



**Paul Simon
Public Policy Institute**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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“Religion in Southern Illinois”

Southern Illinoisans claim to be very religious, according to a poll taken recently by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

A majority (51 percent) of the respondents said they attended religious services every week. Another 13 percent said they attend almost every week.

This level of weekly church attendance significantly exceeds comparable levels of weekly church attendance nationally. National polls generally indicate claimed weekly church attendance to be about 40 percent.

“These results illustrate why southern Illinois is often considered to be a part of the Bible Belt, which is mostly centered in the South,” said John S. Jackson, a visiting professor at the Simon Institute, who was one of the co-authors of the poll.

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming religious identification is Christian - 92 percent. This left 3 percent of the respondents who claim “some other” religious identification and 5 percent who indicate that they have no religious identification. These three categories can be compared to the statewide results from an earlier poll conducted by the Institute where the results were 77 percent Christian, 1 percent Jewish, 4 percent Other and 16 percent Unaffiliated.

In the recent Southern Illinois Poll, 14 percent of the Christian respondents claimed the Roman Catholic designation leaving the remainder of the Christian group divided into a wide variety of Protestant categories. Of those, Baptists led the way with 32 percent and they were divided as follows:

- 61 percent of the Baptists were Southern Baptists
- 13 percent were Independent Baptists
- 3 percent were American Baptists
- 1 percent were National Baptists
- 11 percent were identified as “Just Baptist”

The next highest categories of Protestants were Methodists at 11 percent and the Lutherans at 9 percent. The “Non Denominational” churches were also well represented at 6 percent of the respondents in that category. They were followed by the Pentecostals, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterians at 3 percent each.

Overall, the sample contained 54 percent of the religious identifiers who called themselves “Evangelical” or “Born Again” Christians and 46 percent who did not accept that designation.

Interestingly, when asked a number of questions concerning the mixing of religion and public policy, the results indicated considerable support for the separation of the two. For example:

- 53 percent oppose and 36 percent favor the government giving grants to religious charities that offer people non-religious social services.
- 82 percent oppose and only 10 percent favor the government giving grants to religious charities that offer people social services that encourage them to change religions.

“Southern Illinois may be very religious and attend church extraordinarily regularly; however, a majority of the residents seem to be very skeptical about breaking down the wall of separation between church and state in this manner,” said Jackson.

The poll of 401 registered voters in the 18-county area of southernmost Illinois was taken April 5 to 13 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The interviews were conducted for the Institute by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas. It reports no Illinois political figures as clients and was paid with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund.

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**Paul Simon Public Policy Institute
Southern Illinois University Carbondale**

**Poll Results of Registered Voters in Southern Illinois
Conducted April 5-13, 2010**

Released April 28, 2010

1. Apart from occasional weddings, baptisms, or funerals, how often do you go to religious services?

Every week	51.4%
Almost every week	13.0%
Once or twice a month	7.5%
A few times a year	16.2%
Never	12.0%

2. Do you attend a place of worship that is Christian or some other religion?

Christian	97.9%
Some other religion	1.7%
Don't know	.3%

3. What church or denomination is that? (of those who attend)

Catholic or Roman Catholic	14.1%
Baptist	32.2%
Assembly of God	1.1%
Church of Christ	2.0%
Church of God	.8%
Congregationalist	.3%
Disciples of Christ	.8%
Latter Day Saints	.3%
Lutheran	8.9%
Methodist	10.6%
Non-denominational	6.0%
Orthodox	.3%
Pentecostal	3.0%
Presbyterian	3.3%
United Church of Christ	2.7%
Christian or "Just Christian"	3.3%
Protestant or "Just Protestant"	1.4%
Other	4.3%
Don't Know	2.4%
Refused	2.2%

4. With which Baptist group is your church associated?
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Southern Baptist Convention | 60.5% |
| American Baptist Churches | 3.4% |
| National Baptist Convention | .8% |
| Independent Baptist | 12.6% |
| “Just Baptist” | 10.9% |
| Other | 8.4% |
| Don’t Know | 2.5% |
| Refused | .8% |
5. Would you favor or oppose the government giving grants to religious charities that offer people non-religious social services?
- | | |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor | 36.1% |
| Oppose | 52.8% |
| Other/Don’t Know | 10.9% |
6. What about religious charities that offer people social services that encourage them to change religions? Would you favor or oppose the government giving grants to these religious charities?
- | | |
|------------------|-------|
| Favor | 10.4% |
| Oppose | 81.5% |
| Other/Don’t Know | 7.9% |
7. Some people think of themselves as “Evangelical” or “Born Again” Christians. Do you ever think of yourself in either of these ways?
- | | |
|-----|-------|
| Yes | 53.7% |
| No | 46.3% |

**Some columns do not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.*

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