

FINDING FAITH IN IRELAND

THE SHIFTING SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE OF TEENS &
YOUNG ADULTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

A PROJECT CONDUCTED IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH CHRIST IN YOUTH





For more information about this study and to see the complete findings, check out our 2017 report:

Finding Faith in Ireland

The full report is available at shop.barna.com or through Barna Access membership.

IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- October 2016 to January 2017
- 96 in-depth interviews with young people
- Interviews lasted 5-25 minutes

YOUTH WORKERS

- 21 February through 30 March, 2017
- 51 youth workers surveyed
- Focus groups in Dublin with youth workers, September 2016



PANEL-BASED SAMPLE

- 24 January to 21 February, 2017
- 750 youth surveyed
- Sample error is plus or minus 3.6%

CHURCH-BASED SAMPLE

- 25 February through 13 March, 2017
- 40 youth surveyed



IN THEIR WORDS:

YOUTH WORKERS DESCRIBE IRISH YOUNG PEOPLE...



- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative



KEY FINDINGS PART 1

A majority of Irish youth are Christian...
...in name only.

1 in 4 young people in Ireland is currently going through
a crisis of faith.

Just 3 in 10 young people feel confident about their
knowledge of theology or the Bible.



KEY FINDINGS PART 2

The generation feels increasing conflict between progressive values and Christian morality.

Attending Christian events is linked to a more personal and active faith life.

Academic and professional pressures weigh significantly on the minds of young Irish people.



KEY FINDINGS PART 3

Young Christians in Ireland are eager for a closer relationship between Catholic and non-Catholic communities.

Parents, church leaders and teachers are identified as influences who can make Christianity more appealing.

71% of young practising Christians in Ireland want to find a way to follow Jesus that connects to the world they live in.



PRESSURES ON IRISH YOUTH...

1. Religious legacy and identity
2. Popular morality and culture
3. Purpose and success

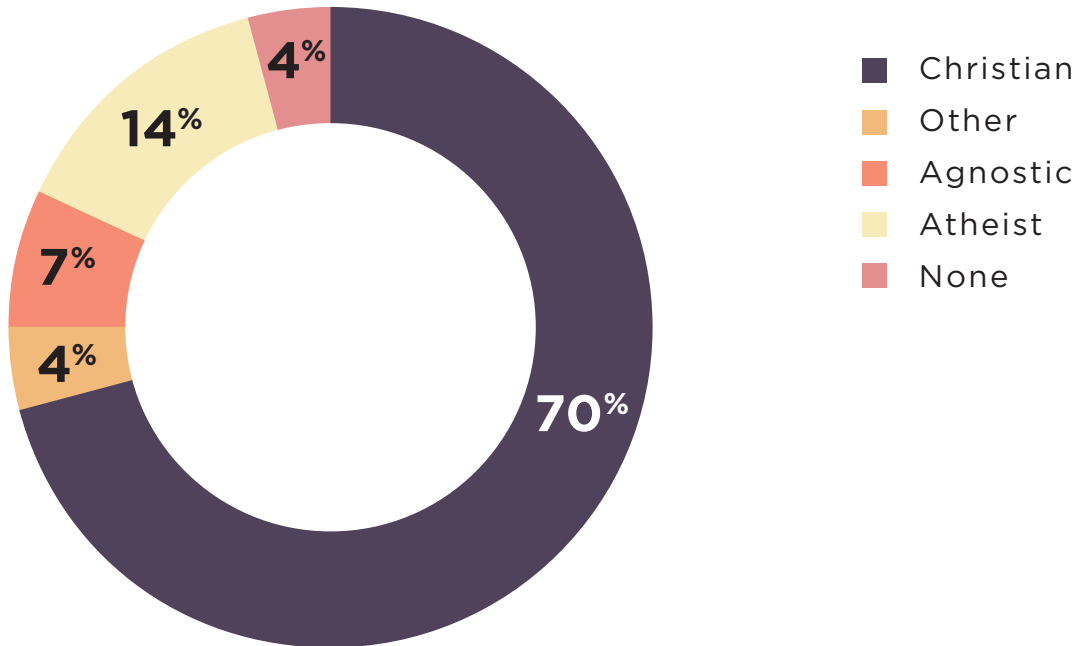


FAITH IDENTITY & PRACTICE



STILL CHRISTIAN

% among Irish young people



BECOMING CHRISTIAN

% among Irish young people

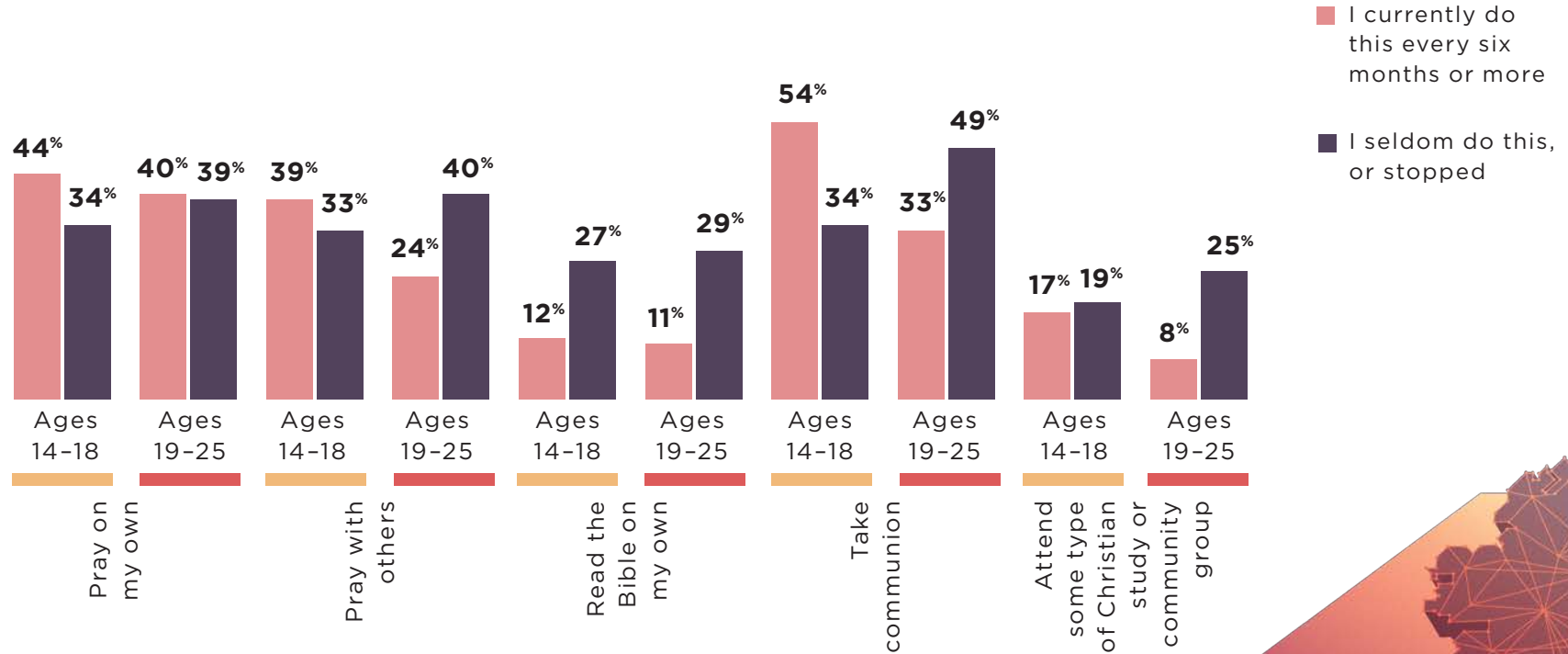
AT WHAT POINT DID YOU FULLY BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

base: self-identified Christian

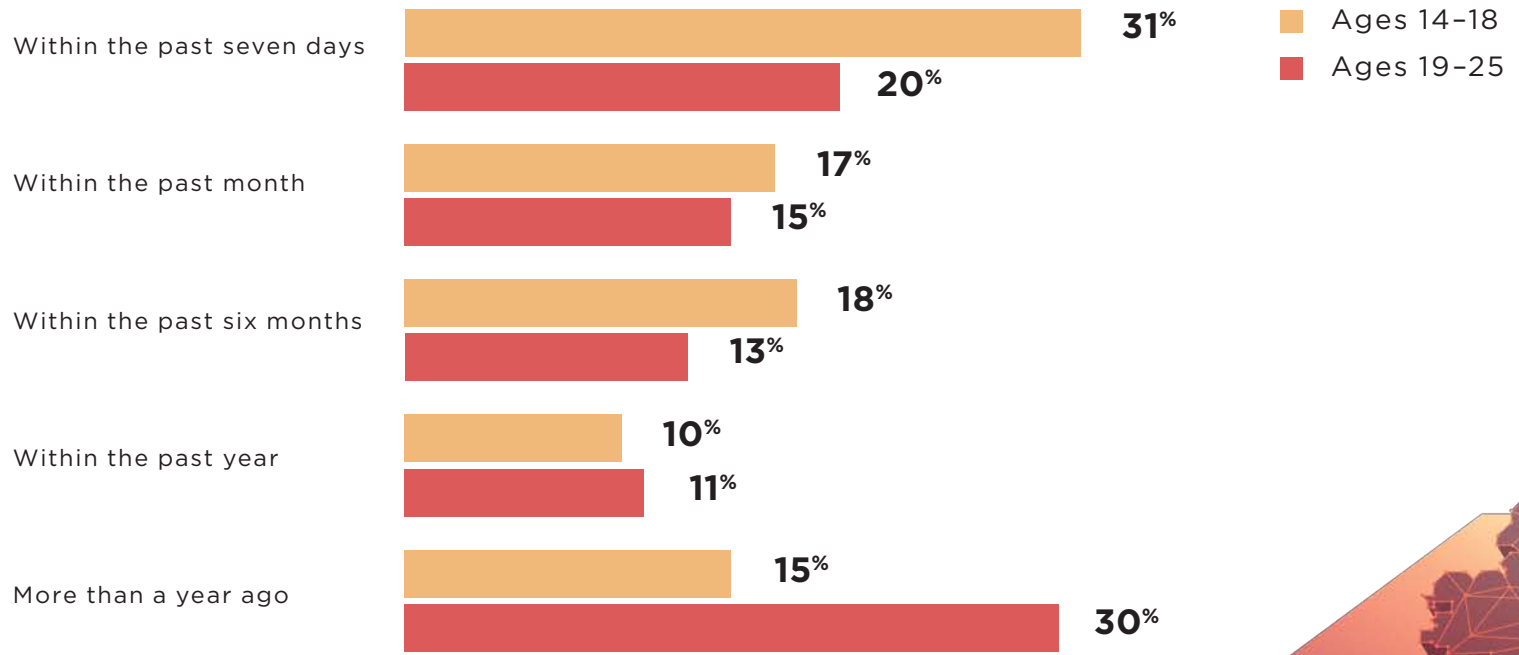
When I was baptised	51%
This is my family's faith, so I have been a full Christian since birth	17%
When I became a full member of my church, in a confirmation or other ceremony	10%
When I had a specific, private experience of committing my life to Christ	8%
It was more gradual than an event I can pinpoint	6%
I have not become fully Christian	6%
Other	1%



