

FOR RELEASE MAY 27, 2026

What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?

Most U.S. adults who go to religious services say they've recently heard from their clergy about at least one political or social issue

BY *Becka A. Alper*

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Becka A. Alper, Senior Researcher
Hannah Taber, Communications Manager

202.419.4372
www.pewresearch.org

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Pew Research Center, May, 2026, "What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?"

About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan, nonadvocacy fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. It does not take policy positions. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, computational social science research and other data-driven research. It studies politics and policy; news habits and media; the internet and technology; religion; race and ethnicity; international affairs; social, demographic and economic trends; science; research methodology and data science; and immigration and migration. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

© Pew Research Center 2026

About this research

This Pew Research Center report examines what Americans say they hear from their clergy about current social and political issues. It is based on adults who say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month.

Why did we do this?

Pew Research Center conducts high-quality research to inform the public, journalists and leaders. Studying religion's role in public life is a key part of the Center's long-standing research. In recent months, the media has followed how religious groups are engaging with important political issues, including immigration, U.S. military action in Iran, abortion and more. We designed this survey to learn what Americans are hearing about these and other topics from the clergy in their own houses of worship.

Learn more [about Pew Research Center](#) and our [religion research](#).

How did we do this?

This analysis includes findings from a survey of 3,592 U.S. adults who are part of the Center's [American Trends Panel](#) (ATP), including 1,391 people who say they attend religious services at least monthly. The survey was conducted April 6-12, 2026. The overall margin of error for respondents who attend religious services at least monthly is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Here are the [questions used for this analysis](#), along with [responses](#) and the survey [methodology](#).

What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?

Most U.S. adults who go to religious services say they've recently heard from their clergy about at least one political or social issue

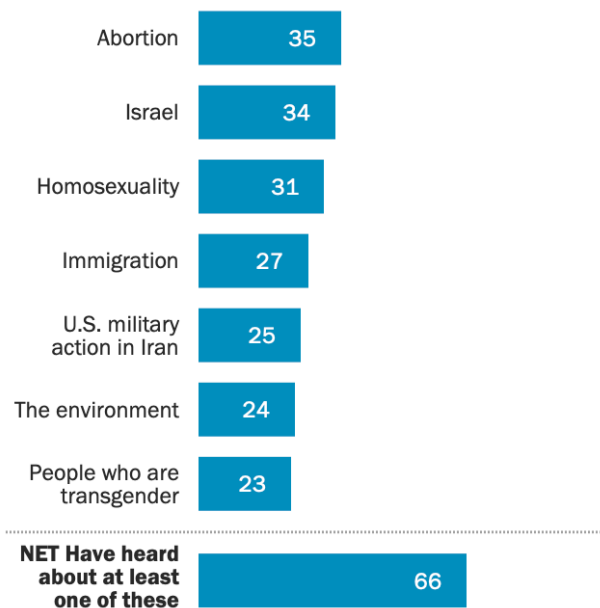
A new Pew Research Center survey finds that two-thirds of U.S. adults who regularly attend religious services say they have heard their clergy speak about at least one political or social issue in the past few months. Of the seven topics we asked about, abortion, Israel and homosexuality were among the most commonly cited.

When people hear their minister, priest, rabbi or other clergy person speak out about these topics, they report that they tend to hear messages *against* abortion, *against* homosexuality or *in support of* Israel. Fewer Americans say they've recently heard the clergy at their place of worship speak *in favor of* abortion rights, *encourage* acceptance of people who are gay or lesbian, or *criticize* Israel.

The nationwide survey, conducted April 6-12, 2026, included 1,391 U.S. adults who say they go to religious services at least once or twice a month. We also asked respondents about four additional social and political issues, spanning topics such as immigration and U.S. military action in Iran.

