

2025
State of American Theology
Study

RESEARCH REPORT

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Executive Summary

The 2025 State of American Theology Study is the sixth in a series of surveys of American adults examining their theological beliefs. Previous surveys were conducted in 2022, 2020, 2018, 2016 and 2014. Some comparisons are made in this report to questions repeated across multiple years. Other questions have been asked for the first time.

Ligonier Ministries sponsored the 2025 State of American Theology Study conducted by Lifeway Research to measure the current theological awareness of adult Americans and to expand upon earlier findings. Ligonier Ministries identified specific doctrines and heresies to test. Lifeway Research helped refine these questions and subsequently surveyed 3,001 Americans.

Questions focused on six key doctrinal areas and included a number of specific beliefs where Americans differ from historic and orthodox views.

Beliefs about God

The highest agreement among Americans to any of the statements in the survey is seen with more than 8 in 10 describing God as loving all people the same way (83%). On all 6 surveys, a consistent 7 in 10 Americans believe in one true God in three persons. About two-thirds believe God cannot make a mistake and doesn't change. But anti-biblical statements also have a large following. Two thirds of Americans believe God accepts worship from all religions. About half deny the deity of Christ, a third fail to affirm the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and more than half categorize the Holy Spirit as a force rather than a personal being.

- 71% agree “There is one true God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.”
- 65% agree “God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.”
- 66% of Americans agree “God is a perfect being and cannot make a mistake.”
- 68% agree “God is unchanging.”
- 83% agree “God loves all people the same way.”
- 65% agree “Biblical accounts of the physical (bodily) resurrection of Jesus are completely accurate. This event actually occurred.”
- 49% agree “Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.”
- 57% agree “The Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.”
- 49% agree “The Holy Spirit gives a spiritual new birth or new life before a person has faith in Jesus Christ.”
- 16% agree “The Holy Spirit can tell me to do something which is forbidden in the Bible.”

Beliefs about Goodness and Sin

Another consistency across all five surveys is that two-thirds of Americans find most people good by nature. More than 7 in 10 believe everyone is born innocent. Despite this flattering view of mankind, more than half of Americans believe God measures righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ rather than one's works. Almost a quarter of Americans believe any sin deserves eternal punishment.

- 66% agree "Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature."
- 23% agree "Even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation."
- 56% agree "God counts a person as righteous not because of one's works but only because of one's faith in Jesus Christ."
- 74% of Americans agree "Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God."

Beliefs about Salvation and Religious Texts

About half of Americans believe the Bible is completely accurate, but almost the same number say the Bible is not literally true. The growth in people considering the Bible a myth retreated slightly but is still higher than 2016 and prior. More than one third of Americans say science disproves the Bible. Almost 6 in 10 Americans believe that eternal salvation requires trust in Jesus Christ alone, and more than a quarter say God chose those who would be saved before creation.

- 48% agree "The Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true." This is lower than 2022 (53%), similar to 2020 (48%) and 2018 (47%), and higher than 2016 (44%) and 2014 (41%).
- 49% of Americans agree "The Bible is 100% accurate in all that it teaches."
- 36% agree "Modern science disproves the Bible." This is lower than 2022 (40%) and similar to 2020 (34%) and 2018 (36%).
- 58% agree "Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation."
- 26% agree "God chose the people he would save before he created the world."

Beliefs about Judgement and Punishment

More than 6 in 10 Americans expect Jesus to return and judge all people. Fewer, but still a majority believe some people will be punished in a place called hell.

- 57% of Americans agree "Hell is a real place where certain people will be punished forever." This is similar to 2022 (59%) and 2020 (56%), and higher than 2018 (54%).
- 62% agree "There will be a time when Jesus Christ returns to judge all the people who have lived."

Beliefs about the Church

More than 6 in 10 Americans say there are valid alternatives to in-person worship attendance. One in three say Christians must join a local church. More than half believe Christians should keep their religious beliefs out of their political decisions.

- 63% of Americans agree “Worshiping alone or with one’s family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church.” This has receded from the high of 66% in 2022 (66%), but remains higher than 2020 (58%), 2018 (58%), 2016 (59%), and 2014 (52%).
- 54% agree “Christians should not allow their religious beliefs to influence their political decisions.”
- 33% agree “Every Christian has an obligation to join a local church.”

Beliefs about Authority

Almost two thirds of Americans say God created marriage to be between one man and one woman, and half say sex outside of such a traditional marriage is sin. Americans are split on whether the basis for religious belief is objective truth or not. Adults remain divided down the middle on whether abortion is a sin. A similar half of Americans believe the Bible has authority over our do’s and don’ts. Almost 4 in 10 say people should be able to choose their gender. Three in ten think God is unconcerned with their daily decisions.

- 46% of Americans agree “Religious belief is not about objective truth.”
- 65% agree “God created marriage to be between one man and one woman.”
- 52% agree “Sex outside of traditional marriage is a sin.”
- 49% agree “Abortion is a sin.”
- 50% agree “The Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do.”
- 41% agree “The Bible’s condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn’t apply today.”
- 38% agree “People should be able to choose their gender regardless of their biological sex.”
- 30% agree that “God is unconcerned with my day-to-day decisions.”

Methodology

The 2025 State of American Theology Study was conducted by Lifeway Research. The objective of the study is to quantify among a national sample of Americans indicators of theological understanding today. The project was designed with a large sample to allow for comparisons between groups within Christian churches and those outside the Christian faith.

The project was sponsored by Ligonier Ministries to ascertain the state of theological awareness and belief among Americans, including several subsets of Americans (particularly Evangelicals).

