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Pope Francis Still Highly Regarded in U.S., but Signs of Disenchantment Emerge

Five years after his election, pope draws growing number of negative assessments, especially from Catholic Republicans

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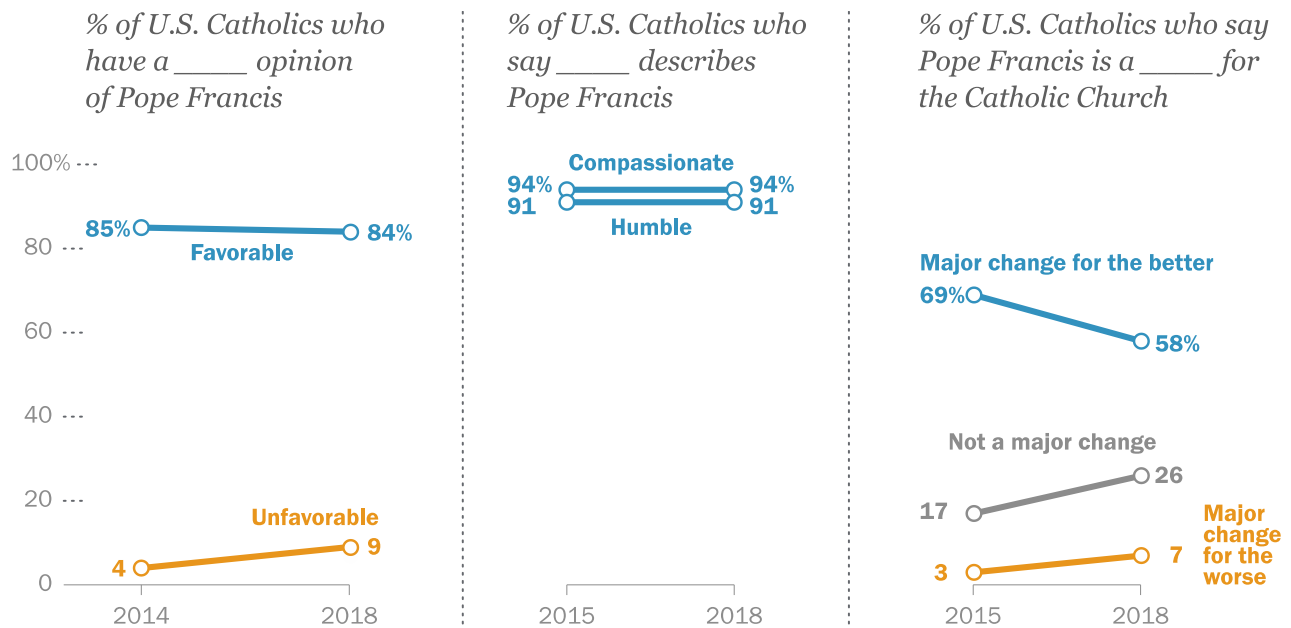
Claudia Deane, vice president of research, also gave valuable feedback on this report.

Pope Francis Still Highly Regarded in U.S., but Signs of Disenchantment Emerge

Five years after his election, pope draws growing number of negative assessments, especially from Catholic Republicans

Five years into Francis' papacy, the vast majority of U.S. Catholics continue to have a favorable opinion of the Argentinian pontiff, and most say he represents a major – and positive – change for the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, a new Pew Research Center survey finds signs of growing discontent with Francis among Catholics on the political right, with increasing shares of Catholic Republicans saying they view Francis unfavorably, and that they think he is too liberal and naïve.

Pope Francis remains popular among U.S. Catholics



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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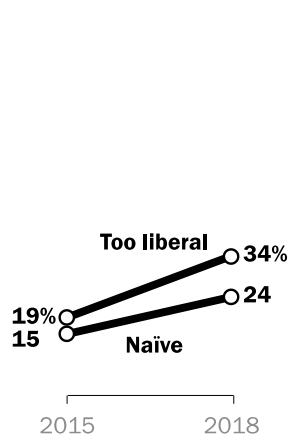
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Currently, 84% of American Catholics say they have a “favorable” view of Pope Francis, which is virtually identical to the share who expressed a positive view of the pope after the first year of his pontificate. Furthermore, roughly nine-in-ten U.S. Catholics describe Pope Francis as “compassionate” and “humble.” And though the share of Catholics in the U.S. who think Pope Francis represents a “major change” for the better is down from a high point in 2015, nearly six-in-ten still express this view.

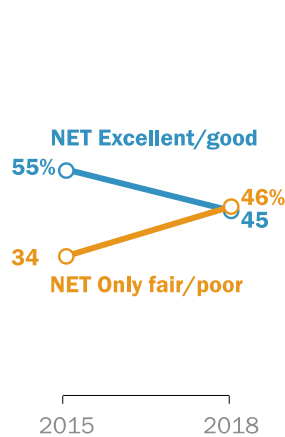
But while Francis remains quite popular, there are signs that American Catholics are less enamored with him than was once the case. For instance, the share of American Catholics who say Pope Francis is “too liberal” has jumped 15 percentage points between 2015 and today, from 19% to 34%. And about a quarter of U.S. Catholics (24%) now say he is naïve, up from 15% in 2015.

Growing share of U.S. Catholics say Francis is ‘too liberal,’ ‘naïve’

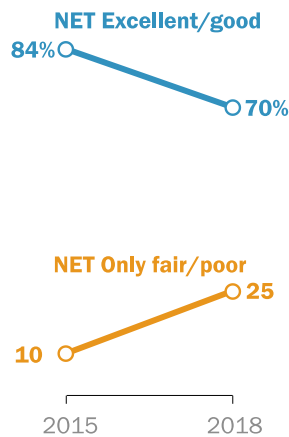
% of U.S. Catholics who say that _____ describes Pope Francis



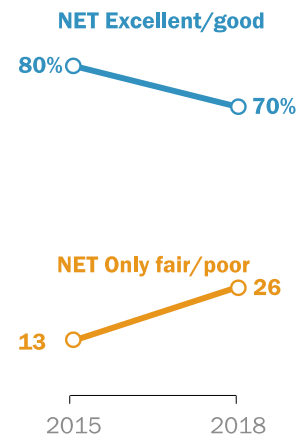
Ratings of pope’s job addressing sex abuse scandal



