

May 15, 2009

More Americans “Pro-Life” Than “Pro-Choice” for First Time

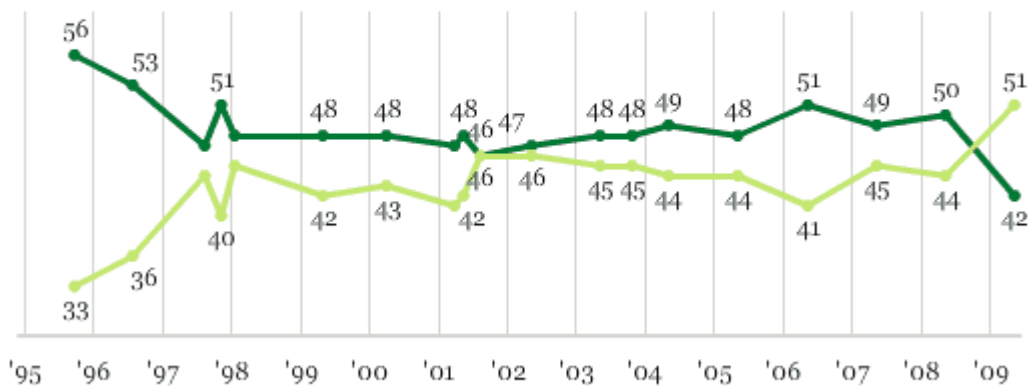
Also, fewer think abortion should be legal “under any circumstances”

by Lydia Saad

PRINCETON, NJ -- A new Gallup Poll, conducted May 7-10, finds 51% of Americans calling themselves "pro-life" on the issue of abortion and 42% "pro-choice." This is the first time a majority of U.S. adults have identified themselves as pro-life since Gallup began asking this question in 1995.

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

■ % Pro-choice ■ % Pro-life



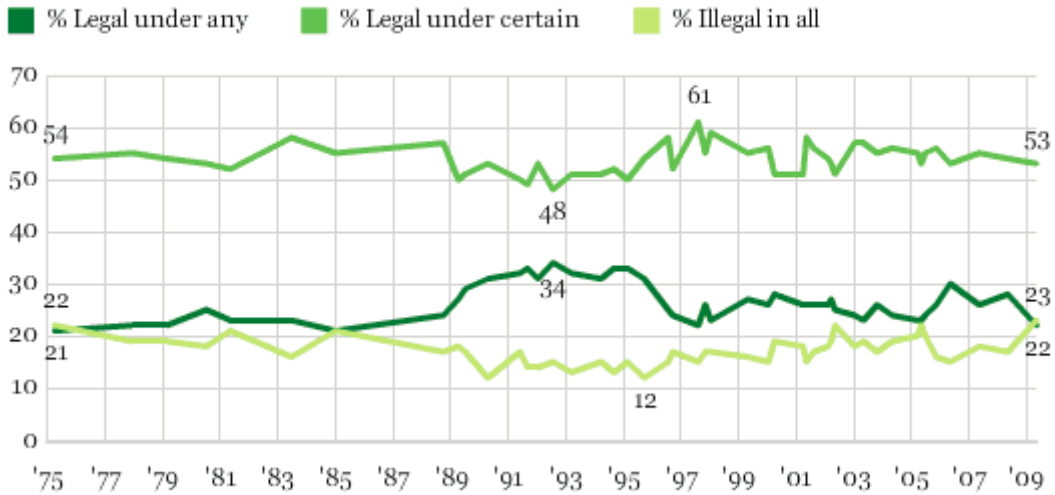
GALLUP POLL

The new results, obtained from Gallup's annual Values and Beliefs survey, represent a significant shift from a year ago, when 50% were pro-choice and 44% pro-life. Prior to now, the highest percentage identifying as pro-life was 46%, in both August 2001 and May 2002.

The May 2009 survey documents comparable changes in public views about the legality of abortion. In answer to a question providing three options for the extent to which abortion should be legal, about as many Americans now say the procedure should be illegal in all circumstances (23%) as say it should be legal under any circumstances

(22%). This contrasts with the last four years, when Gallup found a strong tilt of public attitudes in favor of unrestricted abortion.

