

GLOBAL YOUTH CULTURE

United States Report

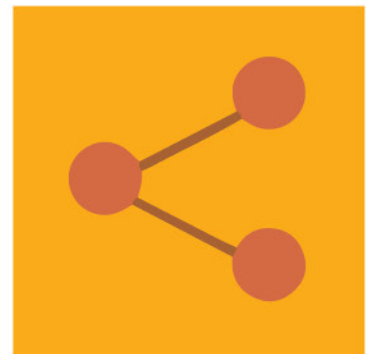
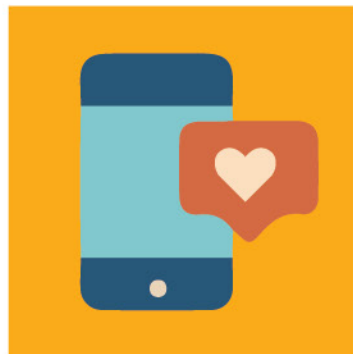


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INTRODUCTION

Teenagers constantly have their faces in their phones. If they're not staging selfies and recording Reels until they get it looking just right, they're looking at everyone else's and comparing to see how they stack up.

The teenage years are brutal in and of themselves. Today's teens have the digital component of constant connectedness and access to influences outside of the bubble, adding layers of complexity to these formative years. We wanted to know how growing up in America, experiencing the digital age, and gaining exposure to a multitude of foreign cultures has affected today's teens and what it's doing to their faith journey.

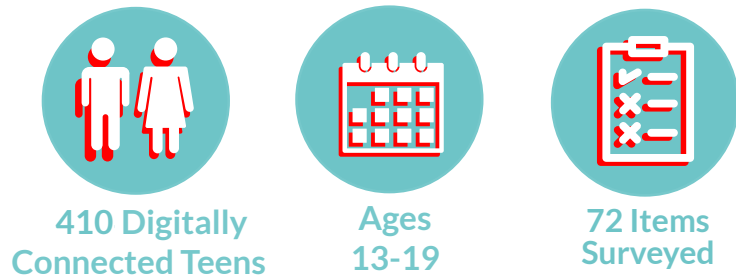
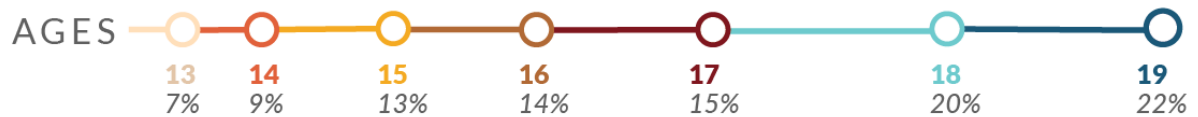
Let's face it: we like to know how our teens stack up to their counterparts from other countries, so we'll show you that as well. But most importantly, looking at the data forces us to grapple with the deeper question: *are our young people influencing or being influenced by the world?*



GLOBAL REPORT

- Africa:** Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa (1,275 teens surveyed)
- Asia:** China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam (2,100 teens surveyed)
- Eurasia:** Egypt, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, The United Kingdom (2,936 teens surveyed)
- Latin America:** Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico (1,673 teens surveyed)
- North America:** United States (410 teens surveyed)

ABOUT THE U.S. TEENS



Note: These results do not reflect the viewpoint of all teens, only those who are digitally connected. Data was collected between February 24 and February 29, 2020—before the effects of the global pandemic were felt in a widespread way. This research reflects teens' beliefs and behaviors before quarantine orders went into effect.

Their answers were complex then, pretty much like they are right now. Reading their responses will send you on a roller coaster ride of emotions. When you connect the dots between the responses and the access today's teens have compared to generations past, it is mind-blowing to think about how much noise there is competing for their time and attention.

You may think you know all there is to know about U.S. teens. But when you take a hard look at what they are thinking about today, how they are feeling, who is influencing them, and what their deepest pain points are and view them through a distinctly global lens, you gain clarity through context and can strategize to create relevant ways to help guide young people through the most challenging yet formative years of their lives.

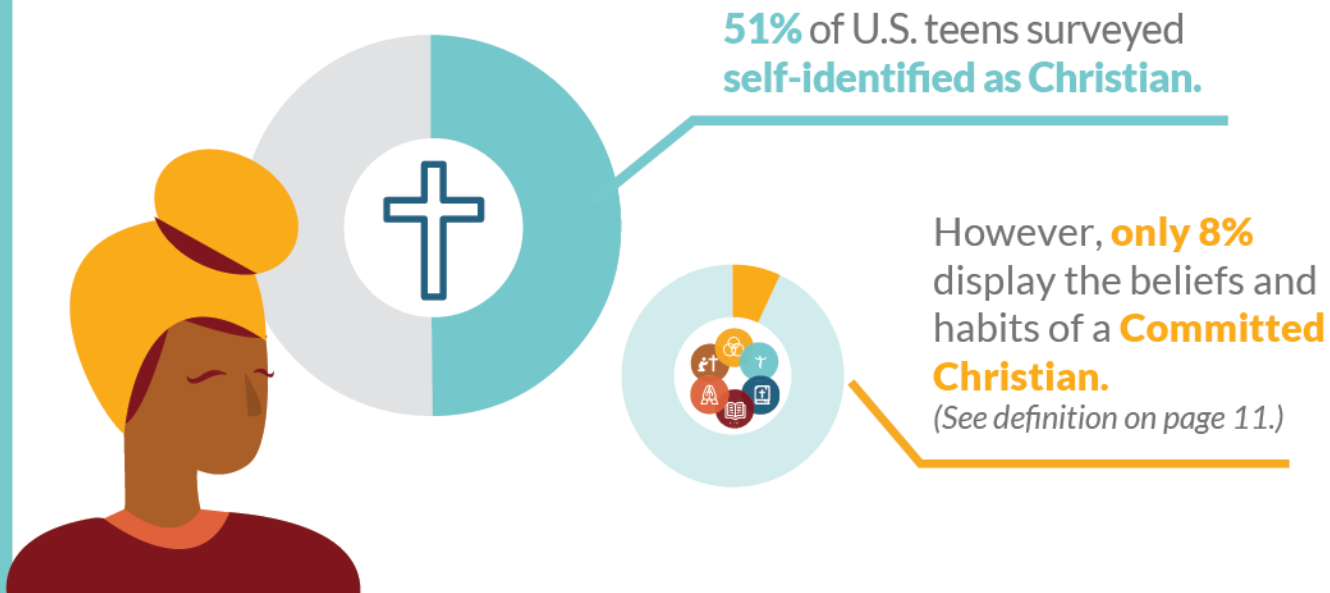
RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

UNITED STATES REPORT

What We Discovered

UNITED STATES

CONSIDER...



SPIRITUAL JOURNEY...



More than half (57%) of teens say their **faith beliefs or spiritual journeys** are an important part of their identity.

NOT HOSTILE BUT...

Teens who say they have no religion, including atheists and agnostics, are **primarily apathetic rather than hostile** in their attitude towards God, the Bible, and Jesus.



SPIRITUAL JOURNEY...



3 in 5 teens in the U.S. say they never read religious scriptures on their own, and **nearly half (46%) of Christian teens say they never read the Bible.**

BENEFITS...



Teens who don't go to Church say they are open to attending **if invited.**

Don't miss this.

TRUTH IS EVERYWHERE...



Nearly half (45%) of teens believe **all religions teach equally valid truths**, and more than half of Christian teens (58%) believe they **don't have a responsibility to share their faith.**

You either are or you aren't...

U.S. teens are split in half when it comes to religion.

Young people in America have long been called “spiritual but not religious,” and our research backs it up.

51% of teens identified themselves as Christian, compared to 43% globally.

57% say their faith beliefs or spiritual journey are an important part of their identity, compared to 67% globally.

Yet...

11% align themselves with other religions.

39% have no religious affiliation and are sometimes called “nones”—a category which includes atheists and agnostics.

2 OUT OF EVERY 5
TEENS IN THE
U.S. CLAIM
NO RELIGION

WHO ARE THE “NONES”?

If 2 out of every 5 teens in the U.S. answer “none” when asked what religion they are, we need to understand what this large group of “nones” believe...or don't believe? Here's what they revealed about themselves in our survey:



1 in 3 “nones” say their faith beliefs or spiritual journeys are an important part of their identity.

45% say they never think about God; 27% believe in cosmic forces like good and evil, but not in a personal God.



Only 1 in 10 hold a hostile view of Jesus, and more than 1 in 4 say He is the Son of God.

60% say they know Christians and consider them kind and caring.



2 in 3 “nones” would consider coming to church if someone invited them.

42% would change their mind about a religious belief if they had a personal experience such as an answer to prayer.

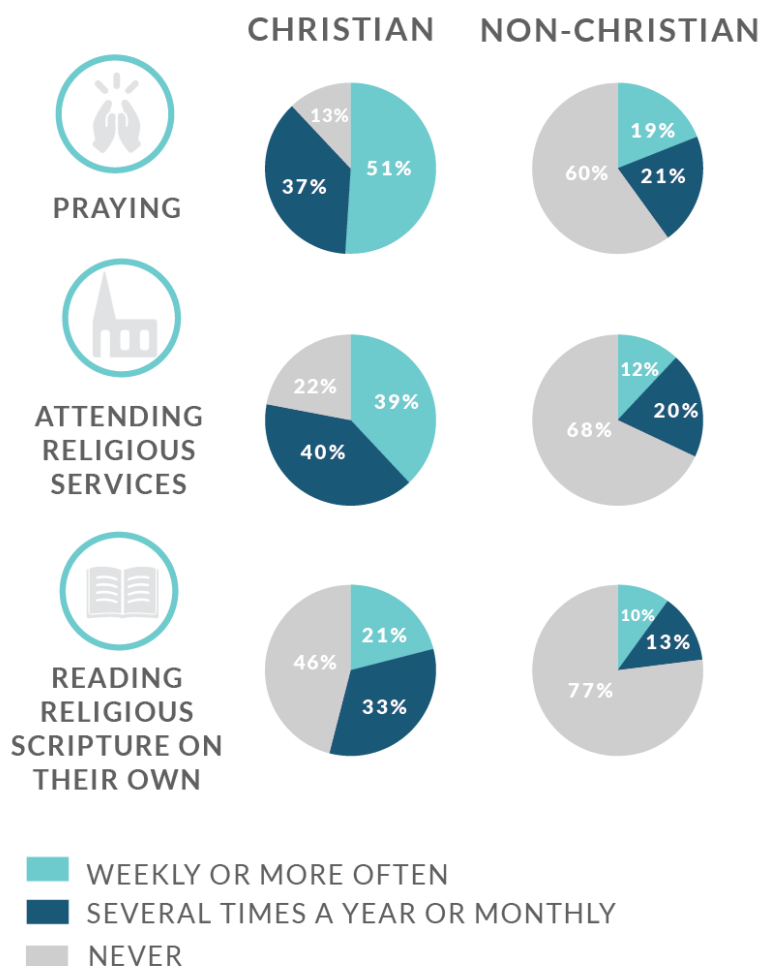


It's fascinating that most "nones" aren't hostile towards the Christian faith, yet they seem to waffle between being apathetic and being curious. While these variances are common for teenagers, we interpret this data as a clear sign that teens in the U.S. are tender and open to invitations to participate in spiritual conversations and experiences, as they figure out who they are and where they fit in the grand scheme of things.

