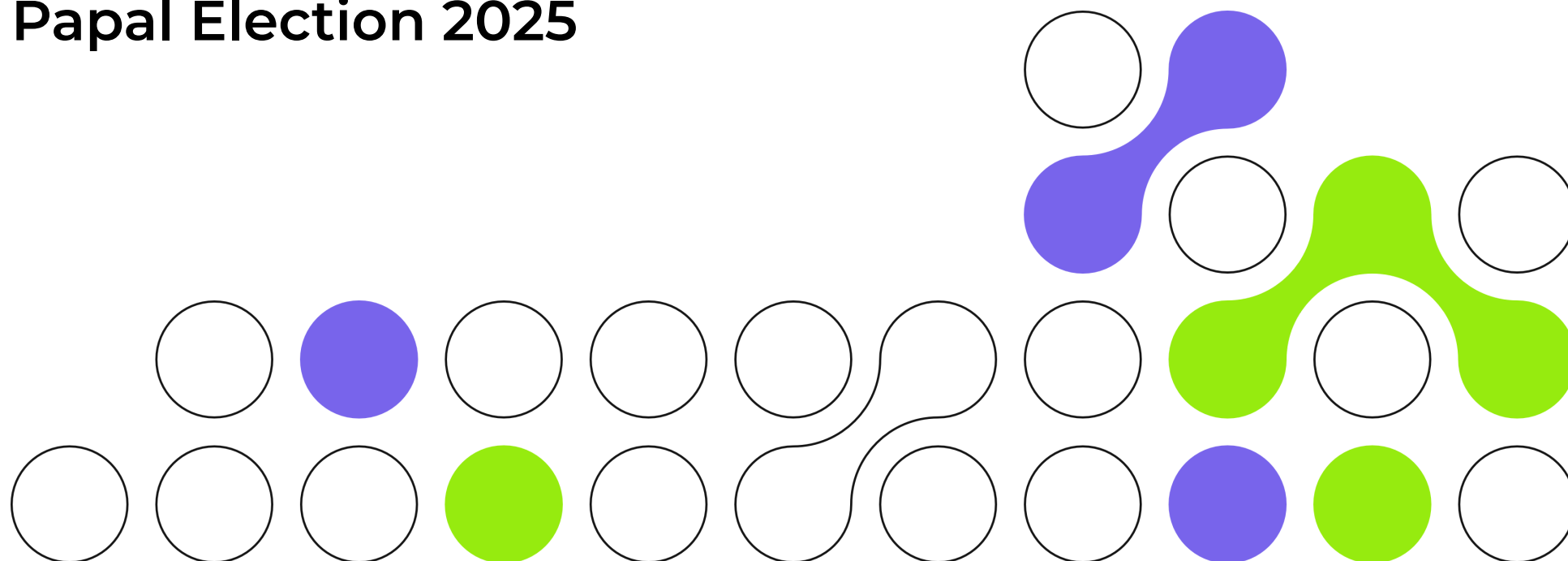




CONCLAVE OF THE PRESS

Papal Election 2025



Summary

Who will be the next pope? The world is guessing

The death of Pope Francis has triggered one of the most defining religious events in recent times: the 2025 papal election. This centuries-old, highly significant ritual takes place behind closed doors and will determine not only the future direction of the Catholic Church but also potentially impact global politics.

The conclave has already assembled in the Vatican, and the official voting will begin on May 7. The election of the new pope will be announced by the white smoke rising from the Sistine Chapel chimney, accompanied by the sound of bells.

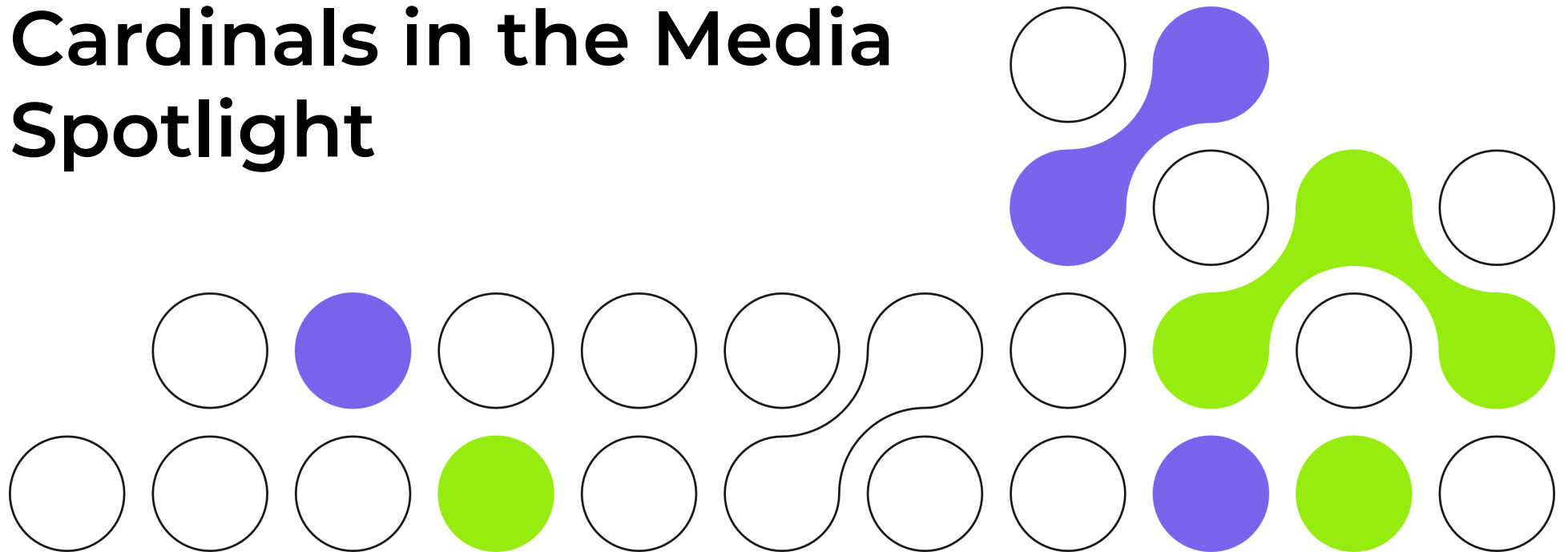
This rare and globally watched event inevitably raises a question: Can we predict who the next pope will be? Maybe yes, maybe no – yet millions of people around the world are speculating. The topic has emerged in everyday conversations, in the media, and even in the offerings of betting agencies.

Interest in the cardinal electors has skyrocketed overnight: search trends have surged, and international media outlets are publishing portraits, analyses, and "papal favorites" from different countries.

We turned to publicly available data for answers: betting odds, online search statistics, and global media coverage. So, who has won the conclave of the global press?



Cardinals in the Media Spotlight



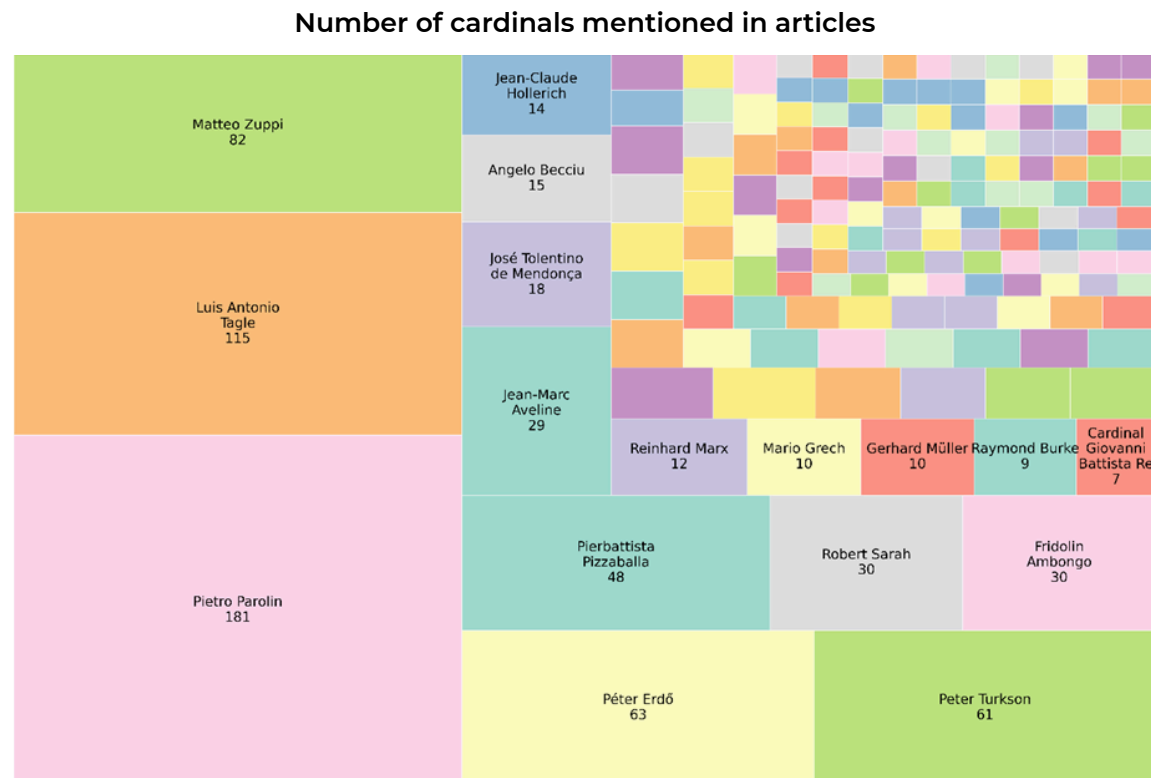
Cardinals in the Media Spotlight

To explore the popularity and international visibility of the cardinal electors, we analyzed international news coverage. **We collected and examined a total of 365 articles** – primarily from leading European media outlets, complemented by key sources from other regions. **Of these, 245 articles specifically discussed the papal election, and 221 mentioned cardinals by name as potential successors to Pope Francis.**

The resulting popularity map presents a kind of media conclave: Who are the figures most closely watched by the public eye? Who are the papal favorites?

