



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
For The People & The Press

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**Prevalent Among Young People, Minorities and ‘Passion of Christ’ Viewers**  
**BELIEF THAT JEWS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHRIST’S DEATH**  
**INCREASES**

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**Prevalent Among Young People, Minorities and ‘Passion of Christ’ Viewers**  
**BELIEF THAT JEWS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHRIST’S DEATH**  
**INCREASES**

A growing minority of Americans believe that Jews were responsible for Christ’s death. Roughly a quarter of the public (26%) now expresses that view. This represents a modest but statistically significant increase in the number holding this opinion when compared with a 1997 survey by ABC News which found 19% feeling this way. But a solid majority of Americans both then and now (60%) continue to say that Jews were not responsible for the death of Christ.

Nonetheless, the shift in opinion among young people and African Americans over that period has been striking. Currently, 34% of those below age 30 and 42% of blacks say they feel Jews were responsible for Christ’s death, up substantially from 1997 (10% and 21%, respectively). By contrast, there has been far less movement among older Americans and among whites.

Despite the increasing belief among some groups that the Jews *were* responsible for Christ’s death, other surveys have shown that only a tiny minority believes that Jews *today* should bear responsibility for what happened to Christ 2000 years ago. An ABC News/PrimeTime poll, released Feb. 15, found that just 8% think that “all Jews today” bear responsibility for the death of Jesus, compared with 80% who reject that view.

The increasing sense among some groups that Jews were responsible for Christ’s death comes amid controversy over the Mel Gibson movie “The Passion of the Christ.” A relatively large proportion of people who have seen the movie (36%) feel Jews were responsible for Christ’s death. However, this is also the case among people who *plan to* see the movie (29%), suggesting people who are drawn to this movie may be predisposed to this opinion more than others. By comparison, just 17% of those who have no plans to see the movie believe that Jews were responsible for Christ’s death.

About one-in-five Americans (19%) say they have already seen “The Passion of the Christ,” while many more (49%) say they intend to see it; 30% say they do not plan to see the movie. There also has been considerable public attention to news coverage about the movie – 37% of Americans

<b>Views of Jesus and the Bible</b>		
<i>Were the Jews responsible for Christ’s death?</i>	Mar 1997	Mar 2004
	%	%
Yes	19	26
No	62	60
Don’t know	<u>19</u>	<u>14</u>
	100	100
<i>Did Jesus die on the cross?</i>		
Yes	91	92
No	5	4
Don’t know	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
<i>Did Jesus rise from the dead?</i>		
Yes	84	83
No	10	11
Don’t know	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100
<i>Feeling about The Bible</i>	June 1996	Mar 2004
Literal word of God	35	40
God’s word, but not to be taken literally	47	42
A book written by men	14	13
Other/Don’t know	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100

say they followed these reports very closely.

The Pew Research Center national survey of 1,703 Americans, conducted March 17-21, finds that, aside from attitudes regarding responsibility for Christ’s death, opinion on other issues relating to Jesus Christ and the Bible have remained largely stable since the late 1990s. About nine-in-ten Americans (92%) believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross, and 83% believe that Christ rose from the dead. Both measures are virtually unchanged from the 1997 ABC News survey (91% and 84%, respectively).

As in previous surveys, the public remains divided over whether the Bible is actually the word of God and should be taken literally. Currently, four-in-ten Americans express that opinion, while about as many (42%) say the Bible is the word of God, but that not everything in it should be taken literally. Just 13% think the Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God.

A solid majority of white and black evangelical Protestants believe that the Bible is literally the word of God (70% and 71%, respectively). Only about a quarter of white non-evangelical Protestants (24%) and white Catholics (25%) share this belief.

***Seeing the ‘Passion’***

There are only modest age differences among those who have seen “The Passion of the Christ,” although fewer people age 65 and older (who typically attend movies at lower rates than younger people) report seeing the movie.

More African-Americans than whites report seeing the movie (30% of blacks vs. 18% of whites). Among whites, more than twice as many evangelical Protestants than non-evangelicals say they have seen “The Passion of the Christ” (25% vs. 11%). One-in-five white Catholics say they have seen the movie.

