

Secular Policy Institute Secular Resource Guide



The Reason Rally, March 2012 on The Mall, Washington, DC

A Report by the Secular Policy Institute

by Johnny Monsarrat

July, 2015



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America's Fastest Growing Minority

A Powerful Voting Bloc

Atheists, agnostics, and religiously unaffiliated people, known as secular people, are the fastest growing minority in America, forming an important voting bloc. With an annualized growth rate of 5.1%¹, we outpace even Hispanics (2.1%) and Asians (2.9%)². In 2015, atheists now comprise 3.1% of Americans, a 100% leap from 2007, a rapid growth that suggests that many more Americans are privately atheist but unwilling to say so in polls.

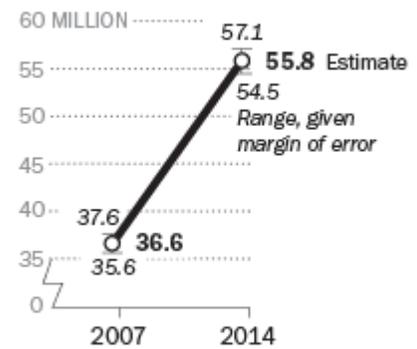
Beyond the 3.1% of openly atheist Americans, An additional 4% say they do not believe in God or a universal spirit, even though they don't use the word 'atheist'³. Then an additional 15.8% of Americans are either agnostic or belong to no "nothing in particular". These are all secular people.

The 2010 US Census found 34 million Americans without a religious affiliation⁴, but today that number has risen to 56 million Americans, 22.8% of the country⁵. Among all age groups those with no religion are growing, especially amongst those born since 1990 (36%)⁶.

That is a powerful voting bloc. Although the secular movement is new, as it matures we will have the influence of smaller but well organized groups such as the 1.9% of Americans who are Jewish and 1.6% who are Mormon⁷. Meanwhile Christians in the United States have declined from 78% in 2007 to 71% in 2014⁵.

The "churchless" are becoming younger (34% under 30), more college educated (50%), more gender-balanced (43% woman), more racially diverse (only 74% white), and more geographically dispersed (only 30% in the US West)⁸.

Rapid Growth of Religiously Unaffiliated



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Unaffiliated Make Up Growing Share Across Generations

% of each generation that identifies current religion as atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular

	2007	2014	Change
Silent generation (b. 1928-1945)	9	11	+2
Baby Boomers (b.1946-1964)	14	17	+3
Generation X (b. 1965-1980)	19	23	+4
Older Millennials (b. 1981-1989)	25	34	+9
Younger Millennials (b. 1990-1996)	n/a	36	n/a

2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. All changes are statistically significant.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research, May 2015, growth from 16.1% to 22.8% over 7 years.

² [U.S. Hispanic and Asian Populations Growing, But For Different Reasons](#), Pew Research Center, June 2014

³ [5 Facts About Atheists](#), Pew Research Center, October 2013

⁴ [US 2010 Census, Table 75. Self-Described Religious Identification of Adult Population](#), 2010.

⁵ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research, May 2015

⁶ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

⁷ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research, May 2015

⁸ [2015 State of Atheism in America](#), Barna Group, March 2015

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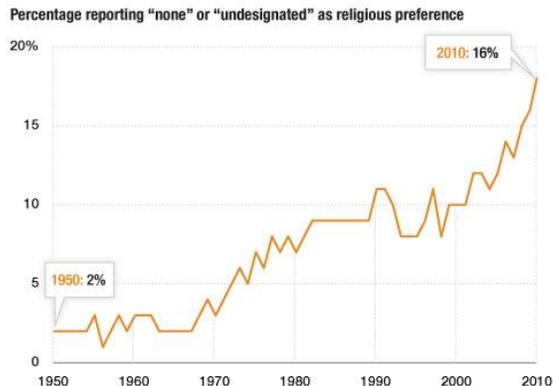
Worldwide, 16% of humans are unaffiliated with religion, making secular people the 3rd largest belief group after Christians (31.5%) and Muslims (23.2%)⁹.

Easy Ways to Lock In the Secular Vote

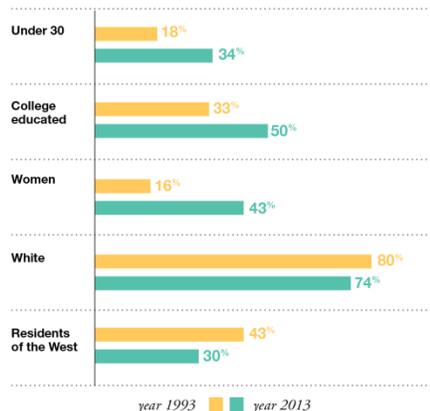
You need say nothing against religion to win the secular vote. What we want most is to end discrimination against us, so that we can take a respected and normalized role in public discourse and American life.

Just say, "I support people of all faiths, and of no faith," or as Barack Obama said at his 2009 presidential inauguration, "We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers."¹⁰

We also want greater separation of church and state, with more reason and science in government. If you support scientific enquiry and giving religious people a voice but not a veto in lawmaking, you have already come most of the way to getting secular voters to fully support you.



Changing Demographics of the "Churchless"



Source: 2015 State of Atheism in America, Barna Group

About this Report

In this report you will learn who secular people are, what we want from government, and where we are located in American states and around the world. You will also learn how we are distributed across gender, age, race, income, and educational brackets.

This report attempts to be the most comprehensive gathering and meta-analysis of hard demographic numbers on secularism ever produced.

The Secular Policy Institute is the world's largest secular coalition and world's most prestigious and largest secular think tank. For more information, contact us directly:



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⁹ [The Global Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research Center, December 2012

¹⁰ [An Inaugural First: Obama Acknowledges 'Non-believers'](#), USA Today, January 2009

Who Are Secular People?

Everyday People Who Don't Hate God, But Want to Make Our Own Choices

Secular people are ordinary Americans. We are teachers, parents, construction workers, bankers, and florists. We are men and women, straight and gay, from all income levels, all political parties, all nationalities, and all races. Many of us don't believe in God, but some of us do. What we all have in common is a desire for separation of church and state.

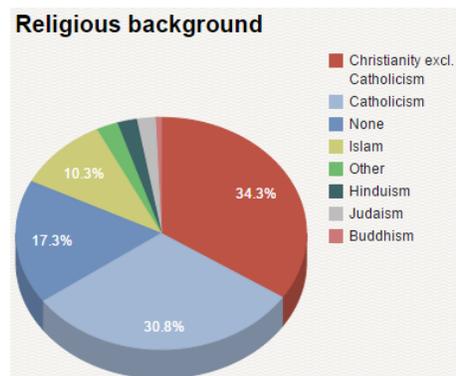
We don't hate God and we're not opposed to other people having a religion. In fact, 83% of us come from a religious upbringing¹¹, and 82%¹² of atheists do feel connected to nature and the Universe, with as many as 41%¹³ feeling spiritual in some way. Just as many people (58%) feel a connection with nature whether they are affiliated with religion or not¹⁴.

Many of us just don't have God or religion as part of our lives. However, some 38% of atheists and agnostics say they do believe in some kind of God or Universal Spirit¹⁵.

Most of the time we're happy to ignore religion, but this can be difficult when religious leaders claim to speak for all Americans. When society favors religious people and religious organizations, it puts nonbelievers in an inferior subclass.



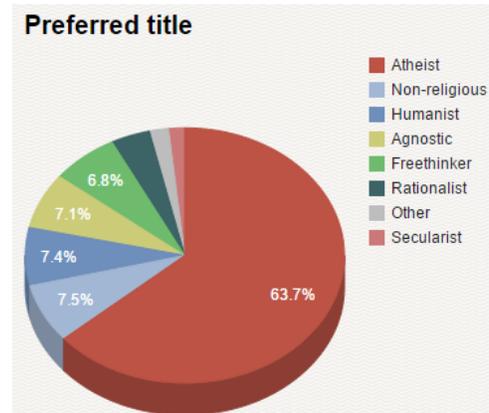
This is what an atheist looks like.



What We Call Ourselves

Secular people use many labels:

- **Secularist, nontheist, and nonbeliever** are blanket terms for those who don't believe in God or for those who feel spiritual but strongly support separation of church and state.
- **Atheist** is the most common nonbelief term, used by 64% of nonbelievers¹⁶. Atheists believe strongly that God doesn't exist. Most nonbelievers don't mind



¹¹ [Atheist Census](http://atheistcensus.com), atheistcensus.com

¹² [5 Facts About Atheists](#), Pew Research Center, October 2013

¹³ ["Nones" on the Rise: Religion and the Unaffiliated](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

¹⁴ ["Nones" on the Rise: Religion and the Unaffiliated](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

¹⁵ ["Nones" on the Rise: Religion and the Unaffiliated](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

¹⁶ [Atheist Census](http://atheistcensus.com), atheistcensus.com

casually being called atheist. Atheist need not be capitalized.

- **Agnostic** people are unsure whether God exists. Some people choose this position carefully, but others simply haven't thought about it much. Sometimes agnostics are spiritual, but not religious.
- **Freethinkers** and **Brights** are major groups of nonbeliever who prefer their own terms.
- **Secular Humanists** don't believe in God, but do believe in community and ceremony. Many gather to reflect on life and socialize, much like a church, but without the religious element.
- **Science supporters** are our allies. Although most organizations that promote science education and research take no public position on religion, they stand up for secular issues such as evolution, climate change, and the age of the Universe. They say, "We don't oppose religion. We just don't understand why they ignore the evidence of science on some issues."
- **Secular Jews** are congregations of Jewish people who lean atheist or agnostic.
- **Skeptics** are our allies, because they oppose conspiracies and false beliefs including Bigfoot, psychics, and healing rock crystals. Many skeptics are atheist, but many are spiritual and feel that criticizing religion is outside the scope of their movement.

What's It Like to Not Believe in God?

How do nonbelievers function and enjoy life without God? How do we find our way morally through the world? Just like you, sometimes we take the advice of community leaders, or get our ideas from books. Then use our heads and hearts to make good choices. Just like you, ultimately we must *decide for ourselves* what to believe and what to reject.

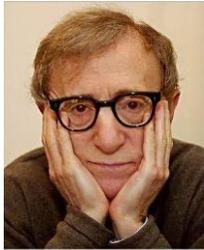
We are good to our friends and community. We work hard at our jobs. We support our families. We're surprisingly just like you.



Famous Secular People

Since 3% of Americans openly identify themselves as atheists in surveys, and as much as 20% of our country does not belong to an organized religion, it's no surprise that secularists are everywhere. However, because of discrimination, many of us keep our philosophy to ourselves.

Here is a selection of celebrities who have had the courage to openly talk about their nonbelief.



