

A Barna Report Produced in Partnership with
Biblica, World Vision and Alpha

Barna



The Open Generation

A Global Teens Study

Philippines

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A Preface from the Partners

Listening is a posture that is deeply embedded in the Christian tradition and originally modeled for us by Jesus himself. When we dig deep into the communication style of Jesus in the gospels, we find that he listened more than he talked. Jesus was interested to know what people thought and how they felt. He listened to people who agreed with him, and people who didn't. He listened to people who seemed to have things together, and to people whose lives were in pieces.

In your work with teenagers and young people today, how are you following Jesus' lead?

In 2021, Alpha, Biblica and World Vision came alongside Barna Group—as well as a collective of other organizational partners including the Association of Christian Schools International, Bible Study Fellowship, Christ In Youth and Christian Vision—to *listen* to the perspectives of young people in the emerging generation. Our desire is to help local churches, schools and youth ministries around the world love and lead young people well. Specifically, in a digital, questioning, experiential age, we want to hear how teens perceive Jesus, the Bible and social action.

This global research on teenagers shows that, overall, this generation is open and inclusive, seeking truth, authenticity and change. Interconnected and optimistic, today's teens represent and welcome different perspectives, different faiths and different cultures. They are deeply passionate about addressing injustice in our world. Given all of this,

there is a current of curiosity about both Jesus and the Bible, and how they connect to the purpose and pain of everyday people.

What does this mean for the Church, youth groups and Christian leaders?

What does this mean for *your* work?

As you know well, there are local nuances to the contexts, cultures, opportunities and obstacles that surround today's teens. Our organizations work all over the world, and we are grateful that this research is able to reach into 26 countries. This allows the voice of the open generation to be heard on a national level. We hope reports like this one, focused on the findings specific to the Philippines, produce personal and practical next steps for you and your ministry.

Together, we have contributed to this study in order to serve teens and love them well. We hope *The Open Generation* equips and empowers Christian leaders to better understand teens and to facilitate deeper connections with young people. The study supports leaders across the world who want to create something not just *for* teenagers but *with* teenagers: to come alongside this generation, collaborate with them, guide and learn from them.



World Vision



Bible Study Fellowship



Meet the Open Generation

An Introduction to Barna's Global Study of Teenagers

Thanks to two major global studies in recent years, Barna Group has a compelling impression of the trajectory of young people today. We'll open this report about *The Open Generation* in the Philippines with a quick overview.

In 2018 and 2019, in partnership with World Vision, we worked on a study of young adults (ages 18 to 35) in 25 countries. At the time, it was Barna's largest study and a unique international effort to understand emerging adults. It revealed that young adults in this age range (which our U.S. research typically refers to as Millennials and the leading edge of Gen Z) contend with strong currents of anxiety, loneliness and skepticism. We highlighted areas of need and opportunities for churches to better lead and support young adults.

Fast-forward to 2021 and 2022. Amid a pandemic and with the partnership of a collective of organizations including Alpha, Biblica and World Vision (as well as the support of partners at the Association of Christian Schools International, Bible Study Fellowship, Christ In Youth and Christian Vision), we have broadened the scope of our research again, this time to 25,000+ interviews, 26 countries and a slightly younger cohort: teenagers ages 13 to 17. This report presents a summary

of the findings specific to the Philippines. The goal is to advance the understanding of teens globally—their identity, values and views—and to offer a picture of the global Church's relationship to a rising generation.

Along the way, we have ended up observing some remarkable differences between teenagers today and the young adults we heard from just a few years ago. Chief among these differences is teens' openness. As we have explored the profile that emerges from the aggregated data, we have used words like "optimistic," "engaged," "malleable," "curious," "authentic," "inclusive" and "collaborative." From a global vantage point, there is a lightness of being among today's teens that is less common among young adults even just a few years ahead of them. This is just one reason we're referring to them as "the open generation."

Granted, no matter what context a teen lives in, they are still in early stages of the development of their ideas and character. Their appealing openness is, on some level, a reflection of youth. But that fact does not diminish the reality of their overall optimism, and these qualities emerge despite this study having been conducted during a time when teens were living through a global pandemic.

What might come of their hope, their desire to make a difference and their leaning into goodness?

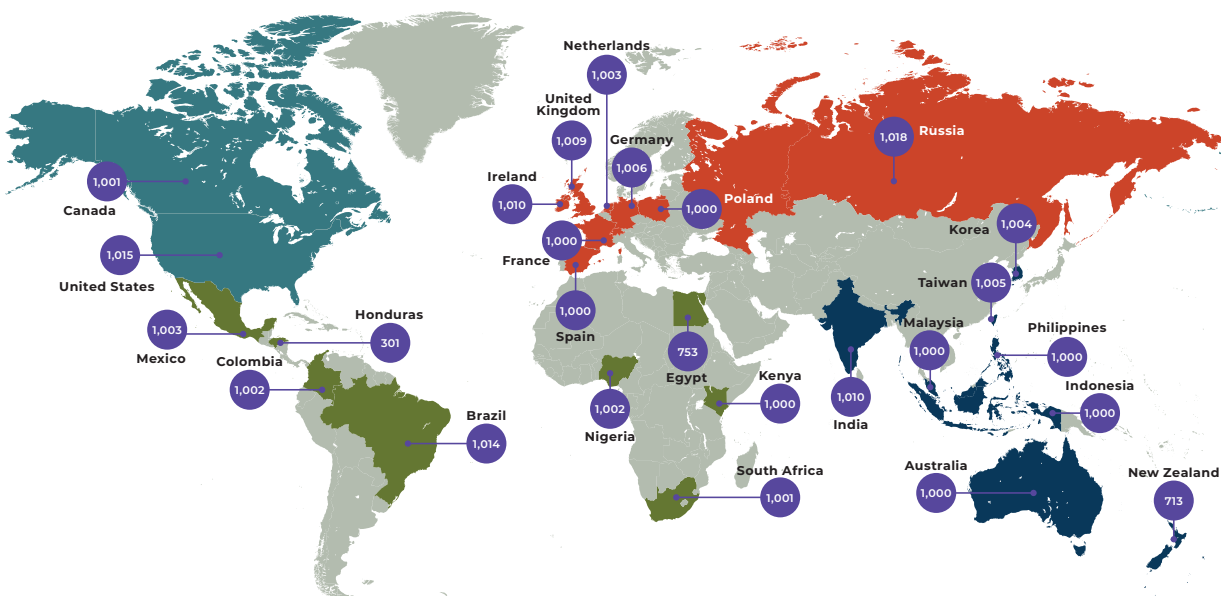
Will certain milestones, influences or experiences soon dampen their enthusiasm—presenting some of the challenges that face their not-so-much older peers?

This research offers an emotional portrait of a connected, digitally enabled generation—especially as it relates to the sacred text, central character and expression of the Christian faith. We see that teens are open to **Jesus**, the **Bible**

and **justice**. Further, their commitments to these three things are interwoven and increase together. Regardless of how “churched” a nation or region may be, there is much to learn from these key elements of the Christian faith.

In more ways than one, teenagers are on the cusp. *The Open Generation* project urges that Christians around the world come alongside teenagers to help them make the most of these formative years.

This report represents a summary of the findings specific to the Philippines



Sample sizes for each country included in the study.

Teens in the Philippines: A Local Snapshot

Many young people now have the shared experience of a fast-paced, more-connected-than-ever, always-changing world. Despite these common threads, teens around the world also face issues that are unique to their place and position in the world.

Though *The Open Generation* does not offer a comprehensive view of teenage life in any one country—including the Philippines—it points to local forces and cultural climates that influence how teens identify and interact.

Faith

As Barna Group is experienced in studying the intersection of faith and culture, and as this project aims to help leaders and educators understand the faith of teens in their context, we'll often look at the data through the lens of faith affiliation or practice.

The Philippines is a majority Christian country. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, roughly 88 percent of the nation is Christian.¹ According to Barna data, over nine in 10 teens in the nation (97%) report being Christian (78% Catholic and 19% Protestant).

Faith Profile of Teens in the Philippines

● Christian ● Other faith ● No faith



Emotions

In matters of emotional health and security, teens in the Philippines stand out against their global peers, in primarily positive respects. They are significantly more likely to feel optimistic about the future, deeply cared for by those around them and that someone believes in them. They are also slightly less likely to report feeling anxious about important decisions, a need to be perfect, or lonely and isolated from others. When it comes to positive indicators of emotional health, their emotional profile is generally more pronounced than the global average.

Community

Teens in the Philippines are equally as likely as global teens on average to report community satisfaction. However, they are more likely to feel it is important to be a part of their community and have confidence that they will be a part of it for a long time. Despite this, they could use a boost in feeling like they have positive influence or that their values are shared within their community.

