From the Huffington Post

Abortion Poll Finds Support For 20-Week Ban

Posted: 07/11/2013 7:25 am EDT Updated: 07/11/2013 3:51 pm EDT

Most Americans would favor sweeping new national restrictions on abortion after the 20th week of pregnancy, according to a new HuffPost/YouGov poll. But the poll also shows many Americans remain conflicted in their views on abortion.

By a margin of 59 percent to 30 percent, respondents to the new poll said they would favor a federal law banning abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

A recent United Technologies/National Journal poll found Americans divided over the possible ban, with a narrower plurality of 48 percent to 44 percent supporting it.
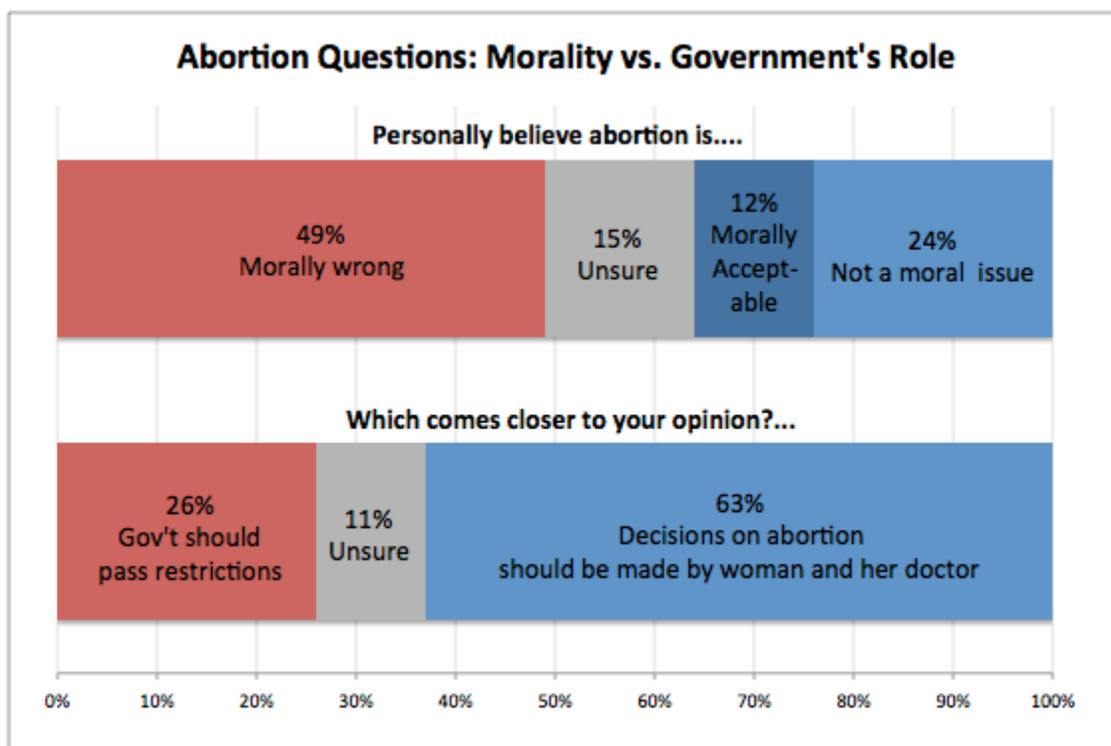
Respondents to the HuffPost/YouGov poll were split in their views on whether abortion should usually be legal or illegal, with a large number falling somewhere in the middle -- a finding consistent with other surveys. Nineteen percent said they think abortion should always be legal, while 27 percent said it should be generally legal, but with some restrictions. Another 17 percent said that abortion should always be illegal, while 30 percent said it should be generally illegal, except in special circumstances. Wide variation in poll results is not unusual when pollsters ask about public policy issues, but the reason is usually public disengagement. Most Americans are unfamiliar with the details of many issues and legislative

proposals, and so when asked about these, survey respondents often form opinions on the spot based on question wording.

