




Growing young statsheet

Powered by the Fuller Youth Institute
Pasadena, CA


📍 135 N Oakland Ave
Pasadena, CA
91182

☎️ + 01 626 584 5580
🖨️ + 01 626.584.5442
🌐 fulleryouthinstitute.org

Discover how our nation's leading churches are reaching the next generation.




The Fuller Youth Institute has spent three years engaging traditions representing 71% of U.S. Christians in one of the most comprehensive and collaborative ministry studies ever conducted.




Following a model analogous to Jim Collins' *Good To Great*, we went on the ground with 250 leading congregations that were intentionally diverse in size, denomination, region, and ethnicity, and compiled over 10,000 hours of data and interviews into over 10,000 pages of research.

Comprehensive.



Growing Young research was designed in three stages. Stage One utilized a quantitative and qualitative study of 373 church leaders from 259 nominated churches. Stage Two narrowed our focus with qualitative one-hour structured phone interviews of 535 congregational participants from 41 exemplary churches.

Stage Three involved in-person site visits to 12 of these churches, serving as illustrative case studies. These visits allowed for more in-depth analysis and a “thick description” of prior findings via observation, document analysis, and interviews.



Our research lab ran quantitative correlational analyses (ANOVAs) and qualitative interview transcript analysis by utilizing a modified CQR coding method, as well as additional semantic analysis using NVivo software.

Diverse.

We are proud of the diversity of churches studied in the Growing Young research. Our broad church sample was diverse in size, ethnicity, urban/rural, denomination, and socio-economic categorization.

Racial Identity

Approximately 50% of churches in Stage One and Stage Two were predominantly white. In Stage Three only 34% of churches were predominantly white. The remaining 66% of churches were ethnically-focused or multiethnic congregations.

Church body/Denominational affiliation

Over 21 denominations were represented among the Stage One churches, in addition to 43 congregations indicating no denominational affiliation. The largest five specific traditions represented were Baptist (32 churches), Presbyterian (32), United Methodist (26), Evangelical Covenant (17), and Roman Catholic (15).

Congregation Size

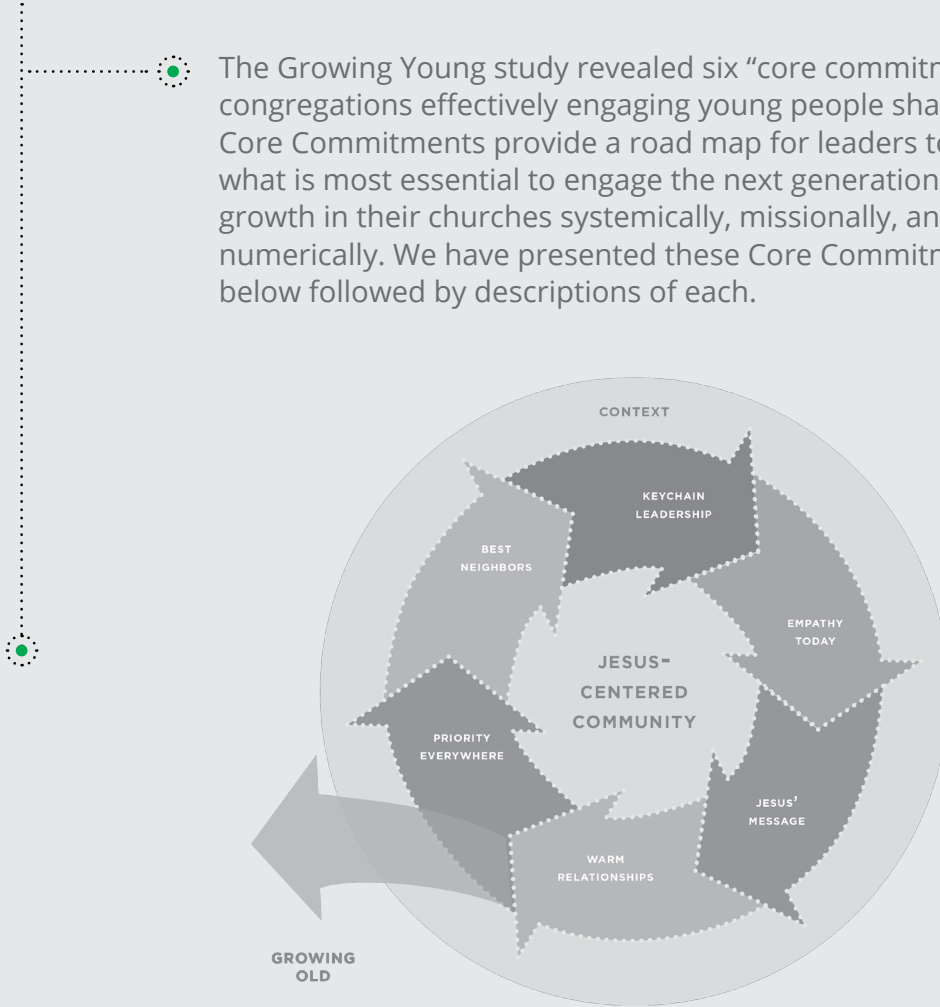
Churches ranged in size from under 100 participants to over 10,000 participants, the largest three categories being 1,001-3,000 (28 percent), 501-1,000 (24 percent), and 251-500 (15 percent).

