

EXODUS

Why Americans are Leaving Religion—
and Why They're Unlikely to Come Back



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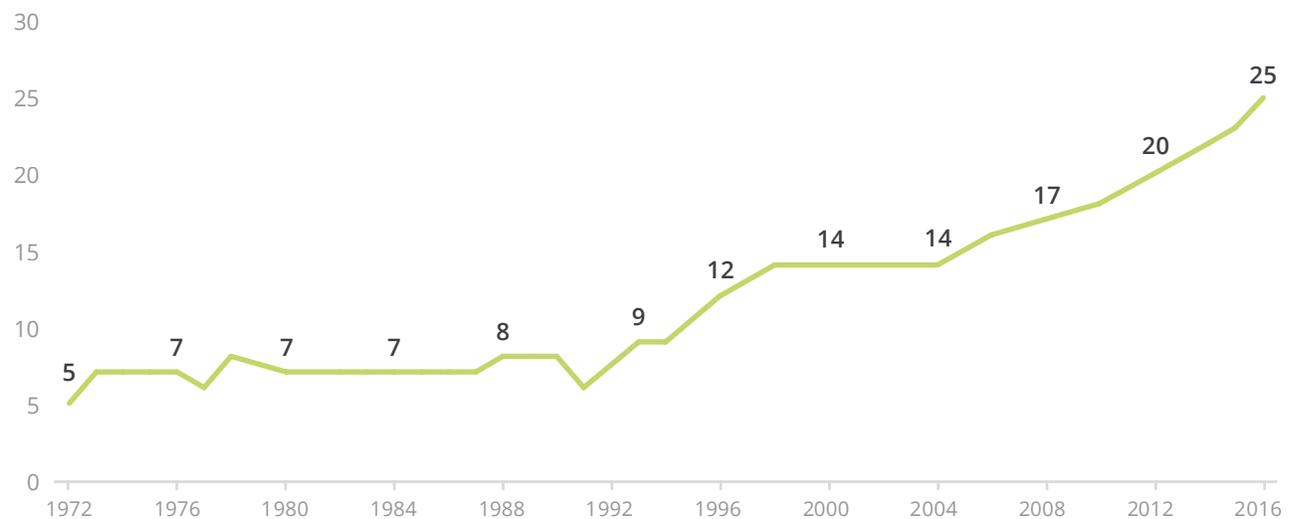
The Rise of the Unaffiliated

America's Largest "Religious" Group

The American religious landscape has undergone substantial changes in recent years. However, one of the most consequential shifts in American religion has been the rise of religiously unaffiliated Americans.¹ This trend emerged in the early 1990s. In 1991, only six percent of Americans identified their religious affiliation as "none," and that number had not moved much since the early 1970s.² By the end of the 1990s, 14% of the public claimed no religious affiliation. The rate of religious change accelerated further during the late 2000s and early 2010s, reaching 20% by 2012. Today, one-quarter (25%) of Americans claim no formal religious identity, making this group the single largest "religious group" in the U.S.

FIGURE 1. Growth of the Religiously Unaffiliated, 1972-2016

Percent of population



Sources: General Social Survey, 1974-2012; PRRI Surveys, 2014-2016.

¹ The religiously unaffiliated category includes all those who identify as "atheist," "agnostic," or "nothing in particular," in response to a question about their religious affiliation.

² General Social Survey 1972-1991.

The Decline of Religious Affiliation Among Young Adults

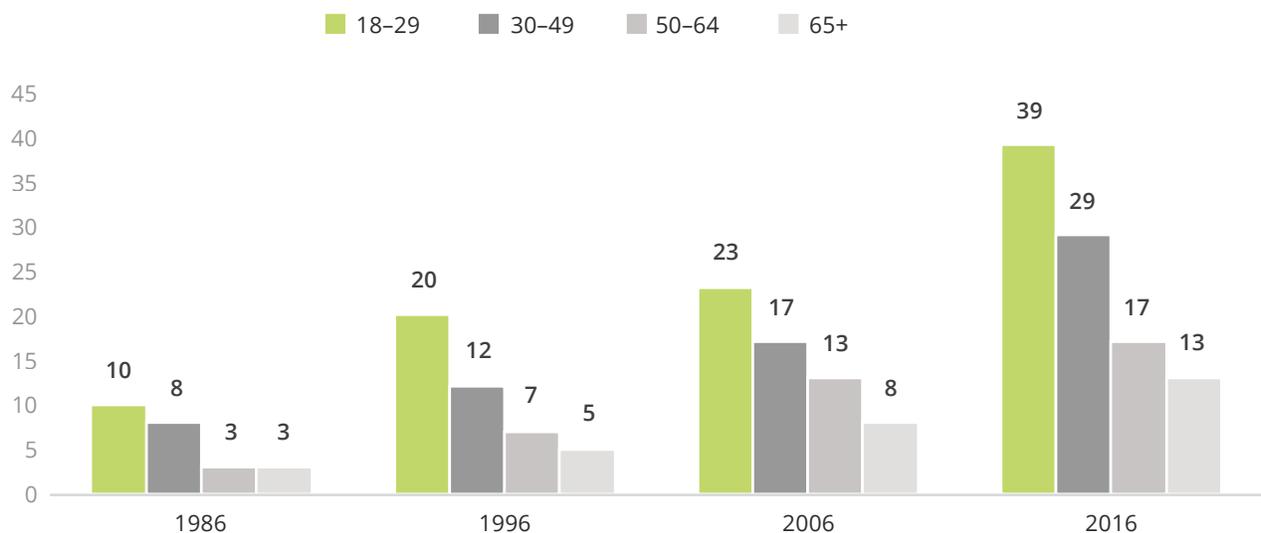
Today, nearly four in ten (39%) young adults (ages 18-29) are religiously unaffiliated—three times the unaffiliated rate (13%) among seniors (ages 65 and older). While previous generations were also more likely to be religiously unaffiliated in their twenties, young adults today are nearly four times as likely as young adults a generation ago to identify as religiously unaffiliated. In 1986, for example, only 10% of young adults claimed no religious affiliation.

Among young adults, the religiously unaffiliated dwarf the percentages of other religious identifications: Catholic (15%), white evangelical Protestant (9%), white mainline Protestant (8%), black Protestant (7%), other non-white Protestants³ (11%), and affiliation with a non-Christian religion (7%).

The age gap has also widened over the past several decades. Ten years ago, each age cohort was only somewhat more likely to be unaffiliated than the one preceding it. Today, there are only modest differences between middle-aged Americans (age 50 - 64) and seniors, but there is a substantial gap between Americans over the age of 50 (15%) and those under the age of 50 (33%).

FIGURE 2. More Young Adults are Unaffiliated than in the Past

Percent of each age group who are religiously unaffiliated, 1986-2016



Sources: General Social Survey, 1986, 1996, 2006; PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey

³ Other non-white Protestants includes respondents who are Hispanic, Asian-Pacific Islander or mixed race.

Religious Switching

The growth of the unaffiliated has been fed by an exodus of those who grew up with a religious identity. Only nine percent of Americans report being raised in a non-religious household. And while younger adults are more likely to report growing up without a religious identity than seniors (13% vs. 4%, respectively), the vast majority of unaffiliated Americans formerly identified with a particular religion.

No religious group has benefitted more from religious switching than the unaffiliated. Nearly one in five (19%) Americans switched from their childhood religious identity to become unaffiliated as adults, and relatively few (3%) Americans who were raised unaffiliated are joining a religious tradition. This dynamic has resulted in a dramatic net gain—16 percentage points—for the religiously unaffiliated.

