News



This combination of photos shows Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump, left, and Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris during an ABC News presidential debate at the National Constitution Center, Sept. 10 in Philadelphia. (AP/Alex Brandon, File)



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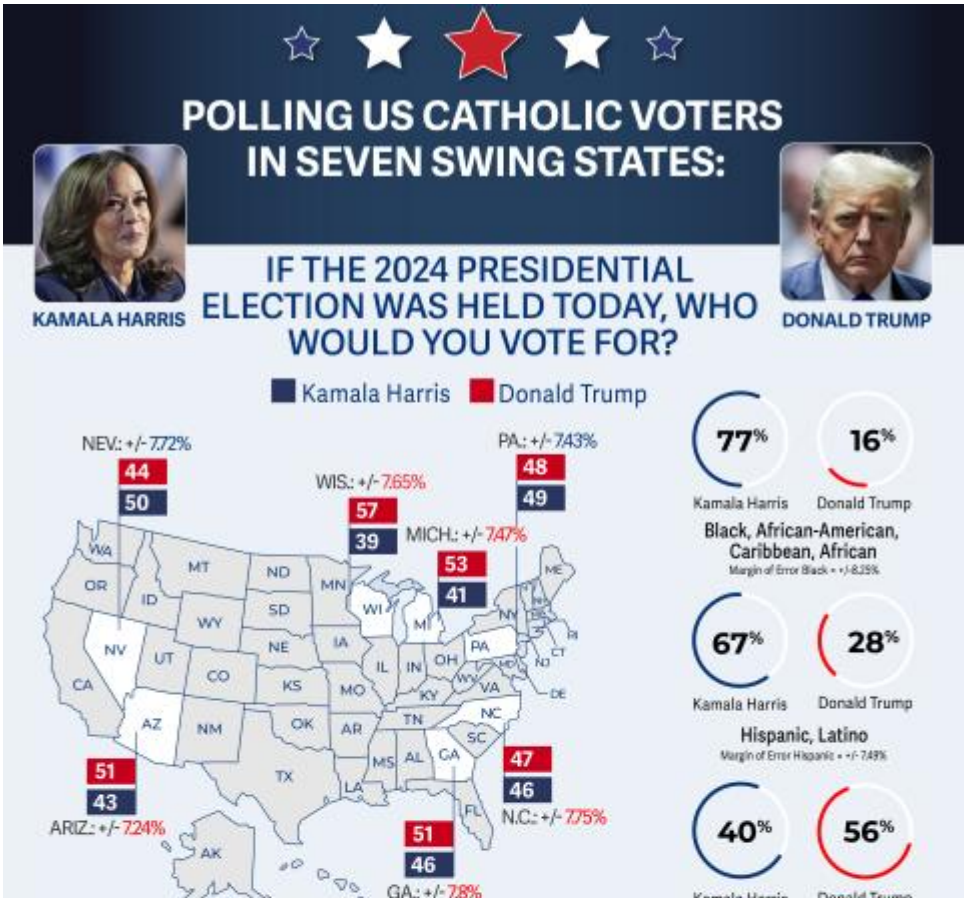
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October 14, 2024
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Catholic voters in seven battleground states favor Donald Trump over Kamala Harris by 5 percentage points, but the vice president leads the Republican nominee overwhelmingly among Hispanic and Black Catholics in those swing states, according to a new poll conducted by the National Catholic Reporter.

With just more than three weeks to the election, Trump leads Harris 50% to 45% in the closely watched battleground states, a margin that could be an important factor given the closeness of the contest. Most polls say the race is too close to predict, and margins are extremely narrow in the decisive states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Among Hispanic and Black Catholics in the battlegrounds, Harris has an advantage over Trump with nearly seven out of 10 Hispanics and more than three-quarters of Blacks favoring the sitting vice president. The lead among Blacks and Hispanics stems from a strong aversion to Trump as well as an alignment with the vice president on values and key social issues, the poll shows.



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Swing-state Catholic voters were more likely to say they support their preferred candidate for reasons that go against church teaching, with Trump supporters favoring his anti-immigration policies and Harris voters backing her views on reproductive rights. Catholic teaching generally favors immigrant rights and opposes abortion.

In the battleground states, Catholic populations are sizable and are seen as so important to the Trump and Harris campaigns that both have launched efforts to woo the so-called Catholic vote. In Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, for example, approximately one-quarter of adults identify as Catholic.

Among white Catholic voters, Trump's overall lead widens to 16 percentage points.

The Republican nominee also leads overall among Catholic voters in five of the seven individual states, although some are within the margin of error. The former president does have larger leads in Wisconsin, where he is up by 18 percentage points, and in Michigan, where he leads by 12 points among Catholic voters.

One Wisconsin voter, Jason O'Connell, an insurance worker, said he considers himself a moderate who plans to vote for Trump. "I prefer less government intervention and more of a capitalist economy," O'Connell said. "I don't think the government should have their hand in the pot."

