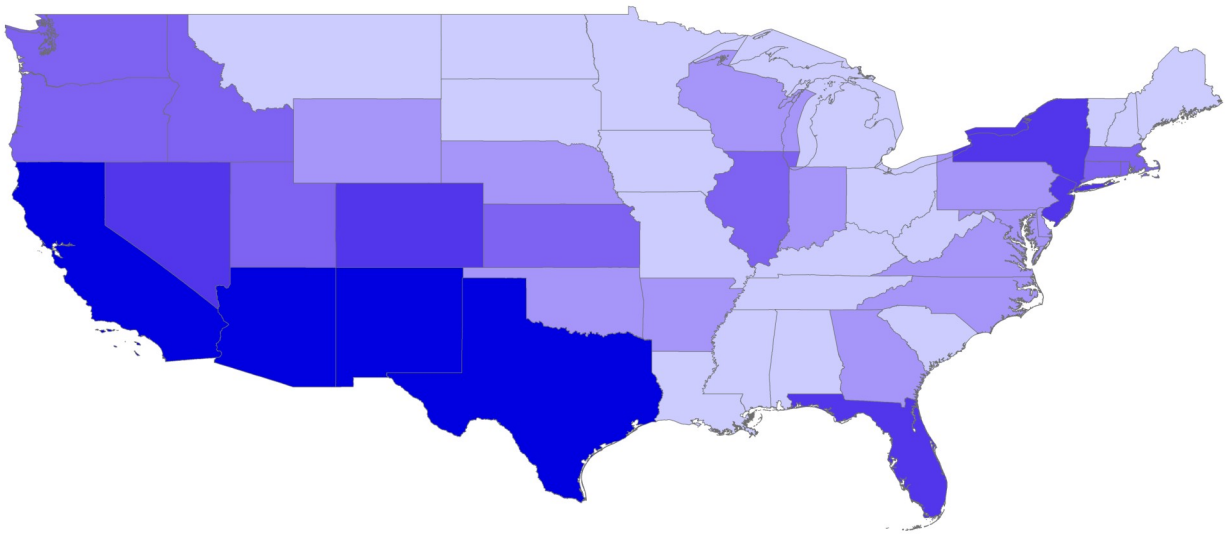


# **U.S. Latino Religious Identification 1990-2008: Growth, Diversity & Transformation**



## **A Report Based on the American Religious Identification Survey 2008**

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## Highlights

**The majority of the 31 million adult U.S. Latinos self-identified as Catholic (60%) in 2008 although the proportion is down when compared to 1990 (66%). (Figure 1)**

Whereas in 1990 Latino Catholics numbered 9.6 million and comprised 20% of all U.S. Catholics the 2008 estimate for Latino Catholics is over 18 million comprising 32% of all U.S. Catholics.

Over the period 1990-2008 without the infusion of 9 million adult Latinos the U.S. Catholic Church would have grown by only 2 million adults and shrunk as a share of the total U.S. population.

**The combined non-Catholic Christian traditions also lost market share from 1990-2008, falling from 25% to 22%, though they almost doubled their absolute numbers to 7 million adults. (Figure 1)**

Within this grouping there was realignment, with the non-denominational Christian Generic and Protestant Sect traditions gaining at the expense of the Mainline and Baptist traditions. (Figure 2)

**The fastest-growing religious traditions among U.S. Latinos are:**

The Nones (no religion) up from less than a million or 6% of the population in 1990 to nearly 4 million and 12% in 2008 (Figure 1) and

Protestant Sects (such as Jehovah's Witnesses), which grew from 335,000 and 2% to 1.2 million or 4% of all Latinos. (Figure 2)

**Americanization is leading to de-Catholicization and religious polarization. U.S.-born Latinos and those most proficient in English are less likely to self-identify as Catholic and more likely to identify either as None (no religion) or with conservative Christian traditions. (Figures 13,14,15)**

**Latino religious polarization may be influenced by a gender effect, as in the general U.S. population, with men moving toward no religion and women toward more conservative religious traditions and practices. (Figure 3)**

Two traditions at opposite poles of the religious spectrum exhibit the largest gender imbalance: the None population is heavily male (61%) while the Pentecostal is heavily female (58%).

**There are remarkable differences and imbalances in the marital status patterns by religious tradition and gender. (Figure 5)**

The percentage of unmarried persons co-habiting with a partner and so outside of civil or religious marriage varies from 15% among the Nones, to 11% among Catholics to 7% among non-Catholic Christians.

**There are imbalances in marital status between the sexes especially among Catholics, with large surpluses of Catholic never-married single men and of widowed and separated Catholic Latinas.**

Latinas are much more loyal to Catholic Church prohibitions against divorce and remarriage. The number of Catholic Latinas claiming to be separated outnumbers separated men more than 2:1. (Figure 5)

The differences in marital status among Latinos of different traditions also suggest that marriage and partnership across religious boundaries are a common occurrence. For example there are over 1.1 million married male Nones but fewer than 400,000 married female Nones.

**There are considerable age differences between adherents of the various religious traditions. The traditions with the largest proportion of young Latinos are Nones and the Protestant Sects; these two were also the fastest growing among Latinos since 1990. (Figure 4)**

**Social class differences are evident between religious traditions.**

The most educated group is the Nones (25% with a college degree); the least educated is the Protestant Sects (8% with a college degree). (Figure 9)

Christian Generic identifiers are the most suburbanized. (Figure 7)

**Latinos are transforming patterns of religious identification at the state level in different ways. (Figure 8)**

From 1990 to 2008 Latinos went from being 51% of all Catholics in California to 56%.

Latino Nones in California increased from 10% of all Californian Nones in 1990 to 24% in 2008.

In Texas the percentage of Latinos among all Catholics fell from 73% to 66% between 1990 and 2008 while Latino Nones rose from 15% to 28% of all Texans without a religious identification.

Latinos comprised 8% of all Texans in the Christian Generic tradition in 1990 but 20% in 2008.

Protestant Sects have gained ground in New York and Florida to become one-tenth of the Latino population in those states.

**Political party preference and voter registration shows variation by religious tradition. (Figures 11, 12)**

Latino Catholics and Nones are most likely to prefer the Democratic Party.

Republican Party preferences are more common among the non-Catholic Christian religious traditions.

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## Introduction

The religious composition of the U.S. population is fluid and ever changing. New groups arrive; old groups recede or transform. Over the past 18 years there are probably few phenomena that have changed America and American religion more than the growth of the Latino population. The adult Latino population grew from 8% to 14% of the national population. It has more than doubled from 14.6 million to 30.8 million adults to become the largest U.S. minority. This immense growth of over 16 million people has inevitably had a major impact on the national religious profile and trends. The U.S. Hispanic or Latino population is commonly and officially regarded as a collectivity because of its historical connection to the use of the Spanish language, Latin American nations and Roman Catholicism. Latinos are not biologically homogeneous but very diverse in terms of race and national origins and they include persons of American Indian, European, and African descent and admixtures.

The ARIS Latino Report is the third major report based on the findings of the American Religious Identification Survey, ARIS 2008, and the earlier surveys in the ARIS time series<sup>1</sup>. In this report we focus on three aspects of U.S. Latino religious identification – growth, diversity and transformation. First, we investigate the current demography and profile of Latino religious identification and how they have changed since 1990. The comparison of the patterns of Latino religious identification in 1990 and 2008 is based on a unique data set covering two very large representative national samples. Secondly, we analyze the differences among different religious groups of Latinos, according to national identity and origin and acculturation variables such as language use. The answers to questions regarding language preference and national origin were asked in English or Spanish to a subsample of 959 Latino adults in 2008. Finally, we discuss the impact of the changes in Latino religion on American society at large and for the main religious groups to which Latinos belong.

<sup>1</sup>For earlier publications on Latinos using ARIS data see:

Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, “Party Political Preferences of U.S. Hispanics: The Varying Impacts of Religion, Social Class and Demographic Factors.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 18 (2), 1995, pp. 336-347.

