



Undecided, Uncommitted Catholic Voters: Reliable and Politically Unanchored

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Research Background and Methodology	3
Executive Summary	4
Conclusions	4
Detailed Findings	5
1. Undecided, Uncommitted Catholics' Voting Patterns and Values	5
2. The Influence of Religion on Political Beliefs	7
Focus Group Participant Demographics	9
Demographics of Respondents	10

CHARTS AND TABLES

Undecided, Uncommitted Catholic Voter History	5
Issues Influencing an Undecided, Uncommitted Catholic's Support for a Candidate	6
Informing Issue Positions: Personal Experiences, Thoughts, and Opinions vs. Teachings of Religious and Faith Practice by Religious Service Attendance	8
Focus Group Composition Table	9
Demographics of Survey Respondents: Age	10
Demographics of Survey Respondents: Gender Identity	10
Demographics of Survey Respondents: Race/Ethnicity	10
Demographics of Survey Respondents: Frequency of Religious Service or Event Attendance at Place of Worship	10

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Catholic voters represent an important constituency in U.S. elections accounting for approximately one in five voters in the 2024 presidential election.¹ However, while they may hold the same religious beliefs, Catholics hold diverse political perspectives, with roughly one-half (49%) identifying with or leaning toward the Republican Party and slightly fewer (44%) toward the Democratic Party.² Considerable research has examined Catholic voting patterns, religious participation, and partisan affiliations, yet less is understood about Catholics who remain undecided or uncommitted close to an election, particularly the issues and policies they prioritize when deciding whom to support. This represents an important opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of these voters' political positions and motivations, providing valuable insight into their potential role in future elections.

A two-phase research study was commissioned to explore undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters' policy priorities, voting habits, motivations for candidate selection, and the extent to which their faith influences their political positions. First, two online focus groups (11 participants total) with conservative and progressive Catholic voters took place August 12–13, 2026, to explore policy priorities and sentiments toward the midterm elections and political climate. These were followed by an online survey fielded September 23–October 7, 2026, which received 511 complete responses from Catholics residing in the United States. To qualify, respondents had to report being likely to vote or unsure of voting in the 2026 midterm elections, while remaining undecided in their candidate support. Although respondents were screened for Catholic affiliation, the survey did not reference religion or disclose that participants were selected based on their faith. This approach was intended to minimize priming effects and social desirability bias, allowing respondents to express their views without the influence of the study's religious context. The survey was offered in English and Spanish, although no respondents completed the Spanish survey.

Of the n=511 respondents, roughly half resided in Michigan (n=265), with the remainder living elsewhere in the country (n=246). Approximately seven in ten respondents (71%) were male, compared to 29% female, and 93% were white/Caucasian. Respondents were recruited through an online research panel without demographic quotas or controls designed to achieve a predetermined sample composition. Consequently, these demographic imbalances were not intentional or the result of targeted recruitment, but emerged naturally based on the availability and participation of eligible panel members. These imbalances should be considered when interpreting the findings, particularly those presented for the full sample. Meaningful subgroup distinctions are highlighted where analytically appropriate.

Importantly, established demographic benchmarks do not exist for the specific population of undecided and uncommitted U.S. Catholic voters. Although demographic information is available for U.S. Catholics broadly, the composition of this narrower audience is not readily known and may shift as voting preferences evolve. Consequently, there is no reliable demographic profile against which to assess the sample's composition. While this does not eliminate the limitations associated with recruitment or sample imbalances, it provides important context, as differences from the broader Catholic population do not necessarily reflect differences from this narrower audience.

For brevity, respondents are referred to throughout this report as “undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters” or “Catholic voters.” The findings are not representative of U.S. Catholics broadly or the larger population of undecided and uncommitted Catholic voters, but instead provide a snapshot of participating individuals' perspectives and should not be generalized beyond the sample. A comprehensive analysis informed the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, with statistical significance tested at the 95% confidence level. Graphs and charts may not total 100% due to rounding. Base sizes may differ from 511 because “Prefer not to answer,” “Do not know,” and “Does not apply” responses were excluded from calculations. Labels for responses below 5% are occasionally omitted for readability.

¹ Pew Research Center. (2025, June 26). [Demographic profiles of Trump and Harris voters in 2024](#).

