



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

SHOULD RELIGION PLAY A ROLE IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES?

White evangelical Protestants differ substantially from other Americans when it comes to the level of influence religion should have on a range of government policies, according to a recent national survey conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. White evangelical Protestants also tend to hold considerably more conservative opinions about those policies than do other Americans.

Most white evangelical Protestants think religion should have more influence on government policies than is currently the case; other Americans are more inclined to say religion should be less influential. In many cases, Americans who hold more conservative attitudes on particular policies are more inclined than others to say religion should influence those issues.

For example, 37% of all Americans favor making abortion illegal except in cases of rape, incest, or threats to the mother's life; 67% of white evangelical Protestants favor such restrictions on abortion. Sixty-seven percent of white evangelical Protestants say religion does influence government policy on abortion, but even more (80%) think religion should impact policy. In comparison, other Americans are more likely to say religion does play a part in the government's policies on abortion (79%) and are much less likely to think religion should do so (41%).

White evangelical Protestants and other Americans have similar opinions about school vouchers. Forty percent of white evangelical Protestants favor vouchers for low-income children to attend religious and private schools, and 42% of other Americans agree. But looking at education policy more broadly, 69% of white evangelical Protestants think religion should influence education policy, but only 37% of other Americans agree.



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Three Things You Should Know

About The AP-NORC Poll on Religion Among American Adults age 18 and older

- 1) Eighty percent of white evangelical Protestants say religion should influence government policy on abortion; 41% of others agree.
- 2) Fifty percent of Americans say religion has an effect on the government's policies regarding poverty, and 52% think religion should have an impact on those policies.
- 3) Seventy-nine percent of white evangelical Protestants approve of how President Trump is handling his job; 34% of others agree.

The nationwide poll was conducted December 5-9, 2019, using the AmeriSpeak Panel®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,053 adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

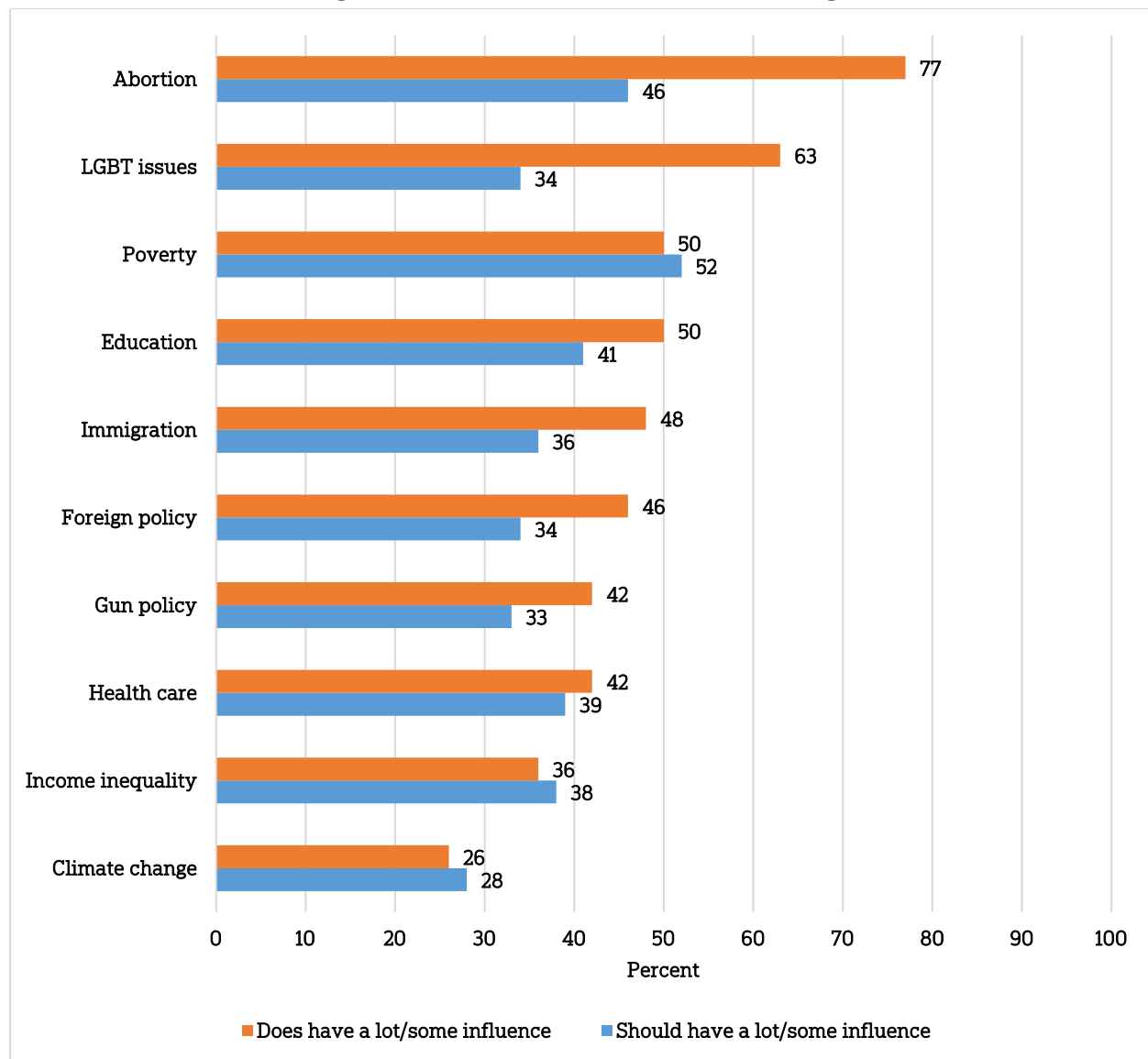
Other findings from the poll include:

