

Moral Issues and Catholic Values



October 2008

*How the Survey
Was Conducted*

- The study *Moral Issues and Catholic Values* reports the results of a national survey by the Knights of Columbus.
- The survey was conducted by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.
- Adults eighteen years of age or older who live in the contiguous United States were interviewed September 24th through October 3rd, 2008.
- An oversample of American Catholics was also done resulting in a total of 813 interviews with Catholics nationwide.
- Telephone numbers were selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population.

- The survey results for all Americans are statistically significant at $\pm 2.5\%$. The margin of error increases for smaller sub-groups in the population.

Margin of Error		
Group	Number of Interviews	Margin of Error
Americans	1733	$\pm 2.5\%$
Registered Voters	1503	$\pm 2.5\%$
Catholics	813	$\pm 3.5\%$
Registered Catholic Voters	698	$\pm 4.0\%$
Practicing Catholics	533	$\pm 4.5\%$
Registered Practicing Catholic Voters	474	$\pm 4.5\%$
Non-practicing Catholics	276	$\pm 6.0\%$
Registered Non-practicing Catholic Voters	221	± 6.5

Executive Summary

✦ *The National Mood*

- Catholics and non-Catholics agree the country needs a moral makeover. 71% of U.S. residents think the nation's moral compass is pointing in the wrong direction. A similar proportion of Catholics and practicing Catholics share this view.

✦ *Who Are American Catholics?*

- Demographically, Catholics in the United States resemble the overall population. By slight margins, they are more likely to be married, to earn higher incomes, and have college degrees. The heaviest concentration of Catholics is in the Northeast which has 19% of the U.S. population but 30% of the nation's Catholics.
- Latinos make up 25% of the Catholic population, but are only 12% of the American population.
- But, consideration of Catholics only as a whole masks the wide disparity between practicing Catholics and non-practicing Catholics. Practicing Catholics, that is, those who practice their faith regularly, make up 65% of American Catholics. Non-practicing Catholics comprise 35% of Catholics nationally.

✦ *Who Are American Catholics? (continued)*

- American Catholic voters in 2008 tend to be more moderate and less liberal than American voters as a whole. A plurality of Catholic voters, 39%, are Democrats, and 45% describe themselves as moderate. Only 19% say they are liberal.

✦ *The Issue of Abortion : More Consensus than Division*

- The polarizing labels of the abortion debate mask the consensus among Americans. Although 50% of U.S. residents nominally identify themselves as pro-choice, and 44% say they are pro-life, in fact, 84% of Americans believe abortion should be significantly restricted.
- In cases where an underage female is seeking an abortion, most Americans and Catholics say parents have the right to know regardless of their daughter's privacy.
- 71% of registered voters nationwide would support a candidate who maintains that life begins at conception including half of the American electorate who say they would definitely vote for such a candidate.

✦ *Same-Sex Marriage*

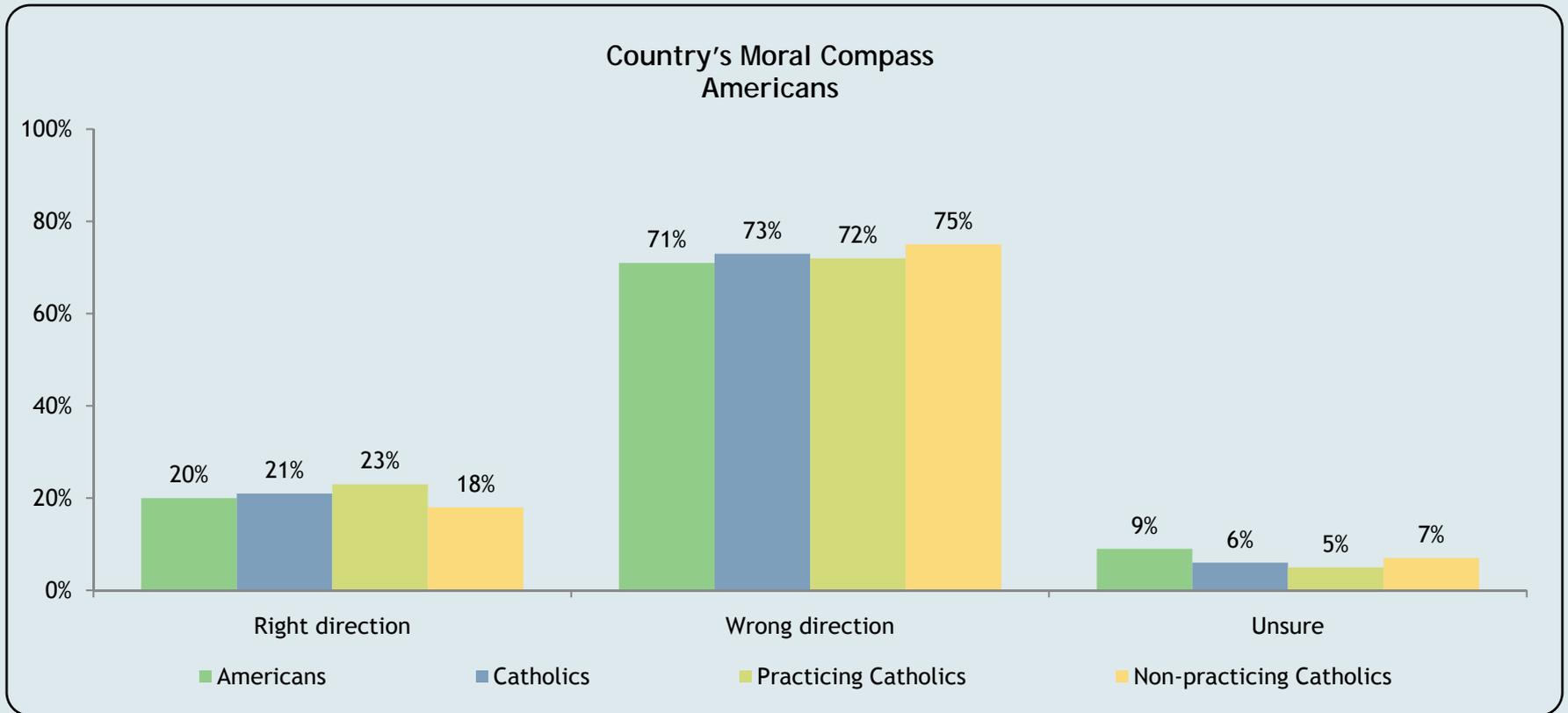
- 70% of Americans do not support same-sex marriage including 38% who advocate no legal recognition and 32% who favor civil unions. 68% of Catholics and three-quarters of practicing Catholics share this view.
- 70% of voters would support a candidate who would uphold marriage only between a man and a woman including a majority of the electorate who would definitely vote for such a candidate.
- 66% of registered Catholic voters and 70% of those Catholic voters who regularly practice their faith follow suit. This includes close to half of Catholic voters and 55% of registered practicing Catholic voters who say they would definitely vote for someone who defines marriage in this way.

✦ *The Election Season: Values and Issues*

- 57% of American voters mention the nation's financial situation as the critical issue facing the country today.
- A combination of both values and issues shapes voters' perceptions of candidates running for public office. 73% of registered voters nationwide want a candidate who upholds religious liberties, and 63% are looking for a candidate who stands for Christian principles. Many voters also favor a candidate who will work to solve global warming, support universal health care, and work to establish school vouchers.

The National Mood

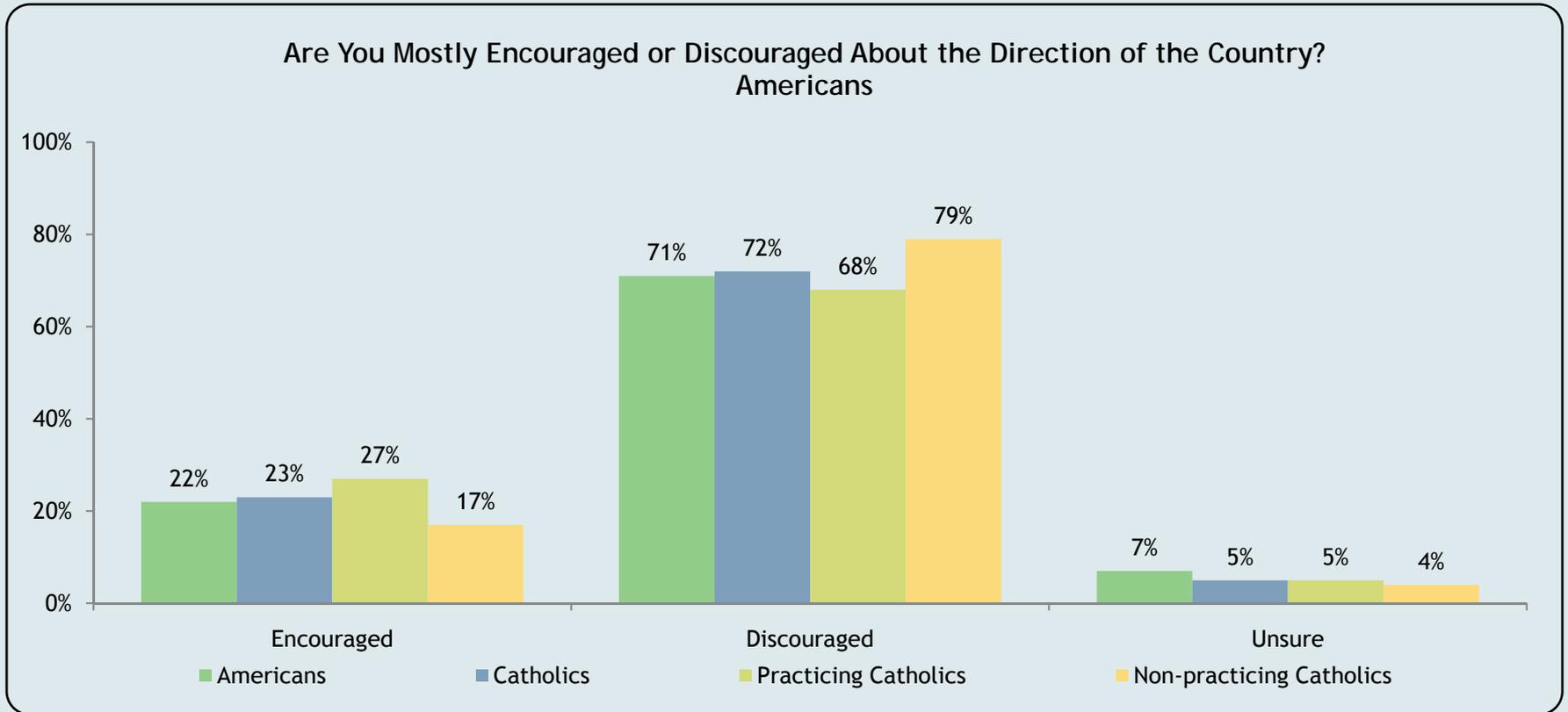
Morality Matters



Question wording: Overall, do you feel the country's moral compass right now points in the right direction or the wrong direction?