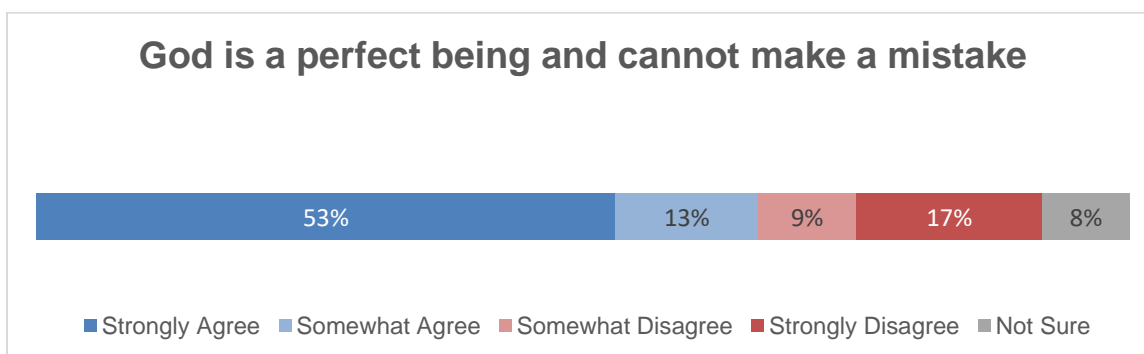
The quantitative survey of American adults was conducted using a large, national online panel. Quotas were in place to ensure the sample was demographically balanced and slight weights were used to ensure the sample matches the population on gender, age, ethnicity, income, region and religion. 3,001 surveys were completed January 6-15, 2025. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed $\pm 1.9\%$. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Ligonier Ministries identified specific doctrines and heresies to test. Lifeway Research helped refine these questions to ensure the following principles were followed throughout the questionnaire:

- Each doctrine or heresy was tested by stating it as fact and asking the respondent to indicate their level of agreement,
- Phrasing that can introduce bias was excluded,
- Questions in which the desired response is agreement and questions in which the desired response is disagreement were mixed throughout the survey, and
- Wording choices sought to use words that would be understood by the typical American.

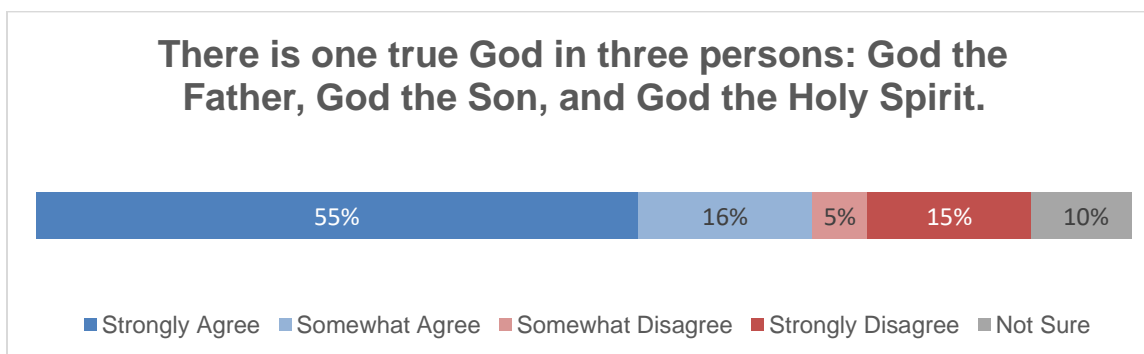
Quantitative Findings

BELIEFS ABOUT GOD



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (97% v. 59%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (92% v. 47%). Americans age 35-49 (76%) and 50-64 (78%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (54%) and 65+ (58%).

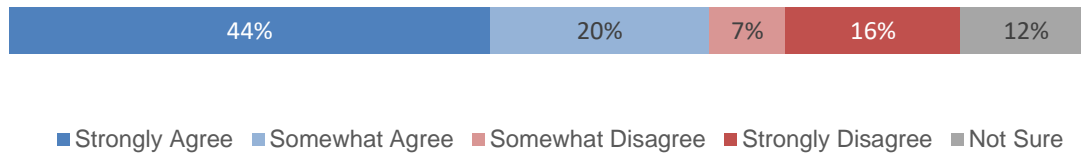
The 66% who Agree is similar to 2022 (66%), 2020 (65%), and 2016 (65%) but lower than 2018 (69%) and higher than 2014 (63%).



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (97% v. 64%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (92% v. 55%). Americans age 50-64 are the most likely to Agree (83%).

The 71% who Agree is consistent with 2022 (71%), 2020 (72%), 2018 (70%), 2016 (69%), and 2014 (71%).

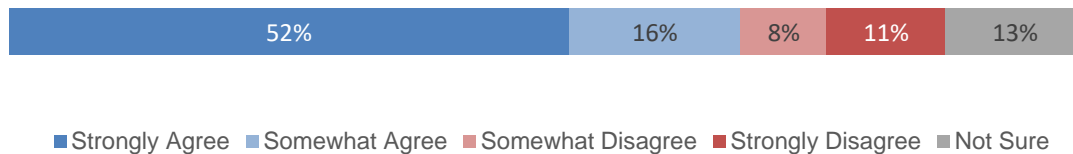
God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (45% v. 18%).

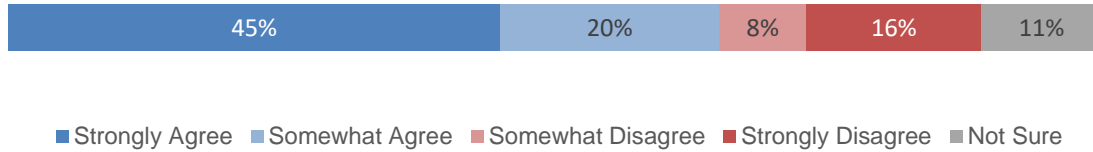
The 65% who Agree is similar to 2020 (64%), 2022 (67%), 2018 (66%), and 2016 (64%).