Ariela Keysar, Barry A. Kosmin and Egon Mayer, *Religious Identification among Hispanics in the United States*, The PARAL Study, RISC, Brooklyn College, New York, 2002.

## Methodological Note

The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2008 is a random digit dialed (RDD) survey of a nationally representative sample of 54,461 adults. Of those, 3,169 individuals who responded “Yes” to the question: Are you of Hispanic origin or background? For these 3,169 people, basic census-type socio-demographic information was collected (age, sex, etc.). A randomly selected, nationally representative subset, 959 respondents, was also asked an additional series of questions on national origin and language use. The subset is a nationally representative “silo” of Latinos. The 1990 data used in this report are drawn from the National Survey of Religious Identification, a nationally representative sample of 113,713 adults among whom 4,868 self-identified as Hispanic, which utilized the same RDD methodology.

The report does not use the ARIS 2001 Hispanic population data because it did not include Spanish language interviews which may have skewed the results on the religious profile during a period of heavy immigration. The decision to utilize data points 18 years apart should make the generational differences and the transformation wrought by a period of heavy immigration during the 1990s and early 2000s more easily visible. The authors also decided to adopt the more contemporary name Latino, rather than the term Hispanic, for identifying this population in the report. The sampling error for the full ARIS 2008 is +/- 0.3%. For the Hispanic sub-sample, the sampling error is +/- 1.7%. For further information on the ARIS series methodology see:

<http://www.trincoll.edu/Academics/AcademicResources/Values/ISSSC/archive.htm>

or Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *Religion in a Free Market: Religious and Non-Religious Americans*, Ithaca, NY, Paramount Market Publishing, 2006.

The data collection for the ARIS series was conducted by ICR - International Communications Research of Media, Pennsylvania.

# Part I: Growth

## National Trends in Latino Religious Identification 1990-2008

Latinos in the U.S. have maintained their Catholic majority and adherence to Christianity, yet significant changes have occurred in their religious composition between 1990 and 2008. Although the share of Catholics fell from 66% in 1990 to 60% in 2008, Latinos are still overwhelmingly Catholic. They doubled in numbers and gained over 9 million adults over 18 years, thus contributing significantly to helping Catholics in the U.S. maintain their dominance as the largest religious group.

**Figure 1**

**Religious Self-Identification of the U.S. Latino Adult Population 1990 & 2008**

Religion	1990 (N= 4,868)		2008 (N= 3,169)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<i>Catholic</i>	9,608,000	65.8	18,352,000	59.5
<i>Other Christians</i>	3,662,000	25.1	6,861,000	22.2
<b>Total Christians</b>	<b>13,270,000</b>	<b>90.9</b>	<b>25,213,000</b>	<b>81.7</b>
<b>Other Religions</b>	<b>272,000</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>427,000</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>None</b>	<b>932,000</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>3,811,000</b>	<b>12.4</b>
<b>Don't Know/Refused</b>	<b>124,000</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1,402,000</b>	<b>4.5</b>
<b>Total*</b>	<b>14,597,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>30,853,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Population Estimates based on U.S. Census numbers. Hispanic population in 1990 drawn from 1990 Census estimates. Hispanic population in 2008 drawn from *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2010* (table 6).

Given the rapid growth of the Latino population most religious traditions increased their absolute numbers. However, the proportion of Christians of all types declined by 10%, which is exactly in line with the decline in the overall U.S. Christian population – a trend reported earlier in the *ARIS 2008 Summary Report*. At the same time, as in the country generally, the challenge to Christianity among Latinos has not come from other world religions or new religious movements but from irreligion and a decline in self-identification with religion.

The growth in the number and percentage of Nones parallels national trends, with Nones increasing among Latinos from just over 900,000 (6%) in 1990 to almost 4 million (12%) in 2008. The estimated number of Latino adults who profess no religion in 2008 is four times the estimated number of 1990. Among Latinos who are included in the Nones category, the number of those who self-identify as atheist or agnostic increased eight-fold from 59,000 in 1990 to 463,000 in 2008. This change means that the number of self-identified Latino atheists and agnostics is larger than the total number of Latino identifiers with all non-Christian religions. In addition, while the proportion of Nones almost doubled, there was an even more significant growth in the percentage and numbers of Latinos refusing to answer the question *What is your religion, if any?* They increased from 124,000 to 1.4 million between 1990 and 2008.

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Despite the losses over time in market share by Catholicism, the ratio of Catholics to other Christians of just 2.5:1 was maintained. Both groups of Christians (Catholics and non-Catholics) lost ground. The widespread assumption that non-Catholic Christian traditions are gaining ground among U.S. Latinos is not supported. Obviously this ratio is affected by the preferences of new immigrants, who remain overwhelmingly Catholic. Other non-Christian religions, comprising a wide range of groups, also lost market share.

Whereas in 1990 non-Catholic Christians represented 25% of all Latinos, this percentage was reduced to 22% in 2008. More importantly, non-Catholic Latinos are a heterogeneous group, which has nonetheless changed its profile dramatically in terms of denominational identification since 1990.

Figure 2 shows shifts within the major non-Catholic Christian traditions (for taxonomy of the religious traditions see appendix A) among U.S. Latino adults between 1990 and 2008. While nearly half of this group consisted of members of more historical Protestant traditions such as Mainline and Baptist churches in 1990, by 2008 these two traditions represented less than 1-in-5 of non-Catholic Christian Latinos. The growth in Pentecostal numbers has merely kept up with population growth. In contrast, the groups with the largest proportional gains among non-Catholic Latino Christians were non-denominational Generic Christians and Protestant Sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Adventists. These two traditions now represent two-thirds of all non-Catholic Latino Christians.

**Figure 2**

**Profile of Non-Catholic Christians among U.S. Latino Adults 1990 & 2008**

Religious Tradition	1990 (N= 4,868)		2008 (N= 3,169)	
	Estimate	Percent of U.S. Latinos	Estimate	Percent of U.S. Latinos
Mainline Protestant	545,000	3.7	434,000	1.4
Baptist	1,077,000	7.4	879,000	2.9
Christian Generic	1,167,000	8.0	3,297,000	10.6
Pentecostal	427,000	2.9	955,000	3.1
Protestant Sects	335,000	2.3	1,186,000	3.8
Mormon/Latter Day Saints	111,000	0.8	110,000	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,662,000</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>6,861,000</b>	<b>22.2</b>



## Part II: Diversity

### Socio-demographic Patterns of Latino Religious Identification

#### A. GENDER

In order to understand the polarization of Latino religious identification it is necessary to look at the social and demographic characteristics of different religious groups and traditions.

Figure 3a.

Sex Ratios of Latinos by Selected Religious Traditions 2008

Religious Tradition	Male	Female	Total
Catholic	49	51	100%
Mainline Protestant	51	49	100%
Baptist	55	45	100%
Christian Generic	53	47	100%
Pentecostal	42	58	100%
Protestant Sects	44	56	100%
None	61	39	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 3a shows the pattern of gender differences among Latinos of different religious traditions. The Latino population has more men than women, a sign of its recent immigrant origin. Most religious traditions have balanced gender ratios that mirror the Latino national norm of 51% males. Only two religious groups, which lie interestingly at opposite ends of the theological spectrum, show a significant gender imbalance. Latino Nones have a male-to-female ratio similar to all American Nones, 61:39. At the same time, Pentecostals have a similar but inverse gender imbalance, with a 58:42 female-to-male ratio. The Protestant Sects tradition is heavily female, and as we will discuss later, it is also very young. This suggests that Latino religious polarization may have some gender factor, as in the general U.S. population, with men moving toward no-religion and women toward more conservative religious traditions and practices.

