

Congressional Research Service. ✓

[Misc. publ. A]

Abortion, 1980-1981: public opinion. 1981.

7

ABORTION, 1980-1981: PUBLIC OPINION

ISSUE BRIEF NUMBER IB81052

# Issue Brief



CONGRESSIONAL  
RESEARCH  
SERVICE  
LIBRARY OF  
CONGRESS

LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
SANTA BARRABA  
OCT 8 1982  
GOVT. PUBLICATIONS DEPT.



ABORTION, 1980-1981: PUBLIC OPINION

ISSUE BRIEF NUMBER IB81052

AUTHOR:

Crocker, Royce

Government Division

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE  
MAJOR ISSUES SYSTEM

DATE ORIGINATED 03/20/81  
DATE UPDATED 04/30/81

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CALL 287-5700

0501



ISSUE DEFINITION

The following series of questions on Abortion were asked by various public opinion polling organizations and covers the period June 1980 - Dec. 1980. The results of the survey questions shown in the tables are reported as percentages. For a discussion of the possible limitations of these poll results, consult the section titled "Some Caveats About Interpreting Public Opinion Polls and About the POLL Database."

RESULTS OF THE POLLS

HS.12/04/80.4 THE HARRIS SURVEY

4

## CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BANNING ABORTIONS

Do you agree or disagree that a Constitutional Amendment should be passed to ban legalized abortion?

|          | Percent |
|----------|---------|
| Agree    | 34      |
| Disagree | 62      |
| Not sure | 4       |

Results are based on telephone interviews with 'a cross section of 1,199 adults nationwide' conducted between Nov. 7-10, 1981.

GP.11/16/80.1 THE GALLUP POLL

## OPINIONS ON VARIOUS ISSUES

This card (respondents were handed a card listing various issues) lists various proposals being discussed in this country today. Would you tell me whether you generally FAVOR or generally OPPOSE each of these proposals?

|                        | Favor | Oppose | Don't know |
|------------------------|-------|--------|------------|
| A ban on all abortions | 31    | 65     | 4          |

Results are based on personal interviews with 1,602 adults, 18 and older, conducted in over 300 scientifically-selected localities across the nation during the period Sept. 12-15. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the entire sample.

---

CB.11/15/80.27 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

GOVERNMENT IMPACT ON ABORTION AND BUSINESS REGULATION

I'd like to ask your opinion on the following statements.

|   | Agree | Disagree | No opinion |
|---|-------|----------|------------|
| ...The government should help a poor woman with her medical bills if she wants an abortion. Do you agree or disagree? | 38    | 55       | 7          |

This poll was conducted by telephone Nov. 7-12, 1980. It consists of reinterviews of 2,651 adults who were part of a nationwide random sample of 3,091 adults originally interviewed Oct. 30 - Nov. 1, 1980. A total of 2,012 of the 2,264 registered adults (89%) originally interviewed were successfully reinterviewed. A total of 639 of the sample of 827 unregistered adults (77%) were reinterviewed. A total of 1,805 persons who were reinterviewed indicated that they had voted in the general election. This constituted 68.1% of all persons reinterviewed and 89.7% of the registered voters reinterviewed. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for results based on the sample of registered voters. The error due to sampling on differences for questions that were asked of the same people in both interviews is about half of that.

---

HS.10/06/80.2 THE HARRIS SURVEY

ATTITUDES ON VARIOUS RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Do you agree or disagree that [READ EACH ITEM]?

|   | Agree | Disagree | Not Sure |
|---|-------|----------|----------|
| A constitutional amendment should be passed to ban legalized abortion | 34    | 61       | 5        |

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,492 'Likely Voters' nationwide conducted between Sept. 3-7, 1981.

---

NB.09/30/80.29 THE NBC/ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL

ABORTION DECISION LEFT TO WOMAN AND PHYSICIAN

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement. "The decision to have an abortion should be left to the woman and her physician."

