Engaging Your Hindu Population

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Objectives

1. Describe the history of the Hindu American community in America.
2. Identify the population distribution by state and national statistics of the Hindu American population.
3. Describe how a pharmacy owner can better engage with his/her Hindu American employees.
4. Identify the stakeholders in the community committed to Hindu American health and explain how a pharmacy owner can expand his/her services.
5. Identify, explain, and debunk the stereotypes that pharmacy staff should be aware of when interacting with the Hindu American population.

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Setting the Stage

- A community pharmacy owner living in San Francisco has a temple within 1 mile of his pharmacy. However, he notices that he has not had many Hindu patients get their prescriptions filled at his store. What can he do to become a trusted member in his community and increase his store sales?

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History of Hinduism in America

Hinduism arrives in North America.
Missionary and travel accounts, followed by European Orientalist translations of Sanskrit texts, introduced Hinduism to America.

Popularization of yoga and the Transcendental Meditation movement.
The physical practice of yoga gathered attention in the 1950s, and guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi arrived in America with a simple technique called Transcendental Meditation (TM). TM's popularity was further boosted due to associations with popular celebrities such as The Beatles and Mia Farrow.

U.S. Census first introduces an "Asian Indian" category.
The U.S. Census first used the category "Asian Indian" in the 1980 census, and 361,544 people chose that designation.Asian Indian immigration continued at a steady rate in the 1980s.

Hindu missionaries and Indian immigrants first arrive in notable numbers.
However, this first wave was still small in size and consisted mainly of men, thus rendering it rather insignificant.

Immigration Act of 1965
The United States and Canada significantly revised their immigration policies in the 1960s. This, along with the counterculture movement of the 1960s and the arrival of new Hindu *gurus,* facilitates immigration of Indians.

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https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195399318/obo-9780195399318-0144.xml
https://www.worldhindunews.com/chronology-of-hinduism-in-america/

History of Hinduism in America (cont'd)

2003

The White House hosts its first Diwali celebration under President George W. Bush.

2009

President Obama lights Diwali *diyas* in the White House.

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https://www.worldhindunews.com/chronology-of-hinduism-in-america/
https://www.indiatimes.com/news/world/this-is-how-the-white-house-celebrates-diwali-228103.html

Hindu American Demographics

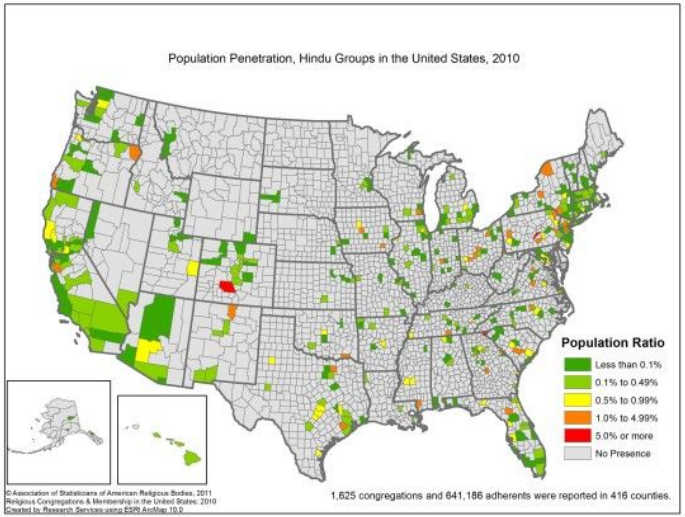
Hinduism is the **oldest religion** in the world.

Hinduism in the U.S. ranks **3rd largest** after Christianity and Irreligion.

Hindu Americans made up around **1% of the U.S. population** as of the 2020 census (i.e., **3.3 million** Hindus).

By 2050, the U.S. is expected to have the **world's 5th largest** Hindu population (i.e., **4.8 million Hindus**).

Hindu Americans are heavily concentrated in **larger metropolitan regions,** particularly near New York City and San Francisco.



https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/hindus/#:~:text=By%202050%2C%20the%20United%20States,the%20world's%20largest%20Hindu%20populations.
https://www.prri.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/most-and-least-hindu-cities-in-america_n_2201213

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Population Search

You can search your county or zip code to view the demographic data of the patient population that lives around your pharmacy.

Examples of useful databases: US Census Bureau, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state health department, or another source.

- https://www.census.gov/
- https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings
- http://www.city-data.com/

Find a Hindu temple nearby:

- https://www.rudhratek.com/
- https://web.archive.org/web/20120718221315/http://owlib.com/dir/dir.show?cat_id=2348

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Engagement:

