

IDD-HUMANIST NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disorders (AAIDD) Humanist Action Group
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This newsletter expresses the opinion of members of this subgroup and not necessarily of AAIDD

All data presented are opinions and alternative opinions may be printed in later issues. Send feedback and submissions to jrmullin@verizon.net

Editor's notes

Just a couple of things in this issue. I delivered a speech on the “Nones” and discrimination towards Atheists at my workplace in September and parts of this speech will be in this and the next couple of issues. I hope to work the material into a poster I want to do for the AAIDD annual meeting next summer.

Also there is a discussion of an article that talks about how television shows make odd events look like supernatural events by asking for other opinions on what happened and then ignoring the ones they don't like, the ones that don't look “supernatural”. This is relevant because it is so easy for anyone to believe what is on television and television no longer seems to care what is true or not.

Enjoy.

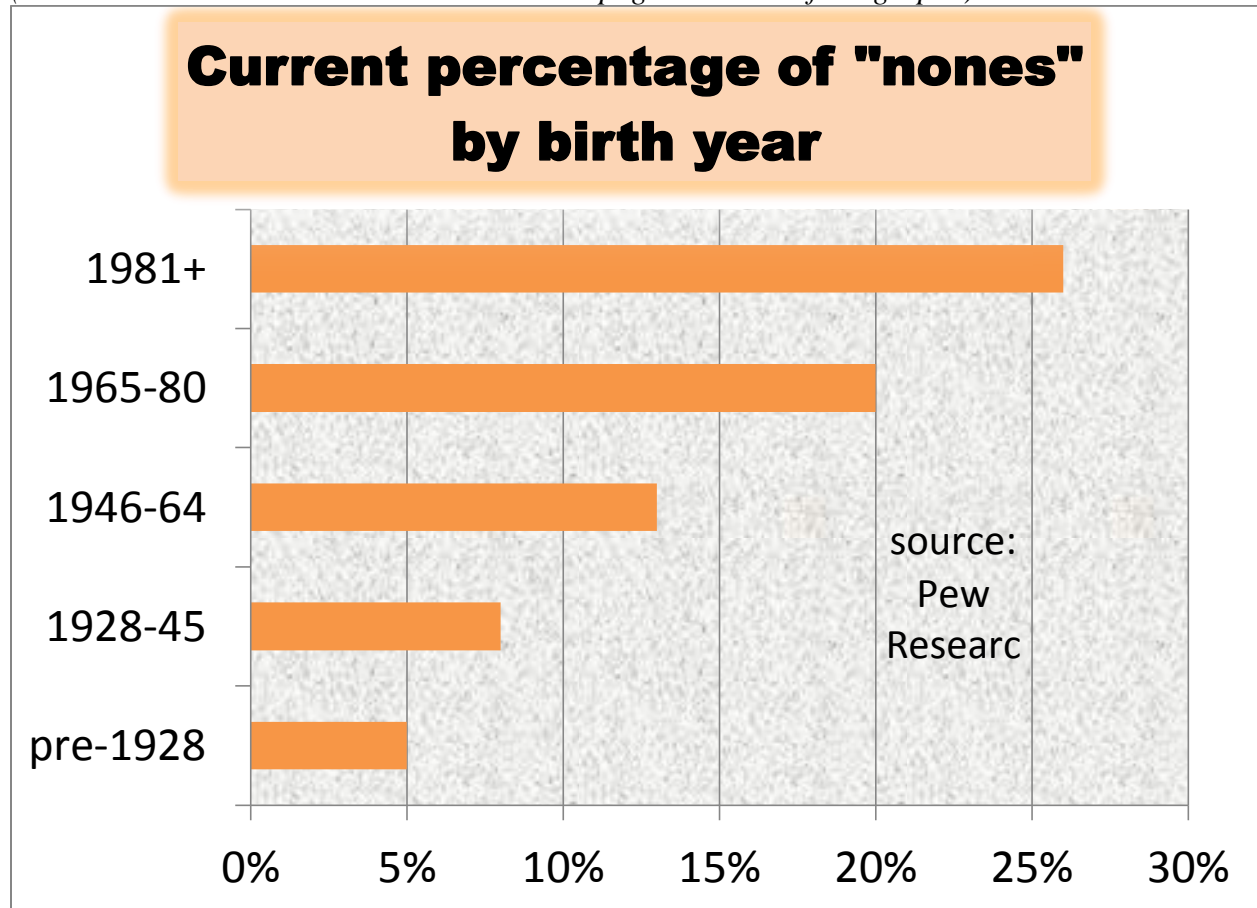
Changing Religious Attitudes in the United States

