

# THE FAITH AND AMERICAN POLITICS SURVEY

## *The Young and the Faithful*

**EMBARGOED until October 8, 2008 at 11:30 AM EDT**  
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## Executive Summary

**Monthly worship attenders swing to Obama in 2008.** The greatest shift in candidate preference between 2004 and 2008 has occurred among voters who attend religious services once or twice a month, moving from 49% support for Kerry in 2004 to 60% support for Obama in 2008. McCain maintains a significant advantage among voters who attend more frequently, while Obama has a nearly identical advantage over McCain among those who attend less than a few times a month or never.

**More Americans think Obama is friendly to religion than McCain.** Forty-nine percent of Americans say Obama is friendly to religion, while 45% say McCain is friendly to religion. More than seven-in-ten (71%) say it is important for public officials to be comfortable talking about religious values.

**Young first-time voters are heavily supporting Obama.** Among young first-time voters, who make up close to one-third of this age group (ages 18-34), more than seven-in-ten (71%) support Obama, compared to slightly more than half (53%) of young voters who have voted in previous elections.

**Younger Catholics more strongly support Obama, abortion rights, and more active government than older Catholics.** While older Catholics (age 35 and older) are split between the candidates (46% for McCain and 44% for Obama), among younger Catholics Obama leads McCain by 15 points (55% to 40%). Six-in-ten younger Catholics say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, compared to half of older Catholics. Younger Catholics are more pro-government than any other religious group, with two-thirds preferring bigger government with more services, compared to 41% support among older Catholics.

**Younger white evangelicals strongly oppose abortion rights but are less conservative and more supportive of same-sex marriage than older evangelicals.** Young white evangelicals are strongly opposed to abortion rights, with two-thirds saying abortion should be illegal in all or most cases. Yet, less than a majority (49%) of younger evangelicals identify as conservative, compared to nearly two-thirds (65%) of older evangelicals. Among young evangelicals, a majority favor either same-sex marriage (24%) or civil unions (28%), compared to a majority (61%) of older evangelicals who favor no legal recognition of gay couples' relationships.

**Younger white evangelicals are more pluralistic and more supportive of active government at home and of diplomacy abroad.** While less than one-third (30%) of older evangelicals say a person can be moral without believing in God, 44% of younger evangelicals affirm this idea, a 14-point gap. A majority (56%) of younger evangelicals believe diplomacy rather than military strength is the best way to ensure peace, compared to only 44% of older white evangelicals. Younger white evangelicals are also more likely than older white evangelicals to favor a bigger government offering more services, by a margin of 21 points (44% and 23% respectively).

**Americans say economy, energy and gas prices, and health care are the most important issues in 2008.** Americans rank the economy (83%) and energy/gas prices (76%), and health care (71%) as the most important issues in the 2008 election. Economic issues topped the list of most important issues among all religious groups.

**Americans rank abortion and same-sex marriage as the least important issues in 2008.** Only 43% and 28% respectively say these issues are very important issues to their vote in 2008. White evangelicals do not rank abortion or same-sex marriage in their top five most important voting issues.

**Americans see room for common ground in abortion debate.** A majority (53%) of Americans believe political leaders can work to find common ground on abortion while staying true to their core beliefs, including majorities of white mainline Protestants (59%), Catholics (55%), and the unaffiliated (52%).

**Generation gap on same-sex marriage is large and increasing.** Nearly half (46%) of young adults say gay couples should be allowed to marry, compared to only 29% of Americans overall. Over the last two years, support for same-sex marriage among young adults has jumped 9 points (from 37% to 46%), and the generation gap has nearly doubled.

**Support for same-sex marriage is significant among young religious Americans.** Among young white mainline Protestants and Catholics, close to half (48% and 44% respectively) support same-sex marriage. Young white evangelicals are 2.5 times as likely as older evangelicals to say that gay couples should be allowed to marry (25% to 9%).

**Addressing religious liberty concerns strongly increases support for same-sex marriage.** When respondents were provided with an assurance that “no church or congregation would be required to perform marriages for gay couples,” support for same-sex marriage increased by 14 points in the general population and among younger adults.

**Young adults prefer larger government that provides increased services.** Nearly six-in-ten (57%) young adults say they prefer a larger government providing more services rather than a smaller government providing fewer services. Among Americans as a whole, less than half (45%) want bigger government. The generation gap is evident among every religious tradition. Two-thirds (67%) of younger Catholics say they prefer bigger government, and younger white evangelicals are 21 points more likely than older evangelicals to support larger government (44% to 23% respectively).

**The 2008 Election**

*The Religious Vote*

The pattern of support among religious traditions seen in past elections is evident this year as well. Overall, we found Obama leading McCain by an eight-point margin among registered voters (50% to 42%). However, McCain tops Obama by a wide margin among white evangelicals (68% to 25% respectively)—a pattern that has been evident in polls since mid-summer. Democratic nominee John Kerry captured 21% of the white evangelical vote in 2004. Among Catholics, a key swing group that Kerry lost to Bush 52% to 47%, Obama maintains a significant lead (51% to 40%). Among white mainline Protestants Obama edges out McCain (49% to 45%). Among the religiously unaffiliated,<sup>i</sup> Obama has a strong forty-point lead, and the Democratic candidate also captures the vast majority (93%) of the black Protestant vote.

