

Examining Americans' Views on Religious Freedom and Its Limits

**Conducted by the University of Chicago Divinity School and The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research
With funding from NORC at the University of Chicago**

*Interviews: 2/13-16/2020
1,015 adults*

Margin of error: +/- 4.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level among all adults

NOTE: All results show percentages among all respondents, unless otherwise labeled.

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DIV1. For each of the following statements, please indicate whether or not you think it should be federal law or policy in the United States.

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes, it should be	No, it should not be	DK	SKP/ REF
Individuals can practice any religion without government restriction	78	21	*	1
Individuals can practice no religion at all without government restriction	64	35	*	1
The government does not favor one religion over another	66	33	-	1
The government does not favor religion over no religion	61	37	1	1

N=1,015

DIV2. As far as you know, does the United States have any federal laws or policies about freedom of religion, or doesn't it have any such laws or policies?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, it has federal laws or policies about freedom of religion	61
No, it does not have federal laws or policies about freedom of religion	13
Not sure	25
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

1,015

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If yes, it has federal laws or policies about freedom of religion or not sure in DIV2

DIV3. For each of the following statements, please indicate whether or not you think it is currently protected by federal law or policy in the United States.

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes, it is	No, it is not	DK	SKP/ REF
Individuals can practice any religion without government restriction	79	18	*	2
Individuals can practice no religion at all without government restriction	70	26	*	3
The government does not favor one religion over another	62	35	*	3
The government does not favor religion over no religion	58	39	1	3

N=894

DIV4. How important are issues related to freedom of religion to you personally?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Not important at all/Not very important NET	19
Not important at all	7
Not very important	12
Somewhat important	26
Very/Extremely important NET	55
Very important	27
Extremely important	28
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

1,015

DIV5. Over the past year, have you taken any action to express your views about freedom of religion, such as donating money or volunteering for an organization or group, posting a message on social media, or participating in a protest, march, or demonstration, or haven't you done any of these things in the past year to express your views about freedom of religion?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, I have done this	20
No, I haven't done this	80
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

1,015

DIV6. Over the past year, have you taken any action to express your views about issues other than freedom of religion, such as donating money or volunteering for an organization or group, posting a message on social media, or participating in a protest, march, or demonstration, or haven't you done any of these things in the past year to express your views about issues other than freedom of religion?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, I have done this	28
No, I haven't done this	71
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1

N= 1,015

DIV7. To what extent do you feel in the United States today that:

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	A lot/Some NET	A lot	Some	Only a little/Not at all NET	Only a little	Not at all	DK	SKP/ REF
Your freedom of religion is being threatened	35	13	22	65	17	48	-	*
Your freedoms or rights are threatened by others' claims about their freedom of religion	44	19	25	56	19	37	*	*

N=1,015

DIV8. To what extent do you feel the freedom of religion of each of the following groups is being threatened in the United States today?

[FIRST FOUR ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	A lot/Some NET	A lot	Some	Only a little/Not at all NET	Only a little	Not at all	Not sure	SKP/ REF
Atheists	21	6	15	57	13	43	22	1
Buddhists	19	5	14	53	13	40	27	1
Jews	42	15	27	41	15	26	17	*
Muslims	52	27	25	33	12	20	15	1
Mormons	18	4	14	61	21	40	20	1
Catholics	22	7	15	63	16	47	13	1
Evangelical Christians	23	10	13	60	16	44	16	1
Other Christians	25	11	14	57	14	42	17	1

N=1,015

DIV9. To what extent do you feel claims about freedom of religion by each of the following groups threaten the freedoms or rights of others in the United States today?

[FIRST FOUR ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	A lot/Some NET	A lot	Some	Only a little/Not at all NET	Only a little	Not at all	Not sure	SKP/ REF
Atheists	23	10	13	57	11	45	20	1
Buddhists	13	3	9	66	11	55	21	1
Jews	15	7	9	65	14	52	18	1
Muslims	32	16	16	49	13	36	18	1
Mormons	14	4	9	64	15	49	21	1
Catholics	20	6	14	63	16	46	17	1
Evangelical Christians	25	14	11	55	13	42	18	1
Other Christians	22	9	13	57	14	43	20	1

N=1,015

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DIV10A. Because of religious beliefs to help others, an American citizen provides humanitarian assistance to undocumented immigrants in the U.S. desert. As a result, the American citizen is arrested by border patrol agents who consider this assistance to be against the law.

