

Trends & TudesSM

Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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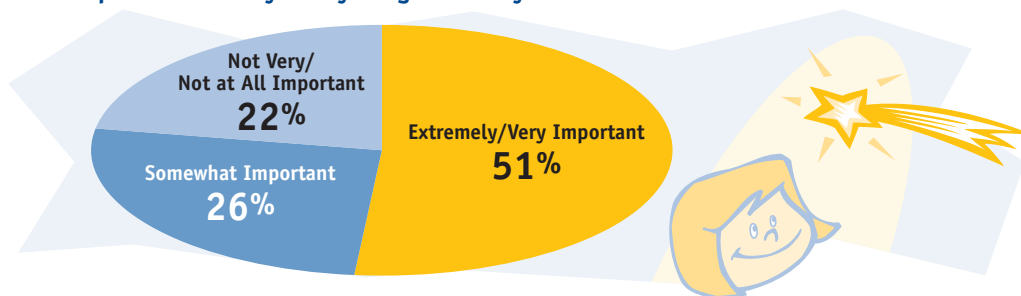
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Young People and Religion

Religion is a topic that is rarely mentioned when discussing young people. It can be an uncomfortable topic. However, attitudes young people have towards religion and their belief systems affect how they view the world. As researchers who seek to understand today's youth, it is essential that we understand their religious sentiments. Are today's young people more or less religious than previous generations? What do they believe in? How certain are they of these beliefs? What are their views toward political leaders and religion? Toward public policy issues that are often wrapped in discussions about religion? We recently placed some questions into the YouthQuerySM omnibus in order to provide a youth perspective on these issues.

About half of US teens feel that religion is extremely or very important to their lives. The importance of religion is reflected in their behavior: three in ten (30%) attend religious services every week, while 54% attend services monthly or more. Forty percent (40%) pray at least once a day, while two-thirds (67%) say they pray once a week or more.

How important would you say religion is in your own life?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, US Youth Ages 13-18; July, 2005 (n=818).

Parents have a large influence on the religious views of their children. Two-thirds (68%) of teenagers say their religious views are similar to their parents'. However, many teens feel less religious than their parents. Thirty-eight percent (38%) report they are less religious than their parents while just fourteen percent (14%) say they are more religious than their parents. Teens also tell us that their mothers tend to be more religious than their fathers.

Early teens are establishing their worldview independent of their parents. In 2002, the Harris Interactive YouthPulseSM study found that 74% of teens are likely to discuss religion with their families. Over the last three years, the number of teens discussing religion with their parents declined; in 2005, our tracking poll found that just 68% of teens discussed religion with their families and an increasing number are now more likely to discuss religion with their friends.

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Editorial: Our Take On It

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The August 8, 2005 issue of *Time* magazine contains a number of articles that are relevant to youth marketers and educators. One, entitled "Feels Like Teen Spirit," discusses the recognition on the part of many religious leaders that they need to be relevant to early teens, whom they see as being at a time of transition and establishment of faith. The new thinking is that if ministries do not connect to children by their teen years, it will be too late to establish a lifelong faith.

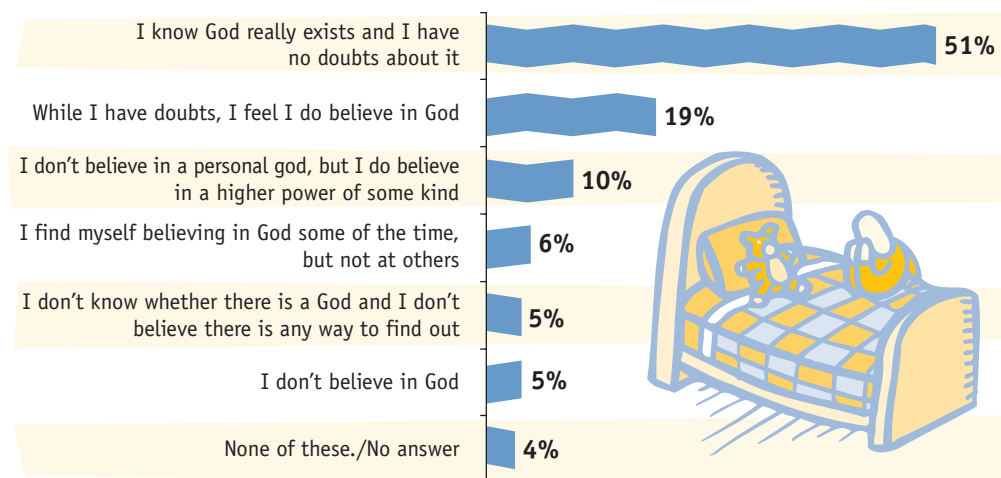
Wow! Even religious institutions are realizing the lifetime value of communicating to young people in their formative years. The research data are very clear (for most consumer categories) that an important reason to market to young people is lifetime preferences are established quite young. To me, it was fascinating to see this concept placed in a religious context.

