



YOUNG & YOUNG ADULT UMC SURVEY

What 985 Young Methodists Told Us

Three priorities for the 2026 Leadership Gathering

985

respondents

4

languages

20 min

this brief

Who Responded

985

Total Respondents
Worldwide

63.9%

From the
United States

26.4%

From Outside
the United States

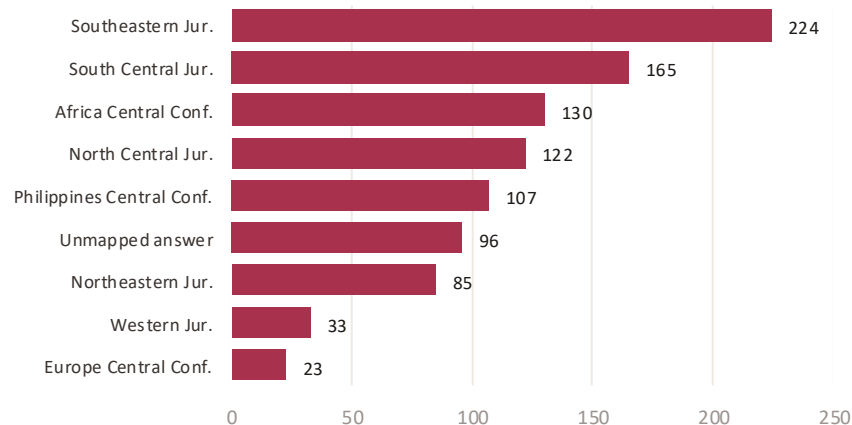
83%

Feel Connected to
a Local Church

Respondents by Age

25-35 years	54.2%	534
16-18 years	12.2%	120
19-22 years	11.7%	115
22-25 years	11.1%	109
12-15 years	8.9%	88
35-45 (Philippines)	1.9%	19

Respondents by jurisdiction / central conference



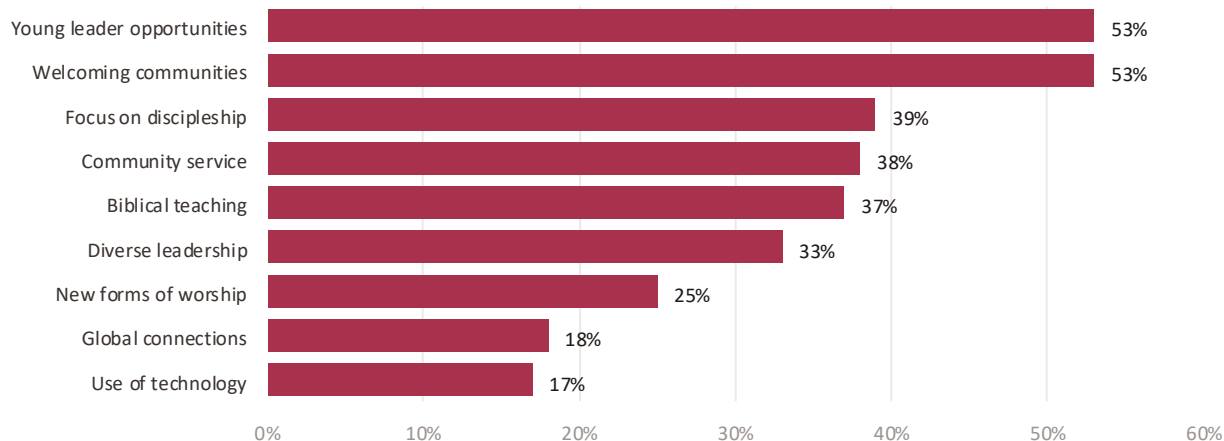


They Are Not Asking for Programs

53%

chose “more opportunities for young leaders” as a top priority for the church in 10-20 years, the joint highest of any option

What matters most for the church in 10-20 years (share selecting “more” or “stronger” of each)



Key Findings

Young leadership and welcoming communities are the top two priorities in every age group, every region and every level of connection

