

Attitudes of Catholics on Reproductive Rights, Church-State, and Related Issues

Three National Surveys in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico

Conducted for

**Catholics for a Free Choice and
Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir en Bolivia, Colombia
and Mexico**

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Summary of Key Findings

Nationally and internationally, Catholics differ on the role of the church in certain aspects of their lives. However, one point all Catholics tend to agree on is the fact that the Vatican does not wholly represent the beliefs of the 1 billion Catholics it oversees, particularly when it comes to matters of reproductive rights. For example, the church is unyielding regarding its stance against modern forms of contraception. Still, many Catholics around the world are using contraception, and Catholics in Latin America are no exception. Following are examples of key reproductive rights issues that exemplify the disconnect between the Vatican and followers of the Catholic faith in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico.

Access to Contraception

Ninety-one percent of Catholics in Colombia and Mexico believe adults should have access to contraception, including condoms and the birth control pill; 79% of Catholics in Bolivia agree. These same Catholics believe public health services, including hospitals and health centers, should provide free contraception; 96% of Catholics in Mexico feel this way, while 91% of Catholics in Bolivia and Colombia hold this belief as well.

Church Doctrine and Opinions of Catholics Who Use Birth Control

Church doctrine forbids the use of any contraceptive methods, with the exception of celibacy and periodic abstinence. However, 87% of Catholics in Colombia believe that a person can use contraceptives and still be a good Catholic, while 84% of those in Mexico and 81% of Catholics in Bolivia share this view.

Views on Abortion

A significant number of Catholics in these three countries believe abortions should be allowed in some or all circumstances. Sixty percent of those in Mexico feel this way, while 56% of those in Bolivia, and 49% of those in Colombia share this belief.

Who Should Decide?

In instances where abortion is a consideration, 62% of Bolivian Catholics, 55% of Mexican Catholics, and 48% of Colombian Catholics believe the ultimate decision to have an abortion lies with the couple, and not the church.

A Woman Can Still Be a Good Catholic after Having an Abortion or While Supporting Someone Who Does

Many Latin American Catholics believe it is possible to be a good Catholic even after having an abortion. In Mexico, 53% of residents hold this view; in Bolivia, those in agreement total 50%, while 37% of those in Colombia feel this way. These same individuals also believe it is possible to be a good Catholic if they support a woman who has had an abortion; 55% of those in Mexico agree with this, while 50% of Catholics in Bolivia and 39% of those in Colombia agree.

A Woman Should Not be Expelled from the Church for Having an Abortion

Mexican Catholics, at 81%, are most opposed to the expulsion of a woman from the church because she has had an abortion. 74% of Bolivian Catholics feel this way, and 67% of Colombian Catholics, while more conservative in their views, also believe that a woman who has had an abortion should be allowed to remain in the church.

Public Hospitals Should Attend to Women with Post-Abortion Health Problems

An overwhelming number of Catholics in these three countries believe public hospitals should provide care to women who experience post-abortion related health issues. Ninety-three percent of Catholics in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico hold this view.

Health Centers and Public Hospitals Should Offer Emergency Contraception

Eighty-eight percent of Catholics in Mexico, 84% of Catholics in Bolivia and 82% of Catholics in Colombia think health centers and public hospitals should offer emergency contraception (EC) to rape victims. In cases of unprotected sex, 77% of Mexican Catholics think these facilities should offer EC to women, while 65% of Catholics in Colombia and 58% of Catholics in Bolivia believe EC should be available in such instances.

Catholics Do Not Rely on Church Officials for Voting Advice

When it comes to politics, Catholics in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico do not make political decisions based on the views of the church. In Mexico, only 19% of Catholics polled said the opinion of their priest was important to them when deciding whom to vote for; in Colombia, just 22% said their priest's opinion mattered; and in Bolivia, only 30% feel this way.

Mass is Not the Place for Politics

A significant majority of Catholics in these Latin American countries disagree with the church using Mass to promote or disqualify political candidates or parties. Ninety-two percent of Mexican Catholics disagree with this practice, while 84% of Colombian and 77% of Bolivian Catholics also oppose it.

As these statistics clearly demonstrate, the attitudes of many Catholics regarding the church's role in reproductive rights and politics are moving toward a more progressive stance, even though the Vatican refuses to accept this shift. Throughout this report, it is clear that the beliefs of Catholics in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico, more often than not, take a different direction than those of church officials. When and if the Vatican ever decides to acknowledge this point, it will see that Catholics all over the world have already moved in this direction.

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I. Introduction

Catholics comprise 95% of the population in Bolivia, 90% in Colombia and 89% in Mexico.* Catholics for a Free Choice and its partner organizations Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir are nonprofit organizations in the United States and Latin America that support the rights of women and men to make personal decisions regarding human reproduction without legal penalties and seek to change the positions of the Roman Catholic church on these issues.

These organizations jointly commissioned three companion surveys in Mexico, Bolivia and Colombia in the latter half of 2003, to explore Catholics' attitudes on reproductive rights, the role of the Catholic church in reproductive rights issues and in political life, and related issues. The Population Council cosponsored the Mexican component, collaborated on the design, and oversaw the implementation of the project. Belden Russonello & Stewart advised on the development of similar questionnaires for the three countries and the design of the methods in each to enable comparisons. The results of the three studies are brought together in the following analysis.

Local companies executed the studies of the Catholic population in each of the three countries in both urban and rural areas. Estadística Aplicada interviewed 2,328 Catholics in Mexico between June 15 and July 13; Encuestas y Estudios interviewed 1,500 Catholics in Bolivia between July 28 and August 28; and Napoléon Franco y Cía S.A. interviewed 1,523 Catholics in Colombia between August 21 to September 2, 2003.

* CIA World Factbook, 2003.

II. Executive Summary

Overview

The three surveys look at the attitudes of the Catholic populations in Mexico, Bolivia and Colombia about the role of the church, separation of church and state, reproductive rights and related issues. The results show that Catholics in these countries see a humanitarian and spiritual role for their church and support many changes to liberalize it, including sanctioning contraception and some abortion rights. Also they largely oppose the church taking a heavy role in politics.

While there is agreement on many issues, the Catholics in each country do differ in key ways. Mexican Catholics are the most vociferous opponents of church intervention in public institutions and politics. Catholics in Colombia and particularly in Mexico exhibit the more permissive attitudes on most questions, while the Bolivians lean toward a more conservative point of view.

Guidepost

Catholics in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico want a church that is attentive to the world around it, particularly addressing the needs of the poor, promoting human rights and providing moral guidance. Protecting human rights generally and denouncing domestic violence are areas that garner great support for church emphasis.

Politics

Catholics in all three countries in our study oppose direct intervention in politics by the church and strongly oppose using the pulpit to promote or disqualify candidates. Majorities in all three countries say priests and nuns should not be able to hold elected office.

Colombian and Bolivian Catholics do tend to believe it is appropriate for the church to let its views be known and to work to make public policy reflect its beliefs, but Mexicans object even to these less intrusive possibilities for the church to inject itself into the public policy arena.

On a personal level Bolivians, Colombians and Mexicans also see little role for church opinions on politics: less than one in ten would consult a priest directly about voting decisions. And the views of a parish priest are one of the least important opinions for most of the Latin Americans when deciding how to vote. Many more people are interested in the views of their own families and political analysts in the media.

The influence of a president's religious beliefs on his policy making is a more complicated issue. Six in ten Bolivians and 56% of Mexicans say their presidents' religious beliefs should not have a substantial impact on the presidents' decision making, but a slight majority of Colombians say religious convictions do have at least some influence on their president's decisions. In almost all cases the perceived influence of religion on the presidents' decisions—whether a lot or none—is seen positively.

Bottom line, the great majority in all three countries says their presidents and their legislators should govern based on the diversity of opinions among their constituents—rather than basing them on the teachings of the Catholic church.

Schools, religion and sexuality education

In two countries, Bolivia and Colombia, Catholics tend to view a close relationship between the Catholic church and public education positively, supporting both government financing for parochial schools and teaching Catholicism in public schools. But Mexican Catholics are divided on the first issue and opposed to the second.

The support many of the Latin Americans give for Catholic integration into public schools does not prevent them from advocating the teaching of sexuality education in schools, including all contraceptive methods.

Contraceptive choice

Use by Catholics in the three nations of contraceptive methods such as pills, injectables, IUDs and condoms is far more prevalent than methods approved by the church, such as periodic abstinence. Most Catholics in our study support and want to have the freedom to use artificial contraception, and believe that public health facilities should provide contraception free of charge. They go so far as to say that adolescents should have access to a full range of contraceptive methods including those opposed by the church. And they do not believe that using contraception prevents one from being a “good Catholic.”

Condoms and AIDS

Catholics in the three countries say that the government should fight HIV/AIDS with condoms, and they would prefer the church allow Catholics to use condoms to prevent the spread of this disease.

Abortion

A majority of Catholics in all three countries believe abortion should be permitted in some or all cases. Support for abortion rights is strongest in Mexico and weakest in Colombia.

The circumstances in which abortion is most likely to be seen as acceptable involve life or health threatening situations. Pregnancy resulting from rape is another instance in which most are willing to condone an abortion. However, economic rationales, contraceptive failure and a feeling of incapacity to deal with a child are not seen as acceptable rationales for obtaining an abortion.

Catholics in the three nations believe first and foremost that a couple together or a woman herself should be the ones to make the decision to have an abortion. Only very small numbers would have husbands, doctors or the Catholic church making this decision.

Catholics are divided on the question of whether one can have an abortion or support someone who does and continue to be a “good Catholic.” Still, most say expulsion from the church for having an abortion is too harsh.

Obligations of health institutions

Large majorities of Catholics in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico believe public hospitals should attend to women who have health problems stemming from abortions, although they do not believe public health facilities should be obligated to provide abortion free upon request. They do say on the other hand that public hospitals and clinics should offer emergency contraception to women who have had unprotected intercourse or were raped.

Sexual abuse of minors by priests

The cases of sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy are well known throughout the three countries in our surveys, and about half or more in each country believe the occurrence of such abuse is relatively frequent.

Catholics would treat priests who have committed abuse against minors harshly. More than eight in ten would deny them the opportunity to return to serving as a priest after rehabilitation, and more than two thirds say they should be judged by both the church and the criminal justice system.

III. Summary of Methods

The three surveys reported here are based on national random samples of Catholics in Bolivia, Mexico and Colombia. The questionnaires for the three countries were written in collaboration with all the parties involved, and modifications were made in each country to allow for a limited number of country-specific questions and some wording differences in shared questions to allow for cultural differences.

The universe for each of the studies was all Catholics living in their countries. Respondents were chosen via a probability design in each nation, and interviews were conducted face-to-face at respondents' homes.

