

THE  
**AMERICAN BELIEFS**  
STUDY  
RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES & PRACTICES

## The ReligiousInsite Priorities Report 2021

Prepared for: The Presbytery of the Highlands  
Study area: Geography: Counties - Somerset County (NJ)

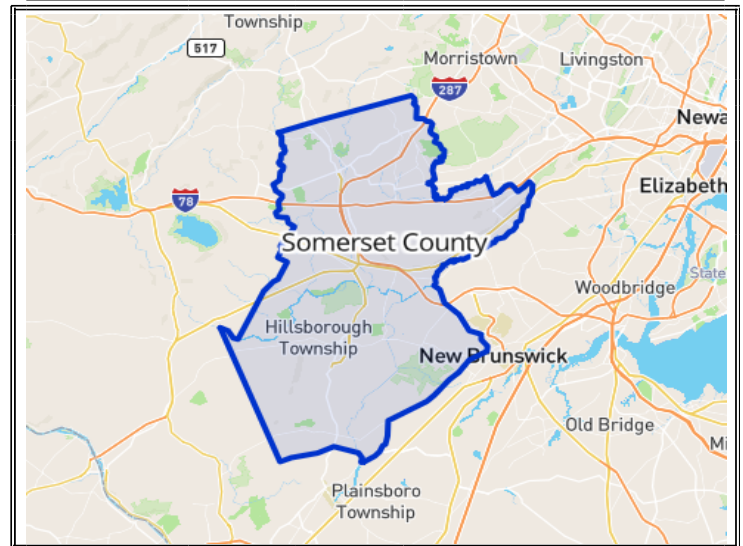
Date of Report: 7/17/2023  
American Beliefs Study Version: 2021

### About the American Beliefs Study Reports

The American Beliefs Study provides a projection of likely religious beliefs, preferences, and practices for a defined study area. This report is based on the American Beliefs Study national survey, which MissionInsite conducts every five (5) years. While general religious data is available through various organizations, only MissionInsite can provide current local geography projections. This report is based upon the 2021 American Beliefs Study Survey.

The 2021 American Beliefs Study Survey series contains two reports. **ReligiousInsite** provides insights into community beliefs and religious preferences. **MinistryInsite** focuses on practical applications of the 2021 survey. It includes life concerns, reasons for non-participation (or considered nonparticipation) in a religious congregation or community, and a list of preferred ministries or programs. These are based on the specific study area. Customized priority lists address the study area's concerns, program and ministry preferences and more.

### The Study Area



The **ReligiousInsite Priorities** Report and **MinistryInsite Priorities** Report capture the priorities of some survey questions based upon strengths of beliefs plus the direction of the beliefs, whether towards agreement or disagreement. These two reports correspond to the full reports.

### Contents of the ReligiousInsite **Priorities** Report

The **ReligiousInsite Priorities** Report has four sections that summarize data about the following topics:

| Topics                              | Page |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Beliefs about God                   | 2    |
| Beliefs about Jesus                 | 3    |
| Beliefs about social & moral values | 4    |
| Faith and religious involvement     | 6    |

### Data Detail Reports and Supporting Documents

The **ReligiousInsite Priorities** Report provides a top level view of the full **ReligiousInsite** Report. To learn more, generate the full **ReligiousInsite** Report. To understand your area's ministry and program preferences, run the **MinistryInsite** Report.

