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Most Catholics Critical As Well

BROAD CRITICISM OF POPE BENEDICT’S HANDLING OF SEX ABUSE SCANDAL

Amid new revelations of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI’s job ratings for handling the scandal have plummeted. Only about one-in-ten Americans (12%) say the pope has done an excellent (3%) or good job (9%) in addressing the sex abuse scandal; 71% say he has done a poor (44%) or only fair (27%) job.

The pope’s ratings for addressing the continuing scandal have declined sharply since April 2008, shortly after his visit to the United States. At that time, 39% said he had done an excellent or good job in dealing with the abuse scandal, while 48% said he had done only fair or poor.

“Poor” Ratings for Pope on Abuse Scandal Have Doubled Since ‘08		
	April 2008	April 2010
<i>Heard about Pope Benedict XVI...</i>	%	%
A lot	29	29
A little	55	45
Nothing at all	15	25
Don’t know	1	1
	100	100
<i>Pope’s job in addressing sex abuse scandal...*</i>		
Excellent	9	3
Good	30	9
Only fair	28	27
Poor	20	44
Don’t know	13	17
	100	100

* Based on those who have heard “a lot” or “a little” about Pope Benedict XVI
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted April 1-5 among 1,001 adults on landlines and cells phones, finds most Americans (74%) have heard either a lot (29%) or a little (45%) about the pope. Awareness of the pope is nearly as high as it was in April 2008, just after Pope Benedict XVI’s high-profile visit to the U.S., when 84% of the public had heard something about the pope.

Among those who have heard at least a little about the pope, Catholics express more positive opinions of the pope's handling of the abuse scandal than do Protestants. Nonetheless, Catholics have become more critical of how the pope has addressed the issue: 59% give him only fair (31%) or poor (28%) ratings in the current survey, up from 40% in April 2008. Catholics who attend church at least once a week are more supportive of the pope's performance than those who attend church less often – though negative ratings among both groups have risen since 2008.

	----- April 2008 -----				----- April 2010 -----				<i>Change in Exc/Good</i>	2010 <i>N</i>
	<u>Exc/ Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Exc/ Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK</u>		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Total	39	28	20	13=100	12	27	44	17=100	-27	785
Total Catholic	49	26	14	11=100	32	31	28	9=100	-17	176
Attend weekly+	60	25	8	7=100	44	31	18	7=100	-16	85
Less often	38	28	20	14=100	22	32	35	11=100	-16	91
Total Protestant	39	25	21	15=100	6	28	44	22=100	-33	441
White evangelical	45	20	19	16=100	6	35	40	19=100	-39	179
White mainline	32	30	23	15=100	5	31	41	23=100	-27	171
Unaffiliated	17	42	26	15=100	2	18	68	12=100	-15	107

Based on those who have heard "a lot" or "a little" about Pope Benedict XVI.
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Protestants are more critical than Catholics in rating the job the pope has done addressing the sex abuse scandal. About seven-in-ten (72%) give the pope only fair or poor ratings, up from 46% in 2008. There is little difference between the views of white evangelical and white mainline Protestants. Religiously unaffiliated Americans are the most critical of the pope's handling of the abuse scandal: 86% say the pope has done a poor or only fair job addressing the situation.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a national sample of 1,001 adults living in the continental United States, 18 years of age or older, from April 1-5, 2010 (670 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 120 who had no landline telephone). Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for the total sample:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,001	4.0 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

ABOUT THE PROJECTS

This survey is a joint effort of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Both organizations are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are projects of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan “fact tank” that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. The Center’s purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of the Center’s current survey results are made available free of charge.

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. It conducts surveys, demographic analyses and other social science research on important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings.

This report is a collaborative product based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
APRIL 2010 OMNIBUS SURVEY WAVE 1
FINAL TOPLINE
April 1-5, 2010
N=1001

QUESTIONS 1-2, 5-6 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 3-4

ASK ALL:

Q.7 How much, if anything, have you heard about Pope Benedict the sixteenth who heads the Roman Catholic Church ...a lot, a little, or nothing at all?

Apr 1-5 <u>2010</u>		Late April <u>2008</u> ¹	March <u>2008</u>	Aug <u>2007</u>
29	A lot	29	18	19
45	A little	55	57	62
25	Nothing at all	15	24	18
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	1	1

IF HEARD AT LEAST A LITTLE (Q.7=1,2), ASK [N=785]:

Q.8 In your view, how good a job has the pope done in addressing the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church? Has he done an excellent, good, only fair, or a poor job?

Apr 1-5 <u>2010</u>		Late April <u>2008</u>
3	Excellent	9
9	Good	30
27	Only fair	28
44	Poor	20
17	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	13

QUESTIONS 9-11 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

¹ In April, 2008 and before the question read, "In 2005, Pope Benedict the sixteenth became head of the Roman Catholic Church. How much have you heard about Pope Benedict...a lot, a little, or nothing at all?"