

# American Views on Morality



Representative Survey of 1,000  
Americans

# Methodology

---

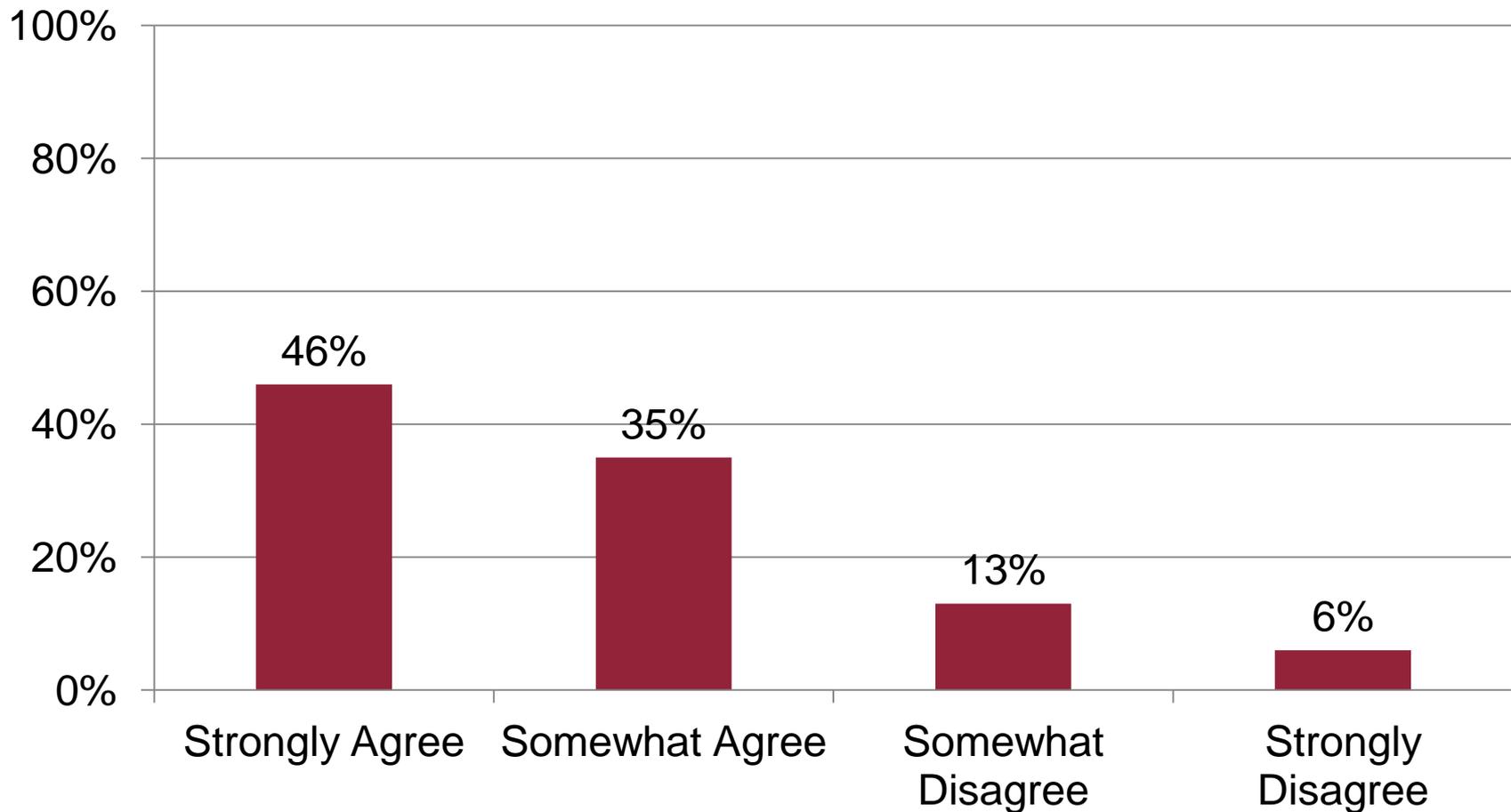
LifeWay Research conducted the study Sept. 27 – Oct. 1, 2016. The survey was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection.

Sample stratification and weights were used for gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, metro/non-metro, education, and income to reflect the most recent US Census data. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.1 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

