



**Issue Ranks Lower on the Agenda**  
**SUPPORT FOR ABORTION SLIPS**

Results from the  
2009 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey

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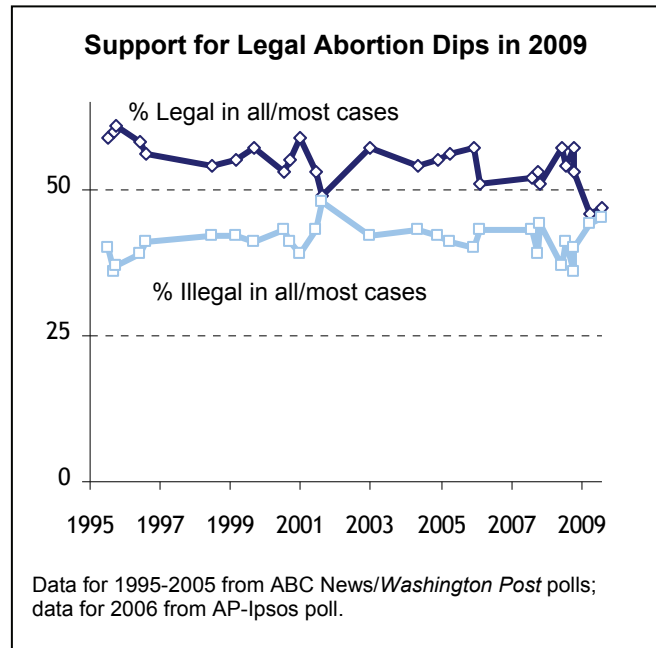
## **Issue Ranks Lower on the Agenda** **SUPPORT FOR ABORTION SLIPS**

Polls conducted in 2009 have found fewer Americans expressing support for abortion than in previous years. In Pew Research Center polls in 2007 and 2008, supporters of legal abortion clearly outnumbered opponents; now Americans are evenly divided on the question, and there have been modest increases in the numbers who favor reducing abortions or making them harder to obtain. Less support for abortion is evident among most demographic and political groups.

The latest Pew Research Center survey also reveals that the abortion debate has receded in importance, especially among liberals. At the same time, opposition to abortion has grown more firm among conservatives, who have become less supportive of finding a middle ground on the issue and more certain of the correctness of their own views on abortion.

No single reason for the shift in opinions is apparent, but the pattern of changes suggests that the election of a pro-choice Democrat for president may be a contributing factor. Among Republicans, there has been a seven point decline in support for legal abortion and a corresponding six point increase in opposition to abortion. But the change is smaller among Democrats, whose support for legal abortion is down four points with no corresponding increase in pro-life opinion. Indeed, three groups of President Obama's strongest supporters – African Americans, young people and those unaffiliated with a religion – have not changed their views on abortion at all. At the same time, fully half of conservative Republicans (52%) – the political group most opposed to abortion – say they worry Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights.

The shift in opinion is broad-based, appearing in most demographic groups in the population. One of the largest shifts (10 points) has occurred among white, non-Hispanic Catholics who attend Mass at least weekly. Substantial change has also occurred among Democratic men (with support for abortion down nine points), but not among Democratic women.



This shift in attitudes is also evident on other measures of public opinion about restrictions on abortion. For instance, four-in-ten Americans (41%) now say they favor making it more difficult to obtain an abortion, up six points from 35% in 2007. Similar movement is seen on the question of whether it would be good to reduce the number of abortions in this country; in 2005, 59% of respondents agreed it would be good to reduce abortions. Today 65% take this view, an increase of six points. And three-quarters (76%) continue to favor requiring minors to obtain the permission of a parent before having an abortion.

<i>Abortion should be...</i>	Aug <u>2008</u>	Aug <u>2009</u>	<i>Change</i>
Illegal in all/most cases	41	45	+4
Legal in all/most cases	54	47	-7
<i>Make abortion more difficult?</i>			
	Jan <u>2007</u>	Aug <u>2009</u>	
Favor	35	41	+6
Oppose	56	50	-6
<i>Good to reduce # of abortions?</i>			
	Jul <u>2005</u>	Aug <u>2009</u>	
Yes	59	65	+6
No	33	26	-7

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted Aug. 11-27 among 4,013 adults reached on both landlines and cell phones, also finds that fewer people say abortion is a critical issue today (15%) compared with 2006, when 28% described abortion as a critical issue facing the country.

There are, however, important political differences in these attitudes. The poll shows evidence of significant weakening in the level of concern about the abortion issue among liberal Democrats, while conservative Republicans appear more entrenched in their positions and less willing to compromise on this issue.

For example, there has been a 26-point drop since 2006 in the proportion of liberal Democrats who say abortion is a critical issue, from 34% to 8%. But among conservative Republicans, the decline has been much smaller (nine points, from 35% to 26%). Additionally, support for finding a middle ground on the abortion issue is down 12 points among conservative Republicans (44% now say the country needs to find a middle ground on the issue, compared with 56% in 2006), while liberal Democrats have not moved on this question. And the percentage of conservative

<i>% saying abortion is critical issue</i>	Mar <u>2006</u>	Aug <u>2009</u>	<i>06-09 Change</i>
Total	28	15	-13
Conserv Rep	35	26	-9
Mod/Lib Rep	24	12	-12
Independent	24	13	-11
Cons/Mod Dem	27	12	-15
Liberal Dem	34	8	-26
<i>% saying country should find middle ground</i>			
	Jul <u>2006</u>	Aug <u>2009</u>	<i>06-09 Change</i>
Total	66	60	-6
Conserv Rep	56	44	-12
Mod/Lib Rep	73	71	-2
Independent	66	61	-5
Cons/Mod Dem	71	64	-7
Liberal Dem	71	71	0
<i>% ever wonder about abortion view</i>			
	Jul <u>2006</u>	Aug <u>2009</u>	<i>06-09 Change</i>
Total	30	26	-4
Conserv Rep	30	19	-11
Mod/Lib Rep	26	26	0
Independent	29	26	-3
Cons/Mod Dem	33	32	-1
Liberal Dem	33	28	-5

Republicans who say they ever wonder whether their position is right has dropped 11 points (from 30% in 2006 to 19% now), while the figure among liberal Democrats has been relatively stable.

The timing of this shift in attitudes on abortion suggests it could be connected to Obama’s election. The decline in support for legal abortion first appeared in polls in the spring of 2009. Overall, roughly three-in-ten (29%) think Obama will handle the abortion issue about right as president. One-in-five Americans (19%) worry that Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights, while very few (4%) express the opposite concern that Obama will not go far enough to support abortion rights. Concern about Obama’s handling of abortion is especially evident on the right; fully half of conservative Republicans (52%) worry that Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights. However, nearly one-in-five political independents (18%) also worry that Obama will go too far in support of abortion rights.

	<b>Concern on the Right Over Obama’s Support for Abortion Rights</b>				Don’t know Obama pro-choice %
	Go too far %	Not go far enough %	Handle about right %	DK %	
Total	19	4	29	6	42=100
Conserv Rep	52	7	10	6	25=100
Mod/Lib Rep	19	6	33	7	36=100
Independent	18	4	29	7	42=100
Cons/Mod Dem	7	3	36	4	51=100
Liberal Dem	4	6	55	3	32=100

Q135 & Q136. Respondents were first asked if Obama’s views are pro-choice or pro-life; those answering pro-choice were then asked how they think Obama will handle the abortion issue. Results based on total.

The poll finds that four-in-ten Americans are unaware of Obama’s position on the abortion issue. Conservative Republicans, however, are more likely than any other group to know Obama’s position, with 75% correctly identifying him as “pro-choice” rather than “pro-life.”

In spite of the small shift toward opposition to legal abortion, the basic contours of the debate are still intact, with most major groups lining up on the same side of the issue as they have in the past. For example, most people who regularly attend religious services continue to come down in opposition to abortion, while the large majority of those who rarely or never attend religious services still support legal abortion.

The survey also reveals continued polarization over abortion. Even as the public expresses support for finding a middle ground, most Americans are quite certain that their own position on abortion is the right one, with only a quarter (26%) saying they ever wonder about their views on the issue. This is a slight decline since 2006, when 30% expressed doubts about their own view on abortion. Furthermore, many people on both sides of the issue say that the opposite point of view on abortion is not a “respectable” opinion for someone to hold. Nearly half of abortion opponents (47%), including 62% of those who say abortion should be illegal in

all cases, say that a pro-choice view is not a respectable opinion for someone to hold. On the other side, 42% of abortion supporters (including 54% of those who want abortion to be legal in all cases) say the pro-life point of view is not respectable.

