

Research and Trends

Three Components of Skeptics' Disbelief Just as believers arrive at their belief in God by amassing a variety of information and experiences, skeptics piece together different inputs to draw their conclusions. According to Barna Research, the three primary components that lead to disbelief in God's existence are

1. Rejection of the Bible,
2. A lack of trust in the local church and
3. Cultural reinforcement of a secular worldview.

Churches have done little to convince skeptics to reevaluate. In fact, more than two-thirds have attended Christian churches in the past, most for an extended period of time. ([Barna Group 3/24/15](#))

Least Religious Generation A San Diego State Univ. study found that Millennials appear to be the least religious generation ever recorded. Psychology professor Jean M. Twenge suggested one main reason for Millennials abandoning religion is rising individualism in American culture which puts self first and is less prone to showing commitment to institutions. The study found twice as many 12th graders and college students today never attend religious services compared to those in the 1960s and '70s. Also, twice as many 12th-graders and entering college students in the 2010s give their religious affiliation as "none." Findings also noted Millennials are the least religious generation of the last six decades and possibly in the nation's history. ([Christian Post 5/29/15](#))

Unchurched Not Always Unbelievers According to the Barna Group, the majority of unchurched Americans are non-practicing Christians: They claim Christianity as their faith, but they haven't been to church in a long time. Skeptics represent 25% of all unchurched adults, of which 31% have never attended a Christian church service in their lives. That's nearly double the proportion of "virgin unchurched" who are not skeptics (17%). ([Barna Group 3/24/15](#))

More Immigrants Non-Religious Immigrants to the U.S. are increasingly identifying themselves as religiously unaffiliated, according to a new [Pew Research Center study](#) of America's religious composition. Recent immigrants (those who have arrived since '00) are as likely to have no religious affiliation as the country's overall adult population. One in five immigrants said they did not belong to any religion-up 4% since '07, when it was 16%. The share of Christian immigrants has also slipped from 75% to 68%. In addition, there also has been growth in the percentage of immigrants who are adherents of non-Christian faiths, rising from 8% to 12% in the past years. Muslims now account for 4% of foreign-born U.S. residents vs. 2% in '07. Also, among immigrants who arrived before '90, 16% were not associated with any faith and 75% reported being Christian vs. 23% and 63% respectively for those who have arrived since '00. ([Pew Research Center Fact Tank 5/19/15](#))

Not Interested The bulk of U.S. religious "nones" (15.8% of the population) don't commit to any view on God. Instead, they say they believe "nothing in particular." Yet 30% of "nones" say religion is still at least somewhat important to them, but 39% are not agnostic, atheist or vaguely spiritual; they're just not interested. Religion is not even somewhat important to them. Most Christians are women (55%) and most "nones" are men (57%). However, women's unbelief numbers are growing. ([USA Today 5/12/15](#))

Christianity Clarified, Not Dying Contrary to what headlines might imply as a result of Pew Research Center's "America's Changing Religious Landscape," any reasonable reading of the research does not show Christianity (and/or evangelicalism) dying. LifeWay Research's Ed Stetzer notes researchers describe mainline Protestantism as hemorrhaging. Although evangelical denominations are often struggling and some are declining, growth is occurring in non-denominational evangelicalism, but not inside most denominations. Furthermore, most of the growth is among non-Anglos. The number of the devout people in the country is increasing, as well as the number of secular people. It seems people with low levels of religious commitment are now more likely to identify as religiously unaffiliated, whereas in earlier decades such people would have identified as Christian, Jewish or as part of some other religious group. Stetzer writes, "Rather than predict the impending doom of the church in America, this latest study affirms what many researchers have said before. Christianity isn't collapsing; it's being clarified."

Churches aren't emptying; rather, those who were Christian in name only are now categorically identifying their lack of Christian conviction and engagement." ([USA Today 5/14/15](#))

Latino Evangelical Growth Among Hispanics, the portion of evangelicals increased from 16% to 19%, according to Pew Research Center's report, "America's Changing Religious Landscape." It was the only race/ethnic group to see an increase in its proportion of evangelicals. The largest drop was among Hispanic Catholics, from 58 to 48%. The largest increase was among Hispanic unaffiliated, from 14 to 20%. ([Christian Post 5/17/15](#))

The Median Age of U.S. Worshipers overall is 54, while that of conservative Protestants is 47, mainline Protestants is 59 and Catholics is 53. (*U.S. Congregational Life Survey*)

Tithing Dr. Charles Stone, lead pastor at West Park Church in London, Ontario, Canada, offers 10 common reasons church people give for not tithing, along with a suggested response.

