

# Faith Digest: Super Bowl faith

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**Some fans rely on God and rituals to boost favorite team.** Most Americans don't think God will pick the Super Bowl champion or any other sports winner. But some pray nonetheless, and a few "religiously" perform little game-day rituals—just in case.



(Infographic courtesy of

Public Religion Research Institute) A survey by [Public Religion Research Institute](#) probes the crossover between team spirit and spirituality. Most Americans—60 percent—call themselves fans of a particular team. Among this group, several do a little dance or say a little prayer to help the team along, and 21 percent wear special clothes or do special rituals. Donning a team jersey leads the way, at 66 percent. One-fourth of sports fans—including 31 percent of football fans—have felt their team has been cursed. A little more than one-fourth—26 percent—say they pray to God to help their team. White evangelicals are most likely to lean on the Lord, with 38 percent who say they pray for their team. Football fans also are more likely than other fans to admit praying for their team (33 percent to 21 percent), performing pre-game or game-time rituals (25 percent to 18 percent), or believe their team has been cursed (31 percent to 18 percent). Although three-quarters of respondents said God plays no role in who wins,

Americans are divided evenly on whether God rewards faith-filled athletes with good health and success, with 48 percent saying yes and 47 percent saying no. PRRI surveyed 1,011 people in English and Spanish between Jan. 8 and Jan. 12. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

**Capital punishment draws less support from young Christians.** A new poll shows younger Christians are not as supportive of the death penalty as older members of their faith. When asked if they agreed “the government should have the option to execute the worst criminals,” 42 percent of self-identified Christian boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, said “yes.”



Only 32 percent of self-identified Christian millennials, born between 1980 and 2000, said the same thing. The poll conducted by [Barna Group](#) last summer surveyed 1,000 American adults and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.6 percentage points. It showed an even sharper

difference in support for the death penalty among “practicing Christians,” which Barna defined as those who say faith is very important to their lives and have attended church at least once in the last month. Nearly half of practicing Christian boomers support the government’s right to execute the worst criminals, while only 23 percent of practicing Christian millennials do. According to the Barna study, only 5 percent of Americans believe Jesus would support government’s ability to execute the worst criminals. Two percent of Catholics, 8 percent of Protestants, and 10 percent of practicing Christians said Jesus would offer his support.