



Barna

# REVIVING EVANGELISM

Current Realities That Demand a New Vision for Sharing Faith



For more information about this study and to see the complete findings, check out our 2019 report:

***Reviving Evangelism***

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

Evangelism Erosion  
Blurred Maps  
Fertile Soil

# Evangelism Erosion

## Blurred Maps

## Fertile Soil



Evangelism Erosion  
**Blurred Maps**  
Fertile Soil

Evangelism Erosion  
Blurred Maps  
Fertile Soil

# KEY REALITIES

1. **Evangelism Erosion:** The forces of cultural and religious change are eroding the landscape of evangelism.
2. **Blurred Maps:** Christians' perceptions of the landscape *and of themselves* are often hazy or wide of the mark.
3. **Fertile Soil:** Real opportunities remain for evangelism, but effective faith-sharing today looks different from the past.

# DEFINITIONS

**Practicing Christians** identify as Christian, agree strongly that faith is very important in their lives and have attended church within the past month.

**All others** are US adults who are not practicing Christians under the definition above. These fall into two main groups:

- **Lapsed Christians** identify as Christian but have not attended church within the past month.
- **Non-Christians** identify with a faith other than Christianity (“religious non-Christians”) or with no faith at all (“atheists / agnostics / nones”).

# DEFINITIONS

**Millennials** 1984 to 1998 / ages 20 to 34

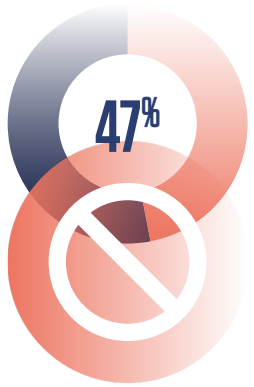
**Gen X** 1965 to 1983 / ages 35 to 53

**Boomers** 1946 to 1964 / ages 54 to 72

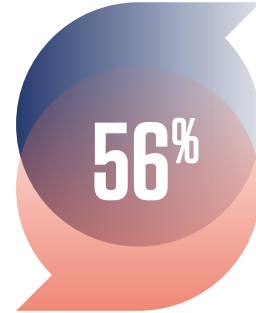
**Elders** before 1946 / age 73+

# KEY FINDINGS: PRACTICING CHRISTIANS

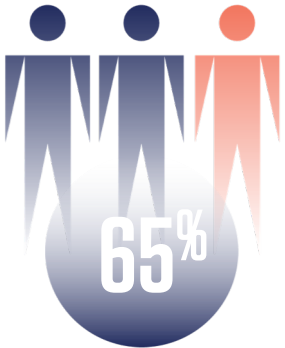
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Nearly half of Millennial practicing Christians say it is wrong to evangelize (47%).



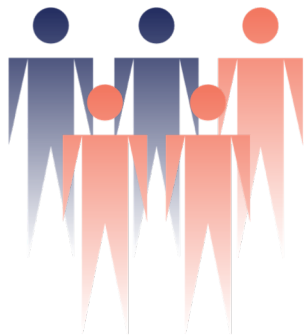
More than half report having two or fewer conversations about faith with a non-Christian during the past year (56%).



At the same time, 2 in 3 Millennials believe being a witness about Jesus is part of their faith (65%).



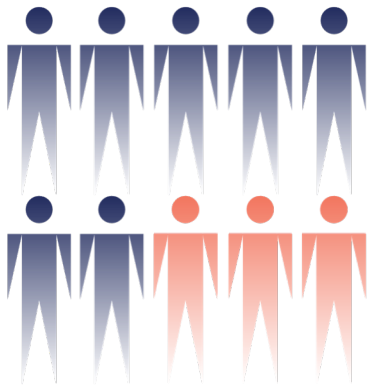
Those who had at least one conversation about faith came away more confident and eager to talk with others.



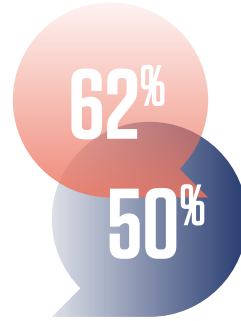
Almost 2 in 5 practicing Christians say they have no non-Christian friends or family members (38%).

# KEY FINDINGS: NON-CHRISTIANS & LAPSED CHRISTIANS

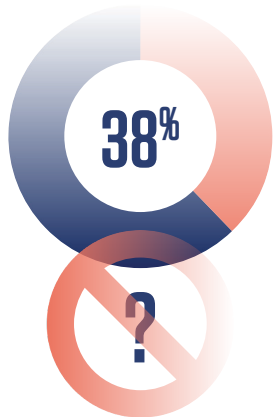
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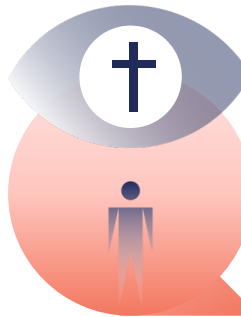
Seven in 10 say they are not “on a quest for spiritual truth” (71%).



Top qualities they would look for in a person with whom to talk about faith are “listens without judgment” (62%) and “does not force a conclusion” (50%).



Thirty-eight percent report they “don’t have any questions about faith.”



Those who engage in regular conversations about faith are much more open to exploring faith than those who don’t.

# EVANGELISM EROSION

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**People are turning inward to find truth.**

Question:

***Whatever is right for your life  
or works best for you is the  
only truth you can know.***

<b>All adults</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>Millennials</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>Practicing Christians</b>	<b>41%</b>



# EVANGELISM EROSION

The perceived barriers to normal conversation are significant. People isolate into their tribes.

Question:		<i>All adults:</i>	<i>Evangelicals:</i>
<b><i>Which groups do you think it would be difficult for you to have a natural and normal conversation with?</i></b>	<b>Muslims</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>87%</b>
	<b>Mormons</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>67%</b>
	<b>Atheists</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>85%</b>
	<b>Evangelicals</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>28%</b>
	<b>LGBT community</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>87%</b>

# EVANGELISM EROSION

Three trends emerging from the data demonstrating this erosion:

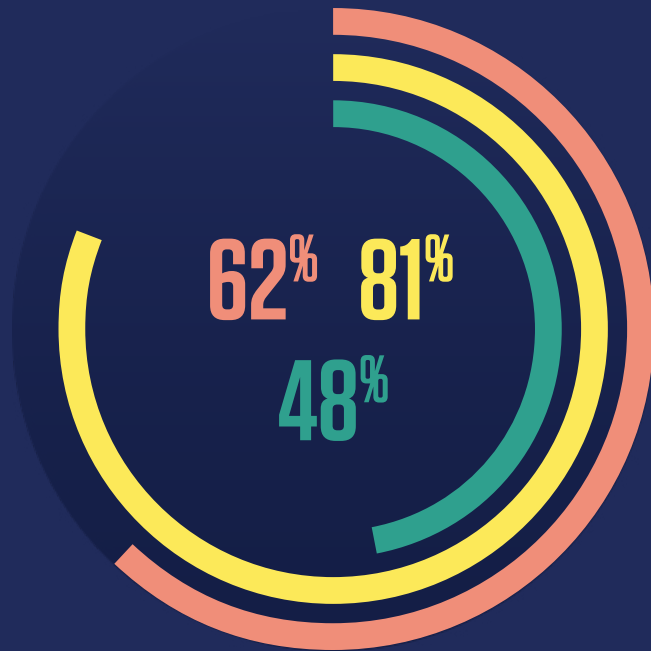
- *America is “de-churching” and increasingly isolated.*
- *Most people do not feel a “God-shaped hole.”*
- *Cultural fragmentation complicates evangelism.*

# KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

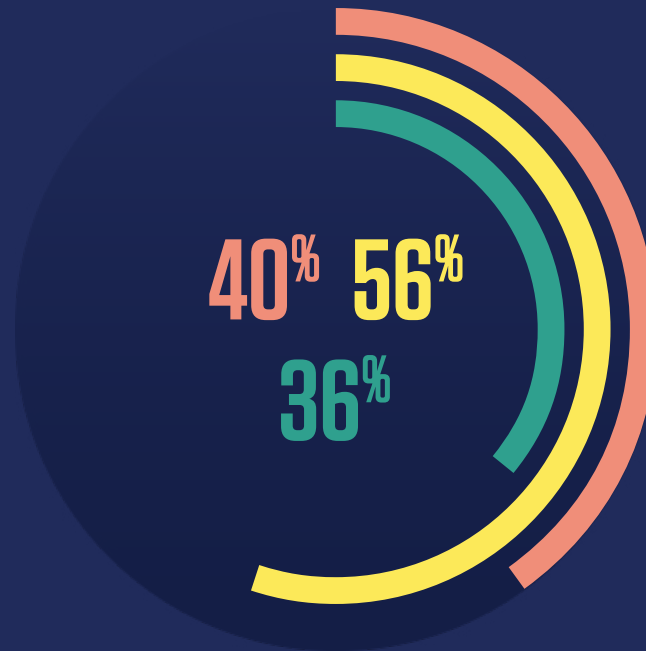
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● Lapsed Christians    ● Religious non-Christians    ● Atheists / agnostics / nones

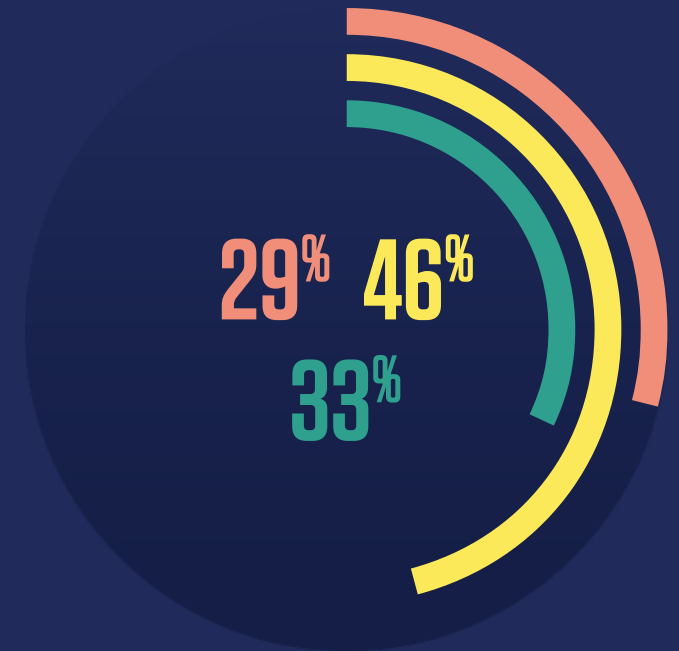
I consider myself to be  
a spiritual person



I have unanswered  
spiritual questions



I experience a general  
sense of emptiness



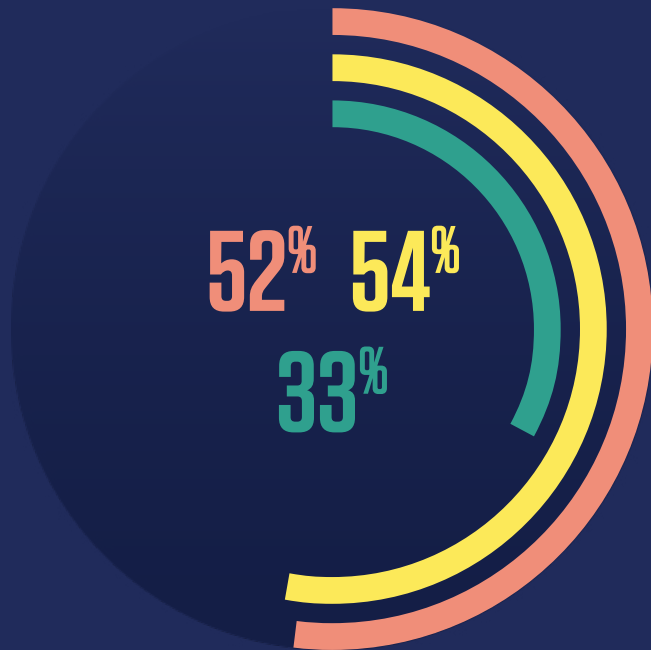
*n=1,001 US adults who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

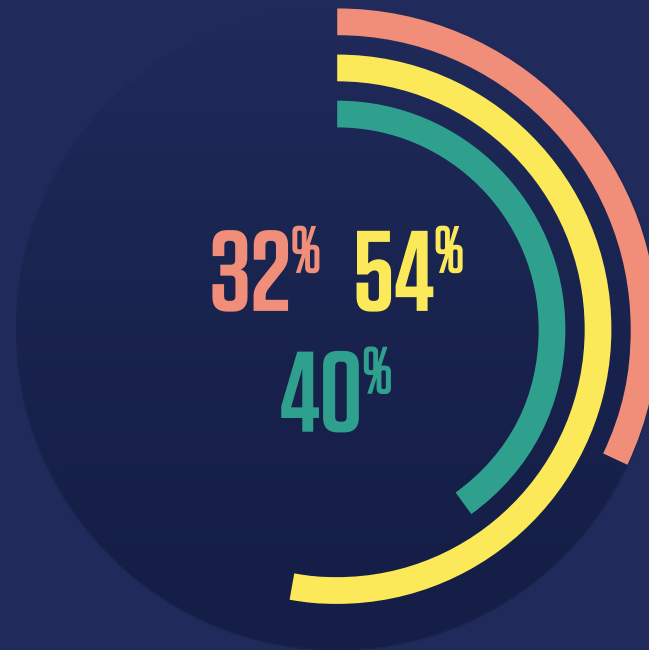
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● Lapsed Christians    ● Religious non-Christians    ● Atheists / agnostics / nones

I am curious about  
who God is



I am interested in exploring faiths  
that are different from my own



I am seeking something  
spiritually better



*n=1,001 US adults who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# I'D BE MORE INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT CHRISTIANITY IF...

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## Lapsed Christians

Most  
important

31%

*I saw various churches  
in my community  
working together more*

32%

*I had an eye-  
opening spiritual  
experience myself*

31%

*The Christians I knew were  
more humble and aware of  
their shortcomings*

Least  
important

13%

*The Christians I know were more articulate about their faith*

*n=1,001 US adults who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# I'D BE MORE INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT CHRISTIANITY IF...

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## Religious Non-Christians

Most  
important

31%

*Christianity had better evidence to support it*

31%

*Christianity had a better reputation*

29%

*I saw various churches in my community working together more*

Least  
important

10%

*The Christians I know demonstrated a more vibrant personal faith*

*n=1,001 US adults who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# I'D BE MORE INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT CHRISTIANITY IF...