*The Generation Gap Significant among Religious Groups*

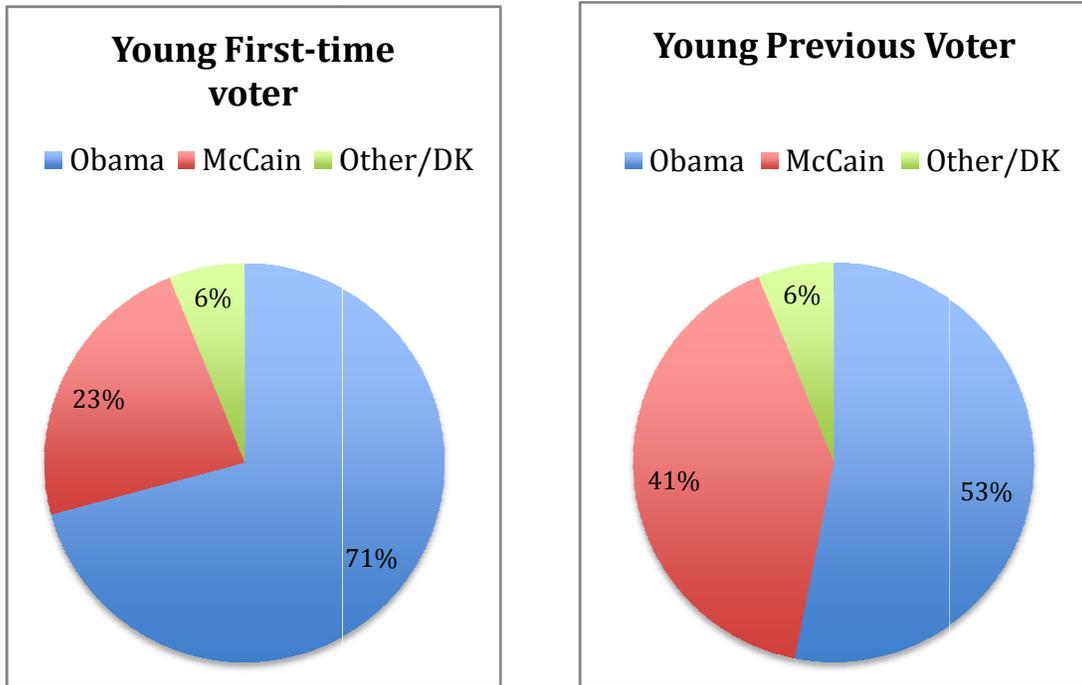
As in the two previous elections (2004 and 2006), we found Democrats are maintaining a significant edge among younger voters. Currently Obama has a 24-point advantage among young adults (age 18-34), leading McCain 59% to 35%. The generation gap is largest among the religiously unaffiliated, a group that constitutes a quarter (25%) of young registered voters. Support for Obama among younger religiously unaffiliated voters exceeds the already high support by older religiously unaffiliated voters by 10 points (75% compared to 65%), giving Obama a commanding 57-point lead. Obama also enjoys increased support among younger Catholics. Catholics age 35 and older are split between the candidates, 46% for McCain and 44% for Obama. Among younger Catholics, Obama leads McCain by 15 points (55% to 40%), which accounts for Obama’s lead among Catholics as a whole.

*First-time Voters Heavily Favor Obama*

One-in-ten Americans who are currently registered to vote have never voted in a presidential election. Among young adults (age 18-34), almost one third (31%) of registered voters have never voted in a presidential election. Moreover, the vote preferences of young first-time voters differ significantly from those of young adults who have voted in previous elections. Among young first-time voters, more than seven-in-ten (71%) support Obama, compared to slightly more than half (53%) of young voters who have voted in previous elections.

	<u>Obama</u>	<u>McCain</u>	<u>Oth/DK</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total	50	42	8	=100
18-34	59	35	6	=100
White Evangelical	25	68	7	=100
18-34	29	65	6	=100
White Mainline	49	45	6	=100
18-34	47	42	11	=100
Catholic	51	40	9	=100
18-34	55	40	5	=100
Black Protestant*	93	3	4	=100
18-34*	99	*	1	=100
Unaffiliated	65	25	10	=100
18-34	75	18	7	=100

Note: n<100 for black Protestant and young black Protestant registered voters.

