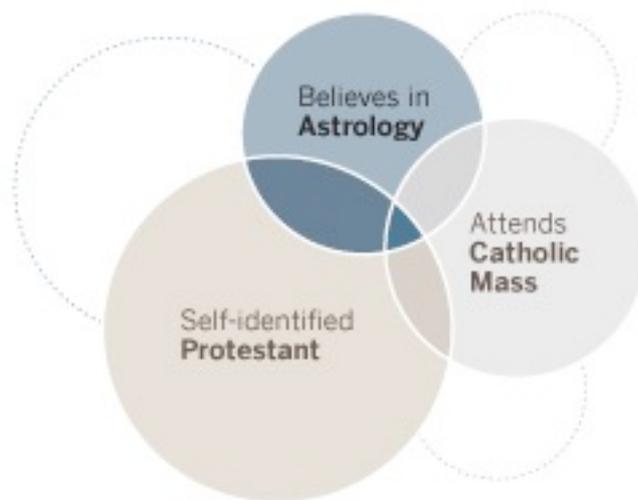


# Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths

## Eastern, New Age Beliefs Widespread

Dec. 9, 2009



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The religious beliefs and practices of Americans do not fit neatly into conventional categories. A new poll by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life finds that large numbers of Americans engage in multiple religious practices, mixing elements of diverse traditions. Many say they attend worship services of more than one faith or denomination -- even when they are not traveling or going to special events like weddings and funerals. Many also blend Christianity with Eastern or New Age beliefs such as reincarnation, astrology and the presence of spiritual energy in physical objects. And sizeable minorities of all major U.S. religious groups say they have experienced supernatural phenomena, such as being in touch with the dead or with ghosts.

One-third of Americans (35%) say they regularly (9%) or occasionally (26%) attend religious services at more than one place, and most of these (24% of the public overall) indicate that they sometimes attend religious services of a faith different from their own. Aside from when they are traveling and special events like weddings and funerals, three-in-ten Protestants attend services outside their own denomination, and one-fifth of Catholics say they sometimes attend non-Catholic services.

	All adults %	-----Protestant-----				
		Total %	White evang %	White mainline %	Black %	Catholic
<b>Attend only one place</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Attend multiple places</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>
Only of own faith	11	9	9	7	15	21
Different faiths	24	30	28	24	42	19
<b>Seldom/Never attend/DK</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>How often attend other places?</i>						
Regularly	9	8	6	6	12	9
Occasionally	<u>26</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>30</u>
<b>Total attend multiple places</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>
Sample size	2,003	1,099	465	402	135	437
Q281-Q282f.						

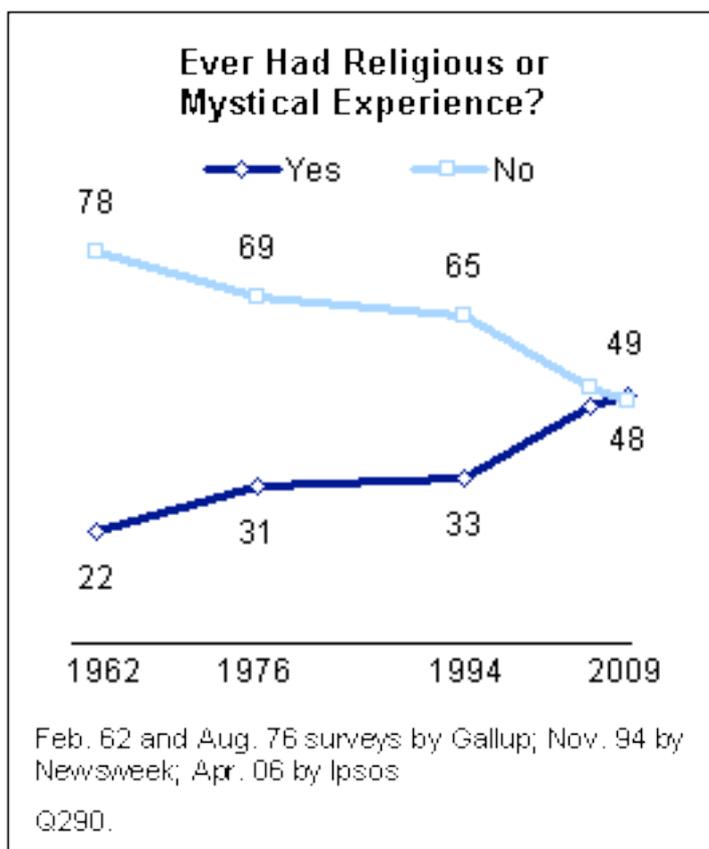
Among those who attend religious services at least once a week, nearly four-in-ten (39%) say they attend at multiple places and nearly three-in-ten (28%) go to services outside their own faith, according to the Pew Forum survey, which was conducted Aug. 11-27 among 4,013 adults reached on both landlines and cell phones. Attending services at more than one place and across multiple religious traditions is even more common among those who go to religious services on a monthly or yearly basis, with nearly six-in-ten (59%) saying they attend at multiple places and four-in-ten attending services from outside their own faith at least sometimes.

