



## Focus on Religious Freedom

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### Christianity Is Growing Faster Than Any Time in History But Declining in Europe & America

"Americans' membership in houses of worship continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time in Gallop's 80-year trend. In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999," wrote a recent Gallop poll.<sup>(1)</sup> When Gallop first measured church membership in 1937, it was 73% and remained near 70% until the 21st century.

The fastest-declining Christian populations in the world are in Europe according to a peer-reviewed study in the journal *Sociology of Religion*.<sup>(2)</sup>

Researchers, sociologists and church leaders offer a wide range of causes for this decline in church affiliation and attendance in the West while Christianity is flourishing in Asia and Africa.

Some studies suggest that countries supporting a particular religion through law, contributes to the secularization of that country. For example, the Church of England is the state church and Christianity is the state religion; the Swedish king is the head of the government and the Church of Sweden appoints bishops to their positions; Portugal, Spain and Italy offer preferential support to the Catholic Church through tax policy and education.<sup>(3)</sup> However, throughout Europe, Church affiliation is declining.

Other studies suggest that different factors are the cause for both decline and growth of Christianity in the world.

\* Abundant and bold prayer is practiced in countries with increasing Christianity. For example, "in Africa, it is not unusual for churches to commit 50-100 days per year for fasting & prayer."<sup>(4)</sup> This amount of fasting & prayer is rarely practiced in the West.

\* Empowering ordinary people for ministry is carried out in growing congregations. Pastors are seen as coaches and teachers and are not responsible for everything the church does: preach, pray, visit the sick, counsel people, evangelize, oversee administration, etc., as is common in the West where a person "goes into ministry."<sup>(5)</sup>

**Conclusion: When looking at the range of statistics and causes surrounding contemporary Christianity, it becomes clear that even where Western culture appears to be becoming more and more secular, Christian faith is still very much alive.<sup>(6)</sup>**

(news.gallop.com, 3/29/21(1); christianitytoday.com, 5/6/21(2)(3);christianpost.com, 3/15/20(4)(5); pathos.com, 5/8/21; get religion.org, 5/15/21; holyart.com(6)

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