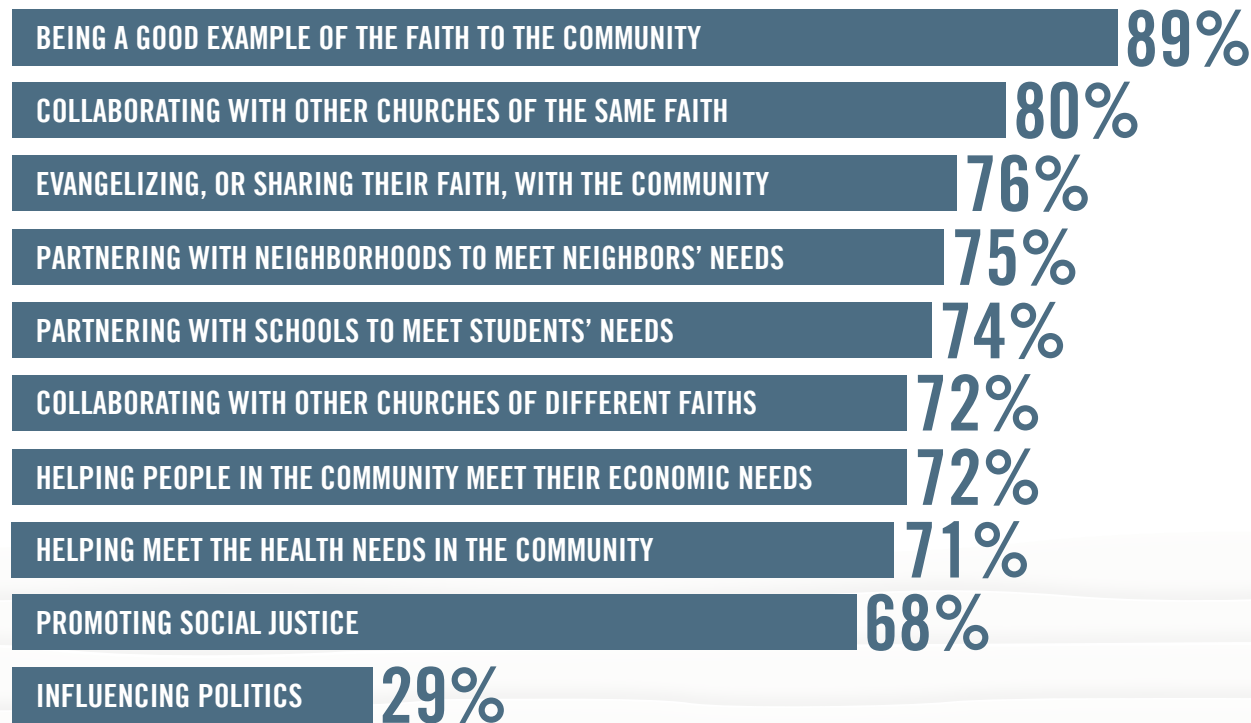
PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SURVEY QUESTION:

How important is it that places of worship or worshiping communities take on this role in your community?



CHRISTIANS SAY IT'S FAIRLY OR VERY IMPORTANT THAT CHURCHES FILL COMMUNITY ROLES.



Churches represent places of worship or worshiping communities.



PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SURVEY QUESTION:

How important is it that places of worship or worshipping communities take on this role in your community?

Though there are differences between Christians, Non-Christians, and generations*, there is opportunity to lean into some of the more common views.

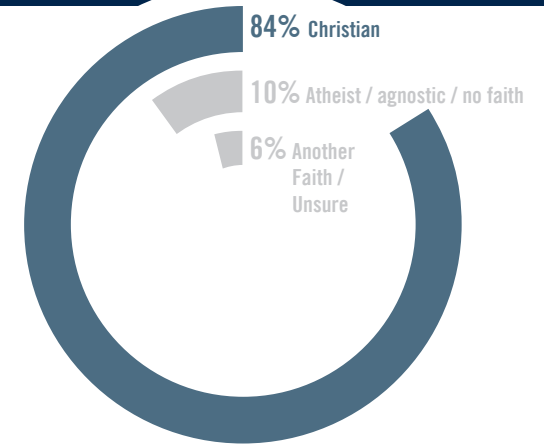
All believe...