Ratings of pope’s job spreading Catholic faith



Ratings of pope’s job standing up for traditional morals



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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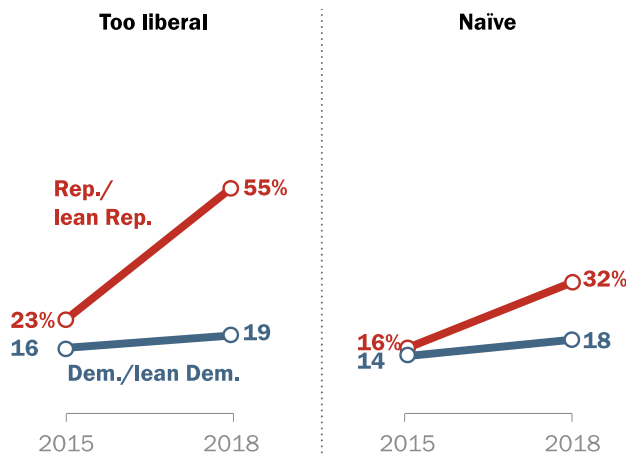
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Over the same period, the share of American Catholics who give Pope Francis “excellent” or “good” marks for his handling of the sex abuse scandal dropped from 55% to 45%. (The survey was conducted before the recent papal visit to Chile and Peru, which prompted new questions and [media coverage about the pope’s handling of this issue.](#)) And there have been similar declines in the share of Catholics who give the pope positive marks for “spreading the Catholic faith” and “standing up for traditional moral values,” though on balance he continues to garner more praise than criticism on these fronts.

The survey also finds signs of growing polarization along partisan lines in Catholics’ views of Francis. The share of Republican and Republican-leaning Catholics who say Pope Francis is “too liberal” has more than doubled since 2015 (from 23% to 55%). Similarly, one-third of Catholic Republicans now say Francis is “naïve,” up from 16% who said this in 2015. Among Democratic and Democratic-leaning Catholics, by contrast, there has been no statistically significant change in opinion on either of these questions.

Half of Catholic Republicans now say Pope Francis is too liberal

% of U.S. Catholics who say Pope Francis is ...



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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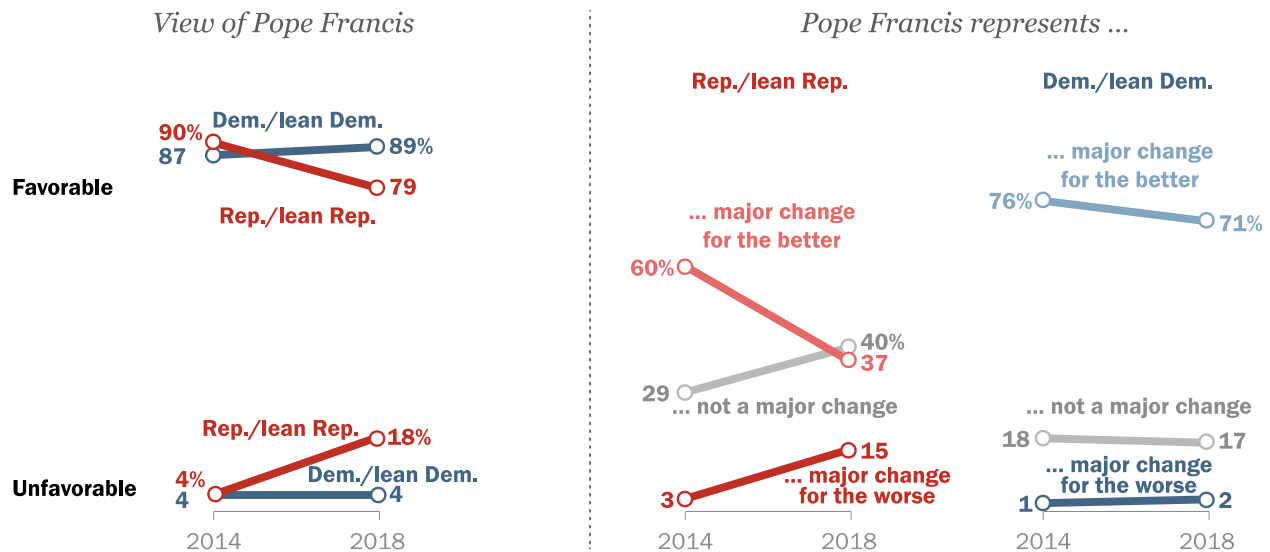
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In addition, while most Republican Catholics continue to express a favorable view of Francis, the share who have a favorable view of the pontiff is down compared with the end of his first year in office, four years ago. At that time, there was no discernible difference between the share of Catholic Republicans (90%) and Democrats (87%) who expressed a favorable view of Francis. Today, by contrast, the pope's favorability rating is 10 points higher among Catholic Democrats (89%) than among Catholic Republicans (79%).

Over the same period, the share of Catholic Republicans who say Francis represents a major, positive change for the Catholic Church has declined from 60% to 37%. By contrast, there has been little movement since the end of Francis' first year as pope in the share of Catholic Democrats who view him as a major change for the better (71% today vs. 76% in 2014).

Catholic Republicans less enamored with Pope Francis now than in 2014

Among U.S. Catholics



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

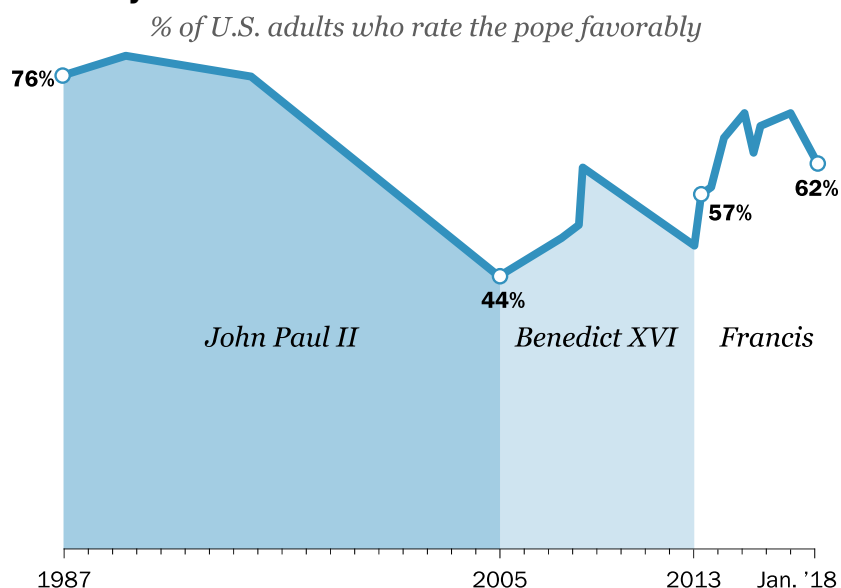
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These are among the key findings of a new national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted Jan. 10 to 15 among 1,503 adults, including 316 Catholics. Among the U.S. public as a whole (including both Catholics and non-Catholics), roughly six-in-ten say they have a favorable view of Pope Francis, which is on par with the share of Americans who gave Francis a favorable rating in the early summer of 2015 (just before his visit to the U.S.), and slightly below the peak of 70% who rated him favorably in February 2015 and again in early 2017. Compared with Francis, Pope Benedict XVI generally earned lower favorability ratings from the U.S. public (except in April 2008, immediately following his U.S. trip), while Pope John Paul II earned higher ratings from the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s.

