

Views of Voters in Texas' 16th 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 slim majority of voters in Texas' 16th 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 El Paso-based district are much 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 hold mixed feelings about how much influence Catholic Bishops should have over how their Congressional representatives vote on health care reform.

Belden Russonello & Stewart conducted the telephone survey among 400 registered voters in Texas' 16th Congressional District from November 27 to December 2, 2009. The data have been weighted by age and race. 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

- Large majorities of voters across Texas' 16th Congressional District believe that people who receive government subsidies to help pay for their health insurance should be allowed to choose insurance that covers contraception (70%), HIV/ AIDS testing (83%) and the HPV vaccine for girls to prevent cervical cancer (78%).
- District voters' attitudes on insurance coverage for abortion are mixed. A majority of 65% opposes government subsidies for health insurance that help to pay for abortion services, while 32% are in favor. In a related question asked only of those who are opposed to abortion coverage, we find another 19% 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, a slim majority (51%) 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 could pay a price at the ballot box. Voters in Texas' 16th are much more likely to view their member of Congress less favorably (41%) than more favorably (23%) if that Congressperson votes for a health care reform bill that "makes it more difficult for women to get health insurance that covers abortion."

An overwhelming majority of 72% of voters – including 72% of Catholic voters – rejects the argument that Catholic politicians have a religious obligation to vote in the way Catholic Bishops recommend on health care reform (46% *strongly* disagree with this notion).

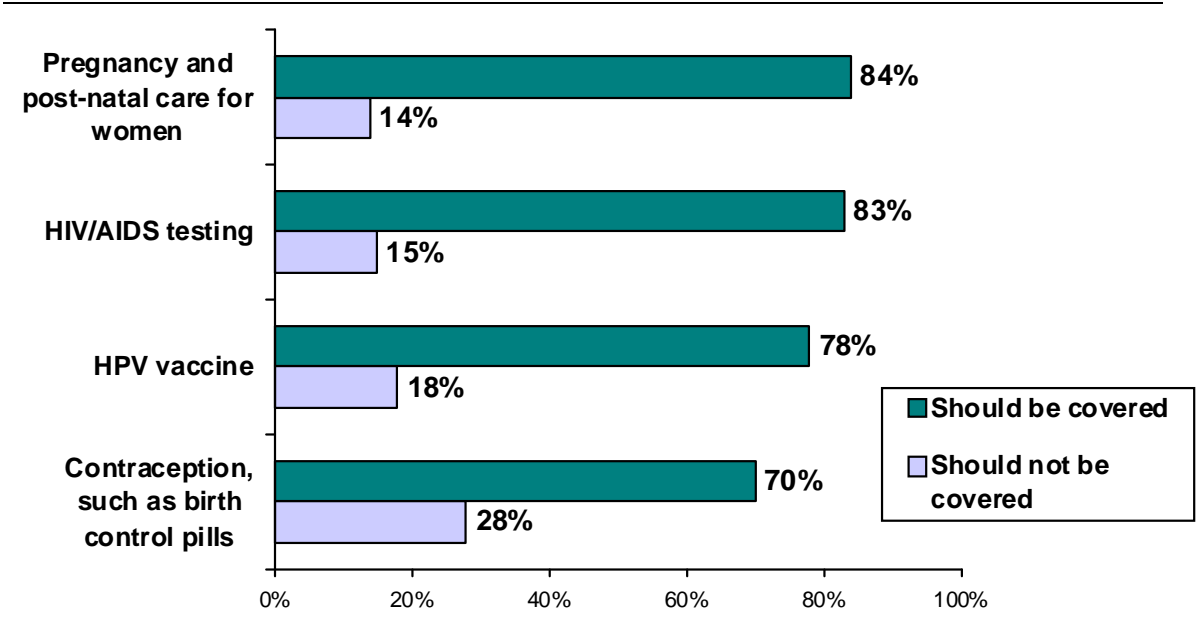
- When the subject is abortion and health care, Catholic voters share views similar to other voters in the Texas 16th Congressional District. Catholics support making abortion coverage available in some way under government subsidized health insurance in the same proportion as voters as a whole in this district (51%). Also like other district voters, Catholics are twice 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 (40% of Catholics say less favorably and 21% more favorably; 41% less favorably and 23% more favorably among all voters).

