



Abortion in America

January 2015

INTRODUCTION

Study Objectives



- Understand Americans' attitudes toward abortion
- Detail how Americans define their positions on the issue
- Identify Americans who align with each side of the abortion debate
- Profile those who do not strongly align with one side or the other
- Explore the nuances in Americans' opinions regarding restrictions

Executive Summary: Views on Abortion

- When asked directly to take sides on the issue of abortion, either pro-life or pro-choice, Americans divide almost equally. 47% of Americans describe themselves as pro-life, and 49% identify as pro-choice.
- However, Americans' views on abortion are complex. When offered additional options to define their sentiment on the issue, a good deal of common ground is revealed.
- Most Americans, 84%, agree there should be significant restrictions and safe guards associated with the procedure including limits to within the first three months of pregnancy, allowed only in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother, or never permitted.
- Even more than two-thirds of pro-choice supporters believe access should be available, at most, during the first three months of pregnancy, allowed only in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother, or never permitted.
- Most Americans, 84%, think laws can exist which protect, both, the health and well-being of a woman and the rights of the unborn. Of note, fewer Americans now, 12%, report the law must choose than in 2010 when 19% had this view.

Executive Summary: Abortion Restrictions

- Should access to abortion be restricted? Given the number of abortions in the United States over the last 40 years, 64% of Americans believe the figure is higher than it should be. Also noteworthy, 42% of pro-choice Americans, including more than one-third of those who strongly hold this view, 35%, believe the number of abortions over time has been higher than it should be.
- Nearly six in ten Americans, 58%, think additional legal restrictions on abortion are required.
- Specifically, most residents, 78%, favor parental notification if an underage girl seeks an abortion including 65% who identify as pro-choice.
- There is little support for using tax dollars to pay for a woman's abortion. 68% of Americans, regardless of gender, oppose the use of public funding for this purpose.
- Overall, 59% of Americans think abortion does more harm than good to a woman in the long-run.

Executive Summary: Religious Conscience

- Should professionals and organizations with moral objections to abortion be required to provide abortion services, insurance coverage, or referrals? A majority of Americans, 57%, thinks these groups should be allowed to opt out on moral grounds. Even 40% of pro-choice Americans believe moral objections to abortion should be respected, and professionals with such objections should not be required to provide abortion-related services.
- Religious freedom, overall, should be the priority even if it is in opposition with government laws, say seven in ten Americans.
- Regardless of their own feelings about the legality of abortion, 60% of Americans believe abortion is morally wrong.

AMERICANS' VIEWS ON ABORTION

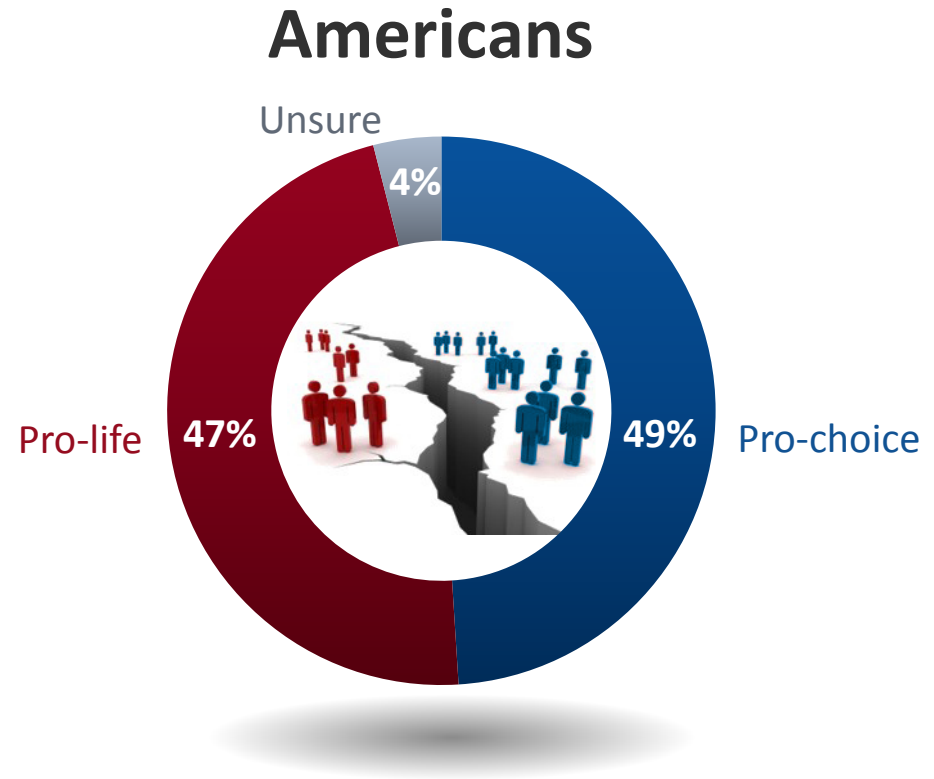
Pro-life or Pro-choice?

