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# Followers Under 40

Rev. Kris Sledge

# FOLLOWERS UNDER 40

The journey away from church for millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha



RACHEL GILMORE & KRIS SLEDGE

FOREWARD BY TYLER SIT



# THE JOURNEY

WE  BELONG.



**SAVING YOUR  
CHURCH**

**WHAT ARE WE  
NOT TALKING  
ABOUT?**

**MAGIC WAY TO GET  
100 NEW KIDS OR  
YOUNG ADULTS TO  
YOUR CHURCH**

Key Generations

**Millennials;  
Gen Z; Alpha**

**WHAT ARE WE  
TALKING  
ABOUT?**

Changing Church  
Trends

**Discovering why  
young people are  
leaving.**





POSTED  
NO TRESPASSING  
KEEP OUT

# Three Emerging Generations

Millennial

**1980-1996**

Gen Z

**1997-2012**

Gen Alpha

**2012-2024**



Baby Boomers

Generation X

**Generation Y**

Generation Z

Generation Alpha

1950

1960

1970

1980

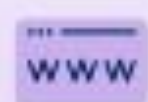
1990

2000

2010

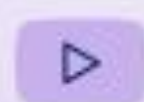
2020

### Used to learn new skills (daily)



42%

Websites



41%

YouTube



38%

Instagram

### Words used to describe themselves



52%

Independent



46%

Generous



44%

Dependable

### Qualities valued in a leader



60%

Clear communication



59%

Approachable



55%

Integrity / Accountability

### Most important when considering a new job



73%

Flexible working hours



72%

Convenient location



72%

Accessible and approachable leadership

# Gen Y

Born 1980-1994



### Top hopes

1 Have full financial freedom and independence

63%

2 Travel and see the world

58%

3 Pursue interests and hobbies

56%

### Top fears

1 I won't have enough money to live comfortably

59%

2 Not reaching my full potential

40%

3 Suffering a long term illness

38%

### Influential movies



Titanic



Harry Potter



Lion King

### Global population and workforce %

● Builders ● Boomers ● X ● Y ● Z ● Alpha



Population

3%

13%

17%

21%

23%

23%



Workforce

12%

27%

34%

27%



Baby Boomers

Generation X

Generation Y

**Generation Z**

Generation Alpha

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

### Used to learn new skills (daily)



48%  
TikTok



46%  
Instagram



42%  
YouTube

### Words used to describe themselves



51%  
Independent



48%  
Determined



46%  
Creative

### Qualities valued in a leader



58%  
Approachable



57%  
Clear communication



57%  
Empathy

### Most important when considering a new job



75%  
Accessible and approachable leadership



69%  
Learning and development opportunities



67%  
Career progression opportunities

# Gen Z

Born 1995-2009



### Top hopes



### Top fears



### Influential movies



Harry Potter



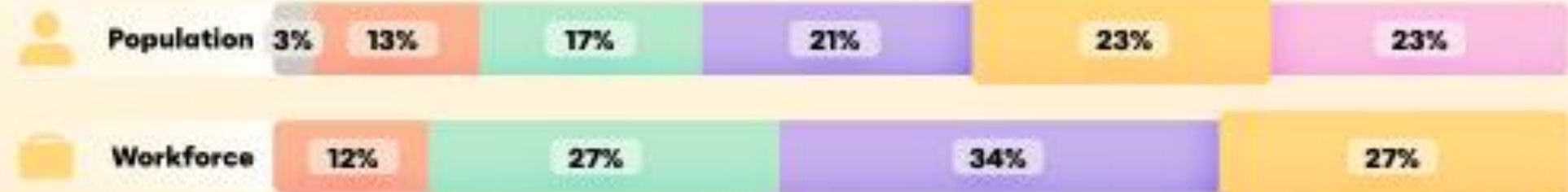
Shrek



Toy Story

### Global population and workforce %

● Builders ● Boomers ● X ● Y ● Z ● Alpha





Baby Boomers

Generation X

Generation Y

Generation Z

Generation Alpha

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

Labels

The Alphas

Generation glass

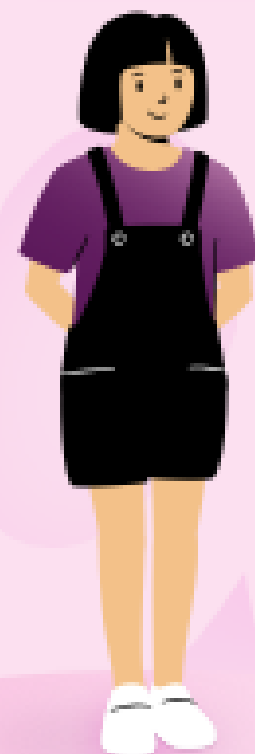
Upagers

Multi-modals

Global Gen

# Gen Alpha

Born 2010-2024



Future size & economic footprint

Once they've all been born they will number more than 2 billion, the largest generation in the history of the world.