1. Philippine Statistics Authority (website), accessed January 12, 2023, <https://psa.gov.ph/>.

● Catholic ● Protestant



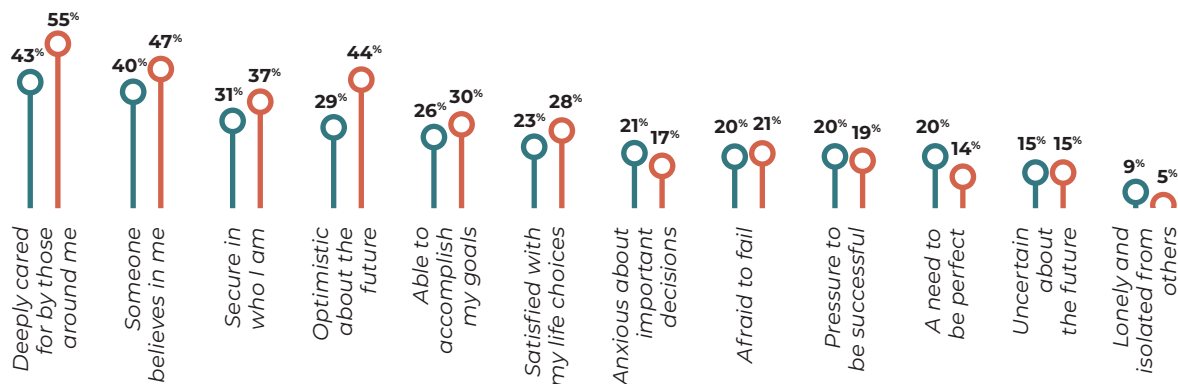
n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

The Emotional Climate of Teens in Philippines

How often do you feel each of the following?

% “always”

● Global ● Philippines



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

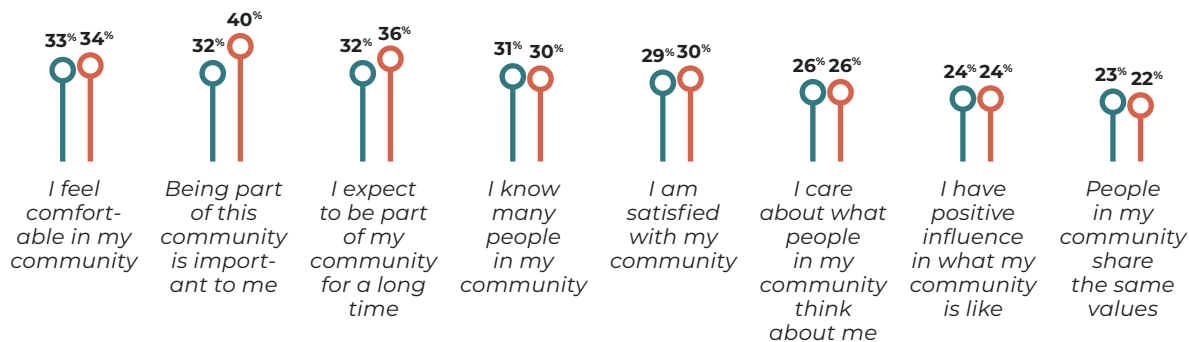
Community Among Teens in Philippines

Still thinking about your community, how true are the following statements?

Base: teens who are part of a community

% “very true”

● Global ● Philippines



n=998 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 2021; *n*=24,449 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

1. How Teens in the Philippines Relate to Jesus

“Who Do Teens Say That I Am?”

Beliefs about Jesus vary among teens, on a global scale and at the national level.

Globally, teens believe Christ represents love, hope, care, generosity and trustworthiness. Christian teens in the Philippines agree even more emphatically with these views and describe Christ in agreeable and comforting terms. They are far more likely to describe him as trustworthy, rising 14 points ahead of Christian teens globally on this point (69% vs. 55%). Christian teens in the Philippines are also more likely than Christian teens worldwide to say Jesus can be communicated with, that he wants to have a personal relationship with people, that he was a miracle worker, that he was crucified and that he was God in human form.

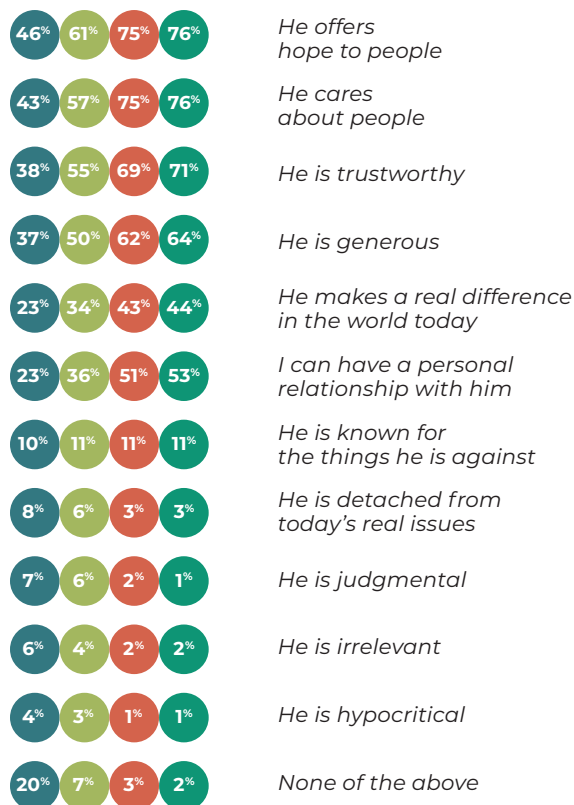
Despite their tendency to be more certain of some aspects of Jesus than their Christian peers worldwide, there is room for a greater understanding of Jesus’s historicity or his return; Filipino Christian teens are less likely than their Christian peers globally to say that Jesus was a real person, that he will return one day or that he advocated for justice. This hints at a “partial gospel” that is commonplace among teens, even Christian teens, globally.

There is contrast between Catholic and Protestant teens’ views of Jesus, particularly about Christ’s deity. Catholic teens, the majority of

Which of the following do you, personally, believe about Jesus?

Select all that apply.

● Global ● Global Christians
● Philippines ● Filipino Christians



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

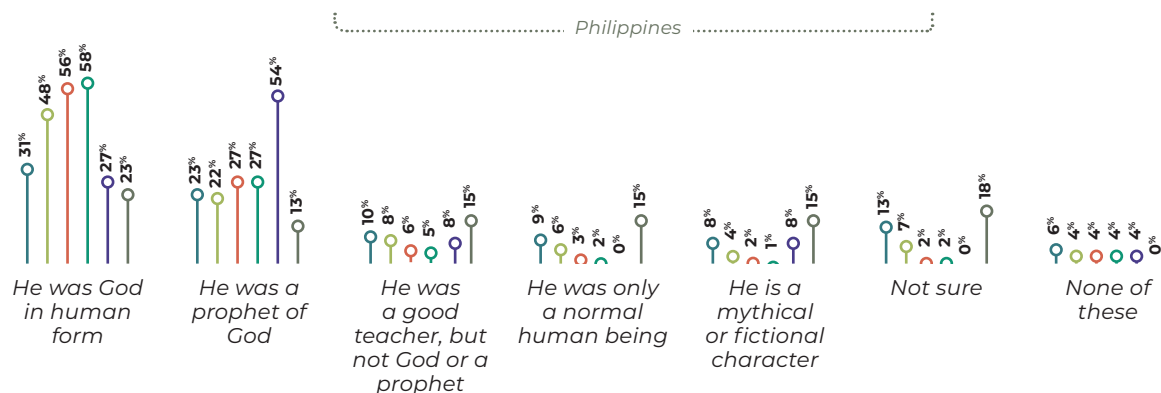
Christian teens in the Philippines, are more likely than Protestant Filipino teens to regard Jesus as a prophet of God (31% vs. 14%). Protestant teens, on

the other hand, are more likely to believe Jesus was God in human form, with nearly two in three (65% vs. 56% Catholic) stating this.

Which of the following best describes your understanding of who Jesus Christ is?

Select one.