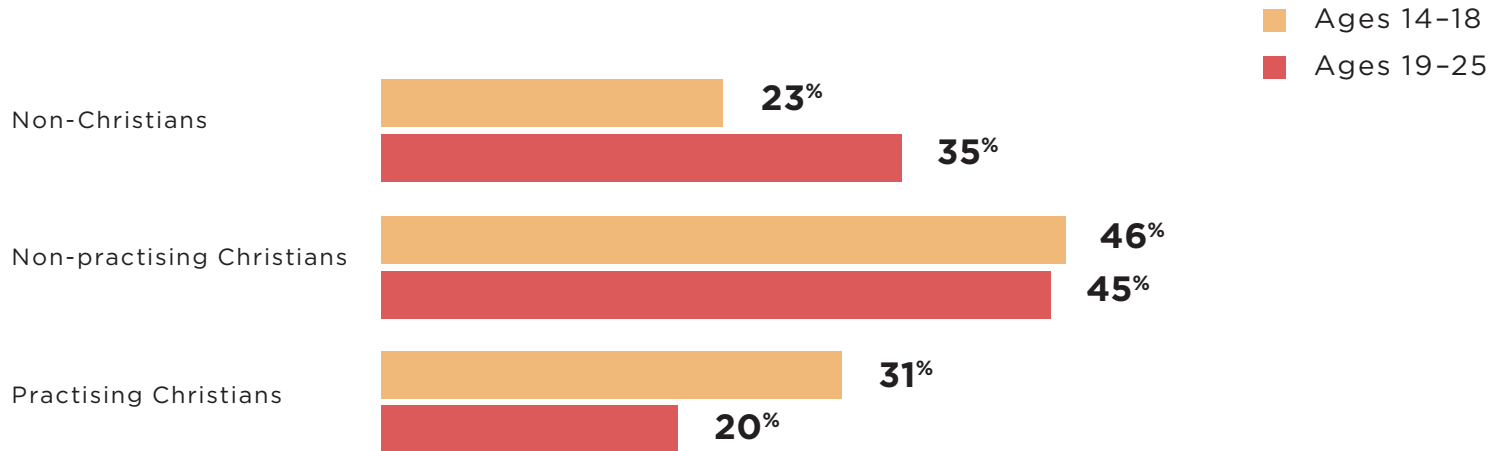
CHRISTIAN PRACTICES



CHURCH ATTENDANCE

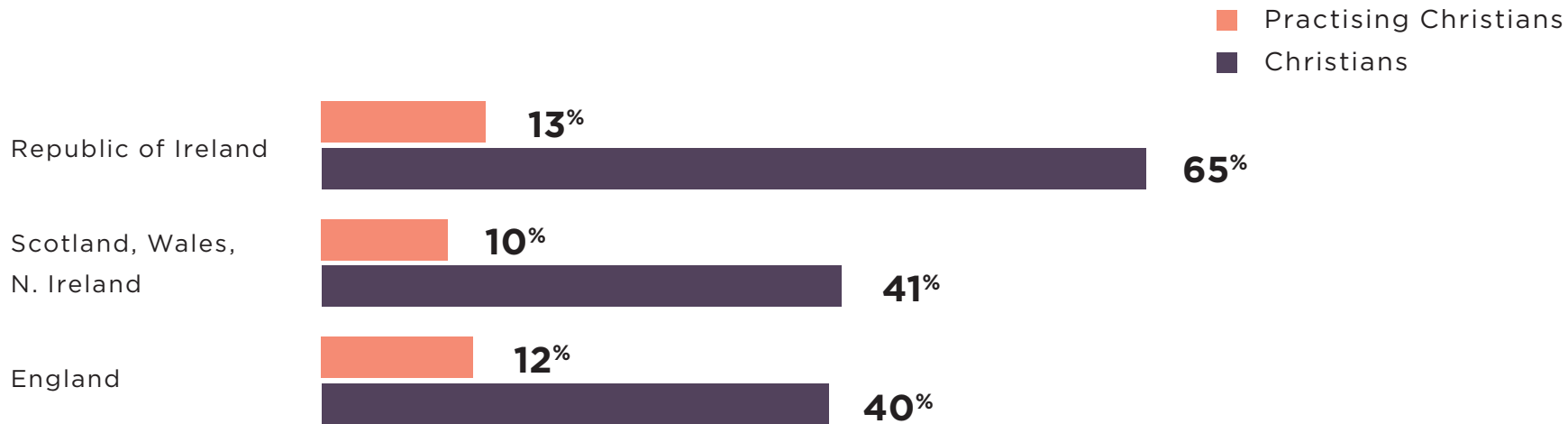


AFFILIATION + PRACTICE



RATES OF CHRISTIANITY

% among ages 18-25



**In Barna's Previous U.K. Study, "Practising Christian" Was Defined As Monthly Engagement In Prayer, Bible Reading And Regular Worship Services.*



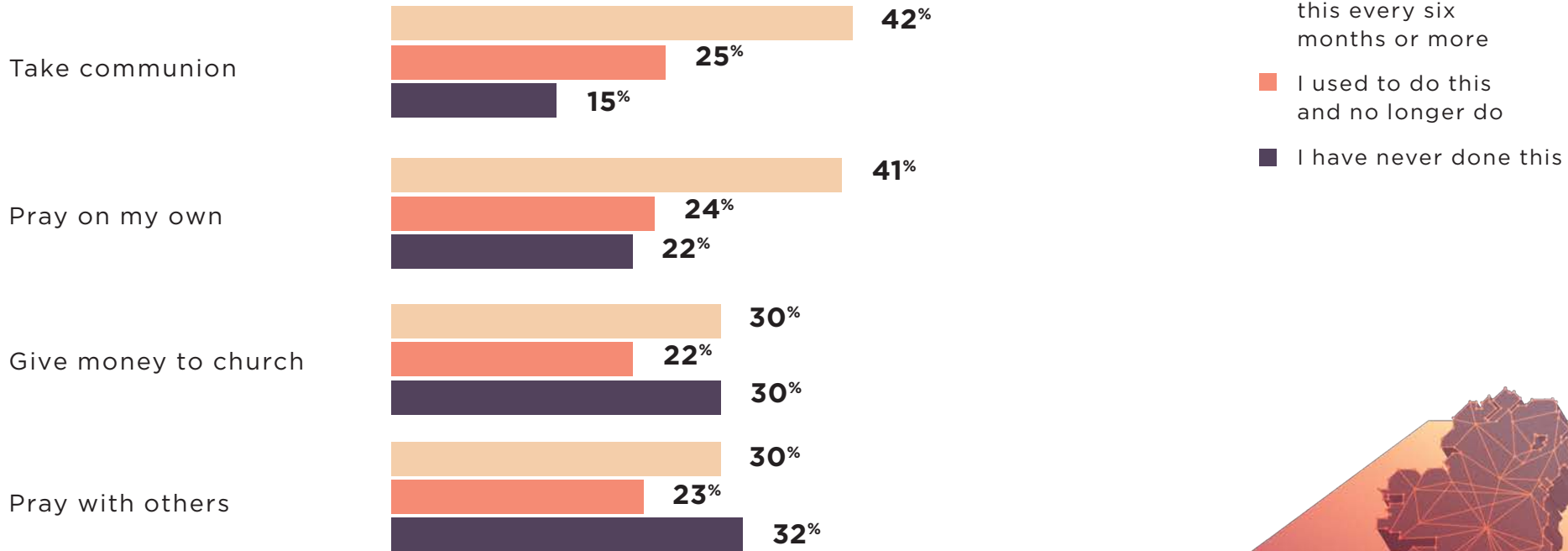
RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

- Of those with non-Irish heritage, almost two-thirds (64%) say they are Christian of those with Irish heritage, the proportion is nearly three-quarters (73%).
- Although a majority of those who are not white Irish is Christian, the remaining 36% are more widely spread across religious groups compared to white Irish; 13% of youth who are not white Irish identify with non-Christian faiths, and one-quarter (23%) says they are not religious. 96% of non-Christian white Irish youth are non-religious.



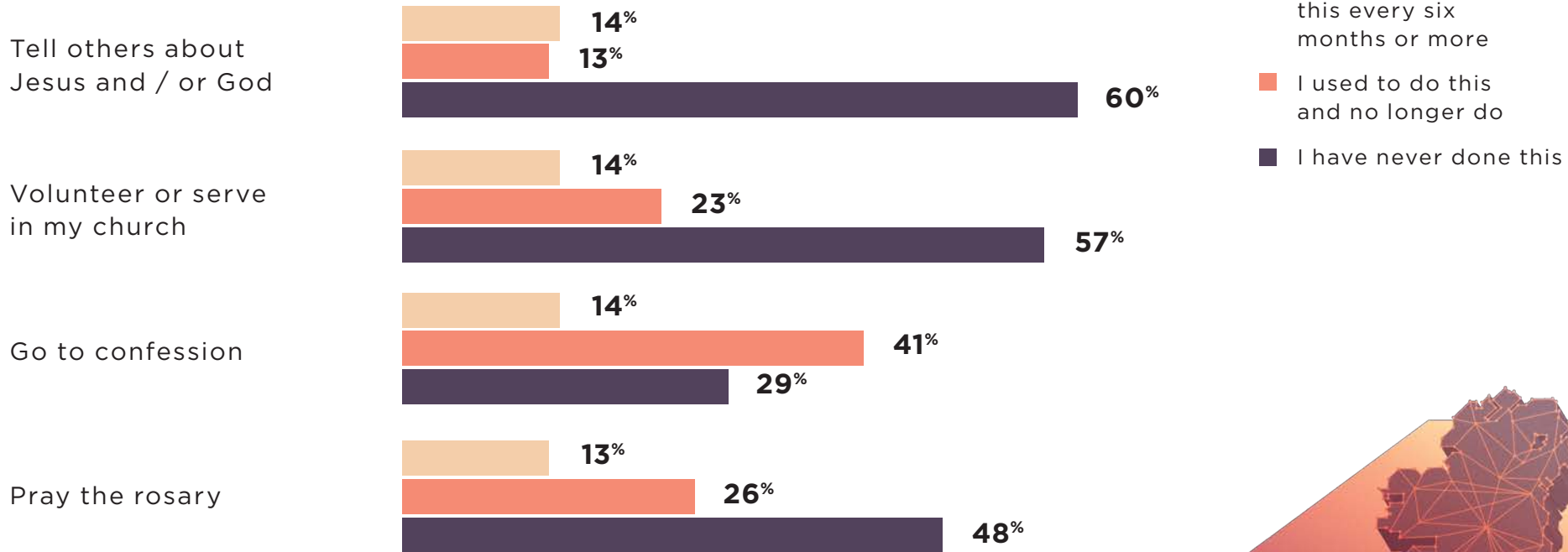
CHRISTIAN PRACTICES PART 1

% among Irish young people



CHRISTIAN PRACTICES PART 2

% among Irish young people



CHRISTIAN PRACTICES PART 3

% among Irish young people

Attend some other type of Christian study or community group



Read the Bible on my own



Attend a Bible study

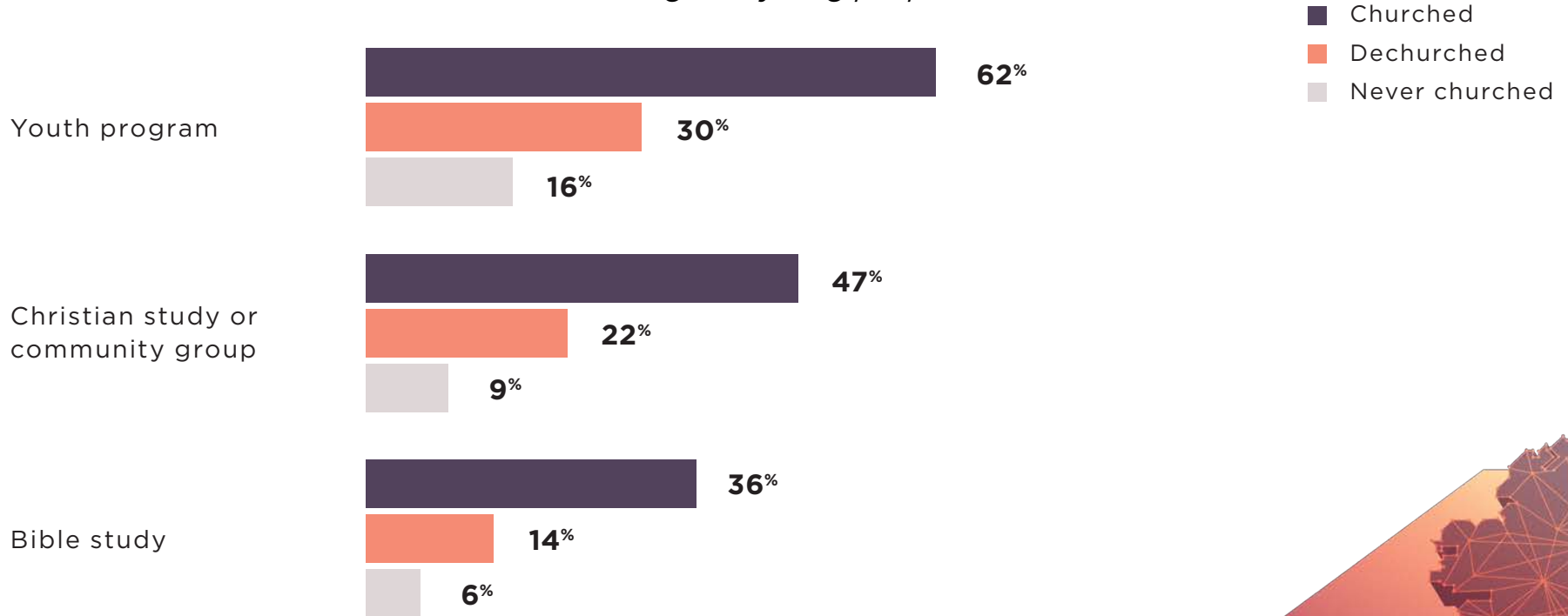


- I currently do this every six months or more
- I used to do this and no longer do
- I have never done this



YOUTH EXPERIENCES PART 1

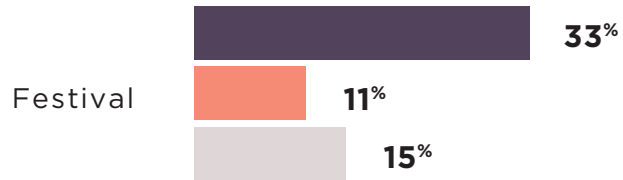
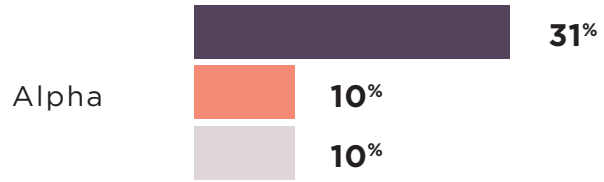
% among Irish young people