(AMONG ALL LIKELY VOTERS -- 63.2% of total sample) ✕

|          | % Likely Voters |
|----------|-----------------|
| Agree    | 72              |
| Disagree | 24              |
| Not sure | 4               |

A total of 2,393 adult Americans were interviewed nationwide by telephone in the three days immediately following the televised debate between Ronald Reagan and John Anderson (Sept. 22-24, 1980). Of that total, 1,512 persons were judged to be 'likely voters.' Four hundred localities were selected proportionate to the population of each subregion, and, within subregion, the size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) a properly proportionate chance to be included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of respondents by sex. The estimated average sample tolerance, at the 95% confidence level, of the data from this poll, is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire sample of 2,393 adults. The estimated average sampling error for the sample of 1,512 'likely voters' is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

NB.09/30/80.30 THE NBC/ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL

CANDIDATES' POSITIONS ON ABORTION

In thinking about your presidential vote choice, how important to you are the candidates' stands on abortion ... very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?

(AMONG ALL LIKELY VOTERS -- 63.2% of total sample)

|                    | % Likely Voters |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Very important     | 30              |
| Somewhat important | 38              |

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| Not at all important | 29 |
| Not sure             | 3  |

A total of 2,393 adult Americans were interviewed nationwide by telephone in the three days immediately following the televised debate between Ronald Reagan and John Anderson (Sept. 22-24, 1980). Of that total, 1,512 persons were judged to be 'likely voters.' Four hundred localities were selected proportionate to the population of each subregion, and, within subregion, the size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) a properly proportionate chance to be included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of respondents by sex. The estimated average sample tolerance, at the 95% confidence level, of the data from this poll, is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire sample of 2,393 adults. The estimated average sampling error for the sample of 1,512 'likely voters' is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

CB.09/27/80.31 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROHIBITING ABORTIONS

Would you favor or oppose having a Constitutional Amendment that would prohibit abortions?

(POST-DEBATE ONLY -- 50% of PROBABLE ELECTORATE)

|            | Post-Debate |
|------------|-------------|
| Favor      | 32          |
| Oppose     | 58          |
| No opinion | 10          |

This poll was conducted by telephone Sept. 19-21, 1980, and Sept. 23-25, 1980, among two nationwide random samples. A total of 1,627 registered voters were interviewed, 817 before the debate and 810 after. A total of 2,303 adults were contacted to reach this number. All respondents were weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate.' (1,627 registered voters = 71% of all persons contacted, PRE-DEBATE sample = 35% of all persons contacted, and POST-DEBATE sample = 35% of all persons contacted). The 'PROBABLE ELECTORATE' consists of all registered voters (= 1,627) with responses weighted by their probability of voting. All responses in the study reflect this weighting procedure. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 5 percentage points for results based on each sample (i.e., PRE- and POST-DEBATE sample).

---

CB.09/27/80.32 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

CANDIDATES' POSITIONS ON ABORTION AMENDMENT

Where do you think ... stands on a Constitutional Amendment prohibiting abortions? Does ... favor or oppose having a Constitutional Amendment that would prohibit abortions?

(POST-DEBATE ONLY -- 50% of PROBABLE ELECTORATE)

|            | Jimmy Carter | Ronald Reagan | John Anderson |
|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Favor      | 24           | 34            | 17            |
| Oppose     | 41           | 32            | 35            |
| No opinion | 35           | 34            | 48            |

This poll was conducted by telephone Sept. 19-21, 1980, and Sept. 23-25, 1980, among two nationwide random samples. A total of 1,627 registered voters were interviewed, 817 before the debate and 810 after. A total of 2,303 adults were contacted to reach this number. All respondents were weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate.' (1,627 registered voters = 71% of all persons contacted, PRE-DEBATE sample = 35% of all persons contacted, and POST-DEBATE sample = 35% of all persons contacted). The 'PROBABLE ELECTORATE' consists of all registered voters (= 1,627) with responses weighted by their probability of voting. All responses in the study reflect this weighting procedure. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 5 percentage points for results based on each sample (i.e., PRE- and POST-DEBATE sample).

---

CB.09/27/80.33 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

WILL ABORTION POSITION INFLUENCE VOTE

Of the six issues I've mentioned, will abortion be among the top three issues in deciding how you will vote for President, or won't it be very important in determining your vote? (IF NECESSARY: The issues are government spending on domestic programs, U.S. military strength, income taxes, reducing dependence on foreign oil, the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion.)

