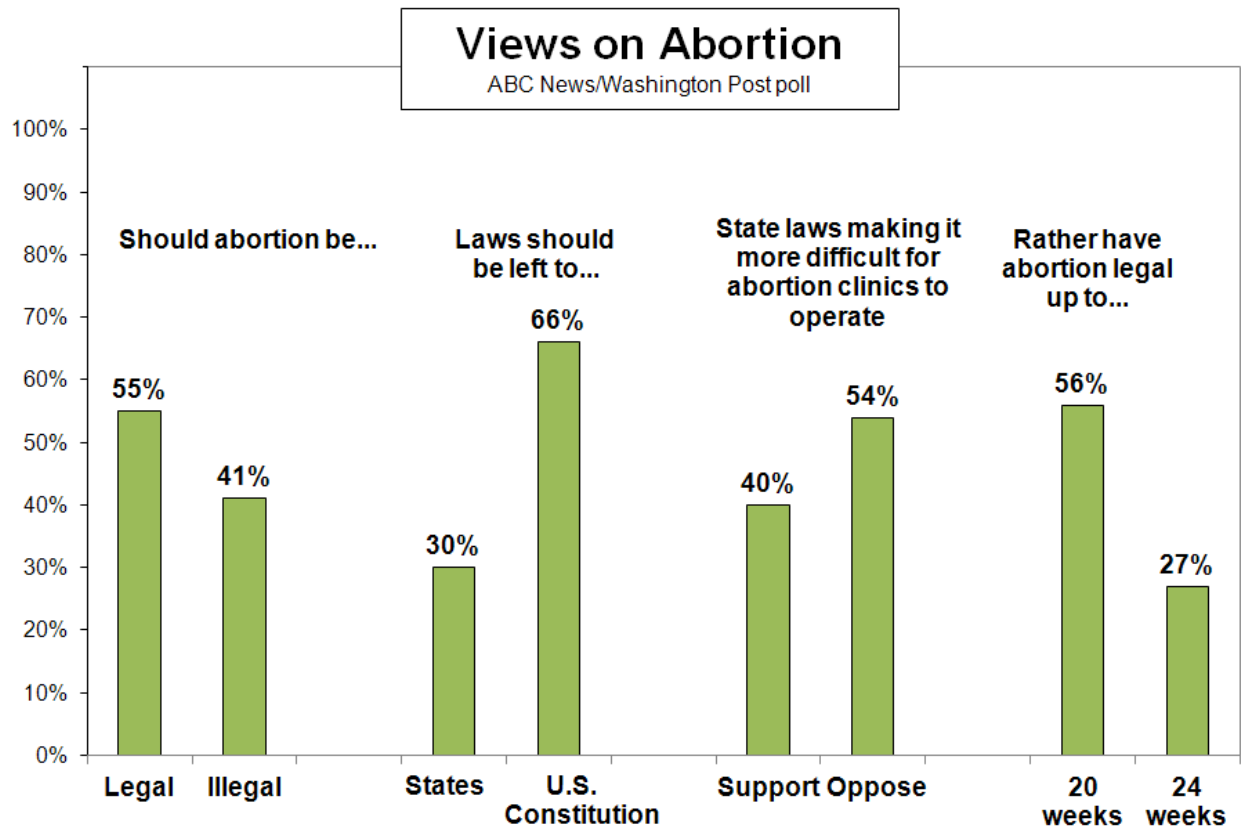


## **Majority Supports Legal Abortion, But Details Indicate Ambivalence**

Most Americans continue to support legal abortion, as many oppose making it more difficult for abortion clinics to operate and two-thirds say the U.S. Constitution should trump state abortion laws. But views on legal time limits for abortions mark underlying ambivalence on the issue.

Fifty-five percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, while 41 percent believe it should be entirely or mostly illegal. Those almost exactly match their long-term averages, 55-42 percent, in more than 30 ABC/Post polls since 1995.

A similar 54 percent oppose state laws that effectively make it more difficult for abortion clinics to operate (most of them “strongly” opposed), vs. 40 percent in support. And by more than a 2-1 margin, 66-30 percent, Americans prefer abortion laws to be decided constitutionally rather than by each state individually. Preference for federal over state abortion laws encompasses both 69 percent of those who support legal abortion and 63 percent of those who oppose it.



At the same time, reflecting underlying unease with abortion, more say it should be legal without limitation only up to 20 weeks (as in some recent state laws), as opposed to about 24 weeks, as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark Roe v. Wade case; the division is 56-27 percent (an additional 8 percent volunteer that it should never be legal).

Supporters of legal abortion divide fairly closely on the 20- vs. 24-week issue, with 49 percent supporting the former and 42 percent favoring the latter. On the other hand, not surprisingly, preference for the shorter option rises to 69 percent among those who oppose legal abortion, with an additional 18 percent of them saying the procedure never should be legal.

GROUPS – Support for legal abortion, as usual, includes similar numbers of men and women (56 and 55 percent, respectively). Also as is typical, religious, partisan and ideological differences are sharp in this survey, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#).

Among evangelical white Protestants, for example, 66 percent say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases; among non-evangelical white Protestants, an identical 66 percent say it should generally be legal. Catholics divide more evenly, 50-45 percent, legal-illegal. Among those who profess no religion, by contrast – one in six adults – 73 percent support legal abortion.

