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2

Surveying the Papal Visit to Ireland: A Francis Effect?

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Introduction

Pope Francis is a remarkably popular religious leader. A term has even been coined to describe his presumed positive impact on Catholicism worldwide: "The Francis Effect". On 25 and 26 August 2018, Francis visited Ireland as part of the World Meeting of Families. But as his visit approached, the national conversation became dominated by the issue of abuse – so much so that the visit seemed to have become an unofficial referendum on the papal response to abuse.

This report outlines the results of a survey conducted a few weeks after the papal visit which revealed that only 30 percent of Irish people thought Francis had done enough to address abuse during his visit. But practising Catholics, defined as those who attend religious services at least once a month, differed from the rest of the population: 50 percent thought that Francis had gone far enough to address abuse.

Their views differed significantly from the rest of the Irish population on almost all questions about the papal visit. This survey seems to suggest that while the abuse crisis has negated the Francis Effect among the wider Irish population, it has impacted on the perceptions and practices of some practising Catholics.

The survey also asked whether people had attended events during the visit, and their reasons for attending

or not attending. Overall, 80 percent did not attend events. Of those, 51 percent did not attend because "I was not interested" and 30 percent did not attend because "I disagree with how the Catholic Church has handled child sex abuse."

For practising Catholics, the top reason they did not attend was because the travel/walk was too difficult (39 percent), followed by lack of interest (22 percent) and disagreement with how the Church has handled abuse (18 percent). Among those with "no religion", 73 percent were not interested and 40 percent disagreed with the handling of abuse. So for everyone except practising Catholics, indifference seems to have trumped indignation about abuse as a reason for not attending – although abuse is still the next most significant factor.

The survey was designed by Dr Gladys Ganiel from the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University Belfast and carried out as part of Amarach's monthly omnibus survey in the Republic of Ireland, mid-to-late September 2018. It was funded by Queen's University Belfast. The full results of the survey are presented in the report that follows, which was prepared by Amarach. A fuller analysis by Gladys Ganiel will be published in *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* in 2019.

Other findings include:

Overall, 31 percent agreed the visit had been “a healing time for victims and survivors of clerical sex abuse”; 54 percent of practising Catholics agreed.

Overall, 23 percent agreed the visit had been “a healing time for LGBTQI people and their families”; 37 percent of practising Catholics agreed.

Overall, 48 percent agreed that the visit was “good for Ireland as a nation”; 75 percent of practising Catholics agreed. Overall, 50 percent agreed the visit “was good for the Catholic Church in Ireland”; 73 percent of practising Catholics agreed.

Overall, 24 percent agreed that the visit “will revive faith in Ireland”; 47 percent of practising Catholics agreed.

Overall, 66 percent said their opinion of the Catholic Church has not changed since Francis became pope in 2013, with 22 percent saying their opinion had become more favourable. Among practising Catholics, 57 percent said their opinion of the Catholic Church has not changed since Francis became pope in 2013, with 39 percent saying their opinion had become more favourable.

Overall, 74 percent said their opinion of the Catholic Church has not changed since the papal visit, with 16 percent saying their opinion had become more favourable.

Among practising Catholics, 66 percent said their opinion had not changed, with 30 percent saying their opinion had become more favourable.

Overall, most people said their religious practice had not changed since Francis became pope (63 percent) and would not change after the visit (63 percent) – figures that were similar to practising Catholics (64 percent since Francis became pope, and 62 percent after the visit).

For practising Catholics, the top three ways in which religious practice had changed or would change (ranging from 16 to 12 percent) were praying more often, being more kind and merciful to family and friends, and attending religious services more often.

Francis’ visit also prompted eight percent of practising Catholics to say they would give more of their time and money to helping the poor, and seven percent to go to confession more often.



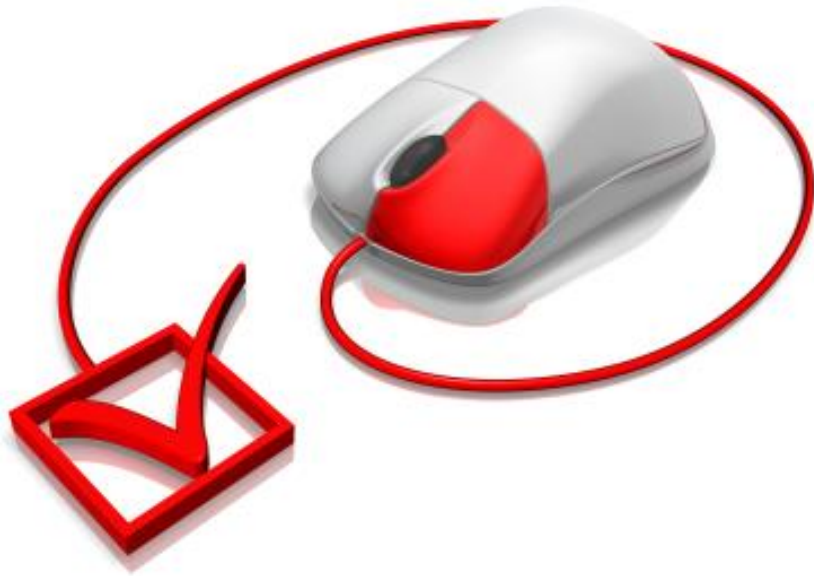
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Pope Francis Papal Visit August 2018

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Research Methodology

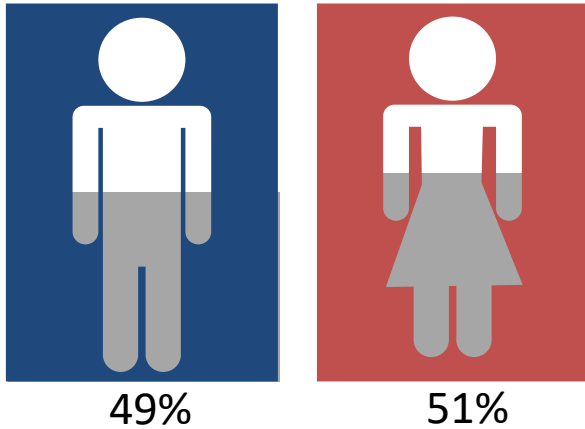


- A number of questions were placed on the Amárach Research September omnibus. The omnibus survey is a syndicated survey whereby clients can include questions within the survey.
- Due to the sensitive nature of the questions involved, respondents were asked if they would like to take part. Thus, a total sample of 840 was achieved with quotas set on gender, age, social class and region to achieve a sample aligned with national population. Due to the high proliferation of the internet among the Irish population, the Amárach Research omnibus is completed fully online.

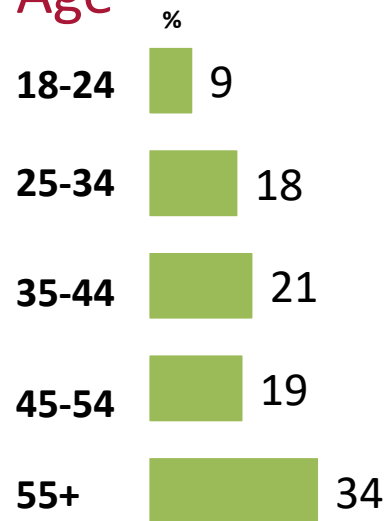
Irish Sample Profile

(Base: All respondents – 840)