(POST-DEBATE ONLY -- 50% of PROBABLE ELECTORATE)



|            | Post-Debate |
|------------|-------------|
| Yes        | 17          |
| No         | 77          |
| No opinion | 6           |

This poll was conducted by telephone Sept. 19-21, 1980, and Sept. 23-25, 1980, among two nationwide random samples. A total of 1,627 registered voters were interviewed, 817 before the debate and 810 after. A total of 2,303 adults were contacted to reach this number. All respondents were weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate.' (1,627 registered voters = 71% of all persons contacted, PRE-DEBATE sample = 35% of all persons contacted, and POST-DEBATE sample = 35% of all persons contacted). The 'PROBABLE ELECTORATE' consists of all registered voters (= 1,627) with responses weighted by their probability of voting. All responses in the study reflect this weighting procedure. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 5 percentage points for results based on each sample (i.e., PRE- and POST-DEBATE sample).

---

GP.08/28/80.1 THE GALLUP POLL

#### LEGALITY OF ABORTIONS

Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal under only certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

|  | Percent |
|--|---------|
| Legal under all circumstances          | 25      |
| Legal only under certain circumstances | 53      |
| Illegal under all circumstances        | 18      |
| No opinion                             | 4       |

The results are based on 1,548 personal interviews with adults, 18 and over, conducted in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period July 11-14, 1980. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling could be three percentage points in either direction.

---

---

NB.08/25/80.3 THE NBC/ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL

ABORTION DECISION LEFT TO WOMAN AND PHYSICIAN

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The decision to have an abortion should be left to the woman and her physician."

(AMONG ALL LIKELY VOTERS -- 56.8% of total sample)

|          | % Likely Voters |
|----------|-----------------|
| Agree    | 78              |
| Disagree | 17              |
| Not sure | 5               |

NBC News and The Associated Press conducted this poll after the Democratic Convention by telephone on Aug. 15 and 16, 1980, across the country. A total of 2,000 adult Americans were interviewed, of whom 1,137 were judged to be 'likely voters.' The release stated the following about 'Likely Voters: ' "Likely voters' reflects a procedure designed to identify for purposes of analysis persons in the sample who, other things being equal, have characteristics that suggest they are more likely to be representative of the slightly more than 50% of the adult population that can be expected to vote for President in November. It is very important to understand that applying the term 'likely voters' to the raw standing of the candidates as of now does NOT produce a significantly better idea of which candidate will actually win the election. No poll taken in August (or September) can predict the outcome of the coming Presidential Election. All that the use of the term 'likely voters' in connection with such numbers does is heighten the widely held but thoroughly false impression that such poll data is an accurate prognostication of the way the election will turn out." Four hundred localities were selected proportionate to the population of each subregion, and, within subregion, the size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) a properly proportionate chance to be included. One adult 18 years or over from each household was included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of respondents by sex. The estimated average sampling tolerance, at the 95% confidence level, of data from this poll, is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire sample of 2,000 adults. The sampling error for the sample of 'likely voters' is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

---

NB.08/25/80.4 THE NBC/ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL

PARTIES' PLATFORMS -- ABORTION

The Democratic Party has endorsed the right of women to have an abortion while the Republican Party strongly opposes abortion. Do these positions on abortion make you more likely to vote for Jimmy Carter or more likely to vote for Ronald Reagan, or don't these positions on abortion make a difference?  
(AMONG ALL LIKELY VOTERS -- 56.8% of total sample)

|   | % Likely Voters |
|---|-----------------|
| More likely to vote for Carter                  | 35              |
| More likely to vote for Reagan                  | 20              |
| No difference                                   | 40              |
| More likely to vote for Anderson (volunteered)  | 1               |
| More likely to vote for McCormick (volunteered) | *               |
| Not sure  | 4               |

NOTE(S): \* Less than 0.5%

NBC News and The Associated Press conducted this poll after the Democratic Convention by telephone on Aug. 15 and 16, 1980, across the country. A total of 2,000 adult Americans were interviewed, of whom 1,137 were judged to be 'likely voters.' The release stated the following about 'Likely Voters:':

"'Likely voters' reflects a procedure designed to identify for purposes of analysis persons in the sample who, other things being equal, have characteristics that suggest they are more likely to be representative of the slightly more than 50% of the adult population that can be expected to vote for President in November. It is very important to understand that applying the term 'likely voters' to the raw standing of the candidates as of now does NOT produce a significantly better idea of which candidate will actually win the election. No poll taken in August (or September) can predict the outcome of the coming Presidential Election. All that the use of the term 'likely voters' in connection with such numbers does is heighten the widely held but thoroughly false impression that such poll data is an accurate prognostication of the way the election will turn out." Four hundred localities were selected proportionate to the population of each subregion, and, within subregion, the size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) a properly proportionate chance to be included. One adult 18 years or over from each household was included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of respondents by sex. The estimated average sampling tolerance, at the 95% confidence level, of data from this poll,

is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire sample of 2,000 adults. The sampling error for the sample of 'likely voters' is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