- White evangelical Protestants, who make up 14% of the population, are more likely than other groups to think that religion has less influence on policy than it ought to have.
- Catholics and other Protestants are also more likely than other Americans to say that religion should influence government policies, but both to a much lesser extent than white evangelical Protestants.
- Sixty-seven percent of white evangelical Protestants favor restricting abortion to cases of incest, rape, or to save the life of the mother; 37% of other Americans agree. About a third of white evangelical Protestants oppose a prohibition on discrimination against LGBT people or a ban on semiautomatic weapons. In comparison, 66% of other Americans favor prohibiting LGBT discrimination, and 55% support banning semiautomatic guns.
- President Trump enjoys his strongest support among white evangelical Protestants, with 79% approving of his job performance. More than half of other Americans disapprove of how he is handling his job.

MOST AMERICANS SAY THAT GOVERNMENT POLICIES SHOULD NOT BE INFLUENCED BY RELIGION.

Many Americans say government policies are at least somewhat impacted by religion, but most say that should not be the case. Seventy-seven percent of Americans say religion influences abortion policy, and 63% say the same about policies relating to LGBT issues. However, less than half of the public say these issues should be influenced by religion. Overall, 50% say religion should affect the government's handling of poverty, and just about as many (52%) say that religion should have an impact.

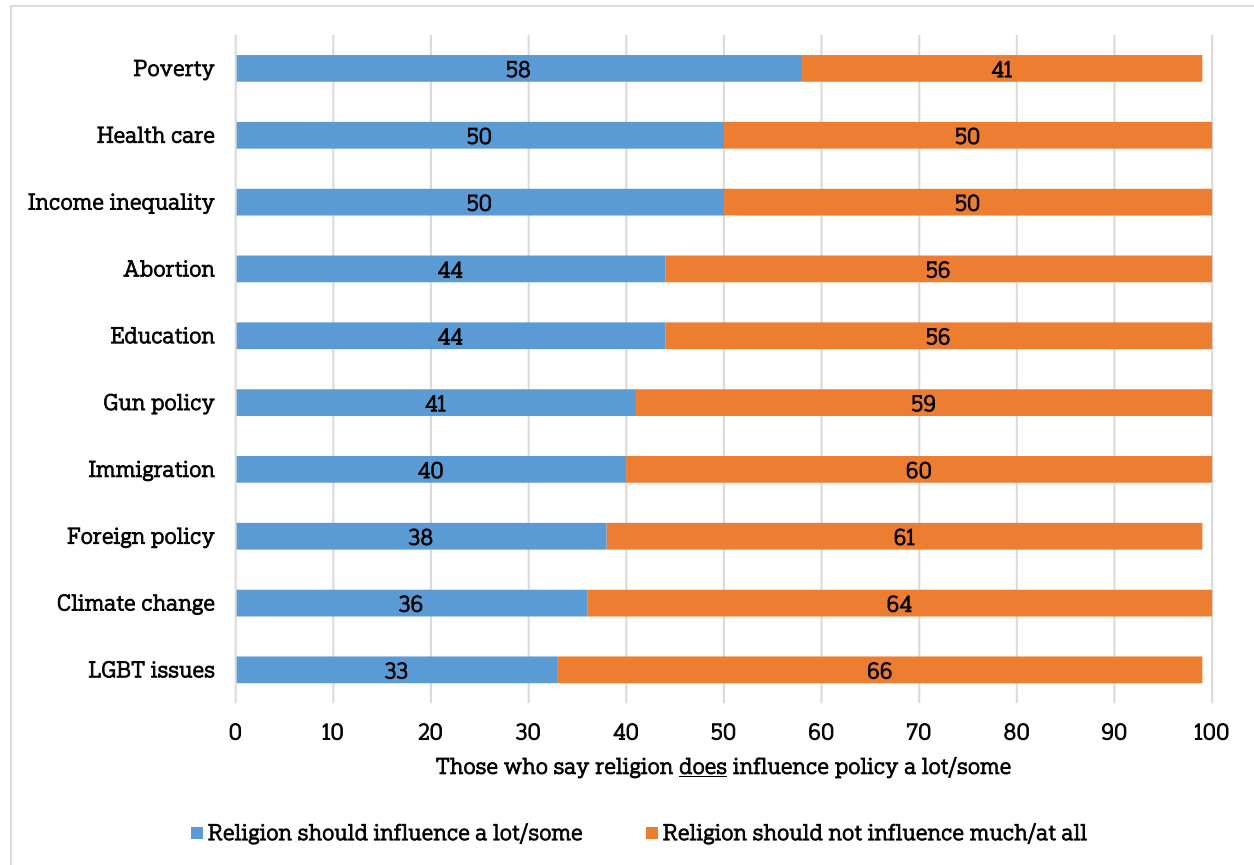
How much influence does religion have vs how much influence should religion have on:



Questions: Overall, how much influence do you think religion has on government policies concerning each of the following? / Overall, how much influence do you think religion should have on government policies concerning each of the following?
 Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

Americans think different government policies should be influenced by religion more so than others, even among those who say that religion does have an influence in that area already. Fifty-eight percent of Americans who say religion affects policies concerning poverty believe that this *should* be the case, along with 50% of those who think the same about health care and income inequality policies. Fewer say the same about other issues.

Should religion influence government policies?