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes	No	DK	SKP/ REF
In your opinion, does the arrest violate the American citizen's freedom of religion, or not?	41	58	1	1
Do you think the American citizen should have been arrested, or not?	32	67	*	1

N=1,015

DIV10B. A parent does not vaccinate their children because of religious beliefs against this practice and the children are denied enrollment in public school because of its policy that all students must be vaccinated.

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes	No	DK	SKP/ REF
In your opinion, does denying enrollment in public school violate the parent's freedom of religion, or not?	26	73	*	1
Do you think the unvaccinated children should have been denied enrollment in public school, or not?	72	26	*	1

N=1,015

DIV10C. The federal government builds a natural gas pipeline through land despite a Native American tribe's objections to do because they consider the land to be sacred.

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes	No	DK	SKP/ REF
In your opinion, does the government's building of the pipeline violate the Native American tribe's freedom of religion, or not?	61	37	*	1
Do you think the government should have built the pipeline, or not?	28	69	*	2

N=1,015

DIV10D. A business owner is legally required to provide family healthcare benefits to a same-sex couple despite the owner's religious beliefs that marriage is only between a man and a woman.

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes	No	DK	SKP/ REF
In your opinion, does the requirement for the business owner to provide family healthcare benefits violate the business owner's freedom of religion, or not?	32	66	*	1
Do you think the business owner should have been required to provide family healthcare benefits, or not?	71	28	*	1

N=1,015

DIV10E. An Immigration and Custom Enforcement, also known as ICE, agent refuses to separate undocumented parents and children because of religious beliefs about family unity and the government fires the agent for not following protocol.

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes	No	DK	SKP/ REF
In your opinion, does the firing violate the ICE agent's freedom of religion, or not?	36	62	*	1
Do you think the ICE agent should have been fired, or not?	36	62	*	*

N=1,015

DIV10F. An employee at a government-run public benefit program is fired for accepting applicants for financial assistance who do not meet eligibility requirements because of religious beliefs to help everyone.

AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020	Yes	No	DK	SKP/ REF
In your opinion, does the firing violate the employee's freedom of religion, or not?	25	74	*	2
Do you think the employee should have been fired, or not?	60	37	1	*

N=1,015

Experiment Condition 1¹

DISDIV11. In a city in the United States, a caterer refuses to make food for a Jewish couple's wedding because the caterer only believes in celebrating Christian marriages.

DIV11A. Do you support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose the Christian caterer's decision not to make food for the Jewish couple's wedding?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Strongly/Somewhat support NET	19
Strongly support	9
Somewhat support	10
Neither support nor oppose	35
Somewhat/Strongly oppose NET	46
Somewhat oppose	14
Strongly oppose	31
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	-

N=

258

DIV11B. If a court ruled that the Christian caterer is required to make food for the Jewish couple's wedding, would you say the caterer's freedom of religion has been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Christian caterer's freedom of religion	40
No, this would not violate the Christian caterer's freedom of religion	59
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

258

¹ Each respondent only received one DIV11 condition.

DIVC11C. If a court ruled the Christian caterer is not required to make food for the Jewish couple's wedding, would you say the couple's freedoms or rights have been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Jewish customers' freedoms or rights	46
No, this would not violate the Jewish customers' freedoms or rights	52
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	2
<i>N=</i>	258

Experiment Condition 2

DISDIV11. In a city in the United States, a caterer refuses to make food for a Christian couple's wedding because the caterer only believes in celebrating Jewish marriages.

DIV11A. Do you support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose the Jewish caterer's decision not to make food for the Christian couple's wedding?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Strongly/Somewhat support NET	24
Strongly support	11
Somewhat support	12
Neither support nor oppose	29
Somewhat/Strongly oppose NET	47
Somewhat oppose	16
Strongly oppose	32
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*
<i>N=</i>	244

DIV11B. If a court ruled that the Jewish caterer is required to make food for the Christian couple's wedding, would you say the caterer's freedom of religion has been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Jewish caterer's freedom of religion	48
No, this would not violate the Jewish caterer's freedom of religion	52
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*
<i>N=</i>	244

DIVC11C. If a court ruled the Jewish caterer is not required to make food for the Christian couple's wedding, would you say the couple's freedoms or rights have been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Christian customers' freedoms or rights	36
No, this would not violate the Christian customers' freedoms or rights	63
DON'T KNOW	1
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1
<i>N=</i>	244

Experiment Condition 3

DISDIV11. In a city in the United States, a caterer refuses to make food for a Muslim couple's wedding because the caterer only believes in celebrating Christian marriages.