While Francis is quite popular with Americans overall, analysis of Pew Research Center surveys conducted since he became pope finds no evidence of a rise in the share of Americans who identify as Catholic (22% in 2012, 20% in 2017), and no indication of a Francis-inspired resurgence in Mass attendance. In surveys conducted in 2017, 38% of Catholic respondents say they attend Mass weekly. By comparison, in the year before Francis became pope, 41% of U.S. Catholics reported attending Mass weekly.

Among all U.S. adults, six-in-ten rate Pope Francis favorably



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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There are, however, a number of changes occurring within American Catholicism that were underway before Francis became pope and have continued during his pontificate. For instance, the share of U.S. Catholics who are Hispanic has grown from 32% in the year before Francis became pope to 36% today. The share of U.S. Catholics who favor allowing gays and lesbians to legally marry has grown from 54% in 2012 to 67% in 2017. And while there has been little change in the partisan composition of Catholic voters as a whole, white Catholic registered voters have continued to trend in a Republican direction. As of today, 54% of white Catholic voters identify with or lean toward the GOP, up from 50% in 2012 and early 2013.

Other key findings from the new survey include:

- Roughly half of Catholics (55%) say the priests at their parish are “very supportive” of Pope Francis, and an additional 23% say their priests are “somewhat supportive” of the pontiff. Roughly one-in-five self-identified Catholics decline to answer the question or else volunteer that they do not attend church often enough to assess the level of support for Francis among their parish priests. Just 2% say their priests are “not too” or “not at all” supportive of the pontiff.
- Roughly six-in-ten Catholics (58%) say Francis is doing an “excellent” or “good” job appointing new bishops and cardinals, and 55% say he is doing an “excellent” or “good” job addressing environmental issues.
- Among U.S. Catholics as a whole, roughly three-quarters say the pontiff has done “a lot” (33%) or “a little” (41%) to make the Catholic Church more accepting of homosexuality. And seven-in-ten U.S. Catholics say Pope Francis has done “a lot” (26%) or “a little” (43%) to make the church more accepting of divorce and remarriage.
- The survey shows, furthermore, that most Catholics seem to approve of Francis’ actions in these areas. Six-in-ten Catholics (63%) say Francis has done at least a little to promote acceptance of homosexuality, and also say he has done “about the right amount” or that they would like to see him “do more” on this issue. Similarly, 64% of Catholics say the pope has done at least a little to increase acceptance of divorce and remarriage, and that he has done “the right amount” or that they would like him to “do more.”

The rest of this report looks at the results of the survey and at longer-term trends in American Catholicism in more detail, including differences by religious affiliation and observance.

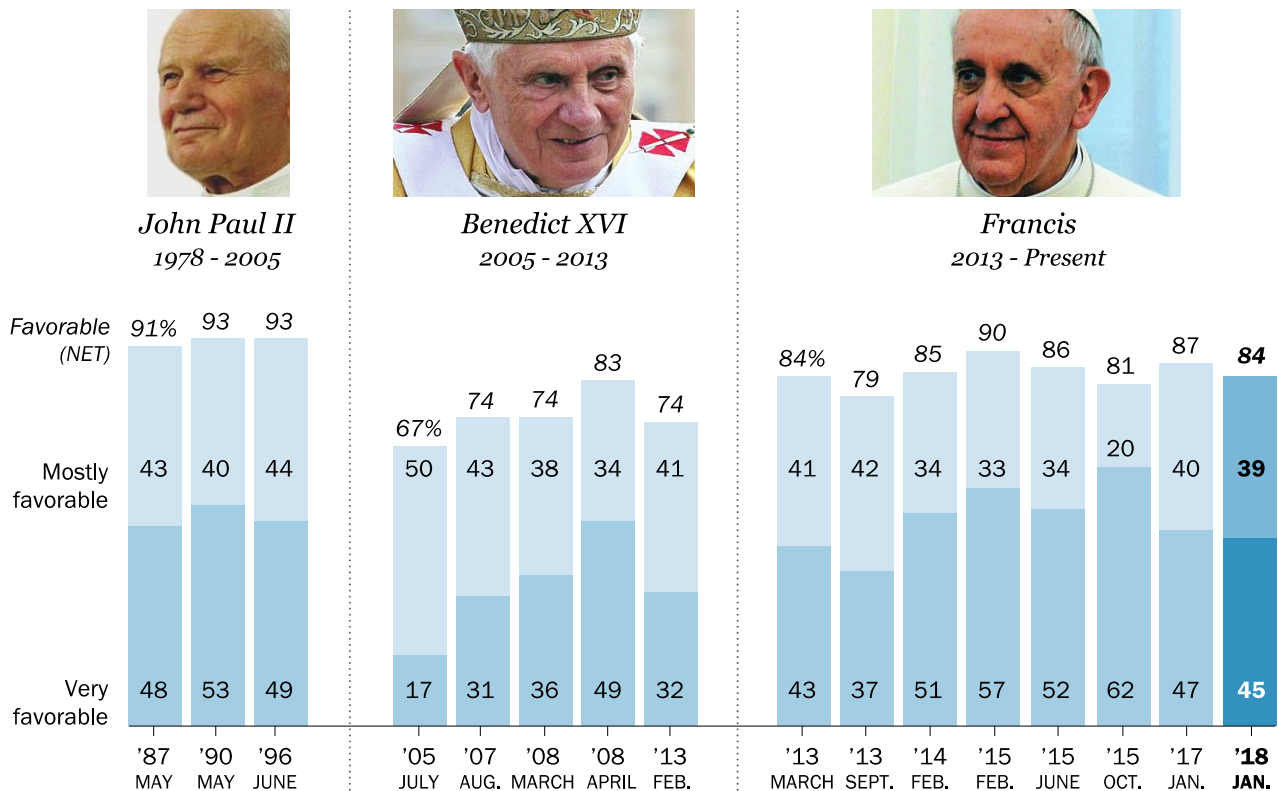
Views of Pope Francis

Pope Francis remains popular among a variety of Catholic and non-Catholic groups

In the five years since Pope Francis was elected, the share of American Catholics who have rated him favorably has ranged from 79% (in September 2013) to 90% (in February 2015), generally hovering in the mid-80s.