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## Atheists / Agnostics / Nones

Most  
important

44%

*Christianity had better evidence to support it*

35%

*Christianity had a better reputation*

29%

*I had an eye-opening spiritual experience myself*

Least  
important

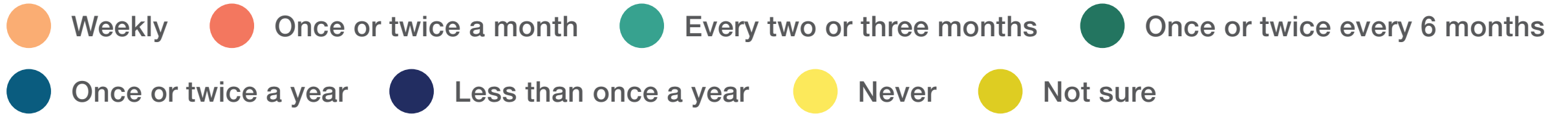
10%

*The Christians I know were more articulate about their faith*

*n=1,001 US adults who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# HOW OFTEN US ADULTS ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES

% among US adults 18 and older



Practicing Christians



All other US adults

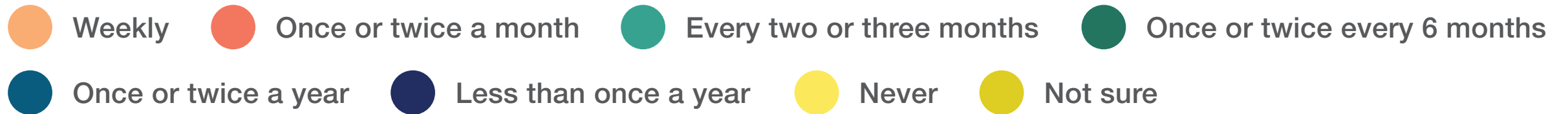




# HOW OFTEN US ADULTS ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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% among US adults 18 and older



Lapsed Christians



Religious non-Christians



Atheist / agnostic / none



n=1,992 US adults 18 and older; May 2018.

# HOW US ADULTS (WHO ARE NOT PRACTICING CHRISTIANS) PRIORITIZE SPIRITUALITY

*% among US non-Christians and lapsed Christians 18 and older*

- Spirituality is the most important thing in my life
- Spirituality is as important as anything else in my life
- Spirituality plays a minor role in my life
- Spirituality plays no role in my life

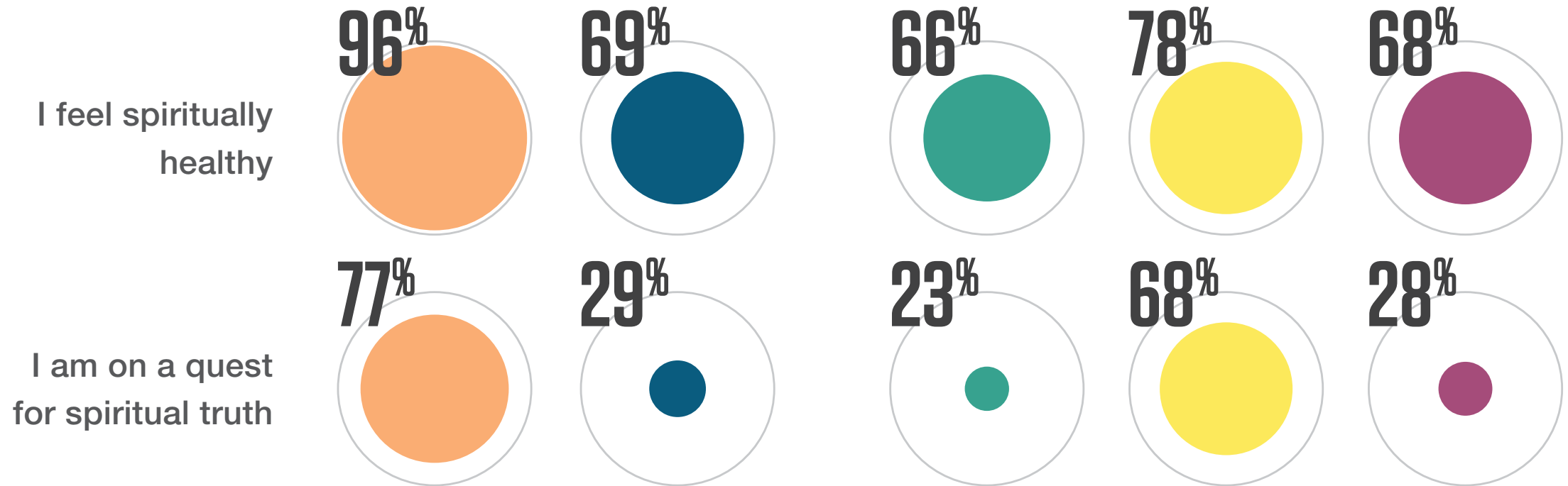
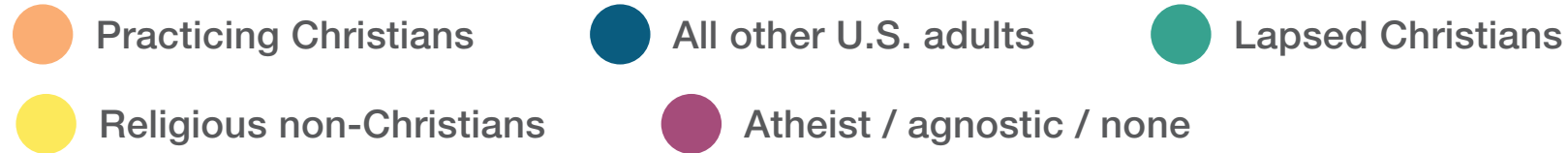


*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# SPIRITUAL MINDSETS OF US ADULTS

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% agree among US adults 18 and older

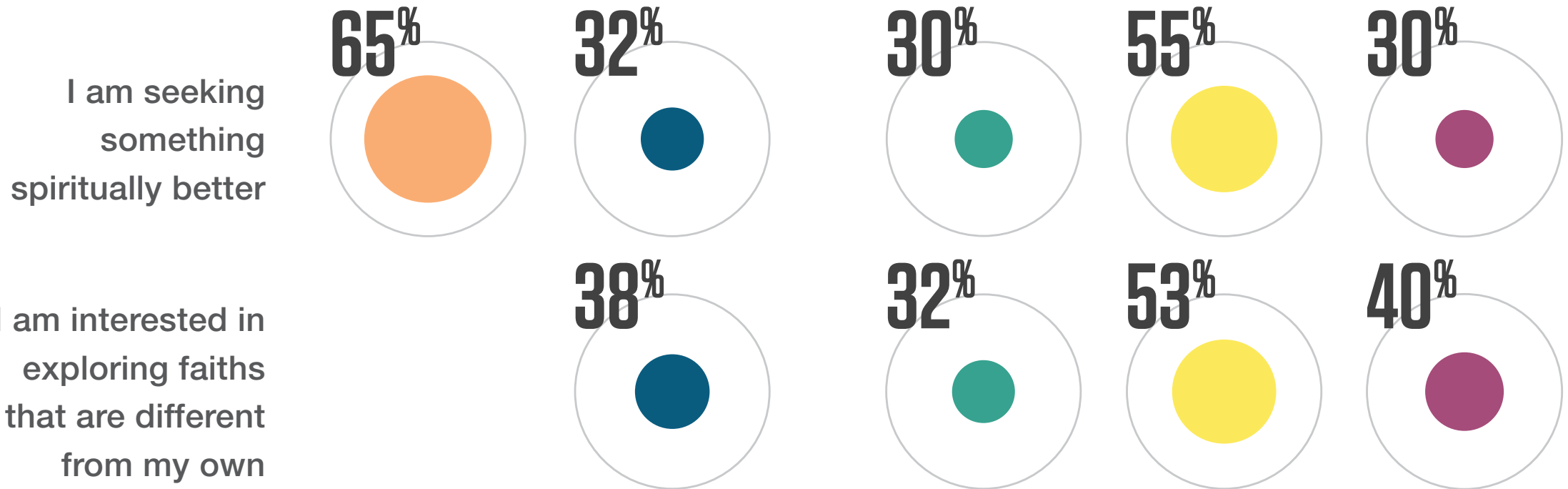
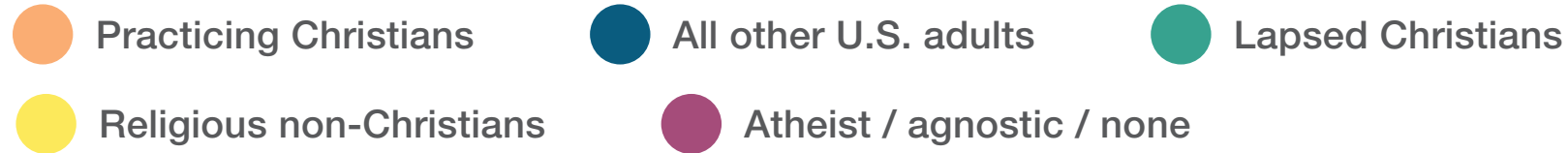


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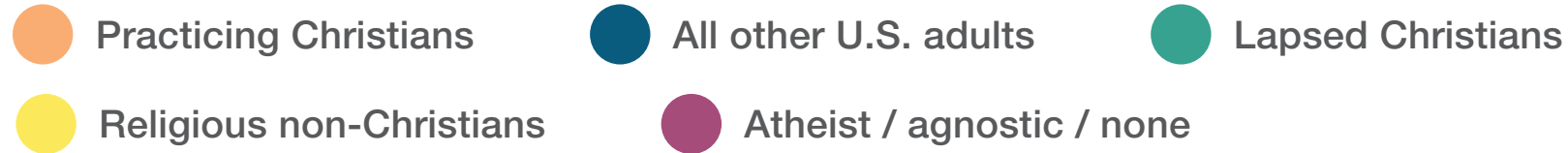


*n=1,992 US adults 18 and older; May 2018.*

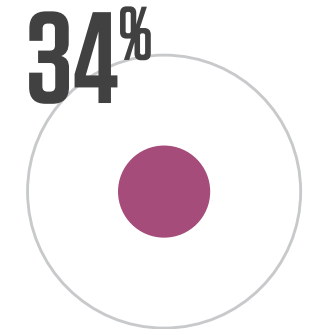
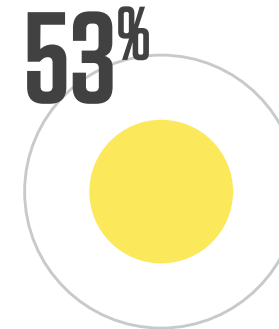
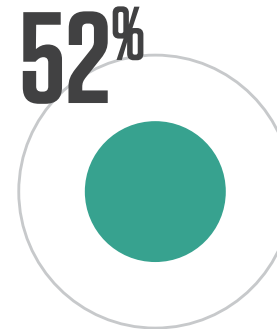
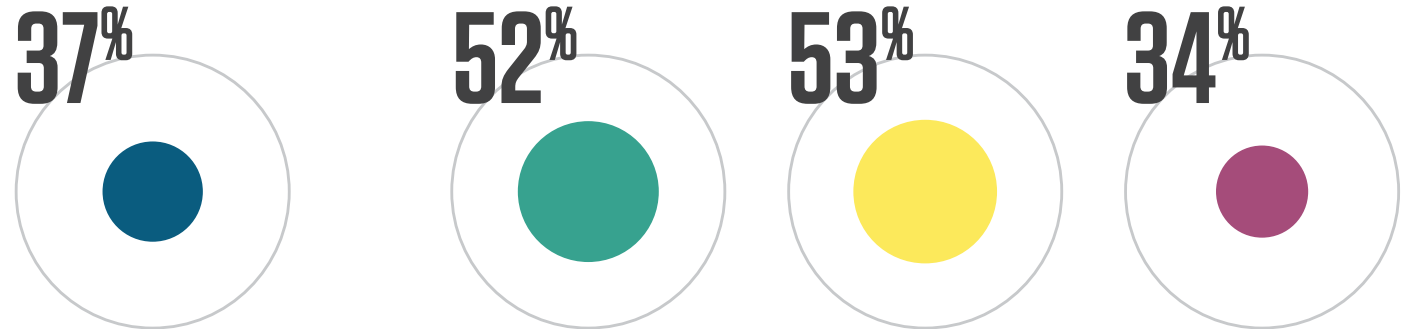
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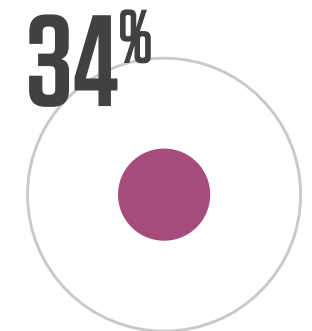
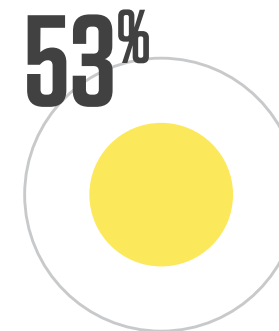
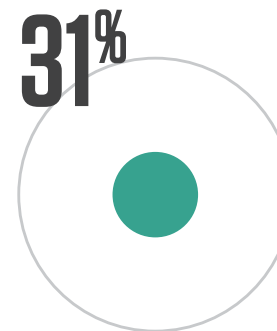
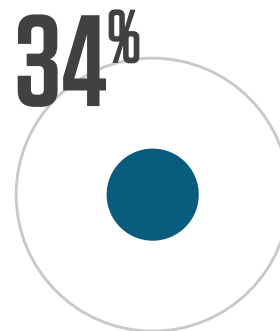
% agree among US adults 18 and older