Religiously mixed marriages are common in the United States, and the survey finds that the link between being in a religiously mixed union and attendance at multiple types of services is a complex one. Overall, people in religiously mixed marriages attend worship services less often than people married to someone of the same faith. But among those who attend religious services at least yearly, those in religiously mixed marriages attend multiple types of services at a higher rate than people married to someone of the same religion.

### Supernatural Experiences and Beliefs

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Christians</u>
<i>% who have...</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Been in touch w/dead	29	29
Had ghostly experience	18	17
Consulted psychic	15	14
<i>% believe in...</i>		
Spiritual energy in trees, etc.	26	23
Astrology	25	23
Reincarnation	24	22
Yoga as spiritual practice	23	21
Evil eye (i.e., casting of curses)	16	17
Sample size	2,003	1,589
Q291a-Q292c.		

Though the U.S. is an overwhelmingly Christian country, significant minorities profess belief in a variety of Eastern or New Age beliefs. For instance, 24% of the public overall and 22% of Christians say they believe in reincarnation -- that people will be reborn in this world again and again. And similar numbers (25% of the public overall, 23% of Christians) believe in astrology. Nearly three-in-ten Americans say they have felt in touch with someone who has already died, almost one-in-five say they have seen or been in the presence of ghosts, and 15% have consulted a fortuneteller or a psychic.



Nearly half of the public (49%) says they have had a religious or mystical experience, defined as a "moment of sudden religious insight or awakening." This is similar to a survey conducted in 2006 but much higher than in surveys conducted in 1976 and 1994 and more than twice as high as a 1962 Gallup survey (22%). In fact, this year's survey finds that religious and mystical experiences are more common today among those who are unaffiliated with any particular religion (30%) than they were in the 1960s among the public as whole (22%).

## Attendance at Multiple Types of Religious Services

Nearly three-quarters of Americans (72%) say they attend religious services at least a few times a year, including 38% who say they attend at least once a week and 34% who attend once or twice a month or a few times a year. Roughly one-quarter says they seldom or never attend religious services (27%). These figures are roughly consistent with findings from recent years.

### Attendance at Religious Services

	%
Weekly or more	38
Monthly/yearly	34
Seldom/never	27
Don't know	<u>1</u>
	100

ATTEND. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Of those who attend at least yearly, roughly half (37% of the public overall) say they always attend services at the same place, while nearly as many (35%) say they regularly or occasionally attend religious services at different places, aside from when they are traveling and going to special events such as weddings and funerals. To estimate the number of Americans who attend multiple types of religious services, the survey followed up by asking people who attend religious services at different places about the types of services (e.g., Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, etc.) they attend. Overall, about one-in-four adults (24%) indicate that they attend services of at least one faith other than their own, and roughly one-in-ten (12%) say they participate in the services of two or more faiths in addition to their own.

Three-in-ten Protestants say they attend multiple types of religious services, including those who attend services at Protestant denominations different than their own; 18% of Protestants indicate that they attend non-Protestant services.