Woody Allen
3 Academy Awards



Fred Armisen
"Saturday Night Live"



Kevin Bacon
Golden Globe Winner



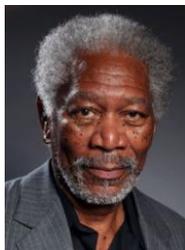
Javier Bardem
Academy Award Winner



Richard Branson
Founder of Virgin Group



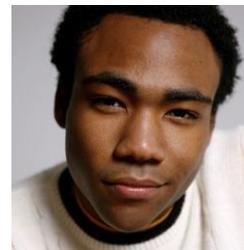
Jodie Foster
2 Academy Awards



Morgan Freeman
Academy Award Winner



Ira Glass
Public Radio



Donald Glover
Actor, "Community"



Stephen Hawking
Albert Einstein Medal



Katharine Hepburn
3 Academy Awards



Eric Idle
Tony, Grammy Awards, "Monty Python"



Samuel L. Jackson
“Pulp Fiction”, “Star Wars”



Billy Joel
6 Grammy Awards



Angelina Jolie
2 Academy Awards



Bruce Lee
Actor, “Enter the Dragon”



John Legend
9 Grammy Awards



John Malkovich
2 Oscar Nominations



Julianne Moore
4 Oscar Nominations



Brad Pitt
Academy Award Winner



Daniel Radcliffe
Actor, “Harry Potter”



Ron Reagan
Son of the US President,
Radio Personality



Chris Rock
Comedian, 3 Emmys



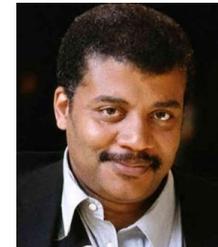
Shakira
2 Grammy Awards



Sarah Silverman
Comedian, 2 Emmys



Emma Thompson
2 Academy Awards



Neil deGrasse Tyson
Scientist, Emmy Nominee, “Cosmos”

A Fast Growing Voting Bloc

Americans who are less religious are more likely to vote than religious Americans according to one study¹⁷, while a smaller study with a larger margin of error found the religiously unaffiliated are just as likely to vote (21% of voters, and 24%¹⁸ of Americans) as the religiously affiliated.

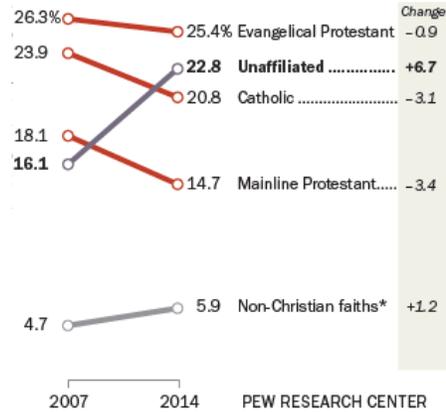
Meanwhile in the seven years from 2007 to 2014, the religiously unaffiliated grew to 22.8%, becoming the second largest belief group in the United States¹⁹.

In that 22.8% of Americans, 3.1% are openly atheist, 4.0% are agnostic, and 15.8% believe in “nothing in particular”. But there are reasons to predict that many more Americans are atheist but feel uncomfortable openly self-identifying as such. For example, 7% of Americans say they do not believe in God or a universal spirit, even though only 3.1% use the word ‘atheist’²⁰.

The growth in the unaffiliated in the United States is largely due to some 19.2% of Catholics and 13.0% of Protestants leaving their faith. Some 49% of churchgoers who rarely or never attend church services now describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated²¹.

In contrast, only 4.3% of those with no religious affiliation return to organized religion²², the highest retention rate of any belief system. Only 10% of those with “no religion in particular” are looking for a religion²³. The rest have made their choice.

Those with no religion are growing across every region of the United States and in every racial and ethnic group²⁴.



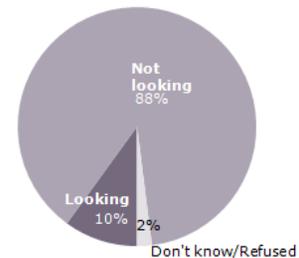
Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, PEW RESEARCH CENTER

	Raised in group %	Left group %	Entered group %	Currently in group %	NET change
Christian	85.6	-19.2	+4.2	70.6	-15.0
Protestant	50.2	-13.0	+9.4	46.5	-3.7
Evangelical	23.9	-8.4	+9.8	25.4	+1.5
Mainline	19.0	-10.4	+6.1	14.7	-4.3
Historically black	7.3	-2.2	+1.4	6.5	-0.8
Catholic	31.7	-12.9	+2.0	20.8	-10.9
Unaffiliated	9.2	-4.3	+18.0	22.8	+13.6

2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Are You Looking For a Religion that Would be Right for You?

Among those who identify their religion as “nothing in particular,” % who say they are ...



Source: Pew Research Center survey, June 28-July 9, 2012.

¹⁷ [Moral and Religious Convictions and Intentions to Vote in the 2008 Presidential Election](#), *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, Vol. 10, No. 1, G. Scott Morgan, Linda Skitka, Daniel Wisneski, 2010.

¹⁸ [The Party of Nonvoters](#), Pew Research Center, October 2014

¹⁹ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research Center, May 2015

²⁰ [5 Facts About Atheists](#), Pew Research Center, October 2013

²¹ [“Nones” on the Rise](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

²² [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research Center, May 2015

²³ [“Nones” on the Rise](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

²⁴ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research Center, May 2015

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What Do Secular People Believe?

Although it's easier to explain ourselves using a negative, saying that we don't believe in religion, our approach to life is very positive. We support science and reason, the best tools that humanity has to solve problems in real life. These tools aren't perfect, but unlike with faith, their answers can be tested, challenged, and proven. Just look at modern medicine, which came from science, not faith. Medical science saves lives.

Scientific thinking gives us more than just gadgets. Reasoned thought can guide society's moral choices. What's the most effective (proven and real) way to make society happy, while embracing human principles of fairness to minority populations and our planet?

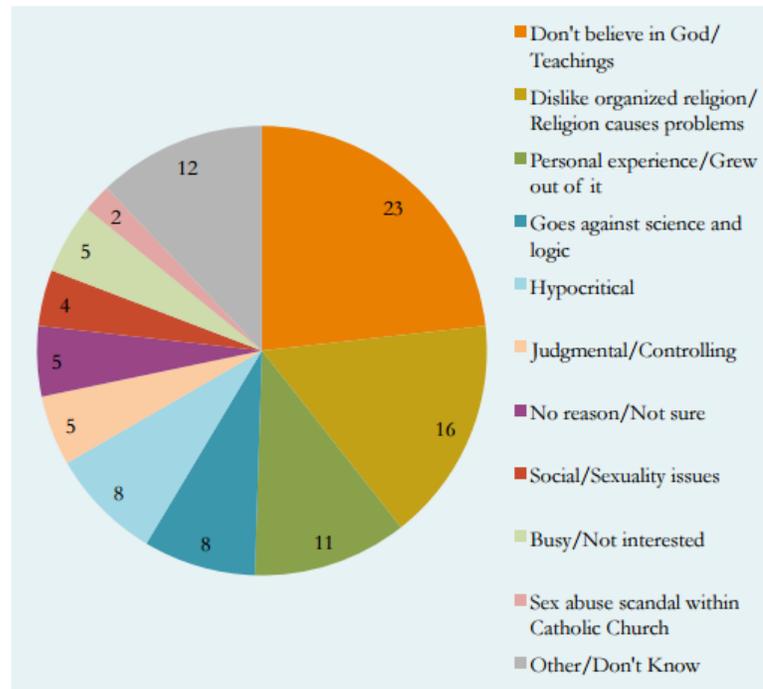
Some people feel that navigating big issues is impossible without faith, but we respectfully disagree. To us "taking something on faith" seems too much like blindly following authority. Of course secular people listen to our feelings, but our heads are smarter, so we try to put them first.

We also listen to experts. When choosing between our gut instinct and the advice of a million scientists who have spent a career studying the age of the Universe, we'll go with the experts, because they can back up their claims with proof.

That doesn't mean that we hate religion or that we hate religious people. We just don't take it for granted that when religion speaks, the conversation is over. We don't like the idea that one part of society assumes they can speak as a moral authority for the entire society. We'll speak for ourselves, thank you.

Unfortunately, this makes it look like we oppose religion, because to get our voices heard, we need to get religious leaders to stop dominating the conversation. Discrimination against secular people is so high that there is bound to be some discord when we speak up.

Reasons for Leaving Childhood Religion



Source: PRRI, The 2012 American Values Survey, October 2012 (N= 3,003)

America's Most-Hated Minority?

Unfortunately, religions have so much cultural influence in the United States that they can accidentally (or intentionally) bulldoze secular people out of public discourse. Government decisions are often made on the basis of faith rather than reason and science. When one group of Americans, the religious, claims to be the moral authority for all Americans, they marginalize secular people. That is the tyranny of the majority.

In 1987, Vice President George H. W. Bush said, "I don't know that atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered as patriots. This is one nation under God." Nearly 50% of Americans would be unhappy if a family member married an atheist²⁵. Atheists may not hold public office in seven states²⁶.

In America, secular people can be ostracized from their friends, family, and community for being different. The superiority of religious people is so taken for granted that religious organizations get special privileges in the law over secular non-profits, and people who would never permit their government representatives to be racist or sexist applaud when a politician says that atheists are not real Americans.

Atheists are more distrusted and less socially accepted than any minority from a long list, with 39.6% of Americans saying that atheists do not agree with their vision of American society, and 47.6% disapproving of a child marrying an atheist²⁷.

Responses	%
This Group Does Not At All Agree with My Vision of American Society	
Atheists	39.6
Muslims	26.3
Homosexuals	22.6
Conservative Christians	13.5
Recent Immigrants	12.5
Hispanics	7.6
Jews	7.4
Asian Americans	7.0
African Americans	4.6
White Americans	2.2
I Would Disapprove if My Child Wanted to Marry a Member of This Group	
Atheist	47.6
Muslim	33.5
African American	27.2
Asian American	18.5
Hispanic	18.5
Jew	11.8
Conservative Christian	6.9
White	2.3

Source: American Mosaic Project Survey, 2003.

²⁵ [Why Americans Hate Atheists](#), Phil Zuckerman, June 2014.

²⁶ [Unelectable Atheists: U.S. States that Prohibit Godless Americans from Public Office](#), Humanist Network News.

²⁷ [Atheists As "Other": Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society](#), Penny Edgell, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Hartmann, American Sociological Review, 2006, Vol. 71, 2006.

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More than half of Americans would be less likely to vote for a qualified US presidential candidate who did not believe in God, putting secular people right at the bottom of disliked minority groups²⁸.

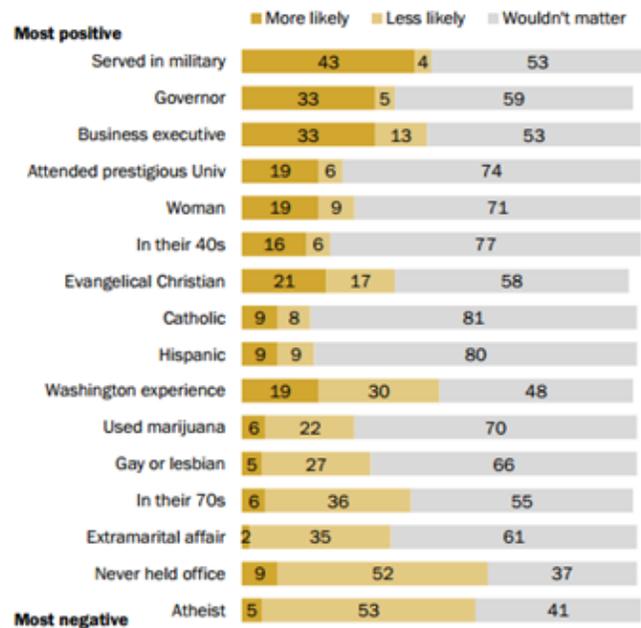
Seven US states prohibit atheists for running for public office. It's implausible that not one of the 535 members of the US Congress is secular, but none have said so publicly, surely due to their fears of discrimination.

In the developing world, speaking up for secular values can get you jailed or killed by your government, especially in North Africa and the Middle East. You can be murdered by your family or community for not believing in God.

