

INCREASING SUPPORT FOR RELIGIOUSLY BASED SERVICE REFUSALS

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Religiously Based Refusals to Serve LGBT People

Gays and Lesbians

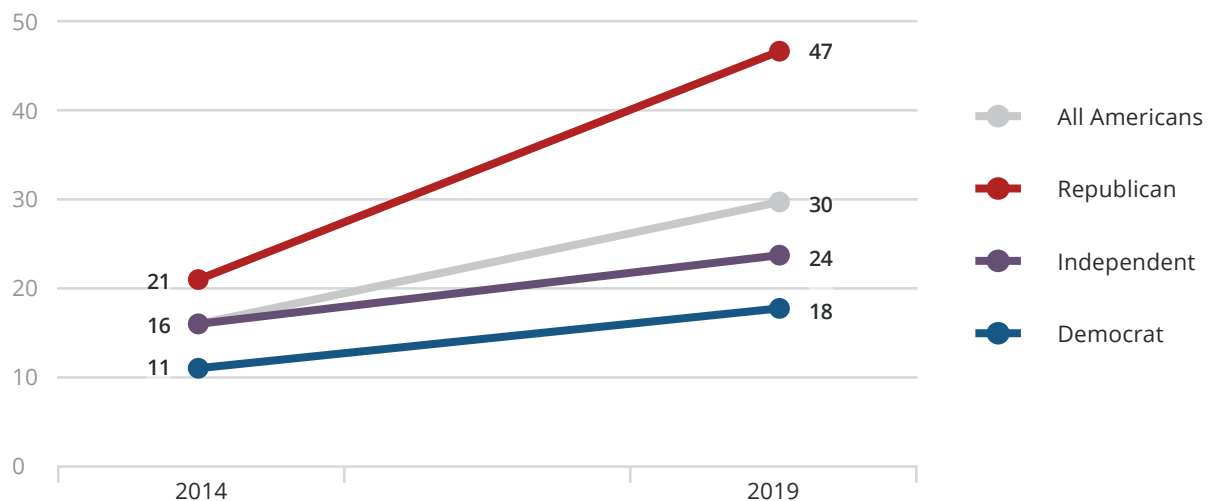
Three in ten (30%) Americans say they think it should be permissible for a small business owner in their state to refuse to provide services to gay or lesbian people if doing so violates their religious beliefs, while two-thirds (67%) say they should *not* be allowed to do so.

Support for religiously based service refusals have increased across virtually every demographic group since 2014, when only 16% of Americans said small businesses should be allowed to refuse service to gay or lesbian customers because of religious beliefs, and 80% said they should not.¹

Opinions on this issue, however, differ by gender, age, and race. More than one-third (34%) of men, compared to 26% of women, say businesses should be allowed to refuse services to gay or lesbian people. This is an increase from 2014, when only 19% of men and 14% of women

FIGURE 1. Support for Religiously Based Refusals to Serve Gay and Lesbian People, by Party Affiliation

Percent who say: A small business owner in their state should be allowed to refuse to provide products or services to gay or lesbian people, if doing so violates their religious beliefs.



Sources: PRRI May 2014 Survey; PRRI April 2019 Survey.

¹ Source: PRRI May 2014 Survey. All references to 2014 in this report refer to these data.

agreed that businesses should be permitted to refuse to serve gays and lesbians on the basis of their religious beliefs.

Seniors ages 65 and older (39%) are more likely than young Americans ages 18-29 (26%) to favor religiously based service refusals targeting gays and lesbians. Every age group has increased support since 2014, when only 17% of seniors and only 12% of young Americans supported allowing businesses to refuse to serve gay or lesbian people on religious grounds. One-third (33%) of white Americans, compared to nearly one-fourth (24%) of nonwhite Americans, agreed. White Americans have nearly doubled their support since 2014 (16%).

While there are no differences on this issue by educational attainment, similar increases in support for refusing service to gays and lesbians on religious grounds occurred across the board during the last two years, from those with a high school diploma or less (17% to 28%), some college (15% to 29%), and college graduates (17% to 32%).

Republicans are divided on whether small businesses should be allowed to refuse gay or lesbian people (47% favor, 48% oppose). This number has more than doubled from 2014, when only 21% of Republicans said these types of religiously based service refusals should be allowed.

