

# THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY  
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS  
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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**NO CHANGE IN CALIFORNIANS' LONG-STANDING SUPPORT FOR ALLOWING ABORTION. SEVEN IN TEN AGREE WITH SUPREME COURT'S HISTORIC ROE v. WADE COURT DECISION.**

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

There has been no change in California voters long-standing support for allowing women the right to a legal abortion. About seven in ten voters (71%) favor making no change to the state's current abortion laws or making abortion easier to obtain. In addition, a similar 71% endorse the U.S. Supreme Court's historic 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that granted women a constitutional right to abortion.

These are the findings from the latest *Field Poll* conducted June 22-July 5 among a representative sample of 1,390 registered voters statewide.

### **Little change in California voter opinions on about permitting abortion**

The pattern of California public opinion on the issue of abortion has remained largely unchanged over the course of fifteen separate *Field Poll* measures taken on this issue since 1987. In each survey between 66% and 71% of voters have favored either making no change to abortion laws or making abortion easier to obtain, while the proportion who feel abortion should be more difficult to obtain has ranged narrowly between 22% and 29%.

The current survey finds seven in ten voters (71%) taking the pro-choice position on this issue, while 24% believe abortion should be made more difficult to obtain.

**Table 1**  
**Trend of California public opinion about abortion laws**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b>Make abortion easier to obtain</b>	<b>Make no changes to existing laws</b>	<b>Make abortion harder to obtain</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>July 2010</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>
2006	23%	47	22	8
2005	23%	45	25	7
2004	26%	45	22	7
2003	21%	47	26	6
2002	27%	41	23	9
2000	28%	43	23	6
1998	20%	46	29	5
1997	24%	42	26	8
1996	25%	43	26	8
1995	29%	38	28	5
1993	31%	38	24	7
1992	34%	41	22	3
1991	33%	39	22	6
1987	27%	43	25	5

*Note: Surveys conducted prior to 1998 were asked of all California adults, not just registered voters.*

**Sub-group analysis shows broad support for permitting abortion**

Majorities of voters across virtually all major segments of the California registered voter population endorse either making no change to existing abortion laws or making abortion easier to obtain.

The voter subgroups most supportive of permitting abortion are those who identify as strong liberals (90%), voters with no religious preference (90%) and non-Christians (88%), voters supporting Barbara Boxer for U.S. Senate (86%), supporters of Jerry Brown for Governor (84%), those identifying as moderately liberal (84%) and African-Americans (82%).

The largest proportions of voters who take a contrary view and advocate making abortion harder to obtain exist among strong conservatives (52%), those who identify strongly with the Tea Party protest movement (48%), Vietnamese-Americans (45%), Republicans (40%), supporters of Carly Fiorina for U.S. Senate (39%), supporters of Meg Whitman for Governor (38%), moderate conservatives (37%) and Latinos (36%).

**Table 2**  
**California public opinion about abortion laws – by subgroup**  
**(among registered voters)**

	<b>Make abortion easier to obtain</b>	<b>Make no changes</b>	<b>Make abortion harder to obtain</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>Total registered voters</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>
<u>Party registration</u>				
Democrats	28%	52	16	4
Republicans	10%	44	40	6
Non-partisans/others	25%	50	18	7
<u>Political ideology</u>				
Strongly conservative	3%	40	52	5
Moderately conservative	12%	41	37	10
Middle-of-the-road	21%	59	15	5
Moderately liberal	38%	46	12	4
Strongly liberal	48%	42	7	3
<u>Tea Party movement identification</u>				
A lot	3%	45	48	4
Some	14%	53	29	4
Not at all	27%	48	19	6
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	21%	51	22	6
Female	22%	47	26	5
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>				
White non-Hispanic	24%	50	21	5
Latino	12%	47	36	5
African-American	26%	56	14	4
Asian-American/other (total)	<u>25%</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>10</u>
Chinese-American	26%	41	17	16
Korean-American	43%	23	27	7
Vietnamese-American	25%	26	45	4
<u>Religion</u>				
Protestant	13%	50	32	5
Catholic	14%	48	34	4
Other religions	40%	48	7	5
No preference	45%	45	4	6
<u>Likely voters in November (total)</u>				
Brown supporters for Governor	34%	50	12	4
Whitman supporters for Governor	10%	48	38	4
Undecided for Governor	14%	56	24	6
Boxer supporters for U.S. Senate	32%	54	12	2
Fiorina supporters for U.S. Senate	9%	46	39	6
Undecided for U.S. Senate	23%	47	19	11

