

Views of Voters in Maine's 2nd CD on Abortion, Health Care Reform & Catholic Bishops

Analysis of a survey of registered voters

December 2009

As Congress debates whether health care reform legislation will include coverage for abortion, a new Catholics for Choice/Belden Russonello & Stewart survey finds a majority of voters in Maine's 2nd Congressional District in favor of including coverage for abortion services under government-subsidized insurance, as long as the specific abortion coverage is paid for with private funds and not government funds.

Voters in this northern Maine district, covering Bangor and the North Woods, are two times more likely to look negatively than positively on a member of Congress who uses health care reform to make it more difficult for women to obtain health insurance that covers abortion. The survey also finds that voters do not want Catholic Bishops to have much influence in how their Congressional representatives vote on health care reform.

Belden Russonello & Stewart conducted the telephone survey among 401 registered voters in Maine's 2nd Congressional District from November 27 to December 3, 2009. The survey measures attitudes toward government-subsidized insurance coverage of reproductive health services and reactions to the Catholic Bishops' position in the current health care reform debate. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.9 percentage points at the 95% level of tolerance. The survey questionnaire with filled-in response totals and selected crosstab tables are appended at the back of this report.

Survey Highlights

- At a time when the U.S. Catholic Bishops have intensified their lobbying on health care reform, a majority of voters in Maine's 2nd Congressional District believes the Bishops should back off. Six in ten (61%) oppose the Catholic Bishop in their area having much of an influence on how their member of Congress votes on health care reform. Also, three quarters of voters (74%) reject the argument that Catholic politicians have a religious obligation to vote in the way Catholic Bishops recommend on health care reform (56% *strongly* disagree with this notion).
- Large majorities of voters across Maine's 2nd believe that people who receive government subsidies to help pay for their health insurance should be allowed to choose insurance that covers contraception (75%), HIV/AIDS testing (83%) and the HPV vaccine for girls to prevent cervical cancer (79%).
- Attitudes toward insurance coverage for abortion are somewhat mixed among district voters. A majority of 53% opposes government subsidies for health insurance that help to pay for abortion services, while 40% are in favor. In a related question asked only of those who are opposed to abortion coverage, we find another 21% support allowing people who use government subsidies to purchase health insurance that covers abortion services, if the services were paid for with private funds and not government dollars.

Thus, a majority (61%) overall favors making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance. This number reflects those who favor government subsidies for abortion coverage and those who favor allowing health insurance plans that receive government subsidies to offer abortion coverage as long as those services are paid for with private funds.

- The survey findings suggest that a member of Congress who takes the side of the Catholic Bishops on abortion in health care reform, rather than the side of voters, could pay a price at the ballot box. Voters in Maine's 2nd are twice as likely to view their member of Congress less favorably (39%) than more favorably (15%) if that Congressperson votes for a health care reform bill that "makes it more difficult for women to get health insurance that covers abortion."
- Catholic voters in Maine's 2nd Congressional District express a strong desire to keep religion out of health care policy. About as many Catholic voters (70%) as voters overall (74%) say that Catholic politicians do not have a religious obligation to vote in the way Bishops advocate. Also like voters overall, Catholics are more likely to feel less favorably than more favorably

