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The Newsletter of the *Naturist Action Committee* and the *Naturist Education Foundation*

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How Does America Feel About Naturism?

NEF Continues Gathering Data with a New Zogby Poll

Analysis by Bill Schroer, NEF Board Member

Overview

The Naturist Education Foundation has funded a national poll regarding American citizen attitudes toward social nudity for over 20 years. The latest iteration was conducted in 2021 by Zogby Analytics, a national polling firm. The study includes benchmark questions (asked in each iteration of the study) and also first time questions dealing with American attitudes toward contemporary issues which may impact attitudes regarding social nudity.

Method

The study comprised 1,101 adults from across the country who participated in an interactive online questionnaire. The sample was weighted to reflect the overall US population with variables including age, gender, education, geographical location, party, religion, etc all considered in the weighting. The study has a confidence interval of 95% +/- 3.9%.

Summary

When it comes to the “trendline” questions (i.e. those questions remaining the same each time a poll is conducted) we find some attitudes staying about the same and some changing quite significantly.

For example, the question regarding “...those who enjoy

nude sunbathing should be able to do so...as long as they do so at a beach accepted for that purpose?” continues to be a very robust (about 75% are in support) in 2021 and that extends as far back as 1983. In this regard, American attitudes are very stable and definitely demonstrating a strong majority of agreement in support of nude sunbathing in designated areas.

There are some questions which demonstrate a gradual acceptance of naturist activities and over time have grown in positive scores. The question regarding whether respondents “...have personally gone “skinnydipping” alone or with others” has grown consistently in affirmative responses from 15% in 1983 to 39.8% in 2021. This represents an increase of well over 100% in the space of 44 years and shows consistent growth in the level of participation in nude swimming on the part of a plurality of the American public.

When asked whether “public lands should be set aside for nude sunbathing/swimming just as public lands are set aside for snowmobiling, hiking or horseback riding”, that “agreement” level has grown from 39% in 1983 to 73.6% in 2021. This suggests the American public is recognizing if the public should be allowed to sunbathe nude in designated areas it makes sense to provide those designated areas.

Another area showing increasing level of acceptance is

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the question concerning whether the respondent would “...visit a nude beach if it was safe and legal?”. First asked in 2015, this question has grown in positive agreement level from 28% in 2015 to 45.3% in 2021. This also demonstrates a significant increase in acceptance of naturist activity and a plurality of respondents willingness to participate.

Some questions have been asked for the first time and while they offer positive scores....it will only be seen as a trend when they are asked in followup polls. For example, a question regarding respondent participation in “...nude activity at home during Covid-19 lockdowns either by oneself or with others?” received a 45% total agreement score. Also, when asked if respondent “knows of a friend or family member that likes to be nude some or all of the time” a plurality of respondents supported the question with 41.4% in agreement.

Finally, a question was asked on an issue of growing controversy in the US...the issue of “...whether the government should compel women to cover their chests when men are not required to do so?” (i.e. the issue of topfree legality). Again, this was asked for the first time in 2015 and the majority agreed. In this latest (2021) version the results reflect more of a national split on the question:

- ▶ 46.2% feeling the government should (compel women to cover up)
- ▶ 44.1% disagreeing the government should force women to cover their tops when men aren't required to do so.

Overall, this survey demonstrates a very solid continuation and growth of support for naturist activities where those activities are in defined areas. Further, the American public is increasingly supportive of the government setting aside areas for those activities to take place. While not every subgroup is in agreement with every question and there are demographic differences, there is a surprising level of consistency on most questions across most mainstream demographic groups. This stands in contrast to the firewall of opposition articulated by many politicians and public parks managers who seem to feel they are representing American public opinion by denying nudists the ability to have land set aside for naturist activities. This poll demonstrates they are not reflecting American voter opinion at all...but their own personal biases.

The Detail

As the most significant findings in research are based on changes over time of respondent views, the NEF poll has consistently asked some important baseline questions. These comprise the bulk of the survey, as follows.