I am curious  
about who God  
is



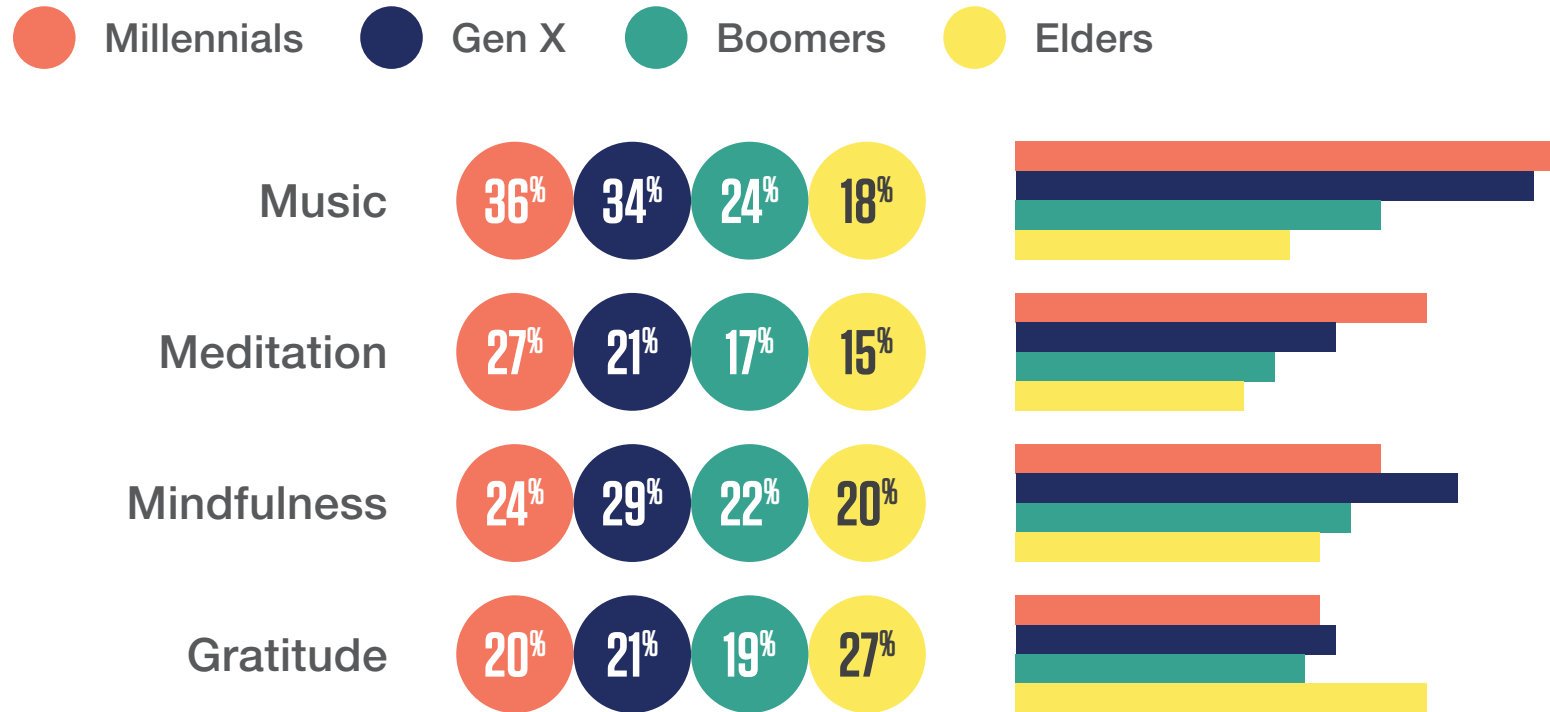
Something  
feels missing  
from my life



n=1,992 US adults 18 and older; May 2018.

# ACTIVITIES PEOPLE CONSIDER A PART OF THEIR SPIRITUALITY

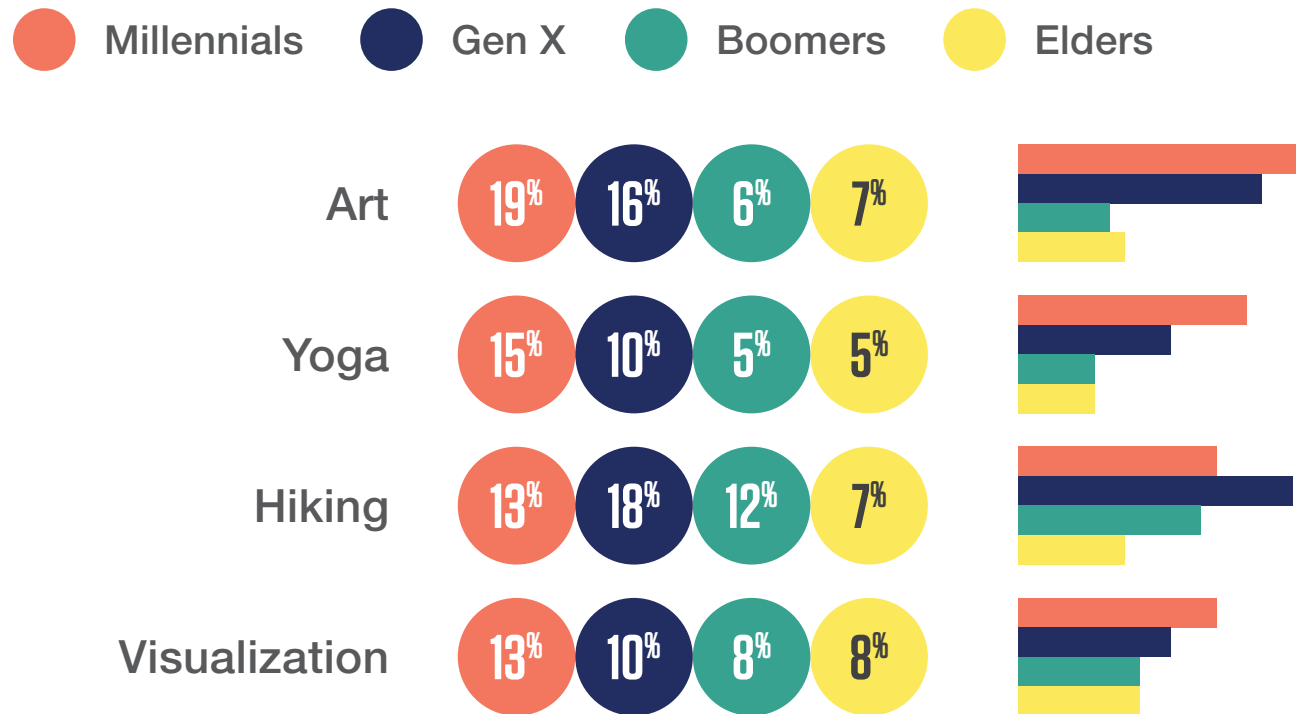
% among US non-Christians and lapsed Christians 18 and older



*n=1,001 US adults who are not practicing Christians, May 2018.*

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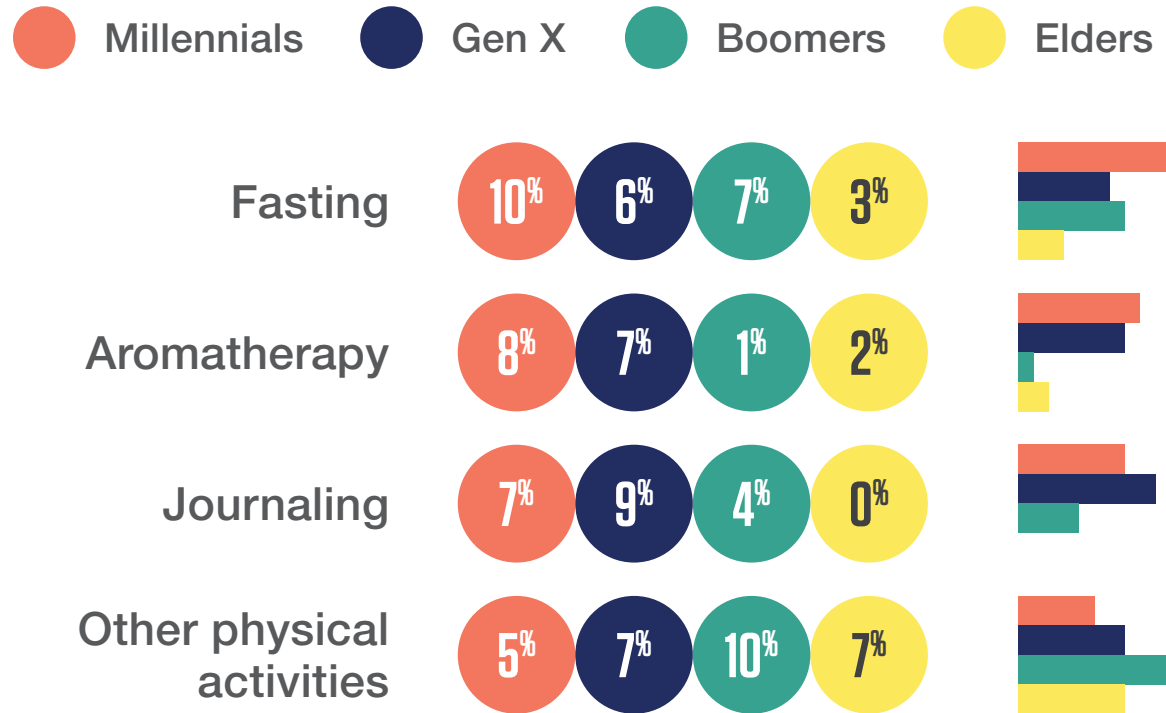
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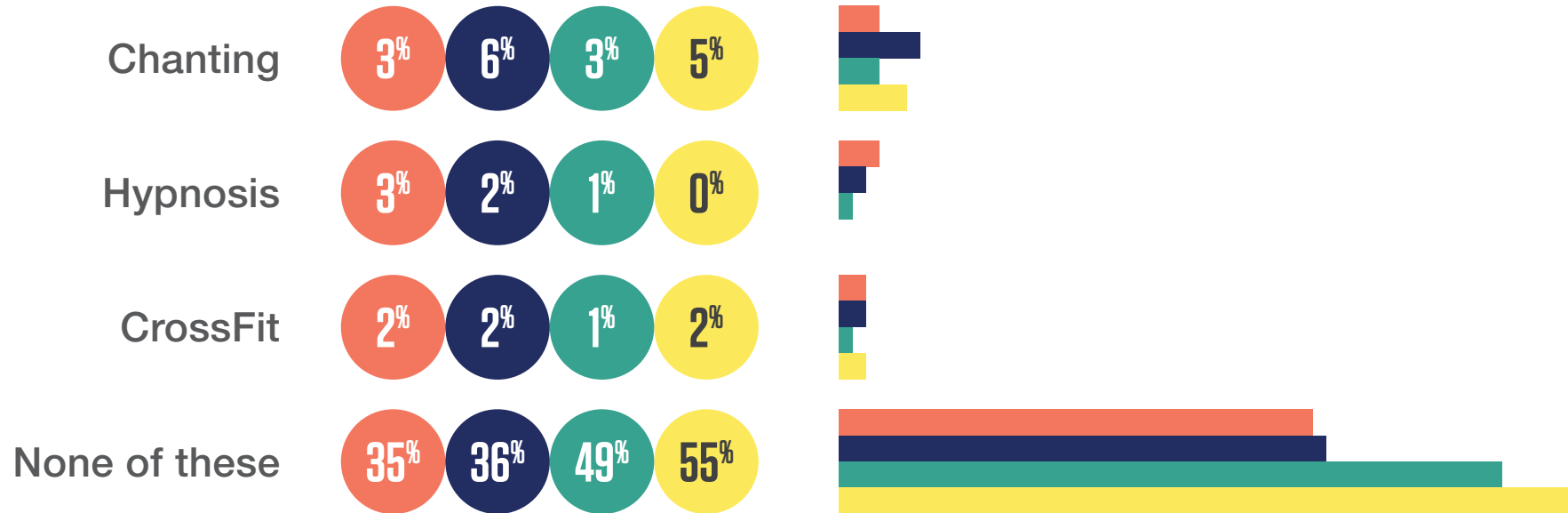
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# ACTIVITIES PEOPLE CONSIDER A PART OF THEIR SPIRITUALITY

% among US non-Christians and lapsed Christians 18 and older

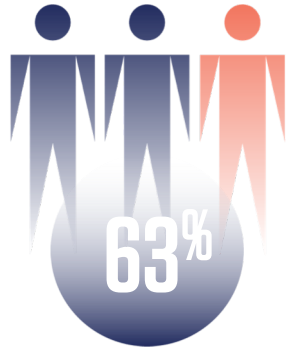
● Millennials ● Gen X ● Boomers ● Elders



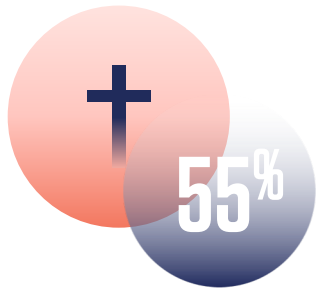
*n=1,001 US adults who are not practicing Christians, May 2018.*

# EVANGELIZING CHRISTIAN YOUTH

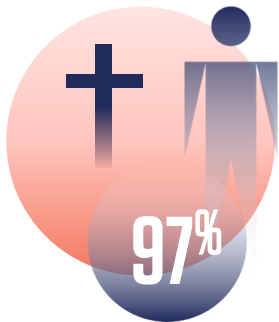
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Among US adults who do not practice Christianity today, two-thirds were raised in a Christian family (63%).



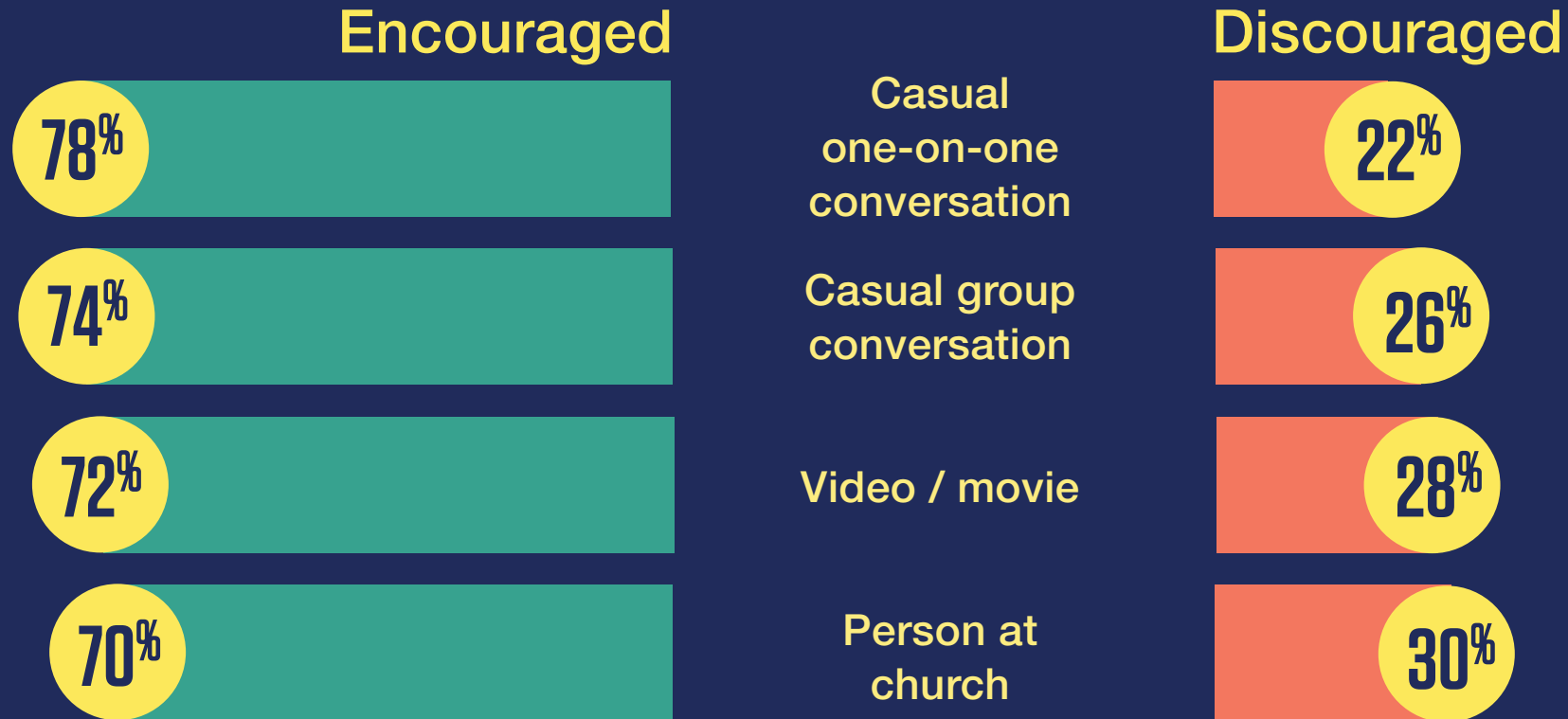
About half of atheists, agnostics and nones were raised in a Christian family (55%).



