

# Reference Document

*"9 out of 10 'Normal People' Think Jehovah's Witnesses Are a Cult"*

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

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## How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video.

### Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — Sourced from peer-reviewed research, official Watchtower publications (including archived magazines), government or attorney general records, or original first-party platforms (such as the Reddit post and comment that anchor the video). Primary sources can stand on their own.
  - **SECONDARY** — Sourced from established polling organizations, reputable research institutions, or advocacy and professional-association resources. Secondary sources support claims and are most defensible when paired with a primary or another independent secondary.
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## SECTION 1: The Poll and Its Results

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### **Claim: A Jehovah's Witness user posted a poll on r/polls titled "Are Jehovahs Witnesses a cult?"**

- **Source:** Reddit user "InheritedCertainty," post on the r/polls subreddit
- **URL:** [https://www.reddit.com/r/polls/comments/1ss5tje/are\\_jehovahs\\_witnesses\\_a\\_cult/](https://www.reddit.com/r/polls/comments/1ss5tje/are_jehovahs_witnesses_a_cult/)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — The Reddit post is the original artifact the video is built around. Public first-party record.
- **Note:** The original poster self-identifies as a current Jehovah's Witness in the comment thread.

### **Claim: r/polls is a general-interest poll subreddit with over a hundred thousand subscribers.**

- **Source:** Reddit, "r/polls" subreddit page
- **URL:** <https://www.reddit.com/r/polls/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — The subreddit is a public-facing Reddit community. Subscriber count is visible on the subreddit page.
- **Note:** At time of the cited poll, the subreddit had approximately 113,000 subscribers.

### **Claim: The poll received 2,625 total votes: 92% of non-Christians and 86% of Christians said yes, Jehovah's Witnesses are a cult. Overall, 2,384 said yes and 241 said no — approximately 91%.**

- **Source:** Reddit, r/polls — "Are Jehovahs Witnesses a cult?" vote tallies
- **URL:** [https://www.reddit.com/r/polls/comments/1ss5tje/are\\_jehovahs\\_witnesses\\_a\\_cult/](https://www.reddit.com/r/polls/comments/1ss5tje/are_jehovahs_witnesses_a_cult/)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Vote counts are displayed directly on the poll by Reddit's polling system.
- **Note:** Non-Christian breakdown: 1,920 yes / 164 no. Christian breakdown: 464 yes / 77 no.

**Claim: The original poster, "InheritedCertainty," wrote in the comments that he is "currently stuck in the Jehovahs witness organization" and that if anyone in his life discovered he had made the post he would "lose my entire community overnight. Everyone I've ever known and loved."**

- **Source:** Reddit user "InheritedCertainty," comment reply on the r/polls cult poll thread
- **URL:** [https://www.reddit.com/r/polls/comments/1ss5tje/are\\_jehovahs\\_witnesses\\_a\\_cult/](https://www.reddit.com/r/polls/comments/1ss5tje/are_jehovahs_witnesses_a_cult/)
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — The comment is publicly posted by the original poll's author under the same username.
- **Key quote:** "I'm currently stuck in the Jehovahs witness organization ... I would lose my entire community overnight. Everyone I've ever known and loved."

## SECTION 2: Comparative Polling (YouGov 2022)

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**Claim: In 2022, YouGov surveyed Americans' views on 35 different religions and belief systems, calculating a net favorability score for each group.**

- **Source:** YouGov, "Americans' views on religious groups"
- **URL:** <https://today.yougov.com/society/articles/44850-americans-views-religious-groups-yougov-poll>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — YouGov published the survey data and methodology directly. Established polling organization.

**Claim: Christianity scored +34 net favorability; Catholicism +10; Mormonism -21; Islam -24; Jehovah's Witnesses -31.**

- **Source:** YouGov, 2022 survey on American views of religious groups
- **URL:** <https://today.yougov.com/society/articles/44850-americans-views-religious-groups-yougov-poll>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Net favorability scores published directly by YouGov.
- **Note:** Jehovah's Witnesses rated 10 points below Mormons and 7 points below Islam on the same instrument.

**Claim: In the YouGov 2022 survey, the only two groups rated worse than Jehovah's Witnesses were Scientology and Satanism, which were tied at -49.**

- **Source:** YouGov, 2022 survey on American views of religious groups
- **URL:** <https://today.yougov.com/society/articles/44850-americans-views-religious-groups-yougov-poll>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Bottom-of-ranking data published directly by YouGov.

## SECTION 3: Retention Data (Pew Research)

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**Claim: The Pew Research Center tracks the percentage of people raised in a given religion who continue to identify with it as adults.**

- **Source:** Pew Research Center, "A closer look at Jehovah's Witnesses living in the U.S."
- **URL:** <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Pew is an established nonpartisan research institution. The article summarizes Pew's Religious Landscape Study.

**Claim: Evangelical Protestants retain approximately 65% of adherents raised in the tradition; Mormons retain 64%; Jehovah's Witnesses retain 37% — the lowest retention rate of any major religious tradition in the United States.**

- **Source:** Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study, summarized in "A closer look at Jehovah's Witnesses living in the U.S."
- **URL:** <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Peer research organization; retention percentages based on Pew's Religious Landscape Study.
- **Note:** Two out of every three people raised as Jehovah's Witnesses do not continue to identify as Witnesses as adults.