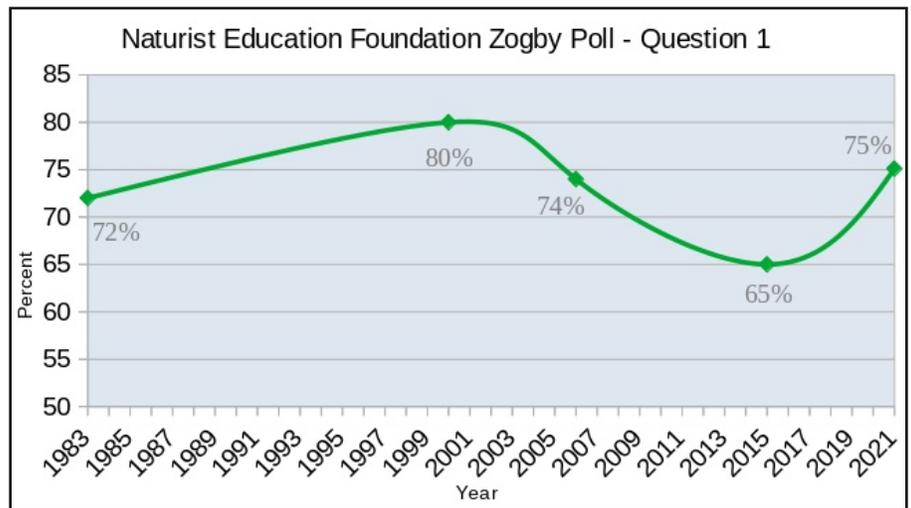
Q1: Do you agree people who enjoy nude sunbathing should be able to do so without interference from officials as long as they do so at a beach accepted for that purpose?

Looking at the details of the 2021 survey there were few differences by region. There were no major differences by age cohort although when looking at generational differences, the highest ranking generation was the Millennials with 80.1% agreement, followed by the Silent Generation (pre-1946) with 79.9%. Who says older and younger people have nothing in common?

One significant demographic difference is gender: Men were significantly more supportive than women (87.5% to 63.7%). Additionally, those self-describing as “non-binary” scored at 52.4%, a significantly lower score than for men or women. Given the pressure and social bias against non-binary individuals this may not be a surprising difference.

Those married, with college educations and white respondents were most positive. There is a positive correlation with income and parents were also more supportive than non-parents.

Respondents in medium size cities were most supportive at 81.1% followed by those in large cities (80.3%).



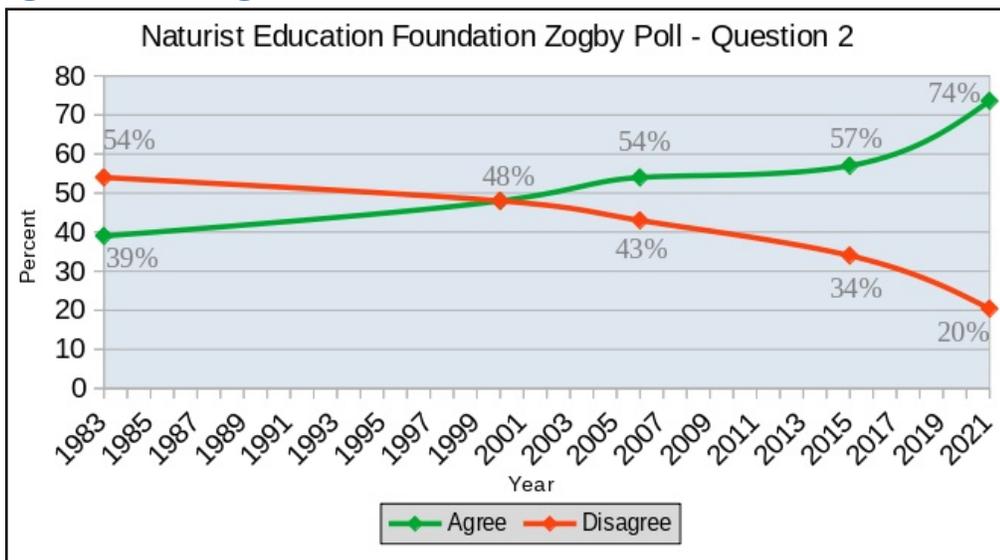
The Net Takeaway from Question 1:

- ▶ While there are demographic differences, most are not significant and overall, regardless of demography at least 70% of any group are strongly/most supportive of Question 1 premise. Some subsets are as high as 80%, an overwhelming number when considering most polling numbers.
- ▶ Historically, the numbers haven't changed significantly. From a trending standpoint, consistently about 3/4 of Americans support the concept of nude sunbathing at a beach set aside for that purpose.
- ▶ It is therefore difficult to understand why public officials at State parks/beaches are so opposed to the establishment of a public nude beach.
- ▶ As this is a national poll and there are few differences by region the argument in support of nude beaches should be able to be made anywhere in the country.

Q2: Local and State governments set aside public land for special types of recreation such as camping, off-leash dog running, birdwatching, 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 or swimming?