**2,000,000,000**

By 2029, Generation Alpha's economic footprint will reach more than US\$5.46 trillion.

**\$5,460,000,000**

Weekly births

**2,586,000**

Generation Alphas born globally each week

Top countries of birth

1



India

2



China

3

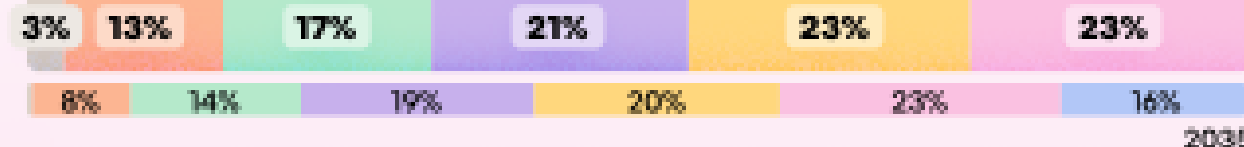


Nigeria

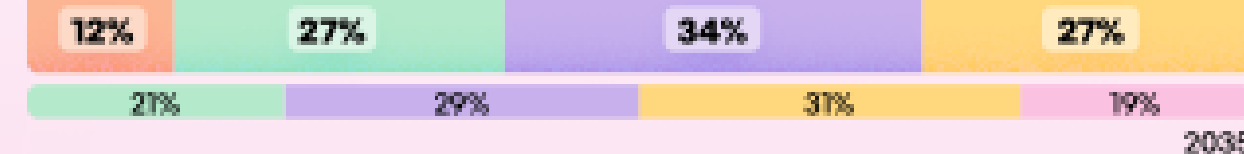
Global population and workforce %

Builders Boomers X Y Z Alpha Beta

Population



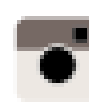
Workforce



Incoming technology



iPod



Instagram



Siri



GoPro HERO3



3D printers



Google glass



Apple watch



Tesla Powerwall



Fortnite



Smart speakers



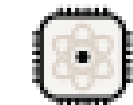
AirPods



5G



Biometrics



Quantum computing



ChatGPT



Autonomous vehicles

Timeline

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

Outgoing technology



Myspace



Street directory



Pager



MP3 player



Blackberry



Fax machine



Landline phone



CD/DVD



GPS unit



Car key - ignition



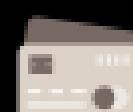
Textbooks



Desktop computer



Credit cards



Wallet



Analogue watch



Milestones

First Alphas born

500 million

1 billion

1.6 billion

2.2 billion

New jobs

Cybersecurity specialist

UX manager

Drone pilot

Blockchain developer

Data designer

Virtual reality engineer

Robotics mechanic

Sleep technician

Sustainability officer

Driverless train operator








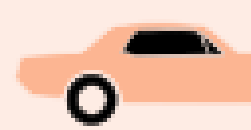





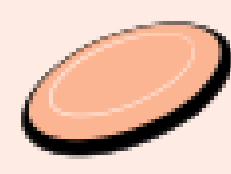
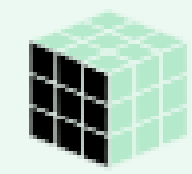
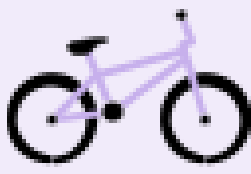
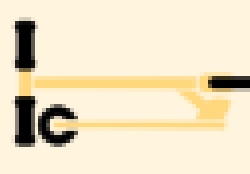
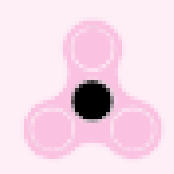