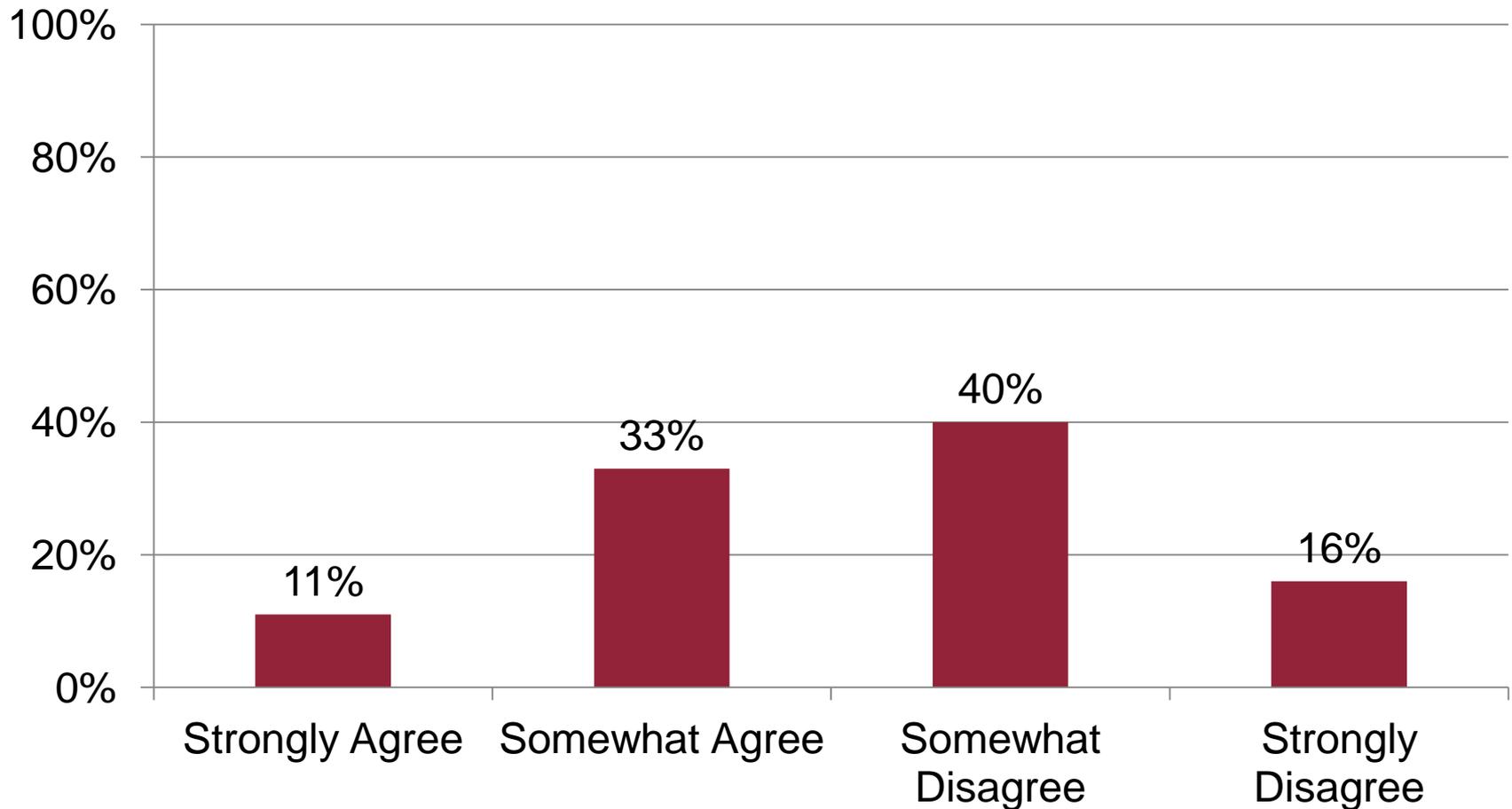
# Survey Responses

---

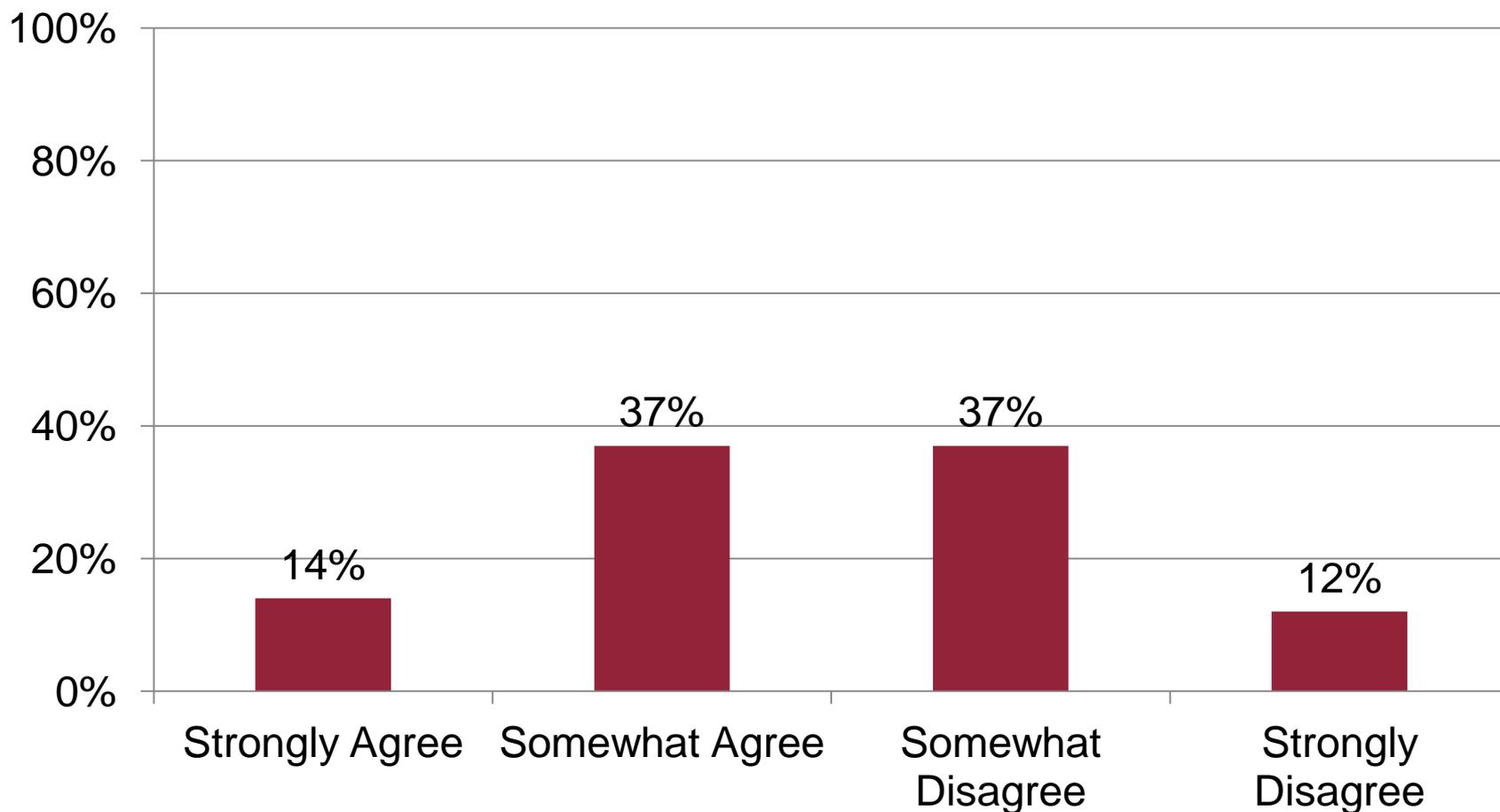
# 81% are concerned about the moral behavior in the United States