---

CB.08/09/80.32 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROHIBITING ABORTION

Do you think there should be an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting abortions, or shouldn't there be such an amendment? \*

|            | Percent |
|------------|---------|
| Should     | 29      |
| Should Not | 62      |
| No Opinion | 9       |

NOTE(S): \* DIFFERENT QUESTION WORDING (See CB.8-9-80.41 and CB.8-9-80.49)

Survey results are based on a nationwide random sample of 1,769 adults, including 410 Republicans, 692 Democrats, and 667 Independents and other party members. For all questions involving voting in the general elections, respondents were also weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on registration, prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate' in the text. One-third of the sample is not sure they will vote in November. And if trends continue, about half of the eligible voters will actually vote. Intention to vote this year related well to voting history. Of the two-thirds who said they 'definitely' would vote for President this year, 81% voted in 1976 and 43% already voted in 1980. Only 6% have never voted. Of those unsure about voting this fall, only 42% voted in 1976 and 12% in 1980. 28% never voted before. In the first group 90% are registered, in the second 52%. (Republicans = 23% of the Total Sample; Democrats = 39% of the Total Sample; Independents/Other = 38% of the Total Sample; and Probable Electorate = 66% of the Total Sample). Interviewing for this poll was conducted both before and after President Carter's August 4 press conference. In order to control for any bias in the sample individuals interviewed BEFORE and AFTER the press conference took place were weighted as separate samples, and then combined into one group. The resulting distribution of respondents from both groups are the same for age, education, race, sex and political party. 976 respondents were interviewed BEFORE the press conference and 793 respondents were interviewed AFTER the press conference. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the total sample.

NOTE: Three questions regarding abortion, each worded differently, were included in the survey. Release states: Changes in the way an abortion question is asked can dramatically affect the results. Respondents overwhelmingly think a woman should be allowed to have an abortion if she wants one and her doctor agrees; oppose an amendment prohibiting abortions; but support an amendment



protecting unborn life. While Americans are more supportive of an amendment labeled pro-life than they are of an amendment labeled anti-abortion, contradiction is greatest among the lower educated. Presumably these are the respondents most susceptible to changes in question wording. While most of the public would not support a constitutional amendment outlawing abortions, the Republican party does significantly better on the notion of a 'pro-life' amendment, as it was often referred to on the convention floor. Democrats were more likely to agree than were Republicans.

CB.08/09/80.33 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM AND THE ANTI-ABORTION AMENDMENT

Does the Republican party platform favor or oppose an amendment to prohibit abortions?

|            | Percent |
|------------|---------|
| Favor      | 21      |
| Oppose     | 23      |
| No Opinion | 56      |

Survey results are based on a nationwide random sample of 1,769 adults, including 410 Republicans, 692 Democrats, and 667 Independents and other party members. For all questions involving voting in the general elections, respondents were also weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on registration, prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate' in the text. One-third of the sample is not sure they will vote in November. And if trends continue, about half of the eligible voters will actually vote. Intention to vote this year related well to voting history. Of the two-thirds who said they 'definitely' would vote for President this year, 81% voted in 1976 and 43% already voted in 1980. Only 6% have never voted. Of those unsure about voting this fall, only 42% voted in 1976 and 12% in 1980. 28% never voted before. In the first group 90% are registered, in the second 52%. (Republicans = 23% of the Total Sample; Democrats = 39% of the Total Sample; Independents/Other = 38% of the Total Sample; and Probable Electorate = 66% of the Total Sample). Interviewing for this poll was conducted both before and after President Carter's August 4 press conference. In order to control for any bias in the sample individuals interviewed BEFORE and AFTER the press conference took place were weighted as separate samples, and then combined into one group. The resulting distribution of respondents from both groups are the same for age, education, race, sex and political party. 976 respondents were interviewed BEFORE the press conference and 793 respondents were interviewed AFTER the press conference. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the total sample.

