



# Views on Changing the Law on Abortion in Argentina

## Analysis of a national public opinion survey

October 2011

## Introduction and Summary

The Argentinean legislature is currently considering legislation that would expand legal abortion rights by modifying the country's law that currently allows abortion in only very limited cases. Belden Russonello Strategists LLC (formerly Belden Russonello & Stewart) conducted public opinion research for Catholics for Choice regarding Argentines' attitudes on abortion, the proposed new legislation, and the influence of Catholic bishops in the abortion debate. The findings reported here are from a survey of 1,002 Argentines over the age of 18 in cities with a population of 50,000 or more, conducted by telephone from September 9<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>.

Abortion in Argentina is technically legal in very limited circumstances but is generally unobtainable. However, three in ten Argentina residents know someone who has had one, eight in ten think it should be legal in at least some cases, and more than six in ten think political candidates should ignore the views of the Catholic bishops when making policy decisions. These are some of the findings of a new nationwide survey in Argentina commissioned by Catholics for Choice.

- A third of Argentines (34%) tell us that they know someone who has had an abortion, despite the fact that it is almost impossible to obtain a legal abortion in the country, including personal acquaintances such as a friend or neighbor (16%) and family members (7%).
- There is broad support for many components of the proposed legislation on abortion. A large majority favors abortion being legal in at least a few cases (78%), especially when the woman's health or life is at risk (81% favor), the pregnancy is a result of rape (80%), or the fetus has severe abnormalities (68%).

- Most Argentineans believe that Catholic bishops should not have political influence over voters or candidates. About six in ten say that the views of Catholic bishops are not important to their decision about whom to support (57%) and disagree that Catholic candidates have a religious obligation to vote in accordance with the Catholic bishops (63%). They also reject the idea that Catholics have a moral obligation to vote against candidates who support legal abortion (70% disagree).

This survey for Catholics for Choice is based on a random probability sample of 1,002 Argentineans over the age of 18 in cities with a population of 50,000 or more. The telephone survey was conducted in Argentina from September 9<sup>th</sup> through 30<sup>th</sup>. The margin of sampling error at the 95% level of confidence is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points. A detailed methodology is available in Appendix A. The findings are available in English and Spanish, as are the original Spanish questionnaire and a translation into English.

In reading the report, the base for each table is all respondents (n=1,002) unless otherwise noted. In reading these data, when the percent sign (%) appears at the top of a column, the numbers add vertically; when % appears at the left of a row, the numbers add horizontally. An asterisk (\*) indicates less than 1%; a double hyphen (--) indicates zero. Due to weighting, rounding, omission of "do not know," "refuse," or other responses, percentages may add to more or less than 100%.

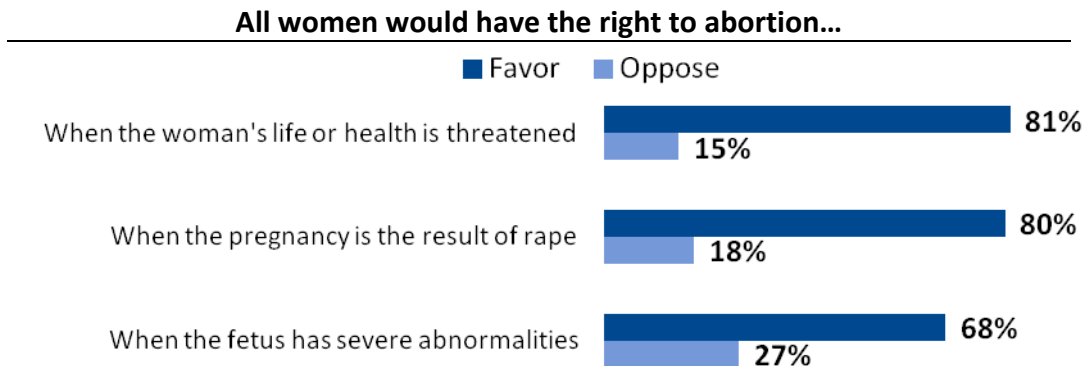
## Findings

### A. Broad support for reproductive rights

**Support for access to contraception:** Argentineans widely support access to reproductive health care services for women. Nearly eight in ten (78%) say they approve of the fact that women in Argentina have legal access to contraception and only 17% oppose its legality.