| | ...THAT CHURCHES SHOULD BE A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THEIR FAITH | ...THAT CHURCHES SHOULD PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES (E.G. REFUGEE CRISES, RACIAL INJUSTICES, EQUALITY) | ...THAT THERE IS VALUE IN CHURCHES COLLABORATING WITH OTHER CHURCHES OF THE SAME FAITH TO HELP MEET NEEDS IN THEIR COMMUNITY | ...THAT THERE IS VALUE IN CHURCHES COLLABORATING WITH OTHER CHURCHES OF THE DIFFERENT FAITHS TO HELP MEET NEEDS IN THEIR COMMUNITY. | ...THAT A ROLE IN INFLUENCING POLITICS SHOULD BE OF RELATIVELY LOW IMPORTANCE FOR CHURCHES |
|-----------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| CHRISTIANS | 89% | 68% | 80% | 72% | 29% |
| NON-CHRISTIANS | 56% | 81% | 44% | 68% | 5% |
| GEN Z/MILLENIAL | 82% | 78% | 70% | 75% | 19% |
| GEN X | 84% | 63% | 78% | 68% | |
| BOOMER | 86% | 64% | 73% | 71% | 31% |
| ELDER | 90% | | 79% | 71% | 41% |

*Certain generation data points were omitted because the data points were not statistically significant, meaning that the observed differences between groups might have been the result of chance. In other cases, data are disaggregated by generational groups despite non-significant differences to illustrate commonality across generations. For all data points on this page, direct comparisons across generational groups should be made with caution.

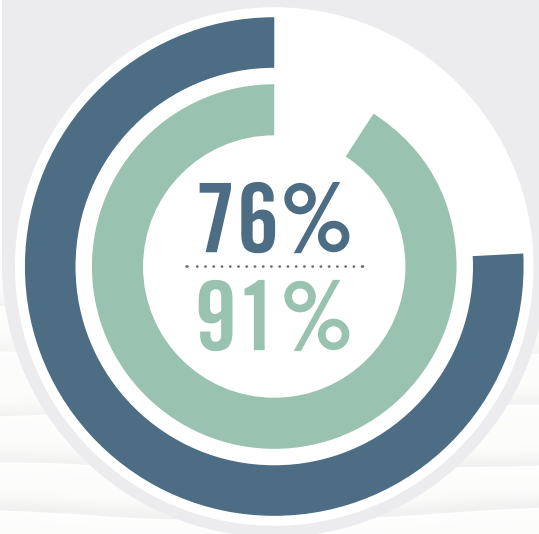


PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CHRISTIAN

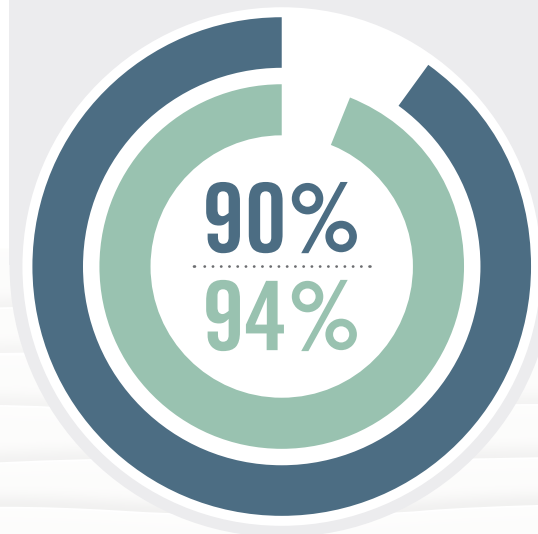


The vast majority of Christians and *Practicing & Committed Christians* agree it is their responsibility to share about their faith and to help meet the needs of other human beings. *Practicing & Committed Christians* feel these responsibilities more strongly.

SHOULD SHARE ABOUT THEIR FAITH



SHOULD HELP MEET NEEDS



● ALL CHRISTIANS

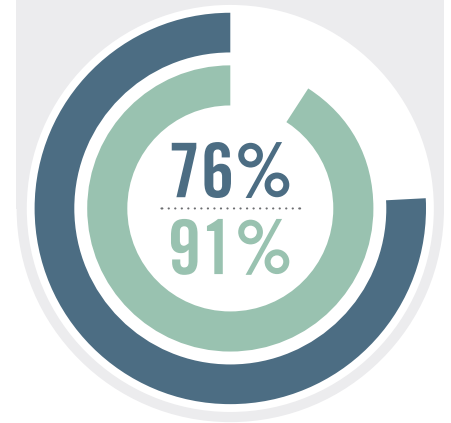
● PRACTICING & COMMITTED CHRISTIANS

Key Terms

- **Practicing & Committed Christians**
 - identify as Christian
 - report being absolutely committed to their faith
 - report attending religious services at least monthly

PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CHRISTIAN

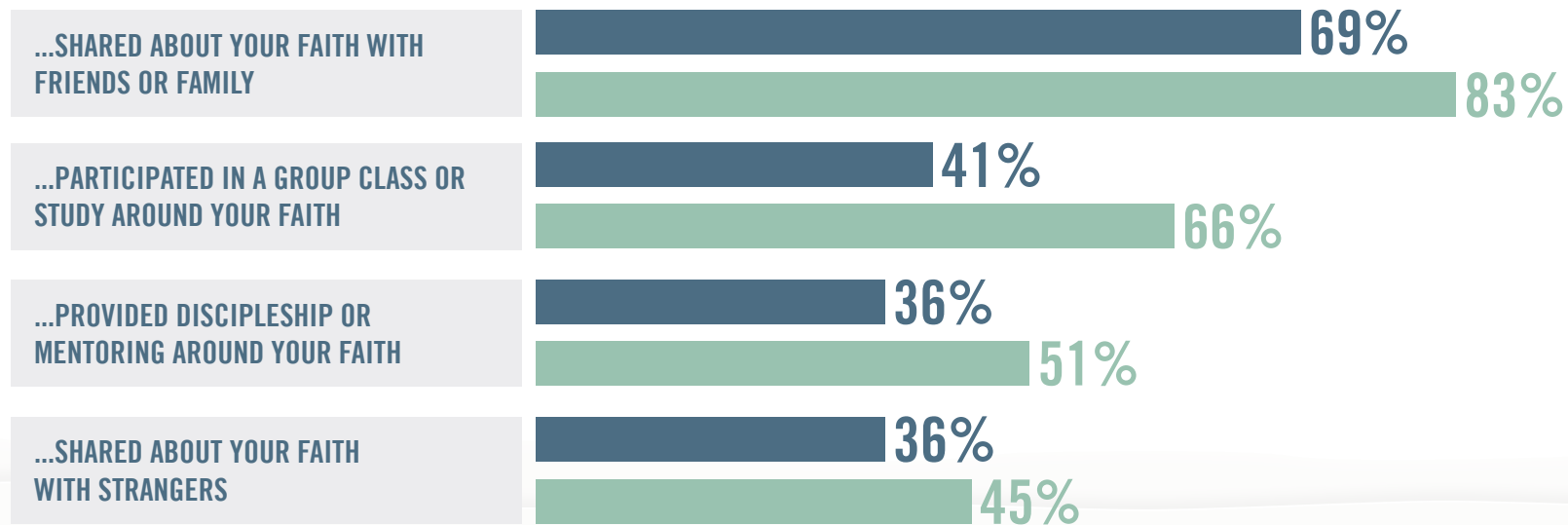
SHOULD SHARE ABOUT THEIR FAITH



Responsibilities in practice

Most Christians, and *Practicing & Committed Christians*, believe they should share about their faith, however, there is opportunity to share more, especially with strangers.

IN THE MONTH LEADING UP TO THE SURVEY, CHRISTIANS AND *PRACTICING & COMMITTED* CHRISTIANS IN THE REGION...



