

NEF Takes the Pulse of America!

A new series of independent opinion surveys commissioned by the Naturist Education Foundation

Bob Morton
Naturist Education Foundation

Americans are becoming more accepting of nudity. That's not just a hope or a guess. It's an increasingly demonstrable fact.

A progression of scientifically conducted and statistically valid public opinion surveys over the years is allowing naturists, lawmakers, and policy makers to make better informed decisions concerning public attitudes toward nudity. With publication of the NEF 2015 Polls, the Naturist Education Foundation has further extended and updated the available body of knowledge.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE POLLS

1983 Just three years after the creation of The Naturist Society (TNS), founder Lee Baxandall commissioned Gallup to conduct a brief nationwide survey of the American public's perspective on nude recreation. As Baxandall understood, even if naturists came up with the questions, having those questions asked, and the responses tallied, by an independent, reputable, and widely trusted professional polling organization would be absolutely essential to the credibility of the process. The Gallup poll included just three questions, later dubbed "the Baxandall questions," and those questions laid the groundwork for surveys in succeeding years. The results were quite encouraging for naturists, but there was little to which they could be compared.

2000 Opinion surveys are not inexpensive, especially if they're to be conducted by "name brand" pollsters that command respect when the results are published. Naturists waited 17 years for an update. In 2000, the Naturist Education Foundation (NEF) retained the well-known Roper polling organization to ask the Baxandall questions again. Although there were other questions that could have been asked, NEF recognized the value in comparing current opinions to the established baseline. The results were gratifying.

Although it's not well known, it bears mentioning that the American Association for Nude Recreation also paid for an opinion survey in 2000. Interestingly, AANR also chose to ask the Baxandall questions, and the responses were very much in line with the answers Roper presented to NEF. But because AANR had saved a few bucks by using a relatively obscure polling company, the results were not as impressive. AANR ditched its own poll and began quoting the NEF 2000 poll.

2006 NEF updated the poll in 2006, once again commissioning Roper to conduct the survey. The results were published in *N* 26.2. Yet again, NEF asked the Baxandall questions, and the results showed relative steady support, with slight improvement in

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

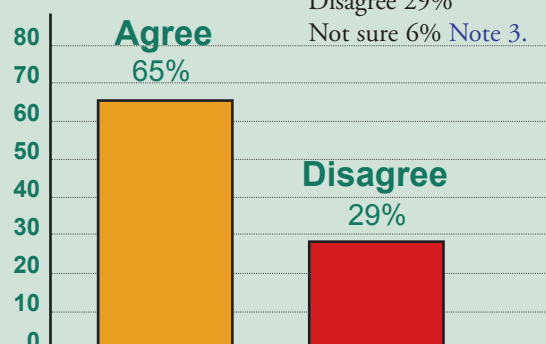
QUESTION number 1

Do you agree or disagree that people should be able to enjoy nude sunbathing on a beach or other location that is accepted for that purpose?

AGREE 65%

Disagree 29%

Not sure 6% [Note 3.](#)



NEF-COMMISSIONED ZOGBY ANALYTICS POLL OF 1,026 U.S. ADULTS—NOVEMBER, 2014

MARGIN OF ERROR IS ± 3.1 PERCENTAGE POINTS WITH A 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL.

Continued Strong Support for Nude Sunbathing

Close to two-thirds of U.S. adults agree: nude sunbathing that takes place on accepted beaches or in other recognized areas should be allowed. This high level of acceptance for nude sunbathing remains consistent with national acceptance figures in 1983 (72%), 2000 (80%) and 2006 (74%).

• **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION FOR QUESTION 1:** Support for those who choose nude sunbathing is remarkably consistent across generational lines. Between and among the various age-related cohorts (18-29, 30-49, 50-64, and 65+), there was not more than 5% difference in the percentage of those who agreed. While a healthy margin of the size that responded "agree" to this question is any political candidate's dream, increasing national ideological and political polarization may have contributed to a drop in the favorable level, compared to previous polls. Responses from those who identify themselves as "moderate" or "liberal" were significantly more favorable than those who self-identify as "conservative." Even so, 49.7 percent who consider themselves to be conservative agreed that people should be able to enjoy nude sunbathing on a beach or other location that is accepted for that purpose. U.S. Presidents have been elected by smaller percentages of the popular vote. Regionally, agreement is lowest in the South and highest in the West. [Note 1.](#)

some areas. The 2006 survey included an additional question concerning the acceptance of nudity in one's own backyard. Approval for that question was not large, but NEF wished to establish a baseline for a new line of questions.