By contrast, only 18% of Democrats and 24% of independents currently support these kinds of religiously based service refusals. These numbers are also up from 2014, when only 11% of Democrats and 16% of independents agreed that service refusals based on religion should be allowed.

When it comes to religious affiliation, white Protestants are substantially more likely to support religiously based service refusals. Around four in ten white evangelical Protestants (42%) and slightly fewer white mainline Protestants (37%) say that small businesses should be allowed to refuse products or services to gay or lesbian people if doing so would violate their religious beliefs. Support is lower among Catholics (28%), nonwhite Protestants (26%), and the religiously unaffiliated (22%).

Support for these service refusals is up across every religious group compared to 2014, when substantially fewer white evangelical Protestants (26%), white mainline Protestants (13%), Catholics (15%), nonwhite Protestants (16%), and the religiously unaffiliated (12%) agreed that religious faith could exempt businesses from serving gays and lesbians.

Transgender People

Notably, there are few differences between beliefs about small business owners refusing service to transgender people and refusing service to gays and lesbians. Three in ten (29%) Americans say they think small business owners in their state should be allowed to refuse to provide

products or services to transgender people, if doing so violates their religious beliefs, compared to 68% who say they should not be allowed to do this.

Compared to religiously based refusals to serve gays and lesbians, support for allowing small businesses to opt out of serving transgender people is roughly the same across every demographic group: men (34%), women (24%), Republicans (44%), independents (25%), Democrats (19%), white evangelical Protestants (38%), white mainline Protestants (39%), Catholics (27%), nonwhite Protestants (22%), and religiously unaffiliated Americans (23%).

One exception is among different age groups. While younger Americans show similar levels of support for refusing to serve gays and lesbians and refusing to serve transgender people, seniors (ages 65 and older) are more likely to support allowing businesses to reject gays or lesbians on religious grounds (39%) than allowing businesses to reject transgender people (30%).

Religiously Based Refusals to Serve Other Groups

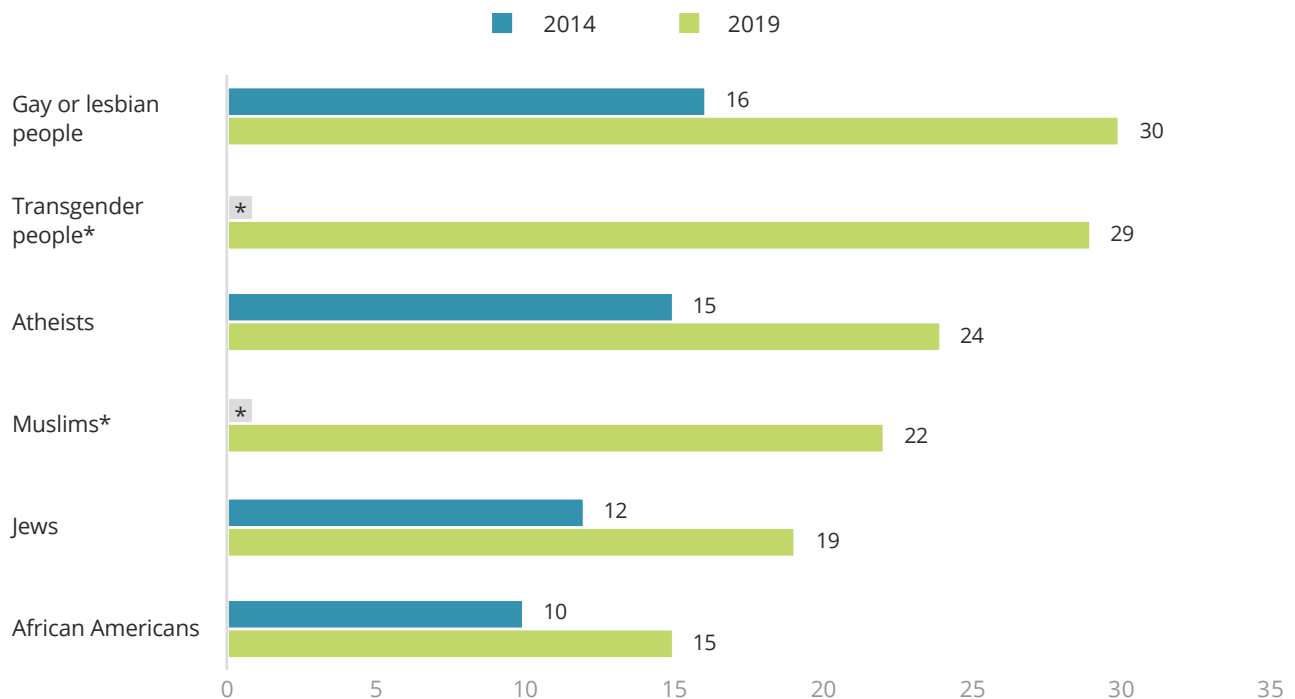
By contrast, there is generally less support for allowing small business owners to refuse to serve African Americans, Jews, Muslims, and atheists, if serving these groups would violate the owner's religious beliefs. However, the number of Americans who support religiously based refusals to serve each of these groups has increased in the last five years.