***Young People and the ‘Passion’***

Generally, there is a correlation between seeing the movie, and expressing an intention to see it, with holding the view that Jews were responsible for Christ’s death. This is

<b>Who’s Seen “The Passion”?</b>		
	<b>%</b>	<b>(N)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1703</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1390</b>
Evangelical Protestant	25	413
Mainline Protestant	11	372
Catholic	20	313
<b>Black</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>188</b>
Evangelical Protestant	33	104
Other	26	84
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>117</b>
Catholic	27	73
<b>18-34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>426</b>
Evangelical	30	105
Mainline	25	84
Catholic	31	120
Secular	7	75
<b>35-59</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>800</b>
Evangelical	29	271
Mainline	12	211
Catholic	20	188
Secular	9	61
<b>60+</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>457</b>
Evangelical	17	162
Mainline	4	141
Catholic	19	103

especially the case among younger people. Of those age 18-34 who have seen the movie, 42% believe Jews were responsible for Christ's death. Similarly, 36% of those age 35-59 who have seen "The Passion of the Christ" express that view. Still, majorities in both of these age groups – whether they have seen the movie or not – say they do not feel that Jews were responsible for Christ's death.

<b>"The Passion" and Opinion about Christ's Death</b>				
<i>Percent saying Jews were responsible for Christ's death</i>				
	<u>All ages</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35-59</u>	<u>60+</u>
	%	%	%	%
All Americans	26	31	27	20
Seen the movie	36	42	36	19
Plan to see	29	33	28	25
Don't plan to see	17	14	18	17

Older Americans (those age 60 and older) who have seen the movie are no more likely than others in that age group to say the Jews were responsible for Christ's death. Just 19% of those age 60 and older who have seen "The Passion of the Christ" say they feel that Jews were responsible for Christ's death.

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**ABOUT THIS SURVEY**

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,703 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period March 17-21, 2004. Based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on either Form 1 (N=864) or Form 2 (N=839), the sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points. For results based on Registered Voters (N=1306), the sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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.

## DO YOU FEEL THE JEWS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHRIST'S DEATH, OR NOT?

<i>ABC News</i>					----- <i>March 2004</i> -----					
----- <i>March 1997</i> -----										
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(N)</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>(N)</u>
	%	%	%			%	%	%	<i>in Yes</i>	
<b>Total</b>	19	62	19=100	(752)		26	60	14=100	+7	(1703)
<b>Sex</b>										
Male	19	66	15	(359)		28	60	12	+9	(816)
Female	19	59	22	(393)		25	60	15	+6	(887)
<b>Race</b>										
White	19	65	16	(612)		24	64	12	+5	(1390)
Black †	21	48	31	(79)		42	47	11	+21	(188)
Hispanic* †	17	61	22	(59)		40	47	13	+23	(117)
<b>Race and Sex</b>										
White Men	17	68	15	(293)		25	64	11	+8	(664)
White Women	21	62	17	(319)		24	63	13	+3	(726)
<b>Age</b>										
Under 30	10	70	20	(138)		34	55	11	+24	(295)
30-49	18	64	18	(330)		26	62	12	+8	(619)
50-64	25	65	10	(161)		26	64	10	+1	(438)
65+	24	48	28	(118)		20	56	24	-4	(331)
<b>Sex and Age</b>										
Men under 50	15	68	17	(230)		31	60	9	+16	(466)
Women under 50	15	63	22	(238)		27	59	14	+12	(448)
Men 50+	24	62	14	(127)		23	59	18	-1	(346)
Women 50+	26	54	20	(152)		23	62	15	-3	(423)
<b>Education</b>										
College Grad.	16	73	11	(234)		18	73	9	+2	(591)
Some College	16	69	15	(172)		29	61	10	+13	(411)
High School Grad.	20	59	21	(273)		29	56	15	+9	(542)
< H.S. Grad. †	25	46	29	(69)		33	44	23	+8	(155)

\* The designation Hispanic is unrelated to the white-black categorization.

† Note: Small sample size in March 1997 ABC survey.

Question:            Do you feel the Jews were responsible for Christ's death or not?

Continued on next  
page...

