



New Harris Poll Finds Different Religious Groups Have Very Different Attitudes To Some Health Policies and Programs

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – October 20, 2005 – A new Harris Poll finds that large majorities of the U.S. adult public support each of 12 different healthcare policies, programs and practices, including some which are highly controversial. However, people who consider themselves “very religious” or born-again Christians and, particularly, those born-again Christians who describe themselves as Evangelicals, have very different attitudes on some of them.

These are the results of a nationwide Harris Poll of 2,242 U.S. adults surveyed online by Harris Interactive® between September 6 and 12, 2005.

In total, the survey measured attitudes to the following 12 issues, listed in order of their overall popularity (i.e. the percentage of all adults who strongly or somewhat favor them).

1. **Medicare (health insurance for the elderly and disabled)**. Fully 96 percent of adults support Medicare, including 92 percent or more of all religious categories.
2. **Birth control/contraception** is supported by 93 percent of all adults, including 90 percent of Catholics and 88 percent of born-again Christians, the “very religious” and Evangelicals.
3. **Condom use to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases** is supported by 92 percent of adults, including 93 percent of Catholics, 82 percent of born-again Christians, 83 percent of the “very religious” and 81 percent of Evangelicals.
4. **Medicaid (health insurance for people with very low incomes)** is supported by 91 percent of all adults, including 88 percent of all religious categories.
5. **Sex education in high schools** is supported by 87 percent of the public, but only by 76 percent of born-again Christians, 77 percent of the “very religious” and 72 percent of Evangelicals.
6. **Funding of international HIV prevention and treatment programs** is supported by 87 percent of the public, including not less than 82 percent of all religious categories.
7. **Universal health insurance** is favored by 75 percent of all adults, including 63 percent or more of all religious groups.
8. **Embryonic stem cell research** is favored by 70 percent of all adults, including 70 percent of Catholics. However, it is supported by only 45 percent of born-again Christians, 38 percent of Evangelicals and 51 percent of the “very religious.”
9. **Funding of international birth control programs** is supported by 70 percent of the public, including 66 percent of Catholics, but only 53 percent of born-again Christians and 48 percent of Evangelicals.

10. **Withdrawal of life support systems/food for those in a vegetative state** is supported by 68 percent of the public, but by only 47 percent of born-again Christians and 45 percent of Evangelicals.
11. **Abortion rights** (which were not defined) are supported by 63 percent of the public, including 56 percent of Catholics, but by only 30 percent of born-again Christians, 39 percent of the “very religious” and 28 percent of Evangelicals.
12. **Abstinence from sex before marriage** is supported by 63 percent of the public, but by fully 85 percent of born-again Christians, 85 percent of the “very religious” and 91 percent of Evangelicals.

The Big Picture

With a few exceptions, majorities of all the different religious groups favor all the listed policies, programs or practices. However, the exceptions are striking.

One very interesting finding is that the attitudes of Catholics are generally very similar to those of all adults and, on some issues, very unlike the official position of the Pope and the Church. For example, overwhelming majorities of Catholics favor contraception (90%), condom use to prevent HIV and STD infections (93%), the funding of international birth control programs (66%), embryonic stem cell research (70%) and the withdrawal of life support for those in a vegetative state (68%). A majority (56%) also supports abortion rights.

On the other hand, born-again Christians, adults who think of themselves as “very religious” and Evangelicals are much less supportive of all of these programs and policies, with Evangelicals being the least likely to support them. For example, only 28 percent of Evangelicals support abortion rights (compared to 63% of all adults) and only 38 percent of Evangelicals support embryonic stem cell research (compared to 70% of all adults).

TABLE 1
SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION TO 12 HEALTH PROGRAMS, POLICIES OR PRACTICES

"Please indicate whether you support or oppose the policy."