● ALL CHRISTIANS

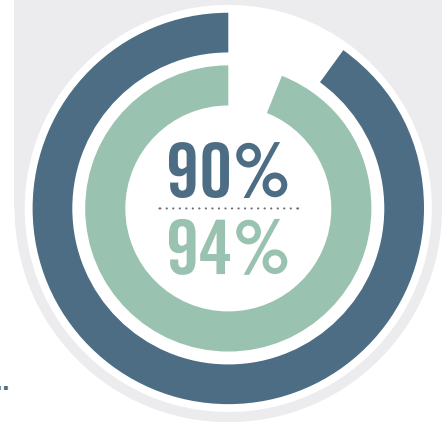
● PRACTICING & COMMITTED CHRISTIANS

PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CHRISTIAN

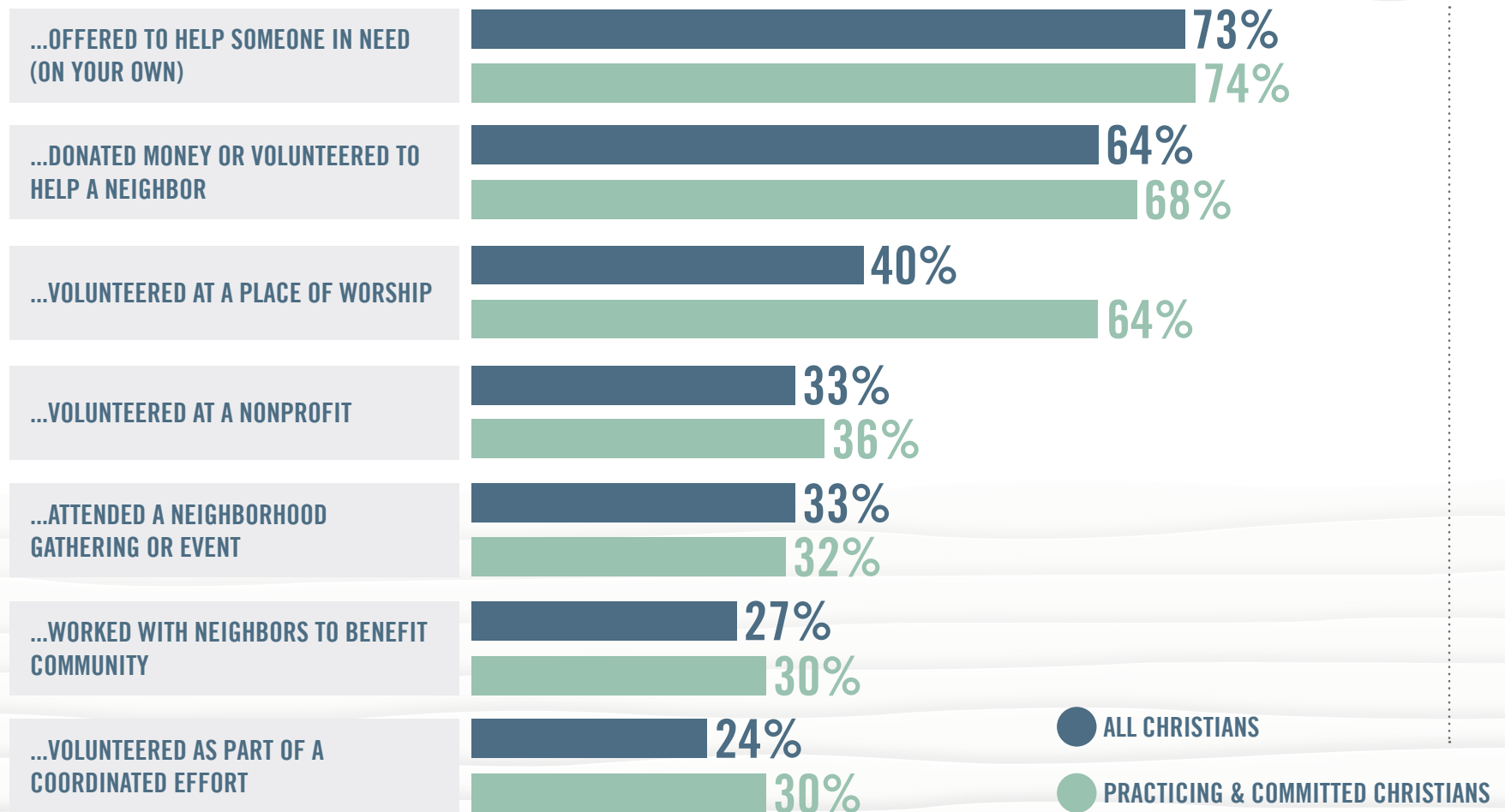
Responsibilities in practice

The majority of Christians and *Practicing & Committed Christians* believe they should help meet the needs of others. There is opportunity to provide more help to others, especially with organized volunteer and neighborhood efforts.

