THE AMERICAN MOSAIC PROJECT  Wave 2.5, Preliminary Findings Report, Fall 2020

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American Mosaic Project Survey, Wave 2.5, 2019
Executive Summary and Preliminary Findings

The American Mosaic Project
Introduction

The American Mosaic Project (AMP) is a research initiative housed at the University of Minnesota designed to contribute to our understanding of what brings Americans together,
what divides us, and the implications of our diversity for our political and civic life. We are most concerned with how Americans themselves understand the nature and consequences of diversity for their own lives and for our society as a whole. How do Americans understand ethnic, religious, and racial diversity? How do Americans respond to calls for greater recognition of diverse groups and lifestyles? How do our ethnic, racial, and religious identities shape the way we understand the obligations of citizenship and our vision of “the good society”?

The first wave of the project, a nationally representative telephone survey conducted in 2003 with support from the David Edelstein Family Foundation, measured attitudes about diversity, racial and religious identities, and discrimination. Through in-depth interviews and fieldwork across the country, we further explored the various contexts in which Americans experience diversity, focusing in particular on religious interfaith organizations, neighborhoods, and festivals. From 2005 to 2011, the research team published findings from this data in American Sociological Review, Social Problems, and Sociological Theory, as well as a range of field-specific journals. In addition to broad studies of Americans’ visions of diversity, topics also included more specific examinations of anti-Semitism, negative attitudes about atheists, gender and family in religious communities, and critical whiteness theories. The 2003 survey data is archived at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan and the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA).

Ten years later, with support from the National Science Foundation, we designed the Boundaries in the American Mosaic Survey (BAM) as an online follow up and extension to the original AMP project, with a particular focus on the social and economic conditions associated with Americans’ attitudes towards racial and religious diversity. This survey was fielded to a nationally representative sample in the early spring of 2014. Our results indicated a number of trends consistent with the 2003 data, as well as some new insights into what issues Americans are concerned about, who they blame for these perceived social problems, and what these attitudes may mean for the future of social policy formation in the United States. The research team has published findings from this wave of data in journals like Social Forces, Social Problems, and Sociology of Race and Ethnicity. The 2014 survey data is in the process of being archived at ICPSR and ARDA.

Soon after the 2014 data were collected, the national conversation around citizenship and social belonging shifted. The 2016 Presidential Election heightened tensions surrounding American identity, particularly with regard to policy questions about immigration, citizenship, and the status of religious and racial minority groups. In order to test whether attitudes on these measures have shifted substantially, in fall of 2019 we fielded a subset of the core questions from the 2014 BAM survey that measure attitudes about diversity and belonging, understandings of racial inequality, and beliefs about the role of religion in public life. Our results, described in this report, indicate that Americans are increasingly concerned about intolerance and inequality, and many are more accepting of racial and religious minorities. However, there is also evidence of increased partisan sorting that continues to shape Americans’ perceptions of “the good society” and who should be included in it.
Who is Like Me and Who is Different?

Americans overall still have a mixed attitude toward diversity, but Black, college educated, and liberal-leaning Americans are more likely to see it as a strength.

Pluralistic societies such as the United States draw complex boundaries around who and who doesn’t belong, and American attitudes toward diversity reflect the difficulties of reconciling respect for differences with a common American identity. When asked if “social and cultural diversity is a strength or weakness” pluralities of BAM survey respondents said they saw diversity as both a strength and a weakness – about 38% in both 2014 and 2019. However, there has been an increase in seeing diversity as mostly a strength, from 30% in 2014 to 36% in 2019, and a decrease in seeing diversity as mostly a weakness.

Who is driving the increase in valuing diversity? Most demographic groups saw at least a slight increase in seeing diversity as a strength, but the following groups saw notable increases: Black Americans – 40% in 2019, versus 27% in 2014; Americans with college degrees – 51% (41%); nonreligious Americans – 42% (32%), and Democrats – 46% (37%). The only groups that decreased in this category were Hispanics – 31% (33%) and Catholics – 33% (35%).

More Americans are comfortable with out-group marriage, but overall approval is still low.

