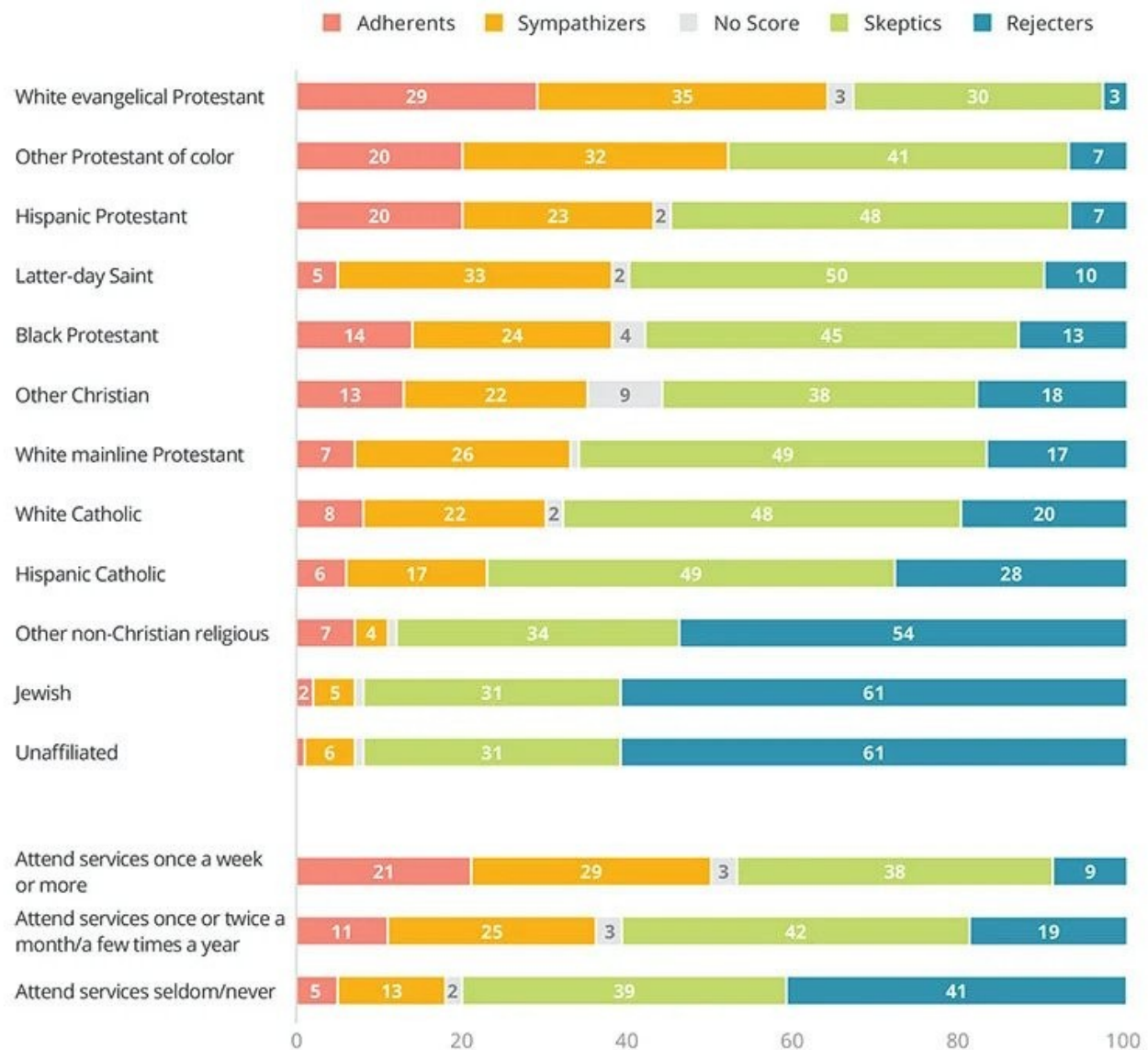Poll: A third of US adults are Christian nationalists

by [Yonat Shimron](#)

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FIGURE 3. The Christian Nationalism Scale, by Religious Subgroups
Percent who are:

Legend: ■ Adherents ■ Sympathizers ▢ No Score ■ Skeptics ■ Rejecters

Subgroup	Adherents	Sympathizers	No Score	Skeptics	Rejecters
White evangelical Protestant	29	35	3	30	3
Other Protestant of color	20	32		41	7
Hispanic Protestant	20	23	2	48	7
Latter-day Saint	5	33	2	50	10
Black Protestant	14	24	4	45	13
Other Christian	13	22	9	38	18
White mainline Protestant	7	26		49	17
White Catholic	8	22	2	48	20
Hispanic Catholic	6	17		49	28
Other non-Christian religious	7	4		34	54
Jewish	2	5		31	61
Unaffiliated		6		31	61
Attend services once a week or more	21	29	3	38	9
Attend services once or twice a month/a few times a year	11	25	3	42	19
Attend services seldom/never	5	13	2	39	41

Source: PRRI/Brookings Christian Nationalism Survey, 2023.

A new survey finds that fewer than a third of adults in the United States, or 29 percent, qualify as Christian nationalists, and of those, two-thirds define themselves as White evangelicals.

The [survey](#) of 6,212 US adults by the Public Religion Research Institute and the Brookings Institution is the largest yet to gauge the size and scope of Christian nationalist beliefs.

It finds that 10 percent of US adults are avowed Christian nationalists, what the survey calls "adherents," while an additional 19 percent are sympathetic to Christian nationalist ideals.

Among White evangelical Protestants, nearly two-thirds are either White Christian nationalism adherents or sympathizers. Support for Christian nationalism is significantly smaller among Asian American, mixed race, Black, and Hispanic Protestants. Majorities of White mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, members of other non-Christian faiths, and those who are unaffiliated with any religion, on the other hand, reject or mostly reject Christian nationalism. (The survey calls them "skeptics" and "rejecters.")

Attention to Christian nationalism has grown rapidly in the past few years, especially in the wake of the January 6 attack on the US Capitol. The term describes a religious and political belief system that argues the United States was founded by God to be a Christian nation. In the survey, supporters of Christian nationalism were identified by their responses to five statements, including: "The U.S. should be declared a Christian nation," and "God has called Christians to exercise dominion over all areas of American society." They were then assigned a place on a Christian nationalism scale.

Unlike other studies that have suggested Christian nationalists are only nominally churchgoing, the PRRI/Brookings survey found Christian nationalists are significantly more likely than other US adults to be connected to churches and to say religion is important in their lives.

"There's a strong positive correlation between frequency of church attendance and likelihood of being a Christian nationalism adherent or sympathizer," said Robert P. Jones, president and founder of PRRI. "Christian nationalism adherents are more than six times as likely as Christian nationalism rejectors to attend church weekly."

Christian nationalism as a worldview is not new but the terms is. Indeed, a third of respondents said they had not heard of the term. For that reason, it's impossible to say whether the ranks of Christian nationalists have grown over time.

In their book Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States, sociologists Andrew Whitehead and Sam Perry found that about 20 percent of US adults strongly embrace Christian nationalist ideas. The PRRI survey is more in line with a 2021 Pew Research survey that found that 10 percent of US adults are what Pew identified as hard-core "faith and flag" conservatives.

Whatever the precise number, the survey confirms that by a ratio of 2-to-1, US adults reject a Christian nationalist worldview.

The vast majority of US adults (70 percent) do not think the government should declare America a Christian nation. And nearly 60 percent do not think its laws should be based on Christian values.

Most US adults (73 percent) said they preferred a country made up of a diversity of faiths and not just Christianity.

Still, Christian nationalists have an outsized influence in US politics.

More than half of Republicans now identify as Christian nationalist or sympathizers, the survey concludes. Some members of Congress, notably Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, proudly endorse the label. Former President Donald Trump called himself a nationalist, and the survey finds Christian nationalists have far more favorable views of Trump than the general population.

That makes the political power of Christian nationalists far greater than their actual numbers in the population.

"If we were in Europe and had four or five political parties, we'd have a Christian nationalist party and it would represent a quarter of the country or 30 percent at most," said Jones. "But because we have this binary system, that group loads into one political party. That's why the country feels divided."

Christian nationalist influence is also felt theologically. Two-thirds of Christian nationalists believe that biblical obligations to the poor are more about charitable acts by individuals rather than the task of a just society. US adults as a whole are divided; 54 percent say biblical injunctions to care for the poor are about charitable

acts by individuals, compared with 47 percent who believe they are primarily talking about our obligation to create a just society.

Those who identify as Christian nationalists overwhelmingly trust far-right news outlets such as One America News Network, Newsmax, or Fox to deliver their news.

On issues such as race, immigration and Islam their views diverge significantly from that of most US adults.

Four in 10 US adults (41 percent) agreed that discrimination against White people is as big of a problem as discrimination against Black people. But among avowed Christian nationalists (85 percent) and sympathizers (73 percent) who are White, overwhelming numbers agree that discrimination against Whites is as big a problem as discrimination against Blacks.

About a third of US adults affirm the core tenet of so-called great replacement theory, the belief that immigrants are "invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background." But 71 percent of avowed Christian nationalists and 57 percent of Christian nationalist sympathizers agree the replacement theory is taking place.

Fewer than 4 in 10 US adults (39 percent) believe that the values of Islam are at odds with US values and the US way of life. But a majority of Christian nationalists say the Muslim faith is at odds with the US way of life, between 58 percent and 69 percent.

Not all Christian nationalists are White, the survey found, but White Christian nationalists hold consistent views on race, immigration, and Islam.

Speaking to the results of the survey at a Brookings Institution forum Wednesday, Jemar Tisby, a historian and author of *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* and *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice*, concluded: "White Christian nationalism is the greatest threat to democracy and the witness of the church in the United States today."

The survey was conducted online between November and December last year. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 1.6 percentage points. —Religion News Service

(This story was reported with support from the Stiefel Freethought Foundation.)