TEENS IN THE U.S. ARE TENDER AND OPEN TO INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS AND EXPERIENCES.

American Teens and Religion

Of course Christian teens say that they attend church, read their Bible, and pray more often than other teens. However, it was a surprise that non-Christian teens, including the "nones," say they sometimes engage in religious behaviors.



The most common ground of these uncommon groups is prayer.

Half of Christian teens say they pray weekly or more often, compared to 56% globally. 1 in 5 non-Christians say the same.

Church attendance data was all over the place.

Christian teens are quite likely to attend church, but their attendance is inconsistent. Patterns outside of the U.S. were quite similar.

39% say they attend every week, compared to 36% globally.

40% go several times a year or monthly, compared to 42% globally.

22% say they never attend church, compared to 22% globally.

For Christian teens who grew up in the Church, around half (52%) say that their Children's Ministry experience played an important role in their spiritual growth. They also made their most important faith commitment around age 11.

Reading religious texts falls lowest on the scales for all teens.

46% of Christian teens say they never read the Bible, compared to 40% globally.

**46% OF
CHRISTIAN
TEENS SAY
THEY NEVER
READ THE
BIBLE.**

This is devastating because not only is the Bible a great way to strengthen our relationship with God, but it is also a tool and resource to help us face life's challenges. Christian teens who read the Bible—even minimally—report lower rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts as compared with Christian teens who never read their Bible.

SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT



52%
OF TEENS NEVER
READ RELIGIOUS
SCRIPTURE ON
THEIR OWN.

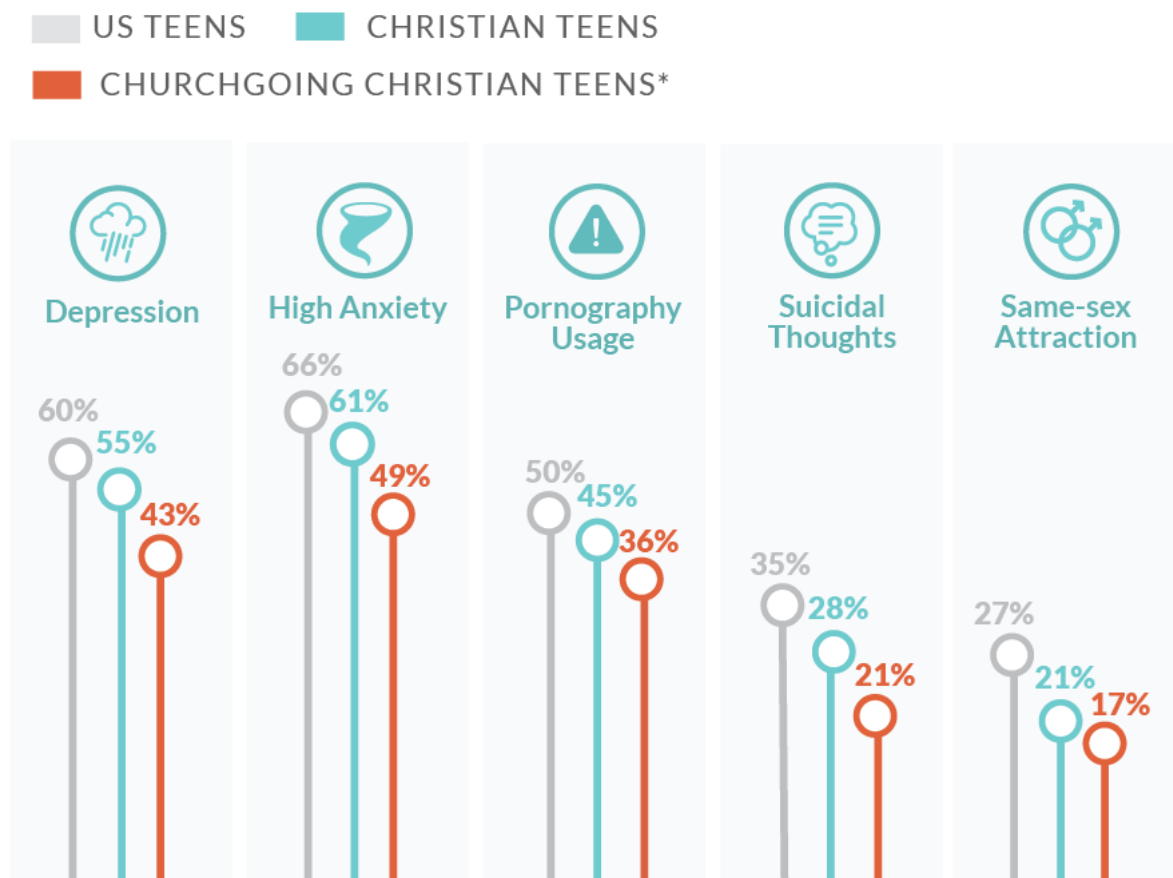
The Power of a Church Community

Teens told us that regularly engaging with a community of believers helped them have a more positive outlook on life. As much as they may fight waking up to go to church, they clearly value building relationships with people who will support and encourage them as they mature.

More than 3 in 4 Christian teens report attending church, though some say they do so inconsistently.

Christian teens who say they attend church once a month or more report lower rates of mental health struggles and other concerns.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND PERSONAL STRUGGLES



*Report they are at church once a month or more frequently

Unchurched teens say they would be open to attending church if someone invited them.

67% said they would be interested in attending or they would consider it.
33% said they would not be interested.

The majority of our respondents reported having a positive perception of Christians. 3 in 5 non-Christian teens say the believers they know are kind and caring. The witness of the church and the people in it is powerful to a watching world.

“CHURCH
IS NOT A
PLACE, BUT
A PEOPLE.”
-U.S. TEEN

So few Committed Christians

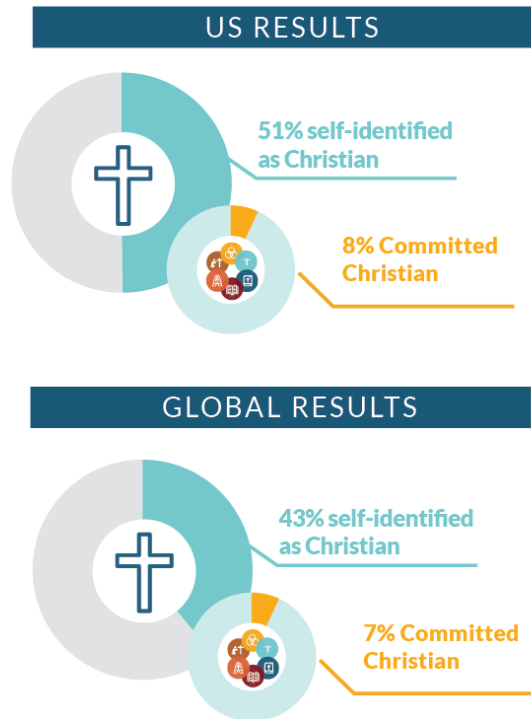
6 TRAITS OF COMMITTED CHRISTIANS



** Note that these teens self-identified as Christian, but not as Jehovah's Witness or Mormon. Committed Christians may be Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Orthodox, or a number of other denominations.*

It was hard to find Committed Christian teens. While 51% of teens we surveyed align themselves with Christianity, a mere 8% display beliefs and behaviors indicating commitment to their Christian walk.

For comparison, the U.S. is on trend with the rest of the world. Across all 20 countries surveyed, 43% of teens identified themselves as Christian with just 7% meeting the definition of a Committed Christian.



The Truth Is ...

Despite the Bible's clear teachings on truth, it appears that Christian youth are being sucked into the post-truth culture of tolerance.

- Nearly half of U.S. teens (45%) believe all religions teach equally valid truths, compared to 52% globally.
- Shockingly, an equal number of Christian teens say the same.

31% of Christian teens **disagree** that forgiveness of sins is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ. **This is on trend** with 29% Christian teens who would say the same globally.

Many teens admitted they were embarrassed to talk (online or in person) about their faith either because it makes them look uncool to their friends or because the topic can be so divisive.

Nearly 2 in 5 Christian teens in the U.S. said they never talk about religious or spiritual things with people who do not share their beliefs. The same number said they do so regularly, having spiritual conversations once a month or more often.

NEARLY **2 IN 5** CHRISTIAN TEENS IN THE U.S. SAID THEY **NEVER** TALK ABOUT RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH PEOPLE WHO DO NOT SHARE THEIR BELIEFS.

CHRISTIAN TEENS SHARING THEIR FAITH

“I can talk to my parents, but there is no way I feel comfortable talking to my friends about religion,” said one U.S. teen.

Why so shy? Many Christian teens do not see sharing their faith as important.

- **58%** of Christian teens we surveyed don't believe they have a responsibility to share their faith or religious beliefs with others, compared to 44% globally.
- Globally, American teens ranked as being more averse to evangelism than Christians in many other countries.

58% OF CHRISTIAN TEENS DON'T BELIEVE THEY HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO SHARE THEIR FAITH.



Conclusion

Remember, this is just a snapshot. The good news is that the attitudes and habits of teens depicted here are far from fixed. This research gives us valuable insight and points us towards some practical implications and applications on how to help guide them as they age.

- **NEARLY HALF OF CHRISTIAN TEENS SAY THEY NEVER READ THEIR BIBLE.** God's Word is the greatest resource we have to grow our faith, yet the younger generation is failing to participate in biblical growth and discipleship. How can we encourage young people towards this important spiritual discipline and demonstrate the vibrancy that comes from a life lived in step with Scripture?
- **TEENAGERS WILL SAY THEY ARE CHRISTIANS, BUT AREN'T LIVING OUT A COMMITTED CHRISTIAN WALK.** Half of teens we talked to say they are Christian, but just 1 in 12 display the beliefs and habits that show they are committed to their faith. This includes embracing foundational truths such as believing Jesus is the only way and regularly engaging in Scripture reading and prayer. These behaviors and beliefs are critical if a teen is to mature in their faith and experience the life transformation God intends for them. How can we elevate the role of Scripture in the regular rhythms of a teen's life?
- **THE NUMBER OF COMMITTED CHRISTIANS IN THE U.S. IS SADLY FEW, MATCHING THE OBSERVED GLOBAL TREND.** But our data points to big differences in the lives of teens who hold to the core beliefs of Christianity and have a regular habit of Bible reading and prayer. It is critical that we disciple teens in these three key areas that help them move from being "nominal" Christians to being serious about their walk with Jesus.
- **TEENAGE "NONES," INCLUDING ATHEISTS AND AGNOSTICS, ARE MORE FAVORABLE TOWARD CHRISTIANITY AND TO THE CHURCH THAN WE THOUGHT.** They are not necessarily mad at God, actively opposed to Jesus, or skeptical of the Bible's message. Instead, they mostly say they just don't think about these things. How can we spiritually awaken these "nones" and show them that there is a message worth believing that can have real impact on their lives?

- **MANY TEENS SAY THAT FAITH BELIEFS OR A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR IDENTITY.**

This is good news for the Church; there is common ground to explore and expand on their openness. More teens than you might expect say they would consider coming to church if invited—so it doesn't hurt to ask! The data also shows that the presence of a church community is a powerful force for good in the lives of young people. How can we draw teens into our church communities for a personal encounter with the Gospel?

