

AEI PUBLIC OPINION STUDY

Attitudes About Abortion

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<http://www.aei.org/publicopinion15>

In the 32 years since the Supreme Court decided Roe v. Wade, pollsters have asked hundreds of questions about abortion. This AEI Public Opinion Study brings many of those questions together in one place. It shows how different pollsters have approached the subject.

Opinion on abortion has been remarkably stable. Between 1975 and 2005, Gallup has asked the identical question on abortion more than 40 times. The responses barely budge. This constancy of opinion is evident on question after question in this document.

Although opinion about abortion is stable, it is also deeply ambivalent. Americans are at once pro-life and pro-choice. On the one hand, substantial numbers tell the pollsters that abortion is an act of murder. On the other, they say that the decision to have an abortion should be a personal choice. Those two views are fundamentally contradictory, yet many Americans hold them within themselves. They see no reason to resolve the tensions in their own positions. They believe in the sanctity of life and in the importance of individual choice.

Most Americans do not want to repeal Roe v. Wade. At the same time, however, they are willing to put significant restrictions on abortion. Majorities of Americans favor notification of spouses, parental consent, 24-hour waiting periods. They support first-term abortions, but oppose second and third trimester ones.

Ninety percent of Americans told Los Angeles Times interviewers in 2000 that they had never been active in the abortion debate. Between 1980 and 2000, in every presidential election, abortion was included in the list of issues people could pick as a top issue (or one of the for them) in casting their presidential ballot. In each of these presidential contests, these single-issue voters cast their ballots for the Republican presidential candidate. In 2004, the exit pollsters did not include abortion as a category people could check as their top issue.

ABORTION AS MURDER: In 2000, the *Los Angeles Times* asked people to agree or disagree with the statement “abortion is murder.” Fifty-six percent of those surveyed agreed, and 37 percent disagreed. Those responses were virtually identical to the ones the survey organization got when they asked that question for the first time in 1989. The belief that life begins at conception may pull people toward the view that abortion is murder.

Although the questions have not been asked recently, early questions show that pluralities say they are personally against abortion and separately, that they think the bad effects of abortion outweigh the good.

- Do you agree or disagree with this statement: “Abortion is murder”? Do you strongly agree/disagree or only somewhat agree/disagree?

		Abortion is Murder			
		Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Mar. 1989	L.A. Times	42	16	15	19
Jun. 2000	L.A. Times	44	12	13	24

- Which of these statements comes closer to your opinion –abortion is the same thing as murdering a child, OR abortion is not murder because a fetus isn’t a person? (1983-1987)
- Which of these statements comes closer to your opinion: abortion is the same thing as murdering a child, OR abortion is not murder because the fetus really isn’t a child? (1989-1998)

		Murder	Not Murder	Depends
Nov. 1983	NYT	57	30	na
Nov. 1985	CBS News/NYT	54	35	na
Dec. 1985	CBS News/NYT	55	35	na
Aug. 1987	CBS News/NYT	50	35	na
Apr. 1989	CBS News/NYT	48	40	4
July 1989#	CBS News/NYT	40	47	7
Jan. 1995	CBS News/NYT	46	41	5
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NYT	50	38	5

NOTE: # question wording read, “...abortion is not murder because the fetus really hasn’t developed into a child yet.”

- Some people say that abortion is an act of murder, while other people disagree with this. What is your view—do you think that abortion is an act of murder or don’t you feel this way?

		An Act of Murder	Don’t Feel This Way
Aug. 1994	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	43	47
Jan. 1995	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	40	51
Jan. 1998	Yankelovich/Time/CNN/Gallup	48	45
Jan. 2003	Harris/Time/CNN	46	46

- Do you believe that life begins at conception, or at birth, or somewhere in between?

		Life begins at...		
		Conception	Birth	Somewhere in Between
Mar. 1989	L.A. Times	41	15	27
Jun. 2000	L.A. Times	53	12	29

- Would you say you are personally for or against abortion?

		Personal Views about Abortion		
		For	Against	Not Sure
May 1996	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	38	44	18
Aug. 1996	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	34	48	17

- Many things in our society have both good and bad effects. For example, aviation does because it provides fast transportation. Here is a list of some different things that have resulted in both good and bad effects. [Card is shown to respondent.] Would you read down the list and for each one tell me whether, on balance, you think the good effects outweigh the bad, or whether the bad effects outweigh the good?...Abortion.

		Abortion—Good and Bad Effects		
		Good Outweighs Bad	Bad Outweighs Good	Equally Good and Bad
Mar. 1992	Roper Starch Worldwide	24	47	20
Mar. 1995	Roper Starch Worldwide	24	47	21

WOMAN'S CHOICE: *The belief that individuals should be able to make their own choices shapes attitudes about abortion and many other areas. Most Americans believe, for example, that smoking is a bad habit, but they also believe that people should be able to make their own choices about whether or not to smoke. Survey after survey that discusses abortion in the context of choice reveals broad and deep support for the idea.*

- Which of the following best represents your views about abortion—the choice on abortion should be left up to the woman and her doctor, abortion should be legal only in cases in which pregnancy results from rape or incest or when the life of the woman is at risk, or abortion should be illegal in all circumstances?

