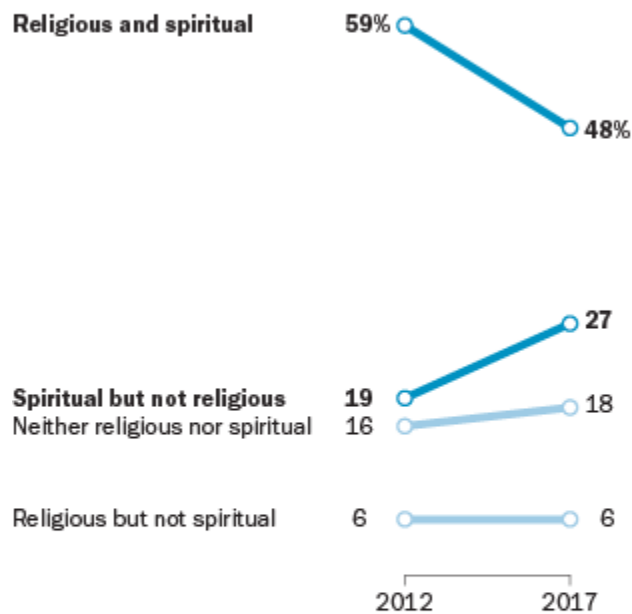


More Americans now say they're spiritual but not religious
BY MICHAEL LIPKA AND CLAIRE GECEWICZ

September 6, 2017

A quarter of Americans now see themselves as spiritual but not religious

% who identify as ...



Note: Respondents were asked separate questions about whether they consider themselves to be "a religious person" and whether they consider themselves to be "a spiritual person." The "spiritual but not religious" category includes those who responded affirmatively to the question about being a spiritual person and also responded that they do not consider themselves to be a religious person. Statistically significant changes are indicated in **bold**. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted April 25-June 4, 2017.

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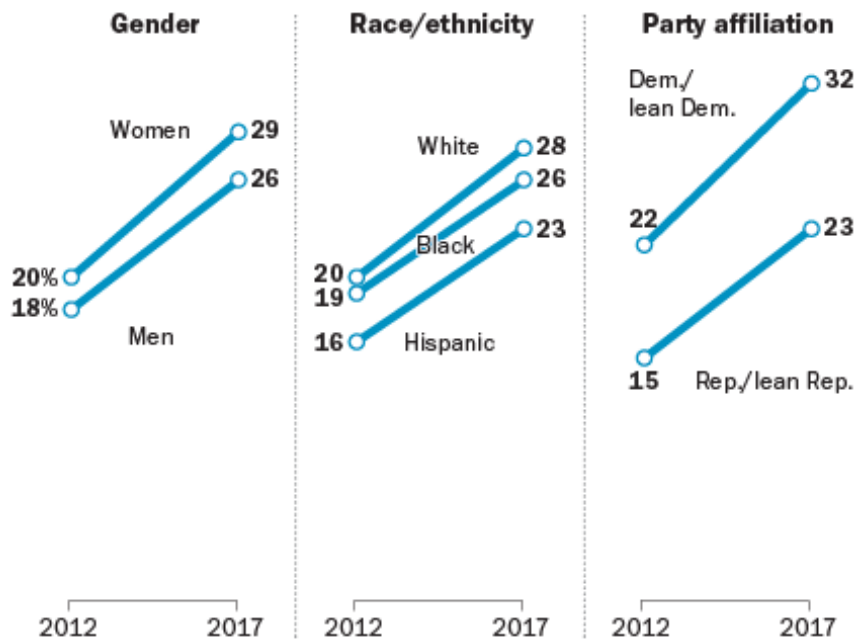
Some people may see the term "spiritual but not religious" as indecisive and devoid of substance. Others embrace it as an accurate way to describe themselves. What is beyond dispute, however, is that the label applies to a growing share of Americans.

About a quarter of U.S. adults (27%) now say they think of themselves as spiritual but not religious, up 8 percentage points in five years, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted between April 25 and June 4 of this year. This growth has been broad-based: It has occurred among men and women; whites, blacks and Hispanics; people of many different ages and education levels; and among Republicans and Democrats. For instance, the share of whites who identify as spiritual but not religious has grown by 8 percentage points in the past five years.

To be clear, the survey did not directly ask respondents whether the label “spiritual but not religious” describes them. Instead, it asked two separate questions: “Do you think of yourself as a religious person, or not?” and “Do you think of yourself as a spiritual person, or not?” The results presented here are the product of combining responses to those two questions.

Increase of ‘spiritual but not religious’ is broad-based

% of U.S. adults who identify as spiritual but not religious



Note: Respondents were asked separate questions about whether they consider themselves to be “a religious person” and whether they consider themselves to be “a spiritual person.” The “spiritual but not religious” category includes those who responded affirmatively to the question about being a spiritual person and also responded that they do not consider themselves to be a religious person. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. Hispanics can be of any race. Source: Survey conducted April 25-June 4, 2017.

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Increase of 'spiritual but not religious' Americans, by age and education

% of U.S. adults who identify as spiritual but not religious

	2012	2017	Change
	%	%	
Ages 18-29	20	29	+9
30-49	20	30	+10
50-64	21	29	+8
65+	14	17	+3
High school or less	16	20	+4
Some college	20	32	+12
College graduate	23	32	+9

Note: Statistically significant changes are indicated in **bold**. Respondents were asked separate questions about whether they consider themselves to be "a religious person" and whether they consider themselves to be "a spiritual person." The "spiritual but not religious" category includes those who responded affirmatively to the question about being a spiritual person and also responded that they do not consider themselves to be a religious person. Source: Survey conducted April 25-June 4, 2017.