### Attendance at Different Types of Religious Services

	All adults %	-----Protestants-----				--Catholics--		Unaffiliated %
		Total	White evang	White mainline	Black	Total	White non-Hisp	
<b>Attend only one place<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Attend multiple places</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>19</b>
Only of own faith**	11	9	9	7	15	21	16	n/a
Different faiths***	24	30	28	24	42	19	18	n/a
One other faith	12	15	15	11	18	13	12	n/a
Two other faiths	8	10	9	8	14	5	5	n/a
Three or more	4	4	3	5	9	1	1	n/a
<b>Seldom/never attend/DK</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>70</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Type of other service...<sup>a</sup></i>								
Prot/Diff Prot churches	n/a	26	24	22	40	18	16	12
Catholic Masses	n/a	15	13	14	19	n/a	n/a	8
Jewish synagogues	n/a	4	3	4	8	5	5	3
Muslim mosques	n/a	1	1	*	5	1	1	1
Other kinds of services	n/a	3	3	3	7	2	3	3
Sample size	2,003	1,099	465	402	135	437	338	302

ATTEND, Q281-Q282f.

<sup>a</sup>Includes those answering "Don't know/Refused" in Q281.

\*\*Includes those answering all questions in the Q281 a-f series negatively.

\*\*\*Includes those answering at least one question in the Q281 a-f series affirmatively.

<sup>a</sup>Based on total. Responses do not sum to the total attending "different faiths" because respondents could name more than one different faith in which they participate.

More than four-in-ten black Protestants (42%) and roughly one-quarter of white evangelical and mainline Protestants (28% and 24%, respectively) regularly or occasionally attend services at a faith other than their own. Among all three groups of Protestants, the most commonly cited type of services attended (other than services of one's own faith) are those of other Protestant denominations (40% among black Protestants, 24% among white evangelicals and 22% among white mainline Protestants). However, significant numbers within all three Protestant traditions report sometimes attending Catholic Mass; this includes nearly one-in-five black Protestants (19%), 13% of white evangelicals and 14% of mainline Protestants. Fewer say they attend Jewish synagogues or Muslim mosques.

Roughly one-in-five Catholics say they attend services of at least one faith other than Catholicism, with most of these (18% of Catholics overall and 16% of white Catholics) saying they attend Protestant services. About one-in-twenty Catholics report attending services at Jewish synagogues (5%) and 1% say they attend Muslim mosques.

Attending religious services at more than one place is most common among those who attend services only occasionally. Among those who attend services once or twice a month or a few times a year, fully six-in-ten (59%) attend services at more than one place, including four-in-ten who attend religious services of faiths other than their own. Among those who say they attend services on a weekly basis, fewer say they attend at more than one place (39%); still, more than a quarter of

Americans who are regular, weekly attenders at religious services (28%) say they also attend services outside their own faith, not counting when they are traveling or special occasions like weddings and funerals. (Respondents who seldom or never attend religious services were not asked about where they attend.)

	<i>Worship attendance</i>		————— <i>Marital status</i> <sup>a</sup> —————			
	<i>At least</i>	<i>Monthly/</i>	<i>Not</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Spouse</i>	<i>Spouse</i>
	<i>weekly</i>	<i>yearly</i>				
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Attend only one place*	61	41	32	40	43	27
Attend multiple places	39	59	36	34	36	30
<i>But only of own faith**</i>	11	19	12	10	12	5
<i>Different faiths***</i>	28	40	24	24	24	25
Seldom/never attend/DK	==	==	<u>32</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>43</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sample size	825	653	784	1,219	953	266

ATTEND, Q281-Q282f.  
 \*Includes those answering "Don't know/Refused" in Q281.  
 \*\*Includes those answering all questions in the Q281 a-f series negatively.  
 \*\*\*Includes those answering at least one question in the Q281 a-f series affirmatively.  
<sup>a</sup>Figures include respondents who say they are married and respondents who say they are living with a partner. "Spouse same religion" category includes affiliated respondents married to spouses of same faith and unaffiliated respondents married to unaffiliated spouses. "Spouse different religion" includes affiliated respondents married to unaffiliated spouses, and unaffiliated respondents married to affiliated spouses.

The survey finds a complex link between attending multiple types of religious services and being in religiously mixed marriages. The key distinction between those in religiously mixed versus religiously matched marriages is in the overall level of religious commitment, with those in religiously mixed marriages exhibiting lower levels of religious commitment, as measured by frequency of attendance at worship services. Among those in religiously mixed marriages, fully four-in-ten (43%) say they seldom or never attend religious services, twice as high as seen among those married to someone of the same faith (21%).

