

## Chapter 2:

# Social and Political Views

Relatively few Americans say they look to religion as the primary source of their views on social and political issues. Nevertheless, the Landscape Survey confirms the strong links that exist between Americans' religious affiliation, their beliefs and practices, and their basic social and political attitudes. Religion may, in fact, be playing a more powerful, albeit indirect, role in shaping people's thinking than many Americans recognize.

This chapter examines the views of members of the various religious traditions on many of the social and political issues of the day. Where sample size allows, traditions are broken down further by levels of religious commitment according to four important measures – frequency of worship service attendance, importance of religion in one's life, frequency of prayer and degree of belief in a personal God. The analysis shows that on many issues, the fault lines of American politics run not only along religious traditions but through them.

The religious beliefs, practices and identities of U.S. adults are extremely diverse, but among almost all faiths there is broad agreement about the positive impact religion exerts in society. Most Americans disagree with the notion that religion causes more problems than it solves. Most people who are affiliated with a religion also do not see a conflict between being a devout person and living in a modern society.

American adults are very content with their family and personal lives, with 59% of the public overall and majorities of almost every religious group reporting they are very satisfied with their personal lives. Opinions are more negative when it comes to American politics, however, with 68% expressing dissatisfaction with the way the political system is working and similar numbers expressing dissatisfaction with the way things are going in the country.

Americans report relatively high levels of political engagement. More than half (52%) say they follow politics or public affairs most of the time. There are few substantial differences in self-reported interest in politics across religious groups or levels of religious commitment.

But although religion is not strongly tied to political engagement, religion has a more significant impact on American attitudes on a core group of issues. Views on social or cultural issues such as abortion and homosexuality are strongly tied to both an individual's religious affiliation and level of religious commitment. For instance, while a slim majority of Americans (51%) favor keeping abortion legal in all or most cases, Mormons and members of evangelical churches remain strongly opposed to legalized abortion (70% and 61%, respectively). There is also significant variation within religious traditions, with more highly committed believers holding more conservative positions on these issues.

Not only does religious affiliation influence Americans' attitudes on important social and cultural questions, it is also closely related to Americans' basic political orientation. For example, while members of historically black Protestant churches, Jews and people who are not affiliated with a religion are largely Democratic, members of evangelical Protestant churches and Mormons lean more Republican. Further, across several religious traditions, Americans who pray more frequently, attend worship services more often, are more certain in their belief in a personal God or say religion is very important in their lives tend to be more conservative and somewhat more Republican than others.

On other topics covered in the survey, such as views on the role and size of government and foreign policy attitudes, the role of religion is less clear. Differences among religious traditions on many economic issues and foreign policy questions are comparatively smaller. For instance, a majority of nearly every religious group supports stricter environmental regulations and believes the government should do more to help Americans in need. Similarly, most Americans, including majorities of most faiths, say it is more important to focus on problems here at home than to be active in world affairs.

## I. Religion and Society

### Religion and Societal Problems

Most American adults (62%) reject the notion that religion causes more problems in society than it solves. Majorities of most Christian traditions as well as a large majority of Muslims (68%) reject this idea.

By contrast, nearly half of all Jews (49%) and more than half of Buddhists (56%), Hindus (57%) and the unaffiliated (59%) say religion causes more problems than it solves. A majority of Jehovah's Witnesses (51%) also say religion causes more harm than good in society. Atheists stand out

### Religion's Role in Society

	<i>"Religion causes more problems in society than it solves"</i>					
	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	Don't know	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Total population	14	20	28	34	4	<b>=100</b>
Protestant	9	16	28	43	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	7	13	26	50	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Mainline churches</i>	11	22	33	30	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	10	14	27	45	5	<b>=100</b>
Catholic	13	20	31	33	4	<b>=100</b>
Mormon	3	11	30	54	1	<b>=100</b>
Jehovah's Witness	29	22	14	27	8	<b>=100</b>
Orthodox	13	23	30	29	5	<b>=100</b>
Jewish	22	27	28	18	5	<b>=100</b>
Muslim	11	16	21	47	4	<b>=100</b>
Buddhist	30	26	25	12	6	<b>=100</b>
Hindu	25	32	23	15	4	<b>=100</b>
Unaffiliated	30	29	23	14	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Atheist</i>	49	28	14	6	3	<b>=100</b>
<i>Agnostic</i>	39	33	20	6	2	<b>=100</b>
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	34	32	21	8	5	<b>=100</b>
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	17	23	28	26	5	<b>=100</b>

Question: Here are a few statements. For each one, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it. The first/next one is [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]...do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree?

(c) Religion causes more problems in society than it solves.

for the degree with which they believe religion is a problem. Nearly half of all atheists (49%) say they completely agree that religion is more likely to cause problems than to provide solutions in society.

Among the general public and several of the largest religious groups, those who exhibit higher levels of religious commitment are more likely to reject the notion that religion causes more problems than it solves. For instance, three-quarters of Americans (76%) who attend religious services at least once a week reject the idea that religion is, on balance, a negative influence in society, compared with slightly more than half (53%) of those who attend services less often.

The attendance gap on this issue cuts across many religious traditions. There are also differences between those who express certain belief in a personal God and others. For instance, among members of mainline Protestant churches who express certainty in their belief in a personal God, more than seven-in-ten (73%) do not think religion causes more problems than it solves, while those who are less certain in this belief or who hold different views about God are more evenly split on this question. Similar patterns are seen across several religious traditions between those who pray often and those who do not, and between those who say religion is very important in their lives and those who say it is less important.

## Religion and Societal Problems

% disagree that religion causes more problems than it solves...			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>64%</b>
Attend weekly or more	76	Attend weekly or more	73
All others	53	All others	58
Religion is very important	74	Religion is very important	72
All others	47	All others	55
Pray at least daily	71	Pray at least daily	69
All others	50	All others	58
Absolute belief in personal God	74	Absolute belief in personal God	71
All others	50	All others	57
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>85%</b>
Attend weekly or more	81	Attend weekly or more	88
All others	69	All others	74
Religion is very important	80	Religion is very important	88
All others	62	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	79	Pray at least daily	89
All others	66	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	79	Absolute belief in personal God	88
All others	67	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>60%</b>
Attend weekly or more	75	Attend weekly or more	73
All others	57	All others	53
Religion is very important	74	Religion is very important	63
All others	52	All others	55
Pray at least daily	70	Pray at least daily	60
All others	56	All others	59
Absolute belief in personal God	73	Absolute belief in personal God	66
All others	53	All others	55
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>46%</b>
Attend weekly or more	76	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	67	All others	41
Religion is very important	74	Religion is very important	69
All others	58	All others	36
Pray at least daily	73	Pray at least daily	62
All others	65	All others	41
Absolute belief in personal God	74	Absolute belief in personal God	63
All others	67	All others	43

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.

## Conflict Between Religion and Modern Society

Most Americans believe that modern society does not present a challenge to devout believers. The Landscape Survey finds that a majority of adults (54%) with a religious affiliation see no conflict between being a devout religious person and living in modern society. A substantial minority (40%), however, does see a tension. Jehovah's Witnesses (59%) are most likely to see a conflict between being religious and living in modern society; a plurality of members of evangelical churches (49%) also say this. Jews (29%) are least likely to see a conflict.

The unaffiliated population was asked a different version of this question – whether there is a conflict between being non-religious and living in a society where people *are* religious. One-third (34%) perceives such a conflict; atheists and agnostics are most likely to say this (44% and 41%, respectively).