1. It's all mine anyway. Why should I give? *Everything we own is actually God's (Ps 50:10, Ps 24:1).*
2. I give elsewhere. *Do causes around the purposes of God get the lion's share of your giving?*
3. Tithing is not in the New Testament. *When Jesus fulfilled the law, He didn't revise spirituality downward.*
4. God will provide through other people. *God chose to release His resources through all believers.*
5. My gifts don't really count. *Don't minimize the size of any gift (Mk 12:41-44).*
6. I don't trust preachers. *If you lead a church, make sure you instill the highest standards of stewardship and accountability.*
7. I only give to projects I like. *Trust your church leadership to wisely manage God's money.*
8. I have no control over my finances. My husband does. *Rest in the Lord. He knows your heart.*
9. I will tithe when I can afford it. *If you wait, you probably never will.*
10. I'm afraid to. *Step out in faith knowing that God promises to meet your needs.*

([ChurchLeaders.com 5/6/15](#))

Who Tithes? Just 18% of all U.S. worshipers give 10% of their income to the church vs. 44% for conservative Protestants, 16% mainline Protestants and 10% for Catholics. (*U.S. Congregational Life Survey*)

Most Christians Evangelical All U.S. Christian groups are more likely to self-identify as "evangelical" or "born-again." Half of all Christians call themselves evangelical, including 72% of historically black Protestant churches, finds Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study. By contrast, 15% of adults in evangelical churches do not identify as born-again or evangelical. Neither do 21% of those at nondenominational churches or 10% of those at Pentecostal churches. ([ChurchLeaders.com 5/22/15](#))

Nondenominational Churches Are Growing LifeWay Research's president Ed Stetzer claims many analyses of religious data in the U.S. miss the growing presence of nondenominational churches, particularly evangelical ones. For example, the share of Southern Baptists in the U.S. population fell by 1.4% in the past seven years while nondenominational evangelical Christians grew by 1.5%. If current trends continue, the largest evangelical "denomination" will soon be nondenominational. Many evangelicals are more comfortable talking about Jesus than their denomination. Many might not even know their church is affiliated with a larger group. American Christianity is becoming more nondenominational and more evangelical. ([Ed Stetzer, CNN.com 6/12/15](#))

Evangelicals Lost Fewer [The Pew Research Center 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study](#) reports evangelicals have lost less than 1% of their share of the population since '07 and have even added more than 2 million, remaining the largest religious segment (and a majority of the Protestant segment) in the U.S. at one in four American adults. In contrast, mainline Protestants have lost 3.5% of their population share and are currently less than 15% of American adults, while Catholics lost 3% of their population share and are currently 21% of adults. ([ChurchLeaders.com 5/22/15](#))

Evangelicals Decline Least According to Pew Research Center's report, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," an estimated net decline of between 2.8 to 7.8 million Christians since a comparable survey

in '07. That translates to a drop from 78.4% of the U.S. population to 70.6. The number of evangelicals declined -0.9% since '07 compared with a decline of 3.1% for Catholics, 3.4% for mainline denominations and an increase of 1.2% for non-Christians and 6.7% for the unaffiliated. ([Pew Research Center's America's Changing Religious Landscape 5/13/15](#))

More Evangelicals Now a clear majority, evangelicals account for 55% of all U.S. Protestants in the U.S. They were the only segment of Christianity that likely saw growth between '07 and '14 when they added about two million to their fold, according to Pew Research Center's report, "America's Changing Religious Landscape." It was the only Christian group that had more people joining than leaving. 8.4% of Americans left evangelical Christianity while 9.8% joined, a net change of +1.5 percentage points. Also, the share of nondenominational evangelicals grew from 13% to 19%. Among those who currently identify with an evangelical church, 19% were raised in a mainline Protestant home and another 19% in homes unaffiliated with any religion, the highest of any other group. For comparison, among those raised in evangelical homes, 12% are now mainline Protestants and 15% are now unaffiliated. ([Christian Post 5/17/15](#))

