

Evolution views driven by faith more than education

by [Sarah Pulliam Bailey](#) in the [February 5, 2014](#) issue

As evolution remains a contentious issue for many public schools, a new survey suggests that views on the question are driven by Americans' religious affiliation more than their level of education.

Overall, six in ten Americans say that humans have evolved over time, while one-third reject the idea of human evolution, according to a new analysis by the Pew Research Center. The one-third of Americans who reject human evolution has remained mostly unchanged since a 2009 Pew survey.

About one in four American adults say that "a supreme being guided the evolution of living things for the purpose of creating humans and other life in the form it exists today."

While education matters, the new analysis suggests that religion appears to have more influence than level of education on evolution. The 21-point difference between college graduates and high school graduates who believe in evolution, for example, is less stark than the 49-point difference between mainline Protestants and evangelicals.

Evangelicals are four times as likely to reject human evolution as mainline Protestants, with 64 percent of evangelicals saying that "humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time." Half of black Protestants say humans have not evolved, compared to 15 percent of white mainline Protestants who share that opinion.

Those with more years of formal education are more likely than those with less education to say that humans and animals have evolved over time. Seventy-two percent of college graduates say humans have evolved over time, compared with 51 percent of high school graduates who say the same thing.

The gap between Republicans and Democrats on evolution has grown by 10 points since 2009, with 43 percent of Republicans and 67 percent of Democrats saying humans have evolved over time.

Those who accept evolution may differ on how it may have happened. The belief that evolution occurred as a natural process (not necessarily one guided by God) is still a minority view. Only among people who have no religious affiliation does a majority (57 percent) think humans evolved due to natural processes.

For Protestants who say that humans have evolved over time, the group is divided over whether evolution is due to natural processes or whether it was guided by a supreme being (36 percent each).

Meanwhile, the Creation Museum in Kentucky, which promotes a literal reading of the biblical account of a six-day creation, will begin offering free admission to children this year. Seeking a wider audience, the museum has rolled out some displays that contain no religious messages. —RNS

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