

LIFEWAY RESEARCH: Study exposes top reasons for skipping church

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP and local reports) – Bad weather will apparently keep many churchgoers out of the pew on a Sunday, according to a just-released LifeWay Research study.

A total of 1,002 participants were asked how often they would skip a weekly worship service for six different scenarios: to avoid severe weather, to enjoy an outdoor activity in good weather, to get extra sleep, to meet friends, to avoid traveling when it's raining, or to watch sports.



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“Churchgoers are not on autopilot. Each week they are faced with a choice of whether to attend church, and there is more than one tradeoff when it comes to this decision,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

Weather as a factor

Most regular churchgoers (77%) said they would miss a weekly worship service at least once a year to avoid traveling in severe weather, to enjoy an outdoor activity (55%), or to get some extra sleep (54%).

Half of respondents said they would do so to meet a friend or group of friends. Fewer said they’d skip church in order not to have to travel when it was raining (43%) or to watch a sporting event or their favorite team (42%).

“Sometimes churchgoers conclude it’s safer to skip church and

not be on the roads,” McConnell said, “but many will also skip church if they feel they have a better option.”

Seventy-seven percent would skip church if there was snow, ice, a tornado watch, or other severe weather, including 23% who would do so once a year, 39% a few times a year, and 15% many times a year.

Twenty-three percent said they would never intentionally miss a worship service for those reasons.

Outdoor activities

Fifty-five percent said they would miss weekly worship at least occasionally to enjoy an outdoor activity during nice weather. For 15%, they’d do so once a year, 22% a few times a year, and 18% many times a year.

Still, 45% said they’d never miss church outside activities during good weather.

Sleeping in

Fifty-four percent of churchgoers said they’d miss church to stay in bed a little longer, including 10% who said they would skip once a year to get some extra sleep, 26% a few times a year, and 18% many times a year.

Sleep is never a reason to miss for 46% of U.S. churchgoers participating in the study.

Meeting friends

Churchgoers are evenly split on missing a service to meet friends or a group of friends. Half would do so, including 17% once a year, 22% a few times a year, and 12% many times a year. The other half of respondents said they’d never skip a weekly worship service to meet a friend or group of friends.

Rain, rain, go away

Most U.S. Protestant churchgoers said rain wouldn't keep them away but 43% said they may miss church to avoid traveling during rainy weather. For 13%, they'd miss once a year, 20% a few times a year, and nine percent many times a year.

Fifty-seven percent said they would never skip a worship service because it was raining.

Sports

Forty-two percent said they'd miss a worship service to watch a sporting event or their favorite sports team, including 11% once a year, 17% a few times a year, and 14% many times a year.

For 58% of responding U.S. Protestant churchgoers, sports would never cause them to miss church.

Men vs. women, age considerations

Churchgoers in the U.S. Midwest are the least likely to say they'd miss many times a year to watch sports (eight percent). Men are more likely to say they'd stay home to watch their favorite team at least once a year (46%) than women (39%), while 47% of women are more likely to miss because of rain than men (37%).

Those under age 50 are more likely to miss worship services to enjoy an outdoor activity and meet friends than those age 50 and older. In addition, the study revealed the younger a churchgoer is, the more likely they are to stay in bed and sleep on Sunday mornings at least occasionally.

Frequent fliers

Perhaps unsurprisingly, churchgoers who attend four times a month or more are less likely to say they'd ever miss for any of the six options than those who attend one to three times a month. Also, the study showed evangelicals are less likely to say they would skip for any of the listed reasons than those

without such theological convictions.

Presbyterians on top

Denominationally, Presbyterians are among the least likely to say they'd miss church for any of the options in the study (74%). Sixty-two percent of Baptists in the study said they would never skip for any of the options. Methodist churchgoers are among the most likely for each of the six options to say they would skip at least once a year.

For more information, view the complete report and visit LifewayResearch.com.