Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Identity

College-age Millennials demonstrate significantly lower levels of traditional religious engagement than older Americans. From frequency of prayer and worship attendance to views on God and the Bible, Millennials tend to engage in religious activity less often and embrace less traditional beliefs. Religion is also less central to Millennials’ lives, although a significant number still say that it is an important part of their lives.

Few Millennials report regular religious engagement. One-in-four (25%) Millennials say that they attend religious services at least once a week. Three-in-ten (30%) say they attend occasionally (once or twice a month or a few times a year), and more than 4-in-10 say they seldom (16%) or never attend (27%). One-third (33%) of Millennials report that they pray at least daily. About 1-in-4 (27%) say they pray occasionally (at least a few times a week, once a week or a few times a month), and nearly 4-in-10 (37%) say they seldom or never pray.

Nearly half (45%) of Millennials who attended or are currently attending a religiously affiliated college or university report attending worship services at least once a week, compared to 13% of Millennials who attended or are currently attending a private college or university, and 21% who attended or are currently attending a public college or university. Rates of worship attendance do not differ significantly by level of educational attainment, with roughly equal numbers of college graduates (22%) and high school graduates (26%) reporting that they attend services at least weekly. Notably, Millennials who live at home with their parents are not more likely to attend religious services than Millennials overall.

A majority (54%) of Millennials believe that God is a person with whom one can have a relationship. About 1-in-5 (22%) say that God is an impersonal force, and 14% say they do not believe in God. Views of the Bible are more fragmented. Fewer than one-quarter (23%) believe that the Bible is the word of God and should be taken literally, word for word. About 1-in-4 (26%) say the Bible is the word of God, but not everything in the Bible should be taken literally. Roughly 4-in-10 (37%) say that the Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God.

Fewer than half (40%) of Millennials say that religion is either very important or the most important thing in their life. One-quarter say that religion is somewhat important to them, and one-third (33%) say it is not too important or not at all important in their life. Not surprisingly, there are strong differences between Millennials by religious affiliation. Nearly 8-in-10 white evangelical (78%) and black Protestant (77%) Millennials say that religion is either very important or the most important thing in their life, compared to 37% of white mainline Protestant Millennials and 44% of Catholic Millennials. Only 3% of religiously unaffiliated Millennials say religion is either very important or the most important thing in their life. More than 8-in-10 religiously
unaffiliated Millennials say that religion is not too important (24%) or not at all important (60%).

**Religious Identity on Facebook**

More than 8-in-10 (85%) of college-age Millennials have a Facebook account, and more than 6-in-10 (63%) say they use it at least once a day. By contrast, only 16% use Twitter daily, and only 5% use the social networking tool Tumblr daily.

Among Millennials who use Facebook at least seldom, fewer than half (45%) include a religious identity on their profile page. There are, however, significant differences among Millennials by religious affiliation. For instance, three-quarters of white evangelicals include a religious identity, compared to fewer than half (49%) of white mainline Protestant and Catholic (44%) Millennials. Only 30% of religiously unaffiliated Millennials include a religious identity on their Facebook profile page.

Among Millennials who include their religious identity on their Facebook page, about 4-in-10 (38%) simply identify as “Christian,” 16% identify as “Catholic,” and 8% identify with a specific Protestant denomination (e.g. Presbyterian, Baptist). Sixteen percent identify their religion as atheist or agnostic. Three percent specifically mention Jesus or God but do not mention any specific religious tradition. More than 1-in-10 (12%) include a religious identity that is not explicitly linked to a specific religious tradition. Examples of other religious identities include “Pastafarian,” “Open,” “Humanist,” “Searching,” or a quote from the Bible.