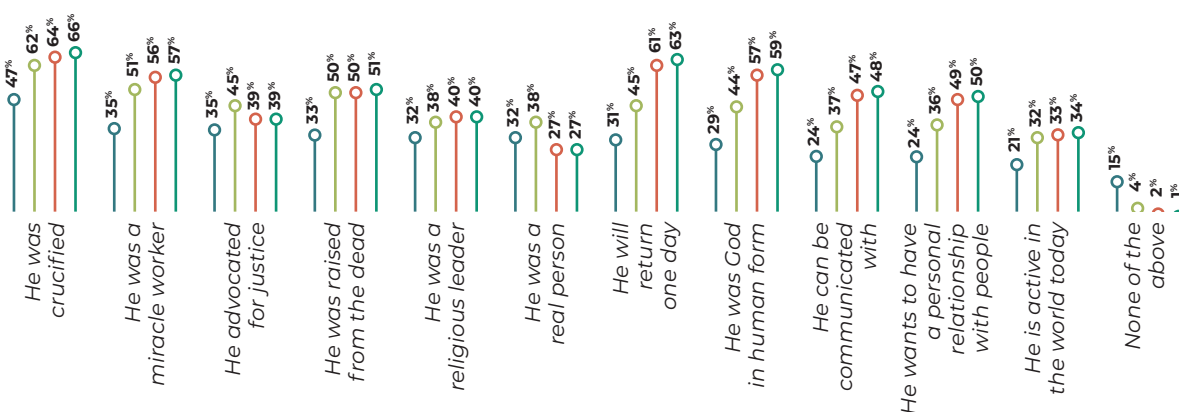
● Global ● Global Christians ● Philippines ● Christian ● Other faith ● No faith



Thinking about Jesus, which of the following are true?

Select the statements you believe are true.

● Global ● Global Christians ● Philippines ● Filipino Christians



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

Knowing & Growing with Jesus

Having looked at teens' perceptions of Jesus, we'll now focus on their connections to him.

When teens identify as a Christian, that doesn't mean they have made a personal commitment to follow Jesus. Barna has long made the distinction between nominal Christians and practicing Christians in its research, which is especially important in areas that may be culturally Christian. We can also assume that some teens are young enough that they identify with the religion of their community or upbringing without having yet made deeply personal decisions around that faith.

To sharpen our analysis of Christianity among teens, Barna developed a segmentation based on a personal commitment to follow Jesus.

Commitment to Jesus

- Committed Christians
- Nominal Christians
- All others

Global



Philippines



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

- **COMMITTED CHRISTIAN** teens self-identify as Christian and say they have made a personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ
- **NOMINAL CHRISTIAN** teens self-identify as Christian but have not made a personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ
- **ALL OTHER** teens do not identify as Christian and / or are unsure about who Jesus is

In the Philippines, the number of committed Christian teens rises dramatically to over half (51%), and just over two in five are nominal Christians (43%), also exceeding the global proportion (30%). Broken down by denomination, 49 percent of Catholic teens in the Philippines and 72 percent of Protestant teens are categorized as committed Christians.

In the Philippines, committed Christian teens are a majority who often have meaningful experiences of faith. For Filipino teens, the reported benefits of this globally rare relationship with Jesus are much more pronounced.

Globally, three-quarters of committed Christian teens strongly agree their connection to Jesus brings them joy and satisfaction. The same group in the Philippines is experiencing this joy deeply; there is a six-point increase in the percentage of committed Christian teens who agree strongly. Notably though, nominal Christian teens in the Philippines are nearly twice as likely as nominal Christian teens globally to say that whatever relationship they have with Jesus is satisfying.

The strong majority of committed Christian

teens, globally and in the Philippines, strongly agrees that they find relevance in what Jesus has to say. Nominal Christian teens in the Philippines are roughly twice as likely as their global counterparts to agree strongly that Jesus speaks to them in a way that is relevant to their life. Overall, these nominally Christian Filipino teens experience more certainty than nominal Christian teens globally about

whether Jesus offers them joy or relevant wisdom; few say “I am not sure.”

Some discipleship opportunities present themselves in this data. With a generally positive view of Jesus and his personal relevance, Filipino teens who are not currently committed Christians are likely still open to learning more about following Jesus—and have plenty of faithful peers to join them.

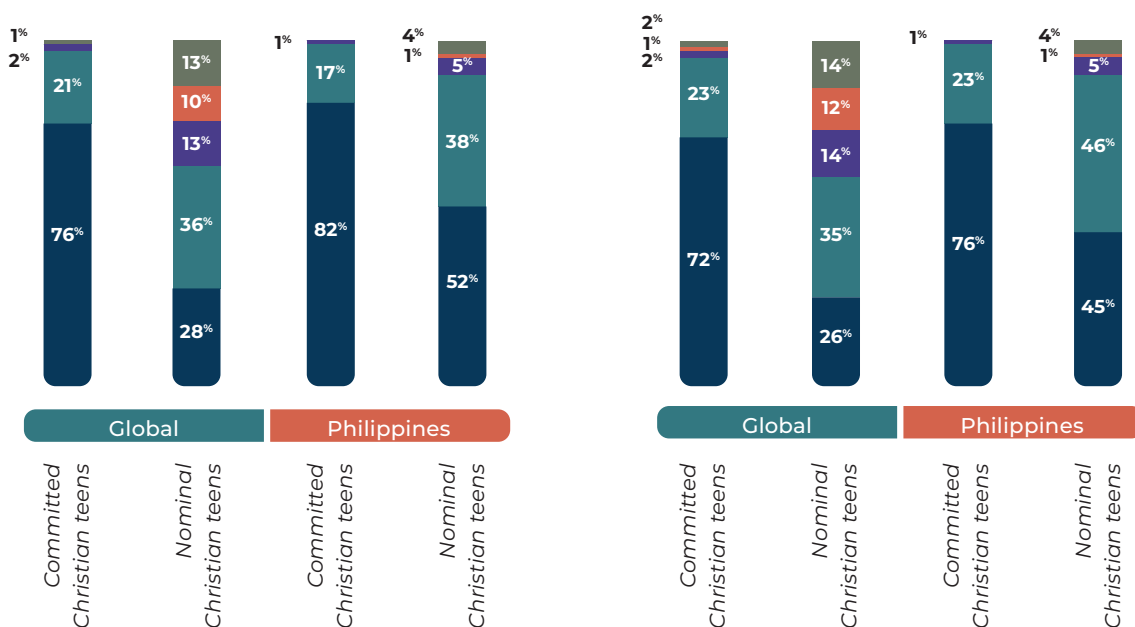
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Base: Christians

“My relationship with Jesus brings me deep joy and satisfaction”

“Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life”

● Agree strongly ● Agree somewhat ● Disagree somewhat ● Disagree strongly ● I am not sure



n=935 teens in Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=13,282 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

A Learning Journey with Jesus

Curiosity about Jesus is widespread in the open generation. Teens in the Philippines, however, are even more intrigued than their global peers, with 95 percent being at least somewhat motivated to keep learning about Jesus throughout their lives.

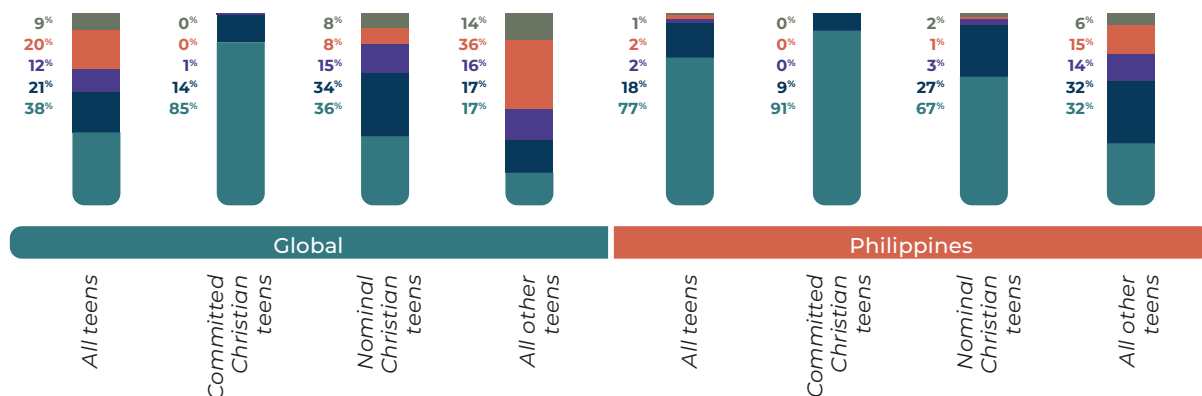
Teens' personal commitment to follow Jesus goes hand in hand with their motivation to study him. Globally, 85 percent of committed Christian teens are very motivated to continue learning about him, compared to about one-third of nominal Christian teens. In the Philippines, while a gap persists between committed and nominal Christian teens, this gap narrows considerably, and motivation rises overall.

Filipino teens may place a significant amount of trust in religious texts and community and in their households to teach them about Jesus. Teens are more likely to report looking to these sources than to social media, the Internet, their friends or influencers.

Digging into their top trusted sources, however, we find multiple opportunities for instruction about Jesus. Beyond the Bible, committed Christian teens in the Philippines turn to clergy, Christians, other church leaders and then to themselves with their curiosity about Jesus. Nominal Christian teens are as likely to turn to a family member as they are to clergy.

