



U.S. Churchgoers Are Increasingly Ambivalent about Family and Abortion

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(GLENDALE, AZ) Even regular churchgoers are increasingly uncertain about the definition of family and related moral issues. A new national survey reveals that many of the nation's faithful are significantly influenced by the broader cultural upheaval over how family is defined and what to believe about abortion.

While churchgoers still differ somewhat from adults who do not attend church, the research shows that the gap between the two groups is narrowing. Traditional understanding of family and longstanding opposition to abortion appear to be waning within the Christian church.

In fact, the study found widespread uncertainty among churchgoing adults on both issues. No single definition of family received majority support, with responses ranging from a traditional, biblical model to more fluid cultural or relational descriptions.

And attitudes toward abortion have also shifted significantly over the past two years. The share of churchgoers identifying as pro-life dropped sharply, while support for a pro-choice position increased. These changes were especially pronounced among evangelicals and younger adults.

The findings come from a national survey of 1,000 regular churchgoers, commissioned by [Family Research Council](#) and conducted by the [Cultural Research Center](#) at [Arizona Christian University](#) under the direction of veteran researcher Dr. George Barna.

This is the first of two releases from [“Worldview and Social Issues: A National Survey of Churchgoing Americans,”](#) looking at American churchgoers' views of family and abortion. An upcoming second report will focus on worldview, politics, voting, and Israel.

Clarity about Family

The survey among adults who regularly attend a Christian church discovered that their ideas about what constitutes a family were varied. Presented with four alternative descriptions of “family,” none of the options was chosen by a majority. The most common reply, selected by slightly less than half of the adults (46%), proclaimed family to be a group of people united by God's design—a man and woman married to each other, plus their children and relatives.

About half as many churchgoers (22%) said the definition of family changes over time and differs across cultures, intimating that family is not a consistent construct. Almost as many (20%)

said family is any group of people who care for each other. The least common choice of definition was to portray family as any group of people who live together (6%). The remaining 6% said they could not accept any of the four descriptions.

A closer look at the data shows that no spiritual or demographic segment had even six in 10 churchgoers choose the biblical definition of family. The groups most likely to align with the biblical view were theologically-defined born-again Christians (59%), Pentecostal churchgoers (56%), and Asians (55%).

The segments least likely to embrace the biblical view of family included the 4% of regular churchgoers who do not believe/care/know if God exists (i.e. the Don'ts, of whom just 18% accepted the biblical definition of family); self-identified political liberals (29%); churchgoing LGBTQ adults (34%); upscale individuals (34%); and members of Gen Z (34%).

Despite not aligning with biblical teaching about the definition of family, most regular churchgoers agreed with a number of family-related perspectives. Those beliefs included:

- There are only two genders: male and female (79% agreed).
- It is important for society to facilitate families that have a father, a mother, and children living together (70%).
- A legitimate marriage is only between one man and one woman (68%).

There were some eye-opening demographic realities uncovered by the research. Size-wise, the Christian population is basically split down the middle between theologically-identified born-again Christians and adults who are not born-again. It is not surprising to find that of those two halves, the born-again portion is consistently more in tune with biblical perspectives on family.

However, the survey found a particularly large gap between the two segments related to their definitions of family. While most born-again churchgoers (59%) described family as a married mother and father living with their children, about one-third of the non-born-again group (38%) agreed that the description was the best portrait of what constitutes a family today.

Another pattern emerged: adults in evangelical or Pentecostal churches were more likely than those in mainline or independent Christian congregations to hold Bible-consistent views on all four indicators. Attenders of mainline Protestant churches were most likely to support gay marriage.

The survey further showed that the adult members of Gen Z (i.e., people currently in the 18 to 22 age bracket) were consistently *less likely* than older adults to accept the biblical perspective on family.

How Churchgoing Groups Think about Family							
Family Perspective	All churchgoing adults	Theologically identified born-again	Not theologically identified born-again	Attend Evangelical church	Attend mainline church	Attend independent or non-denom. church	Attend Pentecostal church
There are only two genders	79%	89%	73%	86%	76%	79%	90%
Important for society to facilitate families that have father, mother, and children living together	70	79	65	73	72	64	77
A legitimate marriage is only between one man and one woman	68	78	61	75	61	68	81
People united by God's design – one man, one woman married to each other, plus their children, relatives	46	59	38	54	45	43	56
Source: Family Research Council, 2025. National survey of 1,003 regular churchgoing adults; conducted July 2025.							

