

MAY 29, 2018



Being Christian in Western Europe

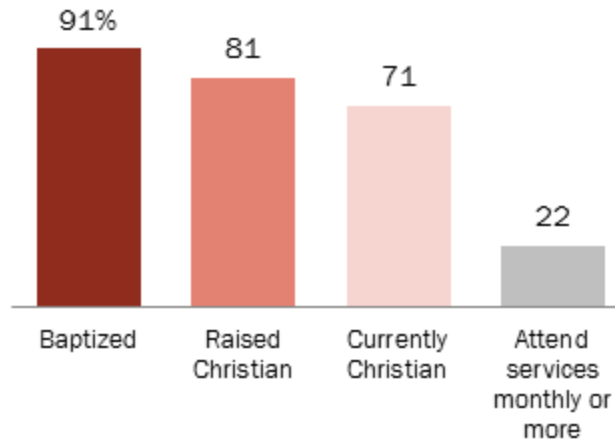
The majority of Europe's Christians are non-practicing, but they differ from religiously unaffiliated people in their views on God, attitudes toward Muslims and immigrants, and opinions about religion's role in society



(Arterra/Getty Images)

Most Western Europeans continue to identify as Christians, though few regularly attend church

Across 15 countries, median % ...



Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

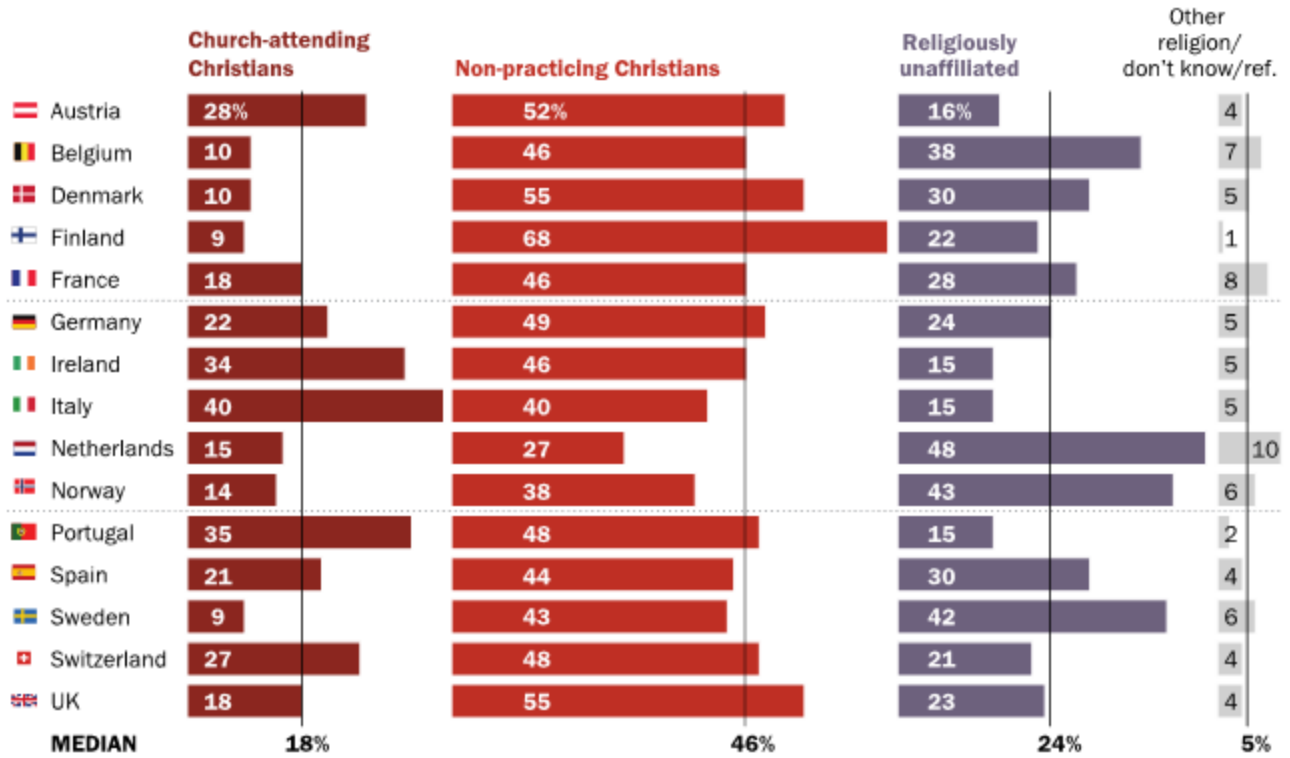
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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-00-1/) Western Europe, where Protestant Christianity originated and Catholicism has been based for most of its history, has become one of the world's most secular regions. Although the vast majority of adults say they were baptized, today many do not describe themselves as Christians. Some say they gradually drifted away from religion, stopped believing in religious teachings, or were alienated by scandals or church positions on social issues, according to a major new Pew Research Center survey of religious beliefs and practices in Western Europe.

Yet most adults surveyed still *do* consider themselves Christians, even if they seldom go to church. Indeed, the survey shows that non-practicing Christians (defined, for the purposes of this report, as people who identify as Christians, but attend church services no more than a few times per year) make up the biggest share of the population across the region. In every country except Italy, they are more numerous than church-attending Christians (those who go to religious services at least once a month). In the United Kingdom, for example, there are roughly three times as many non-practicing Christians (55%) as there are church-attending Christians (18%) defined this way.

In most Western European countries, non-practicing Christians are largest group

% who are ...



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often. Other religion/don't know/ref. are mostly Muslim respondents. General population surveys in Western Europe may not fully capture the size of minority populations, such as Muslims. Therefore, these figures may differ from previously published demographic estimates. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. "Being Christian in Western Europe"

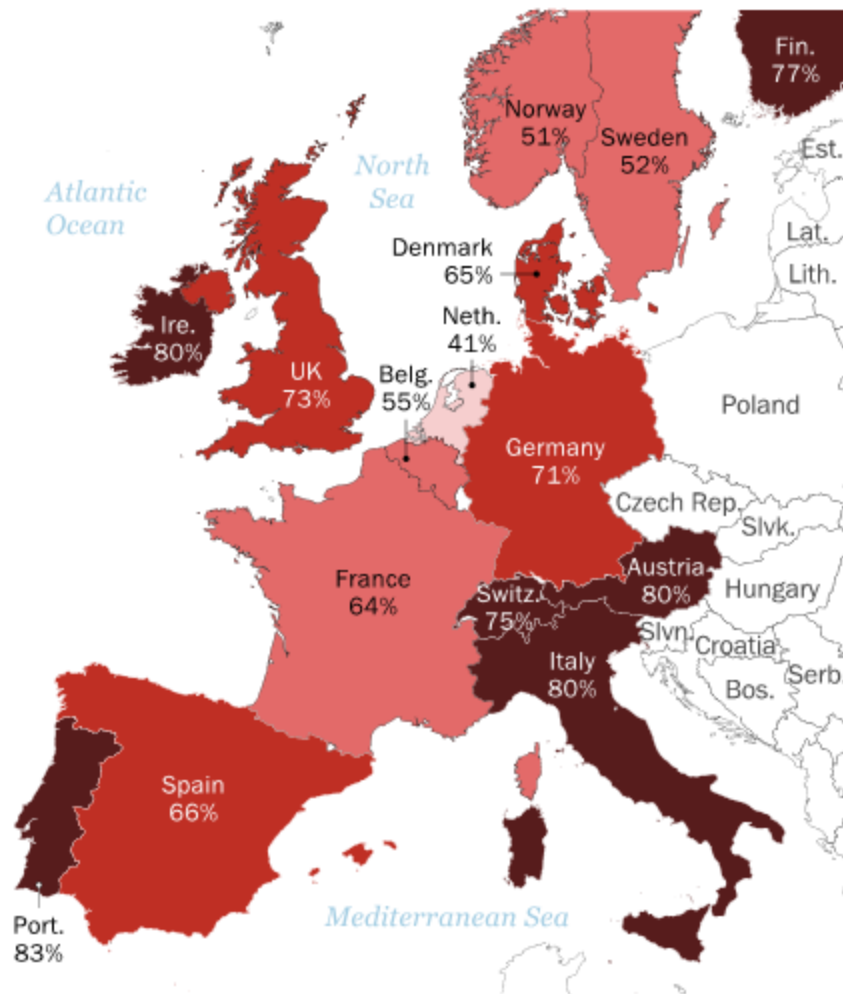
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Majorities across Western Europe identify as Christian

% who say they are Christian

0-49% 50-64% 65-74% 75%+ Non-surveyed country



Note: Respondents were asked "What is your present religion, if any? Are you Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else or nothing in particular?"
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-01/) Non-practicing Christians also outnumber the religiously unaffiliated population (people who identify as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular," sometimes called the "nones") in most of the countries surveyed.¹ And, even after a recent surge in immigration from the Middle East and North Africa, there are many more non-practicing Christians in Western Europe than people of all other religions combined (Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, etc.).

These figures raise some obvious questions: What is the meaning of Christian identity in Western Europe today? And how different are non-practicing Christians from religiously unaffiliated Europeans – many of whom also come from Christian backgrounds?

The Pew Research Center study – which involved more than 24,000 telephone interviews with randomly selected adults, including nearly 12,000 non-practicing Christians – finds that Christian identity remains a meaningful marker in Western Europe, even among those who seldom go to church. It is *not* just a "nominal" identity devoid of practical importance. On the contrary, the religious, political and cultural views of non-practicing Christians often differ from those of church-attending Christians *and* religiously unaffiliated adults. For example:

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- Although many non-practicing Christians say they do not believe in God “as described in the Bible,” they do tend to believe in some other higher power or spiritual force. By contrast, most church-attending Christians say they believe in the biblical depiction of God. And a clear majority of religiously unaffiliated adults do not believe in any type of higher power or spiritual force in the universe.
- Non-practicing Christians tend to express more positive than negative views toward churches and religious organizations, saying they serve society by helping the poor and bringing communities together. Their attitudes toward religious institutions are not quite as favorable as those of church-attending Christians, but they are more likely than religiously unaffiliated Europeans to say churches and other religious organizations contribute positively to society.
- Christian identity in Western Europe is associated with higher levels of negative sentiment toward immigrants and religious minorities. On balance, self-identified Christians – whether they attend church or not – are more likely than religiously unaffiliated people to express negative views of immigrants, as well as of Muslims and Jews.
- Non-practicing Christians are less likely than church-attending Christians to express nationalist views. Still, they are more likely than “nones” to say that their culture is superior to others and that it is necessary to have the country’s ancestry to share the national identity (e.g., one must have Spanish family background to be truly Spanish).
- The vast majority of non-practicing Christians, like the vast majority of the unaffiliated in Western Europe, favor legal abortion and same-sex marriage. Church-attending Christians are more conservative on these issues, though even among churchgoing Christians, there is substantial support – and in several countries, majority support – for legal abortion and same-sex marriage.
- Nearly all churchgoing Christians who are parents or guardians of minor children (those under 18) say they are raising those children in the Christian faith. Among non-practicing Christians, somewhat fewer – though still the overwhelming majority – say they are bringing up their children as Christians. By contrast, religiously unaffiliated parents generally are raising their children with no religion.

Christian identity in Europe remains a religious, social and cultural marker

Across 15 countries, median % who ...