Nearly all lapsed Christians were raised in a Christian family (97%).

# LET'S ASK THE EVANGELIZED ABOUT EVANGELISM

What they say about evangelistic encounters

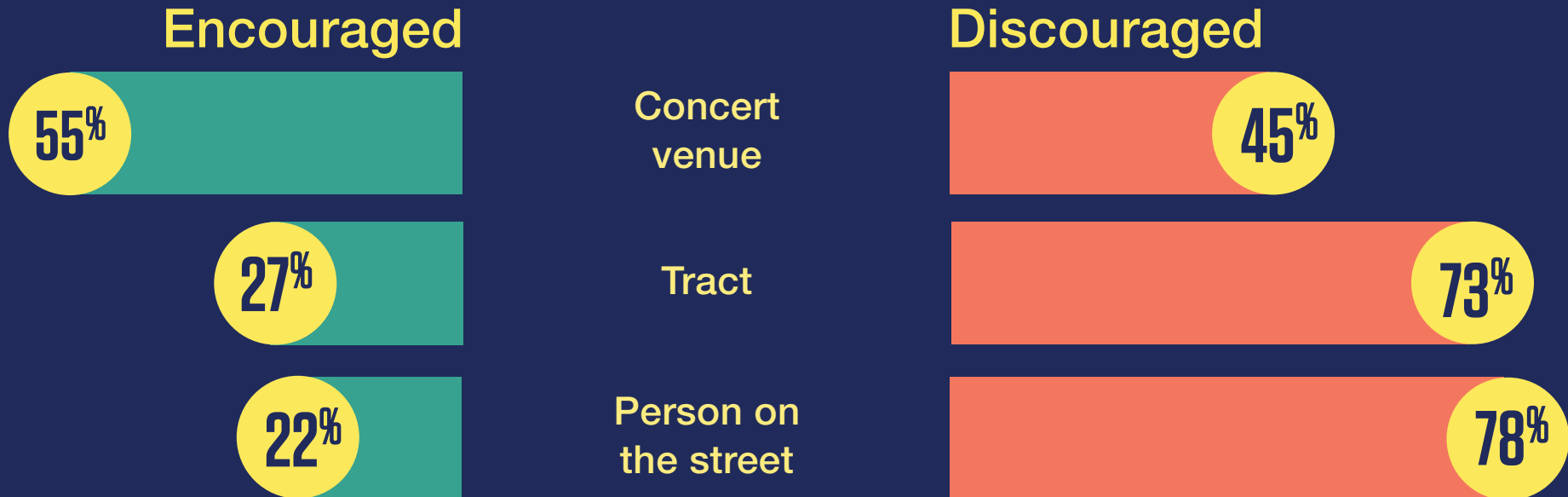


*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018*

# LET'S ASK THE EVANGELIZED ABOUT EVANGELISM

Barna

What they say about evangelistic encounters



*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018*

# LET'S ASK THE EVANGELIZED ABOUT EVANGELISM

## What they say about Christians and conversations

● Someone I would talk to about faith    ● Christians I know personally

Listens without judgment

62%

34%

Does not force a conclusion

50%

26%

Allows others to draw their own conclusions

43%

22%

Confident in sharing their own perspective

33%

28%

*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018*

# LET'S ASK THE EVANGELIZED ABOUT EVANGELISM

## What they say about Christians and conversations

● Someone I would talk to about faith    ● Christians I know personally

Demonstrates interest in  
other people's story or life

29%

17%

Good at asking questions

27%

16%

Focused on the details  
of questions

20%

10%

Aware of the  
inconsistencies in their  
own perspective

20%

9%

# LET'S ASK THE EVANGELIZED ABOUT EVANGELISM

## What they say about Christians and conversations

● Someone I would talk to about faith    ● Christians I know personally

Knows the story of the person they are sharing their faith with

18%

20%

Exhibits a vibrant faith of their own

15%

25%

Good at debating topics

15%

10%

Focused on the emotions behind questions

13%

8%

# GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES ON FAITH-SHARING

% agree among US practicing Christians

Barna

Millennials

Gen X

Boomers

Elders

Part of my faith means being a witness about Jesus

96%

97%

95%

95%

The best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus

94%

97%

97%

97%

n=992 US practicing Christians 18 and older; May 2018.



# GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES ON FAITH-SHARING

% agree among US practicing Christians

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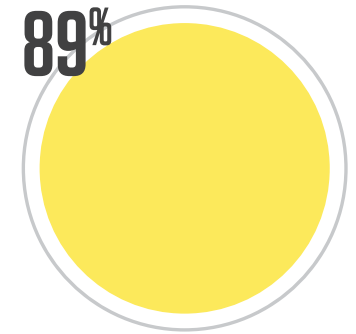
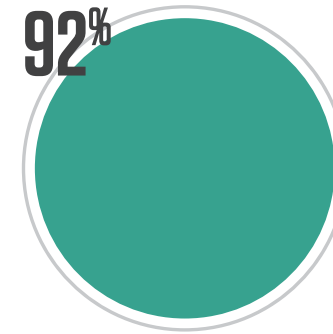
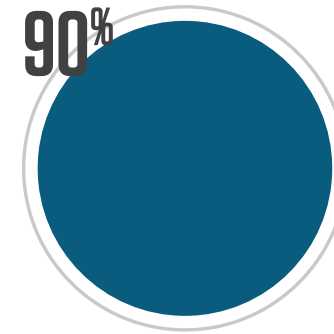
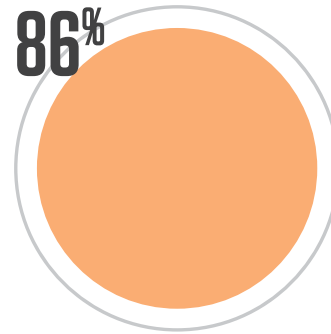
Millennials

Gen X

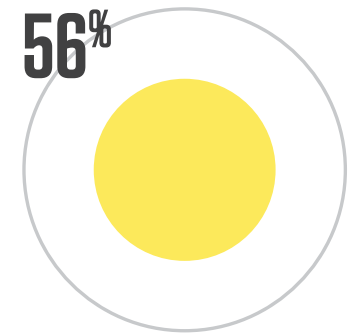
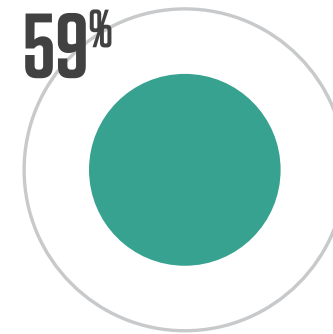
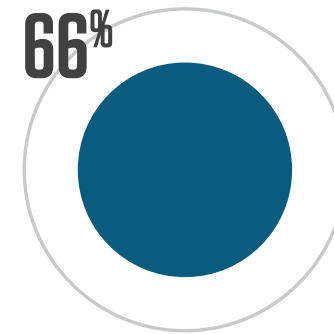
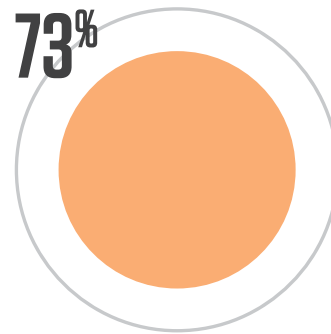
Boomers

Elders

When someone raises questions about faith, I know how to respond



I am gifted at sharing my faith with other people



*n=992 US practicing Christians 18 and older; May 2018.*

# GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES ON FAITH-SHARING

% agree among US practicing Christians

Barna

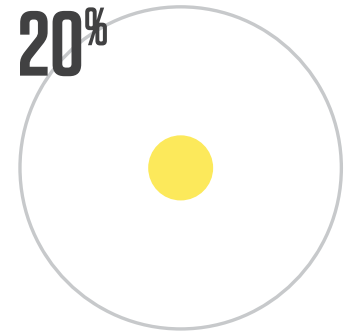
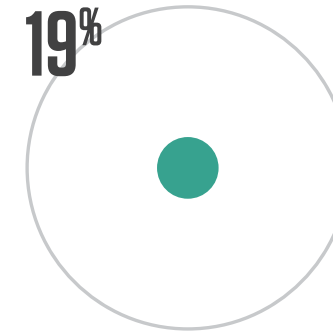
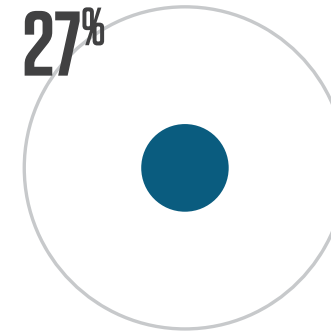
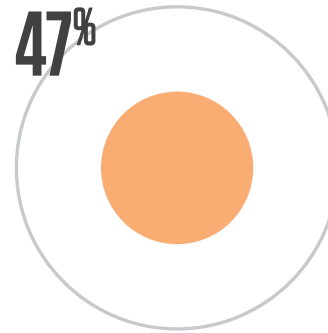
Millennials

Gen X

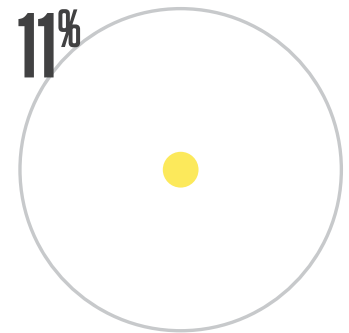
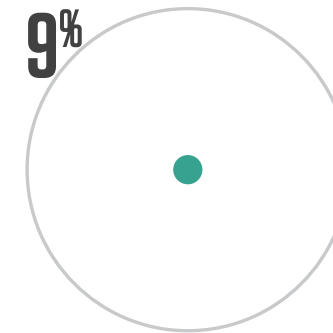
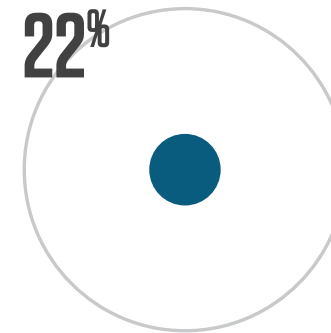
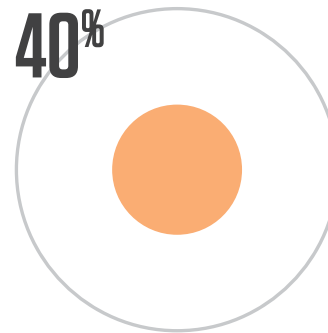
Boomers

Elders

It is wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith



If someone disagrees with you, it means that they're judging you

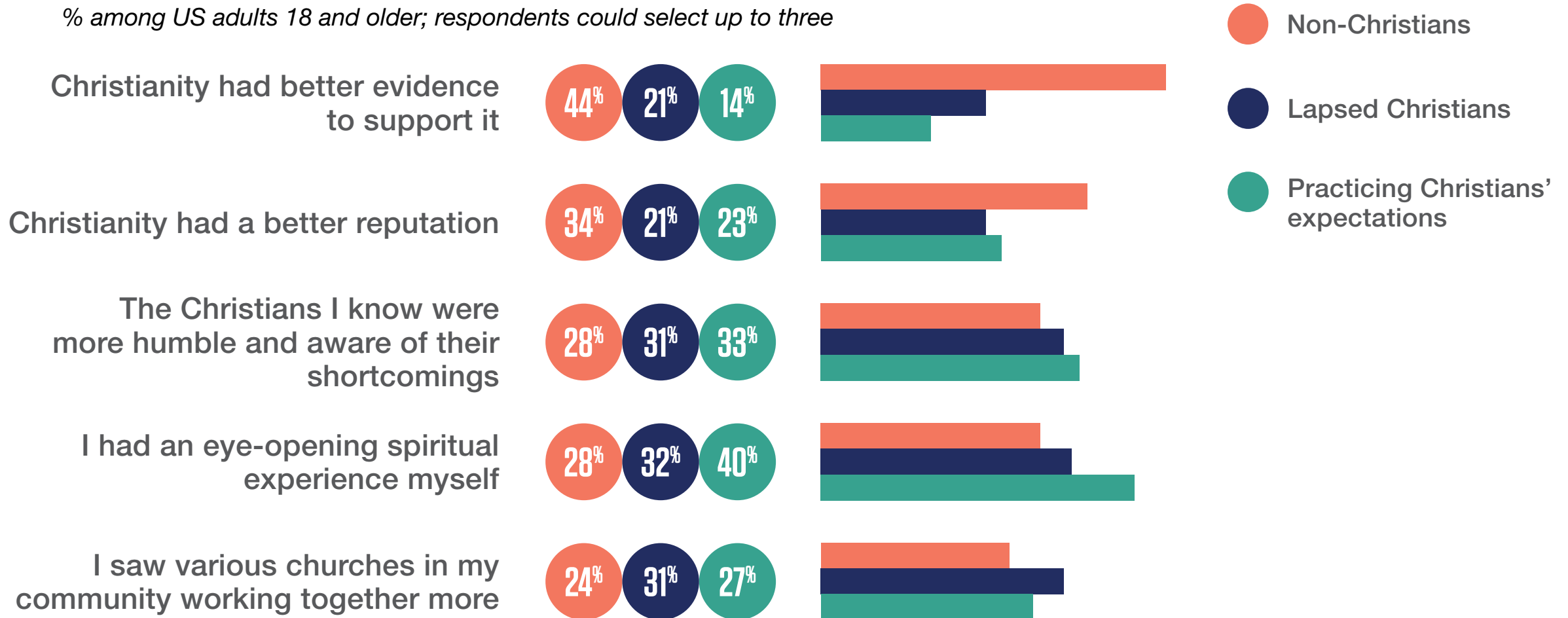


*n=992 US practicing Christians 18 and older; May 2018.*

# FACTORS THAT COULD INCREASE INTEREST IN CHRISTIANITY

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% among US adults 18 and older; respondents could select up to three



