

Religious Devotions and Practices

This section summarizes responses to several questions about Catholics' religious devotions and practices in daily life. Respondents were asked about their general level of involvement in religious activities outside of Mass, about what they do during Lent, whether they own or carry religious art or objects, and how frequently they pray the rosary.

General Involvement in Parish and Religious Activities other than Mass

Four percent of Catholics describe themselves as “very” involved in parish or religious activities other than attending Mass.

<i>Besides attending Mass, how involved are you in parish or other religious activities?</i>		
	2001	2008
Very involved	7%	4%
Somewhat involved	18	11
Involved a little	24	21
Not involved at all	51	64

In 2001, one-quarter of Catholics reported that they were at least “somewhat” involved in parish or other religious activities, compared to 15 percent in the present (2008) poll.²⁵

²⁵ This result comes from the 2001 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

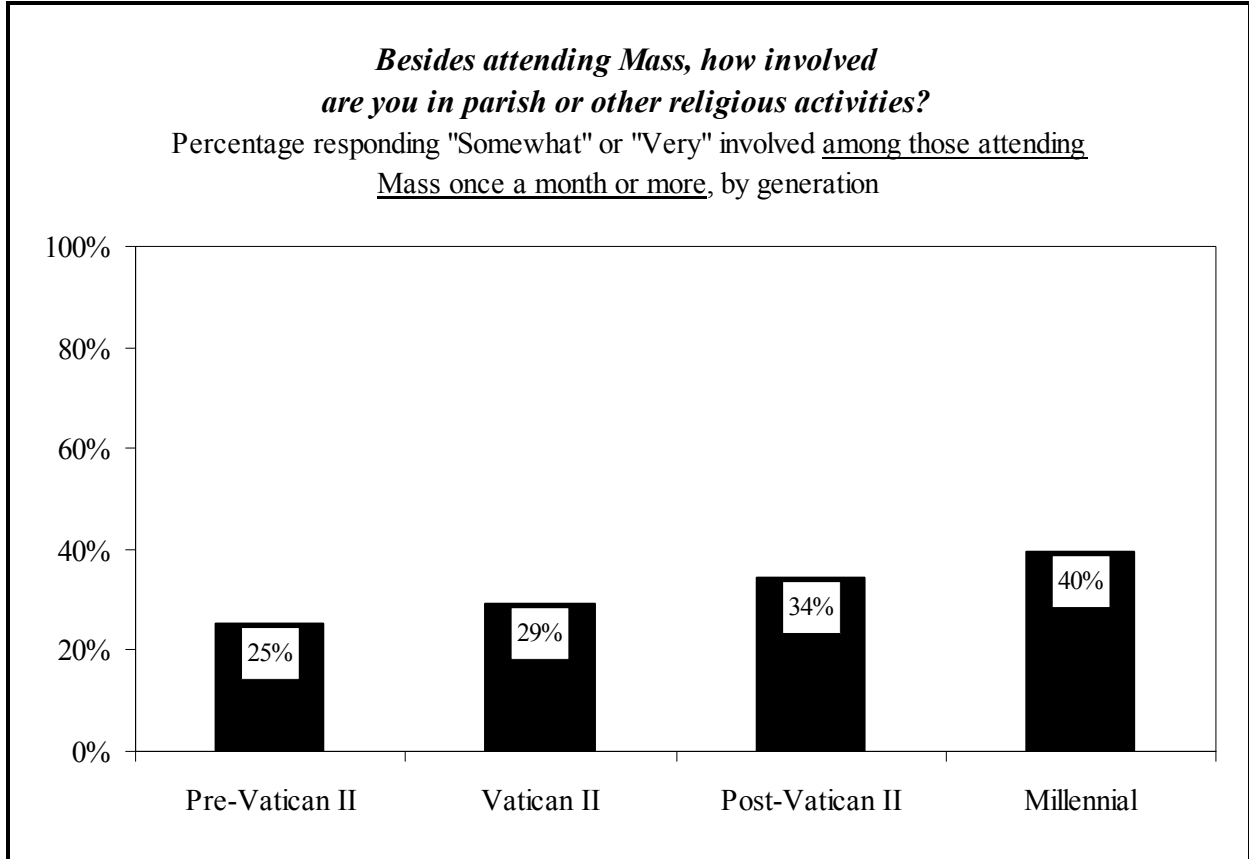
Differences by Mass Attendance

The more frequently Catholics attend Mass, the more likely they are to be active in their parish. More than four in ten weekly attenders (42 percent) say they are “somewhat” or “very” involved in parish and religious activities other than Mass. By comparison, only 19 percent of those attending Mass at least once a month but not weekly and 3 percent of those attending a few times a year or less often say they are this active in their parish or other religious activities.

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Very involved	13%	3%	<1%
Somewhat involved	29	16	2
Involved a little	33	38	10
Not involved at all	25	43	88

Differences by Generation

Among those attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation (40 percent) and Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics (34 percent) are more likely than older Catholics to say they are at least “somewhat” involved in parish life.



Differences by Education

Among those who attended some college, those who attended a Catholic college or university are more than twice as likely as those attending a non-Catholic institution to be at least “somewhat” active in their parish or other religious activities (33 percent compared to 15 percent). Sixty-two percent of those who attended a Catholic college or university report some (at least “a little”) level of activity besides attending Mass.

Lenten Practices

Six in ten Catholics say they abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays.

Do you do any of the following during Lent, the 40-day period preceding the celebration of Easter?

