

Americans Divided Over Religious Discussion in Presidential Race

Americans split down the middle on whether presidential candidates should publicly discuss their religious beliefs, with majorities of Democrats and Republicans taking opposite sides on the issue.

Forty-five percent in an ABC News poll say candidates should bring their religious beliefs into the campaign discourse - but 47 percent say not. On the yeah side are 58 percent of Republicans; on the nay, 57 percent of Democrats.

	Candidates should:	
	Publicly discuss religious beliefs	Keep religious beliefs to themselves
All Americans	45%	47
Republicans	58%	35
Democrats	39	57
Independents	43	48

ISSUE - Candidates from Republican George W. Bush to Democrat Al Gore have been discussing their faith on the campaign trail and invoking the Bible in stump speeches. At a GOP debate in Iowa last month, half the Republican presidential candidates (Bush, Sen. Orrin Hatch and Gary Bauer) named Jesus as the philosopher or thinker who has had the most influence on their lives

Bill Bradley has been the exception, characterizing his religious beliefs as a personal matter. As the table above notes, his position is more in line with the majority Democratic position, though it's a closer call among independents.

INCOME/AGE - In addition to political identity, age and economic status seem to have an effect on these views, with higher-income and younger Americans preferring that candidates not discuss their religious convictions.

	Publicly Discuss	Keep to Themselves
Under \$25K	51%	42
\$75K+	38	54
Age 65+	53%	40
Age 18-34	42	52

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone Jan. 19-23, 2000, among a random national sample of 1,004 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://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

38. Do you think candidates for president should publicly discuss their religious beliefs, or keep their religious beliefs to themselves?

	Discuss	Keep to Themselves	No opin.
1/23/00	45	47	7

END