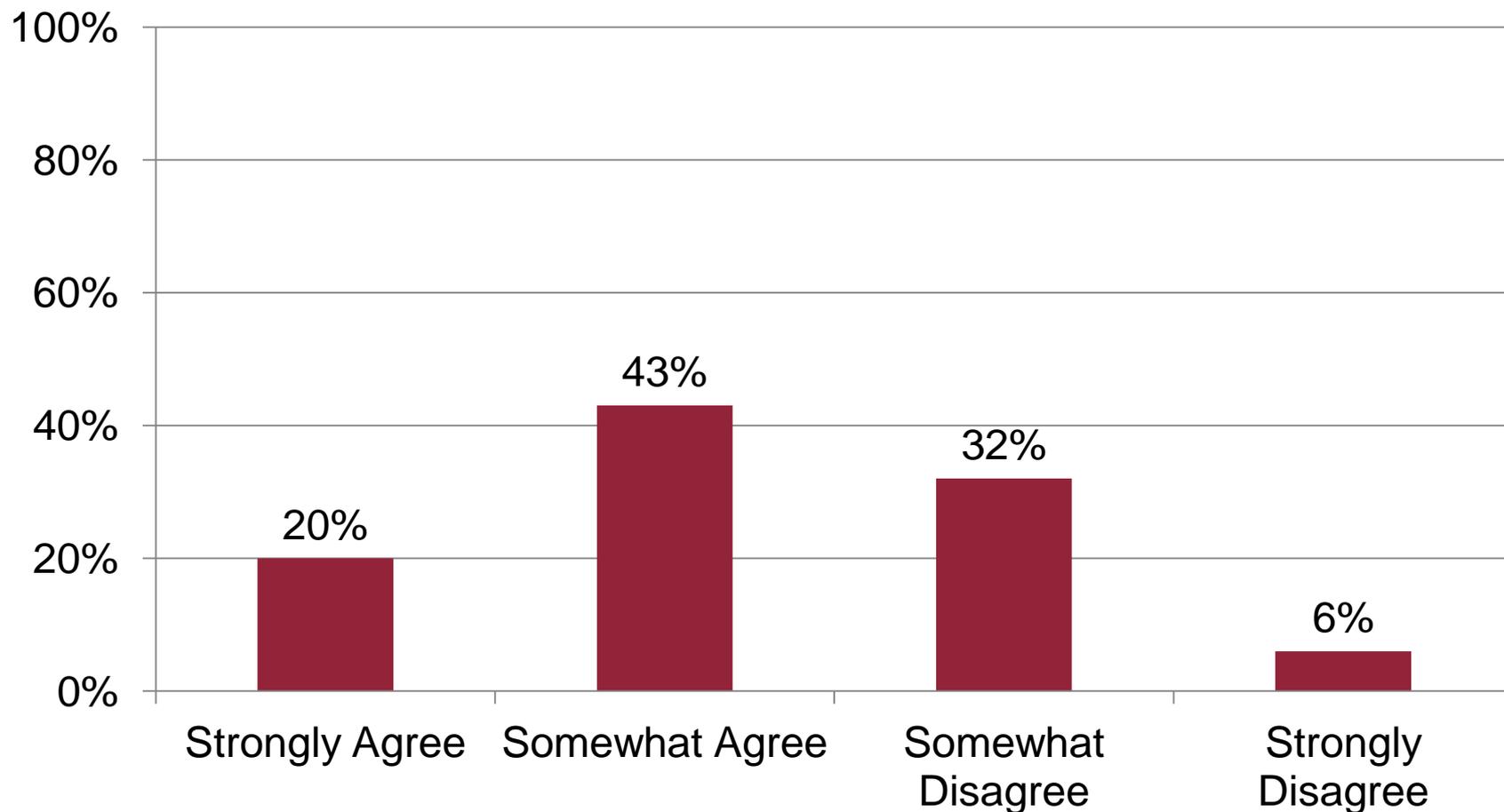
# 44% believe it is better to have fewer laws regulating moral standards



