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Fewer See Stem Cell Research and IVF as Moral Issues

Abortion Viewed in Moral Terms

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Fewer See Stem Cell Research and IVF as Moral Issues Abortion Viewed in Moral Terms

Regardless of their views about the legality of abortion, most Americans think that having an abortion is a moral issue. By contrast, the public is much less likely to see other issues involving human embryos – such as stem cell research or in vitro fertilization – as a matter of morality.

Asked whether abortion is morally acceptable, morally wrong or not a moral issue, only about a quarter of U.S. adults (23%) say they personally do not consider having an abortion to be

a moral issue, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center. Twice as many Americans (46%) say this about using in vitro fertilization. Asked about the morality of medical research that uses embryonic stem cells, more than a third of U.S. adults (36%) say they do not consider such research to be a moral issue. Roughly four-in-ten (42%) say the same about stem cell research that does not involve human embryos.

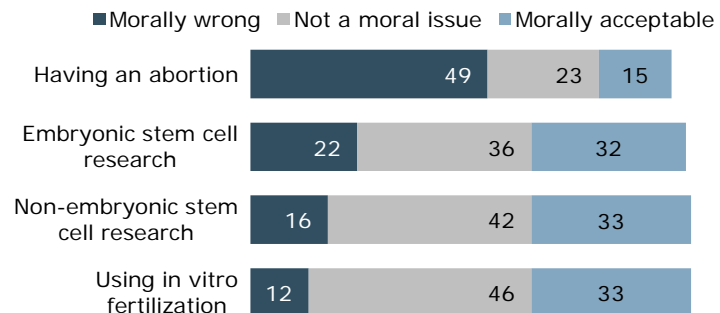
The percentage of U.S. adults who consider abortion to be morally wrong (49%) far exceeds the percentage who express this view about in vitro fertilization (12%), non-embryonic stem cell research (16%) or embryonic stem cell research (22%).

Only 15% of the public thinks that having an abortion is morally acceptable. By comparison, about a third of U.S. adults say they personally view IVF and both forms of stem cell research as morally acceptable practices.

These are some of the findings from a survey by the Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project conducted March 21 to April 8, 2013, among a representative sample of 4,006 adults nationwide. The margin of error for the survey is plus or minus 2.1 percentage points.

Moral Assessments

% of U.S. adults who say each of these is ...



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58a-d. Responses of those who volunteered "depends on situation" and those who did not give an answer are not shown.

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MORALITY OF ABORTION

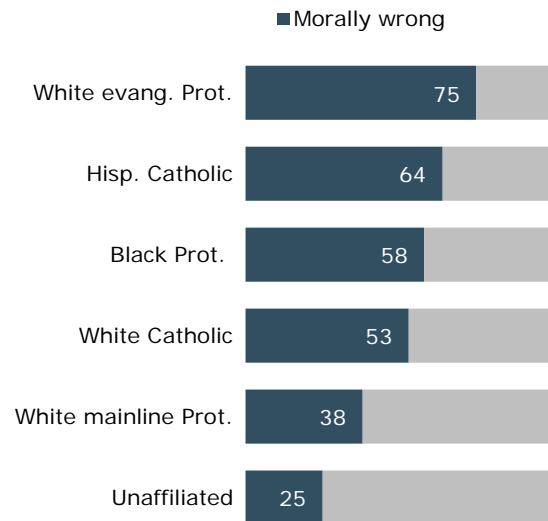
Roughly half of U.S. adults (49%) say they personally believe that having an abortion is morally wrong, about the same percentage as in previous Pew Research surveys.

Opinions on the morality of abortion differ widely among religious groups. Fully three-quarters of white evangelical Protestants consider having an abortion morally wrong, as do about two-thirds of Hispanic Catholics (64%). A majority of black Protestants (58%) and about half of white Catholics (53%) say the same. Fewer white mainline Protestants (38%) and religiously unaffiliated adults (25%) hold this view.

Relatively small percentages of people in all religious groups consider it morally acceptable to have an abortion. However, among the unaffiliated, roughly equal shares say having an abortion is morally acceptable (28%) and morally wrong (25%).

