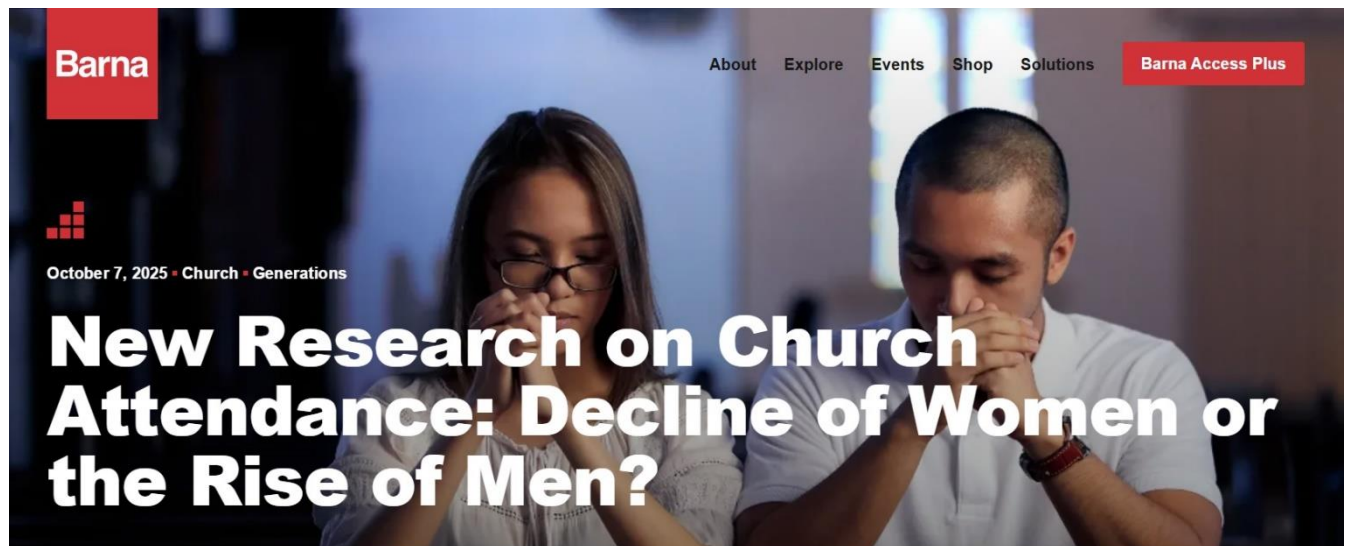




At a Glance: New research on Church attendance.

- **Major Gender Shift:** Men are significantly outpacing women in church attendance since the pandemic, reversing a long-standing trend in Barna's decades of tracking. The 2025 gender gap is the largest recorded so far (43% for men vs. 36% among women).
- **Married Dads Show Up; Moms Step Back:** Among parents of kids under 18, married dads have the highest show-up rate at church compared to all other parents. Only 1 in 4 single moms (24%) attend church weekly—significantly trailing other married moms and dads.
- **Why It Matters:** These shifts reveal new patterns of participation and disengagement among key groups that may reshape the fabric of church life in the years to come.
- **Leadership Consideration:** How will churches adapt to support the growing faith engagement of young men—and the growing disengagement of women, particularly single mothers? How can leaders assess what people are experiencing inside the church that shapes whether they return?

For decades, women have outnumbered men in church attendance and have often led the way in spiritual participation. But a significant shift is occurring in American Christianity that demands attention: Women—particularly younger women—are attending church less frequently than men. This reversal isn't just a numerical milestone; it signals a broader cultural and spiritual turning point.

While men traditionally have been less likely to participate in church life, the current data, released as part of Barna's ongoing *State of the Church* initiative with *Gloo*, tells a different story—one that points both to signs of renewal in the Church and to specific, concerning areas of decline.

This article explores the generational and gender dynamics now reshaping American church attendance. As women's engagement patterns change, the effects on church communities, leadership, and culture are likely to be profound. These are trends the Church can't afford to overlook.

