

Polling News & Notes

Overlooked Recent Polling And Insights • March 19, 2009

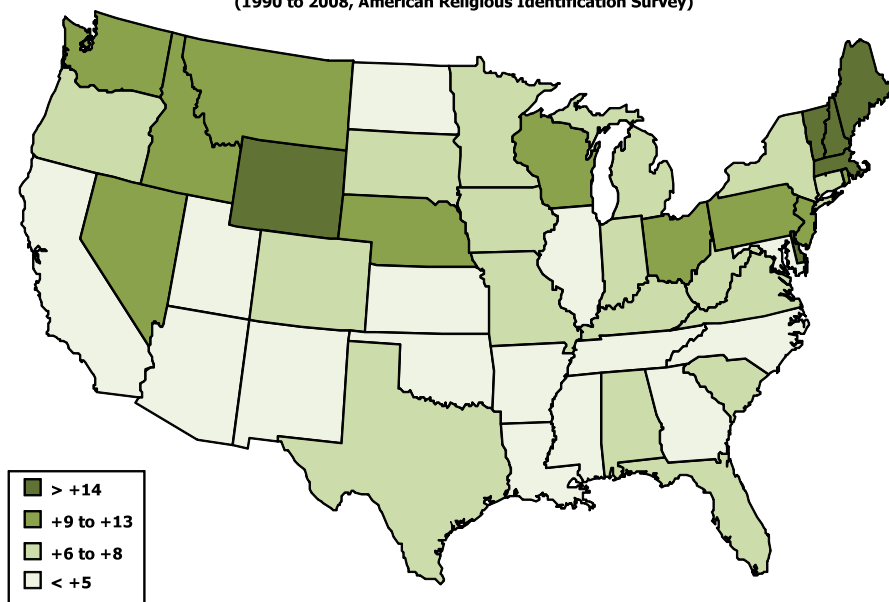
Religious Trends – Non-Religious Americans On the Rise, Catholics Increasing in South and West:

A new study by Trinity College in Connecticut of trends in American religious identification has found that the number of Americans who say they have no religion has increased from 8% in 1990 to 15% in 2008, while the number of self-identified Christians has fallen from 86% to 77%. But inside the overall national numbers, a number of significant trends are clear on a state-by-state, region-by-region level.

While the total number of Americans identifying as not part of any religion has increased significantly nationwide, the changes have not been evenly distributed. New England now has the highest proportion of non-religious residents in the country. In Vermont, the percent has gone from 13% to 34%; in Massachusetts from 8% to 22%; and in Maine, from 11% to 25%.

Percent Change in No Religion By State

(1990 to 2008, American Religious Identification Survey)

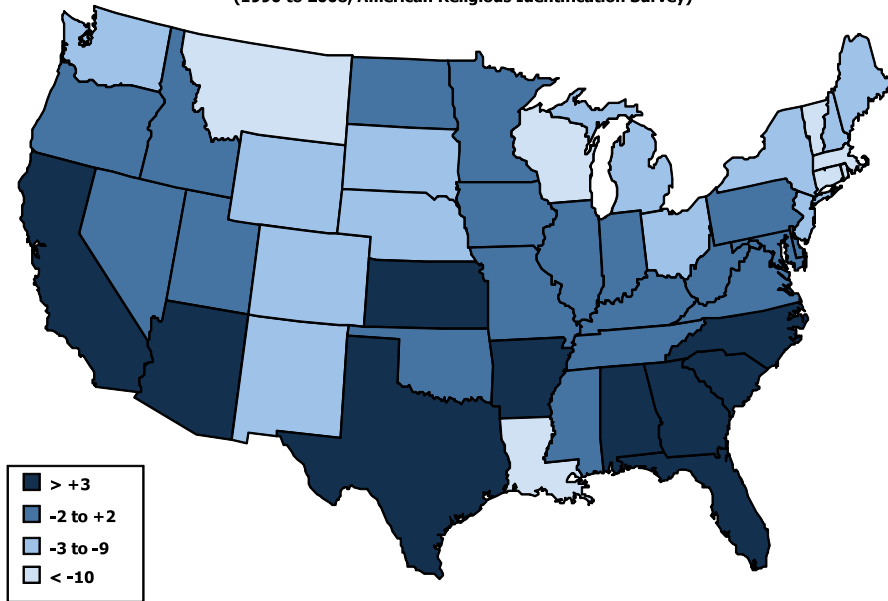


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Meanwhile, the percentage of Catholics nationwide has declined slightly from 26% to 25% since 1990, but state-by-state data reveals different trends. The proportion of Catholics has fallen significantly in the Northeast and the Midwest—in Massachusetts, for example, Catholics have dropped from 54% of the population to 39%; in Wisconsin, from 39% to 29%. But in the South and Southwest, the number of Catholics has increased—from 29% to 37% in California, and from 23% to 32% in Texas. These increases may be the result of increased Hispanic immigration and higher birthrates throughout the South and Southwest over the past two decades.

Percent Change in Catholics By State

(1990 to 2008, American Religious Identification Survey)

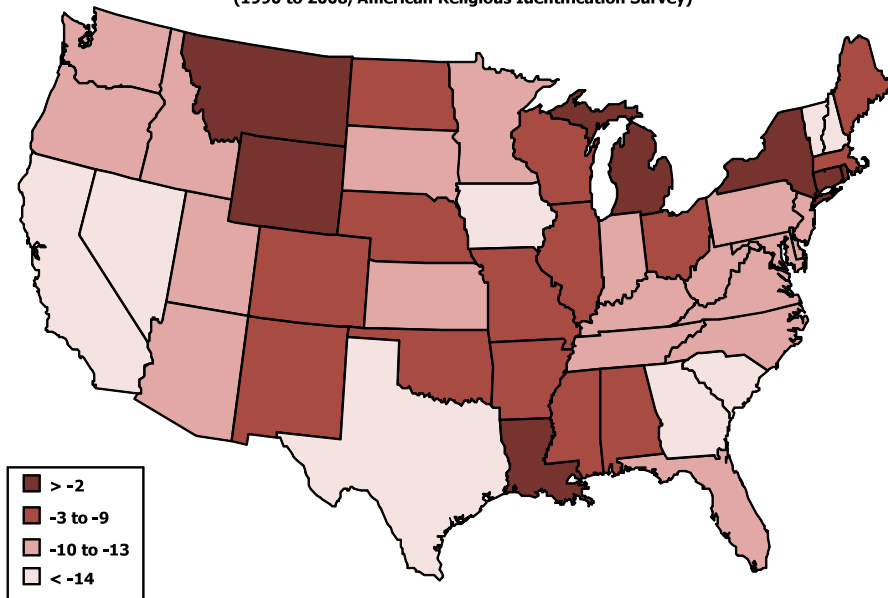


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Similarly, the state-by-state data on the number of self-identified “other Christians” (i.e., non-Catholics) by state shows significant regional trends. Most states have seen the number of “other Christians” decline since 1990, but some more than others. Southwest states—such as California, Nevada, and Arizona—have seen double-digit declines in the percentage of “other Christians,” while some states in the Mountain West and Upper Midwest (Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Wisconsin) have seen small gains for other Christians or very small declines.

Percent Change in Other Christians By State

(1990 to 2008, American Religious Identification Survey)



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America’s religious landscape has always been in flux, but the increase in non-religious individuals while the number of mainline Protestants decreases will have a tremendous impact on the nation’s culture and society.

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