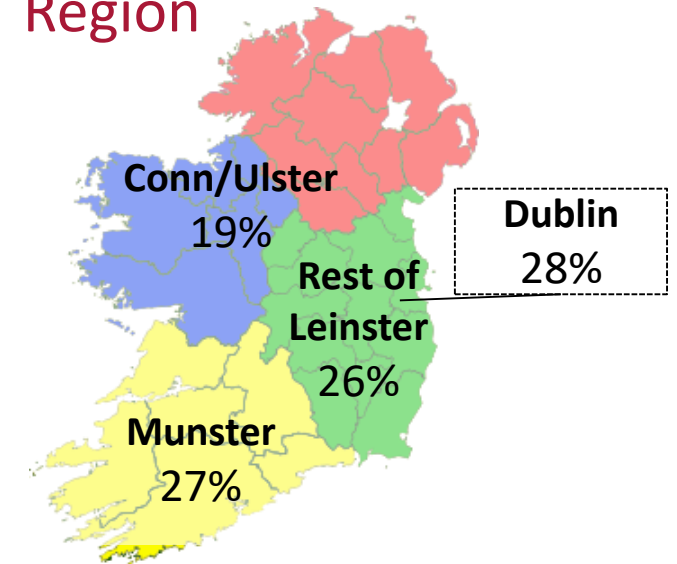
Gender



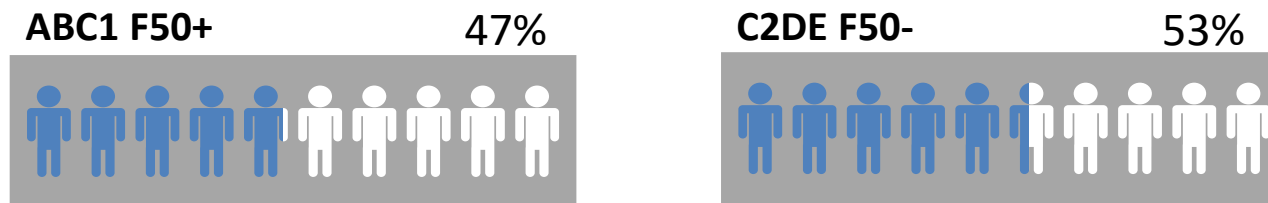
Age



Region

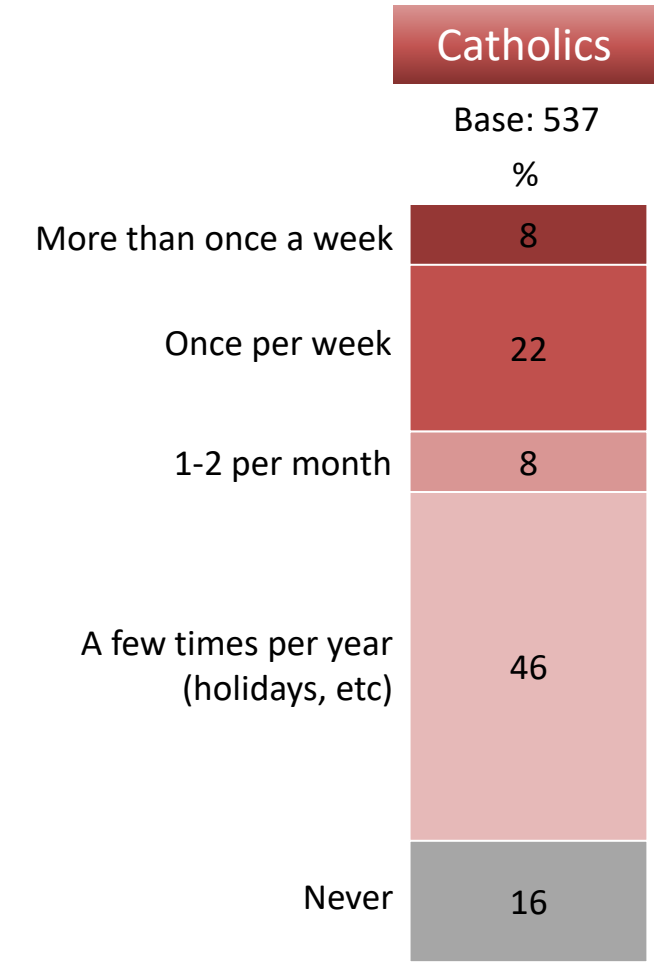
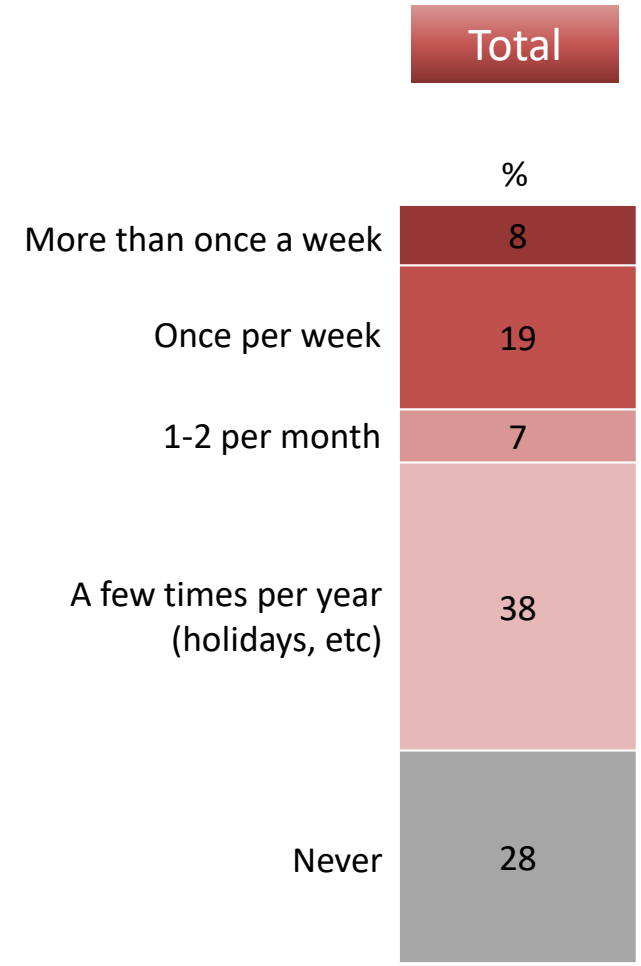
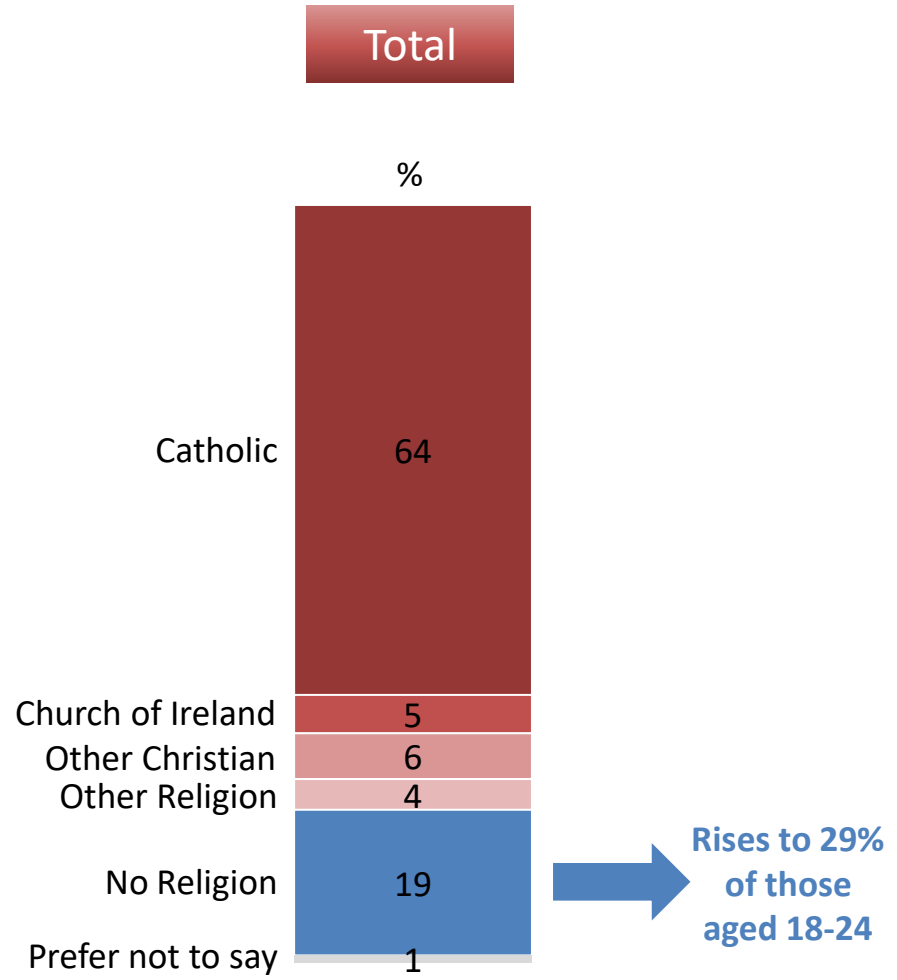


Social Class



Almost two thirds of respondents identify as Catholics, and circa 1 in 5 as having no religion, rising to almost 3 in 10 of those aged 18-24

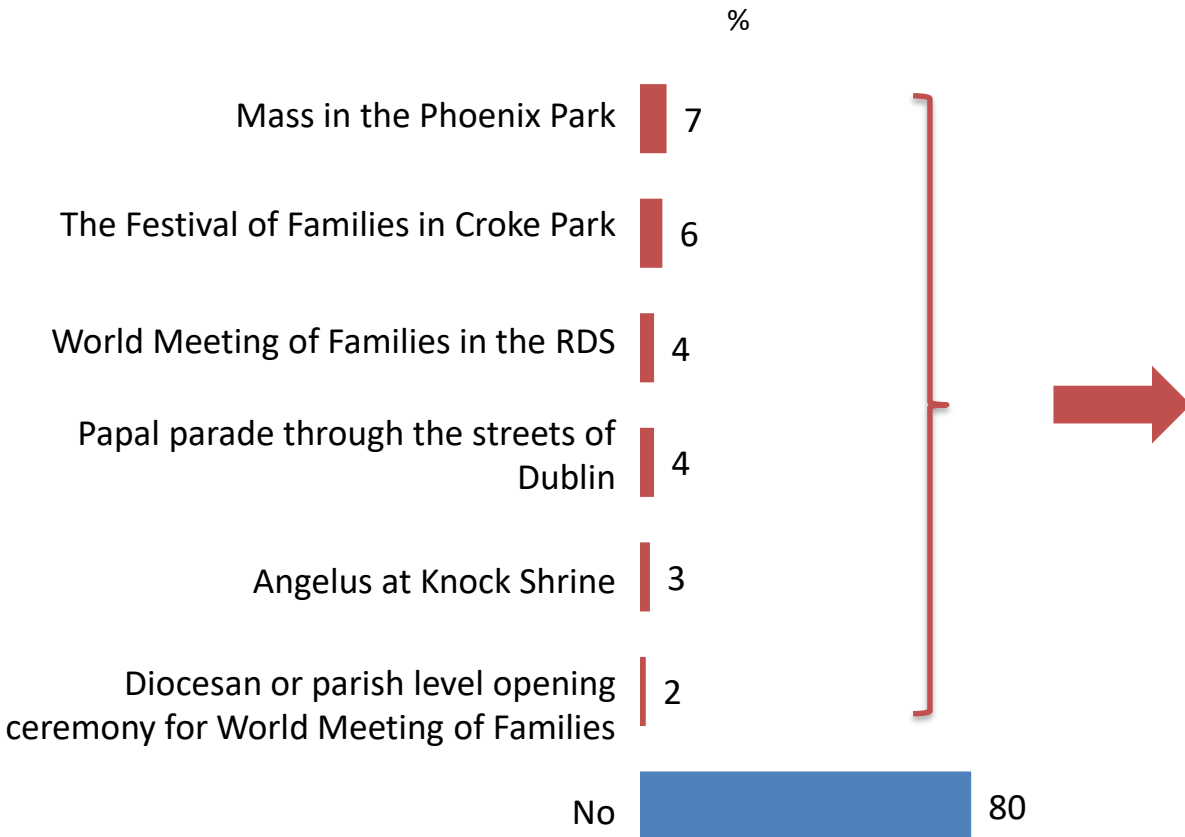
(Base: All respondents – 840)



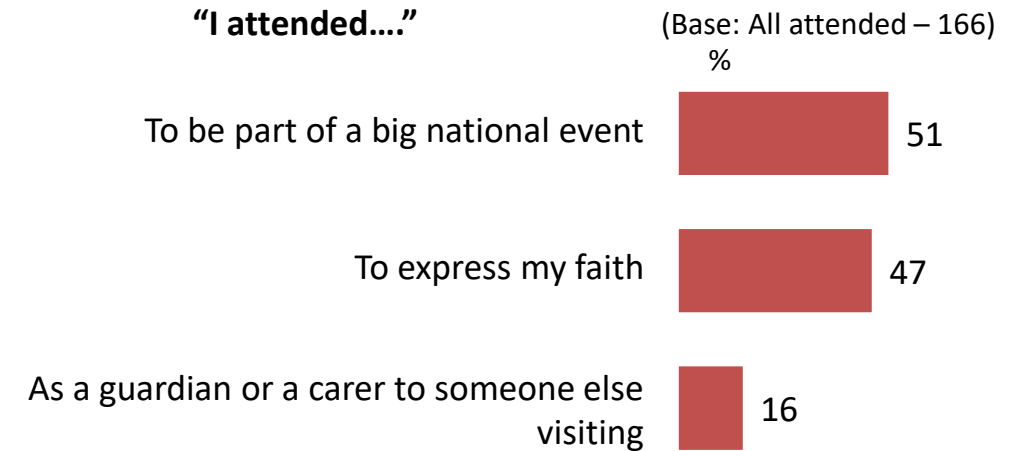
Of those that attended any of the events associated with the papal visit, half did so to be part of a big national event.