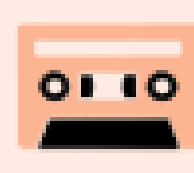




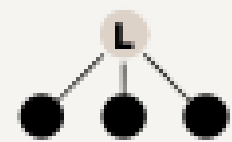
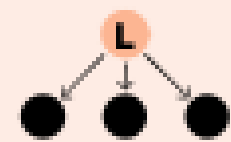
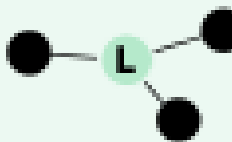
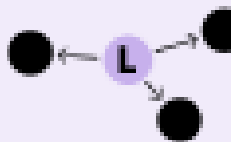

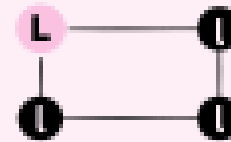
Wellbeing manager

AI specialist

Life simplifier

Urban farmer

Space tourism agent

Category	Builders Born: 1925-1945	Baby Boomers Born: 1946-1964	Generation X Born: 1965-1979	Generation Y Born: 1980-1994	Generation Z Born: 1995-2009	Gen Alpha Born: 2010-2024
Slang terms	 We prefer proper English if you please	 Be cool Peace Groovy Way out	 Dude Ace Rad As if Wicked	 Bling Funky Doh Fashizz Whassup?	 Fam GOAT Slay Yass queen	 lit yeet hunda oof m idrc
Social markers	World War II 1939-1945	Moon landing 1969	Stock market crash 1987	September 11 2001	GFC 2008	COVID-19 2020
Iconic cars	 Model T Ford Final, 1927	 Ford Mustang 1964	 Holden Commodore 1978	 Toyota Prius 1997	 Tesla Model S 2012	 Autonomous vehicles 2020s
Iconic toys	 Roller skates	 Frisbee	 Rubix cube	 BMX bike	 Folding scooter	 Fidget spinner
Music devices	 Record player LP, 1948	 Audio cassette 1962	 Walkman 1979	 iPod 2001	 Spotify 2008	 Smart speakers Now
Leadership style	 Controlling	 Directing	 Coordinating	 Guiding	 Empowering	 Inspiring
Ideal leader	Commander	Thinker	Doer	Supporter	Collaborator	Co-creator
Learning style	Formal	Structured	Participative	Interactive	Multi-modal	Virtual
Influence Advice	Officials	Experts	Practitioners	Peers	Forums	Chatbots
Marketing	Print (traditional)	Broadcast (mass)	Direct (targeted)	Online (linked)	Digital (social)	In situ (real-time)





