

THE FACTS TELL THE STORY

Catholics and Choice

CATHOLICS
FOR
CHOICE

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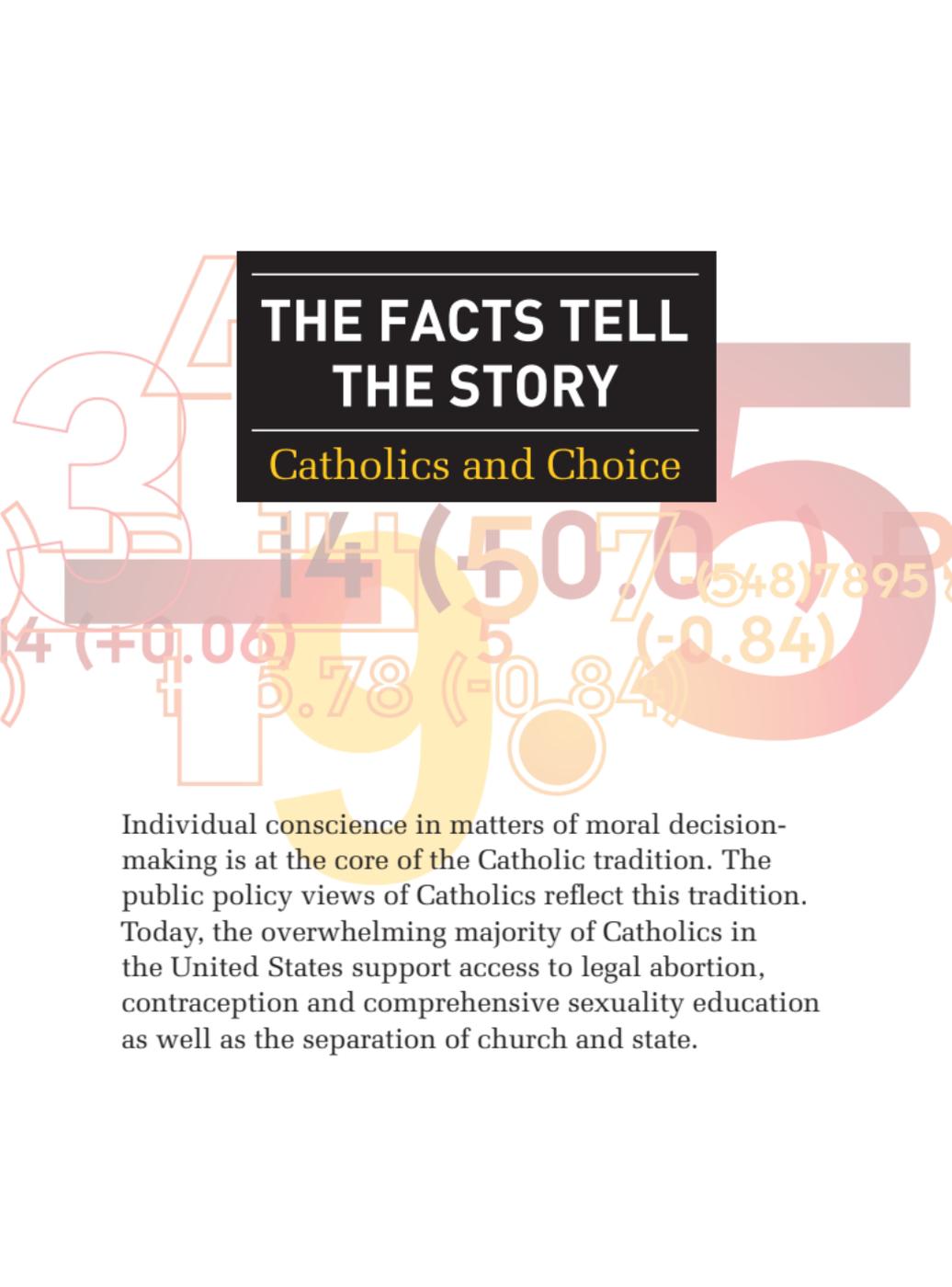
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Individual conscience in matters of moral decision-making is at the core of the Catholic tradition. The public policy views of Catholics reflect this tradition. Today, the overwhelming majority of Catholics in the United States support access to legal 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 (**98%**) to have used some form of contraception banned by the Vatican as women in the general population (**99%**). Among sexually active Hispanic Catholic women, **96%** have used a contraceptive method banned by the Vatican. (NSFG, 2008)

Even among those who attend church once a week or more, **83%** of sexually active Catholic women use a form of contraception that is banned by the Vatican. (NSFG, 2008)

69% of Catholic women have used birth control pills and **88%** have used condoms. (NSFG, 2008)

Catholics (**55%**) are as likely as the general population (**57%**) to believe that 14- to 16-year-olds should be able to access contraception, even if their parents do not approve. (GSS, 2008)

When Catholic voters considered healthcare reform in 2009, more than six in ten (**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 (**90%**) is the same as that of married non-Hispanic Catholic women (**88%**). (NSFG, 2008)

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
87%	90%	76%	90%	88%

(NSFG, 2008)

Fewer than **2%** of sexually active Catholic women use Vatican-approved methods as their primary form of family planning. (NSFG, 2008)

ABORTION

86% of Catholics approve of abortion when a woman's health is seriously endangered, and **78%** think it should be possible for a woman to obtain an abortion when a pregnancy is the result of rape. (GSS, 2008)

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 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 women and her doctor decide it is appropriate (**50%**)

(BRS, 2009)

A poll of almost **3,000** adults found that the views of Catholics on abortion are consistent with those of the rest of the population.

Abortion should be:	Catholic Respondents	All Respondents
Legal in All Cases	16%	17%
Legal in Most or Some Cases	59%	63%
Not Legal	21%	15%
Unsure	4%	5%

(Pew, 2008)

SEX & SEXUALITY

95% of Catholics favor sexuality education in public schools. (GSS, 2008)

56% of Catholics think that birth control information should be available to 14- to 16-year-olds—even if their parents don't approve. (GSS, 2008)

HIV & AIDS

79% of Catholics believe that using condoms is prolife because it helps save lives by preventing the spread of HIV and 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 people with different religious beliefs to support medical research using embryonic stem cells left over from in-vitro fertilization procedures.

Catholic	Protestant	Other	TOTAL
69%	74%	66%	72%

(Harris Interactive, 2010)

RELIGION IN PUBLIC POLICY

Only **8%** of Catholics believe that the views of the US bishops are “very important” in deciding how to vote and **69%** of Catholic voters believe they do not have a religious obligation to vote against candidates who support legal abortion. (BRS, 2008)

SOURCES:

Belden Russonello & Stewart, www.brspoll.com/reports.htm

- “Catholic Voters’ Views on Health Care Reform and Reproductive Health Care Services: A National Opinion Survey of Catholic Voters,” September 2009
- “Secular and Security-Minded: A National Opinion Survey of Likely Catholic Voters,” August 2008
- “Catholic Attitudes on Condoms in the Prevention of HIV and AIDS,” November 2007

General Social Survey, www.norc.uchicago.edu/GSS+Website.

Guttmacher Institute, “Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients, 2008,” May 2010.

Harris Interactive, “Embryonic Stem Cell Research Receives Widespread Support from Americans,” October 2010.

National Survey of Family Growth, www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg.htm.

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “A Slight but Steady Majority Favors Keeping Abortion Legal,” September 2008.

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.

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.

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