

See Spot Go to Heaven? The Public's Not So Sure

Is there a chew toy waiting for Sparky behind the pearly gates? Americans, and even pet owners, are not so sure.

There's little dispute among the public about the existence of heaven – nearly nine in 10 adults believe in it. But whether or not man's best friend will be joining him there... well, that's where Americans divide like cats and dogs.

Forty-three percent in an ABC News/Beliefnet poll think pets go to heaven when they die. But about as many, 40 percent, think heaven is reserved for people only. The rest are withholding judgment, possibly until Judgment Day.

Not even pet owners – about six in 10 adults – are so sure that heaven awaits their assorted dogs, cats, hamsters, fish and ferrets. Forty-seven percent of pet owners say pets go to heaven, still not a majority. Perhaps envisioning eternal relief from dog-walking duties, 35 percent of pet owners say only people have a berth in the great beyond.

	Do pets go to heaven?	
	Yes	No
All	43%	40
Pet owners	47	35
Non-pet owners	38	48

In a test, this poll asked half of respondents if all animals go to heaven, as opposed to just pets. About the same number, 41 percent, said yes.

GROUPS – Younger people are more likely to think heaven is open to Fido, Fifi, et. al. And people living in the Northeast are more apt to say so – they're a bit more likely than Americans living in other areas to own a pet.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News/Beliefnet poll was conducted by telephone June 27-July 1, 2001, among a random national sample of 1,018 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Here are the full results (*= less than 0.5 percent):

1. Do you believe in heaven, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
7/1/01	87	8	5

2. (IF YES) SPLIT SAMPLE VERSION A: Do you think people's pets like cats and dogs go to heaven when they die, or only people go to heaven?

	Pets	Only people	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
7/1/01	43	40	2	15

(IF YES) SPLIT SAMPLE VERSION B: Do you think animals go to heaven when they die, or only people go to heaven?

	Animals	Only people	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
7/1/01	41	33	3	23

3. Do you or does anyone in your household own a pet, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
7/1/01	61	39	*

END