² Pew Research Center. (2025, February 26). [Religion, partisanship and ideology](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Catholics are swing voters in the truest sense of the term. Catholics vote. In the past three presidential elections, only four percent of surveyed undecided, uncommitted Catholics did not vote at all, making them a very large, very reliable community. However, what they offer in terms of dependability to show up at the polls, they lack in predictability for whom they will pull the lever. Nearly three-quarters of surveyed voters have both voted for Obama and Trump, and majorities of uncommitted, undecided Catholics, as a whole, supported both presidents, despite the candidates' vastly different policy priorities and approaches to governing.

Like most Americans,³ the economy and cost of living top the list of issues influencing the undecided, uncommitted Catholic vote in 2026. Interestingly, while this community nearly unanimously reports viewing issues affecting families and children through a religious lens, this issue falls behind others, including health care and climate change, when it comes to its influence over which candidate to support. Nevertheless, for a majority of uncommitted, undecided Catholics, their religious teachings and faith practice greatly informs their views on various political issues.

From race to climate change to immigration, the more frequently an undecided, uncommitted Catholic voter attends Mass or other events at their parish, the more their religious beliefs and faith practice inform their views and the more likely a person is to have previously supported Republican candidates. In fact, of those still unsure of who or if they will vote in their local House of Representative midterm elections, nearly nine in ten are leaning toward supporting a Republican candidate.

CONCLUSIONS

1. **Catholic voters vote!** While some Catholic voters may be late to decide for whom to vote, they do vote. Therefore, any effort to reach and influence this voting bloc is time well spent, particularly because, historically, few are single-party voters. Because U.S. Catholics are not a monolithic voting bloc, appeals to shared values – particularly family values -- offer an opportunity to build support for candidates whose positions align with what matters most to these voters.
2. **Religious participation may offer important insights into undecided Catholic voters.** Although this survey was not designed to be representative of all U.S. Catholics, the findings suggest it is the more fervent Catholics who wait to decide for whom to vote until closer to the election. This could be key when trying to target undecided voters – they are attending church or other functions at their parish at least once a week. Their regular participation provides additional context for understanding their sources of information, community relationships, and exposure to discussions about social and political issues. Therefore, parish bulletins, social events, and other church-related activities may represent valuable communication environments and strategies.
3. **Race and immigration are key issues for Republican-leaning, frequent church-going voters.** Uncommitted, undecided Catholic voters who frequently attend Mass or other functions at their church are often much more likely to have voted for Republican candidates than those who do not attend as frequently. At the same time, this audience places great importance on issues surrounding immigration and race, so where a given candidate can authentically connect their values to their personal story, policy or platform, this could be an entry point to reaching this audience.

³ Oliphant, J. B. (2026, October 8). [Cost concerns dominate as public's economic ratings turn more negative. Pew Research Center.](#)

DETAILED FINDINGS

1. Undecided, Uncommitted Catholics' Voting Patterns and Values

Undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters are not party line voters as six percent voted for only Republican candidates in each of the past five presidential elections and three percent voted for only Democrats. In fact, when all 511 responses were tallied, among those who were eligible to vote in all five elections, there were 51 different combinations of voting patterns, ranging from those who voted for a Democratic presidential candidate in every year except Clinton to those who voted for Trump in 2016 and 2024, but voted for Biden (a Catholic) in 2020 to those who voted for McCain, Romney, Clinton, Biden, and Trump. Perhaps this is a factor of general disillusionment with politicians and those in power, which was a reoccurring theme observed in the focus groups.

At an aggregate, high level, about two-thirds of uncommitted, undecided Catholic voters supported Obama in 2008 (67%) and 2012 (68%) before switching parties to support Trump in each subsequent year (2016: 69%; 2020: 68%; 2024: 66%). While nearly three in ten (28%) voted for Obama twice and then Trump three times, almost nine in ten (86%) have voted for Trump at least once, which may explain why the same proportion (86%) are leaning toward supporting a Republican candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in their congressional district. Likelihood to support a Republican candidate in the midterm elections increases with one's frequency of religious attendance and decreases with age.