On the surface, people who are married to a spouse from a faith different than their own are neither more nor less likely than married people overall to attend multiple types of religious services (25% among all of those in religiously mixed relationships, 24% among those in religiously matched marriages). However, among those who attend religious services at least yearly, more than four-in-ten in mixed marriages attend services of faiths different than their own, compared with roughly three-in-ten of those married to someone of the same faith.

## Worship Venues

In addition to asking about the types of religious services that people attend, the survey also asked about the locations or venues in which these services are held. Most people who attend services at least yearly do so at a church or other house of worship. But a significant minority of Americans (11%) say they go to services at other locations, either instead of (3%) or in addition to (8%) services in a regular house of worship.

	Where Do You Attend Services?							
	All adults	Protestants				Catholics		Unaffiliated
		Total	White evang	White mainline	Black Prot	Total	White non-Hisp	
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Attend at least yearly	72	83	91	66	97	82	77	30
Churches/Houses of worship	60	70	75	58	84	75	74	23
Other places	3	4	5	2	3	1	1	1
Both	8	9	10	6	10	4	3	5
Don't know/Refused	1	*	*	*	1	2	*	1
Seldom/Never attend/DK	28	17	9	34	3	18	23	70
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total attending at...								
Houses	7	9	11	7	8	4	2	2
Schools	1	2	2	1	1	*	*	0
Parks/Campgrounds	1	1	2	*	1	1	*	*
Restaurants	1	1	1	1	*	0	0	*
Hotels	1	1	*	0	4	0	0	0
Other – buildings	2	2	2	3	1	1	*	1
Other – outdoors	1	1	1	*	2	*	*	1
Other/Don't know	1	1	*	1	1	0	0	*
Sample size	2,003	1,099	465	402	135	437	338	302

ATTEND, Q283-Q285.

Roughly one-in-six white evangelicals attend religious services in a place other than a church or house of worship (16%), as do 13% of black Protestants. Nearly one-in-ten white mainline Protestants say the same (9%), while the comparable figures among Catholics and the unaffiliated are 5% and 6%, respectively.

Homes are the most popular alternative venue to churches and other houses of worship. About 7% of Americans say they attend religious services in someone's home. Attending services in homes is somewhat more common among Protestants (9%) than among Catholics (4%).

## Eastern or New Age Beliefs, "Evil Eye"

Roughly one-quarter of adults express belief in tenets of certain Eastern religions; 24% say they believe in reincarnation (that people will be reborn in this world again

and again), and a similar number (23%) believe in yoga not just as exercise but as a spiritual practice. Similar numbers profess belief in elements of New Age spirituality, with 26% saying they believe in spiritual energy located in physical things such as mountains, trees or crystals, and 25% professing belief in astrology (that the position of the stars and planets can affect people's lives). Fewer people (16%) believe in the "evil eye" or that certain people can cast curses or spells that cause bad things to happen to someone.

<b>Eastern or New Age Beliefs</b>			
<i>% who believe in ...</i>	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>DK</u> %
Reincarnation, that people will be reborn in this world again and again	24	69	6=100
Yoga not just as exercise but as a spiritual practice	23	70	7=100
Spiritual energy located in physical things like mountains, trees, crystals	26	69	5=100
Astrology, that the position of stars/planets can affect people's lives	25	71	4=100
Evil eye, or that certain people can cast curses or spells that cause harm	16	81	2=100
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Q291a-f.			

Compared with other religious traditions, white evangelical Protestants consistently express lower levels of acceptance of both Eastern beliefs (reincarnation, yoga) and New Age beliefs (spiritual energy in physical things and astrology). For example, roughly one-in-ten white evangelicals believes in reincarnation, compared with 24% among mainline Protestants, 25% among both white Catholics and those unaffiliated with any religion, and 29% among black Protestants. Similarly, 13% of white evangelicals believe in astrology, compared with roughly one-quarter or more among other religious traditions. There are few differences among religious traditions in belief in the "evil eye," though black Protestants stand out for high levels of belief on this question (32%).