- **Bolivia:** Encuestas & Estudios interviewed 1,500 Catholics 18 years and older between July 28 and August 28, 2003, giving the Bolivian study a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.
- **Colombia:** Napoléon Franco y Cía. S.A. interviewed 1,523 Catholics 18 years and older between August 21 and September 2, 2003, for a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points in Colombia.
- **Mexico:** Estadística Aplicada interviewed 2,328 Catholics 18 years and older, between June 15 and July 13, 2003, for a margin of error of plus or minus 2.2 percentage points in the Mexican survey.

Data were tabulated in each of the three countries and analysis presented to the local Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir. The data in Bolivia and Colombia were weighted to bring them closely in line with national population figures; the Mexican data did not require weighting. Data for each survey were then also provided to us in SPSS files, to enable us to prepare directly comparable cross tabulations for the three countries and bring the three studies together into this overarching analysis.

**Copies of the questionnaires, as well as translations of the questionnaires,
are available from Catholics for a Free Choice.**

IV. Detailed Findings

Chapter 1. Three nations, three perspectives

The surveys in Mexico, Bolivia and Colombia reveal that the Catholic populations in the three countries agree on many, but not all, aspects of reproductive rights, the role of the church and other related issues. The political and social climates in each of these nations are of course different. In Bolivia, which has recently seen upheaval, Catholics are the most pessimistic about the direction of their nation. In Colombia, where attitudes on the state of affairs are mixed, the government with the international community is beginning to make inroads in efforts to end four decades of conflict. The most positive outlook can be seen in Mexico where there is relative stability and democratic institutions appear to be strengthening.

Bolivia

- Two-thirds (66%) of Catholic Bolivians say their country is headed in the wrong direction and only 11% think it is going in the right direction.
- Bolivian Catholics also register dissatisfaction with past president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada whose election by the Senate when no candidate won a majority in the general election was followed by unrest. A majority of Catholics (53%) have an unfavorable opinion of Sánchez de Lozada, while 40% have a positive opinion of him.

Colombia

- Armed conflict has been part of life for years in Colombia, and the gap between right and wrong direction is much smaller than in Bolivia. A plurality (45%) says Colombia is headed in the wrong direction and 34% say it is on the right track.

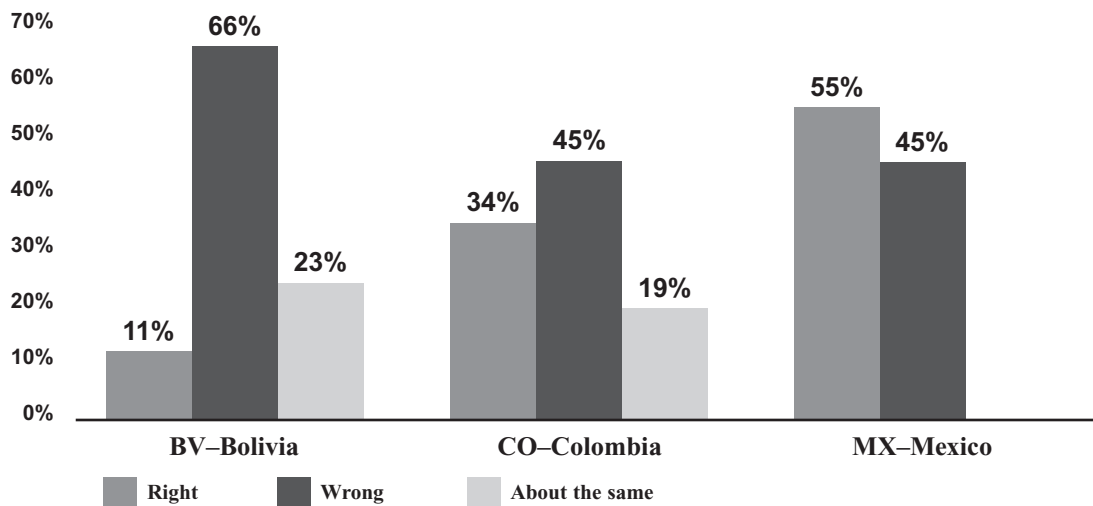
- President Alvaro Uribe Velez’s election in July of 2002 was the first time in the history of Colombia that a presidential candidate won a majority of the votes cast. His noteworthy victory is largely credited with his unyielding stance against the militants like FARC, and today he enjoys a strong 77% favorable rating.

Mexico

- In Mexico a majority of Catholics (55%) says the country is moving in the right direction, but 45% say their country is on the wrong track.*
- The president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, the first non-PRI candidate to be elected president in over 60 years, enjoys positive opinion ratings from 72% of respondents.

Direction of the country

Q11. In your opinion is _____ on the right track, or is it headed off in the wrong direction?



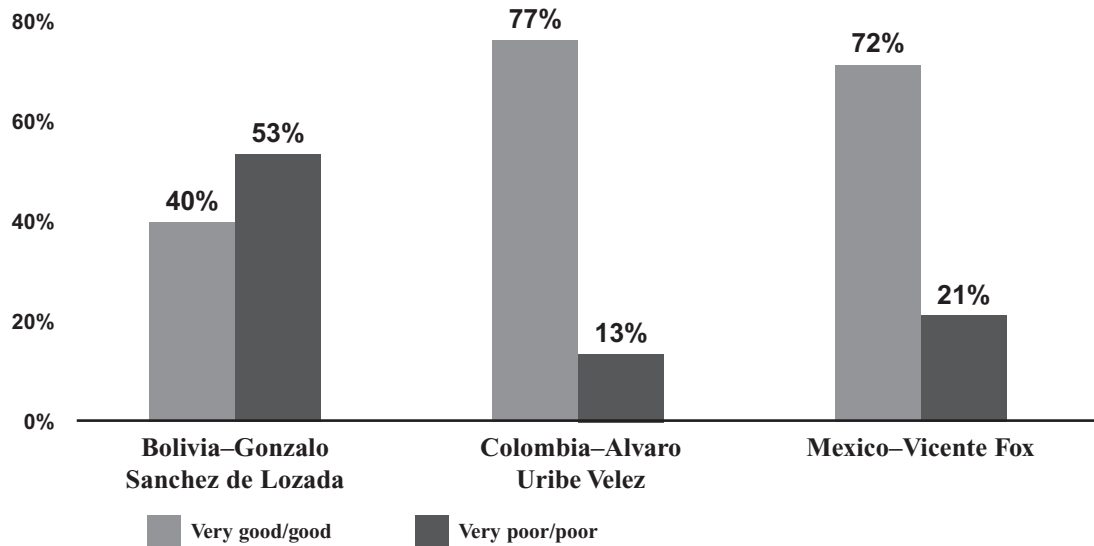
* In Mexico respondents were not offered the options “about the same” or “neither.”

Opinion of the presidents of the three nations

Q1-2. I am going to read you a list of names*, please tell me if you know them. If you do I am going to ask if you have a very good, good, poor, or very poor opinion of them; if you don't have an opinion about them you can tell me that also.

*CO – names and institutions

MX – I am going to read a list of names of people and organizations, please tell me if you have heard or do not recognize them. Have you heard of ____? How good or bad is your opinion with respect to ____?



Repeating themes

In the following pages, the reader will see that Catholics in the three countries approach such issues as reproductive rights and the role of the church in politics differently.

Mexicans are strongly opposed to church involvement in politics, reflecting their anticlerical history and they are more progressive than others on reproductive choice issues.

Bolivian Catholics are generally less liberal than their counterparts in Mexico and Colombia, following church teachings more closely.

The attitudes of Colombians generally fall in between the other two countries—except the Colombians are least supportive of abortion rights and most concerned about human rights, the latter not surprising given the years of armed conflict that Colombia has endured.

Chapter 2. Catholics' priorities for their church

The Catholic church has filled many different roles over the course of two millennia, from a political body to a provider of shelter for the needy to a guide to the faithful in worship. Bolivian, Colombian and Mexican Catholics today largely want a church that is attentive to the world around it, particularly in the case of social issues.

- More than eight in ten Catholics in Bolivia, Mexico and Colombia say the church should pay a lot or some attention to helping the poor, promoting the defense of human rights and providing moral guidance to Catholics.

Smaller but still sizable majorities say at least some attention should be paid by the church to the political arena. However, Mexicans show their anticlerical colors and oppose church involvement in politics.

- Bolivians are most likely to favor the church working to make government policies reflect Catholic beliefs (77% a lot or some attention) and informing the public of its opinion on political topics (73%).
- Two-thirds of Colombians say the church should pay some or a lot of attention to government policies and just over half (53%) say informing the public about the church's views on politics is an area for church attention.
- A majority of Mexicans (about six in ten) say each of these types of engagements should get not much or no attention from the church.

Areas for church attention

Q16. To continue, I would like to ask you some questions about the Catholic church in [Bolivia/Colombia/Mexico]. How much attention should the Catholic church* give to the following topics?

*BV – the Catholic church in Bolivia/MX – the Catholic church in Mexico

	Bolivia		Colombia		Mexico	
	A lot/Some attention	Not much/No attention	A lot/Some attention	Not much/No attention	A lot/Some attention	Not much/No attention
Helping the poor	97%	1%	99%	1%	97%	3%
Promoting the defense of human rights	95%	5%	97%	3%	88%	13%
Giving Catholics moral guidance	93%	7%	94%	6%	83%	17%
Working to make government policies reflect Catholic beliefs	77%	23%	66%	33%	40%	61%
Informing the public of the church's opinion on political topics	73%	27%	54%	46%	40%	61%

The contrast between desires for church involvement in social versus political areas appears in starker relief when Catholics are asked about the use of church resources. And Catholics in the three countries in our study are very much in agreement with each other about these priorities.

- Eight in ten or more Mexican, Bolivian and Colombian Catholics favor the church spending a lot or some resources on building more homes for street children, more hospitals and clinics, and more schools. In the case of facilities for street children, there is nearly universal support in all three nations.
- Support for spending a lot or some resources on the construction of more churches is somewhat smaller but still strong, with about seven in ten Catholics in each country in agreement.
- However, majorities say the church in each country should spend few or no resources on more homes for priests: 53% in Bolivia; 62% in Colombia; and 60% in Mexico.
- Involvement in politics is rejected as an appropriate use of church resources. Again, the greatest support for such action can be seen in Bolivia, but even there only 28% of Catholics favor the church spending a lot or some of its resources getting involved in politics. Very small numbers, 13% of Colombian and 12% of Mexican Catholics, say the church should use some or more resources to intervene in politics.

