

Americans Show Rising Support for Abortion Rights: Poll

Results of Harris Interactive/HealthDay survey run counter to states' recent efforts to curb access

NORWALK, Conn., USA (July 25, 2011) – Despite recent moves by some states to restrict access to abortion, more Americans now support a woman's right to choose than they did two years ago, a new *Harris Interactive/HealthDay* poll finds.

Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of those polled in 2009 supported the idea that a woman should have access to abortion in "all circumstances." But that number has risen to 36 percent in 2011 -- the highest proportion seen in Harris polls on the issue since 1985.

At the same time, the percentage of Americans opposed to abortion under any circumstances fell from 21 percent in 2009 to 17 percent this year.

The poll also found that almost half of U.S. adults (47 percent) favored permitting abortion under "some [but not all] circumstances," a slight dip from the 53 percent observed in 2009.

Although the poll's demographics are similar to 2009, the most recent study was done exclusively online, which can have some implications for sensitive topics such as abortion.

"Despite the current trend of fiscal conservatism in the United States stemming from the economic downturn, Americans overall remain socially moderate on abortion rights," said Jennifer Colamonic, senior vice president for healthcare research at Harris Interactive, which conducted the online survey of nearly 2,400 adults at the beginning of July.

The poll results come against the backdrop of recent moves by some states to restrict access to abortion. These include legislation banning insurance coverage for abortion in the health insurance exchanges created as part of last year's federal health care reform; requirements that all women who are considering an abortion get an ultrasound first; and cutting public funding for Planned Parenthood. In some states, such as Indiana, Iowa, Kansas and North Carolina, some of these moves have already been implemented, according to published reports.

The poll included 2,362 U.S. adults over age 18 who were surveyed online between July 6 to 8, 2011, by *Harris Interactive*, one of the world's leading custom market research firms, and *HealthDay*, a leading producer and syndicator of health news.

The complete findings of the newest joint *Harris Interactive/HealthDay* poll are available [here](#). HealthDay's news report is available [here](#). Full data on the poll and its methodology are available at [Harris Interactive](#).

About HealthDay

HealthDay, a division of Scout News LLC, is a leading producer and syndicator of evidence-based health news for consumers and physicians and is the largest syndicator of that news to Internet sites. Its consumer health news service (www.healthday.com) appears on more than 5,000 websites such as Yahoo!, MSN Health, iVillage, US News.com, hundreds of hospitals and hospital group websites, as well as print publication websites across the country. HealthDay also produces Physician's Briefing

(www.physiciansbriefing.com), a news service for physicians, nurses and other medical professionals updated twice daily providing 15 articles a day across 32 medical specialties. HealthDay also provides custom content for major health portals. The newest addition to the HealthDay portfolio is [HealthDay TV](#) –a 90-second news broadcast of essential health information that appears on several major media websites, U.S. government websites and other health information sites.

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive is one of the world's leading custom market research firms, leveraging research, technology, and business acumen to transform relevant insight into actionable foresight. Known widely for the Harris Poll and for pioneering innovative research methodologies, Harris offers expertise in a wide range of industries including health care, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant, and consumer package goods. Serving clients in more than 215 countries and territories through our North American, European, and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms, Harris specializes in delivering research solutions that help us - and our clients - stay ahead of what's next. For more information, please visit www.harrisinteractive.com.

**TABLE 1A
FAVOR PERMITTING ABORTIONS**

“In general, do you favor permitting a woman who wants one to have an abortion in all circumstances, some circumstances or no circumstances?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Political ID			
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
All circumstances	36	20	49	37	31
Some circumstances	47	54	43	49	40
No circumstances	17	26	9	14	29

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 1B
FAVOR PERMITTING ABORTIONS – BY AGE AND GENDER**

“In general, do you favor permitting a woman who wants one to have an abortion in all circumstances, some circumstances or no circumstances?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age						Gender	
		18-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
All circumstances	36	33	31	38	36	40	31	34	37
Some circumstances	47	44	52	41	50	47	52	51	44
No circumstances	17	23	17	22	14	14	17	15	19

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 1C
FAVOR PERMITTING ABORTIONS – TREND**

“In general, do you favor permitting a woman who wants one to have an abortion in all circumstances, some circumstances or no circumstances?”

Base: All Adults

	1985	1992	1993	1996	1998	2005	2006	2007	2009	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All circumstances	26	29	30	25	23	23	24	25	23	36
Some circumstances	53	54	55	53	58	55	53	52	53	47
No circumstances	20	14	14	19	17	21	20	20	21	17
Not sure	1	3	2	4	1	1	4	2	4	NA

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding; NA signifies that response choice was not given. Previous years conducted by telephone.

**TABLE 2A
LAWS ABOUT ABORTION**

“Do you favor laws that would make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion, favor laws that would make it easier to get an abortion or should no change be made to existing abortion laws?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Political ID			
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
Making it more difficult to get an abortion	34	58	20	31	34
Make it easier to get an abortion	28	18	38	28	20
No change	38	24	42	41	46

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 2B
LAWS ABOUT ABORTION**

“Do you favor laws that would make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion, favor laws that would make it easier to get an abortion or should no change be made to existing abortion laws?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age						Gender	
		18-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Making it more difficult to get an abortion	34	32	31	35	37	30	38	33	35
Make it easier to get an abortion	28	36	30	26	28	29	25	30	27
No change	38	33	39	39	35	41	37	37	39

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 2C
LAWS ABOUT ABORTION -- TREND**

“Do you favor laws that would make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion, favor laws that would make it easier to get an abortion or should no change be made to existing abortion laws?”

