

# **Views of Voters in Pennsylvania's 14th 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 Pennsylvania's 14<sup>th</sup> Congressional District believes government-subsidized health insurance should cover abortion, and this majority increases to two thirds when abortion coverage is paid for with private funds and not government funds.

A majority of voters in this Pittsburgh-based district are 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 400 registered voters in Pennsylvania's 14<sup>th</sup> Congressional District from November 27 to December 2, 2009. The data have been weighted by age. 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 Pennsylvania's 14<sup>th</sup> Congressional District believes the Bishops should back off. Over half (55%) oppose the Catholic Bishop in their area having much of an influence on how their member of Congress votes on health care reform. Also, an overwhelming majority of 72% rejects the argument that Catholic politicians have a religious obligation to vote in the way Catholic Bishops recommend on health care reform (48% *strongly* disagree with this notion).
- Large majorities of voters across Pennsylvania's 14<sup>th</sup> believe that people who receive government subsidies to help pay for their health insurance should be allowed to choose insurance that covers contraception (78%), HIV/ AIDS testing (90%) and the HPV vaccine for girls to prevent cervical cancer (85%).
- A majority of voters in this district expresses consistent support for insurance coverage of abortion. Fifty-three percent support government subsidies for health insurance that help pay for abortion services, while 41% oppose. In a related question asked only of those who are opposed to abortion coverage, we find another 16% 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.

Thus, more than two thirds (69%) overall favor 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.

- Catholic support is evenly divided on whether to support government subsidies for health insurance that help pay for abortion (47% support; 49% oppose). Support for coverage increases to nearly six in ten Catholics when abortion coverage is paid for with private funds and not government funds (59% support; 39% oppose).
- 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, may pay a price at the ballot box. Voters in Pennsylvania's 14<sup>th</sup> are nearly three times as likely to view their member of Congress less favorably (55%) than more favorably (17%) if that Congressperson votes for

a health care reform bill that “makes it more difficult for women to get health insurance that covers abortion.”

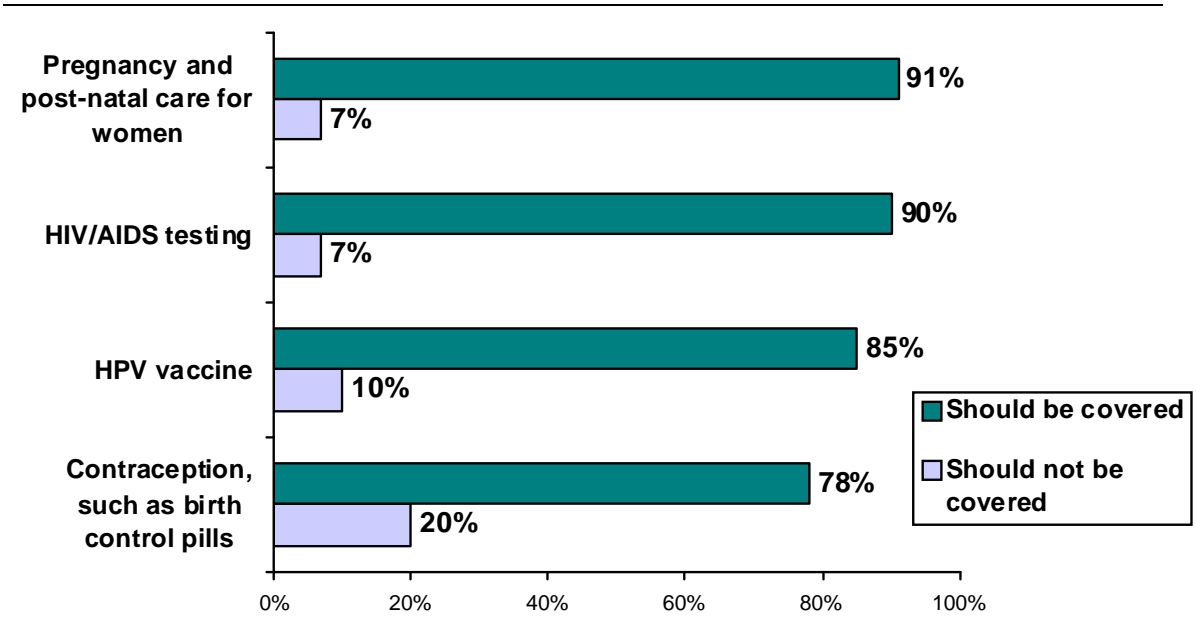
- Catholic voters in Pennsylvania’s 14th Congressional District hold similar views as district voters overall. Both Catholic voters (69%) and voters overall (72%) say that Catholic politicians do not have a religious obligation to vote in the way Bishops advocate. Catholics, like other district voters, are three times as 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 (47% of Catholics say less favorably; 17% more favorably).