Atheists

Nearly one-quarter (24%) of Americans say small businesses should be allowed to refuse to serve atheists if doing so is against their religious beliefs – support that has climbed nearly 10 percentage points since 2014 (15%).

FIGURE 2. Support for Religiously Based Refusals to Serve Groups

Percent who say: A small business owner in their state should be allowed to refuse to provide products or services to the following groups, if doing so violates their religious beliefs.



*Note: No data available for 2014.

Sources: PRRI May 2014 Survey; PRRI April 2019 Survey.

Men are more likely than women to say small business owners should be allowed to refuse service to atheists on religious grounds (29% vs. 21%), but there are no substantial differences by age.

Republicans (37%) are more likely than independents (21%) and Democrats (17%) to say small businesses should be allowed to refuse service to atheists. Though support levels are mostly stable for Democrats, Republicans have nearly doubled their support level compared to 2014 (19%).

Support for these religiously based service refusals targeting atheists has also increased among most major religious groups since 2014, including white evangelical Protestants (up to 35% from 21%), white mainline Protestants (up to 29% from 9%), nonwhite Protestants (up to 23% from 14%), and Catholics (up to 22% from 13%). The religiously unaffiliated have largely remained consistent in their attitudes on this issue (17% vs. 14%).

Muslims

Support for religiously based service refusals aimed at Muslims is similar to opinions about service refusals aimed at atheists. Just over one in five (22%) Americans say small businesses should be able to refuse to serve Muslims on religious grounds.² Men are more likely than women to agree (25% vs. 20%).

There are no substantial differences by age in support for such policies. Republicans (32%) are more likely than independents (20%) and Democrats (14%) to say small businesses should be allowed to refuse service to Muslims.

Attitudes differ by race and religious affiliation as well. Around three in ten white evangelical Protestants (32%) and white mainline Protestants (28%) say small businesses should be allowed to refuse to serve Muslims for religious reasons, compared to around one in five nonwhite Protestants (21%), Catholics (19%), and the religiously unaffiliated (17%) who say the same.

Jews

The proportion of Americans who say small businesses should be able to refuse to serve Jews on religious grounds is up seven percentage points (19% in 2019 vs. 12% in 2014). Republicans (24%) are more likely than independents (16%) and Democrats (17%) to say small businesses should be allowed to refuse service to Jews. Support is up from 2014, when only 16% of Republicans and nine percent of Democrats supported this sort of service refusal.

Men are also more likely than women to say small business owners should be allowed to refuse service to Jews (22% vs. 16%). Support for all of these refusals is up for both men and women, with only around one in ten each for men and women endorsing these types of religiously based service refusals in 2014, though this increase is not significant among women. Though there are

2 No trend data are available here as this group was not included in the 2014 survey.

no substantial differences by age in support for religiously based service refusals that target Jews, support has increased across all age groups since 2014.

Support for these religiously based service refusals has also increased among most major religious groups since 2014. Support for denying service to Jews has roughly doubled among white evangelical Protestants (up to 24% from 12% in 2014), white mainline Protestants (up to 26% from 11%), and Catholics (up to 20% from 10%), while the religiously unaffiliated (11% vs. 11%) and nonwhite Protestants (19% vs. 14%) have remained mostly stable in their attitudes on these issues.