Key Findings

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

Seven in ten or more voters in Texas’ 16th 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 (84%); HIV/AIDS testing (83%); the HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer (78%); and contraception, such as birth control pills (70%).

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. A majority supports 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.

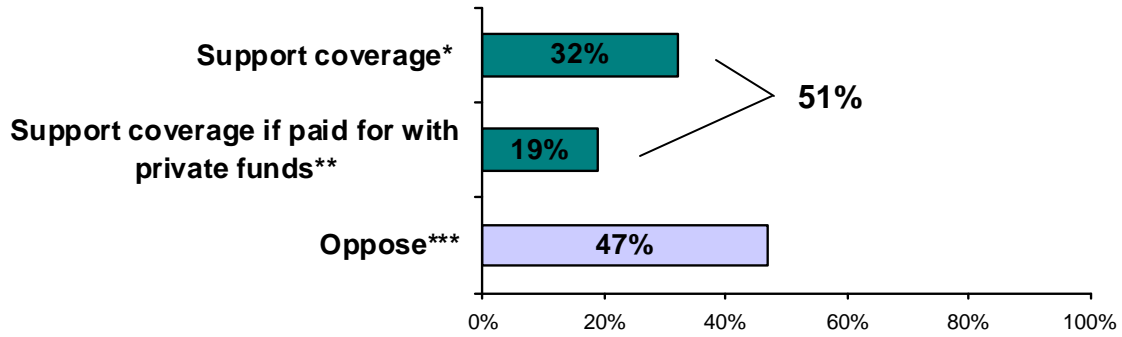
A majority (65%) of 16th District voters opposes allowing people to use government subsidies for health insurance that help pay for abortion, while 32% are in favor.

In a related question asked only of those who are opposed to abortion coverage, another 19% 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 slim majority (51%) overall favors making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance.

Attitudes of Catholics track closely to attitudes of the district's voters generally: 51% of Catholics favor making abortion coverage available in some way under government-subsidized health insurance – the same proportion as voters as a whole in the district (51%).

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?)

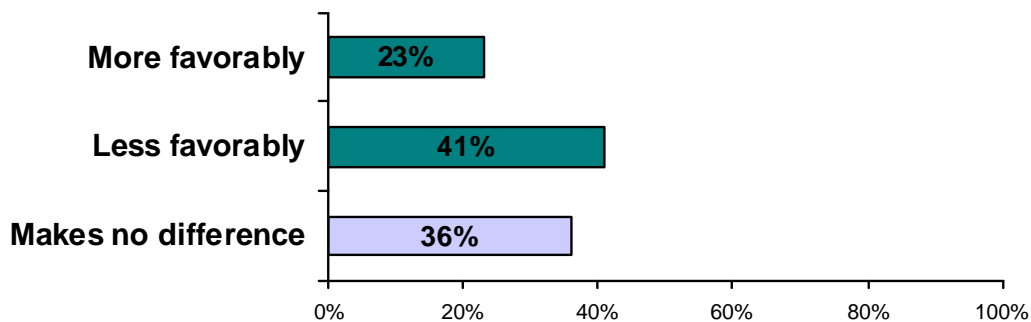
***"Oppose:" Those who answered "coverage should not be allowed" in Q7 and Q8.

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 suggest 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 Texas' 16th are much more likely to view their Congressperson *less favorably* (41%) than more favorably (23%) 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 of the Texas 16th are twice as likely to feel less favorably (40%) than more favorably (21%) toward a member of Congress who votes to make it more difficult to get health insurance that covers abortion.