While non-white Protestants and non-Christian religious groups have remained fairly stable, white Protestants and Catholics have all experienced declines, with Catholics suffering the largest decline among major religious groups: a 10-percentage point loss overall. Nearly one-third (31%) of Americans report being raised in a Catholic household, but only about one in five (21%) Americans identify as Catholic currently. Thirteen percent of Americans report being former Catholics, and roughly 2% of Americans have left their religious tradition to join the Church. White evangelical Protestants and white mainline Protestants are also witnessing negative growth, but to a much more modest degree (-2 percentage points and -5 percentage points, respectively).

TABLE 1. Religious Switching in the U.S.

Percent of general population

	Childhood Affiliation	Entering Group	Leaving Group	Current Affiliation	Retention Rate	Net Gain/Loss
White evangelical Protestant	17.8	3.8	6.0	15.6	0.66	-2.2
White mainline Protestant	18.0	4.0	8.6	13.5	0.52	-4.5
Black Protestant	8.2	0.9	1.6	7.6	0.80	-0.6
Other non-white Protestant	5.6	3.0	1.4	7.2	0.75	1.6
Catholic	31.2	2.5	12.8	20.9	0.59	-10.3
Non-Christian religion	5.0	2.1	1.9	5.2	0.62	0.2
Unaffiliated	9.0	18.9	3.1	24.8	0.66	15.8

Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

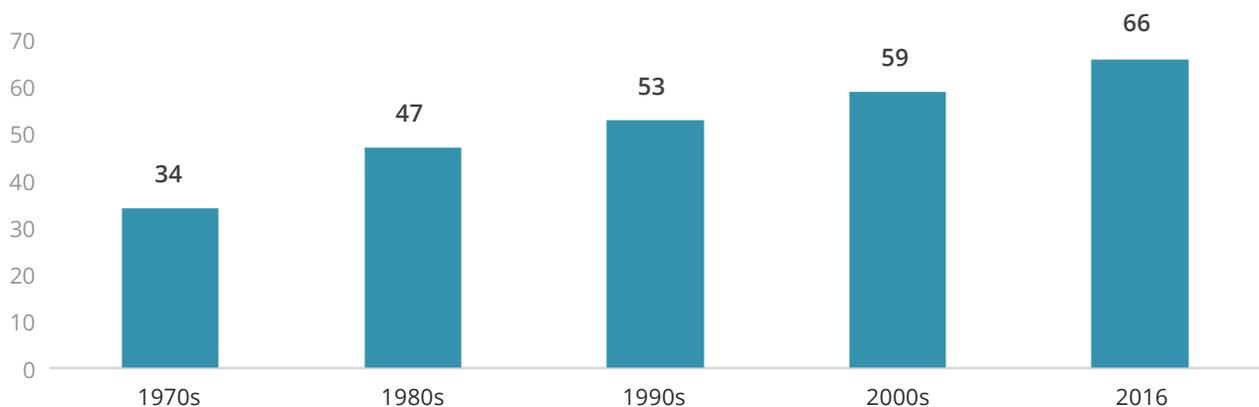
Rising Retention Rates among the Unaffiliated

Not every religious community is equally successful in keeping members in the fold, and historically, Americans who were raised unaffiliated were among the most likely to switch their religious identity in adulthood. In the 1970s, only about one-third (34%) of Americans who were raised in religiously unaffiliated households were still unaffiliated as adults. By the 1990s, slightly more than half (53%) of Americans who were unaffiliated in childhood retained their religious identity in adulthood. Today, about two-thirds (66%) of Americans who report being raised outside a formal religious tradition remain unaffiliated as adults.

One important reason why the unaffiliated are experiencing rising retention rates is because younger Americans raised in nonreligious homes are less apt to join a religious tradition or denomination than young adults in previous eras. About three-quarters (74%) of Americans under the age of 50 who were raised nonreligious have maintained their lack of religious identity in adulthood. In contrast, only about half (49%) of Americans age 50 or older who were raised unaffiliated still identify that way.⁴

FIGURE 3. Americans Raised Without a Religion More Likely to Remain Unaffiliated than in the Past

Percent of American adults who were raised unaffiliated and are still unaffiliated as adults



Note: Estimates for each decade were based on combined surveys.

Sources: General Social Survey, 1973-2008; PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

⁴ Note this analysis is based on relatively small sample size (N=88) and results should be interpreted with caution.

Why Are Americans Leaving Religion?

Age of Disaffiliation

Most Americans who leave their childhood religious identity to become unaffiliated generally do so before they reach their 18th birthday. More than six in ten (62%) religiously unaffiliated Americans who were raised in a religion say they abandoned their childhood religion before they turned 18. About three in ten (28%) say they were between the ages of 18 and 29. Only five percent say they stopped identifying with their childhood religion between the ages of 30 and 49, and just two percent say age 50 or older.

Causes of Disaffiliation

The reasons Americans leave their childhood religion are varied, but a lack of belief in teaching of religion was the most commonly cited reason for disaffiliation. Among the reasons Americans identified as important motivations in leaving their childhood religion are: they stopped believing in the religion's teachings (60%), their family was never that religious when they were growing up (32%), and their experience of negative religious teachings about or treatment of gay and lesbian people (29%).

Fewer than one in five Americans who left their childhood religion point to the clergy sexual-abuse scandal (19%), a traumatic event in their life (18%), or their congregation becoming too focused on politics (16%) as an important reason for disaffiliating.

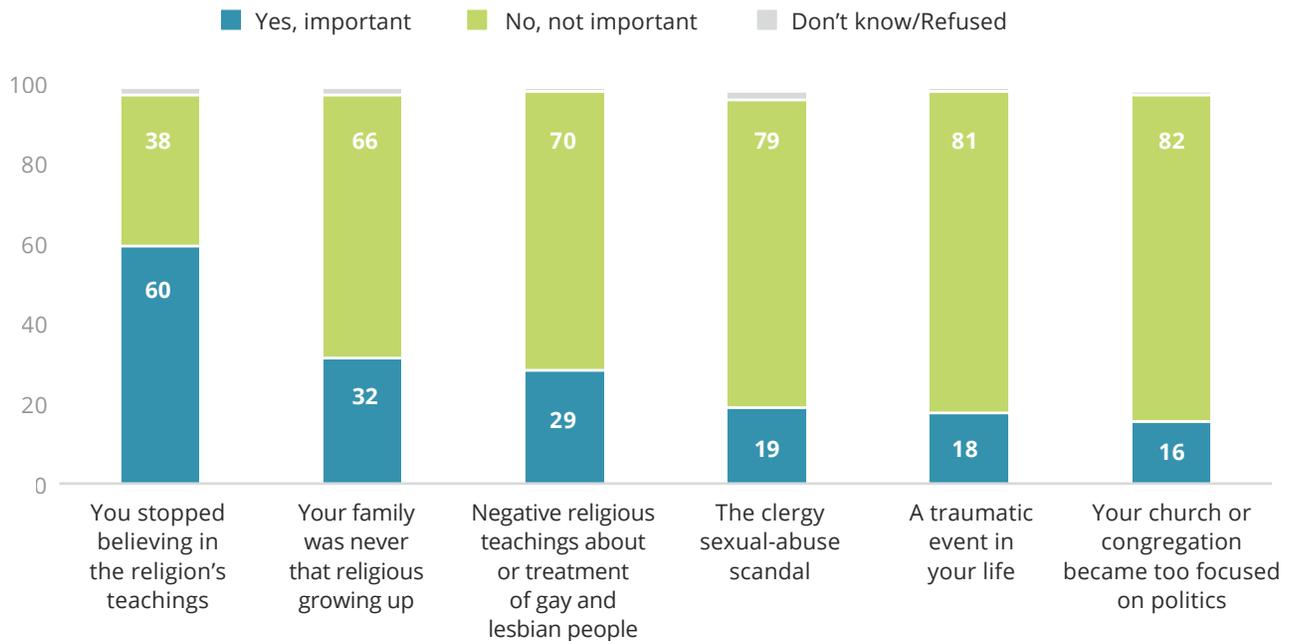
Among those who left their childhood religion, women are twice as likely as men to say negative religious teachings about or treatment of gay and lesbian individuals was a major reason they chose to leave their religion (40% vs. 20%, respectively). Women are also about twice as likely as men to cite the clergy sexual-abuse scandal as an important reason they left their childhood faith (26% vs. 13%, respectively).

