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Catholicism Has Declined in Latin America Over the Past Decade

Growing numbers of Latin Americans are religiously unaffiliated, but belief in God remains high across the region

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About this research

This report describes how the religious affiliation of people in six Latin American countries has changed over the past decade. It also examines their religious beliefs and practices. It focuses on several of the largest countries in the region: Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Peru are the five [most populous](#) countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, while Chile has the region's seventh-largest population.

Why did we do this?

Pew Research Center conducts opinion surveys, demographic studies and other research to better understand the role of religion in public life, among other topics. Some of our recent reports on religion and spirituality around the world have focused on [religious switching](#), beliefs about [life after death](#) and [public opinion on Pope Francis](#).

[Learn more about Pew Research Center.](#)

How did we do this?

This report is based mainly on a Pew Research Center survey conducted in spring 2024 that included more than 6,200 Latin American adults (ages 18 and older).

Here are the [questions and responses used for this report](#), along with the [survey methodology](#).

Who funded this work?

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Catholicism Has Declined in Latin America Over the Past Decade

Growing numbers of Latin Americans are religiously unaffiliated, but belief in God remains high across the region

The Catholic share of the population in several Latin American countries has shrunk over the last 10 years, while a growing percentage of Latin American adults are religiously unaffiliated, describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.”

Catholicism still appears to be Latin America’s largest religion, according to Pew Research Center surveys in six of the region’s most populous countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru.

Today, Catholics make up 46% to 67% of the adult population in each of these countries, while the share of adults who are religiously unaffiliated ranges from 12% to 33%.

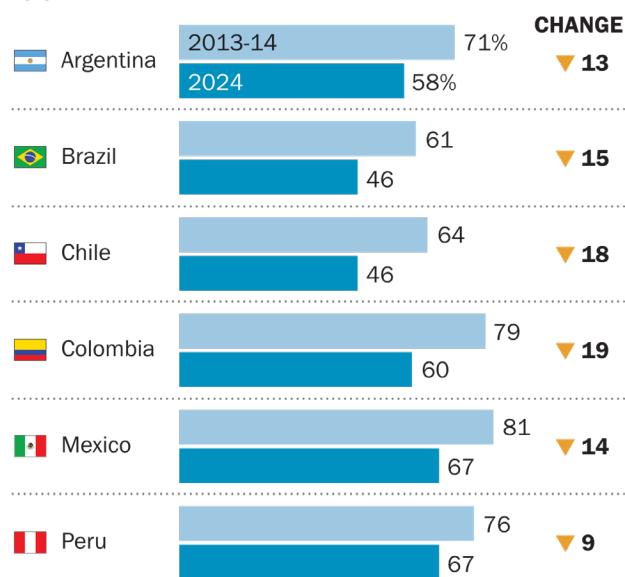
But the Catholic shares have dropped by 9 percentage points or more in all six countries over the past decade, while the percentages of adults who are unaffiliated have risen by 7 points or more. In several countries, unaffiliated adults – sometimes called religious “nones” – now outnumber Protestants.

Despite these shifts, Latin Americans remain quite religious, on average. For instance:

- **Belief in God is widespread**, with around nine-in-ten or more adults surveyed in each country saying they believe in God.
- **Religion matters deeply to many people** in the region, with about half or more of adults surveyed in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru saying religion is *very* important in their lives.

Catholic share of Latin American populations has fallen since 2013-14

% of adults in each country who identify as Catholic, by year



Note: All changes are statistically significant.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey and 2013-14 “Religion in Latin America” survey.

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- **Prayer is fairly common**, with majorities of Brazilian, Colombian and Peruvian adults saying they pray at least once a day.

By these measures, Latin Americans are more religious than adults in many other countries the Center has surveyed in recent years, especially in [Europe](#), where many adults have left Christianity since childhood.

Moreover, Latin Americans are about as likely to believe in God as they were a decade ago. Even among religiously unaffiliated adults surveyed across the region, majorities say they believe in God.

These are among the key findings of Pew Research Center surveys, conducted in spring 2024, that included more than 6,200 adults in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru.

The responses Latin Americans gave to questions about their religious affiliation and belief in God can be compared with results of another survey we conducted across Latin America in 2013-14, providing insights into how the region has changed religiously over the past decade.

But the results of most other questions in the 2024 survey *cannot* be directly compared with the earlier survey, either because the questions are new or because their wording has changed.

The rest of this overview explores the following questions:

- [How has the religious affiliation of Latin Americans changed?](#)
- [What do former Catholics in Latin America identify as now?](#)
- [How religious are Latin Americans today?](#)
- [How different are Catholics, Protestants and “nones” in Latin America?](#)
- [Who is more religious: “Nones” in Latin America or Christians in Europe?](#)

Why these countries?

This report focuses on six Latin American nations that were included in a 2024 [survey of 36 countries](#) around the world. Together, the six countries contain about 495 million people, or roughly [three-quarters of the entire population](#) of Latin America and the Caribbean.

How has the religious affiliation of Latin Americans changed?

A decade ago, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru all had Catholic majorities, with roughly six-in-ten or more adults in each country identifying as Catholic.

Today, roughly half of Brazilians and Chileans identify as Catholic (46% each in 2024), while Argentina (58%), Colombia (60%), Mexico (67%) and Peru (67%) have much smaller Catholic majorities than they did in 2013-14.

Catholicism has been declining in all these countries at least since the 1970s, according to estimates from the [World Religion Database](#).

Meanwhile, the share of adults who are religiously unaffiliated has roughly *doubled* in Argentina (to 24% in 2024), Brazil (15%) and Chile (33%); *tripled* in Mexico (20%) and Peru (12%); and nearly *quadrupled* in Colombia (23%).

There are now more religiously unaffiliated adults than Protestants in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico.

When asked about their current religion, for example, two-in-ten Mexican adults identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – compared with about one-in-ten Mexicans who identify with any branch of Protestantism.

Protestantism has remained relatively stable across the region. For instance, in Brazil – which has the largest percentage of Protestants of the six countries surveyed – 29% of adults now identify as any kind of Protestant, compared with 26% in 2013-14.

Despite declines, Catholicism is still the most common religion in Latin America

Religious identity of adults in each country, by year

	2013-14	2024	Change
Argentina			
Catholic	71%	58%	▼13
Protestant	15	16	▲1
Religiously unaffiliated	11	24	▲13
Brazil			
Catholic	61	46	▼15
Protestant	26	29	▲3
Religiously unaffiliated	8	15	▲7
Chile			
Catholic	64	46	▼18
Protestant	17	19	▲2
Religiously unaffiliated	16	33	▲17
Colombia			
Catholic	79	60	▼19
Protestant	13	15	▲2
Religiously unaffiliated	6	23	▲17
Mexico			
Catholic	81	67	▼14
Protestant	9	9	0
Religiously unaffiliated	7	20	▲13
Peru			
Catholic	76	67	▼9
Protestant	17	18	▲1
Religiously unaffiliated	4	12	▲8

Note: Statistically significant changes are in **bold**.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey and 2013-14 “Religion in Latin America” survey.

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And while [Pentecostal Protestantism](#) continues to be widespread across the region, the percentage of Protestants who are Pentecostal has declined over the past decade as other traditions have grown.¹

Jump to a later section for more information on [religious affiliation in Latin America](#), including how the Pentecostal share of the population has changed in each country since 2013-14.

¹ Protestants were asked two questions about Pentecostalism: “Would you describe yourself as Pentecostal, or not?” and “Do you belong to a historical Protestant Church (e.g., Baptist), a Pentecostal church (e.g., Assemblies of God), or another Protestant church?” If respondents said “yes” to the first question or indicated they belong to a Pentecostal church in answer to the second question – or both – they are categorized as Pentecostal. Refer to the report [topline](#) for full wording of questions and response options.

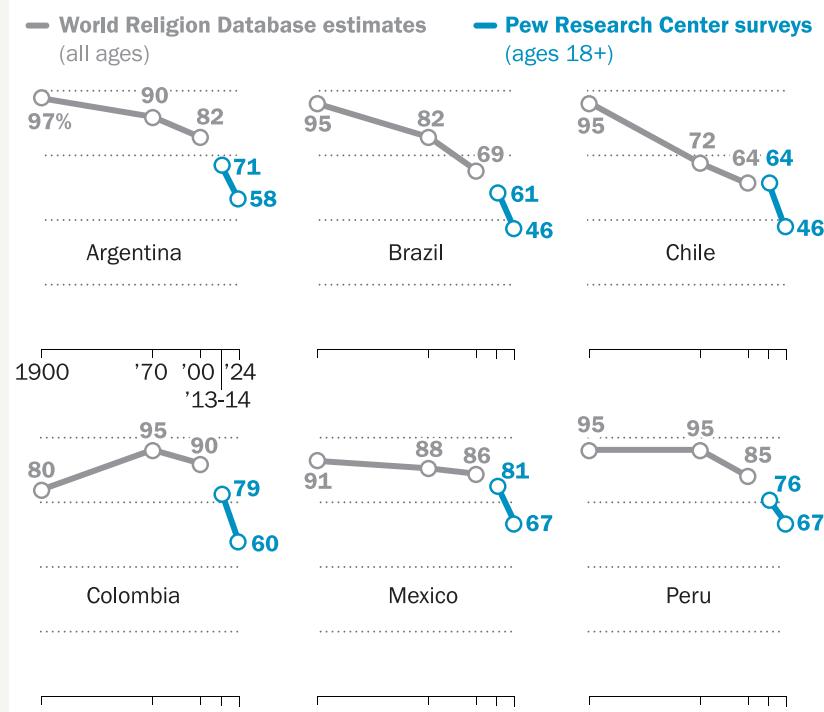
How the share of Catholics in Latin America has changed since 1900

In 1900, the vast majority of Latin Americans were Catholic. But by the end of the 20th century, Catholicism was declining in most Latin American countries, according to estimates from the [World Religion Database](#).

For instance, in Argentina, the share of Catholics in the general population (which includes children) fell from 97% in 1900 to 82% in 2000. More recently, Pew Research Center surveys (which do not include children) have found the share of Catholics in Argentina declining from 71% in 2013-14 to 58% in 2024.

Long-term drop in Catholic share of the population in 6 Latin American countries

% of population in each country who are *Catholic*, by year



Note: Data for 1900, 1970 and 2000 comes from the World Religion Database and includes adjusted estimates for adults and children. Data for 2013-14 comes from Pew Research Center's "Religion in Latin America" survey (adults only). Data for 2024 comes from Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Survey (adults only). Refer to this report's methodology for more information on how the population estimates were calculated.