A total of 224 different cardinals were named in the analyzed articles, illustrating how diverse and open the field of speculation is. The media clearly thinks globally, even if the weighting of chances is not always consistent. **Nevertheless, Cardinal Pietro Parolin was by far the most frequently mentioned name, followed by Cardinals Luis Antonio Tagle, Matteo Zuppi, Péter Erdő, and Peter Turkson.**

The chart below highlights the cardinals most frequently mentioned by name in the media.

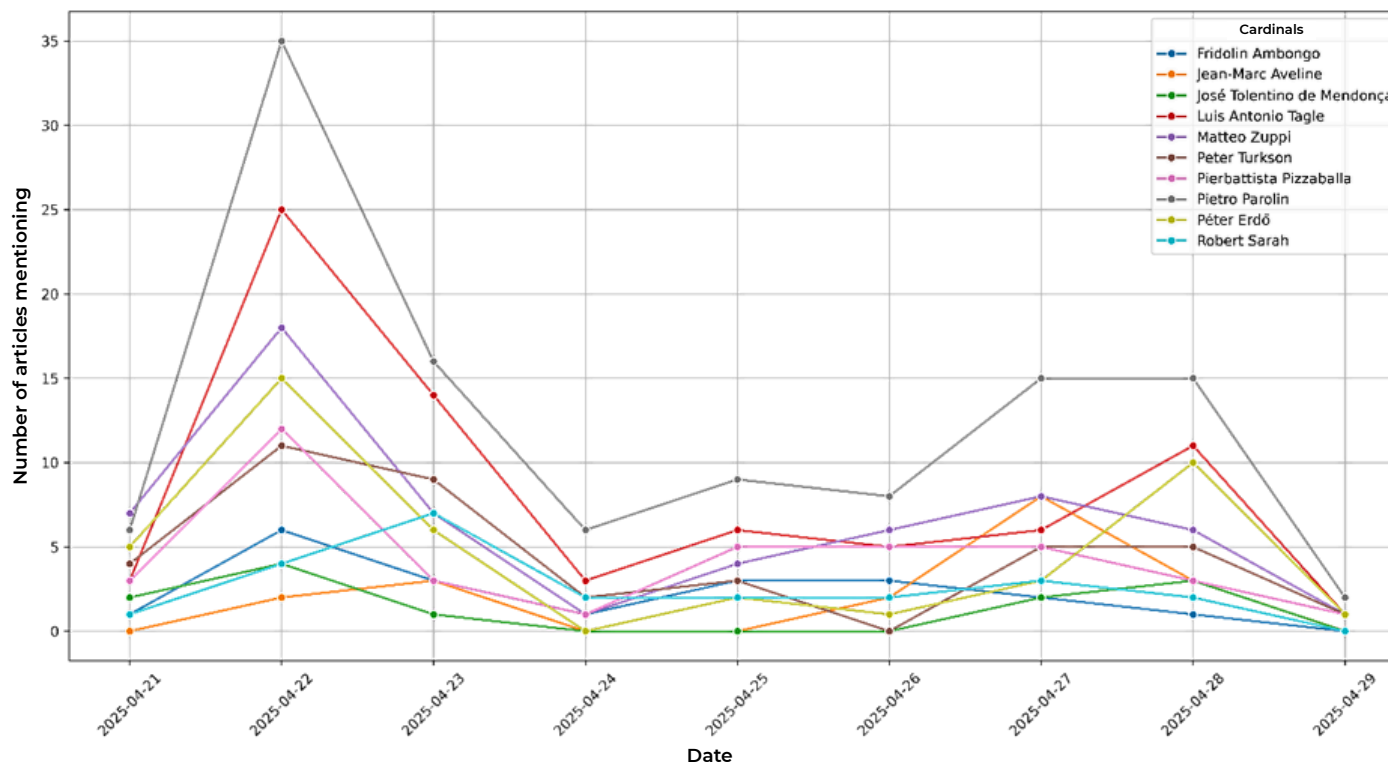


Looking at the timeline of media coverage for the **ten most frequently mentioned cardinals**, we see a clear surge in reporting immediately after the news of Pope Francis' death broke – the interest was explosive, sparking a wave of intense media discourse.

Although the number of mentions gradually declined after the initial peak, attention has not waned: interest remains high, fueled continuously by the upcoming conclave. The media keeps returning to the top contenders, repeatedly analyzing their personalities, diplomatic influence, or theological positions.

Pietro Parolin has consistently topped the mentions from the start – becoming an unavoidable figure in the media. However, other notable church leaders have not been far behind: Luis Antonio Tagle, Matteo Zuppi, Péter Erdő, Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Fridolin Ambongo, and Peter Turkson have all frequently appeared in the media spotlight – each for different reasons and narratives. Geopolitical weight, theological orientation, personal stories, or charismatic presence have all contributed to their prominent roles in the 2025 media conclave.

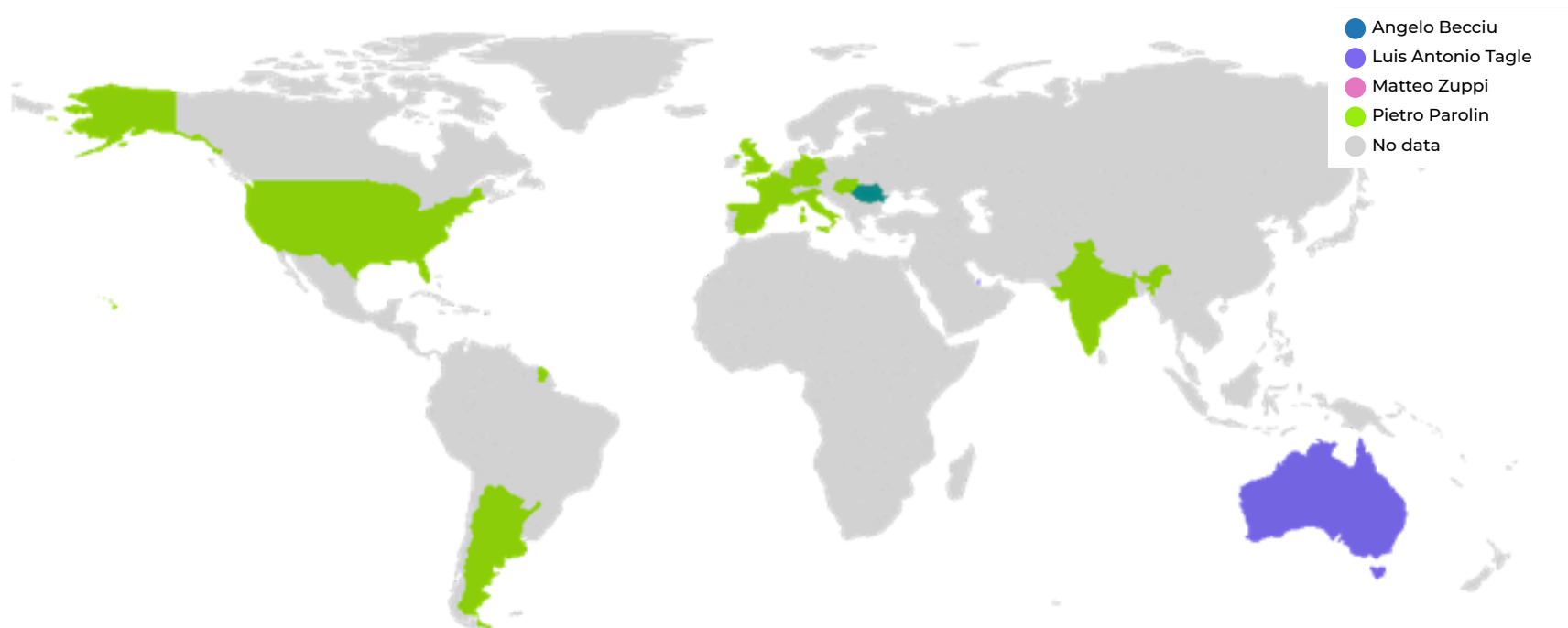
The 10 most famous cardinals mentioned in articles



