

# Faith Digest: Americans exaggerate church attendance

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Americans fib about their church attendance, a new survey by the [Public Religion Research Institute](#) reveals. The survey finds many Christians—and unbelievers, too—will exaggerate about attending worship in live phone interviews. However, when asked in an anonymous online questionnaire,



people answer more realistically. On the phone, 36 percent of Americans report attending religious services weekly or more, while 30 percent say they seldom or never go. But online, a smaller share—31 percent—of people surveyed said they attended church at least weekly, while a larger portion—43 percent—admitted they seldom or never go. The three groups most likely to inflate attendance are white mainline Protestants, Catholics and adults ages 18 to 29. On the phone, 73 percent of “nones” say they seldom or never attend, but 91 percent say so when interviewed online. In the overall study, 19 percent of adults answering online said religion was not important to them; only 13 percent said so on the phone. However, among the “nones,” the gap on the importance of religion was markedly wider—49 percent on the phone, compared with 73 percent online. Both surveys of American adults were conducted in 2013, with 2,002 people interviewed by cell and landline and a demographically comparable group of 2,317 who answered questions online.

**Pastors leave Reformed network amid child abuse scandal.** Pastors Joshua Harris and C.J. Mahaney left the leadership council of [The Gospel Coalition](#), a central hub for the Reformed evangelical movement, after a trial involving child abuse at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Md.,



which both men have overseen.

C.J. MahaneyA recently concluded criminal trial raised questions about what pastors at Covenant Life knew about the abuse and why steps weren't taken to stop it. Nathaniel Morales, 56, was convicted May 15 of sexually abusing three underage boys between 1983 and 1991 when he was a youth leader at Covenant Life. During testimony, former Covenant Life Pastor Grant Layman suggested he withheld information from the police about the abuse allegations against Morales. Layman, who is Mahaney's brother-in-law, stepped down from his role at Covenant Life in March. Mahaney founded Covenant Life in 1977 and now leads Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville, Ky., the home of Sovereign Grace Ministries, a national association of 80 Reformed evangelical churches.