Appropriate uses of church resources

Q26. Please tell me if you think that the Catholic church should spend a lot, some, few or no resources on:

	Bolivia		Colombia		Mexico	
	A lot/Some resources	Few/No resources	A lot/Some resources	Few/No resources	A lot/Some resources	Few/No resources
Building more homes for street children	98%	2%	99%	1%	95%	5%
Building more hospitals and clinics	92%	8%	92%	8%	83%	17%
Building more schools	91%	8%	96%	4%	79%	21%
Building more churches	73%	26%	67%	33%	71%	29%
Building or buying better homes for priests	47%	53%	37%	62%	40%	60%
Intervening in politics	28%	71%	13%	86%	12%	88%

Chapter 3. Changing the church

The three surveys asked about attitudes on a series of initiatives—most of them departures from current church positions—that might be undertaken by the Catholic church. The areas where change would be most welcome are a stronger voice for human and personal rights and reproductive rights. The areas where Catholics are least interested in change have to do with church governance and clergy.

Protecting people

- Protecting human rights in general and dealing with domestic violence in particular garner enormous support as areas for more focus by the church. More than nine in ten in all three countries offer a lot or some support to the church protecting human rights around the world. Support for the church denouncing domestic violence among Catholics is almost as high: 94% in Colombia, 92% in Bolivia and 88% in Mexico would like to see a lot or some support go to such an initiative.

Reproductive rights

- Despite longstanding church opposition to artificial contraception, large majorities of Catholics in all three countries say they would endorse the church changing its policy to allow the use of contraception and the use of condoms to protect against AIDS.
- The issue of emergency contraception is more divisive. In Mexico, 58% would approve and 42% disapprove; 55% in Colombia approve and 45% disapprove; and 49% in Bolivia approve but 51% disapprove.
- Few Catholics in the three nations are inclined to suggest that the church change its position on abortion. A few more Mexican Catholics (34%) would favor the church allowing abortions than their counterparts in Bolivia and Colombia (26% and 21%).

Divorce

- Latin American Catholics are also divided on the question of allowing Catholics to divorce and remarry. Very slight majorities approve in Mexico (53%) and Colombia (53%) and only 48% approve in Bolivia.

Gay men and lesbians

- An acceptance of the right of gay men and lesbians to express their sexual orientation openly is endorsed by majorities of Catholics in all three countries, most strongly in Mexico (66% in favor). Support is at 53% in Bolivia and 60% in Colombia.

Clergy

- Changing the selection system for bishops to allow the faithful to participate is another divisive issue. In Bolivia and Colombia, 58% support this idea and 41% and 43%, respectively, oppose it. Mexican Catholics are evenly split 49% in favor to 51% against.
- A restructuring of the all-male priesthood, by either opening it to women or allowing its members to marry and continue to serve, finds little support. Allowing priests to marry and continue to work as priests is rejected in all three countries—especially in Mexico where 70% oppose. While a majority, 61%, of Bolivians would give a lot or some support to the church if it opened the priesthood to women, majorities in Colombia (52%) and Mexico (54%) would oppose such a move.

Support for initiatives that would change the church

Q28. BV and CO – Would you give a lot of, some, very little, or no support to the Catholic church carrying out the following initiatives? MX – Now I am going to ask you some questions about activities of the Catholic church. Would you support or oppose each of the following activities?

	Bolivia		Colombia		Mexico	
	A lot/Some support	Very little/No support	A lot/Some support	Very little/No support	A lot/Some support	Very little/No support
Protecting human rights around the world	96%	4%	96%	4%	92%	8%
Denouncing domestic violence	92%	8%	94%	6%	88%	12%
Allowing Catholics to use condoms to protect themselves from HIV or AIDS	88%	12%	93%	7%	85%	16%
Allowing Catholics to use contraception	71%	28%	83%	16%	72%	28%
Accepting the right of lesbians and homosexuals to express their sexual orientation openly	53%	46%	60%	40%	66%	35%
Changing the system so the Catholic faithful can participate in the election of bishops	58%	41%	58%	43%	49%	51%
Allowing Catholics to use emergency contraception, that is, a high dose of birth control pills after unprotected sex, in order to prevent pregnancy	49%	51%	55%	45%	58%	42%
Allowing Catholics to get divorced and then remarry	48%	52%	53%	46%	53%	47%
Allowing women to become priests	61%	39%	48%	52%	46%	54%
Allowing priests to marry and continue to work as priests	45%	55%	43%	57%	30%	70%
Allowing Catholics who so choose to have abortions	26%	73%	21%	79%	34%	66%

Chapter 4. Relationship to the church

While most of the Latin American Catholics in our study feel positively toward church leadership and desire the counsel of a priest on such personal matters as helping with an alcohol problem, few would consult a priest about their marital, reproductive and political decisions.

Opinion of the pope

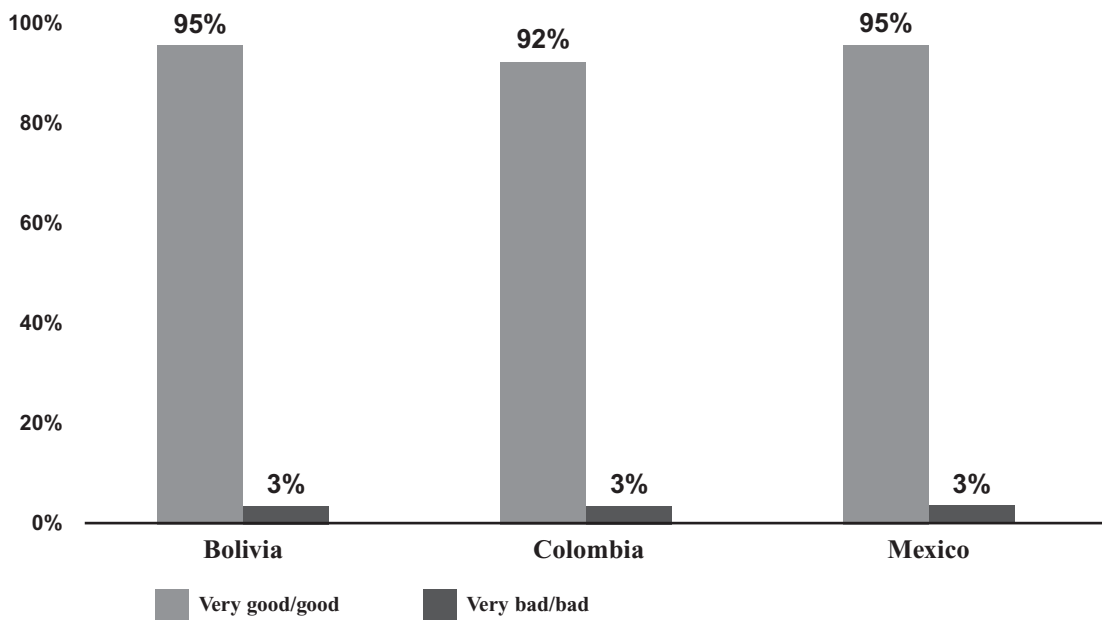
- Very large majorities of Catholics in all three countries have positive opinions of Pope John Paul II. Ninety-five percent of Catholics in Bolivia and Mexico have a very good or good opinion of the pope, as do 92% of those in Colombia.

Pope John Paul II Opinion ratings

Q1-2(c). I am going to read you a list of names*, please tell me if you know them. If you do I am going to ask if you have a very good, good, bad, or very bad opinion of them; if you don't have an opinion about them you can tell me that also.

*CO – names and institutions

MX – I am going to read a list of names of people and organizations, please tell me if you have heard or do not recognize of these. Have you heard of ____? How good or bad is your opinion with respect to ____?



The advice of a Catholic priest

Most Catholics in the three nations would welcome the counsel of a priest in only a few areas about which we inquired.

Alcoholism

- In each of the three countries Catholics are most likely to consult a priest to seek help for a relative with alcohol problems. Bolivians with an alcoholic relative are particularly likely to seek help from a priest (80%), followed by Colombians (73%) and Mexicans (68%).

Marriage and divorce

- Marriage, in which the church has an important traditional role, is an area where about half of Catholics would consult a priest: 52% in Colombia, 49% in Bolivia and 44% in Mexico. Divorce is not accepted by the church, and is something about which only four in ten or fewer would consult with their priest: 40% in Colombia, 38% in Bolivian and 36% in Mexico.

Reproductive decisions

- Few Catholics would consult their priest on the issues of abortion and contraception. More would seek advice about an abortion (35% in Mexico, 32% in Bolivia, and 31% in Colombia) than the use of contraceptives (17% in Mexico and 15% each in Bolivia and Colombia). Perhaps this disparity mirrors the finding that more Catholics in all three countries feel getting or supporting the decision to get an abortion affects one's status as a good Catholic than express that concern about contraception.

Candidate choice

- Catholics are highly unlikely to involve their priest in political decisions. Only about one in ten Catholics in each country say they would consult a priest when deciding for whom to vote.

Consulting a priest

Q27.

BV and CO — In each of the following situations, can you tell me if you would definitely consult a priest, probably consult, probably not consult, or definitely not consult a priest:

MX – I would like to ask you some questions about different personal decisions a person might have to make. Please tell me what you would do if you or a member of your family were faced with a similar decision. Use the options that are shown on the card. How likely is it that you would consult or advise a family member to consult a Catholic priest:

[% saying definitely or probably consult]

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
To seek help for a relative with alcohol problems	80%	73%	68%
To decide whether or not to get married	49%	52%	44%
To decide whether or not to get a divorce	38%	40%	36%
To decide whether or not to get an abortion	32%	31%	35%
To decide whether or not to use a contraceptive	15%	15%	17%
To decide which candidate to vote for	9%	10%	9%

Desire for children to become clergy

- Catholics in the three countries are split on the issue of whether they would like to see their own children become priests or nuns. Catholics are slightly more likely to say they would like a son to become a priest (58% in Mexico, 55% in Bolivia and 47% in Colombia) than would like a daughter to become a nun (48% in Mexico, 46% in Bolivia and 40% in Colombia).

Desire for children to become clergy

Q29. I'm going to read you some statements, please tell me if you agree or not.

[% saying agree]

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
If you had a son, you would like him to become a priest.	55%	47%	58%
If you had a daughter, you would like her to become a nun.	46%	40%	48%

Chapter 5. The role of the church in political affairs

The role that Catholics want for the church is not a political one. Across the three countries Catholics agree that they would not seek out the advice of priests in their political decision making (as we saw earlier), welcome clergy as elected officials, nor approve of their using the pulpit to promote or oppose candidates. Mexicans are the most emphatically opposed to clerical involvement in the political sphere.

- Only one in ten would definitely or probably consult a priest to decide which candidate to support. (See page 21.)
- Less than a third (30%) of Catholics in Bolivia call the view of the parish priest very or somewhat important in deciding how to vote; 22% of Colombians and a mere 19% of Mexicans agree.