**Support for legal abortion:** Nearly eight in ten (78%) Argentineans also believe that abortion should be legal in at least a few cases, if not more broadly. This figure includes 55% who say it should be legal in just a few cases, 13% who say most cases, and 10% who say almost all cases. Just two in ten say abortion should never be legal (21%).

**Support for changing the law on abortion:** Argentineans favor changing current abortion law in multiple ways. The areas of the proposed legislation that garner the most support are legalizing abortion when the woman's life or health is threatened (81% favor) and when the pregnancy is the result of rape (80%). Seven in ten support legalizing abortion when the fetus has serious abnormalities (68%). The public is evenly divided on whether the new legislation should allow women to obtain an abortion for any reason in the first twelve weeks of pregnancy (45% favor, 53% oppose).



Legislation has been proposed to change the abortion law in several ways. Now I'm going to read you the different parts of the legislation and I would like you to tell me if you favor or oppose each part. P9. Every woman would have the right to have an abortion when there is a risk to the life or health of the woman; P8. Every woman would have the right to have an abortion when the pregnancy is the result of rape; P10. Every woman would have the right to have an abortion when the fetus has serious abnormalities; P7. Every woman would have the right to decide to have an abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

The table below reveals that there is majority support across all demographic groups for making abortion legal in cases of threats to the life or health of the woman, rape, and fetal abnormalities. Most demographic groups are close to evenly divided on legalizing abortion in the first twelve weeks for any reason (last column), except among those who attend church once a week or more (25% favor/75% oppose).

There are few differences by gender and age. Across every question, Catholics are more supportive of legal abortion than non-Catholics. Those who attend church once a week or more are less supportive of legal abortion across all questions, but still broadly support legalizing abortion in cases of threats to the woman’s life and health, rape, and severe fetal abnormalities.

**Views on Abortion Legality and Proposed Legislation**

	Favor legal in cases of health/life	Favor legal in cases of rape	Favor legal in cases of fetal abnormality	Favor legal in first twelve weeks
<b>Total</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Men	82%	82%	69%	49%
Women	81%	79%	68%	41%
18-34 years old	76%	81%	57%	39%
35-44	79%	81%	65%	45%
45-54	84%	73%	74%	46%
55-64	86%	83%	75%	54%
65+	85%	81%	77%	45%
Catholic	84%	84%	71%	47%
Not Catholic	73%	69%	62%	38%
Attend religious services once a week or more	73%	58%	59%	25%
Few times per month	85%	84%	71%	41%
Special celebrations	85%	90%	72%	54%
Never	80%	85%	71%	58%

**Familiarity:** Despite the fact that abortion is currently legal in only very limited cases and generally unavailable in the country, a third of Argentineans (34%) say they know someone who has had an abortion. Most say the person who had the abortion is a friend or neighbor (16%), with another 7% saying it is a family member. Some also say that the person is someone they work with (3%) or someone else (12%). We did not ask respondents about their own experience but one percent volunteered that they themselves have had an abortion.

## B. Leaving abortion and Catholic bishops out of politics

**A non-issue:** Argentineans are unlikely to either punish or reward candidates for elected office based on the issue of abortion. Two-thirds (64%) say a candidate’s support for legal abortion has no impact on their vote. The rest of the public either says such support would make them more inclined to vote for the candidate (11%) or it would make them less inclined (22%). Catholics are somewhat less likely to choose candidates based on their abortion stance (67% no impact) than non-Catholics (57%).