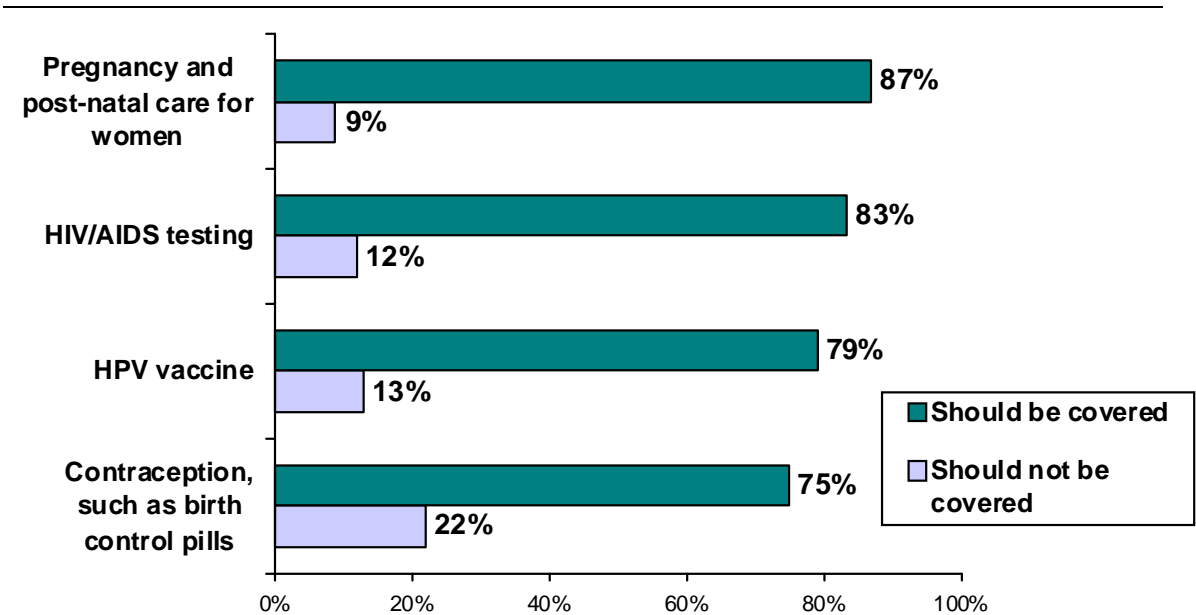
toward a member of Congress who votes to make it more difficult to get health insurance that covers abortion (34% less favorably, 20% more favorably). While a plurality of Catholics expresses support for making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance, Catholic support is somewhat lower than the district as a whole (49% of Catholics support and 46% oppose; 61% of voters overall support and 34% oppose).

Key Findings

1. Support for a range of services to be covered under government-subsidized health insurance.

At least three quarters of voters in Maine’s 2nd Congressional District believe that those who receive financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should be allowed to choose an insurance plan that covers the following services: care for pregnant women and follow-up care after the baby is born (87%); HIV/AIDS testing (83%); the HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer (79%); and contraception, such as birth control pills (75%).

Support for Health Services to Be Covered under Government Subsidized Insurance Plans



Do you think someone who receives financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should or should not be allowed to choose a plan that covers each of the following?
Q3. Care for pregnant women and follow-up care after the baby is born; Q5. HIV/AIDS testing; Q4. The HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer; Q6. Contraception, such as birth control pills

2. Six in ten voters support making abortion coverage available under government-subsidized health insurance.

Just as voters' attitudes on abortion represent many shades of gray rather than simply black and white, their views on government-subsidized insurance covering abortion are also complicated.

A majority (53%) of 2nd District voters opposes allowing people to use government subsidies for health insurance that help pay for abortion services, while 40% are in favor.

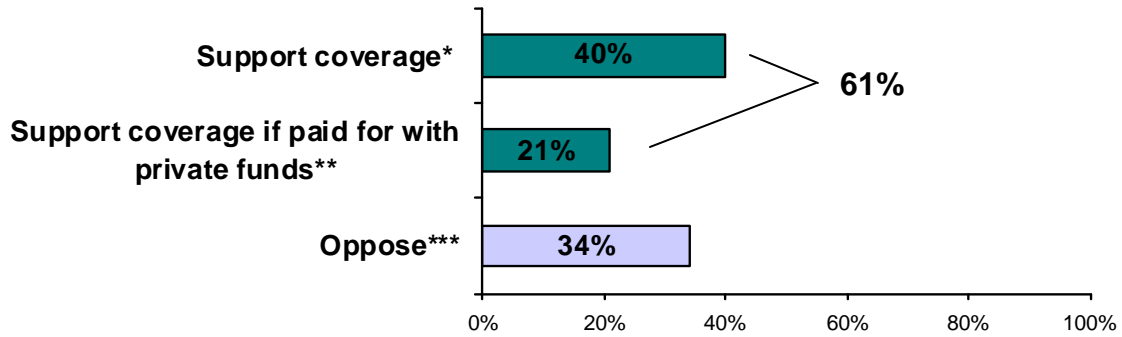
In a related question asked only of those who are opposed to abortion coverage, another 21% go on to say they would support allowing people who use government subsidies to purchase health insurance that covers abortion services, if the services were paid for with private funds and not government dollars.