*n=942 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians and are not interested in Christianity, May 2018;  
n=781 US practicing Christians 18 and older who say non-Christians are not interested in Christianity, May 2018.*

# FACTORS THAT COULD INCREASE INTEREST IN CHRISTIANITY

Barna

% among US adults 18 and older; respondents could select up to three

The Christians I know had better answers to my questions



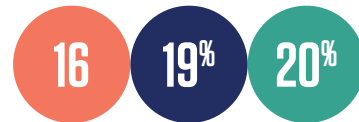
The Christians I know were more welcoming and hospitable



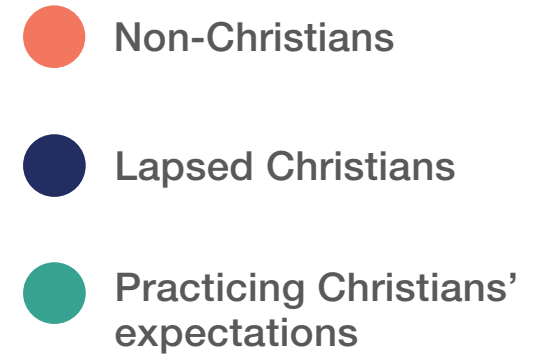
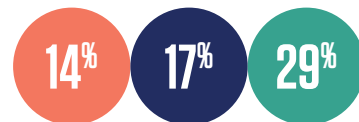
The Christians I know were more open to outsiders



The Christians I know were more open to my questions



The Christians I know cared more about me

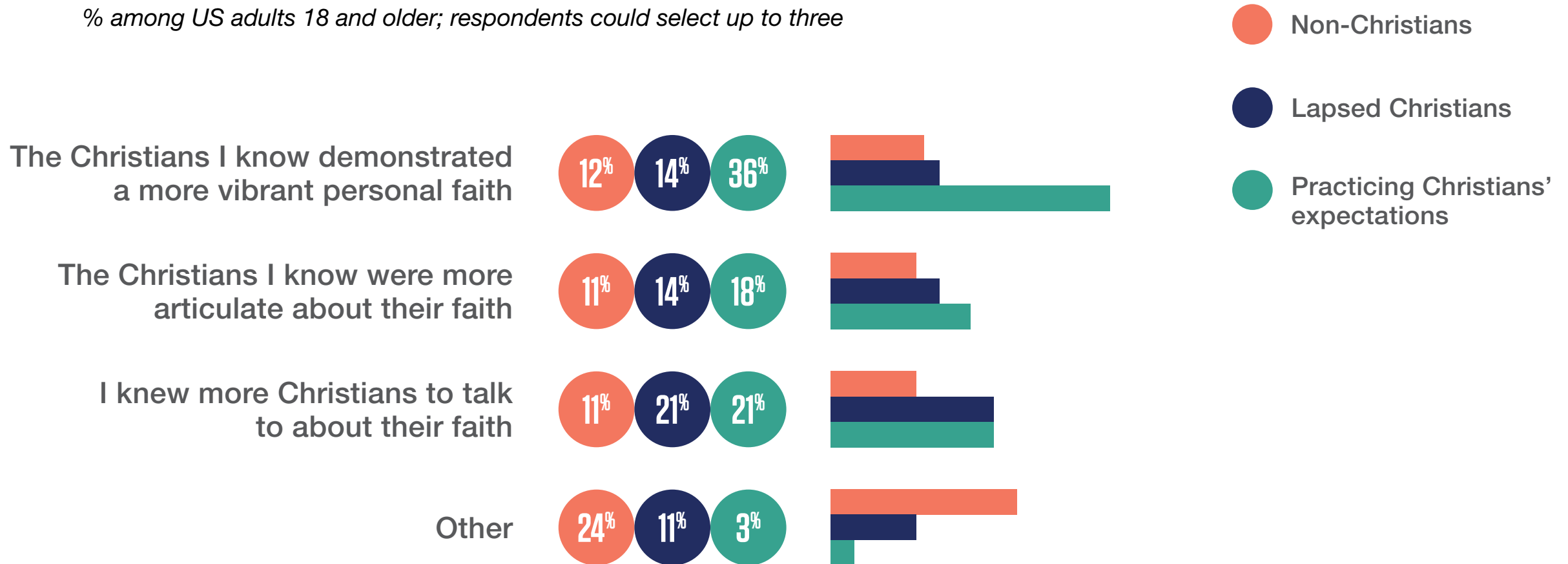


*n=942 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians and are not interested in Christianity, May 2018;  
n=781 US practicing Christians 18 and older who say non-Christians are not interested in Christianity, May 2018.*

# FACTORS THAT COULD INCREASE INTEREST IN CHRISTIANITY

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% among US adults 18 and older; respondents could select up to three

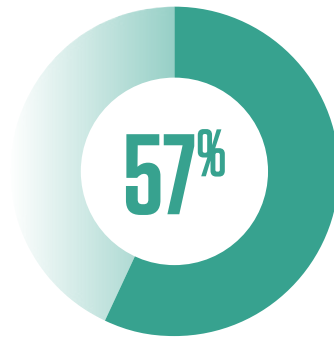


*n=942 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians and are not interested in Christianity, May 2018;  
n=781 US practicing Christians 18 and older who say non-Christians are not interested in Christianity, May 2018.*

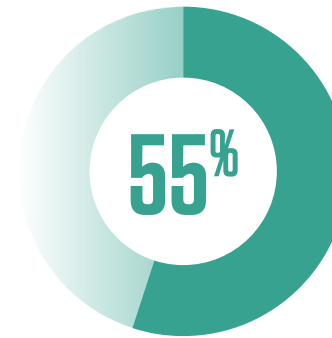
# HOW CHRISTIANS ARE MOST COMFORTABLE SHARING FAITH

% “completely comfortable” among US practicing Christians 18 and older

Listening to someone’s questions about faith



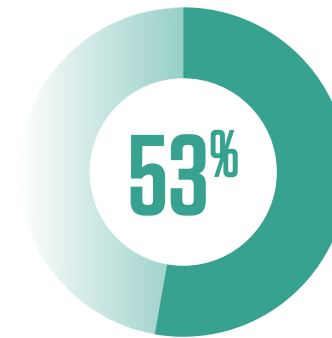
Extending hospitality to people of other faiths



Making friends with someone who practices another faith or no faith



Sharing the story of your own faith journey

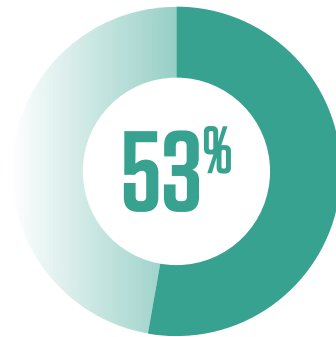


# HOW CHRISTIANS ARE MOST COMFORTABLE SHARING FAITH

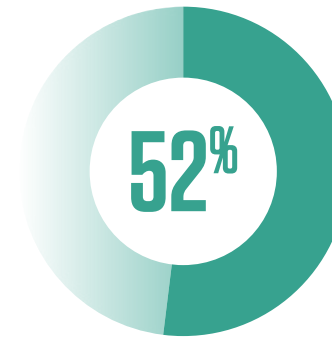
Barna

% “completely comfortable” among US practicing Christians 18 and older

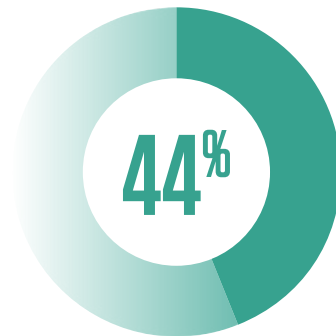
Helping someone  
of another faith  
or no faith with  
non-spiritual needs



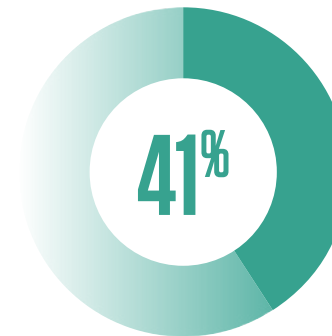
Inviting someone  
to a church service  
or outreach event



Explaining  
the reliability of  
Christianity



Asking someone  
questions about  
their own faith



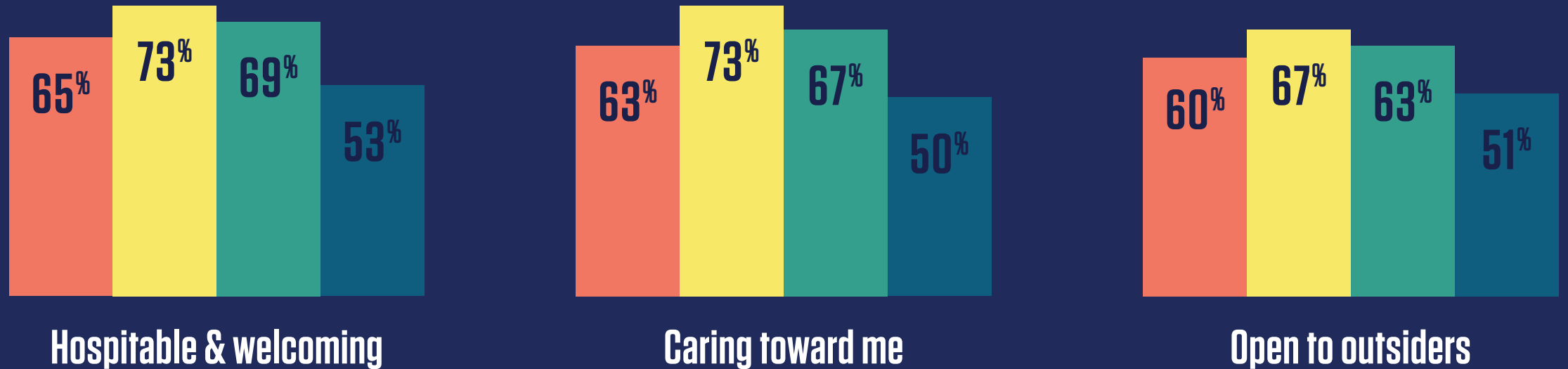
*n=992 US practicing Christians 18 and older; May 2018.*

# NON-CHRISTIANS LIKE CHRISTIANS MORE THAN CHRISTIANITY

Barna

Christianity

● All non-Christians    ● Religious non-Christians    ● Nones    ● Atheists / agnostics



*n=620 US non-Christians 18 and older; May 2018*

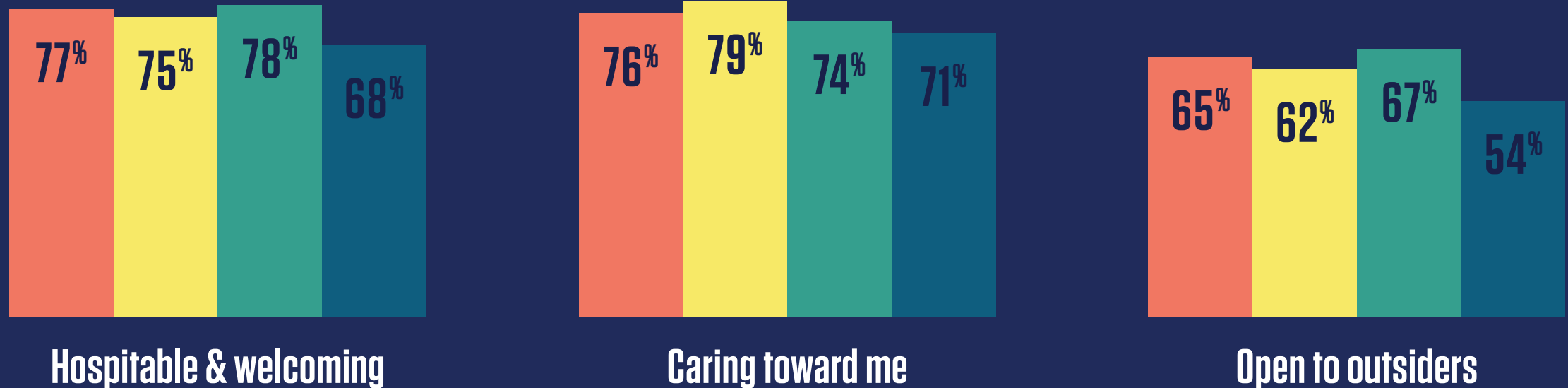


# NON-CHRISTIANS LIKE CHRISTIANS MORE THAN CHRISTIANITY

Barna

## Christians I Know

● All non-Christians    ● Religious non-Christians    ● Nones    ● Atheists / agnostics

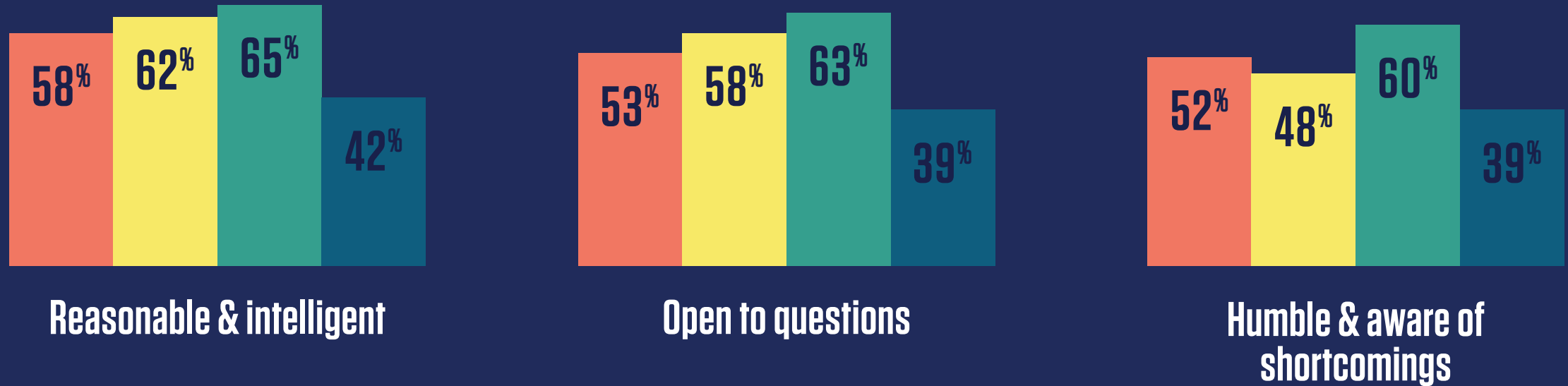


*n=620 US non-Christians 18 and older; May 2018*

# NON-CHRISTIANS LIKE CHRISTIANS MORE THAN CHRISTIANITY

## Christianity

● All non-Christians    ● Religious non-Christians    ● Nones    ● Atheists / agnostics

