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Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics

Most say religion is losing influence in American life

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Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics

Most say religion is losing influence in American life

A large majority of Americans feel that religion is losing influence in public life, according to a 2019 Pew Research Center survey. While some say this is a good thing, many more view it as a negative development, reflecting the broad tendency of Americans to see religion as a positive force in society.

At the same time, U.S. adults are resoundingly clear in their belief that religious institutions should stay out of politics. Nearly two-thirds of Americans in the new survey say churches and other houses of worship should keep out of political matters, while 36% say they should express their views on day-to-day social and political questions. And three-quarters of the public expresses the view that churches should *not* come out in favor of one candidate over another during

Most U.S. adults want religious groups to stay out of politics

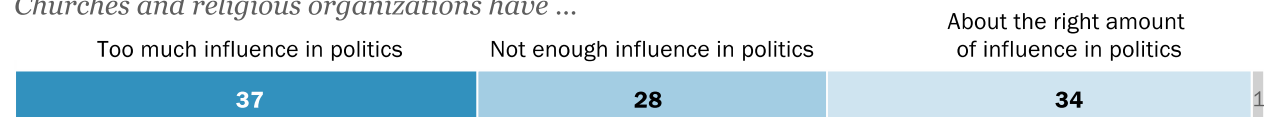
% of U.S. adults who say churches and other houses of worship should ...



During political elections, should churches/other houses of worship come out in favor of one candidate over another?



Churches and religious organizations have ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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elections, in contrast with [efforts by President Trump](#) to roll back existing legal limits on houses of worship endorsing candidates.¹

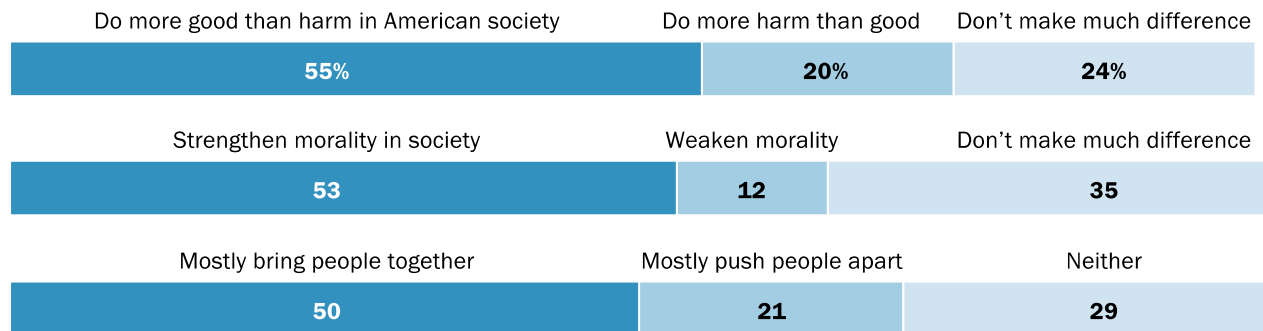
In addition, Americans are more likely to say that churches and other houses of worship currently have too much influence in politics (37%) rather than too little (28%), while the remaining one-third (34%) say religious groups' current level of influence on politics is about right.

¹ This is not the first time Pew Research Center has asked these questions of the U.S. public. However, [previous surveys](#) were conducted over the phone by a live interviewer, and are not directly comparable to the new survey, which respondents self-administered online as part of the Center's [American Trends Panel](#).

On balance, U.S. adults have a favorable view about the role religious institutions play in American life more broadly – beyond politics. More than half of the public believes that churches and religious organizations do more good than harm in American society, while just one-in-five Americans say religious organizations do more harm than good. Likewise, there are far more U.S. adults who say that religious organizations strengthen morality in society and mostly bring people together than there are who say that religious organizations weaken morality and mostly push people apart. On all three of these questions, views have held steady [since 2017](#), the last time the Center measured opinions on these issues.

Many in U.S. see religion as force for good in society

% of U.S. adults who say churches and religious organizations ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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The survey also shows that roughly four-in-ten U.S. adults – including a majority of Christians – lament what they perceive as religion’s declining influence on American society, while fewer than two-in-ten say they think religion is losing influence in American life and that this is a good thing. In addition, roughly two-thirds of the public believes that religious leaders in general have high or very high ethical standards, and a larger share of Americans who attend religious services at least a few times a year say this about the clergy in their own congregations. Among these U.S. adults who attend religious services, majorities express at least “some” confidence in their clergy to provide useful guidance not only on clearly religious topics (such as how to interpret scripture) but also on other matters, such as parenting and personal finance (see Chapter 2).

Most U.S. adults think religious leaders have high ethical standards

% of U.S. adults who say religious leaders in general have ...

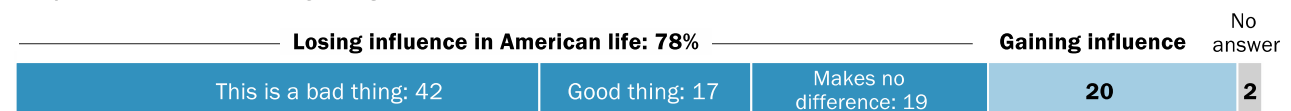
High/very high ethical standards  65%

*Among those who attend religious services at least a few times a year,
% who say _____ have high/very high ethical standards*

The clergy at their congregation  88

Religious leaders in general  78

% of U.S. adults who say religion is ...



Note: Results for the share of U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often and say the clergy at their congregation have high or very high ethical standards combine the results of two questions: Respondents who identify as Catholic and attend Mass at least a few times a year were asked to rate the ethical standards of the priests at their parish, and U.S. adults who attend religious services at least yearly but are not Catholic were asked to rate the ethical standards of the clergy at their congregation or place of worship. In the question about religion’s influence in American life, the “makes no difference” response option includes those who said religion is losing influence but did not answer a follow-up question about whether this was a good thing or a bad thing. Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotal indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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These are among the key findings from a nationally representative survey of 6,364 U.S. adults conducted online from March 18 to April 1, 2019, using Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points. Many of the questions in the survey were asked only of U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often; results for that group have a margin of error of plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

The survey, part of an ongoing effort by the Center to explore the role of [trust, facts and democracy](#) in American society, was designed to gauge the public’s views about many aspects of religion’s role in public life, as well as asking how much U.S. adults trust clergy to provide various kinds of guidance, what messages Americans receive from their clergy about other religious groups, how satisfied they are with the sermons they hear, how close they feel to their religious leaders, and whether they know – and share – the political views of the clergy in their houses of worship.

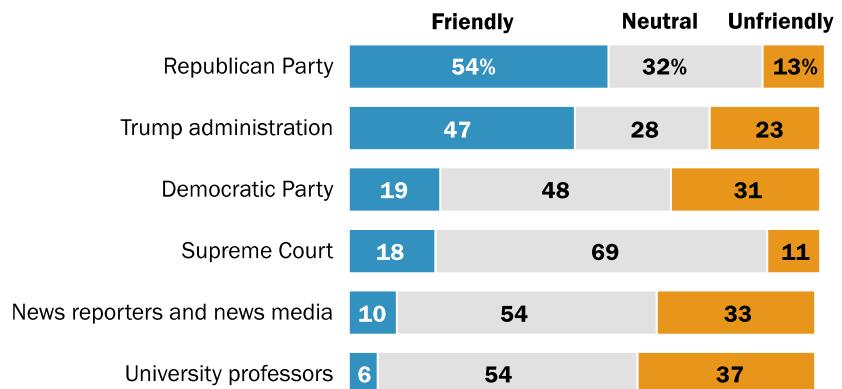
The survey shows that slightly more than half of U.S. adults say that the Republican Party is friendly toward religion (54%), while just under half say the same about the Trump administration (47%). Far fewer say these two groups are unfriendly toward religion. Other major societal institutions are viewed by majorities or pluralities of the public as neutral toward religion; for instance, roughly seven-in-ten U.S. adults say the Supreme Court is neutral toward religion.

Equal shares say that reporters and the news media (54%) and university professors (54%) are neutral toward religion, and 48% say this about the Democratic Party. In each of these cases, however, Americans are considerably

more likely to say these groups are *unfriendly* toward religion than to say they are friendly. For instance, more than one-third of the public (37%) says university professors are unfriendly to religion, while just 6% say professors are friendly to religion.

Just over half of Americans say GOP is friendly toward religion

% of U.S. adults who say each is generally ___ toward religion



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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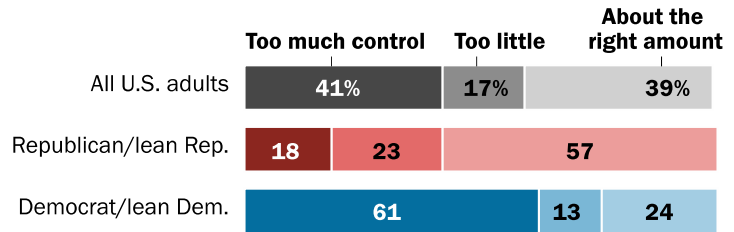
On balance, Republicans and Democrats mostly agree with each other that the GOP is friendly toward religion. They disagree, however, in their views about the Democratic Party; most Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party say the Democratic Party is unfriendly toward religion, while most Democrats and those who lean to the Democratic Party view their own party as neutral toward religion.

