

American Evangelicals and Israel

Recent surveys by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life demonstrate that American evangelical Protestants have distinctive — and highly positive — attitudes towards the state of Israel. This group is important both because it constitutes a large share of the American population — about 26% — and because it provided President George W. Bush with 40% of his total votes in the 2004 presidential election.

In June-July 2003, the Forum and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press conducted a joint nationwide survey of Americans' views on religion, politics, and public policy. Concerning Israel, people were asked...

- whether they sympathized more with Israel or the Palestinians in their longstanding dispute;
- whether religious beliefs or other factors had the biggest influence on their thinking on this issue;
- whether they believed God gave the land that is now Israel to the Jewish people;
- whether they believed the state of Israel fulfills the biblical prophecy about Jesus' second coming.

	<i>Sympathize more with...</i>				
	<u>Israel</u>	<u>Palest-</u>	<u>Both</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>DK</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>inains</u>	<u>(Vol.)</u>	<u>(Vol.)</u>	<u>%</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	41	13	8	18	20=100
White	41	12	7	19	21=100
Evang.	55	6	6	12	21=100
Mainline	34	17	10	19	20=100
Catholic	39	13	6	22	20=100
Black	40	17	8	16	22=100
Hispanic	40	13	7	20	20=100
Secular	24	20	11	26	19=100

American Views on Religion, Politics, and Public Policy 2003

Compared to other Americans, the survey found that white evangelical Protestants were...

- significantly more sympathetic to Israel than to the Palestinians — 55% sympathized more with Israel, only 6% with the Palestinians (versus 41% and 13%, respectively, of all those surveyed).
- significantly more likely to say that religious beliefs were the single biggest influence in leading them to sympathize more with Israel — 46% versus 26% of all those surveyed.
- significantly more likely to believe that God gave the land of Israel to the Jews — 72% versus 44% of all those surveyed.
- significantly more likely to believe that Israel fulfills the biblical prophecy about Jesus' second coming — 63% versus 36% of all those surveyed.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Total	36	46	18=100
White	34	48	18=100
Evangelical	63	22	15=100
Mainline	21	58	21=100
Catholic	25	55	20=100
Black	51	33	16=100
Hispanic	41	41	18=100
Secular*	7	76	17=100

* Evangelical Protestants are those who identify themselves as "born again or evangelical Christians." Mainline Protestants do not.
** Seculars include atheists, agnostics and those with no religious preference who rarely, if ever, attend religious services.

More recently, in March-May 2004, the Pew Forum on

Religion & Public Life sponsored a nationwide survey in which people were asked: “Should the U.S. support Israel over the Palestinians?” Unlike the questions in the 2003 survey, this one specifically asked Americans what they think about *U.S. policy* towards Israel and the Palestinians. The complete results are provided in the table below.

- As the table indicates, Americans overall were fairly evenly divided as to whether the U.S. should support Israel over the Palestinians: 35% agreed, while 38% disagreed, with 27% expressing no opinion. If anything, slightly more Americans believe that the U.S. should *not* support Israel over the Palestinians than believe that it should.
- As one would expect from the 2003 survey results, the picture is dramatically different for white evangelical Protestants. Overall, more than twice as many white evangelicals agreed that the U.S. should support Israel over the Palestinians than disagreed: 52% agreed, while 25% disagreed, with 23% expressing no opinion.
- The survey also found that “traditionalist” evangelicals — who are characterized by a high level of orthodox belief and a high level of church attendance, and who are the largest subgroup of evangelicals — are even more likely to agree that U.S. policy should tilt towards Israel: 64% agreed, while 18% disagreed, with 18% expressing no opinion. (According to a post-election analysis sponsored by the Pew Forum, “traditionalist” evangelicals provided Bush with 27% of his vote total in 2004.)
- Pew Forum-sponsored surveys show that, between 2000 and 2004, evangelicals showed the greatest increase in support for Israel of any religious group: up 14% since 2000, to 52%.
- The survey found that white evangelicals are virtually the mirror opposite of “secular” Americans in their attitudes towards Israel: only 23% of seculars agree that the U.S. should support Israel over the Palestinians, while 51% disagree, with 26% expressing no opinion.

	U.S. Support Israel over Palestinians		
	Agree	No Op	Disagree
ENTIRE SAMPLE	35%	27	38
Evangelical Protestant	52%	23	25
<i>Traditionalist Evangelical</i>	64%	18	18
<i>Centrist Evangelical</i>	45%	26	29
<i>Modernist Evangelical</i>	28%	37	35
Mainline Protestant	33%	30	37
<i>Traditionalist Mainline</i>	43%	28	29
<i>Centrist Mainline</i>	34%	34	32
<i>Modernist Mainline</i>	22%	26	52
Latino Protestants	37%	30	33
Black Protestants	24%	32	44
Catholic	31%	26	43
<i>Traditionalist Catholic</i>	43%	26	31
<i>Centrist Catholic</i>	30%	24	46
<i>Modernist Catholic</i>	23%	29	48
Latino Catholic	25%	36	39
Other Christian	33%	27	40
Other Faiths	22%	8	70
Jewish	75%	13	12
Unaffiliated	20%	27	53
<i>Unaffiliated Believers</i>	19%	30	51
<i>Secular</i>	23%	26	51
<i>Atheist, Agnostic</i>	15%	23	62

The American Religious Landscape and Politics 2004