By this measure, Francis has been rated more positively, on average, than was his immediate predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. But Francis' favorability ratings fall below the very high marks U.S. Catholics gave to Pope John Paul II during the late 1980s and mid-1990s. (Pew Research Center's polling about John Paul II was conducted before the sex abuse scandal within the church received widespread media coverage in the early 2000s.)

Among all U.S. Catholics, Francis viewed more favorably than Benedict XVI, less favorably than John Paul II



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding.
 Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018. Wikimedia Commons (images).
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Pope Francis' popularity among Catholics is widespread across a variety of Catholic subgroups. He is viewed favorably by most Catholic women and men, as well as by those under age 50 and by older Catholics. (The survey did not include enough interviews with Hispanic Catholics to permit a comparison between them and white Catholics.)

Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week give Francis somewhat higher marks than do those who attend Mass less often; 56% of weekly Mass attenders say they have a "very favorable" view of the pontiff,

compared with 40% among Catholics who attend Mass less often. Still, large majorities of both groups rate the pope at least "mostly" favorably.

Francis widely popular among U.S. Catholics

% of U.S. Catholics with a _____ view of Francis

	NET Favorable	Very	Mostly	NET Unfavorable	DK/can't rate
All U.S. Catholics	84	45	39	9	7=100
Men	82	42	40	12	6
Women	85	48	37	7	7
Ages 18-49	80	38	42	9	11
50+	88	51	37	10	2
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>					
Weekly or more	89	56	33	7	4
Less often	81	40	41	11	8
Republican/lean Rep.	79	37	41	18	4
Democrat/lean Dem.	89	49	40	4	7

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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The survey also shows that American Catholics are not alone in their admiration of Pope Francis. Two-thirds (67%) of white mainline Protestants and 58% of religiously unaffiliated adults have positive views of Francis, as do roughly half of black Protestants (53%) and white evangelical Protestants (52%).

There have been at least two notable shifts in Francis' ratings among non-Catholic groups since his election. White evangelical Protestants have become considerably more likely to rate Francis *unfavorably*: Just one-in-ten white evangelicals (9%) did this immediately after his election, compared with 28% today (similar to the 31% who rated him unfavorably about a year ago). And religiously unaffiliated Americans have become more likely to rate Francis favorably (39% in March 2013, 58% today), although the share who rate him favorably has declined somewhat in the past year, from 71% in January 2017.

Many non-Catholic religious groups in U.S. give Pope Francis positive ratings

	White evangelical Protestant			White mainline Protestant			Black Protestant			Unaffiliated		
	Fav.	Unfav.	DK/can't rate	Fav.	Unfav.	DK/can't rate	Fav.	Unfav.	DK/can't rate	Fav.	Unfav.	DK/can't rate
Pope Francis	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
January 2018	52	28	20=100	67	17	17=100	53	21	26=100	58	16	26=100
January 2017	53	31	16	72	14	14	n/a	n/a	n/a	71	19	10
October 2015	64	19	17	67	11	23	n/a	n/a	n/a	61	12	27
June 2015	51	15	35	69	6	25	59	13	28	58	10	33
February 2015	60	22	18	74	7	19	n/a	n/a	n/a	68	16	16
February 2014	56	14	30	66	9	26	46	24	30	64	11	25
September 2013	47	17	36	60	8	32	47	15	21	54	15	32
March 2013	59	9	32	65	7	28	n/a	n/a	n/a	39	27	34

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Figures for black Protestants in March 2013, February 2015, October 2015 and January 2017 are not shown due to insufficient sample sizes.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Five years into his papacy, most Catholics (67%) continue to say Pope Francis represents a major change in direction for the Catholic Church. This marks a slight decline since 2015 in the share who view the pontiff as a major change, with the decline concentrated among those who see Francis as a change for the better.

Early on in his papacy, roughly seven-in-ten Catholics saw Pope Francis as a major change in a positive direction. Today, 58% of American Catholics share this perspective. Since Francis' earlier days there has also been a slight increase in the share who say the pontiff is a major change for the worse. And since 2015, the share who say he is not a major change at all has ticked up 9 percentage points.

Shrinking majority of U.S. Catholics see Francis as major positive change for the church

% of U.S. Catholics who think Pope Francis represents _____ for the Catholic Church

	2014	2015	2018
	%	%	%
Major change in direction	71	74	67
For the better	68	69	58
For the worse	2	3	7
Neither/don't know	1	1	2
Not a major change	23	17	26
Don't know/refused	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Across the board, U.S. Catholics find the pope compassionate and humble

When asked about four distinct attributes that could apply to the pope, the vast majority of U.S. Catholics say “compassionate” (94%) and “humble” (91%) describe Francis. This is virtually unchanged from 2015, the last time Pew Research Center asked these questions. And these overwhelmingly positive feelings toward the pontiff hold true across a wide variety of Catholic subgroups, including men and women, older and younger Catholics, regular Mass-goers and those who attend religious services less often.

Over the same time period, however, there has been an uptick in the share who say the two negative descriptors apply to the pope. The share of U.S. Catholics who say the pope is “naïve” has increased since 2015, from 15% to 24% today. And about a third of U.S. Catholics (34%) say Pope Francis is “too liberal,” up from 19% who said this three years ago.

Catholic Republicans (as well as those who lean toward the GOP) are far more likely than Catholic Democrats and Democratic leaners (55% vs. 19%) to say that “too liberal” is an accurate descriptor for the pontiff.

Nine-in-ten American Catholics call Francis compassionate, humble

% of U.S. Catholics who say _____ describes Pope Francis

	Compassionate	Humble	Too liberal	Naïve
U.S. Catholics	%	%	%	%
2018	94	91	34	24
2015	94	91	19	15
<i>2018 among...</i>				
Men	95	93	38	25
Women	93	88	31	23
Ages 18-49	94	90	28	25
50+	94	92	40	23
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>				
Weekly or more	97	92	32	27
Less often	92	90	35	21
Republican/lean Rep.	92	86	55	32
Democrat/lean Dem.	98	96	19	18

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.
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Most U.S. Catholics say their parish priests are supportive of Pope Francis

A majority of American Catholics say their parish priests are supportive of Pope Francis, including 55% who say their priests are “very” supportive and 23% who say their priests are “somewhat” supportive. Just 2% say their parish priests are not too or not at all supportive of the pope. An additional one-in-five either volunteer that they do not attend church often enough to gauge their parish priests’ views of the pontiff (6%) or otherwise decline to answer the question (13%).

The share who see their parish leadership as very supportive toward Francis is similar across many Catholic subgroups – including Democrats and Republicans. But Catholics who attend Mass at least weekly stand out from those who attend less often. Fully seven-in-ten Mass-goers (72%) say their parish priests are very supportive of the pope, compared with 47% of those who attend less often. Those who attend Mass less than once a week are less likely to offer an opinion on the subject.