Throughout the rest of your life, how motivated are you to continue learning more about Jesus Christ?

Very motivated Somewhat motivated Somewhat unmotivated
Not at all motivated Not sure



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

Open-Ended: Takeaways & Questions to Help You Think Through the Research

How can the Church embody the merciful and compassionate Jesus teens are drawn to? How could this help teens grow in their spiritual life and practice?

JUN CRUZ: The head knowledge about Jesus our young people receive from their schools and Sunday services is valuable. But the turning or pivotal point is the encounter of the person of Jesus. We have so many stories of young people, and their points of encounter are varied. But we know that it was by sheer grace that Jesus met them where they are. The love of Jesus is a saving love. He meets us where we are and saves us from the circumstances we are in. Therefore, we must provide opportunities for young people to meet Jesus.

FATHER RO ATILANO: Teens admire Jesus for his compassion, forgiveness and care of others for many possible reasons.

- First, this is their personal experience with Jesus in prayer—a God who is loving and compassionate to them—or maybe their innermost desire and goal in their personal relationship with Jesus.
- Second, these are the qualities they wish to have as their own—they also wish to be compassionate, forgiving and caring for others.
- Third, they admire Jesus for these qualities because their experience of the world is the opposite, a world that is not compassionate, forgiving and caring. Jesus has become the perfect model and answer to their questions.

What does it look like to disciple teens so they enter into a dynamic, present, relevant relationship with Jesus? How can liturgies and traditions become more than a cultural or nominal activity for teens?

CRUZ: How do you bring those in children's formation to a teenagers' program and then to a young adult program without them falling into the cracks? In our community, we call it a "youth bridge." The youth workers, the parents and the whole community work together to understand where the children are and how to "accompany" them along their transitions in life. Pastoral accompaniment is something every church should design for their own children.

This report features insights from:



Jun Cruz

President of Sangguniang
Laiko ng Pilipinas



Joe Bonifacio

Campus pastor & online
content creator



Fr. Ro Atilano, SJ

Head of Ateneo de Manila
University junior high school
& senior high school
campus ministry

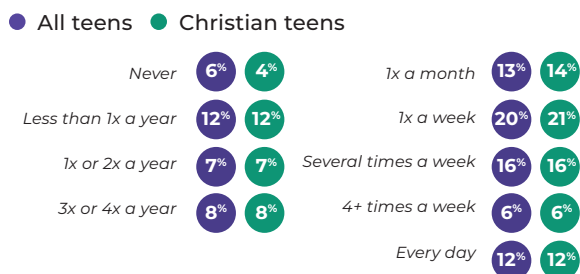
2. How Teens in the Philippines View the Bible

The Presence of the Bible

Overall, 91 percent of teens in the Philippines—including 93 percent of Christian teens—say their household owns a Christian Bible. Only around one in 20 teens in the Philippines (6%) never uses a Bible (which the survey defined as reading, listening, watching, praying with or using Bible text or content in any form), while more than half of Christian teens interact with scripture weekly.

For the most part, Christian teens in the Philippines use the Bible by reading it in print (67% in the past year). Reading Bible content on the Internet is the next most-common use, with 53 percent of Christian teens saying they've done so in the past year. Just over two in five have heard the Bible read in a church worship service or mass. Roughly one-third of Christian teens has used a Bible app on a smartphone or tablet (38%) or has searched for Bible content on a smartphone or cellphone (33%) during this same period.

Bible Use Among Teens in Philippines



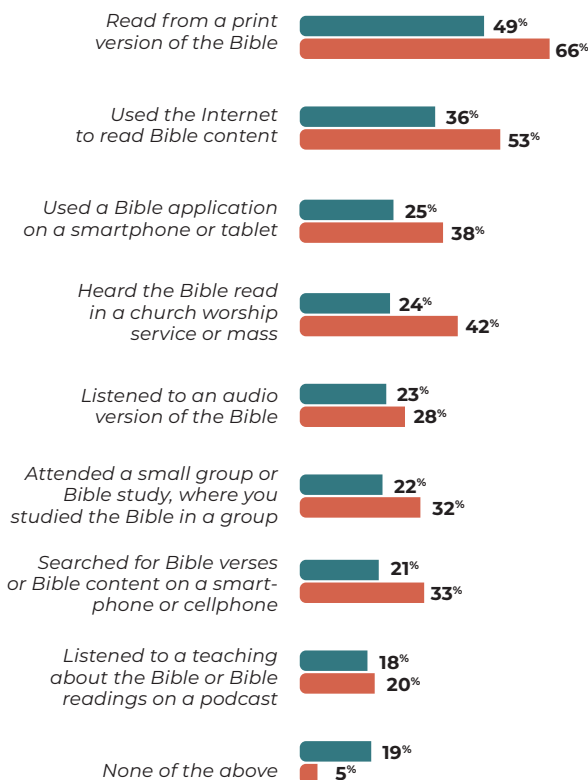
n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

These days, the Christian Bible is available and used in different formats. Have you used any of these versions in the past year?

Select all that apply.

Base: Bible users / owners or Christians

● Global ● Philippines



n=982 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021;

n=18,118 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

What Is the Bible?

The Bible is seen as significant and sacred to the plurality of Filipino teens. This is typical of majority-Christian countries and reflects a fundamental understanding of the Bible.

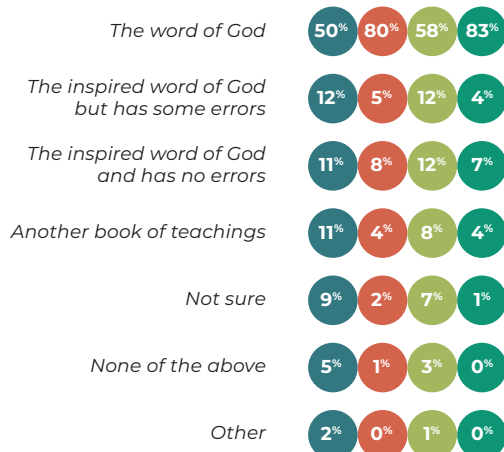
Teens in the Philippines express less skepticism toward the Bible than do teens globally; they are 30 percentage points more likely than teens worldwide to say the Bible is the word of God. In a similar disparity, Filipino Christian teens are significantly more likely than Christian teens worldwide to affirm this view of the Bible. Meanwhile,

“The Christian Bible is ...”

Which of the following statements comes closest to describing what you believe about the Christian Bible?

Base: Bible users / owners or Christians

● Global ● Philippines
● Global Christians ● Filipino Christians



Filipino teens, including Christians, are less likely than their global peers to consider Christian scripture to be “just another book of teachings.” Their approach to interpreting the text leans symbolic rather than literal.

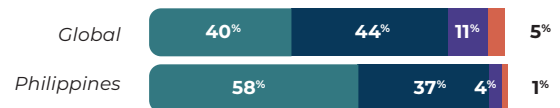
Christian teens are also less likely to be apprehensive about deciding on what, exactly, the Bible is. Fewer Christian teens and fewer teens overall in the Philippines report not being sure what to believe about the Bible.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

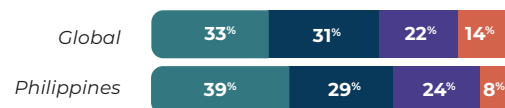
Base: Bible users / owners or Christians

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

“The Christian Bible should be understood symbolically, interpreting the text when needed”



“The Christian Bible should be understood literally, word for word”



Bible Engagement Among Teens

To better gauge the relationship today's teens have with the Bible, we categorized their thoughts and behaviors surrounding the Bible into three categories of engagement:

- **BIBLE-ENGAGED** teens hold a “high” view of the Bible and read the Bible several times a week.
 - * *A high view of the Bible refers to believing the Bible is “the word of God,” “the inspired word of God with no errors” or “the inspired word of God but with some errors.”*
- **BIBLE-OPEN** teens either (1) hold a high view of the Bible and read the Bible less often than Bible-engaged teens (but more than three or four times a year) or (2) have a neutral view toward the Bible, meaning they don't have a high or negative view of the Bible.
- **BIBLE UNENGAGED**—All other teens

Across religious and demographic spectrums, teens are largely open to Christian scripture, with over half of all respondents, globally and in the Philippines, falling into this category of engagement. While this openness could be celebrated for its curiosity or potential, the marginal percentage of Bible-engaged teens shouldn't be overlooked.

In the Philippines, Christian teens are slightly more engaged with the Bible than their global counterparts, and less likely to report being unengaged.

Teens' Engagement with the Bible

- Bible engaged ● Bible open ● Bible unengaged

Global



Philippines



Global Christians



Filipino Christians



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

How Teens Read the Bible

For the most part, teens' Bible-reading is an individualized experience. Teens' Bible habits especially vary across different faith segments.