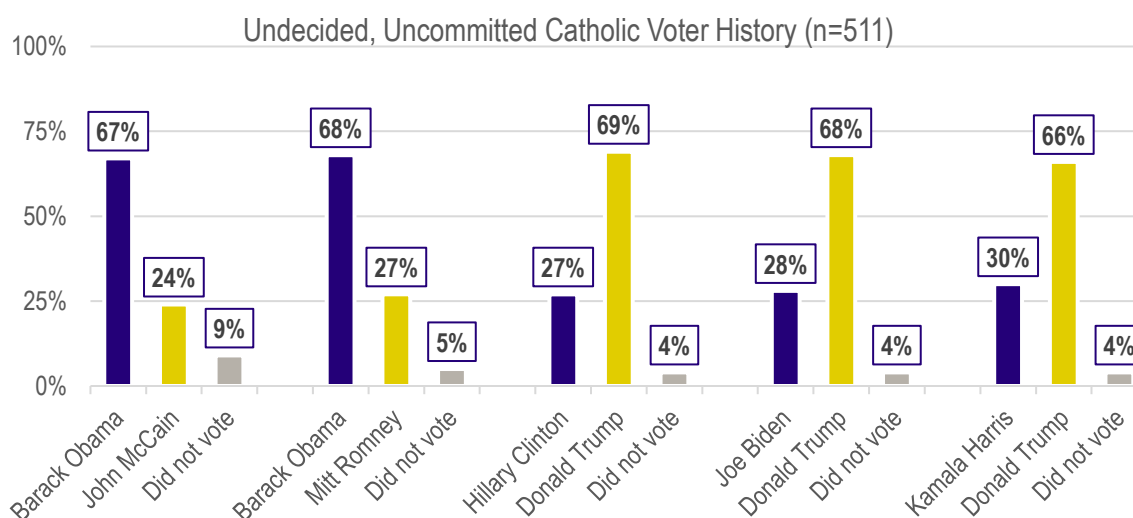
"I do think every president there's ever been has been corrupt. I think to get that far in life, you have to be kind of cutthroat to begin with." - 65-year old female moderate Trump voter in New York

"I'm an independent, middle of the road, but I don't have respect for him because of the way he treats others, or other people in his cabinet I do have respect for." - 56-year-old female moderate Trump voter in New York

"I, personally, like Trump. I think he's an awesome president. He's the coolest president we've ever had; all the other presidents seem fake. I feel like he sticks up for himself, and people didn't like that, because he was different from everybody else, and I think he's done a lot of great things for our country." - 46-year-old female conservative Trump voter in Florida

"When you get into power, a lot of times that money buys your opinions, it buys what it is that you're going to do, and you need candidates who understand that we put you in these seats for a reason. You have a job to do." - 27-year-old female progressive Harris voter in Maryland

One very interesting observation in the voting patterns of undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters is that they do, indeed, vote. With the exception of 2008, only about one out of every 25 (4-5%) undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters stayed home from the polls and only three percent did not vote at all between 2008-2024, a far cry from the roughly one-third of Americans who normally do not vote.⁴



QUESTION WORDING: For whom did you vote in the 2008 / 2012 / 2016 / 2020 / 2024 presidential election?

⁴ Hartig, H., Keeter, S., Daniller, A., & Van Green, T. (2025, June 26). 1. [Voter turnout, 2020-2024](#). Pew Research Center.

While a myriad of factors influence a person's decision for whom to vote – from the economic climate to a person's individual struggles, their personal values to their perception of current crises -- at least three in five undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters report each of the tested issues as having a large influence over their decision for which candidate to support.

To provide a more complete understanding of respondents' views, findings are presented using both a three-tier scale and an average score on a scale of 0 to 100. Presenting both measures helps understand how widespread a particular view is (the percentage in the top category) and how strongly respondents lean toward that view overall (the average score). These distinctions are important when interpreting findings, as similar percentages do not necessarily reflect similar ratings, and similar averages can conceal meaningful differences in how respondents answered. Examining both measures helps identify patterns that may not be apparent from either measure alone.

