

## Cultural Research Center

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### **2024 Pre-Election Research – Report #1** **104 Million People of Faith—Including 32 Million Christian Regular Churchgoers—Projected to Abstain from Voting in November**

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As the final weeks of the 2024 presidential election campaign unfold, it appears that the outcome of the close race between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris will depend on which candidate does a more effective job of getting their supporters to vote. A new national survey by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, led by Dr. George Barna, indicates that voting enthusiasm is significantly lower than in 2020, and that a massive number of Christians who regularly attend church services are not likely to vote in November.

Christian churchgoing voters have historically supported the more conservative major-party candidate in a presidential race and appear poised to do so again this election cycle—albeit with fewer of them casting a ballot than in the most recent presidential race.

The research indicates that as many as 104 million people of faith are unlikely to vote in this upcoming election—and among those, 32 million self-identified Christians who regularly attend church won't cast their ballots.

If that expectation holds true, the impact bodes more poorly for President Trump's prospects for re-election than for Mrs. Harris's effort to succeed Joe Biden.

The surveys also revealed that large numbers of Christian churches have distanced themselves from the election, refusing to even encourage congregants to vote and avoiding teaching related to many of the key social issues that will determine which candidates people will support.

#### **Estimating Who Will—and Will Not—Vote**

The research by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University (CRC) indicates that enthusiasm for this election is lower than usual, and certainly lower than in 2020. A primary reason for that diminished interest is the public's distaste for both major-party candidates (Donald Trump, Kamala Harris).

Other significant reasons for the heightened disinterest include the aging out of Boomers and Elders (two generations that were highly involved in past elections) alongside the emergence of the less politically energized Millennials and Gen Z; public dissatisfaction with the quality of government, in general; and the widespread expectation that the results of the election will be manipulated by illegal, behind-the-scenes activities and voting by illegal immigrants.

Historical data indicates that turnout among the voting age population was about 54% in 2012 (Obama-Romney); 55% in 2016 (Trump-Clinton); and 61% in 2020 (Trump-Biden).

If the election had been held at the time of the survey, which was conducted approximately seven weeks prior to the election, the turnout would have been 50% of voting-age adults. Interest in voting usually rises slightly between Labor Day and Election Day, causing CRC researchers to project the November 5 turnout in the 53% to 55% range. That would put the 2024 election squarely in line with the turnout levels of 2012 and 2016, but significantly below that of 2020.

CRC calculated the number of voting-age adults who are “likely to vote” on the basis of six factors that have been correlated with turnout behavior in past elections. Research director Dr. George Barna noted that survey respondents are notorious for overstating their likelihood to vote. To compensate for that overly optimistic declaration of voting intent, CRC combined measures of election interest, knowledge, past voting, and intent through an algorithm that has been shown in prior elections to provide a more reliable turnout estimate.

### **Turnout and People of Faith**

One of the most important findings of the research is the depressed voting intent of “people of faith”. The survey defined “people of faith” as either someone who described themselves as “a person of religious faith” or as someone who associated with some recognized religious faith (such as Christianity, Judaism, Mormonism, Islam, etc.). Based on that filter, 79% of Americans qualified as a person of faith. In total, 66% of Americans 18 or older identified as Christian, thus constituting more than four out of every five adults (83%) who view themselves as a person of faith.

Among those classified as a person of faith, only one-half (51%) indicated they are likely to vote. If the survey statistics are projected on the basis of national population estimates, based on a Census-derived U.S. voting-age population of 268 million and an estimated 212 million adults qualifying as a “person of faith,” the 49% who are not likely to vote in November represents about 104 million eligible non-voters in the “people of faith” segment.

Barna pointed out that a deeper dive into the data shows more narrowly defined segments within the “people of faith” group have different expected turnout rates. Among those are people who are defined by their beliefs regarding sin and salvation as born-again Christians (41 million expected to not vote); self-identified Christians who regularly attend church services (32 million not expected to vote); and voting-age adults who regularly attend an evangelical church (14 million of whom are expected to not vote). The research also indicated 46 million adults who attend Protestant churches and 19 million who attend Catholic churches are not likely to vote.

### **Reasons for Not Voting**

The research asked people who indicated they were not likely to vote to explain the reasons for that choice. The most common reason, offered by two-thirds of the non-voters (68%), was a lack of interest in politics and elections. Other common reasons included disliking all of the major candidates (57%), feeling that none of the candidates reflect their most important views (55%), and believing that their one vote will not make a difference (52%). Half of the non-voters said they will avoid voting because the election has become too controversial for their liking (50%).