Base: All Adults

	%	Strongly/ Somewhat Favor (NET)	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Strongly/ Somewhat Oppose (NET)	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure
Medicare (health insurance for the elderly and disabled)	%	96	80	16	3	2	1	2
Use of birth control/contraception	%	93	79	14	4	2	2	3
Condom use to prevent HIV and other STDs	%	92	82	10	5	3	2	3
Medicaid (health insurance for people with low incomes)	%	91	63	28	7	5	2	2
Sex education in high school	%	87	68	19	10	5	4	3
Funding of international HIV prevention and treatment programs	%	87	60	27	10	7	3	3
Universal health insurance	%	75	52	23	7	8	9	9
Embryonic stem cell research	%	70	48	22	19	8	11	11
Funding of international birth control programs	%	70	45	24	21	11	10	9
Withdrawal of life support systems/food for those in vegetative state	%	68	40	28	17	8	8	15
Abortion rights	%	63	46	17	32	11	21	5
Abstinence from sex before marriage	%	63	32	31	27	18	9	10

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

TABLE 2
THOSE IN FAVOR OF 12 HEALTH PROGRAMS, POLICIES OR PRACTICES – BY RELIGION

"Please indicate whether you support or oppose the policy."

Percent saying strongly or somewhat favor

Base: All Adults

	Total (n=2,242)	Catholic (n=403)	Episcopalian/ Anglican (n=53)	Lutheran (n=115)	Methodist (n=147)	Non- Denominational (n=174)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Abortion rights	63	56	83	67	75	50
Use of birth control/contraception	93	90	100	95	95	92
Abstinence from sex before marriage	63	66	44	72	65	86
Condom use to prevent HIV and other STDs	92	93	99	96	94	84
Funding of international HIV prevention and treatment programs	87	86	86	82	90	84
Funding of international birth control programs	70	66	79	75	75	61
Universal health insurance	75	76	65	71	66	68
Sex education in high school	87	89	92	94	91	83
Embryonic stem cell research	70	70	88	70	77	59
Withdrawal of life support systems/food for those in vegetative state	68	68	80	75	77	58
Medicare (health insurance for the elderly and disabled)	96	98	93	96	97	96
Medicaid (health insurance for people with low incomes)	91	92	95	91	91	91

	Total (n=2,242)	Presbyterian (n=85)	Baptist (n=221)	Other Christian (n=215)	Jewish (n=75)	Agnostic/ Atheist (n=199)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Abortion rights	63	72	53	49	83	90
Use of birth control/contraception	93	99	94	89	97	99
Abstinence from sex before marriage	63	63	75	76	44	31
Condom use to prevent HIV and other STDs	92	99	91	8/4	98	99
Funding of international HIV prevention and treatment programs	87	89	87	85	92	95
Funding of international birth control programs	70	81	62	62	79	87
Universal health insurance	75	80	76	68	68	89
Sex education in high school	87	90	83	81	94	94
Embryonic stem cell research	70	82	62	58	95	96
Withdrawal of life support systems/food for those in vegetative state	68	80	64	61	75	86
Medicare (health insurance for the elderly and disabled)	96	97	97	96	92	97
Medicaid (health insurance for people with low incomes)	91	88	92	88	90	91

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TABLE 3
THOSE IN FAVOR OF 12 HEALTH PROGRAMS POLICIES OR PRACTICES – BY RELIGION

"Please indicate whether you support or oppose the policy."
Percent saying strongly or somewhat favor

Base: All Adults

	Total (n=2,242)	Born- again Christians (n=413)	Very Religious (n=448)	Evangelical Born-again Christians (n=202)
	%	%	%	%
Abortion rights	63	30	39	28
Use of birth control /contraception	93	88	88	88
Abstinence from sex before marriage	63	85	85	91
Condom use to prevent HIV and other STDs	92	82	83	81
Funding of international HIV prevention and treatment programs	87	82	86	82
Funding of international birth control programs	70	53	57	48
Universal health insurance	75	63	71	66
Sex education in high school	87	76	77	72
Embryonic stem cell research	70	45	51	38
Withdrawal of life support systems/food for those in vegetative state	68	47	56	45
Medicare (health insurance for the elderly and disabled)	96	96	96	98
Medicaid (health insurance for people with low incomes)	91	89	92	90

Methodology

The Harris Poll[®] was conducted online within the United States between September 6 and 12, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 2,242 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race, 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.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the various sub-samples shown in the above tables is higher and varies. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample is not a probability sample.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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About Harris Interactive®

Harris Interactive Inc. (www.harrisinteractive.com) is the 13th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world, perhaps best known for *The Harris Poll*® and for pioneering and engineering Internet-based research methods. The Rochester, New York-based global research company blends premier strategic consulting with innovative and efficient methods of investigation, analysis and application, conducting proprietary and public research globally to help clients achieve clear, material and enduring results.

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