Influential figures in making voting decisions

Q15. Please tell me how important the opinions of the following people are to you when you decide whom to vote for. [% saying very important or important]

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
Your spouse or partner	41%	45%	42%
TV, magazine, newspaper or radio political analysts	37%	29%	33%
Other members of your family	36%	40%	31%
Political party leaders	29%	25%	27%
The leaders in the community where you live	24%	26%	21%
Your parish priest	30%	22%	19%

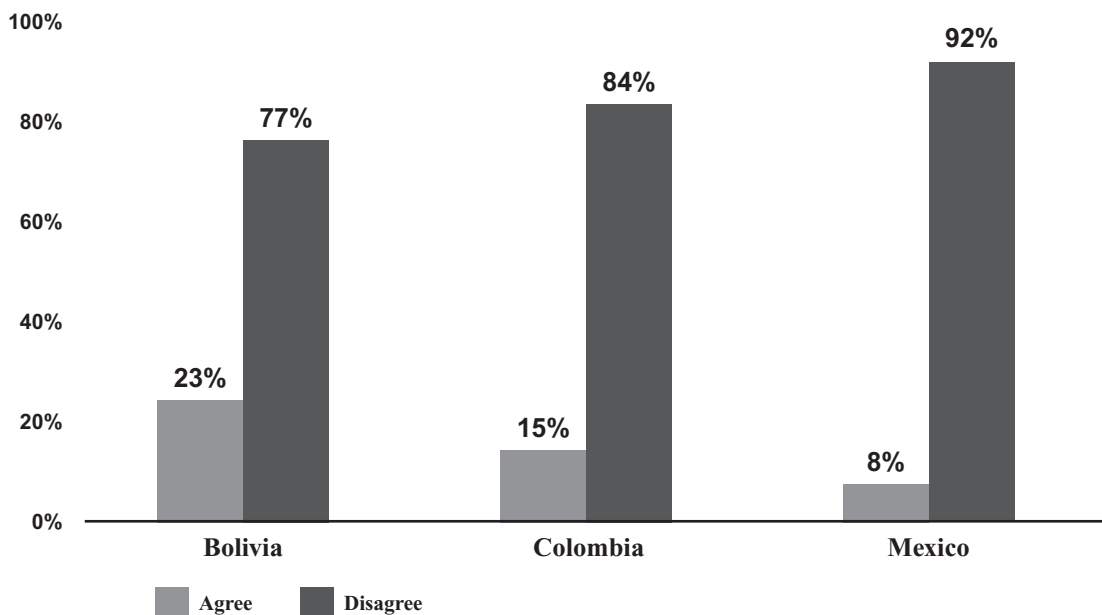
Voting decisions

- Large majorities of Catholics across all three countries think Mass should not be used to promote or disqualify candidates. This view is held most strongly in Mexico, where 92% of Catholics disagree with this practice.

Catholic church urging support or opposition to candidates during Mass

Q22. Do you agree or disagree with the Catholic church using Mass to promote or disqualify* certain candidates or political parties?

*CO – to speak well or poorly of



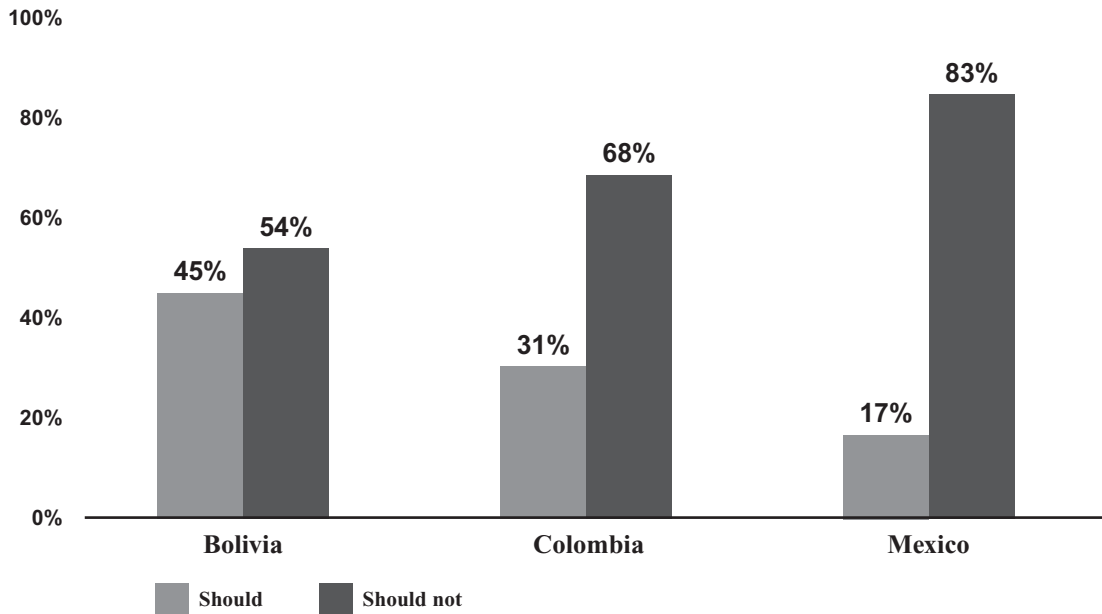
Religious figures running for public office

Just as there is little support for allowing politics to enter Mass, majorities of Catholics feel that priests and nuns should not be able to hold elected office.

- Eighty-three percent of Catholics in Mexico and 68% of those in Colombia do not feel members of the clergy should be allowed to run for office.
- The gap in Bolivia between those who would oppose clergy candidates (55%) and those who think priests and nuns should be able to run for office (45%) is much smaller.

Should priests and nuns be able to hold elected office?

Q25. Do you think that priests and nuns should or should not be able to hold elected office?



Religious basis for policy making by presidents and legislators

Most Catholics in our study—especially in Mexico—believe their presidents and their legislative and judicial branches should govern based on the diversity of opinions found in their respective nations, rather than on the teachings of the Catholic church.

- Seventy-five percent of Catholics in Bolivia say a Catholic president should govern based on the diversity of opinions that exist in his or her country and 76% say the same holds true for those in positions of legislative and judicial power.
- More Catholics in Colombia feel the country’s diverse opinions should be the basis for presidential (80%) and legislative and judicial (81%) decisions.
- And over nine in ten Mexican Catholics would prefer to have their president (92%) and legislators and judges (93%) act on nationally diverse opinions rather than church teachings.

Should a Catholic president govern based on the teachings of the Catholic church or the diversity of opinions in the country?

Q23. In your opinion, should a Catholic president govern based on the teachings of the Catholic church or based on the diversity of opinions that exist in their country?

Q24. In your opinion, should people in positions of legislative and judicial power* make decisions based on the teachings of the Catholic church or based on the diversity of opinions that exist in their country?

*CO – people in the Congress, the Senate and the courts

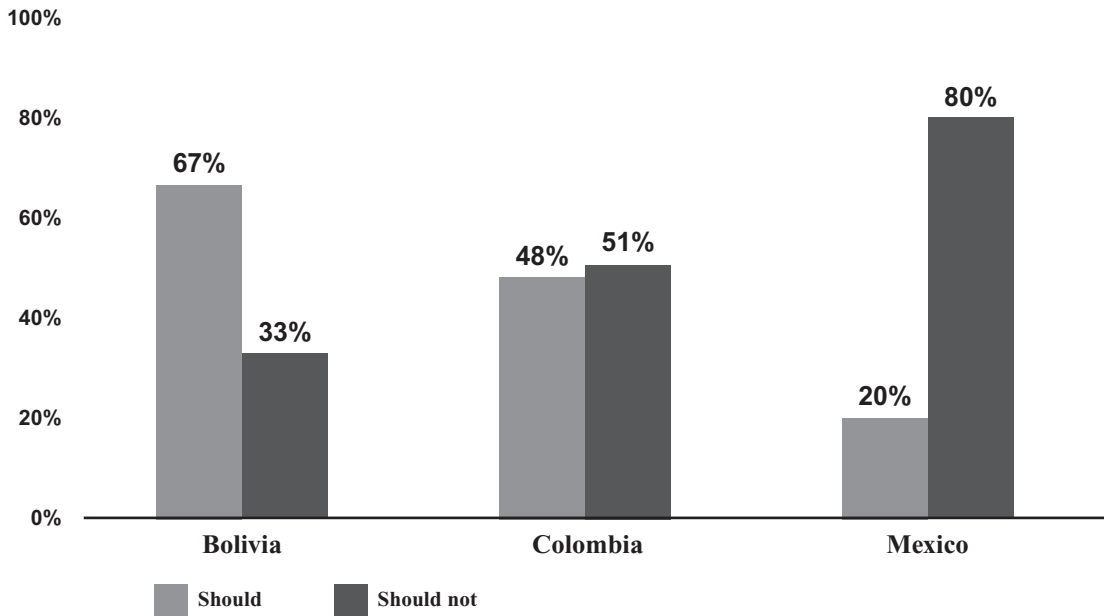
	Bolivia		Colombia		Mexico	
	President	Legislative/ Judicial	President	Legislative/ Judicial	President	Legislative/ Judicial
Based on the teachings of the Catholic church	25%	23%	19%	18%	8%	7%
Based on the diversity of opinions in the country	75%	76%	80%	81%	92%	93%

However, this does not mean the Catholics object to a religious influence in government policy making altogether.

- Two-thirds of Bolivian Catholics (67%) think the church *should* have such influence, and Colombians are split with 51% saying the church should not have influence on policy while 48% think such sway is acceptable.
- In clear contrast, Mexican Catholics strongly disapprove of the idea of the church having influence on government policies (80% say it should not).

Should the Catholic church have influence on the design of government policies?

Q17. In your opinion, the Catholic church should or should not have influence on the [Bolivian/Colombian/Mexican] government's policies.



Mexico has a long-standing and strong anticlerical tradition, as evidenced in the above examples. One question that appeared only on the Mexican questionnaire further expresses this sentiment, demonstrating that 82% of Mexican Catholics believe the Mexican government should be protected from the influence of the Catholic church in order to protect the lay state. Less than one in five (18%) feel the church should be allowed to have influence in the Mexican government.

Protection of the lay state

	Mexico
Q15-MEXICO. Tell me which of these is most in accordance with your opinion.	
The Mexican government should be protected from the influence of the Catholic church in order to protect the lay state.	82%
The Catholic church should be allowed to have influence in the Mexican government.	18%

Beliefs about the existing influence of religious beliefs on presidents’ decisions

Views on whether religion should play a big part in the decision making of the three nations’ presidents are more complex.

- Only in Colombia does a majority of Catholics (55%) believe that religion has a lot or some influence over the decisions of their president, Alvaro Uribe. Mexicans and Bolivians are more likely to think religion has little or no influence on the decisions of presidents Fox and Sánchez de Lozada (56% and 65%, respectively).

How much do a president’s religious beliefs influence decisions?

Q20. Do you think that the religious beliefs of [Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada/Álvaro Uribe/Vicente Fox] have a lot, some, not much or no influence over his decisions as president?