(Base: All respondents – 840)

Did You Attend?



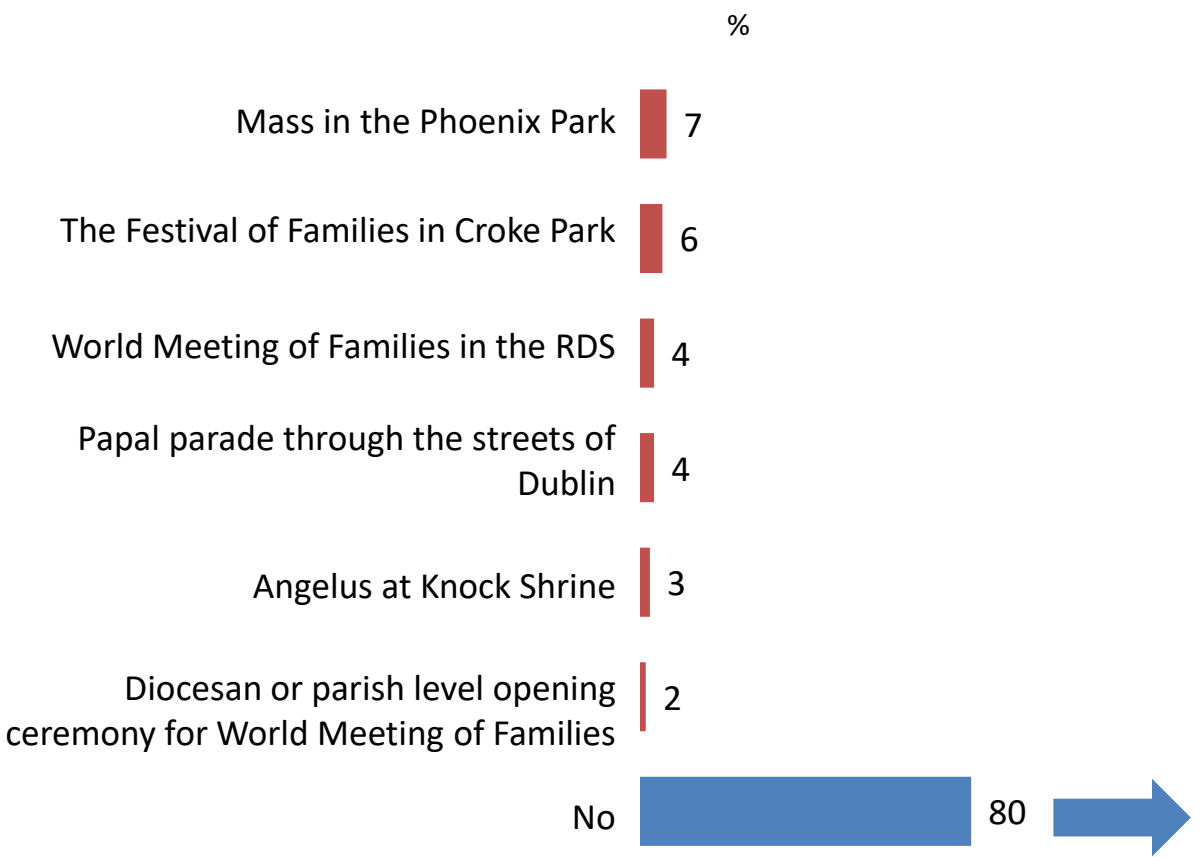
Why?*



Of those that didn't attend the event, half were not interested, and 1 in 3 said it was because they disagree with how the child abuse has been handled by the church

(Base: All respondents – 840)

Did You Attend?



Why Not?*

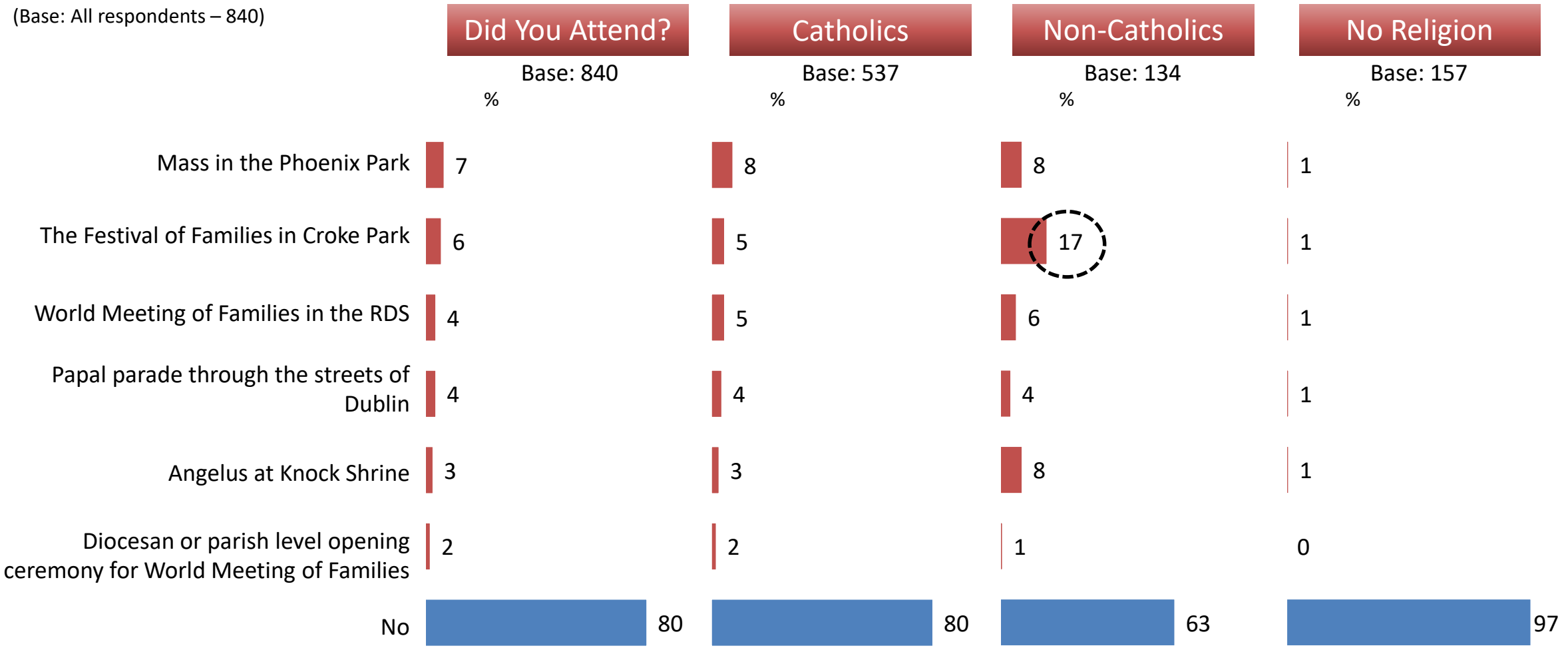


Q3 Did you attend any of the events associated with Pope Francis' visit to Ireland?
 Q4 Why did you choose to attend (or not attend) an event associated with Pope Francis' visit?

* (Only including reasons for not attending from Q4)

Attendance of Catholics closely matched the total, with a large portion of Non-Catholics attending the Festival of Families

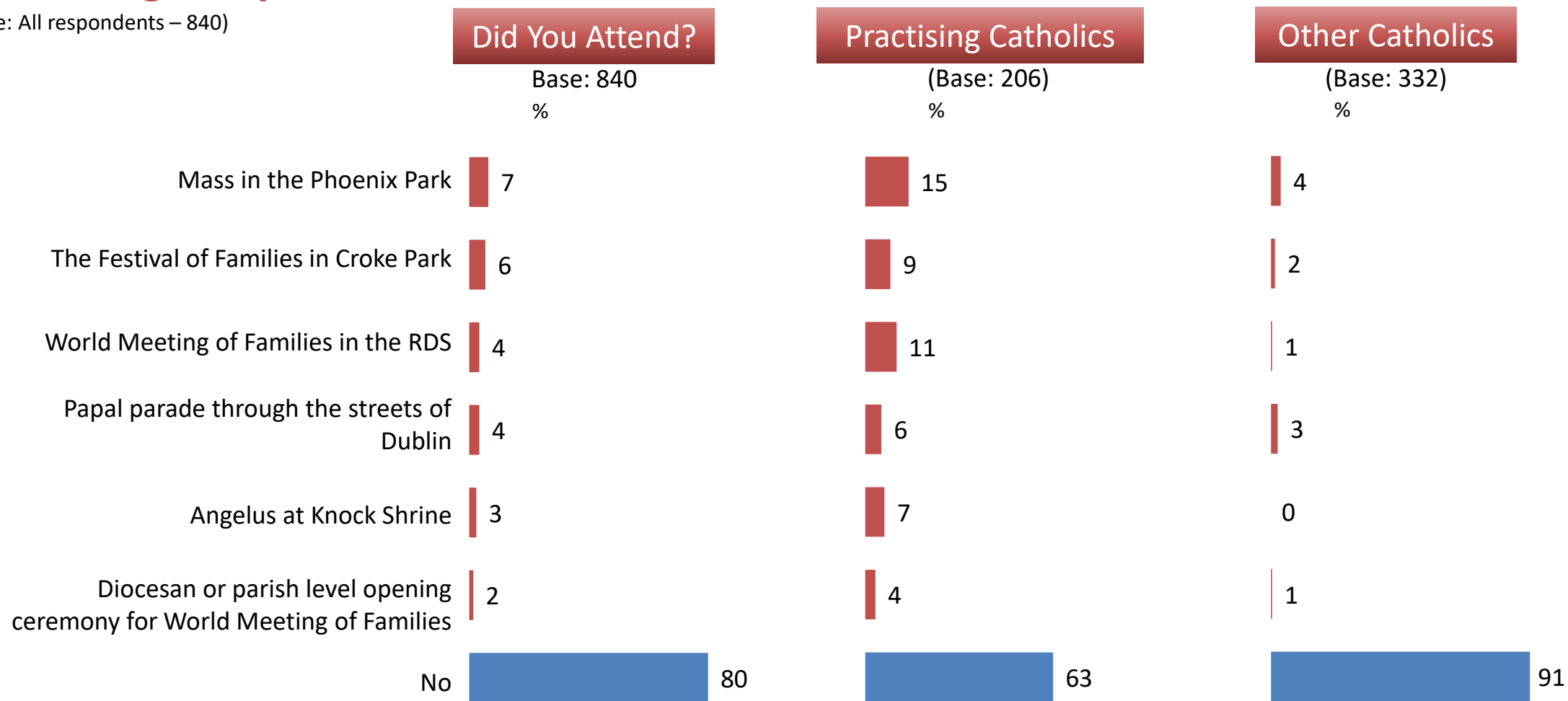
(Base: All respondents – 840)



Q3 Did you attend any of the events associated with Pope Francis' visit to Ireland?

