

Memorandum to Interested Parties

From: Ted Miller, NARAL Pro-Choice America
Date: Wednesday, May 23, 2012
Subject: Key Points in Response to Gallup Poll

The Gallup Organization today released a poll suggesting a decline in the number of Americans identifying as pro-choice.

As you may recall, Gallup release a survey in 2009 that indicated a majority of Americans identifying as “pro-life.” Those results changed in a 2010 survey showing a decline in affiliation with the “pro-life” label.

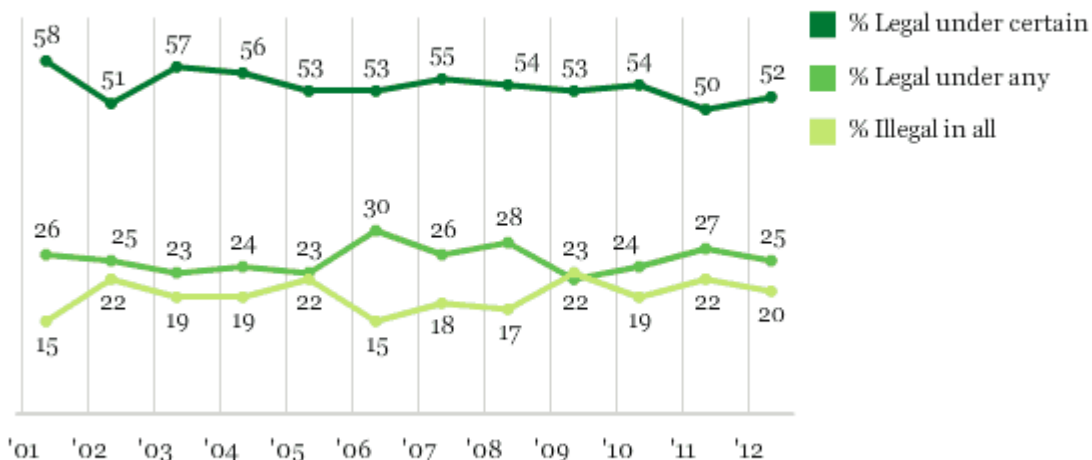
Gallup Shows Support for Legal Abortion Remains Strong

While one part of the Gallup survey focuses on the labels individuals use to describe their position on abortion, it’s important to note that Gallup also reports that a vast majority of Americans continues to support legal abortion in all or certain circumstances:

Gallup's [longest-running measure of abortion views](#), established in 1975, asks Americans if abortion should be legal in all circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances. Since 2001, at least half of Americans have consistently chosen the middle position, saying abortion should be legal under certain circumstances, and the 52% saying this today is similar to the 50% in May 2011. The 25% currently wanting abortion to be legal in all cases and the 20% in favor of making it illegal in all cases are also similar to last year's findings.

Circumstances Under Which Abortion Should Be Legal

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



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This Survey and Electoral Politics

It would be a mistake for anti-choice groups and their allies to interpret this survey as a signal that Americans want even more interference from politicians in their personal, private decisions, including a woman's right to choose safe, legal abortion.

Gender Gap in Presidential Race

- At the presidential level, pro-choice President Obama consistently scores higher among women voters than his presumed Republican opponent, Gov. Mitt Romney. These numbers [come after significant media coverage of a debate over contraceptive coverage and other issues related to women's health.](#)

Pro-Choice Wins in Conservative States

- Since 2005, choice-related issues have been on the ballot 10 times in six states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Mississippi, South Dakota, and Oregon). Pro-choice forces prevailed on nine of the 10 measures, including defeat of a "personhood" abortion ban in Mississippi in November 2011 and two abortion bans in South Dakota in 2006 and 2008, respectively.
- If there is an increase in support for anti-abortion policies, one could assume that this trend would be most evident in the country's most politically conservative states. That has not happened.

Backlash Against State-Level Anti-Choice Legislative Attacks

- Other polls indicate a strong resistance to high-profile attacks on abortion, as evidenced in the battleground state of Virginia. This year Gov. Bob McDonnell signed a forced ultrasound bill into law, and independent polling indicates he and the legislators who supported the measure paid a price with voters. A [Washington Post poll found that half of Virginians opposed the measure,](#) and that 59 percent of voters in that state believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. In addition, [a Quinnipiac University poll taken shortly after Gov. McDonnell signed the bill](#) into law showed that 72 percent believe that it's not the government's place to make such laws. That same survey [showed a drop in Gov. McDonnell's approval rating and major drop in public support for the legislature that passed the bill:](#)

For the first time this session, the Virginia State Legislature received a net negative approval rating from voters: 38 percent approve of its job performance, while 47 percent disapprove. This represents a 19 percentage point net negative shift from the 47 percent to 37 percent approval it received as recently as Feb. 9.

Other Independent Polling Shows Little Change in Opinions on Choice

Last month, [the Pew Center issued survey findings on a wide range of social issues](#). Here is the synopsis of its analysis of choice-related trends:

In contrast with opinions about gun control and gay marriage, public attitudes regarding abortion have changed relatively little in recent years. In surveys conducted in 2011 and 2012, 53% say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases; 41% say it should be illegal in all or most cases.

Opinion was more evenly divided in 2009 and 2010 (48% legal in all most cases vs. 44% illegal in all most cases). But opinions since the start of last year are almost identical to those from surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008 (54% legal vs. 40% illegal). This analysis combines surveys in each two-year period (2007-2008, 2009-2010, 2011-2012), which enables analysis of the views of small demographic groups.

Questions

If you have questions about this material, please contact me at 202-973-3032 or via email at TMiller@ProChoiceAmerica.org