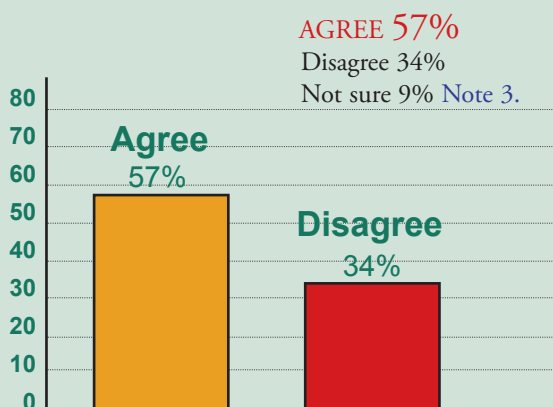
2009 Responding to a crisis concerning nudity at certain state parks in California, NEF commissioned its first state-specific opinion survey. Selecting well-known political pollster John Zogby and his firm to implement the poll, NEF selected

questions that made sense in the California context, but also included questions that would ultimately make their way into a nationwide survey and specific surveys for other states. The 2009 NEF California Poll turned heads. NEF experimented with an extra depth of questioning and analysis, allowing, for example, a statistically meaningful look at what San Francisco residents think about nudity. That proved useful during the debate over that city's proposed anti-nudity ordinance.

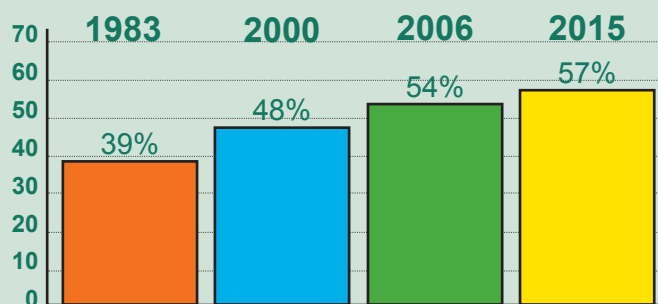
NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

QUESTION number 2

Local and state governments now set aside public land for special types of recreation such as camping, off-leash dog running, bird watching, snowmobiling, surfing, fishing, and hunting. Do you agree or disagree that areas should be set aside for people who enjoy clothing-optional recreation such as nude sunbathing and swimming?



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• **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION FOR QUESTION 2:** The same basic question has been asked in public opinion surveys spanning more than 30 years.

1983 Commissioned by The Naturist Society. Polling organization: GALLUP.

2000 Commissioned by Naturist Education Foundation. Polling organization: ROPER.

2006 Commissioned by Naturist Education Foundation. Polling organization: ROPER.

2015 Commissioned by Naturist Education Foundation. Polling organization: ZOGBY.

Americans to Government: Set Aside Clothing-Optional Areas

The 2015 NEF U.S. POLL indicates that the idea of setting aside areas for nude sunbathing enjoys enormous support. National polls show that public approval for the idea has clearly been building over the years, but governmental agencies have been slow to respond to the emerging demand. Agencies and public land managers must reevaluate their policies toward the designation of public land for people who enjoy nude sunbathing.

Notable successes already exist where agencies have responded positively to this increasing demand. Among its positive efforts to manage for nude recreation, the National Park Service counts recognized clothing-optional areas at the Gateway National Recreation Area in New Jersey and at Canaveral National Seashore in Florida. At the state level, Oregon has designated a portion of Rooster Rock State Park as clothing-optional, and Collins Beach on Sauvie Island has official clothing-optional signage supplied by the State Department of Fish & Wildlife. Miami-Dade County in Florida has shown vision and has reaped economic rewards by setting aside a portion of Haulover Beach for clothing-optional use.