Percentage saying “Yes”

Do you abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent?	60%
Do you typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services?	45
Besides giving something up, do you do anything positive, like giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person, during Lent?	44
Besides meat on Fridays, do you give up or abstain from anything else during Lent?	38

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Catholics were asked if they observe Lent in each of several ways.

- Slightly less than half (45 percent) typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services.
- A similar proportion try to something positive (as opposed to giving something up) during Lent.
- Slightly fewer than four-tenths give up something for Lent (other than abstaining from meat on Fridays).

Differences by Mass Attendance

Nine in ten adult Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often (89 percent) abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent. Slightly fewer, 85 percent, say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday. Two-thirds of weekly attenders (67 percent) say they give up something for Lent (in addition to abstaining from meat on Fridays) and nearly three in four (73 percent) say they try to do something positive, such as giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person during Lent.

<i>Do you do any of the following during Lent, the 40-day period preceding the celebration of Easter?</i>			
Percentage saying “Yes”			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Do you abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent?	89%	81%	41%
Do you typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services?	85	73	18
Besides giving something up, do you do anything positive, like giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person, during Lent?	73	63	25
Besides meat on Fridays, do you give up or abstain from anything else during Lent?	67	51	21

Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month are only slightly less likely than weekly attenders to observe Lenten practices.

Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less are least likely to observe Lenten practices. However, four in ten of these Catholics do say they abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent.

Differences by Gender

Women are slightly more likely than men to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays (65 compared to 55 percent). They are also more likely to do something positive for Lent (51 compared to 36 percent) and to receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services (50 compared to 38 percent).

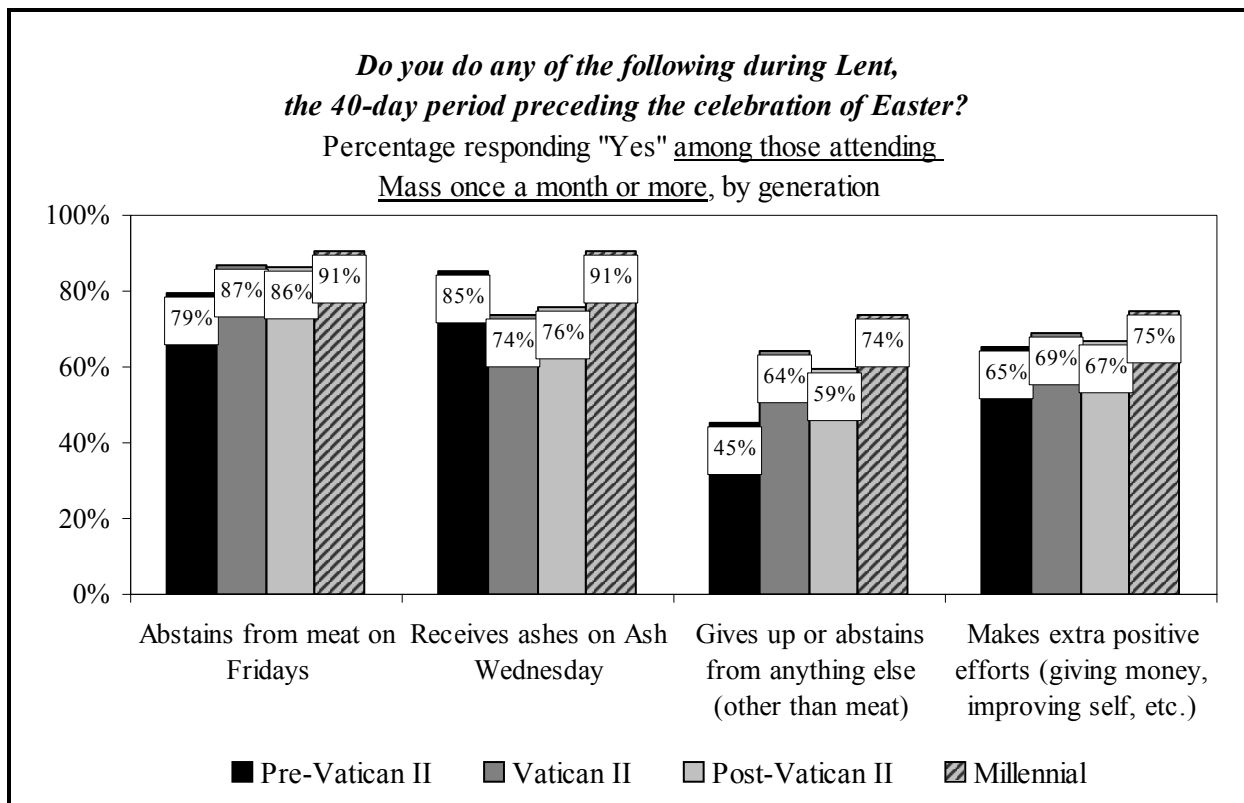
Differences by Generation

There is relatively little variation across generations in the observance of Lent. About six in ten Catholics of all generations abstain from meat on Fridays. Pre-Vatican II Catholics are most likely to say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (58 percent) and that they do something positive during Lent (50 percent). Compared to older Catholics, those of the Millennial Generation are most likely to say they give something up during Lent (46 percent).

Do you do any of the following during Lent, the 40-day period preceding the celebration of Easter?				
Percentage responding “Yes”				
	By Generation			
	Pre-Vatican II	Vatican II	Post-Vatican II	Millennial
Do you abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent?	64%	59%	59%	61%
Do you typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services?	58	40	40	50
Besides giving something up, do you do anything positive, like giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person, during Lent?	50	45	41	40
Besides meat on Fridays, do you give up or abstain from anything else during Lent?	33	34	38	46

Catholics of the of Vatican II and Post-Vatican II generations are the least likely to say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (40 percent). The oldest generation of Catholics is least likely to say they give anything else up besides eating meat on Fridays (33 percent).

Among Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month, those of the Millennial Generation are the *most* likely to observe Lenten practices (see graph on the following page). More than nine in ten of these Catholics abstain from meat on Fridays and receive ashes on Ash Wednesday. About three-quarters of these young adult Catholics also give up something during Lent. A similar percentage make other positive efforts during Lent as well.