Figure 3b presents a different type of gender gap in religious identification among Latinos. It shows that the distribution of religious traditions among Latino males and females is similar except for two traditions. The proportion of Latino males who identify as Catholic is 5% lower than the proportion of females. In contrast, women are 5% less likely than men to self-identify with one of the None categories (agnostic, atheist, humanist, none or secular). As a result Latinas are more likely than Latinos to identify with a religion and to identify as Christians. Overall 78% of Latinos identify with a Christian tradition compared with 84% of Latinas.

Figure 3b.

Religious Profile of Male and Female Adult Latinos 2008

Religious Tradition	Male	Female	Total
Catholic	57	62	60
Mainline Protestant	1	1	1
Baptist	3	3	3
Christian Generic	11	10	11
Pentecostal	3	4	3
Protestant Sects	3	4	4
Other Religions	2	2	2
None	15	10	12
Don't Know/Refused	5	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## B. AGE

Figure 4a shows apparent different age profiles of identifiers with the largest religious traditions among Latinos. About one-third of all Latino adults are between the ages of 18 and 29 years while about three-quarters are under the age of 55 years. In terms of mean age the Protestant Sects are by far the youngest group. On the other hand the Baptists and Mainline Protestants have the oldest age profiles. These two traditions are the only ones to lose population among Latinos in the past 18 years. They seem to have retained their older adherents but not attracted many new and younger ones.

Figure 4a.

Age Distribution and Mean Age of Adult Latinos in Selected Religious Traditions 2008

Religious Tradition	Percent 18-29 Years	Percent 30-54 Years	Percent 55 years and older	Total	Mean Age in Years
Catholic	33	48	19	100%	41
Mainline Protestant	10	52	38	100%	50
Baptist	31	43	26	100%	49
Christian Generic	34	54	12	100%	39
Pentecostal	25	63	12	100%	46
Protestant Sects	44	50	6	100%	36
None	43	44	13	100%	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>41</b>

Figure 4b.

## Religious Profile of Adult Latinos by Age 2008

Religious Tradition	Percent 18-29 Years	Percent 30-54 Years	Percent 55 years and older	Total
Catholic	59	59	64	60
Mainline Protestant	<1	2	3	1
Baptist	2	2	4	3
Christian Generic	11	12	8	11
Pentecostal	2	4	2	3
Protestant Sects	5	4	1	4
Other Religions	1	1	3	1
None	15	11	9	12
Don't Know/Refused	4	5	6	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 4b shows the distribution of religious traditions across generations. This figure provides a clearer picture of the process of religious polarization we refer to. The percentage of self-identified Latino Catholics is 5% lower among Latinos under 30 years and those between 30 and 54 years of age than among Latinos older than 55 years.

Latinos 55 years of age and older tend to identify with more historical Christian traditions. Seventy-one percent of Latinos in this age group self-identify as Catholic, Mainline Protestant, or Baptist. In contrast, the percentage of these traditions among young adult Latinos (under 30 years) is just 63%. Younger Latinos are more likely to have no religious identification (15%) compared with older Latinos (9%).

## C. MARITAL STATUS

Figure 5 shows the marital status of U.S. adult Latinos by selected religious traditions and by sex. Most traditions have a married majority. The notable exception is the Nones with only 40% married. The difference is probably attributable to age since Nones tend to be younger than most other traditions.

There are major imbalances in marital status between the sexes among Latinos. Obviously recent immigration skewed towards young single males contributes to these marital status discrepancies. For instance there are more than 1.4 million unmarried single men without a partner than unmarried single women. There are also 600,000 more currently married men than married women. In contrast there are 800,000 more widowed Latinas than widowed men; nearly half a million more separated women than men, and 300,000 more currently divorced women than men.

The percentage of unmarried persons co-habiting with a partner and so outside of civil or religious marriage varies from 15% among the Nones, to 11% among Catholics to 7% among non-Catholic Christians.

The remarkable gender imbalances in marital status patterns are apparent in particular religious traditions. For instance, the entire widowed gap - the 800,000 surplus widows - is composed of Catholics. The sex

Figure 5.

## Marital Status of U.S. Latinos by Sex by Selected Religious Traditions 2008

Religious Tradition and Gender	Single Never Married	Single Living with a Partner	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Total*
<b>Catholic</b>	<b>4,004 (22%)</b>	<b>2,015 (11%)</b>	<b>8,564 (48%)</b>	<b>929 (5%)</b>	<b>1,304 (8%)</b>	<b>1,128 (6%)</b>	<b>17,944 (100%)</b>
Male	2,313 (27%)	955 (11%)	4,337 (50%)	269 (3%)	614 (7%)	184 (2%)	8,672 (100)
Female	1,691 (18%)	1,061 (11%)	4,227 (46%)	660 (7%)	689 (8%)	944 (10%)	9,272 (100%)
<b>Other Christians</b>	<b>1,743 (26%)</b>	<b>477 (7%)</b>	<b>3,593 (53%)</b>	<b>198 (3%)</b>	<b>428 (6%)</b>	<b>336 (5%)</b>	<b>6,775 (100%)</b>
Male	1,820 (32%)	277 (8%)	1,683 (49%)	71 (2%)	120 (3%)	190 (6%)	3,423 (100%)
Female	661 (20%)	200 (6%)	1,908 (57%)	127 (4%)	308 (9%)	146 (4%)	3,350 (100%)
<b>None</b>	<b>1,253 (34%)</b>	<b>556 (15%)</b>	<b>1,494 (40%)</b>	<b>108 (3%)</b>	<b>243 (6%)</b>	<b>64 (2%)</b>	<b>3,718 (100%)</b>
Male	766 (33%)	313 (13%)	1,115 (48%)	16 (1%)	87 (4%)	15 (1%)	2,462 (100)
Female	487 (35%)	243 (17%)	379 (27%)	92 (7%)	155 (11%)	49 (3%)	1,405 (100%)
<b>All U.S. Latinos**</b>	<b>7,275 (25%)</b>	<b>3,158 (11%)</b>	<b>14,115 (48%)</b>	<b>1,295 (4%)</b>	<b>2,135 (7%)</b>	<b>1,606 (5%)</b>	<b>29,581 (100)</b>
Male	4,354 (29%)	1,620 (11%)	7,373 (49%)	414 (3%)	902 (6%)	393 (2%)	15,056 (100%)
Female	2,923 (20%)	1,539 (11%)	6,737 (46%)	881 (6%)	1,230 (9%)	1,214 (8%)	14,524 (100%)

Numbers are in thousands

\* Excludes "refused."

\*\* Estimates drawn from Table 56 of the 2010 Statistical Abstract of the United States.

differences in the number of Latinos claiming to be separated are overwhelmingly (2-to-1 ratio) due to Catholic women. This suggests that Latinas are much more loyal to Catholic Church prohibitions against remarriage than Latino men. Interestingly the numbers and proportions of the married and those currently divorced among Catholics are roughly similar for both sexes.

Another statistic that is worth noting is the wide gap in marital status patterns between Latino Nones of different sexes. The Nones account for the entire male imbalance of 700,000 in married people so presumably many men who profess no religion are married to women who identify with a religion. These differences in marital status among Latinos of different traditions also suggest that marriage and partnerships across religious boundaries are a common occurrence.