SHOULD HELP MEET NEEDS

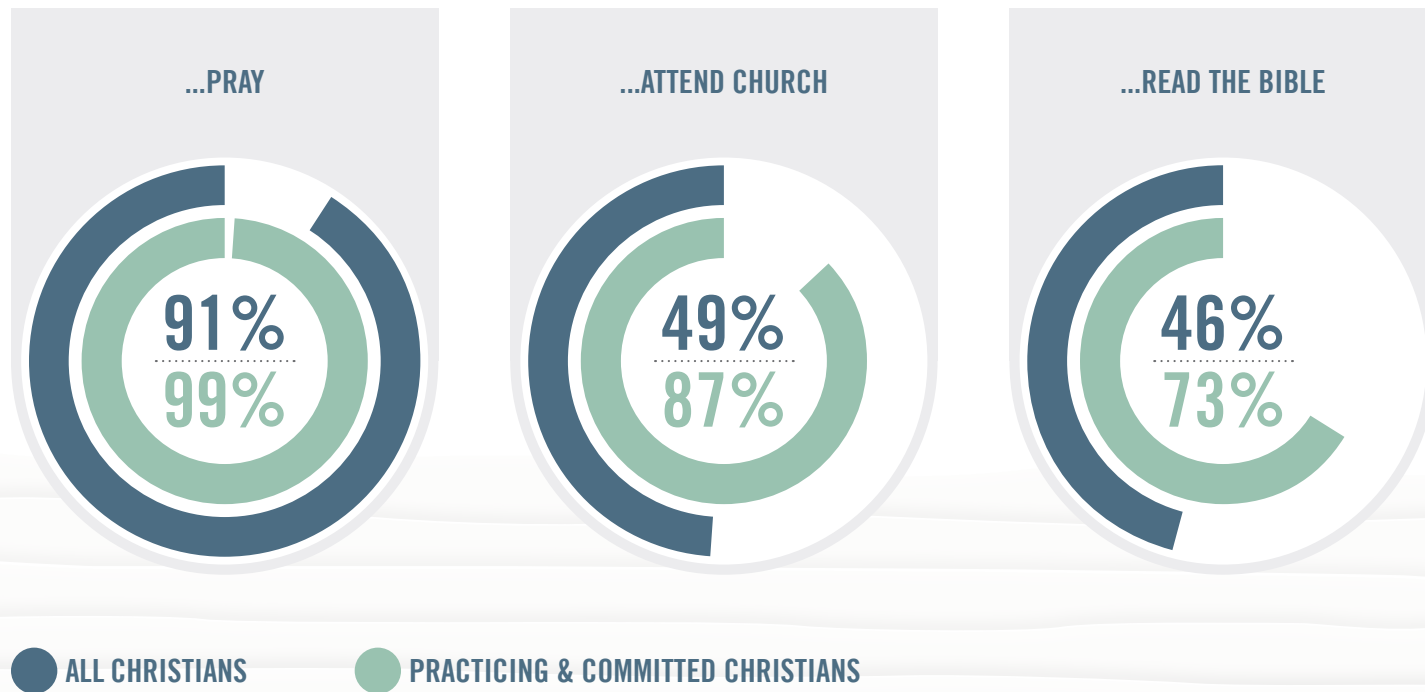


IN THE MONTH LEADING UP TO THE SURVEY, ALL CHRISTIANS AND *PRACTICING & COMMITTED CHRISTIANS* IN THE REGION...



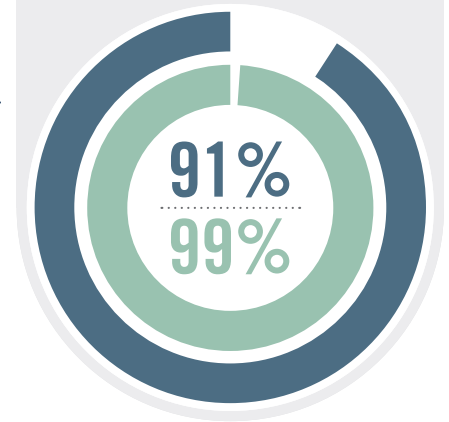
FAITH PRACTICES

EACH WEEK, CHRISTIANS AND *PRACTICING & COMMITTED* CHRISTIANS IN THE REGION...



