

Churchgoers still tithing but outside of church

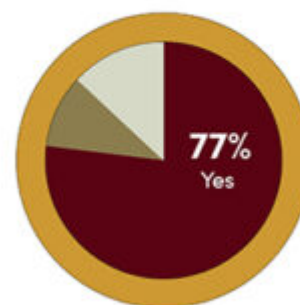
April 26, 2023

BRENTWOOD, Tenn.—Most churchgoers see tithing as a biblical command and give at least 10 percent of their income. But they have more diverse opinions on the “where” and “how” of tithing.

More than 3 in 4 American Protestant churchgoers say tithing is a biblical command that still applies today (77 percent), according to a [Lifeway Research study](#). One in 10 (10 percent) says it is not. And 13 percent are uncertain about the matter.

Pass the plate?
3 in 4 say tithing is a biblical
command that still applies today

Among U.S. Protestant churchgoers



Notes: 10% say no; 13% say not sure

Lifewayresearch

[Compared to 2017](#), fewer churchgoers today believe tithing is a biblical command that still applies (77 percent vs. 83 percent) and more are not sure (13 percent vs. 10 percent).

“Giving 10 percent of your earnings to God is still a widespread standard among churchgoers,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. “The small decline in considering tithing a command appears to be more from a lack of teaching on the subject than a rejection of such teaching.”

The youngest adult churchgoers, those age 18 to 34, are the least likely to

agree tithing is a biblical command that still applies today (66 percent). Denominationally, Lutherans are least likely to agree (59 percent).

Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without evangelical beliefs to say tithing is biblical and currently applicable (85 percent vs. 71 percent).

And those who attend a worship service at least four times a month are more likely than those who attend one to three times a month (80 percent vs. 72 percent) to agree.

How much do churchgoers give?

By definition, a tithe is one-tenth. And while more than 3 in 4 churchgoers believe giving a tithe is biblical, only half (51 percent) give 10 percent or more of their income to the church they attend.

Three in 10 (31 percent) say they give a tithe, and 19 percent give more. More than 1 in 5 (22 percent) say they try to give but aren't always consistent. And 16 percent say they regularly give less than a tithe.

Another 9 percent say their finances make it difficult to give, and 2 percent say they do not give.

Although fewer give 10 percent of their income to the church today compared to 2017 (31 percent vs. 37 percent), the percentage of churchgoers who give 10 percent or more has remained relatively steady (51 percent vs. 54 percent).

Today, fewer churchgoers regularly give less than a tithe (16 percent vs. 20 percent). And more try to give but are not consistent (22 percent vs. 17 percent).

“Believing God wants you to tithe and doing it are two different things,”

McConnell said. “Some who do not tithe are consistent with their giving at a lower threshold, and others give when they feel they are able. Like many exhortations in Scripture, giving your finances to God is not necessarily easy in practice.”

Several church-related factors impact a person’s likelihood of giving to the church they attend. Baptist (40 percent), Presbyterian/Reformed (34 percent) and non-denominational (34 percent) churchgoers are more likely to tithe 10 percent of their income than Lutheran (19 percent), Restorationist Movement (17 percent) and Methodist (12 percent) churchgoers.

Additionally, those who attend worship services at least four times a month (34 percent) are more likely to tithe than those who attend one to three times a month (26 percent). And those with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without evangelical beliefs to tithe (39 percent vs. 25 percent).

Where can you tithe?

Most churchgoers who say tithing is an applicable biblical command say tithe money can be given to their church (90 percent). Most also say tithes can be given to a Christian ministry (55 percent). Fewer say tithes can be given to an individual in need (42 percent) or to another church they don’t regularly attend (34 percent). One in 4 believe tithes can be given to a secular charity (25 percent). And 1 percent are not sure.

Today, fewer churchgoers than in 2017 say tithe money can be given to their church (90 percent vs. 98 percent).

And more said tithes can be given to Christian ministries (55 percent vs. 48 percent), an individual in need (42 percent vs. 34 percent) or a secular charity (25 percent vs. 18 percent).

Denominationally, Lutheran (98 percent), Presbyterian/Reformed (96 percent), Baptist (93 percent) and non-denominational (92 percent) churchgoers are among the most likely to say tithe money can be given to their churches.

Lutheran and Presbyterian/Reformed churchgoers are also among the most likely to say tithes can be given to another church they don't regularly attend (58 percent and 53 percent, respectively) or a Christian ministry (72 percent and 68 percent).

Lutherans are also among the most likely to say tithes can be given to a secular charity (45 percent), and Presbyterian/Reformed churchgoers are among the most likely to say they can be given to an individual in need (51 percent).

Conversely, Baptists are among the least likely to say tithes can be given to a Christian ministry (51 percent), individuals in need (37 percent), another church they don't regularly attend (34 percent) or a secular charity (19 percent).

Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without evangelical beliefs to say tithe money can be given to their churches (95 percent vs. 85 percent), while those without evangelical beliefs are more likely than those with such beliefs to say tithes can be given to a secular charity (29 percent vs. 20 percent).