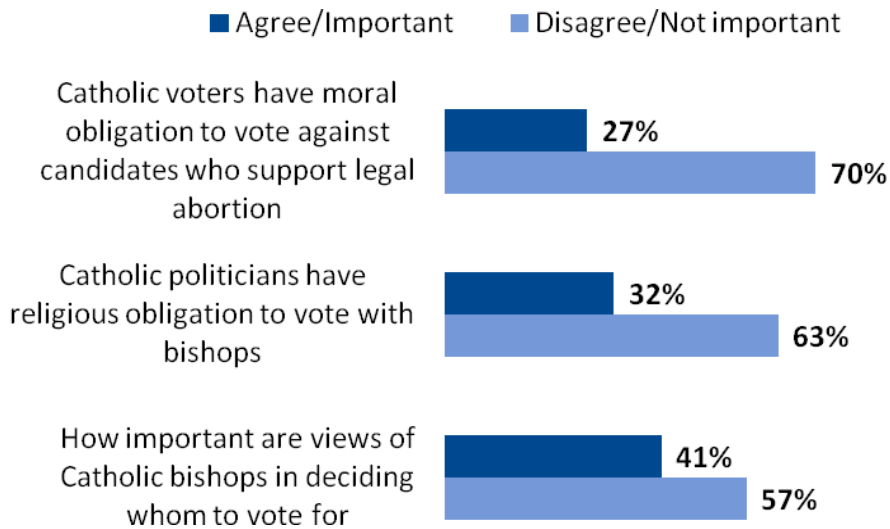
**Effect of Political Candidate’s Support for Legal Abortion on Vote**

	No impact	More inclined to vote for	Less inclined to vote for
<b>Total</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Catholic	67%	11%	19%
Not Catholic	57%	10%	29%

**Rejection of the influence of Catholic Bishops on politics:** While three-fourths (73%) of Argentineans are Catholic, most do not believe the Catholic bishops should have influence in political matters.

- On the issue of abortion specifically, Argentineans broadly reject the idea that Catholic voters have a moral obligation to vote against candidates who support legal abortion (70% disagree).
- In addition, over six in ten (63%) disagree that a Catholic politician has a religious obligation to follow the recommendations of Catholic bishops in their voting.
- Fifty-seven percent say that the views of Catholic bishops are not important to their decision on whom to support.

### Argentineans' Opposition to Bishops' Influence in Politics



P4. How much do you agree with this statement: Voters who are Catholic have the moral obligation to vote AGAINST candidates who support legal abortion. Would you say you...completely agree, agree, disagree, or completely disagree; P3. How much do you agree with this statement: Politicians who are Catholic have a religious obligation to vote on issues the way Catholic bishops recommend. Would you say you... completely agree, agree, disagree, or completely disagree; P2. How important are the views of the Catholic Bishops in Argentina on current issues for you in deciding whom to vote for? Not important at all, not very important, somewhat important, very important.

As the table below shows, on the questions of Catholic voters' and politicians' religious obligations, majorities across all demographic groups disagree that voters and politicians must vote against those who support legal abortion and with Catholic bishops.

In addition, majorities of nearly all demographic groups say the opinions of Catholic bishops in Argentina are not important to their vote decisions. The only groups who do not are Argentines over the age of 65 and those who attend church a few times a month or more. Even among these groups, only about a third or fewer says bishops' opinions are very important to their vote (Age 65+: 34% very important; church once a week+: 25%, church few times a month: 24%).

Across all the questions, younger Argentineans are more likely to reject the influence of Catholic bishops and religion in politics than their elders.

#### Views on Political Role for Catholic Bishops

	Disagree Catholics must vote against candidates supporting legal abortion	Disagree Catholic politicians must vote as Bishops recommend	Bishops' opinions not important to vote decision
<b>Total</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>57%</b>
Men	70%	65%	58%
Women	71%	63%	56%
18-34 years old	70%	68%	64%
35-44	71%	78%	74%
45-54	73%	63%	50%
55-64	71%	52%	57%
65+	67%	55%	40%
Catholic	71%	60%	53%
Not Catholic	66%	75%	67%
Attend religious services once a week or more	60%	53%	48%
Few times per month	68%	60%	47%
Special celebrations	73%	66%	58%
Never	79%	77%	76%





## Appendix A: Detailed Methodology

### Collaboration

MBC MORI in Buenos Aires provided translation from English to Spanish, sample design and execution, and interviewing under contract and supervision by BRS.