FAITH PRACTICES

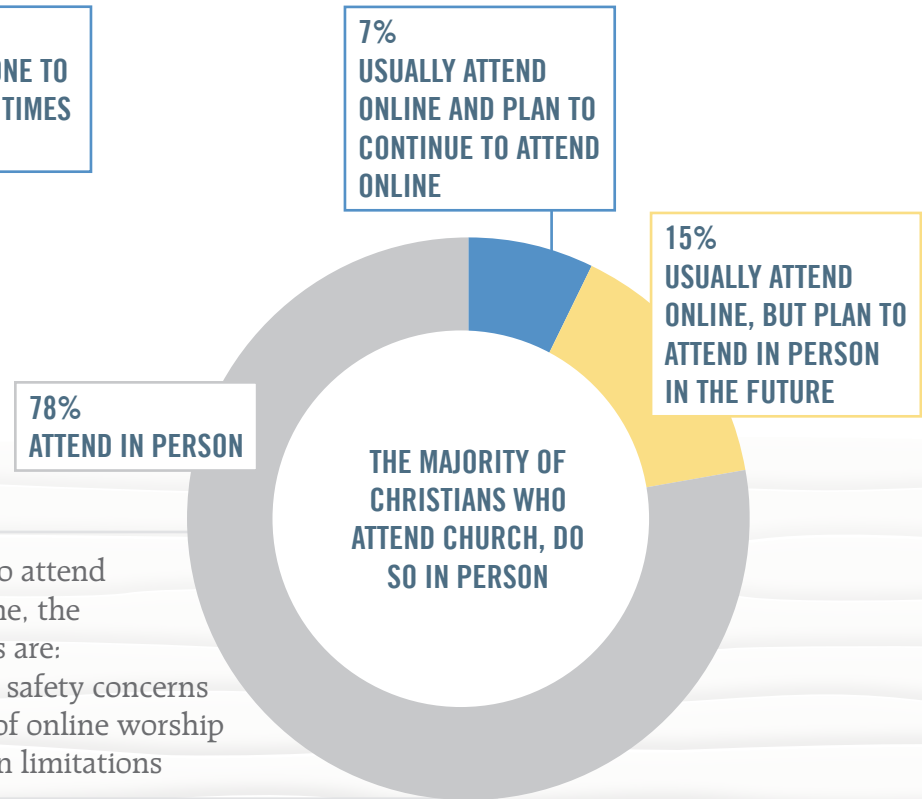
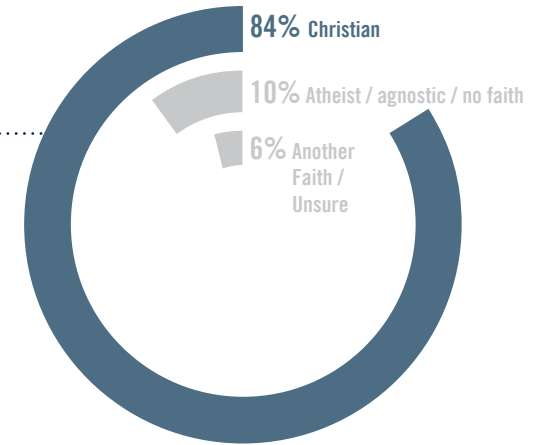
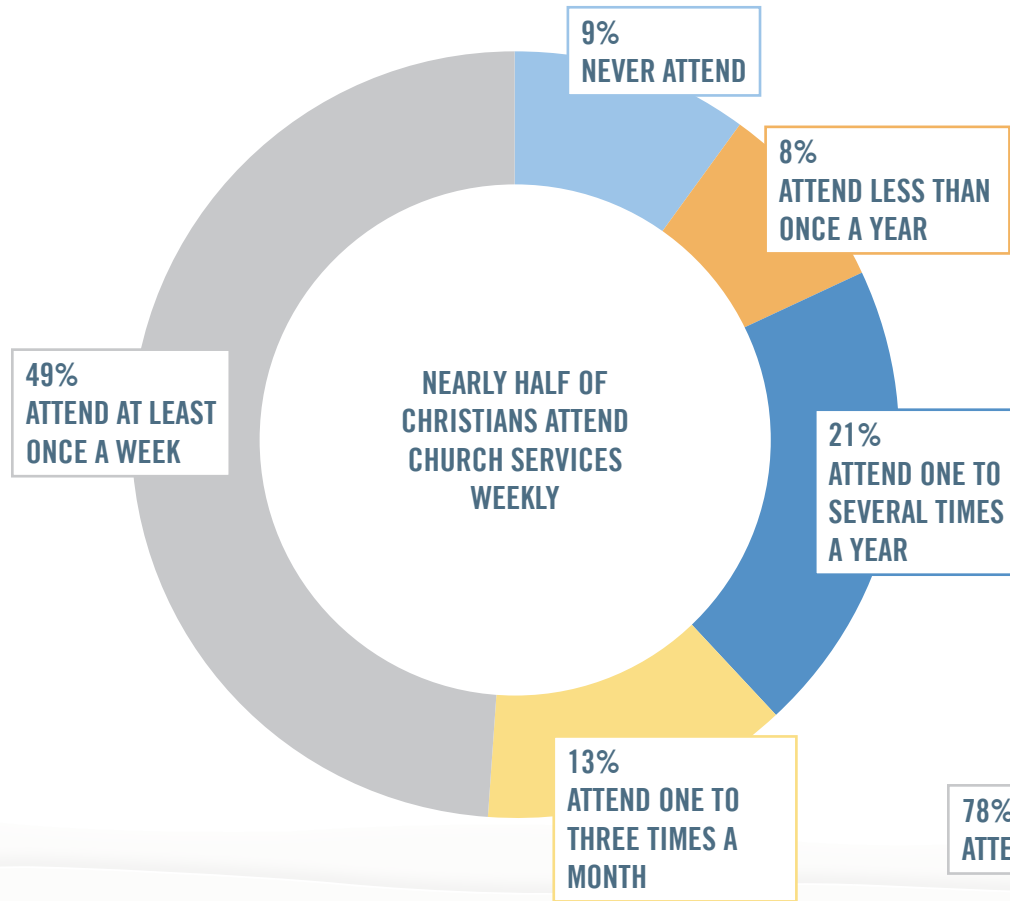
...PRAY



Christians report praying because...



FAITH PRACTICES



Among Christians who attend religious services online, the most common reasons are:

- 44% Health and/or safety concerns
- 32% Convenience of online worship
- 11% Transportation limitations