Young adults (age 18 to 29) who left their childhood religion are about three times more likely than seniors (age 65 and older) to say negative religious teachings about and treatment of the gay and lesbian community was a primary reason for leaving their childhood faith (39% vs 12%, respectively). Young adults are also more likely than seniors to say being raised in a family that was not that religious was a major reason they no longer affiliate with a religion (36% vs. 23%, respectively).

Notably, those who were raised Catholic are more likely than those raised in any other religion to cite negative religious treatment of gay and lesbian people (39% vs. 29%, respectively) and the clergy sexual-abuse scandal (32% vs. 19%, respectively) as primary reasons they left the Church.

FIGURE 4. Reasons for Leaving Religion

Would you say any of the following were important reasons why you no longer identify with your childhood religion?



Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

Most Americans who have left a religious tradition do not identify a particular negative experience or incident as the catalyst. Relatively few Americans who are now unaffiliated report their last experience in a church or house of worship was negative. In fact, more than two-thirds (68%) of unaffiliated Americans say their last time attending a religious service, not including a wedding or funeral service, was primarily positive. Only one in five (20%) unaffiliated Americans say their last visit to a religious congregation was mostly negative.

Family Dynamics and Religious Disaffiliation

Divorce

Previous research has shown that family stability—or instability—can impact the transmission of religious identity.⁵ Consistent with this research, the survey finds Americans who

⁵ Lawton, Leora E., and Regina Bures. 2001. "Parental Divorce and the 'Switching' of Religious Identity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40(1): 99–111.

were raised by divorced parents are more likely than children whose parents were married during most of their formative years to be religiously unaffiliated (35% vs. 23% respectively).

Rates of religious attendance are also impacted by divorce. Americans who were raised by divorced parents are less likely than children whose parents were married during most of their childhood to report attending religious services at least once per week (21% vs. 34%, respectively). This childhood divorce gap is also evident even among Americans who continue to be religiously affiliated. Roughly three in ten (31%) religious Americans who were brought up by divorced parents say they attend religious services at least once a week, compared to 43% of religious Americans who were raised by married parents.

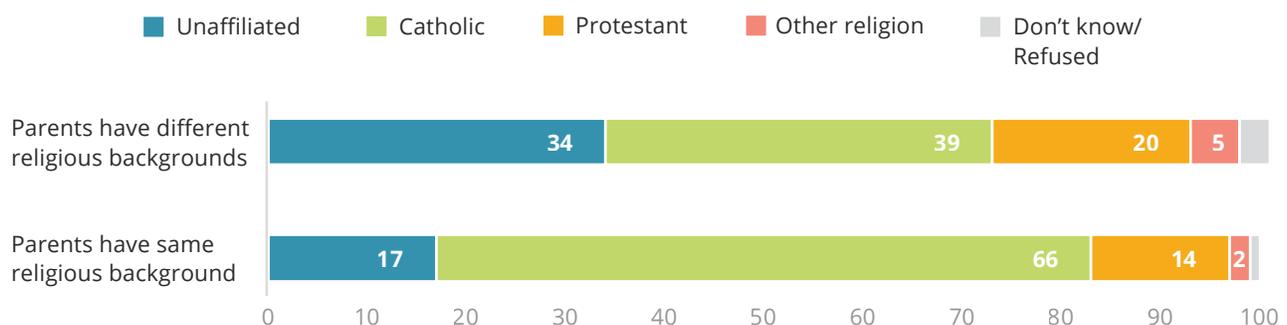
Religiously Mixed Households

Americans raised in mixed religious households—where parents identified with different religious traditions—are more likely to identify as unaffiliated than those raised in households where parents shared the same faith (31% vs. 22%, respectively).

Among those who were raised Catholic, there is a particularly strong correlation between those whose parents were both Catholic and those who had one parent with a different religious identity. Among those who were raised Catholic by parents who did not share the same religious identity, about four in ten (39%) remain Catholic as adults. In contrast, nearly two-thirds (66%) of those raised in Catholic households by parents who were both Catholic remain Catholic as adults.

FIGURE 5. Catholics Raised in Mixed Religious Households Have Higher Rates of Disaffiliation

Current religious affiliation of those raised Catholic, by parents' religious background



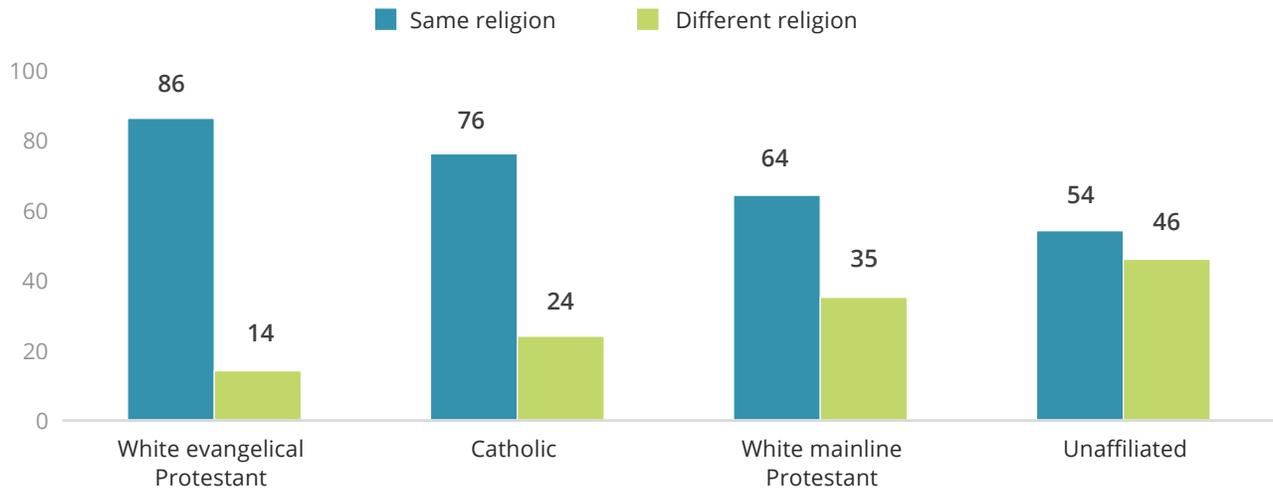
Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

The Rise of Religiously Unaffiliated Households

One critical shift that occurred over the past several decades is the increasing likelihood of religiously unaffiliated Americans to form households with religiously likeminded partners. A majority (54%) of unaffiliated Americans who are married today report that their spouse shares the same religious background as they do. A generation earlier, unaffiliated Americans were much more likely to end up with religious spouses. In the 1970s, more than six in ten (63%) unaffiliated Americans who were married reported that their spouse identified with a religious tradition.⁶

FIGURE 6. Secular Spouses

Is your current spouse’s religious background different from your own?



Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

Despite the rising rates of homogamy among the unaffiliated, however, they are still less likely to marry someone who shares their religious background than members of other religious groups. For example, 86% of white evangelical Protestants who are married report that their spouse shares their religious background, as do roughly three-quarters (76%) of married Catholics.

⁶ This analysis is based on combined data from the General Social Survey (1972-1978).

Perceptions of Religion and God Among the Religiously Unaffiliated

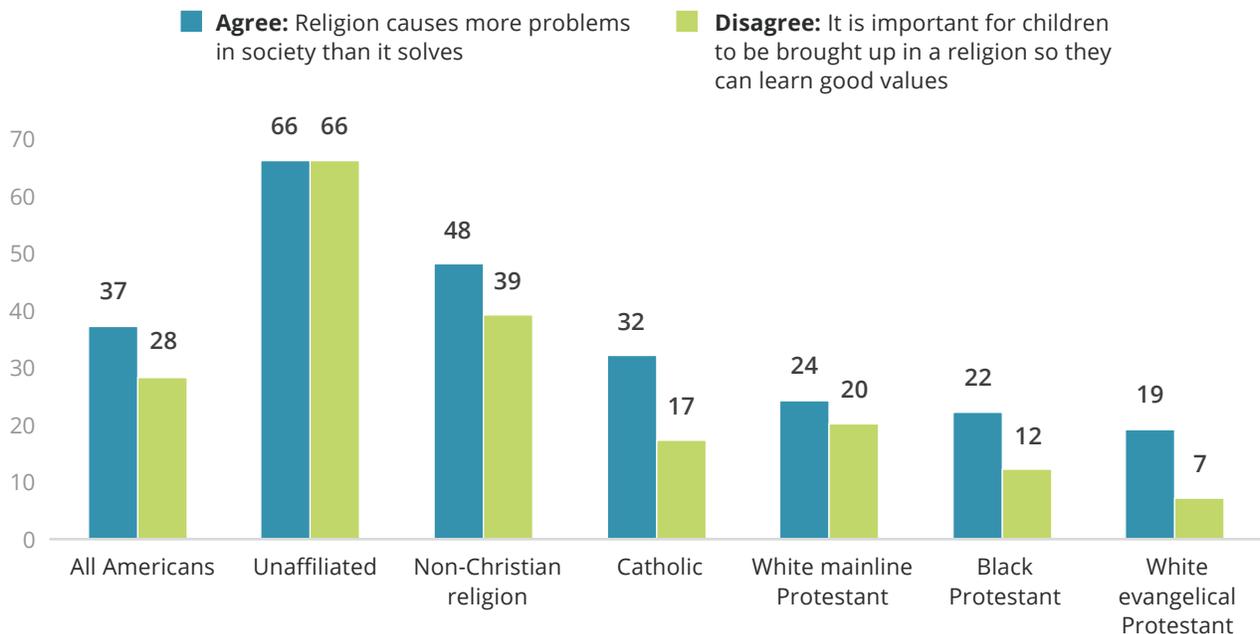
Perceptions of Organized Religion

Overall, religiously unaffiliated and affiliated Americans hold significantly different views about the merits of organized religion, both for themselves and for society as a whole. About two-thirds (66%) of unaffiliated Americans agree “religion causes more problems in society than it solves.” In contrast, a majority of white evangelical Protestants (78%), black Protestants (74%), white mainline Protestants (72%), and Catholics (66%) disagree. Members of non-Christian religions are closely divided on this question (48% agree, 49% disagree).

Americans who are unaffiliated also reject the notion that religion plays a crucial role in providing a moral foundation for children. Approximately two-thirds (66%) of unaffiliated Americans believe it is *not* important for children to be brought up in a religion so they can learn good values. Overwhelming numbers of religious Americans, including white evangelical Protestants (92%), black Protestants (86%), Catholics (81%), white mainline

FIGURE 7. Religiously Unaffiliated Express More Negative Views of Religion

By religious affiliation



Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

Protestants (78%), and members of non-Christian religions (59%) believe religion is important in instilling good values in children.

Few unaffiliated Americans are actively looking to join a religious community. Only seven percent of the unaffiliated report they are searching for a religion that would be right for them, compared to 93% who say they are not.

In fact, relatively few unaffiliated Americans report they regularly devote much time to thinking about God or religion. More than seven in ten (72%) unaffiliated Americans say that in their day-to-day life, they do not spend much time thinking about God or religion. By contrast, a majority (54%) of Americans, including majorities of black Protestants (81%), white evangelical Protestants (80%), Catholics (54%), and white mainline Protestants (52%), disagree. Members of non-Christian religions are roughly divided on this question (51% agree, 49% disagree).

God, Morality, and Doubt

Despite their lack of connection to formal religious institutions, most unaffiliated Americans retain a belief in God or a higher power. A majority of unaffiliated Americans say God is either a person with whom people can have a relationship (22%) or an impersonal force (37%). Only one-third (33%) of religiously unaffiliated Americans say they do not believe in God.⁷ Strong majorities of Americans who belong to the major Christian religious traditions hold a personal conception of God. Compared to Christians, Americans who identify with a non-Christian tradition are significantly less likely to hold a personal conception of God (33%) and are more likely to say God is an impersonal force in the universe (49%).

Although most unaffiliated Americans do not reject outright a belief in God, they express many more doubts about the existence of a higher power than other Americans. A majority (53%) of religiously unaffiliated Americans say they sometimes doubt whether God exists, while more than four in ten (44%) disagree. In contrast, only six percent of white evangelical Protestants, 12% of black Protestants, 19% of white mainline Protestants, and roughly one-quarter (26%) of Catholics say they have doubts about God's existence. Americans who identify with non-Christian religions are more likely than other religious Americans to say they sometimes doubt the existence of God (46%).

Religiously unaffiliated Americans are also less likely than religious Americans to link belief in God to moral behavior. Only about one in five (21%) unaffiliated Americans say it is necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values. More than three-quarters (77%)

⁷ Thirteen percent of religiously unaffiliated Americans claim the label "atheist"; 14% define themselves as "agnostic."

reject this idea, including 61% who strongly reject it. A majority of black Protestants (78%), white evangelical Protestants (59%), and Catholics (59%) agree believing in God is a necessary precondition for moral behavior. Notably, fewer than half of white mainline Protestants (43%) and those who identify with non-Christian religions (43%) agree.

Sharing Religious Identity and Views about Religion

Although previous research has shown that atheists are viewed quite negatively among the public,⁸ most religiously unaffiliated Americans do not have qualms about sharing their religious beliefs or views about religion with their friends or family. Only 21% of unaffiliated Americans say they generally do *not* share their religious identity or views about religion with friends or family members out of fear of disapproval, while 76% say they have no problem doing this. Among Americans overall, eight in ten (80%) say they do not mind sharing their religious beliefs with friends or family.

Notably, young unaffiliated Americans (age 18 to 29) are roughly twice as likely as unaffiliated seniors (age 65 and older) to say they are not always open about their religious identity or beliefs with family members or friends (30% vs. 16%, respectively).

⁸ Edgell, Penny, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Harmann. 2006. "Atheists as 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society." *American Sociological Review* 71(2), 211-34.