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Refer to the "[Factors driving religious change](#)" section for details about the drivers behind this shift.

Catholic decline among Hispanics in the United States

The U.S. Hispanic population reached [68 million](#) in 2024. The number of Hispanics living in the United States exceeds the number of all people who live in any Latin American country, except [Brazil and Mexico](#).

In a trend similar to the religious changes in Latin America, fewer Hispanics in the U.S. identify as Catholic now (42%) than did so a decade ago (58%), according to Pew Research Center's 2023-24 [Religious Landscape Study \(RLS\)](#).

Meanwhile, the share of U.S. Hispanics who are religiously unaffiliated has increased since 2014, with about a quarter now describing their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.”

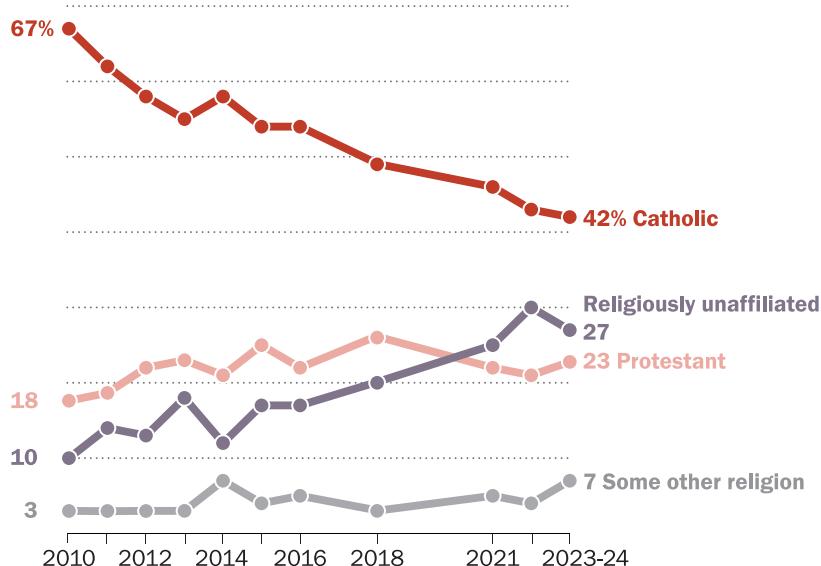
(In the Center's U.S. surveys, people who self-identify as being of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin are considered Hispanic. They can be of any race. Adults in Latin America may or may not identify as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish.)

Additionally, 40% of U.S. Hispanics say religion is very important in their life, and 47% say they pray at least daily. A large majority of U.S. Hispanics (83%) say they believe in God, according to a separate 2023 Center survey.

For more information about religious and spiritual beliefs and practices among U.S. Hispanics, refer to [our recent report](#) and the [RLS interactive database](#).

Decline since 2010 in the share of U.S. Hispanics who identify as Catholic

Religious identity of Hispanic adults in the U.S., by year



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Hispanics are of any race and include all adults who self-identify as being of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin. “Some other religion” is an umbrella category of religions with sample sizes too small to reliably analyze separately, including, for example, Christianity aside from Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian religions. The survey of Latino adults was conducted by telephone through 2018 and subsequently moved online to the American Trends Panel. Data for 2021 and 2022 is weighted to targets drawn from the previous year's National Public Opinion Reference Survey. Refer to the methodology of Pew Research Center's report “Among U.S. Latinos, Catholicism Continues to Decline but Is Still the Largest Faith” for more details. The 2023-24 Religious Landscape Study was conducted mainly online and on paper.

Source: Pew Research Center's National Survey of Latinos, 2010-16, 2018, 2021-22. Religious Landscape Study of U.S. adults conducted July 17, 2023-March 4, 2024. “Catholicism Has Declined in Latin America Over the Past Decade”

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What do former Catholics in Latin America identify as now?

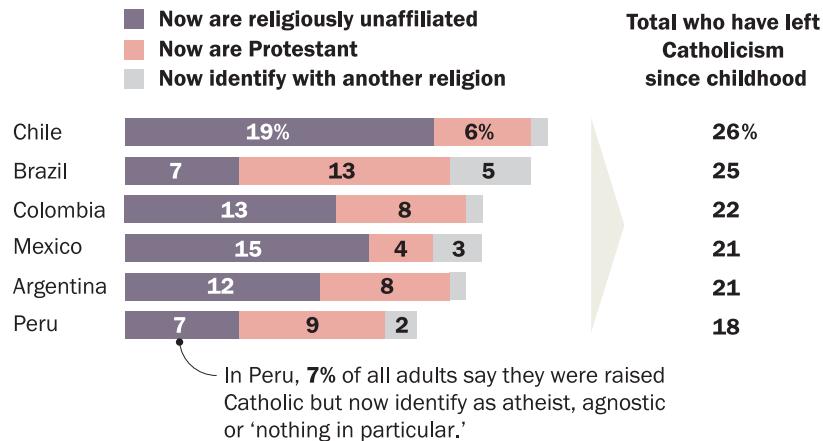
One reason for the decline of Catholicism and growth of religiously unaffiliated populations in Latin America is religious switching: a flow out of Catholicism by adults who were raised in the religion but no longer identify with it.

Across the six Latin American countries surveyed, around two-in-ten or more adults say they were raised Catholic but have since left Catholicism.²

Many Latin American adults who have left Catholicism since childhood have become religiously unaffiliated, with smaller shares in some countries now identifying as Protestant.

Most former Catholics in Latin America now identify as religiously unaffiliated or Protestant

% of all adults in each country who say they were raised Catholic but have since left Catholicism and ...



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. "Another religion" includes Christians who do not identify as Catholic or Protestant, such as Orthodox Christians or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; respondents who identify with a non-Christian religion; and respondents who declined to answer the question about their current religion.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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For example, 22% of adults in Colombia say they were raised Catholic but no longer identify that way. This includes 13% of all Colombian adults who were raised Catholic but now identify as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular," 8% who were raised Catholic and now identify as Protestant, and 1% who were raised Catholic and now identify with another religious group.

² The 2024 survey did not ask people who have changed their religious identity *why* they made this change. But the [2013-14 Latin America survey](#) gave respondents a list of eight possible reasons for switching and asked whether each reason was important to them, or not. Among people who were raised Catholic but identified as Protestant in the 2013-14 survey, the most commonly chosen reason was that they "wanted a more personal experience with God." Other common choices included: enjoying the worship style at a new church; wanting a religion that placed a greater emphasis on morality; finding a church that reached out and helped its members more; and being recruited directly by a Protestant church member. Subsequently, a [2025 Pew Research Center survey](#) in the United States asked former Catholics, "Just in your own words, what is the main reason you are no longer Catholic?" Respondents gave a wide range of answers; some common explanations were that their beliefs changed and that their values no longer aligned with those of the Church. Meanwhile, in a [2023 U.S. survey](#) focused on religious "nones," religiously unaffiliated U.S. adults were asked to choose from a list of six options that might explain why they were nonreligious. The most common reason selected was that they questioned a lot of religious teachings. Many respondents also said they didn't believe in God or a higher power, didn't like religious organizations, had bad experiences with religious people, or didn't see a need for religion in their life.

Brazil is the only country surveyed where former Catholics are more likely to now be Protestant (13% of all adults) than to be religiously unaffiliated (7%).

In Peru, roughly equal shares of former Catholics have become Protestants (9% of all adults) and “nones” (7%).

Jump to a later section for more information on [religious affiliation and religious switching in Latin America](#).

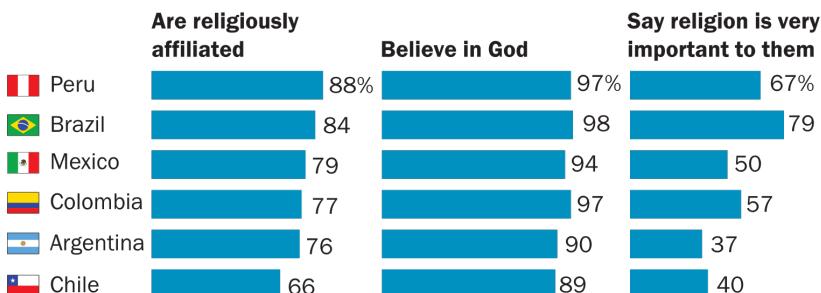
How religious are Latin Americans today?

Even though Catholics are shrinking and “nones” are growing as a share of the population in every Latin American country surveyed, most adults across the region are religious, to some degree, by a variety of measures.

To begin with, **in all six countries, most adults identify with a religion**. The shares who are religiously affiliated range from 66% in Chile to 88% in Peru. These figures include people who identify with Christian traditions (such as Catholics, Protestants and Jehovah’s Witnesses); Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous religions (such as Umbanda and Candomblé); and other faiths (such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism).

Majorities in Brazil, Peru and Colombia say religion is very important to them

% of adults in each country who say they ...



Note: Religiously affiliated people are those who identify with Christian traditions (such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Jehovah’s Witness); Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian or Indigenous religions (such as Umbanda and Candomblé); or other faiths such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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Also, **the vast majority of adults in every Latin American country surveyed say they believe in God** – with percentages ranging from 89% in Chile to 98% in Brazil. Even among religiously unaffiliated adults, majorities say they believe in God. For example, about three-quarters of “nones” in Mexico say they believe in God.

Fewer Latin Americans describe religion as very important to them personally. Yet in four of the six countries surveyed, half or more of adults say religion is *very* important in their lives. For instance, 57% of Colombians say this, as do 79% of Brazilians. In Chile and Argentina, fewer adults say religion is very important to them (40% and 37%, respectively).

Jump to later sections for more information on religious affiliation and belief in God in Latin America.

In addition, many Latin Americans regularly engage in religious or spiritual practices. For example, about four-in-ten or more adults in each country surveyed say they pray at least once a day; these shares range from 39% of adults in Argentina to 76% in Brazil.

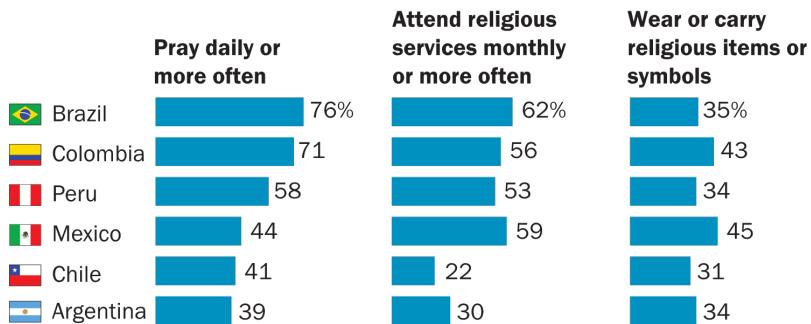
In four countries – Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru – about half or more of adults say they attend religious services monthly or more often. For example, 59% of Mexicans surveyed say they attend religious services at least monthly.