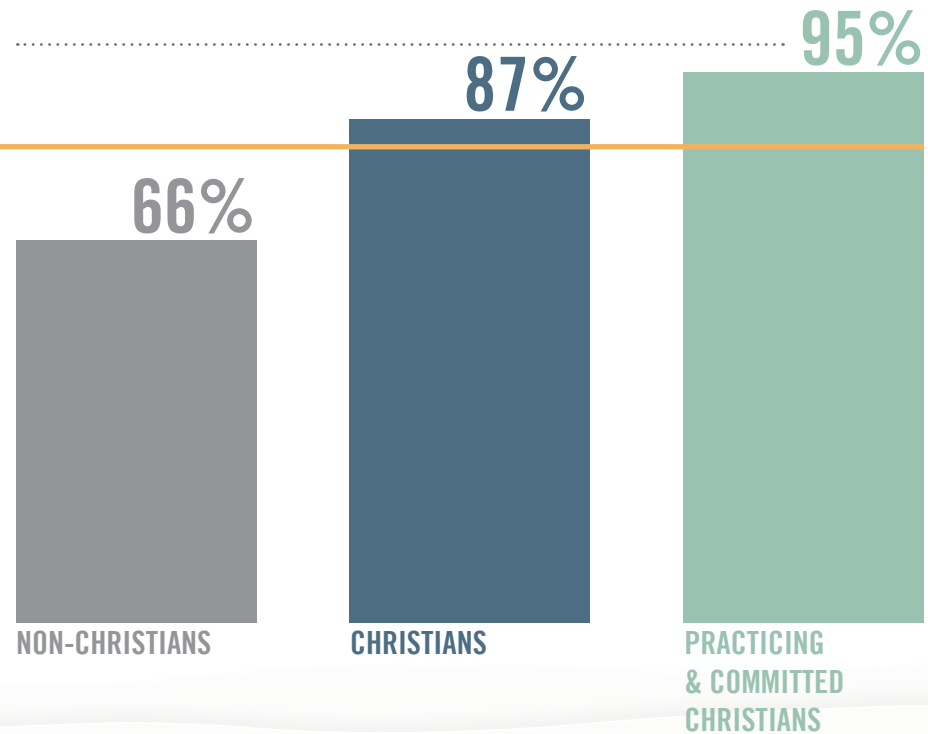
As noted on Page 1, all data were collected October 2021 through December 2021

FAITH PRACTICES

82%

OF RESIDENTS DONATE TO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS OR PLACES OF WORSHIP. CHRISTIANS OVERALL ARE MORE LIKELY TO DONATE THAN NON-CHRISTIANS. NEARLY ALL PRACTICING AND COMMITTED CHRISTIANS DONATE.

Total donation amounts (i.e., medians) increase with age with the Millennial/Gen Z generation donating \$100 in 2021, Gen X \$240, Boomer \$1,000 and the Elder generation donating \$2,000.



FLOURISHING

Flourishing was assessed with items from the Harvard Flourishing Index (HFI)¹. The HFI is comprised of twelve items and six domains. Each item is rated on a scale of 0-10. The final score for each domain is the average of the two items in the domain. Additionally, the Overall Flourishing score is the average of all twelve items.

HAPPINESS & LIFE SATISFACTION

- Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days?
- In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel?

MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

- In general, how would you rate your physical health?
- How would you rate your overall mental health?

MEANING & PURPOSE

- Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- I understand my purpose in life.

CHARACTER & VIRTUE

- I always act to promote good in all circumstances, even in difficult and challenging situations.
- I am always able to give up some happiness now for greater happiness later.

CLOSE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

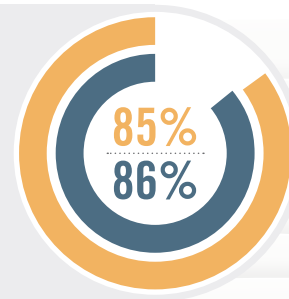
- I am content with my friendships and relationships.
- My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be.

FINANCIAL & MATERIAL STABILITY

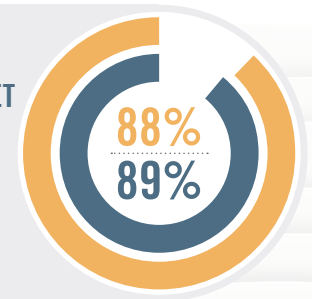
- How often do you worry about normal monthly living expenses?
- How often do you worry about safety, food, or housing?

Additional survey items related to selected Flourishing Domains. For example, All Residents and Christians report being treated with dignity and respect by others in the communities where they live. Further, both groups recognize the importance of getting to know people who are different from them.

I AM TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT BY OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY WHERE I LIVE



I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET TO KNOW PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM ME



● ALL RESIDENTS

● CHRISTIANS

¹VanderWeele, T.J. (2017). On the promotion of human flourishing. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, U.S.A.*, 31:8148-8156.