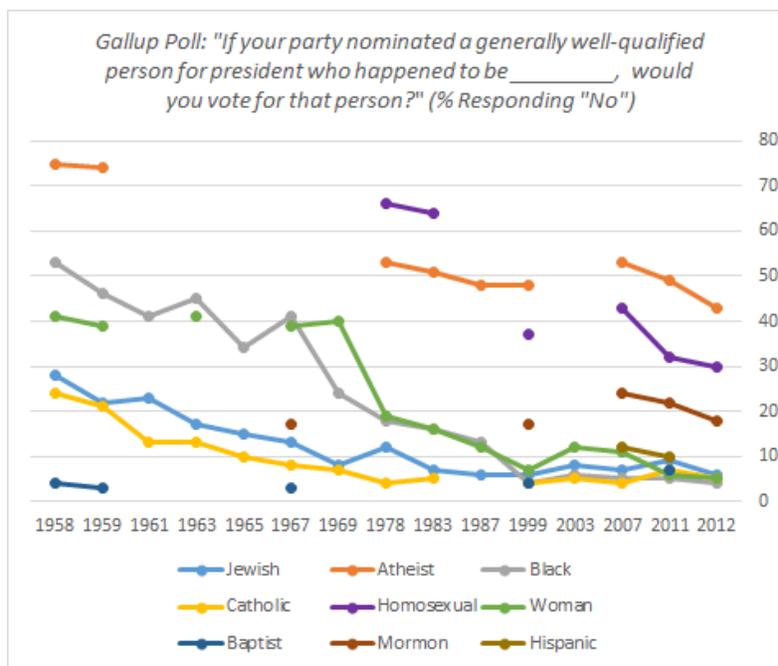
While most people want to end discrimination based on race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, discrimination against we secular people has been overlooked. That's not right.

Views of Presidential Traits: Positives and Negatives

How would each impact your likelihood of supporting a candidate ...



Source: [Pew Research Center](#), May 2014



Source: Gallup Polls [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#).

²⁸ [For 2016 Hopefuls, Washington Experience Could Do More Harm than Good](#), Pew Research Center, May 2014. *Secular Resource Guide*, Secular Policy Institute, www.SecularPolicyInstitute.net, July 2015
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What Do Secular People Want?

We Don't Want to Convert People

Nonbelievers who proselytize are a far lower than the percentage of religious people who proselytize. The average secular person is too afraid of discrimination to even discuss his or her opinion, never mind attempt to convert others.

Mostly, secular people ignore religion, but sometimes it cannot be ignored because we live in the same community. Religions have so much cultural influence that it can be stifling.

We Want to End Discrimination Against Us

Secular people should not be shunned from society. At home, we want our family and friends to accept us for who we are. In our community, we don't want to be vilified or looked down upon as immoral. Through government, we want our laws to be fair to secularism. This sometimes make it looks like we are fighting religion, but really we are just calling to end unfair religious privilege.

For example, the US armed services have interdenominational chaplains that provide counseling to soldiers of any faith. However, they aren't trained how to comfort secular people, nor are secular people allowed to be chaplains. *We don't see fixing this as fighting religion.* We just want secular people to be included.

How can this be fixed? It's easy. We just need Americans to accept secular people as a "valid" minority group, as they have with African-Americans, gay people, and Jewish people.

We Promote Science and Reason

Just like you, we want doctors to use science instead of prayer, and courtrooms to make judgments based on the evidence. A jury that ignored the evidence and looked to faith for the answer would not be responsible.

Secular people feel that all of society's decisions should be made responsibly, with facts that can be proven with evidence. For example, research shows that vaccinations save lives, and are safe. If you fear vaccines, *you have been duped by fake science.*

We want the same things you want. Nobody wants to be duped, and everyone wants healthy children. So let's discuss. Our secular viewpoint can contribute much to public dialogue.

We Want Separation of Church and State

Separation of church and state means that the government shouldn't run churches, and churches shouldn't run government. But many Americans are religious. Shouldn't they have a voice in government?

Of course! It's only a problem when faith tries to speak for all of us. If you say, "Our Christian morals should steer the nation," we must remind you that not all Americans are Christian.

Of Americans who are unaffiliated with religion, 67% believe that religion plays too great a role in politics (and 81% of atheists and agnostics), but they are far from alone. Some 46% of the US general public feels the same²⁹. Some 66% of Americans feel that churches should not endorse political candidates, and 43% are uncomfortable with political candidates who discuss the depth of their faith.³⁰

	U.S. general public %	Unaffiliated %	Affiliated %
Are too concerned w/money and power	51	70	47
Focus too much on rules	51	67	47
Are too involved w/politics	46	67	41
Bring people together/strengthen community bonds	88	78	90
Play important role in helping poor and needy	87	77	90
Protect and strengthen morality	76	52	81

Source: Pew Research Center survey, June 28-July 9, 2012.

Let's share influence in equal measure to the size of our community, the strength of our arguments, and the conviction of our people. All we're asking for is a seat at the table.

We Want a Better World for Everyone

Like all people, secular people want success for our families, our communities, our nation, and the world. We want to be responsible citizens. We want personal happiness at home and at work. We want to make a difference.

Because we believe in reason and science so strongly, we think we have a special viewpoint that can help build a better world. If you have benefited from smart phones, cars, air conditioning, and modern dentistry, you can't disagree that science brings something special to the planet.

So let us work for you. By hearing our voices, by partnering with us, you get the advantage of our special talents. Together we can do great things.

²⁹ ["Nones" on the Rise: Religion and the Unaffiliated](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

³⁰ ["Nones" on the Rise: Social and Political Views of the Unaffiliated](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012.

How Secular People Vote

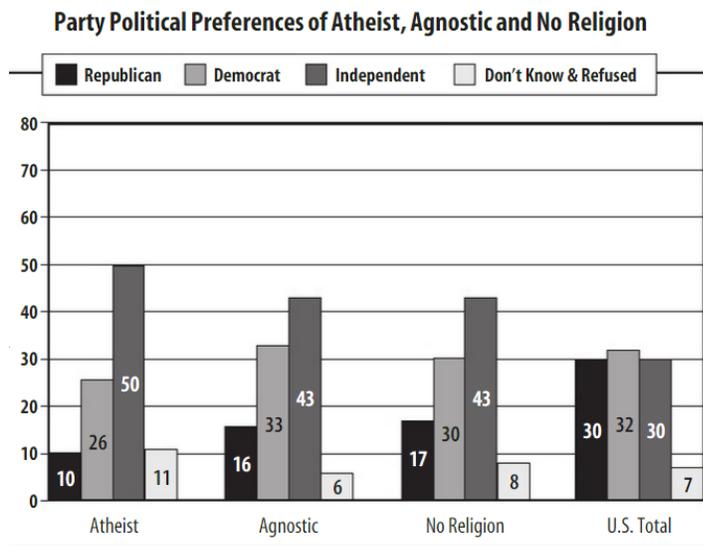
Atheists are far more likely to be independent voters than Republican or Democrat³¹.

Nonreligious people are about twice as likely to describe themselves as political liberals than as conservatives³², and they tend to have liberal social values, with 72% supporting legal abortion and 73% supporting same-sex marriage³³.

Although some secular people have conservative views in finance and foreign affairs values, putting them in the Libertarian category rather than Liberal, the non-religious tend to vote Democratic, with 61% choosing Al Gore in 2000, 67% choosing John Kerry in 2004, and 75% choosing Barack Obama in 2008, with only 23% voting for John McCain³⁴.

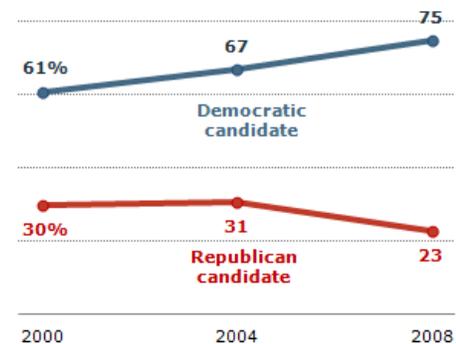
	U.S. general public	Unaffiliated	Affiliated
<i>Abortion should be...</i>	%	%	%
Legal in all/most cases	53	72	49
Illegal in all/most cases	41	24	46
Don't know	6	4	6
	100	100	100
<i>Same-sex marriage...</i>			
Favor	48	73	41
Oppose	44	20	50
Don't know	9	7	9
	100	100	100

Of the unaffiliated, 67% are registered to vote, slightly less than the 72% of Americans, but among young voters, 50% are registered to vote, regardless of religious participation³⁵. Some 73% of atheists and agnostics say they are certain to vote, compared with 53% of the religiously unaffiliated³⁶.



Source: American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2001

Presidential Exit Polls Among the Unaffiliated



Source: Exit polls conducted by the National Election Pool, 2000, 2004, 2008. Based on those with no religion.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

³¹ [Who Are America's Atheists and Agnostics?](#) Ariela Keysar, Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture, circa 2002

³² ["Nones" on the Rise](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

³³ ["Nones" on the Rise](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012

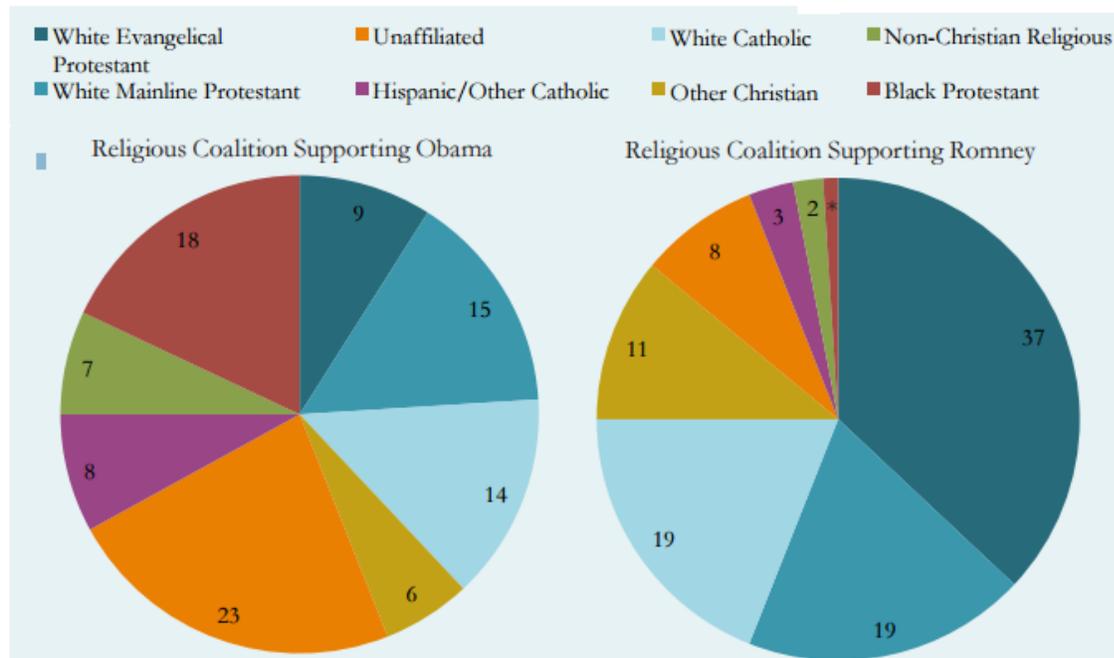
³⁴ ["Nones" on the Rise: Social and Political Views of the Unaffiliated](#), Pew Research Center, October 2012.