## **Broad-based Decline in Support for Legal Abortion**

Recently, Americans have become more opposed to legal abortion. New analysis of combined Pew Research Center surveys conducted over the past three years shows that in 2007 and 2008, supporters of abortion rights clearly outnumbered opponents of abortion (those saying it should be illegal in most or all cases) by a 54%-40% margin. By contrast, in two major surveys conducted in 2009 among a total sample of more than 5,500 adults, views of abortion are about evenly divided, with 47% expressing support for legal abortion and 44% expressing opposition.

Republicans and Republican-leaning political independents have each become less pro-choice and more pro-life in recent polling. Democrats have also become less pro-choice, though by a somewhat smaller margin (four points less supportive of legal abortion). Democrats have not become more opposed to abortion; rather, they are now more likely to be undecided about the issue as compared with 2007/2008.

The 2009 polls find that gender differences now exist among Democrats. Among Democratic men, support for legal abortion has dropped nine percentage points from 2007/2008 to 2009 (62% to 53%) while support is unchanged among Democratic women (65% in 2007/2008 vs. 64% in 2009). This means that a significant gender gap over abortion now exists among Democrats, with Democratic women expressing more support for abortion rights than Democratic men (64% vs. 53%).

Among religious groups, observant white mainline Protestants and white Catholics (i.e., those who attend worship services at least weekly) each exhibit double-digit declines in support for legal abortion, as do Jews and less-observant white evangelical Protestants. By contrast, the views of black Protestants and the religiously unaffiliated have held steady.

Declines in support for legal abortion are seen among a wide variety of demographic groups. For example, both men and women currently express less support for legal abortion than they did in 2007/2008. Similarly, both whites and Hispanics have become significantly less pro-choice. But while whites have become significantly more pro-life, the movement among Hispanics has been primarily into the undecided camp.

### Small but Widespread Decline in Support for Legal Abortion

	---2007/2008*---			----2009*----			Change <i>legal</i>	Change <i>illegal</i>	Change <i>DK</i>	N 07/08	N 2009
	<u>Legal</u> %	<u>Illegal</u> %	<u>DK</u> %	<u>Legal</u> %	<u>Illegal</u> %	<u>DK</u> %					
Total	54	40	6	47	44	9	<b>-7</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+3</b>	14,317	5,534
<b><u>POLITICAL GROUPS</u></b>											
Republican	39	57	4	32	63	5	<b>-7</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+1</b>	4,075	1,473
Democrat	64	31	5	60	31	9	<b>-4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+4</b>	4,827	1,739
Independent	56	38	6	47	44	9	<b>-9</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+3</b>	4,556	2,006
Republican leaning	47	48	5	36	57	7	<b>-11</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>+2</b>	1,459	761
Democratic leaning	66	30	5	62	32	7	<b>-4</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+2</b>	1,995	759
Conservative	37	58	5	30	63	7	<b>-7</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+2</b>	5,601	2,263
Moderate	61	33	6	55	37	9	<b>-6</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+3</b>	5,363	1,917
Liberal	75	21	4	70	23	7	<b>-5</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+3</b>	2,735	1,062
Conserv Rep	31	66	3	26	70	4	<b>-5</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+1</b>	2,809	1,042
Mod/Lib Rep	57	39	4	46	48	6	<b>-11</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>+2</b>	1,209	394
Independent	56	38	6	47	44	9	<b>-9</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+3</b>	4,556	2,006
Cons/Mod Dem	57	37	6	53	38	9	<b>-4</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+3</b>	3,021	1,053
Liberal Dem	81	16	3	76	17	7	<b>-5</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+4</b>	1,648	615
<b><u>RELIGIOUS GROUPS</u></b>											
Protestant	48	47	6	39	52	9	<b>-9</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+3</b>	7,918	3,049
White evangelical	32	64	5	23	71	6	<b>-9</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>+1</b>	3,125	1,266
Attend weekly	24	73	3	16	79	5	<b>-8</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+2</b>	2,051	842
Attend less	46	47	7	34	58	8	<b>-12</b>	<b>+11</b>	<b>+1</b>	1,063	419
White mainline	65	28	7	55	34	11	<b>-10</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+4</b>	2,970	1,116
Attend weekly	54	38	7	42	46	12	<b>-12</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>+5</b>	806	310
Attend less	68	25	6	60	30	10	<b>-8</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+4</b>	2,140	796
Black Protestant	49	44	7	48	42	10	<b>-1</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>+3</b>	1,114	386
Catholic	53	42	5	45	45	10	<b>-8</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+5</b>	3,139	1,199
White non-Hisp	53	41	6	47	44	9	<b>-6</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+3</b>	2,430	896
Attend weekly	36	57	6	26	67	8	<b>-10</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>+2</b>	1,136	405
Attend less	65	30	5	62	29	9	<b>-3</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>+4</b>	1,284	483
Hispanic**	44	53	3	39	48	13	<b>-5</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>+10</b>	236	234
Jewish	86	10	4	76	18	6	<b>-10</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>+2</b>	281	109
Unaffiliated	71	23	6	68	25	7	<b>-3</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+1</b>	1,969	807
<i>Religious attendance</i>											
Weekly or more	35	59	6	28	63	9	<b>-7</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+3</b>	5,771	2,279
Monthly/Yearly	61	33	6	53	38	9	<b>-8</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+3</b>	4,734	1,770
Seldom/Never	70	24	6	64	28	8	<b>-6</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+2</b>	3,632	1,419
<b><u>OTHER DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS</u></b>											
Men	52	42	6	44	47	10	<b>-8</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+4</b>	7,007	2,494
Women	55	39	5	50	42	8	<b>-5</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+3</b>	7,310	3,040
White non-Hispanic	55	40	6	47	45	8	<b>-8</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+2</b>	10,976	4,238
Black non-Hispanic	51	42	7	50	40	10	<b>-1</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>+3</b>	1,373	491
Hispanic**	47	49	4	39	50	10	<b>-8</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+6</b>	456	439
18-29	52	45	3	52	44	5	<b>0</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>+2</b>	2,091	761
30-49	58	38	5	48	44	8	<b>-10</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+3</b>	4,518	1,627
50-64	56	38	6	48	42	10	<b>-8</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+4</b>	4,375	1,664
65+	45	44	11	37	51	12	<b>-8</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>+1</b>	3,110	1,388
College grad+	63	32	5	57	36	8	<b>-6</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+3</b>	5,532	2,091
Some college	57	38	5	48	44	9	<b>-9</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+4</b>	3,538	1,393
HS or less	47	46	7	40	50	9	<b>-7</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+2</b>	5,154	2,014
Northeast	61	34	6	54	36	10	<b>-7</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+4</b>	2,695	1,039
Midwest	51	42	6	46	47	8	<b>-5</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+2</b>	3,520	1,402
South	49	46	6	41	50	9	<b>-8</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+3</b>	5,319	2,080
West	59	36	6	51	39	9	<b>-8</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+3</b>	2,783	1,013

\*This table compares aggregated results from seven Pew Research Center surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008 with results from two Pew Research Center surveys conducted in 2009. Bold figures indicate statistically significant changes.

\*\*Hispanic figures based only on those surveys conducted in both English and Spanish.

The analysis also shows that some groups that once clearly preferred keeping abortion legal are now divided over whether it should be legal or not. For instance, Pew Research Center surveys from 2007/2008 found that men, whites, those age 30-49, those with some college education, political independents, observant white mainline Protestants, Catholics and Midwesterners all clearly favored keeping abortion legal in most or all cases. Now, each of these groups is closely divided on the issue.

Similarly, several groups that were previously divided in their views on abortion now come down clearly on the pro-life side. Among Hispanics, seniors, those with a high school education or less, Southerners and less-observant white evangelicals, abortion opponents now outnumber supporters of abortion rights.