Views of Having an Abortion, by Religion

% of each religious group that says having an abortion is morally wrong



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58a. Other responses and those who did not give an answer are not shown.

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Views of Having an Abortion, by Religious Affiliation

% of each group that says having an abortion is ...

	Morally wrong	Not a moral issue	Morally acceptable
Protestant	59	16	11
White evangelical	75	9	5
White mainline	38	25	19
Black Protestant	58	18	13
Catholic	57	22	11
White Catholic	53	22	11
Hispanic Catholic	64	18	11
Unaffiliated	25	36	28

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58a. Responses of those who volunteered "depends on situation" and those who did not give an answer are not shown.

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Those who attend religious services at least once a week are much more inclined to say that having an abortion is morally wrong than those who seldom or never attend (70% vs. 32%).

This pattern holds for nearly all major religious groups. For example, half (50%) of white mainline Protestants who attend services weekly say they personally consider having an abortion morally wrong, compared with a third (33%) of white mainline Protestants who attend services less often. About three-quarters (74%) of white Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week consider having an abortion morally wrong, compared with four-in-ten white Catholics (40%) who attend services less often. However, Hispanic Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week do not differ significantly from those who attend less often in their views about the moral acceptability of abortion.

Views of Having an Abortion, by Worship Service Attendance

% of each group that says having an abortion is ...

	Morally wrong	Not a moral issue	Morally acceptable
<i>Frequency of worship service attendance</i>			
Weekly	70	14	7
Monthly/yearly	41	24	19
Seldom/never	32	33	22

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58a. Responses of those who volunteered "depends on situation" and those who did not give an answer are not shown.

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There are sizable differences in opinions about the moral acceptability of abortion by partisanship, political ideology and education, but few differences when it comes to gender and age.

About two-thirds of Republicans and independents who lean toward the Republican Party consider having an abortion morally wrong (64%), compared with 38% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents. Similarly, conservatives (67%) are more inclined than either self-described moderates (40%) or liberals (31%) to view having an abortion as morally wrong.

Those with fewer years of formal schooling also are more inclined to consider abortion morally wrong. A majority of those with a high school degree or less education (58%) say they personally believe having an abortion is morally wrong. This compares with 47% among those with some college education and 39% among those with at least a college degree.

By comparison, men and women are about equally likely to say having an abortion is morally wrong. And those ages 50 and older tend to hold similar viewpoints about the moral acceptability of abortion as those ages 18 to 49.

Moral Acceptability of Abortion

% saying having an abortion is ...

	Morally wrong	Not a moral issue	Morally acceptable
All adults	49	23	15
Men	48	22	18
Women	50	23	13
18-49	48	24	17
50 and older	52	20	14
College grad+	39	25	22
Some college	47	24	16
H.S. or less	58	20	10
Rep./lean Rep.	64	16	8
Dem./lean Dem.	38	28	22
<i>Political ideology</i>			
Conservative	67	13	9
Moderate	40	28	17
Liberal	31	34	25

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58a. Response of those who volunteered "depends on situation" or who gave no response not shown.

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MORALITY OF MEDICAL RESEARCH USING STEM CELLS

More Americans consider embryonic stem cell research to be morally acceptable than say the same about having an abortion. A clear majority says that embryonic stem cell research either is morally acceptable (32%) or is not a moral issue (36%). Only about a fifth of the general public (22%) considers embryonic stem cell research morally wrong.

As with abortion, men and women are about equally likely to say embryonic stem cell research is morally acceptable. Similarly, adults ages 50 and older are about equally likely as younger adults (18 to 49 years) to say that conducting embryonic stem cell research is morally acceptable. However, college graduates are somewhat more inclined than those with less education to consider this practice morally acceptable.

There also are differences when it comes to partisanship and ideology. About three-quarters of Democrats and independents who lean toward the Democratic Party consider embryonic stem cell research either morally acceptable or not a moral issue. Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are more inclined than their Democratic counterparts to consider such research morally wrong. Similarly, self-described conservatives tend to see embryonic stem cell research as morally wrong more than either moderates or liberals do.

