

CATHOLICS
FOR
CHOICE

JUST THE FACTS

Catholic Perspectives on Sex,
Gender, and Reproductive Health

1
IN
4

ABORTION
PATIENTS
IS
CATHOLIC



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ABOUT CATHOLICS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Let's face it: There are a lot of **misconceptions** about what Catholics believe about sexual and reproductive ethics, and the church hierarchy doesn't represent the views of all — or even most — Catholics.

How do we know? Just look at the data.

68%

of Catholics
support

Roe v. Wade

(Pew Aug. 2020)*

1 in 4

abortion patients
is Catholic

(Guttmacher 2014)

98%

of Catholic
women have used
birth control

(Guttmacher 2011)

Anti-choice Catholics can be loud, but **they are the minority** in the church. We believe that the Catholic tradition's teachings on social justice, human dignity, and the primacy of conscience **compel us to support the right to reproductive freedom** — and the facts in this brochure prove that we're not alone.

*Unless otherwise indicated, statistics in this brochure refer to the United States

ABORTION

75%

of Catholics think abortion should be legal either in all circumstances or in certain circumstances

(Gallup 2018)

68%

of Catholics support Roe v. Wade

(Pew August 2019)

1 in 4

abortion patients is Catholic

(Guttmacher 2014)

65%

of Catholics in 12 countries with high Catholic populations said abortion should be legal in all or some cases

(Guttmacher 2011)

56%

of Catholics think abortion should be legal in all or most cases

(Pew August 2020)



1917

The year that the Vatican
codified a total ban on
abortion into canon law



0

The number of times
abortion is banned, shamed,
or discouraged in the Bible



14%

The percentage of Catholics
who agree with the hierarchy
that abortion should be illegal
in all cases

(Pew August 2020)



34%

The percentage of Catholics
who have “a lot” of trust in
clergy’s opinions on abortion

(Pew November 2019)



44%

The percentage of Catholics who have heard
an anti-abortion homily in the past month

(Pew August 2020)

BIRTH CONTROL

98%

of Catholic women
have used birth control

(Guttmacher 2011)

8%

of Catholics believe that using
birth control is morally wrong

(Pew September 2016)

76%

of Catholics think the church should
allow people to use birth control *(Pew 2015)*

Remember:

According to the hierarchy, “The Church has always taught the **intrinsic evil of contraception**, that is, of every marital act intentionally rendered unfruitful.”
(Pontifical Council for the Family 1997).

But birth control serves **many medical purposes**, and for many people around the world — especially those who are poor or sick — **access to birth control is a matter of life or death.**

MARRIAGE

The Catholic laity's support for marriage equality and divorce has increased in recent years, despite resistance from the hierarchy.

We take this as a sign that **the church, as the people of God, can evolve on matters of sexual and reproductive health,** even if its leadership remains resistant to change.

44%

of Catholics have lived with a partner without being married
(Pew 2015)

61%

of Catholics think that getting divorced is not sinful
(Pew 2015)

1 in 4

Catholics has been divorced
(Pew 2015)

Catholics who believe same-sex marriage should be legally recognized (Gallup 2020)

49%

2006-2010

59%

2011-2015

69%

2016-2020

LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS

47%

of LGBTQIA+ adults are religious
(UCLA 2020)

70%

of Black LGBTQIA+ adults are religious
(UCLA 2020)

76%

of Catholics think the U.S. should be accepting of homosexuality
(Pew November 2020)

68%

of Catholics oppose laws that allow small businesses
to turn away LGBTQIA+ customers (PRRI 2017)

56%

of Catholics oppose anti-trans laws that stipulate
which bathrooms people can use (PRRI 2017)

GENDER EQUALITY

The Catholic hierarchy, including Pope Francis, often promotes **gender complementarity**: the belief that men and women should have **separate and unequal roles in both church and society**.

The laity's support for women's ordination demonstrates that they reject this idea.

59%

of Catholics think
the church should
ordain women

(Pew 2015)

**ONLY
7%**

of Catholic women think
the church shouldn't ordain
women as deacons

(CARA 2018)



LATINX CATHOLICS

In the United States, **76%** of Latinx people identify as Catholic, culturally Catholic, or formerly Catholic, so the church has a particularly strong presence in Latinx communities (*Pew 2015*).

Many people assume that Latinx Catholics are more conservative, but when we look at the data, **we see that Latinx Catholics also support abortion access.**

57%

of Hispanics who were born in the United States believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases

(*PRRI 2019*)

76%

of Latinx Catholic voters describe birth control as healthcare rather than a religious issue

(*PerryUndem 2018*)

85%

of Latinx Catholics say they would support a loved one who had an abortion

(*PerryUndem 2018*)

62%

of Latinx Catholics do not want *Roe v. Wade* overturned

(*PerryUndem 2018*)

CONSCIENCE AND DECISION-MAKING

For most Catholics, their consciences are their primary guide for making moral decisions.

73% say when answering difficult moral questions, they **rely on their conscience “a great deal,”** as compared to **21%** on Catholic Church teachings, **15%** on the Bible, and **11%** on the pope (*Pew Apr. 2016*).

When making big life decisions, **84%** of Catholics say they depend “a lot” on their own research, **39%** depend a lot on personal reflection, **30%** on professional experts, and **10%** on religious leaders (*Pew Apr. 2016*).

By **following their consciences** — which are **informed by their personal experiences and religious education** — these Catholics follow tradition even when their conclusions differ from the hierarchy’s.

We trust Catholics to make moral decisions and determine their reproductive destinies.

Sources: All statistics listed in this brochure have been cited and are available online at [**catholicsforchoice.org/resources/Facts**](https://catholicsforchoice.org/resources/Facts)

Catholics for Choice — which serves the **pro-choice Catholic majority** — encounters, educates, and emboldens people of faith who support reproductive freedom.

Catholics for Choice believes **healthcare is a human right** — and that includes access to abortion.

Our faith calls us to affirm reproductive and religious freedom as **essential to Catholic social justice**.

