

To: Interested Parties  
From: Celinda Lake and Joshua Ulibarri, Lake Research Partners  
Re: Results from a Recent Survey Among Religious/Faith Affiliated Voters<sup>1</sup>  
Date: July 23, 2015

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Weeks ahead of Pope Francis' first visit to the United States of America, Lake Research Partners conducted a nationwide survey among likely 2016 voters who are religious or faith affiliated. The survey, on behalf of a coalition of labor unions and faith organizations, reveals that the Pope's vision and message of togetherness, community, inclusion, and equality have broad reach and acceptance across the American electorate. The Pope's strong voice on these issues will likely prove catalytic to the conversation regarding a broader values debate and a family-friendly economic agenda. At a time when Americans are having incredibly important conversations around strengthening families, making the economy work for our families, and racism, among other issues, the Pope's message rejects division and instead calls on Americans to embrace the values of inclusion, community, and the Golden Rule (do unto others as we would have them do unto us).

Here are the major findings:

- **Religiously Affiliated Voters will listen to the Pope's overall unifying message and values frame on important issues.** Fifty-six percent of voters are interested in what the Pope has to say. On a ten-point point scale, where ten means they will give a "great deal of attention" to what the Pope says, voters give the Pope's words on children's issues like poverty and health care a mean of 7.8. Voters give what he has to say about poverty a mean of 7.6, and what he has to say about racism and racial healing a mean of 7.5. Voters also say they will give "a great deal of attention" to what he has to say about workers' rights and income inequality (mean of 6.2 and 6.1, respectively).
- **Religiously Affiliated Voters believe that we should follow the Golden Rule.** When thinking about policies and laws, 53% of voters agree that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us (71% rate it an 8, 9, or 10 on a ten-point agree scale). Fifty-five percent of Catholics strongly agree with this belief.
- **Religiously Affiliated Voters embrace the Pope's theme of community and reject the prevailing economic view that says we are in this alone.** Voters say that idea is wrong (that we are in this alone, that we are in competition

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with each other, and that the Gospel says the best we can do is keep our heads down and hope we are better off than others). Instead, voters agree with embracing the notion that millions of struggling workers, seniors, the sick, and the weak are NOT alone. Only two in ten (20%) agree that we are in this alone, compared to two-thirds (66%) who believe the word of God, the Pope, and the Gospel that says that we are all in this together (see full wording in end note below).<sup>ii</sup>

- **Like the Pope, religiously affiliated voters believe we must act in terms of community.** Almost half of voters (47%) strongly agree (67% rate it an 8, 9, or 10 on a ten-point agree scale) that being religious and faithful means we need to think and act in terms of the community, not just our individual well-being. Forty-six percent of Catholics strongly agree with that statement.
- **Religiously Affiliated Voters support an agenda that creates a family-friendly economy, and they give weight to what the Pope has to say on those policies:** Sixty-one percent of voters strongly support taking steps to end racial discrimination and promote racial justice in our society (88% support, overall); 51% strongly support guaranteeing earned paid sick time for recovery from injury or illness, or to help a family member recover (87% support, overall); 46% strongly support making major investments in children and poverty that include early education and child health care, even if it means increasing their taxes (80% support, overall); and, 42% strongly support raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour to help workers sustain their families (62% support, overall). In fact, respectively 70%, 66%, 64%, and 54% of voters would give at least some weight to what the Pope has to say on those issues.

Religiously affiliated voters embrace the Pope's strong voice on four particular planks:

1. ***That we should apply the Golden Rule*** when we think about policies and laws – do unto others as we would have them do unto us.
2. ***That we are all part of the same human family*** regardless of racial, political, cultural, and economic backgrounds, and that we need a bigger, more open definition of community because ***we need one another***.
3. ***That we are all children of God, and we can do better than perpetuating an economy that is tough on families***, from wages, to long hours, to discrimination.
4. ***That there is so much inequality and injustice that our economy is out of balance*** and needs to change so that fairness and dignity are promoted for everyone.