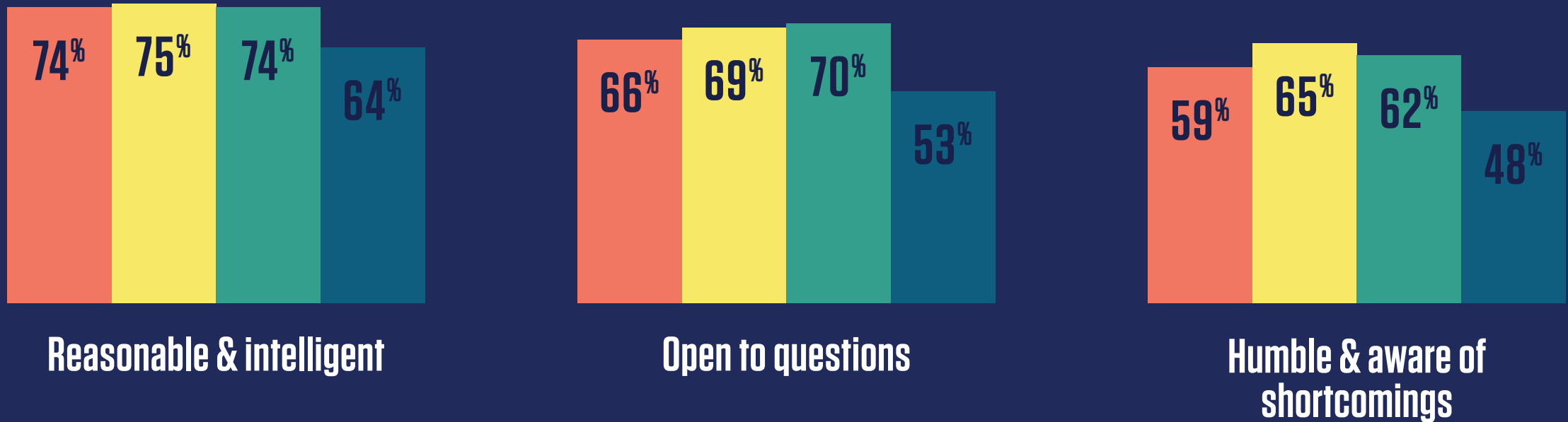


*n=620 US non-Christians 18 and older; May 2018*

# NON-CHRISTIANS LIKE CHRISTIANS MORE THAN CHRISTIANITY

## Christians I Know

● All non-Christians    ● Religious non-Christians    ● Nones    ● Atheists / agnostics

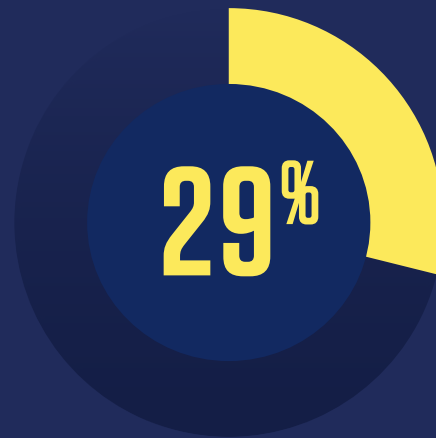
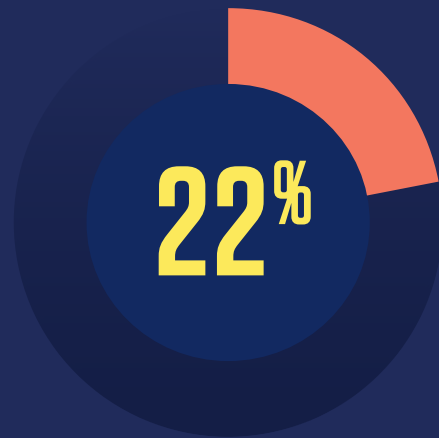


*n=620 US non-Christians 18 and older; May 2018*

# MORE THAN 1 IN 5 EXPRESSES INTEREST IN EXPLORING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

I am interested in learning more about Christianity and  
what it could mean for my life

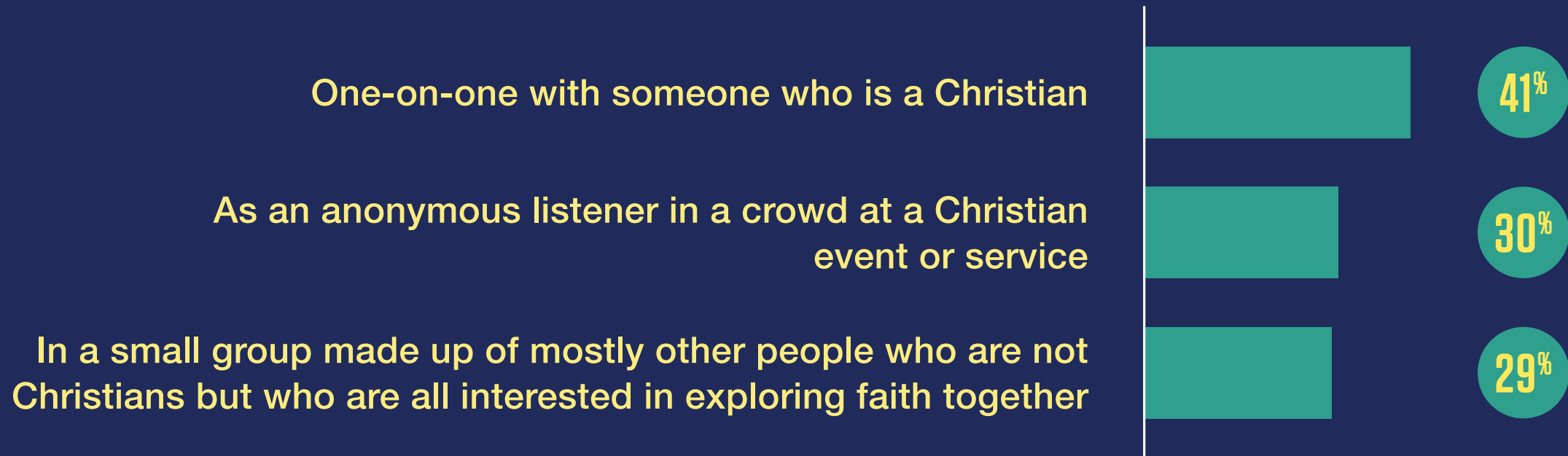
● All non-Christians    ● Religious non-Christians    ● Nones    ● Atheists / agnostics



# I WOULD MOST PREFER TO EXPLORE THE CHRISTIAN FAITH...

*% among those who are interested*

Barna



*n=620 US non-Christians 18 and older; May 2018*

# YOUNG NON-CHRISTIANS TALK ABOUT SPIRITUAL MATTERS A LOT MORE THAN OLDER ADULTS

Barna



Millennial non-Christians



All older non-Christians

70%

52%

64%

44%

67%

51%

I have had one or more conversations about my faith perspectives or beliefs with a close friend or family member of a different faith in the past year

I have had one or more conversations about my faith perspectives or beliefs with a practicing Christian in the past year

A Christian has tried to share his or her faith with me one or more times in the past year

# ...AND ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO EXPRESS PERSONAL INTEREST IN CHRISTIANITY

I am interested in learning more about Christianity and  
what it could mean for my life

● Millennial non-Christians    ● All older non-Christians



# I WOULD MOST PREFER TO EXPLORE THE CHRISTIAN FAITH...

% among those who are interested

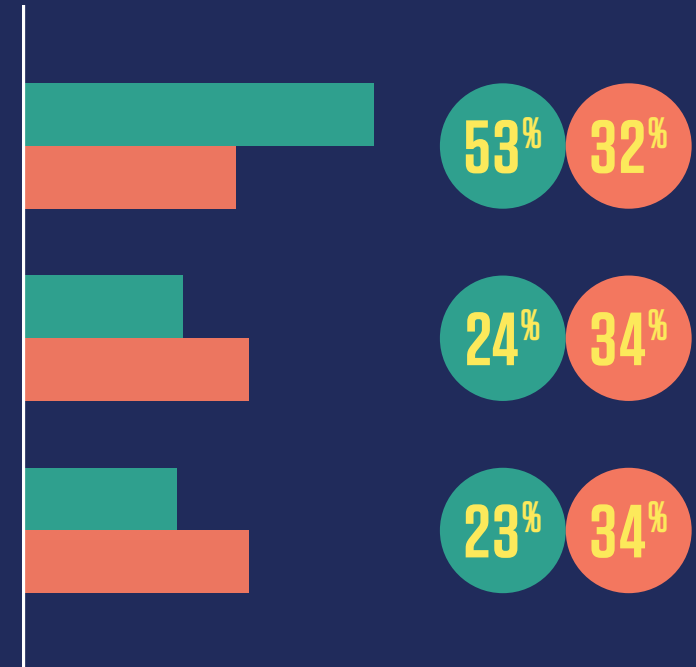
Barna

● Millennial non-Christians ● All older non-Christians

One-on-one with someone who is a Christian

As an anonymous listener in a crowd at a Christian event or service

In a small group made up of mostly other people who are not Christians but who are all interested in exploring faith together

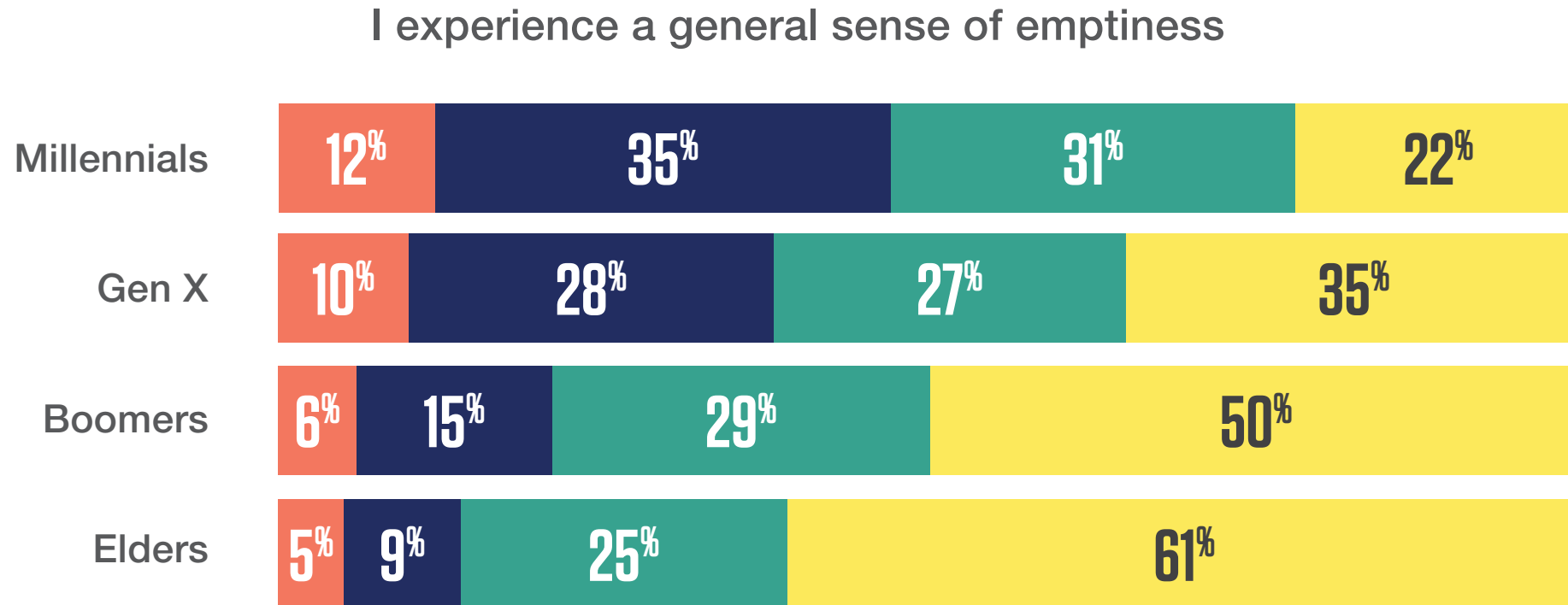




# FEELINGS OF EMPTINESS AND REJECTION, BY GENERATION

% among US non-Christians and lapsed Christians

● Agree strongly   ● Agree somewhat   ● Disagree somewhat   ● Disagree strongly



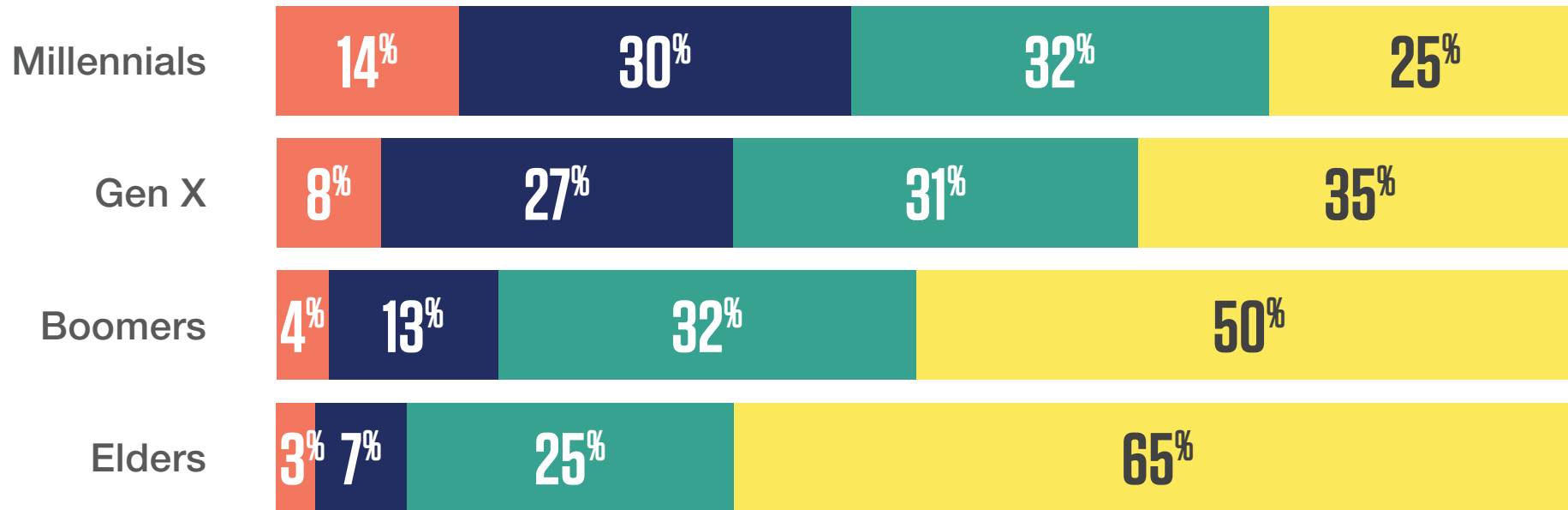
*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# FEELINGS OF EMPTINESS AND REJECTION, BY GENERATION