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

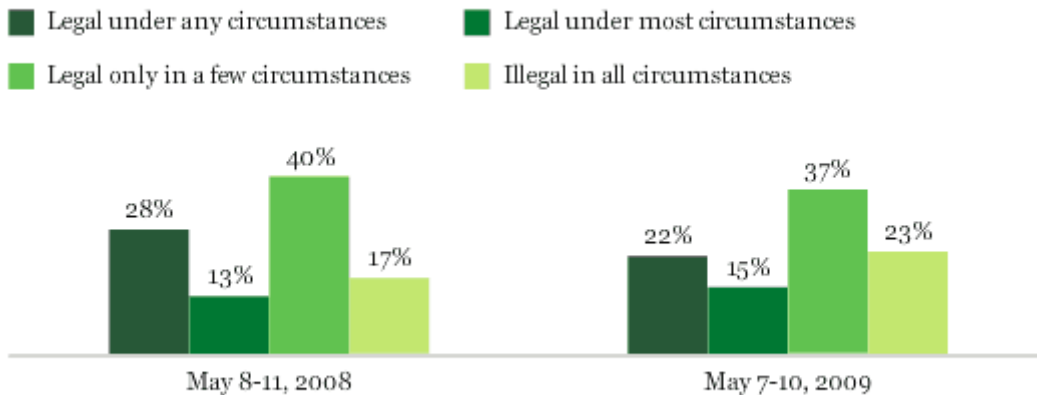


GALLUP POLL

Gallup also found public preferences for the extreme views on abortion about even -- as they are today -- in 2005 and 2002, as well as during much of the first decade of polling on this question from 1975 to 1985. Still, the dominant position on this question remains the middle option, as it has continuously since 1975: 53% currently say abortion should be legal only under certain circumstances.

When the views of this middle group are probed further -- asking these respondents whether they believe abortion should be legal in most or only a few circumstances -- Gallup finds the following breakdown in opinion.

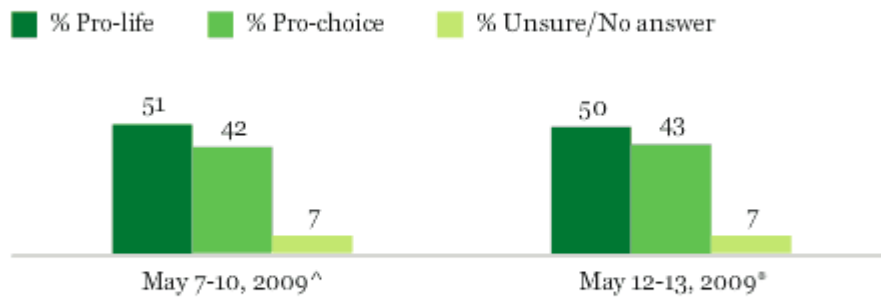
Combined Position on Legality of Abortion



GALLUP POLL

Americans' recent shift toward the pro-life position is confirmed in two other surveys. The same three abortion questions asked on the Gallup Values and Beliefs survey were included in Gallup Poll Daily tracking from May 12-13, with nearly identical results, including a 50% to 43% pro-life versus pro-choice split on the self-identification question.

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



[^] Gallup Values & Beliefs survey

^{*} Gallup Poll Daily tracking

GALLUP POLL

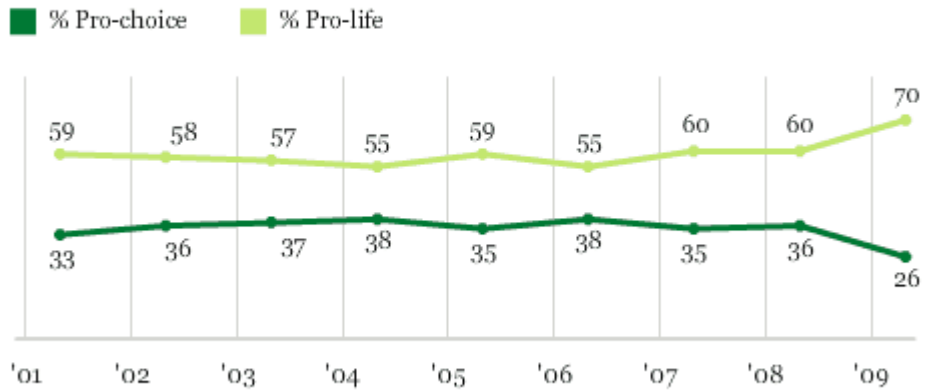
Additionally, a recent national survey by the Pew Research Center recorded an eight percentage-point decline since last August in those saying abortion should be legal in all or most cases, from 54% to 46%. The percentage saying abortion should be legal in only a few or no cases increased from 41% to 44% over the same period. As a result, support for the two broad positions is now about even, sharply different from most polling on this question since 1995, when the majority has typically favored legality.

Republicans Move to the Right

The source of the shift in abortion views is clear in the Gallup Values and Beliefs survey. The percentage of Republicans (including independents who lean Republican) calling themselves "pro-life" rose by 10 points over the past year, from 60% to 70%, while there has been essentially no change in the views of Democrats and Democratic leaners.