Religious rites of passage, from the Catholic confirmation to the Jewish Bar Mitzvah, are not new to the early teen timeframe. Many faiths and cultures formally celebrate the passage to adulthood and independent thinking. Drawing another parallel to the marketing world, what has changed for religion is the explosion in competition for young people's attention.

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According to this year's study, about half (51%) of teens believe in God and have no doubts about it. Seventy percent (70%) believe in God in total, compared to just 5% who state they don't believe in God. This poll also showed that 79% of teens believe in Angels while 67% believe in the Devil. Seventy-eight percent (78%) believe in Heaven while 68% believe in Hell. Teenagers' beliefs reflect the dominance of Christianity in America – with 88% believing Jesus lived, 74% believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and 72% believing in the Resurrection.

Which of the statements below is closest to expressing what you believe about God?

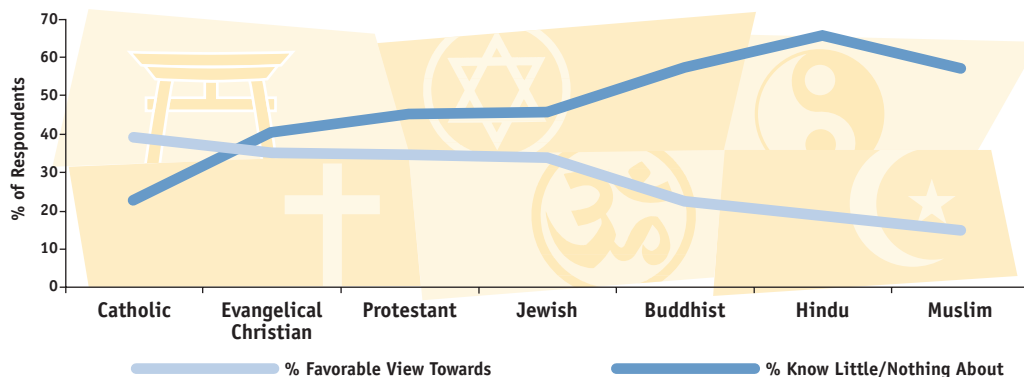


Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, US Youth Ages 13-18; July, 2005 (n=818).

The predominance of Christianity in this country influences teens' views on people of various religions. Perhaps not surprisingly, teenagers have the most favorable views of those of Christian faith which they also know the most about. Teenagers admit to having the least favorable views of Muslims and Atheists. At the same time, teens reveal that they don't know very much about Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam, and this lack of knowledge likely contributes to their somewhat negative perception of these faiths.

Please tell us your overall opinion for the following religious group.

How much do you know about the following religions and their practices?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, US Youth Ages 13-18; July, 2005 (n=818).

As the chart on the following page shows, 43% of US teenagers feel that religion has too little influence in America. Yet, teenagers are split on whether political leaders should be talking about their religious beliefs as part of their political campaigns – 38% think politicians should do so while 35% think politicians should not with the rest being not sure. Twenty-six percent

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News stories relating to religion are often critical in nature, whether focusing on abuse scandals among clergy, public debates on how to teach evolution in schools, taking the word “God” out of the Pledge of Allegiance, etc. Despite the separation of church and state, public leaders are more likely than ever to bring religion into the debate over policy issues. And, our wars on terrorism and in Iraq have been declared on states and not on religions, in an area of the world where the two are often the same thing. The result is many young people are confused at the same time they are awash in information.

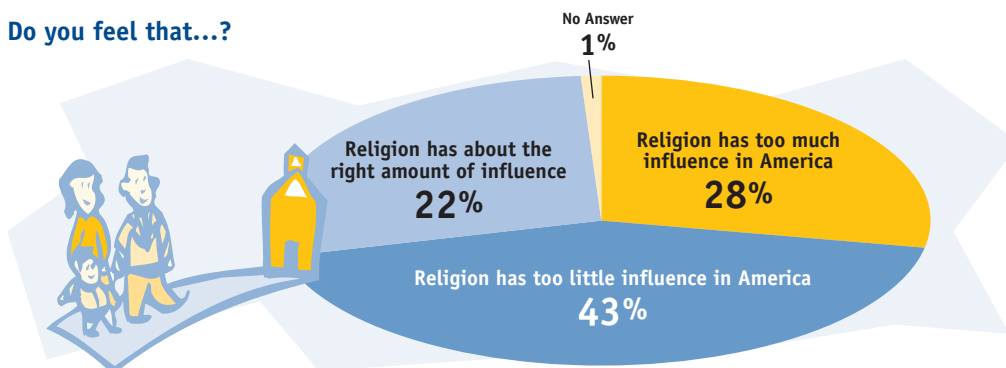
Despite increasing religious rhetoric in the news, today’s youth still hold organized religion in high regard. In the July 2005 YouthQuery, we had 13- to 18-year-olds express their degree of confidence in 12 institutions of American society. Out of the 12, “churches and organized religions” came in second (behind colleges and universities) as being the institutions young people have the most confidence in. Churches are held in higher esteem than other institutions such as the police, the medical system, the US Supreme Court, and the Presidency. The media, pharmaceutical companies, and large companies were at the bottom of the list.

Despite the tug of popular culture and critical news representations that confront today’s youth, religion has survived. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of teens say religion

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(26%) of teens think political leaders express too much religious faith and prayer while 39% feel political leaders express too little faith. Thirty-eight percent (38%) feel it is extremely or very important that the President has strong religious beliefs, while 35% feel this is not very important or not important at all.

Do you feel that...?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, US Youth Ages 13-18; July, 2005 (n=818).

Many public policy discussions involve religious issues and topics where religions have well-established positions. The table below shows that teenagers also have well-defined views on these issues.

Teenagers do not object to having religious references in public places, and often welcome it. They overwhelmingly support keeping the phrase “in God we trust” on our currency and keeping the phrase “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. They are also in favor of public displays of the Ten Commandments (but are against displays of the Koran).

Teen opinion is more divided on issues such as organized prayer at school events, federal funding of stem cell research, and abortion. On balance, more teens are against same-sex marriage than are for it, and most feel it is inappropriate for religious leaders to advocate for particular political candidates.

Please tell us if you disapprove or approve of the following:	Approve	Disapprove
Having the words “In God We Trust” on US coins	68%	9%
Including the phrase, “one nation, under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance	67%	10%
Display of a monument to the Ten Commandments in a public school or government building	51%	26%
A prayer as part of the official program at a public school ceremony such as a graduation or sporting event	45%	31%
Using federal tax dollars to pay for medical research using stem cells obtained from human embryos	42%	27%
Political candidates talking about their religious beliefs as part of their political campaigns	38%	35%
Abortion being legal in America	37%	45%
Same-sex marriages (a marriage between two men or between two women) being legal in America	36%	44%
Religious leaders urging people to vote for or against a political candidate	19%	48%
Display of a monument with a verse from the Koran, the holy book of the Islamic religion, in a public school or government building	18%	46%

Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, US Youth Ages 13-18; July, 2005 (n=818).

Harris Interactive recently posed some similar questions to the American adult population, and findings from this poll will be available in our newsroom at www.harrisinteractive.com later this month.

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is extremely or very important in their lives. Cultural studies show us that religious institutions continue to hold great influence over the young. What do the Pope, abstinence, and Christian rock bands have in common? All are seen as cool according to our polls.

Young people are comfortable with religious values co-existing in a secular world. Young people can sometimes seem to be living contradictions of themselves. They can listen to 50 Cent on their iPod® in one moment and ask “what would Jesus do?” in the next. They can dress provocatively while they are signing a “virginity pledge.” Yet, they are all about optimism, the future, and teamwork, all of which are themes that religion provides to them.