	General population	Church-attending Christians	Non-practicing Christians	Religiously unaffiliated
Religious beliefs				
Believe in God as described in the Bible	27%	64%	24%	1%
Believe in other higher power or spiritual force	38	32	51	28
Religion in society/politics				
Say government should support religious values and beliefs	36%	58%	35%	14%
Agree churches and other religious organizations play an important role in helping poor and needy	62	78	62	48
Immigration/religious minorities				
Say immigrants from the Middle East are not honest	26%	26%	29%	18%
Say immigration should be reduced	38	40	37	28
Say Islam is fundamentally incompatible with their national culture and values	42	49	45	32
Are not willing to accept Jews in their family	17	14	19	7
Are not willing to accept Muslims in their family	24	29	30	11
Nationalism/national identity				
Completely/mostly agree "our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others"	45%	54%	48%	25%
Say it is very/somewhat important to have ___ family background to be truly ___ (e.g., German family background to be truly German)	53	72	52	42
Social issues				
Favor legal abortion in all/some cases	81%	52%	85%	87%
Favor legal gay marriage	75	58	80	87
Are raising children as Christian	70%	97%	87%	9%

Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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Religious identity and practice are not the only factors behind Europeans' beliefs and opinions on these issues. For instance, highly educated Europeans are generally more accepting of immigrants and religious minorities, and religiously unaffiliated adults tend to have more years of schooling than non-practicing Christians. But even after statistical techniques are used to control for differences in education, age, gender and political ideology, the survey shows that churchgoing Christians, non-practicing Christians and unaffiliated Europeans express different religious, cultural and social attitudes. (See below (#non-practicing) in this overview and Chapter 1 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/nationalism-immigration-and-minorities>).

These are among the key findings of a new Pew Research Center survey of 24,599 randomly selected adults across 15 countries in Western Europe. Interviews were conducted on mobile and landline telephones from April to August, 2017, in 12 languages. The survey examines not just traditional Christian religious beliefs and behaviors, but also opinions about the role of religious institutions in society, and views on national identity, immigrants and

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minorities, but also Europeans' attitudes toward Eastern and New Age spiritual ideas and practices. And the second half of this Overview more closely examines the beliefs and other characteristics of the religiously unaffiliated population in the region.

While the vast majority of Western Europeans identify as either Christian or religiously unaffiliated, the survey also includes interviews with people of other (non-Christian) religions as well as with some who decline to answer questions about their religious identity. But, in most countries, the survey's sample sizes do not allow for a detailed analysis of the attitudes of people in this group. Furthermore, this category is composed largely of Muslim respondents, and general population surveys may underrepresent Muslims and other small religious groups in Europe because these minority populations often are distributed differently throughout the country than is the general population; additionally, some members of these groups (especially recent immigrants) do not speak the national language well enough to participate in a survey. As a result, this report does not attempt to characterize the views of religious minorities such as Muslims, Jews, Buddhists or Hindus in Western Europe.

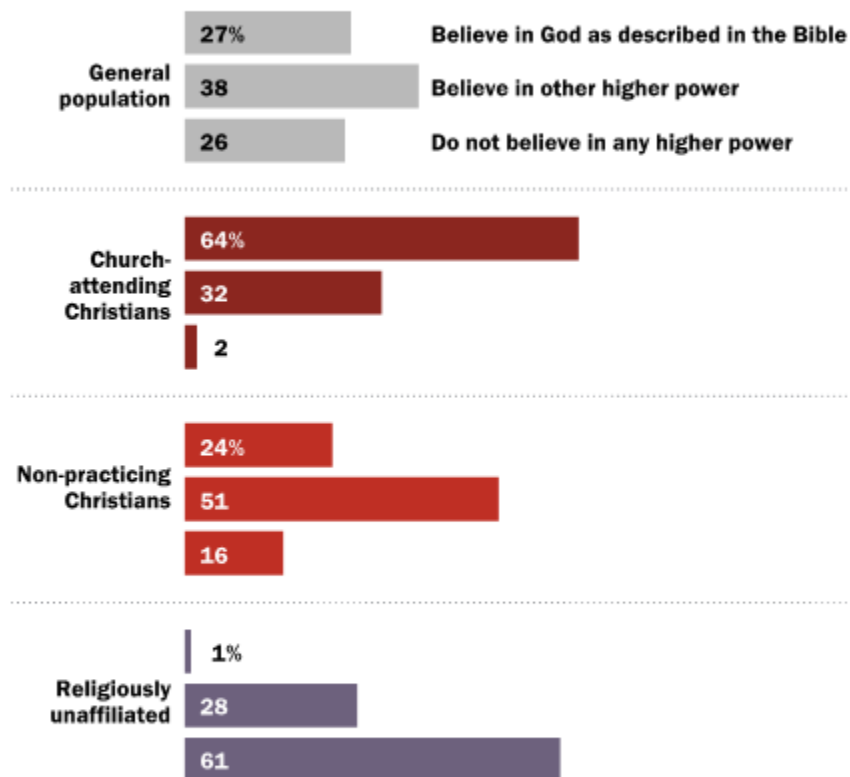
What is a median?

On many questions throughout this report, median percentages are reported to help readers see overall patterns. The median is the *middle* number in a list of figures sorted in ascending or descending order. In a survey of 15 countries, the median result is the eighth on a list of country-level findings ranked in order.

Non-practicing Christians widely believe in God or another higher power

Most non-practicing Christians in Europe believe in God, but not necessarily as described in the Bible

Across 15 countries, median % who ...



Note: Muslim respondents were not asked these questions. Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often. Don't know/refused responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. "Being Christian in Western Europe".

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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-03/)

Most non-practicing Christians in Europe believe in God. But their concept of God differs considerably from the way that churchgoing Christians tend to conceive of God. While most church-attending Christians say they believe in God “as described in the Bible,” non-practicing Christians are more apt to say that they do *not* believe in the biblical depiction of God, but that they believe in some other higher power or spiritual force in the universe.

For instance, in Catholic-majority Spain, only about one-in-five non-practicing Christians (21%) believe in God “as described in the Bible,” while six-in-ten say they believe in some other higher power or spiritual force.

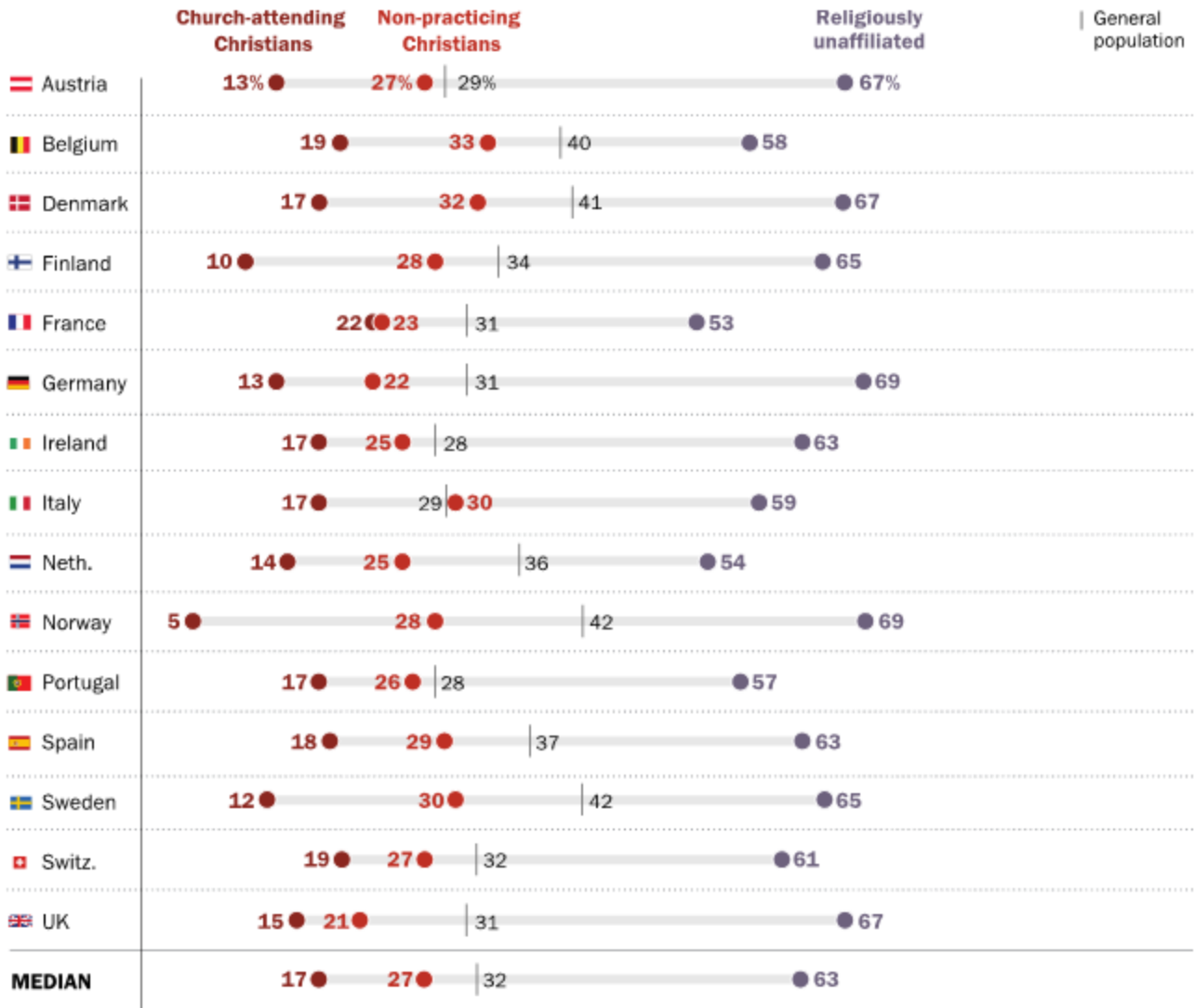
Non-practicing Christians and “nones” also diverge sharply on this question; most unaffiliated people in Western Europe do not believe in God or a higher power or spiritual force of any kind. (See below for more details (#unaffiliated-europeans) on belief in God among religiously unaffiliated adults.)

Similar patterns – in which Christians tend to hold spiritual beliefs while “nones” do not – prevail on a variety of other beliefs, such as the possibility of life after death and the notion that humans have souls apart from their physical bodies. Majorities of non-practicing Christians and church-attending Christians believe in these ideas. Most religiously unaffiliated adults, on the other hand, reject belief in an afterlife, and many do not believe they have a soul.

Indeed, many religiously unaffiliated adults eschew spirituality and religion entirely. Majorities agree with the statements, “There are no spiritual forces in the universe, only the laws of nature” and “Science makes religion unnecessary in my life.” These positions are held by smaller shares of church-attending Christians and non-practicing Christians, though in most countries roughly a quarter or more of non-practicing Christians say science makes religion unnecessary to them. (For a detailed statistical analysis combining multiple questions into scales of religious commitment and spirituality, see Chapters 3 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/religious-practice-and-belief>) and 5 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/attitudes-toward-spirituality-and-religion>).)

Most religiously unaffiliated Europeans say science makes religion unnecessary

% who completely/mainly agree with the statement, "Science makes religion unnecessary in my life"



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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Views on relationship between government and religion

Generally speaking, Western Europeans do not look favorably on entanglements between their governments and religion. Indeed, the predominant view in all 15 countries surveyed is that religion should be kept separate from government policies (median of 60%), as opposed to the position that government policies should support religious values and beliefs in their country (36%).

Non-practicing Christians tend to say religion should be kept out of government policy. Still, substantial minorities (median of 35%) of non-practicing Christians think the government should support religious values and beliefs in their country – and they are much more likely than religiously unaffiliated adults to take this position. For example, in the United Kingdom, 40% of non-practicing Christians say the government should support religious values and beliefs, compared with 18% of “nones.”

In every country surveyed, church-attending Christians are much *more* likely than non-practicing Christians to favor government support for religious values. In Austria, for example, a majority (64%) of churchgoing Christians take this position, compared with 38% of non-practicing Christians.



Christians more likely than religiously unaffiliated to say government should support religious values and beliefs

% who say government policies should support religious values and beliefs in their country



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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The survey also gauged views on religious institutions, asking whether respondents agree with three positive statements about churches and other religious organizations – that they “protect and strengthen morality in society,” “bring people together and strengthen community bonds,” and “play an important role in helping the poor and needy.” Three similar questions asked whether they agree with negative assessments of religious institutions – that churches and other religious organizations “are too involved with politics,” “focus too much on rules,” and “are too concerned with money and power.”