Region of the US

Midwest (33%), West (31%), South (25%), Northeast (11%)

So what did we find out?

The Growing Young study revealed six “core commitments” that congregations effectively engaging young people shared. These Core Commitments provide a road map for leaders to focus on what is most essential to engage the next generation and nurture growth in their churches systemically, missionally, and often numerically. We have presented these Core Commitments visually below followed by descriptions of each.



Unlock keychain leadership

Instead of centralizing authority, empower others—especially young people.

Fuel a warm community

Instead of focusing on cool worship or programs, aim for warm peer and intergenerational friendships.

Empathize with today's young people

Instead of judging or criticizing, step into the shoes of this generation.

Prioritize young people

Instead of giving lip service to how much young people matter, look for creative ways to tangibly support, resource, and involve them in all facets of your congregation.

Take Jesus' message seriously

Instead of asserting formulaic gospel claims, welcome young people into a Jesus-centered way of life.

Be the best neighbors

Instead of condemning the world outside your walls, enable young people to neighbor well locally and globally.

What makes Growing Young different?

- Growing Young is grounded in a rich body of *academically-verified data*. It incorporates top previous ministry research and leading research from other fields including Fuller Theological Seminary's Schools of Psychology, Theology, Intercultural Studies. Unlike previous models based primarily on an isolated church's experiences or an isolated leader's observations, our team has integrated insights, ideas, and experiences from over 1,000 young people, parents, senior leaders, and other church leaders and staff.
- Second, it is *positive*. Amid resources that are often gloomy and theoretical, this project empowers leaders and parents with personal tools and simple church-wide shifts that can create lasting, hopeful change. Church leaders implementing Growing Young consistently feel inspired as they better engage young people, and relate that their entire church becomes invigorated.
- Third, it is *practical*. Growing Young's guided interviews and focus groups with leaders and young people across the country have unearthed what we all want most: proven ideas that we can easily adapt to our context that we know will make a significant difference.
- Finally, it's *collaborative*. National and pastoral leaders from 22 Evangelical and Mainline denominations, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, were involved in all stages of the research. In addition, an Expert Advisory Council and a Pastor Advisory Council, comprised of some of our nation's most influential ministry and thought leaders, provided input and support at key junctures during the research process. In fact, at a December 2015 Summit in Pasadena, denominational leaders representing 63% (yes, 63%!) of Christians in the US gathered to get a sneak preview of *Growing Young*.

How is it connected to Fuller Theological Seminary overall?

Over 25 faculty from the Fuller's School of Theology, the School of Psychology, and the School of Intercultural Studies collaborated on the research design and execution, as well as nearly 40 seminary students who participated as research assistants.

We think this project is a recent example that highlights what Fuller Seminary does best – listening to the most pressing needs of the church, convening the best and brightest scholars and practitioners to respond, and then delivering practical training.

Who else informed the research process?

Growing Young was informed and improved by many of the nation's leading scholars and practitioners in the fields of youth/young adult ministry and overall church health who serve on our two advisory boards. Our Expert Advisory Council includes Steve Argue, Fuller Theological Seminary; Andy Crouch, Christianity Today; Kenda Creasy Dean, Princeton Seminary; Mark DeVries, Ministry Architects; Reggie Joiner, Orange and reThink Group; David Kinnaman, Barna Research Group; Pamela King, Fuller Theological Seminary; Terry Linhart, Bethel College; Brad Lomenick, Blinc Consulting; Bob McCarty, National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry; Amy McEntee, National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association; Soong-Chan Rah, North Park Theological Seminary; Dave Rahn, Youth for Christ; Tyler Reagin, Catalyst; Andy Root, Luther Seminary; and Virginia Ward, Gordon-Conwell Seminary.

Our Pastor Advisory Council is comprised of Eugene Cho, Quest Covenant Church, Q Cafe, One Day's Wages, WA; Sergio De La Mora, Cornerstone Church, CA; Erwin Raphael McManus, Mosaic Church, CA; Brenda Salter McNeil, Quest Covenant Church and Seattle Pacific University School of Theology, WA; Carey Nieuwhof, Connexus Church, Ontario, Canada; Perry Noble, NewSpring Church, SC; John Ortberg, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, CA; Efrem Smith, World Impact, CA; Jill VerSteeg, Meredith Drive Reformed Church, IA; and Len Wenke, Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati, OH.