- **TODAY'S TEENS VIEW TRUTH AS FLUID RATHER THAN FIXED.**

Because this generation prizes tolerance, many shy away from regularly discussing spiritual matters with others. It makes sense as they have grown up in a diverse and complex cultural context. While their inclusive attitude towards people is perhaps one of this generation's greatest strengths, Christian teens need to know that the one true Gospel is the only one that saves. How can we equip them to share the truth in love with those who need to hear it?



PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND STRUGGLES

UNITED STATES REPORT

What We Discovered

UNITED STATES

MENTAL HEALTH...

A significant number of teens are struggling with their mental health, reporting high anxiety, loneliness, depression, and suicidal ideation and attempts. But teens who are Committed Christians report struggling less with their mental health than other teens.



SUICIDAL THOUGHTS...

35% of teens in the U.S. report having had suicidal thoughts within the last three months—the highest rate of any country in our global study.



AGES 13-15...



Younger teens ages 13-15 are struggling more with suicidal ideation than any other age group.

SUICIDE ATTEMPTS...



7% of teens said they actually attempted to take their own life.

GIRLS V. BOYS...

Girls are harder hit than boys when it comes to mental health concerns like loneliness, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.



SEXUALLY ACTIVE...



1 in 3 unmarried teens have been sexually active in the past three months and Christian young people are more likely than non-Christians to report this.

PORNOGRAPHY...



50% of teens have looked at pornographic material recently.

SAME-SEX ATTRACTION...



1 in 4 teens report feeling sexually attracted to someone of the same gender within the past three months.

A Glimpse into a Teenager's Reality

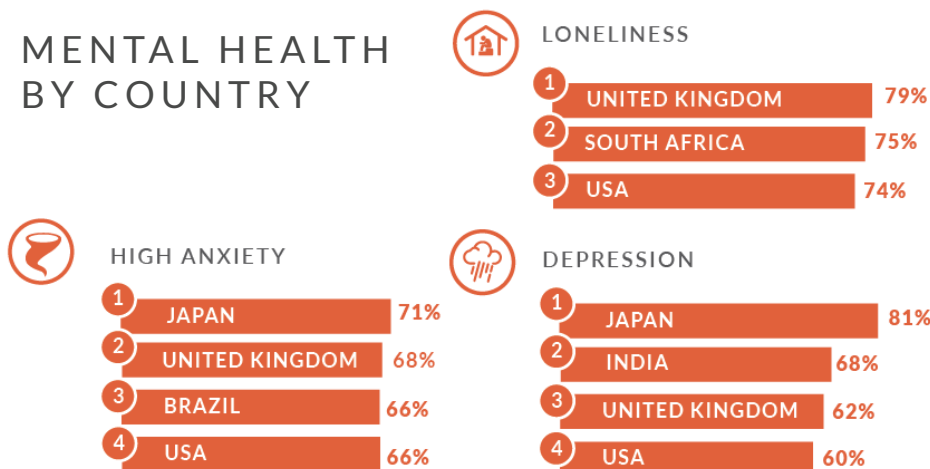
We thought growing up in America would have ranked as easier than growing up in many other countries we surveyed. However, nothing prepared us for the giant number of teens in the U.S. who admitted they are seriously struggling and the deeply personal topics they shared.

The personal struggles U.S. teens reported experiencing in the past 3 months¹ were startling.

- **3 in 4** teens reported feelings of loneliness.
- **2 in 3** reported high anxiety.
- **3 in 5** reported depression.²

American teens are struggling more than their global peers. Of the 20 countries surveyed, the U.S. ranked in the top 5 countries with the highest rates of loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

MENTAL HEALTH BY COUNTRY



MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Within the past three months, I have experienced:



¹ Data was collected towards the end of February 2020, meaning that teens were reflecting on life before experiencing widespread effects from the coronavirus pandemic or from the protests triggered by the George Floyd incident in May.

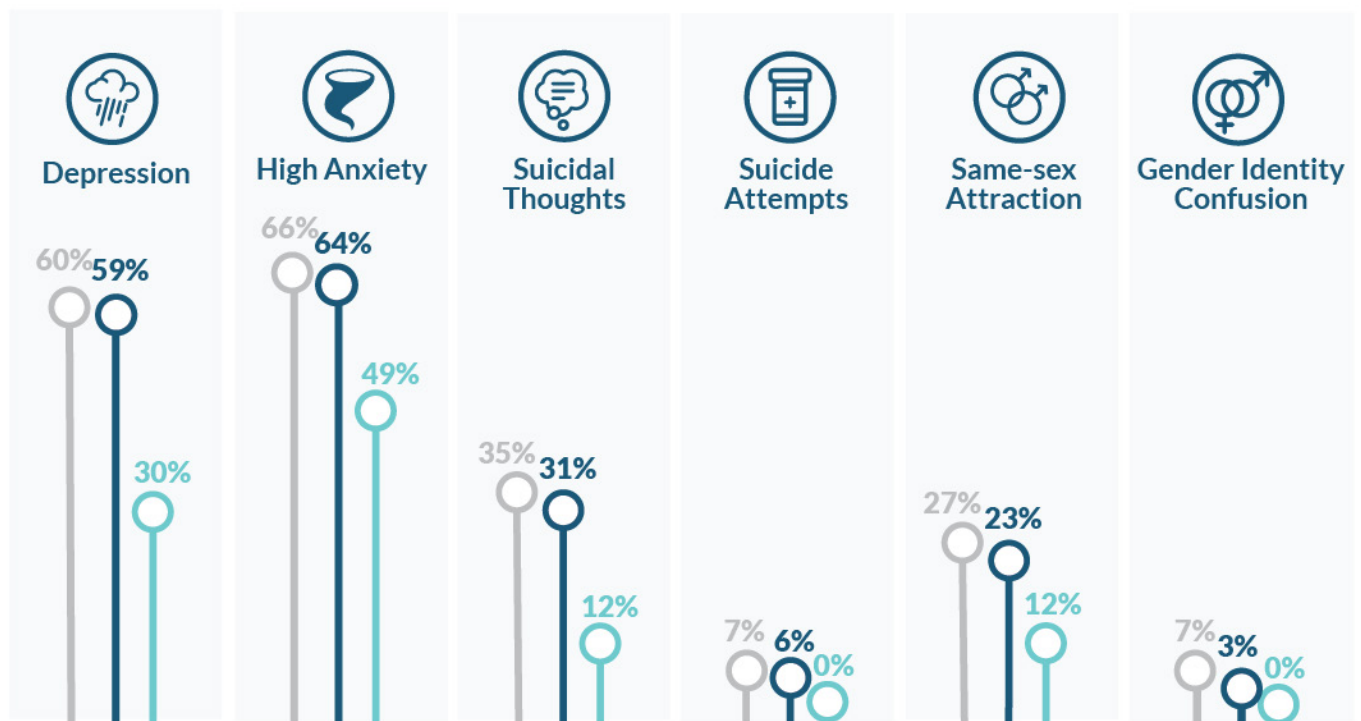
² Note that these are not necessarily clinical levels of depression or anxiety. Teens interpreted for themselves the terms provided and self-reported if they felt they had experienced them.

Committed Christians Struggle Less

Very few teens qualified as Committed Christians (see definition on page 11), but those that did seem to have a better experience than those who did not.

■ US TEENS ■ NOMINAL CHRISTIANS ■ COMMITTED CHRISTIANS

Within the past three months, I have experienced:



Note that the number of suicide attempts in our study is small, so related percentages should be carefully considered.

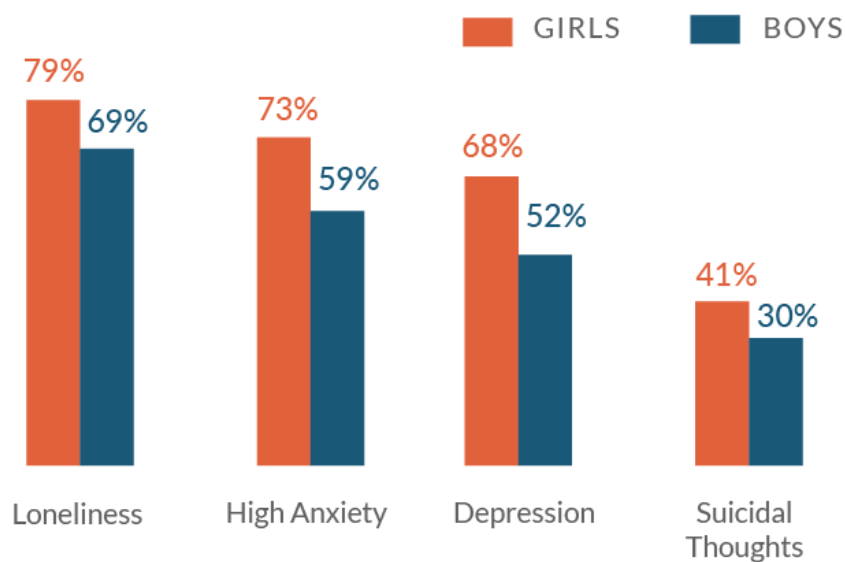
Overall, Committed Christians enjoy better mental health and lower rates of at-risk behaviors on nearly every item we measured compared to “nominal” Christians.

Girls struggle more than boys.

When we sorted the results by gender, girls had more mental health struggles than boys. **This trend is the same globally.**

GIRL VS BOY STRUGGLES

Within the past three months, I have experienced:



Younger teens struggle more.

The younger age group (13-15 year olds) transitioning from middle school into high school reported experiencing **more suicidal ideation** than the high schoolers (16-19 year olds) in our study. **This was on trend compared to the global findings.**

It is little but some consolation that this younger (13-15 year olds) age group is less likely than their older counterparts to engage in certain risk behaviors such as having sex, getting drunk, or using drugs.

We don't know why young teens are struggling so hard, but we do know where they are looking for hope and answers — and it isn't in the Bible.

- **43%** of 13-15 year olds in the U.S. say they never really think about the Bible, compared with 33% of U.S. teens overall.
- They are the **most apathetic** in their faith attitudes of any age group in our study.

It's hard to watch these fledglings struggle and try to overcome life's challenges without the hope of the Gospel. 13-15 year olds need our immediate attention and urgent intervention.

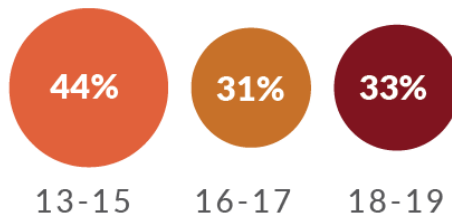
Suicide is a major issue.

The U.S. ranked the highest for suicidal ideation of any country in our global study, meaning young Americans are struggling the most with suicidal thoughts of any young people in the world.

Nearly half (44%) of 13-15 year olds have had suicidal thoughts within the last 3 months—the highest of any age group.

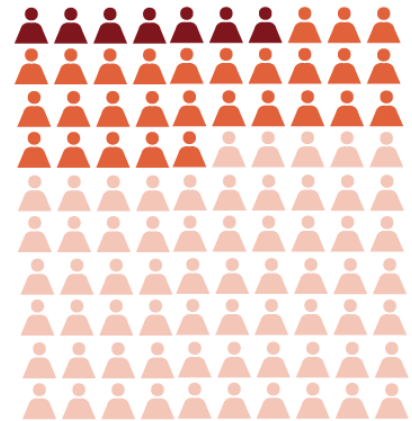


SUICIDAL THOUGHTS BY AGE



35% percent of teens in the U.S. reported having suicidal thoughts in the past 3 months—**the highest rate in the world** across the 20 countries we surveyed, compared to 25% globally.