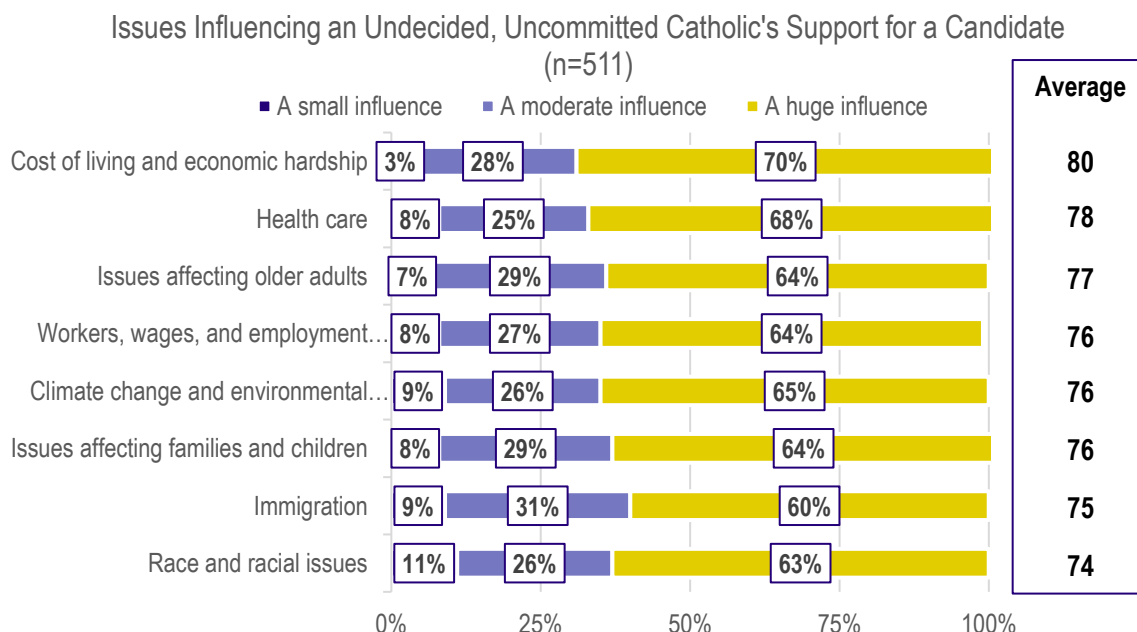
The cost of living and economic hardships (averaging 80%) top the list of issues most influencing a person's decision for whom to vote, followed by health care (78%) and issues affecting older adults (77%). A majority of U.S. Catholics are over 50 years old (58%),⁵ and this increases to seven in ten (70%)⁶ among white Catholics. Therefore, issues related to aging are becoming increasingly relevant to this population. Beyond navigating their own aging-related needs and concerns, many may also be assuming caregiving responsibilities for parents or other older family members, further increasing their familiarity with these issues and the extent to which they directly affect their lives.

"If you don't like the culture here, then don't come here. You know, that's not offensive. Just stay in your country and live your life, but we can be a much better country if everyone came here and just rallied together with all the different cultures." – 65-year-old male conservative Trump voter in New Jersey

"I think [the policy] is actually the most important thing. That's why I'll switch. That's why I'll go from a Republican to a Democrat and vote." – 36-year-old male moderate Trump voter in Illinois

"I feel like inflation and immigration is a big thing. I get really nervous going anywhere with my daughter, in fear of ICE coming." – 43-year-old female moderate Harris voter in Texas

Immigration plays a larger role in selecting a candidate to support among those who have previously voted for Trump (76%, compared to 71% who have not voted for Trump) and those attending services or events at their church at least once a week (76%, compared to 72% who attend less frequently). Undecided, uncommitted Catholics who attend services at least once a week also prioritize race and racial issues more than those who attend services less frequently (76%, compared to 66%), though cost of living and health care (78%) still top their lists (79%).



QUESTION WORDING: Now, thinking more broadly, how much does a candidate's position on or approach to addressing [INSERT ISSUE ITEM] influence your decision to support him or her?

⁵ Nortey, J., Tevington, P., & Smith, G. A. (2025, March 4). [10 facts about U.S. Catholics](#). Pew Research Center.

⁶ Ibid.

2. The Influence of Religion on Political Beliefs

There is a very strong correlation between frequency of attending religious services or events at one's parish and the influence religious beliefs or teachings have on the formation of one's positions on various issues. Overall, a majority of undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters view every tested issue through a very religious lens rather than a personal lens, especially issues affecting families and children (28% somewhat religious, 71% highly religious). Even among those who attend church services or functions less than once a week, faith largely informs these issues (27% somewhat religious, 63% highly religious). Once issues get farther away from the family unit, a slightly more personal lens is used to view issues for some, especially among those who do not frequently attend Mass, though a majority still lead with their faith.

