



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 14, 2010

More Americans Are Going to Church

A recent Gallup poll has found that Americans are beginning to go to church more than they have in recent years. The increase may be small, but according to the researchers, there is a trend throughout the nation that is finding more Americans attending worship services on a regular basis.

Over the past two years Gallup has found a small surge in churchgoing, with 43.1 percent of Americans saying they attend church services regularly, compared to 42.1 percent in 2008.



The Gallup researchers said they believe that the increase is tied to something other than a lagging economy, noting that the increase has come even “as Americans’ economic confidence has also risen, suggesting that, instead of church attendance rising when economic times get bad, as some theorize, the opposite pattern may be occurring.”

The latest numbers come from more than 800,000 interviews Gallup researchers conducted between February 2008 and May 2010, with participants asked to report on how often they attend services at a church, synagogue, or mosque.

According to the Gallup study, 35 percent of respondents reported attending worship services at least once a week, with eight percent saying they attend almost every week. Another 11 percent said they attend only once every month, with 25 percent saying they seldom attend worship services, and 20 percent saying they never attend.

Gallup researchers suggested that the latest rise in church attendance may actually be tied to an aging demographic, noting that older Americans (65 and beyond) are statistically more inclined toward church attendance, and with more and more Baby-boomers reaching age 65, the church-going group is beginning to swell, making it probable that church attendance will continue to make a steady increase in the years ahead.

Gallup found the highest rate of church attendance among those defining themselves as conservative, as well as among non-Hispanic blacks. Conversely, researchers found that political and social liberals, Asians, and individuals aged 18 to 29 were the least likely to attend worship services on a regular basis.

In a similar survey, the Barna Group, which typically charts Evangelical Christian trends, recently explored the makeup of that segment of America’s population most involved in specifically Christian modes of worship, including church attendance, small-group Bible study and prayer, Sunday school, church volunteering, and house churches. Among Barna’s findings:

- A majority of those attending church weekly in America are women (53 percent). Similarly, women make up the majority of those involved in small-group prayer meetings and Bible studies (60 percent), adult Sunday school programs (59 percent), and church volunteer efforts (57 percent). Only in home church settings was attendance by men (56 percent) greater than that of women.



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- Single adults, especially those who have never been married, are often conspicuously missing from church, with 33 percent of those attending church being married. Barna found that single adults who have never been married represent fewer than one-fifth of adults who attend church or who are involved in church volunteering. Only in a home church setting was there an even split between single and married participants.
- As with the Gallup findings, older Americans dominate church attendance, Barna researchers found, with 56 percent of those attending church regularly being aged 45 and older, compared to 44 percent who were between the ages of 18 and 44. Similarly, two-thirds of those participating in small-group and house church worship were 45 years old and above, as were three-fifths of those who volunteered at church and attended Sunday school.
- While those defining themselves as Catholic compose 25 percent of all worshippers in the Barna survey, they comprise only ten percent of those involved in small group Bible study and prayer, Sunday school, and church volunteer activity. Only six percent of Catholics say they are involved in a house church.
- African-Americans make up 13 percent of the nation's adult population, but they account for a significant percentage of those involved in church attendance and other worship activities, including 27 percent of the nation's small group participants and 30 percent of those attending a house church. Comparatively, white Americans are less involved in small group and house church worship models, and involvement by Hispanics in these worship activities is statistically minimal.

While the Gallup poll focused on general church and worship attendance by Americans, the Barna survey broadened its research to explore the overall profile of Christian worshippers across the nation. David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, noted that what defines an active Christian today goes beyond attendance at a Sunday morning church service.

The "one-size-fits-all" profile of the American worshipper no longer works in our nation's rapidly changing culture. "Significant diversity exists within the 'group' involvement of the American Christian community," he said, which means that individuals and families are, by and large, not content with merely going to a sit-down service once a week any more.

What does that mean for how today's pastors and spiritual shepherds relate to those they are called to lead? Because there are so many needs and preferences," said Kinnaman "faith leaders must acknowledge that their churches and faith communities cannot be 'all things to all people.' Clarity in vision and purpose is crucial to providing relevant and transformational settings where people can grow spiritually."



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