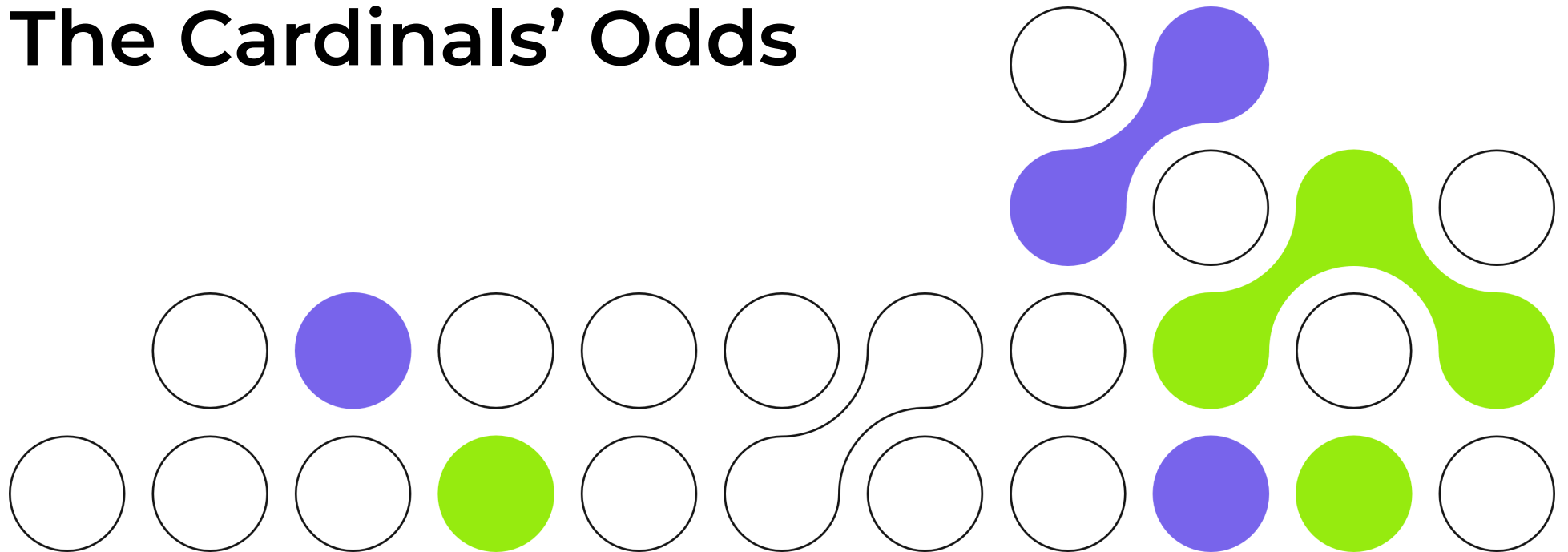
Most of the articles we analyzed came from European outlets, where **Pietro Parolin's name dominated**. However, there were exceptions: in Romania, Angelo Becciu received significant attention – the Italian cardinal was previously convicted and recently withdrew his candidacy. Unsurprisingly, national pride also played a role in media focus, often favoring local candidates. In Hungary, for instance, Péter Erdő was mentioned far more frequently than average.

On other continents, papal election coverage was less frequent, but it still reflected the geographical distribution of potential successors. In the U.S. and Argentina, Parolin also dominated, while in Australia, Matteo Zuppi became the most mentioned name.

Cardinals mentioned in the most articles by country



The Cardinals' Odds



The Cardinals' Odds – Who Is the World Betting On?

As the conclave draws closer, speculation is mounting—not only within church circles but across the secular world. The papal election has even entered the realm of bookmakers—an unusual and somewhat profane intersection of spirituality and speculation. And yes, one can actually bet on who will become the next leader of the Catholic Church. But this is no mere curiosity: behind the odds lie serious analyses, international sentiment, and visible political-ideological fault lines.

Major betting agencies currently list around 35 cardinals as realistic contenders. The odds are shaped not only by internal Church dynamics but also by media visibility, geographic representation, and broader political-cultural discourse. While these numbers don't predict the outcome with certainty, they clearly reflect where global attention is focused — and who the world sees as the future of the Church.

Pietro Parolin currently tops the betting charts with **9/4 fractional odds** — making him the current favorite. The Italian cardinal is followed closely by **Luis Antonio Tagle (11/4)** and **Peter Turkson (5)**. Also ranked highly are **Matteo Zuppi** and **Pierbattista Pizzaballa (both at 7)**, along with **Péter Erdő (8)**, who has received particular attention in Hungary.

The diversity among the frontrunners is striking—not only in nationality but also in theological orientation and ecclesiastical roles. The list includes conservatives and progressives, seasoned Vatican insiders and “outsiders” with strong pastoral credentials. Among the less likely but still mentioned names are **Jean-Claude Hollerich**, **Fridolin Ambongo**, and **Robert Sarah**, with odds ranging from **14 to 25**, as well as lesser-known candidates with **odds of 33, 40, or even 100 to one**.

While betting odds are ultimately speculative, they offer a fascinating lens through which to view how the world perceives the papabili — and in whom it sees the Church's future.

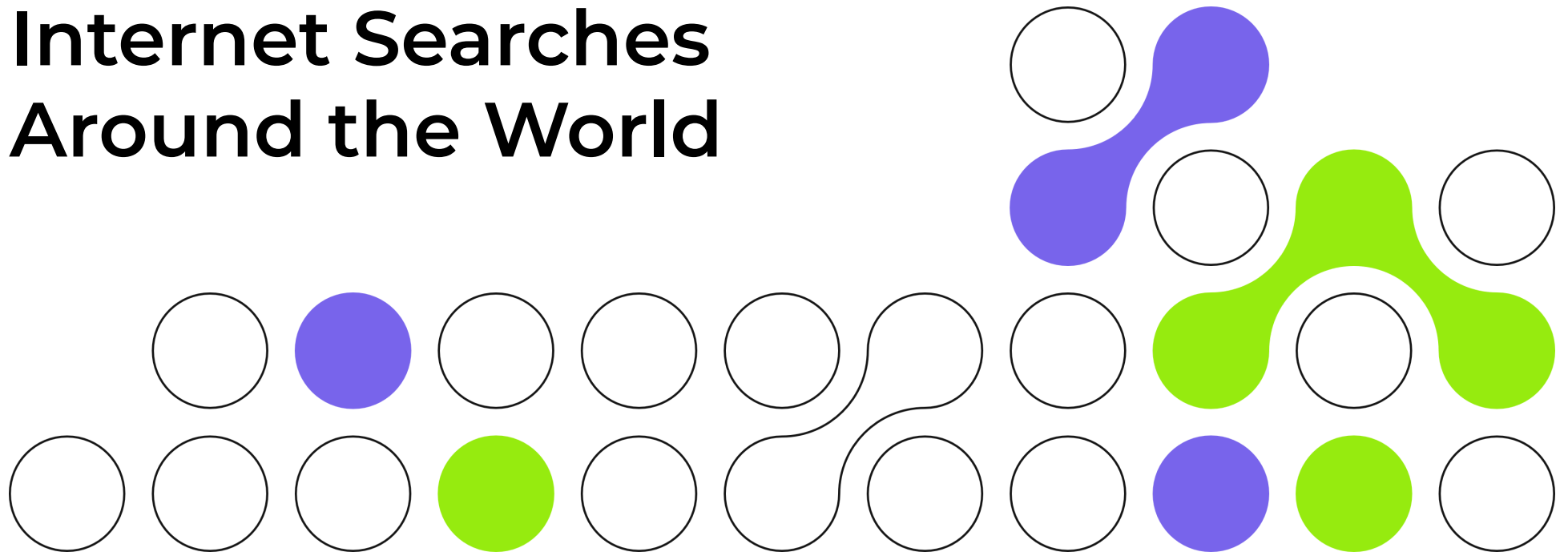
Shifting odds — just like shifts in public opinion — are a telling barometer of which names and directions are gaining momentum in the days leading up to the conclave.



*Fractional odds indicate the risk and potential reward of a given bet. The more likely a candidate is perceived to win, the lower the odds. For example, 9/4 fractional odds equal a decimal multiplier of 3.25 (i.e., $9 \div 4 + 1$).

Odds listed reflect data from Skybet as of April 30, 2025.