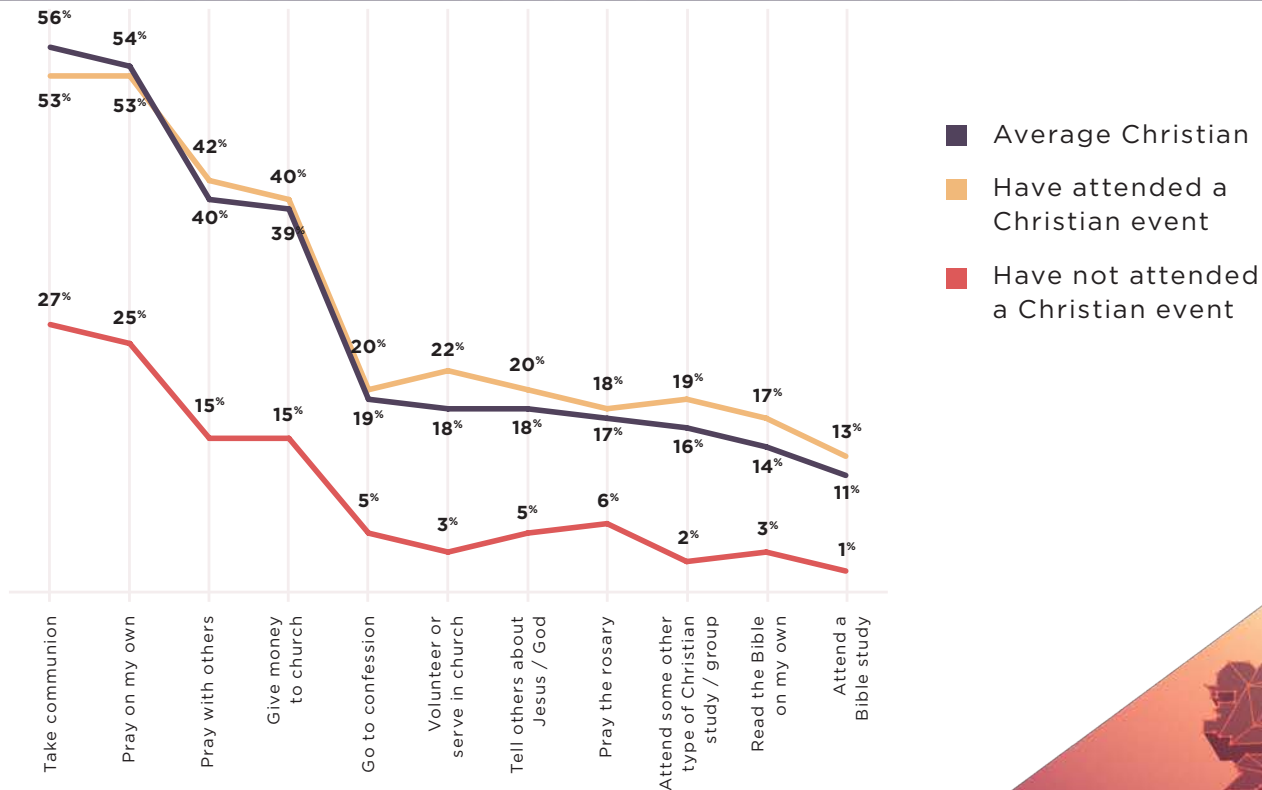
YOUTH EXPERIENCES PART 2

% among Irish young people

■ Churched
■ Dechurched
■ Never churched



EVENTS & FAITH PRACTISES



BELIEF & THEOLOGY



THEOLOGY PART 1

Apostles' Creed	% of Irish Christians ages 14-25 who agree	Parallel survey question
I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth	53%	"God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today" (agree strongly or somewhat)
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord	36%	"Jesus was God in human form who lived among people in the first century"
On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven	47%	"Jesus was physically raised from the dead" (agree strongly or somewhat)



THEOLOGY PART 2

Apostles' Creed	% of Irish Christians ages 14-25 who agree	Parallel survey question
and He will come to judge the living and the dead	31%	"Jesus will actually return to Earth someday"
I believe in the Holy Spirit	52%	"There is only one God who exists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (agree strongly or somewhat)
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,	45%	"Christianity will eventually die out" (agree strongly or somewhat)



THEOLOGY PART 3

Apostles' Creed	% of Irish Christians ages 14-25 who agree	Parallel survey question
the forgiveness of sins,	20%	"If a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven" (agree strongly or somewhat)
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.	15%	"When you die you will go to heaven because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior"



KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE

AGE MAKES NO DIFFERENCE IN HOW WELL YOUNG PEOPLE SAY THEY KNOW THE BIBLE OR THEOLOGY, IN SPITE OF THE FACT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IS USUALLY PART OF SCHOOLING.

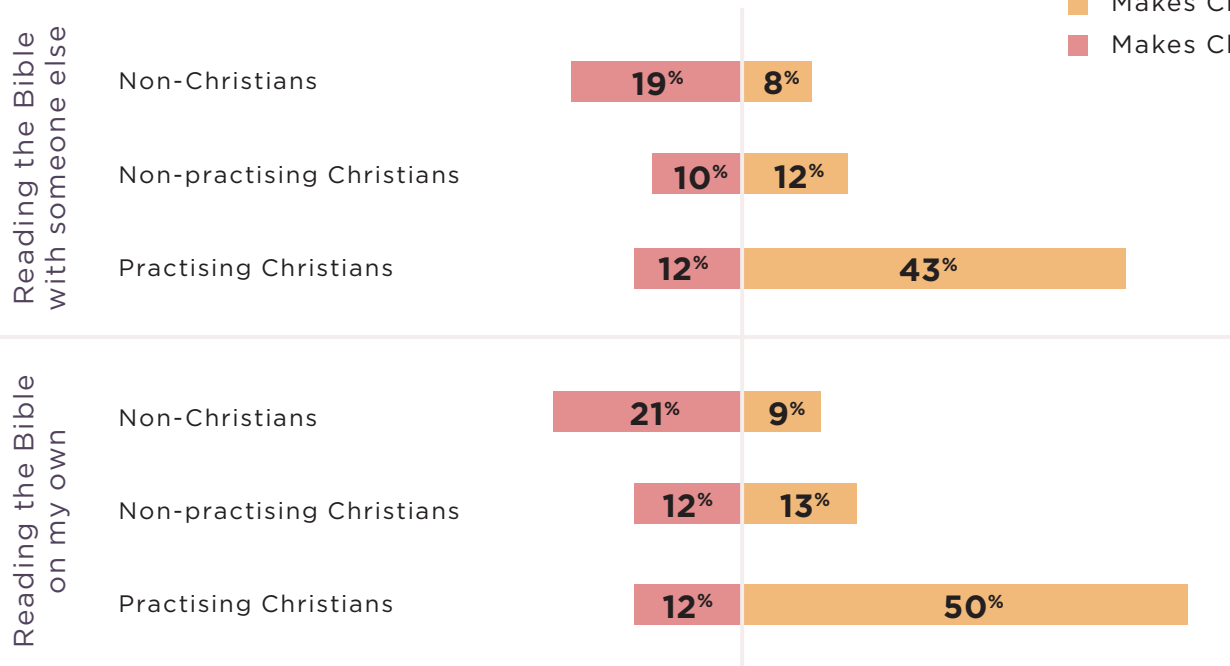
- 57% of young people have already learned about Christianity in the course of their education
- 20% are currently taking a course on it
- Only 3 in 10 feel confident about church teachers and theology, or in their knowledge of the Bible
- Participation in Christian events correlates with greater self-assurance in Bible knowledge



THE BIBLE'S INFLUENCE

% among Irish young people

- Makes Christianity more appealing
- Makes Christianity less appealing



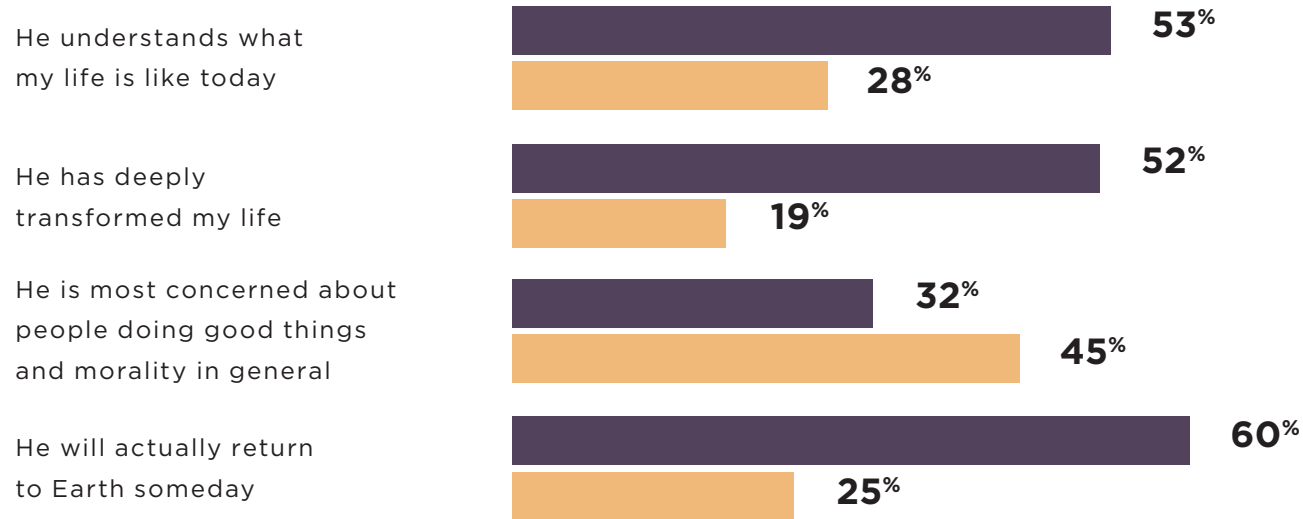
PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS, CHRISTIANS & CHRISTIANITY



VIEWS OF JESUS PART 1

% among Irish young people

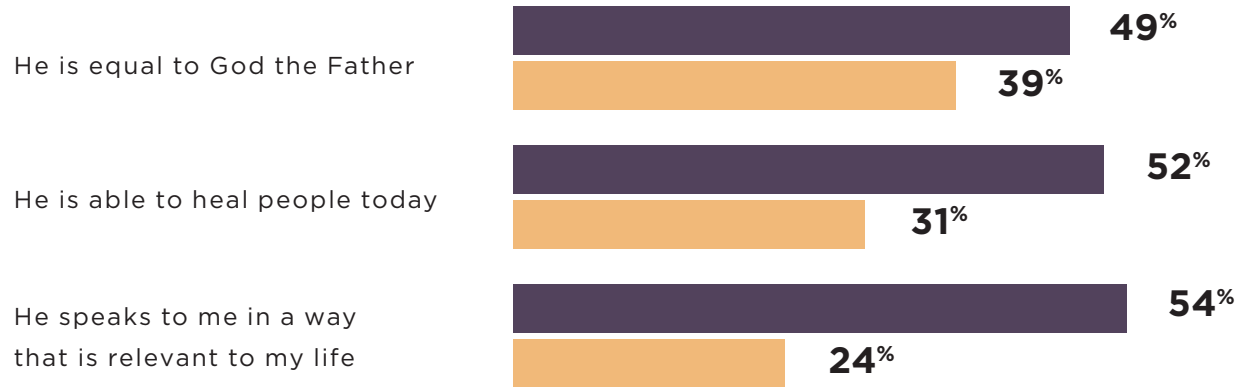
■ Non-Catholic Christians ■ Catholics



VIEWS OF JESUS PART 2

% among Irish young people

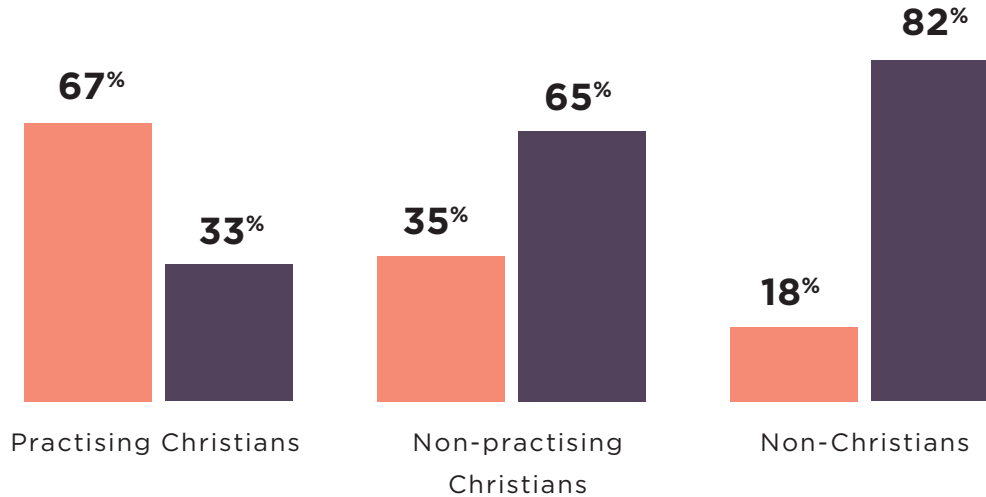
■ Non-Catholic Christians ■ Catholics



HAVE YOU EVER MADE A COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST?