### Questionnaire and data collection

The questionnaire used in this study was designed by BRS, prior to translation into Spanish. The Spanish version was then approved by bilingual BRS staff.

The fieldwork for the survey was conducted by telephone using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system, from September 9 to 30, 2011, by a team of professional, fully-trained and supervised telephone interviewers. A briefing session familiarized the interviewers with the sample specifications and the instrument for this study.

### Sample

The universe for the 2011 study is all adults over the age of 18 with a working telephone in cities with a population over 50,000 in Argentina.

The sample was selected using a stratified sampling frame of phone numbers from listed landline telephone numbers. The telephone lists were categorized into three strata. The first stratum includes the main urban areas that cover over 50% of the population, including Capital Federal, Greater Buenos Aires, Greater Rosario, Greater Córdoba and Mendoza. The second and third strata were comprised of medium (population between 200,000 and 499,999) and small (population between 50,000 and 199,999) urban areas. Cities were randomly selected from the second and third strata. From the cities selected, telephone numbers were selected at random.

A total of 1,002 telephone interviews were completed. All sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error, *i.e.*, the results may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population under study were interviewed. The margin of sampling error for a random survey of this size is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every individual adult in cities with 50,000 inhabitants or more in Argentina had been interviewed. The sampling error is larger for smaller groups within the sample. Other non-sampling error may also contribute to total survey error.

## Data Analysis

The data have been weighted by education level and city size to match the demographics to the proper proportion in the current population of Argentineans living in cities with a population of 50,000 or more. The table below entitled “Sample Composition” shows the weighted and unweighted percentages. All tables and analysis in the text refer to the weighted data.

	Unweighted n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,002</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Men	459	46%	45%
Women	543	54	55
18-34 years old	387	39%	29%
35-44	180	18	17
45-54	163	16	16
55-64	119	12	15
65+	153	15	22
Catholic	743	74%	73%
Not Catholic	259	26	27
Attend religious services once a week or more	214	21%	23%
Few times per month	217	22	22
Special celebrations	371	37	34
Never	188	19	19



Opinion Research  
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## Appendix B: Questionnaire

### 2011 Argentina Survey for Catholics for Choice

Entrevistar de teléfono a cabo del 9 al 30 de Septiembre  
n=1,002 Argentinos de 18 años y mas en las ciudades con pobladas de 50,000 o mas  
Peso estadístico por educación y población de la ciudad  
Margen de error muestral:  $\pm 3.1$  puntos porcentuales  
Los porcentajes pueden añadir al 99% o 101% debido al redondeo  
\* indica que menos del 1%, -- indica cero

Interviewing by telephone conducted September 9<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>  
n=1,002 Argentineans age 18 or older in cities with a population of 50,000 or more  
The data have been weighted by city size and education  
Margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points overall,  
Percents may add to 99% or 101% due to rounding  
\* indicates less than 1%; -- indicates zero

Q1. Vamos a hablar de anticoncepción. ¿Usted está a favor o en contra de que la anticoncepción sea legal para las mujeres en Argentina?	A favor/ <i>Favor</i>	78%
	En contra/ <i>Oppose</i>	17
<i>We are going to talk about contraception. Do you favor or oppose that contraception is legal for women in Argentina?</i>	No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i>	5
Q2. ¿Cuán importantes son las opiniones de los obispos de Argentina sobre temas de actualidad a la hora de decidir su voto?	Nada importante/ <i>Not important at all</i>	38%
	Poco importante/ <i>Not very important</i>	19
<i>How important are the views of the Catholic Bishops in Argentina on current issues for you in deciding whom to vote for?</i>	Algo importante/ <i>Somewhat important</i>	22
	Muy importante/ <i>Very important</i>	19
	No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i>	2