- Catholics and non-Catholics alike agree that the country needs a new direction. 71% of Americans believe the country's moral compass points down the wrong path. A similar proportion of Catholics -- 73% -- share this view.

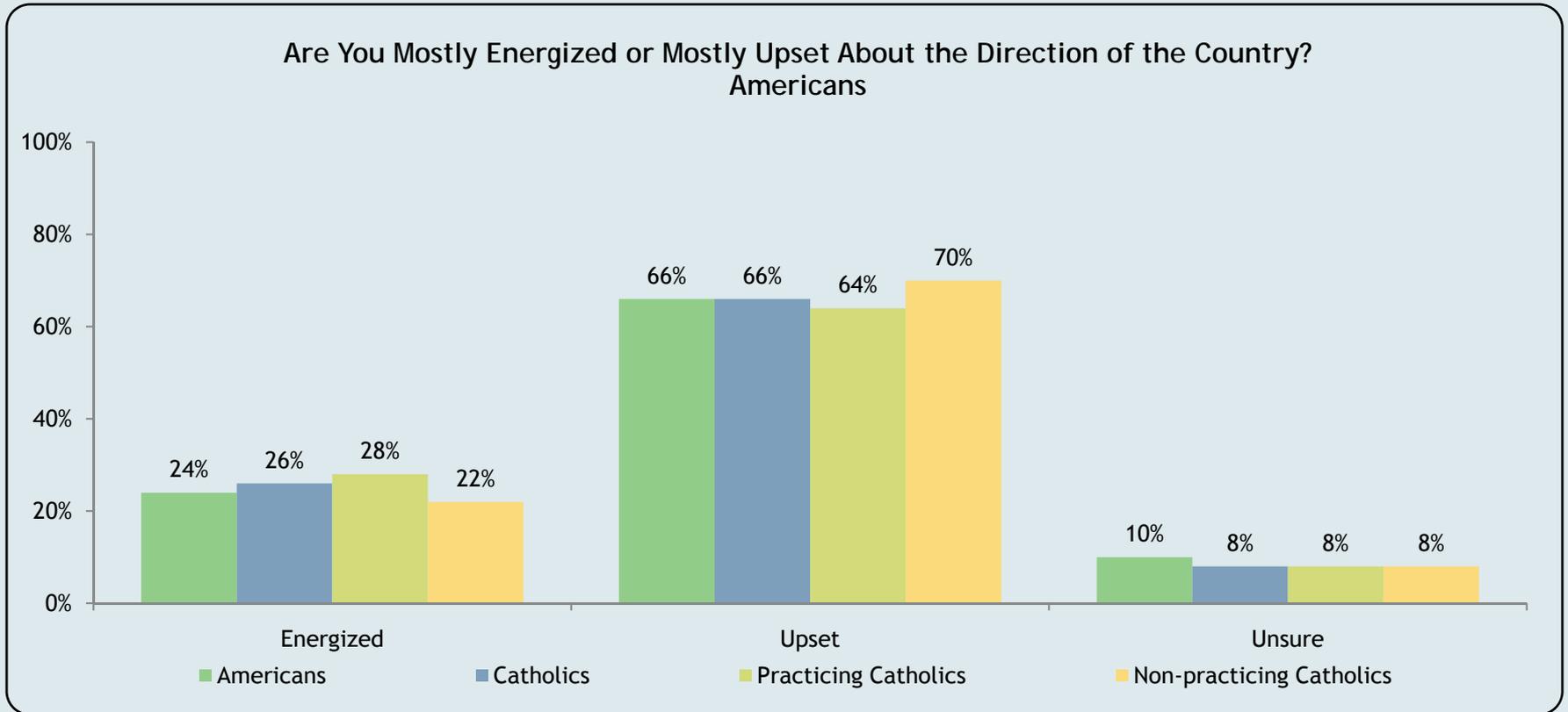
Craving a New Path



Question wording: Are you mostly encouraged or mostly discouraged when you think about the direction the country is headed in the next few years?

- Most Americans think the nation needs to be inspired. Only 22% of Americans are encouraged about where the country is going while 71% are discouraged. Catholics agree.

Needing a Boost

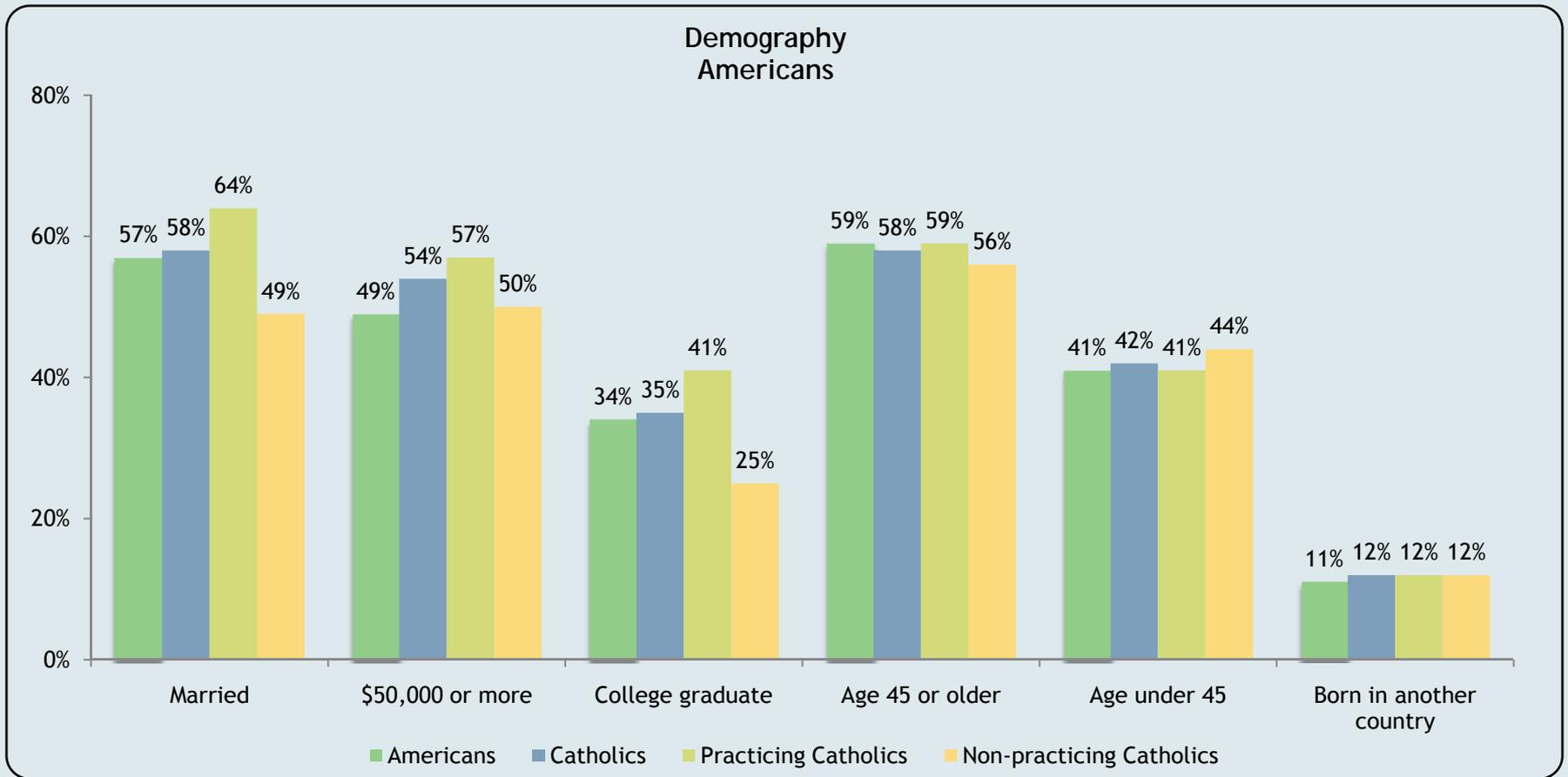


Question wording: Are you mostly energized or mostly upset when you think about the direction the country is headed in the next few years?

- Two-thirds of Americans are upset about the country's trajectory, and only about a quarter of U.S. residents are energized about the nation's future.

*American Catholics:
Who They Are*

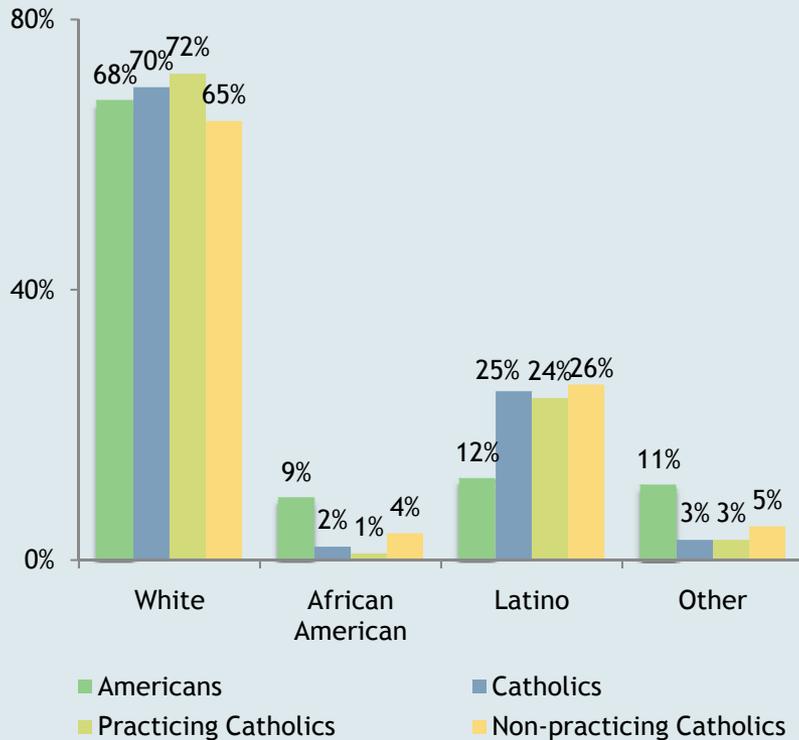
American Catholics: A Demographic Profile