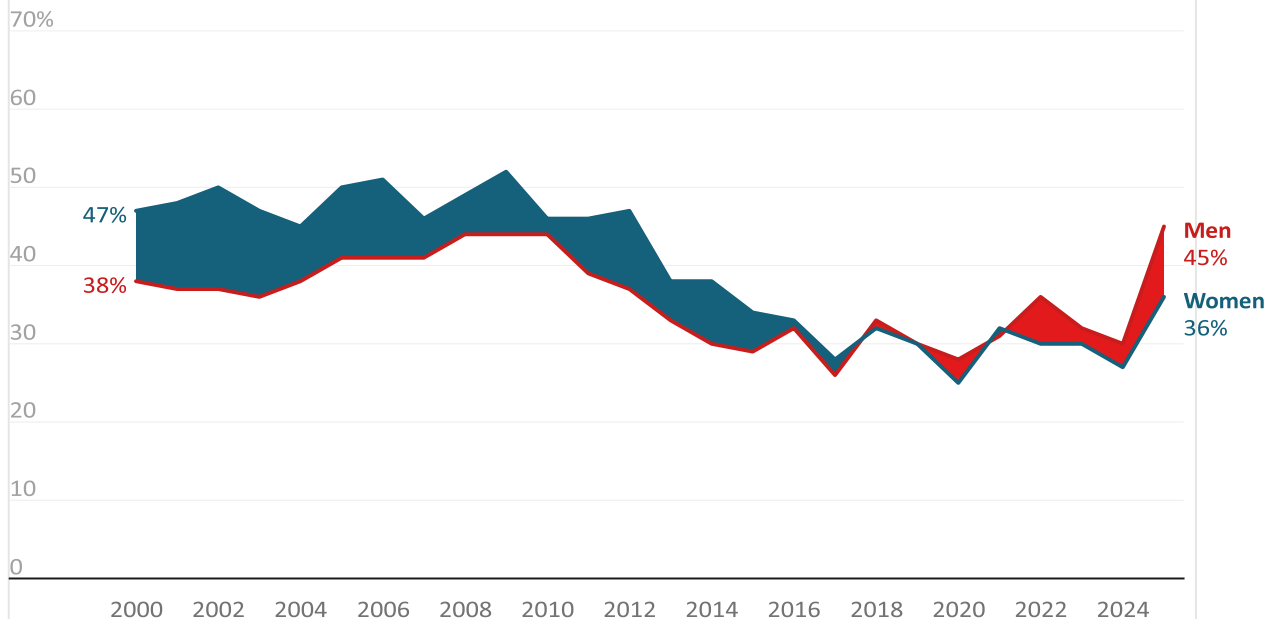
1. A Dramatic Reversal in Attendance

Men and women's church attendance trends have crossed over time. In the early 2000s, women were more regular attenders than men by a wide margin. Over the years, however, women's attendance steadily declined, while men's remained more stable. In other words, churches are losing women more than they are gaining men, with the exception of 2025 when male attendance spiked upward.

As of 2025, 43 percent of men and 36 percent of women report attending church regularly, based on reported weekly attendance. In five of the last six years, men have outpaced women in this key measure of religious engagement, and the 2025 gap is the largest measured.

A 25-Year Reversal in Men and Women's Church Attendance

% Attends Church Weekly



n=132,020 U.S. Adults, January 2000 to July 2025.