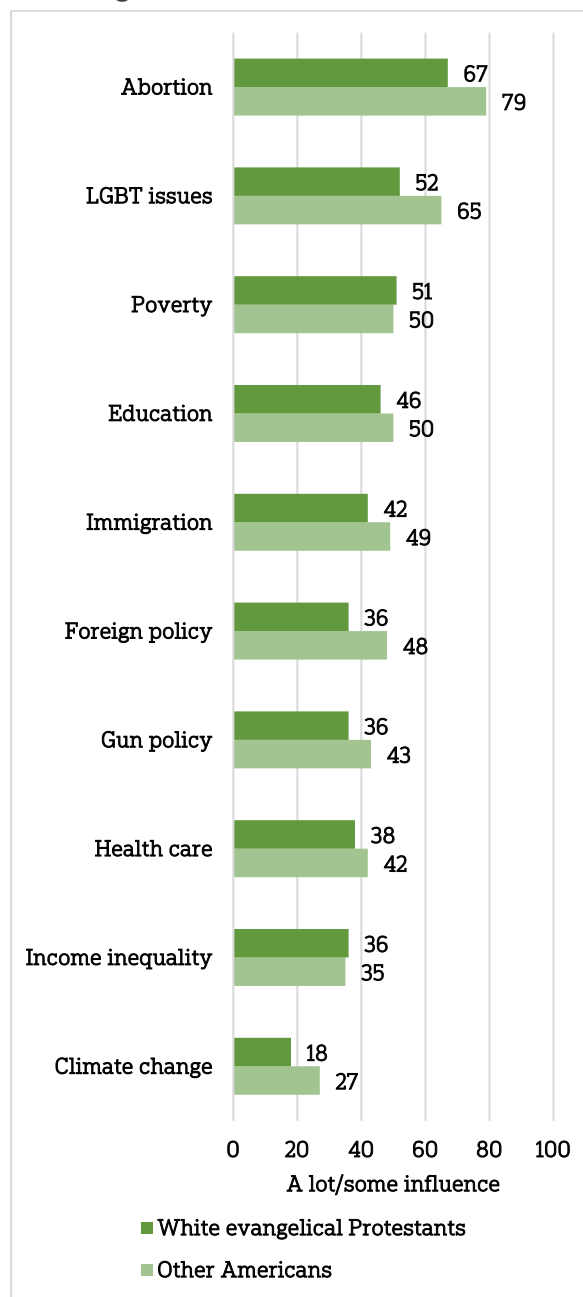


Questions: Overall, how much influence do you think religion has on government policies concerning each of the following? / Overall, how much influence do you think religion should have on government policies concerning each of the following?
 Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

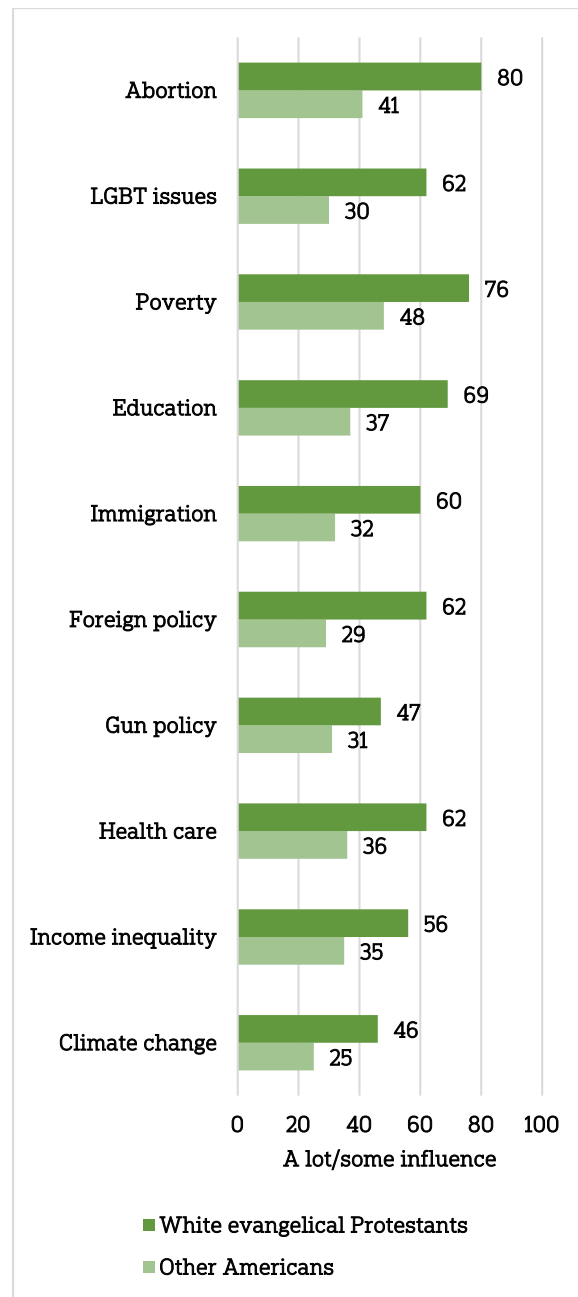
WHITE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS THINK THAT RELIGION SHOULD HAVE MORE INFLUENCE THAN IT CURRENTLY DOES.

White evangelical Protestants, who make up 14% of the population, are less likely than other groups to think religion has much influence on some government policies, particularly abortion and LGBT issues. However, they say that religion should have a greater influence over government policies than it currently does. In contrast, other Americans think religion should have less sway over many government policies.

Does religion have an influence on:



Should religion have an influence on:



