The Texas Lyceum Poll

General Information

We interviewed Texas adults during the April 26-May 7 period, talking to 1,002 adults, half of them female, half of them male. Four out of five said they are registered voters.

One third are "extremely interested" in politics and public affairs and another 48% are "somewhat interested." Just over half — 51% — said they vote in "every" or "almost every" election.

About a third of the respondents identified themselves as Hispanic, 11% as African American, and 54% as White. And the level of interest and participation in public affairs varied by race. While 91 percent of Whites say they're interested in politics, and 88 percent of African Americans say they're interested, only 61 percent of Hispanics said so. And that tracks with their own voting assessments: 55% of Whites said they voted most or all of the time, compared to 43% of African Americans and 28% of Hispanics.

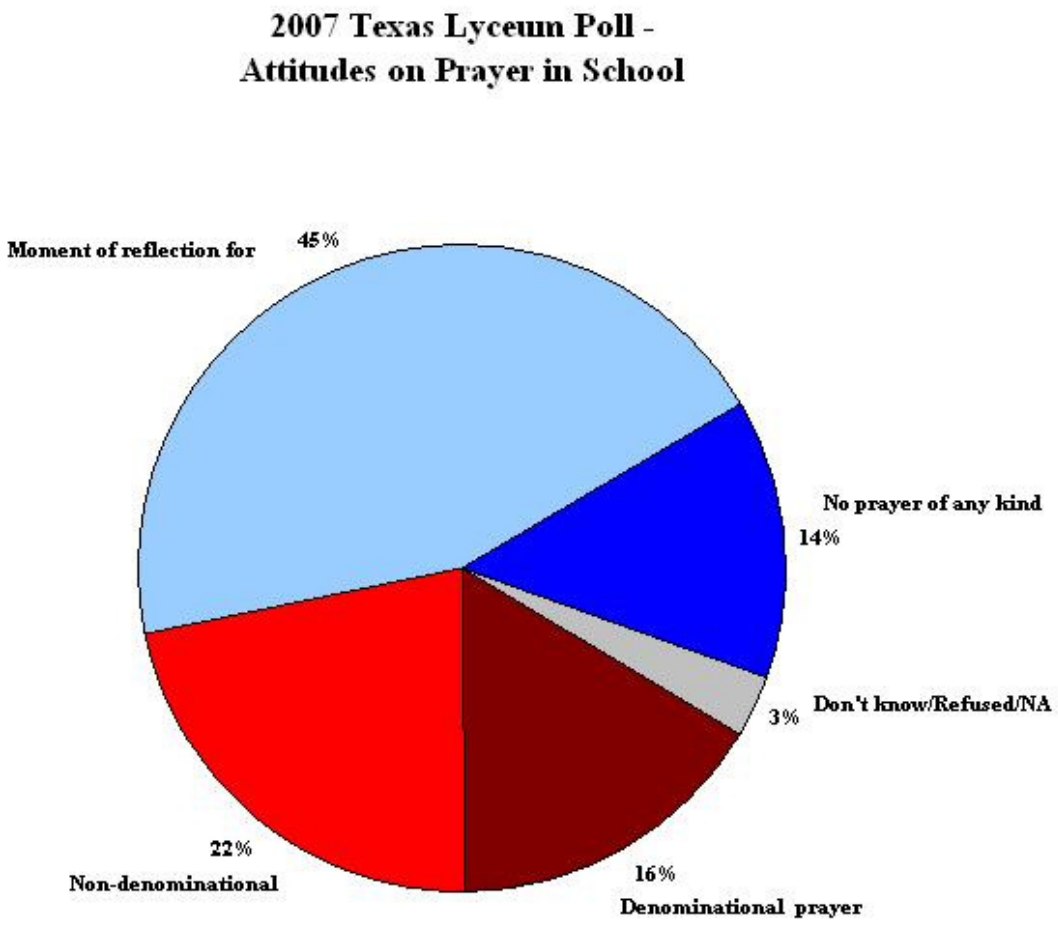
Over three-fourths said they have Internet access at home or at work; 13% said they get most of their political information there, roughly matching the number who said they get that information from newspapers and magazines. Most said they rely on broadcast (32%) and cable TV (31%).

More respondents (40%) identified themselves as Independents than as Republicans (28%) or Democrats (27%). More consider themselves Conservative (41%) than as Moderate (32%) or Liberal (19%).

