

# Gallup reports new low in religious confidence

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c. 2012 Religion News Service (RNS) Americans' confidence in organized religion, slowly but steadily declining since the 1970s, slipped to a new low in the latest survey, the Gallup Organization reported.

Today only 44 percent of Americans have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in "the church or organized religion," Gallup said. It was 68 percent in the mid-1970s.

Pollsters did not name any church or religion in particular, letting respondents define that as they wished, the organization said.

Most Protestants, 56 percent, expressed confidence in the church, but only a minority, or 46 percent, of Catholics did.

But Lydia Saad, Gallup senior editor, pointed out that the question deals with churches and organized religion. Americans are still generally a very religious people, although increasingly on their own terms.

In 2007 a poll by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found only about one in six respondents said religion was "not too" or "not at all" important in their lives.

Only five percent said they did not believe in God or a universal spirit.

Saad said in 1975, "the church or organized religion" was the highest-rated of the 16 institutions Gallup asked about.

It still ranks fourth. The top three institutions Americans have most confidence in are, in order, the military, small business and the police.

The least-trusted institution is Congress, in which only 13 percent of Americans voice "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence.

Health maintenance organizations and banks follow right behind Congress.

The survey included 1,004 adults and was taken June 7-10, Gallup said.