Over 13 Million People Displaced A U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom report notes over 13 million people worldwide have been affected somehow by conflicts that have ties to religious belief. The report highlights the conflicts triggered by ISIL and Boko Haram attacks against Christians and Muslims. The Commission also singled out Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Central African Republic and Burma for their religious intolerance. "We are identifying their governments as well as others as either perpetrating or tolerating some of the worst abuses of religious freedom in the world." ([ChurchLeaders.com 5/8/15](#))

Immigrant Religious Groups. The Pew Research Forum report, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," found a number of religious groups are largely comprised of immigrants: 87% of Hindu adults living in the U.S. are first-generation immigrants, while 61% of American Muslims were born overseas. Among Christian traditions, Orthodox Christians have the greatest share of members born abroad (40%) compared with 27% of Catholics who are first-generation immigrants. ([Pew Research Center Fact Tank 5/19/15](#))

Evangelicals More Diverse The share of U.S. evangelicals who are not white increased from 19% to 24% between '07 and '14. Catholics and mainline Protestants saw a similar growth in non-whites. Among those three, Catholics have the smallest proportion of whites at 59%, and mainline Protestants have the largest at 86%. ([Pew Research Center's America's Changing Religious Landscape 5/13/15](#))

Racially Diverse Evangelicals More than one-third of evangelical Christians are non-white, up from 19% in '07, finds the 2014 Religious Landscape Study. 19% of Hispanics identify as evangelicals, as do 14% of blacks and 23% of other minorities. ([ChurchLeaders.com 5/22/15](#))

Children Stay with Childhood Church Affiliation Evangelicals retain two-thirds of their children, placing fifth among all religious groups and second among Christian groups, according to the Pew Research Forum 2014 Religious Landscape Study. By comparison, Protestants at large retain less than half of their children. 47% of Protestants remain in their childhood denomination. 27% now identify with a different Protestant group, while 3% became Catholic, 4% non-Christians and 19% unaffiliated. ([CT Gleanings 5/12/15](#))

A Struggling Economy and a decline in attendance at mainline Protestant churches have created fewer openings for seminary graduates seeking to become full-time pastors. ([Religion & Ethics Newsweekly 5/29/15](#))

Mormon Stats The share of Americans who identify as Mormons has roughly held steady (1.6%) even as the percentage of Christians in the U.S. has dropped from 78.4% to 70.6% over the past seven years, according to the Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study. Also 82% who are married have a Mormon spouse. 66% of U.S. Mormon adults are currently married, down slightly from 71% in '07 but still high compared with current rates among Christians overall (52%) and U.S. adults overall (48%). Mormons also tend to have more children than other groups. Mormons 40-59 have an average of 3.4 children in their lifetime vs. 2.1 for all Americans in that age range and higher than any other religious group. Mormon adults have an average of 1.1 children currently living at home, nearly double the national average (0.6). Mormons also remain overwhelmingly white. ([Pew Research Center Fact Tank](#))

5/22/15)

U.S. Birthrate Up The rate of births among women ages 15 to 44 ticked up 1% from '13 to '14, the first increase since '07, the beginning of the recession, according to a new study by the National Center for Health Statistics. The 3.98 million total births in '14 were the most since '10. Also, teen birth rates hit a historic low, with 24.2 births per 1,000 women—a 9% drop from 2013's 26.2 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19. Researchers attribute the lower fertility rate to better access of information. People now have many more options to become educated on pregnancy prevention, including school programs, youth programs, parents and the Internet. ([USA Today 6/17/15](#))

Two-Parent Homes A new Rasmussen Reports survey finds 92% of American adults believe it is important for children to grow up in a home with both parents, with 70% considering it very important. 7% say it's not very or not at all important. ([Rasmussen Reports 5/13/15](#))

Interfaith Marriage is rising in the U.S. with each generation. Among Americans who have gotten married since '10, 39% report they are in religiously mixed marriages, compared with 19% among those who got married before 1960, according to Pew Research's latest "America's Changing Religious Landscape" report. ([Pew Research Center's America's Changing Religious Landscape 5/13/15](#))