66% of Americans who regularly attend religious services hear about at least one political or social issue from their clergy

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services at least monthly, % who say that in the past few months the clergy at their place of worship have spoken out about ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 6-12, 2026. "What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

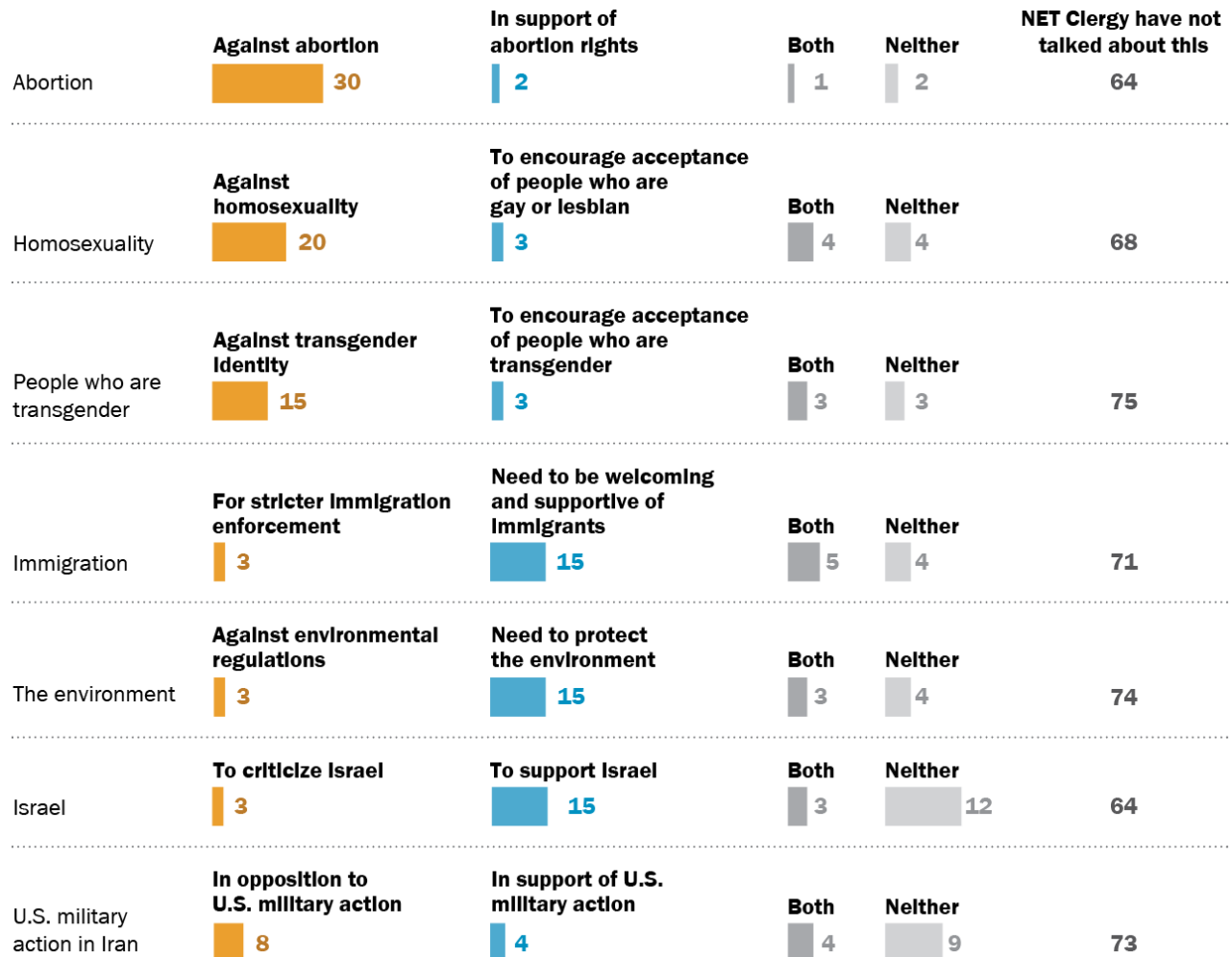
On these topics, we found that Americans who regularly attend religious services hear more about:

- The need to welcome and support immigrants (15%) than the need for stricter **immigration** enforcement (3%)
- Protecting the **environment** (15%) than opposing environmental regulations (3%)
- Opposing **transgender identity** (15%) than accepting people who are transgender (3%)

The messages from American pulpits appear to be more mixed when it comes to **U.S. military action in Iran**. About one-in-ten regular attenders (8%) say they have recently heard their clergy speak in opposition to the U.S. military action in Iran, while 4% say their religious leaders have spoken in support of it. An additional 9% report that their clergy have talked about the conflict without supporting or opposing it.