Many Americans might profess to value diversity in surveys asked respondents if they would approve or disapprove of their children marrying members of three historically marginalized groups – Muslims, atheists, and African Americans. Between 2014 and 2019, respondents’ approval of their children marrying members of all three groups increased, but outright acceptance is still less than 35% for each category. A majority of Americans say “it makes no difference” in regard to marrying African Americans (52% in 2019) but are
Who is driving this increase in approval? Regarding their children potentially marrying Muslims, the following groups saw notable changes: Black approval increased from 13% in 2014 to 30% in 2019, and disapproval decreased from 34% to 23%. White approval increased from 10% to 18% and disapproval decreased from 54% to 45%. Americans with a bachelor's degree or higher (12% to 24%), Democrats (14% to 26%), and nonreligious Americans (13% to 29%), also saw large increases in approval, while Republican approval increased only slightly, from 6% to 8%.

Regarding their children marrying atheists, younger cohorts saw the biggest increases in acceptance, including 18-29-year-olds (from 19% in 2014 to 27% in 2019) and 30-44-year-olds (18% to 29%). Nonreligious Americans (24% to 40%) and Democrats (14% to 26%) also saw large increases in approval. The groups most likely to disapprove of their children marrying atheists were Evangelicals (71% in 2019) and Republicans (56% in 2019).

Regarding their children marrying African Americans, Democrats (from 26% in 2014 to 41% in 2019) and Black Americans (47% to 66%), both saw large increases, but Republican (21% to 22%) and White (20%-29%) approval increased only slightly. Among age cohorts, Americans aged 18-29 saw the biggest increase in approval (25% to 44%), and 45-59-year-olds (24%-30%) saw the smallest increase. Among religious groups, mainline protestants saw the largest increase in approval (18% to 33%), but there were notable increases in acceptance among evangelicals (27% to 35%) and the nonreligious (22% to 36%).

Americans are more likely to think that Muslims, Latin Americans and African Americans share their vision of America—but not immigrants.

Another means of assessing how Americans draw boundaries of belonging is asking them whether other groups share their common vision of America. These charts indicate an increased acceptance of all groups except immigrants and Mormons. Among the least accepted groups, there seems to be a larger increase in acceptance of Muslims and atheists.
Differences in a shared vision of America indicate widening political, educational, and urban/rural divides.

Who is driving this increase in shared vision? Democrats, college-educated Americans, and Americans living in metropolitan areas saw notable increases. Regarding whether African Americans shared their vision of America, 58% of Democrats agreed, versus just 46% in 2014; 59% of college-educated Americans agreed, versus 41% in 2014; and 52% of Americans living in metropolitan areas agreed, versus 42% in 2014. There were similar increases among all three groups regarding atheists, Hispanics/Latin Americans, Jews, and Muslims. Republicans, high school-educated Americans, and Americans living outside of metropolitan areas saw either only slight increases or moved in the opposite direction, however. For example, regarding whether Hispanics/Latin Americans agreed with their vision of America, 35% of Republicans agreed in 2019, versus 39%
in 2014; 37% of high school-educated Americans agreed in 2019, versus 36% in 2014; and 35% of Americans living outside metro areas agreed, versus 35% in 2014. This political and education gap is particularly noticeable regarding immigrants. Democrats and college educated Americans were more likely in 2019 to say that immigrants share their vision, while Republicans, high school-educated Americans, and Americans living outside of metro areas were less likely.

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Perceived Social Problems

Liberal and conservative demographic groups are at similar levels of concern over intolerance and shared values but diverge over inequality.

100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30%
20% 10% 0%

100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0%
Intolerance a Somewhat or Serious Problem 2019 2014
Inequality a Somewhat or Serious Problem

The BAM survey asked respondents whether they thought intolerance and incivility, a lack of shared values, and an increasing gap between the rich and the poor were serious problems in American society. Traditionally liberal demographic groups (Democrats, the college educated, Americans living in metro areas, and the nonreligious) and traditionally conservative demographic groups (Republicans, the high school-educated, Americans living outside metro areas, and conservative Christians) rose to meet each other in their level of concern for incivility and a lack of shared morals. For example, Democrats’ concern over intolerance was already high in 2014 (83% thought intolerance was either a “somewhat” or “very serious” problem), and increased in 2019, to 93%; but Republicans rose to meet Democrats, increasing from 74% concerned to 88% concerned in 2019—a 9-point gap narrowing to a 5-point gap. These data raise intriguing questions over how each group is defining their “shared morals” and whom they feel are facing intolerance. There is, however, a clear divergence between liberal and conservative-leaning groups over concern for rising inequality. In this case Democrats, the college educated, and the nonreligious all saw small increases, while Republicans, those living outside metro areas, grew slightly less concerned.