% among Irish young people

Yes
No



JESUS IN CONTEXT

% among young adults

- Republic of Ireland
- United Kingdom

He was a normal human being, not God or a prophet

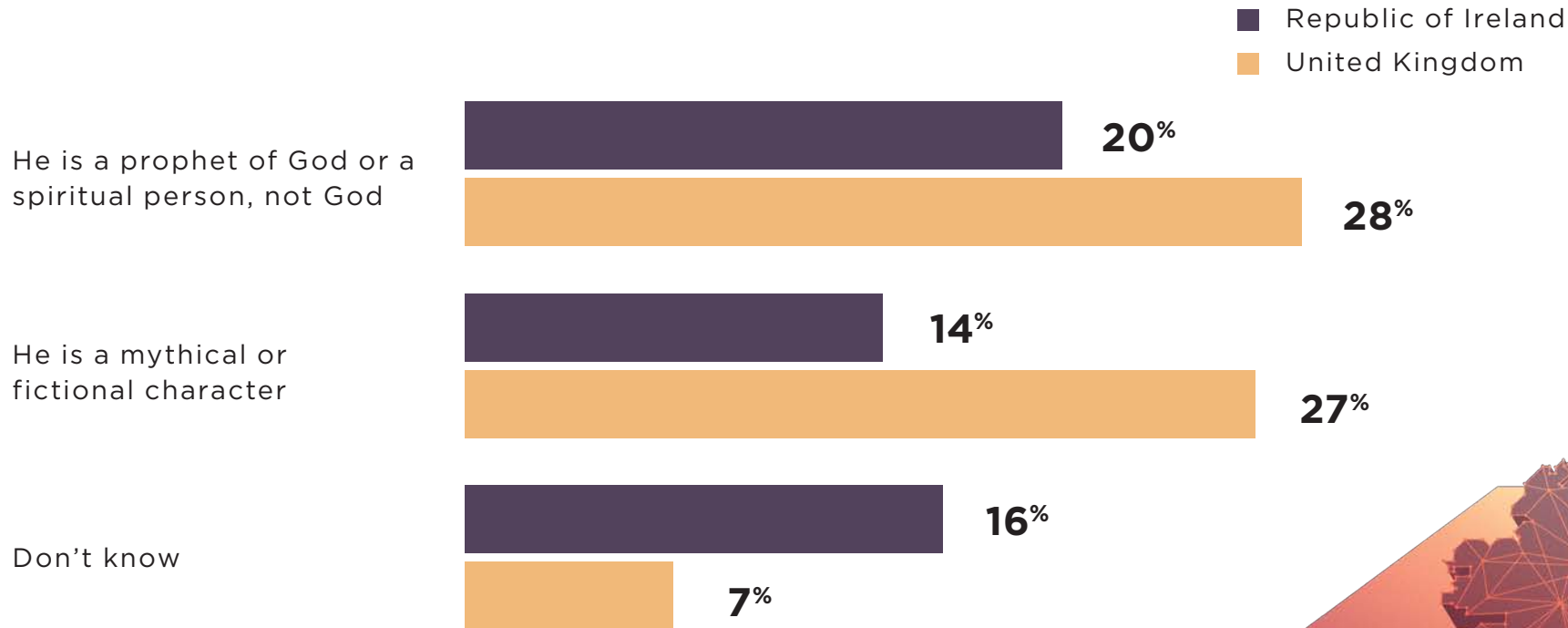


He was God in human form, who lived among people in the 1st century

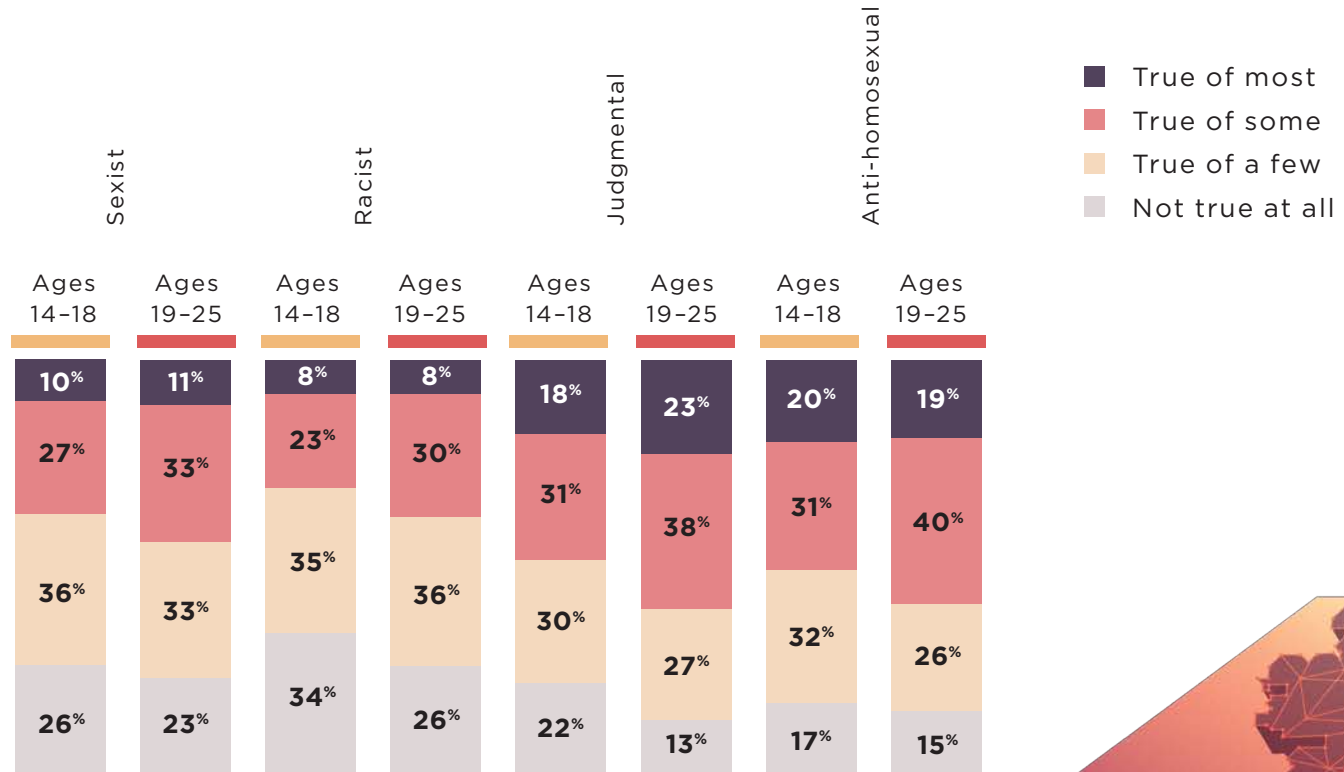


JESUS IN CONTEXT

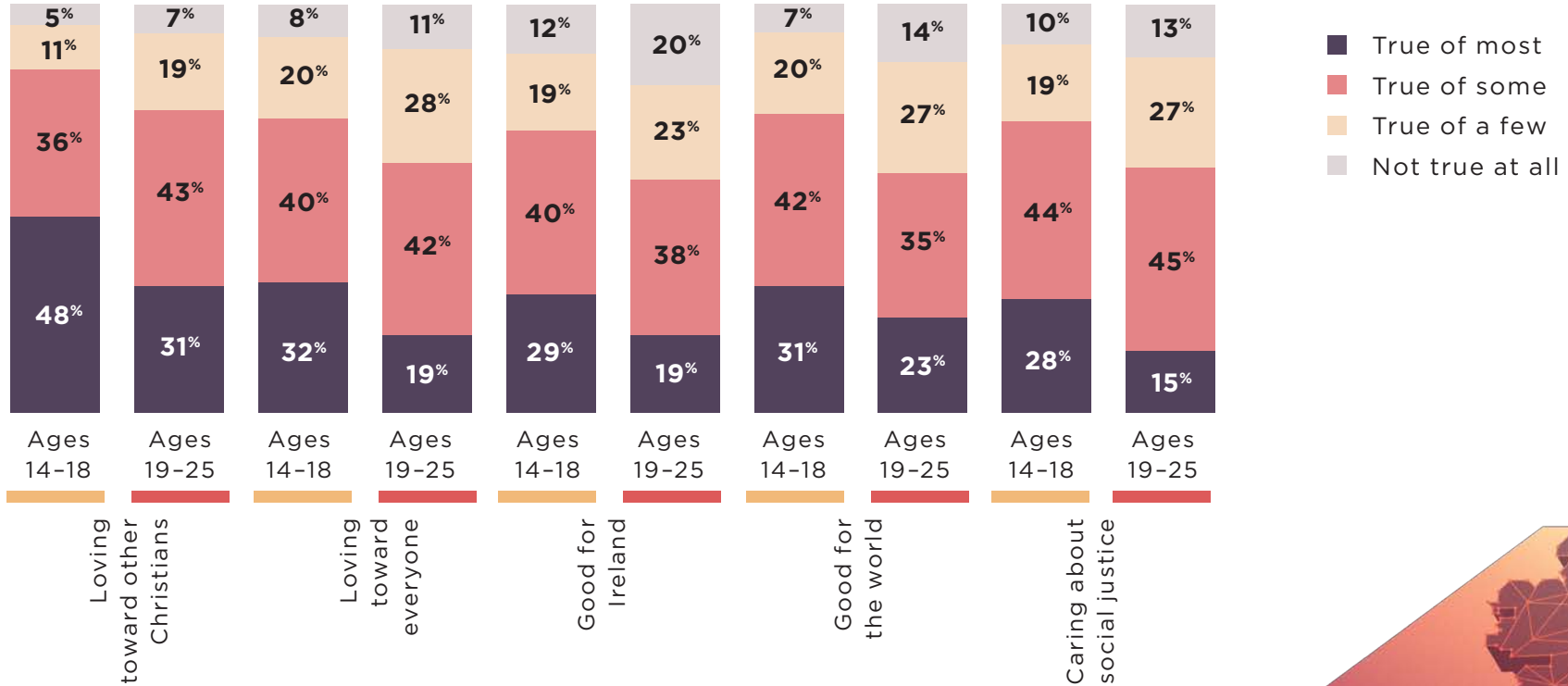
% among young adults



VIEWS OF CHRISTIANS PART 1

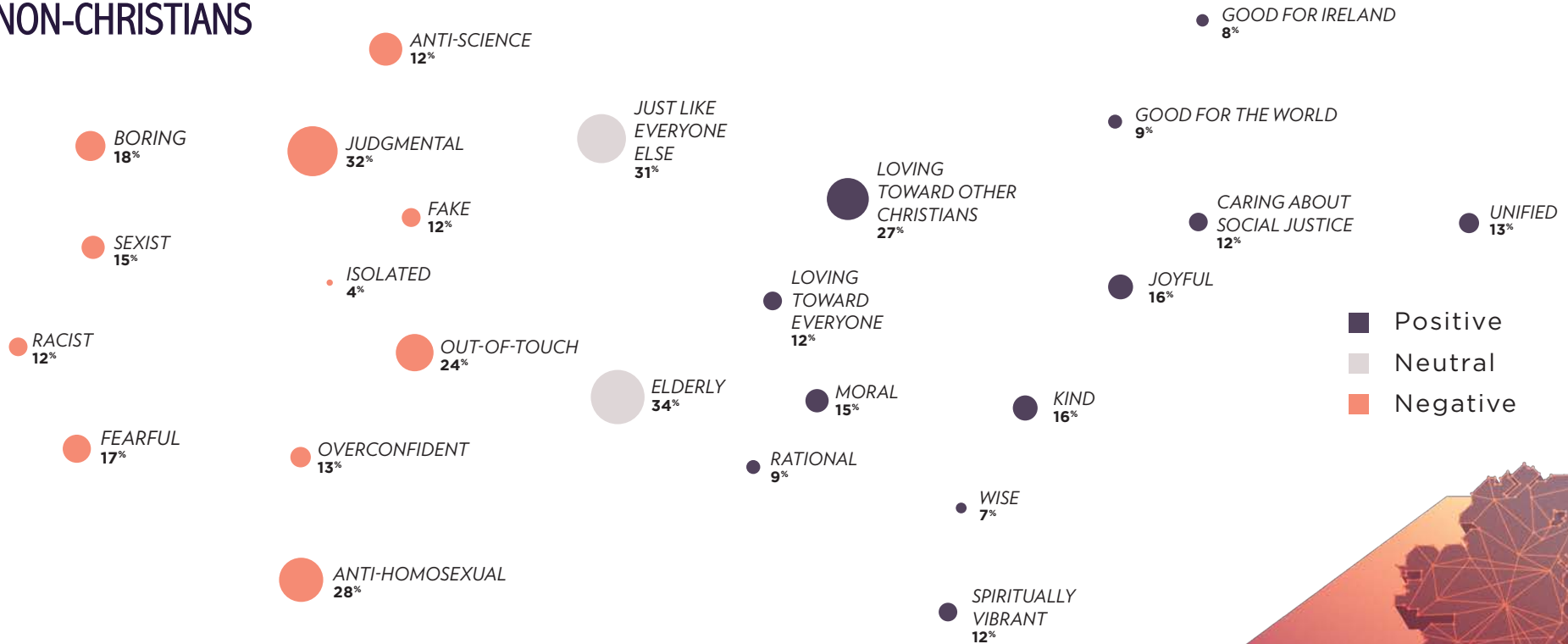


VIEWS OF CHRISTIANS PART 2



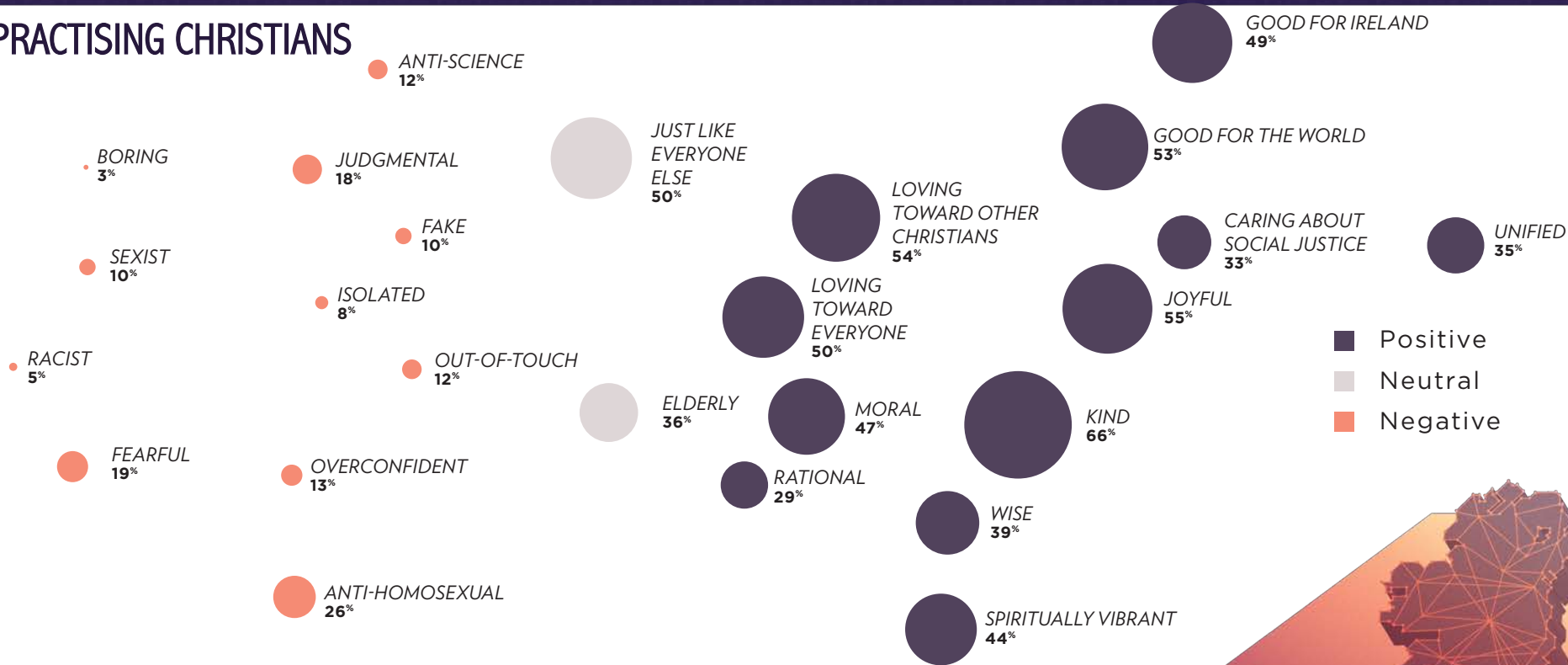
CHRISTIANITY'S REPUTATION

NON-CHRISTIANS



CHRISTIANITY'S REPUTATION

PRACTISING CHRISTIANS

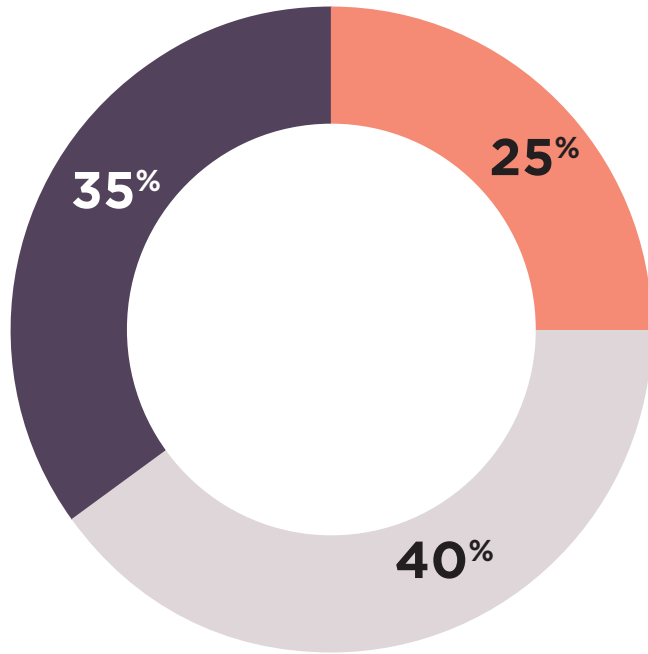


DOUBT & FAITH



EVER DOUBTED YOUR FAITH?

% among Irish young people



- Yes, currently
- Yes, in the past
- No



CHURCH ATTENDANCE

The higher the proportion of youth attending a church, the greater the likelihood that those young people will attend regularly, have a faith integrated into their own lives and say that Jesus has deeply transformed their lives. This points to a key part of resolving the tension between a chaotic world and a purposeful life: Christian community.

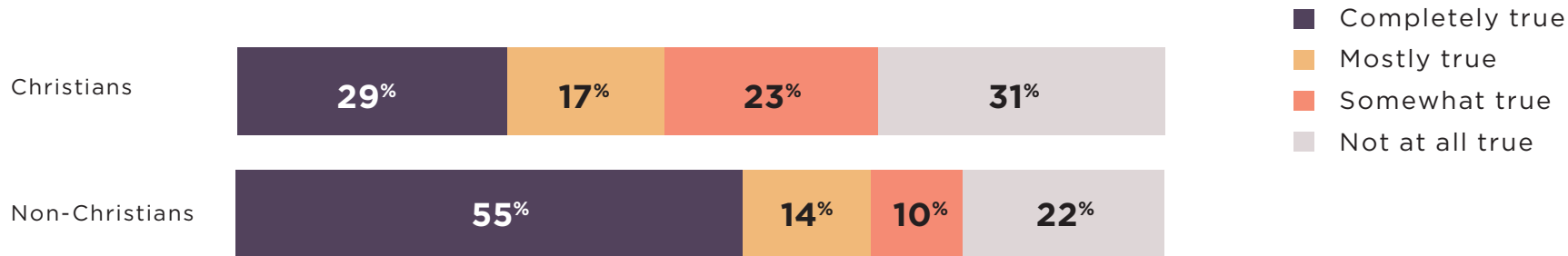
People who go to church are no more or less likely to have ever had a spiritual crisis than those who no longer go to church (67% of each group are experiencing or have experienced doubt), suggesting that the process of questioning faith alone does not lead young people to leave the church.



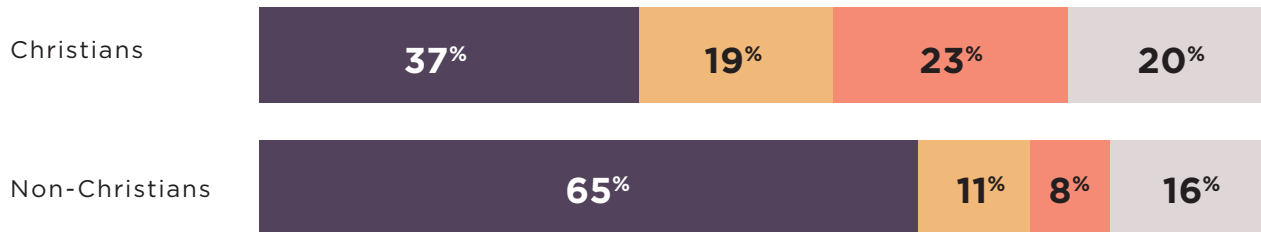
CHURCH'S TEACHING ON SEXUALITY

% among Irish young people

"I PERSONALLY CAN'T LIVE BY THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON SEXUALITY"



"I THINK THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON SEXUALITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY ARE WRONG"



