

FEBRUARY 14, 2012

Religious, Partisan and Gender Differences

---

## Public Divided Over Birth Control Insurance Mandate

---

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

**Andrew Kohut**  
President, Pew Research Center

**Scott Keeter**  
Director of Survey Research, Pew Research Center

**Carroll Doherty, Michael Dimock**  
Associate Directors,  
Pew Research Center for the People & the  
Press

**Gregory Smith**  
Senior Researcher  
Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

For Media Inquiries Contact:  
Vidya Krishnamurthy (202) 419-4372  
Mary Schultz (202) 419-4556  
[www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

## Religious, Partisan and Gender Differences Public Divided Over Birth Control Insurance Mandate

About six-in-ten Americans (62%) have heard about the proposed federal rule that would require employers, including most religiously affiliated institutions, to cover birth control as part of their health care benefits. Among those aware of the issue, opinion is closely divided over whether these institutions should be given an exemption to the rule if they object to the use of contraceptives: 48% support an exemption and 44% say they should be required to cover contraceptives like other employers.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted Feb. 8-12 among 1,501 adults, finds sharp divisions on the issue by religious affiliation, party and ideology.

The Obama administration announced Feb. 10 that it would modify the mandate in response to criticism that the rule would force religious organizations to violate their religious beliefs in providing contraception coverage. The survey shows little difference in opinions among people interviewed before the administration's proposed modification on Feb. 10 and those interviewed afterwards.

Among Catholics who have heard at least a little about the issue, 55% favor giving religious institutions that object to the use of contraceptives an exemption from the federal rule, while 39% oppose exempting those institutions. White evangelical Protestants, by an even larger margin (68% to 22%), favor giving religious institutions an exemption. White mainline Protestants are divided (44% favor an exemption, 46% are opposed). By contrast, a majority (55%) of the religiously unaffiliated who have heard about the issue say religious institutions that object to the use of contraceptives should be required to cover them like other institutions, while 39% favor giving an exemption to these institutions.

### A Religious Exemption for Coverage of Contraceptives?

	Total	Catholic
<b>Heard about issue</b>	%	%
A lot	33	32
A little	29	28
Nothing at all/DK	<u>38</u>	<u>39</u>
	100	100
<b>Among those who heard...</b>		
<i>Religiously affiliated institutions that object to the use of contraceptives ...</i>		
Should be given an exception from this rule	48	55
Should be required to cover contraceptives like other employers	44	39
Other/DK	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 8-12, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

There also are wide partisan and ideological divisions in opinions about the issue. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Republicans, and 82% of Republican and Republican-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party, favor giving religious institutions that object to contraceptives an exemption from the new federal rule. By about two-to-one (64% to 29%), Democrats say religious institutions should be required to cover contraceptives like other employers; liberal Democrats (72%) are more likely than conservative and moderate Democrats (58%) to favor this approach.

**Independents are split: 48% say religious institutions that object to the use of contraceptives should be required to cover them like other employers, while 46% favor giving religious institutions an exemption.**

**A narrow majority of men (54%) who have heard at least a little about this issue say religious institutions that object to the use of contraceptives should be given an exemption from the new federal rule. Only about four-in-ten women (42%) agree.**

**This issue has attracted much more attention from people at either end of the political spectrum than those in the middle. Overall, 71% of Republicans, 63% of Democrats and 58% of independents have heard at least a little about the new federal rule on contraceptive coverage. However, 65% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party have heard *a lot* about this issue, compared with just 25% of other Republicans and Republican leaners. Among**

#### **Awareness and Views of Contraceptive Issue**

	Heard about	<i>Among those who have heard</i>				N
		Should be given an exemption	Should be required to cover like others do	Other/DK	%	
		%	%	%	%	
Total	62	48	44	8=100	1042	
Republican	71	73	19	8=100	345	
Democrat	63	29	64	8=100	333	
Independent	58	46	48	7=100	333	
Protestant	64	51	39	10=100	508	
White evangelical	70	68	22	10=100	228	
White mainline	67	44	46	10=100	179	
Black	48	-	-	-	-	
Catholic	61	55	39	7=100	236	
White Catholic	71	59	37	4=100	176	
Unaffiliated	57	39	55	6=100	190	
Men	64	54	40	6=100	516	
18-49	57	50	46	4=100	206	
50+	75	58	34	8=100	301	
Women	60	42	48	10=100	526	
18-49	44	40	53	6=100	144	
50+	76	43	45	12=100	371	

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 8-12, 2012. Q66-67. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. Sample sizes are for those who have heard about the issue. – indicates insufficient sample size.

