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# Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Levelled Off

*Findings from the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study*

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## How we did this

Pew Research Center conducts the Religious Landscape Study (RLS) to provide authoritative estimates of the U.S. population's religious composition, beliefs and practices.

The new RLS was conducted in English and Spanish from July 17, 2023, to March 4, 2024, among a nationally representative sample of 36,908 respondents.

Our two previous Religious Landscape Studies, conducted in 2007 and 2014, were administered entirely by telephone. Because response rates to telephone surveys have dropped sharply over the past decade, we changed the design of the RLS in 2023-24.

To recruit people to take the survey, we used a method known as address-based sampling (ABS). This involved mailing invitation letters to randomly sampled addresses from the United States Postal Service's Computerized Delivery Sequence File. This approach gave nearly all U.S. adults a chance of being selected to participate in the survey.

People who received our invitation had the option of completing the survey online, on paper, or by calling a toll-free number and completing the survey by telephone with an interviewer. In total, 25,250 respondents participated online, 10,733 completed the survey on paper, and 925 participated by phone.

The survey is designed to be representative of [all 50 states and the District of Columbia](#). The study's large size also makes it possible to describe the religious characteristics of 34 large metro areas.

The data is weighted (using benchmarks from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources) to be representative of the adult population of each state (and D.C.) and the overall U.S. adult population by gender, age, race, ethnicity, education and other categories. The survey's margin of error for results based on the full sample is plus or minus 0.8 percentage points. The response rate is 20%.

For more details, refer to the [Methodology](#).

Previous research has shown that people may [answer some questions differently](#) when completing a survey online or on paper than they do when speaking to a live interviewer over the phone. This means that when we compare data from the three landscape studies to see how Americans' religious beliefs and practices have changed over time, we must consider the possible effects of

changing the primary mode of interviewing from telephone (in 2007 and 2014) to online and on paper (in 2023-24). These “mode effects” can be quite large on some survey questions but small or nonexistent on others.

To help determine whether the results of particular questions in the new RLS are – or are not – directly comparable with our previous landscape studies, we conducted a nationwide telephone survey alongside the RLS. It included all the questions in the 2023-24 RLS that previously appeared in the 2007 and 2014 surveys. We used the findings of this experimental “bridge study” to inform the discussion of long-term trends throughout this report. For more details, go to [Appendix A](#).

This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support from the Lilly Endowment Inc., Templeton Religion Trust, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust.



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## Executive summary

The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) and other Pew Research Center polling find that the Christian share of the population, after years of decline, has been relatively stable since 2019. And the religiously unaffiliated population, after rising rapidly for decades, has leveled off – at least temporarily. At present:

- **62% of U.S. adults describe themselves as Christians:** 40% are Protestant, 19% are Catholic, and 3% are other Christians.
- **29% are religiously unaffiliated:** 5% are atheist, 6% are agnostic, and 19% identify religiously as “nothing in particular.”
- **7% belong to religions other than Christianity:** 2% are Jewish, and 1% each are Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu (all figures are rounded).

**Some key measures of religious belief and practice also have held fairly steady in recent years.** The 2023-24 RLS finds that:

- 44% of U.S. adults say they pray at least once a day. Though down significantly since 2007, this measure has held between 44% and 46% since 2021.
- 33% say they go to religious services at least once a month. Since 2020, the percentages saying this have consistently hovered in the low 30s.

**And large majorities of Americans have a spiritual, supernatural outlook.** For example:

- 86% believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body.
- 83% believe in God or a universal spirit.
- 79% believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world.
- 70% believe in heaven, hell or both.

**But in future years we may see further declines in the religiousness of the American public, for several reasons:**

- Young adults are far less religious than older adults.
- No recent birth cohort has become more religious as it has aged.
- The “stickiness” of a religious upbringing seems to be declining: Compared with older people, fewer young adults who had a highly religious upbringing are still highly religious as adults.
- The “stickiness” of a *nonreligious* upbringing seems to be rising.

This is the third time Pew Research Center has conducted a Religious Landscape Study. The first RLS was conducted in 2007. The second was in 2014. Other key findings from the new study include:

- 35% of U.S. adults have switched religions since childhood, leading to net gains for the unaffiliated population and net losses for the Christian population.
- All three major strands of Protestantism have declined in percentage terms since 2007.
  - Evangelical Protestants now make up 23% of U.S. adults, down from 26%.
  - Mainline Protestants account for 11% of U.S. adults, down from 18%.
  - Members of historically Black Protestant churches make up 5% of U.S. adults, down from 7%.
- The share of Americans who identify with nondenominational Protestantism is growing.
- Many other Protestant denominational families (including Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans and others) have declined as shares of the population.
- The United Methodist Church, which has splintered in recent years, now makes up slightly fewer than 3% of U.S. adults, down from 5% in 2007.

**The 2023-24 RLS also reveals patterns by:**

- **Gender:** Women remain more religious than men in the United States by a variety of measures, such as prayer frequency and belief in God or a universal spirit. But the gender gap in religiousness is less pronounced among the youngest adults than among older people, and it's slightly smaller today than in 2007. Still, women in every age group are at least as religious as men.
- **Political ideology:** The share of self-described political liberals who identify as Christians has fallen 25 percentage points since 2007, from 62% to 37%. Among self-described conservatives, the Christian share has declined 7 points, from 89% to 82%.
- **Race and ethnicity:** 66% of adults who attend religious services say that most or all people in their congregation have the same race or ethnicity they do. Even more (78%) say this was true of the religious services they attended as children.
- **Immigration status:** A majority of U.S. immigrants (58%) are Christian. About a quarter of foreign-born adults are unaffiliated, and 14% belong to other religions, including 4% who are Muslim, 4% who are Hindu and 3% who are Buddhist.

# Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Levelled Off

## *Findings from the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study*

After many years of steady decline, the share of Americans who identify as Christians shows signs of leveling off – at least temporarily – at slightly above six-in-ten, according to a massive new Pew Research Center survey of 36,908 U.S. adults.

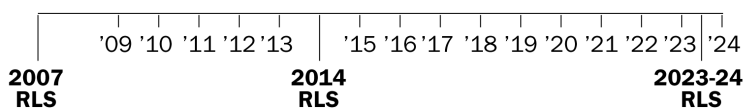
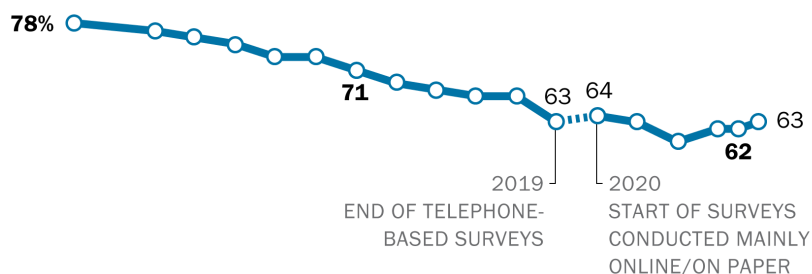
The Religious Landscape Study (RLS) is the largest single survey the Center conducts, aiming to provide authoritative figures on the size of U.S. religious groups because the U.S. census does not collect that information.

We have conducted three of these landscape surveys over the past 17 years, with more than 35,000 randomly sampled respondents each time. That's enough to paint a statistical portrait of religion not only nationally, but also in [all 50 states and the District of Columbia](#), as well as in 34 large metro areas.

This introductory essay walks through the big-picture trends: evidence both of a long-term decline in American religion and of relative stability in the last few years, since 2020 or so.

### After years of decline, the Christian share of the U.S. population stabilizes

% of U.S. adults who identify as Christian



Note: The 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Studies. Other estimates come from the Center's random-digit-dial telephone surveys (until 2019), and from the Center's annual National Public Opinion Reference Survey (since 2020).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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***Jump to an [executive summary of key findings](#).***

***Search for [data on religious groups](#).***

The first RLS, fielded in 2007, found that 78% of U.S. adults identified as Christians of one sort or another. That number ticked steadily downward in our smaller surveys each year and was pegged at 71% in the second RLS, conducted in 2014.

**The latest RLS, fielded over seven months in 2023-24, finds that 62% of U.S. adults identify as Christians. That is a decline of 9 percentage points since 2014 and a 16-point drop since 2007.**

But for the last five years, between 2019 and 2024, the Christian share of the adult population has been relatively stable, hovering between 60% and 64%. The 62% figure in the new Religious Landscape Study is smack in the middle of that recent range.

The largest subgroups of Christians in the United States are Protestants – now 40% of U.S. adults – and Catholics, now 19%. People who identify with all other Christian groups (including the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses and many others) total about 3% of U.S. adults.

Both Protestant and Catholic numbers are down significantly since 2007, though the Protestant share of the population has remained fairly level since 2019 and the Catholic share has been stable since 2014, with only small fluctuations in our annual surveys.

**Meanwhile, the share of Americans who identify with a religion other than Christianity has been trending upward, though it is still in single digits.**

Today, 1.7% of U.S. adults say they are Jewish when asked about their religion, while 1.2% of respondents in the new survey are Muslim, 1.1% are Buddhist, and 0.9% are Hindu.

Religiously unaffiliated adults – those who identify as atheists, agnostics or as “nothing in particular” when

asked about their religion – account for 29% of the population in the new RLS. The size of the religiously unaffiliated population, which we sometimes call religious “nones,” has plateaued in recent years after a long period of sustained growth.

### **Rates of prayer, attendance at religious services also relatively stable**

Other standard survey measures contribute to this emerging picture of stability:

- Though down significantly since 2007, the share of Americans who say they **pray daily** has consistently held between 44% and 46% since 2021. In the new RLS, 44% say they pray at least once a day.
- Similarly, since 2020, the percentage of U.S. adults who say they **attend religious services monthly** has hovered in the low 30s. In the new RLS, 33% say they go to religious services at least once a month.

### **Spiritual beliefs are widespread**

Moreover, the survey shows that large majorities of Americans have a spiritual or supernatural outlook on the world.

## **7% of U.S. adults now identify with a religion other than Christianity**

*% of U.S. adults who are ...*

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
Jewish	1.7%	1.9%	1.7%
Muslim	0.4	0.9	1.2
Buddhist	0.7	0.7	1.1
Hindu	0.4	0.7	0.9
Other non-Christian religions	<u>1.4</u>	<u>1.8</u>	<u>2.2</u>
<b>NET Non-Christian religions</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>7.1</b>

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest whole number. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceptionally large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to show trends over time or to compare the sizes of relatively small religious groups.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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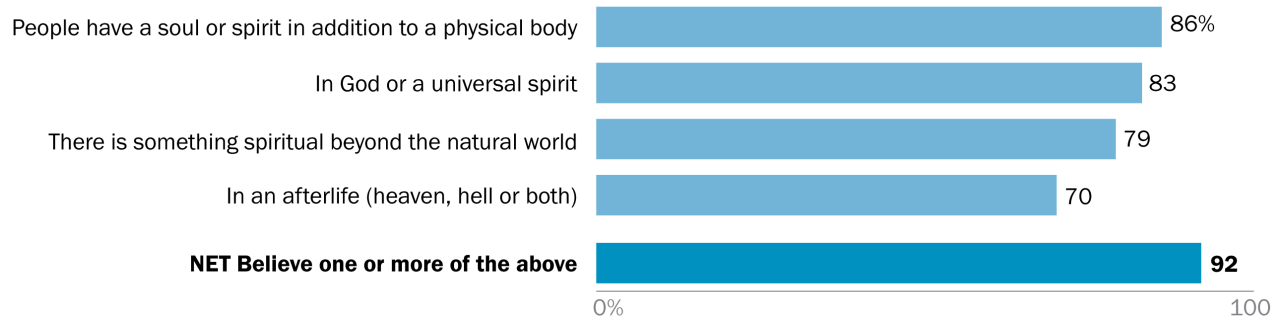
For example:

- 86% believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body.
- 83% believe in God or a universal spirit.
- 79% believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we can't see it.
- 70% believe in an afterlife (heaven, hell or both).

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### Large majorities of U.S. adults believe in the existence of a soul, something spiritual beyond the natural world

% of U.S. adults who say they believe ...



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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**But, despite these signs of recent stabilization and abiding spirituality, other indicators suggest we may see further declines in the American religious landscape in future years.**

Namely, younger Americans remain far less religious than older adults.

For example, the youngest adults in the survey (ages 18 to 24) are *less likely* than today's oldest adults (ages 74 and older) to:

- Identify as Christian (46% vs. 80%)
- Pray daily (27% vs. 58%)
- Say they attend religious services at least monthly (25% vs. 49%)

And the youngest adults are *more likely* than the oldest Americans to be religiously unaffiliated (43% vs. 13%).



Also, younger Americans are less likely than older adults to say they were raised in religious households.<sup>1</sup> And, compared with older adults, fewer young people who were raised in religious households have *remained* religious after reaching adulthood.

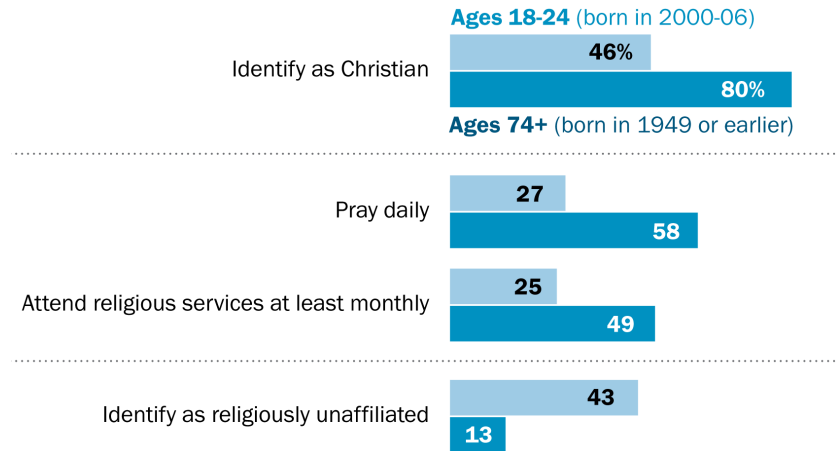
These are among the key findings of Pew Research Center’s 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study. Like the previous studies, the new survey offers a great deal of information on what Americans believe and how they practice a wide variety of religions.

### In this report, we cover in detail:

- [Religious affiliation and religious switching](#)
- [Religion and family life](#)
- [Religious or spiritual beliefs and practices](#)
- [Social and political views](#)
- [Opinions on religion’s place in society](#)
- [Demographics of U.S. religious groups](#)

## Big age gaps in shares of Americans who identify as Christian, pray regularly

% of U.S. adults who say they do the following, by birth cohort



Note: The survey asked respondents, “In what year were you born?” Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent’s year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> Compared with older people, younger adults are less likely to say they were raised in a religion, less likely to say they grew up going to religious services at least monthly, and less likely to have received a lot of formal religious education as children. Young adults also are somewhat less likely than older people to say religion was “very important” to them personally when they were children, and more likely to say religion was “not too important” or “not at all important” to them personally when they were children. An exception to this pattern is that there is little difference across age categories in the share of people who say religion was “very important” to their *families* when they were kids.

**Reasons for the long-term decline and recent stability**

The RLS and other recent Pew Research Center surveys suggest that two things are happening simultaneously in American religion:

- Over the long term (since 2007 in our data and going back further in other major surveys), there is a downward trend in several measures of religiousness, including affiliation with Christianity.
- In the short term (the last four or five years), these changes have slowed or perhaps even plateaued.

### *Long-term decline*

One driver of the long-term trend is “generational replacement.” Older, highly religious, heavily Christian generations are passing away. The younger generations succeeding them are much less religious, with smaller percentages of Christians and more “nones.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the landscape surveys show that between 2007 and 2023-24, each birth cohort has become less religious, by several measures, as it has aged.

#### **What’s a birth cohort?**

Throughout this report, we use “birth cohort” to refer to a group of people who were born in the same years. We categorize U.S. adults into seven cohorts: people born in the 1940s (or earlier) and those born in the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s, and from 2000 through 2006.

One advantage of analyzing these cohorts rather than conventional “generations” (like the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z) is that most of the cohorts are of equal length (a decade long).

Another advantage is that the decade-long cohorts may not carry as many [assumptions](#) – or stereotypes – as the familiar generations do.

For example, people within the oldest and youngest cohorts, as well as those in between, have become less likely to say they pray daily, less likely to identify with a religion (including Christianity), and less likely to believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty.

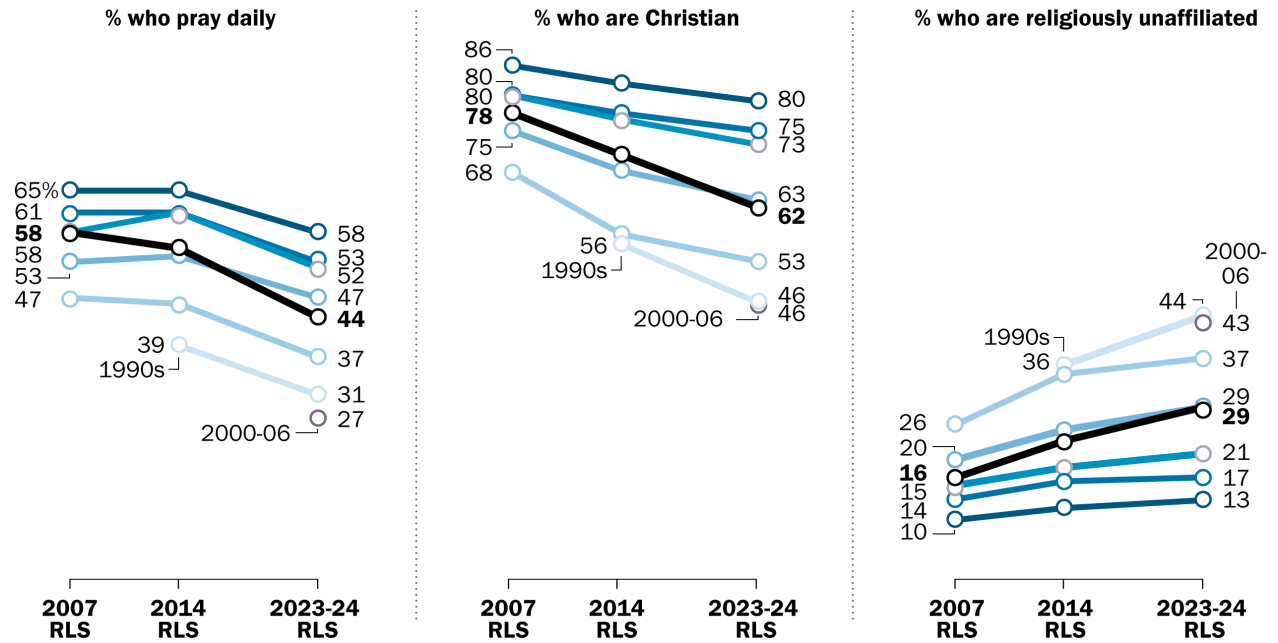
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<sup>2</sup> For more on generational changes in American religion, read Hout, Michael, and Claude S. Fischer. 2014. “[Explaining Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Political Backlash and Generational Succession, 1987-2012](#).” Sociological Science. Also refer to Voas, David, and Mark Chaves. 2016. “[Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?](#)” American Journal of Sociology.

## As they have grown older, U.S. adults in all birth cohorts have become less likely to pray daily and less likely to identify as Christian

Among U.S. adults born in ...

- 1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)
- 1950s (ages 64-74)
- 1960s (ages 54-64)
- 1970s (ages 44-54)
- 1980s (ages 34-44)
- 1990s (ages 24-34)
- 2000-06 (ages 18-24)
- All U.S. adults



Note: The 2023-24 survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The "Religiously unaffiliated" category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religion.  
 Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### *Recent stability*

Since 2020, however, our surveys indicate that the religiousness of most birth cohorts has remained relatively stable. For instance, people born in the 1950s are about as likely to report praying daily in the 2023-24 RLS (53%) and the 2024 National Public Opinion Reference Survey, or NPORS (57%), as they were in the 2020 NPORS (55%).

Additionally, the new RLS finds that the youngest cohort of adults is no less religious than the second-youngest cohort in a variety of ways.<sup>3</sup> Americans born in 2000 through 2006 (those ages 18 to 24 in the 2023-24 RLS) are just as likely as those born in the 1990s (now ages 24 to 34) to identify as Christians, to say religion is very important in their lives, and to report that they attend religious services at least monthly.<sup>4</sup>

Time will tell whether the recent stability in measures of religious commitment is the beginning of a lasting shift in America's religious trajectory. But it is inevitable that older generations will decline in size as their members gradually die. We also know that the younger cohorts succeeding them are much less religious.

This means that, for lasting *stability* to take hold in the U.S. religious landscape, something would need to *change*. For example, today's young adults would have to become more religious as they age, or new generations of adults who are more religious than their parents would have to emerge.

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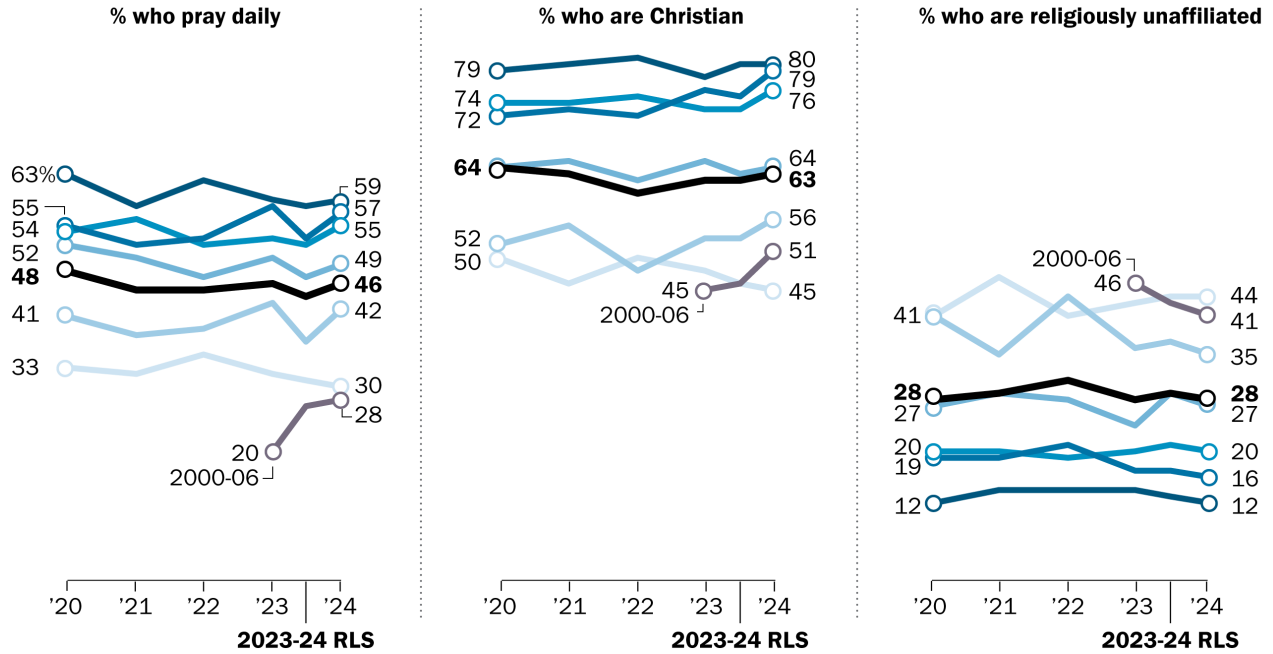
<sup>3</sup> This is not the first time surveys have found young people entering adulthood with levels of religiousness roughly equal to those of the preceding birth cohort. The 2014 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) also found that the youngest adults (at the time) were about as likely as their immediate predecessors to identify as Christians and to report attending religious services weekly. One possible explanation could be that the youngest cohort of new adults includes many who still live at home with parents or guardians. As they gradually form independent households, their levels of religious engagement may change.

<sup>4</sup> On some other questions, however, adults born in 2000 or later exhibit lower levels of religiousness than those born in the 1990s. For instance, they are somewhat less likely to say they pray every day, to believe in God with absolute certainty, and to have received a lot of religious education as children.

## Since 2020, signs of religious stability across birth cohorts in the United States

Among U.S. adults born in ...

- 1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)
- 1950s (ages 64-74)
- 1960s (ages 54-64)
- 1970s (ages 44-54)
- 1980s (ages 34-44)
- 1990s (ages 24-34)
- 2000-06 (ages 18-24)
- All U.S. adults



Note: The 2023-24 survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The "Religiously unaffiliated" category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024. Other estimates come from Pew Research Center's annual National Public Opinion Reference Survey.

## Religion and spirituality among young adults

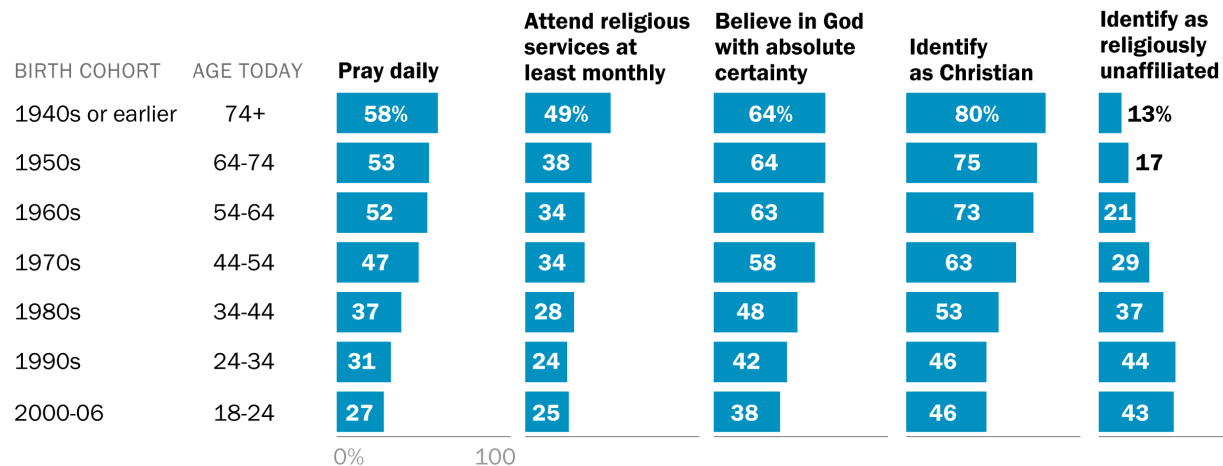
The dynamics of religion and spirituality among young people are key to understanding the country's recent religious trajectory. The large size of the new survey makes it possible to paint a religious and spiritual profile of the nation's youngest adults with unique precision.

By a number of traditional measures, today's young adults exhibit far lower levels of religiousness than older adults. For example, 27% of adults between the approximate ages of 18 and 24 in the new survey say they pray daily, as do 31% of those ages 24 to 34. But among adults ages 54 and older, half or more say they pray daily.

Young adults also report attending religious services less often than older adults do, and they express lower levels of belief in God or a universal spirit. Compared with older adults, fewer young people identify as Christians, and more say they don't identify with any religion.

### In the U.S., young adults are far less traditionally religious than older adults

*% of U.S. adults who say they do the following, by birth cohort*



Note: The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The "Religiously unaffiliated" category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religion. The estimates about belief in God come from two questions. The first was a yes/no question that asked, "Do you believe in God or a universal spirit?" Then, respondents were asked, "How certain are you about this belief? Absolutely certain, fairly certain, not too certain, not at all certain."

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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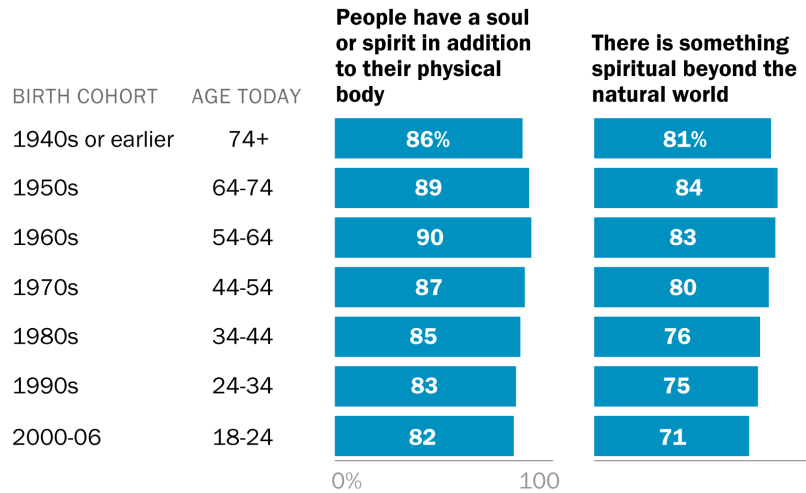
On the survey's questions touching on matters of spirituality, however, the age gaps are smaller.

For example, eight-in-ten or more adults in all age categories say they believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical bodies.

And about seven-in-ten adults ages 18 to 24 and 75% of those ages 24 to 34 believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, only modestly below the 81% of the oldest adults (ages 74 and older) who say this.

## On measures of spirituality, gaps between younger and older Americans are relatively modest

*% of U.S. adults who say they believe the following, by birth cohort*



Note: The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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**In the rest of this Overview, we explore these and other key topics in detail:**

- [Trends in the size of religious groups and denominations](#)
- [Race in religious groups and congregations](#)
- [The narrowing gender gap in American religion](#)
- [Religion in childhood and adulthood](#)
- [Religion in U.S. families today](#)
- [Religious switching](#)
- [Signs of strengthening spirituality](#)
- [Attendance at religious services](#)
- [How religious beliefs change as people age](#)
- [What is happening to the 'middle' of American religion](#)
- [Trends in the religiousness of Christians](#)
- [Religion and political polarization](#)



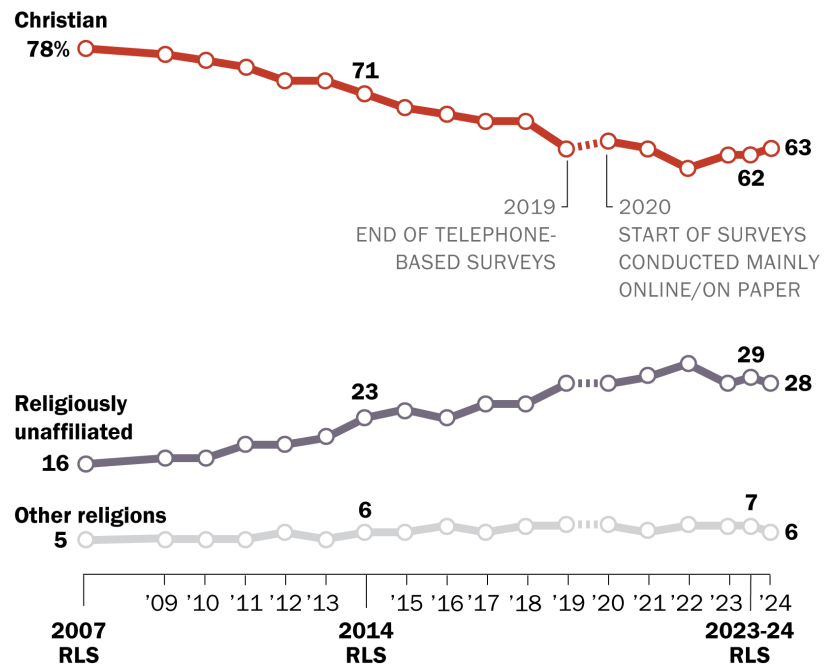
## Trends in the size of U.S. religious groups and denominations

In the new Religious Landscape Study, 62% of U.S. adults describe themselves as Christians. The Christian share of the population is now 9 points lower than when the landscape study was last conducted in 2014, and 16 points lower than in 2007.

The share of Americans who say they have no religion – identifying, instead, as atheist, agnostic or as “nothing in particular” – stands at 29% in the new RLS, up from 23% in 2014 and 16% in 2007.

### Share of U.S. adults identifying as Christian is down since 2007, but it has held steady in recent years

*% of U.S. adults who identify as ...*



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion. The 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Studies. Other estimates come from the Center’s random-digit-dial telephone surveys (until 2019), and from the Center’s National Public Opinion Reference Survey (since 2020).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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The long-term decline in the Christian share of the population and growth of religious “nones” is demographically broad-based. There are fewer Christians and more “nones” among men and women; people in every racial and ethnic category; college graduates and those with less education; and residents of all major regions of the country.

But the changes are much more pronounced among ideological liberals than conservatives. Today, 37% of self-described liberals identify with Christianity, down from 62% in 2007, a 25-point decline. Meanwhile, 51% of liberals now say they have *no* religion, up from 27% in 2007, a 24-point *increase*. There are now more religious “nones” than Christians among liberals, a reversal since 2007.<sup>5</sup>

There also are fewer Christians and more “nones” among conservatives. But the changes in the religious composition of conservatives have been much less pronounced than among liberals, and a large majority of conservatives continue to identify with Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

These changes within ideological categories resemble long-term trends within political parties. A [prior Pew Research Center analysis](#) shows that both Republicans and Democrats include fewer Christians and more religious “nones” today than they did a decade or more ago. But the decline of Christianity and rise of religious “nones” has been much more pronounced among Democrats than Republicans.<sup>7</sup>

For a detailed discussion of trends in the religious composition of demographic groups, refer to [Chapter 1](#).

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<sup>5</sup> Some social scientists have long argued that younger, more liberal Americans are leaving religion in a backlash against the entanglement of religious institutions and leaders with conservative politics. Read Hout, Michael, and Claude S. Fischer. 2002. “[Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations](#).” *American Sociological Review*. Also refer to Putnam, Robert D. and David E. Campbell. 2010. “[American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us](#).”

<sup>6</sup> Of course, this correlation doesn’t mean that changes in one attribute (political ideology) cause changes in the other (religious identity). It’s also possible that people in various religious categories have changed their ideological outlook over time. For more on the complex relationship between people’s religious characteristics and political attributes, refer to Campbell, David E., Geoffrey C. Layman and John C. Green. 2020. “[Secular Surge: A New Fault Line in American Politics](#).” Also refer to Margolis, Michele. 2018. “[From Politics to the Pews: How Partisanship and the Political Environment Shape Religious Identity](#).” Also refer to Margolis, Michele. 2022. “[Reversing the Causal Arrow: Politics’ Influence on Religious Choices](#).” *Advances in Political Psychology*.

<sup>7</sup> Tracking partisanship over time is complicated by a “mode effect.” Compared with surveys conducted by telephone (like the 2007 and 2014 landscape studies), surveys conducted mainly online and on paper (like the 2023-24 RLS) produce far lower estimates of the shares of adults who don’t identify with or lean toward either major party, as well as higher estimates of the shares who identify with or lean toward one or the other of the two major U.S. political parties. The RLS does not adjust for this effect, and therefore, we are not able to analyze trends in partisanship across the three landscape studies. However, the Center’s April 2024 report “[Changing Partisan Coalitions in a Politically Divided Nation](#)” does make this adjustment, and it provides estimates of how the religious composition of the partisan coalitions has changed over time. The mode switch from phone to web/paper also complicates comparing results on a question about political ideology (conservative/moderate/liberal) in the new survey with previous surveys. But the impact of the mode switch is less pronounced on the question about ideology than on the questions about partisanship. For more details about the consequences of the mode switch for drawing comparisons across the three Religious Landscape Studies, refer to [Appendix A](#).

## Long-term decline in Christianity is much more pronounced among political liberals than conservatives

% of U.S. adults who ...

Among ___	... are Christian				... are religiously unaffiliated			
	2007	2014	2023-24	Change between 2007 and 2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	Change between 2007 and 2023-24
Men	74%	66%	59%	-15 pct. pts.	20%	27%	31%	+11 pct. pts.
Women	82	75	66	-16	13	19	27	+14
White	78	70	62	-16	16	24	31	+15
Black	85	79	73	-12	12	18	22	+10
Hispanic	84	77	67	-17	14	20	27	+13
Asian	45	34	33	-12	23	31	33	+10
College graduate	73	64	58	-15	17	24	31	+14
Less than college	80	73	64	-16	16	22	29	+13
Northeast	76	65	58	-18	16	25	30	+14
Midwest	80	73	64	-16	16	22	30	+14
South	83	76	68	-15	13	19	25	+12
West	71	64	55	-16	21	28	35	+14
Conservative	89	85	82	-7	9	11	13	+4
Liberal	62	52	37	-25	27	36	51	+24
Moderate	77	69	61	-16	17	25	30	+13

Note: White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. The "Religiously unaffiliated" category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### Trends within Christianity

In the 2023-24 RLS, about four-in-ten U.S. adults identify as Protestants. That is 11 points lower than in the 2007 RLS.

All three major Protestant traditions have seen their population shares tick downward at least slightly over that period:

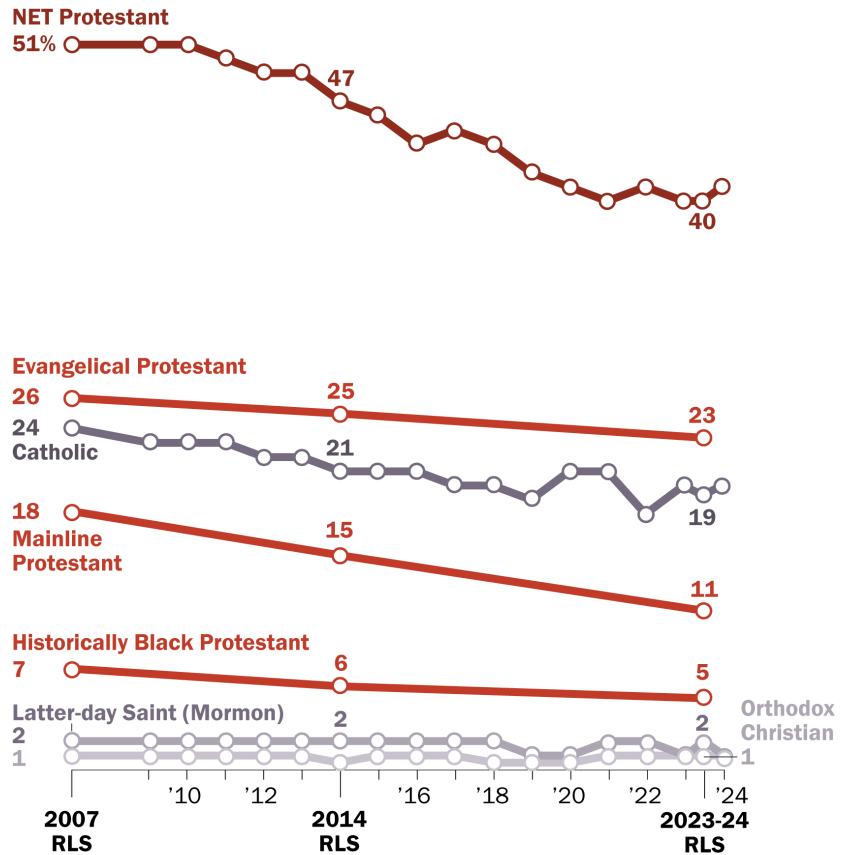
- Evangelical Protestants now account for 23% of all U.S. adults, down from 26% in 2007.
- Mainline Protestants stand at 11%, down from 18% in 2007.
- Members of historically Black Protestant churches make up 5% of U.S. adults, down slightly from 7% in 2007.

Like the overall Christian share of the population, however, the total Protestant share of the population has been quite stable in recent years, hovering between 40% and 42% since 2019.

The Catholic share of the population has been steady over an even longer period. In 11 Pew Research Center surveys conducted since 2014, all but one have found between 19% and 21% of respondents identifying as Catholic.

### Long-term trends of religious identification within Christianity

% of U.S. adults who are ...



Source: The 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Studies. Other estimates come from the Center's random-digit-dial telephone surveys (until 2019), and from the Center's National Public Opinion Reference Survey (since 2020). Subdivisions of Protestants are only possible with the Religious Landscape Study data. Those who identify as Jehovah's Witnesses (1% or fewer in all three landscape studies) or as other Christians (1% or fewer in each landscape survey) are not shown.

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Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) account for 2% of respondents in the new RLS, which is virtually unchanged from both the 2007 and 2014 landscape surveys. Orthodox Christians make up 1% of the U.S. population. Jehovah's Witnesses and other, smaller Christian groups round out the country's Christian population.

## A closer look at Protestant denominational families

Many Protestant denominational families are slightly smaller today than they were in 2014 – at least nominally, even if some of the changes are too small to be statistically significant.

One exception to this pattern is nondenominational Protestantism. The share of Americans identifying with this group is slightly higher today than it was in 2014 (7.1% vs. 6.2%).<sup>8</sup>

Baptists continue to be the single largest Protestant denominational family in America. Today, 12% of U.S. adults are Baptists, down from 15% in 2014 and 17% in 2007.

Members of Pentecostal churches account for 4% of the U.S. adult population.

Methodists and Lutherans each make up 3% of the population, while 2% of U.S. adults identify as Presbyterians.

## Trends in size of Protestant denominational families

*% of U.S. adults who identify with each Protestant denominational family*

	2007	2014	2023-24	Difference between 2014 and 2023-24
Baptist	17.2%	15.4%	12.0%	-3.4 pct. pts.
Nondenominational*	4.5	6.2	7.1	+0.9
Pentecostal	4.4	4.6	3.9	-0.7
Methodist	6.2	4.6	3.5	-1.1
Lutheran	4.6	3.5	2.9	-0.6
Presbyterian	2.7	2.2	1.7	-0.5
Restorationist	2.1	1.9	1.3	-0.6
Episcopalian/Anglican	1.5	1.3	1.1	-0.2
Holiness	1.2	0.8	0.6	-0.2
Congregationalist	0.8	0.6	0.5	-0.1
Adventist	0.5	0.6	0.3	-0.3
Reformed	0.3	<0.3	0.3	--
Anabaptist	<0.3	0.3	<0.3	--
Pietist	<0.3	<0.3	<0.3	--
Friends	<0.3	<0.3	<0.3	--
Other evangelical/fundamentalist	0.3	0.3	<0.3	--
Nonspecific Protestant	<u>4.9</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>+0.4</u>
<b>NET Protestant</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>-6.5</b>

\* The “Nondenominational” category includes only respondents who identified explicitly as “nondenominational Protestants” or “nondenominational Christians.” Respondents who identified as “just Christian” or “just Protestant” are included as “Nonspecific Protestant.” Note: Figures may not add to totals indicated due to rounding. Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest integer. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceptionally large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to show trends over time or to compare the sizes of relatively small religious groups.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>8</sup> In the Religious Landscape Studies, respondents are categorized as nondenominational Protestants *only* if they identify themselves *explicitly* as a “nondenominational Protestant” or a “nondenominational Christian.” The “Nondenominational Protestant” category does *not* include respondents who identify themselves as “just Christian” or “just a Protestant.” Nor does it include people who identify with Protestantism but not with any particular denomination; these latter types of responses are included in the “Nonspecific Protestant” category.

Detailed information about Protestant denominations is not available from Pew Research Center's annual NPORS, making it difficult to know whether the size of denominations has stabilized in recent years.

### **Categorizing Protestants into one of three traditions based on their denomination**

One unique feature of the Religious Landscape Study (RLS) is its detailed questions about religious affiliation. All respondents are asked an initial question about their religious identity (“Are you Protestant, Catholic ... Jewish, Muslim, etc.?”).

Then, Protestants are asked a second question to get more information about what type of church they identify with (“Are you Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, etc.?”).

Finally, depending on how they answer that second question, Protestants are asked a third question to try to determine which denomination they identify with. (Complete details on how these branching questions work and the exact wording of these questions are available in the questionnaires. Refer to the [English paper questionnaire](#); [Spanish paper questionnaire](#); and [combined English/Spanish questionnaire for the web/phone administration](#).)

Pew Research Center researchers then take the most specific information respondents provide about their denominational identity and use it to group Protestants into one of three major traditions – **the evangelical Protestant tradition, mainline Protestant tradition, or the historically Black Protestant tradition**. These divisions within Protestantism are important, because each tradition has its own, distinctive set of beliefs, practices and histories.

For example, churches in the evangelical tradition tend to share the conviction that personal acceptance of Jesus is the only way to salvation; to emphasize bringing other people to the faith; and to have originated in separatist movements against established religious institutions. Churches in the mainline tradition, by comparison, tend to take a less exclusive view of salvation and to place more emphasis on social reform. Churches in the historically Black Protestant tradition have been shaped uniquely by the experiences of slavery and segregation, which put their religious beliefs and practices in a special context.

It’s important to note that not all Protestant respondents identify with a specific denomination. Many Protestants identify as “just Baptist” or “just Methodist,” say they don’t identify with any particular denomination, or describe themselves as “just Christian.” In these cases, respondents are categorized into one of the three Protestant traditions based on their answers to a question asking whether they think of themselves as born-again or evangelical Christians, and/or a question asking about their race. Protestants who *do* identify with a specific denomination are grouped into one of the three Protestant traditions based *exclusively* on their denominational affiliation.

For example, all Southern Baptists are coded as evangelical Protestants regardless of their race, and all United Methodists are coded as mainline Protestants regardless of their answer to the question about whether they think of themselves as a born-again or evangelical Christian. Complete details on the categorization of Protestantism are available in [Appendix B](#).



The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) – which Pew Research Center categorizes as part of the **evangelical Protestant tradition** – remains the nation’s single largest Protestant denomination. Today, 4.4% of U.S. adults say they identify with the SBC, down from 5.3% in 2014 and 6.7% in 2007.

Some of the other large evangelical denominational groupings include:

- The Assemblies of God, which we classify as a Pentecostal church (1.1% of U.S. adults)
- The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1.1%)
- Churches of Christ (1.1%)<sup>9</sup>
- The Presbyterian Church in America (0.5%)

The United Methodist Church – a **mainline Protestant denomination** in the Center’s coding – makes up 2.7% of the U.S. population, compared with 3.6% in 2014 and 5.1% in 2007. The United Methodist Church has splintered in recent years, and many of its former churches have “joined the more conservative Global Methodist Church,” according to [The Associated Press](#).<sup>10</sup>

Other large mainline denominations include:

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or ELCA (1.4% of U.S. adults)
- The American Baptist Churches USA (1.0%)
- The Episcopal Church (0.9%)
- The Presbyterian Church (USA), at 0.8%

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<sup>9</sup> Churches of Christ describes itself as “undenominational,” and the organization has “no central headquarters” and “no organization superior to the elders of each local congregation.” Visit [the organization’s website](#) for additional details.

<sup>10</sup> In the new RLS, fewer than 0.3% of respondents identify with the Global Methodist Church, which we categorize as an evangelical denomination.

The National Baptist Convention, USA – a denomination in the **historically Black Protestant tradition** – was named by 1.0% of survey respondents. Other large historically Black Protestant denominations in the survey include:

- The Church of God in Christ (COGIC), a Pentecostal denomination mentioned by 0.7% of respondents
- The National Baptist Convention of America (0.4%)
- The Progressive National Baptist Convention (mentioned by fewer than 0.3% of respondents)
- The African Methodist Episcopal Church (also mentioned by fewer than 0.3% of respondents)

## A look at the largest Protestant denominations in the 2023-24 RLS

*% of U.S. adults who identify with each Protestant denomination*

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>Difference between 2014 and 2023-24</b>
Southern Baptist Convention (evangelical)	6.7%	5.3%	4.4%	-0.9 pct. pts.
United Methodist Church (mainline)	5.1	3.6	2.7	-0.9
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) (mainline)	2.0	1.4	1.4	-
Assemblies of God (evangelical)	1.4	1.4	1.1	-0.3
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (evangelical)	1.4	1.1	1.1	-
Churches of Christ (evangelical)	1.5	1.5	1.1	-0.4
American Baptist Churches USA (mainline)	1.2	1.5	1.0	-0.5
National Baptist Convention, USA (historically Black Prot.)*	-	-	1.0	-
Episcopal Church (mainline)	1.0	0.9	0.9	-
Presbyterian Church (USA) (mainline)	1.1	0.9	0.8	-0.1
Church of God in Christ (COGIC) (historically Black Prot.)	0.6	0.6	0.7	+0.1
Presbyterian Church in America (evangelical)	0.4	0.4	0.5	+0.1
National Baptist Convention of America (historically Black Prot.)*	-	-	0.4	-
Church of God (Cleveland, TN) (evangelical)	0.4	0.4	0.4	-
United Church of Christ (mainline)	0.5	0.4	0.4	-
Seventh-day Adventist (evangelical)	0.4	0.5	0.3	-0.2
Progressive National Baptist Convention (historically Black Prot.)	0.3	0.3	<0.3	-
African Methodist Episcopal (historically Black Prot.)	0.4	0.3	<0.3	-
Global Methodist Church (evangelical)	-	-	<0.3	-
Disciples of Christ (mainline)	0.3	<0.3	<0.3	-

\* The 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies did not differentiate between the National Baptist Convention, USA, and the National Baptist Convention of America. We corrected this in the 2023-24 survey.

Note: Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest integer. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceptionally large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to show trends over time or to compare the sizes of relatively small religious groups.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Identifying with religions other than Christianity

The share of Americans who identify with a religion other than Christianity has been trending upward, from 4.7% in 2007 to 7.1% today.

Overall, 1.7% of adults identify as Jewish when asked about their religion – on par with results from the previous landscape studies and Pew Research Center’s [2020 survey of Jewish Americans](#).

Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus each account for roughly 1% of the U.S. adult population. All three of these groups are larger today than they were in 2007.

An additional 0.3% of respondents identify with other world religions (including Bahai’ism, Daoism, Rastafarianism, Sikhism and traditional African religions).

And 1.9% of U.S. adults identify religiously as something else, including 1.1% of respondents who identify with Unitarianism or other liberal faiths, and 0.7% who identify with New Age groups.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.7% of U.S. adults identify religiously as Jewish; Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus each make up roughly 1% of Americans

*% of U.S. adults who identify as ...*

	2007	2014	2023-24
Jewish	1.7%	1.9%	1.7%
Muslim	0.4	0.9	1.2
Buddhist	0.7	0.7	1.1
Hindu	0.4	0.7	0.9
Other world religions	<0.3	0.3	0.3
Something else	1.2	1.5	1.9
Unitarians and other liberal faiths	0.7	1.0	1.1
New Age	0.4	0.4	0.7
Native American religions	<0.3	<0.3	<0.3
<b>NET Non-Christian religions</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>7.1</b>

Note: Figures may not add to totals indicated due to rounding. Those who identify with other world religions include Bahais, Daoists, Sikhs and others. The “Unitarians and other liberal faiths” category includes Unitarians, those who volunteer their religion as “spiritual but not religious,” deists, humanists and others. The “New Age” category includes Pagans, Wiccans, druids, Satanists and others. Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest integer. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceptionally large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to show trends over time or to compare the sizes of relatively small religious groups.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>11</sup> The “Unitarians and other liberal faiths” category includes U.S. adults who describe themselves as Unitarians, “spiritual but not religious,” deists, humanists and others. The “New Age” category includes those who identify as Pagans, Wiccans, druids, Satanists and others.

### Religious affiliation of U.S. immigrants

About 14% of U.S. adults who were born outside the country identify with religions other than Christianity, including 4% of U.S. immigrants who are Muslim, 4% who are Hindu, and 3% who are Buddhists.<sup>12</sup>

Most immigrants to the U.S. who were born in other parts of **the Americas** are Christian (72%), including 45% who are Catholic. Among immigrants from **Europe**, 57% are Christian, 8% identify with other religions, and 34% are religiously unaffiliated.

Immigrants born in **the Asia-Pacific** region are divided about evenly between Christians, adherents of non-Christian religions (including 14% who are Hindu, 11% who are Buddhist and 7% who are Muslim), and the religiously unaffiliated.<sup>13</sup>

The survey did not include enough respondents born in the Middle East-North Africa or sub-Saharan Africa regions to be able to report on them separately.

Among respondents who were born in the U.S. but had at least *one parent* born outside the U.S. (i.e., **second-generation** Americans), 10% identify with religions other than Christianity.

By comparison, among people born in the U.S. to parents *both* of whom also were born in the U.S. (i.e., **at least third-generation** Americans), 5% identify with non-Christian religions.

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<sup>12</sup> Overall, 18% of respondents in the new survey were born outside the United States.

<sup>13</sup> Refer also to the Center's report "[Religion Among Asian Americans](#)."

## Among U.S. immigrants, 58% are Christian and 14% identify with other religions

% of U.S. adults who identify religiously as the following, by immigration status

	First generation immigrants (born outside the U.S.)				Second gen. (born in U.S., at least one parent was born elsewhere)	Third gen.+ (born in U.S., both parents also born in U.S.)
	NET All first gen.	Born in Americas (outside U.S.)	Born in Europe	Born in Asia and the Pacific		
<b>Christian</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>NET Non-Christian religions</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
Jewish	1	1	3	<1	3	2
Muslim	4	1	3	7	2	<1
Buddhist	3	1	<1	11	1	1
Hindu	4	<1	<1	14	1	<1
Other world religions	1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1
Something else	1	1	1	1	1	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>No answer</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion. For the purposes of this analysis, people born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories are included among those born outside the U.S. Although individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth, they are included with the “First generation” category here because they are born into a Spanish-dominant culture and because, on many points, their attitudes, views and beliefs are much closer to those of Hispanics born outside the U.S. than to Hispanics born in the 50 U.S. states or District of Columbia, even those who identify themselves as being of Puerto Rican origin. Estimates for respondents born outside the U.S. are representative only of English and Spanish speakers.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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More broadly, the survey finds that the long-term decline in Christianity and growth of the religiously unaffiliated population is evident among immigrants, second-generation respondents (people who were born in the U.S. but had at least one parent born elsewhere), and people whose families have been in the U.S. for three generations or more.

For example, among respondents born outside the U.S., the Christian share of the population declined from 75% to 58% between 2007 and 2023-24. Over the same period, the religiously unaffiliated share of this group (immigrants to the U.S.) grew from 16% to 26%, and the share identifying with religions other than Christianity grew from 8% to 14%.

For more details on trends in the religious composition of U.S. adults, refer to [Chapter 1](#).

## Long-term decline in Christianity, growth of religiously unaffiliated is evident among both U.S.-born adults and immigrants

*% of U.S. adults who identify religiously as the following, by immigration status*

	Among first generation immigrants (born outside the U.S.)			Second gen. (born in U.S., at least one parent was born elsewhere)			Third gen.+ (born in U.S., both parents also born in U.S.)		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>NET Non-Christian religions</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Jewish	1	1	1	6	4	3	1	2	2
Muslim	2	4	4	1	1	2	<1	<1	<1
Buddhist	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	<1	1
Hindu	3	4	4	<1	1	1	<1	<1	<1
Other world religions	<1	1	1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Something else	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>No answer</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion. For the purposes of this analysis, people born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories are included among those born outside the U.S. Although individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth, they are included with the “First generation” category here because they are born into a Spanish-dominant culture and because, on many points, their attitudes, views and beliefs are much closer to those of Hispanics born outside the U.S. than to Hispanics born in the 50 U.S. states or District of Columbia, even those who identify themselves as being of Puerto Rican origin. Estimates for respondents born outside the U.S. are representative only of English and Spanish speakers.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Race in religious groups and congregations

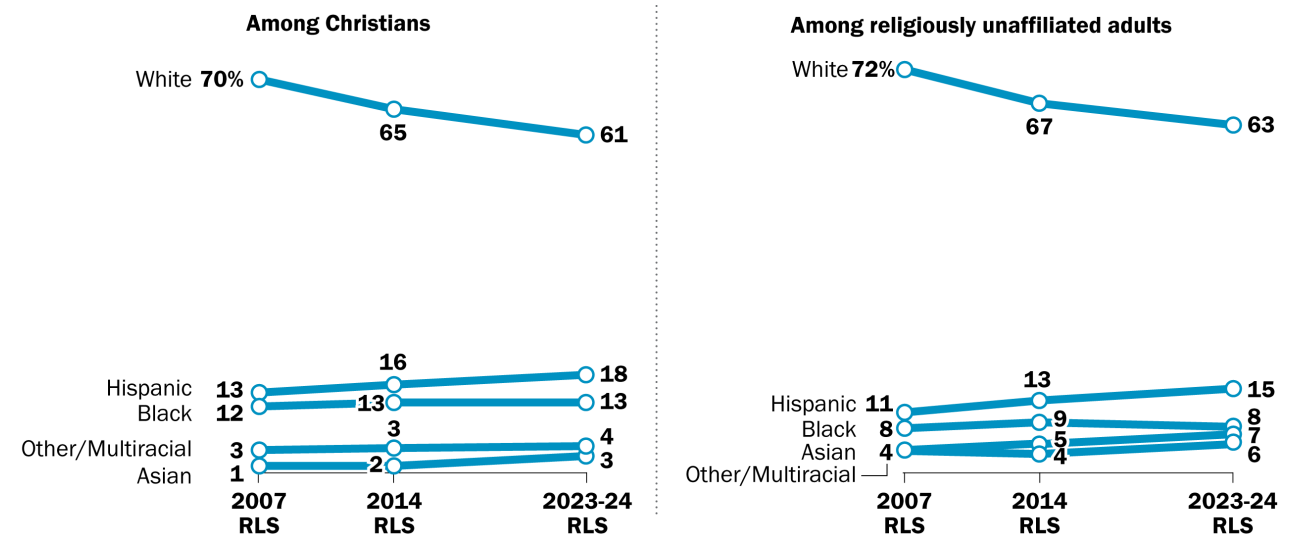
Like the [U.S. public as a whole](#), both Christians and religious “nones” have experienced a decline in the shares who are White.

Among Christians in the new survey, 61% are White (and non-Hispanic), 18% are Hispanic, 13% are non-Hispanic Black, 4% describe themselves as multiracial or in another way, and 3% are non-Hispanic Asian.

In 2007, by comparison, 70% of Christians said they were White, 13% were Hispanic, 12% were Black, 3% identified as multiracial or in another way, and 1% were Asian.

### Trends in the racial composition of U.S. Christians, religiously unaffiliated adults

% who are ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only. The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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In the new survey, 92% of respondents in the historically Black Protestant tradition are Black themselves, while 4% are Hispanic and 3% are White.

In most other Christian traditions large enough to be analyzed in the survey, seven-in-ten or more adherents are White. Catholics are an exception: 54% in the new survey are White, while 36% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian, and 2% are Black.

Nine-in-ten Jewish respondents in the new survey are White. Among Hindu respondents, 84% are Asian, as are 56% of Buddhists in the survey.

Muslim respondents in the new study include 30% who are White, 30% who are Asian, 20% who are Black and 11% who are Hispanic.

Roughly three-quarters of atheists (75%) and agnostics (74%) in the new survey are White; fewer people who describe their religion as “nothing in particular” are White (57%).

(For a detailed discussion of the racial and ethnic composition of religious groups, refer to [Chapter 24](#).)

The survey asked people who attend religious services at least a few times a year about the racial and ethnic makeup of

**Racial composition of religious groups in the U.S.**

*% who identify as ...*

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/ Multiracial
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	60%	11%	16%	6%	5%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	60	12	17	6	4
Christian	61	13	18	3	4
Protestant	63	18	9	3	5
Evangelical	70	7	12	3	6
Mainline	79	6	6	3	5
Historically Black	3	92	4	<1	1
Catholic	54	2	36	4	2
Orthodox Christian	71	12	8	7	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	72	6	12	1	7
Other religions	50	6	11	26	6
Jewish	90	1	6	<1	2
Muslim	30	20	11	30	8
Buddhist	25	3	10	56	5
Hindu	1	0	5	84	8
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	63	8	15	7	6
Atheist	75	2	10	8	5
Agnostic	74	4	10	6	5
Nothing in particular	57	12	18	6	6

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Note: Those who didn't answer the question are not shown. White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

the congregation they attend. And it asked a similar question about the racial and ethnic composition of the congregation that respondents attended as children.

**Among people who attend religious services, roughly one-third currently attend a congregation where they, themselves, are *not* part of a racial or ethnic majority.** This includes 11% who say that most of their fellow worshippers have a different race or ethnicity than they do and 21% who say that no one racial or ethnic group makes up a majority.

**Fewer people (roughly one-fifth of respondents) say they *grew up* attending a congregation where they, themselves, weren't in a racial or ethnic majority.** This includes 10% who grew up going to religious services at least a few times a year at a house of worship where most people belonged to a different race or ethnicity than they did, and an additional 10% who say that no single racial or ethnic group predominated at those services.

For more on race in religious congregations, refer to [Chapter 9](#).

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## Racial composition in U.S. congregations

Among U.S. adults who **currently** attend religious services at least a few times a year, % who say ...

	Most other people are the same race/ethnicity as them	Most other people are of a different race/ethnicity than them	No one race/ethnicity makes up a majority	Unclear
<b>All respondents</b>	66%	11%	21%	2%=100%
White	76	3	19	1
Black	65	12	21	2
Hispanic	56	22	20	2
Asian	59	21	19	1

Among U.S. adults who **as children** attended religious services at least a few times a year, % who say ...

	Most other people were the same race/ethnicity as them	Most other people were of a different race/ethnicity than them	No one race/ethnicity made up a majority	Unclear
<b>All respondents</b>	78%	10%	10%	2%=100%
White	90	2	8	1
Black	80	9	11	1
Hispanic	62	24	12	2
Asian	73	17	9	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## The narrowing gender gap in American religion

Recent [news accounts](#) suggest that among the youngest Americans, men are more religious than women. This would be a major reversal from the past. Historically, U.S. women consistently have exhibited higher levels of religiousness (on average) than men.<sup>14</sup>

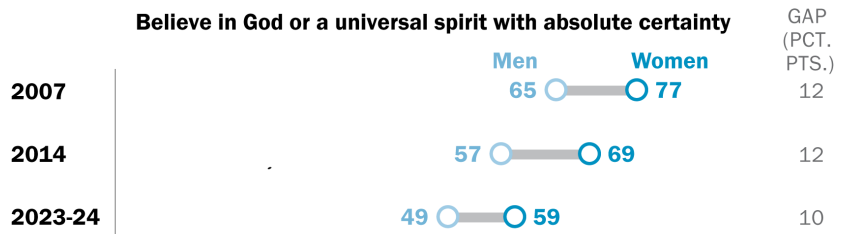
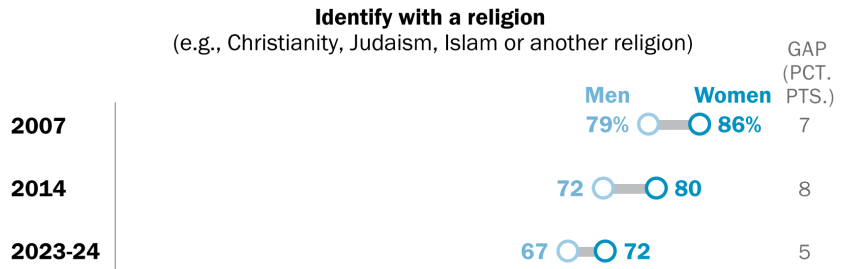
In the new RLS, women continue to report higher levels of religious affiliation, belief and practice than men do. At the same time, there *are* signs that the gender gap in religion is narrowing, as it is smaller among younger people than among older Americans.

For example, in 2007, the share of women who said they pray every day exceeded the share of men who did so by 17 percentage points. In the new survey, women still report praying at higher rates than men. But the difference is slightly narrower, at 13 points.

Among the oldest adults in the new survey (ages 74 and older), the share of women who say they pray every day is 20 points higher than among men. By contrast, among the youngest adults (ages

### Gender gap in U.S. religion shows signs of narrowing

% who do each of the following, by gender



Note: The 2023-24 survey offered respondents the option to identify “as a man, a woman, or in some other way.” The 2007 and 2014 surveys categorized all respondents as either men or women.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on gender differences in religious identities, beliefs and practices both in the U.S. and around the world, refer to Pew Research Center’s report “[The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World.](#)”

18 to 24), the share of women who say they pray daily (30%) is similar to the share of men who say they do the same (26%); the 4-point gap is not statistically significant.

While the gender gap in American religion appears to be narrowing, **there are still no birth cohorts in which men are significantly more religious than women.** In every age group, women are at least as religious as men, and in many birth cohorts, women are significantly *more* religious than men.

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### On some key religion measures, the gender gap is smaller among younger adults than among older people

Among U.S. adults born in \_\_\_, % who ...

	Identify with a religion			Say they pray daily			Believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty			Say religion is 'very important' in their lives		
	Women	Men	Gap (pct. pts.)	Women	Men	Gap (pct. pts.)	Women	Men	Gap (pct. pts.)	Women	Men	Gap (pct. pts.)
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	88%	81%	7	67%	47%	20	70%	56%	14	59%	44%	15
1950s (now ages 64-74)	84	78	6	61	45	16	69	57	12	52	40	12
1960s (now ages 54-64)	80	76	4	59	45	14	68	58	10	47	37	10
1970s (now ages 44-54)	72	67	5	54	40	14	63	52	11	42	35	7
1980s (now ages 34-44)	64	60	4	42	33	9	52	44	8	35	29	6
1990s (now ages 24-34)	57	54	3	37	27	10	47	38	9	32	25	7
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	57	58	-1	30	26	4	42	38	4	31	26	5

Note: The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religion in childhood and adulthood

The survey shows that Americans' current religious identities, beliefs and practices are strongly linked with their upbringing. People who say they were raised in religious homes are much more likely to be religious as adults.

More than half of people who say religion was very important in their families while they were growing up also say religion is very important to them today. By contrast, among people who say religion was not too important or not at all important to their families during childhood, just 17% say religion is very important to them today.

The survey finds a similar pattern on questions about religious attendance. People who grew up attending religious services regularly (at least once a month) are more than twice as likely as those who *didn't* grow up attending services regularly to say they now attend religious services at least monthly.

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### Americans raised in religious families are more likely to attend religious services as adults

Among those who say religion was __ to their families DURING THEIR CHILDHOOD	% who CURRENTLY say religion is __ in their lives			
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too/Not at all important	No answer
Very important	55%	24%	20%	<1%=100%
Somewhat important	28	34	38	<1=100
Not too/Not at all important	17	20	62	1=100

Among those who say they attended religious services __ DURING THEIR CHILDHOOD	% who CURRENTLY say they attend religious services ...		
	At least once or twice a month	Few times a year/Seldom/Never	No answer
At least once or twice a month	40%	59%	1%=100%
Few times a year/Seldom/Never	17	83	1=100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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And among all respondents who were raised in a religion (i.e., among those raised Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or as adherents of another religious tradition), those who were raised in highly religious homes are much more likely to have retained their childhood religious identity.

Indeed, 74% of people who were raised in a religion and grew up attending weekly religious services in a family in which religion was very important still identify with their childhood religion today; 15% of respondents who grew up in this kind of environment now say they have no religion, and 10% identify with a religion different from the one in which they were raised. (Refer to the [section on religious switching](#) for details about retaining or leaving one’s childhood religion in adulthood.)

By contrast, among people who were raised in a religion but grew up seldom or never attending religious services – and in a family in which religion was not too important or not at all important – fewer than half still identify with their childhood religion. Instead, most now say they have no religion (40%) or identify with a religion different from the one in which they were raised (16%).

---

## Americans raised in religiously observant families are more likely to retain their religious identity in adulthood

*Based on U.S. adults who say they were **raised religiously affiliated***

	% who currently identify with ...			
	Same religion in which they were raised (e.g., Protestantism or Catholicism)	Different religion	No religion	No answer
Among those who were raised religiously affiliated and grew up ___				
Attending services weekly in a family in which religion was ‘very important’	74%	10%	15%	1%=100%
Seldom/Never attending religious services in a family in which religion was not too/not at all important	42	16	40	2=100
All others	59	12	27	1=100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The “No religion” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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In short, for many people, a religious upbringing leads to a religious adulthood.<sup>15</sup> But the survey also indicates that raising children in a religious environment is no guarantee that those children will grow up to be religious as adults.

**Indeed, 40% of U.S. adults say they attend religious services less often today than they did as children.**

Just 5% say they attend religious services *more* often today than they did as kids.

**And 32% of U.S. adults say religion is less important to them today than it was to their families when they were growing up. By contrast, 18% say religion is more important to them today than it was to their families when they were children.**

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## 40% of U.S. adults say they attend religious services less often than they did as children

*% of U.S. adults who ...*

Attend religious services LESS OFTEN today than they did as children	40%
Attend services MORE OFTEN today than they did as children	5
Attend at the SAME RATE now as then	53
Unclear/Refused	<u>1</u>
	<b>100</b>

Say religion is LESS IMPORTANT to them today than it was to their families while they were growing up	32
Say religion is MORE IMPORTANT to them today than it was to their families	17
Say religion is EQUALLY IMPORTANT now as then	50
Unclear/Refused	<u>1</u>
	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The attendance estimates are based on two questions – one asking respondents how often they attended religious services when they were children, and the other asking how often they currently attend religious services. Responses to each question were collapsed into two categories: at least monthly (on the high end); and a few times a year, less often or never (on the low end). The “Less often” category includes those who report attending at least monthly as children and a few times a year or less today, while the “More often” category includes those who report attending a few times a year or less as children and at least monthly today. The estimates of religion’s importance are based on two questions – one asking respondents how important religion was to their family when they were children, and the other asking respondents how important religion is to them today. Responses to each question were collapsed into three categories – “Very important,” “Somewhat important” and “Not too/Not at all important” – and then compared to sort respondents into “Less important,” “More important” and “Equally important” categories.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023–March 4, 2024.

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<sup>15</sup> The reverse also is true: Religious adults are more likely to give their children a religious upbringing, as described in [Chapter 6](#).

Compared with their elders, today's youngest adults are less likely, by a variety of measures, to say they had a religious upbringing. For example, more than nine-in-ten adults ages 74 and older say they were raised in a religion, including 89% who were raised Christian. Among U.S. adults who were roughly between 18 and 24 when the survey was conducted, 75% were raised in a religion, including 67% who were raised Christian.

Two-thirds of the oldest Americans say they grew up going to religious services at least once a week. Only about half of the youngest adults say the same.

And while half of the oldest adults say that as children they received a lot of formal religious education (i.e., seven or more years), just 19% of today's youngest adults say the same. **People in the youngest age group are about twice as likely as those in the oldest age group to say they received no formal religious education at all (42% vs. 20%).**

There is one exception to this pattern: Young adults are *not* less likely than older Americans to say religion was very important to their families when they were children. Among adults who were roughly between the ages of 18 to 24 when the new survey was conducted, 47% say religion was very important to their families when they were growing up. Among adults ages 74 and older, 44% say the same.