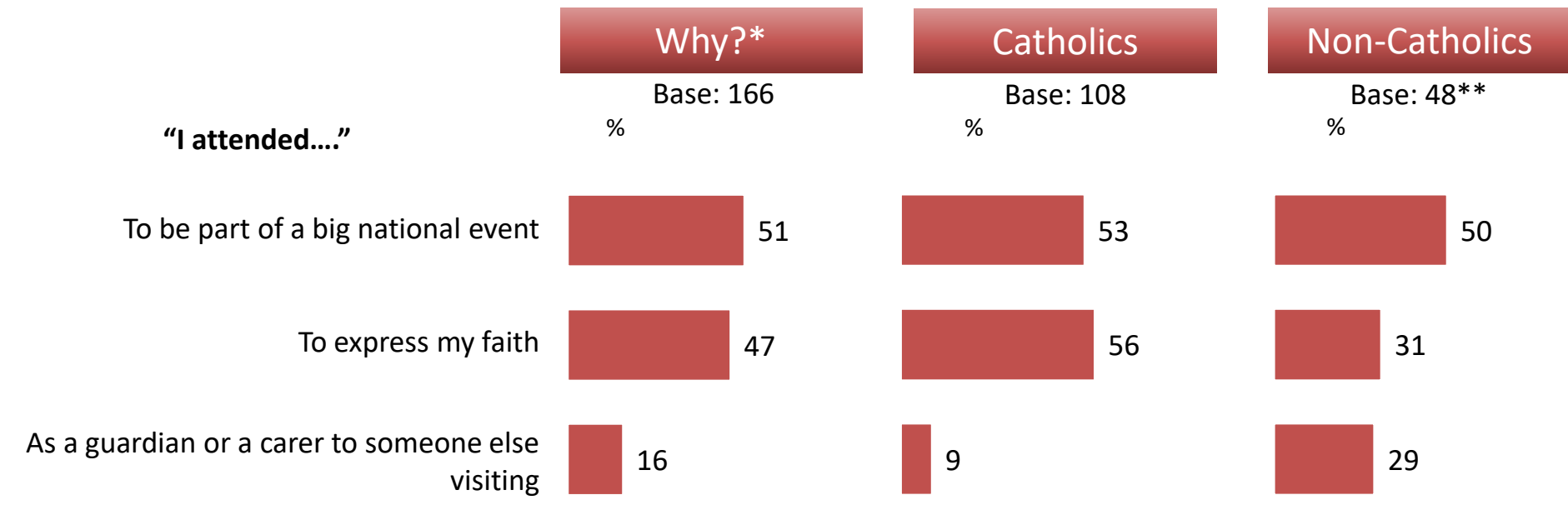
Catholic respondents that regularly attend church at least once a month were much more likely to attend any of the events compared to those Catholics that don't attend church regularly

(Base: All respondents – 840)



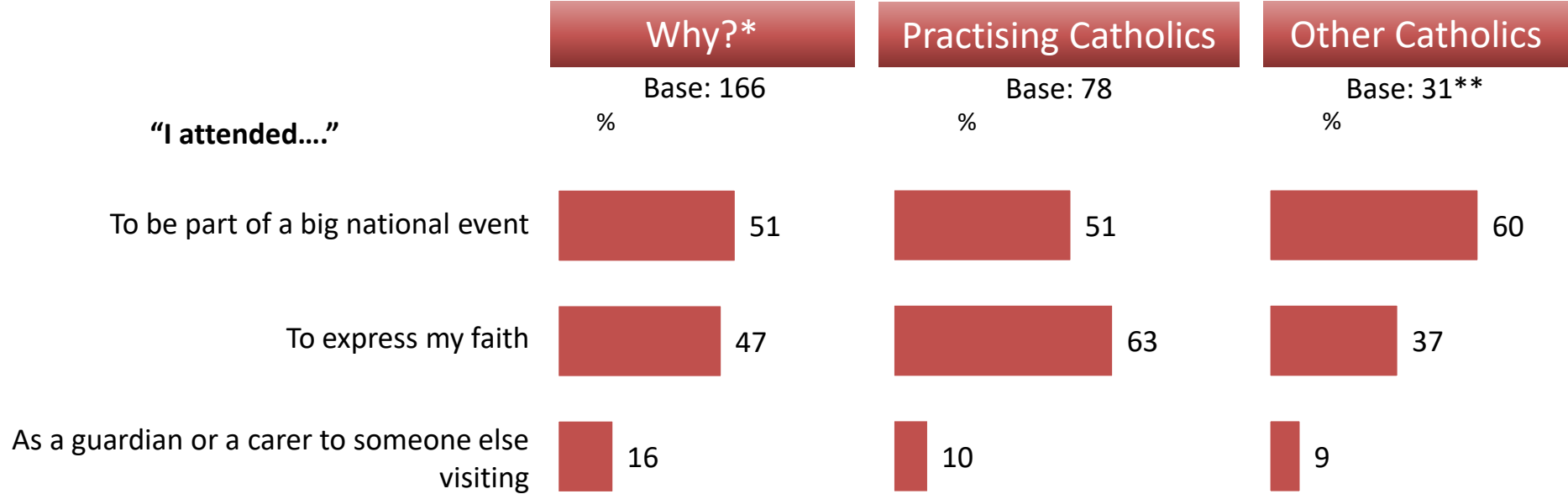
Attendance of Catholics closely matched the total, with a large portion of Non-Catholics attending the Festival of Families

(Base: All those that attended an event – 166)

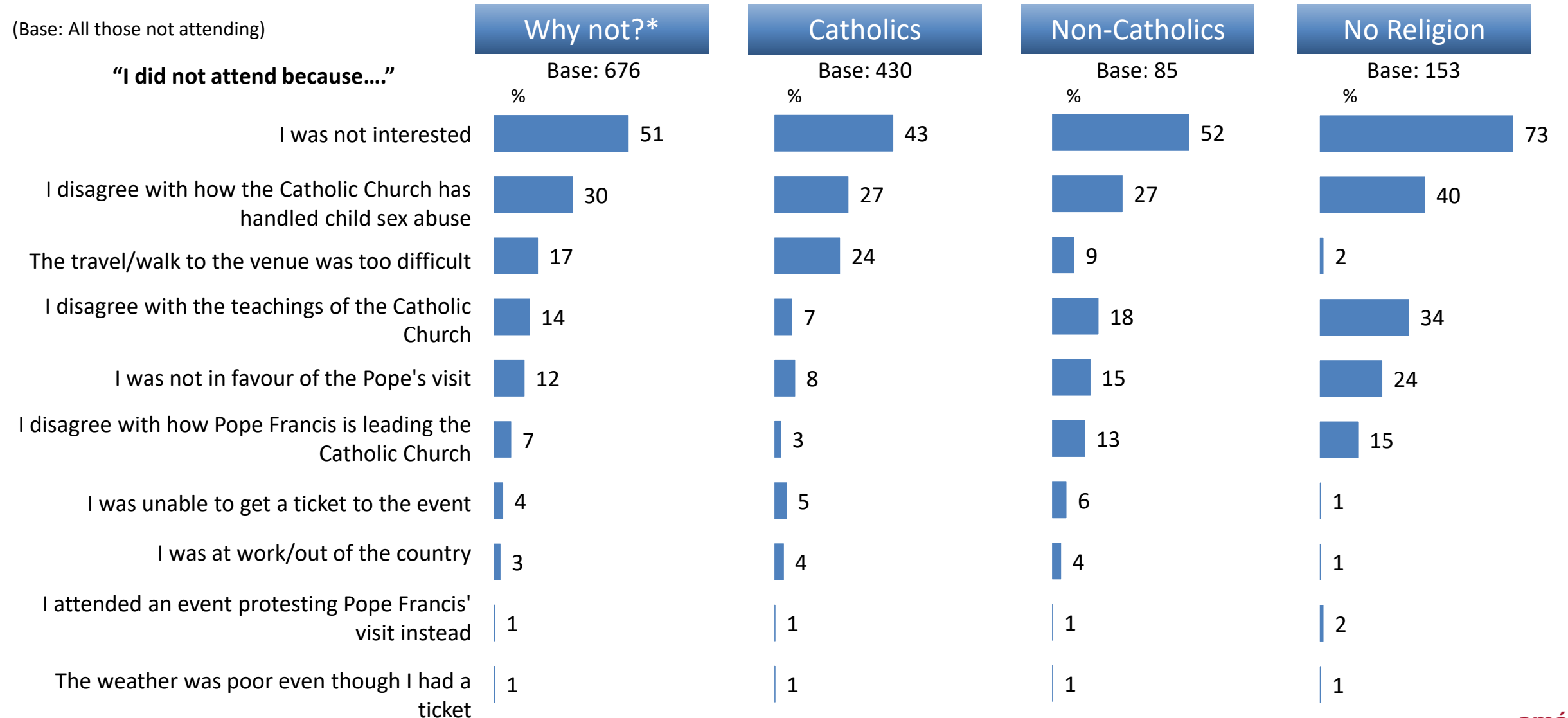


Desire to be part of a big national event was the primary reason for attending an event associated with the papal visit for both practising and “Other” Catholics

(Base: All those that attended an event – 166)



Of those with no religion, the handling of child sex abuse was a reason for 2 in 5 not attending, and for over a quarter of Catholic respondents