**D. GEOGRAPHY****Figure 6.**

Percentage Distribution of Selected Religious Traditions among U.S. Latinos by Census Region in 1990 and 2008

	Year	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
<b>Catholic</b>	1990	18	8	32	42
	2008	15	9	34	42
<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	1990	15	21	39	25
	2008	13	11	38	38
<b>Baptist</b>	1990	9	16	60	15
	2008	20	7	55	18
<b>Christian Generic</b>	1990	12	12	22	54
	2008	12	6	43	39
<b>Pentecostal</b>	1990	27	9	36	28
	2008	22	26	26	26
<b>Protestant Sects</b>	1990	11	8	38	43
	2008	16	3	45	36
<b>None</b>	1990	19	12	26	43
	2008	13	7	30	50
<b>DK/Refused</b>	1990	17	4	30	49
	2008	8	17	43	32
<b>Total</b>	1990	17%	10%	33%	40%
	2008	14%	9%	36%	41%

In 1990 the majority of Latinos lived in the South and West. Although the population shifted more towards the South in 2008, the overall geographic composition of U.S. Latinos did not shift in a dramatic way. The distribution of particular religious traditions did shift. The most striking difference between 1990 and 2008 is the shift of Christian Generic identifiers to the South. This tradition was once overrepresented in the West, but now it is overrepresented in the South. The Christian Generic tradition almost doubled its percentage since 1990 among Latinos in the South, while remaining stable or decreasing in other regions. The other tradition with large numerical gains, the Nones, increased in all regions. Half of all Latino Nones live today in the Western U.S., compared with 43% in 1990. The Pentecostals are now the most evenly distributed tradition by region. Protestant Sects have become more Northeastern and Southern since 1990.

Major changes can be observed among the Latino population when the data is analyzed in terms of type of residential location or degree of urbanization. In 1990 over three-fourths of Latinos lived in urban areas while the other one-fourth split evenly between rural and suburban areas. By 2008 1-in-5 Latinos lived in suburban areas while the percentage of urban-dwelling Latinos decreased to 70% and the percentage of rural Latinos to 10%.

Figure 7.

Residential Location of Selected Religious Traditions among U.S. Latinos in 1990 and 2008

	Year	Percentage Urban	Percentage Suburban	Percentage Rural
<b>Catholic</b>	1990	79	12	9
	2008	71	18	11
<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	1990	61	14	25
	2008	54	32	14
<b>Baptist</b>	1990	54	18	28
	2008	82	10	8
<b>Christian Generic</b>	1990	79	8	13
	2008	48	44	8
<b>Pentecostal</b>	1990	79	11	10
	2008	77	13	10
<b>Protestant Sects</b>	1990	65	16	19
	2008	79	13	8
<b>None</b>	1990	78	12	10
	2008	75	22	3
<b>DK/Refused</b>	1990	87	9	4
	2008	71	15	14
<b>Total</b>	1990	76%	12%	12%
	2008	70%	20%	10%

Figure 7 shows the urban, suburban and rural distribution of U.S. Latinos by religious traditions. As we pointed out earlier, the percentage of Catholics among U.S. Latinos is on the decline and the proportion of Catholics declined in urban areas similar to the general Latino population. In contrast, Catholics are the only tradition that increased in rural areas, even when the overall percentage of Latinos residing in rural areas declined over the same period of time. We calculate that about 14% of “new Catholics” come from rural areas and that over 90% of new rural Latinos are Catholic, suggesting that the increase in these Latinos is heavily influenced by recent immigration.

Since 1990 the proportion of U.S. Latinos living in suburban areas has almost doubled from 12% to 20%. In real numbers these percentages translate from almost 1.8 million Latinos in 1990 to over 6 million in 2008. No tradition experienced a larger increase than Christian Generic groups such as non-denominational Christians. We have already mentioned the large increase of this tradition among U.S. Latinos, but the growth of Latino Christians is a mostly suburban phenomenon. In 1990 just 8% of Latino Christian Generics (86,000 adults) lived in suburban areas, representing just 5% of all suburban Latino residents. In ARIS 2008 “Christians” account for 22% of all Latino suburban residents or about 1.5 million adults, thus becoming the second-largest tradition among suburban Latinos after Catholics.

Latino Christian Generic tradition accounts for 29% of the growth in suburban Latinos between 1990 and 2008. This suggests that there is a class element in the increase of the Christian Generic tradition among Latinos, which we will explore later in our discussion of education and income.

Among urban Latino residents only two traditions experienced increases in self-reported identification among U.S. Latinos: Nones and Protestant Sects. Both traditions doubled their share of the urban Latino religious market. In real numbers Latinos residing in urban areas increased from 11.1 million to almost 21.5 million. Of the 10.3 million-person increase in urban U.S. Latino residents, 20% (2.1 million) are new Nones and 7% (713,000) self-identify with Protestant Sects (Not shown in the table).

To better understand the geographical diversification of U.S. Latino religious identification, we present data on four large states with the highest number of Latinos: California, Florida, New York and Texas. These four states account for 64% or almost two-thirds of Latinos in both 1990 and 2008. Their total number of Latino adults doubled from just over 10.4 million to almost 20 million people.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of religious traditions among Latinos in these four states. The proportion of Catholics among Latinos declined in all four states, except for California, by over 10%. However, interesting differences arise when comparing how the rest of the religious traditions fared in these states.

In California the religious distribution among Latinos did not change drastically. In fact, losses among Catholics correspond almost exactly to gains among Nones. These were the only two traditions that changed in any significant way among Latinos in the state. Overall, it seems that California Latinos are secularizing as those with no religious identification (Nones 14%; Don't Knows and Refusals 3%) now constitute 17%, compared to 8% in 1990. The growth of Latino Nones in California corresponds to the growth of the segment as a whole in the state, which doubled between 1990 and 2008. Moreover, in 1990 the number of adult Latino Nones was estimated at 335,000. Yet, their number rose dramatically to about 1.2 million (over 3.5 times) in 2008.

Florida experienced considerable change across all religious traditions. The share of Latino Catholics declined 11% while the Christian Generic and Protestant Sect traditions increased their shares the most. Christians doubled their share of the Florida Latino religious market from 5% in 1990 to 10% in 2008. Protestant Sects fared even better, proportionally, by increasing their share among Latinos from 2% in 1990 to 10% in 2008. Nones increased their share of the Latino religious market in Florida to levels similar to the Nones population in the state generally.

Interestingly, New York is the only state where Nones appear to have lost market share among Latinos. As in the case of Florida, Protestant Sects seem to have experienced the largest gains in market share among Latinos. Overall, Protestant Sects increased from 1% to 9% of all New York Latinos. This change represents 26% of the growth among Latinos between 1990 and 2008. In real numbers, a total of 200,000 additional Latinos belong to Protestant Sects. In comparison, Latino Catholics increased by 300,000 and the Christian Generic tradition by 150,000. In 1990 Latinos represented about 8% of Sectarian Protestants in New York. The Latino share of the Protestant Sects tradition in New York increased to 40% in 2008, meaning that Latinos account for 65% of new Sectarian Protestants in New York.

In Texas, Catholics lost ground proportionately with most of the gains as in Florida going to the Christian Generic tradition and None category. The Baptist and mainline Christians also lost market share. The scale of the changes is notable. The number of Christian Generic identifiers, most of whom are associated with Evangelicalism and mega churches, increased four-fold between 1990 and 2008 while the Latino Nones grew six-fold to almost 600,000.

Figure 8.

U.S. Latinos in California, Florida, New York, Texas  
in 1990 and 2008 by Selected Religious Traditions

	Year	California	Florida	New York	Texas
<b>Catholic</b>	1990	70	66	72	76
	2008	64	55	61	64
<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	1990	1	4	3	3
	2008	1	2	1	2
<b>Baptist</b>	1990	2	8	3	7
	2008	1	2	3	5
<b>Christian Generic</b>	1990	12	5	5	4
	2008	10	10	10	8
<b>Pentecostal</b>	1990	2	1	5	3
	2008	2	3	3	2
<b>Protestant Sects</b>	1990	2	2	1	3
	2008	3	10	9	4
<b>None</b>	1990	7	8	7	3
	2008	14	13	4	10
<b>DK/Refused</b>	1990	1	2	1	0
	2008	3	5	4	5
<b>Total Population*</b>	1990	<b>4,955,000</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>1,181,000</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>1,538,000</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>2,720,000</b> <b>(100%)</b>
	2008	<b>8,765,000</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>2,983,000</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>2,306,000</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>5,755,000</b> <b>(100%)</b>

\* Population Estimates based on U.S. Census numbers. Hispanic population in 1990 drawn from 1990 Census estimates . Hispanic population in 2008 drawn from *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2010* (table 19).

