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In U.S., Pope's Popularity Continues to Grow

*Nine-in-Ten Catholics View Pope
Francis Favorably, on Par With
Ratings for John Paul II*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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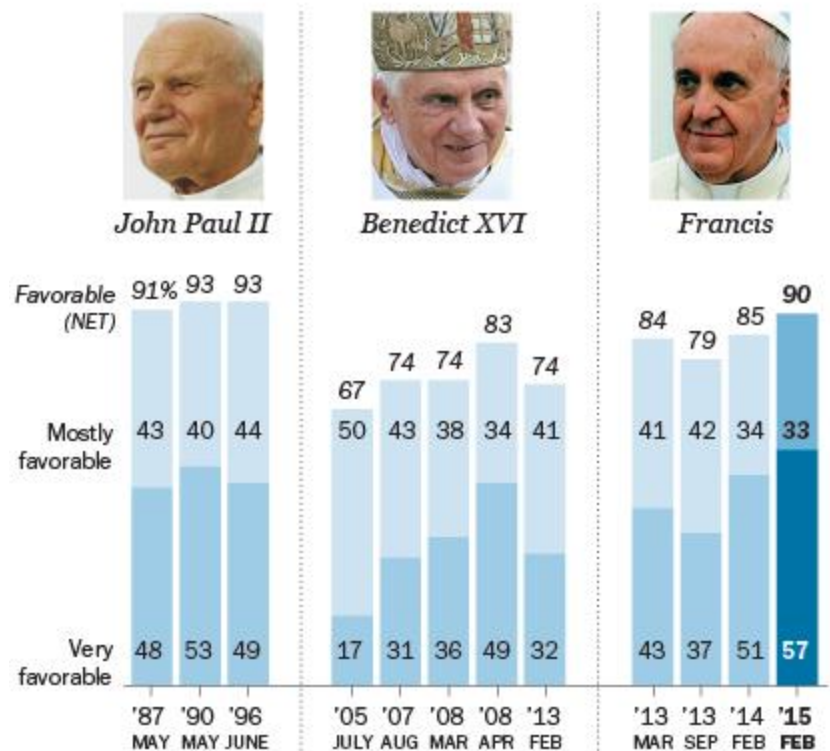
In U.S., Pope's Popularity Continues to Grow

Nine-in-Ten Catholics View Pope Francis Favorably, on Par With Ratings for John Paul II

Nearly two years after becoming the leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis continues to grow more popular among Americans.

Fully nine-in-ten U.S. Catholics now say they have a favorable view of Francis, including nearly six-in-ten who have a “very favorable” view. Francis’ favorability rating among U.S. Catholics is comparable to ratings for Pope John Paul II in the 1980s and ‘90s, and has surpassed any favorability rating for Pope Benedict XVI in Pew Research Center surveys.

Trends in Papal Favorability Among U.S. Catholics



Source: Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 18-22, 2015. Q51a.
Based on Catholics. Wikimedia Commons (images)

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As they have gotten to know more about him, non-Catholics also have grown more admiring of Pope Francis. Among U.S. adults overall (Catholic and non-Catholic), seven-in-ten see the pope favorably, up 13 points since the days immediately following his election in March 2013. The share of Americans who see Francis *unfavorably* has remained relatively steady, and is now 15%. Fewer U.S. adults now say they have no opinion or don't know enough to rate the pope (15%) than said the same in March 2013 (29%).

Among U.S. General Public, Seven-in-Ten Rate Francis Favorably

% of U.S. general public with a ... view of Francis

	Mar 2013	Sep 2013	Feb 2014	Feb 2015
	%	%	%	%
Favorable	57	58	66	70
Unfavorable	14	12	11	15
Can't rate	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>15</u>
	100	100	100	100

Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 18-22, 2015. Q51a. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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The latest Pew Research Center survey, conducted Feb. 18-22, 2015, on landlines and cellphones among a national sample of 1,504 adults, finds that the pope's popularity is very broad based. He is most widely admired by Catholics, but six-in-ten Protestants and two-thirds of the religiously unaffiliated also view him favorably. He is viewed more favorably by Americans over the age of 65 than among those under 50, but even those in the latter category express mostly positive opinions about Pope Francis. Both men and women give Francis a positive rating, and Republicans and Democrats are united in their esteem for him.