Substantial numbers of adults across the region also say they wear or carry religious items or symbols, ranging from 31% in Chile to 45% in Mexico.

Jump to a later section for more on [religious practices](#) in Latin America.

About a third or more of Latin American adults wear or carry religious items or symbols

% of adults in each country who say they ...



Note: People from different religions were asked about attending in different religious spaces. Refer to the topline for details.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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How different are Catholics, Protestants and ‘nones’ in Latin America?

Levels of religious engagement vary widely among Catholics, Protestants and religiously unaffiliated people in Latin America. Across the six countries surveyed, Protestants are more likely than Catholics to hold some religious beliefs and engage in some religious practices, but the reverse is true on other measures. Religious “nones” are usually – but not always – less religiously engaged than either Catholics or Protestants in the same country.

Religious and spiritual beliefs

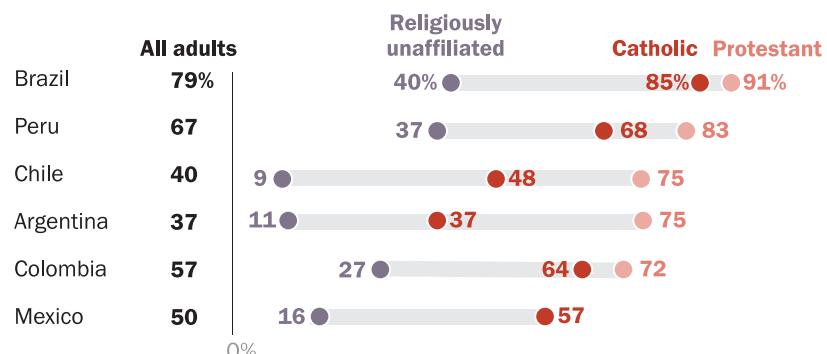
Generally, Protestants are more likely than Catholics and “nones” to say religion is *very important* in their lives. For instance, in Chile, 75% of Protestants say this, compared with 48% of Catholics and 9% of religiously unaffiliated adults.

Catholics and religiously unaffiliated adults in Latin America are generally more likely than Protestants to believe that parts of nature – such as mountains, rivers or trees – can have spirits or spiritual energies. For example, in Brazil, roughly six-in-ten Catholics and “nones” believe that spirits can inhabit parts of nature, while about half of Protestants say the same.

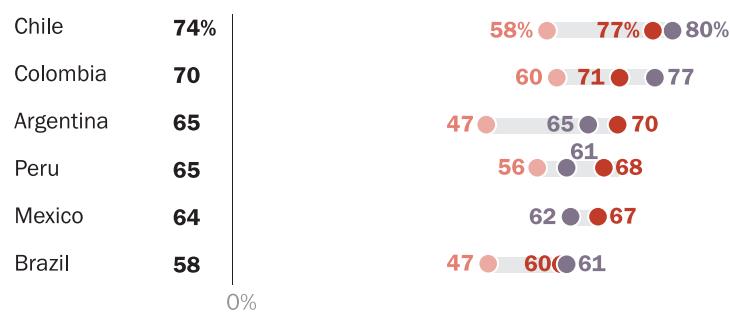
Jump to a later section for more on [beliefs among Catholics, Protestants and religiously unaffiliated people in Latin America](#).

Latin American Protestants more likely than Catholics, ‘nones’ to say religion is very important, but less likely to say nature can have spirits

*% who say religion is **very important** in their lives, by religious identity*



% who say parts of nature, like mountains, rivers or trees, can have spirits or spiritual energies, by religious identity



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size. People from different religions were asked about attending in different religious spaces. Refer to the topline for details.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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Religious and spiritual practices

Protestants in the region are more likely than Catholics and “nones” to report attending religious services weekly or more often.

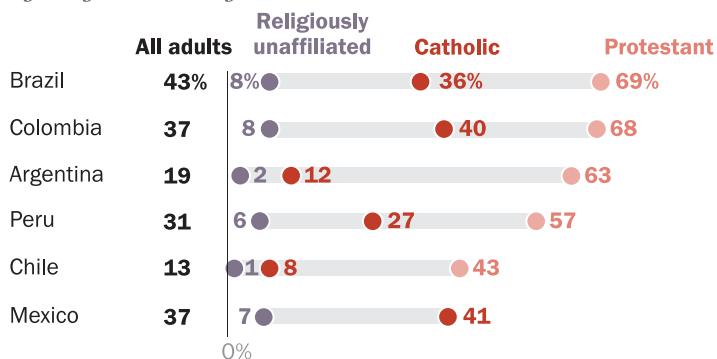
In Argentina, for example, 63% of Protestants say they attend religious services at least weekly, while 12% of Catholics and just 2% of “nones” say they attend that often.

On the other hand, Catholics are much more likely than Protestants and religiously unaffiliated adults to say they wear or carry religious items or symbols. For instance, six-in-ten Catholics in Colombia say they wear or carry religious items or symbols, while two-in-ten or fewer Colombian “nones” and Protestants say they do this.

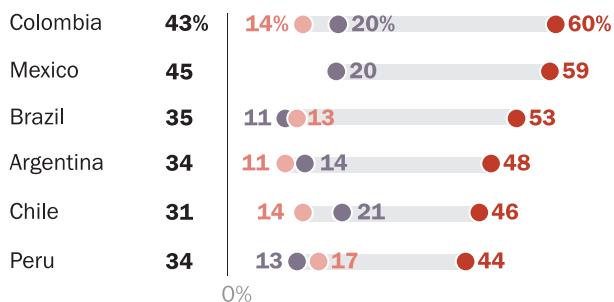
Jump to a later section for more on practices among Catholics, Protestants and religiously unaffiliated people in Latin America.

Latin American Protestants more likely than Catholics to attend religious services weekly, while Catholics more likely to wear or carry religious items

% who say they attend religious services weekly or more often, by religious identity



% who say they wear religious items or symbols, or carry them with them, by religious identity



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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A note on beliefs and practices associated with Latin American folk religions

In addition to exploring large faiths such as Catholicism and Protestantism, this Pew Research Center survey measures some beliefs and practices associated with Latin American folk religions, broadly referred to as Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian or Indigenous religions.

The region's folk religions include [Umbanda](#), [Candomblé](#) and [Santería](#). They draw on influences ranging from African Yoruba, Fon and Bantu traditions (brought to Latin America and the Caribbean by enslaved people); to [Indigenous traditions](#) (such as the [Mapuche](#) and [Ticuna](#)); to [Spiritism](#); and to Catholicism.

Followers of these religions may believe in reincarnation, spiritual forces in nature, and spirits of ancestors or other deceased people who provide healing, counseling and spiritual protection. Some adherents may perform healing rituals or practice divination to try to see the future.

To measure how widespread such beliefs and practices are, we asked questions such as:

- Do you believe in reincarnation (that people will be reborn in this world again and again)?
- Do you believe that spells, curses or other magic can influence people's lives?
- Do you believe that the spirits of ancestors can help or harm you?
- Do you believe parts of nature, such as mountains, rivers or trees, can have spirits or spiritual energies?
- Do you believe animals can have spirits or spiritual energies?
- Do you believe certain objects, such as crystals, jewels or stones, can have spirits or spiritual energies?
- Do you consult a fortune teller, horoscope or other way to see the future?

We found that there are differences between Catholics and Protestants on some of these measures. For example, Catholics across the region are more likely than Protestants to consult a fortune teller or horoscope to see the future and to believe that the spirits of ancestors can help or harm the living.

Our [2013-14 survey](#) asked about a longer list of beliefs and practices associated with Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous religions, including belief in the evil eye and using a traditional religious healer, among others.

Jump to a later section for more on [religious and spiritual beliefs](#) included in the 2024 Center survey. Results for every question can be found in the [topline](#).

Who is more religious: ‘Nones’ in Latin America or Christians in Europe?

Another way of looking at a society’s religiousness is by examining the religious engagement of its “nones” – people who say they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.”

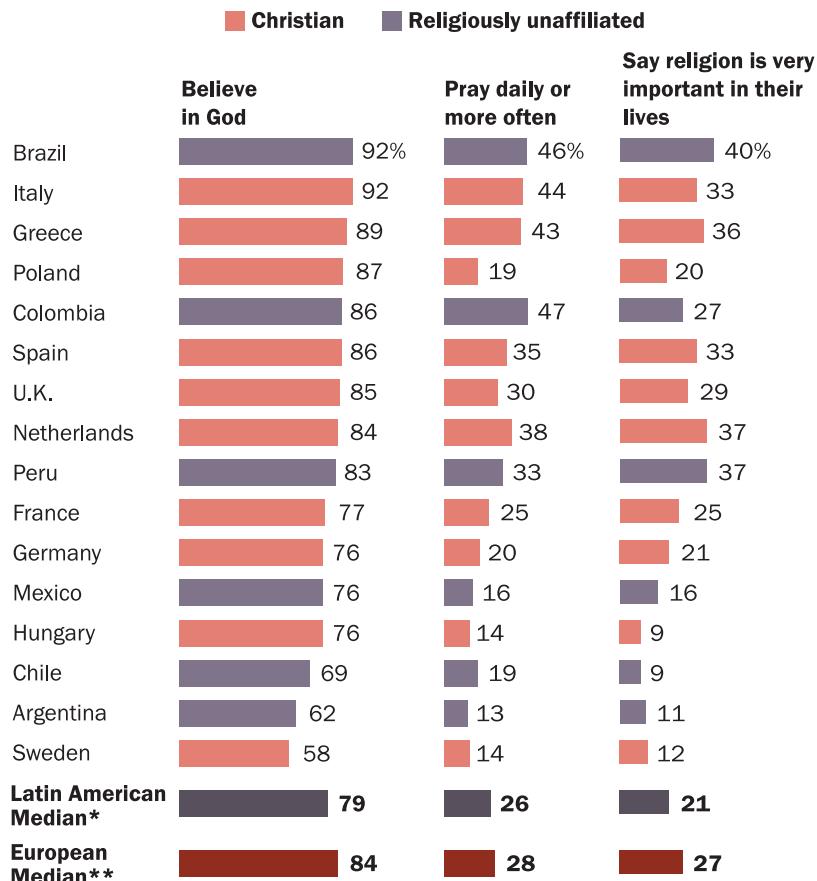
We compared religiously unaffiliated people in Latin America with Christians in Europe on three measures: belief in God, frequency of prayer and whether people consider religion to be very important in their lives.