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?

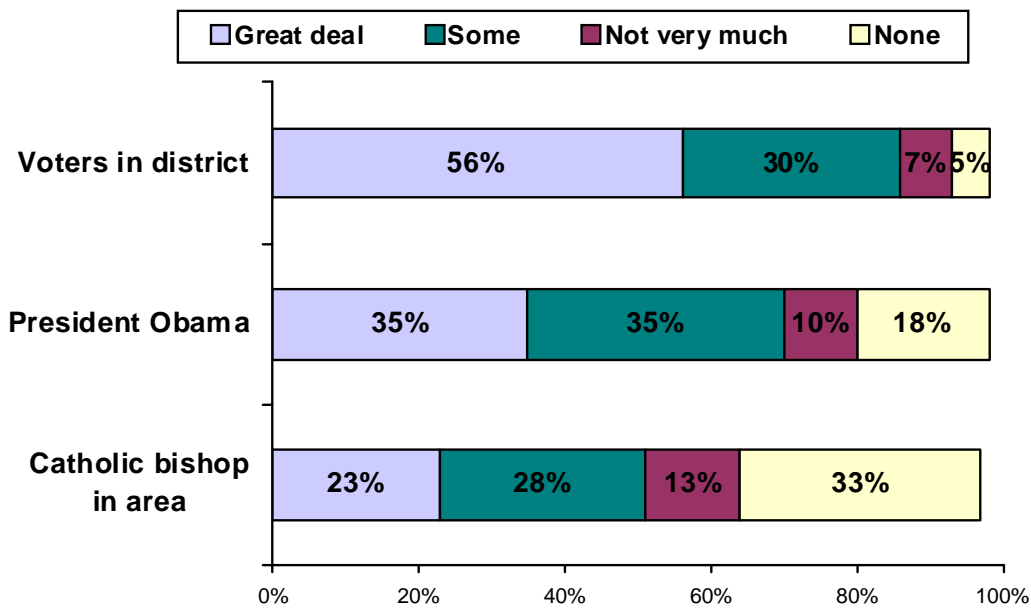
4. Voters more likely to want Congress to listen to them and to Obama than to the Catholic Bishops on health care.

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” (56%) or “some” (30%) influence on their member of Congress’ vote on health care reform. Seven in ten voters would like President Obama to have influence – 35% say he should have a “great deal” of influence and another 35% would like the President to have “some” influence. However, views about the influence of the Catholic Bishop in the area are mixed, with 51% wanting the Bishop to have at least some influence and 46% opposing much of an influence by the Bishop.

A measurement of those who feel strongly on both sides about the influence of the Catholic Bishop on health care reform shows that one third of voters believe the church should have no influence at all compared to just under one in four who would like to see the Bishops exert a great deal of influence.

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



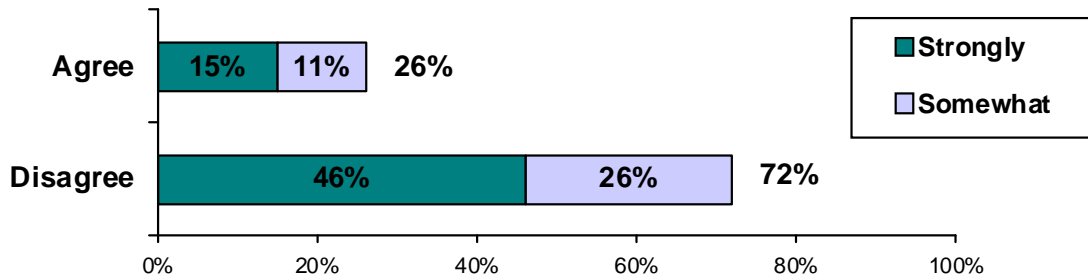
In your view, how much influence would you like each of the following to have on your member of Congress’ vote on health care reform: a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?
 Q10. The views of voters in your district; Q12. President Obama’s recommendation; Q11. The position of the Catholic 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 Texas 16th Congressional District dismiss 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 (46% are strongly dismissive). Only one quarter (26%) agrees with this notion (15% strongly agree).