I recently had the privilege of addressing the changing religious sentiment and attitudes towards atheists in a speech to many of my coworkers. It was well received and I hope to present it in parts over the next few newsletters. It was based on several surveys: two by Pew Research and one by Gallup Polls. All the data that follows is from them although the graphs are my own production.

The biggest change is in the increase in the number of “nones”. These are people who don't belong to a religion. Some of them believe in gods or an afterlife but don't have a church that they go to. It might be there isn't one they like or they just don't like the idea of religions. They are a little less than half of the nones. Of the remaining nones, half don't believe in a god or an afterlife and don't really care about thinking about religions. The rest are atheists and agnostics. More and more of the people around thirty years old are becoming nones. Of the people sixty

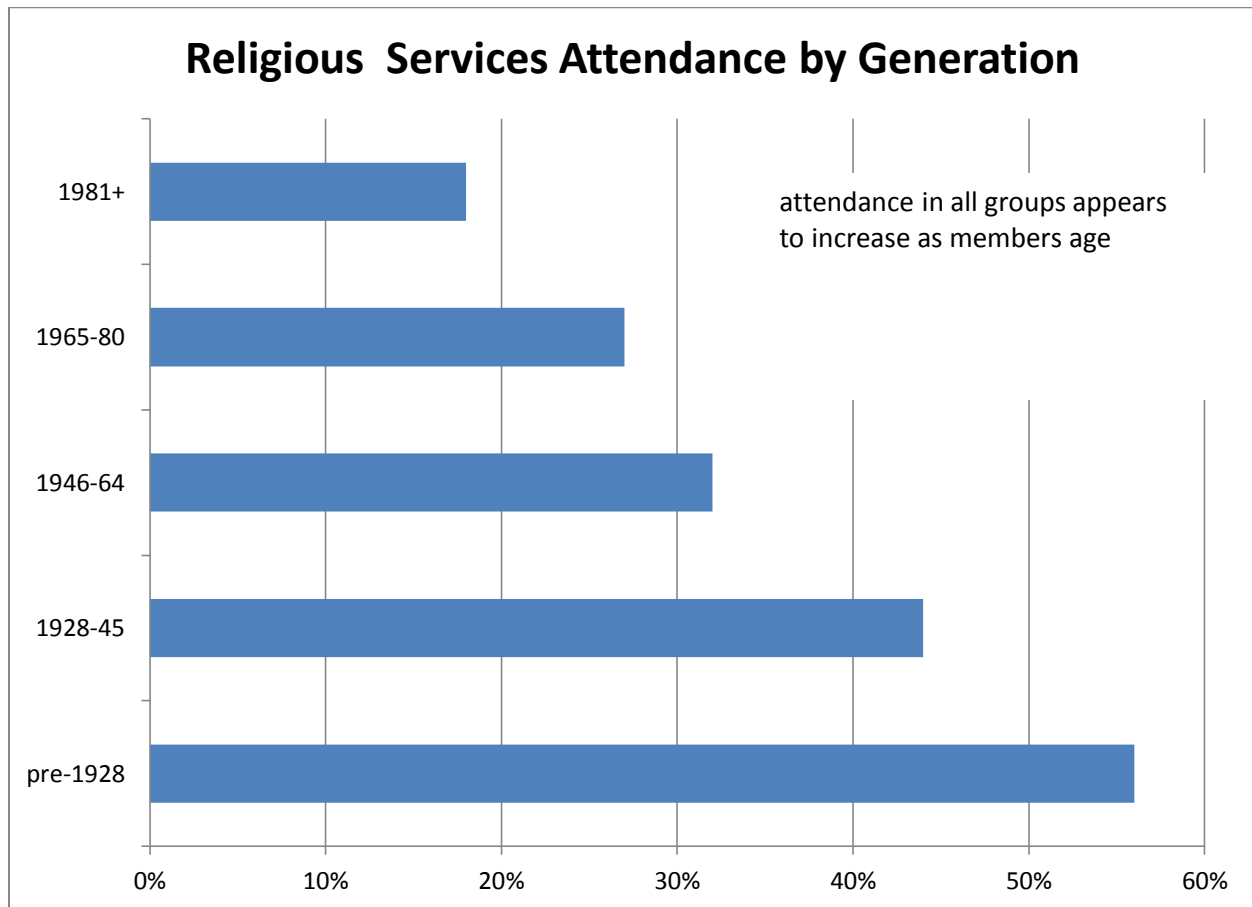
and older, nones are only 5% or one person from a group of twenty. This percentage goes up over time until the people who are thirty or less are more than twenty-five percent nones. Twenty-five percent is one person in four! If this trend continues, in thirty years half the people thirty or less will be nones. Since about half of nones don't believe in gods or religions that means in thirty years one young adult in four might be a non-believer.