Most U.S. Catholics say their priests are supportive of Pope Francis

% of U.S. Catholics who say their parish priests are _____ supportive of Pope Francis

	Very %	Some- what %	Not too/ not at all %	Do not attend church (VOL.) %	DK/ ref. %
U.S. Catholics	55	23	2	6	13=100
Men	55	23	4	5	13
Women	55	24	1	7	12
Ages 18-49	55	26	2	6	11
50+	55	22	3	6	14
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>					
Weekly or more	72	18	3	0	7
Less often	47	25	2	10	16
Rep./lean Rep.	55	24	1	5	14
Dem./lean Dem.	55	25	3	6	11

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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Pope Francis on the issues

Shrinking majorities of American Catholics give Pope Francis high marks for spreading the Catholic faith and standing up for traditional values

Seven-in-ten U.S. Catholics say Pope Francis is doing a good or an excellent job spreading the Catholic faith and standing up for traditional moral values. Roughly six-in-ten (58%) give him high marks on appointing new bishops and cardinals, and 55% say the same about his handling of environmental issues. Just 45% of Catholics rate the pope's handling of the sex abuse scandal as good or excellent.

Catholics who attend Mass weekly more positive about Pope Francis' performance than those who attend church less often

% of U.S. Catholics who say Pope Francis is doing a _____ job ...

	Spreading Catholic faith		Standing up for traditional moral values		Appointing new bishops and cardinals		Addressing environmental issues		Addressing sex abuse scandal	
	NET Good/excellent	NET Only fair/poor	NET Good/excellent	NET Only fair/poor	NET Good/excellent	NET Only fair/poor	NET Good/excellent	NET Only fair/poor	NET Good/excellent	NET Only fair/poor
U.S. Catholics	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2018	70	25	70	26	58	24	55	33	45	46
2015	84	10	80	13	n/a	n/a	53	29	55	34
2014	81	14	81	15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	54	39
<i>2018 among ...</i>										
Men	71	25	69	29	60	27	56	36	45	48
Women	70	25	71	24	57	22	55	30	46	45
Ages 18-49	72	25	65	30	60	27	53	38	41	52
50+	70	25	73	23	57	22	60	27	50	41
<i>Attend religious services ...</i>										
Weekly or more	78	18	81	18	70	20	67	27	54	41
Less often	66	29	64	30	52	26	50	36	40	50
Republican/lean Rep.	60	34	66	31	54	28	51	37	45	48
Democrat/lean Dem.	75	22	73	23	60	23	62	31	44	46

Note: Don't know/refused responses not shown. "N/a" indicates that the question was not asked in a given year.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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While Francis continues to get positive ratings on multiple fronts, several of these positive ratings have declined noticeably in the past three years, and the share giving him negative ratings has increased. On the issue of spreading the Catholic faith, for example, just 10% said the pope was doing an “only fair” or “poor” job in 2015; today 25% give him negative marks. Likewise, U.S. Catholics are twice as likely today as in 2015 to negatively rate Pope Francis’ performance standing up for traditional moral values (26% “only fair” or “poor” today vs. 13% in 2015). And on the issue of the sex abuse scandal within the Catholic Church, 46% say the pontiff is doing a poor or middling job (roughly equal to the share who give him positive reviews), up from 34% who said the same three years ago.

Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often are far more likely than Catholics who attend services less often to positively rate the pope’s performance on each issue asked about.

Most see Francis making the church more accepting, still see room for him to do more

New questions on this survey asked Catholics how much, if anything, they think Pope Francis has done to make the Catholic Church more accepting of homosexuality as well as of divorce and remarriage. Respondents also were asked whether they want the pontiff to do more or less in these areas.

Most U.S. Catholics say Francis has done at least some to make the church more accepting of homosexuality, including 33% who say he has done a lot and 41% who say he has done a little. Just 16% say he has done nothing at all.

Regardless of how much they think the pope has already done in this area, roughly four-in-ten Catholics (38%) would like to see him do more, including 12% who say he has already done a lot, 21% who say he has done a little, and 5% who say he has done nothing in this regard. Another three-in-ten Catholics say that Francis has done about the right amount in making the church more accepting of homosexuality, with 17% saying that he has done a lot, and 13% saying that he has done a little. One-in-ten say he has done nothing and that they would *not* like to see him do more, while just 6% say they would like to see him do *less* to increase the Catholic Church's acceptance of homosexuality.

About a quarter of U.S. Catholics (26%) say Francis has done a lot to make the church more accepting of divorce and remarriage, 43% say he has done a little in this regard, and 17% say he has done nothing. Overall, nearly four-in-ten Catholics (37%) would like to see the pontiff do more to increase the church's acceptance of divorce and remarriage, and a similar share (34%) say he has done at least a little in this area and that it is "about the right amount." Smaller shares say he has done nothing and *should* do nothing

Most American Catholics say Pope Francis has done at least a little to make the church more accepting of homosexuality, divorce and remarriage

% of U.S. Catholics who say Pope Francis has done ____ to make the Catholic Church more accepting of homosexuality/divorce and remarriage	Divorce and remarriage	
	Homo- sexuality %	%
A lot	33	26
Would like to see him do more	12	10
Would like to see him do less	2	<1
Has done about the right amount	17	15
Don't know/refused	1	1
A little	41	43
Would like to see him do more	21	20
Would like to see him do less	5	3
Has done about the right amount	13	19
Don't know/refused	3	2
Nothing at all/made church less accepting (VOL.)	16	17
Would like to see him do more	5	7
Would not like to see him do more	10	8
Don't know/refused	1	1
Don't know/refused	10	14
	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

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(8%) or that he should be doing less to make the Catholic Church more accepting toward divorce and remarriage (3%).

In their own words – what is the most significant thing Francis has done as pope?

Another new question on the survey asked Catholics to describe, in their own words, the most significant thing Pope Francis has done in his time as pope.

In response, American Catholics named a broad range of accomplishments. About one-in-ten noted Francis' work in setting a good Christian example (9%), opening up the church and becoming more accepting (9%), and helping the poor (8%). Another 7% say his biggest contribution has been to make the Catholic Church more accepting toward gays and lesbians, while 6% cite global outreach. And 5% say he is uniting the Catholic community and encouraging open communication and dialogue. Still others named a wide variety of additional actions in religious, social, and political spheres that the pope has undertaken during his first five years.

Just 4% of U.S. Catholics list negative or neutral actions as Pope Francis' most significant accomplishment, such as becoming overly involved in politics or alienating conservative Catholics. Another 4% say he hasn't done anything significant at all, or that they are still waiting to see what he will do. And three-in-ten American Catholics (29%) volunteer that they do not know or cannot name any significant thing that the pope has done.

