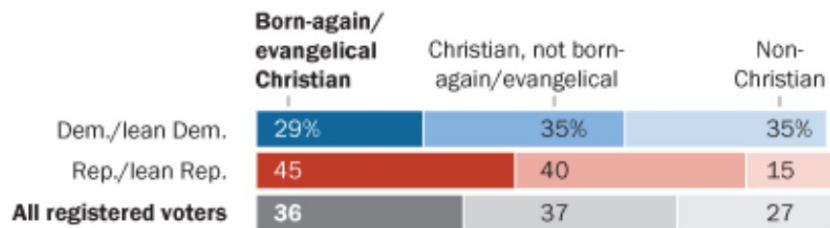


Understanding Why People Leave the Church System

In 2014, Pew Research Center¹ conducted a Religious Landscape Study. Here are 2 items showing the interesting results from it for those who described themselves as 'born-again' or 'evangelical' Christians:²

More than one-third of registered voters describe themselves as 'born-again or evangelical' Christians



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Based on registered voters.

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Religious profile of self-identified 'born-again or evangelical' Christian registered voters

Among Republican/
Rep.-leaning registered voters

Among Democratic/
Dem.-leaning registered voters

Attend religious services at least weekly



Say religion 'very important' in life



Say Bible is literal word of God



Share faith with others weekly/monthly



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Based on registered voters. Don't know/refused responses not shown. Results for the faith sharing question are based only on those who are affiliated with a religion because religious "nones" were not asked this question.

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1 – **About Pew Research Center:** Pew Research Center is a non-partisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, media content analysis and other empirical social science research. Pew Research Center does not take policy positions. (www.pewresearch.org/about)

2 – Pew Research Center (14-3-2016) "Exit polls and the evangelical vote: A closer look" (www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/14/exit-polls-and-the-evangelical-vote-a-closer-look)

The most interesting analysis to come out of the survey was on the topic of why people abandoned religion in all its forms. A Pew article states:

“Perhaps the most striking trend in American religion in recent years has been the growing percentage of adults who do not identify with a religious group. And the vast majority of these religious “nones” (78%) say they were raised as a member of a particular religion before shedding their religious identity in adulthood.

As part of a new survey connected to our broader Religious Landscape Study, we asked these people to explain, in their own words, why they no longer identify with a religious group. This resulted in hundreds of different responses (after all, everyone’s religious experience is a bit different), but many of them shared one of a few common themes.

About half of current religious “nones” who were raised in a religion (49%) indicate that a lack of belief led them to move away from religion.”³

Here is the data from that article:

Half of ‘nones’ left childhood faith over lack of belief, one-in-five cite dislike of organized religion

Reasons for disaffiliating among those who were raised in a religion and are currently ...

	NET Unaffiliated	Atheist	Agnostic	Nothing in particular
	%	%	%	%
NET Don't believe	49	82	63	37
Disenchanted/don't believe	36	71	46	25
Not interested in/don't need religion	7	3	8	7
Views evolved	7	7	12	5
Went through a crisis of faith	1	2	1	1
NET Dislike organized religion	20	10	19	22
Anti-institutional religion	15	2	17	16
Religion focuses on power/politics	4	5	1	6
Religion causes conflict	1	3	2	1
NET Religiously unsure/undecided	18	5	12	22
Unaffiliated but religious	7	1	1	10
Seeking/open-minded	6	3	5	7
Spiritual but not religious	3	2	4	3
Uncertain about beliefs	2	0	4	2
NET Inactive believer	10	0	3	14
Non-practicing	8	0	2	11
Too busy	2	0	1	3
Other	<1	0	<1	1
Unclear/no answer	6	3	7	6

Note: Excludes those who said they had been misclassified and were still affiliated with a religion. Figures do not sum to 100% or to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015. QC13.

“Choosing a New Church or House of Worship”

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Over the page is a summary of the various main reasons why people said they gave up religion.

The article notes this from their responses:

“One-in-five express an opposition to organized religion in general. This share includes some who do not like the hierarchical nature of religious groups, several people who think religion is too much like a business and others who mention clergy sexual abuse scandals as reasons for their stance.”

We need to understand these reasons so we can talk to the 'leavers' appropriately while in the process of introducing them to the reality of the Kingdom.

The full data from the Religious Landscape Study which interviewed 35,00 Americans can be found online.⁴

3 – Pew Research Center (24-8-2016) “Why America’s ‘nones’ left religion behind” (www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind)

4 – Pew Research Center “Religious Landscape Study” (www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study)

Examples of reasons why people are unaffiliated

Don't believe

- "Learning about evolution when I went away to college."
- "Too many Christians doing un-Christian things."
- "Religion is the opiate of the people."
- "Rational thought makes religion go out the window."
- "Lack of any of sort of scientific or specific evidence of a creator."
- "I just realized somewhere along the line that I didn't really believe it."
- "I'm doing a lot more learning, studying and kind of making decisions myself rather than listening to someone else."

Dislike organized religion

- "I see organized religious groups as more divisive than uniting."
- "I think that more harm has been done in the name of religion than any other area."
- "I no longer believe in organized religion. I don't attend services anymore. I just believe that religion is very personal conversation with me and my creator."
- "Because I think religion is not a religion anymore. It's a business ... it's all about money."
- "The clergy sex abuse scandal."
- "The church's teachings on homosexuality."

Religiously unsure/undecided

- "I don't have a particular religion because I am open-minded and I don't think there is one particular religion that is right or wrong."
- "I feel that there is something out there, but I can't nail down a religion."
- "Right now I'm kind of leaning towards spirituality, but I'm not too sure. I know I can pray to my God anywhere. I do believe in a higher power, but I don't need a church to do that."

Inactive believer

- "I just basically stopped going to church when I went to college and never picked it back up. I was never super religious."
- "I don't practice any religion and I don't go to church or participate in any of the rituals of the church."
- "I don't have the time to go to church."

Laurence
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(www.CanberraForerunners.org)

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