	Abortion Legal-illegal	State laws vs. U.S. Constitution	Legislation limiting clinics Support-oppose	20 or 24 weeks
All	55-41%	30-66%	40-54%	56-27%
Men	56-42	32-65	43-50	53-31
Women	55-41	29-66	36-58	60-24
Democrats	65-32	19-77	25-69	51-33
Republicans	38-58	44-53	59-36	68-17
Independents	58-40	33-66	41-55	55-29
Liberals	80-19	18-81	18-76	43-45
Moderates	66-31	29-67	35-61	59-30
Conservatives NET	30-68	41-56	59-36	65-14
Somewhat cons.	38-60	34-63	52-43	63-16
Very cons.	19-79	52-44	71-27	67-10
Liberal Dems.	82-17	15-82	15-83	40-49
Cons Reprs.	23-74	44-52	70-28	71-11
Evang. white Protestants	31-66	38-57	64-31	69-13
Non-evang. white Protestants	66-31	34-61	32-65	63-28
Catholics	50-45	28-70	41-52	54-23
None	73-27	27-68	27-69	43-47
Whites	55-42	35-62	43-52	61-26
Blacks	69-30	26-70	29-65	57-23
Hispanics	46-50	21-79	42-53	39-28

Sixty-five percent of Democrats and 58 percent of independents support legal abortion, while 58 percent of Republicans are opposed (partly because three in 10 Republicans are evangelical

white Protestants). Seventy-nine percent of “very” conservatives oppose abortion in all or most cases, while 80 percent of liberals support it (partly, in this case, because nearly three in 10 liberals profess no religion).

Hispanics, a growing segment of the population (and a disproportionately Catholic group), divide narrowly on abortion, with 46 percent saying it should generally be legal, 50 percent, illegal. That compares with 57-40 percent among all non-Hispanics.

Differences also are evident in opinions on state legislation limiting the operation of abortion clinics, one of which recently was signed into law in Texas. Evangelical white Protestants support such laws while non-evangelical white Protestants oppose them, in each case by 33-point margins. Democrats, independents, liberals and moderates oppose these measures, by margins ranging from 14 to a very wide 58 percentage points, while Republicans, conservatives overall and “very” conservatives are in favor, by 23- to 44-point margins.

As noted, most prefer federal law to take precedence over state laws on the issue, though that preference is higher among Democrats than independents and among liberals and moderates vs. conservatives. Republicans and strong conservatives divide on whether state laws or the U.S. Constitution should carry the day.

Despite broad preference for federal rule, majorities in most groups also prefer a 20- rather than 24-week unrestricted period, from 51 and 55 percent of Democrats and independents, respectively, to about seven in 10 Republicans, strong conservatives and evangelical white Protestants. Liberals are closely divided on the question, even though about eight in 10 liberals support legal abortion, want federal law to prevail and oppose state measures that limit clinics’ ability to operate.

In another example of the complexity of views on abortion, while similar numbers of men and women support legal abortion, women are more likely than men to oppose state laws restricting clinics (58 vs. 50 percent), but also are more apt to prefer a 20- to a 24-week unrestricted rule (60 vs. 53 percent).

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone July 18-21, 2013, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points, including design effect.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Damla Ergun.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

\*= less than 0.5 percent

1-31 previously released or held for release.

32. On another subject, do you think abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases or illegal in all cases?

		----- Legal -----		----- Illegal -----			
	NET	All cases	Most cases	NET	Most cases	All cases	No opinion
7/21/13	55	20	35	41	26	15	3
3/10/12	54	21	33	43	25	17	3
7/17/11	54	19	35	44	30	15	2
3/26/10	53	17	35	45	27	18	2
11/23/09	54	19	35	43	28	16	2
6/21/09	55	20	35	43	26	17	2
9/7/08 RV	57	19	38	39	24	15	4
8/22/08	54	22	32	44	26	18	3
6/15/08	53	18	35	44	28	16	3
1/12/08	57	21	36	40	25	15	3
12/9/07	53	18	35	44	27	17	3
11/1/07	55	19	36	43	27	16	2
7/21/07	56	23	34	41	28	14	2
2/25/07	56	16	39	42	31	12	2
12/18/05	56	17	40	41	27	13	3
4/24/05	56	20	36	42	27	14	3
12/19/04	55	21	34	42	25	17	3
5/23/04	54	23	31	44	23	20	2
1/20/03	57	23	34	42	25	17	2
8/12/01	49	22	27	48	28	20	3
6/24/01	52	22	31	43	23	20	4
1/15/01	59	21	38	39	25	14	1
9/6/00 RV	55	20	35	42	25	16	3
7/23/00	53	20	33	43	26	17	4
9/2/99	56	20	37	42	26	15	2
3/14/99	55	21	34	42	27	15	3
7/12/98	54	19	35	42	29	13	4
8/5/96	56	22	34	41	27	14	3
6/30/96	58	24	34	40	25	14	2
10/1/95	60	26	35	37	25	12	3
9/21/95	60	24	36	36	25	11	4
7/17/95	59	27	32	40	26	14	1

33. Do you think each state should make its own laws on abortion, or do you think this should be decided for all states on the basis of the U.S. Constitution?

	States should make own laws	Should be decided by U.S. Constitution	No opinion
7/21/13	30	66	4

34. Several states are considering or recently have passed legislation that makes it more difficult for abortion clinics to operate there. Overall is this something you support or oppose? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----		----- Oppose -----		No opinion
NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly

7/21/13    40            25            15            54            17            37            6

35. The U.S. Supreme Court has said abortion is legal without restriction in about the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. Some states have passed laws reducing this to 20 weeks. If it has to be one or the other, would you rather have abortions legal without restriction up to (20) weeks, or up to (24) weeks?

	Up to 20 weeks	Up to 24 weeks	Never legal (vol.)	Fewer weeks (vol.)	More weeks (vol.)	Always legal (vol.)	No op.
7/21/13	56	27	8	2	*	*	6

\*\*\* END \*\*\*