U.S. TEENS HAVE THE HIGHEST SUICIDAL IDEATION RATE OF ANY COUNTRY IN OUR GLOBAL STUDY.



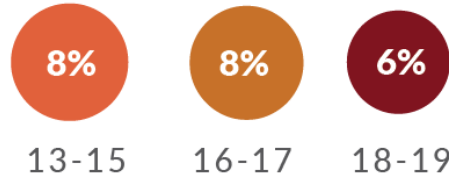
35% OF TEENS HAVE HAD **SUICIDAL THOUGHTS** IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS.

7% OF TEENS HAVE **ATTEMPTED SUICIDE** IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS.

In our study, suicide attempts were **highest among younger teens** and lowest among older teens.

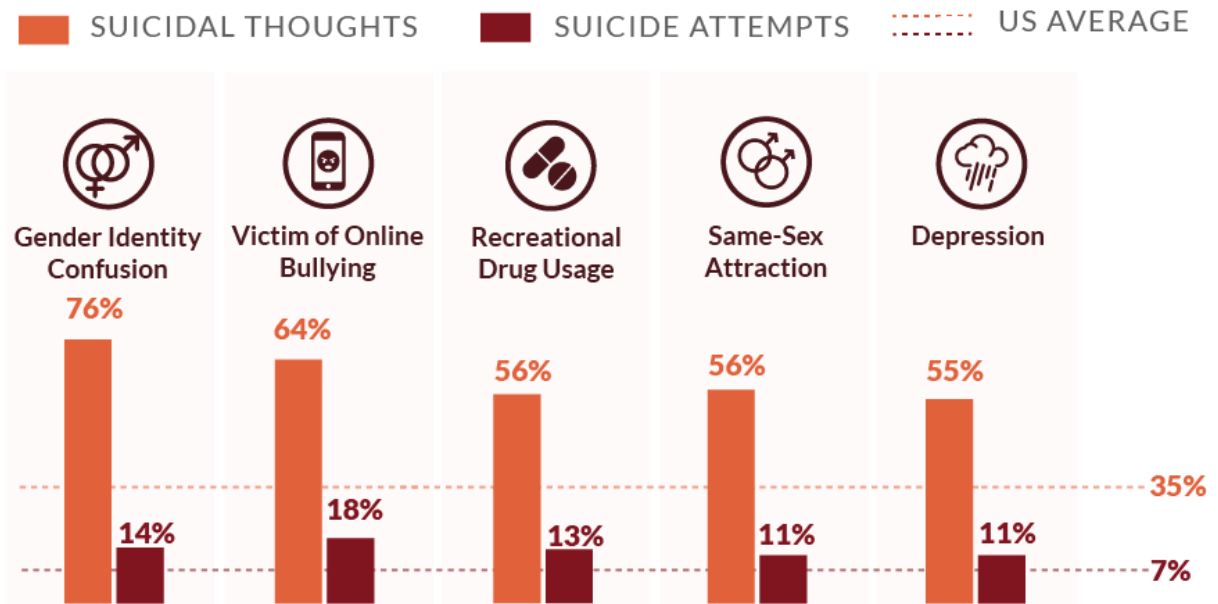


SUICIDE ATTEMPTS BY AGE



Our research clearly revealed that teens who experience bullying or gender confusion are at much higher risk of suicidal ideation and attempts.

5 FACTORS THAT CORRELATE WITH HIGHER SUICIDE RISK



Note that this data is self-reported by teens, not drawn from hospital records which often forms the basis of other research studies on the topic of suicide.

When it comes to suicidal thoughts and attempts, these are not just percentages on a page—they are real lives. These numbers are heartbreaking, and each one represents a young person who feels down enough about life to want to end it. We must shine a light into their darkness.

"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined." —Matthew 4:16 (ESV)

Pornography is a Problem.

Half of teens in the U.S. admit to struggling with pornography - the same amount as teens globally.

- Nearly half (48%) of **13-15 year olds** admit to viewing porn within the past 3 months.
- **Boys** are much more likely than girls to have reported looking at pornographic material within the last 3 months (63% vs 38%).
- **Younger teens** are viewing it almost as much as teens of any other age.
- **Christians** porn usage is less, but not much less.

50% OF U.S. TEENS ADMIT VIEWING PORN WITHIN THE PAST 3 MONTHS.

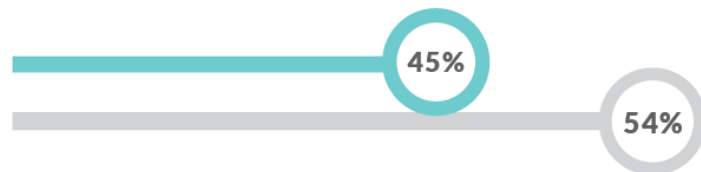
PORNOGRAPHY USAGE BY AGE



CHRISTIAN TEENS Q & A

CHRISTIAN
NON-CHRISTIAN

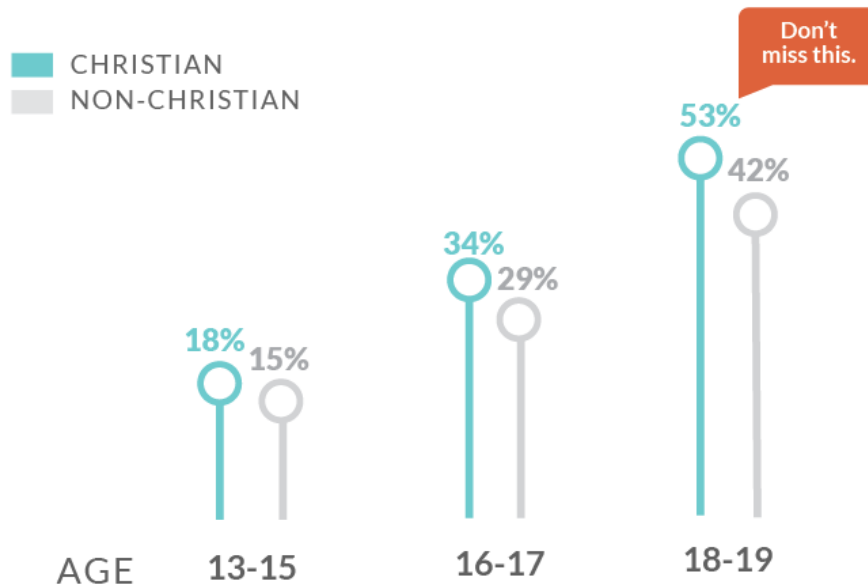
I have looked at pornographic material recently.



Let's talk about sex.

We know teens are viewing porn, and we also know teens are having sex. But did you know it was this much?

SEXUALLY ACTIVE TEENS* BY AGE



*Data represents unmarried teens

- **Girls** were more likely than boys to report being sexually active (38% vs 29%).
- Sexual activity was nearly **three times higher** among older teens (18-19 years old) than younger teens (13-15 years old).

MORE THAN HALF (56%) OF BELIEVING TEENS SAY PRE-MARITAL SEX IS ACCEPTABLE.

CHRISTIAN
NON-CHRISTIAN

It is ok to have sex before marriage



- **Christian** young people are **more likely to be sexually active** than non-Christians.
- **1 in 3** (unmarried) teens report being sexually active within the past three months, compared to 3 in 10 globally.



Despite Biblical instructions that sex is reserved for marriage, Christian teens in the U.S. are engaging in sexual activity **more** than the average teen. **We're seeing the same trend globally.**

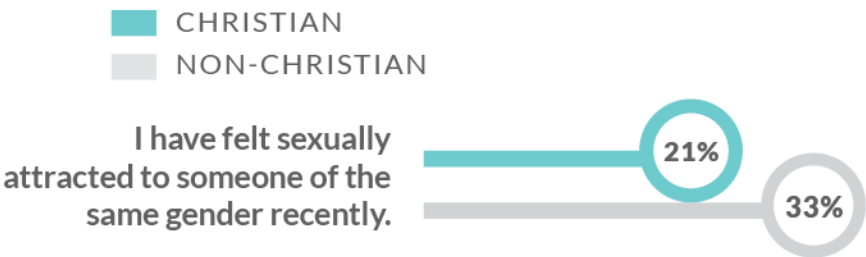
Gender Issues

Not only do teens admit to watching porn and having sex, but many have also shared that they have experienced same-sex attraction.

- **1 in 4** U.S. teens report they have felt sexually attracted to someone of the same gender within the past three months, compared to 1 in 5 globally.
- U.S. is in the **top 5** of the 20 countries surveyed globally with the highest rates of same-sex attraction among young people.
- Girls are almost **twice as likely** to report same-sex attracted than boys (35% vs 19%).
- Teens who say they have had a poor family experience are **twice as likely** to be experiencing same-sex attraction than if they have reported a good family experience overall (42% vs 21%).

GIRLS ARE
ALMOST TWICE
AS LIKELY
TO REPORT
SAME SEX
ATTRACTION
THAN BOYS
(35% VS 19%).

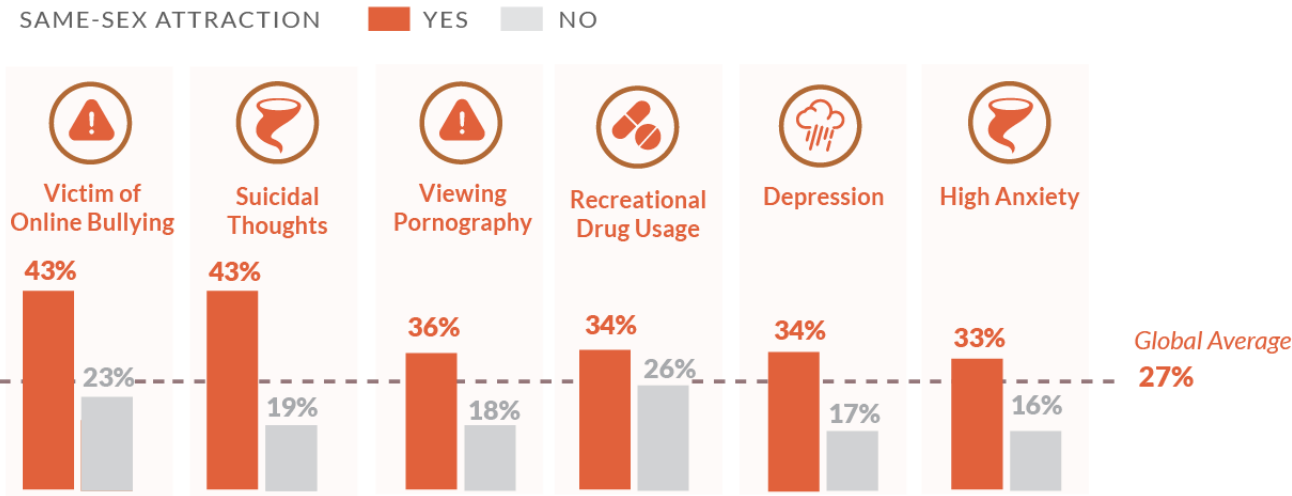
Christian teens aren't immune.



Same-sex attraction appears to double when clustered with other behaviors.

SAME-SEX ATTRACTION AND CLUSTER BEHAVIORS

Same-sex attraction among those who did or did not report other behaviors:



Conclusion

The data is sobering. The physical and emotional struggles teens were vulnerable enough to admit—especially in their YOUNGER years—are alarming. Now that we know what they are thinking, feeling, and doing, we can take empathetic action.