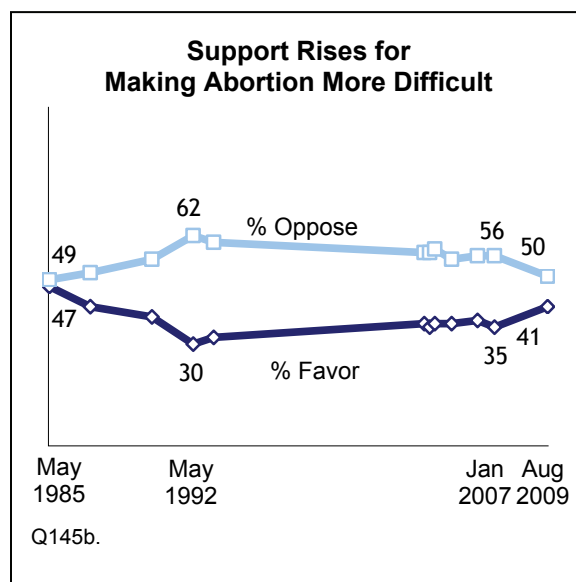
## Other Restrictions on Abortion

The latest (August 2009) Pew Research Center survey also finds that four-in-ten Americans (41%) now favor making it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion, up six points from 2007 (35%) and the highest level of support in Pew Research Center surveys for increased restrictions since 1987. However, those who favor making it more difficult to obtain an abortion are still outnumbered by those who oppose making it more difficult (50% vs. 41%).

Support for putting up barriers to abortion varies substantially across political and religious groups. Fully 65% of conservative Republicans

want to make abortions harder to get, but just 39% of independents and 19% of liberal Democrats say the same. Almost two-thirds of white evangelical Protestants (64%) back greater restrictions on abortion, but fewer than half as many white mainline Protestants (27%) and the religiously unaffiliated (23%) say the same. Catholics fall in between, with 44% in support of more restrictions on abortion.

Those who attend worship services more often are also more apt to favor restrictions on abortion. A slight majority of those who attend church at least weekly (53%) favor more restrictions, compared with 37% of those who attend monthly or yearly and 28% of those who seldom or never attend.



	Making Abortion More Difficult	
	Favor %	Oppose %
Total	41	50
Conserv Rep	65	28
Mod/Lib Rep	36	55
Independent	39	52
Cons/Mod Dem	39	53
Lib Dem	19	74
Protestant	45	44
White evangelical	64	28
White mainline	27	59
Black Protestant	37	53
Catholic	44	47
White non-Hisp	38	52
Unaffiliated	23	69
<i>Attend services ...</i>		
Weekly or more	53	35
Monthly/yearly	37	55
Seldom/never	28	64

Figures read across. Q145b.

When it comes to specific restrictions, Americans overwhelmingly support requiring women under age 18 to get the consent of at least one parent before having an abortion (76%), a figure that is largely unchanged in recent years. Large majorities of conservative Republicans (89%), white evangelicals (83%) and opponents of legal abortion (83%) express support for parental consent laws. But support for parental consent legislation is high even among those groups whose members are more supportive of abortion rights. For example, large majorities of the religiously unaffiliated (64%), mainline Protestants (77%) and Catholics (81%) favor requiring parental consent. Even among those who say abortion should be legal in most or all cases, 71% favor requiring parental consent.

<b>Parental Consent for Minors</b>		
	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Aug 2009	76	19
July 2005	73	22
<hr/>		
18-29	68	29
30-49	80	15
50-64	78	18
65+	72	19
Conserv Rep	89	9
Mod/Lib Rep	83	13
Independent	75	19
Cons/Mod Dem	76	20
Liberal Dem	58	39
Protestant	77	16
White evangelical	83	11
White mainline	77	16
Black Protestant	72	25
Catholic	81	16
White non-Hisp	83	14
Unaffiliated	64	31
<i>Abortion should be ...</i>		
Legal	71	27
Illegal	83	13

Figures read across. Q145c.

## Reducing the Number of Abortions

Apart from opinions on whether abortion should be legal, two-thirds of Americans (65%) say it would be good to reduce the number of abortions performed in the U.S., compared with 26% who say they don't feel this way. Support for reducing abortions is up from 2005, when 59% said they would like to see fewer abortions.

Reducing abortions is popular among groups who are least supportive of legal abortion, including 73% of conservatives, 78% of white evangelical Protestants and 72% of those who attend weekly religious services. But even among groups that generally favor legal abortion, most also say it would be good to reduce the number of abortions. This includes 57% of Democrats, 55% of those unaffiliated with a religion, 59% of those who rarely or never attend worship services and 51% of those who say that abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

<b>Good to Reduce Number of Abortions?</b>			
	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %	<u>DK</u> %
Aug 2009	65	26	10=100
July 2005	59	33	8=100
<hr/>			
Republican	73	18	9=100
Democrat	57	33	10=100
Independent	68	24	8=100
Conservative	73	16	11=100
Moderate	63	30	7=100
Liberal	52	41	7=100
Protestant	68	20	12=100
White evangelical	78	13	9=100
White mainline	63	20	17=100
Catholic	67	25	8=100
White non-Hisp	69	24	7=100
Unaffiliated	55	38	7=100
<i>Attend services...</i>			
Weekly or more	72	16	11=100
Monthly/yearly	61	32	7=100
Seldom/never	59	31	10=100
<i>Abortion should be...</i>			
Legal	51	41	8=100
Illegal	82	12	7=100

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Q151.

## Liberals Less Engaged on Abortion Issue

Only a small minority of Americans (15%) say abortion is a critical issue facing the country today, down from 28% who said this in 2006. One-third says it is one important issue among many, while nearly half of the public (48%) says the issue of abortion is unimportant.

Analysis of the survey reveals that across all groups, relatively small numbers say that abortion is a critical issue. Yet there are also differences in the importance that different groups place on abortion.

Those who say abortion should be illegal are much more likely to see abortion as a critical issue (27%), or at least as one important issue among many (40%), with 30% expressing the view that abortion is not an important issue. By contrast, among those who say abortion should be legal, about two-thirds (65%) do not see abortion as an important issue, while only 6% see it as a critical issue.

Consistent with this, members of groups that are more opposed to abortion generally rate the abortion issue as more important than groups that support legal abortion. A quarter of conservative Republicans (26%) say it is a critical issue, compared to just 8% of liberal Democrats, 64% of whom say abortion is not an important issue.

Among religious groups, white evangelicals (and especially those who attend services more often) see the abortion issue critically important (29% overall, and 35% among high attenders) or as one important issue among many (42% each). White mainline Protestants and the unaffiliated, by contrast, are the least likely to say the issue is a critical one (7% each), and most likely to say the issue is not important (60% and 70%). There is also a wide discrepancy between Catholics who attend Mass weekly and those who do not; among the former, 21% say abortion is critical, compared with 4% among those who attend less often. Black Protestants are less likely than white evangelicals to say abortion is critical (17% vs. 29%), but more likely than white mainliners (7%). A plurality of black Protestants (42%) say abortion is not an important issue.

<b>Abortion Opponents Rate Issue as More Important</b>			
	<i>Abortion issue is ...</i>		
	<u>Critical issue</u> %	<u>One among many</u> %	<u>Not imp</u> %
Aug 2009	15	33	48
March 2006	28	38	32
<i>Abortion should be...</i>			
Legal	6	27	65
Illegal	27	40	30
White	14	33	50
Black	14	32	50
Hispanic	25	35	35
Conserv Rep	26	43	31
Mod/Lib Rep	12	34	52
Independent	13	32	52
Cons/Mod Dem	12	35	50
Liberal Dem	8	26	64
Protestant	19	36	42
White evangelical	29	42	27
Attend weekly	35	42	21
Attend less	16	41	39
White mainline	7	29	60
Attend weekly	13	26	53
Attend less	6	30	62
Black Protestant	17	36	42
Catholic	15	36	46
White non-Hisp	11	36	51
Attend weekly	21	47	31
Attend less	4	29	64
Unaffiliated	7	21	70

Figures read across. Q242.

Declines in the perceived importance of the issue of abortion have been broad-based, but there are major political differences. In 2006, one third of conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats alike rated abortion as a critical issue. Since then, the percentage of conservative Republicans who rate abortion as a critical issue has dropped nine points, to 26%. But the drop has been much sharper among liberal Democrats: only 8% now say the issue is critical, a decline of 26 percentage points.

Among white Catholics who attend Mass weekly (most of whom oppose abortion), one-in-five continue to rate abortion as a critical issue, which is essentially unchanged since 2006. By contrast, among white Catholics who attend Mass less regularly (most of whom support legal abortion), the figure has dropped from 20% to 4%, a decline of 16 percentage points. Similarly, among the unaffiliated, there has been a 19-point drop, from 28% to 7%.

