

Special Report: **America at 300 million**

TIME

Where we **live**.
How we **vote**.
How much we **earn**.
What we **believe**.
On the eve of an
important election,
an illustrated guide
to **who we are**

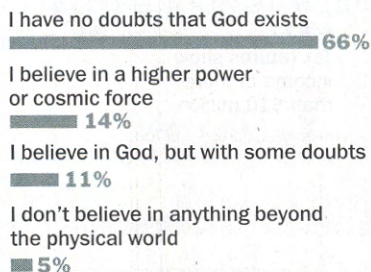
THE
UNITED
STATS OF
AMERICA

\$3.95US



What We Believe...

The U.S. is overwhelmingly a nation of believers. We just don't believe the same things. More than 85% of Americans follow a Christian faith, but that strong majority is built of dozens of denominations that diverge on the most basic questions: What role does God play in the world? What does he want of us? What does the Bible really mean?



The largest segment of believers is evangelical Protestant, a blanket term for the dozens of denominations that emphasize the authority of the Bible, salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus, and the need to share their faith with others. But few Evangelicals welcome that label, preferring "Bible-believing" or "born again."

HOW WE SEE GOD ...

Participation in a particular religious denomination doesn't always translate into a consistent set of views about the world and society. By asking dozens of questions about how Americans perceive God, researchers have constructed four religious viewpoints that correlate strongly with a person's social and political outlook.



31% believe in an **AUTHORITARIAN GOD** who is deeply involved in daily life and world events. God is angry at sin and can punish the unfaithful or ungodly

53% of African Americans share this view, as do **56%** of people who strongly believe that God is a "he"

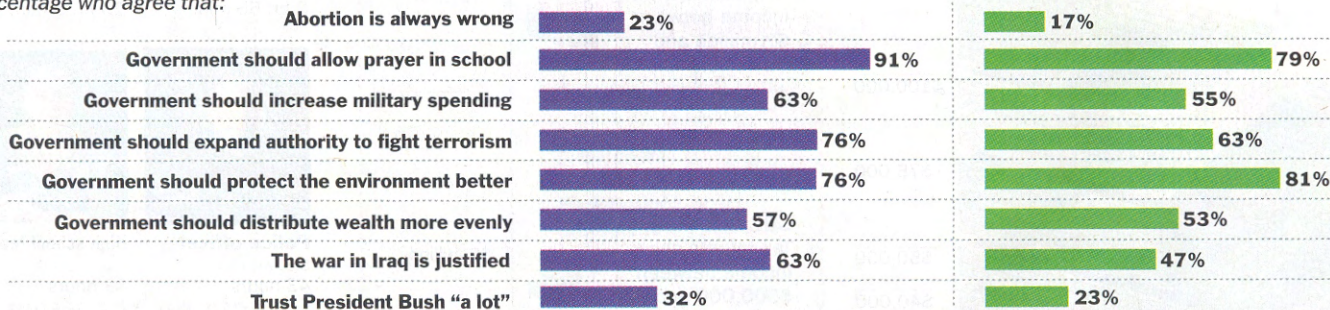


23% believe in a **BENEVOLENT GOD** who is deeply involved in daily life and world events but is mainly a positive force reluctant to punish

People younger than 30 are the least likely to hold this conception of God—just **13%** in the cohort do

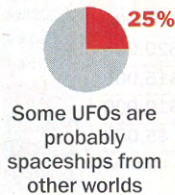
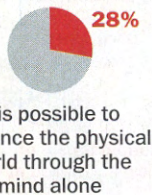
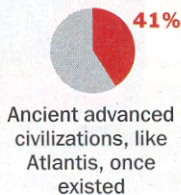
... SHAPES OUR POLITICS

Percentage who agree that:



HOW WEIRD IS THAT?

Percentage who agree that:



HANNA-BARBERA/EVERETT

CORBIS BETTMANN

Nine out of 10 Americans think there's something bigger out there. But what? A look inside our search for meaning

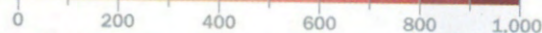


The remaining pieces of our religious quilt comprise the minority who follow other faiths—Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, for example—or no religion. About 5% of Americans are atheists. Researchers at Baylor University have been probing beyond the simple question of belief in God to explore American faith. Below are some findings:

DENOMINATION NATION

Seventy-seven percent of the U.S. population falls into one of three religious groups—mainline Protestants, evangelical Protestants and Catholics.

Religious adherents per 1,000 people, by county



All religions

Mainline Protestants

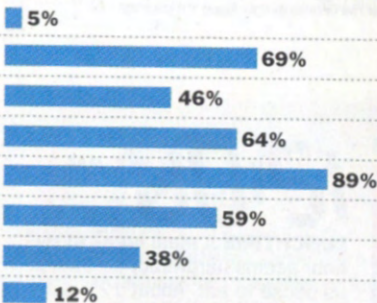
Evangelical Protestants

Roman Catholics



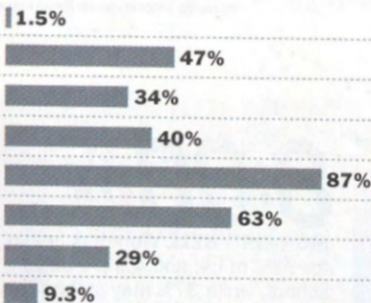
16% believe in a **CRITICAL GOD** who does not really interact with the world but is unhappy with its current state and will exact divine justice

21% of people in the Eastern U.S. hold this view, while just **14%** of Westerners do



24% believe in a **DISTANT GOD** who does not interact with the world and is not angry. God is more of a cosmic force that set the laws of nature in motion

37% of those with household incomes over \$100,000 a year take this view. **42%** of Jews view God this way



Astrologers, palm readers, tarot-card readers, fortune tellers and psychics can foresee the future

Men 8%

Women 18%

Sources: Questions about belief are from *American Piety in the 21st Century*, the Baylor Religion Survey, September 2006. The survey has 1,721 randomly selected respondents and a margin of error of ± 4 percentage points. Denomination maps are from *Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States: 2000*, Glenmary Research Center via the Association of Religion Data Archives