- **TEENS ARE STRUGGLING MORE THAN WE MAY HAVE REALIZED.**

The differences in personal struggles by gender and by age are undeniable and give us some initial places to look. How can we be intentional and proactive about supporting these groups and creating safe spaces for them to discuss their challenges and seek help? Consider the unique struggles girls face in regard to their gender and the fact that we will increasingly need to empower experienced women to disciple their younger counterparts, similar to the model that Titus 2:3-5 shares.

- **CHRISTIAN TEENS NEED DISCIPLESHIP IN THE AREA OF SEXUALITY.**

Alarming, Christian teens are more likely to be sexually active than non-Christians. Many young believers don't even believe pre-marital sex is wrong. How can we guide young people to a more biblical view on this topic that restores sex to the sacred context of marriage that God intended?

- **PORNOGRAPHY USAGE AND SAME SEX ATTRACTION ARE SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FOR THIS GENERATION.**

The data shows that we cannot assume that age or religion protect a teen from these experiences and feelings. Even a teen who is walking with Jesus may be struggling in one or both of these areas.



DIGITAL CONNECTEDNESS AND IMPACT

UNITED STATES REPORT

What We Discovered

UNITED STATES

TIME INVESTMENT...



Teens in the U.S. are spending an average of **7 hours and 35 minutes** online daily.

VIDEO IS KING...

The **U.S. ranks #1** out of 20 countries for **hours spent watching videos** on platforms including Netflix and YouTube.



of teens say they **watch videos every day.**

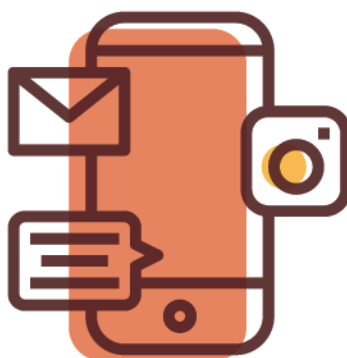


TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING...

Teens who are **heavy internet users** (10+ hours daily) are **struggling more with their mental health.**



SOCIAL MEDIA BENEFITS...

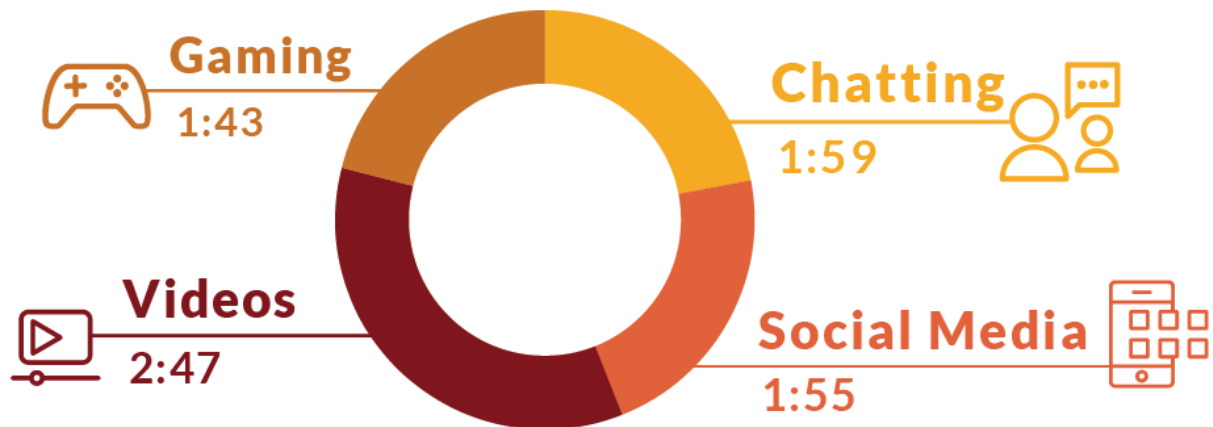


The majority of teens (65%) say **social media contributes to their life satisfaction.**

Online All the Time

Teens are online all the time. Not literally, but close to it. Teens in the U.S. are spending an average of 7 hours and 35 minutes online daily.¹ What are they doing in all those hours they spend online?

TIME SPENT BY ACTIVITY



In our study, U.S. teens **rank #1** for most hours/day spent consuming video content.

Rather than simply looking at cumulative time spent online, it's important to look at the online activities teens regularly return to. In the U.S., video is king.

TEENS IN THE U.S. ARE SPENDING
AN AVERAGE OF 7 HOURS AND 35
MINUTES ONLINE DAILY.

¹ Note that data was collected in February 2020, before schools transitioned to virtual learning due to the coronavirus pandemic. Teens were not specifically asked to exclude school activities from total time spent online daily, so some may have included it in their estimate.



96% of teens watch videos every day.

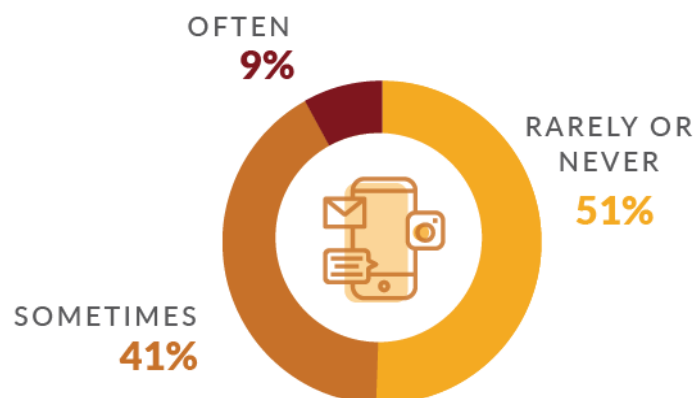
IN OUR STUDY, U.S. TEENS RANK #1 FOR MOST HOURS/DAY SPENT CONSUMING VIDEO CONTENT.

Social media isn't as important to American teens as compared with video. Their top two reasons for using it are to:

- Find funny or entertaining content (71%).
- Connect with friends and family (63%).

While most teens have social media, many (68%) only use it less than 1 hour/day. Teens reported different views on how social media makes them feel. **2 in 3 teens** report that social media **helps them feel satisfied** with their lives.

SOCIAL MEDIA MAKES ME FEEL SAD, ANXIOUS, OR DEPRESSED.



The Tech Effect

When we categorized teens by the amount of time they spend online, here's what we found:

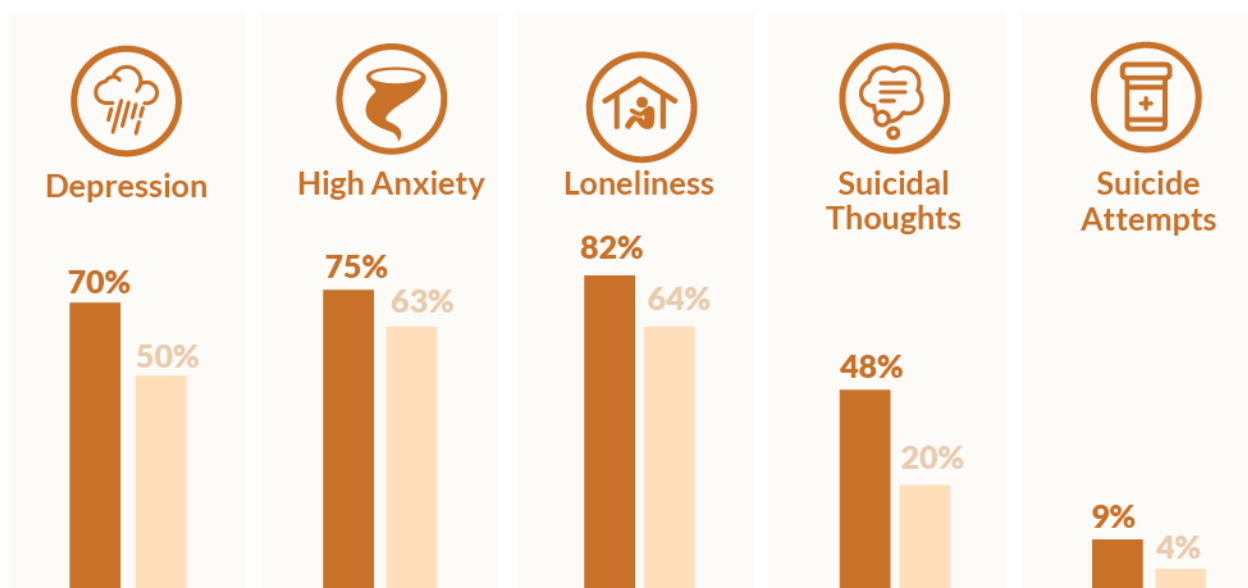
■ Light = 0-4 hours daily ■ Heavy = 10+ hours daily

- Light internet users are **more likely** to say it's important that what they do for work is respected (13% vs 4%).
- Heavy internet users are **twice as likely** to say the most important thing in their future career is how much it pays (32% vs 17%) compared to (25% vs 18%) globally.
- Heavy internet users also appear to be **struggling more with their mental health** and are more than twice as likely to report that they have had suicidal thoughts and even attempted suicide within the past three months.¹

INTERNET USE AND PERSONAL STRUGGLES

■ HEAVY INTERNET USERS (10+ hours online daily) ■ LIGHT INTERNET USERS (0-4 hours online daily)

Within the past three months, I have experienced:



¹ Note that the number of suicide attempts in our study is small, so related percentages should be carefully considered.

There is definitely a connection between time spent online and teenage personal struggles, but there is no proof that one leads to the other. It is possible that heavy internet usage contributes to these personal struggles, but it could also be true that teens who are already struggling with their mental health may turn to their digital devices as a means of escape.

U.S. teens are not the only ones navigating a complex relationship between their in-person experiences and their digital lives. This same trend was observed globally across the 20 countries surveyed. These same mental health concerns surfaced across the world when paired with time spent online.

Conclusion

Being constantly connected is normal for today's young people, and U.S. teens are neither leading the way in time online nor lagging behind. But now that we know where they are and what they are doing digitally, how do we engage them effectively with the Gospel message they need to hear? Here are some ideas to consider:

- **VIDEOS ARE PART OF EVERY TEEN'S DAILY LIFE AND CAN BE A POWERFUL VEHICLE TO REACH YOUNG PEOPLE.**

Teens are spending the most time on platforms like YouTube and Netflix, and 96% of them say they watch video content every day. How can we use this appealing medium to reach young people for Christ?

- **SOCIAL MEDIA MIGHT NOT BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO REACH TEENS.**

Most are not spending a lot of time on these platforms every day (68% spend 1 hour or less daily). Teens are also divided on whether or not social media is helping them live their best life, so consider the content you are putting out for them and how you can help them navigate their complex relationship with their digital devices.

- **TEENS SPENDING A LOT OF TIME ON SCREENS MIGHT BE STRUGGLING DEEPLY.**

Those who are spending a lot of time online may be dealing with some very serious mental health issues, so think about how you can be prepared to respond in conversations that might arise and encourage these teens to have a healthy outlook.



IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

UNITED STATES REPORT

What We Discovered

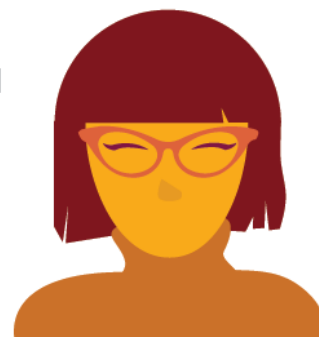
UNITED STATES

GENDER IDENTITY...