• **ADDITIONAL DETAIL FOR QUESTION 2:** Majority support for clothing-optional designation across political/ideological boundaries. Of those who identify themselves as sympathetic to Occupy Wall Street, 72.9% agree that public land should be set aside for clothing-optional recreation. Among those who self-identify as sympathetic to the Tea Party, 59.3% agree that public land should be set aside for clothing-optional recreational users. [Note 1.](#)

ADJUSTMENTS

As might be expected over a 28 year period, NEF has made some adjustments since 1983. Although the Baxandall questions are still at the heart of each survey, NEF has tweaked the wording of those questions just a bit to keep them contemporary and relevant. For example, the increasing popularity of clothing-optional hiking has caused the fundamental question of tolerance to be expanded from “beach” to “beach or other location.”

NEF has remained largely faithful to its roots, while allowing

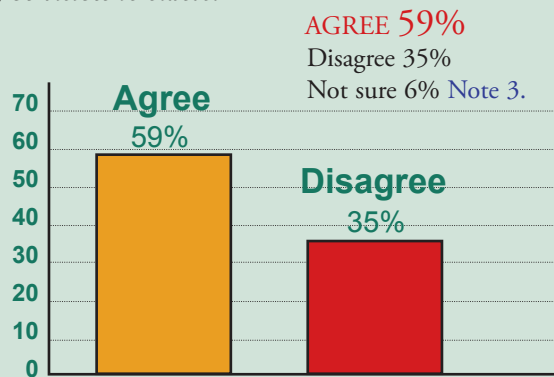
a broader glimpse into attitudes toward nudity, even asking about nudity-themed TV “reality” shows.

2015 For the 2015 survey, NEF turned once again to the reputable polling professionals of Zogby Analytics. Once again, the results are encouraging. And by the way, pay special attention to question number 3. The “backyard” question, for which NEF went out on a limb to establish a baseline in 2006, has gone from a 24 percent nationwide acceptance to 59 percent acceptance in nine years.

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

QUESTION number 3

Do you agree or disagree that people have the right to be nude in their homes or on their property, even if they may occasionally be visible to others?



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Americans see nudity as a personal right

In a time of eroding personal freedoms, a majority of Americans affirm their support for nudity as a personal right. Fifty-nine percent believe that people have the right to be nude in their homes or on their property, even if they may occasionally be visible to others.

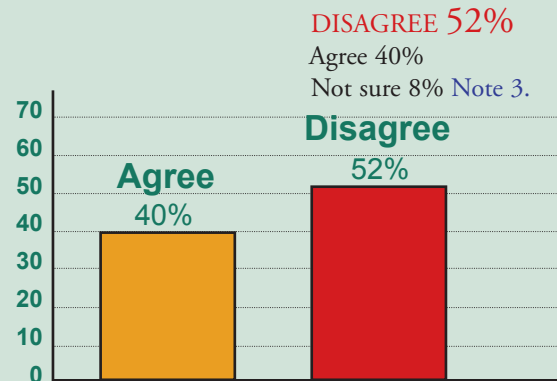
The responses to this question are significant, not only in the consideration of personal liberties, but also in the context of a creeping intrusion of “morality” laws into the private spaces and lives of individuals. State and local statutes typically refer to activities that happen in “any public place or in any place open to the public or exposed to public view.” This NEF U.S. POLL 2015 survey result clearly challenges the acceptability of extending the reach of the law, as it pertains to nudity on one’s own property.

- **ADDITIONAL DETAIL FOR QUESTION 3:** By a margin of almost 2 to 1, a majority (66.2%) of men agree that people have the right to be nude in their homes and on their property. A majority (51.6%) of women agree, too, even if they may occasionally be visible to others. [Note 1.](#)

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

QUESTION number 4

Do you agree or disagree that you are personally offended by the non-sexual nudity of others?



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Most Americans are NOT offended by nudity

The notion that most Americans are offended by nudity is shown to be a myth. A majority (52%) of U.S. adults say that they are NOT personally offended by the non-sexual nudity of others. Lawmakers, regulators and policy-makers who truly wish to do “the will of the people” have a clear measurement here. It has been said that Americans do not elect their Presidents with any greater margins.

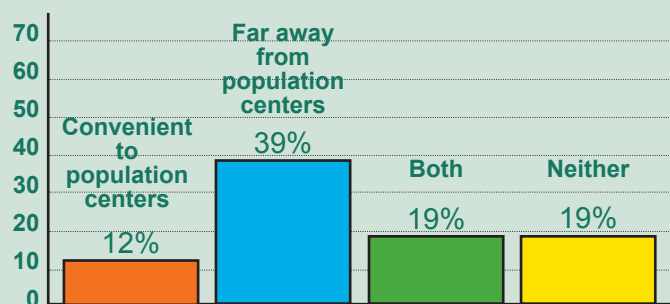
Note that Question 4 was asked “inside out.” Opinion survey respondents who are truly unoffended by the non-sexual nudity of others found themselves having to disagree with this question. Sometimes professional pollsters do this to assure that respondents are not simply agreeing with everything.

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

QUESTION number 5

Clothing-optional recreation on public land has been increasing in popularity in recent years. Do you believe areas should be set aside:

- Convenient to population centers
- Far away from population centers
- Both • Neither



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Nearby or Not - most Americans want Clothing-Optional areas

An *overwhelming majority* of Americans (70%) want clothing-optional areas set aside on public land near population centers, far away from population centers—or both. This question differs from Question number 2, by allowing some choice of location. Overall, a significant number (39%) prefer areas that might be more of a “get-away” than a nearby amenity, but when allowed a chance to fine-tune the locations, fewer than one in five opt for no such areas at all.

- **ADDITIONAL DETAIL FOR QUESTION 5:** Homeowners and those who live in rental housing both reflect the overall percentage (39%) of those who prefer clothing-optional recreational areas at some distance from population centers. However, those who live in large cities are three times more likely to prefer nearby clothing-optional areas, compared to those in the suburbs (23% to 7%). [Note 1.](#)

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

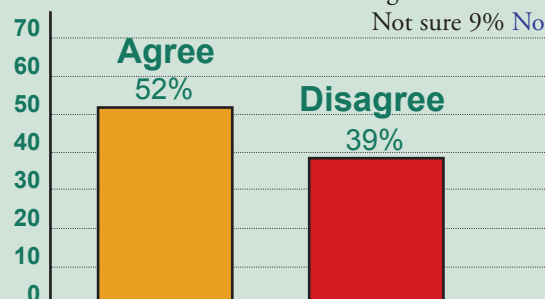
QUESTION number 6

Women in some jurisdictions are required to cover their chests, even where men are not. Do you agree or disagree that the government should compel women to dress differently from men in this manner?

DISAGREE 39%

Agree 52%

Not sure 9% [Note 3.](#)



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Topfree sensibility is gaining favor

A very slight majority of U.S. adults want women to be bound by government dress codes that do not apply to men.

- **ADDITIONAL DETAIL FOR QUESTION 6:** Men disagreed in far greater measure than did women (49% to 29%). Those who identified themselves as Republicans supported mandatory dress codes for women significantly more than those who said they were Democrats (61% to 47%). [Note 1.](#)
- **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION FOR QUESTION 6:** Naturists refer to the uncloaked and unfettered appearance of a woman's upper torso as “topfree.” That description contrasts with “topless,” a term that implies something is missing. “Topfree” will not likely supplant “topless” in adult entertainment contexts. It's not intended to do so. But it makes more sense among those who seek freedom and equality, instead of exhibition for profit.

Ongoing discussion has asked whether this is a nudity issue or a matter of women's rights. It may be both, but naturists see it as a matter of incremental body acceptance.

Maybe You Wondered

...Nude or Clothing-Optional?

Nudity, even at a “nude” public beach, is never a requirement or an exclusionary designation. It's a personal option that many people choose when they're permitted to do so. Places where such a choice exists are often called “clothing-optional.”

Private Resorts / Public Land

Private naturist parks, camps and resorts are wonderful places. They are businesses that cater to selected segments of the nude recreation industry. Nudist facilities range from tiny to large, rustic to posh, and

inexpensive to pricey. They typically offer amenities not found at a beach. But for many people who seek a natural experience that doesn't involve a concrete swimming pool behind fences, walls, and gates, nothing comes close to the open freedom of a clothing-optional beach.