<b>Decline in Concern Especially Evident Among Liberals</b>			
<i>% saying abortion is critical issue</i>	Mar 2006	Aug 2009	06-09 Change
	%	%	%
Total	28	15	-13
Conserv Rep	35	26	-9
Mod/Lib Rep	24	12	-12
Independent	24	13	-11
Cons/Mod Dem	27	12	-15
Liberal Dem	34	8	-26
Protestant	30	19	-11
White evangelical	39	29	-10
White mainline	20	7	-13
Black Protestant	32	17	-15
Catholic	24	15	-9
White non-Hisp	20	11	-9
Attend weekly	22	21	-1
Attend less	20	4	-16
Unaffiliated	28	7	-19
<i>Attend services ...</i>			
Weekly or more	33	27	-6
Monthly/yearly	22	9	-13
Seldom/never	25	7	-18
Q242.			

Worship service attendance overall is also linked with the change in the perceived importance of the abortion issue. Those who attend least regularly are now 18 points less likely to rate abortion as a critical issue, compared with a six-point drop among those who attend weekly and a 13-point drop among those who attend monthly or yearly.

## Most Are Confident About Own Position on Abortion

Two-thirds of Americans say they never wonder whether their position on abortion is right or not. One quarter say they do sometimes wonder, down slightly from 30% three years ago.

Opponents of legal abortion are most certain of their position, with 73% saying they never wonder whether their own view is correct. This is especially true of those who are most opposed to abortion; among those saying abortion should be illegal in all cases, nearly eight-in-ten are fully convinced of the correctness of their view. But most supporters of legal abortion are also firmly convinced that their position is right, with nearly two-thirds of abortion rights supporters overall (63%) and three-quarters of those who think abortion should be legal in all cases (73%) saying they never wonder about their own position.

A similar pattern is seen among other groups as well. Certainty about one's position is high among all groups but is somewhat higher among the most pro-life groups, including conservative Republicans and evangelical Protestants, than among others.

<b>Abortion Opponents More Certain of Own Position</b>		
<i>Ever wonder if your position is right?</i>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
	%	%
Aug 2009	26	66
July 2006	30	66
<i>Abortion should be ...</i>		
Legal	32	63
All cases	24	73
Most cases	36	57
Illegal	20	73
Most cases	24	69
All cases	14	78
Conserv Rep	19	77
Mod/Lib Rep	26	64
Independent	26	69
Cons/Mod Dem	32	58
Liberal Dem	28	68
Protestant	23	68
White evangelical	20	75
White mainline	25	66
Black Protestant	24	62
Catholic	31	61
White non-Hisp	28	65
Unaffiliated	28	67
Figures read across. Q241.		

Traditionally conservative groups also stand out for having become more certain in their views. Conservative Republicans are now 11 percentage points less likely to say they ever wonder about their stance on abortion than they were in 2006, while opinion among other political groups has not changed significantly.

A large decline in the number of people expressing doubts about their view on abortion is also evident among white evangelical Protestants, down from 32% to 20% (12 points). By contrast, the numbers of Catholics and white mainline Protestants expressing doubts about their abortion views are virtually unchanged. Similarly, those who attend services at least weekly are 11 points less likely than in 2006 to say they ever wonder about their position on abortion, while the certainty of those who attend less often has not moved significantly.

<b>Abortion Views Harden Most Among Conservative Republicans</b>			
<i>Ever wonder if your position is right?</i>	Jul <u>2006</u>	Aug <u>2009</u>	<i>06-09 Change</i>
	%	%	%
Total	30	26	-4
Conserv Rep	30	19	-11
Mod/Lib Rep	26	26	0
Independent	29	26	-3
Cons/Mod Dem	33	32	-1
Liberal Dem	33	28	-5
Protestant	30	23	-7
White evangelical	32	20	-12
White mainline	27	25	-2
Catholic	31	31	0
White non-Hisp	30	28	-3
<i>Attend services ...</i>			
Weekly or more	32	21	-11
Monthly/yearly	33	30	-3
Seldom/never	24	29	+4
Q241.			

## Half Respect Opposite View on Abortion

Americans who express a view on abortion are divided over whether the opposing view on abortion is a respectable opinion for someone to hold, with 47% saying the opposing view is respectable and 44% saying it is not. Half of those on the pro-choice side say they respect the view of those who think abortion should be illegal, slightly higher than the number who say they do not (42%). Among those on the pro-life side, 44% say that pro-choice views are respectable and 47% say they are not. Those with the most intense abortion opinions are least likely to express respect for the opposing view; among both those who say abortion should be legal in all cases and those who say it should be illegal in all cases, majorities say the opposing point of view on abortion is not respectable.

Young people tend to be more tolerant of opposing viewpoints on abortion than their older counterparts. More than half of those under age 30 (57%) say the opposite view from their own is respectable. Among those age 65 and older, the reverse is true; seniors are much more likely to say it is *not* respectable to hold the view opposite from their own (51% not respectable vs. 34% respectable).

Most conservative Republicans say that opinions on abortion that differ from their own are not respectable. By contrast, most independents say that the opposing view on abortion is respectable. In other political and ideological groups and in most religious groups, people are divided over whether it is respectable for someone to hold an abortion opinion different than their own. The notable exception to this rule is white evangelical Protestants, among whom 53% say the opposing view is not respectable, while 37% say it is.

### Many Lack Respect for Opposing Abortion Views

<i>View that abortion should be illegal is...</i>	Supporters of legal abortion
	%
Respectable	50
NOT respectable	42
Don't know	8
	100
<i>View that abortion should be legal is...</i>	Opponents of legal abortion
	%
Respectable	44
NOT respectable	47
Don't know	9
	100

Q243 & Q244.

### Other Abortion Position "Respectable"?

	Yes, <u>respectable</u>	No, not <u>respectable</u>	<u>DK</u>
	%	%	%
Total	47	44	9=100
<i>Abortion should be...</i>			
Legal in all cases	38	54	8=100
Legal in most cases	56	36	8=100
Illegal in most cases	55	36	9=100
Illegal in all cases	28	62	10=100
Men	51	42	7=100
Women	44	47	10=100
18-29	57	39	4=100
30-49	50	41	9=100
50-64	43	50	7=100
65+	34	51	15=100
Conserv Rep	41	52	7=100
Mod/lib Rep	46	48	6=100
Independent	52	40	9=100
Cons/Mod Dem	50	42	8=100
Liberal Dem	47	48	5=100
Protestant	45	45	10=100
White evangelical	37	53	10=100
White mainline	50	41	9=100
Black Protestant	49	42	9=100
Catholic	50	43	7=100
White non-Hisp	48	47	6=100
Unaffiliated	51	41	7=100
<i>Attend services ...</i>			
Weekly or more	41	48	11=100
Monthly/yearly	55	39	7=100
Seldom/never	47	46	7=100

Q243 & Q244. Based on those who gave an answer to whether abortion should be legal or illegal.



Those whose position on abortion goes against the grain of their party or religion are more respectful of views different from their own. For example, pro-choice Republicans are much more likely to say the opposing viewpoint is respectable (58%) than are pro-life Republicans (34%). And among pro-life Democrats, more say the opposing view is respectable than among pro-choice Democrats (55% vs. 44%).

A similar pattern exists with regard to religion: 52% of pro-choice evangelical Protestants express respect for the opposing view, compared with 32% of pro-life evangelicals. And among those who attend services weekly or more, those in the pro-choice camp are more likely to respect their opponents than those in the pro-life camp (49% vs. 37%).

<b>Minority Views Linked With Greater Tolerance of Alternative Abortion Opinions</b>		
<i>Respect opposing abortion view?</i>	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No</u> %
<b>Republican</b>		
Pro-choice	58	37
Pro-life	34	57
<b>Democrat</b>		
Pro-choice	44	48
Pro-life	55	38
<b>Independent</b>		
Pro-choice	53	39
Pro-life	51	41
<b>White evangelical</b>		
Pro-choice	52	38
Pro-life	32	58
<b>White mainline</b>		
Pro-choice	51	42
Pro-life	48	39
<b>White non-Hisp Catholic</b>		
Pro-choice	55	39
Pro-life	40	54
<b>Attend services ...</b>		
<b>Weekly or more</b>		
Pro-choice	49	36
Pro-life	37	53
<b>Monthly/yearly</b>		
Pro-choice	56	39
Pro-life	53	39
<b>Seldom/never</b>		
Pro-choice	45	49
Pro-life	52	38

Figures read across. Q243 & Q244.  
Based on those who gave an answer to whether abortion should be legal or illegal.

