



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 16, 2010

## Americans Remain Split on Abortion Issue

A recent survey from the Barna Research Group finds that while the issue of abortion continues to divide the nation, some on both sides in the debate may be softening their positions. What does that mean for the pro-life cause?



In the survey Barna, which tends to focus its research on evangelical Christian trends, asked 1,001 adults across America if they thought “abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases.” Based on the answers given, researchers found that Americans remain split on the issue, with 49 percent saying that the procedure should remain legal in all or most cases, and 42 percent saying it should be illegal in all or most instances.

While public debate and media portrayal tend to paint the issue in black-and-white terms, the Barna study found that many Americans are taking a less hard-line approach, with only 15 saying they think abortion should be legal in every case and 19 percent preferring that it always be illegal.

According to Barna, compared to its data from the 1990s and early 2000s, “the new research suggests that Americans are more likely these days to take a ‘middle ground’ or ‘not sure’ position toward abortion.”

Nonetheless, the research found that faith — or lack of it — continues to heavily influence the parameters of opinion on abortion, with 78 percent of evangelical Christians saying the procedure should be illegal in all or most cases, while 72 percent of those who define themselves as atheists or agnostics argue that it should continue to be legal.

Those survey participants who professed some faith but said they preferred keeping abortion legal included non-born-again Christians (54 percent legal versus 31 percent illegal), Catholics (53 percent versus 36 percent), mainline Protestants (53 percent versus 40 percent), and faiths other than Christianity (54 percent versus 42 percent).

Barna also found that when faith and politics were combined born-again Republicans (72 percent) and born-again independents (58 percent) were solidly opposed to abortion while born-again Democrats found themselves evenly split on the issue, with 47 percent supporting the continuance of legalized abortion and 47 percent saying it should be made illegal in all or most cases.

While 18- to 44-year-old Americans have grown up with legalized abortion and been bombarded over the years by an assortment of media messages sympathetic to “choice” for women, Barna found that the opinions on abortion among born-again Christians in this age group remain decidedly conservative, with 61 percent of the respondents in this age group saying they want to see abortion made illegal in all or



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most cases.

Demographically, Barna found that there are more segments of Americans that support continued legalization of abortion than support its being banned in all or most cases. According to the Barna report, those demographics statistically favoring abortion include “whites, Hispanics, and Asians; upscale adults and college graduates; the nation’s two largest generations, Busters (ages 26 to 44) and Boomers (ages 45 to 63); women; unmarried adults and those currently without children; political moderates and liberals; registered Democrats and independent voters; and a plurality of residents living in the Midwest, West, and Northeast.”

By contrast, Barna found Republicans, 18-25-year-olds, and Americans living in the southern United States are the most opposed to legalized abortion, with some demographics — including blacks, parents, married adults, those without college degrees, and Americans aged 64 and over — evenly split between banning abortion and keeping it legal.

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group and leader of the study, noted that while abortion continues to be a divisive and polarizing issue across the nation, to some Americans it may be taking on less importance. “Perhaps it appears less relevant to Americans because there are so many other urgent issues,” he commented. “Also, the standard debate may seem toned down as both sides of the ideological spectrum have tried to find common objectives — such as limiting the number of abortions and pursuing adoption reform.”

Among the most ardent of pro-life leaders in America, however, any compromise or “common ground” relative to the issue of life can only benefit those who promote murder under the banner of “choice.” Judy Brown, founder and president of the American Life League, pointed out that one question destroys all possibility for compromise: “Does a human being exist prior to birth, at every stage of his biological development?”

For those who embrace a Judeo-Christian life ethic, there can only be one answer to that question, and that is what defines the pro-life cause. Explained Brown: “Lest we forget, our mission as pro-life people is to acquire legal recognition of human rights for every individual — rights which are endowed to each human being by God.... Our task is to focus on the obvious: An end to the killing through a restoration of the human rights that were robbed from our fellow preborn human beings by politicians, judges, and self-proclaimed experts.”



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