With abortion, however, poll results frequently appear to vary for another reason. Americans have a variety of firmly held attitudes about abortion -- often grounded in personal experience or the experience of friends or family -- that are sometimes in conflict.
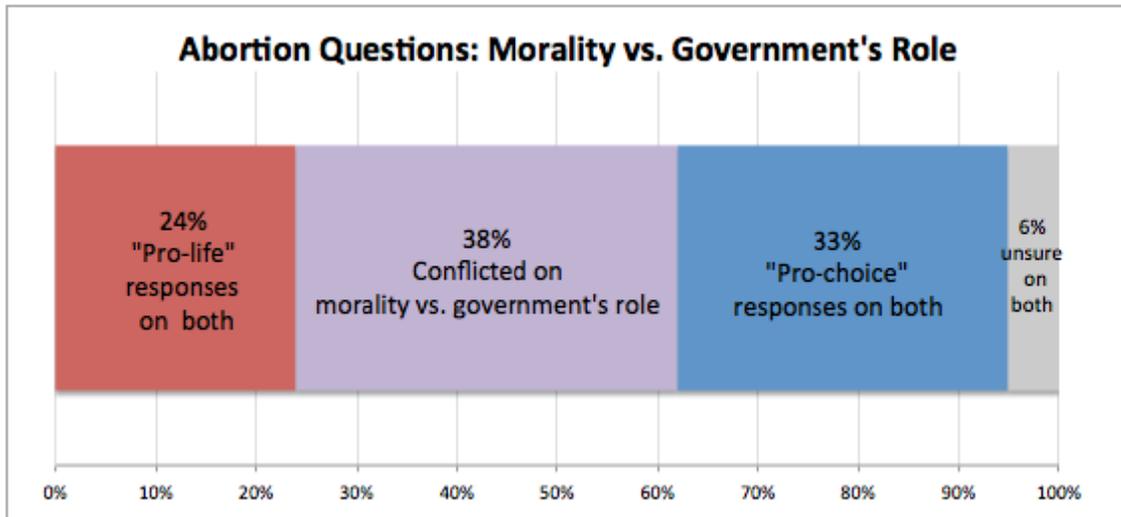
Results from the HuffPost/YouGov poll illustrate two of the most important conflicting attitudes. When asked about the morality of abortion, for example, roughly half say they consider abortion "morally wrong" (49 percent), while more than one-third say it is either "morally acceptable" (12 percent) or "not a moral issue" (24 percent). Another 15 percent are unsure.

At the same time, however, a large majority (63 percent) say that the statement "decisions on abortion should be made by a woman and her doctor" comes closer to their opinion on abortion, while only 26 percent say "government has a right and obligation to pass restrictions on abortion."

Abortion Questions: Morality vs. Government's Role

Personally believe abortion is....

| 49% Morally wrong | 15% Unsure | 12% Morally Acceptable | 24% Not a moral issue |

Which comes closer to your opinion?...

| 26% Gov't should pass restrictions | 11% Unsure | 63% Decisions on abortion should be made by woman and her doctor |

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

Combining responses to these two questions shows that a third (33 percent) take the "pro-choice" position in both instances, nearly a quarter (24 percent) take the "pro-life" position both times, but the largest group (38 percent) is conflicted. Most of these conflicted respondents (30 percent of

the total) say that abortion is morally wrong (or are uncertain about its morality), but also believe that decisions on abortion should be made by a woman and her doctor, not the government.

Abortion Questions: Morality vs. Government's Role

24% "Pro-life" responses on both	38% Conflicted on morality vs. government's role	33% "Pro-choice" responses on both	6% unsure on both

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

These conflicting attitudes among the middle group help to explain the variation on polling results, and the receptivity of many Americans to "some" (but not all) restrictions on abortion. Most respondents who held consistently anti-abortion or pro-abortion rights views on the morality and role of government questions also fell into the corresponding categories on whether abortion should be generally legal or illegal. But the conflicted respondents tended to fall into the middle two categories -- saying that abortion should be legal in some situations, but not in all.

When do you think abortion should be legal?

	By Attitudes on Morality & Gov't Role		
	Consistent "Pro-Choice" (n=330)	Conflicted (n=368)	Consistent "Pro-Life" (n=246)
	%	%	%
Abortion should always be legal	48	5	1
Abortion should be generally legal, but with some restrictions	39	31	8
Abortion should be generally illegal, except in special circumstances	6	44	46
Abortion should always be illegal	6	11	45
Not sure	1	8	0
weighted n=	330	368	246

On a 20-week abortion ban, 70 percent of conflicted respondents said they were in favor of the measure, along with 30 percent of respondents who gave pro-abortion rights responses to both questions and 89 percent of those who gave anti-abortion responses to both.

But the underlying clash of values -- on morality and government's role -- tells only part of the story. "These kind of up-or-down [questions] on 20-week bans don't capture what happens in real life," Democratic pollster Anna Greenberg explained in a recent interview with The Huffington Post, "because in real life, people think abortion is a very complicated issue." Greenberg, who conducted a recent poll on the issue for the Texas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said that in focus groups, voters say "that you can never really know what somebody's individual circumstances are, and they can almost always think of some set of circumstances where it would be okay to have an abortion, whether that's rape, incest, life, health or other reasons."

Put it all together, and questions that focus on specific policy changes on this issue can be highly sensitive to question wording and the specifics of how a proposal is portrayed. (A proposal viewed as one that might shut down abortion clinics entirely, for example, might be viewed in a less favorable light.)

The HuffPost/YouGov poll was conducted June 27-28 among 1,000 adults using a sample selected from YouGov's opt-in online panel to match the demographics and other characteristics of the adult U.S. population. Factors considered include age, race, gender, education, employment, income, marital status, number of children, voter registration, time and location of Internet access, interest in politics, religion and church attendance.

The Huffington Post has teamed up with YouGov to conduct daily opinion polls. You can learn more about this project and take part in YouGov's nationally representative opinion polling.