When asked to take sides, Americans divide on the issue of abortion.

On the issue of abortion, do you consider yourself pro-life or pro-choice?

2014

Pro-life	46%
Pro-choice	50%
Unsure	4%



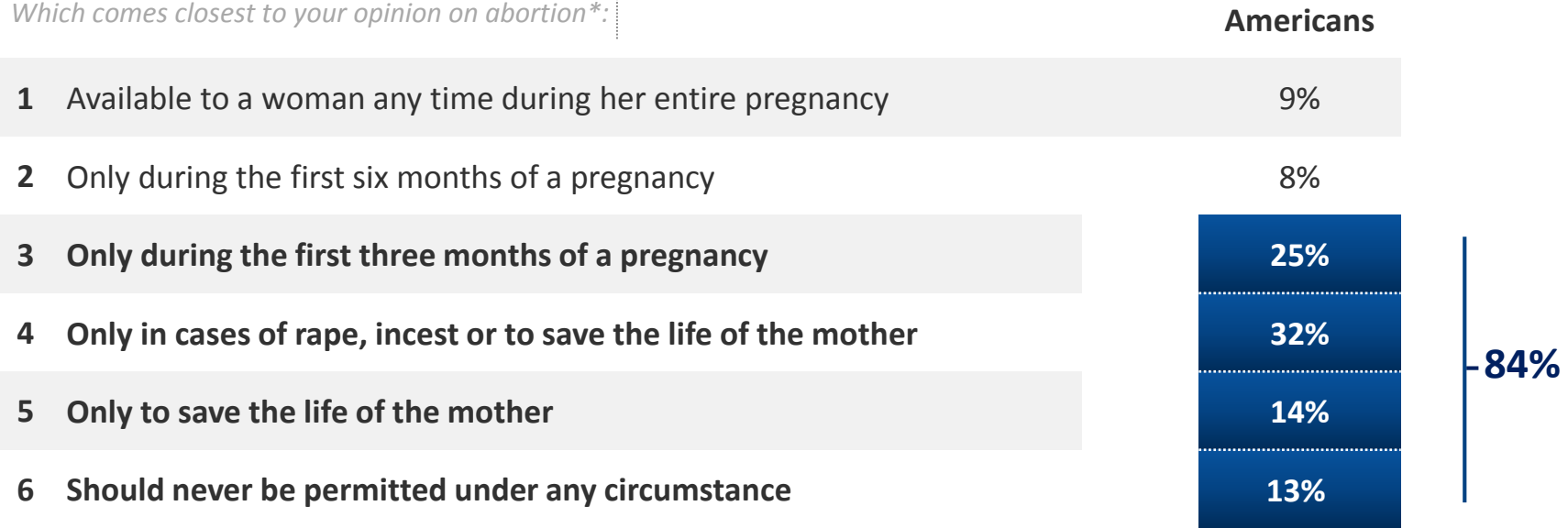
Digging Deeper

1. Members of the Greatest generation, 60%, are more likely than any other generation to describe themselves as pro-life. The proportion of those in the Greatest generation with this viewpoint has grown from 53% in 2014.

Americans' Views on Abortion

Most Americans want significant restrictions on abortion.

