

**RELIGION IN AMERICA**

April 6-9, 2005

Americans are a religious people. More than nine in ten believe in God or a higher power, six in ten say they pray often, and more than half say religion is very important in their daily lives.

But there are also religious questions on which Americans divide - including the literal truth of the Bible, the issue of evolution versus creation, and even on whether or not people with strong religious beliefs are discriminated against in this country. The religious divide has a political side, too. Half of those Americans who attend services nearly every week approve of the way President Bush is handling his job, while most of those who attend religious services less often do not.

**A PEOPLE OF FAITH**

Nearly all Americans believe in some higher power. 82% say they believe in God, and another 9% believe in some other sort of higher power or universal spirit. 8% don't believe in either.

**WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IN?**

God	82%
A higher power	9
Neither	8

Majorities in every demographic group believe in God -- but doubts are highest among the young (20%), men (12%), people who live in big cities (15%), those in the West (15%), and political independents (15%).

Americans engage in religious actions, too - six in ten pray often, and 40% of Americans say they attend religious services nearly every week. Nearly six in ten say religion is VERY important in their daily lives. Only those adults under the age of 30 disagree.

**AMERICA'S RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**

Pray often	59%
Attend services nearly every week	40%
Attend less often	39
Never attend services	20
Say religion is very important in their daily lives	59%
Say religion is not at all important	13

While 20% of Americans say they NEVER attend religious services, fewer admit that religion is not at all important in their lives, and hardly any Americans with a religious preference say they never pray.

Bible reading (or the reading of the Torah, Koran or other sacred text), however, is not a daily activity for most Americans. 15% say they read the Bible daily, about as many who say they never do. A quarter read it at least once a week.

**READING THE BIBLE OR OTHER SACRED TEXT**

Daily	15%
Every week	23
Less often	46
Never	14

Americans are not necessarily in agreement when it comes to how to interpret the Bible. 43% agree with the statement "The Bible is the actual word of God, and is to be taken literally, word for word." 54% disagree. This is a reversal from the answers Americans gave in 1994, when 53% agreed with the statement.

**THE BIBLE SHOULD BE TAKEN LITERALLY, WORD FOR WORD**

	Now	1994
Agree	43%	53%
Disagree	54	43

**CHANGING RELIGIONS**

Most Americans expect that an individual's faith should change throughout their lives, just as their body and mind changes - and 58% say their own personal faith has changed sometime in their lives.

**HAS YOUR PERSONAL FAITH CHANGED DURING YOUR LIFE?**

Yes	58%
No	41

Change is most often reported by those who now say religion is not important in their daily lives. But some Americans have become more religious and some less religious. In fact, nearly half say they have changed their religious activities just in the last five years -- 30% say that just in the last five years they have been spending more time

in religious activities, while 19% say they have been spending less time on those activities.

But there even are changes in how people describe themselves. For example, only 6% of Americans say they were raised having no religious preference, but 16% now describe themselves that way. Some of the greatest change may have occurred among those raised as Catholics. That group totaled 30% in this poll, but when asked their current religious preference, less than two-thirds still described themselves as Catholic.

#### AMERICAN RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

	<u>Raised</u>	<u>Now</u>
Protestant	56%	53%
Catholic	30	20
Other	6	7
None	6	16

Having no religious preference does not always mean having no religion. More than a third of those with no religious preference say they attend religious services at least occasionally and a similar percentage describe religion as at least somewhat important in their daily lives.

#### RELIGION AND TRADITION IN TODAY'S WORLD

More than half of Americans think that traditional religions can answer all or most of today's problems. But a sizable minority sees traditional religions as less relevant to modern life: 32% say that traditional religions are old-fashioned and out of date.

#### TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS...

Can answer today's problems	54%
Are out of date	32

White evangelical Christians are especially likely to see traditional religions as appropriate today -- 83% do. Nearly seven in 10 Protestants see traditional religion as relevant to today's problems, as do 57% of Catholics. At the opposite end of the spectrum, seven in 10 of those with no religion view traditional religion as old-fashioned.

Many Americans are looking for a spiritual experience. 47% of those for whom religion is even minimally important say that following the traditions and teachings of their religion is the most important part of religion for them, but about as many say that it's more important to them to have a spiritual experience, no matter how they find it.

#### WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT?

(Among those for whom religion is important)	
Following religious traditions	47%
Having spiritual experience	46

A majority of those under 30 are interested in a spiritual experience, while most of those over 65 prefer following religious traditions. Religious traditions are more important to more Southerners, and Protestants.

Not surprisingly, those who attend religious services nearly every week are more apt to think traditional religion can answer today's needs, and to say that following religious traditions is more important to them.

**RELIGION AND SCIENCE**

The gap between those who are very religious and those who are not is a chasm on some issues - abortion, for example. Only a third of those who are very religious believe abortion should be permitted in other than extreme circumstances, compared with more than two-thirds of those who say religion is NOT important.

But the gap is also apparent when it comes to the role of science and the belief in evolution. Nearly half of all Americans accept the principle of evolution of humans - although most of them believe God guided the evolutionary process. 44% say God created humans in their present form, and that happened sometime in the past 10,000 years. In another question, without the specific time frame, even more Americans - 53% - say that God created humans in their present form at some time, not necessarily in the last 10,000 years.

**EVOLUTION OR CREATION?**

	Total	Observant	Less/Non-Observant
Humans evolved	17%	2%	28%
God guided human evolution	30	27	33
God created humans in last 10,000 years	44	67	28

Observant practitioners, those who attend religious services almost every week, overwhelmingly reject evolution in any form, while those who attend less often (including those who never attend) generally accept it. Those who never go to religious services are especially accepting of the concept of evolution.

For nearly two-thirds of all Americans, God and evolution are not mutually exclusive. 62% say a person can believe in both God and evolution, while 33% say they can't. Creationists are not so sure of that - fewer than half say a person can believe in both.

**CAN ONE BELIEVE IN BOTH GOD AND EVOLUTION?**

	Total	Creationists
Yes	62%	45%
No	33	48

There is also a sense among Americans that religion and science can mix - or at least can be kept separate with little harm to either. Just a third says religion and science are generally in conflict. Here, however, it is the least observant - those who never attend religious services -- who see the greatest possibility for conflict.

**SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

	Total	Don't Attend Religious Services
Mostly agree with each other	26%	8%
Mostly in conflict	32	44
Not related	37	46

**RELIGION AND POLITICS**

Nearly half of all Americans believe people with strong religious beliefs are discriminated against in this country - more than said the same two years ago and twelve years ago. This is particularly true among those who say they are very religious; most of them say discrimination exists.

**ARE AMERICANS WITH STRONG RELIGIOUS BELIEFS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?**

	Now	2004	1994
Yes	48%	36%	37%
No	43	55	55

Relatively few of those who say religion is not important in their daily lives see discrimination against people with strong religious beliefs, compared with those for whom religion is extremely or very important.

**ARE AMERICANS WITH STRONG RELIGIOUS BELIEFS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?**

	Total	Importance of Religion in Life	
		Very Important	Not Important
Yes	48%	55%	23%
No	43	36	70

The political impact of religious belief is also clear - especially in evaluations of the parties and of the current President. George W. Bush has described himself as a born-again Christian, and has said he reads the Bible every day, so perhaps the religious divide here is not surprising. Those who attend any religious service regularly (the observant) are more likely to think of themselves as Republicans and to approve of the way the President is handling his job, while those who attend less frequently - or not at all - are more likely to be Democrats and to disapprove of the President.

**THE RELIGIOUS DIVIDE ON POLITICS**

	Observant	Less Observant	Non-Observant
Party Identification:			
Republican	41%	26%	18%
Democrat	29	37	31
Independent	30	37	51
Bush Job Performance:			
Approve	51%	31%	18%
Disapprove	43	59	75

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This poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 899 adults, interviewed by telephone April 6-9, 2006. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. Error for subgroups may be higher.

**CBS NEWS POLL**  
**Religion in America**  
**April 6-9, 2006**

q17 What is your personal feeling about abortion? 1. It should be permitted in all cases 2. It should be permitted, but subject to greater restrictions than it is now 3. It should be permitted only in cases such as rape, incest and to save the woman's life OR 4. It should only be permitted to save the woman's life.

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **	Jan06a
	%	%
Permitted in all cases	29	27
Greater restrictions	17	15
Rape/Incest/Save woman's life	33	33
Only to save woman's life	14	17
Not permitted at all (Vol.)	4	5
DK/NA	3	3

q20 Which of the following statements comes closest to your views on the origin of human beings? 1. Human beings evolved from less advanced life forms over millions of years, and God did not directly guide this process 2. Human beings evolved from less advanced life forms over millions of years, but God guided this process 3. God created human beings in their present form.

	** HALF SAMPLE X **	Oct05a
Evolved, God did not guide	17	15
Evolved, God guided process	23	30
God created humans in present form	53	51
DK/NA	7	4

q21 Which of the following statements comes closest to your views on the origin of human beings? 1. Human beings evolved from less advanced life forms over millions of years, and God did not directly guide this process 2. Human beings evolved from less advanced life forms over millions of years, but God guided this process 3. God created human beings in their present form within the last ten thousand years.

	** HALF SAMPLE Y **	
Evolved, God did not guide	17	15
Evolved, God guided process	30	29
God created humans w/in last 10,000 yrs	44	48
DK/NA	9	8

q69 Which of the following statements comes closest to your belief about God -- 1. you believe in God, 2. you don't believe in God, but you believe in some other universal spirit or higher power, or 3. you don't believe in either?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **	
Believe in God	82	
Believe in universal spirit	9	
Don't believe in either	8	
Other (Vol.)	0	
DK/NA	1	

q70 Which comes closer to your view about the relationship between science and religion -- 1. They generally agree with each other, 2. They generally conflict with each other, or 3. They are not related to each other in any meaningful way?

Agree with each other	26
Conflict with each other	32
Not related in a meaningful	37
DK/NA	5

q71 I am going to read you two statements. Please tell me which one best describes your own opinion: 1. A person's faith should not change throughout life because it is the foundation for living. OR 2. A person's faith should change throughout life just as one's body and mind change.

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

	%
Should not change	33
Should change	60
DK/NA	7

q72 What about you -- would you say your own personal faith has NOT changed throughout your life, or has it changed?

Has not changed	41
Has changed	58
DK/NA	1

q73 Do you believe that traditional religions can answer all or most of today's problems, or that traditional religions are largely old-fashioned and out of date?

Can answer	54
Old-fashioned	32
DK/NA	14

q74 How important is religion in your daily life? Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?

Extremely important	26
Very important	33
Somewhat important	26
Not at all important	13
DK/NA	2

q75 Which is the most important part of religion for you, personally?...following the traditions and teachings of your religion as closely as you can; OR, having something you consider a spiritual experience, no matter how you find it?

AMONG THOSE WHO SAY RELIGION IS IMPORTANT

Following traditions	47
Spiritual experience	46
Both/Traditions are spirit	3
DK/NA	4

q76 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

	%	Jul94c
Agree	43	53
Disagree	54	43
DK/NA	3	4

q77 Do you think people who have strong religious beliefs are discriminated against in this country?

		Nov04a
Yes	48	36
No	43	55
Depends (Vol.)	5	4
DK/NA	4	5

q78 Do you believe that it is possible or not possible to believe in both God and evolution?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **	Oct05a
	%	%
Possible	62	67
Not possible	33	29
DK/NA	5	4

q80 How often do you read the Bible, the Torah, Koran, or some other sacred text -- every day, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, less often than that, or never?

Every day	15
At least once a week	23
A few times a month	15
A few times a year	15
Less often	16
Never	14
DK/NA	2

q84 What religion were you brought up in?

Protestant (Please specify)	56
Catholic	30
Jewish	1
Other (Specify)	6
None	6
DK/NA	1

reli What is your religious preference today?

Protestant (Please specify)	53
Catholic	20
Jewish	1
Other (Specify)	7
None	16
DK/NA	3

q90 Would you say you attend religious services every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?

Every week	29
Almost every week	11
Once or twice a month	16
A few times a year	23
Never	20
DK/NA	1

q92 Other than in religious services, how often do you pray--often, sometimes, hardly ever, only in times of crisis or never?

Often	59
Sometimes	13
Hardly ever	4
Crisis	2
Never	2
DK/NA	1
No/DK/NA religious preference in >reli<	19

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	899	
Half Sample X (q20)	468	481
Half Sample Y (q21)	431	418