

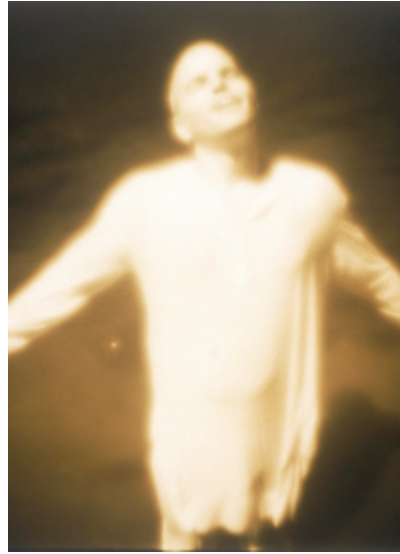


Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 10, 2011

Gallup: More Than 90 Percent of Americans Believe in God

“Despite the many changes that have rippled through American society over the last six and one-half decades,” noted the Gallup report, “belief in God as measured in this direct way has remained high and relatively stable.”

While belief in God remains strong across most segments of the American population, Gallup found that it has dropped below 90 percent “among younger Americans, liberals, those living in the East, those with postgraduate educations, and political independents.”



Among differing age groups, Americans 18 to 29 years old expressed the lowest belief in God at 84 percent, as compared to those 30 and older, 94 percent of whom said they believe in God. As for political persuasion, 98 percent of Republicans said they believe in God, compared to a still high 90 percent of Democrats.

Geographically Gallup found Americans from the East Coast the least likely to have a belief in God, those from the South the most likely, with Americans from the West and the Midwest somewhere in between.

Compared to traditionally more liberal Canada, as well as Europe, the United States appears to be leading in the faith quotient. According to [AtlanticWire.com](#), a “2008 [Canadian Press Harris-Decima survey](#) revealed that only 1 in 4 of our neighbors up north believe in a god. And a 2005 [Eurostat poll](#) indicated that the French, perhaps our cultural opposite, had the highest atheism in Europe — 33 percent responded that they believed in “neither a Spirit, god, or life force.”

And the [Christian Post](#) reported that compared to the rest of the world, “the U.S. is still found to have strong belief in God. An Ipsos Social Research Institute survey earlier this year found that just over half [51 percent] of people worldwide express belief in God.”

Commenting on the study, the Gallup pollsters noted that while belief in God has remained relatively high over the past nearly 70 years, surveys by Gallup over the past several years “have shown that not all Americans are absolutely certain in their beliefs about God. Given the ability to express doubts about their beliefs, the percentage who stick to a certain belief in God drops into the 70% to 80% range.”

Also, when given the alternative of a “universal spirit” or a “higher power” (as Gallup phrased the question to some of the respondents), only about 12 percent chose “God.” Nonetheless, noted the researchers, “the May 2011 poll reveals that when given only the choice between believing and not believing in God, more than 9 in 10 Americans say they do believe.”

The researchers pointed out that among the changes to the spiritual beliefs of Americans, one of the most significant is in how they identify their religious persuasions. “At some points in the 1950s, almost all Americans identified themselves with a particular religion,” noted the Gallup report. But most recently, “more than 1 in 10 Americans [tell survey interviewers they have no formal religious identity.](#)”



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As for those under 30 — the age demographic the survey found the least likely to believe in God — it “remains to be seen whether these young Americans will move toward a belief in God as they age, or instead stick with their current beliefs.”

Commenting on the Gallup findings, Sarah Torre of the conservative [Heritage Foundation](#) wrote that when belief in God informs the social response of individuals and communities, “the benefits can be significant for civil society.” Heritage’s [FamilyFacts.org](#) website reported that nearly 40 percent of Americans attend church, mass, or synagogue at least once a week, and more than 50 percent of adult Americans say they pray daily. “These religious practices can have a profoundly positive impact on marriage and family and defend against much of the social breakdown threatening communities,” wrote Torre.

Studies show, for example that families who attend church regularly tend to report less internal conflict, enjoy more stable marriages, and have more active parental involvement. “Likewise, teens who grow up in religious households and regularly practice their faith are at a decreased risk of using illicit drugs and engaging in sexual activity or experiencing teen pregnancy,” noted Torre. And young adults “who regularly attended church during their teen years are also more likely to hold a favorable view of marriage and more readily acknowledge the drawbacks to premarital sex and cohabitation.”

Attending church regularly tends to help reduce individual stress, depression, and anxiety, Torre reported, and may even (for whatever reason) reduce one’s risk of dying from cancer. “Similarly,” she wrote, “children and teens raised in an observant household are less likely to report feeling lonely or experience major depressive episodes.”

Finally, strong individual and family worship practices can go far in building healthy communities and a solid civil society. “With four out of 10 children born outside marriage and more than half of all families in poverty headed by single mothers, family dissolution and the collapse of marriage pose significant threats to communities’ economic and social well-being,” wrote Torre. “The role of religion in helping to maintain intact families and promote individual flourishing should not be overlooked when addressing social breakdown.”



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