

May 14, 2010

The New Normal on Abortion: Americans More "Pro-Life"

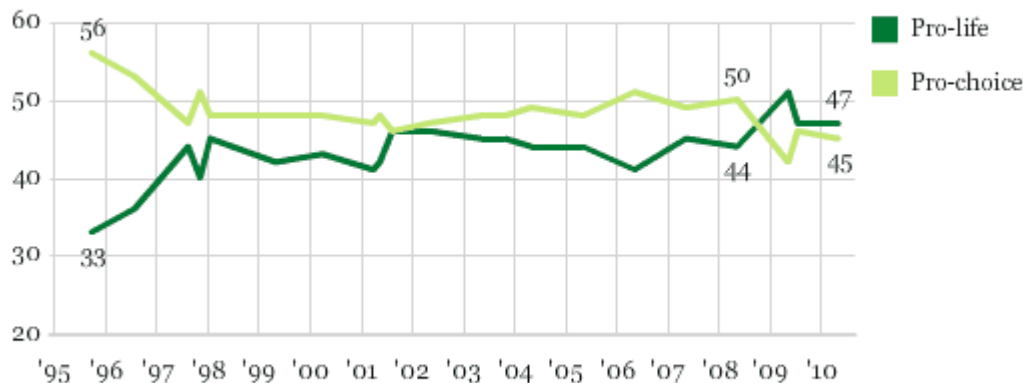
For second year straight, "pro-life" and "pro-choice" closely matched

by Lydia Saad

PRINCETON, NJ -- The conservative shift in Americans' views on abortion that Gallup [first recorded a year ago](#) has carried over into 2010. Slightly more Americans call themselves "pro-life" than "pro-choice," 47% vs. 45%, according to a May 3-6 Gallup poll. This is nearly identical to the 47% to 46% division found last July following a more strongly pro-life advantage of 51% to 42% last May.

Americans' Overall Position on Abortion

With respect to the abortion issue, would you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?



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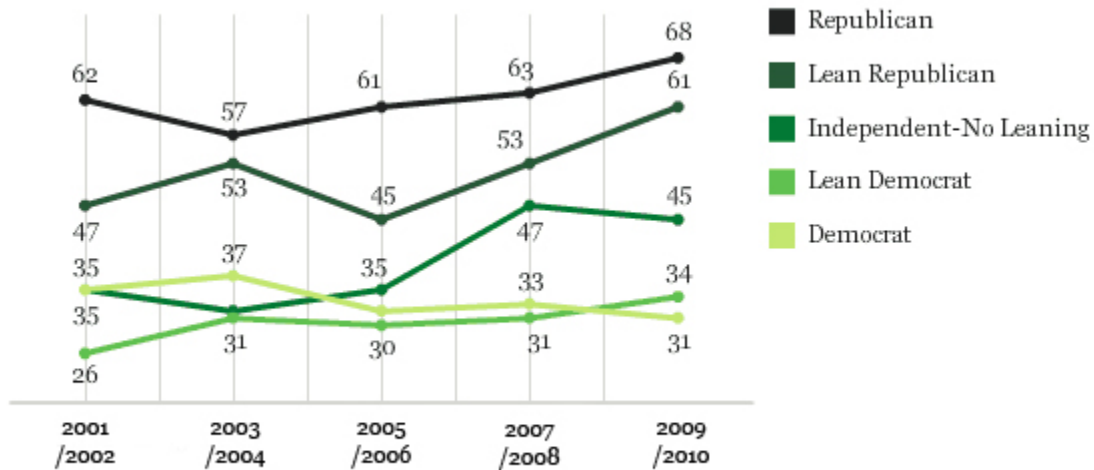
While the two-percentage-point gap in current abortion views is not significant, it represents the third consecutive time Gallup has found more Americans taking the pro-life than pro-choice position on this measure since May 2009, suggesting a real change in public opinion. By contrast, in nearly all readings on this question since 1995, and each survey from 2003 to 2008, more Americans called themselves pro-choice than pro-life.

