

After Years Of Decline, Share Of US Christians Stabilizes

By Clemente Lisi, 2/26/25

NEW YORK – While the Christian share of the U.S. population has remained relatively stable in recent years, the country's religious composition continues to evolve.

For the first time in decades, a new study shows that the proportion of Americans identifying as Christian has stopped its long-term decline, holding steady at 62%. Meanwhile, the number of religiously unaffiliated individuals, though still high, has leveled off after decades of growth.

"It's very striking to us to have observed this recent trend in stability over a long period of decline," said Greg Smith, senior associate director of research at Pew Research Center.

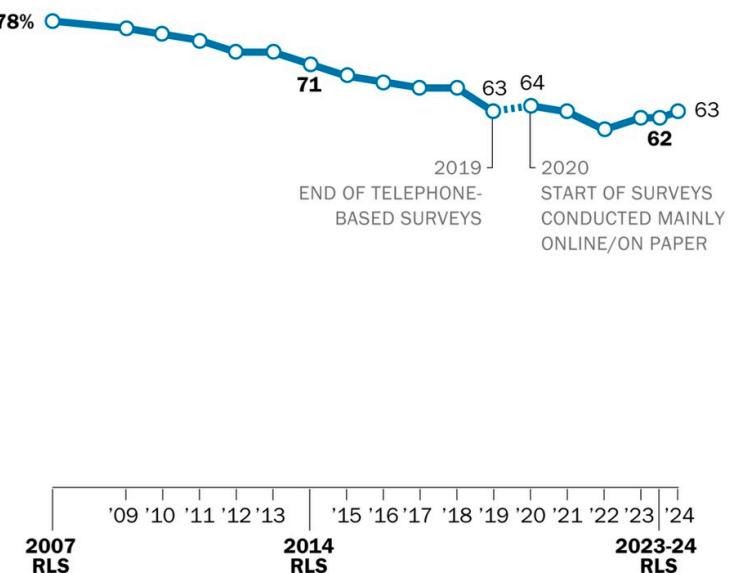
The data from the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study revealed a complex landscape. Of the 62% who identify as Christians, 40% are Protestant, 19% are Catholic and 3% belonging to other Christian denominations. A significant 29% of Americans claim no religious affiliation, with 5% identifying as atheist, 6% as agnostic and 19% as "nothing in particular," the study found.

Meanwhile, 7% of the population practices religious traditions outside Christianity, including 2% who are Jewish and smaller percentages of Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus.

John C. Green, a professor of political science at Akron University and a senior fellow with the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, said he was surprised by the "pause in the recent 'secular surge,' with the level religious affiliation stabilizing after decades of

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

% of U.S. adults who identify as Christian



decline."

"This pattern is especially surprising given the disruptions of the pandemic," he added.

As the U.S. continues to evolve religiously, the Pew study underscores the complex and shifting nature of religious belief and practice in America. While Christianity remains the dominant faith, trends suggest that the future may hold further diversification, fueled by immigration and secularization, triggered by younger generations.

The nonpartisan study remains vital because it surveyed all 50 U.S. states and 34 metro areas. The U.S. Census, by comparison, does not ask about religious affiliation.

Majorities hold spiritual and supernatural beliefs

One of the key findings of the study is the relative stability in certain aspects of religious practice. For instance, 44% of U.S. adults report praying at least once a day – a figure that, despite a notable decline from 2007 levels, has remained steady since 2021.

Similarly, 33% attend religious services at least once a month – a number that has also remained relatively constant since 2020.

While these measures suggest ongoing engagement with religious practices, they indicate that religiosity in the U.S. may not be experiencing a major resurgence.

"I am fascinated by the extensive and varied forms of spirituality reported in the study," Green said. "Large majorities of Americans, including many of the unaffiliated, report supernatural beliefs and related behaviors, some quite novel and some quite conventional. At root, these concerns are more experiential and personal than institutional and political."

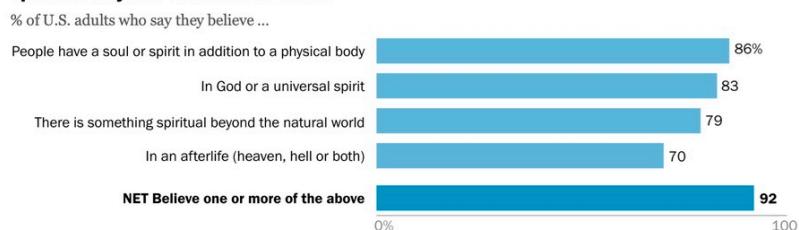
The study also highlights significant shifts in American religious beliefs. Despite a

decline in organized religious affiliation, large majorities continue to hold spiritual and supernatural beliefs. For example, 86% of Americans believe in the existence of a soul or spirit, 83% said they believe in God or a universal spirit and 70% believe in heaven or hell.

