

Bible engagement drops 21 percent during pandemic

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PHILADELPHIA, (BP)—Americans are less engaged with the Bible and are less likely to say the Bible influences their lifestyle than in previous years, the American Bible Society said in its [2022 State of the Bible report](#).

Scripture engagement is down 21 percent from 2021. Only 49 million Americans fit the American Bible Society criteria of Scripture engaged in 2022, down from 64 million in 2021 and 71 million in 2020.

On a scale of 1 to 6, Americans' perception of how much Scripture impacts their behavior has steadily declined since the early days of the pandemic, registering 3.35 in 2022, down from 4.13 in June 2020. Pre-pandemic, Americans registered 4.39 in Scripture-impacted behavior.

"Perhaps the Bible has been neglected or simply taken for granted as people dealt with the challenges of reassembling their lives after a disruptive pandemic," the American Bible Society wrote in the report released April 6.

"A significant number of people say they 'never seem to have enough time' to read the Bible. But we also find that attitudes are changing. This year, more people say that America would stay 'about the same' if no one read the Bible. This news provides a challenge for everyone involved in Bible ministry."

Nearly 26 million Americans either stopped interacting with the Bible altogether or reduced their Bible usage, the American Bible Society said.

Need to recognize implications

Christian leaders must recognize the implications of this unique moment in history and respond strategically, American Bible Society Director of Ministry Engagement John Farquhar said in the report.

“The data (and our personal experiences as leaders) tell us that American adults—particularly Christian adults—are struggling to live out their faith in a social context that has been upended by the pandemic,” Farquhar said. “They do not see a way to connect their faith to meaningful action through generosity, community and relationships.”

He encouraged innovation, energy and deep compassion in ministry at this time, and work that reconnects people to Christ-centered relationships and service.

The American Bible Society will reveal the findings of the 2022 report in increments, releasing one additional chapter each month throughout 2022. Upcoming chapters will examine The Faith of our Mothers, Hope and Flourishing in America, The Bible and Society, Faith Across the Generations, Digging In (a deep dive into how people use the Bible), and A Generous Life, ending with a wrap up of findings and the research agenda for 2023.

“Every year the State of the Bible brings a fresh perspective on the reality God already knows,” American Bible Society President and CEO Robert L. Briggs said. “Our purpose is not merely to satisfy curiosity, or to cause either panic or celebration. It’s a starting point. Where do we go from here? What is God calling us to do in response to this reality, to advance toward the future point God has in mind?”

The 2022 report, conducted in collaboration with the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, is based on 2,598 responses

from a representative sample of adults 18 and older in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. The study was conducted online and on the telephone Jan. 10-28.