## ReligiousInsite Priority Report 2021

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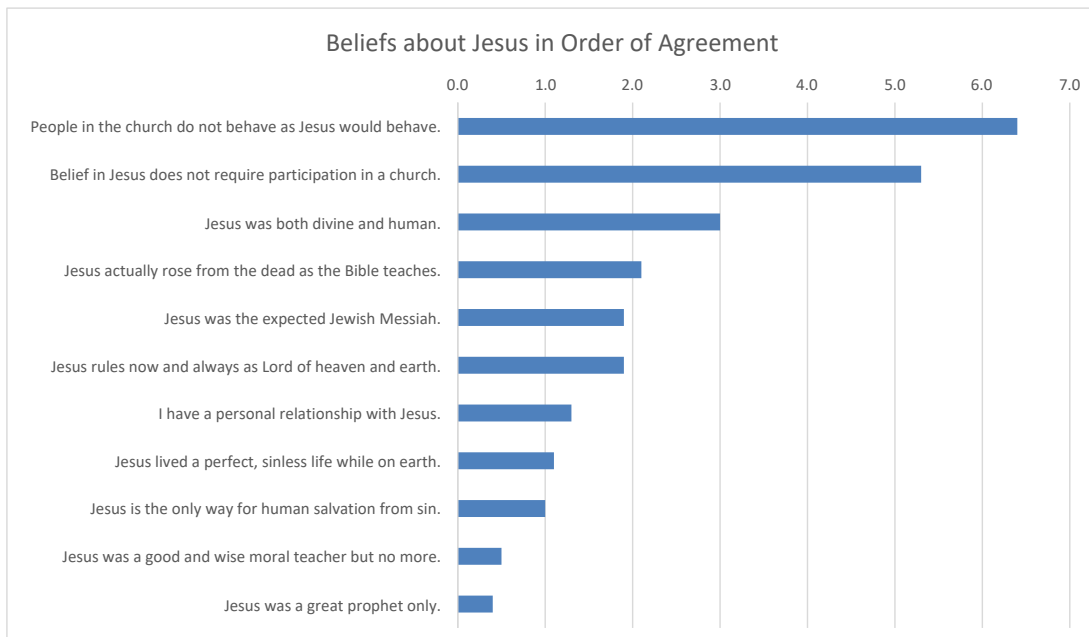
### Beliefs about God

| Priority List | Beliefs about God in Rank Order |                                                                          |       |                           |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
|               | Ranking                         | Concern                                                                  | Ratio | Strength                  |
|               | 1                               | God is love and invites the world into a loving relationship.            | 4.0   | Very Strong Agreement     |
|               | 2                               | I have a relationship with one living God.                               | 2.3   | Strong Agreement          |
|               | 3                               | God is the full realization of human potential.                          | 1.4   | Somewhat Strong Agreement |
|               | 4                               | God is a higher state of consciousness that people may achieve.          | 1.2   | Neutral Agreement         |
|               | 5                               | I believe God created a literal heaven and hell.                         | 1.1   | Neutral Agreement         |
|               | 6                               | The forces of nature and the spirits within the creation are God for me. | 0.9   | Neutral Agreement         |
|               | 7                               | Everyone and everything is god.                                          | 0.5   | Weak Agreement            |
|               | 8                               | I'm unsure/undecided about whether a god exists.                         | 0.3   | Very Weak Agreement       |
|               | 9                               | I don't believe a god exists; the material universe is all that is.      | 0.3   | Very Weak Agreement       |
|               | 10                              | I believe there are many gods.                                           | 0.2   | Very Weak Agreement       |
|               | 11                              | I believe God created the world but takes no further part in it.         | 0.2   | Very Weak Agreement       |



