

# How's the Bible Doing in America?

## *Findings from the Annual State of the Bible National Survey*

The American Bible Society's most recent annual State of the Bible survey of 2,000 Americans has some interesting findings. This survey might surprise you, given the state of our culture. *Not everything in the extensive poll is discouraging.* In fact, many findings are very encouraging and counter-cultural compared to the secular narratives often advanced by Hollywood and the media.

For example over 60% of Americans say that they would like to read the Bible more than they do. Nearly 8 in 10 (79%) say that the Bible is sacred literature or holy. That's nearly eight-times higher than the next most frequently mentioned holy book, the Koran (10%). The Torah is considered sacred by 7% followed with 4% for the Book of Mormon.

*Here's more:*

Americans were asked if they agree that "the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths." Just one out of six (16%) strongly agree with this statement.

Half (51%) of Americans say that the Bible has too little influence upon society today. Another 27% say its influence is "just right." Only 19% say that the Bible has too much influence upon American society.

More than half of all U.S. adults believe that politics would be more civil if politicians read the Bible on a regular basis (56%); a similar proportion agree that America's politicians would be more effective if they read the Bible on a regular basis (58%).

Nearly half of Americans strongly agree that the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life (49%). Elders and Boomers are more likely to believe this, while Millennials are less likely. The proportion that agrees with this statement is

statistically unchanged since 2014.

Adults who read the Bible in the past week are more than twice as likely to have given a lot of thought to how the Bible might apply to their life (58%), compared to those that had heard the Bible read at church or Mass but who had not read the Bible in the past week (28%). Those who heard the Bible read aloud at church are more likely to say they gave some thought to how it might apply to their life.

The reasons why people do not read or stopped reading the Bible are not too surprising. Being too busy with life's responsibilities continues to be the number-one reason Bible readers give for their decrease in Bible engagement.

Elders are more likely to be Bible readers (66%), while the youngest generation, the Millennials (47%), are less likely than average to read the Bible at least three to four times a year. Millennials are also most likely of the generations to admit never reading the Bible (33%), compared to just 19% of Elders. Residents of the South are also more likely to read the Bible than residents of other regions.

Residents of the Midwest (94%) and South (92%) are more likely to have a Bible in their household than residents of the Northeast (78%) or West (84%).

The vast majority of households in America own at least one Bible (88%), and many own more than one. While there was a slight dip in 2012 in the number of Americans who say their household owns a Bible, the proportion has remained statistically unchanged since 2011. However, Bible ownership is down four percentage points since 1993 (92%).

Americans share a nearly universal belief that every person in the world should



have the freedom to own and read a Bible (98%). This conviction holds true among all generations and all faith segments. However, seven out of 10 Americans believe incorrectly that the Bible is currently available in all of the world's languages.

Interestingly, and perhaps contrary to perception, the most preferred version of the Bible by far is still the King James version (39%) with an additional 10% preferring the New King James version. The NIV and ESV are the most often mentioned of the other translations.

A strong majority of Americans agree that the values and morals of America are declining (80%). While the top factor for this is believed to be the influence of movies, television and music, a significant portion of Americans also say the lack of Bible reading is a main factor in our nation's moral decline.

Americans feel strongly that the Bible discourages prostitution (60%), homosexuality or same-sex relationships (56%), pornography (56%) and gambling (51%). Millennials are less likely than average to strongly agree the Bible discourages homosexuality or same-sex relationships.

The most common behaviors Americans feel the Bible encourages are forgiveness (74%), generosity (67%), serving the poor (66%) and patience (65%).

***American Family Association of Indiana***

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