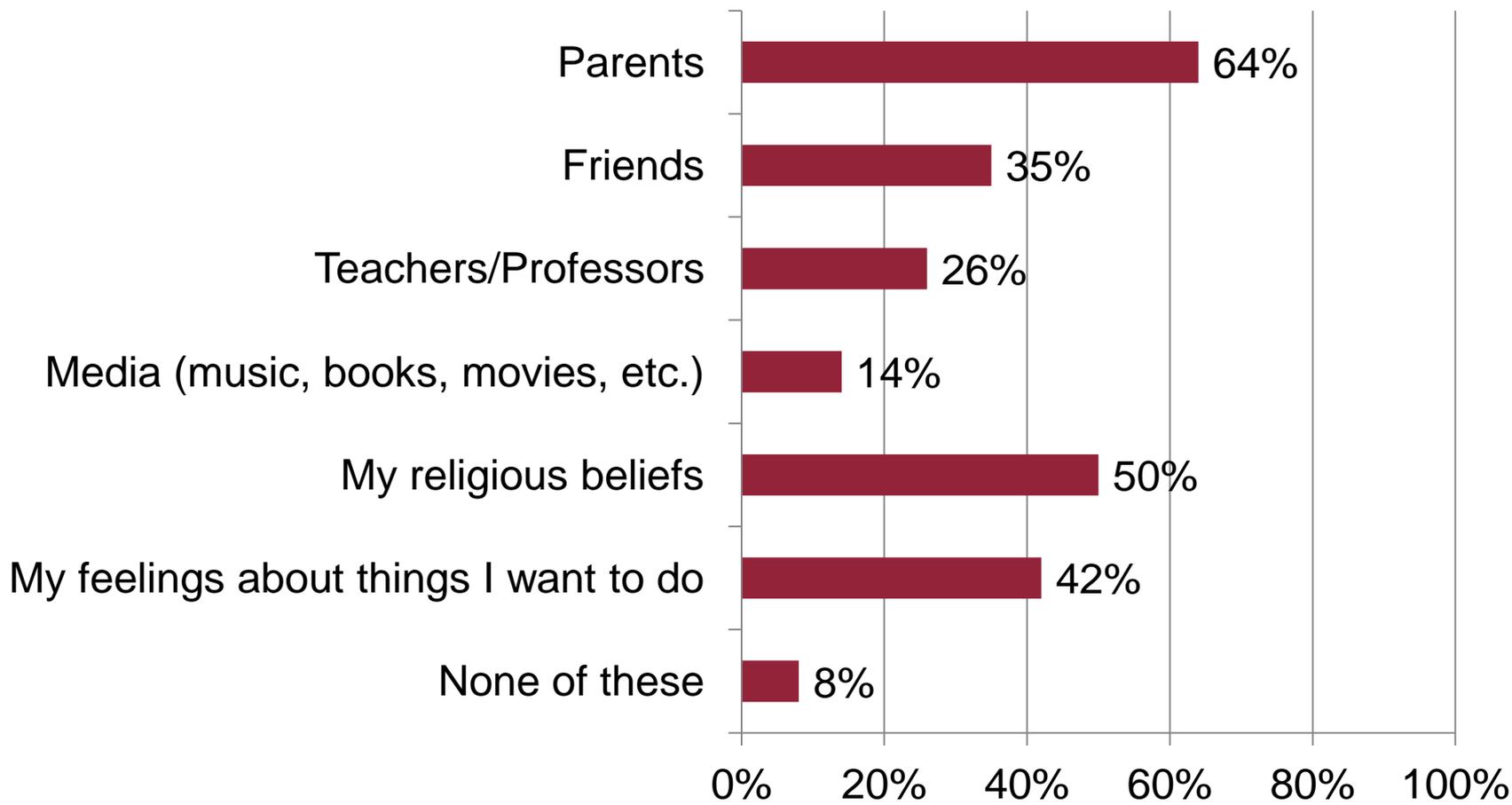
# 51% believe too many laws regulating moral standards have been removed



# 63% believe implementing laws to encourage moral behavior is not effective

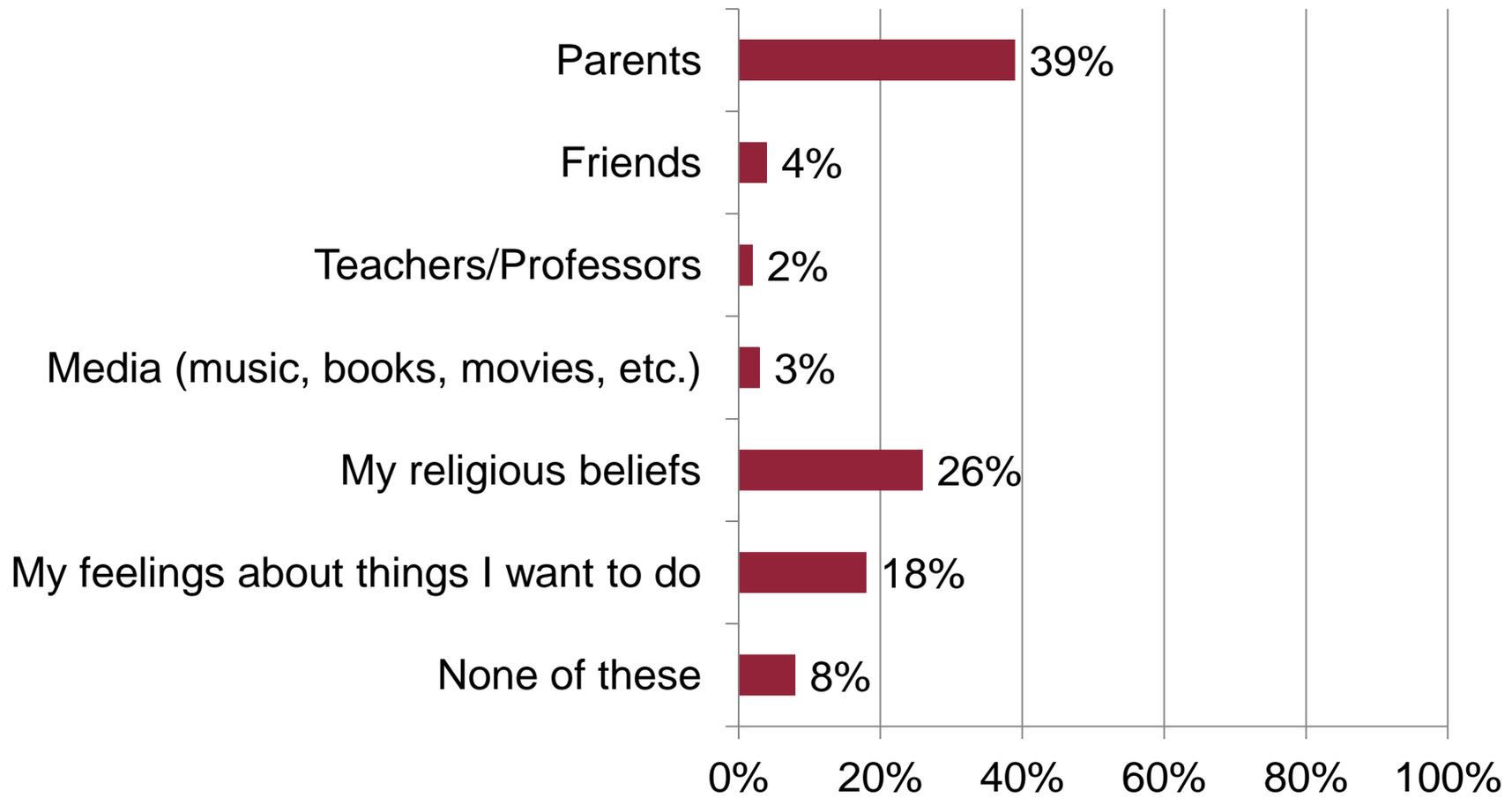


# “Which of the following have shaped YOUR beliefs about what shared moral standards SHOULD exist in American society today?”