		The Choice Should be Left Up to the Woman and Her doctor	Legal Only in Cases of Rape/Incest/ Life of Woman	Illegal In All Circumstances
Jul. 1990	NBC News/WSJ	57	33	8
Jun. 1991	NBC News/WSJ	57	36	7
Jul. 1991	NBC News/WSJ	60	31	8
Dec. 1995	NBC News/WSJ	60	28	10
Mar. 1996	NBC News/WSJ	56	31	10
May 1996	NBC News/WSJ	55	35	7
Jun. 1996	NBC News/WSJ	58	31	9
Aug. 1999	NBC News/WSJ	56	30	12
Jan. 1997	NBC News/WSJ	60	26	11
Jun. 2000	NBC News/WSJ	57	32	9
Jul. 2000	NBC News/WSJ	57	29	12
Jan. 2003	NBC News/WSJ	59	29	9
Nov. 2003	NBC News/WSJ	53	29	15
May 2005	NBC News/WSJ	55	29	14

- I would like to read several statements about some social issues facing America. For each issue, please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with that statement...: The government should not interfere with a woman's ability to have an abortion.

		Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
June 1993#	NBC News/WSJ	63	12	7	14
June 1994	NBC News/WSJ	53	17	9	18

NOTE: # question wording read, "...woman's right to have an abortion."

- Frequently on any controversial issue there is no clear-cut side that people take, and also frequently solutions on controversial issues are worked out by compromise. But I'm going to name some different things, and for each one would you tell me whether on balance you would be more in favor of it or more opposed to it?...Legal abortions for those woman choose to have them.

		Legal Abortions for Women Who Choose to Have Them		
		On Balance More in Favor	On Balance More Oppose	Don't Know/ Mixed Feelings
1978	Roper Starch Wolrdwide	46	42	12
1981	Roper Starch Wolrdwide	46	42	12
1984	Roper Starch Wolrdwide	47	39	15
1989	Roper Starch Wolrdwide	46	38	16
1993	Roper Starch Wolrdwide	49	36	15
1995	Roper Starch Worldwide	49	35	16
1998	Roper Starch Worldwide	48	37	15

- If a woman wants to have an abortion, and her doctor agrees to it, should she be allowed to have an abortion, or not?

		If a Woman Wants to Have an Abortion and her Doctor Agrees to it		
		Should Be Allowed	Should Not	Depends
Aug.1980	CBS News/NYT	62	19	15
Apr.1981	CBS News/NYT	63	25	9
June 1981	CBS News/ NYT	65	22	10
Jan. 1989	CBS News/ NYT	61	25	11
Apr. 1989	CBS News/ NYT	63	24	10
July 1989	CBS News/ NYT	63	24	11
Sept. 1989	CBS News/ NYT	58	26	13
June 1992	ICR/AP	58	20	16
Feb. 1995	ICR/AP	66	22	11
Jan. 1998	CBS News/ NYT	59	24	14

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?: *The Gallup question shown below has been asked 40 times since 1975 and the results are remarkably stable. Most people say that abortion should be legal only uncertain certain circumstances (54 percent in 1975, 53 percent in May 2005).*

What are some of those circumstances? By overwhelming margins, American support legal abortion in the women's health is seriously endangered, if there is a chance of a serious defect in the baby, and if the pregnancy is a result of rape. These are all circumstances in which the pregnancy is beyond a woman's control. People are more divided in their support for legal abortion if the women is not married and does not want to have more children, or if she wants an

- Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

		Abortion Should be				
		Legal Under Any Circumstances	Legal Only Under Certain Circumstances			Illegal in All Circumstances
Apr. 1975	Gallup	21	54			22
Dec. 1977	Gallup	22	55			19
Feb. 1979	Gallup	22	54			19
Jul. 1980	Gallup	25	53			18
May 1981	Gallup	23	52			21
Jun. 1983	Gallup	23	58			16
Jan. 1985	Gallup	21	55			21
Sept.-Oct. 1988	Gallup	24	57			17
Apr. 1989	Gallup/Newsweek	27	50			18
July 1989	Gallup	29	51			17
Apr. 1990	Gallup	31	53			12
May 1991	Gallup	32	50			17
Sept. 1991	Gallup	33	49			14
Jan. 1992	Gallup	31	53			14
Jul. 1992	Gallup/Newsweek	34	48	Legal	Legal Only	13
Mar. 1993	Gallup	32	51	Under Most	in a few	13
Mar. 1994	Gallup	31	51	Circumstances	Circumstances	15
Sept. 1994	Gallup	33	52	13	38	13
Feb. 1995	Gallup	33	50	9	41	15
Sept. 1995	Gallup	31	54	14	39	12
July 1996	Gallup	25	58	13	43	15
Sept. 1996	Gallup	23	51	--	--	18
Aug. 1997	Gallup	22	61	12	48	15
Nov. 1997	Gallup	26	55	15	40	17
Jan. 1998	Gallup	23	59	16	42	17
Apr. 1999	Gallup	27	55	12	42	16
Jan. 2000	Gallup	26	56	17	39	15
Mar. 2000	Gallup	28	51	11	38	19
Mar. 2001	Gallup	26	51	13	38	18
May 2001	Gallup	26	58	15	41	15
Aug. 2001	Gallup	26	56	12	43	17
Feb. 2002	Gallup	26	54	--	--	18
Mar. 2002	Gallup	27	53	12	40	19