Religion

Texans describe themselves as religious and somewhat faithful in the Texas Lyceum Poll. And their responses to questions about faith-based initiatives, prayer in public schools, religious displays, and public funding for private schools show they're somewhat more comfortable with those issues than some of the people they've elected to public office.

Texans have mixed feelings about praying in public schools, with 16% favoring denominational prayers, 22% favoring non-denominational prayers, and 45% in favor of a moment of reflection for personal belief. Just 14% think the schools should allow no prayer of any kind.

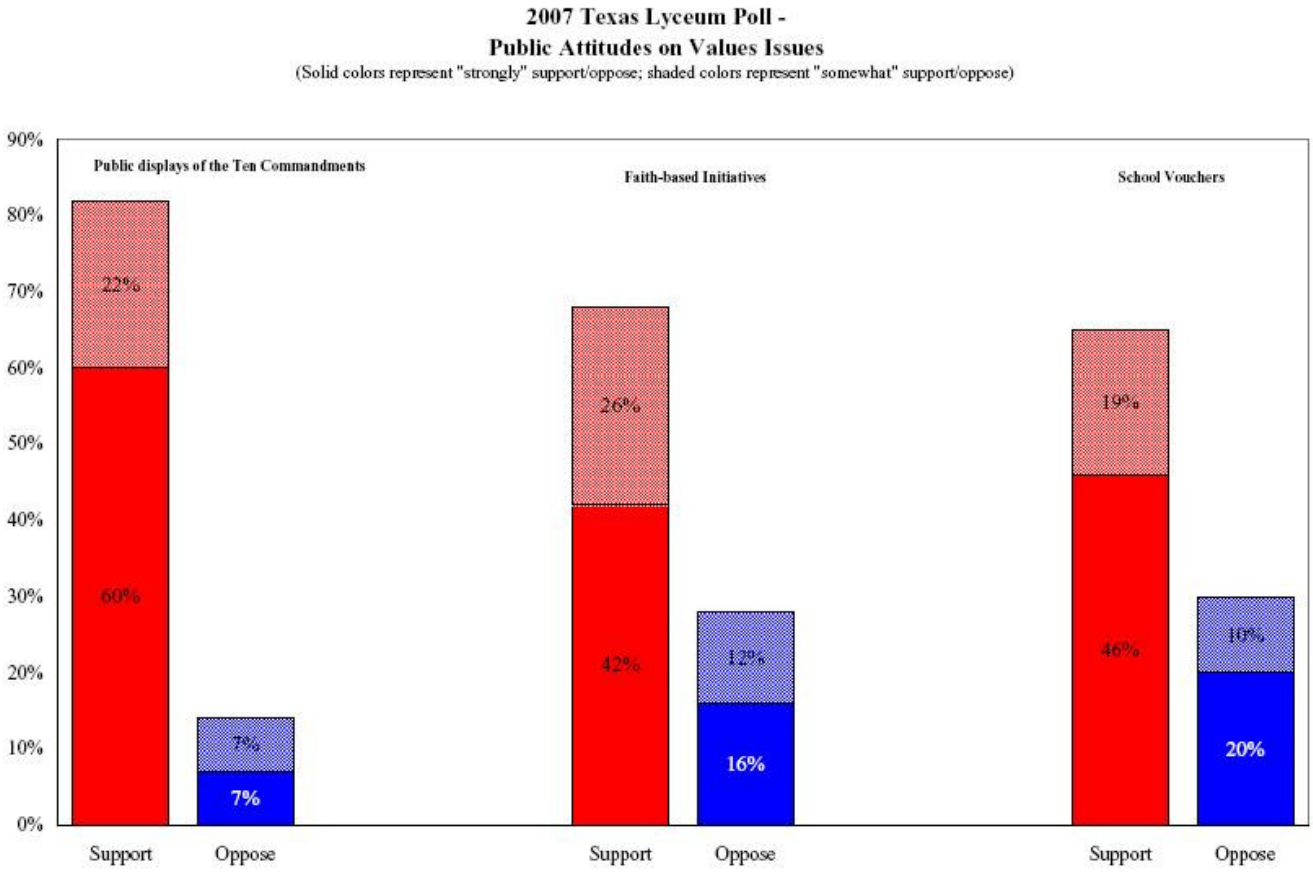


A large majority said they're in favor of displaying the Ten Commandments on the grounds of government offices, either strongly (60%) or somewhat (22%). Another 14% were opposed to such displays.