³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ [The 2012 American Values Survey](#), Public Religion Research Institute, October 2012

Religious Coalitions Supporting the Presidential Candidates

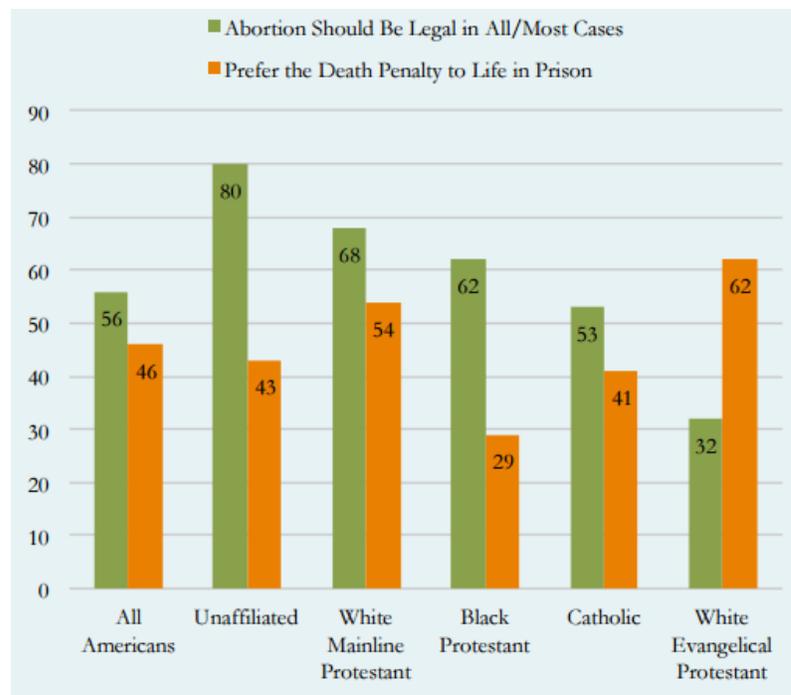
Among Likely Voters



Source: PRRI, The 2012 American Values Survey, October 2012 (N= 3.003)

Some 80% of the religiously unaffiliated support abortion rights in most cases, compared with 56% of Americans, and only 43% support the death penalty, compared with 46% of Americans³⁷.

Some 65% of the unaffiliated support legalizing marijuana, compared with 43% of Americans³⁸. Of secular people, only 42% believe that women are more naturally suited to raise children, compared with 64% of Evangelicals, 55% of Catholics, and 51% of Protestants³⁹.



Source: PRRI, The 2012 American Values Survey, October 2012 (N= 3.003)

³⁷ [The 2012 American Values Survey](#), Public Religion Research Institute, October 2012

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ *ibid*

Secular Demographics

Beliefs

As recently as 2008, 70% of Americans believed in a personal God, some 12% of Americans were atheist (no God) or agnostic (unknowable or unsure), and another 12% were deistic (a higher power but no personal God)⁴⁰.

Beliefs about God among U.S. Adult Population 2008 Regarding the existence of God, do you think . . . ?

There is no such thing	2.3%
There is no way to know	4.3%
I'm not sure	5.7%
There is a higher power but no personal God	12.1%
There is definitely a personal God	69.5%
Refused	6.1%
n = 1,000	100%

There is evidence to support the idea that even people who belong to organized religion sometimes prefer it left out of their lives. To take an extreme example, 98% of Catholic women aged 15-44 use contraception, against church doctrine⁴¹. Others simply want their life ceremonies free from organized religion, the better to focus on their family⁴².

Life Cycle Religious Rituals of the U.S. Adult Population 2008

	% Yes	% No	Don't Know/ Refused	% Total
Did you have a religious initiation ceremony, such as a baptism, Christening, circumcision, confirmation, bar mitzvah or naming ceremony?	71	26	3	100
Were you married in a religious ceremony? (ever married respondents only)	69	30	1	100
When you die, do you expect to have a religious funeral or service?	66	27	7	100
n = 1,000				

⁴⁰ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

⁴¹ [Keeping Facts Straight on 98% of Catholic Women](#), Tampa Bay Times PolitiFact.com, February 2012

⁴² [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

Age

The average age of Americans unaffiliated with religion is 36 years old⁴³, with young people born between 1981 and 1996 being 34% to 36% unaffiliated with religion. Some 28% of college students and 20% of 8th to 10th graders claim no religious affiliation, with the same fractions never attending religious services⁴⁴.

	Silent generation (born 1928-1945)	Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964)	Generation X (born 1965-1980)	Older Millennials (born 1981- 1989)	Younger Millennials (born 1990- 1996)
	%	%	%	%	%
Christian	85	78	70	57	56
Protestant	57	52	45	38	36
<i>Evangelical</i>	30	28	25	22	19
<i>Mainline</i>	22	17	13	10	11
<i>Historically black</i>	5	7	7	6	6
Catholic	24	23	21	16	16
Other Christian groups	3	3	4	3	3
Other faiths	4	5	6	8	8
Unaffiliated	11	17	23	34	36
Don't know/refused	1	1	1	1	1
	100	100	100	100	100

Another poll in 2008 found that as much as 41% of Americans aged 30-49 were “nones”, those with no religious affiliation, including atheists and agnostics⁴⁵.

Age Composition of the Religious Traditions 2008

	18-29	30-49	50-69	70+	% Total
U.S. National Population	22	38	28	12	100
Catholic	21	38	28	13	100
Baptist	11	31	37	21	100
Mainline Christian	18	35	33	14	100
Christian Generic	25	41	25	9	100
Pentecostal/Charismatic	16	34	36	14	100
Protestant Denominations	22	36	28	14	100
Mormon/LDS	22	40	28	10	100
Jewish	21	28	33	18	100
Eastern Religions	37	40	20	3	100
Muslim	42	45	12	1	100
NRM & Other Religions	24	40	27	9	100
Nones	29	41	23	7	100

⁴³ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research, May 2015

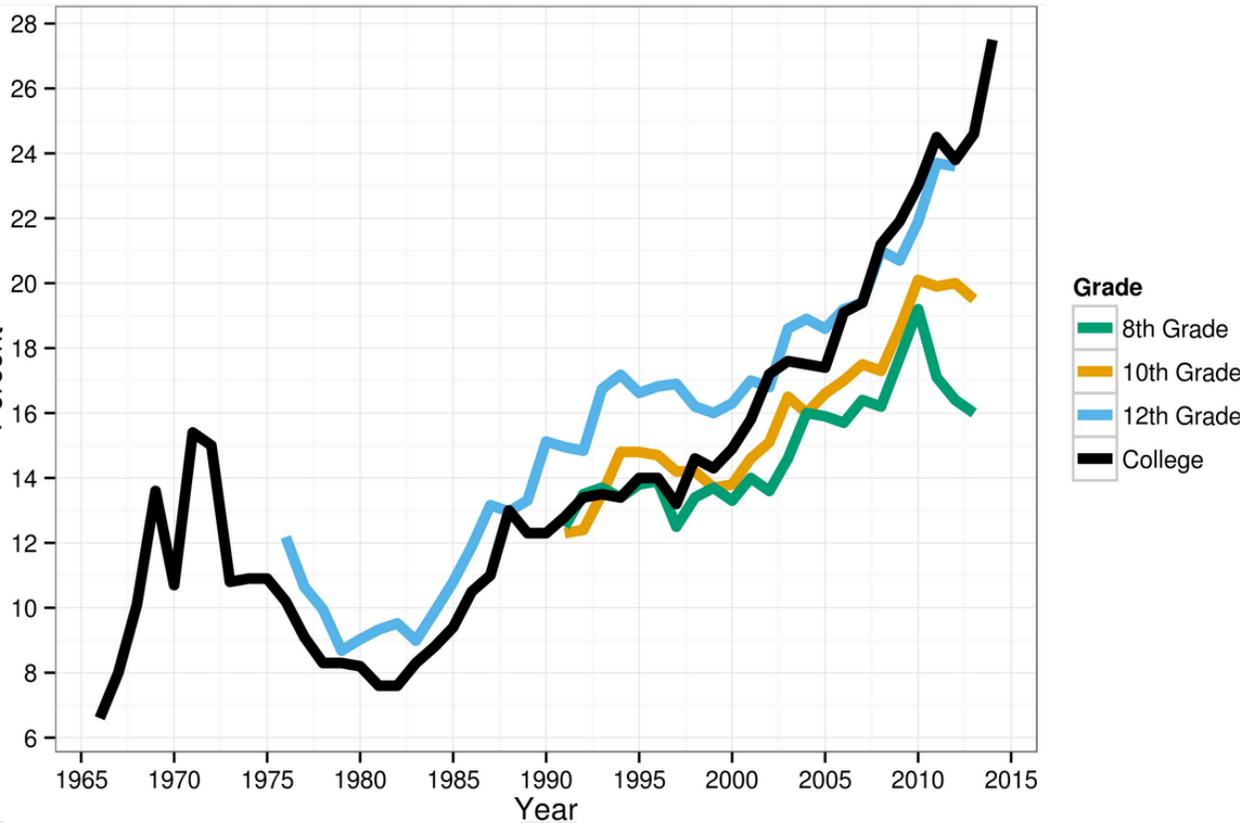
⁴⁴ [Generational Differences in American Adolescents' Religious Orientation, 1966–2014](#), PLOS One, May 2015

⁴⁵ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

Secular Resource Guide, Secular Policy Institute, www.SecularPolicyInstitute.net, July 2015

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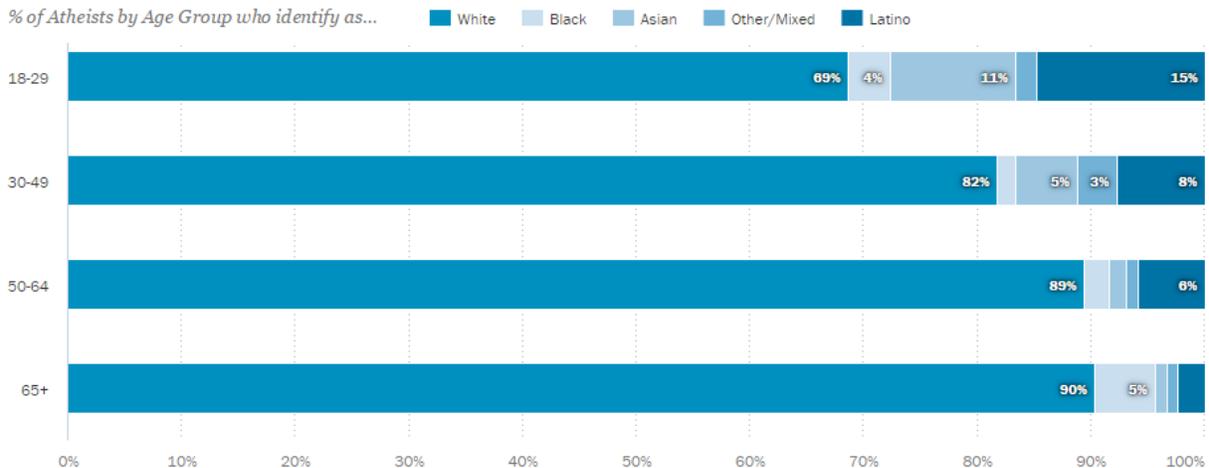
% American Adolescents Claiming "None" for Religious Affiliation



Source: Generational and Time Period Differences in American Adolescents' Religious Orientation, 1966–2014, PLOS One

The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Studies contains [more detailed tables](#) showing religious affiliation and non-affiliation by age.

Racial and Ethnic Composition among Atheists by Age Group



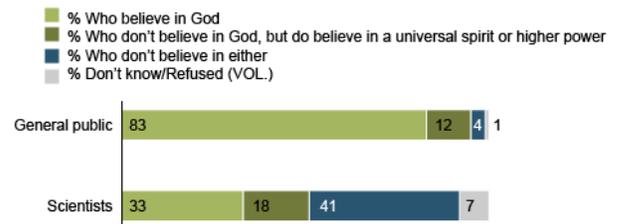
Source: Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study, 2015

Education

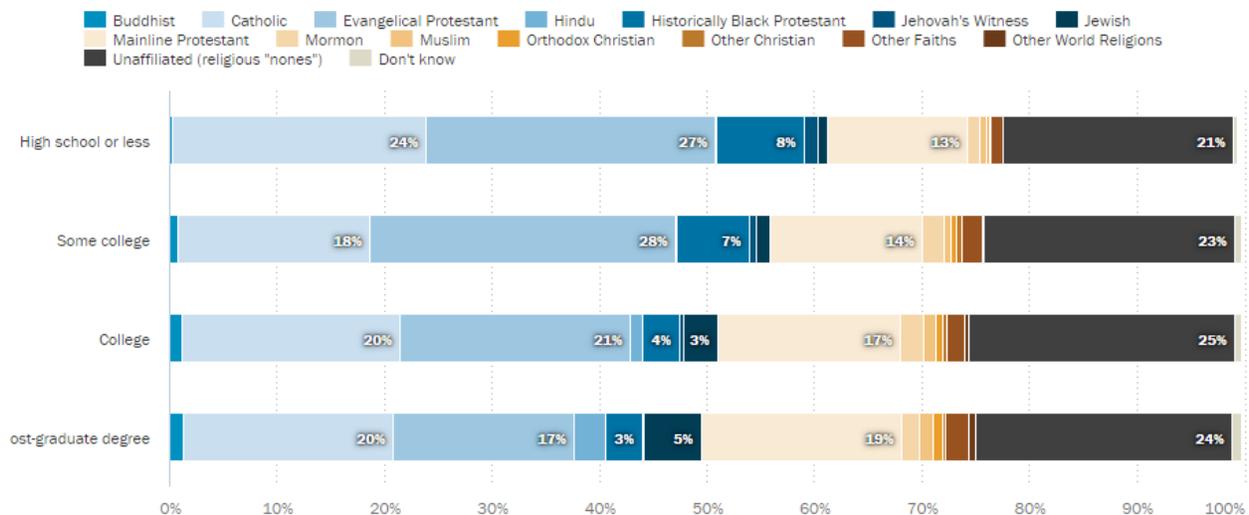
Intelligent people are more likely to be atheist⁴⁶, and secular people are well educated, with 31% having a college degree, which only 27% of Americans have⁴⁷. Some 48% of religious Americans “seldom” or “never” read books other than Scripture⁴⁸. Atheists score higher than any other belief group even on religious knowledge⁴⁹.

Americans with no religious affiliation are more likely to have a college degree (18%) than Catholics (16%), Evangelicals (14%), but about the same of less than Protestants (19%), Mormons (23%), Muslims (23%), Hindus (29%), and Jewish people (29%)⁵⁰. However, those with a college degree or post-graduate degree are more likely to be religiously unaffiliated (25%, 24%) than have any other belief system.

Religious Belief Among the General Public and Scientists



In the United States, 51% of scientists believe in a higher power, compared with 95% of the general population⁵¹, with 41% saying they do not believe in God or a higher power. Of “leading” scientists in 1998, 93% either doubt God or disbelieve in God, up from an astonishing 85% in 1933 and 73% in 1914⁵². Some 73% of philosophers are atheist, with only 15% being theists⁵³.



⁴⁶ [Average Intelligence Predicts Atheism Rates Across 137 Nations](#), Richard Lynn, John Harvey, Helmuth Nyborg, Intelligence Volume 37, Issue 1, January 2009

⁴⁷ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

⁴⁸ [U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey](#), Pew Research Center, September 2010.

⁴⁹ [U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey](#), Pew Research Center, September 2010

⁵⁰ [Religious Landscape Study - Religious Tradition by Educational Group](#), Pew Research Center, 2014

⁵¹ [Scientists and Belief](#), Pew Research Center, November 2009

⁵² [Leading Scientists Still Reject God](#), Edward Larson and Larry Witham, Nature, July 1998. Also see [this link](#).

⁵³ [What Do Philosophers Believe?](#) David Bourget and David Chalmers, November 2013

Secular Resource Guide, Secular Policy Institute, www.SecularPolicyInstitute.net, July 2015

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Religious Tradition	High school or less	Some college	College	Post-graduate degree
Buddhist	20%	33%	28%	20%
Catholic	46%	27%	16%	10%
Evangelical Protestant	43%	35%	14%	7%
Hindu	12%	11%	29%	48%
Historically Black Protestant	52%	33%	9%	6%
Jehovah's Witness	63%	25%	9%	3%
Jewish	19%	22%	29%	31%
Mainline Protestant	37%	30%	19%	14%
Mormon	27%	40%	23%	10%
Muslim	36%	25%	23%	17%
Orthodox Christian	27%	34%	21%	18%
Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	38%	32%	18%	11%

**Percentage of College Graduates in the Population Age 25 and Over
by Religious Tradition 1990-2008**

	1990	2008
U.S. National Population	21	27
Catholic	22	25
Baptist	11	16
Mainline Christian	26	35
Christian Generic	22	26
Pentecostal/Charismatic	9	13
Protestant Denominations	13	21
Mormon/LDS	22	31
Jewish	50	57
Eastern Religions	44	59
Muslim	41	35
NRM & Other Religions	35	33
None	28	31
DK/Refused	29	31

The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Studies contains [more detailed tables](#) showing religious affiliation and non-affiliation by education.

Gender

Polls show that American atheists are more likely to be male, with 67%⁵⁴, 60%⁵⁵, or 57%⁵⁶ being men. This imbalance is also present in foreign countries, with more male atheists in The Ukraine (77%), Portugal (76%), Uruguay (70%), Japan (67%), Israel (65%), Mexico (65%), Sweden (61%), and The Netherlands (60%)⁵⁷.

This gender inequity is an improvement from 2001, when males were even more overrepresented in those with no religion (58%), atheists (70%), and agnostics (75%)⁵⁸. Another survey showed that women were 16% of atheists in 1993 but 43% in 2013⁵⁹. We hope that this balancing trend will continue.

Women pray more often and participate in religious ceremonies more often than men. They also dominate the world of 'New Age' spirituality and are far more superstitious than men⁶⁰. They are more likely than men to believe in God, and in all age ranges, women are more religious than men⁶¹. This disparity may be explained by historically lower levels of education in women, men having more freedom in traditional societies, or by rejection of religion being a risky activity that men are more likely to chance⁶². The gender gap does not seem to be the result of biology but rather gender roles in responsibility for managing birth, child-rearing, and attitudes to the body⁶³.

Gender Composition of the Religious Traditions 2008

	% Male	% Female
Catholic	46	54
Baptist	43	57
Mainline Christian	44	56
Christian Generic	48	52
Pentecostal/Charismatic	42	58
Protestant Denominations	45	55
Mormon/LDS	45	55
Jewish	49	51
Eastern Religions	53	47
Muslim	52	48
NRM & Other Religions	52	48
Nones	60	40

Pew Center Religious Landscape Study (2014)

⁵⁴ [5 Facts About Atheists](#), Pew Research Center, October 2013.

⁵⁵ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

⁵⁶ [Religious Landscape Study – Gender Composition by Religion](#), Pew Research Center, 2014

⁵⁷ [Why Are Women More Religious Than Men?](#) Phil Zuckerman, Psychology Today, September 2014

⁵⁸ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), 2001

⁵⁹ [2015 State of Atheism in America](#), Barna Group, March 2015

⁶⁰ [Why are Women more Religious than Men?](#), Marta Trzebiatowska and Steve Bruce, 2012

⁶¹ [Why Are Women More Religious Than Men?](#) Phil Zuckerman, Psychology Today, September

⁶² [Religion and Atheism from a Gender Perspective](#), Tiina Mahlamäki, Approaching Religion Vol 2 No 1, June 2012

⁶³ [Why are Women more Religious than Men?](#), Marta Trzebiatowska and Steve Bruce, 2012

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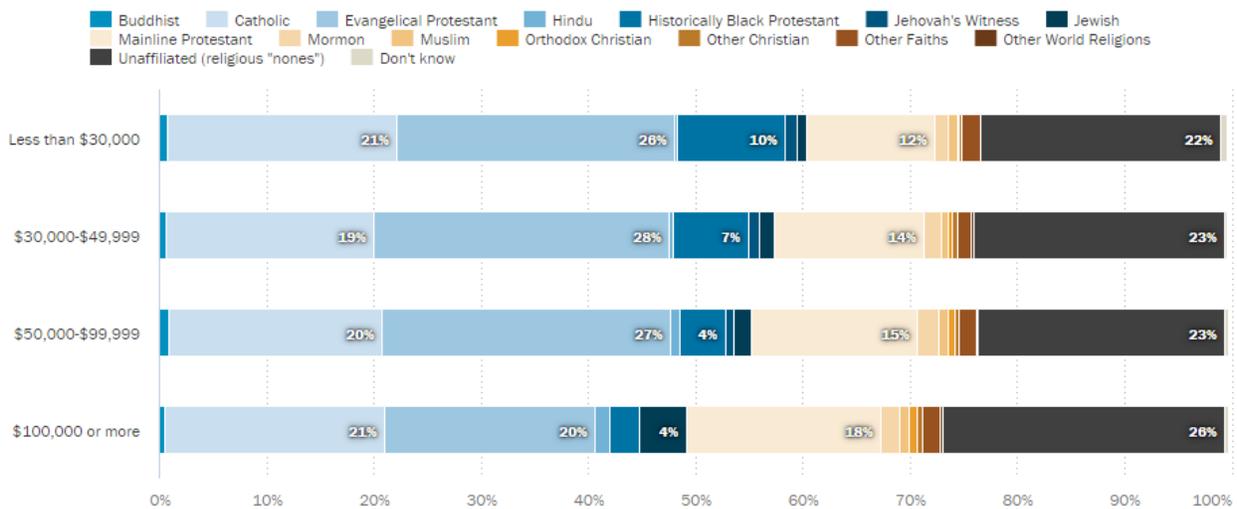
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Religious Tradition	Men	Women
Buddhist	51%	49%
Catholic	46%	54%
Evangelical Protestant	45%	55%
Hindu	62%	38%
Historically Black Protestant	41%	59%
Jehovah's Witness	35%	65%
Jewish	52%	48%
Mainline Protestant	45%	55%
Mormon	46%	54%
Muslim	65%	35%
Orthodox Christian	56%	44%
Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	57%	43%

The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Studies contains [more detailed tables](#) showing religious affiliation and non-affiliation by gender.

Income

Secular people are more likely to earn \$100,000 or more per year than any other belief group, and are less likely to be in lower wage brackets⁶⁴.



The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Studies contains [more detailed tables](#) showing religious affiliation and non-affiliation by household income.

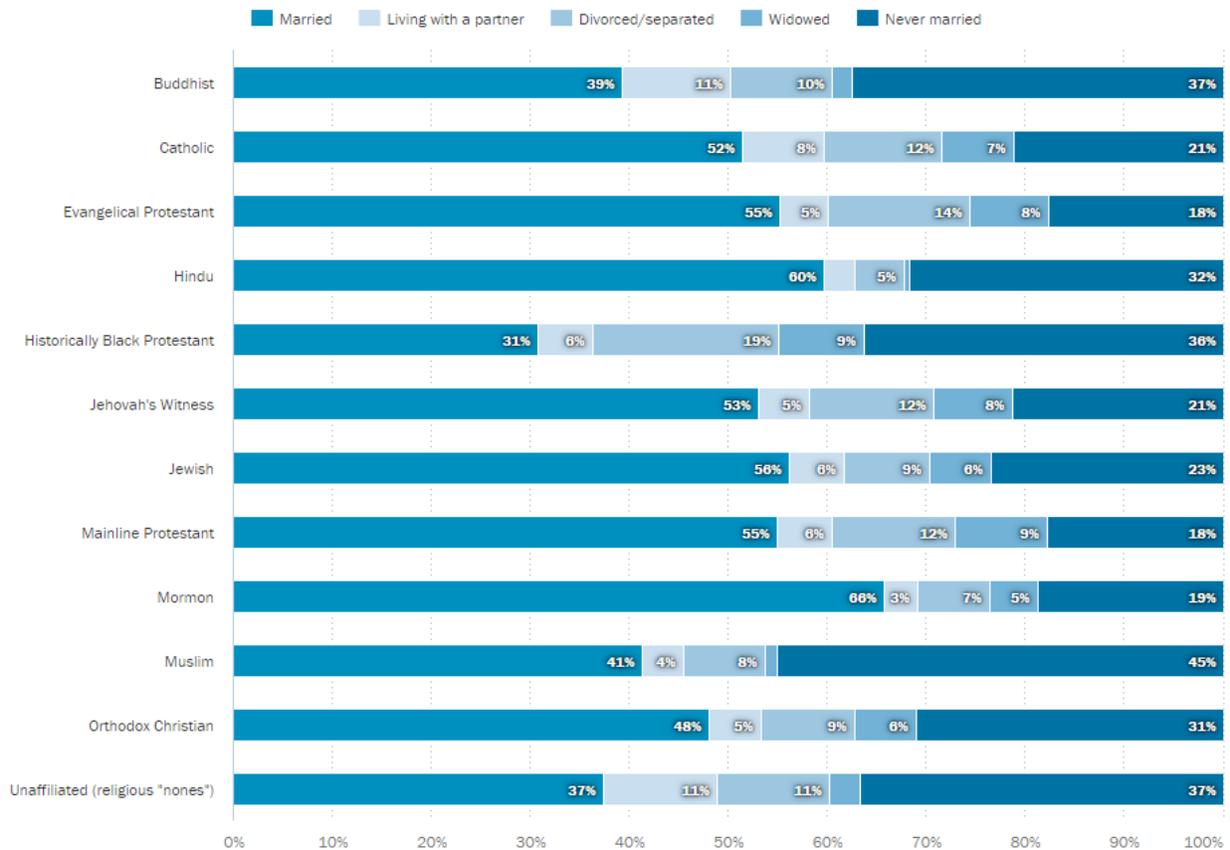
⁶⁴ [Religious Landscape Study – Religious Tradition by Household Income](#), Pew Research Center, 2014
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Marriage

Of those who married since 2010, 39% are in mixed-religion marriages and nearly 20% are a couple with one Christian person and unaffiliated person⁶⁵. Secular Americans are just as likely to be divorced (11%) as other Americans (13%), and just as likely to have never been married (29%) as the US average (25%), according to one poll⁶⁶.

Another poll shows adult Americans without a religious affiliation to be less likely to be married or living with a partner (48%) than Catholics (60%), Evangelicals (60%), Protestants (61%), and Orthodox Christians (53%).

The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Studies contains [more detailed tables](#) showing religious affiliation and non-affiliation by marital status.



⁶⁵ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research, May 2015

⁶⁶ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

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Marital Status of the Religious Traditions 2008

	Single Never Married	Single Living w/ Partner	Married	Divorced/ Separated	Widowed	Don't Know/ Refusal	% Total
U.S. National Population	25	N/A	56	13	6	0	100
Catholic	20	7	53	11	8	1	100
Baptist	13	4	60	11	12	1	100
Mainline Christian	20	6	49	14	11	0	100
Christian Generic	23	6	53	12	5	1	100
Pentecostal/ Charismatic	19	4	52	16	10	0	100
Protestant Denominations	23	2	55	11	8	1	100
Mormon/ LDS	14	2	68	9	6	1	100
Jewish	23	5	54	8	10	1	100
Eastern Religions	35	8	45	10	1	3	100
Muslim	36	11	42	10	1	0	100
NRM & Other Religions	24	13	40	16	7	1	100
None	29	11	45	11	3	1	100

Morality

Atheists and religious people are equally likely to commit moral and immoral acts⁶⁷, but atheists are less likely to commit crimes. Although 4% of Americans are open atheists, they comprise only 0.07% of the US federal prison population⁶⁸.

Foreign nations with the lowest levels of faith, including Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Belgium, and New Zealand, also have the lowest rates of murder, aggravated assault, and rape in the world⁶⁹.

Race

Secular Americans are more racially diverse than other faith groups, with only 68% being white compared with Evangelical (76%), Mormon (85%), Jewish (90%), and Orthodox Christian (81%). However, fewer Catholics (59%) are white and fewer Muslims (38%) are white⁷⁰.

Diversity among the “churchless” is increasing, with whites being 80% in 1993, dropping to 74% in 2013⁷¹.

⁶⁷ [Morality in Everyday Life](#), Science 12, Vol. 345 no. 6202, Wilhelm Hofmann, Daniel Wisneski, Mark Brandt, Linda Skitka, September 2014

⁶⁸ [What Percentage of Prisoners are Atheists? It's a Lot Smaller Than We Ever Imagined](#), Friendly Atheist, July 2013

⁶⁹ [Living the Secular Life](#), Phil Zuckerman, 2014

⁷⁰ [Religious Landscape Study - Racial and Ethnic Composition by Religious Group](#), Pew Research Center, 2014

⁷¹ [2015 State of Atheism in America](#), Barna Group, March 2015

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Religious Tradition	White	Black	Asian	Other/Mixed	Latino
Buddhist	44%	3%	33%	8%	12%
Catholic	59%	3%	3%	2%	34%
Evangelical Protestant	76%	6%	2%	5%	11%
Hindu	4%	2%	91%	2%	1%
Historically Black Protestant	2%	94%	< 1%	1%	3%
Jehovah's Witness	36%	27%	< 1%	6%	32%
Jewish	90%	2%	2%	2%	4%
Mainline Protestant	86%	3%	1%	3%	6%
Mormon	85%	1%	1%	5%	8%
Muslim	38%	28%	28%	3%	4%
Orthodox Christian	81%	8%	3%	2%	6%
Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	68%	9%	5%	4%	13%

Secular Americans are less racist^{72,73}. Strongly religious Americans (Baptists 45%, Evangelicals 38%) are more likely to support laws against interracial marriage than secular Americans (11%)⁷⁴.

Religious affiliation has declined among all racial and ethnic groups in America, with 24% of whites say they have no religion, compared with 20% of Hispanics and 18% of African-Americans⁷⁵. Asian-Americans are substantially less likely to be religious than other racial and ethnic groups⁷⁶. The fraction of Hispanic Americans with no religious affiliation has doubled to more than 12%⁷⁷.

The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Studies contains [more detailed tables](#) showing religious affiliation and non-affiliation by race and ethnicity.

⁷² [Why Don't We Practice What We Preach? A Meta-Analytic Review of Religious Racism](#), Deborah Hall, David Matz, and Wendy Wood, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(1)

⁷³ [The Psychology of Religion, Fourth Edition: An Empirical Approach](#), Ralph Hood, Peter Hill, Bernard Spilka, 2009

⁷⁴ [Changing Faith: Dynamics and Consequences of Americans' Shifting Religious Identities](#), Darren Sherkat, 2014

⁷⁵ [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research, May 2015

⁷⁶ [American Religious Identification Survey](#), Trinity College, March 2009

⁷⁷ [The Secularization of U.S. Latinos](#), Lecture by Professor Juhem Navarro-Rivera, April 2011.

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Questions for Secular People

Why are Atheists so angry?

That's just a stereotype. In the past, discrimination against secular people was so severe that only the most strident people were brave enough to raise their voices. Understandably, because of severe discrimination, they felt that the world was against them.

This happens whenever there is social change. In the early civil rights movement, there were a lot of understandably angry African-American voices. In the early gay rights movement, those brave enough to march in public parades were the ones who were the most fed up. Like the pioneers of secularism, they did not necessarily represent the mood of the average person.

The average secular person does not have bottled up anger, and we never have. There's a new movement of outspoken secular leaders who do not attack religion. Instead, we want to find common ground.

Why do you hate God?

We don't hate God or religious people. Just as government benefits when we hold our politicians accountable and ask questions, we feel that religious organizations benefit from being held accountable. When we question religion, we're trying to be constructive.

Why are you trying to take God away?

We don't want to take God away, and we don't want to convert anyone away from their religion. We should all be free to worship how we please in our private lives.

However, in shared spaces, such as what's said in public discourse, what's printed on our money, and what displays are erected in our city halls, not every American believes in God. We'd just like an acknowledgement of that.

We could turn this question around. Why is it so important to you that people outside your religion accept God? Let's agree to respect each other's' beliefs without interference.

What about the War on Christmas?

The word 'war' is a loaded term meant to disparage nonbelievers, by making them look violent and crazed with anger. No one has fired a gun. No one has died in this "war".

Actually, most secular people love Christmas. We like having the day off. Many of us were raised with Christian traditions, and we like the gift giving, the music, and the decorations.

Christmas dominates two months every year. There's no need to resent us for wanting an acknowledgement that not every American is a Christian.

How can you be moral without God?

We have the same conscience and sense of goodwill towards others that you do.

Even when you are told what to do by a religious leader, or through prayer, or through reading scripture, you are still making the choice to follow, to interpret, and to accept what to do. So you are making your own choices in the same way that we do. We take in what we know about the world, how we feel, and what seems right to us and those we trust. Then we make choices.

How can you be happy without God?

No one likes to think about death. The idea that the Universe has no leader can make us feel lost. On the other hand, living under a God who can send us to Hell is frightening, too. Christians sometimes describe themselves as God fearing. Secularists don't live in fear.

Secular people, especially those of us who prefer the term Humanist, celebrate the idea that human beings can chart their own course. We love the challenge of understanding of nature and working out our own morality. Instead of fixating on death, we embrace life. Do you like the community and ethical aspects of churchgoing? We love those things, too, and many of us attend weekly gatherings to socialize and discuss the big issues of life. These events don't have a religious component, but they take what we feel are the best parts of religious tradition. We acknowledge the need for people to come together.

We have another thing in common with you. While we don't use the word 'spiritual', secular people also experience awe and wonder at the Universe. From the tiniest piece of an atom to the largest galaxy, there are so many amazing things to discover. So if you find the world miraculous, magical, and thrilling, we feel exactly the same as you.

You must believe in something?

We don't feel that we're denying ourselves something, like we've gone on a diet and we're hungry all the time. Our philosophy is self-supporting. There's no "God-shaped hole" in our hearts. Living without God actually clears up many problems for some of us. We don't wonder why there is suffering in the world. We don't wonder why God doesn't answer prayers. We don't worry about how to interpret scripture, because we know we must figure out life for ourselves.

It's true that someone leaving religion can experience trauma, but leaving religion can also be healing for many of us. We can always go back, but almost all of us choose not to, just like few children choose to go back to believing in Santa.

What about on your deathbed?

