

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/122033/U.S.-Abortion-Attitudes-Closely-Divided.aspx?version=print>

August 4, 2009

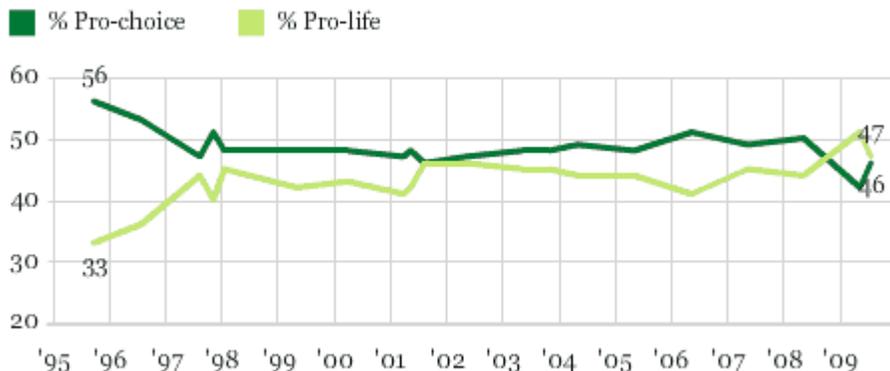
U.S. Abortion Attitudes Closely Divided

Forty-seven percent of Americans identify as "pro-life," 46% as "pro-choice"

by Lydia Saad

PRINCETON, NJ -- A mid-July *USA Today*/Gallup survey finds 47% of Americans calling themselves "pro-life" and 46% "pro-choice." This is less positive for the "pro-life" position than was true in a Gallup survey in May. However, both 2009 readings show more Americans labeling themselves "pro-life" than has been the case in recent years.

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



GALLUP POLL

The average figures for Americans' preferred abortion label across 18 Gallup surveys conducted from 1995 to 2008 are 49% for the "pro-choice" position and 42% for the "pro-life" position -- a seven-point advantage for the "pro-choice" side. Both of Gallup's 2009 surveys show more Americans identifying as "pro-life" than as "pro-choice" (although the one-point advantage for "pro-life" in the July 2009 survey is not statistically significant.)

The May 7-10, 2009, Gallup survey [found a significantly higher percentage of Americans identifying themselves as "pro-life" than "pro-choice,"](#) 51% vs. 42%. (A similar result was found in Gallup Poll Daily tracking from May 12-13.) Those surveys were conducted in the wake of considerable news coverage over the University of Notre Dame's decision to invite President

Barack Obama to deliver the 2009 commencement address, an event that may have raised Americans' awareness of Obama's pro-choice views.

The current poll, conducted just over a month after abortion doctor George Tiller was killed by an anti-abortion activist, finds a nearly even split between the two sentiments. On a long-term basis, both 2009 measures, although differing slightly from one another, indicate a modest shift toward the "pro-life" position.

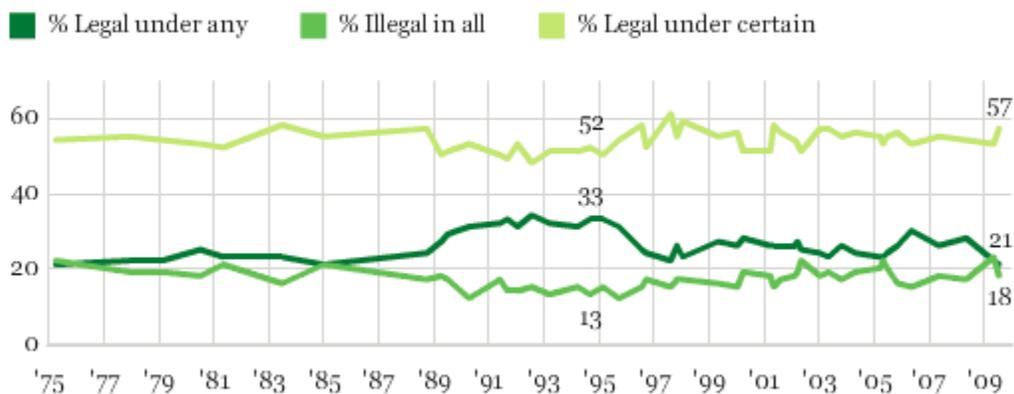
U.S. Adults' Self-Identified Position on Abortion