Around half of teens believe **gender is primarily based on the sex a person is born as.**



The other half believe it is something **a person determines for themselves** according to their personal **feelings or sexual attractions.**



GENDER DIVIDE...

Girls have a **less traditional** view of gender identity than boys do, and are more likely to say it is acceptable to change your body to become a different gender.



FAMILY DYNAMIC...



69%

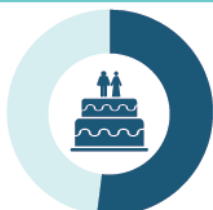
of U.S. teens say they have had a good family experience overall, **but comparatively, the U.S. ranks lowest among the 20 countries surveyed.**

CLOSE FRIENDS...



Teens are satisfied with their friendships with more than **3 in 4** saying they have close friends who know them well.

ABOUT MARRIAGE...



55%

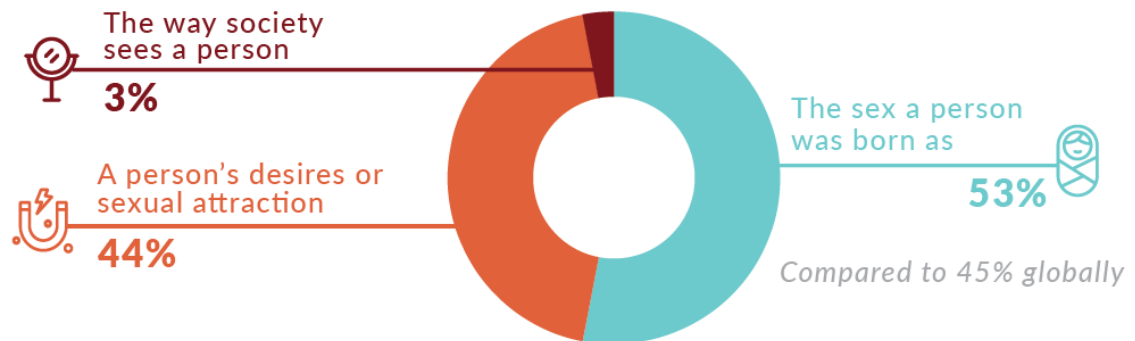
of U.S. teens believe marriage **should not be exclusively between a man and a woman.**

Gender Identity as a Choice

We can't measure all of the highly complex aspects involved in how teens form their identity, but we can learn from how they view themselves and others.

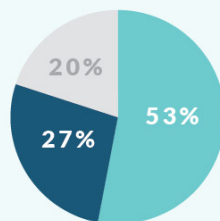
U.S. teens are split right down the middle when it comes to gender. Around half say gender is primarily based on a person's sex at birth. The other half believe gender is a choice to be self-determined by a person's feelings or sexual attractions. **This is the same globally.**

GENDER IS PRIMARILY BASED ON



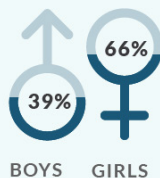
Is it ok for someone to change their body to become a different gender?

● YES ● NO ● MAYBE



GENDER DIVIDE

RESPONDED YES



Girls have a less traditional view of gender than boys do.

- **59%** believe gender is primarily based on a person's feelings or desires as compared to 29% of boys who say the same.
- **66%** of girls say it is acceptable for someone to change their body to become a different gender vs 39% of boys.

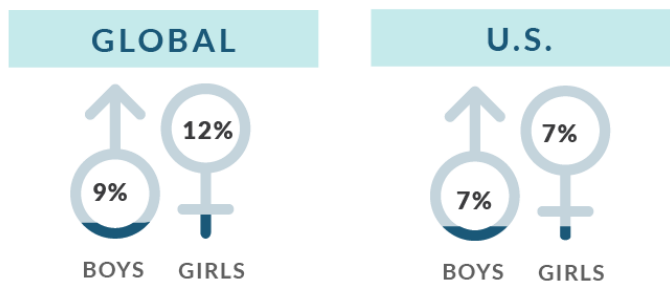
More than half of all teens in the U.S. believe that if a person feels they are a different gender, they should be able to do something about it (i.e. change their body anatomically).

While many teens have opinions about gender identity, few say they are personally confused about their gender identity.

- **7%** of teens in the U.S. say they have experienced gender identity confusion within the past 3 months.
- **1 in 10** say they feel they would be most themselves as a different gender.

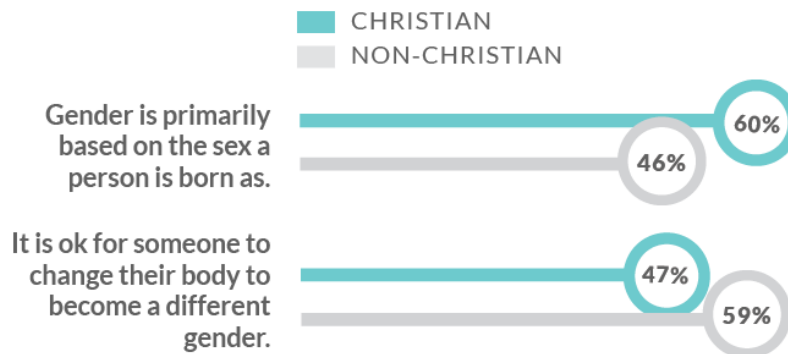
Both boys and girls in the U.S. struggle equally with confusion about their gender identity.

GENDER IDENTITY CONFUSION



Religion definitely impacts teens' opinions about gender identity.

VIEW OF GENDER



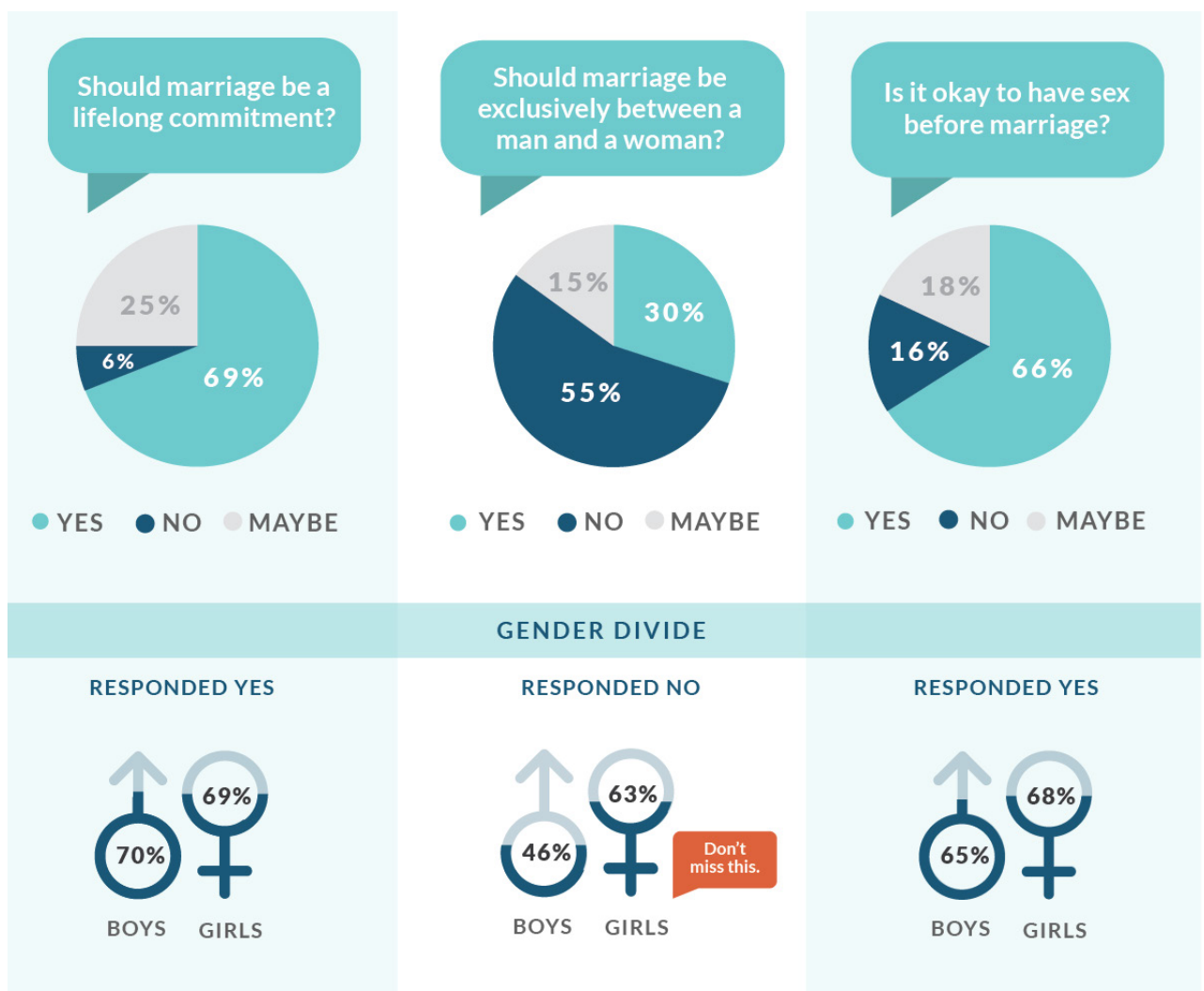
A Deteriorating View of Marriage

U.S. teens are rejecting traditional beliefs about marriage.

- **55%** say marriage should not have to be exclusively between a man and a woman, while **30%** say it should be.

Girls view marriage very differently than boys.

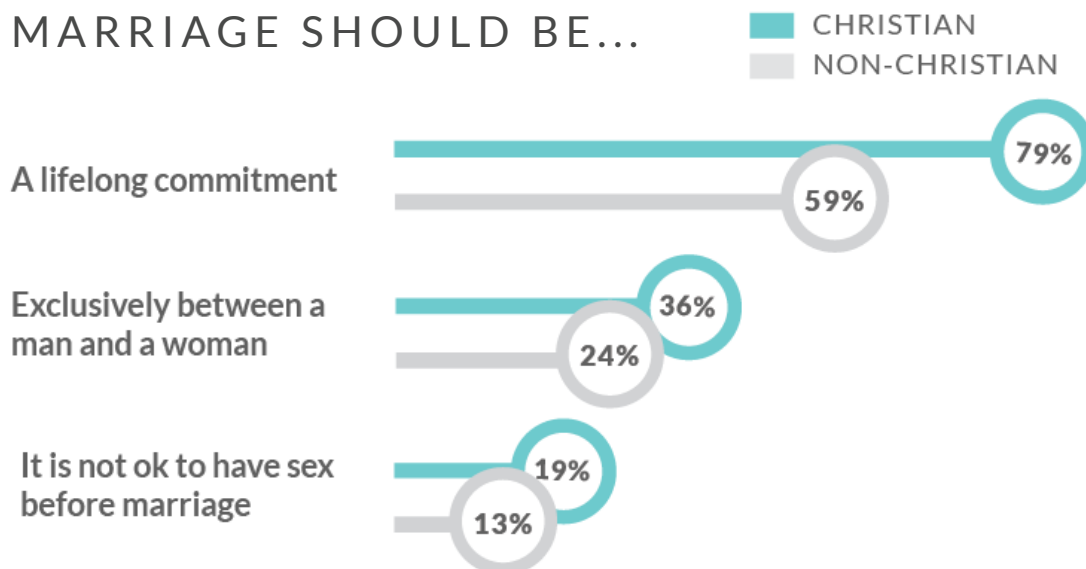
GEN Z ON MARRIAGE



A biblical view of marriage is a minority opinion. 12% of teens believe marriage should be a lifelong commitment exclusively between a man and a woman and that sex should be saved for marriage, **compared to 10% globally.**

1 IN 8 U.S. TEENS HAVE A BIBLICAL VIEW OF SEX AND MARRIAGE.

MARRIAGE SHOULD BE...



