

# Half of Christians believe slavery still affects African Americans

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—Fifty percent of practicing Christians in the United States say the history of American slavery continues to significantly affect the African American community today, a Barna study shows.

A slightly smaller percentage of the general population of U.S. adults surveyed (46 percent) agrees that, almost 400 years after slaves were brought to Jamestown, Va., there remains a “significant impact on the African American community.”

A bit more than a quarter of both practicing Christians and the general population (28 percent) say our society has moved past the history of slavery.

Barna, a nonpartisan for-profit research firm, defined practicing Christians as people who identified themselves as Christians, who said they attended a worship service in the past month, and said their faith is very important in their lives. The findings are included in a new report, [“Where Do We Go from Here?”](#)

Sixteen percent of practicing Christians responded to the question about slavery by saying they were unsure, compared to 18 percent of Americans overall. Seven percent of practicing Christians said they had not considered the issue, compared to 9 percent of the general population.

# Generational and racial differences noted

The study also showed sharp differences in views across racial and generational lines. While 79 percent of black practicing Christians agree that slavery's effects continue today, 42 percent of white practicing Christians share that view.

Conversely, 34 percent of white practicing Christians say society has moved beyond the history of slavery, while only 9 percent of black practicing Christians say they hold that view.

Millennials, defined in the survey as individuals born from 1984 to 1998, were the group most likely to agree there are continuing effects of slavery, with 65 percent saying so. The findings for older groups with similar views were as follows: Generation X (born 1965 to 1983)—55 percent; Boomers (born 1946 to 1964)—40 percent; Elders (born before 1946)—41 percent.

Barna's report included reflections from scholars and faith leaders about how Christians can move ahead in addressing racism.

"Churches need to preach on racial issues and return to preach on them again and again," said Mark E. Strong, a lead pastor of Life Change Church in Portland, Ore., in a statement in a summary of the report.

"This is part of spiritual formation, and like other formation issues—prayer, discipleship, generosity—it demands emphasis and regular, strong teaching."

The study, conducted with The Reimagine Group, which produces resources aimed at improving churches, is based on online surveys of 1,007 U.S. adults and 1,502 practicing adult Christians. The surveys, conducted between April and August 2018, have a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9

percent for the general population and plus or minus 2.3 percent for practicing Christians.