## Beliefs about Jesus

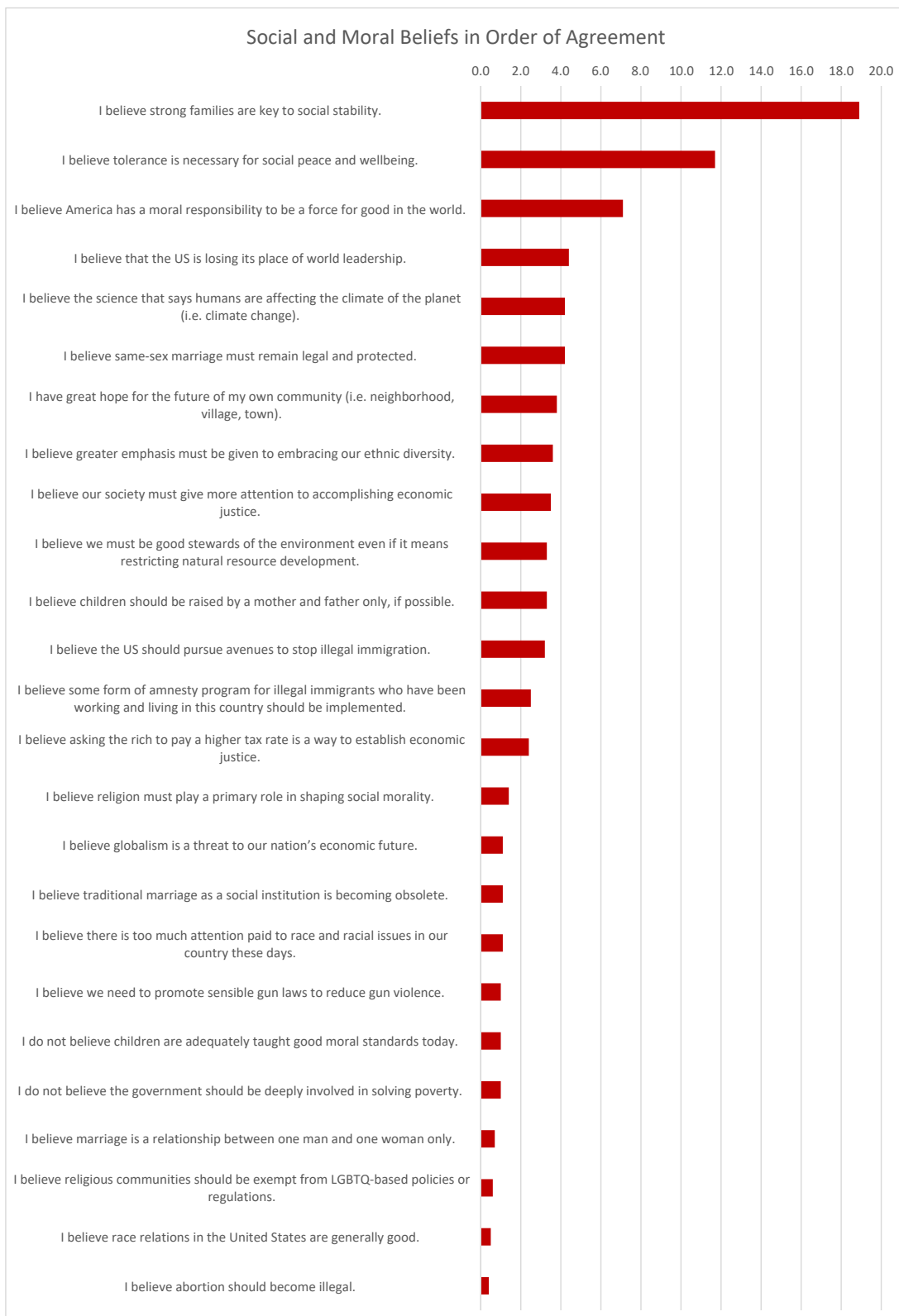
| Priority List | Beliefs about Jesus in Rank Order |                                                             |       |                           |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
|               | Ranking                           | Concern                                                     | Ratio | Strength                  |
|               | 1                                 | People in the church do not behave as Jesus would behave.   | 6.4   | Very Strong Agreement     |
|               | 2                                 | Belief in Jesus does not require participation in a church. | 5.3   | Very Strong Agreement     |
|               | 3                                 | Jesus was both divine and human.                            | 3.0   | Strong Agreement          |
|               | 4                                 | Jesus actually rose from the dead as the Bible teaches.     | 2.1   | Strong Agreement          |
|               | 5                                 | Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah.                      | 1.9   | Somewhat Strong Agreement |
|               | 6                                 | Jesus rules now and always as Lord of heaven and earth.     | 1.9   | Somewhat Strong Agreement |
|               | 7                                 | I have a personal relationship with Jesus.                  | 1.3   | Somewhat Strong Agreement |
|               | 8                                 | Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life while on earth.         | 1.1   | Neutral Agreement         |
|               | 9                                 | Jesus is the only way for human salvation from sin.         | 1.0   | Neutral Agreement         |
|               | 10                                | Jesus was a good and wise moral teacher but no more.        | 0.5   | Weak Agreement            |
|               | 11                                | Jesus was a great prophet only.                             | 0.4   | Weak Agreement            |



Hint: This report compares the percentage of people who agreed with the statement to those who disagreed with the statement. Those who responded with "No Opinion" are not included.

