

Number of nones equals evangelicals, Catholics

## **A recent analysis of survey data also showed an uptick in the percentage of mainline Protestants—though more years will need to pass to see if the increase continues.**

by [Religion News Service staff](#) and [Christian Century staff](#)

This article appears in the [April 24, 2019](#) issue.

People who don't affiliate with any specific faith tradition are now tied with Catholics and evangelicals as the largest religious groupings in the country, according to a recently released analysis of 2018 survey data. Each accounted for roughly 23 percent of respondents.

People claiming a religious preference that researchers tied to evangelicalism dipped to 22.5 percent of Americans from 23.9 percent in 2016, and Catholics also decreased slightly. In the same time period, the percentage of mainline Protestants increased from 10.2 percent to 10.8 percent.

Ryan P. Burge of Eastern Illinois University, who analyzed the [2018 General Social Survey data](#), highlighted that Americans claiming "no religion"—sometimes referred to as "nones" because of how they answer the question, What is your religious tradition?—now represent about 23.1 percent of the population, up from 21.6 percent in 2016.

Burge wrote on social media: "I would not put much stock into one-year shifts, but the larger trends are instructive. The rise of the nones has been consistent for two decades and shows no signs of slowing down."

In the GSS data, affiliation with most religious groups either slightly decreased or remained roughly consistent; for example, Jewish people have been 2–3 percent of respondents for decades.

Burge suggested the religiously unaffiliated came from mainline denominations because the rise in their numbers coincides with decreasing mainline numbers since the early 1990s. He noted that the recent change is not statistically significant and that more years would have to pass to see if the uptick continues.

*A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title "Number of nones equals evangelicals, Catholics"*