## Key Findings

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

Around eight in ten voters in Pennsylvania’s 14<sup>th</sup> 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 (91%); HIV/AIDS testing (90%); the HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer (85%); and contraception, such as birth control pills (78%).

**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. Over two thirds support making abortion coverage available under government-subsidized health insurance.**

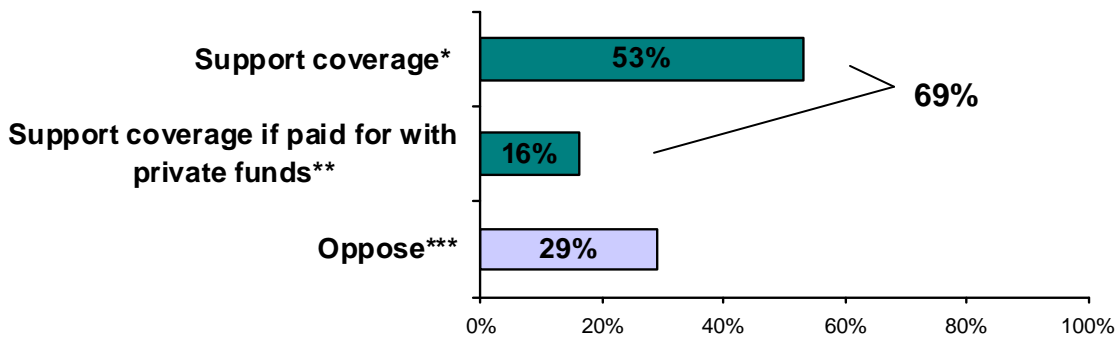
A majority (53%) of 14<sup>th</sup> District voters favors allowing people to use government subsidies for health insurance that help pay for abortion services, while 41% are opposed.

In an additional, related question asked only of those who are opposed to abortion coverage, another 16% 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 that over two thirds (69%) of voters overall favor making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance.

In Pennsylvania’s 14<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, a majority of Catholics (59%) as well as majorities of voters across all gender, age, race, and income groups express support for making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance.

**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?*)

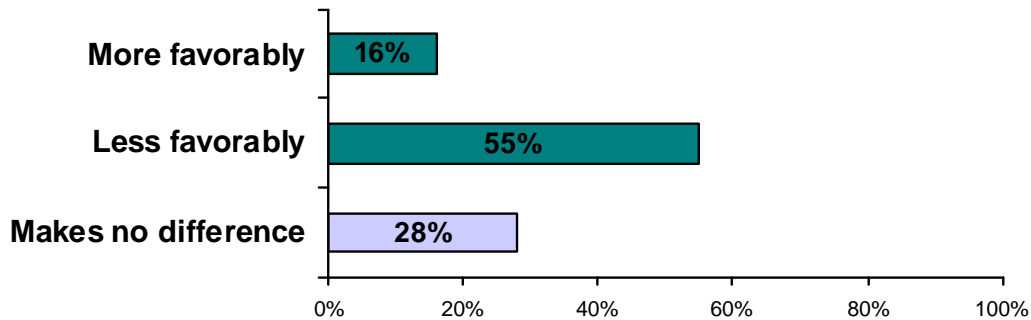
\*\*\*“Oppose:” Those who answered “coverage should not be allowed” in Q7 and Q8.