Partisan differences in views toward religion in public life

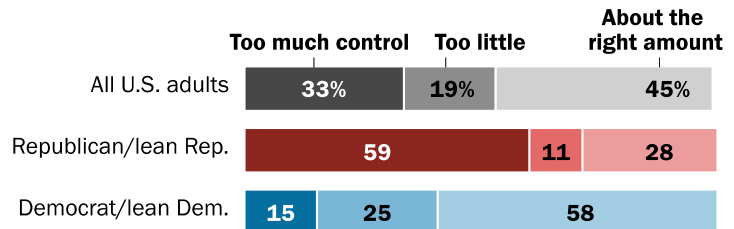
The survey also finds that four-in-ten U.S. adults (including six-in-ten among those who identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party) think religious conservatives have too much control over the Republican Party. At the same time, one-third of Americans (including six-in-ten among those who identify with or lean toward the GOP) say liberals who are not religious have too much control over the Democratic Party.

Most Democrats say religious conservatives have too much control over GOP

Religious conservatives have ___ over the Republican Party



Liberals who are not religious have ___ over the Democratic Party



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.
 Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.
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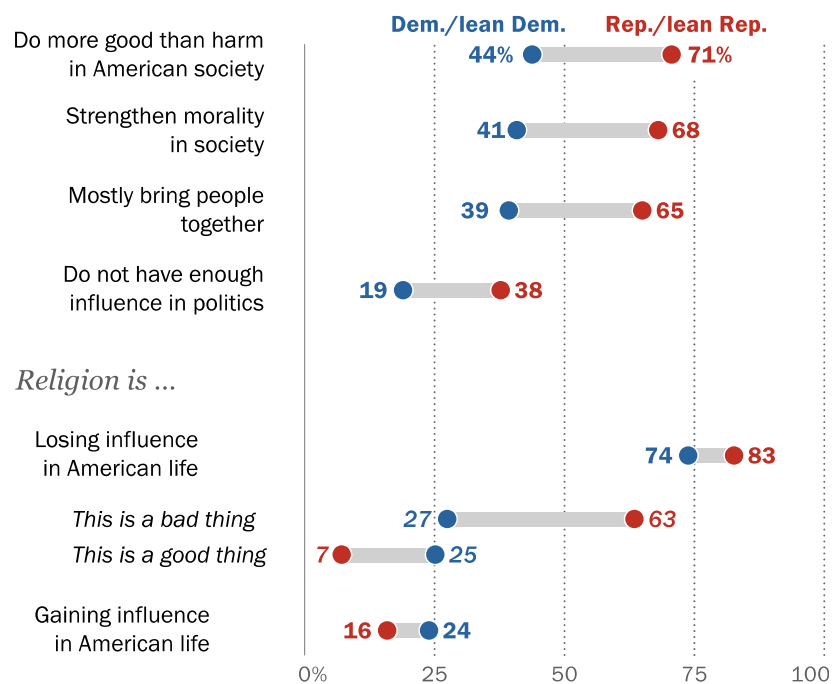
More broadly, Republicans and Democrats express very different opinions about religion's impact on American public life. Seven-in-ten Republicans say churches and religious organizations do more good than harm in the U.S., and two-thirds say these institutions strengthen morality in American society and mostly bring people together (rather than push them apart). On all three of these measures, Democrats are less likely to share these positive views of religious organizations.²

Furthermore, most

Republicans say religion either has about the right amount of influence (44%) or not enough influence (38%) in the political sphere, while a slim majority of Democrats say that religion has *too much* influence in politics (54%). And although most Republicans and Democrats (including those who lean toward each party) agree that religion is losing influence in American life, Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to view this as a regrettable development (63% vs. 27%). There are about as many Democrats who say religion's decline is a good thing (25%) as there are who say it is a bad thing (27%), with 22% of Democrats saying religion's declining influence doesn't make much difference either way.

Republicans and Democrats have very different views about religion's impact on public life

Churches and religious organizations ...



Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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² Another question asked on a different [2019 Pew Research Center survey](#) – conducted by telephone – found that Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party also are much more likely than Democrats and their leaners to say churches and other religious organizations are having a positive effect on the way things are going in the country (68% vs. 38%). The overall share of Americans who say churches are having a positive impact has declined in recent years, according to telephone surveys.

Feelings about religion vary among Democrats based on race and ethnicity

There are stark racial differences among Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party in views on religion's role in society: Black Democrats consistently express more positive views of religious institutions than do white Democrats. For example, half or more of black Democrats say churches and religious organizations do more good than harm in American society, mostly bring people together (rather than push them apart), and strengthen morality in society. White Democrats are substantially less inclined than black Democrats to hold these views.

In addition, two-thirds of white Democrats say churches have too much political power, compared with only three-in-ten black Democrats and four-in-ten Hispanic Democrats who say this. In fact, black Democrats are just as likely as white Republicans to say churches do not have enough influence in politics (37% each).³ And while one-third of white Democrats (33%) say that religion

Black Democrats feel more positive about religion than other Democrats

% of Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party who say ...

	All	White	Black	Hispanic
<i>Churches and religious organizations ...</i>	%	%	%	%
Do more good than harm in American society	44	39	57	45
Do more harm than good	30	35	18	25
Don't make much difference	26	25	25	29
Mostly bring people together	39	32	52	46
Mostly push people apart	31	36	21	26
Neither	30	32	27	27
Strengthen morality in society	41	35	52	47
Weaken morality	18	18	14	16
Don't make much difference	41	46	33	36
Have too much influence in politics	54	66	30	43
Do not have enough influence in politics	19	10	37	28
Have about the right amount of influence	26	24	32	28

Religion is ...

Losing influence in society	74	80	67	66
This is a good thing	25	33	9	18
This is a bad thing	27	23	40	26
It makes no difference*	22	24	18	22
Gaining influence	24	19	32	31

* Includes those who said religion is losing influence but did not answer a follow-up question about whether this was a good thing or a bad thing.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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³ Researchers were not able to separately compare the views of black and Hispanic Republicans due to limited sample size. Previous [Pew Research Center telephone surveys](#) have found that majorities of black and Hispanic adults identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party while minorities in these groups identify as Republicans or lean toward the GOP.

is losing influence in society more broadly and that this is a good thing, far fewer black (9%) and Hispanic (18%) Democrats agree.

Americans who attend religious services largely satisfied with political talk by clergy

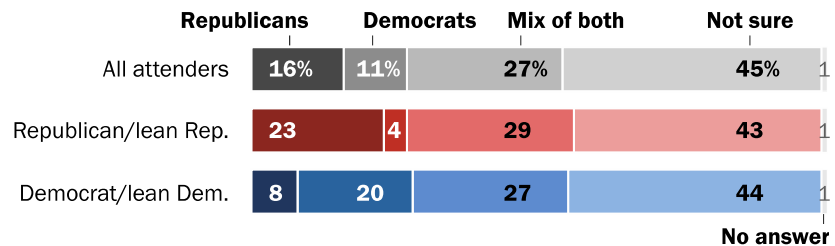
The survey also sought to gauge people’s perceptions about the politics of their clergy, finding that relatively few Americans say their clergy are united on one side of the partisan divide. In fact, many Americans who attend religious services at least a few times a year say they are unsure of the party affiliation of the clergy at their place of worship (45%), while about one-in-four say their clergy are a mix of both Republicans and Democrats (27%).⁴ When those who attend religious services think they know their leaders’ party affiliation, slightly more say their clergy are mostly Republicans (16%) than say they are mostly Democrats (11%).

Among partisans, few say their clergy are mostly members of the opposite party. For example, among those who attend religious services at least a few times a year and identify with or lean toward the Republican Party, just 4% say their clergy are mostly Democrats, while 23% say they are Republicans. Similarly, among Democrats and Democratic leaners, 8% say their clergy are Republicans, while 20% say their clergy are

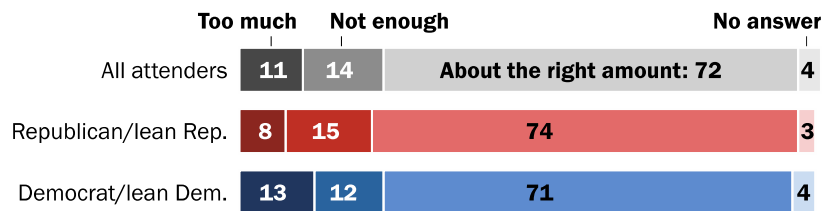
Most religious service attenders think there is the right amount of political discussion in sermons

Based on U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often

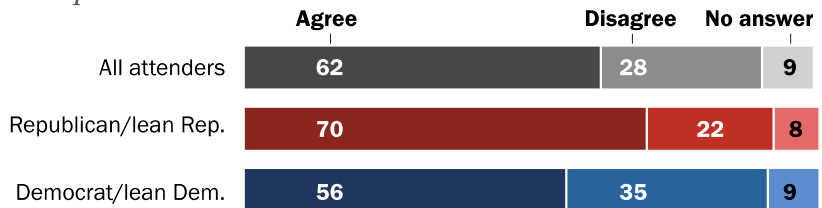
% who say the clergy at their place of worship are mostly ...



% who say the sermons at their place of worship have ___ discussion of politics



% who say they generally ___ with their clergy when they talk about politics



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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⁴ Many places of worship have multiple clergy, while others have just one. The question was asked this way so that it would apply to respondents regardless of how many clergy work at their place of worship.

Democrats. Among both groups, most say they are unsure of the political leanings of their clergy, or say that there is a mix of both Republicans and Democrats in the religious leadership of their congregation.

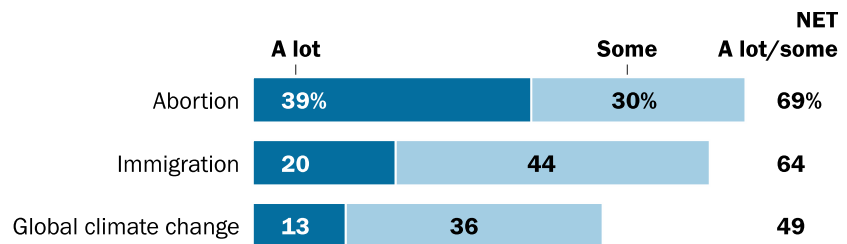
Most attenders – including majorities in both parties – are satisfied with the amount of political discussion they’re hearing in sermons. About seven-in-ten say the sermons at their place of worship have about the right amount of political discussion, while 14% say there is not enough political talk and 11% say there is too much political talk in the sermons they hear.

Furthermore, congregants tend to agree with their clergy when politics is discussed: Overall, about six-in-ten say they generally agree with their clergy about politics (62%), although Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say this (70% vs. 56%).

The survey asked those who attend religious services at least a few times a year the extent to which religious leaders help inform their opinion about three social and political issues: abortion, immigration and global climate change. Four-in-ten religious service attenders have a lot of confidence in their clergy to provide useful guidance to inform their opinion on abortion. Smaller shares have a lot of trust in their clergy’s guidance about immigration (20%) or global climate change (13%).

Religious service attenders more trusting of clergy’s advice on abortion than on immigration, climate change

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say they have ___ confidence in their clergy to provide useful guidance to help inform their opinion about ...



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Republican attenders are much more likely than Democrats who go to religious services to say they have a lot of confidence in their clergy to provide guidance about abortion (53% vs. 25%). Catholics are consistently *less* likely than Protestants – particularly evangelical Protestants – to say they trust their clergy on all three issues. On abortion, for example, 34% of Catholics say they have a lot of trust in their clergy to provide guidance that helps form their opinion, compared with 46% of Protestants overall and 57% of evangelical Protestants who say this. Mainline Protestants (33%) and members of the historically black Protestant tradition (32%) look similar to Catholics on this question.

Other key findings from the survey include:

- Americans who attend religious services with any regularity express “a lot” of trust in the clergy or other religious leaders at their place of worship to provide advice about religious questions, such as growing closer to God or how to interpret scripture. They are more skeptical about advice from their religious leaders on other common life milestones and issues, such as marriage and relationships, parenting, mental health problems, and personal finances, although most express at least “some” confidence in their clergy to weigh in on these topics. And in general, Catholics are less likely than Protestants to say they trust their clergy to provide advice on these issues. (For more, see page 33.)
- Most adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more describe themselves as having at least a “somewhat close” relationship with the clergy at their place of worship, although respondents are much more likely to say they have a “somewhat close” relationship with their clergy (50%) than a “very close” one (19%). About three-in-ten say they are not close with the clergy at their congregation (29%). Just 8% of Catholics say they are very close with their clergy, a much lower share than in any other major U.S. Christian group analyzed. (For more, see page 32.)
- Many U.S. adults hear messages about religious groups other than their own from their clergy or other religious leaders. About four-in-ten religious service attenders have heard their clergy speak out about atheists (43%), while slightly fewer have heard clergy speak out about Catholics or Jews (37% each). About one-third of attenders say they’ve heard their clergy mention evangelical Christians (33%) or Muslims (31%). In terms of the types of messages congregants are hearing from their clergy, the messages about atheists tend to be more negative than positive, while the sentiments toward Jews are mostly positive.⁵ (For more, see page 45.)
- When searching for information about their religion’s teachings, religiously affiliated adults say scripture is the most trusted source. Six-in-ten U.S. adults who identify with a religious group say they have “a lot” of confidence in the information they’d find in scripture, and an additional three-in-ten say they have “some” confidence in this source. Four-in-ten would have a lot of confidence in the clergy at their congregation to give information about religious teachings. Fewer place a high level of trust in family, professors of religion, friends, religious leaders with a large national or international following, or information found online. (For more, see page 42.)

⁵ Results are based only on respondents who are not a member of the group in question. For example, results about Catholics do not include the views of Catholics themselves. See topline for filtering and question wording.

- Most Americans (66%) say religious and nonreligious people generally are equally trustworthy, while fewer think religious people are more trustworthy than nonreligious people (21%) or that nonreligious people are the more trustworthy ones (12%). Majorities across religious groups say religious and nonreligious people are equally trustworthy, but evangelical Protestants are more likely than others to say religious people are especially trustworthy, and self-described atheists are particularly likely to put more trust in nonreligious people. (For more, see page 48.)
- When U.S. adults find themselves in an argument about religion, most say they approach the conversation in a nonconfrontational manner. About six-in-ten say that when someone disagrees with them about religion, they try to understand the other person's point of view and agree to disagree. One-third say they simply avoid discussing religion when a disagreement arises, and only 4% say they try to change the other person's mind. (For more, see page 51.)

The remainder of this report examines the public's views about religion in public life and religious leaders in further detail, including differences in opinions across religious groups. Chapter 1 looks at Americans' views about religion in public life. Chapter 2 explores levels of confidence in clergy (and other clergy-related opinions) held by Americans who attend religious services at least a few times a year. And Chapter 3 looks at religion's role in some of Americans' interpersonal relationships, including levels of trust in religious and nonreligious people.

1. Many in U.S. see religious organizations as forces for good, but prefer them to stay out of politics

Americans largely have positive feelings about the role religion plays in American life. A slim majority of U.S. adults say religious organizations do more good than harm in American society, while just one-in-five say they do more harm than good. Specifically, roughly half of Americans give religious organizations high marks when it comes to strengthening morality and bringing people together.

But U.S. adults draw the line when it comes to politics: More than six-in-ten say churches and other houses of worship should not express their views on day-to-day social and political matters, and three-quarters say religious organizations should not endorse candidates for office.

Members of different religious traditions differ on these questions. For example, compared with members of other groups, evangelical Protestants express relatively high levels of support for religion in politics. A slim majority of evangelical Protestants say churches *should* express their views on political matters, and about half say that religious organizations do not have enough influence in politics. But even among evangelical Protestants, most say churches should not endorse candidates.

Among religiously unaffiliated Americans (those who say they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” sometimes called religious “nones”), most say religious institutions have too much influence on politics, and that religious conservatives have too much control over the Republican Party.

This chapter also includes an analysis by religious group of several questions about how friendly various institutions are toward religion. Most Republicans say the Democratic Party, university professors, and reporters and the news media are unfriendly to religion.

Many Americans say churches and religious organizations strengthen morality in society, bring people together

Most Christians see religion as a force for good in American life. Two-thirds of Christians say that churches and other religious organizations strengthen morality in society (67%), and 64% say they mostly bring people together. Seven-in-ten say that, overall, religious organizations do more good than harm in American society. Positive views of religion's impact on American life are especially common among evangelical Protestants, but majorities in all Christian groups analyzed see religion's influence as more positive than negative in these ways.

The views of U.S. Jews and the religiously unaffiliated are decidedly more mixed. For instance, while roughly four-in-ten Jews (42%) say religious organizations strengthen morality, a similar share (39%) say they do not make much difference in this regard and one-in-five (19%) say religious organizations weaken morality in American society. Among the religiously unaffiliated, those who say that religion does more harm than good outnumber those who say it does more good than harm (39% vs. 31%). Self-identified atheists are especially negative toward religion: 64% say religious organizations mostly push people apart (rather than bring people together), and 70% of U.S. atheists say that, overall, religion does more harm than good in American life.

Older adults generally express more positive views of religious organizations than do younger people, though across all age groups, larger shares express a positive view of religious organizations than a negative one.

Most Christians say religious organizations do more good than harm; religious 'nones' aren't so sure

% of U.S. adults who say churches and religious organizations ...

	Strengthen morality in society	Weaken morality	Don't make much difference	Mostly bring people together	Mostly push people apart	Neither	Do more good than harm	Do more harm than good	Don't make much difference
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	53	12	35	50	21	29	55	20	24
Christian	67	6	26	64	10	26	70	8	21
Protestant	70	5	25	67	8	25	73	7	19
<i>Evangelical</i>	76	4	20	72	7	20	78	6	15
<i>Mainline</i>	64	4	30	59	10	31	70	8	22
<i>Historically black</i>	60	10	30	64	10	27	64	9	27
Catholic	62	7	30	59	12	28	63	9	27
Jewish	42	19	39	41	27	31	47	31	21
Unaffiliated	29	21	49	26	39	34	31	39	29
Atheist	11	41	48	11	64	26	13	70	17
Agnostic	30	17	52	20	42	37	30	42	28
Nothing in particular	34	18	48	33	31	35	37	30	32
Ages 18-49	50	15	34	46	26	27	50	25	24
18-29	49	18	33	46	28	26	44	28	27
30-49	51	14	35	45	25	29	53	24	23
Ages 50+	56	8	35	55	15	30	62	14	24
50-64	57	10	34	55	16	28	61	14	24
65+	55	6	38	54	14	32	62	13	24

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Majority of U.S. adults say religion is losing its influence

A large majority of U.S. adults (78%) say that religion is losing influence in American life. The consensus among both men and women and those over and under age 50 is that religion's influence has decreased. Most black and Hispanic adults also say this, though they are less likely than white adults to say that religion's influence is in decline.

But while people from a variety of demographic and religious groups agree that religion's influence is waning, there is less agreement as to whether this is a good thing or a bad thing. Most Christians, especially evangelicals, lament religion's declining influence in American life. Jews, however, are more divided; 35% of Jews say it is a bad thing that religion's influence is declining, but 25% say this is a good thing and 22% say it makes little difference. Most self-described atheists (71%) say it is a good thing that religion's influence is declining, as do 46% of agnostics.

White and black Americans are more likely than Hispanic adults to say the decline of religious influence in American life is a negative development, and people over 50 are more likely than their younger counterparts to share this sentiment.

Most Americans say that religion is losing its influence, and many judge this as a bad thing

% of U.S. adults who say ...

	NET Religion is losing influence in American life				NET Religion is gaining influence in American life			
	This is a bad thing	Good thing	Doesn't make a difference or no answer		This is a bad thing	Good thing	Doesn't make a difference or no answer	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	78	42	17	19	20	6	10	4
Christian	77	58	5	14	21	3	14	4
Protestant	76	61	4	11	22	2	16	4
<i>Evangelical</i>	78	68	2	7	21	2	16	3
<i>Mainline</i>	79	57	6	16	19	3	12	4
<i>Historically black</i>	65	46	3	16	33	3	22	9
Catholic	78	52	8	18	20	4	10	5
Jewish	81	35	25	22	18	12	3	3
Unaffiliated	80	17	37	26	19	12	4	3
Atheist	84	2	71	10	15	15	0	<1
Agnostic	82	14	46	22	18	17	<1	1
Nothing in particular	78	22	25	31	20	9	6	5
Ages 18-49	77	34	22	21	22	8	9	5
18-29	74	28	24	21	25	9	9	7
30-49	79	37	21	21	19	7	8	4
Ages 50+	79	52	11	16	19	5	11	3
50-64	76	50	11	15	22	5	14	3
65+	83	55	11	17	15	5	8	2
White, non-Hispanic	82	46	18	18	16	6	8	2
Black, non-Hispanic	69	42	10	18	30	6	16	7
Hispanic	68	31	15	22	29	7	16	7

Note: Those who did not answer the question about whether religion is gaining or losing influence in American life are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

"Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics"

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Majorities of Americans want houses of worship out of political matters

More than six-in-ten U.S. adults believe that churches and houses of worship should keep out of political matters (rather than express their views on day-to-day social and political questions), and fully three-quarters say they should not come out in favor of one candidate over another during elections.

Jews and the religiously unaffiliated are more likely than Christians to oppose political activity by religious organizations. Even among Christians, however, seven-in-ten say churches and other houses of worship should refrain from endorsing candidates for political office, and more than half (54%) say churches should keep out of political matters (rather than express their views on day-to-day social and political questions).

Americans want churches to stay out of politics

	<i>Churches and other houses of worship should ...</i>		<i>During political elections, should churches and other houses of worship come out in favor of one candidate over another?</i>	
	Keep out of political matters	Express their views on day-to-day social and political questions	No	Yes
	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	63	36	76	23
Christian	54	44	70	28
Protestant	50	48	66	32
<i>Evangelical</i>	43	55	62	36
<i>Mainline</i>	63	35	77	20
<i>Historically black</i>	43	54	55	45
Catholic	62	37	76	22
Jewish	69	30	82	18
Unaffiliated	76	23	85	14
Atheist	87	12	92	8
Agnostic	76	23	86	13
Nothing in particular	72	26	82	16
Rep./lean Rep.	54	45	68	31
Dem./lean Dem.	70	29	83	16
White, non-Hispanic	64	35	78	21
Black, non-Hispanic	51	47	65	34
Hispanic	63	36	77	22

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party are more likely than Republicans and Republican leaners to say religious organizations should steer clear of politics. But both groups express more opposition to political involvement by churches than support for it.

The survey also shows that 37% of U.S. adults say religious organizations have too much influence in politics, while fewer (28%) think these organizations do not have enough influence in politics. About a third (34%) say churches have about the right amount of political influence.

Atheists (93%), agnostics (78%), Jews (58%) and those who say their religion is “nothing in particular” (53%) are most likely to say religious organizations have too much influence in politics. At the other end of the spectrum, Americans affiliated with historically black Protestant denominations are among the most likely to say that religious groups do not have enough influence in politics, with 54% expressing this view. And a plurality of evangelical Protestants (48%) share the opinion that religious organizations do not have enough influence in politics.

U.S. adults under age 50 (44%) are more likely than those ages 50 and older (30%) to say that religious organizations have too much influence. And men are more inclined than women to believe that religious groups have too much political influence (42% vs. 33%).

No consensus about religion’s current level of influence in politics

% of U.S. adults who say churches and religious organizations have _____ influence in politics

	Too much	Not enough	About the right amount
	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	37	28	34
Christian	21	38	40
Protestant	17	43	38
<i>Evangelical</i>	13	48	38
<i>Mainline</i>	26	30	42
<i>Historically black</i>	14	54	31
Catholic	27	30	42
Jewish	58	5	36
Unaffiliated	65	10	24
Atheist	93	<1	6
Agnostic	78	5	17
Nothing in particular	53	15	31
Men	42	24	34
Women	33	31	34
Ages 18-49	44	25	30
18-29	47	22	30
30-49	42	27	30
Ages 50+	30	30	39
50-64	29	31	38
65+	31	29	39
White, non-Hispanic	39	25	35
Black, non-Hispanic	27	41	31
Hispanic	36	30	33

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

“Americans Have Positive Views About Religion’s Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics”

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Most atheists, agnostics and Jews say religious conservatives have too much control over GOP; most evangelicals say nonreligious liberals have too much sway over Democratic Party

Four-in-ten U.S. adults say religious conservatives have too much control over the Republican Party. This view is especially common among self-described atheists (86%), agnostics (78%) and Jews (74%); among Christians, the prevailing opinion is that religious conservatives have “about the right amount” of control over the GOP.

One-third of U.S. adults say liberals who are not religious have too much control over the Democratic Party. Roughly six-in-ten evangelical Protestants think nonreligious liberals have too much sway in the Democratic Party, while half or more of the religiously unaffiliated (55%), Jews (52%), and those in the historically black Protestant tradition (51%) say nonreligious liberals have an appropriate level of control over the Democratic Party.

Adults under 50 are more likely than older Americans to say religious conservatives have too much influence over the GOP (44% vs. 37%). Meanwhile, those ages 50 and older are much more likely than younger adults to say nonreligious liberals have too much power over the Democratic Party (43% vs. 25%).

Four-in-ten say religious conservatives have too much control over GOP; one-third say liberals who are nonreligious have too much power in Democratic Party

	Do you think religious conservatives have ___ control over the Republican Party?			Do you think liberals who are not religious have ___ control over the Democratic Party?		
	Too much	Too little	Right amount	Too much	Too little	Right amount
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	41	17	39	33	19	45
Christian	28	23	45	43	15	38
Protestant	26	24	46	46	14	37
Evangelical	20	28	49	57	12	29
Mainline	34	13	49	41	11	44
Historically black	28	37	31	19	26	51
Catholic	33	20	44	37	18	41
Jewish	74	3	23	27	21	52
Unaffiliated	60	9	29	18	25	55
Atheist	86	3	10	7	41	51
Agnostic	78	5	15	15	23	60
Nothing in particular	48	11	38	22	21	54
Ages 18-49	44	17	36	25	23	49
18-29	44	17	38	18	25	55
30-49	45	17	35	29	22	46
Ages 50+	37	18	42	43	14	39
50-64	36	19	42	39	15	41
65+	38	17	42	49	12	37

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.
 Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.
 “Americans Have Positive Views About Religion’s Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics”

Republicans see Democratic Party, professors, media as unfriendly to religion

The survey asked Americans whether a variety of U.S. institutions, including both major political parties, are friendly, unfriendly or neutral toward religion. While just over half of Americans view the Republican Party as friendly toward religion, the prevailing view is that the Democratic Party is neutral toward religion.

Most Democrats see their own party as neutral toward religion

	Republican Party is ____ toward religion			Democratic Party is ____ toward religion			Trump administration is ____ toward religion		
	Friendly	Neutral	Unfriendly	Friendly	Neutral	Unfriendly	Friendly	Neutral	Unfriendly
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	54	32	13	19	48	31	47	28	23
Christian	49	35	14	16	41	40	45	28	24
Protestant	51	34	13	17	38	43	49	26	24
<i>Evangelical</i>	59	32	7	10	34	55	58	25	16
<i>Mainline</i>	52	35	11	16	43	38	49	28	20
<i>Historically black</i>	21	40	37	41	44	11	16	22	61
Catholic	45	37	15	15	48	35	40	34	24
Jewish	72	19	8	29	47	23	66	18	16
Unaffiliated	61	26	11	23	59	16	49	28	21
Atheist	84	10	4	31	60	8	69	19	10
Agnostic	79	13	7	21	60	18	62	22	15
Nothing in particular	49	35	14	21	59	17	39	33	26
Rep./lean Rep.	59	35	4	7	31	61	60	32	7
Dem./lean Dem.	52	28	19	28	61	9	39	24	35

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Sentiments on these questions differ by respondents' own party affiliation: Nine-in-ten Democrats (and those who lean toward the Democratic Party) say their own party is either friendly (28%) or neutral (61%) toward religion, and majorities among Democrats also view university professors and the news media as neutral toward religion. By contrast, approximately six-in-ten Republicans and Republican leaners say the Democratic Party, professors and journalists are *unfriendly* toward religion.

In addition, nine-in-ten Republicans view the Trump administration as either friendly (60%) or neutral (32%) toward religion. But fully a third of Democrats say the White House is unfriendly toward religion (35%).

The survey also shows that majorities of evangelical Protestants – most of whom identify with or lean toward the Republican Party – think that the Democratic Party, professors and journalists are unfriendly toward religion. At the same time, about six-in-ten evangelical Protestants think the GOP and the Trump administration are friendly toward religion.

Among a few largely Democratic subgroups, most atheists (69%), Jews (66%) and agnostics (62%) say the Trump administration is friendly toward religion, while most members of the historically black Protestant tradition (61%) take the opposite position, saying the White House is unfriendly toward religion.

Most Republicans view university professors, journalists as unfriendly to religion

	University professors are ____ toward religion			News reporters and news media are ____ toward religion			The Supreme Court is ____ toward religion		
	Friendly	Neutral	Unfriendly	Friendly	Neutral	Unfriendly	Friendly	Neutral	Unfriendly
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	6	54	37	10	54	33	18	69	11
Christian	5	49	44	7	50	41	13	72	14
Protestant	5	45	48	7	48	43	13	71	14
Evangelical	3	35	59	4	39	56	10	71	17
Mainline	5	50	43	9	54	36	15	73	10
Historically black	11	65	20	14	67	16	18	69	12
Catholic	6	56	36	7	55	37	13	72	13
Jewish	9	60	31	16	63	21	29	67	3
Unaffiliated	7	64	25	15	62	21	26	65	7
Atheist	5	70	23	25	64	9	43	54	2
Agnostic	6	60	33	15	63	22	28	67	5
Nothing in particular	8	64	24	13	60	24	21	67	9
Rep./lean Rep.	4	34	60	6	36	57	10	75	14
Dem./lean Dem.	8	70	20	14	68	16	25	65	9

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

"Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics"

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Most people in both political parties view the Supreme Court as neutral toward religion. This is also the majority view across religious groups, although atheists are more likely than others to say the high court is friendly toward religion. Atheists also overwhelmingly see the Republican Party as friendly toward religion (84%).

2. Most congregants trust clergy to give advice about religious issues, fewer trust clergy on personal matters

A majority of U.S. adults think religious leaders have high or very high ethical standards (65%). And among those who attend religious services at least a few times a year, an even larger share have similarly positive ratings about the ethical behavior of the clergy at their congregation (88%).

The survey also finds that a majority have “a lot” of confidence in their clergy to give advice about clearly religious matters, such as growing closer to God (68%). But fewer are very confident that their clergy could give advice about parenting, mental health problems or finances. When asked how *comfortable* they would be seeking out advice from their clergy, most say they would be at least “somewhat comfortable” bringing a range of personal issues to their religious leaders, though fewer than half would be “very comfortable” doing so, and fully a quarter or more of adults who go to religious services at least a few times a year say they would be “not too” or “not at all” comfortable speaking to their clergy about drug or alcohol issues, problems with anxiety or depression, or financial difficulties.

At the same time, most attenders report that they have at least a “somewhat close” relationship with their clergy (70%), that they are satisfied with the sermons at their church (87%), and that they tend to agree with the opinions they hear when their clergy discuss religion (85%) or politics (62%).

This chapter also explores the frequency with which attenders hear their clergy talking about other religious groups during services, and whether messages about these groups tend to be positive or negative. It also examines the sources of guidance that religiously affiliated U.S. adults trust when seeking information about the teachings of their religion.

Two-thirds in U.S. say religious leaders have high ethical standards

About two-thirds of U.S. adults (65%) say religious leaders have “high” (54%) or “very high” (10%) ethical standards. Fully three-quarters of Christians (76%) say they think religious leaders generally have high or very high ethical standards. Among religious “nones,” 45% say religious leaders have high or very high ethical standards, while 54% give them “low” or “very low” marks for their ethics.⁶

Overall, religious leaders rank below medical doctors (whose ethical standards are rated as high or very high by 87% of U.S. adults) and slightly below police officers (70%). But religious leaders receive better marks for their ethical standards than journalists (whose ethical standards are seen as high or very high by 45% of respondents), lawyers (44%) and elected officials (26%).

The survey asked respondents who attend religious services at least a few times a year to rate the ethical standards of the clergy at their own congregation. Nearly nine-in-ten religious attenders give the clergy at their own congregation high (47%) or very high (41%) marks for ethics, compared with 78% of attenders who say the same about religious leaders in general.⁷

Among U.S. Catholics, those who attend religious services at least yearly are less likely to

Americans rank ethics of religious leaders below doctors, above politicians, lawyers and journalists

% who say each of the following have “high” or “very high” ethical standards

	Among all U.S. adults
	%
Medical doctors	87
Police officers	70
Religious leaders	65
Journalists	45
Lawyers	44
Elected officials	26
Among those who attend religious services at least a few times a year	
	%
Clergy at your congregation	88
Religious leaders in general	78
Among Catholics who attend religious services at least a few times a year	
	%
Priests at your parish	87
Pope Francis	83
Your bishop	79
Religious leaders in general	77
Catholic bishops in the U.S.	69

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults. “Americans Have Positive Views About Religion’s Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics”

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⁶ Another recent [Pew Research Center survey](#) asked a number of other questions about ethics among people in positions of power and responsibility, including religious leaders. It found that about seven-in-ten Americans say religious leaders act unethically at least some of the time, and roughly half say religious leaders generally escape serious consequences when they act unethically.

⁷ Results for the share of U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often and say the clergy at their congregation have high or very high ethical standards are based on two questions. Respondents who identify as Catholic and attend Mass at least a few times a year were asked to rate the ethical standards of the priests at their parish. U.S. adults who attend religious services at least yearly but are not Catholic were asked to rate the ethical standards of the clergy at their congregation or place of worship. Figures shown here combine the results of these two questions.

say the U.S. Catholic bishops as a whole have high or very high ethical standards (69%) compared with the share who say the same about their own parish priests (87%), Pope Francis (83%) or their own bishop (79%).

Most attenders feel they have at least a ‘somewhat close’ relationship with their clergy

Respondents who attend religious services at least a few times a year were asked to assess how close a relationship they have with the clergy or other religious leaders at their place of worship. Overall, roughly seven-in-ten say they have a “very” (19%) or “somewhat” (50%) close relationship, while 29% say they are not close with their clergy.

Within religious groups, majorities say they are very or somewhat close with their clergy – although the most common response across most religious groups is that congregants are “somewhat close” to their clergy.

Protestants are more likely than Catholics to say they have a very close relationship with their clergy. Roughly one-quarter of Protestants in the evangelical (28%) and historically black (25%) traditions and one-in-five mainline Protestants (19%) say they are very close with their clergy, compared with 8% of Catholics who say this.

Protestants more likely than Catholics to be very close with their clergy

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say they have a ___ relationship with the clergy at their place of worship

	Very close	Somewhat close	Not close	No answer
	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults who attend religious services yearly or more often	19	50	29	1
Christian	21	52	26	1
Protestant	25	53	22	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	28	52	19	<1
<i>Mainline</i>	19	52	29	<1
<i>Historically black</i>	25	56	18	1
Catholic	8	53	39	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

“Americans Have Positive Views About Religion’s Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics”

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Nearly seven-in-ten attenders very confident clergy can provide advice about growing closer to God

Majorities of U.S. adults who attend religious services at least a few times a year have “a lot” of confidence in the clergy or other religious leaders at their place of worship to provide useful guidance about growing closer to God (68%) and the interpretation of scripture (60%). But while many attenders place a high level of trust in their clergy to guide them on religious issues, smaller shares trust their clergy “a lot” to give useful advice about marriage and relationships (47%) or parenting (40%). About one-in-four have a lot of confidence in their religious leaders to provide guidance on mental health problems (27%), and 21% have the same level of confidence in their clergy’s advice about personal finances.

Majority of attenders have ‘a lot’ of confidence that religious leaders can provide guidance on religious issues, but they have less confidence in other areas

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times or year or more often, % who say they have ___ in their clergy to provide useful guidance about ...

	NET A lot/some confidence %	A lot %	Some %	NET Not much/no confidence %	No answer %
Growing closer to God	92	68	24	7	1=100
Interpretation of scripture	90	60	30	9	1
Marriage or relationships	86	47	39	12	1
Parenting	84	40	44	15	1
Anxiety or depression	73	27	46	26	1
Abortion	69	39	30	29	2
Immigration	64	20	44	34	2
Personal finances	59	21	39	39	2
Global climate change	49	13	36	48	2

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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By comparison, religious service attenders express relatively low levels of trust in clergy to give advice about social and political issues. Just four-in-ten say they have a lot of confidence in their religious leaders to provide useful guidance to help inform their opinion about abortion (39%). Even fewer express a lot of confidence in their clergy’s advice about immigration (20%) and global climate change (13%).

On almost all these topics, many other congregants say they have “some” confidence in their clergy to provide guidance, while fewer than half say they have “not much” or “no” confidence.

In general, the opinions of religious groups follow a similar pattern, with most major subgroups of Christians endorsing their clergy's guidance on clearly religious matters but expressing less confidence in what their religious leaders might say about personal problems.

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services at least a few times a year, evangelical Protestants are particularly likely to have a lot of confidence in their religious leaders to give advice about religious questions. For example, eight-in-ten evangelical Protestants (82%) voice a lot of confidence in their clergy's advice about becoming closer to God. By comparison, about seven-in-ten Protestants in the mainline and historically black traditions say this, as do 60% of Catholics.

Evangelical Protestants also are more likely than other major U.S. Christian groups to express a lot of confidence in their religious leaders to give advice on issues such as marriage or relationships, parenting and personal finances. They also are more likely than mainline Protestants and Catholics to have a lot of trust in their clergy's advice about anxiety or depression. Catholics are less likely than all the other major Christian groups to have a lot of confidence in their clergy to give advice on almost all of the religious and personal topics asked about in the survey.

Evangelical Protestants more confident than other groups that clergy can give good advice about religious and personal topics

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times or year or more often, % who say they have a lot/some confidence in their clergy to provide useful guidance about ...

	Growing closer to God		Interpretation of scripture		Marriage/relationships		Parenting		Anxiety or depression		Personal finances	
	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Christian	72	22	64	28	50	38	42	45	29	47	23	40
Protestant	77	20	70	25	58	33	49	42	34	47	28	44
<i>Evangelical</i>	82	16	77	19	66	28	56	37	39	46	35	44
<i>Mainline</i>	71	25	63	32	45	44	36	53	24	52	11	44
<i>Historically black</i>	70	23	58	31	54	32	44	41	36	42	31	41
Catholic	60	30	50	39	30	52	23	53	15	49	7	34
Very/somewhat close w/clergy	77	19	69	24	57	35	50	41	35	47	27	42
Not close with clergy	48	37	40	42	25	50	17	52	11	43	7	30

Note: Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

"Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics"

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Evangelical Protestants again stand out for being much more likely than other Christian groups to express a lot of confidence in their clergy to provide useful guidance to inform their opinion about abortion. Nearly six-in-ten evangelical Protestant attenders have a lot of confidence in their clergy on this issue, compared with about one-third of mainline Protestants, Protestants in the historically black tradition and Catholics who say the same.

Levels of trust in clergy to guide opinions about immigration and global climate change are more similar across religious

groups, although mainline Protestants are less likely than other Protestants to have a lot of confidence in their clergy's guidance on immigration. And while the issue of global climate change has been a [recent topic of conversation in the Catholic Church](#), only 8% of Catholics say they have a lot of confidence in their clergy's guidance on this issue.

Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party are about twice as likely as Democrats and Democratic leaners to say they have a lot of confidence in their clergy to help form an opinion about abortion (53% vs. 25%). However, there are no significant differences between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to levels of confidence in their clergy to provide advice about immigration or global climate change.

Evangelicals, Republicans more likely to trust their clergy's advice on abortion

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say they have a lot/some confidence in the clergy at their congregation to provide useful guidance to inform their opinion about ...

	Abortion		Immigration		Global climate change	
	A lot %	Some %	A lot %	Some %	A lot %	Some %
Christian	43	30	20	46	13	38
Protestant	46	29	21	46	14	38
<i>Evangelical</i>	57	25	25	43	16	38
<i>Mainline</i>	33	38	13	52	11	35
<i>Historically black</i>	32	31	22	44	16	44
Catholic	34	33	16	47	8	38
Republican/lean Republican	53	28	18	44	11	37
Democrat/lean Democrat	25	25	21	45	14	35

Note: Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

"Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics"

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Eight-in-ten attenders would be very or somewhat comfortable seeking advice from clergy if they were having doubts about their religion

Attenders also were asked to evaluate how *comfortable* they would be going to their clergy or other religious leader for various types of information, regardless of how confident they are in the advice their clergy might provide.

Eight-in-ten congregants say they would be either “very” comfortable (45%) or “somewhat” comfortable (35%) going to their clergy for advice if they had doubts about their religion. Roughly three-quarters also say they would be very or somewhat comfortable asking for advice about marriage or relationship problems, parenting problems, or problems with drugs or alcohol. But smaller numbers would feel comfortable seeking guidance from clergy about mental health or financial problems. Indeed, fully a third say they would be “not too comfortable” or “not at all comfortable” going to their clergy to talk about anxiety or depression, and more than four-in-ten (45%) express discomfort with talking to their clergy about financial problems.

U.S. congregants more comfortable seeking advice from clergy on doubts about religion than other problems

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say they would be ____ going to the clergy at their place or worship for advice about ...

	Doubts about religion	Marriage/relationship problems	Parenting problems	Problems with drugs/alcohol	Problems with anxiety/depression	Financial problems
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NET Very/somewhat comfortable	80	77	75	73	66	54
Very	45	36	33	33	27	20
Somewhat	35	41	41	40	39	34
NET Not too/not at all comfortable	18	22	24	25	33	45
No answer	2	1	2	2	1	1
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

“Americans Have Positive Views About Religion’s Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics”

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Among the major subgroups of U.S. Christians, evangelical Protestants tend to feel more comfort going to their clergy than other groups, while Catholics express less comfort than others.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, congregants who feel they have a very or somewhat close relationship with their clergy are much more likely to say they would be comfortable going to their clergy to discuss the kinds of problems raised in the survey. For example, more than half (56%) of those who say they are close with their clergy would be very comfortable going to their clergy for advice when doubting their religion, compared with 20% of those who report that they are not close with their clergy.

About half of Christians would be very comfortable going to their clergy to talk about doubting their religion

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say they would be very/somewhat comfortable going to the clergy at their place or worship for advice about ...

	Doubts about religion		Marriage/relationship problems		Parenting problems		Problems with drugs/alcohol		Problems with anxiety/depression		Financial problems	
	Very	Some-what	Very	Some-what	Very	Some-what	Very	Some-what	Very	Some-what	Very	Some-what
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Christian	48	35	38	42	35	42	35	40	29	40	21	36
Protestant	52	34	42	41	42	42	38	42	34	41	26	39
<i>Evangelical</i>	57	30	50	39	49	38	43	40	39	42	32	41
<i>Mainline</i>	46	41	29	49	30	49	31	46	26	43	12	34
<i>Historically black</i>	44	34	37	40	36	42	32	44	30	36	24	39
Catholic	37	39	24	45	17	45	25	39	15	38	7	29
Very/somewhat close with clergy	56	32	46	42	44	43	43	41	36	41	26	40
Not close with clergy	20	43	12	39	8	40	10	39	7	33	4	22

Note: Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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U.S. adults who attend religious services are largely satisfied with sermons

Nearly nine-in-ten U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more say they are satisfied with the content of sermons at their place of worship, with 46% saying they are very satisfied and 41% saying they are somewhat satisfied. Just 12% say they are not too or not at all satisfied with the sermons they hear.

Within religious groups, about nine-in-ten in the three major U.S. Protestant traditions say they are at least somewhat satisfied with the sermons at their congregation, including a majority of evangelical Protestants who are “very” satisfied with the sermons. Catholics are somewhat less likely to be happy with the sermons at their parishes: Roughly eight-in-ten Catholic Mass-goers say they are satisfied with the sermons, although more are “somewhat” satisfied (52%) than “very” satisfied (32%).

Vast majority of attenders are at least somewhat satisfied with the sermons at their place of worship

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say they are ___ satisfied with the sermons they hear at their place of worship

	NET Very/ somewhat %	Very %	Somewhat %	NET Not too/ not at all %	No answer %
U.S. adults who attend religious services yearly or more often	87	46	41	12	1=100
Christian	90	49	40	9	1
Protestant	92	56	37	7	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	93	61	32	6	<1
<i>Mainline</i>	91	45	46	8	1
<i>Historically black</i>	91	54	38	8	<1
Catholic	83	32	52	15	2

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Most church attenders also say the sermons at their place of worship strike the right balance of political discussion. About seven-in-ten (72%) say there is the right amount of discussion about politics, while 11% say there is too much political talk and 14% say there is not enough.

Majorities across Christian groups say there is about the right amount of political discussion in their sermons. In most major Christian traditions, the remainder are roughly evenly divided between those who say there is too much political discussion and those who say there is not enough. However, evangelical Protestants are an exception: They are more likely to say there is not enough talk about politics in the sermons at their church than they are to say there is too much (17% vs. 6%).

Most attenders satisfied with the amount of political discussion in sermons

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say the sermons at their place of worship have ___ discussion of politics

	Too much %	Not enough %	About the right amount %	No answer %
U.S. adults who attend religious services yearly or more often	11	14	72	4=100
Christian	9	14	73	3
Protestant	8	15	74	3
<i>Evangelical</i>	6	17	74	3
<i>Mainline</i>	11	9	76	4
<i>Historically black</i>	11	15	71	3
Catholic	12	16	70	3
Republican/lean Republican	8	15	74	3
Democrat/lean Democrat	13	12	71	4

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Republicans and Democrats are about equally likely to say that there is the right amount of political discussion in their sermons (74% and 71%, respectively). But Democrats are slightly more inclined than Republicans to say they are hearing too much discussion of politics in the sermons at their place of worship (13% vs. 8%).

Relatively few U.S. congregants say their clergy are united in one political party

More than four-in-ten U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often say they are not sure about the partisan leanings of the clergy or other religious leaders at their place of worship. When those who attend religious services think they know their leaders' party affiliation, they are slightly more likely to say their leaders are mostly Republicans than to say they are Democrats (16% vs. 11%). About one-in-four say their religious leaders are a mix of Republicans and Democrats.

About six-in-ten Catholics (59%) say they are unsure of the political affiliations of their clergy, a higher share than among any other religious group analyzed. Evangelical Protestants stand out because they are the most likely to say their religious leaders are mostly Republicans (29%). At the other end of the spectrum, nearly four-in-ten Protestants in the historically black tradition (37%) say they attend a place of worship with predominantly Democratic clergy.

More than four-in-ten attenders unsure of the political leanings of their clergy

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say the clergy at their place of worship are mostly ...

	Republicans %	Democrats %	A mix of both %	Not sure %	No answer %
U.S. adults who attend religious services yearly or more often	16	11	27	45	1=100
Christian	17	10	28	45	1
Protestant	19	11	29	39	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	29	4	27	39	1
<i>Mainline</i>	7	11	37	45	1
<i>Historically black</i>	6	37	26	30	<1
Catholic	7	7	25	59	1
Republican/lean Rep.	23	4	29	43	1
Democrat/lean Dem.	8	20	27	44	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Majorities of attenders generally agree with their clergy about politics and religion

U.S. adults who go to services a few times a year or more often generally agree with the political content they are hearing from their clergy. About six-in-ten attenders say they agree with their clergy when they talk about politics, while 28% mostly disagree.

Evangelical Protestants are more likely than people from other Christian groups to agree with their clergy when they talk about politics. Three-quarters of evangelical Protestants say this, compared with a smaller majority of Protestants in the historically black tradition (65%), about six-in-ten mainline Protestants (58%) and roughly half of Catholics (53%).

Republicans and those who lean Republican are more likely than Democrats to share political opinions with their clergy (70% vs. 56%).

When it comes to the teachings of their religion, attenders are even more likely to agree with their clergy. More than eight-in-ten attenders (85%) say they agree with their clergy about religion, while 12% disagree.

About nine-in-ten evangelical (93%) and mainline Protestants (90%) generally agree with their clergy about the teachings of their religion, compared with somewhat smaller majorities of Catholics (83%) and Protestants in the historically black tradition (81%).

Evangelicals especially likely to agree with their clergy about politics

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say they generally AGREE with the clergy at their place of worship when they are talking about ...

	Religion %	Politics %
U.S. adults who attend religious services yearly or more often	85	62
Christian	88	64
Protestant	91	69
<i>Evangelical</i>	93	76
<i>Mainline</i>	90	58
<i>Historically black</i>	81	65
Catholic	83	53
Republican/lean Republican	93	70
Democrat/lean Democrat	79	56

Note: Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults. "Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics"

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Religiously affiliated adults most likely to place ‘a lot’ of trust in scripture to provide information about the teachings of their religion

The survey asked all religiously affiliated U.S. adults: If they were searching for information about the teachings of their religion, which sources of information would they trust the most? Scripture ranks at the top of the list of possibilities offered in the survey. Six-in-ten religiously affiliated Americans (61%) say they have “a lot” of confidence in what they would find in scripture to provide guidance about the teachings of their religion, and an additional 29% say they would have “some” confidence in scripture. About four-in-ten affiliated adults say they would have a lot of confidence in the clergy at their congregation to provide advice on this topic.

Just three-in-ten express a lot of confidence in the information that family members could provide about their religion’s teachings, though an additional 55% say they have “some” confidence in their family’s ability to guide them on this topic. Affiliated adults are less enthusiastic about endorsing other sources of information, such as a professor of religion, friends, a religious leader with a large national or international following, or the internet.

The patterns of trust in different sources of information are generally similar across religious groups. However, a high level of trust in scripture is particularly apparent among evangelical Protestants. About eight-in-ten evangelicals (82%) express a lot of confidence in scripture to provide guidance about religion. U.S. Jews stand out for being the only group that is more likely to say they have a lot of confidence in clergy than they do in scripture.

Eight-in-ten evangelical Protestants have a lot of confidence in scripture to answer questions about their religion's teachings

% of religiously affiliated U.S. adults who say if they were searching for information about their religion's teachings, they would have a lot/some confidence in the things they heard or read from ...

	Scripture		The clergy at your congregation		Family		A professor of religion at a major university		Friends		Religious leader with a large national or international following		Information they find online	
	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some	A lot	Some
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All affiliated	61	29	41	46	30	55	19	52	12	61	12	52	6	53
Christian	63	28	42	47	31	56	18	53	12	61	12	53	6	53
Protestant	70	23	45	46	31	55	17	52	13	62	12	53	6	54
<i>Evangelical</i>	82	15	53	42	33	55	14	51	14	65	13	54	6	56
<i>Mainline</i>	56	35	40	50	27	58	21	54	11	63	10	52	5	51
<i>Historically black</i>	60	27	31	51	34	49	20	52	15	53	17	53	10	54
Catholic	48	40	32	52	28	58	21	54	9	58	12	55	6	51
Jewish	32	49	49	40	20	59	40	42	6	58	7	45	6	60

Note: Figures for Jews are shown in this table, but not throughout the rest of this chapter. This is because the questions shown here were asked of all Jews in the sample, and the survey obtained enough interviews with Jews to provide the statistical power to be analyzed separately. Other questions in this chapter were asked only of Jews (and members of other religious groups) who say they attend religious services a few times a year or more often; the survey did not obtain enough interviews with synagogue-attending Jews to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Separately, Catholics were asked about their level of confidence in the pope to provide information about their religion's teachings. Fully 85% of Catholics say they would have at least some confidence in information they receive from the pope about their religion, including nearly half (46%) who say they would have "a lot" of confidence in the pope to provide guidance about Catholic teachings. By this measure, U.S. Catholics have somewhat more confidence in the pope than they do in the clergy at their congregation.

Additionally, 13% of Catholics say they would have not much or no confidence in information about their religion's teachings from the pope. Catholics who attend Mass a couple times a month or less often are somewhat more likely than weekly Mass-attenders to say they would have not much or no confidence in the pope to give information about Catholicism (15% vs. 9%).

Most Catholics trust in pope's guidance on Catholic teachings

% of U.S. Catholics who say if they were searching for information about their religion's teachings, they would have ____ confidence in the things they heard or read from the pope

	%
NET A lot/some confidence	85
A lot	46
Some	39
NET Not much/no confidence	13
No answer	2
	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.
Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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Most congregants do not hear their clergy talk about other religious groups, but when they do, messages are mixed

The survey asked respondents whether they have heard the clergy at their place of worship speak out about different religious groups. Among adults who attend religious services at least a few times a year, about four-in-ten (43%) say they have heard their clergy speak out about atheists, while slightly fewer say their clergy have spoken out about Catholics or Jews (37% each). And roughly one-third have heard their clergy talk about evangelical Christians (33%) or Muslims (31%).⁸

Respondents also were asked to assess the sentiment of the comments their clergy made about other religious groups. Adults whose clergy have talked about atheists say those messages tend to be more negative (19%) than positive (2%). An additional 7% say the messages are both positive and negative, and 14% say the sentiment from clergy is neither positive nor negative. Evangelical Protestants are more likely than all other Christian groups to say their clergy have spoken out about atheists in a negative way (31%).

On the other hand, discussions of Jews and evangelical Christians among clergy are reported to be more positive than negative. One-in-five attenders say their clergy have spoken about Jews in a positive way, compared with 1% who say their clergy have said negative things about Jews. Another one-in-ten report that they have heard both positive and negative things about Jews, or that they have heard their clergy speak out about Jews in a way that wasn't inherently either positive or negative. This general pattern holds across religious groups analyzed.

The messages that congregants say they hear from their clergy about Muslims and Catholics are more mixed.

⁸ Results are based only on respondents who are not a member of the group in question. For example, results about Catholics do not include the views of Catholics themselves. See topline for filtering and question wording.

Christian clergy's messages tend to be negative about atheists and positive about Jews, according to people in the pews

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often, % who say their clergy have spoken out about ...

	All attenders	Christian	Protestant	Evangelical	Mainline	Historically black	Catholic
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Atheists	43	45	52	59	43	42	30
Mostly positive things	2	2	2	2	3	4	2
Mostly negative things	19	20	25	31	16	19	11
Both	7	7	8	9	8	5	7
Neither	14	15	16	17	17	13	11
Catholics	37	40	40	43	38	36	n/a
Mostly positive things	9	8	8	6	12	8	n/a
Mostly negative things	5	5	5	7	3	4	n/a
Both	13	14	15	17	10	13	n/a
Neither	11	12	11	12	12	10	n/a
Jews	37	39	44	50	39	35	27
Mostly positive things	20	21	23	26	22	16	15
Mostly negative things	1	1	1	<1	0	3	1
Both	8	8	10	13	6	6	4
Neither	9	9	10	10	10	10	6
Evangelical Christians	33	34	43	n/a	43	43	26
Mostly positive things	12	13	18	n/a	18	19	7
Mostly negative things	3	3	4	n/a	2	7	2
Both	10	10	12	n/a	13	10	9
Neither	8	8	9	n/a	10	7	8
Muslims	31	31	37	41	30	33	17
Mostly positive things	7	6	6	3	9	10	7
Mostly negative things	6	7	9	12	4	7	1
Both	8	9	11	13	8	8	4
Neither	9	9	10	12	9	7	5

Note: Other responses not shown. Results are based only on respondents who are not a member of the group in question. For example, results for Catholics do not include the views of Catholics themselves. See topline for filtering and question wording. Figures for Jews, Muslims and other non-Christian faiths not shown because the survey did not obtain enough interviews with members of these groups who attend religious services a few times a year or more often to analyze separately.

Source: Survey conducted March 18- April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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3. Americans trust both religious and nonreligious people, but most rarely discuss religion with family or friends

The survey included a few questions about interpersonal trust, asking respondents about the trustworthiness of religious and nonreligious people, and about how often they talk with other people about their religious beliefs.

When it comes to bestowing trust, most Americans do not care whether someone is religious. Fully two-thirds of U.S. adults say nonreligious people and religious people generally are equally trustworthy. In addition, most Americans do not restrict their friendship circles to people of similar religious beliefs; roughly two-thirds say that just “some,” “hardly any” or “none” of their friends share their religious beliefs.

Americans are somewhat more likely to discuss religion with relatives than with people outside their family. That said, most Americans do *not* talk about religion with family or friends with any regularity. Four-in-ten say they talk about religion with their family at least once or twice a month (39%), while three-in-ten say they discuss religion with people outside of their family with the same frequency (31%).

When Americans *do* talk about religion, they generally do not try to change other people’s minds about it. The overwhelming majority of U.S. adults say that when someone disagrees with them about religion, they either try to understand the other person’s belief and agree to disagree, or else they avoid discussing religion with the person. Just 4% say they try to change the other person’s mind.

Majority of U.S. adults say religious and nonreligious people are equally trustworthy

Fully two-thirds of Americans say religious and nonreligious people generally are equally trustworthy, while fewer think religious people are more trustworthy than nonreligious people (21%) or that nonreligious people are the more trustworthy ones (12%).

Majorities across religious groups say religious and nonreligious people are equally trustworthy. But evangelical Protestants are more likely than other Americans to say religious people are more trustworthy than those who are not religious. Four-in-ten evangelical Protestants take this position, compared with about one-in-four or fewer across other religious groups.

Evangelical Protestants more likely than others to say religious people are generally more trustworthy than nonreligious people

% of U.S. adults who say ...

	Religious people are more trustworthy than nonreligious people	Nonreligious people are more trustworthy than religious people	Religious and nonreligious people are equally trustworthy	No answer
	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	21	12	66	1=100
Christian	29	6	64	1
Protestant	32	4	62	2
<i>Evangelical</i>	40	3	56	1
<i>Mainline</i>	23	3	73	2
<i>Historically black</i>	27	11	59	2
Catholic	20	9	69	1
Jewish	16	8	75	<1
Unaffiliated	9	21	69	1
Atheist	<1	35	65	<1
Agnostic	5	16	79	0
Nothing in particular	12	20	67	2

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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About seven-in-ten religiously unaffiliated adults also say that religious and nonreligious people are equally trustworthy. But when "nones" choose one group as more trustworthy than the other, a larger share say nonreligious people are more trustworthy than religious people (21% vs. 9%). In fact, among self-described atheists, fully one-third say nonreligious people are more trustworthy, compared with fewer than 1% who think religious people are more trustworthy.

Most Americans have friends who do not share their religious beliefs

One-third of U.S. adults say that all or most of their friends share their religious beliefs. Nearly half (46%) say that some of their friends share their religious beliefs, and an additional 19% say hardly any or none of their friends do.

Across most religious groups, fewer than half say all or most of their friends share their religious beliefs. Protestants in the historically black tradition are an exception: 56% in this group say all or most of their friends share their religious beliefs, a higher share than in most other religious groups. Religiously unaffiliated adults, on the other hand, are more likely than other adults to say hardly any or none of their friends share their religious beliefs. Three-in-ten religious “nones” say this, compared with roughly one-in-five or fewer across religious traditions. (A [recent Pew Research Center report](#) finds a similar pattern among U.S. teens.)

One-third of U.S. adults say all or most of their friends share their religious beliefs

% of U.S. adults who say ___ of their close friends share their religious beliefs

	All/most %	Some %	Hardly any/none %	No answer %
All U.S. adults	34	46	19	1
Christian	43	45	12	1
Protestant	45	43	11	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	48	42	9	1
<i>Mainline</i>	35	50	13	2
<i>Historically black</i>	56	30	14	1
Catholic	37	49	13	1
Jewish	30	47	21	2
Unaffiliated	21	48	30	1
Atheist	23	50	26	1
Agnostic	22	55	23	<1
Nothing in particular	20	45	34	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults. “Americans Have Positive Views About Religion’s Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics”

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Most U.S. adults do not talk with family, others about religion on a regular basis

For most Americans, religion is not a very frequent topic of family conversation. About four-in-ten say they talk with their family about religion once or twice a month or more often. By comparison, a somewhat smaller share say they discuss religion with people *outside* their family on a regular basis (31%).

In general, members of religious groups are more likely to discuss religion with their families than they are with other people. And Protestants in the evangelical and historically black traditions are especially likely to discuss religion – both with family and non-family – at least once or twice a month. Six-in-ten or more in these groups regularly discuss religion with their families, and about half regularly discuss religion with others.

Religiously unaffiliated adults are much less likely to discuss religion at all. But when they do discuss religion, they're just as likely to talk with family (17%) as they are to talk with people outside their family (16%).

Americans more likely to discuss religion with family than with others

% of U.S. adults who say they talk with ___ about religion once or twice a month or more often

	Family	People outside their family
	%	%
All U.S. adults	39	31
Christian	51	39
Protestant	55	44
<i>Evangelical</i>	65	53
<i>Mainline</i>	38	28
<i>Historically black</i>	60	47
Catholic	40	26
Jewish	30	24
Unaffiliated	17	16
Atheist	14	15
Agnostic	20	19
Nothing in particular	18	15

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults. "Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics"

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When disagreeing about religion, most U.S. adults do not try to change the other person's mind

Most Americans (62%) say that when someone disagrees with them about religion, the best thing to do is try to understand the person's belief and agree to disagree. A third (33%) say they avoid discussing religion with the person. Just 4% say they try to persuade the other person to change their mind.

Overwhelming majorities of adults from every religious group say that when someone disagrees with them about religion, they either try to understand the person's belief and agree to disagree or they avoid discussing religion with the person. Very few say the best thing to do is try to persuade the other person to change their mind. However, evangelical Protestants are more likely than other groups to say this is the best approach (11%) and are least likely to say they avoid discussing religion with the person altogether (19%).

In disagreements about religion, six-in-ten Americans say it's best to try to understand others' beliefs and agree to disagree

What do you personally think is the best thing to do when someone disagrees with you about religion?

	Try to persuade the person to change their mind	Try to understand the person's beliefs and agree to disagree	Avoid discussing religion with the person	No answer
	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	4	62	33	1=100
Christian	6	64	29	1
Protestant	7	66	26	1
<i>Evangelical</i>	11	69	19	1
<i>Mainline</i>	2	64	33	1
<i>Historically black</i>	5	58	35	1
Catholic	2	60	36	1
Jewish	6	57	36	<1
Unaffiliated	2	58	40	1
Atheist	3	56	42	<1
Agnostic	<1	70	30	1
Nothing in particular	2	55	42	1

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted March 18-April 1, 2019, among U.S. adults.

"Americans Have Positive Views About Religion's Role in Society, but Want It Out of Politics"

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted March 18 to April 1, 2019. A total of 6,364 panelists responded out of 8,396 who were sampled, for a response rate of 76%. This does not include five panelists who

were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straight-lining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 5.3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged onto the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 6,364 respondents is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points.

Many of the questions in this report were asked of respondents who attend religious services a few times a year or more often. The margin of sampling error for this group is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

The subsample from the ATP was selected by grouping panelists into four strata so demographic groups that are underrepresented in the panel had a higher probability of selection than overrepresented groups:

- Stratum A consists of panelists who identified as Mormon or as Jewish, or who are non-internet users or have a high school education or less. They were sampled at a rate of 100%.
- Stratum B consists of panelists that are Hispanic, unregistered to vote or non-volunteers. They were sampled at a rate of 77%.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment Dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,508
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,469
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	802
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	8,714
	Total	29,114	18,720	13,493

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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- Stratum C consists of panelists that are black non-Hispanic or 18 to 34 years old. They were sampled at a rate of 28%.
- Stratum D consists of the remaining panelists. They were sampled at a rate of 23%.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 18,720 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,493 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.⁹

⁹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#)."

Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 and 2017 some respondents were subsampled for invitation to the panel. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table. For this wave, an additional weighting parameter was added to adjust for oversampling Mormon and Jewish respondents.

Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the American Trends Panel's Hispanic sample is predominantly U.S. born and English speaking.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2017 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Hispanic nativity	
Home internet access	
Region x Metropolitan status	2018 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2015 CPS Volunteer Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys
Religion (Mormon/Jewish/all other)	2018 recruitment survey weighted to the above dimensions

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	6,364	1.7 percentage points
Christian	3,886	2.1 percentage points
Protestant	2,475	2.6 percentage points
<i>Evangelical</i>	1,252	3.6 <i>percentage points</i>
<i>Mainline</i>	899	4.3 <i>percentage points</i>
<i>Historically black</i>	324	7.3 <i>percentage points</i>
Catholic	1,116	4.0 percentage points
Jewish	290	8.9 percentage points
Unaffiliated	1,936	2.9 percentage points
Atheist	377	6.6 percentage points
Agnostic	410	6.3 percentage points
Nothing in particular	1,149	3.8 percentage points
Ages 18-49	2,989	2.4 percentage points
18-29	943	4.3 percentage points
30-49	2,046	2.8 percentage points
50+	3,371	2.3 percentage points
50-64	1,909	3.1 percentage points
65+	1,462	3.3 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	4,421	1.9 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	594	5.4 percentage points
Hispanic	867	5.1 percentage points
Republican/lean Republican	2,600	2.5 percentage points
Democrat/lean Democrat	3,560	2.3 percentage points
White	2,157	2.7 percentage points
Black	511	5.8 percentage points
Hispanic	595	6.2 percentage points

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services a few times a year or more often

Total	3,097	2.4 percentage points
Christian	2,631	2.6 percentage points
Protestant	1,677	3.2 percentage points
<i>Evangelical</i>	945	4.1 percentage points
<i>Mainline</i>	482	6.0 percentage points
<i>Historically black</i>	250	8.4 percentage points
Catholic	706	5.1 percentage points
Republican/lean Republican	1,530	3.3 percentage points
Democrat/lean Democrat	1,467	3.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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