An analysis that combines voters who favor government subsidies for abortion coverage and those who favor allowing health insurance plans that receive government subsidies to offer abortion coverage, as long as those services are paid for with private funds, reveals a strong majority (61%) overall favors making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance.

In Maine's 2nd Congressional District, majorities among both genders and across all ages, incomes, and political parties support some form of coverage of abortion services under government-subsidized insurance. Democrats (75%), Republicans (52%) and independents (57%) all support this form of coverage for abortion.

Voters who identify as Catholics express somewhat less support than voters overall in making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance (49% of Catholics compared to 61% of voters overall).

Abortion Coverage in Government Subsidized Insurance Plans



* "Support coverage:" Those who answered "coverage should be allowed" in Q7 (Q7. *Do you think someone who receives financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should or should not be allowed to choose a plan that covers abortion services?*)

** "Support coverage if paid with private funds:" Those who answered "should not be allowed," "DK/REF" in Q7 and "Coverage should be allowed" in Q8 (Q8. *[IF NO/DK/REF in Q7] Would you support allowing health insurance plans that receive government subsidies to cover abortion if that coverage was paid for with private funds, not government funds?*)

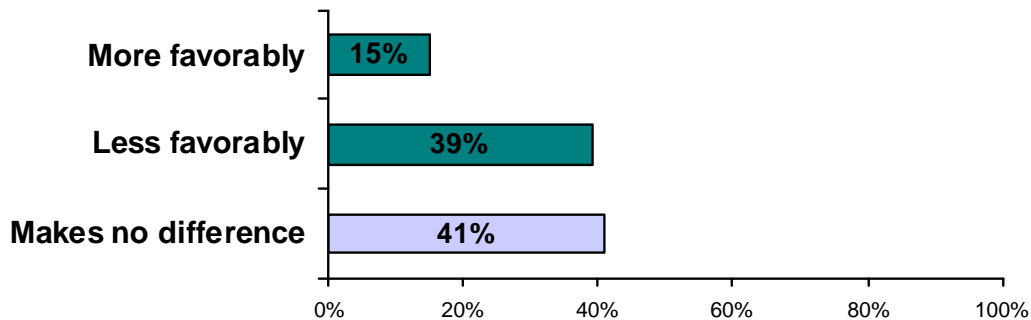
***"Oppose:" Those who answered "coverage should not be allowed" in Q7 and Q8.

3. Potential negative repercussions for members of Congress who make it more difficult to get insurance abortion coverage through health care reform.

The survey findings indicate that a member of Congress who votes to make it more difficult for women to secure insurance coverage for abortion could see negative repercussions at the ballot box. Voters in Maine's 2nd are twice as likely to view their Congressperson *less favorably* (39%) than more favorably (15%) if he or she votes for a health care reform bill that "makes it more difficult for women to get health insurance that covers abortion." It would make no difference at all for 41% of district voters.

Similar to other district voters, a greater proportion of Catholic voters would feel less favorably (34%) than more favorably (20%) toward a member of Congress who votes to make it more difficult to obtain insurance coverage for abortion in health care reform.

View of Member of Congress Who Votes to Make Getting Abortion Coverage More Difficult in Health Care Bill



Q15. How would you feel about your member of Congress if he or she voted for a health care bill that makes it more difficult for women to get health insurance that covers abortion: would you feel more favorably toward your member of Congress, less favorably, or it would make no difference?

