


COSTA RICA

Public Opinion Poll Costa Rica -August, 2009-	Technical Card		<i>Consultoría Interdisciplinaria en Desarrollo S.A. CID-Gallup</i> 
	Date of Field Work:	August 2 - 14, 2009	
	Interview Type:	One per household	
	Interviews:	1,226	
	Sample Error:	±3 points in the total results (95% confidence level)	
	Informant:	Adult Costa Rican resident in the country	
	Sample Type:	Random	
Geographic Area:	Entire country		

Catholics are decreasing in size and are less attached to the Church

Costa Rica continues to be predominantly Catholic and is most common in people 40 years and older in the greater San José area. However, today Catholicism is practiced much less than it was 20 years ago, and despite the close ties between churchgoers and church leaders, the country's official religion will most likely continue losing followers in the coming years.

Today's adult population was born into a society 88% Catholic, whereas today the religion garners the following of just 71% of the population. But for evangelical religions, the outlook is the complete opposite; growing from 11% to the following of 20% of the population. Meanwhile, it is also interesting to note that unlike Catholicism, evangelical religions are attracting parishioners from other creeds. While no single evangelical religion has taken a noticeable lead, the flow is consistently from Catholicism to other religions.

“Catholicism’s practices are constantly furthering themselves from the reality of their follower’s lives and just making everything more complicated than necessary” – this was just one of the many sentiments manifested by respondents. They believe the Catholic church does not place enough importance on their basic needs and day to day problems. The church is a ‘beautiful, but cold temple,’ ‘the priest only listens to confessions and conducts mass, but there is no genuine exchange with parishioners as is often the case in churches from other religions and their followers.’ Other religions are gaining strength among youth and with people of low education levels, as well as in areas beyond the greater metropolitan area. Respondents attribute this phenomenon to the fact that their activities are more relevant to family life.

Catholic priests are the least in tune with parishioners

While half of evangelicals and followers of others Christian religions are close to the pastor of their church, almost two-thirds of Catholics have minimal or no emotional attachment to their local priest. According to some Catholics, their priest rarely talks with them and they often limit themselves to preaching from the altar. Costa Rican youth, men, and adults residing outside of the metropolitan area are the furthest from all aspects of the church; as indicated by rarely participating in church activities and having little empathy for their church leader.

However, unlike the apathetic group described, half of evangelicals claim to be “very close to their pastor.” They claim their spiritual leader understands their problems, visits their homes, and aside from that, fellow churchgoers share in their struggles and joys on a daily basis.

Five out of ten Catholics attend church once per week

The fact that relationships with priests are practically null and that the source of motivation for Catholics is unclear, it is no surprise church attendance is lower among Catholics. Believers in this religion can be divided in two large groups, those who attend church once every seven days—primarily on Sundays—and those who never assist at all.

But unlike the low church attendance in the Catholic Church, attendance by evangelicals is more frequent. Around 27% claimed to not attend at least once during the seven days preceding the study and 22% admitted to having attended service three or more times during that same week.

Support for the suspension of the pilgrimage to the Basilica de la Virgen de los Angeles

Independent of the religion practiced, two-thirds of adult Costa Ricans agreed with the decision of the Health authorities to suspend the pilgrimage to Cartago to visit the Basilica. Opposition to the government’s decision was stronger among Catholics, many of which claimed their Priest expressed discontent with the decision during their sermons.

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		CURRENT RELIGION (Principal religions)			
		TOTAL	Atheist/None	Evang./Christian	Catholic
Religion Today	Evangelical	20	0	92	0
	Catholic	71	0	0	100
	Others: Jehova's Witness	2	0	8	0
	None/Atheist	8	100	0	0
Religion born into	Evangelical	11	16	40	1
	Catholic	86	61	54	98
	Jehova's Witness	1	2	3	0
	None/Atheist	3	20	3	1
N. times went to temple/church	1	39	0	30	42
	2	11	0	20	9
	3	6	0	14	3
	4	2	0	4	1
	5 or more	2	0	4	2
	(Not go/Never)	39	100	27	43
Closeness to pastor/priest	Not at all	35	0	18	40
	Little	22	0	12	25
	Some	19	0	17	19
	A Lot	22	0	49	13
	(DK/NR)	3	0	3	3
Support for suspension of pilgrimage to Basilica of Cartago	Not at all	29	26	13	34
	Little	5	4	5	6
	Some	10	7	11	11
	A Lot	52	59	62	48
	(DK/NR)	3	4	10	1