

About Four-in-Ten U.S. Adults Believe Humanity is Living in the End Times

About four-in-ten U.S. adults believe humanity is 'living in the end times'
BY JEFF DIAMANT

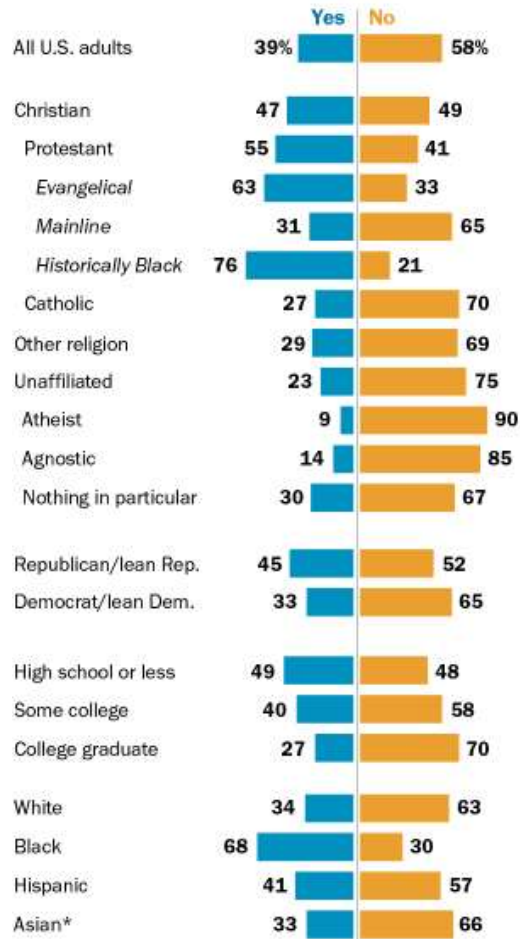


Periods of catastrophe and anxiety, such as the coronavirus pandemic, have historically led some people to anticipate that the destruction of the world as we know it – the “end times” – is near. This thinking often has a religious component that draws on sacred scripture. In Christianity, for example, these beliefs include expectations that Jesus will return to Earth after or amid a time of great turmoil.

How we did this

U.S. Protestants in evangelical and historically Black traditions especially likely to believe humanity is ‘living in the end times’

Do you believe we are living in the end times?



* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. "Other religion" includes those who identify as Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or with another world religion or other non-Christian faith.

Source: Survey conducted April 11-17, 2022.

"How Religion Intersects with Americans' Views on the Environment"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In the United States, 39% of adults say they believe “we are living in the end times,” while 58% say they do *not* believe we are living in the end times.

Christians are divided on this question, with 47% saying we are living in the end times, including majorities in the historically Black (76%) and evangelical (63%) Protestant traditions. Meanwhile, 49% of Christians say we are *not* living in the end times, including 70% of Catholics and 65% of mainline Protestants who say this. Viewed more broadly, the share of Protestants who say we are living in the end times is greater than the corresponding share among Catholics (55% vs. 27%).

About three-in-ten or fewer people from non-Christian religions (29%) and those with no religious affiliation (23%) say we are living in the end times. (Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other smaller non-Christian religious groups are included in the survey and represented in the “other religions” category, but there were not enough respondents in these groups to analyze separately.)

In addition, Black Americans (68%) are much more likely than Hispanic (41%), White (34%) and Asian (33%) Americans to believe humanity is living in the end times. And adults in Southern states (48%) are more likely to say this than those living in the Midwest (37%), Northeast (34%) or West (31%).

Americans without college degrees are more likely than college graduates to believe humanity is approaching its end, as are Americans with lower income levels when compared with those with higher incomes. And Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to express this belief.

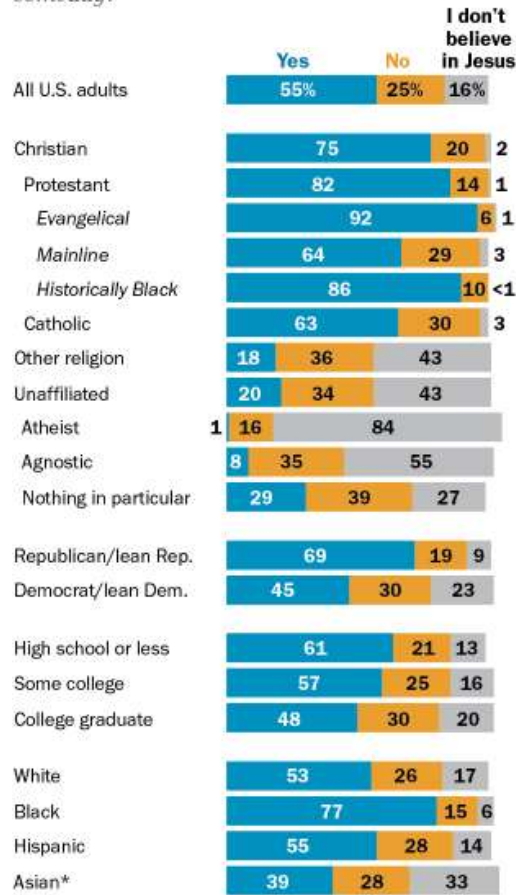
Pew Research Center asked Americans about the end times as part of a wider survey about religion and the environment, partly to assess whether views about the end times are related to views on the environment.

Views about Jesus’ return to Earth

The survey also explored Americans’ views about a core tenet of Christianity: the belief that Jesus will eventually return to Earth, in what is often called the “second coming.”

A slight majority of Americans believe Jesus will return to Earth one day

Do you believe Jesus will return to Earth someday?



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When asked if Jesus “will return to Earth someday,” more than half of all U.S. adults (55%), including three-quarters of Christians, say this will happen. Protestants in the evangelical (92%) and historically Black (86%) traditions are more likely than other Christians to say there will eventually be a second coming of Jesus. Roughly four-in-ten Americans either do not believe Jesus will return to Earth (25%) or say they do not believe in Jesus (16%).

Respondents who said they believe Jesus will return to Earth were also asked how certain they are that this will happen *during their lifetime*. One-in-ten Americans say they believe the second coming of Jesus will definitely or probably occur during their lifetime, 27% are not sure if Jesus will return in their lifetime, and 19% say the return of Jesus will definitely or probably *not* occur during their lifetime.

The proportion of Americans who say they believe Jesus will definitely or probably return during their lifetime is higher among Protestants in the historically Black tradition (22%) and evangelical Protestants (21%), and lower among Catholics (7%) and mainline Protestants (6%). And the share of Black (19%) and Hispanic (14%) Americans who believe that the second coming of Jesus will likely occur during their lifetime is greater than the corresponding share of White, non-Hispanic Americans (8%). That said, in all religious groups, people are more likely to express uncertainty over the timing of Jesus' return than to express the sense that it will happen in their lifetime. For example, about seven-in-ten evangelicals say either that they are not sure Jesus will return during their lifetime (50%) or that Jesus will definitely or probably *not* return during their lifetime (21%). And nearly two-thirds of those in the historically Black Protestant tradition say they are either unsure of the timing (47%) or that it will probably or definitely *not* happen during their lifetime (17%).

One-in-ten U.S. adults believe Jesus will definitely or probably return in their lifetime

% of U.S. adults who ...

	Believe Jesus will return to Earth some day			Do not believe Jesus will return to Earth/do not believe in Jesus
	Yes, Jesus will definitely/probably return in their lifetime	Not sure if Jesus will return within lifetime	No, Jesus will definitely/probably NOT return in their lifetime	
	%	%	%	%
All U.S. adults	10	27	19	41
Christian	14	37	25	22
Protestant	16	43	22	15
<i>Evangelical</i>	21	50	21	7
<i>Mainline</i>	6	30	27	32
<i>Historically Black</i>	22	47	17	11
Catholic	7	25	31	34
Other religion	2	10	6	79
Religiously unaffiliated	3	9	8	77
Republican/lean Rep.	12	35	22	28
Democrat/lean Dem.	8	20	17	52
High school or less	14	29	18	35
Some college	10	27	20	40
College graduate	5	24	19	50
White	8	26	19	43
Black	19	41	18	21
Hispanic	14	23	18	41
Asian*	8	15	16	61

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Additional views about end-times theology

The survey also asked about other beliefs often associated with end-times theology: Whether Jesus will return after a *worsening* of global conditions leads to a low point for

humanity (a view consistent with a theological belief known as “premillennialism”), or whether Jesus will return after an *improvement in* conditions leads to a high point of peace and prosperity (a view consistent with a belief called “postmillennialism”).

While each of these positions about the specific circumstances of Jesus’ return are held by a minority of U.S. adults, premillennial beliefs are more common than postmillennial beliefs (20% vs. 3%). An additional third of Americans say Jesus will return but that “it is impossible to know what will happen before Jesus returns.” And, as mentioned above, about four-in-ten U.S. adults do not believe Jesus will return to Earth or say they do not believe in Jesus.

Evangelicals are divided on questions about the circumstances of Jesus’ return, with 44% taking a premillennial stance and 45% saying that it is impossible to know the circumstances that will precede Jesus’ return. Fewer Catholics (15%) and Protestants in the historically Black (27%) and mainline (18%) traditions believe Jesus’ return will be preceded by a global deterioration. Instead, members of historically Black churches (51%), Catholics (44%) and mainline Protestants (41%) are more likely to say it is impossible to know what will happen before Jesus’ return.

Blessings,

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