God is unchanging



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (95% v. 62%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (90% v. 53%). Americans age 35-49 (77%) and 50-64 (78%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (58%) and 65+ (61%).

**Biblical accounts of the physical (bodily)
resurrection of Jesus are completely accurate.
This event actually occurred.**



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (98% v. 57%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (90% v. 46%). Americans age 50-64 are the most likely to Agree (78%).

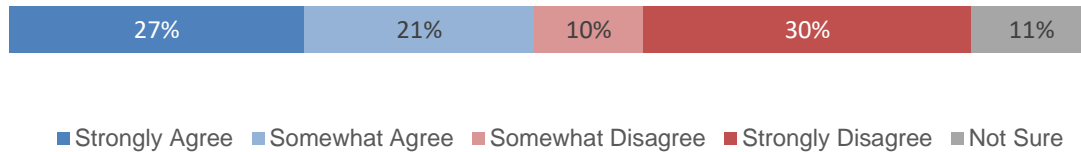
The 65% who Agree is similar to 2022 (66%), 2020 (66%), 2018 (66%), 2016 (64%) but significantly lower than 2014 (68%).

God loves all people the same way



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (94% v. 80%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (94% v. 75%). Americans age 35-49 (88%) and 50-64 (90%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (78%) and 65+ (76%).

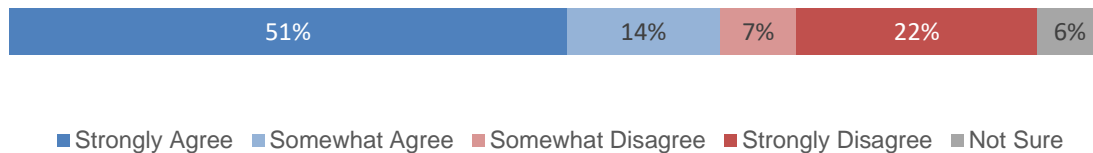
Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (68% v. 33%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (54% v. 30%). Americans age 50-64 (48%) are more likely to *Disagree* than 18-34 (30%) and 65+ (41%).

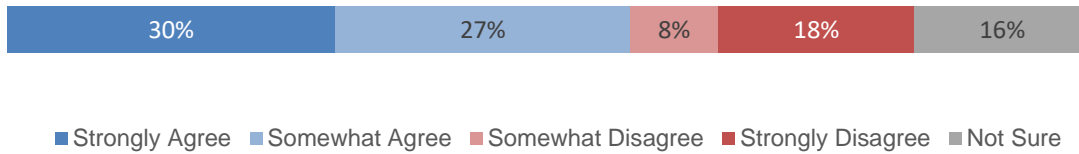
The 49% who Agree is lower than 2022 (53%) and 2020 (52%).

God created marriage to be between one man and one woman.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (98% v. 57%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (87% v. 48%). Americans age 35-49 (78%) and 50-64 (74%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (52%) and 65+ (57%).

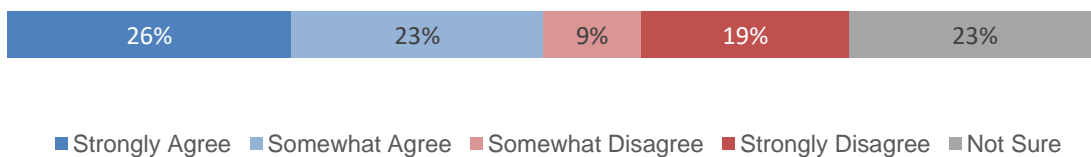
The Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (41% v. 23%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (33% v. 21%).

The 57% who Agree is similar to 2022 (59%), 2020 (59%) 2018 (59%), and 2016 (56%), but less than 2014 (64%).

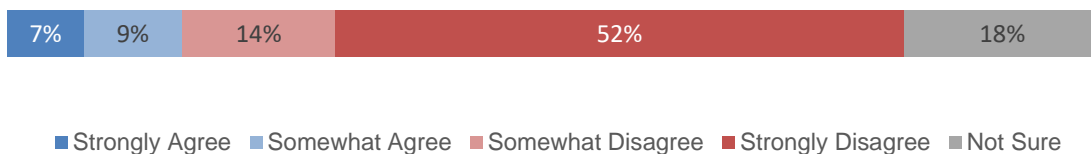
The Holy Spirit gives a spiritual new birth or new life before a person has faith in Jesus Christ.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (60% v. 46%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (64% v. 38%). Americans age 35-49 are the most likely to Agree (59%).

The 49% who Agree is similar to 2022 (51%), 2020 (51%), 2018 (51%), and 2016 (50%), but significantly higher than 2014 (46%).

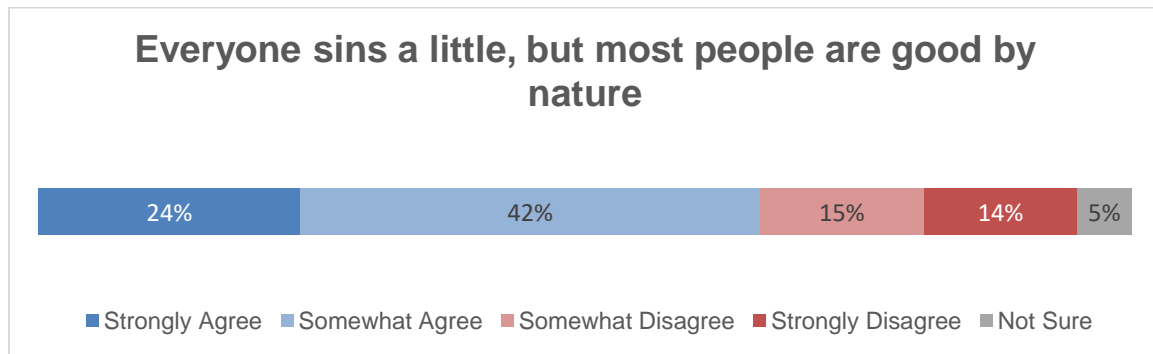
The Holy Spirit can tell me to do something which is forbidden in the Bible.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (80% v. 62%). Americans age 18-34 (21%) and 35-49 (21%) are more likely to Agree than 50-64 (12%) and 65+ (8%).