% among US non-Christians and lapsed Christians

● Agree strongly    ● Agree somewhat    ● Disagree somewhat    ● Disagree strongly

I often feel rejected

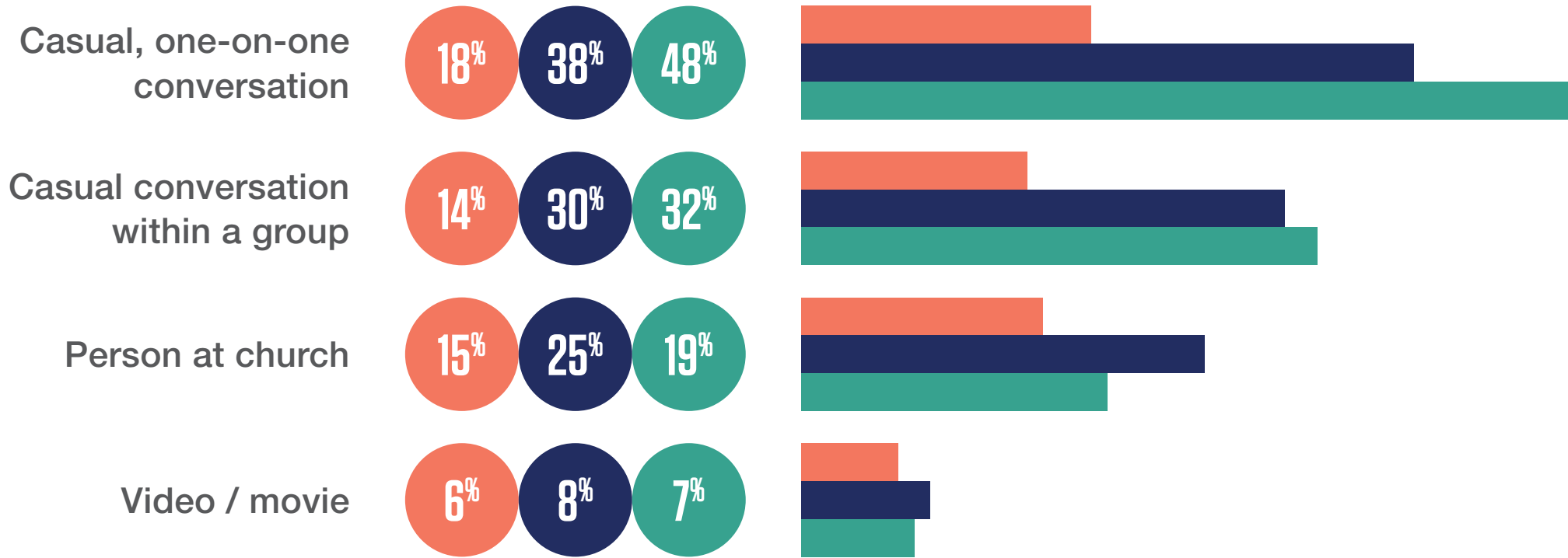


*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# HOW PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE FAITH, BY NUMBER OF FAITH CONVERSATIONS IN THE PAST YEAR

*% strongly + somewhat agree among US adults*

None 1 to 5 6 or more

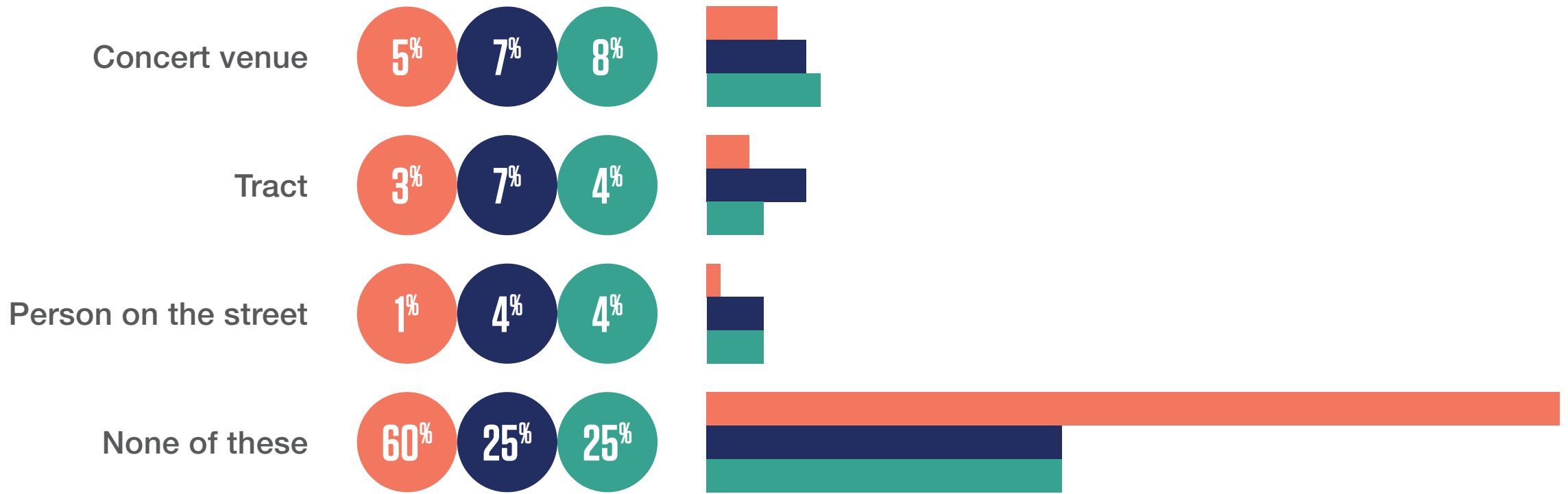


*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# HOW PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE FAITH, BY NUMBER OF FAITH CONVERSATIONS IN THE PAST YEAR

*% strongly + somewhat agree among US adults*

● None ● 1 to 5 ● 6 or more



*n=1,001 US adults 18 and older who are not practicing Christians; May 2018.*

# PEOPLE'S DEEP LONGINGS

Barna

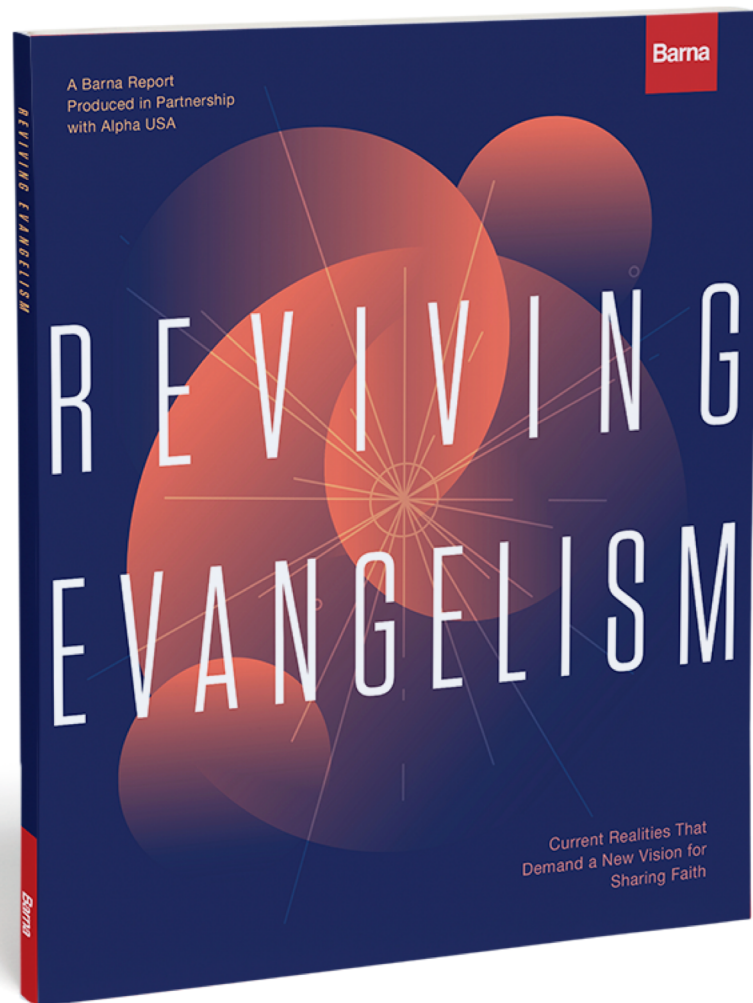
**Searching for Identity:** *Who am I, really?*

**Fighting Anxiety:** *How should I live in today's world?*

**Experiencing Loneliness:** *Am I loved?*

**Harnessing Ambition:** *What's my purpose?*

**Feeling Entitled:** *What matters beyond me?*



# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

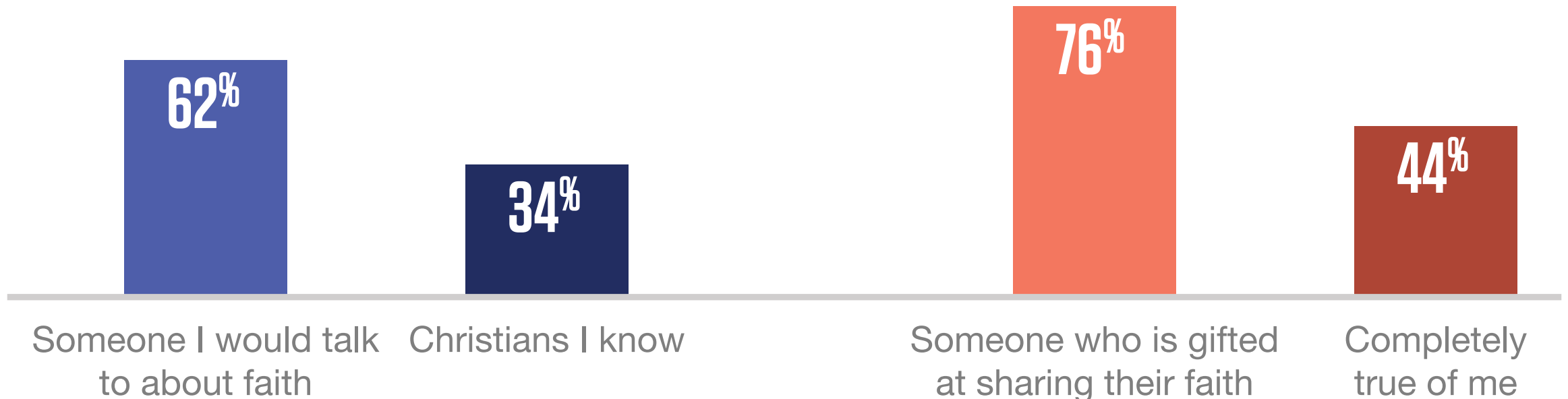
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Listens without judgment

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Does not force a conclusion

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*



# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

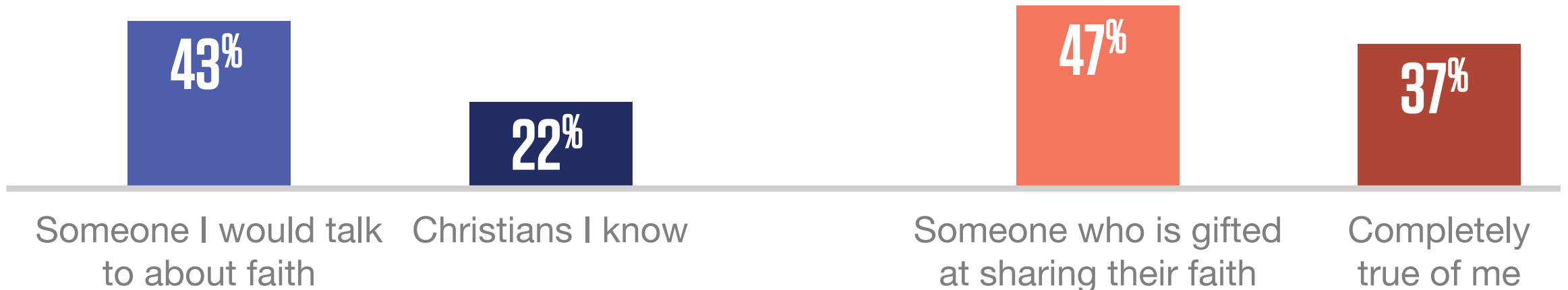
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Allows others to draw their own conclusions

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

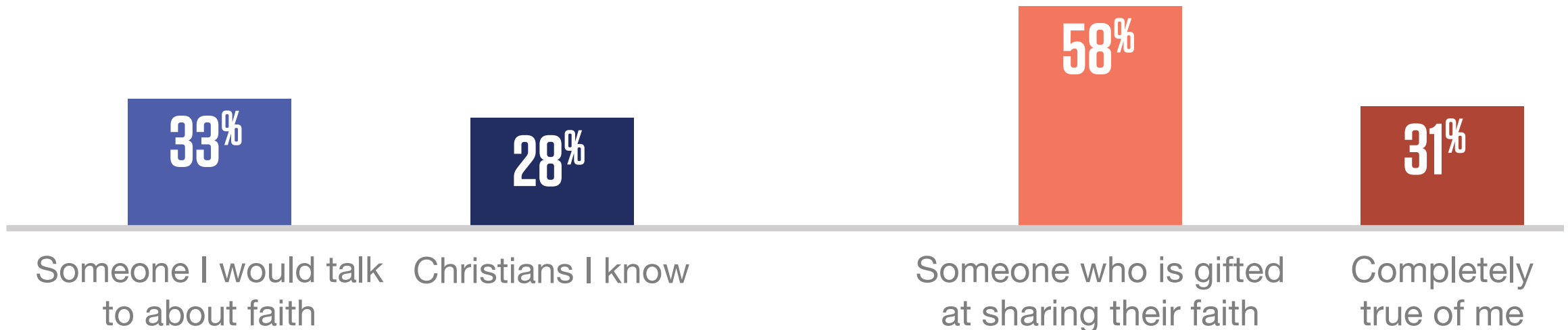
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Confident in sharing their own perspective

