

# Gallup says 9 in 10 Americans believe in God

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June 8, 2011

(RNS) A new Gallup poll finds 92 percent of Americans say they believe in God, a figure that has dropped by only a few points since Gallup first asked the question in the 1940s.

Gallup pollster Frank Newport offered some background on those numbers:

Americans' self-reported belief in God has been relatively constant over the last 6 1/2 decades; the percentage of Americans who respond that they believe in God now stands within six points of the all-time high in the 1950s and 1960s.

Previous Gallup surveys have shown that when respondents are given the ability to express doubts about their belief, the percentage of Americans who report a certain belief in God drops to 70 to 80 percent.

Additionally, about 12 percent of Americans say they believe in a universal spirit or higher power instead of "God" when given that option.

Still, 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 age group least likely to claim belief in God is 18-29-year-olds, at 84 percent, compared to 94 percent of older Americans. In addition, 98 percent of Republicans claim belief, compared to 90 percent of Democrats and 89 percent of independents.

The most recent (2005) Eurostat study of religious beliefs among Europeans found that 52 percent of Europeans believed in God, 27 percent

believed in "some sort of spirit or life force," and 18 percent claimed no belief whatsoever.