Today’s young people care about religion but they don’t tend to wear it on their sleeves. About half (49%) of teens say that people with strong religious beliefs are discriminated against in this country. It is cool to be religious – just not cool to express it too vociferously. The separation of church and state is a pillar of the US constitution, yet teens are caught between the political and religious worlds. While 31% of teens think that public officials don’t pay enough attention to religion and religious leaders, 39% think they pay too close attention to religion. On the whole, the data suggest that teens are unsure how they want their politicians to act. They want their politicians to

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Recent Research for Public Release

Editor’s note: The September 2005 issue of Trends & Tudes featured a description of a recent project conducted by Harris Interactive for America’s Promise. The question development and survey analysis for this study was conducted by Just Kid Inc. (JKI).

New Survey Reveals Ninety-Four Percent of Consumers Believe the Internet Poses a Threat to Children

According to a recently published survey commissioned by Zone Labs®, a Check Point® company, and conducted by Harris Interactive, the vast majority of consumers today believe that the Internet poses a threat to children, especially from online predators and pornography.

The survey shows that 94% of consumers believe the Internet presents a threat to children. 61% cited predators in chat rooms as the biggest threat, with an additional 16% citing pornographic websites.

The survey also reveals that, during a year where vulnerabilities, spyware and identity theft assailed news headlines, only 50% had installed a software firewall, and only 23% had installed a full security suite to secure their personal computer against such Internet threats. Not surprisingly, 78% do not feel safer computing online today compared to a year ago.

“These results corroborate the level of concern we regularly hear from our customers about the online safety of both adults and children,” said Laura Yecies, general manager at Zone Labs. “The Internet helps children of all ages advance academically and culturally. With proper guidance from parents combined with the latest preventative security technologies, we can protect their rights to these valuable learning tools.

To read the entire release, click here:

http://download.zonelabs.com/bin/free/pressReleases/2005/pr_15.html



What Do Kids and Teens Think?

This month, we offer responses – in young peoples’ own words – to the following question:

What was your favorite part about going back to school this Fall?

“Spending time with people I like. And learning stuff.”

“I’M IN HIGH SCHOOL NOW AND I FEEL MORE MATURE AND INDEPENDENT.”

“Meeting new people and getting to know people you didnt know last year.”

“Getting started in Junior High School and having multiple teachers.”

“To learn what I can so that I can get a good paying job in life, to help my family.”

“Not having to deal with the mind-numbing boredom of not being in school.”

“The realization that it is Senior year, and by May, I’ll be graduating and gone.”

“Buying new clothes and seeing friends I haven’t seen since the previous school year.”

Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery® Online Omnibus, US Youth ages 8-18; Sept. 14-20, 2005 (n=1,556).

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be religious, but not to bring it to the forefront of political discussions.

By their own admission, young people have concerns about moral values. Two-thirds (67%) told us that today's young people do not have as strong a sense of right and wrong as young people did 50 years ago. Most see their generation as being having a poorer sense of right and wrong than young people did 50 years ago. They don't think they are as religious as their parents are.

The need to "market" religion is an interesting topic. It can seem out-of-bounds to draw analogies between the establishment of religion and the marketing of products to the young. We do need to understand the myriad pressures a tween or young teen faces – and these include establishing their own sense of religion and values. Understanding this context is critical to anyone trying to secure something from youth – be it brand preference or lifelong adherence to a religious faith.

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Ask a Question...

And get some answers. Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuerySM youth omnibus. Just send us an email (HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net) with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of the newsletter. YouthQuery is your chance to ask one or a series of questions of 1,100 young consumers nationwide, and get accurate, projectable answers within days. To learn more about YouthQuery, contact us.

It's 8 a.m.—do you know what American kids are doing?

YouthPulseSM 2005 Released

You need to know almost as much about the youth market as you would if they were all your own children. How they spend their time, how they spend their money, their hopes, fears and aspirations and which parts of the kid experience are totally different today than they were a decade—or even a year—ago. YouthPulseSM is the only study covering these topics and hundreds of others for kids from age 8 to 21, and the 2005 study has just been released. To learn more about YouthPulse, contact us.

Get Smart!

Did you know that Harris Interactive conducts up to five free webinars a month? Spanning a variety of business issues facing a handful of industries, these one-hour interactive sessions allow you to catch up on the latest research advancement, proprietary industry findings, and best practices. Register for one or more sessions at <http://harrisinteractive.webex.com>. Visit often as our schedule changes weekly.

Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of *Trends & Tudes*, please visit our website at www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_k12.asp.

Contact Us

To make suggestions regarding this newsletter or to discuss a business issue involving youth or the people and issues that influence today's youth, please contact us at 877.919.4765 or info@harrisinteractive.com.

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