Overall, the share of Americans who think intolerance and lack of shared values are a “serious” problem has increased, but serious concern over inequality has decreased.

When just looking at respondents who found these problems a “very” rather than “somewhat” serious problems, a few more differences become apparent.

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Who is driving beliefs in increasing intolerance
How Serious of a Problem is Increasing Intolerance and Incivility in America Today?

20%
10%
0%

being a very serious problem? Among age cohorts, 30-44-year-olds saw the biggest increase (33% in 2014 versus 61% in 2019), but 60+-year-olds saw a similar increase, and are the age group most likely to see this as a very serious problem (41% to 65%). Among racial groups, the largest increase in thinking it is a very serious problem was among Blacks (38% to 67%). Respondents with some college education
(37% to 63%) and at least bachelor’s degree (38% to 67%) also saw marked increases.

Who is driving beliefs in lack of shared values as a very serious problem? Republicans who saw shared morals as a serious problem (44% in 2014 versus 58% in 2019) remain more concerned than Democrats (28% to 39%), evangelicals (46% to 63%) are more concerned than Catholics (40% to 46%), mainline protestants (35% to 44%), and the nonreligious (25% to 30%). Among racial groups, Blacks (34% to 60%) were more concerned than Whites (35% to 45%) and Hispanics (39% to 48%).

Who is driving beliefs that income inequality is not a very serious problem? In contrast to concerns over intolerance and shared morals, the overall share of Americans who believe inequality is a “very serious” problem decreased slightly between 2014 and 2019. Republicans (31% in 2014 versus 21% in 2019) rather than Democrats (63% to 65%), Americans living in metro (51% to 37%) rather than outside metros (49% to 48%), and Whites (48% to 40%) rather than Blacks (58% to 66%) or Hispanics (49% to 53%) all seem to be driving this change. All age groups except Americans aged 30-

Americans in general see religion as more divisive than they used to and are less concerned about increasing rates of religious disaffiliation.

Today

Religion Divides People in America 60%
Who is driving beliefs that religion divides? The share of respondents who agreed with the statement “religion divides people in America today” increased between 2014 and 2019. This increase seems to be a general trend rather than attributable to one group. However, Democrats (26% in 2014 versus 41% in 2019) are more likely to strongly agree than Republicans (18% to 22%). Additionally, while strongest among the nonreligious and weakest among evangelicals, all religious groups are more likely to strongly agree and less likely to somewhat agree. The biggest increase among the nonreligious is in the strongly agree category (34% to 53%). Among the strongest racial groups, agreement is strongest among Black Americans (28% to 41%) over Whites (23% to 31%) and Hispanics (21% to 35%).

Who is driving increased acceptance of the nonreligious? The BAM survey also indicates increased approval and decreased disapproval of nonreligious Americans. Mainline protestants saw the biggest decrease in seeing a lack of religious affiliation as a “bad” thing (57% in 2014 versus 34% in 2019). Among age cohorts, 18-29-year-olds are most likely to see non-affiliation as a “good” thing in 2019 (23%), and among racial groups Whites are the most likely to approve (14%). Democrats (28%) are much less likely to say non-affiliation is a bad thing than Republicans (54%). In general, however, Americans are most likely to say that non-affiliation is neither a good nor a bad thing, in both 2014 and 2019.
Public Religious Expression

Fewer Americans are using religion as an indicator of good citizenship and American identity, but partisan divides remain.

**Society's Standards Should be Based on God's Law - Democrats and Republicans**

Between 2014 and 2019, fewer Americans were inclined to agree that “a president should have strong religious beliefs,” that society’s morals should be based on “God’s laws,” and that “being a good Christian is important to being a good American.” This trend is in line with the findings in the previous section about Americans becoming more accepting of nonreligious people and more concerned about the ways that religion can be divisive. However, definite partisan divides remain.

**A President Should Have Strong Religious Beliefs**

Disagreement that a president should have strong religious beliefs? Among religious groups, the nonreligious (29% in 2014 increasing to 50% in 2019) are much more likely than Catholics (6% to 9%), evangelicals (1.5% to 2.2%), or mainline protestants (2% to 7%) to say they disagree that a president should have strong beliefs. Evangelicals are the only religious group who are also more likely to strongly agree (38% to 46%).