	Bolivia – Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada	Colombia – Alvaro Uribe	Mexico – Vicente Fox
A lot	10% 34%[27% 55%[18% 44%[
Some	24%	28%	26%
Not much	31% 65%[23% 42%[26% 56%[
No influence	34%	19%	30%

- In almost all cases the perceived role of religion in the presidents’ decision making—whether a lot or none—is seen in a positive light. This is most noticeable in Colombia, where 93% of those expressing the majority view, that the president’s decisions are influenced by his religious beliefs, think this is a good thing. Of those Bolivian Catholics saying they see a lot or some influence on their president, 74% view this behavior positively as do 66% of Mexicans.
- Most Colombians and Mexicans who believe their leaders’ decisions are not particularly led by religious beliefs approve. Bolivia offers the only exception. Only 30% of Catholics in Bolivia who say religion has little or no role in then-president Sánchez de Lozada’s decisions consider this a good state of affairs. More than two-thirds (68%) say it is bad that religion has not much or no influence on his presidency.

Attitudes regarding the nature of religious influence on the president by beliefs about level of influence religion has on president

Q21. In your opinion, is it good or bad for [Bolivia/Colombia/Mexico] that the religious beliefs of the president have [a lot or some/not much or no] influence over his decisions as president?

	Bolivia		Colombia		Mexico	
	Religion has:		Religion has:		Religion has:	
	A lot/Some influence	Not much/No influence	A lot/Some influence	Not much/No influence	A lot/Some influence	Not much/No influence
Good	74%	30%	93%	64%	66%	72%
Bad	26%	68%	7%	34%	34%	28%

Chapter 6: Schools and youth

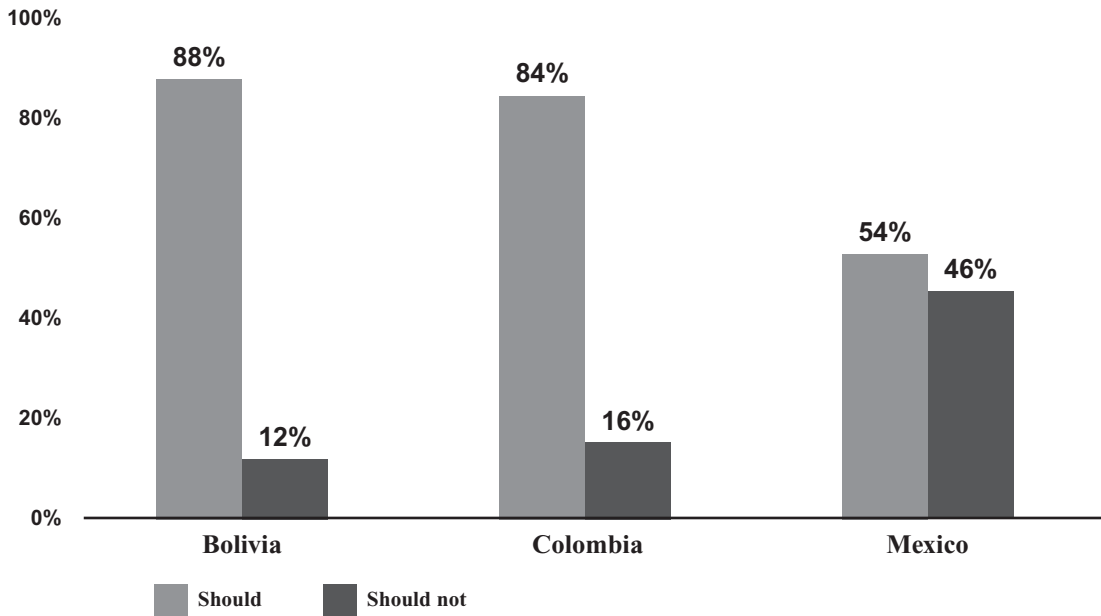
Bolivian and Colombian Catholics view religious influence in public education in a positive light. Catholics in Mexico are divided on the role of government in religious education and the church in secular education. At the same time nearly all the Catholics in our study say schools should teach sexuality education and adolescents should have access to artificial contraception.

Government support for Catholic schools

- Majorities of Catholics in all three countries think their national governments should provide financial support to the church so it can operate Catholic schools. Such sentiment is particularly strong in Bolivia and Colombia where 88% and 84% of Catholics, respectively, feel this way.
- A much smaller majority (54%) in Mexico thinks the government should provide financial support for parochial schools and 46% say the government should not provide such aid.

Should the government provide economic support to the Catholic church so it can operate Catholic schools?

Q18. Do you think that the [Bolivian/Colombian/Mexican] government should or should not give financial support to the Catholic church for Catholic schools?

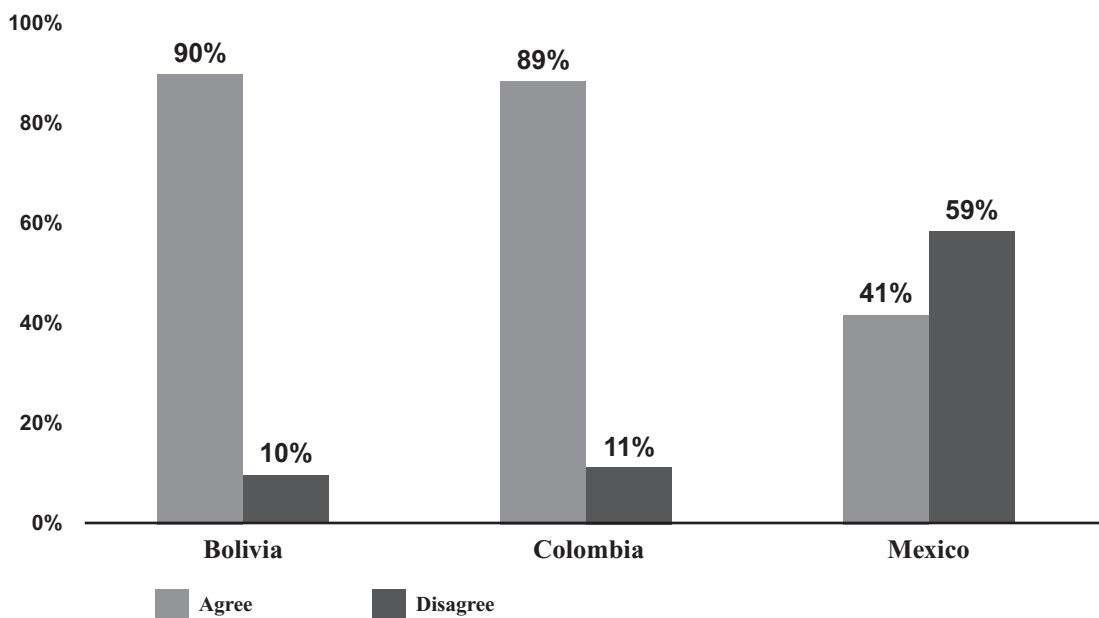


Teaching Catholicism in public schools

- Ninety percent of Bolivian Catholics and 89% of Colombian Catholics favor religious instruction in public schools.
- Once again, the reverse can be seen in Mexico, where only 41% think teaching religion has a place in public education and 59% oppose the instruction of Catholicism in public schools.

Teaching Catholicism in public schools

Q19. Do you agree or disagree with public schools in [Bolivia/Colombia/Mexico] teaching Catholicism to students?



Sexuality education for young people

■ At the same time the great majority of Catholics believe public schools should provide sexuality education for students, and in Bolivia and Colombia more than nine in ten say Catholic schools should do the same. Furthermore, about eight in ten in each country say adolescents should have access to various types of artificial contraception.

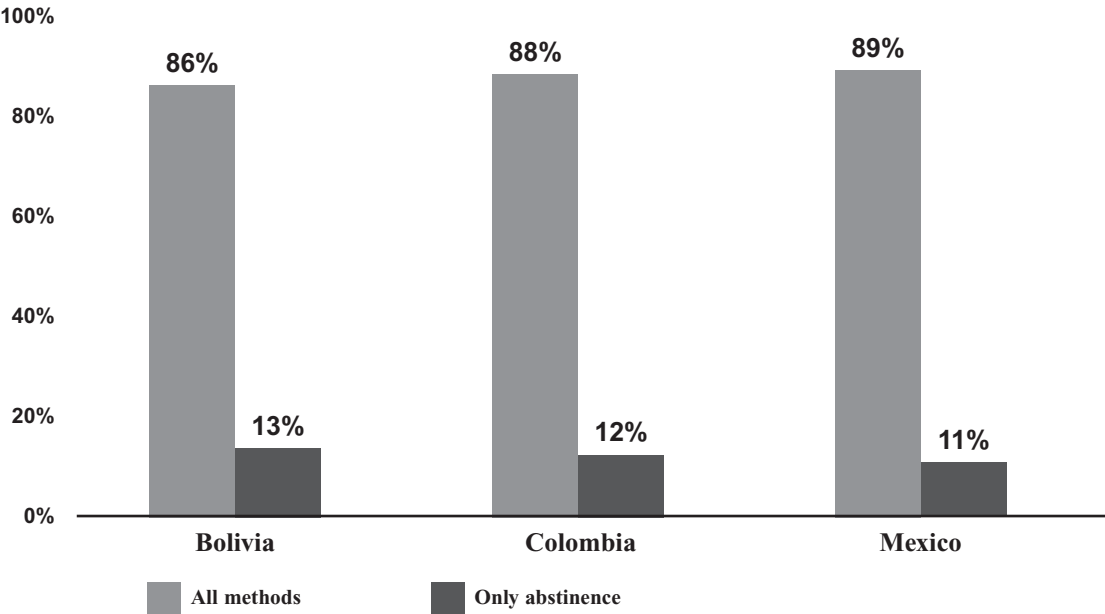
Q3. Now I am going to read you a list of statements. For each one tell me if you agree or disagree.
 [% saying agree]

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
Public schools should teach sex education to students	94%	95%	93%
Catholic schools should teach sex education to students	93%	94%	N/A
Adolescents should have access to contraceptives, including the pill, injectable contraceptives, the IUD and condoms	76%	83%	82%

■ The great majority also say that given that sexuality education is already a reality in schools, it should cover all contraceptive methods, not just abstinence.

Teaching about contraceptive methods

Q4. Thinking about education of adolescents and the fact that sex education is now taught in schools, in your opinion: a) they should teach ALL contraceptive methods; or b) ONLY abstinence as a way to prevent pregnancy.



These findings foreshadow the positive attitudes Catholics hold about contraception generally.

Chapter 7. Views on reproductive issues

While the Catholic church continues to oppose Catholics exercising reproductive choice, most Catholics in the Latin American countries examined in this study support and want to have freedom of choice in this area.

Access to contraception

Most Catholics in the three countries believe adults should have access to contraception, and that public hospitals and health centers should provide contraception free of charge.