## Compared with older U.S. adults, fewer young people say they were raised in religious households or received a lot of formal religious education

	All U.S. adults	Among U.S. adults born in ...						
		1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	1950s (now ages 64-74)	1960s (now ages 54-64)	1970s (now ages 44-54)	1980s (now ages 34-44)	1990s (now ages 24-34)	2000-06 (now ages 18-24)
% who were raised __								
Religiously affiliated	86%	94%	93%	90%	86%	83%	81%	75%
Christian	80	89	89	86	81	76	73	67
Other religion	6	5	4	4	6	7	7	9
Religiously unaffiliated	13	5	6	9	12	16	18	23
% who attended religious services __ as a child								
Weekly or more often	56	68	66	58	55	52	50	48
Once or twice a month	11	9	10	11	11	11	13	14
Few times a year	13	10	10	14	14	14	13	13
Seldom/Never	19	11	14	16	20	22	23	24
% who received __ of formal religious education as a child								
A lot	35	49	45	38	35	31	29	19
A fair amount	18	16	19	18	17	18	18	17
A little	16	12	13	16	17	16	17	22
None	30	20	21	26	29	34	36	42
% who say religion was __ to their family when they were growing up								
Very important	45	44	45	45	46	45	46	47
Somewhat important	31	34	34	31	31	30	29	30
Not too/Not at all important	23	21	20	23	23	25	25	23

Note: The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The religious education estimates are based on two questions, one asking respondents how many years they attended a private religious school, and the other asking how many years they attended some other form of religious education (like Sunday school or CCD). Each question had four response options: none, one to three years, four to six years, and seven or more years. Respondents in the "None" category are those who report having attended neither Sunday school, CCD or any other religious education program, nor a private religious school from K-12. "A little" religious education includes those who attended either a private religious school or an extracurricular religious program for one to three years total. "A fair amount" of religious education includes those who attended a religious private school or Sunday school (or both) for four to six years, as well as those who received one to three years of both. These three categories only include respondents who provided an answer to both questions about private religious schooling and extracurricular religious education programs. "A lot" of religious education includes those who attended either one of these for seven or more years, even if they did not answer both questions. Respondents who gave unclear answers are not shown in the religious education estimates displayed here.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Moreover, the persistence of a high level of religiousness from childhood into adulthood – the “stickiness” of a religious upbringing – appears to be declining, while the stickiness of a nonreligious upbringing seems to be increasing.

In the oldest cohort of U.S. adults (ages 74 and older), 51% of those who say they grew up attending religious services weekly in families for whom religion was very important are *still* highly religious in these ways (i.e., they still go to services weekly and still say religion is very important in their lives).

And among people in this oldest cohort, 50% of those who say they grew up seldom or never attending religious services in families in which religion was not too important or not at all important *still* describe themselves as nonreligious in these ways (i.e., they still rarely or never go to services, and still say religion is not important in their lives).

In other words, **a highly religious upbringing has proved to be just as “sticky” as a nonreligious upbringing over the lifetimes of the oldest Americans** (now 74 and older).

**How ‘sticky’ is a religious upbringing? It seems to be less sticky among young adults than older Americans**

	<b>% who STILL attend services weekly and say religion is ‘very important’ in their lives</b>
Among those who grew up attending weekly religious services in families in which religion was ‘very important’	35%
By birth cohort	
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	51
1950s (now ages 64-74)	39
1960s (now ages 54-64)	35
1970s (now ages 44-54)	34
1980s (now ages 34-44)	31
1990s (now ages 24-34)	29
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	28
	<b>% who STILL seldom/never attend services and say religion is ‘not too/not at all important’ in their lives</b>
Among those who grew up attending religious services seldom or never, in families in which religion was ‘not too important’ or ‘not at all important’	65%
By birth cohort	
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	50
1950s (now ages 64-74)	59
1960s (now ages 54-64)	56
1970s (now ages 44-54)	63
1980s (now ages 34-44)	69
1990s (now ages 24-34)	72
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	76

Note: The survey asked respondents, “In what year were you born?” Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent’s year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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By contrast, among the youngest U.S. adults in the survey (now ages 18 to 24), just 28% of those raised in highly religious homes are, today, highly religious themselves. Meanwhile, 76% of young adults who grew up rarely or never attending services, in families in which religion was unimportant, still say they *don't* attend religious services and that religion is *not* important to them. In other words, **a highly religious upbringing has been much less persistent (or “sticky”) than a nonreligious upbringing so far in the lifetimes of the youngest U.S. adults.**

Of course, it's possible that the effect of a highly religious upbringing just needs time to develop. Maybe the people in the youngest cohort will grow more religious as they age, and if they are surveyed again in 20 or 30 years, a highly religious upbringing will appear stickier than it does now. However, there is no evidence in the three Religious Landscape Studies conducted since 2007 that any birth cohorts have grown more religious over the long term, as discussed below in the [section on how religious beliefs change as people age](#).

For more information on Americans' religious upbringing, refer to [Chapter 4](#).

## Religion in U.S. families today

### Raising children

Among parents of minor children – i.e., people currently raising children under 18 in their homes – 40% say they send their child or children to some kind of religious education or private religious school.

By comparison, 51% of parents say they, themselves, received a fair amount or a lot of religious education as children, while 16% received a little, and 33% had none.

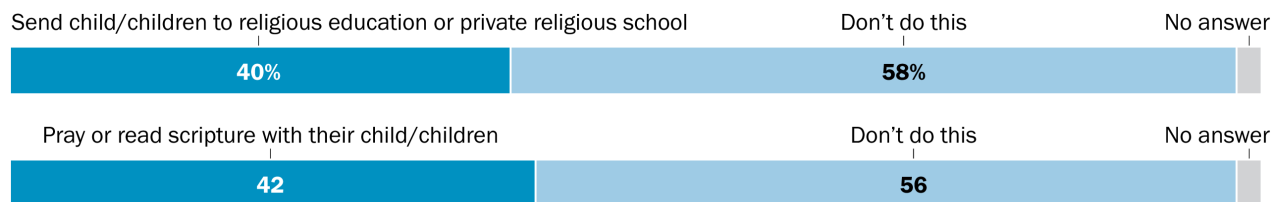
However, these questions about the respondent’s own religious education and the religious education of their kids are not exactly parallel. The survey asked respondents to report how many years of religious education they received as children, whereas parents were asked whether their minor children are *currently* enrolled in a religious private school or other religious education programs. Some parents may not have children enrolled right now but may enroll them later or may have enrolled them in the past.

**Among parents living with minor children in their homes, 42% say they read scripture or pray with their children.** The survey did not ask respondents whether (or how often) they used to read scripture with their parents or prayed with their parents when they were children themselves.

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### Today, 4 in 10 U.S. parents say they send their kids to religious education

*Among U.S. parents who are currently raising one or more children under the age of 18 in their homes, % who ...*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

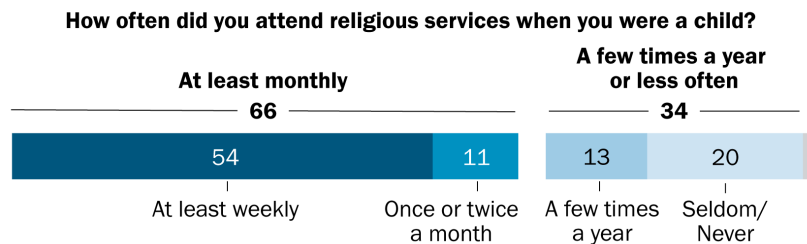
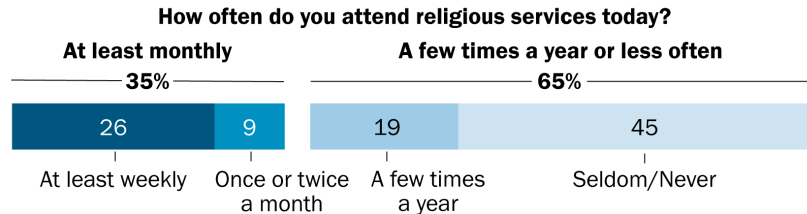
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Overall, 26% of people who are currently raising children say they go to religious services at least weekly, and an additional 9% say they go to religious services once or twice a month. The survey did not ask current parents whether they take their children with them when they go to religious services. But, even if all 35% *do* take their children with them to services, this still would be a much smaller percentage than the roughly two-thirds of parents who say they went to services at least monthly when they were growing up.<sup>16</sup>

## 26% of parents currently raising children report attending religious services at least weekly

Based on U.S. parents who are currently raising one or more children under the age of 18 in their homes



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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For more on how parents in different religious traditions are raising their children, refer to [Chapter 6](#).

<sup>16</sup> The survey finds that, in general, parents who are raising minor children attend religious services at higher rates than adults of a similar age who are not parents. For instance, among parents between the ages of 25 and 34, 34% say they attend religious services at least monthly, compared with 20% of people in the same age group who are not parents. Among parents between the ages of 35 and 44, 34% say they attend religious services at least monthly, compared with 18% of people in the same age group who are not currently parenting a minor child. One exception to this pattern is the youngest age group: Among Americans ages 18 to 24, those who are parents do *not* report attending services at higher rates than those who are not parents. But the survey includes a relatively small number of interviews with 18- to 24-year-olds who are parents, and the results for this group have a correspondingly large margin of error (plus or minus 8.8 percentage points).

## Religious intermarriage

In the new survey, 26% of married adults say their spouse has a religious identity different from their own. That's virtually identical to what we found in the 2014 RLS (25%).

One-quarter of married Catholics in the new survey say they are married to a non-Catholic spouse, including 14% who are married to a spouse from another Christian tradition and 9% who are married to a spouse with no religion.

About one-in-five married Protestants say they have a non-Protestant spouse, including 8% who have a spouse who identifies with another Christian faith and 10% whose spouse has no religion.

Roughly one-third of married "nones" say their spouse identifies with some religion, in most cases a branch of Christianity.

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### Religious intermarriage: 19% of married Protestants have a non-Protestant spouse, and 25% of married Catholics have a non-Catholic spouse

*% of married U.S. adults who have a ...*

	NET Spouse with a different religion than respondent	... spouse who identifies as __				... spouse with the same religion as respondent
		Christian	Other religion (non-Christian)	Religiously unaffiliated	No answer	
Protestant	<b>19%</b>	8%	1%	10%	1%	<b>81%</b>
Catholic	<b>25</b>	14	1	9	1	<b>75</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>13</b>	6	0	7	0	<b>87</b>
Jewish	<b>35</b>	18	2	15	<1	<b>65</b>
Religiously unaffiliated	<b>32</b>	28	4	--	1	<b>68</b>

Note: Protestantism is treated here as a single religion, so a marriage between people in two different Protestant traditions (such as a Southern Baptist married to an Episcopalian) is categorized as "Spouse same religion." The "Religiously unaffiliated" category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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**Protestants, Catholics and Jews who are in religiously mixed marriages are far less religiously active, on average, than those with spouses who share their religion.**

For example, 68% of Protestants married to other Protestants say religion is very important in their lives, compared with 38% of Protestants married to non-Protestants who say this. And 49% of Catholics married to fellow Catholics say they go to church at least once or twice a month, compared with 28% of Catholics married to non-Catholics who say they attend this often.

These differences carry over into child-rearing. Among parents of minor children, Protestants married to fellow Protestants are significantly more likely than Protestants married to non-Protestants to say they pray or read scripture with their kids and send their children to religious education. For the most part, a similar pattern holds for Catholics.

These patterns raise an interesting question: Does being in a religiously mixed marriage make people less religious, or are nonreligious people more likely to enter religiously mixed marriages? The survey cannot answer this question; it's possible that both things are at play.

Meanwhile, religiously *unaffiliated* people married to spouses who identify with a religion tend to be a little more religiously active, on average, than religiously unaffiliated people married to spouses who are also unaffiliated.

For instance, 12% of married “nones” whose spouses identify with a religion say they pray daily, compared with 9% of married “nones” who have a fellow “none” as a spouse. And 13% of religious “nones” who are currently parenting a minor child and who are married to a religiously affiliated spouse say they send at least one of their children to religious education, compared with 5% of religious “nones” who are married to a religiously unaffiliated spouse.<sup>17</sup> The differences are quite small, though, as are the overall shares of “nones” who say they are religiously active in these ways – regardless of whether they are married to a fellow “none,” or not.

For more on religious intermarriage, refer to [Chapter 4](#).

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<sup>17</sup> Relatively few religious “nones” married to a religiously affiliated spouse say their spouse is very religious. Overall, 17% of religious “nones” married to a religiously affiliated spouse say religion is very important in their spouse’s life, 36% say religion is somewhat important to their spouse, and 47% say religion is not too important or not at all important to their spouse.

## Protestants, Catholics in religiously mixed marriages tend to be less religious

% of married U.S. adults who do each of the following

	Say religion is 'very important' in their lives	Say they attend religious services at least monthly	Say they pray daily
<b>Protestant</b>			
Spouse same religion	68%	64%	72%
Spouse different religion	38	28	49
<b>Catholic</b>			
Spouse same religion	51	49	57
Spouse different religion	33	28	42
<b>Jewish</b>			
Spouse same religion	41	38	33
Spouse different religion*	7	8	13
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>			
Spouse same religious identity	2	2	9
Spouse different religious identity	4	4	12

% of married U.S. adults who are currently raising one or more children under the age of 18 in their homes and say they ...

	Pray or read scripture with their children	Send children to Sunday school or other religious education	Send children to private religious school or homeschool instead of public school
<b>Protestant</b>			
Spouse same religion	73%	64%	28%
Spouse different religion	40	34	16
<b>Catholic</b>			
Spouse same religion	49	44	21
Spouse different religion	33	27	18
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>			
Spouse same religious identity	7	5	7
Spouse different religious identity	15	13	9

\* The survey included 178 Jewish respondents married to a non-Jewish spouse, with an effective sample size of 99 and a margin of error of plus or minus 9.8 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. The survey did not include enough married respondents in other religious traditions to subdivide them by whether they are in religiously mixed or matched marriages, nor did it include enough married Jewish respondents who are currently raising a child to include them in the analysis of child-rearing in this table.

Note: Protestantism is treated here as a single religion, so a marriage between people in two different Protestant traditions (such as a Southern Baptist married to an Episcopalian) is categorized as "Spouse same religion." The "Religiously unaffiliated" category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious switching

Overall, 35% of U.S. adults have switched religions between childhood and adulthood. That is, they say they currently identify with a religion (or with no religion) that is different from the religion in which they were raised.

This figure includes people who switched from one Christian religious tradition to another (e.g., those who say they were raised Protestant but now identify as Catholic or vice versa), as well as people who switched from one non-Christian religion to another (e.g., those who say they were raised Hindu and now identify as Buddhist or vice versa).<sup>18</sup> It also includes people who switch from identifying with a religion to describing themselves as religiously unaffiliated (or vice versa).

The share of people in the new survey who say they switched religions is on par with the share who said this in 2014.

When we divide the data into just three categories – Christianity, other religions and no religion – it shows very clearly that Christianity loses far more people than it gains through religious switching. Fully 80% of U.S. adults say they were raised Christian, but upward of a quarter of them (22% of all U.S. adults) no longer identify as Christians.

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### 22% of U.S. adults were raised as Christians but no longer identify as such

*% of U.S. adults who were/are ...*

<b>Raised Christian</b>	<b>80%</b>
Still Christian	58
No longer Christian	22
Now identify with other religion	2
Now religiously unaffiliated	19
Refused	1
<b>Raised in other religion</b>	<b>6</b>
Still identify with other religion	4
No longer identify with other religion	2
Now Christian	<1
Now religiously unaffiliated	1
Refused	<1
<b>Raised religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>13</b>
Still religiously unaffiliated	9
No longer religiously unaffiliated	3
Now Christian	3
Now other religion	1
Refused	<1
<b>Refused to say how they were raised</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>18</sup> This figure does not include switching within Protestantism (e.g., from Baptist to Methodist, or from Lutheran to Episcopalian), nor does it include switching within the religiously unaffiliated category (e.g., from atheist to agnostic, or from agnostic to “nothing in particular”). If these kinds of switching within Protestantism and among the religiously unaffiliated are added to the equation, then the share of U.S. adults who have switched religions between childhood and adulthood rises to 49%.

### What is ‘religious switching’?

We use the phrase “religious switching” rather than more familiar terms like “conversion” because changes in religious identity occur in all directions, including from having a religion to having no religion. Also, these changes can take place without any formal ritual or declaration.

We measure religious switching with two survey questions. The first asks, “What is your present religion, if any?” The second asks, “Thinking about when you were a child, in what religion were you raised, if any?” By comparing each respondent’s answers to these questions, we can see whether they still have the same religion in which they were raised or whether they have switched.

However, these questions may not capture all the switching that takes place. For instance, they would not reveal whether a person has switched multiple times, or whether a person left their childhood religion and later returned to it. Our analysis of religious switching focuses on the difference (if any) between a respondent’s religious identity at the time of the survey and during childhood, not the steps that may have occurred in between.

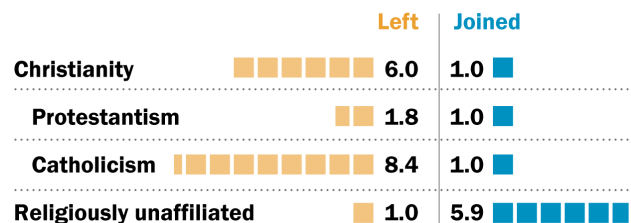
By contrast, religious “nones” gain far more people than they lose through religious switching. Overall, 13% of U.S. adults say they were raised in no religion. But fully 20% of U.S. adults now say they are religiously unaffiliated after having been raised in a religion, including 19% who were raised Christian and 1% who were raised in other religions.

Expressed as a ratio, these figures mean that **there are six former Christians for every convert to Christianity in the United States.** The balance is especially lopsided for Catholicism (which loses 8.4 people through religious switching for every convert to the religion). But Protestants also lose more people than they gain through switching, by a ratio of 1.8 to one.

In stark contrast, **the religiously unaffiliated gain nearly six people for every person they lose through religious switching.** That is, there are about six times as many Americans who say they were raised in a religion and no longer identify with a religion than there are who say they were raised in no religion but now identify with one.

### On balance, Christians lose more people than they gain by religious switching; ‘nones’ gain far more than they lose

*Among U.S. adults, ratio of people who leave each religious group versus people who join*



Note: The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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In the aggregate, **religions other than Christianity gain about as many people as they lose through religious switching.** Overall, 3% of the public identifies with a religion other than Christianity after having been raised Christian or with no religion (or they did not answer the question about their childhood religion). And 2% of U.S. adults say they were raised in a religion other than Christianity but no longer identify with it.

The survey shows big differences in religious switching patterns across age groups, which helps explain the long-term declines in religious affiliation, especially for Christianity. Vast majorities of older adults (89% of those born in the 1950s or earlier) say they were raised Christian, and most of them are still Christian today. Relatively few older adults say either that they were raised in no religion or that they have become religiously unaffiliated after having been raised as Christians.

Smaller majorities of young adults were raised as Christians, and fewer of them have retained their Christian identity in adulthood. Young people are more likely than older adults to have been raised in no religion and, also, more likely to have become religiously unaffiliated after having been raised as Christians.

Interestingly, among the youngest adults – those born between 2000 and 2006, who were ages 18 to 24 when the survey was conducted – the share who were raised Christian and are still Christian is about as high as among those born in the 1990s, who were 24 to 34 when the survey was conducted (41% vs. 42%). And the youngest cohort is slightly *less* likely than the second-youngest cohort to have left Christianity.

Jump to [Chapter 2](#) to see the retention rates of different religious groups (i.e., what percentage of all the people raised in each group still identify with that group today).

## Younger adults are more likely than older Americans to have left Christianity

% of U.S. adults who were/are ...

	Among those born in __						
	1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	1950s (now ages 64-74)	1960s (now ages 54-64)	1970s (now ages 44-54)	1980s (now ages 34-44)	1990s (now ages 24-34)	2000-06 (now ages 18-24)
<b>Raised Christian</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>67%</b>
Still Christian	76	72	69	59	50	42	41
No longer Christian	13	16	17	22	26	31	26
Now identify with other religion	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Now religiously unaffiliated	10	13	14	19	23	27	22
Refused	1	1	1	1	1	<1	1
<b>Raised in other religion</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>
Still identify with other religion	3	3	2	4	5	5	6
No longer identify with other religion	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Now Christian	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	<1
Now religiously unaffiliated	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Refused	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	<1	0
<b>Raised religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>
Still religiously unaffiliated	2	3	5	8	12	15	19
No longer religiously unaffiliated	2	2	3	4	4	4	5
Now Christian	2	2	3	3	2	2	4
Now other religion	<1	<1	1	<1	1	1	1
Refused	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
<b>Refused to say how they were raised</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. The "Religiously unaffiliated" category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Signs of strengthening spirituality

When asked how their levels of spirituality may have changed over the course of their lifetimes, Americans who say they have become *more* spiritual outnumber those who say they have become *less* spiritual by a roughly four-to-one margin (43% vs. 11%).

Moreover, the survey finds that **Americans of all ages are more likely to say their spirituality has grown stronger than to say it has weakened.**<sup>19</sup>

Large majorities of the U.S. public believe that people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical bodies, that there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, and that there is an afterlife.

### More Americans say their spirituality has increased than decreased over the course of their lives

Over your lifetime, have you generally become \_\_\_ **spiritual?** (%)

		More	Less	No clear change
<b>All U.S. adults</b>		<b>43%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>46%</b>
BIRTH COHORT	AGE TODAY			
1940s or earlier	74+	45	8	47
1950s	64-74	48	8	43
1960s	54-64	48	9	44
1970s	44-54	46	10	44
1980s	34-44	41	14	45
1990s	24-34	39	14	47
2000-06	18-24	35	12	53

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The “No clear change” column includes respondents who say “Some of both,” those who say “Stayed about the same” and people who did not answer the question. The survey asked respondents, “In what year were you born?” Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent’s year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>19</sup> Young adults and older Americans may have very different reference points in mind when answering this question. Young adults have only their childhood and early adulthood as points of comparison. Older adults may be considering a much longer time horizon.

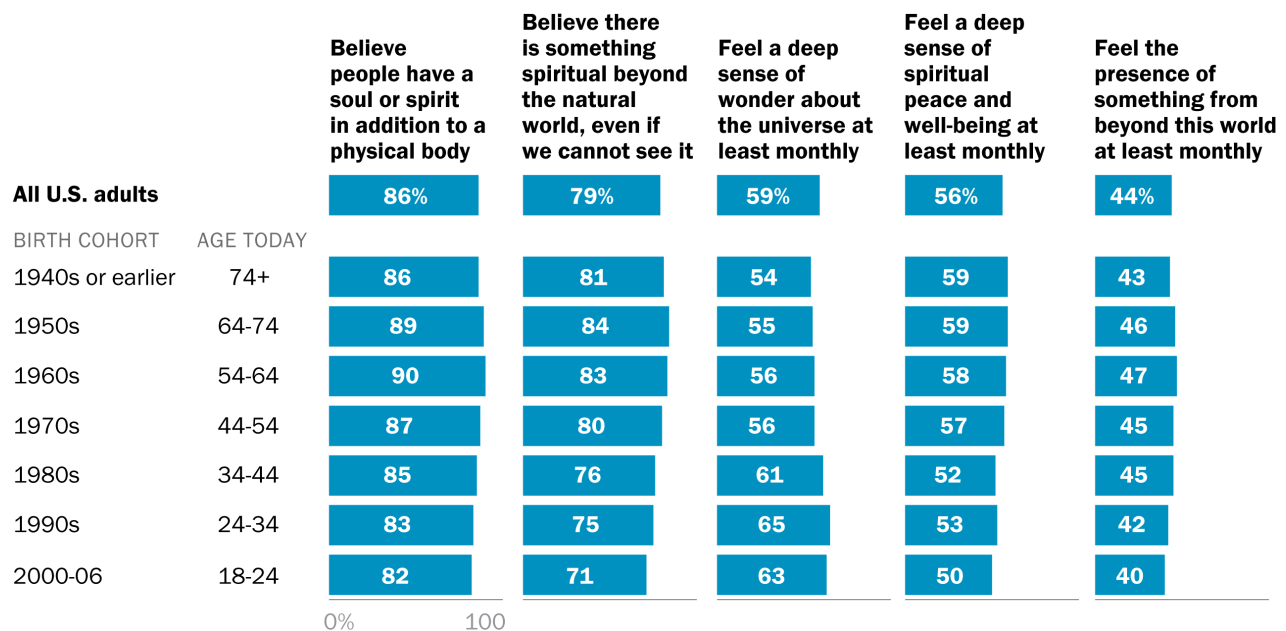
And although younger Americans are less *traditionally religious* than older adults (as measured by rates of prayer, identifying with a religious group, attending religious services, and some other beliefs and practices), the age gaps are much smaller on several of the survey’s questions about *spirituality*.<sup>20</sup>

For instance, 82% of adults who were roughly between the ages of 18 and 24 when the survey was conducted say they believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body – only slightly lower than the share of today’s oldest adults who affirm the same belief.

And 63% of today’s youngest adults say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe at least monthly, which is somewhat higher than the share of today’s oldest adults who say the same.

## Relatively modest age gaps among Americans on some questions about spirituality

% who say they ...



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>20</sup> There is an active debate among scholars over how to define religion and spirituality. Previous [Pew Research Center surveys have shown](#) that many Americans see no real difference between the two terms. However, some people describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, and our surveys find that many of these people hold supernatural beliefs (such as in a higher power or spiritual force in the universe) but rarely participate in organized religious activities, such as attending religious services. With that finding in mind, we use “spirituality” loosely in this report to refer to beliefs or practices that don’t necessarily imply participation in, or identification with, any organized religion. At the same time, we do not wish to suggest that there is a clear line between religion and spirituality.

The survey finds that Americans who say their spirituality has increased are more likely than other adults (especially those who say their spirituality has declined) to say they regularly feel awe at nature’s beauty, feel a sense of spiritual peace, and experience the presence of something from beyond this world.

Americans who say their spirituality has grown also are more inclined than others to say they believe in God or a universal spirit, and to say they pray daily.

## Americans who say they’ve become more spiritual stand out on a variety of spirituality, religion measures

Based on U.S. adults (table reads down)

	Among U.S. adults who say their ...		
	Spirituality has <b>INCREASED</b> over the course of their lives	Spirituality has not clearly changed in either direction	Spirituality has <b>DECREASED</b> over the course of their lives
% who experience each of the following AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK			
Feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness	79%	52%	38%
Feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature	74	53	46
Think about the meaning and purpose of life	62	36	26
Feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being	62	26	12
Feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe	54	32	30
Feel the presence of something from beyond this world	53	20	10
Feel a deep sense of connection with humanity	49	24	18
% who say __			
There’s something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we can’t see it	92%	75%	46%
The natural world is all there is	7	23	52
They believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty	75	43	19
They believe in God or a universal spirit; less certain	19	37	34
They don’t believe in God or a universal spirit	5	18	46
They believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to a physical body	95	84	59
They pray daily	65	32	13
They pray weekly/monthly	20	28	17
They seldom/never pray	15	40	69

Note: The “No clear change” column includes respondents who say “Some of both,” those who say “Stayed about the same” and those who did not answer the question.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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These results suggest that spirituality and religion are not necessarily in tension with each other. We know from previous research that many people view [spirituality and religion as complementary](#); some see no difference between them.

Indeed, the new survey finds that people who identify with a religion are *more* likely than religiously unaffiliated Americans to say they have grown increasingly spiritual during their lives.

Religiously affiliated people also are more inclined than religious “nones” to believe in God or a universal spirit, to pray daily, and to report that they experience a variety of spiritual sensations, such as “the presence of something from beyond this world.”

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### Religiously affiliated Americans are more apt than ‘nones’ to say they’ve grown more spiritual over their lives

*Over the course of your life, have you generally become \_\_\_ spiritual? (%)*

Among people who are ...	More	Less	No clear change
Religiously affiliated	51%	7%	42%
Religiously unaffiliated	27	20	53

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The “Religiously affiliated” category consists of people who identify with a religion (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, or another religion). The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion. “No clear change” includes respondents who say “Some of both,” those who say “Stayed about the same” and people who did not answer the question.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Among the “nones,” those who say they’ve grown *more spiritual* during their lives are more likely than other religiously unaffiliated people to say that people have souls or spirits in addition to their physical bodies, that there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, and that they regularly feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature.

## Religious ‘nones’ who say they’ve grown more spiritual during their lives have very different beliefs and experiences than ‘nones’ who have not grown more spiritual

Based on *religiously unaffiliated* U.S. adults (table reads down)

	Among religiously unaffiliated adults who say their ...		
	Spirituality has INCREASED over the course of their lives	Spirituality has not clearly changed in either direction	Spirituality has DECREASED over the course of their lives
% who experience each of the following AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK			
Feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness	67%	40%	35%
Feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature	71	48	48
Think about the meaning and purpose of life	53	29	25
Feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being	42	15	9
Feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe	56	33	34
Feel the presence of something from beyond this world	35	10	5
Feel a deep sense of connection with humanity	38	19	19
% who say ...			
There is something spiritual beyond natural world, even if we can't see it	82	56	28
The natural world is all there is	16	42	70
They believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty	36	13	6
They believe in God or a universal spirit; less certain	41	39	23
They don't believe in God or a universal spirit	22	46	70
They believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to a physical body	89	69	42
They pray daily	25	8	4
They pray weekly/monthly	23	16	6
They seldom/never pray	51	75	89

Note: The “No clear change” column includes respondents who say “Some of both,” those who say “Stayed about the same” and people who did not answer the question. The “Religiously unaffiliated” category consists of people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Attendance at religious services

The 2023-24 RLS finds a substantial age gap in attendance at religious services. Most young adults say they go to religious services no more than a few times a year. Indeed, among people born since the 1980s, about half or more say they *seldom* or *never* attend religious services.

### Three-quarters of U.S. adults born since 1980s say they attend religious services a few times a year or less, if at all

Based on U.S. adults

	How often do you attend religious services in person?							Are you a member of a religious congregation?
	NET At least monthly	Weekly or more often	Once or twice a month	NET A few times a year or less often	A few times a year	Seldom/ Never	No answer	Yes
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>33%</b>	25%	8%	<b>67%</b>	18%	49%	<b>1%=100%</b>	37%
Among those born in ...								
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	<b>49</b>	40	9	<b>50</b>	15	36	<b>1</b>	57
1950s (now ages 64-74)	<b>38</b>	30	8	<b>61</b>	16	45	<b>1</b>	47
1960s (now ages 54-64)	<b>34</b>	25	8	<b>66</b>	18	47	<b>1</b>	41
1970s (now ages 44-54)	<b>34</b>	25	9	<b>66</b>	17	48	<b>1</b>	38
1980s (now ages 34-44)	<b>28</b>	20	8	<b>72</b>	18	54	<b>1</b>	29
1990s (now ages 24-34)	<b>24</b>	18	6	<b>75</b>	17	59	<b>&lt;1</b>	26
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	<b>25</b>	18	7	<b>75</b>	25	50	<b>&lt;1</b>	27

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The question about membership in a religious congregation asked, "Are you personally a member of a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other house of worship?"

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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By comparison, older adults report attending religious services at far higher rates. Furthermore, 57% of people in the oldest cohort say they are members of a religious congregation, compared with 27% of the youngest adults.

Does this mean that attendance at religious services is declining? Not necessarily. The age gap, by itself, is not *proof* that fewer people are attending services, because it is theoretically possible that people participate in religious services at higher rates as they get older. Perhaps today's young adults will go to a church, synagogue, mosque or other house of worship more often when they reach middle age or retirement age than they do today.

Moreover, we do not have a clear, long-term trend line for attendance at religious services because the new survey's findings about rates of religious attendance cannot be directly compared with the previous landscape studies.

The earlier studies in 2007 and 2014 were conducted by telephone, while the new survey was conducted mainly online or on paper. [Previous research](#) shows that these different ways (or "modes") of conducting surveys produce significantly different results on the question "How often do you attend religious services?" This makes it hard to determine, over the long term, how much religious attendance has changed.

However, the Center's telephone surveys were showing a decline in religious attendance in the years before we switched to online/paper surveys. The share of Americans who reported attending religious services at least monthly dropped from 54% in 2007 to 50% in the 2014 Religious Landscape Study and had fallen to 45% by [2018-19](#) (which is when the Center last regularly conducted telephone surveys that asked about religious attendance).

**But the *short-term* trend line for the share of Americans who attend religious services at least monthly is pretty flat.** In Pew Research Center's 2020 NPORS, 33% of U.S. adults reported attending religious services at least once or twice a month. That's identical to what we found in the 2023-24 RLS and very similar to the 32% measured in the 2024 NPORS.

## Short-term trend in share of U.S. adults who say they attend religious services at least monthly

*% who say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month*

	2020 NPORS	2021 NPORS	2022 NPORS	2023 NPORS	2023-24 RLS	2024 NPORS
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	33%	31%	30%	32%	33%	32%
Among those born in ...						
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	47	44	48	44	49	43
1950s (now ages 64-74)	40	35	32	34	38	38
1960s (now ages 54-64)	35	30	34	36	34	31
1970s (now ages 44-54)	29	35	27	34	34	31
1980s (now ages 34-44)	25	26	23	31	28	32
1990s (now ages 24-34)	26	24	28	22	24	24
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	--	--	--	21	25	27

Note: The 2023-24 survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The 2020-22 surveys did not include enough respondents born in 2000 or later to include their results in this analysis.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024, and Pew Research Center's annual National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS).

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## How religious beliefs change as people age

When asked to describe how their own religiousness has changed over their lifetimes, the most common response people give is that there has been no clear change in either direction – up or down – over the course of their lives (44% of U.S. adults say this). This includes people who say they have sometimes grown more religious and other times less religious; people who say their level of religiousness has not changed very much; and people who don't answer the question. This is the most common kind of response among respondents in every age category.

Among people who say their religiousness *has* changed over the course of their lives, about equal shares say they have become less religious (29%) and more religious (28%).

The new RLS also finds that more *young* adults say their religiousness has *decreased* than say it has increased. By contrast, *older* U.S. adults are more likely to say their religiousness has *increased* than that it has decreased.<sup>21</sup>

However, on the questions in the new survey that *can* be directly compared with the previous studies, **there is no evidence that people in older birth cohorts have grown more religious between 2007 and today.**

In the three Religious Landscape Studies conducted over the past 17 years, there are no birth cohorts – neither the oldest Americans, nor the youngest, nor any cohort in between – that have

### More young U.S. adults say their religiousness has decreased than say it has increased

*% who say over the course of their lifetimes, they have generally become \_\_\_ religious*

		More	Less	No clear change
<b>All U.S. adults</b>		<b>28%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>44%</b>
BIRTH COHORT	AGE TODAY			
1940s or earlier	74+	36	19	44
1950s	64-74	35	21	44
1960s	54-64	32	24	44
1970s	44-54	29	28	43
1980s	34-44	23	35	41
1990s	24-34	20	37	43
2000-06	18-24	20	33	47

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024)

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>21</sup> Of course, young adults and older Americans may have very different reference points when asked this question about the course of their lives. Young adults have only their childhood and young adulthood as points of comparison, whereas older adults have a much longer time horizon.

grown more prayerful, more certain in their belief in God, more likely to believe in an afterlife (heaven, hell or both), or more likely to identify with a religion, including Christianity.

This may seem at odds with the retrospective answers that survey respondents give to questions about how their own religiousness and spirituality have changed. [As previously noted](#), about four times as many U.S. adults say they have become *more* spiritual (43%) as say they have become *less* spiritual (11%) over their lifetimes, while nearly equal shares say they have become *more* religious (28%) and *less* religious (29%).

But substantial numbers of Americans say they haven't really changed spiritually (46%) or religiously (44%).

And the answers people give to these questions may be shaped

by many factors, such as how desirable they feel it is to be spiritual and/or religious, and how they understand the meaning of those terms.

Another limitation in understanding how religiousness tends to change as people age is that Pew Research Center's data on many questions about religion goes back no further than the first Religious Landscape Study in 2007. That 17-year span may not be long enough to capture all the change that has occurred in older birth cohorts. For a longer perspective, we turned to the General Social Survey (GSS), a national survey that has been conducted every year or two since 1972.

The GSS shows that people *do* tend to become more prayerful as they get older. For example, when people born in the 1960s were just entering adulthood in the early 1980s, 36% said in the GSS that they prayed on a daily basis. By the late 2010s, when people in this birth cohort were in their late

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### Between 2007 and 2023-24, there is no evidence in Religious Landscape Studies that Americans are becoming more religious as they get older

% who say they ...

	Believe in God/ universal spirit with absolute certainty			Believe in an afterlife (heaven, hell or both)		
	2007	2014	2023- 24	2007	2014	2023- 24
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	71%	63%	54%	77%	75%	70%
Among those born in ...						
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	76	70	64	77	77	74
1950s (now ages 64-74)	73	69	64	77	77	74
1960s (now ages 54-64)	73	68	63	79	79	76
1970s (now ages 44-54)	68	62	58	77	74	71
1980s (now ages 34-44)	63	54	48	77	70	66
1990s (now ages 24-34)	--	50	42	--	70	62
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	--	--	38	--	--	67

Note: The 2023-24 survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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40s and 50s, 64% said they prayed daily. The GSS also reports that people born in the 1950s and 1970s exhibited similar long-term increases in rates of daily prayer.

But the GSS suggests that people do not become more likely to identify with a religion as they get older. There is also little evidence in the GSS that as Americans get older, they tend to become more likely to believe in God or to attend religious services regularly.

For more analysis of GSS data on how the religiousness of people in different birth cohorts has changed or stayed the same over time, refer to [Appendix C](#).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For more on religious change over the course of adulthood, refer to Bengtson, Vern L., et al. 2015. "[Does Religiousness Increase with Age? Age Changes and Generational Differences Over 35 Years](#)." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. Also refer to Silverstein, Merrill, and Vern L. Bengtson. 2017. "[Return to Religion? Predictors of Religious Change among Baby-Boomers in their Transition to Later Life](#)." *Journal of Population Ageing*. Also refer to Bleidorn, Wiebke, et al. 2022. "[Secularization Trends Obscure Developmental Changes in Religiosity](#)." *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

## What is happening to the ‘middle’ of American religion

As the Christian share of the U.S. adult population has declined in recent decades and the public has come to look less religious on a variety of measures, the question arises whether these changes are evidence of religious decline across the board or, instead, a hollowing out of the “religious middle.”

That is, are religious beliefs and practices declining all across the religious spectrum? Or is there a decline only in the share of the population with medium levels of religiousness, accompanied by stability or even growth at both ends of the spectrum of religiousness – resulting in more highly secular people, more highly religious people, and fewer people who are just moderately religious?

**The new RLS indicates that the long-term changes in American religion are broad-based and *not* a hollowing out of the religious middle.**

Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate this is by looking at trends in prayer frequency over time. This is the new study’s best indicator of religiousness that can safely and directly be compared with previous RLS results.<sup>23</sup> The share of Americans who say they pray daily is clearly down. And the share of Americans who say they seldom or never pray is clearly up. Meanwhile, the share of Americans who say they occasionally pray (on a weekly or monthly basis) is relatively stable. There is no indication of a hollowing out of the “religious middle” on this key indicator.

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<sup>23</sup> The switch from telephone interviewing in the earlier landscape studies to mostly online/paper administration of the new RLS means that other key questions, such as frequency of religious attendance and the importance of religion, are not directly comparable across the different studies. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for details.

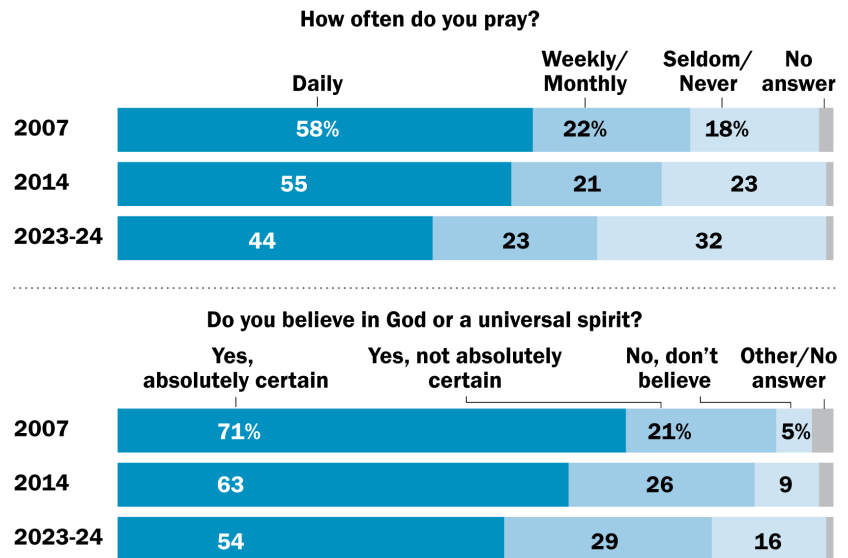


The survey finds a similar pattern in questions about belief in God. The share of Americans who say they believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty has clearly declined, while nonbelief is trending upward. And the share of Americans occupying the middle ground on this question – saying they believe in God but with less than absolute certainty – shows no signs of hollowing out, but rather is rising. The share of adults in the new survey who believe in God but with less than absolute certainty is higher than it has ever been in an RLS survey.<sup>24</sup>

Another way to assess the evidence for a hollowing out of the religious middle is to look at differences across age groups within the new survey. This allows us to examine additional indicators of religiousness, because looking just at the results of the *new* survey sidesteps the difficulties posed by the change of survey

## The U.S. has seen growth at the low end of the religiousness spectrum and a decline at the high end

Based on U.S. adults



Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study was conducted mainly online and on paper, whereas the previous landscape studies were conducted by telephone. This “mode switch” complicates comparisons between results from the new survey and the previous studies. However, our analysis finds that the new survey’s question about prayer frequency can be safely compared with the prior studies, and the questions about belief in God can be cautiously compared with the previous results. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>24</sup> The 2023-24 RLS was conducted mainly online and on paper, whereas the previous landscape studies were conducted by telephone. This “mode switch” complicates comparisons between results from the new survey and the previous studies. However, our analysis finds that the new survey’s question about prayer frequency can be safely compared with the prior studies. The questions about belief in God can be cautiously compared with the previous results. Analysis of a companion “bridge study” we conducted by telephone (for testing purposes only) finds that the share who say they believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty is similar in the main survey and in the bridge study, as is the share who say they believe in God or a universal spirit but are not absolutely certain. These categories can be safely compared with the 2007 and 2014 results. However, the share who say they do *not* believe in God/a universal spirit is higher in the main survey than the bridge study (by 4 percentage points), while the share expressing no opinion is slightly lower in the main survey than in the bridge study. Both the main survey and the bridge study find that absolutely certain belief in God or a universal spirit is trending downward. Both the main survey and the bridge study also suggest that the share of people who do not believe in God or a universal spirit is trending upward, though it is difficult to say by exactly how much; some of the apparent increase in nonbelief suggested by the main survey may be attributable to the switch in survey modes. Neither the main survey nor the bridge study suggests that the middle category – those who believe in God or a universal spirit, but not with absolute certainty – is shrinking. For additional details, refer to [Appendix A](#).

modes between the previous two Religious Landscape Studies (conducted by telephone) and the new one (conducted mainly online and on paper).

For this analysis, we used four key questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance, and religious service attendance. Responses to each question were assigned numbers from 0 (low) to 2 (high) as follows:

- **Prayer frequency:** Coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else.
- **Belief in God or a universal spirit:** Coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else.
- **Religion's importance:** Coded as 0 for those who say religion is not too important or not at all important in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is very important in their lives, and 1 for everyone else.
- **Religious attendance:** Coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else.

We then added these indicators together to form a scale ranging from 0 (for people who scored 0 on all four measures) to 8 (for respondents who scored 2 on all four measures).<sup>25</sup> And we subdivided the scale roughly into quartiles, as follows:

- **Low religiousness:** Scores of 0 to 1
- **Medium-low religiousness:** Scores of 2 to 4
- **Medium-high religiousness:** Scores of 5 to 6
- **High religiousness:** Scores of 7 to 8

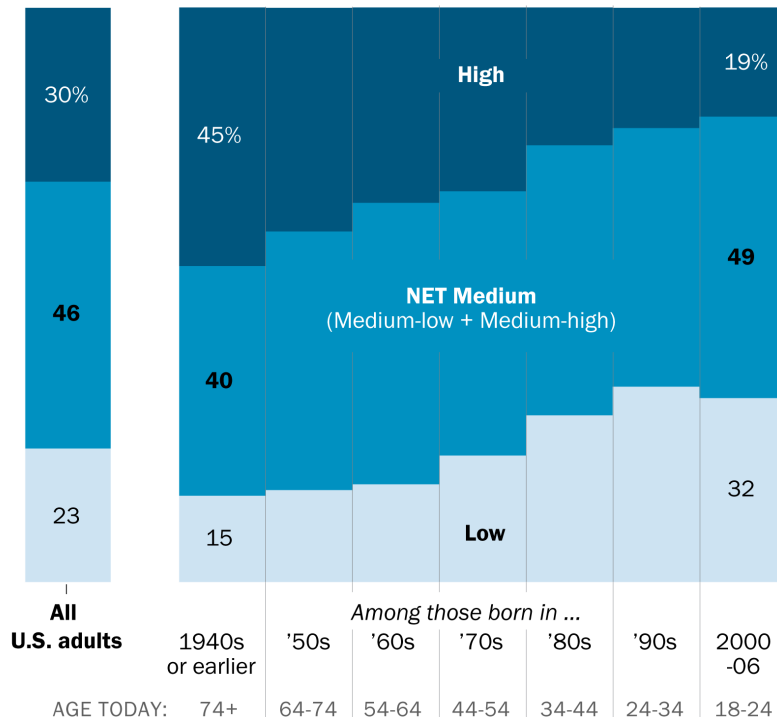
Here again, there is no evidence that religious changes underway in America reflect a shrinking of the “religious middle.” The religious middle is not smaller among the younger cohorts than among the older cohorts, which is what one might expect if a hollowing out of the religious middle were occurring.

Rather, compared with older adults, younger Americans include far more people at the

low end of the religiousness spectrum and far fewer people at the high end. The size of the middle

## Young adults are less religious than older adults; ‘religious middle’ makes up between 45% and 49% of most age categories

Summary scale of religiousness among U.S. adults



Note: The survey asked respondents, “In what year were you born?” Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent’s year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). The scale of religiousness is based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God/a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion’s importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is “not too important” or “not at all important” in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is “very important” in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile). Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>25</sup> Cronbach’s Alpha=.865.

categories of religiousness is in the same ballpark across most age groups. This is exactly the pattern that would be expected if broad-based religious decline (which some social scientists call a process of secularization) were underway.

## Trends in the religiousness of Christians

We have already seen that over the long term (since 2007), the Religious Landscape Studies show a substantial rise in the percentage of U.S. adults who are religiously unaffiliated (sometimes called “nones”) and a substantial decline in the percentage who describe themselves as Christians – including declines in [all three major Protestant traditions](#) (evangelical, mainline and historically Black Protestant churches).

This raises the question: **As the Christian share of the population has shrunk, have Christians become more religious, on average?** One might expect that as some Americans leave Christianity and join the ranks of the unaffiliated, those who stay behind and remain Christian would become a smaller but more committed group, with rising average levels of religious belief and practice. Has this happened?

The new RLS offers a mixed answer, with a couple of indicators of religiousness holding steady or rising slightly among U.S. Christians, while two other indicators clearly have declined.

The four questions in the 2023-24 RLS about religious practice and belief that can most readily be compared with the prior studies ask about prayer frequency, belief in God or a universal spirit, belief in heaven and, separately, belief in hell.<sup>26</sup>

The new survey shows that among Christians, belief in heaven and hell is on par with or slightly higher than in 2007. Belief in heaven now stands at 85% among Christians, compared with 83% in 2007. Meanwhile, 72% of Christians now say they believe in hell, up slightly from 68% in 2007.

But there is no indication that Christians are any more prayerful today than they were in 2007. Indeed, the share of Christians who say they pray every day is markedly lower now (44%) than it was in 2007 (58%).

The share of Christians who say they believe in God with absolute certainty also is lower today than it was in 2007. In the new survey, 73% of Christians say they are absolutely certain God or a universal spirit exists, down from 80% in 2007.

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<sup>26</sup> The 2023-24 RLS was conducted mainly online and on paper, whereas the previous landscape studies were conducted by telephone. This “mode switch” complicates comparisons between results from the new survey and the previous studies. However, our analysis finds that these estimates from 2023-24 can be safely compared with the prior studies. For additional details, refer to [Appendix A](#).

## Among U.S. Christians, belief in heaven and hell has been steady or rising, while rates of daily prayer and absolutely certain belief in God have been declining

*% who say they ...*

	Pray daily			Believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty			Believe in heaven			Believe in hell		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All Christians</b>	58%	55%	44%	80%	76%	73%	83%	85%	85%	68%	70%	72%
Protestant	69	71	64	84	81	78	84	86	84	73	75	76
Evangelical	78	79	72	90	88	85	86	88	84	82	82	82
Mainline	53	54	45	73	66	61	77	80	82	56	60	59
Historically Black	80	80	72	90	89	83	91	93	92	82	82	81
Catholic	58	59	51	72	64	62	82	85	86	60	63	69
Orthodox Christian	60	57	53	71	61	54	74	81	71	56	59	60
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	82	85	73	90	86	76	95	95	92	59	62	54

Note: The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study was conducted mainly online and on paper, whereas the previous landscape studies were conducted by telephone. This “mode switch” makes it complicated to compare results from the new survey with the previous studies.

However, our analysis finds that the estimates shown here can be safely compared over time. For additional details, refer to Appendix A.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religion and political polarization

The U.S. is [politically polarized](#), and religion is closely associated with the country's political divisions. But the new Religious Landscape Study – which was conducted mostly in 2023 and the early part of 2024, *before* the 2024 presidential election – also finds that the connections between religion and political partisanship vary a lot by race and ethnicity, as described below.

In general, highly religious Americans tend to identify with or lean toward the Republican Party and express conservative views on a variety of social, political and economic questions at much higher rates than do the least religious Americans. Meanwhile, Americans with lower levels of religious engagement tend to identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party and express liberal views on the same gamut of social, political and economic issues.<sup>27</sup>

For example, a majority of people in the most highly religious quartile of the U.S. adult population (61%) say they identify with or lean toward the Republican Party. By contrast, in the least religious quartile of the population, just 27% say they identify with or lean toward the GOP.<sup>28</sup>

Highly religious U.S. adults also are far more likely than the least religious U.S. adults to say that abortion should be illegal, that homosexuality should be discouraged, and that children are better off if their mother doesn't work and stays home to raise them instead.

There also are religious differences on questions that aren't directly about sexuality or gender roles. Highly religious people are more inclined than the least religious people to say that environmental regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy, as well as to say that too much openness to people from other countries is a threat to America's identity.

None of the foregoing discussion is meant to suggest that religiousness (or lack thereof) is the primary factor driving Americans' political opinions. Numerous other factors can help shape

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<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of political differences between Americans who are affirmatively secular and those who are instead simply nonreligious, refer to Campbell, David E., Geoffrey C. Layman and John C. Green. 2020. "[Secular Surge: A New Fault Line in American Politics](#)."

<sup>28</sup> The scale of religiousness is based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance, and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God/a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion's importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is "not too important" or "not at all important" in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is "very important" in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

political views, including age, gender, education, geography and socioeconomic status. And political partisanship is itself an important factor in people’s views about a host of issues.<sup>29</sup>

## The most highly religious Americans also are the most Republican, conservative

*% of U.S. adults who say the following, by religiousness*

	Low religiousness	Medium-low	Medium-high	High	Gap (highest - lowest)
They identify with or lean toward the Republican Party	27%	43%	50%	61%	34 pct. pts.
Abortion should be illegal in most/all cases	9	23	39	63	54
Homosexuality should be discouraged by society	9	20	33	54	45
Environmental regulations cost too many jobs, hurt economy	22	37	43	48	26
Children are better off if the mother stays home to raise them	10	18	23	34	24
America risks losing national identity if too open to outsiders	17	28	35	37	20

Note: Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Moreover, the new RLS shows that the links between religion and politics vary quite a bit across racial and ethnic categories. The political differences between Americans with different levels of religiousness are especially large among White respondents. For example, compared with the least religious White Americans, the most highly religious White Americans are:

- 64 percentage points more likely to say abortion should be against the law in most or all cases (72% vs. 8%)
- 53 points more likely to say homosexuality should be discouraged by society (61% vs. 8%)
- 49 points more likely to identify with or lean toward the Republican Party (77% vs. 28%)
- 35 points more likely to say environmental regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy (56% vs. 21%)

In other racial and ethnic groups, there also is a relationship between religiousness and political views, with more highly religious people generally expressing more conservative views. However,

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of demographics and political polarization, refer to Pew Research Center’s report “[Changing Partisan Coalitions in a Politically Divided Nation](#).” For a discussion of how people in the two major party coalitions see each other, refer to the Center’s report “[As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration With the Two-Party System](#).” For a discussion of issue attitudes, political values and polarization, refer to the Center’s report “[The Political Values of Harris and Trump Supporters](#).”



the differences in political views between people with different levels of religiousness tend to be smaller in other racial and ethnic groups, and they are not seen on every issue.

For example, Black respondents who are highly religious are *not* more likely than the least religious Black respondents to identify with or lean toward the Republican Party; if anything, *highly religious* Black adults are somewhat *less Republican* than Black adults with the lowest levels of religious engagement.

Highly religious Hispanic respondents are, on average, more likely than the least religious Hispanics surveyed to identify with the Republican Party. But the gap in Republicanism among highly religious Hispanic adults and Hispanic adults in the lowest religiousness category is 22 points, much smaller than the 49-point gap among White adults.

## Especially among White Americans, more religious people tend to take more conservative positions

	By religiousness				Gap (highest - lowest)
	Low	Medium- low	Medium- high	High	
Among <b>White respondents</b> , % who say ...					
They identify with or lean toward the Republican Party	28%	49%	65%	77%	49 pct. pts.
Abortion should be illegal in most/all cases	8	23	43	72	64
Homosexuality should be discouraged by society	8	19	34	61	53
Environmental regulations cost too many jobs, hurt economy	21	36	47	56	35
Children are better off if the mother stays home to raise them	9	16	22	36	27
America risks losing national identity if too open to outsiders	18	33	42	45	27
Among <b>Black respondents</b> , % who say ...					
They identify with or lean toward the Republican Party	22*	24	20	14	-8
Abortion should be illegal in most/all cases	10*	21	24	31	21
Homosexuality should be discouraged by society	13*	25	28	42	29
Environmental regulations cost too many jobs, hurt economy	25*	36	38	32	7
Children are better off if the mother stays home to raise them	10*	18	20	19	9
America risks losing national identity if too open to outsiders	13*	26	24	20	7
Among <b>Hispanic respondents</b> , % who say ...					
They identify with or lean toward the Republican Party	26	36	39	48	22
Abortion should be illegal in most/all cases	11	25	42	63	52
Homosexuality should be discouraged by society	7	18	30	45	38
Environmental regulations cost too many jobs, hurt economy	28	38	38	37	9
Children are better off if the mother stays home to raise them	13	25	27	43	30
America risks losing national identity if too open to outsiders	15	20	30	28	13
Among <b>Asian respondents</b> , % who say ...					
They identify with or lean toward the Republican Party	27	37	34	53	26
Abortion should be illegal in most/all cases	8	19	29	55	47
Homosexuality should be discouraged by society	12	20	37	42	30
Environmental regulations cost too many jobs, hurt economy	20	30	30	35	15
Children are better off if the mother stays home to raise them	11	19	24	32	21
America risks losing national identity if too open to outsiders	12	15	19	26	14

\* The survey included 185 interviews with Black adults with low levels of religiousness, with an effective sample size of 95 and a margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

Note: White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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# **I. Religious affiliation and religious switching**

## 1. Religious identity

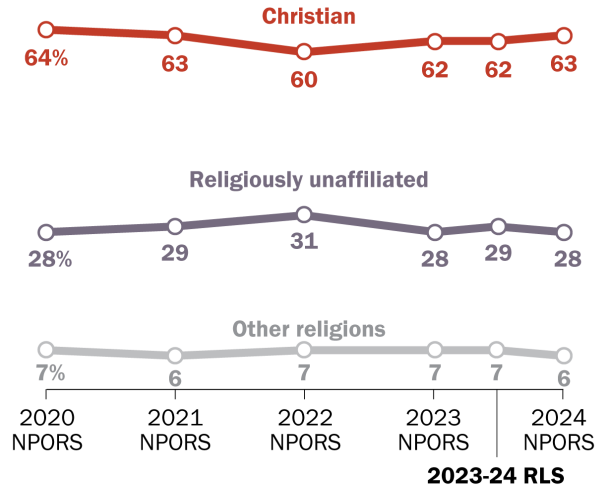
The religious composition of the United States has been fairly stable in half a dozen Pew Research Center surveys conducted since 2020. The Christian share of the adult population has been between 60% and 64% in these surveys, while the religiously unaffiliated share has ranged from 28% to 31%. Adherents of religions other than Christianity have consistently accounted for 6% or 7% of U.S. adults throughout this period.

Over the longer term, however, Christians have been declining as a percentage of the U.S. adult population, while the share that is religiously unaffiliated has been rising.

(For an extended discussion of what explains the short-term stability in American religion amid a longer-term decline, refer to this report's [Overview](#).)

### Stability in religious identity since 2020

% of U.S. adults who identify as ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. "NPORS" refers to Pew Research Center's National Public Opinion Reference Survey, which has been conducted annually since 2020. "RLS" stands for Religious Landscape Study.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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This chapter draws on the 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 Religious Landscape Studies to summarize the long-term trends in Americans' religious identities.

The data shows that the Christian share of the population has declined across many demographic groups. Compared with 2007, the percentage of people who describe themselves as Christians is lower among men and women; college graduates and those with less education; all racial and ethnic groups large enough to analyze; all age groups; and all geographic sectors of the country.

The picture is reversed for the religiously unaffiliated – a group sometimes referred to as religious “nones.” The “nones” are made up of U.S. adults who describe themselves as atheists, agnostics or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion. The ranks of “nones” have *grown* among men and women, married and unmarried people; college graduates and people with less education; all large racial and ethnic groups; all age groups; and in all regions of the country.

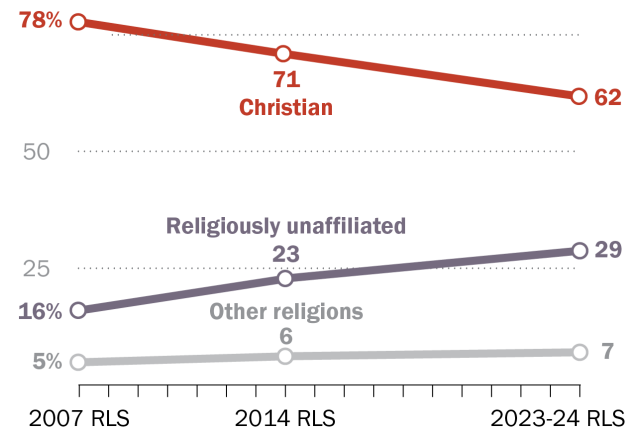
### This chapter includes sections on:

- [Trends within Christianity](#)
- [A detailed look at the size of Protestant denominations](#)
- [Trends among religiously unaffiliated Americans](#)
- [Trends among religions other than Christianity](#)

The chapter concludes with a set of [detailed tables](#) on the religious composition of key demographic groups.

## Long-term decline of Christians, rise of religiously unaffiliated Americans

% of U.S. adults who identify as ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. “RLS” stands for Religious Landscape Study.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Trends within Christianity

In the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS), 62% of respondents identify as Christian, which is lower than the Christian shares measured in the 2007 (78%) and 2014 (71%) studies.

The Protestant share of the population declined from 51% in 2007 to 40% in 2023-24.

The Catholic share of the population, meanwhile, ticked down from 24% in 2007 to 21% in 2014. Since then, it has ranged between 18% and 21% [in Center surveys](#), and it stands at 19% in the 2023-24 RLS.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) have accounted for 2% of respondents in all three religious landscape surveys. Orthodox Christians account for 1% of the population in the latest RLS.

Fewer than 1% of respondents in the new survey identify as Jehovah's Witnesses, and 1% identify either with more than one Christian group (e.g., people who say they identify as both Protestant and Catholic) or with a variety of other, smaller Christian groups (including Messianic Jews, Christian Scientists, or offshoots of Catholicism that are not in communion with Rome).

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### Christians have declined as a share of the U.S. adult population

*% of U.S. adults who identify as ...*

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All Christians</b>	78%	71%	62%
Protestant	51	47	40
Catholic	24	21	19
Orthodox Christian	1	<1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	2
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	<1
Other Christian	<1	<1	1

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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**Christian shares across social and demographic groups**

In all three of our landscape studies, younger Americans, men, unmarried people and college graduates have identified as Christians at lower rates than, respectively, older adults, women, married people and adults with less than a college degree.

But one thing all these demographic groups have in common is a long-term decline in the share who identify as Christians. For example, although women have identified as Christians at higher levels than men in all three landscape surveys, the share of women saying they are Christian has dropped from 82% in the first RLS (2007) to 66% in the most recent one (2023-24).

In addition, people of every racial and ethnic background that we measure are less likely to say they are Christian now than they were in 2007, as are people in every major region of the U.S.

## Shrinking share of Christians across many social and demographic groups in the United States

% of U.S. adults who are *Christian*, by demographic group

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	78%	71%	62%
Birth cohort			
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	86	83	80
1950s (now ages 64-74)	80	78	75
1960s (now ages 54-64)	80	77	73
1970s (now ages 44-54)	75	68	63
1980s (now ages 34-44)	68	58	53
1990s (now ages 24-34)		56	46
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)			46
Race and ethnicity			
White	78	70	62
Black	85	79	73
Hispanic	84	77	67
Asian	45	34	33
Education			
College graduate	73	64	58
Less than college	81	73	64
Gender			
Men	74	66	59
Women	82	75	66
Marital status			
Married	81	76	68
Not married	75	66	56
Geographic region			
Northeast	76	65	58
Midwest	80	73	64
South	83	76	68
West	71	64	55

Note: White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. The 2023-24 survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). Adults born in the 1990s were under 18 in 2007, making them ineligible for the 2007 Religious Landscape Study. Adults born in 2000 or later were under 18 in 2014, making them ineligible for both the 2007 and 2014 surveys.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## A detailed look at the size of Protestant denominations

One feature of the RLS is that it includes detailed, branching questions to gather information about specific types of Protestants.

The RLS seeks to learn not just whether someone is Protestant, but also what *family of denominations* (Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, etc.) they may belong to.

In addition, the RLS goes a step further, seeking to learn which *specific denomination* within a Protestant family the respondent identifies with, if any. We ask Baptists, for instance, whether they identify with the Southern Baptist Convention; the American Baptist Churches USA; the National Baptist Convention, USA; or another Baptist church. We ask Methodists whether they identify with the United Methodist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Global Methodist Church, or another kind of church.<sup>30</sup>

We take this information about which specific denomination respondents identify with and then we categorize Protestants into one of three *major Protestant traditions* – the evangelical tradition, the mainline tradition or the historically Black Protestant tradition. These divisions within Protestantism are important, because each has a distinctive combination of beliefs, practices and histories.<sup>31</sup>

Still, some respondents don't identify with any specific denomination. For example, some describe themselves as “just Baptist,” “just Lutheran” or “just Christian” without providing additional details. In these cases, we use a question that asks respondents whether they think of themselves as “born-again or evangelical” Christians, along with information about their race and ethnicity, to help classify them into one of the three major Protestant traditions. (Refer to [Appendix B](#) for complete details about how Protestants are sorted into the evangelical, mainline and historically Black traditions.)

All three of these Protestant traditions have declined, at least a little, as shares of the U.S. adult population since the first RLS was conducted in 2007. The mainline Protestant category has exhibited the sharpest drop, declining from 18% of U.S. adults in 2007 to 11% in 2023-24. Evangelicalism remains the largest tradition within Protestantism, but the evangelical share of the

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<sup>30</sup> The denominations mentioned in this paragraph do not represent all the denominations asked about in the survey. For the full question wording, refer to [the questionnaire](#).

<sup>31</sup> For example, churches in the evangelical tradition tend to share the conviction that personal acceptance of Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation; emphasize bringing other people to the faith; and originated in separatist movements against established religious institutions. Churches in the mainline tradition, by comparison, tend to have a less exclusive view of salvation and place an emphasis on social reform. Churches in the historically Black Protestant tradition have been shaped uniquely by the experiences of slavery and segregation, which put their religious beliefs and practices in a special context.

adult population also has ticked down, going from 26% in 2007, to 25% in 2014, to 23% in 2023-24. Respondents in the historically Black Protestant tradition accounted for 7% of respondents in 2007 and 5% in 2023-24 (after rounding to the closest whole number).

Because of the steepness of the decline in mainline Protestantism, evangelicals have *risen* as a share of all *Protestants* (even as evangelicals have fallen as a percentage of the overall adult population).

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## Mainline Protestants have declined as a share of both the overall public and of all Protestants

*% who are part of the \_\_\_ tradition*

	Among all U.S. adults			Among Protestants		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
Evangelical Protestant	26.3%	25.4%	23.1%	51%	55%	58%
Mainline Protestant	18.1	14.7	11.5	35	32	29
Historically Black Protestant	<u>6.9</u>	<u>6.5</u>	<u>5.4</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>
<b>NET Protestant</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest whole number. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceedingly large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to illustrate trends over time.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Largest Protestant denominational families

Baptists have been the single largest family of U.S. Protestant denominations in all three religious landscape surveys. They make up 12% of U.S. adults as of 2023-24.

Nondenominational Protestants, the second-largest family of Protestant denominations, now account for 7% of the adult population. This is the only Protestant family of denominations that is *larger as a share of the U.S. population* in the new survey than it was in the first RLS.<sup>32</sup>

## Among Protestants, share who are nondenominational has doubled since 2007

% who are ...

	Among all U.S. adults			Among Protestants		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
Baptist	17.2%	15.4%	12.0%	33%	33%	30%
Nondenominational Protestant*	4.5	6.2	7.1	9	13	18
Pentecostal	4.4	4.6	3.9	9	10	10
Methodist	6.2	4.6	3.5	12	10	9
Lutheran	4.6	3.5	2.9	9	8	7
Presbyterian	2.7	2.2	1.7	5	5	4
Restorationist	2.1	1.9	1.3	4	4	3
Episcopalian/Anglican	1.5	1.3	1.1	3	3	3
Holiness	1.2	0.8	0.6	2	2	2
Congregational	0.8	0.6	0.5	1	1	1
Reformed	0.3	<0.3	0.3	1	<1	1
Adventist	0.5	0.6	0.3	1	1	1
Anabaptist	<0.3	0.3	<0.3	<1	1	1
Pietist	<0.3	<0.3	<0.3	<1	<1	<1
Friends	<0.3	<0.3	<0.3	<1	<1	<1
Other evangelical/Fundamentalist	0.3	0.3	<0.3	1	1	<1
Nonspecific Protestant	<u>4.9</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>
<b>NET Protestant</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

\* The "Nondenominational Protestant" category includes only respondents who identified explicitly as "nondenominational Protestants" or "nondenominational Christians." Respondents who identified as "just Christian" or "just Protestant" are in the "Nonspecific Protestant" row. Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest whole number. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceedingly large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to illustrate trends over time.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>32</sup> In the Religious Landscape Studies, respondents are *only* categorized as nondenominational Protestants if they identify themselves *explicitly* as a "nondenominational Protestant" or a "nondenominational Christian." The "Nondenominational Protestant" category does *not* include respondents who identify themselves as "just Christian" or "just a Protestant," nor does it include people who identify with Protestantism but not with any particular denomination; these latter types of responses are included in the "Nonspecific Protestant" category.

Most other denominational families have seen either a slight decline or relative stability in their share of the U.S. adult population since 2007.

In the new survey, 4% of respondents identify with the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest evangelical denomination in our categorization. And 3% of U.S. adults identify with the United Methodist Church, making it the largest mainline denomination in the new survey. Overall, 1% of respondents in the new survey say they identify with the National Baptist Convention, USA, and 1% affiliate with the Church of God in Christ – two of the largest denominations in the historically Black Protestant tradition.

## Largest Protestant denominations in the United States

*% who identify with each of the following Protestant denominations*

	Among all U.S. adults			Among Protestants		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
Southern Baptist Convention (evangelical tradition)	6.7%	5.3%	4.4%	13%	11%	11%
United Methodist Church (mainline)	5.1	3.6	2.7	10	8	7
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) (mainline)	2.0	1.4	1.4	4	3	3
Church of Christ (evangelical)	1.5	1.5	1.1	3	3	3
Assemblies of God (evangelical)	1.4	1.4	1.1	3	3	3
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (evangelical)	1.4	1.1	1.1	3	2	3
National Baptist Convention, USA (historically Black Prot.)*	–	–	1.0	–	–	2
American Baptist Churches USA (mainline)	1.2	1.5	1.0	2	3	3
Episcopal Church (mainline)	1.0	0.9	0.9	2	2	2
Presbyterian Church (USA) (mainline)	1.1	0.9	0.8	2	2	2
Church of God in Christ (historically Black Prot.)	0.6	0.6	0.7	1	1	2
Presbyterian Church in America (evangelical)	0.4	0.4	0.5	1	1	1
National Baptist Convention of America (historically Black Prot.)*	–	–	0.4	–	–	1
United Church of Christ (mainline)	0.5	0.4	0.4	1	1	1
Church of God (Cleveland, TN) (evangelical)	0.4	0.4	0.4	1	1	1
Seventh-day Adventist (evangelical)	0.4	0.5	0.3	1	1	1

\* The 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies did not differentiate between the National Baptist Convention, USA, and the National Baptist Convention of America. We corrected this in the 2023-24 survey.

Note: Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest whole number. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceedingly large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to illustrate trends over time.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Trends among religiously unaffiliated Americans

About three-in-ten Americans (29%) are religiously unaffiliated, according to the 2023-24 RLS. This includes 5% who identify as atheist, 6% who say they are agnostic, and 19% who describe their religion as “nothing in particular.”

The share of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated – also known as religious “nones” – is markedly higher in the 2023-24 RLS than it was in 2007 (16%) and 2014 (23%). In the last several years, however, the growth of the “nones” seems to have slowed. (Refer to the [Overview](#) of this report for additional discussion of the short-term stability in the religiously unaffiliated population.)

While the percentage of “nones” varies across social and demographic groups, the direction of the trend from 2007 to 2023-24 is the same across the board: It is up, at least marginally, in every category.

Among Americans born in the 1980s, for example, 26% were religiously unaffiliated in 2007. In 2023-24, that share stands at 37%. The percentage of “nones” also has grown among both men and women; among married and unmarried people; within all major racial and ethnic categories; and in all regions of the country.

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### 19% of U.S. adults now say their religion is ‘nothing in particular’

*% of U.S. adults who identify as ...*

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	16%	23%	29%
Atheist	2	3	5
Agnostic	2	4	6
Nothing in particular	12	16	19

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 'Nones' have risen as a share of all major demographic groups since 2007

% of U.S. adults who are *religiously unaffiliated*, by demographic group

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	16%	23%	29%
Birth cohort			
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	10	12	13
1950s (now ages 64-74)	14	17	17
1960s (now ages 54-64)	15	18	21
1970s (now ages 44-54)	20	25	29
1980s (now ages 34-44)	26	34	37
1990s (now ages 24-34)		36	44
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)			43
Race and ethnicity			
White	16	24	31
Black	12	18	22
Hispanic	14	20	27
Asian	23	31	33
Education			
College graduate	17	24	31
Less than college	16	22	29
Gender			
Men	20	27	31
Women	13	19	27
Marital status			
Married	14	18	24
Not married	19	28	35
Geographic region			
Northeast	16	25	30
Midwest	16	22	30
South	13	19	25
West	21	28	35

Note: White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. The 2023-24 survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024). Adults born in the 1990s were under 18 in 2007, making them ineligible for the 2007 Religious Landscape Study. Adults born in 2000 or later were under 18 in 2014, making them ineligible for both the 2007 and 2014 surveys.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Trends among religions other than Christianity

The share of Americans who identify with religions other than Christianity has increased – albeit from a small base – from 4.7% of U.S. adults in the 2007 RLS to 7.1% in the 2023-24 RLS.<sup>33</sup>

In the new survey, 1.7% of respondents identify as Jewish when asked about their religion, while 1.2% identify as Muslim, 1.1% as Buddhist, and 0.9% as Hindu. The new survey finds that less than 0.3% identify with other world religions (such as Sikhism, Daoism, Bahaism and Zoroastrianism) and 1.9% identify with something else, religiously speaking (such as Unitarian Universalism, Pantheism, Wicca, etc.).