## E. EDUCATION

Figure 9 explores the level of educational attainment among Latino adherents of the selected traditions in 2008. It shows wide differences among Latinos 25 years of age and older. Whereas more than one in three of Mainline Protestants and one in four Nones are college graduates only one in twelve of the Protestant Sects identifiers have attained this level of education. The Catholics have a similar proportion of the less educated, similar to the members of Protestant Sects, but a higher proportion of college graduates.

The variation in educational characteristics among the “conservative” traditions - the Christian Generics, Pentecostals and Protestant Sects - is noteworthy. While Pentecostals have the highest rate of people with at least some college education (62%), they have low rates of college completion (11%). Christian Generic identifiers for their part are in line with the educational attainment profile for the general Latino population.



Figure 9.

## Educational Attainment of Latinos Aged over 25 Years by Selected Religious Traditions 2008

Religious Tradition	High School Graduate or Less	Some College, No Degree	College Graduate and Higher	Total
Catholic	65	21	14	100%
Mainline Protestant	45	17	38	100%
Baptist	62	23	15	100%
Christian Generic	60	23	17	100%
Pentecostal	48	51	11	100%
Protestant Sects	64	28	8	100%
None	52	23	25	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>

Finally, the Protestant Sects not only have the lowest college graduation rates of any group but their college graduation rate is only half the rate of the total Latino population. These differences suggest that there is a class as well as age and gender elements at work in forming religious differences among U.S. Latino adults.

## F. HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Figure 10.

## Annual Household Income of Latinos Aged over 25 Years by Selected Religious Traditions 2008

Religious Tradition	Under \$50,000	Over \$50,000	Total
Catholic	64	36	100%
Mainline Protestant	37	63	100%
Baptist	56	43	100%
Christian Generic	51	49	100%
Pentecostal	46	54	100%
Protestant Sects	70	30	100%
None	59	41	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100%</b>

In terms of household income, the pattern of wide disparities by religious identification persists. Figure 10 shows that 61% of Latinos 25 years and older reported an annual household income in 2008 of under \$50,000 and 39% an income of over \$50,000 a year. Some of these disparities can be explained by geography both in terms of region and urban-rural differences. They involve cost of living factors which can both explain and offset income inequalities. Not surprisingly given their high average age and education Mainline Protestant Latinos report the highest levels of income with 63% having over \$50,000 a year. Surprisingly, Pentecostals are the second-highest income group among the religious traditions despite being heavily female and having lower levels of college graduation. This might be explained by the fact that

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Pentecostals are also the second-oldest tradition in terms of age composition and located more in the Northeast and less in the South. The Nones, who are younger, but also heavily male and better educated are about average in terms of household income. Meanwhile, adherents of Protestant Sects, who are heavily female, with low levels education and relatively young have the lowest income levels with 70% reporting an annual household income of under \$50,000.

### G. POLITICS AND VOTING

Between 1990 and 2008 the salience of religion grew in U.S. politics and elections as a result of conflict over “culture war” issues with religious connotations. At the same time the Latino population growth made this ethnic group of rising importance in national and local electoral politics. Thus the relationship between Latino religion and political party preferences is of significance.

Between 1990 and 2008 Republican preference increased by 138,000 Latinos while 4.7 million more Latinos preferred the Democratic Party. The changes in political party preference among Latinos between 1990 and 2008 diverge somewhat from the general population. Although Republican Party preference declined between 1990 and 2008 among American adults, among Latinos the decline is steeper as the percentage of Republicans among Latino adults was cut in half from 24% to 12%.

However, contrary to the general population in which Democratic Party preference remained stable between 1990 and 2008, Latino Democratic Party preference also declined from 41 to 35 percent. Interestingly the largest increase was not among Independents, who remained constant, but among Don't Knows and Refusals. This might be explained by a large influx of immigrants who are not able to participate in the electoral process and for whom partisan preferences are not a vital decision.

Exploring the partisan preferences by religious traditions yield some surprising results. The most Democratic-leaning major religious tradition among Latinos is the Nones. Forty-one percent of Nones report a preference for the Democratic Party, compared to only 8% preference for the Republican Party. Compared to the general None population, Latinos are significantly less likely to identify themselves as Independents (30:41%). After Catholics, Nones comprise the largest percentage of self-identified Democrats among Latinos. Catholics represent 63% of all Latino Democratic Party identifiers. Nones account for 15% of all Democrats, which is up from 5% in 1990. The 15% of Nones among Latino Democrats is almost similar to the 17% of Democrats provided by all the non-Catholic Christians combined.

Among the 12% of Latinos who prefer the Republican Party, those who identify with the Christian Generic tradition account for 21% in 2008 of all Latino Republicans compared to 11% in 1990. These patterns even after controlling for indicators such as education, income and urbanization suggest that Latinos who prefer the Republican Party tend to be from the most conservative religious traditions. Overall, non-Catholic Christians comprise 40% of all Latinos who prefer the Republican Party.

Another political question asked in ARIS 2008 was whether or not the respondents were registered to vote. Figure 12 shows the differences in self-reported voting registration among Latinos by selected religious traditions. About half of all Latinos self-report being registered to vote. There are large differences between Latinos of different religious traditions. The two largest religious traditions among Latinos, Catholics and Nones, have similar levels of voting registration. This may be explained by the social characteristics of the groups. Many U.S. Latino Catholics are immigrants who are probably not eligible to vote in the United States. The None population tends to be younger (see Figure 4), and particularly concentrated in the age cohort 18-30 years, which has low levels of political participation.

Figure 11.

Political Party Preference of U.S. Latinos by Selected Religious Traditions in 1990 and 2008

	Year	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other*
Catholic	1990	2,182,000 (23%)	4,168,000 (43%)	2,577,000 (27%)	682,000 (7%)
	2008	1,719,000 (9%)	6,757,000 (37%)	5,000,000 (27%)	4,875,000 (27%)
Mainline Protestant	1990	159,000 (29%)	248,000 (46%)	111,000 (20%)	25,000 (5%)
	2008	142,000 (33%)	100,000 (23%)	126,000 (29%)	66,000 (5%)
Baptist	1990	293,000 (27%)	500,000 (46%)	238,000 (22%)	46,000 (5%)
	2008	283,000 (32%)	422,000 (48%)	151,000 (17%)	23,000 (3%)
Christian Generic	1990	383,000 (33%)	374,000 (32%)	331,000 (28%)	78,000 (7%)
	2008	755,000 (23%)	708,000 (22%)	1,189,000 (36%)	647,000 (19%)
Pentecostal	1990	144,000 (34%)	178,000 (42%)	82,000 (19%)	22,000 (5%)
	2008	227,000 (24%)	340,000 (36%)	208,000 (22%)	180,000 (18%)
Protestant Sects	1990	42,000 (13%)	43,000 (13%)	102,000 (31%)	147,000 (43%)
	2008	64,000 (5%)	264,000 (22%)	412,000 (35%)	445,000 (38%)
None	1990	145,000 (16%)	295,000 (32%)	373,000 (40%)	118,000 (12%)
	2008	308,000 (8%)	1,577,000 (41%)	1,125,000 (30%)	800,000 (21%)
Total	1990	3,466,000 (24%)	5,958,000 (41%)	3,970,000 (27%)	1,202,000 (8%)
	2008	3,604,000 (12%)	10,647,000 (35%)	8,712,000 (28%)	7,490,000 (25%)

\* Includes "Other," "Don't Know," and "Refused"

**Figure 12.**

Percentage of Latinos who Report being Registered to Vote by Selected Religious Tradition 2008

Religious Tradition	Registered	Not Registered	Total
Catholic	47	53	100%
Mainline Protestant	77	23	100%
Baptist	76	24	100%
Christian Generic	55	45	100%
Pentecostal	77	23	100%
Protestant Sects	34	66	100%
None	49	51	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>

Age and income patterns appear to account for why Baptists, Mainline Protestants and Pentecostals have high levels of voter registration of about 77%. These groups have older age profiles and the highest levels of household income among the Latino religious traditions. Economic factors (household income and urbanization) also seem to explain the above-average levels of self-reported voting registration among the Christian Generic tradition. In addition the Pentecostals have a high proportion of Puerto Ricans (see below) who are native-born U.S. citizens and therefore more likely to be registered voters.

