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First Reactions More Positive than for Pope Benedict

U.S. Catholics Express Favorable View of Pope Francis

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First Reactions More Positive than for Pope Benedict

U.S. Catholics Express Favorable View of Pope Francis

In the early days of his papacy, Pope Francis is viewed favorably by an overwhelming majority of U.S. Catholics. More than eight-in-ten (84%) say they have a favorable impression of the new pontiff, including 43% who express a very favorable view.

Francis is viewed much more favorably by U.S. Catholics than Pope Benedict XVI was during the early days of his pontificate. Benedict was rated favorably by 67% of U.S. Catholics in July 2005, roughly three months after assuming the papacy.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted March 28-31 among 1,001 adults (including 193 Catholics) also finds that among Americans as a whole, 57% have a favorable opinion of Pope Francis. Roughly three-in-ten (29%) cannot yet rate the new pope, while 14% have an unfavorable opinion of him.

Currently, just 5% of U.S. Catholics express an unfavorable view of Pope Francis, while

roughly one-in-ten (11%) are as yet unable to rate him. Pope Benedict XVI also was

Views of Pope Francis

	U.S. adults	Catholics
	%	%
Favorable	57	84
Very favorable	22	43
Mostly favorable	35	41
Unfavorable	14	5
Can't rate/Refused	29	11
	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 28-31, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Trends in Papal Favorability, Among U.S. Catholics

	(NET)			(NET)	Can't
	Favorable	Very	Mostly	Unfavorable	rate/Ref
	%	%	%	%	%
Pope Francis					
March 2013	84	43	41	5	11=100
Benedict XVI					
February 2013	74	32	41	16	10=100
April 2008	83	49	34	9	8=100
March 2008	74	36	38	11	15=100
August 2007	74	31	43	12	14=100
July 2005	67	17	50	5	28=100
John Paul II					
June 1996	93	49	44	5	2=100
May 1990	93	53	40	6	1=100
May 1987	91	48	43	8	1=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 28-31, 2013. PEW3a. Based on Catholics. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

viewed unfavorably by 5% of U.S. Catholics in the early days of his papacy, while about one-quarter of American Catholics (28%) had no opinion of him either way.

Francis' current favorability rating among U.S. Catholics matches the high water mark for Benedict, who was rated favorably by 83% of U.S. Catholics in April 2008 following his visit to the U.S. Roughly three-quarters of U.S. Catholics (74%) rated Benedict favorably in [February](#) 2013 immediately following the announcement of his resignation.

Benedict's predecessor, Pope John Paul II, was rated favorably by upwards of nine-in-ten U.S. Catholics in three separate Pew Research polls conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. John Paul II first visited the U.S. as pope in October 1979, roughly one year after ascending to the papacy. He also visited the U.S. in September 1987, August 1993, October 1995 and January 1999.

About the Survey

This report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 28-31, 2013, among a national sample of 1,001 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (500 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone and 501 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 235 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Universal Survey Center and Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about the survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,001	3.7 percentage points
Catholics	193	8.5 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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MARCH 28-31, 2013, OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,001

NOTE: OTHER QUESTIONS FROM THIS SURVEY HAVE BEEN RELEASED PREVIOUSLY OR HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

PEW.3 Is your overall opinion of [INSERT NAME; RANDOMIZE] very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? How about [NEXT NAME]? [IF NECESSARY: Just in general, is your overall opinion of [NAME] very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?] [INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."]

	-----Favorable-----			-----Unfavorable-----			(VOL.)	(VOL.)
	Total	Very	Mostly	Total	Very	Mostly	Never heard of	Can't rate/Ref
a. Pope Francis								
March 28-31, 2013	57	22	35	14	6	9	6	22
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:								
<i>Pope Benedict the sixteenth</i>								
February 14-17, 2013	49	14	34	27	12	16	4	20
April 23-30, 2008	61	22	39	17	8	9	4	18
March, 2008	52	18	34	18	6	12	7	23
August, 2007	50	14	36	18	6	12	8	24
July, 2005	44	10	34	11	4	7	4	41
<i>Pope John Paul II</i>								
June, 1996	76	28	48	13	4	9	1	10
May, 1990	79	31	48	11	4	7	1	9
May, 1987	76	28	48	14	4	10	1	9