### Share of U.S. adults who identify as Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or with another non-Christian religion now stands at 7.1%

*% of U.S. adults who are ...*

	2007	2014	2023-24
Jewish	1.7%	1.9%	1.7%
Muslim	0.4	0.9	1.2
Buddhist	0.7	0.7	1.1
Hindu	0.4	0.7	0.9
Other world religions	<0.3	0.3	0.3
Something else	<u>1.2</u>	<u>1.5</u>	<u>1.9</u>
<b>NET Identify with a religion other than Christianity</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>7.1</b>

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest whole number. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceedingly large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to illustrate trends over time.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>33</sup> Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest whole number. However, the Religious Landscape Study (RLS) is an exceedingly large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to illustrate trends over time.

Immigrants in the United States are more likely than adults who were born in the U.S. to identify with a non-Christian religion. Among immigrants, 14% identify with a religion other than Christianity, compared with 6% of respondents born in the U.S.

## Immigrants are more likely than U.S.-born adults to belong to non-Christian religions

*% of U.S. adults who are ...*

	Among those born in the U.S.	Among those born outside the U.S.
Jewish	2%	1%
Muslim	1	4
Buddhist	1	3
Hindu	<1	4
Other world religions	<1	1
Something else	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<b>NET Identify with a religion other than Christianity</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>

Note: Figures may not add to totals indicated due to rounding. For the purposes of this analysis, people born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories are included among those born outside the U.S. Although individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth, they are included with the "Among those born outside the U.S." category here because they are born into a Spanish-dominant culture and because, on many points, their attitudes, views and beliefs are much closer to those of Hispanics born outside the U.S. than to Hispanics born in the 50 U.S. states or District of Columbia, even those who identify themselves as being of Puerto Rican origin.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Detailed tables

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**Religious affiliation of U.S. adults**

*% of U.S. adults who are ...*

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
<b>Christian</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>62%</b>
Protestant	51	47	40
<i>Evangelical</i>	26	25	23
<i>Mainline</i>	18	15	11
<i>Historically Black</i>	7	6	5
Catholic	24	21	19
Orthodox Christian	1	<1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	2
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	<1
Other Christian	<1	<1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Jewish	2	2	2
Muslim	<1	1	1
Buddhist	1	1	1
Hindu	<1	1	1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1
Something else	1	2	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>
Atheist	2	3	5
Agnostic	2	4	6
Nothing in particular	12	16	19
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	35,556	35,071	36,908

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition of birth cohorts: U.S. adults born in 1949 or earlier through those born in the 1970s

% who are ...

	Among adults born in 1949 or earlier			Among adults born in the 1950s			Among adults born in the 1960s			Among adults born in the 1970s		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>63%</b>
Protestant	59	56	53	54	52	50	50	50	46	47	44	41
<i>Evangelical</i>	29	29	28	27	28	27	27	28	27	25	24	25
<i>Mainline</i>	24	22	21	20	17	16	17	15	13	15	12	10
<i>Historically Black</i>	6	6	4	7	8	6	6	7	6	7	7	6
Catholic	23	24	24	23	22	23	26	24	24	25	20	19
Orthodox Christian	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	<1	1	1	<1
Other Christian	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>
Jewish	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1
Muslim	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	1	1	1	1	1
Buddhist	1	1	1	1	<1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hindu	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	1	1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Something else	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>
Atheist	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	4	5
Agnostic	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	4	5
Nothing in particular	7	8	8	11	13	12	12	14	14	15	17	19
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>&lt;1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	12,595	9,327	6,155	7,455	7,045	7,811	6,375	5,778	6,389	4,813	4,337	5,000

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition of birth cohorts: U.S. adults born in the 1980s to 2006

% who are ...

	Among adults born in the 1980s			Among adults born in the 1990s		Among adults born from 2000-06
	2007	2014	2023-24	2014	2023-24	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>46%</b>
Protestant	43	38	34	36	29	28
<i>Evangelical</i>	22	22	21	19	18	16
<i>Mainline</i>	13	10	8	11	6	7
<i>Historically Black</i>	8	6	5	6	5	5
Catholic	22	16	15	16	13	14
Orthodox Christian	1	<1	1	1	1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	1	2	2	2
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	1	1	<1	<1
Other Christian	<1	<1	1	<1	1	<1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Jewish	2	2	1	2	2	2
Muslim	1	2	2	2	2	3
Buddhist	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hindu	<1	2	1	1	1	1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1
Something else	2	2	3	2	3	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>
Atheist	3	4	7	6	7	8
Agnostic	4	7	7	7	9	10
Nothing in particular	18	23	23	23	28	25
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	3,457	4,567	5,400	3,291	4,327	1,236

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Adults born in the 1990s were under 18 in 2007, making them ineligible for the 2007 Religious Landscape Study. Adults born in 2000 or later were under 18 in 2014, making them ineligible for both the 2007 and 2014 surveys.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition of racial and ethnic groups

% who are ...

	Among White adults			Among Black adults			Among Asian adults			Among Hispanic adults		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>67%</b>
Protestant	53	48	42	78	71	65	27	17	18	23	26	22
<i>Evangelical</i>	30	29	27	15	14	15	17	11	12	16	19	17
<i>Mainline</i>	23	19	15	4	4	6	9	5	6	5	5	4
<i>Historically Black</i>	<1	<1	<1	59	53	44	<1	0	<1	3	1	1
Catholic	22	19	17	5	5	4	17	17	14	58	48	42
Orthodox Christian	1	1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	2	<1	<1	1	1	1	<1	1	1	1
Jehovah's Witness	<1	<1	<1	1	2	1	<1	<1	<1	1	2	1
Other Christian	<1	<1	1	<1	1	1	0	<1	<1	<1	<1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
Jewish	2	3	3	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	1
Muslim	<1	<1	1	1	2	2	4	6	6	<1	<1	1
Buddhist	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	9	6	10	<1	1	1
Hindu	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0	14	16	13	<1	<1	<1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	2	3	1	<1	<1	<1
Something else	1	2	2	<1	1	1	1	<1	1	<1	1	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>
Atheist	2	4	6	<1	1	1	3	6	7	1	2	3
Agnostic	3	5	7	1	1	2	4	5	6	1	2	4
Nothing in particular	12	15	18	11	16	19	16	20	20	12	16	21
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	27,309	24,900	26,054	3,101	3,394	2,865	773	937	1,727	3,151	3,814	3,864

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition by place of birth

% who are ...

	Among adults who were born in the U.S.			Among adults who were born outside the U.S.		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>58%</b>
Protestant	55	50	43	24	25	24
<i>Evangelical</i>	28	27	25	15	15	15
<i>Mainline</i>	20	16	13	7	7	5
<i>Historically Black</i>	8	7	6	2	3	4
Catholic	21	18	16	46	39	30
Orthodox Christian	<1	<1	<1	2	1	2
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	2	1	1	1
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	<1	1	1	1
Other Christian	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>
Jewish	2	2	2	1	1	1
Muslim	<1	<1	1	2	4	4
Buddhist	1	1	1	2	1	3
Hindu	<1	<1	<1	3	4	4
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1
Something else	1	2	2	1	1	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>
Atheist	2	3	5	1	3	4
Agnostic	2	4	6	2	2	3
Nothing in particular	12	16	19	13	15	19
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	32,179	30,922	32,350	3,243	3,968	4,164

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. For the purposes of this analysis, people born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories are included among those born outside the U.S. Although individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth, they are included with the "Among adults who were born outside the U.S." category here because they are born into a Spanish-dominant culture and because, on many points, their attitudes, views and beliefs are much closer to those of Hispanics born outside the U.S. than to Hispanics born in the 50 U.S. states or District of Columbia, even those who identify themselves as being of Puerto Rican origin.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition by educational attainment

% who are ...

	Among college graduates			Among adults with less than a college degree		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>64%</b>
Protestant	46	41	36	53	49	42
<i>Evangelical</i>	20	20	19	29	28	25
<i>Mainline</i>	23	18	13	16	14	11
<i>Historically Black</i>	4	4	4	8	8	6
Catholic	23	20	19	24	21	19
Orthodox Christian	1	1	1	<1	<1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	2	2	1	1
Jehovah's Witness	<1	<1	<1	1	1	1
Other Christian	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
Jewish	4	4	3	1	1	1
Muslim	1	1	1	<1	1	1
Buddhist	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hindu	1	2	2	<1	<1	<1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Something else	2	2	2	1	1	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>29</b>
Atheist	2	5	7	1	2	4
Agnostic	4	6	9	2	3	4
Nothing in particular	11	14	16	13	17	20
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	12,931	14,695	19,054	22,367	20,173	17,648

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition by gender

% who are ...

	Among men			Among women		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>66%</b>
Protestant	49	43	37	54	50	43
<i>Evangelical</i>	26	24	23	27	27	24
<i>Mainline</i>	17	14	10	19	16	13
<i>Historically Black</i>	6	5	4	8	7	7
Catholic	23	20	19	25	22	20
Orthodox Christian	1	1	1	1	<1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	2	2	2	1
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	<1	1	1	<1
Other Christian	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Jewish	2	2	2	2	2	1
Muslim	1	1	1	<1	1	1
Buddhist	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hindu	1	1	1	<1	<1	<1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Something else	1	2	2	1	1	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>
Atheist	2	4	6	1	2	4
Agnostic	3	5	7	2	3	5
Nothing in particular	14	17	18	10	14	19
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	16,291	17,514	15,658	19,265	17,557	20,507

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Refer to Appendix A for a discussion of how the way the Center measures gender identity has changed over time.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition by marital status

% who are ...

	Among adults who are married			Among adults who are not married		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>56%</b>
Protestant	52	50	43	51	43	37
<i>Evangelical</i>	29	29	27	24	22	19
<i>Mainline</i>	19	17	13	17	13	10
<i>Historically Black</i>	4	4	3	10	9	7
Catholic	25	22	21	22	20	17
Orthodox Christian	1	<1	1	1	<1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2	2	2	1	1	1
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	<1	1	1	<1
Other Christian	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Jewish	2	2	2	2	2	2
Muslim	<1	1	1	<1	1	1
Buddhist	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hindu	1	1	1	<1	1	1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Something else	1	1	1	1	2	3
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>35</b>
Atheist	1	2	4	2	4	6
Agnostic	2	3	5	3	5	7
Nothing in particular	11	13	15	14	19	23
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	20,430	17,827	18,909	14,878	17,064	17,557

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition by detailed marital status, among people who are not currently married

% who are ...

	Among adults who are living with a partner			Among adults who are divorced/separated			Among adults who are widowed			Among adults who've never been married		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Protestant	40	32	28	56	52	45	64	60	55	45	38	32
<i>Evangelical</i>	19	17	14	28	28	24	30	31	30	19	18	16
<i>Mainline</i>	14	11	9	19	14	12	24	21	18	14	10	8
<i>Historically Black</i>	7	5	5	9	9	9	10	9	7	12	9	8
Catholic	26	23	16	21	19	18	22	23	23	21	18	15
Orthodox Christian	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Jehovah's Witness	<1	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	1
Other Christian	1	<1	1	1	1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Jewish	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Muslim	<1	<1	<1	1	1	1	<1	<1	<1	1	2	2
Buddhist	1	1	1	1	1	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	1
Hindu	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1
Other world religions	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Something else	2	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>
Atheist	3	5	6	1	2	4	1	1	1	3	5	7
Agnostic	4	6	9	2	3	4	1	1	2	5	6	8
Nothing in particular	20	24	30	12	15	18	6	8	11	16	22	24
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	1,753	2,128	2,905	4,425	4,752	5,276	3,705	3,218	3,190	4,995	6,966	6,186

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. In theory, the categories presented are not mutually exclusive. For example, it is possible for someone to be both living with a partner and widowed or never married. In this analysis, however, the categories are mutually exclusive because respondents were asked to choose just one category that represents their current marital status. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious composition of geographic regions

% who are ...

	Among adults in the Northeast			Among adults in the Midwest			Among adults in the South			Among adults in the West		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>Christian</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>55%</b>
Protestant	37	32	27	54	50	43	65	59	51	38	34	29
<i>Evangelical</i>	13	13	12	26	26	23	37	34	31	20	22	18
<i>Mainline</i>	19	15	11	22	19	16	17	14	11	15	11	9
<i>Historically Black</i>	5	5	4	6	5	4	11	11	9	3	2	2
Catholic	37	30	28	24	21	18	16	15	14	25	23	20
Orthodox Christian	1	1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<1	1	<1	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	5	4
Jehovah's Witness	1	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	1	1	1	<1
Other Christian	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	1
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Jewish	4	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Muslim	1	1	2	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1
Buddhist	1	1	1	<1	1	1	<1	<1	1	2	1	2
Hindu	1	1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	1	1
Other world religions	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1
Something else	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>35</b>
Atheist	2	4	5	1	3	5	1	2	4	3	4	6
Agnostic	3	5	5	2	4	6	2	3	5	4	5	8
Nothing in particular	12	16	19	12	16	20	10	14	17	15	19	21
<b>Don't know/Refused</b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>&lt;1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sample size	6,556	6,516	6,717	9,078	7,491	7,549	12,643	12,566	13,423	7,279	8,498	9,219

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 2. Religious switching

Millions of Americans have changed their religion over the course of their lifetimes, switching from one religion to another, leaving religion altogether, or choosing to identify with a religion after having grown up without one.

If Protestants are counted as a single category – rather than separated into subgroups such as Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, etc. – then the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) finds that **35% of U.S. adults were raised with a different religious identity than the one they have now.**

This is roughly on par with what we found in the 2014 RLS, using the same definition of switching. At that time, 34% of Americans were categorized as having switched religions when Protestantism was treated as a single group.

(By this definition, religious switchers would include – to give just a few examples – a person who was raised Protestant and is now religiously unaffiliated; a person who was raised Catholic and now identifies as any kind of Protestant; a person who was raised in no religion but now identifies as Jewish; and a person who was raised as an Orthodox Christian and now identifies as a Catholic. However, a person who was raised as a United Methodist and now identifies as a Southern Baptist would not be considered to have switched religions, because both of those denominations are Protestant. Similarly, a person who was raised with no particular religion and now identifies as an atheist would not be counted as having switched, because both of those categories are part of the religiously unaffiliated grouping.<sup>34</sup>)

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<sup>34</sup> Findings about switching among religious groups vary depending on how the groups are defined. For example, another way to calculate movement among religious groups would be to treat each Protestant denominational family (such as Baptists, Presbyterians and Lutherans) as a separate group and also to disaggregate religiously unaffiliated Americans into three separate categories (atheists, agnostics and those whose religion is “nothing in particular”). Under those parameters, the share of Americans in the new survey who have switched religions between childhood and adulthood is 49%. In 2014, the comparable figure was 48%.

The overall patterns of religious switching in the 2023-24 RLS are similar to the patterns that appeared in the previous landscape studies. Christianity, as a whole, continues to lose more adherents than it gains through switching: **For every American who has become Christian after having been raised in another religion or no religion, six others have left Christianity and now describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated, as belonging to another – i.e., non-Christian – religion, or they don’t answer the question about their current religion.**

Both Protestantism and Catholicism experience net loss from switching. In the 2023-24 RLS, 1.8 people have left Protestantism for every person who has become a Protestant after having been raised in another religious group or in no religion. The ratio for Catholicism is even more lopsided: For every U.S. adult who has become a Catholic after being raised in some other religion or without a religion, there are 8.4 adults who say they were raised in the Catholic faith but who no longer describe themselves as Catholics.<sup>35</sup>

Pew Research Center uses the term “religious switching” rather than “conversion” to reflect the fact that movement occurs in all directions and is not necessarily accompanied by any rituals.

The category that has grown the most through religious switching is the religiously unaffiliated population. This group is sometimes called the “nones” and is made up of Americans who answer a question about their present religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.” **For every person who was raised as a “none” and now identifies with a religion, 5.9 people have switched away from their childhood religion and no longer identify with any religion.**

This chapter details the religious switching among U.S. religious groups. We show both sides of the equation: how many U.S. adults have *entered* and *left* each group. We also show the retention

## Catholicism has lost 8.4 people for every person it has gained through ‘religious switching’ in the U.S.

Ratio of U.S. adults who have left each religious group to those who have joined each group

	Ratio of change	
	Left	Joined
Christian	6.0	1.0
Protestant	1.8	1.0
Catholic	8.4	1.0
Religiously unaffiliated	1.0	5.9

Note: Based on self-reported childhood religion and present religion among U.S. adults.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>35</sup> At the same time, immigration has helped to bolster the number of Catholics in the United States. Overall, Catholics have declined from 24% of U.S. adults in 2007 to 19% in the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS), while the Protestant share of the country’s adult population has dropped from 51% to 40% over the same period. For more on these trends, read the [Overview](#) of this report.

rates of the large groups: what percentage of all people raised in a religious group as children remain in it as adults.

In addition, this chapter explores a pair of questions asking respondents to evaluate, in broad terms, how they have changed religiously and spiritually as they have aged.

When asked how their *religiousness* has changed, 28% of Americans say they have become more religious, while roughly the same share – 29% – say they have become less religious. The remainder describe their religiousness as unchanged (21%), say they have sometimes grown more religious and other times less so (21%), or they decline to answer the question (1%).

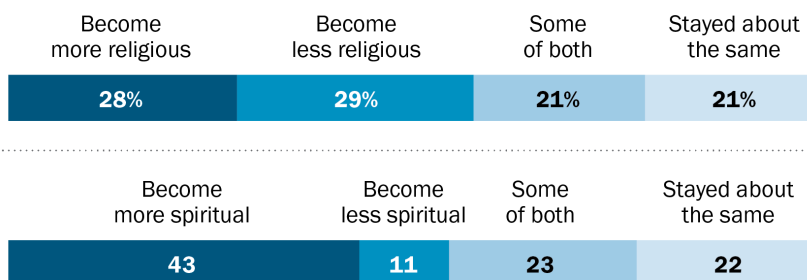
When asked how their *spirituality* has shifted over the course of their lifetimes, more U.S. adults say it has increased (43%) than decreased (11%). The remainder say their level of spirituality has stayed about the same (22%), indicate that it has sometimes risen and sometimes fallen (23%), or they give no answer (1%).

### Jump to sections on:

- [Net gains and losses among religious traditions](#)
- [Net gains and losses among Protestant denominational families](#)
- [Retention among religious traditions](#)
- [Retention among Protestant denominational families](#)
- [Change in religiousness over time](#)
- [Change in spirituality over time](#)

## More Americans say their spirituality has increased than decreased over their lifetimes

*% of U.S. adults who say that over the course of their lifetimes, they have generally ...*



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Net gains and losses among religious traditions

Religiously unaffiliated Americans have experienced the greatest net gains, as a share of the U.S. population, through religious switching.

Among all U.S. adults, 12.6% say they were raised with no religious affiliation (as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular”). About a quarter of that group – 3.5% of all U.S. adults – no longer identify as religious “nones.” Instead, they now identify with a religion (or, in a small number of cases, decline to answer the religion question).

Still, the share of people who have joined the ranks of the “nones” is nearly six times larger: 20.2% of all U.S. adults were raised in a religion and now identify as religiously unaffiliated.<sup>36</sup>

The picture is reversed for Christianity. Overall, 21.9% of U.S. adults are *former*

Christians – people who say they were raised as Christians but no longer identify as such. That’s six times higher than the share of U.S. adults who now identify as Christians after having been raised in some other way (3.6%).

### Most Americans who are currently religiously unaffiliated were not raised that way

*% of U.S. adults who were raised in, left, entered and currently identify with each group*

	Childhood religion	Leaving group	Entering group	Current religion
<b>Christian</b>	<b>80.4%</b>	<b>-21.9%</b>	<b>+3.6%</b>	<b>=62.1%</b>
Protestant	46.0	-13.7	+7.6	40.0
Catholic	30.2	-12.8	+1.5	18.9
Orthodox Christian	0.8	-0.3	+<0.3	0.7
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2.1	-1.0	+0.4	1.5
Jehovah’s Witness	0.6	-0.4	+<0.3	0.4
Other Christian	0.7	-0.6	+0.5	0.6
<b>Other religions</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>-1.7</b>	<b>+3.0</b>	<b>7.1</b>
Jewish	1.9	-0.5	+<0.3	1.7
Muslim	1.2	-0.3	+<0.3	1.2
Buddhist	1.2	-0.7	+0.5	1.1
Hindu	1.0	-<0.3	+<0.3	0.9
Other world religions	<0.3	<0.3	+<0.3	0.3
Something else	<0.3	-<0.3	+1.8	1.9
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>-3.5</b>	<b>+20.2</b>	<b>29.4</b>
<b>Uninterpretable/Refused</b>	<b>1.2</b>			<b>1.4</b>
	<b>100</b>			<b>100</b>

Note: All figures, including in the middle two columns, are percentages of the total U.S. adult population. Pew Research Center typically reports survey results rounded to the nearest whole number. However, the Religious Landscape Study is an exceptionally large survey, and the margin of error for results based on the full sample is less than 1 percentage point. Thus, in some analyses, we show results out to one decimal point if that level of precision is necessary to show trends over time or to compare the sizes of relatively small religious groups. Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>36</sup> This includes 0.2% of U.S. adults who now identify as religious “nones” and who declined to answer the question about their childhood religion.

Catholics have experienced the greatest net losses due to switching. About three-in-ten U.S. adults (30.2%) say they were raised Catholic. But 43% of the people raised Catholic no longer identify as Catholic, meaning that 12.8% of all U.S. adults are *former* Catholics. Meanwhile, on the other side of the ledger, 1.5% of U.S. adults have *become* Catholics after being raised another way. Overall, 18.9% of U.S. adults currently identify as Catholics, according to the new RLS.

Protestantism also has lost more people than it has gained through religious switching. Overall, 13.7% of U.S. adults say they no longer identify with the group after having been raised as Protestants, compared with 7.6% of Americans who were not raised Protestant but now identify as such.

We found similar religious switching patterns in our [2014 Religious Landscape Study](#).

To put some of these percentages in context, there were approximately 262 million adults (ages 18 and older) in the United States in 2023, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That means:

- About 91 million U.S. adults (35%) have switched their religion since childhood – including more than 9 million (3.6%) who have *become* Christians and more than 57 million (21.9%) who have *left* Christianity.
- Meanwhile, about 53 million (20.2%) have become religiously unaffiliated, while about 9 million (3.5%) have joined a religion after being raised without one.

## Net gains and losses among Protestant denominational families

Several Protestant denominational families have lost more people than they have gained through religious switching.

For example, 7.5% of U.S. adults say they were raised Baptist but no longer identify as Baptist, compared with 3.3% of U.S. adults who were not raised Baptist but who now identify with the group.

Nondenominational Protestants are an exception to this pattern. While 1.7% of U.S. adults say they were raised as nondenominational Protestants and no longer identify as such, more than three times as many now describe themselves as nondenominational Protestants after having been raised another way (5.7%).

There were similar patterns in Protestant denominational switching in the [2014 RLS](#).

### Several Protestant denominational families have lost more adherents than they've gained through 'religious switching'

*% of U.S. adults who were raised, left, entered and currently identify with each group*

	Childhood religion	Leaving group	Entering group	Current religion
Baptist	16.2%	-7.5%	+3.3%	=12.0%
Methodist	5.7	-3.6	+1.3	3.5
Lutheran	4.5	-2.4	+0.8	2.9
Pentecostal	4.0	-2.2	+2.1	3.9
Nondenominational Protestant	3.1	-1.7	+5.7	7.1
Presbyterian	3.0	-2.1	+0.8	1.7
Episcopalian/Anglican	1.6	-1.0	+0.5	1.1
Restorationist	1.6	-0.9	+0.6	1.3
Congregationalist	0.9	-0.6	+0.3	0.5
Holiness	0.6	-0.4	+0.4	0.6
Adventist	0.4	<0.3	+<0.3	0.3
Anabaptist	0.4	<0.3	+<0.3	<0.3
Reformed	0.3	<0.3	+<0.3	0.3
Pietist	<0.3	<0.3	+<0.3	<0.3
Friends	<0.3	<0.3	+<0.3	<0.3
Other evangelical/Fundamentalist	<0.3	<0.3	+<0.3	<0.3
Nonspecific Protestant	<u>3.5</u>	-2.6	+3.3	<u>4.2</u>
<b>NET Protestant</b>	<b>46.0</b>	<b>-13.7</b>	<b>+7.6</b>	<b>40.0</b>

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. The "Nondenominational Protestant" category includes only respondents who identified explicitly as "nondenominational Protestants" or "nondenominational Christians." Respondents who identified as "just Christian" or "just Protestant" are included in the "Nonspecific Protestant" row.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Retention among religious traditions

The previous analysis in this chapter looked at the shares of all U.S. adults who say they were raised in various religious groups, what percentages have left each group, and what percentages have joined each group after having been raised in some other way.

Another way to examine the data is by looking at “retention rates.” Among the people raised in a particular religious group, what percentage continue to identify with that group as adults?

At least three-quarters of Americans who were raised Hindu (82%), Muslim (77%) and Jewish (76%) still identify with those religious groups in adulthood. Among people raised as Hindus, 11% are religious “nones” today, as are 13% of those raised Muslim and 17% of those raised Jewish.

Seven-in-ten adults who were raised Protestant still identify as Protestant as adults, while 22% of people raised as Protestants say they are now religiously unaffiliated.

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### Upward of 75% of Americans who were raised as Hindu, Muslim or Jewish still identify with the same religious group as adults

*% of U.S. adults raised in each religious tradition who ...*

Among those raised __	Still identify with childhood religion	Now identify as Protestant	Now identify as Catholic	Now identify with another Christian tradition	Now identify with another religion/No answer	Now identify as religiously unaffiliated	NET No longer identify with childhood religion
Hindu	<b>82%</b>	3%	1%	3%	1%	11%	<b>18%</b>
Muslim	<b>77</b>	5	<1	1	3	13	<b>23</b>
Jewish	<b>76</b>	2	<1	<1	4	17	<b>24</b>
Religiously unaffiliated	<b>73</b>	17	3	1	6	–	<b>27</b>
Protestant	<b>70</b>	–	2	1	4	22	<b>30</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>66</b>	7	2	1	3	21	<b>34</b>
Catholic	<b>57</b>	14	–	1	3	24	<b>43</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>54</b>	11	2	2	4	28	<b>46</b>
Buddhist	<b>45</b>	11	3	<1	2	39	<b>55</b>

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% or to NETs due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Among people who were raised Catholic, 57% still identify as such as adults. About a quarter of people who were raised Catholic now say they are religiously unaffiliated (24%), and 14% of people raised as Catholics identify as Protestant today.

Nearly three-quarters of those raised religiously unaffiliated (73%) have remained religious “nones” as adults. Most of those who were raised as “nones” but have since changed affiliations now identify as Protestants (17%).

The retention rate among religious “nones” in the 2023-24 RLS is significantly higher than it was in the [2014 RLS](#). At that time, 53% of Americans who were raised without a religious affiliation continued to identify as unaffiliated in adulthood. The share of people raised as “nones” who say they are still “nones” has gone up across all age categories since 2014.

In general, the retention rate of those raised as “nones” is higher among younger adults than it is among older people. For instance, among adults born between 2000 and 2006 (who were between the ages of 18 and 24 when the 2023-24 survey was conducted), 79% of those raised as “nones” are still religiously unaffiliated today, as are 80% among people born in the 1990s who were raised as “nones.” By comparison, among those born in the 1960s who were raised as “nones,” 61% are still “nones” today, as are 60% of people born in the 1950s who were raised as “nones.”

## Retention among Protestant denominational families

Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals and nondenominational Protestants have among the highest retention rates of Protestant denominational families in the 2023-24 RLS. More than half of Americans who were raised Baptist (54%) still identify as Baptists as adults; 47% raised Lutheran still identify as Lutherans; and 45% raised Pentecostal or nondenominational still identify that way as adults.

Among all U.S. adults who were raised Protestant, 44% still identify with the same denominational family as they did as children, while 26% identify with a different one. An additional 22% are religiously unaffiliated, 2% identify as Catholic, and 4% identify with another religion.

### 54% of Americans who were raised Baptist are still Baptist as adults

*% of U.S. adults raised in each Protestant denominational family who ...*

<i>Among those raised</i> __	<b>Still identify with childhood denominational family</b>	<b>Now identify with a different Protestant denominational family</b>	<b>Now identify as Catholic</b>	<b>Now identify with another religion</b>	<b>Now are religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>No answer to question about current religion</b>
Baptist	54%	23%	1%	5%	17%	1%=100%
Lutheran	47	19	4	4	26	1
Pentecostal	45	28	1	3	22	1
Nondenominational	45	23	1	4	27	<1
Restorationist	42	31	1	2	23	1
Methodist	37	32	2	3	25	<1
Episcopalian/Anglican	35	24	5	4	31	1
Congregationalist	31	34	4	7	23	1
Presbyterian	30	29	3	7	29	1
Holiness	30	50	<1	5	15	0
Nonspecific Protestant	25	36	3	6	28	2
<b>All Protestants</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Change in religiousness over time

About eight-in-ten Americans say their religiousness has shifted during their lifetimes, including 28% who say they have become more religious, 29% who say they have become less religious, and 21% who say their religiousness has fluctuated, sometimes increasing and other times decreasing. About one-in-five (21%) say their religiousness has stayed about the same over the course of their lives.<sup>37</sup>

Evangelical Protestants (50%); people who identify with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who are widely known as Mormons (48%); and members of historically Black Protestant churches (46%) are especially likely to say they have become more religious during their lifetimes. Religiously unaffiliated adults are the most likely group to say they have become less religious (54%).

### 28% of Americans say they've grown more religious over their lives; 29% say they've grown less religious

% who say that over the course of their lifetimes, they have generally ...

	Become more religious	Become less religious	Some of both	Stayed about the same
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>19</b>
Christian	39	17	25	18
Protestant	43	14	24	17
<i>Evangelical</i>	50	11	22	15
<i>Mainline</i>	28	20	29	22
<i>Historically Black</i>	46	11	24	17
Catholic	30	23	26	20
Orthodox Christian	26	21	26	28
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	48	12	26	12
Other religions	20	32	24	24
Jewish	18	29	25	28
Muslim	38	18	23	21
Buddhist	21	28	21	29
Hindu	23	27	30	19
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>27</b>
Atheist	<1	72	4	24
Agnostic	2	69	9	19
Nothing in particular	8	44	17	30

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>37</sup> We first asked this question in a [2023 survey of U.S. adults](#). In that survey, respondents were slightly less likely to say their religiousness had *increased* and slightly more likely to say their religiousness had *decreased* over the course of their lives.

## Change in spirituality over time

On a parallel question about spiritual change, 43% of Americans say they have generally become more spiritual during their lifetimes, while 11% say they have become less so. An additional 23% say they sometimes have grown more spiritual, other times less so. And 22% say their level of spirituality has stayed about the same.<sup>38</sup>

About six-in-ten members of evangelical Protestant (61%) and historically Black Protestant (58%) denominations say they have become more spiritual over their lifetimes. A similar share of Latter-day Saints say this (58%).

The survey finds that 43% of mainline Protestants, 42% of Muslims, 42% of Buddhists, 41% of Catholics and 40% of Hindus say they have grown more spiritual over time.

About a third of Jews (34%) and 27% of religiously unaffiliated adults say they have become more spiritual over the course of their lives.

### 43% of Americans say they've become more spiritual over their lives; 11% say they've become less spiritual

*% who say that over the course of their lifetimes, they have generally ...*

	Become more spiritual	Become less spiritual	Some of both	Stayed about the same
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	43%	11%	23%	22%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>				
Christian	51	7	22	19
Protestant	55	5	21	17
<i>Evangelical</i>	61	4	20	13
<i>Mainline</i>	43	7	24	24
<i>Historically Black</i>	58	5	19	16
Catholic	41	10	25	23
Orthodox Christian	32	11	30	27
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	58	8	25	7
Other religions	47	8	23	21
Jewish	34	10	25	30
Muslim	42	10	24	23
Buddhist	42	8	26	24
Hindu	40	8	30	22
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	27	20	24	28
Atheist	12	39	16	32
Agnostic	26	22	29	22
Nothing in particular	30	15	24	29

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>38</sup> We first asked this question in a [2023 survey of U.S. adults](#) and found that Americans reported similar levels of spiritual shifting.

### 3. Identifying with a religion because of culture, ethnicity or family background

For many years, Pew Research Center’s standard question about religious identity has asked, “What is your present religion, if any?” We asked that question again in the [2023-24 Religious Landscape Study](#) (RLS).

This new survey, coming after a long period of decline in U.S. religious affiliation, also sought to measure whether Americans feel connected to religions that they do *not* identify with religiously.

So we asked respondents if they think of themselves as Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist,

Muslim or Hindu for reasons “aside from religion” – for example, ethnically, culturally, or because of their family background. Respondents had the option to say they felt connected to any of these five religions, or to none of them.<sup>39</sup>

We asked this question because we wanted to know how many people feel an enduring attachment to a religious tradition they were raised in but no longer practice, or feel a connection to a particular religious group for other reasons – perhaps, for example, because they have a spouse,

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#### 12% of U.S. adults say they consider themselves Catholic for reasons ‘aside from religion’

*Do you think of yourself as any of the following “aside from religion” (for example, ethnically, culturally, or because of your family background)? (%)*

	Yes, think of themselves as — ASIDE FROM RELIGION	No/Don’t know/ Refused	Identify as — RELIGIOUSLY
Catholic	12%	69%	19%=100%
Jewish	3	95	2=100
Buddhist	3	96	1=100
Muslim	1	98	1=100
Hindu	1	98	1=100

Note: Respondents were asked separately about each of the five groups, and they could respond “Yes” to more than one group. Respondents who participated online or by phone were not asked about identifying with a group “aside from religion” if they had already identified with that group when asked about their religion. For example, respondents who said they are Catholic when asked about their religion were not subsequently asked if they think of themselves as Catholic “aside from religion.” However, all five questions were administered to respondents who participated via paper, because there was no straightforward way to filter these questions in the paper questionnaire. Paper respondents who identified with a group by religion are categorized as belonging to that group by religion and not “aside from religion.”

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>39</sup> Respondents who participated online or by phone were not asked about identifying with a group “aside from religion” if they had already identified with that group when asked about their religion. For example, respondents who said they are Catholic when asked about their religion were not subsequently asked if they think of themselves as Catholic “aside from religion,” and respondents who said they are Jewish when asked about their religion were not subsequently asked if they are Jewish “aside from religion.” On the other hand, respondents who completed the survey on paper (rather than online or by phone) received all five questions about identity aside from religion, because there was no straightforward way to filter these questions based on their previous responses when filling out the paper questionnaire. Paper respondents who identified with a group *by religion* are categorized as belonging to that group by religion and not “aside from religion.” In other words, no respondents in the survey are counted as identifying with a group both by religion and “aside from religion.” Respondents are categorized as identifying with a group religiously (if they answered the religion question that way), or “aside from religion,” or neither – but not both.

family member or close friend who belongs to the group, or because their ancestors belonged to the group – even though they don’t consider it their *own* religion.

In some previous research, we delved into the views and experiences of Americans who feel these kinds of cultural, ethnic or ancestral connections to [the Jewish people](#), to [Catholicism](#) and to [Islam](#).<sup>40</sup> In the new RLS, we have broadened the lens to include two additional religions that are often intertwined with ethnicity: Hinduism and Buddhism.

The survey finds that more Americans identify as Catholic *aside from religion* (12%) than express a similar connection with any other religion we listed. Combining this 12% with the 19% of U.S. adults who identify Catholicism as their religion, a total of 31% of all U.S. adults identify as Catholic either religiously or aside from religion.

The survey also finds that 3% of U.S. adults identify as Jewish aside from religion, and an identical share identify as Buddhist aside from religion.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, 1% of U.S. adults identify as Muslim aside from religion, and 1% identify as Hindu aside from religion. (All these percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.)

The survey did not ask any follow-up questions about why respondents identify with these religious groups. But, using other questions in the survey, we can see that some people who identify with a religious tradition for reasons aside from religion also say they were raised in that religion or have a spouse or partner who identifies with that religion. For example, 62% of people who identify as Catholic aside from religion say they were raised Catholic or have a Catholic spouse or partner. Among adults who identify as Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim or Hindu aside from religion, about one-in-five or slightly fewer respondents say they were raised in these traditions or have a spouse or partner who identifies with the tradition.

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<sup>40</sup> Refer to [“Jewish Americans in 2020”](#) for a detailed discussion of people who are “Jews of no religion” or otherwise connected to the Jewish community for reasons other than their current religious identity. Refer to [“U.S. Catholics Open to Non-Traditional Families”](#) for a discussion of cultural Catholicism. Refer to [“Faith Among Black Americans”](#) for a discussion of Black Americans who identify as Muslim “aside from religion.”

<sup>41</sup> The finding that 3% of U.S. adults (after rounding) identify as Jewish aside from religion is roughly consistent with the Center’s earlier research, although in our major surveys of Jewish Americans we have focused on a smaller group (amounting to about 0.6% of U.S. adults) who identify as Jewish aside from religion AND who also have at least one Jewish parent AND who do not identify with any other religion. We refer to people who meet *all three of these criteria* as “Jews of no religion” because they answer a survey question about their present religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.” The bigger 3% figure includes people who identify, religiously, as Christians or with other (non-Jewish) religions as well as people who may not have either a Jewish mother or a Jewish father. For more detail on Jewish identity in the United States, including the variety of ways that people express connections to Judaism and the Jewish people, refer to the Center’s report [“Jewish Americans in 2020.”](#)

Other people identify with *more than one group* aside from religion, which may suggest they have an affinity for many religions or all major religious traditions.

Still, other respondents – ranging from 12% among those who identify as Hindu aside from religion to 52% of those who identify as Jewish aside from religion – say they identify with one of these groups aside from religion even though they were *not* raised in that religion, do *not* have a spouse/partner who identifies with that group and do *not* identify with multiple traditions. Presumably, these respondents have some other connections to the traditions they identify with *aside from religion* that cannot be measured by this survey.

**Read on for more about Americans who identify with the following traditions aside from religion:**

- [Catholicism](#)
- [Judaism](#)
- [Buddhism](#)
- [Islam](#)
- [Hinduism](#)



## Catholic ‘aside from religion’

Overall, 12% of U.S. adults identify religiously as something *other* than Catholic but nevertheless say they think of themselves as Catholic “aside from religion” – for example culturally, ethnically, or because of their family background.

Among this group (people who identify as Catholic aside from religion), 57% say they were raised in the Catholic faith as children. And 12% say they currently have a spouse or partner who is Catholic by religion.

Altogether, 62% of people who identify as Catholic aside from religion were either raised Catholic or have a Catholic spouse or partner.

In terms of their current religion, 39% of people who consider themselves Catholic aside from religion identify as Christians – though *not* as Catholics by religion – while 7% identify with other (non-Christian) religions and 51% are religiously unaffiliated (i.e., atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular”).

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### Identifying as Catholic ‘aside from religion’ in the U.S.

*Based on the 12% of U.S. adults who think of themselves as Catholic “aside from religion” (for example, culturally, ethnically, or because of their family background)*

*In what religion were you raised? Were you raised ...*

Catholic	57%
Other Christian	28
Other religion	3
No religion	10
No answer	<u>1</u>
	<b>100</b>

*What is your spouse’s/partner’s religion?*

Catholic	12
Other Christian	20
Other religion	3
No religion	24
No answer	1
Not married or living with a partner	<u>41</u>
	<b>100</b>

NET Raised Catholic or have a Catholic spouse/partner	62
Identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	13
NET Raised Catholic, have a Catholic spouse/partner, or identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	70
None of the above	30

*What is your present religion?*

Other Christian	39
Other religion	7
No religion	51
No answer	<u>3</u>
	<b>100</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Overall, 13% of people who identify as Catholic aside from religion also say they identify with one or more *additional* religious traditions aside from religion, indicating that they feel connections to multiple religions.

## Jewish ‘aside from religion’

Past [Pew Research Center surveys](#) have examined U.S. adults who are not Jewish by religion but consider themselves Jewish for other reasons, such as ancestry or culture.

The current RLS finds that 3% of all U.S. adults are not Jewish by religion but consider themselves Jewish for reasons aside from religion, such as their ethnicity, culture, or family background.

About one-in-ten people in this group (11%) say they were raised Jewish by religion. And 5% have a spouse or partner who is Jewish by religion. Altogether, 16% were either raised Jewish themselves or have a spouse or partner who is Jewish.

Slightly more than half of people who identify as Jewish aside from religion identify *religiously* today as Christians, and 9% identify with another religion (other than Christianity or Judaism). One-third are religiously unaffiliated.

### Identifying as Jewish ‘aside from religion’ in the U.S.

*Based on the 3% of U.S. adults who think of themselves as Jewish “aside from religion” (for example, culturally, ethnically, or because of their family background)*

*In what religion were you raised? Were you raised ...*

Jewish	11%
Other religion	72
Christian	67
Something else	5
No religion	16
No answer	<u>1</u>
	<b>100</b>

*What is your spouse’s/partner’s religion?*

Jewish	5
Other religion	38
No religion	19
No answer	<1
Not married or living with a partner	<u>37</u>
	<b>100</b>

NET Raised Jewish or have a Jewish spouse/partner	16
Identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	35
NET Raised Jewish, have a Jewish spouse/partner, or identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	48
None of the above	52

*What is your present religion?*

Christian	55
Other religion (not Jewish or Christian)	9
No religion	33
No answer	<u>2</u>
	<b>100</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Overall, 35% of people who identify as Jewish aside from religion also identify with one or more additional religious traditions aside from religion.

## Buddhist ‘aside from religion’

About 3% of U.S. adults consider themselves to be Buddhist aside from religion.

Within this group, 13% say they were raised Buddhist in childhood. And 5% say they have a Buddhist spouse or partner today. Altogether, 16% were either raised Buddhist or have a Buddhist spouse or partner.

The survey finds that among the people who identify as Buddhist aside from religion, 43% also identify with one or more other religious traditions aside from religion.

### Identifying as Buddhist ‘aside from religion’ in the U.S.

*Based on the 3% of U.S. adults who think of themselves as Buddhist “aside from religion” (for example, culturally, ethnically, or because of their family background)*

*In what religion were you raised? Were you raised ...*

Buddhist	13%
Other religion	69
Christian	58
Something else	11
No religion	17
No answer	1
	<b>100</b>

*What is your spouse’s/partner’s religion?*

Buddhist	5
Other religion	30
No religion	22
No answer	1
Not married or living with a partner	42
	<b>100</b>

NET Raised Buddhist or have a Buddhist spouse/partner 16

Identify with more than one tradition aside from religion 43

NET Raised Buddhist, have a Buddhist spouse/partner, or identify with more than one tradition aside from religion 56

None of the above 44

*What is your present religion?*

Christian	35
Other religion (not Buddhist or Christian)	17
No religion	46
No answer	2
	<b>100</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Muslim ‘aside from religion’

Overall, 1% of U.S. adults say they identify as Muslim aside from religion.

One-in-five people in this group were either raised Muslim (17%) or have a Muslim spouse or partner (5%).

About six-in-ten people who identify as Muslim aside from religion (58%) also identify with at least one other religious tradition aside from religion.

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### Identifying as Muslim ‘aside from religion’ in the U.S.

*Based on the 1% of U.S. adults who think of themselves as Muslim “aside from religion” (for example, culturally, ethnically, or because of their family background)*

*In what religion were you raised? Were you raised ...*

Muslim	17%
Other religion	75
Christian	71
Something else	4
No religion	5
No answer	3
	<b>100</b>

*What is your spouse’s/partner’s religion?*

Muslim	5
Other religion	28
No religion	11
No answer	2
Not married or living with a partner	54
	<b>100</b>

NET Raised Muslim or have a Muslim spouse/partner	20
---	----

Identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	58
---	----

NET Raised Muslim, have a Muslim spouse/partner, or identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	74
---	----

None of the above	26
-------------------	----

*What is your present religion?*

Christian	52
Other religion (not Muslim or Christian)	6
No religion	36
No answer	6
	<b>100</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Hindu ‘aside from religion’

Among all respondents in the new survey, 1% say they think of themselves as Hindu aside from religion.

Within this group, 16% say they were raised Hindu and 6% have a Hindu spouse or partner. Altogether, 18% were either raised Hindu or have a Hindu spouse or partner.

Among people who identify as Hindu aside from religion, 72% also identify with at least one other religious tradition aside from religion.

### Identifying as Hindu ‘aside from religion’ in the U.S.

*Based on the 1% of U.S. adults who think of themselves as Hindu “aside from religion” (for example, culturally, ethnically, or because of their family background)*

*In what religion were you raised? Were you raised ...*

Hindu	16%
Other religion	72
Christian	61
Something else	11
No religion	10
No answer	<u>2</u>
	<b>100</b>

*What is your spouse’s/partner’s religion?*

Hindu	6
Other religion	27
No religion	15
No answer	<1
Not married or living with a partner	<u>52</u>
	<b>100</b>

NET Raised Hindu or have a Hindu spouse/partner	18
---	----

Identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	72
---	----

NET Raised Hindu, have a Hindu spouse/partner, or identify with more than one tradition aside from religion	88
---	----

None of the above	12
-------------------	----

*What is your present religion?*

Christian	36
Other religion (not Hindu or Christian)	20
No religion	41
No answer	<u>3</u>
	<b>100</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## II. Religion and family life



## 4. Religious intermarriage

In the new Religious Landscape Study (RLS), nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults who are currently married (74%) say they have the same religion as their spouse, a similar share as in the 2014 RLS (75%).

And 26% of married U.S. adults in the new study say their spouse has a religious identity that is *different* from their own. They include:

- 13% of married U.S. adults who are Christians paired with a religiously unaffiliated spouse, or vice versa;
- 7% of married U.S. adults who are Christians and whose spouse is part of a different Christian tradition, such as a Catholic married to a Protestant; and
- 6% of married people who are in other types of interfaith pairings, such as between a Jew and a Catholic, or between a Muslim and a religious “none.”

The survey also finds that 51% of married U.S. adults say their religious beliefs are very similar to their spouse’s beliefs. And 36% say they talk about religion with their spouse at least once a week.

Compared with people in religiously mixed marriages, respondents who are “in-married” (married to a person of the same religion) are more likely to say they share similar beliefs and talk about religion weekly or more often with their spouse.

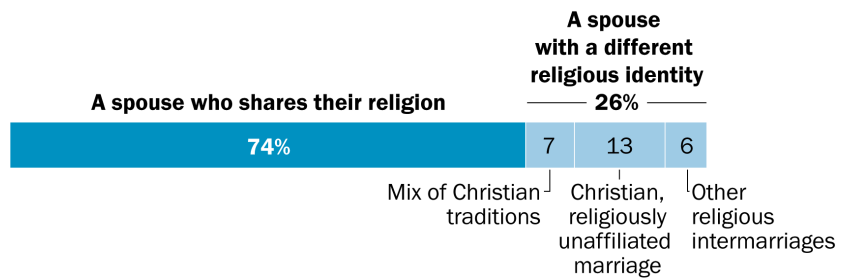
All these findings depend, of course, on how one defines a religious intermarriage.

The analysis in this chapter is based on current, intact marriages. It compares the respondent’s *current* religion with their description of their spouse’s *current* religion at the time of the survey. (Spouses were not interviewed.)

This analysis does not include marriages that have ended – whether through divorce, annulment or death. Nor does it hinge on whether one spouse switched religions to join the other’s religion.

### 26% of married Americans have a spouse of another religion

Among U.S. adults who are married, % who have ...



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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For example, a former Christian who converted to Islam before (or after) marrying a Muslim would be counted as in-married – *not* as religiously intermarried – if they were married and shared a religion at the time of the survey.

In addition, this analysis treats Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) as separate religious groups. Marriages between people in any two of these traditions (such as between a Protestant and a Catholic) are counted as *intermarriages* throughout this chapter.

However, all varieties of Protestantism are treated as one religious group – meaning that a Baptist married to a Lutheran, or a Methodist married to a nondenominational Protestant, are *not* counted as intermarried.

Similarly, all religiously unaffiliated Americans are considered as one group. An atheist who is married to an agnostic, for instance, doesn't count as religiously intermarried for the purposes of this analysis.

**Jump to sections in this chapter about:**

- [Intermarriage across religious traditions](#)
- [Religiousness and intermarriage](#)
- [Similarities in religious views between spouses](#)
- [Similarities in the importance of religion between spouses](#)
- [Frequency of religious discussions in marriages](#)
- [Religion among unmarried people who are living with a partner](#)

## Intermarriage across religious traditions

Overall, 74% of married respondents in the survey say their spouse has the same religion they do, while 26% say their spouse identifies with a different religion, using the definitions outlined above.

Roughly nine-in-ten married Latter-day Saints (87%) have a spouse who is of the same religion, making people in this group more likely than married people in any other U.S. religious group we analyzed to be religiously *in-married*.

Meanwhile, 81% of married Protestants have spouses who also are Protestant, while 10% are married to religiously unaffiliated spouses and 7% have Catholic spouses.

Among married Catholics, three-quarters have spouses who are Catholic, 12% are married to Protestants, and 9% have spouses who are religiously unaffiliated.

Roughly two-thirds of married religiously unaffiliated people (68%) have a spouse who is religiously unaffiliated. A similar share of married Jewish respondents (65%) say they have a Jewish spouse.<sup>42</sup>

The survey did not include enough interviews with married people in other religious traditions – including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and others – to be able to analyze their intermarriage patterns.

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<sup>42</sup> For an in-depth discussion of intermarriage patterns and trends among Jewish Americans, refer to Pew Research Center's report, "[Jewish Americans in 2020](#)."

## Latter-day Saints are most likely to have a spouse of the same religion

*% of married U.S. adults whose spouse has ...*

Among married respondents who are __	The same religion as the respondent	A different religion than the respondent, and the spouse is ...					No answer to spouse religion	NET Spouse has different religion
		Protestant	Catholic	Other Christian	Other religion	Religiously unaffiliated		
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>87%</b>	2%	3%	<1%	0%	7%	0%	<b>13%=100%</b>
Protestant	<b>81</b>	–	7	1	1	10	1	<b>19</b>
Catholic	<b>75</b>	12	–	1	1	9	1	<b>25</b>
Religiously unaffiliated	<b>68</b>	15	12	1	4	–	1	<b>32</b>
Jewish	<b>65</b>	7	11	1	2	15	<1	<b>35</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. The survey did not include enough interviews with married people in other religious traditions – including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and others – to be able to analyze their intermarriage patterns. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religiousness and intermarriage

People who identify with the same religion as their spouse tend to have higher levels of religiousness than people married to someone of a different religion.<sup>43</sup>

For example, among Protestants who are married to other Protestants, 62% are highly religious, compared with 27% of Protestants who are married to non-Protestants.

And 46% of Catholics who are married to other Catholics display a high level of religious engagement, compared with 24% of Catholics married to non-Catholics.

Among Jewish respondents with Jewish spouses, 29% are highly religious. That is the case for 4% of Jewish respondents whose spouses are not Jewish.

Few religiously unaffiliated respondents are highly religious, regardless of whether their spouse identifies with a religion. That said, unaffiliated respondents whose spouses identify with a

### Intermarried adults tend to be less religious than those married to a person of the same religion

Based on married U.S. adults

Among married respondents who are	% of respondents whose religiousness is ...			
	Low	Medium-low	Medium-high	High
Protestant, with a Protestant spouse	2%	13%	22%	62%=100%
Protestant, with a non-Protestant spouse	9	32	32	27
Catholic, with a Catholic spouse	6	24	25	46
Catholic, with a non-Catholic spouse	10	36	29	24
Jewish, with a Jewish spouse	22	31	18	29
Jewish, with a non-Jewish spouse*	50	38	8	4
Religiously unaffiliated, with a religiously unaffiliated spouse	72	22	4	1
Religiously unaffiliated, with a spouse who is <i>not</i> religiously unaffiliated	60	31	7	2

\* The survey included 178 Jewish respondents married to a non-Jewish spouse, with an effective sample size of 99 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 9.8 percentage points.

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details. The survey did not include enough interviews with married people in other religious traditions – including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) and others – to be able to analyze them here.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>43</sup> We measured religiousness using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God/a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion's importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is "not too important" or "not at all important" in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is "very important" in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

religion are less likely to exhibit low levels of religious engagement than are unaffiliated respondents whose spouses also are unaffiliated (60% vs. 72%).

The survey did not include enough interviews with married people in other religious traditions – including Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and others – to be able to analyze their intermarriage patterns. It also did not include enough married Latter-day Saints to analyze those who are intermarried.

These results don't necessarily show that being in a religiously mixed marriage *causes* people to become less religious. Indeed, the causal arrow could just as easily point in the opposite direction: People who aren't particularly religious may be more inclined to enter into a religiously mixed marriage.

## Similarities in religious views between spouses

When asked to compare their own religious beliefs with those of their spouse, 51% of married respondents say their beliefs are very similar. An additional 30% say their beliefs and their spouse's beliefs are somewhat similar, while 14% say they are not too similar or not at all similar.

Among married people whose spouse shares their religious identity, 62% report that their spouse has very similar religious beliefs. By contrast, among married people whose spouse does not share their religious identity, 21% say they and their spouse hold very similar religious beliefs.

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### 51% of married U.S. adults say they and their spouse share 'very similar' religious beliefs

*% of married U.S. adults who say their own religious beliefs and the beliefs of their spouse are ...*

	<b>Very similar</b>	<b>Somewhat similar</b>	<b>Not too/Not at all similar</b>	<b>Not sure/No answer</b>
<b>All married U.S. adults</b>	51%	30%	14%	5%=100%
Spouse has same religious identity	62	28	7	4
Spouse has different religious identity	21	37	34	8

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Similarities in the importance of religion between spouses

Among married people who say religion is very important in their own life, 68% say it also is very important in their spouse's life.

And among married people who say religion is not too or not at all important in their own life, 78% also say this is the case in their spouse's life.

---

### Most married U.S. adults who say religion is very important to them also say it's very important to their spouse

*% of married U.S. adults who say religion is \_\_\_ in their spouse's life*

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Not too/Not at all important</b>	<b>No answer</b>
<b>All married U.S. adults</b>	36%	25%	38%	1%=100%
<i>Among married respondents who say religion is ___ important in their own life</i>				
Very	68	21	10	1
Somewhat	20	44	34	1
Not too/Not at all	6	15	78	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Frequency of religious discussions in marriages

Among married respondents, 36% report discussing religion with their spouse weekly or more often. And 47% say they discuss religion monthly or less often with their spouse, while 16% say they never talk with their spouse about religion.

People in same-religion marriages are more likely to discuss religion with their spouse than are people in interfaith relationships, according to the survey. Among U.S. adults married to someone of the same religion, 43% say they talk with their spouse about religion weekly or more often. Among those in mixed marriages, the corresponding share is 16%.

---

### 36% of married Americans discuss religion with their spouse at least weekly

*% of married U.S. adults who talk about religion with their spouse ...*

	<b>NET Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>NET Monthly or less often</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Less often</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>No answer</b>
<b>All married U.S. adults</b>	<b>36%</b>	16%	20%	<b>47%</b>	14%	34%	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%=100%</b>
Spouse has same religion	<b>43</b>	20	23	<b>43</b>	13	30	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>
Spouse has different religion	<b>16</b>	6	10	<b>60</b>	15	46	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religion among unmarried people who are living with a partner

Overall, 62% of unmarried people living with a partner identify with the same religion their partner does, while 38% say their partner has a different religious identity. By comparison, 74% of married people report that their spouse shares their religion, while 26% say their spouse has a different religious identity.

---

### About 6 in 10 adults living with a romantic partner are in a same-religion relationship

*Among U.S. adults living with a partner, % who say their partner ...*

Has the same religion as they do	62%
Has a different religion from them	<u>38</u>
	<b>100</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 5. Religious upbringing and childhood education

The vast majority of Americans were raised in a religion. Fully 86% say that as children, they identified with Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam or another religion. Just 13% of U.S. adults say that as children, they did not identify with *any* religion.

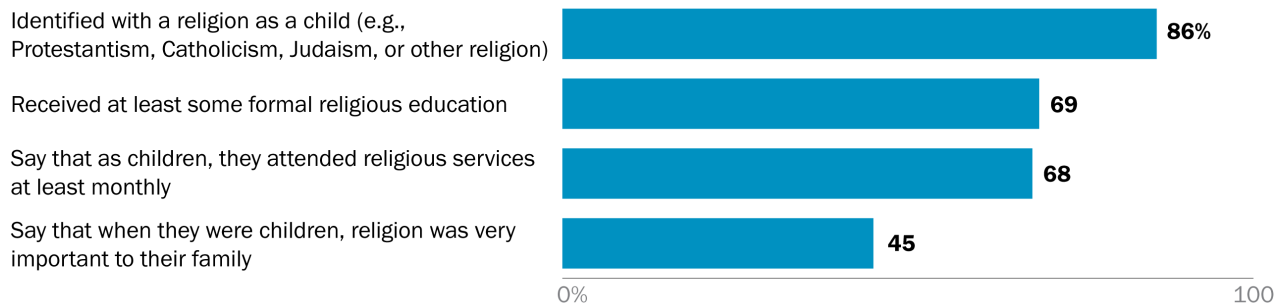
The Religious Landscape Study (RLS) shows, furthermore, that 68% of U.S. adults say they grew up attending religious services at least once or twice a month, including 56% who say they went at least once a week.

Seven-in-ten U.S. adults say they received at least some formal religious education as children, attending either a private religious school or other religious education programs such as Sunday school or CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine). This includes 35% of Americans who received *a lot* of formal religious education (seven or more years attending either type).

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### Most Americans say they were raised in a religion, grew up going to religious services at least monthly

*% of U.S. adults who ...*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

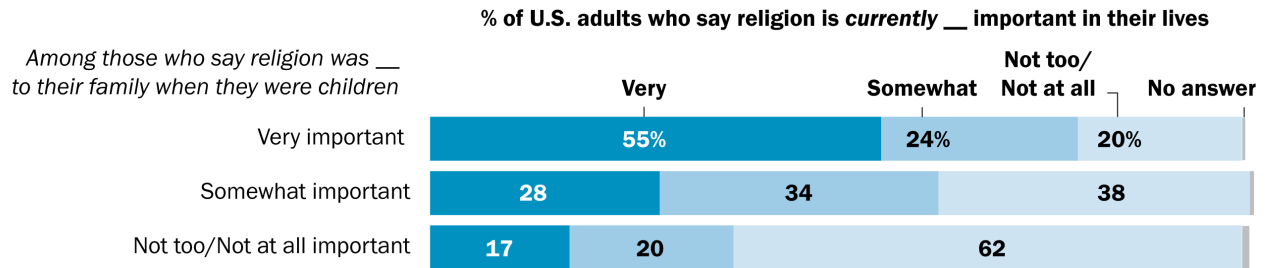
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In addition, 45% of Americans say religion was very important to their family when they were children.

The survey shows a clear relationship between people's religious upbringing and how religious they are now. People raised in highly religious families are more likely to be religious themselves as adults.

## 55% of Americans who grew up in families in which religion was very important say religion is very important in their own lives today



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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For example, among adults who say religion was very important to their family when they were children, 55% say religion is very important in their own lives today. Far fewer people who grew up in families in which religion was less important say it is very important in their own lives today.

Still, growing up in a religious home is no guarantee that a person will view religion as very important as an adult. Among adults who say they were raised in homes where religion was very important to their family, 24% say religion is *somewhat* important to them today, and an additional 20% say it is *not too* important or *not at all* important.

Age plays a role in how people answer these questions. The younger they are, the less likely U.S. adults are to say they were raised in religious homes. And the “stickiness” of a religious upbringing may be declining: In general, younger U.S. adults who were raised in highly religious homes are less religious today than older U.S. adults who were raised in highly religious homes.

### Read more in this chapter about:

- [Childhood religious identity](#)
- [Religious service attendance during childhood](#)
- [Importance of religion during childhood](#)
- [Childhood religious education](#)
- [Age differences in religious upbringing](#)
- [Connection between religious upbringing and religious outcomes](#)
- [Age differences in the ‘stickiness’ of religious upbringing](#)

While this chapter includes data on U.S. adults' religious affiliation and attendance at religious services *as children* – and on the importance of religion to them while they were growing up – you can read more about U.S. adults' *current* levels of religious affiliation in [Chapter 1](#), about current levels of religious attendance in [Chapter 8](#), and about religion's current importance to adults in [Chapter 7](#).

## Childhood religious identity

The vast majority of U.S. adults – 86% – say they were raised in a religion. This includes 80% who were raised as Christians and an additional 6% who were raised in other, non-Christian religions.

Overall, 46% of U.S. adults say they were raised as Protestants, and 30% say they were raised as Catholics. Smaller shares were raised as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, widely known as Mormons (2%); Orthodox Christians (1%); and Jehovah’s Witnesses (1%).

Among the survey’s respondents, 2% say they were raised Jewish by religion, 1% say they were raised Muslim, 1% were raised Buddhist, and 1% grew up Hindu.

In addition, 1% of U.S. adults say they were raised as atheists, 1% were raised as agnostics, and 11% say they were raised in no particular religion.

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### 86% of Americans were raised in a religion

*% of U.S. adults who say that as children, they were raised ...*

<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>86%</b>
Christian	80
Protestant	46
Catholic	30
Orthodox Christian	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	2
Jehovah’s Witness	1
Other Christian	1
Other religions	6
Jewish	2
Muslim	1
Buddhist	1
Hindu	1
Other world religions	<1
Something else	<1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>13</b>
Atheist	1
Agnostic	1
Nothing in particular	11
<b>No answer</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religious service attendance during childhood

A majority of U.S. adults (56%) say they went to religious services weekly or more often as children, and an additional 11% say they grew up going to religious services once or twice a month.

Looking just at people raised as Christians, 78% say they grew up going to church at least monthly, including 63% who say they went at least weekly.

People raised in religions other than Christianity report having attended religious services at lower rates as children.

Among people who say they were raised religiously unaffiliated, 17% say they grew up going to religious services at least monthly.

### Among Americans raised as Christians, 78% say they grew up going to church at least once a month

*% who say they attended religious services \_\_\_ growing up*

	NET At least once a month	At least weekly	Once or twice a month	NET A few times a year or less often	A few times a year	Seldom/ Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>68%</b>	56%	11%	<b>31%</b>	13%	19%
<i>Among those who were raised ...</i>						
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>76</b>	63	12	<b>24</b>	13	11
Christian	<b>78</b>	66	12	<b>21</b>	11	10
Protestant	<b>80</b>	67	13	<b>20</b>	11	9
Catholic	<b>75</b>	64	12	<b>24</b>	12	12
Orthodox Christian	<b>62</b>	42	20	<b>36</b>	21	16
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>88</b>	82	7	<b>11</b>	6	4
Other religions	<b>44</b>	30	14	<b>55</b>	28	27
Jewish	<b>49</b>	33	16	<b>50</b>	29	21
Muslim	<b>55</b>	46	9	<b>44</b>	26	18
Buddhist	<b>24</b>	10	13	<b>76</b>	25	51
Hindu	<b>49</b>	28	21	<b>51</b>	35	16
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>17</b>	11	6	<b>83</b>	14	69

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Importance of religion during childhood

Overall, 45% of U.S. adults say that religion was very important to their family when they were growing up.

Looking just at people who were raised as Christians, half say religion was very important to their family when they were children, including 49% of those raised Protestant and 51% of those raised Catholic.

Among U.S. adults raised in non-Christian religions, the shares who say religion was very important to their family when they were children range from 27% among those raised Buddhist to 66% among those raised Muslim.

Most adults who were raised without a religious affiliation say religion was *not too* or *not at all* important to their family when they were growing up (69%), while 15% say religion was *very* important to their family.

Far fewer Americans say religion was very important *to them personally* when they were children than say it was very important *to their family* while they were growing up. This pattern is seen among people raised in a wide variety of religious traditions.

### 45% of Americans say religion was very important to their family growing up

% who say ...

	Religion was __ important to THEIR FAMILY when they were growing up			Religion was __ important to THEM PERSONALLY when they were growing up		
	Very	Some- what	Not too/ Not at all	Very	Some- what	Not too/ Not at all
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	45%	31%	23%	29%	34%	36%
<i>Among those who were raised ...</i>						
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	50	33	16	32	36	31
Christian	50	33	16	32	37	30
Protestant	49	33	17	34	36	29
Catholic	51	35	14	30	39	31
Orthodox Christian	37	43	19	23	37	39
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	70	19	11	47	30	22
Other religions	42	36	21	29	30	41
Jewish	32	42	26	24	27	48
Muslim	66	23	9	51	30	18
Buddhist	27	40	32	15	28	56
Hindu	53	35	10	27	44	28
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	15	16	69	10	16	73

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Childhood religious education

Most Americans (69%) say they received at least some formal religious education as children. This includes 62% of U.S. adults who say that as children, they attended Sunday school, CCD or some other kind of religious education for one to three years (20%), four to six years (13%), or seven or more years (28%).

Fewer people (24%) say they attended a private religious school as a child for at least one to three years.

### Most U.S. adults say they received at least some formal religious education as a kid

*% who say they did the following as children*

	Attended Sunday school, CCD or some other form of religious education for ...				Attended private religious school for ...			
	1-3 years	4-6 years	7+ years	Did not attend	1-3 years	4-6 years	7+ years	Did not attend
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	20%	13%	28%	37%	8%	6%	11%	75%
<i>Among those who were raised __</i>								
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	21	15	32	31	8	6	12	73
Christian	21	15	33	29	8	6	12	73
Protestant	19	15	42	23	7	4	5	83
Catholic	26	15	21	37	10	10	23	57
Orthodox Christian	21	14	17	46	9	3	9	76
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	17	19	42	21	6	4	1	88
Other religions	16	11	13	59	8	7	10	74
Jewish	18	19	26	36	8	8	18	65
Muslim	25	12	8	54	9	13	6	72
Buddhist	11	2	5	82	7	5	3	85
Hindu	11	3	6	81	8	5	11	76
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	14	4	4	77	5	3	3	89

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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We combined these two questions (about attendance at Sunday school or other religious education programs, and attendance at private religious schools) to construct a scale measuring levels of religious education.

According to the scale, 35% of U.S. adults received *a lot* of religious education, meaning they attended either a private religious school or an extracurricular religious program for seven or more years.

An additional 18% received *a fair amount* of religious education. By this we mean people who attended private religious school or religious education programs (or both) for four to six years, as well as those who attended one to three years of both kinds of programs.

Another 16% of Americans received *a little* religious education – meaning they attended a private religious school for one to three years or an extracurricular religious program for one to three years.

Three-in-ten Americans say they received *no* religious education as children.<sup>44</sup>

Among people who were raised as Christians, 41% received a lot of religious education when they were growing up, as did 37% of people raised Jewish. Smaller shares of people raised

### 35% of U.S. adults received ‘a lot’ of formal religious education as children

*Summary measure of formal religious education respondents received as children, including Sunday school/CCD and/or attending a private religious school*

	None	A little amount	A fair	A lot
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	30%	16%	18%	35%
<i>Among those who were raised __</i>				
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>				
Christian	21	16	19	41
Protestant	21	16	18	44
Catholic	21	17	22	39
Orthodox Christian	38	21	18	21
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	19	15	22	42
Other religions	49	13	18	19
Jewish	24	13	25	37
Muslim	45	20	22	12
Buddhist	73	12	8	7
Hindu	69	6	12	14
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	72	14	7	6

Note: Those who gave unclear answers are not shown. Respondents with no religious education are those who report having attended neither Sunday school, CCD or any other religious education program, nor a private religious school from K-12. “A little” religious education includes respondents who attended either a private religious school or an extracurricular religious program for 1-3 years total. “A fair amount” of religious education includes respondents who attended a religious private school or Sunday school (or both) for 4-6 years, as well as those who received 1-3 years of both. These three categories only include respondents who provided an answer to both questions about private religious schooling and extracurricular religious education programs. “A lot” of religious education includes respondents who attended either one of these for 7 years or more, even if they did not answer both questions. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>44</sup> Respondents with no religious education are those who report having attended neither Sunday school, CCD or any other religious education program, nor a private religious school from kindergarten through 12th grade. “A little” religious education includes respondents who attended either a private religious school or an extracurricular religious program for one to three years total. “A fair amount” of religious education includes respondents who attended a religious private school or Sunday school (or both) for four to six years, as well as those who received one to three years of both. These three categories only include respondents who provided an answer to both questions about private religious schooling and extracurricular religious education programs. “A lot” of religious education includes respondents who attended either one of these for seven or more years, even if they did not answer both questions.

in other religions received a lot of religious education as children.

Most people who were raised religiously unaffiliated say they had no formal religious education as children.

## Age differences in religious upbringing

Older adults are generally more likely than younger adults to have been raised with religion in their lives, according to several measures in the survey. For example, 94% of people born before 1950 say they were raised in a religion, compared with 81% of those born from 1990 to 1999, and 75% of adults born between 2000 and 2006.

There's a similar age-related pattern when it comes to attendance at religious services when growing up and receiving a lot of formal religious education as children.

The survey's question about the importance of religion to people's families while they were growing up is an exception to this pattern. The youngest adults are no less likely than the oldest adults to say religion was very important to their family while they were children.

### Compared with older U.S. adults, fewer young people say they were raised in a religion or received a lot of religious education

*% who say that as children ...*

	They were raised in a religion	They attended religious services at least monthly	They received a lot of formal religious education	Religion was very important to them personally	Religion was very important to their family
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	86%	68%	35%	29%	45%
<i>Among adults born in ___</i>					
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	94	77	49	36	44
1950s (now ages 64-74)	93	76	45	31	45
1960s (now ages 54-64)	90	69	38	29	45
1970s (now ages 44-54)	86	66	35	30	46
1980s (now ages 34-44)	83	63	31	28	45
1990s (now ages 24-34)	81	64	29	28	46
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	75	61	19	25	47

Note: "A lot of formal religious education" includes those who attended either private religious schools or religious education programs (such as Sunday school or CCD) for seven or more years. The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Connection between religious upbringing and religious outcomes

People who say they were raised in religious homes are more likely – compared with people who were not raised that way – to be religious in adulthood.

For example, there are more religious service attenders among people who say they grew up going to religious services at least monthly than among people who didn't attend religious services as often growing up (40% vs. 17%).

Similarly, U.S. adults who say religion was very important to their family when they were children are more apt to say religion is very important in their lives today than are people raised in homes where religion was less important.

Moreover, the survey shows that among people raised Protestant or Catholic, those who grew up in highly religious environments have retained their childhood religious identity at higher rates than those who were raised in less religious families.

