

Q1 2025

THE UNSTUCK CHURCH REPORT

BENCHMARKS + TRENDS IN U.S. CHURCHES

Sponsored by:



THE UNSTUCK GROUP[®]

— WE HELP PASTORS LEAD UNSTUCK CHURCHES. —

Introduction

February 2025

Every quarter, The Unstuck Group compiles all the data we've collected to monitor trends in churches in North America. For this quarter's report, we've only included churches that participated in our January 2025 survey. This provides a very current snapshot of ministries of all shapes and sizes.

We received survey responses from 487 churches, ranging from 100 to over 13,000 in physical attendance for worship gatherings. The average in-person attendance of churches that participated was 938 people.

Thanks to the number of church leaders responding to the survey, we can continue to include a summary by church size in this quarter's report. Read on for critical takeaways in reach, connection, staffing and leadership, finances and overall health to gain some best-practice wisdom from other church leaders.



Key Findings

	This Year	Last Year	Difference
In-Person Average Weekly Attendance	938	825	+15%
Online Service Views	627	499	+26%
Decisions to Follow Jesus per 100 Attendees	13.6	11.7	+16%
Percentage of Adults and Students in Groups	44%	44%	--
Percentage of Adults and Students Serving	33%	27%	
Per Capita Giving (No Kids)	\$51	\$53	-4%

It's possible for churches to grow but not be healthy.

Many of the pastors at growing churches don't necessarily view their churches as unhealthy. They do, though, feel the pain of lagging systems or outdated strategies that can't keep pace with rapid growth.

Pain is a warning signal that something needs to be addressed; otherwise, it will create real harm down the line. So while it may be true that a church is experiencing health in many areas, the fact that their systems and structure aren't able to support the growth could be what eventually leads to decline.

Looking at this quarter's Lifecycle Assessment (taken from the Unstuck Church Assessment), there is evidence that many growing churches aren't fully healthy. In fact, 41% of churches that responded are in the "maintenance" phase of the lifecycle even though they're growing numerically. This suggests that growth isn't always a sign of a healthy church.

But we are happy to report that we are still seeing this trend: Many churches are growing consistently. Our reports show a double-digit percentage growth rate dating back to the third quarter of 2022. For many churches, getting people through the "front door" has not been an issue, but where health may be lagging is in engagement and discipleship.

Consider these findings from this quarter's report:

- **Overall group participation grew by 14%.** However, the percentage of people engaged in groups relative to overall attendance decreased from 53% to 43%.
- **Giving overall has increased by 8%,** but per capita giving is down to \$51 per person (not including children).
- **More people are making decisions to follow Jesus,** up about 3% from a year ago, but the frequency of church attendance seems to be declining.
- **The percentage of adults and students serving in the church has plateaued at 35%** (the same number as last year), but the overall number of people serving grew by 17%.

These trends point to churches that are growing in attendance but aren't keeping pace in spiritual engagement and participation.

If your church is experiencing a season of growth, celebrate it! But also be sure to evaluate whether that growth is leading to further spiritual formation.

Growth without health is like a plant growing without deep roots. It might thrive for a while, but eventually, it will wither.

In 15+ years of working with churches, The Unstuck Group has learned that the most successful churches strike a balance between “reach” (evangelism) and “discipleship” (spiritual formation).

In this report, we’ll dive into the data and explore more about how churches are doing in both areas. I hope the findings will give you an opportunity to assess your church’s strategies and make sure you are positioned for health and growth in the future.

With that, let’s dive into the data.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy K. Anderson".

Amy Anderson
Managing Director

Ministry Reach

Churches are connecting with new people.

Specifically, there was a 7% increase in the number of new people that churches started tracking in their database over the last year compared to the year before. Additionally, a church averaging 1,000 attendees added the names and contact information of 500 more new people than the previous year.

The average in-person attendance over the previous 12 months increased by 15%.

The average weekly attendance for the last 12 months increased from 825 to 938. This is the total of all people, including children.



"This is the 11th consecutive quarter with double-digit percentage growth for the churches that participated in our survey. At this point, it's safe to say churches are experiencing more than a pandemic rebound. Many churches have found effective front door strategies that are reaching people outside of the church and faith."

Amy Anderson

The percentage of people making decisions to follow Jesus over the last 12 months increased by 3%.

The number of people who followed Jesus by indicating salvation, baptism, etc. equaled 20% of this year's average in-person attendance.

Engagement with online services started to increase again.

After seeing a decline in online viewing post-pandemic, the average number of online service views (one minute or more) per week increased by 26% from the year before. Additionally, 96% of all churches surveyed now offer online services.

The majority of large churches are multisite.

Of churches that average 1,000 or more people in attendance, 54% are doing ministry in multiple locations. On average, those large churches have three locations, including the original location. In addition, the number of mid-sized churches that are multisite increased this quarter to 22%. In total, 25% of all churches surveyed are now multisite.