PROGRESSIVISM & SEXUALITY

Questions of sexuality affect non-practising Christians more than those who go to Christian activities.

Reinforced by exposure to Christian teaching and a community that more often accepts it, practising Christians are less likely than non-practising Christians to feel conflicted over traditional theology on sexuality.

Still, only three in 10 practising Christians (28%) feel the Church is completely wrong on this subject.



4 IN 10

Non-Christians say
a news story has
given them a bad feeling
about Christianity



CHURCH ABUSE & SCANDALS

- 42% of Christian youth agree at least somewhat that when they think of the Catholic Church, they also think of child abuse scandals.
- 1 in 3 Irish young people say it's completely true that they cannot go to a church that has not properly dealt with the guilt of these abuses.



COMMON GROUND

% who strongly agree

There is too much tension between the Catholic Church and other churches



■ Non-Catholic Christians
■ Catholics

I would be happy to go to a Christian event that was for both Catholics and non-Catholics



No matter what church a person goes to, he or she can be a good Christian



CATHOLIC & NON-CATHOLIC RELATIONS

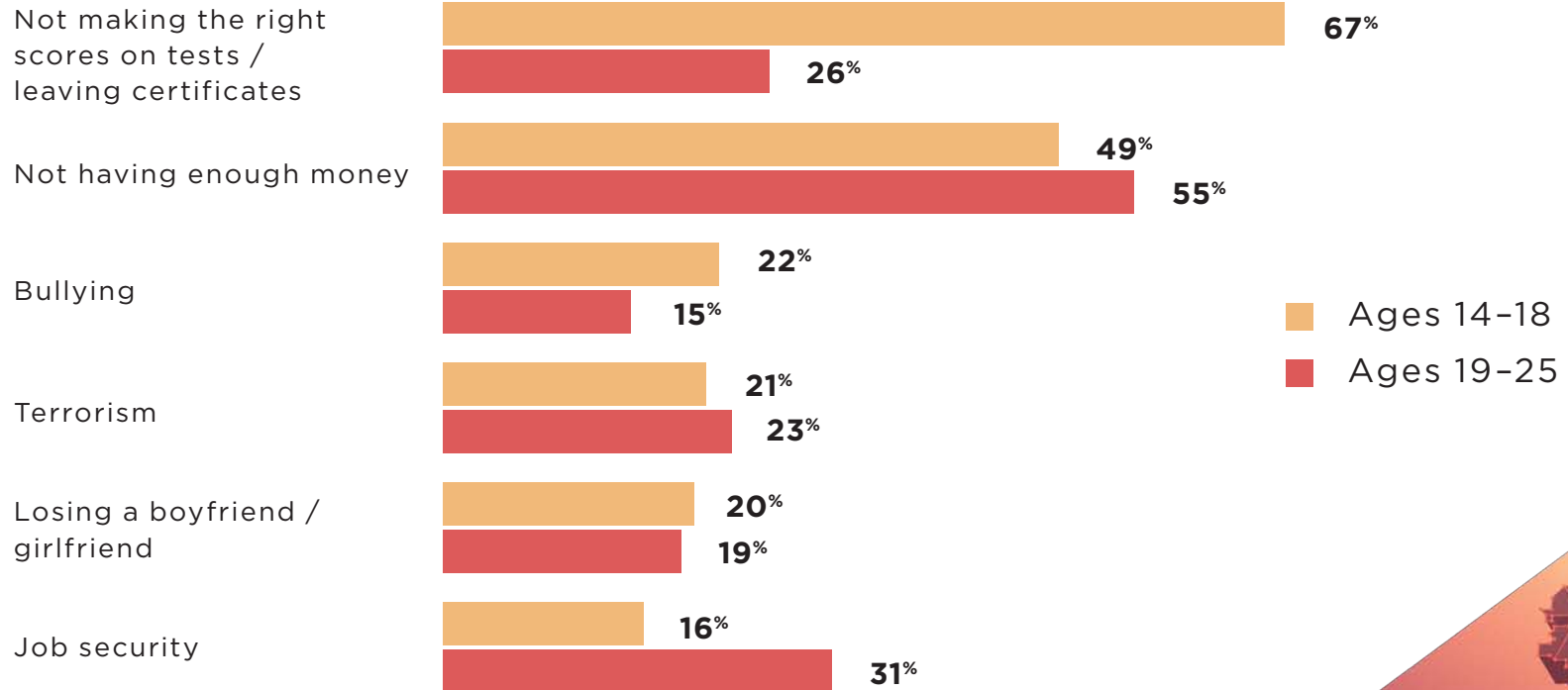
- About half of Christian youths (49%) say that Catholics and non-Catholic Christians share the same faith, with no significant difference in how enthusiastically each group agrees with the other.
- On distinctly Catholic teachings, Catholic and non-Catholics show a few differences:
 - non-Catholic Christians strongly disagree that the pope is able to speak directly for Christ (44%, compared to 23% of Catholics)
 - that it is good to pray to an intermediary (45%, compared to 12% of Catholics)
 - that communion elements become Christ's literal body and blood (35%, compared to 20% of Catholics).



