

## Freshman hordes more godless than ever

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In FI Aug/Sept 2007 we reported results from a survey of students entering college asking about their religious affiliation and participation in religious services.

In the most recent survey, from students entering college in 2007, the number of students with no religious preference increased slightly from 19.1% to 19.4%, which is a new all time high.

The number of students who reported *no* attendance at religious services fell from 23.2% to 22.1%, but this change is a reversion to the long-term trend toward increasing apostasy (see Figure 1).

Students at universities were less religious than their peers at four-year colleges, but students at historically black colleges were far more religious, with only 5.8% indicating no religious preference and 8% avoiding religious services.

The gender gap, which has persisted over the 40 years of the study, is unchanged; 21.4% of male students report no religious preference compared to 17.8% of female students.

In 2007 more than 272,000 students at 356 colleges participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), a longitudinal study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute.

This survey has posed the same questions about religion for almost 40 years; the results in Figure 1 show a clear and consistent trend away from both identification with religious sects and participation in religious services. These data make a strong case for secularization in the United States that has, if anything, accelerated in the last decade.

Source:

[1] J.H. Pryor, S. Hurtado, J. Sharkness, W.S. Korn, *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2007*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA (2007).

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