Which comes closest to your opinion on abortion*:



**Which ONE of the following statements comes closest to your opinion on abortion: One, abortion should be available to a woman any time she wants one during her entire pregnancy, Two, abortion should be allowed only during the first six months of a pregnancy, Three, abortion should be allowed only during the first three months of a pregnancy, Four, abortion should be allowed only in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother, Five, abortion should be allowed only to save the life of the mother, Six, abortion should never be permitted under any circumstance?*

Digging Deeper

- 92% of pro-life supporters think abortion should be allowed, at most, in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother, or never permitted
- 69% of those who describe themselves as pro-choice say abortion should be allowed, at most, in the first trimester or only in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother, or never permitted

Understanding Americans' Views on Abortion

Regardless of their position on abortion, most Americans, including 57% of those who are strongly pro-choice, want significant restrictions on abortion.

IN THE MIDDLE

Which comes closest to your opinion on abortion*:		Pro-life Supporters	Pro-choice Supporters	Strongly support pro-life	Somewhat support pro-life	Sometimes think of self as pro-choice	Sometimes think of self as pro-life	Somewhat support pro-choice	Strongly support pro-choice
1	Any time during her entire pregnancy	1%	17%	1%	1%	1%	10%	7%	25%
2	During the first six months	1%	15%	<1%	1%	4%	4%	15%	18%
3	During the first three months	6%	44%	3%	7%	15%	36%	48%	45%
4	Only in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother	44%	19%	35%	65%	61%	39%	26%	9%
5	Only to save the life of the mother	24%	3%	29%	19%	11%	8%	2%	1%
6	Never be permitted	24%	3%	32%	7%	7%	4%	1%	2%

*Which ONE of the following statements comes closest to your opinion on abortion: One, abortion should be available to a woman any time she wants one during her entire pregnancy, Two, abortion should be allowed only during the first six months of a pregnancy, Three, abortion should be allowed only during the first three months of a pregnancy, Four, abortion should be allowed only in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother, Five, abortion should be allowed only to save the life of the mother, Six, abortion should never be permitted under any circumstance?

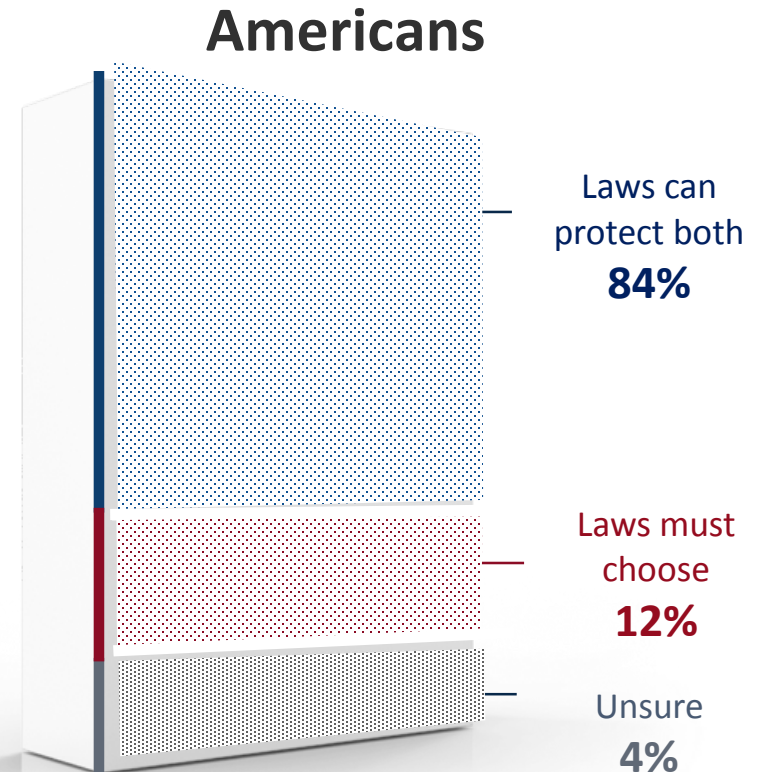
Digging Deeper

- 32% of those who strongly support the pro-life position believe abortion should never be permitted. 25% of strong pro-choice advocates say abortion should never be restricted.

Equal Protection?

Most Americans think both the health and well-being of the woman and the life of the unborn can be protected under the law.

Which statement comes closer to your view: One, it is possible to have laws which protect both the health and well-being of a woman and the life of the unborn; or two, it is necessary for laws to choose to protect one and not the other?



Digging Deeper

1. The proportion of Americans who say the rights of the mother or the unborn supersedes the other has declined from 19% in 2010 to 12% now.



ABORTION RESTRICTIONS

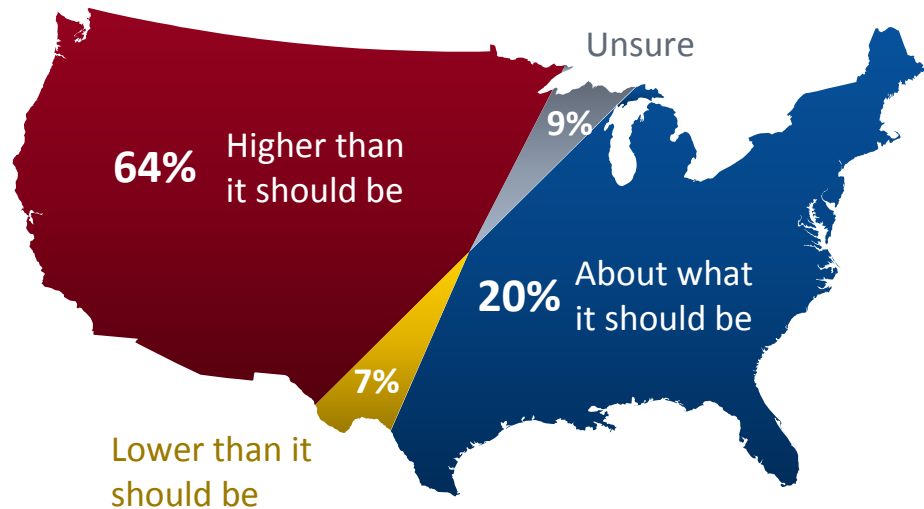
Abortions in the U.S.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans think there are too many abortions in the United States.

Last year, there were more than one million abortions in the United States. Since 1973 there have been about 50 million abortions. In general, do you think the number of abortions in the U.S. is higher than it should be, lower than it should be, or about what it should be?

	Pro-life	Pro-choice
Higher than it should be	88%	42%
Lower than it should be	3%	11%
About what it should be	6%	32%
Unsure	2%	15%

Americans



Digging Deeper

1. A plurality of pro-choice proponents, 42%, including 35% who strongly hold this position, believe the number of abortions in the United States over the decades has been too high.

Providing Oversight

Americans favor greater legal restrictions on abortion, especially when an underage girl seeks the procedure. Using tax dollars to fund abortions is widely opposed.

Americans

Please tell me if you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following statements:

78% support



Parental notification

58% support



Greater legal restrictions

68% oppose



Use of tax dollars for abortions

Presents percentage reporting strongly support/support

Requiring a parent to be notified before their underage daughter is allowed to have an abortion

Pro-life

91%

Pro-choice

65%

Changing laws to allow for some restrictions on abortion

71%

46%

Presents percentage reporting oppose/strongly oppose

Using tax dollars to pay for a woman's abortion

87%

49%

Abortion Law: Pro-life/Pro-choice Continuum

Most pro-life Americans favor abortion restrictions. Notable proportions of pro-choice Americans support limits as well.