## Most Want Middle Ground on Abortion

Though support for legal abortion has slipped and sizeable numbers of the public lack respect for opposing views on abortion, most Americans remain committed to the idea that the nation should find a way to compromise on abortion issues. Six-in-ten say the country needs to find a middle ground on abortion, down slightly since 2006 when 66% expressed this view. Roughly three-in-ten (29%) say there is no room for compromise on the abortion issue, the same proportion as three years ago.

Supporters of legal abortion are especially likely to say the country needs to find a middle ground (72%), while those who say abortion should be illegal in most or all cases are more divided on the issue, with 48% advocating a middle ground and 44% saying there is no room for compromise.

Groups traditionally opposed to legal abortion are also most wary of the idea of compromise. Among conservative Republicans, a 48% plurality says there is no room for compromise, with 44% saying the nation should find a middle ground. By contrast, a strong majority of moderate or liberal Republicans (71%) say the country should find a middle ground, while 20% say there is no room for compromise. In this regard, they resemble liberal Democrats, among whom 71% support finding middle ground.

Similarly, white evangelical Protestants – especially those who attend church on a weekly basis – stand out for saying there is no room for compromise on abortion (59% for weekly attenders vs. 49% of white evangelicals overall). Majorities of other religious groups, however, favor seeking a middle ground on abortion, including white mainline Protestants (68%) and Catholics (67%). Among these groups, regular attendance at church services is also related to less support for a middle ground; but even among weekly attenders in these groups, majorities still favor finding a middle ground.

<b>Abortion Foes Less Amenable to Compromise</b>			
	Need to find middle ground %	No room for com- promise %	DK %
Aug 2009	60	29	11=100
July 2006	66	29	5=100
<i>Abortion should be ...</i>			
Legal	72	19	9=100
Illegal	48	44	8=100
Conserv Rep	44	48	8=100
Mod/Lib Rep	71	20	9=100
Independent	61	27	11=100
Cons/Mod Dem	64	27	9=100
Liberal Dem	71	22	8=100
Protestant	54	33	13=100
White evangelical	40	49	11=100
Attend weekly	32	59	9=100
Attend less	54	33	13=100
White mainline	68	17	15=100
Attend weekly	61	21	19=100
Attend less	71	17	13=100
Black Protestant	58	25	17=100
Catholic	67	25	8=100
White non-Hisp	67	27	6=100
Attend weekly	55	41	4=100
Attend less	75	17	8=100
Unaffiliated	68	25	8=100
Q130.			

The decline over time on support for a middle ground also reflects these divisions. Support for finding a middle ground is down 12 points among conservative Republicans, while liberal Democrats have not changed their views on this question.

Among white evangelical Protestants, support for finding a middle ground on abortion has declined from 61% in 2006 to 40% today, a drop of 21 percentage points. Catholics are just as supportive of seeking a middle ground today as in 2006 (67% now vs. 63% in 2006).

Among those who attend religious services at least weekly, support for finding a middle ground has dropped 12 percentage points since 2006 (from 60% to 48%). By contrast, among those who attend services less often, opinion on this question has been more stable.

<b>Support for Middle Ground Drops Among Conservative Republicans</b>			
<i>% saying country should find middle ground</i>	Jul 2006	Aug 2009	06-09 Change
	%	%	%
Total	66	60	-6
Conserv Rep	56	44	-12
Mod/Lib Rep	73	71	-2
Independent	66	61	-5
Cons/Mod Dem	71	64	-7
Liberal Dem	71	71	0
Protestant	67	54	-13
White evangelical	61	40	-21
White mainline	76	68	-8
Catholic	63	67	+4
White non-Hisp	62	67	+5
<i>Attend services ...</i>			
Weekly or more	60	48	-12
Monthly/yearly	72	69	-3
Seldom/never	67	65	-2
Q130.			

## Obama and the Abortion Issue

Nearly six-in-ten Americans (58%) correctly describe Obama’s position on abortion as pro-choice, while a sizeable minority either believe he is pro-life (14%) or say they don’t know the president’s position (28%). Nearly four-in-ten (38%) say that Obama thinks it would be good to reduce the number of abortions, while 44% say they do not know if Obama thinks it would be good to reduce the number of abortions and 19% say he does not think it would be good to reduce abortions.

More Republicans (71%) than Democrats (54%) or independents (58%) know that Obama is pro-choice. However, on the question of whether or not Obama wants to reduce the number of abortions in the U.S., more Democrats than Republicans say he believes this is a good thing (46% vs. 27%, respectively). Among both groups, as many as four-in-ten say they do not know what Obama thinks about reducing the number of abortions.

Majorities of all age groups know that Obama is pro-choice, although older Americans (those age 65 and older) are slightly less knowledgeable than those age 30-64. People under age 30 are significantly more likely than those over age 50 to say that Obama favors reducing the number of abortions: 51% of those under age 30 say this, compared with 29% of those age 50 and older.

Among religious groups, roughly two-thirds of white evangelical Protestants (69%) and white Catholics (65%) know that Obama is pro-choice, compared with 58% of white mainline Protestants and 53% of the religiously unaffiliated. On the question of whether or not Obama wants to reduce the number of abortions in this country, roughly half of the religiously unaffiliated (47%) say that Obama favors reducing the number of abortions, while white evangelicals are much more skeptical (29% say he holds this view).

<b>Most Know Obama Supports Abortion Rights, Fewer Think He Favors Reducing Abortion</b>	
	<u>Total</u>
<i>On abortion, Obama is...</i>	%
Pro-choice/supports choice	58
Pro-life/restricting access	14
Don't know	<u>28</u>
	100
 <i>Does Obama think it would be good to reduce # of abortions...</i>	
Yes	38
No	19
Don't know	<u>44</u>
	100
Q135 & Q152.	

	<b>Obama's Abortion Views?</b>	
	<i>Obama...</i>	<i>Thinks it's good to reduce # of abortions</i>
	<u>Is pro-choice</u>	<u>%</u>
	%	%
Total	58	38
18-29	57	51
30-49	60	40
50-64	59	29
65+	52	29
College grad	77	44
Some college	63	39
HS or less	45	34
Republican	71	27
Independent	58	38
Democrat	54	46
Protestant	58	33
White evangelical	69	29
White mainline	58	37
Catholic	58	43
White non-Hisp	65	39
Unaffiliated	53	47
<i>Abortion should be ...</i>		
Legal	59	44
Illegal	60	35
Q135 & Q152.		

Among people who know that Obama is pro-choice, a plurality (29% of the public overall) think that he will handle the issue about right. About one-in-five (19%) worry that Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights, while very few (4%) worry that he will not go far enough in supporting abortion rights.

There are stark differences of opinion along political and ideological lines as to how Obama will handle the issue of abortion as president. A majority of conservative Republicans (52%) say that Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights, while just 10% think he will handle the issue about right. By contrast, a majority of liberal Democrats (55%) think he will handle the issue about right and just 4% say he will go too far. The views of independents mirror those of the public overall; three-in-ten independents (29%) think that Obama will strike the right balance and 18% think he will go too far in supporting abortion rights.

<b>Concern on the Right Over Obama's Support for Abortion Rights</b>					
	<i>Will Obama ...</i>				<i>Don't know Obama is pro-choice</i>
	<i>Go too far</i>	<i>Not go far enough</i>	<i>Handle about right</i>	<i>DK</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Total	19	4	29	6	42=100
Conserv Rep	52	7	10	6	25=100
Mod/Lib Rep	19	6	33	7	36=100
Independent	18	4	29	7	42=100
Cons/Mod Dem	7	3	36	4	51=100
Liberal Dem	4	6	55	3	32=100
Protestant	23	3	25	7	42=100
White evangelical	40	4	17	8	31=100
White mainline	14	3	32	9	42=100
Black Protestant	7	1	33	1	58=100
Catholic	19	4	30	5	42=100
White non-Hisp	21	4	36	4	35=100
Unaffiliated	8	6	34	6	47=100
<i>Attend services ...</i>					
Weekly or more	28	4	22	7	39=100
Monthly/yearly	16	4	32	5	43=100
Seldom/never	9	5	36	6	44=100
<i>Abortion should be...</i>					
Legal	5	4	45	5	41=100
Illegal	34	5	15	6	40=100
Q136.					

Not unexpectedly, those who believe that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases are more worried that Obama may go too far in supporting abortion rights than are Americans who believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases. One-third of abortion opponents (34%) worry that Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights, while a plurality of supporters of legal abortion (45%) say Obama will handle the issue about right.

