



The Facts

Tell

the Story:

Catholics

and

Choice



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The Facts Tell the Story: Catholics and Choice



Individual conscience in matters of moral decision-making is at the core of the Catholic tradition. The public policy views of Catholics reflect this tradition. Catholics believe in legal abortion. They also believe in contraception, sexuality education, government support for family planning programs in developing countries and the separation of church and state.

- Only 25% of Catholics believe that church leaders should have the final say on abortion.

—Life Cycle Institute/National Catholic Reporter poll, 2005

- 87% of Catholics support abortion when a pregnancy poses a serious threat to a woman's health and 79% support it in cases of rape.

—General Social Survey, Cumulative Data File, 1972-2004

- Less than one-quarter (22%) of Catholics in the US agree with the bishops' position that abortion should be illegal.

—Belden Russonello & Stewart, 2004

- A majority of Catholic women (52%) polled in a national survey prefer a hospital in their community that offers elective abortions to one that does not.

—Belden Russonello & Stewart poll, April 2000

- 58% of Catholics believe you can be a good Catholic without following the bishops' teaching on abortion. 75% believe you can be a good Catholic without following the bishops' teaching on birth control.

—National Catholic Reporter poll, September 2005

- Only 13% of the nation's 47,200 Catholic priests belong to Priests for Life and it reports no membership income in its latest tax returns (2003).

—Membership information from Priests for Life, July 2000

- Catholic women have abortions at the same rate as women in the population as a whole. In a study of more than 10,000 women over the age of 17 obtaining abortions, 27% were Catholic. Catholics make up almost 25% of the population.

—Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 2002

- 96% of sexually active Catholic women above the age of 18 have used a modern method of contraception.

—2002 National Survey of Family Growth, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Less than 2% of sexually active Catholic women use church-approved family planning methods.

—2002 National Survey of Family Growth, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Which of these comes closest to your view?

	Catholic Respondents	All Respondents
Abortion should be generally available to those who want it	.34	.36
Abortion should be available, but under stricter limits than it is now	.37	.37
Abortion should not be permitted	.28	.25
Unsure	.1	.2

Source: CBS News Poll, May 2004.

- 88% of Catholics are in favor of public schools providing sex education and 83% believe that information regarding birth control should be available to teenagers.

- 58% of Catholics believe that birth control should be available to 14-16 year-olds, even if their parents do not approve.

—General Social Survey, Cumulative Data File, 1972-2004

- 93% of Catholics support the use of condoms to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

—2002 National Survey of Family Growth,

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Only 7% of Catholics believe that the views of the US bishops are "very important" in deciding who to vote for and 74% of Catholic voters do not believe they have a religious obligation to vote against candidates who support legal abortion.

—Belden Russonello & Stewart, 2004

- 66% of Catholics support the funding of international family planning programs.

—Harris Poll, September 2005

Catholics are prochoice.