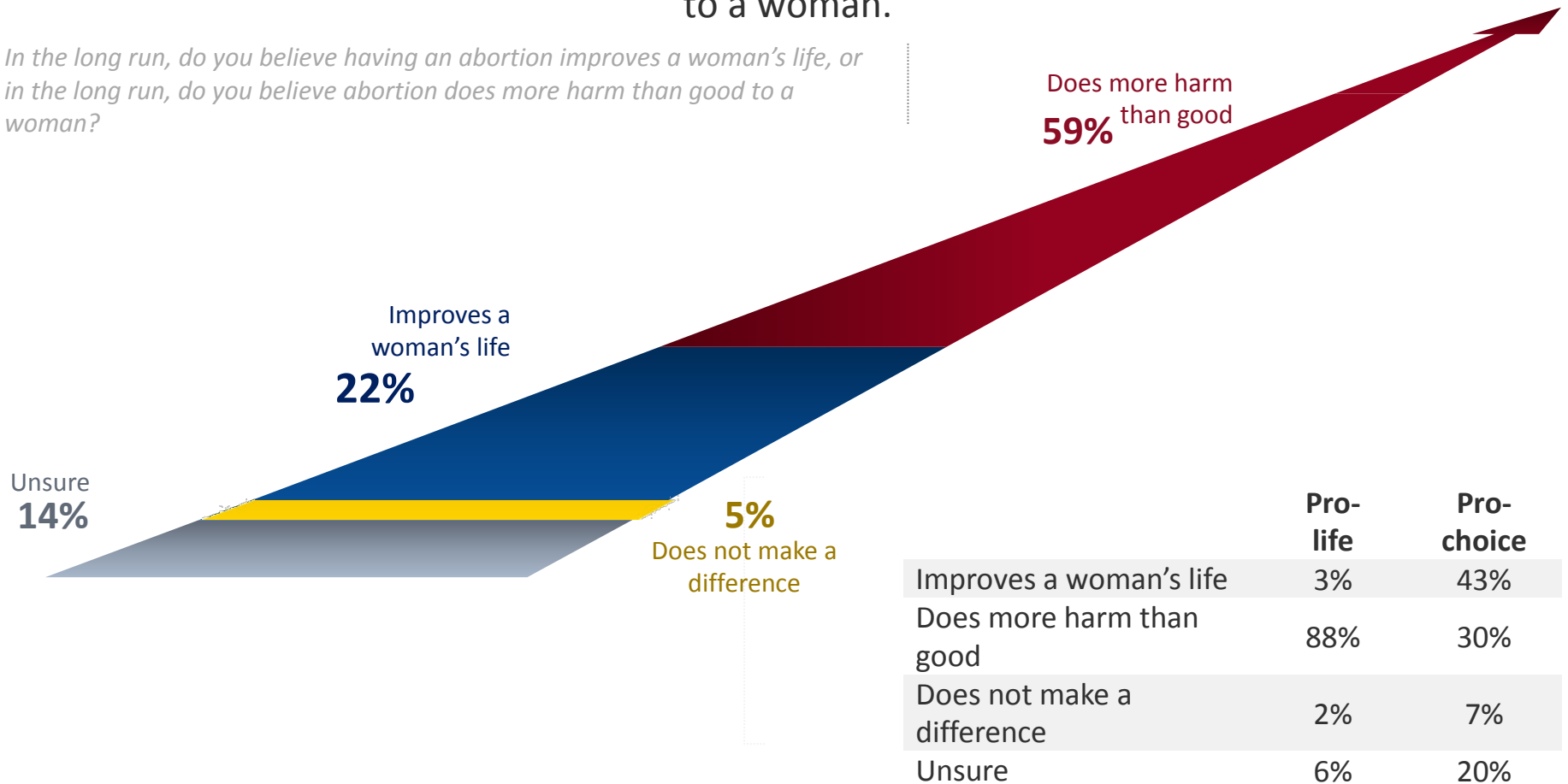
Please tell me if you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following statements:

Presents percentage reporting strongly support/support	Strongly support pro-life		Somewhat support pro-life		Sometimes think of self as pro-choice		Somewhat support pro-choice		Strongly support pro-choice	
	Pro-life Supporters	Pro-choice Supporters	Pro-life	Pro-choice	Pro-life	Pro-choice	Pro-life	Pro-choice	Pro-life	Pro-choice
Requiring a parent to be notified before their underage daughter is allowed to have an abortion	91%	65%	92%	94%	88%	84%	67%	57%		
Changing laws to allow for some restrictions on abortion	71%	46%	67%	80%	79%	68%	53%	34%		
Using tax dollars to pay for a woman's abortion	11%	47%	7%	14%	21%	26%	35%	60%		

The Lifelong Impact of Abortion

Close to six in ten Americans think the long-term effect of having an abortion is detrimental to a woman.

In the long run, do you believe having an abortion improves a woman's life, or in the long run, do you believe abortion does more harm than good to a woman?





