

Executive summary

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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.