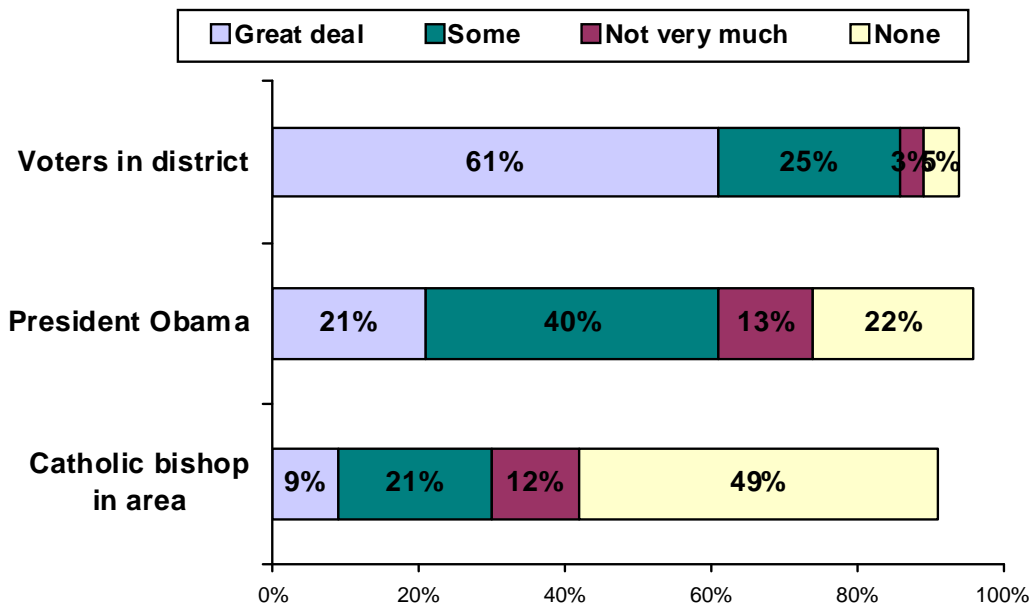
4. Voters want Catholic Bishops to have little influence on how their member of Congress votes on health care.

When it comes to who should have influence on how their Congressperson votes on health care reform, district voters want Catholic Bishops to line up behind voters themselves and President Obama.

Over eight in ten believe voters like themselves should have either a “great deal” (61%) or “some” (25%) influence on their member of Congress’ vote on health care reform. Half that amount – only three in ten – want the Catholic Bishop in their area to have a “great deal” (9%) or “some” (21%) influence. On the other side, 61% of district voters believe the Bishop should have “not very much” (12%) or no influence at all (49%) on how their Congressional representatives vote on health care reform.

Many Maine 2nd voters also call for President Obama’s recommendations to have much more influence than those of the Bishops.

Desired Influence on Your Member of Congress’ Health Care Reform Votes



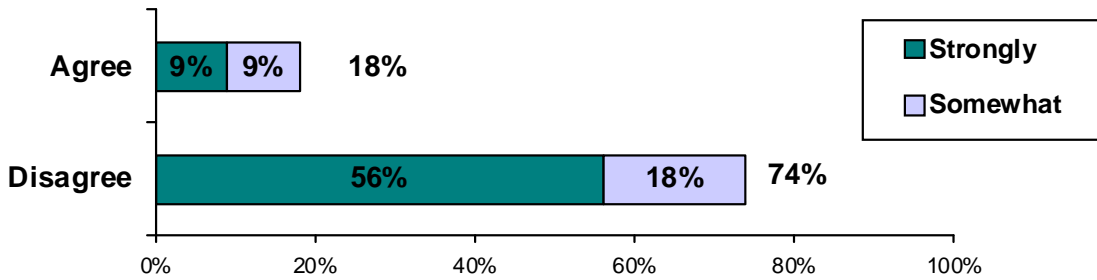
In your view, how much influence would you like each of the following to have on your member of Congress’ vote on health care reform: a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?
 Q10. The views of voters in your district; Q12. President Obama’s recommendation; Q11. The position of the Catholic Bishop in your area

5. Voters resoundingly reject the argument that Catholic politicians have a religious obligation to vote along with Bishops.

Three quarters of voters (74%) in the Maine 2nd Congressional District disagree with the argument that politicians who are themselves Catholic have a religious obligation to vote in the way Catholic Bishops recommend on health care reform (56% strongly disagree). Fewer than two in ten (18%) agree with this notion (9% strongly agree).

In the 2nd District, Catholic voters mirror voters overall in their belief that Catholic politicians do not have a religious obligation to vote in the way Bishops recommend (70% of Catholics disagree with the religious obligation argument; 43% strongly).

Do Catholic Politicians Have Religious Obligation to Vote with Bishops?



Q14. Do you agree or disagree that on health care reform, politicians who are Catholic have a religious obligation to vote in the way Catholic Bishops recommend? Is that strongly or somewhat?

Survey of Voters in Maine-2 Congressional District For Catholics for Choice

Interviewing conducted November 27 to December 3, 2009.
N=401 registered voters in Maine's 2nd Congressional District

Margin of sampling error is ± 4.9 percentage points.

Hello, may I please speak to (NAME FROM SAMPLE)? Hello, my name is _____, and I am an interviewer with BRS, an opinion research company. We are conducting a completely confidential survey of registered voters in [STATE]. We are not selling anything and we will not ask you for money. (IF NECESSARY ARRANGE FOR A CALL BACK AND RECORD DATE AND TIME)

Q1. Do you think things in this country are generally going in the right direction or are they off on the wrong track?	RIGHT DIRECTION	28%
	WRONG TRACK	57
	DK/REF	15

Now I have a few questions about health care.

Q2. Would you favor or oppose a new government plan that would make health insurance available to people who do not already have it? Is that strongly or somewhat?	STRONGLY FAVOR	38%
	SOMEWHAT FAVOR	21
	SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	6
	STRONGLY OPPOSE	24
	DK/REF	10

Do you think someone who receives financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should or should not be allowed to choose a plan that covers each of the following? [RANDOMIZE: Q7 ALWAYS LAST]

	Should	Should not	DK/REF
Q3. Care for pregnant women and follow-up care after the baby is born	87%	9	4
Q4. The HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer	79%	13	8
Q5. HIV/AIDS testing	83%	12	4
Q6. Contraception, such as birth control pills	75%	22	3
Q7. Abortion services	40%	53	7

Q8. [BASE = THOSE WHO ANSWER "SHOULD NOT" or "DK/REF" on "ABORTION SERVICES" in Q7; N=240]	Yes	35%
Would you support allowing health insurance plans that receive government subsidies to cover abortion if that coverage was paid for with private funds, not government funds?	No	57
	DK/REF	8

Q7 and Q8 COMBINED [BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE]

(Q7) Support govt. subsidized insurance plans covering abortion	40%	} 61%
(Q8) Support govt. subsidized coverage if abortion paid for by private funds	21	
Total opposition to govt. subsidized plans covering abortion		34
DK/REF		5

Q9. What is your religious preference--do you consider yourself a Catholic, or something else, or do you not have a religious preference?	CATHOLIC	24%
	SOMETHING ELSE	49
	NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	24
	REF	2

In your view, how much influence would you like each of the following to have on your member of Congress' vote on health care reform: a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all? [RANDOMIZE]

	Great deal	Some	Not very much	None at all	DK/REF
Q10. The views of voters in your district	61%	25	3	5	6
Q11. The position of the Catholic Bishop in your area	9%	21	12	49	10
Q12. President Obama's recommendation	21%	40	13	22	3

Q13. Regardless of your religious preference, how important are the views of U.S. Catholic Bishops for you in deciding whom to vote for: very important, somewhat, not very, or not at all important?	VERY IMPORTANT	4%
	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	16
	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	19
	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	59
	DK/REF	2

Q14. Do you agree or disagree that on health care reform, politicians who are Catholic have a religious obligation to vote in the way Catholic Bishops recommend? Is that strongly or somewhat?	STRONGLY AGREE	9%
	SOMEWHAT AGREE	9
	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	18
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	56
	DK/REF	7