## Beliefs about Social & Moral Values

| Priority List | Social and Moral Beliefs by Strength of Importance |                                                                                                                                       |       |                            |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|
|               | Ranking                                            | Concern                                                                                                                               | Ratio | Strength                   |
|               | 1                                                  | I believe strong families are key to social stability.                                                                                | 18.9  | Extremely Strong Agreement |
|               | 2                                                  | I believe tolerance is necessary for social peace and wellbeing.                                                                      | 11.7  | Extremely Strong Agreement |
|               | 3                                                  | I believe America has a moral responsibility to be a force for good in the world.                                                     | 7.1   | Very Strong Agreement      |
|               | 4                                                  | I believe that the US is losing its place of world leadership.                                                                        | 4.4   | Very Strong Agreement      |
|               | 5                                                  | I believe the science that says humans are affecting the climate of the planet (i.e. climate change).                                 | 4.2   | Very Strong Agreement      |
|               | 6                                                  | I believe same-sex marriage must remain legal and protected.                                                                          | 4.2   | Very Strong Agreement      |
|               | 7                                                  | I have great hope for the future of my own community (i.e. neighborhood, village, town).                                              | 3.8   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 8                                                  | I believe greater emphasis must be given to embracing our ethnic diversity.                                                           | 3.6   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 9                                                  | I believe our society must give more attention to accomplishing economic justice.                                                     | 3.5   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 10                                                 | I believe we must be good stewards of the environment even if it means restricting natural resource development.                      | 3.3   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 11                                                 | I believe children should be raised by a mother and father only, if possible.                                                         | 3.3   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 12                                                 | I believe the US should pursue avenues to stop illegal immigration.                                                                   | 3.2   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 13                                                 | I believe some form of amnesty program for illegal immigrants who have been working and living in this country should be implemented. | 2.5   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 14                                                 | I believe asking the rich to pay a higher tax rate is a way to establish economic justice.                                            | 2.4   | Strong Agreement           |
|               | 15                                                 | I believe religion must play a primary role in shaping social morality.                                                               | 1.4   | Somewhat Strong Agreement  |
|               | 16                                                 | I believe globalism is a threat to our nation's economic future.                                                                      | 1.1   | Neutral Agreement          |
|               | 17                                                 | I believe traditional marriage as a social institution is becoming obsolete.                                                          | 1.1   | Neutral Agreement          |
|               | 18                                                 | I believe there is too much attention paid to race and racial issues in our country these days.                                       | 1.1   | Neutral Agreement          |
|               | 19                                                 | I believe we need to promote sensible gun laws to reduce gun violence.                                                                | 1.0   | Neutral Agreement          |
|               | 20                                                 | I do not believe children are adequately taught good moral standards today.                                                           | 1.0   | Neutral Agreement          |
|               | 21                                                 | I do not believe the government should be deeply involved in solving poverty.                                                         | 1.0   | Neutral Agreement          |
|               | 22                                                 | I believe marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman only.                                                              | 0.7   | Somewhat Weak Agreement    |
|               | 23                                                 | I believe religious communities should be exempt from LGBTQ-based policies or regulations.                                            | 0.6   | Somewhat Weak Agreement    |
|               | 24                                                 | I believe race relations in the United States are generally good.                                                                     | 0.5   | Weak Agreement             |
|               | 25                                                 | I believe abortion should become illegal.                                                                                             | 0.4   | Weak Agreement             |



Hint: This report compares the percentage of people who agreed with the statement to those who disagreed with the statement. Those who responded with “No Opinion” are not included.