FLOURISHING

CHARACTER & VIRTUE IS A HIGHLY RATED FLOURISHING DOMAIN AMONG ALL GROUPS

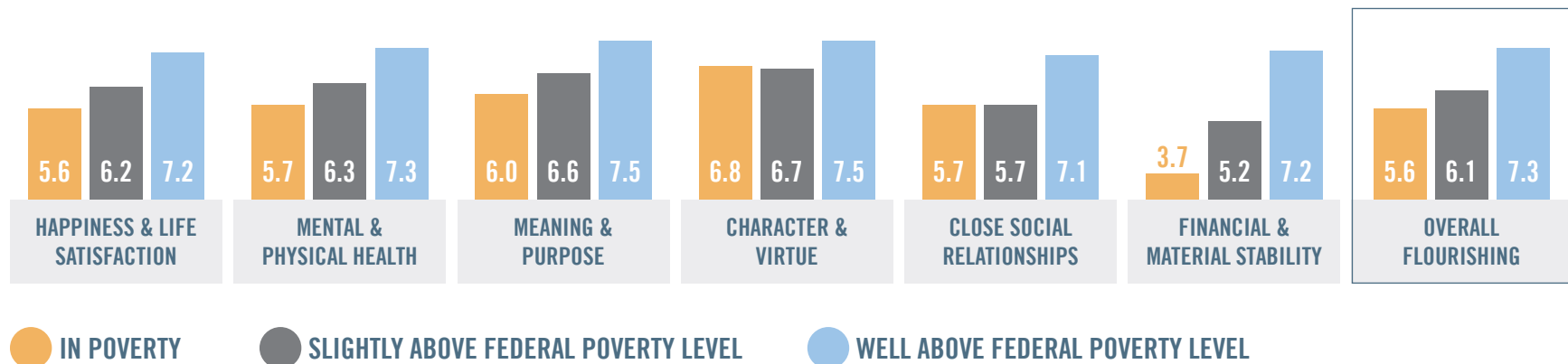
Christians and Non-Christians reported similar levels of flourishing on most domains. The key exception to this finding relates to the Meaning and Purpose domain, where Christians scored higher. However, across all domains, the subset of Practicing and Committed Christians reported higher levels of flourishing than Non-Christians.



FLOURISHING

MEANING AND PURPOSE AND CHARACTER AND VIRTUE ARE THE HIGHEST RATED FLOURISHING DOMAINS AT EACH INCOME LEVEL, AND FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL STABILITY SHOWED THE GREATEST VARIANCE ACROSS INCOME LEVELS.

The overall flourishing score was reported to be 5.6 for residents in poverty*, 6.1 for residents slightly above the federal poverty level, and 7.3 for residents well above the federal poverty level. Poverty thresholds for each year and household size are issued in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services. Poverty thresholds vary according to the number of people in the household. For example, in 2021 the poverty threshold was \$17,420 for a household of two and \$26,500 for a household of four.



*Among Christians, 20% live in poverty, 10% live slightly above the federal poverty level, and 70% live well above the federal poverty level. Among non-Christians, 10% live in poverty, 13% live slightly above the federal poverty level, and 77% live well above the federal poverty level.

² <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines>

Key Terms

- In poverty**
 Household income below the federal poverty threshold
- Slightly above the federal poverty level**
 Household income 100% to 149% of the federal poverty threshold
- Well above the federal poverty level**
 Household income above 149% of the federal poverty threshold



METHODS

The 2022 Faith and Flourishing Survey was developed by the Welborn Baptist Foundation in consultation with Diehl Consulting Group, Evansville, IN. Diehl Consulting Group also managed the data collection process. All adults, age 18 and older in Vanderburgh, Warrick, Gibson, and Posey Counties in Indiana and Henderson County in Kentucky were eligible to participate in the survey. These five survey counties were chosen to be representative of the area's population centers, including urban, suburban, and rural populations.

A stratified random sample of households in Gibson, Henderson, Vanderburgh, and Warrick counties, and all households within Posey County were invited to participate in the survey. The sample was drawn from all valid household addresses in the counties using the most current listing of occupied housing units as provided by Data Mail in the fall of 2021. Addresses included single-family and multi-family dwelling, but not PO boxes or businesses. Each mailing included an outgoing envelope, the cover letter (with a perforated incentive contact form on the bottom), survey, and return envelope. The outgoing envelope included the Welborn Baptist Foundation's return address and the return envelope was addressed directly to Diehl Consulting Group. While surveys were mailed, respondents did have the option to complete the survey electronically. A survey link was included on the invitation letter for those choosing the electronic option. Participants also had an option to request a Spanish version of the survey. The first survey administration occurred in October 2021. To increase sample sizes and achieve desired margins of error, a second mailing was conducted in November 2021. Extra steps were taken to ensure representation of population sub-groups in the Greater Evansville region, e.g., Spanish survey tool, over-sampling in the most diverse zip codes, etc.

A total of 1,832 adults completed the survey. The margin of error (with 95% confidence) was 2% for the overall region and 5% for Gibson, Henderson, Vanderburgh, and Warrick Counties. Given its smaller total population, the margin of error for Posey County was 6%. For each county, data were weighted by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and educational attainment to ensure that the sample more accurately reflected the characteristics of the population from which it was drawn. Population characteristics (i.e., control variables) were derived from the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS; 5-year estimates). The survey sample was weighted to the population controls through an iterative raking process. Survey weighting, descriptive analyses, and inferential analyses were performed by Diehl Consulting Group, Evansville, IN. Where appropriate, highlighted findings involving direct comparisons between two or more groups were based on statistically significant differences. Descriptive findings are also presented to highlight areas determined to be of practical importance. Statistical testing included parametric and non-parametric methods.



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