Shift Limited to Republicans and Independents

According to two-year averages of these results since 2001, Republicans have become more likely to call themselves pro-life since polling conducted in 2003/2004, as have Republican-leaning independents since 2005/2006. Independents who lean to neither party also became more likely to call themselves "pro-life" between 2003/2004 and 2005/2006, but have since held steady.

Democrats' self-identification with the pro-life position has moved in the other direction, declining from 37% in 2003/2004 to 31% in 2009/2010. Among independents who lean Democratic, there has been no movement in either direction.

Percentage "Pro-Life" by Party ID -- Biennial Averages

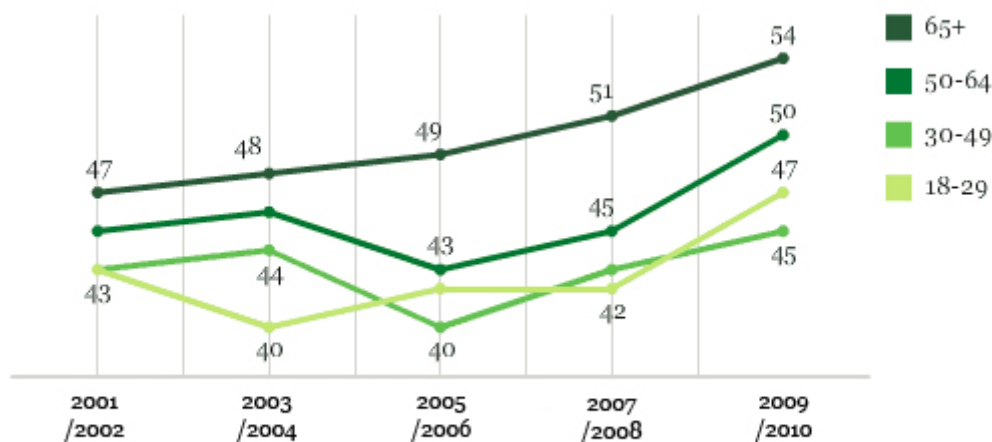


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Age and Gender Trends Mirror Overall Pattern

All age groups have become more attached to the pro-life label since 2005, with particularly large increases among young adults and those aged 50 to 64 years in the latest period between 2007/2008 and 2009/2010.

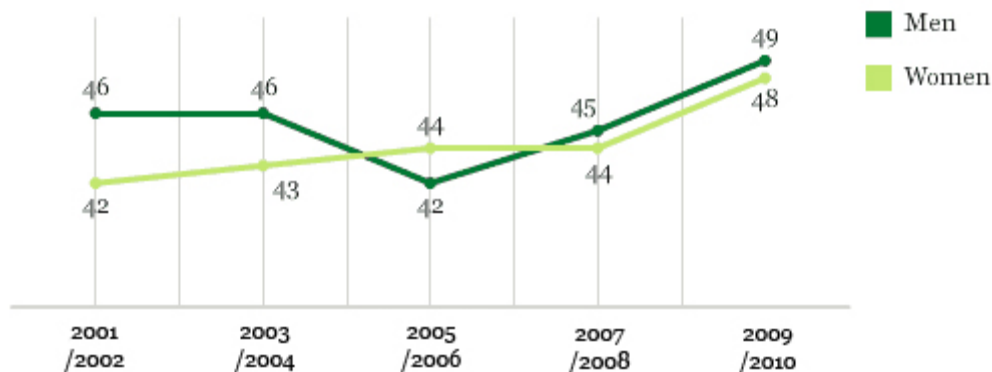
Percentage "Pro-Life" by Age -- Biennial Averages



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Both genders have also become more likely to identify as pro-life, with the increase among women coming mainly since 2008, whereas the increase in men started after 2006.