ABC News

-----March 1997-----

----- March 2004 -----

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>(N)</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>(N)</u>
	%	%	%			%	%	%	<u>in Yes</u>	
<b>Total</b>	19	62	19=100	(752)		26	60	14=100	+7	(1703)
<b>Region</b>										
East	15	71	14	(167)		23	60	17	+8	(334)
Midwest	19	58	23	(179)		22	64	14	+3	(414)
South	22	58	20	(249)		31	57	12	+9	(641)
West	18	66	16	(157)		27	60	13	+9	(314)
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>										
Total White Protestant	22	60	18	(272)		27	60	13	+5	(785)
- Evangelical	--	--	--			30	56	14	--	(413)
- Non-Evangelical	--	--	--			22	66	12	--	(372)
White Catholic	24	66	10	(134)		21	69	10	-3	(313)
Secular †	5	80	15	(75)		20	66	14	+15	(155)
<b>Community Size</b>										
Large City	--	--	--	--		27	59	14	--	(348)
Suburb	--	--	--	--		22	68	10	--	(407)
Small City/Town	--	--	--	--		28	58	14	--	(601)
Rural Area	--	--	--	--		28	57	15	--	(331)
<b>Party ID</b>										
Republican	--	--	--	--		28	62	10	--	(484)
Democrat	--	--	--	--		31	55	14	--	(577)
Independent	--	--	--	--		22	66	12	--	(542)
<b>Party and Ideology</b>										
Conservative Republican	--	--	--	--		26	64	10	--	(310)
Moderate/Liberal Rep.	--	--	--	--		32	58	10	--	(167)
Conservative/Mod. Dem.	--	--	--	--		35	52	13	--	(389)
Liberal Democrat	--	--	--	--		23	62	15	--	(174)
<b>Biblical Literalism</b>										
Word of God, to be taken literally	23	54	23	(292)		35	52	13	+12	(636)
Word of God, but shouldn't be taken literally	18	66	16	(336)		24	66	10	+6	(739)
A book written by men, not the word of God†	11	77	12	(98)		14	74	12	+3	(234)

† Note: small sample size in March 1997 ABC survey

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS  
AND PEW INTERNET AND AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT  
MARCH 2004 NEWS INTEREST INDEX  
FINAL TOPLINE  
March 17 - 21, 2004  
N=1703**

*Question 1 previously released*

Q.2 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE WITH ITEM h ALWAYS LAST; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]**

		Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not too Closely	Not at all Closely	DK/Ref
a.	News about candidates for the 2004 presidential election	35	34	18	13	*=100
b.	News about the current situation in Iraq	47	36	12	4	1=100
c.	The issue of gay and lesbian marriage	29	33	20	17	1=100
d.	Unrest and violence in Haiti	15	31	30	23	1=100
e.	The terrorist bombings in Madrid, Spain	34	35	18	12	1=100
f.**	The trial and conviction of Martha Stewart	18	31	28	23	*=100
g.***	The high price of gasoline these days	47	27	14	10	2=100
h.	The release of Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ"	37	29	18	15	1=100

\*\* Asked on Form 1 only (N=864)

\*\*\* Asked on Form 2 only (N=839)

*See March 25<sup>th</sup> Pew release for trends on items a,b,c,d and g.*

Q.2x Have you seen the movie "The Passion of the Christ," have you not yet seen it but plan to at some point, or don't you plan to see this movie?

19	Seen it
49	Plan to see it
30	Don't plan to see it
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused
100	

*Questions 3 through 40 previously released*

Q.41F1/

Q.42F2 Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible? **[READ, IN ORDER]**

			----- Mid-July 2003 -----					
	Standard	Reverse		Standard	Reverse	March	June	
<u>Total</u>	<u>Order</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Order</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>Order</u>	<u>Order</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>1996</u>
40	40	39	The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word, OR	35	32	38	36	35
42	41	43	The Bible is the word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word, OR	43	42	44	43	47
13	14	12	The Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God.	16	19	13	14	14
1	1	1	Other (VOL.)	2	2	2	3	2
<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100
<b>N=</b>	<b>(864)</b>	<b>(839)</b>						

**ASK ALL:**

Q.43 Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross, or not?

		<u>ABC News</u>	<u>ABC/Washington Post</u>
		<u>March 1997</u>	<u>March 1986</u>
92	Yes	91	93
4	No	5	5
<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
100		100	100

Q.44 Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead, or not?

		<u>ABC News</u>
		<u>March 1997</u>
83	Yes	84
11	No	10
<u>6</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>6</u>
100		100

Q.45 Do you feel the Jews were responsible for Christ's death or not?

		<u>ABC News</u>
		<u>March 1997</u>
26	Yes	19
60	No	62
<u>14</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>19</u>
100		100

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<sup>1</sup> Form 1 of this question was asked in the order in which the response categories appear. Form 2 of the question was asked in the reverse order.