<b>2024 Turnout Projections by Faith Segments</b>			
<b>Religious subgroup</b>	<b>Adult Population Incidence</b>	<b>Estimated Gen. Elec. Turnout</b>	<b>Estimated Number of Non-voters</b>
Self-identified Christian	66%	52%	85 million
Attend a Protestant church	36%	52%	46 million
Theologically-defined born-again Christians	32%	52%	41 million
Self-identified Christian, regularly attend church	31%	61%	32 million
Attend a Catholic church	17%	58%	19 million
Attend a mainline Protestant church	13%	57%	15 million
Attend an evangelical church	11%	53%	14 million
Aligned with a non-Christian faith	9%	50%	12 million
Attend a non-denominational Christian church	7%	46%	10 million
Attend a Pentecostal/charismatic church	4%	50%	5 million

Source: Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, N=3,000 voting-age adults, nationally representative multi-mode surveys, conducted August 26-September 10, 2024.

Almost half of the non-voters (48%) were deterred by the belief that the election outcome will be rigged, or by not knowing enough about the candidates to choose one (48%).

To explore ways of getting those people to vote, several scenarios were posed to non-voters and their reaction to each possibility was gauged. The depth of voting resistance among this segment was revealed by the discovery that none of the scenarios generated an increase in likelihood of participation among even one out of five of these non-voters.

Overall, about one out of every six likely non-voters said they would probably vote if their church taught them that voting is a biblical responsibility for every Christian. One out of seven of the likely non-voters indicated that they would be likely to vote if family or friends convinced them of the importance of voting; if the election was so close they believed their vote might actually make a difference; or if they received an unbiased, objective briefing about what each of the major candidates supports and opposes.

### **What About Churches?**

The survey examined some of political or election-related activity undertaken by the respondent's church during the past two years. The most common action was their church providing one or more sermons or teachings about the Bible's stand on specific issues. Six out of 10 of the regularly churched Christians (61%) asserted their church had provided such instruction.

<b>Election-Related Actions Undertaken By Christian Churches in the Past Two Years, According to Regular Church Attenders</b>			
<b>Action Undertaken by the church in the Past Two Years</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Provided sermons or teaching about the Bible's stand on specific issues	61%	32%	7%
Encouraged people to vote, without recommending specific candidates	56%	36%	8%
Provided written information about the Bible's stand on specific issues	48%	44%	8%
Invited/hosted candidates to speak at the church	26%	65%	9%
Registered new voters	26%	60%	15%
Recommended voting for specific candidates	24%	68%	9%
Provided voter's guides	24%	64%	11%

Source: Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, N=2,000 voting-age, self-identified Christian adults who regularly attend a Christian church; nationally representative multi-mode survey, conducted August 26-September 6, 2024.

Churches of the regular attenders were most likely to have addressed the topics of religious freedom (67%) and poverty (63%). Roughly half recalled receiving a teaching concerning abortion (49%). Slightly fewer remembered a teaching concerning matters related to crime, law and order, and law enforcement (45%). About four out of 10 congregants recalled teaching related to same-sex marriage (42%). Only one-third cited teaching regarding the role and authority of government (34%) or the Israel-Palestine conflict (33%). One out of four had been exposed to a teaching about transgenderism (27%) and immigration and border security (25%). The least taught-on topic among those evaluated was artificial intelligence (18%).

Barely more than half of Christian churches (56%) took the simplest election-related action, that of encouraging congregants to vote in November. Slightly less than half of Christian churches (48%) were said to have provided congregants with written information about the Bible's stand on specific issues.

Less common church activities included registering new voters (an action attributed to 26% of Christian churches); inviting or hosting candidates to speak at the church (26%); providing voter's guides (24%); and recommending that people vote for specific candidates (24%).

The survey pointed out that black churches are more likely than all other Christian churches engage in each of the seven forms of election-related activity studied. Traditionally-black churches are more than twice as likely as all other Christian churches to register people to vote (common to 55% of

traditionally-black churches versus 25% among all other Christian churches) and to provide voter's guides for congregants (53% compared to 23%).

Significant proportions of regular church attenders indicated an interest in receiving biblical teaching from their church about various social and political issues in congregations where that topic had not already been addressed from the pulpit. The unaddressed topics of greatest interest were immigration and border security (31%), artificial intelligence (29%), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (28%), the role and authority of government (28%), and issues related to crime, law enforcement, law and order (25%).

<b>Issues of Greatest Influence on Which Candidate To Support Among Christians Who Regularly Attend Church Services</b>	
<b>Issue of Interest</b>	
Inflation, cost of living	67%
Economy (in general)	64%
Immigration, border control	60%
Crime, law and order	59%
Poverty, homelessness	43%
Poor leadership, government mismanagement	42%
Abortion	41%
Quality of life	40%
Gun ownership and laws	39%
Terrorism, national security	38%
Unemployment, jobs	38%
Political corruption	37%
Federal deficit/debt	33%
Justice, court system	29%
Public school education	29%
Moral decline	23%
Racial conflict and discrimination	22%
Unity, overcoming national division	20%
None of these	1%
Issues will not determine who you vote for	1%

Source: Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, N=2,000 voting-age, self-identified Christian adults who regularly attend a Christian church; nationally representative multi-mode survey, conducted August 26-September 6, 2024.