The responses in 2021 have jumped significantly to a level of support unseen before. It would appear respondents may have made the connection between Q.1 and Q.2 and logically concluding it is difficult to support Q.1 without supporting Q.2.

Looking at demographic subsets there is no significant difference by region with all areas of the country clustering around the mean score of 73.6%. Men are significantly more supportive than women at 83.1% vs. 64.6%. Also, support is positively correlated (again) with education and income. Liberals are more supportive than Conservatives 80.3% to 72.4% and parents are significantly more supportive than non-parents (80.1% to 70.7%).



The Net Takeaway from Question 2:

- ▶ There is a significant difference between the approval of this question from 2006 to 2021. Respondents appear to recognize if it is OK for people to be nude at beaches approved for that purpose it also makes sense to approve the creation or establishment of those beaches.
- ▶ While there are demographic differences, most are not significant and overall, regardless of demography at least 70% of any group are strongly/most supportive of Question 2 premise.
- ▶ The support for Question 2 stands in dramatic contrast with the rigid opposition to the creation of nude beaches demonstrated by most public officials and park managers.
- ▶ As with Question #1, this is a national poll and there are few differences by region the argument in support of nude beaches should be able to be made anywhere in the country.



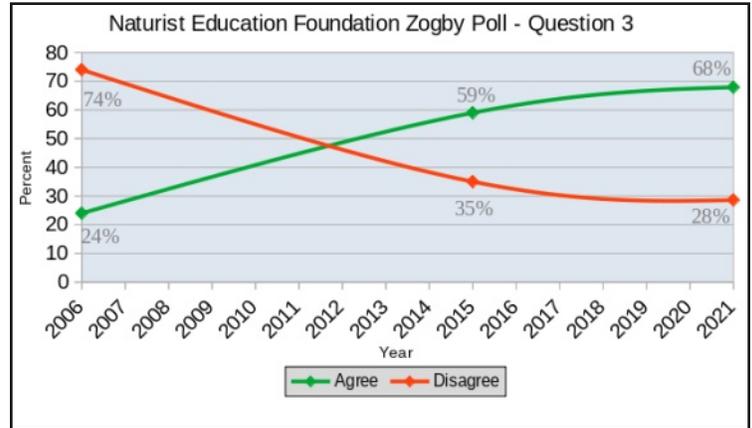
Q3: Do you agree or disagree people have a right to be nude in their homes or on their property even if they may be visible to others?

This is a question asked originally in 2006 and again in 2015 and 2021. In 2006 the strongly agree/agree score was fairly low at 24%.

Also, in 2006 the question was worded somewhat differently asking people about “being able to be nude in their backyard without interference even if they may be visible to others.” The limitation to the backyard may have influenced scores whereas the 2015 and 2021 versions incorporated “in their homes” which is a factor possibly influencing more respondents to be supportive. In 2021 the overall response of 67.9% in strong or somewhat agreement confirms that most Americans value their ability to be in control of their bodies on their own property and those who may be able to see them should not be able to deprive them of that control.

Those 30-49 are most supportive at 75.3% and those 65+ least supportive at 60.8%. Millennials again are most supportive at 77.9% while Baby Boomers are least supportive 59.9%. Males are significantly more supportive than females (75.5%/60.6%) and those with a college education significantly more supportive than those without (74.8%/65.7%).

As with the two previous questions those living in the largest cities are most supportive at 74.8% and there is declining support as cities get smaller with the exception of rural areas which is higher at 66.4%.



The Net Takeaway from Question 3:

- ▶ Wording makes a huge difference. When confronted with the question of being nude “in your home”....respondents are much more likely to be positive about being able to be nude. “In your backyard, if visible to others...” invites a less positive score.
- ▶ This finding suggests proximity to the home is critical....with the further from the actual home, the less likely respondents will support being nude if visible to others.