Cohabitation Half of all first premarital cohabitations dissolve in less than two years, finds a Bowling Green State Univ. study. Couples who live together are significantly less likely to get married today and are about half as likely to marry as other couples who lived together outside marriage 30 years ago. They are also over 20% more likely to separate. ([LifeSite News 5/12/15](#))

Millennials now comprise 35% of the U.S. civilian labor force, the largest generation segment. Boomers and Gen-Xers each account for 31%. ([Mary Meeker's 20th Annual Internet Trends Report](#))

55% of Americans Pray Every Day, according to a '13 Pew Research Center survey, while 23% pray weekly or monthly and 21% seldom or never pray. Even among those who are religiously unaffiliated, 21% pray daily. Women (65%) are more likely than men (46%) to pray every day. Older people (60%) are more likely than younger adults (45%) to pray daily. 57% of Americans favor having the Day of Prayer, while just 5% oppose it and it doesn't matter to 38%. ([Pew Research Center Fact Tank 5/6/15](#))

Homeless Female Veterans The Department of Veterans Affairs says from '06 to '10, the number of homeless U.S. female veterans doubled. The current estimate is 15,000 women vets who are homeless. ([Religion & Ethics Weekly 5/22/15](#))

The Unprecedented Generation In "The Age Wave," Ken Dychtwald said, "Two-thirds of all the men and women who have lived beyond the age of 65 in the entire history of the world are alive today." Not since the days of Noah has God given a generation such extended life, good health and adequate resources. Today the fastest-growing segment of the senior adult population is the 85-and-up group. In most congregations, a strategic plan for the future that does not incorporate the needs, values and gifts of senior adults is incomplete. ([BP News 5/19/15](#))

TV Viewing Varies by Generation While a majority among all Americans turn on the television seven days a week (Elders 93%, Boomers 83%, Gen-Xers 69%, Millennials 52%), young adults are far more likely than older Americans to say they don't turn it on at all. 22% of Millennials turn on the TV zero days per week, compared to less than 1% of Elders. This is due largely to other screens replacing the TV among Millennials rather than less screen time overall. ([Barna Group 5/20/15](#))

Morality in America Most Americans, even most liberals, believe the state of moral values in the U.S. is getting worse, according to a Gallup poll. When asked, "Right now, do you think the state of moral values in the country as a whole is getting better or getting worse?" 72% of Americans said "getting worse" and 22% said "getting better." While social conservatives are consistently more pessimistic and social liberals are consistently more optimistic about the state of moral values, 58% of social liberals answered that moral values are getting worse. 81% of social conservatives and 76% of social moderates agreed.

(Christian Post 6/3/15)

Modern American Young Men are less violent than in the past, but prolonged use of video games and porn are causing unhealthy rewiring of their brains, says Philip Zimbardo, an expert on human psychology. A study of 20,000 young men showed less violence, lower drug use and less drinking than in the past, but the replacement of father figures with video games and porn is leading to erectile dysfunction and other negative physical and psychological consequences. Over-stimulation via video games and porn begins to change brain function. It begins to change the reward center of the brain and produces a kind of excitement and addiction. While boys get "psychologically excited" by pornography and video games, physiologically boys are less aroused-and also face obesity, Type II Diabetes, and erectile dysfunction. Zimbardo attributes much of the problem to the lack of fathers in the home. *(LifeSite News 5/12/15)*

Underage Drinking and binge drinking rates among young people are on the decline, finds a new U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration study. Underage drinking among all U.S. residents 12 through 20 dropped 21%. Underage binge drinking fell 26.4%. The survey examined the years '02 to '13. 22.7% of the nation's young people reported they had an alcoholic drink in the last 30 days. 14.2% of people underage reported they had engaged in binge drinking (5 or more drinks on the same occasion) in the last 30 days. That is down from just under 20% in '02. For those age 18 through 20, however, the rate has stayed between 39% and 44% for the past 20 years. Also 59.4% of the college-age population reported drinking in the last 30 days. Alcohol remains the primary drug used by youth with 22.7% reporting they drink, compared to 16.9% who use tobacco and 13.6% who use illicit drugs. *(USA Today 6/11/15)*