Family



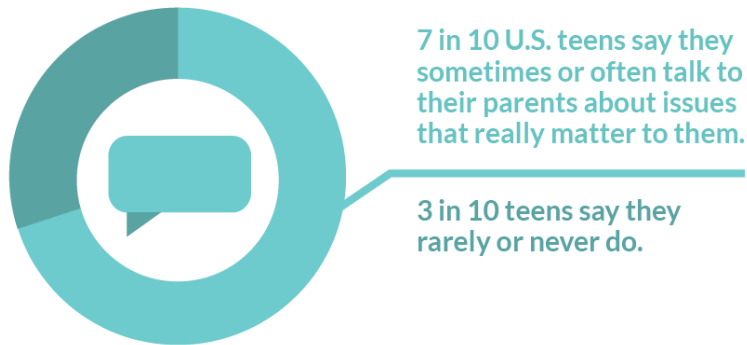
Here's what teens in our study reported about family relationships.

- **7 in 10** teens say that overall their family experience has been good.
- Family satisfaction was higher for those living in two-parent homes (76%).

Even so, compared to the 19 other countries in our study, **American teens are much less likely than the global average to say their family experience has been good (69% vs 82%).**

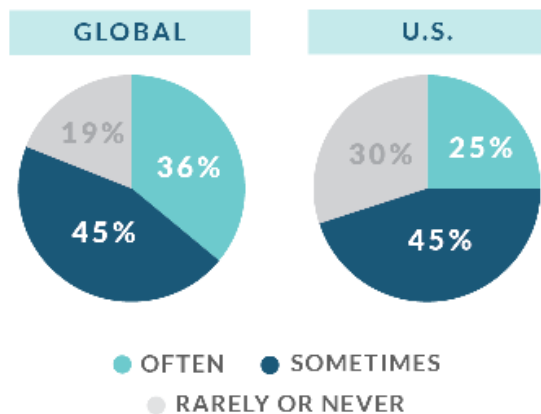
U.S. TEENS ARE THE MOST DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR FAMILY EXPERIENCE OF ANY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

We tried to figure out if communication had anything to do with teens' feeling close or distant with parents.



U.S. teens talking to their parents ranked lower than the other countries in our study.

I TALK TO MY PARENTS/GUARDIANS ABOUT ISSUES THAT REALLY MATTER TO ME



77% say they have close friends that know them well, **which means 23% do not.**

Digital interactions can complicate friendships.

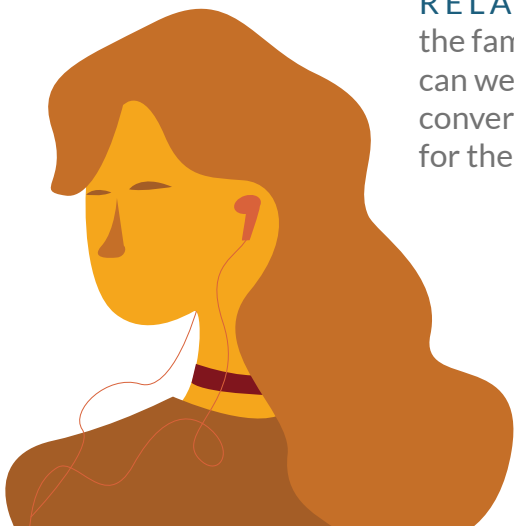
- **20%** report they have been bullied by someone online within the past three months.
- **16%** of teens admitted being personally hurtful to someone online recently.

NEARLY 1 IN 4 TEENS SAY THEY DON'T HAVE CLOSE FRIENDS THAT KNOW THEM WELL.

Conclusion

The American teenage identity is complicated, as is trying to balance family and friends. But that doesn't mean we sit back and watch teens flounder while trying to figure out who they are and where they belong in community and society. A good starting point may be the topic of identity—which many teens shared is a confusing one. The data also shows that they may lack people who know them well or healthy family relationships that can support them in their growing up journey. Here is some food for thought, as you ponder how to come alongside the teens in your life and ground the highly complex areas of their lives with the truth of Scripture:

- **HALF OF U.S. TEENS BELIEVE GENDER IDENTITY IS SUBJECTIVE AND CAN BE SELF-DETERMINED.** In this landscape, where young people believe gender is their choice and their right, how do we present what the Bible has to say about identity?
- **TEENS MAY SEE MARRIAGE AS A LIFELONG COMMITMENT, BUT DO NOT SEE IT AS EXCLUSIVE BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN.** The majority of teens also don't see the need to save sex for marriage. How can we help teens not only understand God's plan for marriage, but also the benefits of commitment when it comes to covenant?
- **GIRLS HAVE A LESS BIBLICAL VIEW OF GENDER IDENTITY AND MARRIAGE** than boys do. Knowing this, how can we be intentional about healthy support for girls that guides them to reflect more deeply on what God has to say about these topics?
- **TEENS ARE QUITE SATISFIED WITH THEIR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS** despite the fact that they ranked lowest on the family satisfaction scale out of all 20 countries in our study. How can we strengthen families to have deep, meaningful connections and conversations more regularly and incorporate the truth of Scripture for the challenges young people may be facing?



INFLUENCES AND GUIDING VOICES

UNITED STATES REPORT

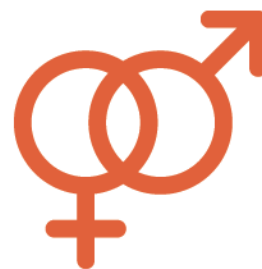
What We Discovered

UNITED STATES

GO-TO GUIDES...

MEANING OF LIFE

U.S. teens say **family** is their go-to for guidance on some of life's most important questions such as what is right and wrong and the meaning of life.



GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Social media and friends are teens' top influences when it comes to conversations about gender and sexuality.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...



As Gen Z looks to its future, **teens see education as a pathway to success** in life and say that enjoying what they do for work is a more important career priority than how much a job pays.

PASTORAL INFLUENCE...

Christian teens say their churches have dedicated youth pastors, but report they are **not going to their church leaders to discuss important life issues.**



I'D RECONSIDER IF...



Personal experiences are the number one reason teens say they would **change their mind about a religious belief.**

Teens Trust Family

Teens might say they have strong opinions, but more often than not, they are easily swayed and often just echoing someone else's point of view. Here is insight into who teens see as their biggest influencers.

Family is the first place U.S. teens go for advice when it comes to big questions in life. It's good to know teens trust their family despite 31% reporting a negative family experience.

FAMILY IS THE FIRST PLACE U.S. TEENS GO FOR ADVICE WHEN IT COMES TO BIG QUESTIONS IN LIFE.

RIGHT AND WRONG CONVERSATIONS



- 1 **FAMILY MEMBERS 52%**
compared to 50% globally
- 2 **FRIENDS/PEERS 21%**
compared to 16% globally
- 3 **SOCIAL* MEDIA 10%**
compared to 14% globally
- 4 **RELIGIOUS LEADERS/TEXTS 8%**
compared to 7% globally
- 5 **TEACHERS/COUNSELORS 7%**
compared to 9% globally
- 6 **OFFLINE MEDIA 3%**
compared to 5% globally

**In answering this question, respondents chose "social media or other online sources"*

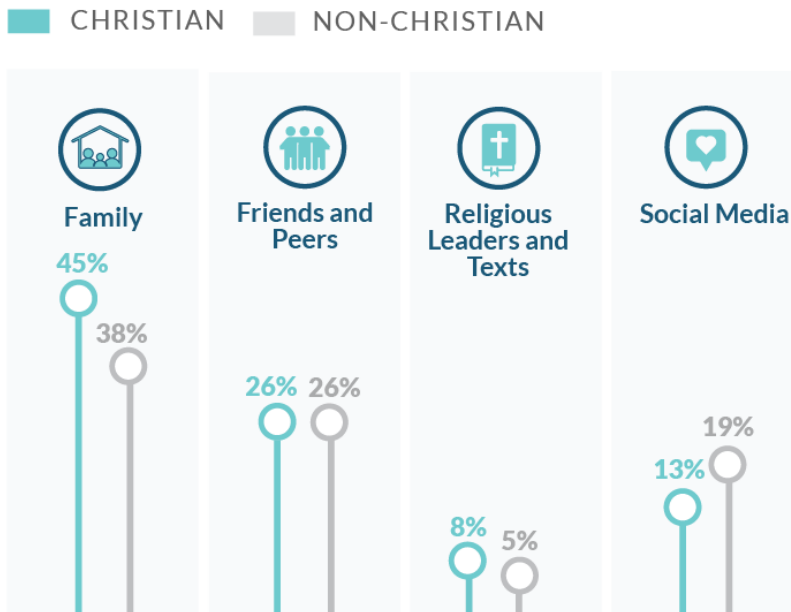
MEANING OF LIFE CONVERSATIONS



- 1 **FAMILY MEMBERS 42%**
compared to 41% globally
- 2 **FRIENDS* PEERS 26%**
compared to 19% globally
- 3 **SOCIAL MEDIA 16%**
compared to 20% globally
- 4 **TEACHERS/COUNSELORS 6%**
compared to 7% globally
- 5 **RELIGIOUS LEADERS/TEXTS 6%**
compared to 7% globally
- 6 **OFFLINE MEDIA 5%**
compared to 7% globally

The order of influence changes a bit when you account for a teen's religious beliefs.

INFLUENCES AND THE MEANING OF LIFE



Sadly, the least likely place all teens—even Christians—go for guidance is to the Church or the Bible.

Googling Gender and Sexuality

GENDER & SEXUALITY CONVERSATIONS



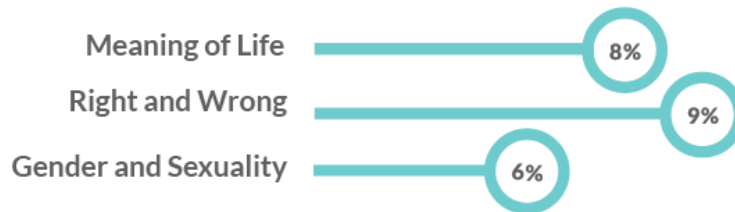
- 1 SOCIAL MEDIA 30%**
compared to 36% globally
- 2 FRIENDS/PEERS 30%**
compared to 23% globally
- 3 FAMILY MEMBERS 24%**
compared to 20% globally
- 4 OFFLINE MEDIA 6%**
compared to 6% globally
- 5 TEACHERS/COUNSELORS 5%**
compared to 11% globally
- 6 RELIGIOUS LEADERS/TEXTS 5%**
compared to 4% globally

When teens want information on issues of gender and sexuality, they are most likely to turn to the Internet and their peers. Again, the least likely place teens go for guidance is to the Church or the Bible.

While it's more private and less embarrassing to go online with personal sexual questions, there's something to the fact that—even among Christian teens—they will go to the Internet before they'll go to Scripture or the Church.

CHRISTIAN TEEN Q & A

Christian teens who say they go to their pastors or the Bible for information or guidance about...



Creating Safe Spaces

Teens exposed some interesting observations about their church experiences.