GALLUP POLL

The current parity among the U.S. public between the "pro-choice" and "pro-life" camps is mirrored in a separate Gallup question asking Americans whether abortion should be legal in all circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances. In Gallup's May and July 2009 surveys, the percentages favoring one of the two extreme positions are about equal. Currently, 21% say abortion should be legal without exceptions while 18% say it should be illegal.

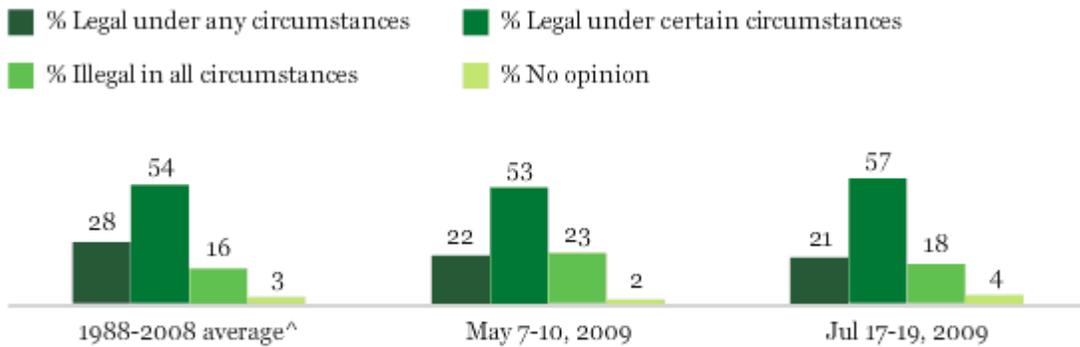
Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?



GALLUP POLL

Apart from several readings between 2002 and 2005 when the two sides were closely matched, a significantly higher percentage of Americans has typically favored unfettered abortion rights than no legal access to abortion, peaking at a 20-point difference in September 1994, 33% vs. 13%. From 1988 through 2008, the average advantage for the "legal under any circumstances" position was 12 percentage points, 28% vs. 16%. That compares with a three-point advantage today.

U.S. Adults' Preference for Legality of Abortion



[^] Based on an average of the yearly averages in Gallup Polls from this period

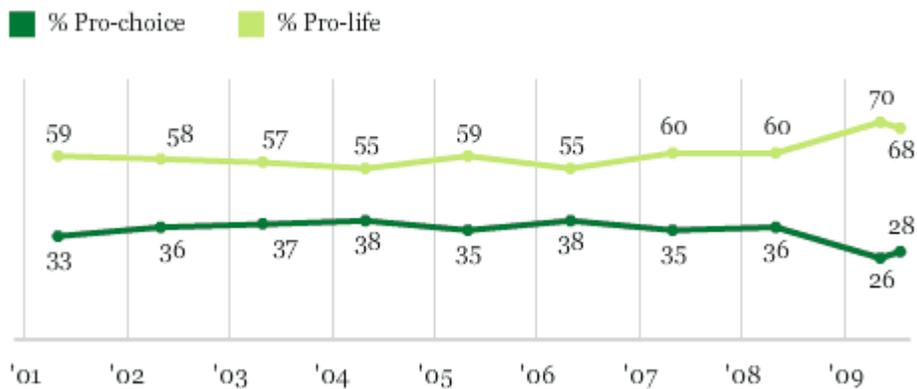
GALLUP POLL

Republicans Remain More "Pro-Life" Compared to Earlier in Decade

As was the case in May, the increase in "pro-life" sentiment in the current survey is the result of a higher percentage of Republicans (including independents who lean Republican) identifying themselves as such. Today, two-thirds of Republicans call themselves "pro-life," up roughly 10 points from earlier this decade.