For example, among people who were raised Protestant and grew up attending church monthly in families in which religion was very important, 80% still identify as Protestant today. By contrast, among people who were raised Protestant and grew up attending church a few times a year or less often in families in which religion was *not* very important, 57% are still Protestant today.

But many people raised in a religious home don't grow up to be particularly religious. For example, among Catholics who were raised in religious families, three-in-ten are now either religiously unaffiliated (16%) or identify with a religion other than Catholicism (15%).

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### People who went to religious services at least monthly growing up say they go more regularly now as adults than do people who went less often growing up

*% who say they **currently** attend religious services ...*

<i>Among U.S. adults who say that as children, they attended religious services __</i>	<b>At least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less often</b>	<b>No answer</b>
At least once a month	40%	59%	1%=100%
A few times a year or less often	17	83	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Among U.S. adults who were raised Protestant or Catholic, those who grew up in religious homes are more likely to have retained their religious identity

*% who now ...*

	<b>... are still Protestant</b>	<b>... identify with another religion</b>	<b>... have no religion</b>	<b>No answer</b>
<i>Among U.S. adults who were <b>raised Protestant</b></i>	70%	6%	22%	1%=100%
Attended church monthly, religion was very important to family	80	5	15	1
Attended a few times a year or less often, religion not very important to family	57	6	36	1
All others	65	8	26	1
	<b>... are still Catholic</b>	<b>... identify with another religion</b>	<b>... have no religion</b>	<b>No answer</b>
<i>Among U.S. adults who were <b>raised Catholic</b></i>	57%	18%	24%	1%=100%
Attended church monthly, religion was very important to family	68	15	16	1
Attended a few times a year or less often, religion not very important to family	44	21	33	2
All others	52	18	29	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Age differences in the ‘stickiness’ of a religious upbringing

In general, the survey data also suggests that a religious upbringing is less “sticky” among today’s young adults than among older age groups.

### *Importance of religion*

People in the youngest cohorts of adults who were raised in families in which religion was very important are far less likely than older adults raised in such families to say religion is very important to them now.

### Among U.S. adults raised in families in which religion was very important, younger ones are less likely to say religion is very important to them now

	% who now say religion is __ in their lives		
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too/Not at all important
<i>Among U.S. adults who grew up in families in which religion was VERY IMPORTANT and who were born in ...</i>			
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	71%	18%	10%
1950s (now ages 64-74)	64	22	13
1960s (now ages 54-64)	60	25	14
1970s (now ages 44-54)	56	24	19
1980s (now ages 34-44)	49	26	25
1990s (now ages 24-34)	45	25	30
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	44	25	31
<i>Among U.S. adults who grew up in families in which religion was NOT TOO/NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT and who were born in ...</i>			
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	30%	21%	48%
1950s (now ages 64-74)	24	22	54
1960s (now ages 54-64)	22	25	52
1970s (now ages 44-54)	19	19	61
1980s (now ages 34-44)	13	18	69
1990s (now ages 24-34)	11	17	72
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	6	18	76

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. The survey asked respondents, “In what year were you born?” Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent’s year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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*Religious affiliation*

Among people who were raised as Protestants, older adults are more likely to still identify with Protestantism today than are younger Americans. For example, roughly eight-in-ten adults born in the 1950s or earlier who were raised Protestant still identify that way today, compared with roughly six-in-ten adults born since 1980 who were raised Protestant.

Among people who were raised Catholic, six-in-ten or more who were born in the 1960s or earlier are still Catholic today, compared with about half of those who were born in the 1980s or later.

The pattern plays out differently for religious “nones,” in that older U.S. adults who were raised religiously unaffiliated are *less* likely to still be religiously unaffiliated than are younger adults who were raised that way.



## Among Americans raised as Protestants, young adults are less likely than older adults to identify as Protestant today; the same is true for Catholics

Among U.S. adults who were <b>raised Protestant</b> and were born in ___	% who now ...			
	Are still Protestant	Identify with another religion	Identify with no religion	No answer
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	82%	7%	10%	1%=100%
1950s (now ages 64-74)	80	6	13	1
1960s (now ages 54-64)	77	6	17	1
1970s (now ages 44-54)	71	5	23	1
1980s (now ages 34-44)	62	7	30	1
1990s (now ages 24-34)	57	7	35	1
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	59	8	32	1

Among U.S. adults who were <b>raised Catholic</b> and were born in ___	% who now ...			
	Are still Catholic	Identify with another religion	Identify with no religion	No answer
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	71%	14%	13%	2%=100%
1950s (now ages 64-74)	61	21	17	2
1960s (now ages 54-64)	63	20	16	1
1970s (now ages 44-54)	56	19	24	1
1980s (now ages 34-44)	50	20	30	1
1990s (now ages 24-34)	49	11	40	<1
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	52	12	36	0

Among U.S. adults who were <b>raised in no religion</b> and were born in ___	% who now ...		
	Still identify with no religion	Identify with a religion	No answer
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	46%	51%	3%=100%
1950s (now ages 64-74)	60	40	1
1960s (now ages 54-64)	61	37	2
1970s (now ages 44-54)	69	29	2
1980s (now ages 34-44)	77	21	1
1990s (now ages 24-34)	80	19	1
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	79	20	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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*Attendance at religious services*

Among those born in 1949 or earlier who grew up attending religious services at least monthly, more than half (53%) say they still attend monthly today. That's a far higher rate of religious attendance than is reported by adults born in the 1980s (35%), the 1990s (33%), or born between 2000 and 2006 (35%).

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**Compared with older U.S. adults, fewer young people who grew up attending religious services monthly still attend monthly as adults**

	% who say they now attend religious services ...	
	At least once a month	A few times a year or less often
<i>Among U.S. adults who grew up attending religious services AT LEAST MONTHLY and were born in __</i>		
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	53%	46%
1950s (now ages 64-74)	44	55
1960s (now ages 54-64)	39	61
1970s (now ages 44-54)	41	58
1980s (now ages 34-44)	35	64
1990s (now ages 24-34)	33	67
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	35	65
<i>Among U.S. adults who grew up attending religious services A FEW TIMES A YEAR OR LESS OFTEN and were born in __</i>		
1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)	31	67
1950s (now ages 64-74)	20	79
1960s (now ages 54-64)	21	78
1970s (now ages 44-54)	19	81
1980s (now ages 34-44)	15	85
1990s (now ages 24-34)	10	90
2000-06 (now ages 18-24)	9	91

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. The survey asked respondents, "In what year were you born?" Approximate age was calculated by subtracting the respondent's year of birth from the year in which they completed the survey (2023 or 2024).

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 6. Religion, fertility and child-rearing

The new Religious Landscape Study (RLS) shows that average family size varies by religious affiliation.

To compare how many children are born to parents in various groups, we asked all respondents how many biological children they have ever had during their lives. Since most Americans have completed childbearing by the time they reach ages 40 to 59, we focus on answers from respondents in this age group to estimate “completed fertility.”

In the new RLS, Christians have a higher completed fertility rate (2.2 children per respondent) than religiously unaffiliated Americans (1.8) and Americans who belong to non-Christian religions (1.8).

Another way to gauge family size is by asking respondents whether they are *currently* parents or guardians of children under the age of 18 living in their home. Overall, Christian adults (27%) are a little less likely to be living with minor children than are religiously unaffiliated adults (29%) or adults who identify with non-Christian religions (31%).

How is it that U.S. Christians are *less* likely than other Americans to have children under 18 at home, but also that they’ve had *more* children over the course of their lives than other Americans, on average? A key factor is age. [U.S. Christians are older, on average, than religiously unaffiliated people and people who identify with other religions](#). Just 42% of the Christian respondents in the RLS are between the ages of 25 and 54 – ages in which children are often present in homes – compared with 60% of religiously unaffiliated people and 56% of people who belong to other religions.

### 27% of U.S. Christians have children under 18 at home

	Completed fertility rate (average number of children ever born to adults ages 40-59)	Share (among adults of all ages) who have children under 18 currently living at home
All U.S. adults	2.1	28%
Christian	2.2	27%
Other religions	1.8	31%
Religiously unaffiliated	1.8	29%

Note: The “Completed fertility rate” column reports the average number of children ever born to people ages 40-59 in each group. Women tend to report slightly higher fertility rates than men, but the patterns are largely unchanged when analysis is restricted to women.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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In addition to asking about family size, the survey also asked parents whether they engage in various religious activities with their children under 18 who live at home, and if these children receive specific types of religious education.<sup>45</sup>

Approximately four-in-ten respondents who are parents or guardians of minor children at home say they pray or read scripture with at least one of their children. About a third of parents of minor children say they send their kids to a religious education program, and 17% say they opt for homeschooling or private religious schooling instead of public school.

Among parents who are highly religious, 81% say they pray or read scripture with their children; 66% say they send their children to a religious education program; and 29% say they homeschool or send their children to a private religious school instead of a public school. Overall, 89% of highly religious parents say they do *at least one* of these things.<sup>46</sup>

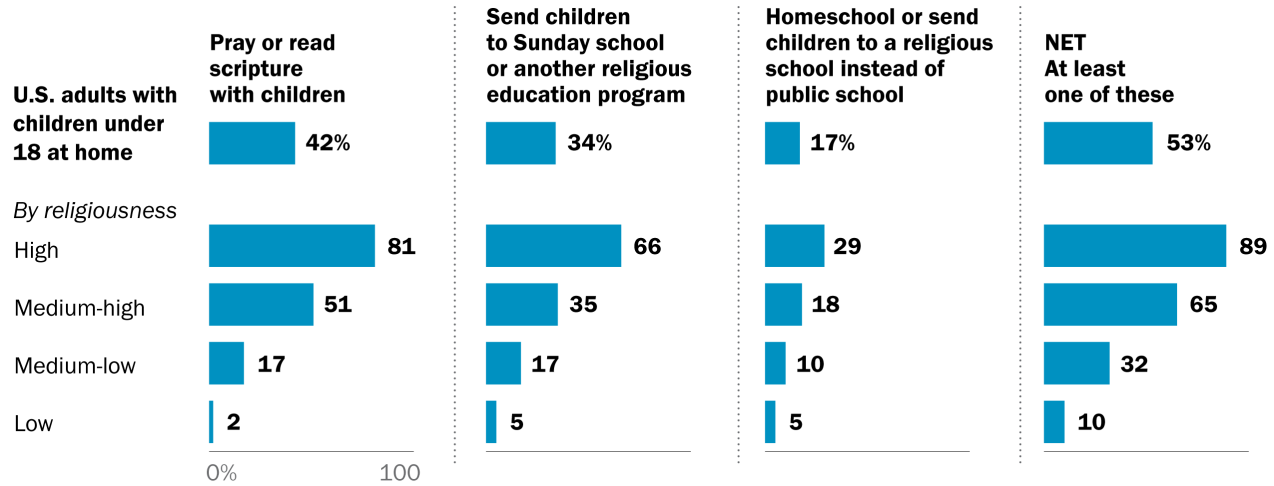
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<sup>45</sup> [Chapter 5](#) of this report describes the religious upbringing of the respondents *themselves* (when they were children) and examines the relationship between their religious upbringing and how religious they are as adults.

<sup>46</sup> We measured religiousness using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God/a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion's importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is "not too important" or "not at all important" in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is "very important" in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

## 8 in 10 highly religious parents say they pray or read scripture with their children

% of U.S. adults who are parents/guardians of children under 18 currently living at home who ...



Note: Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### Read more about how religious groups answer the survey's questions about:

- [Parental status and fertility](#)
- [Parents' religious activities with children](#)

## Parental status and fertility rates across religious groups

Overall, 28% of U.S. adults report being the parent or guardian of at least one child under 18 currently living with them.

Similar shares of religiously affiliated (28%) and religiously unaffiliated (29%) adults say this, although sizable differences exist within these groups.

Among people identifying with a religion, for example, Hindus (44%) and Muslims (42%) are most likely to be raising children at home. At the other end of the spectrum, 22% of Jewish adults and 21% of mainline Protestants say they are the parent or guardian of a minor child in their home.

(On average, Jewish Americans and mainline Protestants are much older than Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, Jewish and mainline Protestant

respondents are more likely than Hindu and Muslim respondents to be past the period of their lives when parents typically have minor children living with them. Refer to [Chapter 24](#) for additional details about the age of people in various religious groups.)

The survey finds that among adults between the ages of 40 and 59, Christians have had 2.2 children, on average. Jewish Americans ages 40 to 59 report having had 2.0 children during their

### Fertility, parental status among U.S. religious groups

	Share who have children under 18 currently living at home	Completed fertility rate (average number of children ever born to adults ages 40-59)
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	28%	2.1
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	28	2.2
Christian	27	2.2
Protestant	27	2.2
<i>Evangelical</i>	29	2.3
<i>Mainline</i>	21	1.9
<i>Historically Black</i>	31	2.3
Catholic	27	2.2
Orthodox Christian	27	–
Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	37	–
Other religions	31	1.8
Jewish	22	2.0
Muslim	42	–
Buddhist	31	–
Hindu	44	–
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	29	1.8
Atheist	25	1.5
Agnostic	23	1.4
Nothing in particular	32	1.9

Note: The “Completed fertility rate” column reports the average number of children ever born to people ages 40-59 in each group with a sufficient sample size; dashes indicate the survey did not include enough responses from people ages 40-59 to report their results.

Women tend to report slightly higher fertility rates than men, but the patterns here are largely unchanged when analysis is restricted to women.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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lifetimes, on average, while religiously unaffiliated adults in this age range have had an average of 1.8 children.

## Parents' religious activities with children

Among Christians in the new survey who are currently the parents or guardians of at least one child in their home, 58% say they pray or read scripture with their children. About half (48%) say they send their child to a religious education program, and 22% say they homeschool their children or send them to a private religious school instead of public school.

In total, 70% of Christian parents engage in at least one of these forms of religious education for their children.

Parents who identify as evangelical Protestants (82%) or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (84%) – who are widely known as Mormons – are even more likely than Christian

parents overall to say they do at least one of these things with their children.

Far fewer religious “nones” who are parents of children under 18 living at home say they participate in these kinds of religious activities with their children. For example, just 9% say they send their child to a religious education program.

(The survey did not include enough responses from Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu respondents who are currently parenting minor children to be able to report their answers to these questions.)

### 58% of U.S. Christian parents say they pray or read scripture with their children

*% of U.S. adults who are parents/guardians of children under 18 currently living at home who ...*

	Pray or read scripture with children	Send children to Sunday school or another program	Homeschool or send children to a religious school	NET At least one of these
<b>U.S. adults with children under 18 at home</b>	42%	34%	17%	<b>53%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	55	46	21	<b>68</b>
Christian	58	48	22	<b>70</b>
Protestant	63	54	23	<b>75</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	72	60	28	<b>82</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	41	40	13	<b>57</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	64	47	18	<b>71</b>
Catholic	44	36	20	<b>60</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	80	66	17	<b>84</b>
Other religions	38	26	18	<b>48</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	13	9	8	<b>21</b>
Atheist	2	4	4	<b>7</b>
Agnostic	4	6	5	<b>11</b>
Nothing in particular	17	11	9	<b>26</b>

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## **III. Religious or spiritual beliefs and practices**

## 7. Importance of religion and the Bible

The percentage of Americans who say religion is *very* important in their lives has been relatively stable in recent years, though it appears to be lower than it was in the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies.

Today, about four-in-ten Americans say religion is very important to them. That’s what we’ve found both in the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) and in other surveys we have conducted since 2021.<sup>47</sup>

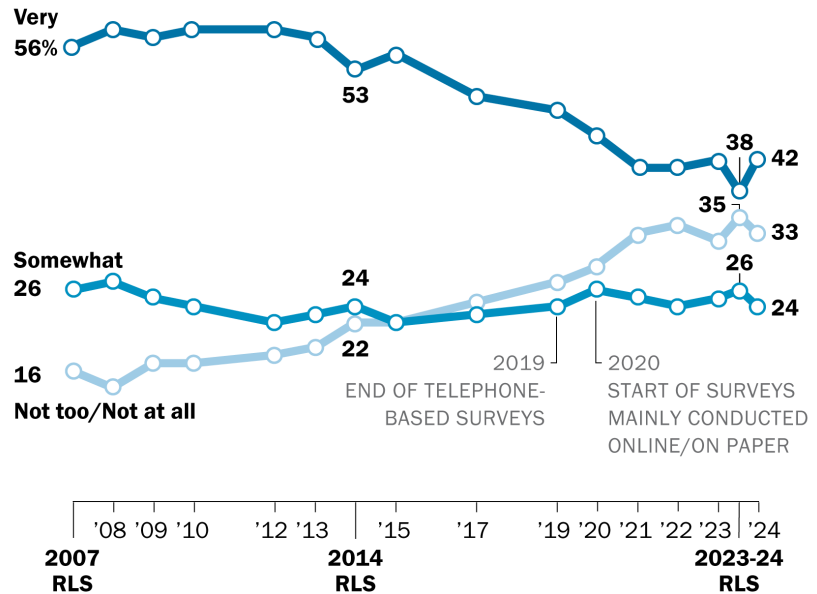
In contrast, more than half of U.S. adults said religion was very important in their lives in 2007 (56%) and 2014 (53%).

Some of this decline reflects the growth of religiously unaffiliated Americans: Adults who identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” rarely say religion is very important to them personally.

The decline also may be partly due to a “mode effect,” as Pew Research Center has changed the way it conducts surveys. Unlike the 2007 and 2014 landscape studies, which were conducted by

### Share of Americans who say religion is very important has declined over the long term, but is more stable recently

% of U.S. adults who say religion is \_\_\_ important in their lives



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Comparisons over time are complicated by differences in the way each survey was conducted. The 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Studies. Other estimates come from Pew Research Center’s random-digit-dial telephone surveys (through 2019) and from the Center’s annual National Public Opinion Reference Survey (since 2020). Prior to 2020, our surveys were conducted by a live interviewer over the phone. Since 2020, our interviews have been mostly self-administered online and on paper. Refer to Appendix A for more details. In addition, the gap between the 2023-24 RLS and 2024 NPORS estimates may be due to context effects; compared with the NPORS, the RLS asked more questions about religion before asking this question, which may elicit a different response. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>47</sup> The gap between the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) and the results from each National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS) may be due to “context effects.” The order of questions in the RLS effectively prompts respondents to think about their religious identity, beliefs and practices before asking them how important religion is in their lives. NPORS contains fewer questions about religious beliefs and practices, and therefore may elicit a different response about the importance of religion in a respondent’s life.

telephone, the new RLS was administered primarily online and on paper. The Center’s National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS), repeated annually since 2020, also is conducted online and by paper.

A [companion study conducted alongside the new RLS](#) suggests that people are somewhat more inclined to say religion is very important in their lives when speaking to a live interviewer over the telephone than when reading questions by themselves and responding online or on paper. This aligns with social scientists’ findings that people taking surveys sometimes give more socially desirable answers when talking with another person, perhaps unconsciously leaning toward the answers they think the other person expects or wants to hear. The size and direction of this “mode effect” can vary, depending on the question.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, the percentage of Americans who say religion is very important in their lives was already slipping before we transitioned to online and paper surveys, and the mode effect on this question does not appear to be big enough to account for the entire decline since 2014.

### Most Christians in the U.S. say the Bible is very or extremely important in their lives

% who say the Bible is \_\_\_ important in their lives

Among ...	Extremely/Very	Somewhat	Not too/Not at all	No answer
Christians	64%		21%	14%
Other religions	17	19	64	
Religiously unaffiliated	10	13	77	

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.  
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The 2023-24 RLS also asked respondents about the importance of the Bible in their lives. While most Christians say the Bible is either *extremely* important or *very* important, most adults in other U.S. religious groups say the Bible is *not too* important or *not at all* important.

**Read on for more details about how specific groups answer questions about the [importance of religion](#) and the [importance of the Bible](#).**

<sup>48</sup> Additional details about the implications of the change in survey mode are provided in [Appendix A](#).

## Religion's importance

Nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults say religion is very important or somewhat important in their lives. But there are sharp differences across religious groups.

Among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons), members of historically Black Protestant denominations, and evangelical Protestants, roughly seven-in-ten say religion is very important to them personally.

Fewer than half of mainline Protestants and Catholics say religion is very important to them.

Most U.S. Muslims (60%) say religion is very important in their lives, while Buddhists and Hindus are more likely to say religion is *somewhat* important than to say it is *very* important.

### Slim majority of religiously affiliated Americans say religion is very important in their lives

% who say religion is \_\_\_ important in their lives

	NET Very/ Somewhat	Very	Somewhat	Not too/ Not at all
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>64%</b>	38%	26%	<b>35%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>83</b>	53	31	<b>16</b>
Christian	<b>86</b>	55	31	<b>13</b>
Protestant	<b>88</b>	60	28	<b>11</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>92</b>	69	23	<b>7</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>77</b>	37	41	<b>22</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>93</b>	71	22	<b>6</b>
Catholic	<b>82</b>	44	38	<b>17</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>75</b>	43	31	<b>23</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>95</b>	72	23	<b>4</b>
Other religions	<b>60</b>	29	31	<b>40</b>
Jewish	<b>57</b>	27	30	<b>43</b>
Muslim	<b>87</b>	60	26	<b>13</b>
Buddhist	<b>62</b>	21	41	<b>38</b>
Hindu	<b>70</b>	24	46	<b>30</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>19</b>	4	15	<b>81</b>
Atheist	<b>2</b>	<1	1	<b>98</b>
Agnostic	<b>7</b>	<1	6	<b>93</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>27</b>	7	20	<b>72</b>

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Those who did not answer the question are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Jewish Americans are among the most likely of the religiously affiliated groups studied to say religion is not too important or not at all important in their lives – though 27% say it is very important.

Most people who are religiously unaffiliated say religion is not important in their lives, including 98% of atheists who say it is not too important or not at all important.

## The Bible's importance

Overall, 44% of U.S. adults say the Bible is extremely important or very important in their lives, while 19% say the Bible is somewhat important, and 37% say the Bible is not too important or not at all important.<sup>49</sup>

A majority of U.S. Christians say the Bible is extremely important or very important in their lives, but there are large differences across Christian subgroups.

The vast majority of members of historically Black Protestant denominations, evangelical Protestants, and Latter-day Saints say the Bible is extremely or very important in their lives. Fewer than half of mainline Protestants and Catholics say this.

Most Americans who identify with non-Christian religions

say the Bible is not too important or not at all important to them personally, though roughly one-quarter of Jews (22%) and Muslims (25%) say the Bible is extremely or very important in their lives.

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### Most evangelicals and members of historically Black Protestant churches say the Bible is extremely or very important to them

*% who say the Bible is \_\_\_ important in their lives*

	<b>Extremely/ Very</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not too/ Not at all</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	44%	19%	37%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	59	21	19
Christian	64	21	14
Protestant	72	18	10
<i>Evangelical</i>	82	13	5
<i>Mainline</i>	45	31	23
<i>Historically Black</i>	84	13	2
Catholic	46	30	24
Orthodox Christian	46	24	31
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	80	13	8
Other religions	17	19	64
Jewish	22	15	62
Muslim	25	22	52
Buddhist	10	25	64
Hindu	19	18	62
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	10	13	77
Atheist	<1	2	97
Agnostic	1	7	92
Nothing in particular	15	18	67

Note: Those who did not answer the question are not shown

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>49</sup> The "extremely important" response option is offered on this question but not on the question of religion's importance.

Relatively few religiously unaffiliated adults (10%) say the Bible is extremely or very important in their lives. This modest share comes almost exclusively from people who say their religion is “nothing in particular,” rather than from atheists or agnostics.

This question was not asked in previous RLS surveys, so we are not able to show trends over time.

## 8. Religious attendance and congregational involvement

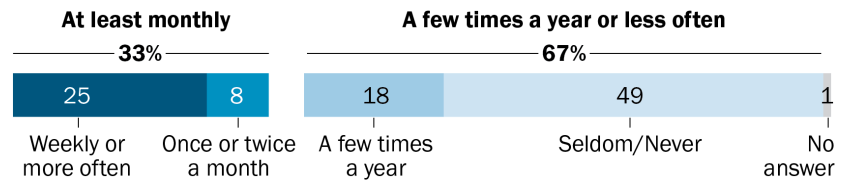
One-third of U.S. adults say they attend religious services in person at least once a month, including 25% who report going at least once a week.

Far more Americans (67%) say they attend religious services in person a few times a year or less often. This includes about half of U.S. adults who seldom or never attend services.

In response to a separate question, the new survey finds that 23% of Americans watch religious services online or on TV at least once a month, while the majority (76%) do so a few times a year or less often.

### 33% of U.S. adults attend religious services in person at least monthly

*% of U.S. adults who say they attend religious services in person ...*



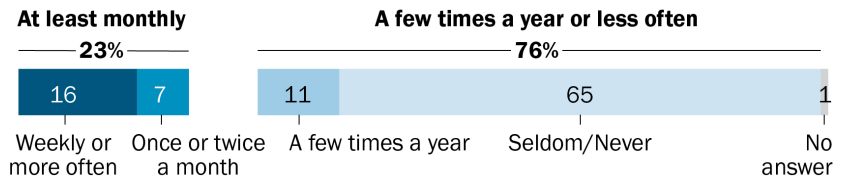
Note: Figures may not add to 100% or subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### 23% of U.S. adults participate in virtual religious services at least monthly

*% of U.S. adults who say they watch religious services online or on TV ...*



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or subtotals indicated due to rounding.

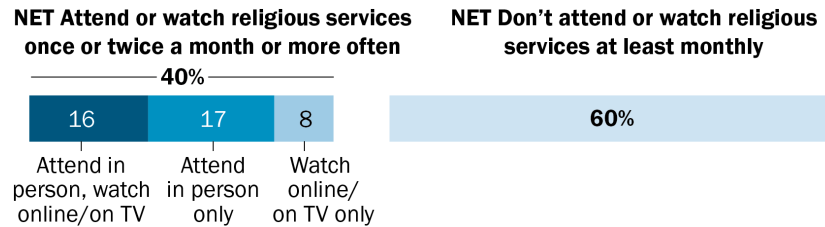
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Looking at these two questions together allows us to see, more broadly, how many Americans participate in religious services. The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) finds that 40% of U.S. adults say they do so at least once a month, either in person or online, or both ways: 16% say they participate both ways, 17% attend only in person, and 8% watch only online or on TV.

## 40% of U.S. adults attend religious services in person or watch them online (or on TV) at least monthly

% of U.S. adults who say they ...



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### Why we don't compare these findings with 2014

In 2014, [the last time we conducted a Religious Landscape Study](#), we asked a single question about religious participation – “How often do you attend religious services?” – without asking separately about in-person attendance and virtual participation. We did not begin asking respondents whether they watch religious services online/on TV until 2020, when the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) caused many congregations to restrict in-person attendance and begin livestreaming their services.

Another difference between this survey and the previous RLS is that the 2014 study was conducted entirely by telephone, while the new survey was conducted mainly online and on paper.<sup>50</sup> [Research shows](#) that telephone surveys tend to produce higher estimates of religious attendance than web/paper surveys do.

Because of these changes, the results of the two surveys on religious service attendance are not directly comparable. What might *appear* to be a sharp drop from 50% of U.S. adults describing themselves as regular (at least monthly) attenders in 2014 to 33% describing themselves that way in 2023-24 *does not necessarily reflect a real change* in behavior. The difference between the two surveys is caused, at least in part, by changes in the ways the surveys were conducted.

That said, the Center's telephone surveys were picking up [a decline in religious attendance](#) in the years before we switched over to online/paper surveys. The share of Americans who reported

<sup>50</sup> The new survey offered respondents the option of participating online, on paper or by calling a toll-free number and participating by phone. Overall, 60% of respondents completed the survey online, 37% on paper and 3% by phone. Complete details are available in the [Methodology](#).



attending religious services at least monthly dropped from 54% in 2007 to 50% in the 2014 RLS and had fallen to 45% by the time the Center transitioned away from phone surveys in 2018-19.

**This chapter covers the new RLS findings about:**

- [Attending religious services in person](#)
- [Watching religious services online or on TV](#)
- [Participating in religious services either in person or online/on TV](#)
- [Belonging to religious and nonreligious organizations](#)

## Attending religious services in person

One-third of U.S. adults say they attend religious services in person at least once or twice a month, while 18% report attending services a few times a year, and 49% seldom or never attend religious services in person.

Most members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) say they attend religious services in person at least monthly (76%), as do 60% of evangelical Protestants.

### 33% of Americans say they attend religious services in person at least monthly

% who say they attend religious services *in person* ...

	NET Monthly or more often	Weekly or more often	Once or twice a month	NET Less than monthly	A few times a year	Seldom/ Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>33%</b>	25%	8%	<b>67%</b>	18%	49%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>45</b>	35	11	<b>54</b>	21	32
Christian	<b>48</b>	37	11	<b>51</b>	21	30
Protestant	<b>51</b>	40	11	<b>48</b>	19	29
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>60</b>	50	10	<b>39</b>	16	23
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>34</b>	23	11	<b>65</b>	24	41
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>46</b>	33	12	<b>52</b>	22	30
Catholic	<b>40</b>	29	11	<b>60</b>	27	32
Orthodox Christian	<b>37</b>	23	15	<b>62</b>	23	39
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>76</b>	69	7	<b>24</b>	13	11
Other religions	<b>23</b>	15	9	<b>76</b>	22	54
Jewish	<b>23</b>	15	8	<b>77</b>	26	50
Muslim	<b>46</b>	39	8	<b>54</b>	22	32
Buddhist	<b>17</b>	6	10	<b>82</b>	26	56
Hindu	<b>35</b>	18	16	<b>65</b>	36	29
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>3</b>	2	2	<b>96</b>	9	88
Atheist	<b>1</b>	<1	1	<b>99</b>	4	95
Agnostic	<b>1</b>	<1	1	<b>99</b>	8	90
Nothing in particular	<b>5</b>	3	2	<b>95</b>	10	85

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Fewer Muslim Americans (46%), members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (46%), Catholics (40%), Orthodox Christians (37%), Hindus (35%) and mainline Protestants (34%) say they go to religious services once a month or more often.

Jewish adults (23%) and Buddhists (17%) are among the least likely groups of religiously affiliated Americans to say they attend religious services in person at least monthly. Among religiously *unaffiliated* adults – those who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – very few regularly attend religious services in person.

## Watching religious services online or on TV

Overall, 16% of U.S. adults say they watch religious services online or on TV at least once a week. An additional 7% say they participate virtually once or twice a month, and 11% do so a few times a year. Most Americans (65%) say they seldom or never watch religious services online or on television.

Members of the historically Black Protestant tradition are among the most likely to say they watch religious services online or on TV at least monthly.

### 54% of members of historically Black Protestant churches watch religious services online or on TV at least monthly

% who say they watch religious services *online or on TV* ...

	NET Monthly or more often	Weekly or more often	Once or twice a month	NET Less than monthly	A few times a year	Seldom/ Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>23%</b>	16%	7%	<b>76%</b>	11%	65%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>31</b>	22	10	<b>68</b>	15	53
Christian	<b>33</b>	23	11	<b>66</b>	15	51
Protestant	<b>39</b>	27	12	<b>60</b>	15	45
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>44</b>	31	13	<b>55</b>	15	40
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>22</b>	12	10	<b>78</b>	15	63
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>54</b>	41	13	<b>44</b>	15	29
Catholic	<b>21</b>	14	7	<b>79</b>	15	64
Orthodox Christian	<b>17</b>	14	3	<b>83</b>	15	68
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>28</b>	17	11	<b>72</b>	38	34
Other religions	<b>17</b>	13	5	<b>82</b>	11	71
Jewish	<b>11</b>	6	5	<b>89</b>	12	77
Muslim	<b>38</b>	34	4	<b>62</b>	11	50
Buddhist	<b>18</b>	10	7	<b>82</b>	9	74
Hindu	<b>22</b>	17	5	<b>78</b>	23	55
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>4</b>	3	2	<b>96</b>	3	92
Atheist	<b>&lt;1</b>	<1	<1	<b>100</b>	1	99
Agnostic	<b>&lt;1</b>	<1	<1	<b>100</b>	2	98
Nothing in particular	<b>6</b>	4	2	<b>93</b>	5	89

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Those who did not answer are not shown.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Participating in religious services either in person or online/on TV

When we combine these two questions about attending religious services in person and watching them online or on television, we find that 40% of U.S. adults say they participate in religious services at least once a month *in some way* – whether in person, online or both.

Latter-day Saints (80%), evangelical Protestants (71%) and members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (66%) report the highest rates of participation in religious services, one way or another, at least monthly.

Latter-day Saints are especially likely to say they attend religious services monthly in person but do not watch services online (52%). Members of historically Black Protestant churches are especially likely to do the reverse (20%).

### 4 in 10 U.S. adults participate in religious services in person or online at least monthly

*% who say they participate in religious services ...*

	In person and online monthly or more often	In person monthly or more often, but not online monthly or more often	Online monthly or more often, but not in person monthly or more often	NET Participate in religious services in either way monthly or more often
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	16%	17%	8%	<b>=40%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>				
Christian	22	23	10	<b>55</b>
Protestant	27	24	12	<b>62</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	33	27	11	<b>71</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	13	22	9	<b>43</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	34	12	20	<b>66</b>
Catholic	14	25	7	<b>46</b>
Orthodox Christian	11	26	5	<b>43</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	24	52	4	<b>80</b>
Other religions	11	13	7	<b>30</b>
Jewish	6	17	5	<b>29</b>
Muslim	28	18	10	<b>57</b>
Buddhist	6	11	12	<b>29</b>
Hindu	18	17	4	<b>39</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	2	2	3	<b>6</b>
Atheist	<1	1	<1	<b>1</b>
Agnostic	<1	1	<1	<b>2</b>
Nothing in particular	2	2	4	<b>9</b>

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Participation varies somewhat across demographic groups:

- Older Americans are more likely than younger Americans to say they participate in religious services in some way – in person, online or both – at least monthly.
- A higher percentage of Black Americans than White, Hispanic or Asian Americans report that they participate at least monthly in religious services in person and/or online.
- Generally, women are more likely than men to say they participate (one way or another) in religious services.

### Older Americans are more likely than younger ones to participate in religious services at least monthly in person, online or both

*% who participate in religious services **monthly or more often** in person, online or on TV or both*

	All	Men	Women	Ages				Less than college	College grad+	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
				18-29	30-49	50-64	65+						
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	40%	37%	43%	31%	35%	44%	52%	41%	39%	37%	57%	41%	36%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	55	53	57	50	52	55	61	54	56	53	67	53	52
Christian	58	56	60	53	55	57	63	56	61	56	68	55	63
Protestant	62	60	64	59	60	62	67	60	67	59	69	72	66
<i>Evangelical</i>	71	69	73	68	70	69	77	68	79	69	79	78	–
<i>Mainline</i>	43	40	45	37	37	41	51	39	48	41	66	–	–
<i>Historically Black</i>	66	56	71	–	59	72	76	64	72	–	66	–	–
Catholic	46	45	48	38	42	47	55	46	47	45	–	46	58
Latter-day Saint	80	77	82	–	–	–	–	72	92	84	–	–	–
Other religions	30	33	27	34	31	25	26	30	30	24	–	–	41
Jewish	29	33	24	–	36	21	19	–	24	27	–	–	–
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	6	5	7	7	6	6	5	8	3	3	23	10	4

Note: The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus or members of other religious groups to be able to subdivide them by demographic traits and include them in this table. "Other religions" includes Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu Americans, and those who identify with other world religions or other non-Christian religions. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. Dashes indicate subgroups with insufficient sample sizes. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are widely known as Mormons.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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The survey did not include enough interviews with people who belong to many other U.S. religious groups – such as Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus – to be able to subdivide them and analyze their attendance patterns by most demographic variables like sex, age, education, or race and ethnicity.

## Belonging to religious and nonreligious organizations

Overall, 37% of U.S. adults say they, personally, are members of a church, synagogue, mosque or other house of worship, including 54% of Christians.

A large majority of Latter-day Saints (86%) belong to a congregation, as do 61% of evangelical Protestants and 56% of members of the historically Black Protestant tradition.

While Jewish Americans are less likely than U.S. Christians to attend religious services monthly or more often, 42% of Jewish Americans say they personally belong to a synagogue, temple or other congregation. This is on par with the share of “Jews by religion” (i.e., people who answer a question about their present religion by saying they are Jewish) who reported in our [2020 survey of Jewish Americans](#) that they, personally, are synagogue members.

Overall, 3% of U.S. adults say they participate in organizations for atheists or nonbelievers.

### 86% of Latter-day Saints say they personally belong to a congregation

% who say they ...

	Are personally a member of a house of worship	Participate in any organization of atheists or nonbelievers
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	37%	3%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	51	3
Christian	54	3
Protestant	57	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	61	2
<i>Mainline</i>	48	2
<i>Historically Black</i>	56	5
Catholic	47	2
Orthodox Christian	53	2
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	86	5
Other religions	27	7
Jewish	42	3
Muslim	35	7
Buddhist	27	6
Hindu	25	12
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	5	2
Atheist	2	4
Agnostic	4	2
Nothing in particular	6	2

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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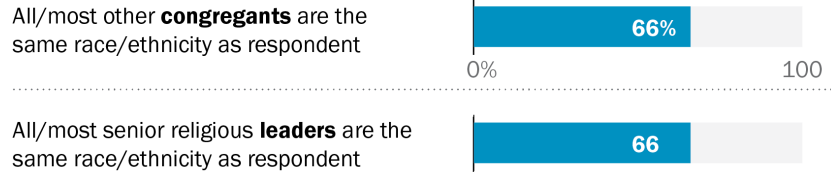
## 9. Race and ethnicity in religious congregations

Americans who go to religious services tend to worship where most other congregants and senior leaders share their race or ethnicity.

Two-thirds of U.S. adults who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year (called “attenders” in this chapter) say they go to a church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other house of worship in which all or most other congregants share their race or ethnicity.

### Most U.S. adults who attend religious services worship where they are in the racial majority

*% of U.S. adults who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year in which ...*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Two-thirds also go to congregations where the *senior religious leaders* share their race or ethnicity.

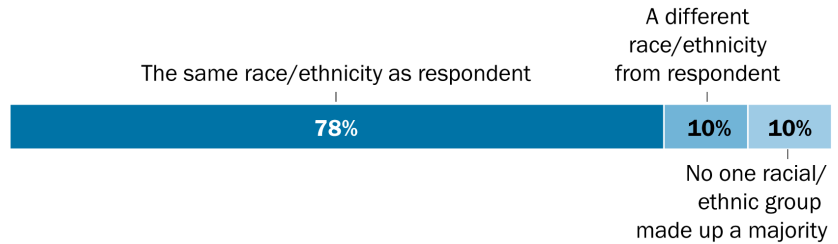


The new Religious Landscape Study (RLS) also asked about the religious composition of the congregation that respondents attended as children. Most people who grew up attending religious services at least a few times a year (78%) say they went to religious services in which most other congregants had the same race or ethnicity as they did.

One-in-ten say that as children they went to a house of worship where most attendees were of a *different* race than their own. A similar share (10%) say they attended a congregation where no single racial group made up a majority.

### Growing up, most Americans attended religious services with people of their own race

*% of U.S. adults who went to religious services at least a few times a year when growing up in which all or most other congregants were ...*



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Today, half of U.S. adults who attend religious services at least a few times a year report that all or most other people in their house of worship are White, 11% say most of their fellow congregants are Hispanic, 10% say most are Black, and 4% say most are Asian.

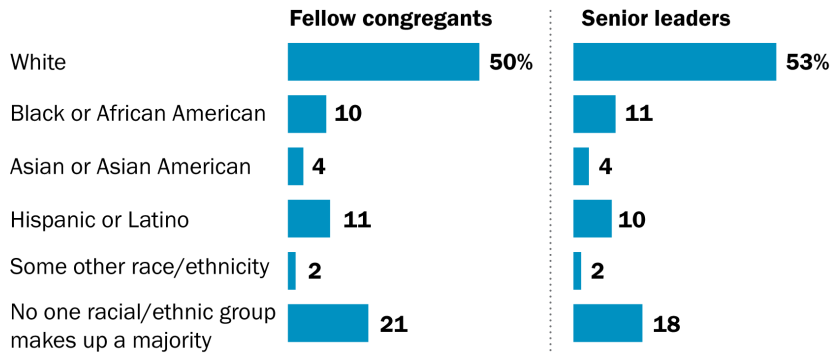
And when it comes to *leadership* in their houses of worship, 53% of U.S. adults who attend services at least a few times a year say that all or most of the senior leaders there are White, 11% say most are Black, 10% say most are Hispanic, and 4% say most are Asian.

Additionally, 21% of attenders go to congregations where no one racial or ethnic group accounts for a majority of congregants, and 18% go to a congregation where no one racial or ethnic group makes up a majority of senior leaders.

**Read more about how religious service attenders answer the survey's questions about the [racial and ethnic compositions of congregations](#) and [congregational leaders](#).**

## Half of Americans who attend religious services go to congregations where most attendees are White

*% of U.S. adults who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year in which all or most \_\_\_ are ...*



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## The racial and ethnic composition of congregations

Two-thirds of Americans who attend religious services at least a few times a year say that all or most of their fellow worshippers are the same race or ethnicity as themselves. An additional 11% say they go to a congregation where all or most other congregants have a different race or ethnicity than they do, and 21% attend a congregation in which no single racial group makes up a majority.

Most Jews (81%) worship where all or most attendees are the same race or ethnicity as themselves, as do 73% of mainline Protestants, 72% of members of the historically Black Protestant tradition, and 71% of Hindus.

Muslim Americans are an exception. Just 35% of Muslim Americans say they worship in congregations where they share the race or ethnicity of all or most of their fellow

worshippers. A majority of

Muslims who attend religious services do so either where all or most congregants are a *different* race than they are (26%), or where no one racial group makes up a majority (39%).

We do not discuss results for religious “nones” in this section because the vast majority of them – 88% – seldom or never attend religious services. Most of the rest say they attend religious services

### 66% of U.S. adults who attend religious services say most other congregants at their place of worship are the same race or ethnicity as they are

*% who say they attend religious services in person at least a few times a year in which ...*

	All/most congregants are the same race/ethnicity as respondent	All/most congregants are a different race/ethnicity from respondent	No one racial/ethnic group makes up a majority
<b>All U.S. attenders</b>	66%	11%	21%
<b>Christian</b>	67	11	20
Protestant	68	9	20
<i>Evangelical</i>	66	10	22
<i>Mainline</i>	73	8	17
<i>Historically Black</i>	72	10	16
Catholic	66	13	19
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	69	14	15
<b>Other religions</b>	61	16	22
Jewish	81	12	6
Muslim*	35	26	39
Hindu*	71	14	14

\* The survey included 175 interviews with respondents who are Muslim and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 96 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points. The survey included 172 interviews with respondents who are Hindu and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 91 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. The margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50%.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians, Buddhists or members of other religiously affiliated groups who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year to be able to show their results.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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a few times a year (9%). Just 3% of religious “nones” say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month.

The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians or members of other religiously affiliated groups who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year to be able to show their results.

The survey finds that 85% of Jewish attenders say they go to a congregation in which all or most other congregants are White, as do 70% of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons), 70% of mainline Protestants and 61% of evangelical Protestants.

## 70% of mainline Protestants and 85% of Jews who attend U.S. religious services do so where all or most congregants are White

*% who say they attend religious services in person at least a few times a year in which all or most other people attending are ...*

	White	Black or African American	Asian or Asian American	Hispanic or Latino	Other race/ethnicity	No racial group makes up majority
<b>All U.S. attenders</b>	50%	10%	4%	11%	2%	21%
<b>Christian</b>	53	10	2	12	1	20
Protestant	56	15	2	5	1	20
<i>Evangelical</i>	61	7	2	7	1	22
<i>Mainline</i>	70	6	3	2	1	17
<i>Historically Black</i>	7	68	1	3	2	16
Catholic	47	2	3	27	1	19
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	70	4	1	7	1	15
<b>Other religions</b>	33	5	31	2	7	22
Jewish	85	1	2	1	5	6
Muslim*	11	15	23	0	13	39
Hindu*	4	1	77	1	3	14

\* The survey included 175 interviews with respondents who are Muslim and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 96 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points. The survey included 172 interviews with respondents who are Hindu and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 91 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. The margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50%.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians, Buddhists or members of other religiously affiliated groups who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year to be able to show their results.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Two-thirds of attenders who identify with the historically Black Protestant tradition say they go to a congregation in which all or most other people are Black or African American.<sup>51</sup> And about three-quarters of Hindu attenders (77%) report that all or most of their fellow worshippers are Asian or Asian American.

Nearly half of Catholic attenders (47%) go to Mass at a church in which all or most other congregants are White, while 27% of Catholic attenders go to a church that is mostly Hispanic or Latino, and 19% say they attend a church where no racial group makes up a majority.

The differences across religious groups in the way respondents describe the racial and ethnic makeup of their congregations partly reflects the racial and ethnic composition of the groups themselves. For details on the racial and ethnic composition of people within these religious categories, refer to [Chapter 24](#).

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<sup>51</sup> The “historically Black Protestant tradition” as defined here includes *both* 1) people who identify with historically Black denominations – such as the National Baptist Convention, USA, or the Church of God in Christ – and 2) Black respondents who provided a vague denominational affiliation, such as “just Baptist” or “just Methodist.” This definition is consistent with the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies. That said, using this approach results in findings with lower shares of people in the historically Black Protestant tradition going to congregations with mostly Black leaders and members than is seen when other methods are used to define the historically Black Protestant tradition. For example, our 2021 study of religion among Black Americans found that among respondents who belonged to one of the following [Black Protestant denominations](#) – the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; the Church of God in Christ; the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International; the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.; the National Baptist Convention, USA; and the Progressive National Baptist Convention – 78% say they go to congregations with majority Black leaders and 74% say the majority of their congregation’s members are Black. In the Religious Landscape Study (RLS), when the analysis is limited solely to people who identify with these historically Black denominations, we find 71% report attending congregations with majority Black *membership* and 70% report attending congregations with majority Black *leadership*. Pew Research Center’s 2021 analysis of faith among Black Americans included a [more detailed discussion](#) on the size and makeup of historically Black Protestant denominations.

## The racial and ethnic composition of congregational leaders

As with the racial and ethnic composition of congregants, two-thirds of Americans who attend religious services say they go to congregations in which all or most of the senior religious leaders are the same race or ethnicity as they are.

Here again, Muslims are a notable exception. Fewer than half of Muslim respondents say they share the same race as most of the religious leaders at their mosque.

### Most attenders go to a congregation in the U.S. with religious leaders who have the same race as they do

*% who say they attend religious services in person at least a few times a year in which ...*

	All/Most senior religious leaders are the same race/ethnicity as respondent	All/Most senior religious leaders are a different race/ethnicity from respondent	No one racial/ethnic group makes up a majority of senior leaders
<b>All U.S. attenders</b>	66%	14%	18%
<b>Christian</b>	67	13	17
Protestant	71	11	16
<i>Evangelical</i>	69	11	17
<i>Mainline</i>	74	10	14
<i>Historically Black</i>	72	12	14
Catholic	61	18	19
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	68	16	14
<b>Other religions</b>	62	17	19
Jewish	82	12	5
Muslim*	39	23	38
Hindu*	71	18	10

\* The survey included 175 interviews with respondents who are Muslim and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 96 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points. The survey included 172 interviews with respondents who are Hindu and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 91 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. The margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50%.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians, Buddhists or members of other religiously affiliated groups who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year to be able to show their results.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Roughly nine-in-ten Jewish Americans who attend religious services at least a few times a year say all or most of the leaders at their congregation are White. Three-quarters of Latter-day Saints and mainline Protestants say the same, as do two-thirds of evangelical Protestants.

About half of Catholics say all or most of the senior religious leaders at their parishes are White.

---

### **Most Jews, Latter-day Saints, evangelicals and mainline Protestants in the U.S. attend congregations led mostly by White religious leaders**

*% who say they attend religious services in person at least a few times a year in which all or most of the senior religious leaders are ...*

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black or African American</b>	<b>Asian or Asian American</b>	<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>Other race/ethnicity</b>	<b>No racial group makes up majority</b>
<b>All U.S. attenders</b>	53%	11%	4%	10%	2%	18%
<b>Christian</b>	56	11	2	11	1	17
Protestant	60	15	2	5	1	16
<i>Evangelical</i>	66	7	2	6	1	17
<i>Mainline</i>	73	7	3	2	<1	14
<i>Historically Black</i>	9	68	1	4	2	14
Catholic	48	2	3	24	3	19
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	74	6	1	4	1	14
<b>Other religions</b>	36	5	30	2	6	19
Jewish	88	<1	0	1	4	5
Muslim*	12	15	20	3	13	38
Hindu*	9	<1	75	1	3	10

\* The survey included 175 interviews with respondents who are Muslim and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 96 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points. The survey included 172 interviews with respondents who are Hindu and attend religious services in person at least a few times a year, with an effective sample size of 91 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.3 percentage points. The margin of error conservatively assumes a reported percentage of 50%.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians, Buddhists or members of other religiously affiliated groups who attend religious services in person at least a few times a year to be able to show their results.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 10. Prayer and other religious practices

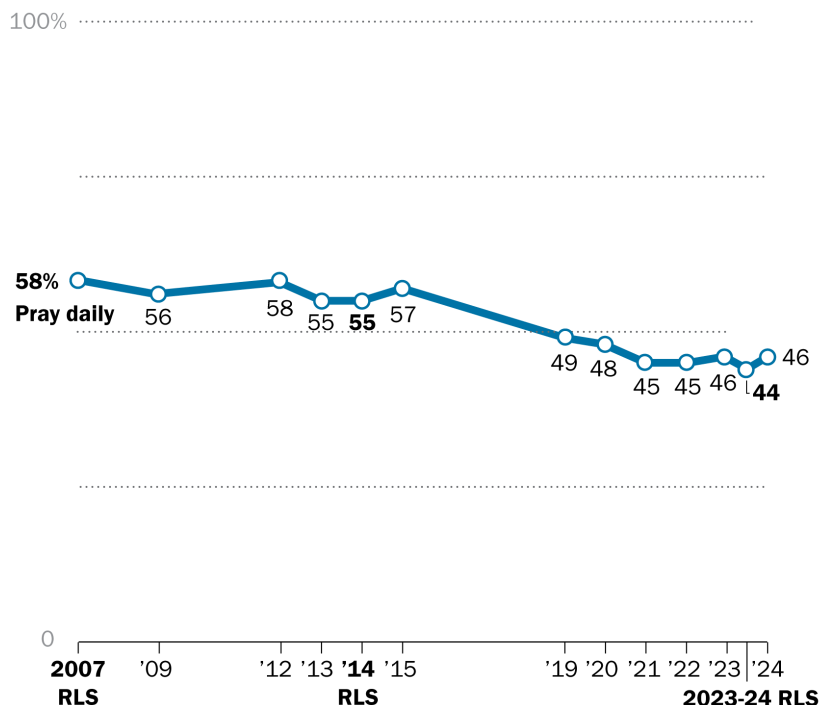
Fewer than half of Americans (44%) say they pray each day. This is a substantial decline from the first Religious Landscape Study (RLS) conducted in 2007, when 58% said they prayed at least once a day.<sup>52</sup>

Most of the decline occurred [between 2015 and 2021](#), a period in which the shares of U.S. adults who reported praying daily tumbled from 57% to 45%. Since 2021, the percentages who say they pray at least once a day have been relatively stable.

At least two factors help explain the long-term decline. First, the share of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated – those who answer a question about their religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – has increased by 6 percentage points since 2014. This group, sometimes called the “nones,” is less inclined than other Americans toward frequent prayer.

### Fewer Americans are praying daily

% of U.S. adults who say they pray *daily or more often*



Note: The 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Studies. Other estimates come from Pew Research Center’s random-digit-dial telephone surveys (through 2019) and from the Center’s annual National Public Opinion Reference Survey (since 2020). Estimates from 2019 and earlier, including the 2007 and 2014 landscape surveys, come from interview-administered telephone surveys. The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study and National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS) were mostly self-administered.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>52</sup> The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) was conducted mainly online and on paper, whereas the previous landscape studies were conducted by telephone. This “mode switch” makes it complicated to make comparisons between results from the new survey and the previous studies. However, our analysis finds that the new survey’s question about prayer frequency can be safely compared with the prior studies. The percentage of people who say they pray daily is somewhat higher in a companion bridge study we conducted by telephone than in the main RLS survey (by 3 percentage points), and the share of people who say they seldom or never pray is somewhat lower in the bridge study than in the main survey (by 4 points). However, [previous Pew Research Center analysis](#) found little difference in answers to this question between a telephone survey and self-administered surveys. And both the main survey and the companion bridge study suggest that the share of Americans who pray daily has declined since 2014. For additional details, refer to [Appendix A](#).

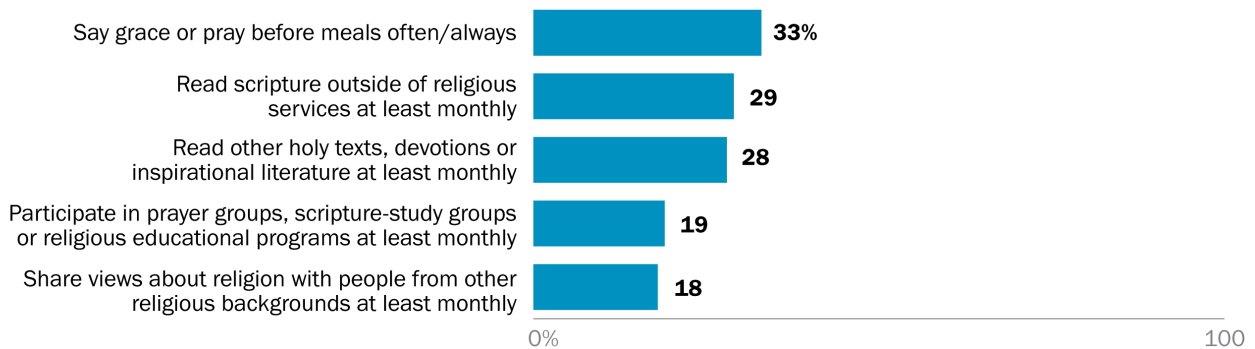
Second, the self-reported frequency of prayer has declined among U.S. adults in some of the largest religious groups, such as Catholics, evangelical Protestants and mainline Protestants.

This chapter discusses the findings of the 2023-24 RLS about the religious practices of the U.S. public. Unlike the question about prayer, however, we do not have valid data on trends over time for most of these questions. Some were asked for the first time as part of the new RLS. Others cannot be compared with previous surveys because of changes in methodology or question wording. (Read [Appendix A](#) for more details.)

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### 33% of Americans often or always say grace or pray before meals

*% of U.S. adults who ...*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Among the key findings on religious practices:

- 33% of U.S. adults often or always say grace before meals.
- 29% read scripture at least monthly.<sup>53</sup>
- 28% read other holy texts, devotions or inspirational literature (aside from scripture) at least monthly.
- 19% participate in prayer groups, scripture-study groups or religious educational programs at least monthly.
- 18% share their views about religion with people from other religious backgrounds at least monthly.

**Read more about how Americans in different religious groups answer the survey’s questions about:**

- [Personal prayer](#)
- [Reading scripture, other holy texts and inspirational literature](#)
- [Grace before meals](#)
- [Participation in prayer or scripture-study groups](#)
- [Sharing religious views with others](#)

For details on religious service attendance and congregation involvement, read [Chapter 8](#).

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<sup>53</sup> This question also was asked in the 2007 and 2014 [Religious Landscape Studies](#). However, the results are not comparable because of differences in the way the surveys were conducted. In 2007 and 2014, the RLS was administered entirely by live interviewers on the telephone. The 2023-24 RLS was conducted mostly online and on paper (by mail). These differences in the survey’s “mode” of administration can affect [the way people answer some questions](#), and that seems to be the case with the question about reading scripture. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for more details.

## Personal prayer

More than four-in-ten Americans (44%) report that they pray at least once a day, and an additional 23% say they pray weekly or a few times a month. Nearly one-third of U.S. adults seldom or never pray.

Most members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, widely known as Mormons, (73%); evangelical Protestants and people who identify with the historically Black Protestant tradition (72% each); and Muslim Americans (67%) pray daily.

---

### Latter-day Saints are among the most likely to pray daily

% who say they pray ...

	Daily	Weekly/ Monthly	Seldom/ Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	44%	23%	32%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	58	26	15
Christian	60	26	13
Protestant	64	25	10
<i>Evangelical</i>	72	21	7
<i>Mainline</i>	45	34	20
<i>Historically Black</i>	72	24	4
Catholic	51	31	18
Orthodox Christian	53	26	20
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	73	18	8
Other religions	34	26	40
Jewish	22	19	58
Muslim	67	20	13
Buddhist	22	34	44
Hindu	46	33	21
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	12	16	72
Atheist	1	1	97
Agnostic	3	11	85
Nothing in particular	17	21	61

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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The share of Americans who pray daily has dropped 14 points since 2007. This decline has been fairly widespread: Catholics, all three major Protestant traditions and religiously unaffiliated adults all have shown statistically significant declines in daily prayer of between 6 and 10 points since 2007.

## Daily prayer has declined in the U.S. since 2007

*% who say they pray **daily or more often***

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	58%	55%	44%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	65	66	58
Christian	66	68	60
Protestant	69	71	64
<i>Evangelical</i>	78	79	72
<i>Mainline</i>	53	54	45
<i>Historically Black</i>	80	80	72
Catholic	58	59	51
Orthodox Christian	60	57	53
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	82	85	73
Other religions	42	42	34
Jewish	26	29	22
Muslim	71	69	67
Buddhist	45	43	22
Hindu	62	51	46
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	22	20	12
Atheist	5	1	1
Agnostic	9	9	3
Nothing in particular	27	26	17

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Overall, Black Americans are more likely to report praying daily (64%) than Hispanic (47%), White (40%) and Asian (34%) Americans.

Also, women are more likely than men to pray daily (50% vs. 37%), and older Americans are more likely than younger ones to say they pray once or more per day.

The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus or people in other small religious groups to be able to subdivide them by sex, age, education and race.

### Women, Black Americans, older Americans and those with lower levels of educational attainment are more likely than others to pray daily

% who say they pray *daily or more often*

	All	Men	Women	Ages				Less than college	College grad+	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
				18-29	30-49	50-64	65+						
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	44%	37%	50%	28%	39%	52%	55%	46%	39%	40%	64%	47%	34%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	58	51	63	43	55	62	63	59	54	55	72	59	49
Christian	60	54	66	47	58	64	65	61	58	58	72	60	57
Protestant	64	58	69	52	62	69	67	65	63	61	73	70	56
Evangelical	72	65	77	56	70	76	77	71	74	71	78	74	--
Mainline	45	37	52	35	39	49	50	46	44	43	69	--	--
Historically Black	72	66	75	--	66	82	78	71	74	--	72	--	--
Catholic	51	44	58	33	49	52	62	53	47	48	--	55	58
Latter-day Saint	73	69	78	--	--	--	--	66	85	78	--	--	--
Other religions	34	34	35	27	36	41	32	36	32	26	--	--	41
Jewish	22	25	18	--	27	20	15	--	15	20	--	--	--
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	12	8	15	9	11	16	13	15	6	8	36	17	3

Note: The survey did not include enough interviews with Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus or members of other religious groups to be able to subdivide them by demographic traits and include them in this table. "Other religions" includes Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu Americans, and those who identify with other world religions or other non-Christian religions. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. Dashes indicate subgroups with insufficient sample sizes. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are widely known as Mormons.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Reading scripture, other holy texts and inspirational literature

Upward of one-in-five Americans (22%) report that they read scripture outside of religious services at least once a week, while 7% say they do so once or twice a month, and 9% read scripture several times a year. Most U.S. adults (61%) seldom or never read scripture outside of religious services.

Latter-day Saints (59%) and people who belong to the evangelical Protestant (51%) and historically Black Protestant (46%) traditions are the religious groups whose members are most likely to read scripture outside of religious services at least once a week.

### Most Latter-day Saints read scripture outside of church at least weekly

*% who read **scripture** outside of religious services ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Once or twice a month</b>	<b>Several times a year</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	22%	7%	9%	61%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	31	9	11	48
Christian	33	9	11	46
Protestant	41	11	11	37
<i>Evangelical</i>	51	11	10	28
<i>Mainline</i>	18	9	12	60
<i>Historically Black</i>	46	13	11	29
Catholic	14	7	11	67
Orthodox Christian	15	10	15	59
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	59	13	6	22
Other religions	14	6	12	67
Jewish	14	4	7	73
Muslim	28	12	17	43
Buddhist	13	5	11	70
Hindu	12	8	22	58
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	3	3	4	90
Atheist	1	1	1	97
Agnostic	<1	1	2	96
Nothing in particular	4	4	6	86

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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One-in-five Americans say they read other holy texts, devotions or inspirational literature (besides scripture) at least weekly. An additional 8% say they do this monthly and another 11% do it yearly, while 60% say they seldom or never read other holy texts.

Latter-day Saints (48%) and people who identify with historically Black (41%) and evangelical (39%) Protestant churches are the most likely to say they read other holy texts at least once a week.

Religiously unaffiliated Americans are much less likely than those who identify with a religion to read other holy texts, devotions or inspirational literature on a weekly basis (4% vs. 27%).

**20% of Americans read holy texts aside from scripture at least weekly**

*% who read other holy texts, devotions or inspirational literature (aside from scripture) ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Once or twice a month</b>	<b>Several times a year</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	20%	8%	11%	60%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	27	11	13	49
Christian	28	11	13	47
Protestant	33	12	13	41
<i>Evangelical</i>	39	13	13	34
<i>Mainline</i>	17	10	12	59
<i>Historically Black</i>	41	13	14	31
Catholic	15	8	13	63
Orthodox Christian	16	8	14	62
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	48	20	8	24
Other religions	16	7	15	61
Jewish	12	6	9	72
Muslim	27	9	23	41
Buddhist	17	7	13	62
Hindu	15	8	19	57
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	4	3	6	87
Atheist	<1	1	3	96
Agnostic	2	1	5	92
Nothing in particular	6	4	7	83

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Putting these two questions together, we see that about a third of U.S. adults (35%) read *either* scripture or other holy texts, devotions or inspirational literature at least once a month.

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### 35% of U.S. adults read either scripture or other holy texts at least monthly

*% who read scripture outside of religious services or read other holy texts, devotions or inspirational literature **monthly or more often***

<b>All U.S. adults</b>	35%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	46
Christian	48
Protestant	57
<i>Evangelical</i>	66
<i>Mainline</i>	34
<i>Historically Black</i>	66
Catholic	28
Orthodox Christian	28
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	76
Other religions	28
Jewish	22
Muslim	47
Buddhist	27
Hindu	26
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	8
Atheist	2
Agnostic	4
Nothing in particular	11

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Grace before meals

One-third of Americans always or often say grace or pray before meals, and an additional 18% do this sometimes, according to the 2023-24 RLS. Nearly half of Americans (48%) seldom or never say grace or offer prayers before meals.

About two-thirds of Latter-day Saints (68%) and people who belong to churches in the historically Black Protestant tradition (67%) always or often say grace or pray before meals. Large shares of evangelicals (58%) and Muslims (54%) also do this regularly.

People in other religious groups are far less likely to report that they pray or say grace before they eat.

### Most Latter-day Saints and members of historically Black Protestant churches say grace before meals

% who say grace or pray before meals ...

	Always/ Often	Sometimes	Seldom/ Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	33%	18%	48%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	44	22	34
Christian	46	23	31
Protestant	51	23	26
<i>Evangelical</i>	58	22	20
<i>Mainline</i>	29	25	44
<i>Historically Black</i>	67	22	11
Catholic	34	24	41
Orthodox Christian	41	19	40
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	68	19	13
Other religions	24	14	61
Jewish	17	9	73
Muslim	54	19	25
Buddhist	12	20	68
Hindu	26	15	58
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	8	10	82
Atheist	1	1	97
Agnostic	2	6	92
Nothing in particular	12	13	75

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Participation in prayer or scripture-study groups

Overall, 13% of Americans say they participate at least once a week in prayer groups, Bible-study or other scripture-study groups, or religious education programs. An additional 6% report that they participate in such groups once or twice a month, and 7% participate several times a year. Nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults seldom or never participate in these groups.

Weekly participation in prayer and scripture-study groups appears to have declined since the previous religious landscape survey conducted in 2014, when 24% of adults surveyed said they took part in such groups each week. But methodological changes may account for some of the difference.<sup>54</sup>

In the 2023-24 RLS, Latter-day Saints are the most likely to participate in prayer or scripture-study groups on a weekly basis (45%). Among evangelical Protestants, 30% participate in such groups this often, as

### 13% of Americans participate in prayer groups, scripture-study groups or religious education programs on a weekly basis

*% who participate in prayer groups, scripture-study groups or religious education programs ...*

	Weekly or more often	Once or twice a month	Several times a year	Seldom/ Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	13%	6%	7%	73%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	19	8	9	63
Christian	20	8	9	62
Protestant	24	10	9	56
<i>Evangelical</i>	30	12	10	48
<i>Mainline</i>	9	5	8	77
<i>Historically Black</i>	28	11	10	51
Catholic	8	5	9	77
Orthodox Christian	6	6	10	77
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	45	12	8	34
Other religions	11	6	10	72
Jewish	11	6	6	75
Muslim	25	11	18	45
Buddhist	5	5	11	78
Hindu	13	9	19	57
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	2	1	2	95
Atheist	<1	<1	<1	99
Agnostic	<1	<1	<1	99
Nothing in particular	2	2	3	92

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>54</sup> Comparisons between the new RLS and the earlier studies are complicated by differences in the ways they were conducted. The landscape studies in 2007 and 2014 were conducted by live interviewers over the telephone, while the 2023-24 RLS was conducted mainly online and on paper. This “mode shift” affects the results of some survey questions more than others. Analysis of a nationwide companion telephone survey, which was conducted alongside the 2023-24 RLS for testing purposes, indicates that on self-administered surveys (like the new RLS),

do 28% of members of historically Black Protestant churches and 25% of Muslims. Smaller shares of people affiliated with other religions say they participate weekly in such groups.

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Americans are 3 points *less* likely than on interviewer-administered surveys (like the earlier studies) to say that they participate at least once a week in prayer groups, scripture-study groups or religious education programs. But both the main RLS survey *and* the companion telephone survey suggest that regular participation in these kinds of groups has declined since 2014. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for details.

## Sharing religious views with others

When it comes to sharing their views about religion with people from other religious backgrounds, 9% of U.S. adults say they do this at least once a week.<sup>55</sup> An additional 9% share their views on religion once or twice a month, and 16% say they do this several times a year.

About two-thirds of U.S. adults (65%) say they seldom or never share their religious views with people of other faiths or religious backgrounds.

### 9% of Americans discuss their religious views with people from other faith backgrounds at least weekly

*% who share views about religion with people from other religious backgrounds ...*

	Weekly or more often	Once or twice a month	Several times a year	Seldom/ Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	9%	9%	16%	65%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	12	11	18	58
Christian	12	11	18	58
Protestant	15	13	19	53
<i>Evangelical</i>	17	15	21	46
<i>Mainline</i>	6	7	15	70
<i>Historically Black</i>	25	14	14	47
Catholic	6	7	16	71
Orthodox Christian	7	5	20	67
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	15	20	27	37
Other religions	9	11	19	61
Jewish	5	11	19	63
Muslim	16	19	15	50
Buddhist	8	8	22	61
Hindu	13	6	15	67
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	3	4	11	82
Atheist	1	5	13	81
Agnostic	1	4	13	82
Nothing in particular	4	4	9	83

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>55</sup> The 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies included two similar, but not identical, questions. Religiously unaffiliated adults were asked: "How often do you ... share your views on God and religion with religious people?" And religiously affiliated adults were asked: "How often do you ... share your faith with non-believers or people from other religious backgrounds?" Since these questions were not previously asked of everyone, and since they were not asked in the same way, the results are not comparable with findings from the 2023-24 RLS.

## 11. Religious and spiritual beliefs

Belief in a spiritual realm beyond the physical world remains very common among U.S. adults, the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) finds.

Roughly eight-in-ten Americans believe “there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it.” Similar or slightly larger numbers say they believe that God or a universal spirit exists (83%), and that humans have a soul or spirit in addition to a physical body (86%).

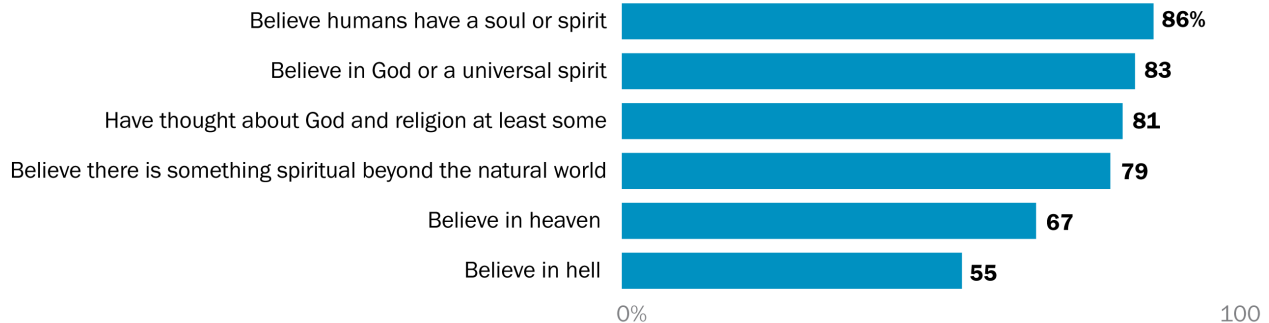
Large majorities of Christians and Muslims hold each of these beliefs, as do more than half of all Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and religiously unaffiliated adults.

Belief in heaven and belief in hell are less widespread, but still held by most Americans, including most Christians and Muslims.

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### Most U.S. adults believe in God or a universal spirit, the existence of a human soul, and that there is something spiritual beyond the natural world

*% of U.S. adults who say they ...*



Note: Those who did not answer the question are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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In addition, Americans across religious categories – including most religiously unaffiliated adults – say they have spent at least some time in recent years thinking about God and religion.

Over the years, Americans overall have become slightly less likely to believe in heaven or hell, or to believe in God or a universal spirit with absolute certainty. This partly reflects the fact that religiously unaffiliated adults – those who identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” –

make up a growing share of the population, and they are less likely than other groups to hold these types of beliefs.

The survey also asked about human evolution. Most U.S. adults believe that humans have evolved over time, including 33% who say that God had no role in human evolution, and 47% who say that humans have evolved due to processes that were guided or allowed by God or a higher power. A smaller share of the public (17%) believes humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.

**Read on for specific religious groups' beliefs about:**

- [Something spiritual beyond the natural world](#)
- [Human souls](#)
- [Belief in heaven](#)
- [Belief in hell](#)
- [Belief in God](#)
- [Human evolution](#)
- [Thinking about God and religion](#)

## Something spiritual beyond the natural world

A large majority of Americans (79%) believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we can't see it. Far fewer (19%) say they believe the natural world is all there is.