Fewer churches offer traditional worship, with more than 74% of churches offering only “modern/contemporary” styles of worship services.

We know from current research that declining churches are more likely to provide multiple worship service styles—think combinations of traditional, contemporary, blended, modern, etc. In other words, the more worship styles a church offers, the more likely the church is experiencing a decline in attendance.

Children’s ministry in-person attendance is at 16% of overall attendance.

This includes all children from newborn through fifth grade. The year-over-year increase in children’s ministry attendance was also 16%, slightly above the total attendance increase.

The average church has nine students for every 100 people attending weekly gatherings.

Additionally, student ministry attendance for in-person gatherings increased by 22% last year. This is now two years in a row that student ministry growth has outpaced growth in kids’ attendance and total attendance in churches. This includes all students in sixth through twelfth grades.

Ministry Connection

Home groups are the primary option churches offer to connect people into smaller gatherings beyond the weekend services.

In fact, 57% of churches surveyed only offer home groups rather than providing an option for Sunday school or other midweek group gatherings.

The percentage of group engagement continued to decline.

Churches now see 43% of their adults and students participate in a group, down from 53% a year ago. Even though the number of people participating in groups continues to increase overall, it's still struggling to keep up with the pace of attendance growth.

Volunteer engagement has flatlined.

While churches saw an increase of 17% overall in serving, the percentage of attendance actually engaged in serving held at 35%, matching the percentage from the same quarter in 2024.

Churches have a span of care of one volunteer leader for every 13 people in attendance.

Leaders include adults and students responsible for leading a team or a group of others (i.e., team leaders or group leaders). Best-practice churches often have about one volunteer leader for every five people in attendance.



“The data related to groups and volunteer engagement in this quarter’s report aligns with what we’re hearing from churches on a daily basis. It is increasingly difficult to engage people’s time in ministry. What we often see are siloed strategies around discipleship and spiritual formation. Many times, this comes back to a structural issue within the team. The church hasn’t identified one leader to oversee the entire spiritual formation process. Because of that, people get lost in next steps and find other ways to use their limited time.”

Amy Anderson

Of all churches surveyed, 44% indicated they believe their members have a clear understanding of where they are on the church's discipleship path.

Interestingly, we found a correlation between more decisions to follow Jesus and clarity about the discipleship path:

Only about a third of the churches seeing 5% or less of their attendance making decisions to follow Jesus said their members had a clear understanding of where they are on the church's discipleship path. In churches seeing more than 5% of attendance making decisions to follow Jesus, nearly 60% did.



Insights From Blue Van Dyke, Founder of StudioC

The correlation between discipleship clarity and evangelism effectiveness revealed in this data isn't just interesting; it's transformative. When people clearly understand their own spiritual journey, they become more effective at inviting others along that path.

We've seen this firsthand with churches like Church of the Highlands, where making their discipleship pathway crystal clear and personally relevant led to over 7,800 previously inactive members reengaging.

Think of it like a GPS—people are far more likely to invite others on a journey when they can confidently explain both where they are and where they're heading. That's why the most effective churches aren't just focused on creating clear pathways but on delivering personalized guidance that helps each person understand and own their next step. When churches can do this consistently, both discipleship and evangelism thrive naturally.

Many churches lack efficient digital tools for tracking and engagement.

For the churches who participated, 42% indicated their digital tools do not currently empower them to track and increase engagement across all ministries. That percentage increases to 49% for churches under 200 in average attendance and decreases for larger churches. In churches over 1,000 in average attendance, 32% indicated their digital tools are currently inadequate.

Of all churches surveyed, 65% indicated that they have the necessary tools to simply and quickly run meaningful reports, analyze the data and turn it into actionable insights for making ministry decisions in real time.



Data Insights From StudioC

First, while it's encouraging that 65% of churches feel equipped to analyze their data, the real question is whether they're turning those insights into meaningful engagement.

The most effective churches aren't just running reports; they're using data to inform how they personally engage with each person in real time.

When Church of the Highlands shifted from general reporting to targeted engagement, they discovered they could move from what were once "dream category" goals to actually knowing "the one" and delivering exactly what each person needs in their spiritual journey.

This isn't just about better analytics. It's about turning information into transformation. The key is having tools that not only tell you what happened but that also help you take action on what should happen next. That's when churches see real movement in both discipleship and evangelism.

Second, let's talk about the 35% who don't have the tools for data analysis—because this represents a critical opportunity. Many churches are sitting on rich information in their various systems but lack the ability to turn that data into actionable engagement strategies.

We see this challenge regularly in our work with churches of all sizes. Before partnering with StudioC, Rock City Church had plenty of data but struggled to use it effectively for personalized ministry. As their Executive Director Katie Fisher notes, "The more we know about someone, the better we can pastor them, the better we can love them, the better we can lead them." – Blue Van Dyke

Ministry Staffing & Structure

Staffing levels continue to remain high compared to attendance.