May 2002	Gallup	25	51	12	39	22
Jan. 2003	Gallup	24	57	14	42	18
May 2003	Gallup	23	57	15	42	19
Oct. 2003	Gallup	26	55	14	40	17
May 2004	Gallup	24	56	13	42	19
Mar. 2005	Gallup	23	55	14	39	20
May 2005	Gallup	23	53	12	40	22

- Which comes closest to your view? (1) Abortion should be generally available to those who want it; or (2) Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now; or (3) Abortion should not be permitted.

		Abortion Position Closest To Your View		
		Generally Available	Stricter Limits	Not Permitted
Sept. 1989#	CBS News/NYT	40	40	18
Nov. 1989	CBS News/NYT	41	42	15
Jan. 1990	CBS News/NYT	39	40	18
Aug. 1990	CBS News/NYT	41	41	16
June. 1991	CBS News/NYT	37	38	22
Aug. 1991	CBS News/NYT	41	40	15
Sept. 1991	CBS News/NYT	42	38	18
Jan. 1992	CBS News/NYT	40	39	19
Mar. 1992	CBS News/NYT	44	37	17
June 1992	CBS News/NYT	42	39	17
June 1992	CBS News/NYT	43	39	16
July 1992	CBS News/NYT	41	39	18
Aug. 1992	CBS News/NYT	41	40	17
Oct. 1992	CBS News/NYT	43	37	16
Mar. 1993	CBS News/NYT	42	36	20
July 1994	CBS News/NYT	40	37	21
Jan. 1995	CBS News/NYT	40	37	21
Jan. 1995	CBS News/NYT	40	37	23
Feb. 1995	CBS News/NYT	43	38	18
Apr. 1995	CBS News/NYT	38	40	20
Aug. 1995	CBS News/NYT	40	36	22
Oct. 1995	CBS News/NYT	37	41	20
Feb. 1996	CBS News/NYT	40	41	18
Apr. 1996	CBS News/NYT	37	41	21
June 1996	CBS News/NYT	35	41	20
July 1996	CBS News/NYT	37	42	19
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NYT	32	45	22
Nov. 1999	CBS News/NYT	34	41	22
Feb. 2000	CBS News/NYT	34	41	23
May 2000	CBS News/NYT	37	39	22
July 2000	CBS News/NYT	28	48	21
July 2000	CBS News/NYT	34	40	22
Sept. 2000	CBS News/NYT	35	42	21
Oct. 2000	CBS News/NYT	32	44	21
Mar. 2001	CBS News/NYT	33	43	23
Jan. 2003	CBS News/NYT	38	37	22
Jan. 2003	CBS News/NYT	39	38	22
Jan. 2003	CBS News/NYT	41	43	11
July 2003	CBS News/NYT	35	38	25
May 2004	CBS News/NYT	36	37	25
Nov. 2004	CBS News/NYT	34	44	21
Jan. 2005	CBS News/NYT	36	35	26

Mar. 2005	CBS News/NYT	35	37	25
Apr. 2005	CBS News/NYT	36	38	24

NOTE: # question wording was, "...abortion should be available but more difficult to get than it is now or abortion should not be available."

- Which of these comes closest to your general view? (1) Abortion should be generally available to those who want it; (2) Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now; (3) Abortion should be against the law except in cases of rape, incest, and to save the woman's life; or (4) Abortion should not be permitted at all.

		Position Closest to Your General View			
		Generally Available	Available but under Stricter Limits	Against the Law except for Rape, Incest, Mother's Life	Not Permitted
Apr. 1995	CBS News/NYT	35	20	36	8
Aug. 1995	CBS News/NYT	36	20	34	9
Oct. 1995	CBS News/NYT	35	22	36	6
Feb. 1996	CBS News/NYT	36	22	34	7
Apr. 1996	CBS News/NYT	37	17	34	10
June 1996	CBS News/NYT	36	18	37	8
July 1996	CBS News/NYT	33	21	34	9
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NYT	25	25	41	9

- What is your personal feeling about abortion: (1) It should be permitted in all cases; (2) It should be permitted, but subject to greater restrictions than it is now; (3) It should be permitted in such cases as rape, incest, and to save the woman's life; or (4) It should only be permitted to save the woman's life?

		Convention Delegates, Partisans, And Registered Voters				
		Permitted In all Cases	Permitted With Some Restrictions	Permitted for Rape/ Incest/ Life	Only to Save Life	Not Permitted at All
1996						
Dem. delegate	CBS News/NYT	61	15	13	3	--
Democrats	CBS News/NYT	30	11	41	13	2
All Reg. Voters	CBS News/NYT	27	14	39	14	3
Republicans	CBS News/NYT	21	16	39	18	4
Rep. delegate	CBS News/NYT	11	12	38	27	4

- In general, do you favor permitting a woman who wants one to have an abortion in all circumstances, some circumstances, or no circumstances?

