Opinion: How secular family values stack up

By Phil Zuckerman, Los Angeles Times

More children are “growing up godless” than at any other time in our nation’s history. They are the offspring of an expanding secular population that includes a relatively new and burgeoning category of Americans called the “Nones,” so nicknamed because they identified themselves as believing in “nothing in particular” in a 2012 study by the Pew Research Center.

The number of American children raised without religion has grown significantly since the 1950s, when fewer than 4 percent of Americans reported growing up in a nonreligious household, according to several recent national studies. That figure entered the double digits when a 2012 study showed that 11 percent of people born after 1970 said they had been raised in secular homes. This may help explain why 23 percent of adults in the U.S. claim to have no religion, and more than 30 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 say the same.

So how does the raising of upstanding, moral children work without prayers at mealtimes and morality lessons at Sunday school? Quite well, it seems.

Far from being dysfunctional, nihilistic and rudderless without the security and rectitude of religion, secular households provide a sound and solid foundation for children, according to Vern Bengston, a USC professor of gerontology and sociology.

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