Q15. How would you feel about your member of Congress if he or she voted for a health care bill that makes it more difficult for women to get health insurance that covers abortion: would you feel more favorably toward your member of Congress, less favorably, or it would make no difference?	MORE FAVORABLY	15%
	LESS FAVORABLY	39
	MAKES NO DIFFERENCE	41
	DK/REF	5
Q16. Thinking about abortion in general, do you think abortion should be: legal in all cases, legal in most cases, legal in just a few cases, or never legal?	LEGAL IN ALL	20%
	LEGAL IN MOST	23
	LEGAL IN JUST A FEW	39
	NEVER LEGAL	15
	DK/REF	3
Now I have a few questions to help us classify your questionnaire.		
D1. Do you consider yourself to be a [ROTATE: Democrat, Republican], an independent, or something else?	DEMOCRAT	28%
	REPUBLICAN	24
	INDEPENDENT	43
	SOMETHING ELSE	2
	DK/REF	2
D1B. [ONLY If D1="independent" or "Something Else"] Do you lean more toward [ROTATE] the Democratic Party or Republican Party?	LEAN DEMOCRAT	14%
	LEAN REPUBLICAN	14
	NO LEAN	17
	DK/REF	1
D2. In terms of political outlook, do you usually think of yourself as [READ LIST; REVERSE ORDER]:	VERY CONSERVATIVE	13%
	SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE	24
	MIDDLE OF THE ROAD	42
	SOMEWHAT LIBERAL	13
	VERY LIBERAL	6
	DK/REF	2
D3. How often would you say you attend religious services - more than once a week, once a week, at least once a month, a few times a year, less often than that, or never?	MORE THAN ONCE/WEEK	6%
	ONCE A WEEK	22
	AT LEAST ONCE/MONTH	13
	FEW TIMES A YEAR	22
	LESS OFTEN THAN THAT	14
	NEVER	21
DK/REF	2	

D4. In what year were you born? Are you between:	18-34	21%
	35-44	15
	45-54	21
	55-64	20
	65+	23
	REF	--

D5. Are you Hispanic or Latino?	WHITE	94%
D6. [IF NO, DK, REF in D5] Would you say you are white, black or African-American, Asian or Pacific Islander or something else?	AFRICAN AMERICAN	1
	LATINO/HISPANIC	1
	NATIVE AMERICAN	1
	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	*
	SOMETHING ELSE	*
	REF	2

D7. Stop me when I come to the category in which your total HOUSEHOLD income falls before taxes. Your best estimate is fine. Is it?.. [READ LIST]	LESS THAN \$25,000	17%
	\$25,000 UP TO \$50,000	27
	\$50,000 UP TO \$75,000	22
	\$75,000 UP TO \$100,000	10
	\$100,000 OR MORE	11
	DK/REF	13

GENDER	MALE	47%
	FEMALE	53

Support for Health Services to Be Covered Under Government Subsidized Insurance Plans

Do you think someone who receives financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should or should not be allowed to choose a plan that covers each of the following?
Q3. Care for pregnant women and follow-up care after the baby is born; Q5. HIV/AIDS testing; Q4. The HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer; Q6. Contraception, such as birth control pills Q7. Abortion services

% answering

"Coverage should be allowed"

	Care for pregnant women	HIV/AIDS testing	The HPV vaccine	Contraception	Abortion services
Total	87%	83%	79%	75%	40%
Men	81%	80%	74%	69%	39%
Women	92%	86%	82%	80%	41%
18-44	90%	82%	81%	83%	40%
45-64	84%	87%	79%	74%	45%
65+	87%	78%	73%	64%	30%
Liberal	96%	97%	90%	91%	65%
Moderate	86%	84%	80%	80%	42%
Conservative	83%	76%	72%	61%	26%
Democrat	92%	87%	89%	86%	51%
Republican	81%	73%	71%	67%	34%
Independent	87%	87%	77%	73%	37%
<\$50K	88%	84%	77%	73%	41%
\$50K+	86%	85%	80%	77%	40%
Catholics	85%	77%	78%	68%	27%
Other	85%	81%	75%	73%	40%
Church-attending Catholics*	85%	76%	80%	65%	26%
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion**	91%	90%	87%	87%	66%
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	81%	72%	65%	54%	--

* "Church-attending Catholics" those who answered "More than once a week," "once a week," "at least once/month," or "a few times a year" in Q3: Religious service attendance

** "Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion" those who answered "coverage should be allowed" in Q7 or in Q8. Q7. Do you think someone who receives financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should or should not be allowed to choose a plan that covers abortion services? Q8. [IF NO/DK/REF in Q7] Would you support allowing health insurance plans that receive government subsidies to cover abortion if that coverage was paid for with private funds, not government funds?

"Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used" those who answered "coverage should not be allowed" in Q7 and Q8.

Support for Abortion Coverage under Government Subsidized Plans

Do you think someone who receives financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should or should not be allowed to choose a plan that covers each of the following?
Q7. Abortion services; Q8. [IF NO/DK/REF in Q7; N=240] Would you support allowing health insurance plans that receive government subsidies to cover abortion if that coverage was paid for with private funds, not government funds?