Employees, Patients, Community Stakeholders

Creating a business proposition around a niche market

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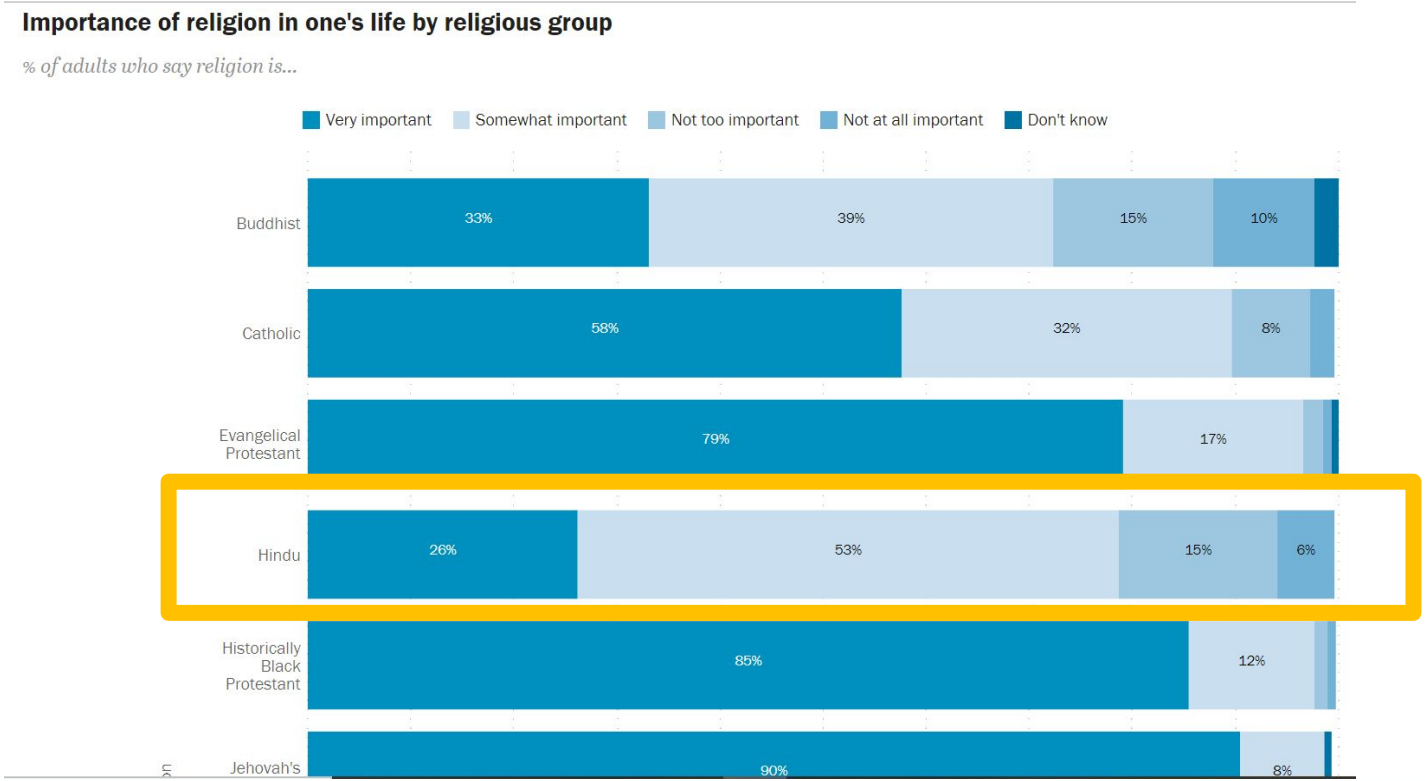
Engaging Your Employees:
Recognizing the varying importance of religion in their life



https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/

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Engaging Your Employees:
Recognizing diversity within Hinduism

There is no one central authority in Hinduism. Hinduism is extremely **diverse** in its practice and contains many branches and denominations.

- **Traditions and practices may vary significantly** across different individuals, families, or groups.
- Therefore, best practice is to **always ask a Hindu person about their beliefs and preferences** so as to minimize unconscious assumptions.

Key Takeaway: You might ask employees that you are hiring if they have any religious or cultural practices that they would like employers to accommodate. This will generate an atmosphere of inclusivity and help with employee retention at your pharmacy.

https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religious-practices-2/

https://www.hinduismtoday.com/magazine/january-february-march-2013/2013-01-educational-insight-a-health-care-provider-s-handbook-on-hindu-patients/

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Engaging Your Employees:
Accommodating prayer at the workplace

- **Prayer** and **meditation** are important aspects of practicing faith for many Hindus.
- There are no set times or locations for prayers (called *pujas*).
  - However, many Hindus **prefer to pray in the morning,** and usually at a **shrine** that they might have put in their **home**.
  - Some Hindus might also say a brief prayer **before meals**.
  - During certain religious festivals, some Hindus might prefer to pray multiple times in a day or at a particular time of the day.

Key Takeaway At the workplace, prayer can take place in any location, preferably in a **clean, quiet,** and **private** space**.** Hindus may wish to use small religious statues, holy books, or prayer beads when praying

https://www.hinduismtoday.com/magazine/january-february-march-2013/2013-01-educational-insight-a-health-care-provider-s-handbook-on-hindu-patients/

https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRMevq5ShUy8L3Ljkir_pK9q8cWFuaB8UccGg&usqp=CAU

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Engaging Your Employees:
Religious Days in Hinduism

- Since Hinduism is a vast religion, **many diverse religious days and festivals** (both major and minor) exist.
- This National Today calendar generally contains an updated list of Hindu religious dates for each year.
  - FYI: since the Hindu calendar is synchronized with the **lunar calendar**, religious dates vary from year to year.
    - For example, Diwali was celebrated on October 24th in 2022, but will be celebrated on November 12th in 2023.

Key Takeaway Employers could also download and print this **condensed desktop holiday calendar** produced by the Hindu American Foundation to facilitate accommodation of Hindu employees.

https://nationaltoday.com/hindu-holidays/

https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/HAFN_23_001-2023-Dharmic-Days-Hindu-and-Hindu-Holidays-Calendar-Guide-forRelease_v2.0-desktop-condensed.pdf

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Engaging Your Employees:
Religious Days in Hinduism (cont'd)

- A few **major Hindu festivals** celebrated worldwide include:
  - **Holi** - usually in March
  - **Dussehra** - usually in October
  - **Navratri** - usually in October
  - **Diwali** - usually in October or November
  - **Raksha Bandhan** - usually in August

Key Takeaway Hindu religious days are generally ***not*** **public holidays.** Therefore, an employee may ask for the day off to celebrate with family, time off to attend prayers at temples, or to change shifts with someone else. As an employer, knowing when these religious days occur might help in creating an effective work schedule.

https://www.learnreligions.com/hindu-festivals-calendar-1770190

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Pongal

- **Pongal is a four-day Hindu** harvest festival celebrated across South India, particularly by the **Tamil community**. Observed around the winter solstice, it marks the Sun's transition northward after reaching its southernmost point, typically falling on **January 14 or 15** each year according to the Tamil solar calendar. The festival is a time to express gratitude to the Sun, Mother Nature, and farm animals for their role in ensuring a plentiful harvest.

