

1 in 5 Americans see Bible as 'fables, legends, and history'

by [Sarah Pulliam Bailey](#)

June 6, 2014

c. 2014 Religion News Service

(RNS) America could be experiencing a decline of literalism and the rise of secularism, according to one interpretation of a recent Gallup Poll.

The poll, which measured Americans' beliefs about the Bible, found that 28 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the literal word of God—close to the lowest point ever found in the survey. About 40 percent of Americans said the same thing in the late 1970s.

Meanwhile, about one in five Americans view the Bible in secular terms, described in the poll as ancient “fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man.” This was up from 10 percent in the late 1970s.

About half (47 percent) of Americans continue to say the Bible is the “inspired” word of God not to be taken literally, which has remained relatively stable over time.

Overall acceptance of the Bible as being the “inspired” or “actual” word of God is about the same percentage of Americans identifying themselves as Christian: 76 percent. At the same time, the 21 percent of Americans who view the Bible in more secular terms closely mirrors the 22 percent who identify with another religion or no religion.

The poll comes after a survey found that a majority of Americans use an older translation of the Bible.

More than half of Americans use a King James Version Bible, famous for its use of words such as “thee” and “thou.” Just 19 percent read the more modern New International Version, according to a recent study by the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis.

Bibles continue to sell well, with publishers finding new variations on a theme, such as breast cancer or patriotism. Thomas Nelson will publish *The Duck Commander Faith and Family Bible* in October.