Percentage "Pro-Life" by Gender -- Biennial Averages



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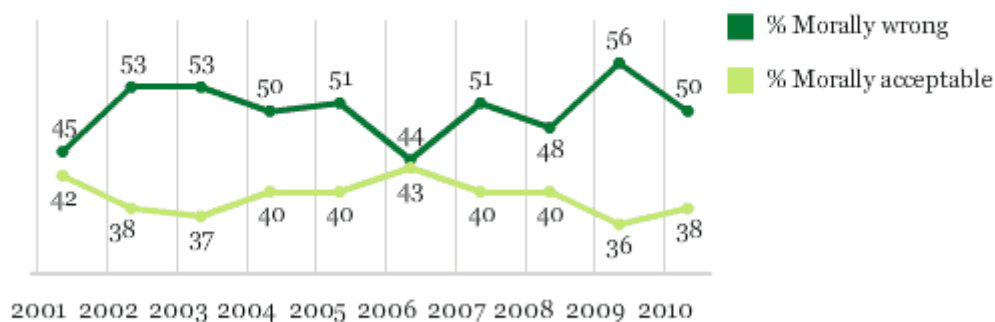
Underlying Moral Reaction to Abortion is Unchanged

It is not entirely clear why Americans have grown more likely to embrace the pro-life label when defining their own views on the issue, especially because there has not been an attendant increase in opposition to abortion on moral grounds.

Half of Americans currently say abortion is morally wrong -- in line with most of Gallup's readings on this question since 2001, although higher than the initial 45% recorded in 2001 and a one-time 44% reading in 2006.

Morality of Abortion

Regardless of whether or not you think it should be legal, for each one, please tell me whether you personally believe that in general it is morally acceptable or morally wrong. How about abortion?



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Barring evidence that Americans are growing more wary about the morality of abortion per se, the trends by party identification suggest that increased political polarization may be a factor in Republicans' preference for the "pro-life" label, particularly since Barack Obama took office. Whatever the cause, the effect is that the pro-life label has become increasingly dominant among Republicans

and to a lesser degree among independents, while the pro-choice label has become more dominant among Democrats.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,029 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 3-6, 2010. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones (for respondents with a landline telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell phone only).

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Biennial Trend in Pro-Choice/Pro-Life, by Party ID

With respect to the abortion issue, would you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?

	Repub- lican	Lean Repub- lican	Indepen- dent-No leaning	Lean Demo- crat	Demo- crat
	%	%	%	%	%
2001-2002					
Pro-choice	32	41	49	67	56
Pro-life	62	47	35	26	35
No opinion	6	12	15	7	9
2003-2004					
Pro-choice	37	41	49	61	58
Pro-life	57	53	32	31	37
No opinion	6	7	19	8	4
2005-2006					
Pro-choice	32	49	47	60	61
Pro-life	61	45	35	30	32
No opinion	7	6	18	9	7
2007-2008					
Pro-choice	31	44	43	62	60
Pro-life	63	53	47	31	33
No opinion	5	3	11	7	6
2009-2010					
Pro-choice	26	33	37	60	62
Pro-life	68	61	45	34	31
No opinion	6	6	18	5	7

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Biennial Trend in Pro-Choice/Pro-Life, by Age

With respect to the abortion issue, would you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?

	18 to 29 years	30 to 49 years	50 to 64 years	65 and older
	%	%	%	%
2001-2002				
Pro-choice	50	49	47	37
Pro-life	43	43	45	47
No opinion	7	8	8	16
2003-2004				
Pro-choice	54	51	46	42
Pro-life	40	44	46	48
No opinion	6	5	8	10
2005-2006				
Pro-choice	50	53	49	41
Pro-life	42	40	43	49
No opinion	8	7	9	10
2007-2008				
Pro-choice	54	52	51	39
Pro-life	42	43	45	51
No opinion	4	5	4	11
2009-2010				
Pro-choice	45	49	44	35
Pro-life	47	45	50	54
No opinion	8	6	6	10

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Biennial Trend in Pro-Choice/Pro-Life, by Gender

With respect to the abortion issue, would you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?

	Men	Women
	%	%
2001-2002		
Pro-choice	46	48
Pro-life	46	42
No opinion	8	10
2003-2004		
Pro-choice	47	50
Pro-life	46	43
No opinion	7	7
2005-2006		
Pro-choice	50	49
Pro-life	42	44
No opinion	9	8
2007-2008		
Pro-choice	49	49
Pro-life	45	44
No opinion	5	7
2009-2010		
Pro-choice	44	45
Pro-life	49	48
No opinion	7	8

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