The survey found that the issues not being discussed by pastors—and those that are of greatest interest to congregants—are among the issues that will have the greatest degree of influence on which candidates churchgoing voters will support. The three issues identified by a majority of regular churchgoing Christians were the economy (listed by more than two-thirds of them); immigration and border control (a major issue of influence to 60%); and crime, law and order (59%).

The study found that just 1% of Christians who regularly attend church services said that the candidates' positions on the issues will not affect who they vote for.

<b>Interest in Election-Related Topics for Bible Teaching from Churches, According to Regular Church Attenders</b>			
<b>Do you want your church to teach this?</b>			
<b>Topic for church teaching:</b>	<b>Already did</b>	<b>Yes, want it</b>	<b>No, don't want</b>
Religious freedom	67%	18%	13%
Addressing poverty	63%	21%	16%
Abortion	49%	21%	29%
Crime, law and order, and law enforcement	45%	25%	30%
Same-sex marriage	42%	18%	39%
Role and authority of government	34%	28%	37%
Israel-Palestine conflict	33%	28%	38%
Transgenderism	27%	23%	49%
Immigration, border security	25%	31%	42%
AI, artificial intelligence	18%	29%	50%

Source: Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, N=2,000 voting-age, self-identified Christian adults who regularly attend a Christian church; nationally representative multi-mode survey, conducted August 26-September 6, 2024.

### **Church Engagement in Elections**

Church engagement in elections has been a subject of hot debate among pastors, congregants, public officials, journalists, and even irreligious voters. Controversies have swirled around questions such as the biblical mandate and responsibilities of churches in elections, the legal permissibility and boundaries for political engagement by churches, how much influence churches and their leaders have on voters, and more.

The survey asked regular attenders of Christian churches if they would prefer their church to be more involved or less involved in the 2024 election than it had been in recent elections. The results show that the churchgoing public is split. A plurality (42%) opted for the status quo, preferring that their church

maintain the same level of involvement as in the past. The other half of the respondents were evenly divided between saying they prefer their church to be more involved (25%) or less involved (27%).

Survey respondents were also given a scenario in which their church “registered voters, provided information about issues and candidates, encouraged people to vote (without endorsing anyone), and taught what the Bible says about current social issues.” They were then asked their opinion of such activity by their church. A comfortable majority (59%) said the activities described meant the church would be helping their community. Only one out of every 10 church-going Christians (11%) felt the description reflected a church that was harming the community. One-fifth (20%) said the activity would not make any difference, and the remaining 10% were not sure.

The same scenario was then repeated (i.e., the church engaged in voter registration, providing information about issues and candidates, encouraging congregants to vote, avoiding endorsing any candidates, and teaching the biblical view related to current issues). Respondents were asked if they felt their church, by doing those actions, would be carrying out its biblical responsibility or doing activities that are not a biblical responsibility. Overall, half (51%) said the church would be carrying out its biblical responsibility while one-third (33%) said it would be doing activities that are not a biblical responsibility. The other one in six people (16%) said they were not sure.

### **Citizenship, Faith, and Responsibility**

Veteran researcher Dr. George Barna was encouraged by the fact that the research showed how much of a difference churches and pastors can make in the election, if they choose to use that influence.

“Pastors often seek opportunities to have a positive influence in people’s lives and upon the culture, and to help the community in which their church is located,” the long-time researcher explained. “This research underscores the fact that simply encouraging people to vote in order to fulfill their biblical responsibility would not only be seen as doing their job while helping the community, but an estimated five million regular churchgoers would be likely to vote as a result of that simple exhortation. That, in itself, could change the outcome of the election by simply doing their job and getting congregants to fulfill one of their chief duties as an American citizen.”

Using the most recent presidential election as an example, Barna provided some context for the importance of church engagement in the electoral process. Alluding again to the 32 million Christians who regularly attend church services but are not likely to vote, Barna pointed out that gap between Mr. Trump and Mr. Biden in the hotly contested 2020 election was just 7 million votes.

“But even that number is misleading,” he commented. “The voting results that tell the real story are the margins of victory in the swing states. In 2020, the margins of victory were a combined 587,000 votes or so in nine battleground states, Cumulatively, they represented about one-fifth of the Electoral College votes—104 out of the 538 electoral votes. You only need 270 electoral votes to win the race, yet an average gap of just 60,000 votes in each of those states determined the winner of nearly 40 percent of the total electoral votes needed to win.”

