

Megachurch Trends

✖ ✖ Wondering where all the young single adults in your church have gone? If you're the pastor of a small- or medium-size congregation, you may want to check the nearest megachurch.

That's because singles are three times as likely to attend a megachurch and make up one-third of those churches' congregations, according to a study by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research that surveyed nearly 25,000 people at 12 megachurches throughout the country.

The report also discovered that two-thirds of megachurch regulars are under the age of 45, with the average person being 40 years old. When compared to the typical Protestant church, at which the average age is 53, it's clear that megachurches continue to attract a younger crowd.

What they're also drawing, however, is an "entertain me" mindset. The Hartford study found that nearly 45 percent of those who attend a megachurch never volunteer at the church, while 32 percent give little or no money.

"The ethos of the megachurch is to say 'You can't just sit there and spectate, that's not enough, you've got to do this or do that,'" said study co-director Scott Thumma. "But a lot of people said 'I'm perfectly happy coming here and doing that.'"

Don't assume that's because megachurches attract more new Christians or those who haven't been to church for a while-both of which could possibly add to the spectator mindset. According to the study, only a quarter of those attending a megachurch had stopped going to church for a long time prior to coming. And in terms of drawing new believers, the survey found hardly any difference among megachurches and non-megachurches. The biggest difference between the two, however, is attracting new people. Two-thirds of those attending a megachurch have been there five years or less-compared to 40 percent in churches of all sizes. (Interestingly enough, this

ratio remains the same even when you don't consider newer churches that began within the past decade.)

When analyzing what attracts people to megachurches, the report found the top three factors (in order) to be worship style, senior pastor and the church's reputation. Leaders will also find it interesting that the top reason first-time visitors of a megachurch return is the senior pastor.

For more on the study, [click here](#). [, 6/9/09]