NOTE: Three questions regarding abortion, each worded differently, were included in the survey. Release states: Changes in the way an abortion question is asked can dramatically affect the results. Respondents overwhelmingly think a woman should be allowed to have an abortion if she wants one and her doctor agrees; oppose an amendment prohibiting abortions; but support an amendment protecting unborn life. While Americans are more supportive of an amendment labeled pro-life than they are of an amendment labeled anti-abortion, contradiction is greatest among the lower educated. Presumably these are the respondents most susceptible to changes in question wording. While most of the public would not support a constitutional amendment outlawing abortions, the Republican party does significantly better on the notion of a 'pro-life' amendment, as it was often referred to on the convention floor. Democrats were more likely to agree than were Republicans.

---

CB.08/09/80.38 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

ISSUES WHICH STRONGLY INFLUENCE VOTE FOR PRESIDENT THIS YEAR

Will any of the following issues strongly influence your vote for President this year -- a large tax cut, U.S. military superiority, the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, or the 55 mile per hour speed limit? (IF YES) Which?

|                           | Percent * |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Large Tax Cut             | 28        |
| U.S. Military Superiority | 32        |
| Equal Rights Amendment    | 18        |
| Abortion                  | 21        |
| 55 MPH Speed Limit        | 19        |

NOTE(S): \* Total adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Survey results are based on a nationwide random sample of 1,769 adults, including 410 Republicans, 692 Democrats, and 667 Independents and other party members. For all questions involving voting in the general elections, respondents were also weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on registration, prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate' in the text. One-third of the sample is not sure they will vote in November. And if trends continue, about half of the eligible voters will actually vote. Intention to vote this year related well to voting history. Of the two-thirds who said they 'definitely' would vote for President this year, 81% voted in 1976 and 43% already voted in 1980. Only 6% have never voted. Of those unsure about voting this fall, only 42% voted in 1976 and 12% in 1980. 28% never voted before. In the first group 90% are registered, in the second 52%. (Republicans = 23% of the Total Sample; Democrats = 39% of

the Total Sample; Independents/Other = 38% of the Total Sample; and Probable Electorate = 66% of the Total Sample). Interviewing for this poll was conducted both before and after President Carter's August 4 press conference. In order to control for any bias in the sample individuals interviewed BEFORE and AFTER the press conference took place were weighted as separate samples, and then combined into one group. The resulting distribution of respondents from both groups are the same for age, education, race, sex and political party. 976 respondents were interviewed BEFORE the press conference and 793 respondents were interviewed AFTER the press conference. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the total sample.

NOTE: Three questions regarding abortion, each worded differently, were included in the survey. Release states: Changes in the way an abortion question is asked can dramatically affect the results. Respondents overwhelmingly think a woman should be allowed to have an abortion if she wants one and her doctor agrees; oppose an amendment prohibiting abortions; but support an amendment protecting unborn life. While Americans are more supportive of an amendment labeled pro-life than they are of an amendment labeled anti-abortion, contradiction is greatest among the lower educated. Presumably these are the respondents most susceptible to changes in question wording. While most of the public would not support a constitutional amendment outlawing abortions, the Republican party does significantly better on the notion of a 'pro-life' amendment, as it was often referred to on the convention floor. Democrats were more likely to agree than were Republicans.

-----  
 CB.08/09/80.41 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROTECTING THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN

Do you believe there should be an amendment to the Constitution protecting the life of the unborn child, or shouldn't there be such an amendment? \*

(PROBABLE ELECTORATE Sample - 66% of the Total Sample)

|            | Percent |
|------------|---------|
| Should     | 50      |
| Should Not | 39      |
| No Opinion | 11      |

NOTE(S): \* DIFFERENT QUESTION WORDING (See CB.8-9-80.32 and CB.8-9-80.49)