Another aspect of the celebration is ***kolam*, intricate and colorful geometric artwork**

The four days of Tamil Pongal include **Bhogi Pongal for cleaning and renewal**, Thai Pongal for **honoring the Sun God** with sweet rice, Mattu Pongal for celebrating and **worshiping cattle**, and Kaanum Pongal for **socializing and strengthening community** bonds.

The festival's name comes from the dish **"Pongal", a sweet rice** preparation Cows hold special significance during Pongal.

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Diwali

The name Diwali comes from the Sanskrit word dipavali, which means "row of lights"

Diwali is celebrated by Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs. It's the most important festival of the year in India and is celebrated by more than a billion people worldwide

Diwali symbolizes the spiritual victory of Dharma over Adharma. In North India, it's based on the story of Rama's people lighting diyas to guide him home after 14 years in exile. In South India, it honors the story of Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Naraka

Diwali is celebrated by lighting rows of clay oil lamps called diyas outside homes, shops, and public places. Other celebrations include festive gatherings, fireworks displays, feasts, and prayer

https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diwali-Hindu-festival

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Holi

Holi is considered as one of the most revered and celebrated festivals of India and it is celebrated in almost every part of the country. It is also sometimes called as the “festival of love” as on this day people get to unite together forgetting all resentments and all types of bad feeling towards each other.

The vibrancy of colors is something that brings in a lot of positivity in our lives and Holi being the festival of colours is actually a day worth rejoicing. Holi is a famous Hindu festival that is celebrated in every part of India with utmost joy and enthusiasm. The ritual starts by lighting up the bonfire one day before the day of Holi and this process symbolizes the triumph of good over the bad.

https://www.britannica.com/search?query=holi

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Raksha Bandhan

Raksha Bandhan strengthens the cherished bond between brothers and sisters every August. This ancient Hindu festival, dating back millennia, celebrates sibling love through the tying of a sacred thread. Honor your siblings, exchange gifts, and share traditional sweets to partake in this joyous cultural observance.

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https://nationaltoday.com/raksha-bandhan/

Engagement:

Increasing Your Sales

How to “Market” to Your Hindu Population

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Engaging Your Patients:
Pharmacy Staff Greetings

- A traditional Indian greeting, now popularized by the spread of yoga practices, is ***namaste***.
  - *Namaste*, which means “I bow to the divine within you”, is often accompanied by a **nod** of the head or by **pressing the palms together** with the fingertips facing upwards.
    - Click here to learn how to pronounce *namaste*.
  - However, with the increasing rates of **modernization** and diaspora in recent decades, **younger generations** of Hindu Americans might prefer being greeted with a common English greeting such as “**hello**”.
- If there is a Hindu religious festival or celebration going on, it is acceptable to use a greeting of “Happy [insert name of celebration]”. Examples include “**Happy Diwali”** or “**Happy Holi**”.

Key Takeaway Greeting your Hindu patients with a simple “Namaste” will help to show your inclusivity and project that you are open to the community.

https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/indian-culture/indian-culture-greetings

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Engaging Your Patients:
Pharmacist Counselling

- **Fasting** is a common practice in Hinduism.
  - For example, during the month of *Shravan*, some groups of Hindus fast by eating only one meal a day (generally dinners). Others may fast by abstaining from food and water for an entire day (e.g., for all Mondays of the *Shravan* month).
  - Therefore, it might be best practice to **ask** a Hindu patient about dietary changes and about what time of day fasting would occur so that pharmacists can counsel appropriately.
    - This allows **customization** of counselling points for individual Hindu patients to practice patient-centered care and promote medication adherence.

Key Takeaway **Sweets** and **confectionaries** are often eaten in higher amounts during celebrations such as Diwali, so this might be another important counseling point for patients with **diabetes** or **dyslipidemia**.

https://www.uphs.upenn.edu/pastoral/resed/diversity_points.html
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Engaging Your Patients:
Inventory Supply

- Hindus are often **vegetarian** and may not consume any meat or animal byproducts. Conversely, some Hindus may eat most types of meat (except **beef** usually because the cow is a sacred animal in Hinduism).
  - Hindu patients might prefer to ***not*** consume **fish oil** products.
    - → stock and recommend alternative forms of omega-3 fatty acid supplementation (e.g., vegan/vegetarian capsules, algae supplements, flaxseed oil, etc.).
  - Hindu patients might prefer to ***not*** consume **alcohol-based** products.
    - → stock and recommend non-alcoholic formulations of OTC cough syrups whenever possible.
  - Hindu patients might prefer to ***not*** consume **gelatin capsules.**
    - → stock and recommend vegetable or plant-based capsules, especially if you offer compounding at your pharmacy.

- **Key Takeaway: Marketing** - this can be a relevant marketing strategy for the Hindu business line in your area.

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Engaging Your Patients:
Vaccines Inventory

- Hindu patients might prefer to ***not*** receive **egg-based** vaccines**.**
  - Most **flu** vaccines (both injectables and the nasal spray) are produced using an egg-based manufacturing process and contain some egg protein called ovalbumin.
    - → stock and recommend **non-egg based** flu vaccines
      - **Cell-Based** Flu Vaccine - **Flucelvax Quadrivalent** (for patients >6 months)
      - **Recombinant** Flu Vaccine - **Flublok Quadrivalent** (for patients >18 years)

- **Key Takeaway: Marketing** - advertising that you carry non-egg based flu vaccines (via email campaigns, flyers, phone outreach, etc.) might help increase your pharmacy's vaccination rates in the Hindu American patient population.