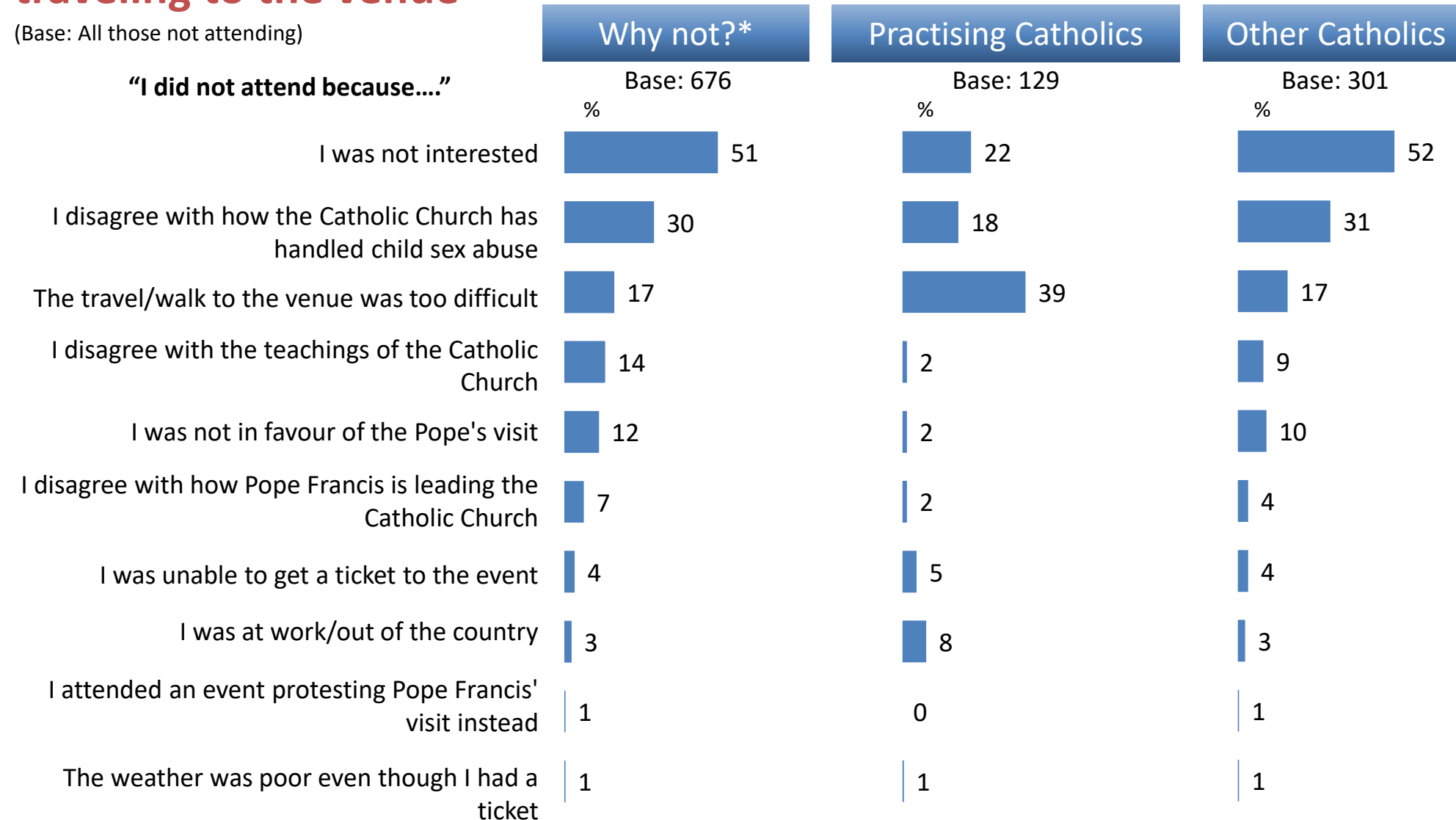


Q4 Why did you choose to not attend an event associated with Pope Francis' visit?

*(Only including reasons for not attending from Q4)

Lack of interest in attending was the main reason “Other Catholics” did not wish to attend, while circa 2 in 5 practising Catholics didn’t attend due to the difficulty of traveling to the venue

(Base: All those not attending)

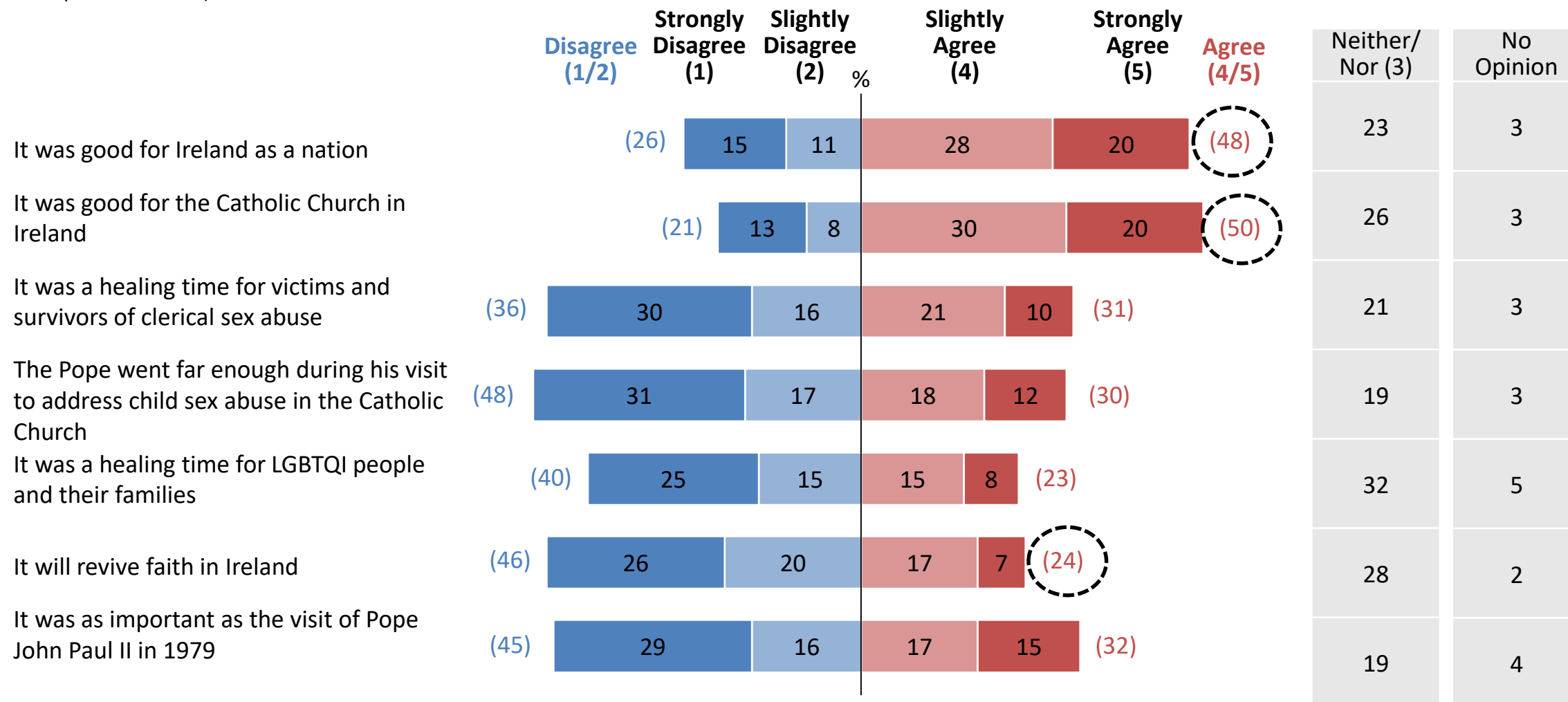


Q4 Why did you choose to not attend an event associated with Pope Francis' visit?

*(Only including reasons for not attending from Q4)

Circa one half of respondents agree that Pope Francis' visit was good for the Catholic Church in Ireland and for Ireland as a nation, while less than 1 in 4 agree that it will revive faith in Ireland

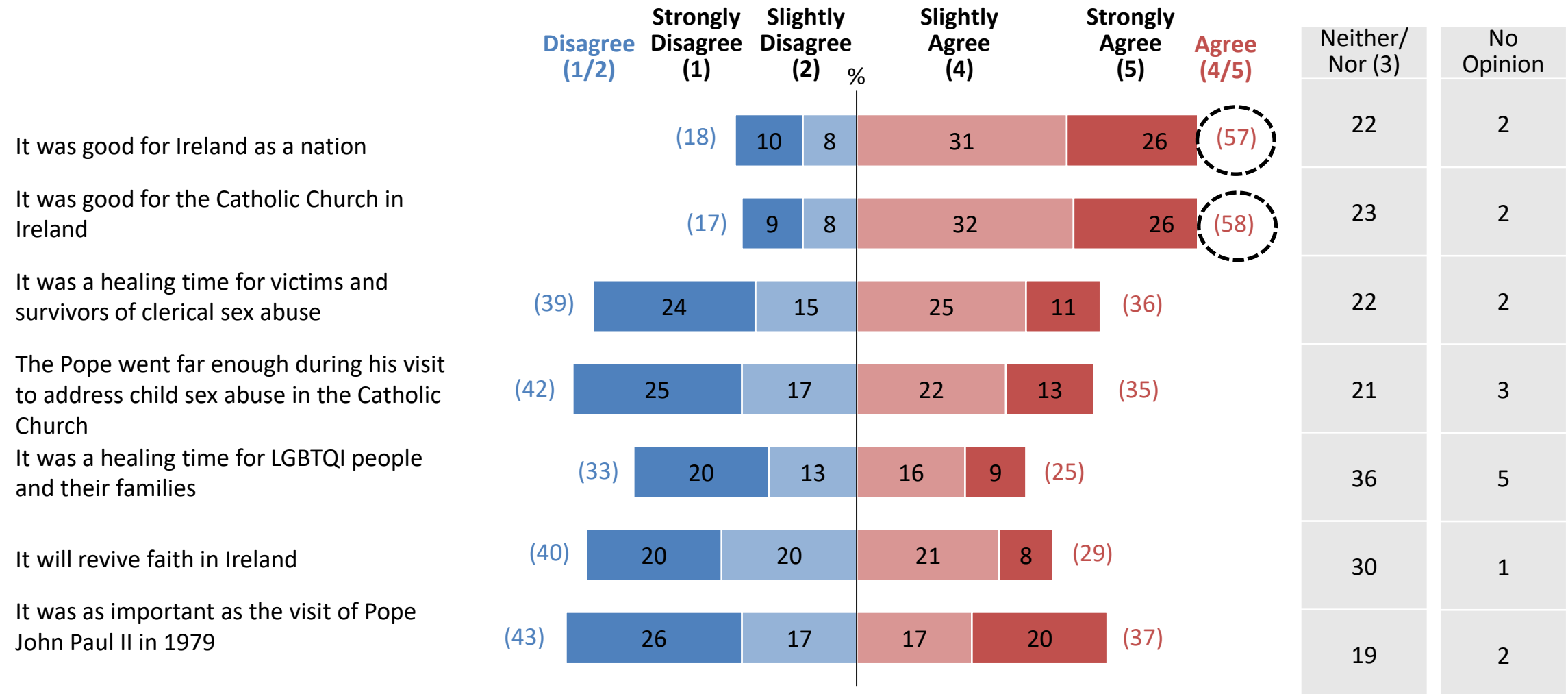
(Base: All respondents – 840)



Q5 Please rate your agreement with each of the following statements using the scale from 1 to 5 below, where 1 is Strongly Disagree and 5 is Strongly Agree.