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In addition to those who say they are spiritual but not religious, 48% say they are *both* religious and spiritual, while 6% say they are religious but not spiritual. Another 18% answer both questions negatively, saying they are neither religious nor spiritual. Looked at another way, only 54% of U.S. adults think of themselves as religious – down 11 points since 2012 – while far more (75%) say they are spiritual, a figure that has remained relatively steady in recent years.

The growth of "spiritual but not religious" Americans has come mainly at the expense of those who say they are religious *and* spiritual. Indeed, the percentage of U.S. adults in this latter group has fallen by 11 points between 2012 and 2017.

A closer look

Most of those who say they are spiritual but not religious also identify with a religious group

	U.S. adults	Religious and spiritual	Religious but not spiritual	Spiritual but not religious	Neither religious nor spiritual
<i>% who identify as ...</i>	%	%	%	%	%
Protestant	46	63	47	35	18
Catholic	21	24	37	14	19
Unaffiliated	22	4	6	37	54
Other	8	8	8	11	7
Don't know/refused	2	1	2	3	3
	100	100	100	100	100
<i>% who say they attend religious services ...</i>					
Weekly or more	35	55	36	17	8
Monthly/yearly	31	31	40	32	27
Seldom/never	33	13	20	49	63
Don't know/refused	1	1	3	2	2
	100	100	100	100	100
<i>% who say religion is ...</i>					
Very important	50	79	49	27	11
Somewhat important	23	18	35	27	26
Not too/not at all important	25	3	14	44	61
Don't know/refused	1	<1	2	2	3
	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Results for U.S. adults based on the random half of respondents who were asked whether they consider themselves to be a religious person and whether they consider themselves to be a spiritual person. Respondents were asked separate questions about whether they consider themselves to be "a religious person" and whether they consider themselves to be "a spiritual person." The "spiritual but not religious" category includes those who responded affirmatively to the question about being a spiritual person and also responded that they do not consider themselves to be a religious person.
Source: Survey conducted April 25-June 4, 2017.

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Who makes up this rapidly rising, "spiritual but not religious" segment of American adults? While many of them (37%) are religiously unaffiliated (describing their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular"), most actually do identify with a religious group, including 35% who say they are Protestant, 14% who are Catholic and 11% who are members of others faiths, such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism.

Many in the "spiritual but not religious" category have low levels of religious observance, saying they seldom or never attend religious services (49%, compared with 33% of the general public) and

that religion is “not too” or “not at all” important in their lives (44% vs. 25% of all U.S. adults). But others in this group appear to be quite observant, at least by traditional measures – 17% say they attend religious services weekly, and 27% say religion is very important to them. In both cases, those who think of themselves as spiritual but not religious are more observant than those who say they are neither religious nor spiritual.

‘Spiritual but not religious’ are more educated than U.S. public as a whole

	U.S. adults	Religious and spiritual	Religious but not spiritual	Spiritual but not religious nor spiritual	Neither religious nor spiritual
	%	%	%	%	%
Men	48	45	55	47	62
Women	52	55	45	53	38
	100	100	100	100	100
White	65	64	55	65	63
Black	12	15	11	11	6
Hispanic	16	15	29	14	18
Other/mixed	8	6	4	10	13
	100	100	100	100	100
Ages 18-29	22	15	25	22	30
30-49	34	29	29	36	36
50-64	26	31	17	30	20
65+	19	24	30	12	14
	100	100	100	100	100
High school or less	40	43	60	29	40
Some college	31	30	23	37	30
College graduate	28	27	16	34	30
	100	100	100	100	100
Rep./lean Rep.	41	44	34	30	28
Dem./lean Dem.	50	39	41	52	52
Ind./other/no lean	9	17	25	18	20
	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. Hispanics can be of any race. Results for sex, race/ethnicity, age and education repercentaged to exclude nonresponse. Respondents were asked separate questions about whether they consider themselves to be “a religious person” and whether they consider themselves to be “a spiritual person.” The “spiritual but not religious” category includes those who responded affirmatively to the question about being a spiritual person and also responded that they do not consider themselves to be a religious person. Source: Survey conducted April 25-June 4, 2017. General public data on party affiliation from aggregated Pew Research Center surveys conducted January-April, 2017. Data on sex, race/ethnicity, age and education from 2015 American Community Survey.

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Those who are “spiritual but not religious” are about evenly split between men (47%) and women (53%) – in stark contrast with those who say they are *neither* religious *nor* spiritual, 62% of whom are men. Similarly, when it comes to race and ethnicity or age, those who are spiritual but not religious do not look dramatically different from the U.S. public overall, although they do skew a bit younger (for example, just 12% of these adults are ages 65 and older, compared with the 19% of all U.S. adults who are in this age group).

“Spiritual but not religious” Americans are more highly educated than the general public. Seven-in-ten (71%) have attended at least some college, including a third (34%) with college degrees. In addition, they lean Democratic, with 52% identifying with or leaning toward the Democratic Party, compared with 30% who identify as or lean Republican. Those who are neither religious nor spiritual also are more likely to be Democrats (52%). Compared with the spiritual but not religious, the share of Democrats among the religious *and* spiritual and the religious *but not* spiritual is lower, at 39% and 41%, respectively.