DIV11A. Do you support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose the Christian caterer's decision not to make food for the Muslim couple's wedding?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Strongly/Somewhat support NET	21
Strongly support	10
Somewhat support	11
Neither support nor oppose	31
Somewhat/Strongly oppose NET	47
Somewhat oppose	11
Strongly oppose	37
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	-
<i>N=</i>	267

DIV11B. If a court ruled that the Christian caterer is required to make food for the Muslim couple's wedding, would you say the caterer's freedom of religion has been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Christian caterer's freedom of religion	45
No, this would not violate the Christian caterer's freedom of religion	51
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	4
<i>N=</i>	267

DIVC11C. If a court ruled the Christian caterer is not required to make food for the Muslim couple's wedding, would you say the couple's freedoms or rights have been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Muslim customers' freedoms or rights	41
No, this would not violate the Muslim customers' freedoms or rights	56
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	3
<i>N=</i>	267

Experiment Condition 4

DISDIV11. In a city in the United States, a caterer refuses to make food for a Christian couple's wedding because the caterer only believes in celebrating Muslim marriages.

DIV11A. Do you support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose the Muslim caterer's decision not to make food for the Christian couple's wedding?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Strongly/Somewhat support NET	33
Strongly support	16
Somewhat support	17
Neither support nor oppose	33
Somewhat/Strongly oppose NET	32
Somewhat oppose	12
Strongly oppose	20
DON'T KNOW	1
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>246</i>

DIV11B. If a court ruled that the Muslim caterer is required to make food for the Christian couple's wedding, would you say the caterer's freedom of religion has been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Muslim caterer's freedom of religion	47
No, this would not violate the Muslim caterer's freedom of religion	49
DON'T KNOW	1
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	3
<i>N=</i>	<i>246</i>

DIV11C. If a court ruled the Muslim caterer is not required to make food for the Christian couple's wedding, would you say the couple's freedoms or rights have been violated, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes, this would violate the Christian customers' freedoms or rights	33
No, this would not violate the Christian customers' freedoms or rights	66
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	2
<i>N=</i>	<i>246</i>

DIV12. Would you say you have a positive, negative, or neither positive nor negative view of each of the following groups?

[FIRST FOUR AND LAST TWO ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

AP-NORC 2/13- 16/2020	Very/Somewhat positive NET	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat/Very negative NET	Somewhat negative	Very negative	DK	SKP/ REF
Atheists	22	9	13	52	26	15	11	*	*
Buddhists	36	16	20	55	8	5	3	1	*
Jews	42	18	24	50	7	5	2	*	1
Muslims	23	8	15	45	32	21	11	*	1
Mormons	22	7	14	55	21	16	5	1	1
Catholics	34	13	20	48	18	14	4	*	1
Evangelical Christians	31	13	18	42	26	15	11	*	1
Other Christians	42	16	26	46	11	8	2	*	1
LGBT People	34	18	16	45	20	11	9	1	*
Immigrants	36	18	18	46	17	12	5	*	1

N=1,015

REL1. Which of the following statements comes closest to describing your beliefs?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Religious but not spiritual	8
Spiritual but not religious	28
Neither religious nor spiritual	24
Both religious and spiritual	40
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1

N=

1,015

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RELIG. What is your present religion, if any?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Protestant (Baptist, Methodist, Non-denominational, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Reformed, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, etc.)	26
Roman Catholic (Catholic)	18
Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints/LDS)	2
Orthodox (Greek, Russian, or some other orthodox church)	*
Jewish (Judaism)	2
Muslim (Islam)	*
Buddhist	1
Hindu	*
Atheist (do not believe in God)	6
Agnostic (not sure if there is a God)	5
Nothing in particular	17
Just Christian	19
Unitarian (Universalist)	*
Something else	4
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

1,015

If Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox, just Christian, or Something else in RELIG BORN. Would you describe yourself as a 'born-again' or evangelical Christian, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes	37
No	63
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