The average church employs one full-time equivalent (FTE) staff person for every 53 attendees. This number includes all ministry and support staff. By comparison, The Unstuck Group recommends one FTE for every 75 people in attendance.



“Before I go further in the staffing data, let me call out the staffing levels related to what we covered on volunteer engagement in the previous section. Commonly, churches that are overstaffed have reduced levels of volunteer engagement. Churches that are leaner on staff, though, see higher levels of volunteer engagement. When considering low volunteer engagement, I ask churches to also look at overstaffing. Are you outsourcing ministry by paying more people to ‘do’ the work rather than hiring capable leaders to empower others for ministry?”

Amy Anderson

The average church board or elder team has seven members.

The church with the largest board identified in the current reporting cycle had 50 members.

Churches generally have two additional boards or committees.

One church in this reporting cycle noted having one board and 20 other committees.

Ministry Finances

Giving to churches has increased in the last 12 months.

Churches reported, on average, that their total general fund giving was up 8% from the previous year.



“Attendance growth continues to outpace the growth in giving. That’s also reflected in the average per capita giving for churches. Currently, per capita giving is \$51 per person per week (not including children’s attendance), which is down from \$60 per person per week two years ago.”

Amy Anderson

Churches are investing more than half of their ministry budget into ministry staff.

The average staff budget is 53% of the overall ministry budget. This includes the cost of all salaries and benefits. We recommend that churches try to keep staffing budgets between 45% and 55% of the overall budget. The Unstuck Group does not collect salary information for individual employees.

We recommend The Church Lawyers for expert guidance in establishing reasonable compensation policies and practices that comply with IRS rules and regulations. Learn more [here](#).

Churches, on average, have the equivalent of almost eight months in cash reserves.

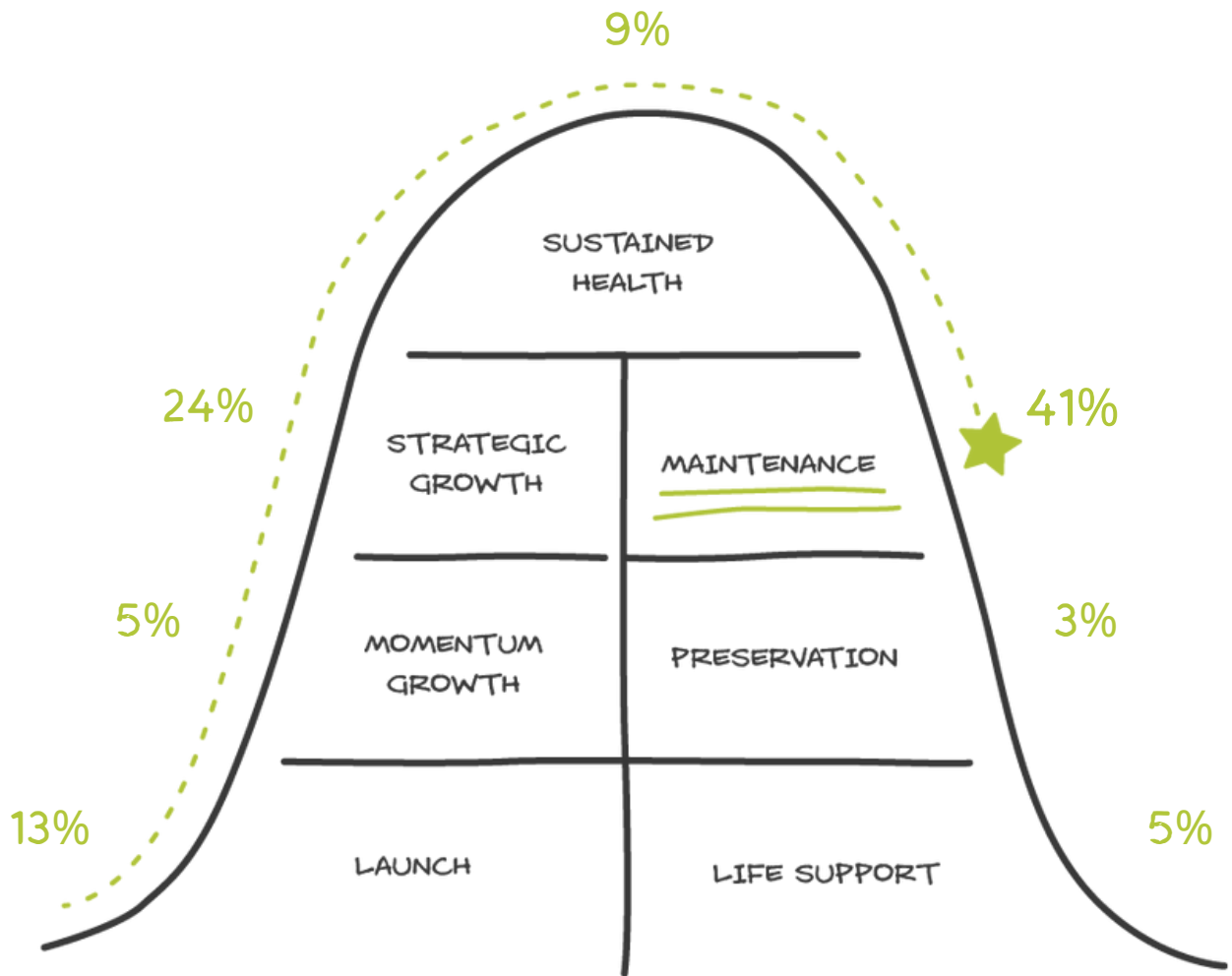
This number is beyond the two to three months The Unstuck Group recommends. The amount of cash reserves nearly doubled from the same quarter last year, when churches had four months in reserves on average.

