

New Analysis Finds African-Americans are Markedly More Religious than Overall U.S. Population

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 /Christian Newswire/ -- On the eve of Black History Month, the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life released a new analysis (<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=389>) that paints a detailed religious portrait of African-Americans. The analysis finds that African-Americans are markedly more religious than the U.S. population as a whole on a variety of measures, including reporting a religious affiliation, attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer and the importance of religion in people's lives.

Compared with other racial and ethnic groups, African-Americans are among the most likely to report a formal religious affiliation, with fully 87% of African-Americans describing themselves as belonging to one religious group or another. The analysis also finds that nearly eight-in-ten African-Americans (79%) say religion is very important in their lives, compared with 56% among all U.S. adults.

These are among many findings of the new Pew Forum analysis detailing the unique nature of religion in the African-American community. Other highlights include:

- A large majority of African-Americans who are unaffiliated with any particular faith (72%) say religion plays at least a somewhat important role in their lives; nearly half (45%) of unaffiliated African-Americans say religion is very important in their lives, roughly three times the percentage who says this among the religiously unaffiliated population overall (16%).
- African-Americans express a high degree of comfort with religion's role in politics, with roughly six-in-ten saying that houses of worship should express their views on social and political topics and roughly half saying that there has been too little expression of faith and prayer by political leaders. At the same time, most African-Americans support certain restrictions on the mingling of politics and religious institutions, with nearly six-in-ten (58%) saying that churches and other houses of worship should refrain from endorsing political candidates.
- The link between religion and some social and political attitudes in the African-American community is similar to that seen among the population overall. For instance, just as in the general public, African-Americans who are more religiously observant are more likely to oppose abortion and homosexuality and more likely to report higher levels of conservative ideology.
- On a variety of other questions, including political party identification and opinions about the proper role of government in providing services to the citizenry and assistance to the poor, there are few differences in the views of African-Americans across religious groups. Perhaps most strikingly, the partisan leanings of African-Americans from every religious background tilt heavily in the Democratic direction.

The analysis is based on the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, conducted by the Pew Forum in 2007 and released in 2008, as well as other Pew Research Center surveys.

The report is for immediate release and is available online at <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=389>. If you are interested in arranging an interview with Pew Forum researchers or need more information, please contact Robbie Mills at 202.419.4564 or rmills@pewforum.org, or Lorelei Coyle at 202.419.4556 or lcoyle@pewforum.org.

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