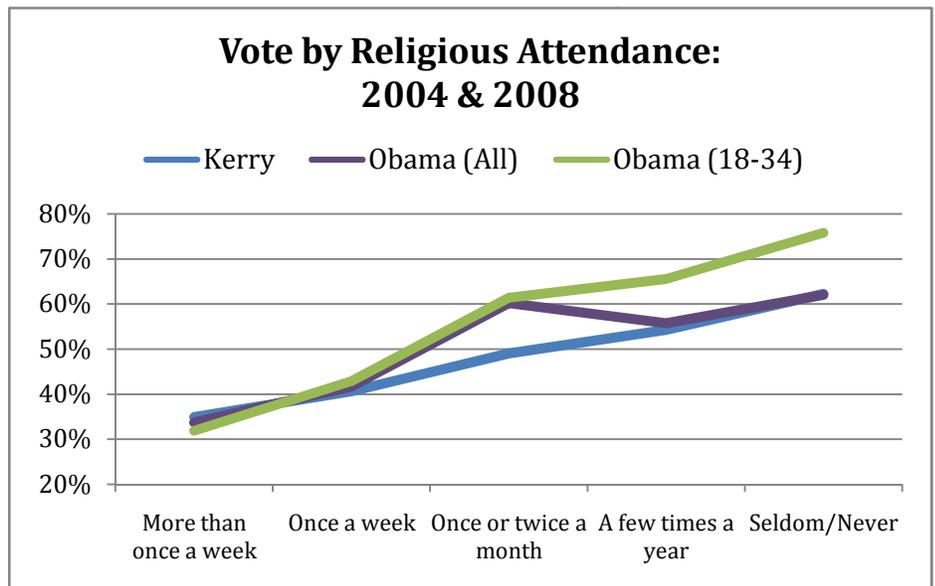


*The God Gap, Again, but Monthly Attenders Swing to Obama*

Our analysis of religious attendance and vote preference provides evidence that the religious fault lines have changed modestly over the last four years.

The most significant shift from 2004 is among the critical group of monthly religious service attenders (16% of registered voters).<sup>ii</sup> While John Kerry lost this group 49%-51% to Bush in 2004, six-in-ten of voters who attend once or twice a month are now supporting Obama.

Among voters who most and least often attend religious services, however, the patterns from 2004 persist. Among voters who attend religious services more than once per week, McCain leads Obama 60% to 34%. Four years ago, Kerry received 35% of the vote from those who attended services more than weekly. Among voters who attend church weekly, Obama’s support again mirrors Kerry’s level of support in 2004 at about four-in-ten. At the other end of the attendance scale, among Americans who attend only a few times a year or less, support for the Democratic candidate is also unchanged from 2004, with both Obama and Kerry receiving identical levels of support (62%).



## Faith in Public Life: The Young and the Faithful

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Interestingly, although Obama leads among young adults (age 18-34) overall by a significant margin (59% to 35%), there is no generation gap among voters who attend religious services most often. Among young adults who attend religious services once a week or more, McCain's lead (55% to 38%) is similar to his lead among Americans overall who attend religious services once a week or more. Obama's lead is concentrated among young adults who attend religious services once or twice a month or less, among whom he leads 69% to 25%. These less-frequent attenders, however, make up nearly two-thirds (65%) of the young adult population, a significantly higher proportion than the general population in which less-frequent attenders account for 56% of the population.

### *Candidates and Religion: Obama Viewed as More "Friendly"*

While past surveys have consistently found that the Republican Party has been perceived to be more "friendly" to religion, we found that Obama is perceived to be slightly more "friendly" to religion than McCain (49% to 45%).<sup>iii</sup> We also found some ambivalence about the role of religion in public life. While a majority (53%) of the general public worry more about public officials being too close to religious leaders rather than about public officials not paying enough attention to religion, more than seven-in-ten (71%) say they think it is important for public officials to be comfortable talking about religious values.

### *Few Crossover Voters, Swing Voters Religiously Diverse*

Neither candidate attracts much support from voters who have consistently supported the other party in previous elections. For instance, McCain receives only 4% support from voters who say they always vote Democratic and 9% support from voters who say they usually vote Democratic. Obama garners similar support: 3% among voters who say they always vote Republican and 7% from voters who say they usually vote Republican. Among swing voters, those who say they vote for Democratic and Republican candidates about equally, McCain beats Obama (48% to 39%), but more than one-in-ten (13%) in this group say they are undecided. Swing voters are more likely to be white (90%) and female (56%), and with the exception of the virtual absence of black Protestants, are religiously diverse. Not surprisingly, more than half (51%) of swing voters are political independents and are equally likely to be Republicans (21%) or Democrats (22%).

## Important Issues in the 2008 Election

### *Economic Issues, Health Care, Iraq/Terrorism Dominate*

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of Americans rank the economy (83%) and energy/gas (76%) as the most important issues in the 2008 election. Two-thirds or more of voters also say health care, Iraq, and terrorism will be very important to their vote. Abortion and same-sex marriage rank last out of ten issues that Americans say are very important (only 43% and 28% respectively).

### *Religious Voters Share Broader Concerns*

Economic concerns also top the list of most important issues among all religious groups. Despite the stereotype that white evangelicals care only about hot-button issues, abortion and same-sex marriage do not rank in their top five most important voting issues. Like the general population, more white evangelicals are very concerned with economic issues (78% economy, 74% energy/gas), terrorism (76%), Iraq (67%), and health care (61%). While abortion ranks significantly higher among white evangelicals than the general population (57% vs. 43% respectively), concerns about poverty (56%) register similar support. Less than a majority (49%) cite same-sex marriage as a very important voting issue, and the environment receives a similar level of support (44%).

The issue priorities of younger white evangelicals closely mirror those of white evangelicals as a whole. Approximately six-in-ten (62%) young white evangelicals say abortion is a very important voting issue; this level of support is 19 points higher than all young adults (43%). Fewer than half of younger white evangelicals and evangelicals overall (44% vs. 49% respectively) say same-sex marriage is a very important voting issue.

The issue priorities of other religious groups closely mirror the general population, with the major exception of Catholics and black Protestants, who rank health care as the second most important voting issue (77% and 94% respectively).