## Faith and Religious Involvement

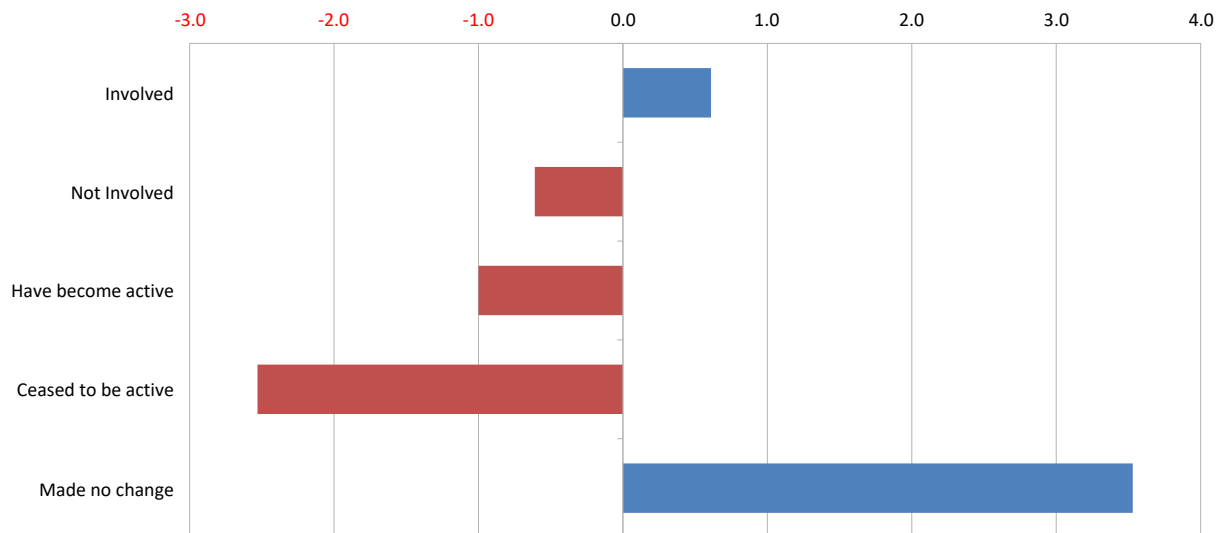
### Activity in a Religious Congregation or Community

| Study Area Comparison between<br>2017 & 2021 | 2017  | 2021  | Point Change Between<br>Surveys |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Involvement</b>                           |       |       |                                 |
| Projected percentage involved                | 32.5% | 33.1% | 0.6                             |
| Projected percentage NOT involved            | 67.5% | 66.9% | -0.6                            |

|                                            | 2017  | 2021  | Point Change Between<br>Surveys |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Directional Change in Involvement</b>   |       |       |                                 |
| Percent likely to have become active       | 3.8%  | 2.8%  | -1.0                            |
| Percent likely to have ceased to be active | 12.8% | 10.3% | -2.5                            |
| Percent likely to have made no change      | 83.4% | 87.0% | 3.5                             |

Hint: These tables compare 2021's level of involvement and the direction of active involvement to the same data from the 2017 Survey.

### Trends in Religious Activity Between 2017 & 2021



## Supporting Information

### Interpreting the Report

The American Beliefs Study reports help you interpret data at a glance.

**Comparative Indexes:** All variables have a column called Comparative Index, which compares your study area with a larger area. For this report, all comparisons are with the national averages for the data item.

- Indexes of 100 mean the study area variable is the same as its base area.
- Indexes greater than 100 mean the study area variable is above the base area. The higher the number, the greater it is above the base.
- Indexes less than 100 mean the study area variable is below the base area. The lower the number, the greater it is below the base.

**Color Coding:** The Comparative Indexes columns are color coded so you can easily spot changes and the direction of change.

Index: Above Ave    Ave    Below Ave.

### Support

If you need support, email us at [misupport@acst.com](mailto:misupport@acst.com) or call 1-877-230-3212.