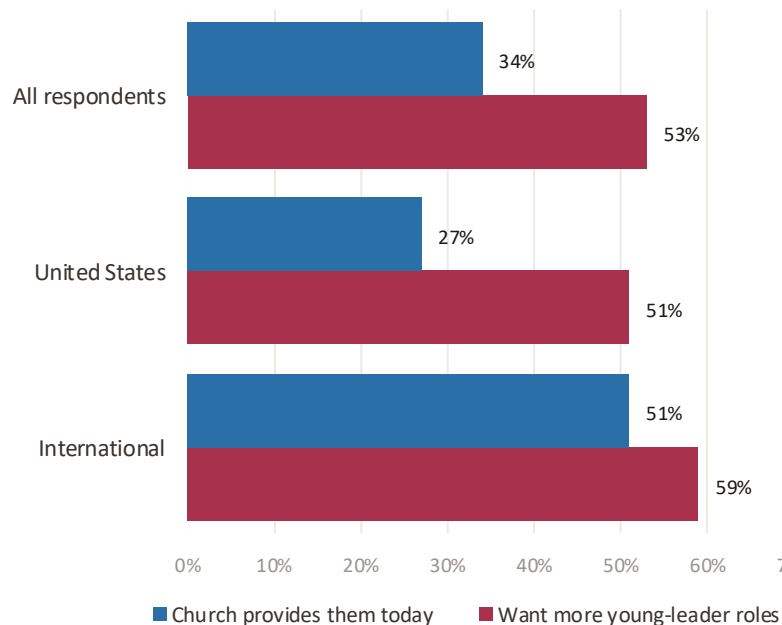
Only 34% say their church currently provides leadership opportunities: the fifth-ranked strength

Respondents can select up to three answers, so columns total more than 100%

Discipleship ranks third at 39%, ahead of community service and biblical teaching

Technology ranks last at 17%. These respondents are not asking for a more digital church

The Leadership Gap



A 19-point gap between what young people want and what they say they get. In the United States it is 24 points.

The Signal

Young leadership is the joint-top future priority in every age group, every region and every level of connection. It is the most consistent finding in the survey.

The Gap

53% want more opportunities for young leaders; only 34% say their church already provides them. Internationally the gap is 8 points. In the United States it is 24.

The Drift

The sense of not being served grows with age: 10% at 12-18, 16% at 19-25, 22% at 25 and over. The institutional drop-off happens after high school.



