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Choosing a New Church or House of Worship

Americans look for good sermons, warm welcome

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Table of Contents

Overview	3
1. The search for a new congregation	10
2. Religious attendance fluid for many Americans	24
Acknowledgments	31
Methodology	32
Topline	36

Choosing a New Church or House of Worship

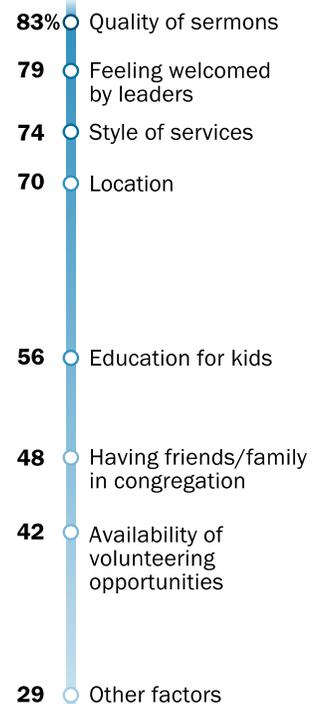
Americans look for good sermons, warm welcome

About half of U.S. adults have looked for a new religious congregation at some point in their lives, most commonly because they have moved. And when they search for a new house of worship, a new Pew Research Center study shows, Americans look first and foremost for a place where they like the preaching and the tone set by the congregation's leaders.

Fully 83% of Americans who have looked for a new place of worship say the quality of preaching played an important role in their choice of congregation. Nearly as many say it was important to feel welcomed by clergy and lay leaders, and about three-quarters say the style of worship services influenced their decision about which congregation to join. Location also factored prominently in many people's choice of congregation, with seven-in-ten saying it was an important factor. Smaller numbers cite the quality of children's programs, having friends or family in the congregation or the availability of volunteering opportunities as key to their decision.

When searching for a new congregation, Americans value quality of sermons and feeling welcomed

Among U.S. adults who have looked for a new congregation or house of worship, % who say each factor played an important role in their choice



Note: Based on those who have searched for a new house of worship.
Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC5a-h. "Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

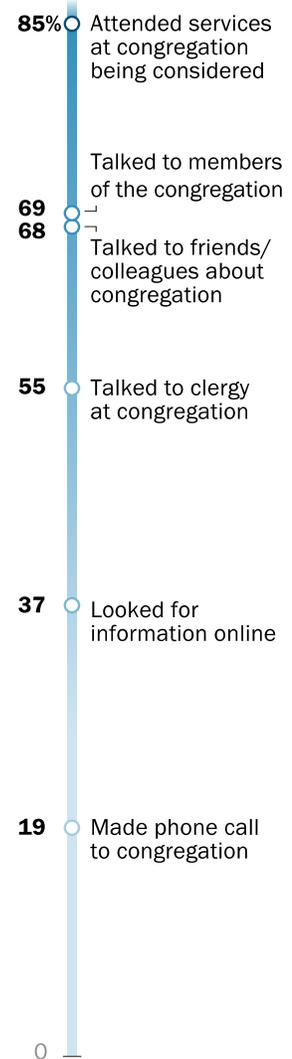
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Perhaps as a result of the value they place on good sermons, church leadership and the style of worship services, many people – even in this age of technology – find there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction when seeking information about a new religious home. Fully 85% of those who have looked for a new house of worship say they attended worship services at a church they were considering, and seven-in-ten say they spoke with members of the congregation or to friends or colleagues about their decision. Looking for information online may be growing more common, especially among young people and those who have looked for a congregation recently. But online information still appears to be far less important to potential congregants than experiencing the atmosphere of the congregation firsthand.

How Americans choose a new house of worship: Personal visits remain crucial

Among U.S. adults who have looked for a new congregation, % who say they have _____ while doing so

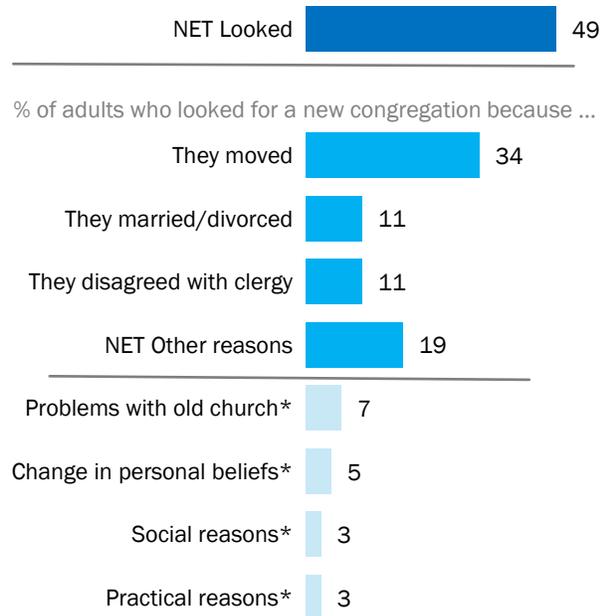


Note: Based on those who have searched for a new house of worship.
 Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC4a-f. "Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

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The single most common reason people give for having looked for a new congregation is that they moved: Roughly one-third of adults say they have searched for a new place of worship because they relocated. By comparison, fewer people say they sought a new congregation because of a disagreement with clergy or other members at their previous house of worship (11%) or because they got married or divorced (11%). About one-in-five adults (19%) volunteered that they have looked for a new congregation for some other reason, including other problems with a previous church, changes in their own beliefs or for social or practical reasons.

Half of Americans have looked for a new church



*In a series of questions about reasons for changing congregations, respondents who said they had looked for a congregation for “other reasons” were asked to specify those reasons in their own words.

Note: Figures do not add to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC1a,b,d; QC2.

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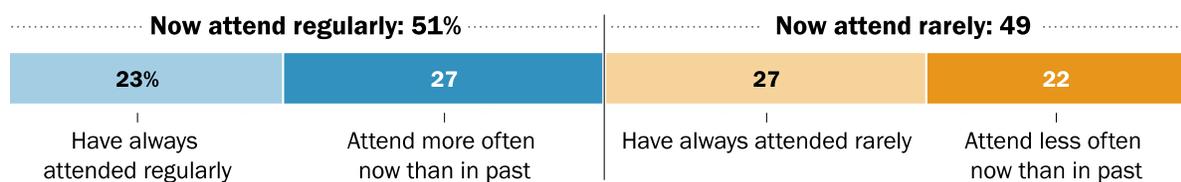
These are some of the key findings from the fourth in a series of reports based on Pew Research Center’s U.S. Religious Landscape Study. The study and this report were made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support for the project from Lilly Endowment Inc. The first report on the 2014 Landscape Study, based on a telephone survey of more than 35,000 adults, examined the [changing religious composition](#) of the U.S. public and documented the fluidity of religion in the U.S., where roughly one-third of adults now have a religious identity different from the one in which they were raised. The second report described the [religious beliefs, practices and experiences](#) of Americans, as well the social and political views of different religious groups. A third report drew on both the national telephone survey and a supplemental survey of participants in Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel to describe how Americans live out their [religion in their everyday lives](#).

This fourth report also draws on the national telephone survey, but it relies primarily on questions asked in a follow-up (“recontact”) survey of respondents who originally participated in the national telephone poll. It explores the fluidity and dynamism in U.S. religion in more detail by documenting when, how and why Americans search for new congregations. It shows that about half of adults who have searched for a new congregation at some point in their lives considered changing denominations while they were searching. And it finds that many Americans say their own level of religious engagement has ebbed and flowed over the course of their adult lives.