### 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 may see negative repercussions at the ballot box. Voters in Pennsylvania's 14<sup>th</sup> are nearly three times as likely to view their Congressperson *less favorably* (55%) than more favorably (16%) 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."

Similar to other district voters, Catholic voters are also three times as likely to feel less favorably (47%) than more favorably (17%) 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?

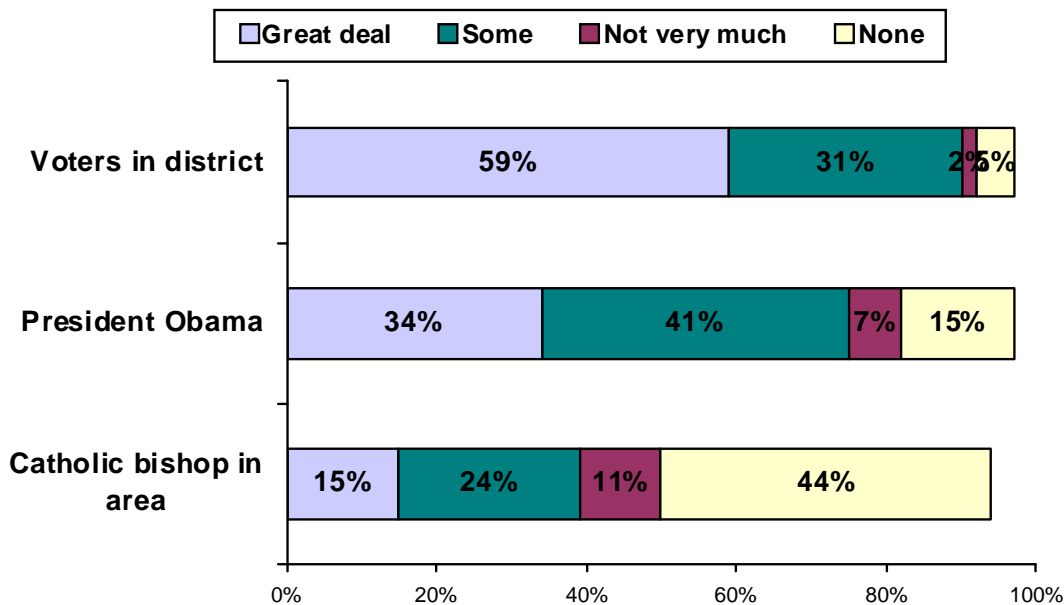
**4. Voters want Catholic Bishops to have little influence on how their member of Congress votes on health care.**

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.

Nine in ten believe voters like themselves should either have a “great deal” (59%) or “some” (31%) influence on their member of Congress’ vote on health care reform. Half that amount – only four in ten – want the Catholic Bishop in their area to have a “great deal” (15%) or “some” (24%) influence. On the other side, 55% of district voters believe the Bishop should have “not very much” (11%) or no influence at all (44%) on how their Congressional representatives vote on health care reform.

Many Pennsylvania 14<sup>th</sup> 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**



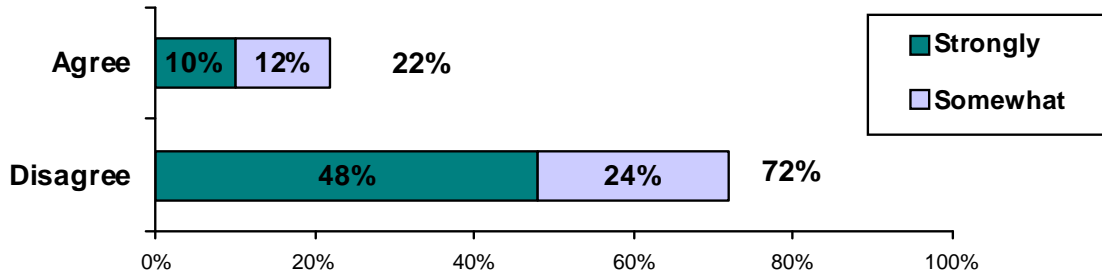
In your view, how much influence would you like each of the following to have on your member of Congress’ vote on health care reform: a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all? Q10. The views of voters in your district; Q12. President Obama’s recommendation; Q11. The position of the Catholic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

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

Seven in ten voters (72%) in the Pennsylvania 14<sup>th</sup> 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 (48% strongly disagree). Only two in ten voters (22%) agree with this notion (10% strongly agree).

