

## Religion and Condoms in Latin America

According to recent statistics, about 1.7 million people across Latin America were infected with HIV or AIDS in 2006, and 410,000 new cases had been reported that year as well. These numbers have shown no sign of abatement.

Latin America is home to the majority of the world's Catholics. As of 2005, Brazil is the country with the largest Catholic population in the world. The policies of the Catholic Church can be seen as at least partly responsible for why the number of HIV/AIDS cases in this part of the world is so high, as the Church is very vocal in promoting its view that condoms and other forms of contraceptives should not be used, and that abstinence is the only suitable form of birth control. The fact that the Church also has at times promoted misinformation, such as that condoms could help spread HIV rather than prevent it, is another way in which condoms are shunned in that area of the world.

However, religious beliefs may not be the only reason why the Church is so adamant about being anti-contraceptive. As several have suggested, right now, in places like Africa and Latin and South America, the Church is losing members to both evangelical Christianity and Islam, and may fear that promoting the use of birth control, even for a cause like AIDS, might lead to lower birth rates for Catholic families. Considering that Latin America is home to almost half the world's population of Catholics, this could be a valid fear.

In any case, the strong presence of the Catholic Church as an institution in Latin America means that it exerts a lot of influence in promoting abstinence as the only method of birth control. Governments have a limited amount of funds for the public welfare and oftentimes rely on outside institutions, such as the Catholic Church, to help promote public welfare through non-profit work. The Catholic Church has done a lot of good for many communities in Latin America, however their ideology concerning birth control is strict and unbending. As studies show, in many of these countries, people start becoming sexually active in their teens, and since there's a lack of contraceptive-friendly sexual education taught in schools, pregnancy and STD rates are a problem, as well as HIV and AIDS. Given that many of these countries struggle financially, one can imagine that the growing rate of infection and disease can't be very helpful economically either.

However, this is not to say that everyone that lives in these countries submits to Catholic ideology. Brazil, for example, promotes and distributes condoms to the population as an attempt to help reduce the HIV infection rate, despite the fact that 85% of the country is Catholic. Not everyone in Latin America is a practicing Catholic, and among those who are, there is a wide spectrum of opinions and ideology. The problem is that this diversity of thought and opinion is not reflected in the ideology the Church promotes and funds. Catholicism has a very strong and influential hold on the people of Latin America, and its views regarding condoms have an enormous effect on the area as well.

For more information visit: [Religion and Condoms in Latin America](#)

### About the Author

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