Who Chose these Questions?

The questions were selected by NEF board members, inspired by the original 1983 questions of Lee Baxandall, founder of The Naturist Society, and informed and refined by the experience of subsequent

NEF polls. Questions were reviewed for form by Zogby Analytics, the independent polling organization that conducted the survey.

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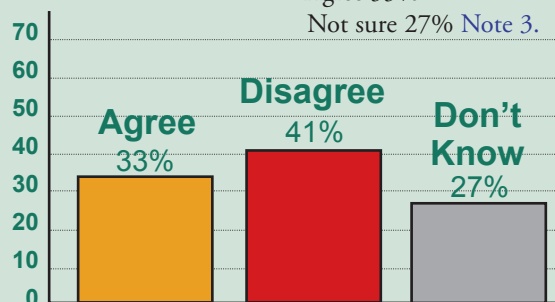
QUESTION number 7

Do you agree or disagree that the nudity included in some popular TV “reality” shows is an accurate portrayal of those who actually participate in nude recreation or live clothing-optional at home?

DISAGREE 41%

Agree 33%

Not sure 27% [Note 3.](#)



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“Naked Reality” on TV? A third of Americans believe it’s accurate

- **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION FOR QUESTION 7:** With their contrived scenarios and tortured pixelated or blurred presentation of human anatomy, it has been said that popular “naked” TV shows are far from reality. But viewers get the idea, right? Even if it’s a censored and filtered view, is it an accurate view of those who actually participate in nude recreation or live clothing-optional at home. Only a third of Americans agree that it is. A relatively large number (27%) say they’re not sure, but some of that may be because they haven’t seen the shows to which the question refers.
- **ADDITIONAL DETAIL FOR QUESTION 7:** By a count of almost 3 to 1, men are more likely than women to agree strongly that the nudity in some popular TV “reality” shows is an accurate portrayal of those who actually participate in nude recreation or live clothing-optional at home. [Note 1.](#)

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

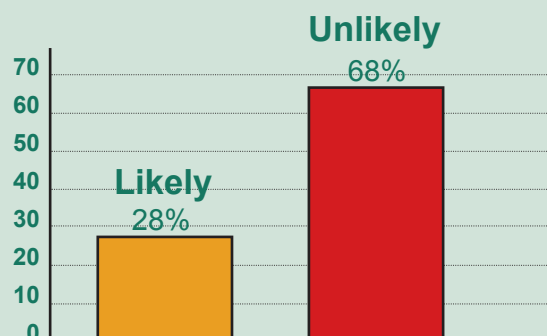
QUESTION number 8

How likely is it that you would consider going nude at a clothing-optional beach if you knew it was safe and legal?

Likely 28%

Unlikely 68%

Not sure 4% [Note 3.](#)



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More than a quarter of all Americans would try a clothing-optional beach

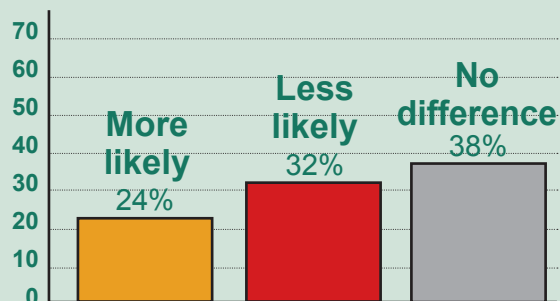
The array of options available to those seeking clothing-optional recreation is large and growing. The choices include private nudist parks, upscale naturist resorts, clothing-optional bed and breakfast facilities, and nude ocean cruises. This question measures the likelihood that U.S. adults would consider a clothing-optional beach, if they knew it was safe and legal to do so. Twenty-eight percent said YES.

- **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION FOR QUESTION 8:** This question may be considered a close complement to Question number 1. Responding to number 1, Americans agreed that individuals should be able to enjoy nude sunbathing on a beach or other location that is accepted for that purpose. Interestingly, the overall percentages are swapped when the question becomes “are you likely to do it?”
- **ADDITIONAL DETAIL FOR QUESTION 8:** Likelihood of considering a clothing-optional beach skews young. Among the 18-29 year old cohort, 43% said they were likely. The percentage among older cohorts who considered themselves likely remains above the overall average, until the age reaches 65+, where it drops off rapidly. [30-49: 32%, 50-64: 30%, 65+: 10%] [Note 1.](#)

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

QUESTION number 9

If a candidate for public office supported the designation of clothing-optional areas on public land, would you be more or less likely to support the candidate, or would it make no difference?



Not sure 8% Note 3.

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Candidates for public office should see this

If you're a politician who's considering supporting the designation of clothing-optional areas on public land, the downside here is probably far less than you might have imagined. In fact, 38% of Americans won't hold it against you, and close to a quarter would be more likely to support you. Savvy politicians recognize that the negatives associated with this issue are less than for many other matters.

- **ADDITIONAL DETAIL FOR QUESTION 9:** Note 1. Of those who identified themselves as Republicans, 22% would be more likely to support a candidate who supports the designation of clothing-optional areas on public land. Among individuals identifying as Democratic, 31% are more likely to support such a candidate.

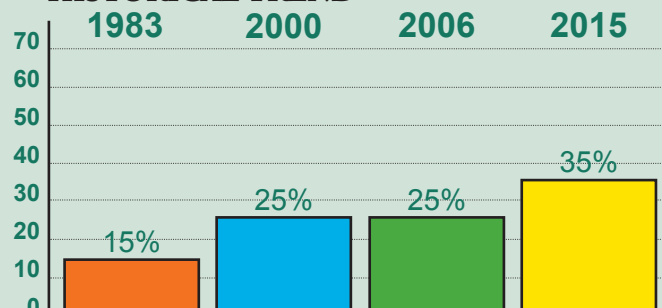
The greatest percentage of those responding "no difference" are in the \$100,000 - \$150,000 yearly income group [48%].

NEF 2015 U.S. POLL

QUESTION number 10

Have you, personally, ever gone skinny-dipping or nude sunbathing with others?

HISTORICAL TREND



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More Americans than ever before have been skinny-dipping or nude sunbathing with others

The 2015 NEF U.S. POLL shows an increasing percentage of U.S. adults have gone skinny-dipping or nude sunbathing with others. This measure of participation has gone from a baseline of 15% in 1983, when Lee Baxandall first asked the question in a nationwide opinion survey, to 35% today.

• **SELECTED DETAIL FOR THOSE ANSWERING YES TO QUESTION 10:**

Ethnicity: Hispanic 58%
Ideology: Conservative 28%. Liberal 50%
Religion: Catholic 38%. Protestant 35%. Jewish 28%
Other/none 33%
Investment: Stock owner 41%
Military: Veteran/Armed forces 50%
Work: Union member 59%
Income: <\$25K 35%. >\$150K 45%. No income group under 30%.

Note 1.

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Details of the 2015 NEF U.S. Poll are available on the NEF website, naturisteducation.org

Coming soon:

2015 NEF California Poll

2015 NEF New York Poll

2015 NEF Florida Poll

Opinion surveys are valuable for naturists, but they're expensive. Please support the educational and informational mission of the Naturist Education Foundation through your voluntary donation.

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NEF thanks you for your support!

NOTES

1. The margin of error for the entire sample is +/- 3.1 percentage points. The margin of error at the subgroup level is higher.
2. Methodology Statement from Zogby Analytics
Zogby Analytics was commissioned by Naturist Education Foundation to conduct an online survey of 1,026 adults in the US. Using trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation is password coded and secure so that one respondent can only access the survey one time.
Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, we use complex weighting techniques to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Weighted variables may include age, race, gender, region, party, education, and religion.
Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 1,026 is +/- 3.1 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, the identical survey repeated will have results within the margin of error 95 times out of 100.
Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. As a rule we do not rely on the validity of very small subsets of the data especially sets smaller than 50-75 respondents. At that subset we can make estimations based on the data, but in these cases the data is more qualitative than quantitative. Additional factors can create error, such as question wording and question order.
3. Rounding of subtotals. Please note that percentages may not add up to 100%.



The Naturist Education Foundation (NEF) is the educational and informational adjunct to The Naturist Society, a membership society serving North America. NEF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of volunteers.

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