

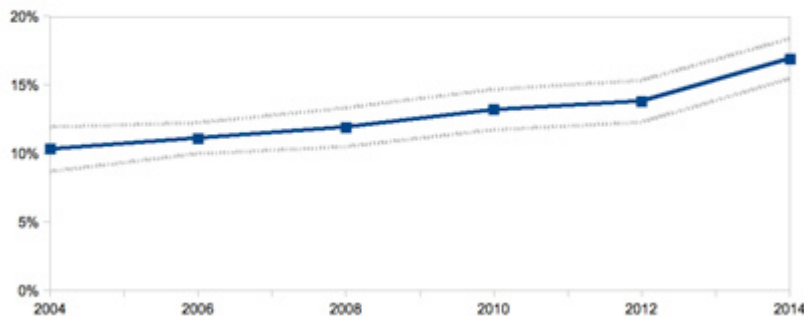
Analysis: 7.5 million Americans lost their religion since 2012

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—A new survey starkly reveals the “Great Decline” of religion in America.

Since 2012, about 7.5 million Americans have dropped out of religion, the 2014 General Social Survey reveals. Funded by the National Science Foundation, this study provides the most accurate data on American society—including religion.

Percentage of Americans who say they never pray



Solid blue line

represents the percentage each year. Dotted gray line is the upper/lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval (the average plus/minus the margin of error). Source: General Social Survey / Corner of Church & State / <http://tobingrant.religionnews.com/> In looking at key findings from the survey, keep in mind an important point: Each percentage point increase represents a growth of 2.5 million adults. So, a three-point rise in secularity, for example, means about 7.5 million people left religion since 2012.

1. More Americans prefer “no religion.”

When asked their religious preference, about one in four Americans now says “none.” Up until the 1990s, the percentage of people who were in this group known as “nones” hovered in the single digits. The 2014 survey showed nones are 21 percent of the population, up 1 percent from 2012.

How large is this group? There are nearly as many Americans who claim no religion as there are Catholics (24 percent). If this growth continues, in a few years the largest “religion” in the United States may be no religion at all.

2. Americans aren’t going to church like they used to.

The number of Americans who never darken a church door also is at a new high. More than a third of Americans (34 percent) never attend a worship service, other than weddings and other ceremonies—a 3 percent increase from just a few years earlier.

3. More Americans say they never pray.

Is this just a departure from organized religion? Even with people no longer identifying with religion or attending worship services, they still pray. But nearly one American in six never prays.

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