

Christianity's contributions mostly negative, Americans say

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(RNS) When asked about Christianity's recent contributions to society, Americans cited more negatives than benefits, according to a new survey.

The negative contribution cited most was hatred or violence in the name of Jesus, according to the Barna Group survey. Other frequently cited examples included opposition to gay marriage and the Roman Catholic Church's sex abuse scandal.

The positive contribution mentioned most was Christians' helping the poor, as well as evangelism and influencing the country's values.

"Overall, there was a more extensive and diverse list of complaints about Christians and their churches than there was of examples of the benefits they have provided to society," said the Barna Group, a Christian firm that researches U.S. faith and culture, in a report released Monday (Oct. 25).

Researchers, who asked open-ended questions, found that one in four respondents could not name a single positive contribution made by Christians in recent years to American society. Just 12 percent could not think of a single negative contribution.

The findings were based on telephone interviews Aug. 16-22 with a random sample of 1,000 U.S. adults and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.