

Midwest is 'microcosm of American religion' Closely matches overall religious profile of U.S.: Closely matches overall religious profile of U.S.

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New England is heavily Catholic, the South is predominantly evangelical, the West Coast has the highest proportion of religiously unaffiliated folks. If you're a Midwesterner, you're living in the region that best reflects the religious diversity of the United States.

The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, released February 25, estimates the religious makeup of the country's 225 million adults, categorizing them in groups as large as evangelical Protestants (26.3 percent) and as small as Unitarians (0.3 percent).

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life study captures the depth and breadth of religious America—where 78.4 percent are Christian, 4.7 percent are members of other faiths and 16.1 percent are unaffiliated.

Pew researcher John Green called the Midwest a “microcosm of American religion” that closely matches the overall religious profile of the U.S. population's largest religious groups.

“In religious terms, the Midwest really . . . does reflect, of all the regions, the great diversity, at least in terms of affiliation,” said Green, who is also on the faculty of the University of Akron.

Stephen Prothero, who chairs the religion department at Boston University, said that the description fits. The Midwest may be known for Lutheranism, he said, “but the Lutherans don't dominate in the Midwest the way that the Catholics do in New

England or the Southern Baptists do in the Southeast.”

Other key findings of the study:

- Muslims are the most racially diverse faith group, including 37 percent who are white, 24 percent who are black, and 20 percent who are Asian.
- More than a third of married Americans—37 percent—are married to someone with a different religious affiliation (including a different Protestant faith). Hindus and Mormons are most likely to be married to someone of the same religion, while the majority of Buddhists and of people who are unaffiliated have married someone of a different religion.
- Researchers found that Jews outnumber Muslims, with Jews making up 1.7 percent of the adult population and Muslims 0.6 percent. The Mormon Church, which reports much higher membership figures for itself, also has 1.7 percent of the adult population, according to the survey. That would translate to 3.82 million adults who identify with Judaism and 3.82 million who identify with Mormonism.

Age is a variable factor among Protestants: while 62 percent of Americans 70 and older are Protestant, only 43 percent of Americans ages 18-29 are. -*Religion News Service*