Once again, there are marked differences of opinion on these questions among Western Europeans across categories of religious identity and practice. Throughout the region, non-practicing Christians are more likely than religiously unaffiliated adults to voice positive opinions of religious institutions. For example, in Germany, a majority of non-practicing Christians (62%) agree that churches and other religious organizations play an important role in helping the poor and needy, compared with fewer than half (41%) of “nones.”



Church-attending Christians hold especially positive opinions about the role of religious organizations in society. For example, nearly three-in-four churchgoing Christians in Belgium (73%), Germany (73%) and Italy (74%) agree that churches and other religious institutions play an important role in helping the poor and needy. (For more analysis of results on these questions, see Chapter 6 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/religion-and-society>).)

Majorities of non-practicing Christians say churches and other religious organizations play an important role in helping poor and needy

% who agree with the statement, "Churches and other religious organizations play an important role in helping the poor and needy"



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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Both non-practicing and churchgoing Christians are more likely than the unaffiliated to hold negative views of immigrants, Muslims and Jews

The survey, which was conducted following a surge of immigration to Europe from Muslim-majority countries, asked many questions about national identity, religious pluralism and immigration.

Most Western Europeans say they are willing to accept Muslims and Jews in their neighborhoods and in their families, and most reject negative statements about these groups. And, on balance, more respondents say immigrants are honest and hardworking than say the opposite.



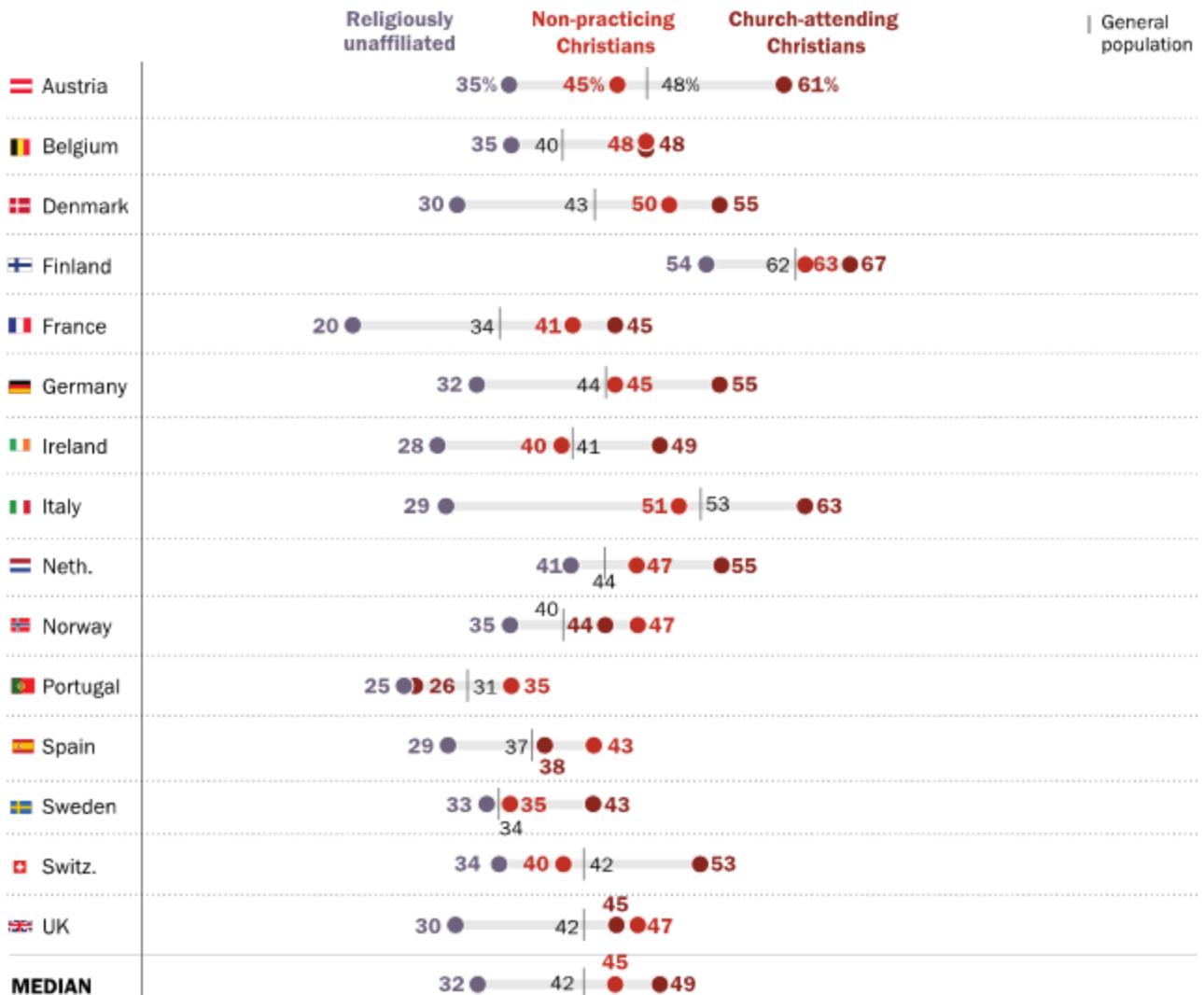
But a clear pattern emerges: Both church-attending and non-practicing Christians are more likely than religiously unaffiliated adults in Western Europe to voice anti-immigrant and anti-minority views.

For example, in the UK, 45% of church-attending Christians say Islam is fundamentally incompatible with British values and culture, as do roughly the same share of non-practicing Christians (47%). But among religiously unaffiliated adults, fewer (30%) say Islam is fundamentally incompatible with their country’s values. There is a similar pattern across the region on whether there should be restrictions on Muslim women’s dress, with Christians more likely than “nones” to say Muslim women should not be allowed to wear any religious clothing.

Although current debates on multiculturalism in Europe often focus on Islam and Muslims, there also are long-standing Jewish communities in many Western European countries. The survey finds Christians at all levels of religious observance are more likely than religiously unaffiliated adults to say they would *not* be willing to accept Jews in their family, and, on balance, they are somewhat more likely to agree with highly negative statements about Jews, such as, “Jews always pursue their own interests, and not the interest of the country they live in.” (For further analysis of these questions, see Chapter 1 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/nationalism-immigration-and-minorities>).)

Christians more likely than ‘nones’ to say Islam is incompatible with national values

% who say, “Islam is fundamentally incompatible with our country’s culture and values”



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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When it comes to immigration, Christians – both churchgoing and non-practicing – are more likely than “nones” in Europe to say immigrants from the Middle East and Africa are *not* honest or hardworking, and to favor reducing immigration from current levels.² For example, 35% of churchgoing Christians and 36% of non-practicing Christians in France say immigration to their country should be reduced, compared with 21% of “nones” who take this position.

There are, however, exceptions to this general pattern. In a few places, church-attending Christians are *more* accepting of immigration and *less* likely to say immigration should be reduced. In Finland, for example, just one-in-five churchgoing Christians favor reducing immigration (19%), compared with larger shares among religiously unaffiliated adults (33%) and non-practicing Christians (37%).

But overall, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish opinions are more common among Christians, at all levels of practice, than they are among Western Europeans with no religious affiliation. This is not to say that *most* Christians hold these views: On the contrary, by most measures and in most countries surveyed, only minorities of Christians voice negative opinions about immigrants and religious minorities.

There also are other factors beyond religious identity that are closely connected with views on immigration and religious minorities. For example, higher education and personally knowing someone who is Muslim tend to go hand in hand with more openness to immigration and religious minorities. And identifying with the political right is strongly linked to anti-immigration stances.

Still, even after using statistical techniques to control for a wide variety of factors (age, education, gender, political ideology, personally knowing a Muslim or a Jewish person, personal assessments of economic well-being, satisfaction with the country’s general direction, etc.), Western Europeans who identify as Christian are more likely than those who have no religious affiliation to express negative feelings about immigrants and religious minorities.

Non-practicing Christians more likely than unaffiliated to favor reducing immigration levels

% who say the number of immigrants to their country should be reduced



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

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Are Christian identity and Muslim immigration linked? The broader debate in Europe

Pew Research Center's survey of Western Europe was conducted in the spring and summer of 2017, following the two highest years (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/15/european-asylum-applications-remained-near-record-levels-in-2016/>) of **asylum applications** (<http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/>) on record. Some scholars and commentators have asserted that the influx of refugees, including many from Muslim-majority countries, is spurring a revival of Christian identity. Rogers Brubaker, a professor of sociology at UCLA, calls this a **reactive Christianity** (<https://tif.ssrc.org/2016/10/11/a-new-christianist-secularism-in-europe/>) in which highly secular Europeans are looking at new immigrants and saying, in effect: "If 'they' are Muslim, then in some sense 'we' must be Christian."

The survey – a kind of snapshot in time – cannot prove that Christian identity is now growing in Western Europe after decades of secularization. Nor can it prove (or disprove) the assertion that *if* Christian identity is growing, immigration of non-Christians is the reason.

But the survey can help answer the question: What is the nature of Christian identity in Western Europe today, particularly among the large population that identifies as Christian but does not regularly go to church? As explained in greater detail throughout this report, the findings suggest that the answer is partly a matter of religious beliefs, partly a matter of attitudes toward the role of religion in society, and partly a matter of views on national identity, immigrants and religious minorities.



This confluence of factors may not surprise close observers of European politics. Olivier Roy, a French political scientist who studies both Islam and secularization, **writes that** (http://www.eurel.info/IMG/pdf/rw-rethinking_the_place_of_religion.pdf) , “If the Christian identity of Europe has become an issue, it is precisely because Christianity as faith and practices faded away in favor of a cultural marker which is more and more turning into a neo-ethnic marker (‘true’ Europeans versus ‘migrants’).”

Some commentators have expressed strong misgivings about the promotion of “cultural” Christian identity in Europe, seeing it as driven largely by fear and misunderstanding. In the “present context of high levels of fear of and hostility to Muslims,” **writes Tariq Modood** (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/tariq-modood/moderate-secularism-european-conception>) , professor of sociology, politics and public policy at the University of Bristol in the UK, efforts to develop cultural Christianity as an “ideology to oppose Islam” are both a challenge to pluralism and equality, and “a risk to democracy.”

Others see a potential revival of Christianity in Western Europe as a bulwark against extremism. While calling himself an “incurable atheist,” the British historian Niall Ferguson said in a **2006 interview** (<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/588ada483a0411af1ab3e7ca/588bbdcb09e1c4e7069e7605/588bbe4909e1c4e7069e8e7c/1485553225302/Niall-Ferguson-on-Islam-and-demographics-The-Religion-Report-ABC-Radio-National-Australian-Broadcasting-Corporation.pdf?format=original>) that “organised Christianity, both in terms of observance and in terms of faith, sail[ed] off a cliff in Europe sometime in the 1970s, 1980s,” leaving European societies without “religious resistance” to radical ideas. “In a secular society where nobody believes in anything terribly much except the next shopping spree, it’s really quite easy to recruit people to radical, monotheistic positions,” Ferguson said.

But not everyone agrees on immigration’s impact. British author and lecturer Ronan McCrea contends that Muslim migration is making Europe **more secular** (<https://aeon.co/essays/is-migration-making-europe-more-secular>) , not less. “Previously, many of those who are not particularly religious were content to describe themselves as Christian on cultural grounds,” he writes. “But as religion and national identity have gradually begun to separate, religious identity becomes more a question of ideology and belief than membership of a national community. This has encouraged those who are not true believers to move from a nominal Christian identity to a more clearly non-religious one.”