Internet Searches Around the World

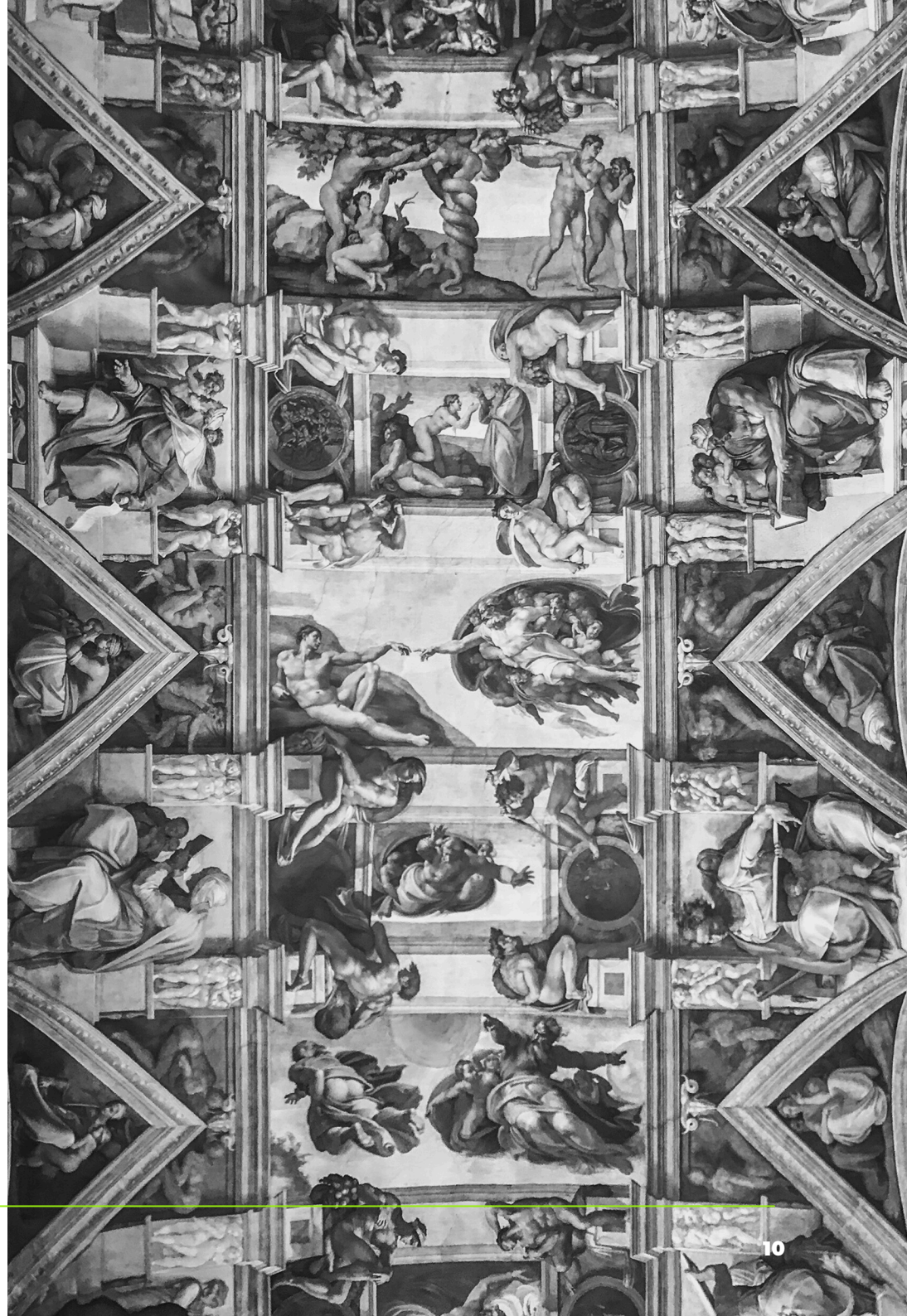


Internet Searches Around the World - What Google Trends Reveals About Papal Candidates

To better understand how public attention shifted towards the most likely papal candidates, we analyzed Google Trends data from April 21 to 25, 2025 – just after the death of Pope Francis, when both the Catholic Church and the global press closely followed the events.

During this period, there was a dramatic surge in searches for the keyword **“conclave”** and several prominent cardinal names – it was evident in the digital realm that the world was almost simultaneously starting to speculate: Who could be the next pope?

The following charts visually illustrate how interest in the various candidates evolved over time, as well as which countries saw particularly high online demand. These search patterns not only reveal the nature of global curiosity but could also shed light on regional affiliations, religious, or political sympathies. Behind each name, there are not only personal qualities but also geographical, cultural, and theological hopes, painting a picture of why people in certain regions might consider someone a strong candidate for the role of the world’s next spiritual leader. Thus, Google searches essentially become a world map showing where, who, and why people believe certain figures are contenders for this important role.



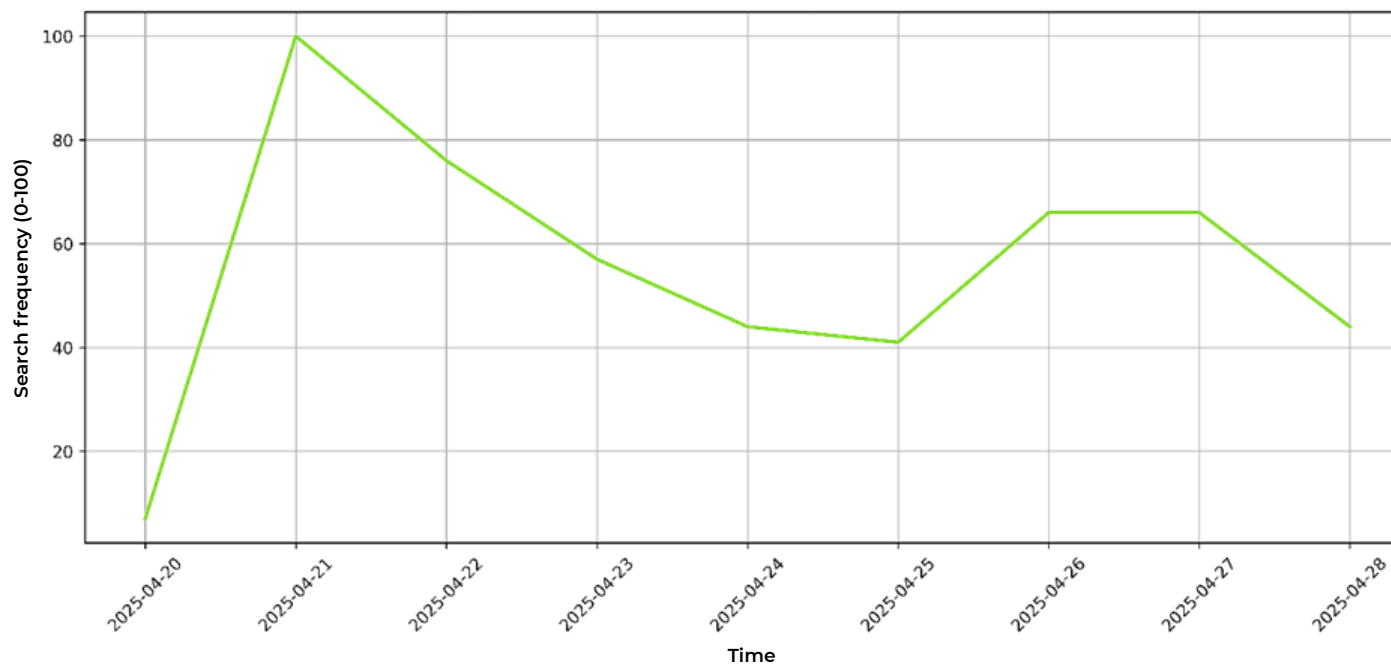
The Number of Google Searches for the Term **"Conclave"** Skyrocketed Immediately After the News of Pope Francis' Death – and Has Remained Consistently High Since. The sharp shift in search trends clearly illustrates the powerful surge of global interest and speculation: Who will be the next leader of the Catholic Church?

This digital attention explosion not only reflects the significance of the event but also the intense involvement of public opinion – since, even though the decision is made behind closed doors, **millions around the world are already "voting" with their searches.**

Building on this heightened interest, we examined which cardinals generated the most online activity: Who did people search for the most, where, and when? Could these search patterns indicate who the public considers most likely to be the next pope?

The following sections provide insight into this. First, we track how interest in the individual candidates evolved over time, then show on a map where in the world curiosity peaked the most when a particular name was mentioned.

