

Barna: Why the Story of the Black Church Is Important for America

Barna Group today released the first of several research reports on the state of the Black church in America. As the U.S. honored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 18, this report underscores the tremendous role of the Black church in American history, progress and national culture.

This report was developed in partnership with Black Millennial Cafe, Urban Ministries Inc., American Bible Society, Compassion International, Gloo and . The study describes how Black Americans, including members of predominantly Black churches, perceive the role of the church and their political views. The first report highlights several interesting trends, including that, compared to previous years, Black Christians are finding more comfort and control in being part of the church, while at the same time feeling more powerless politically.

[Click here to read about the report.](#)

“I believe in vigilance in every area of potential injury to Black communities,” said Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker, CEO of Black Millennial Cafe. “This data on perceptions of political powerlessness allowed the church, social justice organizations and spaces I occupy as a data activist to activate Black voters. Twenty-plus years without extensive data in Black faith communities left a deficit in resources and prohibited opportunities. As a lead researcher of this study, I am proud of the work this project will do for Black churches and communities in an age when racial disparities are being highlighted and exposed as an opportunity for change. This data assists in that change.”

“This important research further establishes the Black community’s understanding that the primacy of Christian faith, justice and practice is embraced and propelled in times of financial crisis and political upheaval,” said C. Jeffrey Wright, president and CEO of Urban Ministries Inc. “This study underscores this historic moment, in the midst of a devastating pandemic and the aftermath of one of our nation’s most contentious transitions of power, when America must now undertake a second Reconstruction.”

“The story of the Black church in America is important for our nation and for Christianity,” said Brooke Hempell, senior vice president of research at Barna. “We have conducted hundreds of studies about faith and culture, and we have found consistently that Black Americans have a more active faith—in prayer, reading Scripture and worship—than other racial groups in this country. We are excited to share the story of this legacy with fresh data.”

Notable Findings

1. Being associated with the Black church is comforting because it is a place where Black people have control over their lives.

- 1996: Agree 50%; disagree 41%; not sure 9% (Black adults).
- 2020: Agree 65%; disagree 36%; not sure 12% (Black adults).
- 2020: Agree 80%; disagree 15%; not sure 5% (Black church churchgoers).

2. When it comes to politics, Black people generally feel powerless.

- 1996: Agree 61%; disagree 34%; not sure 5% (Black adults).
- 2020: Agree 73%; disagree 27%; (Black adults).
- 2020: Agree 75%; disagree 25%; (Black church churchgoers).

3. What is your political identity?

- All U.S. adults (registered + affiliate as): Democrat 43%; Republican 36%; Independent 16%; no affiliation 5%.
- All Black adults (consider themselves to be): Democrat 67%; Republican 6%; Independent 19%; no affiliation 8%.
- Black Church churchgoers (consider themselves to be): Democrat 76%; Republican 5%; Independent 14%; no affiliation 5%.

About Barna

Barna Group is a social research and resource company that is focused on the intersection of faith and culture. The company is a private, non-partisan organization that has been conducting and analyzing original research to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984. Barna Group has worked with thousands of businesses, nonprofit organizations and churches across the U.S. and around the world, ranging from Protestant to Catholic organizations and leaders.

About the State of the Black Church Project

This extensive and multidimensional study, conducted by Barna Group along with a collection of ministry partners, provides original research on the Black church in the United States. This study gives church leaders a clearer sense of the needs, perceptions and values of Black Americans, inside and outside the church, based on the most robust research conducted in over 20 years.

The project covers the most pressing subjects within the church today, such as:

- Spiritual identity and expression.
- Activism and civic engagement.

- Leadership pipelines and pastoral transitions.
- Gentrification.
- The legacy of historically Black churches.
- The flourishing of Black Americans and churchgoers.
- The impact of COVID-19 on churches.
- The role of women in the church and more.

The full Trends in the Black Church report will be released in June 2021, exploring key findings and commentary from pastors, experts, scholars and thought leaders within the Black church.

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