

Decline in American Christian observance has slowed

February 27, 2025

(RNS)—The decline in American religiousness observed since at least 2007 generally has slowed over the past four to five years, a new study reveals. However, the Pew Research Center noted the country still is heading toward less religiousness.

[Pew's Religious Landscape Study's](#) 2023-24 edition, released on Feb. 26, points to changes in American religious observance—including those identifying as Christian—stabilizing after years of steady decline and to growth of the religiously unaffiliated leveling off.

“The U.S. is a spiritual place, a religious place, where we’ve seen signs of religious stabilization in the midst of longer-term decline,” said Gregory Smith, a senior associate director of research at Pew, during a press briefing.

Now on its third edition, Pew released similar reports in 2007 and 2014, aiming to fill a gap in recognized, reliable data sources on America’s religious composition, beliefs and practices.

From July 2023 to March 2024, the center polled 35,000 adult respondents randomly selected from the U.S. Postal Service address registry. This third edition was to be published in 2021 but was postponed to avoid flawed results due to the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on religious life.

Number of US Christians fairly stable

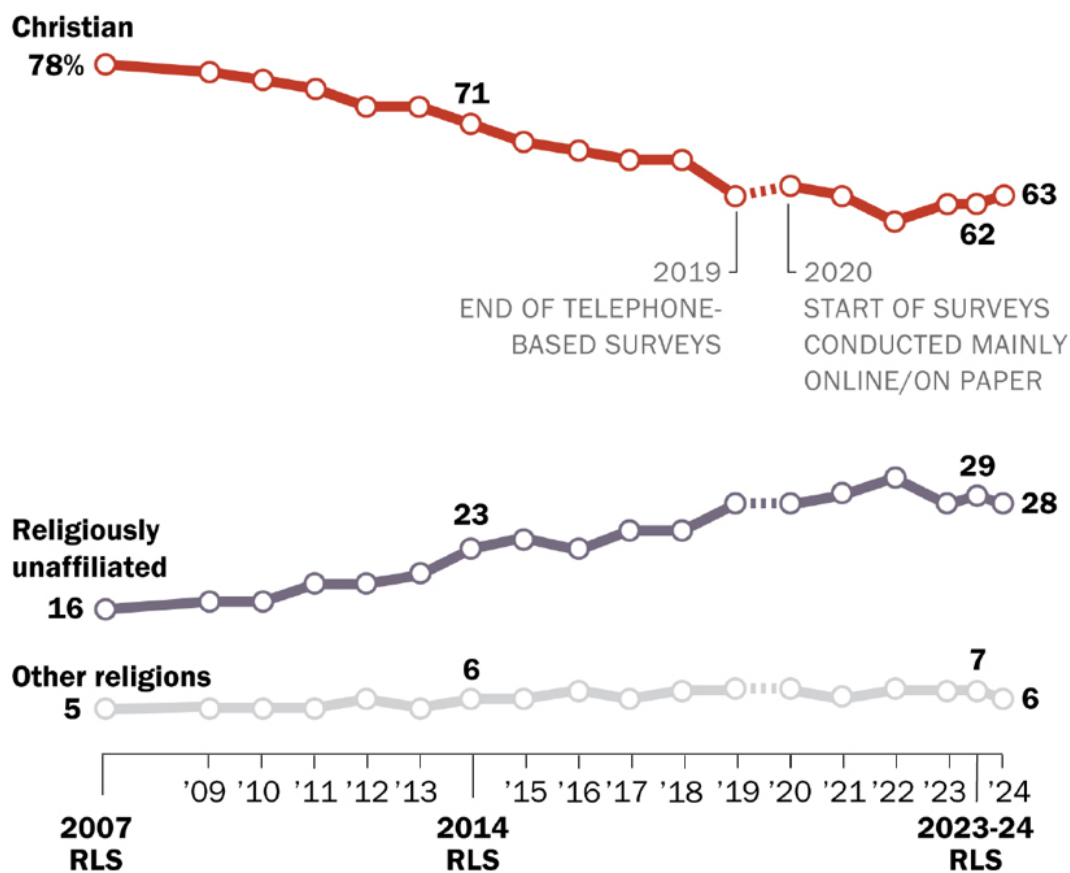
After dropping from 78 percent to 71 percent between 2007 and 2014, the share of U.S. adults identifying as Christian has now dropped to [62](#)

[percent](#), according to the report.

However, it notes this figure has been relatively stable since 2019, oscillating between 60 percent and 64 percent.

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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Share of U.S. adults identifying as Christian is down since 2007, but it has held steady in recent years (Graphic courtesy of Pew Research Center via RNS)

Protestants are still the largest subgroup of Christians, with 40 percent of American adults identifying as such. However, all major Protestant denominations have declined since the first Pew Religious Landscape Study report in 2007.

The percentage of respondents who identify as evangelical Protestants dropped from 26 percent to 23 percent. Those who identify as mainline Protestants dropped from 18 percent to 11 percent. And those in historically Black Protestant denominations decreased from 7 percent to 5 percent.

Catholics are the second largest, representing 19 percent of the entire Christian population. Other denominations, including Greek and Russian Orthodox, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses, represent 3 percent of the Christian population.

Members of the United Methodist Church declined from 5 percent to 3 percent of U.S. adults since 2007. The report also indicates similar declines in Baptist and Lutheran Christians.

However, those identifying as non-Christian religious adults rose from 4.9 percent in 2007, to 5.9 percent in 2014, and to 7.1 percent in 2023-24. Among them, 1.7 percent identified as Jewish, 1.2 percent as Muslim, 1.1 percent as Buddhist and 0.9 percent as Hindu, in addition to 2.2 percent who identified as "other non-Christian religions."

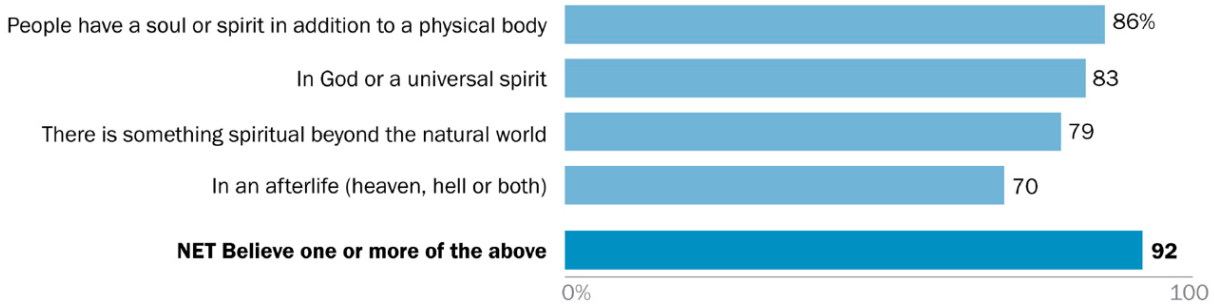
Additionally, the growth of the religiously unaffiliated—also called nones—has plateaued after decades of rapid growth. In 2007, they represented 16 percent of U.S. adults, rising to 23 percent in 2014, and 29

percent in 2023-24.

This includes 5 percent who identify as atheists, 6 percent who describe themselves as agnostics and 19 percent who identify as “nothing in particular.”

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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Large majorities of U.S. adults believe in the existence of a soul, something spiritual beyond the natural world. (Graphic courtesy of Pew Research Center via RNS)

More than 8 out of 10 American adults indicated they were spiritual or believe in the supernatural; 86 percent agreed people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body.

A large portion also believe in God or a universal spirit (83 percent) and/or something spiritual beyond the natural world (79 percent).

About 70 percent indicated they believe in heaven, hell or both. These figures are relatively the same across age categories.

Though this latest study shows a stabilizing religious composition in America, Pew researchers project a decline in religiousness in the future.

Less religious younger generations are progressively expected to replace older, highly religious and heavily Christian generations.

“This means that, for lasting stability to take hold in the U.S. religious landscape, something would need to change,” the report explains.

“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.”

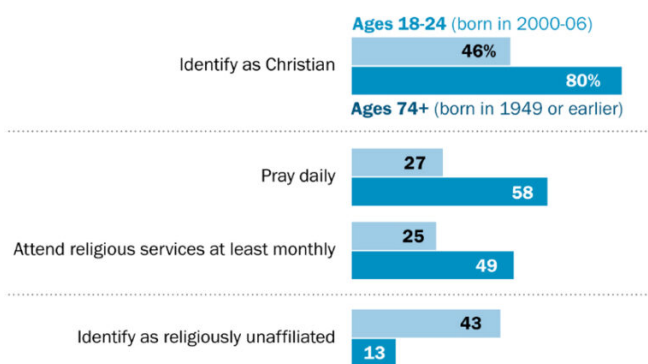
While 54 percent of adults ages 54 and older said they pray daily, only 31 percent of ages 24-34 do so, and 27 percent for ages 18-24.

Younger cohorts also attend religious services less often compared with older generations and are also less likely to express beliefs in God or the universal spirit than other generations.

Shift is possible, but unlikely

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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Big age gaps in shares of Americans who

identify as Christian, pray regularly.
(Graphic courtesy of Pew Research
Center via RNS)

The trend could shift if younger Americans became more religious as they age, which is unlikely to happen as such a trend never has been observed before, the report notes.

Comparing the results to previous report findings, between 2007 and 2023-24, each age group has become less religious as it aged.

The share of American adults who switched religions since childhood, at 35 percent, also has increased the religiously unaffiliated and led to fewer people identifying as Christians.

The percentage of Americans who engage in religious practices remained relatively stable over the last few years, despite decreasing from 2007, according to Pew.

In the 2023-24 report, 44 percent of respondents said they pray at least once a day, which is consistent with 2021 findings from Pew's annual National Public Opinion Reference Survey.

However, that's down from 55 percent who said they prayed daily in 2014, and 58 percent in 2007.

Also, in Pew's 2020 NPORS, 33 percent of U.S. adults said they attend religious services at least once or twice a month. Similar results were found in 2023-24 data, indicating stability over the last several years.

Besides the generational aspect, other factors such as gender and political affiliations seem to weigh in levels of religiousness.

Overall, women are more religious than men, but that figure appears to be

narrowing slightly. Women are more likely to pray daily (50 percent to 37 percent for men) and are more likely to believe in God or a universal spirit (59 percent to 49 percent).

Liberals also seem to be less likely to identify as Christians, with a notable decrease since 2007—today, 37 percent of self-described political liberals identify as Christian, compared with 62 percent who did in 2007.

Among self-described conservatives, 89 percent identify as Christian today, compared with 82 percent in 2007.