

## **Analysis of Voters' Opinions on Abortion Restrictions and Affirmative Policies**

### **Findings from a New Survey**

To: Interested Parties  
From: PerryUdem Research/Communication  
Date: January 20, 2016

The National Institute for Reproductive Health commissioned PerryUdem Research/Communication to conduct a national survey to better understand voters' awareness of and views toward the trend of abortion restrictions. Contrary to conventional wisdom that the public is deeply divided on abortion, large majorities of voters agree on how they want the experience to be for women and on a number of affirmative policy proposals. Many voters see abortion restrictions as heading in the wrong direction.

PerryUdem conducted a national survey among  $n = 1,109$  registered voters from December 17, 2015 to January 15, 2016. The survey was administered online using GfK's Knowledge Panel. The margin of sampling error for results is  $\pm 3.3$  percentage points.

Key findings include:

- Large majorities of voters say they want the experience of abortion to be safe, legal, respectful, supportive, affordable, accessible, and without shame.
- Since January of 2010, states across the country have passed 318 laws restricting access to abortion.<sup>1</sup> Slightly more than half of voters (55 percent) are unaware of this recent trend. Once informed, a majority says these laws are going in the wrong direction. Voters are less likely to vote to re-elect an official who favors these restrictions.
- A majority of voters support proposals for laws that help ensure safe and affordable access to abortion care that is driven by standard medical practices and medically proven data.

Detailed findings follow.

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute for Reproductive Health analysis based on Guttmacher Institute data, encompassing a total of six years, 2010 – 2015; the last five of those years account for 288 of the more than 1,000 abortion restrictions adopted by states since *Roe v. Wade*.

<http://www.guttmacher.org/media/inthenews/2016/01/13/index.html>

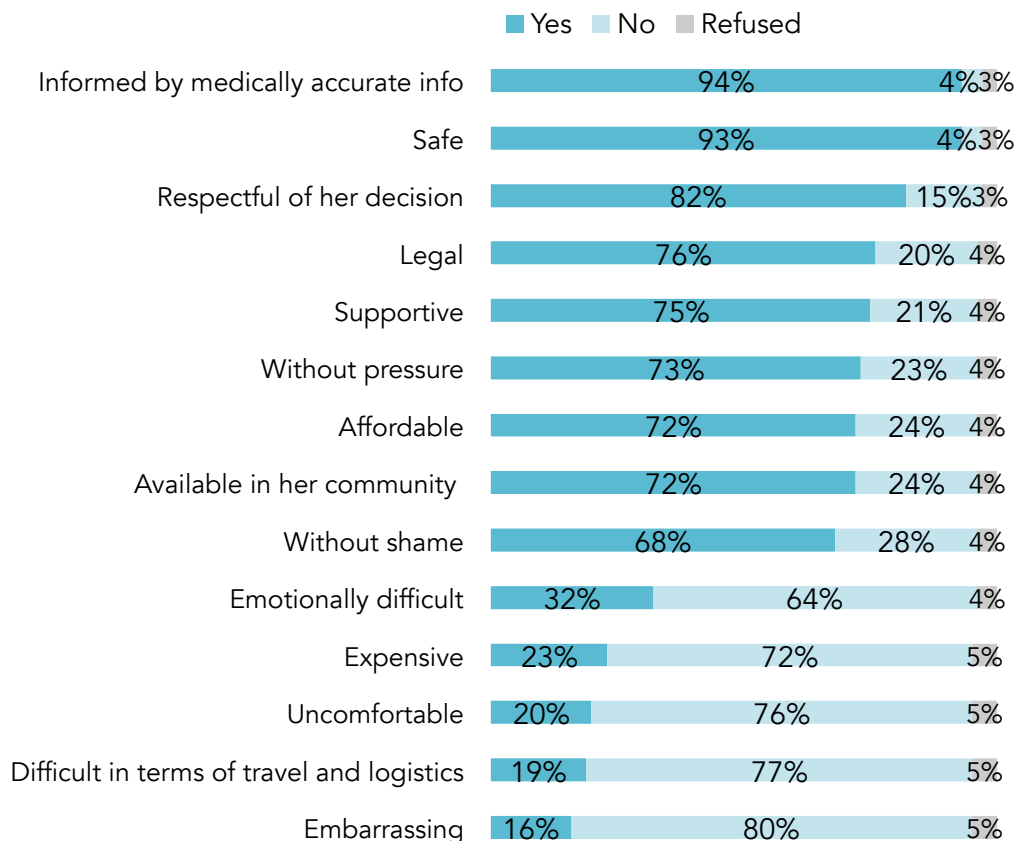
<http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/updates/2010/statetrends42010.html>

## Detailed Findings

Most of the recent restrictions and policy proposals on abortion relate to access to care and the experience of having an abortion. To get a baseline of how voters want access and the experience to be, we asked a set of straightforward questions. (See Figure 1.)