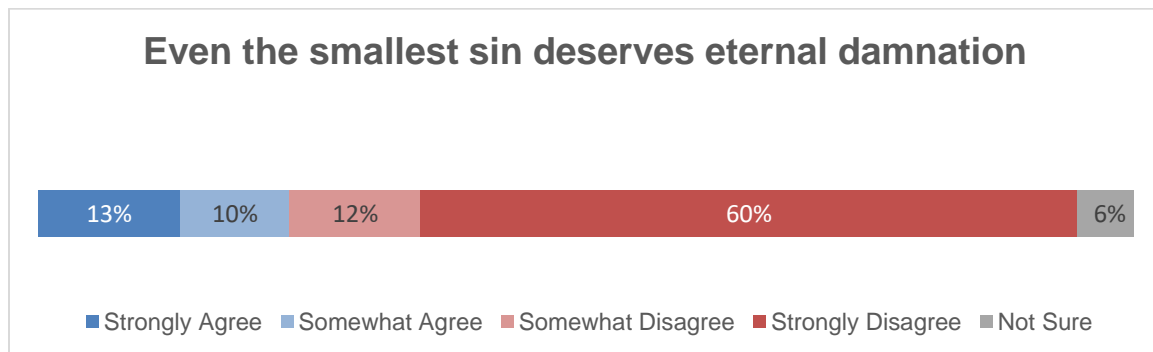
The 16% who Agree is significantly lower than 2022 (22%), 2020 (19%), and 2018 (20%).

BELIEFS ABOUT GOODNESS AND SIN



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (43% v. 25%).

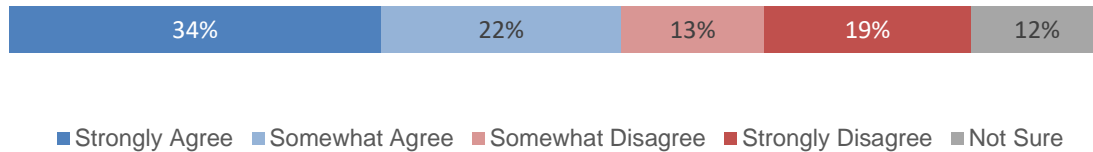
The 66% who Agree is consistent with 2022 (66%), 2020 (65%), 2018 (66%), 2016 (65%), and 2014 (67%).



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (49% v. 16%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (39% v. 11%). Americans age 65+ are the most likely to Disagree (84%).

The 23% who Agree is similar to 2022 (25%) and 2018 (23%), and is significantly lower than 2020 (26%), but significantly higher than 2016 (19%) and 2014 (18%).

God counts a person as righteous not because of one's works but only because of one's faith in Jesus Christ.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (88% v. 48%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (77% v. 41%). Americans age 65+ are more likely to *Disagree* (42%).

The 56% who Agree is similar to 2022 (57%) and 2020 (56%) and significantly higher than 2018 (53%).

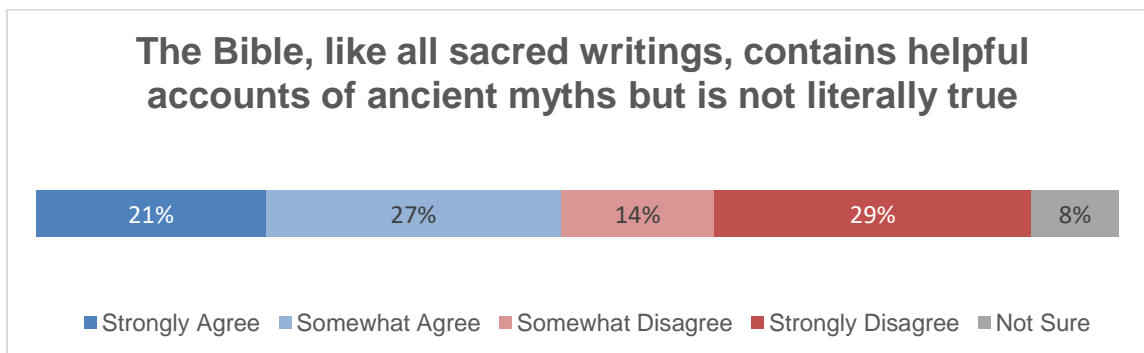
Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (31% v. 15%).

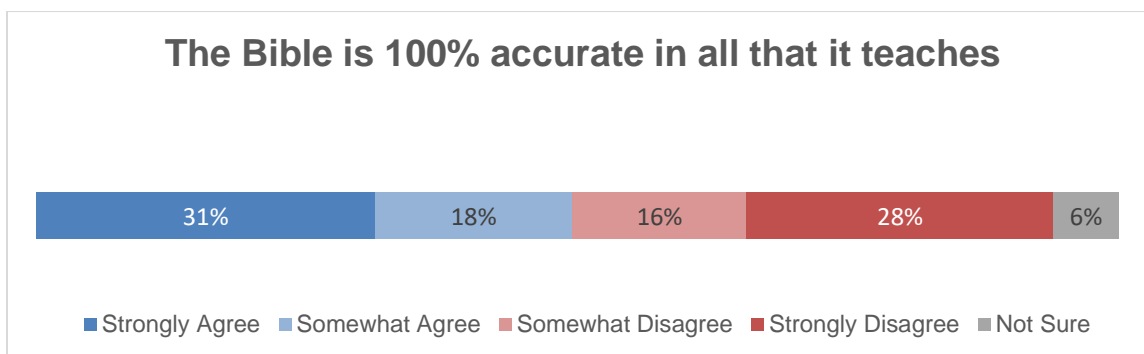
The 74% who Agree is significantly higher than 2022 (71%).