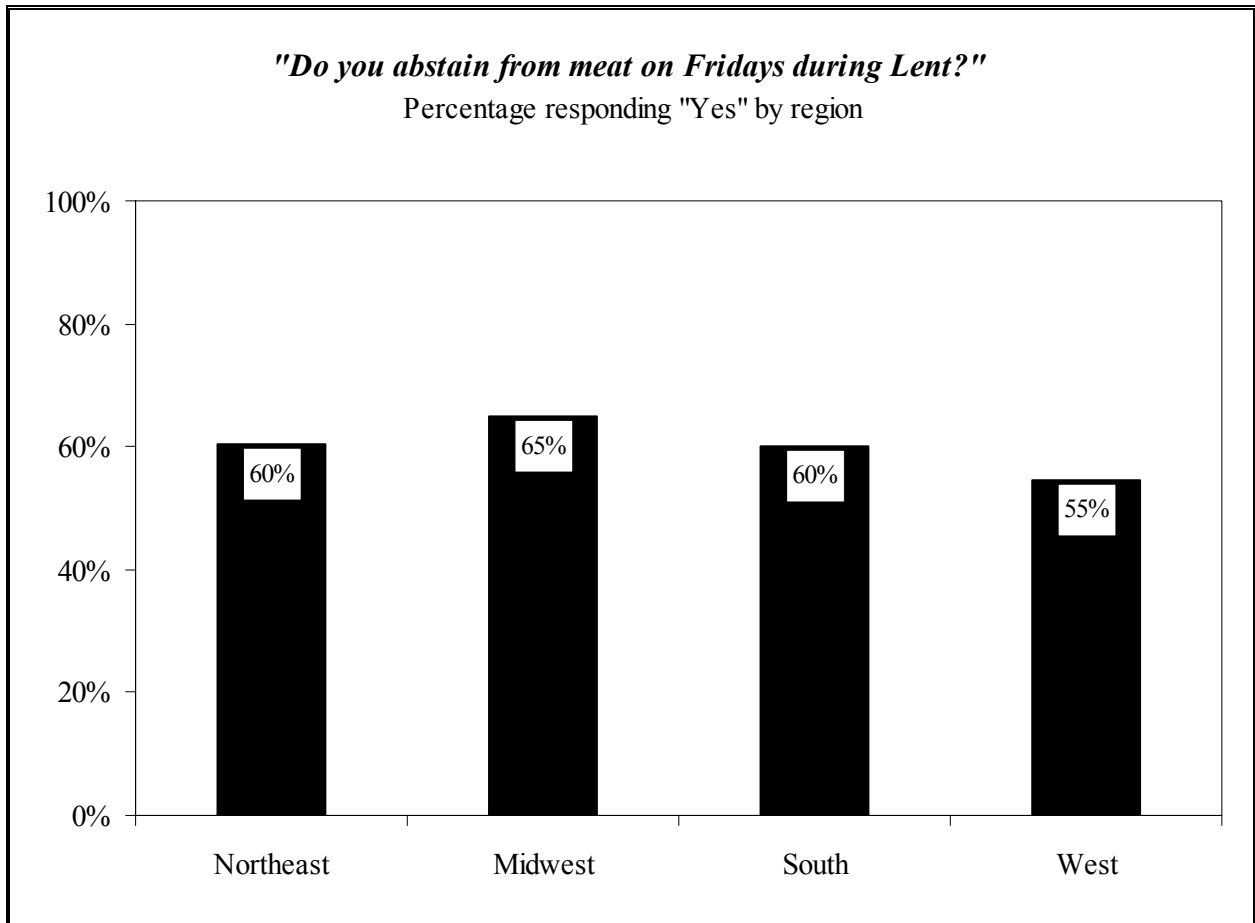


Differences by Education

- Fifty-three percent of Catholics with a post-graduate degree give up or abstain from something other than meat on Lenten Fridays. This compares to 41 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 38 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 34 percent of those with a high school diploma or less.
- Fifty-nine percent of Catholics with a post-graduate degree make extra efforts to do something positive during Lent. This compares to 48 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 41 percent of all other Catholics.
- Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays (68 percent compared to 58 percent) and to make an extra effort to do something positive (52 percent compared to 41 percent).
- Among Catholics who attended at least some college, those who enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who did not to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays (74 percent compared to 59 percent), to make an extra effort to do something positive (65 percent compared to 43 percent), and to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (56 percent compared to 45 percent).