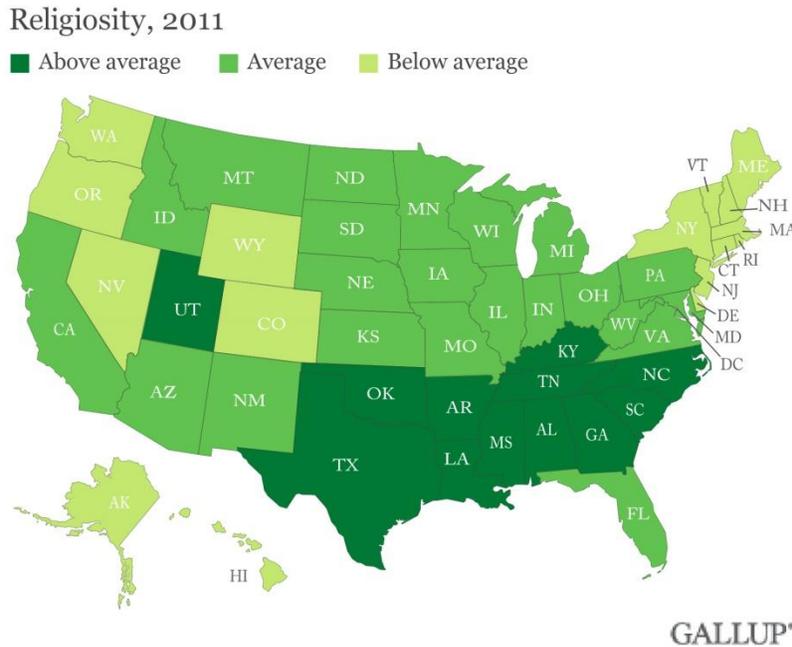
Death is scary and can make people panic, but secularism is a rich and self-supporting worldview. It's arrogant to think that under pressure we would give it up to choose religion.

What about the children?

It's arrogant to suggest that children raised without religion are inferior.

Secular People in US States

Secularism has grown and religiousness has shrunk in every region of the United States. Six of the least religious states are in the US Northeast, and eight of the most religious states are in the US South^{78,79}. Americans unaffiliated with religion number 25% in the Northeast, 22% in the Midwest, 28% in the West, and 19% in the South⁸⁰.



Most Religious States, Based on % Very Religious

State	Very religious Americans
Mississippi	59%
Utah	57%
Alabama	56%
Louisiana	54%
Arkansas	54%
South Carolina	54%
Tennessee	52%
North Carolina	50%
Georgia	48%
Oklahoma	48%

Gallup Daily tracking
January-December 2011

Least Religious States, Based on % Very Religious

State	Very religious Americans
Vermont	23%
New Hampshire	23%
Maine	25%
Massachusetts	28%
Alaska	28%
Oregon	30%
Nevada	30%
Washington	30%
Connecticut	31%
District of Columbia (tie)	32%
New York (tie)	32%
Rhode Island (tie)	32%

Gallup Daily tracking
January-December 2011

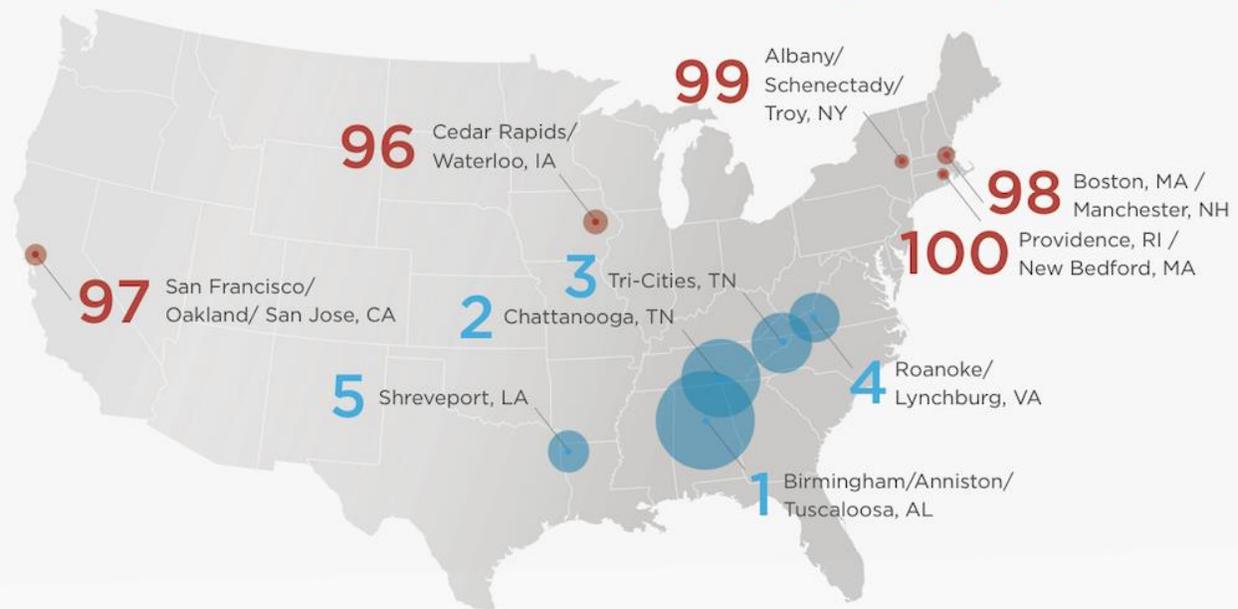
⁷⁸ [Mississippi Is Most Religious U.S. State](#), Gallup, 2011

⁷⁹ [State of the States](#), Gallup, 2001

⁸⁰ [Religious Landscape Study](#), Pew Research Center, 2014.

The most Christian (or “bible-minded”) cities in America are Birmingham, AL, Chattanooga, TN, Tri-Cities, TN, Lynchburg, VA, and Shreveport, LA, with the least religious cities being Providence, RI, Albany, NY, Boston, MA, San Francisco, CA, and Cedar Rapids, IA⁸¹.

AMERICA'S MOST BIBLE-MINDED CITIES 2015



1.	Birmingham / Anniston / Tuscaloosa, AL	51	33.	Tulsa, OK	67.	Baltimore, MD	24
2.	Chattanooga, TN	50	34.	Richmond / Petersburg, VA	68.	Miami / Ft. Lauderdale, FL	24
3.	Tri-Cities, TN	50	35.	Charleston, SC	69.	Sacramento / Stockton / Modesto, CA	24
4.	Roanoke/Lynchburg, VA	48	36.	New Orleans, LA	70.	Pittsburgh, PA	24
5.	Shreveport, LA	46	37.	Waco / Temple / Bryan, TX	71.	San Diego, CA	24
6.	Springfield, MO	46	38.	Fort Smith / Fayetteville / Springdale-Rogers, AR	72.	Orlando / Daytona Beach / Melbourne, FL	23
7.	Jackson, MS	46	39.	Norfolk / Portsmouth / Newport News, VA	73.	Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN	23
8.	Charlotte, NC	46	40.	San Antonio, TX	74.	Milwaukee, WI	23
9.	Greenville / Spartanburg / Anderson, SC / Asheville, NC	46	41.	Dayton, OH	75.	Seattle / Tacoma, WA	22
10.	Little Rock / Pine Bluff, AR	46	42.	South Bend / Elkhart, IN	76.	Tucson / Sierra Vista, AZ	22
11.	Knoxville, TN	42	43.	Kansas City, KS-MO	77.	Wilkes-Barre / Scranton, PA	22
12.	Huntsville / Decatur / Florence, AL	42	44.	Cincinnati, OH	78.	Green Bay / Appleton, WI	22
13.	Charleston / Huntington, WV	42	45.	Davenport, IA / Rock Island / Moline, IL	79.	Syracuse, NY	22
14.	Nashville, TN	42	46.	Houston, TX	80.	Los Angeles, CA	21
15.	Lexington, KY	42	47.	St. Louis, MO	81.	Chicago, IL	21
16.	Savannah, GA	42	48.	Harlingen / Weslaco / McAllen / Brownsville, TX	82.	Denver, CO	21
17.	Louisville, KY	41	49.	Columbus, OH	83.	Toledo, OH	21
18.	Baton Rouge, LA	41	50.	Austin, TX	84.	Madison, WI	20
19.	Oklahoma City, OK	40	51.	Albuquerque / Santa Fe, NM	85.	Washington, DC / Hagerstown, MD	20
20.	Greensboro / High Point / Winston-Salem, NC	40	52.	Spokane, WA	86.	Ft. Myers / Naples, FL	19
21.	Columbia, SC	40	53.	Portland, OR	87.	Rochester, NY	19
22.	Wichita / Hutchinson, KS	39	54.	El Paso, TX / Las Cruces, NM	88.	Portland / Auburn, ME	18
23.	Paducah, KY / Cape Girardeau, MO / Harrisburg, IL / Mt. Vernon, IL	39	55.	Cleveland / Akron / Canton, OH	89.	Burlington / Plattsburgh, VT	18
24.	Jacksonville, FL	38	56.	Des Moines / Ames, IA	90.	Salt Lake City, UT	17
25.	Mobile, AL / Pensacola / Fort Walton, FL	38	57.	West Palm Beach / Fort Pierce, FL	91.	New York, NY	17
26.	Dallas / Fort Worth, TX	38	58.	Champaign / Springfield / Decatur, IL	92.	Phoenix / Prescott, AZ	17
27.	Memphis, TN	38	59.	Tampa / St. Petersburg / Sarasota, FL	93.	Buffalo, NY	16
28.	Raleigh / Durham / Fayetteville, NC	38	60.	Detroit, MI	94.	Hartford / New Haven, CT	16
29.	Grand Rapids / Kalamazoo / Battle Creek, MI	35	61.	Omaha, NE	95.	Las Vegas, NV	15
30.	Indianapolis, IN	34	62.	Harrisburg / Lancaster / Lebanon / York, PA	96.	Cedar Rapids / Waterloo, IA	15
31.	Atlanta, GA	34	63.	Fresno / Visalia, CA	97.	San Francisco / Oakland / San Jose, CA	15
32.	Greenville / New Bern / Washington, NC	34	64.	Flint / Saginaw / Bay City, MI	98.	Boston, MA / Manchester, NH	14
			65.	Colorado Springs / Pueblo, CO	99.	Albany / Schenectady / Troy, NY	10
			66.	Philadelphia, PA	100.	Providence, RI / New Bedford, MA	9

⁸¹ [The Most \(and Least\) Bible-Minded Cities in America](#), American Bible Society, 2015.

Catholic faith has risen the South and West due to immigration from Latin America, and fallen in the Northeast due to religious scandals. Those without a religious affiliation have grown in every region and every state. Although nonbelievers historically were concentrated in the Northwest, there are now more in the Northeast⁸².

The Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Studies contains [more detailed tables](#) from 2014 showing religious affiliation and non-affiliation by US state and region, which can be compared with the [American Religious Identification Survey](#) charts from 2008.

⁸² [American Religious Identification Survey](#), March 2009

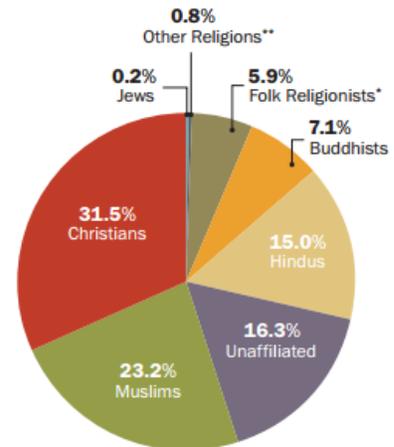
Secular People Around the World

Global

Globally, 59% of people are religious, 23% are not religious, and 13% are openly atheist⁸³. After Christianity (2 billion), Islam (1.3 billion), and Hinduism (900 million), secularism (850 million) is the world's 4th largest belief system⁸⁴. A more recent study ranked those unaffiliated with religion as the 3rd largest belief system (16.3%) after Islam (23.2%) and Christianity (31.5%).

Global religiousness dropped 9% from 2005 to 2011 while atheism increased 3%⁸⁵. The most atheist countries in 2011 were China, Japan, The Czech Republic, France, South Korea, Germany, The Netherlands, Austria, Iceland, Australia, and Ireland. The most religious were Ghana, Nigeria, Armenia, Fiji, Macedonia, Romania, Iraq, Kenya, Peru, and Brazil⁸⁶.

