



## Gallup: Americans Less Satisfied With Personal Freedom

By [Michael Cipriano](#) - July 1, 2014

The United States is no longer in the top quartile of countries satisfied with the freedom to choose what to do with their lives, according to a Gallup [poll](#).

With the Fourth of July just days away, the poll reports satisfaction with freedom dropped 12 percentage points (from 91 percent recorded in 2006) to 79 percent in 2013. Dissatisfaction during that same period has also grown from 9 percent to 21 percent.

The U.S. ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in the world in 2013 in satisfaction with their personal freedom. New Zealand sits atop the rankings at 94 percent, with Australia, Cambodia and Sweden a close second at 93 percent.

What's more, only 10 other countries experienced declines in satisfaction levels as large as or larger than did the United States. Egypt and Greece saw the biggest declines: 34 and 30 points, respectively.

Why factors are behind the U.S. decline? One could be a lack of confidence in the national economy, which has remained one of the most important [issues](#) to voters. A recent [survey](#) found that Americans remain pessimistic about the direction of the economy.

There is also heightened perception of corruption in government. Seventy-nine percent of Americans said corruption was widespread throughout the federal government in 2013, up from 73 percent in 2012. The increase could be the result of the Internal Revenue Service targeting conservative groups for extra scrutiny and the National Security Administration's metadata collection, revealed by leaker Edward Snowden.

One expert, however, is unsatisfied with that connection. Vice President and Publisher of the Cato Institute John Samples believes government corruption is not linked to a diminished perception of personal freedom.

"You have to have a reason why that leads back into people's own lives," Samples asserted. "You will have people saying, 'The government could be corrupt, but I can still go on with my own life.'"

Samples believes the easier explanation for the decline is the state of the labor market. Though the economy has marginally improved, he said it is faring worse than “misleading” statistics suggest, with labor force participation at “historic lows.”

The Gallup survey of 1,000 adults from each country was conducted between 2006 and 2013. The margin of error for the total sample of national adults ranged between plus or minus 1.7 and 5.8 percentage points.