Democrats, about twice as many liberals (43%) as conservatives and moderates (21%) have heard a lot about the new federal rule on contraceptive coverage.

Awareness of the controversy is also far higher among older adults than among the young. Six-in-ten (60%) adults ages 18-29 have heard nothing about the issue, compared with just 24% among those 50 and older. Among people ages 30-49, 43% have not heard about it.

The contraception story was a particular focus of talk show hosts on cable and radio. According to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, fully 24% of the time studied on talk shows on both radio and cable news channels during the past week was devoted to the contraception controversy. That contrasts with 8% of news coverage overall.

## Where Catholics Stand

The issue of requiring contraceptive coverage is of particular relevance to Catholics, since many of the institutions that initially raised religious objections to the rule are affiliated with the Catholic Church. Along with white Protestants, white Catholics are more likely than members of other religious groups to say that they have heard at least a little about the issue. Among white Catholics, 71% say they have heard about the rule, as have 70% of white evangelical Protestants and 67% of white mainline Protestants.

While 55% of Catholics who have heard about the rule support an exemption to it, opinion varies considerably by frequency of church attendance. Among Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week, 63% support an exemption while 25% say religiously affiliated institutions should have to cover contraceptives like other employers. Among those who attend less often, opinion is evenly divided (48% favor an exemption, 49% oppose one).

About one-quarter of Catholic churchgoers (24%) report having heard about the issue in church. Among Catholics who report attending Mass weekly, 32% said the rule was brought up recently by their priest or other church official.

### Catholics Who Attend Weekly More Likely to Favor Exemption

	Among Catholics		
	All	Attend weekly	Less Often
<b>Heard about issue</b>	%	%	%
A lot	32	39	28
A little	28	25	31
Nothing/Don't know	<u>39</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>41</u>
	100	100	100
N	337	158	178
<b>Among those who heard</b>			
<i>Religiously affiliated institutions that object...</i>			
Should be given an exception from this rule	55	63	48
Should be required to cover contraceptives like other employers	39	25	49
Other/DK	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100
N	236	117	119
<b>Was issue brought up by clergy at church?*</b>			
Yes	24	32	15
No	64	64	64
Didn't attend	4	1	7
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>14</u>
	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 8-12, 2012. Q66-67. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

\*Asked of Catholics who attend church at least a few times per year.

**Although the use of contraception is forbidden by church doctrine, few U.S. Catholics regard the use of contraceptives as morally wrong. Just 15% of Catholics say that using contraceptives is morally wrong, while 41% say it is morally acceptable and 36% say it is not a moral issue. Even among Catholics who attend church weekly, just 27% say contraception is morally wrong.**

**By comparison, 55% of Catholics (and 68% of those who attend Mass weekly) regard having an abortion as morally wrong. Among the public overall, 48% regard having an abortion as morally wrong.**

### Few Catholics Say Contraceptive Use Is Morally Wrong

	Total	Catholics		
		All	Attend weekly	Less often
<b>Using contraceptives</b>				
Morally acceptable	42	41	33	48
Morally wrong	8	15	27	5
Not a moral issue	43	36	30	41
Depends/DK	8	8	10	7
	100	100	100	100
<b>Having an abortion</b>				
Morally acceptable	13	12	10	13
Morally wrong	48	55	68	46
Not a moral issue	25	18	11	23
Depends/DK	14	15	11	18
	100	100	100	100
<b>Getting a divorce</b>				
Morally acceptable	23	32	31	32
Morally wrong	21	19	20	18
Not a moral issue	48	45	42	46
Depends/DK	9	5	6	4
	100	100	100	100
N	1501	337	158	178

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 8-12, 2012. Q40a-c. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Another practice forbidden by church doctrine – getting a divorce – is regarded as morally wrong by only 19% of Catholics.

