News



by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

## Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Washington — September 23, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A new Pew Research Center report examines public confidence in groups of people who hold positions of power and responsibility in America, including religious leaders.

The other groups included in the survey were members of Congress, military leaders, police officers, principals of K-12 public schools, journalists, leaders of technology companies and local elected officials.

Respondents were asked their views about several aspects of confidence in the performance and outlook of these groups of leaders, such as whether they care about people, handle resources responsibly or provide accurate information to the public. Results were released Sept. 19.

"In general, U.S. adults express positive opinions about the role religious leaders play in their communities," said a Pew report on the survey results. "U.S. adults express the most confidence in religious leaders' ability to fulfill the spiritual needs of their communities on a consistent basis.

"Three-quarters say religious leaders do a good job providing for the spiritual needs of their communities 'all or most' or 'some of the time,' while just 23% say religious leaders do this only a little or none of the time. Another seven in 10 U.S. adults say religious leaders care about people like them at least some of the time."

U.S. adults "are divided over how frequently religious leaders admit their mistakes and take responsibility for them," it said, with half saying these leaders do this at least some of the time and half saying religious leaders do this "only a little" or "none of the time."

Pew said the opinions about religious leaders varied by religious affiliation, age and frequency of attendance at religious services.

Adults who have a religious affiliation are more likely than the religiously unaffiliated – those who identify themselves as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular" – to say religious leaders "perform key parts of their jobs at least some of the time."

Among adults who identify with a religious faith, Pew said, evangelical Protestants are among the groups who hold the most positive opinions about religious leaders.

When it comes to the age of respondents, Americans ages 50 and older "are consistently more likely than their younger counterparts to give religious leaders higher praise for at least some of the time performing the five job duties asked about in the survey," Pew said.

Americans who say they attend religious services at least once a week are more likely than those who say they attend services less often "to think religious leaders regularly care about people, do a good job providing for the spiritual needs of their communities, handle their resources responsibly, and admit and take responsibility for their mistakes."

Generally, according to Pew, the public has the most confidence in the way K-12 public school principals, military leaders and police officers operate when it comes to caring about people, providing fair and accurate information to the public and handling resources responsibly. Leaders of tech companies were ranked last with regard to caring about people; members of Congress were ranked last in providing fair and accurate information to the public and handling resources responsibly. Religious leaders fell somewhere in the middle.

The data is from a survey conducted Nov. 27 to Dec. 10, 2018, of 13,570 panelists on the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel. A total of 10,618 panelists responded, which is a response rate of 78%. The margin of error is plus or minus 1.5

percentage points.

The American Trends Panel is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is managed by Ipsos.

Advertisement