Pope's Popularity Broad Based

% with a ... view of Francis

	Favorable	Unfavorable	Can't rate
	%	%	%
Total	70	15	15=100
Men	69	15	16=100
Women	70	15	15=100
White, non-Hispanic	73	13	14=100
Black, non-Hispanic	56	21	23=100
Hispanic	71	17	12=100
Age 18-29	64	22	14=100
30-49	68	13	18=100
50-64	71	14	15=100
65+	77	10	13=100
College graduates	79	11	10=100
Some college	68	14	18=100
HS or less	65	18	17=100
Rep/lean Rep	72	17	11=100
Dem/lean Dem	70	13	17=100
Conservative	67	17	16=100
Moderate	73	13	14=100
Liberal	74	15	11=100
Protestant	60	18	22=100
White evangelical	60	22	18=100
White mainline	74	7	19=100
Catholic	90	8	3=100
Unaffiliated	68	16	16=100

Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 18-22, 2015. Q51a. Note: The survey obtained too few interviews with black Protestants to include their views in this analysis. The "can't rate" column includes those who refused to answer or have never heard of Pope Francis. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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Catholics' Views of Pope Francis

Among Catholics, those who attend Mass regularly give Francis a highly positive assessment. Indeed, almost all Catholics who attend Mass weekly give the pope a favorable rating (95%), including two-thirds who express a “very favorable” opinion of Francis.

This nearly unanimous approval of the pontiff is striking even for highly observant Catholics. In five separate readings taken over the course of Pope Benedict XVI’s papacy from 2005 to 2013, the highest favorability rating for Pope Francis’ predecessor among regular Mass-attending Catholics was 88%, and it dipped as low as 77%.

The current survey finds that 86% of Catholics who less often attend Mass also give Francis a favorable rating, including half who rate him very favorably.

Nine-in-Ten Catholics View Francis Favorably

	NET Favorable %	Very favorable %	Mostly favorable %	NET Unfavorable %	Can't rate/Ref %
All Catholics	90	57	33	8	3=100
Men	88	52	37	8	4=100
Women	91	62	29	8	2=100
White, non-Hispanic	91	57	34	8	1=100
Hispanic	88	58	30	6	6=100
Ages 18-49	88	54	34	9	3=100
Ages 50+	91	60	31	6	3=100
Rep/lean Rep	89	56	33	10	1=100
Dem/lean Dem	90	58	31	7	4=100
Conservative	94	51	42	4	2=100
Moderate/liberal	87	62	26	11	2=100
Attend weekly+	95	66	29	4	1=100
Attend less often	86	50	35	10	4=100

Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 18-22, 2015. Q51a. Based on Catholics. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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There are minimal differences among Catholics by gender, ethnicity, political orientation or age when it comes to their feelings toward the pope. Francis is widely admired by Catholic men and women, by both white and Hispanic Catholics, by Catholic Republicans and Democrats, and by Catholic adults under the age of 50 as well as older Catholics.

Views of Pope Francis Among Other Religious Groups

Although Pope Francis' warmest ratings come from his fellow Catholics, majorities of other large U.S. religious groups also view him favorably. Francis is held in high esteem even among religious "nones" (people who have no particular religion or describe themselves as atheists or agnostics). Two-thirds of religious "nones" (68%) now have a favorable view of the pope, up from 39% who said the same immediately following Francis' election. And the share of religious "nones" who view Francis unfavorably has dropped from 27% to 16% over the last two years.

Three-quarters of white mainline Protestants (74%) say they have a favorable view of Pope Francis, compared with 65% in March 2013. Most white evangelical Protestants (60%) also express positive views, though the trajectory of evangelicals' opinions about Francis has been somewhat different from patterns seen among other groups over time.¹

Trends in Pope Francis' Favorability Ratings, by Religion

	Catholic			White evangelical Protestant			White mainline Protestant			Unaffiliated		
	Fav	Unfav	Can't rate	Fav	Unfav	Can't rate	Fav	Unfav	Can't rate	Fav	Unfav	Can't rate
Pope Francis	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
February 2015	90	8	3=100	60	22	18=100	74	7	19=100	68	16	16=100
February 2014	85	4	11=100	56	14	30=100	66	9	26=100	64	11	25=100
September 2013	79	4	17=100	47	17	36=100	60	8	32=100	54	15	32=100
March 2013	84	5	11=100	59	9	32=100	65	7	28=100	39	27	34=100

Pew Research Center survey, Feb. 18-22, 2015. Q51a. Note: The survey obtained too few interviews with black Protestants to include their views in this analysis. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

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¹ The new survey obtained too few interviews with black Protestants to include their views in this analysis.