Large majorities want a woman who has decided to have an abortion to have the experience be safe, legal, affordable, and available in her community. They also want the experience to be informed by medically accurate information<sup>2</sup>, respectful of her decision, without pressure, supportive, and without shame. Voters *do not* want access to be difficult in terms of travel and logistics or expensive.

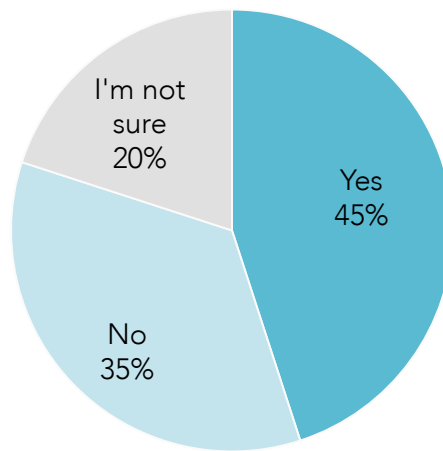
**Figure 1: Think of a woman who has decided to have an abortion. How would you want that experience to be? Would you want it to be...** (Base n = 861)



<sup>2</sup> Some states require doctors to give medically inaccurate information to their patients: [http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib\\_OAL.pdf](http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_OAL.pdf)

**Slightly more than half of voters lack knowledge about the trend to restrict access to abortion care.** Women are slightly less likely than men to have heard about the trend (42 percent have heard vs. 48 percent of men).

**Figure 2: Have you heard of a recent trend of states passing laws making it harder for women to get abortion care?**



**When informed, a majority of voters say the restrictions are going in the wrong direction.** Based on recent qualitative research<sup>3</sup>, we suspected many voters would not be aware of the restrictions trend nor of the types of laws passed. To measure opinion toward these restrictions, we presented respondents with the following information about the trend and types of laws<sup>4</sup>.

Since 2010, states across the country have passed 318 laws that make it harder for women to get abortion care. (There is a link at the end of this survey for more information if you are interested).

These 318 laws tend to fall into these categories:

- Requiring a woman to have an ultrasound, whether or not the doctor says it is necessary
- Requiring the doctor to describe the ultrasound image or display it in front of the woman
- Requiring doctors to give women medically inaccurate information about the risks of abortion
- Requiring women to make multiple, medically unnecessary appointments for an abortion
- Requiring clinics that provide abortions to meet new building standards for ambulatory surgical centers or else shut down (these laws only apply to abortion providers, not to other out-patient surgical centers)
- Banning insurance plans from covering abortion in almost all circumstances
- Banning Medicaid from covering abortion in almost all circumstances
- Banning abortion at various stages, in one state as early as six weeks
- Making some of the safest and most common abortion procedures illegal
- Limiting access to medication abortion

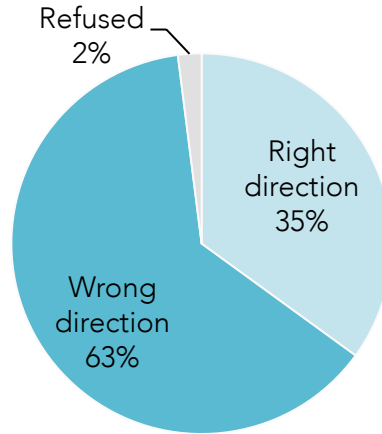
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<sup>3</sup> Focus groups in eight states for NIRH in 2014 and 2015

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://www.gutmacher.org/statecenter/abortion.html>

Close to two-thirds (63 percent) say the restrictions trend is going in the wrong direction, and 35 percent say the trend is going in the right direction. (See Figure 3.)

**Figure 3: In general, do you feel these laws are going in the right direction or wrong direction?**



Majorities of men and women feel the trend is going in the wrong direction. (See Table 1.) African Americans are among the most likely to say the trend is heading in the wrong direction. Majorities of Democrats and independents say the same, as well as nearly half of Republicans disagreeing with the direction of these laws.

