



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 31, 2011

Catholics and Homosexual Marriage: What the Numbers Really Show

A recent survey supposedly showing that Catholics are increasingly supportive of homosexual marriage was actually funded in part by a homosexual activist group, charged a prominent Catholic writer and cultural observer.

As reported by [CatholicCulture.org](#), Thomas Peters, who writes a regular article on [CatholicVote.org](#), revealed that the study released by the [Public Religion Research Institute](#) (PRRI) was co-sponsored by the pro-homosexual Arcus Foundation, which “has contributed over \$6.5 million in the past five years to religious organizations favorably disposed toward gay rights.” In addition, noted the CatholicCulture.org article, another sponsor of the study was the Haas Foundation, whose past efforts, according to Peters, included helping PRRI “develop religious education strategies supporting gay equality.”



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In its study released March 22, PRRI said it found that 53 percent of Catholics support homosexual marriage, while 56 percent of Catholics said they believe same-sex relationships are not sinful. “PRRI CEO Dr. Robert P. Jones and PRRI Research Director Daniel Cox asserted that these statistics show that Catholics are more progressive on the topic of gay and lesbian issues than the general population,” reported the [Christian Post](#).

But according to CatholicCulture.org, the survey was flawed “because it did not adequately distinguish between active practicing Catholics — those who attend Mass at least weekly — and those who only attend Mass occasionally. Moreover the poll blurred the distinction between legal recognition of same-sex marriage and other measures such as registration of civil unions.”

As [Peters noted in his article](#) on the study, what the survey really showed is that “the less Catholics care about their faith, the more likely they are to support same-sex marriage.” In fact, [PRRI’s own graph](#) showed that only 26 percent of Catholics who attend Mass every week support homosexual marriage. However, that figure jumps to 59 percent among Catholics who attend Mass less than once a month.

So who are the Catholics the survey supposedly shows as supporting homosexual marriage? “Catholics who are almost never in the pews,” wrote Peters. “And yet, when it comes to the headlines, Catholics who can’t even trouble themselves to get to Mass with any sort of regularity are lumped in with faithful Catholics who actually try to follow the teachings of the Church.”



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Peters pointed out that the survey starkly reveals “the contradiction between being a faithful Catholic and signing on to the LGBT agenda to redefine marriage,” with those Catholics who are most ready to support the homosexual lifestyle typically being those who are the least serious about their Christian faith. “A strong, biblical faith, after all, holds true to the traditional teachings against homosexuality and for the family, while a weak ‘secularized’ faith is quick to overturn these views under cultural pressure,” he said.

According to the [Catholic News Agency](#) (CNA), the PRRI study lacked important margin-of-error statistics that would bring balance to the survey’s findings. Dr. Mark Gray, director of CARA Catholic Polls and a research associate with the Center for Applied Research at Georgetown University, told CNA the claim that a majority of Catholics support homosexual marriage cannot be made “with any certainty, given the relatively small sample size here and the margin of error.” The PRRI pollsters had only interviewed about 3,000 individuals, including about 600 Catholics, and the margin of error for the Catholic population was plus or minus six percentage points, Gray told CNA. “Any percentage here, for all Catholics, could be six points higher, it could be six points lower,” he explained, noting that the study also did not include either the margins of error or the numbers of Hispanic Catholics, which he called “standard practice” for such surveys.

Gray said that the PRRI numbers for Catholic support of same-sex marriage were considerably higher than that reported in the 2010 [General Social Survey](#), which he called the “gold standard” of sociological research. “In that survey, only 20 percent of Catholics strongly agreed and 28 percent agreed ‘that homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another,’” reported the CNA.

Gray explained that the high degree of support from Catholics for same-sex marriage found in the PRRI survey was the result of “kind of forcing people between two options”—either civil marriage for same-sex couples or no recognition at all. “In Gray’s view, a three-option survey adding the choice of civil unions ‘gets at a greater level of detail’ and probably provides ‘a more accurate estimation, because people have more choices to consider,’” reported the CNA.

Gray also told the CNA that over time “there’s been a growing percentage of people who agree specifically with the questions about civil unions and marriage, something that we’ve seen in surveys. A lot of it we see in terms of generational differences.” But he emphasized that in surveys offering three choices — same-sex marriage, civil unions, or no legal recognition whatsoever of homosexual unions — there is no indication that even a small majority of Catholics support homosexual marriage.

As homosexual activists have attempted to confuse the issue by offering a false distinction between homosexual marriage and civil unions between same-sex partners, leadership within the Catholic Church has continued to provide a clear standard on the issue, emphasizing the conviction that homosexual behavior is sinful and God’s design is for a family unit based on marriage between a man and a woman. In a 2003 document, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger reminded Catholic Christians of the Church’s teaching “that respect for homosexual persons cannot lead in any way to approval of homosexual behavior or to legal recognition of homosexual unions. The common good requires that laws recognize, promote, and protect marriage as the basis of the family, the primary unit of society.”



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