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New Poll Reveals Evolution's Corrosive Impact on Beliefs about Human Uniqueness

From the earliest days of civilization, humans have considered themselves exceptional among living creatures. But a new survey of more than 3,400 American adults indicates that the theory of evolution is beginning to erode that belief in humanity's unique status and dignity.

According to the survey, 43% of Americans now agree that "Evolution shows that no living thing is more important than any other," and 45% of Americans believe that "Evolution shows that human beings are not fundamentally different from other animals."

The highest levels of support for the idea that evolution shows that humans aren't fundamentally different from other animals are found among self-identified atheists (69%), agnostics (60%), 18 to 29 year-olds (51%), and those who live in New England (51%) and the Pacific region (50%).

The theory of evolution is also reshaping how people think about morality. A majority of Americans (55%) now contend that "Evolution shows that moral beliefs evolve over time based on their survival value in various times and places." About 7 in 10 (71%) of self-described atheists embrace this idea, as do 68% of self-described agnostics, 58% of 18-29 year-olds and those over 60, 58% of those who live in the Mid-Atlantic region, and 57% of those who live in the Pacific region.

"Since the rise of Darwin's theory, leading scientists and other thinkers have insisted that human beings are just another animal, and that morality evolves based on survival of the fittest," says historian Richard Weikart, author of the new book *The Death of Humanity: And the Case for Life*. "What this new survey shows is just how pervasive these ideas have become in our culture. Many people no doubt continue to believe that humans are unique, but most do not think that evolution supports that position. Many critics of my earlier scholarship will be disconcerted to see this data, which powerfully supports my arguments about the way that Darwinism devalues human life, a key point I explain further in my new book."

Weikart is a Professor of History at California State University, Stanislaus and a Senior Fellow with Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture.

Survey Methodology

The data for this nationwide survey was collected from March 17-20, 2016 using SurveyMonkey Audience, a nationally representative panel of more than 6 million people recruited from the 30+ million people who take SurveyMonkey surveys each month. The SurveyMonkey platform has been utilized for public opinion surveys by NBC News, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other media organizations.

Survey respondents were randomly sampled from members of SurveyMonkey Audience in the United States who are 18 years of age or older, and the survey included

3,427 completed responses. According to SurveyMonkey, "SurveyMonkey Audience respondents represent a diverse group of people and are reflective of the general population. However, as with most online sampling, respondents have Internet access and voluntarily joined a program to take surveys... We automatically balance results according to census data for age and gender, while location tends to balance out naturally." SurveyMonkey conducts "regular benchmarking surveys to ensure our members are representative of the U.S. population." More information on how respondents are recruited for SurveyMonkey Audience is available here: www.surveymonkey.com/mp/audience.

Survey Results

The following tables provide more detailed information about the survey results, including cross-tabulations comparing responses by gender, religion, age, income, and region. Note: Percentages reported may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **Evolution shows that no living thing is more important than any other.**

GROUP	AGREE	DISAGREE	NO OPINION
All Respondents *(n=3,427)*	43%	35%	22%
Men *(n=1,623)*	40%	39%	21%
Women *(n=1,797)*	46%	31%	24%
Religion: Theists *(n=2,326)*	38%	38%	24%
Religion: Atheists *(n=400)*	55%	26%	19%
Religion: Agnostics *(n=701)*	51%	31%	18%
Age: 18-29 *(n=727)*	46%	32%	23%
Age: 30-44 *(n=900)*	42%	33%	25%
Age: 45-59 *(n=930)*	40%	38%	22%
Age: 60+ *(n=863)*	44%	36%	20%
Household Income: **Under $50,000/yr** *(n=1,167)*	48%	30%	22%
Household Income: **$50,000-$99,000/yr** *(n=975)*	40%	38%	22%
Household Income: **$100,000-$199,000/yr** *(n=639)*	41%	40%	19%
Household Income: **$200,000/yr and over** *(n=148)*	41%	34%	24%

Region: New England *(n=215)*	48%	31%	21%
Region: Mid Atlantic *(n=502)*	43%	36%	22%
Region: E North Central *(n=533)*	43%	37%	20%
Region: W North Central *(n=261)*	41%	32%	27%
Region: S Atlantic *(n=572)*	41%	36%	23%
Region: E South Central *(n=124)*	40%	38%	23%
Region: W South Central *(n=307)*	42%	35%	23%
Region: Mountain *(n=280)*	44%	38%	18%
Region: Pacific *(n=563)*	44%	31%	25%

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **Evolution shows human beings are not fundamentally different from other animals.**

GROUP	AGREE	DISAGREE	NO OPINION
All Respondents *(n=3,427)*	43%	35%	22%
Men *(n=1,623)*	45%	42%	14%
Women *(n=1,797)*	46%	38%	16%
Religion: Theists *(n=2,326)*	37%	36%	17%
Religion: Atheists *(n=400)*	69%	24%	7%
Religion: Agnostics *(n=701)*	60%	27%	13%
Age: 18-29 *(n=727)*	51%	34%	21%
Age: 30-44 *(n=900)*	45%	35%	26%
Age: 45-59 *(n=930)*	42%	44%	27%
Age: 60+ *(n=863)*	44%	44%	25%
Household Income: Under $50,000/yr *(n=1,167)*	48%	35%	16%
Household Income: $50,000-$99,000/yr *(n=975)*	42%	44%	14%
Household Income:	47%	41%	12%

$100,000-$199,000/yr *(n=639)*			
Household Income: **Over $200,000/yr** *(n=148)*	45%	39%	16%
Region: New England *(n=215)*	51%	35%	14%
Region: Mid Atlantic *(n=502)*	49%	35%	16%
Region: E North Central *(n=533)*	43%	43%	14%
Region: W North Central *(n=261)*	43%	36%	21%
Region: S Atlantic *(n=572)*	43%	41%	17%
Region: E South Central *(n=124)*	40%	41%	19%
Region: W South Central *(n=307)*	41%	45%	13%
Region: Mountain *(n=280)*	43%	45%	12%
Region: Pacific *(n=563)*	50%	36%	14%

3. *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:* **Evolution shows that moral beliefs evolve over time based on their survival value in various times and places.**

GROUP	AGREE	DISAGREE	NO OPINION
All Respondents *(n=3,427)*	43%	35%	22%
Men *(n=1,623)*	53%	25%	22%
Women *(n=1,797)*	56%	21%	23%
Religion: Theists *(n=2,326)*	48%	28%	24%
Religion: Atheists *(n=400)*	71%	13%	16%
Religion: Agnostics *(n=701)*	68%	13%	19%
Age: 18-29 *(n=727)*	58%	21%	21%
Age: 30-44 *(n=900)*	52%	23%	25%
Age: 45-59 *(n=930)*	51%	25%	24%
Age: 60+ *(n=863)*	58%	22%	20%
Household Income: **Under $50,000/yr** *(n=1,167)*	54%	22%	24%

Household Income: $50,000-$99,000/yr *(n=975)*	54%	24%	22%
Household Income: $100,000-$199,000/yr *(n=639)*	56%	24%	19%
Household Income: Over $200,000/yr *(n=148)*	58%	26%	16%
Region: New England *(n=215)*	57%	20%	24%
Region: Mid Atlantic *(n=502)*	58%	22%	20%
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Region: W North Central *(n=261)*	53%	23%	25%
Region: S Atlantic *(n=572)*	54%	22%	24%
Region: E South Central *(n=124)*	49%	26%	25%
Region: W South Central *(n=307)*	53%	27%	20%
Region: Mountain *(n=280)*	53%	28%	19%
Region: Pacific *(n=563)*	57%	20%	23%