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Religion and Electronic Media

One-in-Five Americans Share Their Faith Online

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Religion and Electronic Media: One-in-Five Americans Share Their Faith Online

In an average week, one-in-five Americans share their religious faith online, about the same percentage that tune in to religious talk radio, watch religious TV programs or listen to Christian rock music. And nearly half of U.S. adults see someone else share their religious faith online in a typical week.

These are among the key findings from a survey conducted in May and June of 2014 that asked 3,217 adults from the Pew Research Center's nationally representative American Trends Panel whether they had engaged in various kinds of religious activities during the previous week. (For more about the American Trends Panel, see page 6.)

Fully 20% of Americans said they had shared their religious faith on social networking websites or apps (such as Facebook and Twitter) in the past week, and 46% said they had seen someone else share “something about their religious faith” online. The percentage of Americans who shared their own faith online is similar to the proportions who said they watched a religious TV program (23%), listened to religious talk radio (20%) or listened to Christian rock music (19%). Even more (40%) said they shared something about their religious faith “offline, in a real-life setting.” By way of comparison, in Pew Research telephone surveys conducted in 2014, 35% of Americans have reported attending religious services at least once a week.

The survey suggests that religious engagement through TV, radio, music and the internet generally complements – rather than replaces – traditional kinds of religious participation, such as going to church. Americans who said they frequently attend religious services were more likely to engage in these electronic religious activities than those who said they attend religious services less often. And white evangelicals and black Protestants — two groups with high levels of traditional religious observance — shared their faith online, watched religious TV and listened to religious talk radio more often than other large U.S. religious groups.

Participation in Electronic and Offline Religious Activities

% of U.S. adults who participated in each activity in the past week

<i>New media</i>	%
Saw religion shared online	46
Shared own faith online	20
<i>Old media</i>	
Watched religious television	23
Listened to religious talk radio	20
Listened to Christian rock	19
<i>Offline participation</i>	
Shared faith in real-life setting	40

Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4).
Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014.

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The survey also finds that young adults (ages 18-29) are about twice as likely as Americans ages 50 and older to see people sharing their faith online. This pattern reflects broader generational differences in technology adoption and media consumption, with young adults [using the internet](#) more than older people do. By contrast, watching religious television is considerably more common among older adults than among those under 30.

Electronic Forms of Religious Engagement

The survey finds that white evangelicals and black Protestants are far more likely than other major U.S. religious groups to say they watched a religious television program, shared their faith online or listened to a religious talk radio program during the previous week. And listening to Christian rock music is much more commonly reported by white evangelicals than by other religious groups that are large enough to be analyzed in the survey.

There are smaller differences between religious groups when it comes to seeing other people share their religion on social media websites or apps. For example, 50% of religiously unaffiliated adults say they saw

someone else share something about their religious faith on social networking sites or apps during the past week, about the same as the share of white evangelicals (47%) and somewhat higher than the share of Catholics (39%) who report seeing someone else share their faith online.

Americans who say they attend religious services frequently are more likely to say they engage in electronic forms of religious activity than those who attend services less often. For example, among adults who say they attend religious services at least once a week, 31% report sharing their faith online in the previous week, compared with just 8% of those who seldom or never attend religious services. And those who attend services weekly are nearly six times more likely to say they listen to religious talk radio than those who seldom or never attend services at a church or other house of worship (35% vs. 6%).

White Evangelicals and Black Protestants Most Likely to Participate in Electronic Religious Activities

% of U.S. adults who participated in each activity during the past week

	New media		Old media		
	Saw religion shared online	Shared own faith online	Watched religious TV	Listened to religious talk radio	Listened to Christian rock
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	46	20	23	20	19
Protestant	46	27	32	28	27
White evangelical	47	34	39	35	37
White mainline	43	15	15	10	18
Black Protestant	43	30	45	37	19
Catholic	39	15	21	15	11
Unaffiliated	50	7	7	8	9
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>					
Weekly or more	50	31	36	35	30
Monthly/yearly	47	20	20	16	18
Seldom/never	39	8	11	6	7

Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. Whites and blacks include those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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Nearly six-in-ten adults under age 50 (including 61% of those ages 18-29) say they saw someone else share their religion online in the past week. Far fewer older adults (37% of those ages 50-64 and 22% of those 65 and older) say they saw online faith sharing in the preceding week.

Older adults, by contrast, are far more likely than younger adults to say they watched religious

television in the past week. One-third of Americans ages 50 and older (including 38% of those 65 and older) say they watched religious television in the past week, compared with just 15% of adults under 50.

Younger Americans See More Faith Sharing Online While Older Adults Watch More Religious TV

% of U.S. adults who participated in each activity during the past week

	New media		Old media		
	Saw religion shared online %	Shared faith online %	Watched religious TV %	Listened to religious talk radio %	Listened to Christian rock %
Ages 18-49	58	21	15	18	22
18-29	61	21	12	14	21
30-49	56	21	18	20	23
Ages 50+	31	19	32	23	14
50-64	37	21	29	25	19
65+	22	16	38	21	7

Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014.