By these measure, **“nones” in Latin America are about as religious as Christians in Europe, on average.³**

For instance, anywhere from 58% of Swedish Christians to 92% of Italian Christians say they believe in God. This is similar to the shares of “nones” surveyed in Latin America who believe in God, which range from 62% in Argentina to 92% in Brazil.

‘Nones’ in Latin America are similar to Christians in Europe on some measures of religiousness

% of __ adults in each country who ...



* Median of religiously unaffiliated adults in six Latin American countries above.

** Median of Christian adults in 10 European countries above.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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³ Christians make up at least 37% of the adult population in the 10 European countries analyzed here, and four have Christian majorities: Poland (95%), Greece (84%), Hungary (79%) and Italy (73%). For religious composition estimates of 36 countries around the world based on Pew Research Center surveys of adults, refer to [“Around the World, Many People Are Leaving Their Childhood Religions”](#) and its [topline](#).

When it comes to prayer, a third or more of “nones” surveyed in Brazil, Colombia and Peru pray at least once a day – comparable to the shares of Christians who say they pray daily or more often in several European countries.

And around four-in-ten religiously unaffiliated adults in Brazil and Peru say religion is very important in their lives – similar to the shares of Christians in Greece (36%) and the Netherlands (37%) who express the same view.

Related: [*How religion declines around the world*](#)

1. Religious affiliation in Latin America

Catholics continue to be the largest religious group in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru – despite [declining as a share of these countries' adult populations](#) over the past decade. Today, Catholics make up between 46% and 67% of adults in the six Latin American countries surveyed.⁴

Religiously unaffiliated adults are the second-largest group in four of the countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico. (The religiously unaffiliated population, sometimes called religious “nones,” is comprised of people who answer a question about their religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.”)

In Brazil and Peru, Protestants are the second-largest group. Pew Research Center's 2024 survey of six Latin American countries also finds that:

- One-in-five or fewer adults in each country are Pentecostal Protestants.
- Religious identity differs by age and education. For example, younger adults are less likely than older adults to identify as Catholic and more likely to be “nones.”
- Religious switching – changing from one's childhood religion to a different religious identity in adulthood – has led to a net loss for Catholics in every country surveyed, but to net gains for the religiously unaffiliated and Protestants.
- Catholics who have left their religion are now mostly Protestants or religiously unaffiliated, while former Protestants tend to have become religiously unaffiliated.

Jump to sections on: [Religious composition](#) | [Religious switching](#)

⁴ The survey was conducted in 2024 in [36 countries](#) around the world. This report focuses on six Latin American countries that include about [three-quarters of the total population](#) of Latin America and the Caribbean. Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Peru are the region's five most populous countries. Chile has the region's seventh-largest population.

Religious composition of each country

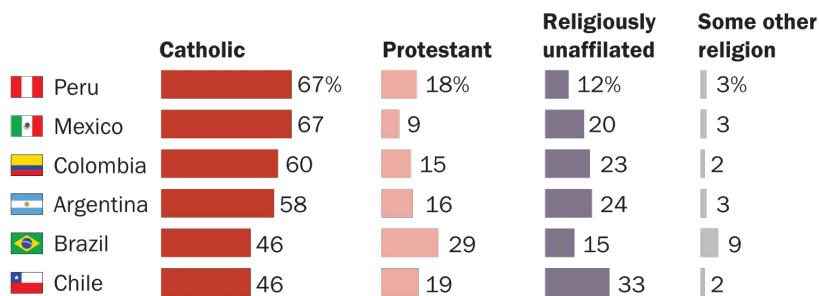
Majorities of adults in Mexico (67%), Peru (67%), Colombia (60%) and Argentina (58%) identify as Catholic. In Brazil and Chile, 46% of adults are Catholic.

Protestants make up smaller shares of the adult population in Latin America, ranging from 9% in Mexico to 29% in Brazil.

Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico have larger shares of religiously unaffiliated people than of Protestants. For instance, 33% of Chilean adults identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” while 19% identify as Protestant.

Catholics are still the largest religious group across Latin America

% of all adults in each country who identify as ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. “Some other religion” is an umbrella category of religions with sample sizes too small to reliably analyze separately, including, for example, Christianity aside from Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian religions, and Spiritism.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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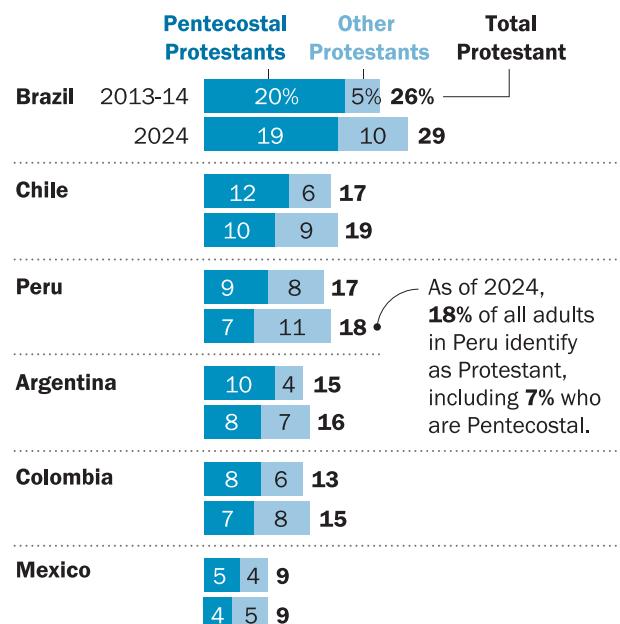
Pentecostalism

Pew Research Center estimated the share of Pentecostals in this survey using two questions. We asked all Christians whether they describe themselves as Pentecostal, or not.⁵ We also asked all Protestants what kind of church they belong to, with one option being “a Pentecostal church, for example, Assemblies of God or the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.”⁶ If respondents who identified as Protestant said “yes” to the first question (they consider themselves Pentecostal), or they indicated they belong to a Pentecostal church in the second question – or both – they were categorized as Pentecostal.

As of 2024, **Pentecostal Protestants** make up small percentages of the overall populations in the six countries surveyed, ranging from 4% of all adults in Mexico to 19% in Brazil. This group’s relative size has remained fairly stable in the broader landscape since 2013-14.

19% of Brazilians are Pentecostal Protestants

% of all adults in each country who are ...



As of 2024, **18%** of all adults in Peru identify as Protestant, including **7%** who are Pentecostal.

Note: Pentecostals are those who either self-identify as Pentecostal or belong to a Pentecostal church, or both. Refer to the report topline for full question and response option wording.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey and 2013-14 “Religion in Latin America” survey.

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⁵ All Christians surveyed were asked, “Would you describe yourself as Pentecostal, or not?” In this report, we only show Pentecostal Protestants. Refer to the [topline](#) for the percentages of other Christians (including some Catholics) in each country who say they are Pentecostal.

⁶ Refer to the [topline](#) for the percentages of Protestant adults who say they belong to other types of churches.

Yet, over the past decade, Pentecostalism appears to have lost some ground *within* Protestantism.

In 2013-14, majorities of Protestant adults in several of the six countries surveyed were Pentecostal. For instance, 71% of Argentine Protestants identified as Pentecostal in 2013-14.

Today, Brazil is the only Latin American country surveyed where a majority of Protestants are Pentecostal (65%).⁷

While the decline in the share of Protestants who are Pentecostal is statistically significant in two countries (Argentina and Brazil), the sample sizes of Protestants are relatively small, so there are large margins of error.⁸

Among Protestants in Brazil and Argentina, share who are Pentecostal has decreased since 2013-14

Among **Protestants** in each country, % who are Pentecostal

	2013-14	2024	Change
Argentina	71%	54%	▼17
Brazil	80	65	▼15
Chile	67	54	▼13
Peru	52	40	▼12
Colombia	56	48	▼8

Note: Statistically significant changes are in **bold**. Protestants in Mexico are not shown due to insufficient sample size. Pentecostals are those who either self-identify as Pentecostal or belong to a Pentecostal church, or both. Refer to the topline for full wording of questions and response options.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey and 2013-14 “Religion in Latin America” survey.

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⁷ Scholars have suggested a number of possible reasons for this decline, including that many Protestants in the region now call themselves simply “Christians” rather than use labels such as “Pentecostal” to describe their religious identity.

⁸ The survey included 148 Protestants in Argentina, 313 Protestants in Brazil, 192 Protestants in Chile, 178 Protestants in Colombia and 184 Protestants in Peru.

How religious identity differs by age, gender and education

In all six Latin American countries surveyed, younger adults are much less likely than older adults to identify as Catholic. For example, 59% of Mexican adults ages 18 to 34 say they are Catholic, compared with 77% of Mexicans ages 50 and older.

Younger adults are more likely than older adults to identify as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.” For instance, 33% of Colombian adults under 35 say they are religiously unaffiliated, compared with 10% of Colombians 50 and older.

There are no significant differences by age in the shares of adults who identify as Protestant in each country, or who identify as Pentecostal Protestants.

In general, there are no significant differences in the shares of Latin American men and women who identify as Catholic, Protestant or religiously unaffiliated.

Younger adults in Latin America are less likely than older adults to identify as Catholic

% of all adults in each country who identify as __, by age

		Catholic	Protestant	Religiously unaffiliated
Argentina	Ages 18-34	47%	19%	32%
	35-49	58	16	21
	50+	67	12	18
	Youngest-oldest diff	-20	+7	+14
Brazil	Ages 18-34	36	30	21
	35-49	45	33	14
	50+	54	25	11
	Youngest-oldest diff	-18	+5	+10
Chile	Ages 18-34	36	18	44
	35-49	39	21	38
	50+	57	19	22
	Youngest-oldest diff	-21	-1	+22
Colombia	Ages 18-34	50	15	33
	35-49	58	16	25
	50+	72	16	10
	Youngest-oldest diff	-22	-1	+23
Mexico	Ages 18-34	59	8	30
	35-49	67	11	16
	50+	77	7	12
	Youngest-oldest diff	-18	+1	+18
Peru	Ages 18-34	62	19	18
	35-49	66	20	11
	50+	74	15	6
	Youngest-oldest diff	-12	+4	+12

Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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In Argentina, Chile and Peru, people with more education are less likely to be Protestant. Just 12% of Argentine adults with higher levels of education (i.e., those who have completed secondary school) are Protestant, versus 20% of Argentines with lower levels of education.⁹

By the same token, adults with higher levels of education are more likely than those with lower levels to be religiously unaffiliated in five of the six countries. In Argentina, 28% of adults with more education are “nones,” compared with 18% of Argentines who have less education.