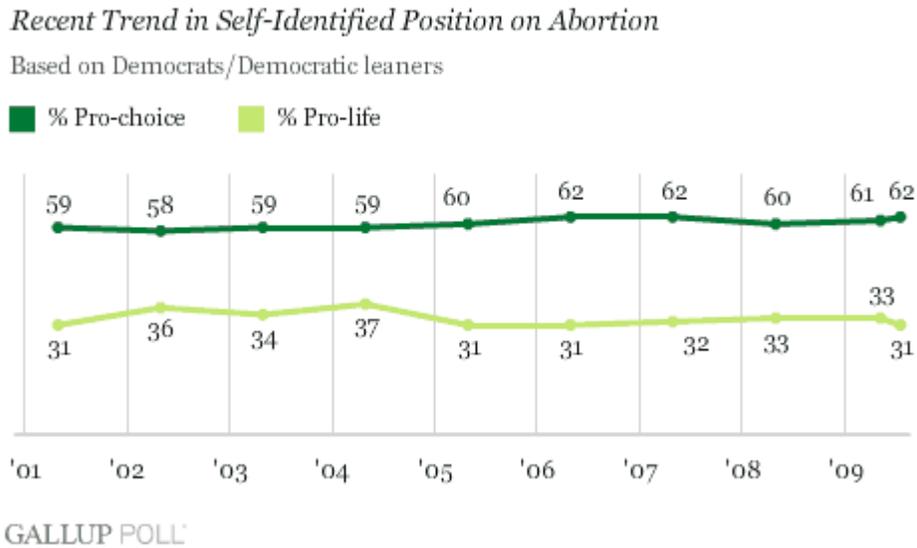
Recent Trend in Self-Identified Position on Abortion

Based on Republicans/Republican leaners



GALLUP POLL

As seen in May, there has been no change in the outlook of Democrats on the issue, who generally favor the "pro-choice" position by 2 to 1.



Bottom Line

Americans' attitudes on abortion have varied over the past two decades, but the balance of opinion has consistently favored the abortion rights side -- ranging from a slight advantage to a significant advantage. Advocacy of abortion rights, as measured in Gallup polling, was particularly high from about 1989 to 1996, and continued to be the dominant position into 2001. It subsequently dwindled some through about 2005, then expanded again from 2006 through 2008. In 2009, the ratio of Americans identifying themselves as "pro-choice" versus "pro-life" and the percentage saying abortion should be legal "under any circumstances" are at or near the lowest levels seen in Gallup trends.

The source of the latest shift in abortion views -- between 2008 and 2009 -- is clear. The percentage of Republicans (including independents who lean Republican) who call themselves "pro-life" has risen by nearly 10 points over the past year, from 60% to 68% -- perhaps a reaction to the "pro-choice" presidency of Barack Obama -- while there has been essentially no change in the views of Democrats and Democratic leaners.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,006 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted July 17-19, 2009. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on land-line telephones (for respondents with a land-line telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell-phone only).