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https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/cell-based.htm

Engaging Your Patients:
Ayurvedic Medicine

- *Ayurveda*, a Sanskrit term meaning “the science of life”, is a **natural** and ancient system of medicine that originated in India more than 3,000 years ago.
  - Ayurvedic treatment combines **products** (mostly **plant-derived**, but also possibly **metal**- or **animal-based), diet, exercise**, and **lifestyle**.

- It is estimated that about 240,000 American adults use Ayurvedic medicine.

- While some studies have shown positive effects in patients with breast cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and osteoarthritis, no federal regulations or well-designed clinical trials exist. Therefore, **caution** and **clinical judgment** must be exercised, especially if the patient is pregnant or nursing.

Key Takeaway Being aware that your patients may be using alternative therapy to treat their conditions can help with drug-herb interaction counselling points.

https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/ayurvedic-medicine-in-depth

https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/ayurveda

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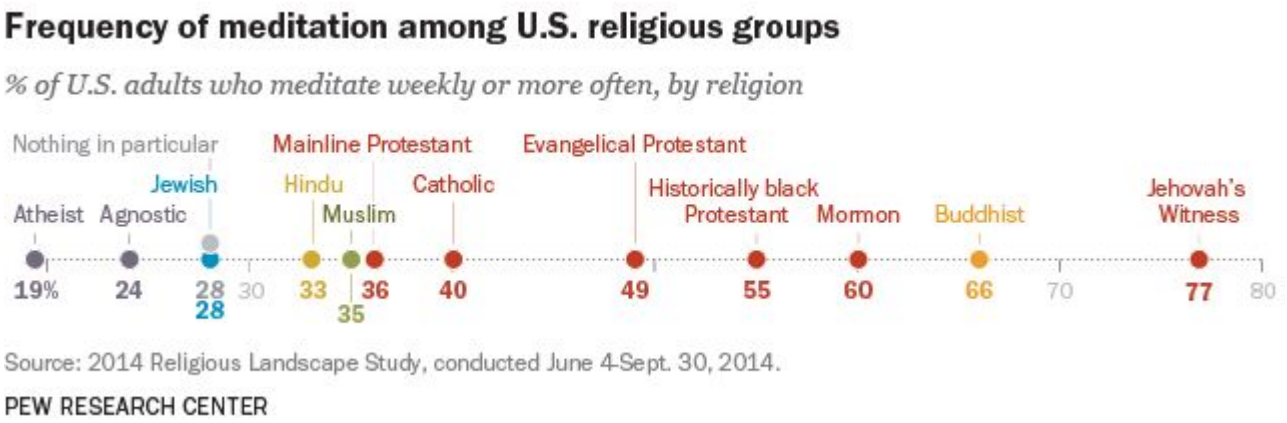
Engaging Your Patients:
Practice of Yoga and Meditation



While data shows that meditation and yoga might actually be practiced more frequently by other religious groups despite their origins in Hinduism, Hindu Americans are still likely to consider adopting **meditation and yoga as heart-healthy lifestyle modifications** to make in combination with pharmacological measures.

https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/01/02/meditation-is-common-across-many-religious-groups-in-the-u-s/
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Engaging Your Patients:
Immunization Considerations

- Some Hindu patients may express culturally-based concerns about **modesty**, especially in the presence of someone of the opposite sex.
  - → **Ask** the patient if they would prefer to use the Immunization Room/Private area if available.
  - → **Ask** the patient if a female or male pharmacist/technician immunizer would be preferred.
  - Most patients are aware that these requests might not be able to be accomodated. However, **culturally competent care** should always be offered whenever possible to make all our patients feel more comfortable.
- Hindu patients, especially females, may wear **jewelry or adornments** with strong cultural or religious meaning.
  - → **Ask** if they could remove or adjust the item to allow access for immunization.

https://www.uphs.upenn.edu/pastoral/resed/diversity_points.html

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Engaging Your Patients:
Male/Female Interaction

- Some Hindu patients may express culturally-based reservations regarding **physical interaction,** especially with someone of the opposite sex.

- If unsure about their level of comfort, **ask** permission before making physical contact such as hand shaking or hugging.

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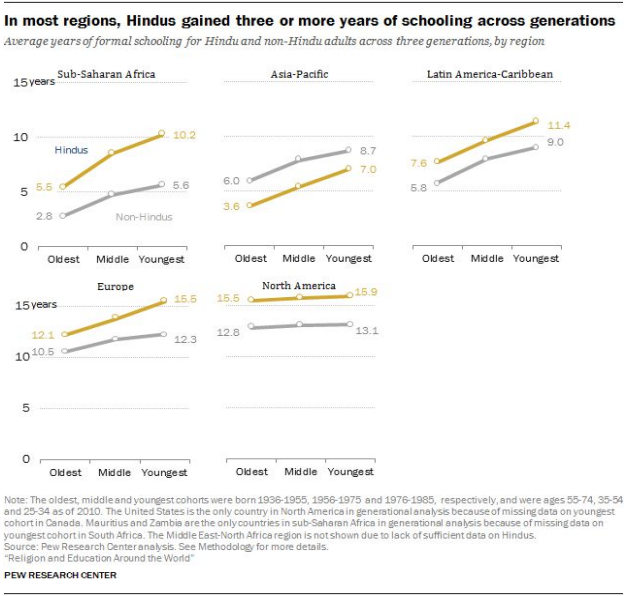
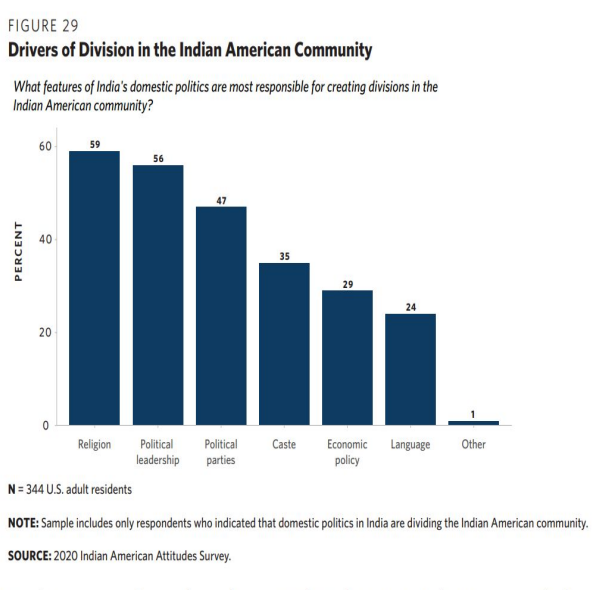
Engaging Your Patients:
Generational Gap





