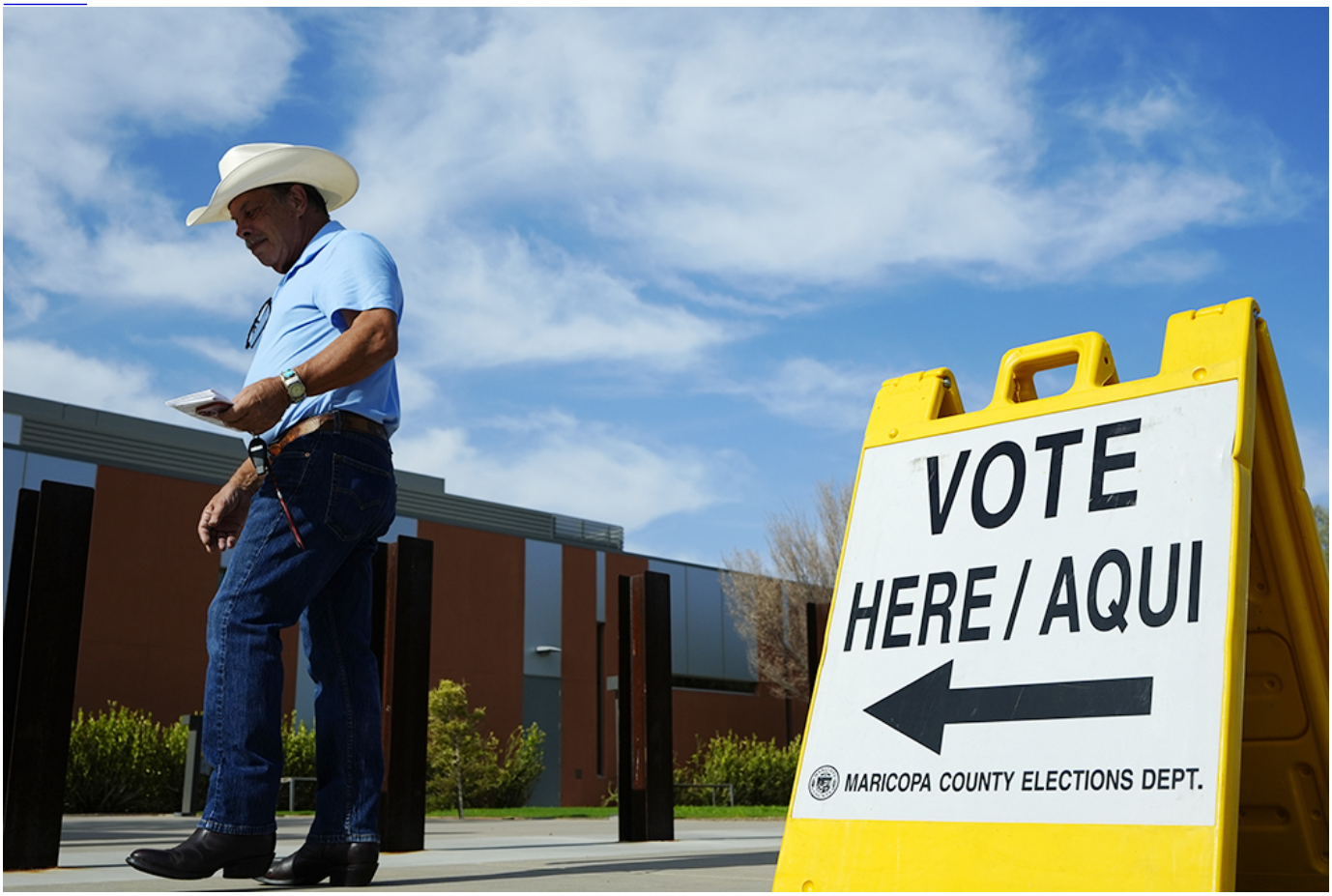
News



A voter walks to a voting precinct prior to casting his ballot in the state's primary election July 30, 2024, in El Mirage, Arizona. (AP file/Ross D. Franklin)



by Brian Fraga

Staff Reporter

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

October 15, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Large majorities of Black and Hispanic Catholic voters in seven battleground states say they intend to vote for Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris over her Republican opponent, former President Donald Trump, a new political poll, commissioned by National Catholic Reporter, found.

Self-identified Black and Hispanic Catholic voters in the nation's swing states could play a pivotal role in deciding a presidential election that is expected to be decided by a razor-thin margin of several thousand votes in those states.

"If you look at this election, it's a close election. This is an election that's going to be won or lost on the margins. This is one of those races where race and gender really do matter," said John White, a political science professor at the Catholic University of America.