Also, there is nearly universal support among Catholics for government promotion of condom use to prevent AIDS.

Access to contraception

Q3. Now I am going to read you a list of statements. For each one tell me if you agree or disagree. [% saying agree]

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
Adults should have access to contraceptives, including the pill, injectable contraceptives, the IUD and condoms	79%	91%	91%
Public health services, including hospitals and health centers, should provide free contraception	91%	94%	96%
The government should promote the use of condoms to fight the AIDS virus	95%	96%	96%

Catholics' wide use of artificial contraception

While the church prohibits the use of artificial contraception by Catholics, many ignore this prohibition and practice contraception in their own lives. Periodic abstinence (the “rhythm method”), condoned by the church, is far less frequently cited as a method used than are artificial means. In Colombia 75% report using one type of contraception or another, 67% in Mexico and 59% in Bolivia.

- Specifically, 46% Colombian Catholics say they or their partners have used a condom, as do 44% of their Mexican and 39% of their Bolivian counterparts.
- Birth control pills are the second most commonly used contraceptive in Colombia (34%) and Mexico (26%).

- In Bolivia the second most used contraceptive among Catholics is the church accepted method, periodic abstinence (32%). Catholics in Mexico and Colombia are much less likely to use this method: 13% and 15% respectively.
- Couples in all three countries infrequently report sterilization. Men are particularly unlikely to have had vasectomies, whereas, about one in ten Catholic woman in Colombia and Mexico say they have tubal ligations.

Contraceptive methods used

Q5. Which of the contraceptive methods on this card [SHOW CARD] have you or your partner used*?

*MX – you or a partner used at some point in time

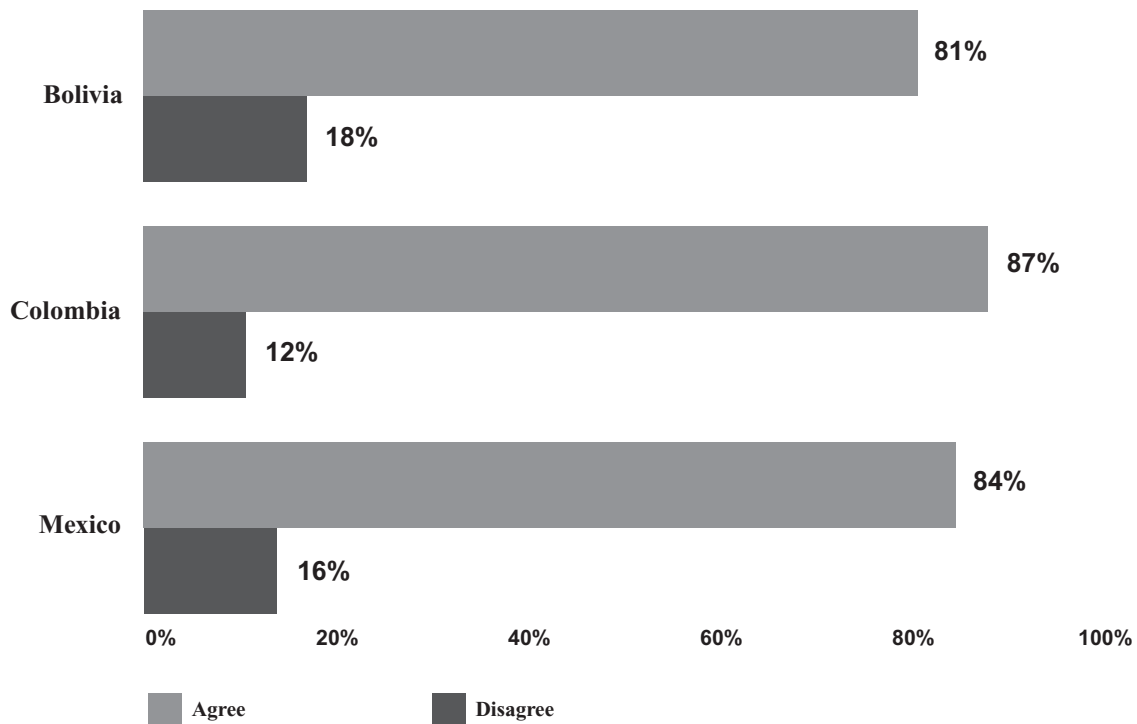
	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
Total artificial means of contraception and sterilization	59%	75%	67%
Condom	39%	46%	44%
Birth control pills	23%	34%	26%
The IUD	10%	14%	15%
Tying tubes (female operation)	5%	11%	10%
Vasectomy (male operation)	4%	1%	2%
Pessaries, diaphragms, etc.	3%	N/A	3%
Other	2%	6%	*
Periodic abstinence (“rhythm method”)	32%	15%	13%
None	17%	22%	29%

Clearly there is a disparity between church doctrine and the opinions of Latin American Catholics in regard to contraception.

- The church stands firmly against the use of any contraceptive methods, aside from celibacy and periodic abstinence. However, not only are many Catholics using modern contraception, as we have discussed, but also large majorities of Catholics in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico do not believe that using a contraceptive prevents a person from being a good Catholic. Colombian Catholics, at 87%, are most likely to agree that a person can use a contraceptive and continue being a good Catholic, followed closely by those in Mexico (84%) and Bolivia (81%).

A person can use contraception and still be a good Catholic

Q29(d). I'm going to read you some statements, please tell me if you agree or not. A person can use a contraceptive and continue being a good Catholic.



Support for abortion

A majority of Catholics in all three countries believe abortions should be allowed in some or all circumstances.

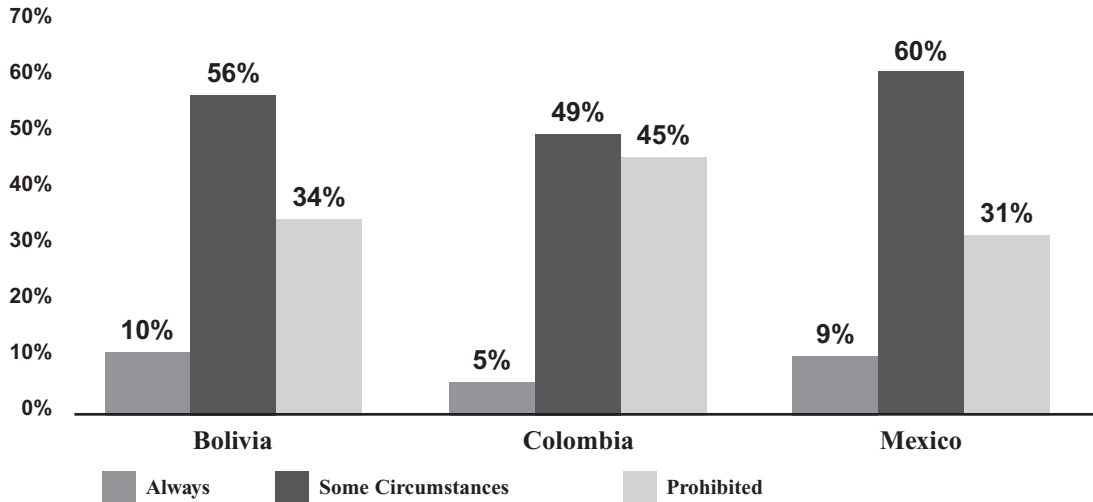
Mexicans differ the most from the church with nine percent supporting abortion in all cases and 60% supporting abortion under certain circumstances.

Similarly, in Bolivia 10% support a woman's right to an abortion whenever she chooses and 56% think there are some instances in which it should be permitted.

Colombian Catholics offer the most lukewarm support, but some still come down in favor: 49% say abortion should be allowed in some circumstances and five percent in all circumstances.

When abortion should be permitted

Q6. Please tell me which of these is most in accordance with your opinion about abortion: A) a woman should always have the right to choose to have an abortion; B) abortion should only be allowed in some circumstances; C) abortion should be prohibited in all cases.



Specific circumstances

Regardless of whether Catholics said they would always, sometimes, or never support abortion, they were asked whether they would agree or disagree with a decision to have an abortion in a series of specific situations. This exercise serves to demonstrate that far higher percentages approve of abortion under “some circumstances” when those circumstances are made explicit.

- Majorities in all countries supported abortion in circumstances involving the health of the woman and fetus. The greatest number of Catholics feels abortion is appropriate in each country when the life of a woman is at risk (82% in Mexico, 78% in Bolivia and 73% in Colombia).
- Most also agree with abortion when a woman’s health is at risk (71% Bolivia, 65% Colombia, 77% Mexico) and when a woman has AIDS (76%, 66%, and 69%, respectively).

- Sixty-eight percent of Catholics in Bolivia, 66% in Mexico and 61% in Colombia agree abortion should be allowed when the child would be born with severe mental or physical congenital defects.
- The final case presented in which a majority of Catholics in all three countries support abortion is when the pregnancy is the result of rape: 65% in Mexico, 58% in Bolivia and 52% in Colombia.

Situations in which a woman may request an abortion

Q7. Now I am going to read you some situations in which there might be an abortion, for each one tell me if you agree or disagree. [% saying agree]

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
When the woman's life is in danger	78%	73%	82%
When the woman's health is at risk	71%	65%	77%
When the woman has AIDS	76%	65%	69%
When the fetus has severe mental or physical congenital defects	68%	61%	66%
When the pregnancy is the result of rape	58%	52%	65%
When the woman chooses	20%	11%	21%
Because of a lack of economic resources	16%	11%	16%
When a contraceptive method has failed	18%	9%	14%
When a woman does not feel capable of taking care of a child at that moment	17%	11%	13%

Who should decide?

- In cases where abortion is considered, majorities of Catholics in Bolivia (62%) and Mexico (55%) and a plurality in Colombia (48%) say it should be a couple's decision.
- Smaller, but relevant, percentages think such a decision should be the woman's alone: 33% in Mexico, 22% in Colombia and 17% in Bolivia. The other potential decision makers presented (the husband or partner, doctors and the Catholic church) received single digit support in all countries.

Who should make the decision to have an abortion?

Q10. In the case of an unwanted pregnancy, who should principally make the decision to have an abortion?

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
The woman	17%	22%	33%
The husband or partner	2%	3%	5%
Both of them together*	62%	48%	55%
<i>*MX – the woman and her partner</i>			
The doctors	2%	3%	4%
The Catholic church	2%	*	2%
None of them	15%	21%	1%

Can a good Catholic get an abortion or support someone else who does?

Catholics in Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico were asked if a woman who decides to have an abortion or a person who supports her decision can continue being a “good Catholic.”

- Roughly half of Mexican and Bolivian Catholics believe individuals who do either of these can continue being good Catholics.
- However, Colombian Catholics are less likely to agree; only 37% think a woman continues being a good Catholic after deciding to have an abortion and 39% think a person who supports a woman’s decision to do so remains a good Catholic.