In Pennsylvania’s 14<sup>th</sup> 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 (69% of Catholics disagree with the religious obligation argument; 42% 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 PA-14 Congressional District For Catholics for Choice

Interviewing conducted November 27 to December 2, 2009.  
N=400 registered voters in Pennsylvania's 14th Congressional District  
Data have been weighted by age.

Margin of sampling error is  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points.

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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)

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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	53%
	WRONG TRACK	39
	DK/REF	8

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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	54%
	SOMEWHAT FAVOR	19
	SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	8
	STRONGLY OPPOSE	15
	DK/REF	4

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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	91%	7	2
Q4. The HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer	85%	10	5
Q5. HIV/AIDS testing	90%	7	2
Q6. Contraception, such as birth control pills	78%	20	2
Q7. Abortion services	53%	41	6

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Q8. [BASE= THOSE WHO ANSWER "SHOULD NOT" or "DK/REF" on "ABORTION SERVICES" in Q7; N=191]	Yes	34%
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	61
	DK/REF	6

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**Q7 and Q8 COMBINED** [BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE]

(Q7) Support govt. subsidized insurance plans covering abortion	53%	} 69%
(Q8) Support govt. subsidized coverage if abortion paid for by private funds	16	
Total opposition to govt. subsidized plans covering abortion		29
DK/REF		3

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Q9. What is your religious preference--do you consider yourself a Catholic, or something else, or do you not have a religious preference?	CATHOLIC	32%
	SOMETHING ELSE	48
	NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	19
	REF	1

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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	59%	31	2	5	3
Q11. The position of the Catholic Bishop in your area	15%	24	11	44	6
Q12. President Obama's recommendation	34%	41	7	15	3

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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	9%
	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	21
	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	14
	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	55
	DK/REF	2

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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	10%
	SOMEWHAT AGREE	12
	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	24
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	48
	DK/REF	5

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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	16%
	LESS FAVORABLY	55
	MAKES NO DIFFERENCE	28
	DK/REF	2
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	27%
	LEGAL IN MOST	24
	LEGAL IN JUST A FEW	32
	NEVER LEGAL	14
	DK/REF	2
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	64%
	REPUBLICAN	13
	INDEPENDENT	15
	CONSERVATIVE PARTY	1
	LIBERTARIAN PARTY	1
	SOMETHING ELSE	1
	DK/REF	5
D1B. [ONLY If D1="independent" or "Something Else"] Do you lean more toward [ROTATE] the Democratic Party or Republican Party?	LEAN DEMOCRAT	9%
	LEAN REPUBLICAN	4
	NO LEAN	7
	DK/REF	2
D2. In terms of political outlook, do you usually think of yourself as [READ LIST; REVERSE ORDER]:	VERY CONSERVATIVE	10%
	SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE	22
	MIDDLE OF THE ROAD	31
	SOMEWHAT LIBERAL	22
	VERY LIBERAL	12
	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	9%
	ONCE A WEEK	35
	AT LEAST ONCE/MONTH	12
	FEW TIMES A YEAR	18
	LESS OFTEN THAN THAT	12
	NEVER	13
DK/REF	1	

D4. In what year were you born? Are you between:	18-34	29%
	35-44	15
	45-54	18
	55-64	16
	65+	22
	REF	*
D5. Are you Hispanic or Latino?	WHITE	71%
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	23
	LATINO/HISPANIC	1
	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	1
	NATIVE AMERICAN	1
	SOMETHING ELSE	*
	REF	3
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	28%
	\$25,000 UP TO \$50,000	24
	\$50,000 UP TO \$75,000	18
	\$75,000 UP TO \$100,000	9
	\$100,000 OR MORE	10
	DK/REF	11
GENDER	MALE	44%
	FEMALE	56