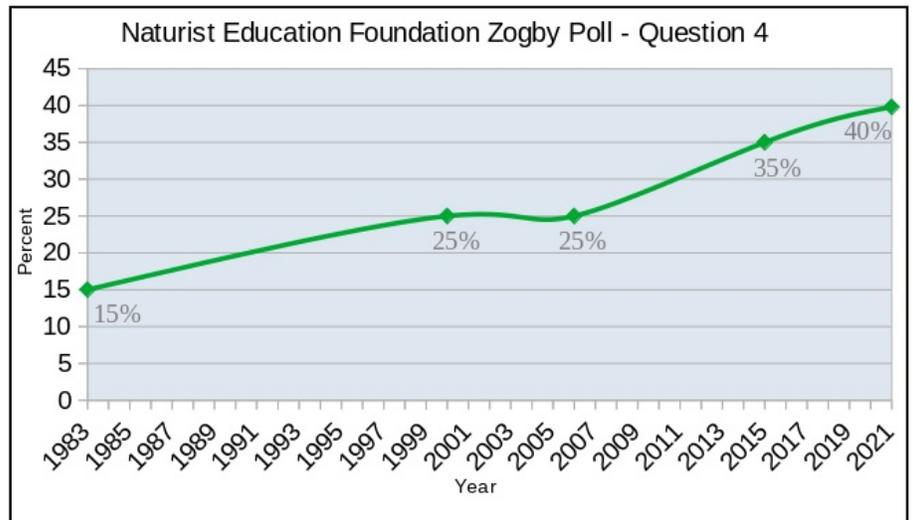
Q4: Have you ever personally gone skinny-dipping or nude sunbathing with others?

There has been a steady increase in the number of respondents who affirmed they have gone skinnydipping or sunbathed nude with others since 1983. The current 39.8% more than doubles the 1983 statistic.

Regionally the numbers are consistently close to the mean although the West scores somewhat higher at 42.8%. Those in medium size cities are mostly likely to participate (47.6%) while those in the suburbs are least likely (29.7%). Those 30-49 years of age are most likely to have skinnydipped or sunbathed nude at 48.8% and those 65+ least likely at 25.1%. Males are dramatically more likely to have participated than females (50%/30%) and those with a college education more likely than those without (44%/38.1%).

The Net Takeaway from Question 4:

- ▶ There have been consistent reports during the pandemic of more adults practicing nudism in their homes, on vacation or through the opportunity to “skinnydip” at a pond, lake or seashore.
- ▶ Doubling of the participation rate since 1983 suggests the stigma against skinnydipping has been reduced for many.



Elmschrat, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Skinny Dipping at Haulover.

Q5: 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?

This question is first asked in 2015 and the total “Disagreement” level was 39%. (The wording in this question drives us to look at the level of “Disagreement” as it is a negatively oriented question.) In other words those who support women being allowed to be topfree would disagree or strongly disagree with this question.

The slight increase to a total “Disagreement” level of 44.1% reflects a modest increase in the number of respondents who disagree women should be compelled to cover up. The American public from a majority initially agreeing with the question is increasingly split on this issue.

Year	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
2015	52%	39%	9%
2021	46.2%	44.1%	9.8%

Regionally, there were few differences on this question. Those 30-49 were in most disagreement at 50.4% with other age groups clustering around the mean. Those with a college education are significantly more likely to disagree than those without (50.9%/44.1%) and generationally those in the Gen X generation were somewhat more likely to disagree than other cohorts at 49.1%. There were no significant differences by income group.

Net Takeaway from Question 5:

- ▶ Although the trendline only starts with the second iteration in 2021 Americans are increasingly split on this topic.



[Courtesy Friends of Little Beach]

Q6: How likely is it that you would consider going nude at a clothing-optional beach if you knew it was safe and legal?

There is a dramatic improvement from 2015 when this question was first asked. While most age groups cluster around the mean, those 65+ are less “likely” to visit a nude beach at 22.1%. Men also are more likely to “visit” than women (57.4%/33.8%). Millennials are dramatically more likely to visit at 61.2% vs any other group. The largest cities are most likely (54.7%) and the rural area respondents who are least likely to visit (37.7%).

Year	Likely	Unlikely	Not Sure
2015	28%	68%	4%
2021	45.3%	49.8%	4.9%

The Net Takeaway from Question 6:

- ▶ Almost ½ of all adults in 2021 appear willing to experience a nude beach.
- ▶ Millennials, with their high level of agreement may represent the next class of nudists.



[Photo of Little Beach by "dronepicr", CC-BY-2.0, cropped.]

Q7: During the COVID lockdown did you go nude or try going nude within your home when otherwise you might not have?

A total of 42.7% of the sample either did go nude or attempted to while at home during the lockdown. This is a new question and suggests there is interest in nude living and with opportunity.....many may try it out.

Younger age cohorts scored much higher (50%+). Men are more likely trying out nudity than women (40.7% /30%) and those with a college education were significantly more likely to try being nude at home at 49%. Generationally the Millennials were far above any other generation at 58.5%. The largest/medium size cities were most likely to try being nude at home (52.6%/53.1%) .