Faith-based initiatives find favor with most Texans. The majority (68%) support giving taxpayer money to religious organizations that minister to the poor and needy, while 28% oppose such programs. African Americans and Hispanics were more likely to support and less likely to oppose such programs than Whites in the survey.

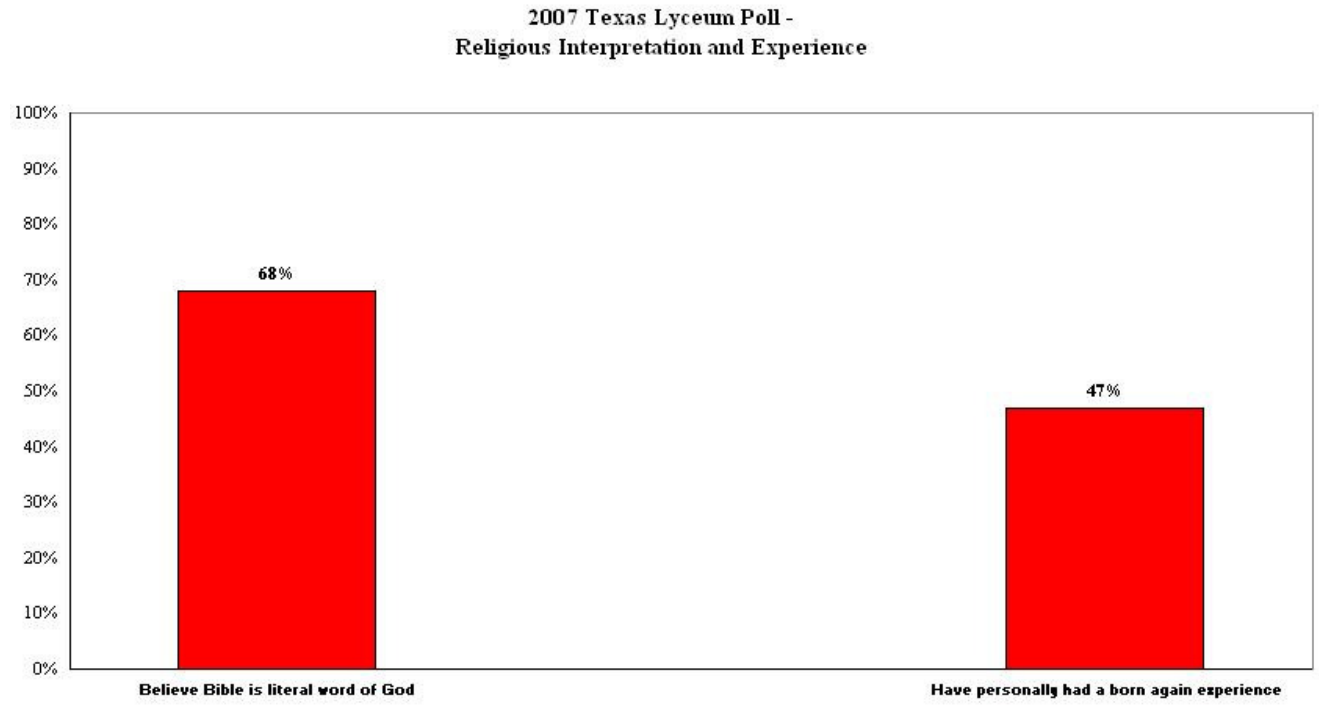
Almost two-thirds (65%) said they support a program "in which parents are given taxpayer money by the government that they can use to pay for a child's tuition at the school of their choice." Another 30 percent oppose such voucher

programs, 20% of them strongly. The racial breakdowns on vouchers tracked those on faith-based initiatives, with Whites more likely to be in opposition and African Americans and Hispanics more likely to support the idea. And younger Texans were more supportive than older ones.

