



STUDY GUIDE

WHY ARE SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE UNHAPPY?

KEY TERMS: values
virtues

meaning
American identity

patriotism
religion

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section during the video. Include definitions and key terms.

CUE COLUMN: Complete this section after the video.

What did a 2019 Reuters report claim had doubled over less than a decade among U.S. college students?

How has a loss of values contributed to the unhappiness of young people?

What two sets of values was the U.S. founded on?

How many Americans born after 1980 don't affiliate with any religion?

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Prager notes, “People have more money, better health, better housing, more education, and live longer than at any time in history, but people, especially the young, are unhappier than at any time since data began to be collected.” Why do you think that this is the case? Explain. Why do you think that data is being collected on this condition?
- After Mr. Prager explains that a loss of values is one of the biggest reasons for so much unhappiness, he points out: “Another set of values is referred to as middle class or bourgeois values. These include getting married before having a child, making a family, getting a job, self-discipline, delayed gratification, and patriotism. All of these have been under attack by America’s elites, with the following results: The majority of births to millennials are to unmarried women. Yet, according to a 2018 Cigna study, single parents are generally the loneliest of Americans. The percentage of American adults who have never been married and who have no children is at an historic high.” What do you think the connection is between the condition of getting married and having children and the condition of happiness? Explain. Why do you think that America’s elites are attacking the very values that have provided so many Americans with so much happiness for so long? Explain.
- Mr. Prager later points out that, “Until the 1960s, Americans grew up loving their country, admiring the Founders, and believing in America’s values, most especially, liberty. Americans did not ignore the bad parts of their history, but they were wise enough to recognize that what made America exceptional was not its flaws, which were all universal, but its virtues, which were not. This strong American identity provided generations of Americans with roots, community, optimism, and meaning.” Why do you think that a significant number of Americans stopped loving their country and believing in American values in the 1960s? What are America’s exceptional virtues? What do you think Mr. Prager means by “American identity”? Explain.
- Later in the video, Mr. Prager explains: “...the most important reason for all this unhappiness [is] a lack of meaning. ...nothing has given Americans, or any other people for that matter, as much meaning as religion. But in the West since World War II, God and religion have been relegated to the dustbin of history. The result is that more than a third of Americans born after 1980 affiliate with no religion. This is unprecedented in American history. And it’s even worse in Europe. Maybe, just maybe, the decline of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, those great providers of meaning, is the single biggest factor in the increasing sadness and loneliness among so many young people in America and around the world.” Why do you think that God and religion have declined so drastically since WWII? Do you agree with Mr. Prager that lack of religion, and thus meaning that stems from it, is likely the primary driver of sadness and loneliness amongst young people? Why or why not?
- At the end of the video, Mr. Prager concludes: “Young people have been told God is nonsense, their country is essentially evil, their past is deplorable, their future is bleak, and that marriage and children are not important. Why are so many young people depressed, unhappy, and angry? It’s not capitalism, or income inequality, or patriarchy, or even global warming. It’s having no religion, no God, and no country to believe in. And what does that leave them with? No meaning.” Why do you think that young people are being indoctrinated with such nonsense, and whom do you think is primarily responsible for imposing such nonsense on young people? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Church Membership

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What is the percentage of Americans who report belonging to a church, synagogue or mosque? What is the decline in church membership consistent with? What does the decline in church membership mostly reflect? What percentage of adults with a religious preference belonged to a church at the turn of the century compared to today? What do the low rates of church membership among millennials conform with? How does the decline in church membership amongst Republicans compare to that of Democrats, in terms of percentage and subgroup trend? What factors are contributing to the accelerating trend of declining church membership?
- What do you think are the most significant factors driving the decline in people being religious and participating in religious groups? Do you think that if more young people found meaning through participating in a religious community that more young people would be happier? Why or why not? What other institutions, conditions, or factors might contribute towards more young people being happier? Do you agree with Mr. Prager’s thesis that young people need values and meaning to be happy? Why or why not?
- In the video, Mr. Prager explains: “Chief among the American values was keeping government as small as possible. This enabled non-governmental institutions- Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions Clubs; book clubs; the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; bowling leagues; music societies; and of course, churches, to provide Americans with friends and to provide the neediest Americans with help. But as government has gotten ever larger, many of these non-governmental groups have dwindled in number or simply disappeared.” Why do you think that Americans have gradually traded community and religious groups for big-government dependency? Do you think that replacing community and religious groups with big-government dependency has been worth the trade-off? Why or why not?