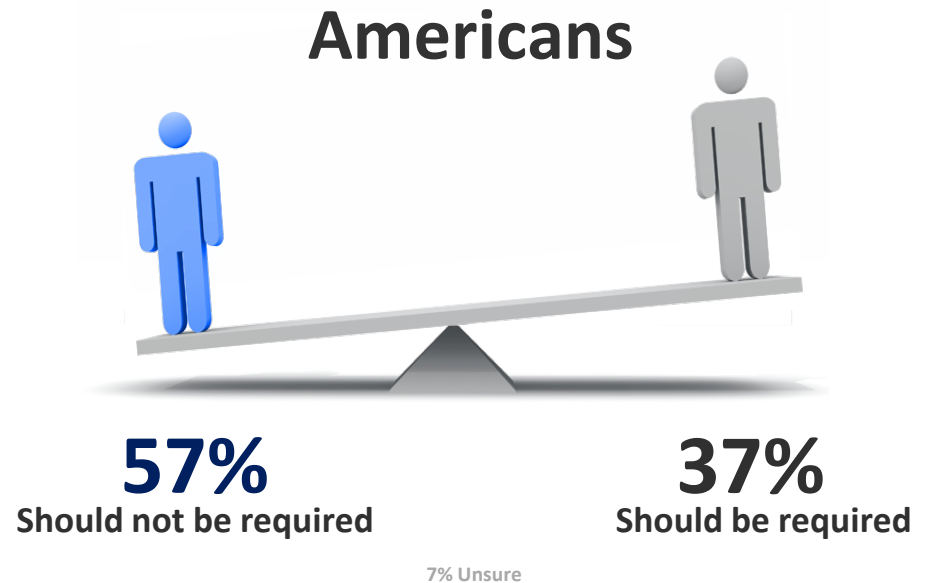
RELIGIOUS CONSCIENCE

Opting Out on Moral Grounds

Professionals with moral objections should *not* be required to carry out abortion procedures, according to nearly six in ten Americans.

Do you think professionals or organizations who have moral objections to abortion should or should not be required to provide abortion services, insurance coverage, or referrals?

	Pro-life	Pro-choice
Should be required	20%	54%
Should not be required	75%	40%
Unsure	6%	6%



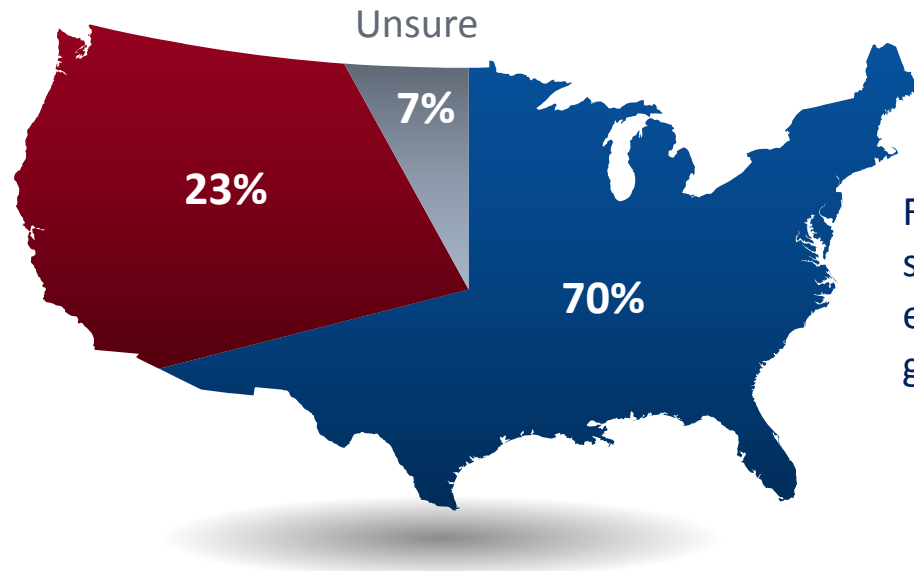
Freedom of Religion

Seven in ten Americans believe freedom of religion should be protected even if it conflicts with government laws.

Which statement comes closer to your view:

Americans

Government laws
should be observed
without exception
even if it restricts
freedom of religion