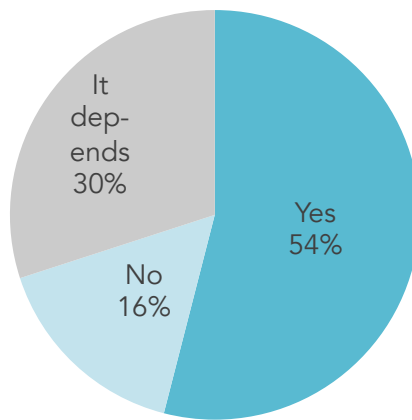
**Table 1: Do you feel these laws are going in the right direction or wrong direction?**

	Right direction	Wrong direction
Total	35	63
Men	35	62
Women	35	63
White	37	61
Latino	29	67
African American	27	70
Democrat	20	79
Independent	34	62
Republican	53	45
18-29 years old	33	63
30-44	37	62
45-59	36	62
60+	34	64



**Voters say they are going to pay attention to candidates' views on this issue.** Fifty-four percent of voters say they will pay close attention to political candidates' views on this issue. (See Figure 4.) Voters most likely to say they will pay close attention to a political candidate's views include Democrats (59 percent), women (57 percent), and respondents age 60 and older (62 percent).

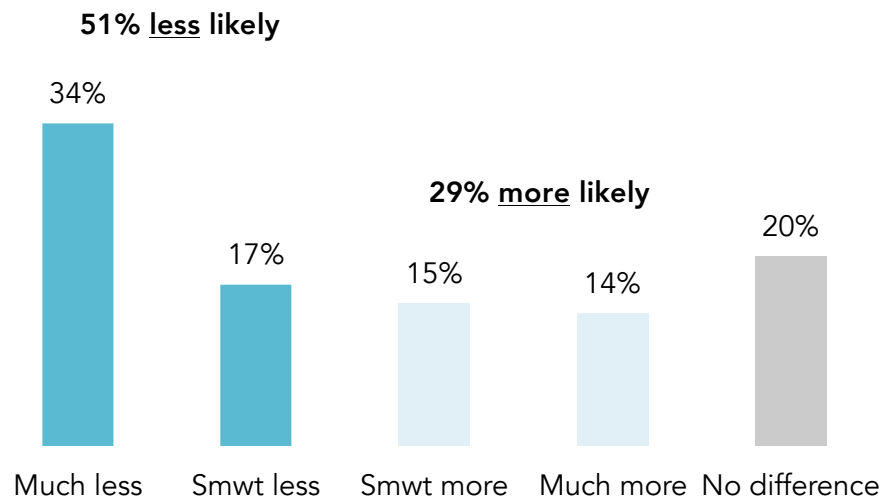
**Figure 5: After hearing about these laws, do you plan on paying close attention to a political candidate's views on this issue?**





By nearly a two-to-one margin, voters say they are less likely to vote to re-elect an official who favored these restrictions (51 percent vs. 29 percent more likely). The intensity is much stronger among those who say they would be much less likely to support (34 percent say they are much less likely to vote to re-elect vs. 14 percent who say they are much more likely to vote to re-elect).