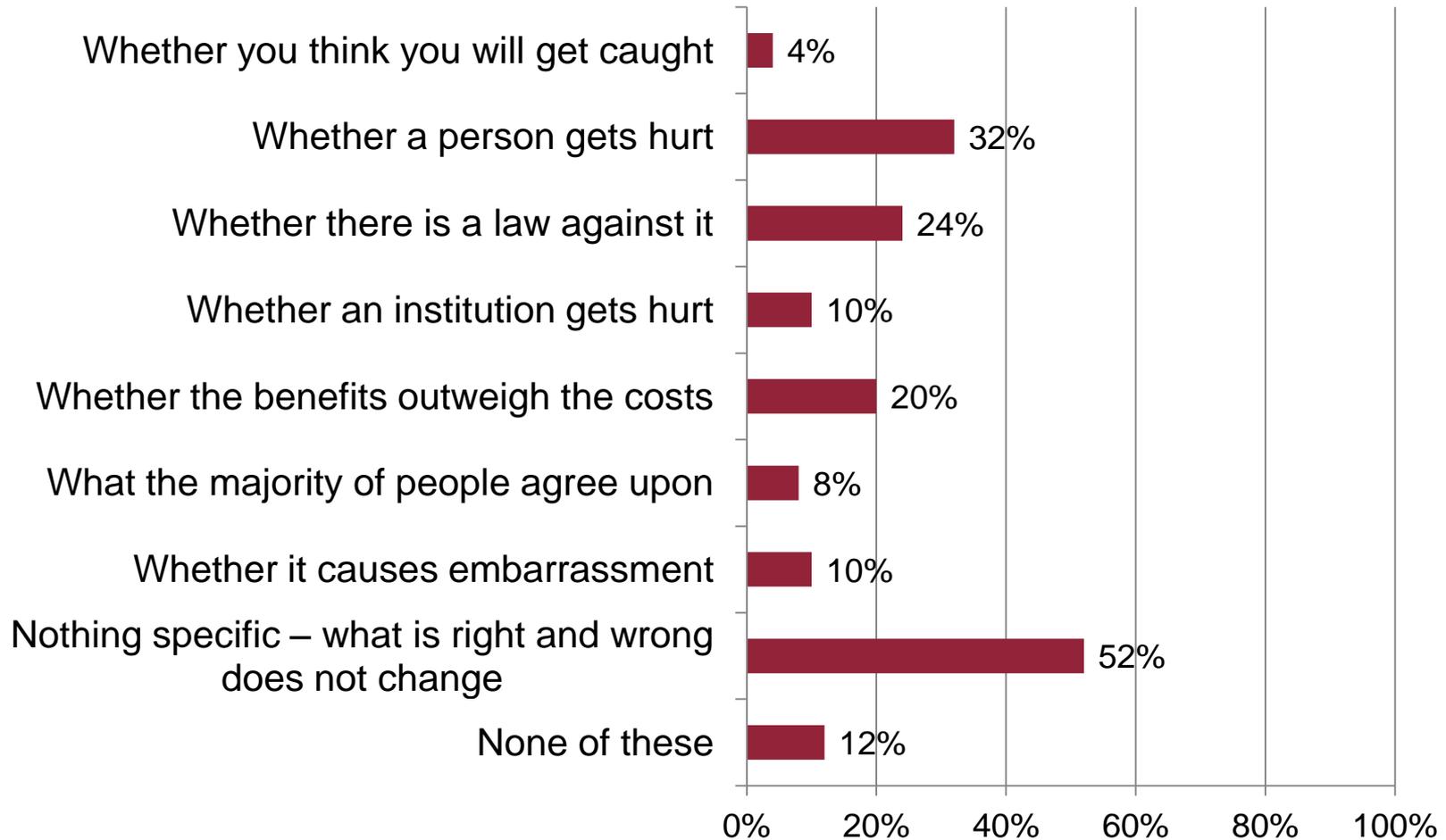


QB06a: “Which of the following have shaped YOUR beliefs about what shared moral standards SHOULD exist in American society today? (Select all)”