### Conflict Between Religion and Modern Society?

	Conflict	No conflict	Don't know	
	%	%	%	
Total affiliated*	40	54	6	=100
Protestant	43	51	7	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	49	45	6	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	32	62	6	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	46	45	9	=100
Catholic	34	61	5	=100
Mormon	36	60	4	=100
Jehovah's Witness	59	32	9	=100
Orthodox	35	58	7	=100
Jewish	29	65	6	=100
Muslim**	32	63	5	=100
Buddhist	30	65	6	=100
Hindu	31	62	7	=100
Unaffiliated***	34	61	6	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	44	52	5	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	41	55	4	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	28	68	4	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	34	58	8	=100

\*Question: [IF HAS A RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION, ASK]: Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a devout religious person and living in a modern society, or don't you think so?

\*\*From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

\*\*\*Question: [IF UNAFFILIATED, ASK]: Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a non-religious person and living in a society where most people are religious, or don't you think so?

## Hollywood vs. Religion?

The perceived conflict between religion and modern society is clearly evident when it comes to views about Hollywood and the entertainment industry. Hollywood and the entertainment industry are often seen as in conflict with the values of certain religious groups, and a significant number of the general population (42%), including a majority of some religious groups, express this view. However, most Americans (56%) disagree with the idea that their values are threatened by Hollywood.

Mormons are by far the most apprehensive about Hollywood: Two-thirds (67%) say Tinseltown and the entertainment industry represent a threat to their values. A majority of Jehovah's Witnesses and members of evangelical churches agree. Concern is particularly pronounced among the most observant Mormons and members of evangelical churches: 75% of Mormons who attend religious services at least once a week and 60% of members of evangelical churches who attend church this often see the entertainment industry as a threat.

### Hollywood Threatens My Values

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	
Total population	42	56	3	=100
Protestant	46	52	2	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	53	45	2	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	41	57	2	=100
<i>Historically black churches</i>	35	63	3	=100
Catholic	43	54	3	=100
Mormon	67	30	2	=100
Jehovah's Witness	54	42	5	=100
Orthodox	42	56	2	=100
Jewish	25	72	2	=100
Muslim	41	56	2	=100
Buddhist	31	65	4	=100
Hindu	39	59	3	=100
Unaffiliated	28	70	2	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	19	79	2	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	21	78	1	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	27	72	2	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	35	62	2	=100

Question: Now, as I read some statements on a few different topics, please tell me if you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly DISagree or completely disagree with each one. (First/next) [INSERT; RANDOMIZE]

(a) I often feel that my values are threatened by Hollywood and the entertainment industry.

Majorities of most other religious groups are less concerned about Hollywood and the entertainment industry. However, at least four-in-ten Catholics (43%), Orthodox Christians (42%), members of mainline Protestant churches (41%) and Muslims (41%) say they feel their values are threatened by the influence of Hollywood.



## II. Satisfaction with Personal and Public Life

### Religion and Personal Satisfaction

Most Americans are very satisfied with their personal lives. Close to nine-in-ten (86%) say they are satisfied with the way things are going in their personal lives, and six-in-ten (59%) say they are very satisfied. Majorities of nearly every religious tradition are very satisfied with their personal lives; only among members of historically black Protestant churches do fewer than half (47%) say they are very satisfied with their personal lives.

#### Levels of Satisfaction

	% very satisfied with ...			
	Personal life	Family life	Standard of living	Personal safety
	%	%	%	%
Total population	59	75	38	32
Protestant	59	75	39	32
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	61	76	38	34
<i>Mainline churches</i>	62	77	43	35
<i>Historically black churches</i>	47	67	29	19
Catholic	62	77	37	30
Mormon	66	83	45	42
Jehovah's Witness	56	69	32	18
Orthodox	54	71	34	31
Jewish	64	76	49	33
Muslim	53	72	37	36
Buddhist	56	74	41	39
Hindu	62	76	46	37
Unaffiliated	54	70	35	34
<i>Atheist</i>	57	68	42	42
<i>Agnostic</i>	53	69	40	39
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	56	71	37	35
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	52	70	30	28

Questions: All in all, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in your personal life? [IF SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED, ASK]: Would you say that's very [satisfied/dissatisfied] or just somewhat [satisfied/dissatisfied]?

Please tell me how satisfied you are with the following things. (First/next), how satisfied are you with [INSERT; RANDOMIZE]...Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?

- (a) Your standard of living – what you can buy or do.
- (b) Your family life.
- (d) Your personal safety from things like crime and terrorism.

American adults are even more content with their family lives. More than nine-in-ten (93%) say they are satisfied, and three-quarters say they are very satisfied, in their family lives. Large majorities within every religious group express high levels of satisfaction with their family lives.

The survey finds a link between individuals' religious beliefs and practices and their satisfaction with their personal lives, with those exhibiting greater religious commitment somewhat more likely to express satisfaction with their lives. Among the various measures of religious commitment analyzed here – frequency of worship service attendance, prayer, importance of religion in one's life and view of God – attendance appears to have the greatest impact on levels of personal satisfaction. For instance, among members of historically black churches who attend religious services at least once a week, a majority (54%) say they are very satisfied with their personal lives, compared with less than four-in-ten (37%) of those who attend less often. Slightly smaller, but nonetheless significant gaps are also evident among the general public as well as among other religious groups. A similar pattern exists for satisfaction with family life, with those who attend church more frequently being somewhat more likely than others to express high levels of satisfaction with their family life.

Three-quarters of Americans (78%) say they are content with their standard of living or what they can buy or do. However, fewer express a high degree of satisfaction; less than four-in-ten (38%) say they are very satisfied. Perhaps not surprisingly, religious groups reporting high levels of education and income tend to express greater satisfaction with their standard of living. For instance, nearly half of Jews (49%) and Hindus (46%) say they are very satisfied with what they can buy and do, while members of historically black churches (29%) are significantly less likely to express similar levels of satisfaction.

More than seven-in-ten Americans say they are very (32%) or somewhat (39%) satisfied with their level of personal safety from things like crime and terrorism. Mormons (42%), Buddhists (39%), atheists (42%) and agnostics (39%) are among the most likely to say they are very satisfied with their level of personal safety.

## Satisfaction With Personal Life

% who are very satisfied...			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>62%</b>
Attend weekly or more	65	Attend weekly or more	67
All others	55	All others	59
Religion is very important	62	Religion is very important	65
All others	56	All others	59
Pray at least daily	61	Pray at least daily	63
All others	57	All others	62
Absolute belief in personal God	62	Absolute belief in personal God	65
All others	56	All others	60
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>66%</b>
Attend weekly or more	66	Attend weekly or more	71
All others	53	All others	52
Religion is very important	63	Religion is very important	71
All others	53	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	62	Pray at least daily	70
All others	55	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	63	Absolute belief in personal God	69
All others	55	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>54%</b>
Attend weekly or more	68	Attend weekly or more	66
All others	59	All others	47
Religion is very important	65	Religion is very important	57
All others	59	All others	50
Pray at least daily	63	Pray at least daily	54
All others	62	All others	53
Absolute belief in personal God	66	Absolute belief in personal God	57
All others	59	All others	51
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>64%</b>
Attend weekly or more	54	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	37	All others	62
Religion is very important	48	Religion is very important	70
All others	41	All others	62
Pray at least daily	48	Pray at least daily	71
All others	42	All others	62
Absolute belief in personal God	49	Absolute belief in personal God	68
All others	42	All others	63

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.

## Satisfaction With American Society and the Political System

Despite their overall feeling of satisfaction with their family and personal lives, only about a quarter of Americans (27%) say they are satisfied with the way things are going in the U.S. Many religious groups register similar levels of displeasure, but a few groups express distinctive views. For instance, Mormons (40%) and Hindus (38%) are among those registering the highest levels of satisfaction. Conversely, members of historically black churches (17%) and Jehovah's Witnesses (10%) are among the least satisfied.

Attitudes about the political system are nearly identical to views about the country in general. More than two-thirds of Americans (68%) were dissatisfied (as of summer 2007 when the survey was

### Satisfaction With Direction of the Country and Political System

	% very or somewhat satisfied with ...	
	Direction of the country	Political system
	%	%
Total population	27	27
Protestant	27	27
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	29	30
<i>Mainline churches</i>	27	27
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	17	21
Catholic	30	30
Mormon	40	36
Jehovah's Witness	10	11
Orthodox	34	31
Jewish	25	29
Muslim*	38	25
Buddhist	24	24
Hindu	38	33
Unaffiliated	24	21
<i>Atheist</i>	21	20
<i>Agnostic</i>	22	17
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	25	21
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	26	25

\* From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Questions: All in all, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today? [IF SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED, ASK]: Would you say that's very [satisfied/dissatisfied] or just somewhat [satisfied/dissatisfied]?

Please tell me how satisfied you are with the following things. (First/next), how satisfied are you with [INSERT; RANDOMIZE]...Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied?

(c) The way the political system is working in this country.

conducted) with how the political system operates in the U.S.; only slightly more than a quarter (27%) were satisfied. These attitudes were relatively similar across religious groups. In fact, with the exception of Mormons (36%), no more than a third of any religious tradition expressed overall satisfaction with the way the political system was working.

### III. Religion and Political Attentiveness

#### *Influences on Political Thinking*

When asked about what most influences their thinking about government and politics, a plurality of the general public (34%) says they rely most on their own personal experiences. Roughly one-in-five (19%) say they rely on what they have seen in the media. Only 14% cite their religious beliefs as the most important influence in their thinking about government and public affairs.

Jehovah's Witnesses (60%), members of evangelical churches (28%) and Mormons (24%) are more likely to rely on their religious beliefs to guide their political thinking than are members of

#### What Most Influences Thinking About Government and Public Affairs?

	Your personal experience	Views of your friends and family	What you have seen or read in the media	Your religious beliefs	Your education	Something else	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Total population	34	6	19	14	13	10	4	=100
Protestant	32	6	18	20	11	10	4	=100
<i>Evang. churches</i>	29	6	16	28	8	9	4	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	37	7	19	8	15	10	4	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	28	7	23	17	10	12	3	=100
Catholic	35	7	23	9	14	9	5	=100
Mormon	38	4	12	24	12	6	4	=100
Jehovah's Witness	13	3	10	60	3	8	3	=100
Orthodox	35	8	20	9	15	9	4	=100
Jewish	35	6	20	4	21	11	3	=100
Muslim	28	9	19	13	18	12	2	=100
Buddhist	35	7	18	2	26	9	4	=100
Hindu	28	8	28	3	23	5	4	=100
Unaffiliated	40	6	19	3	16	13	3	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	40	7	16	1	22	11	3	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	42	3	16	1	24	12	2	=100
<i>Secular unaffil.</i>	42	6	20	1	15	13	3	=100
<i>Religious unaffil.</i>	37	7	20	6	13	12	5	=100

Question: When you [do] think about government and public affairs, which of the following factors most influences your thinking? Would you say it's your personal experience, the views of your friends and family, what you have seen or read in the media, your religious beliefs, your education, or something else?

other religious groups. Less than 5% of Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and the unaffiliated say that their religious views serve as their primary guide to politics and public affairs.

Americans who pray daily, attend worship services at least weekly, express certain belief in a personal God or say religion is very important in their lives are significantly more likely than others to say their religious beliefs most influence their views on politics. For instance, more than one-in-four Americans (27%) who attend religious services at least once a week say they rely principally on their religious beliefs to guide their thinking about politics, compared with only one-in-twenty (5%) of those who attend less often. It is worth pointing out, however, that even among the most religiously engaged Americans, only minorities cite religion as the primary influence on their thinking about government and politics.

## Religion's Influence on Political Views

% who say religious beliefs most influence their thinking on politics			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>9%</b>
Attend weekly or more	27	Attend weekly or more	15
All others	5	All others	4
Religion is very important	22	Religion is very important	13
All others	3	All others	3
Pray at least daily	21	Pray at least daily	12
All others	4	All others	4
Absolute belief in personal God	21	Absolute belief in personal God	12
All others	6	All others	5
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>24%</b>
Attend weekly or more	39	Attend weekly or more	28
All others	13	All others	9
Religion is very important	34	Religion is very important	27
All others	6	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	33	Pray at least daily	28
All others	10	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	33	Absolute belief in personal God	27
All others	15	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>9%</b>
Attend weekly or more	17	Attend weekly or more	20
All others	3	All others	3
Religion is very important	14	Religion is very important	15
All others	2	All others	2
Pray at least daily	12	Pray at least daily	14
All others	3	All others	1
Absolute belief in personal God	12	Absolute belief in personal God	14
All others	4	All others	5
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>4%</b>
Attend weekly or more	23	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	10	All others	2
Religion is very important	20	Religion is very important	11
All others	5	All others	2
Pray at least daily	20	Pray at least daily	12
All others	9	All others	2
Absolute belief in personal God	20	Absolute belief in personal God	9
All others	12	All others	3

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.



## Attention to Politics

Roughly half of the general public (52%) and similar numbers of most religious groups say that they follow occurrences in the government most of the time. Among most of these groups an additional third say they follow government activity or public affairs some of the time, with fewer than one-in-five saying they pay attention only now and then or hardly at all.

Certain groups do stand out, however, in their attentiveness to public affairs. More than two-thirds of Jews (68%) and six-in-ten atheists (61%), agnostics (63%) and Buddhists (60%) say they follow politics most of the time. At the opposite end of the spectrum are Jehovah's Witnesses and the religious unaffiliated. Less than three-in-ten Jehovah's Witnesses and about four-in-ten of the religious unaffiliated say they follow politics or public affairs most of the time. In fact, more than a quarter of Jehovah's Witnesses (27%) say they hardly ever pay attention to public affairs.

### Political Attentiveness

	% who follow government and public affairs...					
	Most of the time	Some of the time	Only now and then	Hardly at all	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Total population	52	29	11	7	1	=100
Protestant	53	29	11	6	1	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	52	30	11	7	1	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	58	28	9	5	0	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	47	32	13	7	1	=100
Catholic	49	30	13	7	1	=100
Mormon	54	34	8	4	0	=100
Jehovah's Witness	29	24	17	27	3	=100
Orthodox	49	37	7	6	2	=100
Jewish	68	22	7	2	1	=100
Muslim	47	34	14	4	1	=100
Buddhist	60	26	8	4	1	=100
Hindu	50	33	10	6	2	=100
Unaffiliated	49	28	13	9	1	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	61	24	8	6	2	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	63	25	9	4	0	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	49	29	12	9	1	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	41	30	16	12	1	=100

Question: Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?

## Voter Registration

Nearly three-quarters of adults (73%) in the U.S., including the vast majority of most religious groups, say they are registered to vote. Among Jews and mainline Protestants, more than eight-in-ten (84% and 81% respectively) are registered to vote.

Less than half of Muslims (48%) and Hindus (42%) are registered to vote, although this relatively low level is primarily due to the fact that both groups are made up of a disproportionately large number of immigrants who are not eligible to vote; a quarter of Muslims and four-in-ten Hindus are not U.S. citizens. Jehovah's Witnesses also have low levels of voter registration. Slightly more than one-in-ten Jehovah's Witnesses (13%) are registered to vote, but nearly three-quarters (74%) say they are not registered.

### Voter Registration

	Registered		Not registered	Don't know/ Refused	Not U.S. citizen	
	Yes, absolutely certain	Possible registration lapsed/ Not sure				
	%	%	%	%	%	
Total population	73	3	17	1	6	=100
Protestant	78	3	16	1	3	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	76	3	17	1	3	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	81	3	14	0	2	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	77	5	15	1	2	=100
Catholic	69	3	14	1	13	=100
Mormon	76	5	15	1	3	=100
Jehovah's Witness	13	0	74	1	11	=100
Orthodox	69	4	17	1	9	=100
Jewish	84	2	10	1	2	=100
Muslim*	48	2	22	3	25	=100
Buddhist	73	3	15	1	7	=100
Hindu	42	4	14	1	40	=100
Unaffiliated	65	4	24	1	6	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	69	3	22	1	5	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	72	3	21	1	3	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	67	3	24	1	5	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	59	4	26	1	9	=100

\* From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: [IF CITIZEN, ASK]: These days, many people are so busy they can't find time to register to vote, or move around so often they don't get a chance to re-register. Are you now registered to vote in your precinct or election district or haven't you been able to register so far? [IF REGISTERED, ASK]: Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote, or is there a chance that your registration has lapsed because you moved or for some other reason?

## IV. Religion, Ideology and Partisanship

### *Ideology*

Overall, nearly twice as many Americans identify as politically conservative (37%) as liberal (20%); more than a third says they are politically moderate (36%). But ideological identity varies widely among religious groups. Mormons and members of evangelical Protestant churches are by far the most politically conservative. Majorities of both groups say they are conservative (60% and 52%, respectively), while only about one-in-ten in each group say they are liberal. Half of all Jehovah's Witnesses offered no opinion of their ideological self-placement.

Members of non-Christian faiths, on the other hand, tend to be much more moderate or liberal. Jews are about twice as likely to be liberal as conservative (38% vs. 21%). Half (50%) of all Buddhists and atheists describe themselves as liberal. Hindus are about three times more likely to be liberal (35%) than conservative (12%).

Catholics and members of mainline and historically black Protestant churches all resemble the population as a whole in terms of their ideological profile.

In general, Americans who place a high value on religion in their lives or who are very active religiously tend to be more politically conservative than other Americans. People who attend religious services at least once a week or pray daily, for instance, are significantly more politically conservative (46% and 44%, respectively) than those who attend services or pray less often (28% and 27%, respectively).

## Political Ideology

	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	37	36	20	7	=100
Protestant	44	34	15	6	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	52	30	11	7	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	36	41	18	5	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	35	36	21	8	=100
Catholic	36	38	18	8	=100
Mormon	60	27	10	3	=100
Jehovah's Witness	21	12	17	50	=100
Orthodox	30	45	20	6	=100
Jewish	21	39	38	3	=100
Muslim*	19	38	24	19	=100
Buddhist	12	32	50	6	=100
Hindu	12	44	35	10	=100
Unaffiliated	20	39	34	8	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	14	27	50	8	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	15	39	44	3	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	17	39	35	8	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	25	41	24	10	=100

\*From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: In general, would you describe your political views as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal?

Almost twice as many people who say religion is very important in their lives are conservative (46%) compared with those for whom religion is less important (25%). A similar pattern is found among several religious traditions. For instance, among Jews and members of evangelical Protestant churches, the differences between those who pray daily or attend services at least once a week and those who do not is quite dramatic. More than twice as many Jews who pray daily identify as conservative (36%) compared with those who pray less often (16%). Catholics who attend religious services at least once a week are significantly more conservative than those who attend less often (45% vs. 31%), and Catholics who pray daily are also significantly more likely to be conservative than those who pray less often (40% vs. 31%).

## Political Conservatism

% who identify as conservative...			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>36%</b>
Attend weekly or more	50	Attend weekly or more	45
All others	28	All others	31
Religion is very important	46	Religion is very important	42
All others	25	All others	29
Pray at least daily	44	Pray at least daily	40
All others	27	All others	31
Absolute belief in personal God	46	Absolute belief in personal God	41
All others	27	All others	32
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>60%</b>
Attend weekly or more	61	Attend weekly or more	66
All others	40	All others	40
Religion is very important	57	Religion is very important	66
All others	34	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	56	Pray at least daily	64
All others	40	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	58	Absolute belief in personal God	65
All others	38	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>30%</b>
Attend weekly or more	43	Attend weekly or more	44
All others	32	All others	22
Religion is very important	41	Religion is very important	42
All others	30	All others	13
Pray at least daily	39	Pray at least daily	38
All others	32	All others	17
Absolute belief in personal God	41	Absolute belief in personal God	40
All others	30	All others	22
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>21%</b>
Attend weekly or more	39	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	30	All others	17
Religion is very important	37	Religion is very important	33
All others	25	All others	15
Pray at least daily	36	Pray at least daily	36
All others	29	All others	16
Absolute belief in personal God	37	Absolute belief in personal God	27
All others	31	All others	20

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.

## Partisanship

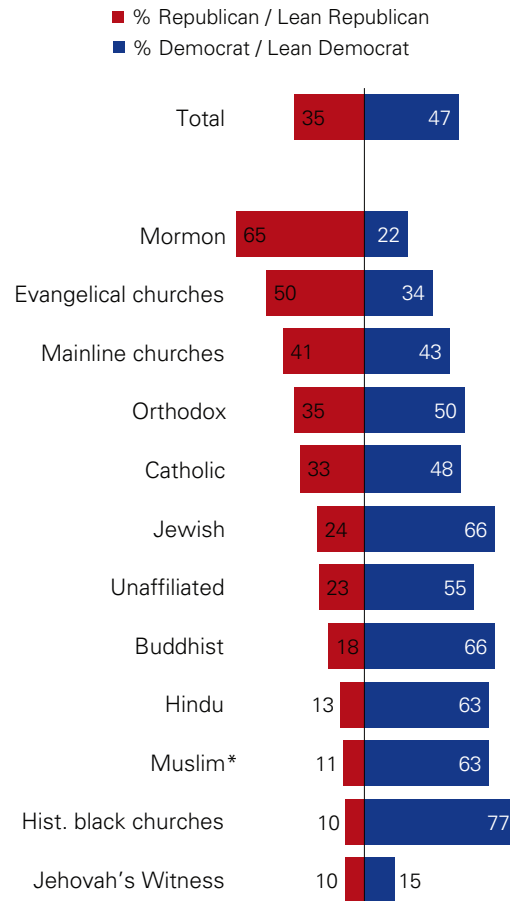
Nearly half of U.S. adults (47%) identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, a third (35%) say they are Republican or lean Republican and about one-in-five (18%) say they are independent, something else or express no partisan preference. Catholics and Orthodox Christians have the same basic partisan composition as the general public.

Mormons are by far the most staunchly Republican group, with nearly two-thirds (65%) identifying with or leaning toward the GOP. Members of evangelical Protestant churches are also significantly more likely to be Republican (50%) than Democratic (34%). Conversely, majorities of non-Christian faiths identify as Democrats, including at least six-in-ten Jews (66%), Muslims (63%), Buddhists (66%) and Hindus (63%).

Members of historically black Protestant churches are more likely than any other group to identify as Democrats (77%). Atheists and agnostics are also strongly Democratic; almost two-thirds of atheists (65%) and agnostics (62%) are Democrats or lean Democratic.

Religious beliefs and practices are not as closely linked to partisan identification as they are to political ideology. It is true that Americans who say religion is very important in their lives, participate regularly in religious activities or express certain belief in a personal God are generally more likely to be Republican than those who do not. However, these patterns vary somewhat by religious tradition and completely disappear among certain religious groups.

**Party Affiliation of Religious Traditions**



\*From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent? [IF INDEPENDENT, NO PREFERENCE, OTHER, ASK]: As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

Among Catholics and members of historically black Protestant churches, for example, most of these religious traits make little difference in terms of partisan identification. Similarly, there are only small differences in party identification among members of mainline Protestant churches depending on their level of religious commitment. For instance, members of mainline churches who say religion is very important in their lives are only slightly more likely to be Republican than those who say it is less important (44% vs. 38%).

Among Mormons, members of evangelical Protestant churches and Jews, those who attend religious services at least weekly or say religion is very important in their lives are much more likely to be Republican than those who do not share these characteristics. And members of evangelical churches and Jews who attend religious services less than once a week are more likely to identify as Democrats compared with those who attend at least weekly (43% vs. 29% for members of evangelical churches and 69% vs. 47% for Jews).

## Party Affiliation

% who say they are...	Republican/ Lean Rep	Democrat/ Lean Dem	% who say they are...	Republican/ Lean Rep	Democrat/ Lean Dem
<b>Total population</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Attend weekly or more	43	40	Attend weekly or more	35	46
All others	30	51	All others	32	49
Religion is very important	40	43	Religion is very important	34	46
All others	29	52	All others	32	50
Pray at least daily	40	44	Pray at least daily	34	48
All others	30	51	All others	32	48
Absolute belief in pers. God	43	42	Absolute belief in pers. God	38	47
All others	27	52	All others	29	49
<b>Evang. Protestant churches</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>34 %</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Attend weekly or more	56	29	Attend weekly or more	73	15
All others	42	43	All others	39	45
Religion is very important	53	32	Religion is very important	70	19
All others	40	41	All others	N/A	N/A
Pray at least daily	53	32	Pray at least daily	68	20
All others	41	41	All others	N/A	N/A
Absolute belief in pers. God	54	31	Absolute belief in pers. God	69	19
All others	38	43	All others	N/A	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Attend weekly or more	46	40	Attend weekly or more	40	42
All others	39	45	All others	32	54
Religion is very important	44	41	Religion is very important	37	48
All others	38	46	All others	33	52
Pray at least daily	43	42	Pray at least daily	35	49
All others	40	45	All others	34	52
Absolute belief in pers. God	46	39	Absolute belief in pers. God	40	45
All others	36	48	All others	31	54
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>66%</b>
Attend weekly or more	12	78	Attend weekly or more	N/A	N/A
All others	8	77	All others	21	69
Religion is very important	10	77	Religion is very important	34	51
All others	10	77	All others	19	72
Pray at least daily	10	78	Pray at least daily	36	50
All others	12	74	All others	19	72
Absolute belief in pers. God	11	77	Absolute belief in pers. God	28	59
All others	9	77	All others	23	67

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.



## V. Religion and “Culture War” Issues

### Government Protection of Morality

The public is divided over the government’s proper role in protecting morality in society. A slight majority (52%) says they worry that the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality, while four-in-ten say that the government should be doing more to protect morality in society. There are stark differences on this question among religious groups as well as by degree of religious commitment.

#### Government’s Role in Protecting Morality

	The government should do more to protect morality in society	I worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality	Neither/Both (VOL)	Don’t know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	40	52	3	5	=100
Protestant	44	47	4	5	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	50	41	4	5	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	33	58	4	5	=100
<i>Historically black churches</i>	48	42	3	6	=100
Catholic	43	49	3	5	=100
Mormon	54	39	4	3	=100
Jehovah’s Witness	38	36	10	16	=100
Orthodox	43	48	3	6	=100
Jewish	22	71	3	5	=100
Muslim*	59	29	4	8	=100
Buddhist	26	67	3	4	=100
Hindu	44	45	4	7	=100
Unaffiliated	27	66	3	4	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	20	75	2	3	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	13	84	2	2	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	23	70	3	4	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	39	53	3	6	=100

\* From “Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream,” Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: Now I’m going to read you a few pairs of statements. Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...[READ AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

(a) The government should do more to protect morality in society, OR I worry the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality.

Of all the religious traditions, Mormons, Muslims and members of evangelical Protestant churches are most supportive of an increased role for government in protecting morality in society. A majority of Mormons (54%) and Muslims (59%), and half of members of evangelical Protestant churches, say the government should be more active in this role. Among members of mainline Protestant churches, only a third expresses this view.

In contrast, Jews, Buddhists and the unaffiliated are much more likely to worry about too much government involvement. More than seven-in-ten Jews (71%), and two-thirds of Buddhists (67%) and the unaffiliated (66%, including three-quarters of atheists, more than eight-in-ten agnostics and seven-in-ten of the secular unaffiliated), worry government is too involved in the issue of morality.

Americans who exhibit higher levels of religious engagement are significantly more likely than others to say the government ought to be doing more to protect morality in society. For instance, a majority of members of evangelical churches (52%) who pray daily support an increased government role in protecting morality, compared with four-in-ten (41%) of those who pray less often. Similar patterns are seen among members of mainline churches, Catholics, Jews and Orthodox Christians.

## *Abortion*

Abortion remains a divisive issue in the United States, with a slim majority of Americans in favor of keeping it legal in all or most cases (51%); by comparison, more than four-in-ten (43%) favor making abortion illegal in all or most cases. Most religious traditions in the U.S. come down firmly on one side of the debate or the other. For instance, a strong majority of members of mainline Protestant churches, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and the unaffiliated believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Conversely, a significant majority of Mormons, members of evangelical churches and Jehovah's Witnesses say that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases. Catholics, Muslims and members of historically black Protestant churches are basically evenly divided on the question of abortion.

## Abortion Should Be...

	Legal in most/all cases	Illegal in most/all cases	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	
Total population	51	43	6	=100
Protestant	45	49	6	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	33	61	6	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	62	32	7	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	47	46	8	=100
Catholic	48	45	7	=100
Mormon	27	70	4	=100
Jehovah's Witness	16	77	7	=100
Orthodox	62	30	8	=100
Jewish	84	14	2	=100
Muslim	48	48	4	=100
Buddhist	81	13	6	=100
Hindu	69	24	7	=100
Unaffiliated	70	24	6	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	82	13	5	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	83	14	3	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	76	19	5	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	56	36	8	=100

Question: Do you think abortion should be [READ CATEGORIES IN ORDER TO HALF SAMPLE, IN REVERSE ORDER TO HALF SAMPLE] legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases?

Views on abortion not only differ among religious traditions but also within them. Religious beliefs and practices significantly influence views on abortion, with those exhibiting high levels of religious commitment (on measures such as frequency of attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer or importance of religion in one's life) much more likely to oppose legalized abortion than their less-committed peers. For instance, nearly three-in-four members of evangelical Protestant churches (73%) who attend church at least weekly say abortion should be illegal in most or all cases, compared with only 45% of members of evangelical churches who attend church less frequently. Similar patterns are seen among other religious groups, including members of mainline and historically black Protestant churches, Catholics, Mormons, Orthodox Christians and Jews; the more committed members of these traditions tend to be significantly more likely to oppose legalized abortion compared with less-committed members of the same traditions.

## Opposition to Legalized Abortion

% who say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases...			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>45%</b>
Attend weekly or more	61	Attend weekly or more	58
All others	31	All others	35
Religion is very important	56	Religion is very important	56
All others	26	All others	31
Pray at least daily	53	Pray at least daily	51
All others	28	All others	35
Absolute belief in personal God	54	Absolute belief in personal God	52
All others	30	All others	38
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>70%</b>
Attend weekly or more	73	Attend weekly or more	78
All others	45	All others	44
Religion is very important	67	Religion is very important	75
All others	39	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	66	Pray at least daily	78
All others	44	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	67	Absolute belief in personal God	75
All others	46	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>30%</b>
Attend weekly or more	43	Attend weekly or more	51
All others	26	All others	19
Religion is very important	40	Religion is very important	41
All others	23	All others	16
Pray at least daily	39	Pray at least daily	37
All others	24	All others	20
Absolute belief in personal God	39	Absolute belief in personal God	40
All others	24	All others	22
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>14%</b>
Attend weekly or more	50	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	39	All others	10
Religion is very important	47	Religion is very important	29
All others	39	All others	8
Pray at least daily	47	Pray at least daily	31
All others	40	All others	8
Absolute belief in personal God	47	Absolute belief in personal God	29
All others	42	All others	11

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.

## Homosexuality

Views on homosexuality follow similar patterns as views on abortion, for the general public as well as for religious traditions. Half of all Americans believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society, and four-in-ten say that it is a way of life that should be discouraged. Three-quarters of Jehovah's Witnesses (76%), about six-in-ten Muslims (61%) and roughly two-thirds of Mormons (68%) and members of evangelical churches (64%) say homosexuality ought to be discouraged. The majority of most other religious groups say homosexuality should be accepted by society. This includes Catholics (58%), members of mainline churches (56%), Jews (79%), Buddhists (82%) and the unaffiliated (71%). By contrast, members of historically black churches, Orthodox Christians and Hindus are more divided over the issue of homosexuality. For example, four-in-ten members of historically black churches say homosexuality should be accepted, while 46% say it should be discouraged.

### Homosexuality Should Be...

	Accepted	Discouraged	Neither/Both/Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	
Total population	50	40	10	=100
Protestant	38	51	10	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	26	64	10	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	56	34	11	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	39	46	14	=100
Catholic	58	30	12	=100
Mormon	24	68	8	=100
Jehovah's Witness	12	76	11	=100
Orthodox	48	37	15	=100
Jewish	79	15	6	=100
Muslim*	27	61	12	=100
Buddhist	82	12	6	=100
Hindu	48	37	14	=100
Unaffiliated	71	20	10	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	80	14	6	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	83	10	8	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	74	17	8	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	59	29	12	=100

\* From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: Now I'm going to read you a few pairs of statements. Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...[READ AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

(b) Homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society, OR Homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society.

As with abortion, there are important links between intensity of religious beliefs and practices and attitudes about homosexuality. Across religious traditions, those who attend services more frequently, pray more frequently, say religion is very important in their lives or express certain belief in a personal God are less accepting of homosexuality than those who are less observant. For instance, seven-in-ten members of evangelical churches who say religion is very important to them say homosexuality ought to be discouraged by society, compared with four-in-ten members of evangelical Protestant churches who say religion is less important in their lives. Even among Jews, who overwhelmingly believe society should accept homosexuality, one-in-three of those who pray every day say that society should discourage it, which is four times the level of opposition seen among Jews who pray less often.

## Opposition to Public Acceptance of Homosexuality

% who say homosexuality should be discouraged by society...			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>30%</b>
Attend weekly or more	57	Attend weekly or more	37
All others	28	All others	25
Religion is very important	52	Religion is very important	35
All others	23	All others	23
Pray at least daily	49	Pray at least daily	33
All others	26	All others	26
Absolute belief in personal God	51	Absolute belief in personal God	34
All others	28	All others	26
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>68%</b>
Attend weekly or more	75	Attend weekly or more	76
All others	49	All others	43
Religion is very important	70	Religion is very important	75
All others	42	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	69	Pray at least daily	74
All others	48	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	69	Absolute belief in personal God	71
All others	52	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>37%</b>
Attend weekly or more	44	Attend weekly or more	57
All others	28	All others	26
Religion is very important	42	Religion is very important	47
All others	25	All others	24
Pray at least daily	39	Pray at least daily	48
All others	28	All others	20
Absolute belief in personal God	39	Absolute belief in personal God	44
All others	28	All others	31
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>15%</b>
Attend weekly or more	54	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	36	All others	10
Religion is very important	49	Religion is very important	27
All others	30	All others	9
Pray at least daily	49	Pray at least daily	32
All others	34	All others	8
Absolute belief in personal God	50	Absolute belief in personal God	24
All others	40	All others	12

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.

## Evolution

Another issue that divides Americans is the issue of evolution. Overall, the public is evenly divided on the question of whether or not evolution is the best explanation for life on earth, with 48% agreeing that it is and 45% rejecting the notion that evolution best explains the origins of human life. Religious differences on this issue are stark. At least seven-in-ten members of evangelical Protestant churches, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses reject the evolutionary account as the best explanation for the development of human life, while large majorities of Catholics, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and the unaffiliated agree that evolution best explains the development of life on earth.

### Evolution as the Best Explanation for the Origins of Human Life

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	
Total population	48	45	7	=100
Protestant	35	58	7	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	23	70	6	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	51	42	8	=100
<i>Historically black churches</i>	39	51	11	=100
Catholic	58	35	7	=100
Mormon	21	76	3	=100
Jehovah's Witness	8	90	2	=100
Orthodox	55	36	9	=100
Jewish	77	17	5	=100
Muslim	45	51	3	=100
Buddhist	81	14	5	=100
Hindu	80	14	5	=100
Unaffiliated	72	22	6	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	87	9	3	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	87	11	2	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	77	16	6	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	55	37	8	=100

Question: Now, as I read some statements on a few different topics, please tell me if you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly DISagree or completely disagree. (First/next) [INSERT; RANDOMIZE]  
 (c) Evolution is the best explanation for the origins of human life on earth.



Thoughts about whether evolution is the best explanation for life on earth are also closely tied to individual religious beliefs and practices. Across many religious traditions, the more highly committed tend to be less likely to believe in evolution. Among the public overall, nearly two-thirds (63%) of those who attend religious services at least once a week reject the idea of evolution, compared with only a third of those who attend less often. Similar patterns are found across religious traditions. A majority of members of historically black Protestant churches (57%) who attend worship services at least once a week disagree that evolution best explains the origins of human life, while only four-in-ten of those who attend less often hold the same opinion. Among Orthodox Christians the gap is especially pronounced – 35 percentage points.

## Disagreement with Evolution

% who say evolution is not best explanation for origins of human life...			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>35%</b>
Attend weekly or more	63	Attend weekly or more	44
All others	33	All others	29
Religion is very important	59	Religion is very important	42
All others	27	All others	26
Pray at least daily	57	Pray at least daily	41
All others	28	All others	26
Absolute belief in personal God	60	Absolute belief in personal God	44
All others	28	All others	26
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>76%</b>
Attend weekly or more	80	Attend weekly or more	82
All others	57	All others	56
Religion is very important	76	Religion is very important	80
All others	49	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	76	Pray at least daily	80
All others	53	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	77	Absolute belief in personal God	79
All others	52	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>36%</b>
Attend weekly or more	55	Attend weekly or more	60
All others	35	All others	25
Religion is very important	54	Religion is very important	47
All others	29	All others	24
Pray at least daily	51	Pray at least daily	47
All others	31	All others	22
Absolute belief in personal God	53	Absolute belief in personal God	56
All others	29	All others	22
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>17%</b>
Attend weekly or more	57	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	40	All others	14
Religion is very important	52	Religion is very important	35
All others	39	All others	10
Pray at least daily	54	Pray at least daily	34
All others	37	All others	12
Absolute belief in personal God	54	Absolute belief in personal God	27
All others	44	All others	16

Note: The "absolute belief in a personal God" category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.

## Churches and Politics

The public is nearly equally divided between those who believe that houses of worship should express their views on day-to-day social and political matters and those who say churches should keep out of politics (50% and 46%, respectively).

Views on this issue vary significantly by tradition. Members of mainline Protestant denominations, Catholics and Mormons are split over the issue, while about two-thirds of members of evangelical and historically black churches (64% and 69%, respectively) agree that churches should express social and political views.

Many other faiths are much less comfortable with this intermingling. Large majorities of Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and the unaffiliated oppose church involvement in politics. However, among the unaffiliated there are also stark differences. More than two-thirds of atheists, agnostics and

### Should Churches Express Views on Politics?

	Yes	No	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	
Total population	50	46	5	<b>=100</b>
Protestant	58	38	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	64	32	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Mainline churches</i>	46	50	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	69	27	4	<b>=100</b>
Catholic	48	48	5	<b>=100</b>
Mormon	47	48	5	<b>=100</b>
Jehovah's Witness	12	82	7	<b>=100</b>
Orthodox	42	53	4	<b>=100</b>
Jewish	33	63	4	<b>=100</b>
Muslim*	49	43	8	<b>=100</b>
Buddhist	34	56	10	<b>=100</b>
Hindu	25	69	7	<b>=100</b>
Unaffiliated	34	61	5	<b>=100</b>
<i>Atheist</i>	23	72	5	<b>=100</b>
<i>Agnostic</i>	27	69	3	<b>=100</b>
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	28	67	5	<b>=100</b>
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	47	47	6	<b>=100</b>

\* From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: In your opinion, should churches and other houses of worship keep out of political matters - or should they express their views on day-to-day social and political questions?

the secular unaffiliated are opposed to the idea that churches should express their views on political or social matters. The religious unaffiliated, in contrast, are split, with identical numbers supporting and opposing this view (47% each). The group with the greatest reservations about mixing religion with politics is Jehovah's Witnesses; 82% say that churches should not express their views on day-to-day political issues.

There are also differences on this issue based on level of religious commitment. For instance, a majority of members of mainline Protestant churches (54%) who say religion is very important in their lives say churches should express their views on political matters, compared with less than four-in-ten (37%) of those who say religion is less important to them. Additionally, a majority of Catholics (55%) who attend worship services at least once a week favor houses of worship getting involved in political debates, but only four-in-ten Catholics (42%) who attend less often agree.

## VI. Religion and Economic Issues

### Size of Government

Attitudes on social and cultural issues as well as basic political orientation are often closely associated with religious affiliation, beliefs and practices. Views on other political topics, including the economy and views on certain foreign affairs issues, tend to be less closely linked with religion.

The general public is about evenly split between a preference for a smaller government providing fewer services (43%) and a larger government providing more services (46%). A slim majority of Catholics and Buddhists (51% each), and substantial majorities of Muslims (70%), members of

### Views of Size and Role of Government

	Prefer smaller government, fewer services	Prefer bigger government, more services	Depends (VOL)	Don't know/ Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	43	46	5	6	=100
Protestant	45	44	5	7	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	48	41	4	7	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	51	37	5	7	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	18	72	5	5	=100
Catholic	39	51	4	6	=100
Mormon	56	36	5	4	=100
Jehovah's Witness	23	47	6	23	=100
Orthodox	42	46	6	7	=100
Jewish	40	46	7	7	=100
Muslim*	21	70	3	6	=100
Buddhist	35	51	7	7	=100
Hindu	31	59	5	5	=100
Unaffiliated	41	48	5	6	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	38	50	5	7	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	48	43	5	4	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	44	44	5	6	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	35	54	4	7	=100

\*From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services?

historically black churches (72%) and Hindus (59%), support bigger government that offers more services. By contrast, fewer than four-in-ten members of mainline churches (37%) and Mormons (36%) favor a large government.

On many social and cultural issues, agnostics and members of evangelical churches find themselves on opposite sides, but on the role of government, a plurality of both groups (48%) say they prefer a smaller role for government. Atheists and the religious unaffiliated are significantly less likely to prefer smaller government (38% and 35%, respectively).

### *Aid to the Poor*

While American adults are more-or-less evenly divided on whether they would prefer a larger or a smaller government, more than six-in-ten (62%) favor the government doing more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt. Indeed, strong majorities of nearly every religious group believe that government should do more to help needy Americans. Only among Mormons do fewer than half (49%) say that government should do more to help the needy; more than four-in-ten Mormons (42%) say the government can't afford to do much more for the needy.

Nearly three-quarters of Muslims and Buddhists (73% each) and eight-in-ten members of historically black churches (79%) believe that government has an obligation to do more to help Americans in need. Members of mainline and evangelical churches, by comparison, are less supportive of having government do more for the needy, though nearly six-in-ten among these groups (58% and 57%, respectively) also agree that government ought to be more involved even at the expense of incurring more debt. Nearly two-thirds of the unaffiliated (65%) say the government should do more to help the needy, with little variation among the unaffiliated subgroups.

## Government Assistance for the Poor

	Government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt	Government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy	Neither/Both (VOL)	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	62	29	5	4	<b>=100</b>
Protestant	60	31	5	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	57	34	5	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Mainline churches</i>	58	33	6	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	79	15	3	3	<b>=100</b>
Catholic	63	29	4	4	<b>=100</b>
Mormon	49	42	7	3	<b>=100</b>
Jehovah's Witness	60	24	5	11	<b>=100</b>
Orthodox	62	30	6	3	<b>=100</b>
Jewish	68	23	6	4	<b>=100</b>
Muslim*	73	17	4	6	<b>=100</b>
Buddhist	73	18	6	3	<b>=100</b>
Hindu	60	36	3	1	<b>=100</b>
Unaffiliated	65	26	6	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Atheist</i>	65	26	5	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Agnostic</i>	62	30	6	3	<b>=100</b>
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	64	26	6	4	<b>=100</b>
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	68	23	5	4	<b>=100</b>

\*From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: Now I'm going to read you a few pairs of statements. Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...[READ AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

(d) The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt, OR The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy.

## Hard Work and Success

Although most Americans believe the government should help needy citizens, they also believe that with hard work most people can get ahead. Two-thirds of the public (67%), including majorities of every major religious tradition, believe that people who want to get ahead can make it if they are willing to work hard. Less than three-in-ten say hard work is no guarantee of success. Mormons are somewhat more likely than the general public (77% vs. 67%) to say that people can get ahead by relying on hard work, while Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists and atheists are somewhat less likely to express this view (57%, 52% and 54%, respectively).

### Attitudes About Hard Work and Success

	Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they are willing to work hard	Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people	Neither/Both (VOL)	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	67	29	2	2	=100
Protestant	69	27	2	1	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	71	25	2	1	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	68	29	2	1	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	65	31	2	2	=100
Catholic	70	26	2	2	=100
Mormon	77	21	1	1	=100
Jehovah's Witness	57	37	2	4	=100
Orthodox	66	28	2	3	=100
Jewish	63	32	3	1	=100
Muslim*	71	26	2	1	=100
Buddhist	52	43	3	2	=100
Hindu	71	26	1	2	=100
Unaffiliated	61	35	3	2	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	54	42	3	2	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	61	36	2	1	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	62	34	3	1	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	61	34	3	2	=100

\*From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007.

Question: Now I'm going to read you a few pairs of statements. Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...[READ AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

(c) Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard, OR Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people.



## Environmental Protection

There is broad agreement among Americans, and among most religious groups, on the issue of environmental protection. More than six-in-ten Americans (61%) say tougher environmental laws are worth the cost. Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses all mirror the general public on the issue of environmental regulations.

Although a majority of every major religious group in the United States supports stricter environmental measures, there are some differences in degree. For instance, only slim majorities of members of evangelical and historically black Protestant churches (54% and 52%, respectively) support the imposition of stricter environmental laws. Members of non-Christian faiths, by

### Views on the Environment

	Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy	Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost	Neither/Both (VOL)	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	30	61	3	6	=100
Protestant	33	57	4	6	=100
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	35	54	4	6	=100
<i>Mainline churches</i>	28	64	3	5	=100
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	38	52	3	7	=100
Catholic	32	60	3	6	=100
Mormon	36	55	4	5	=100
Jehovah's Witness	24	60	8	8	=100
Orthodox	30	60	5	5	=100
Jewish	16	77	2	5	=100
Muslim	26	69	3	2	=100
Buddhist	19	75	3	3	=100
Hindu	24	67	2	6	=100
Unaffiliated	24	69	3	4	=100
<i>Atheist</i>	20	75	2	3	=100
<i>Agnostic</i>	18	78	3	1	=100
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	21	72	3	4	=100
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	31	59	3	6	=100

Question: Now I'm going to read you a few pairs of statements. Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...[READ AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

(e) Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy, OR Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost.

contrast, are much more likely to believe that stricter environmental regulations are worth the economic costs. More than two-thirds of Jews (77%), Buddhists (75%), Hindus (67%), Muslims (69%) and the unaffiliated (69%) support stricter environmental laws. Further, more than seven-in-ten atheists (75%), agnostics (78%) and the secular unaffiliated (72%) say stricter environmental laws are worth the cost, with somewhat lower levels of support for environmental regulation found among the religious unaffiliated (59%).

## VII. Religion and Foreign Affairs

### *Isolationism vs. Internationalism*

The majority of Americans (55%) believe that the U.S. should concentrate more on problems at home and pay less attention to problems overseas. By contrast, only slightly more than a third (36%) says it would be best for the future of the country to be active in world affairs.

Majorities of most religious groups agree that the U.S. should concentrate more on domestic problems. This is especially true of members of historically black Protestant churches (68%) and

#### Views on U.S. Involvement Abroad

	It is best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs	We should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home	Neither/Both (VOL)	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	36	55	7	2	<b>=100</b>
Protestant	36	55	8	2	<b>=100</b>
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	36	54	8	2	<b>=100</b>
<i>Mainline churches</i>	40	52	8	1	<b>=100</b>
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	23	68	7	1	<b>=100</b>
Catholic	36	55	6	2	<b>=100</b>
Mormon	51	37	10	1	<b>=100</b>
Jehovah's Witness	13	64	13	10	<b>=100</b>
Orthodox	34	56	9	1	<b>=100</b>
Jewish	53	37	8	2	<b>=100</b>
Muslim	31	59	7	2	<b>=100</b>
Buddhist	41	45	11	2	<b>=100</b>
Hindu	34	58	6	2	<b>=100</b>
Unaffiliated	34	58	7	1	<b>=100</b>
<i>Atheist</i>	46	47	6	1	<b>=100</b>
<i>Agnostic</i>	42	50	7	1	<b>=100</b>
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	35	56	8	1	<b>=100</b>
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	26	65	7	2	<b>=100</b>

Question: Now I'm going to read you a few pairs of statements. Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...[READ AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

(g) It's best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs, OR We should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home.

Jehovah's Witnesses (64%). Only among Jews and Mormons do majorities say that it is best for the future of the U.S. to be involved in global affairs (53% and 51%, respectively).

Overall, the unaffiliated and members of evangelical Protestant churches most closely resemble the general public in their views of U.S. involvement in the world, but among the unaffiliated there are substantial differences between those with a secular outlook and those with a more religious orientation. Atheists are about evenly split over whether it is better for the U.S. to be active in world affairs (46%) and whether the U.S. should focus on problems at home (47%). However, among the religious unaffiliated, the overwhelming majority (65%) says that the U.S. should concentrate on problems at home, compared with only about a quarter (26%) who say the U.S. should be active in the world.

### *Diplomacy vs. Military Strength*

About six-in-ten Americans (59%) say that good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace. Majorities or pluralities of every major religious tradition believe that diplomacy, and not military strength, is the best way to ensure peace.

The religious groups composed of a significant proportion of immigrants are among the strongest supporters of diplomacy as a method to ensure peace. Roughly eight-in-ten Muslims (84%), Hindus (84%) and Buddhists (79%) say foreign policy based on good diplomacy is a better way to ensure peace than military strength, as do nearly two-thirds of Catholics and Orthodox Christians (64% each).

Although Mormons and members of evangelical Protestant churches are less likely than others to favor diplomacy over military strength, pluralities of these groups also take this view (46% and 49%, respectively). On the other hand, close to four-in-ten of these groups (38% and 37%, respectively) say that military strength is a better way to ensure peace.

## Diplomacy vs. Military Strength

	The best way to ensure peace is through military strength	Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace	Neither/Both (VOL)	Don't know/Refused	
	%	%	%	%	
Total population	28	59	9	4	<b>=100</b>
Protestant	32	53	10	5	<b>=100</b>
<i>Evangelical churches</i>	38	46	11	5	<b>=100</b>
<i>Mainline churches</i>	29	57	11	3	<b>=100</b>
<i>Hist. black churches</i>	20	67	7	6	<b>=100</b>
Catholic	25	64	8	3	<b>=100</b>
Mormon	37	49	13	2	<b>=100</b>
Jehovah's Witness	9	55	21	14	<b>=100</b>
Orthodox	23	64	11	2	<b>=100</b>
Jewish	23	64	10	3	<b>=100</b>
Muslim	12	84	3	1	<b>=100</b>
Buddhist	14	79	4	3	<b>=100</b>
Hindu	12	84	2	2	<b>=100</b>
Unaffiliated	22	68	8	3	<b>=100</b>
<i>Atheist</i>	20	73	6	1	<b>=100</b>
<i>Agnostic</i>	18	73	7	1	<b>=100</b>
<i>Secular unaffiliated</i>	21	68	8	2	<b>=100</b>
<i>Religious unaffiliated</i>	23	64	8	5	<b>=100</b>

Question: Now I'm going to read you a few pairs of statements. Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...[READ AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS]  
(f) The best way to ensure peace is through military strength, OR Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace.

Although there are few notable differences in views on this question that are traceable to differing levels of religious commitment, it is interesting to note that Jews who pray frequently or say religion is very important are significantly more likely than Jews who are less committed on these measures to say military strength is the best way to ensure peace.

## Support for Foreign Policy Based on Military Strength

% who say military strength is the best way to ensure peace...			
<b>Total population</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>25%</b>
Attend weekly or more	31	Attend weekly or more	25
All others	26	All others	25
Religion is very important	30	Religion is very important	25
All others	25	All others	25
Pray at least daily	29	Pray at least daily	24
All others	26	All others	26
Absolute belief in personal God	32	Absolute belief in personal God	27
All others	23	All others	23
<b>Evangelical Protestant churches</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>Mormon</b>	<b>37%</b>
Attend weekly or more	39	Attend weekly or more	41
All others	36	All others	24
Religion is very important	39	Religion is very important	40
All others	35	All others	N/A
Pray at least daily	38	Pray at least daily	40
All others	37	All others	N/A
Absolute belief in personal God	40	Absolute belief in personal God	40
All others	33	All others	N/A
<b>Mainline Protestant churches</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	<b>23%</b>
Attend weekly or more	29	Attend weekly or more	25
All others	29	All others	23
Religion is very important	30	Religion is very important	24
All others	28	All others	23
Pray at least daily	29	Pray at least daily	22
All others	29	All others	25
Absolute belief in personal God	32	Absolute belief in personal God	26
All others	26	All others	21
<b>Hist. black Protestant churches</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>23%</b>
Attend weekly or more	20	Attend weekly or more	N/A
All others	20	All others	21
Religion is very important	21	Religion is very important	30
All others	16	All others	20
Pray at least daily	20	Pray at least daily	30
All others	18	All others	21
Absolute belief in personal God	20	Absolute belief in personal God	29
All others	19	All others	22

Note: The “absolute belief in a personal God” category includes those who indicate that they believe in God or a universal spirit, are absolutely certain God exists and believe God is a person.