Discipleship Formation

Third by Ranking, First by Consequence

45%

Say their church helps them grow spiritually

39%

Want greater focus on discipleship in 10-20 yrs

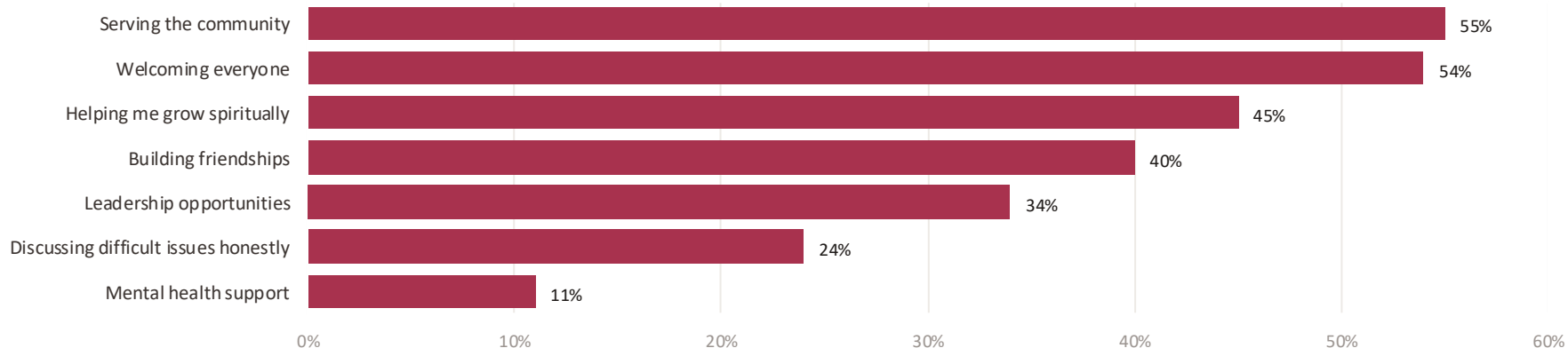
37%

Want stronger biblical teaching

21%

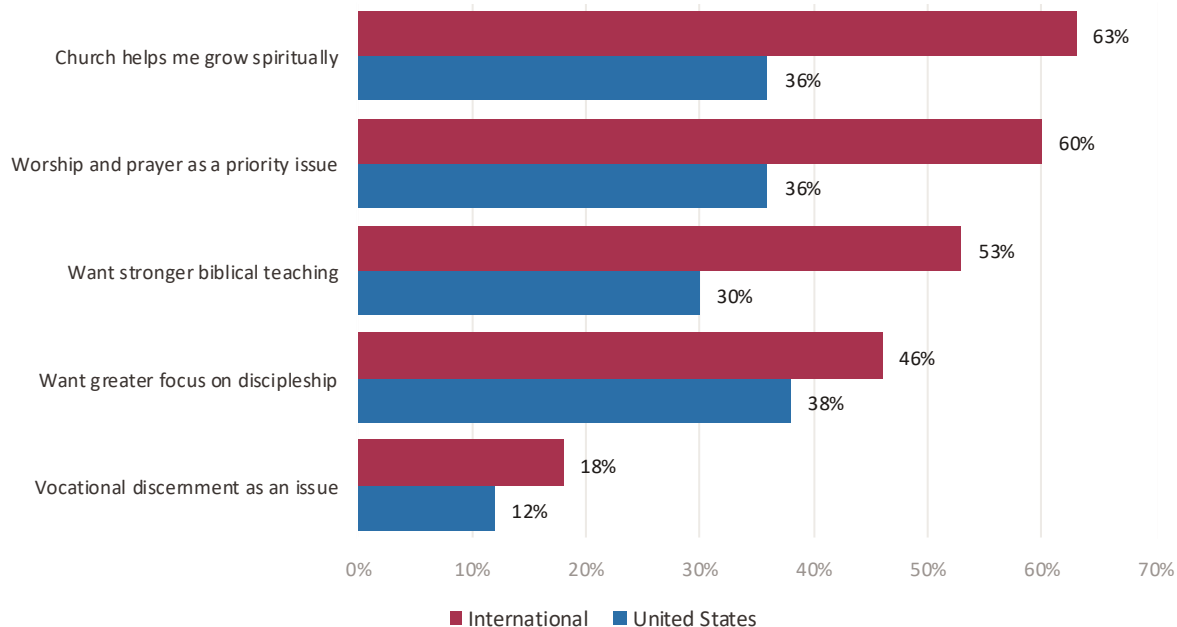
Of the disconnected say they grow (49% connected)

What young people say their church does best



Two Different Conversations About Formation

United States respondents (n=629) against respondents outside the United States (n=260)



Formation Reads as Strength Abroad

63% of international respondents say their church helps them grow spiritually. In the US it is 36%. This 27-point gap is the widest in the entire survey.

Two Vocabularies

Internationally, formation language dominates: worship, prayer, biblical teaching, discipleship. In the US the leading issues are loneliness, mental health and inclusion.

Not a Disagreement

Both groups want formation. They describe it differently. A single global formation message will land as foreign to one side or the other.