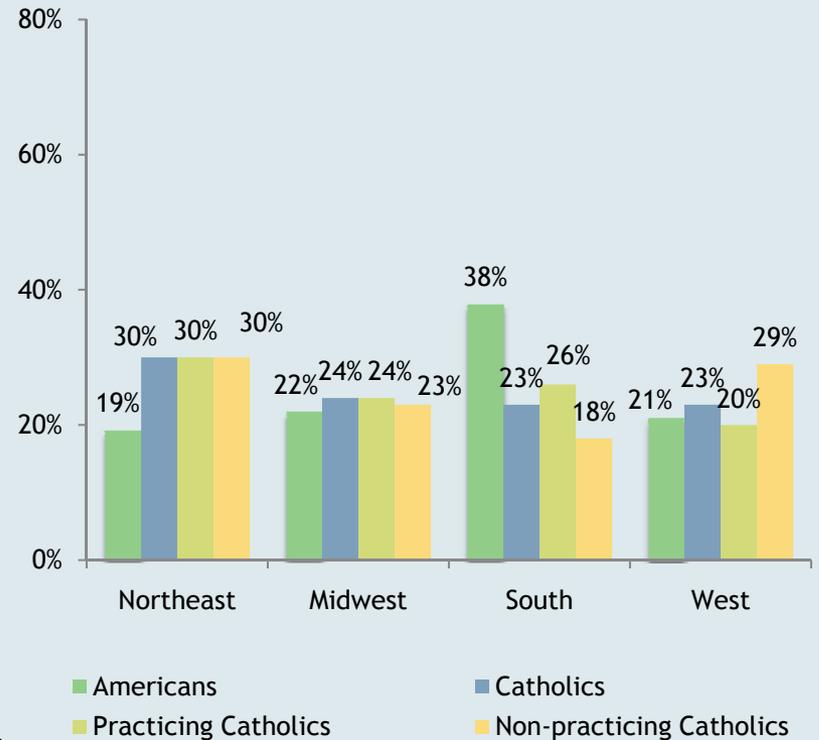
- Catholics closely reflect the overall U.S. population demographically.
- Practicing Catholics, that is, Catholics who regularly attend religious services, are more likely to be married, earn more than \$50,000, and have a college education than Americans as a whole.

American Catholics: A Demographic Profile

Race
Americans

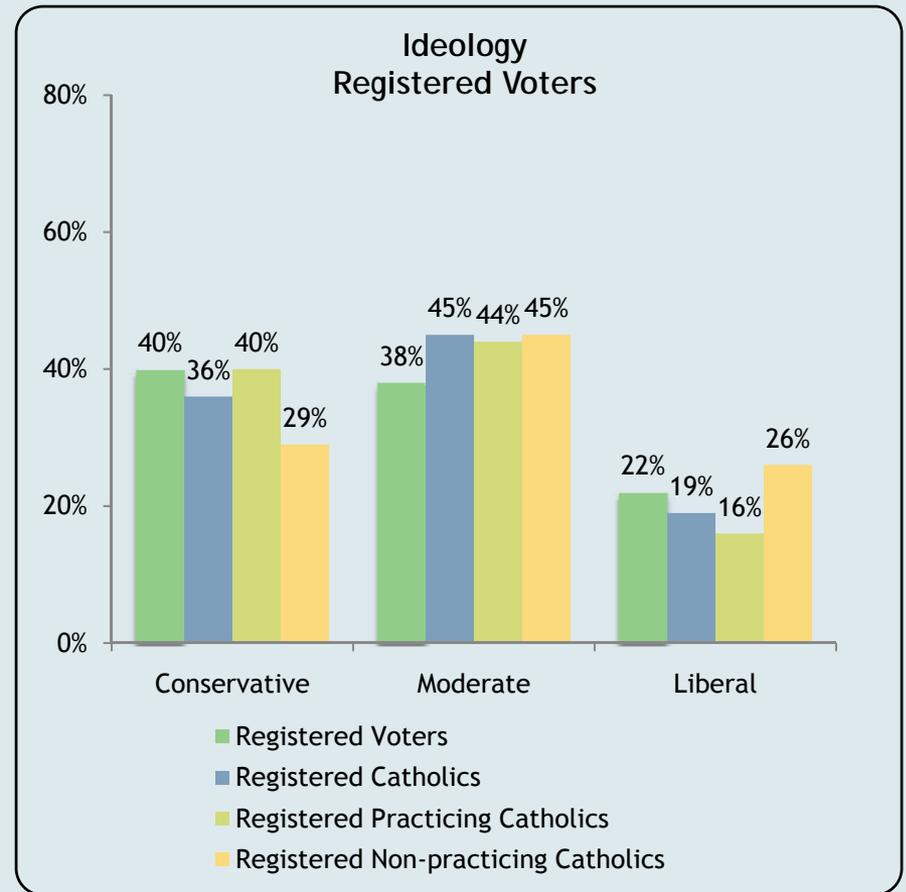
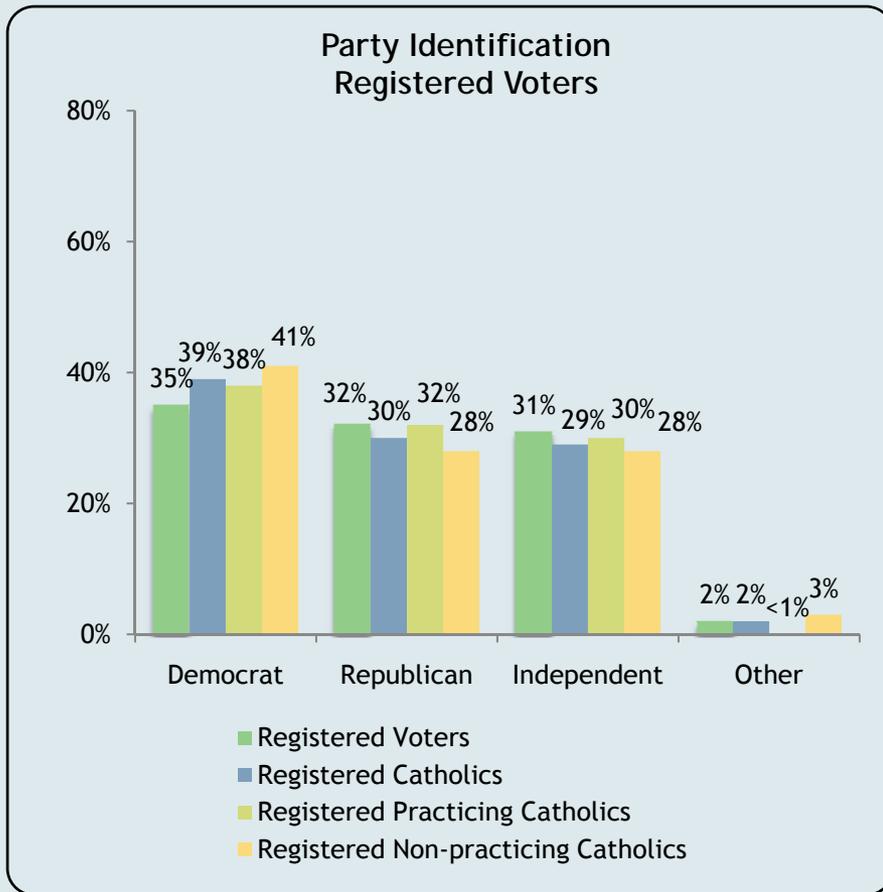


Region
Americans



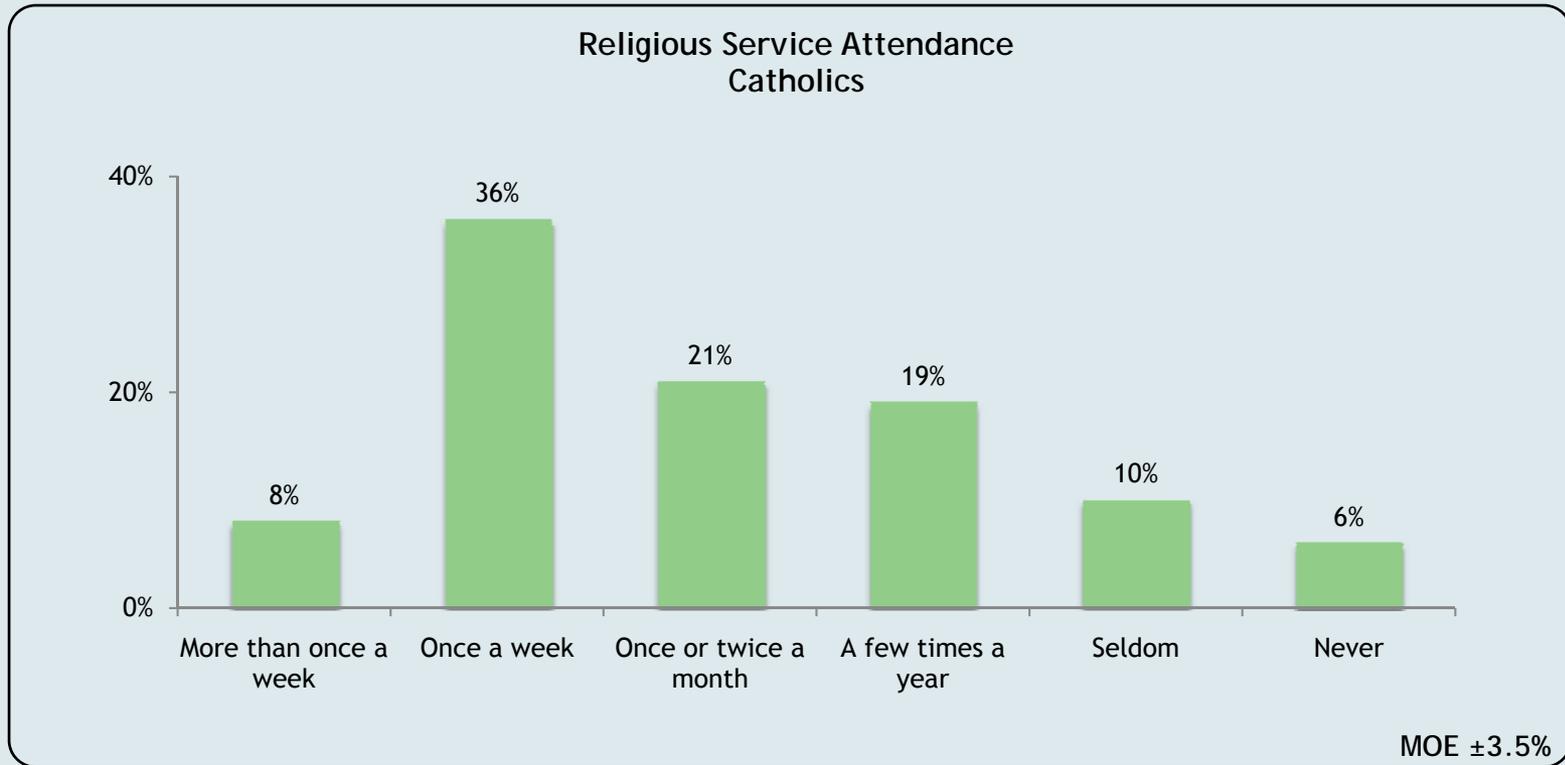
➤ Although the Catholic community in the U.S. is made up of mostly white residents, one in four Catholics is Latino. Three in ten Catholics call the Northeast home compared with only 19% of Americans.

