

Research: Most Protestant Churchgoers Refuse to Drink Alcohol

Most churchgoers say the Bible teaches against drunkenness. But that doesn't stop about 4 in 10 from taking a drink now and then.

While 41 percent of Protestant churchgoers say they consume alcohol, 59 percent say they do not. That's a slight shift from 10 years ago, according to a new study by Nashville-based LifeWay Research.

In a 2007 phone survey by LifeWay Research 39 percent of Protestant churchgoers said yes, they consumed alcohol, while 61 percent said no.

Gallup surveys over the last 75 years have typically shown that two-thirds of all American adults have occasion to drink alcoholic beverages, including 63 percent in 2018.

"While alcohol consumption continues to be seen as mainstream in the United States, churchgoers' attitudes about drinking haven't changed much in the past decade," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

Almost 9 in 10 of churchgoers (87 percent) agree that Scripture says people should never get drunk. That's up from 82 percent in 2007.

But when it comes to total abstinence, fewer than a quarter (23 percent) of Protestant churchgoers believe Scripture indicates people should never drink alcohol. A majority (71 percent) disagree.

The share of churchgoers who say Scripture teaches against any kind of alcohol consumption has decreased six percentage

points over the last decade. In 2007, 29 percent said Scripture directs people to never drink alcohol; 68 percent disagreed.

When Christians drink socially, many churchgoers believe they could cause other believers to stumble or be confused. In 2017, 60 percent agree, and 32 percent disagree. The portion who say drinking socially could cause others to stumble dropped slightly from 63 percent in 2007.

Researchers also found slightly more than half of churchgoers say Scripture indicates all beverages, including alcohol, can be consumed without sin (55 percent) and that Christians exercise biblical liberty when partaking of alcohol in reasonable amounts (54 percent).

Attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol use vary based on age, geography, denominational affiliation and other demographic factors.

Male churchgoers are more likely to say they drink alcohol compared to women (48 percent versus 37 percent).

Lutherans (76 percent) and Methodists (62 percent) are more likely to say they imbibe than Baptists (33 percent), non-denominational (43 percent) and Assemblies of God/Pentecostals (23 percent).

Churchgoers ages 18-34 are evenly split on their alcohol consumption, with 50 percent saying they drink and 50 percent saying they don't. Forty-one percent of churchgoers ages 35-49 say they drink, while 59 percent do not; 44 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds say they consume alcohol, while 56 percent do not. Churchgoers age 65 and above were the least likely age group to say they drink alcohol, with 32 percent saying yes to drinking alcohol and 68 percent saying no.

Among churchgoers, those with a higher education are more likely to say they drink than those with less education.

Churchgoers with a graduate degree are most likely to say they drink alcohol (62 percent) followed by those with a bachelor's degree (59 percent), some college (46 percent) and those who are high school graduates or less (26 percent).

"Churchgoers' perspectives on alcohol are not changing very fast," said McConnell. "The majority believe that biblically they can drink, but they choose not to." {eo}

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