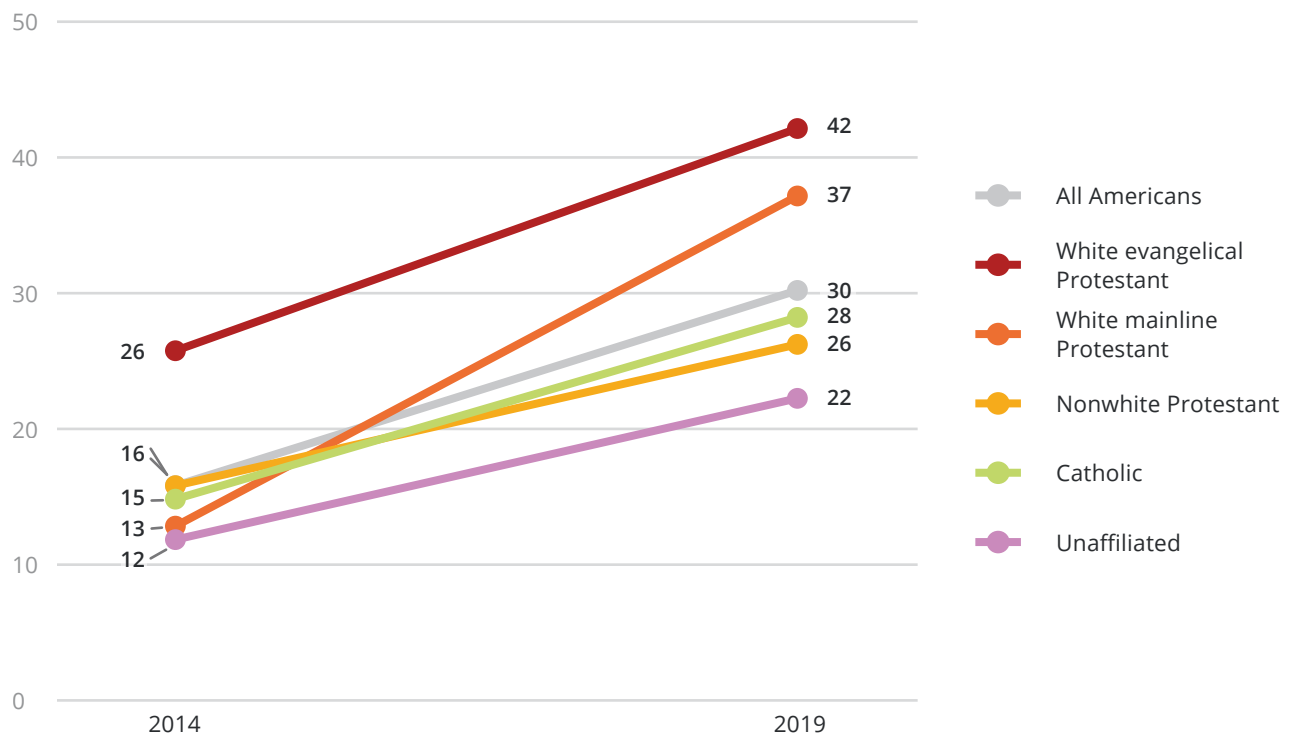
African Americans

Fifteen percent of Americans say small businesses should be allowed to refuse to serve African Americans, if doing so violates their religious beliefs, a five-percentage point increase from 2014 (10%).

Men are more likely than women to agree (18% vs. 13%), with support up six percentage points for men (12% in 2014). Attitudes among women have largely remained stable. There are few

FIGURE 3. Support for Religiously Based Refusals to Serve Gay and Lesbian People, by Religious Affiliation

Percent who say: A small business owner in their state should be allowed to refuse to provide products or services to gay or lesbian people, if doing so violates their religious beliefs.



Sources: PRRI May 2014 Survey; PRRI April 2019 Survey.

differences by party affiliation or age in support for allowing small businesses to deny service to African Americans based on their religious beliefs.