Among Protestants, high levels of religious commitment are associated with lower levels of acceptance of Eastern or New Age beliefs. Among both evangelical and mainline Protestants, those who attend church weekly express much lower levels of belief in reincarnation, yoga, the existence of spiritual energy in physical things and astrology compared with those who attend religious services less often. Among Catholics, by contrast, frequency of church attendance is linked much less closely with these kinds of beliefs, although those who attend less often do express higher levels of belief in astrology compared with weekly attenders.

### Beliefs of Demographic, Political and Religious Groups

	—% who believe in...—					N
	Reincar-	Yoga	Spiritual	Astrol-	Evil	
	nation		energy	ogy	eye	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Total	24	23	26	25	16	2,003
Male	21	19	24	21	15	862
Female	28	27	27	28	18	1,141
White	21	22	24	22	11	1,557
Black	34	21	20	29	29	160
Hispanic	29	33	37	35	36	149
18-29	26	31	31	30	18	270
30-49	25	26	28	26	19	593
50-64	26	20	25	23	16	597
65+	18	12	17	18	10	511
College grad	17	25	20	18	11	747
Some college	23	24	28	22	11	512
HS or less	29	22	28	30	22	727
Republican	17	15	17	14	12	582
Independent	26	26	28	26	15	681
Democrat	30	31	30	31	19	628
Conservative	18	15	18	16	17	817
Moderate	27	25	29	30	15	662
Liberal	33	39	35	30	17	414
Protestant	20	18	20	21	16	1,099
White evang.	11	12	15	13	12	465
Attend weekly	5	7	10	8	11	315
Attend less often	20	21	22	23	12	147
White mainline	24	24	27	24	10	402
Attend weekly	12	15	14	15	8	103
Attend less often	28	26	31	27	10	296
Black Protestant	29	20	18	29	32	135
Catholic	28	27	29	29	17	437
White non-Hisp	25	24	24	25	12	338
Attend weekly	21	19	22	16	12	160
Attend less often	27	26	25	30	11	173
Unaffiliated	25	28	30	25	12	302

Q291a-f.

Hispanics are more likely than whites to believe in yoga, spiritual energy in physical objects, astrology and the evil eye, and blacks are more likely than whites to believe in reincarnation and the evil eye. Older people (those over age 65) consistently express lower levels of acceptance of these kinds of beliefs compared

with younger people. These beliefs are more common among Democrats and independents than Republicans and are more widely held by liberals and moderates than conservatives. The difference between liberals and conservatives is especially pronounced on the question of belief in yoga as a spiritual practice; nearly four-in-ten liberals express this belief (39%), compared with 15% of conservatives.

## Ghosts, Fortunetellers, and Communicating With the Dead

<b>Supernatural Experiences</b>			
<i>% felt you were in touch with someone who has already died</i>	Jun 1990	Sep 1996	Aug 2009
Yes	17	18	29
No	82	81	69
Don't know	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100	100
<i>% seen or been in the presence of a ghost</i>			
Yes	9	9	18
No	90	90	80
Don't know	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100	100
<i>% consulted a fortuneteller or psychic</i>			
Yes	14	17	15
No	85	83	85
Don't know	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100

Sep. 1996 and June 1990 surveys conducted by Gallup.  
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.  
 Q292a-c.

Roughly three-in-ten Americans (29%) say they have felt in touch with someone who has died. Nearly one-in-five say they have been in the presence of a ghost (18%), while 15% say they have consulted a fortuneteller or a psychic.

The proportion of Americans who say they have interacted with a ghost has doubled over the past 13 years (9% in 1996 compared with 18% today). The number saying they have felt in touch with someone who has died has also grown considerably, from 18% in 1996 to 29% today. There has been no change, however, over the past 20 years in the proportion of Americans who have consulted a

fortuneteller or psychic, with a steady minority of roughly one-in-seven continuing to say they have done so.

Evangelical Protestants are the group least likely to say they have felt in touch with a dead person (20%). Members of other religious traditions are much more familiar with this type of phenomenon, with 37% of black Protestants, 35% of white Catholics, 31% of the unaffiliated and 29% of white mainline Protestants saying they have felt in touch with someone who has died. Differences between evangelicals and other religious traditions are smaller on the questions of ghostly experiences and consultations with fortunetellers.