Source: Barna Group • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

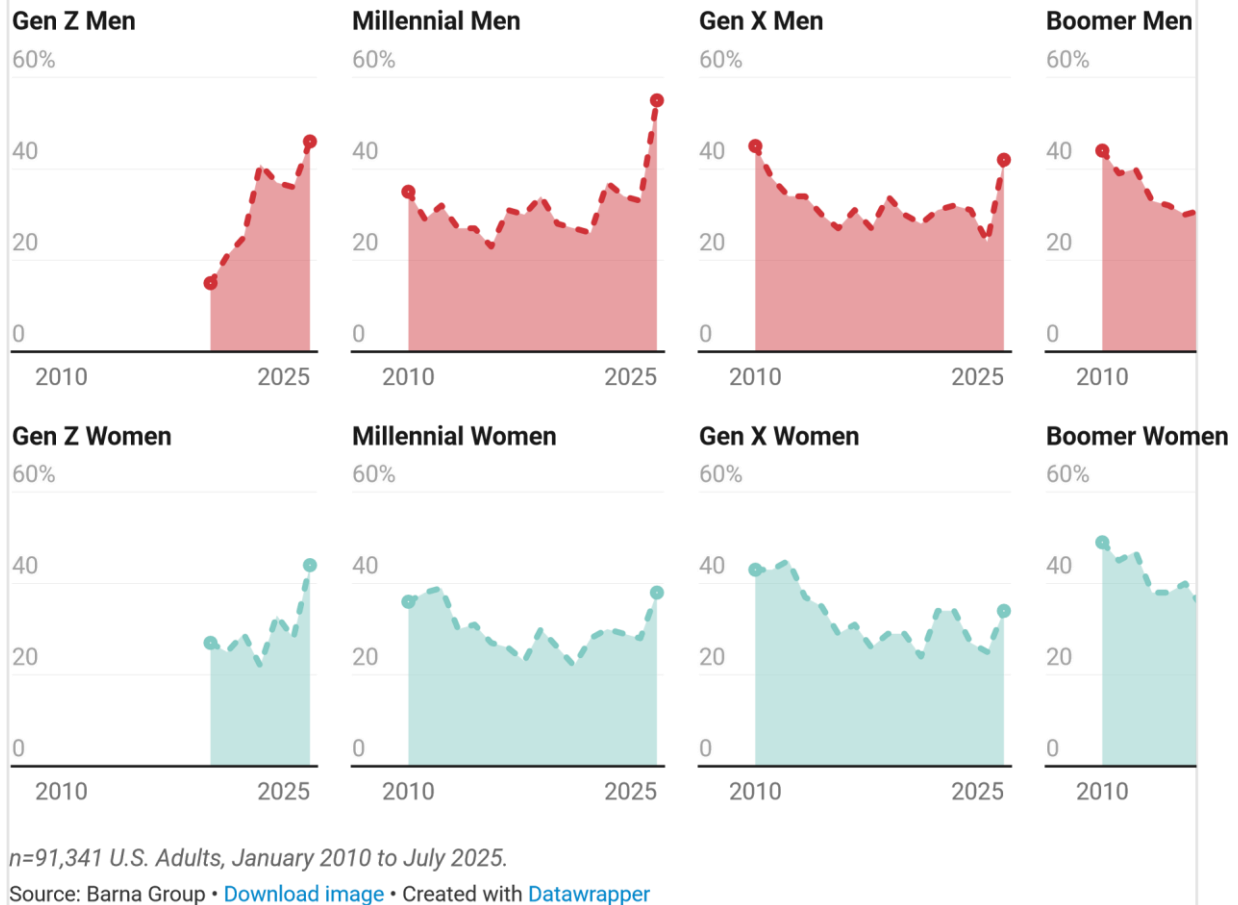
2. Young Men Lead the Shift

Looking at gender and age over the last 15 years, we discovered a few illuminating trends.

- Regular church attendance is on the rise for all young adults. Since 2019 both Gen Z and Millennials were the least likely generation to frequently attend church. Today, they are the most engaged.
- Though there's a slight uptick in attendance among older generations, their weekly attendance, especially for women, lags far below younger adults. When seen with 15 years of perspective, it's clear that the Boomer generation overall is slowing down their church engagement, most significantly among older women.
- Across every generation, women are trailing men in weekly church attendance, especially among Gen X and Millennials.

Church Attendance is on the Rise for All Young People - Especially Men

% Attends Church Weekly



What's Driving the Shift?

The reasons behind the shift in women's church attendance are complex and layered. Experts point to a convergence of factors affecting Gen Z women:

- **Increased burdens of work and caregiving:** Many young women are juggling careers, side gigs, and unpaid domestic responsibilities—all while earning less than their male peers. Instead of being a place of sanctuary and spiritual renewal, church often adds to the already full plate of demands on women's lives.
- **Changing social dynamics:** With more women delaying marriage or remaining single, they often feel isolated in congregations that cater to nuclear families. (Learn more about the latest marriage, family and relationship trends in [The](#)

[State of Today's Family](#), Barna's upcoming study produced in partnership with Gloom and a network of trusted partners of the Flourishing Families Initiative.)

