



Parishioners Rosa Romero, center, and Jesus Romero, right, pray at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Reading, Pa., on June 9, 2024. Reading is 67% Latino, according to U.S. Census figures, and home to high concentrations of people of Dominican and Puerto Rican heritage — as well as Colombians and Mexicans, who own restaurants and other businesses around town. (AP/Luis Andres Henao)



Aleja Hertzler-McCain

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There are more Latino voters in the U.S. than [ever](#). As reporters and pundits seek to understand this important voting bloc, they're digging into the faith of Hispanic communities. But as this election cycle brings yet another flurry of trend pieces about Latino evangelicals, some narratives distort the big picture of Latino faith. Others are just myths.

Here's what you may not know about Latino voters and their faith:

### **The share of U.S. Latino adults who are evangelical has been relatively steady in the last decade.**

Many trend pieces about Latino voters claim that there has been a significant spike in the Latino evangelical population. However, that narrative doesn't bear out in the polling.

In 2022, Pew Research Center [found](#) that 15% of U.S. Latino adults were evangelical, the same percentage that was evangelical in 2012. In the years in between, that statistic has dropped to 14% or been as high as 19%.

The Public Religion Research Institute found in 2013 that Hispanic Protestants, a category that also includes nonevangelicals such as mainline Christians, made up 3% of Americans. In 2023, those numbers grew to 4%.

The small growth PRRI has tracked comes as the overall number of U.S. Latinos is [growing](#), as is the share of the U.S. population that they represent. In 2022, Latinos made up nearly 1 in 5 Americans, up from 16% in 2010.

This growth does not translate to a significantly expanding Latino evangelical population, yet this misunderstanding persists.

A segment on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" on Sept. 5 [broadcast](#) that narrative, with journalist Paola Ramos saying, "You even have some scholars like Mark Mulder from Calvin University that predict that by 2030 over 50% of Latinos will identify as evangelical."

In an email, Mulder told RNS that Ramos had misquoted a prediction he and others made in a [2017 book](#) that included all Latino Protestants, a larger category.

Asked whether he stood by that prediction in 2024, Mulder pointed out that the book had been written in 2015, almost a decade ago. "Right now, no, that does not seem plausible," he wrote. A December 2023 poll by PRRI also found that Hispanic Protestants' net gain in membership is [relatively small](#). Only 1.4% of the U.S. population has become Hispanic Protestant after growing up with a different childhood religion, but 0.9% of those raised Hispanic Protestants have left the faith.

In polling released in August, PRRI found that younger Latino adults in both the 18-29 and 30-49 age cohorts were more likely to be Protestant than older generations, a trend that has held over the last decade.

But while evangelical Protestants have almost always outnumbered nonevangelical Protestants by more than 2-to-1 overall, that gap has been smaller in the 18-29 age cohort over the years, with relatively higher representation of nonevangelical Protestants. (PRRI pollsters caution that it can be difficult to draw certain conclusions when sample sizes are small.)

Eli Valentín, an ordained Pentecostal and founder of the think tank [Institute for Latino Politics and Policy](#), said that although Latino evangelical political engagement is currently peaking, this group's involvement in the religious right began during George W. Bush's presidency.

While many Latino evangelical traditions began after white evangelical proselytization, the groups had more distance between them in political engagement and worship traditions [until recently](#), said Valentín, a Democratic strategist. Still, Latino evangelical Protestants remain politically diverse.

In 2022, Pew [found](#) that half of Latino evangelicals identify as Republicans or lean that way, and 44% identify as Democrats or lean that way, making the group more conservative than Catholic or religiously unaffiliated Latinos.

A [poll](#) from The 19th and SurveyMonkey conducted Aug. 26 to Sept. 4 and released Sept. 10 found that 63% of Hispanic Protestants would vote for Donald Trump if the election were held today, and 29% would vote for Kamala Harris.

More Hispanic Protestants than the national average (36%) said that inflation and the cost of living was the issue that mattered most to them, with 44% identifying that as a priority. And while only 6% identified abortion as their top issue, 57% of Hispanic Protestants said abortion should be illegal in most or all cases.

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## **Religiously unaffiliated Latinos are seeing the largest growth of any faith category among Latinos.**

In 2022, 30% of U.S. Latino adults were religiously unaffiliated, up from 10% in 2010, [according](#) to Pew polling. But the trend pieces haven't followed. Almost half (49%) of U.S. Latinos ages 18-29 are religiously unaffiliated, while older generations tend to affiliate with religion.

This group leans significantly Democratic, with 66% identifying with the party or leaning that way and 24% identifying with Republicans.

In the 19th's Sept. 10 [poll](#), 59% of Hispanics who said their religion was "nothing in particular" indicated they would support Harris if the election were held today, and 28% said they would support Trump. Three percent indicated support for a third candidate, and 10% were undecided. Atheist and agnostic Hispanics, who make up only about 5% of Hispanics polled, more heavily favored Harris, with 68% support. Less than a quarter (22%) said they would support Trump, and 4% said they would support a third candidate, with 5% remaining undecided.

Both groups have high support for abortion rights, even as fewer than 1 in 10 in each group cited it as their top issue. Eighty-seven percent of Hispanics whose religion is "nothing in particular" think abortion should be legal in most or all cases, and 94% of Hispanic atheists or agnostics say the same.

Like other groups, a plurality of Hispanics whose religion is "nothing in particular" say inflation and the cost of living is the top issue (39%), and 32% of Hispanic

atheists and agnostics agree.

## **Catholics are still the largest religious group among Latinos.**

Even as Catholicism experiences a strong trend of disaffiliation, 43% of U.S. Latino adults are Catholic, according to Pew data from 2022.

PRRI found in [2023](#) that 11.6% of the general U.S. population are Hispanic Catholics. In the general U.S. population, 3.7% are former Hispanic Catholics and 0.4% are Hispanic Catholic converts.

While white Catholics are more likely to be Republican, Latino Catholics are more likely to be Democratic. In 2020, Latino Catholics [backed](#) Joe Biden over Trump by a 35-point margin.

In a 2023 Pew [poll](#), 60% of Latino Catholics said that they were Democrats or leaned Democratic, while 35% said they were Republicans or leaned Republican.

In the 19th's Sept. 10 poll, a third of Hispanic Catholics (33%) said they would vote for Trump if the election were held today, while about half (52%) indicated they would support Harris. About 1 in 10 (11%) are undecided, and another 2% plan to vote for a third candidate.

Like other groups, 40% of Hispanic Catholics said inflation and the cost of living is the most important issue.

While only 1 in 20 (5%) cited abortion as their top issue, 70% of Hispanic Catholics said it should be legal in all or most cases, despite U.S. Catholic bishops' [teaching](#) that the "threat of abortion" should be Catholic voters' "preeminent priority." About a quarter (28%) said it should be illegal in most or all cases.

A birds-eye view of the data shows that the Latino evangelical population is not significantly growing. Instead, religious disaffiliation is chipping away at the Catholic base. The impacts of these trends on this year's election remain to be seen.

"When it comes to Latino voters, the faith component, the religious component is still underexplored," Valentín said.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. [View the full series.](#)