The respondents to this survey report attending services or events at their church far more often than the average Catholic across the country (87%, compared to 28%)⁷, so it does not come as a surprise to see this audience say their religious teachings and faith practice have a large influence over their views of societal and political issues. For example, in a 2025 Pew Research Center study, about three in ten (31%) U.S. Catholics said taking care of the environment is an essential part of their faith;⁸ in this study, a majority (55%) say their positions on climate change and environmental issues are greatly informed by their religious beliefs. Similarly, the same three in ten U.S. Catholics believe caring for immigrants (30%)⁹ is an essential part of their faith, while one-half (54%) of undecided, uncommitted Catholics in this survey reports their position on immigration is largely driven by their religious views. Although these two studies do not measure the relationship between religion and political views in precisely the same way, comparing their findings provides valuable insight into the relationship between religious participation and the influence of faith on everyday life. More frequent attendance at Mass and other religious activities may provide greater exposure to Catholic teachings, values, and practices, potentially strengthening the role these play in shaping individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and decisions beyond the Church itself. Put simply, the more actively a person participates in their faith tradition and community, the more likely their faith influences how they engage with the world beyond the parish doors.

Given that those who attend religious services or events at their parish at least once a week make up a majority of this survey audience, it is no surprise they view issues through mostly the same lens as the total survey population. However, nearly two-thirds (60%) of those frequent church attendees view issues around climate change and environmental issues as a highly religious issue. While about one-half as many less frequent churchgoers say the same (27%), this is still the issue most informed by their faith outside of family-related issues. For this minority cohort, it is interesting to see nearly one-half approach workers, wages, and employment issues (46%), health care (46%), and issues affecting older adults (46%) from a personal perspective at roughly twice the rate more fervent service attendees report doing so (21%, 22%, and 22%, respectively).

Additionally, undecided, uncommitted Catholic voters who are leaning toward supporting a Republican candidate in the 2026 midterm elections are more likely to view each issue through a religious lens than those who lean toward supporting a Democratic candidate, as do those who voted for both Obama and Trump at some point.

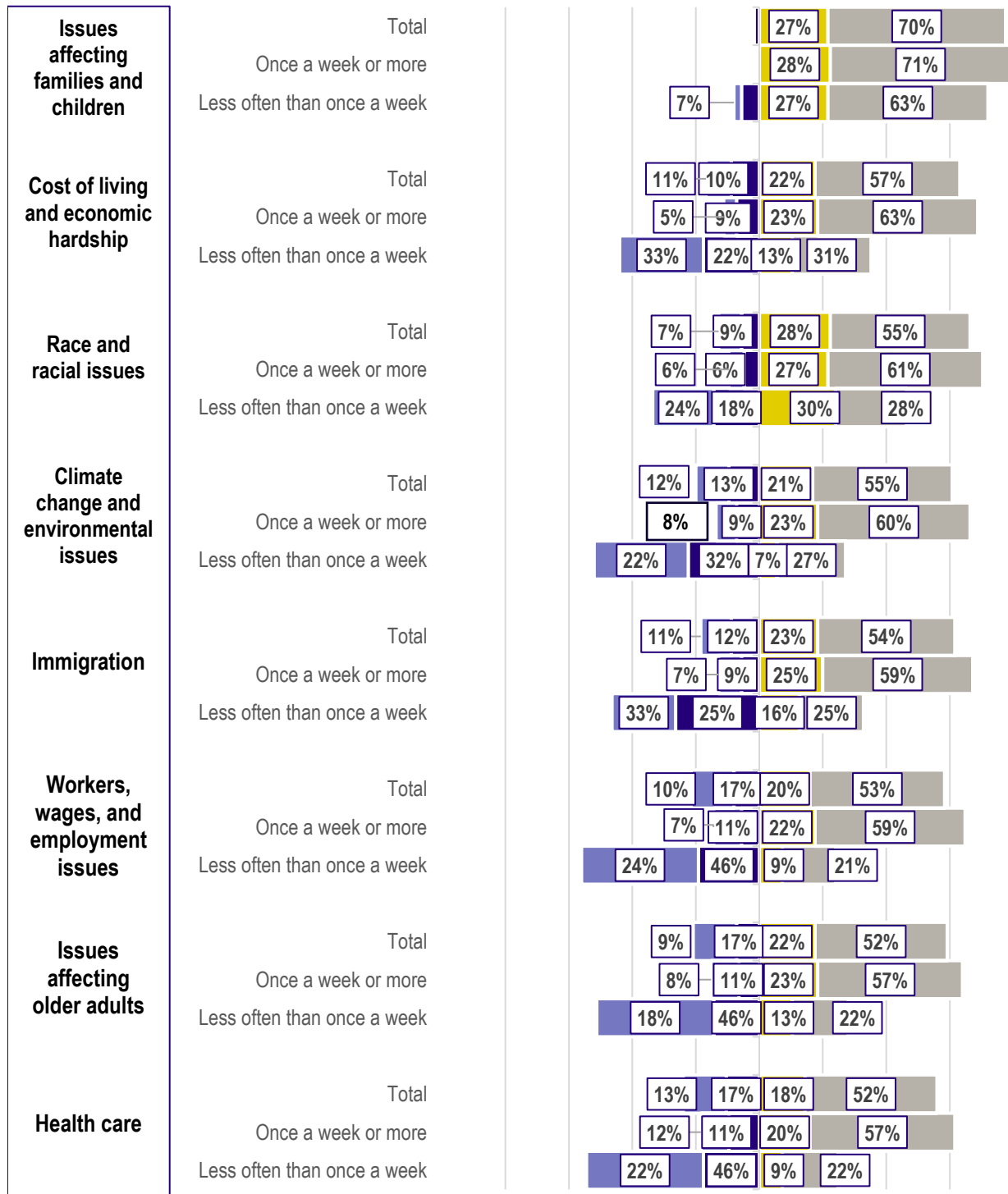
⁷ Pew Research Center. (2025, June 16). [Catholic practices and devotions](#).