Survey results are based on a nationwide random sample of 1,769 adults, including 410 Republicans, 692 Democrats, and 667 Independents and other party members. For all questions involving voting in the general elections, respondents were also weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on registration, prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate' in the text. One-third of the sample is not sure they will vote in November. And if trends continue, about half

of the eligible voters will actually vote. Intention to vote this year related well to voting history. Of the two-thirds who said they 'definitely' would vote for President this year, 81% voted in 1976 and 43% already voted in 1980. Only 6% have never voted. Of those unsure about voting this fall, only 42% voted in 1976 and 12% in 1980. 28% never voted before. In the first group 90% are registered, in the second 52%. (Republicans = 23% of the Total Sample; Democrats = 39% of the Total Sample; Independents/Other = 38% of the Total Sample; and Probable Electorate = 66% of the Total Sample). Interviewing for this poll was conducted both before and after President Carter's August 4 press conference. In order to control for any bias in the sample individuals interviewed BEFORE and AFTER the press conference took place were weighted as separate samples, and then combined into one group. The resulting distribution of respondents from both groups are the same for age, education, race, sex and political party. 976 respondents were interviewed BEFORE the press conference and 793 respondents were interviewed AFTER the press conference. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the total sample.

NOTE: Three questions regarding abortion, each worded differently, were included in the survey. Release states: Changes in the way an abortion question is asked can dramatically affect the results. Respondents overwhelmingly think a woman should be allowed to have an abortion if she wants one and her doctor agrees; oppose an amendment prohibiting abortions; but support an amendment protecting unborn life. While Americans are more supportive of an amendment labeled pro-life than they are of an amendment labeled anti-abortion, contradiction is greatest among the lower educated. Presumably these are the respondents most susceptible to changes in question wording. While most of the public would not support a constitutional amendment outlawing abortions, the Republican party does significantly better on the notion of a 'pro-life' amendment, as it was often referred to on the convention floor. Democrats were more likely to agree than were Republicans.

-----

CB.08/09/80.49 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

CHOICE FOR ABORTION

If a woman wants to have an abortion and her doctor agrees to it, should she be allowed to have an abortion, or not? \*

|                     | Percent |
|---------------------|---------|
| Should              | 62      |
| Should Not          | 19      |
| Depends (Voluntary) | 15      |
| No Opinion          | 4       |

NOTE(S): \* DIFFERENT QUESTION WORDING (See CB.8-9-80.32 and CB.8-9-80.41)



Survey results are based on a nationwide random sample of 1,769 adults, including 410 Republicans, 692 Democrats, and 667 Independents and other party members. For all questions involving voting in the general elections, respondents were also weighted according to their probability of voting. The estimate of their likelihood was based on registration, prior voting participation, and the individual's intention of voting in the fall. This is referred to as the 'probable electorate' in the text. One-third of the sample is not sure they will vote in November. And if trends continue, about half of the eligible voters will actually vote. Intention to vote this year related well to voting history. Of the two-thirds who said they 'definitely' would vote for President this year, 81% voted in 1976 and 43% already voted in 1980. Only 6% have never voted. Of those unsure about voting this fall, only 42% voted in 1976 and 12% in 1980. 28% never voted before. In the first group 90% are registered, in the second 52%. (Republicans = 23% of the Total Sample; Democrats = 39% of the Total Sample; Independents/Other = 38% of the Total Sample; and Probable Electorate = 66% of the Total Sample). Interviewing for this poll was conducted both before and after President Carter's August 4 press conference. In order to control for any bias in the sample individuals interviewed BEFORE and AFTER the press conference took place were weighted as separate samples, and then combined into one group. The resulting distribution of respondents from both groups are the same for age, education, race, sex and political party. 976 respondents were interviewed BEFORE the press conference and 793 respondents were interviewed AFTER the press conference. The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the total sample.

NOTES: Three questions regarding abortion, each worded differently, were included in the survey. Release states: Changes in the way an abortion question is asked can dramatically affect the results. Respondents overwhelmingly think a woman should be allowed to have an abortion if she wants one and her doctor agrees; oppose an amendment prohibiting abortions; but support an amendment protecting unborn life. While Americans are more supportive of an amendment labeled pro-life than they are of an amendment labeled anti-abortion, contradiction is greatest among the lower educated. Presumably these are the respondents most susceptible to changes in question wording. While most of the public would not support a constitutional amendment outlawing abortions, the Republican party does significantly better on the notion of a 'pro-life' amendment, as it was often referred to on the convention floor. Democrats were more likely to agree than were Republicans.

