News



An empty recovery area, left, and abortion procedure room are shown June 30, 2022, at the Planned Parenthood facility in Tempe, Arizona. (AP/Matt York)



by Aleja Hertzler-McCain

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

February 23, 2023

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

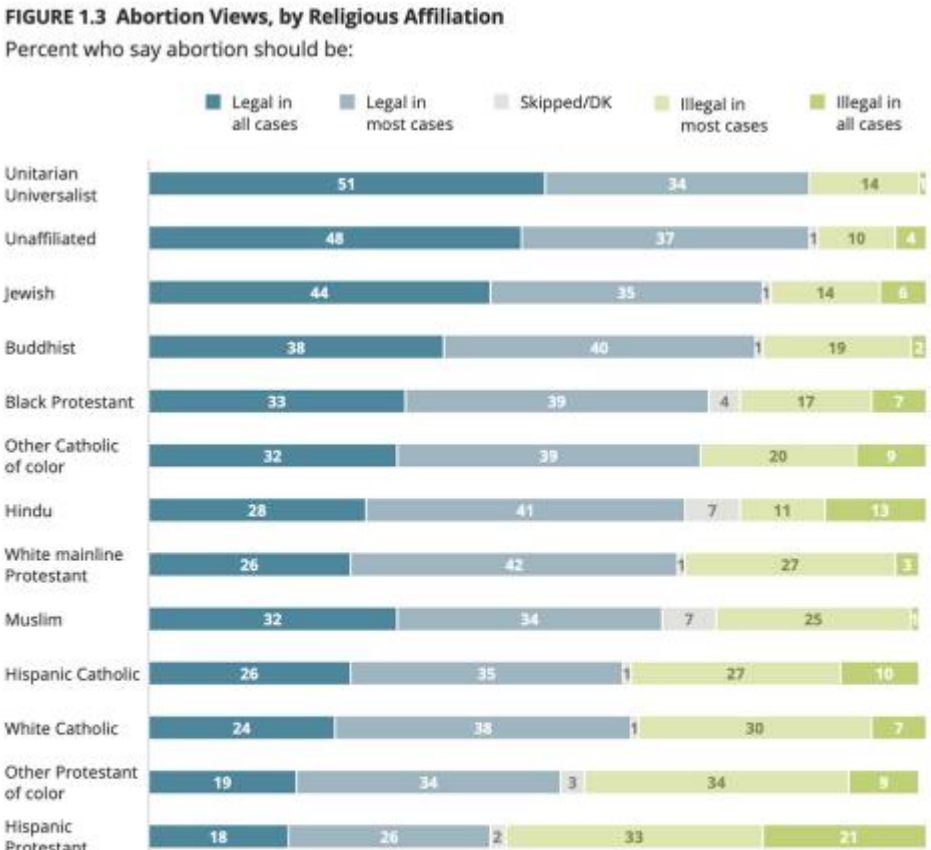
Support for legal abortion in all cases nearly doubled among Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. over the course of 2022, according to a survey on abortion attitudes across the 50 states released Feb. 23 by the Washington-based Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI).

The institute says the survey, which included nearly 23,000 interviews, is the first of its kind to examine opinions on abortion in each of the states since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe* v. *Wade* in June 2022 and ended federal protections for abortion.

In March 2022, 16% of Hispanic Catholics said abortion should be legal in all cases, with 31% holding the same position in December, according to the survey, which included interviews at several points throughout 2022.

The survey authors note that support for legal abortion in all cases among Hispanic Catholics significantly increased as support for legal abortion in most cases decreased. In March 2022, 41% of Hispanic Catholics said abortion should be legal in most cases. That number decreased to 31% in December.

Since the Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs* v. *Jackson Women's Health Organization*, most abortions are now banned in 13 states. Georgia, not included in the 13, bans abortion at six weeks, which is before most people know they are pregnant. Four additional states ban abortion at 15, 18 or 20 weeks.



Click for full-size graphic

While the U.S. bishops have focused on "the threat of abortion" as their "preeminent priority" in their main teaching document on U.S. political involvement, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," the newly released PRRI survey indicates that most Catholics are not looking to religious leaders for guidance on abortion issues.

