

Religious beliefs significantly tied to national political participation

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A study recently published in *Social Science Quarterly* explores the effects of religious behaviors and beliefs on political participation and finds that religious beliefs play a more significant role than church attendance or religious traditions in political participation.

Robyn Driskell, Elizabeth Embry, and Larry Lyon, all of Baylor University, utilized data from the Baylor Religion Survey, one of the few nationally representative surveys to measure in detail multiple dimensions of religion and politics.

Religious beliefs affected political participation more than other measures of religious behavior. In addition, different types of religious beliefs influence political participation differently.

Generalized, macro religious beliefs affected national political participation. Macro beliefs include religious beliefs that involve broad, worldly concerns. Narrow, individually experienced micro beliefs that are personal and affect individual concerns had no effect on national politics.

Those who believe that God is directly involved in world affairs, such as evangelical Protestants, are less likely to be involved in world affairs. Believers in such an active God believe that if God determines worldly affairs, then there is little reason for individuals to participate in civic events. In contrast, if one believes that God is more inactive, as is common with Jews and mainline Protestants, then one would need to

take action and more likely be politically engaged.

"Our results have wide-ranging implications for both the study of political participation and the field of religion," the authors conclude. "It is focused types of religious beliefs, more than broad religious traditions, which impact political participation."

Source: Wiley-Blackwell

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