## Reactions to Federal Court Decision on Same-Sex Marriage

Almost eight-in-ten Americans (78%) are aware of a federal court ruling last week that a California law banning same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. One-in-three (33%) have heard a lot about the ruling, and 45% have heard a little about it.

Among those who have heard about the issue, more express negative than positive reactions to the ruling. More than four-in-ten (44%) say they are disappointed (31%) or angry (13%). Just a third (33%) say they are pleased (20%) or very happy (13%). About one-in-five (22%) volunteer that they have none of these reactions (15%) or have no opinion (7%).

A majority of Republicans (58%) say they are disappointed (39%) or angry (20%) about the court decision. Just 21% are pleased (15%) or very happy (6%). Democrats, on balance, have a positive reaction to the court's ruling: 46% are either pleased (27%) or very happy (19%), while 34% are either disappointed (26%) or angry (8%). Independents' reactions mirror those of the general public, with 42% expressing disappointment (29%) or anger (13%) and 33% saying they are pleased (20%) or very happy (13%).

Among religious groups, white evangelical Protestants have the most negative reactions to the verdict, while the views of white mainline Protestants and Catholics are more mixed. About six-in-ten white evangelical Protestants (59%) say they are either angry (25%) or disappointed (35%), compared with fewer than half of Catholics (42%) or white mainline Protestants (43%). Roughly a third in each of the latter groups is very happy or pleased with the ruling. Among those unaffiliated with a religion, 45% say they are very happy (20%) or pleased (25%) with the ruling, while 30% are disappointed (20%) or angry (10%).

### More Negative than Positive Reactions to Calif. Court Decision

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
Heard about this ruling...	%	%	%	%
A lot	33	33	34	33
A little	45	49	43	44
Nothing at all/DK	22	18	23	22
	100	100	100	100

### Among those who heard, decision makes you feel...

Positive (net)	33	21	46	33
Very happy	13	6	19	13
Pleased	20	15	27	20
Negative (net)	44	58	34	42
Disappointed	31	39	26	29
Angry	13	20	8	13
None of these (VOL.)	15	13	12	20
Don't know	7	8	8	5
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 8-12, 2012. Q41-42. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted Feb. 8-12, 2012, among a national sample of 1,501 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (900 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 601 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 284 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,501	3.0 percentage points
Republicans	447	5.5 percentage points
Democrats	478	5.5 percentage points
Independents	508	5.5 percentage points
Those who have heard about federal rule	1042	4.0 percentage points
Catholics		
All Catholics	337	6.5 percentage points
Those who have heard about federal rule	236	7.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS/  
PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE  
FEBRUARY 2012 POLITICAL SURVEY  
FINAL TOPLINE  
February 8-12, 2012  
N=1501**

**Q.1-Q.6a, Q.32-Q.37, Q.43-Q.48, Q.55-Q.57, Q.60-Q.65, Q.71-Q.72 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE  
Q.6b-e, Q.7-Q.8, Q.11, Q.13-Q.16, Q.19-Q.21 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED  
NO QUESTIONS 9-10, 12, 17-18, 22-31, 38-39, 49-54, 58-59, 68-70**

**ASK ALL:**

On another subject...

Q.40 Do you personally believe that [INSERT ITEM AND RANDOMIZE] is morally acceptable, morally wrong, or is it not a moral issue. [IF NECESSARY: And is [INSERT ITEM] morally acceptable, morally wrong, or is it not a moral issue?]

		Morally acceptable	Morally wrong	Not a moral issue	(VOL.) Depends on the situation	(VOL.) DK/Ref
a.	Using contraceptives Feb 8-12, 2012	42	8	43	2	6
b.	Getting a divorce Feb 8-12, 2012 Aug 11-17, 2009 <sup>1</sup>	23 20	21 29	48 40	6 6	3 4
c.	Having an abortion Feb 8-12, 2012 Aug 11-17, 2009 Feb, 2006	13 10 12	48 52 52	25 25 23	9 8 11	5 4 2

**ASK ALL:**

Q.41 How much, if anything, have you heard about a federal court ruling that California's ban on gay marriage is unconstitutional? [READ]

Feb 8-12

2012

- |    |                           |
|----|---------------------------|
| 33 | A lot                     |
| 45 | A little                  |
| 20 | Nothing at all            |
| 2  | Don't know/Refused (VOL.) |

**ASK ALL:**

Q.42 Does this federal court decision make you [READ IN REVERSE ORDER FOR RANDOM HALF SAMPLE]?

