

Religious and Political Trends Set to Shape Future

What were the top religion and political trends in 2010? And how might they shape our future? That's the topic of a Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) study. The trends are important to note because they group expects them to continue into 2011 and beyond.

Robert P. Jones, CEO of PRRI, outlined the following 10 trends:

1. Nearly half (47 percent) of Americans who identify with the Tea Party movement also identify with the Christian right.
2. Pew found that 18 percent of Americans believe President Obama is a Muslim, and PRRI found that 51 percent say his religious beliefs are different from their own.
3. Fifty-seven percent of Americans are opposed to allowing NY Muslims to build an Islamic center and mosque two blocks from ground zero, but 76 percent say they would support Muslims building a mosque in their local community if they followed the same regulations as other religious groups.
4. Americans are about five times more likely to give an "F" than an "A" to churches for their handling of homosexuality. Two-thirds see connections between messages coming from America's churches and higher rates of suicide among gay and lesbian youth.
5. Forty-five percent of Americans say the values of Islam are at odds with American values and way of life, while a plurality (49 percent) disagree.
6. If another vote similar to Proposition 8 were held now, 51 percent of Californians say they would vote to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry.
7. At least seven-in-10 Americans say that protecting the

dignity of every person, keeping families together, and the Golden Rule are important values that should guide immigration reform.

8. In his new book *American Grace*, Robert Putnam found that between one-third and one-half of all American marriages are in interfaith marriages, and roughly one-third of Americans have switched religions at some point in their lives.
9. Despite high levels of religiosity, Pew found on average that Americans only answered about half of 32 questions correctly on their Religious Knowledge Survey.
10. The 2010 congressional election revealed relatively stable voting patterns by religion compared to past elections. GOP candidates held an advantage among white Christians, while Democratic candidates held an advantage among minority Christians and the unaffiliated.

And an 11th for 2011. Nearly 6-in-10 Americans affirm American exceptionalism, that God has granted America a special role in human history. Those affirming this view are more likely to support military interventions and to say torture is sometimes justified.

What say you? Do you see these trends as shaping our future?