Currently, half of American adults (51%) say they attend religious services regularly – at least once or twice a month. Within this group, nearly half (23% of all U.S. adults) say they have always attended religious services at least as regularly as they do now, but slightly more (27% of all U.S. adults) say they now attend religious services more often than they did at some other time in their adult lives.¹

One-quarter of Americans now attend religious services regularly, but once attended less

Religious service attendance of U.S. adults



Note: “Attend regularly” includes those who say they attend religious services once or twice a month, once a week or more often. “Attend rarely” includes those who say they attend religious services a few times a year, seldom or never. Don’t know/refused responses not shown. Figures may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC9, QC11.

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Meanwhile, 49% of American adults now attend religious services just a few times a year, rarely or never. A majority of them (27% of all U.S. adults) say they have never attended religious services more often than they do now. But a substantial proportion (22% of all U.S. adults) say they now go to religious services less often than they did at another point during adulthood.

Many of those whose religious attendance has become more frequent cite a change in their beliefs as the main reason, saying their increased attendance reflects the fact that they have become more religious or felt a need for God or religion in their lives. By contrast, among those whose attendance has waned, the most commonly offered reasons have to do with practical concerns, including many who say they are too busy to attend or cite other practical difficulties with getting to a church, synagogue, mosque or other house of worship, depending on their religion.²

¹ The survey asked respondents who say they attend religious services “more than once a week,” “once a week” or “once or twice a month” whether there was ever a time when they attended religious services less often than they do now. Respondents who say they currently attend religious services “a few times a year,” “seldom” or “never” were asked whether there was ever a time when they attended religious services more often than they do now.

² The survey, however, does not contain enough Jews, Muslims or members of other relatively small U.S. religious groups to analyze their attitudes and experiences separately.

Other key findings from the new survey include:

- Quality of sermons, welcoming leaders and the style of worship services tend to be the key factors in why Americans overall choose the congregations they do, but for Catholics, nothing is more important than location. Fully three-quarters of Catholics who have looked for a new church (76%) say location was an important factor in their choice of parish, reflecting the geographically based system by which Catholics typically associate with a local church.
- Overall, 56% of adults who have looked for a new congregation say the quality of educational programs available for children was an important factor in their decision. Among those who currently are parents of minor children, however, about two-thirds (65%) say this.
- Americans who have looked for a new congregation are evenly divided between those who say they considered switching religions or denominations when they searched for a new house of worship (48%) and those who considered congregations only in the denomination with which they already identified (49%).
- Seven-in-ten people who have looked for a new congregation say finding one was easy, while 27% say finding a new house of worship was difficult. When asked what made it easy to find a new congregation, many of those who found the task trouble-free indicated that their new congregation was conveniently located and easy to get to (43%), that they had been invited to join by family or friends (20%), or that it was easy to find the kind of information they needed (14%). Among those who found the task of choosing a new congregation burdensome, some common explanations were that they disagreed with the theology of the congregations they encountered (26%), there was a shortage of acceptable, conveniently accessible churches in their area (24%), or they were dissatisfied with the sense of fellowship at the congregations they considered (23%).
- Not surprisingly, religious “nones” – people who identify as atheists, agnostics or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion – are far less likely than those who identify with a religion to say they have ever looked for a new congregation. Still, about three-in-ten current religious “nones” (29%) indicate they *have* searched for a new congregation at some point in their lives.

- Young adults are far more likely than older people to have searched online for information about a new congregation. Indeed, 59% of adults under 30 say they have incorporated online searches when looking for a new congregation, compared with just 12% of those ages 65 and older. Still, like their elders, young people are more apt to have attended worship services at congregations they were considering and to have talked with congregation members than they are to have looked for information about congregations online.
- About half of Americans have *never* looked for a new house of worship, perhaps because they are not churchgoers or because they have been members of the same church, synagogue or mosque since childhood. Those who have never searched for a congregation are less likely than those who have looked to be religiously affiliated and to attend services with any regularity. They are also more likely to have lived in the same place all their life.

1. The search for a new congregation

To find a church or house of worship that is right for them, many Americans say they attend services with congregations they are considering and talk to current members, friends or colleagues about recommending a house of worship. By comparison, fewer people use the internet or make phone calls to prospective congregations. This may be because some of the factors people say they value the most in choosing a congregation – the quality of sermons, the style of services and a welcoming leadership – are difficult to assess over the phone or on a website.

This chapter explores details about Americans' searches for new religious congregations – beginning with why they look.

Half of Americans have looked for a new congregation

About half of U.S. adults (49%) say they have looked for a new congregation or house of worship at some point in their adult lives, and moving to a new residence is the most common reason. Roughly one-third of all U.S. adults have looked for a new congregation because of a move. And a majority of Americans who have lived in at least two states say they have looked for a new congregation, while fewer than half of those who have only lived in one state have undertaken such a search.

Compared with those who have looked for a new house of worship after moving, fewer Americans say a marriage or divorce (11%) or a disagreement with clergy or fellow congregants at their previous church (11%) prompted them to search for a new congregation.

When asked whether they had ever looked for a new congregation for reasons other

A third of Americans have looked for a new congregation because they moved

% of U.S. adults who looked for a new congregation because they ...

	NET Have looked for a new congregation		Married/ divorced	Disagreed with clergy member or people at previous congregation	Other reasons
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	49	34	11	11	19
All affiliated	55	40	13	12	21
Christian	55	40	13	12	20
Protestant	62	45	14	15	23
<i>Evangelical</i>	67	49	16	18	26
<i>Mainline</i>	61	45	15	13	20
<i>Historically black</i>	46	29	7	11	19
Catholic	41	30	11	7	14
Non-Christian faiths	50	34	11	13	26
Unaffiliated	29	16	5	8	13
Atheist/agnostic	24	12	4	8	11
Nothing in particular	32	18	6	8	14
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>					
At least monthly	61	45	15	13	23
Less often	37	24	7	10	15
<i>Always lived in one state</i>	41	24	10	10	20
<i>Lived in two states</i>	55	41	11	11	23
<i>Lived in three+ states</i>	59	48	12	15	28

Note: The "always lived in one state" category includes those who have moved within one state. Figures do not add to subtotals because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC1a,b,d; QC2.

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than a move, a change in marital status or a disagreement at a previous church, 19% indicate they had.³ (See page 13 for details on the other reasons mentioned.)

Of the country's largest religious traditions, evangelical Protestants are among the most likely to say they have looked for a new congregation. By comparison, Catholics and members of the historically black Protestant tradition are less likely to say they have sought a new congregation. For Catholics, this may reflect that choosing a new congregation (after a move, for example) can be as straightforward as determining which Catholic parish they reside in, removing the need for a more extensive search. Members of the historically black Protestant tradition move to new communities less often than other Protestants, which may be one reason they also are less likely to have ever looked for a new congregation.

Most people who are not currently affiliated with a religion have never looked for a congregation for any reason. However, about a third of Americans who describe their religion as "nothing in particular" indicate they have looked for a congregation at some point in their lives, as have roughly a quarter of those who currently identify as atheist or agnostic.

Looked at another way, the half of Americans who have *never* searched for a new church or other house of worship are more than twice as likely as others to currently identify as religious "nones" (31% vs. 13%). And only about four-in-ten (39%) of those who have never searched say they now attend religious services at least once a month, compared with 63% of Americans who have looked for a new congregation at some point in their adult lives.