## WHY ARE THEY LEAVING?

1. The church doesn't share their values
2. No impact on daily life
3. Decline in trust of clergy and organized religion

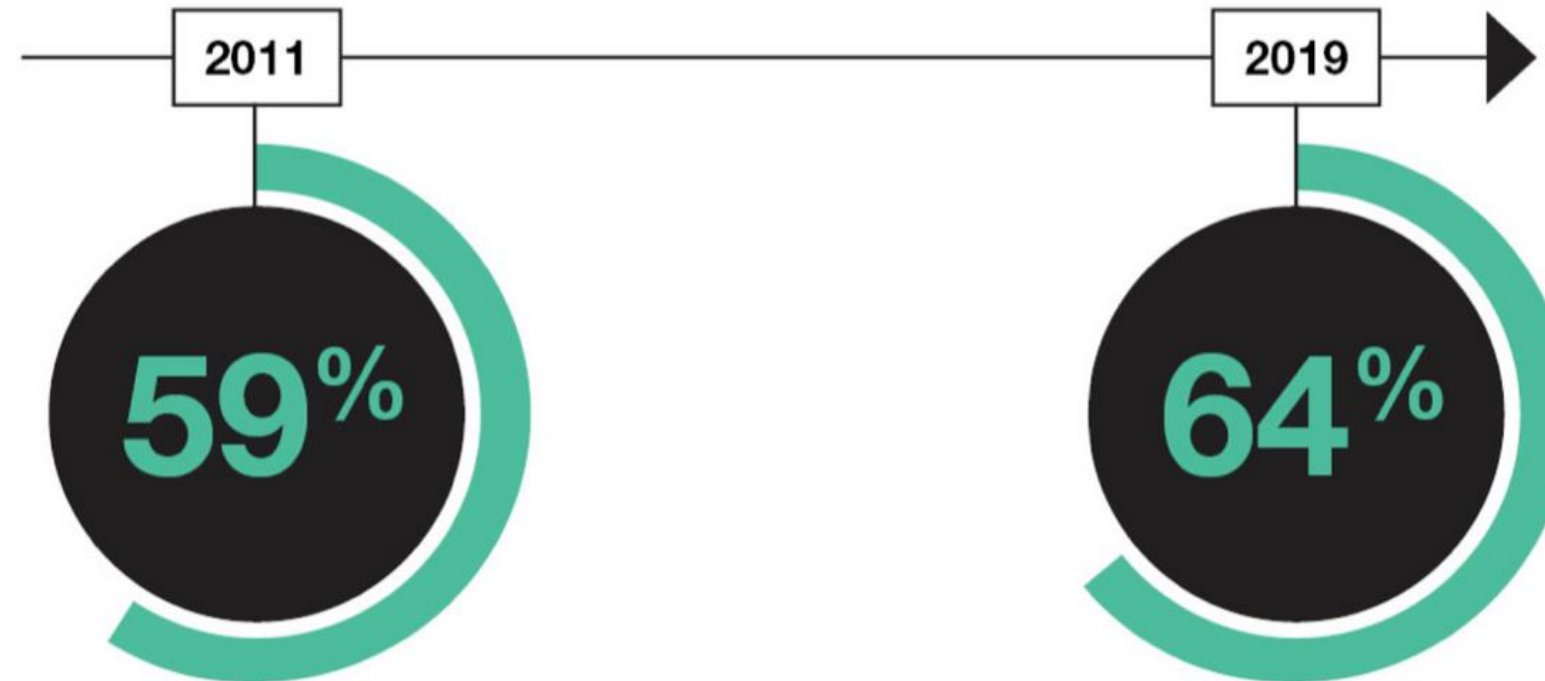


# INCREASE IN CHURCH DROPOUTS

Barna



Church  
Dropouts



*n* = 1,816 US adults 18-29 current/former Christians, January 2011;  
*n* = 1,514 US adults 18-29 current/former Christians, February 16-28, 2018

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# CHANGING TIMES

- 86% of teens value standing up for **justice** and 3 in 4 teens have acted **against racism** (August 2020 National 4H Council Survey).
- Yubo Poll of 39,000 **Gen Zers** found that **88% believe Black Americans are treated differently** than others **and 90% support the BLM movement.**







# CHANGING TIMES

- Among social media users, **69% of Gen Z** felt **anxious** about the future when it comes to **climate change** compared to 59% of Millennials, 46% of Gen X, 41% of Baby Boomers (Pew Research May 2021).
- **93% of Gen Zers** said brands have an obligation to take a stand on environmental issues.





THESE GENERATIONS WANT  
TO INFLUENCE THE WORLD  
AROUND THEM.