Among religious groups, white evangelicals are more concerned that Obama will take abortion rights too far than are other groups. Four-in-ten white evangelicals say that Obama will overreach on abortion rights, while just 19% of Catholics and 14% of white mainline Protestants agree.

## Religious and Moral Influence on the Debate

One-third of Americans (32%) say their religious beliefs are the primary influence on their attitudes toward abortion. Roughly one-in-five cite their education (21%), and one-in-seven point to their personal experience (14%). Fewer say the views of their family and friends (6%) or what they have seen or read in the media (5%) are the main influences on their opinion about abortion, but a sizable proportion (21%) say there is something else that most informs their view.

Religious beliefs hold much stronger sway over those who oppose abortion than over those on the pro-choice side of the abortion issue. More than half of those who say abortion should be illegal (53%) cite religious beliefs as the primary influence on their views, compared with only 11% among supporters of legal abortion. Instead of religion, supporters of legal abortion are much more likely to cite their education (30%) or a personal experience (20%) as the primary influence on their views on abortion.

	Relig. Beliefs %	Educ- ation %	Pers. exper. %	Views of others %	Media %	Some- thing else %
Total	32	21	14	6	5	21
<i>Abortion should be ...</i>						
Legal	11	30	20	7	6	25
Illegal	53	12	9	5	4	16
<i>Men</i>						
Men	28	21	13	6	5	25
<i>Women</i>						
Women	36	20	16	6	5	17
<i>Age</i>						
18-29	25	25	12	11	5	20
30-49	27	21	19	6	5	22
50-64	38	20	13	4	4	19
65+	44	14	8	4	7	21
<i>Political affiliation</i>						
Conserv Rep	53	15	9	5	2	15
Mod/Lib Rep	22	27	18	6	4	19
Independent	26	24	16	5	5	26
Cons/Mod Dem	36	15	14	9	6	19
Liberal Dem	17	32	20	7	8	17
<i>Religion</i>						
Protestant	39	16	15	5	5	18
<i>White evangelical</i>						
Attend weekly	58	11	10	3	2	14
Attend less	68	7	9	4	2	10
<i>White mainline</i>						
Attend weekly	42	17	13	3	3	21
Attend less	22	23	20	9	2	24
<i>Black Protestant</i>						
Attend weekly	41	23	14	7	1	12
Attend less	14	23	22	9	3	28
<i>Catholic</i>						
Attend weekly	33	17	18	3	13	13
Attend less	35	22	12	8	4	18
<i>White non-Hisp</i>						
Attend weekly	36	24	14	3	3	18
Attend less	60	15	8	3	1	13
<i>Unaffiliated</i>						
Attend weekly	19	30	18	4	5	22
Attend less	8	28	19	9	4	31

Figures read across. Q126. Results based on those who gave an answer to whether abortion should be legal or illegal.

Women are more apt than men to say that their religious beliefs have the most influence on their views about abortion (36% vs. 28%), and Americans 65 and older are much more likely than young adults to say this (44% among those 65 and older vs. 25% among those under age 30).

Among political groups, 53% of conservative Republicans say their attitudes are based primarily on their religious beliefs, compared with just 22% of moderate or liberal Republicans. More than a third of conservative or moderate Democrats (36%) and 17% of liberal Democrats single out the influence of their religious beliefs.

A majority of white evangelical Protestants (58%) say their religious beliefs drive their views on abortion. This figure approaches seven-in-ten (68%) among white evangelicals who attend services at least weekly. Mainline Protestants are much less likely to cite their religious beliefs (22%), but there is still a strong divide between white mainline Protestants who attend church at least weekly (41%) and those who attend less often (14%). White, non-Hispanic Catholics are similarly divided on the issue, with 60% of those who attend weekly services saying their religious beliefs are the main influence on their abortion views, compared with just 19% of those who attend less regularly. More than one-quarter of religiously unaffiliated Americans (28%) rely most on their education in formulating their opinion on abortion.

### Half Say Abortion is Morally Wrong

A slight majority of Americans (52%) say having an abortion is morally wrong. One quarter says it is not a moral issue, and just 10% say it is morally acceptable. (The remaining 12% say that the morality of abortion depends on the situation or refuse to express an opinion.)

There is a strong connection between views on whether abortion should be legal and views on the morality of having an abortion. Most opponents of legal abortion (80%) say having an abortion is morally wrong. Most supporters of legal abortion, on the other hand, say abortion is morally acceptable (18%) or that it is not a moral issue (42%). But more than a quarter of those who say abortion should be legal (28%) say it is morally wrong to have an abortion.

Consistent with this, the most pro-life groups more often say that abortion is morally wrong. Three-quarters of conservative Republicans say this, as do slight majorities of moderate or liberal Republicans (51%) and conservative or moderate Democrats (55%). Nearly a third of liberal Democrats (31%) say abortion is morally wrong, with 40% saying it is not a moral issue.

White evangelical Protestants are very likely to say abortion is morally wrong (74%). Majorities of black Protestants (58%) and Catholics (58%) also say this. Fewer than half of white mainline Protestants (40%) say that abortion is morally wrong. Among the unaffiliated,

	<b>Is Having an Abortion Morally Acceptable?</b>		
	<u>Morally wrong</u> %	<u>Morally acceptable</u> %	<u>Not a moral issue</u> %
Aug 2009	52	10	25
Feb 2006	52	12	23
<i>Abortion should be ...</i>			
Legal	28	18	42
Illegal	80	4	10
Conserv Rep	75	8	10
Mod/Lib Rep	51	12	25
Independent	48	10	29
Cons/Mod Dem	55	11	23
Liberal Dem	31	13	40
Protestant	59	10	19
White evangelical	74	7	11
White mainline	40	13	29
Black Protestant	58	15	17
Catholic	58	9	22
White non-Hisp	52	8	25
Unaffiliated	30	14	43
<i>Attend services ...</i>			
Weekly or more	67	7	16
Monthly/yearly	50	11	27
Seldom/never	35	15	35

Figures read across. Q180a.

30% say having an abortion is morally wrong, but 43% say it is not a moral issue. Attendance at worship services also plays a role, with those who attend most frequently being twice as likely as those who attend least often to say abortion is morally wrong (67% vs. 35%).

### Influence of Religious and Moral Beliefs

Religious beliefs, when cited as the main source of thinking on abortion, are much more likely to influence adherents in a pro-life direction than in a pro-choice direction. Among those who say their religious beliefs have the most influence on their thinking about abortion, an overwhelming

majority (82%) say abortion should be illegal. Less than one-in-five (18%) say it should be legal.

The opposite is true, however, among those who cite education or

personal experience as their main influence. Strong majorities of these groups identify with a pro-choice viewpoint (72% among those saying education, 70% among those saying personal experience).

A similar though less-pronounced pattern is seen on the question of whether the country should find a middle ground on abortion. Those who cite religious beliefs as the primary influence on their abortion views and those who say abortion is morally wrong are considerably more likely than others to say that there is no room for compromise on the issue of abortion.

	Total public	--Abortion influence--			--Abortion wrong?--	
		Rel. beliefs	Educ.	Personal exp.	Yes, morally wrong	No, not wrong
<i>Abortion should be...</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Legal in all/most cases	47	18	72	70	24	76
Illegal in all/most cases	45	82	28	30	69	17
Don't know	8	n/a*	n/a*	n/a*	7	7
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>On abortion...</i>						
Find middle ground	60	44	64	66	51	70
No room for compromise	29	49	27	26	39	20
Don't know	11	7	9	8	9	10
	100	100	100	100	100	100

\*Only those expressing an opinion about the legality of abortion were asked about the main influence on their abortion views.



## ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 4,013 adults, 18 years of age or older. Interviews were conducted in two waves, the first from August 11-17, 2009 (Survey A) and the second from August 20-27, 2009 (Survey B). In total, 3,012 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,001 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 347 who had no landline telephone. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2008 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the sample.

The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey. The topline survey results included at the end of this report clearly indicate whether each question in the survey was asked of the full sample, Survey A only or Survey B only.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus...</b>
Total sample	4,013	2.0 percentage points
Survey A	2,010	2.5 percentage points
Form 1	1,011	3.5 percentage points
Form 2	999	3.5 percentage points
Survey B	2,003	2.5 percentage points
Form 1	1,034	3.5 percentage points
Form 2	969	3.5 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## ABOUT THE PROJECTS

This survey is a joint effort of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Both organizations are sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts and are projects of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan “fact tank” that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

**The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press** is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. The Center’s purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of the Center’s current survey results are made available free of charge.