---

HS.07/31/80.2 THE HARRIS SURVEY

#### VOTERS REACTION TO REPUBLICAN POLICIES

Now let me ask you about some specific policies included in the Republican platform adopted at the 1980 Republican Convention and in Reagan's acceptance speech. For each, tell me if your own reaction was very favorable, moderately favorable, moderately unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

|   | Very Favor. | Mod. Favor. | Mod. Unfavor. | Very Unfavor. | Not Sure |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| Calling for the appointment of federal judges who would tend to oppose abortion | 21          | 18          | 18            | 36            | 7        |
| Advocating passage of a constitutional amendment making all abortions illegal   | 21          | 14          | 17            | 44            | 4        |

Survey results are based on telephone interviews with 'a cross section of 1,458 likely voters nationwide' conducted between July 18-21, 1980. The survey was conducted following the close of the Republican Party National Convention.

---

NB.07/24/80.10 THE NBC/ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL

EFFECT OF PARTY PLATFORM PROHIBITING ABORTION ON REAGAN VOTE

The Republican party has decided to endorse a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion in almost all cases. Does this position make you more likely to vote for Ronald Reagan in November, less likely to vote for Reagan, or does it make no difference?

|                                | Percent |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| More likely to vote for Reagan | 14      |
| Less likely to vote for Reagan | 28      |
| No difference                  | 53      |
| Not Sure                       | 5       |

Survey results are based on a weighted sample of 1,847 adults, including 1,075 likely voters. The results were weighted to reflect the national distribution of political partisanship. (Likely Voters = 58% of the Total Sample). The survey was conducted immediately following the close of the Republican National Convention. From the interviews with 2,013 adults, a weighted sample of 1,847 adults and 1,075 likely voters was produced. Four hundred localities were selected proportionate to the population of each subregion, and, within subregion, the size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) a properly proportionate chance to be included. One adult 18 years or over from each household was included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of respondents by sex. The estimated average sample tolerance, at the 95% confidence level, of data from this poll, is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire sample of 1,847 adults. The estimated average sample

tolerance for the subgroup of likely voters is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

---

NB.07/14/80.7 THE NBC/ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL

DECISION TO HAVE ABORTION LEFT TO WOMAN AND HER PHYSICIAN

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The decision to have an abortion should be left to the woman and her physician.

(All LIKELY VOTERS - 59% of the Total Sample)

|          | Percent |
|----------|---------|
| Agree    | 78      |
| Disagree | 18      |
| Not Sure | 4       |

Survey results are based on a national sample of 1,949 adults, including 1,159 who were 'judged to be likely voters.' (Likely Voters = 59% of the Total Sample). Four hundred localities were selected proportionate to the population of each subregion, and, within subregion, the size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) a properly proportionate chance to be included. One adult 18 years or over from each household was included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of respondents by sex. The estimated average sample tolerance, at the 95% confidence level, of data from the July National Poll, is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire sample. The estimated average sample tolerance for the subgroup of likely voters is also plus or minus 3 percentage points.

---

NB.07/14/80.8 THE NBC/ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL

GOVERNMENT HELP POOR WOMEN PAY FOR ABORTIONS

Do you feel that the government should help a poor woman with her medical bills if she has an abortion?

(All LIKELY VOTERS - 59% of the Total Sample)

|          | Percent |
|----------|---------|
| Yes      | 43      |
| No       | 47      |
| Not Sure | 10      |

Survey results are based on a national sample of 1,949 adults, including 1,159 who were 'judged to be likely voters.' (Likely Voters = 59% of the Total Sample). Four hundred localities were selected proportionate to the population of each subregion, and, within subregion, the size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) a properly proportionate chance to be included. One adult 18 years or over from each household was included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of respondents by sex. The estimated average sample tolerance, at the 95% confidence level, of data from the July National Poll, is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire sample. The estimated average sample tolerance for the subgroup of likely voters is also plus or minus 3 percentage points.

---

CB.06/24/80.33 THE CBS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL

ANTI-ABORTION CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

There is a proposal for a Constitutional amendment that would make abortions illegal. Do you favor or oppose such an amendment?

|            | Percent |
|------------|---------|
| Favor      | 35      |
| Oppose     | 57      |
| No Opinion | 8       |

Survey results are based on telephone interviews with 'a nation-wide random sample...of 1,517 adults,' including 356 Republicans, 607 Democrats, and 554 Independents and other party members. [Of the Total Sample, 1,164 are Registered Voters, which includes 301 Registered Republicans, 484 Registered Democrats, and 379 Registered Independents/Others.] (Registered Voters = 77% of the Total Sample). The error due to sampling could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the total sample.