Understanding the Religiously Unaffiliated: Rejectionists, Apatheists, and Unattached Believers

The Three Subgroups: Rejectionists, Apatheists, and Unattached Believers

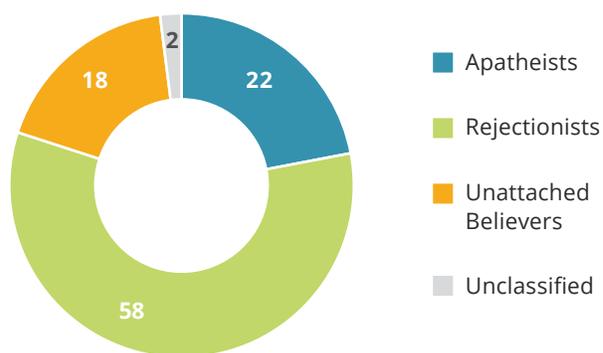
Religiously unaffiliated Americans are distinct from religious Americans in important ways, but there is also considerable diversity among this group. Using two separate questions that measure the personal relevance of religion and the perceived social benefit of religion, we identified three distinct groups among the unaffiliated: Rejectionists, Apatheists, and Unattached Believers.

Rejectionists, who account for the majority (58%) of all unaffiliated Americans, say religion is not personally important in their lives and believe religion as a whole does more harm than good in society. Apatheists, who make up 22% of the unaffiliated, say religion is not personally important to them, but believe it generally is more socially helpful than harmful. Unattached believers, who make up only 18% of the unaffiliated, say religion is important to them personally.⁹ For a full demographic profile of these three subgroups of religiously unaffiliated Americans, see Appendix 2.

Overall, religiously unaffiliated Americans are significantly younger than religiously affiliated Americans. Among the religiously unaffiliated subgroups, Rejectionists and Apatheists are substantially younger than Unattached Believers. More than one-third of Apatheists (38%) and Rejectionists (35%) are under the age of 30, compared to fewer than one-quarter (24%) of Unattached Believers.

The racial composition of each group is also somewhat distinct. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Rejectionists and approximately

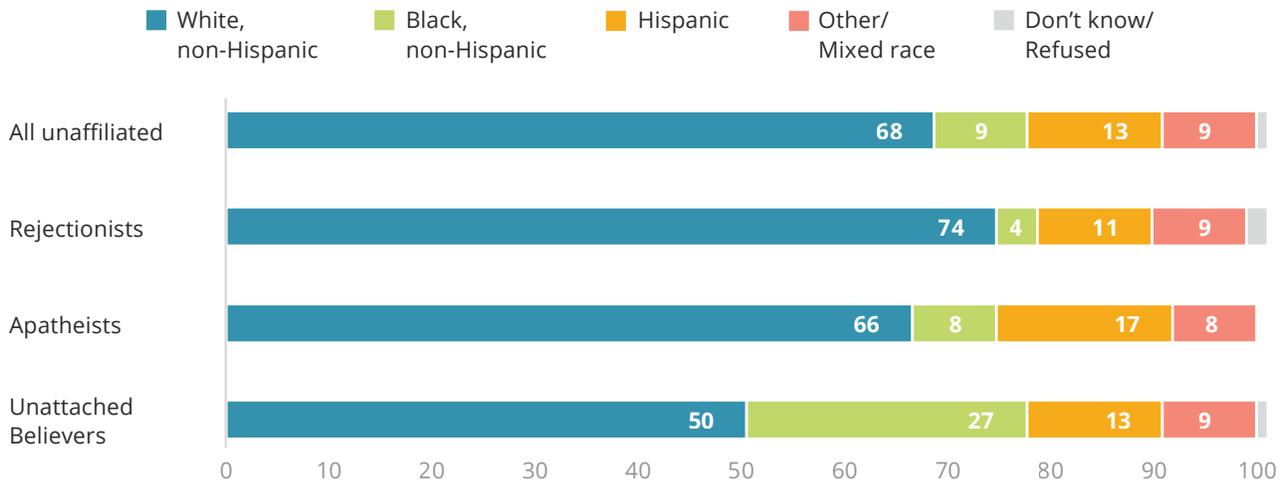
FIGURE 8. Three Subgroups Within the Religiously Unaffiliated



PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

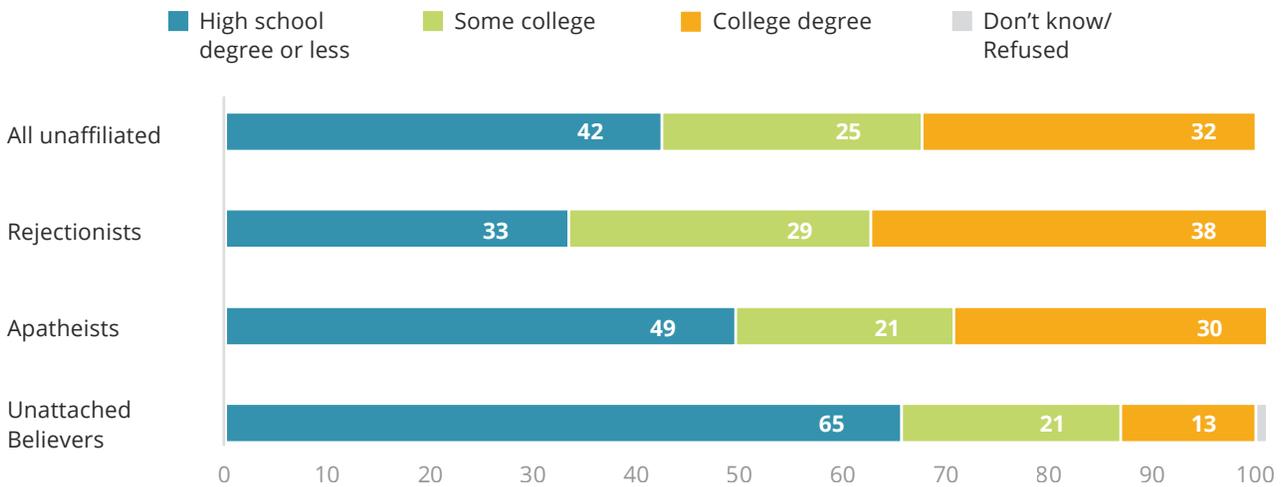
⁹ Unattached Believers include those who see religion as more helpful and more harmful to society, although the majority (58%) of this group believe religion is more beneficial than harmful.

FIGURE 9. Race/Ethnicity of Religiously Unaffiliated Subgroups



Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

FIGURE 10. Education Level of Religiously Unaffiliated Subgroups



Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

two-thirds (66%) of Apatheists are white, non-Hispanic Americans. In contrast, only half (50%) of unattached believers are white. Fewer than one in ten Rejectionists (4%) and Apatheists (8%) are black, compared to 27% of Unattached Believers.

Unattached Believers also stand out because they are significantly more likely than Rejectionists or Apatheists to live in the South (53% vs. 29% and 28%, respectively).

The gender ratio also varies considerably between the groups as well. Six in ten (60%) Apatheists and a majority (56%) of Rejectionists are men. In contrast, nearly six in ten (58%) Unattached Believers are women.

There are stark educational divisions between the groups. Nearly four in ten (38%) Rejectionists and three in ten (30%) Apatheists have a four-year college degree, compared to only 13% of Unattached Believers. Roughly two-thirds (65%) of Unattached Believers have a high school education or less, compared to roughly half (49%) of Apatheists and only one-third (33%) of Rejectionists.

Religious Participation and Engagement

The approach and attitude towards religion also varies substantially among the unaffiliated. Rejectionists and Apatheists report similar patterns of worship attendance—more than three-quarters say they seldom or never attend formal religious services (83% and 76%, respectively). Fewer than four in ten (39%) Unattached Believers say they seldom or never attend religious services. More than six in ten (61%) say they attend at least a few times a year.