## **International Outlook and Foreign Policy**

### *Greatest Moral Crisis in the World*

Terrorism and religious extremism (31%), world hunger (29%), and war (18%) are perceived to represent the “greatest moral crisis in the world today” among the general population. Among religious groups, all follow this ranking except black Protestants. Almost one-third (31%) of black Protestants say world hunger represents the greatest moral crisis, and a quarter cite the spread of AIDS (25%, more than triple the 8% support in the general population). Young adults share these top priorities, with only minor differences from the general population.

### *Diplomacy and Military Strength*

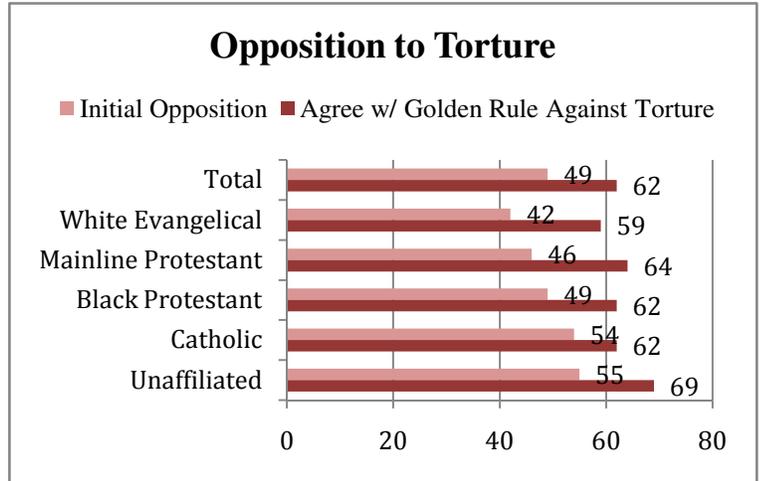
More than six-in-ten (63%) Americans and more than two-thirds (68%) of younger Americans believe good diplomacy rather than military strength is the best way to promote peace. Among the general population, white evangelicals are the only group in which a majority does not support diplomacy over military strength, but a plurality (46%) favors diplomacy. Among young adults, all religious groups, including evangelicals (56%) support diplomacy over military strength.

<b>Importance of Issues in the 2008 Election</b>		
<b>Issues:</b>	<i>% Saying Very Important</i>	
	<b>All</b>	<b>White</b>
	<b>Americans</b>	<b>Evangelicals</b>
The economy	83	78
Energy/Gas	76	74
Health care	71	61
Terrorism	69	76
Iraq	66	67
Poverty	62	56
The environment	56	44
Immigration	46	50
Abortion	43	57
Same-sex marriage	28	49

*Torture and the Golden Rule Argument Against Torture*

Consistent with other polling, we found that the general population remains evenly divided on whether the practice of torture can be justified to gain important information. Nearly half (49%) of Americans say torture can be often or sometimes justified, and 49% say torture can rarely or never be justified. Less than one-third (29%) of the general population says torture can never be justified. Interestingly, age differences are mostly insignificant on this issue.

Although Americans are initially split on the justifiability of torture, a majority (62%) agrees with the Golden Rule argument against torture—that the U.S. government should not use methods against our enemies that we would not want used on American soldiers. This level of support constitutes a 13-point increase from the 49% in the general population who initially said that torture is rarely or never justified.



An appeal to the Golden Rule increases opposition to torture among every religious group. As we found in our previous survey among white evangelicals in the South, the Golden Rule argument against torture has strong appeal even among more conservative religious groups such as white evangelicals.<sup>iv</sup> For example, only 42% of white evangelicals say torture is never or rarely justified, but a strong majority (59%) of this group was persuaded by the Golden Rule argument against torture—a 17-point shift.

**Role of Government**

*Generation Gap*

Young adults are much more inclined than the general public to support a larger government providing more services. Nearly six-in-ten (57%) young adults say they prefer a larger government providing more services than a smaller government providing fewer services. Among Americans as a whole, less than half (45%) want bigger government. Younger Americans in every religious tradition are more likely to prefer bigger government, and younger Catholics are more supportive than even young people as a whole (66% to 57%). The largest generation gap on the role of government exists among white evangelicals. Forty-four percent of younger evangelicals, compared to only 23% of evangelicals age 35 or older, support larger government, a generation gap of 21 points.

*Strongest Support for Government Involvement in Poverty and Environment*

When it comes to particular areas of government involvement, Americans are much more likely to support government involvement in poverty relief and environmental protection than in business regulation or protecting morality. Close to eight-in-ten Americans say the government should be more involved in helping needy Americans (77%) and protecting the environment (79%). Significantly fewer believe that government should be more involved in regulating business corporations (52%) and protecting morality (43%).

Young adults closely mirror the population at large except on the issue of protecting morality, where young adults favor greater government involvement than the general population (49% to 43%). These differences are pronounced among younger Catholics and white evangelicals. Younger Catholics are significantly more likely than Catholics overall to support greater government involvement in this area (56% vs. 47% respectively). A strong majority of younger white evangelicals (61%) support increased government involvement in morality, compared to 53% of evangelicals overall.

## Abortion

Abortion remains a contentious issue in American society with the public nearly evenly split: 50% say it should be legal in all or most cases and 47% say it should be illegal in all or most cases. Young adults are somewhat more supportive of keeping abortion legal than the general public (58% to 50% respectively), but relatively few believe it should be legal in all cases (21%).

