

Study finds strong link between religious giving and going to worship

People who attend services once a month or more give ten times more than those who attend less often, according to a recent study.

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [November 22, 2017](#) issue

The more frequently a household attends worship services, the more likely it is to donate to religious institutions, and give generously, new research shows.

“Most strikingly, those attending religious services once a month or more make an average annual religious contribution of \$1,848, while those attending religious services less than once a month donate \$111,” researchers wrote in a report from Giving USA.

The recently released report draws on data from the University of Michigan’s Philanthropy Panel Study. Giving to religion, as defined by the Chicago-based Giving USA Foundation, includes contributions to congregations, religious media, denominations, and mission organizations. It does not include faith-related institutions such as the Salvation Army, Catholic hospitals, or Jewish foundations.

Overall, giving to religious causes amounted to close to a third of all charitable giving in 2016, according to Giving USA. Religious institutions received \$122.94 billion that year. That figure is more than double the amount received by educational institutions, the next highest sector within nonprofits, which garnered \$59.77 billion.

David King, director of the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving at Indiana University, said that religious giving has remained at about a third of charitable giving in recent years “despite trends that we’ve seen around declining religious affiliation and religious involvement.”

Researchers from the university found that almost one-tenth of households that never attend religious services give to religious institutions, but in lower

amounts—\$67 annually on average.

Among donors to religious causes, annual average giving reaches its peak between ages 40 and 64 (\$2,505), which is higher than with donors under age 40 (\$1,892) and those over 65 (\$2,338).

“Younger generations do give to religion, and do so at a rate that is similar to earlier generations,” said Rick Dunham, a board member of Giving USA Foundation and president of a fundraising company that focuses on faith-based nonprofits. “It is reasonable to expect that as younger generations mature, they will be similarly engaged in charitable giving as older generations are.”

Religious giving also increases with income as well as with educational attainment. While 21 percent of heads of household without a high school degree gave to a religious institution, 49 percent with education beyond a bachelor’s degree gave to religious causes. —Religion News Service

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