Rejectionists are unique among the unaffiliated for the degree to which they report a personally negative experience at a place of worship. More than one-quarter (27%) of Rejectionists report having had a mostly negative experience the last time they attended a worship service, while a majority (57%) say their last experience was primarily a positive one. At least eight in ten Apatheists (80%) and Unattached Believers (89%) say their last experience at a worship service was primarily positive.

Despite a generally positive view about the role of religion in society, few Apatheists are actively looking to join a religious congregation. In fact, Apatheists and Rejectionists are about equally as likely to say they are looking to join a religion (3% vs. 4%, respectively). Notably, even relatively few Unattached Believers (22%) say they are currently seeking to join a religious community or congregation.

Both Apatheists and Rejectionists show considerable disinterest in religion. Eighty-six percent of Apatheists and 79% of Rejectionists report they do not spend much time in their daily life thinking about God or religion. Only one-third (33%) of Unattached Believers say they do *not* contemplate God or religion regularly.

Views about God

Conceptions of God vary widely between the unaffiliated subgroups. Unattached Believers are far more likely than Apatheists or Rejectionists to hold a personal view of God (54% vs. 21% and

13%, respectively). Nearly half (47%) of Rejectionists say they do not believe in God, while fewer than one-quarter (22%) of Apatheists and just six percent of Unattached Believers say the same.

Rejectionists are also substantially more likely than Apatheists and Unattached Believers to report doubts about God. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Rejectionists say they sometimes doubt whether God exists, a sentiment shared by fewer than half (49%) of Apatheists and only 24% of Unattached Believers.

Perceptions of the Link between Religion and Morality

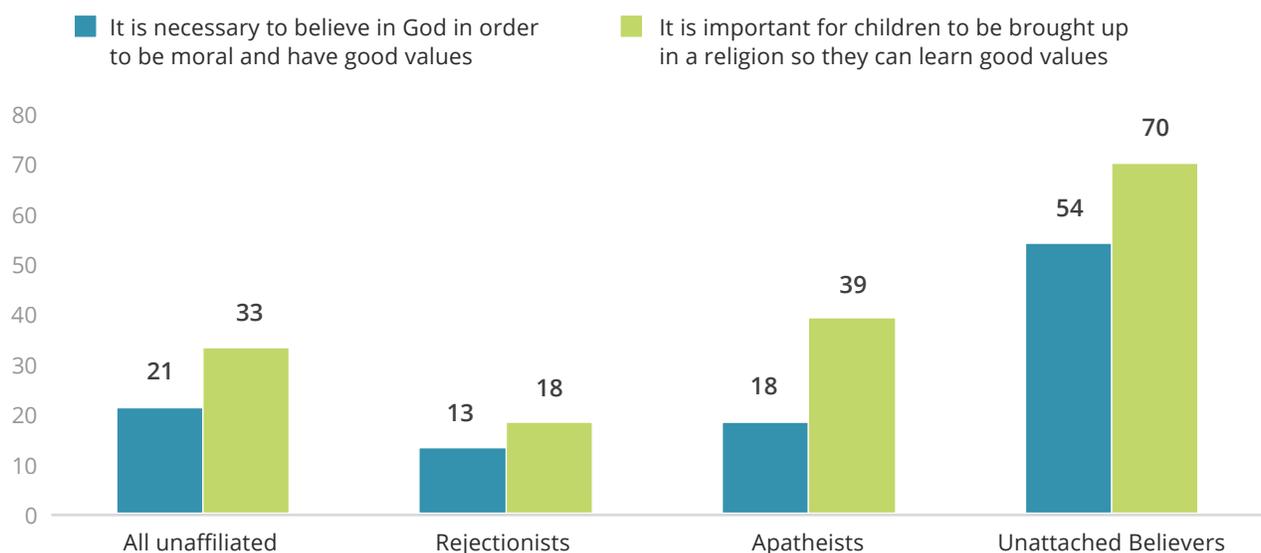
Unattached believers are significantly more likely than either Apatheists or Rejectionists to perceive a link between religious belief and membership on the one hand and the ability to have good morals and values on the other.

Seven in ten (70%) Unattached Believers agree children ought to be raised in religion so they can learn good values, a view shared by only about four in ten (39%) Apatheists and 18% of Rejectionists.

Similarly, a majority (54%) of Unattached Believers agree it is necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values. Less than one in five Apatheists (18%) and Rejectionists (13%) agree with this statement.

FIGURE 11. Perceptions of Religion's Value

Percent who agree with each statement, by religiously unaffiliated subgroup



Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

A Cultural Connection to Religion

The religiously unaffiliated subgroups also diverge in the extent to which they report a cultural connection to religion. Roughly half (47%) of unaffiliated Americans overall say they have a connection to religion as part of their ethnic background or cultural heritage. The cultural connection is strongest among Unattached Believers. More than three-quarters (77%) of Unattached Believers say they still feel a cultural connection to religion even though they no longer identify with a particular denomination or tradition, compared to roughly half (51%) of Apatheists and 36% of Rejectionists.

(Not) Spiritual and Not Religious

The survey finds little evidence of a separate mode of “spirituality” distinct from “religiosity,” either among religious or religiously unaffiliated Americans. Rather, measures of traditional religiosity are positively correlated with self-identification as a “spiritual person.” Compared to other Americans, the religiously unaffiliated are considerably less likely to identify themselves as spiritual. Only four in ten unaffiliated Americans identify themselves as being very (14%) or moderately (26%) spiritual. Nearly six in ten say they are only slightly spiritual (26%) or not at all spiritual (32%). In contrast, more than two-thirds of Americans overall say they are very (30%) or moderately (38%) spiritual.

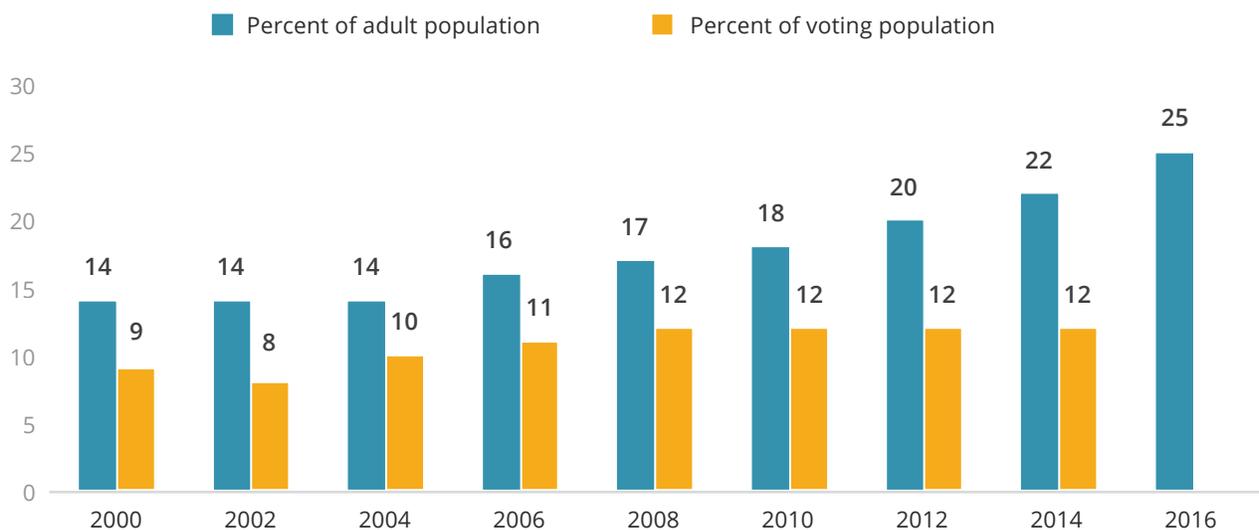
Rejectionists and Apatheists are much less likely than Unattached Believers to self-identify as spiritual. While more than seven in ten (71%) Unattached Believers describe themselves as at least moderately spiritual, only about one-third of Apatheists (31%) and Rejectionists (34%) identify this way.