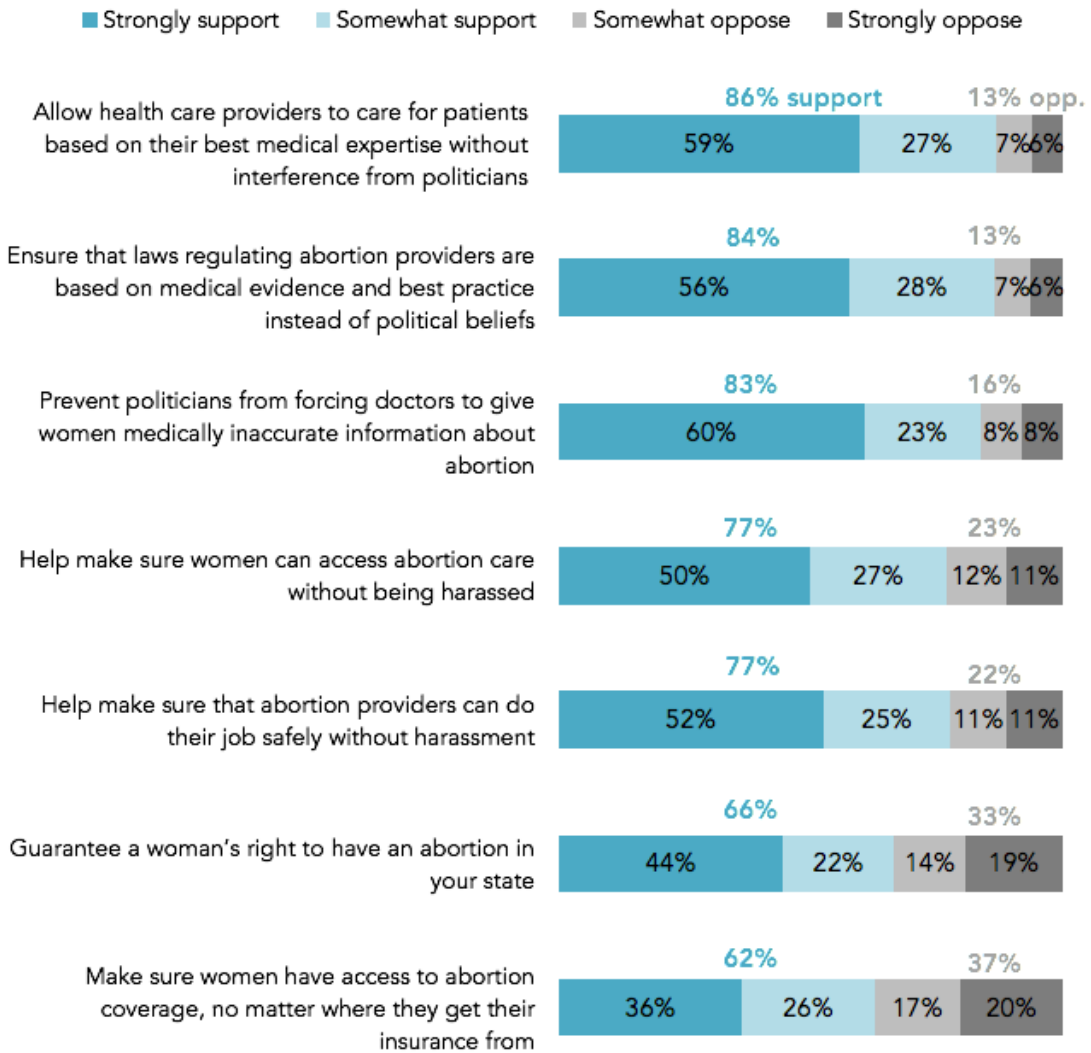
**Figure 6: Let's say your elected representative was in favor of these laws that have made it harder for women to get an abortion. Would you be more or less likely to vote to re-elect him or her?**



African-American voters are among the most likely to say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate in favor of restrictions (59 percent).

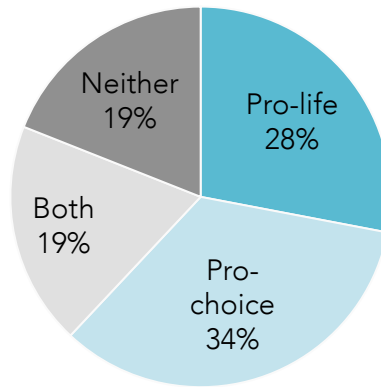
**Most voters support policies that correspond to how they want abortion access and the experience to be for women.** Majorities support proposals around medical evidence and the doctor-patient relationship, ensuring the safety of providers and women accessing care, guaranteeing a woman’s right to abortion at the state level, and ensuring abortion is covered by insurance.

**Figure 7: Here are some ideas for laws that go in a different direction. Would you support or oppose these new proposals?**



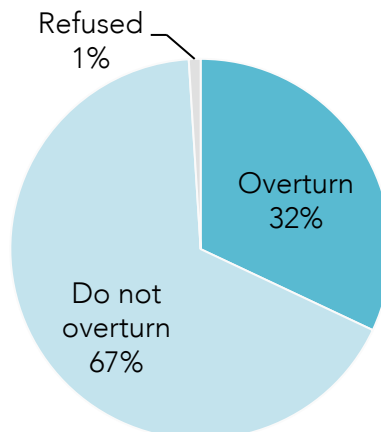
**A plurality of voters does not solely subscribe to either of the traditional labels on the issue of abortion.** About one in four (28 percent) says they are pro-life; 34 percent adopts the pro-choice label. The remaining (38 percent) identify with neither (19 percent) or both (19 percent) labels.

**Figure 8: Do you label yourself as:**



**A majority of voters do not want to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.** Two-thirds of voters (67 percent) say they do not want the Supreme Court to overturn its *Roe v. Wade* decision (vs. 32 percent who say they want it overturned).

**Figure 9: In 1973, the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision established a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion. Would you like to see the Supreme Court overturn its *Roe v. Wade* decision, or not?**



## Conclusion

Voters agree on how they want the experience around abortion to be as well as the direction of public policy on the issue. Large majorities say the experience should be safe, accessible, affordable, supportive, without pressure, and respectful – contrary to the effect of many recent restrictions on abortion. Almost two-thirds disagree with the direction of these recent restrictions, and large majorities support policies that affirm a woman’s right to abortion and ensure safe, affordable care based on medical standards and evidence. These findings are not surprising given only about one-quarter of voters label themselves pro-life and most voters do not want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned.