

God Help Us: Atheism Becomes Largest Religion In U.S.

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Daily wire, April 7, 2019

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Ralf-Finn Hestoft / Getty

For the first time in history, atheists constitute the largest religious group in America. According to the General Social Survey, the number of Americans who have no religion has increased 266% over the past three decades and now account for 23.1% of the population, just barely edging out Catholics and Evangelicals as the nation's dominant faith. Mainline Protestant churches have suffered the greatest collapse, declining 62.5% since 1982 and now comprising just 10.8% of the U.S. population.

As religiosity has declined, social ills have abounded. Nearly one in five American adults suffers from anxiety disorders, which now constitute the most common mental illness in the country. One in six Americans takes antidepressant drugs, a 65% surge over just 15 years. The problem is particularly acute among younger Americans. While depression diagnoses have increased 33% since 2013, that number is up 47% among Millennials and 63% among teenagers. Coincidentally, suicide rates among American teenagers have increased by 70% since 2006. American life expectancy declined again last year, as Americans continue to drug and kill themselves at record rates.

Social scientists have long since established the link between religiosity and life satisfaction. As social psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky [observes](#), people who attend religious services several times each week are nearly twice as likely as those who

worship less than once a month to describe themselves as “very happy.” Such psychologists simply state the obvious: the belief that God loves you and that you will live with him in eternity offers greater consolation than the view of death as a dirt nap that stiffens you into worm food.

Religious people are also significantly more likely to engage in happy-making behaviors, such as getting and staying married. A study [released](#) in 2017 affirmed what countless others had already shown: married couples report higher life satisfaction than their single, divorced, and widowed neighbors. That satisfaction tends to last beyond the honeymoon and well into old age.

The misery epidemic threatens not merely American households but also our halls of power. The late Andrew Breitbart observed that politics is downstream of culture, and culture in turn is downstream of religion. “Cult” and “culture” are etymologically related, and a culture is defined by what it worships. A materialistic culture worships wealth; a licentious culture worships sex; a godly culture worships God. But “our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people,” as John Adams wrote to the Massachusetts militia in 1798. “It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

A miserable politics awaits us when the irreligious rot flows downstream. Who but God can help us now?