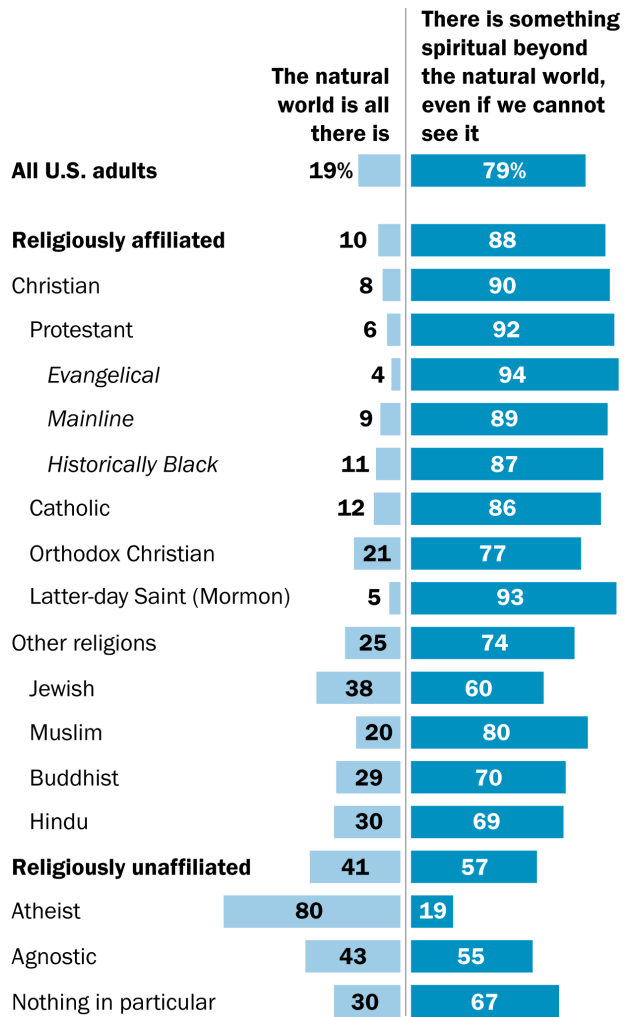
Nine-in-ten Christians say they believe in something beyond the natural world, including 93% of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons), 92% of Protestants, 86% of Catholics and 77% of Orthodox Christians.

Of the non-Christian religious groups we analyzed, Muslims are the most likely to believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world: 80% say this, compared with smaller majorities of Buddhists (70%), Hindus (69%) and Jews (60%).

Among Americans who are religiously unaffiliated, there is a wide range of views. The vast majority of self-described atheists (80%) say the natural world is all there is, though 19% say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world. Two-thirds of Americans who describe their religious identity as “nothing in particular” and 55% of agnostics believe in something beyond the natural world.

### Most religiously unaffiliated Americans believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world

% who say ...



Note: Those who did not answer the question are not shown.  
 Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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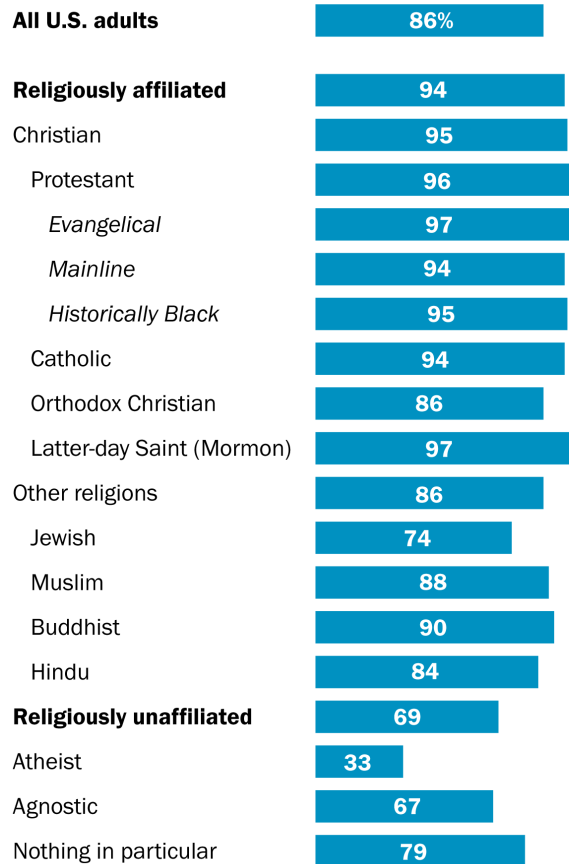
## Human souls

The vast majority of Americans (86%) believe that humans have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical bodies. This view is held by nearly all Christians (95%) along with 90% of Buddhists and 88% of Muslims. Large majorities of Hindus (84%), people who say their religion is “nothing in particular” (79%), Jews (74%) and agnostics (67%) also believe that humans have a soul.

Again, atheists stand out from other religiously unaffiliated adults: Just one-third of atheists say they believe that humans have a soul.

### Vast majority of U.S. adults believe people have souls

*% who say they believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to a physical body*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Belief in heaven

Most Americans say they think there is a heaven “where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded.”

Among Americans who are affiliated with a religion, the share who believe in heaven has been stable since 2007.<sup>56</sup>

However, the share of all U.S. adults who believe in heaven has declined. This is driven partly by the growing segment of Americans who describe themselves as atheist or agnostic, or who say their religion is “nothing in particular.” These religious “nones” have become less likely to believe in heaven since 2007, [even as their ranks have grown](#).

Belief in heaven, as defined in the survey, is most common among Christians (85%) and Muslims (83%). It is less common among Buddhists (52%), Hindus (48%) and Jews (39%).

Nearly half of adults who describe themselves as having no particular religion say they think there is a heaven where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded, as do 17% of agnostics and a relatively small share of atheists (5%).

### Belief in heaven is stable among religiously affiliated Americans

% who say they believe in heaven

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	74%	72%	67%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	81	82	81
Christian	83	85	85
Protestant	84	86	84
<i>Evangelical</i>	86	88	84
<i>Mainline</i>	77	80	82
<i>Historically Black</i>	91	93	92
Catholic	82	85	86
Orthodox Christian	74	81	71
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	95	95	92
Other religions	42	47	47
Jewish	38	40	39
Muslim	85	89	83
Buddhist	36	47	52
Hindu	51	48	48
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	41	37	34
Atheist	12	5	5
Agnostic	18	14	17
Nothing in particular	49	50	47

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>56</sup> Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study (RLS) and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The first two landscape surveys were conducted by telephone, but the 2023-24 study was conducted mainly online and on paper. This “mode shift” affects the results of some survey questions more than others. Analysis of a nationwide telephone survey, which was conducted alongside the 2023-24 RLS for testing purposes, indicates that self-administered surveys (like the new RLS) and interviewer-administered surveys (like the earlier studies) produce similar estimates of the shares of people who believe in heaven and hell. Estimates of the shares of people who *don’t* believe in heaven and hell are less comparable; self-administered surveys yield more “Don’t believe” responses, while interviewer-administered surveys yield more people declining to answer the questions. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for additional details.

## Belief in hell

The survey also asked about the existence of a hell “where people who have led bad lives, and die without being sorry, are eternally punished.”

Belief in hell is somewhat less common than belief in heaven (55% vs. 67%). But the share of religiously affiliated Americans who believe in hell has ticked up slightly over the years.

Belief in hell is most common among evangelical Protestants (82%), members of historically Black Protestant traditions (81%) and Muslims (77%). Somewhat smaller shares of Catholics (69%), Orthodox Christians (60%), mainline Protestants (59%) and Latter-day Saints (54%) say they believe in hell.

In contrast, 43% of Buddhists and 42% of Hindus surveyed say they believe in hell as defined in the survey, as do 25% of religiously unaffiliated adults and 22% of Jews.

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### Belief in hell is up among U.S. Catholics

*% who say they believe in hell*

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	59%	58%	55%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	65	67	69
Christian	68	70	72
Protestant	73	75	76
<i>Evangelical</i>	82	82	82
<i>Mainline</i>	56	60	59
<i>Historically Black</i>	82	82	81
Catholic	60	63	69
Orthodox Christian	56	59	60
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	59	62	54
Other religions	27	31	38
Jewish	22	22	22
Muslim	80	76	77
Buddhist	26	32	43
Hindu	35	28	42
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	30	27	25
Atheist	10	3	4
Agnostic	12	9	9
Nothing in particular	37	36	35

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Belief in God

Most Americans believe in God or a universal spirit, and slightly more than half of all U.S. adults say they are *absolutely certain* in this belief.

As in our past surveys, the vast majority of Christians (97%) and Muslims (93%) say they believe in God, and most people in these religious groups express this belief with absolute certainty.

Belief in God is less universal, but still fairly common, among Hindus (85%), Buddhists (74%) and Jews (72%).

Even among religiously unaffiliated Americans, more than half say they believe in God or a universal spirit. This view is partly driven by the 69% of adults who say their religion is “nothing in particular.” In comparison, 43% of agnostics and 7% of atheists hold this view.

### Most Americans believe in God

*% who say they believe in God or a universal spirit, and they are \_\_\_ certain in this belief*

	NET Believe	Absolutely	Fairly	Not too/ Not at all
<b>All U.S. adults in 2023-24</b>	<b>83%</b>	54%	21%	8%
All U.S. adults in 2014	<b>89</b>	63	20	5
All U.S. adults in 2007	<b>92</b>	71	17	4
<i>In 2023-24 among ___ adults</i>				
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>96</b>	70	21	5
Christian	<b>97</b>	73	20	4
Protestant	<b>98</b>	78	17	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>99</b>	85	12	1
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>97</b>	61	29	7
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>98</b>	83	13	2
Catholic	<b>96</b>	62	28	6
Orthodox Christian	<b>91</b>	54	28	9
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>97</b>	76	19	2
Other religions	<b>80</b>	43	27	10
Jewish	<b>72</b>	29	23	18
Muslim	<b>93</b>	72	18	2
Buddhist	<b>74</b>	24	37	12
Hindu	<b>85</b>	37	38	10
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>54</b>	18	21	15
Atheist	<b>7</b>	1	4	3
Agnostic	<b>43</b>	6	17	20
Nothing in particular	<b>69</b>	26	27	16

Note: Those who said they believe in God or a universal spirit but did not answer the question about their level of certainty are included in the NET column but are not shown separately. Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The shares of U.S. adults who in 2007 and 2014 said they believe in God or a universal spirit are shown because these results are comparable with 2023-24, but the shares of adults who said they do not believe in God or a universal spirit are not comparable and therefore are not shown. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Belief in God over time

The share of U.S. adults who believe in God or a universal spirit has declined over time, and the share who hold this belief with absolute certainty has declined even more.<sup>57</sup>

Today, 83% of U.S. adults believe in God (9 percentage points less than in 2007). And 54% of U.S. adults believe in God with absolute certainty (17 points less than in 2007).

Since 2007, most religiously affiliated groups have seen a decline in the share who are certain that God exists. For example, the share of Christians who say they are absolutely certain that God exists has ticked down from 80% in 2007, to 76% in 2014, to 73% in 2023-24.

## Americans overall are becoming less certain that God exists

% who say they are **absolutely certain** God or a universal spirit exists

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	71%	63%	54%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	79	74	70
Christian	80	76	73
Protestant	84	81	78
<i>Evangelical</i>	90	88	85
<i>Mainline</i>	73	66	61
<i>Historically Black</i>	90	89	83
Catholic	72	64	62
Orthodox Christian	71	61	54
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	90	86	76
Other religions	50	45	43
Jewish	41	37	29
Muslim	82	84	72
Buddhist	39	29	24
Hindu	57	41	37
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	36	27	18
Atheist	8	2	1
Agnostic	17	7	6
Nothing in particular	43	36	26

Note: Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The shares of U.S. adults who in 2007 and 2014 said they believe in God or a universal spirit are shown because these results are comparable with 2023-24, but the shares of adults who said they do *not* believe in God or a universal spirit are not comparable and therefore are not shown. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>57</sup> Comparisons between the new RLS and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The first two landscape surveys were conducted by telephone, but the 2023-24 study was conducted mainly online and on paper. This “mode shift” affects the results of some survey questions more than others. Analysis of a nationwide telephone survey, which was conducted alongside the 2023-24 RLS for testing purposes, indicates that self-administered surveys (like the new RLS) and interviewer-administered surveys (like the earlier studies) produce similar estimates of the shares of people who believe in God with varying levels of certainty. Estimates of the share of people who *don’t* believe in God are less comparable; self-administered surveys yield more “Don’t believe”

## Don't believe in God

Relatively few U.S. adults are absolutely certain that God does *not* exist.

Atheists stand out as an exception. Not only do the vast majority of atheists reject belief in God or a universal spirit, but at least half also say they are absolutely certain in this belief.

The new survey's estimate of the share of Americans who don't believe in God or a universal spirit cannot be directly compared with results from our previous religious landscape studies. That's because the new survey was conducted mainly online and on paper, whereas both the 2007 RLS and the 2014 RLS were conducted by telephone.

We conducted a telephone "bridge study" (for testing purposes only) to gauge the impact of this mode switch. Compared with respondents in the telephone bridge study, respondents in the main survey (conducted mainly online or on paper) were more likely to say they don't believe in God. So the estimate of the share of people who *don't* believe in God or a

## Half of U.S. atheists say they are absolutely certain there is no God

*% who say they don't believe in God or a universal spirit, and they are \_\_\_ certain in this belief*

	NET Don't believe	Absolutely	Fairly	Not too/Not at all
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>16%</b>	5%	7%	4%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>4</b>	1	1	1
Christian	<b>2</b>	<1	1	1
Protestant	<b>1</b>	<1	1	<1
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>1</b>	<1	<1	<1
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>3</b>	<1	1	1
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>1</b>	<1	1	0
Catholic	<b>3</b>	<1	1	1
Orthodox Christian	<b>7</b>	2	3	2
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>3</b>	2	1	<1
Other religions	<b>19</b>	7	7	5
Jewish	<b>26</b>	10	9	7
Muslim	<b>7</b>	1	3	4
Buddhist	<b>25</b>	7	8	9
Hindu	<b>15</b>	4	9	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>45</b>	16	19	10
Atheist	<b>92</b>	53	31	8
Agnostic	<b>54</b>	11	28	16
Nothing in particular	<b>29</b>	8	13	9

Note: Those who said they don't believe in God or a universal spirit but did not answer the question about their level of certainty are included in the NET column but are not shown separately.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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responses, while interviewer-administered surveys yield slightly more people declining to answer the question. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for more details.

universal spirit in the *new* survey cannot be directly compared with the previous results. (Refer to [Appendix A](#) for additional details.)

However, both the 2023-24 RLS and the companion bridge study suggest that nonbelief has risen since 2007. The upshot is that we can be confident that the share of Americans who do not believe in God is higher than it was in 2007, but we cannot say by exactly how much.

(These “mode differences” are smaller in the “Yes, believe in God or a universal spirit” category. Additional details are provided in [Appendix A](#).)

## Human evolution

When asked about evolution, U.S. adults most commonly say that humans have evolved over time due to processes that were guided or allowed by God or a higher power.<sup>58</sup>

The view that evolution has been guided or allowed by God is held by 47% of U.S. adults, including most Muslims (63%) and Christians (61%).

On the other hand, one-third of adults believe that humans have evolved over time due to processes such as natural selection and that God or a higher power had no role in this process.

This view is held by most Jews (64%), Buddhists (58%) and religiously unaffiliated adults (66%), as well as by roughly half of all Hindus.

Very few evangelical

Protestants (6%) or members

of historically Black Protestant churches (12%) believe humans evolved without involvement from God.

Some Americans believe that humans have *not* evolved – that they have existed in their present form since the beginning of time. This view is held by 17% of U.S. adults, including 10% or more of all the groups in this analysis except for atheists and agnostics. Notably, about a quarter of

### Most U.S. Muslims and Christians say that human evolution was guided by God

% who say ...

	NET Believe in evolution	Humans evolved; God had no role	Humans evolved; guided by God	Humans have existed since beginning of time
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>80%</b>	33%	47%	<b>17%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>78</b>	19	59	<b>19</b>
Christian	<b>77</b>	15	61	<b>20</b>
Protestant	<b>76</b>	12	64	<b>22</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>71</b>	6	65	<b>26</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>83</b>	23	61	<b>13</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>78</b>	12	67	<b>19</b>
Catholic	<b>80</b>	24	55	<b>17</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>76</b>	23	53	<b>23</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>81</b>	8	73	<b>17</b>
Other religions	<b>86</b>	50	37	<b>12</b>
Jewish	<b>87</b>	64	23	<b>10</b>
Muslim	<b>82</b>	19	63	<b>17</b>
Buddhist	<b>84</b>	58	26	<b>14</b>
Hindu	<b>84</b>	51	33	<b>13</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>87</b>	66	21	<b>11</b>
Atheist	<b>95</b>	93	3	<b>4</b>
Agnostic	<b>97</b>	85	12	<b>2</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>81</b>	53	29	<b>16</b>

Note: Those who did not answer the question are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>58</sup> The 2014 RLS included different questions about human evolution that cannot be directly compared with the question in the new survey.



evangelical Protestants (26%) and Orthodox Christians (23%) say humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.

## Thinking about God and religion

Nearly two-thirds of Americans say they have thought about God and religion a great deal or quite a bit in recent years.

This includes the vast majority of evangelical Protestants (90%) and members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (90%), as well as 86% of Latter-day Saints.

Smaller shares of people in other U.S. religious groups also say they've thought about God and religion quite a bit or a great deal. This includes 68% of mainline Protestants, 70% of Catholics and 74% of Muslims.

Among religious groups in this analysis, around half or fewer of Hindus, Jews and Buddhists say they have thought about God and religion either a great deal or quite a bit.

Religiously unaffiliated adults are among the least likely to say they think about God and religion, but 56% say they have thought *at least some* about these topics. Atheists are the only group in which most adults say they have given little or no thought to God and religion in recent years.

### Most U.S. adults think about religion

% who say they have thought about God and religion \_\_\_ in recent years

	A great deal/ Quite a bit	Some	A little/ None
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	63%	17%	19%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	77	15	8
Christian	79	14	6
Protestant	84	11	4
<i>Evangelical</i>	90	7	2
<i>Mainline</i>	68	21	10
<i>Historically Black</i>	90	7	3
Catholic	70	20	10
Orthodox Christian	67	24	8
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	86	9	2
Other religions	55	20	25
Jewish	45	23	32
Muslim	74	12	12
Buddhist	38	27	35
Hindu	51	26	23
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	32	24	44
Atheist	23	19	59
Agnostic	31	24	45
Nothing in particular	35	25	39

Note: Those who did not answer the question are not shown.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 12. Spiritual experiences

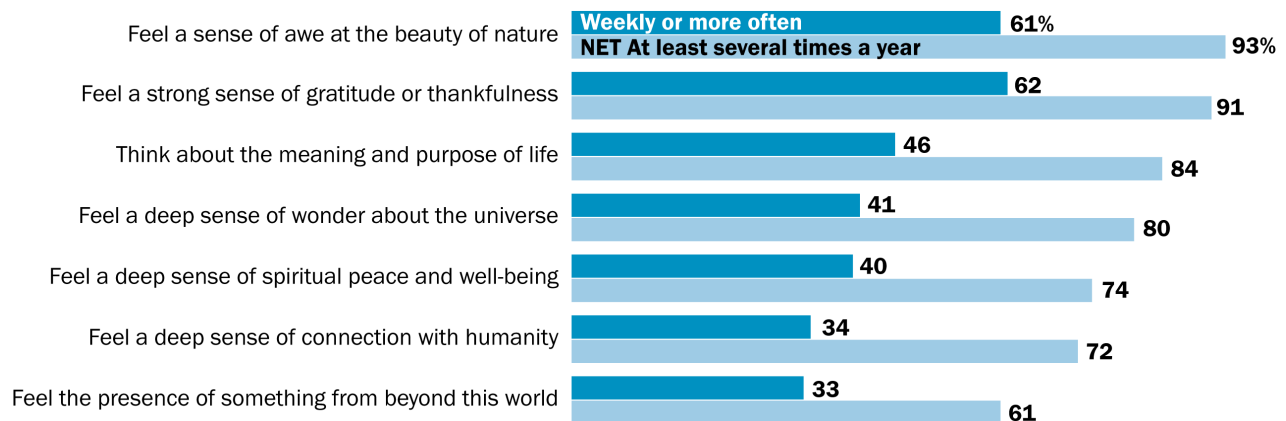
How often do Americans think about spiritual matters or feel moved in spiritual ways? Large majorities of U.S. adults say they experience various kinds of spiritual thoughts and feelings at least several times a year, according to the new Religious Landscape Study (RLS).

For example, 93% of U.S. adults say that they feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature several times a year or more often. This includes 61% who say they experience this feeling at least once a week.

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### More than 6 in 10 Americans say they feel awe, gratitude at least weekly

*% of U.S. adults who say they experience each of the following ...*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Nearly as many (91%) say they feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness at least several times a year, including 62% who report feeling deeply grateful on a weekly basis or more often. Large shares of Americans also say they think about the meaning and purpose of life at least several times a year (84%) and feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe (80%) that often.

Smaller majorities of U.S. adults say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being (74%), a deep sense of connection with humanity (72%), or the presence of something from beyond this world (61%) several times a year or more often.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Several of these questions were included, in a different context, in a [2023 Pew Research Center survey that focused on spirituality](#). That survey asked whether Americans feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being; a deep sense of wonder about the universe; the presence of something from beyond this world; and a deep sense of connection with humanity. Overall, respondents reported fewer spiritual experiences in the 2023 survey than in the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS). The difference may be due, in part, to posing the same

**Jump to sections in this chapter on the survey’s questions about:**

- [Feeling a sense of awe at the beauty of nature](#)
- [Feeling a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness](#)
- [Thinking about the meaning and purpose of life](#)
- [Feeling wonder about the universe](#)
- [Feeling spiritual peace and well-being](#)
- [Feeling a connection with humanity](#)
- [Feeling the presence of something from beyond this world](#)

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questions in different contexts. The 2023 survey had a relatively short questionnaire that asked mostly about spirituality, while the 2023-24 RLS was a longer survey that focused heavily on religious identity, beliefs and practices. Focusing on religion may have primed some respondents to report more frequent feelings of peace, wonder, connection with humanity and the presence of “something from beyond this world.” The questions about spiritual peace, wonder about the universe, gratitude and purpose, also were asked in previous religious landscape surveys, but they are coded “red” – meaning that the results are *not* comparable – because of differences in the way the studies were conducted. For details, refer to [Appendix A](#).

## Feeling a sense of awe at the beauty of nature

Upward of six-in-ten

Americans (61%) say they feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature at least once a week. An additional 32% report that they feel awed by nature once or twice a month or several times a year. Relatively few (6%) say they seldom or never feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) and evangelical Protestants are especially likely to say they feel awe at the beauty of nature weekly or more often (74% and 72%, respectively).

### Most Americans feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature at least weekly

*% who say they feel a sense of awe at the beauty of nature ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Monthly/Yearly</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	61%	32%	6%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	64	30	5
Christian	65	29	4
Protestant	68	27	4
<i>Evangelical</i>	72	24	3
<i>Mainline</i>	64	30	4
<i>Historically Black</i>	58	31	8
Catholic	58	35	6
Orthodox Christian	55	34	8
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	74	24	1
Other religions	59	33	7
Jewish	53	36	10
Muslim	54	36	8
Buddhist	45	40	15
Hindu	48	47	5
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	54	37	8
Atheist	55	38	7
Agnostic	58	38	3
Nothing in particular	53	37	10

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Feeling a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness

Most Americans (62%) feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness weekly or more often, and an additional 29% feel this way once or twice a month or several times a year. Relatively few Americans (8%) seldom or never feel a strong sense of gratitude.

Among Christian groups large enough to analyze in the survey, the shares saying they feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness at least weekly range from 59% of Orthodox Christians to 78% each among evangelical Protestants and Latter-day Saints. Most Muslim Americans (61%) also say they feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness that often.

Roughly half of Jewish Americans (52%), Buddhists (47%) and Hindus (47%) say they experience a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness on a weekly basis, along with 46% of religiously unaffiliated adults.

### 62% of Americans feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness at least weekly

*% who say they feel a strong sense of gratitude or thankfulness ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Monthly/Yearly</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	62%	29%	8%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	69	25	5
Christian	71	24	4
Protestant	74	21	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	78	18	3
<i>Mainline</i>	66	29	5
<i>Historically Black</i>	75	19	3
Catholic	63	30	6
Orthodox Christian	59	23	15
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	78	19	2
Other religions	56	33	10
Jewish	52	36	10
Muslim	61	31	7
Buddhist	47	35	17
Hindu	47	44	9
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	46	39	14
Atheist	42	43	15
Agnostic	49	41	10
Nothing in particular	47	38	15

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Thinking about the meaning and purpose of life

Overall, 46% of Americans say they think about the meaning and purpose of life at least once a week, and 38% say they think about this on a monthly or yearly basis. Another 15% of U.S. adults say they seldom or never think about the meaning of life.

Majorities of Latter-day Saints (65%), people who belong to historically Black Protestant churches (64%) and evangelical Protestants (58%) say they think about the meaning and purpose of life at least weekly.

### 46% of Americans say they think about the meaning and purpose of life at least weekly

*% who say they think about the meaning and purpose of life ...*

	Weekly or more often	Monthly/Yearly	Seldom/Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	46%	38%	15%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	51	36	12
Christian	52	35	12
Protestant	54	34	11
<i>Evangelical</i>	58	32	10
<i>Mainline</i>	43	42	14
<i>Historically Black</i>	64	26	8
Catholic	44	40	15
Orthodox Christian	46	45	9
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	65	27	7
Other religions	45	39	15
Jewish	36	40	23
Muslim	48	42	10
Buddhist	35	49	16
Hindu	41	46	14
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	35	43	22
Atheist	26	46	28
Agnostic	36	45	19
Nothing in particular	37	41	21

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Feeling wonder about the universe

Upward of four-in-ten Americans (41%) say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe weekly or more often. An additional 39% say they experience this once or twice a month or several times a year, and 19% seldom or never feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe.

Overall, 42% of adults who identify with a religion and 39% of religiously unaffiliated people say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe at least weekly.

### 41% of Americans say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe at least once a week

*% who say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Monthly/Yearly</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	41%	39%	19%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	42	38	19
Christian	41	38	19
Protestant	44	36	18
<i>Evangelical</i>	47	34	17
<i>Mainline</i>	38	42	19
<i>Historically Black</i>	42	35	21
Catholic	35	42	22
Orthodox Christian	35	49	15
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	48	37	14
Other religions	46	37	17
Jewish	37	39	22
Muslim	44	39	17
Buddhist	31	39	29
Hindu	37	49	14
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	39	41	19
Atheist	43	41	16
Agnostic	45	44	10
Nothing in particular	37	40	23

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Feeling spiritual peace and well-being

Four-in-ten Americans feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least once a week, while an additional 34% say they feel this kind of peace on a monthly or yearly basis. Meanwhile, 25% say they seldom or never feel a deep sense of spiritual peace.

Among Christians, 49% report feeling a deep sense of spiritual peace on a weekly basis, including most Latter-day Saints (64%) and members of evangelical (60%) and historically Black Protestant (59%) churches.

People who identify with religions other than Christianity are somewhat less likely than Christians to report feeling a deep sense of spiritual peace on a weekly basis (38% vs. 49%).

### 40% of Americans feel a deep sense of spiritual peace on a weekly basis

*% who say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Monthly/Yearly</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	40%	34%	25%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	48	34	17
Christian	49	34	16
Protestant	53	31	14
<i>Evangelical</i>	60	28	10
<i>Mainline</i>	37	39	22
<i>Historically Black</i>	59	28	11
Catholic	39	40	21
Orthodox Christian	35	38	26
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	64	28	8
Other religions	38	37	24
Jewish	28	34	36
Muslim	44	35	21
Buddhist	33	37	30
Hindu	32	50	18
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	21	35	43
Atheist	15	31	52
Agnostic	16	39	43
Nothing in particular	24	35	40

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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About one-in-five religiously unaffiliated adults feel a deep sense of spiritual peace at least weekly, including 24% of those who say their religion is “nothing in particular,” 16% of agnostics and 15% of atheists.

## Feeling a connection with humanity

Upward of one-third of Americans (34%) say they feel a deep sense of connection with humanity at least once a week. An additional 37% feel this way once or twice a month or several times a year, and 26% seldom or never feel a deep sense of connection with humanity.

Nearly half of U.S. Muslims (48%), members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (47%) and Latter-day Saints (46%) feel a deep sense of connection with humanity at least weekly.

### 34% of Americans feel a deep sense of connection with humanity at least weekly

*% who say they feel a deep sense of connection with humanity ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Monthly/Yearly</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	34%	37%	26%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	39	37	22
Christian	39	37	22
Protestant	41	35	22
<i>Evangelical</i>	43	33	21
<i>Mainline</i>	33	40	25
<i>Historically Black</i>	47	31	19
Catholic	34	40	24
Orthodox Christian	35	38	26
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	46	41	12
Other religions	36	38	25
Jewish	31	41	26
Muslim	48	36	15
Buddhist	24	38	38
Hindu	38	47	14
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	24	39	35
Atheist	24	41	34
Agnostic	25	44	30
Nothing in particular	24	38	37

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Feeling the presence of something from beyond this world

One-third of U.S. adults say they feel the presence of something from beyond this world at least once a week, and 28% report having such an experience on a monthly or yearly basis. An additional 38% seldom or never feel the presence of something from beyond this world.

Latter-day Saints (56%) and evangelical Protestants (52%) are especially likely to feel the presence of something from beyond this world on a weekly basis.

Religiously unaffiliated adults, on the other hand, are far less likely to say they have such an experience weekly or more often. Most atheists (84%) and agnostics (66%) say they seldom or never feel the presence of something from the beyond.

### 33% of Americans feel the presence of something from beyond this world at least once a week

*% who say they feel the presence of something from beyond this world ...*

	<b>Weekly or more often</b>	<b>Monthly/Yearly</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	33%	28%	38%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	41	29	28
Christian	41	29	27
Protestant	45	28	24
<i>Evangelical</i>	52	26	19
<i>Mainline</i>	31	32	34
<i>Historically Black</i>	46	27	24
Catholic	32	32	35
Orthodox Christian	29	31	38
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	56	29	14
Other religions	32	28	39
Jewish	21	22	55
Muslim	43	23	34
Buddhist	20	32	47
Hindu	28	35	36
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	15	24	59
Atheist	5	11	84
Agnostic	10	23	66
Nothing in particular	20	28	51

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 13. Spiritual activities

How often do Americans engage in spiritual activities? The Religious Landscape Study (RLS) asked U.S. adults about six activities they might do for spiritual purposes. Here are some key findings:

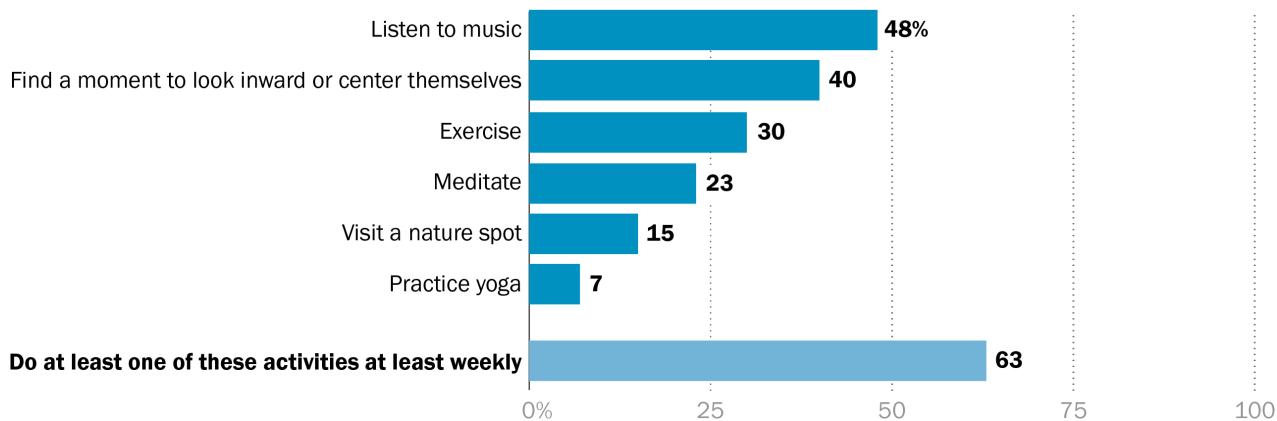
- 48% say they **listen to music** for spiritual reasons weekly or more often.
- 40% find time to **look inward or center themselves** weekly or more often.
- 30% **exercise** for spiritual reasons weekly or more often.
- 23% **meditate** weekly or more often.
- 15% **visit a nature spot** such as a waterfall, mountaintop or river for spiritual reasons weekly or more often.
- 7% **practice yoga** for spiritual reasons weekly or more often.

Overall, 63% of Americans report that they engage in *at least one* of these six activities, for spiritual reasons, at least once a week.

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### 63% of U.S. adults say that they do at least 1 thing weekly for spiritual reasons

*% of U.S. adults who say they \_\_\_ for spiritual reasons weekly or more often*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Americans who identify with a religion are more likely than religiously unaffiliated adults (those who identify religiously as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular”) to say they participate on a weekly basis in at least one of these spiritual activities (71% vs. 45%).<sup>60</sup>

The survey also finds that 3% of U.S. adults say they go on a spiritual retreat more than once a year. An additional 11% say they do this about once a year or every few years.

**Read more about Americans’ self-reported participation in the following spiritual activities:**

- [Listening to music](#)
- [Looking inward or centering yourself](#)
- [Exercise](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Visiting a nature spot](#)
- [Practicing yoga](#)
- [Spiritual retreats](#)

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<sup>60</sup> In a [different survey from 2023](#), Pew Research Center asked questions on similar topics in slightly different ways. In that survey, respondents were first asked how often they engaged in the following: looking inward or centering yourself, exercise, meditation, spending time in nature and practicing yoga. Then, those who said they engaged in any of these activities at least a few times a month were asked to select from the following options which was the most important reason why they did these things: “To feel connected with something bigger than myself,” “To get health benefits, including relaxation,” “To have fun and enjoy the experience,” “To feel connected with other people,” “To feel connected with my true self,” or for a different reason. Because of the differences in how these previous questions were asked, they are not directly comparable with the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) questions explored in this chapter.

## Listening to music

Nearly half of U.S. adults (48%) say they listen to music *for spiritual reasons* at least weekly.

An additional 6% do this monthly, while 12% do this less often. And 33% say they never listen to music for spiritual purposes.

These rates vary widely across religious groups. Roughly seven-in-ten members of historically Black Protestant churches (72%) say they listen to music for spiritual reasons on a weekly basis, as do 65% each among evangelical Protestants and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons).

Jewish Americans and religiously unaffiliated adults are much less likely to say they listen to music for spiritual reasons.

### 55% of Christians listen to music at least weekly for spiritual reasons

*% who say they listen to music for spiritual reasons ...*

	Weekly or more often	Monthly	Less often	Never do this for spiritual reasons
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	48%	6%	12%	33%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	54	7	14	24
Christian	55	7	14	23
Protestant	60	7	13	18
<i>Evangelical</i>	65	7	12	14
<i>Mainline</i>	44	8	16	31
<i>Historically Black</i>	72	8	9	11
Catholic	45	6	16	32
Orthodox Christian	44	8	11	37
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	65	8	14	12
Other religions	44	8	13	35
Jewish	33	4	12	51
Muslim	37	10	18	35
Buddhist	45	7	18	29
Hindu	51	14	10	25
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	33	5	9	53
Atheist	16	3	5	76
Agnostic	24	5	8	63
Nothing in particular	39	5	10	44

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Looking inward or centering yourself

Four-in-ten Americans say they find time to look inward or center themselves for spiritual reasons at least once a week. About three-in-ten say they do this for spiritual reasons monthly (11%) or less often (20%), while 28% say they never do this for spiritual reasons.

About six-in-ten Latter-day Saints (61%) report that they look inward or center themselves for spiritual reasons at least once a week, as do 55% of members of historically Black Protestant churches.

By comparison, religiously unaffiliated adults – particularly atheists – are less likely to do this. Indeed, two-thirds of atheists (68%) say they *never* center themselves for spiritual reasons.

### Most Latter-day Saints find a moment to look inward for spiritual reasons at least weekly

*% who say they find a moment to look inward or center themselves for spiritual reasons ...*

	Weekly or more often	Monthly	Less often	Never do this for spiritual reasons
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	40%	11%	20%	28%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	46	11	20	21
Christian	46	11	20	21
Protestant	48	11	19	20
<i>Evangelical</i>	51	10	18	19
<i>Mainline</i>	39	12	23	24
<i>Historically Black</i>	55	12	17	14
Catholic	39	12	24	24
Orthodox Christian	42	13	22	24
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	61	13	16	9
Other religions	46	12	18	23
Jewish	31	12	19	38
Muslim	41	13	19	27
Buddhist	47	12	17	24
Hindu	39	18	26	15
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	26	10	18	45
Atheist	15	7	11	68
Agnostic	25	11	17	46
Nothing in particular	29	11	21	39

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Exercise

Three-in-ten Americans say they exercise for spiritual reasons at least weekly, while an additional 6% say they do so monthly, and 16% do so less often.

Adults who identify with a religion are far more likely than religiously unaffiliated Americans to say they exercise weekly for spiritual purposes (34% vs. 21%).

### 30% of Americans say they exercise at least weekly for spiritual reasons

*% who say they exercise for spiritual reasons ...*

	Weekly or more often	Monthly	Less often	Never do this for spiritual reasons
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	30%	6%	16%	48%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	34	6	16	43
Christian	33	6	17	43
Protestant	34	6	17	42
<i>Evangelical</i>	34	5	17	42
<i>Mainline</i>	30	5	15	48
<i>Historically Black</i>	40	9	21	29
Catholic	33	5	17	44
Orthodox Christian	35	3	19	43
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	39	9	16	35
Other religions	35	7	13	43
Jewish	22	5	10	62
Muslim	39	9	13	39
Buddhist	41	12	12	35
Hindu	40	8	14	36
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	21	5	13	60
Atheist	12	2	6	79
Agnostic	17	4	9	70
Nothing in particular	25	6	17	52

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Meditation

Overall, 23% of U.S. adults say they meditate for spiritual reasons at least once a week, and an additional 7% report doing so monthly. Upward of one-fifth of Americans (21%) meditate for spiritual purposes less often than that, while 48% say they *never* meditate for spiritual reasons.

Roughly three-in-ten or more members of historically Black Protestant churches (39%), Buddhists (38%), Hindus (36%), Latter-day Saints (34%) and Muslim Americans (32%) say they meditate weekly or more often.

Jewish Americans and religiously unaffiliated adults are among the least likely to say they meditate for spiritual reasons.

### 23% of U.S. adults say they meditate at least weekly for spiritual reasons

*% who say they meditate for spiritual reasons ...*

	Weekly or more often	Monthly	Less often	Never do this for spiritual reasons
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	23%	7%	21%	48%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	27	7	22	43
Christian	26	6	22	44
Protestant	28	6	21	43
<i>Evangelical</i>	30	6	19	42
<i>Mainline</i>	18	5	24	51
<i>Historically Black</i>	39	9	22	29
Catholic	22	6	23	47
Orthodox Christian	17	9	20	49
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	34	11	27	28
Other religions	31	9	21	37
Jewish	12	5	16	64
Muslim	32	10	19	39
Buddhist	38	12	21	29
Hindu	36	10	30	23
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	14	7	19	61
Atheist	6	4	12	78
Agnostic	11	6	20	63
Nothing in particular	16	8	20	55

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Visiting a nature spot

Three-in-ten Americans say they spend time in nature (for example, by visiting a waterfall, mountaintop or river) for spiritual reasons at least once a month, including 15% who say they do so weekly.

An additional 29% of U.S. adults say they experience nature this way, but less often. And 39% say they never visit nature spots for spiritual reasons.

### 3 in 10 Americans say they visit a nature spot for spiritual reasons at least monthly

*% who say they visit a nature spot (such as a waterfall, mountaintop or river) for spiritual reasons ...*

	Weekly or more often	Monthly	Less often	Never do this for spiritual reasons
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	15%	15%	29%	39%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	16	16	32	35
Christian	15	16	33	35
Protestant	16	15	32	35
<i>Evangelical</i>	16	16	33	33
<i>Mainline</i>	15	17	31	36
<i>Historically Black</i>	15	11	32	40
Catholic	14	15	33	37
Orthodox Christian	19	18	22	41
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	19	26	32	22
Other religions	19	19	28	33
Jewish	13	12	21	53
Muslim	16	15	33	35
Buddhist	20	18	27	35
Hindu	15	25	34	25
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	12	14	23	50
Atheist	8	7	14	70
Agnostic	11	14	23	51
Nothing in particular	13	15	26	45

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Practicing yoga

One-in-ten Americans say they practice yoga weekly (7%) or monthly (3%) for spiritual reasons.<sup>61</sup>

Hindu Americans are especially likely to engage in yoga for spiritual reasons: 32% say they do this once a week or more often. An additional 11% of Hindu Americans say they do this monthly, while 25% do so less often and 30% say they never do this.

### 1 in 10 Americans say they practice yoga at least monthly for spiritual reasons

% who say they practice yoga for spiritual reasons ...

	Weekly or more often	Monthly	Less often	Never do this for spiritual reasons
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	7%	3%	15%	73%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	7	3	15	73
Christian	6	3	14	75
Protestant	6	3	14	76
<i>Evangelical</i>	5	2	12	79
<i>Mainline</i>	5	3	14	76
<i>Historically Black</i>	9	4	21	65
Catholic	6	3	16	73
Orthodox Christian	9	3	15	69
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	8	4	18	68
Other religions	15	6	19	59
Jewish	8	2	12	76
Muslim	13	7	19	60
Buddhist	15	9	16	59
Hindu	32	11	25	30
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	7	4	15	73
Atheist	3	2	9	85
Agnostic	7	4	14	74
Nothing in particular	8	5	17	69

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>61</sup> An earlier [Pew Research Center survey from 2023](#) found that 15% of Americans practice yoga (for any reason) at least a few times a month, including 11% who do it mainly for their health, enjoyment or other reasons; 2% who do it mainly to feel connected with their “true self,” 1% who do it mainly to feel connected with something bigger than themselves, and 1% who do it mainly to feel connected with other people.

## Spiritual retreats

Overall, 3% of Americans say they go on spiritual retreats more than once a year. An additional 11% say they do this annually or every few years, and 13% do this less often. More than seven-in-ten (72%) never go on spiritual retreats.

Hindus and Latter-day Saints are among the religious groups that are most likely to participate in a spiritual retreat.

### 72% of Americans never go on spiritual retreats

% who go on spiritual retreats ...

	More than once a year	About once a year/Every few years	Less often	Never
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	3%	11%	13%	72%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	4	14	15	66
Christian	3	15	15	66
Protestant	3	16	16	63
<i>Evangelical</i>	4	19	18	57
<i>Mainline</i>	1	10	11	76
<i>Historically Black</i>	4	17	15	62
Catholic	3	11	14	72
Orthodox Christian	4	15	17	64
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	6	18	21	54
Other religions	6	14	13	67
Jewish	4	6	6	84
Muslim	10	14	16	59
Buddhist	6	20	16	58
Hindu	10	22	20	47
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	2	4	6	88
Atheist	1	1	3	95
Agnostic	1	3	4	92
Nothing in particular	2	5	8	84

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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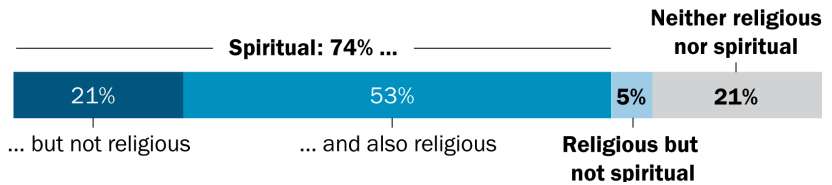
## 14. Spiritual and religious self-descriptions

Americans are more likely to say they are spiritual than to say they are religious. Nearly three-quarters of Americans say they are either very spiritual or somewhat spiritual, while 58% say they are very or somewhat religious.

Combining these measures, upward of half of U.S. adults (53%) say they are both spiritual and religious, while 21% say they are spiritual but not religious. Just 5% say they are religious but not spiritual, and 21% say they are neither spiritual nor religious.<sup>62</sup>

### 74% of U.S. adults identify as spiritual

% of U.S. adults who identify as the following



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. “Spiritual” adults are those who describe themselves as very or somewhat spiritual. “Religious” adults are those who describe themselves as very or somewhat religious. Those who are not spiritual include those who say they are not too or not at all spiritual, and those who did not answer the question. Those who are not religious include those who say they are not too or not at all religious, and those who did not answer the question.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### Jump to details on how Americans answer questions in the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) about:

- [Being a spiritual person](#)
- [Being a religious person](#)
- [Being spiritual but not religious](#)

<sup>62</sup> Pew Research Center has asked about spirituality among Americans in various ways. Most recently, in a [2023 survey](#), we asked U.S. adults, “Do you think of yourself as spiritual? (Yes/No)” and “Do you think of yourself as religious? (Yes/No)” along with questions asking, “How important is spirituality in your life?” and “How important is religion in your life?” We divided respondents into four categories based on their responses to both sets of questions, classifying them as spiritual if they said either that they think of themselves as spiritual OR that spirituality is very important in their lives. Likewise, we classified them as religious if they said either that they think of themselves as religious OR that religion is very important in their lives. Broadly speaking, the [2023 survey found a similar pattern of responses](#) to what the Religious Landscape Study (RLS) shows. The largest group in the 2023 survey consisted of Americans who said they were *both* spiritual and religious (48%), while 22% said they were spiritual but not religious, 10% said they were religious but not spiritual, and 21% said they were neither spiritual nor religious.

## Being a spiritual person

Nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults consider themselves at least somewhat spiritual, including 32% who describe themselves as very spiritual and 42% who say they are somewhat spiritual. A quarter of Americans say they are not too, or not at all, spiritual.<sup>63</sup>

The vast majority of Christians (85%) say they are at least somewhat spiritual, as do 77% of people who identify with non-Christian religions. Jewish Americans (60%) are the least likely of the religiously affiliated groups large enough to analyze to describe themselves this way.

Half of all religiously unaffiliated adults say they are at least somewhat spiritual people – though atheists (24%) are notably less likely to say this than are agnostics (47%) and people who describe their religion as “nothing in particular” (58%).

### About 9 in 10 or more Latter-day Saints, evangelicals and people in the historically Black Protestant tradition say they are very or somewhat spiritual

% who say they are a \_\_\_ spiritual person

	NET Very/ Somewhat	Very	Somewhat	NET Not too/ Not at all
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>74%</b>	32%	42%	<b>25%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>84</b>	39	45	<b>15</b>
Christian	<b>85</b>	40	46	<b>14</b>
Protestant	<b>87</b>	44	44	<b>12</b>
Evangelical	<b>90</b>	50	40	<b>9</b>
Mainline	<b>80</b>	28	51	<b>19</b>
Historically Black	<b>90</b>	50	41	<b>8</b>
Catholic	<b>80</b>	29	52	<b>19</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>76</b>	26	50	<b>24</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>95</b>	56	39	<b>5</b>
Other religions	<b>77</b>	38	39	<b>22</b>
Jewish	<b>60</b>	22	38	<b>37</b>
Muslim	<b>75</b>	37	38	<b>25</b>
Buddhist	<b>76</b>	26	50	<b>23</b>
Hindu	<b>82</b>	28	54	<b>17</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>50</b>	14	36	<b>50</b>
Atheist	<b>24</b>	5	19	<b>76</b>
Agnostic	<b>47</b>	10	37	<b>52</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>58</b>	18	40	<b>42</b>

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>63</sup> The Center has included this question – asking people if they are a “very,” “somewhat,” “not too” or “not at all” spiritual person – in two previous surveys conducted in [2022 and 2017](#). The 2022 survey focused on the relationship between religion and views on the environment, and the 2017 survey covered a range of topics including various religious beliefs and practices, the relationship between religion and society, and where people find meaning and purpose in their lives. While the topics of the surveys were not the same, they collectively suggest that the share of Americans who consider themselves very spiritual may have increased modestly in recent years, from 28% in 2017 and 27% in 2022 to 32% in the 2023-24 RLS.

## Being a religious person

Nearly six-in-ten Americans say they are at least somewhat religious, including 19% who describe themselves as very religious and 38% who say they are somewhat religious. Upward of four-in-ten Americans (42%) say they are not too, or not at all, religious.<sup>64</sup>

About half of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) say they are very religious, as do roughly a third or more of Muslims, evangelical Protestants and people who identify with the historically Black Protestant tradition.

### 58% of Americans say they are a somewhat or very religious person

% who say they are a \_\_\_ religious person

	NET Very/ Somewhat	Very	Somewhat	NET Not too/ Not at all
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>58%</b>	19%	38%	<b>42%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>76</b>	27	49	<b>23</b>
Christian	<b>78</b>	28	51	<b>21</b>
Protestant	<b>80</b>	30	49	<b>19</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>83</b>	36	47	<b>15</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>70</b>	16	54	<b>29</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>85</b>	35	50	<b>14</b>
Catholic	<b>75</b>	21	55	<b>24</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>71</b>	19	52	<b>27</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>90</b>	53	37	<b>9</b>
Other religions	<b>52</b>	16	36	<b>47</b>
Jewish	<b>42</b>	15	27	<b>56</b>
Muslim	<b>77</b>	37	40	<b>23</b>
Buddhist	<b>57</b>	9	48	<b>42</b>
Hindu	<b>72</b>	19	53	<b>28</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>15</b>	2	13	<b>84</b>
Atheist	<b>1</b>	<1	1	<b>99</b>
Agnostic	<b>4</b>	<1	4	<b>95</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>22</b>	3	19	<b>77</b>

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>64</sup> The Center has included this question – asking people if they are a “very,” “somewhat,” “not too” or “not at all” religious person – in two previous surveys conducted in [2022 and 2017](#). The 2022 survey focused on the relationship between religion and views on the environment, and the 2017 survey covered a range of topics including various religious beliefs and practices, the relationship between religion and society, and where people find meaning and purpose in their lives. While the topics of the surveys were not the same, they collectively suggest that the share of Americans who consider themselves religious has been fairly stable since 2022 (when 18% said this) and may be slightly higher than in 2017 (when 13% described themselves as “very religious”).

## Being spiritual but not religious

Combining these two questions, we see that a little more than half of Americans – 53% – say they are both spiritual and religious (i.e., at least somewhat spiritual *and* at least somewhat religious).

Smaller shares say they are spiritual but not religious (21%); religious but not spiritual (5%); and neither spiritual nor religious (21%).<sup>65</sup>

Among religiously unaffiliated adults – often called religious “nones” – 37% say they are spiritual but not religious, while 48% say they are neither spiritual nor religious.

Seven-in-ten religiously affiliated Americans say they are both spiritual and religious. Latter-day Saints (88%) and members of historically Black Protestant (80%) and evangelical Protestant (79%) churches are more likely than members of other religious groups large enough to be analyzed to say they are spiritual as well as religious.

### 21% of Americans are spiritual but not religious

% who say they are ...

	Spiritual and religious	Spiritual but not religious	Religious but not spiritual	Neither spiritual nor religious
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	53%	21%	5%	21%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	70	14	6	10
Christian	73	12	6	9
Protestant	75	13	5	8
<i>Evangelical</i>	79	11	5	5
<i>Mainline</i>	64	16	6	15
<i>Historically Black</i>	80	11	5	4
Catholic	68	12	7	13
Orthodox Christian	62	14	9	15
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	88	7	2	3
Other religions	45	33	7	16
Jewish	35	25	7	33
Muslim	63	12	14	11
Buddhist	46	31	11	12
Hindu	65	17	6	11
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	13	37	2	48
Atheist	1	23	1	75
Agnostic	4	43	<1	52
Nothing in particular	20	38	2	40

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. “Spiritual” adults are those who describe themselves as very or somewhat spiritual. “Religious” adults are those who describe themselves as very or somewhat religious. Those who are not spiritual include those who say they are not too or not at all spiritual, and those who did not answer the question. Those who are not religious include those who say they are not too or not at all religious, and those who did not answer the question.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>65</sup> In our [2022 survey](#) that included the same questions, 48% of respondents identified as both spiritual and religious, 21% said they are spiritual but not religious, 6% described themselves as religious but not spiritual, and 25% said they are neither spiritual nor religious.



## **IV. Social and political views**

## 15. Religion, partisanship and ideology

The religious profiles of U.S. adults – how religious they are and what religion they identify with – are closely aligned with their partisan political identities, according to the new Religious Landscape Study (RLS).

Generally speaking, Americans who are highly religious are the most solidly Republican constituency. U.S. adults with lower levels of religious engagement more commonly identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party.<sup>66</sup>

However, Black Americans are a notable exception: At all levels of religiousness, most identify as Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party.

### Large U.S. partisan divides by level of religiousness

*% of U.S. adults who identify with or lean toward each political party*

	Rep/ lean Rep	Dem/ lean Dem	No lean
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>8%</b>
High religiousness	61	32	7
Medium-high religiousness	50	41	9
Medium-low religiousness	43	48	9
Low religiousness	27	67	5

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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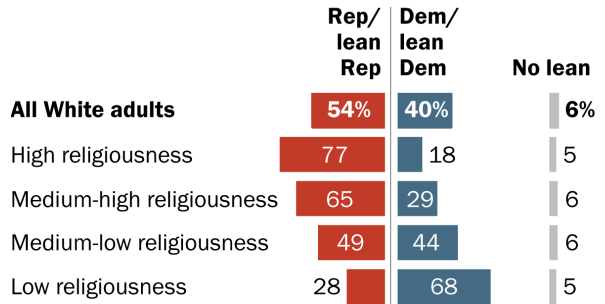
<sup>66</sup> We measured religiousness using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God and/or a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion’s importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is “not too important” or “not at all important” in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is “very important” in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

White Americans are far more divided than other racial groups by level of religiousness.

Among highly religious White Americans, a solid majority identify with the Republican Party or lean Republican (77%). Among White Americans with low levels of religious engagement, a sizable majority identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party (68%).

**For White U.S. adults, partisanship is closely tied to level of religiousness**

*% of **White adults** who identify with or lean toward each political party*



Note: White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and Americans of other races and ethnicities also are somewhat politically divided by their levels of religiousness, but the gaps are not as wide as among White Americans.

For example, 48% of highly religious Hispanic Americans identify as Republican or Republican-leaning and 40% identify as Democratic or Democratic-leaning. (The rest say they do not lean toward either party.) Among Hispanic Americans with low levels of religious engagement, a clear 68% majority lean toward the Democratic Party.

### Highly religious Hispanic Americans are about equally likely to favor Republicans, Democrats

*% of Hispanic adults who identify with or lean toward each political party*

	Rep/ lean Rep	Dem/ lean Dem	No lean
<b>All Hispanic adults</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>12%</b>
High religiousness	48	40	12
Medium-high religiousness	39	47	13
Medium-low religiousness	36	50	14
Low religiousness	26	68	5

*% of Asian adults who identify with or lean toward each political party*

	Rep/ lean Rep	Dem/ lean Dem	No lean
<b>All Asian adults</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>10</b>
High religiousness	53	36	10
Medium-high religiousness	34	53	13
Medium-low religiousness	37	55	9
Low religiousness	27	65	8

Note: Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. Hispanics are of any race. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Black Americans largely support the Democratic Party regardless of their level of religiousness, with about three-quarters in both the high and low religiousness categories siding with the Democratic Party.

(Results about partisanship and ideology from this new survey cannot be compared with the previous 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies due to differences in the way the surveys were conducted.<sup>67</sup>)

**Read on to learn about the political and ideological views of specific religious groups.**

## Black U.S adults tend to prefer the Democratic Party, regardless of how religious they are

*% of Black adults who identify with or lean toward each political party*

	Rep/ lean Rep	Dem/ lean Dem	No lean
<b>All Black adults</b>	19%	73%	9%
High religiousness	14	76	9
Medium-high religiousness	20	72	8
Medium-low religiousness	24	65	11
Low religiousness*	22	75	3

\* The survey included 185 interviews with Black adults with low levels of religiousness, with an effective sample size of 95 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points.

Note: Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>67</sup> Both the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies were conducted by telephone, while the 2023-24 survey was conducted mainly online and on paper. More details about this change in survey modes and its implications for understanding the survey's findings are available in [Appendix A](#).

## Political orientation and political ideology by religious affiliation

The U.S. public is very evenly divided politically: In the 2023-24 RLS, 46% of Americans identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, and 46% identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party.

The remaining 8% of U.S. adults consider themselves independents or “something else,” or did not answer the question and don’t lean toward either party.

(Read our [recent analysis of trends in party identification over time](#).)

Some religious groups strongly favor one party over the other:

- Evangelical Protestants and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) largely identify with or lean toward the Republican Party (70% and 73%, respectively).
- Historically Black Protestant church members (72%), Jewish Americans (66%) and Hindus (62%) mostly identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, as do atheists (82%) and agnostics (76%).

### U.S. evangelicals and Latter-day Saints mostly favor the Republican Party

*% who identify with or lean toward each political party*

	Republican/ lean Rep	Democrat/ lean Dem	No lean
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	46%	46%	8%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	53	40	8
Christian	55	38	7
Protestant	58	35	7
<i>Evangelical</i>	70	24	6
<i>Mainline</i>	51	41	8
<i>Historically Black</i>	20	72	8
Catholic	49	44	8
Orthodox Christian	50	44	6
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	73	23	4
Other religions	33	59	8
Jewish	31	66	3
Muslim	42	53	6
Buddhist	40	51	9
Hindu	29	62	8
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	31	62	7
Atheist	15	82	3
Agnostic	20	76	4
Nothing in particular	39	53	9

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Mainline Protestants favor the GOP (51%) over the Democratic Party (41%). Among Catholics, 49% are Republicans and GOP leaners while 44% are Democrats or Democratic leaners.

Within some religious groups, there are large differences by race:

- Hispanic Catholics tend to favor the Democratic Party (54%), while White, non-Hispanic Catholics favor the GOP (60%).
- Among evangelical Protestants, the Republican preference is much more pronounced among White evangelicals (80%) than among Hispanic evangelicals (58%).

On a separate question asking respondents to describe their political views, 33% of U.S. adults identify as conservative or very conservative and 24% identify as liberal or very liberal. An additional 38% identify as moderate, and 4% say they don't know or give no answer.

Religious groups' responses about political ideology generally track partisan patterns, though most religious groups also have substantial shares that describe themselves as politically moderate.

The only groups in which about half or more adults identify as ideologically conservative are evangelical Protestants (59%) and Latter-day Saints (56%).

And the only groups with a majority who identify as ideologically liberal are atheists (67%) and agnostics (57%).

## Majorities of U.S. atheists and agnostics identify as ideologically liberal

% who describe their political views as ...

	Very conservative/ Conservative	Moderate	Very liberal/ Liberal	Don't know/ Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	33%	38%	24%	4%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	41	37	17	4
Christian	44	37	14	4
Protestant	48	35	13	4
<i>Evangelical</i>	59	30	7	4
<i>Mainline</i>	36	40	20	4
<i>Historically Black</i>	27	44	23	6
Catholic	36	42	18	4
Orthodox Christian	32	48	19	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	56	33	10	1
Other religions	17	40	39	4
Jewish	23	30	46	1
Muslim	18	47	31	4
Buddhist	23	47	28	2
Hindu	13	39	44	4
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	15	39	42	3
Atheist	7	25	67	1
Agnostic	9	32	57	1
Nothing in particular	19	45	31	4

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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About half of members of the historically Black Protestant tradition, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Americans who identify religiously as “nothing in particular” say they are moderate or give no answer.



## 16. Religion and views on LGBTQ issues and abortion

In the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS), 59% of adults who identify with a religion say that homosexuality should be accepted by society, up a bit from 55% in 2014 and from 46% in 2007.<sup>68</sup>

This view is more widespread among Americans who are religiously unaffiliated (that is, those who identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religion) than among those who identify with a religion. In the 2023-24 survey, 87% of religiously unaffiliated respondents say homosexuality should be accepted by society, compared with 83% in 2014 and 71% in 2007.

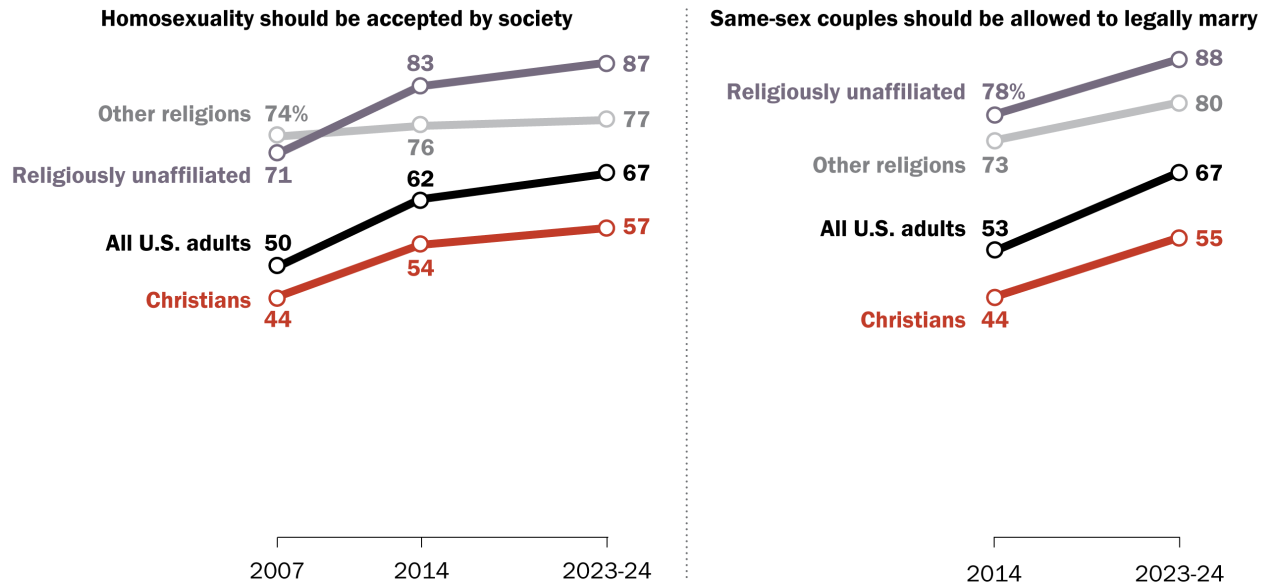
In the new RLS, 55% of Christians say they favor allowing same-sex couples to marry legally, up from 44% in 2014. Support for legal same-sex marriage is generally higher among Hindus (88%), Buddhists (87%), Jews (82%) and religiously unaffiliated Americans (88%) than it is among Christians.

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<sup>68</sup> Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study (RLS) and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The first two landscape surveys were conducted by telephone, but the 2023-24 study was conducted mainly online and on paper. This “mode shift” affects the results of some survey questions more than others. Analysis of a nationwide telephone survey, which was conducted alongside the 2023-24 RLS for testing purposes, indicates that the subject matter in this chapter – survey findings about public attitudes toward LGBTQ issues and abortion – *can be cautiously compared* with the previous landscape studies. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for additional details.

## 57% of U.S. Christians say homosexuality should be accepted by society; 55% say same-sex marriage should be legal

% who say the following, among ...



Note: The 2007 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) did not ask about same-sex marriage. Comparisons between the new RLS and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The first two landscape surveys were conducted by telephone, but the 2023-24 study was conducted mainly online and on paper. This “mode shift” affects the results of some survey questions more than others. Analysis of a companion telephone survey, which was conducted alongside the 2023-24 RLS for testing purposes, indicates that these questions *can be cautiously compared* with the previous landscape studies. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

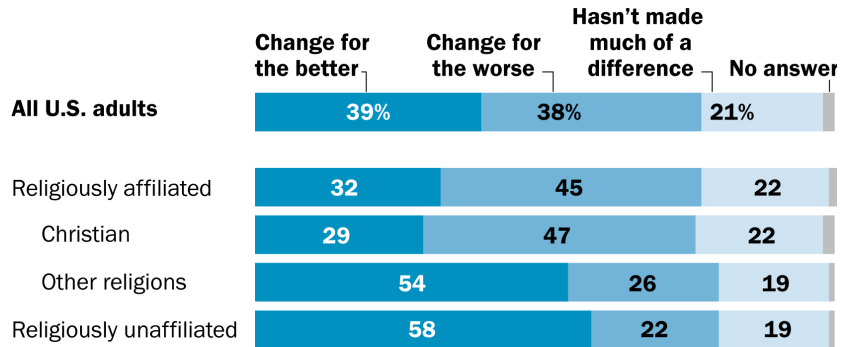
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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When it comes to acceptance of people who are transgender (that is, those who identify as a gender that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth), Americans who identify with a religion are more likely to say that greater social acceptance of transgender people has been a “change for the worse” (45%) than a “change for the better” (32%). By contrast, religiously unaffiliated Americans are much more likely to describe this as a change for the better (58%) than as a change for the worse (22%).

**45% of Americans who identify with a religion see increased acceptance of transgender people as a change for the worse**

*% who say that greater social acceptance of people who are transgender (that is, people who identify as a gender that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth) is a ...*



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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(Pew Research Center did not ask about acceptance of transgender people in either the 2014 or 2007 RLS.)

All three Religious Landscape Studies have asked about abortion. And all three studies have found that support for legal abortion is much higher among religiously unaffiliated Americans than among U.S. Christians. (More information about long-term trends in the public’s abortion views is available in the Center’s fact sheet “[Public Opinion on Abortion.](#)”)

The rest of this chapter describes how people from different religious groups answer the survey’s questions about LGBTQ issues and abortion.

(In addition to religion, views on these topics also are linked with political partisanship, age and other factors. More details about how public opinion varies on [LGBTQ issues](#) and [abortion](#) are available on our website.)

**Read more on how religious groups answer questions about:**

- [Acceptance of homosexuality](#)
- [Same-sex marriage](#)
- [Acceptance of transgender people](#)
- [Abortion’s legality](#)

**52% of U.S. Christians say abortion should be legal in most or all cases; 47% say it should be illegal**

	% who said abortion should be LEGAL in most/all cases in ...		In the 2023-24 survey, % who say abortion should be __ in most/all cases	
	2007	2014	Legal	Illegal
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	51%	53%	64%	35%
Religiously affiliated	47	47	54	44
Christian	46	45	52	47
Other religions	77	75	79	21
Religiously unaffiliated	70	73	85	14

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The shares of U.S. adults who in 2007 and 2014 said abortion should be legal are shown because these results are comparable with 2023-24, but the shares who said abortion should be illegal are not comparable and therefore are not shown. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Acceptance of homosexuality

In all three Religious Landscape Studies, large majorities of religiously unaffiliated Americans have said homosexuality should be accepted by society. Most Jews and Buddhists also have consistently expressed this view, as have seven-in-ten or more Hindus in both 2014 and in the new survey.

A smaller majority of Christians say homosexuality should be accepted by society. Most Catholics, mainline Protestants and members of historically Black Protestant churches say homosexuality should be accepted, while most evangelical Protestants say homosexuality should be discouraged by society. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) are divided on this question.

Still, Christians overall are more accepting of homosexuality today than they were when the first RLS was conducted in 2007. Some Christian groups exhibited increased acceptance between 2007 and 2014 and then a leveling off, while others continued to exhibit increased acceptance between the 2014 survey and the new study.

### 57% of U.S. Christians say homosexuality should be accepted by society

	% who said homosexuality should be ACCEPTED in ...		In the 2023-24 survey, % who say homosexuality should be ...	
	2007	2014	Accepted	Discouraged
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	50%	62%	67%	30%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>				
Christian	46	55	59	38
Protestant	44	54	57	40
<i>Evangelical</i>	38	48	50	47
<i>Mainline</i>	26	36	36	61
<i>Historically Black</i>	56	66	72	25
Catholic	39	51	61	36
Orthodox Christian	58	70	74	23
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	48	62	58	39
Other religions	24	36	46	50
Jewish	74	76	77	21
Muslim	79	81	82	17
Buddhist	38	45	41	55
Hindu	82	88	83	16
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	48	71	78	18
Atheist	71	83	87	12
Agnostic	80	94	93	6
Nothing in particular	83	94	95	4
	67	78	82	17

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Also not shown is the “Neither/Both equally” option that respondents could volunteer in the 2007 and 2014 surveys. Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The shares of U.S. adults who in 2007 and 2014 said homosexuality should be accepted by society are shown because these results are comparable with 2023-24, but the shares who said homosexuality should be discouraged are not comparable and therefore are not shown. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Same-sex marriage

Since the last RLS, nearly every Christian group large enough to be analyzed has become more likely to favor allowing same-sex couples to marry legally. None of the U.S. religious groups analyzed here have shown a decline in support for same-sex marriage.

For example, 70% of Catholics favor same-sex marriage in the new survey, up from 57% in 2014. And 56% of adults in the historically Black Protestant tradition now favor it, up from 40% in 2014.

At the same time, the survey shows that most evangelical Protestants (62%) continue to oppose same-sex marriage, as do 56% of Latter-day Saints.

### Support for same-sex marriage has increased across many religious groups

*% who say they favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally*

	2014	2023-24
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	53%	67%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	46	58
Christian	44	55
Protestant	39	49
<i>Evangelical</i>	28	36
<i>Mainline</i>	57	71
<i>Historically Black</i>	40	56
Catholic	57	70
Orthodox Christian	54	58
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	26	41
Other religions	73	80
Jewish	77	82
Muslim	42	43
Buddhist	84	87
Hindu	68	88
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	78	88
Atheist	92	96
Agnostic	91	97
Nothing in particular	72	84

Note: Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Acceptance of transgender people

Religiously unaffiliated Americans are a lot more likely than those who identify with a religion to say that increased acceptance of people who are transgender is a “change for the better” (58% vs. 32%).

Majorities of Hindus (67%) and Jews (59%) in the U.S. also see transgender acceptance as a change for the better.

Taking the other position, 47% of U.S. Christians and 48% of Muslims say that increasing acceptance of transgender people is a “change for the worse.” Among Christians, this includes:

- 64% of evangelical Protestants
- 55% of Latter-day Saints
- 50% of Orthodox Christians

Catholics, mainline Protestants and members of historically Black Protestant churches are more divided on this question.

For example, 39% of mainline Protestants say greater social acceptance of people who are transgender is a change for the better, while 37% say it is a change for the worse.

### 58% of religiously unaffiliated Americans say greater acceptance of people who are transgender is a change for the better

*% who say that greater social acceptance of people who are transgender (that is, people who identify as a gender that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth) is a ...*

	Change for the better	Change for the worse	Hasn't made much of a difference
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	39%	38%	21%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	32	45	22
Christian	29	47	22
Protestant	26	52	20
<i>Evangelical</i>	18	64	16
<i>Mainline</i>	39	37	22
<i>Historically Black</i>	32	34	32
Catholic	36	35	26
Orthodox Christian	28	50	20
Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	31	55	12
Other religions	54	26	19
Jewish	59	24	16
Muslim	33	48	18
Buddhist	54	18	27
Hindu	67	17	15
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	58	22	19
Atheist	76	12	11
Agnostic	73	14	12
Nothing in particular	49	27	23

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Abortion's legality

In the new survey, roughly two-thirds of Latter-day Saints (69%) and evangelical Protestants (65%) say abortion should be illegal in most or all cases.