		All Circumstances	Some Circumstances	No Circumstances
1985	Harris	26	53	20
1992	Harris	29	54	14
1992	Harris	34	52	11
1993	Harris	30	55	14
1996	Harris	25	53	19

1998

Harris

23

58

17

- Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if...

		A Woman's Health Seriously Endangered by the Pregnancy		There is a strong chance of a Serious Defect in Baby		The Pregnancy is a Result of a Rape	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1972	NORC	83	13	75	20	75	20
1973	NORC	91	8	82	15	81	16
1974	NORC	90	7	83	14	83	13
1975	NORC	88	9	80	16	80	16
1976	NORC	89	9	82	16	81	16
1977	NORC	89	9	83	14	81	16
1978	NORC	88	9	80	18	81	16
1980	NORC	88	10	80	16	80	16
1982	NORC	90	8	81	15	83	13
1983	NORC	87	10	76	20	80	16
1984	NORC	88	10	78	19	77	19
1985	NORC	87	10	76	21	78	18
1987	NORC	86	11	77	20	78	18
1988	NORC	86	11	76	21	77	18
1989	NORC	88	10	79	18	80	16
1990	NORC	89	8	78	18	81	15
1991	NORC	--	--	80	16	83	13
1993	NORC	86	10	79	18	79	16
1994	NORC	88	9	80	17	81	16
1996	NORC	89	8	79	18	81	15
1998	CBS News/NYT	88	7	75	18	84	12
1998	NORC	84	12	75	21	77	19
2000	NORC	85	11	--	--	--	--
2002	NORC	90	8	--	--	--	--

		Family has Very Low Income and Cannot Afford any More Children		Woman is Married and Does Not Want More Children	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1972	NORC	46	48	38	57
1973	NORC	52	45	46	51
1974	NORC	52	43	45	50
1975	NORC	51	45	44	52
1976	NORC	51	45	45	52
1977	NORC	52	45	45	51
1978	NORC	46	51	39	58
1980	NORC	50	46	45	51
1982	NORC	50	46	46	49
1983	NORC	42	54	38	59
1984	NORC	45	52	41	56
1985	NORC	42	55	39	58
1987	NORC	44	53	40	56
1988	NORC	41	56	39	58
1989	NORC	46	50	43	54
1990	NORC	46	49	43	53
1991	NORC	47	49	43	53
1993	NORC	48	48	45	50
1994	NORC	49	48	47	50
1996	NORC	45	51	45	51
1998	CBS News/NYT	43	54	39	55
1998	NORC	42	53	40	55

- Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if...

		Woman is Not Married and Does Not Want to Marry the Man		She wants it for Any Reason	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1972	NORC	41	53	--	--
1973	NORC	47	49	--	--
1974	NORC	48	48	--	--
1975	NORC	46	49	--	--
1976	NORC	48	48	--	--
1977	NORC	48	48	37	60
1978	NORC	40	57	32	65
1980	NORC	46	49	39	57
1982	NORC	47	49	39	56
1983	NORC	38	58	33	64
1984	NORC	43	54	37	60
1985	NORC	40	57	36	61
1987	NORC	40	56	38	58
1988	NORC	38	58	35	61
1989	NORC	43	52	39	57
1990	NORC	43	52	42	54
1991	NORC	43	53	41	51
1993	NORC	46	49	43	52
1994	NORC	46	51	45	52
1996	NORC	43	53	43	52
1998	CBS News/NYT	35	62	--	--
1998	NORC	40	55	39	56

- On another subject, do you tend to agree or disagree with this statement: A woman should be able to get an abortion if she decides she wants one no matter what the reason?

		She Decides She Wants One No Matter What the Reason	
		Agree	Disagree
May 1981	ABC News/Washington Post	40	59
Jan. 1985	ABC News/Washington Post	52	46
Feb. 1986	ABC News/Washington Post	54	44
Aug. 1987	ABC News/Washington Post	53	44
Feb. 1989	ABC News/Washington Post	50	49
Oct. 1989	ABC News/Washington Post	54	45
July 1990	ABC News/Washington Post	54	46
June 1991	ABC News/Washington Post	57	41
Aug. 1993	ABC News/Washington Post	59	40
Aug. 1994	ABC News/Washington Post	54	34
Jan. 1998	ABC News/Washington Post	50	47

- There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view? (1) Abortion should never be permitted, (2) Abortion should be permitted only if the life and health of the woman is in danger; (3) Abortion should be permitted if, due to personal reasons, the woman would have difficulty in caring for the child; or (4) Abortion should never be forbidden, since one should not require a woman to have a child she doesn't want.

		Never Be Permitted	Abortion Should Only if Life and Health in Danger	Personal Difficulty	Should Never be Forbidden
1972#	Univ. of Mich.	11	46	17	24
1976#	Univ. of Mich.	11	44	16	26
1978	Univ. of Mich.	10	43	16	26
1980	Univ. of Mich.	10	44	18	27

NOTE: question wording read, "Still on the subject of women's rights..."

- There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view? (1) By law, abortion should never be permitted; (2) The law should permit abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger; (3) The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established; or (4) By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.

		Never Permitted	Only in Cases of Rape, Incest, or Danger	Clear Need	Always as Personal Choice
1980	Univ. of Mich.	11	32	18	35
1982	Univ. of Mich.	13	30	19	35
1984	Univ. of Mich.	13	29	19	35
1986	Univ. of Mich.	13	28	18	38
1988	Univ. of Mich.	12	33	18	35
1990	Univ. of Mich.	12	33	14	40
1992	Univ. of Mich.	10	28	14	46
1994	Univ. of Mich.	12	30	14	42
1996	Univ. of Mich.	12	29	16	42

- Which of these positions best represents your views about abortion? (1) A woman should be able to get an abortion if she decides she wants one, no matter what the reason; (2) Abortion should only be legal in certain circumstances, such as when a woman's health is endangered or when the pregnancy results from rape or incest; (3) Abortion should be illegal in all circumstances

		Abortion Position That Best Represents Your Views		
		Woman's Decision No Matter What the Reason	Legal in Certain Circumstances	Illegal in All Circumstances
Aug. 1987	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	34	51	12
Apr. 1989	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	37	51	9
July 1989	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	38	50	9
Apr. 1990	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	43	45	9
May 1990	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	43	43	10
July 1991	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	44	44	11
Apr. 1992	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	47	37	10
Aug. 1992	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	49	38	12
Jan. 1993	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	43	43	10
Aug. 1993	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	47	37	11
Jan. 1994	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	45	39	13
May 1994	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	47	39	12
Sept. 1995	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	44	43	10
May 1996	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	40	46	11
Jan. 1998	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	38	43	16
Mar. 1999	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	38	46	12
Jan. 2001	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	35	50	12
July 2001	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	39	40	17

- Which comes closest to your view on abortion: Abortion should always be legal, or should be made illegal except in cases of rape, incest and to save the mother's life, or abortion should be made illegal without any exceptions?

		Abortion Position That Comes Closest To Your View		
		Always Legal	Illegal except in cases of rape, incest, or to save the mother's life	Illegal Without Exceptions
Jun. 2000	L.A. Times	43	46	8
Mar. 2001	L.A. Times	42	41	12

RESTRICTIONS ON ABORTION: *Americans do not want to outlaw abortion. At the same time, however they are willing to put restrictions on its use. Large majorities favor 24 hour waiting periods, parental consent a law requiring doctors to tell people about alternatives to abortion, and spousal notification.*

People say abortion should be legal in the first trimester. They oppose second and third trimester abortions.

- Do you favor or oppose each of the following proposals...?

A law requiring women seeking abortions to wait 24 hours before having the Procedure done

		Favor	Oppose
Jan. 1992	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	73	23
July 1996	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	74	22
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NYT	79	16
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	78	19

A law requiring doctors to inform patients about alternatives to abortion before performing procedure

		Favor	Oppose
Jan. 1992	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	86	12
July 1996	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	86	11
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	88	11

A law requiring women under 18 to get parental consent for any abortion

		Favor	Oppose
July 1989	CBS News/NYT	60	28
Jan. 1992	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	70	23
July 1996	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	74	23
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NYT	78	17
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	73	24

A law requiring that the husband of a married woman be notified if she decides to have an abortion

		Favor	Oppose
Jan. 1992	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	73	25
July 1996	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	70	26
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/USA Today	72	26

- Thinking more generally, do you think abortion should be generally legal or generally illegal during each of the following stages pregnancy?

		Stages of Preganancy and the Question of legality		
		Should be Generally Legal	Should be Generally Illegal	Depends
In the first three months of pregnancy				
Aug. 1996	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA TODAY</i>	64	30	4
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA TODAY</i>	66	29	--
In the second three months of pregnancy				
Aug. 1996	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA TODAY</i>	26	65	7
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA TODAY</i>	25	68	--
In the last three months of pregnancy				
Aug. 1996	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA TODAY</i>	13	82	3
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA TODAY</i>	10	84	--

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: *In 1973, the Supreme Court made its ruling in favor of making abortions legal in the United State Roe v. Wade. Americans do not favor a constitutional amendment to ban abortion. Opinion is also stable on this point.*

- Do you favor or oppose...a constitutional amendment to ban legalized abortion?

		Constitutional Amendment to ban Abortion	
		Favor	Oppose
Feb. 1982	Harris	33	61
July 1982	Harris	31	62
Mar. 1984	Harris	33	62
July 1987	Harris	33	62
Jan. 1989	Harris	29	68

- Do you favor or oppose...a constitutional amendment to ban abortions?

		Constitutional Amendment to ban Abortion	
		Favor	Oppose
Apr. 1984	Harris	34	59
Sept. 1984	Harris	31	63
Sept. 1984	Harris	20	61
Jan. 1985	Harris	38	58
Sept. 1985	Harris	37	55

- Do you favor or oppose each of the following...a constitutional amendment to ban all abortions?