In fact, only a minority of churchgoing Gen Z adults agreed the best definition of family was a married mother and father who live with their children (34%), that it is important for society to facilitate such families living together (44%), or to accept the notion that the only morally legitimate marriage is one male married to one female (49%).

And even though a majority of the churchgoing Gen Z group agreed that there are only two genders, the proportion embracing that view (60%) was considerably smaller than that of the other three adult generations (76% of Millennials, 81% of Gen X, and 81% of Boomers).

Making Sense of Abortion

Despite being a high-profile moral issue for the past 50 years, Americans have been both divided in their position on abortion and confused by the substance and nuances related to the issue. The findings from the FRC survey underscore that uncertainty, even among Christian churchgoers.

A careful analysis of the opinions held on six abortion-related measures in the survey indicates that three out of every four churchgoers (73%) hold inconsistent opinions related to this subject. In other words, three-quarters of churchgoers fluctuated between pro-life and pro-abortion positions on the six abortion-related measures in question. In addition, about one out of every 10 churchgoers admitted that they do not know enough about the issue to hold a substantive position on the factors examined.

Church Equipping

About half of churchgoing adults (53%) estimated that their church preached or taught about abortion in the weekend worship services at least once a year. Overall, two-thirds of respondents who attend a Catholic church (67%) and half of adults attending a Protestant church (48%) claimed to have been taught about abortion in the past year. People who attend a Protestant church were more likely than those regularly attending a Catholic church to assert that their church *never* teaches about abortion-related topics (26% vs. 16%). Within the Protestant community, people regularly attending mainline churches were the most likely to indicate their church avoids the topic (38%).

The churchgoing population was open—but lukewarm—to the idea of their church providing more biblical worldview education regarding abortion and the value of life. Only one-quarter of them (28%) found that idea “very desirable,” with an additional one-third (32%) describing that possibility as “somewhat desirable.” That combined 60% in favor of such teaching was down from 71% in 2023.

Evidence of the Need for Clarity

Churchgoing adults are divided in their reactions to abortion, at least partially due to their ignorance about biblical principles on the matter. Only half (51%) said the Bible is clear and decisive in its teaching about the morality of aborting a child; 21% said the Bible is unclear or ambiguous on the matter; 17% said the Bible does not address the morality of abortion; and 11% said they do not know.

Reflecting the confusion and ambivalence in the pews, among the half of regular churchgoers who claimed the Bible is clear and decisive on the topic, only one-half (53%) described themselves as pro-life, nearly one-third (30%) self-identified as pro-choice, and the remaining one in six held indeterminate views on the subject.

The Christian community’s tepid stance on abortion reflects declining biblical knowledge and information about abortion. In the past two years, the share saying the Bible is clear on abortion dropped 14 points (from 65%), while those viewing it as unclear, ambiguous, or silent rose by 10 points.

Majority Views Aligned with Scripture

Some positive news for Bible-believing Christians emerged in the survey findings. Large majorities of consistent churchgoers held biblical perspectives on three factors that are at least tangentially related to killing the unborn.

- More than four out of five (84%) said they believe that every person is made in the likeness of God. The segments least onboard with this belief were churchgoers under 30 years old and those who are LGBTQ.
- An equal proportion (83%) claimed to believe that every human being has undeniable value and dignity. Blacks and LGBTQ adults who regularly attend a Christian church lagged in their acceptance of this truth.
- Three-quarters (75%) said they believe the God of the Bible is the only author of life. Far fewer members of Gen Z (54%) embrace this principle. Among those who do not believe in, know for certain, or care about the existence God, only (44%) agreed.

Self-Identification

The churchgoing public has undergone a number of dramatic attitudinal shifts in the past two years, based on a comparison with a similar research study conducted by FRC by Dr. Barna in 2023. Currently, just 43% described themselves as pro-life, down from 63% in 2023. More than one-third said they are pro-choice (35%, up from 22%). Among the remaining individuals, 15% were leaning one way or the other but could be convinced otherwise, and 7% said they did not know where they stand on the issue.

The 20-point drop in churchgoers identifying as pro-life is driven mainly by those attending evangelical churches (down 33 points since 2023), political liberals (down 30 points), those with no education beyond high school (down 29 points), and adults under 50 (down 26 points).

The survey also examined other aspects of belief and behavior related to abortion, including the participation of regular-churchgoers in having an abortion, the types of information that most influence their views on the subject, some of the insights they believe the Bible provides regarding the beginning of life, and how often they want their church to address abortion from the pulpit.

Understanding the findings

According to David Closson, Director of the Center for Biblical Worldview at Family Research Council, the findings are troubling.