Differences by Region

Midwest Catholics (65 percent) are the most likely to say they abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent and those in the West are the least likely to do this (55 percent).



Religious Imagery, Art, and Symbols

Respondents were asked whether they have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home and whether they carry or wear each of several religious objects.

Statue or Picture of Mary on Display at Home

About six in ten Catholics (59 percent) report that they have a statue or picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, on display in their home.

<i>Some people have religious objects in their homes. Is there a statue or picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, on display in your home?</i>		
	2003	2008
Yes	56%	59%
No	44	41

In 2003, a similar proportion of Catholics (56 percent) reported that they had a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.²⁶

Differences by Mass Attendance

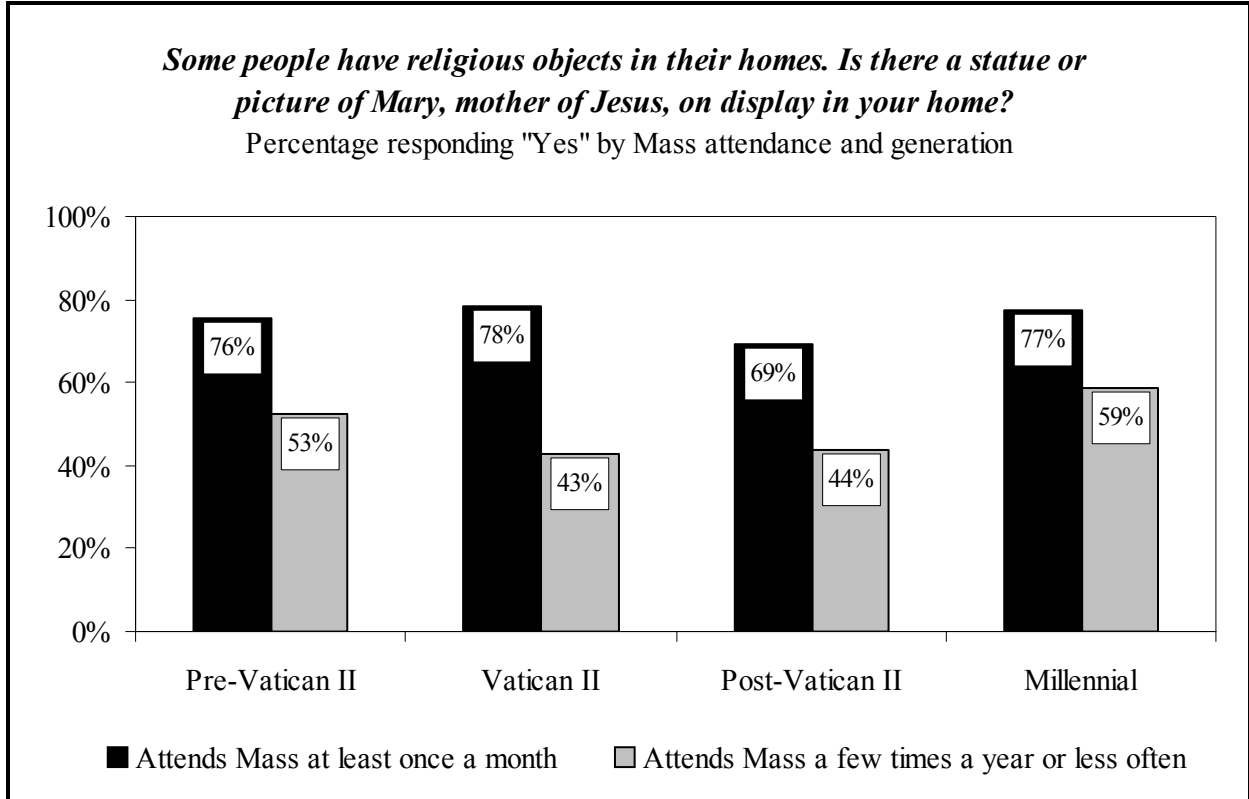
Eight in ten respondents who attend Mass weekly or more have a statue or picture of Mary displayed in their home. Sixty-eight percent of those attending monthly but less than weekly have this, as do 47 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