BELIEFS ABOUT SALVATION AND RELIGIOUS TEXTS



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (79% v. 35%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (62% v. 30%). Americans age 18-34 (57%) and 65+ (52%) are more likely to Agree than those 35-49 (43%) and 50-64 (39%).

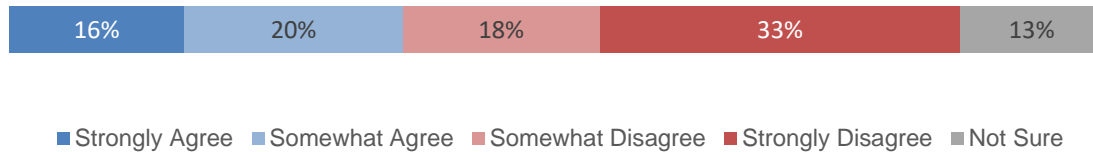
The 48% who Agree is similar to the 2020 (48%) and 2018 (47%), and significantly lower than 2022 (53%), but higher than 2016 (44%) and 2014 (41%).



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (95% v. 38%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (76% v. 30%). Americans age 35-49 (59%) and 50-64 (58%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (44%) and 65+ (38%).

The 49% who Agree is similar to 2022 (51%), 2020 (48%), 2018 (50%), and 2016 (47%), but significantly higher than 2014 (43%).

Modern science disproves the Bible.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (73% v. 45%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (65% v. 40%). Americans age 18-34 are the most likely to Agree (53%).

The 36% who Agree is similar to 2020 (34%) and 2018 (36%), but significantly lower than 2022 (40%).

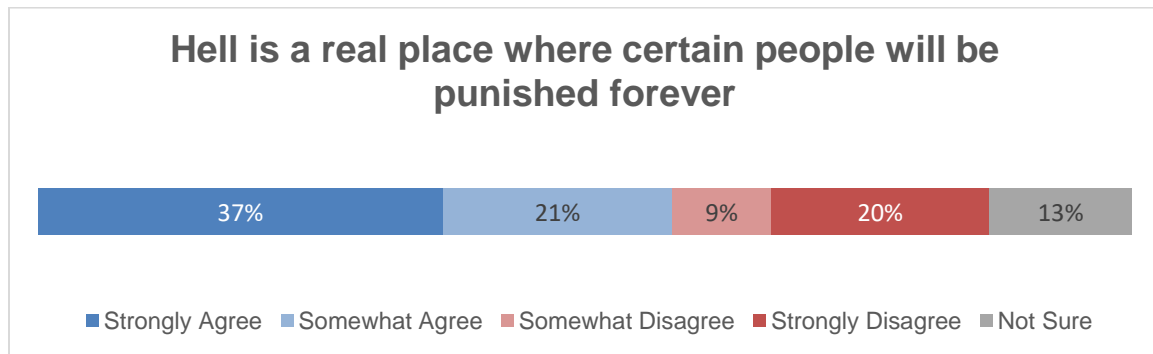
God chose the people he would save before he created the world.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (41% v. 23%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (39% v. 17%). Americans age 65+ are the most likely to *Disagree* (63%).

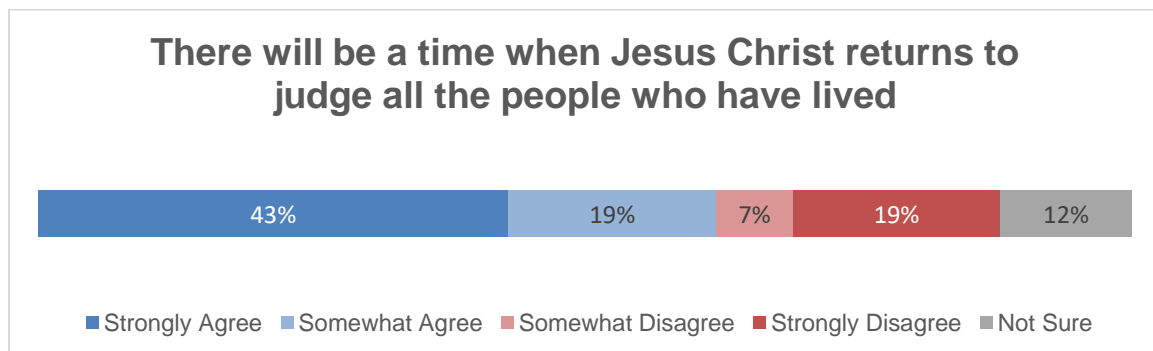
The 26% who Agree is significantly lower than 2022 (30%) but similar to 2020 (26%).

BELIEFS ABOUT JUDGEMENT AND PUNISHMENT



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (94% v. 48%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (80% v. 41%). Americans age 35-49 are the most likely to Agree (71%).