In Western Europe, religion strongly associated with nationalist sentiment

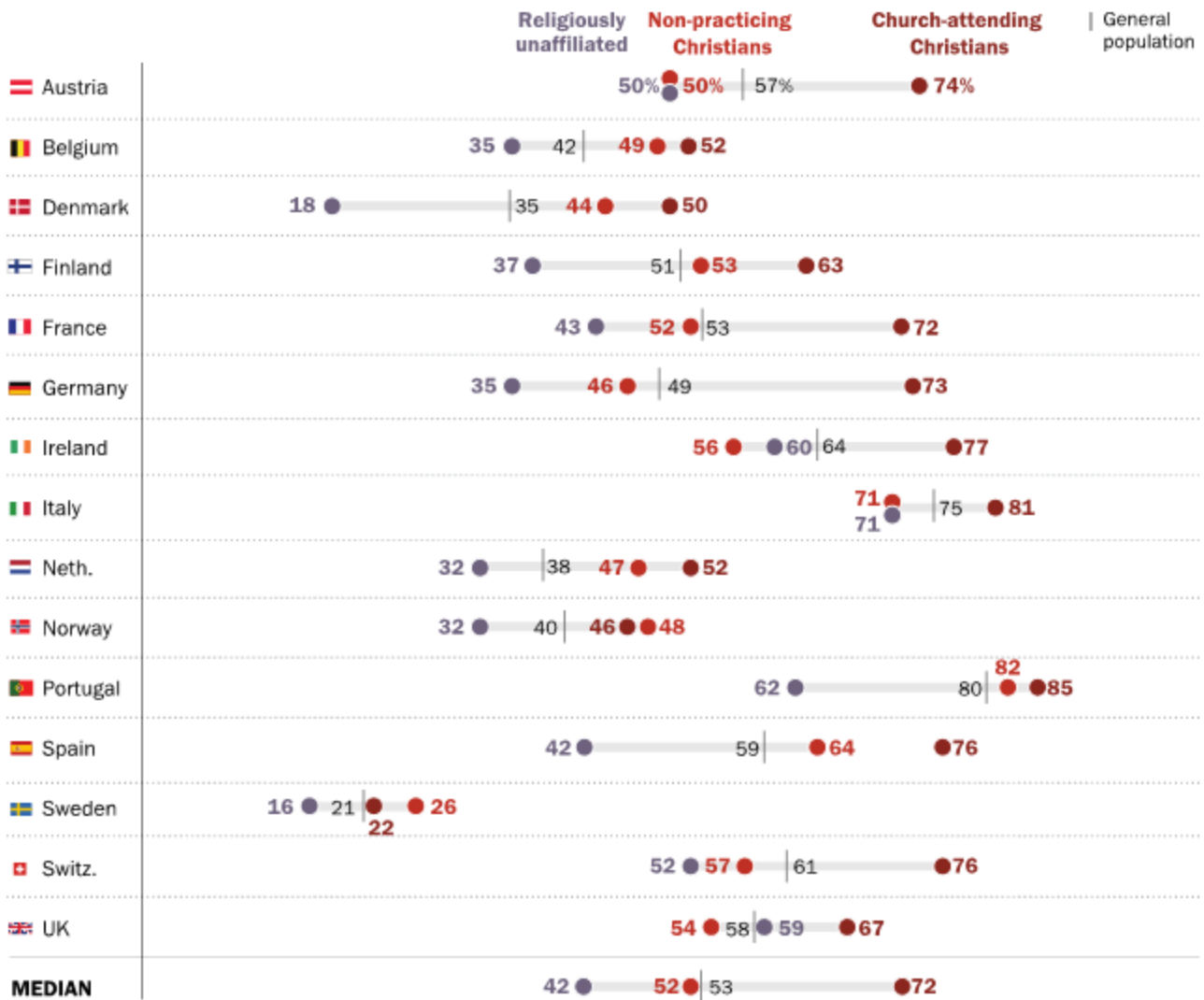
Overall levels of nationalism vary considerably across the region.³ For example, solid majorities in some countries (such as Italy and Portugal) and fewer than half in others (such as Sweden and Denmark) say that it is important to have ancestors from their country to truly share the national identity (e.g., to have Danish ancestry to be truly Danish).

Within countries, non-practicing Christians are less likely than churchgoing Christians to say that ancestry is key to national identity. And religiously unaffiliated people are less likely than both churchgoing and non-practicing Christians to say this.

For example, in France, nearly three-quarters of church-attending Christians (72%) say it is important to have French ancestry to be “truly French.” Among non-practicing Christians, 52% take this position, but this is still higher than the 43% of religiously unaffiliated French adults who say having French family background is important in order to be truly French.

Both church-attending and non-practicing Christians more likely than unaffiliated to link national identity with ancestry

% who say having _____ family background is very/somewhat important to be truly _____ (e.g., Austrian family background to be truly Austrian)



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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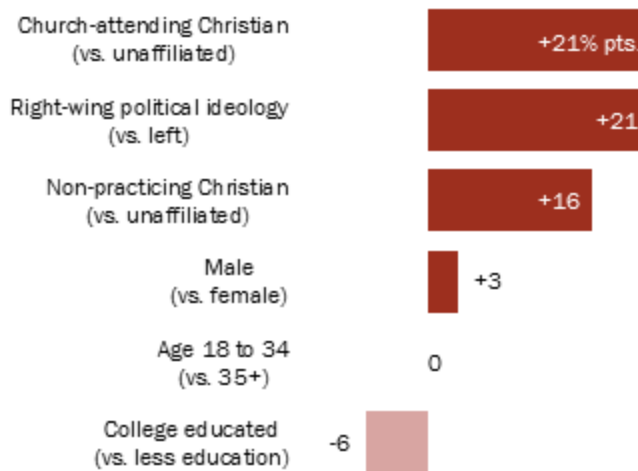
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Both non-practicing and churchgoing Christians are more likely than “nones” to agree with the statement, “Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others.” And additional statistical analysis shows that this holds true even after controlling for age, gender, education, political ideology and other factors.



In Western Europe, both church-attending and non-practicing Christians are more likely than unaffiliated to say their culture is superior

Relative influence of each factor on the likelihood of a respondent to completely/mostly agree that, "Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others" (see note below for explanation)



Note: The number shown is the difference in predicted probability of agreeing (either completely or mostly) with the statement, "Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others," after controlling for other factors. The model includes several other factors that are not shown in the chart, including respondents' assessments of their personal economic well-being, satisfaction with their country's general direction, diversity of their friend circle, personally knowing someone who is Muslim/Jewish and having familiarity with Islam/Judaism. Individual effects of each country are also taken into account. Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often. See Appendix A for a more detailed explanation.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-10/) In other words, Christians as a whole in Western Europe tend to express higher levels of nationalist sentiment. This overall pattern is *not* driven by nationalist feelings solely among highly religious Christians or solely among non-practicing Christians. Rather, at all levels of religious observance, these views are more common among Christians than among religiously unaffiliated people in Europe.

Altogether, the survey asked more than 20 questions about possible elements of nationalism, feelings of cultural superiority, attitudes toward Jews and Muslims, views on immigrants from various regions of the world, and overall levels of immigration. Many of these views are highly correlated with each other. (For example, people who express negative attitudes toward Muslims and Jews are also more likely to express negative attitudes toward immigrants, and vice versa.) As a result, researchers were able to combine 22 individual questions into a scale measuring the prevalence of nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-minority sentiments in each country and to conduct additional statistical analysis of the factors associated with these sentiments in Western Europe today. For details of this analysis, see Chapter 1 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/nationalism-immigration-and-minorities>).

Same-sex marriage, abortion widely accepted by non-practicing Christians

Vast majorities of non-practicing Christians and religiously unaffiliated adults across Western Europe favor legal abortion and same-sex marriage. In some countries, there is not much difference on these questions between the attitudes of Christians who rarely attend church and adults who do not affiliate with any religion.

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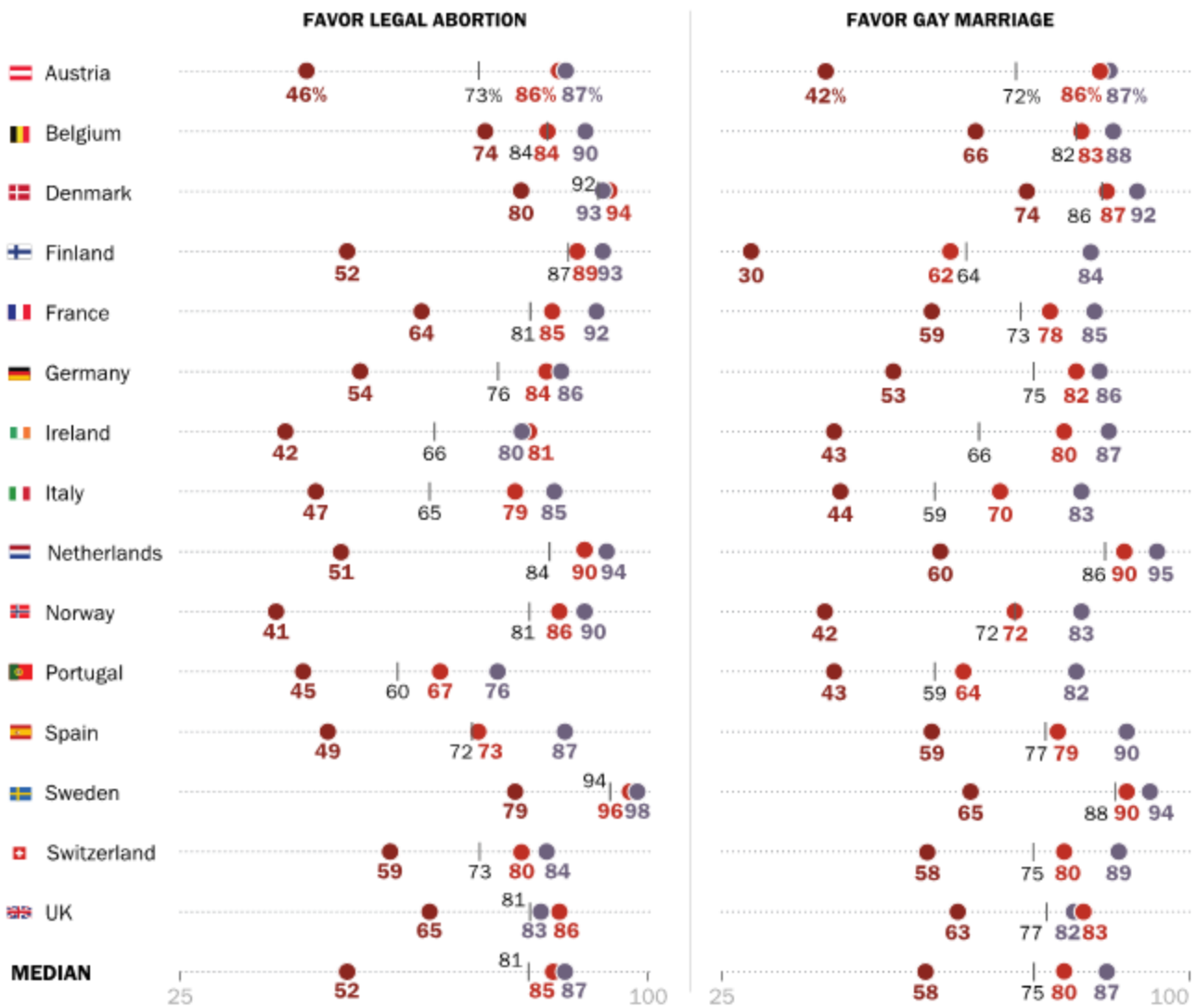
In every country surveyed, on the other hand, church-attending Christians are considerably more conservative than both non-practicing Christians and religiously unaffiliated adults on questions about abortion and same-sex marriage.

Education has a strong influence on attitudes on both issues: College-educated respondents are considerably more likely than those with less education to favor legal abortion and same-sex marriage. On balance, women are more likely than men to favor legal gay marriage, but their attitudes are largely similar on abortion.

Unaffiliated adults and non-practicing Christians generally favor legal abortion, same-sex marriage

% who ...

● Church-attending Christians ● Non-practicing Christians ● Religiously unaffiliated | General population



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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Summing up: On what issues do non-practicing Christians resemble ‘nones’? And on what measures are they similar to church-attending Christians?



While the religious, political and cultural views of non-practicing Christians in Western Europe are frequently distinct from those of church-attending Christians and religiously unaffiliated adults (“nones”), on some issues non-practicing Christians resemble churchgoing Christians, and on others they largely align with “nones.”