Generational divides

However, the data points to a potential

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

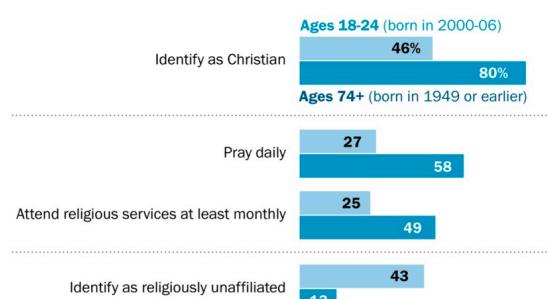


Source: Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024.

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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.

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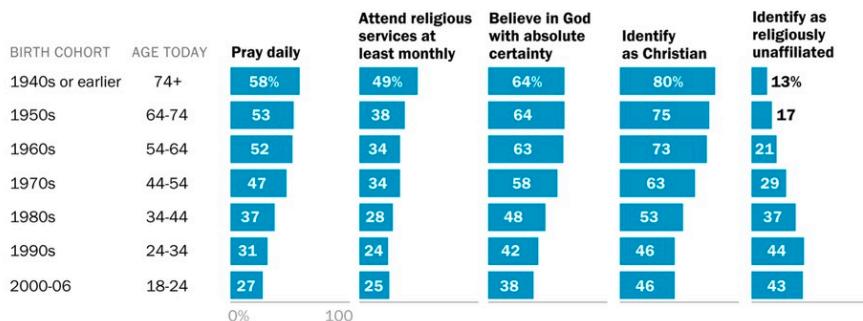
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future decline in religious engagement. Younger adults, in particular, are far less religious than older generations, with little evidence to suggest that younger

generations are becoming more religious as they age.

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



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

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The dynamics of faith in the U.S. remains, according to the study, "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.

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 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.

"The youngest group is 34 points less Christian compared to the oldest group," Smith said.

The study also finds that fewer young people raised in highly religious households are maintaining that level of religiosity as adults. In contrast, the study said the "stickiness" of a nonreligious upbringing appears to be growing, with fewer young people transitioning to religious belief as they grow older.

Smith said the secular forces that have "undergirded the long-term decline are still in place."

"These kinds of generational differences is what has driven the long-term trends [and] long-term decline of those who are religious," he said.

In order for future religious declines to take place, Smith said young adults today "would have to become more religious as they get older."

Why gender, politics and ethnicity matter

Other noteworthy findings include the rise of nondenominational Protestantism and the continued decline of traditional Christian denominations. Evangelical Protestants now make up 23% of U.S. adults – down from 26% in 2007. Mainline Protestants have decreased from 18% to 11%, while the United Methodist Church has also seen a decline, making up slightly fewer than 3% of U.S. adults – down from 5% nearly two decades ago.

Gender, political ideology and race also play significant roles in the religious landscape. Women remain more religious than men across several measures, though the gap has narrowed, the data shows, especially among younger adults.

"It has not reversed, but the gap is narrowing," Smith said.

Politically, self-identified political progressives are now less likely to identify as Christian, with only 37% of them identifying as such – a steep decline from 62% in 2007. In contrast, political conservatives continue to maintain a high Christian affiliation, though their share has decreased from 89% to 82%.

The study also explored religious trends across different racial and ethnic groups. Data shows that a majority of religious service attendees report that most members of their congregation share their race or ethnicity. The trend is even more pronounced when looking back at childhood experiences, with 78% of adults saying their childhood religious communities were racially homogeneous.

Immigration has also helped shape the current U.S. religious landscape. While 58% of U.S. immigrants identify as Christian, about 25% are religiously unaffiliated and 14% belong to other faiths (Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism being the most common).

Most immigrants to the U.S. who were born in other parts of the Americas are Christian (72%), including 45% who identify as 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). 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.

"Immigrants are driving the growth of non-Christian religions," Smith said, "and also helping to reinforce the growth of Christianity."

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
NET Non-Christian religions	4.7	5.9	7.1