U.S. Catholics say making church more accepting among Francis' most notable actions

% of U.S. Catholics who say _____ is the most significant thing Pope Francis has done as pope

	%
NET General positive actions as pope	25
Setting a good Christian example/being humble	9
Traveling to many countries/global outreach	6
Promoting peace	3
Uniting everyone/more accepting of other religions	3
Other positive actions/"done good things"	3
Other mentions of how he is, not what he's done	1
NET Addressing social/political issues	20
Focus on helping poor/addressing poverty, injustice	8
More accepting toward gays and lesbians	7
Addressing care for environment, climate change	2
Standing up for children/addressing sex abuse	2
More welcoming toward divorce and remarriage	2
Addressing immigration and refugee issues	1
NET Addressing church issues	20
Opening up the church/being more accepting	9
Uniting Catholic community/encouraging dialogue	5
Spreading the faith	1
Reforming Vatican/addressing bureaucracy, hierarchy	1
Other changes in church tradition (e.g. prayer changes)	2
Other religious (e.g. miracles, inspiring more believers)	2
NET Negative or neutral actions	4
Unclear	3
Hasn't done anything/ waiting for him to do something	4
Don't know/refused	29

Note: Figures do not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated because multiple responses were permitted.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018.

"Pope Francis Still Highly Regarded in U.S., but Signs of Disenchantment Emerge"

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Catholic trends during Francis' papacy

Since Francis began his papacy he has enjoyed high favorability ratings from U.S. Catholics; many have wondered if his popularity would spur a so-called Francis effect, reinvigorating the Catholic community. Pew Research Center surveys do not see evidence of this type of effect, at least as measured by the share of Catholics in the U.S. adult population or the share of Catholics who say they attend Mass regularly, although of course it is possible that Catholic life in the U.S. has been revitalized in ways not measured in the Center's surveys.

In 2012 and the first two months of 2013, before Francis became pope, 22% of U.S. adults identified as Catholics in

Pew Research Center surveys. As of 2017, the Catholic share of U.S. adults stands at 20%, representing a very slight decline in the overall share of U.S. adults who are Catholic.

Pope Francis years see no increase in share of U.S. Catholics, regular Mass attenders

	Jan. 2012 - Feb. 2013	Mar. 2013 - Dec. 2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	%	%	%	%	%	%
% of U.S. adults who are Catholic	22	22	21	21	21	20
<i>% of U.S. Catholics who say they attend Mass ...</i>						
Weekly or more	41	39	38	40	38	38
Monthly/yearly	41	42	42	43	43	42
Seldom/never	17	18	19	17	19	20
Don't know/ref.	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u><1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>% of U.S. Catholics who identify as ...</i>						
White, non-Hispanic	61	58	59	56	56	56
Hispanic	32	33	34	37	37	36
Black, non-Hispanic	3	4	3	3	3	3
Other, non-Hispanic	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Race/ethnicity results repercentaged to exclude nonresponse.

Source: Aggregated data from Pew Research Center surveys conducted in each year. "Pope Francis Still Highly Regarded in U.S., but Signs of Disenchantment Emerge"

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Over the same period, self-reported Mass attendance also has dipped slightly among self-described Catholics. In 2012, 41% of U.S. Catholics said they attended Mass weekly or more; now 38% say the same. Another four-in-ten (42%) say they attend a few times a month or several times a year, and one-in-five say they seldom or never attend Mass.¹

The racial and ethnic composition of U.S. Catholics also shows continued signs of shifting. Catholics today are somewhat less likely to be non-Hispanic whites than in 2012 (56% now vs. 61% then). And they are somewhat more likely to identify as Hispanic – 36% of U.S. Catholics today say they are Hispanic, compared with 32% in 2012. These demographic changes began well before Francis became pope. And even without considering the impacts of future immigration to the U.S., [data on the age structure of the U.S. Catholic population](#) suggest that Hispanics will continue to grow as a share of the U.S. Catholic population, since they are considerably younger, on average, than are white Catholics.

¹ Recent research shows that surveys that ask respondents directly about how often they attend religious services obtain higher estimates of rates of weekly attendance as compared with other, more indirect methods of data collection (such as asking respondents to keep a diary of how they spend their days, without specific reference to attendance at worship services). When prompted directly by a survey question to report how often they attend religious services, respondents who indicate they attend every week seem to be indicating that they are the kind of person who attends religious services regularly, not necessarily that they literally never miss a week of church. See, for example, Brenner, Philip S. 2011. "Exceptional Behavior or Exceptional Identity? Overreporting of Church Attendance in the U.S." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. In addition to the over-reporting of church attendance arising from asking respondents directly about how often they attend religious services, readers should bear in mind that telephone opinion surveys can produce overestimates of religious attendance due to high rates of nonresponse. See, for example, Pew Research Center's 2012 report "[Assessing the Representativeness of Public Opinion Surveys](#)." See also Pew Research Center's July 21, 2015, Fact Tank post "[The Challenges of Polling When Fewer People Are Available to be Polled](#)."

U.S. Catholics also have steadily become more supportive of [same-sex marriage](#) over the years, and this has continued since Pope Francis assumed the papacy. In 2001, 40% of Catholics expressed support for allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally. By 2012, just before Francis' election, the share of Catholics expressing support for same-sex marriage had grown to 54%, reflecting increased acceptance of same-sex marriage among the U.S. population writ large. As of 2017, fully two-thirds of Catholics say they favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally.

U.S. Catholics more likely now to support same-sex marriage; abortion attitudes comparatively stable

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<i>% of U.S. Catholics who say they...</i>						
Favor same-sex marriage	54	54	57	57	58	67
Oppose same-sex marriage	37	37	34	37	32	28
Don't know/refused	9	9	9	7	9	6
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>% of U.S. Catholics who say abortion should be ...</i>						
Legal in all/most cases	51	49	52	44	54	53
Illegal in all/most cases	42	45	43	48	42	44
Don't know/refused	7	6	5	8	4	3
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Aggregated data from Pew Research Center surveys conducted in each year. "Pope Francis Still Highly Regarded in U.S., but Signs of Disenchantment Emerge"

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By comparison, U.S. Catholics' attitudes about abortion have been relatively stable. Overall, 53% say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, while 44% say it should be illegal in all or most cases.

Just before Pope Francis assumed office, 44% of Catholic registered voters identified as Republican or said they leaned toward the GOP, and 48% of Catholic voters said they were Democrats or leaned toward the Democratic Party. Today those numbers are virtually unchanged. And the share of Catholics who identify as conservative, moderate or liberal on the political spectrum have been similarly stable.