		Constitutional Amendment to ban all Abortions	
		Favor	Oppose
Feb. 1996	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	24	70
Mar. 1996	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	21	70
May 1996	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	28	64

- Would you favor or oppose an amendment to the Constitution which would make all abortions illegal?

		Constitutional Amendment to make All Abortions Illegal	
		Favor	Oppose
Sept. 1982	CBS News/NYT	28	68
Jan.1998	CBS News/NYT	22	76

- Generally speaking, are you in favor of an amendment to the United States Constitution that would prohibit abortions, or are you opposed to that? Are you strongly in favor or opposed to that or only somewhat?

		Constitutional Amendment That Would Prohibit Abortions			
		Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Mar. 1989	L.A. Times	20	8	21	42
Jun. 2000	L.A. Times	19	7	17	49

- Would you vote...for or against a constitutional amendment that would overturn the Roe v. Wade decision, and make abortion illegal in all states?

		Constitutional Amendment to Overturn Roe v. Wade	
		For	Against
Oct. 2000	Gallup	30	67

- The 1973 Roe v. Wade decision established a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, at least in the first three months of pregnancy. Would you like to see the Supreme Court completely overturn its Roe v. Wade decision or not?

		Yes, Overturn	No, Not Overturn
Jul. 1989	Gallup	31	58
Oct. 1989	Gallup	33	61
Aug. 1992	Gallup	34	60
Mar. 2002	Gallup	36	60
Jul. 2005	Gallup	29	68

- Twenty-five years ago, the Supreme Court’s decision in Roe v. Wade established a constitutional right for women to obtain legal abortions in this country. In general, do you think the Court’s decision was a good thing or a bad thing?

		Good Thing	Bad Thing
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NYT	60	33
Jul. 2005#	CBS News/NYT	59	32

NOTE: question wording read, “More than thirty years ago, ...”

- How about... a constitutional amendment to ban abortion in all circumstances, except in cases necessary to save the life of the mother?

		Constitutional Amendment to ban Abortion In all Circumstances except to save the life of the Mother	
		Favor	Oppose
Jan. 2003	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA Today</i>	38	59

- Do you think making abortion illegal is the kind of issue you would like to change the Constitution for, or isn’t abortion that kind of issue?

1996

		Convention Delegates, Partisans, And Registered Voters	
		Kind of Issue	Not that Kind of Issue
Dem. delegate	CBS News/NYT	3	96
Democrats	CBS News/NYT	22	71
All Reg. Voters	CBS News/NYT	22	71
Republicans	CBS News/NYT	24	69
Rep. delegates	CBS News/NYT	34	57

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: There should be a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion?

		Constitutional Amendment Outlawing Abortion	
		The Public and Conventional Delegates	
		Agree	Disagree
<i>Republican delegates</i>			
1988	ABC News/Washington Post	36	53
1992	ABC News/Washington Post	28	55
1996	ABC News/Washington Post	36	58
<i>General population</i>			
July 1992	ABC News/Washington Post	25	67
June 1996	ABC News/Washington Post	24	75
Aug. 1996	ABC News/Washington Post	26	72
<i>Democratic delegates</i>			
1980	ABC News/Washington Post	10	na
1984	ABC News/Washington Post	9	83
1988	ABC News/Washington Post	6	87
1992	ABC News/Washington Post	3	93
1996	ABC News/Washington Post	1	98

VOTERS' VIEWS OF ABORTION, BY SUBGROUP: *In 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004, exit pollsters asked those people leaving the polls to check a box on the exit poll ballot that best represented their position on abortion. The results of those questions from 1992 and 1996 are shown below for all voters and for subgroups. Some findings are worth noting. Men and women do not differ on the issue. Those who actively practice their religion, no matter what their denomination, are more likely to oppose abortion than are those who don't go to church at all. A Protestant who attends church regularly looks more like a Catholic or Jew who attends church or synagogue regularly than that Protestant looks like another Protestant who doesn't attend church at all.*

- Which comes closest to your position? Abortion should be...

SOURCE: Exit polls by Voter Research and Surveys, a consortium of ABC News, Associated Press, CBS News, CNN, and NBC News, November 3, 1992, and by VNS, a consortium of ABC News, Associated Press, CBS News, CNN, Fox News, and NBC News, November 5, 1996.