Recent Trend in Self-Identified Position on Abortion

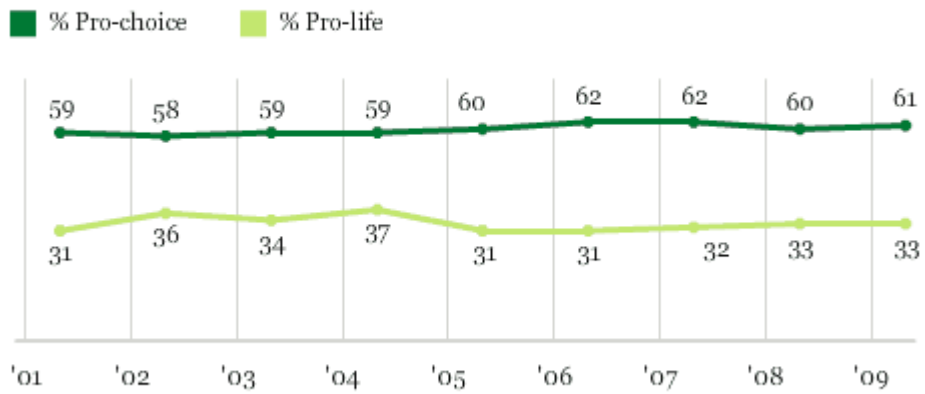
Based on Republicans/Republican leaners



GALLUP POLL

Recent Trend in Self-Identified Position on Abortion

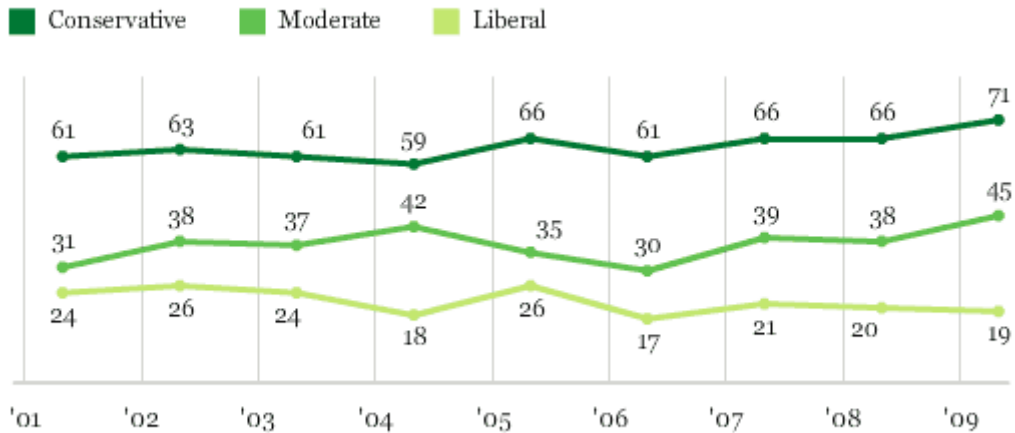
Based on Democrats/Democratic leaners



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Similarly, by ideology, all of the increase in pro-life sentiment is seen among self-identified conservatives and moderates; the abortion views of political liberals have not changed.

Recent Trend in Percentage "Pro-Life," Based on Political Ideology



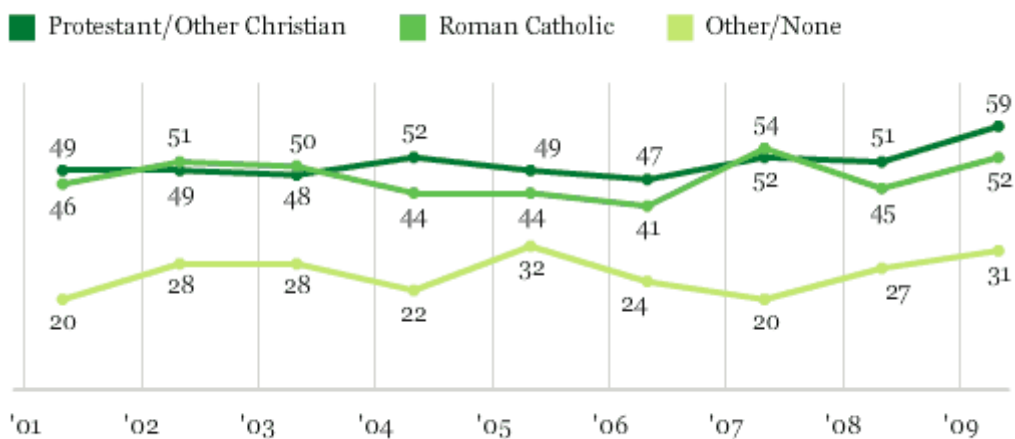
GALLUP POLL

"Pro-Life" Up Among Catholics and Protestants

One of the more prominent news stories touching on the abortion issue in recent months involves President Barack Obama's commencement speech and the bestowal of an honorary doctorate degree on him at the University of Notre Dame -- a Roman Catholic institution -- on Sunday. The invitation has drawn criticism from conservative Catholics and the church hierarchy because of Obama's policies in favor of legalizing and funding abortion, and the controversy might have been expected to strengthen the pro-life leanings of rank-and-file Catholics.

Nevertheless, the swelling of the pro-life position since last year is seen across Christian religious affiliations, including an eight-point gain among Protestants and a seven-point gain among Catholics.

Recent Trend in Percentage "Pro-Life," Based on Religious Preference



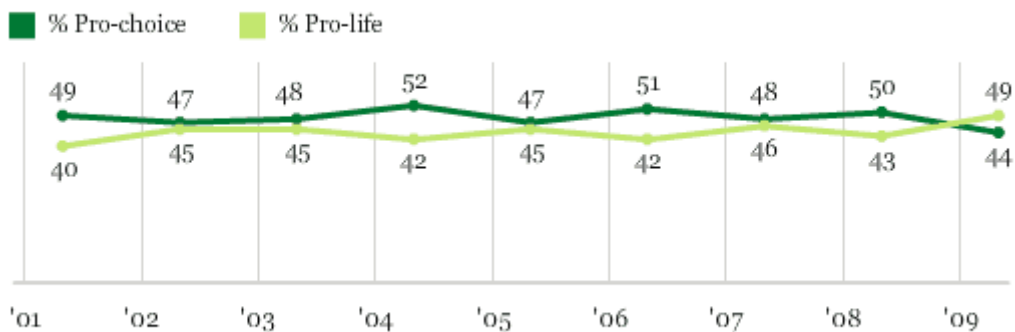
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Gender Agreement

A year ago, Gallup found more women calling themselves pro-choice than pro-life, by 50% to 43%, while men were more closely divided: 49% pro-choice, 46% pro-life. Now, because of heightened pro-life sentiment among both groups, women as well as men are more likely to be pro-life.

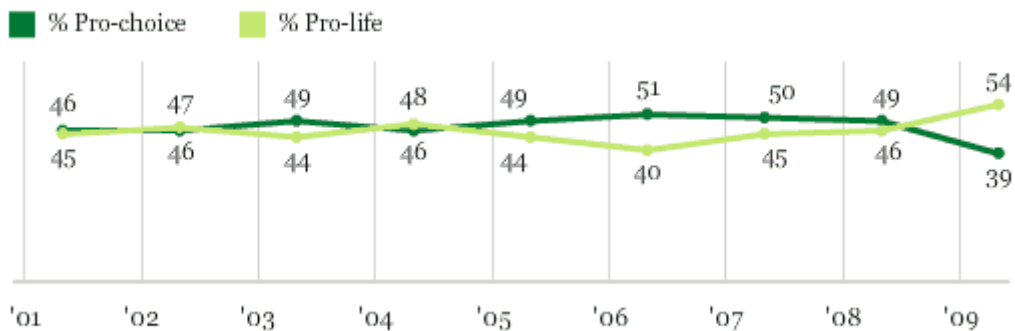
Men and women have been evenly divided on the issue in previous years; however, this is the first time in nine years of Gallup Values surveys that significantly more men and women are pro-life than pro-choice.

Recent Trend Abortion Position, Based on Women



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Recent Trend Abortion Position, Based on Men



GALLUP POLL

Bottom Line

With the first pro-choice president in eight years already making changes to the nation's policies on funding abortion overseas, expressing his support for the Freedom of Choice Act, and moving toward rescinding federal job protections for medical workers who refuse to participate in abortion procedures, Americans -- and, in particular, Republicans -- seem to be taking a step back from the pro-choice position. However, the retreat is evident among political moderates as well as conservatives.

It is possible that, through his abortion policies, Obama has pushed the public's understanding of what it means to be "pro-choice" slightly to the left, politically. While Democrats may support that, as they generally support everything Obama is doing as president, it may be driving others in the opposite direction.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,015 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 7-10, 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 ± 3 percentage points.

Gallup Poll Daily results are based on telephone interviews with 971 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 12-13, 2009, as part of Gallup Poll Daily tracking. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3 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.