Most teens who are Bible users and / or Christians, both globally and in the Philippines, report finding enjoyment in reading the Bible by themselves and reflecting on what they've read. In the Philippines, teens are more likely than their global peers to say that they enjoy searching for comforting verses and taking time to pray on what they've read, as well.

The habits of Bible-engaged teens in the Philippines are holistic. These teens are searching and processing the scriptures, both alone and with help from others.

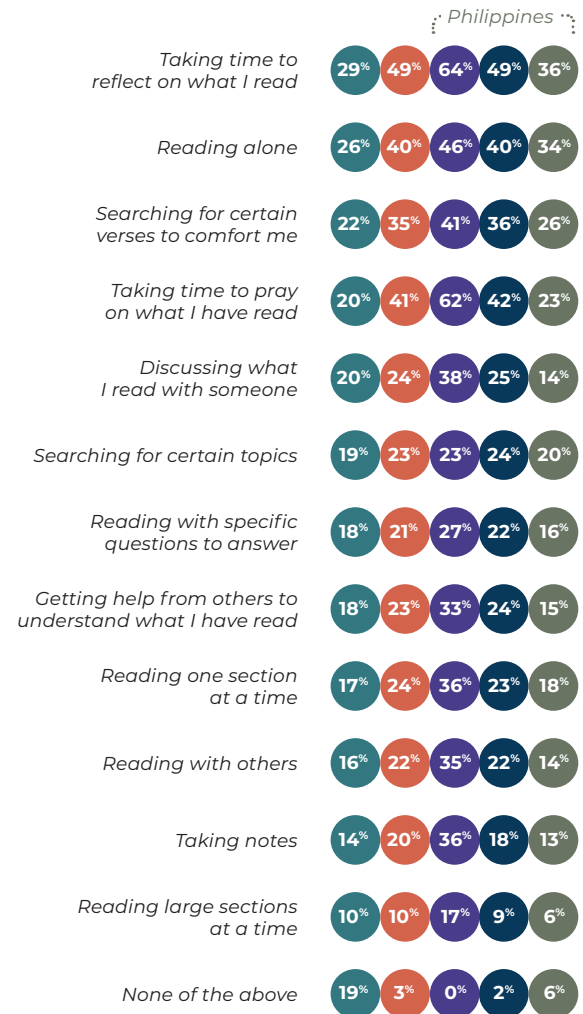
Meanwhile, just 3 percent of Bible users and / or Christians in the Philippines—including 6 percent of Bible-unengaged teens—tends to not enjoy *any* of the Bible-reading habits Barna presented to survey takers. Teens are usually reluctant to precisely name barriers to their Bible reading (the plurality selects none). However, teens in the Philippines, sometimes far more than their global peers, point to barriers like lacking understanding, interest, focus or enjoyment in their Bible reading.

These findings illustrate a need for community and older adults to come alongside teens and coach them in the joy, relevance and practice of engaging the Bible—an endeavor that, as we'll see next, many teens in the Philippines may be curious to undertake.

When you read the Bible, which of the following do you enjoy? Select all that apply.

Base: Bible users / owners or Christians

● Global ● Philippines ● Bible engaged
● Bible open ● Bible unengaged



n=982 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=18,118 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

Mentoring Teens in Bible Engagement

When it comes to learning more about the Bible throughout their lives, Christian teens in the Philippines are nearly unanimous, with 98 percent and 2 percent feeling “very” or “somewhat” (respectively) motivated to do so, setting them apart from their peers worldwide.

Where might this instruction come from? Typically, the home. In the Philippines, 59 percent of teens who are Bible users and / or

Christians—including nearly two-thirds of the Bible engaged—report having been taught to study the Bible by a parent or guardian. Teens worldwide offer the same top selection (36%).

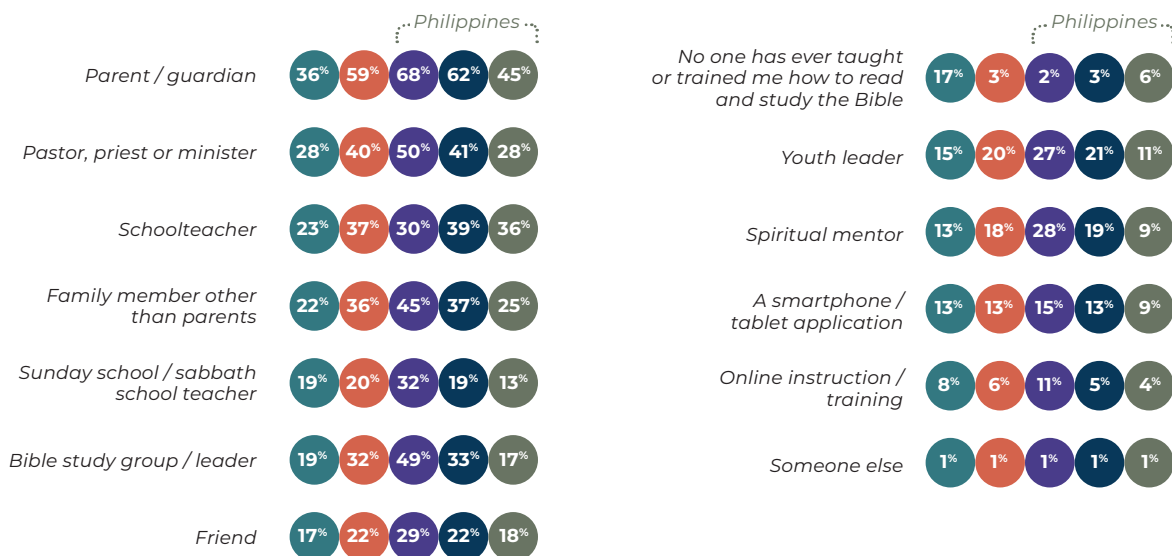
Ministry is naturally another source of instruction. Two in five Filipino teens who are Christian or use a Bible say they were taught by a pastor, priest or minister (40%). Half of Bible-engaged teens report having received instruction from clergy. From

Have any of the following ever taught or trained you how to read and study the Christian Bible?

Select all that apply.

Base: Bible users / owners or Christians

● Global ● Philippines ● Bible engaged ● Bible open ● Bible unengaged



n=982 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; n=18,118 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

another angle, teens in the Philippines are less likely than teens globally to say no one has taught them how to read the Bible, dramatically underscoring the role of relationships in nurturing Bible reading.

Globally and in the Philippines, sources of Bible mentorship are similar—but the outcomes are not.

Christian teens in the Philippines are more likely than their Christian peers around the world to report that in their church they regularly receive wisdom for how the Bible applies to their lives (55% and 42%, respectively).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

“In my church I regularly receive wisdom for how the Bible applies to my life”

Base: Christians

● Agree strongly ● Agree somewhat ● Disagree somewhat ● Disagree strongly ● Not sure



n=935 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=13,282 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

Open-Ended: Takeaways & Questions to Help You Think Through the Research

Teens prefer to read the Bible alone and mostly view Bible-reading as personal and reflective. Yet data also show community is essential to vibrant, ongoing Bible engagement. *How can teens be nudged toward a balance of personal reflection and community participation in their approach to scripture?*

FR. ATILANO: Both personal reading of the Bible and community Bible study are essential. There are those teens who prefer to read the Bible alone and there are those who prefer to do with a community. ... Both ways should be encouraged.

The personal Bible reading helps teens to become more reflective as a person and intimate in the relationship with Jesus, while the community Bible study helps them grow in their knowledge of Jesus as they listen to each other's experience.

It is also important that someone who is more knowledgeable about the Bible, someone who has studied the Bible professionally, can provide a structure or guide in [engaging] with the Bible.

JOE BONIFACIO: Reading alone and reading in community don't need to be set at odds with one another. [Create] a great ecosystem for studying the Bible where there's a place where teens do read alone [but] also have a community that encourages them when they get tired or [to show] it's more joyful to process together. ... I would also challenge the assumption that people don't want community.

[For young people], be the community that is important for them. Be the community that has what

they're looking for: a place to be secure, a place to discover what is important, a place that's full of value. ... Community is a place where they encounter the truth of God, and they wrestle with the implications of that. Even if it corrects their sinfulness, that's community.

How can the Church help teens overcome obstacles to Bible engagement?

CRUZ: Discipleship is a process. We need to learn a discipling process that would be dynamic and relevant for young people. In our community, [we've found] there are two effective ways to disciple. The first is through living situation. Young people are invited to live in a Christian training household to jump start their exposure to a life of Christian discipleship and service. The other is through missions. [Being involved in outreach] to other youth and / or marginalized communities can be very fulfilling and transformational to youth.