-----Views of Different Groups of Voters About-----
Abortion, 1992 and 1996

	1992				1996			
	Legal, all cases	Legal most cases	Illegal most cases	Illegal all cases	Legal all cases	Legal most cases	Illegal most cases	Illegal all cases
All voters	34	30	23	9	25	35	24	12
Men	31	32	25	8	22	36	27	11
Women	37	28	22	10	28	33	22	13
Married	30	30	26	10	--	--	--	--
Single	43	29	18	7	--	--	--	--
18-29 years	41	27	21	8	29	35	22	11
Men	37	30	22	9	24	39	27	9
Women	44	24	20	8	33	32	18	14
30-44 years	34	32	23	8	29	33	23	11
Men	29	36	25	6	26	35	26	10
Women	37	28	21	10	32	31	21	13
45-59 years	31	31	26	9	22	36	27	10
Men	28	32	28	8	19	41	26	10
Women	35	30	24	8	26	32	28	11
60+ years	30	27	24	11	17	35	26	15
Men	31	26	26	11	17	32	31	15
Women	30	28	22	12	19	37	20	15
< High School grad.	26	22	27	15	20	34	26	14
High School grad.	27	30	26	12	20	35	27	13
Some College	36	30	23	8	22	37	25	12
College grad.	35	31	23	7	28	30	24	13

Postgrad.	43	29	20	6	32	37	20	8
Democrat	40	31	17	7	33	39	17	8
Men	38	33	18	6	30	42	16	8
Women	42	30	16	7	36	35	17	8
Republican	25	28	32	12	16	29	33	19
Men	23	31	34	11	14	31	37	16
Women	28	26	29	13	20	26	28	23
Independ.								
/Other	37	30	22	8	24	38	25	8
Men	34	34	23	6	23	37	28	8
Women	40	27	22	8	25	38	22	9
White	34	30	24	9	24	34	25	12
Black	38	29	17	9	28	39	18	8
Hispanic	31	26	25	16	26	32	24	12
Asian	22	30	27	13	--	--	--	--
Protestant	30	31	26	9	21	35	28	13
Catholic	30	29	26	10	22	37	25	12
Jewish	62	31	5	1	51	40	5	1
Other—								
Christian	28	25	29	15	19	29	31	18
None	60	32	4	2	46	36	9	5

- Do you think abortion should be made illegal in all cases, except for rape, incest, and to save the life of the mother? [Put an X in the box.] Yes, made illegal with exceptions; Yes, made illegal without any exception; No, not made illegal.
- What religion do you consider yourself? [Put an X in the box.] Protestant, Roman Catholic, Other Christian, Jewish, Other religion, or no religion.
- How frequently do you attend religious services or do you never attend religious services? [Put an X in the box.] Never; Less than once a year; Once a year; Several times a year; Once a month; Several times a month; Once a week; Several times a week; Once a day; Several times a day.

Los Angeles Times exit poll Nov. 5, 1996

	Abortion Attitudes by Denomination And Participation		
	Not Illegal	Illegal with Exceptions	Illegal Always
Protestant	48	41	11
Catholic	46	41	14
Other Christian	41	44	15
Jewish	74	21	5
No religion	80	16	5
<i>Attend church rarely</i>			
Protestant	62	33	5
Catholic	62	33	5
Other Christian	59	34	7
<i>Attend church regularly</i>			
Protestant	34	50	17
Catholic	27	50	23
Other Christian	22	55	23

NOTE: Rarely is the combination of never, less than once a year, once a year, and several times a year. Regularly is the combination of several times a week, once a day, several times a day.

ABORTION AS AN ELECTION ISSUE: *In the middle of the 2000 general election campaign, in June 2000, 62 percent of people did not know George W. Bush's position on abortion. Of the remainder, 31 percent knew that he was pro-life and 7 percent thought he was pro-choice. Fifty-nine percent did not know Al Gore's position on abortion. 35 percent knew he was pro-choice, and 6 percent thought he was pro-life.*

- Is there any one issue that you feel so strongly about that you would vote for or against a candidate based on that issue alone?

		Abortion As An Election Issue		
		No one Issue	Abortion-- Oppose	Abortion-- Favor
July 1992	Wirthlin Worldwide	55	10	8
May 1996	Wirthlin Worldwide	53	9	6

- Thinking about how the abortion issue might affect your vote for major offices, would you: Only vote for a candidate who shares your views on abortion; or consider a candidate's position on abortion as just one of many important factors when voting; or Not see abortion as a major issue?

		Abortion As An Election Issue		
		Only Vote for Candidate Who Shares Views	Just One of Many Important Factors	Not See Abortion as Major Issue
June 1992	Gallup	13	46	36
July 1996	Gallup	18	48	30
July 1996	Gallup	16	51	30

- Do you know George W. Bush's view on abortion – is he in favor of abortion rights, that is allowing a woman the right to choose whether or not to have an abortion, or is he against abortion except in the cases of rape, incest, and the mother's health?

		George W. Bush View on Abortion		
		Pro-abortion rights	Against Abortion	Don't Know
June 2000	L.A. Times	7	31	62

NOTE: asked of registered voters.

- Do you know Al Gore's view on abortion – is he in favor of abortion rights, that is allowing a woman the right to choose whether or not to have an abortion, or is he against abortion except in the cases of rape, incest, and the mother's health?

		Al Gore's View on Abortion		
		Pro-abortion rights	Against Abortion	Don't Know
June 2000	L.A. Times	35	6	59

NOTE: asked of registered voters.

- Have you ever been involved in the abortion movement – that is, tried to make it easier for people to have abortions or tried to convince people not to have abortions?