**Strong support for High Court’s Roe v. Wade decision**

Thirty-seven years ago the U.S. Supreme Court, in its landmark Roe v. Wade decision, ruled that women in this country have a constitutional right to abortion.

In recent years there have been various legislative proposals in some states to place greater restrictions on access to abortion. It is expected that legal challenges to the Roe v. Wade could find their way back to the Supreme Court, forcing it to revisit its 1973 decision.

The current survey asked Californians whether they agreed or disagreed with the High Court’s original Roe v. Wade ruling. The results show 71% agreeing and 25% disagreeing with that decision. These results are similar to a 2006 *Field Poll* survey, the last time this question was asked.

While sizeable portions of Republicans (44%), Fiorina supporters for U.S. Senate (42%) and Meg Whitman supporters for governor (41%) disagree with the Roe v. Wade decision, in each case majorities agree with the ruling.

<b>Table 3</b>			
<b>Do you agree or disagree with U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in its 1973 Roe v. Wade decision establishing a constitutional right to a legal abortion during the first three months of pregnancy (among registered voters)</b>			
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
<b>July 2010</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>
2006	73%	19	8
<u>Party registration</u>			
Democrats	82%	13	5
Republicans	54%	44	2
Non-partisans/others	71%	24	5
<u>Likely voters in November (total)</u>			
Brown supporters for Governor	89%	10	1
Whitman supporters for Governor	55%	41	4
Boxer supporters for U.S. Senate	86%	12	2
Fiorina supporters for U.S. Senate	53%	42	5

## **Information About The Survey**

### **Methodological Details**

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed June 22 – July 5, 2010 among a representative sample of registered voters in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone using live interviewers working from Field Research Corporation’s central location telephone interviewing facilities. Voter opinions on the question about abortion laws was asked of 1,390 registered voters, while views about the High Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision was asked of a random subsample of 477 registered voters.

To enable the survey to more closely examine the preferences of California’s growing ethnic voter populations, the survey was conducted in six languages and dialects – English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese. In addition, for questions asked of the total sample the main statewide sample was supplemented with additional interviews among Chinese Americans, Korean-Americans and Vietnamese-Americans.

Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. The overall registered voter sample was drawn from a listing of all registered voters, while the ethnic sample augments were drawn from listings of ethnic surnames of voters targeting Chinese-American, Korean-American and Vietnamese-American voters. All samples were provided by Voter Contact Services, a leading provider of registered voter samples to the survey research industry.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter’s landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, results from the ethnic sample augments were weighted down to bring them into alignment with their proper shares of the state’s registered voter population. In addition, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the registered voter population in California by region, age, gender and party registration.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall registered voter sample is +/- 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, while findings from the random subsample have a maximum sampling error of +/- 4.8 percentage points. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample have somewhat larger sampling error levels. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other sources of error.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field and has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The poll receives annual funding from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the raw data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

### **Questions Asked**

(ASKED OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS) In respect to the issue of abortion, do you favor laws that would make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion, favor laws that would make it easier to get an abortion or should no change be made to existing abortion laws?

(ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS) In 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in the landmark *Roe vs. Wade* case established that women have a constitutional right to a legal abortion, at least in the first three months of pregnancy. In general, do you agree or disagree with the Court’s decision in this case?