³ Respondents were allowed to give multiple reasons for searching for a new congregation, and about one-in-five did so. For example, 7% said they looked for a congregation both because they moved and because of a change in marital status.

Roughly one-in-five adults say they have looked for a new congregation for some other reason (besides moving, a change in marital status, or a disagreement with clergy or members of their previous congregation). Among the other reasons people give for seeking a new congregation are problems with the church they left (7%) and changes in their personal religious beliefs (5%).

In addition, some respondents mention social reasons (such as a desire to attend services with a specific friend or family member) or practical considerations (e.g., getting to their old church was no longer convenient, or finding a new job made attending their previous congregation impractical).

Why else do people seek a new house of worship?

% of U.S. adults who say _____ is another reason they looked for a new congregation, aside from moving, marriage/divorce or a disagreement with someone at their previous congregation

	%
NET Problems with former church	7
Church theology/beliefs	3
Dissatisfaction with church	3
Prefer different leadership/leadership changed	1
Church programs	<1
NET Change in personal beliefs	5
Exploring/seeking	3
Personal growth/beliefs evolved	1
Changed religions or denominations	1
NET Social reasons	3
Children's needs and education	1
Looking for a sense of fellowship	1
Want to attend with friends/family	1
Networking/finding friends	<1
NET Practical reasons	3
Distance/convenience	2
Life events	1
Previous church closed/never had a previous church	1
Language barriers	<1
Unclear/no answer	1
NET Looked for congregation for reason other than having moved, marriage/divorce, or disagreement at previous congregation	19

Note: The survey asked respondents whether they have ever looked for a new congregation for each of three reasons: because they moved, got married or divorced, or had a disagreement with leaders or congregants at their previous house of worship. Respondents were then asked whether they have ever searched for a new congregation for any other reason; 19% responded yes, and were then asked to specify, in their own words, what those reasons were. Figures may not sum to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC2.

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More than four-in-ten Americans who moved to their current community within the last five years (45%) also have looked for a new congregation in that time frame. Only about one-in-five U.S. adults who moved to their local community more than five years ago say they have looked for a new place to worship within the last five years.

U.S. adults who attend religious services regularly (at least once or twice a month) are more likely than others to say they have looked for a new congregation in the last five years. In fact, a majority (63%) of those who attend worship services only a few times a year, seldom or never say they have *never* looked for a new congregation.

Among those who attend worship services regularly, three-in-ten have looked for a new congregation in the past five years

How long ago was your most recent search for a new congregation?

	Within 5 years	5-10 years ago	10+ years ago	DK/ref.	Never looked for a new congregation
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	25	9	15	1	51=100
All affiliated	28	10	16	1	45
Christian	29	10	16	1	45
Protestant	33	11	17	1	38
<i>Evangelical</i>	39	12	16	<1	33
<i>Mainline</i>	26	11	23	1	39
<i>Historically black</i>	30	7	8	2	54
Catholic	20	7	13	1	59
Non-Christian faiths	21	8	21	<1	50
Unaffiliated	15	6	8	1	71
Atheist/agnostic	10	4	9	1	76
Nothing in particular	17	6	8	1	68
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>					
At least monthly	31	11	19	1	39
Less often	19	7	11	<1	63
<i>Moved to their current community ____ ago</i>					
5 years or less	45	4	5	<1	46
6-10 years	26	17	9	1	47
11-19 years	24	11	19	<1	47
20 years or more	16	10	26	1	47

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC6.

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Most say the quality of sermons played an important role in their search for a new house of worship

Among U.S. adults who have ever looked for a new house of worship, about eight-in-ten say the quality of sermons (83%) or feeling welcomed by clergy and lay leaders (79%) played an important role in their choice. Most also cite the style of services (74%) and the location (70%) as important factors to consider when choosing a new congregation. And, overall, 56% say the quality of religious education for children played an important role in their decision. Among those who currently have children under 18, however, two-thirds (65%) say the quality of educational programs for children was an important factor.

For Catholics who have looked for a new congregation, no single factor is more important than location. One possible explanation for this is that the Catholic Church is structured geographically; when Catholics seek a new congregation after a move (the most common reason people give for

Quality sermons and feeling welcome are crucial to finding new house of worship

Among U.S. adults who have looked for a new congregation or house of worship, % who say each factor played an important role in their choice

	Quality of sermons	Feeling welcomed by leaders	Style of worship services	Location	Religious education for kids	Having friends/family in congregation	Volunteering opportunities	Other factors
Total	83	79	74	70	56	48	42	29
All affiliated	84	80	75	72	58	49	43	30
Christian	85	80	74	72	58	49	44	30
Protestant	92	84	79	71	62	51	47	31
<i>Evangelical</i>	94	83	80	69	64	49	49	34
<i>Mainline</i>	87	86	78	76	54	53	40	26
<i>Historically black</i>	92	81	76	62	69	52	59	32
Catholic	67	71	63	76	51	45	36	22
Non-Christian faiths	73	76	79	77	50	50	30	28
Unaffiliated	75	71	73	61	41	45	36	24
Atheist/agnostic	76	66	71	62	33	50	35	22
Nothing in particular	74	73	74	60	44	43	36	24
Attend monthly or more	87	80	74	71	61	48	47	32
Attend less often	76	75	75	69	46	49	33	23

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC5a-h. "Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

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seeking a new congregation), the task may be as simple as locating their new geographical parish.

Protestants are far more likely than Catholics to say the quality of sermons played an important role in their selection of a new congregation. They also are more likely than Catholics to say that feeling welcomed by church leaders, the style of services and educational opportunities for children played an important role in their choice.

In addition to the seven factors mentioned explicitly in the survey (e.g., quality of sermons, being welcomed by clergy, etc.), respondents also were asked whether there were any other elements that factored importantly in their decision about which congregation to join; 29% indicated that there were. These included some mentions of aspects of the congregation's programs or leadership (by 13% of people who have ever looked for a congregation), including particular teachings or political stances – for example, that they were looking for a church that offers “preaching from the Bible,” that has “conservative Christian values” or that is “positive on civil rights.”

Another one-in-ten Americans who have searched for a new house of worship volunteer, in their own words, that the church environment played an important role. This includes 6% who say a warm sense of fellowship was an important factor in their choice, 3% who say the music or some other aspect of the worship style was very important to them and 1% who mention the size of the congregation or its demographic characteristics (both those who were looking for a “diverse population” as well as others who wanted a church with “people who look like me”).

An additional 5% of respondents who have looked for a new congregation mention additional elements like convenience (e.g., “convenience of service times”) or family situations (e.g., having “a place for my teenagers” or “acceptance of children”) as factors in their decision.

For most, personal contact key to search for new house of worship

More than eight-in-ten adults who have ever looked for a new house of worship say they attended a service during their search (85%). And roughly seven-in-ten talked to members of the congregation (69%) or to friends or colleagues (68%) about the house of worship they were considering. Upward of half of those searching for a new house of worship talked to a minister or clergyperson (55%). Fewer say they looked for information online (37%) or made a phone call (19%) to a house of worship they were considering – although among adults under 30 who have looked for a congregation, about six-in-ten (59%) say they searched for information online.

Most people try out services when looking for a new house of worship

Among U.S. adults who have looked for a new congregation or house of worship, % who have _____ as part of their search

	Attended worship service %	Talked to members of congregation %	Talked to friends/ colleagues %	Talked to minister/ clergyperson %	Looked for information online %	Made a phone call to a house of worship %
Total	85	69	68	55	37	19
All affiliated	86	68	68	56	35	19
Christian	87	68	68	56	34	18
Protestant	90	71	72	61	35	18
Evangelical	91	71	72	64	36	18
Mainline	89	71	72	56	36	17
Historically black	89	70	75	58	30	17
Catholic	75	57	57	40	29	16
Non-Christian faiths	85	77	64	54	49	30
Unaffiliated	77	72	68	48	44	17
Atheist/agnostic	78	75	68	46	52	8
Nothing in particular	77	71	68	48	41	21
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>						
At least monthly	88	70	68	57	38	19
Less often	81	67	68	51	35	17
Searched within last five years	89	75	74	60	47	21
Has not searched in last five years	81	63	61	50	26	16
Ages 18-29	86	75	82	56	59	14
30-49	86	71	72	57	50	20
50-64	87	72	67	55	27	21
65 or older	80	55	54	49	12	13

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC4a-f.
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Using the internet to find information about potential congregations, although still far from a universal tactic, seems to be getting more common. Nearly half (47%) of those who have looked for a new congregation within the last five years say they relied on the internet as part of their search, compared with 26% of those whose last search was more than five years ago.⁴

Protestants are more likely than Catholics to talk to a minister or priest (61% vs. 40%) when searching for a new congregation. In fact, compared with members of other religious traditions, Catholics are generally among the least likely to use any of these strategies when searching for a new house of worship, perhaps due to the geographically based parish system used by the Catholic Church.

⁴ U.S. adults who have searched for a new house of worship within the last five years are more likely than those whose most recent search was in the more distant past to have used ALL of these tactics when they searched for their new congregation. Still, the differences on the question about having used the internet are particularly large.

In search for congregation, many also explore different denominations

About half of U.S. adults who have looked for a new congregation (48%) considered changing denominations or religions when looking.

Considering a switch when looking for a new congregation is relatively uncommon among Catholics and members of historically black Protestant churches; solid majorities in these groups who have looked for a new congregation say they considered churches only in the same denomination. Only about one-in-three in each group say they explored changing denominations or religions.

By contrast, about half of both mainline (52%) and evangelical (47%) Protestants who have looked for a new church say they thought about changing denominations or religions during their search.

Only about three-in-ten people who are currently religious

“nones” have ever looked for a new congregation. But among those who have, about two-thirds (68%) say they considered joining a new denomination or religion when they looked. Some in this group may have been raised in a particular religion before searching for something different, but ultimately moved away from religious affiliation altogether.

Half of Americans who looked for new house of worship considered a new denomination or religion

Among U.S. adults who have looked for a new congregation or house of worship, % who ...

	Considered only congregation in same denomination	Considered different denomination/religion	Don't know/refused
	%	%	%
Total	49	48	3=100
All affiliated	53	45	3
Christian	53	44	3
Protestant	50	47	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	49	47	3
<i>Mainline</i>	45	52	3
<i>Historically black</i>	66	31	3
Catholic	63	36	1
Non-Christian faiths	47	51	2
Unaffiliated	29	68	3
Atheist/agnostic	22	74	4
Nothing in particular	32	65	3
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>			
At least monthly	53	44	3
Less often	43	55	3
Searched within last five years	45	53	2
Has not searched in last five years	54	42	3
Currently in childhood denom.	63	36	1
No longer in childhood denom.	38	58	4

Note: Based on those who have searched for a new house of worship.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. Q03.

“Choosing a New Church or House of Worship”

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Among adults who have searched for a new congregation and no longer identify with the religion in which they were raised, nearly six-in-ten (58%) say they considered changing denominations when they looked for a new congregation. Far fewer adults who still identify with their childhood denomination (36%) did so.

Finding a new house of worship relatively easy for most who look

Most Americans who have searched for a new congregation or house of worship found the process to be either very easy (45%) or somewhat easy (26%). Far fewer say finding a new house of worship was either very difficult (7%) or somewhat difficult (20%).

Catholics find it especially easy to find a new congregation, with 83% indicating they encountered little difficulty when looking for a new church. Members of historically black Protestant churches report some degree of difficulty in finding a new house of worship; about four-in-ten (41%) say they found the task to be very or somewhat difficult.

Americans who have searched for a new congregation recently say they have had

somewhat more difficulty than those who looked more than five years ago. But still, two-thirds of those whose search was in the last five years (66%) say finding a new house of worship was very or somewhat easy.

Most say finding a new house of worship was easy

Among U.S. adults who have looked for a new congregation or house of worship, % who say finding a new house of worship was ...

	Very/ somewhat easy %	Very/ somewhat difficult* %	Don't know/ refused %
Total	71	28	1=100
All affiliated	72	27	1
Christian	72	27	1
Protestant	68	31	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	69	31	1
<i>Mainline</i>	70	29	1
<i>Historically black</i>	59	41	1
Catholic	83	16	1
Non-Christian faiths	74	23	3
Unaffiliated	64	34	2
Atheist/agnostic	64	36	1
Nothing in particular	64	33	3
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>			
At least monthly	74	26	1
Less often	67	32	2
Searched within last five years	66	33	<1
Has not searched in last five years	76	22	2

*Includes those who did not find new house of worship.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC7.

"Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

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Among the roughly seven-in-ten Americans who say it was either very or somewhat easy to find a new congregation, more than half explain, in their own words, that they were able to find a suitable house of worship because their new congregation was conveniently located and easy to get to or because it was easy for them to find information and locate what they were looking for.

About a third of those who say finding a new house of worship was easy mention family- or community-related reasons; many were invited by friends to join a church, while others say they quickly responded to a sense of fellowship at their new congregation.

Roughly one-in-ten (12%) say it was easy to find a new church or other house of worship because of some specific aspect of the new congregation that appealed to them, such as its theology, worship style or leadership.

Convenience main factor for many in ease of finding a new house of worship

Among those who say finding a new house of worship was easy, % who say this because of ...

	%
NET Convenience	55
Availability/location/logistics	43
Easy to find info/find what was looking for	14
NET Family/community	36
Invited/friends	20
Family/family situation	10
Felt a sense of fellowship	8
NET Found a good congregation	12
Agreed with theology/worship style	5
Liked church's leadership	4
General satisfaction	2
Already familiar with the church	1
Unclear/no answer	3

Note: Based on those who said finding a new house of worship was very or somewhat easy. Figures do not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC8. "Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

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The 28% of Americans who say finding a new house of worship was difficult give a variety of reasons. Four-in-ten say they were dissatisfied with some characteristic or trait of the congregations they encountered, including 26% who had theological disagreements. One-third say finding a new house of worship was inconvenient for some reason, such as that there were no churches located nearby or it was hard to find pertinent information.

Of the roughly three-in-ten who cite family or community related reasons, many say they did not find a welcoming congregation; a smaller share say it was difficult for them to find a house of worship that was agreeable both to them and to their family members.

Church theology a barrier to finding a new house of worship for some

Among those who say finding a new house of worship was difficult, % who say this because of ...

	%
NET Dissatisfaction with church practices/religion	40
Disagreed with theology	26
General concerns about religion	5
Disliked church's leadership	3
Liked previous church more	3
Personal beliefs evolved	3
NET Inconvenience	33
Availability/location/logistics	24
Hard to find information	8
NET Family/community	28
Lack of fellowship	23
Family/family situation	5
Unclear/no answer	8

Note: Based on those who said finding a new house of worship was very or somewhat difficult, including those who did not find one. Figures do not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC8.

"Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

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2. Religious attendance fluid for many Americans

More than a quarter of Americans (27%) say they currently attend religious services at least once or twice a month, but that there was once a time in their adult lives when they attended less regularly than they do now. And more than one-in-five adults (22%) say they currently attend religious services infrequently or never (a few times a year, at most), but that there was once a time when they attended more often.⁵

Those who attend religious services more often now than in the past offer mostly religious reasons as the motivation for their return to church. For example, many say they felt a need for God or that their increased attendance reflects an overall increase in their personal religiosity. Among those who attend less often now than in the past, the most commonly offered reasons for their falloff in attendance are practical in nature, such as being too busy to attend regularly.

The remainder of this chapter provides details about the reasons people give for the ebbs and flows in their religious engagement. It concludes with a discussion of the reasons religious “nones” give for having disassociated with their childhood faiths.

⁵ The survey asked respondents who say they attend religious services “more than once a week,” “once a week” or “once or twice a month” whether there was ever a time when they attended religious services less often than they do now. Respondents who say they currently attend religious services “a few times a year,” “seldom” or “never” were asked whether there was ever a time when they attended religious services more often than they do now.

Many evangelicals say they attend church more often now than in the past

Two-thirds of Christians say they now attend religious services at least once or twice a month, including 35% who say there was a time during their adult life when they did not attend as often as they do now. Among Christian traditions, 44% of evangelical Protestants, 33% of members of the historically black Protestant tradition, 31% of mainline Protestants and 28% of Catholics say they now go to church regularly – but that they did not always attend religious services with the same frequency.

At the same time, the survey shows that all of these Christian groups include people who do not attend religious services regularly and whose attendance has fallen off over time. For example, 27% of mainline Protestants, 20% of Catholics and 15% of those in the evangelical and historically black Protestant traditions say they now attend religious services no more than a few times a year, and that there was a time in their adult lives when they attended more regularly than they do now.

The vast majority of religious “nones” (92%) say they attend religious services no more than a few times a year, including 30% who say they once attended more often than they do now and 61% who never went to services more frequently.

Among all U.S. adults, about half who now attend religious services regularly (53%) say their attendance was not always as high as its current level. And 45% of those who do *not* attend worship services with any regularity say they used to go at least somewhat more often.

One-in-five adults now rarely or never attend religious services, but used to go more

Based on all U.S. adults

	% who now attend religious services at least once or twice per month and who ...			% who now attend religious services a few times a year or less and who ...		
	Attend more often now than in the past %	Have always attended regularly %	NET Now attend at least once/twice per month %	Attend less often now than in the past %	Have always attended rarely %	NET Now attend few times a year or less %
Total	27	23	=51	22	27	=49
All affiliated	34	29	=63	20	16	=36
Christian	35	30	=65	19	15	=34
Protestant	38	28	=67	19	14	=33
<i>Evangelical</i>	44	31	=75	15	10	=25
<i>Mainline</i>	31	22	=53	27	19	=46
<i>Historically black</i>	33	34	=68	15	15	=30
Catholic	28	32	=60	20	19	=39
Non-Christian faiths	18	16	=36	30	34	=64
Unaffiliated	4	4	=8	30	61	=92
Atheist/agnostic	1	3	=4	29	67	=96
Nothing in particular	6	5	=11	30	58	=89
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>						
At least monthly	53	46	=100	–	–	–
Less often	–	–	–	45	54	=100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. "Don't know" and refused responses are not shown.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC9, QC11.

"Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

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Changing beliefs lead many to attend services more often

The 27% of Americans who say they now attend religious services regularly (at least once or twice a month) but used to attend less often were asked to explain, in their own words, why their rate of religious attendance has increased. About half of respondents in this group (49%) mention changes in their personal religious beliefs as the main reason for attending more often – including one-in-five who say they became more religious. Others say they found themselves desiring God or religion in their life or realized religion was important as they got older or grew more mature.

About a quarter (23%) mention social factors, including changes in family structure (such as marriage or the birth of a child), entering different phases of life (e.g., going to college, joining the military, etc.) or a desire for fellowship or community.

And one-in-five mention practical changes, such as having a work schedule that permits them to attend church more often now than in the past.

Becoming more religious, family changes among reasons for attending church more often

Main reason for change among those who now attend religious services at least once or twice a month, but used to go less often

	%
NET Changing beliefs	49
Become more religious	20
Need God/religion/church in their life	15
More mature/older	14
NET Social factors	23
Family changes	13
Life phase/lifestyle change	6
Desire for fellowship/church life	4
NET Practical issues	20
Have time now/scheduling	10
Convenience/habit	6
Found a congregation they like more	3
Other	1
Unclear/no answer	7
	100

Note: Based on U.S. adults who say they now attend religious services regularly (at least once a month) but say there was once a time in their adult life when they attended less often. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC10. "Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Shifting circumstances often lead people to attend church less frequently

More than one-in-five Americans (22%) attend religious services no more than a few times a year, but say there was once a time in their lives when they attended more often. When asked an open-ended question about why their rate of religious attendance has declined, fully half cite practical issues as the reason. This includes one-in-five who say they are too busy to attend religious services regularly (e.g., because of their work schedule) and one-in-ten who say attending church is not high on their list of personal priorities (e.g., because they have “gotten out of the habit” or are “too lazy” to attend regularly).

About one-in-four infrequent attenders who used to attend more often (26%) say something changed with their own personal beliefs or with their church. And an additional 17% mention social factors; in some cases, they say they used to attend religious services more often in order to accompany a family member or friend who no longer requires or expects their company.

Those whose attendance has fallen off often say they are too busy to attend church more often

Main reason for change among those who now attend religious services no more than a few times a year, but used to go more often

	%
NET Practical issues	50
Too busy	20
Personal priorities	10
Practical difficulties	8
Old age/health reasons	6
Looking for a congregation	5
NET Changing beliefs/church	26
Beliefs changed	17
Disagree with church teachings	6
Church has changed	2
NET Social factors	17
Family changes	7
No longer expected to attend	5
Attended with someone	3
Life phase/lifestyle changed	2
Other social reasons	1
Other	1
Unclear/no answer	7
	100

Note: Based on U.S. adults who say they now attend religious services infrequently (a few times a year, at most) but say there was once a time in their adult life when they attended more often. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC12.

“Choosing a New Church or House of Worship”

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Religious ‘nones’ give variety of reasons for disaffiliation from religion

Roughly eight-in-ten religious “nones” say they were [raised with a religious affiliation](#).

When asked why they no longer identify with a faith, they offer a variety of explanations. About half say they stopped believing in the religion in which they were raised or have rejected religious beliefs as a whole (49%), but nearly as many give other reasons for disaffiliating.

One-in-five (20%) religious “nones” who were raised in a religion say they came to dislike or distrust religious institutions or organized religion in general. A similar share (18%) might be described as religiously unsure or undecided; while they no longer identify with a particular religion, they still describe themselves as religious or spiritual, or in some cases “seeking” or uncertain about their beliefs. And some religious “nones”

who were raised in a religion (10%) say they are simply no longer *practicing* their childhood faith, or are too busy to engage in religious rituals.

Half of ‘nones’ left childhood faith over lack of belief, one-in-five cite dislike of organized religion

Among those who were raised in a religion and are currently ...

	NET Unaffiliated	Atheist	Agnostic	Nothing in particular
NET Don't believe	49	82	63	37
Disenchanted/don't believe	36	71	46	25
Not interested in/don't need religion	7	3	8	7
Views evolved	7	7	12	5
Went through a crisis of faith	1	2	1	1
NET Dislike organized religion	20	10	19	22
Anti-institutional religion	15	2	17	16
Religion focuses on power/politics	4	5	1	6
Religion causes conflict	1	3	2	1
NET Religiously unsure/undecided	18	5	12	22
Unaffiliated but religious	7	1	1	10
Seeking/open-minded	6	3	5	7
Spiritual but not religious	3	2	4	3
Uncertain about beliefs	2	0	4	2
NET Inactive believer	10	0	3	14
Non-practicing	8	0	2	11
Too busy	2	0	1	3
Other	<1	0	<1	1
Unclear/no answer	6	3	7	6

Note: Excludes those who said they had been misclassified and were still affiliated with a religion. Figures do not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC13.

“Choosing a New Church or House of Worship”

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There are clear patterns in the reasons “nones” give for disaffiliating, based on how they describe their current religious identity. For example, most of those who now identify as atheists (82%) say a lack of belief spurred them to become unaffiliated. By contrast, fewer than half of respondents

who describe their religion as “nothing in particular” (37%) cite lack of belief as the reason they no longer affiliate with a religion.

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Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews among a national sample of 5,000 adults. These respondents were originally among the 35,071 who were interviewed in the national telephone survey that served as the centerpiece of the Pew Research Center's [2014 Religious Landscape Study](#); they were subsequently recontacted and asked additional questions. This “recontact” survey was conducted under the direction of Abt SRBI March 17-May 6, 2015. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish; 2,013 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone and 2,987 were interviewed on a cell phone.

Sample design

Respondents who participated in the 2014 Religious Landscape Study's original telephone survey were sorted into 15 recontact strata based on a variety of religious and demographic characteristics. In order to support the analytical goals of the project, certain groups (e.g., religiously intermarried respondents) were oversampled, while others were undersampled (see tables). After data collection, the data were weighted (as described below) such that all 15 strata are represented in roughly their proper proportion in the study's final, weighted estimates.

Sampling strata

	2014 Religious Landscape Study		Recontact survey		
	Unweighted N	Weighted share	Unweighted N	Unweighted share	Weighted share
<i>Strata including married/partnered evangelical Protestants, religious "nones," Catholics and mainline Protestants whose spouse/partner identifies with one of these four religious identity categories that is different than the respondent's own</i>					
1: Respondent is a mainline Protestant who was raised Catholic	141	<1	53	1	1
2: Respondent is an evangelical Protestant who was raised as religious "none" and now has a spouse/partner who is a mainline Protestant or a religious "none"	54	<1	17	<1	<1
3: Respondent is a mainline Protestant who was raised as religious "none"	59	<1	25	1	<1
4: Respondent is evangelical Protestant who has a spouse/partner who is Catholic	288	1	92	2	1
5: Respondent is religious "none" who has a spouse/partner who is an evangelical Protestant	270	1	111	2	1
6: Other combinations	3,630	10	1,379	28	12
<i>Strata including anyone who has a spouse/partner who has the same religious identity as the respondent, anyone who is not married or living with a partner, as well as all other respondents not covered in strata 1-6</i>					
7: Respondent is religious "none," is the parent of minor child, and has a spouse/partner who is also a religious "none"	714	2	175	4	3
8: Respondent is mainline Protestant, is the parent of minor child, has a spouse/partner who is also a mainline Protestant, and was NOT raised Catholic or as religious "none"	426	1	142	3	2
9: Respondent is mainline Protestant and was raised Catholic	502	1	108	2	2
10: Respondent is evangelical Protestant and was raised as religious "none"	492	1	148	3	2
11: Respondent is mainline Protestant and was raised as religious "none"	232	1	94	2	1
12: Respondent is member of historically black Protestant tradition and attends religious services a few times a year or less	471	2	141	3	2
13: Respondent is member of historically black Protestant tradition and attends religious services at least once a month	1,432	5	192	4	5
14: Respondent is Catholic, parent of a minor child, and has spouse/partner who is also Catholic	1,046	4	170	3	5
15: All others	<u>25,314</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>2,153</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>64</u>
	35,071	100	5,000	100	100

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Weighting

The national results included in this report are based on weighted estimates. The weighting was conducted in two stages. The first stage in the weighting process was the calculation of base weights, which was accomplished by multiplying the final base weight from the 2014 Religious Landscape Study's original telephone survey by the inverse of the subsampling rate in the recontact survey. This step was carried out separately for each of the 15 recontact strata. For details on how the base weights were calculated in the 2014 Religious Landscape Study, see the [methodological appendix](#) in "[America's Changing Religious Landscape](#)."

The second stage of the weighting calibrated the base-weighted data to demographic benchmarks for the population covered by the survey (U.S. adults). This was performed via iterative proportional fitting (or "raking"). The raking procedure aligned survey respondents to population benchmarks on the following dimensions:

- Gender by age
- Gender by education level
- Education level by age
- Race/ethnicity
- Telephone service
- Population density
- State of residence
- Religious affiliation

The demographic benchmarks for age, gender, education level, race, and state came from an analysis of the Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) one-year estimates, which was the most current data source available at the time the 2014 Religious Landscape Study data were weighted. The ACS parameters were calculated for adults ages 18 and older residing in households in the U.S., excluding those living in institutionalized group quarters. The population density parameter was derived from Census 2010 data and filtered on adults ages 18 and older residing in the U.S. The benchmark for religious affiliation was based on weighted estimates of self-reported data from the 2014 Religious Landscape Study. The telephone service parameter was constructed from model-based estimates released by the National Center for Health Statistics for July-December 2013, projected to the year 2014. These estimates were based on adults, ages 18 and older, living in households with a telephone (either landline or cell). The completion rate for this study was 37.2%. Taken together with the response rate to the original 2014 Religious Landscape Study, the cumulative response rate of the new survey is 3.9%.

Design effect and margins of error

Weighting and survey design features that depart from simple random sampling tend to result in a loss of precision in survey estimates. This loss of precision, known as the design effect, is incorporated in all margins of error, standard errors and tests of statistical significance included in this report.

Generally speaking, larger sample sizes are associated with smaller margins of sampling error, and smaller sample sizes are associated with larger margins of error. The margin of error for national estimates from this survey is +/- 2.0 percentage points. The margins of error for subgroups are larger. The accompanying table presents sample sizes and corresponding margins of error for the religious traditions discussed throughout much of this report. Sample sizes and margins of error for other groups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Sample sizes and margins of error for religious traditions

	Sample size	Margin of error
Full sample	5,000	+/- 2.0 percentage points
All affiliated	3,834	+/- 2.2 percentage points
Christian	3,625	+/- 2.3 percentage points
Protestant	2,553	+/- 2.7 percentage points
<i>Evangelical</i>	1,043	+/- 4.1 percentage points
<i>Mainline</i>	1,175	+/- 4.1 percentage points
<i>Historically black</i>	335	+/- 6.9 percentage points
Catholic	956	+/- 4.5 percentage points
Non-Christian faiths	209	+/- 8.9 percentage points
Unaffiliated	1,149	+/- 4.3 percentage points
Atheist/agnostic	426	+/- 7.1 percentage points
Nothing in particular	723	+/- 5.4 percentage points
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>		
At least monthly	2,370	+/- 2.8 percentage points
Less often	2,610	+/- 2.8 percentage points
Ever looked for a new congregation	2,709	+/- 2.7 percentage points
Protestant	1,677	+/- 3.4 percentage points
<i>Evangelical</i>	738	+/- 5.0 percentage points
<i>Mainline</i>	770	+/- 5.0 percentage points
<i>Historically black</i>	169	+/- 9.8 percentage points
Catholic	474	+/- 6.3 percentage points
Non-Christian faiths	123	+/- 11.5 percentage points
Unaffiliated	369	+/- 7.6 percentage points
Never looked for a new congregation	2,291	+/- 2.9 percentage points

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015.

