

Gallup: Protestants top Catholics in attendance: Catholic attendance low in wake of sex abuse scandals

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A higher percentage of Protestants now attend church on a weekly basis than Catholics do, the Gallup Organization has announced. "Historical Gallup Poll data show that Protestants have now clearly overtaken Catholics in church attendance, for the first time in Gallup polling history," George H. Gallup Jr. said in a recent commentary.

Catholic weekly attendance reached an all-time low in the wake of sex abuse scandals, but seems to have rebounded somewhat. Between March 2002, two months after news of the scandals broke, and February 2003, weekly Catholic church attendance fell 9 percentage points to 35 percent, the lowest measurement ever recorded by Gallup. By November 2003, attendance had climbed back to 45 percent.

But during that same November, Protestant attendance was at 48 percent, a figure that has remained fairly stable in recent polls. By contrast, back in 1955 the number of Catholics saying they were at church in the previous week was 74 percent, compared to 42 percent of Protestants answering the same question.

The latest Gallup survey on attendance was based on telephone interviews with 1,004 adults nationwide November 10-12. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. *-Religion News Service*