There are no differences by education level in the shares of adults who identify as Catholic in any of the countries surveyed.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how religious affiliation varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

⁹ Secondary education is the equivalent of high school in the United States.

Religious switching

Change in a country's religious landscape is a result of many factors, including people moving from one religion to another, or from one religion to no religion. The analysis of "religious switching" in this report focuses on the change between the religious group in which a person says they were raised (during their childhood) and their religious identity now (in adulthood).¹⁰

Across the six Latin American countries surveyed, more people have *left* Catholicism since childhood than joined. As a result, Catholicism has experienced an overall (or "net") loss of adherents due to religious switching.

In Chile, for instance, more people have left Catholicism (26% of all Chilean adults) than have entered the faith (2%), a net loss for Catholics that is equivalent to 24% of Chile's total adult population.

On the flip side, Protestants and the religiously unaffiliated have experienced a net *gain* in most Latin American countries surveyed because of religious switching.

For example, in Brazil, 6% of all adults say they were raised Protestant but no longer identify as such, while 15% of all Brazilian adults say they

Religious switching has led to increases for Protestants and unaffiliated people in Latin America

% of all adults in each place who were raised in, left, entered and currently identify with each group

		Their childhood religion	Left group	Entered group	Current religion
Argentina	Catholicism	75%	-21	+4	=58%
	Protestantism	11	-5	+9	=16
	Religiously unaffiliated	10	-4	+17	=24
Brazil	Catholicism	69	-25	+2	=46
	Protestantism	20	-6	+15	=29
	Religiously unaffiliated	5	-2	+12	=15
Chile	Catholicism	70	-26	+2	=46
	Protestantism	18	-6	+7	=19
	Religiously unaffiliated	10	-2	+25	=33
Colombia	Catholicism	79	-22	+3	=60
	Protestantism	11	-5	+10	=15
	Religiously unaffiliated	5	-3	+20	=23
Mexico	Catholicism	87	-21	+2	=67
	Protestantism	4	-1	+6	=9
	Religiously unaffiliated	4	-1	+17	=20
Peru	Catholicism	81	-18	+4	=67
	Protestantism	12	-5	+11	=18
	Religiously unaffiliated	3	-1	+10	=12

Note: All figures in this table, including in middle columns, are based on the total adult population of each country. They are percentages of *all* respondents, not just each religious group, surveyed in each country. Figures may not add up to the "Current religion" column due to rounding.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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¹⁰ We use the term "religious switching" instead of "conversion" because the changes can take place in many directions – including from having been raised in a religion to being unaffiliated.

were *not* raised Protestant but are now Protestants.

Similarly, the religiously unaffiliated category has grown because of religious switching: 4% of Mexican adults say they were raised atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” compared with 20% who are religiously unaffiliated today.

Related: [*Around the World, Many People Are Leaving Their Childhood Religions*](#)

Factors driving religious change

Change – and stability – in the religious landscape of any given country is the result of many factors, including [religious switching](#) (changing from one’s childhood religion to another religion or no religion), [migration rates](#) (how many people in each religious group are moving into and out of a particular country or region), [age structure](#) (variations in the demographic makeup of religious groups by age and sex), [fertility rates](#) (the number of children born to women in different religious groups), and [mortality rates](#) (whether people in some religious groups live longer than others).

For example, [religious switching among Christians](#) has led to declines in many parts of the world, as rising numbers of Christians have become religiously unaffiliated. In the United States, [Muslim](#), [Buddhist](#) and [Hindu](#) populations are expanding in large part due to migration. And in some European countries, [more Christians are dying than being born each year](#), reflecting the continent’s low fertility rates.

Read more about the factors driving religious change around the world in these Pew Research Center reports:

- [How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020](#)
- [The Religious Composition of the World’s Migrants](#)
- [Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off](#)

How do former Catholics and Protestants identify now?

Former Catholics in Latin America tend to identify as either religiously unaffiliated or Protestant, while former Protestants tend to have become “nones.”

Specifically, in four of the Latin American countries, more former Catholics have *disaffiliated* – meaning they left the religion of their childhood and are now religiously unaffiliated – than have switched to Protestantism or another religion.

For example, 15% of all Mexican adults say they were raised Catholic and are now religiously unaffiliated, while just 4% of Mexicans say they were raised Catholic but are now Protestant.

Brazil is the only country where significantly *more* former Catholics have become Protestant (13% of all Brazilian adults) than have become religiously unaffiliated (7%). In Peru, former Catholics are about as likely to be Protestant (9% of all Peruvian adults) as to be “nones” (7%).

Meanwhile, former Protestants in Latin America are generally more likely to have disaffiliated than to have become Catholic. For instance, 5% of all Chileans say they were raised Protestant and are now atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” compared with 1% of former Protestants in Chile who now identify as Catholic.

Many former Catholics and Protestants in Latin America have become religiously unaffiliated

% of all adults in each country who say they were ...

	Raised Catholic but are now __			Raised Protestant but are now __		
	Religiously unaffiliated	Protestant	In another religion	Religiously unaffiliated	Catholic	In another religion
Chile	19%	6%	1%	5%	1%	0%
Mexico	15	4	3	1	0	0
Colombia	13	8	1	4	0	0
Argentina	12	8	1	3	1	0
Brazil	7	13	5	4	1	1
Peru	7	9	2	2	2	0

Note: “Another religion” includes Christians who do not identify as Catholic or Protestant, such as Orthodox Christians or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; respondents who identify with a non-Christian religion; and respondents who declined to answer the question about their current religion. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, including rounding down to 0%. Survey-based estimates of 0% do not necessarily mean no one in those countries now identifies with that religious group.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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Retention rates

Another way of measuring religious change is to calculate retention rates: Among all the people who say they were raised in a particular religious group, what percentage still describe themselves as belonging to that group today?

Across the region, most people who were brought up Catholic or Protestant have retained the same religious identity as adults.¹¹

In Argentina, Colombia and Peru, Catholics are more likely than Protestants to retain their religious identity

Among adults in each country who were raised __, % who still identify with that religious group today

	Catholic	Protestant
Argentina	72%	58%
Brazil	64	70
Chile	63	65
Colombia	72	55
Mexico	75	--
Peru	78	60

Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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In the countries surveyed, between 63% and 78% of people who were raised Catholic still identify as Catholic today. Similarly, between 55% and 70% of those who say they were raised Protestant still describe themselves as Protestant.

¹¹ The sample size of adults who were raised religiously unaffiliated is only large enough for reliable analysis in two countries: In Argentina, the unaffiliated retention rate is 63%, while in Chile, it's 83%.

2. Religious and spiritual beliefs in Latin America

This Pew Research Center study explores a wide variety of spiritual and religious beliefs in six Latin American countries. Our survey included some questions we previously have asked in many countries, such as whether people believe in God and whether they believe in an afterlife. But we also asked about beliefs that are often associated with folk religions – including Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian or Indigenous faiths – such as beliefs in spells and various kinds of spirits.¹²

Around nine-in-ten or more adults in each country surveyed say they believe in God, and about two-thirds say there is probably or definitely life after death. More than half of adults in each country believe that spells, curses or other magic can influence people's lives, while fewer than half believe in reincarnation.¹³

Other findings from the Center's 2024 survey of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru include:

- Majorities of adults believe that parts of nature (such as mountains, rivers or trees) can have spirits or spiritual energies, but fewer believe that spirits can reside in objects (such as crystals, jewels or stones).
- Catholics are consistently more likely than Protestants to believe in reincarnation, while in some countries, Protestants are more likely than Catholics to believe that spells can influence people's lives.¹⁴
- Older adults in some countries are more likely than younger adults to believe in God, but younger adults are more likely to believe in "something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it."

Jump to sections on: [Belief in God](#) | [Belief in a spiritual presence beyond the natural world](#) |
[Belief in life after death](#) | [Belief in reincarnation](#) |
[Belief in spells, curses and other magic](#) | [Belief in spirits or spiritual energies](#)

¹² The survey was conducted in 2024 in [36 countries](#) around the world. This report focuses on six Latin America countries that include about [three-quarters of the total population](#) of Latin America and the Caribbean. Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Peru are the region's five most populous countries. Chile has the region's seventh-largest population.

¹³ The survey asked respondents whether they believe there "definitely is," "probably is," "probably is not" or "definitely is not" life after death. The question did not specify any particular version of what life after death might be like. Respondents were asked whether they believe in "reincarnation – that people will be reborn in this world again and again."

¹⁴ Refer to the [topline](#) for the shares of Catholics, Protestants and religiously unaffiliated adults in all six countries who hold each of the beliefs asked about on this survey.

Belief in God

About nine-in-ten or more adults in each of the six countries surveyed say they believe in God. For instance, 94% of Mexicans say they believe in God, as do 98% of Brazilians, similar to the [shares reported in 2013-14](#).¹⁵

Nearly all Catholics and Protestants say they believe in God, with percentages virtually unchanged from [a decade ago](#). (The sample of Protestants in Mexico is too small to analyze separately.)

In Argentina, for example, 99% of Catholics and Protestants said they believe in God in 2013-14, and 99% say the same today.

Majorities of religiously unaffiliated adults believe in God, though they are less likely than Catholics or Protestants to hold this belief. In Chile, for example, 69% of unaffiliated adults say they believe in God, compared with 99% of Catholics and 100% of Protestants surveyed.¹⁶ (The unaffiliated category, sometimes referred to as religious “nones,” consists of people who answer a question about their religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.”)

In Mexico, the share of religiously unaffiliated adults who believe in God appears to have risen sharply since 2013-14, almost doubling in size to 76%. However, the sample of “nones” in Mexico is relatively small, so there is a [large margin of error](#).

¹⁵ We can directly compare results on two questions about religious beliefs in the 2024 survey to identical questions we asked in 2013-14: belief in God and belief in reincarnation. Some other questions are not directly comparable due to changes in question wording or response options. In addition, the 2024 survey includes some new questions.

¹⁶ Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, including rounding to 100%. Survey-based estimates of 100% do not necessarily mean that everyone in those groups holds this belief.