Among most U.S. religious groups, Francis' favorability rating has risen as more people have gained familiarity with the pope and become able to express an opinion about him, while the share expressing an unfavorable view has held relatively steady (among Catholics and white mainline Protestants) or declined (among religious "nones"). By contrast, the share of white evangelicals giving Francis an unfavorable rating has increased by 13 percentage points (from 9% to 22%) since the days just after his election. Still, more white evangelicals express positive views about Francis today (60%) than did so toward Pope Benedict XVI, who was generally viewed favorably by roughly half of evangelicals in Pew Research Center surveys conducted during his papacy.²

² The exception was April 2008, when Pope Benedict XVI received his highest favorability ratings from Americans after his visit to the United States. Following the trip, 61% of the public overall had a favorable view of Benedict, including 83% of Catholics, 63% of white evangelical Protestants, 61% of white mainline Protestants and 40% of religious "nones."

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 18-22, 2015 among a national sample of 1,504 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (526 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 978 were interviewed on a cellphone, including 559 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. 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 2013 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 (landline only, cellphone only, or both landline and cellphone), based on extrapolations from the 2014 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cellphones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. 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:

Group	General public		Catholics	
	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,504	2.9 percentage points	344	6.1 percentage points
Men	817	3.9 percentage points	179	8.4 percentage points
Women	687	4.3 percentage points	165	8.8 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	1067	3.4 percentage points	210	7.8 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	134	9.7 percentage points	9	<i>Not reported on</i>
Hispanic	191	8.1 percentage points	111	10.7 percentage points
Ages 18-29	246	7.2 percentage points	50	<i>Not reported on</i>
30-49	401	5.6 percentage points	99	<i>Not reported on</i>
50-64	438	5.4 percentage points	88	<i>Not reported on</i>
65+	400	5.6 percentage points	103	<i>Not reported on</i>
Ages 18-49	647	4.4 percentage points	149	9.2 percentage points
50+	838	3.9 percentage points	191	8.1 percentage points
College graduates	624	4.5 percentage points	121	9.6 percentage points
Some college	411	5.5 percentage points	83	<i>Not reported on</i>
HS or less	464	5.2 percentage points	138	10.2 percentage points
Republican/lean Republican	679	4.3 percentage points	162	8.8 percentage points
Democrat/lean Democrat	688	4.3 percentage points	152	9.1 percentage points
Conservative	585	4.6 percentage points	145	9.3 percentage points
Moderate/liberal	874	3.8 percentage points	192	8.1 percentage points
Moderate	526	4.9 percentage points	127	10.0 percentage points
Liberal	348	6.0 percentage points	65	<i>Not reported on</i>
Protestant	669	4.3 percentage points	n/a	n/a
White evangelical Protestant	290	6.6 percentage points	n/a	n/a
White mainline Protestant	207	7.8 percentage points	n/a	n/a
Catholic	344	6.1 percentage points	n/a	n/a
Unaffiliated	359	5.9 percentage points	n/a	n/a
Attend weekly+	537	4.9 percentage points	156	9.0 percentage points
Attend less often	954	3.6 percentage points	187	8.2 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.

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
FEBRUARY 2015 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
FEBRUARY 18-22, 2015
N=1,504**

OTHER QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED OR HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Next,

Q.51 Would you say your overall opinion of **[INSERT NAME; RANDOMIZE]** is 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								
Feb 18-22, 2015	70	29	40	15	5	10	5	11
Feb 14-23, 2014	66	30	36	11	4	7	7	16
Sep 4-8, 2013	58	21	37	12	4	7	10	20
Mar 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