The NCR poll, the first focused exclusively on Catholics in swing states, surveyed 1,172 Catholic voters in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. It was conducted by Mercury Analytics Oct. 3-8. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.86%.

For more about the NCR poll's methodology, click here.

For more detail from the poll results, see the file below.

Read full document:
Document
NCR_Catholic Poll_PDF Crosstab_Results.pdf

Trump did better among older voters in the NCR poll. Those ages 45 and older opted for Trump over Harris by eight percentage points, while those 44 and younger were tied at 47% for each candidate. Voters ages 18-24 gave Harris a seven-point advantage.

Trump also leads among Catholics of all income levels, although some results were within the margin of error. He outperformed among upper-class voters with incomes of over $150,000 annually by 14 points, as compared to middle-class voters with whom he had a three-point lead. The lead was five points among working-class Catholic voters in battleground states.

There was a slight, two-point gender gap among Catholic women, although the findings were within the margin of error for women. Catholic men favored Trump over Harris by eight points.

The poll reveals how complicated capturing the so-called Catholic vote can be. Among Trump supporters, about three-quarters say they are choosing him because of his anti-immigrant positions, which Pope Francis has called "against life." Similarly, about half of Harris voters say they plan to vote for her because of her support for legal abortion.



A woman prepares to vote in the presidential primary election at a polling place April 2 in Superior, Wisconsin. (OSV News/Reuters/Erica Dischino)

Overall, Catholic voters in battleground states are motivated by pocketbook issues, with three of every four respondents saying the economy was the most important issue to them in this election. Other top issues were immigration/the border (60%), health care (53%), taxes (52%), affordable housing (46%), fighting crime (42%), gun control/Second Amendment rights (41%) and abortion/reproductive rights (37%).

Catholic voters in battleground states said the one overriding issue most important to them was the economy, with just over a quarter citing it as a deal-breaker. One in

five said immigration/the border was their nonnegotiable issue and 13% cited abortion/reproductive rights as their top nonnegotiable issue. Fifteen percent said there was no one issue for them that was nonnegotiable.

When asked which values undergirded their voting decisions, honesty (77%), concern to protect America's way of life (67%) and concern for human dignity and the common good (64%) were the most frequently named by respondents. Hispanic Catholic voters and those ages 18-29 were more likely to indicate that equality was an important value.

The Catholic clergy's influence on voters in their flock appears to be extremely limited. While two-thirds of poll respondents said church teaching influences how they think about social and political issues, a minority named priests, bishops, Pope Francis, encyclicals and religious women as major influences. Instead, about six in 10 named Jesus or family and friends as what most influences their decisions, while about half cited the Bible.

Related: Catholic Trump voters see no choice in upcoming election — even after conviction

The poll also indicated mixed results from questions about abortion and reproductive rights, raising questions about the influence of religion on voters' views about the subject. A slight majority, 51%, described themselves as "pro-life," while 28% did not. Twenty-one percent were unsure. Catholics' definitions of "pro-life" are primarily associated with abortion, which was selected by about eight in 10 of respondents from among a list of life issues.

Yet 58% percent of Catholic voters thought abortion should be legal in all or most cases, reflecting other surveys with similar findings. In open-ended responses, some expressed concerns about government infringement on bodily autonomy and lack of support for children after birth from "pro-life" policies and politicians.



A roll of "I Voted Today" stickers are pictured in a file photo. (OSV News/Reuters/Gary Cameron)

The NCR survey also indicated high levels of religious belief and practice among Catholics, with 87% saying their Catholic identity and beliefs are important to them and 94% saying they believe in the existence of God. One half pray daily, while one quarter attend Mass weekly.

When asked about Pope Francis, 62% had a "somewhat" or "very" favorable view of him. By comparison, a Pew survey in April found 75% of Catholics viewed Francis favorably, which was down 8 percentage points from 2021 and 15 points from 2015.

The NCR poll reflects results from a national poll of more than 7,000 registered voters conducted by the Pew Research Center in April, which found Catholic voters favoring Trump 55% to 43% (against then-Democratic nominee President Joe Biden). The Pew poll, however, showed Hispanic Catholics more closely divided, 49% for Biden and 47% for Trump.

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"Catholics reflect the diversity of America," said Ryan Burge, an expert on data about religion and politics and associate professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University. "The average Catholic looks like the average American."

Although white Catholics lean Republican, and Latino and Black Catholics tend to be Democrats, the aggregate Catholic vote is pretty evenly divided, said Burge, who reviewed the NCR survey data. "And the U.S. electorate as a whole looks like the Catholic vote. We are incredibly divided."

Burge said he was struck by how little the Catholic vote seems to have changed since 2020. Some polls have indicated that some Latinos are moving toward the Republican Party, but NCR's poll does not show evidence of that, he said.

"If [Catholics] did shift, it could be enough to swing the whole outcome of a swing state and of the election," he said.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. View the full series.
A version of this story appeared in the **Oct. 25-Nov. 7, 2024** print issue under the headline: Catholic voters favor Trump.