Among the major religious groups, white evangelical Protestants are most likely to say embryonic stem cell research is morally wrong.

Embryonic Stem Cell Research

% saying medical research that uses embryonic stem cells is ...

	Morally wrong	Not a moral issue	Morally acceptable
All adults	22	36	32
Men	23	35	33
Women	21	36	31
18-49	22	39	30
50 and older	22	32	34
College grad+	19	35	38
Some college	24	36	31
H.S. or less	22	36	29
Rep./lean Rep.	30	31	28
Dem./lean Dem.	15	39	37
<i>Political ideology</i>			
Conservative	32	29	28
Moderate	17	39	35
Liberal	12	42	39
Protestant	28	32	28
White evangelical	38	26	23
White mainline	15	36	38
Black Protestant	23	39	26
Catholic	24	36	30
White Catholic	22	35	33
Hispanic Catholic	25	36	28
Unaffiliated	11	43	38
<i>Those who say having an abortion is ...</i>			
Morally wrong	36	29	23
Morally acceptable	6	25	67
Not a moral issue	8	62	26

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58b. Response of those who volunteered "depends on situation" or who gave no response not shown.

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However, in comparison to attitudes toward abortion, differences among religious groups are relatively modest.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those who say that having an abortion is morally acceptable also are more likely to say that embryonic stem cell research is morally acceptable (67%). And those who say that having an abortion is morally wrong also are more inclined to consider embryonic stem cell research morally wrong (36% do so). However, a majority of those who think abortion is morally wrong consider embryonic stem cell research to be either morally acceptable (23%) or not a moral issue (29%).

A separate question on the survey asked about the moral acceptability of medical research using stem cells that do *not* derive from human embryos. The overwhelming majority of adults say that non-embryonic stem cell research is either morally acceptable (33%) or is not a moral issue (42%); only 16% say such research is morally wrong.

There are only modest differences in opinion among social and demographic groups on this issue. For example, there are no significant differences in opinion on non-embryonic stem cell research by political party and only modest differences by ideology. However, moderates and liberals are somewhat more inclined than conservatives to say non-embryonic research is not a moral issue. And those with a college degree are more likely than those with fewer years of formal education to say that non-embryonic stem cell research is morally acceptable.

Non-Embryonic Stem Cell Research

% saying medical research that uses stem cells from sources that do not involve human embryos is ...

	Morally wrong	Not a moral issue	Morally acceptable
All adults	16	42	33
Men	16	41	36
Women	17	43	31
18-49	16	46	33
50 and older	18	38	34
College grad+	8	42	45
Some college	16	44	33
H.S. or less	22	41	25
Rep./lean Rep.	15	41	37
Dem./lean Dem.	17	44	33
<i>Political ideology</i>			
Conservative	18	38	34
Moderate	14	45	34
Liberal	15	47	34
Protestant	18	39	33
White evangelical	19	38	34
White mainline	9	42	42
Black Protestant	27	40	20
Catholic	21	39	33
White Catholic	17	38	38
Hispanic Catholic	26	38	26
Unaffiliated	10	53	32

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58c. Response of those who volunteered "depends on situation" or who gave no response not shown.

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MORALITY OF USING IN VITRO FERTILIZATION

For comparison purposes, the Pew Research survey also asked about the moral acceptability of using in vitro fertilization, a procedure that was first successfully carried out in the United Kingdom in 1978 when a woman gave birth after having had her egg fertilized in a laboratory “test tube” and then transferred to her uterus.

Just 12% of Americans say they personally consider using IVF to be morally wrong. One-third say it is morally acceptable, and a 46% plurality says it is not a moral issue.

As with non-embryonic stem cell research, there are only modest differences in opinion among social and demographic groups – including religious groups – about the moral acceptability of IVF. Those with at least a college degree are more inclined to say that using IVF is morally acceptable. But there are no significant differences on this issue by political party, and only modest differences by ideology; more liberals and moderates than conservatives say IVF is not a moral issue.

In Vitro Fertilization

% saying that using in vitro fertilization is ...