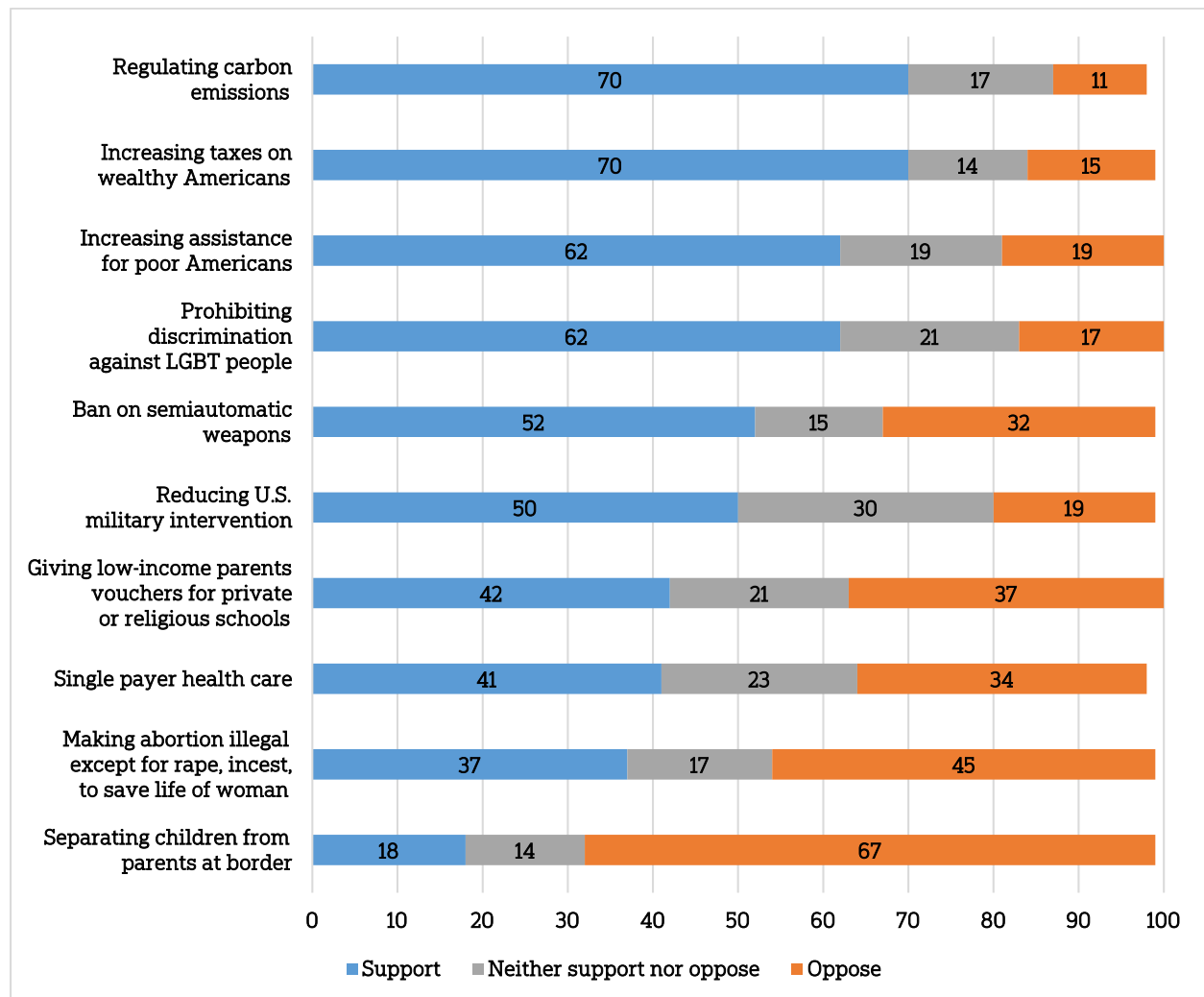
Questions: Overall, how much influence do you think religion has on government policies concerning each of the following? / Overall, how much influence do you think religion should have on government policies concerning each of the following?
 Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

Catholics and other Protestants are more likely than other Americans to say that religion should have more influence on government policies, but both to a much lesser extent than white evangelical Protestants. Catholics, however, are more in line with white evangelical Christians when it comes to abortion; 48% of white evangelical Protestants and 41% of Catholics say it should have a lot of influence, compared to just 28% of other Protestants.

AMERICANS WHO THINK RELIGION SHOULD INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT POLICIES HOLD MORE CONSERVATIVE VIEWS ON CERTAIN POLICIES.

About 7 in 10 Americans support regulating carbon dioxide emissions and increasing taxes on wealthy Americans, and oppose separating children from their parents when they are detained at the border. More than half also agree on increasing assistance for poor Americans; prohibiting discriminations against LGBT people in workplaces, housing, and schools; and banning semiautomatic weapons. There is less consensus on school vouchers for low-income families, a single payer health care system, and making abortion illegal in most cases.

Do you favor or oppose the following policies?