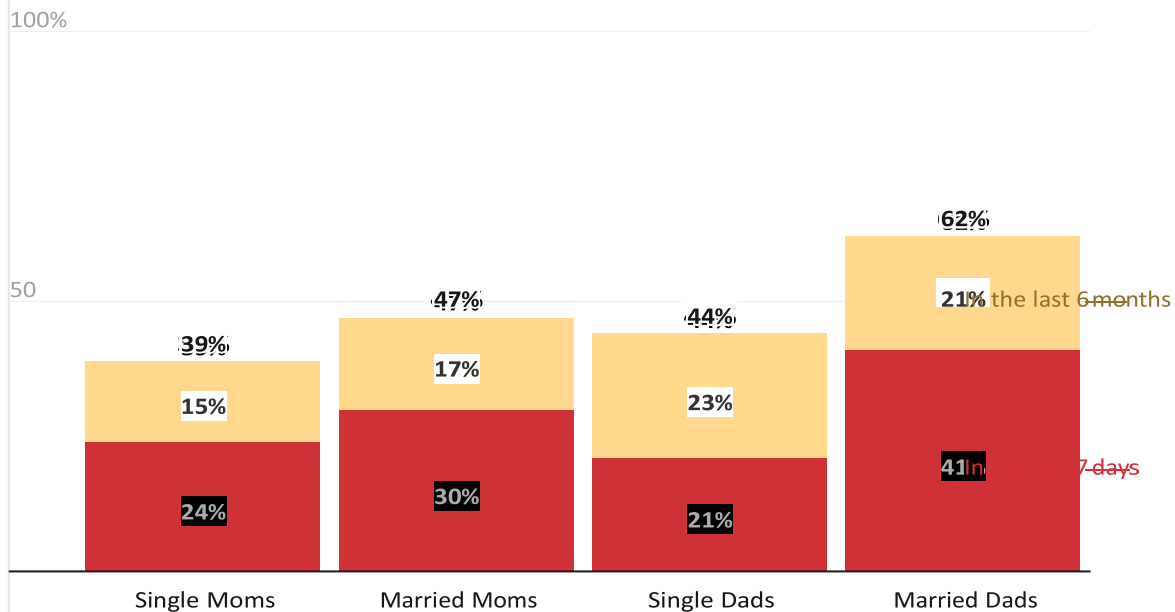
- **Cultural mismatch:** Some [researchers](#) suggest the decline in women's church attendance may stem from a growing disconnect between traditional, hierarchical church structures and the values of younger women—many of whom now identify as liberal politically. In a culture that increasingly affirms women's leadership and agency, churches that limit women's roles may feel out of step, leaving gifted women feeling sidelined.
- **Church culture and leadership failures:** High-profile scandals involving male church leaders, along with toxic teaching and exclusionary practices, have eroded trust—especially among women. “When women see repeated examples of moral failure, abuse, or hypocrisy in church leadership, it deepens their disillusionment,” says David Kinnaman, CEO of Barna Group.

3. Married Dads Take the Lead on Church going; Single Moms Left Out

Among today's parents, married dads are now the most likely to attend church weekly, a finding that marks a striking shift from previous norms. Barna has [long reported on](#) the influence of [moms](#) on their children's faith practices. In a 2023 Barna study to explore the spiritual backstories of U.S. adults, 78 percent of practicing Christians say that growing up their mother modeled a strong religious faith (compared to only 57% who say that is true of their dad).

Married Dads Become the Most Consistent Church Attendees

When was the last time you attended a church service?



n=1,140 U.S. Adult Parents of U18 Kids, August 2024.

Source: Barna Group • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

This data hints at a possible realignment in the spiritual habits of families, with married fathers becoming more active in church life than any other parent group.

Meanwhile, single moms have the lowest weekly attendance rate—and their six month attendance (39%) also lags slightly behind that of single dads (44%). These disparities raise important questions about what supports and barriers exist for single parents—especially mothers—within church communities.

As attendance patterns shift, it's worth asking: Are churches adapting to the realities and needs of single-parent families? And how might these trends influence the future shape of family ministry and discipleship?

Is it the Decline of Women or the Rise of Men?

Contrary to past narratives of broad decline, church attendance in the U.S. is showing signs of renewal, especially among younger generations and men. The latest data suggests a complex but hopeful picture: more Americans are returning to

church, and men are attending at higher rates than at any point in the last 25 years of Barna's tracking. Yet this shift is not experienced evenly.

Women's attendance is holding steady or increasing slightly, but not at the pace seen among men, leading to a historic gender gap. As Daniel Copeland, Barna's VP of Research, notes, "The question isn't just whether men are showing up more—it's also why women aren't keeping pace. These trends prompt a deeper look into how women are experiencing church today, particularly younger women and single mothers."

The shifts in attendance point not just to a return, but to a realignment—one that's uneven across gender and generation. The data prompts important questions:

- What is driving men's renewed involvement in church life?
- What are women encountering that may be slowing or stalling their engagement?
- And how do these dynamics reshape the community life, leadership pipelines and discipleship rhythms of local congregations?

While definitive answers may take time to surface, the emerging patterns are clear enough to invite serious reflection. As leaders consider what these shifts mean for the people in their pews, the invitation is to listen closely and prepare wisely for the future of a church that is changing.

Share



About the Research

Barna Group's tracking data is based on online and telephone interviews within nationwide random samples of 132,020 adults conducted over a 25-year period ending in July 2025. These studies are conducted utilizing quota sampling for representation of all U.S. adults by age, gender, race / ethnicity, region, education and income. Minimal statistical weighting has been used when necessary to maximize statistical representativeness.

Included in this data is 5,580 online interviews that were collected between January and July of 2025, which also utilized quota sampling and minimal statistical weighting.

Glossary:

Gen Z: Born between 1999 and 2015

Millennial: Born between 1984 and 1998

Gen X: Born between 1965 and 1983

Boomer: Born between 1946 and 1964

Elder: Born before 1946