

Study: Religious belief declines in Britain

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A British study indicates religious belief is declining faster than attendance at services across the United Kingdom.

Far from religious belief being relatively strong and robust, David Voas of The University of Manchester, the study's lead researcher, said fewer people now have real faith than passively "belong" to a religion.

Researchers say one factor that might slow the decline is that religious parents have more children than others.

The study argues institutional religion now has a "half-life" of one generation. In other words, two non-religious parents successfully pass their lack of faith. Two religious parents have roughly a 50-50 chance of passing on their beliefs

"How children are brought up has an enormous impact on whether they will identify with a religion," said Voas. "Once people become adults, their religious affiliation is less likely to be affected by influences around them."

Voas notes older people mostly describe themselves as religious, although not necessarily orthodox. The middle-aged see themselves as spiritual rather than religious; and younger people most often hold their beliefs as part of a view of life that they do not even recognize as spiritual.

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