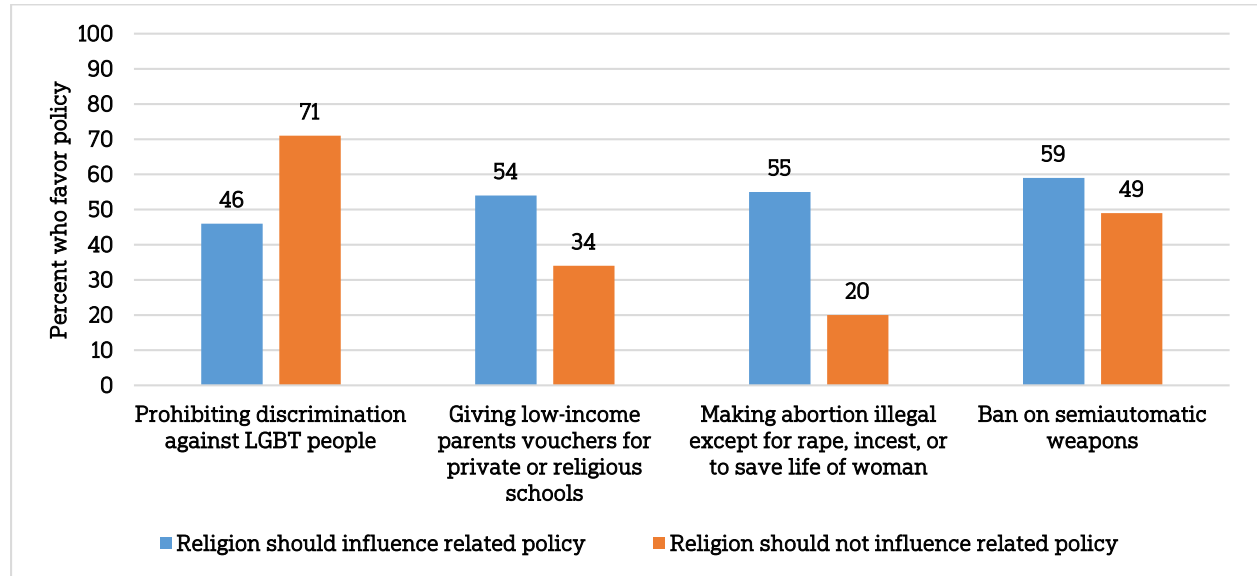


Question: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following government policies?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

Americans who say that religion should have a greater influence on government policies concerning LGBT rights are less likely to favor prohibiting LGBT discrimination than are Americans who do not think religion should have a greater impact. Those who think religion should influence policy on guns, education, and abortion are more likely to support the specific policies mentioned.

Do you favor the following policies?