Among white, non-Hispanic Catholic registered voters, however, the Francis years have been marked by the [continuation of a longer-term shift toward the GOP](#). As of 2008, 49% of white Catholic registered voters in Pew Research Center surveys identified with or leaned toward the Democratic Party, while 41% favored the GOP. Since then, however, white Catholics' support for the GOP has steadily increased. By 2012 and early 2013, just before Francis became pope, Republicans outnumbered Democrats by 8 percentage points (50% vs. 42%) among white Catholics. And today, Republicans outnumber Democrats by 14 points in this group (54% vs. 40%).

Most Hispanic Catholics, meanwhile, continue to identify as Democrats (64%), while far fewer (27%) say they are Republicans – little changed in recent years. Among Catholics overall, the fact

Little change in American Catholics' political party affiliation, ideology

	Jan. 2012 – Feb. 2013	Mar. 2013 – Dec. 2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<i>% of U.S. Catholic registered voters who identify as ...</i>						
Rep./lean Rep.	44	44	45	47	47	46
Dem./lean Dem.	48	47	46	45	47	47
Other/refused to lean	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>% of U.S. Catholics who identify as ...</i>						
Conservative	36	38	37	38	38	39
Moderate	39	38	37	38	37	36
Liberal	20	20	22	21	22	22
Don't know/ref.	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>% of U.S. white, non-Hispanic Catholic registered voters who identify as ...</i>						
Rep./lean Rep.	50	53	52	54	57	54
Dem./lean Dem.	42	39	40	37	38	40
Other/refused to lean	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>% of U.S. Hispanic Catholic registered voters who identify as ...</i>						
Rep./lean Rep.	26	26	26	27	23	27
Dem./lean Dem.	66	64	65	67	68	64
Other/refused to lean	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Data on political party affiliation are based on registered voters.

Source: Aggregated data from Pew Research Center surveys conducted in each year. "Pope Francis Still Highly Regarded in U.S., but Signs of Disenchantment Emerge"

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that predominantly Democratic Hispanics are growing as a share of all U.S. Catholics has balanced out white Catholics' shift toward the Republican Party.

Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted Jan. 10 to 15, 2018, among a national sample of 1,503 adults (including 316 Catholics), 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (376 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,127 were interviewed on a cellphone, including 718 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers under the direction of Abt Associates. A combination of landline and cellphone random-digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. 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 our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>.

The combined landline and cellphone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity, and region to parameters from the Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey one-year estimates and population density to parameters from the decennial census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cellphone only, or both landline and cellphone), based on extrapolations from the 2016 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cellphone have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with landline phones. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

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:

Survey conducted Jan. 10-15, 2018

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,503	2.9 percentage points
Catholic	316	6.4 percentage points
<i>Among Catholics...</i>		
Men	177	8.6 percentage points
Women	139	9.7 percentage points
Ages 18-49	117	10.6 percentage points
50+	193	8.2 percentage points
<i>Attend worship services...</i>		
Weekly or more	124	10.3 percentage points
Less often	189	8.3 percentage points
Republican/lean Rep.	140	9.7 percentage points
Democrat/lean Dem.	142	9.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
JANUARY 2018 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
JANUARY 10-15, 2018
N=1,503**

QUESTIONS 1-2, 5-8, 11a, 12-16, 28, 30 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 3-4, 9-10, 11b, 17-27, 28b, 29, 30c, 31-38

QUESTIONS 11c-e HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Q.39 Next, 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								
Jan. 10-15, 2018	62	26	37	18	7	11	3	16
Jan. 4-9, 2017	70	30	40	19	7	13	2	9
Oct. 1-4, 2015	68	35	33	12	5	7	5	15
May 5-June 7, 2015	64	29	35	10	4	5	8	19
Feb. 18-22, 2015	70	29	40	15	5	10	5	11
Feb. 14-23, 2014	66	30	36	11	4	7	7	16
Sept. 4-8, 2013	58	21	37	12	4	7	10	20
March 28-31, 2013	57	22	35	14	6	9	6	22
Feb. 14-17, 2013 (Benedict XVI)	49	14	34	27	12	16	4	20
April 2008 (Benedict XVI)	61	22	39	17	8	9	4	18
March 2008 (Benedict XVI)	52	18	34	18	6	12	7	23
August 2007 (Benedict XVI)	50	14	36	18	6	12	8	24
July 2005 (Benedict XVI)	44	10	34	11	4	7	4	41
June 1996 (John Paul II)	76	28	48	13	4	9	1	10
May 1990 (John Paul II)	79	31	48	11	4	7	1	9
May 1987 (John Paul II)	76	28	48	14	4	10	1	9

QUESTIONS 39b-39c, 40-44 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTION A1

READ ALL:

As you may know, Pope Francis has been pope for nearly five years now...

ASK ALL:

Q.A2 Do you think Pope Francis represents a major change in direction for the Catholic Church, or don't you think so? **[INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: IF RESPONDENT SAYS "DON'T KNOW" OR THAT THEY HAVE NO OPINION, RECORD AS "9" AND DO NOT PROBE FURTHER]**

ASK IF "MAJOR CHANGE" (Q.A2=1):

Q.A3 And do you see this as **[READ AND RANDOMIZE: mainly a change for the better [OR] mainly a change for the worse]**?

Jan. 10-15 <u>2018</u>		May 5-June 7 <u>2015</u>	Feb. 14-23 <u>2014</u>
54	Yes, represents a major change in direction	56	59
45	Mainly a change for the better [OR]	48	55
7	Mainly a change for the worse	5	3
1	Neither (VOL.)	1	*
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	1
23	No, don't think so	18	21
23	Don't know/refused (VOL.)	26	20

ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:

Q.A4 Just in your own view, what is the single most significant thing Pope Francis has done as pope?
**[OPEN-END. RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE. PROBE ONCE IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS
 "DON'T KNOW." IF MORE THAN ONE MENTION, RECORD IN ORDER OF MENTION]**

NOTE: RESULTS DO NOT SUM TO 100% BECAUSE MULTIPLE RESPONSES WERE PERMITTED.