BONIFACIO: By training them and having robust [faith] discussions with them. I've found young people are open to discussing the Bible if we're willing to go to the depths of it, discussing the tensions of scripture, the heart of scripture and how it applies to what they're going through. ... In some ways, the Bible confirms and validates a lot of their generation's concerns. And in [other] ways, the Bible challenges, corrects and adjusts some of their generation's assumptions.

3. How Teens in the Philippines Can Make an Impact

Teens' Global Concerns & Convictions

Barna asked teens which global problems are of greatest concern to them and received a broad distribution of responses. Cultural, political, economic and even geographic differences cause distinct sets of concerns to rise to the top, depending on where teens live.

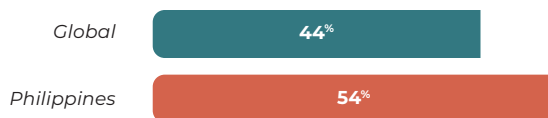
Globally, extreme poverty (38%), global climate change (35%), sexual abuse (33%), unemployment (33%) and political corruption (31%) are front of mind for the majority of teens. In the Philippines, this list looks similar; teens, in even greater agreement, feel that extreme poverty is of the most pressing concern (53%), followed by political corruption (49%), unemployment (47%), global climate change (45%) and mental health issues (40%).

Whatever issues they are concerned about, some Filipino teens may feel unable or even uninterested to affect them. Filipino teens, including Christians, trend behind their global peers in their reported motivation to address injustices in society—only one in three reports being “very” motivated toward this.

It's important for adults and mentors who work with teens to discern whether teens lack motivation in general or whether teens personally lack what they feel is enough context or information to understand their own capacity to act against injustice. In the Philippines, it may be the latter, as the slight majority of teens agrees that, collectively, their generation has the ability to make a positive impact in the world.

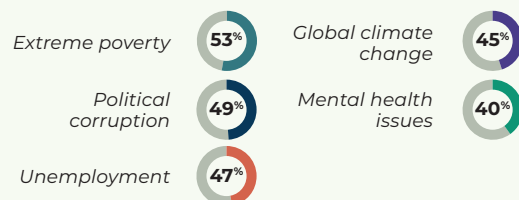
“My generation has the ability to make a positive and meaningful impact on the world.”

% agree strongly



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

5 Greatest Concerns of Teens in the Philippines



Teens' Motivation Toward Justice

Teens may often lack agency or ability to take personal action against injustices on their own or without the involvement, resources and leadership of a parent or guardian. However, the research does allow us to distinguish them by their motivation or potential for promoting justice. The resulting spectrum of justice motivation is based on a combination of teens' Conviction + Confidence + Commitment (see chart for definitions).

As you'll see, there is a significant drop-off after conviction, highlighting the need to develop confidence and commitment in teens who are interested in justice.

- **JUSTICE-MOTIVATED** teens meet all three categories (Conviction + Confidence + Commitment)
- **JUSTICE-ORIENTED** teens meet one or two of the three categories
- **JUSTICE-NEUTRAL** teens meet none of the three categories

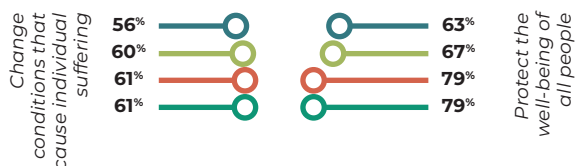
Teens in the Philippines, both in aggregate and in Christianity specifically, are far more likely than their peers worldwide to be categorized as justice motivated. They are just as likely to be justice oriented and significantly less likely to be justice neutral.

n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

- Global ● Global Christians
- Philippines ● Filipino Christians

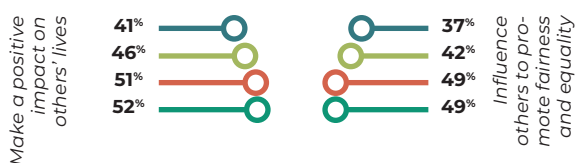
Conviction: "I believe it is important to ..."

% agree strongly



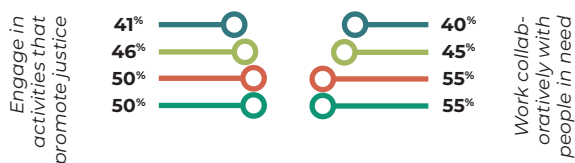
Confidence: "I am confident that I can ..."

% agree strongly



Commitment: "In the future, I will ..."

% agree strongly



Teens' Motivation Toward Justice

- Motivated ● Oriented ● Neutral



Looking for Leaders

Who do teens feel should play a role in addressing injustices? Generally, everyone, teens worldwide and in the Philippines tell Barna.

The majority of teens, especially those who are justice motivated, has high expectations across society, major institutions and themselves, believing all should play not just some role but a major one in addressing justice.

Specifically, along with the government, schools and educational institutions come out at the top of teens' responses, with 87 percent of justice-motivated teens and two-thirds of justice-oriented teens in the Philippines (74%) saying they should play a major role. This could be a product of the season of life teens are in, with school being central in their routines and development.

The Church and its leaders are also seen as

having major roles in justice, which we'll continue to explore. Still, justice-motivated Filipino teens are predictably more inclined to look to them, too, to champion justice.

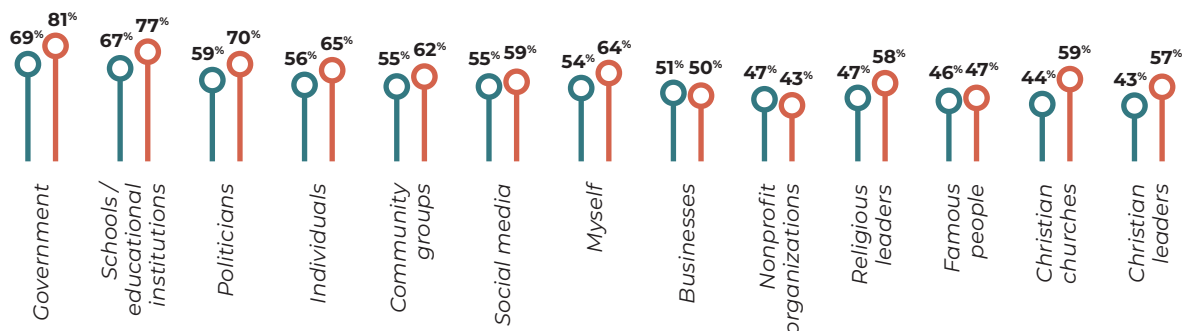
Filipino teens who are justice neutral don't assign as much responsibility to any of the options Barna asked about, though two in three (65%) say the government should be at the helm in addressing injustice.

Teens' high and wide expectations may reflect their deep concern about injustice, not their confidence in these groups; as it stands, roughly half of teens globally, including a slight majority in the Philippines, are neutral when asked whether they trust leaders today. Communities that lean into this generational longing to address injustice may in the process gain greater trust from today's teens.

How much of a role, if any, do you think of each of the following should play in addressing injustices?

% "major role"

● Global ● Philippines



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

The Role of the Church

Overall, teens globally and in the Philippines aren't convinced the Christian Church is making an impact on issues of poverty and injustice. One-quarter worldwide and one-third in the Philippines say this is "definitely" the case.

As justice motivation increases, so does the certainty that Christian churches are making a difference. What might that impact look like? Justice-motivated and justice-oriented Filipino teens who feel churches and church leaders should play a role in addressing injustice agree on two critical activities that are most important: teaching that the Bible encourages special kindness to people who are experiencing injustice and advocating for meaningful

change. Justice-motivated teens stand out by hoping for the former while justice-oriented and justice-neutral teens stand out by hoping for the latter. Filipino teens also believe prayer should be part of the Church's leadership in this area.

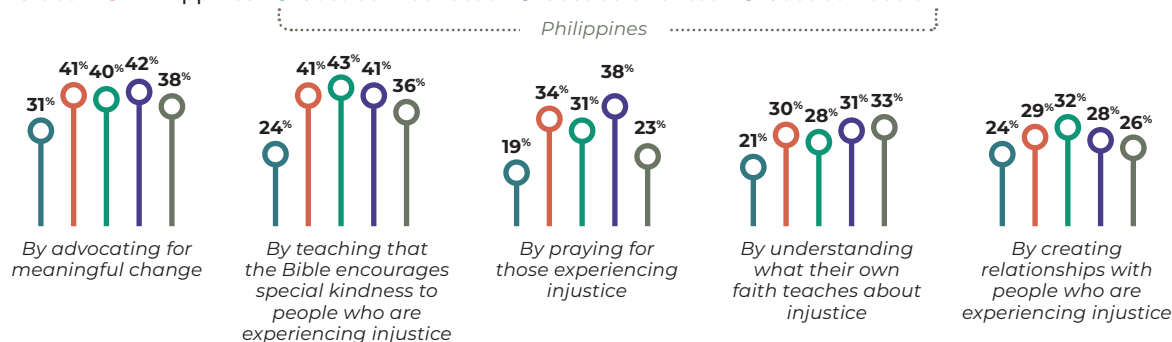
Remember, extreme poverty is of greatest concern to teens in the Philippines, but this is not front of mind when it comes to what teens are looking for the churches they attend to address. Across all justice motivation levels, teens would prefer to attend a church that prioritizes positive mental health. After this, teens report that they'd prefer to attend a church that prioritizes all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Top Ways the Church Can Address Injustice

Which of the following are ways that Christian churches or leaders can address injustice in the world? Select your three most important.