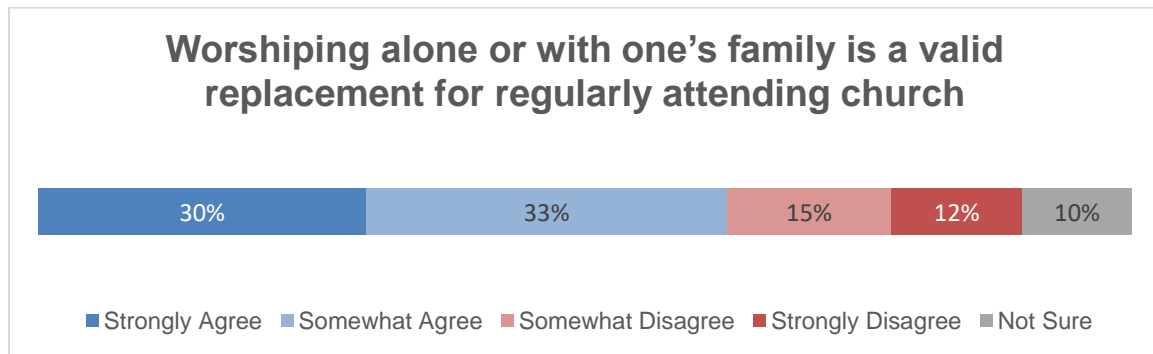
The 57% who Agree is similar to 2022 (59%) and 2020 (56%), but higher than 2018 (54%).



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (98% v. 53%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (88% v. 43%). Americans age 35-49 (71%) and 50-64 (73%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (53%) and 65+ (51%).

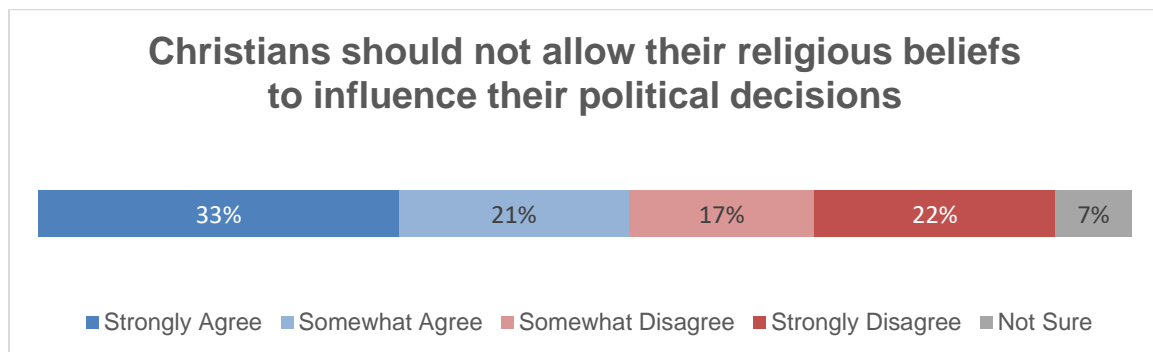
The 62% who Agree is similar to 2022 (64%), 2020 (62%), 2018 (62%), and 2014 (63%), but higher than 2016 (59%).

BELIEFS ABOUT THE CHURCH



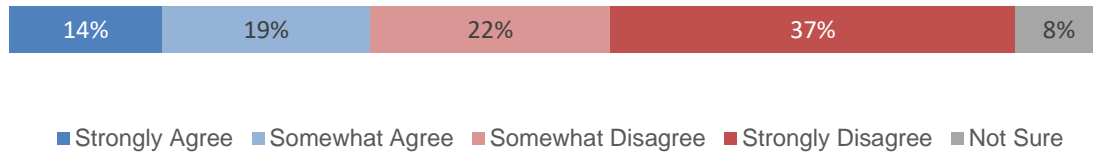
Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (49% v. 21%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (42% v. 15%). Americans age 50-64 (32%) are more likely to *Disagree* than 18-34 (20%) and 65+ (25%).

The 63% who Agree is significantly lower than 2022 (66%) but significantly higher than 2020 (58%), 2018 (58%), 2016 (59%), and 2014 (52%).



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (65% v. 32%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (52% v. 29%). Americans age 18-34 are the most likely to Agree (65%).

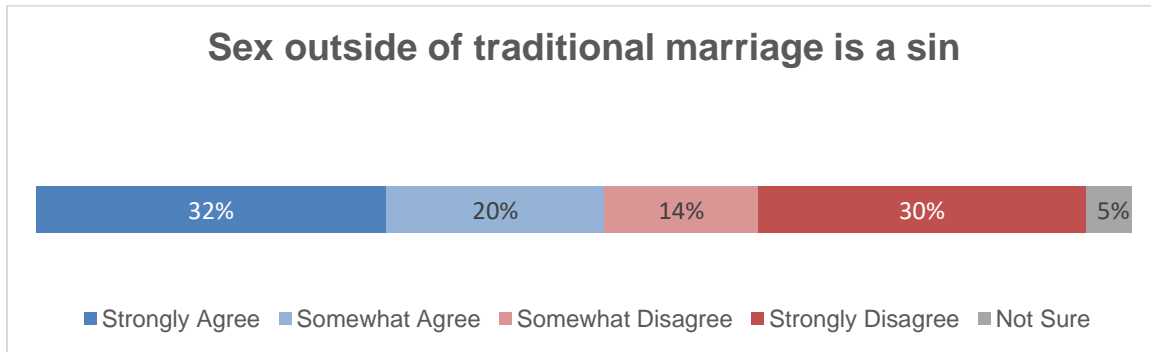
Every Christian has an obligation to join a local church.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (61% v. 26%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (57% v. 15%). Americans age 35-49 are the most likely to Agree (43%). Americans age 65+ are the least likely to Agree (19%).

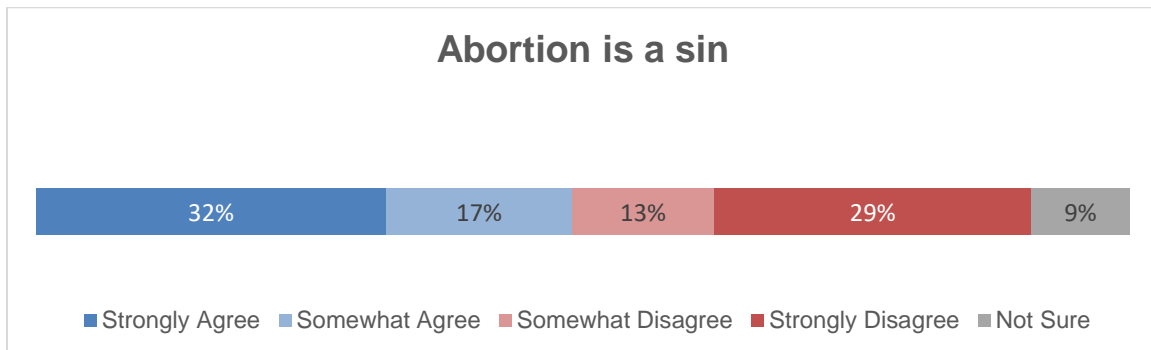
The 33% who Agree is significantly lower than 2022 (36%).

BELIEFS ABOUT AUTHORITY



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (92% v. 42%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (77% v. 33%). Americans age 35-49 (63%) and 50-64 (59%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (43%) and 65+ (43%).

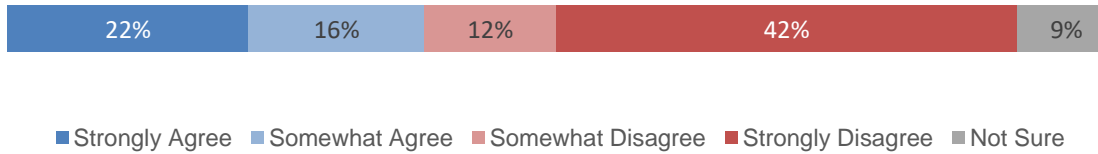
The 52% who Agree is similar to 2022 (53%), 2020 (51%), and 2018 (51%) and significantly higher than 2016 (49%).



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (88% v. 39%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (72% v. 32%). Americans age 35-49 are the most likely to Agree (62%).

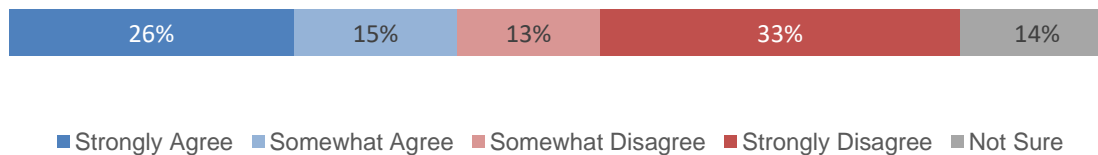
The 49% who Agree is significantly lower than 2022 (53%) and 2018 (52%) but similar to 2020 (51%) 2016 (49%).

People should be able to choose their gender regardless of their biological sex.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (82% v. 47%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (68% v. 43%). Americans age 18-34 are the most likely to Agree (54%).

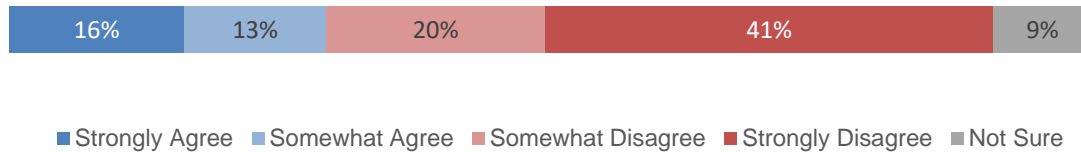
The Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn't apply today



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (79% v. 38%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (63% v. 34%). Americans age 18-34 are the most likely to Agree (50%).

The 41% who Agree is similar to 2020 (40%) and 2016 (42%), but is significantly less than 2022 (46%) and 2018 (44%).

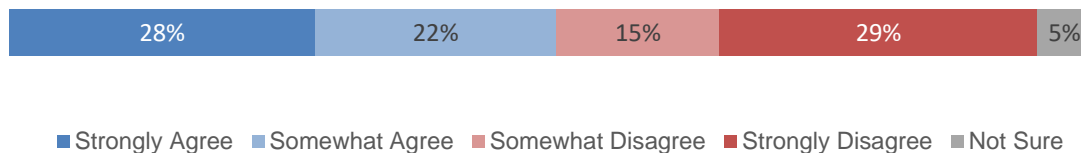
God is unconcerned with my day-to-day decisions



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (87% v. 55%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (77% v. 50%). Americans age 18-34 are the most likely to Agree (41%).

The 30% who Agree is similar to 2022 (32%) and 2016 (28%), but significantly higher than 2020 (25%), 2018 (26%), and 2014 (20%).

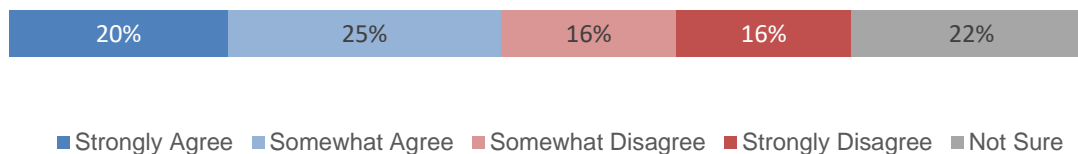
The Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (94% v. 39%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (78% v. 30%). Americans age 35-49 (62%) and 50-64 (59%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (41%) and 65+ (39%).

The 50% who Agree is similar to 2022 (52%), 2020 (51%), 2016 (50%), and 2014 (49%), but significantly lower than 2018 (53%).

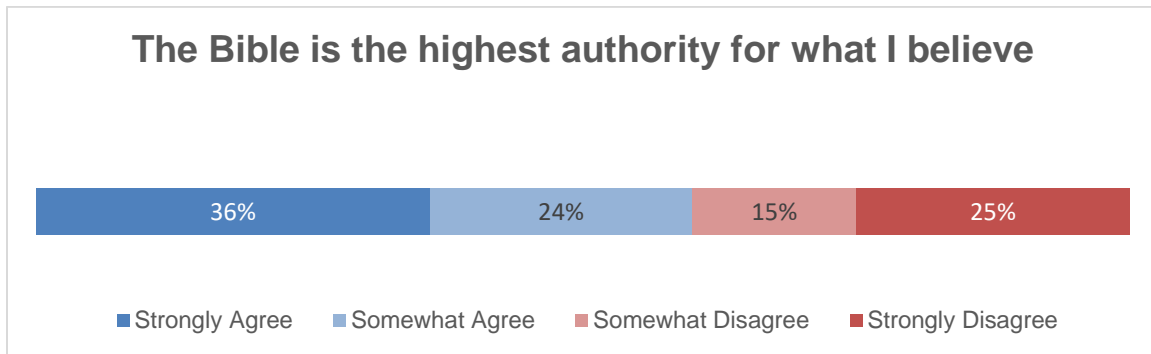
Religious belief is not about objective truth.



Americans with Evangelical Beliefs are more likely to *Disagree* than those without Evangelical Beliefs (53% v. 27%). Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to *Disagree* than those who do not (43% v. 24%). Americans age 18-34 (53%) and 65+ (49%) are more likely to *Agree* than those 35-49 (40%) and 50-64 (40%).

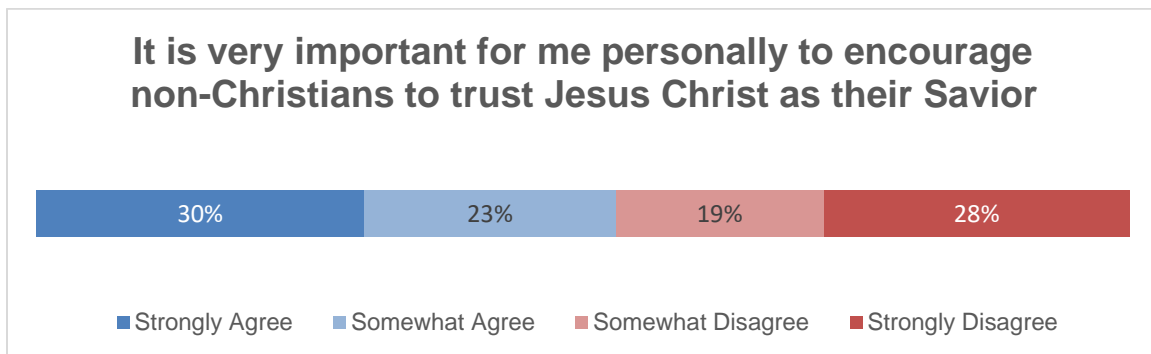
NAE LIFEWAY RESEARCH EVANGELICAL BELIEFS DEFINITION

Using this definition, those who agree strongly with all four of these questions are considered to have Evangelical Beliefs:



Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (87% v. 41%). Americans age 35-49 (71%) and 50-64 (71%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (49%) and 65+ (52%).

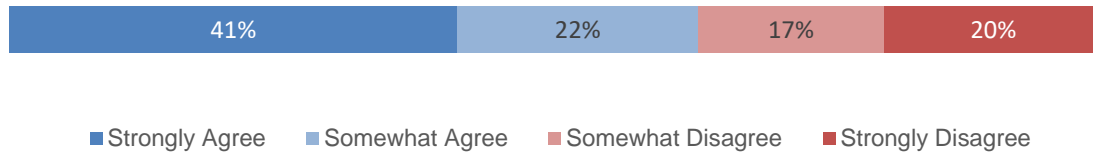
The 60% who Agree is consistent with 2022 (62%), 2020 (62%), 2018 (62%), and 2016 (61%).



Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (81% v. 33%). Americans age 35-49 are the most likely to Agree (67%).

The 53% who Agree is similar to 2022 (55%), 2020 (54%), 2018 (52%), and 2016 (51%).

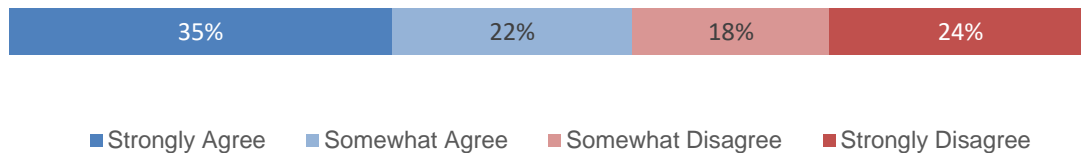
Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin



Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (86% v. 46%). Americans age 35-49 (74%) and 50-64 (71%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (55%) and 65+ (53%).

The 63% who Agree is consistent with 2022 (64%), 2020 (65%), and 2018 (62%), but significantly higher than 2016 (60%).

Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation



Americans who attend a religious service at least once or twice a month are more likely to Agree than those who do not (81% v. 40%). Americans age 35-49 (70%) and 50-64 (66%) are more likely to Agree than 18-34 (50%) and 65+ (45%).

The 58% who Agree is similar to 2022 (60%) and 2020 (60%), and 2018 (57%), but significantly higher than 2016 (54%).