Barna explained, “In that context, the 32 million Christians sitting in the pews each week who refuse to vote are a gamechanger. It’s low hanging fruit for pastors as they try to motivate those congregants to carry out their civic duty and honor God through their influence for things that matter in our culture.”

Barna was hopeful that more Christians would be energized about the election in the final month-plus of the cycle. “If church leaders, family members, and close friends will use their influence to get reticent voters from their churches to cast a ballot on November 5, the election outcome will be meaningfully affected. What a great way for believers and churches to use their platform—not by replacing their

spiritual mandate with political emphasis, but by teaching people to live a culturally engaged life based on biblical principles. That, of course, includes voting. And it's not only voting for the next president, but also determining who will hold many other federal, state and local offices, and what will happen with numerous referenda."

As Barna noted, "In a society where a huge majority of people want their lives to make a difference, and millions of Americans lament the lack of options for making their life count, what a sterling opportunity November 5 represents."

### **Survey Methodology**

The research was comprised of two related surveys conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University during August and September 2024.

The first survey was administered to a national sample of adults who self-identified as Christians and attended church services at least once a month. In total, 2,000 qualified adults were interviewed. To provide a more representative sample of the voting-age population, data were collected via a mixed-mode research approach, utilizing a combination of telephone and online interviews. Telephone surveys were conducted with the use of a national random-digit-dial sampling technique to maximize the inclusive and representative nature of respondents. The online interviews were conducted with a systematic sampling of members of a national research panel. To best approximate the national profile of the churchgoing Christian audience, minor statistical weighting was applied to the final database in regard to age and race. (The benchmark profile of the Christian churchgoing audience was based on data from the *American Worldview Inventory*, an annual, nationwide survey conducted by the Cultural Research Center.) For data based upon the aggregate sample of respondents, the estimated sampling error is a maximum of plus/minus 3 percentage points, based on the 95% confidence interval. Interviews were conducted from two days after the completion of the Democrat National Convention (August 26) through September 6, 2024. The average interview lasted 17 minutes.

The second survey was conducted among a representative sample of all voting-age adults (18 and over) in the United States. In that study, a sample of 1,000 adults was conducted online using systematic and quota sampling among members of a national research panel. To reflect national adult population norms, minimal statistical weighting was applied to the final database to balance the sample with regard to respondent age. (Other important demographics were already reflective of population norms.) The estimated sampling error is a maximum of plus/minus 4 percentage points for the aggregate sample of respondents, based on the 95% confidence interval. The interviews were conducted from September 18-22, 2024, with the average interview lasting 15 minutes.

### **About the Cultural Research Center**

The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University in Glendale, Arizona, conducts the annual *American Worldview Inventory* as well as other nationwide surveys regarding worldview and cultural transformation. National studies completed by the Cultural Research Center (CRC) have investigated topics related to family, values, lifestyle, spiritual practices, and politics.

One of the groundbreaking efforts by CRC has been the worldview-related surveys conducted among the ACU student population. The first-of-its-kind *ACU Student Worldview Inventory* is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final time just prior to graduation. The results of that student census enable the University to track and address the worldview development of its students from a longitudinal perspective.

CRC is guided by Dr. George Barna, Director of Research, and Dr. Tracy Munsil, Executive Director. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. The Center works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Results from past surveys conducted by CRC and information about the Cultural Research Center are available at [www.CulturalResearchCenter.com](http://www.CulturalResearchCenter.com).

Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at [www.ArizonaChristian.edu](http://www.ArizonaChristian.edu).

### **About George Barna and *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul***

In addition to being a professor at Arizona Christian University and Director of Research of the Cultural Research Center at ACU, George Barna is a veteran researcher of 40-plus years and author of 60 books. His most recent book is *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*, which immediately became a bestseller on Amazon upon its release in late 2023.

*Raising Spiritual Champions*, published by [Arizona Christian University Press](#) in collaboration with [Family Research Council](#) (Washington, D.C.) and Texas-based [Fedd Books](#), covers a variety of topics helpful to parents and Christian leaders. The volume includes research-based descriptions of how a child's worldview develops; the relationships between worldview and discipleship; how parents can develop a simple plan to guide their child to a biblical worldview, and how to become a disciple of Jesus Christ; the role churches and godly church leaders can play in that process; measuring the worldview of children; and more.

[Click here](#) for more information about *Raising Spiritual Champions* or visit [www.RaisingSpiritualChampionsBook.com](http://www.RaisingSpiritualChampionsBook.com). For information about discounts for quantity orders, email [info@culturalresearchcenter.com](mailto:info@culturalresearchcenter.com).