Base: said Christian churches / leaders should play a role in addressing injustice

● Global ● Philippines ● Justice motivated ● Justice oriented ● Justice neutral



n=946 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; n=19,135 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

Supporting Teens to Make an Impact

What can one person do to address injustice?

Among teens who say individuals should play a role in addressing injustice, the plurality points to some general categories of possible participation. Justice-motivated, justice-oriented and justice-neutral teens in the Philippines agree that individuals should be advocating for meaningful change and encouraging others to address injustice.

An interesting standout among the possible roles that individuals can play: Justice-oriented teens, even more so than justice-motivated teens, gravitate toward “learning about the sources of injustice” as an important step. This may underscore the critical role that listening and learning presently play in their own journey toward gaining confidence to address injustice. As it stands, the majority of Filipino teens of all justice motivation levels agrees at least somewhat that they want to keep learning more about injustices in society throughout their lives.

When asked what they need in order to be a part of global change themselves, teens have high expectations for their peers. Worldwide and in the Philippines, the average teen most needs encouragement from family and friends. Importantly, though, justice-motivated and justice-oriented teens are unique in first wanting their generation to step up as leaders. Justice-neutral teens, meanwhile, are hungry for the guidance of older leaders.

Authentic investment of peers, family members, leaders and the other members of a teens’ circle may be a catalyst to empower teens to realize their hopes of making change in society.

Which of the following are ways that individuals can address injustice in the world?

Select your three most important.

Base: said individuals should play a role in addressing injustice

● Global ● Philippines ● Justice motivated
● Justice oriented ● Justice neutral



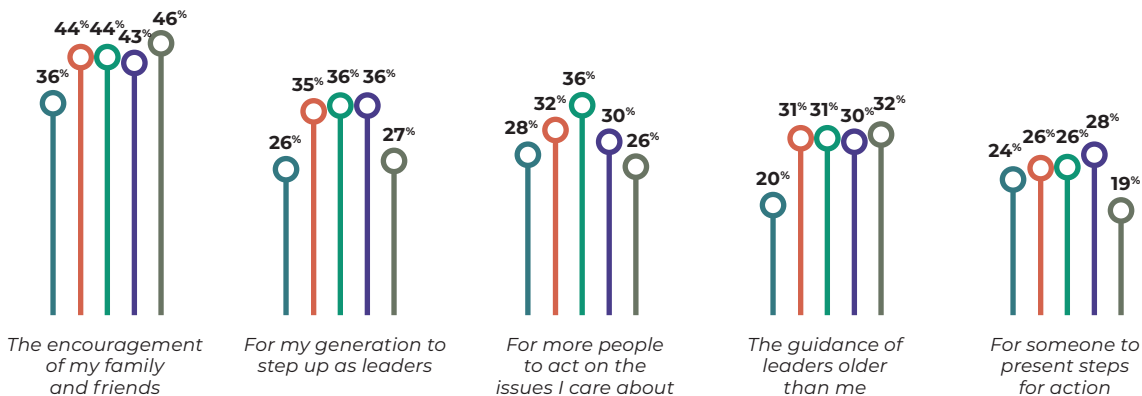
n=975 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; *n*=23,488 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021

Top Things Teens Need to Make an Impact

As an individual, would any of the following be helpful to you in addressing injustice?
Select your three most important.

● Global ● Philippines ● Justice motivated ● Justice oriented ● Justice neutral

Philippines



n=1,000 teens in the Philippines ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021; n=24,870 teens ages 13 to 17, July 21–August 24, 2021.

Open-Ended: Takeaways & Questions to Help You Think Through the Research

Teens steadily report a motivation to address injustice and a belief that their generation can make an impact. *Where do you think this optimism comes from? How can it be shaped into empowerment, confidence and equipping?*

FR. ATILANO: Teens of this generation want to be involved and relevant in the society. This optimism comes from their personal experience of social injustice, abuse and the unjust structure of the Philippine society. [Teens] want to make a change in society and be part of the solution.

Church and political leaders must enhance and encourage this optimism by providing [teens] more participation and involvement [opportunities].

Teens in the Philippines are greatly concerned about mental health and hope to be in churches that prioritize this issue. *What are the factors that cause this topic to be so central to teens in your context? How is your local Christian community engaging with these mental health concerns and needs?*

FR. ATILANO: Mental health issues among teens have been around even before the pandemic, [and] it's time for different church organizations to pay attention to this major challenge. There are efforts in local churches to address this issue by providing a support group structure for their members and training church leaders in counselling. But these [steps] are not enough—much more could still be done.

General categories of participation, such as advocacy and encouraging people to address injustice, are some of the top ways teens hope to see churches and individuals make an impact. *Get specific and practical: What could this encouragement or advocacy look like in your context? Your community? Your church? How can teens be engaged?*

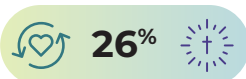
FR. ATILANO: There are different programs and advocacies initiated by local church communities—such as relief operations, immersion and environmental activism, just to name a few—to address social and societal injustices. Church leaders should make an extra effort to get teens involved in these programs. In fact, [church leaders] can let teens be the organizers, leaders and promoters of these activities.

This [young] generation is creative and well-informed. They want to be part of the solution in the social and societal problems. Teens must not be simply passive members of the [local] church but also active leaders, especially in social justice issues.

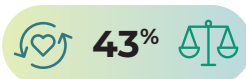
The Way, the Truth, the Life

As Barna Group and our partners have set out to learn about how teens view Jesus, the Bible and justice, the data has consistently shown that these aspects of the Christian faith are interwoven and increase together. Using the custom categories introduced through this study, **here's how teens in the Philippines experience an overlap in their commitment to follow Jesus, their engagement with scripture and their motivation to make an impact.**

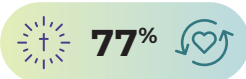
In the Philippines



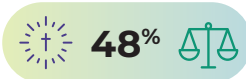
of committed Christian teens are Bible engaged



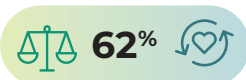
of committed Christian teens are justice motivated



of Bible-engaged teens are committed Christians



of Bible-engaged teens are justice motivated



of justice-motivated teens are committed Christians



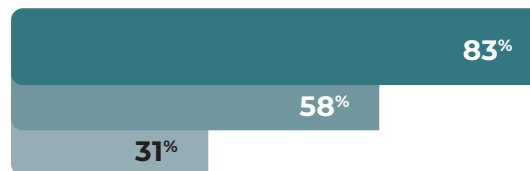
of justice-motivated teens are Bible engaged

The Bible draws teens to Jesus ...

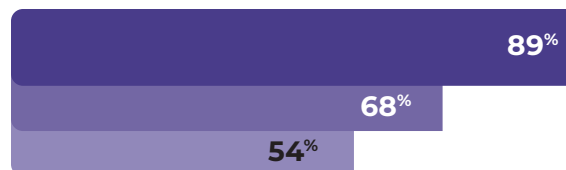
"I believe that the Christian Bible provides a way for people to know Jesus personally"

% "very true"

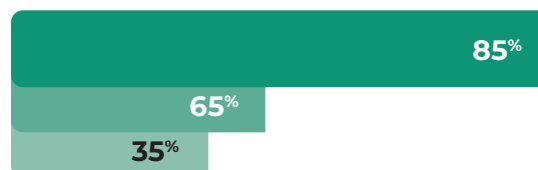
Committed Christians Nominal Christians All others



Bible engaged Bible open Bible unengaged



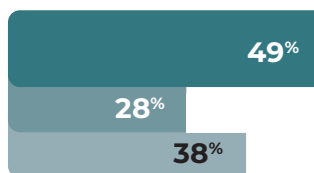
Justice motivated Justice oriented Justice neutral



Jesus offers a model for justice ...