QUIZ

WHY ARE SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE UNHAPPY?

1. What did a 2019 Reuters report claim had doubled over less than a decade among U.S. college students?
 - a. suicidal thinking
 - b. severe depression
 - c. rates of self-injury
 - d. all of the above

2. The United States was founded on two sets of values: _____.
 - a. Prussian and Socialist
 - b. Judeo-Christian and American
 - c. Calvin and European
 - d. Zoroastrian and Germanic

3. The majority of births to millennials are to unmarried women.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. Until the 1960s, Americans grew up _____.
 - a. skeptical of American values
 - b. eschewing the founders
 - c. loving their country
 - d. ignoring the bad parts of their history

5. What might be the *biggest* factor in the increasing sadness and loneliness among so many young people?
 - a. increased drug and opioid addiction
 - b. fears for their future
 - c. less human interaction because of constant cellphone use
 - d. the decline of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>

Politics
April 18, 2019

U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades

by Jeffrey M. Jones

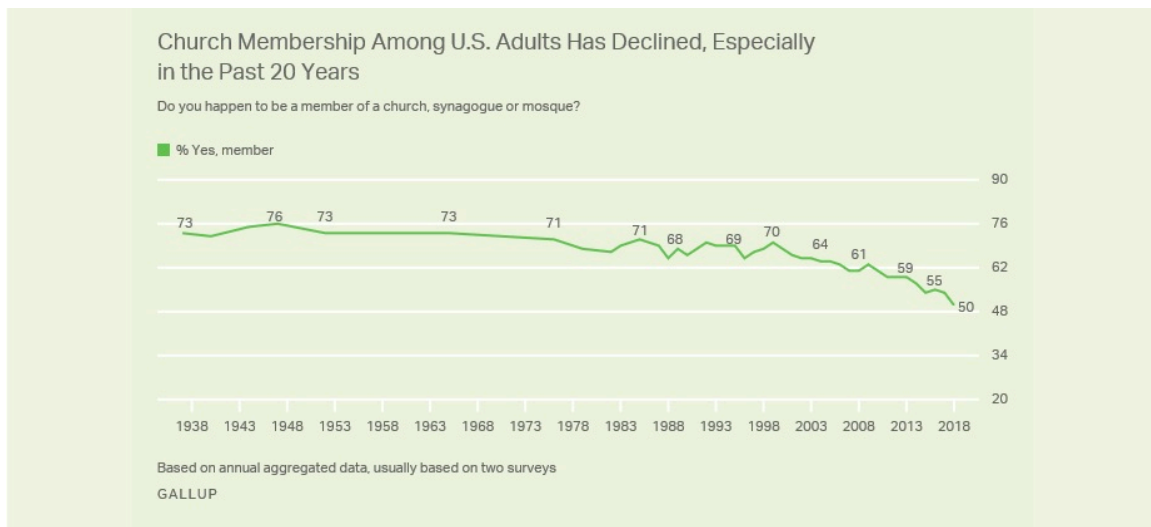


Story Highlights

- Half of Americans are church members, down from 70% in 1999
- Most of the decline attributable to increase in percentage with no religion
- Membership has fallen nine points among those who are religious

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- As Christian and Jewish Americans prepare to celebrate Easter and Passover, respectively, Gallup finds the percentage of Americans who report belonging to a church, synagogue or mosque at an all-time low, averaging 50% in 2018.

U.S. church membership was 70% or higher from 1937 through 1976, falling modestly to an average of 68% in the 1970s through the 1990s. The past 20 years have seen an acceleration in the drop-off, with a 20-percentage-point decline since 1999 and more than half of that change occurring since the start of the current decade.