American Catholics: A Political Profile



- Catholics largely share the party identification and ideology of American voters.
- Registered practicing Catholic voters are somewhat more moderate and less liberal than American voters in general, and registered non-practicing Catholic voters are more moderate and less conservative.

Many Catholics Worship Regularly

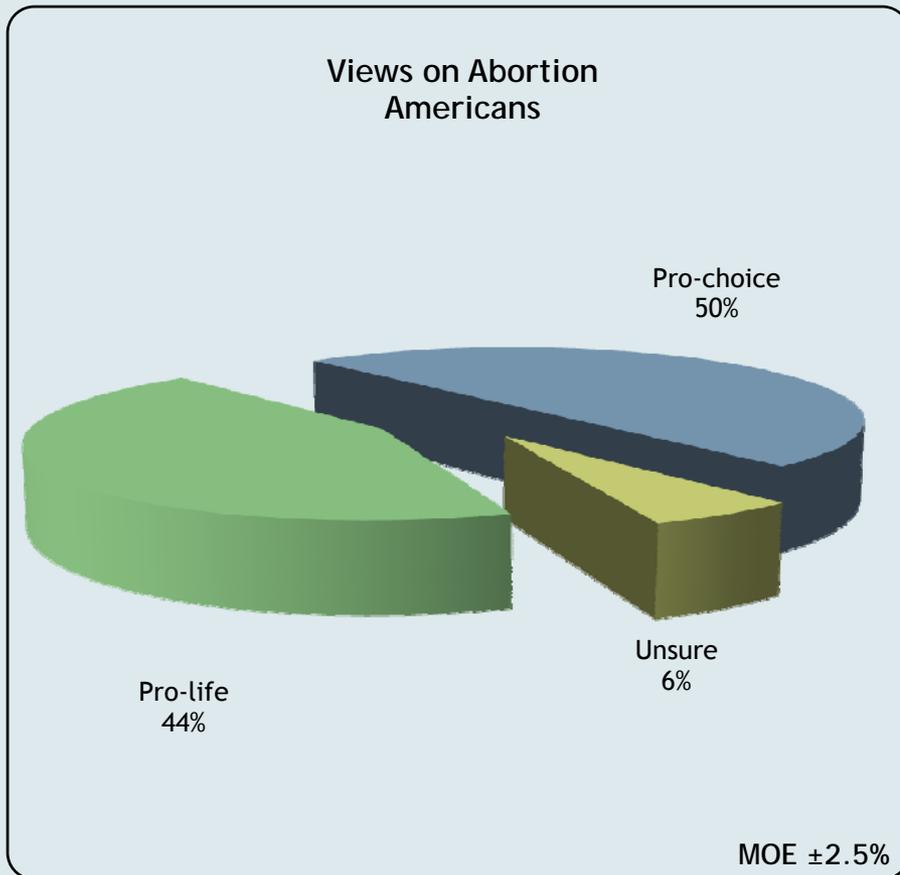


Question wording: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often would you say you attend religious services: More than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?

- 44% of Catholics attend religious services at least once a week, and another 21% practice their faith once or twice a month.

*The Issue of Abortion:
More Consensus than Division*

Abortion: Labels Magnify Division

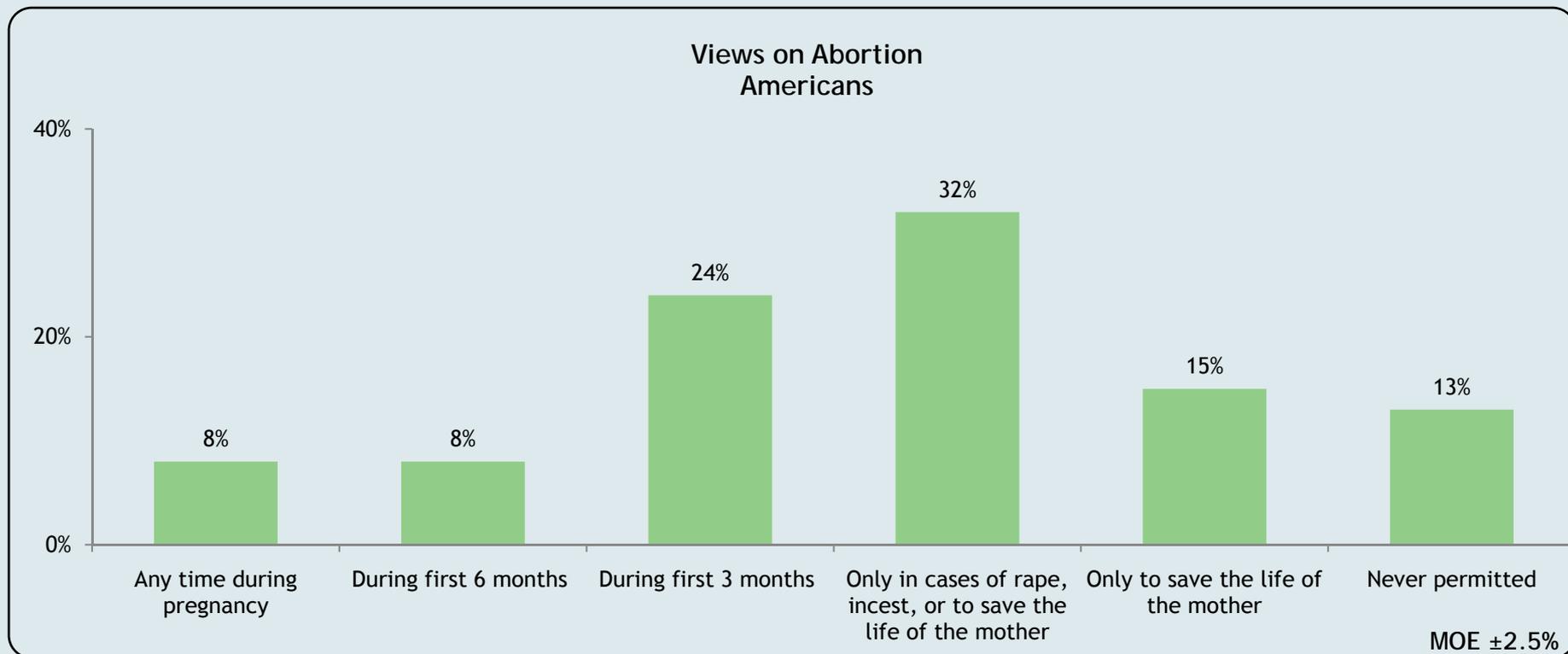


Question wording: On the issue of abortion, do you consider yourself pro-life or pro-choice?

- Consider themselves pro-life:
 - 51% of people over 60
 - 48% of those who are married
 - 49% of households without a woman who works outside the home
 - 48% of non-college graduates
 - 49% of those earning less than \$50,000
 - 44% of men
 - 45% of women
- Consider themselves pro-choice:
 - 52% of people under 45
 - 55% of those not married
 - 54% of households where a woman works outside the home
 - 56% of college graduates
 - 55% of those earning \$50,000 or more
 - 49% of men
 - 49% of women

- When asked to identify themselves as either pro-life or pro-choice, Americans divide. 50% think of themselves as pro-choice. 44% consider themselves to be pro-life.

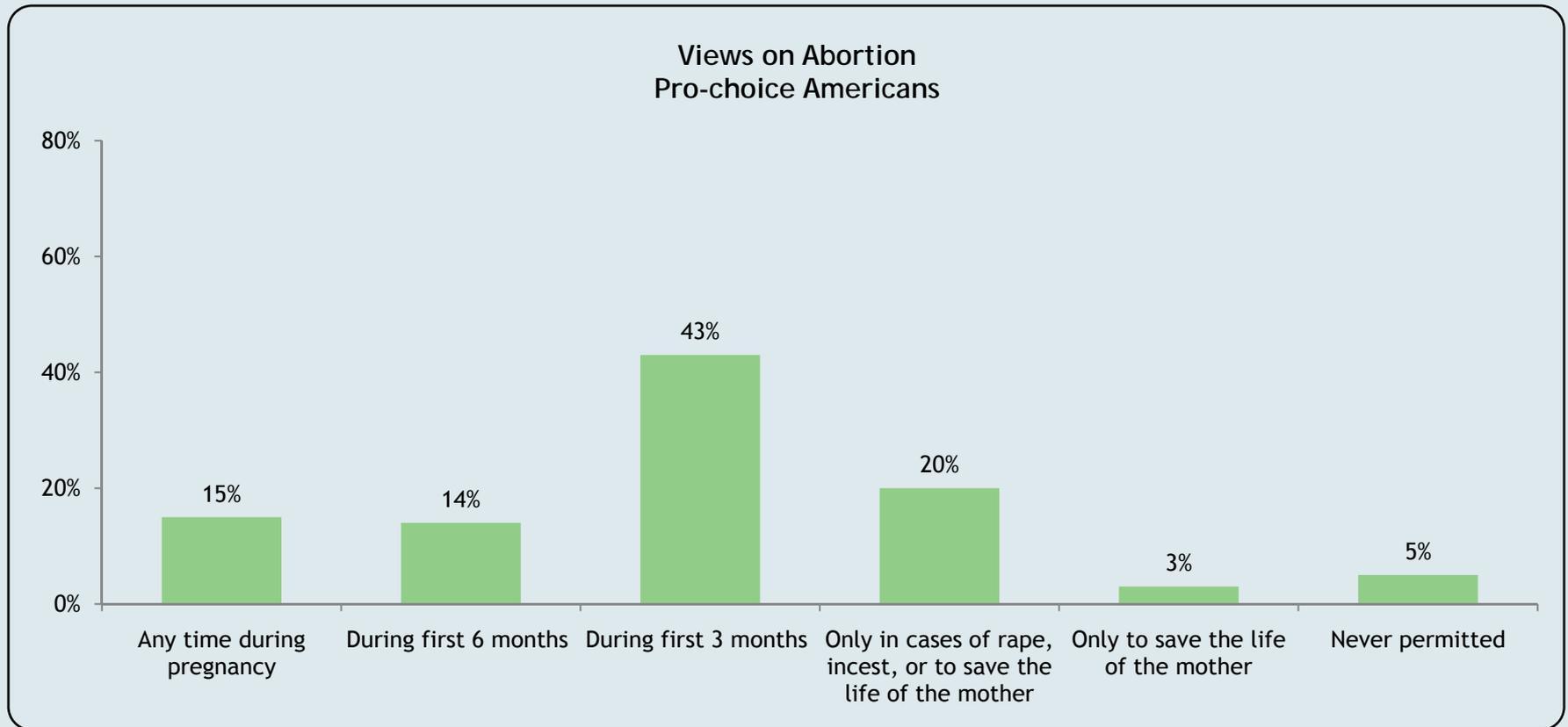
But, When Asked More Specifically... There's Consensus



Question wording: Which one of the following statements comes closest to your opinion on abortion:

- Most Americans -- 84% -- believe abortion should be significantly restricted.
- This includes 60% who want, at most, to allow abortion only in cases of rape, incest, to save the life of the mother, or who think abortion should never be permitted.