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

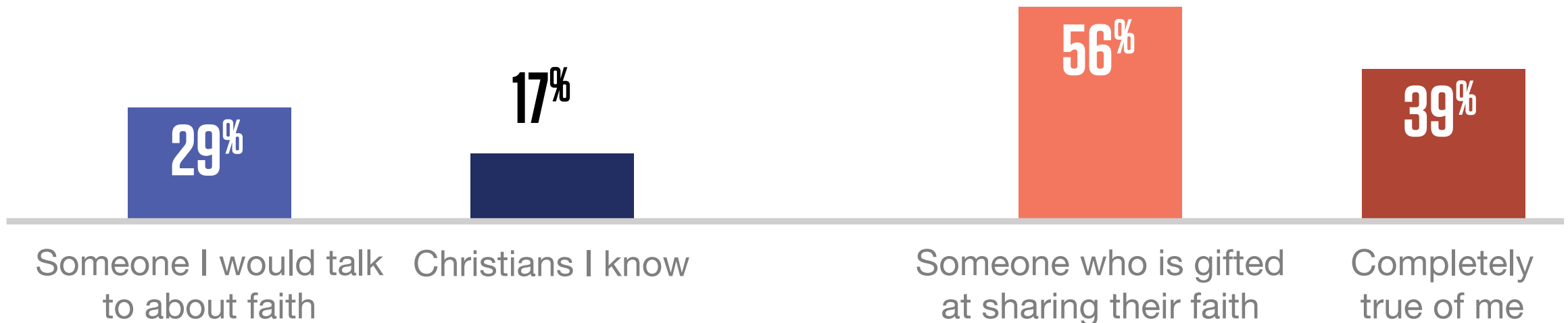
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Demonstrates interest in other people's story or life

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Good at asking questions

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Focused on the details of questions

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

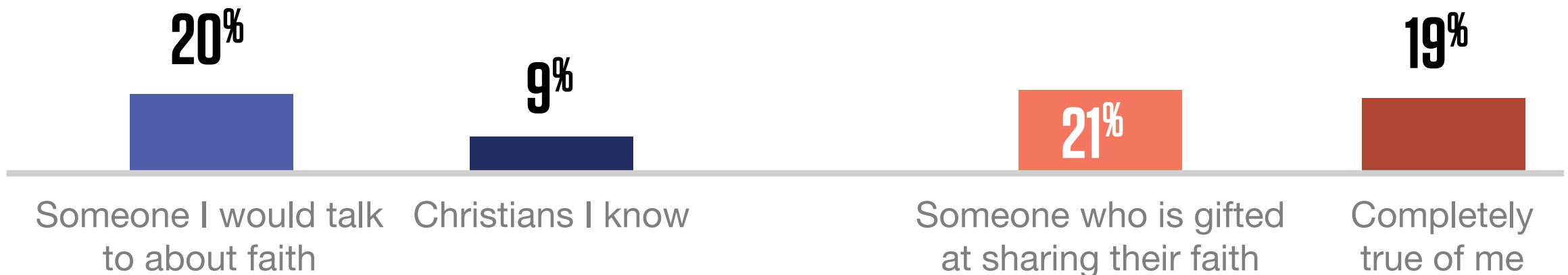
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Aware of the inconsistencies in their own perspective

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

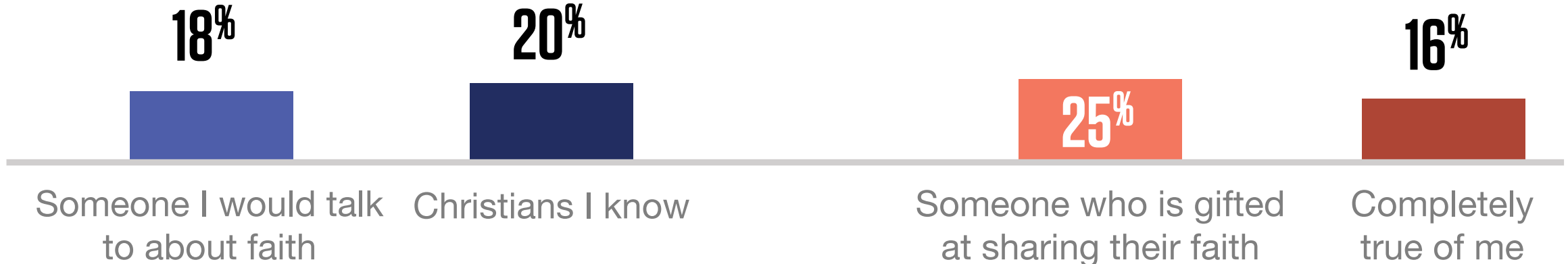
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Knows the story of the person they are sharing their faith with

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

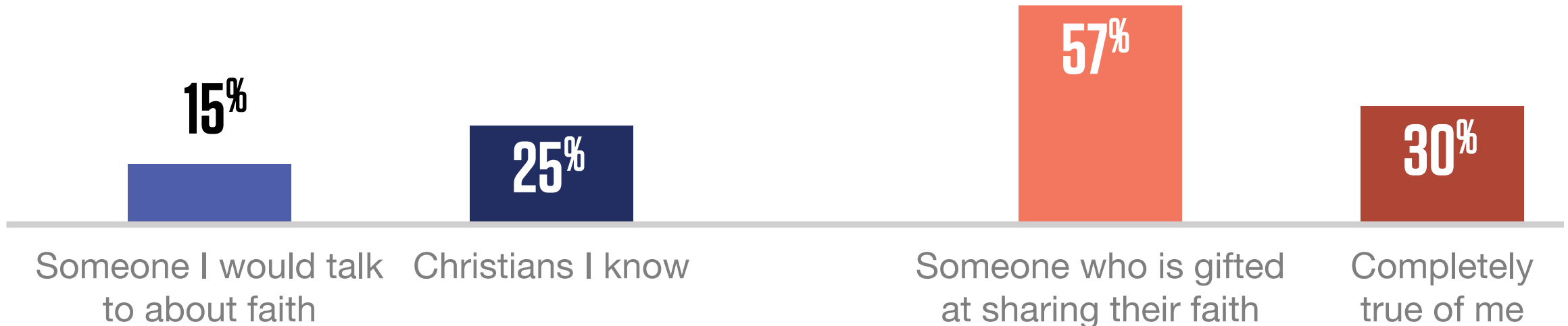
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Exhibits a vibrant faith of their own

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*



# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

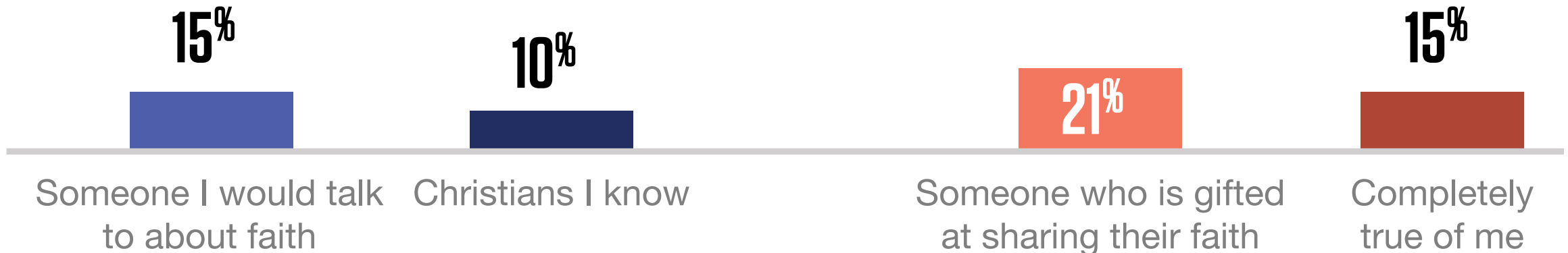
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Good at debating topics

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

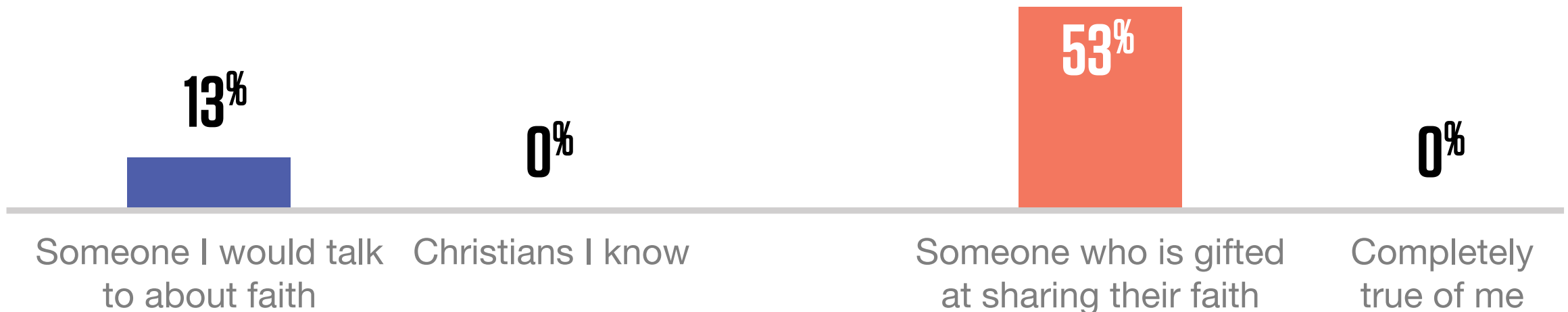
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Helps others have a spiritual experience of God for themselves

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

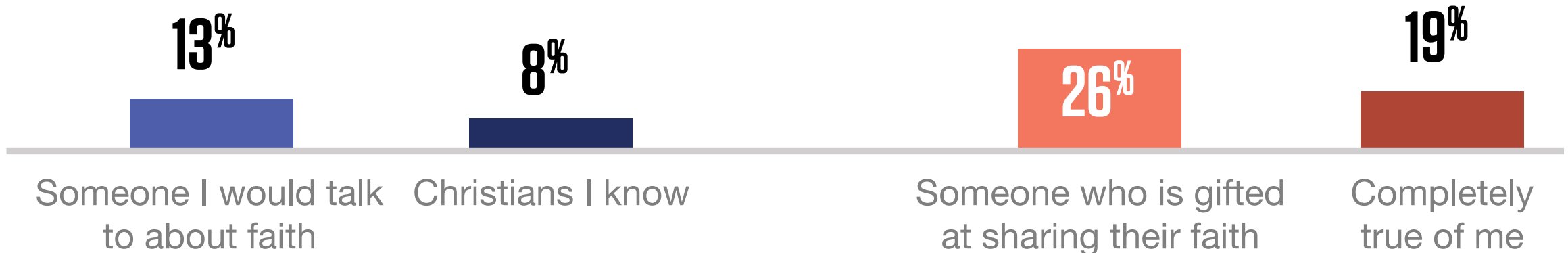
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Focused on the emotions behind questions

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

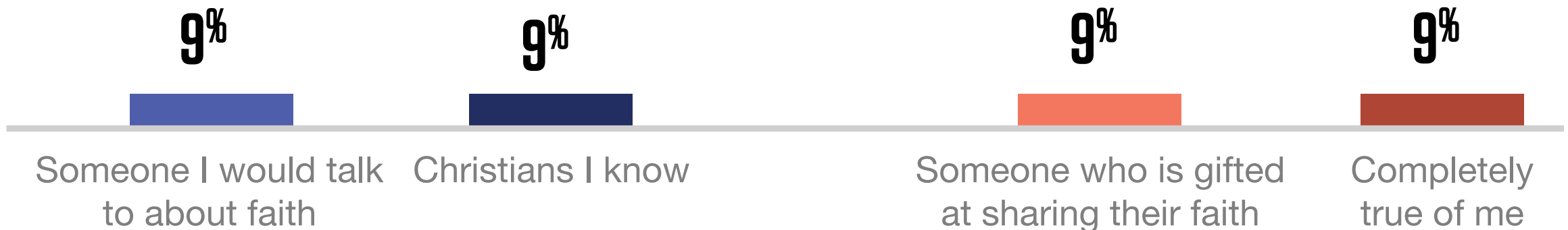
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Quick to point out inconsistencies in others' perspectives

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

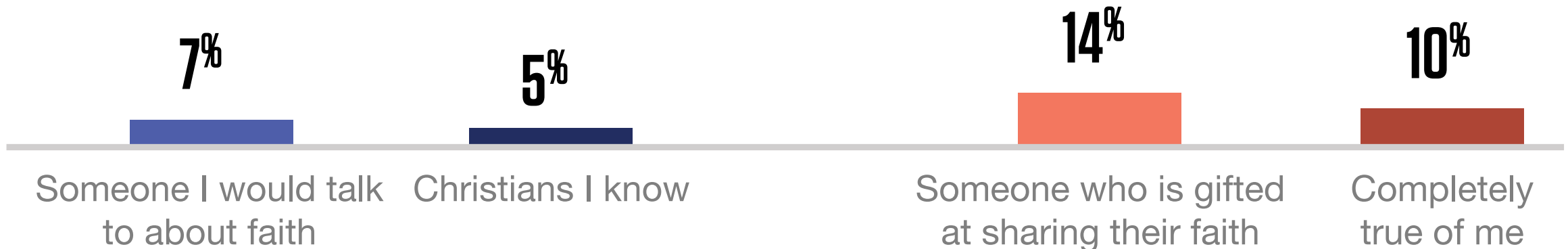
Barna

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Has all of the answers to questions about faith

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*

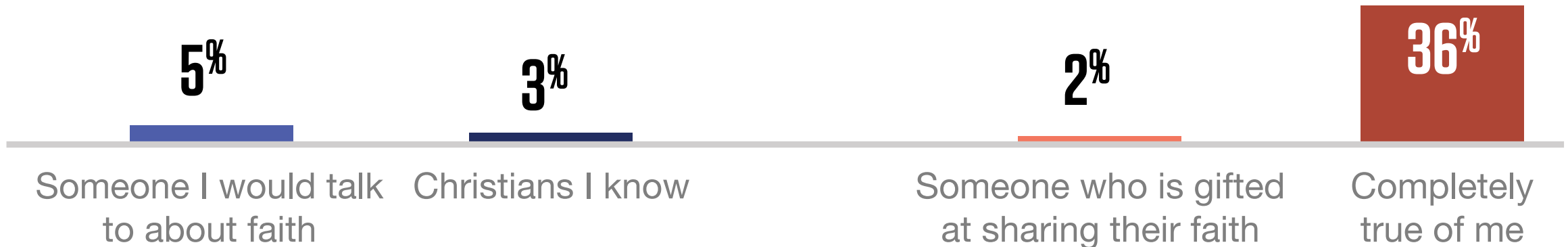
# QUALITIES OF A GOOD PERSON TO TALK WITH ABOUT FAITH

*% among US adults; respondents could select all that apply.*

## Other

Non-Christians / lapsed Christians

Practicing Christians



*n=1,993 US adults 18 and older, May 2018.*



For more information about this study and to see the complete findings, check out our 2019 report:

***Reviving Evangelism***

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



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# REVIVING EVANGELISM

Current Realities That Demand a New Vision for Sharing Faith