Belief in God has remained high in Latin America

% of __ adults in each country who say they believe in God, by year

	2013-14	2024	Change
Argentina			
All adults	93%	90%	▼3
Catholic	99	99	0
Protestant	99	99	0
Religiously unaffiliated	51	62	▲11
Brazil			
All adults	99	98	▼1
Catholic	100	100	0
Protestant	100	100	0
Religiously unaffiliated	89	92	▲3
Chile			
All adults	92	89	▼3
Catholic	98	99	▲1
Protestant	100	100	0
Religiously unaffiliated	64	69	▲5
Colombia			
All adults	99	97	▼2
Catholic	100	100	0
Protestant	99	100	▲1
Religiously unaffiliated	--	86	--
Mexico			
All adults	94	94	0
Catholic	99	99	0
Protestant	96	--	--
Religiously unaffiliated	39	76	▲37
Peru			
All adults	98	97	▼1
Catholic	99	99	0
Protestant	98	100	▲2
Religiously unaffiliated	--	83	--

Note: Statistically significant changes are in **bold**. Dash indicates the group is not being shown separately due to insufficient sample size. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, including rounding to 100%. Estimates of 100% do not necessarily mean everyone in those groups holds this belief.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey and 2013-14 “Religion in Latin America” survey.

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In some Latin American countries, adults ages 18 to 34 are slightly less likely than those 50 and older to say they believe in God. The age gap is largest in Chile, where 83% of younger adults say they believe in God, compared with 96% of the oldest adults. However, in Brazil, 98% of *both* younger and older adults hold this belief.

Adults with higher levels of education tend to be less likely than those with lower levels of education to believe in God. For instance, 86% of Argentine adults who have at least a secondary education believe in God, compared with 95% of Argentines with less education.¹⁷

Women are somewhat more likely than men to express belief in God in Chile, Colombia and Peru. For example, 99% of Colombian women say they believe in God, compared with 94% of Colombian men.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

¹⁷ Secondary education is the equivalent of high school in the United States.

Belief in a spiritual presence beyond the natural world

Respondents were asked whether they believe “there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it” or, alternatively, “the natural world is all there is.”

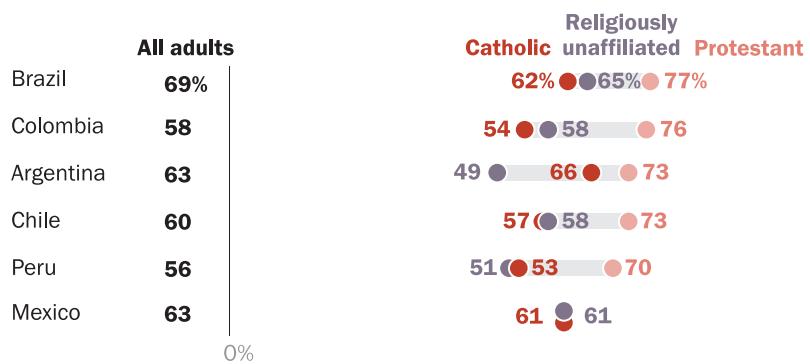
Majorities in each country, ranging from 56% of adults in Peru to 69% of adults in Brazil, say they believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world.

In Colombia, Chile and Peru, Protestants are more likely than Catholics or religiously unaffiliated adults to say there is something spiritual beyond this world, even if we cannot see it. And in several countries surveyed, Catholics are more similar to religiously unaffiliated adults than to Protestants on this question. For instance, in Peru, seven-in-ten Protestants say there is something spiritual beyond this world, while about half of Peruvian Catholics and “nones” say the same.

Argentina is the only Latin American country surveyed in which Catholics (66%) are more likely than “nones” (49%) to say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world.

More Latin American Protestants than Catholics say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world

% in each country who say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it, by religious identity



Note: Respondents were asked whether “there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it” or “the natural world is all there is.” Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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In general, younger adults in the Latin American countries surveyed are more likely than older people to believe there is something spiritual beyond the natural world. That's a reversal of the age pattern we find on belief in God.

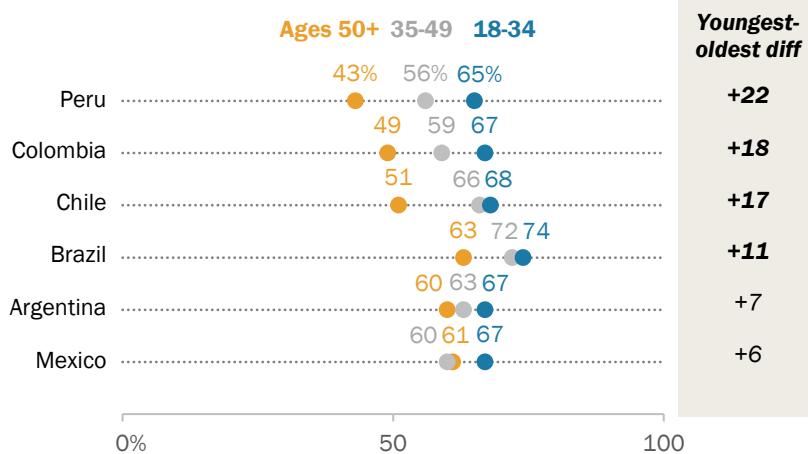
In Chile, 68% of adults ages 18 to 34 believe in something spiritual beyond the natural world, compared with 51% of adults ages 50 and older.

Across the region, adults with higher levels of education are more likely than those with lower levels of education to say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world. In Mexico, for example, 73% of adults who have completed secondary school express this belief, compared with 54% of adults who have less education.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

In many Latin American countries, younger adults are more likely than older adults to say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world

% in each country who say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it, by age



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. Respondents were asked whether “there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it” or “the natural world is all there is.”

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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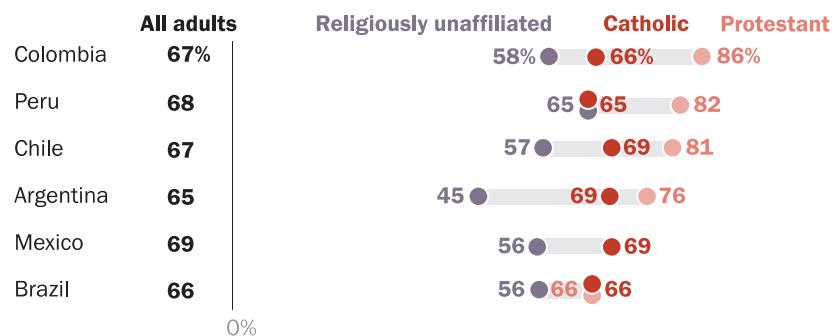
Belief in life after death

Belief in an afterlife is common in Latin America, with about two-thirds of adults in each country saying there is definitely or probably life after death.

In Colombia, Chile and Peru, Protestants are more likely than Catholics and religiously unaffiliated adults to say there is definitely or probably life after death. For instance, in Colombia, 86% of Protestants believe in an afterlife, compared with 66% of Catholics and 58% of “nones.”

Around half or more of ‘nones’ in many Latin American countries believe in an afterlife

*% in each country who say there is **definitely/probably** life after death, by religious identity*



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

A note on beliefs and practices associated with Latin American folk religions

In addition to exploring large faiths such as Catholicism and Protestantism, this Pew Research Center survey measures some beliefs and practices associated with Latin American folk religions, broadly referred to as Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian or Indigenous religions.

The region's folk religions include [Umbanda](#), [Candomblé](#) and [Santería](#). They draw on influences ranging from African Yoruba, Fon and Bantu traditions (brought to Latin America and the Caribbean by enslaved people); to [Indigenous traditions](#) (such as the [Mapuche](#) and [Ticuna](#)); to [Spiritism](#); and to Catholicism.

Followers of these religions may believe in reincarnation, spiritual forces in nature, and spirits of ancestors or other deceased people who provide healing, counseling and spiritual protection. Some adherents may perform healing rituals or practice divination to try to see the future.

To measure how widespread such beliefs and practices are, we asked questions such as:

- Do you believe in reincarnation (that people will be reborn in this world again and again)?
- Do you believe that spells, curses or other magic can influence people's lives?
- Do you believe that the spirits of ancestors can help or harm you?
- Do you believe parts of nature, such as mountains, rivers or trees, can have spirits or spiritual energies?
- Do you believe animals can have spirits or spiritual energies?
- Do you believe certain objects, such as crystals, jewels or stones, can have spirits or spiritual energies?
- Do you consult a fortune teller, horoscope or other way to see the future?

We found that there are differences between Catholics and Protestants on some of these measures. For example, Catholics across the region are more likely than Protestants to consult a fortune teller or horoscope to see the future and to believe that the spirits of ancestors can help or harm the living.

Our [2013-14 survey](#) asked about a longer list of beliefs and practices associated with Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous religions, including belief in the evil eye and using a traditional religious healer, among others.

Results for every question can be found in the [topline](#).

Belief in reincarnation

Fewer than half of adults in each country believe in reincarnation, making this belief less common than belief in an afterlife. (In the survey, reincarnation was defined as people being “reborn in this world again and again.”)

In Argentina, Colombia and Peru, larger shares of adults overall say they believe in reincarnation now than [a decade ago](#).

In Argentina, Chile and Mexico, religiously unaffiliated adults in particular have become more likely to believe in reincarnation; in Mexico, there’s been a 25-point increase since 2013-14. However, the sample of unaffiliated people in Mexico is relatively small (199), with a large margin of error (plus or minus 10.0 percentage points).

Across the region, Catholics continue to be more likely than Protestants to express belief in reincarnation. In Brazil and Chile, religiously unaffiliated adults also are now more likely than Protestants to say they

In Argentina, Colombia and Peru, belief in reincarnation is more common now than a decade ago

% of __ adults in each country who say they believe in reincarnation, by year

	2013-14	2024	Change
Argentina			
All adults	36%	42%	▲6
Catholic	41	48	▲7
Protestant	27	30	▲3
Religiously unaffiliated	19	36	▲17
Brazil			
All adults	29	33	▲4
Catholic	35	37	▲2
Protestant	9	13	▲4
Religiously unaffiliated	22	34	▲12
Chile			
All adults	41	44	▲3
Catholic	46	50	▲4
Protestant	26	25	▼1
Religiously unaffiliated	32	49	▲17
Colombia			
All adults	34	42	▲8
Catholic	37	45	▲8
Protestant	24	30	▲6
Religiously unaffiliated	--	46	--
Mexico			
All adults	41	42	▲1
Catholic	45	46	▲1
Protestant	26	--	--
Religiously unaffiliated	18	43	▲25
Peru			
All adults	34	42	▲8
Catholic	36	48	▲12
Protestant	31	26	▼5
Religiously unaffiliated	--	37	--

Note: Statistically significant changes are in **bold**. Dash indicates the group is not being shown separately due to insufficient sample size. Respondents were asked if they believe in “reincarnation – that people will be reborn in this world again and again.”