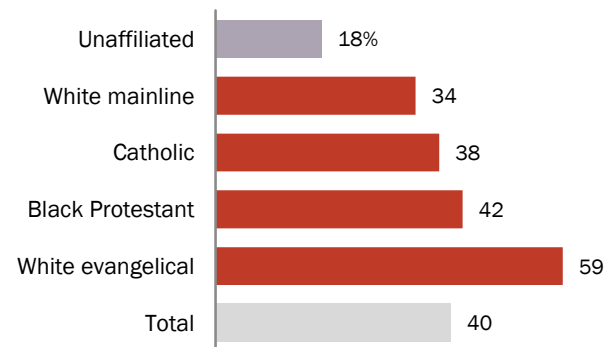
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Offline Faith Sharing

Roughly six-in-ten white evangelical Protestants report that they shared something about their religious faith offline, in a “real-life setting,” during the preceding week.¹ Roughly four-in-ten black Protestants (42%) and Catholics (38%) also say they had shared their faith in the previous week, as do 34% of white mainline Protestants. Among religious “nones,” 18% say they had shared something about their religious views offline in the last week.

Nearly Six-in-Ten White Evangelicals Shared Something About Their Faith in Past Week

% of American adults who shared something about their faith offline, in a real-life setting, during the past week



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. Whites and blacks include those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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¹ Faith sharing does not necessarily mean evangelizing or proselytizing. The survey question asked respondents whether they had “shared something about” their “religious faith offline, in a real-life setting.” This could include a wide range of interactions, such as offering a prayer or blessing, quoting from scripture or describing a religious experience, to mention only a few possibilities.

About the American Trends Panel Surveys (ATP)

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by the Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected adults in U.S. households. Respondents who self-identify as internet users (representing 89% of U.S. adults) participate in the panel via monthly self-administered Web surveys, and those who do not use the internet participate via telephone or mail. The panel is being managed by Abt SRBI.

Data in this report are drawn from the June wave of the panel, conducted May 30-June 30, 2014, among 3,217 respondents (2,849 by Web and 368 by mail). The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 3,217 respondents is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points.

All current members of the American Trends Panel were originally recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, a large (n=10,013) national landline and cellphone random digit dial (RDD) survey conducted Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014, in English and Spanish. At the end of that survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The invitation was extended to all respondents who use the internet (from any location) and a random subsample of respondents who do not use the internet.²

Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel. A total of 5,338 agreed to participate and provided either a mailing address or an email address to which a welcome packet, a monetary incentive and future survey invitations could be sent. Panelists also receive a small monetary incentive after participating in each wave of the survey.

The ATP data were weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that some panelists were subsampled for invitation to the panel. Next, an adjustment was made for the fact that the propensity to join the panel varied across different groups in the sample. The final step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, telephone service, population density and region to parameters from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey. It also adjusts for party affiliation using an average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys, and adjusts for internet use using as a parameter a measure from the 2014 Survey of Political Polarization. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The Hispanic sample in the American Trends Panel is predominantly native born and English speaking. In

² When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.

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.

The Web component of the June wave had a response rate of 60% (2,849 responses among 4,729 Web-based individuals enrolled in the panel); the mail component had a response rate of 66% (368 responses among 556 non-Web users enrolled in the panel). Taking into account the response rate for the 2014 Survey of Political Polarization (10.6%), the cumulative response rate for the June ATP wave is 3.5%.

The accompanying table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for groups discussed in the report.

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Sample Size and Margin of Error for American Trends Panel (Wave 4)

	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus...
Total	3,217	2.2 percentage points
Ages 18-29	470	5.8 percentage points
30-49	875	4.3 percentage points
50-64	1,061	3.9 percentage points
65+	794	4.5 percentage points
Protestant	1,509	3.3 percentage points
White evangelical	592	5.2 percentage points
White mainline	584	5.2 percentage points
Black Protestant	170	9.7 percentage points
Catholic	629	5.0 percentage points
Unaffiliated	703	4.8 percentage points

Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. Whites and blacks include those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

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**2014 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 4 JUNE**

TOPLINE

MAY 30-JUNE 30, 2014

TOTAL N=3,217

WEB RESPONDENTS N=2,849

MAIL RESPONDENTS N=368³

ALL OTHER QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED OR HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

RANDOMIZE ORDER OF ITEMS; ITEM F ALWAYS LAST

ASK ALL:

REL6. **Which, if any, of the following did you do during the past week?**

[Check all that apply]

	<u>Yes</u>	Not selected/ <u>No answer</u>
a. Listened to Christian rock	19	81
b. Watched a religious program on television	23	77
c. Listened to a religious talk radio program	20	80
d. Shared something about your religious faith on social networking websites/apps	20	80
e. Saw someone else share something about their religious faith on social networking websites/apps	46	54
f. Shared something about your religious faith offline, in a real-life setting	40	60

³ Question wording in this topline is that from the Web version of the survey. Question wording and format was adapted for the paper questionnaire delivered by mail; this questionnaire is available on request. All questions asked in both modes unless noted.