## SECTION 4: The BITE Model and Academic Framework

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**Claim: In 1988, mental health counselor Steven Hassan published "Combating Cult Mind Control," in which he introduced the BITE model — a framework for assessing authoritarian control in high-control groups across four categories: Behavior, Information, Thought, and Emotional control.**

- **Source:** Steven Hassan, "Combating Cult Mind Control" (1988); Wikipedia entry providing publication history
- **URL:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combating\\_Cult\\_Mind\\_Control](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combating_Cult_Mind_Control)
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — The book itself is the primary source; the Wikipedia entry is used for easy verification of publication date and framework summary.

**Claim: Since its publication, the BITE model has been used in peer-reviewed research, in court cases involving undue influence, and by mental health professionals working with people leaving controlling groups.**

- **Source:** Freedom of Mind Resource Center, "The BITE Model and Jehovah's Witnesses"
- **URL:** <https://freedomofmind.com/the-bite-model-and-jehovahs-witnesses/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Freedom of Mind is the professional resource center associated with Hassan's work. It documents the model's application across research, legal, and clinical contexts.

**Claim: A peer-reviewed study in Psychiatric Times, using a BITE-model-based instrument, found that Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons were the two dominant groups among respondents raised in high-control environments.**

- **Source:** Psychiatric Times, "Putting the New Framework into Practice" (BITE-based study on high-control groups)
- **URL:** <https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/putting-the-new-framework-into-practice>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Published in a peer-reviewed clinical psychiatry publication.

## SECTION 5: Institutional Patterns and Investigations

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**Claim: The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse conducted an inquiry in 2015 into the Jehovah's Witnesses organization, documenting institutional patterns in how allegations were handled.**

- **Source:** Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Case Study 29: Jehovah's Witnesses
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies/case-study-29-jehovahs-witnesses>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official government inquiry report published by the Royal Commission of Australia.

**Claim: Pennsylvania's statewide grand jury investigation into alleged child sexual abuse within Jehovah's Witnesses congregations is ongoing, with new charges continuing to be filed.**

- **Source:** Office of the Pennsylvania Attorney General, press release on Westmoreland County charges arising from the statewide grand jury investigation
- **URL:** <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/taking-action/westmoreland-co-man-allegedly-abused-2-children-charges-result-from-grand-jury-investigation-of-jehovahs-witnesses-congregation-members/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official statement from the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office.
- **Note:** As of mid-2025, 17 members of Jehovah's Witnesses had been charged by the Pennsylvania Attorney General following grand jury presentments since 2022. The investigation remains active.

## SECTION 6: Kingdom Hall Construction

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**Claim: Many Kingdom Halls in North America are built without windows by design. The Watchtower's own Awake! magazine described the windowless construction as "a safeguard against vandalism" in 1972.**

- **Source:** Awake! magazine, August 22, 1972 edition, page 23, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Direct quotation from an official Watchtower publication.
- **Note:** The 1972 Awake! article is one of the earliest on-record institutional acknowledgments of the windowless design practice.
- **Key quote:** "The building is windowless as a safeguard against vandalism (a common feature of many city Kingdom Halls)."

## SECTION 7: Watchtower Official Responses

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**Claim: The Watchtower organization officially denies that Jehovah's Witnesses are a cult, arguing that cult designations come primarily from those who do not share the religion's beliefs.**

- **Source:** JW.org, FAQ page, "Are Jehovah's Witnesses a Cult?"
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/are-jehovahs-witnesses-a-cult/>
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication on the organization's own website.
- **Key quote:** "No, Jehovah's Witnesses are not a cult. Rather, we are Christians who do our best to follow the example set by Jesus Christ and to live by his teachings."

**Claim: Watchtower-affiliated parties have pursued legal action in European courts over defamatory characterizations of the organization, including challenges to statements made by France's MIVILUDES interministerial cult-monitoring agency.**

- **Source:** Bitter Winter, "France: Administrative Court Finds MIVILUDES's Statements About Jehovah's Witnesses Defamatory"
- **URL:** <https://bitterwinter.org/france-administrative-court-finds-miviludess-statements-about-jehovahs-witnesses-defamatory/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Bitter Winter is an established magazine covering religious freedom and new religious movements, published by CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions).

## SECTION 8: Creator's Personal Background

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**Claim: The creator spent 40 years inside the Jehovah's Witness organization before leaving 8 years ago.**

- **Source:** Creator personal testimony — not a factual claim requiring external verification
- **Verification: PRIMARY** — Firsthand personal testimony from the creator, consistent across all EXJW Analyzer channel content.

## SECTION 9: Additional Supporting Sources

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These sources provide useful context or background but are not tied to a specific claim in the video.

**Claim: Context: Definition and usage of the term "PIMO" (Physically In, Mentally Out).**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org, FAQ on ex-JW community terminology
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/faq/jehovahs-witnesses-cult/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — AvoidJW.org is a longstanding legal and advocacy resource covering Jehovah's Witnesses issues.

**Claim: Context: Steven Hassan's professional credentials and current work at the Freedom of Mind Resource Center.**

- **Source:** Freedom of Mind Resource Center
- **URL:** <https://freedomofmind.com/>
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Hassan's professional resource center; organizational website.

**Claim: Context: Broader critical and scholarly discussion of Jehovah's Witnesses policies, including shunning, blood transfusion doctrine, and governance structure.**

- **Source:** Wikipedia, "Criticism of Jehovah's Witnesses" (aggregates sourced academic and journalistic coverage)
- **URL:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism\\_of\\_Jehovah%27s\\_Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Jehovah%27s_Witnesses)
- **Verification: SECONDARY** — Wikipedia article with extensive inline sourcing to academic, legal, and journalistic references.