Among Catholics, those that agree that the visit was good for the Catholic Church and Ireland rises to almost 3 in 5



(Base: All who identify as Catholic – 537)

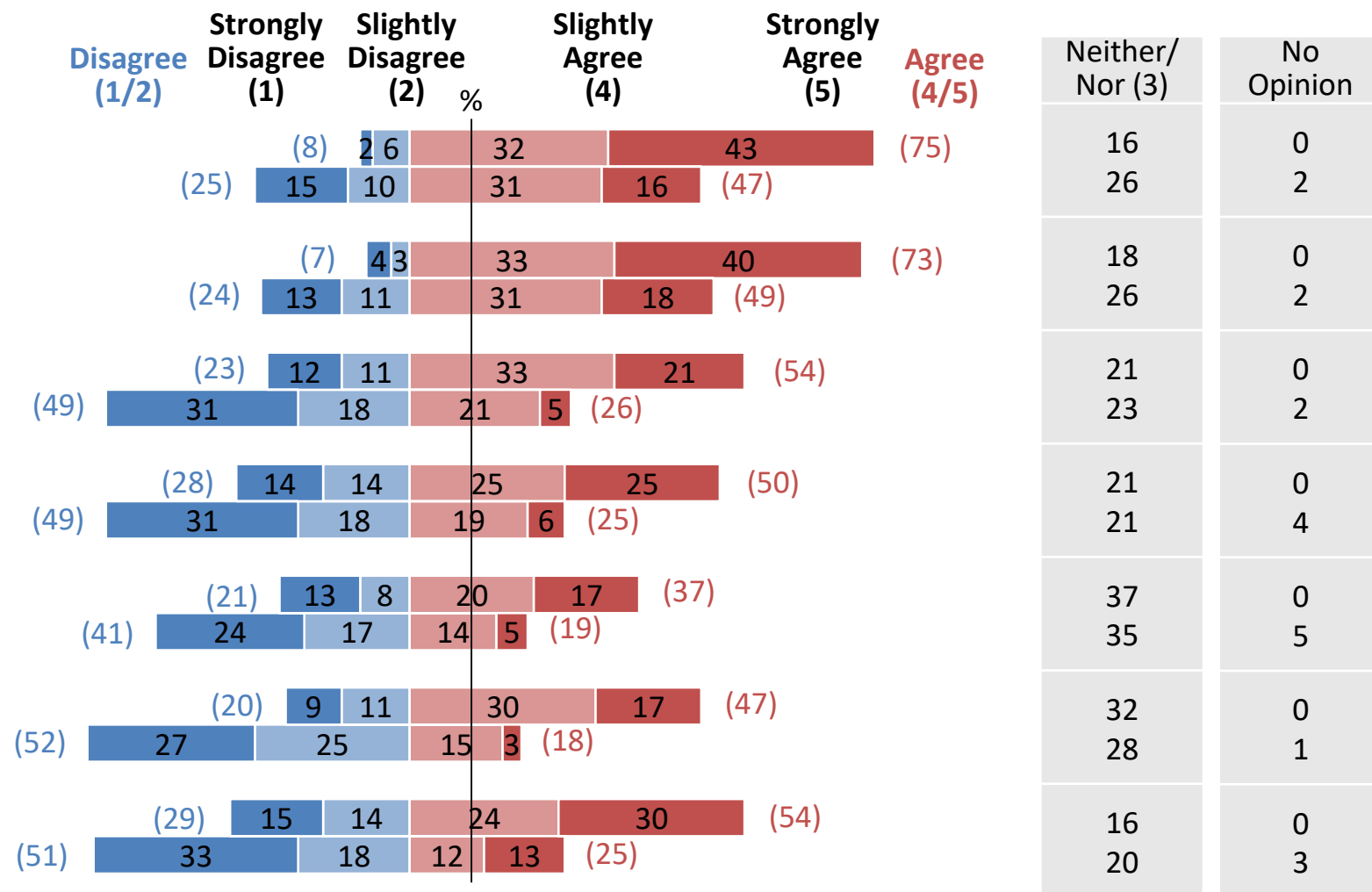


Q5 Please rate your agreement with each of the following statements using the scale from 1 to 5 below, where 1 is Strongly Disagree and 5 is Strongly Agree.

3 in 4 practising Catholics agree that the papal visit was good for Ireland and the Catholic Church, while over half of “Other Catholics” disagree that the visit will revive faith in Ireland

(Base: All who identify as Catholic)

Practising Catholic – 206 
 Other Catholic – 332 

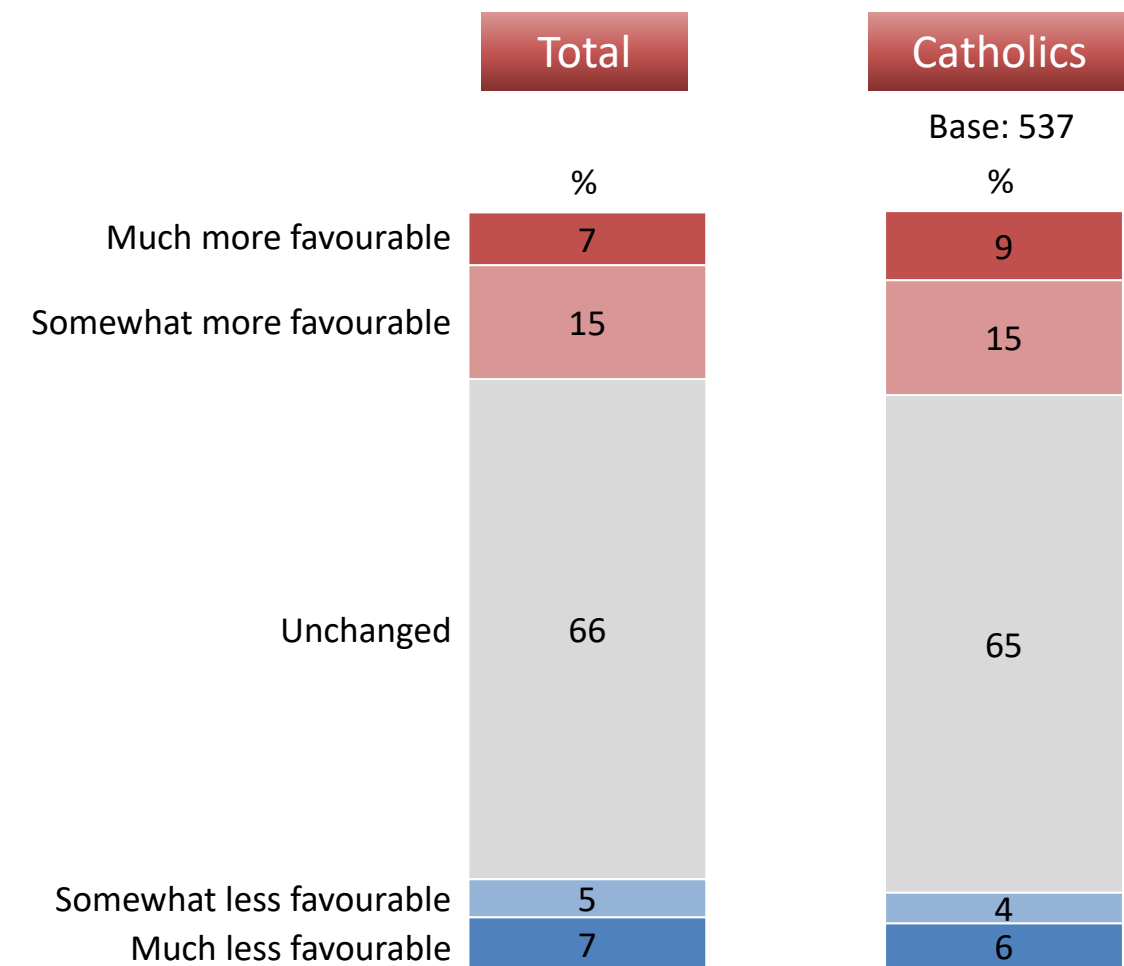


Q5 Please rate your agreement with each of the following statements using the scale from 1 to 5 below, where 1 is Strongly Disagree and 5 is Strongly Agree.

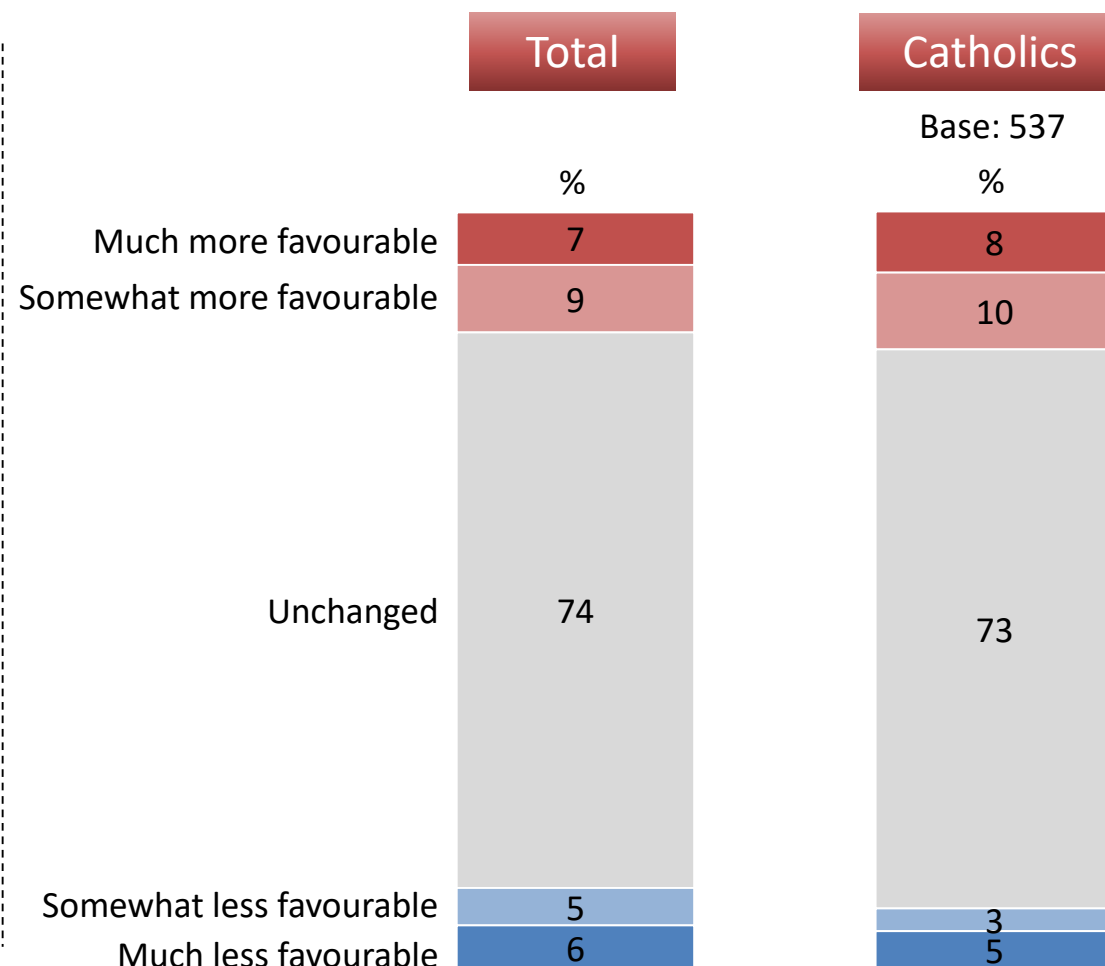
The opinions of the Catholic Church since Pope Francis took office have remained unchanged for two thirds of respondents, and unchanged for circa three quarters after the papal visit.