"Choosing a New Church or House of Worship"

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FINAL TOPLINE
2014 U.S. RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE STUDY
RECONTACT SURVEY
March 17-May 6, 2015
N=5,000

ASK IF BORN IN THE US⁶:

Q.A1 Have you lived in or near your local community your entire life, aside from the time you may have spent away in school or college, or have you lived in other places?

BASED ON TOTAL

Mar 17-May 6

2015

36	NET Yes, lived in or near local community for entire life
35	Yes, entire life
1	Yes, except during active military duty (VOL.)
52	Lived in other places
12	Not born in U.S.
<1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL WHO LIVED IN OTHER PLACES OR WERE BORN OUTSIDE US [N=3,458]:

Q.A2 About how many years have you lived in your local community?
ENTER YEARS (range 1 to 97)

Mar 17-May 6

2015

47	NET 10 years or less
3	Less than 1 year
25	1-5 years
18	6-10 years
53	NET More than 10 years
18	11-19 years
35	20+ years
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL WHO LIVED IN OTHER PLACES OR WERE BORN OUTSIDE US [N=3,458]:

Q.A3 Thinking about all the places you have lived in the United States, how many different states have you lived in? Have you lived in one state, two different states, three different states, or more than three states? **[IF RESPONDENT SAYS DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, INCLUDE IN STATE COUNT (e.g. "2 states, plus DC" WOULD EQUAL 3 STATES)]**

Mar 17-May 6

2015

24	One state
26	Two different states,
20	Three different states,
29	More than three states
<1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

⁶ Country of birth drawn from 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study. See corresponding [topline](#) for full results for the question (QP2).

CHOOSING A NEW CHURCH OR HOUSE OF WORSHIP

ASK ALL WHO HAVE LIVED IN DIFFERENT STATES [N=2,826]:

Q.A4 Thinking about when you were growing up, what state did you live in? **[IF RESPONDENT SAYS THEY GREW UP IN MORE THAN ONE STATE PROBE ONCE WITH "Which state did you spend the most time in growing up?" IF RESPONDENT STILL REFUSES CODE AS DON'T KNOW]**

Mar 17-May 6

2015

19	State in the Northeast
25	State in the Midwest
29	State in the South
20	State in the West
6	Grew up outside of the U.S.
<1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

QUESTIONS QB1 THROUGH QB22 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**ASK ALL:**

Q.C1 Many people look for a new congregation or house of worship at some point in their adult lives. Please tell me if you have ever looked for a new congregation for any of the following reasons. First, have you ever looked for a new congregation or house of worship because **[INSERT ITEM A]**? Next, have you ever looked for a new congregation because **[INSERT B-D; RANDOMIZE]**? How about because **[INSERT ITEM B-D; RANDOMIZE]**? **READ IF NECESSARY** "Have you ever looked for a new congregation because **[ITEM]**?"⁷

	<u>Yes</u>	No/Did not happen/ Never looked for a new congregation at <u>any point (VOL.)</u>	<u>DK/Ref. (VOL.)</u>
<u>Mar 17-May 6, 2015</u>			
a. You had recently moved	34	65	<1
b. You had gotten married or divorced	11	89	<1
d. You had a disagreement with a clergy member or other people at your previous house of worship	11	88	<1

⁷ Respondents who volunteered that they have never looked for a congregation at any point in their adults lives were not asked the remaining items in this list or QC2.

ASK IF RESPONDENT DID NOT SAY THEY "NEVER LOOKED FOR A NEW CONGREGATION AT ANY POINT":

Q.C2 As an adult, has there ever been a time where you looked for a new congregation or house of worship for some other reason? **(SPECIFY)**

NOTE: RESULTS DO NOT SUM TO SUBTOTALS INDICATED BECAUSE MULTIPLE RESPONSES WERE PERMITTED.

BASED ON TOTAL

Mar 17-May 6

2015

7	NET Problems with former church
3	Dissatisfaction with church
3	Church theology/beliefs
1	Prefer different leadership
<1	Leadership change
<1	Church programs
5	NET Change in personal beliefs
3	Exploring/seeking
1	Personal growth/beliefs evolved
1	Changed religions or denominations
3	NET Practical reasons
2	Distance/convenience
1	Life events
1	Previous church closed/never had a previous church
<1	Language barriers
3	NET Social reasons
1	Children's needs and education
1	Looking for a sense of fellowship
1	Want to attend with friends/family
<1	Networking/finding friends
1	Unclear
<1	No answer
19	NET Yes, looked for a new congregation for some other reason

ASK ALL WHO LOOKED FOR A NEW CONGREGATION (IN Q.C1a-d OR Q.C2) [N=2,709]:

Q.C3 When looking for a new congregation or house of worship, did you only consider congregations in the religion or **[IF PROTESTANT INSERT "Protestant"]**denomination you were part of at the time, or did you ever consider one in a different religion or **[IF PROTESTANT INSERT "Protestant"]**denomination?⁸

Mar 17-May 6

2015

49	Only considered congregations in the denomination I was part of at the time
48	Considered different denomination
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

⁸ Religious tradition drawn from 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study. See corresponding [topline](#) for full results for the question (QE1-QE3v).

CHOOSING A NEW CHURCH OR HOUSE OF WORSHIP

ASK ALL WHO LOOKED FOR A NEW CONGREGATION (IN Q.C1a-d OR Q.C2) [N=2,709]:

Q.C4 Which of the following, if any, have you ever done when looking for a congregation or house of worship? First, have you ever **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]**, or not? Next, have you ever **[INSERT;RANDOMIZE]**, or not? Have you ever **[INSERT;RANDOMIZE]**, or not?

	Yes, did <u>this</u>	No, did not <u>do this</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref.</u>
<u>Mar 17-May 6, 2015</u>			
a. Looked for information online about a church or house of worship you were considering	37	63	<1
b. Made a phone call to a church or house of worship you were considering	19	81	<1
c. Talked to members of a congregation you were considering	69	31	1
d. Talked to a minister or clergy person at a church or house of worship you were considering	55	44	1
e. Attended a worship service at a church or house of worship you were considering	85	15	<1
f. Talked to friends or colleagues about a church or house of worship you were considering	68	32	<1

ASK ALL WHO LOOKED FOR A NEW CONGREGATION (IN Q.C1a-d OR Q.C2) [N=2,709]:

Q.C5 And which if any of the following factors have played an important role in your choice of congregation? First, has **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]** ever played an important role in your choice of congregation, or not? Next, has **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]** ever played an important role in your choice of congregation, or not? Has **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]**, ever played an important role in your choice of congregation? How about **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]**? **[READ AS NECESSARY: Has this ever played an important role in your choice of congregation, or not?]**

	Yes, played an important <u>role</u>	No, has not ever played an important <u>role</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref.</u>
<u>Mar 17-May 6, 2015</u>			
a. Location	70	29	1
b. Feeling welcomed by clergy or lay leaders	79	21	1
c. The quality of religious education for children	56	44	1
d. Having friends or family members who were already going there	48	51	<1
e. The style of worship services	74	24	1
f. The quality of sermons or preaching	83	16	1
g. The availability of volunteering and community service opportunities	42	57	1

ASK ALL WHO LOOKED FOR A NEW CONGREGATION (IN Q.C1a-d OR Q.C2) [N=2,709]:

Q.C5h Are there any other factors that have played an important role in your choice of congregation?
(SPECIFY)

NOTE: RESULTS DO NOT SUM TO SUBTOTALS INDICATED BECAUSE MULTIPLE RESPONSES WERE PERMITTED.