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey and 2013-14 “Religion in Latin America” survey.

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believe in reincarnation. For instance, in Chile, twice as many “nones” as Protestants hold this belief (49% vs. 25%).

In several countries, younger adults are more likely than adults ages 50 and older to say they believe in reincarnation. For instance, 46% of adults under 35 in Colombia believe in reincarnation, compared with 35% of older adults.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

Belief in spells, curses and other magic

Majorities of adults in all six countries surveyed say they believe that spells, curses or other magic can influence people's lives. This ranges from 56% of Mexicans to 72% of Colombians.

In some countries, Protestants are more likely than Catholics to believe spells have real effects. For instance, 83% of Colombian Protestants believe in this, compared with 71% of Catholics.

In Brazil, there are differences

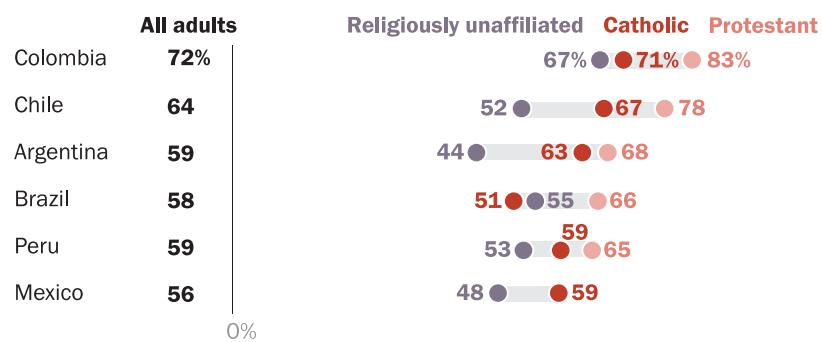
within Protestantism as well. Pentecostal Protestants (73%) are far more likely than other Protestants in Brazil (53%) to say spells, curses or other magic can influence people's lives. (Brazil is the only surveyed country with samples large enough to compare Pentecostal Protestants with non-Pentecostal Protestants.)

In Argentina and Chile, “nones” are less likely than Catholics or Protestants to believe that spells, curses and the like really do work. In Chile, for example, about three-quarters of Protestants and two-thirds of Catholics say these kinds of magic can influence people's lives, compared with about half of “nones” who say the same.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

83% of Protestants in Colombia believe spells, curses or other magic can influence people's lives

% in each country who say they believe that spells, curses or other magic can influence people's lives, by religious identity



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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Belief in spirits or spiritual energies

Can spirits or spiritual energies exist in parts of nature, such as mountains, rivers or trees?

What about in animals? Or in certain objects such as crystals, jewels or stones?

Majorities across the six countries surveyed believe that parts of nature and animals can have spirits or spiritual energies, but far fewer believe this about objects such as crystals or jewels.

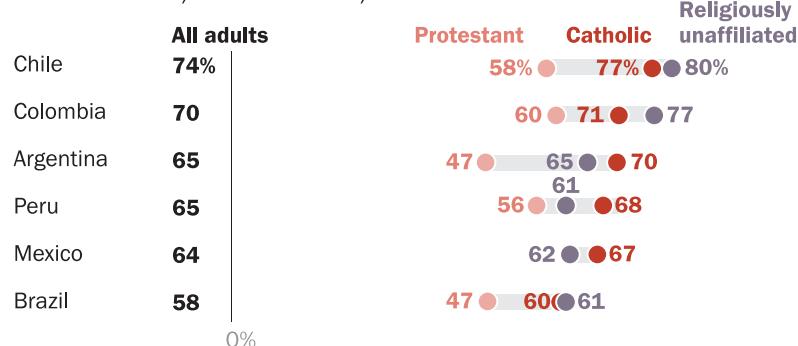
For instance, about three-quarters of Chileans say that animals or parts of nature can have spiritual energies, while a third of Chilean adults say objects can have spiritual energies.

Across the region, Catholics and religiously unaffiliated adults tend to be more likely than Protestants to believe in these types of spirits. In Colombia, for example, 68% of Catholics and 76% of “nones” believe animals can have spirits or spiritual energies, compared with 56% of Protestants.

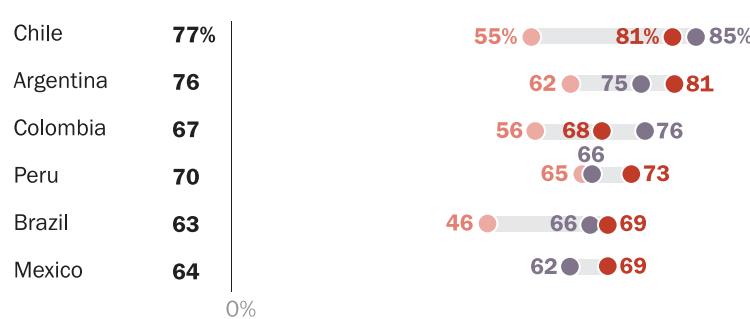
Majority of Latin American Catholics and ‘nones’ say parts of nature can have spirits or spiritual energies

% in each country who say that ___ can have spirits or spiritual energies, by religious identity

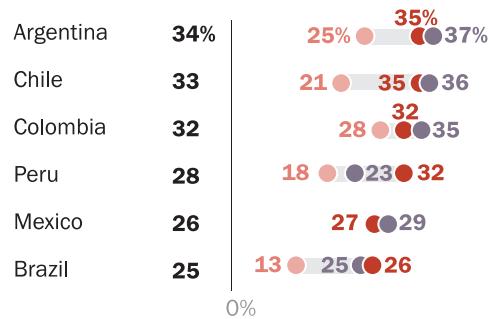
Parts of nature, like mountains, rivers or trees



Animals



Certain objects, like crystals, jewels or stones



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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Younger adults are more likely than older adults to say animals can have spirits or spiritual energies. For instance, 77% of Peruvians ages 18 to 34 believe animals can have spirits, while 56% of Peruvians 50 and older hold this belief. However, younger and older adults are equally likely to say parts of nature and certain objects can have spirits.

In several countries, people who pray at least daily are less likely than those who pray less often to say that animals can have spirits or spiritual energies. In Argentina, 70% of adults who pray daily believe this about animals, compared with 80% of those who pray less often.

However, there's no clear link between how often people pray and whether they believe that parts of nature or certain objects can have spirits or spiritual energies.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies across demographic groups.)

3. Religious and spiritual practices in Latin America

In this survey of six Latin American countries, we asked about a variety of religious and spiritual practices, such as whether respondents pray daily, attend worship services weekly or wear religious symbols.¹⁸

Half or fewer of adults in each country engage in the practices we asked about – with the exception of daily prayer, which is reported by majorities of adults in Brazil (76%), Colombia (71%) and Peru (58%).

In several countries, Protestants are more likely than Catholics to say they pray daily and attend worship services weekly. But Catholics are more likely than Protestants to wear or carry religious symbols and to light incense or candles for religious or spiritual purposes.¹⁹

Other findings from Pew Research Center's 2024 survey of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru include:

- Women are more likely than men in these six countries to pray and to attend religious services, reaffirming a pattern that researchers have often [observed around the world](#).
- Based on the religious practices we asked about in these countries, Argentine and Chilean adults appear to be the least religious, on average.

Jump to sections on: [Daily prayer](#) | [Attending religious services](#)

[Lighting incense or candles](#) | [Wearing religious symbols](#)

¹⁸ The survey was conducted in 2024 in [36 countries](#) around the world. This report focuses on six Latin American countries that include about [three-quarters of the total population](#) of Latin America and the Caribbean. Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Peru are the region's five most populous countries. Chile has the region's seventh-largest population.

¹⁹ Refer to the [topline](#) for the shares of Catholics, Protestants and religiously unaffiliated adults in all six countries who hold each of the beliefs asked about on this survey.

Daily prayer

Praying at least once a day is most common in Brazil, Colombia and Peru. Fewer than half of adults in Mexico, Chile and Argentina report doing so.

Majorities of Protestants in nearly all places surveyed say they pray at least once a day. (The sample of Protestants in Mexico is too small for reliable analysis.)

Yet only in Brazil, Colombia and Peru do majorities of Catholics pray daily. Our [2013-14 survey in Latin America](#) also found that Protestants were more likely than Catholics to pray daily.²⁰

Within the countries surveyed, religiously unaffiliated adults generally are much less likely than either Catholics or Protestants to pray daily.

However, there is a lot of variation in rates of prayer between religious groups in *different* countries. For example, “nones” in Brazil and Colombia are about as likely as Catholics in Chile and Mexico to pray at least once a day.

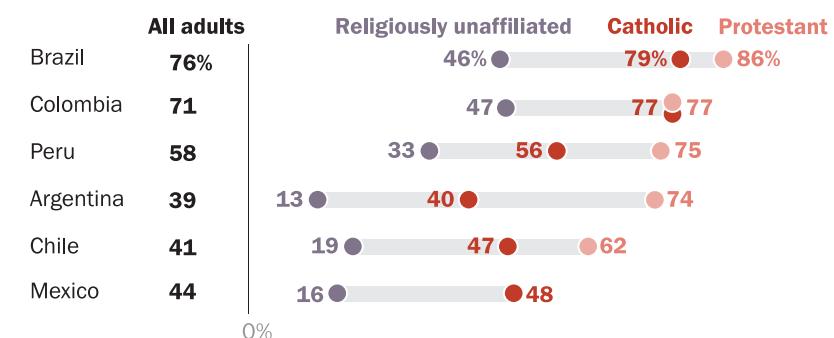
The oldest adults surveyed (ages 50 and older) are much more likely than the youngest adults (ages 18 to 34) to say they pray daily. For example, most of the oldest Chilean adults (57%) pray daily, compared with 21% of the youngest Chileans.

In all six countries, women are more likely than men to report that they pray daily.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) to see how this measure varies across demographic groups.)

Majorities of Protestants in Latin America pray daily

% in each country who say they pray daily or more often, by religious identity



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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²⁰ None of the questions about spiritual and religious practices in this chapter are directly comparable to questions included in the 2013-14 survey, due to changes in question wording or response options. In addition, the 2024 survey includes some new questions.