Majorities in most other groups, by contrast, say abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

### Most evangelicals and Latter-day Saints say abortion should be illegal in most or all cases; majorities in most other groups say it should be legal

	% who said abortion should be LEGAL in most/all cases in ...		In the 2023-24 survey, % who say abortion should be __ in most/all cases	
	2007	2014	Legal	Illegal
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	51%	53%	64%	35%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	47	47	54	44
Christian	46	45	52	47
Protestant	45	44	49	50
<i>Evangelical</i>	33	33	33	65
<i>Mainline</i>	62	60	69	29
<i>Historically Black</i>	47	52	72	27
Catholic	48	48	59	39
Orthodox Christian	62	53	60	37
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	27	27	31	69
Other religions	77	75	79	21
Jewish	84	83	83	17
Muslim	48	55	57	41
Buddhist	81	82	79	21
Hindu	69	68	82	17
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	70	73	85	14
Atheist	82	87	95	5
Agnostic	83	87	94	6
Nothing in particular	66	67	80	19

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Comparisons between the new Religious Landscape Study and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The shares of U.S. adults who in 2007 and 2014 said abortion should be legal are shown because these results are comparable with 2023-24, but the shares who said abortion should be illegal are not comparable and therefore are not shown. Refer to Appendix A for additional details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## 17. Religion and views on gender, parenting and workforce participation

The more religious they are, the more likely Americans are to express traditional views about gender roles when asked about parenting and women’s participation in the paid labor force.

A majority of U.S. adults (55%) say it’s better for a child with two parents to have one stay at home to focus on the family, according to the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS). This includes 33% who say, in a follow-up question, that it *doesn’t matter which parent* stays home, 22% who say it’s generally better if the stay-at-home parent is the *mother*, and less than 1% who say it’s better if the *father* stays at home.

An additional 43% say children in two-parent families are “just as well off when [both of] their parents work outside the home.”

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### About two-thirds of highly religious Americans think it’s better for 1 parent to stay home to focus on family

*% who say the following statement about children with two parents comes closer to their view, even if neither is exactly right*

	All U.S. adults	Among those whose religiousness is ...			
		Low	Medium-low	Medium-high	High
<b>NET Children with two parents are better off when a parent stays home to focus on the family</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>65%</b>
Generally better if that parent is ...					
<i>The mother</i>	22	10	18	23	34
<i>The father</i>	<1	<1	<1	1	<1
<i>It doesn’t matter which parent stays home</i>	33	34	34	34	31
<i>No answer</i>	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
<b>Children with two parents are just as well off when their parents work outside the home</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>No answer</b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. The religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Among highly religious Americans (on a scale combining these four measures), 65% say it's better when one parent stays home to focus on the family, including 34% who say it should be the mother and 31% who say it doesn't matter which parent stays home. In contrast, 55% of Americans with relatively low levels of religious engagement say children are just as well off when both their parents work outside the home.<sup>69</sup>

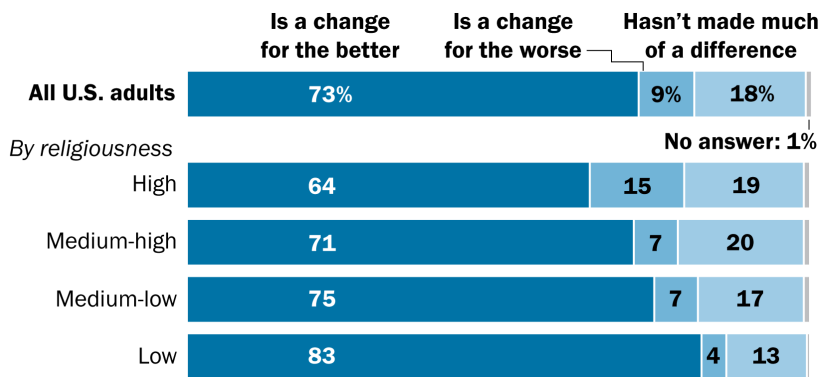
At the same time, a majority of highly religious Americans (64%) say that rising numbers of women in the workforce has been a change for the better. Even larger percentages of U.S. adults with lower levels of religious engagement hold this view.

**Read more on how Americans in various religious groups answer questions about:**

- [Parents and child care](#)
- [Women in the paid labor force](#)

**Americans hold positive opinions about women's increased workforce participation**

*% who say more women in the workforce ...*



Note: The religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>69</sup> We measured religiousness using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God and/or a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion's importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is "not too important" or "not at all important" in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is "very important" in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

## Parents and child care

About one-third of U.S. Muslims (36%) and a quarter of U.S. Christian adults (27%) believe that children with two parents are better off when the mother stays home to focus on the family. One-fifth of U.S. Buddhists say this, as do 18% of Hindus and 14% of Jews.

Among Christians, the share who say children are best off when their mother stays home includes:

- 41% of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons)
- 35% of evangelical Protestants
- 26% of Orthodox Christians
- 25% of Catholics

Roughly one-in-three Christians (32%) say children are better off when one parent stays home to focus on the family, but that it doesn't matter which one. And 39% of Christians say children of two parents are just as well off when both parents work outside the home.

The view that children with two parents are better off when the father is the one to stay home to take care of the family is extremely rare across all religious groups.

## 60% of Christians believe it is better for children if 1 parent stays home; 52% of people in other religious groups and 47% of religiously unaffiliated adults say this

% who say the following about children with two parents

	<b>NET They're better off when one parent stays at home ...</b>	... and it's the mother	... and it's the father	... but it doesn't matter which parent	<b>They're just as well off when their parents work outside the home</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>55%</b>	22%	<1%	33%	<b>43%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>59</b>	26	<1	32	<b>40</b>
Christian	<b>60</b>	27	<1	32	<b>39</b>
Protestant	<b>59</b>	28	<1	31	<b>40</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>67</b>	35	<1	31	<b>32</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>50</b>	16	<1	33	<b>49</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>45</b>	19	2	24	<b>53</b>
Catholic	<b>58</b>	25	<1	32	<b>40</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>61</b>	26	1	34	<b>38</b>
Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	<b>79</b>	41	1	35	<b>20</b>
Other religions	<b>52</b>	18	1	33	<b>46</b>
Jewish	<b>41</b>	14	<1	26	<b>57</b>
Muslim	<b>63</b>	36	1	25	<b>33</b>
Buddhist	<b>57</b>	20	<1	37	<b>41</b>
Hindu	<b>48</b>	18	1	29	<b>51</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>47</b>	12	<1	35	<b>51</b>
Atheist	<b>38</b>	6	<1	32	<b>60</b>
Agnostic	<b>45</b>	9	<1	35	<b>55</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>50</b>	14	<1	36	<b>48</b>

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Women in the paid labor force

Majorities of all religious groups say that more women in the workforce is a “change for the better.” Support for this view has ticked up slightly or stayed the same among most religious groups since the question was asked in the 2014 RLS.

Among Christians, 69% of respondents believe that women’s increased labor force participation is a “change for the better.” This share is highest among members of historically Black Protestant churches (77%), mainline Protestants (76%) and Catholics (75%). It is somewhat lower among Orthodox Christians (64%), Latter-day Saints (61%) and evangelical Protestants (60%).

Large majorities of adherents of non-Christian religions look favorably on the increased number of women in the workforce. For example, support for this position is expressed by 89% of Hindus, 81% of Jewish Americans, 76% of Buddhists and 66% of Muslims.

Among the religiously unaffiliated, nearly nine-in-ten atheists (86%) and agnostics (87%) see women’s increased participation in the labor force as a change for the better. About three-fourths of those who say their religion is “nothing in particular” (77%) say the same.

## Majorities across religious groups support women's increased presence in the paid labor market

% who say more women in the workforce is ...

	2014				2023-24			
	A change for the better	A change for the worse	Hasn't made much of a difference	Mixed views/No answer	A change for the better	A change for the worse	Hasn't made much of a difference	No answer
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	67%	9%	20%	4%	73%	9%	18%	1%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	65	10	20	4	70	10	19	1
Christian	64	11	21	4	69	10	19	1
Protestant	63	12	21	4	67	11	21	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	58	15	22	5	60	16	23	1
<i>Mainline</i>	69	8	19	3	76	7	17	1
<i>Historically Black</i>	69	6	22	3	77	5	17	2
Catholic	69	7	21	3	75	8	16	1
Orthodox Christian	70	8	17	5	64	9	26	<1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	49	23	21	7	61	19	20	<1
Other religions	76	6	14	4	77	7	15	1
Jewish	79	6	11	4	81	8	11	1
Muslim	67	7	21	4	66	15	18	<1
Buddhist	80	6	12	2	76	7	16	1
Hindu	83	1	12	4	89	1	10	<1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	75	5	17	3	80	5	14	<1
Atheist	84	2	12	2	86	4	10	<1
Agnostic	82	4	12	2	87	4	9	<1
Nothing in particular	71	6	20	4	77	6	17	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. In the 2014 Religious Landscape Study, which was conducted by telephone, some respondents volunteered that the change was a mixture of both better and worse. Their mixed views are shown together with respondents who provided no answer.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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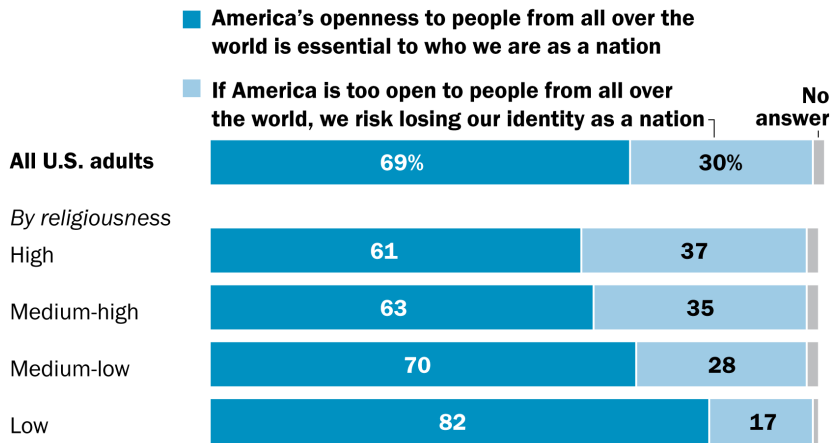
## 18. Religion and views on immigration and diversity

Most U.S. adults express positive views about America’s openness to people from around the world, the new Religious Landscape Study (RLS) finds.

This is true across the religious spectrum. Upward of half of members of all major U.S. religious groups – and majorities of people at all levels of religious engagement – say “openness to others from around the world is essential to who we are as a nation.”<sup>70</sup>

### 7 in 10 U.S. adults say America’s openness to people from around the world is essential to national identity

*% who say the following statement comes closer to their view, even if neither is exactly right*



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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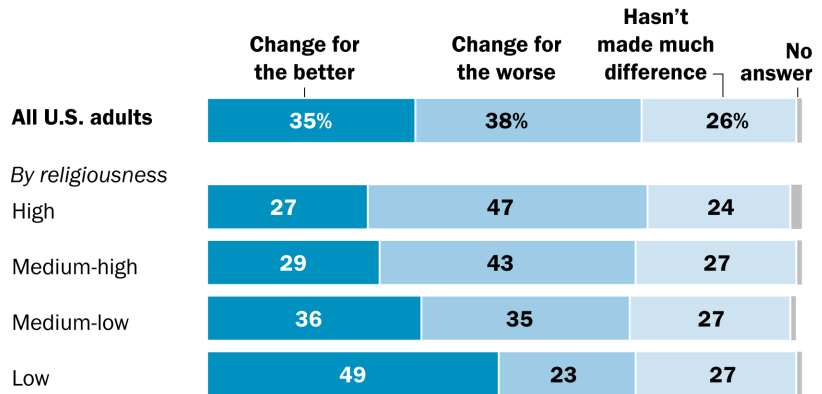
<sup>70</sup> We measured religious engagement using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God and/or a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion’s importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is “not too important” or “not at all important” in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is “very important” in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

But the public is more divided over whether a [growing population of immigrants](#) has been a change for the better, a change for the worse, or hasn't made much difference.

On this question, the most common view among highly religious Americans is that increased immigration has been a change for the worse. By contrast, the most common view among Americans with low levels of religious engagement is that increased immigration has been a change for the better.

### Americans with low levels of religious engagement are more likely than highly religious people to view rising immigration as good

*% who say a growing population of immigrants has been a ...*



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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This chapter explores how Americans in different religious groups and with different levels of religious engagement answer survey questions about immigration, racial and ethnic diversity, and religious diversity. But readers should bear in mind that other factors – such as race and ethnicity, political party identification, education and age – also underlie public opinion on these questions.

For example, Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party are far *less* likely than Democrats and Democratic-leaning Americans to say the country’s openness to newcomers is essential to who we are. And Republicans are far *more* likely than Democrats to say that the growing population of immigrants has been a change for the worse.

Highly religious people are more likely than those who are not religious to be Republicans or lean toward the Republican Party, while people who are not religious are more likely to be Democrats and Democratic leaners than are highly religious people. (For more on the connection between religion and partisanship, refer to Pew Research Center’s “[Changing Partisan Coalitions in a Politically Divided Nation](#).”)

The new survey also shows that the connection between religiousness and views on these topics varies across racial and ethnic groups.

For example, among White Americans, highly religious people are 29 percentage points less likely than those with a low level of religious engagement to say that a growing population of immigrants has been a change for the better (19% vs. 48%). But among Hispanic Americans, the gap is only 9 points, and among Black Americans and Asian Americans, it is 7 points.

## Among White U.S. adults, highly religious people are less positive about rising immigration than people with low levels of religious engagement

*% who say a growing population of immigrants has been a change for the better*

	Full sample	Among those whose religiousness is ...			
		Low	Medium-low	Medium-high	High
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	35%	49%	36%	29%	27%
<i>Among those whose race/ethnicity is ...</i>					
White	30	48	30	21	19
Black	36	45*	39	30	38
Hispanic	46	50	51	43	41
Asian	55	57	54	58	50

\* The survey included 185 interviews with Black Americans with low levels of religiousness, with an effective sample size of 95 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points.

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian respondents are representative of English speakers only. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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When asked about the country’s racial and ethnic diversity, majorities in all the religious categories analyzed in this report and at every level of religious engagement say the fact that the United States is made up of people of many different races and ethnicities strengthens American society.

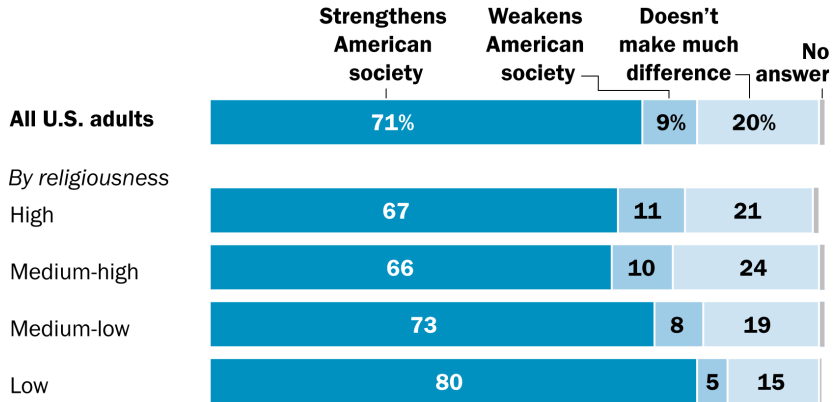
Here again, though, highly religious Americans are somewhat less likely than those with low levels of religious engagement to express a positive view of the country’s diversity.

In response to a separate question, 52% of Americans say

the country’s religious diversity (including people who are not religious) strengthens society, while 18% say religious diversity weakens society, and 29% say it doesn’t make much difference.

### 71% of U.S. adults say the country’s racial and ethnic diversity strengthens American society

*% who say the fact that the U.S. population is made up of people of many different races and ethnicities ...*



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### Read on for more information about how U.S. religious groups answer questions about:

- [America’s openness to people from around the world](#)
- [America’s growing immigrant population](#)
- [Whether racial diversity strengthens or weakens society](#)
- [Whether religious diversity strengthens or weakens society](#)

## Views on America’s openness to people from around the world

Most U.S. adults view America’s openness to people from all over the world as essential to who we are as a nation.

Likewise, upward of half of people in every religious group in this analysis view America’s openness as essential to the country’s national identity.

Atheists (89%) and agnostics (88%) are among the most likely of all groups to say that the country’s openness is essential.

Americans who identify with non-Christian religions are more likely than Christians to view America’s openness to people from all over the world as essential to the country’s identity (81% vs. 62%).

Evangelical Protestants are more divided compared with other religious groups. Just over half of evangelicals (54%) say “America’s openness is essential to our identity,” while just under half (45%) say that “we risk losing our identity as a nation if America is too open to people from all over the world.”

### 9 in 10 atheists say openness to people from around the world is essential to U.S. identity

*% who say the following statement comes closer to their view, even if neither is exactly right*

	America’s openness to people from all over the world is essential to who we are as a nation	If America is too open to people from all over the world, we risk losing our identity as a nation	Don’t know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	69%	30%	2%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	64	34	2
Christian	62	36	2
Protestant	60	39	2
<i>Evangelical</i>	54	45	2
<i>Mainline</i>	66	33	2
<i>Historically Black</i>	72	26	2
Catholic	67	31	2
Orthodox Christian	67	33	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	69	30	1
Other religions	81	18	1
Jewish	78	21	1
Muslim	82	17	1
Buddhist	81	18	1
Hindu	85	14	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	80	19	1
Atheist	89	11	<1
Agnostic	88	11	1
Nothing in particular	75	24	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Views on America’s growing immigrant population

U.S. adults as a whole are split on whether a growing population of immigrants has been good for the country (35%), bad for the country (38%), or not made much difference (26%).<sup>71</sup>

Christians (46%) are twice as likely as Americans of other religions (23%), and twice as likely as those with no religion (23%), to say that a growing population of immigrants has been a change for the worse.

More than half of evangelical Protestants (55%) take this position.

Members of the historically Black Protestant tradition are notably less likely than Christians as a whole to view immigration negatively (26% vs. 46%).

In the U.S., about half or more of Buddhists (50%), Jews (50%), Muslims (57%) and Hindus (73%) say that a growing population of immigrants is a change for the better. ([Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists in the U.S. are largely composed of first-generation immigrants.](#))

### 55% of U.S. evangelical Protestants say the growing immigrant population is a change for the worse

% who say a growing population of immigrants has been a ...

	Change for the better	Change for the worse	Hasn't made much difference	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	35%	38%	26%	1%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>				
Christian	27	46	26	2
Protestant	24	48	26	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	20	55	24	1
<i>Mainline</i>	27	46	25	2
<i>Historically Black</i>	36	26	36	2
Catholic	33	41	25	2
Orthodox Christian	34	43	22	<1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	38	38	22	2
Other religions	54	23	22	1
Jewish	50	29	20	1
Muslim	57	19	24	<1
Buddhist	50	25	24	1
Hindu	73	13	13	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	47	23	29	1
Atheist	62	14	24	1
Agnostic	56	17	27	1
Nothing in particular	40	28	31	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>71</sup> The 2014 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) included a similar question about views of immigration. However, the new results cannot be compared with the previous results because of differences in the way the surveys were conducted. The 2014 survey was conducted by telephone, while the 2023-24 survey was conducted mainly online and on paper. More details about this change in survey modes and its implications for understanding the survey’s findings are available in [Appendix A](#).

A majority of atheists (62%) and agnostics (56%) also view the growing immigrant population as a change for the better.

## Views on whether racial diversity strengthens or weakens society

Seven-in-ten U.S. adults – including majorities in all religious groups analyzed – say the country’s racial diversity strengthens American society.

Atheists (89%) and agnostics (88%) are among the most likely to view racial diversity as a strength.

Eight-in-ten or more Hindus, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists also say the country’s racial and ethnic diversity strengthens American society.

Among Christian groups, the share saying the country’s racial diversity is a strength ranges from 61% among evangelical Protestants to 76% among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons).

### Majorities in all American religious groups view racial diversity as a strength to society

% who say the fact that the U.S. population is made up of people of many different races and ethnicities ...

	Strengthens American society	Weakens American society	Doesn't make much difference	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	71%	9%	20%	1%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	68	10	21	1
Christian	66	11	22	1
Protestant	64	12	23	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	61	14	24	1
<i>Mainline</i>	69	9	21	1
<i>Historically Black</i>	70	8	22	1
Catholic	70	9	21	1
Orthodox Christian	67	10	23	<1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	76	7	16	1
Other religions	82	4	13	<1
Jewish	83	4	13	1
Muslim	82	5	13	1
Buddhist	80	7	12	<1
Hindu	89	1	9	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	79	5	15	<1
Atheist	89	3	8	<1
Agnostic	88	3	9	<1
Nothing in particular	74	6	20	<1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Views on whether religious diversity strengthens or weakens society

Overall, 52% of U.S. adults say the fact that the U.S. population is made up of people from many different religions, including people who are not religious, strengthens American society.<sup>72</sup>

This view is especially common among atheists (75%) and agnostics (76%), as well as U.S. adults who identify as Jewish (73%) or Hindu (79%).

Latter-day Saints are more likely than other Christians to view religious diversity as strengthening society. Latter-day Saints are themselves a minority religious group in America, making up roughly 2% of the population.

Evangelical Protestants (38%) are notably more likely than other religious groups to say the country's religious diversity weakens American society.

### 52% of U.S. adults say religious diversity strengthens American society

*% who say the fact that the U.S. population is made up of people of many different religions, including people who are not religious ...*

	Strengthens American society	Weakens American society	Doesn't make much difference	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	52%	18%	29%	1%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	47	23	29	1
Christian	44	25	30	1
Protestant	41	29	29	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	35	38	26	1
<i>Mainline</i>	52	17	30	1
<i>Historically Black</i>	43	18	38	1
Catholic	50	16	33	1
Orthodox Christian	49	20	31	<1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	65	15	20	<1
Other religions	71	9	19	1
Jewish	73	5	20	1
Muslim	69	13	17	1
Buddhist	66	12	22	0
Hindu	79	3	17	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	64	7	29	<1
Atheist	75	6	19	<1
Agnostic	76	5	19	<1
Nothing in particular	57	8	34	<1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>72</sup> We also [asked this question in 2022](#). In that survey, 41% of respondents said religious diversity strengthens society, 19% said it weakens society, and 39% said it doesn't make much difference. But the two surveys asked the question in different contexts, which may help explain the difference in results. In the 2022 survey, this question was preceded by many others focused on science, COVID-19 and foreign affairs (including questions about the war between Russia and Ukraine), in addition to some questions about whether it has become more difficult to be a religious or nonreligious person in the United States in recent years. In the RLS, the question was asked very early in the survey, as part of a series of questions about societal changes (including questions about a growing population of immigrants and more women in the workforce), as well as the country's diversity.



## 19. Religion and views on the environment

Most U.S. adults believe that God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth (66%), and 57% believe that God gave humans the right to use the Earth for humanity’s benefit, according to the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS).

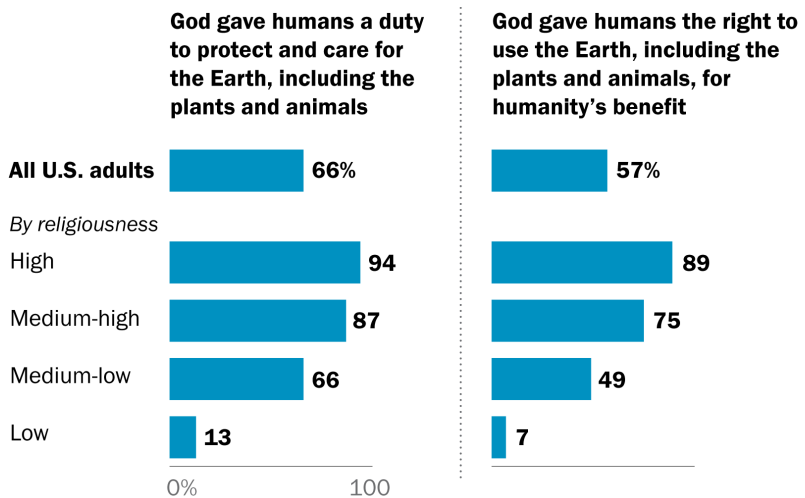
Highly religious Americans are the most likely to say that God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth (94%) and that God gave people the right to use the Earth for humanity’s benefit (89%).

Few Americans with low levels of religious engagement believe that God gave humans a duty to protect the Earth or the right to use it for humanity’s benefit (largely because many people in these groups do not believe in God).<sup>73</sup>

The idea that “God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth” is sometimes associated with the theological concept of “[stewardship](#).” The notion that

### Most Americans believe God gave humans a duty to protect the Earth

% who say the following statements *completely/mostly* describe their view



Note: These are two separate questions, and respondents had the option of saying that either, both, or neither statement completely/mostly describes their views. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>73</sup> We measured religiousness using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God and/or a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion’s importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is “not too important” or “not at all important” in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is “very important” in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

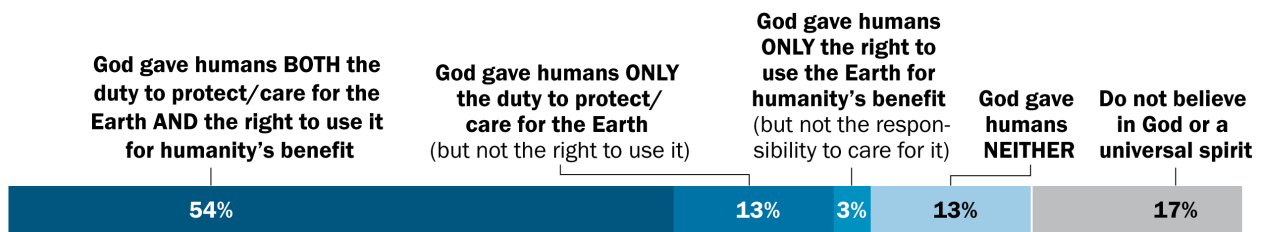
“God gave humans the right to use the Earth for humanity’s benefit” reflects more of a “[dominionist](#)” perspective.

Slightly more than half of Americans (54%) agree with *both* perspectives, saying that God has given humans a duty to care for the Earth and also a right to use it for humanity’s benefit. Just 3% say that humans have a right to use the Earth but do *not* have a duty to protect and care for it.

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## 54% of U.S. adults say humans have both a God-given duty to protect Earth and a God-given right to use it

% of U.S. adults who say \_\_\_ *completely/mostly* describes their views



Note: Those who say they do not believe in God or a universal spirit were not asked this question. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024

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The survey also shows that Americans who are very religious are *less* likely than those with low and medium-low levels of religious commitment to view stricter environmental regulations as worth the cost, and to say that the Earth is getting warmer mostly because of human activity.

The differences between highly religious Americans and those who are not religious on these questions reflect big partisan differences between these groups. Indeed, [prior research](#) shows that the main driver of U.S. public opinion about the climate is political party, not religion.

## Highly religious Americans are less likely than people with low levels of religious engagement to say stricter environmental laws are worth the cost

	% who say stricter environmental laws and regulations ...			Which statement about the Earth's temperature comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right? (%)			
	Are worth the cost	Cost too many jobs and hurt the economy	No answer	Earth is warming due to human activity	Earth is warming due to natural patterns	No solid evidence the Earth is warming	Not sure/No answer
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	60%	38%	2%=100%	48%	22%	11%	20%=100%
<i>By religiousness</i>							
High	49	48	3	33	29	16	22
Medium-high	55	43	2	41	24	12	23
Medium-low	62	37	2	51	20	8	21
Low	77	22	1	70	13	4	13

Note: Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Highly religious Americans tend to identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, and Republicans are less inclined than Democrats to support environmental regulations or to believe the Earth is warming because of human activity. People who are not religious tend to identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, and Democrats are more inclined than Republicans to support environmental regulations, and to believe the Earth is warming because of human activity.

Read our [previous study about religion and Americans' attitudes on environmental issues](#).

### Jump to sections on religious groups' views about:

- [Whether humans have a God-given duty to protect/use the Earth](#)
- [Whether stricter environmental regulations are worth the cost](#)
- [Climate change](#)

## Views on whether humans have a God-given duty to protect/use the Earth

All respondents who said they believe in God and/or a universal spirit were asked several questions that were not offered to others.

Specifically, we asked them how closely each of these statements reflect their own views: “God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth, including the plants and animals,” and “God gave humans the right to use the Earth, including the plants and animals, for humanity’s benefit.”

(This was not a choice between the two statements. Respondents were able to say they hold both views or to reject both views.)

Two-thirds of U.S. adults say the notion that God gave humans a duty to protect the Earth *completely* or *mostly* describes their views. Slightly fewer (57%) say the notion that God gave humans the right to use the Earth completely or mostly describes their views.

### 91% of evangelical Protestants say God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth

% who say \_\_\_ *completely/mostly* describes their views

	God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth, including the plants and animals	God gave humans the right to use the Earth, including the plants and animals, for humanity's benefit
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	66%	57%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>		
Christian	85	75
Protestant	87	79
<i>Evangelical</i>	91	86
<i>Mainline</i>	80	63
<i>Historically Black</i>	88	83
Catholic	80	69
Orthodox Christian	69	63
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	90	83
Other religions	55	38
Jewish	45	34
Muslim	83	74
Buddhist	38	24
Hindu	63	39
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	31	22
Atheist	2	2
Agnostic	17	7
Nothing in particular	42	32

Note: These are two separate questions, and respondents had the option of saying that either, both, or neither statement completely/mostly describes their views.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Majorities of all religiously affiliated groups say God gave humans a duty to protect and care for the Earth – with the exceptions of Jews and Buddhists (who are [less likely than other affiliated groups to believe in God](#)).

And across the religiously affiliated groups, the view that God gave humans a duty to protect the Earth is generally more common than the view that God gave humans a right to use the Earth.

When we combine these questions, we find:

- Slightly more than half of Americans (54%) say humans have *both* a God-given duty to protect the Earth *and* a God-given right to use the Earth for humanity's benefit.
- 13% affirm a God-given duty to protect the Earth but no God-given right to use the Earth for humanity's benefit.
- Just 3% say humans have a God-given right to use the Earth without a duty to also protect it.
- 13% say *neither* of these statements completely or mostly describes their views.
- 17% of U.S. adults [do not believe in God or a universal spirit](#) (or didn't answer the question about whether they believe in God); as a result, they were not asked the questions about whether God gave humans a right to use or a duty to protect the Earth.

Evangelical Protestants (81%); members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who are widely known as Mormons (80%); and members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (78%) are among the mostly likely religious groups to affirm *both* a God-given duty to protect the Earth *and* a God-given right to use the Earth for humanity's benefit.

Hindus (29%) and mainline Protestants (20%) are more likely than most other religious groups to say that humans have a God-given duty to protect and care for the Earth, without a God-given right to use the Earth.

Few Americans in any of the religious or nonreligious groups say that God gave humans a right to use the Earth for humanity's benefit without also saying we have a duty to protect and care for the Earth.

## Few Americans say ‘God gave humans the right to use the Earth’ without also saying ‘God gave humans the duty to protect and care for the Earth’

% who say \_\_\_ *completely/mostly* describes their views

	God gave humans BOTH the duty to protect/ care for the Earth AND the right to use it for humanity’s benefit	Only that God gave humans the duty to protect/ care for the Earth	Only that God gave humans the right to use the Earth for humanity’s benefit	Neither	Do not believe in God or a universal spirit
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	54%	13%	3%	13%	17%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	68	14	4	10	4
Christian	72	13	4	9	3
Protestant	75	12	4	7	2
<i>Evangelical</i>	81	9	4	4	1
<i>Mainline</i>	59	20	3	14	3
<i>Historically Black</i>	78	10	5	5	2
Catholic	65	15	4	12	4
Orthodox Christian	58	11	5	17	9
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	80	9	3	5	3
Other religions	35	20	3	22	20
Jewish	30	15	4	23	28
Muslim	71	12	3	7	7
Buddhist	22	16	2	34	26
Hindu	34	29	5	17	15
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	20	10	2	21	46
Atheist	2	1	1	4	93
Agnostic	6	11	1	24	57
Nothing in particular	29	12	2	25	31

Note: Those who say they do not believe in God or a universal spirit were not asked this question. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Views on whether stricter environmental regulations are worth the cost

The 2023-24 RLS asked respondents to choose which of two statements comes closest to their view: “Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy,” or “Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost.”

Six-in-ten U.S. adults say stricter environmental regulations are worth the cost, while 38% say they cost too many jobs and hurt the economy.

The balance of opinion on this question is similar to what we found in the [2014 RLS](#), when 57% said environmental regulations are worth the cost and 38% said they cost too many jobs and hurt the economy. In 2007, 61% said environmental regulations are worth the cost and 30% said they cost too many jobs and hurt the economy.<sup>74</sup>

### Support for stricter environmental regulations is highest among atheists in the U.S.

*% who say stricter environmental laws and regulations ...*

	Are worth the cost	Cost too many jobs and hurt the economy	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	60%	38%	2%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	56	42	2
Christian	54	44	3
Protestant	51	46	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	44	53	3
<i>Mainline</i>	60	37	3
<i>Historically Black</i>	62	35	3
Catholic	59	38	2
Orthodox Christian	57	41	2
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	46	51	3
Other religions	71	28	1
Jewish	72	26	1
Muslim	61	38	1
Buddhist	68	31	1
Hindu	72	28	<1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	72	27	1
Atheist	87	12	<1
Agnostic	83	16	1
Nothing in particular	64	35	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>74</sup> Comparisons between the new RLS and the earlier studies are complicated by important differences in the ways the surveys were conducted. The first two landscape surveys were conducted by telephone, but the 2023-24 study was conducted mainly online and on paper. This “mode shift” affects the results of some survey questions more than others. Analysis of a nationwide telephone survey, which was conducted alongside the 2023-24 RLS for testing purposes, indicates that results on this question *can be cautiously compared* with the previous landscape studies. The telephone survey we conducted for testing purposes obtained a somewhat higher share of respondents volunteering that they have no opinion on this question, while the self-administered RLS obtained slightly higher shares expressing both substantive responses. The balance of opinion across the two modes is very similar. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for additional details.

Atheists (87%) and agnostics (83%) are the most likely to support stricter environmental regulations. Evangelical Protestants (44%) and Latter-day Saints (46%) are among the least likely to say regulations are worth the cost. These differences correspond to broader political differences between these groups. Atheists and agnostics mostly identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, and Democrats tend to support environment regulations. Evangelical Protestants and Latter-day Saints mostly identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, and Republicans are less supportive of environmental regulations.

Other religious groups lie somewhere between, but Americans who identify as Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist are more likely than Christians overall to say stricter environmental regulations are worth the cost.



## Views on climate change

The survey also asked respondents to choose which of these three statements comes closest to their view: 1) “The Earth is getting warmer mostly because of human activity such as burning fossil fuels”; 2) “The Earth is getting warmer mostly because of natural patterns in the Earth’s environment”; or 3) “There is no solid evidence that the Earth is getting warmer.”

Overall, most respondents (70%) say the Earth is getting warmer, including 48% who say it is getting warmer mostly due to human activity and 22% who say it is getting warmer mostly due to natural patterns.

Atheists (83%), agnostics (78%) and Hindu Americans (81%) are the groups most likely to say the Earth is getting warmer mostly because of human activity.

In addition, Jews (65%), Buddhists (65%) and Muslims (60%) are more likely than Christians to say the Earth is getting warmer primarily due to human activity.

Among Christian subgroups, evangelical Protestants (28%) and Latter-day Saints (29%) stand out as being the *least* likely to believe the Earth is getting warmer mostly due to human activity.

### In the U.S., majorities in all religious groups say the Earth is getting warmer

% who say ...

	The Earth is getting warmer mostly because of human activity	The Earth is getting warmer mostly because of natural patterns	There is no solid evidence that the Earth is getting warmer	Not sure/Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	48%	22%	11%	20%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	42	25	13	20
Christian	39	26	14	21
Protestant	34	28	15	23
<i>Evangelical</i>	28	30	20	22
<i>Mainline</i>	45	26	9	20
<i>Historically Black</i>	40	20	9	32
Catholic	48	23	10	18
Orthodox Christian	46	27	12	16
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	29	36	15	21
Other religions	66	15	6	13
Jewish	65	16	6	13
Muslim	60	18	6	16
Buddhist	65	19	4	12
Hindu	81	11	2	6
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	63	14	5	18
Atheist	83	7	3	7
Agnostic	78	11	2	8
Nothing in particular	53	17	7	24

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Here again, these religious differences are in line with partisan gaps. The religious groups that are least likely to say they think the Earth is warming because of human activity are largely Republican and Republican-leaning groups. The religious groups that are most likely to say they think the Earth is warming because of human actions are largely Democratic and Democratic-leaning groups.

## 20. Religion and views on the role of government

U.S. adults with low levels of religious engagement are much more likely than highly religious Americans to say the government should provide *more* assistance to people in need (58% vs. 35%).

About one-third of highly religious Americans (36%) say the government should provide *less* assistance to people in need – twice the share of Americans with low levels of religious engagement who take the same position (18%).

Underlying these differences are patterns in political partisanship. [Chapter 15](#) of this report shows that highly religious White Americans tend to be a solidly Republican constituency, while White adults with lower levels of religious engagement more often favor the Democratic Party, and [Black Americans at all levels of religious commitment tend to identify as Democrats](#).

### Highly religious Americans are less likely to say the government should give more help to people in need

% who say the government \_\_\_ to people in need

	Should provide more assistance	Should provide less assistance	Is providing about the right amount of assistance	Don't know/Ref.
All U.S. adults	46%	27%		26%
By religiousness				
High	35	36		27
Medium-high	45	27		28
Medium-low	48	24		26
Low	58	18		23

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Moreover, Republicans and those who lean toward the GOP are far more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to say the government should provide less assistance to people in need, while Democrats are far more inclined than Republicans to say the government should provide more help to people in need.

This chapter focuses on attitudes toward government among Americans with different religious affiliations and levels of religiousness.

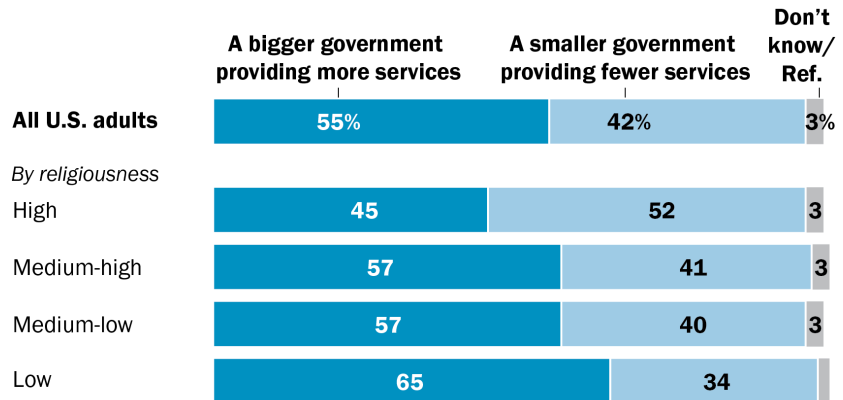
Most Americans with low (65%), medium-low (57%) and medium-high (57%) levels of religious engagement say they would rather have a bigger government providing more services than a smaller government providing fewer services.<sup>75</sup>

But among highly religious Americans, 52% say they prefer a smaller government that provides fewer services, while 45% say they would prefer a bigger government that provides more services.

The scale of religiousness used for this analysis is based on how often respondents say they pray, how often they say they attend religious services, whether they believe in God and/or a universal spirit and how important they say religion is in their lives.<sup>76</sup>

## Two-thirds of U.S. adults with low levels of religious engagement favor a bigger government that provides more services

% of U.S. adults who say they would rather have ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>75</sup> The results on this question are different in the new Religious Landscape Study (which finds more support for a bigger government than a smaller one) than in other recent Pew Research Center surveys (which find a relatively even split on this question). In the new RLS, responses to this question might have been influenced by asking it right after a question about whether the government is providing too little, too much or about the right amount of assistance to people in need. In the previous RLS questionnaires and other Center surveys, this question is often asked in a more neutral context, and so the results from the new RLS on this question cannot be compared with other Pew Research Center data. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for details.

<sup>76</sup> We measured religiousness using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God/a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion's importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is "not too important" or "not at all important" in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is "very important" in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

**Read on to see how different religious groups answer the survey's questions about:**

- [Government aid to people in need](#)
- [Preferences for government size](#)

## Government aid to people in need

Most religiously unaffiliated Americans (60%) say the government should provide more assistance to people in need.

U.S. adults who are affiliated with non-Christian religions are more likely than Christians, as a whole, to say the government should provide more assistance to the needy (57% vs. 38%).

But Christian subgroups differ substantially on this question.

A clear majority of members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (69%) favor the government providing more assistance to people in need.

Among mainline Protestants and Catholics, greater numbers say the government should provide *more* assistance than say it should provide *less*

assistance. About three-in-ten adults in each group say the government is providing about the right amount of assistance.

Among evangelical Protestants and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons), greater numbers say the government should provide *less* assistance to those in need than say it should provide more assistance.

### 72% of atheists say the government should provide more assistance to those in need

% who say the government \_\_\_ to people in need

	Should provide more assistance	Should provide less assistance	Is providing about the right amount of assistance	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	46%	27%	26%	1%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	40	31	28	2
Christian	38	33	28	2
Protestant	38	34	26	2
<i>Evangelical</i>	31	42	26	2
<i>Mainline</i>	38	31	29	2
<i>Historically Black</i>	69	9	21	1
Catholic	37	30	31	1
Orthodox Christian	44	27	28	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	27	37	34	2
Other religions	57	16	26	1
Jewish	49	19	30	1
Muslim	60	14	26	<1
Buddhist	55	19	25	1
Hindu	45	22	33	<1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	60	18	21	1
Atheist	72	11	16	<1
Agnostic	61	16	22	1
Nothing in particular	57	20	22	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Preferences for government size

Members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (83%) are among the most likely of all U.S. religious groups to say they favor a bigger government providing more services.

Most Hindu (72%), Muslim (71%), Buddhist (68%), Jewish (63%) and religiously unaffiliated Americans (66%) also say they would rather have a bigger government providing more services.

On the other hand, majorities of Latter-day Saints (63%) and evangelical Protestants (60%) say they would rather have a smaller government providing fewer services.

A slim majority of Catholics (54%) favor a bigger government providing more services. Among Orthodox Christians, 52% say they would prefer a smaller government.

And mainline Protestants are split right down the middle, with 48% expressing a preference for a bigger government and 48% saying they prefer a smaller government.

When this question was asked by telephone in our previous [religious landscape surveys](#), conducted in 2007 and 2014, some participants volunteered the response “It depends,” which was not an

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### U.S. Christians equally divided on the question of having a bigger or smaller government

*% who say they would rather have ...*

	A bigger government providing more services	A smaller government providing fewer services	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	55%	42%	3%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	51	46	3
Christian	49	48	3
Protestant	47	50	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	38	60	2
<i>Mainline</i>	48	48	4
<i>Historically Black</i>	83	15	2
Catholic	54	43	3
Orthodox Christian	45	52	3
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	33	63	4
Other religions	66	32	2
Jewish	63	34	3
Muslim	71	27	2
Buddhist	68	31	1
Hindu	72	27	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	66	32	2
Atheist	77	22	1
Agnostic	67	32	1
Nothing in particular	63	35	2

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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option in the new study, conducted mostly online and on paper. This makes the new results difficult to compare with those of the earlier studies.<sup>77</sup>

Additionally, the broader finding that 55% of U.S. adults favor a bigger government providing more services, while 42% favor a smaller government providing fewer services, is somewhat different from [what we have found on other recent surveys](#). Recent waves of our American Trends Panel find a roughly equal balance of opinion on the question of a bigger or smaller government.

The different results may be caused by asking the same question in differing contexts. In the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study, the question about the size of government came immediately after the question about assistance to people in need, which may have influenced how some respondents thought about the size of government.

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<sup>77</sup> More details about the change in survey modes and its implications for understanding the survey's findings are available in [Appendix A](#).



## **V. Opinions on religion's place in society**

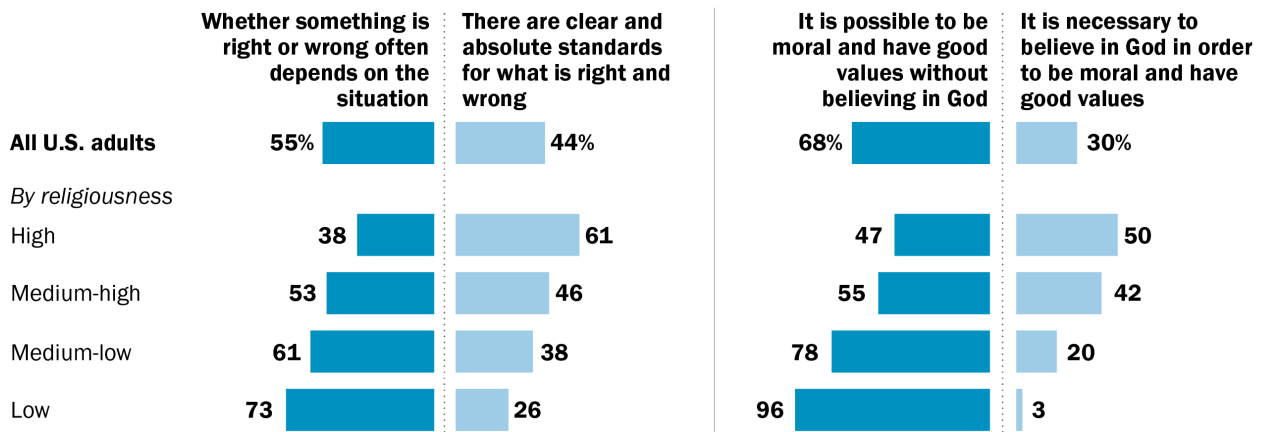
## 21. Religion and views of right and wrong

A majority of U.S. adults (55%) say that whether something is right or wrong often depends on the situation. Fewer than half say there are clear and absolute standards by which to decide whether something is right or wrong, according to the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS).

In response to a separate question, the survey finds that 68% of Americans say it is possible to be moral and have good values without believing in God. Just 30% say it is necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values.

### 3 in 10 Americans say it is necessary to believe in God to be moral

*% who say ...*



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

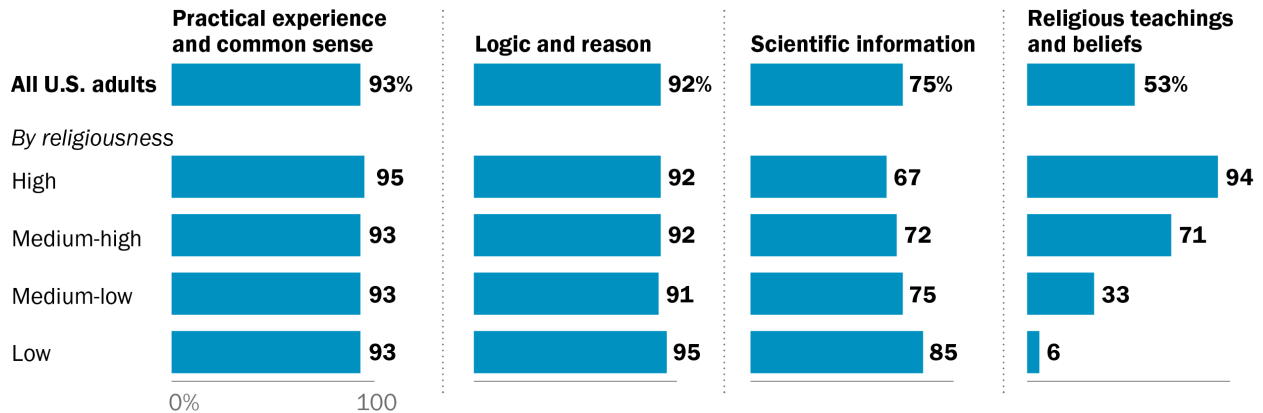
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Half of highly religious Americans say that belief in God is necessary to be moral and have good values, and 61% say there are clear and absolute standards for right and wrong.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> We measured religiousness using a scale based on four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God/a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion's importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is "not too important" or "not at all important" in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is "very important" in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).

## Just over half of U.S. adults view religious teachings and beliefs as important for moral decisions

% who say each of these is an *extremely/very important* factor when making decisions between right and wrong



Note: Religiousness scale is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion’s importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for more details.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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The survey also asked Americans about various factors they may consider when making moral decisions.

Slightly more than half of Americans (53%) say religious teachings and beliefs are *extremely* important or *very* important when making decisions between right and wrong. But the percentage of U.S. adults who say this is considerably lower than the shares who view practical experience and common sense (93%), logic and reason (92%) and scientific information (75%) as extremely or very important for moral decision-making.

The vast majority of U.S. adults at all levels of religiousness say that “practical experience and common sense” and “logic and reason” are extremely or very important for deciding between right and wrong.

Highly religious Americans are less likely than those with low levels of religious engagement to consider scientific information to be an important factor in moral decisions. Nevertheless, a clear majority of the highly religious (67%) view scientific information as important.

Not surprisingly, Americans who are highly religious are much more likely than those with low religious engagement to view religious principles as important for deciding between right and wrong. Overall, 94% of highly religious Americans say religious teachings and beliefs are extremely or very important to how they think about matters of right and wrong.<sup>79</sup>

**Jump to sections about religious groups' views on:**

- [Whether moral standards are absolute](#)
- [Whether belief in God is necessary to be moral](#)
- [Factors that guide moral decision-making](#)

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<sup>79</sup> Pew Research Center has previously asked about the topics covered in this chapter. We asked the question about whether it is necessary to believe in God to be moral in a [2023 survey](#), and we have asked a similar question with different wording on multiple other surveys. In recent years, these surveys have all found that people are more likely to say believing in God is *not* necessary to be moral and have good values than to say the opposite. We asked the question about absolute standards of right and wrong on the 2014 RLS, but due to changes in the way the surveys were conducted, prior results cannot be accurately compared with the latest findings. (Refer to [Appendix A](#) for details). Finally, the questions about whether respondents consider each of several factors when making decisions about right and wrong have not been previously asked, though the earlier landscape studies did ask respondents which [factors they look to most](#) for guidance on questions of right and wrong.

## Are moral rules absolute or do they depend on the situation?

Overall, 55% of U.S. adults say that whether something is right or wrong often depends on the situation (55%), while 44% say there are clear and absolute standards for right and wrong.

Majorities of Hindus (73%), Buddhists (70%), religiously unaffiliated Americans (69%) and Jewish Americans (66%) say whether something is right or wrong often depends on the situation.

Muslims (58%), members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (56%), mainline Protestants (54%) and Catholics (53%) also are more likely to say that right and wrong depends on the situation, rather than that there are clear and absolute standards.

Evangelical Protestants and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as

Mormons) are the only religious groups analyzed in which a majority of adults say there are clear and absolute standards for what is right and wrong.

### Religiously affiliated Americans are almost evenly split on whether morality depends on the situation or if there are absolute standards

% who say ...

	Whether something is right or wrong often depends on the situation	There are clear and absolute standards for what is right and wrong	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	55%	44%	1%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	49	50	1
Christian	47	52	1
Protestant	45	54	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	37	61	1
<i>Mainline</i>	54	44	2
<i>Historically Black</i>	56	43	1
Catholic	53	46	1
Orthodox Christian	59	41	<1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	33	67	1
Other religions	68	31	1
Jewish	66	33	1
Muslim	58	42	<1
Buddhist	70	29	<1
Hindu	73	25	2
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	69	30	1
Atheist	79	21	<1
Agnostic	76	24	<1
Nothing in particular	65	34	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Does belief in God matter for being moral and having good values?

More than two-thirds of Americans (68%) say it is possible to be moral and have good values without believing in God.

Americans of nearly all religious and nonreligious backgrounds lean toward the notion that belief in God is not necessary to be moral. But among members of the historically Black Protestant tradition, a majority (57%) say it is necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values.

### Majority of adults in the historically Black Protestant tradition say believing in God is necessary to be moral

% who say ...

	It is possible to be moral and have good values without believing in God	It is necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values	Don't know/Refused
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	68%	30%	2%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	60	38	2
Christian	58	40	2
Protestant	55	42	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	51	46	2
<i>Mainline</i>	71	27	3
<i>Historically Black</i>	40	57	3
Catholic	62	37	2
Orthodox Christian	67	29	3
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	73	23	3
Other religions	78	21	1
Jewish	82	16	2
Muslim	52	46	2
Buddhist	79	19	1
Hindu	73	26	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	88	11	1
Atheist	98	2	1
Agnostic	98	1	<1
Nothing in particular	82	16	2

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## How much does religion matter for morality, relative to other factors?

When asked whether religious teachings and beliefs are important for deciding between right and wrong, just over half of Americans (53%) say religion is either *extremely* important or *very* important in such decisions. This is considerably lower than the shares who say that “practical experience and common sense,” “logic and reason” and “scientific information” are extremely or very important.

Among every religious group analyzed, larger numbers say “practical experience and common sense” and “logic and reason” are important than say “religious beliefs and teachings” are important in these kinds of decisions.

In many religious groups, larger percentages also ascribe importance to “scientific information” than to religious beliefs in moral decision-making. The exceptions are

evangelical Protestants, members of the historically Black Protestant tradition and Latter-day Saints. More people in those three groups consider religious principles than scientific information to be important in discerning right from wrong.

### Practical experience and common sense are top factors for deciding between right and wrong

% who say each of these is an *extremely/very important* factor when making decisions between right and wrong

	Practical experience and common sense	Logic and reason	Scientific information	Religious teachings and beliefs
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	93%	92%	75%	53%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>				
Christian	94	92	71	69
Protestant	94	91	66	77
<i>Evangelical</i>	94	92	62	86
<i>Mainline</i>	93	92	74	58
<i>Historically Black</i>	93	89	68	80
Catholic	94	94	78	63
Orthodox Christian	97	88	77	57
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	94	91	68	81
Other religions	93	93	82	39
Jewish	93	93	81	33
Muslim	94	92	82	68
Buddhist	87	89	76	37
Hindu	96	94	93	39
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>				
Atheist	91	98	92	2
Agnostic	94	97	89	4
Nothing in particular	93	92	78	23

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

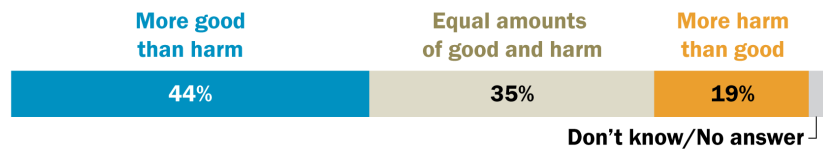
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## 22. Religion's role in public life

On balance, U.S. adults are more likely to view religion as helpful than as harmful: 44% say religion does more good than harm, while 19% say it does more harm than good. About one-third think it does equal amounts of good and harm.<sup>80</sup>

### 44% of Americans think religion does more good than harm

% of U.S. adults who say religion does ...



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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What, specifically, do Americans think are some of the helpful

and harmful effects of organized religion? The survey asked respondents whether they agree or disagree with six statements – three positive and three negative – about churches and other religious organizations. Majorities agree with each of the six statements, but higher shares agree with the positive ones:

- 80% agree that churches and other religious organizations bring people together and strengthen community bonds.
- 78% agree that they play an important role in helping the poor and needy.
- 64% agree that they protect and strengthen morality in society.

Smaller majorities agree with the negative statements:

- 59% of Americans agree that churches and other religious organizations are too concerned with money and power.
- 54% agree that they focus too much on rules.
- 54% agree that they are too involved with politics.

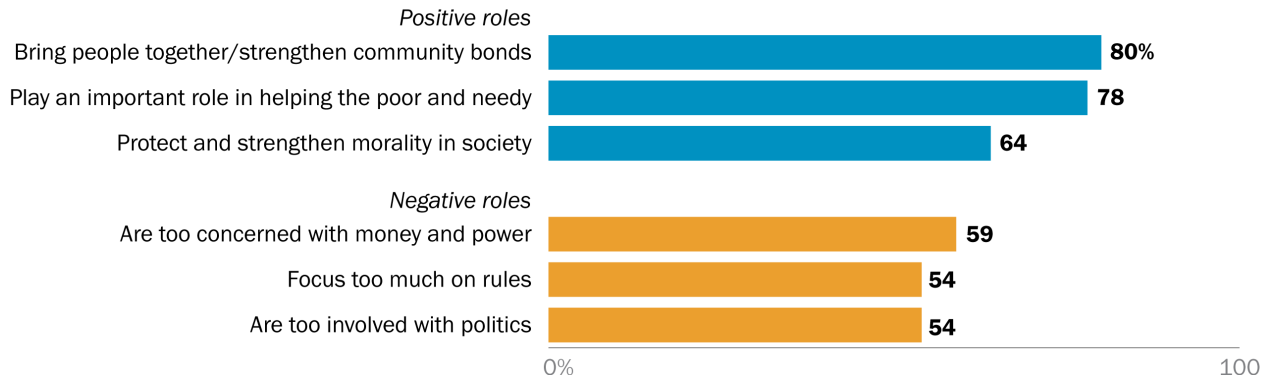
<sup>80</sup> This question was not asked in the earlier landscape studies. It was asked in a [2022 survey](#) focused on spirituality among Americans. In that survey, 40% of respondents said religion does more good than harm in society, 37% said it does equal amounts of good and harm, and 21% said it does more harm than good.



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## Americans say religious institutions play positive roles, but most also see negative qualities

*% of U.S. adults who agree that churches and other religious organizations ...*



Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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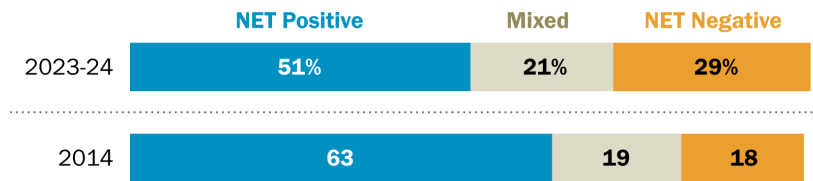
When these questions are combined in a scale, the results indicate that Americans are more likely to voice positive opinions about religious institutions than to voice negative ones.<sup>81</sup>

Overall, 51% of Americans express positive views of churches and other religious organizations, while 29% express negative views. The remainder hold mixed views.

We also asked these questions about religious institutions in the 2014 Religious Landscape Study. **Compared with 2014, Americans now express less positive views of churches and other religious organizations.**<sup>82</sup> The share of U.S. adults who express a very or somewhat positive view of religious institutions has declined from 63% in 2014 to 51% today.

### 51% of Americans express mostly positive opinions about religious institutions, 29% mostly negative

*% of U.S. adults who describe churches and other religious organizations in ways that are ...*



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Based on a scale combining responses to questions asking respondents whether they agree or disagree with each of six statements about religious organizations. Three of the statements are positive (religious organizations protect and strengthen morality in society, bring people together and strengthen community bonds, play an important role in helping the poor and needy), and three are negative (religious organizations focus too much on rules, are too concerned with money and power, are too involved with politics). Those who agreed with more positive than negative statements are categorized as having a positive view of religion, while those agreeing with more negative than positive statements are categorized as having a negative view. People who agreed with equal numbers of positive and negative statements are coded as having mixed views. Refer to the accompanying text for additional details. Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>81</sup> This analysis is limited to respondents who answer at least four questions from the six-question scale. Agreeing with the following statements were considered positive views: “Bring people together and strengthen community bonds,” “Play an important role in helping the poor and needy” and “Protect and strengthen morality in society.” Agreeing with the following statements were considered negative views: “Are too concerned with money and power,” “Focus too much on rules” and “Are too involved with politics.” Those who agreed with more positive than negative statements are categorized as having a positive view of religion, while those agreeing with more negative than positive statements are categorized as having a negative view. People who express an equal number of positive and negative views are coded as holding mixed views.

<sup>82</sup> The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) was conducted mainly online and on paper, whereas the 2014 RLS was conducted by live interviewers on the telephone. This “mode switch” makes it complicated to draw comparisons between the new survey and the previous survey, because respondents sometimes answer questions differently when speaking with an interviewer than they do when participating in a survey online or on paper. To help assess the impact of the mode switch, we conducted a “bridge study” by telephone alongside the main RLS. The questions used in this scale are coded as “yellow” questions – the results from the new survey can be cautiously compared with the previous survey. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for additional details about the impact of the mode switch on the survey’s findings.

The new survey also included a series of questions about separation of church and state, asking whether the federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation, whether teachers should be allowed to lead prayers in public schools and whether municipalities should be allowed to display religious symbols on government property. We do not have clear historical trends on these questions, because we have asked them in different ways over the years, and the results depend greatly on the exact wording of the questions and response options.

**Jump to findings on how religious groups answered questions about:**

- [Whether religion does more good than harm](#)
- [Positive and negative statements about religious institutions](#)
- [Religion and public life](#)

## Views on whether religion does more good than harm in American society

A little more than half of Americans who identify with a religion (56%) see religion as doing more good than harm in society. Just 10% of religiously affiliated adults say it does more harm than good, and about a third say it does equal amounts of good and harm.

In contrast, just 16% of religiously unaffiliated adults (those who answer a question about their religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular”) take the position that religion does more good than harm. Most of the unaffiliated say that it does more harm than good (40%) or that it does equal amounts of good and harm (43%).

Among Christians, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) and evangelical Protestants are most strongly inclined to say religion does more good than harm (72% and 68%, respectively). Smaller shares of Catholics, mainline Protestants, people who identify with the historically Black Protestant tradition and Orthodox Christians take this view.

Hindus (33%), Jews (32%) and Buddhists (31%) are less likely than people in other religious groups to think that religion does more good than harm.

### Religiously unaffiliated adults are most likely to say religion does more harm than good in the U.S.

% who say religion does \_\_\_ in American society

	More good than harm	More harm than good	Equal amounts of good and harm
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	44%	19%	35%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	56	10	32
Christian	59	8	31
Protestant	61	7	29
<i>Evangelical</i>	68	5	25
<i>Mainline</i>	51	10	38
<i>Historically Black</i>	55	10	32
Catholic	54	9	35
Orthodox Christian	46	11	42
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	72	6	21
Other religions	29	31	38
Jewish	32	30	37
Muslim	52	12	35
Buddhist	31	26	40
Hindu	33	29	38
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	16	40	43
Atheist	5	70	24
Agnostic	11	51	38
Nothing in particular	21	29	49

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Positive and negative statements about religious institutions

Large majorities of the public say religious organizations help bring people together and strengthen community bonds (80%) and that religious institutions play an important role in helping the poor and needy (78%). Additionally, 64% of U.S. adults say religious organizations help protect and strengthen morality in society.

Even among religiously unaffiliated adults, 67% say religious organizations help bring people together and 61% say religious organizations play a key role in helping the poor.

At the same time, many people also think religious organizations have some negative attributes. Six-in-ten Americans – including 78% of religiously unaffiliated adults – say religious organizations are too focused on money and power. And slightly more than half of U.S. adults say religious organizations focus too much on rules and are too involved with politics.

## Most Americans agree that religious organizations do good things in society, but many also think religious organizations do some negative things

% who agree that churches and other religious organizations ...

	POSITIVE ROLES			NEGATIVE ROLES		
	Bring people together and strengthen community bonds	Play an important role in helping the poor and needy	Protect and strengthen morality in society	Are too concerned with money and power	Focus too much on rules	Are too involved with politics
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	80%	78%	64%	59%	54%	54%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	87	85	75	51	45	45
Christian	88	86	78	49	43	43
Protestant	89	87	79	46	38	40
<i>Evangelical</i>	91	89	85	42	34	34
<i>Mainline</i>	87	86	72	52	45	50
<i>Historically Black</i>	83	82	73	53	39	43
Catholic	87	84	76	53	54	48
Orthodox Christian	84	77	74	54	56	59
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	95	92	92	31	32	32
Other religions	75	73	52	70	68	68
Jewish	81	81	51	69	63	72
Muslim	86	82	74	55	58	54
Buddhist	79	76	61	70	68	62
Hindu	73	71	64	59	64	57
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	67	61	36	78	74	75
Atheist	57	51	17	88	83	90
Agnostic	68	60	28	84	81	87
Nothing in particular	69	64	44	73	69	67

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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**When we combine these questions into a scale, it shows that 51% of U.S. adults express a positive view of religion** – i.e., they agree with more positive statements about religious organizations than negative statements. That is 12 percentage points lower than in 2014, when 63% of U.S. adults expressed a positive view of religion.

Meanwhile, the share of people who agree with more negative than positive statements about religion has increased by 11 points since 2014, from 18% to 29%.

These changes reflect, in part, drops in the shares expressing positive views about religion among most Christian subgroups, including Catholics, mainline Protestants and people who identify with historically Black Protestant churches. Evangelical Protestants are an exception, with a relatively stable share expressing net positive views of churches and other religious organizations (78% in 2014, 75% in the new RLS).

Jews, Muslims and Hindus also have become less positive in their views of religious institutions. And among religiously unaffiliated adults, the share expressing net positive views has dropped 17 points, from 40% in 2014 to 23% in the new survey.

## Overall balance of perceptions about religious institutions has shifted in the U.S.

% who describe churches and other religious organizations in ways that are ...

	2014			2023-24		
	NET Positive	Mixed	NET Negative	NET Positive	Mixed	NET Negative
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	63%	19%	18%	51%	21%	29%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	70	18	12	63	20	18
Christian	72	17	11	66	19	15
Protestant	74	16	10	69	17	13
<i>Evangelical</i>	78	15	8	75	15	9
<i>Mainline</i>	69	19	12	60	21	19
<i>Historically Black</i>	71	16	13	63	20	16
Catholic	67	21	12	59	23	18
Orthodox Christian*	61	21	18	49	24	27
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	85	10	5	79	14	7
Other religions	47	25	28	34	25	40
Jewish	52	25	24	36	27	37
Muslim	68	23	10	50	35	15
Buddhist	42	30	28	39	29	32
Hindu	57	22	21	45	22	33
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	40	23	37	23	23	55
Atheist	23	18	59	10	14	76
Agnostic	35	29	36	15	18	67
Nothing in particular	45	22	33	28	26	45

\* The 2023-24 survey included 219 Orthodox Christian respondents who answered at least four of the six scale items, with an effective sample size of 97 and a 95% confidence level margin of error of plus or minus 10.0 percentage points.

Note: Based on a scale combining responses to questions asking respondents whether they agree or disagree with each of six statements about religious organizations. Three of the statements are positive (religious organizations protect and strengthen morality in society, bring people together and strengthen community bonds, play an important role in helping the poor and needy), and three are negative (religious organizations focus too much on rules, are too concerned with money and power, are too involved with politics). Those who agreed with more positive statements than negative statements are categorized as having a positive view of religion, while those agreeing with more negative than positive statements are categorized as having a negative view. People who agreed with equal numbers of positive and negative statements are coded as having mixed views. Refer to the accompanying text for additional details.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Religion and public life

### Declaring the U.S. a Christian nation

Americans are about evenly divided on whether the federal government should declare the U.S. a Christian nation, with 47% either favoring or *strongly* favoring the idea and 50% either opposing or *strongly* opposing it.

Among religious groups, this idea is most widely supported by evangelical Protestants, 78% of whom say that they favor or strongly favor the federal government declaring the U.S. a Christian nation.

About two-thirds of Latter-day Saints and six-in-ten members of historically Black Protestant churches also take this position.

### Nearly half of evangelicals strongly favor the government declaring the U.S. a Christian nation

% who \_\_\_ the federal government declaring the U.S. a Christian nation

	NET Favor	Strongly favor	Favor	NET Oppose
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>47%</b>	21%	25%	<b>50%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>58</b>	29	30	<b>38</b>
Christian	<b>63</b>	32	32	<b>33</b>
Protestant	<b>69</b>	37	31	<b>28</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>78</b>	48	30	<b>19</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>54</b>	21	33	<b>42</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>59</b>	27	32	<b>35</b>
Catholic	<b>53</b>	20	33	<b>43</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>56</b>	24	32	<b>40</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>65</b>	32	33	<b>29</b>
Other religions	<b>16</b>	4	12	<b>81</b>
Jewish	<b>11</b>	3	8	<b>87</b>
Muslim	<b>16</b>	5	11	<b>81</b>
Buddhist	<b>24</b>	2	21	<b>74</b>
Hindu	<b>22</b>	8	13	<b>73</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>19</b>	5	15	<b>78</b>
Atheist	<b>4</b>	2	2	<b>95</b>
Agnostic	<b>8</b>	1	7	<b>90</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>27</b>	6	20	<b>69</b>

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### *How survey question wording, response options can affect answers*

Over the years, we have asked Americans many questions about how much influence religion should have in U.S. public life. This includes several questions asking, in various ways, whether religion (and Christianity, in particular) should hold a privileged status in society and play a special role in shaping U.S. laws and policies. We've learned that response patterns vary considerably on these questions depending on their specific wording and structure.

One factor influencing how people respond to questions about the separation of church and state (or, looked at from another direction, the integration of religion and public life) is that Americans often have widely differing understandings of what being “a Christian nation” or promoting “Christian values” would entail, in practical terms.

The new RLS asked Americans if they favor or oppose the federal government declaring the U.S. a “Christian nation,” but it did not ask those who favor it to elaborate on what they mean by Christian nation. However, in [a 2022 survey](#), we asked Americans if the U.S. “should be a Christian nation,” and then we asked a follow-up question: “In your own words, what does the phrase ‘Christian nation’ mean to you?”

While some respondents defined Christian nation as a country where laws are based on Christian tenets and leaders are Christian, a much more common response was that a Christian nation involves people being broadly guided by Christian values or belief in God, even if the laws are not explicitly, or exclusively, Christian.

Furthermore, Americans who said the U.S. should *not* be a Christian nation often envisioned a Christian nation as a theocracy in which the government makes laws and policies based directly on Christian teachings. But those who said the U.S. *should* be a Christian nation tended to reject the idea of a theocracy and, rather, envisioned a country where most people are Christians and/or where people have good morals and treat each other well.

Another factor influencing responses to these types of questions is that, in general, when respondents are given the option to say they have no opinion or that neither of the two options provided represents their views, *smaller* shares favor integrating religion into public life than is the case when there is no “neutral” option. In other words, many Americans choose not to take a clear stance on church-state relations if they can opt out of doing so in a survey.

When questions do *not* offer a “neutral” option and respondents must choose between stances that either clearly favor or clearly oppose church-state integration, *larger* shares favor the integration

of religion and public life. Put differently, when forced to choose between the privileging of Christianity in public life versus Christianity having no special status, respondents who would otherwise say they have no opinion or no preference (if given that choice) may lean toward saying Christianity should have special status.

For example, in March 2021, when we asked Americans to pick which of two statements they agreed with more, just 15% selected “The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation,” while 69% selected “The federal government should never declare any religion an official religion.” An additional 15% explicitly selected “Neither/No opinion” as their choice.

On the 2023-24 RLS, respondents were asked a similar question: “Do you favor or oppose the federal government declaring the U.S. a Christian nation?” However, this time, they were given four response options (“Strongly favor,” “Favor,” “Oppose” and “Strongly oppose”) with no “neutral” option.

When the question was posed this way, 47% of U.S. adults favor or strongly favor the federal government declaring the U.S. a Christian nation. This is three times the share who chose the comparable option in the other question format from March 2021 – a striking demonstration of how much the results on these survey questions depend on nuances in the wording of the question and the response options offered.