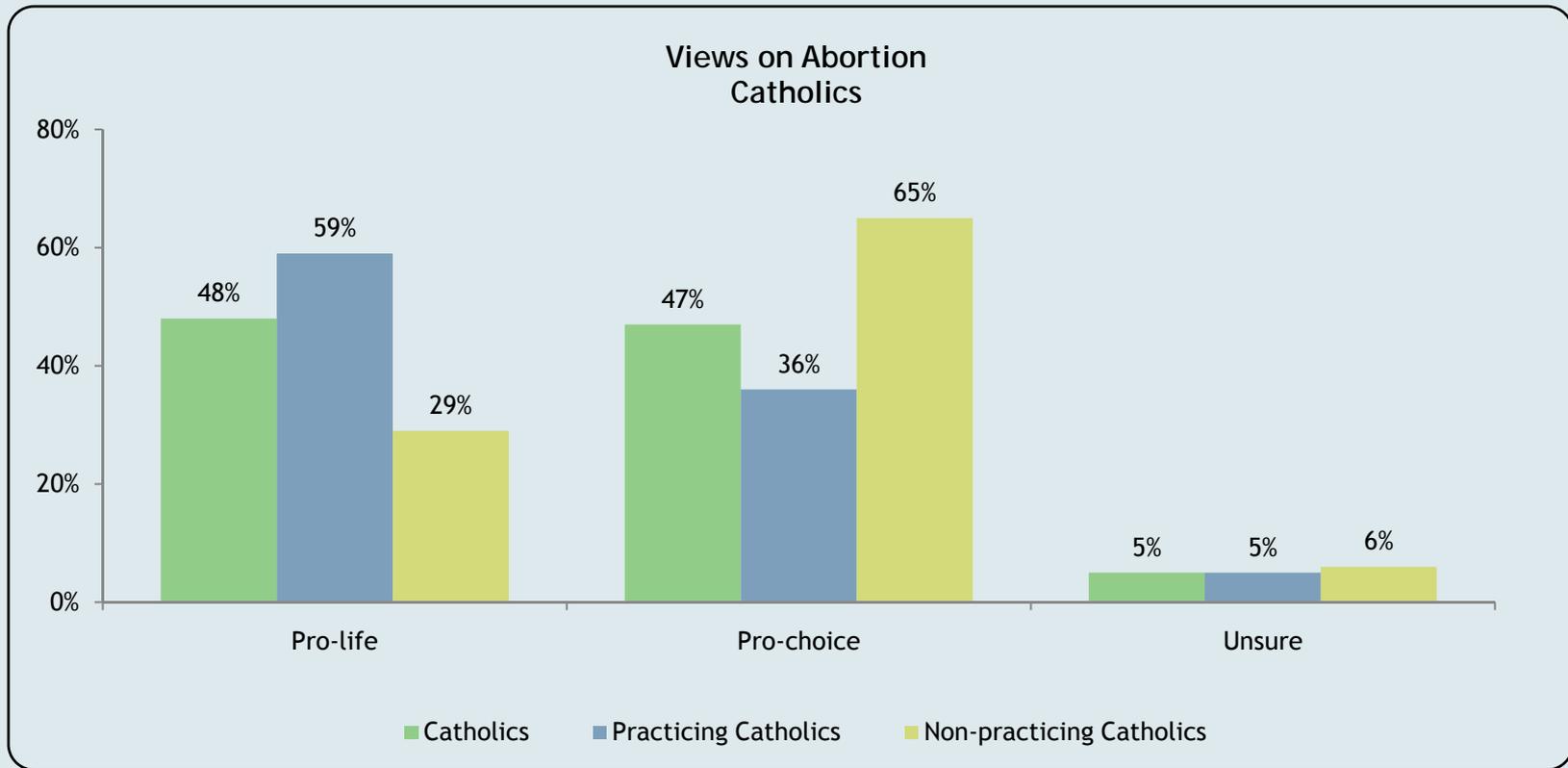
Most Pro-Choice Americans Want Restrictions



Question wording: On the issue of abortion, do you consider yourself pro-life or pro-choice?

- 71% of pro-choice Americans want abortion significantly restricted.
- This includes 43% who think abortion should be restricted to the first three months of pregnancy and 28% of pro-choice Americans who want to limit abortions only to cases of rape, incest, to save the life of the mother, or believe abortion should never be permitted.

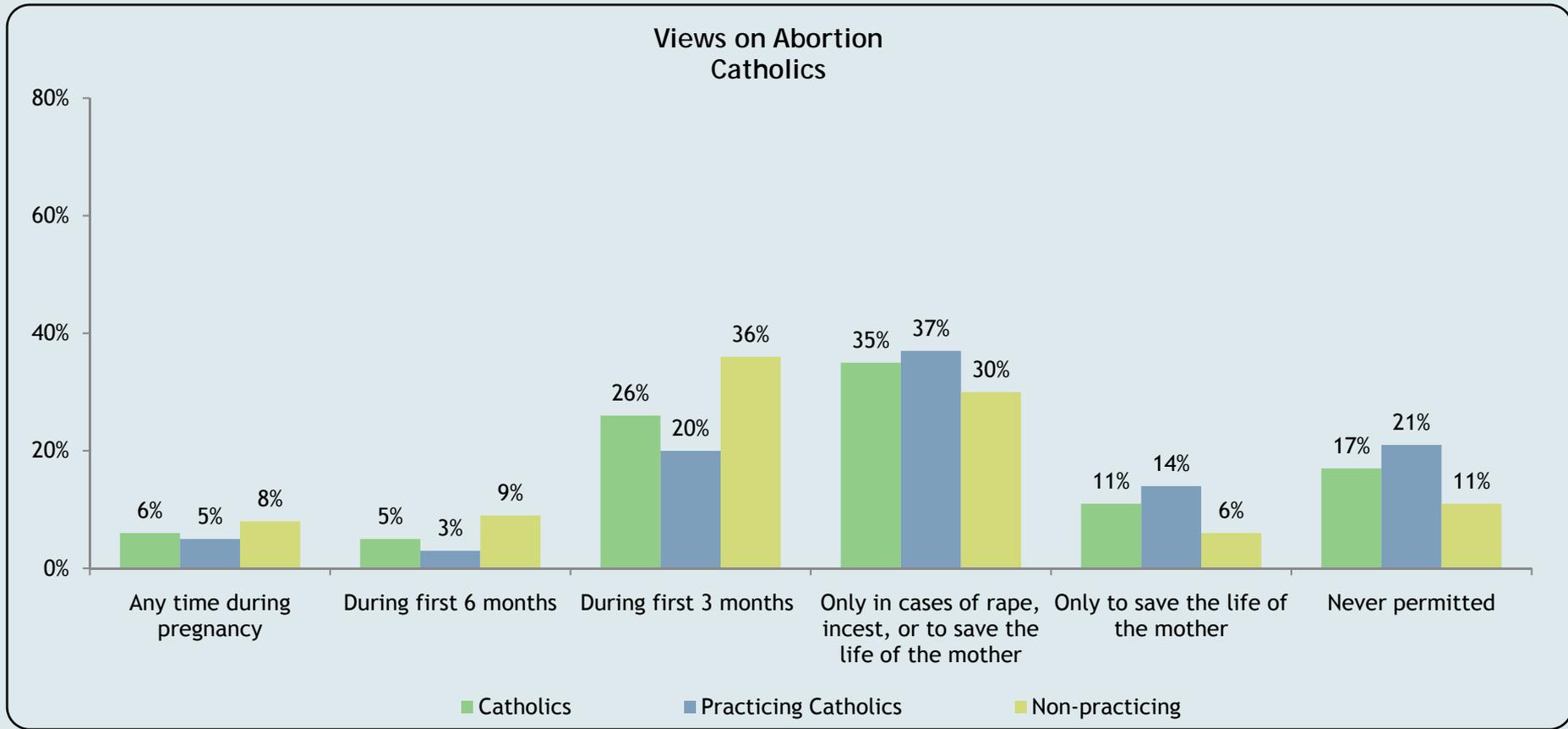
Majority of Practicing Catholics Are Pro-Life



Question wording: On the issue of abortion, do you consider yourself pro-life or pro-choice?

- When asked to identify themselves as either pro-life or pro-choice, Catholics, as a whole, divide.
- But, 59% of practicing Catholics identify themselves as pro-life compared with 65% of non-practicing Catholics who consider themselves to be pro-choice.

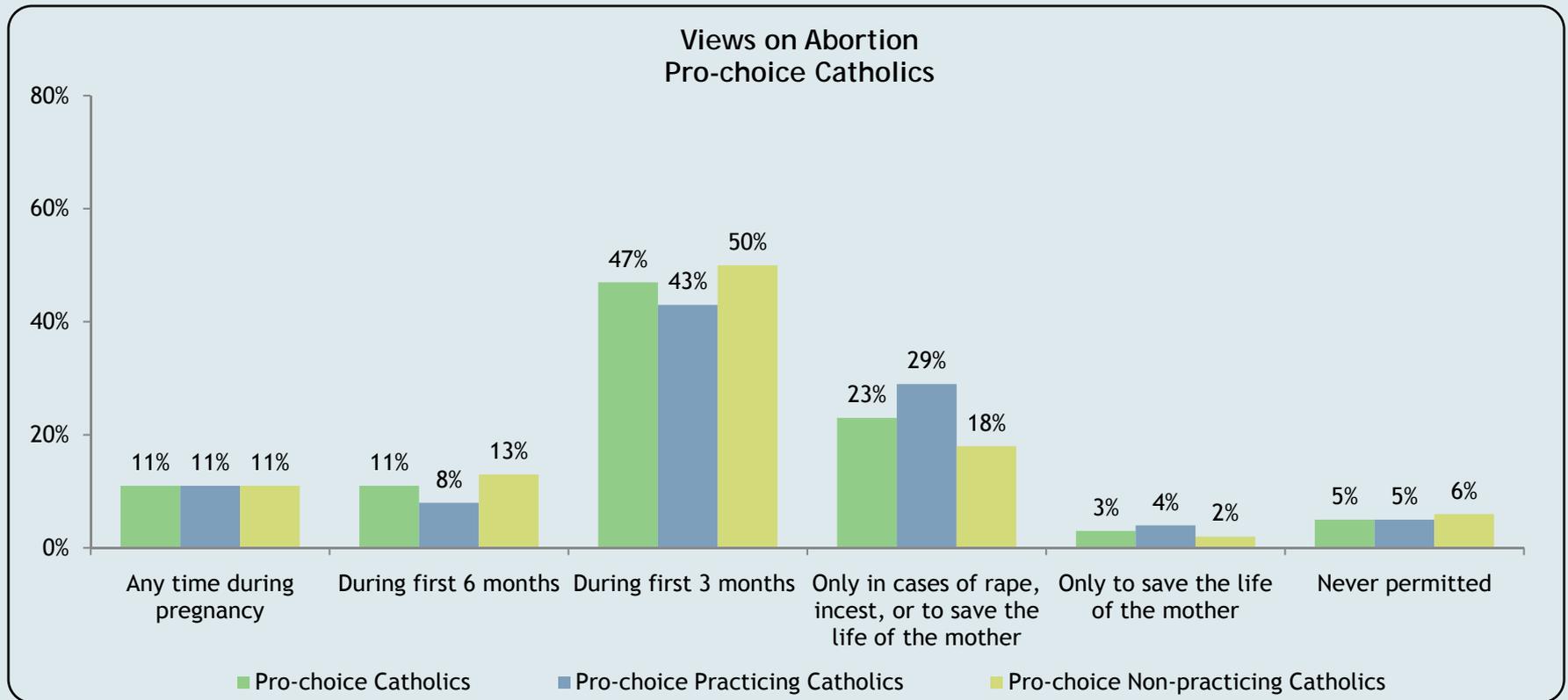
Most Catholics Call for Restrictions



Question wording: Which one of the following statements comes closest to your opinion on abortion:

- 92% of practicing Catholics want to limit abortion.
- This includes 72% who would limit abortion only to cases of rape, incest, to save the life of the mother or who believe abortion should never be permitted.