Religious beliefs and attitudes toward religious institutions are two areas of broad similarity between non-practicing Christians and church-attending Christians. Most non-practicing Christians say they believe in God or some higher power, and many think that churches and other religious organizations make positive contributions to society. In these respects, their perspective is similar to that of churchgoing Christians.

On the other hand, abortion, gay marriage and the role of religion in government are three areas where the attitudes of non-practicing Christians broadly resemble those of religiously unaffiliated people (“nones”). Solid majorities of both non-practicing Christians and “nones” say they think that abortion should be legal in all or most cases and that gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry legally. In addition, most non-practicing Christians, along with the vast majority of “nones,” say religion should be kept out of government policies.

When asked whether it is important to have been born in their country, or to have family background there, to truly share the national identity (e.g., important to have Spanish ancestry to be truly Spanish), non-practicing Christians generally are somewhere in between the religiously unaffiliated population and church-attending Christians, who are most inclined to link birthplace and ancestry with national identity.

Many in all three groups reject negative statements about immigrants and religious minorities. But non-practicing Christians and church-attending Christians are generally more likely than “nones” to favor lower levels of immigration, to express negative views toward immigrants from the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, and to agree with negative statements about Muslims and Jews such as, “In their hearts, Muslims want to impose their religious law on everyone else” in their country or “Jews always pursue their own interests and not the interest of the country they live in.” (For further analysis of these questions, see Chapter 1 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/nationalism-immigration-and-minorities>) .)

Overall, the study shows a strong association between Christian *identity* and nationalist attitudes, as well as views of religious minorities and immigration, and a weaker association between religious *commitment* and these views. This finding holds regardless of whether religious commitment among Christians is measured through church attendance alone, or using a scale that combines attendance with three other measures: belief in God, frequency of prayer and importance of religion in a person’s life. (See Chapter 3 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/religious-practice-and-belief>) for a detailed analysis of the scale of religious commitment.)

Religious observance and attitudes toward minorities among Catholics and Protestants in Western Europe

Catholics more likely than Protestants to express negative views of Muslims

% who ...

	Say Muslim women should not be allowed to wear any religious clothing	Are not willing to accept Muslims as family members	"Feel like a stranger in my own country" due to the number of Muslims
Protestants			
Denmark	27%	18%	23%
Finland	16	31	7
Germany	16	16	19
Netherlands	10	13	20
Norway	24	19	23
Sweden	18	17	15
Switzerland	35	41	29
UK	16	39	18
MEDIAN	17	19	20

Catholics			
Austria	25%	39%	27%
Belgium	32	21	42
France	28	31	23
Germany	31	51	31
Ireland	26	35	22
Italy	35	48	35
Netherlands	19	10	27
Portugal	14	23	14
Spain	28	22	28
Switzerland	22	34	24
UK	35	51	40
MEDIAN	28	34	27

Note: Darker shades represent higher values.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-12/) Although people in some predominantly Catholic countries in Europe, including Portugal and Italy, are more religiously observant than others in the region, Catholics and Protestants overall in Western Europe display similar overall levels of observance.

But Catholics and Protestants in the region differ in their attitudes toward religious minorities. For example, Catholics are more likely than Protestants to hold negative views of Muslims: Catholics are more likely than Protestants to say they would not be willing to accept Muslims as family members, that Muslim women in their country should not be allowed to wear any religious clothing, and that they agree with the statement, "Due to the number of Muslims here, I feel like a stranger in my own country."

Differences between Catholics and Protestants on these issues can be difficult to disentangle from historical and geographic patterns in Western Europe, where Catholic-majority countries are primarily concentrated in the south, while the north is more heavily Protestant. But in a handful of countries with substantial populations of both Catholics and Protestants – including the United Kingdom and Germany – more Catholics than Protestants hold negative attitudes toward Muslims. For example, in the UK, 35% of Catholics and 16% of Protestants say Muslim women in their country should not be allowed to wear any religious clothing. In Switzerland, however, the opposite is true; 35% of Swiss Protestants express this view, compared with 22% of Catholics.

feedback

Context of the survey

The survey was conducted in mid-2017, after immigration emerged as a front-and-center issue in national elections in several Western European countries and as populist, anti-immigration parties questioned the place of Muslims and other religious and ethnic minorities in Germany, France, the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Muslims now make up an estimated 4.9% of the population of the European Union (plus Norway and Switzerland) and somewhat higher shares in some of Western Europe's most populous countries, such as France (an estimated 8.8%), the UK (6.3%) and Germany (6.1%). These figures are projected to continue to increase

(<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population>) in coming decades, even if there is no more immigration to Europe.

The survey asked not only about attitudes toward Muslims and Jews, but also about Catholics' and Protestants' views of one another. The findings about Protestant-Catholic relations were previously released

(<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/08/31/five-centuries-after-reformation-catholic-protestant-divide-in-western-europe-has-faded/>) before the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation in Germany.⁴

This report also includes material from 20 focus groups convened by Pew Research Center in the months following the survey's completion in five of the countries surveyed. The focus groups in France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom provided an opportunity for participants to discuss their feelings about pluralism, immigration, secularism and other topics in more detail than survey respondents typically can give when responding to a questionnaire. Some conclusions from focus groups are included in illustrative sidebars throughout the report.

This study, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation, is part of a larger effort by Pew Research Center to understand religious change and its impact on societies around the world. The Center previously has conducted religion-focused surveys across sub-Saharan Africa

(<http://www.pewforum.org/2010/04/15/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa/>) ; the Middle East-North Africa region and many other countries with large Muslim populations

(<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/>) ; Latin America

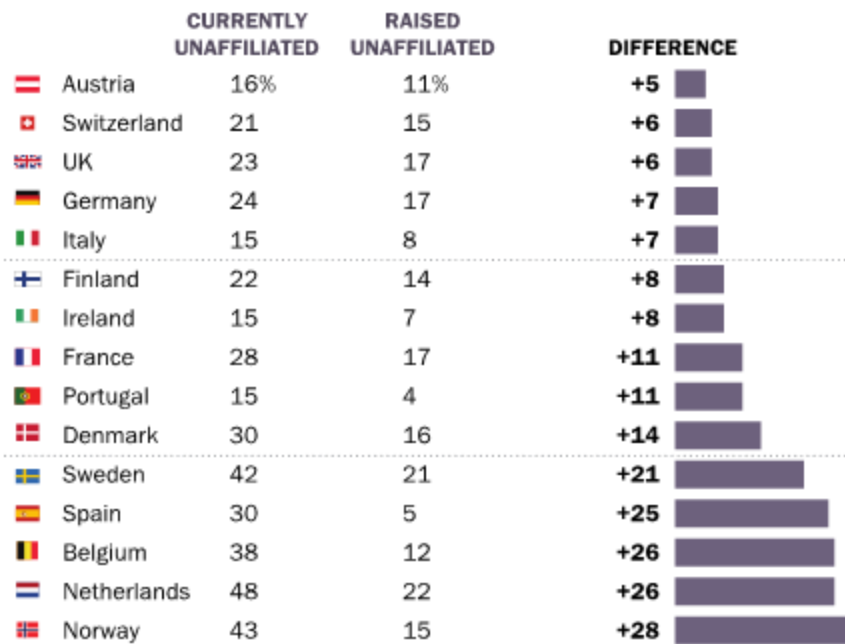
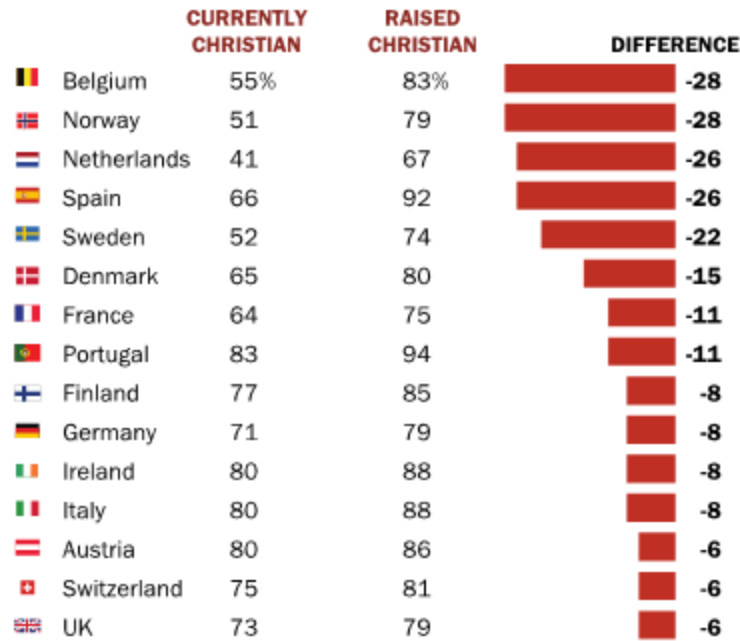
(<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>) ; Israel (<http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/08/israels-religiously-divided-society/>) ; Central and Eastern Europe (<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>) ; and the United States (<http://www.pewforum.org/2008/06/01/u-s-religious-landscape-survey-religious-beliefs-and-practices/>) .

The rest of this Overview examines what it means to be a "none" in Western Europe, including the extent of religious switching from Christianity to the ranks of the religiously unaffiliated and the reasons "nones" give for leaving their childhood faith. It also looks at their beliefs about religion and spirituality, including a closer look at the attitudes of religiously unaffiliated adults who say they *do* believe there is a God or some other higher power or spiritual force in the universe.

Europe's changing religious landscape: Declines for Christians, gains for unaffiliated

In Western Europe, net losses for Christians are largely matched by gains for religiously unaffiliated

% who say they are/were ...



Note: Differences are calculated after rounding. All differences are statistically significant. Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. "Being Christian in Western Europe"

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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-13/) Most people in Western Europe describe themselves as Christians. But the percentage of Christians appears to have declined, especially in some countries. And the net losses for Christianity have been accompanied by net growth in the numbers of religiously unaffiliated people.

Across the region, fewer people say they are Christian now than say they were raised as Christians. The opposite is true of religiously unaffiliated adults – many more people currently are religiously unaffiliated than the share who were raised with no religion (i.e., as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular”). For example, 5% of adults in Germany



say they were raised with no religion, while 30% now fit this category, a difference of 25 percentage points. The religiously unaffiliated have seen similarly large gains in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

Sidebar: Religious identity in Western Europe over time

Several countries in Western Europe have been collecting census data on religion for decades, and these data (from Austria, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland) indicate that the percentage of the population that identifies as Christian has fallen substantially since the 1960s, while the share of the population that does not identify with any religion has risen.⁵