The Politics and Political Influence of the Unaffiliated

Despite their exponentially growing numbers, the political influence of religiously unaffiliated Americans has been muted. In 2004, religiously unaffiliated Americans comprised 14% of the public but only 10% of voters. By the last presidential election in 2012, religiously unaffiliated Americans had grown to comprise 20% of the public, but had grown only marginally to comprise 12% of voters. By way of comparison, in 2012 white evangelical Protestants also comprised 20% of the public, but they accounted for more than one in four (26%) voters because of higher voter registration and turnout rates.¹⁰

It is likely religiously unaffiliated Americans will again be underrepresented at the ballot box this fall. Currently, more than one-quarter (26%) of unaffiliated Americans report they are not registered to vote, a significantly higher rate than among white evangelical Protestants (10%), white mainline Protestants (11%), or white Catholics (12%).

FIGURE 12. Religiously Unaffiliated Americans: Growing but Not Voting



Sources: National Exit Polls, 2000-2014; General Social Survey 2000-2012; PRRI Surveys, 2014-2016.

¹⁰ All population estimates are derived from the General Social Survey, 2004 and 2012. All voter estimates are derived from the National Exit Poll, 2004 and 2012.

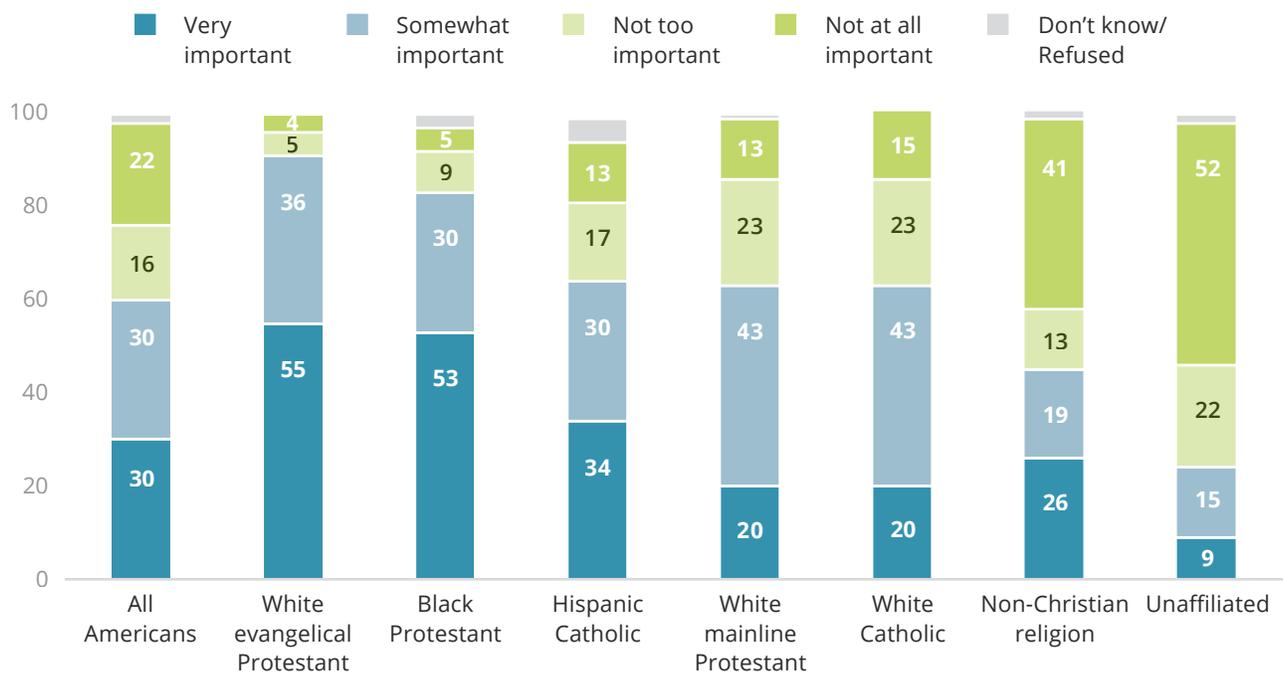
The political preferences of religiously unaffiliated Americans depart notably from those of most other religious groups. A plurality (48%) of religiously unaffiliated Americans are politically independent. One-third of the unaffiliated (33%) are Democrats and only 12% identify as Republican. Although the religiously unaffiliated are more likely to identify as independent than Democratic, they are about twice as likely to be politically liberal (41%) as they are to be conservative (21%). Three in ten (30%) are politically moderate.

The 2016 Presidential Election

Interest in the Election

Consistent with their lower rates of voter registration, religiously unaffiliated Americans express less interest in the 2016 election, compared to white Christian groups. Fewer than four in ten (37%) religiously unaffiliated Americans say they are following news about the 2016 election very closely. Three in ten (30%) say they are following it fairly closely, while more than one-third (34%) say they are following the election not too closely or not at all closely. In contrast, a majority (56%) of white evangelical Protestants say they are following the election very closely.

FIGURE 13. How important is it for a presidential candidate to have strong religious beliefs?
By religious affiliation



Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

Most Americans say it is very important (30%) or somewhat important (30%) that a presidential candidate has “strong religious beliefs,” but unaffiliated Americans strongly reject this assertion. Fewer than one-quarter of religiously unaffiliated Americans say it is very important (9%) or somewhat important (15%) for a presidential candidate to have strong religious beliefs. Nearly three-quarters say it is not too important (22%) or not at all important (52%) that a candidate express strong religious beliefs.

Voter Preference in the Election

At the start of the 2016 general election season in early August, religiously unaffiliated voters expressed a strong preference for Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump (62% vs. 21%, respectively).¹¹ However, nearly one in five unaffiliated voters express support for another candidate such as Gary Johnson or Jill Stein (12%) or report no candidate preference at all (6%).

Clinton and Trump’s voting coalitions differ considerably in terms of each candidate’s proportion of support from white Christians, non-white Christians, and the religiously unaffiliated. Among Hillary Clinton’s supporters, seven percent are white evangelical Protestant, 12% are white mainline Protestant, 11% are white Catholic, 30% are religiously unaffiliated, and 15% are black Protestant. In contrast, among Donald Trump’s supporters, 33% are white evangelical Protestant, 19% are white mainline Protestant, 18% are white Catholic, 13% are religiously unaffiliated, and just one percent are black Protestant.

¹¹ This survey was conducted in early August. Voter preferences include voters who initially said they were unsure about their vote choice, but were leaning towards the Democratic or Republican candidate.

Appendix 1: Survey Methodology

The PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey was designed and conducted by Public Religion Research Institute in partnership with Religion News Service. The survey was made possible by a generous grant from The Henry Luce Foundation with additional support from the Stiefel Freethought Foundation. Results of the survey were based on bilingual (Spanish and English) RDD telephone interviews conducted between July 27, 2016, and August 9, 2016, by professional interviewers under the direction of SSRS. Interviews were conducted among a random sample of 2,201 adults 18 years of age or older living in the United States (1,330 respondents were interviewed on a cell phone).¹² The selection of respondents within households was accomplished by randomly requesting to speak with the youngest adult male or female currently living in the household. The survey included an oversample of unaffiliated respondents, who were prescreened for religious affiliation in SSRS's weekly RDD omnibus survey. A total of 186 unaffiliated respondents were identified as part of the oversample and included in the study.

