

God, family and country? Not exactly, poll reveals

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—“God, family and country” might make for a heart-tugging country music tune, but that’s not really how most Americans rank the strongest influences on their personal identity.

- ☒ The real order is family first (62 percent), followed by “being an American” (52 percent). “Religious faith” lolls way down in third place (38 percent)—if it’s mentioned at all, according to a survey from [the Barna Group](#).

The California-based Christian research company found another 18 percent of those surveyed said faith has a little to do with their idea of who they are, and nearly 20 percent scored its influence at zero.

Christians comprised the largest self-identified group in the survey, and Barna looked at them two ways. “Practicing” Christians—defined in the survey as self-identified Catholics, Protestants and Mormons who say they have attended church at least once in the last month and/or say religion is important to them—scored faith first, at a rate more than double the national average.

But they’re not most Christians—not by a long shot. The survey found only 37 percent of self-identified Christians are “practicing,” while 64 percent are non-practicing, said Roxanne Stone, a Barna vice president and the designer and analyst of the study. That may account for the third place finish for “faith” in the overall standing.

The results were also skewed by age:

- **Family first:** Millennials (53 percent); Gen X-ers (61 percent); Baby Boomers (64 percent); Elders (76 percent)
- **Being an American:** Millennials (34 percent); Gen X-ers (37 percent); Baby Boomers (66 percent); Elders (80 percent)
- **Religious faith:** Millennials (28 percent); Gen X-ers (34 percent); Baby Boomers (45 percent); Elders (46 percent)

“Gen-Xers and Millennials have a reputation for wanting to be individualists—for wanting to break away from traditional cultural narratives and to resist being ‘boxed in’ by what they perceive as limiting expectations,” Stone said.

Barna surveyed 1,000 U.S. adults online Feb. 3-11. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.