Most Pro-Choice Catholics Want Restrictions

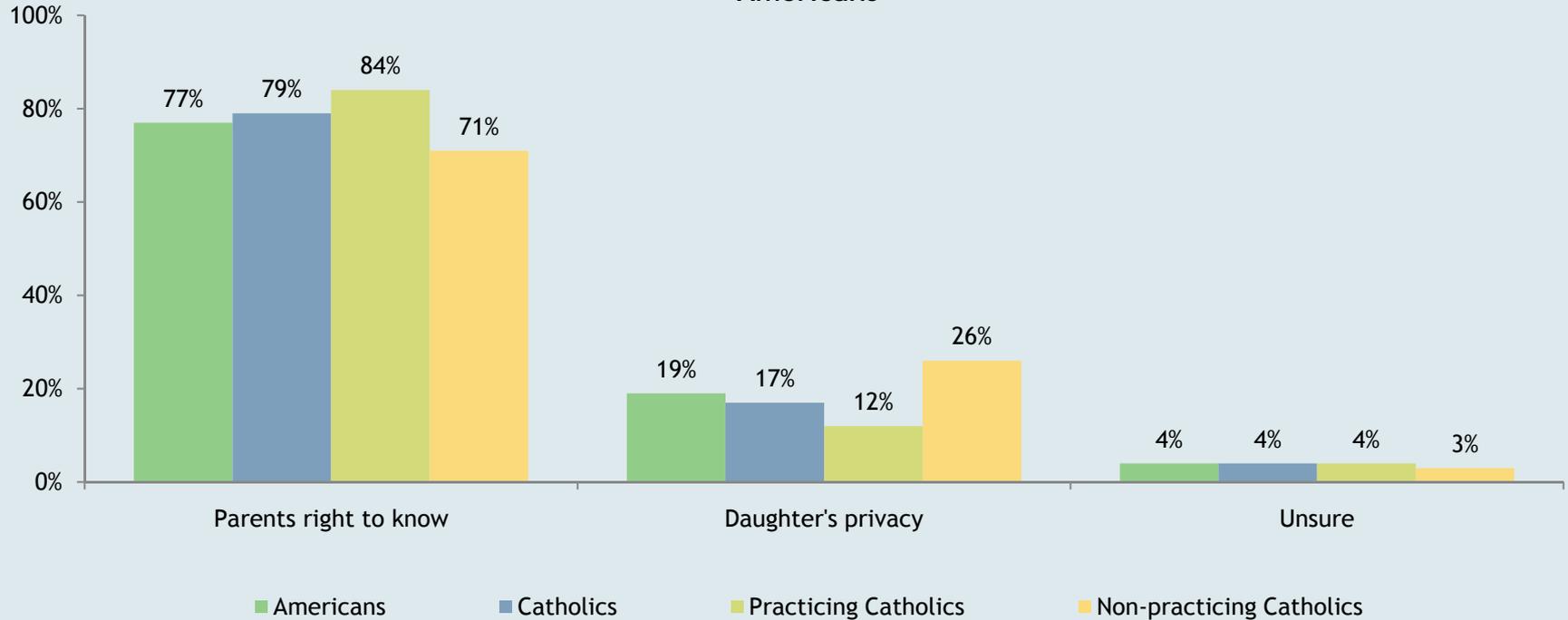


Question wording: Which one of the following statements comes closest to your opinion on abortion:

- ✦ 78% of pro-choice Catholics and 81% of pro-choice practicing Catholics would significantly restrict abortion.
- ✦ Interestingly, 76% of pro-choice non-practicing Catholics agree that abortion should be significantly restricted.

People Agree... Parents Have a Right to Know

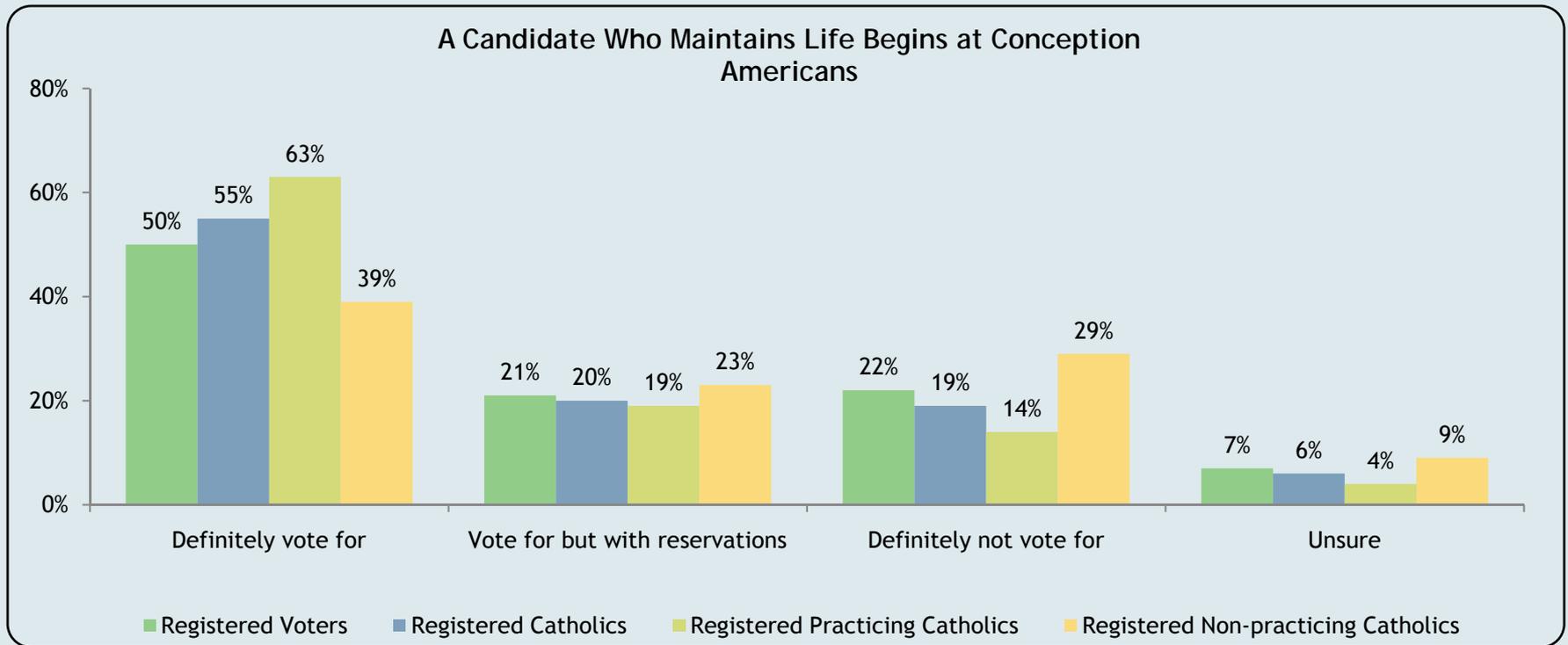
Views on Parental Notification
Americans



Question wording: Except in a medical emergency, which do you think is more important: the privacy of a daughter under the age of 18 to have an abortion or the right of a parent to know their underage daughter is about to have this surgical procedure?

- 77% of Americans believe parents have a right to know if their underage daughter is about to have an abortion. About one in five Americans believe the privacy of the daughter is more important.

Voters: Definition of Life

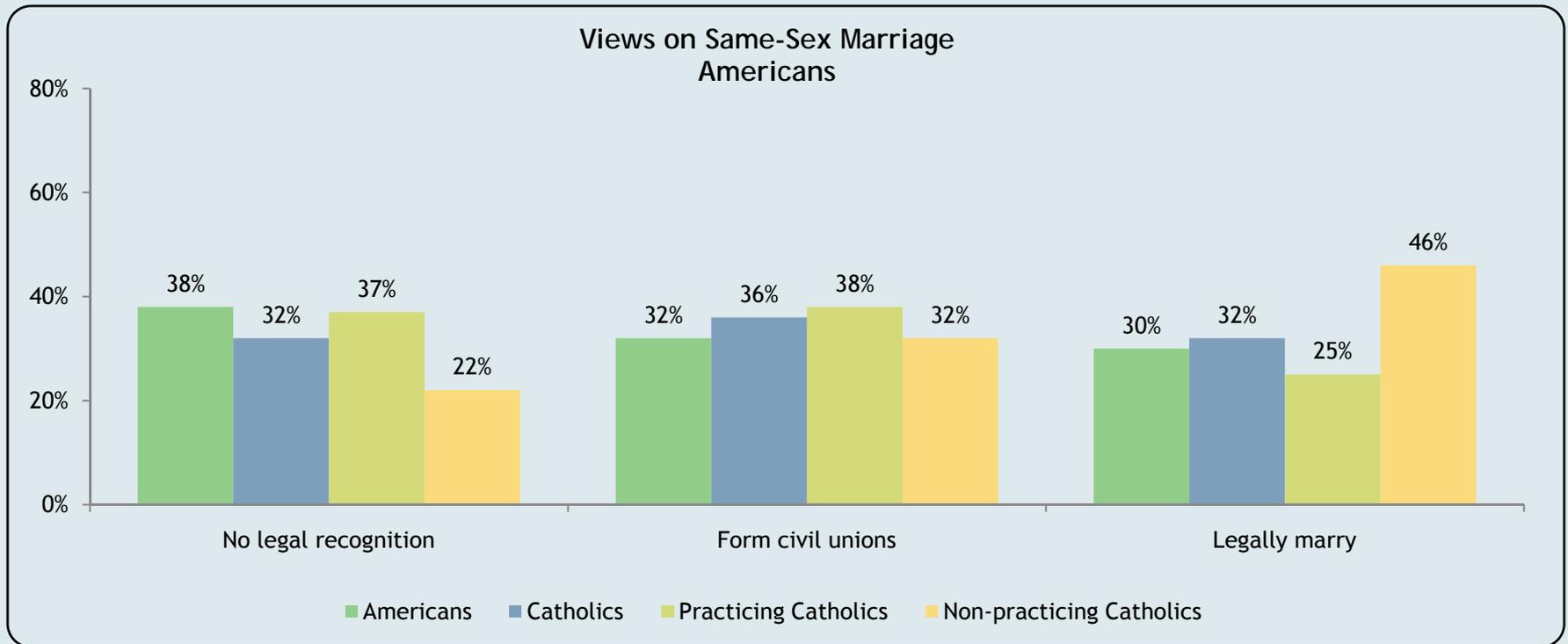


Question wording: Would you definitely vote for, vote for but with reservations, or would you definitely not vote for a candidate who would do each of the following: Maintain that life begins at conception.