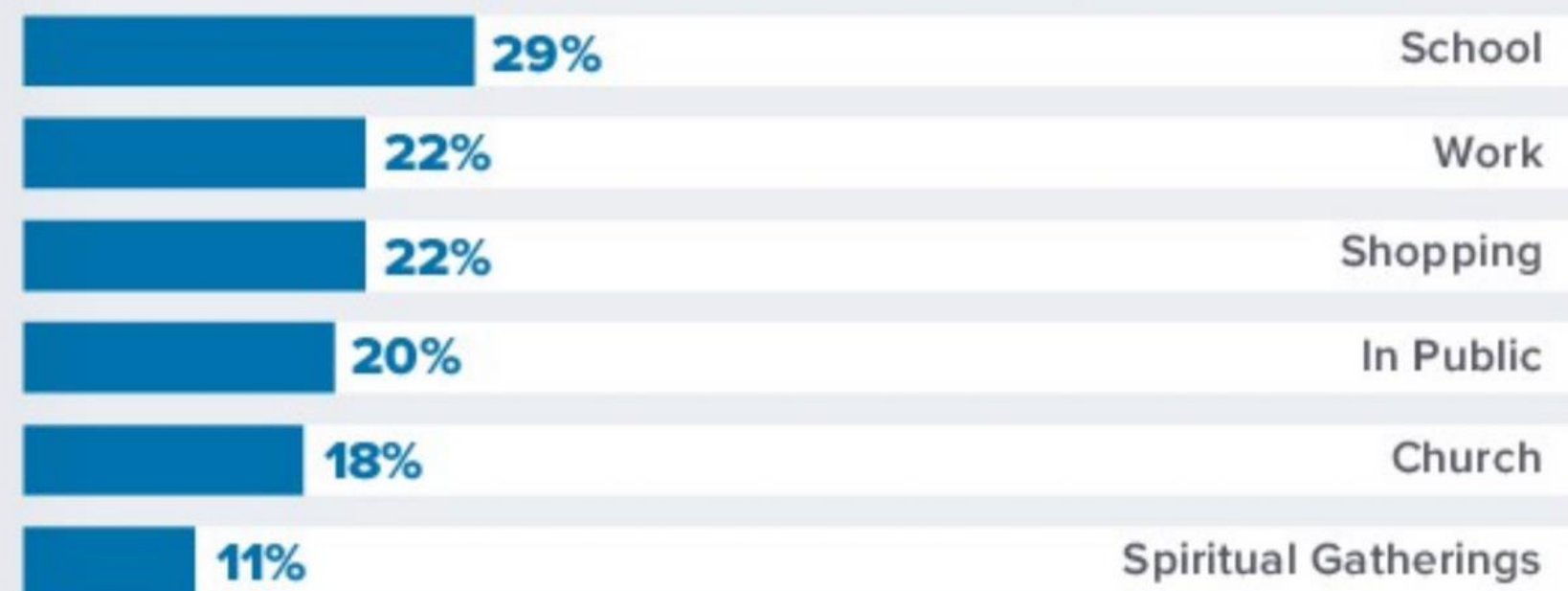
(INFLUENCER- SOMEONE WHO IMPACTS THE BEHAVIOR OF OTHERS  
AND HAS A FOLLOWING)

CHURCHES & PASTORS ARE  
NOT SAFE...

# CHURCHES & PASTORS ARE NOT SAFE...

## Spaces where young people say they feel safe during the pandemic.

Participants were allowed to select more than one option.



20% OF YOUNG ADULTS BELIEVE  
PASTORS HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF  
HONESTY

Compared to 30% of 35–54-year-olds  
and 46% of those 55+

(Lifeway research Jan. 2023)





# WHAT DO YOUNG ADULTS WANT?

Curious  
Diverse  
Flexible  
Unbundled

(SPRINGTIDE RESEARCH)





## BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT HOW TO DO THIS...

- Don't pretend to be something you aren't
- Don't pressure them to join committees
- Don't separate them from the life of the church
- Don't leave this work to the pastor
- Don't wait





# WAYS TO FOSTER A YOUNGER CHURCH





CREATE SPACE FOR  
QUESTIONS, CURIOSITY, AND  
DOUBTS.





FOSTER COMMUNITY  
& TALK ABOUT THINGS  
THAT MATTER









# EMBRACE A QUALITY DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



**JAREMY**

**JULIA**



Pastor Kris

Marsha Banks

Timothy White

THE JOURNEY



It's hard to convince  
people that a God  
they can't see loves  
them, when a church  
they can see doesn't  
seem to like them.

JOHN ALAN TURNER  
THEHAPPYGIVERS.COM

**LISTEN & LOVE...**  
**REJECT TEMPTATIONS TO**  
**SHAME, NAG, OR JUDGE.**





## What We Believe

Inclusion At The Journey

**As A Faith Community, The Journey Welcomes  
And Honors People Of All**



**As Beloved By God And Of Equal Worth And  
Dignity.**

GROWING DIVERSITY IN AMERICA  
(ETHNICITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION)

ACKNOWLEDGE HARM DONE BY CHURCH

**MUST BE A SPACE FOR  
ALL TO BELONG.**

**WE  BELONG.**







# RETHINK CHURCH RHYTHMS FOR YOUNG ADULT MEMBERS



- They won't go every Sunday when they are adults so focus on the rhythm of discipleship in everyday life.
- They don't want to be mentored; they want to be heard.
- They want to ask questions in safe places.
- They want to grow in confidence and identity.
- They don't always trust clergy, so discipleship should be lay led.





**MORAL  
IMPERATIVE**

**WHY?**

**LEGACY OF FAITH**



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