Finally, voter registration among Latino Sectarian Protestants is the lowest among all the religious traditions. The low levels of voter registration in this religious tradition may be related to three factors. First, along with Nones, Sectarian Protestants have the youngest population among Latinos. Since younger people tend to have lower levels of voting registration than older individuals, the youth of Latinos in this tradition may be an important factor lowering the voter registration rate of Sectarian Protestants. Second, Sectarian Protestants also have the lowest levels of household income. Income is another determinant of voter registration, and those individuals with higher levels of income tend to have, on average, higher levels of voter registration. Finally, the exclusionary aspect of many Protestant Sects encourages people to withdraw from participation in worldly affairs. This may be another reason why voter registration levels are so low among Latinos in this tradition. An example of such a group is the Jehovah's Witnesses whose theology discourages participation in political affairs. This denomination accounts for half of all Latino Sectarian Protestants (estimated at 600,000 adults).

## H. NATIVITY STATUS

This section explores the nationality and language use of U.S. Latinos by religious tradition. The data used in this section come from a subsample of nearly one thousand Latino respondents to the survey who were asked additional questions about national origin, country of birth and use of the Spanish and English languages.

Figure 13 shows the place of birth of U.S. Latinos. About 54% of Latino adults were born outside the United States. Among the 46% of native-born Latinos 7% were born in Puerto Rico, and are U.S. citizens by birth, while the other 39% were born in the mainland U.S. In this table we have excluded the Mainline Protestant tradition because of their small sample size.

At the beginning of this report we discussed the role of Latinos in the stability of Catholicism in the

Figure 13.

## Nativity Status of U.S. Latinos by Selected Religious Traditions 2008

Religious Tradition	Percent Born in the United States	Percent Born In Puerto Rico	Percent Born Abroad	Total
Catholic	34	5	61	100%
Baptist	63	0	37	100%
Christian Generic	41	8	51	100%
Pentecostal	46	30	24	100%
Protestant Sects	45	8	47	100%
None	46	7	47	100%
Don't Know/Refused	47	4	49	100%
<b>Total (N=959)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

United States between 1990 and 2008. We suggested that this stability was partly due to Latino immigration, which boosted the proportion of Catholics among the general U.S. adult population. Figure 13 lends evidence to this suggestion, showing that the majority (over 60%) of adult U.S. Latino Catholics were born outside the United States. In contrast, only less than 1 in 4 of Pentecostal Latinos are immigrants.

Figure 14.

## Religious Identification of U.S. Latinos by Nativity and Generation 2008

Religious Tradition	Born in the United States		Born in Puerto Rico or Abroad	
	Before 1990	After 1990	Before 1990	After 1990
Catholic	52	46	59	66
Baptist	6	4	4	1
Christian Generic	12	12	13	10
Pentecostal	5	3	4	3
Protestant Sects	1	10	3	4
None	12	18	9	12
Other Religious Traditions	7	0	2	2
Don't Know/Refused	5	7	6	2
<b>Total (N=959)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 14 illustrates how generational and nativity differences have changed the U.S. Latino religious scene. The figure is divided into two major populations: Latinos born in the mainland U.S. and those born in Puerto Rico and abroad. These two major groups are subdivided into two additional groups. People born in the mainland U.S. are divided between those coming of age before or after 1990. People born abroad and in Puerto Rico are divided between those arriving before or after 1990. These divisions illustrate the generational differences between the two major populations.

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The percentages in Figure 14 provide again evidence for our suggestion that Catholic identification in the U.S. has benefitted from recent Latino immigration. The proportion of Catholics among native-born U.S. Latinos is lower among those who came of age after 1990. And, among Latinos born abroad or in Puerto Rico the proportion of those who arrived after 1990 among Catholics Latinos is higher than those who arrived before 1990.

What Figure 14 also shows is that the Nones is the only group that has experienced growth among U.S. Latinos among both post-1990 generation groups. Among the native-born, Latino Nones increased from 12% to 18%. Nones also increased among U.S. Latinos born abroad from 9% to 12%.

Earlier on we mentioned that Latinos were exhibiting some degree of religious polarization because the religious traditions experiencing growth (Nones and Sectarian Protestants) are at opposite sides of the theological spectrum. What Figure 14 shows is that these two traditions have experienced most of their gains among U.S. Latinos who were born after 1990. Over one-third (36%) of Sectarian Protestants are native-born Latinos born between 1972 and 1990. In comparison, one-quarter of Latino Nones were born in the United States between 1972 and 1990. No other groups have such an overrepresentation of U.S.-born young Latinos. By contrast, just 17% of people in the Christian Generic tradition are U.S.-born young Latinos. Among Catholics the percentage of U.S.-born young Latinos is 13%.

## I. LANGUAGE USE

Figure 15.

Spoken Language Ability by Religious Traditions 2008

Religious Tradition	English Speakers	Bilingual	Spanish Speakers	Other Language Speakers	All Latinos
Catholic	32	59	66	71	58
Baptist	15	2	2	0	3
Christian Generic	19	11	10	8	11
Pentecostal	3	5	4	0	3
Protestant Sects	4	6	4	0	4
None	22	13	10	11	12
Other Religious Traditions	3	2	2	5	4
Don't Know/Refused	2	2	2	5	5
<b>Total (N=959)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100</b>

To explore how Americanization affects Latino religious identification we divided U.S. Latinos into four linguistic groups. These groups are those who reported that they speak mostly English, those who consider themselves bilingual, those who speak mostly Spanish, and those who speak other (Native American) languages. These categories are the result of the combination of the responses to two questions about understanding and speaking English and Spanish: “*Would you say you can carry on a conversation in [Spanish/English], both understanding and speaking-- very well, pretty well, just a little, or not at all?*” We created a combined variable in which those who reported that they spoke English “very well” or “pretty well” and Spanish “just a little” or “not at all” were classified as “English Speakers.” Those who reported that they spoke both

English and Spanish “very well” or “pretty well” were classified as “bilingual.” People who responded that they spoke Spanish “very well” or “pretty well” and spoke English “just a little” or “not at all” were classified as “Spanish Speakers.” Finally, those who reported speaking both languages “just a little” or “not at all” were classified as speaking “other languages.”

Figure 15 shows ability to speak English and Spanish by religious tradition. The table’s organization follows what we consider a pattern of assimilation. The differential trend towards linguistic assimilation by religious tradition is evident among U.S. Latinos.

While among all Latinos, Catholics represent a clear majority of this subsample, 58%, among English-speaking U.S. Latinos, Catholics represent just a plurality of 32%. English-speaking U.S. Latinos, are religious pluralists with four religious traditions claiming at least a 15% share of the religious sub-market: Catholics (32%), Nones (22%), Christian Generics (19%), and Baptists (15%). These percentages change as the usage of foreign languages (mainly Spanish) increases.

Catholicism is the dominant tradition among the three other linguistic categories. Interestingly, the top three religious traditions among U.S. Latinos are the same across linguistic groups. This suggests that Americanization, roughly measured here by English language proficiency, leads to both secularization and conservative Christianization.

The final part of this report focuses on how the changes in religious identification among U.S. Latinos are transforming American religion as a whole. We pay special attention to how different religious traditions have fared since 1990 thanks to the growth of U.S. Latino population.



## Part III: Transforming American Religion

At the same time that Latino religious identification is transforming from within, Latinos are also transforming American religion. This transformation is occurring in several ways.