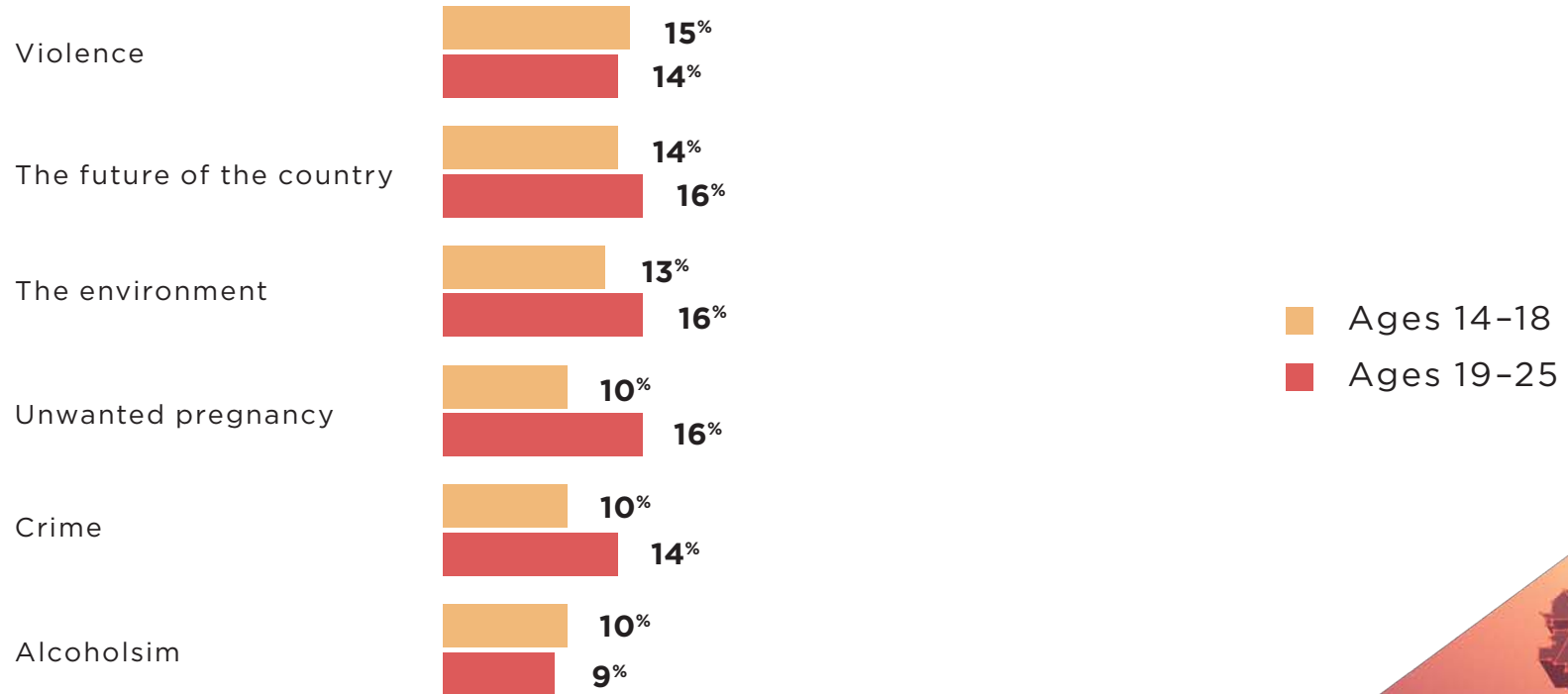
CULTURAL CONTEXT: ANXIETY & THE SCREEN AGE



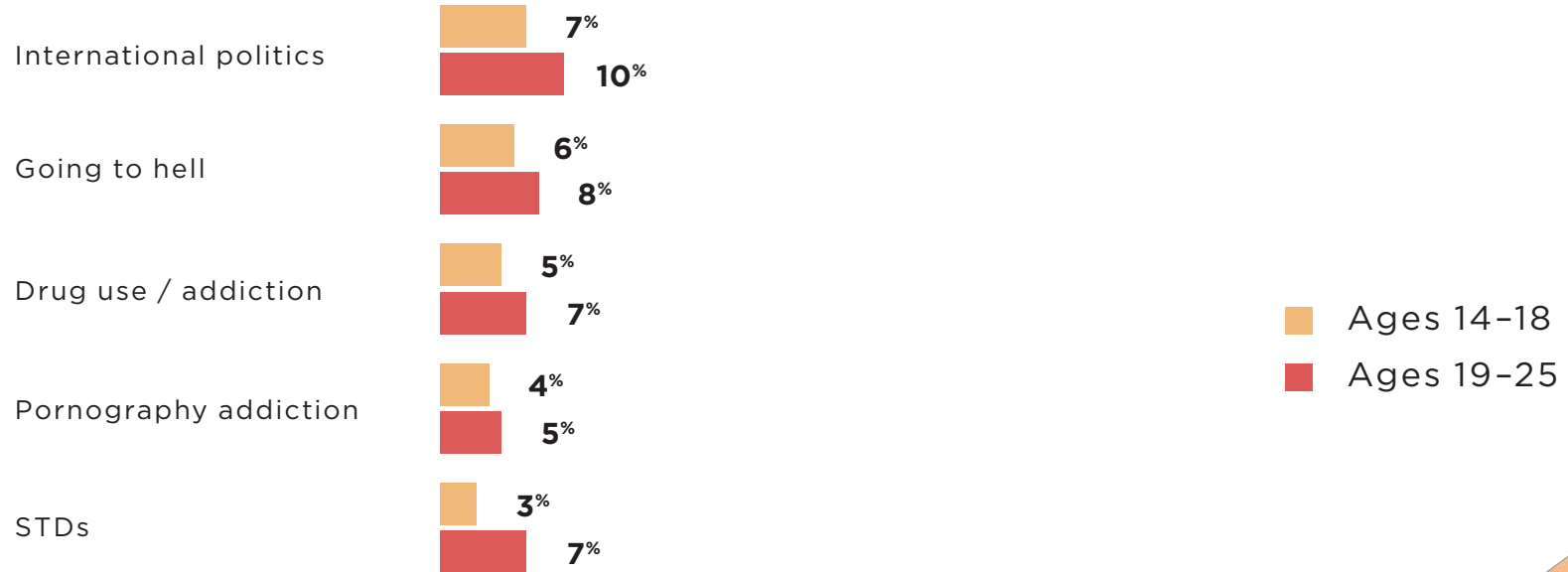
SOURCES OF STRESS - PART 1



SOURCES OF STRESS - PART 2

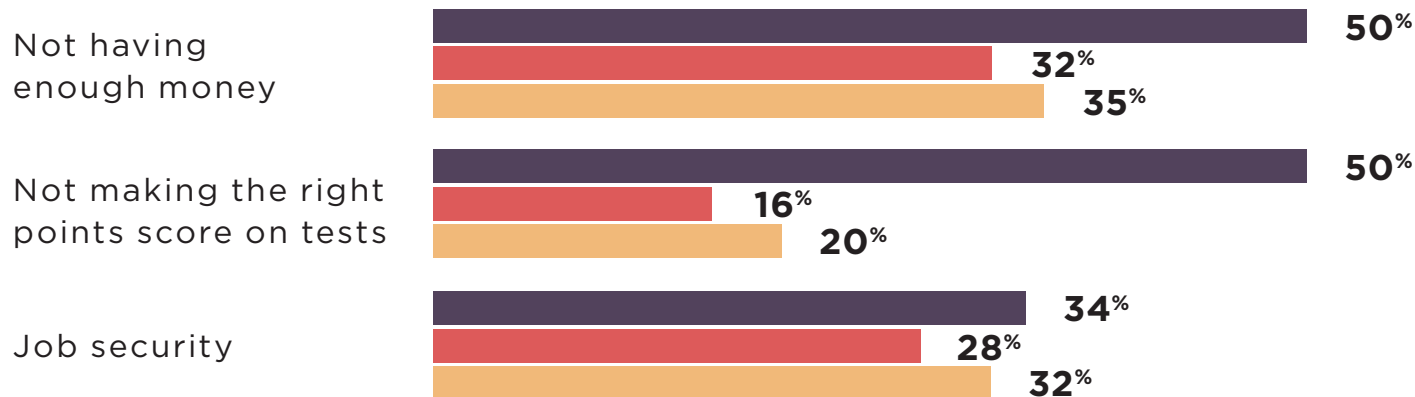


SOURCES OF STRESS - PART 3



AN ANXIOUS AGE PART 1

PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC CONCERNS



■ For Myself

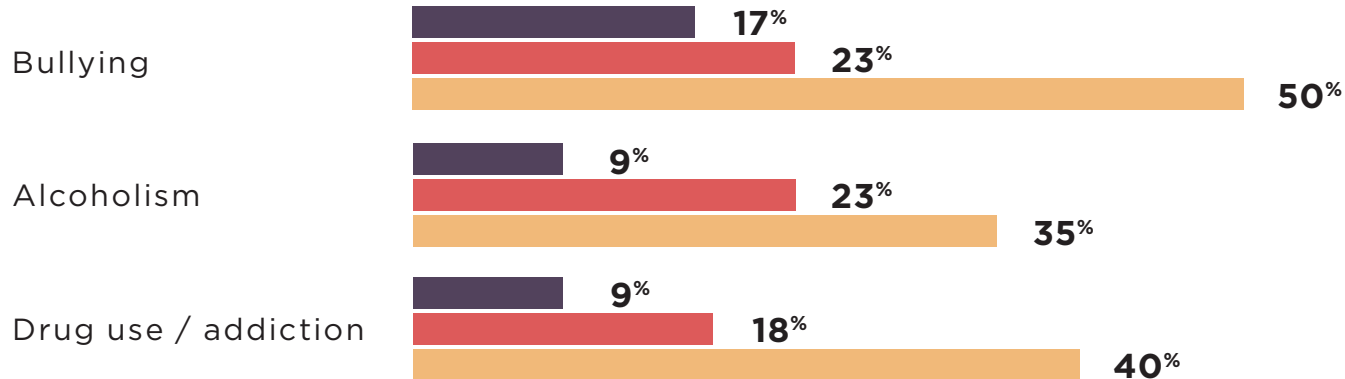
■ For My Friends & Family

■ In General



AN ANXIOUS AGE PART 2

LIFESTYLE CONCERNS



■ For Myself

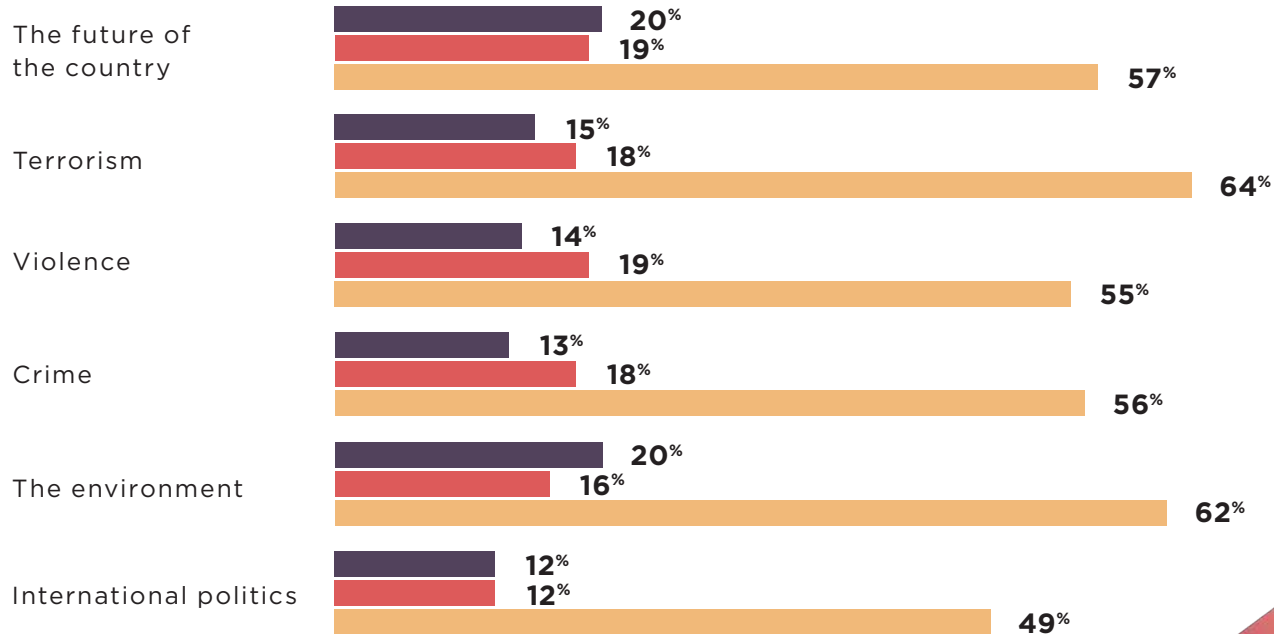
■ For My Friends & Family

■ In General



AN ANXIOUS AGE PART 3

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CONCERNS

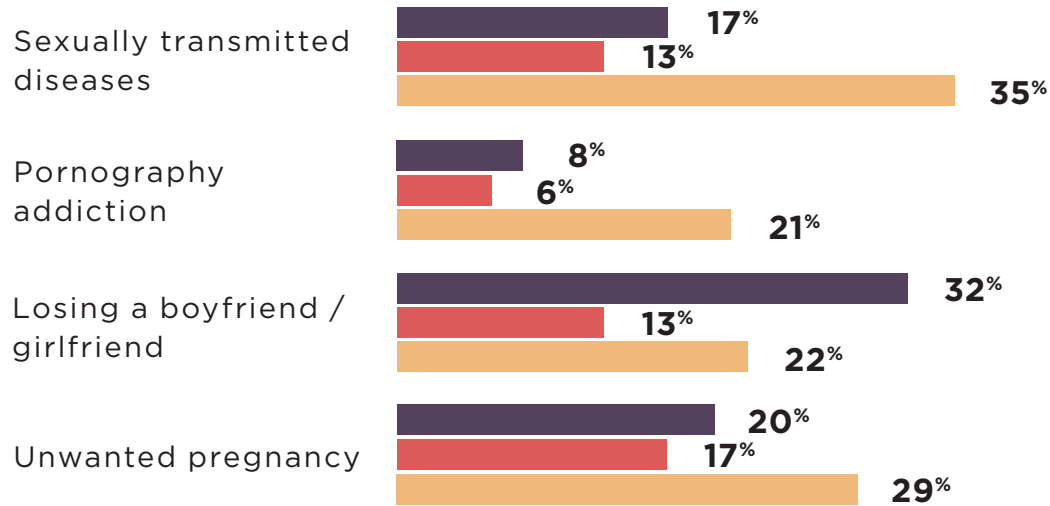


■ For Myself ■ For My Friends & Family ■ In General



AN ANXIOUS AGE PART 4

LOVE LIFE CONCERNS



■ For Myself

■ For My Friends & Family

■ In General



MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT

% among Irish young people

Works That Influenced Irish Youth Toward Christianity Include:

- *The Passion of the Christ*
- Kendrick Brothers films
(such as *War Room*,
Courageous, *Fireproof*, etc.)
- *1984*
- *Dubliners*
- *The Cost of Discipleship*
- *Tuesdays with Morrie*
- Spiritual classics

Works That Influenced Irish Youth Away From Christianity Include:

- *The Passion of the Christ*
- *Eat Pray Love*
- *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*
- *The DaVinci Code*
- *Dogma*
- *God's Not Dead*
- *Ambush in Waco*
- *The God Delusion*
- Books by "new atheists"
- Science and history books
(unspecified)