Does method matter?

Although the past five years have seen a noticeable increase in online giving, most churchgoers still give cash at church (53 percent). Fewer give a check at church (30 percent) or mail one to the church (9 percent).

Others give electronically on the church website (23 percent), through their

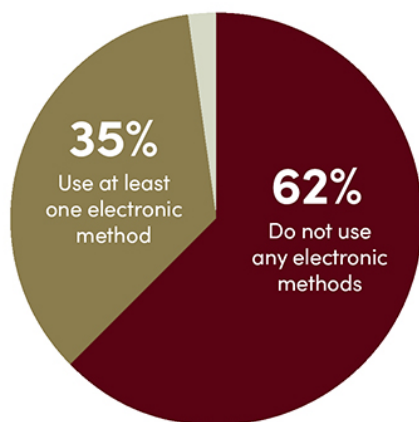
bank (14 percent), through an app the church provided (7 percent) or via text (2 percent). And 8 percent of churchgoers have automated payments set up for their tithes.

Nearly half as many churchgoers today compared to 2017 give a check at church (30 percent vs. 59 percent).

But more churchgoers mail checks to the church today (9 percent vs. 3 percent).

Most churchgoers who give still do so physically

Among U.S. Protestant churchgoers who give to their church

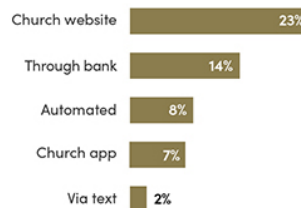


Notes: Respondents were given a list of options and asked which they use to give to their church. They could select all that apply. 2% say not sure.

Non-electronic giving methods



Electronic giving methods



Lifewayresearch

And more are giving electronically through all formats—church website (23 percent vs. 11 percent), banks (14 percent vs. 5 percent), automated payments (8 percent vs. 3 percent) or church app (7 percent vs. 3 percent).

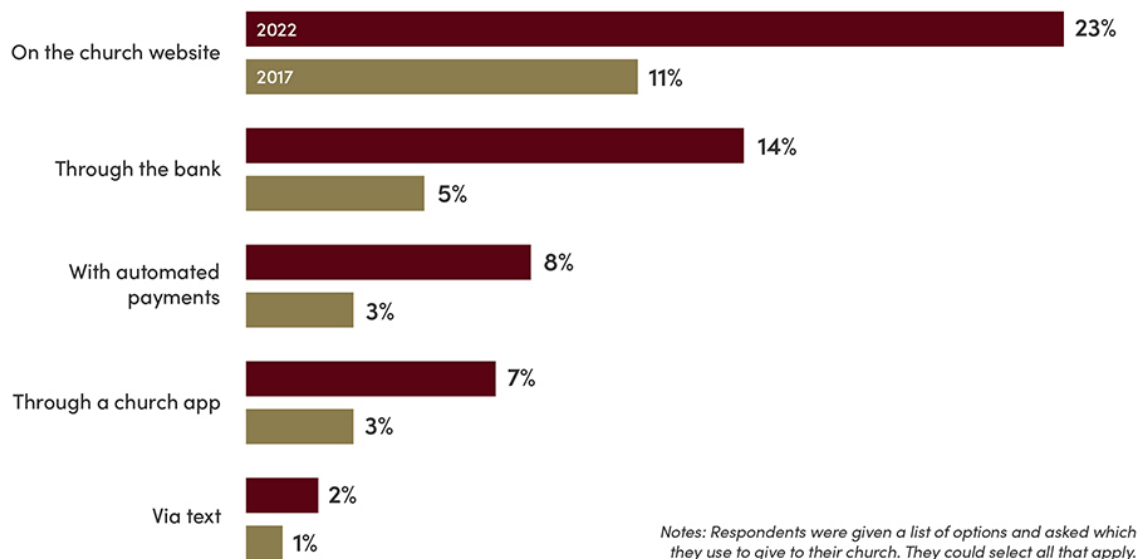
Those 18-34 are among the most likely to give cash at church (75 percent), on the church website (28 percent), through an app the church provided (10 percent) or via text (7 percent). Churchgoers 65 or older are the most

likely to give a check (47 percent).

“While electronic giving has grown significantly in the last five years, 6 in 10 (62 percent) churchgoers who give do not yet utilize electronic giving methods to give to their church,” McConnell said. “Churches would likely be better served by emphasizing the motivation to give than the mode.”

Each form of electronic giving is more popular than it was five years ago

Among U.S. Protestant churchgoers who give to the church they attend



Lifewayresearch

Lifeway Research conducted the online survey of American Protestant churchgoers Sept. 19-29, 2022, using a national pre-recruited panel. Quotas and slight weights were used to balance gender, age, region, ethnicity, education and religion to reflect the population more accurately. The completed sample is 1,002 surveys, providing 95 percent confidence the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.3 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.