In Texas' 16th 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 (72% of Catholics disagree with the religious obligation argument; 46% 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 TX-16 Congressional District For Catholics for Choice

Interviewing conducted November 27 to December 2, 2009.
N=400 registered voters in Texas' 16th Congressional District
Data have been weighted by age and race.

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	49%
	WRONG TRACK	46
	DK/REF	5

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	45%
	SOMEWHAT FAVOR	23
	SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	8
	STRONGLY OPPOSE	21
	DK/REF	3

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	84%	14	2
Q4. The HPV vaccine, which is given to girls to prevent them from getting cervical cancer	78%	18	3
Q5. HIV/AIDS testing	83%	15	1
Q6. Contraception, such as birth control pills	70%	28	1
Q7. Abortion services	32%	65	3

Q8. [BASE = THOSE WHO ANSWER "SHOULD NOT" or "DK/REF" on "ABORTION SERVICES" in Q7; N=272]	Yes	28%
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	69
	DK/REF	3

Q7 and Q8 COMBINED [BASE=TOTAL SAMPLE]

(Q7) Support govt. subsidized insurance plans covering abortion	32%	} 51%
(Q8) Support govt. subsidized coverage if abortion paid for by private funds	19	
Total opposition to govt. subsidized plans covering abortion		47
DK/REF		2

Q9. What is your religious preference--do you consider yourself a Catholic, or something else, or do you not have a religious preference?	CATHOLIC	55%
	SOMETHING ELSE	32
	NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	13
	REF	1

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	56%	30	7	5	1
Q11. The position of the Catholic Bishop in your area	23%	28	13	33	2
Q12. President Obama's recommendation	35%	35	10	18	2

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	13%
	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	26
	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	16
	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	45
	DK/REF	*

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	15%
	SOMEWHAT AGREE	11
	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	26
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	46
	DK/REF	2

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	23%
	LESS FAVORABLY	41
	MAKES NO DIFFERENCE	36
	DK/REF	1

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	13%
	LEGAL IN MOST	21
	LEGAL IN JUST A FEW	43
	NEVER LEGAL	21
	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	47%
	REPUBLICAN	20
	INDEPENDENT	28
	CONSERVATIVE PARTY	1
	LIBERTARIAN PARTY	1
	SOMETHING ELSE	*
DK/REF	3	

D1B. [ONLY If D1="independent" or "Something Else"] Do you lean more toward [ROTATE] the Democratic Party or Republican Party?	LEAN DEMOCRAT	11%
	LEAN REPUBLICAN	13
	NO LEAN	8
	DK/REF	2

D2. In terms of political outlook, do you usually think of yourself as [READ LIST; REVERSE ORDER]:	VERY CONSERVATIVE	17%
	SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE	27
	MIDDLE OF THE ROAD	28
	SOMEWHAT LIBERAL	21
	VERY LIBERAL	5
	DK/REF	1

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	11%
	ONCE A WEEK	40
	AT LEAST ONCE/MONTH	15
	FEW TIMES A YEAR	17
	LESS OFTEN THAN THAT	9
	NEVER	6
DK/REF	2	

D4. In what year were you born? Are you between:	18-34	23%
	35-44	18
	45-54	21
	55-64	18
	65+	21
	REF	*
D5. Are you Hispanic or Latino?	WHITE	24%
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	2
	LATINO/HISPANIC	72
	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	*
	NATIVE AMERICAN	*
	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	20%
	\$25,000 UP TO \$50,000	29
	\$50,000 UP TO \$75,000	21
	\$75,000 UP TO \$100,000	11
	\$100,000 OR MORE	11
	DK/REF	8
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	84%	83%	78%	70%	32%
Men	82%	78%	80%	64%	34%
Women	86%	88%	77%	77%	31%
18-44	89%	88%	84%	80%	38%
45-64	86%	83%	79%	72%	33%
65+	72%	76%	66%	50%	21%
White	87%	87%	82%	82%	33%
Latino	83%	82%	77%	66%	32%
Liberal	89%	89%	78%	76%	49%
Moderate	80%	82%	83%	68%	36%
Conservative	84%	80%	76%	69%	20%
Democrat	84%	82%	77%	73%	39%
Republican	77%	78%	78%	60%	19%
Independent	88%	89%	82%	75%	34%
<\$50K	84%	85%	80%	71%	32%
\$50K+	86%	84%	81%	74%	34%
Catholics	83%	83%	77%	67%	31%
Other	86%	83%	82%	70%	30%
Church-attending Catholics*	83%	82%	77%	66%	30%
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion**	89%	88%	85%	83%	63%
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	79%	78%	72%	56%	--

* "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=272] 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	51%	47
Men	56%	42
Women	47%	51
18-44	58%	41
45-64	50%	48
65+	42%	55
White	48%	50
Latino	52%	46
Liberal	69%	30
Moderate	64%	33
Conservative	33%	64
Democrat	60%	37
Republican	34%	66
Independent	51%	46
<\$50K	51%	45
\$50K+	53%	47
Catholics	51%	47
Other	46%	53
Church-attending Catholics	51%	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	23%	41	36
Men	22%	40	37
Women	23%	42	35
18-44	20%	42	37
45-64	27%	35	37
65+	19%	48	33
White	29%	38	33
Latino	21%	41	38
Liberal	9%	44	44
Moderate	14%	47	39
Conservative	36%	35	28
Democrat	14%	43	42
Republican	41%	33	27
Independent	22%	43	34
<\$50K	20%	40	40
\$50K+	24%	41	34
Catholics	21%	40	38
Other	28%	44	28
Church-attending Catholics	22%	40	36
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*	10%	50	40
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	37%	32	31

* 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	56%	35%	23%
Men	60%	32%	24%
Women	53%	37%	22%
18-44	59%	30%	21%
45-64	53%	40%	21%
65+	57%	34%	31%
White	65%	18%	13%
Latino	52%	41%	26%
Liberal	54%	50%	21%
Moderate	55%	33%	23%
Conservative	59%	26%	25%
Democrat	53%	48%	26%
Republican	62%	15%	26%
Independent	60%	29%	17%
<\$50K	49%	36%	24%
\$50K+	65%	36%	22%
Catholics	54%	42%	35%
Other	61%	21%	10%
Church attending			
Catholics	54%	42%	37%
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*	57%	43%	20%
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	56%	25%	27%

* 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	26%	72	15%	11	26	46
Men	24%	75	13%	11	27	48
Women	27%	70	16%	11	26	44
18-44	25%	75	12%	13	28	47
45-64	28%	70	18%	10	27	43
65+	22%	73	14%	8	24	49
White	29%	69	14%	15	29	40
Latino	24%	74	15%	9	27	47
Liberal	9%	90	4%	5	24	66
Moderate	16%	85	6%	10	27	58
Conservative	43%	55	27%	16	28	27
Democrat	19%	80	9%	10	29	51
Republican	44%	56	26%	18	28	28
Independent	22%	75	13%	9	23	52
<\$50K	26%	72	13%	13	28	44
\$50K+	24%	74	15%	9	24	50
Catholics	26%	72	18%	8	29	43
Other	27%	67	12%	15	21	46
Church- attending						
Catholics	28%	70	20%	8	29	41
Support govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion*	11%	88	5%	6	31	57
Oppose govt. subsidized insurance plan covering abortion, even if no public funds used	41%	55	25%	16	20	35

* Q7 and Q8.