<i>Some people have religious objects in their homes. Is there a statue or picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, on display in your home?</i>			
<i>By Mass Attendance</i>			
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Yes	80%	68%	47%
No	20	32	53

²⁶ Results are from the 2003 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

Differences by Generation

Millennial Generation Catholics are among the most likely to have a statue or picture of Mary displayed in their home. This is the case even among those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.



Differences by Ethnicity

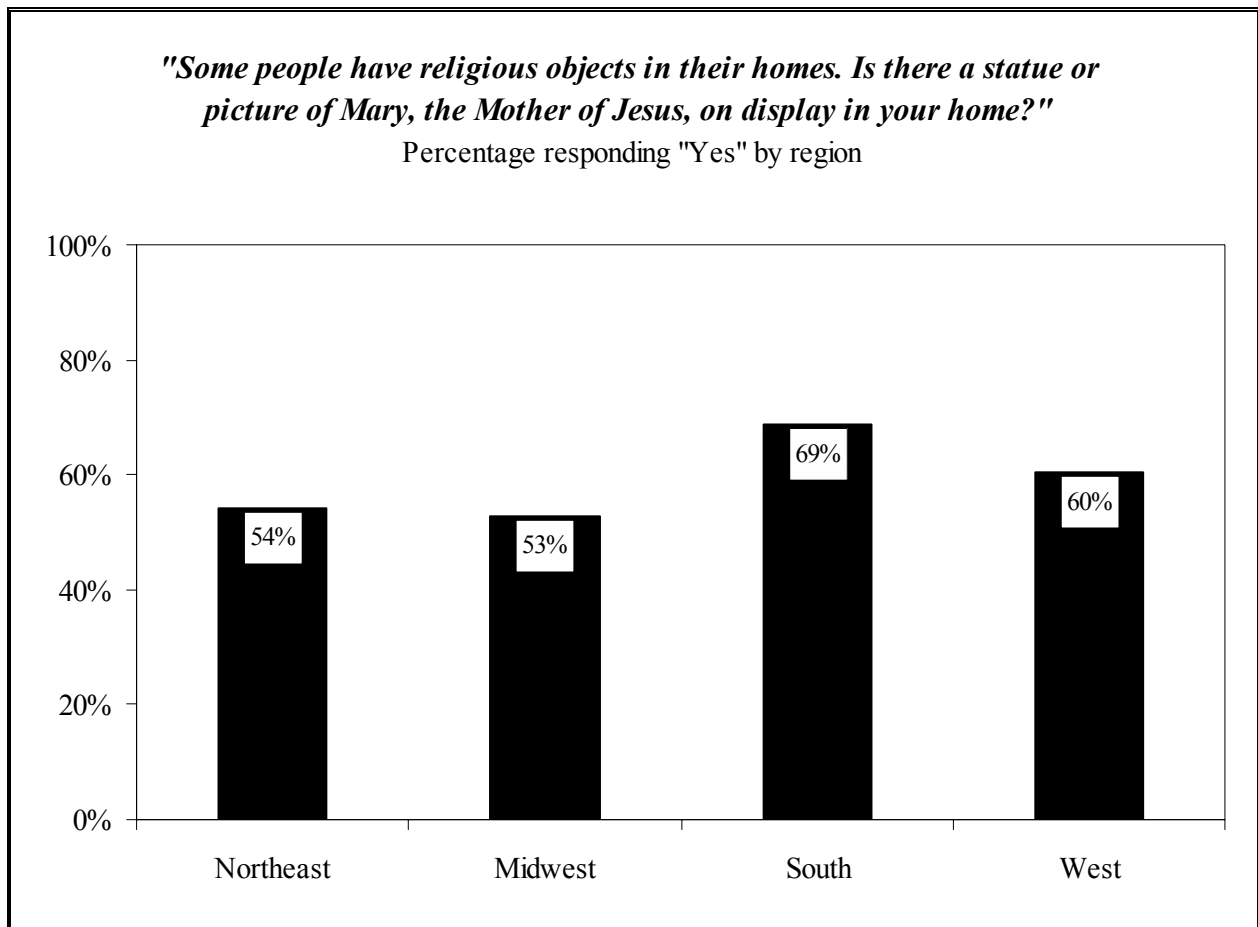
Sixty-seven percent of Hispanics and 54 percent of non-Hispanic whites have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.