Freedom of religion
should be protected
even if it goes against
government laws

2014

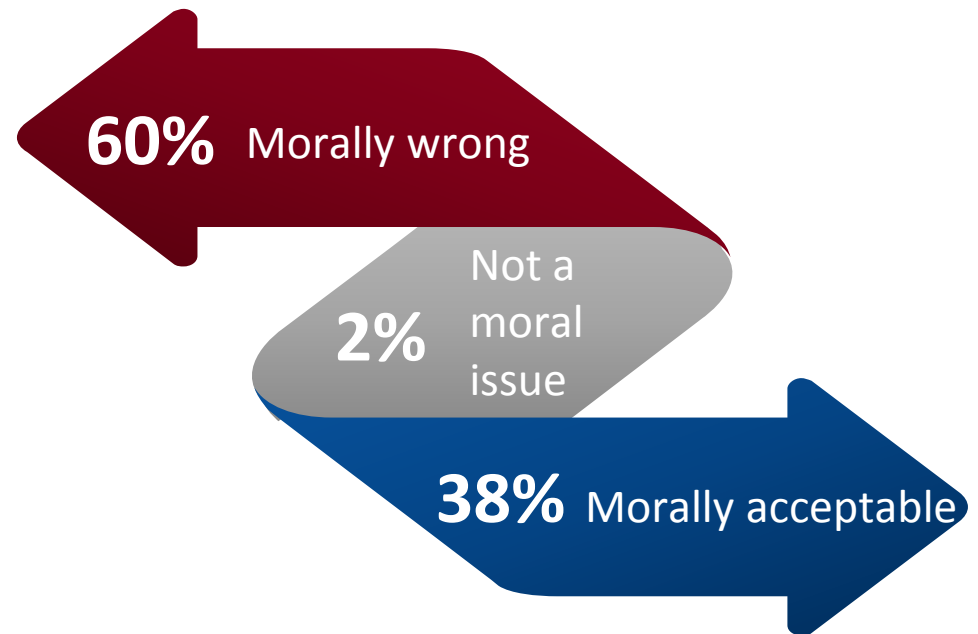
Freedom of religion should be protected even if it goes against government laws	71%
Government laws should be observed without exception even if it restricts freedom of religion	21%
Unsure	8%

The Moral Dimension

Regardless of whether or not abortion should be legal, six in ten Americans think it is morally wrong.

Regardless of whether or not you think it should be legal, do you believe that, in general, abortion is morally acceptable or morally wrong?

Americans



Pro-life **Pro-choice**

Morally acceptable	10%	69%
Morally wrong	90%	29%
Not a moral issue	1%	2%

Pro-Life Americans:

Self-identify as pro-life

- 92% think abortion should be allowed, at most, in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother, or never permitted
- 89% say laws can protect both the mother and the unborn
- Most, 87%, oppose using tax dollars to fund a woman's abortion
- Three quarters, 75%, feel that professionals who have moral objections should not be required to perform abortion services
- Nine in ten, 90%, say abortion is morally unacceptable
- Most, 81%, think freedom of religion should be protected



Pro-Choice Americans:

Self-identify as pro-choice

- 69% say abortion should be allowed, at most, in the first trimester or only in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother, or never permitted
- 79% think laws can protect the mother and the unborn
- Divide over whether or not tax dollars should, 47%, or should not, 49%, be used to pay for a woman's abortion
- 54% think professionals who morally object to abortion should be required to provide abortion services regardless of their personal feelings
- 69% consider abortion to be morally acceptable
- 59% think freedom of religion should be protected even if it goes against government laws



STUDY METHODOLOGY

How the Study was Conducted



- This study was undertaken by The Knights of Columbus and conducted by The Marist Institute for Public Opinion located at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York
- This report presents the findings from a random digit dial telephone survey of 2,079 Americans, including both landline and cell phone sampling frames
- Reports for Americans have a margin of error of +/- 2.1 percentage points
- Data were collected in January 2015
- Analysis of sub-groups is included when noteworthy and/or statistically different
- Please note that some totals may not add to 100% due to rounding

Methodology Statement

- This survey of 2,079 adults was conducted January 7, 2015 through January 13, 2015 by The Marist Poll sponsored and funded in partnership with The Knights of Columbus. Adults 18 years of age and older residing in the continental United States were interviewed in English by telephone using live interviewers.
- Landline telephone numbers were randomly selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation from ASDE Survey Sampler, Inc. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. Respondents in the household were selected by asking for the youngest male. To increase coverage, this landline sample was supplemented by respondents reached through random dialing of cell phone numbers from Survey Sampling International. The two samples were then combined and balanced to reflect the 2010 Census results for age, gender, income, race, and region. Results are statistically significant within ± 2.1 percentage points.
- Some questions on the issue of abortion were asked of half the sample. Survey respondents were randomly selected to complete one of two survey forms. For this report, questions from survey form A are reported. There are 1,210 national adults. Results are statistically significant within ± 2.8 percentage points.