

We mostly like Jews, Catholics, and evangelicals! Do they like us?

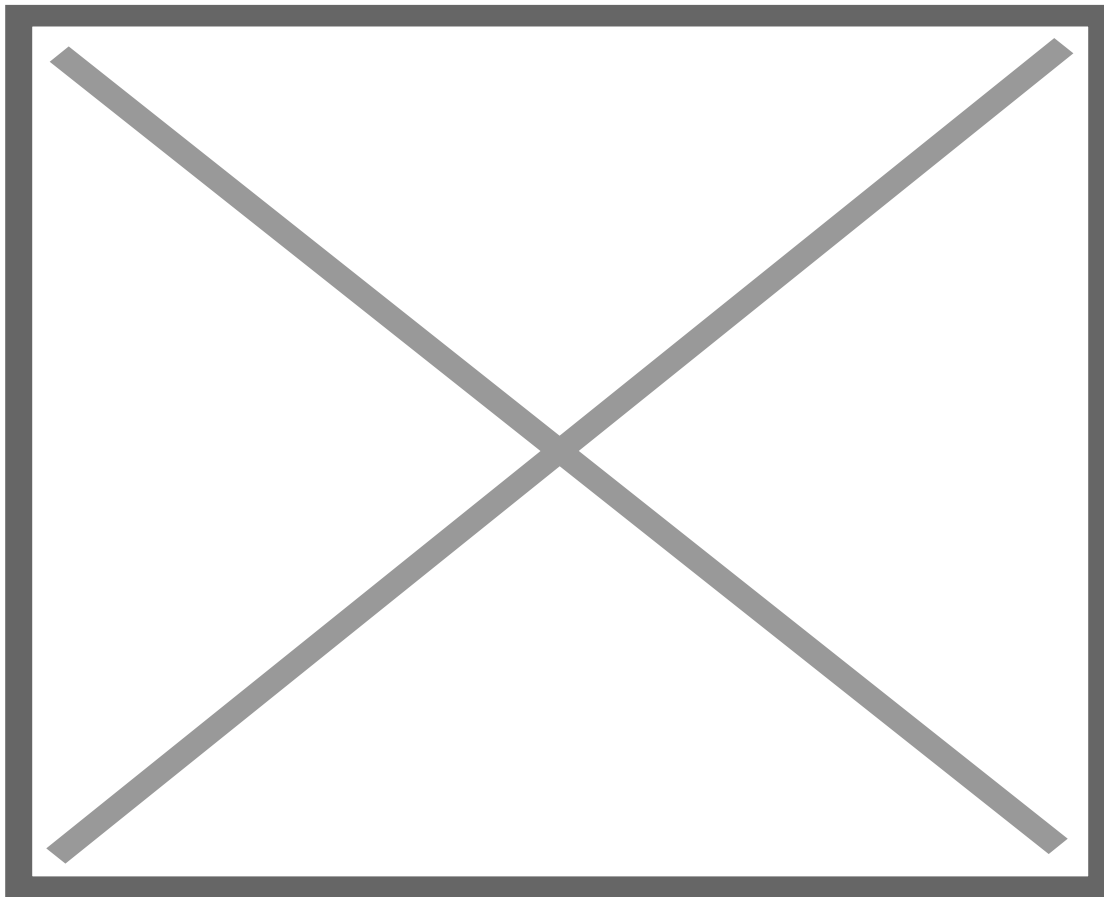
By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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How do American people-of-faith feel about American people-of-different-faith?

The Pew Forum has [a new polling report on this question](#). It seems Catholics have a slightly higher view of Jews than vice versa, while white evangelicals' view of Jews is *much* higher than Jews' view of evangelicals. White mainline Protestants have moderately positive views of Jews, Catholics, and evangelicals, while the opposite is....

Huh, okay. The opposite is *not a question included in the poll*:



Pew [didn't ask people](#) (pdf) how they felt about mainline Protestants, by that name or any other. The only Christian groups asked about were Catholics and evangelical Christians. The Protestant *respondents* are split into three groups—white evangelical, white mainline, black Protestant. But only evangelicals (of whatever color) merited an actual question. Why?

I'm sure there was a time when this seemed obvious to many: *mainliners aren't a specific group that people in the culture have opinions about; they're the culture itself*. These days, most mainline leaders I know can critique this sort of hegemonic view in their sleep. To say nothing of the fact that [the numbers didn't support it even in](#)

[the mainline's alleged heyday](#). Certainly not now, years after [Pew's own people started calling evangelicals the new mainline](#).

Yes, the word "mainline" itself implies this sort of assumed cultural dominance. I'm among those who persist in using the word not out of enthusiasm for it but simply [for lack of a good alternative](#). But I can't see the nomenclature itself being the issue here; Pew could have asked about progressive Protestants or liberal Protestants or whatever.

I don't know why they didn't. (It's [not like they're the Barna Group](#) or something.) The results are predictable: headlines like "[Evangelicals, Catholics, Jews Viewed Warmly](#)." Mainline Protestants aren't necessarily viewed coolly, like atheists and Muslims. We just aren't viewed at all.

I for one would much rather see my tradition considered as one option among many than as some kind of default. I would, however, like it to actually be considered among them.