---



POLL DATABASE FILE

The information contained in this publication has been drawn from the Congressional Research Service's POLL (Public Opinion Legislative Locator) database file. The POLL file contains the results of public opinion surveys, as reported in news releases or printed studies, conducted by some of the major public opinion polling organizations. The POLL file was developed for CRS by the Survey Research Center at the University of California at Berkeley and is currently stored in the Stanford University computer.

The POLL file contains the reported results of the Harris Survey, the Gallup Poll, the CBS News/New York Times Poll and the NBC News Poll since January 1, 1978. Information from these sources is added to the file continually. The POLL file also contains the results of selected special surveys conducted for government agencies or private organizations. As new studies of likely interest to Members of Congress are released CRS hopes to add them to the database.

SOME CAVEATS ABOUT INTERPRETING PUBLIC OPINION POLLS  
AND ABOUT THE POLL DATABASE

There are several reasons for exercising care in interpreting the results of any public opinion poll: results of a single survey may be biased because of the timing of the study; in making comparisons among the results of various polls differences in question-wording, in the groups surveyed and in the methods used by the various research firms may lead to faulty conclusions; and in addition, all polls and surveys based on samples of respondents are subject to sampling error.

Effects of Timing. The results of any single survey are based upon interviews conducted during a short period of time and events may cause public attitudes to change quite quickly and dramatically. While a single survey may record attitudes at a moment in time, the survey cannot measure change. A review of the results of many surveys conducted over a period of time tends to provide a clearer picture of the stability or instability of public attitudes.

Difficulties in Comparing Survey Results. However, comparisons of the results of different surveys over a period of time may also pose problems. One reason is that slight variations in the wording of questions may have major impacts on the results. Surveys only measure the response of the public to specific questions. Therefore, any variation might give the appearance that a "change" or that an "inconsistency" in attitudes has been expressed by the respondents when none may have occurred. Any change in wording may mean that the survey is actually measuring something different from a previous survey on the same subject.

Differences in the results of similar questions may also occur because different populations are surveyed. For example, asking the same question of a sample of "registered voters" and of a sample of "likely voters" may produce widely differing results because each sample is representative of a different population grouping. Different methods (e.g., telephone interviewing

and in-person interviewing) used with exactly the same questions may produce different results as well.

Sampling Error. The results of surveys of the public are all subject to sampling error. Sampling error is the error (best thought of as "uncertainty" rather than "mistake") introduced because the survey only includes a fraction of the population studied. In general, the larger the sample, the smaller the error will be. When supplied by the polling organization, estimates of the sampling error have been included in the entries in the POLL file. These estimates, unless noted, are applicable only for results based on the total sample and are likely to be much larger for estimates based on subpopulation groupings.

Limitations of the POLL File. The accuracy of the information contained in the POLL file is dependent on the accuracy of the published source from which the information is taken. While CRS makes every effort to check the database information against the original published version, we are not able to verify the original published version against the actual data collected or to verify the description of the actual field procedures used by the various organizations.

The POLL database file, as indicated above, is limited in its coverage. While providing results from some of the major polling organizations, the file does not cover all the public opinion results on any topic. However, CRS does maintain paper files--in some cases dating back to the 1930s--on public opinion poll results both nationally and for some States and localities.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you require a more detailed search on a particular topic beyond what is contained in this publication or if you would like us to make a special search of the POLL file on a topic not covered in this series, please place your request through the general CRS inquiry number--287-5700. If you would like further information about a specific question in this publication, please indicate in your request the question's identification number which you will find at the top left corner of each entry in the publication and which consists of two alphabetic and seven numeric characters (e.g., HS.06/15/79.9). Because the question identification number contains the release date for the study, we will be able to quickly find the original release in our files.

~~NOV 21 1983~~  
~~RETURNED DEC 4 1983~~

~~MAR 25 1985~~  
~~RETURNED APR 18 1985~~

GOVT-PUB DEC 04 1989

~~JUN 11 1984~~

~~MAY 26 1986~~

GOVT-PUB MAY 12 1986

GOVT-PUB DEC 8 1986

GOVT-PUB FEB 01 1992

GOVT-PUB MAR 25 1987

GOVT-PUB JUN 22 1987