“It’s deeply discouraging to see the share of churchgoers identifying as pro-life drop so dramatically,” Closson stated. “For decades, Christians have led the way in defending the dignity of unborn life, but these findings reveal just how much cultural confusion has seeped into the church.”

Closson continued, “When the people of God lose moral clarity on an issue as fundamental as the sanctity of life, it signals a serious discipleship crisis. Scripture could not be clearer that

every human life is made in the image of God and therefore possesses immeasurable worth (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139). The decline in pro-life conviction among those who regularly attend church should drive pastors and Christian leaders back to the pulpit with renewed urgency to teach what the Bible says about life.”

Closson still saw some bright spots in the new findings.

“Even amid these concerning trends, there are encouraging signs,” he noted. “The vast majority of churchgoers still affirm that every person is made in God’s image and that life originates from Him alone. Those are profoundly important starting points for rebuilding a biblical worldview on issues like abortion and family. The fact that many still affirm these truths shows the foundation is not lost—it simply needs to be reinforced through faithful preaching and intentional discipleship.”

He stressed the need for pastors to respond and guide their churches to understand these issues from a biblical perspective.

“The data in the report underscores that confusion inside the church is not primarily a political problem; it’s a discipleship problem,” Closson explained. “The next generation is being catechized daily by social media, entertainment, and academia, often far more effectively than by the local church.”

According to Closson, “Pastors and Christian educators must reclaim their calling to ‘equip the saints’ (Eph. 4:12) by teaching a full-orbed biblical worldview. This is not the time for silence or vagueness. At the moment when Gen Z is demonstrating renewed interest in the church and spiritual disciplines, Christians must once again proclaim with clarity that life is sacred, marriage is God’s design, and truth is not up for negotiation.”

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This is the first of two reports from “Social Issues and Worldview,” focusing on findings related to churchgoers’ views of family and abortion. The second report will focus on worldview, politics, voting, and Israel.

To access the full publication, “Social Issues and Worldview: A National Survey of Churchgoing Americans,” please visit FRC.org/Worldview.

About the Research

In July of 2025, a national survey was conducted regarding public opinion related to a variety of social issues, as well as responses regarding their worldview. That survey incorporated responses from 1,003 adults, age 18 or older, who attend worship services at a Christian church at least once a month, either in-person or online. Based on national tracking by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, that segment of the population constituted 42% of all U.S. adults in 2025.

The survey included 37 questions related to faith and morality (in addition to nine demographic questions) that were part of a similar survey conducted by FRC in June of 2023, allowing direct comparisons. The survey questionnaire designed for the 2025 project was constructed by FRC and the Cultural Research Center, substituting about two dozen questions from the 2023 survey with a similar number of questions of current interest to FRC.

The project was managed by David Closson and Brent Keilen, of the Family Research Council, and by George Barna, who serves as a Senior Research Fellow for Family Research Council (FRC), and as a professor and Director of Research at the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University.

About Dr. George Barna

Dr. George Barna is a Senior Research Fellow for the Family Research Council. He is also the Director of Research at Arizona Christian University's Cultural Research Center and a professor at the University. Author of more than 60 books, Barna's most-recent book is [*Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul* \(Arizona Christian University Press, 2023\)](#).

Barna is also the developer of the [ACU Worldview Assessment](#), an online tool that draws on his four decades of research to measure worldview beliefs and behaviors—evaluating five core categories of worldview, as well as the essential “Seven Cornerstones” that determine the likelihood of developing a biblical worldview.

About Family Research Council

Founded in 1983, [Family Research Council](#) is a nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to articulating and advancing a family-centered philosophy of public life. The mission of FRC is to champion marriage and family as the foundation of civilization, the seedbed of virtue, and the wellspring of society. FRC shapes public debate and formulates public policy that values human life, upholds the institutions of marriage and the family, and defends religious liberty. Believing that God is the author of life, liberty, and the family, FRC promotes the Judeo-Christian worldview as the basis for a just, free, and stable society.

In addition to providing policy research and analysis for the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government, FRC seeks to inform the news media, the academic community, business leaders, and the general public about family issues that affect the nation from a biblical worldview.

The [Center for Biblical Worldview](#) exists within FRC to equip Christians with a biblical worldview and train them to advance and defend the faith in their families, communities, and the public square. The Center is led by Dr. David Closson.

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. The Cultural Research Center (CRC) developed and implemented the *ACU Student Worldview Inventory*, which is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final time just prior to a student's graduation. The results of that student census enable the University to track and address the worldview development of its students from a longitudinal perspective.

The Center works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.ArizonaChristian.edu.