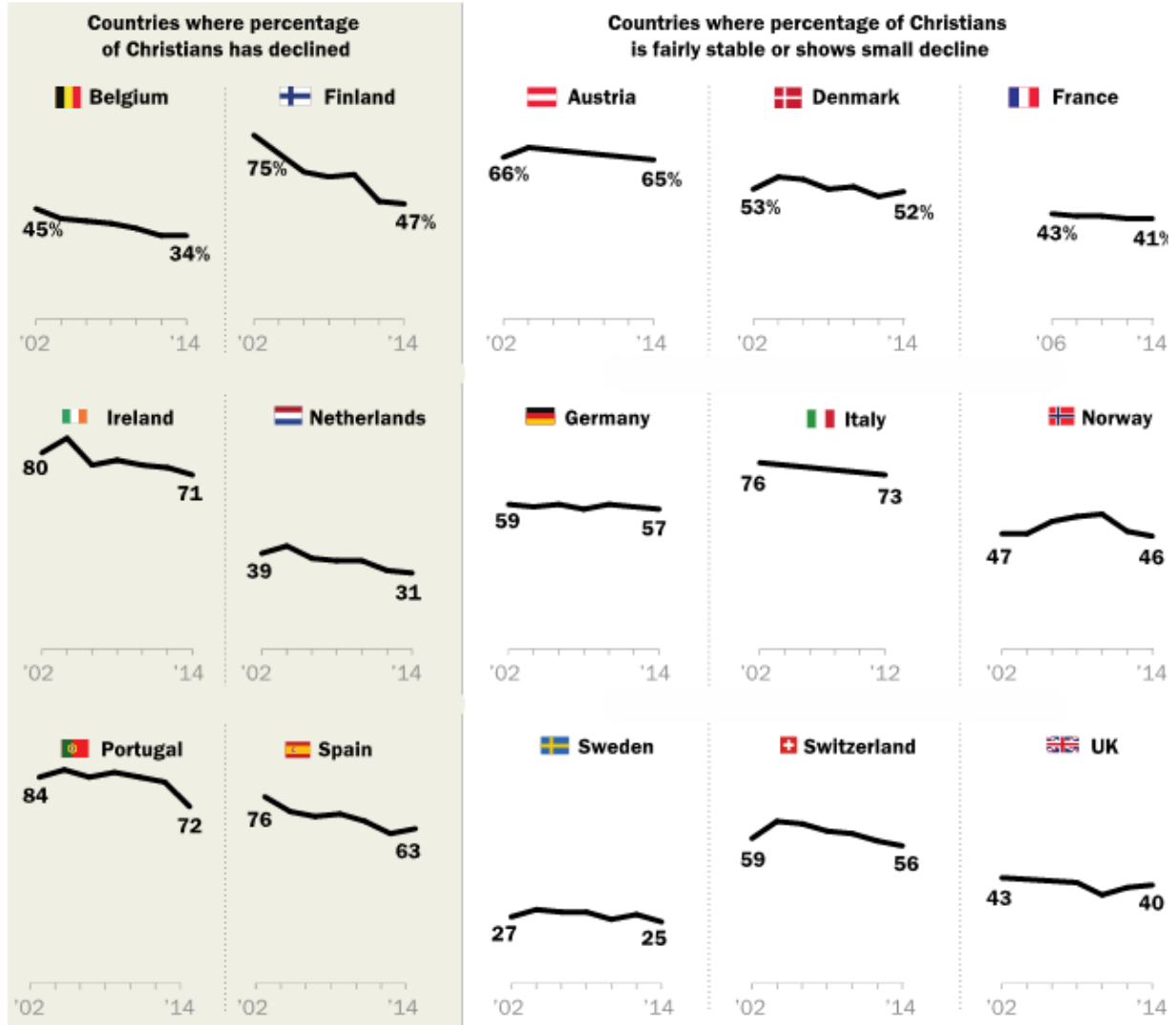
More recent data collected by the European Social Survey (ESS) since 2002 show a continuation of the long-term trend in some countries. Christianity has experienced relatively rapid declines in Belgium, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. But in the nine other countries included in the Pew Research Center survey, the ESS finds the share of Christians has either been relatively stable or has declined only modestly, suggesting that the rate of secularization varies considerably from country to country and may have slowed or leveled off in some places in recent years.

Due to major differences in question wording, the ESS estimates of the percentage of Christians in each country differ considerably from Pew Research Center estimates. The ESS asks what is known as a “two-step” question about religious identity: Respondents first are asked, “Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?” People who say “Yes” are then asked, “Which one? Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, other Christian denomination, Jewish, Islamic, Eastern religions or other non-Christian religions.” Pew Research Center surveys ask a “one-step” question, “What is your present religion, if any? Are you Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else or nothing in particular?”

Using the ESS question wording and two-step approach consistently yields lower shares of religiously affiliated respondents (including Christians) in Western Europe. For example, in the Netherlands, 31% of respondents identify with a Christian denomination in the 2014 ESS, while in the Pew Research Center survey, 41% identify as Christian. Presumably, this is because some respondents who are relatively low in religious practice or belief would answer the first question posed by ESS by saying they have no religion, while the same respondents would identify as Christian, Muslim, Jewish, etc., if presented with a list of religions and asked to choose among them. The impact of these differences in question wording and format may vary considerably from country to country.

In several Western European countries, recent declines in Christian identity

% who say they belong to a Christian denomination



Note: 2016 European Social Survey data were not final at the time of this report's publication. Data on religious denomination are not available for 2014 in Italy.
 Source: European Social Survey (ESS).
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Who are Western Europe's religiously unaffiliated?

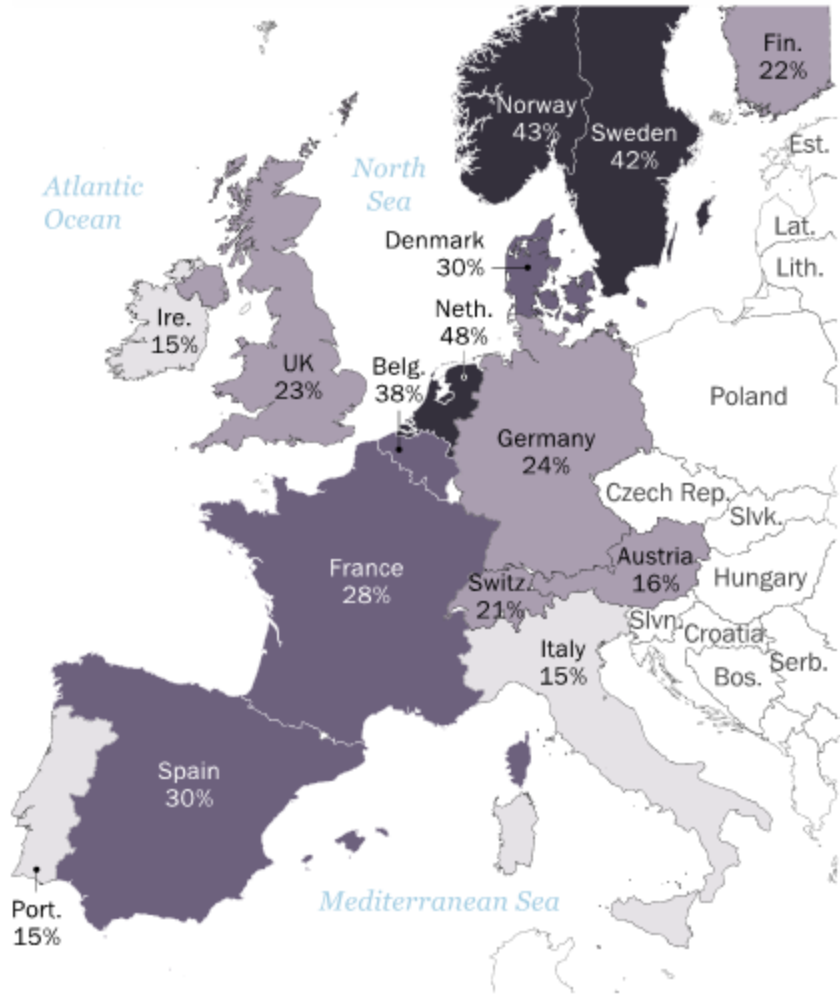
While Christians (taken as a whole) are by far the largest religious group in Western Europe, a substantial minority of the population in every country is religiously unaffiliated – also sometimes called “nones,” a category that includes people who identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.” The unaffiliated portion of the adult population ranges from as high as 48% in the Netherlands to 15% in Ireland, Italy and Portugal.



Share of 'nones' in Western Europe ranges from 15% in Ireland, Italy and Portugal to 48% in the Netherlands

% who say they are atheist, agnostic or have no particular religion

0-15% 16-25% 26-39% 40%+ Non-surveyed country



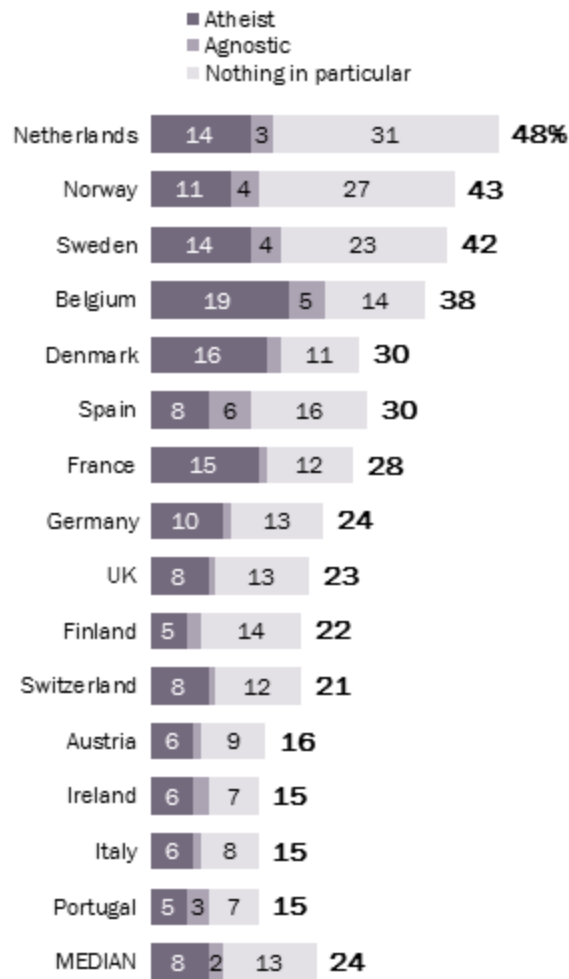
Note: Respondents were asked "What is your present religion, if any? Are you Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else or nothing in particular?"
Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
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Substantial shares across the region say they are atheist, agnostic or have no particular religion

% who say they are ...



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.
 Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-16/)

Demographically, “nones” in Western Europe are relatively young and highly educated, as well as disproportionately male.

Within the unaffiliated category, those who describe their religious identity as “nothing in particular” make up the biggest group (relative to atheists and agnostics) in most countries. For instance, fully three-in-ten Dutch adults (31%) describe their religious identity in this way, compared with 14% who are self-described atheists and 3% who consider themselves agnostics.

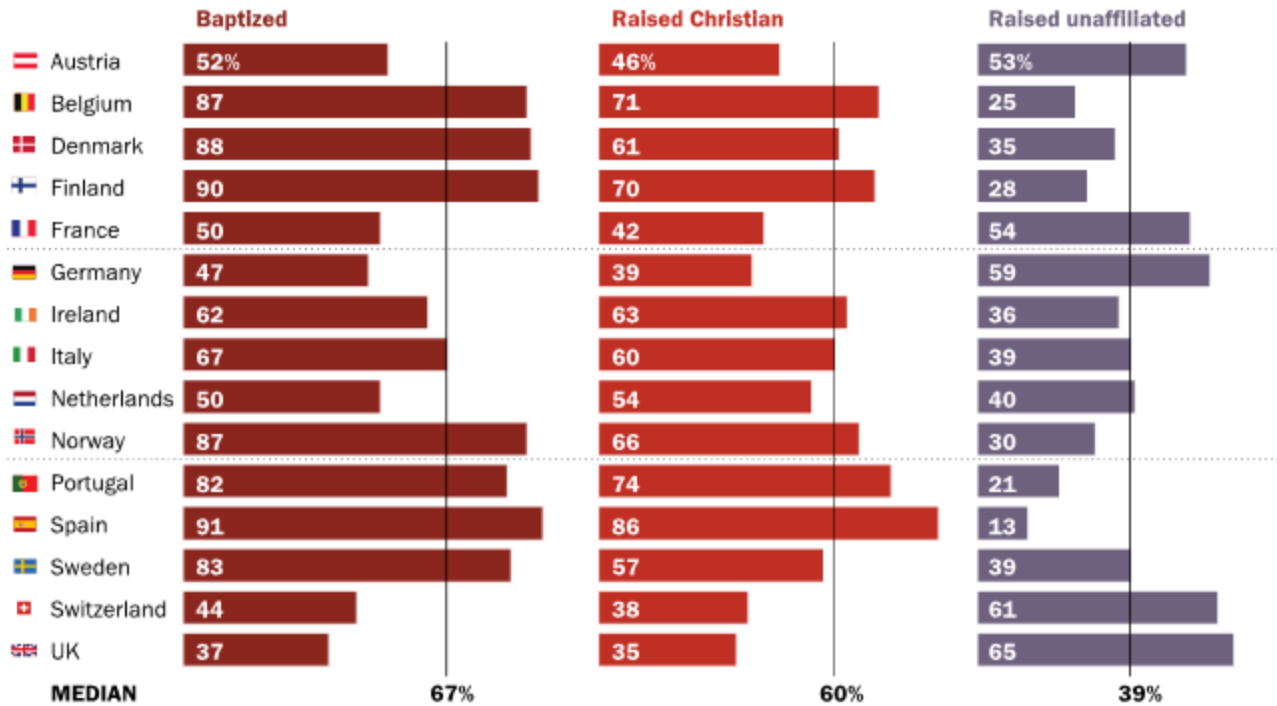
But in some other places, such as Belgium, Denmark and France, atheists are at least as numerous as those in the “nothing in particular” category. Agnostics, by comparison, have a smaller presence throughout Western Europe.

feedback

A majority of “nones” in most countries surveyed say they were baptized, and many of them also say they were raised as Christians. Overall, more religiously unaffiliated adults in Europe say they were raised Christian (median of 60%) than say they were raised with no religious affiliation (median of 39%).