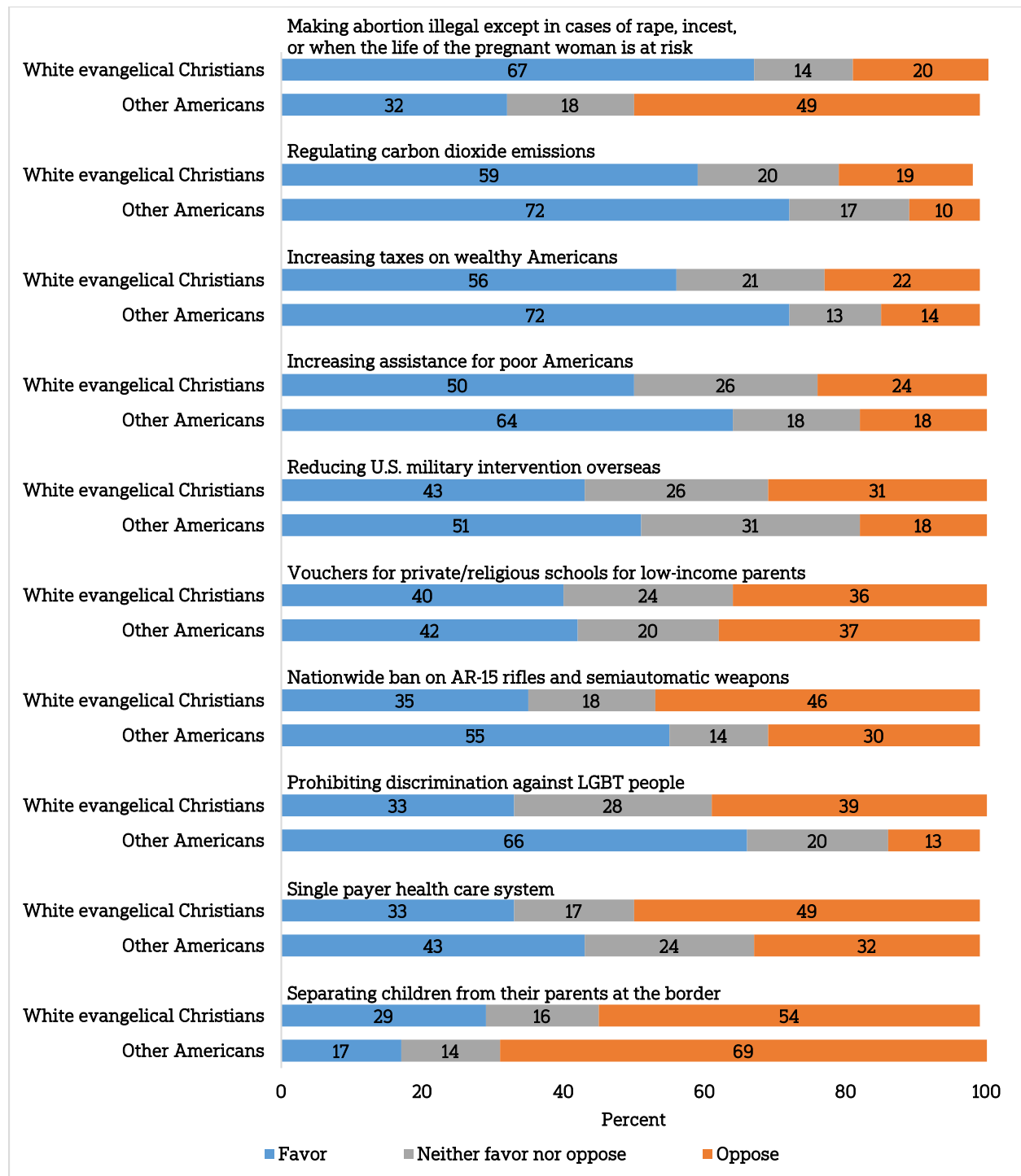
Question: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following government policies? / Overall, how much influence do you think religion should have on government policies concerning each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

WHITE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS TEND TO HAVE MORE CONSERVATIVE VIEWS THAN OTHER AMERICANS.