<p>Q3. ¿Cuán de acuerdo está Ud. con esta frase? “Los políticos que son católicos tienen la obligación religiosa de votar sobre temáticas de la manera en que los obispos católicos recomiendan” Diría que está...</p> <p><i>How much do you agree with this statement: Politicians who are Catholic have a religious obligation to vote on issues the way Catholic bishops recommend. Would you say you...</i></p>	<p>Totalmente de acuerdo/ <i>Completely agree</i></p> <p>De acuerdo/ <i>Agree</i></p> <p>En desacuerdo/ <i>Disagree</i></p> <p>Totalmente en desacuerdo/ <i>Completely disagree</i></p> <p>No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i></p>	<p>3%</p> <p>29</p> <p>45</p> <p>18</p> <p>4</p>
<p>Q4. ¿Y cuán de acuerdo está con esta frase? “Los votantes que son católicos tienen la obligación moral de votar EN CONTRA de los candidatos que apoyan el aborto legal” Diría que está...</p> <p><i>How much do you agree with this statement: Voters who are Catholic have the moral obligation to vote AGAINST candidates who support legal abortion.” Would you say you...</i></p>	<p>Totalmente de acuerdo/ <i>Completely agree</i></p> <p>De acuerdo/ <i>Agree</i></p> <p>En desacuerdo/ <i>Disagree</i></p> <p>Totalmente en desacuerdo/ <i>Completely disagree</i></p> <p>No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i></p>	<p>4%</p> <p>23</p> <p>55</p> <p>15</p> <p>2</p>
<p>Q5. ¿Ud. considera que el aborto debería ser legal en casi todos los casos, en la mayoría de los casos, en unos pocos casos, o en ningún caso?</p> <p><i>Do you believe abortion should be legal in almost all cases, in most cases, in just a few cases, or never?</i></p>	<p>Casi todos los casos/ <i>Almost all cases</i></p> <p>La mayoría de los casos/ <i>Most cases</i></p> <p>Unos pocos casos/ <i>Just a few cases</i></p> <p>Ningún caso/ <i>Never</i></p> <p>No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i></p>	<p>10%</p> <p>13</p> <p>55</p> <p>21</p> <p>1</p>
<p>Q6. A la hora de votar, ¿se siente <u>más</u> inclinado o <u>menos</u> inclinado a apoyar a un candidato político que está a favor de legalizar el aborto en algunos casos, o esto no impacta en su decisión de a quién votar?</p> <p><i>When deciding how to vote, are you more inclined or less inclined to support a political candidate who supports making some abortions legal, or does it make no difference to you in deciding how to vote?</i></p>	<p>Más inclinado/ <i>More inclined</i></p> <p>Menos inclinado/ <i>Less inclined</i></p> <p>No impacta en su decisión/ <i>No impact on your decision</i></p> <p>No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i></p>	<p>11%</p> <p>22</p> <p>64</p> <p>3</p>

La legislación está proponiendo cambiar la ley de aborto en varias formas. Ahora le voy a leer algunas partes de la legislación y me gustaría que me dijera en cada caso si está a favor o en contra.

*Legislation has been proposed to change the abortion law in several ways. Now I'm going to read you the different parts of the legislation and I would like you to tell me if you favor or oppose each part.*

	<b>A favor/ Favor</b>	<b>En contra/ Oppose</b>	<b>NS/Reh./ DK/Ref</b>
Q7. Toda mujer tendría el derecho de decidir hacerse un aborto durante las primeras 12 semanas de embarazo. <i>Every woman would have the right to decide to have an abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.</i>	45%	53	2
Q8. Toda mujer tendría el derecho a hacerse un aborto si el embarazo es resultado de una violación. <i>Every woman would have the right to have an abortion when the pregnancy is the result of rape.</i>	80%	18	2
Q9. Toda mujer tendría el derecho a hacerse un aborto si está en peligro la vida o la salud de la mujer. <i>Every woman would have the right to have an abortion when there is a risk to the life or health of the woman.</i>	81%	15	3
Q10. Toda mujer tendría el derecho a hacerse un aborto si el feto presentara anomalías graves. <i>Every woman would have the right to have an abortion when the fetus has serious abnormalities.</i>	68%	27	4
Q11. ¿Conoce a alguien que se haya hecho un aborto? <i>Do you know anyone who has had an abortion?</i>	SÍ/Yes No		34% 66
	No sabe/Rehusa/ Don't know/Refused		*
Q12. ¿Esa persona es un miembro de su familia, alguien del trabajo, un amigo o vecino u otra persona? RESPUESTA MULTIPLE <i>Is this person a member of your family, someone you work with, a friend or neighbor, or other person? MULTIPLE RESPONSES</i>	Un miembro de su familia/ Family member		7%
	Alguien del trabajo/ Someone at work		3
	Un amigo o vecino/ Friend or neighbor		16
	Otra persona/ Other person		12
	Yo misma (NO LEER)/ Myself		1
	No sabe/Rehusa/ Don't know/Refused		*
	No conoce a nadie/ Don't know anyone		66