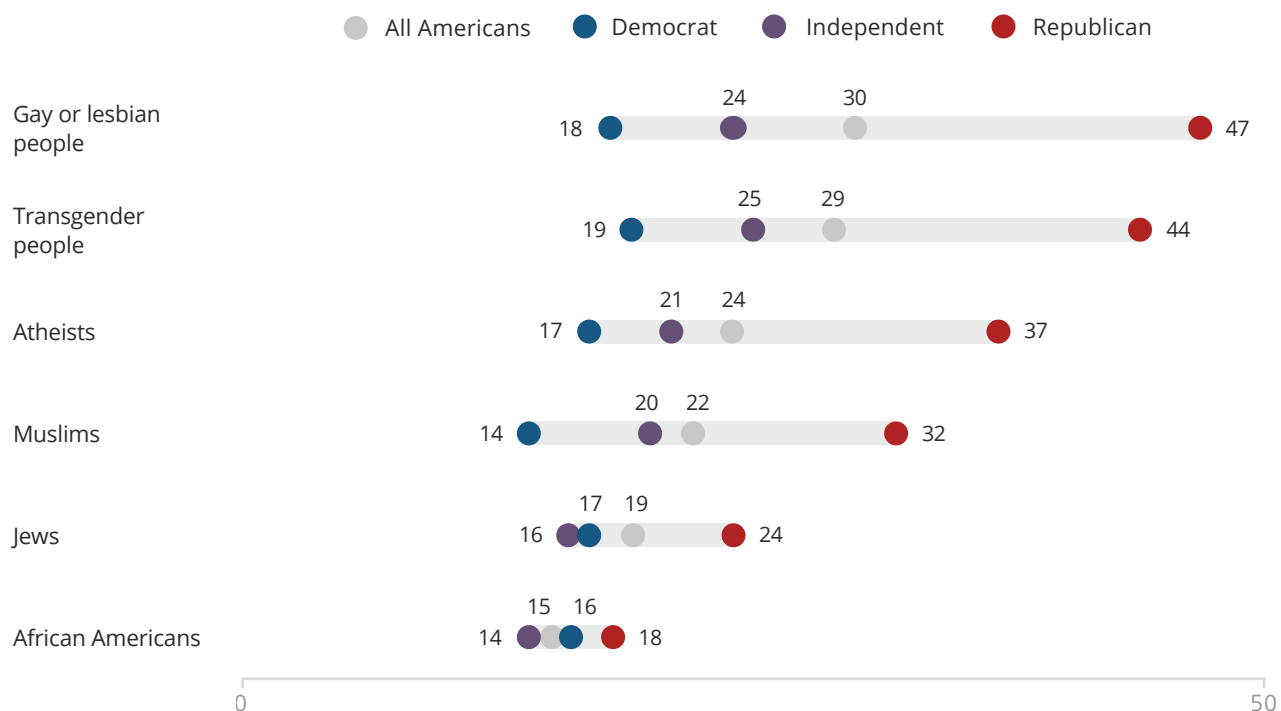
Support for religiously based service refusals targeting African Americans has more than doubled among white evangelical Protestants (up to 22% now from 8% in 2014) and white mainline Protestants (up to 22% from 5%), while the religiously unaffiliated (10% vs. 11%), Catholics (14% vs. 12%), and nonwhite Protestants (14% vs. 10%) have remained mostly stable in their attitudes on these issues.

Support for Religiously Based Service Refusals by Party

Looking across these six groups, a distinct pattern emerges across lines of political party affiliation. Republicans are more than twice as likely as Democrats to support religiously based refusals to serve gay or lesbian people (47% vs. 18%), transgender people (44% vs. 19%), atheists (37% vs. 17%), and Muslims (32% vs. 14%). While the partisan disparity is not as large, Republicans are also seven percentage points more likely than Democrats to favor religiously based refusals to serve Jews. The only group where this is no significant partisan difference is support for allowing businesses to refuse to serve African Americans.

FIGURE 4. Support for Religiously Based Refusals to Serve Groups, by Party Affiliation

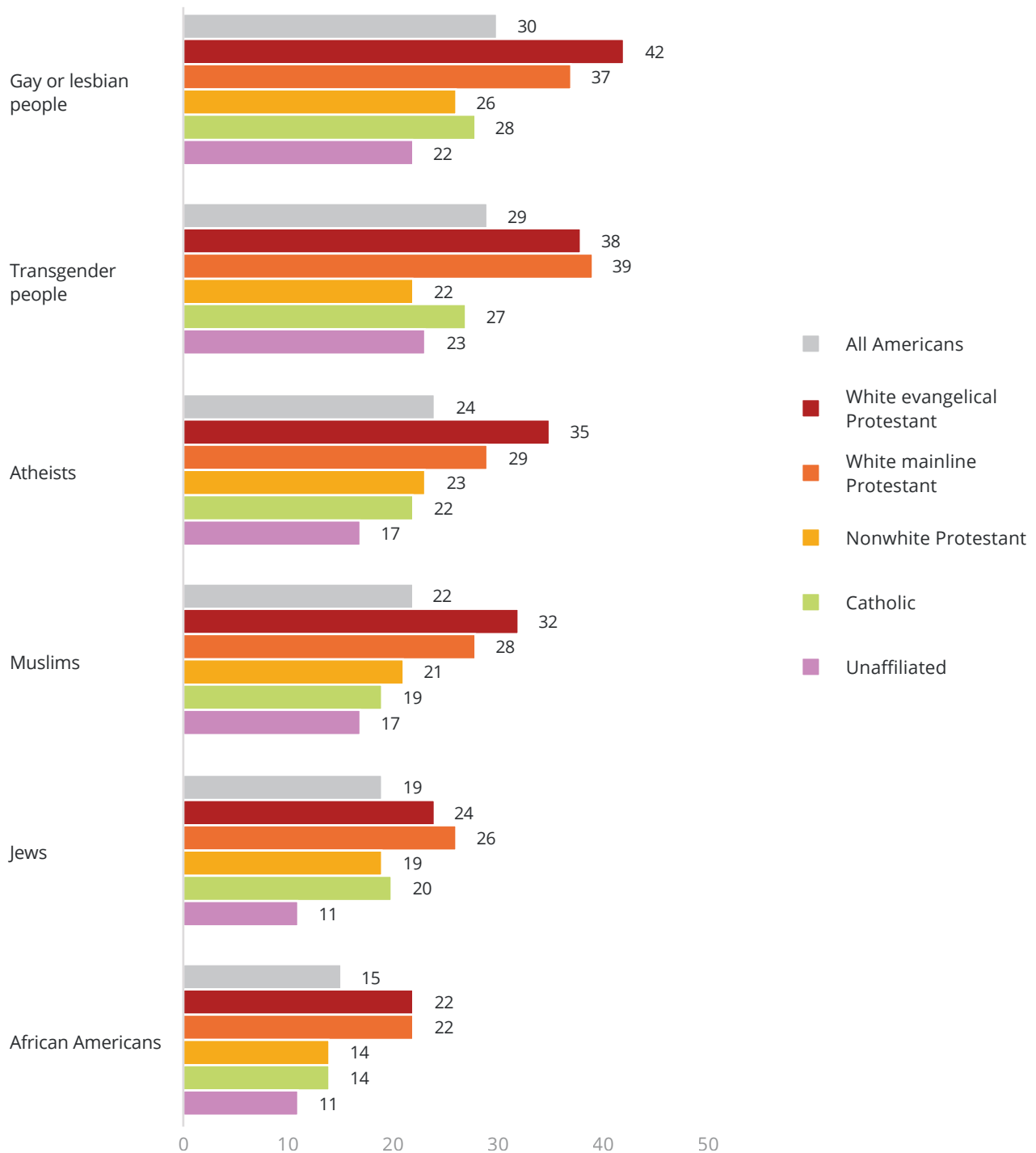
Percent who say: A small business owner in their state should be allowed to refuse to provide products or services to the following groups, if doing so violates their religious beliefs.



Source: PRRI April 2019 Survey.

FIGURE 5. Support for Religiously Based Refusals to Serve Groups, by Religious Affiliation

Percent who say: A small business owner in their state should be allowed to refuse to provide products or services to the following groups, if doing so violates their religious beliefs.



Source: PRRI April 2019 Survey.

Support for Religiously Based Service Refusals by Religious Affiliation

There is also a distinct pattern across religious traditions.

White Protestants are the most likely to support religiously based service refusals in every case, with white evangelical Protestants and white mainline Protestants showing similar numbers in most cases. Both white evangelical Protestants (24%) and white mainline Protestants (26%) are more than twice as likely to support religiously based refusals to serve Jews than the religiously unaffiliated (11%).

The same is true of support for religiously based refusals to serve African Americans when comparing the white Protestant groups (22% each) to the religiously unaffiliated (11%). Catholics and nonwhite Protestants tend to be more aligned with the religiously unaffiliated than the white Protestant groups, with the exception of religiously based refusals to serve Jewish people, where Catholic support (20%) and nonwhite Protestant support (19%) are close to the white evangelical Protestant (24%) and white mainline Protestant (26%) numbers.

Appendix 1: Survey Methodology

The survey was designed and conducted by PRRI. The survey was made possible by generous grants from the **Arcus Foundation** and the **E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation**. Results of the survey were based on bilingual (Spanish and English) RDD telephone interviews conducted between April 9 and April 20, 2019, by professional interviewers under the direction of SSRS. Interviews were conducted among a random sample of 1,100 adults 18 years of age or older living in the United States (668 respondents were interviewed on a cell phone). The survey also over-sampled those living in Texas (150). The selection of respondents within households was accomplished by randomly requesting to speak with the youngest adult male or female currently living in the household.

Data collection is based on stratified, single-stage, random-digit-dialing (RDD) sample of landline telephone households and randomly generated cell phone numbers. The sample is designed to represent the total U.S. adult population and includes respondents from all 50 states, including Hawaii and Alaska. The landline and cell phone samples are provided by Marketing Systems Group.

This SSRS Omnibus insert was weighted to provide nationally representative and projectable estimates of the adult population 18 years of age and older as well as the adult population in Texas. The weighting process took into account the disproportionate probabilities of household and respondent selection due to the number of separate telephone landlines and cellphones answered by respondents and their households, as well as the probability associated with the random selection of an individual household member. Following application of the above

Table A1. Demographic, Political, Religious, and Geographic Subgroup Sample Sizes

	General Public (unweighted)
Total sample	1,100
Male	594
Female	506
Republican	352
Independent	359
Democrat	328
White, non-Hispanic	759
Hispanic	152
Age 18-29	144
30-49	322
50-64	262
65+	369
White evangelical Protestant	207
White mainline Protestant	185
Nonwhite Protestant	121
Catholic	252
<i>White Catholic</i>	149
<i>Nonwhite Catholic</i>	103
Religiously unaffiliated	225

weights, the sample was post-stratified and balanced by key demographics such as age, race, sex, region, and education. The sample was also weighted to reflect the distribution of phone usage in the general population, meaning the proportion of those who are cell phone only, landline only, and mixed users.

With the base-weight applied, the sample underwent the process of iterative proportional fitting (IPF), in which the sample was balanced to match known adult-population parameters based on the most recent March Supplement of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS).³ This process of weighting was repeated until the root mean square error for the differences between the sample and the population parameters was 0 or near-zero. Two raking groups were used to account for the National and the oversample of Texas.

The National population parameters used for post-stratification are: Age (18-29; 30-49; 50-64; 65+) by Gender, Census region (Northeast, North-Central, South, West) by Gender, Education (less than high school, high school graduate, some college, four-year college or more), Race/ethnicity (white non-Hispanic; Black non-Hispanic; Hispanic and born in the U.S.; Hispanic and born outside of the U.S.;⁴ Other non-Hispanic), Marital status (married/not married), Population density (divided into quintiles) and Phone-usage (cell phone only, landline only, both).

The Texas parameters used for post-stratification are: Age (TX 18-29; TX 30-49; TX 50-64; TX 65+), Gender (TX Male; TX Female), Education (TX less than high school, TX high school graduate, TX some college, TX four-year college or more), Race/Ethnicity (TX white non-Hispanic; TX Black non-Hispanic; TX Hispanic and born in the U.S.; TX Hispanic and born outside of the U.S.; TX Other non-Hispanic), and Phone-usage (TX cell phone only; TX landline only; TX both).

The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IPF) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations.

The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The design effect for the survey is 1.39. In addition to sampling error, surveys may also be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context and order effects.

3 Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles, and J. Robert Warren. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 6.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V6.0>

4 Since this is meant to address the percent of Spanish speakers in the weighted sample, respondents born in Puerto Rico are included with those born outside of the U.S.

Appendix 2: About PRRI and the Authors

PRRI

PRRI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to research at the intersection of religion, values, and public life.

Our mission is to help journalists, opinion leaders, scholars, clergy, and the general public better understand debates on public policy issues and the role of religion and values in American public life by conducting high quality public opinion surveys and qualitative research.

PRRI is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), the American Political Science Association (APSA), and the American Academy of Religion (AAR), and follows the highest research standards of independence and academic excellence.

We are also a member organization of the National Council on Public Polls, an association of polling organizations established in 1969, which sets the highest professional standards for public opinion researchers. PRRI is also a supporting organization of the Transparency Initiative at AAPOR, an initiative to place the value of openness at the center of the public opinion research profession.