	Morally wrong	Not a moral issue	Morally acceptable
All adults	12	46	33
Men	13	46	31
Women	11	46	34
18-49	11	48	32
50 and older	14	43	33
College grad+	7	46	43
Some college	11	47	33
H.S. or less	16	45	26
Rep./lean Rep.	12	46	33
Dem./lean Dem.	10	47	35
<i>Political ideology</i>			
Conservative	15	42	32
Moderate	10	48	35
Liberal	7	55	33
Protestant	13	45	31
White evangelical	14	42	31
White mainline	9	46	39
Black Protestant	12	49	23
Catholic	13	46	31
White Catholic	9	49	35
Hispanic Catholic	18	41	26
Unaffiliated	9	51	34

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 21-April 8, 2013. Q58d. Response of those who volunteered “depends on situation” or who gave no response not shown.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

This report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 21-April 8, 2013, among a national sample of 4,006 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (2,002 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 2,004 were interviewed on a cellphone). Interviews were completed in English and Spanish by live, professionally trained interviewing staff under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International.

A combination of landline and cell random digit dial (RDD) samples were used to reach a representative sample of all adults in the United States who have access to either a landline or a cellphone. Both samples were disproportionately stratified to increase the incidence of African-American and Hispanic respondents. Within each stratum, phone numbers were drawn with equal probabilities. The landline samples were list-assisted and drawn from active blocks containing three or more residential listings, while the cell samples were not list-assisted but were drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers. Both the landline and cell RDD samples were disproportionately stratified by county based on estimated incidences of African-American and Hispanic respondents.

Several stages of statistical adjustment or weighting are used to account for the complex nature of the sample design. The weights account for numerous factors, including (1) the different, disproportionate probabilities of selection in each stratum, (2) the overlap of the landline and cell RDD sample frames, and (3) the differential non-response associated with sample demographics.

Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies, including disproportionate stratification of the sample. The table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Margins of Error

	Sample size	Plus or minus percentage points
All adults	4,006	+/-2.1
White, non-Hispanic	2,425	+/-2.7
Black, non-Hispanic	646	+/-5.0
Hispanic	615	+/-4.9
Protestant	1,960	+/-3.0
White evangelical	697	+/-5.0
White mainline	527	+/-5.9
Black Protestant	488	+/-5.8
Catholic	897	+/-4.2
White Catholic	497	+/-5.7
Hispanic Catholic	325	+/-6.6
Unaffiliated	741	+/-4.8

The margins of error are reported at the 95% level of confidence and are calculated by taking into account the average design effect for each subgroup.

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The survey's *margin of error* is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample – the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is ± 2.1 percentage points. This means that in 95 out of every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 2.1 percentage points away from their true values in the population. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance used in this report take into account the effect of weighting. 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.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE PROJECT
TOPLINE
March 21-April 8, 2013
N=4,006

Note: All numbers are percentages. The percentages greater than zero but less than 0.5 % are replaced by an asterisk (*). Columns/rows may not total 100% due to rounding.

QUESTIONS 1-57 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE OR PREVIOUSLY RELEASED.

ASK ALL:

Now, a different kind of question ...

Q.58 Do you personally believe that **[INSERT ITEM AND RANDOMIZE ORDER OF A/D AND B/C IN PAIRS, AND RANDOMIZE ITEMS WITHIN PAIRS]** 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?

		<u>Morally acceptable</u>	<u>Morally wrong</u>	<u>Not a moral issue</u>	(VOL.) <u>Depends on the situation</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Having an abortion					
	Mar 21-Apr 8, 2013	15	49	23	9	4
	Jan 9-13, 2013	13	47	27	9	4
	Feb 8-12, 2012	13	48	25	9	5
	Aug 11-17, 2009	10	52	25	8	4
	February, 2006	12	52	23	11	2
b.	Medical research that uses embryonic stem cells					
	Mar 21-Apr 8, 2013	32	22	36	2	9
c.	Medical research that uses stem cells from sources that do NOT involve human embryos					
	Mar 21-Apr 8, 2013	33	16	42	1	7
d.	Using in vitro fertilization					
	Mar 21-Apr 8, 2013	33	12	46	1	9