

Faith Digest

November 24, 2010

Americans cite negatives of Christianity. When asked about Christianity's recent contributions to society, Americans cited more negatives than benefits, according to a recent survey. The negative contribution cited most was hatred or violence in the name of Jesus, according to the [Barna Group](#) survey. Other frequently cited examples included opposition to gay marriage and the Roman Catholic Church's sex abuse scandal. The positive contribution mentioned most was Christians' helping the poor, as well as evangelism and influencing the country's values. Researchers, who asked open-ended questions, found that one in four respondents could not name a single positive contribution made by Christians in recent years to American society. Just 12 percent could not think of a single negative contribution. The findings were based on telephone interviews Aug. 16-22 with a random sample of 1,000 U.S. adults and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Public school students throw punches more. A recent survey of 43,000 high school students found public school students were more likely to participate in physical violence, while private school students were more likely to have teased or taunted someone, and more likely to have felt bullied themselves. Fifty-two percent of public school students say they have hit someone in anger in the past year, according to the study by the [Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics](#), compared to 47 percent of students in private religious high schools and 41 percent of students in secular private high schools. The study found 60 percent of boys at religious school have "bullied, teased or taunted" someone at least once in the past year, compared to 55 percent of boys in public or secular private schools. Girls in religious schools also were more likely to have verbally bullied someone than girls in the other two categories. About a quarter (23

percent) of religious-school students have “mistreated someone because he or she belonged to a different group,” compared to 21 percent of public school students and 15 percent of secular private students.

American politics lacks civility, poll shows. Four out of five Americans, regardless of party or religious affiliation, think the lack of respectful discourse in the United States political system is a serious problem, according to a [PRRI/RNS Religion News Poll](#). About half of white evangelicals and black Protestants think the country is more divided over religion than it was in the past, compared to less than 40 percent of Catholics and white mainline Protestants. Young adults—at 50 percent—are less likely than seniors—at 61 percent—to say Americans are more divided over politics. But they are more likely than seniors to say Americans are divided over religion—42 percent of young adults and 33 percent of older adults, respectively. The PRRI/RNS Religion News Poll was based on telephone interviews conducted Nov. 5-8, after the midterm elections, with 1,022 U.S. adults. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

-Compiled from Religion News Service