⁸ Pew Research Center. (2025, June 16). [Essentials of Catholic identity](#).

⁹ Ibid.

Informing Issue Positions: Personal Experiences, Thoughts, and Opinions vs.
Teachings of Religious and Faith Practice (n=511)
- By Religious Service Attendance -

■ Somewhat personal ■ Highly personal ■ Somewhat religious ■ Highly religious



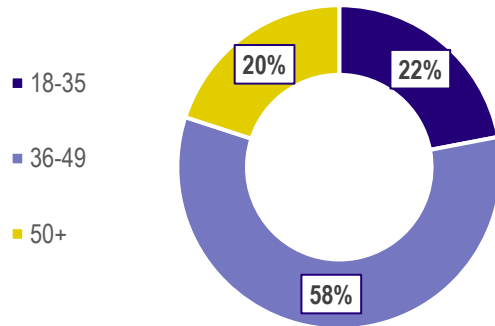
QUESTION WORDING: When you think about your position on [INSERT ISSUE ITEM], do you rely more on your personal experiences, thoughts, and opinions or on the teachings of your religion and your faith practice?

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

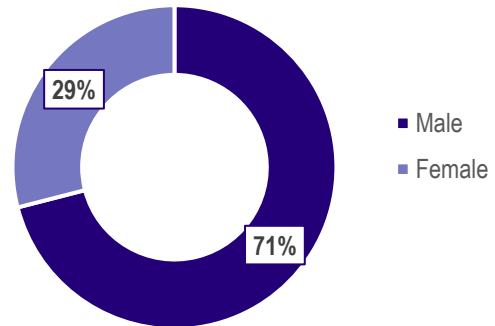
FOCUS GROUP COMPOSITION TABLE		
Demographic		Number of participants
Gender	Male	5
	Female	6
Age	18-29	1
	30-39	3
	40-49	3
	50-59	1
	60+	3
State of residence	New York	3
	Texas	2
	Illinois	2
	Maryland	1
	Florida	1
	Arkansas	1
	New Jersey	1
Race/ethnicity	White	7
	Hispanic/Latino/a	2
	Black/African American	2
Education	Some college or Associate's degree	4
	Bachelor's degree	5
	Graduate or professional degree	2
Annual household income	\$50,000-\$99,999	5
	\$100,000-\$149,999	1
	\$150,000-\$199,999	2
	\$200,000-\$249,999	3
Religion	Catholic	11
Frequency of attendance at religious services	Weekly or more	7
	A few times a month	1
	Every few months	2
	A few times a year	1
Political identity	Moderate	6
	Conservative	3
	Progressive	2
2024 Presidential vote	Donald Trump	6
	Kamala Harris	5