Harris enjoys the support of two-thirds of Hispanic Catholic voters and nearly eight in 10 Black Catholic voters in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, according to the poll, which was conducted by Mercury Analytics.

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

The poll, which surveyed 1,172 Catholic voters Oct. 3-8, found that Harris has more support among Black and Hispanic Catholics than she does white Catholics, 56% of whom said they intend to vote for Trump. Only 40% of white Catholics said they support Harris.

Overall, the poll shows Catholic voters in the battleground states favoring Trump by 5 percentage points (50% to 45%), with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.86%.

Of those surveyed Catholic voters, 171 self-identified as Hispanic or Latino while 73 identified themselves as Black, African-American, Caribbean or African.



Click for full-size graphic

The poll finds that Black and Hispanic Catholics as a whole are more progressive than white Catholics on several issues. They are more likely to identify racial justice and equality as important issues, to support abortion rights and describe themselves as allies of the LGBTQ movement.

About 64% of white Catholics identified immigration as an important issue while a little more than half of Hispanic Catholics and two-fifths of Black Catholics did so.

The Catholic vote has become so important that both major campaigns have made overtures to persuade those voters. The Trump-Vance campaign in September launched its Catholics for Trump coalition with a press release that quoted nine members of the group. The Harris-Walz campaign initiated its outreach to Catholics, Catholics for Harris-Walz, with a national organizing call in mid-September.

Regarding economic matters, Black and Hispanic Catholics are also far more likely than white Catholics to list affordable housing as one of their three most important issues. For white Catholics, affordable housing ranked sixth most important, between crime and Second Amendment rights.

"After inflation, everything went up and housing is a serious issue," a respondent who identified as Black commented on one of the poll's open-ended questions.

Advertisement

Read this next: Catholic voters favor Trump in most battleground states, according to new NCR poll

Just like their white counterparts, the most important issue for Black and Hispanic Catholic voters is the economy. More than three-quarters of respondents in those three demographics identified the economy as an important issue.

"Inflation has impacted my life in a negative way," a Hispanic respondent said when asked to identify an issue that would cause them not to vote for a candidate whose views did not align with their own.

Daniel Mendoza, a construction worker in North Carolina who participated in the survey, told NCR that the economy was "great" during Trump's four years in office.

"Financially, he had us in the right position," said Mendoza, 41, a military veteran who identifies as Hispanic and independent, though he told NCR that he leans Republican and voted for Trump in 2020.

"At the moment, if I didn't vote for Trump, I don't think I'd vote at all," Mendoza said. "I feel like our country is not ready for a woman president yet."

Mendoza, a practicing Catholic who believes abortion should be illegal in most cases, also told NCR that he could not support Harris because of her staunch support for abortion rights. That position puts Mendoza in the minority among surveyed Hispanic Catholics, who are more likely than white Catholics to see Harris as "the lesser of two evils."

The poll also found that seven out of 10 Hispanic Catholics, and 77% of Black Catholics, believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases, as opposed to 55% of white Catholics. Hispanic Catholics are less likely than white Catholics to believe that state governments should legislate the issue. They are also less likely than white Catholics to agree with the Republican Party moderating its stance on abortion, and more likely to agree with Pope Francis' comments that both Harris and Trump are "against life."



A voter enters a polling site for the presidential primary election on March 12, 2024, in Atlanta. (AP/Brynn Anderson)

On "pro-life" matters, Hispanic Catholics are also more likely than white Catholics to identify poverty, war and peace, and immigration as life issues. They are slightly less likely than white Catholics to identify themselves as pro-life.

Asked what they value in a candidate, nearly seven in 10 Hispanic Catholics and 65% of Black Catholics listed equality, as opposed to just less than half of white Catholics. Also compared to white Catholics, Hispanic and Black Catholics are more likely to value concern for human dignity and the common good, caring for the poor and the stranger, and caring for creation. They are less likely than white Catholics to identify "protecting America's way of life" as a value they want in a candidate.

For the LGBTQ community, almost half of Black and two out of five Hispanic Catholics described themselves as allies, as opposed to 36% of white Catholics who said the same. Both Hispanic and Black Catholics were also more likely than white Catholics to say same-sex couples should have the right to legally marry or enter

into a civil union, and that people in the LGBTQ community should be included in Catholic schools and institutions.

On Catholic matters, Hispanic Catholics are more likely than white Catholics (74% to 64%) to say that Catholic social teaching influences their political and social views, and that they pay close attention to Pope Francis. Hispanic Catholics are also more likely than white Catholics to draw on Catholic sources such as clergy, religious sisters and Catholic media in choosing which candidate to support.

Both Hispanic Catholics (64%) and Black Catholics (79%) say they plan to pray before voting while less than half of white Catholics (49%) said they intend to do so.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. View the full series.