Q13. ¿A cuál de los siguientes partidos políticos Ud. apoya más? Frente para la Victoria-PJ, Unión para el Desarrollo Social-UCR, Frente Popular-PJ, Frente Amplio Progresista-PS, Compromiso Federal-PJ, Otros	Frente para la Victoria-PJ/ <i>Front for Victory - PJ</i>	43%
<i>Which political party do you support most: Front for Victory-PJ, Union for the Social Development-UCR, Popular Front-PJ, Broad Progressive Front-PS, Federal Commitment-PJ, or something else?</i>	Unión para el Desarrollo Social-UCR/ <i>Union for the Social Development - UCR</i>	12
	Frente Popular-PJ/ <i>Popular Front - PJ</i>	3
	Frente Amplio Progresista-PS/ <i>Broad Progressive Front - PS</i>	6
	Compromiso Federal-PJ/ <i>Federal Commitment - PJ</i>	4
	Otros/ <i>Other</i>	3
	Ninguno (NO LEER)/ <i>None (NOT READ)</i>	6
	No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i>	22
	Q14. Si las elecciones fueran este domingo ¿por cuál de los siguientes candidatos votaría Ud.?	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner
<i>If the election were held today, which of the following candidates would you vote for?</i>	Ricardo Alfonsín	8
	Eduardo Duhalde	5
	Hermes Binner	13
	Alberto Rodríguez Saá	10
	Elisa Carrió	2
	Jorge Altamira	3
	Otros (NO LEER)/ <i>Other (NOT READ)</i>	1
	Ninguno (NO LEER)/ <i>None (NOT READ)</i>	5
	No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i>	5
	D1. ¿Podría decirme cuál es su religión?	Catolico/ <i>Catholic</i>
<i>Can you tell me what is your religion?</i>	Evangelico/ <i>Evangelical</i>	10
	Otro Cristiano/ <i>Other Christian</i>	7
	Otros/ <i>Others</i>	8
	No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i>	2

D2. ¿Con qué frecuencia concurre a la iglesia/ al templo? Todos los días, 1 vez por semana, 1 vez cada quince días, 1 vez al mes, solo en celebraciones especiales (Navidad/ Pascuas), nunca	Todos los días/ <i>Everyday</i>	5%
	1 vez por semana/ <i>Once a week</i>	18
	1 vez cada quince días/ <i>Once every 15 days</i>	8
	1 vez al mes/ <i>Once a month</i>	15
	Solo en celebraciones especiales (Navidad/ Pascuas) / <i>Only on special celebrations (Christmas/Easter)</i>	34
	Nunca/ <i>Never</i>	19
	No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i>	1
D3. ¿Cuál es el máximo nivel educativo alcanzado por Ud.? <i>What is the highest educational level attained by you?</i>	Primario completo o menos/ Primary complete or less	40%
	Secundario incompleto o complete/ <i>Secondary incomplete or complete</i>	38
	Terciario incompleto o complete/ <i>Tertiary incomplete or complete</i>	8
	Universitario incompleto o mas/ <i>University incomplete or more</i>	13
	No sabe/Rehusa/ <i>Don't know/Refused</i>	--
D4. ¿Podría decirme su edad? <i>Can you tell me your age?</i>	18-34	29%
	35-44	17
	45-54	16
	55-64	15
	65+	22
GÉNERO <i>GENDER</i>	Hombres/ <i>Men</i>	45%
	Mujeres/ <i>Women</i>	55