Mar 17-May 6

2015

13	NET Church programs/leadership
8	Church's teachings
3	Church leadership
2	Church programs
1	Church's politics
<1	Other church programs/leadership
10	NET Church environment
6	Welcoming/fellowship
3	Music/style of worship
1	Congregation size/demographics
1	Other aspects of church environment
5	NET Other factors
2	Family situations
2	Convenience
1	Other personal factors
1	Unclear
1	No answer

29 Yes, other factors played an important role in choice of congregation

ASK ALL WHO LOOKED FOR A NEW CONGREGATION (IN Q.C1a-d OR Q.C2):

Q.C6 Thinking specifically about the most recent time you looked for a new congregation or house of worship, about how long ago was that? Was it **[READ IN ORDER]**

BASED ON TOTAL

Mar 17-May 6

2015

49	NET Ever looked for a new congregation
9	Within the last year
16	Between one and five years ago
9	Between five and 10 years ago [OR]
15	More than 10 years ago
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
51	NET Never looked for a new congregation

ASK ALL WHO LOOKED FOR A NEW CONGREGATION (IN Q.C1a-d OR Q.C2) [N=2,709]:

Q.C7 Still thinking about the most recent time you looked, how difficult or easy would you say it was to find a new church or house of worship? Would you say it was **[READ IN ORDER TO RANDOM HALF OF SAMPLE, IN REVERSE ORDER TO OTHER HALF OF SAMPLE]**?

Mar 17-May 6

2015

7	Very difficult
20	Somewhat difficult
26	Somewhat easy
45	Very easy
1	Did not find a new house of worship (VOL.)
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF GAVE ANSWER TO Q.C7:

Q.C8 What made it [IF VERY/SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT OR DID NOT FIND NEW HOUSE OF WORSHIP IN Q.C7: "difficult"; IF VERY/SOMEWHAT EASY IN Q.C7: "easy"] to find a new congregation? (OPEN END, SPECIFY)

NOTE: RESULTS DO NOT SUM TO 100% OR TO SUBTOTALS INDICATED BECAUSE MULTIPLE RESPONSES WERE PERMITTED.

AMONG THOSE WHO SAID FINDING A NEW CONGREGATION WAS EASY IN Q.C7 [N=1,949]

Mar 17-May 6

2015

55	NET Convenience
43	Availability/location/logistics
14	Easy to find info/find what was looking for
36	NET Family/community
20	Invited/friends
10	Family/family situation
8	Felt a sense of fellowship
12	NET Found a good congregation
5	Agreed with theology/worship style
4	Liked church's leadership
2	General satisfaction
1	Already familiar with the church
1	Unclear
2	No answer

AMONG THOSE WHO SAID FINDING A NEW CONGREGATION WAS DIFFICULT IN Q.C7 [N=728]

Mar 17-May 6

2015

40	NET Dissatisfaction with church practices/religion
26	Disagreed with theology
5	General concerns about religion
3	Disliked church's leadership
3	Liked previous church more
3	Personal beliefs evolved
33	NET Inconvenience
24	Availability/location/logistics
8	Hard to find information
28	NET Family/community
23	Lack of fellowship
5	Family/family situation
3	Unclear
5	No answer

ASK IF NOW ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST MONTHLY⁹:

Q.C9 Since you were 18 years old, has there ever been a time in your life when you attended religious services LESS often than you do now?

BASED ON TOTAL

Mar 17-May 6

2015

51	NET Attend religious services at least monthly
27	Yes, was once a time when attended religious services less often
23	No, was not a time when attended religious services less often
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
49	NET Attend religious services a few times a year or less

ASK IF NOW ATTEND AT LEAST MONTHLY AND USED TO ATTEND LESS OFTEN [N=1,349]:

Q.C10 What is the main reason that you attend religious services more often now than you used to? (**SPECIFY**)

Mar 17-May 6

2015

49	NET Changing beliefs
20	Become more religious
15	Need God/religion/church in their life
14	More mature/older
23	NET Social factors
13	Family changes
6	Life phase/lifestyle changes
4	Desire for fellowship/church life
20	NET Practical issues
10	Have time now/scheduling
6	Convenience/habit
3	Found a congregation they like more
1	Other
2	Unclear
5	No answer

ASK IF NOW ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES A FEW TIMES A YEAR OR LESS AND USED TO ATTEND MORE OFTEN¹⁰:

Q.C11 Since you were 18 years old, has there ever been a time in your life when you attended religious services MORE often than you do now?

BASED ON TOTAL

Mar 17-May 6

2015

49	NET Attend religious services a few times a year or less
22	Yes, was once a time when attended religious services more often
27	No, was not a time when attended religious services more often
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
51	NET Attend religious services at least monthly

⁹ Frequency of attendance at religious services drawn from 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study. See corresponding [topline](#) for full results for the question (ATTEND).

¹⁰ Frequency of attendance at religious services drawn from 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study. See corresponding [topline](#) for full results for the question (ATTEND).

**ASK IF NOW ATTEND A FEW TIMES A YEAR OR LESS AND USED TO ATTEND MORE OFTEN
[N=1,297]:**

Q.C12 What is the main reason that you attend religious services LESS often now than you used to?
(SPECIFY)

Mar 17-May 6

2015

50	NET Practical issues
20	Too busy
10	Personal priorities
8	Practical difficulties
6	Old age/health reasons
5	Looking for a congregation
26	NET Changing beliefs/church
17	Beliefs changed
6	Disagree with church teachings
2	Church has changed
17	NET Social factors
7	Family changes
5	No longer expected to attend
3	Attended with someone
2	Life phase/lifestyle changed
1	Other social reasons
1	Other
2	Unclear
5	No answer

ASK IF SWITCHED FROM AFFILIATED TO UNAFFILIATED [N=956¹¹]:

Q.C13 Last year you told us you currently think of yourself as [**INSERT**: an atheist/an agnostic/having no particular religion], and you were raised [**INSERT**: Christian/Catholic/Jewish/Muslim/Hindu/in a religion]. Just in your own words, what would you say is the main reason that you now think of yourself as [an atheist/an agnostic/having no particular religion]?¹² (**SPECIFY**)

NOTE: RESULTS DO NOT SUM TO 100% OR TO SUBTOTALS INDICATED BECAUSE MULTIPLE RESPONSES WERE PERMITTED.

Mar 17-May 6

2015

49	NET Don't believe
36	Disenchanted/don't believe
7	Not interested in/don't need religion
7	Views evolved
1	Went through a crisis of faith
20	NET Dislike organized religion
15	Anti-institutional religion
4	Religion focuses on power/politics
1	Religion causes conflict
18	NET Religiously unsure/undecided
7	Unaffiliated but religious
6	Seeking/open-minded
3	Spiritual but not religious
2	Uncertain about beliefs
10	NET Inactive believer
8	Non-practicing
2	Too busy
<1	Other
1	Unclear
5	No answer

REMAINING QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

¹¹ A small number of respondents (N=20) that were asked this question volunteered that were still affiliated with their childhood religion and are not included in results for this question.

¹² Religious tradition drawn from 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study. See corresponding [topline](#) for full results for the question (QE1-QE3v).