### Supernatural Experiences

	In touch w/dead	Ghosts	Fortune- tellers	N
	%	%	%	
Total	29	18	15	2,003
Male	26	16	10	862
Female	33	20	20	1,141
White	29	17	15	1,557
Black	41	20	13	160
Hispanic	30	20	15	149
18-29	28	20	11	270
30-49	31	18	17	593
50-64	32	21	16	597
65+	27	13	12	511
College grad	24	13	17	747
Some college	30	18	16	512
HS or less	32	21	13	727
Republican	21	11	9	582
Independent	29	21	14	681
Democrat	36	21	22	628
Conservative	23	13	10	817
Moderate	32	22	18	662
Liberal	35	20	21	414
Protestant	26	17	13	1,099
White evang.	20	15	10	465
White mainline	29	18	13	402
Black Protestant	37	18	15	135
Catholic	34	17	17	437
White non-Hisp	35	16	19	338
Unaffiliated	31	19	15	302
<i>Attend religious services...</i>				
Weekly or more	25	11	11	825
Monthly/Yearly	34	22	19	653
Seldom/Never	28	23	15	501

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Q292a-c.

Having been in touch with a dead person is more common among women than men (33% vs. 26%). Women are also twice as likely to have consulted a fortuneteller or psychic (20% vs. 10%). Blacks report more experience feeling in touch with the dead than whites or Hispanics (41%, 29% and 30%, respectively). But they resemble whites and Hispanics on other items, such as encounters with a ghost or consulting a fortuneteller.

Compared with those with a college degree, more Americans with a high school education or less report having felt in touch with a dead person (32% vs. 24%) and having seen a ghost (21% vs. 13%). However, Americans with less education are no more inclined to have consulted a fortuneteller than are Americans with a college education (13% vs. 17%). Conservatives and Republicans report fewer experiences than liberals or Democrats communicating with the dead, seeing ghosts and consulting fortunetellers or psychics.

## Diverse Supernatural Beliefs and Experiences

In total, upwards of six-in-ten adults (65%) express belief in or report having experience with at least one of these diverse supernatural phenomena (belief in reincarnation, belief in spiritual energy located in physical things, belief in yoga as spiritual practice, belief in the "evil eye," belief in astrology, having been in touch with the dead, consulting a psychic, or experiencing a ghostly encounter). This includes roughly one-quarter of the population (23%) who report having only one of these beliefs or experiences. More than four-in-ten people (43%) answer two or more of these items affirmatively, including 25% who answer two or three of these items affirmatively and nearly one-in-five (18%) who answer yes to four or more. Roughly one-third of the public (35%) answers no to all eight items.

	<u>None</u>	<u>One</u>	<u>Two or three</u>	<u>Four or more</u>	<u>N</u>
	%	%	%	%	
Total	35	23	25	18=100	2,003
Protestant	40	23	23	13=100	1,099
White evang.	53	23	17	7=100	465
Attend weekly	62	21	13	4=100	315
Attend less often	36	26	24	14=100	147
White mainline	33	24	27	15=100	402
Attend weekly	50	23	17	10=100	103
Attend less often	28	24	31	17=100	296
Black Protestant	28	22	31	18=100	135
Catholic	27	26	24	23=100	437
White non-Hisp	34	26	19	21=100	338
Attend weekly	39	26	20	15=100	160
Attend less often	31	25	18	25=100	173
Unaffiliated	32	20	29	19=100	302

Q291a-f, Q292a-c; alpha=.724.

With the exception of white evangelicals, majorities of all major religious traditions report holding at least one of these beliefs or having experienced one of these

phenomena. In fact, roughly half of black Protestants (50%), the religiously unaffiliated (48%) and Catholics (47%) answer yes to two or more of these items, as do 43% of white mainline Protestants. A slim majority of white evangelicals (53%) answer no to all eight questions, while 47% indicate belief or familiarity with at least one of these items. Among white evangelicals and white mainline Protestants, higher levels of religious commitment (as measured by frequency of church attendance) are associated with lower levels of belief in these phenomena and familiarity with these experiences.

## Religious and Mystical Experiences

<b>Ever Had Religious or Mystical Experience?</b>					
	Feb	Aug	Nov	Apr	Aug
	<u>62</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>06</u>	<u>09</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	22	31	33	47	49
No	78	69	65	51	48
Don't know	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

Feb. 62 and Aug. 76 surveys by Gallup; Nov. 94 by Newsweek; Apr. 06 by Ipsos

Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Q290.