706

ATTEND. How often do you attend religious services?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Never	28
Less than once per year	16
About once or twice a year	12
Several times a year	9
About once a month	5
2-3 times a month	7
Nearly every week	6
Every week	14
Several times a week	5
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

1,015

REL2. How important is religion in your life?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Extremely/Very important NET	43
Extremely important	22
Very important	21
Somewhat important	24
Not very/Not at all important NET	32
Not very important	14
Not at all important	18
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1

N=

1,015

OREG. Are you currently registered to vote at your address, or not?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Yes	83
No	16
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	2

N=

1,015

PID1. Do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an independent or none of these?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Democrat	34
Republican	28
Independent	24
None of these	14
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	*

N=

1,015

If Democrat in PID1

PIDa. Do you consider yourself a strong Democrat or a moderate Democrat?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Strong Democrat	45
Moderate Democrat	54
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1

N=

359

If Republican in PID1

PIDb. Do you consider yourself a strong Republican or a moderate Republican?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Strong Republican	48
Moderate Republican	52
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	-

N=

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If independent, none of these, or Don't know/SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED in PID1
PIDi. Do you lean more towards the Democrats or the Republicans?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Lean Democrat	31
Lean Republican	29
Don't lean	39
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>370</i>

POLITICS. Combines PID1, PIDI, PIDA, and PIDB.

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Democrat NET	45
Strong Democrat	15
Moderate Democrat	18
Lean Democrat	12
Independent/None – Don't lean	15
Republican NET	39
Lean Republican	11
Moderate Republican	15
Strong Republican	14
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,015</i>

D3. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a liberal, moderate or conservative?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Liberal	22
Moderate	46
Conservative	31
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,015</i>

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If liberal in D3

D4. Do you consider yourself:

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Very liberal	53
Somewhat liberal	46
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>240</i>

If conservative in D3

D5. Do you consider yourself:

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Very conservative	38
Somewhat conservative	62
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	-
<i>N=</i>	<i>298</i>

If moderate or Don't know/SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED in D3

D6. Do consider yourself:

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Closer to liberal	20
Neither liberal nor conservative	51
Closer to conservative	27
DON'T KNOW	-
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	2
<i>N=</i>	<i>477</i>

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IDEOLOGY. Combines D3, D4, D5, D6: Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a...?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Liberal NET	31
Very liberal	11
Somewhat liberal	10
Lean liberal	9
Neither liberal nor conservative	24
Conservative NET	44
Lean conservative	13
Somewhat conservative	19
Very conservative	12
Don't know/Skipped/Refused	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,015</i>

DM5. How would you describe the community you live in now?

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Urban	24
Suburban	43
Rural	33
DON'T KNOW	*
SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED	1
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,015</i>

AGE

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
18-24	12
25-34	20
35-44	14
45-54	16
55-64	17
65-74	15
75+	6
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,015</i>

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GENDER

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Male	48
Female	52

N= 1,015

RACE/ETHNICITY

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
White	63
Black or African American	12
Hispanic	16
Other	9

N= 1,015

MARITAL STATUS

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Married	49
Widowed	5
Divorced	11
Separated	2
Never married	25
Living with partner	9

N= 1,015

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Employed	56
Not employed	44

N= 1,015

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EDUCATION

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Less than a high school diploma	10
High school graduate or equivalent	28
Some college	28
College graduate or above	33

N= 1,015

INCOME

	AP-NORC 2/13-16/2020
Under \$10,000	5
\$10,000 to under \$20,000	10
\$20,000 to under \$30,000	12
\$30,000 to under \$40,000	11
\$40,000 to under \$50,000	9
\$50,000 to under \$75,000	19
\$75,000 to under \$100,000	14
\$100,000 to under \$150,000	13
\$150,000 or more	7

N= 1,015

Study Methodology

This survey was conducted by the University of Chicago Divinity School and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from 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 percent 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 February 13 and 16, 2020, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,015 completed the survey—940 via the web and 75 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 20.3 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 24.1 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.6 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 4.2 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/-4.2 percentage points at the 95 percent 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.

For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

About the University of Chicago Divinity School

The Divinity School generates knowledge about the history, theology, beliefs, and practices of religions using a broad array of methodological and theoretical approaches. One of the world's leading institutions in the academic study of religion, the Divinity School prepares students for careers in scholarship, teaching, and public religious leadership through multiple graduate and undergraduate programs. <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/>

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- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world. <https://www.norc.org/>

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.