Size of Major Religious Groups, 2010
Percentage of the global population



Pew Research, Forum on Religion & Public Life

Countries	A religious person	Not a religious person	A convinced atheist	Don't know / no response
China	14%	30%	47%	9%
Japan	16%	31%	31%	23%
Czech Republic	20%	48%	30%	2%
France	37%	34%	29%	1%
Korea, Rep (South)	52%	31%	15%	2%
Germany	51%	33%	15%	1%
Netherlands	43%	42%	14%	2%
Austria	42%	43%	10%	5%
Iceland	57%	31%	10%	2%
Australia	37%	48%	10%	5%
Ireland	47%	44%	10%	0%

Countries	A religious person	Not a religious person	A convinced atheist	Don't know / no response
Ghana	96%	2%	0%	1%
Nigeria	93%	4%	1%	2%
Armenia	92%	3%	2%	2%
Fiji	92%	5%	1%	2%
Macedonia	90%	8%	1%	1%
Romania	89%	6%	1%	3%
Iraq	88%	9%	0%	3%
Kenya	88%	9%	2%	1%
Peru	86%	8%	3%	3%
Brazil	85%	13%	1%	1%

[Global Index of Religion and Atheism](#), Gallup International Association, 2012.

⁸³ [Global Index of Religion and Atheism](#), Gallup International Association, 2012.

⁸⁴ [Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents](#)

⁸⁵ [Global Index of Religion and Atheism](#), Gallup International Association, 2012.

⁸⁶ [Global Index of Religion and Atheism](#), Gallup International Association, 2012.

Those in the bottom income tier are 17% more religious than those in the top income tier⁸⁷. The United States is the only rich nation with a majority belief in God and a rejection of evolution⁸⁸.

Income Bracket	Proportion describing themselves as religious
Bottom Quintile (Low Income)	66%
Medium-Low Quintile	65%
Medium Quintile	56%
Medium-High Quintile	51%
High Quintile (High Income)	49%

Countries experiencing a sharp decline in religiousness from 2005 to 2011 included Vietnam, Ireland, Switzerland, France, South Africa, Iceland, Ecuador, the United States, Canada, and Austria⁸⁹.

Country	2005	2012	% change in Religiosity
Global Average	77%	68%	-9%
Vietnam	53%	30%	-23%
Ireland	69%	47%	-22%
Switzerland	71%	50%	-21%
France	58%	37%	-21%
South Africa	83%	64%	-19%
Iceland	74%	57%	-17%
Ecuador	85%	70%	-15%
United States	73%	60%	-13%
Canada	58%	46%	-12%
Austria	52%	42%	-10%

More than 76% of the religiously unaffiliated live in Asia, and 71% of nonreligious people live in a country where their worldview is the majority worldview, compared to 87% for Christians and 97% for Hindus⁹⁰. Only 5.2% of the unaffiliated live in North America.



Source: 2012 WIN-Gallup International

⁸⁷ [Global Index of Religion and Atheism](#), Gallup International Association, 2012

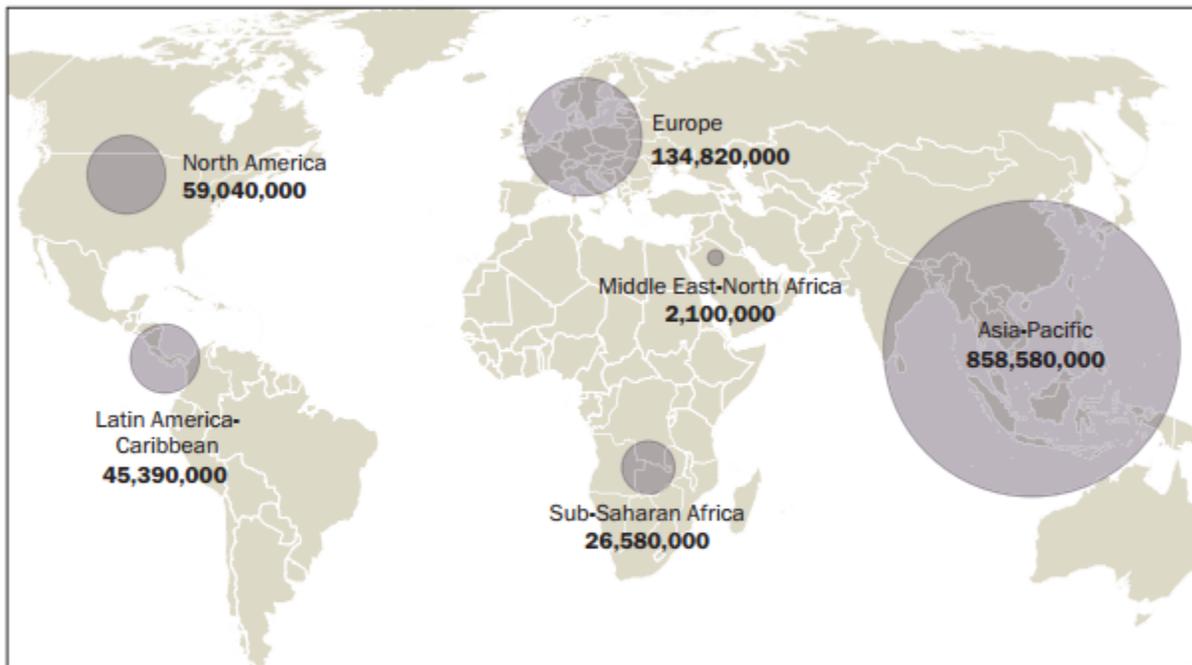
⁸⁸ [Correlating Societal Health with Religiosity and Secularism](#), Physicians for a National Health Program, 2005.

⁸⁹ [Global Index of Religion and Atheism](#), Gallup International Association, 2012.

⁹⁰ [The Global Religious Landscape](#), Pew Research Center, December 2012.

Regional Distribution of the Unaffiliated

Population by region as of 2010



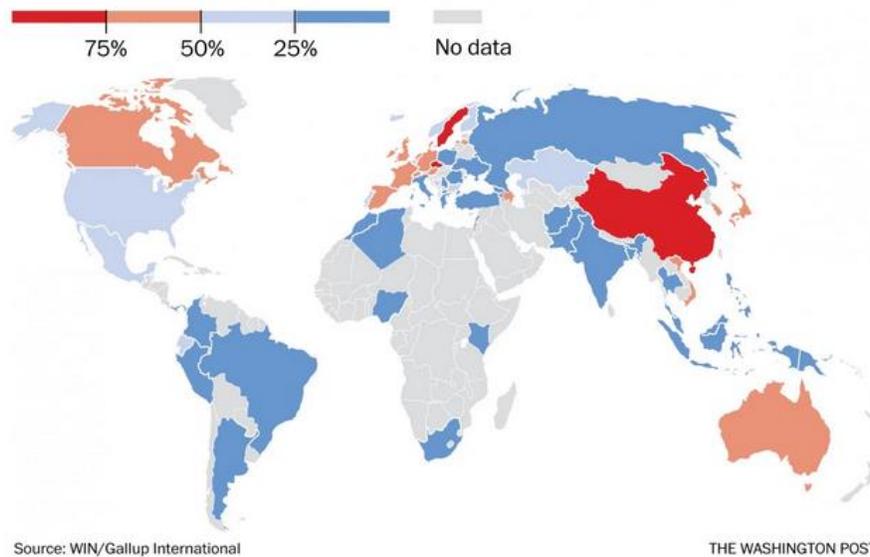
Percentage of world unaffiliated population in each region as of 2010



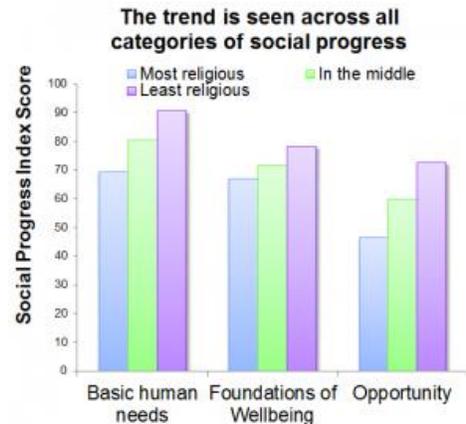
Source: *The Global Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center, December 2012.

World's least religious countries

Percentage of respondents in each country claiming to be either not religious or atheist.



As measured by the [2015 Social Progress Index](#), non-religious countries are more socially advanced, as measured by “Basic Human Needs”, “Foundations of Wellbeing” (health and basic education), and “Opportunity” – personal rights, freedom, tolerance and advanced education⁹¹. Less religious countries are more peaceful, more democratic, have less corruption, and less inequality⁹². This could be because people in difficult and oppressive circumstances are more likely to turn to religion⁹³.



Global studies of religiousness in all the world's countries can be found in the [2012 WIN-Gallup International Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism](#), the [2012 Pew Research Center Global Religious Landscape](#), [Phil Zuckerman, 2005](#), and [Atheism: Contemporary Rates and Patterns, Phil Zuckerman, 2007](#).

Canada

Canada's population is between 19% and 26% atheist⁹⁴.

⁹¹ [Countries Free of Religion are the Most Socially Advanced, Data Show](#), Epiphenom, April 2015

⁹² [Countries Free of Religion are the Most Socially Advanced, Data Show](#), Epiphenom, April 2015

⁹³ [Why Some Countries are More Religious Than Others](#), Epiphenom, July 2009

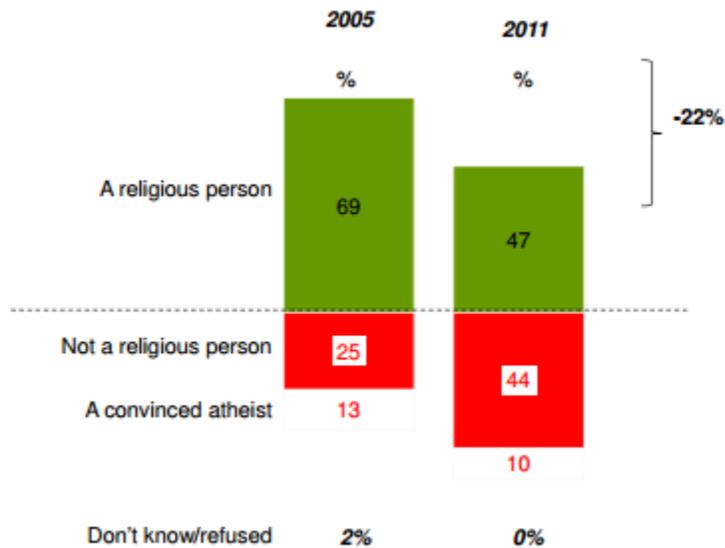
⁹⁴ [34 Fascinating Atheist Demographics](#), BrandonGaille.com, December 2014

Secular Resource Guide, Secular Policy Institute, www.SecularPolicyInstitute.net, July 2015

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Ireland

Religion in Ireland dropped 22% from 2005 to 2011, compared with a global decline of 9%, placing Ireland suddenly into the top 10 most atheist countries⁹⁵.



United Kingdom

The 2011 Office of National Statistics census in the UK shows that Christian numbers have declined dramatically since 2001, while atheists rose from 15% in 2001 to 25% in 2011⁹⁶. Another poll found that 19% of Britons identified as atheist, 7% as agnostic, and 3% as humanist⁹⁷.

⁹⁵ [Global Index of Religion and Atheism](#), Gallup International Association, 2012.

⁹⁶ [2011 Census for England and Wales](#), United Kingdom Office for National Statistics

⁹⁷ [Losing Faith: Atheism Rising in Britain, Poll Suggests](#), Russia Today, February 2015

Secular Resource Guide, Secular Policy Institute, www.SecularPolicyInstitute.net, July 2015

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