White evangelicals are most opposed to keeping abortion legal. Seven-in-ten white evangelicals, and nearly the same number (67%) of younger white evangelicals believe abortion should be illegal.

Catholics are much more closely divided; 47% say it should be legal compared to 50% who say it should be illegal. However, a majority (60%) of younger Catholics believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Americans with no religious affiliation remain the most supportive of abortion rights; three-quarters say it should be legal in all or most cases.

	Legal in All/Most Cases	Illegal in All/Most Cases	DK/Ref.
Total	50	47	3=100
White Evangelical	27	70	3=100
Catholic	47	50	3=100
Black Protestant	52	42	6=100
White Mainline	62	35	3=100
Unaffiliated	74	22	4=100

### *Most Believe Common Ground is Possible, Have a Broader Political Agenda*

Despite the intensity of the abortion debate, a majority (53%) of Americans believe political leaders can find common ground while staying true to their core beliefs. Majorities of white mainline Protestants (59%), Catholics (55%), and the unaffiliated (52%) believe common ground on abortion is possible, as do pluralities of white evangelicals (49%) and black Protestants (47%). This pattern holds true among younger Americans as well, with the exception of younger evangelicals, of whom only 41% say political leaders can find common ground without compromising principles.

For most Americans, abortion is not the deciding factor in their support for presidential candidates. More than seven-in-ten Americans and younger Americans say they would still consider voting for a candidate if his position on abortion were different from their own. Even among white evangelicals, who are the most opposed to abortion, only 35% say they would not vote for a candidate who disagreed with them on the issue. Among Catholics, only about one-quarter (24%) say they would not vote for a candidate who held a different position on abortion.

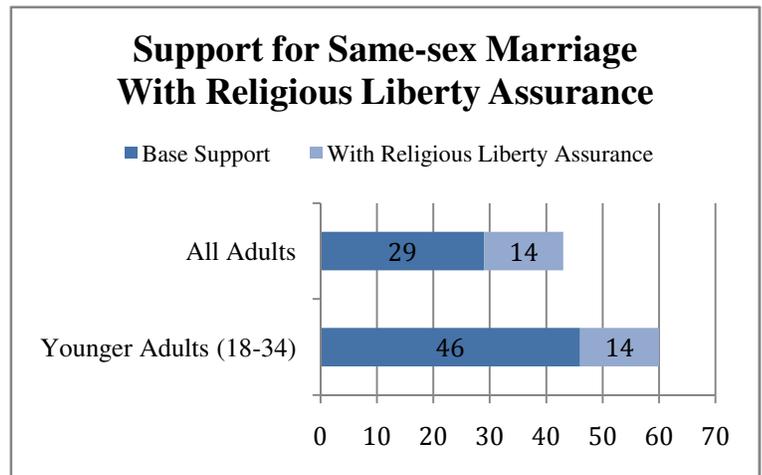
“Pro-choice” Americans are much more likely to support “pro-life” candidates than “pro-life” Americans are to support “pro-choice” candidates. Half of those who say abortion should be illegal in all cases would not support a “pro-choice” candidate under any circumstances. Among those who say abortion should be legal in all cases, significantly fewer (21%) say they would not vote for a “pro-life” candidate under any circumstances.

*Different Sources of Opinions on Abortion Lead to Different Opinions*

Public views on abortion are influenced by many sources. Approximately one third of Americans say their religious beliefs have the most influence on their thinking. About one-in-five say education is the most important influence, and 15% say it was a personal experience. Among young adults, an almost equal number rely on their education as religious beliefs (24% to 25% respectively). Americans on opposite sides of the abortion debate have very different sources of influence. Among those who say abortion should be illegal in all cases almost six-in-ten (58%) say they are most influenced by their religious beliefs, while a majority of those who say it should be legal in all cases say education (32%) or personal experience (19%) most informs their judgment.

**Gay and Lesbian Issues**

Consistent with previous findings, we found a strong link between support for gay and lesbian rights and religious liberty concerns.<sup>v</sup> In the areas of same-sex marriage and employment non-discrimination, we found significant increases in support for policies protecting these rights when they are coupled with religious exemptions. Support for same-sex marriage rose 14 points both in the general population and among younger adults, while support for employment non-discrimination rose more than 31 points with these assurances.



*Same-sex Marriage and Civil Unions*

While a minority of the country supports same-sex marriage, a majority favors some form of legal recognition of a gay couples’ relationship (29% favor marriage, 28% civil unions). Only 37% of Americans say there should be no legal recognition of gay couples’ relationships. White evangelicals are the only religious group with a majority (58%) opposed to some legal recognition.

Among younger adults, more than two-thirds (46% marriage, 22% civil unions) support some legal recognition of gay couples’ relationships; only 29% say there should be no legal recognition. A majority of every younger religious group supports either same-sex marriage or civil unions. Fifty-two percent (24% marriage, 28% civil unions) of younger evangelicals support some legal recognition, compared to only 37% (10% marriage, 27% civil unions) of all evangelicals.

Generational differences are striking on the issue of same-sex marriage. Forty-six percent of young adults support the right of gay couples to marry, 17 points higher than the general population. These generation gaps exist across every religious tradition, including amongst white evangelicals—younger white evangelicals are nearly 2.5 times more likely to support same-sex marriage than are all white evangelicals.

We asked respondents who initially did not support same-sex marriage whether they would support allowing gay couples to marry “if the law guaranteed that no church or congregation would be required to perform marriages for gay couples.” When this religious liberty assurance was offered, support for legalized same-sex marriage increased by 14 points in the general population and among younger adults. Among the general population, this increase was most pronounced among white mainline Protestants, who moved from one-third (34%) support to majority (53%) support. Among younger adults, the movement was largest among Catholics, who increased their support 20 points, from 44% to 64%.

Although opinions remained stable over the last two years in the general population, support for same-sex marriage among young adults jumped 9 points since 2006, from 37% to 46%.<sup>vi</sup> This shift in support was evident across all religious traditions (e.g., young evangelical support for marriage increased from 17% to 24%) and was due almost entirely to shifts in support from civil unions to marriage.

<b>Support for Same-sex Marriage With Religious Liberty Assurance</b>			
<b>Religious Tradition</b>	<b>Gay Couples Allowed to Marry</b>	<b>Support w/ Religious Liberty Assurance</b>	<b>Diff.</b>
Total (All)	29	43	14
<i>Total 18-34</i>	46	60	14
Wh. Evangelical (All)	10	20	10
<i>18-34</i>	24	35	11
Mainline Prot. (All)	34	53	19
<i>18-34</i>	48	61	13
Catholic (All)	30	47	17
<i>18-34</i>	44	64	20
Black Protestant (All)	27	38	11
<i>18-34</i>	29	47	18
Unaffiliated (All)	53	67	14
<i>18-34</i>	69	80	11

### *Employment Non-Discrimination*

We found a similar pattern in opinion about preventing discrimination against gay and lesbian people in the workplace. Thirty-eight percent of the general population and 42% of young adults favor a policy that would make “it illegal for companies to fire or to refuse to hire people based on their sexual orientation.” When we asked those initially opposed to this policy if they would support a law protecting gays and lesbians in the workplace if that law did not apply to churches and other religious organizations, support jumped by 31 points among the general population and 37 points among young adults. As a result, nearly 7 out of 10 (69%) in the general population and nearly 8 out of 10 (79%) young adults, including older and younger evangelicals, supported employment non-discrimination with a religious exemption.

### **Issues Heard About in Church**

A large majority of Americans say clergy at their place of worship speak out about hunger and poverty (87%). Roughly six-in-ten hear about abortion (63%), the war in Iraq (60%) and genocide in Darfur and AIDS in Africa (59%). Approximately half say they hear church leaders speak out about homosexuality (54%) and the environment (47%), while only one-in-five Americans say their clergy discuss immigration in church.

Americans who belong to different religious traditions are exposed to dramatically different messages during church services. More than two-thirds (67%) of white evangelical and black Protestants say their pastor speaks out about the issue of homosexuality. Catholics are the most likely to hear about abortion (78%) and the least likely to hear about homosexuality (37%). More than eight-in-ten black Protestants hear about the Iraq war, more than any other tradition. White mainline Protestants are less likely than all the other traditions to hear about abortion (40%), and a similar number report hearing about the issue of homosexuality (43%).

<i>Issues heard about in church...</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
		<b>Evangelical</b>	<b>Mainline</b>	<b>Protestant*</b>	
Hunger and poverty	87	90	88	89	90
Abortion	63	68	40	55	78
War in Iraq	60	58	53	81	58
Genocide in Darfur and AIDS in Africa	59	56	60	68	62
Homosexuality	54	67	43	67	37
Environment	47	38	48	59	54
Immigration	20	12	14	22	33

*Note:* Among those who attend church at least once or twice a month.  
 \*For black Protestants, n<100.

Americans who hear about the issues of abortion and homosexuality at their places of worship are much more likely to hear their clergy speak out negatively on these issues. In fact, American churchgoers are more than five times as likely to hear their clergy speak out against the legality of abortion as in support of it. On the issue of homosexuality, Americans are about 10 times as likely to hear their clergy say it should be discouraged than accepted.

We found strong correlations between what people in the pews are hearing from their clergy and their views on issues. For instance white mainline Protestants are least likely to hear about abortion (40%) in church and are most supportive of keeping it legal (62%). Black Protestants and white evangelicals are most likely to hear about homosexuality and also more likely than Catholics, unaffiliated and white mainline Protestants to oppose same-sex marriage (48% and 58% respectively).

**APPENDIX A  
SELECTED PROFILE OF YOUNG WHITE EVANGELICALS**

Younger white evangelicals (age 18-34) resemble older evangelicals politically, but on several key issues, they are clearly influenced by their generation.

White evangelicals make up approximately 25% of the general population, and young white evangelicals (age 18-34) constitute 20% of all evangelicals.

Like older evangelicals, younger evangelicals strongly identify with the Republican Party and support John McCain, but levels of support among younger evangelicals were modestly lower for McCain (65% vs. 69%) and higher for Barack Obama (29% vs. 25%).<sup>vii</sup> Like their generational peers, younger evangelicals are also significantly less likely to identify as conservative than older evangelicals.

Younger evangelicals' views on abortion and same-sex marriage stand in clear contrast to one another. The issue of abortion is politically more important to young white evangelicals than to older white evangelicals. More than six-

in-ten (62%) say abortion is very important to their vote, compared to 55% of older evangelicals. Young white evangelicals are also strongly opposed to abortion rights, with approximately one-third saying abortion should be legal all or most of the time—almost identical to the percentage of older evangelicals.

On the issue of same-sex marriage, by contrast, the influence of their generational peers is clear. Nearly four-in-ten young evangelicals say they have a close friend or family member who is gay or lesbian—a rate approximately the same as all young adults and more than double the rate of older evangelicals. Among older evangelicals, nearly half (49%) say same-sex marriage is an important voting issue, and a strong majority (61%) say there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship. Among younger white evangelicals, however, less than a majority see same-sex marriage as a very important voting issue, and a majority (52%) favor either same-sex marriage or civil unions. The generation gap is

<b>Young White Evangelicals A Comparative Profile</b>				
	<b>All Young Adults</b>	<b>Younger Evangelicals (18-34)</b>	<b>Older Evangelicals (35+)</b>	<b>Evangelical Generation Gap</b>
<b>Candidates and Voting</b>				
Vote				
<i>McCain</i>	35	65	69	4
<i>Obama</i>	59	29	25	4
Party Identification				
<i>Republican/lean</i>	36	70	65	5
<i>Independent</i>	12	11	7	4
<i>Democrat/lean</i>	52	19	28	9
Ideology				
<i>Conservative</i>	30	49	65	16
<i>Moderate</i>	39	33	24	11
<i>Liberal</i>	27	12	8	4
<b>Cultural Issues</b>				
Abortion				
<i>V. Impt. Voting Issue</i>	43	62	54	8
<i>Legal All/Most Cases</i>	58	32	31	1
<i>Not Single Issue Voter</i>	74	66	60	6
Same-sex Marriage				
<i>Close friend/family member gay or lesbian</i>	38	37	16	21
<i>V. Impt. Voting Issue</i>	28	44	49	5
<i>Marriage</i>	46	24	9	15
<i>Civil Unions</i>	22	28	25	3
<i>No Recognition</i>	29	47	61	14
<b>Pluralism and Worldview</b>				
Not necessary to believe in God to be moral	54	44	30	14
Diplomacy best way to peace	68	56	44	12
Bigger government	57	44	23	20

largest on the issue of marriage, where younger white evangelicals are more than 2.5 times as likely to support same-sex marriage than older white evangelicals.

Despite their conservative views on abortion and stereotypes as single-issue voters, like older white evangelicals, young white evangelicals have a voting agenda that is much broader than abortion and same-sex marriage. Fully two-thirds of younger evangelicals say they would still vote for a candidate even if the candidate disagreed with them on the issue of abortion. Younger evangelicals rank a number of other issues, such as economic issues, terrorism, and Iraq higher than abortion, and roughly equal numbers say that health care is a very important voting issue as say abortion.

Younger white evangelicals also have a more pluralistic outlook than older white evangelicals and embody a different posture with regard to the role of government both at home and in the world. While less than one-third (30%) of older evangelicals say that a person can be moral without believing in God, 44% of younger evangelicals affirm this idea, a 14-point gap. A majority (56%) of younger evangelicals believe that diplomacy rather than military strength is the best way to ensure peace, compared to only 44% of older white evangelicals. Finally, younger white evangelicals are more likely than older white evangelicals to favor a bigger government offering more services by a margin of 20 points (44% and 24% respectively).

**APPENDIX B  
SELECTED PROFILE OF YOUNG CATHOLICS**

By a number of measures, younger Catholics are more progressive than older Catholics, and on some issues are even more progressive than their generational peers.

Catholics constitute 24% of the general population, and young Catholics (age 18-34) make up 34% of all Catholics and approximately 8% of the general population.

In terms of candidate preference, young Catholics much more closely resemble their peers than older Catholics. A solid majority (55%) of young Catholics support Democrat Barack Obama, similar to the number of young adults overall who prefer the Democratic candidate (59%). Older Catholics are much more politically competitive and are evenly split between Obama and Republican John McCain (45% to 46% respectively).

Younger Catholics are also less conservative and less Republican than older Catholics. While older Catholics are about evenly split in party identification, among younger Catholics there is a 19-point Democratic advantage in party affiliation (54% to 35%). Younger Catholics are also less likely than older Catholics to identify as politically conservative (28% vs. 42% respectively).

Younger Catholics are also less likely than older Catholics and even other young adults to see abortion and same-sex marriage as very important voting issues. Six-in-ten (61%) of young Catholics do not see abortion as a very important voting issue, and seven-in-ten do not see same-sex marriage as a very important voting issue. Neither older nor younger Catholics are single-issue voters on abortion, with more than seven-in-ten (71%) agreeing that they would vote for a candidate who disagreed with them on abortion.

<b>Young Catholics A Comparative Profile</b>				
	<b>All Young Adults</b>	<b>Younger Catholics (18-34)</b>	<b>Older Catholics (35+)</b>	<b>Generation Gap</b>
<b>Candidates and Voting</b>				
Vote				
<i>McCain</i>	35	40	46	6
<i>Obama</i>	59	55	45	10
Party Identification				
<i>Republican/lean</i>	36	35	45	10
<i>Independent</i>	12	11	7	4
<i>Democrat/lean</i>	52	54	48	6
Ideology				
<i>Conservative</i>	30	28	42	14
<i>Moderate</i>	39	41	36	5
<i>Liberal</i>	27	24	21	3
<b>Cultural Issues</b>				
Abortion				
<i>Not V. Impt.</i>				
<i>Voting Issue</i>	56	61	56	7
<i>Legal All/Most Cases</i>	58	60	51	9
<i>Not Single Issue Voter</i>	74	71	76	5
<i>Common Ground</i>				
<i>Possible</i>	54	57	57	0
Same-sex Marriage				
<i>Close Friend/Family</i>				
<i>Member Gay or Lesbian</i>	38	34	32	2
<i>V. Impt. Voting Issue</i>	28	22	27	5
<i>Marriage</i>	46	44	26	18
<i>Civil Unions</i>	22	23	37	14
<i>No Recognition</i>	29	26	32	6
<b>Role of Government</b>				
Favor Bigger Government				
<i>Government More Involved</i>	57	67	41	26
<i>Helping Needy</i>	81	85	79	6
<i>Protecting Environment</i>	82	90	80	10
<i>Reg. Business</i>	56	63	57	6
<i>Protecting Morality</i>	49	56	41	15

Younger Catholics are also considerably more supportive of abortion rights and same-sex marriage than older Catholics. Approximately six-in-ten younger Catholics and young adults overall say abortion should be legal in all or most cases (60% and 58% respectively). Among older Catholics, half (51%) say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, a 9-point generation gap. Close to half (44%) of younger Catholics say same-sex couples in committed relationships should be able to marry, compared to only about a quarter (26%) of older Catholics, an 18-point generation gap. On this issue, younger Catholics resemble the rest of their peers, 46% of whom support same-sex marriage.

Finally, younger Catholics are the most pro-government constituency of any major religious group and even more pro-government than their peers. Two-thirds (67%) of younger Catholics say they prefer bigger government offering more services rather than a smaller government offering fewer services. This level of support is higher than any other religious group; it represents a 26-point generation gap (compared to 41% support among older Catholics), and it is 10 points higher than the level of support for bigger government among other young adults (57%). With one exception,<sup>1</sup> in each of four areas—helping needy Americans, protecting the environment, regulating business corporations, and protecting morality—young Catholics exhibited higher support for more government involvement than every other religious group and than young adults overall.

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<sup>1</sup> Slightly more young white evangelicals than young Catholics supported more government involvement in protecting morality (61% vs. 56%).

## **APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY**

This survey was designed and conducted by Public Religion Research on behalf of Faith in Public Life. Results of the survey were based on telephone interviews conducted by professional interviewers under the direction of Opinion Access Corporation. The survey includes a national sample of 2,000 adults, 18 years of age and older, and an oversample of 974 respondents ages 18-34. The oversample of young adults included 200 interviews of cell phone users. The survey was conducted from August 28 to September 19, 2008.

The margin of error for the national sample is +/- 2.5% at the 95% confidence interval. The margin of error for respondents age 18-34 (N=1251) is +/- 3.0% at the 95% confidence interval. In addition to sampling error, surveys may also be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context, and order effects.

The national sample of adults was interviewed using a random digit dial process and weighted using demographic parameters derived from the March 2007 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The youth landline interviews were conducted using an age-targeted random digit dial method. The cell phone interviews were conducted using a random digit dial method and then combined with the youth landline sample after being weighted proportionally to reflect the telephone usage patterns of 18-34 year olds using the 2007 National Health Interview Survey. The combined youth landline and cell phone samples were then weighted using demographic parameters derived from the March 2007 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

## **ABOUT FAITH IN PUBLIC LIFE**

Faith in Public Life is a communications and organizing resource center that works to transform the values debate in America by increasing the strength, effectiveness and visibility of faith leaders dedicated to justice, compassion, and the common good. Faith in Public Life is a nonpartisan 501(c) (3) organization. For more information, visit [www.faithinpubliclife.org](http://www.faithinpubliclife.org).

## **ABOUT PUBLIC RELIGION RESEARCH**

Public Religion Research is a strategic consulting firm that helps clients broaden their understanding of the ways in which religion and values shape American politics. We also work with clients to develop strategies to engage people of faith for social change. For more information, visit [www.publicreligion.org](http://www.publicreligion.org).

### ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Religiously unaffiliated Americans are those who claim no identification with any religion, such as atheists, agnostics, and others.

<sup>ii</sup> Note that the 2004 Exit Poll attendance categories were slightly different from the categories in our survey. The Exit polls did not include a “seldom” option, and the middle option was “a few times a month.”

<sup>iii</sup> The Pew Forum recently found that a majority of the general population viewed the Republican Party as more friendly to religion than the Democratic Party (51% to 38%) (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, August 2008).

<sup>iv</sup> See Faith in Public Life/Mercer University torture survey, conducted by Public Religion Research, August 2008. Results of the survey are available at [http://blog.faithinpubliclife.org/2008/09/new\\_evangelical\\_poll\\_on\\_tortur.html](http://blog.faithinpubliclife.org/2008/09/new_evangelical_poll_on_tortur.html). In our previous poll among white evangelicals in the South, a similar shift occurred: from 38% to 52% opposition when presented with the Golden Rule argument.

<sup>v</sup> See Robert P. Jones and Dan Cox, “The American Values Survey,” Center for American Values in Public Life, People for the American Way Foundation (<http://www.centerforamericanvalues.org/>).

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> These differences between younger and older evangelical voting preferences are not statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.