Data shows that on average, Hindus in North America are **attaining 3 or more years of increased education** across generations.

Conversely, an increasing proportion of Indian Americans might be **steering away from religiosity**. A survey showed that 59% of Indian Americans believe religion to be creating internal divisions within the community.

This suggests that religiosity and educational backgrounds might vary between successive generations of Hindu Americans, so pharmacists can practice more **culturally competent care** by being mindful of evolving views across generations.

https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2016/12/13/hindu-educational-attainment/
https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/09/social-realities-of-indian-americans-results-from-2020-indian-american-attitudes-survey-pub-84667

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Engaging Your Patients:
Reincarnation and Karma

- Most Hindu groups and traditions believe in **reincarnation,** which is the philosophical or religious concept that a person's soul or essence begins a new life in a different physical form/body after biological death.

- Another common doctrine is that of ***karma*** which states that what one does in this present life will have its effect in the next life.
  - Therefore, pain and suffering might be regarded as punishment for prior actions from a previous life.

Key Takeaway: Being aware of the presence of these beliefs would help pharmacists provide more **culturally competent care** and to better assist patients with decision-making relating to **end-of-life** or **palliative** care.

https://www.britannica.com/topic/reincarnation

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Engagement:
Community Stakeholders

Networking:
Going outside your comfort zone

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Interdisciplinary Team Building

- Bring sweets or confectionaries with a Happy Diwali tag to gift to physicians or pharmacists in your network. This helps promote cultural inclusion and team building.

Key Takeaway:

Gift giving gestures during a time that usually goes unacknowledged can go a long way in building bridges of communication and partnerships between physicians and pharmacists. This in turn enables collaborative practice agreements and trusted relationships.

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Engaging Community Stakeholders

- Learn more about Hinduism by engaging with the **Hindu American Foundation**.

- Celebrate **Hindu Heritage Month** every October.
  - October is a significant month since it is the birth month of Mahatma Gandhi and is often when major Hindu holidays such as Navratri and Diwali are celebrated.

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Temples:
Places of worship for Hindus

- Throughout the history of Hinduism, temples have served as **gathering places** for mass religious celebrations, marriages, or funerals.
  - Unlike some other organized religions, however, regularly visiting a temple is **not mandated** by Hinduism, and many Hindus opt to have a small shrine or *'puja'* space in their homes for daily prayers.
- Most Hindu temples are usually **open to the public,** and visits by people of all faiths and beliefs are welcomed.
- Networking Opportunity: Pharmacy owners can ask to be a part of events at temples and be put on the invitation lists as a way to engage with the community members in their area.
  - Locate a temple nearest to you. This is also another useful temple locator.

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https://www.learnreligions.com/overview-of-hindu-temples-1770647

Museums

Museums or essays dedicated to the history of Hindu culture in the U.S. and abroad:

- Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art:
  - The Arts of Devotion
  - South Asian and Himalayan Exhibitions
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art:
  - Hinduism and Hindu Art

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Chamber of Commerce

Connecting with your local Chamber of Commerce will allow you to interact with other small business owners to form networking bonds and ties within the community.

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Avoiding, Debunking, and Demystifying