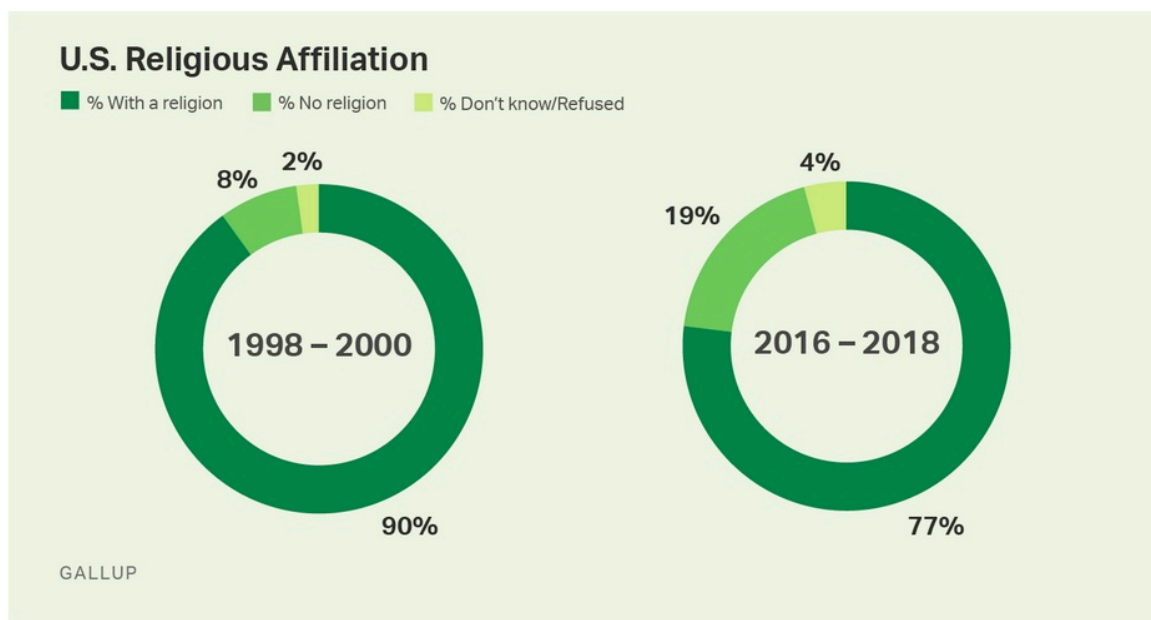
The decline in church membership is consistent with larger societal trends in declining church attendance and an increasing proportion of Americans with no religious preference.

This article compares church membership data for the 1998-2000 and 2016-2018 periods, using combined data from multiple years to facilitate subgroup analysis. On average, 69% of U.S. adults were members of a church in 1998-2000, compared with 52% in 2016-2018.

The decline in church membership mostly reflects the fact that fewer Americans than in the past now have any religious affiliation. However, even those who do identify with a particular religion are less likely to belong to a church or other place of worship than in the past.

Trend Toward No Religious Preference Key Factor in Declining Membership

Since the turn of the century, the percentage of U.S. adults with no religious affiliation has more than doubled, from 8% to 19%.



Although some of those who do not identify with a religion nevertheless indicate that they belong to a church, the vast majority of nonreligious Americans do not. In 1998 through 2000, one in 10 Americans with no religious preference said they belonged to a church, as did an average of 7% in the past three years.

As such, there is an almost one-to-one correspondence between not being religious and not belonging to a church. Consequently, the 11-point increase in no religious affiliation accounts for the majority of the 17-point decline in church membership over the past two decades.

Fewer Religious Americans Are Church Members

Although there has been a steep increase in the proportion of Americans who do not have a religious attachment, they remain a small minority of the U.S. population. Three-quarters of Americans, 77%, identify with some organized religion, though that is down from 90% in 1998 through 2000.

The still-sizable proportion of religious Americans also contribute to declining church membership, as fewer in this group belong to a church than did so two decades ago. At the turn of the century, 73% of U.S. adults with a religious preference belonged to a church, compared with 64% today.

Fewer Religious Americans Belong to a Church			
Figures are the percentage who say they belong to a church, synagogue or mosque			
	1998-2000	2016-2018	Change
	%	%	pct. pts.
Have a religious preference	73	64	-9
Do not have a religious preference	10	7	-3
Data for the small proportion of respondents who did not answer the religious preference question are not shown (approximately four in 10 of these respondents indicated they were members of a church in each time period).			
GALLUP			

It is clear then, that the nature of Americans' orientation to religion is changing, with fewer religious Americans finding membership in a church or other faith institution to be a necessary part of their religious experience.

Generational Change Helping Push the Decline in Church Membership

Religiosity is strongly related to age, with older Americans far more likely than younger adults to be members of churches. However, church membership has dropped among all generational groups over the past two decades, with declines of roughly 10 percentage points among traditionalists, baby boomers and Generation X.

Most millennials were too young to be polled in 1998-2000. Now that they have reached adulthood, their church membership rates are exceedingly low and appear to be a major factor in the drop in overall U.S. church membership. Just 42% of millennials are members of churches, on average.