More regular attenders say they hear messages from their clergy against abortion than in support of abortion rights

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services **at least monthly**, % who say that in the past few months they have heard the clergy at their place of worship speak out about the following topics



Note: Those who did not answer the question about whether their clergy have recently spoken about each topic or the question about which messages they hear are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 6-12, 2026.

"What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The survey also shows that many Americans are not sure whether the leaders of their religious congregations are Republicans or Democrats.

Among people who attend services at least once or twice a month, 19% say they think **their clergy are mostly Republicans**, while 8% think **their clergy are mostly Democrats**. But most either think their clergy are politically mixed (27%) or say they're unsure about their clergy's political leanings (44%).

How religious groups differ in what they hear from their clergy

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services at least monthly, Catholics and White evangelical Protestants are the most likely to say their clergy have spoken recently about **abortion**.

In addition, White evangelicals are especially likely to say they hear their clergy talk about **homosexuality**. And Catholics stand out for hearing **immigration** discussed in their churches.

By contrast, White evangelicals are less likely than others to say their clergy discuss **environmental issues**. About one-in-ten White evangelicals say they've recently heard their clergy talk about the environment, compared with about a quarter of regular attenders who belong to other major Christian denominations.

Half of Catholic Mass attenders say their clergy recently spoke about abortion

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services **at least monthly**, % who say that in the past few months the clergy at their place of worship has spoken out about ...

	Abortion	Homosexuality	People who are transgender	Immigration	The environment	Israel	U.S. military action in Iran
White evang. Prot.	43	42	28	18	13	39	20
White Prot., not evang.	18	22	17	23	27	22	19
Black Protestant	20	30	24	31	27	32	28
Catholic	49	16	15	41	28	25	30

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 6-12, 2026.
 "What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

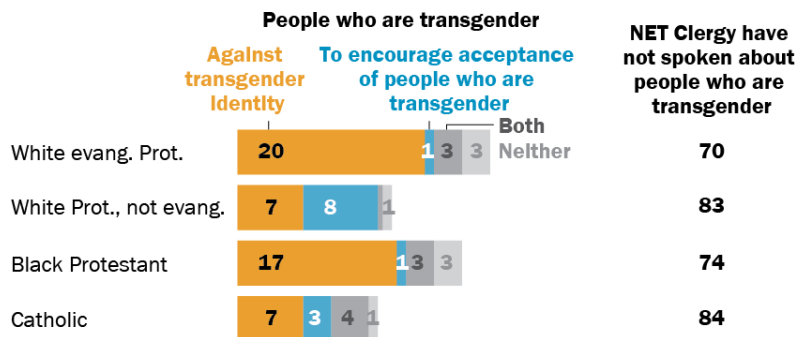
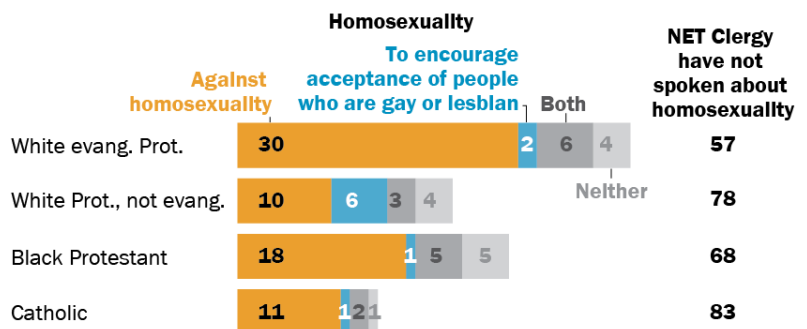
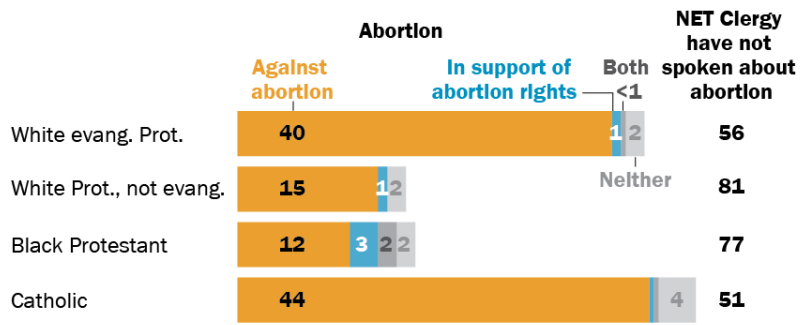
(The survey was open to people of all religions, but there are not enough respondents from other religious groups – such as Jews, Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus – who regularly attend religious services to be able to analyze their responses separately. Read more on [why we typically can't report the views of smaller U.S. religious groups.](#))