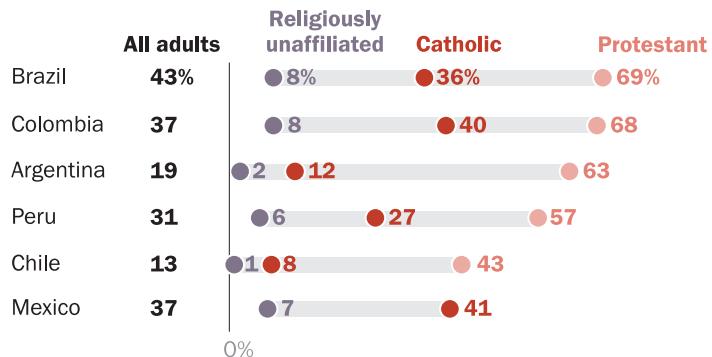
Attending religious services

While about four-in-ten Brazilians (43%), Colombians (37%) and Mexicans (also 37%) say they attend religious services at least once a week, Argentines (19%) and Chileans (13%) are much less likely to do so.

Looking *within* the countries that have a large enough sample of Protestants to analyze, Protestants are much more likely than Catholics to attend religious services weekly or more often. And Catholics, in turn, are more likely than religiously unaffiliated adults to be frequent churchgoers. In Peru, for instance, Protestants are around twice as likely as Catholics to go to church weekly (57% vs. 27%), while just 6% of religiously unaffiliated Peruvian adults say they attend that often.

4 in 10 or fewer Catholics in Latin America attend religious services weekly or more often

% in each country who say they attend religious services weekly or more often, by religious identity



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size. People from different religions were asked about attending in different religious spaces. Refer to the topline for details.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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This broad, regional pattern (Protestants attending church at higher rates than Catholics) was also found in our [2013-14 survey of the region](#). However, the recent survey’s results cannot be directly compared with specific percentages from the earlier survey due to changes in question wording.

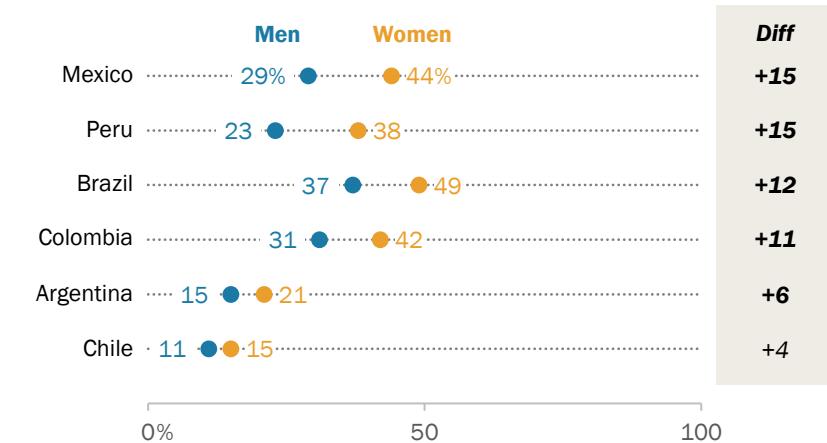
In Brazil, Pentecostal Protestants are more likely than non-Pentecostal Protestants to attend church weekly (76% vs. 54%). (Brazil is the only surveyed country with samples large enough to compare Pentecostal Protestants with non-Pentecostal Protestants.)

In all but one of the six countries surveyed, women are more likely than men to attend religious services. For example, 44% of Mexican women say they attend religious services at least weekly, compared with 29% of Mexican men. (In Chile, the 4 percentage point gap between women and men is not statistically significant.)

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

In Latin America, women are more likely than men to attend religious services

*% in each country who say they attend religious services **weekly or more often**, by gender*



Note: Statistically significant differences are in **bold**. People from different religions were asked about attending in different religious spaces. Refer to the topline for details.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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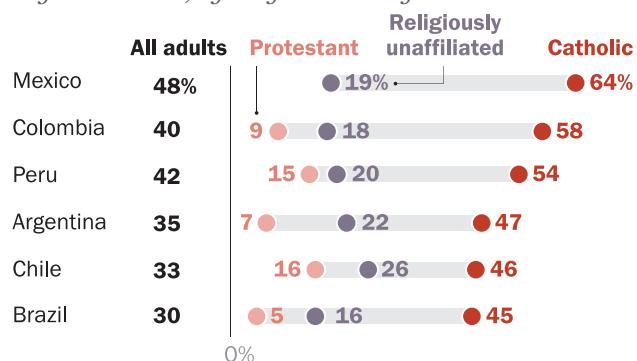
Lighting incense or candles

Among countries surveyed, lighting incense or candles is most common in Mexico, where around half of adults say they do this for spiritual or religious reasons.

Unlike with daily prayer and weekly service attendance, Protestants are much *less* likely than Catholics across the region to say they light candles for spiritual or religious reasons, and Protestants also are less likely than “nones” to follow this practice.

Relatively few Latin American Protestants light candles or incense for religious purposes

% in each country who say they light incense or candles for spiritual or religious reasons, by religious identity



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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In Brazil, for example, 45% of

Catholics light incense or candles for religious reasons, compared with 16% of “nones.” Meanwhile, only 5% of Protestants do this. Likewise, Argentine Catholics are more likely than “nones” to light candles or incense (47% vs. 22%), and both groups are more likely than Protestants in Argentina to do so (7%).

In Argentina, Chile and Mexico, women are more likely than men to light incense or candles for spiritual purposes. In the other countries, the gender differences are not statistically significant.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

Wearing religious symbols

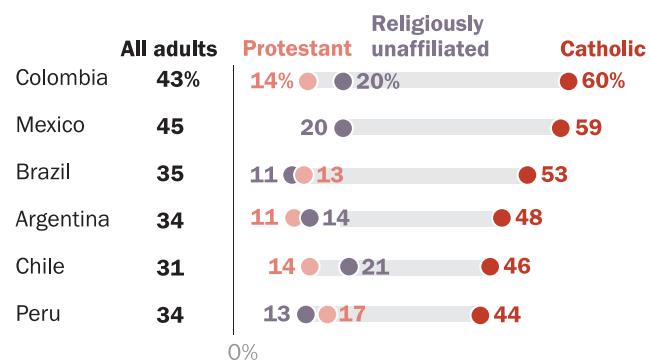
Mexican (45%) and Colombian (43%) adults are more likely than others in the region to say they wear – or carry around – religious items or symbols.

Catholics are much more likely than Protestants to wear or carry such items. But within most countries surveyed, roughly similar shares of Protestants and “nones” report doing this.

In Brazil, for example, about half of Catholics say they wear or carry religious symbols with them, compared with 13% of Protestants and 11% of “nones.”

Around 6 in 10 Catholics in Colombia and Mexico wear religious symbols

% in each country who say they wear or carry religious items or symbols with them, by religious identity



Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how this measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

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While parts of this report were guided by our consultations with the advisers, Pew Research Center is solely responsible for the interpretation and reporting of the data.

Methodology

About Pew Research Center's Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey

Pew Research Center's Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey was conducted in 36 countries via telephone, face-to-face and online interviews, under the direction of Gallup, Langer Research Associates, Social Research Centre and Verian. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted.

This report draws on nationally representative face-to-face surveys of 6,234 adults conducted from Jan. 22 to April 27, 2024, in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Here are more details about our [international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs](#).

Analysis

In addition to presenting findings for the general adult populations in these countries, we analyzed respondents' attitudes based on a number of religious and demographic traits, such as their religious identification, frequency of prayer, age, gender and educational attainment.

(Refer to the [detailed tables](#) for more information about how each measure varies by frequency of prayer and across demographic groups.)

Religious identification

In each country surveyed, respondents were asked about their current religious identification. We then analyzed religious groups with sufficiently large sample sizes to produce reliable estimates. There were not

Sample sizes and margins of error

	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Argentina	1,017	4.0 percentage points
Catholic	600	5.2 percentage points
Protestant	148	10.4 percentage points
Religiously unaffiliated	240	8.2 percentage points
Brazil	1,054	4.4 percentage points
Catholic	484	6.4 percentage points
Protestant	313	8.0 percentage points
Religiously unaffiliated	157	11.3 percentage points
Chile	1,020	4.5 percentage points
Catholic	495	6.5 percentage points
Protestant	192	10.4 percentage points
Religiously unaffiliated	309	8.2 percentage points
Colombia	1,051	4.3 percentage points
Catholic	654	5.4 percentage points
Protestant	178	10.4 percentage points
Religiously unaffiliated	195	10.0 percentage points
Mexico	1,042	4.4 percentage points
Catholic	715	5.3 percentage points
Protestant	--	--
Religiously unaffiliated	199	10.0 percentage points
Peru	1,050	4.3 percentage points
Catholic	707	5.2 percentage points
Protestant	184	10.2 percentage points
Religiously unaffiliated	124	12.5 percentage points

Note: Protestants in Mexico are not shown separately due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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enough Protestants in Mexico to analyze them separately. Refer to the table for the number of respondents in each religious group, and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence, in each of the six countries discussed in this report.

Pentecostals

We estimated the share of Pentecostal Protestants in this survey using two questions. We asked all Christians whether they describe themselves as Pentecostal, or not. We also asked all Protestants what kind of church they belong to, with one option being “a Pentecostal church, for example, Assemblies of God or the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.” If respondents who identified as Protestant said “yes” to the first question (they consider themselves Pentecostal), or they indicated they belong to a Pentecostal church in the second question – or both – they were categorized as Pentecostal. Refer to the report [topline](#) for full question and response option wording.

Educational attainment

To compare educational groups across countries, we standardized education levels based on the United Nations’ [International Standard Classification of Education](#) (ISCED).

Determining how the share of Catholics in Latin America has changed since 1900

Estimates for the share of the population in each country who were Catholic in 1900, 1970 and 2000 come from the [World Religion Database](#) (WRD) and include adjusted estimates for adults and children.

Estimates for 2013-14 come from Pew Research Center’s “[Religion in Latin America](#)” survey, which does not include children. Estimates for 2024 come from the Center’s Global Attitudes Survey (upon which this report is based) and do not include children.

We adjusted the WRD data to ensure that religious groups are categorized consistently across the century. The WRD includes a category of Christians with [double affiliation](#), “where Christians are counted more than once by two or more denominations.” This group was proportionally subtracted from the population of Catholics within each country.

To give an example, WRD estimates that there were 37,214,000 Argentines in 2000, with 33,996,000 who were Christian (including 31,570,000 who were Catholic and 946,000 who were double-affiliated). As such, Catholics were estimated to make up 92.9% of the entire *Christian*

population in Argentina, and we subtracted 92.9% of the double-affiliated Christians (i.e., 878,492 people) from the total Catholic estimate of 31,570,000, resulting in a new, adjusted estimate of 30,691,508 Catholics, which is 82% of the total population.

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