Changes in Church Membership by Generation, Over Time

	1998-2000	2016-2018	Change
	%	%	pct. pts.
Traditionalists (born in 1945 or before)	77	68	-9
Baby boomers (born 1946-1964)	67	57	-10
Generation X (born 1965-1979)	62	54	-8
Millennials (born 1980-2000)	n/a	42	n/a

Note: Given that Gallup's polls are based on the 18+ U.S. adult population, the 1998-2000 time period would have included only a small proportion of the millennial generation.

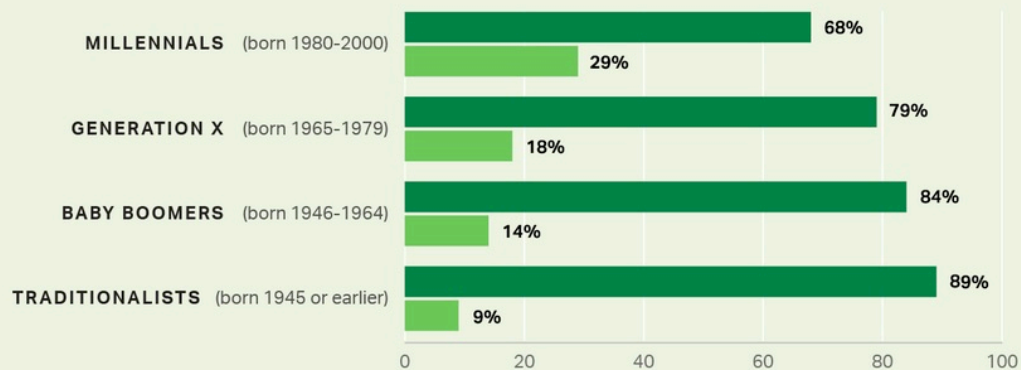
GALLUP

By comparison, 20 years ago, 62% of members of Generation X belonged to a church, when they were about the same age as millennials are today.

The low rates of church membership among millennials conform with the generation's weaker attachment to religion in general. On average, 68% of millennials identify with a religion in the 2016-2018 church membership surveys, while 29% do not. In all other generations, at least 79% have a religious affiliation, with correspondingly lower percentages expressing no faith preference.

Percentage With a Religious Preference, by Generation

■ % With a religion ■ % No religion



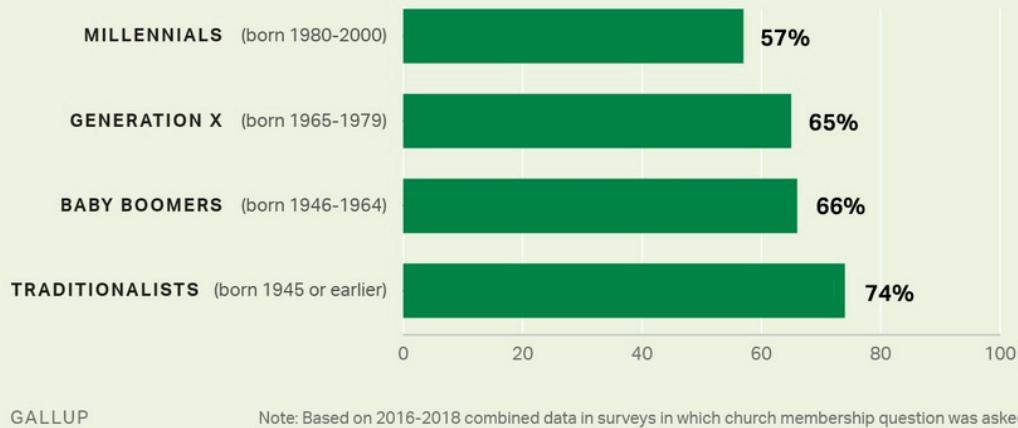
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Note: Based on 2016-2018 combined data in surveys in which church membership question was asked

The percentage of millennials with no religion may be continuing to grow, as an average of 33% in Gallup surveys conducted in 2019 to date say they have no religious affiliation.

Not only are millennials less likely than older Americans to identify with a religion, but millennials who are religious are significantly less likely to belong to a church. Fifty-seven percent of religious millennials belong to a church, compared with 65% or more in older generations.

Percentage of Church Membership Among Those With a Religious Preference, by Generation



The lower rate of church membership among religious millennials appears to be more a product of generational differences than of life-stage effects. In 1998-2000, 68% of Generation X respondents were church members when they were roughly the same age as today's millennials.