Global Connectedness

Strong Overall, and Unevenly Distributed

83%

Feel at least somewhat connected to a church

60%

Feel “very connected” to a local church

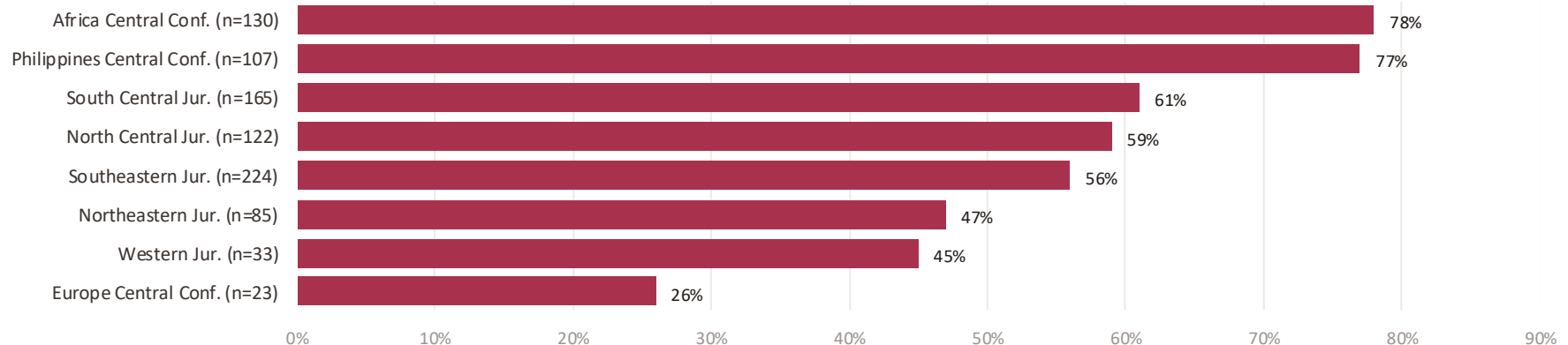
56%

US respondents who feel very connected

73%

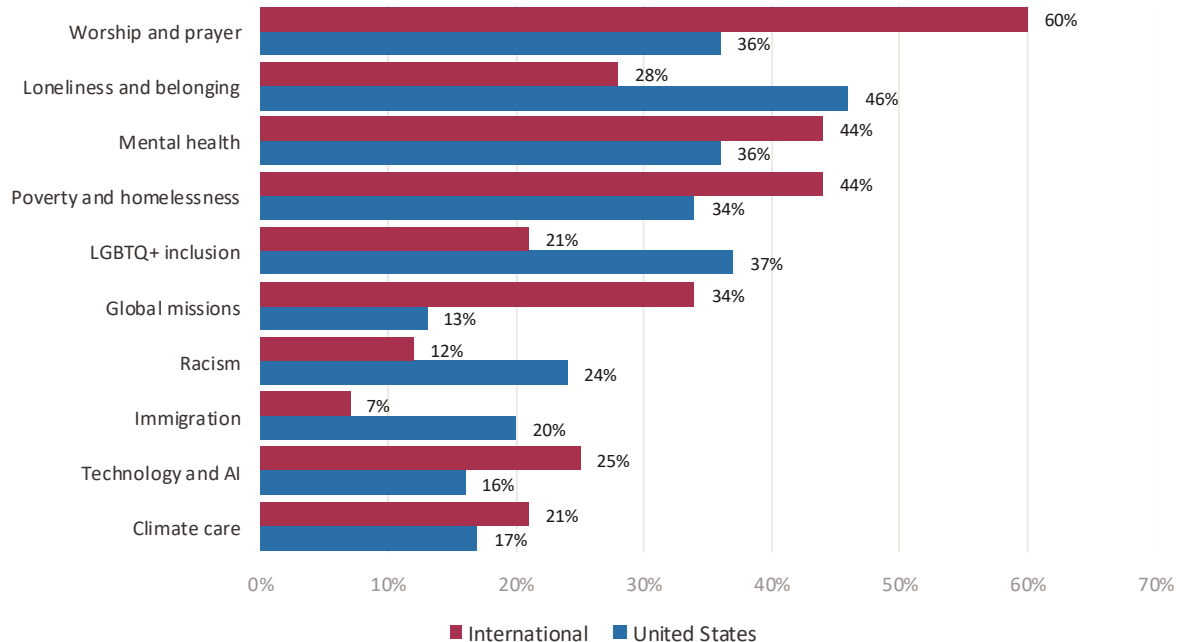
International respondents who feel very connected

Share feeling “very connected” to a local church, by region



One Church, Two Agendas

Issues young people most want the church to engage, United States against international



What the Split Means

Region, not age

Across 29 answer options the US/international gap clears 15 points on 8 of them. The age gap clears it on 1.

Two vocabularies

Worship, prayer and global mission abroad. Loneliness, inclusion and justice in the US.

Shared ground

Mental health, poverty and young leadership rank high on both sides. Start the conversation there.

The weight problem

64% of respondents are American. A simple global average will sound like the US speaking for everyone.

Three Priorities, One Ask

These are not separate issues. Young people describe them as one request.



Youth & Young Adult Engagement

53%

top priority

Access to leadership is the joint-top future priority in every cut of the data, and only 34% say their church provides it today.

Give them decision rights, not just activities



Discipleship Formation

45%

say church forms them

Formation is the strongest correlate of connection: 49% of the connected say their church helps them grow, against 21% of the disconnected.

Formation is what makes the other two stick



Connectedness Global View

83%

feel connected

Strong overall, but the agenda splits by region far more than by age. The US/international gap clears 15 points on 8 of 29 options.

Design for two agendas, not one average

What 985 Young Voices Ask of Leaders

1

Seats, not seminars

Young leadership is the joint-top priority everywhere and only 34% say their church provides it. Name specific roles, budgets and votes that young people will hold by a stated date.

2

Close the post-18 gap

The sense of not being served doubles between ages 12-18 and 25-plus. Churches keep teenagers and lose young adults. Fund the 19-30 ministry that most respondents say does not exist.

3

Make formation the spine

49% of connected young people say their church helps them grow spiritually, against 21% of the disconnected. Formation is what converts welcome into attachment.

4

Plan for two agendas

Region divides these respondents far more than age does. A single global message will misdescribe about a quarter of them. Build regional tracks, not one average.

5

Report back with names and dates

Respondents repeatedly asked not to be consulted again without result. Publish what changed, who owns it and when it lands.



Form us deeply, trust us with real authority, and tell us what changed after you were done talking.

The consistent message of 985 young United Methodists, in four languages, from across the connection



Youth & Young Adult
Engagement



Discipleship
Formation



Connectedness
Global View