"Jesus advocated for justice"

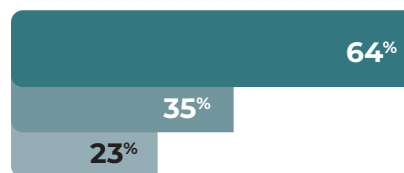
● Committed Christians ● Nominal Christians ● All others



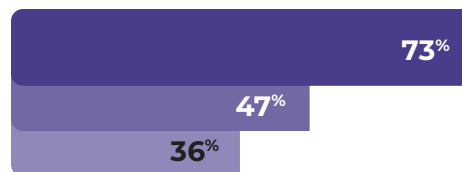
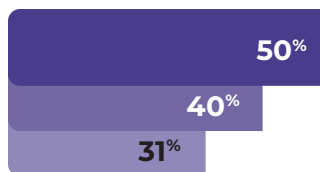
Justice is a biblical matter ...

"I believe that the Christian Bible addresses injustice"

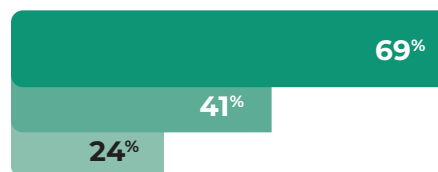
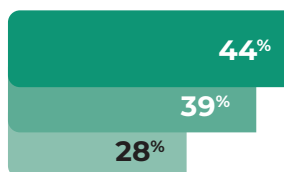
% "very true"



● Bible engaged ● Bible open ● Bible unengaged



● Justice motivated ● Justice oriented ● Justice neutral



Field Study: Teens in Marginalized Contexts in the Philippines

Surveying nationally representative samples of 25,000+ teenagers in 26 countries gives us remarkable and, in some ways, first-of-its-kind insight into teens around the world. But even vast research like this ultimately offers a vibrant impressionistic portrait rather than a sharp snapshot of a global generation.

In other words, there are limitations even to a study as extensive as this one. For instance, we know that online surveys—a subjective measure on their own—must be filled out by those who are literate and have an internet connection and, in the case of this study, a parent or guardian of a teenaged respondent had to complete a screener first.

It's important to Barna to define the boundaries of our studies and be clear about whose voices are not represented by some methodologies—and it's also important to us to make studies more accessible and far-reaching over time. Which is why we are grateful to be able to share findings from surveys and focus groups conducted among several hundred teenagers who live in marginalized contexts. Though specifics of their environments vary, these voices represent the experiences of teens who often go unheard in society and in survey research, whether because they are fleeing their country, living in extreme poverty or escaping violence.

Through schools and programs served by local World Vision offices and our partners at World Vision International, *The Open Generation* survey was conducted among 403 teens ages 13–17 living in Brazil, Honduras, Indonesia and the Philippines and Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Specifically, in the Philippines, 58 survey respondents and 13

focus group participants (six from Camarines Norte and seven from Camarines Sur) were included in the study.

A Hopeful, Prayerful, Listening Posture in the Philippines

This sample of teens should not be treated as representative either of Filipino teens at large or of teens in marginalized contexts. For instance, Protestants are more common in this field study than in Barna's broader representative study of teens in the Philippines. Still, there are insights to be gleaned from this profile of Filipino teens, who exemplify much of the openness that defines their generation in spite of their experiences of vulnerability. We believe, for leaders in all contexts, there is value in listening to these voices.

This group of teens in the Philippines resemble their peers in the country in their level of commitment to follow Jesus, who they primarily describe as loving and welcome. They are also enthusiastic about scripture, which they say makes them feel peaceful and alive. They often connect to the Bible through the internet, small groups and Bible studies, noting that they enjoy getting help from others to understand scripture. Overall, the responses of marginalized teens in the Philippines point to an emphasis on personal discipleship and spiritual disciplines. They are an exceptionally prayerful group. “We need a foundation we can rely upon on a daily basis,” a teen in Camarines Sur says. “If you pray, it makes it easier to solve your problems because you're one with God.”

A number of concerns are on the minds of marginalized teens in the Philippines, either because they observe them globally or nationally or witness them personally: sexual abuse, extreme poverty, political corruption, drug abuse, COVID-19 and more. Education is mentioned often by youth in survey responses and in focus groups, both as an area in need of improvement and as a solution to many needs. One teen in the group from Camarines Norte says they need to “study first and improve oneself before helping others.”

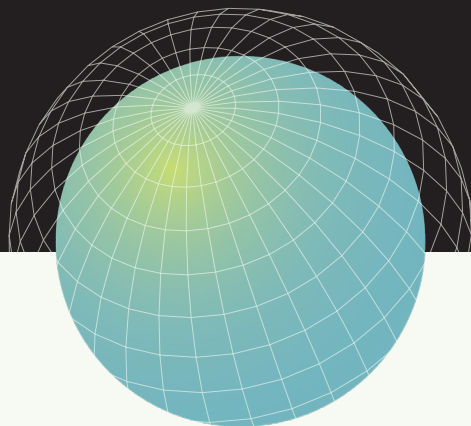
They note they could benefit from guidance from leaders to address injustice. Schools and educational institutions surface again here as entities they are looking to.

Filipino teens in this sample also expect much of Christian leaders. They prefer to attend churches that promote mental health, support gender equality and prevent sexual abuse. In the minds of these teens, a church’s spiritual leadership has

far-reaching outcomes, and they suggest that Christian churches and leaders have a core responsibility to teach about how the Bible encourages special kindness to those who experience injustice. Recommendations for faith-sharing come up often in focus groups. Teens stress the Church’s need to “spread the Word of God” with respect to other faiths, and they hope their peers can “open their mind and understand the Bible’s message on how to listen the right way and how to implement [Christian] ideas.”

Even amid their own trials and a longing to go “back to normal” surrounding the disruptions of the pandemic era, Filipino teens in this field study hold onto many hopes for the world and for their own impact. For now, they are still growing confidence in their own influence or their belief that they can be leaders in the world, but they see the potential in their youth. As one teen shares, “The world needs to hear the voice of every young person.”

An Open Door to *The Open Generation*



There is more to learn about teens around the world—and more insights and tools to help you make use of this research in your context.

Find information about resources, get content from the research partners and sign up for updates at **barna.com/the-open-generation**.

- Vol. 1—*How Teens Around the World Relate to Jesus*
- Vol. 2—*How Teens Around the World View the Bible*
- Vol. 3—*How Teens Around the World Can Make an Impact*
- Regional & Country Reports Featuring Local Data
- Webcasts & Interviews
- E-course

The Open Generation *project continues through 2022 and 2023.*

Methodology

This study is based on online, representative public opinion surveys conducted by Barna Group. Teens were recruited to participate in the quantitative survey through their parents. Parents answered seven screening questions about their teens, which included demographics such as age, gender and ethnicity. A total of 24,557 respondents ages 13 to 17 across 26 countries were surveyed between July 21, 2021, and August 24, 2021. An additional 313 responses were collected in February of 2022 in New Zealand. (See page 7 for sample distribution by country.) The margin of error for each individual country is assumed to be +/- 2.1%.

Through schools and programs served by local World Vision offices and our partners at World Vision International, a survey was conducted among 58 teens ages 13 to 17 living in the Philippines. Additionally, 13 teens participated in focus groups. The quantitative field study data was collected via a mix of quantitative online and in-person tablet surveys and qualitative focus groups, between August 16 and September 30, 2021.

Acknowledgments

Barna Group is incredibly grateful to the all-star collective of partners who have made this project possible.

Our findings about the open generation have been strengthened by the grounded recommendations of ministers, activists, scholars and other experts spanning the globe. For this volume, we want to especially thank: Fr. Ro Atilano, Joe Bonifacio, Jun Cruz, Wichelle Cruz, Roberto Dazo, Jun Godornes, Maria Corazon Gomonan, Karen Flora Gonzales, Elizabeth Lopez, Pastor Choy Magdaong, Loreto Mina, Jr., Vanessa Retuerma and Cyrille Ybanez.

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About the Partners



Barna Group is a research firm helping Christian leaders understand the times and know what to do. In its 38-year history, Barna Group has conducted more than two million interviews over the course of thousands of studies.



Biblica produces relevant and reliable scripture translations and innovative resources that power the Bible ministry of hundreds of global mission organizations and invite millions to discover the love of Jesus Christ.



World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.



Alpha supports the Church with resources and tools that help create a space where people are excited to bring their friends for a conversation about Jesus.



Christian Vision works in partnership with local churches across the globe to introduce people to Jesus, mobilize Christians to evangelize and resource the Church with free digital content and knowledge.



Bible Study Fellowship provides global, in-depth Bible studies producing passionate commitment to Christ, his word and his Church, magnifying God and maturing his people.



The Association of Christian Schools International is an international organization that promotes Christian education and provides training and resources to Christian schools and Christian educators.



Christ In Youth partners with the local church to create moments and conversations that call young people to follow Jesus and into lives of Kingdom work.

