

Church Attendance: Who Goes, How Often?

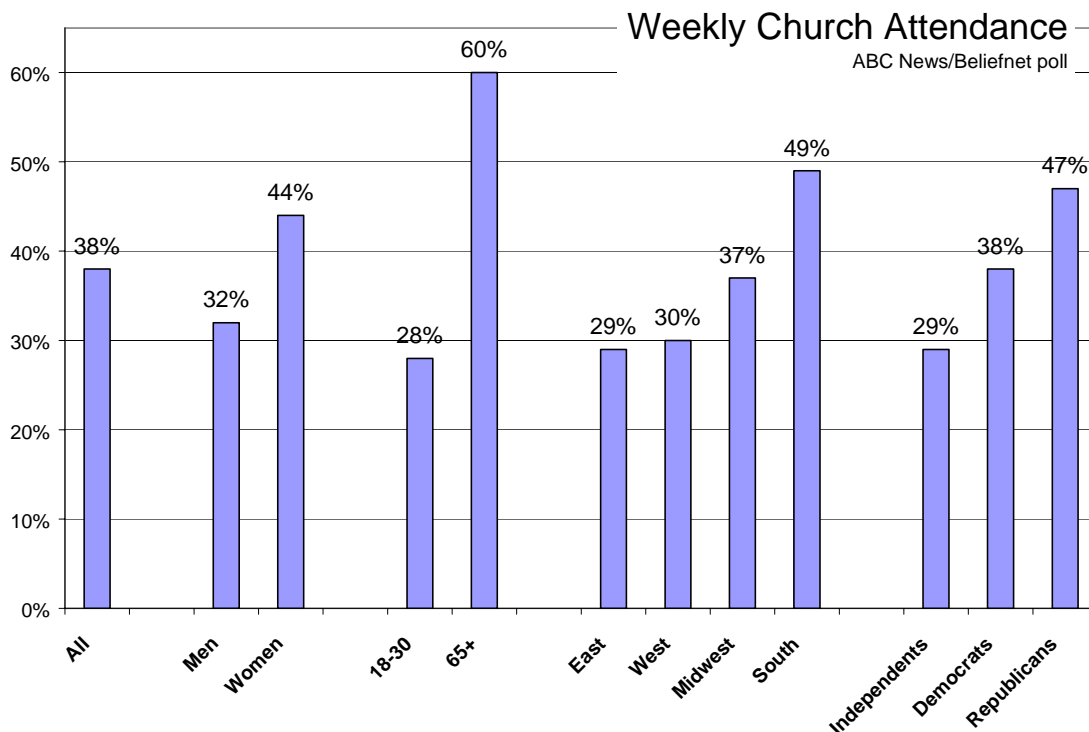
Been to church this week? If you're an older woman in the South, chances are you have.

Not counting weddings and funerals, 38 percent of Americans say they go to religious services at least once a week. But there are big differences across demographic groups, with self-reported attendance peaking among older people, women, Southerners and Baptists, among others.

The biggest gap is between the oldest and youngest age groups. Sixty percent of people age 65 and older report attending religious services at least once a week; among 18 to 30-year-olds, just 28 percent go that often. Previous ABC News polls, similarly, have found that religious belief and practice increase with age.

There are other factors. Nearly half of Southerners attend services weekly, substantially more than elsewhere. Forty-four percent of women go weekly, compared to 32 percent of men. It follows that, among Southern women age 45 and up, weekly church attendance soars to 68 percent.

Forty-seven percent of Republicans attend church regularly, compared to 38 percent of Democrats and 29 percent of independents. And there's a big difference between Catholic women (49 percent go to church weekly) and Catholic men (26 percent attend every week.)



For most Americans, going to religious services means going to church, since 83 percent of adults in this country are Christians. Forty-six percent of Protestants attend church at least weekly, peaking at 52 percent of Baptists. Just over two-thirds of Baptists are in the South, far more than elsewhere (the Midwest is next, at just 17 percent). That's one reason church attendance in the South is higher than elsewhere.

GENDER GAP – Fewer Catholics, 38 percent, report attending church on at least a weekly basis. Men are the reason: As noted, 26 percent of Catholic men say they attend church that regularly, compared to 42 percent of Protestant men. There's no such difference between Protestant and Catholic women – about half in each group say they go to church at least once a week.

Weekly church attendance	
All men	32%
All women	44
Catholic men	26
Catholic women	49
Protestant men	42
Protestant women	50

Half the respondents in this survey identify themselves as Protestants, 23 percent as Catholics and 10 percent as members of other Christian denominations. Eleven percent say they have no religion. Adherents to all other religions combined comprise just five percent of the adult population – not enough for separate analysis in a poll of 1,000 people.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News/Beliefnet poll was conducted by telephone Feb. 19-20, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,008 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Here are the full results (*=less than 0.5 percent):

17. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services - at least once a week, a few times a month, or less often than that?

	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	Never (vol.)	No opin.
2/20/02 All	38	16	41	5	*

END