

# Nearly 70 percent of evangelicals do not view religion, science as being in conflict

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Media and popular culture might portray religion and science as being at odds, but new research from Rice University suggests just the opposite.

Findings from the recently completed study "Religious Understandings of Science (RUS)" reveal that despite many misconceptions regarding the intersection of science and [religion](#), nearly 70 percent of evangelical Christians do not view the two as being in conflict with each other.

The research was presented by Rice sociologist Elaine Howard Ecklund today in Washington, D.C., during the American Association for the

Advancement of Science (AAAS) conference, Perceptions: Science and Religious Communities. Ecklund, the principal investigator and researcher for the RUS project, is the Autrey Professor of Sociology and director of Rice's Religion and Public Life Program.

Ecklund noted that evangelicals are of interest in this study because they constitute approximately 26 percent of the population in the U.S. and are often considered the most hostile toward science.

"We really wanted to determine if this claim was based in any truth," Ecklund said. "Although many politicians and the media at large portray evangelicals as distrustful of science, we found that this is more myth than reality."

Other key findings:

- Nearly half of evangelicals (48 percent) view science and religion as complementary to one another; 21 percent view them as entirely independent of one another.
- Overall, 38 percent of Americans view religion and science as complementary, and 35 percent of Americans view science and religion as entirely independent.
- In the U.S., 76 percent of scientists in the general population identify with a religious tradition.
- Only 15 percent of Americans and 14 percent of evangelicals agree that [modern science](#) does more harm than good.
- Jews (42 percent), Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus (52 percent as a group) and the nonreligious (47 percent) are more interested in new scientific discoveries than evangelicals (22 percent) are.

Ecklund plans to write a book about the survey findings with Chris Scheitle, a sociology professor at the West Virginia University. She hopes the research will shed light on how religious groups understand

science and vice versa, in addition to providing outreach and translation to individuals who might have difficulties with some aspects of science.

RUS is the largest study of American views on religion and [science](#). It includes a nationally representative survey of more than 10,000 Americans and more than 300 in-depth interviews with Christians, Jews and Muslims; more than 140 of the latter three groups are evangelical Christians. The study also included extensive observations of 23 religious centers in Houston and Chicago. The research is being provided to the AAAS Dialogue on Science Ethics and Religion program to help foster communication between [religious groups](#) and scientists. More information about the study is available at [www.elainehowardecklund.com/research/](http://www.elainehowardecklund.com/research/).

**More information:** For more information or to view a copy of the presentation, visit [www.elainehowardecklund.com/research/](http://www.elainehowardecklund.com/research/)

Provided by Rice University

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