



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Georgetown University  
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## **U.S. Catholics split between intent to vote for Kerry and Bush.**

In an election year where the first Catholic candidate since John F. Kennedy has in all likelihood wrapped up the Democratic Party's nomination for president, 45 percent of likely Catholics voters say they prefer Senator John F. Kerry. Additionally, 39 percent of U.S. Catholics currently say they think of themselves as Democrats according to survey results released today by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University.

The results of the most recent CARA Catholic Poll (CCP), an annual national random-sample telephone poll of adults who self-identify as Catholic, are based on 1,001 interviews, conducted between March 15 and March 21.

According to this poll, 31 percent of Catholics think of themselves as Republicans. Forty-one percent of Catholics who say they intend to vote in November indicate a preference for President George W. Bush.

The differences between the percentage of likely Catholics voters who support Senator Kerry and those who support President Bush are within the margin of error for likely voters ( $\pm 3.5$  percentage points) indicating a very close split between the two candidates.

Fewer than one in ten Catholics who intend to vote say they are undecided about a candidate choice at this point in the campaign. Three percent indicate a preference for Ralph Nader and 2 percent say they prefer a candidate from "some other party."

Differences in party identification among Catholics are larger than the poll's overall margin of error for all Catholics ( $\pm 3.2$  percentage points). When looking only at those Catholics who intend to vote in November 40 percent say they consider themselves a Democrat and 33 percent consider themselves a Republican.

The Catholic pre-election support for Senator Kerry is well below the 72 percent of Catholics who said they intended to vote for the last Catholic presidential candidate of a major party, John F. Kennedy in 1960, according to data from the American National Election Study (NES) 1960 pre-election survey. However, support for Senator Kerry among Catholics is very similar to that shown for Vice President Al Gore in 2000. In the 2000 NES pre-election survey, 47 percent of Catholics said they intended to vote for Vice President Gore.

“The religious affiliation of candidates – and specifically those who are Catholic – is not nearly as important as it was when President Kennedy was running for office, or when Al Smith ran for president in 1928,” said CARA researcher Dr. Mark Gray. “The ‘Catholic vote’ in 2004 seems less about religion and more about party identification.”

Among sub-groups of likely Catholic voters, Senator Kerry has the strongest support among Democrats (81 percent), Hispanics born in the U.S. (56 percent), Non-Southerners (50 percent), the Millennial Generation (born in 1982 or later, 50 percent), and Generation X (born between 1961 and 1981, 47 percent). Kerry also finds strong support among likely Catholic voters who only attend Mass once or twice a year or never (51 percent). President Bush has the strongest levels of support among Catholic Republicans (87 percent), Southerners (47 percent), and those self-identifying their race and ethnicity as non-Hispanic white (46 percent).

Forty-six percent of Silent Generation Catholics (born between 1925 and 1942) who intend to vote in November say they prefer Senator Kerry. This age cohort is the only remaining generation of significant size to be eligible to vote in 2004 that also voted in 1960. According to data from the NES 1960 pre-election survey 82 percent of likely Catholic voters of the Silent Generation had intended to vote for the first Catholic Massachusetts Democrat Senator with J.F.K. initials.

“However, comparing pre-election support for then-Senator Kennedy and Senator Kerry today is complicated because so much has changed in the Catholic electorate, the political parties, and the Catholic Church in the past 44 years,” said Dr. Gray. “Kennedy did not have to deal with the issues of abortion, stem cell research, or same-sex marriage that are important in the current campaigns and important issues for the Catholic Church.”

“However, it is also a mischaracterization to look at these issues and say Senator Kerry’s policy statements are at greater odds with Catholic Church doctrine than President Bush’s,” said Dr. Gray. “Kerry’s stances regarding the war in Iraq, the death penalty, and a whole variety of social justice issues regarding healthcare, the economy, and social welfare are arguably in greater agreement with Church teachings.”

“The fact is that it is very difficult for any Catholic member of the electorate to figure out how to cast a ballot that is in agreement with Catholic Church teachings and doctrine,” said Dr. Gray. “There are too many issues that cut across both parties to make it possible to ‘vote Catholic’ even when one of the candidates is Catholic.”

Twenty-three percent of the U.S. voting age population self-identifies as Catholic.

**For questions** about these results or more information contact Dr. Mark Gray at 202-687-0885 (e-mail: [mmg34@georgetown.edu](mailto:mmg34@georgetown.edu)).

## CARA Catholic Poll (CCP) 2004 Frequencies

*Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?*

	Percent
Republican	30.5
Democrat	38.5
Independent	21.8
[Volunteered] Any other party (e.g., Green or Libertarian)	0.8
[Volunteered] No preference, Don't Know (Apolitical)	8.4

*Do you intend to vote for one of the Presidential candidates in the November election?*

	Percent
Yes	81.6
No	14.2
[Volunteered] Don't Know	4.2

*If the Presidential election were held today who would you most likely vote for?*

	Percent
George W. Bush	40.7
John Kerry	45.5
Ralph Nader	3.4
A candidate of some other party	1.8
[Volunteered] Don't know/Undecided	8.6

### Survey Details:

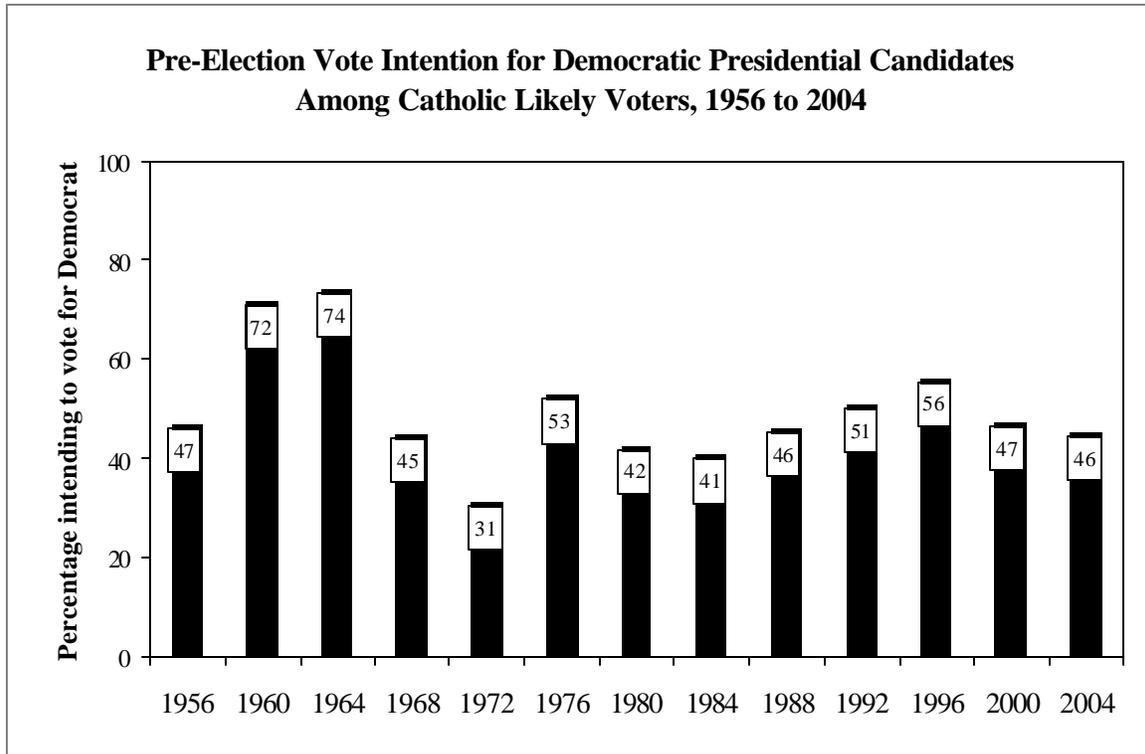
Interviews for the CARA Catholic Poll (CCP) were conducted by telephone between March 15 and March 21, 2004. The national sample is derived from random digit dialing. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish based on each respondent's language preference. Respondents self-identified as "Catholic" in response to the question, "What is your religious preference?" Interviews were completed with 1,001 adult Catholics (18 years or older) providing for a margin of sampling error of  $\pm 3.2$  percentage points (95 percent confidence). This means that if the sample were drawn 100 times, 95 of these samples would provide an estimate of responses to each question that is  $\pm 3.2$  percentage points of the actual population percentage. The margin of error among likely Catholic voters is  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points (95 percent confidence). CARA has weighted the data to most accurately reflect U.S. demographics as reported in the February 2004 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) accounting for race and ethnicity, Census region, generation (age cohorts), and gender. For more information about the CCP visit: [http://cara.georgetown.edu/services/ccp\\_poll.htm](http://cara.georgetown.edu/services/ccp_poll.htm)

## Sub-Group Differences

<b>Comparing Catholic Pre-Election Vote Intention for Catholic Presidential Candidates Among Sub-Groups</b>		
	<b>Kerry 2004</b>	<b>Bush 2004</b>
All likely Catholic voters	45.5%	40.7%
<u>Mass Attendance</u>		
Once a week or more (regular)	40.6	44.8
Once or twice per month (semi-regular)	43.6	41.9
A few times a year or never (irregular)	51.4	36.0
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	44.5	42.3
Female	46.4	39.1
<u>Generation (birth years)</u>		
Silent Generation (1925-1942)	46.4	41.4
Baby Boomers (1943-1960)	43.2	41.6
Generation X (1961-1980)	46.8	41.1
Millennial Generation (1981-)	50.0	32.3
<u>Partisanship</u>		
Democrat	81.0	8.0
Independent	40.3	33.2
Republican	6.8	86.7
<u>Race and Ethnicity</u>		
Non-Hispanic White	43.9	45.7
Hispanic, Born in the U.S.	56.3	22.5
Hispanic, Foreign-born	40.9	25.0
Other (Black, Asian, Native American, etc.)	50.0	24.3
<u>U.S. Census Region</u>		
Northeast	51.9	37.9
Midwest	47.5	38.5
South	35.1	47.1
West	49.0	38.5

Source: CCP 2004. The CCP margin of error for likely voters is  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points. Margins of error among sub-groups vary and are always larger as each sub-group represents a smaller number of respondents. There are too few interviews with the World War II Generation (born between 1901 and 1924) to provide an estimate for this sub-group.

## Historical Trend



Sources: CCP 2004, the American National Election Studies (NES). For information about the American National Election Studies visit: <http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>

## The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate:

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) is a non-profit, independent and non-partisan research institution at Georgetown University. CARA researchers conduct applied social scientific research related to the Catholic Church in the United States. CARA was created in 1964 and has been affiliated with Georgetown University since 1989. The CARA Catholic Poll (CCP) has been conducted annually since 2000. For more information about CARA or the CCP visit: <http://cara.georgetown.edu>