

## **Social and Political Beliefs of Worshipers**

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About 300,000 worshipers in over 2,000 congregations participated in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey ([www.USCongregations.org](http://www.USCongregations.org)) conducted by the Research Services office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in April 2001. Congregations were selected by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago using hyper-network sampling to be representative of congregations across the country. All worshipers in each participating congregation completed a survey in worship, providing extensive data about individuals actively involved in religious life in America.

In addition, a small random sample of the overall sample (n=1,106) completed questions on social and political beliefs (e.g., abortion, prayer in public schools, euthanasia, homosexuality, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, the death penalty). Worshipers' beliefs on such issues are compared to those of the American public (where comparisons are possible). In addition, the impact of faith group, age, gender, and other factors on beliefs is examined. Results show that faith group and age play the largest role in influencing people's beliefs on social and political factors.

**Table 1**  
**Do You Favor or Oppose Each of the Following in Public Schools?**  
**(Favor, Oppose; Q44)**

	<b>Percent Responding "Favor"</b>			
	<b>Allowing schools to post the Ten Commandments</b>	<b>Teaching creation instead of evolution</b>	<b>Allowing daily spoken prayer in the classroom</b>	<b>Allowing use of facilities by religious groups</b>
U.S. Population (Gallup March 2001) <sup>(1)</sup>	—	—	66%	72%
Worshippers.....	82%	39%	79%	92%
Worshippers by:				
Faith Group:	***	***	***	*
Catholic.....	80%	33%	77%	90%
Mainline Protestant.....	76%	24%	70%	92%
Conservative Protestant	96%	70%	94%	97%
Gender:	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Female .....	81%	42%	78%	92%
Male .....	84%	37%	80%	92%
Age:	***	**	***	*
15-24 .....	68%	31%	57%	84%
25-44 .....	82%	40%	79%	94%
45-64 .....	82%	37%	78%	92%
65 or older.....	90%	56%	88%	90%
Education:	***	***	***	n.s.
College degree .....	76%	45%	72%	92%
No college degree .....	87%	55%	84%	91%
Church Attendance:	*	*	*	n.s.
Casual attender .....	78%	34%	73%	90%
Regular attender.....	84%	43%	80%	92%
Been Saved?	*	***	*	n.s.
Yes .....	87%	53%	84%	94%
No .....	81%	35%	77%	91%
Voted in 2000:	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Yes .....	83%	41%	78%	92%
No .....	82%	43%	81%	90%

\* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

**Table 2**  
**Under What Circumstance Do You Think Abortion Should be Legal?**  
**(Q46)**

	<b>Woman's life is in danger</b>	<b>Pregnancy from rape or incest</b>	<b>Baby is mentally impaired</b>	<b>Woman or family cannot afford baby</b>	<b>Woman does not want baby</b>
U.S. Population (Gallup April 2000) <sup>(2)</sup> .....	84%	78%	53%	34%	—
Worshippers .....	69%	51%	21%	10%	12%
Worshippers by:					
Faith Group:	***	***	***	***	***
Catholic .....	65%	48%	18%	7%	10%
Mainline Protestant .....	89%	73%	40%	22%	25%
Conservative Protestant ..	57%	34%	8%	4%	5%
Gender:	**	*	*	n.s.	*
Female .....	65%	48%	20%	9%	11%
Male .....	74%	53%	24%	11%	15%
Age:	**	n.s.	*	n.s.	n.s.
15-24 .....	64%	45%	12%	12%	14%
25-44 .....	72%	56%	25%	11%	14%
45-64 .....	70%	48%	22%	10%	14%
65 or older .....	62%	50%	19%	7%	8%
Education:	***	***	***	***	***
College degree .....	79%	60%	20%	15%	19%
No college degree .....	60%	43%	16%	6%	8%
Church Attendance:	***	***	***	***	***
Casual attender .....	78%	64%	31%	17%	21%
Regular attender .....	65%	46%	18%	8%	10%
Been Saved?	***	***	**	*	**
Yes .....	58%	37%	15%	6%	7%
No .....	72%	55%	23%	11%	14%
Voted in 2000:	***	***	***	n.s.	n.s.
Yes .....	70%	52%	23%	10%	12%
No .....	60%	42%	14%	8%	13%

\* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

**Table 3**  
**Opinions About Homosexuality**  
(Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral or unsure, Disagree, Strongly disagree)

	<b>Percent Responding “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”</b>		
	<b>Homosexuals should have the right to marry (Q50)</b>	<b>Gay partners should be entitled to rights/benefits of married couples (Q52)</b>	<b>Homosexuality should be considered acceptable alternative lifestyle (Q53)</b>
U.S. Population (Gallup 2001) <sup>(3)</sup> .....		44% <sup>(4)</sup>	52%
Worshippers .....	16%	24%	22%
Worshippers by:			
Faith Group:	***	***	***
Catholic.....	17%	26%	24%
Mainline Protestant.....	24%	33%	33%
Conservative Protestant ..	5%	7%	4%
Gender:	**	**	**
Female .....	18%	27%	23%
Male.....	13%	20%	19%
Age:	***	***	***
15-24.....	35%	50%	41%
25-44.....	18%	23%	21%
45-64.....	16%	26%	22%
65 or older.....	8%	13%	14%
Education:	***	**	***
College degree .....	22%	31%	30%
No college degree .....	12%	20%	16%
Church Attendance:	***	***	***
Casual attender .....	27%	36%	34%
Regular attender.....	14%	21%	18%
Been Saved?	***	***	***
Yes .....	13%	17%	14%
No .....	18%	27%	25%
Voted in 2000:	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Yes .....	16%	23%	22%
No .....	16%	28%	19%
	* = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001		