- 71% of voters nationwide would support a candidate who maintains life begins at conception including half the electorate who would definitely vote for a candidate who holds this view.
- Most Catholic voters and registered practicing Catholic voters agree and favor a candidate who maintains that life begins at conception.

Same-Sex Marriage

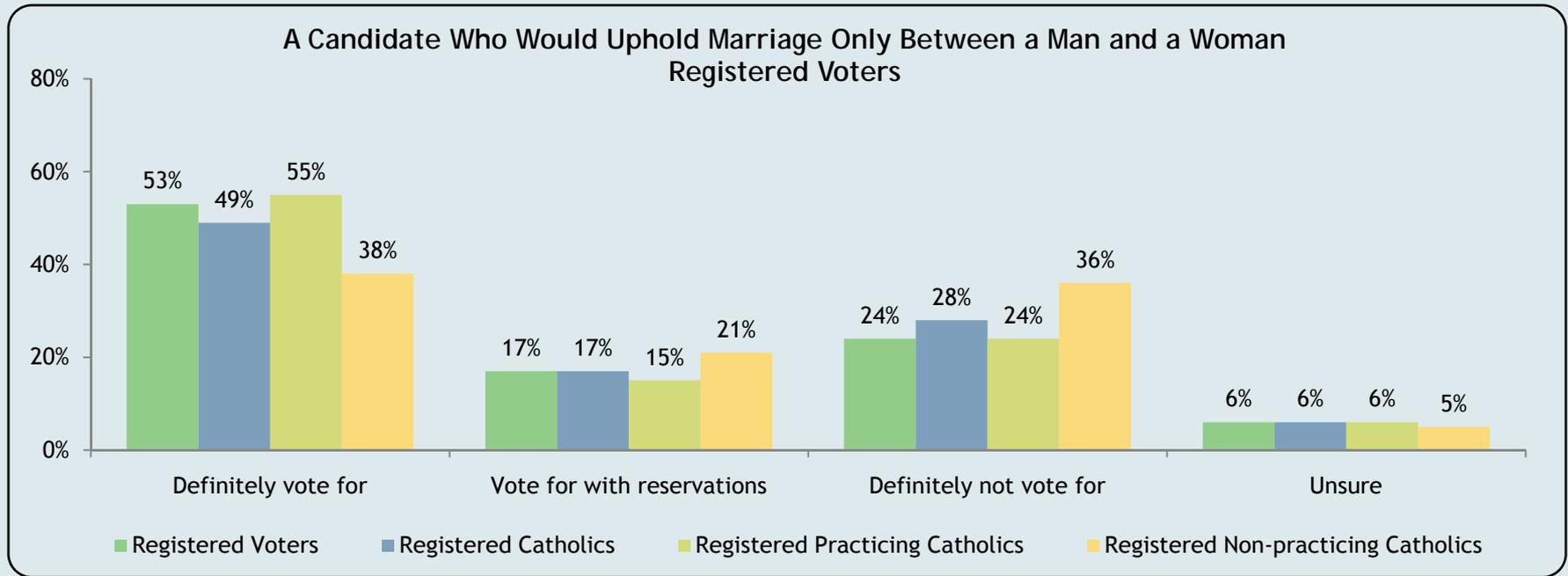
70% of Americans Oppose Same-Sex Marriage



Question wording: Which comes closest to your view: Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry, gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally form civil unions, but not marry, or there should be no legal recognition of the relationship between gay and lesbian couples?

- 70% of Americans do not support same-sex marriage including 38% who advocate no legal recognition and 32% who favor civil unions.
- 68% of Catholics and 75% of practicing Catholics share this view.
- Even though a majority of non-practicing Catholics oppose same sex marriage, 46% believe same-sex couples should be allowed to marry.

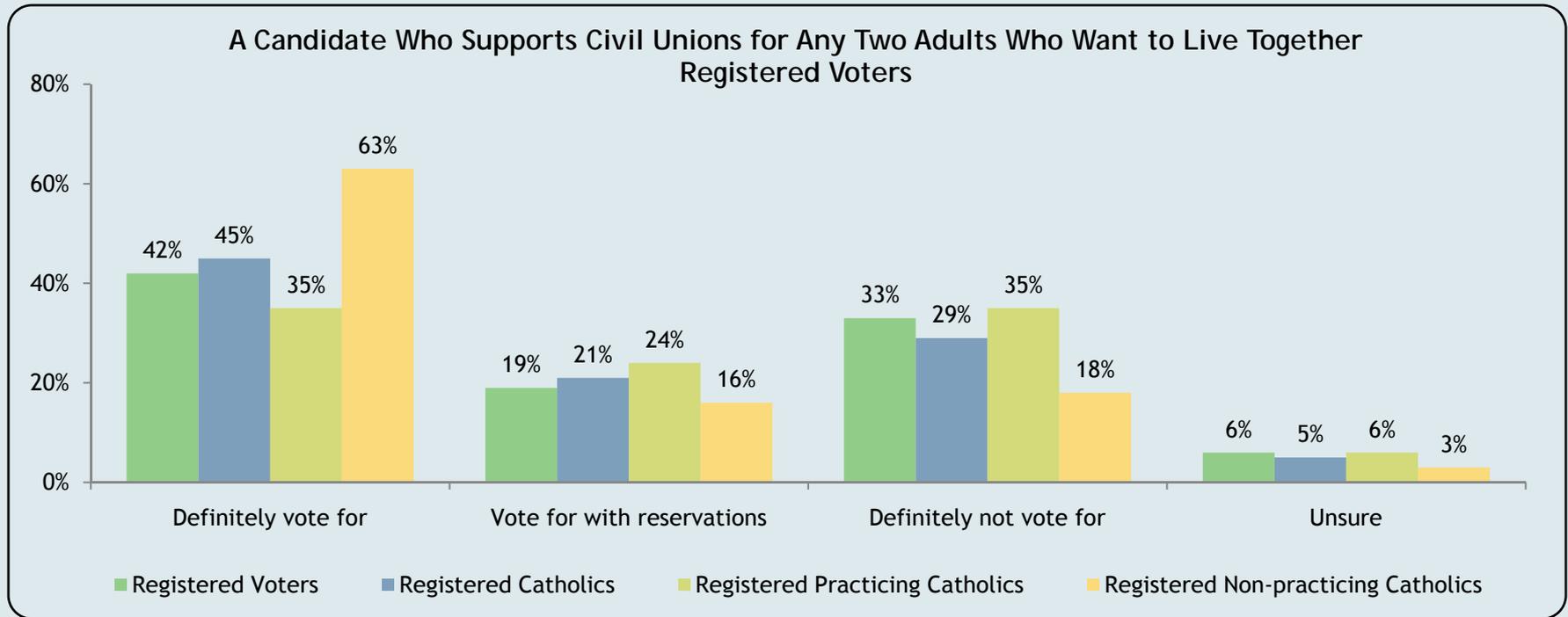
Voters: Same-Sex Marriage and the Ballot



Question wording: Would you definitely vote for, vote for but with reservations, or would you definitely not vote for a candidate who would do each of the following: Uphold marriage only between a man and a woman?

- 70% of voters would support a candidate who would uphold marriage only between a man and a woman including a majority of the electorate who would definitely vote for such a candidate.
- A comparable proportion of Catholic voters agree including 55% of registered practicing Catholics who would definitely support a candidate who believes marriage should be between a man and a woman.
- Only 38% of non-practicing Catholic voters would definitely support such a candidate.