**Prayer in public schools**

The new Religious Landscape Study finds that about half of Americans, or a little more, support allowing teacher-led prayer in public schools, whether that be praying to Jesus explicitly (52%) or, alternatively, praying to God without mentioning any specific religion (57%). Seven-in-ten U.S. Christian adults say they favor permitting teacher-led prayers to Jesus in public schools and 73% say they favor teacher-led prayers to God that don't mention any specific religion.

Compared with Christians, far lower shares of religiously unaffiliated Americans (28%) and adults who affiliate with other, non-Christian religions (39%) say they favor public school teachers leading classes in prayers that refer to God without mentioning any specific religion. There is even less support among non-Christian groups for allowing public school teachers to lead classes in prayers to Jesus.

## Most Christians favor allowing public school teachers to lead their classes in nonsectarian prayers; most others oppose the idea

% who \_\_\_ allowing public school teachers to lead their classes in prayers that ...

	Refer to Jesus				Refer to God but not a specific religion			
	NET Favor	Strongly favor	Favor	NET Oppose	NET Favor	Strongly favor	Favor	NET Oppose
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>52%</b>	27%	26%	<b>46%</b>	<b>57%</b>	25%	31%	<b>41%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>65</b>	36	30	<b>33</b>	<b>69</b>	33	36	<b>29</b>
Christian	<b>70</b>	39	32	<b>27</b>	<b>73</b>	35	37	<b>25</b>
Protestant	<b>75</b>	46	29	<b>23</b>	<b>75</b>	39	35	<b>23</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>84</b>	56	28	<b>15</b>	<b>80</b>	45	35	<b>18</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>57</b>	25	32	<b>41</b>	<b>63</b>	25	37	<b>35</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>79</b>	50	30	<b>18</b>	<b>77</b>	43	34	<b>20</b>
Catholic	<b>63</b>	26	37	<b>35</b>	<b>70</b>	28	42	<b>28</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>63</b>	25	38	<b>34</b>	<b>66</b>	30	37	<b>32</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>64</b>	29	34	<b>64</b>	<b>72</b>	33	39	<b>27</b>
Other religions	<b>20</b>	7	14	<b>78</b>	<b>39</b>	15	24	<b>60</b>
Jewish	<b>11</b>	5	6	<b>88</b>	<b>26</b>	11	15	<b>73</b>
Muslim	<b>23</b>	11	13	<b>74</b>	<b>55</b>	25	30	<b>44</b>
Buddhist	<b>27</b>	3	24	<b>72</b>	<b>37</b>	9	28	<b>62</b>
Hindu	<b>31</b>	10	21	<b>67</b>	<b>56</b>	25	31	<b>42</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>22</b>	6	16	<b>77</b>	<b>28</b>	7	21	<b>70</b>
Atheist	<b>4</b>	2	2	<b>96</b>	<b>6</b>	2	4	<b>94</b>
Agnostic	<b>7</b>	1	6	<b>92</b>	<b>14</b>	2	12	<b>85</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>31</b>	9	22	<b>67</b>	<b>38</b>	10	28	<b>60</b>

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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*How survey question wording, response options can affect answers*

These questions about school prayer provide another example of how the decision to include a “Neither/No opinion” option can have a big impact on survey findings. In a [March 2021 survey](#), we asked respondents to choose which of the following statements came closest to their view:

- “Teachers in public schools should be allowed to lead students in Christian prayers.”
- “Teachers in public schools should not be allowed to lead students in any kind of prayers.”
- “Neither/No opinion”

In response, 30% of U.S. adults said teachers in public schools should be allowed to lead students in Christian prayers, which is on par with the 27% of respondents in the new survey who say they strongly favor allowing teacher-led Christian prayers in public schools.

Meanwhile, 46% of respondents in the March 2021 survey said teachers in public schools should not be allowed to lead students in any kind of prayers, which is similar to the share in the new survey who say they oppose allowing teachers to lead Christian prayers in public schools.

About a quarter of respondents in the 2021 survey (24%) selected “Neither/No opinion” as their choice. The findings of the new survey suggest that many of the respondents in the March 2021 survey who chose “Neither/No opinion” when asked about prayer in schools may, on balance, favor allowing it when presented with a question (like the one in the new survey) that doesn’t explicitly offer a “Neither/No opinion” option. But they may not feel particularly strongly about the issue.

**Displays of religious symbols**

About half of Americans (53%) favor or strongly favor allowing cities and towns to display religious symbols on public property. Support for this stance is particularly strong among Christians, including 80% of evangelical Protestants and 73% of Latter-day Saints who favor or strongly favor allowing public displays of religious symbols.

Much lower shares of Buddhists (39%), Muslims (35%), Hindus (31%) and Jews (25%) say they favor allowing religious displays on public property.

In a [March 2021 survey](#), we asked about religious displays on public property in a different way. We asked respondents which of these statements came closer to their opinion:

- “Cities and towns in the U.S. should be allowed to place religious symbols on public property.”
- “Cities and towns in the U.S. should keep religious symbols off public property.”
- “Neither/No opinion”

In response, 39% of respondents said cities and towns in the U.S. should be allowed to place religious symbols on public property, while 35% said they should keep religious symbols off public property, and 26% selected “Neither/No opinion.”

**About half of Americans support allowing religious displays on public property**

*% who \_\_\_ allowing cities and towns to display religious symbols on public property*

	<b>NET Favor</b>	<b>Strongly favor</b>	<b>Favor</b>	<b>NET Oppose</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	<b>53%</b>	20%	33%	<b>44%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>64</b>	26	38	<b>33</b>
Christian	<b>68</b>	28	40	<b>29</b>
Protestant	<b>71</b>	33	39	<b>26</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>80</b>	42	38	<b>18</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>60</b>	18	41	<b>38</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>61</b>	27	34	<b>34</b>
Catholic	<b>63</b>	20	43	<b>34</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>56</b>	23	32	<b>43</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>73</b>	25	47	<b>25</b>
Other religions	<b>30</b>	7	23	<b>68</b>
Jewish	<b>25</b>	7	18	<b>73</b>
Muslim	<b>35</b>	13	23	<b>64</b>
Buddhist	<b>39</b>	5	34	<b>60</b>
Hindu	<b>31</b>	7	24	<b>65</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>26</b>	5	21	<b>71</b>
Atheist	<b>9</b>	2	7	<b>90</b>
Agnostic	<b>18</b>	2	17	<b>80</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>33</b>	7	27	<b>64</b>

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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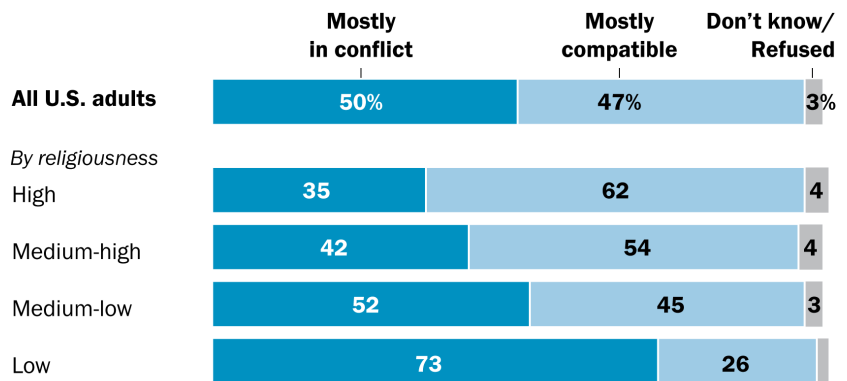
## 23. Religion and views of science

The question of whether science and religion are at odds or generally compatible has long been a topic of interest to philosophers, theologians and scientists, among others.

In the Religious Landscape Study (RLS), we asked respondents whether science and religion are “mostly in conflict” or “mostly compatible,” and Americans are basically split on this topic. Half of U.S. adults say that science and religion are mostly in conflict, while 47% say that science and religion are mostly compatible.

### Americans are divided on whether science and religion are mostly in conflict

% who say science and religion are ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Religiousness is based on responses to four questions: prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Responses were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8 and then subdivided roughly into religiousness quartiles. Refer to the accompanying text for details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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The more religious they are, the more likely Americans are to say science and religion are mostly compatible. The *less* religious they are, the more likely they are to see conflict between science and religion.

Among Americans with low levels of religious engagement, 73% say science and religion are mostly in conflict, roughly twice the share of highly religious Americans who take the same position (35%).<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> To measure levels of religious engagement, we created a scale based on four questions about prayer frequency, belief in God and/or a universal spirit, religion's importance and religious service attendance. Each question was coded from 0 (low) to 2 (high). Prayer frequency is coded as 0 for those who seldom or never pray, 2 for those who pray daily, and 1 for everyone else. Belief in God/a universal spirit is coded as 0 for those who do not believe in God or a universal spirit, 2 for those who believe with absolute certainty, and 1 for everyone else. Religion's importance is coded as 0 for those who say religion is “not too important” or “not at all important” in their lives, 2 for those who say religion is “very important” in their lives, and 1 for everyone else. Religious attendance is coded as 0 for those who say they seldom or never attend religious services, 2 for those who attend religious services at least once a month, and 1 for everyone else. These indicators were added together to form a scale ranging from 0 to 8, and then subdivided roughly into quartiles (scores of 0 to 1 in the lowest quartile, scores of 2 to 4 in the medium-low quartile, scores of 5 to 6 in the medium-high quartile, and scores of 7 to 8 in the highest quartile).



The survey also finds that Americans of all religious backgrounds are more likely to view science as beneficial than as harmful for American society. About half of U.S. adults (52%) say science does “more good than harm.”

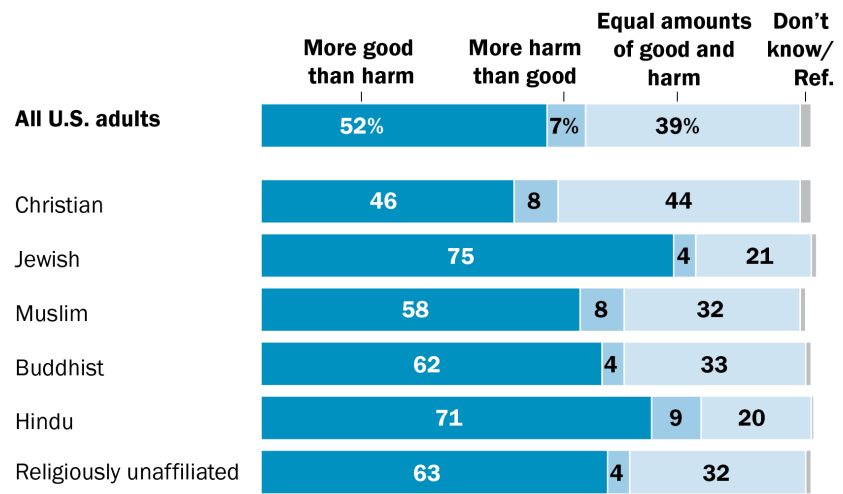
Just 7% of Americans overall say that science does “more harm than good.”

Meanwhile, 39% say science does “equal amounts of good and harm.”

At the same time, most Americans do not expect science to have answers to everything. Nearly seven-in-ten U.S. adults say “there are some things that science cannot possibly explain.” About three-in-ten say “there is a scientific explanation for everything, even if we don’t understand how everything works.”

**52% of Americans say science does more good than harm in society; 7% say it does more harm than good**

*% who say science does \_\_\_ in American society*



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Even most Americans with positive views about science’s impact believe that science cannot explain everything. About six-in-ten who say science does more good than harm also say there are some things that science cannot possibly explain.

**Read more about how religious groups answer questions about:**

- [The compatibility of science and religion](#)
- [Whether science does more good or harm in American society](#)
- [Whether science can explain everything](#)

## Views on compatibility of science and religion

Religiously unaffiliated Americans – people who identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – are more likely than U.S. adults who identify with a religion to say that religion and science are mostly in conflict (68% vs. 42%).

And, among the unaffiliated, atheists (83%) are more likely than agnostics (69%) and those who describe their religion as “nothing in particular” (64%) to think that science and religion conflict.

Looking just at Christian subgroups, 74% of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) say that science and religion are mostly compatible, as do 56% of Protestants and 52% of Catholics.

Two-thirds of Muslims also see science and religion as compatible, while 56% of Buddhists say science and religion are in conflict.<sup>84</sup>

### 68% of religiously unaffiliated Americans say religion and science are mostly in conflict

% who say science and religion are mostly ...

	In conflict	Compatible
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	50%	47%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	42	55
Christian	41	55
Protestant	40	56
<i>Evangelical</i>	40	57
<i>Mainline</i>	36	60
<i>Historically Black</i>	48	48
Catholic	45	52
Orthodox Christian	50	47
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	23	74
Other religions	49	49
Jewish	46	51
Muslim	33	66
Buddhist	56	43
Hindu	44	54
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	68	30
Atheist	83	16
Agnostic	69	30
Nothing in particular	64	34

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>84</sup> The question about whether science and religion are compatible or in conflict was not asked in prior landscape surveys. However, this question was asked in a [2014 Pew Research Center survey](#), in which 59% of respondents said science and religion are mostly in conflict and 38% said they are mostly compatible. That survey, like the new RLS, found that people who were not particularly religious themselves were more likely than highly religious people to say there is a conflict between science and religion.

## Views on whether science does more good or harm in American society

Nearly half of Americans who identify with a religion say science does more good than harm (48%), while 8% say it does more harm than good. The remaining 43% say it does equal amounts of good and harm.<sup>85</sup>

Among Christian subgroups, there are some differences on this question. About half or more of Orthodox Christians (58%), mainline Protestants (55%), Latter-day Saints (55%) and Catholics (51%) see science as doing more good than harm, compared with 40% of members of the historically Black Protestant tradition and 39% of evangelical Protestants.

Meanwhile, a majority of U.S. adults of non-Christian religions (62%) say science does more good than harm, higher than the 46% of Christians overall who take this stance.

Among religiously unaffiliated Americans, 63% say science does more good than harm. This includes:

- 85% of atheists;
- 77% of agnostics; and
- 54% of those who describe their religion as “nothing in particular.”

### Across all religious groups, more say science is helpful than harmful

% who say science does \_\_\_ in American society

	More good than harm	More harm than good	Equal amounts of good and harm
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	52%	7%	39%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	48	8	43
Christian	46	8	44
Protestant	43	9	45
<i>Evangelical</i>	39	10	49
<i>Mainline</i>	55	5	37
<i>Historically Black</i>	40	10	47
Catholic	51	6	41
Orthodox Christian	58	8	33
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	55	7	37
Other religions	62	6	31
Jewish	75	4	21
Muslim	58	8	32
Buddhist	62	4	33
Hindu	71	9	20
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	63	4	32
Atheist	85	1	14
Agnostic	77	1	22
Nothing in particular	54	6	39

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>85</sup> This question was not asked on prior landscape surveys. We did, however, ask this question in a [2023 survey](#) which found that 45% of respondents said science does more good than harm, 46% said it does equal amounts of good and harm, and 8% said it does more harm than good. A “context effect” may help explain the differing results: In the 2023 survey, this question followed several others focused on science, whereas in the new Religious Landscape Study (RLS), the question followed one about an unrelated topic (volunteering).

## Views on whether science can explain everything

Religiously unaffiliated Americans are a lot more likely than U.S. adults who identify with a religion to say there is a scientific explanation for everything (49% vs. 21%). They are a lot *less* likely to say that there are some things that science cannot possibly explain (49% vs. 77%).<sup>86</sup>

Among the unaffiliated, 81% of atheists see science as holding the answers to everything, compared with 61% of agnostics and 38% of those who describe their religion as “nothing in particular.”

Meanwhile, majorities of nearly every religiously affiliated group analyzed say “there are some things science cannot possibly explain.”

Jewish Americans are an exception among the religiously affiliated, with 51% saying there are some things science cannot explain and 48% saying there is a scientific explanation for everything.

### About half or more of adults in all religiously affiliated groups say there are things science can't explain

*% who say ...*

	There are some things that science cannot possibly explain	There is a scientific explanation for everything, even if we don't understand how everything works
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	69%	29%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	77	21
Christian	79	19
Protestant	81	17
<i>Evangelical</i>	86	13
<i>Mainline</i>	76	22
<i>Historically Black</i>	72	25
Catholic	77	21
Orthodox Christian	72	24
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	68	31
Other religions	60	39
Jewish	51	48
Muslim	63	34
Buddhist	60	39
Hindu	62	38
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	49	49
Atheist	19	81
Agnostic	38	61
Nothing in particular	60	38

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>86</sup> This question was not asked in prior landscape surveys. In a survey we [conducted in 2023](#), we found 74% of respondents said there are some things science cannot possibly explain while 25% said there is a scientific explanation for everything.

## **VI. Demographics of U.S. religious groups**

## 24. Age, race, education and other demographic traits of U.S. religious groups

Like the country's [overall population](#), many U.S. religious groups have experienced a decline in the share of adults who identify as White, according to the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS).

Today, 61% of U.S. Christians are non-Hispanic White, compared with 66% in 2014 and 70% in 2007. There has been a similar decline in the share of White adults in the religiously unaffiliated category.<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, there has been growth or stability in the shares of Christians who identify as Black, Hispanic or Asian.<sup>88</sup>

For example, Hispanic Americans now make up 18% of Christians, compared with 13% in 2007. And Asian Americans now make up 7% of the religiously unaffiliated, compared with 4% in 2007.

There have been other demographic changes as well. The median age of Christians has risen to 54, from 49 in 2014 and 46 in 2007. The median age of adults who identify with other religions is lower (41) and has not changed much since 2014 and 2007. The median age of religiously unaffiliated adults in the new survey is 38, which also is in line with both 2014 and 2007.

### Trends in the racial composition of U.S. Christians and religiously unaffiliated adults

*% who are ...*

	Among Christians			Among religiously unaffiliated adults		
	2007	2014	2023-24	2007	2014	2023-24
White	70%	65%	61%	72%	67%	63%
Black	12	13	13	8	9	8
Hispanic	13	16	18	11	13	15
Asian*	1	2	3	4	5	7
Other/Multiracial	3	3	4	4	4	6

\* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>87</sup> In the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies, demographic results were re-percentage to exclude people who did not answer the question, whereas in the current analysis, the percentages shown account for those who did not answer. As a result, numbers shown in this chapter for 2007 and 2014 may differ slightly from the numbers published in the original reports.

<sup>88</sup> The survey asked respondents two questions about their race and ethnicity. First, respondents were asked, "Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban?" Then, respondents were asked, "What is your race or origin? [Please mark all that apply.] White; Black or African American; Asian or Asian American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Some other race or origin (please specify)."

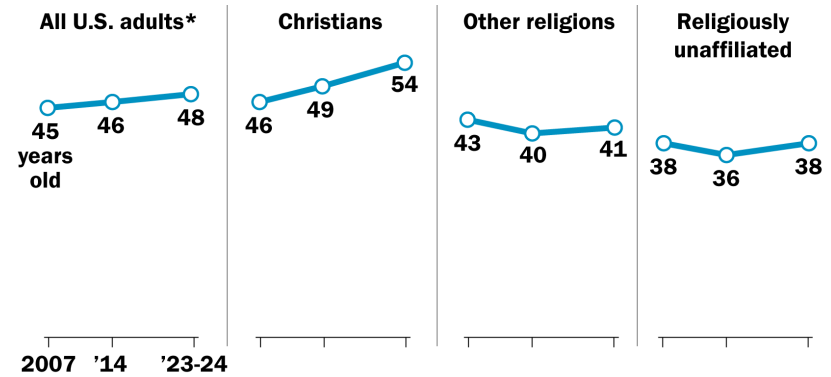
Women continue to make up a majority of Christians. But, today, women also account for nearly half of all religiously unaffiliated Americans (47%). In the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies, the religiously unaffiliated population was composed much more heavily of men than of women.

**Read on for more details about the demographic traits of U.S. religious groups:**

- [Race and ethnicity](#)
- [Immigration and region of birth](#)
- [Citizenship and civic engagement](#)
- [U.S. geographic distribution](#)
- [Age](#)
- [Gender and sexual orientation](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Income and employment status](#)

## Median age of U.S. Christian adults is higher now than in 2007

Median age among ...



\* Results for all U.S. adults have been weighted so that the demographic composition of the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Race and ethnicity

Many of the country's large religious groups – including evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants and Catholics – continue to have White, non-Hispanic majorities. So does the country's religiously unaffiliated population. Among “nones” – i.e., people who answer a question about their current religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – 63% identify as non-Hispanic White.

Among evangelical Protestants, 70% are White, 12% are Hispanic and 7% are Black. Among mainline Protestants, 79% are White and 6% each are Black or Hispanic. Members of the historically Black Protestant tradition continue to be predominantly Black, though about 3% of U.S. adults who affiliate with that tradition identify as White and 4% are Hispanic.

Among U.S. Catholics, the share of Hispanic adults has increased from 29% in 2007 to 36% in the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS).<sup>89</sup> U.S. Jews remain predominantly White and non-Hispanic (90%).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> While the share of Catholics who are Latino is growing, the share of Latinos who are Catholic is declining. For additional details, refer to [Chapter 1](#) of this report, and to our report “[Among U.S. Latinos, Catholicism Continues to Decline but is Still the Largest Faith.](#)”

<sup>90</sup> For more on the racial and ethnic composition of U.S. Jews, refer to [Pew Research Center's 2020 survey of Jewish Americans.](#)



Meanwhile, 84% of Hindus are Asian, as are 56% of Buddhists. Among U.S. Muslims, 30% are Asian, 30% are White, 20% are Black, 11% are Hispanic and 7% are multiracial or identify with another race. White Americans make up roughly three-quarters of adults who identify as atheist (75%) or agnostic (74%), but just 57% of adults who identify religiously as “nothing in particular.”

## Racial and ethnic composition of U.S. religious groups

% who are ...

	2007					2014					2023-24				
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/Multi-racial	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/Multi-racial	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/Multi-racial
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	70%	11%	12%	2%	3%	65%	11%	15%	4%	4%	60%	11%	16%	6%	5%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	70	11	12	2	3	65	12	15	3	4	60	12	17	6	4
Christian	70	12	13	1	3	65	13	16	2	3	61	13	18	3	4
Protestant	73	16	5	1	3	68	17	8	1	4	63	18	9	3	5
<i>Evangelical</i>	80	6	7	2	7	75	6	11	2	5	70	7	12	3	6
<i>Mainline</i>	89	2	3	1	3	85	3	5	1	3	79	6	6	3	5
<i>Hist. Black</i>	2	92	4	<1	1	2	94	3	0	1	3	92	4	<1	1
Catholic	64	2	29	2	2	58	3	33	3	2	54	2	36	4	2
Orthodox	86	6	1	2	3	81	8	6	3	2	71	12	8	7	1
Latter-day Saint	85	2	7	1	3	84	1	8	1	5	72	6	12	1	7
Other religions	68	5	4	16	6	61	6	6	21	5	50	6	11	26	6
Jewish	93	1	3	<1	2	89	2	4	1	2	90	1	6	<1	2
Muslim	32	32	7	20	7	37	27	4	27	3	30	20	11	30	8
Buddhist	52	4	6	31	5	44	3	12	33	8	25	3	10	56	5
Hindu	5	1	2	87	4	4	2	1	91	2	1	0	5	84	8
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	72	8	11	4	4	67	9	13	5	4	63	8	15	7	6
Atheist	83	2	5	4	2	78	3	10	7	2	75	2	10	8	5
Agnostic	83	2	6	4	4	78	3	8	4	4	74	4	10	6	5
Nothing in particular	69	10	12	3	4	63	12	15	5	5	57	12	18	6	6

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are widely known as Mormons.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Immigration and region of birth

Immigrants make up much higher percentages of some non-Christian religions than they do of U.S. Christians.<sup>91</sup>

People born outside the United States account for notably large shares of Hindus (77%), Muslims (59%) and Buddhists (55%). Foreign-born Hindus and Buddhists most often were born in the Asia-Pacific region, while Muslim immigrants' regions of origin are more varied.

Orthodox Christians also include a relatively high percentage of immigrants (42%), including 21% who were born in Europe. An additional 27% of Orthodox Christians have at least one parent who was born outside the U.S.

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<sup>91</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, the "First generation" category of people born outside the U.S. includes those born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. Although individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth, they are included with the "First generation" category here because they are born into a Spanish-dominant culture and because, on [many points](#), their attitudes, views and beliefs are much closer to those of Hispanics born outside the U.S. than to Hispanics born in the 50 U.S. states or the District of Columbia, even those who identify themselves as being of Puerto Rican origin.

Much smaller shares of Christians as a whole (17%), the religiously unaffiliated (16%) and Jews (13%) were born outside the U.S. Most Christians, Jews and religiously unaffiliated Americans say their families have been in the U.S. for at least three generations.

(Read more about the religion of immigrants to the U.S. in our recent report “[The Religious Composition of the World’s Migrants](#).”)

## Most U.S. Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim adults were born in another country or have at least one parent who was born outside the U.S.

% who are \_\_\_ generation

	First (born outside the U.S.)	Second (born in the U.S., has at least one parent born outside the U.S.)	Third+ (born in the U.S., and both parents born in the U.S.)
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	18%	10%	69%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	19	9	69
Christian	17	9	71
Protestant	11	6	80
<i>Evangelical</i>	12	7	79
<i>Mainline</i>	8	6	83
<i>Historically Black</i>	13	5	77
Catholic	29	14	54
Orthodox Christian	42	27	28
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	11	9	79
Other religions	36	14	49
Jewish	13	18	68
Muslim	59	21	17
Buddhist	55	10	34
Hindu	77	16	4
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	16	11	70
Atheist	15	12	71
Agnostic	11	14	74
Nothing in particular	18	10	69

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. For the purposes of this analysis, the “First generation” category includes those born in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. Although individuals born in Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens by birth, they are included with the “First generation” category here because they are born into a Spanish-dominant culture and because, on many points, their attitudes, views and beliefs are much closer to those of Hispanics born outside the U.S. than to Hispanics born in the 50 U.S. states or the District of Columbia, even those who identify themselves as being of Puerto Rican origin.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Two-thirds of U.S. Hindus and 45% of Buddhists were born in the Asia-Pacific region

% who were born in the following places

	Americas (except U.S.)	Asia- Pacific	Europe	Middle East-North Africa	Sub- Saharan Africa	Outside the U.S. (unclear where)	NET Born outside the U.S.
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	8%	5%	2%	<1%	1%	3%	<b>=18%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	9	4	2	<1	1	2	<b>19</b>
Christian	10	2	2	<1	1	2	<b>17</b>
Protestant	5	2	1	<1	1	2	<b>11</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	6	2	1	<1	<1	2	<b>12</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	2	2	2	<1	<1	1	<b>8</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	6	<1	<1	0	3	3	<b>13</b>
Catholic	20	3	2	<1	<1	3	<b>29</b>
Orthodox Christian	1	9	21	3	7	2	<b>42</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	7	1	2	0	<1	1	<b>11</b>
Other religions	5	21	2	2	1	4	<b>36</b>
Jewish	3	1	4	2	1	3	<b>13</b>
Muslim	6	27	4	7	6	8	<b>59</b>
Buddhist	5	45	<1	<1	<1	5	<b>55</b>
Hindu	4	66	<1	0	1	6	<b>77</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	6	5	2	<1	<1	3	<b>16</b>
Atheist	5	5	4	<1	<1	1	<b>15</b>
Agnostic	3	4	2	<1	<1	1	<b>11</b>
Nothing in particular	8	5	1	<1	<1	4	<b>18</b>

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Citizenship and civic engagement

### Citizenship

Most U.S. religious groups are comprised largely of U.S. citizens. This includes majorities of Jews (98%), Christians (93%), Buddhists (89%) and Muslims (78%). Hindus (57%) living in the United States are less likely to be U.S. citizens.

### 93% of U.S. Christians and religiously unaffiliated adults are American citizens

Are you a citizen of the United States? (%)

	Yes			No	No answer
	NET U.S. citizen	Born in the U.S. or Puerto Rico	Born outside the U.S./Puerto Rico		
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>&lt;1%=100%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
Christian	<b>93</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
Protestant	<b>96</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	<b>95</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	<b>98</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	<b>96</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
Catholic	<b>87</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>93</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	<b>95</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
Other religions	<b>88</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
Jewish	<b>98</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
Muslim	<b>78</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
Buddhist	<b>89</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>
Hindu	<b>57</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
Atheist	<b>94</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
Agnostic	<b>96</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
Nothing in particular	<b>92</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. The weighting accounts for the place of birth (U.S. or not) of respondents who are Hispanic and Asian; it does not adjust for citizenship rates. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Note: The "Born outside the U.S./Puerto Rico" category includes those whose country of birth is unknown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Voter registration

About three-quarters of Christians and Jews are registered to vote, as are roughly two-thirds of religiously unaffiliated adults.

The survey finds that 56% of Buddhists, 55% of Muslims and 42% of Hindus are registered to vote. The share of Buddhists who say they are not sure if they are registered to vote stands at 21% – higher than among other groups.

Relatively large shares of Muslims and Hindus indicate that they are not citizens and so are [not eligible to vote](#).

## Roughly three-quarters of U.S. Christians and Jews are registered voters, as are two-thirds of religiously unaffiliated adults

Are you registered to vote at your current address? (%)

	Yes	No	Not sure	Not a citizen/ No answer
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	72%	14%	5%	8%=100%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	74	13	4	8
Christian	76	12	4	8
Protestant	78	13	4	5
<i>Evangelical</i>	77	13	4	6
<i>Mainline</i>	81	13	4	3
<i>Historically Black</i>	78	13	4	5
Catholic	73	9	4	14
Orthodox Christian	65	19	9	8
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	73	17	5	5
Other religions	62	15	8	14
Jewish	75	17	4	4
Muslim	55	10	11	25
Buddhist	56	11	21	12
Hindu	42	10	2	46
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	67	18	7	7
Atheist	75	13	5	6
Agnostic	75	14	7	4
Nothing in particular	63	21	7	9

Note: "No answer" includes both those who did not answer the citizenship question and those who did not answer the question about voter registration.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Volunteering

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons) are the only group in this analysis with more than half of adults who say they have volunteered for any organization in the past 12 months (72% say this).

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### 72% of Latter-day Saints say they volunteered in the past year

*% who say they spent time volunteering in the past 12 months*

<b>All U.S. adults</b>	41%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	45
Christian	45
Protestant	46
<i>Evangelical</i>	48
<i>Mainline</i>	48
<i>Historically Black</i>	36
Catholic	39
Orthodox Christian	36
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	72
Other religions	44
Jewish	52
Muslim	44
Buddhist	34
Hindu	44
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	35
Atheist	44
Agnostic	42
Nothing in particular	31

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## U.S. geographic distribution

Overall, 42% of U.S. Christians live in the South. That includes 64% of adults in the historically Black Protestant tradition and 52% of evangelical Christians.

Roughly seven-in-ten Latter-day Saints live in the West, as do around half of Buddhists.

About four-in-ten Jews (42%) live in the Northeast.

Religiously unaffiliated adults are less likely than Christians to live in the South.

### 64% of members of historically Black Protestant churches, 52% of evangelicals live in the South

% who live in the ...

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	17%	21%	38%	24%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	17	20	41	22
Christian	16	21	42	21
Protestant	12	22	49	17
<i>Evangelical</i>	9	21	52	19
<i>Mainline</i>	17	28	37	18
<i>Historically Black</i>	13	15	64	7
Catholic	26	20	29	25
Orthodox Christian	29	19	31	21
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	5	7	19	69
Other religions	25	16	31	28
Jewish	42	9	26	23
Muslim	29	20	33	18
Buddhist	13	10	32	45
Hindu	26	13	32	29
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	18	21	33	28
Atheist	19	19	31	30
Agnostic	16	21	31	32
Nothing in particular	18	22	34	26

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Age

Mainline Protestants, Catholics and evangelical Protestants are among the country's oldest religiously affiliated populations. People ages 50 and older make up a majority of mainline Protestants (64%), Catholics (57%) and evangelical Protestants (54%).

Muslims and Hindus are much younger, on average, than other U.S. religious groups: About three-quarters of adults in each group are under 50. And a third of U.S. Muslim adults are younger than 30.

The country's religiously unaffiliated population is relatively young as well. Roughly seven-in-ten U.S. adults with no religion are under 50, compared with 44% of religiously affiliated adults.

## Most evangelicals, mainline Protestants and Catholics are ages 50 and older; roughly three-quarters of Muslims, Hindus, atheists and agnostics are under 50

% who are ...

	<b>Ages 18-29</b>	<b>30-49</b>	<b>NET Ages 18-49</b>	<b>50-64</b>	<b>65+</b>	<b>NET Ages 50+</b>
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	19%	33%	<b>52%</b>	24%	23%	<b>47%</b>
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	15	29	<b>44</b>	27	28	<b>54</b>
Christian	14	28	<b>42</b>	28	29	<b>57</b>
Protestant	13	28	<b>42</b>	28	29	<b>57</b>
<i>Evangelical</i>	14	30	<b>43</b>	28	27	<b>55</b>
<i>Mainline</i>	11	24	<b>34</b>	27	38	<b>64</b>
<i>Historically Black</i>	16	33	<b>50</b>	27	22	<b>49</b>
Catholic	14	27	<b>41</b>	29	28	<b>58</b>
Orthodox Christian	24	35	<b>59</b>	23	17	<b>40</b>
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	25	34	<b>58</b>	20	20	<b>40</b>
Other religions	25	39	<b>64</b>	17	17	<b>34</b>
Jewish	18	31	<b>50</b>	20	30	<b>50</b>
Muslim	35	42	<b>76</b>	13	8	<b>22</b>
Buddhist	23	37	<b>60</b>	18	21	<b>40</b>
Hindu	22	51	<b>74</b>	17	4	<b>21</b>
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	28	41	<b>69</b>	18	12	<b>30</b>
Atheist	29	44	<b>73</b>	16	11	<b>27</b>
Agnostic	32	40	<b>73</b>	15	12	<b>27</b>
Nothing in particular	27	40	<b>68</b>	19	12	<b>31</b>

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Note: Those who did not answer the question about their age are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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The median age of Christians overall has risen from 46 in 2007 to 55 in 2024. This is a trend that can be seen within most of the Christian subgroups large enough to analyze in this survey.

Among the religiously unaffiliated and adherents of non-Christian religions, the median age has remained relatively stable since 2007.

## Trend in median age of U.S. religious groups

*Median age among the following groups*

	2007	2014	2023-24
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	45	46	48
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	47	49	53
Christian	46	49	54
Protestant	47	50	55
<i>Evangelical</i>	47	49	54
<i>Mainline</i>	50	52	59
<i>Historically Black</i>	44	46	49
Catholic	45	49	55
Orthodox Christian	46	40	45
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	41	43	44
Other religions	43	40	41
Jewish	50	50	50
Muslim	35	33	35
Buddhist	42	39	45
Hindu	38	33	39
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	38	36	38
Atheist	36	34	38
Agnostic	39	34	36
Nothing in particular	38	38	39

\* Results for all U.S. adults have been weighted so that the demographic composition of the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Gender and sexual orientation

Most Christian groups in this analysis have more women than men. The gap is widest among members of historically Black Protestant churches (64% women, 35% men).

On the other hand, atheists and agnostics have greater shares of men than women.

[Surveys consistently show](#) that in the U.S., women, on average, are more religious than men on a variety of measures. (Read more about the connections between gender and religiousness in the report [Overview](#).)

At the same time, the gender ratio of the religiously unaffiliated has become more balanced over time. In 2007, about 41% of religiously unaffiliated adults were women, while 59% were men. Today, 47% of unaffiliated Americans are women, 50% are men and 3% identify in some other way (an option that was not available in the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies).<sup>92</sup>

### Women make up a majority of U.S. Christians but fewer than half of atheists and agnostics

*% who are ...*

	Men	Women	Identify in some other way
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	46%	51%	2%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	45	53	1
Christian	44	54	1
Protestant	43	55	<1
<i>Evangelical</i>	46	53	<1
<i>Mainline</i>	41	57	1
<i>Historically Black</i>	35	64	1
Catholic	46	53	1
Orthodox Christian	61	36	1
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	52	47	1
Other religions	53	43	4
Jewish	54	44	2
Muslim	52	42	6
Buddhist	51	44	4
Hindu	74	23	<1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	50	47	3
Atheist	59	36	4
Agnostic	55	41	3
Nothing in particular	45	51	3

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>92</sup> For more details about comparing results across the three Religious Landscape Studies, refer to [Appendix A](#). For a discussion of the religious composition of men and women, refer to [Chapter 1](#).

There are more men than women among Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist respondents in the survey. However, given the relatively small samples sizes of these groups, the shares of these groups who are men are not statistically significantly larger than the shares who are women.<sup>93</sup>

In terms of sexual orientation, atheists and agnostics are notably more likely than other U.S. adults to describe their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

## U.S. ‘nones’ are more likely than Christians to identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual

% who are ...

	<b>Straight</b>	<b>Gay or lesbian</b>	<b>Bisexual</b>	<b>Something else</b>
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	86%	3%	5%	2%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	90	2	3	1
Christian	91	1	2	1
Protestant	92	1	2	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	93	1	1	1
<i>Mainline</i>	93	2	2	1
<i>Historically Black</i>	89	3	4	1
Catholic	89	2	2	2
Orthodox Christian	90	1	2	3
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	95	<1	3	<1
Other religions*	78	4	10	4
Jewish	83	4	7	2
Muslim	86	3	2	5
Buddhist	80	5	9	1
Hindu	87	<1	4	1
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	78	5	9	3
Atheist	74	7	13	3
Agnostic	73	7	13	4
Nothing in particular	81	4	7	3

\* The share of people in the “Other religions” category who say they are straight is lower than the shares of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus who say this. The “Other religions” category includes a variety of subgroups that are not shown in this table (or elsewhere in this report) because the survey did not include enough respondents to be able to report on them separately. Collectively, members of these unshown subgroups are less likely to identify as straight than are any of the subgroups that are listed here.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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<sup>93</sup> The share of Hindus in the new survey who are men is much higher than in other Pew Research Center studies. In our 2023 survey of Asian Americans, 52% of Hindus say they are men (84% of Hindus in the 2023-24 RLS are Asian). And in the 2014 RLS, 62% of Hindu respondents are men. In the new survey, there is some evidence to suggest that in Hindu households containing multiple adults, the responding adult was more likely to be a man than would be expected if the selection were fully random.

## Education

Hindus and Jews are, on average, the most highly educated religious groups in the U.S. Roughly seven-in-ten Hindus and two-thirds of Jews have a bachelor's degree or more education.

Roughly half of agnostics (53%) and atheists (48%) have a bachelor's degree or more education, as do 32% of Christians.

### On average, Hindus and Jews have the highest levels of educational attainment among U.S. religious groups

*% who have completed ...*

	College+			High school or less	2023-24		
	2007	2014	2023-24		Some college	Bachelor's degree	Postgraduate degree
<b>All U.S. adults*</b>	27%	27%	35%	35%	30%	19%	15%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	26	27	34	36	29	19	15
Christian	25	25	32	37	29	18	14
Protestant	24	24	31	37	31	17	14
<i>Evangelical</i>	20	21	29	39	32	16	12
<i>Mainline</i>	33	33	40	32	28	21	19
<i>Historically Black</i>	16	15	24	44	32	13	10
Catholic	26	26	35	38	27	20	15
Orthodox Christian	46	39	45	28	26	23	22
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	29	33	36	32	32	24	12
Other religions	51	49	48	26	25	21	27
Jewish	59	59	65	14	20	26	39
Muslim	40	39	44	32	23	18	26
Buddhist	48	47	41	32	27	20	20
Hindu	73	77	70	20	9	24	46
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	29	29	37	32	31	20	16
Atheist	42	43	48	22	30	26	22
Agnostic	43	42	53	15	33	31	21
Nothing in particular	24	24	29	40	31	16	13

\* Results for all U.S. adults are based on the full sample of respondents to the Religious Landscape Study and have been weighted so that the demographic composition closely matches that of the full U.S. population based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Refer to the Methodology for details.

Note: Those who did not answer the question in 2023-24 are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Income and employment status

Of the religious groups in this analysis, Hindus and Jews tend to have the highest family incomes. Roughly half or more of adults in each of these two groups report an annual household income of \$100,000 or more.

Additionally, roughly three-in-ten Catholics and mainline Protestants report annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more.

Relatively few members of historically Black Protestant churches (14%) are in this highest income bracket.

Among religiously unaffiliated Americans, 48% of atheists and 43% of agnostics have a household income of \$100,000 or more.

### Among U.S. religious groups, Hindus and Jews have the highest household incomes

% with a family income of ...

	<\$30K	\$30K- \$49,999	\$50K- \$99,999	\$100K+	No answer
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	20%	18%	25%	30%	7%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	20	18	26	29	8
Christian	20	18	26	28	8
Protestant	21	18	26	27	8
<i>Evangelical</i>	20	18	28	26	8
<i>Mainline</i>	16	16	26	33	9
<i>Historically Black</i>	34	25	21	14	7
Catholic	18	18	25	31	8
Orthodox Christian	20	13	31	31	5
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	18	19	27	29	6
Other religions	17	17	22	38	5
Jewish	9	12	18	54	7
Muslim	23	14	24	35	5
Buddhist	18	23	23	33	3
Hindu	8	11	17	57	6
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	19	17	25	34	5
Atheist	10	13	27	48	3
Agnostic	10	16	27	43	4
Nothing in particular	25	19	23	27	5

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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Among religiously unaffiliated adults, 55% are currently working full time for pay, as are 58% of Hindu adults. Half of Muslim adults are working full time, as are 48% of Buddhists, 46% of Jews and 44% of Christians.

About a quarter of Christians (27%) and Jews (24%) are retired. Christians and Jews also are among the religious groups most likely to be ages 65 or older.

## In the U.S., Christians and Jews are more likely than others to be retired

*Employment status among each group (%)*

	Work full time	Work part time	Not currently working for pay	Cannot work due to a disability	Retired
<b>All U.S. adults</b>	47%	12%	12%	7%	22%
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	44	11	11	7	26
Christian	44	11	11	7	27
Protestant	43	11	10	8	28
<i>Evangelical</i>	44	11	10	8	26
<i>Mainline</i>	40	9	8	6	35
<i>Historically Black</i>	43	12	12	11	21
Catholic	45	11	11	5	27
Orthodox Christian	51	15	15	3	16
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	46	14	18	3	18
Other religions	49	14	15	6	14
Jewish	46	17	10	2	24
Muslim	50	18	23	3	6
Buddhist	48	12	13	9	15
Hindu	58	11	19	3	7
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	55	13	13	6	13
Atheist	61	11	12	4	12
Agnostic	59	13	11	3	13
Nothing in particular	51	14	14	7	13

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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political science at Calvin University; and David Voas, emeritus professor of social science at University College London.

## Methodology

The Religious Landscape Study (RLS), on which this report is based, is a national cross-sectional survey conducted for Pew Research Center by NORC at the University of Chicago.

It was conducted in English and Spanish from July 17, 2023, to March 4, 2024, among a nationally representative sample of 36,908 U.S. adults.

A geographically stratified address-based sample was drawn from the United States Postal Service’s Computerized Delivery Sequence File (CDS).

The survey was designed to produce reliable [state and national estimates](#) of the U.S. adult population. In geographies with a sufficiently large number of completed interviews, metropolitan statistical area (MSA) estimates are also available.

A total of 205,100 sampled addresses were mailed survey invitations. Respondents were given a choice to complete the survey online, by mail, or by calling a toll-free number and completing the survey over the phone with an interviewer. Of the 36,908 U.S. adults who completed the survey, 25,250 did so online, 10,733 did so by mail, and 925 did so by phone.

After accounting for the complex sample design and loss of precision due to weighting, the national margin

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### Sample sizes and margins of sampling error, by religious group

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
<b>U.S. adults</b>	36,908	0.8 percentage points
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	25,764	0.9 percentage points
Christian	23,186	0.9 percentage points
Protestant	15,099	1.2 percentage points
<i>Evangelical</i>	8,298	1.5 percentage points
<i>Mainline</i>	5,333	2.0 percentage points
<i>Historically Black</i>	1,468	3.5 percentage points
Catholic	6,958	1.7 percentage points
Orthodox Christian	225	9.9 percentage points
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	565	6.2 percentage points
Other religions	2,578	3.0 percentage points
Jewish	850	5.0 percentage points
Muslim	273	8.3 percentage points
Buddhist	348	8.4 percentage points
Hindu	247	8.7 percentage points
<b>Religiously unaffiliated</b>	10,729	1.4 percentage points
Atheist	1,999	3.3 percentage points
Agnostic	2,401	2.9 percentage points
Nothing in particular	6,329	1.8 percentage points

Note: The margins of sampling error shown here are calculated at the 95% confidence level using a formula based on the variability of the survey weights.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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of sampling error for these respondents is plus or minus 0.8 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

The research plan for this project was submitted to NORC's institutional review board (IRB), which is an independent committee of experts that specializes in helping to protect the rights of research participants. This research was declared exempt under category 2 of IRB code (approval #: FWA 00000142).

## Sample design

The survey has a complex sample design constructed to ensure reliable estimates for the nation as a whole, for each state (and the District of Columbia), and for some of the largest MSAs.

The sample frame of the 2023-24 RLS is an address-based sample (ABS) comprised of addresses from the USPS CDS file. It is maintained by Vericast and is updated monthly. All residential addresses on the ABS frame were geocoded and assigned to one of 93 strata.

Addresses were initially stratified by state and the District of Columbia. When sample sizes were large enough, states were further partitioned into target MSA strata and non-MSA state strata. For example, the entire state of Connecticut is comprised of one stratum, but five strata cover California (Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim; San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley; Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario; San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad; and all other addresses within California). Strata were defined at the county level and respected state boundaries.

The sample was proportionally allocated but adjusted to account for differential nonresponse and to ensure that a minimum of 300 people in each state completed the survey. Additionally, allocation was optimally adjusted within states so that the survey obtained at least 250 completed surveys from respondents in at least 32 large MSAs while balancing overall design effects due to unequal probability of household selection.<sup>94</sup> Addresses were randomly selected within each stratum.

Once an address was sampled, an invitation was mailed to the address. The invitation asked the adult in the household with the next birthday to complete the survey.

Sampled addresses were contacted in two batches. Addresses in the first batch were first contacted on July 14, 2023, while those in the second batch were first contacted on Oct. 27, 2023. Response

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<sup>94</sup> The sample design only included strata for 32 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). However, the survey yielded a sufficiently large sample to enable reporting on two additional MSAs.

rates from the first batch informed the size of the second batch, to ensure the study reached the targeted number of completed interviews.

## Data collection

The survey used a sequential mixed-mode protocol in which sampled households were first invited to respond online and then, if they did not respond online, mailed a paper version of the questionnaire. A toll-free phone number was included in all contact attempts, and individuals were told they could call it to complete the survey over the phone with an interviewer.

The first mailing included a letter introducing the survey and providing the information needed to respond online or by phone (website URL, unique access PIN, and phone number). A pre-incentive of \$2 was included in the mailing and could be seen through a windowed envelope. The letter promised an additional \$10 once the survey was complete.<sup>95</sup> The invitation was generic; it asked respondents to “answer some questions in a short online survey” and said that “the survey asks about a variety of topics that affect you and your community.” We intentionally avoided telling respondents in the letter that the survey focused heavily on religion, because we wanted to minimize the risk of biasing the survey’s results by appealing disproportionately to people who are interested in religion. Materials were sent in both English and Spanish to 15% of addresses, and in English only to 85% of addresses.

One week after the first mailing, NORC sent a postcard reminder to all sampled individuals, followed a week later by a reminder letter to nonrespondents.

After that, a 16-page paper version of the survey, postage-paid return envelope, cover letter and another \$2 prepaid incentive were mailed to nonrespondents. The timing and postage method for this mailing varied. Addresses sampled as part of the first batch were mailed these materials 10 days after the reminder letter was sent out, whereas addresses in the second batch were mailed two months after the reminder letter. The second batch delay was designed to avoid sending mail over the holiday season from Thanksgiving through New Year’s Day. Mailings to the first batch of addresses and 75% of the second batch were sent using first class mail. The remaining 25% of addresses in the second batch were sent via UPS Mail Innovations. This change was made to increase the response rate while respecting budget limitations.

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<sup>95</sup> Individuals who completed the survey online were given a choice to collect their incentive as an Amazon or Walmart gift code. Mail respondents were mailed a \$10 Mastercard gift card. Phone respondents could choose an Amazon gift code, Walmart gift code, or Mastercard gift card.

One to two weeks later, a reminder postcard followed the paper surveys.

A sample of 60% of nonresponding addresses in the first sample batch also received a second paper version of the survey approximately one month after the first; this sample was drawn proportional to the household's response propensity estimated through predictive modeling using big data classifiers. This mailing included a copy of the paper questionnaire, a cover letter, postage-paid envelope, and an additional prepaid incentive. The hardest-to-reach nonrespondents received a \$5 incentive while others received a \$2 incentive. This final mailing was not sent to the second sample batch due to budget and time constraints.

In addition to the above protocol, a methodological contact experiment was built into the 2023-24 RLS. When available, cellphone numbers were appended to nonresponding addresses and a random subsample of these numbers received a text message. The text message contained either a link to the web survey or gave recipients both the web link and the toll-free telephone number for completing the survey via phone. In the first sample batch, text messages were sent following the final mailing. In the second sample batch, they were sent following the reminder web letter and before the first paper questionnaire was sent.

## Languages

English materials were mailed to all sampled addresses while Spanish materials were also included in mailings to the 15% of addressees identified as most likely to have a Spanish speaker. Addresses that were likely to be home to Spanish-speaking people were identified using a combination of vendor-provided commercial flags, [Bayesian Improved Surname and Geocoding \(BISG\)](#), and isolated Spanish language Census tracts.

For the web survey, the landing page was displayed in English initially but allowed respondents to toggle between English and Spanish. Respondents who called in to complete the survey over the phone were routed to an English or bilingual interviewer as appropriate. Paper questionnaires in both languages were sent to households flagged to receive bilingual materials.

## Weighting and variance estimation

### Household-level weighting

The first step in weighting was to create a base weight for each sampled mailing address, to account for its probability of selection into the sample. The base weight for mailing address  $k$  is called  $BW_k$  and is defined as the inverse of its probability of selection. The addresses had a probability of selection based on the stratum from which they were sampled.

Each sampled mailing address was assigned to one of four categories according to its final screener disposition. The categories were 1) household with a completed interview, 2) household with an incomplete interview, 3) ineligible (i.e., not a household; these were primarily postmaster returns), and 4) addresses for which status was unknown (addresses that were not identified as undeliverable by the post office but from which no survey response was received).

The next step in the weighting process was to adjust the base weight to account for eligibility and nonresponse within each stratum. The proportion of ineligible households in each stratum was calculated under the assumption that all sampled households with unknown eligibility (category 4) were, in-fact, eligible. The proportion of ineligible households was then used to estimate the total number of *eligible* households in each stratum on the sampling frame. The base weights for responding households in each stratum (category 1) were then scaled so that their sum was equal to these estimated totals.



## Person-level weights for national and state-level analysis

An initial adult base weight was calculated for the cases with a completed interview as the product of the truncated number of adults in the household (max value of 3) multiplied by the household weight. This adjustment accounted for selecting one adult in each household.

Next, an [adaptive mode adjustment](#) factor was applied to the adult base weight so that the relative weights for respondents who completed the survey in an offline mode (PAPI or CATI) were increased by a factor of two.

The final step in the adult weighting was to calibrate the adult weights for respondents who completed the survey, so

that the calibrated weights (i.e., the estimated number of adults) aligned with benchmarks for noninstitutionalized U.S. adults (refer to the benchmarks listed in the accompanying table). For some raking dimensions that include the cross-classification of demographic variables within states (State x Race/Ethnicity, State x Gender x Education, and State x Age x Education), cells with fewer than 30 completed interviews were collapsed with neighboring cells to prevent the creation of extreme weight values and to ensure the convergence of the raking process. These weights were then trimmed separately within each stratum at the 1st and 99th percentiles, to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights.

### 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study raking dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age x Gender	2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Born inside versus outside the U.S. among Hispanic adults and Asian Americans	
Sampling stratum	
State x Race/Ethnicity	
State x Metropolitan status	
State x Age	
State x Gender	
State x Education	
State x Gender x Age	
State x Gender x Education	
State x Age x Education	
Voter registration	2020 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	2024 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. ACS estimates for sampling stratum and metropolitan status are calculated by proportionately allocating respondent weights according to the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) in which they reside based on figures from the Missouri Census Data Center's Geocorr 2022. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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### Person-level weights for the analysis of MSAs

An additional set of weights was created for the purpose of producing estimates for the 34 MSAs in which there were at least 250 completed interviews.<sup>96</sup> To create this weight, the person-level weight for respondents living in these MSAs was further calibrated on the following dimensions within each MSA:

- Race/Ethnicity
- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Gender x Age
- Gender x Education
- Age x Education

Because MSA is not available on the American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample, weighting benchmarks were estimated by allocating each case's weight to one or more MSAs, according to the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) in which they live. This allocation was performed using a crosswalk from the Missouri Census Data Center's [Geocorr 2022](#) that contained the share of each PUMA's population residing in every MSA as of the 2020 decennial census.

For some raking dimensions (Race/Ethnicity, Gender x Education, and Age x Education), cells with fewer than 25 completed interviews were collapsed with neighboring cells to prevent the creation of extreme weight values and to ensure the convergence of the raking process. In a final step, the MSA weight was trimmed separately within each MSA at the 1st and 99th percentiles.

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<sup>96</sup> The sample design only included strata for 32 MSAs. However, the survey yielded a sufficiently large sample to enable reporting results for two additional MSAs.

## Variance estimation

Bootstrap replication was used to facilitate variance estimation and conducting tests of statistical significance. Five hundred sets of replicates were created using the Rao-Wu rescaling bootstrap procedure as implemented in the [survey package for the R statistical computing platform](#). The entire process for creating national weights was performed on the full sample and then separately repeated for each replicate. The result is a total of 501 separate weights for each respondent that have incorporated the variability from the complex sample design and weighting.<sup>97</sup> Replicate weights were not created for the MSA weights.

The margins of sampling error reported in the tables here and on the [RLS interactive website](#) take into account the effect of weighting but they are *not* calculated using bootstrap replication. Margins of error are instead calculated using a [formula based on the variability of respondent weights](#).<sup>98</sup> This formula can be very conservative because it assumes that the weights are unrelated to the survey variables. Variance estimates that use the bootstrap replicates will generally show a greater level of precision because they are able to account for correlations between survey variables and the weights.

## Response rates

NORC assigned all sampled cases a result code and used these codes to compute response rates consistent with AAPOR definitions. The response rates are weighted by the base weight to account for the differential sampling in this survey. The AAPOR RR3 response rate was 20%.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For additional details on bootstrap replication, refer to Rust, K.F., and J.N.K. Rao. 1996. "[Variance estimation for complex surveys using replication techniques](#)." *Statistical Methods in Medical Research*.

<sup>98</sup> We used this formula when reporting these margins of error for a variety of reasons; doing so maintains consistency between the national weights and MSA weights, and calculating replicate weights for the Religious Landscape Study's interactive website would require too high of a computational burden.

<sup>99</sup> The weighted share of unscreened households assumed to be eligible for the screener interview (occupied "e") was 96.6%.

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**AAPOR disposition codes**

<b>AAPOR code</b>	<b>Description of cases</b>	<b>Count</b>
1.1 – Complete	Respondent completed the last question on the web or phone survey or returned a paper screener; responded to at least 70% of questions asked; and (for web) took longer than 5 minutes to complete the survey.	36,908
2.11 – Refusal	Respondent called in or wrote an email/letter declining to participate.	370
2.1131 – Blank questionnaire mailed back, ‘implicit refusal’	We received a blank paper survey back in the reply envelope.	324
2.12 – Break-off	Survey begun but stopped before completion.	1,860
2.27 – Completed questionnaire, but not returned during field period	Paper questionnaire returned after deadline.	2
2.9 – Other non-interview	Respondent removed due to quality control (e.g., survey was submitted but fewer than 30% of questions were answered).	817
3.199 – Nothing ever returned	Respondent did not log in to the website or return a paper survey or call in to the toll-free line. Additionally, the post office did not return anything as undeliverable.	149,770
3.2 – Housing unit exists; unknown if eligible respondent	Paper survey was returned but we could not confirm that an adult completed the survey.	550
4.10 – Selected respondent screened out	No one 18 years of age or older lives in the household.	16
4.313 – No such address	Mail was returned as undeliverable.	14,482
4.62 – Seasonal, vacation, temporary residence	Adults do not live in the housing unit full time.	1

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Sample sizes and margins of error for states and metro areas

The following tables show the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

### Sample sizes and margins of error for states

State	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...	State	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Alabama	498	6.2 percentage points	Montana	363	7.3 percentage points
Alaska	350	7.7 percentage points	Nebraska	329	7.0 percentage points
Arizona	712	5.5 percentage points	Nevada	363	7.6 percentage points
Arkansas	348	7.3 percentage points	New Hampshire	313	8.0 percentage points
California	3,746	2.4 percentage points	New Jersey	900	4.4 percentage points
Colorado	596	6.1 percentage points	New Mexico	348	7.1 percentage points
Connecticut	372	6.8 percentage points	New York	2,013	3.0 percentage points
Delaware	345	7.4 percentage points	North Carolina	1,109	4.1 percentage points
District of Columbia	344	7.3 percentage points	North Dakota	367	6.8 percentage points
Florida	2,114	3.1 percentage points	Ohio	1,539	3.4 percentage points
Georgia	858	4.7 percentage points	Oklahoma	375	7.1 percentage points
Hawaii	348	8.1 percentage points	Oregon	462	6.7 percentage points
Idaho	346	7.1 percentage points	Pennsylvania	1,446	3.6 percentage points
Illinois	835	4.8 percentage points	Rhode Island	384	7.5 percentage points
Indiana	655	5.0 percentage points	South Carolina	517	6.3 percentage points
Iowa	310	7.8 percentage points	South Dakota	367	7.0 percentage points
Kansas	352	7.4 percentage points	Tennessee	898	4.4 percentage points
Kentucky	428	6.2 percentage points	Texas	2,988	2.5 percentage points
Louisiana	454	6.2 percentage points	Utah	340	7.3 percentage points
Maine	343	7.2 percentage points	Vermont	373	7.3 percentage points
Maryland	568	6.1 percentage points	Virginia	906	4.5 percentage points
Massachusetts	573	5.8 percentage points	Washington	878	4.7 percentage points
Michigan	1,004	4.2 percentage points	West Virginia	335	7.0 percentage points
Minnesota	533	5.7 percentage points	Wisconsin	625	5.4 percentage points
Mississippi	338	7.7 percentage points	Wyoming	367	7.1 percentage points
Missouri	633	5.2 percentage points			

Note: The margins of sampling error shown here are calculated at the 95% confidence level.

Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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**Sample sizes and margins of error for metro areas**

<b>MSAs</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>	<b>MSAs</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Atlanta	492	6.4 percentage points	Minneapolis	368	7.0 percentage points
Austin	294	7.7 percentage points	Nashville	266	9.0 percentage points
Baltimore	262	9.1 percentage points	New York	2,025	3.0 percentage points
Boston	477	6.4 percentage points	Orlando	253	8.9 percentage points
Charlotte	252	8.6 percentage points	Philadelphia	856	4.8 percentage points
Chicago	724	5.0 percentage points	Phoenix	454	6.9 percentage points
Cincinnati	348	7.8 percentage points	Portland	318	8.1 percentage points
Cleveland	296	8.6 percentage points	Providence	461	7.3 percentage points
Columbus	278	8.4 percentage points	Riverside, CA	375	8.2 percentage points
Dallas	759	5.1 percentage points	Sacramento	273	9.4 percentage points
Denver	304	8.9 percentage points	St. Louis	290	7.9 percentage points
Detroit	425	6.2 percentage points	San Antonio	256	9.0 percentage points
Honolulu	256	9.4 percentage points	San Diego	334	7.8 percentage points
Houston	715	5.6 percentage points	San Francisco	451	6.8 percentage points
Las Vegas	251	8.9 percentage points	Seattle	453	6.7 percentage points
Los Angeles	1,249	4.2 percentage points	Tampa	293	7.9 percentage points
Miami	553	6.7 percentage points	Washington, D.C.	940	4.9 percentage points

Note: The margins of sampling error shown here are calculated at the 95% confidence level. "MSAs" are metropolitan statistical areas.  
Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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## Appendix A: Comparing results across Religious Landscape Studies

Many questions in the 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study (RLS) previously were asked in the 2007 and 2014 landscape studies. Measuring change over time on these questions is one key goal of the new RLS.

But the 2023-24 survey was conducted using different methods from the 2007 and 2014 surveys, and this “mode switch” complicates comparisons between the results of the new survey and the findings of the previous surveys.

In the new survey, we mailed invitations to a random sample of U.S. households using address-based sampling (ABS). Participants were given the option of completing the survey online, on paper, or on the phone (by calling a toll-free number we gave them). For more details, read this report’s [Methodology](#). Overall, 60% of the respondents in the 2023-24 RLS participated online, 37% completed the survey on paper, and 3% took the survey on the phone.

By contrast, both the 2007 and 2014 surveys were conducted entirely by phone. In both of those surveys, we recruited respondents using random-digit dialing, and the survey was administered by live interviewers who asked the questions and recorded the answers.<sup>100</sup>

Respondents answer some survey questions differently when they are talking with an interviewer (as in the 2007 and 2014 surveys) than when they participate in surveys online or on paper (as most respondents in the new survey did). This means that for *some* survey questions, the results we obtained in previous surveys (using an interviewer-administered mode) cannot be directly compared with the results from the new survey that we conducted using mainly self-administered modes, even if the wording of the questions is identical.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> It is no longer feasible to conduct high-quality telephone surveys at the scale required by the Religious Landscape Study (RLS) because response rates to telephone polls have declined too far and costs have risen too high. Today, web and paper surveys conducted among respondents recruited using address-based sampling (ABS) techniques produce far higher response rates and provide higher-quality data than do telephone surveys. That is why we made the switch from an interviewer-administered mode (telephone) to a mainly self-administered mode (online and on paper), despite the complications the “mode switch” introduces for comparing results from the new survey with the previous surveys.

<sup>101</sup> In addition to the different responses they might elicit from some individuals, surveys conducted using different modes might yield a different mix of respondents to begin with. That is, the mix of people who might agree to participate in a telephone survey might be different in important ways than the sample of people who agree to participate in a web/paper survey. Over time, the number of people willing to participate in telephone surveys has declined sharply, and the response rate to telephone surveys now hovers near 3%. By contrast, more people are willing to participate in surveys that are mostly conducted online or on paper like the RLS; the response rate to the new RLS is 20%. This is yet another factor that complicates drawing comparisons between the new RLS and the previous studies.

But not *all* questions are equally subject to these “mode effects.” While testing indicates that some questions are not comparable across different modes, others can be safely compared, and still others fall somewhere in between – the data can provide basic information about the direction of trends, even if varying modes don’t produce identical results.

### **Using a bridge study and other data to decide how to compare results**

To help us determine which results from the new survey are comparable with those of past surveys, we conducted a telephone bridge study using a methodological approach similar to the one we used for the 2007 and 2014 landscape studies. In the bridge study, we used a random-digit-dialing method and conducted telephone interviews with 1,519 respondents *separately* from the main survey. We asked these respondents the same questions that were administered to respondents in the main survey. But the 1,519 respondents in the telephone bridge study are *not* included in the main RLS survey; the bridge study was conducted only as a test, exclusively for the purpose of helping us determine which questions in the new survey can safely be compared with the 2007 and 2014 results, which questions clearly *cannot* be compared, and which fall somewhere in between. (Read about the [bridge study’s Methodology](#).)

We compared the results of the telephone bridge study with those of the main address-based sample. For each question, we examined whether the balance of opinion was similar across the differing modes (phone for the bridge study, mostly online/paper for the main survey). We also considered whether the different survey modes led to different distributions on *particular* response options. For example, people who completed the survey by phone in the bridge study sometimes volunteered “I don’t know” as a response, an option that is not available to respondents on the web and mail surveys. This sometimes resulted in fewer phone respondents choosing one of the *substantive* response options, compared with those who completed the survey via other modes.

The bridge study is one important tool we used to help determine how to compare the results from the 2023-24 RLS with the results from the previous landscape studies, but it is not the only tool we used for this purpose. In addition to the bridge study, we also used other Pew Research Center analyses and experiences to help inform our decisions about whether to make comparisons between the new survey and previous RLS results. For example, we [conducted an analysis in 2021](#) assessing whether it is possible to compare phone results with web results on key questions about religious identity, frequency of prayer, religious service attendance, and religion’s importance in people’s lives. Several RLS questions also have been asked on other recent Center surveys, which can provide additional information about comparability.



We drew on all this information – the telephone bridge study, previous efforts to understand mode effects, and ongoing Pew Research Center surveys – to categorize RLS questions into three buckets, color coded as green (“go”), yellow (“caution”) and red (“stop”).<sup>102</sup>

**Green questions produce results in the new survey that can safely be compared with the 2007 and 2014 RLS findings.** There is no evidence that these questions are subject to significant mode effects. In polling lingo, they are “trendable” even though the new RLS was conducted using different modes than the previous studies.

**Red questions *cannot* be compared with the previous studies.** The mode effects on these questions are relatively large. Comparing the results of these questions from the new study with previous studies could be misleading. Doing so might suggest that big changes have occurred in public opinion over the last 10 or 15 years when, in reality, the different results could be produced by the mode switch alone.

**Yellow questions fall between the safely trendable green questions, on the one hand, and the clearly non-trendable red questions, on the other.** Yellow questions appear to be subject to modest mode effects, but they nevertheless can be *cautiously* compared with previous results while bearing in mind the size and direction of the mode effects on the particular question at hand.

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<sup>102</sup> Some questions in the 2023-24 RLS are new and were not included in either the 2007 or 2014 RLS questionnaires. This analysis focuses exclusively on questions in the new survey that were also asked (in similar or identical form) in one or both of the previous surveys. New questions were not assigned a color.

## Green: Questions we can compare with previous Religious Landscape Studies

Many key questions in the new RLS can be safely compared with the 2007 and 2014 landscape studies, including the study's core questions about religious identity (also sometimes called religious affiliation, preference or adherence). The bridge study finds little evidence that people answer questions differently on the phone than online/on paper when asked about their current religious identity, their childhood religious identity, or the religious identity of their spouse/partner.

The bridge study yielded somewhat fewer Catholic respondents than the main survey. And among respondents who are married or living with a partner, the bridge study finds a slightly smaller share who say their spouse/partner is religiously unaffiliated. Otherwise, though, the religious composition of respondents in the bridge study was quite similar to the religious composition of respondents in the main survey. Additionally, [prior Center analysis found that questions about religious identity can be safely compared](#) between interviewer-administered and self-administered surveys (assuming there are no other differences).

The new survey's questions about prayer frequency can also be safely compared with the prior studies. The percentage of people who say they pray daily is somewhat higher in the telephone bridge study than in the main survey (by 3 percentage points), and the share of people who say they seldom or never pray is somewhat lower in the bridge study than in the main survey (by 4 points). However, previous Center analysis found little difference in answers to this question between a telephone survey and self-administered surveys. And both the main survey and the companion bridge study suggest that the share of Americans who pray daily has declined since 2014.

Several questions in the RLS ask respondents about personal characteristics, like their age and race. Many of these demographic variables are used to "weight" the survey data to known parameters derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, to make sure that the survey's sample is representative of the country's broader population. These kinds of demographic traits are mostly safe to compare with the previous RLS findings.

**Here is the complete list of “green” questions that can safely be compared between the new RLS and the previous surveys (refer to the Topline for full results):**

- RELIG-BRANCH (Questions about the respondent’s current religion – Protestant, Catholic, etc.)
- PRAY (How often do you pray?)
- BORN (Asked of Christians – Do you think of yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian?)
- CHRELIG/CHA3/CHBORN (Questions about the respondent’s religious upbringing – Were you raised Protestant, Catholic, etc.?)
- SPRELIG/SPA3/SPBORN (Asked of people who are married or living with a partner – Questions about the religious identity of one’s spouse/partner)
- RACECMB/HISP (Race/ethnicity of the respondent)
- EDUC\_ACS (Highest level of educational attainment; trendable to the 2014 survey but not the 2007 survey, which asked a different question about education)
- YOBMOD (Used to determine the respondent’s age)
- NATIVITY/FTHR/MTHR (Summary of information about whether the respondent and the respondent’s parents were born inside or outside of the U.S.)
- HH1/HH3 (Household size, including how many are ages 18 or older)
- FERT (How many children have you ever had?)<sup>103</sup>
- MARWHEN (Asked of married people – In what year did you get married?)
- CITIZEN (Are you a citizen of the United States?)
- HAPPY (How happy are you with your life these days?)
- CHNG\_b (Is having more women in the workforce a change for the better or for the worse?)
- KIDACT\_c (Asked of parents of minor children – Do you homeschool or send children to private religious school?)

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<sup>103</sup> Compared with the main survey, respondents in the telephone bridge study report living in smaller households and having fewer children. We nevertheless treat HH1, HH3 and FERT as “green” variables because both the 2023-24 ABS and 2014 random-digit-dial (RDD) estimates for household size and number of children are closely aligned with corresponding benchmarks from the U.S. Census Bureau. Also, these are not questions on which prior research on “mode effects” would lead us to expect respondents to answer them differently when speaking with an interviewer than when completing a survey online or on paper. Instead, it appears likely that the apparent declines in these measures seen on the RDD bridge study are attributable to nonresponse patterns that were not present in either the 2014 RDD or 2023-24 ABS surveys. That is, today, adults in larger households appear less likely to participate in an RDD survey than they were in 2014, whereas willingness to participate in an ABS survey has not declined to the same degree.

## Red: Questions we cannot compare with previous Religious Landscape Studies

There are several questions in the 2023-24 RLS that we cannot compare with our previous landscape studies, even though the wording is the same.

When respondents complete surveys by directly talking to another person, they sometimes give more socially desirable responses or avoid potentially controversial responses. This is called “social desirability bias.” The results of the bridge study suggest that this bias may have played a role in responses to some questions.

For example, on a question about whether the country’s growing immigrant population has been a change for the better, a change for the worse, or hasn’t made much difference, the share of U.S. adults who say “change for the worse” is 15 points lower in the telephone bridge study than on the main survey. It seems that completing the survey by talking to another person over the phone may lead some respondents to avoid giving a negative opinion about the growing immigrant population.

The bridge study and previous Pew Research Center analyses also show that the share of people who say they often attend religious services is higher in telephone surveys than in self-administered surveys. As a consequence, the results of our 2023-24 RLS question about frequency of religious attendance cannot be compared with those of the 2007 and 2014 studies.

On other questions, we cannot compare results because the percentages who say they “don’t know” in the phone-based bridge study are significantly higher than in the main study. For example, on a question about political party identification, the share of respondents who say they don’t know or who don’t answer the question is 5 points higher in the bridge study. And in a follow-up question asking those who do not identify as Republicans or Democrats whether they *lean* Republican or Democratic, the share who say they don’t know or who decline to answer is also higher in the bridge study. Ultimately, the share of respondents who don’t identify with or lean toward either political party is 14 points higher in the bridge study than in the main survey.