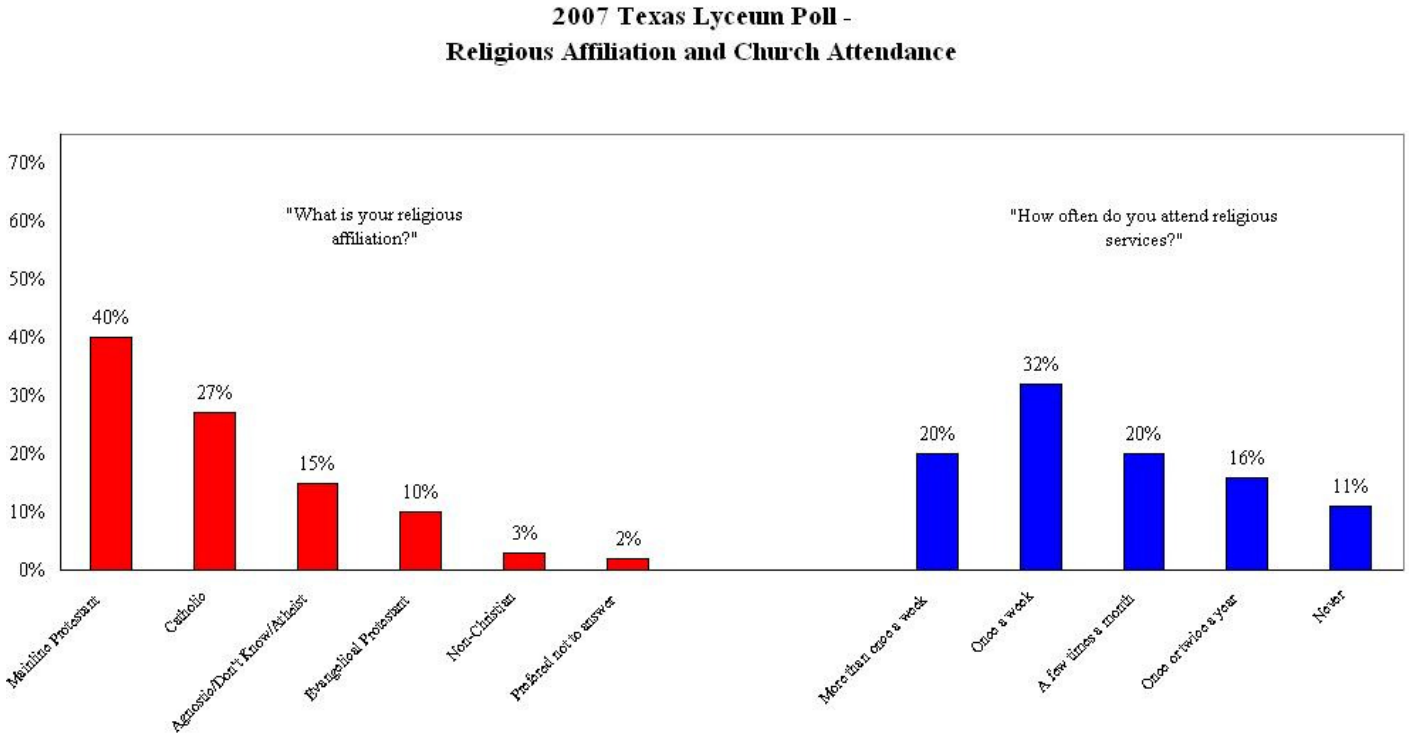


Using drugs in religious ceremonies — "even though this violates federal law" — wasn't a popular idea with the respondents: 77% are opposed to those practices, while 18% support them.

Asked about their personal religious views, 68% said they believe the Bible is the literal word of God. Asked whether they personally have had a born-again experience, 47% said Yes and 49% said No.



Almost three-fourths said they regularly attend religious services, either a few times a month (20%), once a week (32%), or more than once a week (20%). Another 16% go once or twice a year and 11% said they never go.



Asked about their denomination, almost half were either Catholic, 27%, or Baptist, 19%. No other response topped 10%.

Methodology

The 2007 Texas Lyceum Poll is a telephone-based multi-stage cluster sample of Texas adults. Telephone coverage within the state of Texas is approximately 97%. Randomized selection procedures were assiduously followed throughout the process, even at the level of selecting individuals within the household. The final sample size is 1,002 adult Texans. The instrument itself relies on questions that have been used previously in national polls, and have been shown to be both valid (correlating with plausible independent and dependent variables) and reliable (robust to question order and interviewer effects). A Spanish version of the instrument was developed and respondents were given a choice of participating in English or Spanish. Bilingual interviewers were utilized, and approximately 60 interviews (6% of the sample) were completed in Spanish. The overall response rate (completed interviews / contacts) is 40%. This rate is partially the result of an extended time in the field, which facilitated call-backs. The overall margin of error for the sample is +/- 3.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The data used to generate top-lines and tables are weighted by U.S. Census Bureau estimates with respect to age, gender, and race. For example, Census data indicate the proportion of 18-29 year old Hispanic females in Texas, and we use these estimates to weight the survey data. As expected, the most significant weights are applied to young, male, minority respondents (who are under-represented here, as they are in almost all polls in the U.S.).