Only 20% of white Catholics and 13% of Hispanic Catholics say they look to religious leaders for guidance on abortion issues, much lower than the 38% of white evangelical Protestants who say they look to their religious leaders for guidance on abortion issues.

Overall, as the national abortion landscape drastically changed between March and December 2022, Americans' attitudes toward the legality of abortion did not significantly change, according to the survey. Sixty-four percent of Americans reported supporting legal abortion in March; 65% said the same in December.

Over a longer time scale, American support for abortion legality has significantly changed since 2010, when only 55% of Americans said abortion should be legal in all or most cases, say the survey authors. The Public Religion Research Institute began tracking abortion attitudes in 2010.

In this year's survey, 61% of Hispanic Catholics, 62% of white Catholics and 71% of other Catholics of color said that abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

Among Republicans, however, the belief that abortion should be illegal in all cases went from 21% in September 2021 to 14% in December 2022. Republican women's beliefs shifted more than men's throughout 2022.

Similarly, while the percent of Democratic men who believed abortion should be legal in all cases stayed steady, support for the position among Democratic women rose from 46% in March to 52% in December 2022.

Americans ages 18-29 are the age group most likely to say abortion should be legal in all cases (38%) and the age group most likely to say abortion should be illegal in all cases (11%).



Click for full-size graphic

LGBTQ Americans have high levels of support for legal abortion, with 83% saying it should be legal in most or all cases.

In terms of congressional action, 55% of Hispanic Catholics and 50% of white Catholics said Congress should pass a national law preserving a right to an abortion. Twelve percent of Hispanic Catholics and 10% of white Catholics said Congress should pass a national law banning abortion.

The survey also asked about respondents' knowledge of their state abortion laws. In March 2022, 48% of Americans said they were not sure if abortion would be legal in their state if the Supreme Court overturned *Roe* v. *Wade*. That number dropped to 30% in December 2022, when respondents were asked if they knew whether abortion was legal in their state.

Throughout the year, 48% of Hispanic Catholics said they did not know if abortion is still legal in their state; the only religious group with a higher percentage of people unsure about state abortion laws were Jehovah's Witnesses at 49%. Thirty-one percent of white Catholics and 38% of other Catholics of color were unsure about their state abortion laws.

Women were more likely than men to say that they were unsure about their state abortion laws. In early 2022, 52% of women said they were unsure about their state's abortion laws if *Roe* was overturned, compared to 44% of men. This dropped by December, when 31% of women and 29% of men said they did not know whether abortion was legal in their state.

In March 2022, young women ages 18-29 (41%) were much less likely than women older than 65 (61%) to say they didn't know what their state's abortion laws would be if *Roe* was overturned.

The survey also revealed that Catholics are less likely than other religious groups to say that they will only vote for candidates who share their views on abortion.

Advertisement

Among people who say abortion should be legal in most or all cases, Jewish Americans were most likely to say candidates must share their views, at 38%.

For Catholics who say abortion should be legal in most or all cases, 27% of Hispanic Catholics, 22% of white Catholics and 21% other Catholics say they will only vote for a candidate who shares their abortion views.

Among people who believe abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, Hispanic Protestants and white evangelical Protestants were the religious groups most likely to say that a candidate must share their views. 36% of Hispanic Protestants and 34% of white evangelical Protestants who oppose abortion legality said they will only vote for candidates who share their views.

For Catholics who said abortion should be illegal in most or all cases, 23% of white Catholics and 22% of Hispanic Catholics say they will only vote for Catholics who share their views.

Young women are more likely than other groups to say they will only vote for a candidate who shares their views on abortion. Thirty-four percent of young women ages 18-29 and 32% of women 30-49 who believe abortion should be legal say they will only vote for a candidate who shares their views.

Similarly, 33% of women ages 18-29 and 27% of women ages 30-49 who oppose abortion legality will only vote for a candidate who shares their views.

The survey, which is called the 50-state 2022 American Values Atlas, was conducted with a random sample of 22,984 adults living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia between March 11 and Dec. 14, 2022. Respondents were recruited using a database of all delivery addresses in the U.S. The margin of error for the national survey is +/- 0.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

A version of this story appeared in the **March 17-30, 2023** print issue under the headline: Support for legal abortion nearly doubles among Hispanic Catholics.