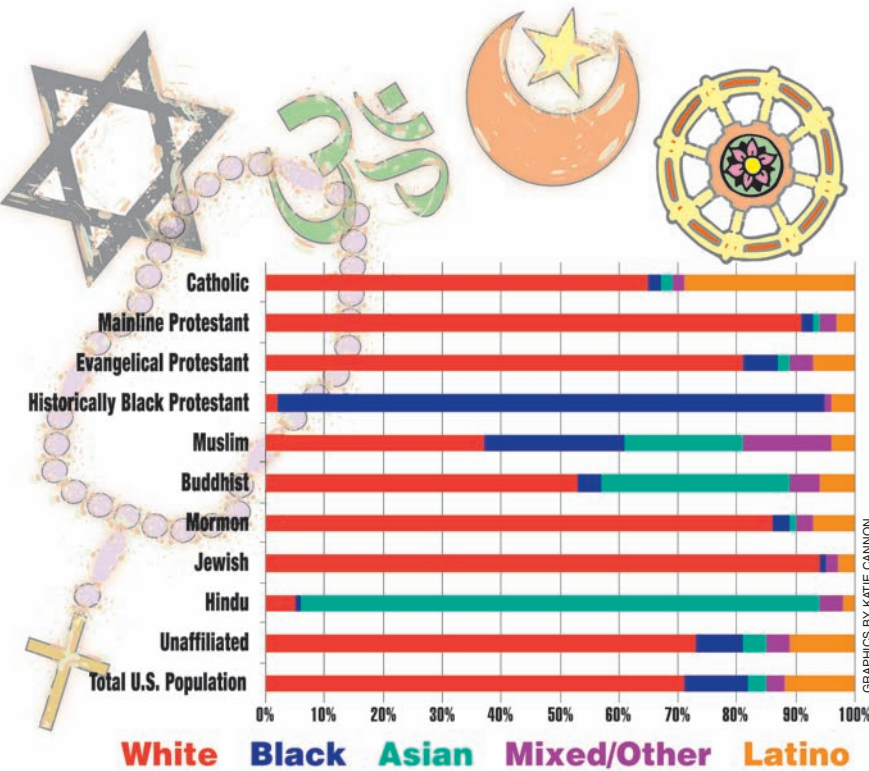


GO FIGURE

JACK MARCUM



Race and ethnicity across the religious landscape

A recent survey of more than 35,000 Americans¹ provides a detailed portrait of the racial and ethnic distribution of various religious bodies and traditions. The findings include:

- **Most religious groupings have a majority of white adherents**, with the exceptions of historically black churches (2 percent), Hindus (5 percent) and Muslims (37 percent).
- **The highest percentages of whites** are found among Jews (95 percent) and mainline Protestants (91 percent).
- **Blacks are a majority in only one group**, the historically black churches (98 percent).
- **Latinos are a relatively small share of every group except Catholics**, where they comprise 29 percent.
- **Asians are a large majority of Hindu adherents** (88 percent), and sizable minorities of Buddhists (32 percent) and Muslims (20 percent).
- **The unaffiliated are mostly white** (73 percent), with sizable shares that are Latino (11 percent) and black (8 percent).

¹ U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. For more details, go to: religions.pewforum.org

What the research shows

Presbyterians, who are predominately white (92 percent of PC(USA) membership—well above the U.S. share of 71 percent), have begun efforts to become more racially and ethnically diverse.

The survey highlights some of the challenges the church faces. For one, most Americans are already part of a religious body. While 27 percent of the unaffiliated population is racial ethnic, only 16 percent of the U.S. population reports being unaffiliated. For another, Presbyterians are only one of a large number of religious bodies, most of them Christian. Why should our outreach efforts stand out, especially given that many other groups already have larger shares of racial ethnic members?

What the PC(USA) needs is something that makes us different but compelling. It turns out that we already have something—the fact that we are Presbyterian. Many recent, non-European immigrants are Presbyterians, and wish to remain so; often they seek us out. By working with this natural constituency to develop new congregations and immigrant fellowships, congregations and presbyteries have been helping the denomination become more racially and ethnically diverse.

Such an approach does not offer the promise of a quick transition to a more multi-racial and multi-ethnic church, but it has one big advantage: It's already working. □