Voters: Same-Sex Marriage and the Ballot

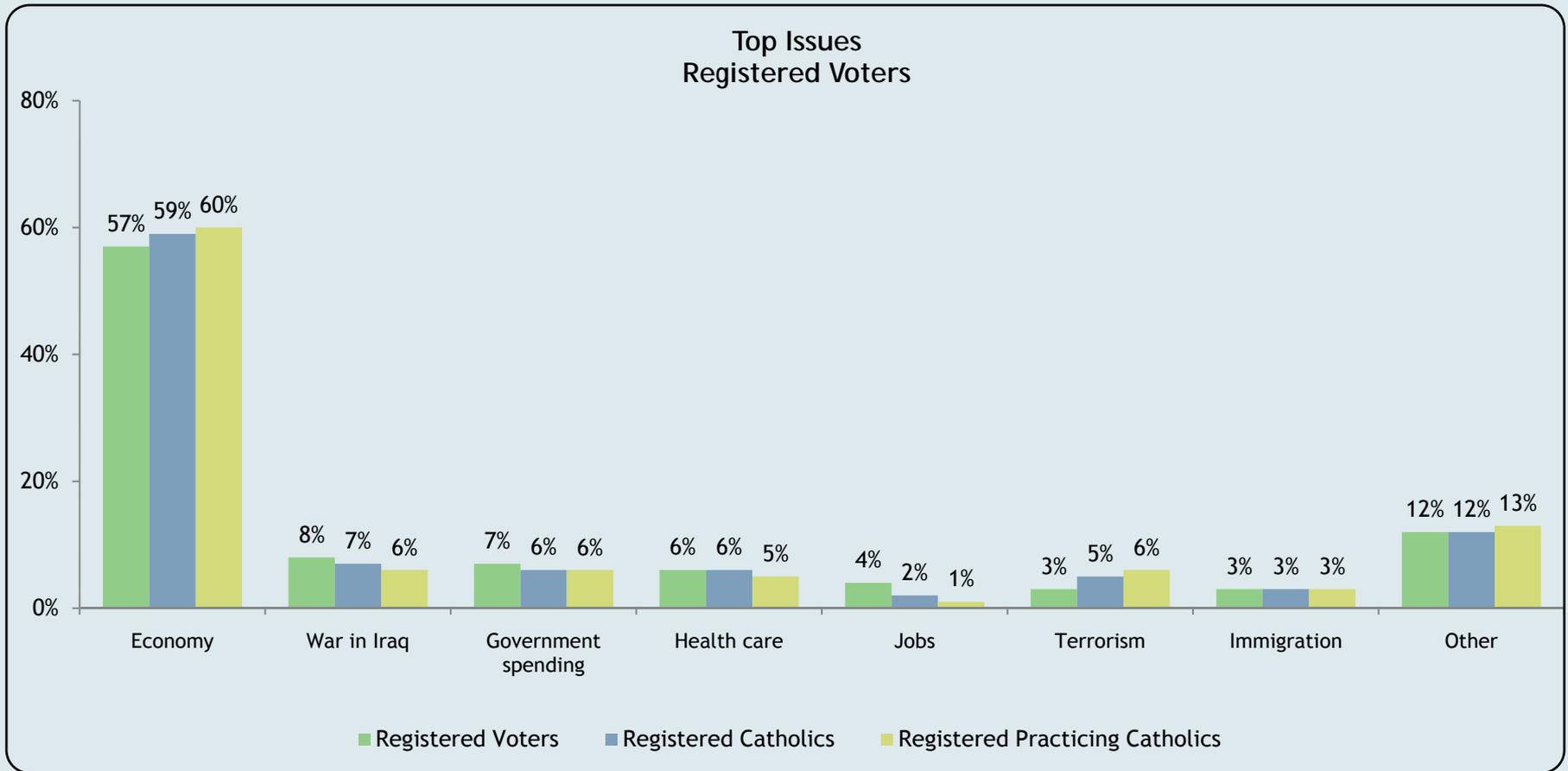


Question wording: Would you definitely vote for, vote for but with reservations, or would you definitely not vote for a candidate who would do each of the following: Support civil unions for any two adults who want to live together?

- 42% of voters nationwide would definitely support a candidate who supports civil unions between any two adults. Another 19% would support, with reservations, a candidate with this position.
- Nearly two-thirds of registered non-practicing Catholic voters would definitely vote for a candidate who held this position.

*Election Season:
Values and Issues*

Economy Ranks as Top Issue

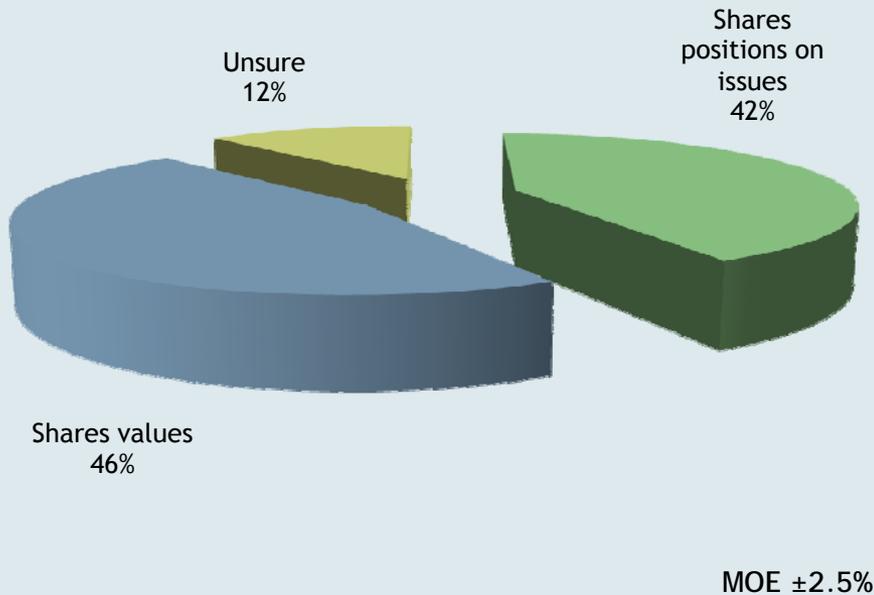


Question wording: Which of the following would you say is the most important issue facing the United States today:

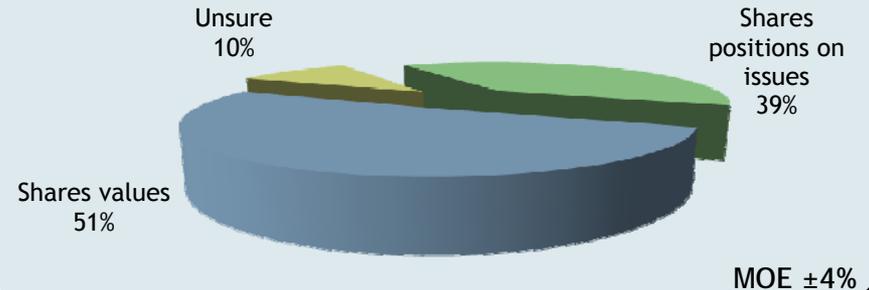
- The economic crisis is on the minds of most registered voters in the U.S. 57% think the nation's financial situation is the critical issue facing the nation today. Catholic voters agree.

Values Matter More to Catholics

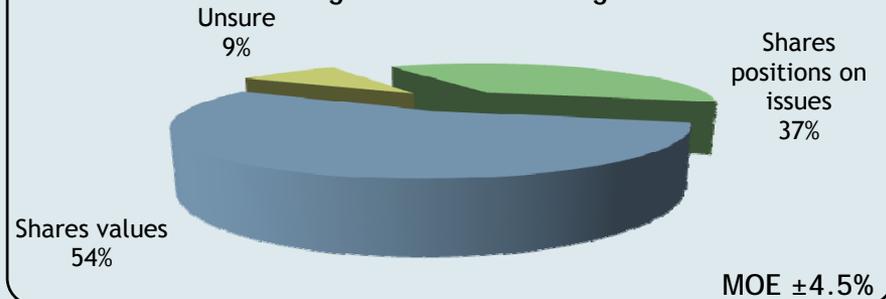
Issues vs. Values
Registered Voters



Issues vs. Values
Registered Catholics



Issues vs. Values
Registered Practicing Catholics



Question wording: If you had to choose, would you prefer: A candidate who shares your position on the issues, but does not share your values or a candidate who shares your values, but not your positions on the issues?

- A majority of Catholic voters -- 51% -- prefer a candidate who shares their values rather than one who maintains similar positions on the issues. 54% of practicing Catholic voters agree. However, the national electorate divides. 46% of registered voters want a candidate with similar values. 42% desire a candidate with whom they share the same views on the issues.

What Voters Want in a Candidate

What Voters Want in a Candidate Registered Voters	
50% or more responded they would definitely vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:	
Uphold religious liberty and freedom of conscience	73%
Work to solve global warming	63%
Stand for the Christian principles on which this country was founded	63%
Support universal health care	60%
Support vouchers to allow students to attend private, public, or religious schools	54%
Uphold marriage only between a man and a woman	53%
Support embryonic stem-cell research	53%
Maintain that life begins at conception	50%
MOE $\pm 2.5\%$	

Question wording: Would you definitely vote for, vote for but with reservations, or would you definitely not vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:

- A combination of both values and issues shapes voters' perceptions of candidates running for public office.
- 73% of registered voters nationwide would definitely support a candidate who upholds religious liberties, and 63% want a candidate who stands for Christian principles. Many also look for a candidate who will work to solve global warming, support universal health care, and work to establish school vouchers.

What Catholic Voters Want in a Candidate

Registered Catholics		Registered Practicing Catholics	
50% or more responded they would definitely vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:		50% or more responded they would definitely vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:	
Uphold religious liberty and freedom of conscience	74%	Uphold religious liberty and freedom of conscience	77%
Work to solve global warming	70%	Stand for the Christian principles on which this country was founded	74%
Stand for the Christian principles on which this country was founded	67%	Work to solve global warming	69%
Support vouchers to allow students to attend private, public, or religious schools	60%	Support vouchers to allow students to attend private, public, or religious schools	63%
Support universal health care	59%	Maintain that life begins at conception	63%
Maintain that life begins at conception	55%	Uphold marriage only between a man and a woman	55%
Be committed to success in the war in Iraq	53%	Support universal health care	55%
Support embryonic stem-cell research	52%	Be committed to success in the war in Iraq	53%
Make government funding for the poor a top priority	52%	Make government funding for the poor a top priority	50%
MOE ±4%		MOE ±4.5%	

Question wording: Would you definitely vote for, vote for but with reservations, or would you definitely not vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:

- Catholic voters match many of the priorities of the national electorate. They prefer a candidate who will uphold religious liberties, tackle global warming, stand for Christian principles, support school vouchers, and work toward universal health care.
- Many practicing Catholics also favor a candidate who maintains life begins at conception.

Issues with Less of a Consensus Among Catholics

Registered Catholics		Registered Practicing Catholics	
Fewer than 50% responded they would definitely vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:		Fewer than 50% responded they would definitely vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:	
Uphold marriage only between a man and a woman	49%	Support embryonic stem-cell research	45%
Support the death penalty	45%	Support the death penalty	39%
Support civil unions for any two adults who want to live together	45%	Leave the economy to adjust to market forces	38%
Leave the economy to adjust to market forces	38%	Make it easier for religious groups & institutions to compete for federal grants	38%
Make it easier for religious groups & institutions to compete for federal grants	36%	Take a stand based on his religious principles	38%
Take a stand based on his religious principles	32%	Consult with religious leaders for guidance	36%
Consult with religious leaders for guidance	31%	Support civil unions for any two adults who want to live together	35%
Provide amnesty to illegal immigrants currently working in the U.S.	28%	Provide amnesty to illegal immigrants currently working in the U.S.	27%
MOE ±4%		MOE ±4.5%	

Question wording: Would you definitely vote for, vote for but with reservations, or would you definitely not vote for a candidate who would do each of the following:

- Although each of these issues is important to many Catholic voters, there is less consensus on them.
- Registered Catholic voters, as a whole, are more divided on the issue of traditional marriage, the death penalty, and civil unions.
- The issue of embryonic stem-cell research divides practicing Catholic voters.



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Founded in 1978, the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (MIPO) is a survey research center at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. The Marist Poll has conducted independent research on public priorities, elections, and a wide variety of public issues.

Through the regular public release of surveys, MIPO has built a legacy of independence, reliability, and accuracy. Frequently cited by journalists, public officials, and policy experts, the Marist Poll has been recognized for fairness, accuracy, and timeliness. Its results are featured in print and electronic media throughout the world.



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The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic men's fraternal benefit society that was formed to render financial aid to members and their families. Mutual aid and assistance are offered to sick, disabled and needy members and their families. Social and intellectual fellowship is promoted among members and their families through educational, charitable, religious, social welfare, war relief and public relief works.

The Knights of Columbus has grown from several members in one council to more than 13,000 councils and 1.7 million members throughout the United States, Canada, the Philippines, Mexico, Poland, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Guatemala, Guam and Saipan.