(continued in short sections over the next two pages because of the graphs)



This is an amazing trend. It has already happened in much of Europe where non-believers can outnumber believers in some areas. Of course you can guess what this will do to church attendance. As non-belief increases, church attendance decreases. This is shown in the following graph which is also based on Pew Research data.

(continued)



There are regional differences in this data. By that I mean that the numbers in one part of the country might be different from numbers in another part. For example, the south is much more religious than the northern states. There are other differences too like Republicans are more religious than Democrats.

Next issue I will talk about attitudes towards atheists. I am hoping to get a poster session on this subject at the next AAIDD annual meeting. Clinicians need to be aware of these trends because their practice may have to change in response to it. In terms of intellectual disabilities clinicians who give guidance in Inclusion (becoming an active part of a community) may need to stop recommending helping with church coffee hours, a common recommendation.



What about all the proof of supernatural events on TV shows?

I just received a newsletter from the Center for Inquiry called *Freethought in Action*. There was an article in it by Joe Nickell, a popular secular writer and television show guest who explains unusual events through rational ways rather than seeing them as proof of the supernatural. In the article, *Skepticism: On The Air – And The Cutting Room Floor*, he writes of times that he was on television shows and asked to explain why something happened like lights in the sky that

someone said were UFOs. After an interview, sections of it appear on the show but not the parts where he explained what happened. In one example he explained on a show that the mysterious “angel wings” that appeared on a Polaroid picture were really caused by exposing light to the film by bad handling. That part did not make it into the show; the explanation was that the show name was “Unexplained Mysteries” so they couldn’t explain what happened.

Some of you may not remember Polaroid pictures; they were a method of photography in which a picture was produced in about a minute. All the chemicals and paper that took were in a cassette which was inserted into the camera. After taking the picture, you pulled out a sandwich of papers which would quickly turn into a picture before your eyes. At the time this was incredible since the alternative was sending out the film to be developed which would take several days. It was possible to mishandle the film cassette though, as Mr. Nickell points out.

He has many examples of this and you can see how the shows were manipulated so that the mysterious solution to the unexplained event always looked like the most promising. That is why you can discount the events on those shows. They are made to look a certain way by deliberately ignoring facts that would make the event look like it was naturally produced.

You need to belong to the Center for Inquiry to get this newsletter but the CFI has a number of email newsletters available at <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/getemail> . They recommend one called *Cause and Effect* but there are others available (all for free) including some regional group’s emails. It’s worth checking out.

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