(Base: All respondents – 840)

Opinion of the Catholic Church since Francis became Pope in 2013



Opinion of the Catholic Church since Pope Francis visited Ireland



Q6 Has your opinion of the Catholic Church changed since Francis became Pope in 2013?

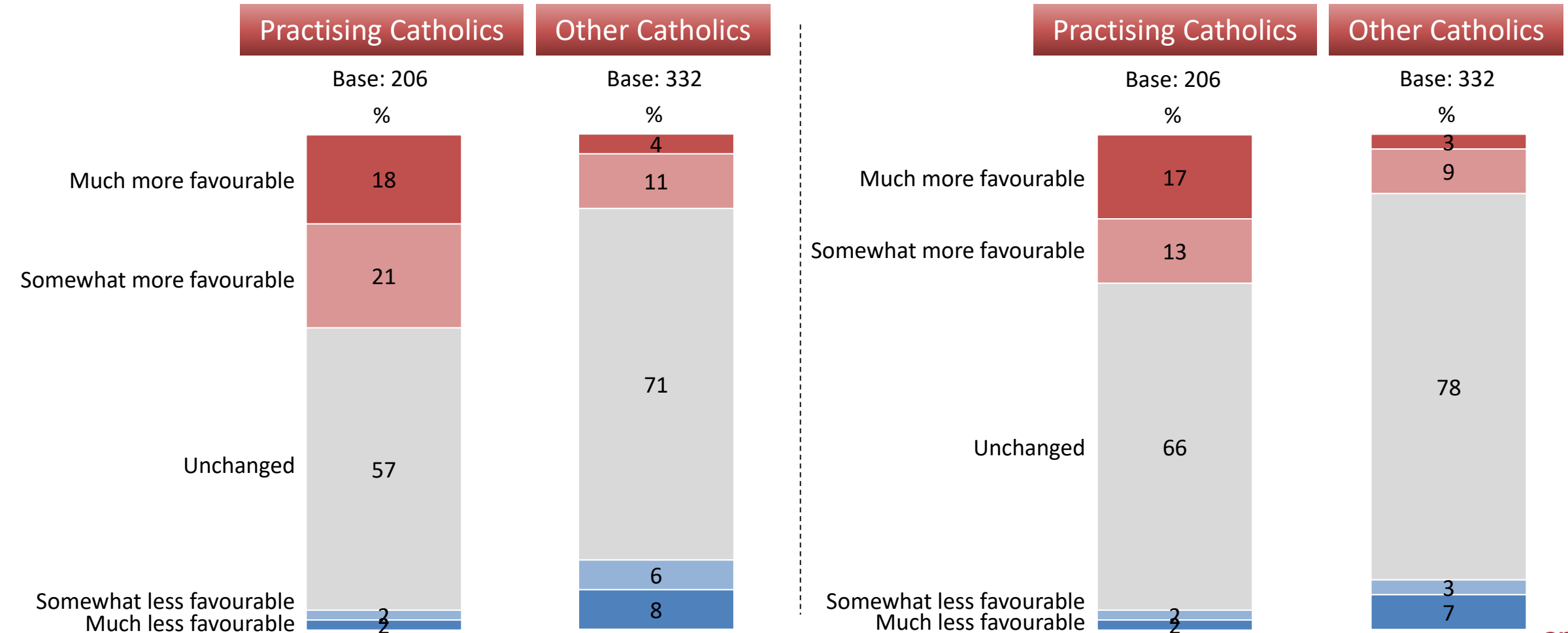
Q7 Has your opinion of the Catholic Church changed since Pope Francis visited Ireland?

Circa 4 in 10 practising Catholics have a more favourable opinion of the Catholic Church since Pope Francis took office, and 3 in 10 since his visit; while the opinions of “Other Catholics” has remained generally unchanged

(Base: All who identify as Catholic)

Opinion of the Catholic Church since Francis became Pope in 2013

Opinion of the Catholic Church since Pope Francis visited Ireland

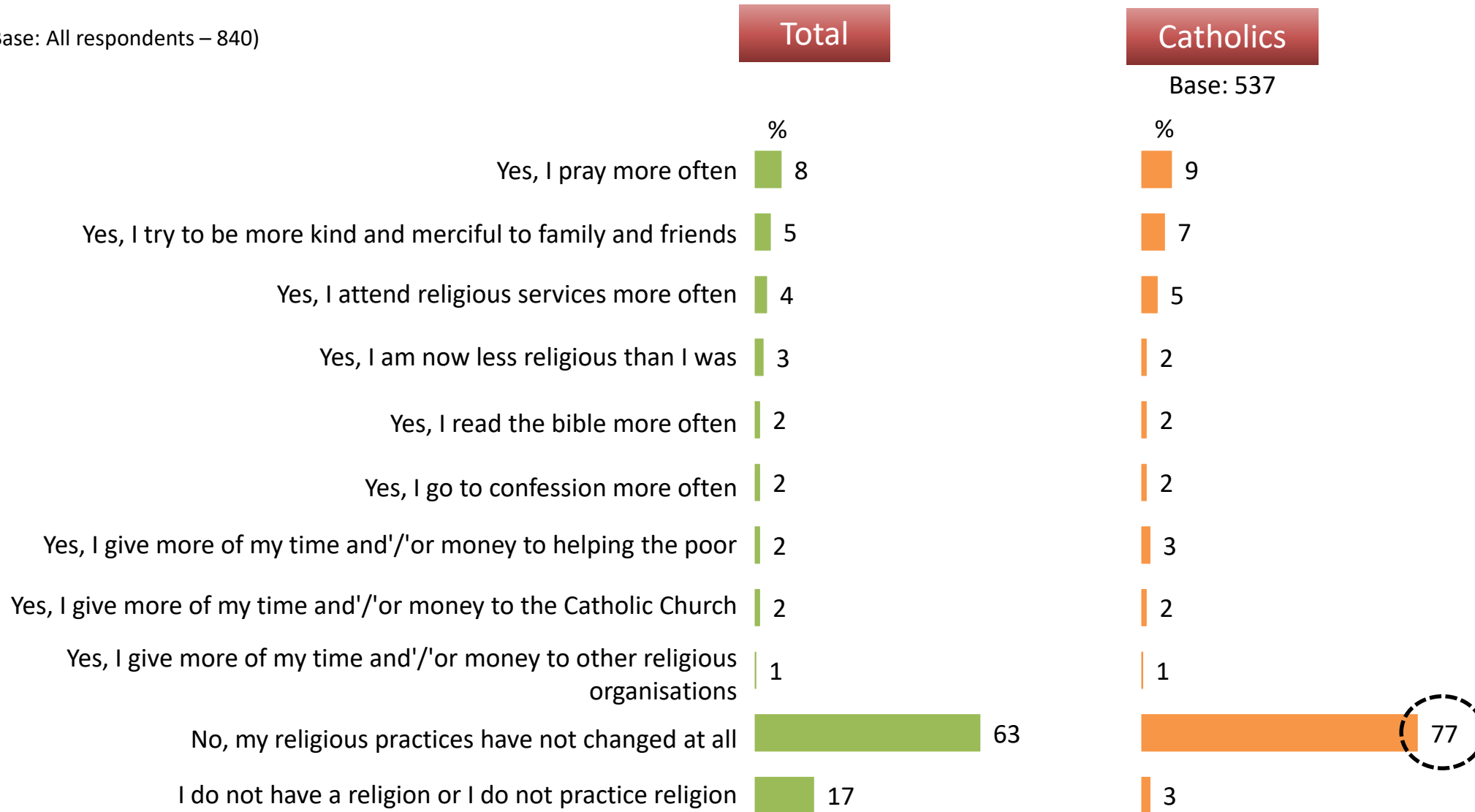


Q6 Has your opinion of the Catholic Church changed since Francis became Pope in 2013?

Q7 Has your opinion of the Catholic Church changed since Pope Francis visited Ireland?

Over three quarters of Catholic respondents have not changed their religious practices since Pope Francis took office in 2013

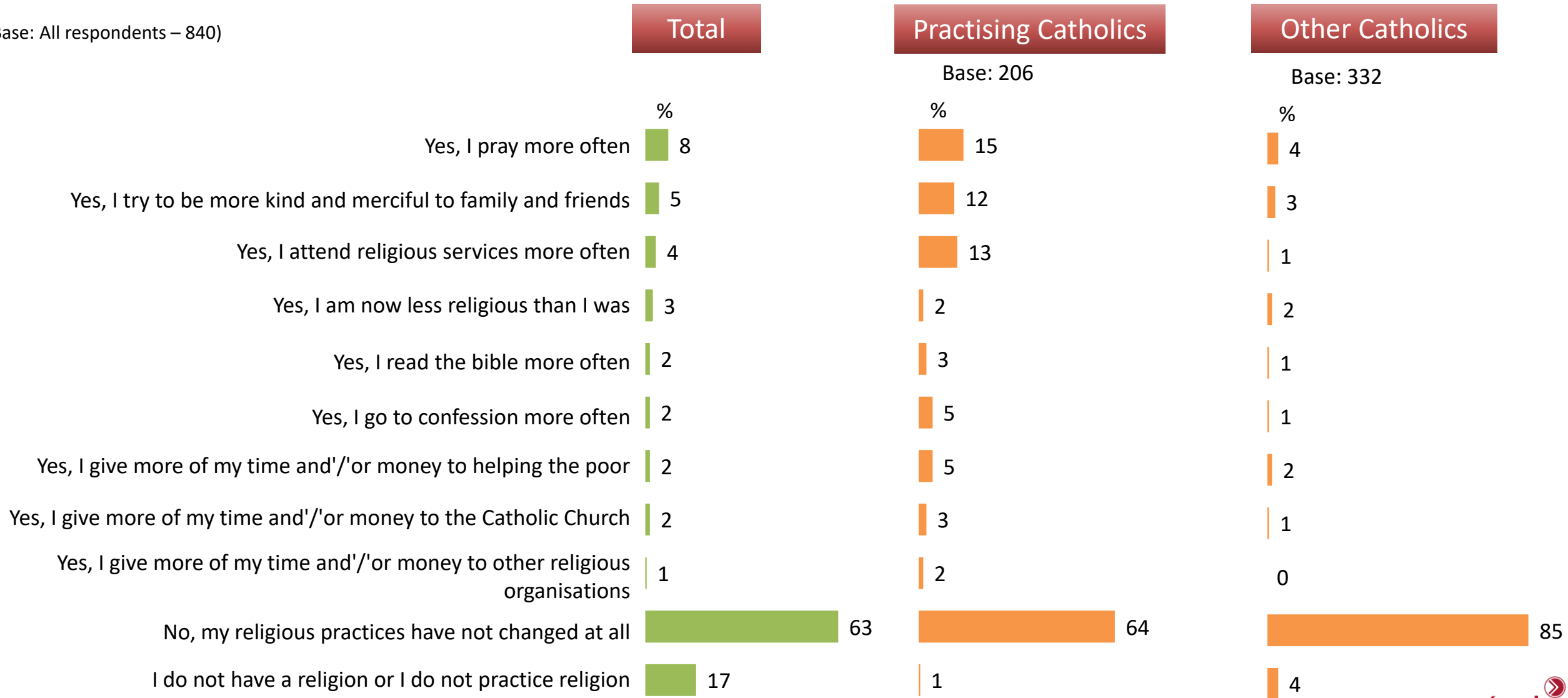
(Base: All respondents – 840)



Q8 Has your religious practice changed as a result of Francis becoming Pope in 2013?

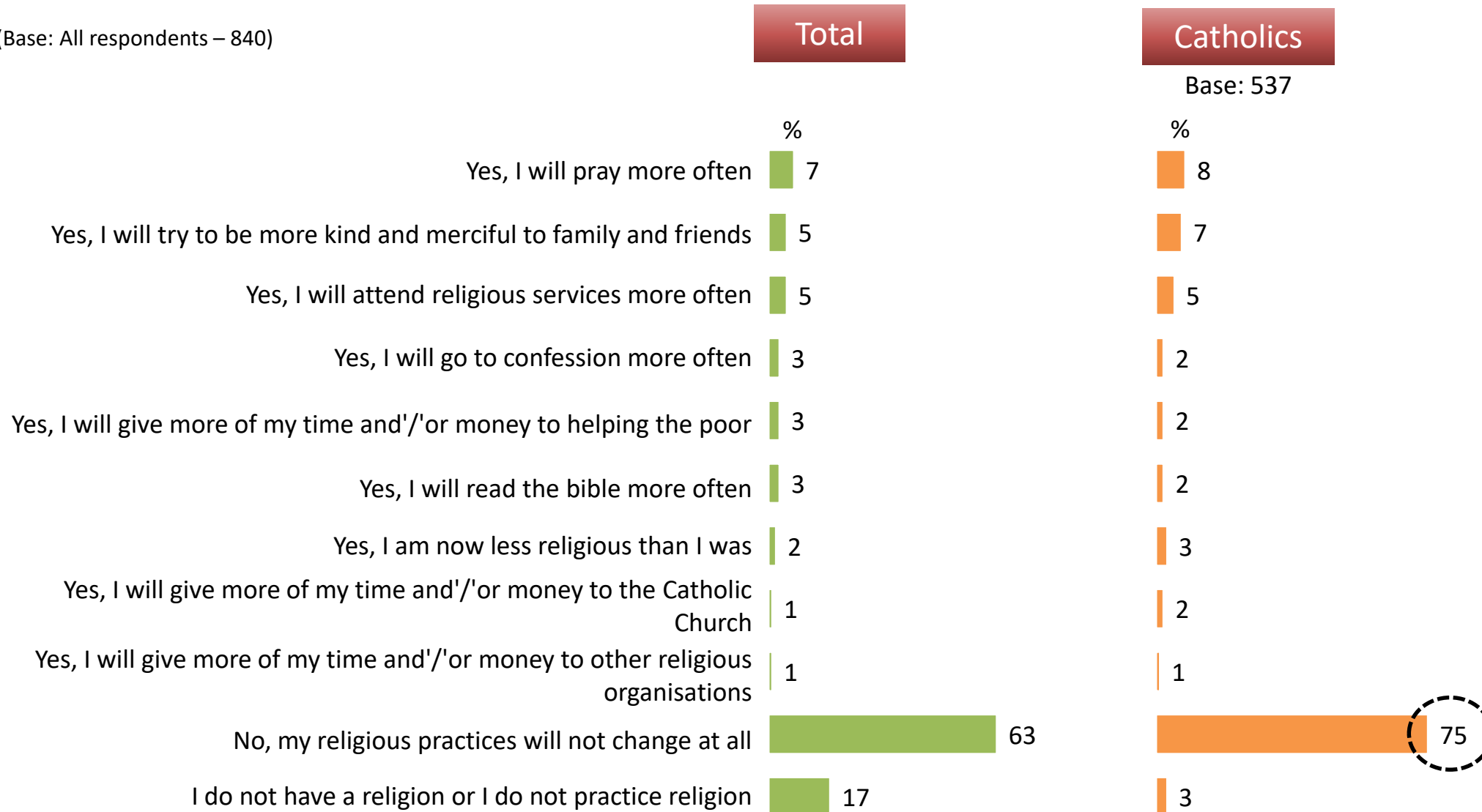
15% of practising Catholics claim they pray more often since Pope Francis took office, while 85% of “Other Catholics” have not changed their religious practices in this time

(Base: All respondents – 840)



Similar to after Pope Francis took office, following the Papal visit three quarters of Catholic respondents claim their religious practices will not change

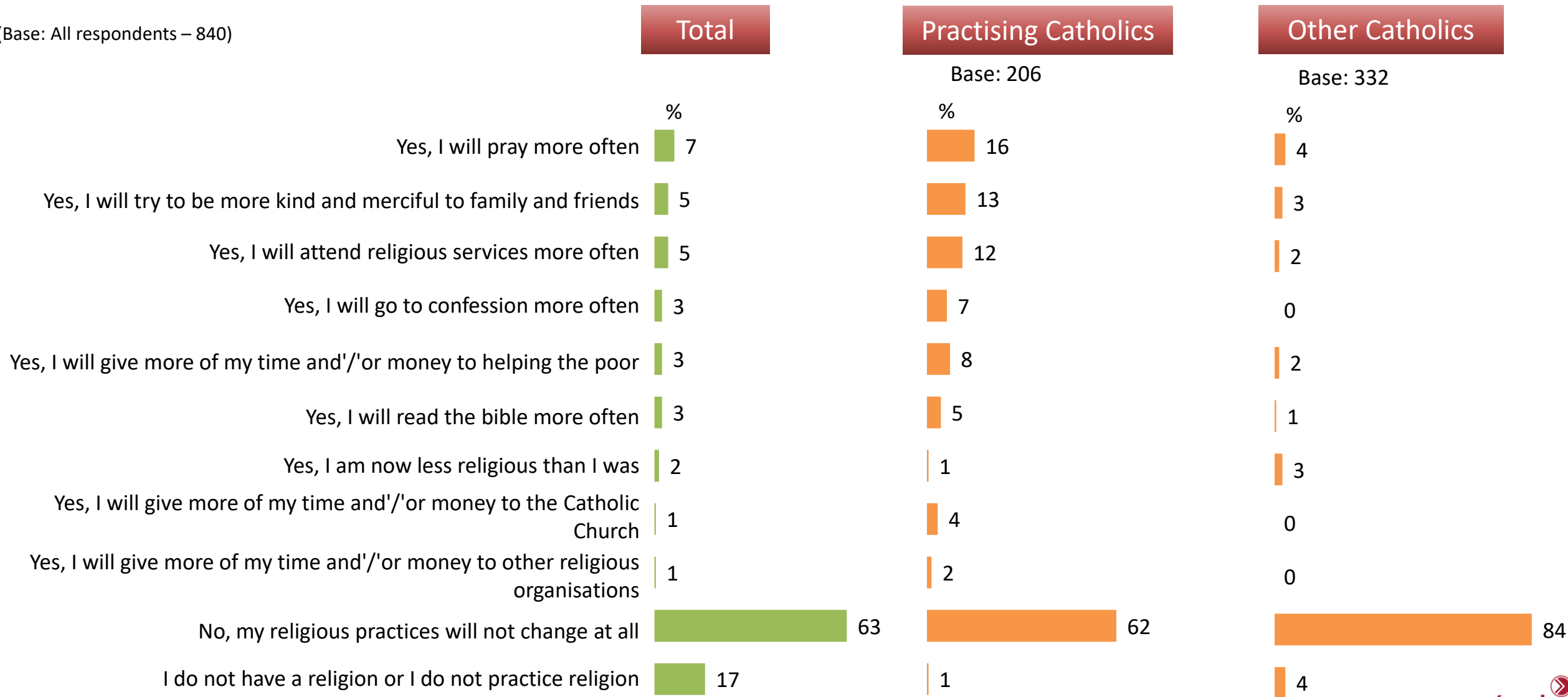
(Base: All respondents – 840)



Q9 Do you anticipate that your religious practice will change as a result of Pope Francis visiting Ireland?

Since the papal visit, 16% of practising Catholics claim they pray more often, while 84% of “Other Catholics” say their religious practices have not changed

(Base: All respondents – 840)



Q9 Do you anticipate that your religious practice will change as a result of Pope Francis visiting Ireland?

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