

THE FACTS TELL THE STORY

Catholics and Choice

2014 – 2015

CATHOLICS
FOR
CHOICE

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Individual conscience in matters of moral decision-making is at the core of the Catholic tradition. The public policy views of Catholics reflect this tradition. Today, the overwhelming majority of Catholics in the United States support access to legal abortion, contraception and comprehensive sexuality education as well as the separation of church and state.

CONTRACEPTION

Sexually active Catholic women older than **18** are just as likely (**99%**) to have used some form of contraception banned by the Vatican as women in the general population (**99%**). (NSFG, 2006-2010)

Even among those who attend church once a week or more, **80%** of sexually active Catholic women have used a form of contraception that is banned by the Vatican. (NSFG, 2006–2010)

Data from a 2010 survey revealed that **76%** of Catholic women have used birth control pills and **89%** have used condoms. (CDC, 2013)

73% of Catholic women have used some form of hormonal birth control (pill, patch, ring, etc.) compared with **77%** of the population. (NSFG, 2006–2010)

11% of Catholic women have used emergency contraception, the same as women from the general population (**11%**). (NSFG, 2006–2010)

Catholics (**58%**) are just as likely as the general population (**58%**) to believe that **14-** to **16-**year-olds should be able to access contraception, even if their parents do not approve. (GSS, 2012)

When Catholic voters considered healthcare reform in 2009, more than six in 10 (**63%**) supported health insurance coverage—whether it is private or government insurance—for contraception, such as birth control pills. (BRS, 2009)

The percentage of married Hispanic Catholic women who use a modern contraceptive method (**95%**) is the same as that of married non-Hispanic Catholic women (**98%**). (NSFG, 2006–2010)

The percentage of sexually active Catholic women aged **15-44** who have ever used modern contraceptive methods is similar to that of women with other religious views or no religious views, as well as the population as a whole.

Catholic	Protestant	Other	No Religion	TOTAL
86%	89%	77%	91%	87%

(NSFG, 2006-2010)

Fewer than **1%** of sexually active Catholic women use Vatican-approved methods as their primary form of family planning. (NSFG, 2006–2010)

68% of Catholics believe that a religiously affiliated university should not be allowed to deny its employees and students insurance coverage for birth control on the ground that birth control is a sin. (BRS, 2012a)

ABORTION

85% of Catholics approve of abortion when a woman's health is seriously endangered, and **76%** think it should be possible for a woman to obtain an abortion when a pregnancy is the result of rape. **74%** of Catholics believe it should be possible for a woman to obtain a legal abortion if the fetus has a serious health defect, compared to **73%** of the general population. (GSS, 2012)

A poll of almost 1,000 Catholics found that only **14%** agree with the Vatican's position that abortion should be illegal. (BRS, 2009)

A 2012 poll of Catholic voters found that only **8%** of respondents felt an obligation to follow the bishops' direction and vote against candidates who support legal abortion. (BRS, 2012b)

A study of almost **9,500** women showed that Catholic women have abortions at the same rate as do other women: **28%** of women who had an abortion self-identified as Catholic, while **27%** of all women of reproductive age identified as such. (Guttmacher, 2010)

When Catholic voters were asked about healthcare reform, half or more support health insurance coverage—whether it is private or government insurance—for abortion:

- when a pregnancy poses a threat to the life of a woman (**84%**)
- when a pregnancy is due to rape or incest (**76%**)
- when a pregnancy poses long-term health risks for a woman (**73%**)
- when test results show a fetus has a severe abnormal condition (**66%**)
- whenever a woman and her doctor decide it is appropriate (**50%**). (BRS, 2009)

Between 2008 and 2012, the number of Catholics who believed a woman should be able to access an abortion in some or all circumstances remained steady at **85-86%**. (CCE, 2008, 2010, 2012)

A nationwide poll asking Catholics who has the final say on the morality of abortion revealed that few believed this authority rested only with church leaders.

Church leaders	Individuals	Both
19%	52%	28%

(National Catholic Reporter, 2011)

59% of Catholics believe that Catholic hospitals should not be allowed to decline to perform an abortion that is medically necessary to protect a woman's health. (BRS, 2012a)

A 2014 survey of Catholics in the US found that **76%** believe that abortion should be allowed in all or some circumstances. (Univision, 2014)

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

94% of Catholics favor sexuality education in public schools. (GSS, 2012)

HIV & AIDS

79% of Catholics believe that using condoms is prolife because it helps save lives by preventing the spread of HIV. Nearly three-quarters (**73%**) believe government-funded Catholic hospitals should provide condoms for HIV prevention. (BRS, 2007)

When Catholic voters considered healthcare reform in 2009, more than half (**51%**) supported health insurance coverage—whether it is private or government insurance—for condoms to prevent the spread of HIV. (BRS, 2009)

NEW REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES

Catholics are as likely as the general population to support in vitro fertilization (IVF) and medical research using embryonic stem cells left over from IVF procedures. Comparable numbers from both groups believed the issues were either “not a moral issue” or “morally acceptable.”

	Morally acceptable or not a moral issue	
	Embryonic stem cell research	In vitro fertilization (IVF)
All adults	68%	79%
Catholic	66%	77%

(Pew, 2013)

RELIGION IN PUBLIC POLICY

More than four out of five Catholic voters (**83%**) feel no obligation to vote the way bishops recommend. **90%** do not feel an obligation to vote against candidates who support legal abortion. (BRS, 2012b)

Three-quarters of Catholic voters (**76%**) do not believe Catholic politicians are obligated to vote the way bishops desire. (BRS, 2012b)

70% of Catholic voters disagree with bishops who would withhold Communion from parishioners who support legal abortion. (BRS, 2012b)

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Catholics for Choice shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being and respect and affirm the moral capacity of women and men to make decisions about their lives.

Catholics for Choice produces a wide range of publications on Catholic healthcare, Catholic public opinion, conservative Catholic organizations and the rights of Catholics in the church. For a full list of CFC's publications, please visit our website, www.CatholicsForChoice.org.

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