Stereotypes

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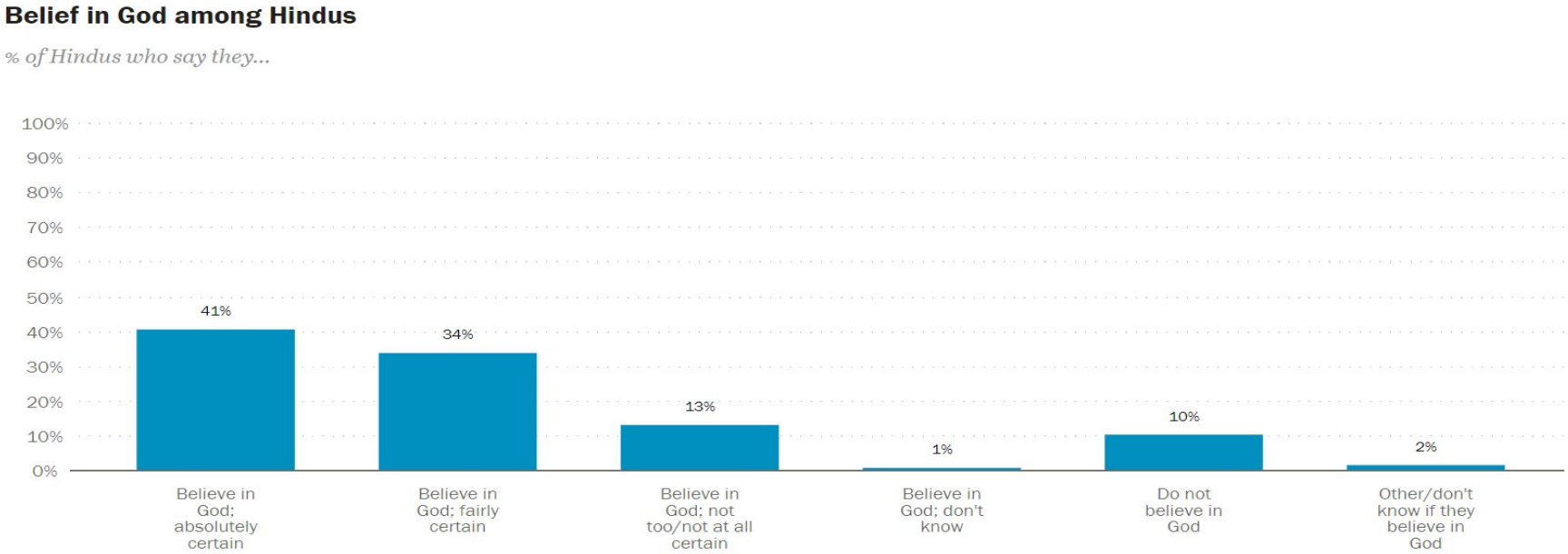
Misconception:
Most Hindu Americans believe in God.



In reality, Pew Research Center's data shows that **only 41% of Hindus say they believe in God with absolute certainty.**

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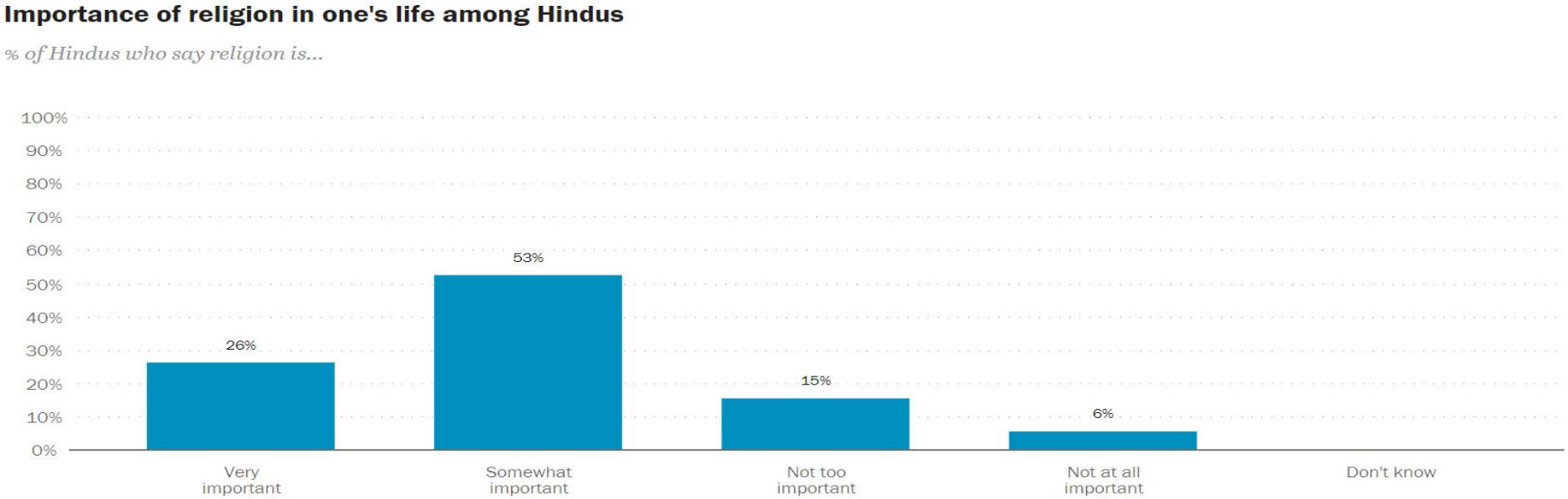
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/hindu#belief-in-god

Misconception:
Most Hindu Americans are religious.



In reality, Pew Research Center's data shows that **only 26% of Hindus say religion is very important in their life.**

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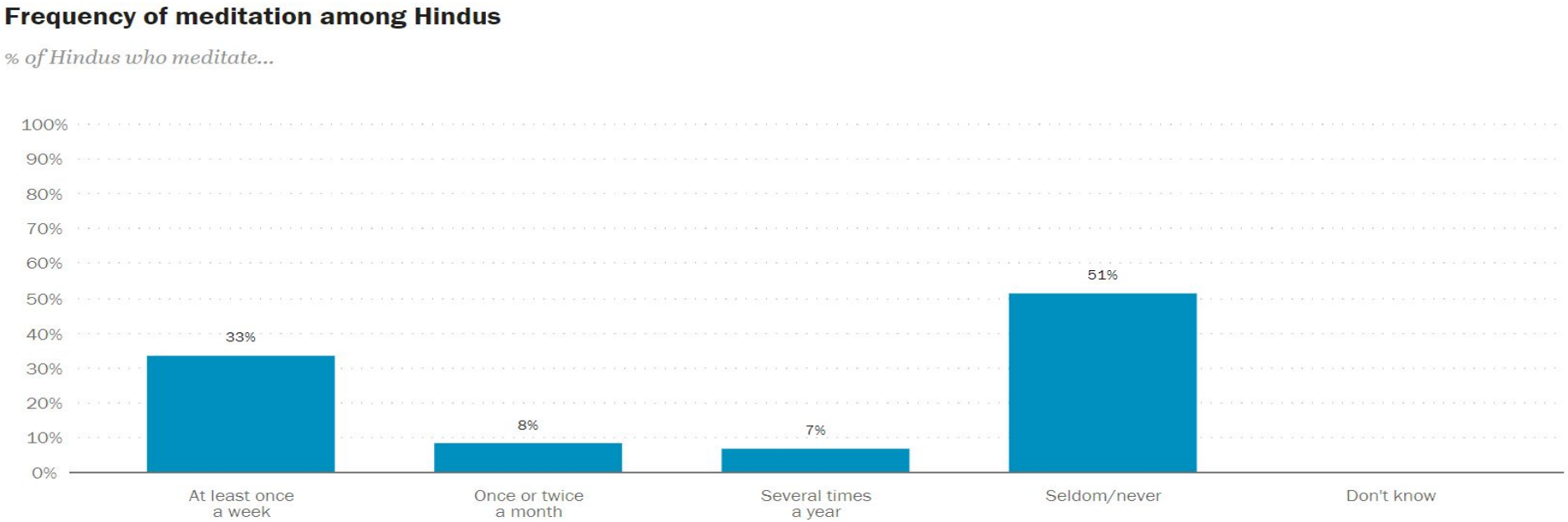
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/hindu#importance-of-religion-in-ones-life

Misconception:
Most Hindu Americans meditate regularly.



In reality, Pew Research Center's data shows that **only 33% of Hindus say they meditate once a week or more.**

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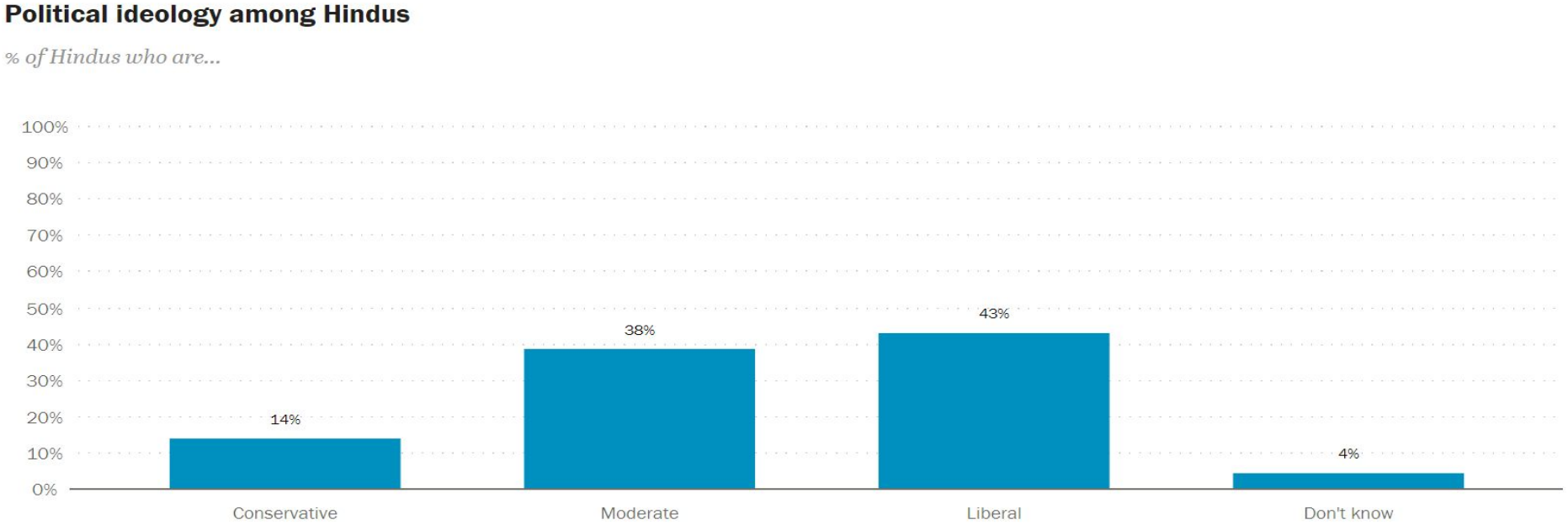
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/hindu#frequency-of-meditation

Misconception:

Most Hindu Americans are conservative (politically).



In reality, Pew Research Center's data shows that **only 14% of Hindus identify as conservative politically.**

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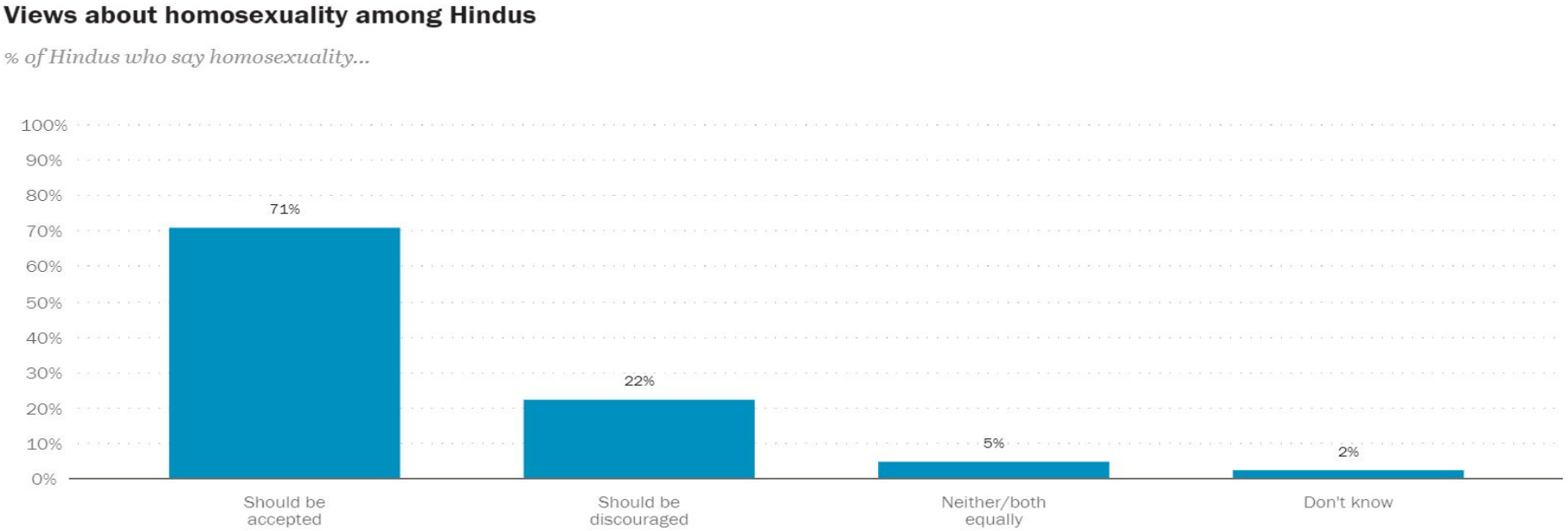
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/hindu#political-ideology

Misconception:
Most Hindu Americans are conservative (socially).



In reality, Pew Research Center's data shows that **only 22% of Hindus believe homosexuality should be discouraged.**

https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/hindu/#views-about-homosexuality
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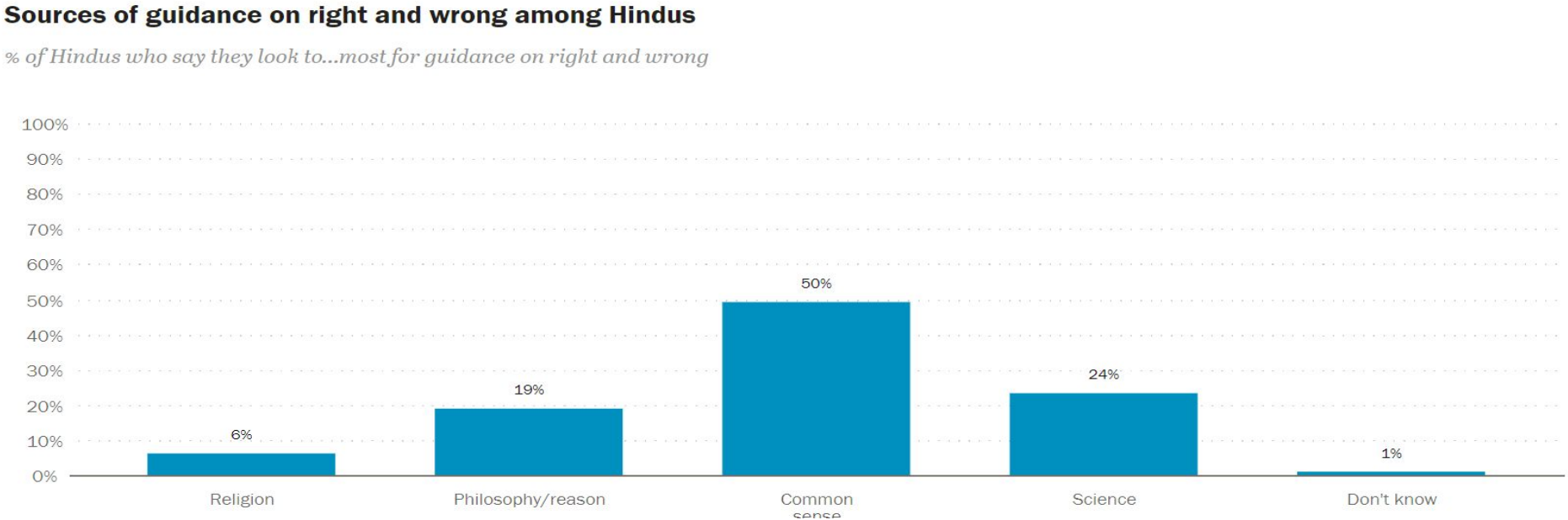
Misconception:
Most Hindus lead life based on religious beliefs.



In reality, Pew Research Center's data shows that **only 6% of Hindus say they look to religion most for guidance on right and wrong.**

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https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/hindu#sources-of-guidance-on-right-and-wrong

Did You Know?

Snippets of info to engage your Hindu population throughout the year

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Did You Know?

- **Best practice:** to minimize unconscious assumptions about culture or beliefs, ask your existing and new Hindu patients open-ended questions such as:
  - "What **preferences** (related to food, language, religion, etc.) can we help **accommodate** to provide you with better care?"
- Why is this important?
  - While Hinduism is most prevalent in India, **considerable Hindu populations** also live in Nepal (which actually has a Hindu majority) and Bangladesh. Two percent of the UK population also identifies as Hindu.
    - Thus one should not assume that all Hindus have Indian origins, or that all Indians are Hindus.
  - India **does *not* have a national language**. Therefore, a Hindu patient who is also Indian American might *not* speak any commonly known languages such as Hindi.
    - Additionally, the terms 'Hindu' and 'Hindi', while similar sounding, are not interchangeable. **'Hindu'** refers to a **person** practicing the religion of Hinduism, while **'Hindi'** is one of the many **languages** spoken on the Indian subcontinent.
  - While the relationship between **Hindus** and **Muslims** remains politically and culturally complicated and has historically resulted in periods of tensions, in many areas these two religions continue to coexist peacefully.

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To learn more about Hinduism:

Further Reading Recommendations for All Ages

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