Many unaffiliated adults in Western Europe were raised Christian

% of unaffiliated adults who say they were ...



Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. "Being Christian in Western Europe"

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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-17/)

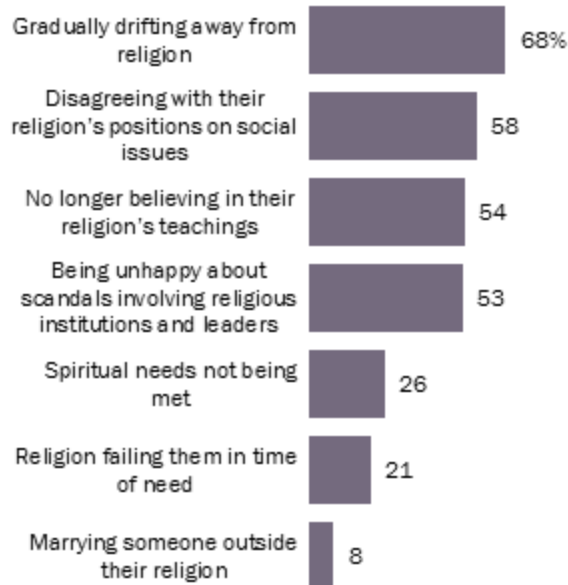
However, these figures vary widely from country to country. For example, the vast majority of unaffiliated adults in Spain (86%) and Portugal (74%) say they were raised as Christians. In the UK, by contrast, roughly two-thirds (65%) of adults who currently have no religious affiliation say they were raised that way.

What has led Europeans to shed their religious identity?



Most Western Europeans who stopped identifying with a religion ‘gradually drifted away,’ among other reasons

Among those who were raised in a religion but now identify as unaffiliated, median % of people who cite _____ as an important reason why they left religion



Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-18/)

For religiously unaffiliated adults who were raised as Christians (or in another religion), the survey posed a series of questions asking about potential reasons they left religion behind.⁶ Respondents could select multiple reasons as important factors why they stopped identifying with their childhood religion.

In every country surveyed, most “nones” who were raised in a religious group say they “gradually drifted away from religion,” suggesting that no one particular event or single specific reason prompted this change.⁷ Many also say that they disagreed with church positions on social issues like homosexuality and abortion, or that they stopped believing in religious teachings. Majorities in several countries, such as Spain (74%) and Italy (60%), also cite “scandals involving religious institutions and leaders” as an important reason they stopped identifying as Christian (or with another religious group).

Smaller numbers give other reasons, such as that their spiritual needs were not being met, their childhood religion failed them when they were in need, or they married someone outside their religious group.

For more detail on patterns of religious switching in Western Europe and the reasons people give for their choices, see Chapter 2 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/religious-identity>).

Religiously unaffiliated Europeans tend to express different attitudes toward Muslims depending on how they were raised

feedback

Religiously unaffiliated adults who were raised as Christians are more accepting of Muslims as neighbors

% who say they would be willing to accept Muslims as neighbors

	General population	Among religiously unaffiliated		Diff.
		Raised Christian	Raised unaffiliated	
Germany	77%	93%	79%	+14
United Kingdom	78	95	81	+14
Austria	77	94	81	+13
Ireland	75	90	77	+13
Italy	65	85	72	+13
Norway	92	97	86	+11
France	85	94	87	+7
Switzerland	76	95	88	+7
Belgium	91	94	88	+6
Denmark	91	97	93	+4
Sweden	90	91	91	0
Netherlands	96	97	98	-1
Finland	83	89	NA	NA
Portugal	83	90	NA	NA
Spain	86	96	NA	NA

Note: Differences are calculated after rounding. Statistically significant differences are indicated in **bold**. NA indicates adequate sample size is not available for analysis.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

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(http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/pf_05-29-18_religion-western-europe-00-19/) People who have left Christianity in favor of no religious identity may have multiple reasons for doing so. But their attitudes, overall, are more positive toward religious minorities than are the views of either Christians overall or "nones" who say they were raised with no religious identity.

On balance, those who were raised Christian and are now religiously unaffiliated are less likely than those who were always unaffiliated to say Islam is fundamentally incompatible with their national culture and values, or to take the position that Muslim women in their country should not be allowed to wear religious clothing.

They also are *more* likely to express acceptance of Muslims. For example, in several countries, higher shares of "nones" who were raised Christian than those who were raised unaffiliated say they would be willing to accept Muslims as neighbors.

Definitive reasons for this pattern are beyond the scope of the data in this study. But it is possible that some Western Europeans may have given up their religious identity, at least in part, because it was associated with more conservative views on a variety of issues, such as multiculturalism, sexual norms and gender roles. It also may be that their attitudes toward immigrants shifted along with the change in their religious identity. Or, it could be that some other, unknown factor (political, economic, demographic, etc.) underlies both their switching from Christian to unaffiliated and their views of immigrants and religious minorities.

feedback

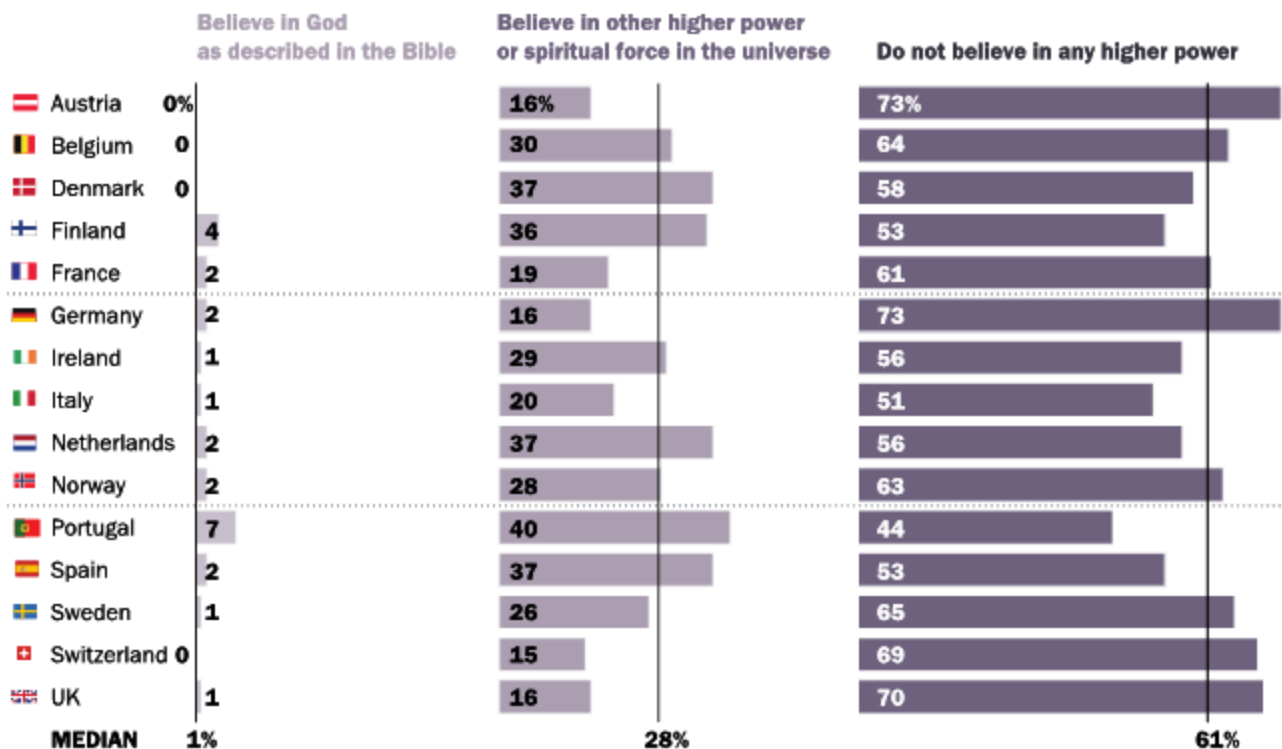
Most unaffiliated Europeans do not believe in a higher power, but a substantial minority hold some spiritual beliefs

Regardless of how they were raised, “nones” across Western Europe seldom partake in traditional religious practices. Few, if any, religiously unaffiliated adults say they attend religious services at least monthly, pray daily, or say religion is “very” or even “somewhat” important in their lives.

Most “nones” in Western Europe also affirm they are truly nonbelievers: Not only do majorities in all countries surveyed say they do not believe in God, but most also clarify (in a follow-up question) that they do not believe in *any* higher power or spiritual force.

Roughly three-in-ten unaffiliated people report believing in some higher power

% of religiously unaffiliated adults who ...



Note: Other/both/neither/depends/don't know/refused responses are not shown.
 Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.
 "Being Christian in Western Europe"

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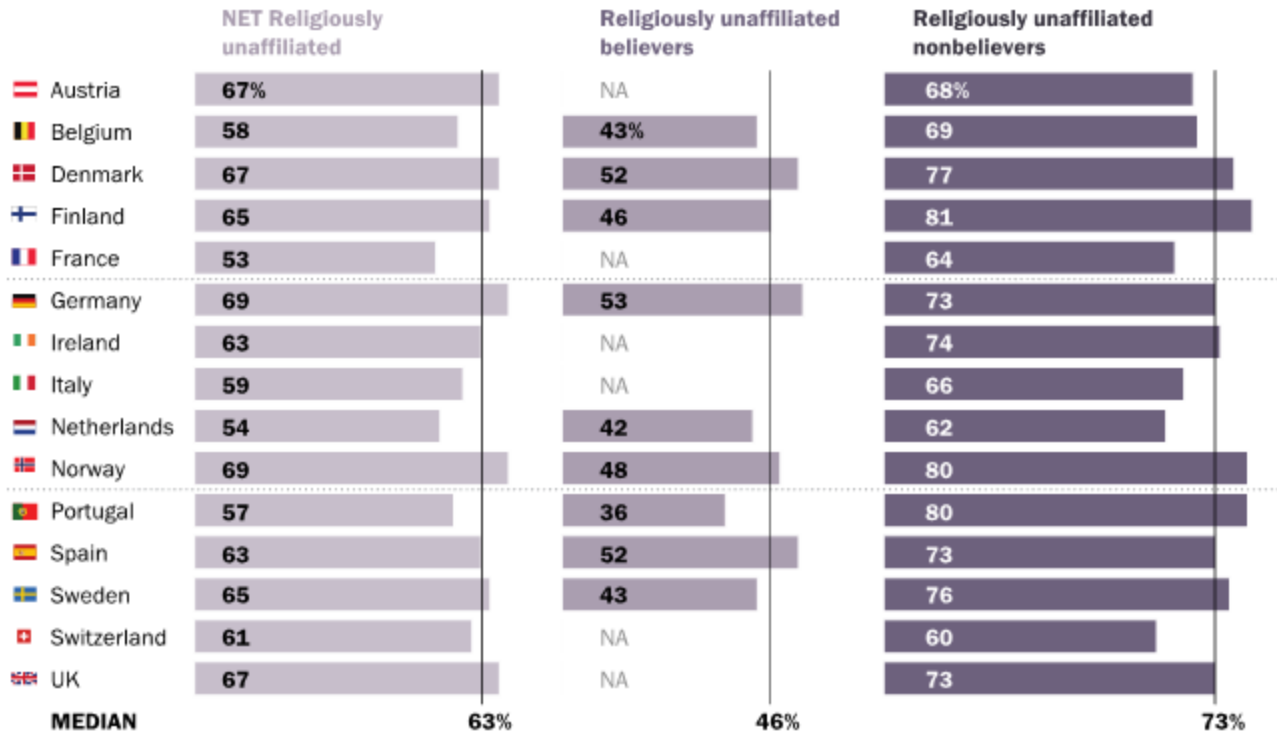
Still, substantial shares of “nones” in all 15 countries surveyed, ranging from 15% in Switzerland to 47% in Portugal, express belief in God or some other spiritual force in the universe. Even though few – if any – of these religiously unaffiliated believers say they attend church monthly or pray daily, they express attitudes toward spirituality that are different from those of most other “nones.”