Who is driving an increase in strong disagreement that a president should have strong religious beliefs? Among age cohorts, 18-29-year-olds are (23% to 27%), but there was a notable uptick in Americans aged 30-44 strongly disagreeing (14% to 24%) as well. Democrats (19% to 25%) are more likely to strongly disagree than Republicans (6% to 7%). There is a larger
increase among those living outside of metro areas (9% up to 15%) strongly disagreeing than those living in them (14% to 18%). However, the share of non-city dwellers in strong agreement (27% to 34%) increased as well.

Who is driving polarization in beliefs about religion’s influence on American society? Conservative Christians have increased in strong agreement (48% in 2014 increasing to 64% in 2019), while mainline protestants decreased in strong agreement (from 30% to 21%) and the nonreligious increased in strong disagreement (44% to 58%). Among racial groups, Whites (25% to 38%) and Blacks (31% to 47%) increased in strong agreement, while Hispanics decreased (25% to 21%). All racial groups saw small upticks in strong agreement. Americans living in metro areas increased in strong disagreement. Americans living in metro areas increased in strong agreement (35%-41%) but so did non-city dwellers (24% to 26%). The share of Democrats, both strongly agreeing and disagreeing increased slightly, while Republicans are more likely to strongly agree (36% to 41%).

Who is driving beliefs that being a Christian in not important for being a good American? Americans across most demographic categories are less likely to include Christianity in their definition of a “good American.” Among age cohorts, 30-44-year-olds saw the biggest uptick in thinking Christianity is not at all important to being a good American (28% in 2014 versus 39% in 2019), though all age groups saw an increase in this belief. While all religious groups saw a small uptick in seeing Christianity as not important, the nonreligious saw a large increase (50% up to 71%). Evangelicals increased in thinking Christianity is very important (50% to 54%) but mainline protestants and Catholics decreased in thinking it is very important. Among racial groups, Whites (27% up to 31%) increased in thinking it is not important, as did Hispanics (21% to 30%) and Blacks (11% to 22%). All racial groups decreased in thinking this is very important. Partisan beliefs on this issue have not changed much since 2014, but both Democrats and Republicans are less likely to see this as very important and more likely
Understandings of Racial Inequality

Americans think race matters in society, but also think of themselves as “colorblind” on racial issues.

The BAM survey asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with statements such as “race no longer matters in the U.S.,” “I’m colorblind—I don’t see race,” and “Whites have lots of advantages in American society today.” Across all three questions about racial inequality, Americans have moved out of the “somewhat” categories and into the “strongly” categories in both directions. Americans also hold somewhat conflicting views about the importance of race—a majority of Americans now strongly disagree that race no longer matters, but a majority also think of themselves as colorblind. Similar to the polarization in religious attitudes, much of this polarization around racial inequality seems to be partisan.

Who is driving polarization in beliefs about race mattering? The only racial categories that saw increases in strong agreement that race no longer matters in the U.S. were Whites (4% in 2014 up to 9% in 2019) and Blacks (4% to 9%). Hispanics saw the biggest increase in strong disagreement (26% to 50%), followed by Blacks (55% to 61%), and then Whites (28% to 31%). There was a large jump in strong disagreement among Democrats (35% to 53%) while Republicans decreased in
Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree
---|---|---|---
(25% to 20%) | (5% to 13%). | 2019 2014

Evangelicals were the only religious group that did not increase in strong disagreement (30% to 29%) and they increased in strong agreement (5% to 11%). The nonreligious saw the biggest increase in strong disagreement (36% to 50%).

I'm Colorblind. I Don't See Race.

Who is driving polarization in beliefs about colorblindness? While overall responses regarding colorblindness were similar between 2014 and 2019, there were some notable differences between demographic groups. Black people were the most likely to increase in strong agreement (30% in 2014 up to 44% in 2019) followed by Whites (25% to 27%). Hispanics were much less likely to strongly agree (43% down to 27%). Blacks were also less likely to strongly disagree (15% to 11%) and...

I'm Colorblind - Racial Groups

Whites Have Lots of Advantages in American Society Today

Hispanics saw a notable increase in strong disagreement (6% to 17%). Democrats were more likely in both years to strongly agree (30% to 32%) compared to Republicans (26% to 26%). Both parties saw a small increase in strong disagreement. Among religious and nonreligious groups, only Catholics saw a decrease in strongly agree...
Evangelicals are most likely to strongly agree in 2019 (32%-34%). Blacks are more likely to strongly agree (56% up to 61%) while Hispanics are less likely to strongly agree (44% down to 41%) and more likely to strongly disagree (6% to 8%). Democrats increased in strong agreement (39% to 48%) while Republicans decreased in strong agreement (17% to 11%) and increased in strong disagreement (11% to 20%). There was also a small increase in strong disagreement among urbanites (7% to 11%). Among education levels, Americans with less than a high school degree increased in strong disagreement (11% to 15%), as did those with a high school degree (11% to 14%) and some college degrees. The only respondents to increase substantially in strong agreement (35% to 41%) were the groups with a bachelor’s degree and above. Among religious groups, Catholics were the only group to decrease in strong agreement (29% down to 26%) and evangelicals increased slightly in strong agreement (23% to 27%) and saw similar rates of agreement as mainline protestants (24% to 29%), with the nonreligious having the highest rates of strong agreement (33% to 39%). All religious and nonreligious groups also saw a slight increase in strong disagreement, but the highest increase was among mainline protestants (7% to 18%).
Methodological Appendix

The data for the 2019 AMP Wave 2.5 survey were gathered from the Ipsos Government & Academic Omnibus survey that draws on a nationally representative probability sample of U.S. households. The Ipsos Omnibus survey uses Ipsos’ KnowledgePanel, a probability-based online panel consisting of approximately 50,000 adult members. From 1999 to 2008, KnowledgePanel recruited participants through a random digit dialing (RDD) sampling method based on a sampling frame of US residential landline telephones. After 2009, KnowledgePanel adapted an address-based sampling (ABS) technique that randomly samples addressing using the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File. Approximately 97% of American households are covered by KnowledgePanel’s current sampling methods. Addresses chosen are mailed an advance letter requesting them to participate in the panel, followed by up to 14 phone call requests for up to 90 days. Those agreeing to participate in KnowledgePanel are compensated with either Internet access and a personal laptop or a cash incentive program per survey for those already owning a personal computer.

The Ipsos Government & Academic Omnibus consists of respondents drawn from KnowledgePanel. Respondents are age 18 or older and are representative of the U.S. general adult population. KnowledgePanel members received an email link to the web survey from Ipsos to participate in the survey, followed by email and phone reminders after three days of non-response. Data collection for the 2019 wave took place between September 13, 2019 and September 23, 2019 and 1,018 respondents completed the survey, with a response rate of 55%. Research on non-response bias in KnowledgePanel samples has found no significant differences in respondents and non-respondents related to the goals of the survey (Heeren et al 2008). Studies using Heckman selection procedures have shown that self-section bias is not as an important factor in participating in KnowledgePanel surveys (Cameron and DeShazo 2013). Compared to similar nationally representative surveys, this survey has a higher response rate than average (Holbrook, Krosnick, and Pfent. 2008).

The combination of a web survey and the GfK Knowledge Panel offers a number of advantages over other survey methods. The chief concern about web surveys in general is access to the Internet and availability of computers for low-income individuals. However, households without Internet access that are selected for KnowledgePanel are provided a laptop computer and free internet service. Web surveys are also advantageous in that people may report sensitive information more accurately on web-based versus telephone surveys (Tourangeau and Yan 2007). A web survey is also more useful because it allows researchers to quickly ask grid questions about multiple identity groups.

The primary goal of the 2019 survey was to compare results with the BAM survey fielded in 2014 to compare pre- and post-Trump attitudes. The 2019 survey was based on a subset of core questions asked in the 2014 survey, which was also fielded using Ipsos’ (formerly GfK) KnowledgePanel. Data collection for the 2014 survey took place between February 28, 2014 and March 16, 2014 and 2,521 respondents completed the survey, with a response rate of 57.9%. The sample for the 2014 survey was larger, but the survey methods and question wordings were almost identical across the two waves.
References


Publications from the American Mosaic Project

2020


2019

2018


2017


2016


2015

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2011


2010


2009

2008

2007


2006


2005