As we previously mentioned in the introduction to this report, American Catholicism has benefited from the growth in the Latino population. While Catholic self-identification remained stable between 1990 and 2008 in the *ARIS 2008 Summary Report* we argued that this stability in the national Catholic percentage was the result of the increase in Latino Catholics through both immigration and natural growth. Two of the pieces of evidence in the *ARIS 2008 Summary Report* were the decline of Catholic self-identification in the Northeast, particularly in New England, and the increase in Catholic self-identification in the South and West regions.

In 1990 Latinos were over-represented, i.e. exceeded their percentage of the U.S. national population, only among Catholics. However by 2008 this was true also for the Protestant Sects. Latinos were close to “normal” for both proportions of Pentecostals and Nones and in their rate of refusals. Latinos are also a growing segment of the fast increasing Christian Generic tradition.

**Figure 16.**

**Latinos as a Percentage of Selected Religious Traditions by Census Division 2008**

Census Division	Catholic	Christian Generic	None	U.S. Latino Adults
New England	13	6	5	8
Middle Atlantic	20	9	9	12
East North Central	13	3	4	6
West North Central	16	3	3	5
South Atlantic	31	10	9	10
East South Central	7	6	1	2
West South Central	53	20	21	24
Mountain	39	10	14	17
Pacific	56	16	21	28
<b>USA Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>

Of course the changing proportion that is Latino in any group is also affected by trends among the rest of the population. The most significant finding from both a statistical and a religious perspective are the Catholic statistics in Figure 16. One of the results highlighted in the *ARIS 2008 Summary Report* was the decline of Catholicism in the Northeast United States while at the same time its growth in new enclaves in the South and Southwest. The report hinted at a wave of Latino growth as the main reason for this shift, as well as a decline in Catholicism among white ethnics in the Northeast who are trending towards the No Religion category. The findings in Figure 16 confirm some of the speculation. Latinos now make up almost one-third of the U.S. Catholic Church up from 20% in 1990.

The proportion of Catholics who are Latino varies among the Census divisions from 7% in the East South



Central to 56% in the Pacific. Though Latinos are overrepresented among Catholics in all divisions, in the Northeast (New England and the Middle Atlantic) their share is below expected levels.

An unexpected finding of this report is that Latinos amount to 10% of the fast-growing Christian Generic tradition. Latinos have a particularly strong presence among the ranks of this tradition in the South Atlantic and West South Central divisions.

Nones, as we have said, have grown nationally and among the Latino population. Interestingly, Latino Nones are a significant presence among Nones in the same areas where Latino Catholicism is strong.

Finally, the South Atlantic division stands out as the division where the Latino proportions within religious traditions are closer to their national proportions within traditions. This is also the division with the most diverse Latino population, where no national origin group is particularly dominant. In contrast, the areas where Latinos are particularly strong among Catholics and Nones tend to be divisions with large Mexican influence. Moreover, the divisions where Latino Catholicism is weaker are areas with large Puerto Rican concentration.

The Catholic data suggest that other religious groups and traditions are gaining disproportionately from the growth of the Latino population. One way to present this is as in Figure 17, which shows the growth of particular groups among Latinos between 1990 and 2008. Figure 17 shows that among “new Latinos” (the 16 million additional people who were born, came of age, or arrived after 1990) Catholicism was 12% lower.

We conduct a hypothetical experiment in Figure 17 in which we calculate what actually happened between 1990 and 2008 and what could have happened if we projected 1990 figures forward.

Column 1 are the actual 1990 numbers and religious distribution of U.S. Latino adults. Column 2 represents the real differences in the survey between the 1990 and 2008 estimates which is based on the 16.25 million growth in the adult Latino population. Column 3 consists of an estimate of the numbers and percentages of U.S. Latinos by the main religious traditions assuming that the growth between 1990 and 2008 corresponded to each tradition’s proportion of the overall Latino population in 1990. Finally, column 4 shows which traditions have been successful and which have been least successful in attracting the 16.25 million “new Latinos.”

The projections from Figure 17 show that the 12% difference between the 1990 numbers and the expected numbers for 2008 cost the Catholic Church 2 million potential adherents in 18 years. This suggests that while Latinos helped to mitigate some of the losses in Catholic identification in the U.S., the Catholic identification is much lower than it could have been.

A particularly striking finding is that among non-Catholic Christians, over half of whom were Mainline Protestants or Baptists in 1990, 95% of the newcomers appear to have identified with more conservative traditions. Using the same estimates, Mainline Protestants and Baptists combined lost another 2 million potential adherents between 1990 and 2008.

Interestingly, despite the attention that the growth of the Pentecostal tradition among Latinos and in Latin America has received among scholars and the media, this tradition did not exceed their expected numbers dramatically; there were only 52,000 new Latino Pentecostals by 2008. In fact, the larger than expected gains among non-Catholic Christians occurred in the Christian Generic and Protestant Sects traditions. Christian Generics gained over 800,000 more adherents than expected. We expected 1.3 million additional Christian Generics based on their 1990 numbers. They exceeded these estimates and there are now 3.2

**Figure 17.**

Actual and Expected Gains and Losses Among Latinos 1990-2008 by Selected Religious Traditions

		<b>1990 Totals</b>	<b>Actual Change 1990-2008</b>	<b>Expected* Change 1990-2008</b>	<b>Loss/Gain vs. Expected</b>
		<b>[1]</b>	<b>[2]</b>	<b>[3]</b>	<b>[2-3]</b>
<b>Catholic</b>	Pop. Estimate	9,608,000	8,744,000	10,700,000	-1,956,000
	% of Latinos	66%	54%	66%	-12%
<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	Pop. Estimate	545,000	-111,000	607,000	-718,000
	% of Latinos	4%	-1%	4%	-5%
<b>Baptist</b>	Pop. Estimate	1,077,000	-198,000	1,199,000	-1,397,000
	% of Latinos	7%	-1%	7%	-8%
<b>Christian Generic</b>	Pop. Estimate	1,167,000	2,130,000	1,300,000	830,000
	% of Latinos	8%	13%	8%	5%
<b>Pentecostal</b>	Pop. Estimate	427,000	528,000	476,000	52,000
	% of Latinos	3%	3%	3%	0%
<b>Protestant Sects</b>	Pop. Estimate	335,000	851,000	373,000	478,000
	% of Latinos	2%	5%	2%	3%
<b>None</b>	Pop. Estimate	932,000	2,879,000	1,038,000	1,841,000
	% of Latinos	6%	18%	6%	12%
<b>DK/Refused</b>	Pop. Estimate	124,000	1,278,000	138,000	1,140,000
	% of Latinos	1%	8%	1%	7%
<b>Total</b>	Pop. Estimate	<b>14,597,000</b>	<b>16,256,000</b>	<b>16,256,000</b>	<b>0</b>
	% of Latinos	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>

\* Change that would have occurred if the percentage of Latinos in each group had remained unchanged.

million Latinos in the Christian Generic tradition.

More surprising are the numbers among Protestant Sects. In 1990, Latinos who identified with this tradition were outnumbered by all Christian groups except Mormon/LDS Latinos (see Figure 2). Our estimates indicate that if growth after 1990 had remained steady, Protestant Sects would have gained just under 400,000 Latinos. Between 1990 and 2008 sectarian Latinos doubled their expected numbers, increasing to over 1 million and becoming the third-largest Christian tradition after Catholics and Christian Generic Latinos.

Among non-Christians, the proportion of Nones is almost four times higher among “new Latinos” than among the 1990 cohort. When we combine the growth of Nones and those who responded “don’t know” or refused to answer, these non-religious traditions comprise 21% of “new Latinos.” In comparison, non-Catholic Christian traditions also represent 21% of “new Latinos.” These results strengthen the argument that Latino religious identification in the United States is undergoing a process of polarization.

## Conclusion

The three themes of this report are growth, diversity and transformation. All are apparent through analyzing data from the American Religious Identification Survey series between 1990 and 2008. The Latino population has doubled in size over two decades and it continues to grow rapidly due to immigration and natural increase. This growth is impacting many religious traditions as well as the overall national profile of the U.S. religious identification.

The shift of Latino religious identification during the 1990s and 2000s has not been towards Protestantism, as is commonly believed. Instead, in the 18 years between 1990 and 2008, Latino religious identification underwent polarization of worldviews. On one hand, the increase in the proportion of Nones suggests secularization of a segment of U.S. Latinos. On the other hand another segment of the Latino population is moving away from the dominant Catholic tradition into more sectarian and evangelical forms of Christianity. Interestingly this is of recent origin and intrinsically an “American” phenomenon. An overview of contemporary Latino religion in the U.S. reveals the rise of less traditional forms of religious identification (i.e. more diversity and variety). The more Americanized individual Latinos become, measured by place of birth and their proficiency in English, the less Catholic they tend to be and the more likely they are to be Nones or identify with other Christian traditions.

In terms of market share Latino religious identification shows a movement away from Catholicism. Numerically, however, this has been masked by recent large-scale immigration, which is heavily Catholic. If we envisage Catholicism as the middle ground then in some ways its predicament is the same as Mainline Protestantism in the wider U.S., which loses out to two theological polarities on either side. The rising traditions clearly attract different sorts of people and so have identifiable constituencies in terms of gender, class, education, residential location and national origin. A complex set of factors is at work in forming the patterns of religious identification, such as if and when people immigrated to the U.S., where and how they were educated and what areas of the country they were born in or migrated to. Since this growing religious diversity seems tied to social change and growing class differentiation among the Latino population we can expect the trend to continue into the future. This conclusion is strengthened by our assessment of the gender and marital status data (Figure 5), which reflect complex domestic living relationships in terms of religious loyalties. The result is that perhaps more than any other group in the U.S. population, Latinos of different religious persuasions live together under the same roof.

One surprising finding worthy of note is the lack of Latino interest in alternatives to Christianity as well as in the new religious movements. This reality is highlighted by the fact that the Latinos who self-identify as atheists and agnostics number nearly half a million and outnumber the combined adherents of all the non-Christian religions and groups on offer in the national religious marketplace.

As with the general U.S. population the growth of the Nones is one of the major developments on the religious scene over the past two decades. The Nones are young and have doubled their proportion of the Latino college educated population to 25%. In real numbers, college-educated Latinos over age 25 years increased by about 2 million between 1990 and 2008. These two trends in combination suggest that Latinos flow towards irreligion will continue to do so into the future.

Another indicator in this regard is that recent immigrants from Latin America are twice as likely to be Nones (12%) as was the U.S. Latino population in 1990 (6%).

The findings on growth among the non-Catholic Christian traditions are also unexpected. The appeal of Pentecostalism among Latinos seems to have waned in recent years. The numerical losses among Latinos

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suffered by the Mainline Protestant tradition mirrors the national situation but in the Latino case Baptists also seem to be affected by this decline. It appears that many who once identified, or would have identified, as Mainliners and Baptists now self-identify with the Christian Generic tradition. This rejection of denominational labels is not unique to Latinos and is again a part of an American national trend.

Another significant recent trend is the increasing fraction of Latinos who refuse to respond to questions about their religious identification. In 1990 less than 1% of Latinos refused the key ARIS question, well below the national average. But in 2008 4.5% of Latinos refused to respond compared to 5.4% of all Americans. The profile of the 'Refusals' shows that they tend to be older, wealthier, less likely to reside in the West and slightly better educated than the average Latino. In other words they seem to be somewhat more Americanized. Whether they can be considered an extension of the No Religion population is open to question.

Even as the Latino population is transforming itself internally it is transforming American religion as a whole. No tradition has been more impacted in recent years than the Catholic Church, which has become more Latino and as a result more immigrant. We estimate that the U.S. Catholic Church added 11 million adult identifiers between 1990 and 2008 but 9 million of these were Latinos.

Without the latter infusion Catholicism would have lost, rather than maintained, its national market share (25%). Defections among its historic constituency of white ethnics have been offset by Latino newcomers. As a result American Catholicism has "relocated" as the Church has become more Western and Southern and less Northeastern and Midwestern. Latinos were 20% of the total Catholic population in 1990 but by 2008 they constituted 32%.

Latinos are also impacting other religious traditions both as an overall proportion and in absolute numbers. Between 1990 and 2008 the number of Latino Nones rose fourfold, those identifying with Protestant Sects rose threefold as did those in the Christian Generic tradition, which is mostly, associated with Evangelical Non-denominational Christianity. As we have noted social trends such as greater suburbanization, more education, and increased Americanization are associated with greater religious differentiation and polarization.

Again the state level is informative of these processes. Despite the proportional decline of Catholics among Latinos, sheer numbers led the percentage of Latinos among all Catholics in California to increase from 50% in 1990 to 56% in 2008. Yet at the same time Latinos in California went from 10% of the state's None population in 1990 to 24% in 2008 and in Texas they rose from 15% to 28% of the Nones.

The analysis of the actual versus the expected change in religious identification between 1990 and 2008 is a good predictor of future trends in Latino religion since it records the religious sentiments of the "new Latinos" who entered the population during the past 18 years – the younger generations of adults and new immigrants. This suggests that the future pattern of Latino religion in the U.S. very much depends on how much immigration there will be in the future and from where it originates.

Immigration from Mexico in particular tends to bolster American Catholicism especially in the Sunbelt states. In contrast, the rising generations of U.S.-born Latinos present a challenge to the Catholic Church and to its diminishing ranks of clergy. If Catholicism is mainly cultural among Latinos it is to be expected that it will decline over time as they adopt American culture. The free market of American religion offers a plethora of religious options but so far Latinos have chosen from a restricted number of Christian traditions, and some have exercised their right to reject them all. It is important to continue and follow these trends as Latinos fully embrace American individualism and culture.

## Appendix A

### The Taxonomy of the Religious Traditions

The long list of religious classifications supplied by ARIS respondents' calls for a shorter, more manageable list for most analytical purposes. Therefore, the ARIS respondents have been collated into the following 13 religious groupings of varying sizes:

1. **Catholic:** *Roman, Greek and Eastern Rites.*
2. **Mainline Protestant:** *Methodist, United Methodist, African Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian/ Anglican, United Church of Christ/ Congregational, Reformed/ Dutch Reform, Disciples of Christ, Moravian, Quaker, Orthodox (Greek, Russian, Eastern, Christian).*
3. **Baptist:** *including Southern Baptist, American Baptist, Free-Will, Missionary, and African-American denominations.*
4. **Christian Generic:** *Christian, Protestant, Evangelical/ Born Again Christian, Born Again, Fundamentalist, Independent Christian, Missionary Alliance Church, Non-Denominational Christian.*
5. **Pentecostal/Charismatic:** *Pentecostal, Assemblies of God, Full Gospel, Four Square Gospel, Church of God, Holiness, Nazarene, Salvation Army.*
6. **Protestant Sects:** *Churches of Christ, Seventh Day Adventist, Mennonite, Brethren, Apostle, Covenant, Christian Reform, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Science, Messianic Jews.*
7. **Mormon/ Latter Day Saints**
8. **Jewish/Judaism**
9. **Eastern Religions:** *Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Baba'i, Shintoist, Zoroastrian, Sikh.*
10. **Muslim/Islam**
11. **New Religious Movements and Other Religions:** *Scientology, New Age, Eckankar, Spiritualist, Unitarian-Universalist, Deist, Wiccan, Pagan, Druid, Indian Religion, Santeria, Rastafarian.*
12. **Nones:** *None, No religion, Humanistic, Ethical Culture, Agnostic, Atheist, Secular.*
13. **Refused: Don't Know.**

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Cover Image: Proportion of Latinos by State 2008 (numbers based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2010*).