Regular attenders in most of the large U.S. religious groups we can analyze are more likely to say their clergy have spoken out *against* abortion, homosexuality and transgender identity than *in support of* abortion rights or accepting people who are gay, lesbian or transgender.

White nonevangelical Protestants are the exception: They are as likely to say their clergy urge acceptance of gay, lesbian and transgender people as to say they hear messages from the pulpit against homosexuality or against transgender identity.¹

White nonevangelical Protestants report hearing a mix of messages from their clergy on homosexuality, transgender identity

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services **at least monthly**, % who say that in the past few months they have heard the clergy at their place of worship speak out about the following topics



Note: Those who did not answer the question about whether their clergy have recently spoken about each topic or the question about which messages they hear are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 6-12, 2026. "What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

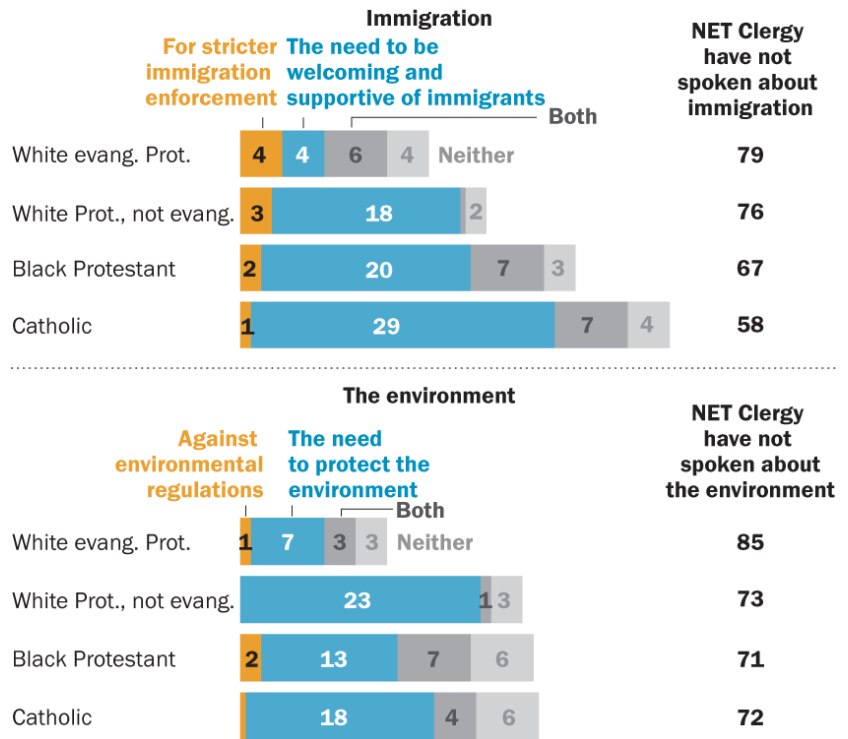
¹ Most White nonevangelical Protestants identify with mainline denominations and churches, such as the United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church (USA) or Episcopal Church.

Both Catholics and members of most Protestant subgroups who regularly attend religious services are more likely to say their clergy have spoken *in support of* immigrants and protecting the environment than to report hearing the alternative.

White evangelicals, on the other hand, are just as likely to say their clergy have called for stricter immigration enforcement (4%) as to say their clergy have talked about needing to welcome and support immigrants (4%).

Regular service attenders generally hear speech from their clergy about the need to protect the environment rather than speech against environmental regulations

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services **at least monthly**, % who say that in the past few months they have heard the clergy at their place of worship speak out about the following topics



Note: Those who did not answer the question about whether their clergy have recently spoken about each topic or the question about which messages they hear are not shown.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 6-12, 2026.
 "What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?"

The pattern of messaging on U.S. military action in Iran is somewhat less clear.

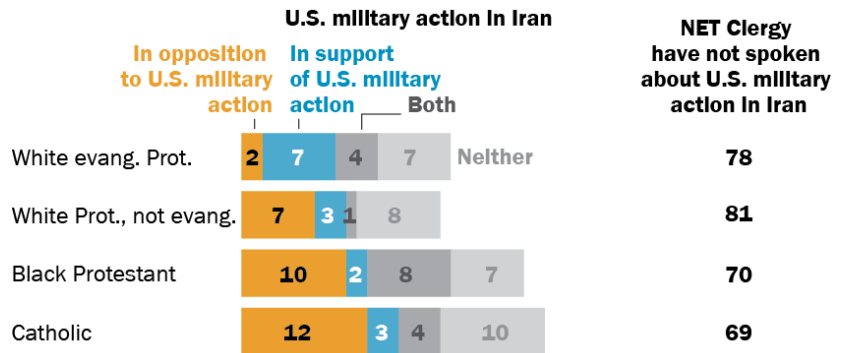
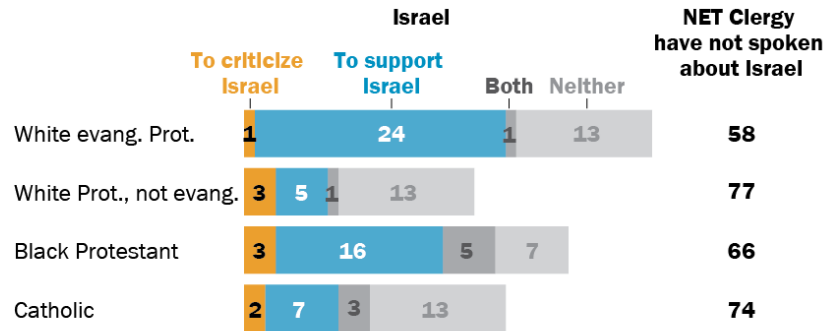
Catholics, White nonevangelical Protestants and Black Protestants are about as likely to say their clergy have spoken *in opposition* to U.S. military action in Iran as they are to say their clergy have spoken about the conflict without either supporting or opposing it.

On Israel, White evangelicals and Black Protestants who attend religious services at least monthly are more likely to say they have heard messages of support, rather than criticism, from their clergy.

But roughly one-in ten adults in most of the large U.S. religious groups analyzed here say they've heard their clergy speak about Israel in ways that are *neither* supportive nor critical.

What regular religious attenders hear from their clergy about Israel and Iran

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services **at least monthly**, % who say that in the past few months they have heard the clergy at their place of worship speak out about the following topics



Note: Those who did not answer the question about whether their clergy have recently spoken about each topic or the question about which messages they hear are not shown.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 6-12, 2026.
 "What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

How regular attenders perceive their clergy’s partisanship

The survey also asked regular attenders whether the clergy or other religious leaders at their place of worship are mostly Republicans, mostly Democrats, or a mix of both.