American Acceptance of Sexual Immorality Growing According to a new Gallup report, 63% of U.S. adults view homosexual relations as morally acceptable today vs. 40% in '01. Also, acceptance of having a baby outside of marriage increased from 45% to 61%. Acceptance of heterosexual sex outside marriage increased from 45% to 61%, divorce from 59% to 71%, polygamy from 7% to 16% and medical research using stem cells from human embryos from 52% to 64%. Views on the moral acceptability of abortion stayed about the same, 42% to 45%. *(Christian Post 6/1/15)*

Around 20% of hospital patients declared as brain dead are reportedly misdiagnosed. Those patients could be conscious and likely to recover. In fact, they may be as likely to respond to questions as healthy patients; they just lack the ability to communicate. Univ. of Western Ontario neurosurgeons performed brain scans on hospital patients diagnosed as being in a "persistent vegetative state" (completely unresponsive and lacking brain activity). They asked the patients questions, and a brain scan showed a "significant proportion" of the patients, despite showing no external response, answered the questions mentally. *(LifeSite News 5/29/15)*

People & Transitions:

Elisabeth Elliot, 88, pioneering missionary and bestselling author, died June 14.

Jim Lundgren will replace Alec Hill as interim president of InterVarsity. Hill has been diagnosed with bone cancer.

CitizenLink president Tom Minnery will be stepping down in October. His successor is Paul Weber.

Bomb Blasts and Brain Damage VA scientists have discovered signs of early aging in the brains of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans caught near roadside bomb explosions, even among those who felt nothing from the blast. Years later, veterans are showing progressive damage to the brain's wiring, claims a study published in *Brain, A Journal of Neurology*. *(USA Today 6/1/15)*

Fast Facts:

One out of nine young people who grow up with a Christian background lose their faith in Christianity.

53% of evangelicals say they are very familiar with what the Bible says about how immigrants

should be treated.

68% of evangelicals would value hearing a sermon about how biblical principles can be applied to immigration.

37% of Americans say they are worried about Sharia law being applied in America.

Today 53% of Americans are satisfied with the influence of organized religion in the U.S., down from 64% in '01.

40% of evangelicals agree worshiping alone or with family is a valid substitute for regularly attending church.

51% of evangelicals agree everyone sins, but most people are by nature good.

50% of U.S. church attendees attend the largest 10% of churches.

31% of Americans who watch Christian TV rarely attend church.

28% of Americans who read Christian books rarely attend church.

26% of Americans who listen to Christian radio rarely attend church.

26% of Americans who listen to Christian podcasts rarely attend church.

68% of evangelicals say they have never been encouraged by their local church to reach out to immigrants in their communities.

73% of evangelicals agree the arrival of immigrants to the U.S. is a great opportunity to share Christ and make disciples.

42% of Americans have a different religion than they did in childhood.

The average American/Canadian will eat about 11.9 pounds of cereal per year.

Only one person in two billion will live to be 116 or older.

Americans travel 1,144,721,000 miles by air every day.

38% of American men say they love their cars more than women.

Bulletproof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers and laser printers were all invented by women.

August is the month when most babies are born

One quarter of the bones in your body are in your feet.

In terms of population, Russia is the 9th largest country in the world, even though it's the world's biggest country.

Russia covers 1/7 of the total land of our planet and neighbors more countries than any other country on earth.

Northwest Medicine research has shown that recalling memories often makes them less accurate over time.

According to the "Journal of Experimental Psychology," fooling yourself into thinking you have slept well, even if you haven't, still improves performance.

A '07 Australian study found homework is of little to no academic value to elementary and junior-high students.

The average numbers of cable TV stations Americans receive ballooned from 129 in '08 to 189 in '13.

Millennials (40%) and Gen-Xers (42%) are twice as likely as Elders (22%) to use websites at least a few times a day to get new information.

Only 42% of Americans take all of their allotted time off from work.

Since the beginning of recorded history, the world has been at peace for a total of 268 years, or only 8%.

The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reports 56% of divorce cases involve one party having "an obsessive interest in pornographic websites."

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