Google Trends: The Temporal Evolution of Searches for the Term "Conclave"



The Most Searched Cardinals – Who Did the World Pay Attention to in April 2025

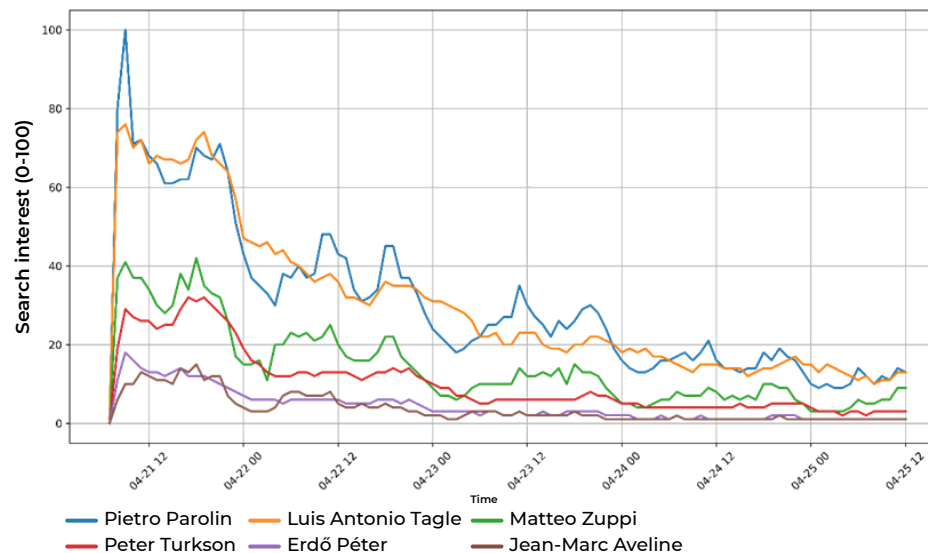
Based on Google Trends data, a few cardinal names quickly became the focus of international attention following Pope Francis' death. **The search spikes featured well-known names such as Pietro Parolin, Luis Antonio Tagle, Matteo Zuppi, Peter Turkson, Péter Erdő, and Jean-Marc Aveline – they generated the most online attention during the days of mourning.**

As the graphs clearly illustrate, the search interest for these six cardinals skyrocketed within hours, signaling that public opinion largely saw them as potential successors to Pope Francis. Although the timing and intensity of interest varied by candidate, the common denominator is clear: global attention focused on a few charismatic, well-known faces.

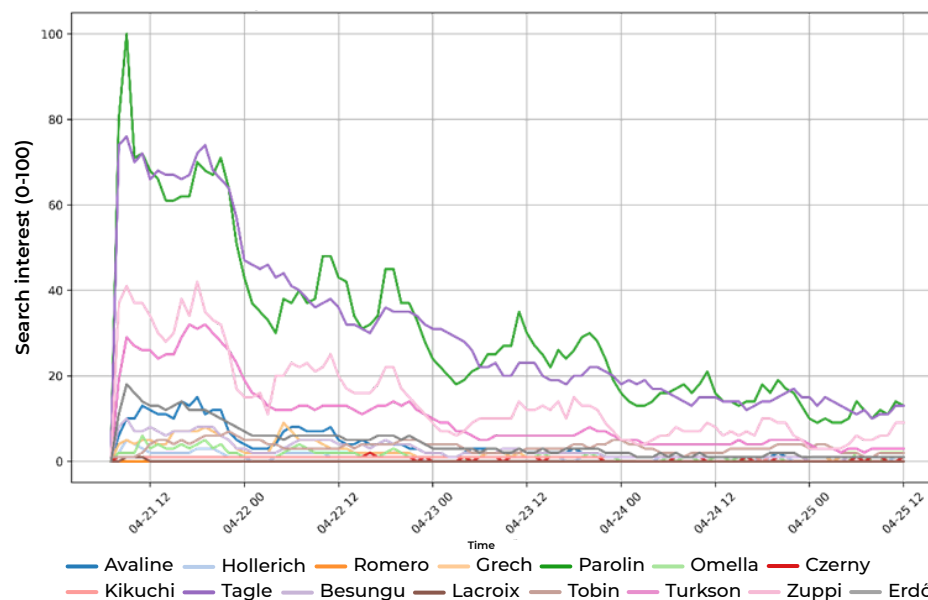
Beyond the tight frontrunners, we also examined a broader list of candidates and found that, although the interest in them wasn't as explosive as for the favorites, many still generated significant search activity among those interested in the topic. The trend remains telling: in the hours and days following the pope's death, people worldwide were intensely trying to map out possible papal election scenarios.

However, the overall search pattern remained consistent: **the pope's death sparked widespread online interest** that not only focused on the most likely candidates but also brought attention to a broader range of potential successors.

Google Trends: Search Interest in the Most Searched Cardinals (Hourly)



Google Trends: Interest in the Cardinals (Hourly)



Interest Does Not Always Predict the Winner

While Google Trends offers a fascinating window into the world's collective curiosity, it is important to remind ourselves that **online searches alone do not predict who will emerge victorious from the conclave**. A significant gap often exists between digital noise and real decisions.

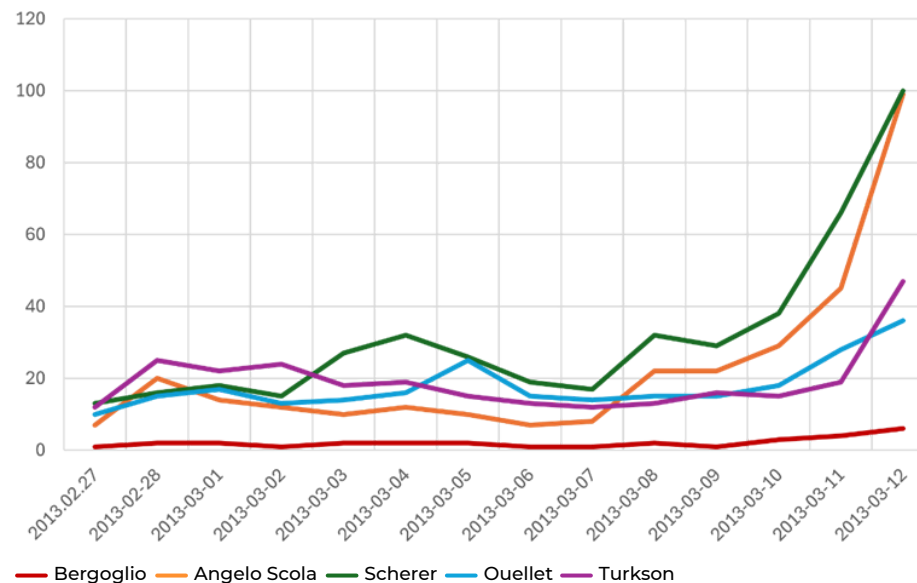
In 2013, **Jorge Mario Bergoglio** – later Pope Francis – was virtually absent from both the betting odds and the top searches on Google. In contrast, during the 2005 conclave, **Joseph Ratzinger** was one of the public's and digital searches' favorites – and indeed, he became Pope Benedict XVI. These two stories illustrate well: while there is sometimes overlap between public interest and the final decision, at other times the real winner comes from completely behind the scenes.

The following chart shows the search patterns leading up to the 2013 papal election. It is clear that Bergoglio's name barely appeared among the most searched cardinals, while others received much more attention.

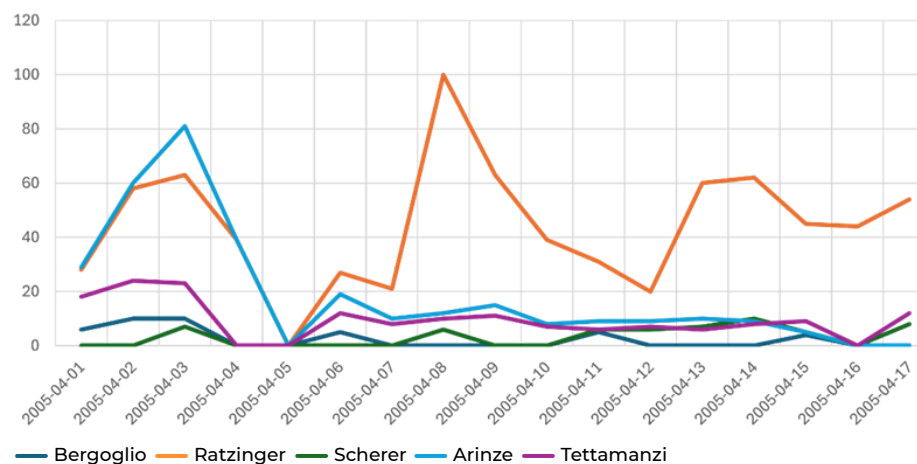
Interestingly, Bergoglio's name also appeared in search trends back in 2005. He was ranked just behind Ratzinger in public interest, yet he was not elected then. **Eight years later, however, he unexpectedly became the new pope**, despite having remained almost "under the radar" for the public.

This retrospective reminds us that conclave decisions are made not by algorithms, but by cardinals – behind closed doors, at the intersection of divine inspiration and internal power dynamics.

