**Know Your Nones**

by Steve Rabey (4/21/13)

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and the Gallup organization have been tracking people's religious preferences for decades. Here are highlights from recent reports:

**Who are the nones?** Pew's report, " ‘Nones’ on the Rise," says just under 20 percent (one-fifth) of Americans are religiously unaffiliated, up from 7 percent in 1972. Young people are more likely to be nones than older people. Also, nones are more likely to be politically liberal and favor gay marriage. Nones played a significant role in the 2012 election, with 70% of the religiously unaffiliated voting for Obama, and 26% voting for Romney.

**Not all nones are secular:** Only 6 percent of Americans are atheist or agnostic. In fact, two-thirds of nones say they believe in God. Many are "Spiritual, but not religious."

**The world.** Nones are now so numerous that they constitute the world's third largest "religious" group. Pew says there are 2.2 billion Christians worldwide, followed by 1.6 billion Muslims and 1.1 billion nones.

**America:** Gallup surveys find that that 40.1 of Americans are "very religious," while 31% are nonreligious.

**Colorado.** A Gallup survey of religiosity by state ranks Colorado as 37th in religiosity, with 34% of residents saying they are "very religious," and 39% saying they are nonreligious. A 2008 Pew study identified 25% of Coloradoans as religiously unaffiliated.

**Colorado Springs:** Nones outnumber true believers in the Springs. In a recent Gallup survey reported in *The Gazette*, 39.3% of Springs residents identified as "not religious" while 35.3% described themselves as "very religious."

**Why the increase in nones?** In addition to the "Political Backlash" reason addressed in the accompanying article, Pew's report cites four other possible causes:

2) Delays in Marriage, particularly among under-30s who don't attend religious services.

3) Broad Social Disengagement among people who stick to themselves and "bowl alone."

4) Secularization and increasing levels of health and wealth.

**So what?** Gallup says the rise in "nones" is "one of the most significant trends in religious measurement in the United States." *Christianity Today* asked six evangelical experts to assess relevance of studies on the nones. Some said this is a major trend that believers must address, while another said, "We're getting bent out of shape over nothing."

**Religion's impact declining.** There's one thing nones and believers agree on: religion is losing its influence on American society. (Of course, they disagree about whether this is a good thing or a bad thing.)

**Read it yourself.** You can read or download the Pew report here:

http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx

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