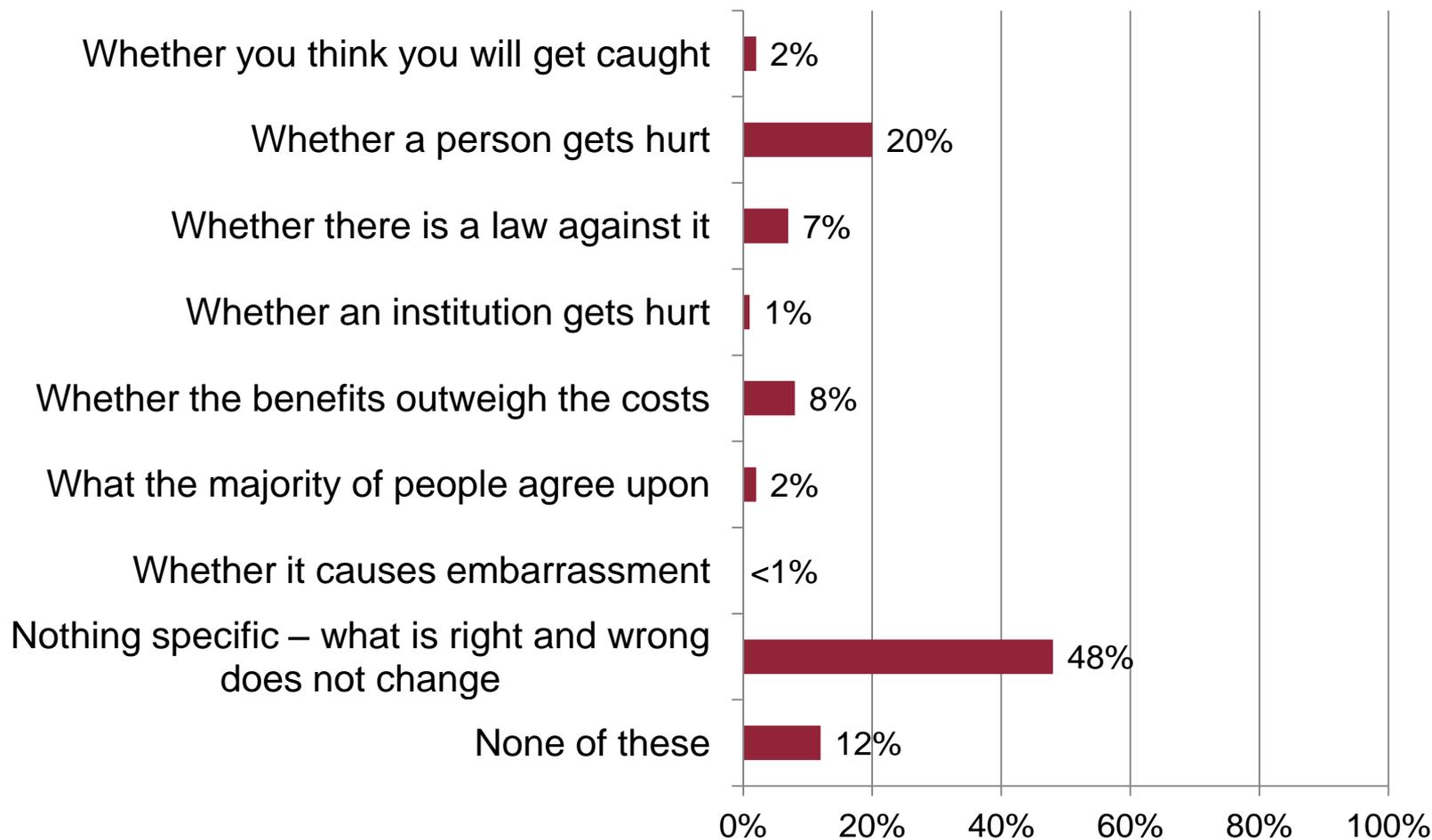
# 39% say that their parents most shaped their beliefs about moral standards



# “Whether something is morally right or wrong for you depends on...”



# 48% say nothing specific influences what is morally right or wrong; what is right and wrong does not change



# Significant Differences

---

Gender  
Region  
Age  
Ethnicity  
Education Level  
Religious Preference  
Denomination  
Evangelical Beliefs  
Religious Service Attendance

# Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among gender, region, age, ethnicity, and education.

Gender	Region	Age	Ethnicity	Education
Male	Northeast	18-24	White, Non-Hispanic	High School graduate or less
Female	Midwest	25-34	Black, Non-Hispanic	Some college
	South	35-44	Hispanic	Bachelor's Degree
	West	45-54	Other Ethnicities	Graduate Degree
		55-64		
		65+		

Note: Region is defined by US Census locations

# Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among religious preference, denomination, Evangelical Beliefs, and religious service attendance.

Religious Preference	Denomination	Evangelical Beliefs	Religious Service Attendance
Christian*	Catholic	Yes	Attending at least once a month
Other Religions	Protestant Christian	No	Attending less than once a month
No religion			

\*includes Catholic, Protestant, Nondenominational, and Orthodox

# Evangelical Beliefs

---

- Evangelical Beliefs are defined using the NAE LifeWay Research Evangelical Beliefs Research Definition based on respondent beliefs
- Respondents are asked their level of agreement with four separate statements using a four-point, forced choice scale (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). Those who strongly agree with all four statements are categorized as having Evangelical Beliefs
  - The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe
  - It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior
  - Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin
  - Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation

# “I am concerned about declining moral behavior in our nation.”

---

- Those in the Midwest (85%) are more likely to Agree than those in the West (76%)
- Those age 45-54 (87%) and 65+ (85%) are more likely to Agree than those 18-24 (71%) and 25-34 (77%)
- Black, Non-Hispanics (86%) are more likely to Agree than Hispanics (73%) and Other Ethnicities (75%)
- Those who are high school graduates or less (85%) or have some college (83%) are more likely to Agree than those with a Bachelor's (74%) or a graduate degree (72%)
- Christians (85%) are more likely to Agree than Other Religions (70%) and Nonreligious (72%)
- Protestant Christians (89%) are more likely to Agree than Catholics (82%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (91%) are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (79%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (89%) are more likely to Agree than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (77%)

# “The fewer laws regulating moral standards, the better.”

---

- Males (49%) are more likely to Agree than females (39%)
- Those with a Bachelor's (50%) or a graduate degree (51%) are more likely to Agree than those with some college (40%)
- Nonreligious (55%) are more likely to Agree than Christians (39%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (34%) are less likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (46%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (36%) are less likely to Agree (48%)

# “Too many laws regulating moral standards have been removed.”

---

- Those age 45-54 (57%) and 65+ (55%) are more likely to Agree than those 18-24 (41%) and 55-64 (45%)
- Those who are high school graduates or less are the most likely education category to Agree (62%)
- Christians (55%) are more likely to Agree than Other Religions (36%) and Nonreligious (42%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (72%) are more likely to Agree than those without Evangelical Beliefs (46%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (61%) are more likely to Agree than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (45%)

# “Implementing laws to encourage people to act morally is **NOT** effective.”

---

- Those in the Midwest (69%) are more likely to Agree than those in the Northeast (58%)
- Those age 65+ (68%) are more likely to Agree than those 35-44 (55%)
- White, Non-Hispanics (65%) are more likely to Agree than Other Ethnicities (53%)
- Nonreligious (69%) are more likely to Agree than Other Religions (52%)

# “Which of the following have shaped YOUR beliefs about what shared moral standards SHOULD exist in American society today?”

---

## Parents

- Those in the Midwest (72%) are more likely to select than those in the Northeast (59%) and West (59%)
- Those age 18-24 (72%) and 55-64 (70%) are more likely to select than those 25-34 (53%) and 35-44 (59%)
- White, Non-Hispanics (67%) are more likely to select than Black, Non-Hispanics (54%)
- Those with a Bachelor's degree (72%) are more likely to select than those who are high school graduates or less (59%)
- Christians (69%) are more likely to select than Other Religions (54%) and Nonreligious (52%)
- Catholics (78%) are more likely to select than Protestant Christians (65%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (57%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (66%)

# “Which of the following have shaped YOUR beliefs about what shared moral standards SHOULD exist in American society today?”

---

## Friends

- Those age 18-24 are the most likely age group to select (62%)
- White, Non-Hispanics (37%) and Other Ethnicities (45%) are more likely to select than Black, Non-Hispanics (27%) and Hispanics (25%)
- Those who are high school graduates or less are the least likely education category to select (27%)
- Nonreligious (41%) are more likely to select than Christians (33%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (20%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (38%)

# “Which of the following have shaped YOUR beliefs about what shared moral standards SHOULD exist in American society today?”

---

## Teachers/Professors

- Those age 18-24 are the most likely age group to select (48%)
- Other Ethnicities are the most likely age group to select (37%)
- Those with a graduate degree are the most likely education category to select (46%)
- Nonreligious (32%) are more likely to select than Christians (23%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (15%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (28%)

## Media (music, books, movies, etc.)

- Those age 18-24 (27%) and 25-34 (20%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (10%), 55-64 (12%), and 65+ (10%)
- Other Ethnicities are the most likely ethnic group to select (28%)
- Those who are high school graduates or less are the least likely education category to select (10%)
- Nonreligious (21%) are more likely to select than Christians (12%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (8%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (16%)

# “Which of the following have shaped YOUR beliefs about what shared moral standards SHOULD exist in American society today?”

---

## My religious beliefs

- Females (54%) are more likely to select than males (45%)
- Those in the South (57%) are more likely to select than those in the Northeast (43%) and West (43%)
- Those age 55-64 (57%) and 65+ (59%) are more likely to select than those 18-24 (35%), 25-34 (44%), and 35-44 (46%)
- Black, Non-Hispanics (59%) are more likely to select than Hispanics (45%)
- Christians (64%) and Other Religions (55%) are more likely to select than Nonreligious (13%)
- Protestant Christians (70%) are more likely to select than Catholics (55%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (82%) are more likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (43%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (78%) are more likely to select than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (35%)

# “Which of the following have shaped YOUR beliefs about what shared moral standards SHOULD exist in American society today?”

---

## My feelings about things I want to do

- Those age 18-24 (56%), 25-34 (46%), and 35-44 (46%) are more likely to select than those 55-64 (32%)
- Those with some college (46%) are more likely to select than those who are high school graduates or less (38%)
- Nonreligious (58%) are more likely to select than Christians (36%) and Other Religions (44%)
- Catholics (42%) are more likely to select than Protestant Christians (33%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (19%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (46%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (30%) are less likely than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (48%)

# “And which one of these has MOST shaped your beliefs about shared moral standards in American society?”

---

- Females (31%) are more likely to select “My religious beliefs” than males (21%)
- Those in the Midwest (45%) are more likely to select “Parents” than those in the West (34%)
- Those in the South (32%) are more likely to select “My religious beliefs” than those in the Northeast (17%) and Midwest (24%)
- Those in the Northeast (22%) and West (21%) are more likely to select “My feelings about things I want to do” than those in the South (15%)
- Those age 18-24 (47%) are more likely to select “Parents” than those 25-34 (30%) and 35-44 (34%)
- Those age 25-34 (5%) are more likely to “Media (music, books, movies, etc.)” than those 45-54 (1%) and 55-64 (1%)
- Those age 18-24 are the least likely age group to select “My religious beliefs” (9%)
- Those age 18-24 (29%) and 25-34 (22%) are more likely to select “My feelings about things I want to do” than those 55-64 (12%) and 65+ (13%)
- Other Ethnicities (48%) are more likely to select “Parents” than Black, Non-Hispanics (32%)

# “And which one of these has MOST shaped your beliefs about shared moral standards in American society?” (continued)

---

- Whites, Non-Hispanics (27%) and Black, Non-Hispanics (36%) are more likely to select “My religious beliefs” than Other Ethnicities (16%)
- Those with some college (4%) or a Graduate degree (5%) are more likely to select “Media (music, books, movies, etc.)” than those with a high school diploma or less (1%)
- Christians (44%) are more likely to select “Parents” than Other Religions (31%) and Nonreligious (30%)
- Nonreligious (8%) are more likely to select “Friends” than Christians (2%)
- Other Religions (5%) and Nonreligious (6%) are more likely to select “Media (music, books, movies, etc.)” than Christians (1%)
- Christians (33%) and Other Religions (36%) are more likely to select “My religious beliefs” than Nonreligious (5%)
- Nonreligious (31%) are more likely to select “My feelings about things I want to do” than Christians (14%) and Other Religious (14%)
- Catholics (33%) are more likely to select “Parents” than Protestant Christians (58%)
- Protestant Christians (45%) are more likely to select “My religious beliefs” than Catholics (16%)

# “And which one of these has MOST shaped your beliefs about shared moral standards in American society?” (continued)

---

- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (22%) are less likely to select “Parents” than those without Evangelical Beliefs (43%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (64%) are more likely to “My religious beliefs” than those without Evangelical Beliefs (18%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (6%) are less likely to select “My feelings about things I want to do” than those without Evangelical Beliefs (21%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (31%) are less likely to select “Parents” than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (44%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (1%) are less likely to select “Friends” than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (5%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (51%) are more likely to select “My religious beliefs” than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (13%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (8%) are less likely to select “My feelings about things I want to do” than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (23%)

# “Whether something is morally right or wrong for you depends on...”

---

## Whether you think you will get caught

- Those age 18-24 (10%) and 25-34 (8%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (2%), 55-64 (2%), and 65+ (3%)
- Hispanics (10%) are more likely to select than White, Non-Hispanics (3%)
- Those who are high school graduates or less (6%) are more likely to select than those with a graduate degree (1%)
- Catholics (7%) are more likely to select than Protestant Christians (2%)

# “Whether something is morally right or wrong for you depends on...”

---

## Whether a person gets hurt

- Females (36%) are more likely to select than males (28%)
- Those in the Midwest (37%) are more likely to select than those in the South (27%)
- Those age 35-44 (36%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (26%)
- White, Non-Hispanics (34%) are more likely to select than Black, Non-Hispanics (24%)
- Those with a Bachelor's (44%) or a graduate degree (38%) are more likely to select than those who are high school graduates or less (26%)
- Nonreligious (44%) are more likely to select than Christians (26%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (16%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (35%)

# “Whether something is morally right or wrong for you depends on...”

---

## Whether there is a law against it

- Those age 18-24 (31%), 35-44 (26%), and 65+ (27%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (16%)
- White, Non-Hispanics (24%) and Hispanics (30%) are more likely to select than Black, Non-Hispanics (15%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (18%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (25%)

## Whether an institution gets hurt

- Those in the Midwest (14%) are more likely to select than those in the Northeast (8%) and South (8%)
- Those age 35-44 (14%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (7%)
- White, Non-Hispanics (11%) and Hispanics (14%) are more likely to select than Black, Non-Hispanics (3%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (5%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (11%)

# “Whether something is morally right or wrong for you depends on...”

---

## Whether the benefits outweigh the costs

- Those age 18-24 (37%), 25-34 (26%), and 35-44 (23%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (14%), 55-64 (13%), and 65+ (14%)
- Hispanics (25%) and Black, Non-Hispanics (28%) are more likely to select than White, Non-Hispanics (17%)
- Those with a Bachelor’s degree (25%) are more likely to select than those who are high school graduates or less (17%)
- Other Religions (24%) and Nonreligious (31%) are more likely to select than Christians (15%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (7%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (22%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (14%) are less likely to select than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (23%)

# “Whether something is morally right or wrong for you depends on...”

---

## What the majority of people agree upon

- Those in the West (12%) are more likely to select than those in the Northeast (5%) and Midwest (5%)
- Those age 18-24 (16%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (6%), 55-64 (5%), and 65+ (6%)
- Other Ethnicities are the most likely ethnic group to select (16%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (2%) are less likely to select than those without Evangelical Beliefs (9%)

## Whether it causes embarrassment

- Those age 18-24 (15%) are more likely to select than those 45-54 (6%)

# “Whether something is morally right or wrong for you depends on...”

---

## Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change

- Those in the South (56%) are more likely to select than those in the West (47%)
- Those age 45-54 (60%), 55-64 (61%), and 65+ (63%) are more likely to select than those 18-24 (36%), 25-34 (39%), and 35-44 (45%)
- White, Non-Hispanics are the most likely ethnic group to select (57%)
- Those with some college (57%) are more likely to select than those with a Bachelor's (46%) or a graduate degree (47%)
- Christians (58%) are more likely to select than Other Religions (42%) and Nonreligious (39%)
- Protestant Christians (62%) are more likely to select than Catholics (53%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (57%) are more likely to select than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (49%)

# “And which one of these is MOST important to you in deciding what is morally right or wrong?”

---

- Females (24%) are more likely to select “Whether a person gets hurt” than males (16%)
- Those in the Northeast are the most likely to regional group to select “Whether you think you will get caught” (5%)
- Those in the South (53%) are more likely to select “Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change” than those in the West (42%)
- Those age 35-44 (27%) are more likely to select “Whether a person gets hurt” than those 45-54 (16%), 55-64 (18%), and 65+ (16%)
- Those age 25-34 (8%), 55-64 (7%), and 65+ (8%) are more likely to select “Whether there is a law against it” than those 45-54 (3%)
- Those age 18-24 are the most likely age group to select “Whether the benefits outweigh the costs” (18%)
- Those age 45-54 (57%), 55-64 (56%), and 65+ (59%) are more likely to select “Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change” than those 18-24 (30%), 25-34 (37%), and 35-44 (41%)
- Other Ethnicities are the most likely ethnic group to select “Whether the benefits outweigh the costs” (18%)

# “And which one of these is MOST important to you in deciding what is morally right or wrong?”

---

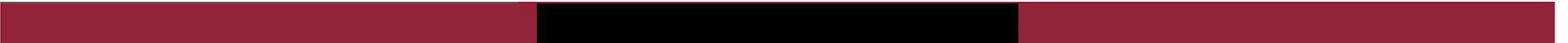
- White, Non-Hispanics (52%) are more likely to select “Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change” than Hispanics (42%)
- Those with a Bachelor’s (31%) or a graduate degree (30%) are more likely to select “Whether a person gets hurt” than those who are not college graduates
- Those with some college (52%) are more likely to select “Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change” than those with a Bachelor’s degree (42%)
- Nonreligious (30%) are more likely to select “Whether a person gets hurt” than Christians (15%)
- Nonreligious (13%) are more likely to select “Whether the benefits outweigh the costs” than Christians (6%)
- Christians (54%) are more likely to select “Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change” than Other Religions (35%) and Nonreligious (35%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (7%) are less likely to select “Whether a person gets hurt” than those without Evangelical Beliefs (23%)
- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (3%) are less likely to select “Whether the benefits outweigh the costs” than those without Evangelical Beliefs (9%)

# “And which one of these is MOST important to you in deciding what is morally right or wrong?”

---

- Those with Evangelical Beliefs (56%) are more likely to select “Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change” than those without Evangelical Beliefs (46%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (16%) are less likely to select “Whether a person gets hurt” than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (22%)
- Those who attend a religious service once a month or more (53%) are more likely to select “Nothing specific – what is right and wrong does not change” than those who attend a religious service less than once a month (45%)

# American Views on Morality



Representative Survey of 1,000  
Americans