

Since 2000, CARA has helped numerous organizations and academic researchers using the CARA Catholic Poll (CCP). The following are examples of publicly available findings:

- Forty percent of U.S. Catholics say they are “very satisfied” with the way the Church meets their spiritual needs.
- Seventy percent of Catholics believe Jesus is present in the Eucharist while 30 percent believe bread and wine are only symbols of Jesus.
- Half of Catholics report that they abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent.
- One in four Catholics regularly attend Mass at a parish that is not closest to home. One in five visited another parish before joining their current one.
- After statistically adjusting for likely exclusion of difficult-to-reach households, an estimated 33 percent of Catholic adults and children in the United States self-identify as Hispanic/Latino(a).

To read examples of research reports based on the CCP click on “CARA Publications” from the CARA website. Findings from the CCP have appeared in a number of national news stories and in articles in peer-reviewed academic journals.

<http://cara.georgetown.edu>



You may have read about the CCP in national publications such as *The New York Times*...

### Study Sees Church Rebounding From Scandal

By LAURIE GOODSTEIN

A new study has found that the scandal over sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church has not caused American Catholics to leave the church, or to stop attending Mass and donating to their parishes.

The study shows that Catholic participation in church life and satisfaction with church leadership dropped noticeably at the height of the scandal in 2002, but has now largely rebounded to prescandal levels.

The only significant decline is in the percentage of Catholics who contributed to diocesan financial appeals, annual campaigns that are usually run by bishops. While the percentage of Catholics who contributed to their local parishes remained steady, those who gave to diocesan appeals dropped to 29 percent in 2005 from 38 percent in April 2002.

“There’s been an expectation that there would be more Catholics exiting the faith, and clearly the polls show that there wasn’t any evidence of that,” said Mark M. Gray, research associate at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, which conducted the study.

“It’s a reflection of how resilient religious faith can be — that Catholics were able to disconnect their own personal faith from what was occurring among a group of clergy at a specific time in history,” Dr. Gray said. “Their faith was bigger than these events. Clearly there was a lot of dissatisfaction, but people remain Catholic.”

The center based the study on 10 national telephone polls of adult Catholics conducted since January 2001. Most included 1,000 or more respondents, but since the number of people polled varied each time, the margin of sampling error varied from plus or minus 2.1 percentage points to plus or minus 4.4 percentage points.

The sexual abuse crisis, which first erupted in the Archdiocese of Boston in early 2002, eventually spread to nearly every diocese in the nation as accusers stepped forward and said priests had molested them as children and young adults. American bishops sent a delegation to Rome to meet with Pope John Paul II and instituted new rules for removing accused priests from the ministry. A report commissioned by the church found that from 1950 to 2004, more than 9,000 young people were victimized.

But the new study found that many Catholics knew little about the scope of the scandal, and that the percentage who said that they had heard

**Status Quo**

According to surveys of adult Catholics, the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church has had little effect on attendance or financial contributions.

Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass? Percentage attending Mass at least once a week.

During the last 12 months, did you or your household regularly contribute to the collection at your local parish? Percentage responding “Yes.”

Based on nationwide telephone surveys, the latest of which was conducted Sept. 20 to Oct. 3, 2005, with 1,000 Catholic adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Source: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

The New York Times

about the bishops’ responses to the scandal dropped to 40 percent in 2005 from a peak of 59 percent in 2004.

“They are just not very well informed of what is really happening,” said John Moynihan, communications director for Voice of the Faithful, a Catholic reform group born in the scandal’s wake.

The percentage of adult Americans who identify themselves as Catholic has remained steady at 23

percent, the study found. The percentage of Catholics who say they attend Mass at least once a week also held steady from September 2000 to September 2005 at 33 percent, with a slight rise to 39 percent immediately after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, according to the center’s polls.

Donations at the parish level also held steady. Seventy-six percent of Catholics said in April 2002 that they had contributed to their parish collection in the previous year, compared with 74 percent in October 2005.

“This really confirms what we’ve heard as well,” said Dr. Francis J. Butler, president of Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activi-

ties. “People are very strongly supportive of their own parish life, but contributions to national collections have dipped.”

Some dioceses are now struggling financially, Dr. Butler said, including Boston; Cincinnati; Spokane, Wash.; Savannah, Ga.; Burlington, Vt.; San Francisco; Oakland, Calif.; Gary, Ind.; and Springfield, Mass.

Paul Baier, co-director of [bishopaccountability.org](http://bishopaccountability.org), said he had learned that Catholics had “compartmentalized their faith.”

“Their belief in their pastor is not shaken,” Mr. Baier said, “but they find a lack of moral authority in the bishops.”

The study found that three-fourths of Catholics say the sexual abuse issue has hurt the credibility of church leaders who speak out on social or political issues. However, it also found that 74 percent of Catholics are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the leadership of American bishops, an increase from 68 percent in April 2002, when the question was first asked, as the scandal was escalating.

Even more said they were satisfied with their own bishop’s leadership (81 percent in April 2002, and 85 percent in October 2005).

Robert Wuthnow, the director of the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University, said he was surprised at the study’s findings.

“At the popular level of casual conversations, there’s always this assumption that the Catholic Church is not doing well because of the scandal, and people are wringing their hands,” Dr. Wuthnow said. “So this evidence is really important.”



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## CCP: The CARA Catholic Poll

### A National Omnibus Telephone Poll of Adult Catholics



The CCP is an affordable research option for Catholic leaders, organizations and institutions as well as academics, journalists and publishers.

## The CARA Catholic Poll (CCP) An Annual Survey of U.S. Catholics

CARA has conducted omnibus surveys of U.S. adult Catholics since 2000. The CARA Catholic Poll (CCP) provides an accurate and timely portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and beliefs of U.S. adult Catholics.



The CCP is designed with a core set of questions measuring the demographics and Catholic background and commitment of respondents. The remainder of the survey is made up of commissioned questions written to meet the specific research needs of clients.

The CCP is a nationwide random sample telephone poll of self-identified Catholics – individuals who say they are “Catholic” when asked their religious preference. It is typically conducted in January or February each year, or by request at other times or using other polling methods. The number of CCP respondents varies year-to-year but is guaranteed to include at least 800 Catholics. Polling is conducted in both English and Spanish to provide representation of Hispanic/Latino(a) Catholics. Academic-quality polling methods are used, including multiple call-back attempts and statistical weighting of results using the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Surveys (CPS).

### CCP Details and Features

1) CARA’s staff of skilled social scientists assists clients in wording their questions. CARA researchers are highly knowledgeable about the Church and experienced in writing questions that ordinary Catholics can understand and that accurately reflect Catholic beliefs and practices. CARA will help you get the most possible information out of each question.

2) Those commissioning questions in the CCP also receive the data for CARA’s standard demographic and religion questions, including:

#### Demographic Background

- Gender
- Age
- Race and ethnicity
- Education
- Household income
- Marital status and whether one’s spouse is Catholic

#### Catholic Background

- Raised Catholic or a convert to Catholicism
- Catholic school attendance

#### Catholic Commitment and Attitudes

- Frequency of Mass attendance
- Parish involvement
- Attitudes toward Church leadership
- Belief measures
- Financial giving

3) Those commissioning questions receive a detailed written report, which includes the basic responses to their questions. For example, what percentage of all adult Catholics say “X” in response to a question? Also included are demographic and religious group break-downs. For example, what percentage of weekly Mass

attenders say “X” and what percentage of non-attenders say the same? Additionally, the report provides special analyses that are necessary to answer your specific research questions.

4) CARA’s work with clients is confidential. They decide how and whether commissioned questions and the responses to them are released. CARA releases information from the core standard demographic and religion questions on our website and in a quarterly newsletter, *The CARA Report*.

5) Fees are reduced for journalists, academic researchers, or others who require only raw data with no analysis. For additional cost, CARA can over-sample specific groups (Latinos, a specific region, etc.). CARA can also include non-Catholics in the sample. All charges are based on the specific type and number of questions, ranging from \$250 to \$3,500 per question.



**For more information about CCP 2007 contact Dr. Mark M. Gray at 202-687-0885 or [mmg34@georgetown.edu](mailto:mmg34@georgetown.edu)**