Can a good Catholic get an abortion or support someone else who does?

Q29. I’m going to read you some statements, please tell me if you agree or not. [% saying agree]

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
A woman can decide to have an abortion and continue being a good Catholic	50%	37%	53%
A person can continue being a good Catholic if he or she supports a woman who decides to have an abortion	50%	39%	55%

Most say excommunication from the church for having an abortion is too harsh.

- Mexican Catholics, at 81%, are most opposed to the excommunication of a woman who has had an abortion. Seventy-four percent of Bolivian Catholics disagree with throwing a woman out of the church. Colombians, once again, are the most conservative on this facet of the abortion debate. Nevertheless, two thirds (67%) feel a woman who has an abortion should not be excommunicated.

Should a woman who has an abortion be excommunicated from the Catholic church?

Q30. In accordance with your opinion, should a woman who has an abortion be excommunicated from the Catholic church, or not?

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
Should be excommunicated	25%	32%	19%
Should not be excommunicated	74%	67%	81%

Chapter 8. Obligation of institutions to provide care

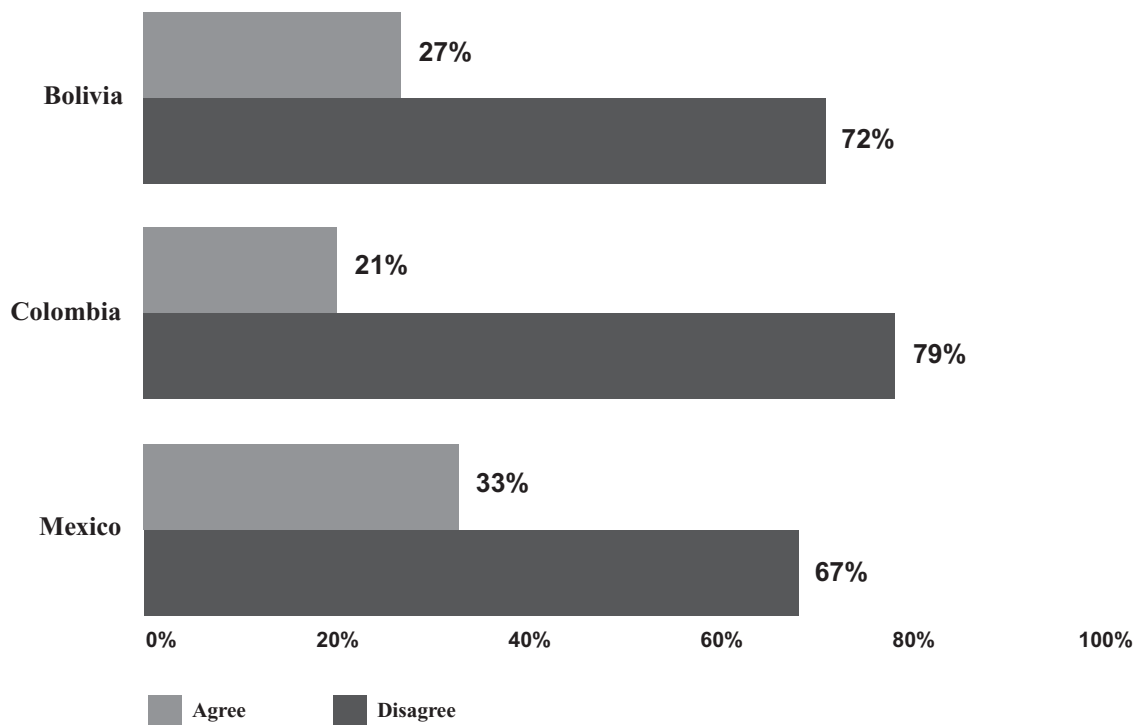
Abortions

Only small numbers of Catholics in the three countries say that public health entities should be required to provide abortions to those who ask for them.

Abortion on request

Q3. Now I am going to read you a list of statements. For each one tell me if you agree or disagree: Public health services, such as hospitals and health centers, should, when asked, provide abortions.*

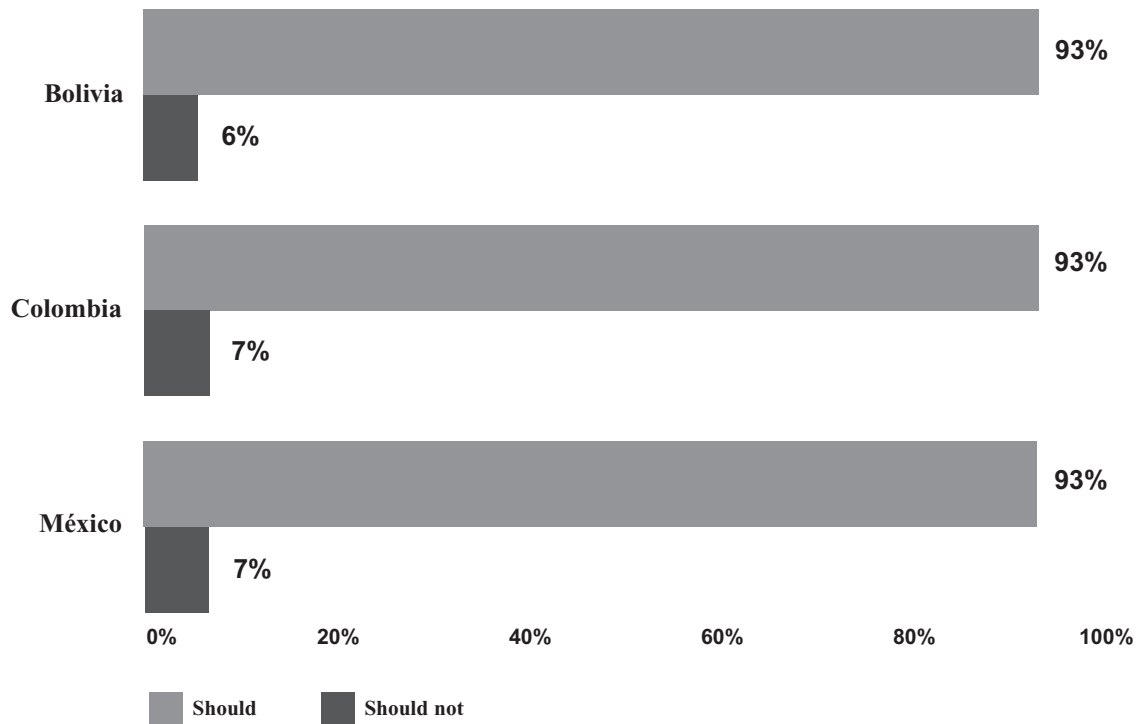
* *BV and MX – legal abortions free of charge.*



However, ninety-three percent of Catholics in each Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico think public hospitals should attend to women who are suffering from complications as the result of an abortion.

Should public hospitals attend to women with post-abortion health problems?

Q8. Do you think that public hospitals should or should not attend to women with health problems as the result of an abortion?



Emergency contraception

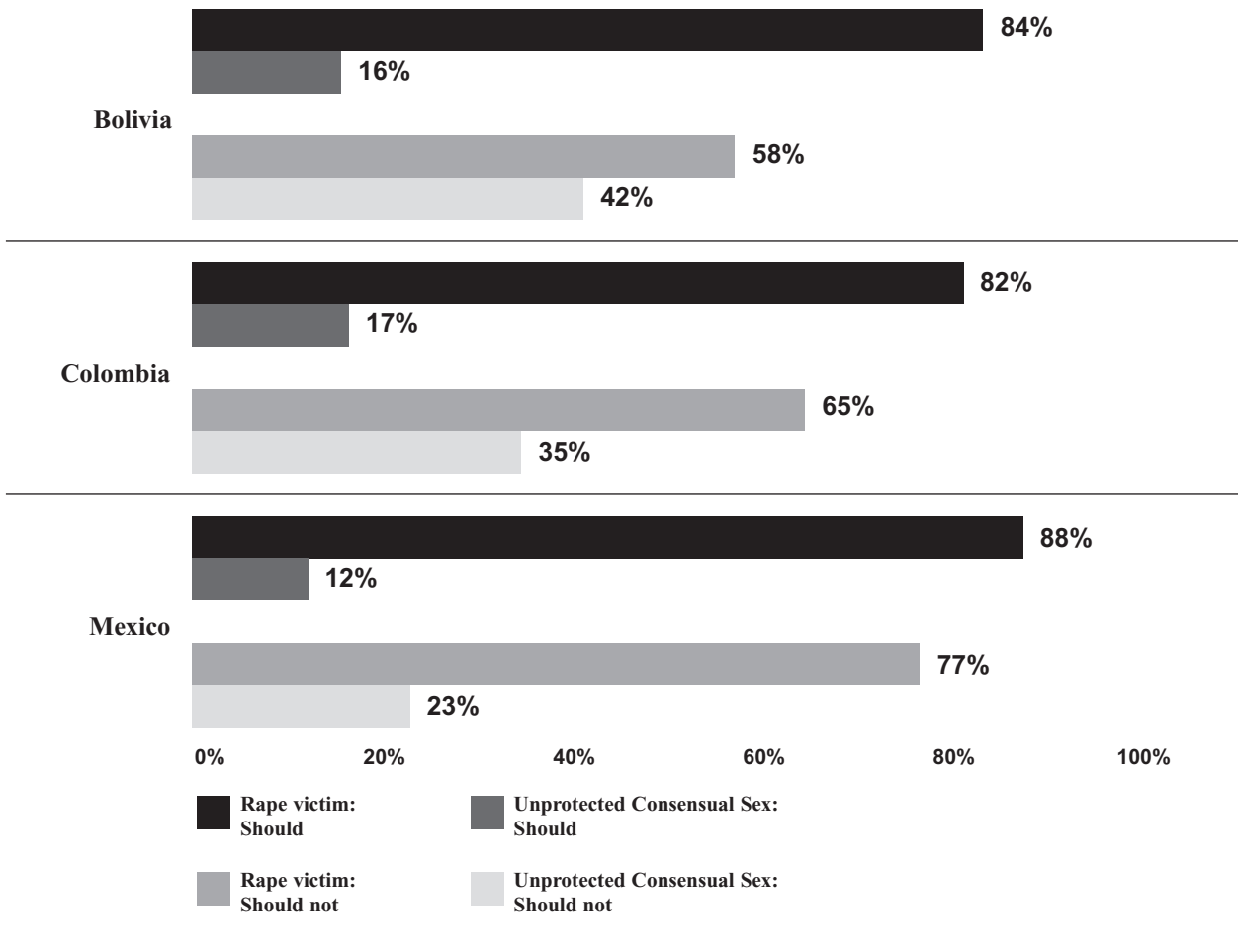
Emergency contraception typically refers to a higher dose of birth control pills taken up to 72 hours after unprotected sex that reduces a woman’s chances of getting pregnant. The mechanism of action is unclear. One possible way that emergency contraceptive pills prevent pregnancy is by inhibiting ovulation. They may also work by altering sperm motility or tubal transport of the sperm or ova to inhibit fertilization. Another possible mechanism is inhibition of the zygote transport in the tube. Finally, the method could work by altering the endometrium to inhibit implantation. While EC may prevent pregnancy in each of these ways, the most controversial from the point of view of those opposed to it is that it can prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg, which they define as abortion. Secular experts, such as the National Institutes of Health, define pregnancy as beginning with implantation.

Large majorities believe health centers and hospitals should offer emergency contraception both for rape victims and in cases of voluntary but unprotected intercourse. This is especially endorsed in the case of rape.

Should health centers and public hospitals offer emergency contraception?

Q9. Emergency contraception is a high dose of birth control pills which can be taken up to 72 hours after unprotected sex to ensure that a woman does not get pregnant, that is to say it prevents the implantation of a fertilized egg. (a) Do you think health centers and public hospitals* should or should not offer these pills to women who have voluntarily had sex without using contraception, but who want to make sure they do not get pregnant? (b) Do you think health centers and public hospitals* should or should not offer these pills to women who have been raped to make sure they do not get pregnant?

*MX – hospitals and public clinics



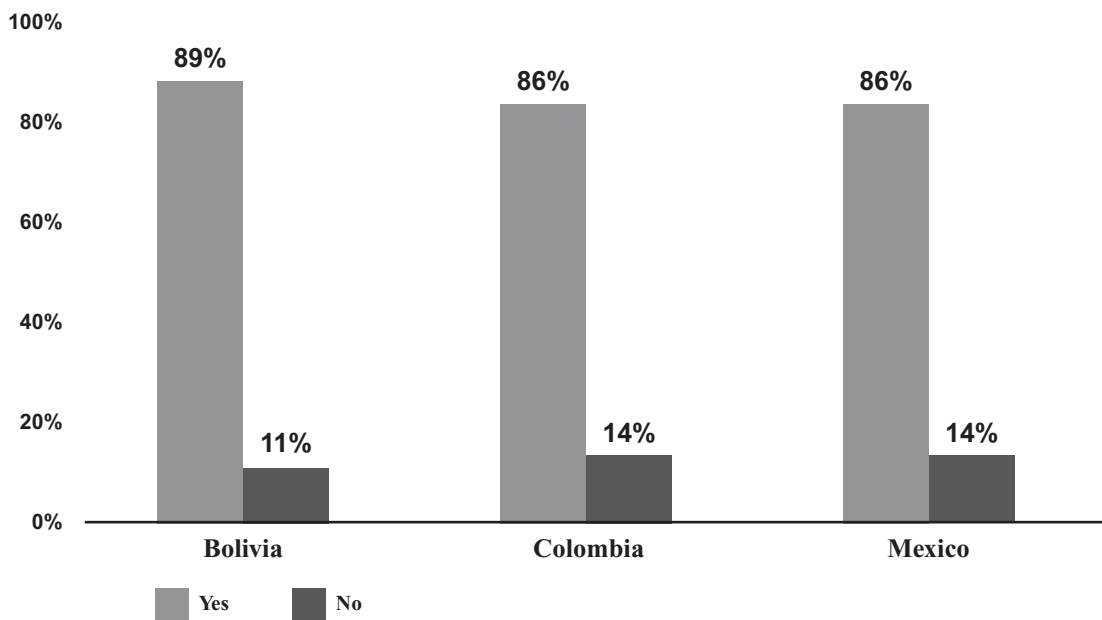
Chapter 9. Sexual abuse of minors by clergy

Catholics in the three countries are well aware of stories of priests sexually abusing minors and would punish them harshly.

- Eighty-nine percent of Bolivians and 86% of both Colombians and Mexicans say they have heard news stories about such occurrences.

Awareness about sexual abuse involving priests and minors

Q32. Have you heard anything in the news about the sexual abuse of minors by a priest?

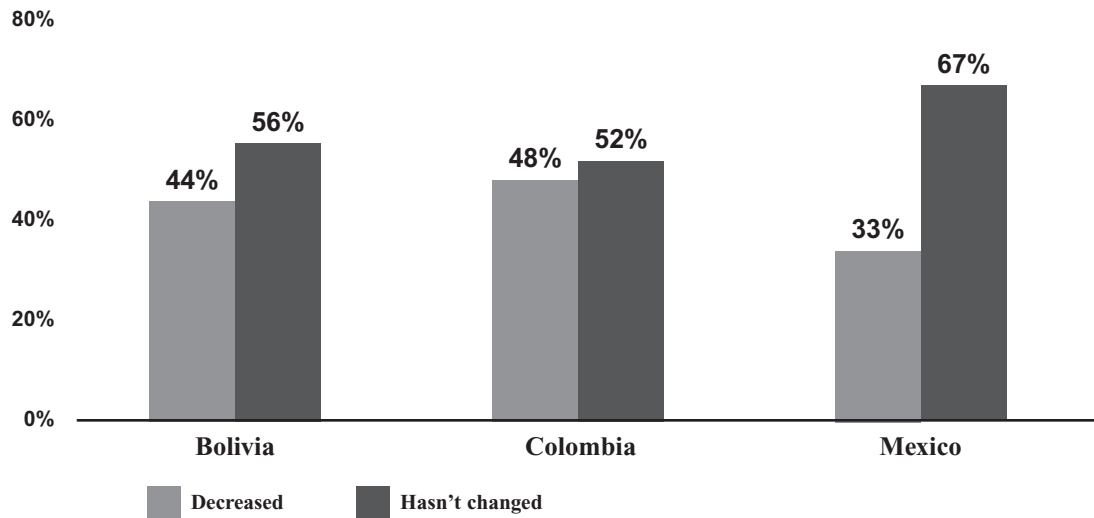


Lack of confidence in the church

- In Mexico, 67% of Catholics who have heard news about abuse say their trust in the church has not changed and 33% say their trust has decreased. However, only slim majorities in Bolivia (56%) and Colombia (52%) say their level of trust in the church is unchanged. The difference may once again reflect Mexicans' anticlerical leanings. Their trust of the church was likely lower to begin with, and therefore, did not diminish in light of the news about sexual abuse.

Have sexual abuse scandals decreased trust in Catholic church?

Q33. [IF YES IN Q32] Has this news about the sexual abuse of minors by a priest generally decreased your trust in the Catholic church or hasn't it changed?



Beliefs about the frequency of occurrence

- Over half of Catholics in Mexico and Colombia and just under half of Bolivians believe that priests in their countries sexually abuse minors very or somewhat often. Colombian and Mexican Catholics are especially likely to believe priests in their country are sexually abusing minors very frequently (26% and 20%).
- Bolivian Catholics (10%) in comparison are least likely to see this as a frequent occurrence, but only seven percent of Mexicans, five percent of Colombians and four percent of Bolivians say such abuse does not happen at all.

Beliefs about the frequency of sexual abuse

Q31. Do you believe that in [Bolivia/Colombia/ Mexico] minors are sexually abused by priests very frequently, somewhat frequently, rarely or never?

	Bolivia	Colombia	Mexico
Very frequently	10%	26%	20%
	46%[55%[58%[
Somewhat frequently	36%	29%	38%
Rarely	48%	37%	35%
Never	4%	5%	7%

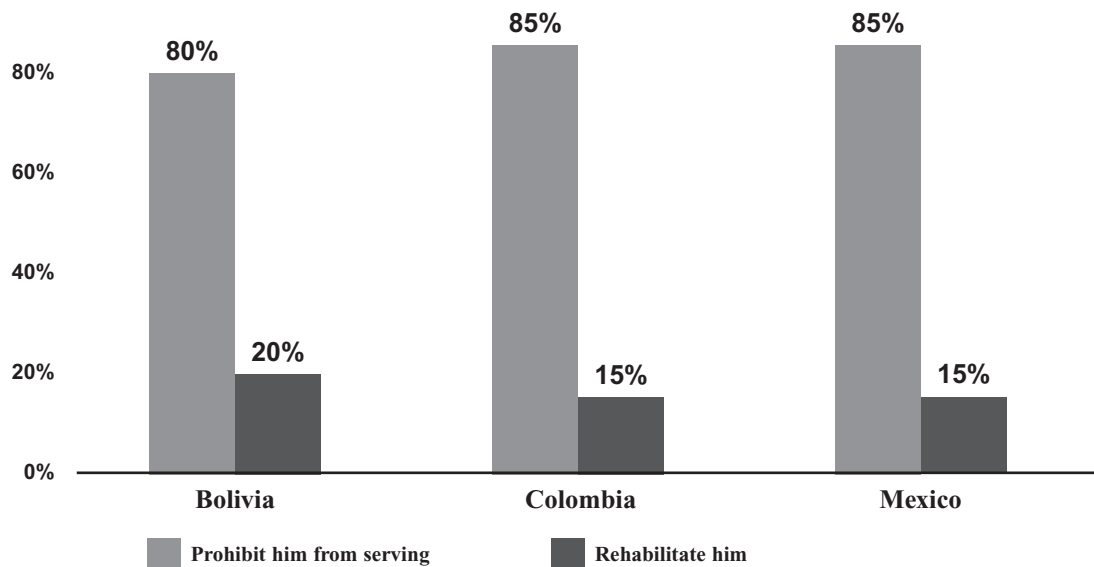
Handling abuse cases

Large majorities of Catholics in each country say sexual abuse of a minor, if it is proved, should result in permanent expulsion from the priesthood.

- Eighty-five percent of both Colombian and Mexican Catholics favor a convicted priest being prohibited from serving even after rehabilitation, as do 80% of Bolivians.
- Only 15% of Colombians and Mexicans and 20% of Bolivians would prefer that a priest found guilty of sexual abuse against a minor be rehabilitated and allowed to return to the priesthood.

How should sexual abuse cases be handled?

Q34. If it is proved that a priest sexually abused minors, do you think that the Catholic church should prohibit him from continuing to serve as a priest or should he be rehabilitated and allowed to continue serving as a priest?



Not only do Catholics favor church involvement in judging sex crimes committed by clergy, but they feel secular involvement is necessary as well.

- Very few Catholics—11% in Colombia, nine percent in Bolivia and six percent in Mexico—believe the church alone should judge a priest proved to have sexually abused a minor.
- Seventy-three percent of Mexicans and 67% of Bolivians and Colombians say both the church and the legal system in their countries need to judge such a priest.
- Additionally, 24% of Bolivians, 22% of Colombians and 21% of Mexicans think only the legal system should judge such a priest.

Who should judge a priest who has abused a minor?

Q35. If it is proved that a priest has sexually abused a minor, who do you think he should be judged by: the Catholic church, the criminal justice system* or both?

*CO – the Colombian justice system