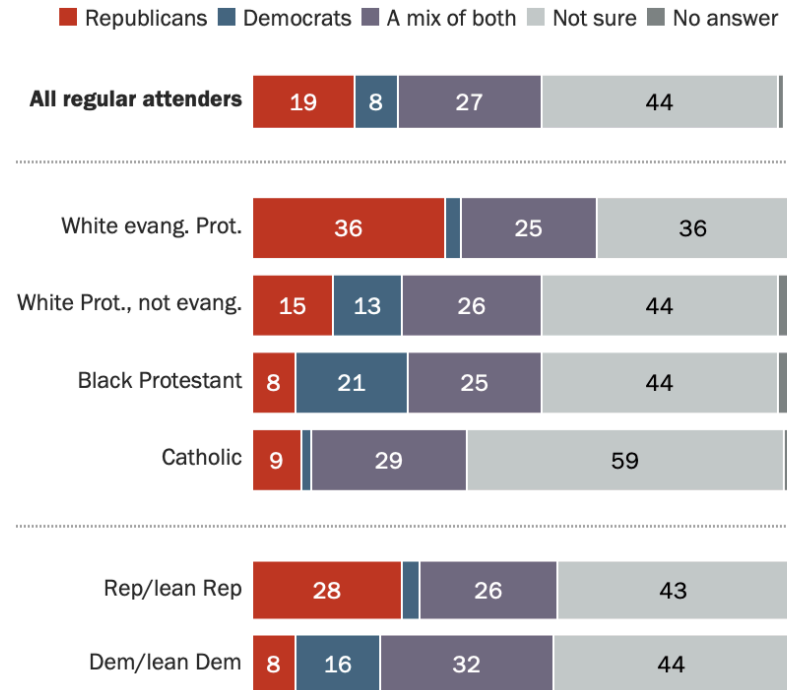
Upward of four-in-ten attenders (44%) say they are unsure about their clergy’s political affiliation. About a quarter (27%) say their religious leaders are a mix of both Republicans and Democrats, while fewer say they are either mostly Republicans (19%) or mostly Democrats (8%).

Across groups, some regular attenders stand out:

- **36% of White evangelical Protestants** say their clergy are mostly Republicans, while just 3% say they are mostly Democrats.
- **21% of Black Protestants** say their clergy are mostly Democrats, while 8% say they are mostly Republicans.
- Self-identified **Republicans** are more likely to say the religious leaders at their house of worship are mostly Republicans (28%), rather than mostly Democrats (3%).

Relatively few regular service attenders see a clear partisan tilt among their clergy

Among U.S. adults who attend religious services **at least monthly**, % who say the clergy or other religious leaders at their place of worship are mostly ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 6-12, 2026.
 “What Political Issues Do Americans Hear About in Church?”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- **Democrats** are more likely to say their clergy are mostly Democrats (16%), rather than mostly Republicans (8%).

Still, large shares of regular attenders across groups say the political makeup of their clergy is either mixed or unclear to them.

Acknowledgments

Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder. This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at [pewresearch.org/religion](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion).

Primary researchers

Becka A. Alper, *Senior Researcher*

Research team

Alan Cooperman, *Director, Religion Research*

Gregory A. Smith, *Senior Associate Director, Research*

Besheer Mohamed, *Principal Researcher*

Chip Rotolo, *Research Associate*

Patricia Tevington, *Research Associate*

Asta Kallo, *Research Assistant*

Meghan Rustemeyer, *Research Assistant*

Methods team

Ashley Amaya, *Associate Director, Survey Methods*

Andrew Mercer, *Principal Methodologist*

Courtney Kennedy, *Vice President, Methods and Innovation*

Dorene Asare-Marfo, *Senior Panel Manager*

Dana Popky, *Associate Panel Manager*

Anna Brown, *Research Methodologist*

Arnold Lau, *Research Methodologist*

Editorial and graphic design

Peter Bell, *Associate Director, Design and UX*

Jeff Diamant, *Senior Writer/Editor*

Anna Jackson, *Editorial Specialist*

Rebecca Leppert, *Writer/Editor*

Bill Webster, *Senior Information Graphics Designer*

Communications and web publishing

Sara Atske, *Digital Producer*

Hannah Taber, *Communications Manager*

Maya Pottiger, *Communications Associate*

Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

Data in this report comes from Wave 191 of the American Trends Panel (ATP), Pew Research Center’s nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. The survey was conducted April 6-12, 2026. A total of 3,592 panelists responded out of 3,775 who were sampled, for a survey-level response rate of 95%.

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 less than 1%.

All of the results in this report are based on 1,391 respondents who say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month. The margin of sampling error for the 1,391 respondents who attend religious services at least once or twice a month is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

The survey includes [oversamples](#) of non-Hispanic Asian adults, White evangelical Protestants who attend church monthly, White nonevangelical Protestants who attend church monthly, Black Protestants who attend church monthly and Catholics who attend church monthly in order to provide more precise estimates of the opinions and experiences of these smaller demographic subgroups. These oversampled groups are weighted back to reflect their correct proportions in the population.