		Never Involved	Involved For Abortion	Involved Against Abortion
June 2000	L.A. Times	90	1	7

VOTERS' VIEWS ON ABORTION: Voters who say abortion is the top issue (or one of the top two issues) for them vote for the Republican candidate. This has been true in every exit poll that included the question since 1984. The proportion saying it is the most important issue varies depending on how questions are worded and what other choices are given.

- Which issues were most important in deciding how you voted today?

		Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day		
		ERA/Abortion Most Important	Voted For Reagan	Carter
1980	CBS News/NYT Exit Poll	7	38	50

NOTE: Voters could choose up to two responses from a list of eight. "ERA/Abortion" was a single category.

- Which issues mattered most in deciding how you voted?

		Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day		
		Abortion One of the Issues That Mattered Most	Voted For Reagan	Carter
1984	CBS News/NYT Exit Poll	8	71	28

NOTE: Voters could choose up to two responses from a list of eight, including "none of these."

- Were any of the items [listed on survey ballot] very important in making your presidential choice?

		Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day		
		Abortion Was Very Important	Voted For Bush	Dukakis
1988	ABC News Exit Poll	33	54	45

NOTE: "The candidates' stand on abortion" was one of twenty-one items listed, including "none of the above."

- Which issues mattered most in deciding how you voted today?

		Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day		
		Abortion One of the Issues That Mattered Most	Voted For	
1988	CBS News/NYT Exit Poll	7	Bush 65	Dukakis 33

NOTE: Voters could choose up to two responses from a list of nine.

- Which issues—if any—were most important to you in deciding how you would vote today?

		Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day		
		Abortion Was Most Important Issue	Voted For	
1988	LAT Exit Poll	20	Bush 63	Dukakis 36

NOTE: Voters could choose up to two responses from a list of eleven, including “none.”

- Which one or two issues mattered most in deciding how you voted?

		Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day			
		Abortion Was an Issue That Mattered Most	Voted For		
1992	VRS	12	Bush 55	Clinton 36	Perot 9

NOTE: Voters could choose up to two responses from a list of nine.

- Which issues—if any—were most important to you in deciding how you would for president today?

		Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day			
		Abortion Was Most Important Issue	Voted For		
1996	LAT Exit Poll	9	Dole 60	Clinton 34	Perot 4

NOTE: Voters could choose up to two responses from a list of eleven, including “none of the above.”

- Which issues—if any—were most important to you in deciding how you would for president today?

		Abortion Was Most Important Issue	Abortion as a Voting Issue On Election Day		
			Bush	Voted For Gore	Nader
2000	LAT Exit Poll	14	58	41	1

NOTE: Voters could choose up to two responses from a list of twelve, including “none of the above.”

PRO-CHOICE OR PRO-LIFE?: Three polling organizations have asked people for a number of years whether they are pro-choice or pro-life. The latest asking, from Gallup in May 2005, shows that 48 percent consider themselves pro-choice and 44 percent pro-life. The other organizations show a close division of opinion, too.

- Thinking about abortion, if you had to choose, would you describe yourself as being more pro-choice—supporting a woman’s right to have an abortion—or more pro-life—protecting the rights of unborn children?

		Pro-choice	Pro-life
Oct./Nov. 1995	Yankelovich/Time/CNN	53	40
Aug. 1996	Yankelovich/TIME/CNN	52	40
May 1998	Yankelovich/TIME/CNN	45	44
Mar. 1999	Yankelovich/TIME/CNN	46	43
Jan. 2000	Yankelovich/TIME/CNN	46	48
Jul. 2001	Yankelovich/TIME/CNN	46	47
Jan. 2003	Harris/Time/CNN	49	45

- On the issue of abortion, would you say you are more pro-life or more pro-choice?

		Pro-choice	Pro-life
Aug. 1997	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	50	40
Jan. 1998	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	49	46
Jun. 1999	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	42	44
Jan. 2000	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	43	44
July 2000	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	54	38
Jan. 2001	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	47	42
Jan. 2002	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	47	41
Apr. 2003	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	49	41
July 2003	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	44	44

- With respect to the abortion issue, would you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?

		Pro-choice	Pro-life
Sept. 1995	Gallup	56	33
Jul. 1996	Gallup	53	36
Aug. 1997	Gallup	47	44
Nov. 1997	Gallup	51	40
Jan. 1998	Gallup	48	45
Apr.-May 1999	Gallup	48	42
Mar.-Apr. 2000	Gallup	48	43
Mar. 2001	Gallup	47	41
May 2001	Gallup	48	42
Aug. 2001	Gallup	46	46
May 2002	Gallup	47	46
May 2003	Gallup	48	45
Oct. 2003	Gallup	48	45
May 2004	Gallup	49	44
May 2005	Gallup	48	44

Many pollsters in the United States regularly supply us with their data. This report could not have been done without their assistance, and we thank them for it. The data in this report come from the archive of public opinion polls at the American Enterprise Institute and from The Roper Center's archive at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut. The Roper Center is the oldest and largest archive of public opinion data in the world. To learn more about the Roper Center, visit <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>.

This Public Opinion Study was adapted from *Public Opinion About Abortion*, Everett Carl Ladd and Karlyn Bowman, AEI Press, 1999.

Key:

NORC/GSS = National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey