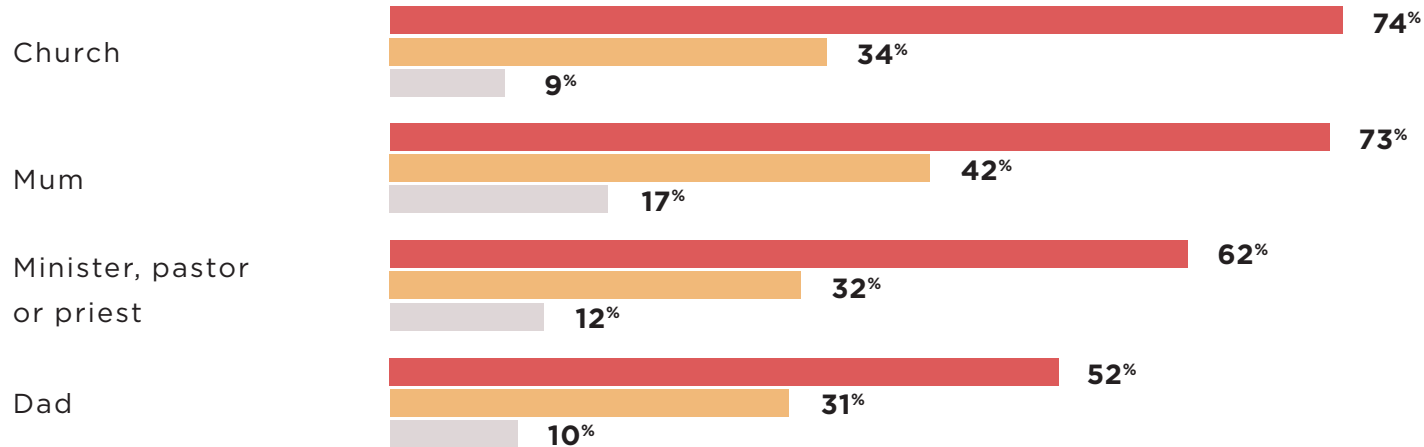


INFLUENCES PART 1

% among Irish young people

WHICH INFLUENCES MAKE CHRISTIANITY MORE APPEALING?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

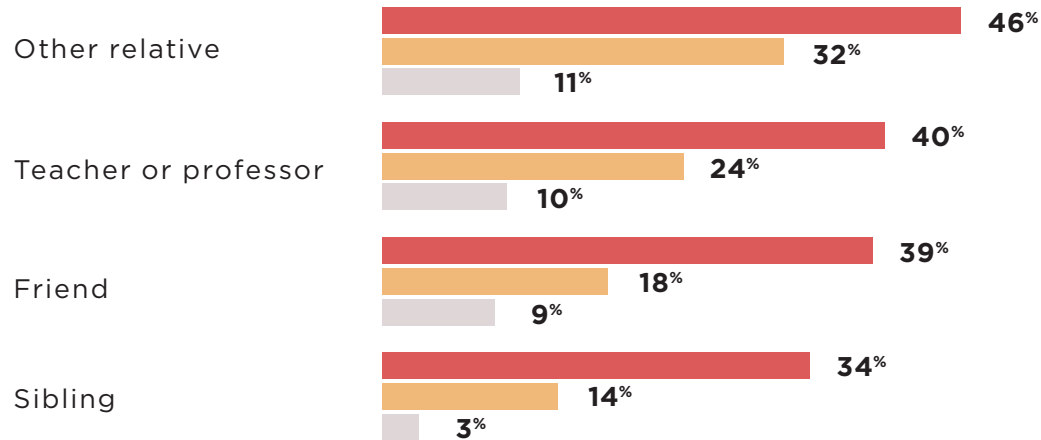


INFLUENCES PART 2

% among Irish young people

WHICH INFLUENCES MAKE CHRISTIANITY MORE APPEALING?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

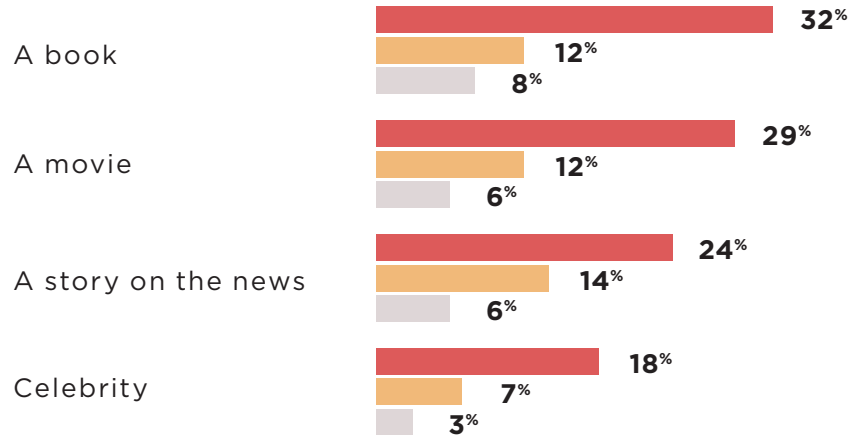


INFLUENCES PART 3

% among Irish young people

WHICH INFLUENCES MAKE CHRISTIANITY MORE APPEALING?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

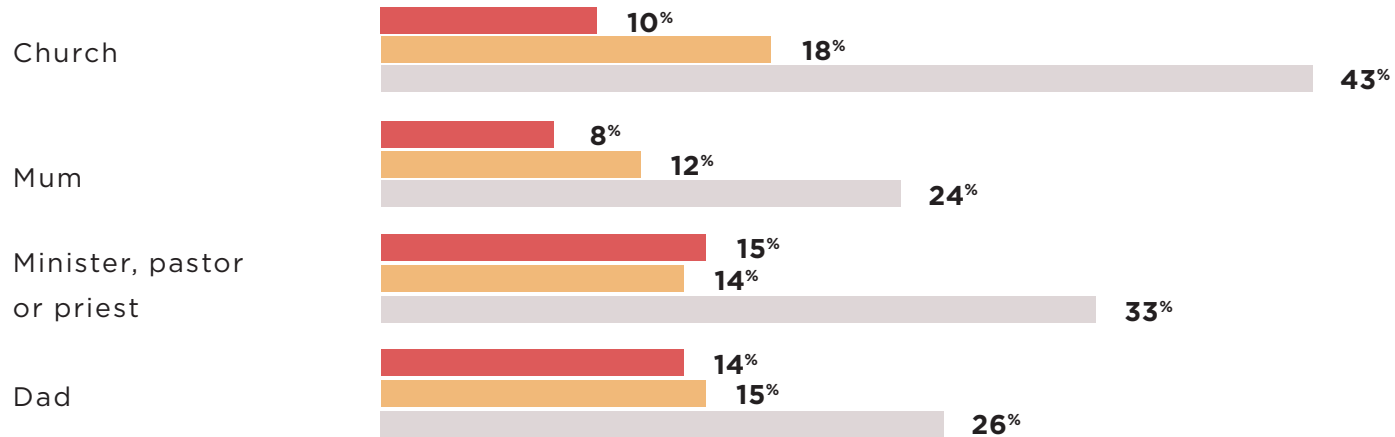


INFLUENCES PART 4

% among Irish young people

WHICH INFLUENCES MAKE CHRISTIANITY LESS APPEALING?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

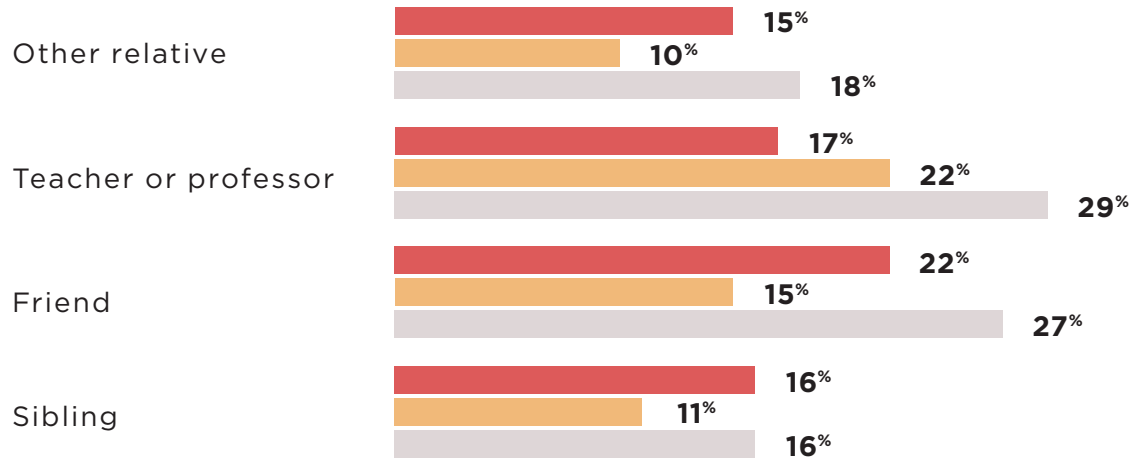


INFLUENCES PART 5

% among Irish young people

WHICH INFLUENCES MAKE CHRISTIANITY LESS APPEALING?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

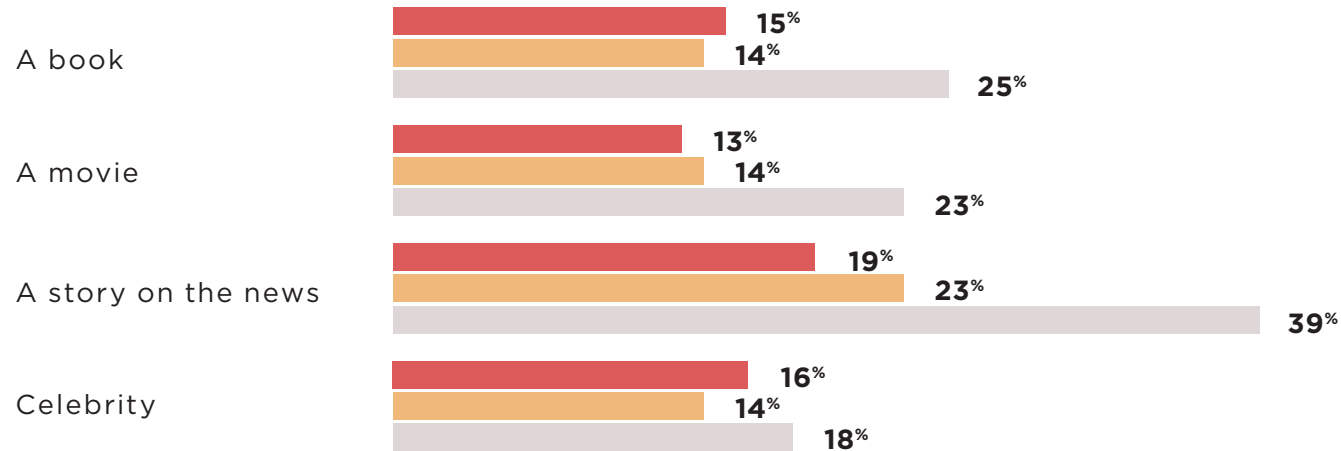


INFLUENCES PART 6

% among Irish young people

WHICH INFLUENCES MAKE CHRISTIANITY LESS APPEALING?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

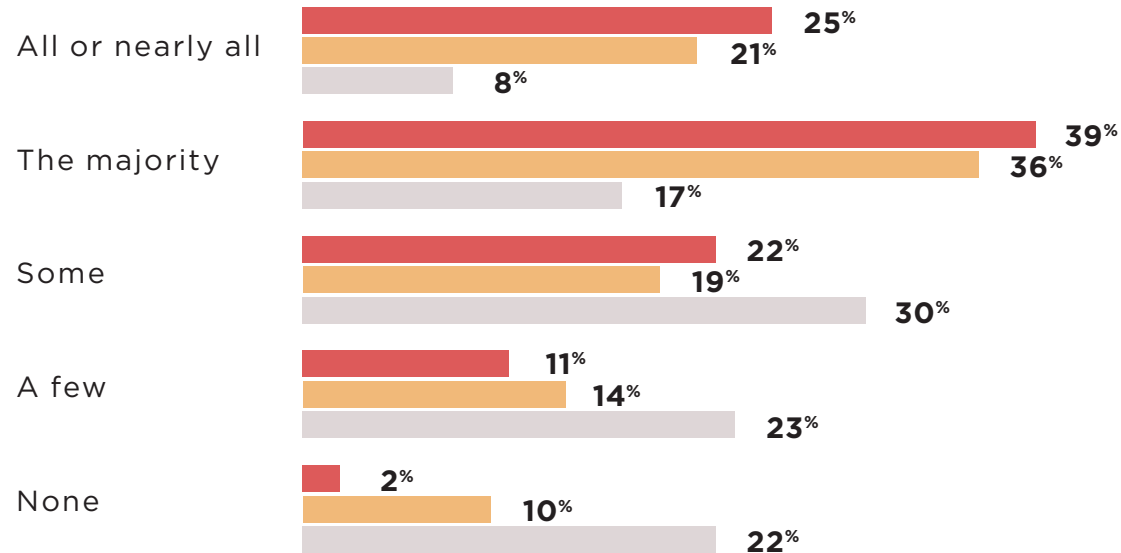


FAITH COMMUNITY PART 1

% among Irish young people

WHERE YOU LIVE, HOW MANY SHARE YOUR FAITH?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

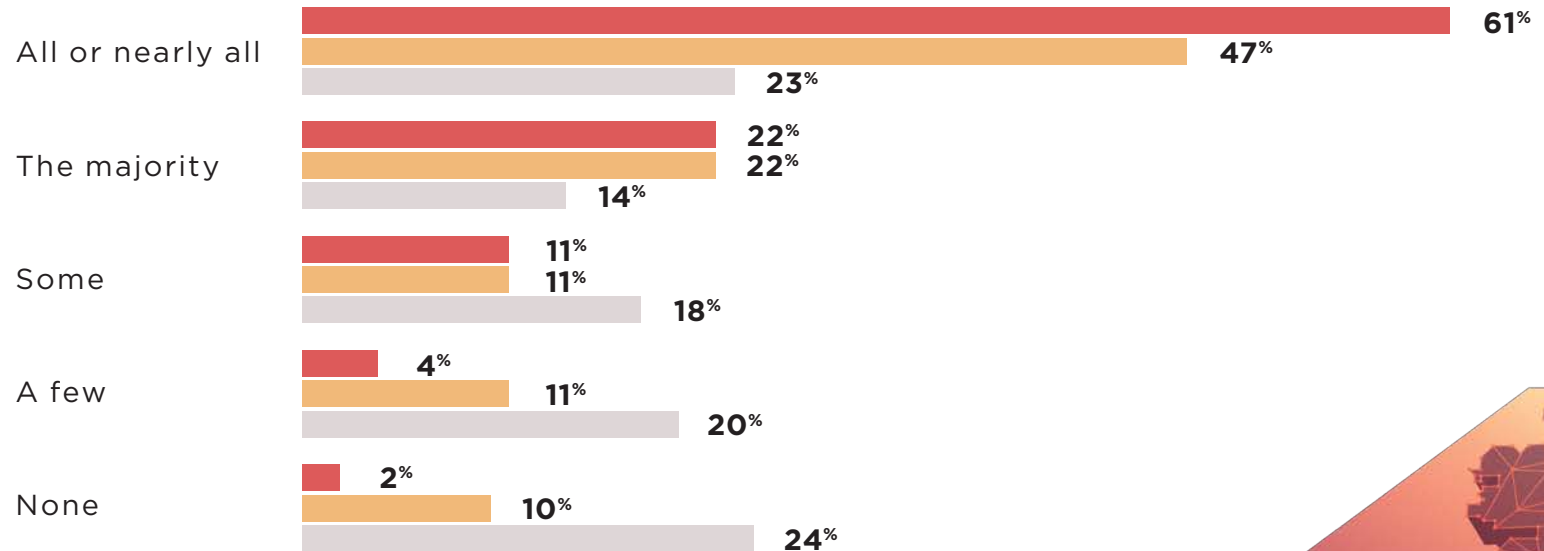


FAITH COMMUNITY PART 2

% among Irish young people

HOW MANY OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS SHARE YOUR FAITH?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians

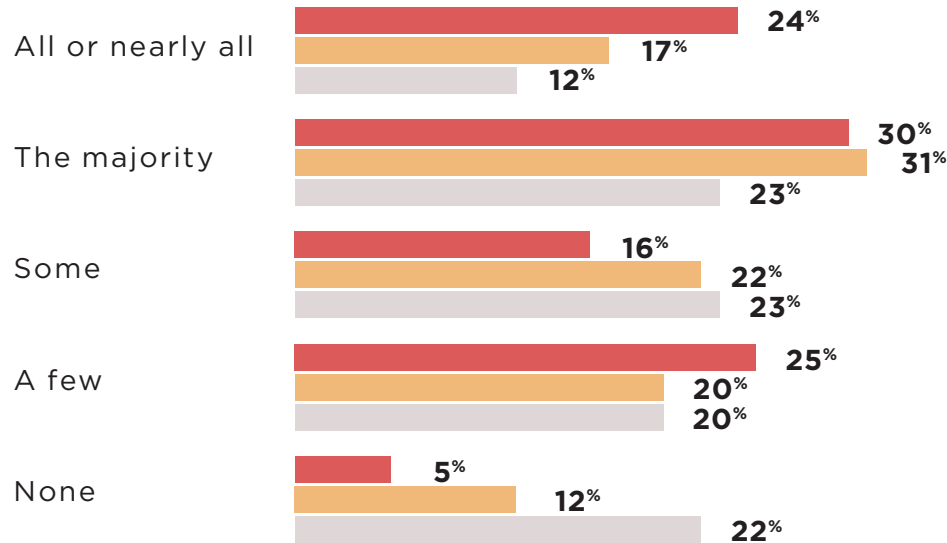


FAITH COMMUNITY PART 3

% among Irish young people

HOW MANY OF YOUR WORKMATES / SCHOOLMATES SHARE YOUR FAITH?

- Practising Christians
- Non-practising Christians
- Non-Christians



CONCLUSIONS

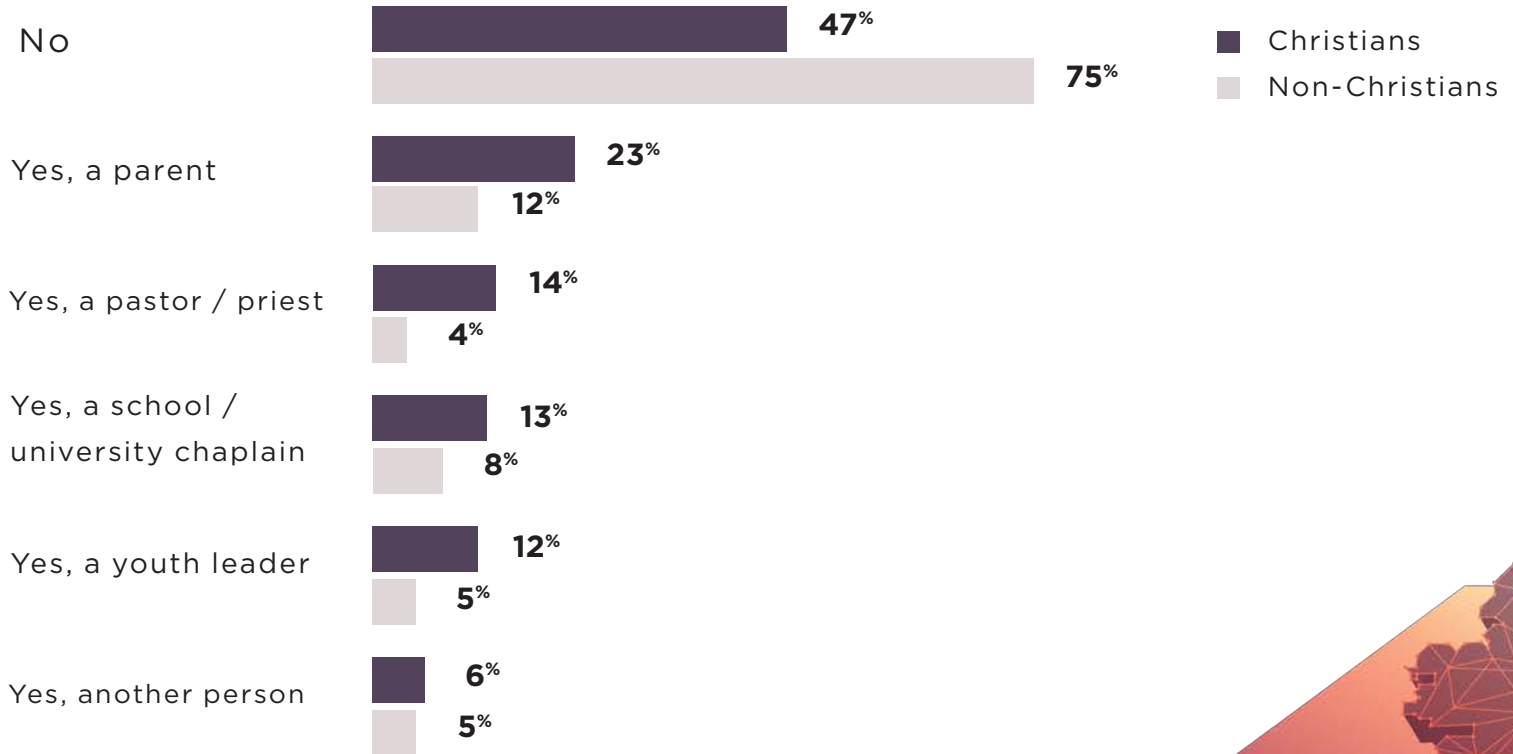


HOPEFUL SIGNS

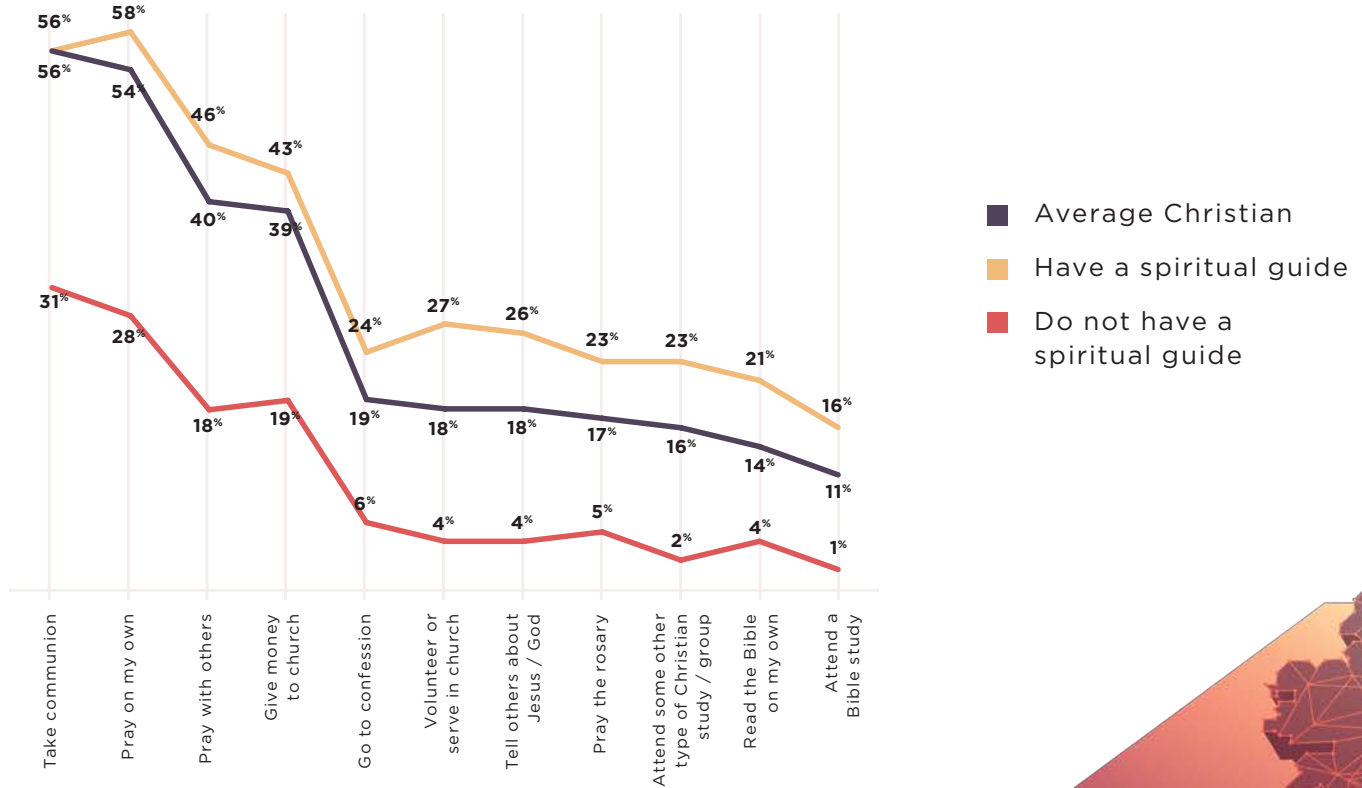
- 37% of Irish youth say it's mostly or completely true that they'd like to find a way to follow Jesus that connects to the world they live in.
- This is even more true of Christians (47%), particularly practising ones (71%).
- 1 in 4 young Christians feel it's important that their lifestyle reflects their relationship with God
- 1 in 5 young Christians want to help the Church return to the priorities Jesus intended for it.



SPIRITUAL GUIDES?



GUIDES ENCOURAGE FAITH



“Many seem quite Cartesian in their understanding of how the Faith is appropriated — just preach the right ideas, and people will change. They fail to recognize how the Faith is transmitted culturally — how the reception of practices and symbols and relationships in an embodied integral context are often more important than clear and distinct verbal communication of ideas.”

- Rod Dreher



How can we create this
embodied, integrated context?



HOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP

- Meaningful relationships
- Cultural discernment
- Reverse mentoring
- Vocational discipleship
- Firsthand experience of Jesus



Do we love our traditions
more than our children?



APPENDIX



ABOUT THE PARTNERS

BARNA GROUP

a research firm dedicated to providing actionable insights on faith and culture, with a particular focus on the Christian church. In its 30-year history, Barna has conducted more than one million interviews in the course of hundreds of studies, and has become a go-to source for organisations that want to better understand a complex and changing world from a faith perspective.

CHRIST IN YOUTH (CIY)

has spent more than 40 years calling students and leaders to boldly live for Christ through the hope of the gospel message and a call to Kingdom action. In partnership with the local church, CIY reaches more than 65,000 students and adult leaders by way of more than 100 events across the United States and in more than 10 foreign countries. As an innovative voice in student ministry, the organisation's programmes are directed toward enhancing the spiritual formation of students, in an effort to help young generations respond in faith and in service to the call of Christ.



DEFINITIONS PART 1

AGE

- Teens = Age 14-18
- Young Adults = Age 19-25
- Young People = Age 14-25

FAITH SEGMENTS

- Self-identified Christians select Christian from a list
- Non-Christians select Buddhist, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Other
- No faith or no religious affiliation are atheists or agnostics, or select "none of the above" from a list
- Catholics select Catholic
- Non-Catholic Christians select Christian, Protestant, Evangelical Christian
- Practising Christians identify Christian; say their faith is very important; and have attended a religious service or gathering in the past month
- Nominal Christians identify Christian but do not agree that religious faith is very important, have not made a personal commitment to Jesus, and do not believe that their entrance to heaven depends on the confession of sins and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior



DEFINITIONS PART 2

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND FAITH PRACTICES

- Churched = attended a service within the past six months
- Dechurched = formerly churched but have not attended a service in the past six months
- Never churched = have never attended church service besides special events
- Corporate spiritual life = applies to those who identify as Christian and participate every six months in at least two of the following: Bible study, Christian study, group prayer, communion and serving in church
- Private / personal spiritual life = applies to those who identify as Christian, agree strongly or somewhat that their religious faith is important in their lives today, are not less spiritual than when they were 12 years old, and do at least two of the following: pray the rosary, read the bible on their own or pray on their own
- Christian event = may include festival, retreat, weekend away, community outreach event, pilgrimage, local mission trip or overseas mission trip



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Millennials Bring Ambition and Optimism to Their Work

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The Mercy Journey

A critical element is missing in how we relate to one another today: mercy. In *The Mercy Journey*, the presence of Christians and the work of





For more information about this study and to see the complete findings, check out our 2017 report:

Finding Faith in Ireland

The full report is available at shop.barna.com or through Barna Access membership.