

Social survey shows drop in religious participation over past two years

by [Tobin Grant](#) in the [April 15, 2015](#) issue

A new survey shows that since 2012, the United States has about 7.5 million more Americans who are no longer active in religion.

The 2014 General Social Survey was released in March. Funded by the National Science Foundation, this multimillion-dollar study gives us the most accurate data on American society—including religion.

(In the data, each percentage point increase represents a growth of 2.5 million adults. So a three-point rise in secularity, for example, means that about 7.5 million people left religion since 2012.)

Here are some of its findings:

- More Americans prefer “no religion.”

When asked their religious preference, nearly one in four Americans now say “none.” Up until the 1990s, the percentage who were in this group, known as “nones,” hovered in the single digits. The 2014 GSS showed that nones are 21 percent of the population, up one point from 2012.

How large is this group? There are nearly as many Americans who claim no religion as there are Catholics (24 percent). If this growth continues, in a few years the largest “religion” in the United States may be no religion at all.

- Americans aren’t going to church like they used to.

The number of Americans who never darken a church door is also at a new high. More than a third of Americans (34 percent) never attend a worship service (other than weddings and other ceremonies). This is a three-point increase from just a few years earlier.

- More Americans say they never pray.

Even with people no longer identifying with religion or attending worship services, they still pray. But the percentage who say they never pray rose from 10 percent in

2004 to 15 percent in 2014. —Religion News Service