Some questions are subject to potential “context effects,” suggesting they may not be comparable with previous instances in which the same question appeared in a different context. For example, the distribution of responses to the 2023-24 survey’s question about the size of the government (asking whether respondents would prefer a bigger government that provides more services or a smaller government that provides fewer services) is very different in the new survey (which finds more support for a bigger government than for a smaller one) than in other Center surveys (which

find a relatively even split). In the new RLS, responses to this question might have been influenced by asking it immediately after a question on whether the government provides too little, too much, or about the right amount of assistance to people in need. In the prior RLS, this question was asked in a more neutral context, and so we have decided not to compare the new findings with the old findings.

Finally, we cannot directly compare results about income levels. On all of the surveys, we ask respondents about their total household income. But because our analysis does not adjust for inflation, the value of a \$40,000-\$50,000 household income, for example, is different today than it was in 2007 or 2014.

**Here is a list of the RLS questions we have coded as “red,” meaning they are *not* comparable with the earlier studies, even though those earlier studies included similar or identical questions** (in the survey’s Topline, we show only the 2023-24 results on red questions and not the prior results, since they are not trendable):

- ATTNDPERRLS (Frequency of attendance at religious services)
- PARTY/PARTYLN (Political party identification)
- IDEO (Are your political views conservative, moderate or liberal?)
- CHNG\_a (Whether a growing population of immigrants is a change for the better or for the worse)
- QB2d (Whether there are absolute standards of right and wrong)
- GOVSIZE1 (Whether the respondent prefers a bigger government or a smaller government)
- PRAC\_b (Frequency of scripture reading)
- EXP\_a (Frequency of feeling a deep sense of spiritual peace/well-being)
- EXP\_b (Frequency of feeling a deep sense of wonder about the universe)
- EXP\_c (Frequency of feeling a deep sense of gratitude)
- EXP\_g (Frequency of thinking about the meaning/purpose of life)
- KIDACT\_a (Asked of parents of minor children – Do you pray/read scripture with your children?)
- KIDACT\_b (Asked of parents of minor children – Do you send your children to a religious education program?)
- INC\_SDT1 (Household income)
- ORIENTMOD (Sexual orientation)

## **Yellow: Questions we can cautiously compare with previous Religious Landscape Studies**

Finally, there are some questions that produce results that can be compared with previous surveys, as long as the comparisons are done cautiously.

One category includes “balanced choice” questions in which the main study and the phone-based bridge study get similar results for one of the substantive response options (typically the affirmative option), but slightly different results on the other substantive response option, often due to larger shares of “don’t know” responses and refusals to answer the question on the phone. For example, the difference between those who say “homosexuality should be accepted by society” in the main study and the bridge study is less than 1 point. However, the share of respondents who say they don’t know or who don’t answer the question in the bridge study is 7 points higher than in the main survey. And the share who say “homosexuality should be discouraged by society” is 7 points *lower* in the bridge study than in the main survey. In other words, the share of respondents who say “homosexuality should be accepted by society” *can* be safely compared with the prior studies, but the share who say it “should be discouraged” cannot.

Other questions that fall in this category (having similar results on one substantive response option) ask about belief in heaven, belief in hell, and views of churches and religious organizations.

On some questions, responses differ in the *degree* to which they affirm a response, but the total share who affirm the response, regardless of degree, is similar. For example, on a question about the legality of abortion, the share who say it should be “legal in all cases” is 3 points lower in the bridge study, but the share who say it should be “legal in most cases” is 5 points *higher* in the bridge study. Taken together, the total share of respondents who say abortion should be legal in all *or* most cases is just 2 points higher in the bridge study than in the main survey. In our analyses comparing the new survey’s findings with past surveys, we focus on this net share – those who say abortion should be legal all or most of the time.

**Here is a table that lists the questions we have deemed “yellow” – cautiously trendable – with a brief explanation of some points readers should keep in mind when interpreting the trends on these questions.** In the survey Topline, these questions are all clearly labeled as yellow, and the 2007 and 2014 results are described as “trends for comparison.”

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## ‘Yellow’ trend questions

Question label	Considerations for interpreting trends
QB2a	This question asks whether homosexuality should be “accepted by society” or “discouraged by society.” The share saying “accepted” is very similar in the main survey and the telephone bridge study, and can be safely compared with results from 2007 and 2014. However, the share saying “discouraged” is higher in the main survey than in the telephone bridge study, and the share who don’t provide an answer is lower in the main survey than in the bridge study. These categories (“Discouraged” and “No answer”) should not be compared with the 2007 or 2014 results.
QB2c	This question asks whether stricter environmental regulations “cost too many jobs and hurt the economy” or are “worth the cost.” The share saying “cost too many jobs and hurt the economy” is slightly higher (by 3 points) in the main survey than in the telephone bridge study, as is the share saying “worth the cost” (by 2 points), while the share who don’t answer the question is lower in the main survey than in the bridge survey (by 6 points). Readers should exercise caution when comparing the absolute value of the substantive responses with the prior studies, but the balance of opinion (more support for “worth the cost” option) is the same in both the main survey and the bridge study.
ABRTLGL	This question asks whether abortion should be “legal in all cases,” “legal in most cases,” “illegal in most cases,” or “illegal in all cases.” The share saying legal in all cases is somewhat higher in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 3 points), but this is offset by the lower share of respondents in the main survey who say legal in most cases (lower than the bridge study by 5 points). The <i>combined</i> share who say abortion should be legal in all/most cases is similar in the main survey and the bridge study, and can be safely compared with the 2007 and 2014 results.
	However, the combined share saying abortion should be <i>illegal</i> in all/most cases is higher in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 6 points), and the share expressing no opinion is lower in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 5 points). These response options (“Net Illegal in all/most cases” and “No answer”) <i>should not</i> be directly compared with the 2007 and 2014 results.
GAYMARR	This question asks respondents whether they strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing same-sex couples to marry legally. The <i>combined</i> share who say they strongly favor/favor same-sex marriage is very similar in the main survey and the bridge study, and can be compared with the 2014 results (this question was not asked in the 2007 survey).
	However, the combined share who say they strongly oppose/oppose same-sex marriage is somewhat higher (by 5 points) in the main survey than in the bridge study, while the share who express no opinion is 6 points lower in the main survey than in the bridge study. These response options (“Strongly oppose/Oppose” and “No answer”) <i>should not</i> be directly compared with the previous results.
RELIMP	This question asks respondents how important religion is in their lives. The share of respondents who say it is “very important” is lower in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 6 points). Additionally, the share of respondents who say very important is lower in the main RLS survey than in other recent Center surveys, suggesting the context in which this question was asked in the RLS (after an extended series of questions about religion/spirituality) may have had an effect on responses to this question. Comparisons between the new results and the prior landscape studies should be made cautiously and with these considerations in mind. Refer to <a href="#">Chapter 7</a> for additional discussion of these issues.
MEMB	This question asks respondents whether they are members of a religious congregation. The results from the main survey are similar to the bridge study, suggesting there is no mode effect on this question. However, the wording of the question is somewhat different in 2023-24 than it was in 2014, and so the trend should be interpreted with some caution.
GOD/GOD2	These questions ask respondents whether they believe in God or a universal spirit, and then (in a follow-up question) how certain they are about their belief. The share who say they believe in God/a universal spirit with absolute certainty is similar in the main survey and in the bridge study, as is the share who say they believe in God/a universal spirit but are not absolutely certain. These categories can be safely compared with the 2007 and 2014 results.
	The share who say they <i>do not</i> believe in God/a universal spirit is higher in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 4 points), and <i>should not</i> be compared with the previous results. However, both the main survey and the bridge study suggest that the share who do not believe in God or a universal spirit is higher now than in 2007. (The share expressing no opinion is slightly lower in the main survey than in the bridge study.)

HVN	<p>This question asks respondents whether they believe in heaven. The share saying yes is similar in the main survey and the bridge study, and hence can be safely compared with the 2007 and 2014 results.</p> <p>However, the share saying no is higher in the main survey than in the bridge study, while the share expressing no opinion is lower in the main survey than in the bridge study. These response options (“No” and “No answer”) <i>should not</i> be compared with the previous results.</p>
HLL	<p>This question asks respondents whether they believe in hell. The share saying yes is similar in the main survey and in the bridge study, and can be safely compared with the 2007 and 2014 results.</p> <p>However, the share saying no is higher in the main survey than in the bridge study, while the share expressing no opinion is lower in the main survey than in the bridge study. These response options (“No” and “No answer”) <i>should not</i> be compared with the previous results.</p>
PRAC_a	<p>This question asks respondents how often they participate in prayer groups or scripture-study groups. The share saying “at least once a week” is slightly lower in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 3 points), as is the share saying “once or twice a month” (also by 3 points). Meanwhile, the share saying “never” is higher in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 4 points).</p> <p>However, both the main survey and the bridge study suggest that the share who do this weekly has declined, while the share who never participate in these kinds of groups has risen. That is, in these categories (“Weekly” and “Never”), the difference between the main survey and the bridge study on this question is appreciably smaller than the difference between the main survey and the 2014 findings. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the share of adults who participate weekly in prayer groups or scripture-study groups has declined since the 2014 RLS, although not necessarily by the full amount of the difference seen in results.</p>
MARITAL	<p>This question asks respondents about their current marital status. The share of respondents in the main survey who are married is in line with U.S. Census Bureau estimates. But the share of married respondents is substantially higher in the main survey than in the bridge study, and so comparisons between the new survey and previous estimates of the shares of people in various religious groups who are married should be made with caution.</p>
CHILDREN	<p>This question asks respondents whether they are the parent or guardian of any children under the age of 18 living in their home. Fewer respondents say no (by 4 points) in the main survey than in the bridge study, while the share who say yes and the share who decline to answer are each slightly higher in the main survey than the bridge study.</p>
RELINSTa-g	<p>These six questions ask respondents whether they agree or disagree with each of six statements about religious organizations. Three statements are positive (e.g., “religious organizations protect and strengthen morality in society”) and three are negative (e.g., “religious organizations focus too much on rules.”)</p> <p>On four of the six questions, the shares who say they agree are similar in the main survey and the bridge study. On the other two questions (asking whether religious organizations “bring people together and strengthen community bonds” and whether religious organizations “play an important role in helping the poor and needy”), the shares of respondents saying they agree are somewhat lower in the main survey than in the bridge study (by 5 points and 4 points, respectively). On these two items, both the main survey and the bridge study suggest that the shares who agree have declined over time. And so we think it is safe to cautiously compare the share expressing <i>agreement</i> in the new survey with the shares expressing <i>agreement</i> in the previous surveys.</p> <p>However, the shares expressing <i>disagreement</i> are higher in the main survey than in the bridge study on all six items, and the shares expressing no opinion are lower in the main survey than in the bridge study on four items. Thus, we recommend against drawing direct comparisons between the new survey and the previous surveys on these response options (“Disagree” and “No answer”).</p>



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The 2023-24 survey includes the following question: “Do you describe yourself as a man, a woman, or in some other way?” This approach to measuring gender is different from both the 2007 and 2014 surveys. In the 2007 survey, respondents were not directly asked about their gender; rather, the telephone interviewers were asked to use their judgment to determine whether each respondent was a man or a woman, and to record this judgment at the end of the interview.

**GENDER**

In the 2014 survey, respondents were asked, “Are you male or female?” If they declined to answer or volunteered another response, the respondent’s gender was recorded based on the interviewer’s observation.

Despite these differences in measurement approaches, we think basic comparisons of the gender composition of religious groups (especially the ratio of men to women) can be made cautiously.

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## Bridge study methodology

The bridge study was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish from Aug. 7 to Nov. 6, 2023, among a nationally representative sample of 1,519 U.S. adults. Of those, 1,357 were completed via cellphone and 162 via landline telephone. Like the main RLS, the bridge study was conducted for Pew Research Center by NORC at the University of Chicago.

Both the cellphone and landline samples were provided by Marketing Systems Group (MSG). Sampled numbers were dialed up to five times by an interviewer to attempt to complete the survey.

After accounting for the complex sample design and loss of precision due to weighting, the national margin of sampling error for the bridge study is plus or minus 3.3 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

The research plan for the RLS – including the bridge study – was submitted to NORC’s institutional review board (IRB), which is an independent committee of experts that specializes in helping to protect the rights of research participants. This research was declared exempt under category 2 of IRB code (approval #: FWA 00000142).

### Sample design

The bridge study employed a dual-frame (cellphone and landline) random-digit-dialing (RDD) approach to yield a nationally representative sample to produce national estimates. Unlike the primary RLS study, it was not designed to produce state or metropolitan statistical area-level estimates.

Both frames (cellphone and landline) were stratified by census region to account for differential nonresponse. A total of 122,118 cellphone numbers and 89,017 landline numbers were drawn with the aim of yielding at least 10% of interviews from the landline sample.

The cellphone sample was drawn by MSG, using their Cell-WINS activity flags. The Cell-WINS service appends activity code information to each sampled record, flagging inactive and business cellphone lines. Any number determined to be inactive or a business was discarded prior to data collection and is not included in the sample counts in this report.

The landline sample was also drawn by MSG from 1+ 100 banks and prescreened to flag business numbers. These numbers were not dialed but are included in the sample as not eligible.<sup>104</sup>

### **Data collection**

Sampled telephone numbers that were not removed during prescreening were called as many as five times in an effort to obtain a completed interview. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents.

In the landline sample, interviewers asked to speak to the adult in the household with the next birthday. In the cellphone sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone provided that the person was age 18 or older. All respondents were offered a \$10 gift card if they completed the survey.

While the bridge study mimicked the main RLS questionnaire, several questions were cut from the bridge study. Telephone interviews generally take longer to complete than web or paper interviews, and the cuts were made to keep the bridge study as short as possible. The omitted questions included those that had not previously been asked in prior iterations of the RLS and were thus not needed to assess how the results of the main survey can be compared with results from the prior landscape studies. The bridge survey took a median time of 33 minutes to complete.

### **Weighting**

The weighting process begins with an initial base weight that accounts for each telephone number's probability of selection from its respective sampling frame. The base weights for known eligible phone numbers were then adjusted to account for the expected proportion of eligible phone numbers among those with unknown eligibility.

For cases from the landline frame with a completed interview, the eligibility adjusted weight is multiplied by the number of adults in the household (max value of 3) to account for their probability of selection within the household. For cases from the cellphone frame, no adjustment is made as there is assumed to be only one eligible adult per cellphone.

Next, a frame membership adjustment was applied to account for individuals who live in a household with both a working landline and cellphone. Their weight was divided in half to account for their chance of selection in either frame.

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<sup>104</sup> Consider a 10-digit telephone number XXX-YYY-YYZZ. A 100 bank is the one hundred potential numbers that share the first eight digits (i.e., the same XXX-YYY-YY). A 1+ 100 bank refers to banks that have at least one listed landline phone number in them.

The final step in the adult weighting was to calibrate the adult weights for respondents who completed the survey, so that the calibrated weights (i.e., the estimate of the number of adults) aligned with benchmarks for noninstitutionalized U.S. adults (refer to the benchmarks listed in the accompanying table). For raking dimensions that include the cross-classification of two demographic variables, cells with fewer than 30 completed interviews were collapsed with neighboring cells to prevent the creation of extreme weight values and to ensure the convergence of the raking process.

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### 2023-24 bridge study raking dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Census Region	2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Hispanic ethnicity x Born inside vs. outside the U.S.	2022 National Health Interview Survey
Telephone service	
Voter registration	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

Source: Bridge study of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 7, 2023-Nov. 6, 2023.

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### Response rates

NORC assigned all sampled cases a result code and used these codes to compute response rates consistent with AAPOR definitions. The AAPOR RR3 response rate for the bridge study was 7.0% and 1.9% for the cellphone and landline samples, respectively.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> The share of unscreened households assumed to be eligible for the interview (“e”) was 21.3% and 54.1% for the cellphone and landline samples, respectively. “e” was calculated using CASRO assumptions which state that the unobserved eligibility rate is equal to the observed eligibility rate.

**AAPOR disposition codes**

<b>AAPOR code</b>	<b>Description of cases</b>	<b>Cellphone</b>	<b>Landline</b>
	<b>Interview</b>		
1.10	Complete	1,357	162
	<b>Eligible, non-interview</b>		
2.1	Refusal and break off	3,470	1,434
2.2	Non-contact	3,809	4,885
2.333	No interviewer available for needed language/Wrong language	202	13
2.9	Miscellaneous non-interview	4	1
	<b>Unknown eligibility, non-interview</b>		
3.1	Unknown if housing unit	40,029	3,362
3.2	Household exists; unknown if eligible respondent	9,016	0
	<b>Not eligible</b>		
4.2	Fax/data line	52	320
4.3	Nonworking/disconnected number	31,425	4,322
4.4	Special technological circumstances	65	37
4.5	Not a household residence	971	807
4.7	No eligible respondent in household	123	15
4.9	Other ineligible	34	1
I	Complete interviews (1.1)	1,357	162
P	Partial interviews (1.2)	0	0
R	Refusal and break off (2.1)	3,470	1,434
NC	Non-contact (2.2)	3,809	4,885
O	Other (2.333, 2.9)	206	14
UH	Unknown household (3.1)	40,029	3,362
UO	Unknown respondent eligibility (3.2)	9,016	0
NE	Not eligible (4.2-4.9)	32,670	5,502
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90,557</b>	<b>15,359</b>
	<b>AAPOR RR3 = I/((I+P) + (R+NC+O) + e*(UH+UO))</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>

Source: Bridge study of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 7, 2023-Nov. 6, 2023.

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## Appendix B: Classification of Protestant denominations

In the Religious Landscape Study (RLS), we group Protestant respondents into one of three “traditions” – the evangelical tradition, mainline tradition or the historically Black Protestant tradition – based on the specific denomination they identify with.

For instance, all respondents who identify with the Southern Baptist Convention are classified as members of the evangelical Protestant tradition; all who identify with the American Baptist Churches USA are categorized as members of the mainline Protestant tradition; and all who say they belong to the National Baptist Convention, USA, are classified as members of the historically Black Protestant tradition.

Protestant respondents who give a vague answer to questions about their denomination (e.g., “I am just a Baptist” or “I am just Methodist” or even “I am just a Christian”) are placed into one of the three Protestant traditions based on their race and/or their response to a question that asks if they think of themselves as a “born-again or evangelical Christian.”

Overall, 36% of Protestants (including 35% of those in the evangelical tradition, 32% of those in the mainline tradition, and 50% of those in the historically Black Protestant tradition) gave a vague denominational identity and were thus categorized into one of the three Protestant traditions based on their race, their born-again status, or both.

The list below reports all the denominational identities given by Protestant respondents in the 2023-24 RLS – including all the denominations offered to respondents as explicit answer choices in the survey, as well as all the responses that were volunteered by respondents (who were given the opportunity to write in their religious identity if they chose not to check one of the boxes provided in the survey). The list shows which identities were placed in each Protestant tradition, and describes whether and how we used race and/or born-again status in categorizing responses.

## Baptist

### **Baptist family in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

Southern Baptist Convention  
Independent Baptist (if not Black)

#### *Volunteered responses*

American Baptist Association  
Baptist General Association of Virginia  
Baptist General Convention of Texas  
Converge/Baptist General Conference/Swedish Baptist  
Free Will Baptist  
Full Gospel Baptist (if not Black)  
General Association of Regular Baptists/Regular Baptist  
Missionary Baptist/Baptist Missionary Association (if not Black)  
Multiple Baptist mentions in the evangelical tradition  
North American Baptist  
Pentecostal Baptist (if not Black)  
Primitive Baptist (if not Black)  
Reformed Baptist/Calvinist Baptist  
Separate Baptist/Separate Baptist in Christ  
Venture Church Network/Conservative Baptist Association  
Baptist, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
Baptist – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)

### **Baptist family in the mainline Protestant tradition**

American Baptist Churches USA

#### *Volunteered responses*

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship/Baptist Alliance  
Liberal Baptist/Moderate Baptist/Progressive Baptist  
Baptist, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
Baptist – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)

**Baptist family in the historically Black Protestant tradition**

National Baptist Convention, USA  
National Baptist Convention of America  
Progressive National Baptist Convention  
Independent Baptist (if Black)

*Volunteered responses*

Black Baptist  
Full Gospel Baptist (if Black)  
Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association  
Missionary Baptist/Baptist Missionary Association (if Black)  
Multiple Baptist mentions in the historically Black Protestant tradition  
Pentecostal Baptist (if Black)  
Primitive Baptist (if Black)  
Baptist, not further specified (if Black)  
Baptist – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if Black)



## Methodist

### Methodist family in the evangelical Protestant tradition

Global Methodist Church

#### *Volunteered responses*

Congregational Methodist

Independent Methodist (if not Black)

Primitive Methodist

Traditional Methodist

Methodist, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)

Methodist – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)

### Methodist family in the mainline Protestant tradition

United Methodist Church

#### *Volunteered responses*

Methodist, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)

Methodist – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)

### Methodist family in the historically Black Protestant tradition

African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion)

Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

#### *Volunteered responses*

Independent Methodist (if Black)

Multiple Methodist mentions in the historically Black Protestant tradition

Methodist, not further specified (if Black)

Methodist – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if Black)

## **Nondenominational Protestant**

### **Nondenominational in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

Nondenominational evangelical  
 Nondenominational fundamentalist  
 Nondenominational charismatic  
 Nondenominational – interdenominational (if born-again/evangelical)

#### *Volunteered responses*

Association of Bridge Churches  
 Community church (if born-again/evangelical)  
 Federated or union church (if born-again/evangelical)  
 Multiple nondenominational mentions in the evangelical tradition  
 Nondenominational Cowboy Church (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Nondenominational electronic ministries  
 Nondenominational, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Nondenominational – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)

### **Nondenominational in the mainline Protestant tradition**

Nondenominational – interdenominational (if not born-again/evangelical)

#### *Volunteered responses*

Community Church (if not born-again/evangelical)  
 Federated or union church (if not born-again/evangelical)  
 Liberal nondenominational  
 Nondenominational Cowboy Church (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Nondenominational, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Nondenominational – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)

**Nondenominational in the historically Black Protestant tradition***Volunteered responses*

Black nondenominational

Nondenominational Cowboy Church (if Black)

Nondenominational, not further specified (if Black)

Nondenominational – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if Black)

## **Lutheran**

### **Lutheran in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

#### *Volunteered responses*

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America/Old Apostolic Lutheran Church/Laestadianism  
Church of the Lutheran Confession

Free Lutheran

Lutheran Brethren

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ

North American Lutheran Church

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)

Lutheran, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical)

Lutheran – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical)

### **Lutheran in the mainline Protestant tradition**

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

#### *Volunteered responses*

American Lutheran Church (ALC)/Lutheran Church in America (LCA)

Lutheran, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical)

Lutheran – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical)

## Presbyterian

### Presbyterian in the evangelical Protestant tradition

Presbyterian Church in America

#### *Volunteered responses*

Associate Reformed Presbyterian

Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches

Cumberland Presbyterian

ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians

Evangelical Presbyterian

Independent Presbyterian

Orthodox Presbyterian

Reformed Presbyterian

Presbyterian, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical)

Presbyterian – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical)

### Presbyterian in the mainline Protestant tradition

Presbyterian Church (USA)

#### *Volunteered responses*

Presbyterian, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical)

Presbyterian – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical)

## **Pentecostal**

### **Pentecostal in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

Assemblies of God  
Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)

#### *Volunteered responses*

Apostolic (if not Black)  
Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ  
Calvary/Calvary Chapel  
Christian Assemblies  
Christian City Church International  
Church of God of Kentucky  
Church of God of Prophecy  
Electronic ministries (if not Black)  
Elim/Elim Fellowship  
Evangelical Pentecostal  
Foursquare  
Free Will Pentecostal  
Full Gospel Pentecostal (if not Black)  
Independent Pentecostal/Nondenominational Pentecostal (if not Black)  
La Luz del Mundo  
Multiple Pentecostal mentions in the evangelical tradition  
Open Bible/Open Bible Churches  
Pentecostal Church of God  
Pentecostal Holiness  
United Pentecostal/United Pentecostal Church International  
Vineyard/Vineyard Churches  
Pentecostal, not further specified (if not Black)  
Pentecostal – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not Black)

**Pentecostal in the historically Black Protestant tradition**

Church of God in Christ (COGIC)

*Volunteered responses*

Apostolic (if Black)

Church of God by Faith

Church of Pentecost/Church of Pentecost USA

Electronic ministries (if Black)

Full Gospel Pentecostal (if Black)

Independent Pentecostal/Nondenominational Pentecostal (if Black)

Pentecostal Assemblies of the World

Redeemed Christian Church of God

Pentecostal, not further specified (if Black)

Pentecostal – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if Black)

## Episcopalian/Anglican

### Episcopalian in the evangelical Protestant tradition

#### *Volunteered responses*

Anglican Church in North America

Evangelical Anglican/Evangelical Episcopalian

Independent Anglican

Reformed Episcopal Church

Episcopalian/Anglican, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical)

Episcopalian/Anglican – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical)

### Episcopalian in the mainline Protestant tradition

Episcopal Church

#### *Volunteered responses*

Anglican/Anglican Church/Church of England

Episcopalian/Anglican, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical)

Episcopalian/Anglican – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical)



## Restorationist

### Restorationist in the evangelical Protestant tradition

Church of Christ/Churches of Christ

#### *Volunteered responses*

Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical)

Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical)

### Restorationist in the mainline Protestant tradition

Disciples of Christ

#### *Volunteered responses*

Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical)

Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical)

## Congregational

### **Congregational in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

#### *Volunteered responses*

Conservative Congregational Christian Conference

Evangelical Congregational

Independent Congregational

National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

Congregational, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical)

Congregational – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical)

### **Congregational in the mainline Protestant tradition**

United Church of Christ

#### *Volunteered responses*

Liberal Congregational/Progressive Congregational

Congregational, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical)

Congregational – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical)

## Holiness

### Holiness in the evangelical Protestant tradition

Church of the Nazarene

Free Methodist Church

#### *Volunteered responses*

Apostolic Holiness Church (if not Black)

Christian and Missionary Alliance/Alliance

Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)/Church of God Ministries

Church of God of the Union Assembly

Holiness Baptist (if not Black)

Independent Holiness (if not Black)

Missionary Church/Missionary Church USA

Salvation Army

Wesleyan/Wesleyan Church/Wesleyan Methodist Church/Wesleyan Holiness Church

Holiness, not further specified (if not Black)

Holiness – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not Black)

### Holiness in the historically Black Protestant tradition

#### *Volunteered responses*

Apostolic Holiness Church (if Black)

Church of the Living God International

Holiness Baptist (if Black)

Independent Holiness (if Black)

Holiness, not further specified (if Black)

Holiness – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if Black)

## Reformed

### Reformed in the evangelical Protestant tradition

Christian Reformed Church

#### *Volunteered responses*

Acts 29

Calvinist (if born-again/evangelical)

Evangelical Reformed

Protestant Reformed Church/Protestant Reformed Churches in America

Reformed Church in the United States/German Reformed

United Reformed Churches in North America

Reformed, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical)

Reformed – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical)

### Reformed in the mainline Protestant tradition

Reformed Church in America

#### *Volunteered responses*

Calvinist (if not born-again/evangelical)

Reformed, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical)

Reformed – Other/Refused/Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical)

## Adventist

### Adventist in the evangelical Protestant tradition

#### *Volunteered responses*

Advent Christian/Advent Christian Church

Church of God (Seventh Day)

Grace Communion International/Worldwide Church of God

Seventh-day Adventist

United Church of God

## Anabaptist

### **Anabaptist in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

#### *Volunteered responses*

Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations

Amish

Brethren, not further specified (if born-again/evangelical)

Brethren in Christ

Church of God in Christ, Mennonite

Covenant Brethren

Grace Brethren

Mennonite, not further specified

Mennonite Brethren

Old Order Mennonite

United Brethren in Christ/United Brethren

Other Anabaptist (if born-again/evangelical)

### **Anabaptist in the mainline Protestant tradition**

#### *Volunteered responses*

Brethren, not further specified (if not born-again/evangelical)

Church of the Brethren

Moravian Church

Other Anabaptist (if not born-again/evangelical)

## **Pietist**

### **Pietist in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

*Volunteered responses*

Evangelical Covenant Church/Covenant

Evangelical Free Church/Free Church/Evangelical Free Mission Church

## **Friends**

### **Friends in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

*Volunteered responses*

Evangelical Friends Church/Evangelical Friends

### **Friends in the mainline Protestant tradition**

*Volunteered responses*

Friends/Quaker

Society of Friends



## **Other evangelical/fundamentalist**

### **Other evangelical/fundamentalist in the evangelical Protestant tradition**

#### *Volunteered responses*

Bible Church/Gospel Church/Missionary Church

Born-again/Bible believer, etc.

Charismatic/Spirit-filled, etc.

Evangelical

Fundamentalist

Plymouth Brethren

## Other/Nonspecific Protestant

### Other/Nonspecific in the evangelical Protestant tradition

#### *Volunteered responses*

Electronic ministries (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Home church (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Just a Christian (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Just a Protestant (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Mixed Protestants (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Protestant – no particular denomination (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Sabbath keeper (if not Black)  
 Gave name and/or location of congregation (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Other/Not interpretable/Refused (if born-again/evangelical and not Black)

### Other/Nonspecific in the mainline Protestant tradition

#### *Volunteered responses*

Electronic ministries (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Ex-vangelical  
 Home church (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Just a Christian (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Just a Protestant (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Liberal Christian  
 Mar Thoma  
 Metropolitan Community Church  
 Mixed Protestants (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Protestant – no particular denomination (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Gave name and/or location of congregation (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)  
 Other/Not interpretable/Refused (if not born-again/evangelical and not Black)

**Other/Nonspecific in the historically Black Protestant tradition***Volunteered responses*

Electronic ministries (if Black)

Home church (if Black)

Just a Christian (if Black)

Just a Protestant (if Black)

Mixed Protestants (if Black)

Protestant – no particular denomination (if Black)

Sabbath keeper (if Black)

Gave name and/or location of congregation (if Black)

Other/Not interpretable/Refused (if Black)

## Appendix C: Comparing the Center’s religion trends with those of other major surveys

Pew Research Center has tracked trends in American religion since 2007 via the Religious Landscape Study (RLS) and since 2020 using the annual National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS). But the RLS and NPORS are hardly the only sources of survey data on religion in the United States. Among others, the [General Social Survey](#) (GSS) and [Gallup](#) also ask questions about Americans’ religious identity, beliefs and practices – and have done so for decades.<sup>106</sup>

Surveys by Pew Research Center, GSS and Gallup all find declines on several religion measures over the past two decades, including a decline in the percentage of U.S. adults who identify as Christians and a corresponding rise in the percentage who say they have no religion. But the data from these three sources is less clear and uniform about what has happened in the last few years, since about 2020.

This appendix explores the long-term and short-term patterns in RLS, GSS and Gallup polls on questions about:

- [Identifying as Christian](#)
- [Identifying as religiously unaffiliated](#)
- [Attending religious services](#)
- [Considering religion personally important](#)
- [Praying daily](#)
- [Believing in God](#)

It also explores [trends in religion by birth cohort](#), and provides [methodological details about the GSS and Gallup surveys](#).

### About the surveys

The GSS is a national survey of American adults conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago since 1972. It generally has been conducted every two years since the 1990s. Through 2018, GSS data was collected mostly through in-person interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GSS was not fielded in 2020. The 2021 GSS was conducted mainly online, supplemented by telephone.

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<sup>106</sup> We also looked at questions about religion in the long-running American National Election Studies (ANES). However, due to changes in both the ANES’s mode of administration and in the wording of key questions about religion, it is difficult to compare results from recent waves of the ANES with earlier waves, and so we do not include discussion of the ANES in this appendix.

The [2022 GSS](#) was administered to respondents using three modes: in person, online and by phone.

Gallup also asks [questions about religion](#). Although Gallup has an online panel, [most interviews for its U.S. polls](#) are still conducted by telephone.

The Center's 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study was fielded from July 17, 2023, to March 4, 2024, and has a sample size of 36,908. Respondents were given the choice to complete the survey online, by mail or over the phone with an interviewer. The [2007](#) and [2014 landscape studies](#) were conducted entirely by telephone and included nationally representative samples of around 35,000 respondents each.

These organizations do not always measure the same religious topics, nor do they employ identical methods or question wording. In addition, the Center and the GSS have made “mode shifts” in recent years, switching from having a live person ask the questions (and record the answers) to administering at least some of their surveys online. [Mode shifts can affect how respondents answer](#) even identically worded survey questions. Consequently, this appendix focuses mostly on the *overall direction* of the trends.

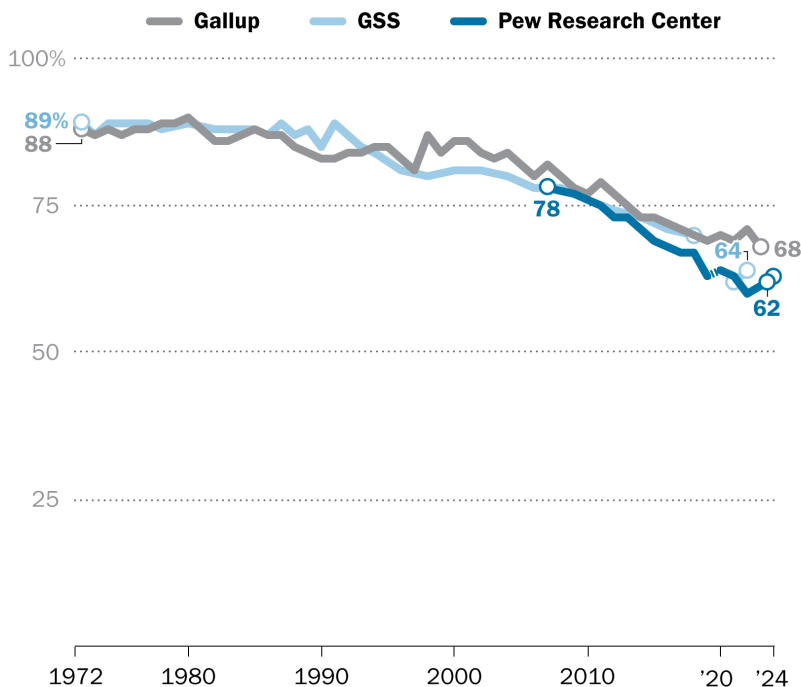
## Share of U.S. adults who are Christian

For many years, all three data sources agreed on the broad trend: The share of Americans who identify as Christian (of all varieties) was declining. In the 1970s, both Gallup and the GSS found that around nine-in-ten U.S. adults were Christian. By 2014, both Gallup and the GSS found that Christians made up 73% of the adult population, and the 2014 RLS estimate was 71%.<sup>107</sup>

In recent years, results from Pew Research Center surveys indicate that the share of Americans who say they are Christian may be leveling off. The 2023-24 RLS finds that Christians make up 62% of U.S. adults. That is clearly lower than in the 2007 and 2014 landscape surveys – in line with the long-term trend – but in the middle of recent annual estimates from the Center’s National Public Opinion Reference Survey. This survey (NPORS) has found the Christian share hovering between 60% and 64% each year since 2020. Refer to [Chapter 1](#) for more about religious affiliation in NPORS.

### Trends in the share of Americans who are Christian

% of U.S. adults who are *Christian*



Note: Pew Research Center data from 2007 to 2019 comes from telephone surveys, while the data from 2020-24 comes from surveys that were conducted mainly online or on paper; the 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from the Center’s Religious Landscape Studies. The General Social Survey (GSS) data from 1972 through 2018 comes from surveys that were conducted mainly face-to-face, while the 2021 and 2022 data comes from surveys that were conducted at least partly online. The Gallup data comes from telephone surveys. Source: Pew Research Center surveys; Gallup surveys; GSS.

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<sup>107</sup> Estimates of the total share of Christians in the General Social Survey (GSS) were calculated by combining those who said they were Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Christian or inter-nondenominational on RELIG, a question about respondents’ religious preference.

Gallup, meanwhile, consistently found between 69% and 71% of U.S. adults identifying as Christian between 2017 and 2022, with no clear decline over that period. In 2023, Gallup's figure ticked downward to 68%.

The GSS found that 62% of Americans identified as Christian in 2021, and that 64% did so in 2022. It is difficult to say, though, whether the GSS finds the same kind of leveling off in the Christian share of the population that is evident in Pew Research Center surveys. Both the 2021 and 2022 GSS produced substantially lower estimates of the Christian share of the population compared with the 2018 GSS. But the GSS underwent major changes between 2018 and 2021/2022, which complicates comparisons across waves. In 2018 and prior years, the GSS was mostly conducted face-to-face, whereas the 2021 GSS was conducted online with a telephone supplement, and the 2022 GSS was done using three modes: in person, online and by phone.

Additionally, the 2021 and 2022 figures are the only two GSS data points available after 2018 (as of the time this appendix was written in January 2025). The GSS was not conducted in 2019, 2020 or 2023, and GSS results for 2024 have not yet been released.

## Share of U.S. adults who are religiously unaffiliated

All three polling organizations have found a similar rise in the share of religiously unaffiliated adults, also known as religious “nones” over the past few decades. These are people who identify as atheist, agnostic or as “nothing in particular” in Pew Research Center surveys, and as having “no religion” in the GSS and Gallup surveys.

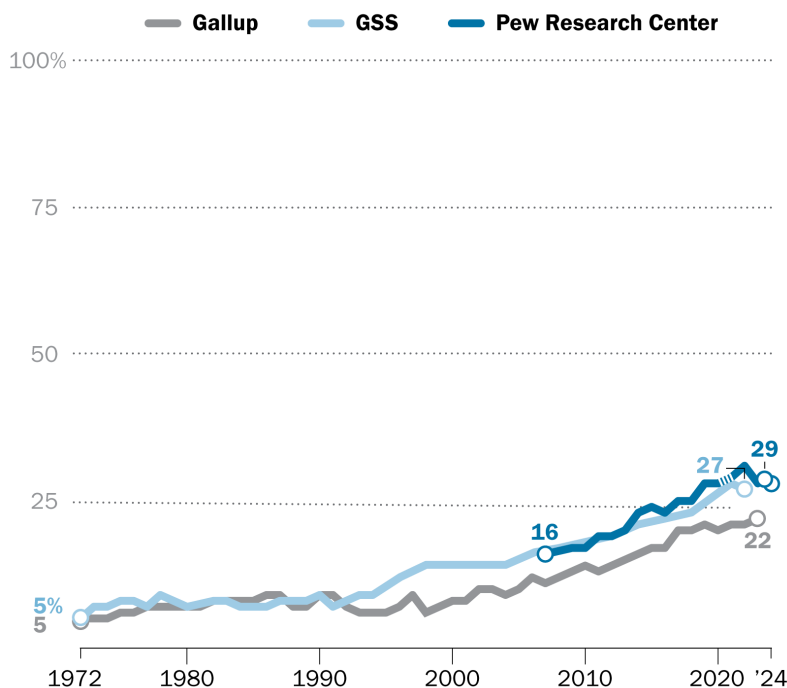
In the 1970s, Gallup and the GSS showed that about one-in-ten or fewer U.S. adults chose not to identify with any religion. By 2014, Gallup’s estimate of the size of the unaffiliated population had risen to 16%. The GSS found a higher share at 21%, and the 2014 Religious Landscape Study reported that the proportion was 23%.<sup>108</sup>

More recently, Pew Research Center surveys suggest that the rise of the “nones” may be

slowing. Between 2019 and 2024, the Center’s surveys consistently find that 28% or 29% of U.S. adults are religious “nones.” The only exception is the 2022 NPORS, which put the religiously unaffiliated figure at 31%. Read [Chapter 1](#) for more about religious affiliation in NPORS.

### Trends in the share of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated

% of U.S. adults who are *religiously unaffiliated*



Note: Pew Research Center data from 2007 to 2019 comes from telephone surveys, while the data from 2020-24 comes from surveys that were conducted mainly online or on paper; the 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from the Center’s Religious Landscape Studies. The General Social Survey (GSS) data from 1972 through 2018 comes from surveys that were conducted mainly face-to-face, while the 2021 and 2022 data comes from surveys that were conducted at least partly online. The Gallup data comes from telephone surveys. Source: Pew Research Center surveys; Gallup surveys; GSS.

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<sup>108</sup> Differences in question wording may be at least partly responsible for the differences in these estimates. Pew Research Center’s standard question about religious affiliation gives respondents three ways to say they are unaffiliated: by identifying as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.” The GSS and Gallup give respondents one way to say they have no religion.



Gallup's estimate of the size of the religiously unaffiliated population held fairly steady between 2017 and 2022, at 20% or 21% each year. In 2023, it was 22%.

The GSS tracked a steady rise in the religiously unaffiliated share of the population from the 2000s through the 2010s and reported that 23% of Americans said they had no religion as of 2018. There was no GSS in 2020. In the 2021 GSS, the share who identified as religiously unaffiliated jumped to 28%, and in 2022 it was 27%. These higher figures may be a result of the GSS's [switch in mode](#) from mostly face-to-face interviews before the COVID-19 pandemic to a mix of in-person, online and phone modes afterward.

## Share of U.S. adults who attend religious services

Both Gallup and the GSS show a long-term decline in attendance at churches and other houses of worship. Because of the “mode switch” from telephone polling to interviewing respondents mostly online and on paper, Pew Research Center does not have a long-term trend on this measure.

In recent years, Gallup’s telephone polls show a continuing decline in the percentage of U.S. adults who regularly attend religious services, while the GSS – like the Center – has made methodological changes that cloud the picture.

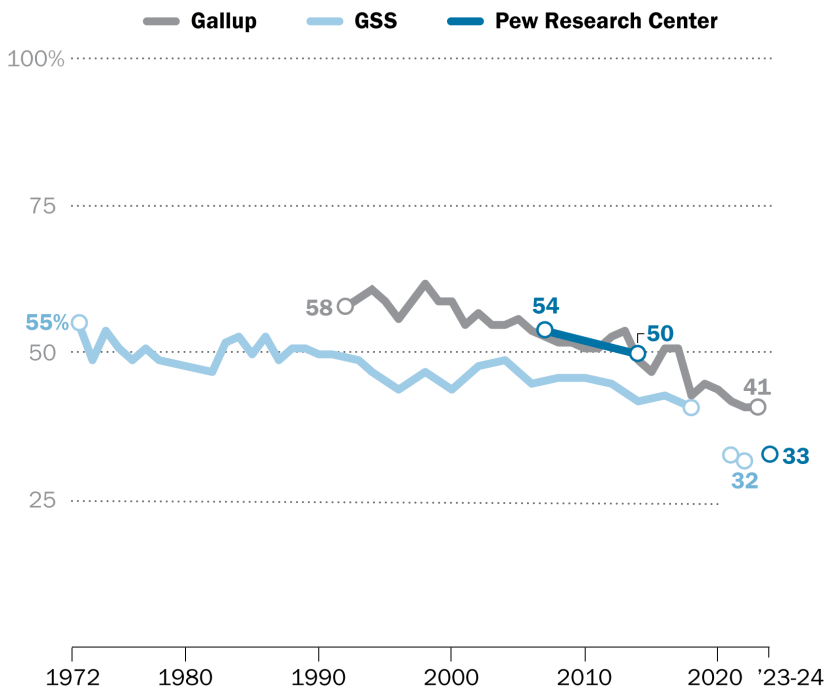
Between 2007 and 2014, the Center’s first two Religious Landscape Studies found a dip in the share of Americans who said they attended religious services at least monthly, from

54% to 50%. However, we cannot directly compare those figures with the new RLS, because of changes in how we asked about attendance and in how the survey was administered.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new RLS asks about religious service attendance by posing two questions, asking Americans how often they attend religious services *in person* and, separately, how often they watch services *online or on TV*. (The figures shown in the accompanying chart are responses to the question specifying attendance in person.)

### Trends in the share of Americans who attend religious services at least monthly

% of U.S. adults who attend religious services *monthly or more often*



Note: Pew Research Center data comes from the Religious Landscape Studies. The 2007 and 2014 landscape studies were conducted by telephone, while the 2023-24 study was conducted mainly online and on paper. As a result, the 2023-24 results are not comparable with the 2007 or 2014 results. The General Social Survey (GSS) underwent a similar mode switch between 2018 and 2021 that complicates drawing direct comparisons between the 2021 and 2022 results and earlier GSS findings.

Source: Pew Research Center surveys; Gallup surveys; GSS.

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In 2007 and 2014, the RLS asked a single question – “How often do you attend religious services?” – without differentiating between virtual and in-person participation. In addition, the 2007 and 2014 landscape surveys were conducted entirely by telephone, while the 2023-24 survey was conducted mainly online and on paper. Research shows that telephone surveys tend to produce [higher estimates of religious attendance](#) than web/paper surveys do.

Because of these changes, the results of the 2023-24 RLS on religious service attendance are not directly comparable with the prior landscape studies. What might appear to be a sharp drop from 50% of U.S. adults describing themselves as regular (at least monthly) attenders in 2014 to 33% describing themselves that way in 2023-24 does not necessarily reflect a *real* change in behavior. The difference between the two surveys is caused, at least in part, by changes in the way they were conducted.

Like the RLS, the GSS has changed its methods in recent years. Through 2018, it consisted mostly of in-person interviews, but the 2021 GSS was conducted online, and in 2022 the GSS was available to respondents in three modes: in-person, online and by phone.

When the GSS first started asking about religious service attendance in 1972, 55% of Americans said they attended services at least monthly. In 2006 and 2008, the GSS found that 45% and 46%, respectively, attended religious services monthly, as did 42% in 2014. In the 2021 survey – which was conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic and potentially [subject to period and mode effects](#) – and in the 2022 survey, the GSS found that 32% of U.S adults attended religious services monthly or more often.

Gallup’s telephone polls also have reported a steady long-term decline in monthly attenders, from 58% in 1992 to 53% in 2007 and 49% in 2014. Over the last five years or so, Gallup found a continuation of the downward trend, from 45% in 2019 to 41% in 2023.

## Share of U.S. adults who consider religion important to them

Starting in the early 1990s, Gallup found that nearly six-in-ten Americans said religion was very important to them. That figure began dropping in the 2000s, falling to 53% in 2014 and 45% in 2023.

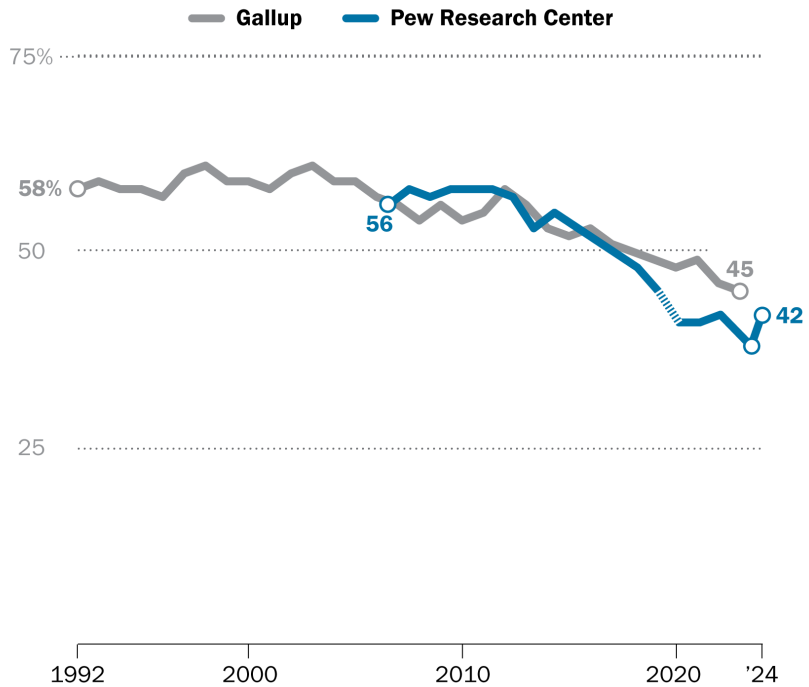
In Pew Research Center’s 2007 RLS, 56% of Americans said religion was very important in their lives. That figure dipped to 53% in 2014 and then fell to 38% in the latest RLS. However, results from the Center’s NPORS indicate that the share of Americans who consider religion to be very important may have leveled off in recent years, at 41% in 2021, 41% in 2022, 42% in 2023, and 42% in 2024. The gap between the 2023-24 RLS and the results from the recent NPORS may be due to “context effects.” In other words, it’s possible that the

order of questions in the RLS effectively prompts respondents to think about their religious identity, beliefs and practices before asking them how important religion is in their lives. NPORS contains fewer questions about religious beliefs and practices, and therefore may elicit a different response about the importance of religion in a respondent’s life.

Additionally, responses to the question about the importance of religion – like the question about attendance at religious services – may be affected by the change in survey mode. Unlike the 2007 and 2014 religious landscape surveys, which were conducted by telephone, the new RLS was conducted primarily online and on paper. The NPORS series, conducted annually since 2020, also is administered mostly online and on paper.

### Trends in the share of Americans who consider religion ‘very important’

% of U.S. adults who say religion is *very important* in their lives



Note: Pew Research Center data from 2007 to 2019 comes from telephone surveys, while the data from 2020-24 comes from surveys that were conducted mainly online or on paper; the 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from the Center’s Religious Landscape Studies. The Gallup data comes from telephone surveys.

Source: Pew Research Center surveys; Gallup surveys.

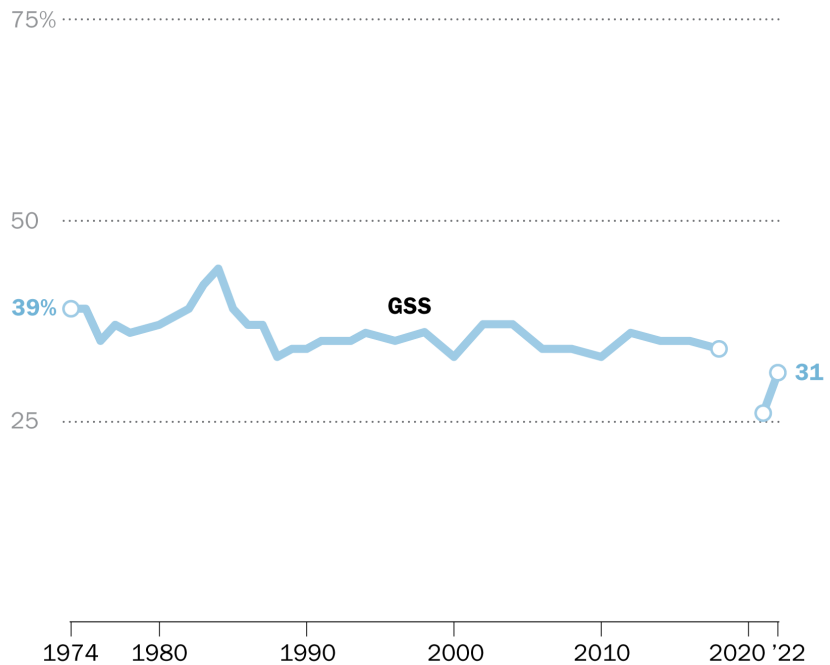
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A companion study conducted alongside the new RLS suggests that people are somewhat more inclined to say religion is very important in their lives when speaking to a live interviewer over the telephone than when reading questions by themselves and responding online or on paper. People taking surveys sometimes give more socially desirable answers when talking with another person, though the size and direction of this “mode effect” can vary, depending on the question.<sup>109</sup>

However, the percentage of Americans who say religion is very important in their lives was already slipping before Pew Research Center transitioned to online and paper surveys, and the mode effect on this question does not appear to be big enough to account for the entire decline since 2014.

## Trends in the share of Americans who say they are strongly affiliated with their religion in the GSS

*% of U.S. adults who say they are a strong [religious preference, e.g., Catholic]*



Note: The General Social Survey (GSS) cautions that this variable is subject to mode differences. From 1972 through 2018, GSS data was collected mostly through in-person interviews. In 2021, the GSS was conducted mainly online, supplemented by telephone. The 2022 GSS was administered to respondents using three modes: in person, online and by phone.

Source: GSS, 1972-2022.

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The General Social Survey does not have a long-term trend question about the importance of religion in one’s life. However, it has a different question that asks adults who identify with a religion: “Would you call yourself a strong [religious preference, e.g., Catholic] or not a strong [religious preference, e.g., Catholic]?” Using this measure, the GSS finds a slight long-term decline in the strength of religious affiliation, though it is less steep than the drop in the importance of religion measured in Gallup polls and Pew Research Center’s landscape studies.

<sup>109</sup> Additional details about the implications of the change in survey mode are provided in [Appendix A](#).

In the 1974 GSS, 39% of U.S. adults said their religious identity was strong. This figure ticked up slightly by the early 1980s, when the GSS found the share of Americans expressing a strong religious identity hovering in the low 40% range (42% in 1983, 44% in 1984). In 2016, 35% of GSS respondents expressed a strong religious identity, as did 34% in 2018.

In 2021, 26% of GSS respondents expressed a strong religious identity, as did 31% in 2022. However, it is hard to know whether these recent estimates constitute a decline since the earlier GSS readings or were produced by the changes in GSS methodology.

## Share of U.S. adults who pray daily

The GSS asks, “About how often do you pray? Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, less than once a week, or never?” In a similar vein, the RLS asks, “Outside of religious services, how often do you pray? Several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week, a few times a month, seldom or never?”

Between 1983 and 2018, the GSS typically found that the share saying they pray daily or more often hovered between 49% and 58%, depending on the year. If anything, the GSS suggests that the share of people who pray daily may have risen over the period from 1983 to 2018. Both the 2021 and 2022 GSS obtained lower estimates of daily prayer than any previous GSS, but here again, it is hard to know whether this recent data

reflects actual declines in the public’s prayerfulness or, instead, is an artifact of changes in the GSS methodology.

In 2007, the RLS found that 58% of U.S. adults said they prayed at least on a daily basis. In 2014, the RLS found that 55% of Americans prayed daily, and the 2023-24 RLS finds that 44% of U.S. adults say they pray at least once a day. Pew Research Center’s NPORS suggests that since 2021, the share of Americans who pray daily may have leveled off, hovering between 44% and 46% each year since 2021.

### Trends in the share of Americans who pray at least once a day

% of U.S. adults who say they *pray daily or more often*



Note: Pew Research Center data from 2007 to 2019 comes from telephone surveys, while the data from 2020-24 comes from surveys that were conducted mainly online or on paper; the 2007, 2014 and 2023-24 data comes from the Center’s Religious Landscape Studies. The General Social Survey (GSS) data from 1972 through 2018 comes from surveys that were conducted mainly face-to-face, while the 2021 and 2022 data comes from surveys that were conducted at least partly online.

Source: Pew Research Center surveys; GSS.

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## Share of U.S. adults who believe in God

Gallup polls have asked about belief in God in a variety of ways, but it has a particularly long trend on a question that asks simply, “Do you believe in God? Yes/No.” Using this wording, Gallup found that 92% of U.S. adults believed in God in 2011, which dropped to 86% in 2014 and 81% in 2022.

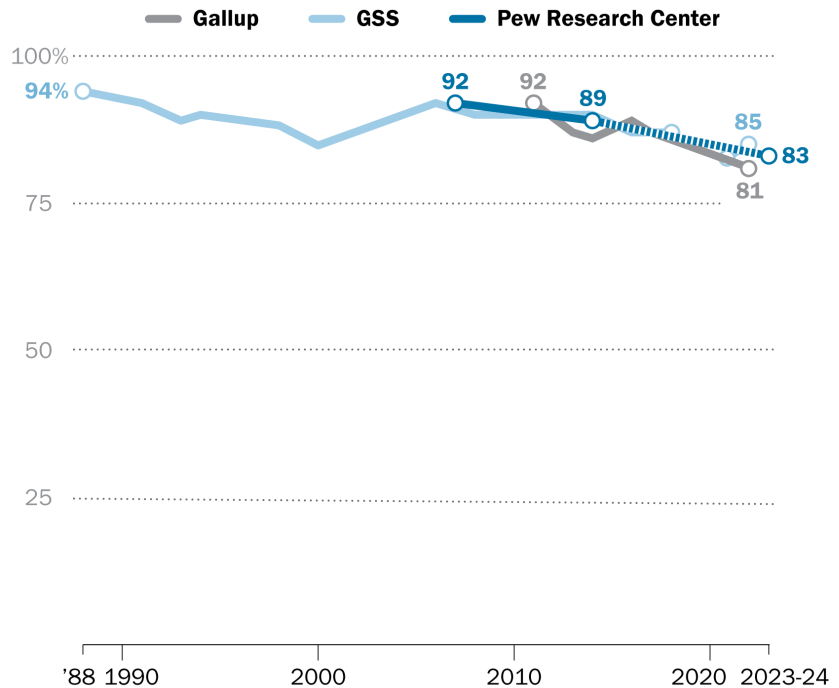
In the GSS, just over 90% of respondents in 1988 and 1991 said they believe in God.<sup>110</sup> By 2016 and 2018, just under 90% of GSS respondents said they believe in God. The 2021 and 2022 GSS surveys produced lower estimates of belief in God compared with prior GSS surveys, perhaps partly owing to changes in the GSS methodology.

The 2007 RLS found that 92% of Americans said they “believe in God or a universal spirit,” a share that declined to 89% in 2014 and to 83% in 2023-24.

Because Pew Research Center’s annual NPORS does not ask about belief in God, the Center does not have comparable data on whether belief in God has been steady, rising or falling in just the last five years.

### Trends in the share of Americans who believe in God or a universal spirit

% of U.S. adults who say they believe in God or a universal spirit/higher power



Note: Pew Research Center data comes from the Religious Landscape Studies. The 2007 and 2014 landscape studies were conducted by telephone, while the 2023-24 study was conducted mainly online and on paper. The General Social Survey (GSS) underwent a similar mode switch between 2018 and 2021 that complicates drawing direct comparisons between the 2021 and 2022 results and earlier GSS findings. The Gallup question asks, “Do you believe in God? Yes/No.” The GSS question asks, “Which of the statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God? Don’t believe; Don’t know, no way to find out; Higher power; Believe sometimes; Believe with doubts; No doubts.”

Source: Pew Research Center surveys; Gallup surveys; GSS.

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<sup>110</sup> The GSS asks, “Which of the statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?” The response options are “Don’t believe,” “Don’t know, no way to find out,” “Higher power,” “Believe sometimes,” “Believe with doubts” and “No doubts.” Those who answer “Higher power,” “Believe sometimes,” “Believe with doubts” and “No doubts” are combined in this analysis.



## Trends in religion by birth cohort

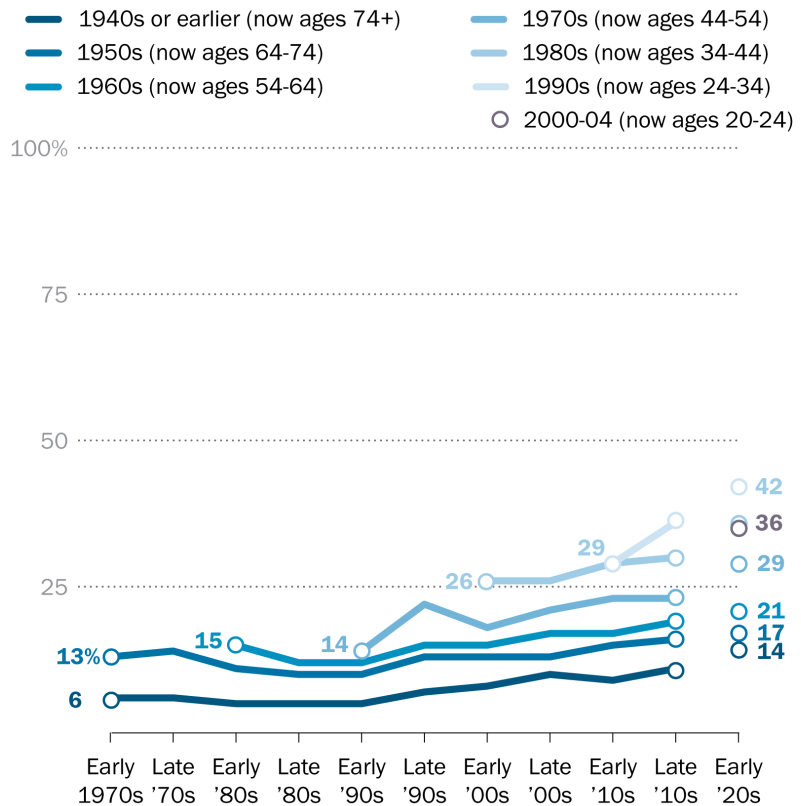
Both the GSS and Pew Research Center generally have found that younger Americans are less religious than older Americans by a couple of traditional measures. For example, in surveys conducted recently (in the early 2020s), the GSS finds that 36% of Americans who are now between the ages of 20 and 24 say they have no religion, compared with just 14% of those ages 74 or older.

Moreover, the long-running GSS can be used to analyze how birth cohorts (i.e., people born in the same years) have changed as they have aged. Most birth cohorts have tended to enter adulthood with a somewhat lower level of religious affiliation than the previous (older) cohort had when it came of age.

For example, surveys conducted in the early 1970s found that 6% of Americans born in the 1940s or earlier said they were religiously unaffiliated. Among those born in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, between 13% and 15% said they were religiously unaffiliated as they entered into adulthood and became eligible to take the GSS. Among those born in the 1980s and '90s, 26% to 29% said they were religiously unaffiliated as they became adults. And 36% of Americans born in the early 2000s said they are religiously unaffiliated as they aged into the GSS conducted in the early 2020s.

### Share of U.S. adults who are religiously unaffiliated by birth cohort in the GSS

% of U.S. adults who are *religiously unaffiliated*



Note: From 1972 through 2018, General Social Survey (GSS) data was collected mostly through in-person interviews. In 2021, the GSS was conducted mainly online, supplemented by telephone. The 2022 GSS was administered to respondents using three modes: in person, online and by phone.  
Source: GSS, 1972-2022.

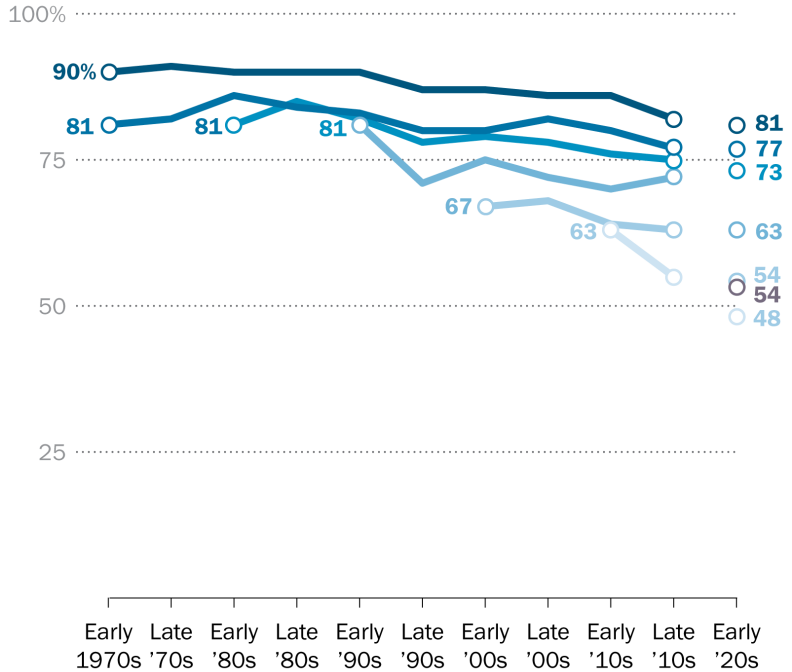
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The GSS data shows, furthermore, that people within birth cohorts do *not* tend to become more religiously affiliated as they get older. Rather, within each birth cohort that can be analyzed in the GSS data, the share of people who say they are Christian, for example, tends to stay roughly the same or tick down somewhat as people get older. And conversely, within each birth cohort, the share of people who say they are religiously unaffiliated tends to stay about the same or tick up slightly as people get older.

### Share of U.S. adults who are Christians by birth cohort in the GSS

% of U.S. adults who are *Christian*

- 1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)
- 1950s (now ages 64-74)
- 1960s (now ages 54-64)
- 1970s (now ages 44-54)
- 1980s (now ages 34-44)
- 1990s (now ages 24-34)
- 2000-04 (now ages 20-24)



Note: From 1972 through 2018, General Social Survey (GSS) data was collected mostly through in-person interviews. In 2021, the GSS was conducted mainly online, supplemented by telephone. The 2022 GSS was administered to respondents using three modes: in person, online and by phone.  
 Source: GSS, 1972-2022.

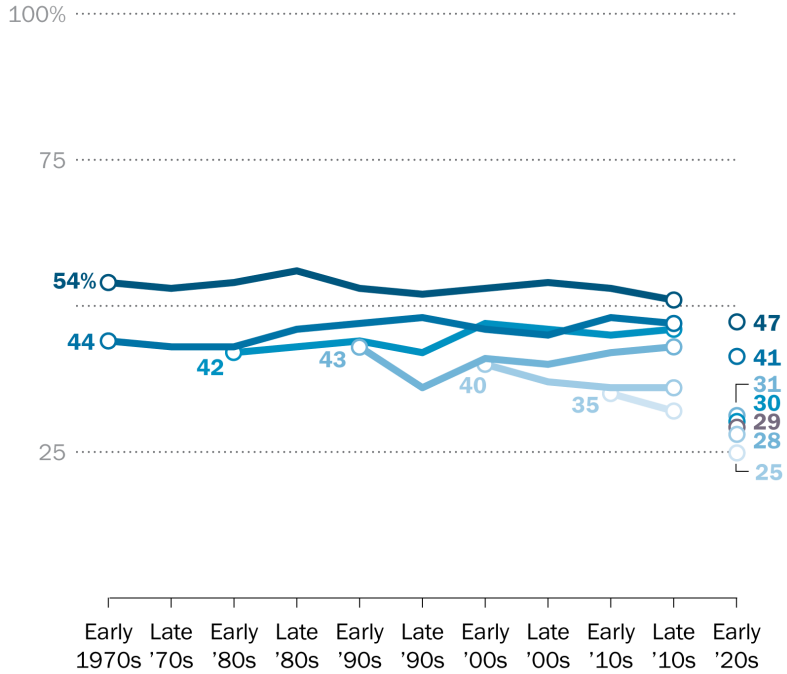
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The GSS data on religious attendance paints a similar picture. Broadly speaking, adults have tended to come of age with at least marginally lower rates of religious attendance than their immediate older predecessors. And *within* birth cohorts, the share of people who say they attend religious services regularly has *not* tended to go up as people get older.

### Share of U.S. adults who attend religious services at least monthly by birth cohort in the GSS

% of U.S. adults who attend religious services *monthly or more often*

- 1940s or earlier (now ages 74+)
- 1950s (now ages 64-74)
- 1960s (now ages 54-64)
- 1970s (now ages 44-54)
- 1980s (now ages 34-44)
- 1990s (now ages 24-34)
- 2000-04 (now ages 20-24)



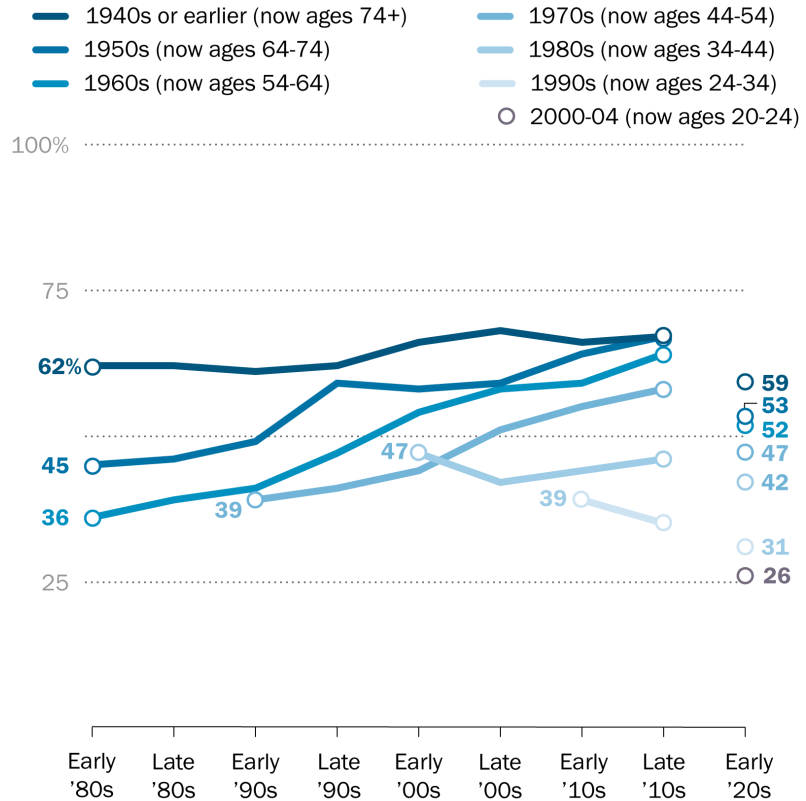
Note: From 1972 through 2018, General Social Survey (GSS) data was collected mostly through in-person interviews. In 2021, the GSS was conducted mainly online, supplemented by telephone. The 2022 GSS was administered to respondents using three modes: in person, online and by phone. Due to these changes in survey administration, early 2020s GSS results should not be compared with previous years.  
Source: GSS, 1972-2022.

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But the GSS data is very different when it comes to prayer frequency. Between the early 1990s and early 2010s, young people just entering adulthood have reported praying at rates similar to or slightly higher than the rates reported by people who aged into adulthood just before them. And in several birth cohorts, including those born in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the share who report praying daily has increased as the people in these groups have gotten older.

### Share of Americans who pray daily by birth cohort in the GSS

% of U.S. adults who say they pray *daily*



Note: From 1972 through 2018, General Social Survey (GSS) data was collected mostly through in-person interviews. In 2021, the GSS was conducted mainly online, supplemented by telephone. The 2022 GSS was administered to respondents using three modes: in person, online and by phone.  
Source: GSS, 1983-2022.

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## Details on the data sources

General Social Surveys are conducted by the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago, beginning in 1972. They were conducted annually through 1994 (with a few exceptions) and then mostly biennially thereafter.

For more information, refer to: Davern, Michael; Bautista, Rene; Freese, Jeremy; Herd, Pamela; and Morgan, Stephen L.; General Social Survey 1972-2022. [Machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Michael Davern; Co-Principal Investigators, Rene Bautista, Jeremy Freese, Pamela Herd, and Stephen L. Morgan. NORC ed. Chicago, 2024. 1 datafile (Release 4) and 1 codebook (2022 Release 4).

NORC samples households, which cover almost 95% of adults, but it excludes what the U.S. Census Bureau calls “group quarters” (jails and prisons, shelters, college dorms, military barracks, assisted living and nursing homes).

Data was accessed from [the GSS website](#). All analyses were conducted using the weight WTSSPS for years 1972-2002, and WTSSNRPS for 2004-2022.

Gallup data was accessed via their [religion topic page](#), and drawn from their recent publication “[How Religious Are Americans?](#)”

Read Pew Research Center’s [RLS](#) and [NPORS](#) methodologies here.