

ORTHODOX CHURCH IS MOST TRUSTED INSTITUTION IN BULGARIA



While there are problems with its public image, the Orthodox Church is nevertheless the most trusted institution in Bulgaria, according to a new Gallup International poll dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the democratic change in Bulgaria, when Communist party leader Todor Zhivkov stepped down after more than 30 years.

Compared to other institutions in the country, the Church enjoys relatively high levels of trust. Since the election of His Holiness Patriarch Neofit in 2013, the Church has consistently garnered the trust of between 40 and 50% of the people. Confidence had briefly waned before that due to various scandals involving clergy.

The people do, however, associate the Church with a number of issues, such as business relationships, the supposed luxurious lives of the clergy, a lack of closeness to the people's daily lives, the diminishing role of religion in modern society, clergy who formerly worked for State Security, and others.

Additionally, the activity of sects, the role of the atheistic government in the recent past, the lack of well-prepared clergy, the lack of sufficient respect for the Church

by active members of society, and other factors have a negative impact on the image of the Church.

Furthermore, while Orthodoxy is the majority religion in Bulgaria, according to 2011 census data, it is a smaller majority (59.5%), while 9.3% considered themselves not religious, 7.9%—Muslims, and 21.8% not declared.

Nevertheless, the Church still finds itself the most trusted institution in Bulgaria, where 46% of the people blame the government for most of the problems in their lives.

The poll was conducted face-to-face with 839 people from August 2 to 9, representing the 18+ population of Bulgaria.

According to a 2017 poll from Sofia's Open Society Institute, 55% trusted the Church, while 30% said they distrust the Church.

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