Differences by Education

Among those attending at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those enrolled at non-Catholic institutions to have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home (68 percent compared to 56 percent).

Differences by Region

Catholic living in the South and West are more likely than those in the Midwest and Northeast to have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.



Wearing or Carrying Religious Objects

One-third of Catholics say they typically wear or carry a crucifix or cross.

Do you typically wear or carry any of the following with you?

Percentage saying “Yes”

A crucifix or cross	32%
A religious medal or pin of a saint or angel	29
A rosary	23
Prayer cards or coins	20
A scapular	9

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

About three in ten Catholics say they typically carry or wear a religious medal or pin of a saint or angel. Slightly less than one-quarter carry a rosary. One in five carry prayer cards or coins, and about one in ten wear or carry a scapular.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Respondents attending Mass weekly are more likely to carry a rosary (45 percent) or religious medal (42 percent) than a cross (39 percent). Catholics attending Mass less often are more likely to wear or carry a cross than any of the other items listed. More than a quarter (27 percent) of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less say they wear or carry a crucifix or cross.

Do you typically wear or carry any of the following with you?

Percentage saying “Yes”

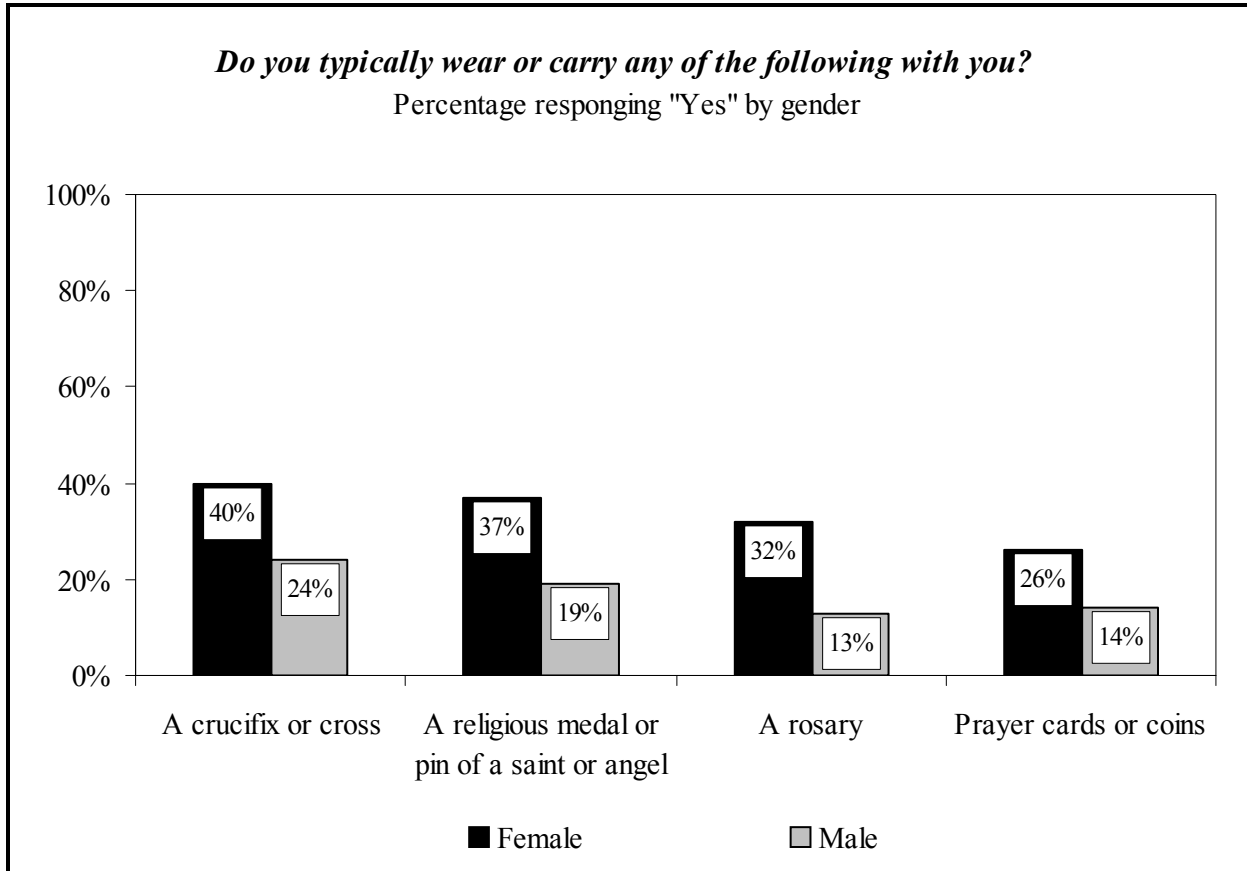
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
A rosary	45%	29%	12%
A religious medal or pin of a saint or angel	42	30	23
A crucifix or cross	39	39	27
Prayer cards or coins	32	28	12
A scapular	17	9	6