Churches continue to pay off debt.

On average, the current debt load is 0.6 times the church’s annual giving. That’s down slightly from 0.7 in the same quarter of last year. The Unstuck Group encourages churches to keep total debt below 2.0 times yearly giving. Ironically, we’ve learned from previous research that plateaued and declining churches are more likely to be debt free than churches experiencing growth.

Lifecycle

(Last 12 Months)



Summary by Church Size

	<200	200-499	500-999	1000+	All Churches
Church Demographics					
Non-Denominational	33%	44%	49%	53%	45%
Year Started	1957	1965	1966	1974	1967
Board Members	9	7	9	9	7
Committees	3	3	2	2	2
Offering Only Modern/Contemporary Style of Worship	58%	71%	77%	86%	74%
Offering Online Services	89%	98%	100%	96%	96%
Multisite Churches	7%	7%	22%	54%	25%
Reach					
Decisions to Follow Jesus as a Percentage of Attendance	11%	15%	15%	22%	20%
Change in Total Contacts Compared to Last Year	18%	23%	15%	13%	20%
Total Contacts to Attendance	3.3	3.9	5.8	6.0	5.6
Attendance Increase from Last Year	10%	15%	13%	14%	15%
Kids as a Percentage of Attendance	18%	19%	15%	16%	16%
Students as a Percentage of Attendance	11%	10%	9%	8%	9%
Online Views Change from Last Year	33%	19%	11%	29%	26%
Online Views as a Percentage of Attendance	84%	41%	49%	75%	67%

	<200	200-499	500-999	1000+	All Churches
Staffing and Finances					
Attendees Per Full-Time Equivalent Staff Person	38	51	53	55	53
Staff Budget Percentage	60%	55%	56%	53%	53%
Weekly Per Capita Giving (Not Including Kids)	\$60	\$55	\$53	\$51	\$51
Giving Increase from Last Year	2.0%	9.0%	9.0%	12.0%	8.0%
Debt to Annual Giving Ratio	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.6
Months of Cash Reserves	6.1	8.4	6.0	10.4	7.7
Next Steps					
Volunteers as a Percentage of Attendance	39%	40%	32%	29%	35%
Attendees Per Volunteer Leader	16	11	13	11	13
Group Participants as a Percentage of Attendance	47%	40%	41%	43%	43%
Offering Only Home Groups (No Sunday School)	46%	56%	58%	63%	56%



For more information related to this survey and the summary of the learnings, contact The Unstuck Group:

theunstuckgroup.com

help@theunstuckgroup.com



ABOUT THE UNSTUCK GROUP

The Unstuck Group helps pastors grow healthy churches by guiding them through experiences to align vision, strategy, team and action. Our core services include ministry health assessments, strategic planning, staffing and structure reviews and multisite consulting. Want to [join the 700+ churches](#) that have engaged our Unstuck Process to make a greater Kingdom impact? Learn more by visiting theunstuckgroup.com.



ABOUT STUDIOC

If discipleship is your church's ultimate Why, engagement is your How. The problem is most churches struggle to extract meaningful insights from their database, leaving leadership teams without the clear picture they need. Most church communication is simply a flood of every message to every person across every channel, leaving your people frustrated and overwhelmed with information.

With a deep understanding of ministry needs, StudioC brings the science of personalized engagement to the Church, enabling you to create customized discipleship journeys at scale. Their two flagship software solutions—ChurchIQ and Member Engagement Solution—help your church unlock the full potential of combining rich data-driven analytics with highly targeted messaging.

With StudioC's software, you can:

- Know the macro- and micro-level movements of your people
- Match them to their relevant next steps
- Tell them through your existing church app

See for yourself at thestudioc.org.