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

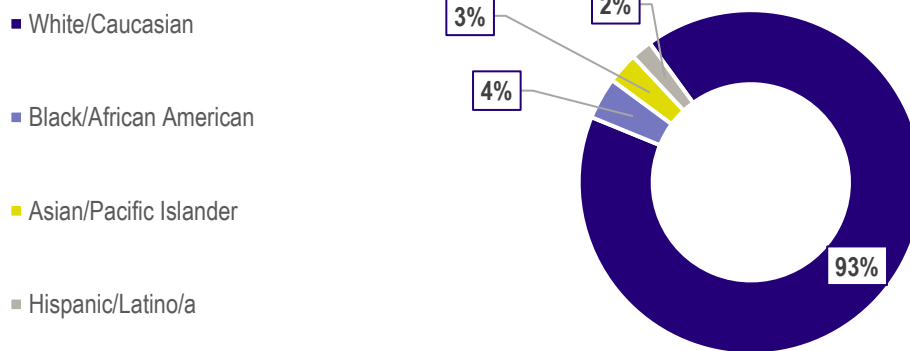
Age (n=511)



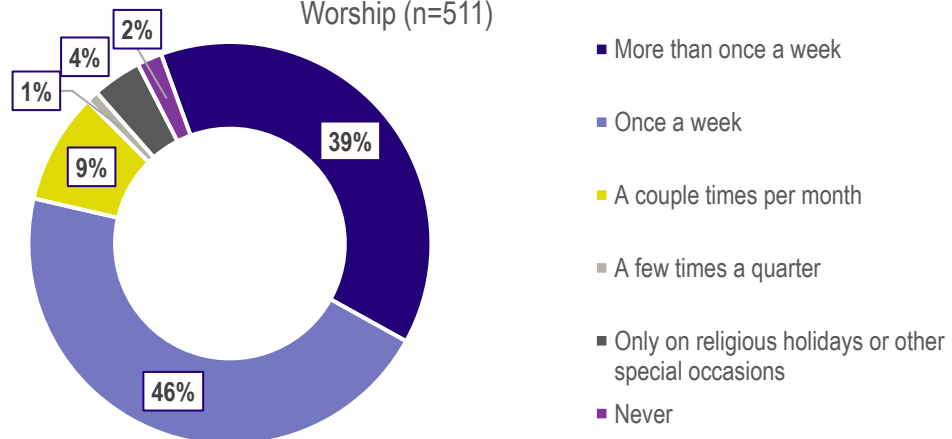
Gender Identity (n=511)



Race/Ethnicity (n=511)



Approximate Frequency of Religious Service or Event Attendance at Place of Worship (n=511)



ABOUT NETWORK

In 1971, 47 Catholic Sisters gathered in Washington, D.C. and the spark that would become NETWORK was ignited. NETWORK is an inclusive, national, Catholic advocacy organization open to all who share our values, working to achieve equity and justice for everyone. NETWORK's commitment to Gospel values and Catholic Social Justice principles is expressed on two websites.

The first, [NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice](#), is a 501(c)(4) non-profit whose work focuses primarily on lobbying and grassroots advocacy for specific legislation and policies to advance the common good.

The second, [NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice](#), is a 501(c)(3) non-profit devoted to advocacy and voter education, including training, webinars, and other resources, on the policies that are central to our mission. For important educational resources, please go to [Network Advocates](#).



ABOUT UNTOLD RESEARCH

Untold Research – a woman-owned, small business – is a full-service research firm which supports non-profits, NGOs, and other mission-driven organizations by creating data-driven strategies which drive social change. Breaking the mold of traditional research, Untold thoughtfully measures and explores not only people's thoughts, opinions, and behavior, but also the motivations behind them. Through both time- tested and experimental methodologies, Untold Research crafts custom studies that create space for participants to respond authentically because repeating what was done yesterday will never change tomorrow.

Untold Research provides a wide array of services, from qualitative research, like in-depth interviews and focus groups, to quantitative methods, such as surveys and data analysis. Whether conducting original studies or analyzing existing data, Untold Research delivers actionable insights which inform strategic planning, program development, and communications. Their research empowers organizations to make data-backed decisions which expand their reach, deepen their impact, and strengthen their mission. With a deep understanding of the unique needs of mission-driven organizations, Untold Research tailors each project to align with clients' goals, priorities, and budget.

More information can be found at www.untoldresearch.com or by emailing connect@untoldresearch.com.

