

Poll shows widespread European indifference to the reign of Ratzinger

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Most people think that Pope Benedict XVI – who ceased to be head of the Catholic Church yesterday – and his leading Catholic bishops have not been influential in their societies. That's according to YouGov's latest EuroTrack survey, which tracks public opinion in Britain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

Asked how much notice they think leading politicians have paid to the views of Pope Benedict and Catholic bishops in their respective countries, a majority of people in every country surveyed say either "not much" or "none at all".

In Britain, 71% say Pope Benedict has not been influential, while only 9% say he was and 21% are undecided.

Amongst British Roman Catholics, 78% say politicians have not paid attention to the views of Pope Benedict, while 17% say they have and 4% aren't sure.

In predominantly Roman Catholic France, 61% of people believe the Pope has not been influential compared to 18% who believe he has been, and 21% who are undecided.

Also, a majority of people in every country except for Germany say leading politicians in their respective countries were right to not pay much notice to the Pope's views.

In Germany the public is divided with 43% believing the Pope should have been listened to, 40% saying he should have been ignored and 16% undecided.

In most of the countries surveyed by YouGov people tend to have a more positive than negative view of Benedict's performance during his eight years as Pope. However, questioned on specific issues, ranging from allowing women priests to homosexuality and birth control, and either a majority or plurality of people tend to agree that Pope Benedict has been "too conservative and changed things too little".

Only a small proportion of people in every country surveyed say they attend church once a week or more.

In Britain, 30% of people say they never attend church services. Amongst British Roman Catholics, 23% say they never go to church, 13% go less than once a year, 6% go at least once a year, 21% say they go at least twice a year, 11% attend church at least twice a month, 6% go least once every two weeks and 19% of Roman Catholics in Britain say they attend church services once a week or more.

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