
United States. National Catholic Reporter poll on Catholic voters. The economy a key factor

(from New York) US Catholic voters are likely to vote for former President Donald Trump, at least in swing states - those with high numbers of undecided voters and no strong Republican or Democratic leanings. It is the finding of a new **National Catholic Reporter** poll published on Monday 14 October on the news outlet's website. In these battleground states, Trump leads his opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, by 50% to 45%. By contrast, Hispanic Catholics and African American voters overwhelmingly support Vice President Kamala Harris. The states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are likely to be decisive in the election of the next President of the United States, and the votes of Catholic residents in these states will be crucial. In fact, around one in four adults in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania identify as Catholic. Having failed to outpace Harris among Catholic voters in August, Trump launched the 'Catholics for Trump' coalition to reach out to undecided voters in US religious groups and has now climbed in the polls. Indeed, Monday's polling data appears to prove him right, with the Republican candidate leading by up to 16 percentage points among white Catholic voters. The results of the polls show how complicated it is to win the so-called 'Catholic vote'. Among Trump's supporters, about three-quarters said they were voting for him because of his anti-immigration positions, which Pope Francis has described as "against life". Similarly, about half of Harris's voters say they are voting for her because she supports legal abortion, which the Pope has also described as an "against life" position. Only 51% of those surveyed said they were pro-life, with 58% of Catholic voters agreeing that abortion should be legal in all states. The pro-life argument is therefore not the most important issue in determining the Catholic vote, but rather the economy, which three out of four interviewees see as decisive. Migration and border defence are non-negotiable issues for 60% of Catholic voters. The survey of Catholic voters largely reflects the general sentiment of US citizens who see the economy as a key factor in the upcoming presidential election. The influence of Roman Catholic clergy on voters in their respective parishes appeared to be extremely low, with two-thirds of respondents saying they were guided in their decisions by Church teaching, Jesus and the Bible, but only a small minority citing priests, bishops, Pope Francis and his encyclicals as determining their political preferences. The US bishops' pastoral letter on Catholic political responsibility, which prioritised abortion and the poor as non-negotiable issues, leaving migrants and the environment as secondary, is not inspiring their flock, with political parties using targeted action groups to persuade Catholic voters to switch sides. Two different expressions of Catholic America, that of the Democratic president, Joe Biden, and that of the Republican vice-presidential candidate, Senator JD Vance, who converted to Catholicism as an adult, will also face off at the voting booths. Joe Biden was raised as a Roman Catholic in the era of Vatican II and the social teachings of the Church, engaged in dialogue with and in the modern world. According to Steven P. Millies, director of the Bernardin Center at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, JD Vance is an icon of this new post-Vatican II era. The Republican candidate's Catholicism is a faith of "resistance" to the tide of the modern world, in which the thousand-year history of the Church is transformed into a shield to protect the traditional family and a new form of male family leadership. Vance's support for the death penalty in certain circumstances, for the expansion of fossil fuel production, for the deportation of millions of migrants, along with his votes against a number of government programmes designed to help the poor, demonstrate a rather narrow adherence to the Catholic faith, as does Biden's pro-abortion statements. After 5 November, whatever the outcome of the polls, the Catholic vote is likely to see further exceptions and perhaps even the end of an era in which it might have been relevant.