**Table 4**  
**Do You Think a Person Has the Right to End His or Her Life if This Person . . .**  
**(Q48)**

	<b>Percent Responding “Yes”</b>		
	<b>Has an incurable life-threatening disease</b>	<b>Is in chronic pain</b>	<b>Is tired of living and ready to die</b>
U.S. Population (GSS 2000) <sup>(5)</sup> .....	58%	—	17%
Worshippers .....	35%	28%	13%
Worshippers by:			
Faith Group:	***	***	***
Catholic .....	34%	26%	11%
Mainline Protestant .....	54%	48%	23%
Conservative Protestant....	22%	15%	9%
Gender:	***	*	n.s.
Female .....	30%	25%	12%
Male.....	43%	31%	15%
Age:	*	*	n.s.
15-24 .....	33%	26%	13%
25-44 .....	40%	32%	16%
45-64 .....	36%	29%	14%
65 or older .....	26%	20%	7%
Education:	***	**	**
College degree.....	43%	33%	17%
No college degree.....	29%	24%	10%
Church Attendance:	***	***	**
Casual attender .....	52%	41%	19%
Regular attender .....	30%	24%	12%
Been Saved?	*	*	n.s.
Yes.....	29%	23%	10%
No .....	37%	30%	14%
Voted in 2000:	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Yes.....	35%	27%	13%
No .....	33%	29%	14%

\* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

**Table 5**  
**Do You Think it is Wrong or Not Wrong for a Man and Woman to Have**  
**Sexual Relations Before Marriage?**  
**(Always wrong, Usually wrong, Sometimes wrong, Not wrong at all, Not sure; Q55)**

	Always Wrong	Usually Wrong
U.S. Population (GSS 1998) <sup>(6)</sup> .....	28%	11%
Worshippers .....	41%	18%
Worshippers by:		
Faith Group: ***		
Catholic .....	33%	18%
Mainline Protestant .....	24%	27%
Conservative Protestant.....	75%	10%
Gender: ***		
Female.....	46%	17%
Male .....	33%	18%
Age: ***		
15-24 .....	32%	13%
25-44 .....	36%	14%
45-64 .....	40%	20%
65 or older .....	52%	21%
Education: ***		
College degree.....	31%	21%
No college degree.....	48%	15%
Church Attendance: ***		
Casual attender .....	25%	16%
Regular attender .....	45%	18%
Been Saved? ***		
Yes .....	58%	16%
No.....	34%	18%
Voted in 2000: ns		
Yes .....	41%	19%
No.....	43%	14%
*** = p < .001		

**Table 6**  
**Multiple Regression: Predicting Attitudes Toward Pre-marital Sex (n=733)**

Independent Variables:	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age .....	-0.243 ***	-0.249 ***	-0.253 ***	-0.287 ***
Gender .....	0.137 ***	0.139 ***	0.135 ***	0.148 ***
Education.....	0.165 ***	0.157 ***	0.144 ***	0.091 **
Voted in previous presidential election.....		.028	0.045	0.051
Been saved.....			-0.234 ***	-0.155 ***
Frequency of worship attendance.....			-0.166 ***	-0.143 ***
Mainline Protestant (dummy coded).....				0.047
Conservative Protestant (dummy coded) .....				-0.283 ***
Adjusted Multiple R <sup>2</sup> .....	.106 ***	.106 ***	.193 ***	.270 ***
R <sup>2</sup> change.....		.001	.089 ***	.078 ***

Dependent variable is attitudes toward pre-marital sex: 1=Always wrong, 2=Usually wrong, 3=Sometimes wrong, 4=Not wrong at all. Not sure responses (n=102) have been excluded.

Worshippers in non-Christian congregations (n=8) and in congregations of historically black denominations (n=9) have been excluded.

Standardized regression coefficients are shown.

\* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

**Table 7**  
**Means and Standard Deviations and Correlation Matrix (n=733)**

	Mean	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Opinions on pre-marital sex .....	2.11	1.15	-.244***	.158***	.174***	.014	-.225***	-.230***	.108**	-.335***
2. Age.....	49.79	1.77	—	-.023	.015	.219***	-.093**	.133***	.164***	-.107**
3. Gender .....	1.40	.49		—	.093**	-.020	.008	-.039	-.082*	.017
4. Education .....	5.66	1.77			—	.275***	.001	-.056	.157***	-.156***
5. Voted .....	0.78	.41				—	-.015	.098**	.071*	-.041
6. Been saved .....	1.27	.45					—	.090**	-.094**	.281***
7. Worship attendance .....	5.76	1.14						—	-.078*	.087**
8. Mainline Protestant (dummy coded).....	0.22	.42							—	-.272***
9. Conservative Protestant (dummy coded) ...	0.20	.40								—

\* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

Note. Because the U.S. Congregational Life Survey was conducted in April 2001, efforts were made to find comparative data collected close to or before that date. Due to events of September 11, 2001, data collected after that day were generally not used.

Data Sources:

U.S. Congregational Life Survey (2001): Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce. Louisville, Kentucky: U.S. Congregations and Research Services, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (Data on worshipers; collected April 2001).

<sup>(1)</sup> Gallup Poll Monthly, March 2001 (Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Poll). (Survey data on religion in the schools collected February 2001).

<sup>(2)</sup> Gallup Poll Monthly, April 2000 (Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Poll). (Survey data on abortion collected March 2000).

<sup>(3)</sup> Gallup Poll Monthly, June 2001 (Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Poll). (Survey data on homosexuality collected May 2001).

<sup>(4)</sup> Gallup question: “Would you favor or oppose a law that would allow homosexual couples to legally form unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples?”

<sup>(5)</sup> General Social Survey (2000): J. Davis, T. Smith, & P. Marsden. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center.

<sup>(6)</sup> General Social Survey (1998): J. Davis & T. Smith. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center.