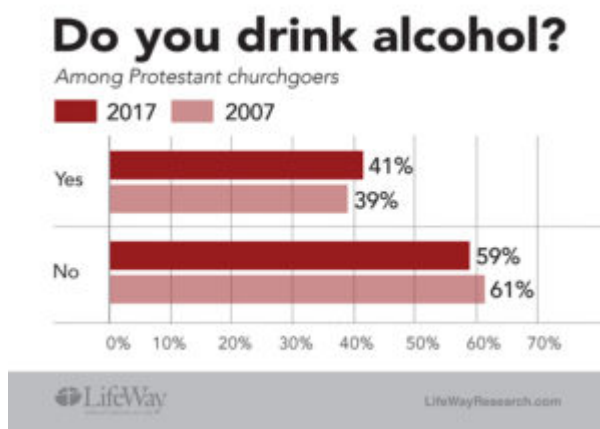


Most Protestant churchgoers say they abstain from alcohol

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Most Protestant churchgoers say the Bible teaches against drunkenness, but that doesn't stop about four in 10 from taking a drink now and then.

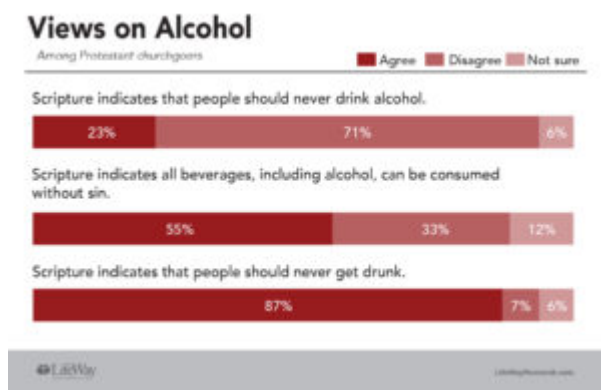
While 41 percent say they consume alcohol, 59 percent say they do not, according to a new [LifeWay Research study](#). That's a slight shift from 10 years ago, when 39 percent said they consumed alcohol, while 61 percent said they did not.



Gallup surveys over the last 75 years typically have shown two-thirds of all American adults occasionally 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.

The latest LifeWay study shows 87 percent of Protestant churchgoers agree Scripture says people should never get drunk, up from 82 percent in 2007.



But when it comes to total abstinence, fewer than a quarter (23 percent) 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.

When Christians drink socially, many Protestant 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 the surveyed churchgoers say Scripture indicates all beverages, including alcohol, can be consumed without sin (55 percent) and that Christians exercise biblical liberty when partaking alcohol in reasonable amounts (54 percent).

Demographic factors matter

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

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

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

Protestant churchgoers ages 18 to 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 to 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," McConnell said. "The majority believe that biblically they can drink, but they choose not to."

LifeWay Research conducted the study of 1,010 American Protestant churchgoers Aug. 22-30, 2017. Analysts used sample stratification and base weights for gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, metro/non-metro, home ownership, education and income to reflect the most recent U.S. Census data. The methodology provides 95 percent confidence the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Comparisons were made to a LifeWay Research phone survey conducted in April-May 2007 among 1,004 Protestant churchgoers.