

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

July 26, 2012 at 4:18pm

Survey examines how religious values shape black, Hispanic Catholics' attitudes

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NCR Today

A new survey conducted by Public Religion Research Institute looks at how religion, values and experiences shape attitudes on abortion and reproductive issues for black Americans and Hispanic Americans.

"Among black Americans and Hispanic Americans, religion plays an important role in shaping attitudes on abortion," institute research director Daniel Cox said in a news release for the African American & Hispanic Reproductive Issues Survey. "However, the messages that both groups receive from clergy are less consequential than other religious factors, like identifying as an evangelical Christian."

You can find out what other questions were asked in the survey by clicking here.

The survey was conducted in June with the results released Thursday. It is a follow-up to the survey of Millennials on religion and abortion conducted and released by the institute in June 2011.

Of black Americans who took the survey, 4 percent identified as Roman Catholic; of Hispanic Americans who participated, 53 percent identified as Roman Catholic.

A brief sampling of the findings regarding Catholics:

On abortion:

According to the survey, "regardless of personal views on abortion, strong majorities of black (78 percent) and Hispanic (60 percent) Americans believe that it is possible to disagree with their religion's

teachings on abortion and still be considered a person of good standing in their faith."

"Among Hispanic Americans, the two strongest independent predictors of views on the legality of abortion are political ideology and identification as a born-again or evangelical Christian, followed by frequency of religious attendance, level of educational attainment, age, having a close friend or family member who has had an abortion, belief in a personal God, recent immigrant status, and identification as a Catholic."

"Hispanic Protestants are more likely than Hispanic Catholics to believe that having an abortion is morally wrong (75% vs. 59%). In addition, as with black Americans, there are considerable differences in the views of Hispanic Americans who attend church at least once a month compared to those who seldom or never attend religious services. Three quarters (75%) of Hispanic Americans who attend services at least weekly believe that having an abortion is morally wrong, compared to less than half (46%) of Hispanic Americans who seldom or never attend."

On contraception:

"There is agreement among Hispanic Catholics and Protestants that religiously affiliated colleges and hospitals (68% and 63%) and publicly held corporations (72% and 69%) should have to provide their employees with health care plans that cover contraception. However, Hispanic Catholics and Protestants are at odds in their views about churches. A majority (54%) of Hispanic Catholics believe that churches and other places of worship should be required to provide health care coverage that includes contraception, compared to about 4-in-10 (41%) Hispanic Protestants. A majority (57%) of Hispanic Protestants say that churches should not be required to provide this type of coverage."

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On the election:

"Among Hispanic Catholics, Obama leads Romney by 37 points (64 percent vs. 27 percent), Romney does better among Hispanic Protestants, among whom Obama's lead shrinks to 9 points (50 percent to 41 percent)."

The survey was conducted from a random sample of 810 non-Hispanic black American adults and 813 Hispanic American adults who are part of the Knowledge Networks' KnowledgePanel. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.7 percentage points for the Hispanic sample and +/- 5.1 percentage points for the black American sample at the 95 percent level of confidence, according to the release.

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