As a nonpartisan, independent research organization, PRRI does not take positions on, nor do we advocate for, particular policies. Research supported by our funders reflects PRRI's commitment to independent inquiry and academic rigor. Research findings and conclusions are never altered to accommodate other interests, including those of funders, other organizations, or government bodies and officials.

History

Since PRRI's founding in 2009, our research has become a standard source of trusted information among journalists, scholars, policy makers, clergy, and the general public. PRRI research has been cited in thousands of media stories and academic publications, and plays a leading role in deepening public understanding of the changing religious landscape and its role in shaping American politics.

For a full list of recent projects, see our research page: <http://www.prri.org/research/>

PRRI also maintains a lively online presence on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/prripoll>) and Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/prripoll>).

About the Authors

Robert P. Jones, Ph.D., CEO and Founder

Dr. Robert P. Jones is the CEO of PRRI and a leading scholar and commentator on religion, values, and public life. He is the author of *The End of White Christian America* and two other books, and numerous peer-review articles on religion and public policy. Dr. Jones writes a column for The Atlantic online on politics and culture and appears regularly in a “Faith by the Numbers” segment on Interfaith Voices, the nation’s leading religion news magazine on public radio. He is frequently featured in major national media such as MSNBC, CNN, NPR, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and others.

Dr. Jones serves as the Co-Chair of the national steering committee for the Religion and Politics Section at the American Academy of Religion and is a member of the editorial board for “Politics and Religion,” a journal published by Cambridge University Press for the American Political Science Association. He is also an active member of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, the Society of Christian Ethics, and the American Association of Public Opinion Research. He holds a Ph.D. in religion from Emory University, where he specialized in sociology of religion, politics, and religious ethics. He also holds a M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a B.S. in Mathematics and Computing Science from Mississippi College. In 2013, Dr. Jones was selected by Emory University’s Graduate Division of Religion as Distinguished Alumnus of the Year. In 2016, Dr. Jones was selected by Mississippi College’s Mathematics Department as Alumnus of the Year.

Before founding PRRI, Dr. Jones worked as a consultant and senior research fellow at several think tanks in Washington, DC, and was assistant professor of religious studies at Missouri State University.

Natalie Jackson, Ph.D., Director of Research

Natalie has held senior and management positions in media, academia, and nonprofit organizations. Most recently, she was the Managing Director of Polling at JUST Capital, where she has built and managed a survey research team, as well as contributed to the overall mission and strategy of the nonprofit organization. Natalie received her PhD in political science from the University of Oklahoma and was a postdoctoral associate at the Duke University Initiative on Survey Methodology. Her work has appeared in peer-reviewed journals *Electoral Studies* and *Social Science Quarterly*, as well as in several edited volumes.

Maxine Najle, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate

Dr. Maxine Najle is a research associate at PRRI, specializing in religious belief and morality.

She has coauthored a number of academic book chapters, journal articles, and conference papers on topics relating to religion and morality. Dr. Najle holds an MS and PhD in Experimental Psychology from the University of Kentucky, where she focused on perceptions of morality and attitudes towards atheists. Before joining PRRI, she served as a graduate fellow at the University of Kentucky Center for Equality and Social Justice.

Oyindamola Bola, Research Assistant

Ms. Bola brings experience in conducting research on topics ranging from religion and social inequality to culture and politics.

She has designed and implemented pilot surveys and in-depth interviews, as well as contributed to reports. Notably, as an undergraduate student, she authored an academic book chapter on the relationship between social capital and religiosity. Ms. Bola holds a BA in Sociology with minors in Religious Studies & Critical and Cultural Theory from The Ohio State University. Prior to joining PRRI, she served as a research intern at the Pew Research Center and the University of Chicago. Through her work in Chicago, she began a continuing project on the sermons and identity of African American women who preach in urban areas.

Daniel Greenberg, Research Assistant

Mr. Greenberg brings to PRRI an expertise in public policy, with a focus on elections, and an in-depth understanding of public opinion polling. He received a BA from Wesleyan University, where he graduated with honors in History and from the College of Social Studies. He also received a Masters' of Public Policy from Georgetown University, where he wrote a thesis examining structural restrictions to gerrymandering. Prior to joining PRRI, he served as a research analyst at Lake Research Partners.

A blurred, low-angle photograph of several people sitting around a table in a meeting or conference room. The image is dark and out of focus, with a blue tint. The people are silhouetted against a lighter background, possibly a window or a screen.

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