Data collection is based on stratified, single-stage, random-digit-dialing (RDD) sample of landline telephone households and randomly generated cell phone numbers. The sample is designed to represent the total U.S. adult population and includes respondents from all 50 states, including Hawaii and Alaska. The landline and cell phone samples are provided by Marketing Systems Group.

The weighting is accomplished in two separate stages. The first stage of weighting corrects for different probabilities of selection associated with the number of adults in each household and each respondent's telephone usage patterns.¹³ In the second stage, sample demographics are balanced to match target population parameters for gender, age, education, race and Hispanic ethnicity, region (U.S. Census definitions), population density and telephone usage. The population density parameter was derived from Census 2010 data. The telephone usage parameter came from an analysis of the January-September 2014 National Health Interview Survey. All other weighting parameters are derived from an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's May 2015 Current Population Survey.

The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights were trimmed to

¹² No interviews were conducted on August 1 or 2, 2016.

¹³ Telephone usage refers to whether respondents have only a landline telephone, only a cell phone, or both types.

prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations.

The margin of error for the survey is +/- 2.5 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The design effect for the survey is 1.5. In addition to sampling error, surveys may also be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context and order effects.

Demographic, Political, and Religious Subgroup Sample Sizes

	General Public (unweighted)
Total Sample	2,201
Male	1,101
Female	1,100
Republican	562
Independent	801
Democrat	695
Registered voter	1,803
White, non-Hispanic	1,497
Black, non-Hispanic	231
Hispanic	280
Age 18-29	329
30-49	542
50-64	663
65+	665
White evangelical Protestant	342
White mainline Protestant	320
Black Protestant	149
Other non-white Protestant	131
Catholic	434
<i>White Catholic</i>	268
<i>Hispanic Catholic</i>	129
Non-Christian religion	102
Religiously unaffiliated	617
<i>Rejectionists</i>	362
<i>Apatheists</i>	129
<i>Unattached Believers</i>	106
Raised unaffiliated	200

Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

Appendix 2: Subgroups Within the Religiously Unaffiliated

Education Level, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Region, and Party Affiliation by Unaffiliated Subgroup

	All unaffiliated	Rejectionists	Apatheists	Unattached Believers
High school degree or less	42%	33%	49%	65%
Some college	25	29	21	21
College degree	32	38	30	13
White, non-Hispanic	68	74	66	50
Black, non-Hispanic	9	4	8	27
Hispanic	13	11	17	13
Other/Mixed race	9	9	8	9
Male	54	56	60	42
Female	46	44	40	58
Ages 18-29	33	35	38	24
30-49	39	39	42	37
50-64	18	16	11	30
65+	10	10	9	9
Northeast	18	21	16	12
Midwest	19	20	19	13
South	33	29	28	53
West	30	30	37	21
Republican	12	10	11	18
Independent	48	50	54	34
Democrat	33	33	31	37
Other/Don't know/Refused	7	7	4	10

Source: PRRI/RNS August 2016 Survey.

Appendix 3: About PRRI and the Authors

PRRI

PRRI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to research at the intersection of religion, values, and public life.

Our mission is to help journalists, opinion leaders, scholars, clergy, and the general public better understand debates on public policy issues and the role of religion and values in American public life by conducting high quality public opinion surveys and qualitative research.

PRRI is a member of the the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), the American Political Science Association (APSA), and the American Academy of Religion (AAR), and follows the highest research standards of independence and academic excellence.

We are also a member organization of the National Council on Public Polls, an association of polling organizations established in 1969, which sets the highest professional standards for public opinion researchers. PRRI is also a supporting organization of the Transparency Initiative at AAPOR, an initiative to place the value of openness at the center of the public opinion research profession.

As a nonpartisan, independent research organization, PRRI does not take positions on, nor do we advocate for, particular policies. Research supported by our funders reflects PRRI's commitment to independent inquiry and academic rigor. Research findings and conclusions are never altered to accommodate other interests, including those of funders, other organizations, or government bodies and officials.

History

Since PRRI's founding in 2009, our research has become a standard source of trusted information among journalists, scholars, policy makers, clergy, and the general public. PRRI research has been cited in thousands of media stories and academic publications, and plays a leading role in deepening public understanding of the changing religious landscape and its role in shaping American politics.

For a full list of recent projects, see our research page: <http://www.prii.org/research/>

PRRI also maintains a lively online presence on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/prripoll>) and Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/prripoll>).

About the Authors

Robert P. Jones, CEO

Dr. Robert P. Jones is the CEO of PRRI and a leading scholar and commentator on religion, values, and public life. He is the author of *The End of White Christian America*, and two other books, and numerous peer-review articles on religion and public policy. Dr. Jones writes a column for *The Atlantic* online on politics and culture and appears regularly in a “Faith by the Numbers” segment on Interfaith Voices, the nation’s leading religion news magazine on public radio. He is frequently featured in major national media such as CNN, NPR, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and others.

Dr. Jones serves as the Co-Chair of the national steering committee for the Religion and Politics Section at the American Academy of Religion and is a member of the editorial board for “Politics and Religion,” a journal published by Cambridge University Press for the American Political Science Association. He is also an active member of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, the Society of Christian Ethics, and the American Association of Public Opinion Research. He holds a Ph.D. in religion from Emory University, where he specialized in sociology of religion, politics, and religious ethics. He also holds a M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In 2013, Dr. Jones was selected by Emory University’s Graduate Division of Religion as Distinguished Alumnus of the Year.

Before founding PRRI, Dr. Jones worked as a consultant and senior research fellow at several think tanks in Washington, DC, and was assistant professor of religious studies at Missouri State University.

Daniel Cox, Director of Research

Dr. Daniel Cox is the Research Director of PRRI, specializing in survey research, youth politics, and religion. He has coauthored several academic book chapters on topics relating to religious polarization and gay and lesbian issues in the black Church. His work has been cited in numerous national news publications including the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, CNN, the Washington Post, and others. Dr. Cox holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. in American Government from Georgetown University, as well as a B.A. in political science from Union College. Prior to joining PRRI, he served as Research Associate at the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, where he worked as part of the core research team. He is an active member of the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) and the American Political Science Association (APSA).

Betsy Cooper, Research Associate

Dr. Cooper is a Research Associate at PRRI, specializing in American politics, public opinion, ideals of citizenship, and sexual orientation. She has also completed research exploring women's groups within the Religious Right. Dr. Cooper holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Political Science from the University of Washington, Seattle, and a B.A. in Politics from Hendrix College. She has co-authored several papers on topics ranging from the Tea Party to rights framing, and has presented her work at the American Political Science, Midwestern Political Science, and Western Political Science Associations' annual conferences. She is an active member of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).

Rachel Lienesch, Research Analyst

Ms. Lienesch has conducted extensive quantitative and qualitative research about American politics. Prior to joining PRRI, Ms. Lienesch worked as a Polling Fellow at the Huffington Post, where she reported on polling trends and constructed surveys on major national political events. She earned her B.A. in Government from the College of William & Mary. She has done research on topics ranging from the effect of party competence evaluations in national elections to the Tea Party, and has presented her work at the Midwestern Political Science Association's annual conference. She is an active member of the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).

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