

Ratio of 'unchurched' up sharply since 1991: A Barna Group study

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The portion of adults who generally do not attend church has risen sharply in the past 13 years, a Barna Group study shows. The percentage of Americans who are “unchurched” grew from 21 percent in 1991 to 34 percent in 2004. Researchers defined the unchurched as those who have not attended a church service in the past six months, other than on holidays such as Easter or Christmas, or events such as a funeral.

In a typical week, unchurched people are less likely than other adults to read the Bible or to pray. Forty-four percent of adults said they read the Bible in a typical week, compared to 19 percent of the unchurched. Eighty-three percent of adults say they pray in a typical week, compared to 63 percent of unchurched adults. While 26 percent of American adults are single and have never married, 37 percent of the unchurched can be similarly described.

Unchurched people tend to live in the Northeast and the West, said George Barna, the Ventura, California-based researcher. They also tend to be independent and less involved organizationally—with lower levels of voter registration, less money donated to nonprofit organizations, lower levels of media usage, and less engagement in community service, he said. The findings were based on telephone interviews of 1,014 adults in late January and early February. *-Religion News Service*