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From: The Human Rights Campaign
Democracy Corps
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

HRC Polling Shows Overwhelming Support Among U.S. Catholics for LGBT Equality and Non-Discrimination Laws

Pope Francis Urged to Bridge Gulf Between Laity and Church Leaders

“If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?”
Pope Francis, July, 2013

The Pope’s tolerant words seemed revolutionary at the time, particularly compared to harsh comments directed at the LGBT faithful by his predecessors. And his inclusive remarks no doubt resonated with most U.S. Catholics who, according to surveys conducted for HRC this year by Democracy Corps and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, are more supportive of LGBT equality than the nation’s voters as a whole.¹

Take the issue of marriage equality. A Democracy Corps Survey, conducted on the eve of the Supreme Court’s marriage equality ruling in June, showed that 57 percent of American voters supported same-sex marriage. But among self-identified Catholic voters that number jumped to 64 percent; only 26 percent registered opposition. An overwhelming majority of Catholic voters -- 83 percent in the Democracy Corps survey -- also said they support basic employment protections for LGBT people, five percentage points higher than the nation overall. Moreover, Catholics are more likely than voters overall to oppose sanctioning discrimination by allowing small businesses to refuse services to LGBT people for religious reasons (62 percent and 56 percent, respectively).

In January 2015, the Human Rights Campaign commissioned a survey from Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research tracking core American views on LGBT equality, equality legislation and views toward LGBT people as a whole. As with the Democracy Corps survey above, this research showed U.S. Catholics markedly ahead of their fellow Americans on LGBT issues, including marriage equality and employment protections. They also reacted more favorably to gay and lesbian people (64 percent favorable, compared to 58 percent favorable nationally) and gay rights groups (54 percent favorable, compared to 50 percent favorable nationally).

¹ This memorandum references two surveys; a Democracy Corps survey taken in June 2015, of 950 likely voters and 193 Catholics, as well as a Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research survey taken in January, 2015. The Democracy Corps survey carries an overall margin of error of +/- 3.18 and the GQR survey carries a margin of error of +/- 3.1. Both surveys were commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign.



Conclusion

To be sure, significant differences remain between the Catholic Church and the LGBT community. But in anticipation of Pope Francis' first visit to the United States as pontiff, it bears noting that U.S. Catholic laity is helping lead this country's march toward equality. HRC urges Pope Francis to translate his words of inclusion to action, and help bridge the gulf between the pews and the pulpit.