**The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life** seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. It studies public opinion, demographics and other important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings.

This report is a collaborative product based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS  
AND PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE  
2009 RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE SURVEY**

**FINAL TOPLINE**

Survey A: August 11-17, 2009, N=2,010

Survey B: August 20-27, 2009, N=2,003

Combined N=4,013

**NOTE: QUESTION NUMBERING IS NOT CONTINUOUS BECAUSE SOME ITEMS HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY RELEASED OR HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

On another subject...

Q.240 Do you think abortion should be [READ]

**(PLEASE READ CATEGORIES IN REVERSE ORDER FOR HALF THE SAMPLE)**

**NOTE: THIS ITEM WAS ASKED AS Q.240 IN SURVEY B AND AS Q.125 IN SURVEY A. THE TWO ITEMS ARE PRESENTED TOGETHER HERE.<sup>1</sup>**

	Legal in all <u>cases</u>	Legal in most <u>cases</u>	Illegal in most <u>cases</u>	Illegal in all <u>cases</u>	[VOL. DO NOT READ] <u>DK/Ref</u>	NET <i>Legal in all/most</i>	NET <i>Illegal in all/most</i>
August 11-27, 2009	16	31	27	17	8	47	45
April, 2009	18	28	28	16	10	46	44
Late October, 2008	18	35	24	16	7	53	40
Mid-October, 2008	19	38	22	14	7	57	36
August, 2008	17	37	26	15	5	54	41
June, 2008	19	38	24	13	6	57	37
November, 2007	18	33	29	15	5	51	44
October, 2007	21	32	24	15	8	53	39
August, 2007	17	35	26	17	5	52	43
February, 2006 <i>AP/Ipsos-Poll</i>	19	32	27	16	6	51	43
December 2005 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	17	40	27	13	3	57	40
April 2005 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	36	27	14	3	56	41
December 2004 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	21	34	25	17	3	55	42
May 2004 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	23	31	23	20	2	54	43
January 2003 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	23	34	25	17	2	57	42
August 2001 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	22	27	28	20	3	49	48
June 2001 <i>ABC/BeliefNet</i>	22	31	23	20	4	53	43
January 2001 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	21	38	25	14	1	59	39
September 2000 <i>(RVs) ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	35	25	16	3	55	41
July 2000 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	33	26	17	4	53	43
September 1999 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	20	37	26	15	2	57	41
March 1999 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	21	34	27	15	3	55	42
July 1998 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	19	35	29	13	4	54	42
August 1996 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	22	34	27	14	3	56	41
June 1996 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	24	34	25	14	2	58	39
October 1995 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	26	35	25	12	3	61	37
September 1995 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	24	36	25	11	4	60	36
July 1995 <i>ABC/Wash Post</i>	27	32	26	14	1	59	40

<sup>1</sup> The introduction to Q.125 Survey A read, "Now thinking about the abortion issue..."

**ASK SURVEY A IF Q.125<9:**

Q.126 Which one of the following has had the biggest influence on your thinking on the issue of abortion...  
**[READ AND RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS WITH OPTION 6 ALWAYS LAST]**

	Based on <u>Total</u>	---Views on Abortion---	
		<u>Illegal in most/all cases</u>	<u>Legal in most/all cases</u>
Your religious beliefs	29	53	11
Your education	19	12	30
A personal experience	13	9	20
The views of your friends and family	6	5	7
What you have seen or read in the media	4	4	6
OR Something else	18	16	25
Don't know/Refused <b>[VOL. DO NOT READ]</b>	1	1	1
<i>No opinion on abortion</i>	<i>(10)</i>		
		<b>[N=890]</b>	<b>[N=926]</b>

**ASK ALL SURVEY A:**

Q.127 Over the past year or so, have your views on abortion changed, or have they pretty much stayed the same?

**ASK IF VIEWS HAVE CHANGED (Q.127=1)**

Q.128 And have you become **[READ AND RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1 AND 2]**

**BASED ON TOTAL**

- 5 Changed
  - 1 More supportive of restricting access to abortion
  - 3 More supportive of a woman's right to choose an abortion
  - \* Other **[VOL. DO NOT READ]**
  - \* Don't know/refused **[VOL. DO NOT READ]**
- 93 Stayed the same
- 2 Don't know/refused **(VOL.)**

**ASK IF Q.128=1,2 [N=77]:**

Q.129 And just in your own words, what is the main reason that you have become **[IF Q.128=1, INSERT: more supportive of restricting access to abortion?; IF Q.128=2, INSERT: more supportive of a woman's right to choose an abortion?]** **[OPEN END. RECORD ONE MENTION?]**

Q.129 RESULTS NOT SHOWN; USED FOR QUALITATIVE PURPOSES ONLY.

**ASK ALL SURVEY A:**

Q.130 Which comes closer to your view about the abortion issue **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

		July <u>2006</u>
60	The country needs to find a middle ground on abortion laws, <b>[OR]</b>	66
29	There's no room for compromise when it comes to abortion laws	29
11	Don't know/refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	5

**ASK ALL SURVEY A:**

Q.135 As far as you know, what is Barack Obama's position on abortion? Is he PRO-CHOICE, that is, supports a woman's right to choose an abortion, or is he PRO-LIFE, that is, supports restricting access to abortion in most cases?

		<i>Trend for comparison</i> <i>(RVs)<sup>2</sup></i> June <u>2008</u>
58	Pro choice / supports a woman's right to choose	52
14	Pro life / supports restricting access in most cases	10
28	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	38

**ASK SURVEY A IF SAYS OBAMA IS PRO-CHOICE (Q.135=1):**

Q.136 Do you [worry that Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights], [worry that Obama won't go far ENOUGH in supporting abortion rights], OR think that Obama will handle the issue of abortion about right? **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS IN BRACKETS]**

**BASED ON TOTAL SURVEY A**

19	Worry that Obama will go too far in supporting abortion rights
4	Worry that Obama won't go far ENOUGH in supporting abortion rights,
29	Think he will handle the issue about right
6	Don't know/refused <b>(VOL.)</b>
(42)	<i>Pro-life/DK/Ref in Q.135</i>

**ASK ALL SURVEY B:**

Q.241 Do you ever wonder whether your own position on abortion is the right one or not?

		<i>Gallup</i>	
		July <u>2006</u>	Dec <u>1988</u>
26	Yes	30	33
66	No	66	60
8	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	4	7

<sup>2</sup>

In June 2008, this question was asked about John McCain and Barack Obama among registered voters and those who plan to register.

**ASK ALL SURVEY B:**

Q.242 Do you think the issue of abortion is a critical issue facing the country, one among many important issues, or not that important compared to other issues?

		March
		<u>2006</u>
15	A critical issue facing the country	28
33	One among many important issues	38
48	Not that important compared to other issues	32
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2

**ASK SURVEY B IF ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGAL (Q.240=1,2) [N=973]:**

Q.243 And do you think the view that abortion should be against the law is a respectable opinion for someone to hold, or not?

50	Yes
42	No
8	Don't know/Refused (VOL)

**ASK SURVEY B IF ABORTION SHOULD BE ILLEGAL (Q.240=3,4) [N=882]:**

Q.244 And do you think the view that abortion should be legal is a respectable opinion for someone to hold, or not?

44	Yes
47	No
9	Don't know/Refused (VOL)

Now, on some issues...

**RANDOMIZE Q.145 a-c AS A BLOCK WITH Q.146a-b AND 147 AS A SEPARATE BLOCK**

Q.145 Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose [READ AND RANDOMIZE WITH ITEM a. ALWAYS FIRST]? And how about [INSERT NEXT ITEM]?

	----FAVOR----			----OPPOSE----			(VOL.) DK/Ref
	Total	<i>Strongly</i> <i>Favor</i>	<i>Favor</i>	Total	<i>Strongly</i> <i>Oppose</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	
<b>ASK ALL SURVEY A:</b>							
b. Making it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion							
August 11-17, 2009	41	19	22	50	23	27	9
January, 2007	35	17	18	56	27	29	9
March, 2006	37	15	22	56	24	32	7
December, 2004	36	19	17	55	29	26	9
Early February, 2004	36	17	19	58	30	28	6
November, 2003	35	19	16	57	29	28	8
August, 2003 <sup>3</sup>	36	17	19	57	30	27	7
May, 1993	32	15	17	60	35	25	8
May, 1992	30	--	--	62	--	--	8
May, 1990	38	21	17	55	29	26	7
May, 1987	41	18	23	51	33	18	8
May, 1985	47	--	--	49	--	--	4

**ASK ALL SURVEY A:**

c. Requiring that women under the age of 18 get the consent of at least one parent before they are allowed to have an abortion

August 11-17, 2009	76	45	31	19	8	11	5
July, 2005	73	--	--	22	--	--	5
Sept, 1999	69	--	--	28	--	--	3
May, 1992	73	--	--	23	--	--	4

3 In August 2003 and earlier the question was worded: "Changing the laws to make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion."

