

Commentary | The dangers of the great American unchurched

September 13, 2017

Americans are abandoning religion in droves.

That's the clear takeaway from two crucially important polls released earlier this week — one from the Public Religion Research Institute and another from the Pew Research Center.

The [Pew poll shows](#) that since 2012 the share of Americans who describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious” has surged from 19 percent to 27 percent, while the share of those who call themselves “religious and spiritual” has declined from 59 percent to 48 percent. That's a dramatic change for a mere five years, and it builds on longer-term trends.

The [PRRI poll](#), which is far more ambitious, places the Pew findings in a broader context, showing that white Christians now comprise less than half of the population; that the relative size of the white evangelical Protestant, white mainline Protestant, and white Catholic populations is declining rapidly; that 24 percent of the country is religiously unaffiliated; that the share of young people (aged 18-29) in that unchurched group is 38 percent; and that nearly all of the growth in the numbers of the religiously unaffiliated has taken place since the early 1990s, when their share of the population consistently averaged a comparatively paltry 8 percent.

Add up the findings and assume current trends continue and we're left with a picture of the United States as a country in which established religious traditions and institutions are in sharp decline — and therefore in which culture and politics are rapidly secularizing.

Read the rest of this article at The Week.