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

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

	Legal under any	Legal only under certain	Illegal in all	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2009 Jul 17-19	21	57	18	4
2009 May 7-10	22	53	23	2
2008 May 8-11	28	54	17	2
2007 May 10-13	26	55	18	1
2006 May 8-11	30	53	15	2
2005 Nov 11-13	26	56	16	2
2005 Jun 24-26	24	55	20	1
2005 May 2-5	23	53	22	2
2005 Mar 21-23	23	55	20	2
2004 May 2-4	24	56	19	1
2003 Oct 24-26	26	55	17	2
2003 May 5-7	23	57	19	1
2003 Jan 10-12	24	57	18	1
2002 May 6-9	25	51	22	2
2002 Mar 22-24	27	53	19	1
2002 Feb 8-10	26	54	18	2
2001 Aug 10-12	26	56	17	1
2001 May 10-14	26	58	15	1
2001 Mar 26-28	26	51	18	5
2000 Mar 30-Apr 2	28	51	19	2
2000 Jan 13-16	26	56	15	3
1999 Apr 30-May 2	27	55	16	2
1998 Jan 16-18	23	59	17	1
1997 Nov 6-9	26	55	17	2
1997 Aug 12-13	22	61	15	2
1996 Sep 20-22 ^	24	52	17	7
1996 Jul 25-28	25	58	15	2
1995 Sep 22-24	31	54	12	3
1995 Feb 24-26	33	50	15	2
1994 Sep 6-7	33	52	13	2
1994 Mar 28-30	31	51	15	3
1993 Mar 12-14	32	51	13	4
1992 Jul 23-24 ^†	34	48	15	3
1992 Jan 16-19	31	53	14	2
1991 Sep 5-8	33	49	14	4
1991 May 30-Jun 2	32	50	17	1
1990 Apr 5-20	31	53	12	4
1989 Jul 6-9	29	51	17	3
1989 Jul 6-7	29	51	17	3
1989 Apr 12-13 †	27	50	18	5

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

17. (If say abortion should be legal under certain circumstances) Do you think abortion should be legal in most circumstances or only in a few circumstances?

Combined responses

	Legal under any	Legal under most	Legal only in a few	Illegal in all	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%
2009 Jul 17-19	21	13	42	18	6
2009 May 7-10	22	15	37	23	3
2008 May 8-11	28	13	40	17	3
2007 May 10-13	26	15	40	18	1
2006 May 8-11	30	13	39	15	3
2005 Nov 11-13	26	16	39	16	3
2005 Jun 24-26	24	15	40	20	1
2005 May 2-5	23	12	40	22	3
2005 Mar 21-23	23	14	39	20	4
2004 May 2-4	24	13	42	19	2
2003 Oct 24-26	26	14	40	17	3
2003 May 5-7	23	15	42	19	1
2003 Jan 10-12	24	14	42	18	2
2002 May 6-9	25	12	39	22	2
2002 Mar 22-24	27	12	40	19	2
2001 Aug 10-12	26	12	43	17	2
2001 May 10-14	26	15	41	15	3
2001 Mar 26-28	26	13	38	18	5
2000 Mar 30-Apr 2	28	11	38	19	4
2000 Jan 13-16	26	17	39	15	3
1999 Apr 30-May 2	27	12	42	16	3
1998 Jan 16-18	23	16	42	17	2
1997 Nov 6-9	26	15	40	17	2
1997 Aug 12-13	22	12	48	15	3
1996 Jul 25-28	25	13	43	15	4
1995 Sep 22-24	31	14	39	12	4
1995 Feb 24-26	32	9	41	15	3
1994 Sep 6-7	33	13	38	13	3

GALLUP POLL

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

	Pro-choice	Pro-life	Mixed/ Neither (vol.)	Don't know what terms mean (vol.)	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%
2009 Jul 17-19	46	47	3	2	2
2009 May 7-10	42	51	2	4	1
2008 May 8-11	50	44	1	2	2
2007 May 10-13	49	45	3	2	2
2006 May 8-11	51	41	4	2	3
2005 May 2-5	48	44	3	3	2
2004 May 2-4	49	44	2	3	2
2003 Oct 24-26	48	45	3	3	1
2003 May 5-7	48	45	2	4	1
2002 May 6-9	47	46	3	3	1
2001 Aug 10-12	46	46	3	3	2
2001 May 10-14	48	42	4	4	2
2001 Mar 26-28	47	41	4	6	2
2000 Mar 30-Apr 2	48	43	2	4	3
1999 Apr 30-May 2	48	42	3	4	3
1998 Jan 16-18	48	45	3	2	2
1997 Nov 6-9	51	40	3	3	3
1997 Aug 12-13	47	44	3	3	3
1996 Jul 25-28	53	36	5	3	3
1995 Sep 22-24	56	33	5	3	3

Trends reported only from polls where previous two questions (under which circumstances should abortion be legal) were also asked.

(vol.) = Volunteered response

GALLUP POLL