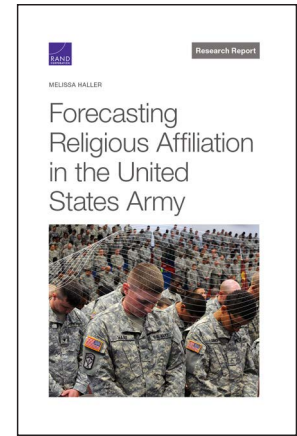




# Forecasting Religious Affiliation in the United States Army

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[www.rand.org/t/RRA752-2](http://www.rand.org/t/RRA752-2)



The author examines U.S. demographic trends in religious affiliation and compares them with those of the U.S. Army to help the U.S. Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains anticipate how the religious needs of the population it serves might change. Data on enlisted soldiers, chaplains, and officers in the Regular Army were reviewed, as well as data from a nationally representative survey of the U.S. population.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How has the religious composition of enlisted RA soldiers and of RA officers changed over time?
- How does the religious composition of the U.S. population compare with the religious composition of the enlisted RA?
- What is the likely projected religious composition of the enlisted RA and of RA officers over the next five years?



## KEY FINDINGS

The three largest religious groups in the enlisted RA are Protestants, Catholics, and “Nones”

- The proportion of Protestants increased from fiscal year (FY) 2000 to FY 2015 and began to decline modestly after FY 2015.
- The proportion of Catholics has declined steadily since FY 2005.
- The proportion of “Nones” fell between FY 2000 and FY 2015 but has since increased.

Officers in the Army tend to be considerably more religious than the enlisted population

- The “Nones” population makes up less than 5 percent of RA officers.

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The religious composition of the U.S. population differs from that of the enlisted RA

- Protestants are the largest group overall in both populations, but the proportion of Protestants is increasing in the RA but decreasing in the United States.
- The United States has a larger proportion of Catholics than the RA does.
- The RA initially had a larger proportion of “Nones,” but the proportion of “Nones” in the U.S. population has grown rapidly in the past 20 years and is approximately equivalent to the current proportion in the RA.

The religious composition of the enlisted population is likely to shift over the next five years

- Given the current geographic makeup of the enlisted RA, the proportions of Protestants and Catholics will likely decline modestly, and the proportion of “Nones” will likely increase.
- Religious makeup could shift further if the Army increases recruitment from underrepresented regions of the United States.
- In contrast, the religious composition of the officer population is likely to remain relatively stable.

