

Christmas 2009: How Americans Identify Themselves

Summarized and posted by Bob Young

A Gallup poll taken early in the 2009 Christmas season showed that 78% of Americans identify with some form of Christian religion, a percentage that has been declining in recent decades. The major reason for this decline is an increase in the percentage of Americans claiming no religious identity, now at 13% of all adults.

One of the most significant trends documented during a 60-year average of Gallup's religious identity data in America is the substantial increase in the percentage of American adults who don't identify with any specific religion. In 1948, only 2% of Americans did not identify with a religion; in 1998, 6%; in 2002, 10% and this year's average of 13% of Americans who claim no religious identity is the highest in Gallup records.

The percentage of Americans who identify as Catholic, Protestant, or some other non-Catholic Christian faith has been decreasing over the years. In 1948, 91% of Americans identified with a Christian faith. Twenty years ago, in 1989, 82% of Americans identified themselves as Christian. Ten years ago, it was 84% and in 2009 78% of all American adults identify with a Christian faith.

The United States remains a dominantly Christian nation. Almost eight out of ten Americans identify with a Christian religion. The vast majority of those who identify with any religion identify with one that is Christian. Yet, the percentage of Americans who, in theory, could have celebrated Christmas this last week as a specific component of their religious faith is down significantly from where it was 50 or 60 years ago. Currently, slightly more than one out of five Americans do not identify with a Christian faith.

Of course, because of its non-Christian components, the Christmas season has ramifications for a broader segment of society. A Gallup survey conducted in 2008 showed that 93% of all American adults said they celebrated Christmas.

For the full report, go to www.gallup.com/poll/124793/this-christmas-78-americans-identify-christian.aspx?