In response to a separate question, half of Americans (49%) say they have had "a religious or mystical experience - that is, a moment of religious or spiritual awakening." This is roughly the same as the number that said this in 2006 (47%), but it represents a sharp increase over the past four decades. In 1962, only 22% of Americans reported having had such an experience, which grew to about a third in 1976 (31%) and 1994 (33%). Since then, the number has continued to increase to roughly half of the public in this decade.

Differences among Protestants are striking. Strong majorities of white evangelicals (70%) and black Protestants (71%) say they have had religious or mystical experiences, compared with four-in-ten mainline Protestants (40%). Catholics resemble mainline Protestants, with 37% having had a religious or mystical experience.

### Religious or Mystical Experience

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>N</u>
	%	%	%	%
Total	49	48	4=100	2,003
White	47	51	3=100	1,557
Black	69	27	4=100	160
Hispanic	44	50	6=100	149
18-29	43	54	2=100	270
30-49	51	46	3=100	593
50-64	55	44	2=100	597
65+	43	49	8=100	511
Republican	50	46	4=100	582
Independent	46	51	3=100	681
Democrat	50	47	3=100	628
Conservative	55	43	3=100	817
Moderate	43	55	3=100	662
Liberal	50	48	3=100	414
Protestant	60	36	4=100	1,099
White evang.	70	26	3=100	465
White mainline	40	55	4=100	402
Black Protestant	71	26	3=100	135
Catholic	37	60	3=100	437
White non-Hisp.	37	61	2=100	338
Unaffiliated	30	69	1=100	302
<i>Attend religious services....</i>				
Weekly or more	61	34	5=100	825
Monthly/Yearly	48	50	2=100	653
Seldom/Never	33	65	2=100	501

Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Q290.

Among the unaffiliated, three-in-ten have had a religious or mystical experience. This is lower than nearly any other religious segment of the population but is still a higher proportion than among the general public in 1962 (22%). These kinds of experiences are particularly common among the "religious unaffiliated" (i.e., those who describe their religion as "nothing in particular" and say that religion is at least somewhat important in their lives), among whom 51% have had a religious or mystical experience. Among self-described atheists, agnostics and the "secular unaffiliated" (i.e., those who describe their religion as "nothing in particular" and say that religion is not important in their lives), roughly one-in-five (18%) say they have had this kind of experience.

Mystical or religious experiences are most common among people who regularly attend religious services. More than six-in-ten of those who attend weekly say they

have had this kind of experience (61%), compared with half of those who attend monthly or yearly (48%) and just one-third of those who seldom or never attend religious services (33%).

Blacks are much more likely than whites or Hispanics (69%, 47% and 44%, respectively) to report religious or mystical experiences. More than half (55%) of baby boomers (age 50-64) identify with such experiences, compared with fewer young adults and seniors (43% each).

There is little difference along party lines on this question. Roughly half of Republicans, Democrats and independents say they have had a religious or mystical experience. More than half of conservatives (55%) claim to have had such experiences, similar to the number of liberals who have had these kinds of experiences (50%) and much higher than among moderates (43%).

## About the Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 4,013 adults, 18 years of age or older. Interviews were conducted in two waves, the first from August 11-17, 2009 (Survey A) and the second from August 20-27, 2009 (Survey B). In total, 3,012 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,001 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 347 who had no landline telephone. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2008 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the sample.

The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey. The topline survey results included at the end of this report clearly indicate whether each question in the survey was asked of the full sample, Survey A only or Survey B only. Most of the results analyzed in this report were asked in Survey B only.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus...</b>
Total sample	4,013	2.0 percentage points
Survey A	2,010	2.5 percentage points
Form 1	1,011	3.5 percentage points
Form 2	999	3.5 percentage points
Survey B	2,003	2.5 percentage points
Form 1	1,034	3.5 percentage points
Form 2	969	3.5 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## About the Projects

This survey is a joint effort of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Both organizations are sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts and are projects of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

**The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press** is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of the Center's current survey results are made available free of charge.

**The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life** seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. It studies public opinion, demographics and other important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings.

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