For example, religiously unaffiliated believers – the subset of “nones” who say they believe in God or some other higher power or spiritual force – are especially likely to believe they have a soul as well as a physical body, including roughly eight-in-ten in the Netherlands and Norway. Among the larger group of “nones” who do *not* believe in any higher power, belief in a soul is much less common.



Most unaffiliated adults say science makes religion unnecessary in their life

% who completely/mainly agree with the statement, "Science makes religion unnecessary in my life"



Note: Religiously unaffiliated believers are defined as "nones" who say they believe in God or some other higher power or spiritual force in the universe. Religiously unaffiliated nonbelievers are defined as "nones" who say they believe there is no higher power or spiritual force in the universe. NA indicates adequate sample size is not available for analysis.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. "Being Christian in Western Europe"

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Western Europeans are less religious than Americans

The vast majority of adults in the United States, like the majority of Western Europeans, continue to identify as Christian (71%). But on both sides of the Atlantic, growing numbers of people say they are religiously unaffiliated (i.e., atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular"). About a quarter of Americans (23%, as of 2014) fit this description, comparable to the shares of "nones" in the UK (23%) and Germany (24%).

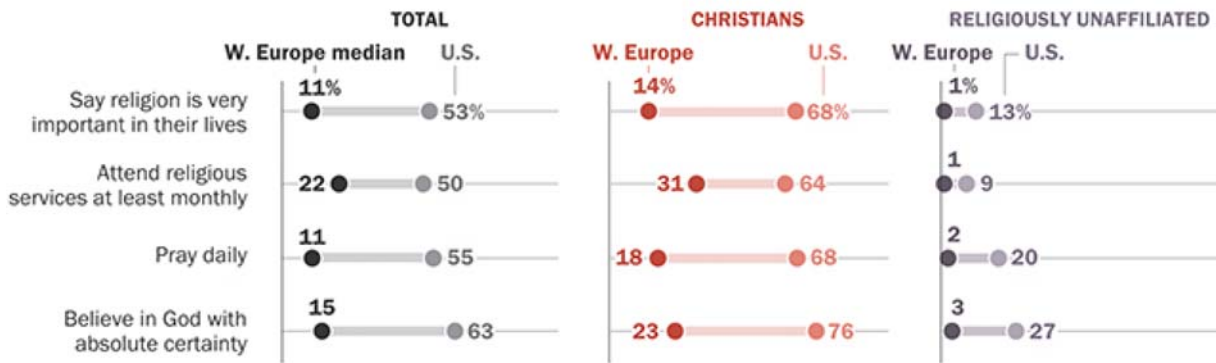
Yet Americans, overall, are considerably more religious than Western Europeans. Half of Americans (53%) say religion is "very important" in their lives, compared with a median of just 11% of adults across Western Europe. Among Christians, the gap is even bigger – two-thirds of U.S. Christians (68%) say religion is very important to them, compared with a median of 14% of Christians in the 15 countries surveyed across Western Europe. But even American "nones" are more religious than their European counterparts. While one-in-eight unaffiliated U.S. adults (13%) say religion is very important in their lives, hardly any Western European "nones" (median of 1%) share that sentiment.

Similar patterns are seen on belief in God, attendance at religious services and prayer. In fact, by some of these standard measures of religious commitment, American "nones" are as religious as – or even more religious than – Christians in several European countries, including France, Germany and the UK.



Compared with U.S. adults, relatively few Western European Christians and religiously unaffiliated people are religiously observant

% who ...



Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. U.S. data from 2014 Religious Landscape Study. "Being Christian in Western Europe"

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Additionally, the survey asked respondents whether they consider themselves religious and, separately, whether they consider themselves spiritual. These two questions, combined, result in four categories: those who describe themselves as both religious and spiritual, spiritual but not religious, religious but not spiritual, and neither religious nor spiritual.

The largest group across Western Europe (a median of 53%) is "neither religious nor spiritual." In almost every country surveyed, roughly four-in-ten or more adults, including majorities in several countries, say they are *neither* religious *nor* spiritual. The biggest exception is Portugal, where more than half of adults (55%) say they are both religious and spiritual.

Smaller shares of populations in most countries say they are spiritual but not religious, or religious but not spiritual.

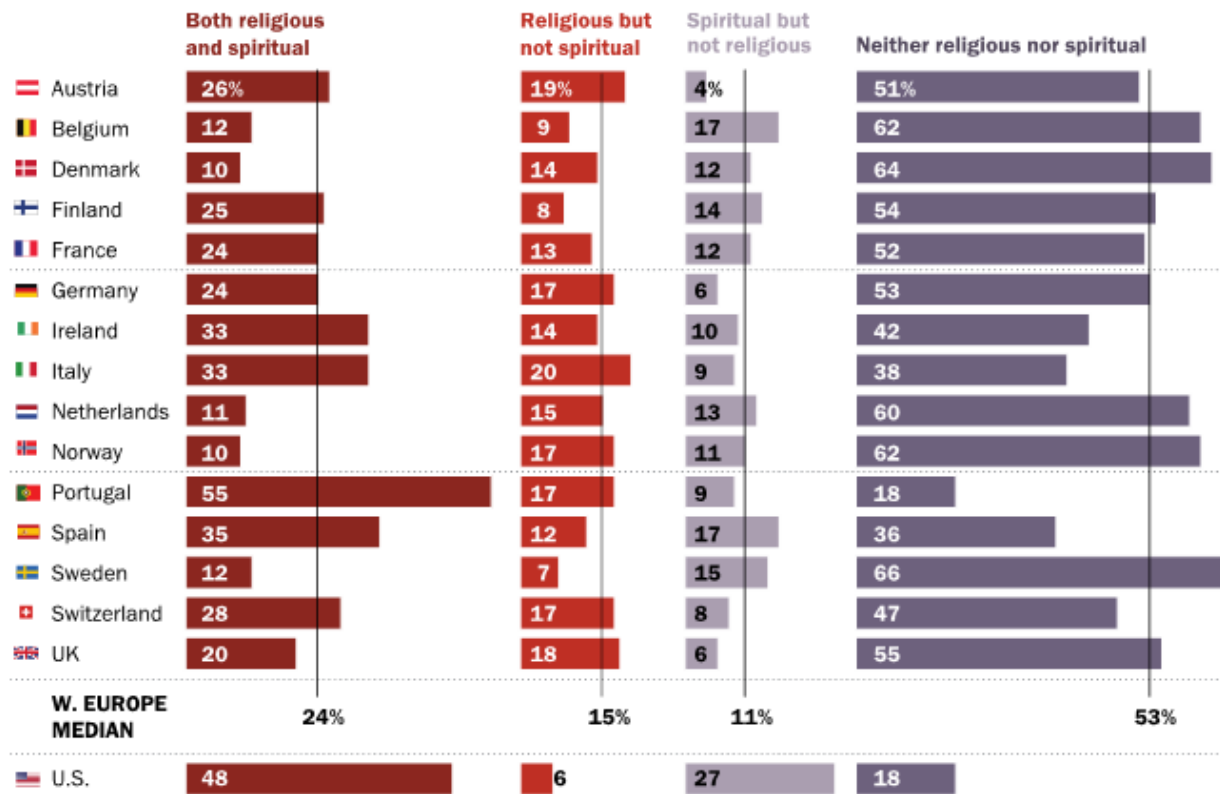
The religious makeup of Western Europe by this measure is significantly different from **that of the United States**

(<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/06/more-americans-now-say-theyre-spiritual-but-not-religious/>). The largest group in the U.S. is both religious and spiritual (48%), compared with a median of 24% across Western Europe. Americans are also considerably more likely than Western Europeans to say they think of themselves as spiritual but not religious; 27% of Americans say this, compared with a median of 11% of Western Europeans surveyed.

Very few religiously unaffiliated adults – 2% to 4% in almost every Western European country surveyed – say they consider themselves to be religious people. While somewhat larger shares (median of 19%) consider themselves spiritual, this is still much lower than in the United States, where about half of "nones" describe themselves as spiritual (including 45% who say they are spiritual but not religious).

In contrast with U.S., Western Europeans tend to describe themselves as neither spiritual nor religious

% who say they are ...



Note: Totals for each country may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. U.S. data from survey conducted April 25-June 4, 2017. "Being Christian in Western Europe"

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A previously published [analysis of data](http://www.pewforum.org/2017/08/31/five-centuries-after-reformation-catholic-protestant-divide-in-western-europe-has-faded/) (http://www.pewforum.org/2017/08/31/five-centuries-after-reformation-catholic-protestant-divide-in-western-europe-has-faded/) from 15 European countries used an older version of survey weights. Since then, Pew Research Center has improved the survey weights for greater accuracy leading to slight differences in some numbers between the two publications. The substantive findings of the previous publication are not affected by the revised weights. Please contact the Center for questions regarding weighting adjustments.

1. To measure religious identity, the Pew Research Center survey asks: "What is your present religion, if any? Are you Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else or nothing in particular?" The wording of this question may result in more respondents giving a religious affiliation (saying they are Christian or Muslim, for example) than previous surveys in some countries, particularly if those surveys used what researchers call a "two-step" approach to religious identification. For example, the [European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) asks: "Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?" Only respondents who say "yes" to this first question are presented with a list of religions to choose from. The two-step approach tends to find smaller shares of people who say they are Christians (or belong to some other religious group) – and larger shares of people with no religion – than are found by surveys that use a one-step approach to religious identification, as Pew Research Center does. Both approaches are valid, though the results may differ. See the [below sidebar](#) for more discussion of question wording and an analysis of ESS data on religious identity. ↪
2. Respondents were asked about their views toward immigrants from the Middle East, "such as those from Syria," and toward immigrants from Africa, "such as those from Nigeria." ↪
3. The survey asked four questions related to the concept of nationalism: Whether people completely/mostly agree or completely/mostly disagree with the statement "Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others;" whether they think it is very/somewhat/not very/not at all important to have been born in the country to truly share its national identity; whether they think it is very/somewhat/not very/not at all important to have family background in the country to truly share its national identity; and whether people are very/somewhat/not too/not at all proud to be a national of their country (e.g., to be French, to be Swedish). The first three items are highly correlated with one another and are included in the scale measuring nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-minority views (NIM). See [Chapter 1](#) for a full analysis of these results. ↪
4. A previously published [analysis of data from this survey](#) used an older version of survey weights. Since then, Pew Research Center has improved the survey weights for greater accuracy, leading to slight differences in some figures between the two publications. The substantive findings of the previous publication are not affected by the revised weights. Please contact Pew Research Center for questions regarding weighting adjustments.

feedback

5. In addition to these countries, the UK census has asked about religious identity in 2001 and again in 2011, showing a considerable decline in the Christian share of the population and a rise in the share with no religion in that 10-year period. ↩
6. The vast majority of “nones” who were raised in a religious group (median of 97%) were raised as Christians. ↩
7. Many focus group participants spoke about how they became less attached to religion over time, while others pointed to an event in their life that prompted a shift in their religious identity. See [Chapter 2](#) for further analysis of focus group discussions on this topic. ↩