SSRS conducted the survey for Pew Research Center via online (n=3,491) and live telephone (n=101) interviewing. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the ATP, read “[About the American Trends Panel](#).”

Panel recruitment

Since 2018, the ATP has used address-based sampling (ABS) for 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 Computerized Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover 90% to 98% of the population.² Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is selected to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed

² AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. “[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#).”

over time but are available upon request.³ Prior to 2018, the ATP was recruited using landline and cellphone random-digit-dial surveys administered in English and Spanish.

A national sample of U.S. adults has been recruited to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an “oversample”) to improve the accuracy of data for underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the United States. It featured a stratified random sample from the ATP from which the following groups were oversampled: non-Hispanic Asian adults, White evangelical Protestants who attend church monthly, White nonevangelical Protestants who attend church monthly, Black Protestants who attend church monthly and Catholics who attend church monthly.

The remaining panelists were sampled at rates designed to ensure that the share of respondents in each stratum is proportional to its share of the U.S. adult population to the greatest extent possible. Respondent weights are adjusted to account for differential probabilities of selection as described in the Weighting section below.

Questionnaire development and testing

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

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 gift code to Amazon.com, Target.com or Walmart.com. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$15 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.

³ Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was April 6-12. Surveys were conducted via self-administered web survey or by live telephone interviewing.

For panelists who take surveys online:⁴ Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset on April 6.⁵ Survey 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 April 6. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled online panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on April 7.

Invitation and reminder dates for web respondents, ATP Wave 191

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	April 6, 2026	April 7, 2026
First reminder	April 9, 2026	April 9, 2026
Final reminder	April 11, 2026	April 11, 2026

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Panelists participating online were sent an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages were sent an SMS invitation with a link to the survey and up to two SMS reminders.

For panelists who take surveys over the phone with a live interviewer: Prenotification postcards were mailed on April 3. Soft launch took place on April 6 and involved dialing until a total of five interviews had been completed. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled phone panelists' numbers were dialed throughout the remaining field period. Panelists who take surveys via phone can receive up to six calls from trained SSRS interviewers.

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, Center researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result

⁴ The ATP does not use routers or chains in any part of its online data collection protocol, nor are they used to direct respondents to additional surveys.

⁵ Postcard notifications for web panelists are sent to 1) panelists who were recruited within the last two years and 2) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

of this checking, three ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the panel survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of recruitment into the panel. These weights are then 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)	2024 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Race/Ethnicity x Gender	
Race/Ethnicity x Age	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	
Volunteerism	2023 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Frequency of internet use	2025 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Religious affiliation	
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	
Party affiliation x Age	
Validated 2024 presidential election turnout and vote choice	Candidate vote share is based on official results from the Federal Election Commission. Turnout is based on estimates from the Election Lab at the University of Florida. The size of the voting-eligible population is based on the 2023 ACS.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. For weighting to the 2024 presidential election results, panelists are considered validated voters if their self-report of having voted was confirmed after matching to a national voter registry.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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 191

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
All regular service attenders	1,391	3.5 percentage points
White evangelical Protestant	295	7.0 percentage points
White Prot., not evang.	252	8.2 percentage points
Black Protestant	269	8.5 percentage points
Catholic	300	7.7 percentage points
Rep/lean Rep	709	4.8 percentage points
Dem/lean Dem	625	5.5 percentage points

Note: This survey includes oversamples of White evangelical Protestants who attend church monthly, White nonevangelical Protestants who attend church monthly, Black Protestants who attend church monthly and Catholics who attend church monthly. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. Refer to the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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 191

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	3,592
Logged in (web)/Contacted (CATI), but did not complete any items	2.11	36
Started survey; broke off before completion	2.12	14
Never logged on (web)/Never reached on phone (CATI)	2.20	130
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Other noninterview	2.30	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.90	3
Total panelists sampled for the survey		3,775
Completed interviews	I	3,592
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	50
Noncontact	NC	130
Other	O	3
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		3,775
AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		95%

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Cumulative response rate, ATP Wave 191

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	12%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	74%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 191	40%
Response rate to Wave 191 survey	95%
Cumulative response rate	3%

PEW RESEARCH CENTER