Given that church membership, and religiosity in general, is greater among older adults, the emergence of an increasingly secular generation to replace far more religious older generations suggests the decline in U.S. church membership overall will continue.

Membership Decline Steeper Among Catholics

Gallup has previously reported that church attendance has dropped more among Catholics than among Protestants. Consistent with this, the decline in church membership has been greater among Catholics. Twenty years ago, 76% of Catholics belonged to a church; now, 63% do.

Meanwhile, 67% of Protestants, down from 73% in 1998-2000, are members of a church. Much of the decline in Protestant membership is attributable to the increasing percentage of Americans who simply identify their religion as "Christian" rather than as a specific Protestant denomination such as Baptist, Lutheran or Methodist. Gallup classifies "Christian" respondents as Protestants but, as might be expected, nondenominational Christians are less likely to belong to a church (57%) than Americans who identify with a specific Protestant denomination (70%).

There are insufficient cases to provide reliable estimates on church membership among other religions, but the data suggest that membership in a place of worship has been stable among Mormons (near 90% in both time periods) and Jews (in the mid- to low 50% range in both time periods) over the past two decades.

In contrast to the variable changes in church membership among generational and faith subgroups, the declines have been fairly similar among most other demographic subgroups. However, the rates have differed by party identification, as Republicans show a relatively modest decline in church membership of eight points since 1998-2000 (from 77% to 69%). In contrast, Democrats show one of the largest subgroup declines, of 23 points, from 71% to 48%.

Full data for subgroups are shown in a table at the bottom of the article.

Implications

Although the United States is one of the more religious countries, particularly among Western nations, it is far less religious than it used to be. Barely three-quarters of Americans now identify with a religion and only about half claim membership in a church, synagogue or mosque.

The rate of U.S. church membership has declined sharply in the past two decades after being relatively stable in the six decades before that. A sharp increase in the proportion of the population with no religious affiliation, a decline in church membership among those who do have a religious preference, and low levels of church membership among millennials are all contributing to the accelerating trend.

The challenge is clear for churches, which depend on loyal and active members to keep them open and thriving. How do they find ways to convince some of the unaffiliated religious adults in society to make a commitment to a particular house of worship of their chosen faith? Roughly one in four U.S. adults are religious but not members of a church, synagogue or mosque.

Church leaders must also grapple with the generational slide away from religion. Millennials are much less likely than their elders to indicate a religious preference, and presumably the nearly one-third of millennials without a religious preference are unlikely to ever join a church. But the roughly two-thirds of millennials who do express a religious preference may one day be convinced to join, perhaps as more get established in their lives, including having families, which can be an impetus to becoming a part of a faith community.

Another obstacle churches face is Americans' eroding confidence in the institution of organized religion. While organized religion is not the only U.S. institution suffering a loss of confidence, Americans have lost more confidence in it than in most other institutions.

In addition to the ongoing trends toward declining religiosity, Americans who are religious may also be changing their relationship to churches. They may not see a need to, or have a desire to, belong to a church and participate in a community of people with similar religious beliefs.

These trends are not just numbers, but play out in the reality that thousands of U.S. churches are closing each year. Religious Americans in the future will likely be faced with fewer options for places of worship, and likely less convenient ones, which could accelerate the decline in membership even more.

Learn more about how the Gallup Poll Social Series works.

Changes in Church Membership, by Subgroup

	1998-2000	2016-2018	Change
	%	%	pct. pts.
U.S. adults	69	52	-17
Religion			
Catholic	76	63	-13
Protestant ^	73	67	-6
Gender			
Men	64	47	-17
Women	73	58	-15
Age			
18-29 years old	63	41	-22
30-49 years old	65	49	-16
50-64 years old	71	56	-15
65+ years old	79	64	-15
Race/Ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic white	68	53	-15
Non-Hispanic black	78	65	-13
Hispanic	68	45	-23
Region			
East	69	50	-19
Midwest	72	56	-16
South	74	58	-16
West	57	43	-14
Education			
College graduate	68	55	-13
College nongraduate	69	51	-18
Party ID			
Republican	77	69	-8
Independent	59	45	-14
Democrat	71	48	-23
Ideology			
Conservative	78	67	-11
Moderate	66	48	-18
Liberal	56	37	-19
Marital status			
Married	71	59	-12
Not married	64	45	-19

^ Protestants include those who identify their religion as "Christian."

GALLUP