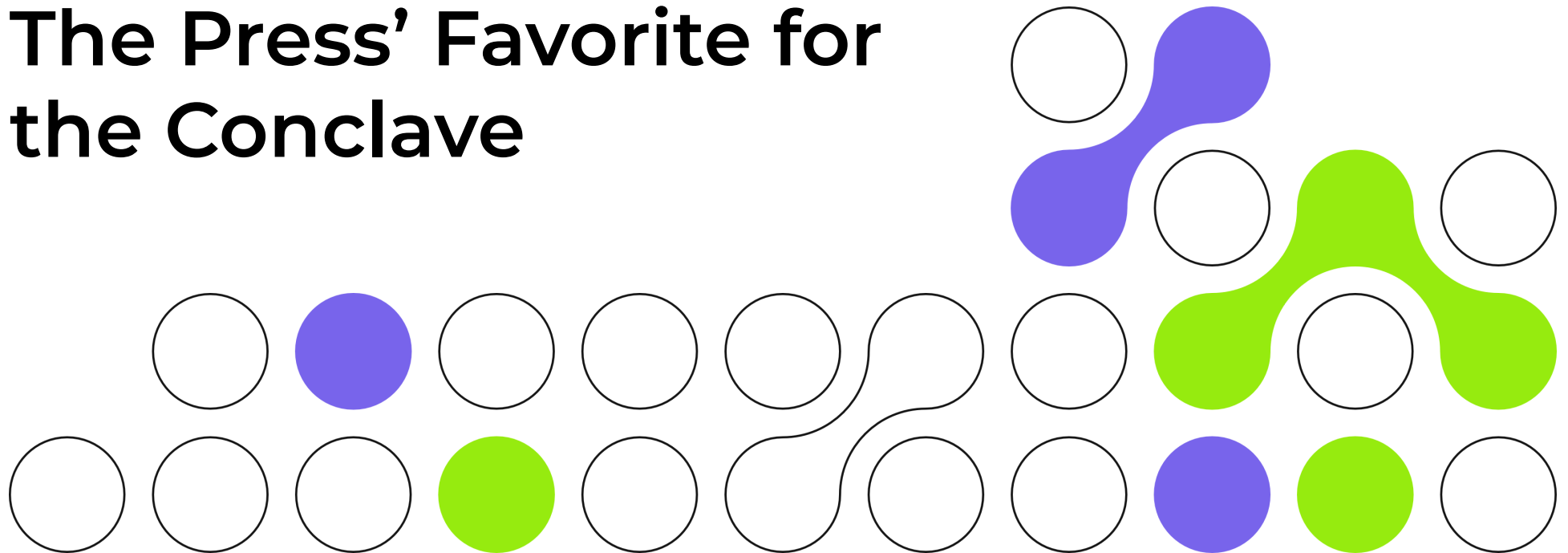
Google Trends: Interest in Cardinals (2013)



Google Trends: Interest in Cardinals (2005)



The Press' Favorite for the Conclave



Pietro Parolin

Italian | 70 years | odds: 9/4



Source: www.vatican.va

- **Current Position:**
Vatican Secretary of State
- **Theological Orientation:**
Slightly conservative
- **Curial Experience:** yes

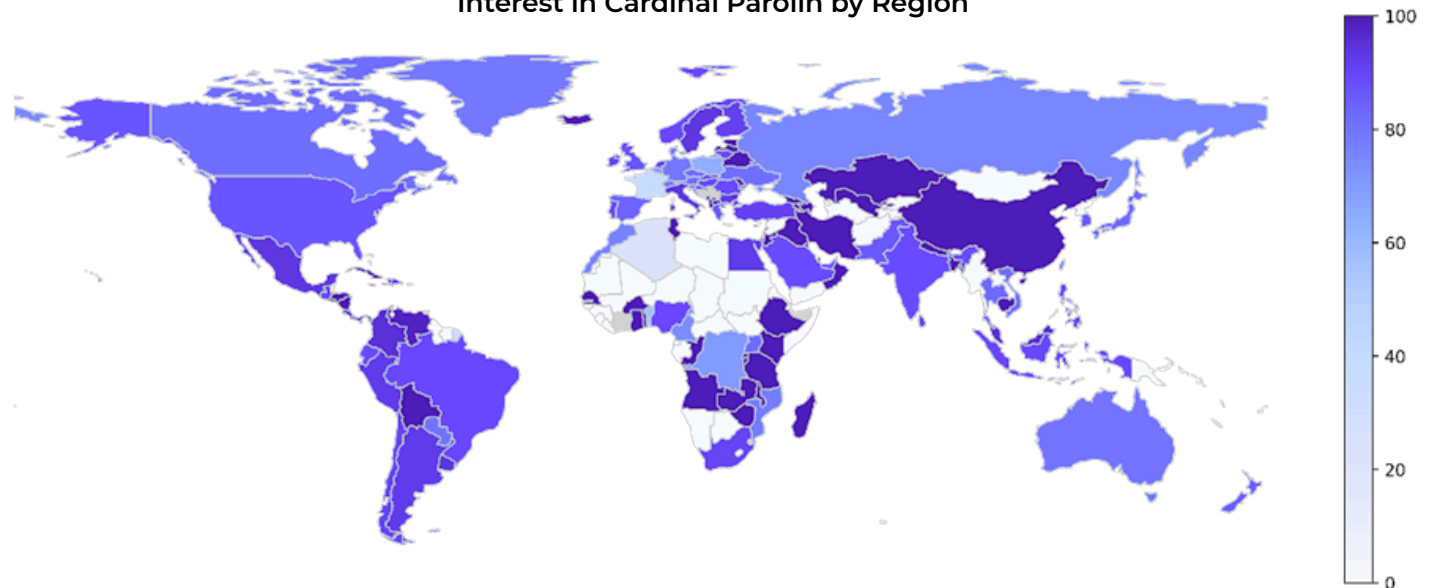
Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who has been the Vatican Secretary of State since 2013 – essentially the pope's "prime minister" – began his career early, having served in Venezuela and Nigeria. He then became the head of the Vatican's Secretariat for Relations with States. Cardinal Parolin is renowned as an excellent diplomat: he played a key role in improving the relationship between the Vatican and China and has also negotiated peace and religious rights in various crisis zones.

His theological stance is moderate and balanced – he is known as a bridge-builder between conservative and progressive factions. He was a trusted confidant of Pope Francis, and due to his pragmatic perspective and diplomatic experience, he is well-versed in the global and political dimensions of the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin enjoys widespread respect – particularly within the Curia and international diplomatic circles. Due to his experience and calm demeanor, many view him as a stable and predictable choice for the papacy.

Worldwide, Cardinal Parolin was the most searched individual, and he is the top favorite in the press and among betting houses. He generated significant interest in China, Kazakhstan, Southern Africa, and the Americas. However, he received relatively little attention in France.

Interest in Cardinal Parolin by Region



Luis Antonio Tagle

Filipino | 67 years | odds: 11/4



Source: www.vatican.va

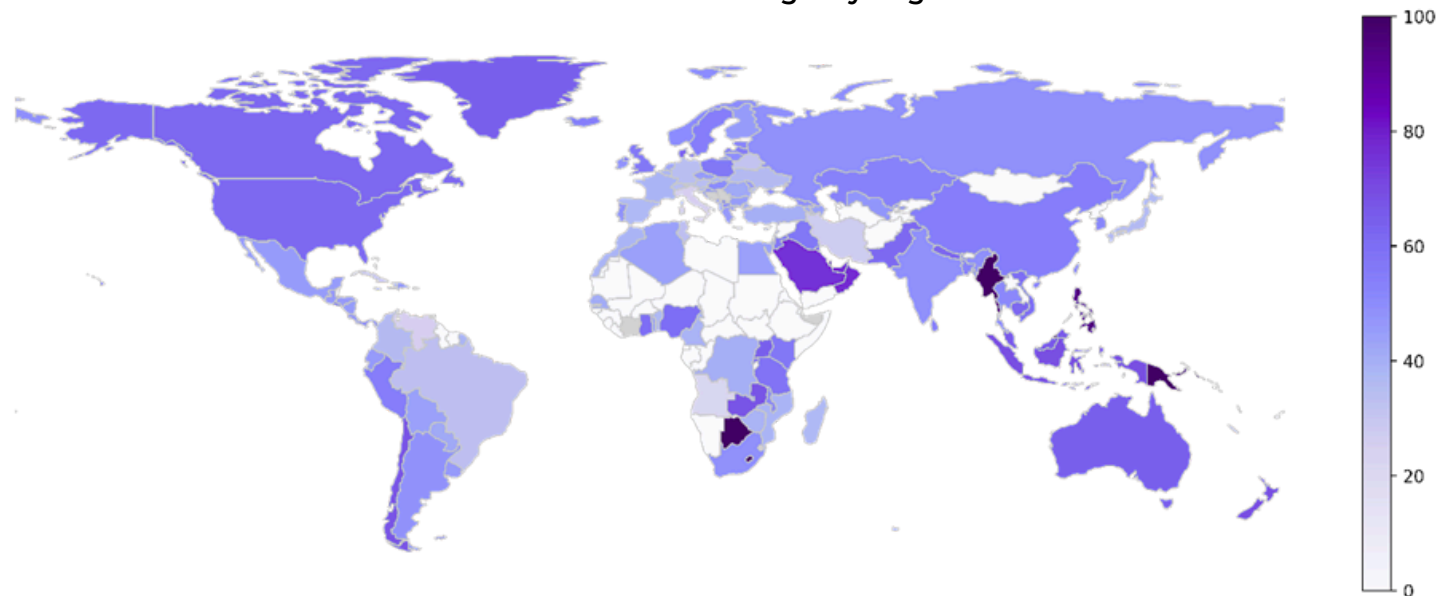
- **Current Position:**
Pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization
- **Theological Orientation:**
Slightly liberal
- **Curial Experience:** yes

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, a Filipino prelate, is one of the most well-known and charismatic Asian church leaders, considered by many to be one of the most important faces of the global Catholic Church. His theological stance is open, socially sensitive, and pastoral – he particularly emphasizes the evangelization of communities living on the peripheries and listening to the voices of the poor and marginalized. He was a prominent ally of Pope Francis, whose thinking reflected many of the values and reform efforts of the late pontiff.

He began his theological studies in Manila and later earned a doctorate in systematic theology from Washington. He was appointed Archbishop of Manila in 2011 and then became head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's predecessor organization in 2019. He currently serves as the pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization.

His charismatic personality, simple lifestyle, and excellent communication skills have made him popular worldwide. According to Google Trends search data, there is particularly high interest in him in his home country, the Philippines, as well as in Thailand and North America. However, he has received relatively little attention in Europe – at least for now.

Interest in Cardinal Tagle by Region



Peter Turkson

Ghanaian | 76 years | odds: 6



Source: www.vatican.va

- **Current Position:**
Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences
- **Theological Orientation:**
Moderate
- **Curial Experience:** yes

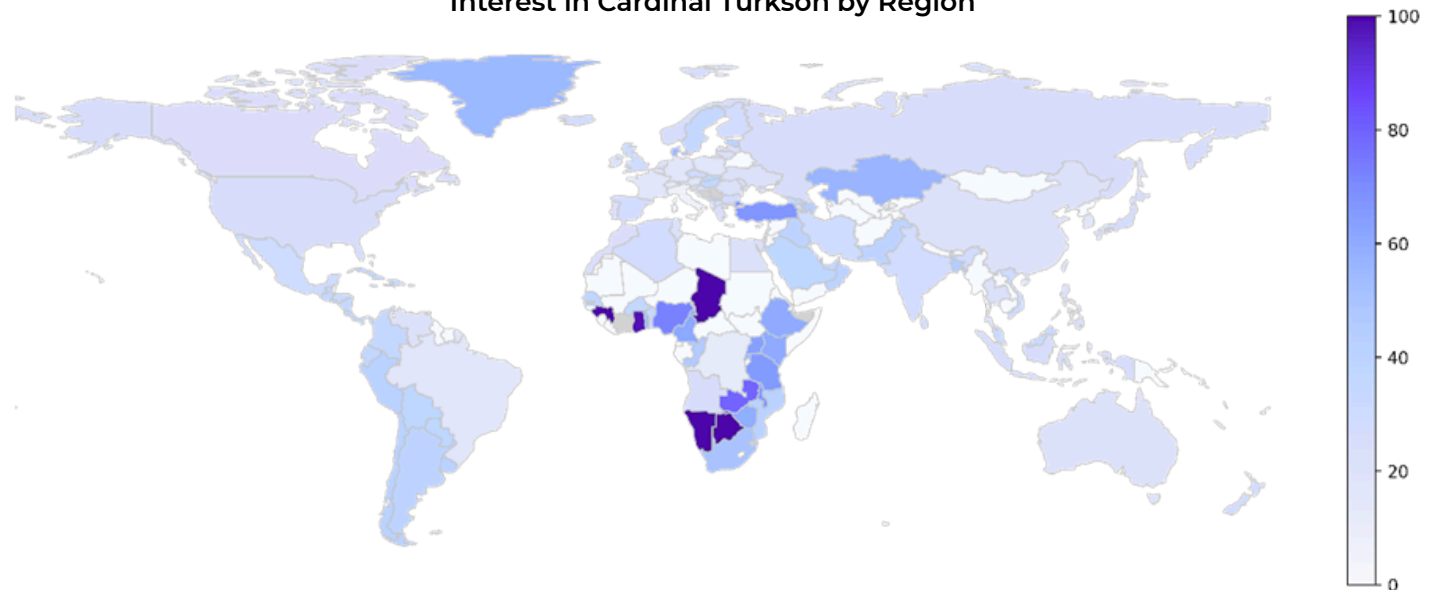
Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, a Ghanaian prelate, is one of the most well-known African church leaders, widely regarded as one of the top contenders in the papal election.

He was appointed cardinal in 2003 by Pope John Paul II and, in 2009, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him to head the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. From 2016, he led the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, and he currently serves as the Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

Cardinal Turkson's theological orientation is sensitive to social issues, with a strong connection to social teachings, particularly in the areas of economic justice, climate protection, and global inequalities. He was also an important supporter of Pope Francis in the development of the *Laudato si'* encyclical.

A globally recognized church figure, Turkson has largely stepped back in recent years, which may affect his chances in the papal election, but his experience and integrity continue to make him a serious contender. Peter Turkson has sparked significant interest in sub-Saharan Africa, largely due to his Ghanaian roots. There is also some interest in South America, but he has received limited attention in North America and Europe. Interestingly, within Europe, the highest number of searches came from Denmark. Additionally, he has notable interest in Turkey and Kazakhstan.

Interest in Cardinal Turkson by Region



Matteo Zuppi

Italian | 69 years | odds: 7



Source: www.vatican.va

- **Current Position:**
Archbishop of Bologna
- **Theological Orientation:**
Liberal
- **Curial Experience:** none

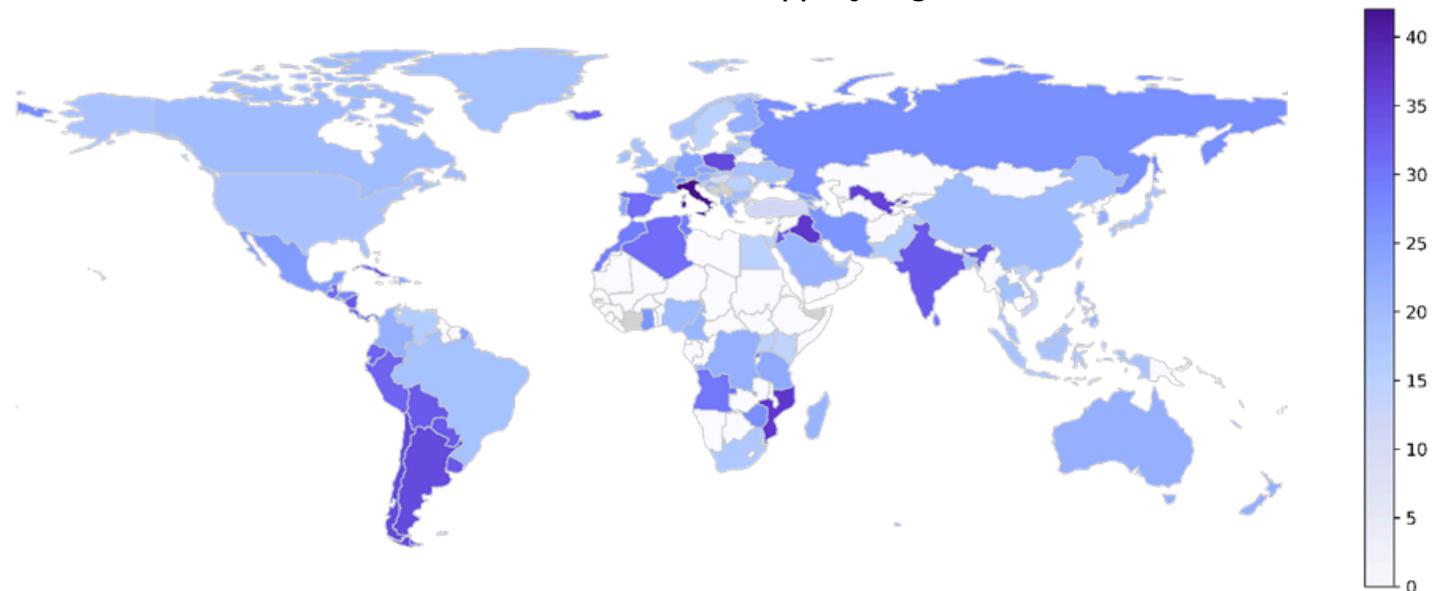
Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, the Archbishop of Bologna, has been the President of the Italian Bishops' Conference since 2022. He is an active member of the Sant'Egidio community, which is committed to supporting peace, dialogue, and the poor.

Cardinal Zuppi's theological orientation is progressive, but it is paired with pastoral sensitivity and practical sobriety. He is particularly focused on social justice, migration, and peacebuilding, and is known for having mediated in several international conflicts – for example, playing a key role in ending the civil war in Mozambique in the 1990s.