White evangelical Protestants are less likely to support banning LGBT discrimination and are more likely to support making most abortions illegal. They are also more likely to oppose the reduction of U.S. military intervention and banning semi-automatic weapons.

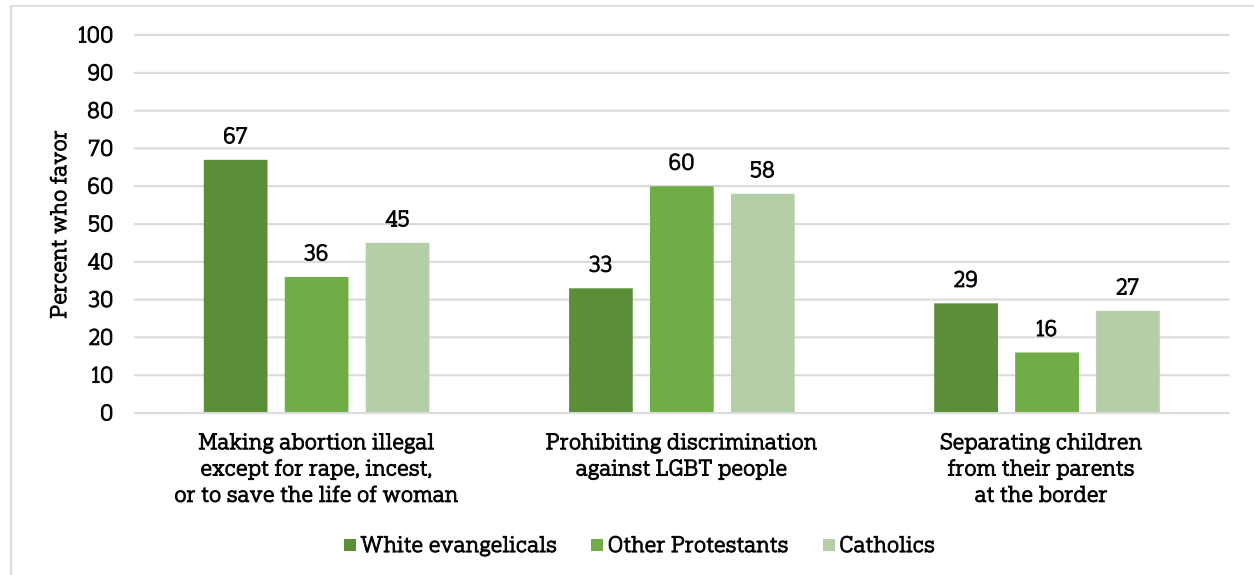
Do you favor or oppose the following policies?