**BASED ON HEARD****BASED ON TOTAL:****A LOT/LITTLE:**

Feb 8-12 <u>2012</u>	Feb 8-12 <u>2012</u>	
12	13	Very happy
19	20	Pleased
27	31	Disappointed
13	13	Angry
17	15	None of these (VOL.)
12	7	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

N      1501      1217

<sup>1</sup> In August, 2009 the item read: "divorce."

**ASK ALL:**

- Q.66 How much, if anything, have you heard about a proposed federal requirement that religiously-affiliated hospitals and colleges, along with nearly all other employers, cover contraceptives in their employee health care benefits, even if the use of contraceptives conflicts with the religious position of these institutions? Have you heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all about this?<sup>2</sup>

Feb 8-12

2012

33	A lot
29	A little
38	Nothing at all
*	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

**ASK IF HEARD A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q.66=1,2)**

- Q.67 Should religiously-affiliated institutions that object to the use of contraceptives be given an exemption from this rule, or should they be required to cover contraceptives like other employers?

<b>BASED ON</b>	<b>BASED ON HEARD</b>	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>A LOT/LITTLE:</b>	
Feb 8-12	Feb 8-12	
<u>2012</u>	<u>2012</u>	
30	48	Should be given an exemption
27	44	Should be required to cover
2	3	Other ( <b>VOL.</b> )
3	5	Don't Know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )
38	--	Heard nothing/DK/Ref
N	1501	1042

<sup>2</sup> On the first two nights of interviewing, February 8-9, 2012, the question read: "A new federal rule will require religiously-affiliated hospitals and colleges, along with nearly all other employers, to cover contraceptives in their employee health care benefits, even if the use of contraceptives conflicts with the religious position of these institutions. How much, if anything, have you heard about this new rule?"

**ASK ALL:**

RELIG What is your present religion, if any? Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else, or nothing in particular? [INTERVIEWER: IF R VOLUNTEERS "nothing in particular, none, no religion, etc." BEFORE REACHING END OF LIST, PROMPT WITH: And would you say that's atheist, agnostic, or just nothing in particular?]

**ASK IF SOMETHING ELSE, NOTHING IN PARTICULAR OR DK/REF (RELIG=11,99):**

CHR Do you think of yourself as a Christian or not? [IF R NAMED A NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGION IN PREVIOUS QUESTION (e.g. Native American, Wiccan, Pagan, etc.), DO NOT READ (ENTER "NO" CODE 2)]

Feb 8-12  
2012

38	Protestant (Baptist, Methodist, Non-denominational, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Reformed, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, etc.)
23	Roman Catholic (Catholic)
2	Jewish (Judaism)
2	Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints/LDS)
1	Muslim (Islam)
1	Buddhist
1	Orthodox (Greek, Russian, or some other orthodox church)
1	Hindu
4	Agnostic (not sure if there is a God)
3	Atheist (do not believe in God)
1	Something else ( <b>SPECIFY</b> )
16	Nothing in particular
8	Christian ( <b>VOL.</b> )
*	Unitarian (Universalist) ( <b>VOL.</b> )
1	Don't Know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

**ASK ALL:**

ATTEND Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services... more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?

Feb 8-12  
2012

12	More than once a week
24	One a week
16	Once or twice a month
18	A few times a year
16	Seldom
14	Never
1	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )

**ASK IF CATHOLIC (RELIG=2) AND CHURCH ATTENDER (ATTEND=1-4) [N=272]:**

Q.75 As best you can recall, was the new federal rule requiring contraceptive coverage in health care benefits brought up by your priest or another official at your church over the past few weeks, or not?

Feb 8-12  
2012

24	Yes, issue was brought up
64	No, was not
4	Didn't attend recently ( <b>VOL.</b> )
8	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )