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Spirituality Among Americans

7 in 10 U.S. adults describe themselves as spiritual in some way, including 22% who are spiritual but not religious

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this survey to explore what spirituality means to Americans and to see whether various beliefs, practices and experiences that people may think of as spiritual are common. For this report, we surveyed 11,201 respondents from July 31 to Aug. 6, 2023. All respondents to the survey are part of Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel recruited through national random sampling of residential addresses, which gives nearly all U.S. adults a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education, religious affiliation and other categories.

For more, refer to the [ATP's Methodology](#) and the [Methodology](#) for this report. Read the [questions used in this report](#).

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Spirituality Among Americans

7 in 10 U.S. adults describe themselves as spiritual in some way, including 22% who are spiritual but not religious

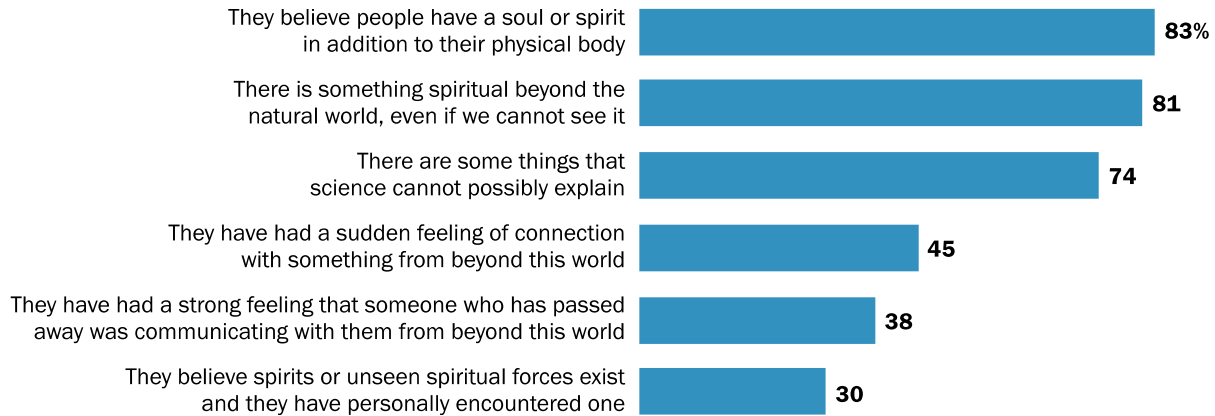
In recent decades, Americans have become less likely to identify with an organized religion. Yet a new Pew Research Center survey shows that belief in spirits or a spiritual realm beyond this world is widespread, even among those who don't consider themselves religious. The survey finds that:

- 83% of all U.S. adults believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body.
- 81% say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it.
- 74% say there are some things that science cannot possibly explain.
- 45% say they have had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world.
- 38% say they have had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was communicating with them from beyond this world.
- 30% say they have personally encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force.

Overall, 70% of U.S. adults can be considered “spiritual” in some way, because they think of themselves as spiritual people or say spirituality is very important in their lives.

Most Americans believe people have a soul or spirit

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



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
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These are among the key findings of a new Pew Research Center survey of American spirituality, conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023, among a nationally representative sample of 11,201 members of our [American Trends Panel](#).

This report covers the following topics:

- [Measuring spirituality](#)
- [Spiritual beliefs](#)
- [Spiritual practices](#)
- [Spiritual experiences](#)
- [Who are ‘spiritual but not religious’ Americans?](#)

Is spirituality increasing?

Because this is the first time Pew Research Center has asked many of these questions about beliefs, practices and experiences that may be viewed as spiritual, we do not know whether they are more – or less – common today than they were in the past.

Previous research has found a [decline in traditional religious beliefs and practices](#). That includes a drop in the shares of U.S. adults who say they [believe in God](#) with absolute certainty, [attend religious services regularly](#), pray daily and consider religion to be very important in their lives.

Some news articles have speculated that young Americans may be turning away from organized religion and [replacing it with their own mix of spiritual elements](#) drawn from many sources, including [Asian religions](#) and [Native American traditions](#), as well as New Age beliefs about crystals, [tarot cards](#) and the like. Media coverage has often focused, in particular, on people who describe themselves as [“spiritual but not religious.”](#)

While Pew Research Center surveys have documented [a decline since 2007 in the percentage of Americans who identify as Christian](#), the evidence that “religion” is being *replaced* by “spirituality” is much weaker, partly because of the difficulty of defining and separating those concepts.

This survey is intended to help fill the gap. We plan to use our new questions about spiritual beliefs, practices and experiences as a baseline, re-asking them periodically to see which measures are rising, which are falling and which are stable. And rather than imposing a definition of spirituality, we will let survey respondents tell us what it means to them and how they practice it.

Sidebar: What is spirituality?

In an effort to understand what Americans have in mind when they talk about spirituality, the survey asked respondents to explain, in their own words, what “spiritual” means to them. Fully 27% define “spiritual” by mentioning beliefs or faiths associated with organized religion, such as belief in God (12%); Jesus, the Holy Spirit or elements of Christian theology (8%); or obedience to religious teachings (5%).

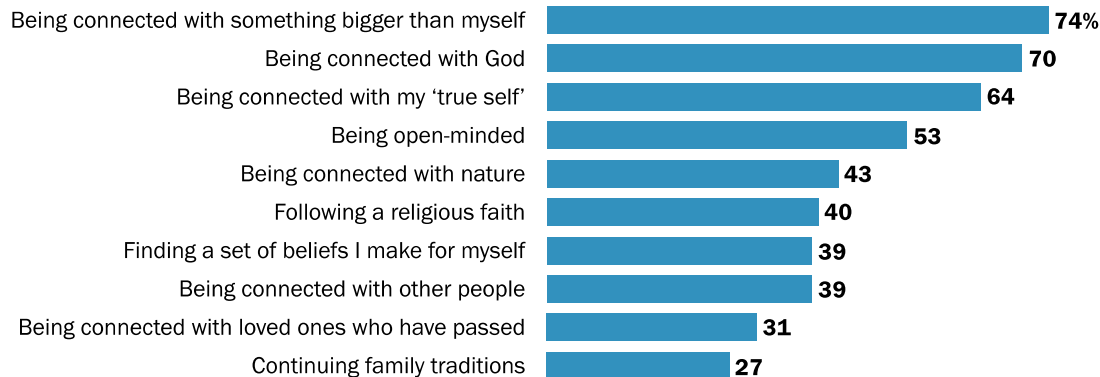
Many also say the word “spiritual” is about connections (24%), frequently with God but also, in some cases, with one’s inner self. One-in-ten Americans say the term relates to understanding themselves or guiding their own behavior, including being kind or respectful (4%), finding inner peace (2%), purpose or meaning (2%) or a sense of guidance and direction (2%).

These open-ended responses illustrate the difficulty of separating “spirituality” from “religion” and suggest that for many Americans, there is no clear dividing line.

To further explore the meaning of spirituality and its overlap with religion, the survey presented “spiritual” Americans (i.e., those who consider themselves spiritual or who say spirituality is very important in their lives) with a list of items and asked them to say which ones are “essential” to what being spiritual means to them. They could select as many items as they wished.

Most spiritual Americans say being connected with ‘something bigger than myself’ is essential to being spiritual

Among spiritual U.S. adults, % who say ____ is essential to what being spiritual means to them



Note: “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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Overall, the top three answers – out of 10 possible items – were “being connected with something bigger than myself” (74%), “being connected with God” (70%) and “being connected with my true self” (64%).

Smaller but still substantial shares of respondents (roughly four-in-ten or more) chose items such as “being open-minded,” “being connected with nature,” “following a religious faith,” “finding a set of beliefs that I make for myself” and “being connected with other people.”

For more discussion of what Americans mean by spirituality, jump to [Chapter 1](#)

Americans' beliefs about spirits and the afterlife

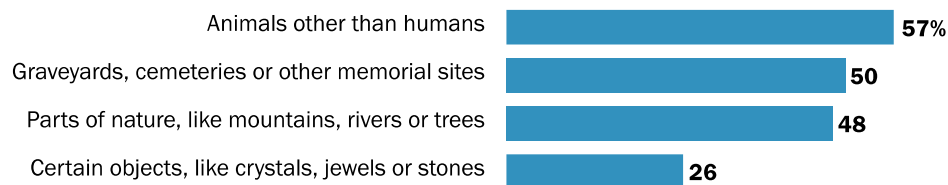
An overwhelming majority of U.S. adults (83%) say they believe that people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body. A smaller majority (57%) believes that animals other than humans can have their own spirits or spiritual energies.

Half of Americans believe that spirits can inhabit burial places, such as graveyards, cemeteries or other memorial sites. And a similar share (48%) says that parts of the natural landscape – such as mountains, rivers or trees – can have spirits or spiritual energies.

About a quarter of U.S. adults believe that spirits or spiritual energy can reside in certain objects, such as crystals, jewels or stones (26%).

Roughly half of Americans believe that animals, graveyards and parts of nature can have spirits or spiritual energies

% of U.S. adults who say they believe ___ can have spirits or spiritual energies



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
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What do Americans believe about life after death?

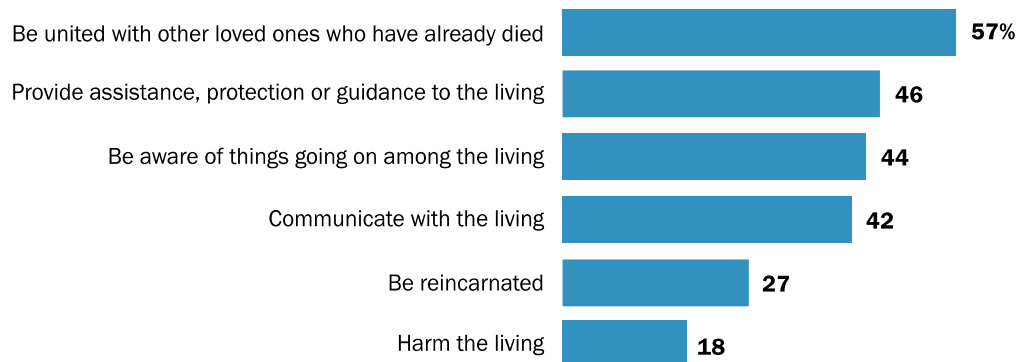
The survey finds that 71% of Americans believe in heaven, while somewhat fewer – 61% – believe in hell and 60% believe in both. These numbers have held steady in recent years.¹ But there is less consensus about whether the dead have various powers, such as the ability to follow what is happening in this world and to watch out for loved ones who are alive.

We explored these beliefs for the first time by asking whether it is “definitely true,” “probably true,” “probably not true” or “definitely not true” that people who have already died can do a variety of things. (Respondents also were able to say they were “not sure.”)

More than half of U.S. adults (57%) believe that in the afterlife, people definitely or probably can reunite with loved ones who also have died.

42% of Americans believe the dead can communicate with the living

*% of U.S. adults who believe it is **definitely or probably true** that people who have died can ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
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About four-in-ten or more Americans say that dead people definitely or probably can assist, protect or guide the living (46%), be aware of what’s going on among the living (44%) or communicate with people who are still living (42%). Overall, U.S. adults are more than twice as likely to say that the dead can *help* the living (46%) as they are to say that the dead can *harm* the living (18%).

¹ Pew Research Center has asked about belief in heaven and hell on four previous occasions in American Trends Panel (ATP) surveys since 2017. The results have been fairly stable, hovering between 71% and 74% of U.S. adults who say they believe in heaven and 60% to 62% who say they believe in hell. Refer to the Topline for details.

About a quarter of U.S. adults believe it is definitely or probably true that the dead can be reincarnated (27%), defined in the survey as being “reborn again and again in this world.”²

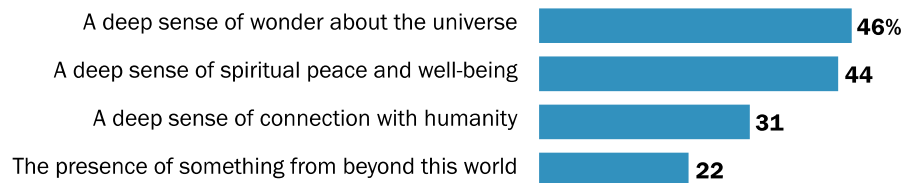
² Several of our surveys have asked about reincarnation in a “Yes/No” format, [most recently](#) on the ATP in 2021, as well as in [a 2009 telephone survey](#) about mystical experiences. However, those surveys are not directly comparable with the 2023 survey of spirituality among Americans because of differences in question wording and/or methodology.

Spiritual experiences and practices

Some kinds of spiritual experiences seem to be relatively common. For example, 46% of U.S. adults say that at least once or twice a month they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe. A similar share (44%) say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being that often.

44% of Americans say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least once or twice a month

% of U.S. adults who say they feel ___ monthly or more often



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
 “Spirituality Among Americans”

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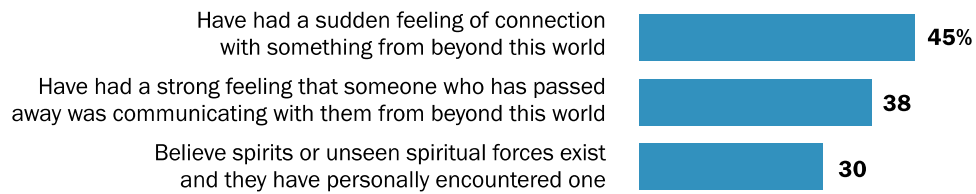
Feeling a deep sense of connection with humanity and feeling “the presence of something from beyond this world” are less common. Still, about one-fifth of Americans or more say they have such feelings at least once or twice a month.

To gauge experiences that may be relatively rare, we asked respondents whether they have ever had specific otherworldly experiences.

Fully 45% say they have had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world, and 38% say they've had a strong feeling that someone who previously passed away was communicating with them from beyond this world. Three-in-ten say they believe in spirits or unseen spiritual forces *and* also say they have personally encountered one.

45% of Americans have ever had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world

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



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
"Spirituality Among Americans"

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How do Americans practice spirituality?

To measure some common spiritual practices, we asked survey respondents how often they pursue five activities: looking inward or centering themselves, meditating, doing yoga, exercising and spending time in nature.

Whether these activities are spiritual depends, of course, on one's definition of spirituality. As previously noted, many Americans explain the meaning of "spiritual" by talking about various kinds of connections – such as with God or something bigger than themselves, with their innermost selves, with loved ones who have died or with all humanity.

With that understanding of spirituality in mind, we asked survey respondents to select the *most important reason* why they engage in each of these activities: Is it to "feel connected" with something bigger than themselves, with their "true self" or with other people? Is it to get health benefits, including relaxation? To have fun and enjoy the experience? Or for other reasons?

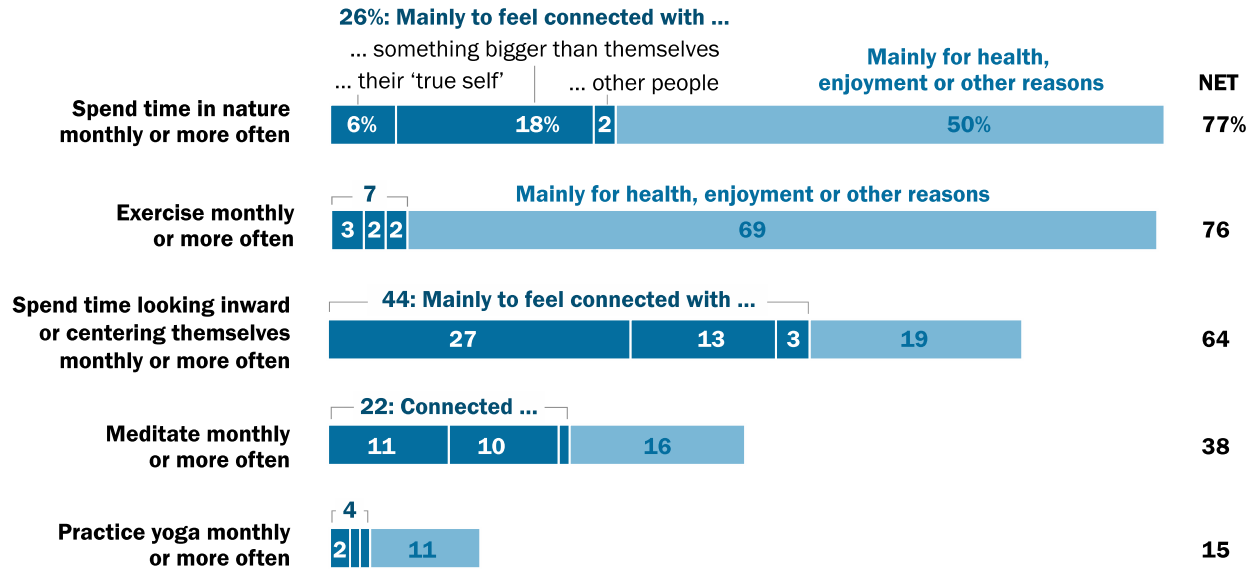
A total of 77% of U.S. adults say they spend time in nature at least a few times a month, and 26% say they do so mainly to feel connected, such as with something bigger than themselves (18%) or with their "true self" (6%). Half of Americans say they spend time in nature mainly for health benefits, to enjoy themselves or for other reasons.

By comparison, fewer Americans (64%) say they look inward or center themselves at least a few times each month. But a relatively large share – 44% of all U.S. adults – say they look inward or center themselves mainly to feel connected, including 27% who do it mainly to feel connected with their "true self."

Roughly four-in-ten Americans meditate at least a few times a month (38%), including 22% of U.S. adults who meditate mainly to connect with their "true self" (11%) or with something bigger than themselves (10%).

Many Americans say they explore nature or center themselves mainly to connect with their ‘true self’ or with something bigger than themselves

% of U.S. adults who say they do each of the following



Note: Those who did not answer the question about the main reason they engage in the corresponding activity are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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How many Americans gather in spiritual communities?

Americans are more likely to report gathering in religious communities than meeting in spiritual groups. Fully 39% of U.S. adults say they are involved in a religious community, such as a church or religious congregation, while 14% say they are involved in “a spiritual community, such as a group that helps [them] find a connection with something bigger than [themselves], nature or other people.”

Moreover, most people who are involved in a spiritual community are also involved in a religious one: 10% of U.S. adults say they are involved in both kinds of groups, while just 4% of all U.S. adults say they are involved in a spiritual community and *not* a religious one.

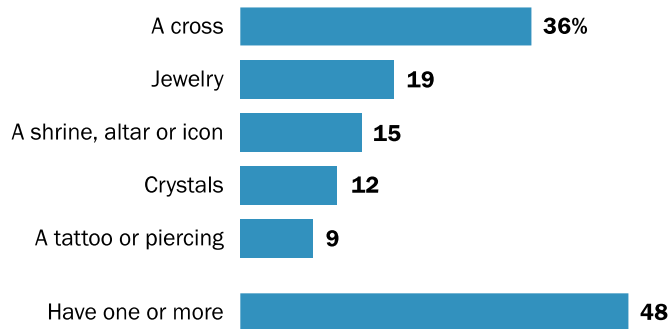
What kinds of things do Americans have for spiritual reasons?

More than one-third of U.S. adults say they have a cross for spiritual purposes, and 19% say they have some jewelry (which could also be a cross) that serves a spiritual purpose.

Also, 15% of Americans say they maintain a shrine, altar or icon in their home; 12% possess crystals for spiritual purposes; and 9% have a tattoo or piercing for a spiritual purpose.

48% of Americans have at least one of the following for spiritual purposes

% of U.S. adults who say they have ____ for spiritual purposes



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
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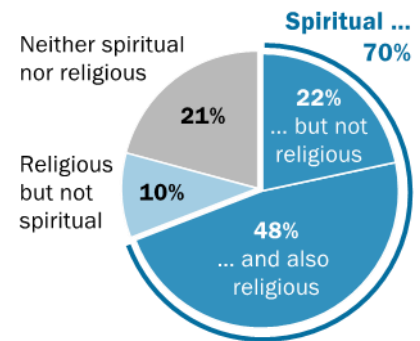
How many Americans are spiritual?

Seven-in-ten U.S. adults think of themselves as spiritual or say that spirituality is very important in their lives. To be sure, most of these people also consider themselves religious or say that religion is very important in their lives. There is enough overlap between what people mean by “spirituality” and what they have in mind by “religion” that nearly half of U.S. adults indicate they are *both* religious and spiritual.

Still, 22% of U.S. adults fall into the category of spiritual but *not* religious. The new survey offers a rich portrait of this group, showing what beliefs they hold, how they practice their spirituality, and how they tend to differ from U.S. adults who embrace the “religious” label.

22% of Americans are spiritual but not religious

% of U.S. adults who are ____



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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What do ‘spiritual but not religious’ people believe?

The survey finds that on many questions, “**spiritual but not religious**” Americans – **SBNRs, for short – are no more spiritual, on average, than U.S. adults who are both religious and spiritual.** For example, large majorities in both groups say they believe “people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body.” Smaller majorities of both groups believe in the existence of “spirits or unseen spiritual forces.”

By several measures, SBNRs are no more spiritual than Americans who are both religious and spiritual

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



Note: “SBNRs” are those who are spiritual but not religious. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

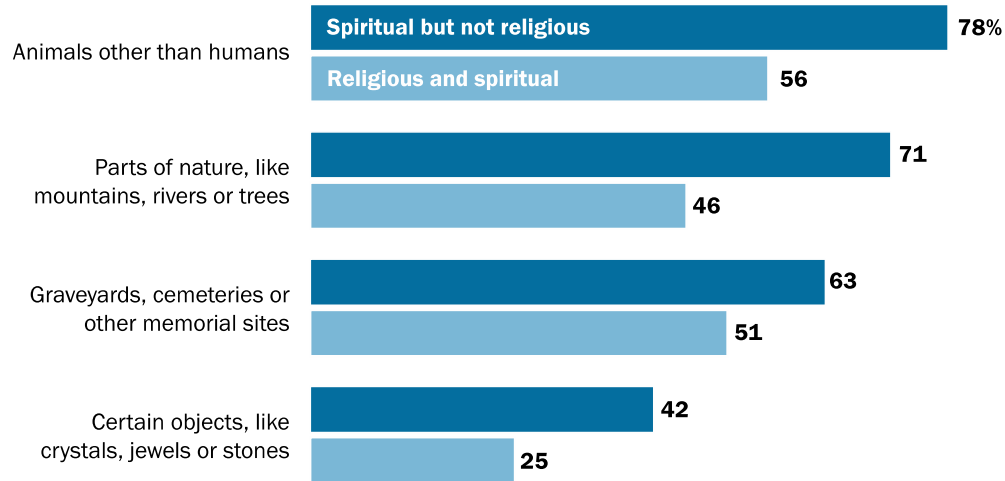
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But SBNRs are more likely to see spiritual forces at work in nature. For example, 71% of SBNRs believe that spirits or spiritual energies can be found in parts of nature like mountains, rivers or trees. Far fewer adults who are both religious and spiritual (46%) share this belief. Also, most SBNRs say that being connected with nature is “essential” to what being spiritual means to them (59%), an outlook that is less common among Americans who describe themselves as both religious and spiritual (35%).

SBNRs are more likely than religious-and-spiritual Americans to say animals, places, objects can have spirits

% of U.S. adults who believe each of the following things can have spirits or spiritual energies



Note: “SBNRs” are those who are spiritual but not religious. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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SBNRs are much less likely than Americans who are both religious and spiritual to believe in the God of the Bible (20% vs. 84%). On the other hand, they are much *more* likely to say they believe there is “some other higher power or spiritual force in the universe” (73% vs. 15%).

Spiritual but not religious Americans express more negative views of organized religion than religious-and-spiritual adults do. For example, 42% of SBNRs say religion causes division and intolerance, while just 12% of religious-and-spiritual adults take that position. And 13% of SBNRs say that the statement “religion encourages people to do the right thing and treat other people well,” describes their views a “great deal” compared with 57% of Americans who are both religious and spiritual.

Very few SBNRs attend religious worship services. Just 2% say they attend weekly or more often, compared with 40% of adults who are both religious and spiritual. SBNRs are also less likely than religious-and-spiritual Americans to say they are involved in a spiritual community that is extremely or very important to them (5% vs. 14%).

But SBNRs are somewhat more likely than religious-and-spiritual U.S. adults to spend time “looking inward or centering” themselves: 78% of SBNRs say they do this at least a few times each month, as do 67% of adults who are both religious and spiritual.

And, although they don’t consider themselves religious or say religion is very important in their lives, **many SBNRs do claim a religious affiliation.** When asked about their present religion, 45% say they are affiliated with a religion – including 21% who identify as Protestant and 12% who identify as Catholic – while 54% say they are religiously unaffiliated (i.e., atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular”).

For more information on spiritual but not religious Americans, including their political leanings and their age, education, gender and other demographic characteristics, go to [Chapter 5](#).

1. Measuring spirituality

How does one go about counting the number of spiritual people in the United States? And how do Americans define spirituality? In preparation for this survey, we reviewed the academic literature on spirituality and consulted with scholars who have published on the topic. It quickly became clear that there is no single, widely accepted definition of spirituality.

Some experts view spirituality as a broad realm and see organized religions as a small part of it.³ Others view religion and spirituality as overlapping circles, often with religious traditions being the bigger circle in American life.⁴ Some define spirituality as beliefs or experiences connected with the supernatural: “something beyond” humans or beyond the material world. Others think spirituality also can be about looking inward into the depths of the self, or about [feeling connected with other humans, other creatures or nature](#).

One common perception is that the label of “religious” has been [tarnished by scandals](#), while the label of “spiritual” carries [mostly positive associations](#). As a result, it’s possible that declining numbers of Americans may describe themselves as religious and rising numbers may call themselves spiritual, even if their underlying beliefs and practices haven’t really changed. This means it is important to measure the way people label themselves separately from what they believe, what they have experienced, and how they practice whatever they consider to be religion and/or spirituality.

³ Sun, Anna. 2022. [“Fearful asymmetry: Rethinking the boundaries between religion and spirituality.”](#) In Steensland, Brian, Jaime Kucinskas and Anna Sun, eds. “Situating Spirituality.”

⁴ Boston University sociologist Nancy Ammerman has warned against framing spirituality as an alternative to organized religion, contending that “this either/or distinction not only fails to capture the empirical reality of American religion, it does no justice to the complexity of spirituality.” Ammerman, Nancy T. 2013. [“Spiritual but not religious? Beyond binary choices in the study of religion.”](#) Journal for the Social Scientific Study of Religion.

For all these reasons, we did not begin this research project with preconceived definitions of spirituality or religion. Rather, we took a practical or functional approach, posing a series of questions to a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults:

- Do you think of yourself as spiritual? (Yes or No)
- Do you think of yourself as religious? (Yes or No)
- How important is spirituality in your life? (Very, Somewhat, Not too, or Not at all important)
- How important is religion in your life? (Very, Somewhat, Not too, or Not at all important)

We also posed a follow-up question to those who think of themselves as spiritual or who say spirituality is very important to them, presenting a list of 10 possible aspects of spirituality and asking them to say which ones are essential to them.

And, we asked *all* the survey respondents, no matter how they labeled themselves, to tell us in their own words what “spiritual” means to them.

This chapter details how our sample of more than 11,000 U.S. adults answered that set of questions and how we categorized them, depending on their answers, into four groups:

- Religious and spiritual (48% of U.S. adults)
- Spiritual but not religious (22%)
- Religious but not spiritual (10%)
- Neither spiritual nor religious (21%)

Other chapters look, separately, at how the respondents answer many other questions about their [beliefs](#), [practices](#) and [experiences](#).

This approach allows us to compare the beliefs, practices and experiences of people in each of our four categories and, especially, to look for the distinguishing characteristics of Americans who are in the spiritual but not religious (SBNR) category, which is summarized briefly in the [Overview of this report](#) and detailed in the [final chapter](#).

Who says they are spiritual or religious?

The survey asked whether Americans think of themselves as spiritual and, separately, whether they think of themselves as religious. Among Americans overall:

- 64% think of themselves as spiritual, and 53% think of themselves as religious.
- 38% think of themselves as *both* religious and spiritual.
- 25% think of themselves as spiritual but not religious, and 14% consider themselves religious but not spiritual.

U.S. adults were also asked how important spirituality is in their lives and, separately, how important religion is in their lives.

- 40% say spirituality is very important in their lives, and 38% say that religion is very important.
- 30% of Americans say that *both* spirituality and religion are very important in their lives.
- 10% say spirituality is very important in their lives but religion is not, and 8% say religion is very important but spirituality is not.

The survey asked U.S. adults whether they think of themselves as spiritual and also whether they think of themselves as religious ...

| % who said yes to ____ | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Both questions | 38 |
| Just the 'spiritual' question | 25 |
| Just the 'religious' question | 14 |
| Neither question | 22 |

... we also asked them how important spirituality is in their lives and how important religion is in their lives ...

| % who said 'very important' to ____ | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Both questions | 30 |
| Just the 'spirituality' question | 10 |
| Just the 'religion' question | 8 |
| Neither question | 52 |

... when we put it all together, the data shows that 22% are spiritual but not religious

| % who are ____ | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Spiritual but not religious | 22 |
| Religious and spiritual | 48 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 10 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 21 |

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. "Spirituality Among Americans"

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Putting these all together, 70% of Americans think of themselves as spiritual or say that spirituality is very important in their lives. And 58% think of themselves as religious or say that religion is very important in their lives. In total:

- 22% of Americans are spiritual but not religious (SBNR).
- 48% are religious and spiritual.
- 10% are religious but not spiritual.
- 21% are neither spiritual nor religious.

How religious affiliation fits into this picture

Most Americans who are affiliated with a religion are both religious and spiritual (64%). This includes 79% each of evangelical Protestants and members of the historically Black Protestant tradition, as well as 56% each of mainline Protestants and Catholics.

Of the U.S. religious groups that are large enough to be analyzed separately in this report, Jews are the most likely to be spiritual but not religious (29%) and the least likely to be both religious and spiritual (27%).⁵

The survey included respondents of many other religious backgrounds, including members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as Mormons), Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. But there are [not enough respondents from these smaller groups](#) to report on their answers separately.

About half of religiously unaffiliated adults – those who answer a question about their religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – are neither spiritual nor religious (48%), including 80% of atheists and 58% of agnostics.

⁵ This is consistent with prior research, including Pew Research Center’s report on [Jewish Americans in 2020](#), which finds that U.S. Jews are [less religious, on average, than the overall U.S. public](#) by conventional measures such as belief in God and attendance at religious services.

22% of Americans are spiritual but not religious

% of U.S. adults who are ...

| | Spiritual but not religious | Religious and spiritual | Religious but not spiritual | Neither spiritual nor religious | NET Religious | NET Spiritual |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 22 | 48 | 10 | 21=100 | 58 | 70 |
| Religiously affiliated | 14 | 64 | 13 | 8 | 77 | 79 |
| Protestant | 11 | 72 | 12 | 5 | 83 | 83 |
| Evangelical | 8 | 79 | 10 | 3 | 89 | 87 |
| Mainline | 19 | 56 | 15 | 10 | 71 | 75 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 8 | 79 | 10 | 4 | 89 | 87 |
| Catholic | 14 | 56 | 18 | 12 | 74 | 70 |
| Jewish | 29 | 27 | 11 | 33 | 38 | 56 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 38 | 12 | 3 | 48 | 14 | 49 |
| Atheist | 19 | 1 | <1 | 80 | 1 | 20 |
| Agnostic | 38 | 3 | 1 | 58 | 4 | 41 |
| Nothing in particular | 43 | 17 | 4 | 36 | 21 | 60 |
| Men | 19 | 44 | 11 | 26 | 54 | 63 |
| Women | 24 | 52 | 9 | 15 | 61 | 76 |
| Ages 18-29 | 24 | 31 | 13 | 32 | 44 | 55 |
| 30-49 | 24 | 44 | 8 | 24 | 52 | 68 |
| 50-64 | 22 | 54 | 9 | 15 | 64 | 76 |
| 65+ | 17 | 59 | 11 | 14 | 70 | 76 |
| White | 22 | 46 | 9 | 23 | 54 | 68 |
| Black | 17 | 67 | 8 | 8 | 75 | 84 |
| Hispanic | 21 | 46 | 16 | 18 | 61 | 66 |
| Asian | 23 | 37 | 11 | 29 | 48 | 61 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 16 | 58 | 11 | 15 | 69 | 74 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 27 | 38 | 9 | 27 | 46 | 65 |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. "Religious" are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Essential elements of spirituality

To further gauge how Americans think about spirituality, the survey asked those who are spiritual whether each of 10 items is “essential,” “important but not essential,” or “not important” to what being spiritual means to them.

Most **spiritual Americans** say “being connected with something bigger than myself” (74%) is essential to what being spiritual means to them, along with “being connected with God” (70%) and “being connected with my true self” (64%).

Many also say “being open-minded” (53%), “being connected with nature” (43%), “following a religious faith” (40%), “being connected with other people” (39%) or “finding a set of beliefs that I make for myself” (39%) are essential to being spiritual.

Fewer spiritual Americans say “being connected with loved ones who have passed” (31%) or “continuing family traditions” (27%) are essential to what being spiritual means to them.

Connecting with ‘something bigger than myself’ or with God most essential to being spiritual

Among spiritual U.S. adults, % who say each of the following is ___ to what being spiritual means to them

| | Essential % | Important, but not essential % | Not important % |
|---|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| Being connected with something bigger than myself | 74 | 19 | 6 |
| Being connected with God | 70 | 16 | 14 |
| Being connected with my ‘true self’ | 64 | 25 | 11 |
| Being open-minded | 53 | 33 | 13 |
| Being connected with nature | 43 | 38 | 19 |
| Following a religious faith | 40 | 29 | 30 |
| Being connected with other people | 39 | 46 | 14 |
| Finding a set of beliefs that I make for myself | 39 | 29 | 31 |
| Being connected with loved ones who have passed | 31 | 35 | 33 |
| Continuing family traditions | 27 | 44 | 28 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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What do people in different religious groups think is essential to being spiritual?

Evangelical Protestants and members of the **historically Black Protestant** tradition who describe themselves as spiritual (either by saying that they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives) stand out for a tendency to say that “being connected with God” is essential to what being spiritual means to them. Fully 92% of evangelicals and 89% of members of historically Black Protestant churches who are spiritual take this position. They are also the most likely of the large religious groups analyzed to say that “following a religious faith” is essential.

Compared with spiritual adults who are affiliated with a religion, **unaffiliated spiritual adults** are more likely to say that “being open-minded” (70%) and “being connected with nature” (63%) are essential to what being spiritual means to them.

Across the board, spiritual Americans in most of the demographic groups included in this analysis say that “being connected with something bigger than myself” is essential to what being spiritual means to them.

The survey also asked spiritual adults whether there is anything else (other than the 10 listed items) they consider essential to what spirituality means to them. Respondents could answer this open-ended question however they wished. Among the more common answers were being kind or respectful (9%); believing in Jesus, the Holy Spirit or other elements of Christian theology (5%); and following religious teachings or scripture (4%).

(For more details, go to the [Topline](#).)

What spiritual Americans consider essential to their spirituality

Among spiritual U.S. adults, % who say ____ is essential to what being spiritual means to them

| | Being connected with something bigger than myself | Being connected with God | Being connected with my 'true self' | Being open-minded | Being connected with nature | Following a religious faith | Being connected with other people | Finding a set of beliefs that I make for myself | Being connected with loved ones who've passed | Continuing family traditions |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Religiously affiliated | 77 | 81 | 60 | 49 | 37 | 49 | 39 | 36 | 31 | 30 |
| Protestant | 80 | 86 | 55 | 44 | 30 | 53 | 38 | 32 | 25 | 26 |
| Evangelical | 83 | 92 | 49 | 36 | 23 | 60 | 36 | 24 | 19 | 23 |
| Mainline | 75 | 73 | 58 | 53 | 42 | 34 | 39 | 40 | 34 | 28 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 78 | 89 | 76 | 57 | 35 | 60 | 40 | 44 | 32 | 32 |
| Catholic | 74 | 76 | 66 | 54 | 44 | 42 | 40 | 46 | 41 | 39 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 64 | 34 | 75 | 70 | 63 | 9 | 39 | 46 | 32 | 19 |
| Agnostic | 75 | 14 | 80 | 76 | 73 | <1 | 51 | 49 | 35 | 11 |
| Nothing in particular | 63 | 40 | 74 | 69 | 61 | 11 | 36 | 45 | 31 | 21 |
| Men | 71 | 68 | 60 | 50 | 40 | 40 | 35 | 35 | 28 | 25 |
| Women | 76 | 72 | 66 | 56 | 44 | 40 | 42 | 41 | 33 | 29 |
| Ages 18-29 | 67 | 50 | 69 | 59 | 48 | 30 | 39 | 43 | 32 | 22 |
| 30-49 | 74 | 67 | 65 | 55 | 44 | 39 | 38 | 39 | 33 | 27 |
| 50-64 | 75 | 77 | 63 | 53 | 41 | 42 | 40 | 37 | 30 | 29 |
| 65+ | 78 | 79 | 59 | 48 | 40 | 44 | 40 | 37 | 30 | 29 |
| White | 75 | 69 | 58 | 51 | 39 | 38 | 38 | 36 | 29 | 25 |
| Black | 78 | 82 | 78 | 60 | 43 | 49 | 43 | 44 | 34 | 31 |
| Hispanic | 73 | 71 | 70 | 56 | 54 | 41 | 41 | 42 | 35 | 36 |
| Asian | 58 | 54 | 62 | 61 | 48 | 36 | 48 | 48 | 39 | 31 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 76 | 79 | 55 | 42 | 34 | 47 | 35 | 33 | 28 | 28 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 74 | 60 | 73 | 66 | 52 | 32 | 43 | 45 | 35 | 27 |

Note: "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only. Atheists and Jewish Americans are not shown because of insufficient sample size.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

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What does ‘spiritual’ mean?

In addition to asking spiritual respondents what they view as essential to being spiritual, we also asked all surveyed respondents to describe, *in their own words*, what the term “spiritual” means to them. We categorized their responses based on the types of beliefs, experiences or other concepts they mentioned.

Fully 27% give descriptions tied to **organized religion**. For example, they cite belief in God (12%), or belief in Jesus, the Holy Spirit or other elements of Christian theology (8%). On the other hand, 4% say explicitly that spirituality is separate from or **outside of organized religion** – including opposition to, or nonparticipation in, organized religion (1%).

About one-third of respondents (32%) offer responses that mention beliefs in what we categorized as “**something else**,” such as belief in a higher power (14%) or belief in the unseen or otherworldly (7%).

About one-quarter of Americans, when asked to describe the term “spiritual” in their own words, mention **connections** (24%), such as with God (12%), nature (4%) or with themselves (4%).

One-in-ten Americans say the term relates to **understanding themselves or guiding their own behavior**, including efforts to be kind or respectful (4%), finding inner peace (2%), purpose and meaning (2%) or a sense of guidance and direction (2%).

Many Americans say ‘spiritual’ means belief in higher power or God

% of U.S. adults who say the term “spiritual” means ...

| | % |
|--|-----------|
| Belief in organized religion | 27 |
| Belief in God | 12 |
| Belief in Jesus, the Holy Spirit or other elements of Christian theology | 8 |
| Obedience to God/following scripture, religious teachings | 5 |
| Faith/faithfulness | 4 |
| Religion/religious | 4 |
| Belief in something else | 32 |
| Belief in higher power | 14 |
| Belief in the unseen/otherworldly | 7 |
| Souls/spirits | 6 |
| Belief in something more/bigger than self | 3 |
| Life after death | 3 |
| Energy/vibrations | 2 |
| Universe | 2 |
| Belief outside of organized religion | 4 |
| Belief outside of religion/the church | 3 |
| Opposition/nonparticipation in organized religion | 1 |
| Connections | 24 |
| Connections with God | 12 |
| Connections with nature, outside world | 4 |
| Connections with self | 4 |
| Connections with higher power | 3 |
| Connections with other people, humanity | 2 |
| Connecting with something more/bigger than self | 1 |
| Connecting with the unseen/otherworldly | 1 |
| Related to self and others | 10 |
| Being kind/respectful | 4 |
| Inner peace | 2 |
| Purpose/meaning | 2 |
| Sense of guidance/direction | 2 |
| Mindfulness | 1 |

Note: This was an open-ended question. Results may not add to subtotals indicated because more than one response was permitted. Up to three responses were coded. Not all responses are shown. Refer to Topline for full list of responses.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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In their own words, how some respondents described what ‘spiritual’ means to them

Here are a few of the thousands of answers we got to this open-ended question, lightly edited for spelling and grammar:

“Being one with your soul, emotions, feelings, actions.”

“It means having a relationship with God and a belief system that includes a responsibility to do what is right.”

“Connecting with the creator who is the source of my existence. Providing strength, guidance, hope and peace. The word of God provides direction for my life.”

“I believe that God is, in part, a spirit, and that each of us (humans) has a spirit. God is the Holy Spirit, and I have given my life – all of it (spirit, mind, body) – to Him. To live spiritually is walking in the knowledge and conviction of that previous statement and personally living in accordance with the Bible in how it instructs.”

“Not adhering to any particular religion, but acknowledging higher powers that exist above all that is.”

“Believing in something larger and more creative than science.”

“I believe there is a God who is a higher power to all that exists. I don’t have to attend a church to feel that God is everywhere and in the beauty of everything.”

“I believe that there is a force bigger than me just not necessarily a god or deity.”

“Spiritual means to discover your own self by deep meditation and contemplation. Love everyone, hate none.”

“That [I] respect the Earth and life of the planet. Live intentionally as possible, with care.”

“One with the universe!”

“I associate spiritual with religious. Something that takes me outside of my everyday life. Both a chance to have moments of reflection and solace and continue generational customs and practices.”

“[B]eing spiritual means to tune in with your inner self and your soul and reflect on what you believe controls things. To think about and believe whatever you feel exists that’s bigger than us and whether or not it has a grand plan for us and our world.”

“The belief that a supreme being is the creator and ultimate controller of the universe, and that humans’ existence in this realm is transient.”

“To me, spiritual means to be in touch with nature, see the beauty in everything, feel the love of Mother Nature, to know that there is something out there that is greater than me, that loves me, that looks out for me. I find that mostly in nature – the sun, the moon, trees, flowers, wild bunnies running through my yard, the deer standing stoically as if posing for me to enjoy their beauty. In addition, I try to follow the teaching of Jesus, because he had some pretty good advice.”

2. Spiritual beliefs

Americans hold a wide range of beliefs about spirits and related matters. Some views that may be considered spiritual – such as belief in God or another “higher power” – are very common across all major demographic groups, including among many religiously unaffiliated Americans.

Some other beliefs – such as in the possibility of reincarnation, or in spiritual energy within crystals and stones – are much less common.

About nine-in-ten U.S. adults believe in God or another higher power, including 54% who say they believe in “God as described in the Bible” and 34% who say they don’t believe in the biblical depiction of God but do believe there is “some other higher power or spiritual force in the universe.”

More than eight-in-ten Americans believe that people have a soul or spirit (83%) and 81% say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it.

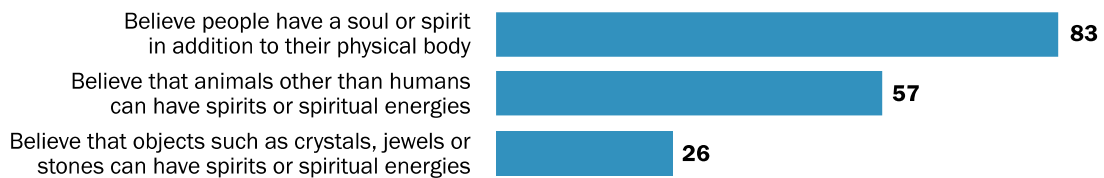
In addition, majorities of U.S. adults believe in heaven (71%) and hell (61%), and more than half say that it is “probably” or “definitely” true that the deceased can be reunited with loved ones who have already died. (Far fewer say this is “probably not” or “definitely not” true.)

88% of Americans believe in God of the Bible or another higher power

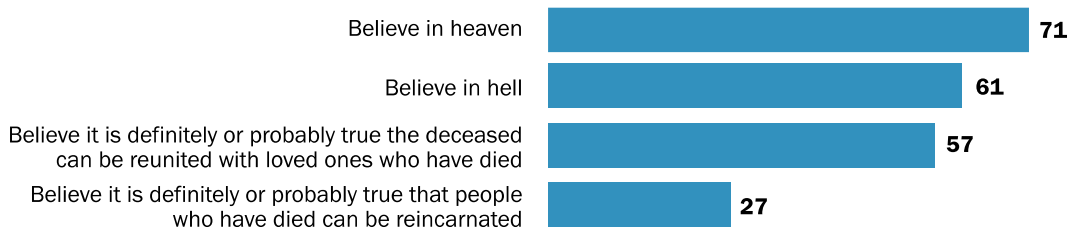
*% of U.S. adults who believe the following about **the supernatural***



*% of U.S. adults who believe the following about **spirits/spiritual energy***



*% of U.S. adults who believe the following about **the afterlife***



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
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This chapter goes into depth on these topics and also presents Americans' views on related questions such as:

- What is the nature of spirits, and do (nonhuman) animals have spirits? Can places like cemeteries and parts of nature like mountains have spirits or spiritual energies?
- What happens after people die? Do their spirits remain in contact with the living world? Can they help or harm the living?

Belief that people have a soul or spirit

Most Americans (83%) believe that people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body. Overwhelming majorities of Protestants (93%) and Catholics (91%) express this belief, as do smaller majorities of Jews (69%) and the religiously unaffiliated (67%).

Older Americans are more likely to believe people have a soul or spirit. Among U.S. adults ages 50 and older, 88% hold this belief, compared with 81% of those ages 30 to 49 and 74% of adults under 30.

This belief is somewhat more common among women than men, and also more prevalent among Republicans and independents who lean toward the Republican Party than among Democrats and Democratic leaners.

Most U.S. adults believe that humans have a soul

% of U.S. adults who believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body

| | % |
|-------------------------------|----|
| U.S. adults | 83 |
| Religiously affiliated | 91 |
| Protestant | 93 |
| Evangelical | 95 |
| Mainline | 92 |
| Historically Black Protestant | 89 |
| Catholic | 91 |
| Jewish | 69 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 67 |
| Atheist | 31 |
| Agnostic | 60 |
| Nothing in particular | 78 |
| Men | 78 |
| Women | 88 |
| Ages 18-29 | 74 |
| 30-49 | 81 |
| 50-64 | 89 |
| 65+ | 87 |
| White | 83 |
| Black | 89 |
| Hispanic | 81 |
| Asian | 77 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 89 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 79 |

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. "Spirituality Among Americans"

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Belief in God or a higher power

Americans overwhelmingly believe in God or some other higher power.

More than half of U.S. adults (54%) say they believe in “God as described in the Bible,” while about one-third (34%) say they do not believe in God as described in the Bible but *do* believe there is some other higher power or spiritual force in the universe.

One-in-ten U.S. adults do not believe there is any higher power or spiritual force in the universe.

Americans who identify with a religion are more likely to say they believe in the God of the Bible than to say they believe in some other higher power or spiritual force (73% vs. 24%).

Large majorities of evangelicals (91%) and members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (86%) say they believe in God as described in the Bible, as do two-thirds of Catholics and mainline Protestants.

Similar shares of agnostics (64%) and those who describe their religion as “nothing in particular” (63%) believe in a higher power or spiritual force.

Most self-identified atheists do not believe there is *any* God, higher power or spiritual force (77%). But 22% of U.S. adults who describe themselves as atheists say they believe there is some “higher power or spiritual force” in the universe.

U.S. adults ages 30 and older are more likely to say they believe in God as described in the Bible, while those under 30 are more likely to believe in some other higher power or spiritual force.

Seven-in-ten Black Americans believe in God as described in the Bible, as do 57% of Hispanic Americans and 53% of White Americans. A minority of Asian Americans (35%) believe in God as described in the Bible. While a majority of Republicans and GOP leaners believe in God as described in the Bible (69%), Democrats and Democratic leaners are more divided: 41% believe in the God of the Bible, 43% believe in another higher power or spiritual force and 16% do not believe in either.

54% of Americans believe in God as described in the Bible

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

| | Believe in God as described in the Bible | Believe in higher power/ spiritual force | Do not believe in any higher power or spiritual force |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 54 | 34 | 10 |
| Religiously affiliated | 73 | 24 | 2 |
| Protestant | 83 | 16 | 1 |
| Evangelical | 91 | 8 | <1 |
| Mainline | 66 | 31 | 2 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 86 | 12 | 1 |
| Catholic | 67 | 30 | 2 |
| Jewish | 39 | 42 | 16 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 13 | 56 | 29 |
| Atheist | <1 | 22 | 77 |
| Agnostic | 3 | 64 | 32 |
| Nothing in particular | 20 | 63 | 14 |
| Men | 52 | 33 | 14 |
| Women | 57 | 35 | 7 |
| Ages 18-29 | 36 | 46 | 17 |
| 30-49 | 51 | 37 | 12 |
| 50-64 | 62 | 29 | 8 |
| 65+ | 66 | 26 | 7 |
| White | 53 | 33 | 13 |
| Black | 70 | 26 | 2 |
| Hispanic | 57 | 35 | 7 |
| Asian | 35 | 49 | 15 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 69 | 25 | 5 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 41 | 43 | 16 |

Note: Those who did not answer or who did not provide a clear response are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Belief in other spirits or unseen forces

We also asked respondents: “Regardless of whether you believe in God or a higher power in the universe, do you believe that other spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist?” Nearly two-thirds of Americans (65%) say they believe in spirits or unseen spiritual forces, while 14% say they do not. Around one-fifth are unsure.

Protestants (72%) and Catholics (68%) are much more likely than Jewish Americans (33%) to believe in spirits or spiritual forces.

Among religious “nones” – those who answer a survey question about their religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – about half believe in spirits or unseen spiritual forces. Americans whose religious identity is “nothing in particular” (62%) are far more likely than self-identified agnostics (43%) and atheists (17%) to say they believe in spirits or spiritual forces.

Black (72%) and Hispanic Americans (70%) are more likely than White (62%) and Asian (58%) adults to believe in spirits or spiritual forces. Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (70%) are somewhat more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners (59%) to believe in these things.

We also asked respondents who believe in spirits about their views on the *nature* of those spirits. About one-in-ten of all U.S. adults believe that spirits generally are helpful, while 4% say they generally are harmful.

A plurality of U.S. adults (39%) say that spirits can be both helpful and harmful. About one-in-ten Americans say that spirits are neither helpful nor harmful.

Most U.S. adults believe that spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist

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

| | Spirits and unseen spiritual forces are generally ____ | | | | Regardless of belief in God or higher power, spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist |
|--------------------------|--|---------|------|---------|---|
| | Helpful | Harmful | Both | Neither | |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 12 | 4 | 39 | 9 | 65 |
| Religious affiliated | 14 | 5 | 43 | 8 | 71 |
| Protestant | 12 | 6 | 45 | 8 | 72 |
| Evangelical | 8 | 9 | 53 | 6 | 78 |
| Mainline | 18 | 2 | 32 | 11 | 64 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 13 | 4 | 43 | 9 | 69 |
| Catholic | 17 | 1 | 39 | 9 | 68 |
| Jewish | 8 | 1 | 15 | 8 | 33 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 10 | 1 | 30 | 9 | 51 |
| Atheist | 4 | 0 | 8 | 5 | 17 |
| Agnostic | 7 | <1 | 28 | 8 | 43 |
| Nothing in particular | 12 | 2 | 37 | 10 | 62 |
| Men | 10 | 4 | 36 | 9 | 60 |
| Women | 14 | 3 | 42 | 9 | 69 |
| Ages 18-29 | 9 | 4 | 41 | 8 | 61 |
| 30-49 | 10 | 3 | 44 | 8 | 66 |
| 50-64 | 15 | 4 | 39 | 10 | 69 |
| 65+ | 14 | 4 | 31 | 9 | 60 |
| White | 13 | 3 | 36 | 9 | 62 |
| Black | 12 | 4 | 47 | 8 | 72 |
| Hispanic | 11 | 5 | 44 | 7 | 70 |
| Asian | 11 | 2 | 35 | 8 | 58 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 13 | 5 | 43 | 8 | 70 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 12 | 2 | 34 | 9 | 59 |

Note: Question about nature of spirits was only asked of those who said that regardless of their belief in God or a higher power, they believe that spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist. Totals in first four columns do not sum to total in the fifth column as those who didn't answer the question about the nature of spirits aren't shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Belief beyond science and the natural world

When asked which comes closer to their views – even if neither is exactly right – 81% of U.S. adults take the position that “there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it.” Far fewer (17%) say “the natural world is all there is.”

Large shares of Protestants (92%) and Catholics (87%) say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, while smaller majorities of Jews and religiously unaffiliated adults say the same (63% each).

Self-described atheists are the only religious or nonreligious group with a majority saying that the natural world is all there is (75%).

About three-quarters of Americans say there are some things that science cannot possibly explain, while one-quarter say there is a scientific explanation for everything, even if we don’t understand how everything works.

81% of U.S. adults say there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it

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

| | There is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it | The natural world is all there is | There are some things science cannot possibly explain | There is a scientific explanation for everything, even if we don't understand how everything works |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 81 | 17 | 74 | 25 |
| Religiously affiliated | 89 | 9 | 83 | 16 |
| Protestant | 92 | 6 | 86 | 13 |
| Evangelical | 93 | 5 | 90 | 9 |
| Mainline | 91 | 6 | 81 | 18 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 89 | 9 | 83 | 16 |
| Catholic | 87 | 10 | 82 | 17 |
| Jewish | 63 | 35 | 57 | 41 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 63 | 35 | 56 | 44 |
| Atheist | 24 | 75 | 21 | 78 |
| Agnostic | 61 | 37 | 45 | 54 |
| Nothing in particular | 75 | 23 | 68 | 31 |
| Men | 77 | 21 | 70 | 30 |
| Women | 85 | 12 | 79 | 20 |
| Ages 18-29 | 76 | 22 | 63 | 36 |
| 30-49 | 80 | 19 | 70 | 29 |
| 50-64 | 85 | 12 | 81 | 18 |
| 65+ | 83 | 14 | 82 | 17 |
| White | 80 | 18 | 74 | 26 |
| Black | 88 | 10 | 82 | 17 |
| Hispanic | 83 | 15 | 74 | 25 |
| Asian | 72 | 25 | 65 | 34 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 87 | 11 | 83 | 17 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 76 | 23 | 65 | 34 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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Protestants (86%) and Catholics (82%) are especially likely to say there are some things that science cannot possibly explain, while fewer Jews (57%) and people who describe their religion as “nothing in particular” (68%) hold this view. About half of agnostics and 78% of atheists say there is a scientific explanation for everything.

Where do spirits and spiritual energies reside?

In addition to asking whether humans have a soul or spirit, the survey explored Americans' views on whether certain places, objects or parts of the natural landscape can have spirits.

Respondents were asked whether each of the following can have "spirits or spiritual energies": parts of nature like mountains, rivers or trees; certain objects like crystals, jewels or stones; animals other than humans; and graveyards, cemeteries or other memorial sites.

Most U.S. adults believe that animals other than humans can have spirits or spiritual energies (57%).

Slightly fewer say that graveyards, cemeteries or other memorial sites (50%) and parts of nature like mountains, rivers or trees (48%) can have spirits. And about a quarter of Americans say objects such as crystals, jewels or stones can have spiritual energies (26%).

57% of Americans believe animals can have spirits or spiritual energies

% of U.S. adults who believe ___ can have spirits or spiritual energies

| | Animals other than humans | Graveyards, cemeteries or other memorial sites | Parts of nature, like mountains, rivers or trees | Objects such as crystals, jewels or stones |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 57 | 50 | 48 | 26 |
| Religiously affiliated | 56 | 52 | 46 | 25 |
| Protestant | 52 | 47 | 41 | 21 |
| Evangelical | 45 | 40 | 34 | 17 |
| Mainline | 65 | 53 | 49 | 24 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 55 | 62 | 51 | 32 |
| Catholic | 58 | 58 | 49 | 28 |
| Jewish | 53 | 41 | 43 | 23 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 60 | 47 | 54 | 29 |
| Atheist | 33 | 18 | 26 | 9 |
| Agnostic | 59 | 43 | 55 | 25 |
| Nothing in particular | 68 | 56 | 62 | 36 |
| Men | 51 | 44 | 43 | 20 |
| Women | 63 | 56 | 53 | 31 |
| Ages 18-29 | 63 | 61 | 56 | 31 |
| 30-49 | 62 | 55 | 53 | 32 |
| 50-64 | 56 | 48 | 46 | 25 |
| 65+ | 47 | 34 | 37 | 14 |
| White | 56 | 46 | 44 | 22 |
| Black | 59 | 61 | 54 | 35 |
| Hispanic | 58 | 56 | 55 | 35 |
| Asian | 57 | 56 | 54 | 23 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 55 | 47 | 42 | 22 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 60 | 53 | 55 | 29 |

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. "Spirituality Among Americans"

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The belief that animals other than humans can have spirits or spiritual energies is held by half or more members of almost every religious and nonreligious group analyzed in this survey, save for two exceptions: evangelical Protestants (45%) and atheists (33%).

On many questions in the survey – such as belief in God and belief in heaven and hell – evangelicals and atheists are at opposite ends of the spectrum of public opinion. But on the question of whether (nonhuman) animals have spirits, they tend to express the same view: No. Taking into account how these groups answered a separate question about whether people have a soul or spirit, it appears that many evangelicals believe that *only* humans have spirits, while most atheists believe that *neither* humans nor animals have spirits.

Members of the historically Black Protestant tradition (62%) and Catholics (58%) are among those most likely to believe that graveyards and cemeteries can have spiritual energies.

The belief that parts of nature, such as mountains, rivers or trees, can have spirits or spiritual energies is somewhat more common among “nones” – especially among those who say their religion is “nothing in particular” – than among the religiously affiliated. Those who identify as “nothing in particular” are also among the most likely to believe that objects like crystals and jewels can have spirits.

Beliefs about the afterlife

What do Americans believe about life after death? The survey asked respondents about the existence of heaven and hell and also probed what they think people who have died are capable of doing.

Heaven and hell

Seven-in-ten Americans believe in heaven (71%), and six-in-ten believe in hell (61%).

Overwhelming majorities of evangelical Protestants and members of historically Black Protestant churches believe in both heaven and hell, while smaller majorities of mainline Protestants and Catholics hold these beliefs.

Jews are far more likely to believe in heaven (48%) than in hell (20%). The vast majority of religiously unaffiliated Americans do not believe in either, with few atheists who believe in heaven (4%) or hell (3%).

About eight-in-ten Republicans and adults who lean toward the Republican Party believe in heaven, compared with about six-in-ten Democrats and Democratic leaners. Nearly three-quarters of Republicans believe in hell, while half of Democrats say the same.

Black Americans are more likely than other large racial and ethnic groups in the survey to believe in heaven and hell.

Americans more likely to believe in heaven than hell

% of U.S. adults who believe in ...

| | Heaven % | Hell % |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| U.S. adults | 71 | 61 |
| Religiously affiliated | 87 | 76 |
| Protestant | 93 | 83 |
| Evangelical | 97 | 91 |
| Mainline | 85 | 68 |
| Historically Black Protestant | 95 | 90 |
| Catholic | 87 | 73 |
| Jewish | 48 | 20 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 36 | 29 |
| Atheist | 4 | 3 |
| Agnostic | 18 | 13 |
| Nothing in particular | 51 | 41 |
| Men | 66 | 57 |
| Women | 77 | 66 |
| Ages 18-29 | 60 | 53 |
| 30-49 | 69 | 59 |
| 50-64 | 76 | 65 |
| 65+ | 79 | 66 |
| White | 69 | 58 |
| Black | 86 | 79 |
| Hispanic | 75 | 61 |
| Asian | 64 | 55 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 82 | 73 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 61 | 50 |

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. "Spirituality Among Americans"

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Pew Research Center has asked about belief in heaven and hell before, including in a [2021 survey on human suffering](#), which we conducted during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). At the time, [73% of U.S. adults said they believe in heaven, and 62% said they believe in hell](#). Our 2007 and 2014 [Religious Landscape Studies](#) showed a similar pattern, although those surveys used somewhat different wording and were conducted by telephone – and [therefore are not directly comparable](#) to more recent ones. For more detail on surveys that have asked about heaven and hell since 2017, refer to the [Topline](#).

What are the dead capable of?

We asked respondents whether they believe it is “definitely true,” “probably true,” “probably not true,” or “definitely not true” that people who have died can do various things, such as be aware of what is happening among people who are still alive and help (or harm) them. We also asked whether the dead can communicate with the living, whether they can reunite with loved ones in the afterlife, and whether they can be reborn in this world.

In this list of six options, the most common belief is that the dead can be reunited with loved ones, which 57% of U.S. adults say is “definitely” or “probably” true. Fewer Americans believe it is true that the dead can assist, protect or give guidance to the living (46%), be aware of things that are going on with the living (44%) or communicate with them (42%).

(About four-in-ten Americans also say they have ever had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was trying to communicate with them. For a discussion of this question, jump to [Chapter 4](#).)

About one-quarter of adults say it is definitely or probably true that the dead can be reincarnated (i.e., reborn again and again in this world). The least common of these beliefs is that the dead can harm people who are still living: 18% of Americans say this is true.

Catholics and members of historically Black Protestant churches are among the most likely to believe it is definitely or probably true that people who have died can be reunited with others beyond this world, provide assistance to the living, be aware of things going on among those who are still living or communicate with them. Those who say their religion is “nothing in particular” are among the most likely to believe it is true that people can be reincarnated (39%) or harm people who are still living (25%).

Higher shares of women than men say it is probably true that the dead can interact with the human world, such as being aware of things going on among the living, communicating with the living, and assisting or harming the living. Women are also more likely than men to say they believe that the dead can be reincarnated and that the dead can be reunited with loved ones in the afterlife.

Women are more likely than men to believe that the dead can interact with the living in various ways

% of U.S. adults who believe it is **definitely or probably true** that people who have died can ...

| | Be united with other loved ones who have already died | Provide assistance, protection or guidance to people who are still living | Be aware of things going on among those who are still living | Communicate with people who are still living | Be reincarnated | Harm people who are still living |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 57 | 46 | 44 | 42 | 27 | 18 |
| Religiously affiliated | 66 | 49 | 49 | 44 | 25 | 17 |
| Protestant | 67 | 42 | 45 | 39 | 20 | 14 |
| Evangelical | 69 | 34 | 39 | 31 | 13 | 13 |
| Mainline | 63 | 49 | 50 | 45 | 25 | 15 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 65 | 59 | 57 | 57 | 35 | 20 |
| Catholic | 71 | 64 | 57 | 54 | 30 | 19 |
| Jewish | 34 | 35 | 31 | 23 | 24 | 10 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 38 | 38 | 34 | 36 | 31 | 19 |
| Atheist | 10 | 11 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 6 |
| Agnostic | 27 | 26 | 25 | 25 | 24 | 13 |
| Nothing in particular | 49 | 49 | 44 | 46 | 39 | 25 |
| Men | 50 | 37 | 37 | 31 | 21 | 15 |
| Women | 65 | 54 | 51 | 51 | 32 | 19 |
| Ages 18-29 | 55 | 48 | 47 | 43 | 32 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 58 | 47 | 46 | 43 | 31 | 22 |
| 50-64 | 61 | 47 | 45 | 43 | 25 | 14 |
| 65+ | 55 | 40 | 39 | 36 | 17 | 7 |
| White | 57 | 40 | 41 | 38 | 21 | 13 |
| Black | 62 | 57 | 53 | 53 | 38 | 24 |
| Hispanic | 60 | 55 | 49 | 47 | 35 | 25 |
| Asian | 45 | 44 | 41 | 35 | 34 | 25 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 65 | 44 | 46 | 40 | 22 | 16 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 51 | 48 | 44 | 43 | 31 | 19 |

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Previously, in August 2023, Pew Research Center published a short report focused on Americans' views about communicating with the dead. Based on a survey conducted in spring 2023, we found that 53% of U.S. adults said they [had ever been visited by a dead family member in a dream or in any other form](#), and that substantial shares said they'd had other types of interactions with dead relatives in the past 12 months, such as telling a dead relative about their life.

3. Spiritual practices

Asking about people’s activities, habits and rituals is one way to explore how abstract concepts such as spirituality and religion show up in everyday life.

In this survey, we asked respondents to tell us whether they pursue a variety of activities – such as meditating and spending time in nature – for reasons that might be considered spiritual, such as to make a connection with something bigger than themselves or to connect with their “true self.”

We also asked whether they possess a range of things – such as a cross, a home altar or crystals – for spiritual purposes. And we asked

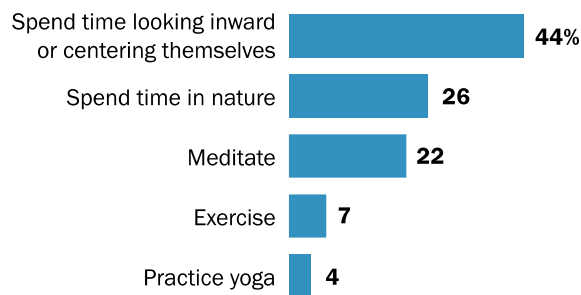
whether they are involved in religious and spiritual communities and, if so, how important those involvements are to them.

We found that:

- 14% of Americans say they are involved in a spiritual community, including 8% who say they’re involved in a spiritual community and that it’s extremely or very important to them.
- 36% have a cross for spiritual reasons. Fewer say they possess jewelry (19%), crystals (12%) or a tattoo or piercing (9%) for spiritual purposes. Religiously unaffiliated Americans are more likely than religiously affiliated adults to own crystals for spiritual purposes.
- 64% of U.S. adults say they spend time each month looking inward or centering themselves. Most of them – 44% of all U.S. adults – say they do this primarily to feel connected with their “true self,” with something bigger than themselves or with other people.

Americans pursue a range of activities to foster connection

% of U.S. adults who say they do each of the following monthly or more often mainly to feel connected with their ‘true self,’ with something bigger than themselves or with other people



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
“Spirituality Among Americans”

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This chapter explores these questions in more detail. For the related topic of spiritual experiences, jump to [Chapter 4](#).

Spiritual and religious communities

About four-in-ten U.S. adults say they are involved in a religious community, such as a church or religious congregation. This includes 54% of religiously affiliated Americans.

By comparison, relatively few Americans say they belong to a spiritual community, such as a group that helps them find a connection with something bigger than themselves, with nature or with other people (14%).

Most of these people – 10% of all U.S. adults – say they are involved in *both* a religious community and a spiritual community. Indeed, it is possible that some respondents are describing *the same community* as both religious and spiritual.

Just 4% of U.S. adults say they are involved in a spiritual community and not also in a religious community.

U.S. adults who are affiliated with a religion are much more likely than religiously unaffiliated Americans (sometimes called “nones”) to be involved in a religious community (54% vs. 7%). The same is true of spiritual communities, though the gap is much narrower: 17% of religiously affiliated adults say they are part of a spiritual community, compared with 8% of “nones.”

More Americans are involved in a religious community than a spiritual one

% of U.S. adults who are involved in a ...

| | Religious community | Spiritual community |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 39 | 14 |
| Religiously affiliated | 54 | 17 |
| Protestant | 58 | 18 |
| Evangelical | 65 | 19 |
| Mainline | 44 | 15 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 61 | 21 |
| Catholic | 49 | 11 |
| Jewish | 47 | 14 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 7 | 8 |
| Atheist | 1 | 3 |
| Agnostic | 2 | 5 |
| Nothing in particular | 10 | 11 |
| Men | 37 | 12 |
| Women | 42 | 16 |
| Ages 18-29 | 31 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 36 | 15 |
| 50-64 | 42 | 14 |
| 65+ | 47 | 14 |
| White | 38 | 13 |
| Black | 51 | 20 |
| Hispanic | 38 | 13 |
| Asian | 36 | 14 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 49 | 15 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 31 | 13 |

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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And among U.S. adults who are involved in a spiritual community, those who have a religion are more likely than those who are religiously unaffiliated to say that being part of such a community is either extremely or very important to them.

Among religiously affiliated adults, 11% are involved with a spiritual community and say this is extremely or very important to them. The comparable figure among religious “nones” is 3%.

15% of members of historically Black Protestant churches say being involved in a spiritual community is extremely or very important to them

% of U.S. adults who say they are involved in a spiritual community and say being involved in a spiritual community is ____ to them

| | Extremely/ Very important % | Somewhat important % | Not too/ Not at all important % | NET Involved in a spiritual community % |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| U.S. adults | 8 | 4 | 2 | 14 |
| Religiously affiliated | 11 | 4 | 2 | 17 |
| Protestant | 13 | 4 | 1 | 18 |
| Evangelical | 14 | 3 | 1 | 19 |
| Mainline | 9 | 5 | 1 | 15 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 15 | 4 | 2 | 21 |
| Catholic | 5 | 4 | 2 | 11 |
| Jewish | 7 | 3 | 5 | 14 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Atheist | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Agnostic | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Nothing in particular | 4 | 4 | 2 | 11 |
| Men | 7 | 3 | 2 | 12 |
| Women | 10 | 5 | 2 | 16 |
| Ages 18-29 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 15 |
| 50-64 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 14 |
| 65+ | 10 | 3 | 1 | 14 |
| White | 8 | 4 | 1 | 13 |
| Black | 12 | 4 | 3 | 20 |
| Hispanic | 6 | 5 | 2 | 13 |
| Asian | 6 | 5 | 2 | 14 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 9 | 4 | 1 | 15 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 7 | 4 | 2 | 13 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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Having things for spiritual purposes

Many Americans say they have one of the following items for spiritual purposes: a cross (36%), jewelry (19%), a shrine, altar or icon in their home (15%), crystals (12%) or a tattoo or piercing (9%).

Catholics are especially likely to own a cross: 72% say they have a cross for spiritual purposes, compared with 42% of Protestants.

Roughly 7 in 10 U.S. Catholics own a cross for spiritual purposes

% of U.S. adults who have ____ for spiritual purposes

| | A cross | Jewelry | A shrine, altar or icon in the home | Crystals | A tattoo or piercing |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---|----------|-------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 36 | 19 | 15 | 12 | 9 |
| Religiously affiliated | 46 | 21 | 17 | 10 | 9 |
| Protestant | 42 | 17 | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| Evangelical | 41 | 14 | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| Mainline | 42 | 21 | 10 | 10 | 8 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 44 | 21 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| Catholic | 72 | 30 | 33 | 11 | 8 |
| Jewish | 6 | 17 | 9 | 13 | 12 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 13 | 15 | 11 | 16 | 11 |
| Atheist | 1 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Agnostic | 6 | 9 | 8 | 13 | 7 |
| Nothing in particular | 18 | 19 | 14 | 20 | 14 |
| Men | 31 | 13 | 13 | 7 | 8 |
| Women | 40 | 25 | 17 | 16 | 10 |
| Ages 18-29 | 30 | 20 | 17 | 18 | 13 |
| 30-49 | 32 | 20 | 16 | 14 | 14 |
| 50-64 | 42 | 21 | 13 | 9 | 7 |
| 65+ | 39 | 16 | 12 | 5 | 2 |
| White | 33 | 17 | 11 | 9 | 8 |
| Black | 38 | 22 | 14 | 18 | 13 |
| Hispanic | 47 | 24 | 25 | 16 | 12 |
| Asian | 26 | 17 | 33 | 11 | 6 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 41 | 19 | 13 | 9 | 8 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 31 | 20 | 18 | 14 | 11 |

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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Meanwhile, 18% of U.S. adults who describe their religious identity as “nothing in particular” say they have a cross for spiritual purposes, as do very small shares of agnostics (6%), Jews (6%) and atheists (1%).⁶

Catholics are also more likely than others to have a shrine, altar or icon in their homes (33%), or to have jewelry for spiritual purposes (30%).

⁶ Readers wondering why Jews would have a cross for spiritual purposes should note that the survey’s sample of Jews is small, with a correspondingly high margin of sampling error of plus or minus 9.8 percentage points. In addition, about one-third of Jews (defined by religious self-identification) who are married say their spouse is not Jewish (32%), according to the Center’s [2020 survey of Jewish Americans](#).

There are also some differences by race and ethnicity. About half of Hispanic Americans (47%) say they have a cross for spiritual purposes, compared with fewer Black (38%), White (33%) or Asian Americans (26%).

Asian Americans (33%) are more likely than Hispanic (25%), Black (14%) or White (11%) Americans to have a shrine, altar or icon for spiritual purposes. Similarly, [a recent Center survey designed specifically to collect data on Asian Americans](#), conducted in 2022-2023 in five Asian languages as well as English, found that 36% of Asian Americans have a shrine, altar or religious symbol that they use for worship in their home. This includes [63% of Asian American Buddhists and 79% of Asian American Hindus](#).

Another recent Center survey, conducted in July 2023, found that [32% of U.S. adults say they have a tattoo](#), including 22% who have more than one. The July survey did not ask whether the tattoos have a spiritual purpose. But it found that among Americans who have tattoos, 69% said one reason they have a tattoo is to “remember or honor someone or something,” while 47% said they have a tattoo to “make a statement about what I believe.” The July survey also found that 41% of religiously unaffiliated adults have at least one tattoo, compared with 29% of those affiliated with a religion.

Activities that create connection

In this survey, we offered respondents a list of five activities and asked them how often they engage in each one. The activities were: spending time looking inward or centering yourself, spending time in nature, exercising, meditating, and practicing yoga.

We then asked people who engage in an activity at least a few times per month to choose the most important reason they do it. The options were: “To feel connected with something bigger than myself,” “To get health benefits, including relaxation,” “To feel connected with other people,” “To feel connected with my true self,” “To have fun and enjoy the experience” and “For a different reason” (which they were then asked to specify).

Looking inward

More than four-in-ten U.S. adults say they spend time looking inward or centering themselves at least a few times a month mainly to feel some sort of connection – most commonly, with their “true self” (27%).

An additional 13% say the most important reason they look inward or center themselves is to connect with something bigger than themselves.

About one-in-five adults say they look inward regularly for health, enjoyment or other reasons.

Time in nature

Roughly one-in-five American adults (18%) say they spend time in nature a few times a month or more mainly to feel connected with something bigger than themselves.

Smaller shares say they do this to feel connected with their “true self” (6%) or to other people (2%).

Half of U.S. adults say they spend time in nature a few times a month or more mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons.

27% of U.S. adults look inward monthly mainly to connect with their ‘true self’

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

| | % |
|---|-----------|
| Spend time looking inward or centering themselves at least a few times a month | 64 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 44 |
| Their ‘true self’ | 27 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 13 |
| Other people | 3 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 19 |
| Seldom or never spend time looking inward or centering themselves | 35 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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18% of U.S. adults regularly spend time in nature mainly to connect with something bigger than themselves

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

| | % |
|--|-----------|
| Spend time in nature at least a few times a month | 77 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 26 |
| Their ‘true self’ | 6 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 18 |
| Other people | 2 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 50 |
| Seldom or never spend time in nature | 23 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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Exercise

A large majority of U.S. adults who engage in exercise at least monthly cite health, enjoyment or other reasons as their main motivation (69%). Just 7% of adults say they engage in exercise monthly to feel some sort of connection.

Relatively few U.S. adults regularly exercise mainly for connection

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

| | % |
|---|-----------|
| Exercise at least a few times a month | 76 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 7 |
| Their 'true self' | 3 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 2 |
| Other people | 2 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 69 |

Seldom or never exercise **24**

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. "Spirituality Among Americans"

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Meditation

About a fifth of U.S. adults (22%) say they meditate at least a few times a month with the primary goal of feeling some sort of connection.

Similar shares say they seek connection with their “true self” (11%) or with something bigger than themselves (10%). An additional 16% of American adults say they meditate regularly for health, enjoyment or other reasons.

Yoga

An overwhelming majority of U.S. adults (84%) say they seldom or never practice yoga. About one-in-ten say they do yoga at least a few times a month mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons. Another 4% of U.S. adults say they practice yoga at least monthly primarily to feel connected with their “true self,” with something bigger than themselves or with other people.

22% of Americans meditate regularly mainly to foster some sort of connection

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

| | % |
|---|-----------|
| Meditate at least a few times a month | 38 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 22 |
| Their ‘true self’ | 11 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 10 |
| Other people | 1 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 16 |
| Seldom or never meditate | 61 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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Americans do yoga mainly for health and enjoyment, less for connection

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

| | % |
|---|-----------|
| Practice yoga at least a few times a month | 15 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 4 |
| Their ‘true self’ | 2 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 1 |
| Other people | 1 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 11 |
| Seldom or never do yoga | 84 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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4. Spiritual experiences

Large majorities of Americans say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe (71%) or a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being (66%) several times a year or more often.

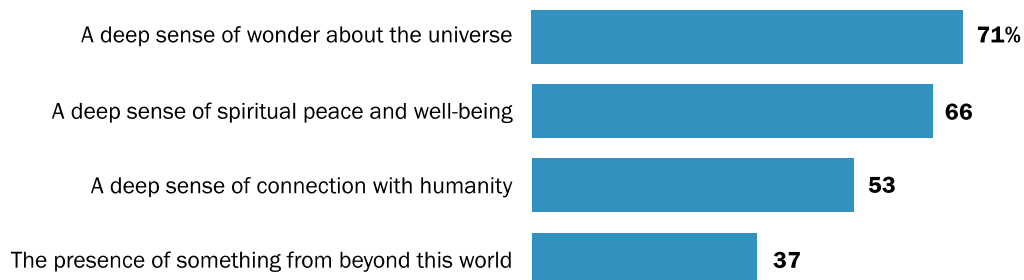
Other types of spiritual experience are less common, yet still experienced by many Americans.

Almost half of U.S. adults (45%) report ever having had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world, while three-in-ten say they have personally encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force.

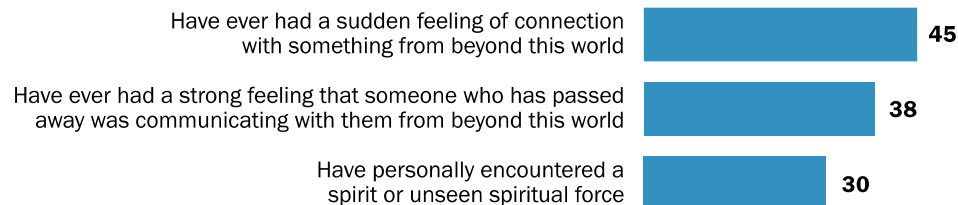
This chapter explores these topics in greater detail.

45% of Americans have had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world

% of U.S. adults who say they feel each of the following several times a year or more often



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



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Regular experiences of wonder or connection

Wonder about the universe

Among all U.S. adults, 71% say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe at least several times a year, including 46% who have this feeling monthly or more often.

Atheists (60%) and agnostics (58%) are more likely than members of other religious groups in this analysis to say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe monthly or more often, as are adults under 50 compared with those who are older.

Asian adults (31%) are less likely than those who are White (46%), Black (46%) or Hispanic (45%) to feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe monthly or more often.

Spiritual peace and well-being

Two-thirds of U.S. adults say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least several times a year, including 44% who have this feeling monthly or more often.

Jews (28%) and the religiously unaffiliated (30%) are less likely than Catholics (41%) and Protestants (53%) to say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being monthly or more often. Evangelical Protestants and those in the historically Black Protestant tradition are the most likely of the religious and nonreligious groups analyzed in this report to say they feel this (60% and 56%, respectively).

Atheists are the least likely of all the religious and nonreligious groups in this analysis to say they regularly feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being. In fact, most atheists – 63% – say they seldom or never feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being.

Nearly six-in-ten Black adults (57%) say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being monthly or more often, which is greater than the share of Hispanic (46%), White (41%) or Asian (29%) adults who say the same.

Additionally, women are more likely than men to say they feel this sense of spiritual peace at least monthly (48% vs. 39%).

Atheists are less likely than others to say they feel spiritual peace and well-being, but just as likely, or more likely, to say they experience a deep sense of wonder

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

| | Feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe ____ | | | Feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being ____ | | |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------|---------------|--|----------------------|---------------|
| | Monthly or more often | Several times a year | Seldom/ Never | Monthly or more often | Several times a year | Seldom/ Never |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 46 | 25 | 28 | 44 | 22 | 32 |
| Religiously affiliated | 44 | 26 | 29 | 50 | 23 | 25 |
| Protestant | 45 | 24 | 30 | 53 | 22 | 22 |
| Evangelical | 45 | 23 | 30 | 60 | 19 | 19 |
| Mainline | 45 | 27 | 27 | 42 | 28 | 29 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 41 | 20 | 38 | 56 | 20 | 23 |
| Catholic | 36 | 31 | 32 | 41 | 26 | 31 |
| Jewish | 39 | 39 | 21 | 28 | 31 | 40 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 50 | 23 | 25 | 30 | 21 | 48 |
| Atheist | 60 | 18 | 21 | 18 | 18 | 63 |
| Agnostic | 58 | 25 | 17 | 25 | 21 | 54 |
| Nothing in particular | 45 | 24 | 30 | 35 | 22 | 42 |
| Men | 47 | 25 | 27 | 39 | 23 | 37 |
| Women | 44 | 25 | 29 | 48 | 23 | 27 |
| Ages 18-29 | 54 | 22 | 22 | 38 | 22 | 37 |
| 30-49 | 47 | 26 | 26 | 42 | 23 | 34 |
| 50-64 | 42 | 25 | 32 | 48 | 21 | 29 |
| 65+ | 41 | 26 | 31 | 45 | 23 | 31 |
| White | 46 | 26 | 27 | 41 | 22 | 34 |
| Black | 46 | 21 | 32 | 57 | 20 | 22 |
| Hispanic | 45 | 25 | 28 | 46 | 23 | 29 |
| Asian | 31 | 36 | 33 | 29 | 31 | 40 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 45 | 24 | 31 | 47 | 22 | 30 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 47 | 28 | 24 | 41 | 24 | 34 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Pew Research Center previously asked these questions about [experiences of wonder and peace](#) in our 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies. However, those surveys were conducted by

telephone, and so it is not clear whether those earlier results can be directly compared with the new estimates (which come from a self-administered online survey).

Sense of connection with humanity

Roughly three-in-ten U.S. adults (31%) say they feel a deep sense of connection with humanity monthly or more often. Demographic differences on this question are relatively modest, though Black adults (38%) are more likely than White adults (28%) or Asian Americans (27%) to say they feel a deep sense of connection with their fellow humans monthly or more often.

Feeling the presence of something from beyond

One-in-five Americans (22%) say they feel the presence of something from beyond this world at least monthly. That includes about three-in-ten Protestants (29%) and smaller shares of Catholics (19%), religiously unaffiliated adults (13%) and Jews (9%).

Additionally, adults who are Black (31%) or Hispanic (27%) are more likely than those who are White (20%) or Asian (11%) to say they feel the presence of something from beyond this world monthly or more often.

Protestants more likely than others to feel presence of something from beyond this world monthly or more often

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

| | Feel a deep sense of connection with humanity ____ | | | Feel the presence of something from beyond this world ____ | | |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------|---------------|--|----------------------|---------------|
| | Monthly or more often | Several times a year | Seldom/ Never | Monthly or more often | Several times a year | Seldom/ Never |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 31 | 23 | 44 | 22 | 15 | 61 |
| Religiously affiliated | 32 | 23 | 42 | 26 | 17 | 56 |
| Protestant | 31 | 23 | 43 | 29 | 16 | 53 |
| Evangelical | 32 | 21 | 44 | 35 | 15 | 48 |
| Mainline | 30 | 26 | 42 | 20 | 17 | 61 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 36 | 24 | 39 | 29 | 14 | 55 |
| Catholic | 27 | 25 | 45 | 19 | 16 | 64 |
| Jewish | 34 | 24 | 42 | 9 | 20 | 71 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 28 | 23 | 48 | 13 | 12 | 74 |
| Atheist | 29 | 16 | 53 | 4 | 4 | 91 |
| Agnostic | 27 | 25 | 47 | 9 | 7 | 85 |
| Nothing in particular | 28 | 24 | 47 | 16 | 17 | 66 |
| Men | 27 | 22 | 50 | 18 | 13 | 67 |
| Women | 34 | 24 | 39 | 25 | 17 | 56 |
| Ages 18-29 | 32 | 22 | 43 | 20 | 15 | 62 |
| 30-49 | 29 | 24 | 46 | 24 | 16 | 60 |
| 50-64 | 30 | 24 | 44 | 23 | 16 | 59 |
| 65+ | 31 | 22 | 43 | 19 | 13 | 65 |
| White | 28 | 22 | 47 | 20 | 14 | 64 |
| Black | 38 | 25 | 36 | 31 | 16 | 51 |
| Hispanic | 34 | 22 | 41 | 27 | 16 | 55 |
| Asian | 27 | 27 | 45 | 11 | 16 | 72 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 28 | 21 | 49 | 25 | 15 | 58 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 33 | 27 | 39 | 19 | 16 | 64 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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Sudden encounters with the spiritual realm

In addition to asking respondents about repeated or frequent experiences of spirituality, we also asked if they have *ever* had certain kinds of encounters.

Sudden connection with the beyond

Many U.S. adults (45%) say they have ever had a sudden or unexpected feeling of connection with something from beyond this world, including 49% of Protestants who say this.

Catholics, Jewish Americans and religiously unaffiliated adults look similar on this question, with roughly four-in-ten in each group saying they have had such an experience.

Personal encounters with spirits

Fewer U.S. adults say they have ever personally encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force: 30% of Americans say they've had such an encounter, though roughly two-thirds *believe* in the existence of spirits or unseen spiritual forces. For a discussion of spiritual beliefs, turn to [Chapter 2](#).

Of the country's large religious groups, Protestants (36%) are the most likely to say they have personally encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force, while smaller shares of the religiously unaffiliated (26%), Catholics (25%) and Jews (11%) say the same.

Around one-third of women (35%) report having personally encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force, compared with one-quarter of men.

And 39% of Black Americans have encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force, compared with 30% of Hispanic adults, 29% of White Americans and 18% of Asian Americans.

Communication from the deceased

About four-in-ten Americans say they have ever had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was trying to communicate with them. That includes 51% of adults in the historically Black Protestant tradition and 47% of Catholics.

Smaller shares of Jews (31%) and evangelical Protestants (30%) say they have ever had a strong feeling that a dead person was trying to communicate with them. Among the religiously unaffiliated, 35% say this.

30% of U.S. adults say they have encountered a spirit or unseen spiritual force

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

| | Have ever had a sudden or unexpected feeling of connection with something from beyond this world | Have ever had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was trying to communicate with them from beyond this world | Believe spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist and they have personally encountered one |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 45 | 38 | 30 |
| Religiously affiliated | 48 | 40 | 32 |
| Protestant | 49 | 36 | 36 |
| Evangelical | 50 | 30 | 39 |
| Mainline | 48 | 41 | 29 |
| Historically Black Protestant | 50 | 51 | 37 |
| Catholic | 42 | 47 | 25 |
| Jewish | 39 | 31 | 11 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 38 | 35 | 26 |
| Atheist | 18 | 15 | 9 |
| Agnostic | 36 | 24 | 20 |
| Nothing in particular | 44 | 44 | 33 |
| Men | 42 | 29 | 25 |
| Women | 47 | 47 | 35 |
| Ages 18-29 | 44 | 33 | 26 |
| 30-49 | 45 | 40 | 31 |
| 50-64 | 47 | 42 | 35 |
| 65+ | 42 | 37 | 28 |
| White | 44 | 36 | 29 |
| Black | 53 | 49 | 39 |
| Hispanic | 46 | 42 | 30 |
| Asian | 32 | 24 | 18 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 47 | 37 | 33 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 44 | 40 | 28 |

Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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Among the religiously unaffiliated, 44% of those who say their religion is “nothing in particular” say they have had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was communicating with them, compared with 24% of agnostics and 15% of atheists.

And women are much more likely than men to have had a strong feeling that a deceased person was trying to communicate with them (47% vs. 29%).

A recent Pew Research Center survey conducted in spring 2023 found that [53% of U.S. adults said they had ever been visited by a dead family member](#) in a dream or other form. That survey also found that in the past 12 months, 34% had felt the presence of a dead relative and 15% said dead family members communicated with them.

A different Center survey, conducted in September 2021, explored [what Americans think heaven and hell are like](#). It found that among U.S. adults who believe in heaven, 25% think it is definitely or probably true that the deceased are able to have relationships with people who are still living on Earth.

Turn to Chapter 2 for a discussion of [Americans' views about the deceased and their abilities](#).

5. Who are ‘spiritual but not religious’ Americans?

This chapter focuses on three groups of U.S. adults, based on their answers to the following four questions: Do you think of yourself as spiritual? Do you think of yourself as religious? How important is spirituality in your life? How important is religion in your life?

The three groups are:

- 22% of Americans who are categorized as **spiritual but not religious (SBNR)** because they say they think of themselves as spiritual or they consider spirituality very important in their lives, but they neither think of themselves as religious nor say religion is very important in their lives.
- 58% of Americans who fall into an overall or “**NET**” **Religious** category because they say they think of themselves as religious or they consider religion very important in their lives. This group can be subdivided into U.S. adults who are **both religious and spiritual** (48%) and those who are **religious but not spiritual** (10%)
- 21% of Americans who are categorized as **neither spiritual nor religious** because they don’t think of themselves as spiritual, don’t think of themselves as religious, don’t consider spirituality very important in their lives and don’t consider religion very important in their lives.

Most of the comparisons in this chapter are between the SBNR and the NET Religious categories. Compared with religious Americans, SBNRs tend to be younger, more likely to identify as Democrats or Democratic-leaning independents and less likely to affiliate with a religion.

SBNRs also differ from religious Americans on some key measures of belief and practice analyzed in this report. For example, SBNRs are far more likely than religious adults to say they believe that spirits or spiritual energies can be contained in animals other than humans (78% vs. 54%) or in parts of nature like mountains, rivers or trees (71% vs. 45%).

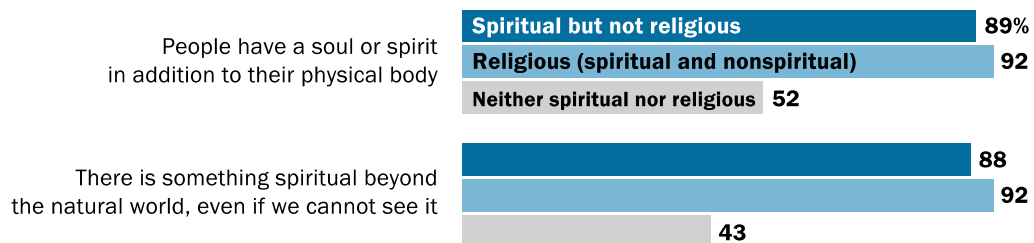
On the other hand, SBNRs are less likely than religious adults to believe in God as described in the Bible (20% vs. 82%), pray daily (21% vs. 64%) or attend religious services at least once a week (2% vs. 36%.)

Still, SBNRs hold many beliefs in common with religious Americans. For example, most people in both groups believe that there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it (88% of SBNRs and 92% of the religious) and that human beings have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body (89% and 92%, respectively).

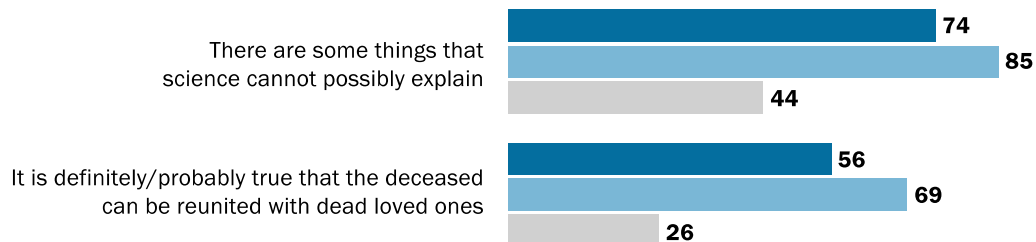
This chapter discusses these findings in more detail and shows how SBNR Americans and religious Americans differ on some measures presented in previous chapters.

Vast majority of SBNRs and religious Americans say people have a soul ...

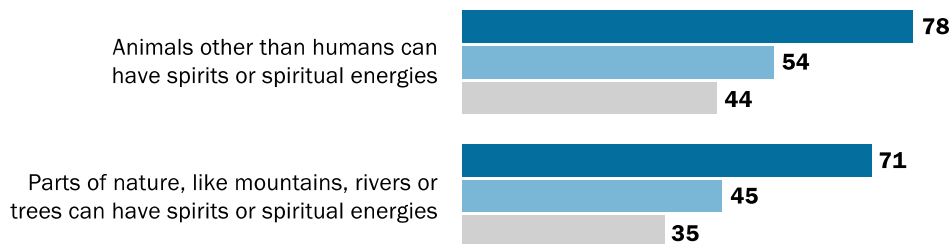
% of U.S. adults who believe each of the following



... but SBNRs are *less likely* to believe loved ones are reunited after death ...



... and *more likely* to believe that parts of nature have spirits or spiritual energy



Note: "SBNRs" are those who are spiritual but not religious. "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or say that spirituality is very important in their lives. "Religious" are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Demographic characteristics

Compared with religious adults, SBNRs are relatively young (58% of adult SBNRs are under age 50, compared with 45% of religious Americans) and more likely to identify as Democrats or Democratic-leaning independents (60% vs. 39%).

SBNRs and religious Americans are similar in their gender composition, with women accounting for a slight majority in each group.

Demographically, Americans who are neither spiritual nor religious stand out for being comprised predominantly of men (60%).

Compared with those who are religious, ‘spiritual but not religious’ Americans tend to be younger, more Democratic

Demographic characteristics of each spiritual/religious category (%)

| | Spiritual but not religious | NET Religious | Religious and spiritual | Religious but not spiritual | Neither spiritual nor religious |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | % | | % | % | % |
| A man | 42 | 45 | 43 | 51 | 60 |
| A woman | 57 | 55 | 56 | 47 | 38 |
| Identify some other way | <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 18-29 | 21 | 14 | 12 | 24 | 29 |
| 30-49 | 37 | 31 | 31 | 27 | 38 |
| 50-64 | 25 | 28 | 29 | 24 | 18 |
| 65+ | <u>17</u> | <u>27</u> | <u>27</u> | <u>24</u> | <u>14</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| High school or less | 31 | 38 | 37 | 44 | 32 |
| Some college | 32 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 28 |
| College graduate | <u>37</u> | <u>31</u> | <u>32</u> | <u>26</u> | <u>40</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| White | 64 | 59 | 60 | 54 | 69 |
| Black | 9 | 15 | 16 | 9 | 4 |
| Hispanic | 15 | 17 | 15 | 26 | 14 |
| Asian | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 8 |
| Other | <u>5</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Rep/lean Rep | 34 | 55 | 55 | 51 | 33 |
| Dem/lean Dem | 60 | 39 | 38 | 42 | 61 |
| Other/refused-no lean | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>6</u> |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Note: Gender, age, education and race and ethnicity recalculated to exclude those who did not answer. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives.

“Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives. White, Black, and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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When it comes to religious identification, SBNR Americans are divided between affiliating with a religion (45%) and not affiliating with one (54%).

By contrast, the vast majority of religious Americans identify with a religion (92%), while most adults who are neither spiritual nor religious are religiously unaffiliated (72%).

The most common response that SBNR Americans give when asked to select a religious identity is “nothing in particular” (38%). About one-fifth of SBNRs identify as Protestant, and 12% identify as Catholic.

45% of SBNR Americans identify with a religion

Religious affiliation of each spiritual/religious category (%)

| | Spiritual but not religious % | NET Religious % | Religious and spiritual % | Religious but not spiritual % | Neither spiritual nor religious % |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Religiously affiliated | 45 | 92 | 92 | 91 | 27 |
| Protestant | 21 | 60 | 62 | 50 | 11 |
| Evangelical | 8 | 35 | 37 | 24 | 3 |
| Mainline | 11 | 16 | 15 | 20 | 6 |
| Historically Black Prot. | 2 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 1 |
| Catholic | 12 | 23 | 21 | 32 | 10 |
| Latter-day Saint (Mormon) | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | <1 |
| Orthodox Christian | <1 | 1 | <1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other Christian | <1 | 1 | 1 | <1 | <1 |
| Jewish | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Muslim | 1 | 1 | 1 | <1 | <1 |
| Buddhist | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Hindu | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | <1 |
| Other religion | 5 | 1 | 1 | <1 | 2 |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 54 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 72 |
| Atheist | 5 | <1 | <1 | <1 | 21 |
| Agnostic | 11 | <1 | <1 | 1 | 17 |
| Nothing in particular | 38 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 34 |
| No answer | 1 | <1 | <1 | <1 | <1 |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. “SBNR Americans” are those who are spiritual but not religious. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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Spiritual beliefs and practices

Some spiritual beliefs are widely shared by SBNRs and religious U.S. adults. For example, large shares of both SBNRs (89%) and religious Americans (92%) say they believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body. Most people in both groups also say that there is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it (88% and 92%) and that spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist (72% and 74%).

However, SBNRs are somewhat less likely than religious Americans to say there are some things that science cannot possibly explain (74% vs. 85%).

9 in 10 SBNRs believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their body

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

| | They believe people have a soul or spirit in addition to their physical body | There is something spiritual beyond the natural world, even if we cannot see it | There are some things that science cannot possibly explain | Spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist | They do NOT believe in God of Bible, but do believe in higher power or spiritual force |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 83 | 81 | 74 | 65 | 34 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 89 | 88 | 74 | 72 | 73 |
| Religious | 92 | 92 | 85 | 74 | 16 |
| Religious and spiritual | 94 | 94 | 87 | 77 | 15 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 85 | 82 | 78 | 60 | 20 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 52 | 43 | 44 | 31 | 43 |

Note: "SBNRs" are those who are spiritual but not religious. "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. "Religious" are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.
"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Beliefs on where spirits reside

SBNRs are far less likely than religious Americans to believe in God as described in the Bible (20% vs. 82%). Instead, they are much more likely to say they believe there is “some other higher power or spiritual force in the universe” (73% vs. 16%).

Also, SBNR Americans are more likely than religious Americans to say that animals, memorial sites, parts of nature or certain objects can have spirits or spiritual energies.

For example, 78% of SBNR Americans say that spirits or spiritual energies can reside in animals other than humans,

compared with 54% of religious adults. And 71% of SBNR adults say spirits can reside in parts of nature like mountains, rivers or trees, compared with 45% of religious adults who hold this view.

Fewer SBNRs say that objects like crystals, jewels or stones can have spirits or spiritual energies (42%). But that share is still larger than among religious Americans (24%).

Most ‘spiritual but not religious’ Americans believe animals, parts of nature and graveyards can have spirits or spiritual energies

% of U.S. adults who say they believe ____ can have spirits or spiritual energies

| | Animals other than humans | Graveyards, cemeteries or other memorial sites | Parts of nature, like mountains, rivers or trees | Certain objects, like crystals, jewels or stones |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 57 | 50 | 48 | 26 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 78 | 63 | 71 | 42 |
| Religious | 54 | 51 | 45 | 24 |
| Religious and spiritual | 56 | 51 | 46 | 25 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 49 | 52 | 40 | 20 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 44 | 34 | 35 | 15 |

Note: “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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Beliefs about the afterlife

SBNR Americans are much less likely than religious Americans to say they believe in heaven (54% vs. 93%) or hell (40% vs. 83%). But SBNRs are much *more* likely than Americans who are neither spiritual nor religious to believe in heaven and hell.

SBNRs also stand out for their beliefs about reincarnation: 43% say it is definitely or probably true that people who have died can be reborn again in this world, compared with 24% of religious Americans who express the same view.

And there are some differences on other questions about the afterlife. For example, SBNRs are *less* likely than religious Americans to say that after people die, they definitely or probably can be reunited with loved ones who have already died (56% vs. 69%.)

But both SBNRs and religious Americans are much more likely than those who are *neither spiritual nor religious* to say that people who have died can be aware of things going on among the living, can communicate with the living and can help or harm the living.

38% of SBNRs believe in both heaven and hell, versus 82% of religious adults

% of U.S. adults who say they believe in ...

| | Heaven % | Hell % | Both % |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| U.S. adults | 71 | 61 | 60 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 54 | 40 | 38 |
| Religious | 93 | 83 | 82 |
| Religious and spiritual | 95 | 84 | 83 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 86 | 76 | 75 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 29 | 23 | 22 |

Note: "SBNRs" are those who are spiritual but not religious. "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. "Religious" are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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SBNR Americans more likely than others to say it is definitely or probably true that people who have died can be reincarnated

% of U.S. adults who believe it is **definitely or probably true** that people who have died can ...

| | Be united with other loved ones who have already died | Provide assistance, protection or guidance to people who are still living | Be aware of things going on among those who are still living | Communicate with people who are still living | Be reincarnated | Harm people who are still living |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|--|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 57 | 46 | 44 | 42 | 27 | 18 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 56 | 55 | 49 | 53 | 43 | 24 |
| Religious | 69 | 50 | 51 | 45 | 24 | 17 |
| Religious and spiritual | 71 | 51 | 52 | 46 | 25 | 17 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 59 | 47 | 46 | 38 | 20 | 18 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 26 | 23 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 11 |

Note: "SBNR Americans" are those who are spiritual but not religious. "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. "Religious" are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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Spiritual practices

Nearly six-in-ten “spiritual but not religious” Americans (58%) say they spend time looking inward or centering themselves at least a few times a month mainly for connection, including 43% who do so primarily to connect with their “true self.” Fewer religious Americans and those who are neither spiritual nor religious say the same.

58% of SBNRs say they regularly spend time looking inward to connect with their ‘true self,’ with something bigger than themselves or with other people

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

| | Spiritual but not religious | NET Religious | Religious and spiritual | Religious but not spiritual | Neither spiritual nor religious |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Spend time in nature at least a few times a month | 83 | 76 | 77 | 72 | 71 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 38 | 26 | 27 | 18 | 13 |
| Their ‘true self’ | 10 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 3 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 27 | 18 | 20 | 8 | 8 |
| Other people | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 45 | 50 | 49 | 54 | 57 |
| Seldom/Never spend time in nature | 16 | 24 | 23 | 27 | 29 |
| Spend time looking inward or centering themselves at least a few times a month | 78 | 65 | 67 | 51 | 46 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 58 | 45 | 49 | 29 | 26 |
| Their ‘true self’ | 43 | 24 | 25 | 18 | 21 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 11 | 18 | 21 | 6 | 2 |
| Other people | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 20 | 19 | 18 | 21 | 20 |
| Seldom/Never look inward or center themselves | 21 | 34 | 32 | 48 | 53 |
| Meditate at least a few times a month | 48 | 43 | 46 | 24 | 17 |
| Mainly to feel connected with ____ | 28 | 26 | 28 | 12 | 8 |
| Their ‘true self’ | 19 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 6 |
| Something bigger than themselves | 8 | 15 | 17 | 3 | 1 |
| Other people | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Mainly for health, enjoyment or other reasons | 19 | 17 | 18 | 12 | 9 |
| Seldom/Never meditate | 52 | 57 | 53 | 75 | 83 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. “SBNRs” are those who are spiritual but not religious. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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SBNRs are also more likely than religious Americans and those who are neither spiritual nor religious to report that they spend time in nature at least a few times a month for connection, especially in order to connect with something bigger than themselves.

But SBNRs are as likely as religious-and-spiritual Americans to say they meditate at least a few times a month primarily to foster connections (28% each).

The new survey also asked whether people have a variety of things for spiritual purposes. SBNRs are notably less likely than religious Americans to say they have a cross (21% vs. 51%). But SBNRs are much more likely to say they own crystals (25% vs. 9%) and somewhat more likely to have a tattoo or piercing for spiritual purposes (15% vs. 9%). SBNRs and religious Americans are about equally likely to have a shrine, altar or icon in their home or to have jewelry for spiritual purposes.

SBNRs are more likely than other groups to have crystals for spiritual purposes

% of U.S. adults who say they have ____ for spiritual purposes

| | A cross | Jewelry | A shrine, altar or icon | Crystals | A tattoo or piercing | Have one or more |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 36 | 19 | 15 | 12 | 9 | 48 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 21 | 24 | 17 | 25 | 15 | 50 |
| Religious | 51 | 22 | 17 | 9 | 9 | 58 |
| Religious and spiritual | 52 | 23 | 17 | 10 | 9 | 59 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 45 | 16 | 17 | 7 | 8 | 55 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 10 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 19 |

Note: "SBNRs" are those who are spiritual but not religious. "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. "Religious" are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

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Involvement in communities

The survey asked respondents whether they are involved in three kinds of communities: a religious community “such as a church or religious congregation”; a spiritual community “such as a group that helps you find a connection with something bigger than yourself, nature or other people”; or a “nonreligious volunteer or community service group.” Respondents could indicate they belong to all, some or none of these kinds of communities.

Religious-and-spiritual Americans most likely to be involved in spiritual community

% of U.S. adults who say they are involved in the following types of communities

| | A religious community | A nonreligious volunteer community | A spiritual community |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 39 | 16 | 14 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 11 | 15 | 13 |
| Religious | 62 | 16 | 18 |
| Religious and spiritual | 65 | 16 | 20 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 47 | 17 | 9 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 6 | 14 | 4 |

Note: “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

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SBNRs are much less likely

than religious Americans to say they are involved in a religious community (11% vs. 62%). They are also slightly less likely to be involved in a spiritual community (13% vs. 18%), though that difference masks a split within the religious category: Americans who are both religious *and* spiritual are much more likely than those who are religious *but not* spiritual to say they are involved in a spiritual community (20% vs. 9%).

Meanwhile, the survey finds no significant difference between SBNRs and religious Americans, overall, in their propensity to be involved in a nonreligious volunteer or community service group.

Spiritual experiences

SBNRs are more likely than religious Americans (and U.S. adults as a whole) to have had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was communicating with them from beyond this world: 48% of SBNRs say they have ever had such an experience, compared with 41% of religious Americans and 21% of U.S. adults who are neither spiritual nor religious.

SBNRs are also slightly more likely than religious Americans to say they have ever had a sudden feeling of connection with “something from beyond this world” (55% vs. 49%), but there is a substantial divide

within the religious category: 52% of Americans who are *both* religious and spiritual say they have had such an experience, compared with 32% of those who are religious *but not* spiritual.

55% of SBNRs have ever had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world

% of U.S. adults who ...

| | Have had a sudden feeling of connection with something from beyond this world | Have had a strong feeling that someone who has passed away was communicating with them from beyond this world | Believe spirits or unseen spiritual forces exist and they have personally encountered one |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 45 | 38 | 30 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 55 | 48 | 37 |
| Religious | 49 | 41 | 35 |
| Religious and spiritual | 52 | 42 | 38 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 32 | 34 | 20 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 23 | 21 | 11 |

Note: “SBNRs” are those who are spiritual but not religious. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives.

“Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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The same patterns hold when comparing SBNRs with religious Americans on some other questions about experiences that might be considered spiritual. SBNRs are more likely than religious Americans (and *much* more likely than those who are religious but not spiritual) to say they feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe once a month or more often.

On the other hand, SBNRs are somewhat less likely than religious Americans (and *much* less likely than those who are both religious and spiritual) to say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least monthly.

([Chapter 4](#) shows the percentage of

U.S. adults who report having these experiences *at least a few times a year*, rather than monthly or more often.)

56% of ‘spiritual but not religious’ Americans feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe at least monthly

% of U.S. adults who say they feel ____ *monthly or more often*

| | A deep sense of wonder about the universe | A deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being | A deep sense of connection with humanity | The presence of something from beyond this world |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 46 | 44 | 31 | 22 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 56 | 46 | 36 | 21 |
| Religious | 44 | 54 | 33 | 28 |
| Religious and spiritual | 47 | 60 | 36 | 32 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 28 | 24 | 17 | 13 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 40 | 13 | 18 | 5 |

Note: “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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Change in personal spirituality over time

Most SBNRs say they have become less religious over the course of their lifetimes (59%). At the same time, 49% say they have become more spiritual over the years and 28% say their spirituality has fluctuated, sometimes increasing and other times decreasing.

By contrast, religious Americans are more likely to say that during their lifetimes, they have become more religious (40%) than to say they have become less religious (14%). Many religious Americans say they have either stayed about the same religiously (19%) or gone back and forth, sometimes becoming more religious and sometimes less (26%).

And religious Americans are just as likely as SBNRs to say they have become more spiritual over their lifetimes: 50% of religious Americans and 49% of SBNRs say this about themselves, while much smaller shares of both groups say they have become less spiritual (5% of religious Americans, 6% of SBNRs).

59% of ‘spiritual but not religious’ Americans say they have become less religious over the course of their lives

% of U.S. adults who have ...

| | Become ___ religious over the course of their lifetimes | | | | Become ___ spiritual over the course of their lifetimes | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|---|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|
| | More % | Less % | Some of both % | About the same % | More % | Less % | Some of both % | About the same % |
| U.S. adults | 24 | 33 | 21 | 21 | 41 | 13 | 23 | 22 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 3 | 59 | 18 | 19 | 49 | 6 | 28 | 16 |
| Religious | 40 | 14 | 26 | 19 | 50 | 5 | 23 | 20 |
| Religious and spiritual | 44 | 12 | 25 | 17 | 57 | 4 | 22 | 16 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 20 | 22 | 29 | 28 | 13 | 13 | 29 | 40 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 2 | 60 | 10 | 26 | 6 | 42 | 17 | 33 |

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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Religion and society

Spiritual but not religious Americans, along with those who are *neither* spiritual nor religious, are more critical than religious adults of religion's impact on society. On balance, 38% of SBNRs say religion does more harm than good, while just 7% of religious Americans share this view.

SBNRs are also more likely than religious Americans to say that the statement "religion causes division and intolerance" describes their views a great deal (42% vs. 11%).

And SBNR Americans are less likely than religious adults to take the position that "religion encourages people to do the right thing and treat people well" (13% vs. 54%) and that "religion helps society by giving people meaning and purpose in their lives" (15% vs. 53%).

'Spiritual but not religious' more likely than religious adults to say religion causes division and intolerance

% of U.S. adults who say ____ describes their views "a great deal"

| | Religion encourages people to do the right thing and treat other people well | Religion helps society by giving people meaning and purpose in their lives | Religion causes division and intolerance | Religion encourages superstition and illogical thinking |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| | % | % | % | % |
| U.S. adults | 36 | 36 | 24 | 17 |
| Spiritual but not religious | 13 | 15 | 42 | 24 |
| Religious | 54 | 53 | 11 | 7 |
| Religious and spiritual | 57 | 55 | 12 | 7 |
| Religious but not spiritual | 41 | 41 | 10 | 8 |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 8 | 10 | 42 | 36 |

Note: "Spiritual" are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. "Religious" are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

"Spirituality Among Americans"

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What does ‘spiritual’ mean?

This survey also asked respondents to say, *in their own words*, what the term “spiritual” means to them. We categorized their responses based on the types of beliefs, experiences or other concepts they mentioned.

- 14% of SBNRs give descriptions tied to **organized religion**, compared with 36% of religious adults.
- About one-in-ten SBNRs relate spirituality to **things outside of organized religion**, compared with 2% of religious Americans.
- 43% of SBNRs offer responses that mention beliefs in what we categorized as “**something else**,” such as belief in a higher power (18%) or belief in the unseen or otherworldly (9%). Among religious adults, 27% relate spirituality to beliefs in “something else.”
- A sizable share of SBNRs (27%) also explain the term “spiritual” by referring to **connections**, such as with God, nature, their inner self or humanity in general. And 15% say “spiritual” relates to **understanding themselves or guiding their own behavior**, such as being kind or respectful.

27% of SBNRs say the term ‘spiritual’ relates to feelings of connection

% of U.S. adults who say the term “spiritual” means ...

| | Spiritual but not religious | NET Religious | Religious and spiritual | Religious but not spiritual | Neither religious nor spiritual |
|---|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Belief in organized religion | 14 | 36 | 40 | 20 | 15 |
| Belief in God | 8 | 16 | 18 | 8 | 5 |
| Belief in Jesus/other Christian tenets | 2 | 13 | 16 | 1 | 1 |
| Obedience to God/following scripture, religious teachings | 1 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Faith/faithfulness | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| Religion/religious | 1 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| Belief in something else | 43 | 27 | 28 | 22 | 36 |
| Belief in higher power | 18 | 11 | 12 | 9 | 15 |
| Belief in the unseen/otherworldly | 9 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 12 |
| Souls/spirits | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| Belief in something more/bigger than self | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Life after death | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Energy/vibrations | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Universe | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Belief outside of organized religion | 9 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Belief outside of religion/the church | 5 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Opposition/nonparticipation in organized religion | 3 | <1 | 1 | <1 | 1 |
| Connections | 27 | 26 | 29 | 13 | 12 |
| Connections with God | 5 | 19 | 21 | 5 | 1 |
| Connections with nature, outside world | 10 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Connections with self | 6 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Connections with higher power | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Connections with other people, humanity | 6 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Connecting with something more/bigger than self | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Related to self and others | 15 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 6 |
| Being kind/respectful | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Inner peace | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Purpose/meaning | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Sense of guidance/direction | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Mindfulness | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Note: “SBNRs” are those who are spiritual but not religious. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives. This was an open-ended question. Results may not add to subtotals indicated because more than one response was permitted. Up to three responses were coded. Not all responses are shown. Refer to the Topline for a full list of responses.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023.

“Spirituality Among Americans”

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Essential elements of spirituality

To further gauge how Americans think about spirituality, the survey asked those who are spiritual whether each of 10 items are “essential,” “important, but not essential,” or “not an important part” to what being spiritual means to them. And a follow-up question asked whether there is anything else they consider essential to what being spiritual means to them (refer to the [Topline](#) for responses).

Most Americans who are spiritual but not religious say that “being connected with my true self” is essential to being spiritual (72%). Majorities also say “being open-minded” (66%), “being connected with something bigger than myself” (62%) and “being connected with nature” (59%) are essential.

Religious-and-spiritual Americans, on the other hand, are most likely to say “being connected with God” is essential to being spiritual.

72% of SBNRs say ‘being connected with my true self’ is essential to being spiritual

% of U.S. adults who say ____ is essential to what being spiritual means to them

| | NET Spiritual % | Spiritual but not religious % | Religious and spiritual % |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Being connected with something bigger than myself | 74 | 62 | 80 |
| Being connected with God | 70 | 33 | 87 |
| Being connected with my ‘true self’ | 64 | 72 | 60 |
| Being open-minded | 53 | 66 | 48 |
| Being connected with nature | 43 | 59 | 35 |
| Following a religious faith | 40 | 4 | 56 |
| Finding a set of beliefs I make for myself | 39 | 44 | 36 |
| Being connected with other people | 39 | 38 | 40 |
| Being connected with loved ones who have passed | 31 | 32 | 31 |
| Continuing family traditions | 27 | 19 | 31 |

Note: “SBNRs” are those who are spiritual but not religious. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

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. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from ATP Wave 132, conducted from July 31 to Aug. 6, 2023. A total of 11,201 panelists responded out of 12,932 who were sampled, for a response rate of 87%. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 11,201 respondents is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points.

Panel recruitment

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 whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

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 | 1,494 |
| Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015 | Landline/ cell RDD | 6,004 | 2,976 | 876 |
| April 25 to June 4, 2017 | Landline/ cell RDD | 3,905 | 1,628 | 431 |
| Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018 | ABS | 9,396 | 8,778 | 4,097 |
| Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019 | ABS | 5,900 | 4,720 | 1,460 |
| June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021 | ABS | 3,197 | 2,812 | 1,535 |
| May 29 to July 7, 2021; Sept. 16 to Nov. 1, 2021 | ABS | 1,329 | 1,162 | 783 |
| May 24 to Sept. 29, 2022 | ABS | 3,354 | 2,869 | 1,685 |
| April 17 to May 30, 2023 | ABS | 686 | 576 | 571 |
| | Total | 43,580 | 30,859 | 12,932 |

Note: RDD is random-digit dial; ABS is address-based sampling. 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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In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based sampling (ABS) recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service 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.⁷ Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is asked to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.⁸

We have recruited a national sample of U.S. adults to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional effort (known as an “oversample”) to boost sample size with under-represented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults, and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Across the six address-based recruitments, a total of 23,862 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 20,917 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 30,859 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 12,932 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. All active panel members were invited to participate in this wave.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

⁷ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. “AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.”

⁸ Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on July 31.

Invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on July 31. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Aug. 1.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to two SMS reminders.

Invitation and reminder dates, ATP Wave 132

| | Soft launch | Full launch |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Initial invitation | July 31, 2023 | Aug. 1, 2023 |
| First reminder | Aug. 3, 2023 | Aug. 3, 2023 |
| Final reminder | Aug. 5, 2023 | Aug. 5, 2023 |

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Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center's researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for very high rates of leaving questions blank, as well as always selecting the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, one ATP respondent was removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey. These weights are then rescaled and adjusted to account for changes in the design of ATP recruitment surveys from year to year.

Finally, the weights are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and 99th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

| Variable | Benchmark source |
|--|---|
| Age (detailed) | 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) |
| Age x Gender | |
| Education x Gender | |
| Education x Age | |
| Race/Ethnicity x Education | |
| Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans | |
| Years lived in the U.S. | |
| Census region x Metro/Non-metro | 2021 CPS March Supplement |
| Volunteerism | 2021 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement |
| Voter registration | 2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement |
| Party affiliation | 2022 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS) |
| Frequency of internet use | |
| Religious affiliation | |
| <i>Additional weighting dimensions applied within Black adults</i> | |
| Age | 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) |
| Gender | |
| Education | |
| Hispanic ethnicity | |
| Voter registration | 2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement |
| Party affiliation | 2022 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS) |
| Religious affiliation | |
| Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized 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.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 132

| Group | Unweighted sample size | Plus or minus ... |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Total sample | 11,201 | 1.4 percentage points |
| Spiritual but not religious | 2,463 | 3.0 percentage points |
| Religious | 6,600 | 1.9 percentage points |
| Religious and spiritual | 5,694 | 2.0 percentage points |
| Religious but not spiritual | 906 | 5.2 percentage points |
| Neither spiritual nor religious | 2,138 | 3.3 percentage points |
| Religiously affiliated | 7,832 | 1.7 percentage points |
| Protestant | 4,676 | 2.1 percentage points |
| Evangelical | 2,389 | 3.0 percentage points |
| Mainline | 1,489 | 3.8 percentage points |
| Historically Black Prot. | 798 | 5.2 percentage points |
| Catholic | 2,157 | 3.5 percentage points |
| Jewish | 222 | 9.8 percentage points |
| Religiously unaffiliated | 3,317 | 2.7 percentage points |
| Atheist | 658 | 5.8 percentage points |
| Agnostic | 678 | 6.0 percentage points |
| Nothing in particular | 1,981 | 3.5 percentage points |
| Men | 4,965 | 2.3 percentage points |
| Women | 6,108 | 1.9 percentage points |
| Ages 18-29 | 966 | 4.4 percentage points |
| 30-49 | 3,579 | 2.4 percentage points |
| 50-64 | 3,216 | 2.5 percentage points |
| 65+ | 3,389 | 2.5 percentage points |
| White | 7,077 | 1.7 percentage points |
| Black | 1,465 | 4.0 percentage points |
| Hispanic | 1,447 | 4.5 percentage points |
| Asian | 677 | 6.0 percentage points |
| Rep/lean Rep | 5,052 | 2.1 percentage points |
| Dem/lean Dem | 5,831 | 2.0 percentage points |

Note: Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

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

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 132

| | AAPOR code | Total |
|--|------------|---------------|
| Completed interview | 1.1 | 11,201 |
| Logged on to survey; broke off | 2.12 | 162 |
| Logged on to survey; did not complete any items | 2.1121 | 70 |
| Never logged on (implicit refusal) | 2.11 | 1,496 |
| Survey completed after close of the field period | 2.27 | 2 |
| Completed interview but was removed for data quality | | 1 |
| Screened out | | 0 |
| Total panelists sampled for the survey | | 12,932 |
| Completed interviews | I | 11,201 |
| Partial interviews | P | 0 |
| Refusals | R | 1,728 |
| Non-contact | NC | 2 |
| Other | O | 1 |
| Unknown household | UH | 0 |
| Unknown other | UO | 0 |
| Not eligible | NE | 0 |
| Total | | 12,932 |
| AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$ | | 87% |
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Cumulative response rate as of ATP Wave 132

| | Total |
|---|-----------|
| Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys | 11% |
| % of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited | 71% |
| % of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 132 | 49% |
| Response rate to Wave 132 survey | 87% |
| Cumulative response rate | 3% |
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Defining spiritual and religious categories

The report analyzes four main groups: people who are spiritual but not religious (22%); people who are religious and spiritual (48%); people who are religious but not spiritual (10%); and people who are neither spiritual nor religious (21%). These groups are created based on their answers to four questions:

- Do you think of yourself as spiritual? (Yes or No)
- Do you think of yourself as religious? (Yes or No)
- How important is spirituality in your life? (Very, somewhat, not too, or not at all important)
- How important is religion in your life? (Very, Somewhat, Not too, or Not at all important)

Anyone who says they think of themselves as spiritual *or* who says spirituality is very important in their life counts as spiritual. Likewise, anyone who says they think of themselves as religious *or* who says that religion is very important in their life counts as religious.

This method is one of several possible ways to create these categories. For example, one could create a four-way grouping using *only* the self-ID questions (Do you think of yourself as spiritual? Do you think of yourself as religious?). Doing so would result in a somewhat larger spiritual but not religious group (25%), a somewhat larger religious but not spiritual group (14%), and a somewhat smaller religious and spiritual group (38%). The category of people who are neither spiritual nor religious would be similar in size (22%).

Similarly, one could create a four-way grouping using *only* the salience questions (How important is spirituality in your life? How important is religion in your life?). Doing so would result in a smaller spiritual but not religious group (10%), a smaller religious and spiritual group (30%), and a larger group of people who are neither spiritual nor religious (52%). The category of people who are religious but not spiritual would be a slightly smaller size (8%).

We also grappled with the question of how to categorize people who say spirituality or religion is “somewhat” important in their life. For example, if a respondent says they do not think of themselves as spiritual, and says that spirituality is “somewhat” important in their life, should they count as spiritual? We ultimately decided to leave people on this level of the spectrum out of the spiritual category. In other words, saying spirituality is “somewhat” important, by itself, does not suffice for a respondent to be categorized as spiritual. However, those who say spirituality is “somewhat”

important in their life *and* describe themselves as spiritual do cross the threshold into spiritual category. The same rule is applied to those whom we counted as religious.

Of course, some researchers might advocate for a different kind of definition altogether. For instance, they might define categories based on certain spiritual or religious beliefs or practices.

We settled on our definitions of who counts as spiritual and/or religious for two main reasons: face validity and empirical coherence. First, there are respondents who say they do not think of themselves as spiritual (or religious) but, nonetheless, say that spirituality (or religion) is “very important” in their lives. Regardless of how they think of themselves, they are indicating that spirituality (or religion) is a salient part of their lives, and therefore we think – as a matter of face validity – they should be counted as spiritual (or religious, as the case may be).

Second, in our judgment, this approach produces more cohesive and logically consistent groups. For example, defining groups based solely on the self-ID questions would produce a spiritual but not religious group that is more traditionally religious on a number of related measures: the respondents in this group would be more likely to affiliate with a religion (52% vs. 45%), to believe in God as described in the Bible (29% vs. 20%) and to say they pray daily (30% vs. 21%) than respondents in a spiritual but not religious group using our definition, which combines self-ID (how respondents say they think of themselves) with a measure of salience (how important they say spirituality and religion are in their lives). To state the obvious, it is more consistent for a group that is “not religious” to be lower on measures of traditional religiosity.

As with all Center surveys, the dataset will soon be made freely available to the public, and researchers will be able to use it to redefine these categories or create new ones as they see fit.

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