

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM INDEX

American
Perspectives on the
First Amendment
First Edition

The Religious Freedom Index: American Perspectives on the First Amendment, is the first annual index to track public opinion across the complete spectrum of religious freedom issues and provide a 30,000-foot view of American perspectives on these issues. The questions asked in the index measure American sentiment across six dimensions of religious freedom and contribute to an annual composite Index score.

INDEX SCORE

2019 Religious Freedom Index 67

DIMENSION SCORES

Religious Pluralism **80**

Religious Sharing **71**

Religion and Policy **67**

Religion in Action **65**

Religion in Society **63**

Church & State **58**

0
Complete
Opposition

100
Robust
Support

Source: 2019 Religious Freedom Index

METHODOLOGY

The Religious Freedom Index (RFI) is created from data gathered in an annual online poll of a **nationally representative sample of American adults**, conducted by independent research company Heart+Mind Strategies.

21
Questions

n=
1,000

The poll includes 21 questions that contribute to the index and will be asked with the same phrasing every fall. The poll also includes additional questions that are not calculated in any of the Index dimensions and will change from year-to-year based on current events.

FIRST EDITION FINDINGS

1 Consensus in a Polarized Society

Even after decades of religious freedom being pulled into the culture wars, Americans accept and support a broad interpretation of religious freedom.

2 Preference for a Hands-off Government Approach

Americans are uncomfortable with the idea of the government penalizing groups and individuals for living out their religious beliefs.

3 Support for a Culture of Accommodation

Contrary to popular narratives of increased tribalism and polarization, Americans support a culture of accommodation for minority faith practices.

(more on reverse)



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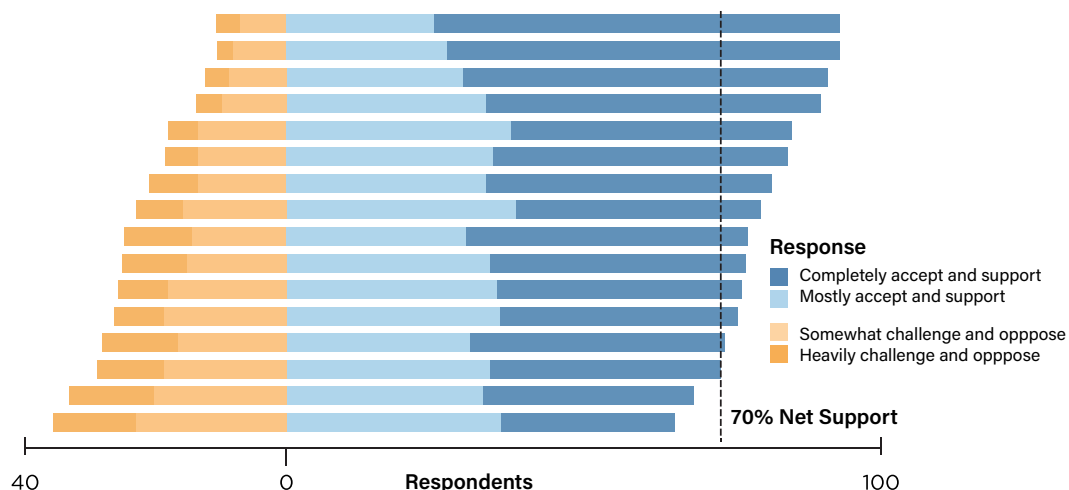
1 Consensus in a Polarized Society

After years of religious freedom being pushed to the center of polarizing debates, rather than reveal a partisan 50-50 split, at 67, the Index scored in the upper third on the scale of favorability towards robust religious liberty protections.

More than half of the index items received

70% or greater support.

Support on 16 questions asking
"To what degree do you accept and support versus challenge and oppose the freedom to..."



2 Preference for a Hands-off Government Approach

87%

support right to practice beliefs in daily life without facing discrimination or harm from others.

70%

support freedom of religious organizations to make leadership and hiring decisions without government interference.

66%

agreed that religious organizations should be eligible on the same terms as nonreligious organizations to receive government funds for providing services to the community.

74%

of respondents said individuals and groups should not face discrimination, fines, or penalties from the government for beliefs that marriage is a union between a man and a woman.

3 Support for a Culture of Accommodation

81%
of respondents were supportive of practicing religious beliefs of minority faiths, and still



74%
were supportive when that practice takes place at work.



63%
of respondents supported the freedom to practice religion in daily life and at work, *even when* it creates an imposition or inconvenience for others.