A reformist, but not divisive, Zuppi is seen by many as someone who could bridge different factions within the Church and carry forward the spiritual legacy of Pope Francis.

According to online search data, he is particularly popular in Italy as a local candidate, but there has also been interest in him from South America, Poland, Spain, and India. In fact, he has been considered one of the most likely candidates worldwide.

Interest in Cardinal Zuppi by Region



Pierbattista Pizzaballa

Italian | 60 years | odds: 7



Source: www.vatican.va

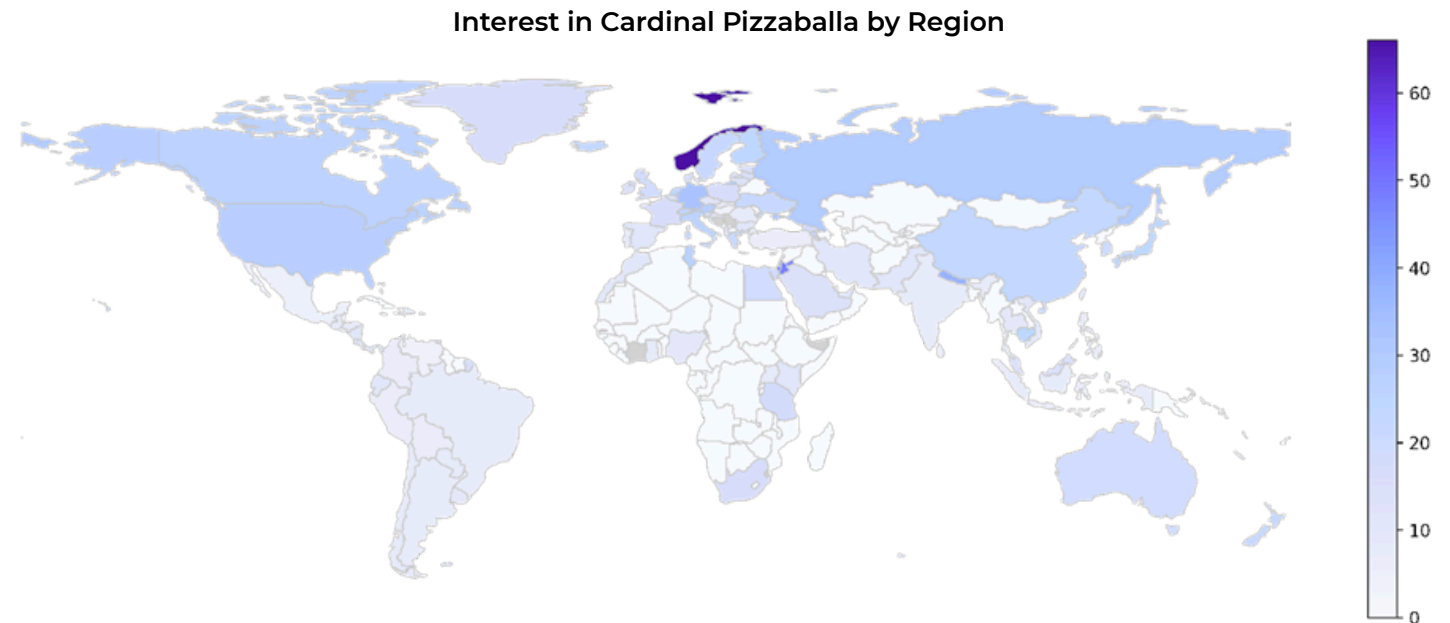
- **Current Position:**
Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem
- **Theological Orientation:**
Moderate
- **Curial Experience:** None

Pierbattista Pizzaballa is an Italian Franciscan friar who has been the head of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem since 2020. He completed his theological studies in Bologna and Jerusalem, is fluent in Hebrew, and has served in the Holy Land for decades. From 2004 to 2016, he was the Custodian of the Holy Land, playing a crucial role in the Christian-Jewish-Muslim dialogue in this position.

His theological orientation is traditional, yet open to dialogue and peacebuilding. Pizzaballa is known as a pragmatic and diplomatic Church leader, sensitive to the religious and political complexities of the Middle East. He frequently speaks out on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, serving as a bridge between different religious communities.

His popularity is particularly significant in the Middle East and Italy, but he also gained international attention during the 2023 Israeli-Gaza war for his balanced and humane statements. Many view him as an authentic, peace-oriented leader.

Pizzaballa has garnered the most search interest in Norway, with significant attention from North America, Australia, Russia, and China.



Péter Erdő

Hungarian | 72 years | odds: 8



Source: www.vatican.va

- **Current Position:**
Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
- **Theological Orientation:**
Conservative
- **Curial Experience:** yes

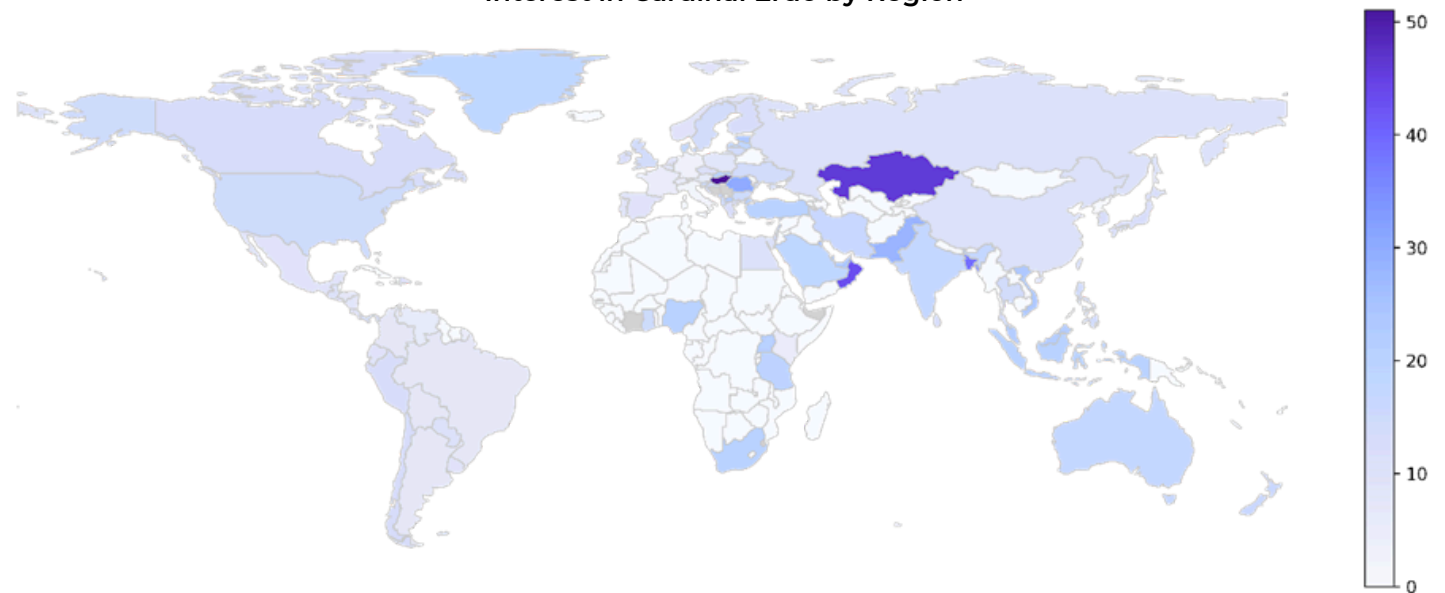
Péter Erdő is a Hungarian cardinal, primate, and Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, a leading figure in the Hungarian Catholic Church. He completed his theological and canon law studies in Budapest and later in Rome, where he also taught as a professor. He is highly cultured, known for his legal precision and intellectual preparation.

He was appointed a cardinal in 2003, and in 2005, he gained significant international attention as the General Rapporteur of the Synod of Bishops. His ecclesiastical orientation is traditional, doctrinally stable, and clear: he is a consistent representative of the Church's teachings, while also possessing strong diplomatic skills.

Cardinal Erdő has built authority with his conservative, reserved style, not only in Hungary but also in the Vatican. Although he is less frequently in the public spotlight, his name regularly comes up during conclaves as a potential "compromise candidate."

His popularity among Hungarian faithful remains stable, with the majority of interest directed towards him from Hungary and Romania. Interestingly, he has also generated significant search interest in Kazakhstan, Oman, and Bangladesh. Additionally, Southeast Asia and Australia have shown more interest in him than the Americas.

Interest in Cardinal Erdő by Region



Conclusion

The smoke has risen, and the media conclave has made its decision: Cardinal Pietro Parolin is expected to be the next Pope.

The metrics we examined, such as Google searches, news portal articles, and bookmaker odds, all indicate that the cardinal's name appears prominently among the potential successors.

However, the mystery of the papal election lies in the fact that apparent odds often turn out to be misleading. Will the image painted by the media match reality, or will an entirely unexpected twist unfold?





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