	Total support gov't coverage*	Total oppose gov't coverage, even if no gov't funds used**
Total	61%	34
Men	60%	34
Women	62%	35
18-44	62%	35
45-64	63%	33
65+	55%	37
Liberal	87%	9
Moderate	64%	30
Conservative	43%	53
Democrat	75%	22
Republican	52%	43
Independent	57%	37
<\$50K	61%	36
\$50K+	64%	34
Catholics	49%	46
Other	57%	37
Church-attending Catholics	49%	48

* "Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion" those who answered "coverage should be allowed" in Q7 or in Q8. Q7. Do you think someone who receives financial help from the government to pay for their health insurance should or should not be allowed to choose a plan that covers abortion services? Q8. [IF NO/DK/REF in Q7] Would you support allowing health insurance plans that receive government subsidies to cover abortion if that coverage was paid for with private funds, not government funds?

** "Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used" those who answered "coverage should not be allowed" in Q7 and Q8.

View of Member of Congress Who Votes to Make Getting Abortion Coverage More Difficult in Health Care Bill

Q15. How would you feel about your member of Congress if he or she voted for a health care bill that makes it more difficult for women to get health insurance that covers abortion: would you feel more favorably toward your member of Congress, less favorably, or it would make no difference?

	More favorably	Less favorably	Makes no difference
Total	15%	39	41
Men	11%	41	43
Women	19%	37	39
18-44	19%	32	47
45-64	13%	45	36
65+	13%	38	40
Liberal	3%	59	33
Moderate	11%	33	50
Conservative	28%	35	33
Democrat	9%	46	41
Republican	21%	37	38
Independent	17%	36	41
<\$50K	15%	39	41
\$50K+	16%	40	40
Catholics	20%	34	44
Other	17%	40	36
Church-attending			
Catholics	21%	36	40
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*			
6%	47	43	
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	34%	26	36

* Q7 and Q8.

Desired Influence on Your Member of Congress' Health Care Reform Votes

In your view, how much influence would you like each of the following to have on your member of Congress' vote on health care reform: a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?

Q10. The views of voters in your district; Q12. President Obama's recommendation; Q11. The position of the Catholic Bishop in your area

<i>% answering "A great deal"</i>	Views of voters in district	President Obama's recommendation	Position of local Catholic Bishop
Total	61%	21%	9%
Men	61%	21%	12%
Women	62%	21%	6%
18-44	67%	19%	9%
45-64	65%	20%	9%
65+	46%	27%	8%
Liberal	67%	29%	6%
Moderate	62%	23%	5%
Conservative	59%	16%	15%
Democrat	54%	32%	4%
Republican	59%	9%	12%
Independent	67%	21%	10%
<\$50K	59%	20%	8%
\$50K+	67%	23%	10%
Catholics	59%	27%	13%
Other	60%	19%	8%
Church-attending Catholics	63%	25%	15%
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*	62%	23%	5%
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	59%	20%	17%

* Q7 and Q8.

Do Catholic Politicians Have a Religious Obligation to Vote the Way Bishops Recommend?

Q14. Do you agree or disagree that on health care reform, politicians who are Catholic have a religious obligation to vote in the way Catholic Bishops recommend? Is that strongly or somewhat?

	Net agree	Net disagree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Total	18%	74	9%	9	18	56
Men	19%	75	9%	10	16	59
Women	18%	74	10%	8	21	53
18-44	22%	71	12%	10	22	49
45-64	19%	78	9%	10	17	61
65+	14%	74	7%	7	15	59
Liberal	7%	87	1%	6	18	69
Moderate	16%	79	7%	9	15	64
Conservative	28%	61	17%	11	22	39
Democrat	16%	78	5%	11	23	55
Republican	21%	71	13%	8	22	49
Independent	18%	74	10%	8	15	59
<\$50K	21%	73	10%	11	17	56
\$50K+	21%	75	12%	9	22	53
Catholics	24%	70	16%	8	27	43
Other	18%	76	8%	10	15	61
Church-attending						
Catholics	27%	67	19%	8	27	40
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*						
	13%	82	6%	7	18	64
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used						
	31%	61	17%	14	20	41

* Q7 and Q8.