**ASK ALL SURVEY A:**

Thinking again about abortion...

**ASK SURVEY A FORM 1 [N=1011]:**

Q.151 Regardless of whether or not you think abortion should be legal, do you think it would be a good thing to reduce the number of abortions performed in the United States, or don't you feel this way?

		July <u>2005</u>
65	Good thing to reduce the number of abortions	59
26	Don't feel this way	33
10	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	8

**ASK SURVEY A FORM 1 [N=1011]:**

Q.152 And from what you know, does Barack Obama think it would be a good thing to reduce the number of abortions performed in the United States, or doesn't he feel this way?

38	Obama thinks it would be good thing to reduce the number of abortions
19	Obama doesn't feel this way
44	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK SURVEY A FORM 2 [N=999]:**

Q.153 As you may know, Barack Obama has said that he favors reducing the number of abortions. What about you? Regardless of whether or not you think abortion should be legal, do you think it would be a good thing to reduce the number of abortions performed in the United States, or don't you feel this way?

69	Good thing to reduce the number of abortions
20	Don't feel this way
11	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

**ASK ALL SURVEY A:**

On another subject...

Q.180 Do you personally believe that [INSERT ITEM AND RANDOMIZE] is morally acceptable, morally wrong, or is it not a moral issue. [IF NECESSARY] And is [INSERT ITEM] morally acceptable, morally wrong, or is it not a moral issue?

		Morally <u>Acceptable</u>	Morally <u>Wrong</u>	Not a Moral <u>Issue</u>	(VOL.) Depends on <u>the Situation</u>	(VOL.) Don't know/ <u>Refused</u>
a.	Having an abortion					
	August 11-17, 2009	10	52	25	8	4
	February, 2006	12	52	23	11	2



**ASK ALL:**

RELIG What is your present religion, if any? Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else, or nothing in particular?

[INTERVIEWER: IF R VOLUNTEERS “nothing in particular, none, no religion, etc.” BEFORE REACHING END OF LIST, PROMPT WITH: And would you say that’s atheist, agnostic, or just nothing in particular?]

**IF SOMETHING ELSE, NOTHING IN PARTICULAR OR DK/REF (RELIG=11, 12, 99) ASK:**

CHR Do you think of yourself as a Christian or not?

- 40 Protestant (Baptist, Methodist, Non-denominational, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Reformed, Church of Christ, Jehovah’s Witness, etc.)
- 23 Roman Catholic (Catholic)
- 2 Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints/LDS)
- \* Orthodox (Greek, Russian, or some other orthodox church)
- 2 Jewish (Judaism)
- \* Muslim (Islam)
- 1 Buddhist
- \* Hindu
- 2 Atheist (do not believe in God)
- 3 Agnostic (not sure if there is a God)
- 2 Something else (**SPECIFY**)
- 12 Nothing in particular
- 11 Christian (**VOL.**)
- \* Unitarian (Universalist) (**VOL.**)
- 2 Don’t Know/Refused (**VOL.**)

**IF CHRISTIAN (RELIG=1-4, 13 OR ((RELIG=11 OR RELIG=99) AND CHR=1)):**

BORN Would you describe yourself as a "born again" or evangelical Christian, or not?

**BASED ON TOTAL**

- 34 Yes, would
- 40 No, would not
- 4 Don’t know/Refused (**VOL.**)
- 78% Christian

**ASK ALL:**

ATTEND Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services... more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?

	More than <u>once a week</u>	Once <u>a week</u>	Once or twice <u>a month</u>	A few times <u>a year</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
August 11-27, 2009	14	23	16	18	16	11	1
August, 2008	13	26	16	19	15	10	1
Aug, 2007	14	26	16	18	16	9	1
July, 2006	15	25	15	18	14	12	1
July, 2005	14	27	14	19	14	11	1
Aug, 2004	13	25	15	20	15	11	1
July, 2003	16	27	15	18	14	10	*

**ATTEND CONTINUED...**

	<u>More than once a week</u>	<u>Once a week</u>	<u>Once or twice a month</u>	<u>A few times a year</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
March, 2003	15	24	15	21	15	9	1
March, 2002	15	25	17	18	15	9	1
Mid-Nov, 2001	16	26	14	17	16	10	1
March, 2001	17	26	17	17	15	7	1
Sept, 2000 (RVs)	17	28	16	17	13	8	1
June, 1997	12	26	17	20	15	10	*
June, 1996	14	25	17	21	13	9	1

**ASK ALL:**

Q.280 How important is religion in your life – very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

**NOTE: THIS ITEM WAS ASKED AS Q.280 IN SURVEY B AND AS Q.185 IN SURVEY A. BOTH ITEMS ARE PRESENTED HERE.**

		<u>August 2008</u>	<u>August 2007</u>
57	Very important	58	61
25	Somewhat important	27	24
8	Not too important	7	8
8	Not at all important	7	6
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	1

**ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

**IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY, ASK:**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
August 20-27, 2009	26	32	36	3	*	3	14	16
August 11-17, 2009	23	33	38	3	*	3	16	15
July, 2009	22	34	37	5	*	2	15	14
June, 2009	25	34	34	3	*	3	11	16
May, 2009	23	39	29	4	*	4	9	14
April, 2009	22	33	39	3	*	3	13	18
March, 2009	24	34	35	5	*	2	12	17
February, 2009	24	36	34	3	1	2	13	17
January, 2009	25	37	33	3	*	2	11	16
December, 2008	26	39	30	2	*	3	8	15
Late October, 2008	24	39	32	2	*	3	11	15
Mid-October, 2008	27	35	31	4	*	3	9	16
Early October, 2008	26	36	31	4	*	3	11	15
Late September, 2008	25	35	34	3	1	2	13	15
Mid-September, 2008	28	35	32	3	*	2	12	14
August, 2008	26	34	34	4	*	2	12	17
July, 2008	24	36	34	3	*	3	12	15
June, 2008	26	37	32	3	*	2	11	16
Late May, 2008	25	35	35	2	*	3	13	15
April, 2008	24	37	31	5	1	2	11	15
March, 2008	24	38	29	5	*	4	9	14
Late February, 2008	24	38	32	3	*	3	10	17
Early February, 2008	26	35	31	5	*	3	11	14
January, 2008	24	33	37	4	*	2	12	18
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2008	25.3	35.8	31.7	3.8	.3	3.1	10.5	15.4
2007	25.4	32.9	33.7	4.6	.4	3.1	10.7	16.7
2006	27.6	32.8	30.3	5.0	.4	3.9	10.2	14.5
2005	29.2	32.8	30.3	4.5	.3	2.8	10.2	14.9
2004	29.7	33.4	29.8	3.9	.4	2.9	11.7	13.4
2003	29.8	31.4	31.2	4.7	.5	2.5	12.1	13.0
2002	30.3	31.2	30.1	5.1	.7	2.7	12.6	11.6
2001	29.2	33.6	28.9	5.1	.5	2.7	11.7	11.4
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	28.2	34.6	29.5	5.0	.5	2.1	11.7	12.5
2000	27.5	32.5	29.5	5.9	.5	4.0	11.6	11.6
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.5	33.2	31.9	4.6	.4	2.4	11.8	13.5
1997	28.2	33.3	31.9	4.0	.4	2.3	12.3	13.8
1996	29.2	32.7	33.0	5.2	--	--	12.7	15.6
1995	31.4	29.7	33.4	5.4	--	--	14.4	12.9
1994	29.8	31.8	33.8	4.6	--	--	14.3	12.6
1993	27.4	33.8	34.0	4.8	--	--	11.8	14.7
1992	27.7	32.7	35.7	3.9	--	--	13.8	15.8

**PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...**

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)		
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	No <u>preference</u>	Other <u>party</u>	DK/ <u>Ref</u>	<i>Lean</i> <u>Rep</u>	<i>Lean</i> <u>Dem</u>
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	4.5	--	--	14.6	10.8
1990	31.0	33.1	29.1	6.8	--	--	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--