Question: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following government policies?
 Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

While white evangelical Protestants have similar views to members of other religious groups, there are some policies where they diverge. Both Catholics and other Protestants are more supportive of prohibiting discrimination against LGBT than are white evangelical Protestants, and these groups also are more opposed to making abortion illegal. White evangelical Protestants are more likely than other Protestants to support the border policy of separating children from their parents.

Do you favor the following policies?

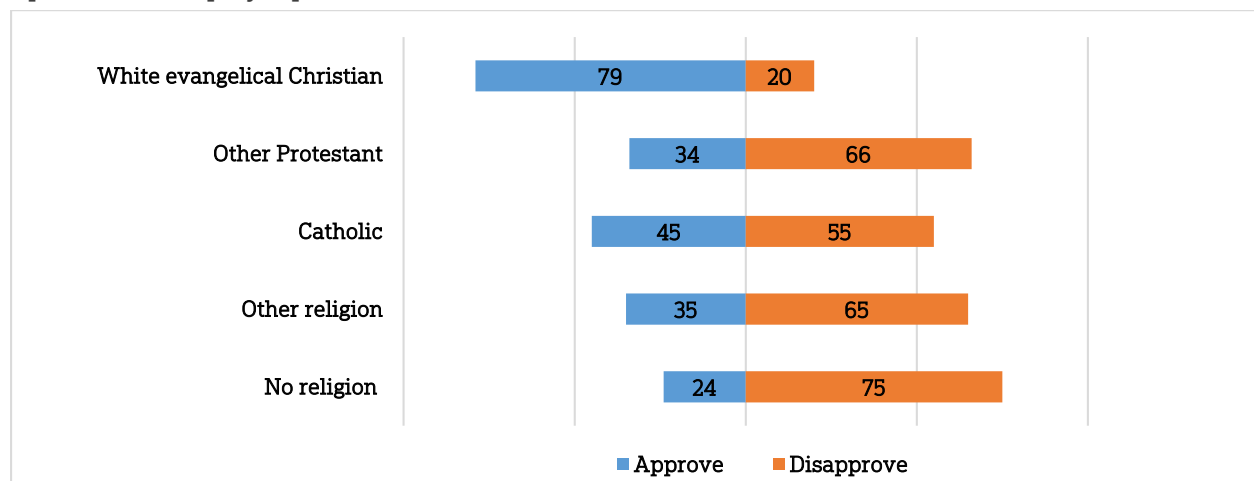


Question: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following government policies?
 Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

PRESIDENT TRUMP AND WHITE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS

White evangelical Protestants are President Trump’s strongest supporters. Seventy-nine percent approve of how he is handling his job, compared with less than half of all other Americans. Americans with no religious affiliation are particularly critical of the president’s stewardship.

Opinion of Trump's job performance



Question: Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?
 Source: AP-NORC poll conducted December 5-9, 2019, with 1,053 adults nationwide

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from The Associated Press and NORC at the University of Chicago.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between December 5 and 9, 2019, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,053 completed the survey—969 via the web and 84 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. The final stage completion rate is 17.9%, the weighted household panel response rate is 24.1%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.6%, for a cumulative response rate of 3.7%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/-4.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2018 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

A comprehensive listing of the questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on The AP-NORC Center website: www.apnorc.org. For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

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ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

The founding principles of The AP-NORC Center include a mandate to carefully preserve and protect the scientific integrity and objectivity of NORC and the journalistic independence of AP. All work conducted by the Center conforms to the highest levels of scientific integrity to prevent any real or perceived bias in the research. All of the work of the Center is subject to review by its advisory committee to help ensure it meets these standards. The Center will publicize the results of all studies and make all datasets and study documentation available to scholars and the public.