Jan. 10-15

2018

25	NET General positive actions as pope
9	Setting a good Christian example/being humble/a "pope for the people"
6	Traveling to many countries/global outreach
3	Promoting peace
3	Uniting everyone/more accepting of other religions
3	Other positive actions/"done good things"
1	Other mentions of how he is, not what he's done
20	Addressing social/political issues
8	Focus on helping poor/addressing poverty, social injustice
7	More accepting toward gays and lesbians, homosexuality
2	Addressing care for environment, global climate change
2	Standing up for children/addressing sex abuse scandal
2	More welcoming toward divorce and remarriage
1	Addressing immigration and refugee issues
20	Addressing church issues
9	Opening up the Church/being more accepting/becoming more modern
5	Uniting Catholic community/encouraging communication and dialogue
1	Spreading the faith
1	Reforming Vatican/addressing bureaucracy and hierarchy
2	Other changes in Church tradition (e.g. changing prayers)
2	Other religious (e.g. miracles, canonization, inspiring more belief and believers)
4	Negative or neutral actions
1	Becoming too involved in politics or in things that don't concern the Church
1	Becoming too liberal/alienating conservative Catholics
<1	Being narrow-minded in views/derogatory toward those who don't share his views
<1	Opposing traditional Catholic moral values
2	Other neutral or negative actions
3	Unclear
4	He hasn't done anything/still waiting for him to do something
29	Don't know/refused¹

QUESTIONS 45, 49-50, 53-56 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS A5, 45j-m, 46-48, 51-52

¹ For all questions filtered on Catholics, the "don't know/refused" category includes one respondent who was backcoded into the Catholic category during data cleaning, and therefore did not receive any of the questions intended only for Catholics.

READ IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2):

Now we have a few questions about Pope Francis.

ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:

Q.J22 As I read some phrases, please tell me whether you think each one describes Pope Francis. First, **[INSERT FIRST ITEM;RANDOMIZE, BUT ALWAYS ASK ITEM a or b FIRST]**. Does this describe Pope Francis, or not? Next, **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]**. **[REPEAT IF NECESSARY: Does this describe Pope Francis, or not?]**

		Yes, describes <u>Pope Francis</u>	No, does not describe Pope <u>Francis</u>	(VOL.) Don't know/ <u>Refused</u>
a. Humble				
	Jan. 10-15, 2018	91	6	3
	May 5-June 7, 2015	91	4	6
b. Compassionate				
	Jan. 10-15, 2018	94	4	2
	May 5-June 7, 2015	94	1	5

NO ITEM c

d. Too liberal				
	Jan. 10-15, 2018	34	59	7
	May 5-June 7, 2015	19	70	10
e. Naïve				
	Jan. 10-15, 2018	24	67	9
	May 5-June 7, 2015	15	76	9

ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:

Q.J29 How would you rate the job the pope is doing in **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]**? Is he doing an excellent, good, only fair, or a poor job? How about **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]**? **[READ AS NECESSARY: Is the pope doing an excellent, good, only fair, or a poor job [REPEAT ITEM]?**

		<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a. Spreading the Catholic faith						
	Jan. 10-15, 2018	31	39	20	5	4
	May 5-June 7, 2015	41	43	8	2	6
	Feb. 14-23, 2014	34	47	12	2	5
b. Addressing the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church						
	Jan. 10-15, 2018	13	33	27	19	8
	May 5-June 7, 2015	19	36	22	12	11
	Feb. 14-23, 2014	18	36	24	15	8

NO ITEM c-d

Q.J29 CONTINUED...

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
e. Standing up for traditional moral values					
Jan. 10-15, 2018	27	43	21	5	4
May 5-June 7, 2015	33	47	10	2	7
Feb. 14-23, 2014	29	51	14	2	4

NO ITEM f-i

j. Addressing environmental issues					
Jan. 10-15, 2018	19	36	25	8	12
May 5-June 7, 2015	18	35	25	4	18
k. Appointing new bishops and cardinals					
Jan. 10-15, 2018	18	41	20	4	17

RANDOMIZE Q.A6-Q.A6b BLOCK AND Q.A7-Q.A7b BLOCK**ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:**

Q.A6 How much, if anything, do you think Pope Francis has done to make the Catholic Church more accepting of homosexuality [READ]?

Jan. 10-15

2018

33	A lot
41	A little [OR]
16	Nothing at all
0	He's made the Church less accepting (VOL.)
10	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:

Q.A6 How much, if anything, do you think Pope Francis has done to make the Catholic Church more accepting of homosexuality **[READ]**?

ASK IF A LOT OR A LITTLE IN Q.A6 (Q.A6=1,2):

Q.A6a And would you personally like to see Pope Francis do MORE to make the Catholic Church accepting of homosexuality, do LESS, or has he done about the right amount?

ASK IF NOTHING AT ALL OR LESS ACCEPTING IN Q.A6 (Q.A6=3,4):

Q.A6b And would you personally like to see Pope Francis do MORE to make the Catholic Church accepting of homosexuality, or not?

Jan. 10-15

2018

33	A lot
12	Would like to see him do more
2	Would like to see him do less
17	He has done about the right amount
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
41	A little [OR]
21	Would like to see him do more
5	Would like to see him do less
13	He has done about the right amount
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
16	NET Nothing at all/He's made the Church less accepting (VOL.)
5	Yes, would like to see him do more
10	No, would not like to see him do more
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
10	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

RANDOMIZE Q.A6-Q.A6b BLOCK AND Q.A7-Q.A7b BLOCK**ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:**

Q.A7 How much, if anything, do you think Pope Francis has done to make the Catholic Church more accepting of divorce and remarriage **[READ]**?

Jan. 10-15

2018

26	A lot
43	A little [OR]
17	Nothing at all
0	He's made the Church less accepting (VOL.)
14	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:

Q.A7 How much, if anything, do you think Pope Francis has done to make the Catholic Church more accepting of divorce and remarriage **[READ]**?

ASK IF A LOT OR A LITTLE IN Q.A7 (Q.A7=1,2):

Q.A7a And would you personally like to see Pope Francis do MORE to make the Catholic Church accepting of divorce and remarriage, do LESS, or has he done about the right amount?

ASK IF NOTHING AT ALL OR LESS ACCEPTING IN Q.A7 (Q.A7=3,4):

Q.A7b And would you personally like to see Pope Francis do MORE to make the Catholic Church accepting of divorce and remarriage, or not?

Jan. 10-15

2018

26	A lot
10	Would like to see him do more
<1	Would like to see him do less
15	He has done about the right amount
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
43	A little [OR]
20	Would like to see him do more
3	Would like to see him do less
19	He has done about the right amount
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
17	NET Nothing at all/He's made the Church less accepting (VOL.)
7	Yes, would like to see him do more
8	No, would not like to see him do more
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
14	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) [N=316]:

Q.A8 How much do the priests at your parish support Pope Francis? Would you say they are very supportive, somewhat supportive, not too supportive or not at all supportive of Pope Francis?

Jan. 10-15

2018

55	Very supportive
23	Somewhat supportive
2	Not too supportive
<1	Not at all supportive
6	Do not attend church (VOL.)
13	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

QUESTIONS 72-73, 80-82, 90 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 57-71, 74-79, 83-89