Base: All Adults

	1992	1993	1998	2005	2006	2007	2009	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Making it more difficult to get an abortion	34	35	40	42	40	42	41	34
Make it easier to get an abortion	18	22	16	13	15	16	14	28
No change	44	39	39	42	40	38	40	38
Not sure	4	3	4	1	6	4	6	NA

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding; NA signifies that response choice was not given. Previous years conducted by telephone.

**TABLE 3A
SUPPORT OR OPPOSE POLICIES**

“Below is a list of policies that have been either implemented already or proposed in some states. Please indicate if you support or oppose each of the policies?”

Base: All Adults

	Support (NET)	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Oppose (NET)	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Not at all sure
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not allowing abortion after the first 20 weeks of pregnancy	64	44	20	22	11	11	14
Requiring all pregnant women to have an ultrasound scan of the fetus before having an abortion	47	29	18	38	12	26	15
Not allowing private insurance companies that use the new insurance exchanges to offer insurance coverage for abortion services	36	24	12	44	15	30	20

Eliminating all state funding for Planned Parenthood	33	23	11	55	14	41	12
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Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 3B
SUPPORT OR OPPOSE POLICIES**

“Below is a list of policies that have been either implemented already or proposed in some states. Please indicate if you support or oppose each of the policies?”

Summary of those saying “strongly support” or “somewhat support”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Political ID			
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
Not allowing abortion after the first 20 weeks of pregnancy	64	81	57	60	63
Requiring all pregnant women to have an ultrasound scan of the fetus before having an abortion	47	67	38	39	47
Not allowing private insurance companies that use the new insurance exchanges to offer insurance coverage for abortion services	36	60	23	32	30
Eliminating all state funding for Planned Parenthood	33	59	16	34	29

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 3C
SUPPORT OR OPPOSE POLICIES – BY AGE AND GENDER

“Below is a list of policies that have been either implemented already or proposed in some states. Please indicate if you support or oppose each of the policies?”

Summary of those saying “strongly support” or “somewhat support”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age						Gender	
		18-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Not allowing abortion after the first 20 weeks of pregnancy	64	65	70	63	62	65	65	62	67
Requiring all pregnant women to have an ultrasound scan of the fetus before having an abortion	47	49	52	49	42	43	52	47	46
Not allowing private insurance companies that use the new insurance exchanges to offer insurance coverage for abortion services	36	37	40	34	33	34	42	39	33
Eliminating all state funding for Planned Parenthood	33	32	35	35	29	29	43	39	28

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 4A
LIMITATIONS ON LEGAL ABORTIONS**

“For those cases where an abortion is allowed by the law, do you think there should be some limitation regarding how late in the pregnancy it should be permitted?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Political ID			
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, there should be some limitation.	74	85	71	72	73
No, there should be no limitation.	13	8	17	13	10
Not at all sure.	13	8	12	15	17

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 4B
LIMITATIONS ON LEGAL ABORTIONS – BY AGE AND GENDER**

“For those cases where an abortion is allowed by the law, do you think there should be some limitation regarding how late in the pregnancy it should be permitted?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Age						Gender	
		18-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Yes, there should be some limitation.	74	68	71	72	73	78	80	71	77
No, there should be no limitation.	13	16	13	13	15	13	8	14	11
Not at all sure.	13	16	16	15	13	10	12	14	12

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 5A
WHEN SHOULD ABORTIONS BE PERMITTED?**

“You indicated that there should be some limitation regarding how late in pregnancy abortion should be permitted. For those cases where abortion is allowed by the law, which of the following comes closest to your views on what this limitation should be?
Abortions should be permitted...”

Base: Adults who say there should be some limitation on how late in pregnancy abortion should be permitted

	Total	Political ID			
		Rep.	Dem.	Ind.	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
Only within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy	43	53	37	35	45
Only within the first 16 weeks of pregnancy	13	11	15	13	9
Only within the first 20 weeks of pregnancy	11	7	12	17	11
Only within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy	4	4	5	5	2
Only within the first 28 weeks of pregnancy	3	1	5	3	*
After 28 weeks of pregnancy	1	*	2	2	3
Not at all sure	25	23	24	26	30

**TABLE 5B
WHEN SHOULD ABORTIONS BE PERMITTED?**

“You indicated that there should be some limitation regarding how late in pregnancy abortion should be permitted. For those cases where abortion is allowed by the law, which of the following comes closest to your views on what this limitation should be?
Abortions should be permitted...”

Base: Adults who say there should be some limitation on how late in pregnancy abortion should be permitted

	Total	Age						Gender	
		18-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Only within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy	43	33	38	44	43	45	47	36	49
Only within the first 16 weeks of pregnancy	13	13	11	10	15	13	15	12	14
Only within the first 20 weeks of pregnancy	11	17	10	12	10	11	9	13	9
Only within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy	4	7	9	6	3	2	3	6	3
Only within the first 28 weeks of pregnancy	3	3	4	5	4	2	1	3	3
After 28 weeks of pregnancy	1	3	*	1	1	2	1	1	1
Not at all sure	25	24	28	22	24	26	24	29	21

Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States July 6 to 8, 2011 among 2,362 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population.

Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Full data available at www.harrisinteractive.com

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