The Net Takeaway from Question 7:

- ▶ It appears given the opportunity to be nude at home without the likelihood of being disturbed a significant portion of respondents have tried nude living.
- ▶ While the question of “Why” was not asked it may be speculated there is, for many, a hidden interest in trying nude living that emerges when the opportunity presents itself.

Yes, self	27.0%
Yes, others	8.2%
Yes, self and others	7.5%
No	55.0%
Not sure	1.8%



Q8: Do you know someone close to you - family or friend - that likes or prefers to be naked some or most of the time?

The plurality score of 41% affirmative suggests many Americans.....perhaps many more than would admit it, find pleasure in living nude at least part of the time at home. How many more would enjoy clothes-free living if it weren't for the cultural, social and legal barriers to doing so?

Regionally, there were few differences with most areas scoring close to the mean. There is a reverse correlation to the statement with age. The youngest cohorts are most likely to have tried being nude 48.6% and the oldest cohorts (65+) least likely to do so (22.3%).

Men and women both score fairly close to the mean and similarly there is no significant difference or deviation from the mean by educational outcome.

Democrats and Republicans are equally likely (and close to the mean) to try living nude. Generationally, Millennials once again score highest at 58.6% positive while the Silent Generation is least likely to try at 11.8%. White/Caucasians are significantly less likely to try living nude than Hispanics, African-Americans or Asians. Hispanics score higher (50.2%) with White Caucasians at 37.8%

Jewish respondents are significantly more likely to try being nude at home (53.1%) versus Catholics (44.3%) or Protestants (36.7%).

There is again a correlation between city size and willingness to engage in nude activities. The largest city respondents are most likely to try being nude at home 54.8% compared with the suburbs/rural areas at 29.9%/37.7% respectively. Those married are somewhat more likely to try being nude at home than singles (both score close to the mean) while those in a domestic partnership are much more likely to participate (56.2%).

Yes	No	Not Sure
41.4%	46.7%	12.0%

Parents are also dramatically more likely to try living nude at home (59.9%) than non-parents (32.6%). Heterosexuals score close to the norm while non-heterosexuals scored higher at 49.4%.

The Net Takeaway from Question 8:

- ▶ A plurality of respondents acknowledge they know “someone” who lives nude or prefers to be nude some/most of the time. For some, this may be a self reflection. (In research sometimes respondents refer to friends or family to suggest a behavior they themselves may engage in.)
- ▶ While it may not be highly publicized there also does not appear to be a disapprobation for the behavior on the part of respondents.



Q9: Do you agree or disagree that seeing more people naked of all shapes and sizes (eg. In artwork, TV, movies, etc.) would make you feel better about your own body?

In this question respondents are in the majority agreeing that seeing nudity with real world bodies would aid in reducing the anxiety many, if not most, Americans feel about their bodies.

Regionally, there are few differences with most regions scoring around the mean. Agewise there is a correlation between advancing age and declining level of agreement. Those youngest groups (18-29/30-49) score highest at 64-65% while the oldest cohorts (50-64 and 65+) scored lowest (43.2%/39.3%). Millennials again score highest over any other generational cohort at 70.8% compared with 20.4% for the Silent Generation.

Hispanic respondents are most likely to agree (67%) while African-Americans are least likely to agree at 52%. White/Caucasian respondents fall at the mean. Jewish respondents are most likely to agree (68%) while Catholics and Protestant respondents are somewhat less likely to agree (57%/52%).

Again, the largest cities are the most supportive of the inclusion of real world bodies in the nude in the media (65%) while the suburbs and rural areas score significantly lower (47%/54%). Marital status does not differ significantly from

Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
56.9%	30.6%	12.4%

the mean. There is a positive correlation between income level and level of agreement with the lowest incomes scoring the lowest level of agreement at 51% and the highest incomes scoring the highest level of agreement at 65%. Liberals outscore Conservatives (66%/55%) and parents far outscore non-parents 71% to 50%. Non-heterosexuals outscore heterosexuals by almost the same margin (70% to 55%).

Net Takeaway from Question 9 include:

- ▶ This strong majority score by respondents nationally demonstrates an implicit understanding that the media has tremendous influence over our self-esteem and self-image. There is large-scale agreement that a more balanced portrayal of the nude human body in the media would allow viewers to have a more realistic and empathic view of their own bodies and an increased sense of well-being and self-image.
- ▶ For future promotional language, utilizing the value of nudism's contribution to positive body image and self-esteem can impact potential trial in what many may believe is a purely sensory experience.



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