While the majority (59%) of churched Christian teens report having a dedicated youth/young adults pastor at their church, 2 in 3 report they don't talk to their pastors or spiritual leaders about life issues or concerns.

Interestingly, more than half (57%) of churched Christian teens say there is at least one adult at church—outside of a family member—who is helping them grow spiritually. This encouraging statistic shows that many teens are being disciplined by their church community.

2 IN 3

CHRISTIAN
TEENS DON'T
TALK TO THEIR
PASTORS OR
SPIRITUAL
LEADERS
ABOUT LIFE
ISSUES OR
CONCERNS.

Changing Their Mind

We were curious what it would take to change a teen's mind on religious beliefs they already hold. For most, a personal experience—such as an answer to prayer—was what they needed to change a belief.

WHAT WOULD BE MOST LIKELY TO CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT A RELIGIOUS BELIEF?

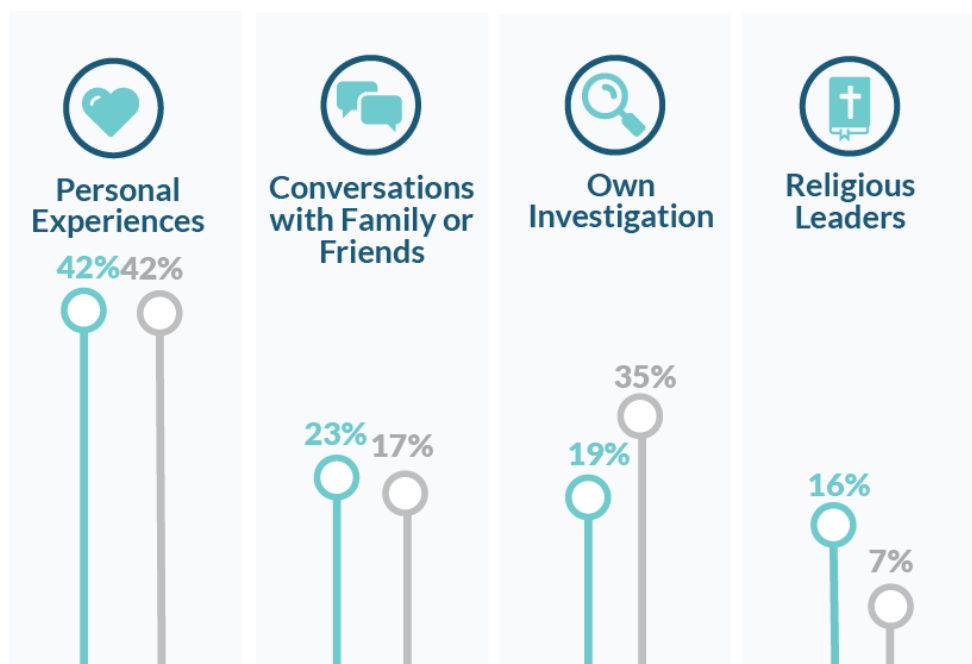


- 1 PERSONAL EXPERIENCES SUCH AS AN ANSWER TO PRAYER: **42%**
compared to 37% globally
- 2 MY OWN INVESTIGATION ONLINE OR IN BOOKS: **27%**
compared to 26% globally
- 3 A CONVERSATION WITH MY PARENTS: **14%**
compared to 18% globally
- 4 TEACHINGS FROM RELIGIOUS LEADERS: **12%**
compared to 12% globally
- 5 A CONVERSATION WITH FRIENDS: **6%**
compared to 8% globally

Christians and non-Christians equally agree that they would be moved by a personal experience (like an answer to prayer) while teachings from a religious leader are nearly the least convincing.

MOST LIKELY TO CHANGE THEIR MIND ABOUT A RELIGIOUS BELIEF

■ CHRISTIAN ■ NON-CHRISTIAN

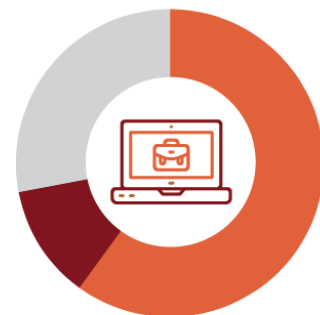


Looking to the Future

Most American teens (60%) agree that education is the primary thing that will guarantee them a better future. Younger teens were more likely to say this than older teens.

- 60% believe education guarantees them a better future, compared to 72% globally.
- Very few (less than 1 in 5) say they have a plan for their future that doesn't require higher education, same as their global counterparts.
- 3 in 10 U.S. teens are already going or planning to go to college.
- More than half (57%) of U.S. teens say that the cost could stop them from going to a college, second highest behind Indonesia (66%) compared to 40% globally.
- Girls were slightly more likely than boys to be worried about the cost of going to college (62% vs 52%).

Education is the primary thing that will guarantee me a better future.



● YES ● NO ● NEUTRAL

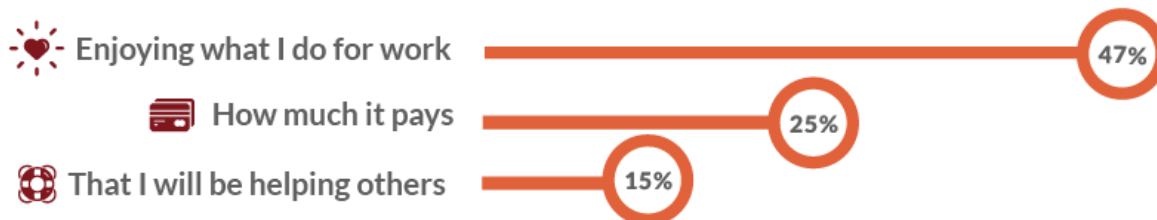
Compared to 20 countries we surveyed, U.S. teens were among the least entrepreneurial; 59% say they would like to start a business or own their own company someday, compared to 75% globally which makes the American youth's entrepreneurial spirit quite low comparatively. The highest country was Nigeria at 98%.

Teens by country with less entrepreneurial spirit than the U.S.



No matter what they do, U.S. teens deeply desire a sense of fulfillment in their future career.

TOP CAREER PRIORITIES



Conclusion

As today's teens navigate life's complex and confusing issues, the voices they are listening to are critical. Whether they are seeking guidance on questions as timeless as the meaning of life and what's right and wrong, or looking for input on more pragmatic topics like sexuality and gender identity—every teen has someone who is influencing their beliefs and behaviors.

- **WHEN IT COMES TO SOME OF LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS—TEENS ULTIMATELY TRUST AND TURN TO THEIR FAMILY FOR GUIDANCE.**

Parents should not take lightly the privilege they have of speaking into their child's life while teens say they are still listening.

- **SCRIPTURE AND THE CHURCH ARE BEING DROWNED OUT BY CULTURE IN THE CONVERSATION AROUND GENDER AND SEXUALITY.**

The voice of culture is loud as expressed through social media and through peers, and it is setting the standard for teens on these important topics. How can we step up in this space to highlight what God has to say even if it conflicts with popular opinion?

- **THE LEAST LIKELY PLACE TEENS LOOK FOR ANSWERS IS THE CHURCH.**

The witness of the Church and the people in it can be effective helpers to young people developing a worldview. This data shows that teens report home as a safer space for asking tough questions than church and family as more trusted than church leaders. Knowing this, how can the Church better equip families to help the teens who are more likely to share their questions and struggles in the home than at church?

- **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES ARE HUGELY INFLUENTIAL IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE.**

Teens who are already walking with Christ continue to be hungry for authentic experiences of their faith, and even non-Christians say they are open to changing their mind if they personally encountered God. How can we help create environments and opportunities for those experiences to happen?



LETTER FROM ROB HOSKINS

A Generation Like No Other

Working with children and youth for over 20 years now, I can confidently say that today's teens are a generation like no other the world has ever seen.

One of my favorite child psychologists, Robert Coles, rightly predicted what we are seeing in today's young people. He said that children caught in the throes of rapid change and social upheaval would begin to evolve in their growth and development patterns.

Cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead, identified these cultural developmental patterns of adapting to change and preparing for the future as:

- **Post figurative**—honoring the past, where elders and sages transmit the vital aspect of their culture and information on to their younger members
- **Cofigurative**—present-oriented, where older and younger are both figuring things out together and at the same time
- **Pre figurative**—looking toward the future, where the children figure things out on their own without the help of and oftentimes before the adults

Because of the rapid development of information technology in our lifetime, for the first time in the history of the world, we have shifted from cofigurative to prefigurative. Digital natives have unfettered access to information—no longer are elders the gatekeepers and purveyors of knowledge. It's the other way around—where you need your teenager to set up grandma's smartphone and show her how to use it.

This access and ability gives today's tech-savvy teens incredible potential. With their potential comes an equal measure of responsibility, which they are not yet ready to carry. So while they are great at investigation and can find information, they still need us to translate it for them.

The change in culture hasn't changed our biblical mandate to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6 KJV). It's our duty as spiritual mothers and fathers to actively translate the world according to the truth of God's Word to the young among us.

Sure, they can Google the terms, but they need wise, experienced, and trusted adults to help them discover truth, their God-given identity, and a path that gives them purpose, hope, and a future. Only then will this generation unlike any other be able to step into their divine destiny to be a generation like no other to the world.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

About OneHope

In partnership with local churches, ministries, and governments around the world, OneHope has reached more than 1.6 billion children and youth with God's Word. Based on in-country research OneHope conducts, Scripture programs are designed to be age and culturally relevant. Since 1987, OneHope has helped kids experience God's Story, sharing the life-changing message of hope with children and youth in every country. To learn more, visit onehope.net.

Methodology

The study surveyed 8,394 teens ages 13-19 across 20 countries. In each country, a representative sample of approximately 400 teens provided the statistical power to be 95% confident that percentage results were within 5% of the true population percentage for teens ages 13 to 19, and to perform corresponding statistical tests. For multi-country regions and globally, the level of confidence was even higher and the margin of error lower.

In 5 countries (China, Egypt, India, Japan, and Vietnam), quotas were used to ensure at least 10% of respondents were Christian in order to have a meaningful sample size for religious-based analysis and comparisons. In several other countries, minimum 10% target sample sizes for Christians or Muslims were met or approximated without using quotas. A sampling quota was also used in Kenya to ensure at least 40% of respondents were female.

The instrument was distributed via Centiment Research. As a quality control measure, respondents were disqualified if they incorrectly answered a simple attention-check question. The research instrument consisted of 70 base questions, with several additional questions customized for each region to explore specific topics of interest.

Definitions

COMMITTED CHRISTIAN

Teens who self-identified as Christian, but not as Jehovah's Witness or Mormon, and who met the following criteria:

- Believe God exists and that they can have a personal relationship with Him.
- Believe Jesus is the Son of God.
- Believe that forgiveness of sins is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Believe the Bible is the Word of God.
- Read Scripture on their own at least weekly.
- Pray at least weekly.

Note that Committed Christian teens may be Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Orthodox, or any other Christian denomination.

NOMINAL CHRISTIANS

Teens who self-identified as Christian, but not as Jehovah's Witness or Mormon, and who did not meet the criteria of core beliefs or habits established for Committed Christians

OTHER RELIGIONS

Teens who self-identified as Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Muslim, or other religions

NO RELIGION

Teens who self-identified as atheist, agnostic, or none of the above

QUESTIONS?

Questions about this research? Contact research@onehope.net



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GLOBAL YOUTH CULTURE



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