Below is the wording tested in the survey that strongly corresponds to the four planks mentioned above:

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- **Seventy-one percent of voters rated this message at an 8, 9, or 10 on a ten-point agree scale (53% agreed, overall).** We should apply the Golden Rule when we think about policies and laws - do unto others as we would have them do unto us. **Sixty-seven percent of voters rated this message at an 8, 9, or 10 on a ten-point agree scale (47% agreed, overall):** Being religious and faithful means we need to think and act in terms of the community, not just our individual well-being.
- **Fifty-four percent of voters rated this message as very convincing (87% convincing, overall).** We need to have a bigger and more open definition of our community, so that everyone belongs. Pope Francis says we are all part of the same human family. We need one another and have a shared responsibility for each other regardless of our racial, political, cultural, and economic backgrounds. By setting aside our differences and working together, we can make things better.
- **Fifty-three percent of voters rated this message as very convincing (85% convincing, overall).** Our society embraces a throw-away culture, where people who are not seen as useful or valuable are easily devalued and discarded. The needs of the old, the poor, the sick, and the uneducated can each be ignored. Pope Francis says our families need to say NO to this throw-away culture by making sure everyone is valued and no one is thrown away.
- **Forty-nine percent of voters rated this message as very convincing (84% convincing, overall).** Our economy is tough on our families, from wages, to hours, to discrimination. Pope Francis says that together, as children of God, we can do better. We need to fight for work, and for dignified work. If people work hard, they ought to earn enough to sustain their families. We can change our community for the better so that the economic system values people over profits.
- **Forty-eight percent of voters rated this message as very convincing (79% convincing, overall).** There is so much inequality and injustice that our economy is out of balance. Too few people benefit from the wealth in our society. Pope Francis says we pay more attention to the stock market than homeless people dying. We need to change our economy so that everyone benefits from the fruits of the Earth and we promote fairness and dignity for everyone.
- **Pope Francis is very popular, and people are interested in what he has to say about numerous core values.** Two-thirds of the likely 2016 electorate have a favorable opinion of the Pope (67% favorable, overall). His favorability extends across the spectrum and is especially strong with Catholics (88% favorable) and Latinos (71% favorable). The Pope is very popular and a credible validator to faith voters, even more popular than Oprah Winfrey

(61% favorable, overall). Voters embrace the Pope's call for them to answer to their higher values and his messages of inclusion, community, and equality, and more than half of the voters (56%) are interested in what he has to say, including 55% of independent voters.

**Summary:**

In summary, religiously affiliated voters strongly support the Pope's message of inclusion, community, and equality. That message and those values seek to promote a balanced economy that values all members, encourages equality and acceptance of everyone in the community, and prioritizes policies that make families stronger. The Pope's message calls on all people, and all Americans, to be their better selves and to answer to their higher values, a message political leaders, advocates, and activists can also embrace.

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<sup>i</sup> **Survey:** Lake Research Partners designed and administered this national survey to 750 likely voters with an oversample of 200 Catholics and an oversample of 105 Latinos by telephone, between June 27 and 30, 2015, using professional interviewers. Respondents for the sample were generated from a list of religious/faith affiliated, registered, proven voters. Both landlines and cellphones were called. The data were weighted slightly by gender, race, religious affiliation, region, education, age, and party identification. The margin of error for the total sample for the survey is +/-3.5%.

<sup>ii</sup> Which of these two statements is closer to your opinion even if neither is right?

\_The prevailing economic view says that we are in this alone, that we are competing with each other for jobs, wages, better schools, and safety. The best we can do is put our heads down, follow the Gospel and our faith leaders, work hard for ourselves and our own family, and hope we are better off than others.

OR

\_The prevailing economic view says that we are all in this alone. But that idea is wrong. Millions of struggling workers are not in this alone. Seniors are not in this alone. The sick and the weak are not in this alone. Children are not in this alone. If you follow the word of God, the Pope, the Gospel, or your faith leader, then you know that we are all in this together.

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