Differences by Ethnicity

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to carry or wear a crucifix or cross (40 compared to 29 percent).

Differences by Gender

Women are more likely than men to wear or carry all of the listed items with the exception of a scapular. This trend is especially prominent concerning rosaries, which women are more than twice as likely to carry.



Differences by Generation

Members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation are most likely to wear or carry all of the listed items. Generational differences are largest for the following:

- A religious medal or pin of a saint or angel (43 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 34 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 21 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 19 percent of the Millennial Generation).
- A rosary (39 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 23 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 19 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 16 percent of the Millennial Generation).

Praying the Rosary

Eight percent of Catholics report that they pray the rosary at least once a week.

<i>Do you ever pray the rosary? [If “Yes”] Would you say you pray the rosary...</i>		
	2001	2008
Every day	--%	4%
More than once a week	5	2
Every week	4	2
Almost every week	2	3
Once or twice a month	10	5
A few times a year	23	20
Less than once a year	10	16
Never prays the rosary	46	48

Another 8 percent of Catholics pray the rosary at least once a month, but less than weekly. One in five do so a few times a year and about one in six (16 percent) do so less than once a year. Nearly half of Catholics (48 percent) report that they rarely or never pray the rosary.

In a 2001 CARA poll, more than four-tenths of Catholics (44 percent) reported that they pray the rosary at least a few times a year.²⁷ This compares to 36 percent in the present survey.

²⁷ The 2001 CCP. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls. The 2001 poll did not include the response category of “every day.”

Differences by Mass Attendance

Three in ten Catholics who attend Mass weekly say they pray the rosary “almost every week” or more often compared to 13 percent of those attending Mass at least once a month but less than weekly and 4 percent of those attending Mass a few times a year or less often.

<i>Do you ever pray the rosary?</i>			
[If “Yes”] <i>Would you say you pray the rosary...</i>			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Every day	11%	5%	2%
More than once a week	6	1	1
Every week	6	1	0
Almost every week	6	6	1
Once or twice a month	12	6	2
A few times a year	31	27	12
Less than once a year	12	18	17
Never prays the rosary	16	35	65

Catholics who attend Mass only a few times a year or less are the most likely to say they do not ever pray the rosary (65 percent).

Differences by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say they ever pray the rosary (62 compared to 42 percent).

Differences by Generation

The older Catholics are, the more likely they are to pray the rosary (73 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 58 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 44 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 39 percent of the Millennial Generation)