

Intersection of American Minority Religions and Voting Behavior:

Keywords:

Minority Religions
Voting Behavior
Party Affiliation
Issue Voting

Description:

This issue brief seeks to address the influence of minority religions on their participants' voting behaviors and political inclinations, including their tendencies towards certain party affiliations and distributions on specific critical issues.

Key Points:

The primary influence that minority religions have on the voting behavior of their participants is that of Democratic or liberal affiliation.

Most members of non-Christian minority religions feel that the GOP is hostile to their communities and concerns.

The only significant commonality in voting behavior across individuals of minority religions is that of party affiliation.

Minority religions have significant impact on the voting behavior of their members regarding certain social issues, but these influences are not consistent across or within minority religions.

There is more voting solidarity in certain minority religious communities than others.

Works Cited, General References:

Lugo, L. (2007). *The pew forum on religion & public life*. Retrieved from <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>

Schram, J. (2005, October 09). <http://www.chilit.org/>. Retrieved from [http://www.chilit.org/Papers by author/Schram -- Religion and the Part It Plays in Presidential Elections.pdf](http://www.chilit.org/Papers%20by%20author/Schram%20--%20Religion%20and%20the%20Part%20It%20Plays%20in%20Presidential%20Elections.pdf)

Pew forum on religion & public life. (2010). Retrieved from <http://religions.pewforum.org/comparisons>

Parker, R. (2004). The politics of god. *Kennedy School Bulletin, Autumn*(2004), Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/ksgpress/bulletin/autumn2004/features/god.htm>

Relevant Websites:

<http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/catalog/ac:124963>

<http://religions.pewforum.org/a>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith>

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/r/religion_and_belief/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=religion&st=cse

Religion and politics in America can be traced back to the Puritan interweaving of morality and politics that began before the United States was an independent nation. In his article, "The Politics of God," Richard Parker advocates the use of a "bloc concept" to understand the impact of religion on voting behavior. He argues that American society is divided into four religious blocs: Catholics; "evangelical or fundamental white protestants;" "mainline" Protestants; and African-American Protestants, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and secular persons (Parker 2004). Parker's framework allows scholars to see the heterogeneity within American religious and political distributions. That said, much of American politics centers around the political impact of Christian groups. In many ways, this is logical as the majority of Americans, 78.4% according to the Pew Forum on Religions and Public Life, self-identify as belonging to some Christian denomination. Generally, individuals belonging to non-Christian minority religions in the United States tend to affiliate with the Democratic Party (Lugo 2007). This is significant when compared with the voting tendencies of the Christian majority, which, with the exceptions of Historically Black Churches and Jehovah's Witnesses, tend strongly towards the Republican Party. According to John Schram, in his 2005 paper: "Religion and the Part it Plays in Presidential Elections," religion is a significant factor in influencing individual voting behavior, but the impact of religious affiliation on voting patterns is generally decreasing, with the exception of the rise of the Christian right. Notably, religion is most influential in social issues elections (Lugo 2007). With the notable exception of Jews, religious individuals tend to be more socially conservative than those who are religiously unaffiliated, however, many still vote Democratic ("Pew forum on," 2010).

Muslim Americans tend to vote in favor of an expansive government with many services, are split on the issue of whether homosexuality should be encouraged or discouraged by society, believe that abortion should be legal in "most" or "all" cases, that the government should do more to protect morality, that more attention should be paid to environmental reforms, that the American government should concentrate more on domestic than international affairs, and 70% of Muslim Americans identify as or lean Democratic ("Pew forum on," 2010) This high percentage of Muslim American Democrats is likely due to the fact that 48% of U.S. Muslims feel that "the GOP is unfriendly toward them" ("Pew forum on," 2010).

The majority (67%) of Buddhist Americans identify as or lean Democratic, over half (51%) believe that the U.S. government should be bigger and have more services, 81% believe that abortion should be legal in most or all cases, 82% believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society, and the majority agree that government is too involved with the protection of morality and that stricter environmental laws are critical ("Pew forum on," 2010). American Buddhists are divided over whether the U.S. government should concentrate on domestic affairs or be involved in international politics ("Pew forum on," 2010).

63% of American Hindus identify as or lean Democratic, a majority (59%) believe that the American government should expand to include more services, 69% believe that abortion should be legal in most or all cases, just under half (48%) believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society, the American Hindu

population is divided 44% to 45% over whether or not the government should do more to protect morality, 67% believe that implementing stricter environmental measures is important, and 58% believe that domestic problems are more important than international affairs (“Pew forum on,” 2010).

Finally, Jewish Americans tend to associate with or lean Democratic and believe that the government should be large and include many services (“Pew forum on,” 2010). 84% of Jewish Americans believe that abortion should be legal in most or all cases, 79% believe that homosexuality should be encouraged by society; a majority state that the government is too involved with morality, that stricter environmental laws would be beneficial, and that the United State should be more involved in foreign affairs (“Pew forum on,” 2010).

Basically, individuals of minority religious groups tend to vote liberally, specifically Democratic, because many feel that the GOP is hostile towards them, their religious customs and their primary social, cultural, and political concerns. Religion remains a significant factor in shaping the voting behavior of Americans regarding social issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage, but is of little significance regarding issues such as immigration and the environment.

Party Affiliation Among Jews:

Lightest blue (17%): Republican

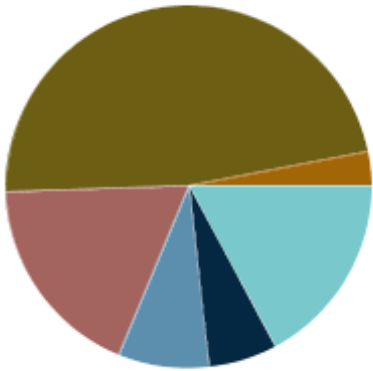
Darkest blue (6%): Lean Republican

Medium blue (8%): Independent

Pink (18%): Lean Democratic

Green (47%): Democratic

Brown (3%): Other/no preference/don't know/refused



<http://religions.pewforum.org/portraits>

Party Affiliation Among Muslims:

Lightest blue (7%): Republican

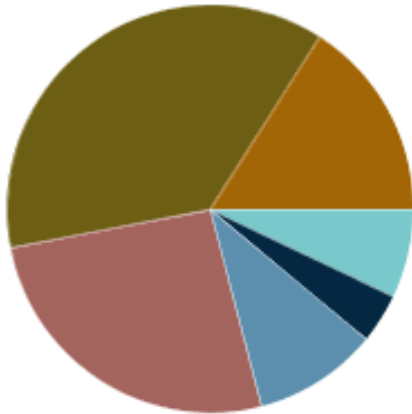
Darkest blue (4%): Lean Republican

Medium blue (10%): Independent

Pink (26%): Lean Democratic

Green (37%): Democratic

Brown (16%): Other/no preference/don't know/refused



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Party Affiliation Among Buddhists:

Lightest blue (10%): Republican

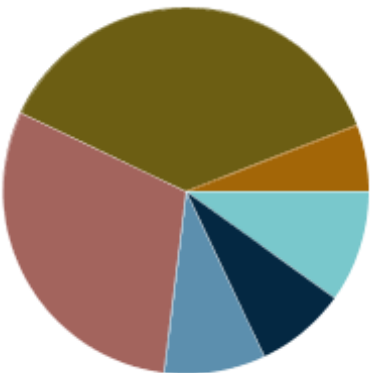
Darkest blue (8%): Lean Republican

Medium blue (9%): Independent

Pink (30%): Lean Democratic

Green (37%): Democratic

Brown (6%): Other/no preference/don't know/refused



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Party Affiliation Among Hindus:

Lightest blue (6%): Republican

Darkest blue (7%): Lean Republican

Medium blue (13%): Independent

Pink (22%): Lean Democratic

Green (41%): Democratic

Brown (11%): Other/no preference/don't know/refused



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