### 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>53%</b>
Men	94%	90%	88%	73%	51%
Women	89%	90%	83%	81%	55%
18-44	94%	95%	91%	84%	63%
45-64	94%	87%	85%	79%	48%
65+	79%	86%	75%	64%	41%
White	90%	88%	85%	77%	52%
African-Am.	93%	98%	85%	78%	58%
Liberal	95%	96%	92%	92%	72%
Moderate	90%	93%	86%	77%	51%
Conservative	88%	83%	81%	65%	35%
Democrat	93%	93%	88%	81%	59%
Republican	82%	79%	73%	60%	25%
Independent	92%	92%	86%	80%	55%
<\$50K	88%	91%	86%	77%	54%
\$50K+	96%	92%	87%	81%	55%
Catholics	90%	86%	83%	70%	47%
Other	90%	91%	84%	80%	51%
Church-attending Catholics*	90%	86%	83%	67%	44%
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion**	94%	94%	88%	89%	77%
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	85%	85%	80%	53%	--

\* "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 D3: 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 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?  
Q7. Abortion services; Q8. [IF NO/DK/REF in Q7; N=191] 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**
<b>Total</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>29</b>
Men	69%	29
Women	68%	28
18-44	71%	29
45-64	70%	26
65+	62%	33
White	67%	30
African-Am.	77%	20
Liberal	88%	10
Moderate	67%	31
Conservative	51%	47
Democrat	74%	23
Republican	45%	53
Independent	70%	29
<\$50K	69%	27
\$50K+	75%	23
Catholics	59%	39
Other	71%	26
Church-attending Catholics	57%	42

\* "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
<b>Total</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>28</b>
Men	15%	52	31
Women	16%	57	25
18-44	16%	58	24
45-64	18%	52	28
65+	11%	51	35
White	19%	54	26
African-Am	8%	57	34
Liberal	9%	70	20
Moderate	10%	51	37
Conservative	30%	42	27
Democrat	9%	58	32
Republican	39%	38	23
Independent	27%	49	21
<\$50K	12%	60	26
\$50K+	20%	49	29
Catholics	17%	47	34
Other	18%	54	27
Church-attending Catholics	17%	46	34
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*	9%	65	24
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	33%	31	34

\* 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>	<b>Views of voters in district</b>	<b>President Obama's recommendation</b>	<b>Position of local Catholic Bishop</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>15%</b>
Men	63%	34%	17%
Women	57%	34%	14%
18-44	67%	33%	9%
45-64	57%	32%	16%
65+	47%	40%	25%
White	59%	26%	14%
African-Am.	59%	60%	17%
Liberal	65%	46%	10%
Moderate	56%	29%	13%
Conservative	58%	27%	23%
Democrat	57%	41%	14%
Republican	48%	6%	16%
Independent	73%	31%	17%
<\$50K	57%	37%	16%
\$50K+	65%	32%	12%
Catholics	53%	26%	25%
Other	63%	39%	12%
Church-attending Catholics	54%	25%	28%
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*	60%	42%	11%
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	58%	18%	25%

\* 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>48</b>
Men	24%	72	12%	12	26	46
Women	20%	73	9%	11	23	50
18-44	28%	69	12%	16	27	42
45-64	17%	76	11%	6	20	56
65+	18%	74	6%	12	26	48
White	21%	75	10%	11	24	51
African-Am.	23%	73	13%	10	28	45
Liberal	14%	81	5%	9	18	63
Moderate	22%	75	8%	14	27	48
Conservative	32%	61	19%	13	30	31
Democrat	21%	75	9%	12	25	50
Republican	36%	56	23%	13	19	37
Independent	13%	83	6%	7	31	52
<\$50K	22%	72	9%	13	27	45
\$50K+	19%	77	10%	9	24	53
Catholics	28%	69	13%	15	27	42
Other	21%	71	10%	11	24	47
Church-attending						
Catholics	30%	68	15%	15	29	39
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*	17%	80	8%	9	23	57
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	34%	57	17%	17	28	29

\* Q7 and Q8.