

ANES 2006 Pilot Report: Abortion Items

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The ANES currently measures abortion attitudes with a single four-choice item:

There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. I am going to read you a short list of opinions. Please tell me which one of the opinions best agrees with your view? You can just tell me the number of the opinion you choose.

- One. By law, abortion should never be permitted.
- Two. The law should permit abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger.
- Three. The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established.
- Four. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.

Results from the ANES 2006 Pilot study, presented graphically in Figure 1, are consistent with other surveys: roughly ten percent of respondents oppose legal abortion for any reason, a little less than half oppose any restrictions, and the remainder prefers limited regulation.¹

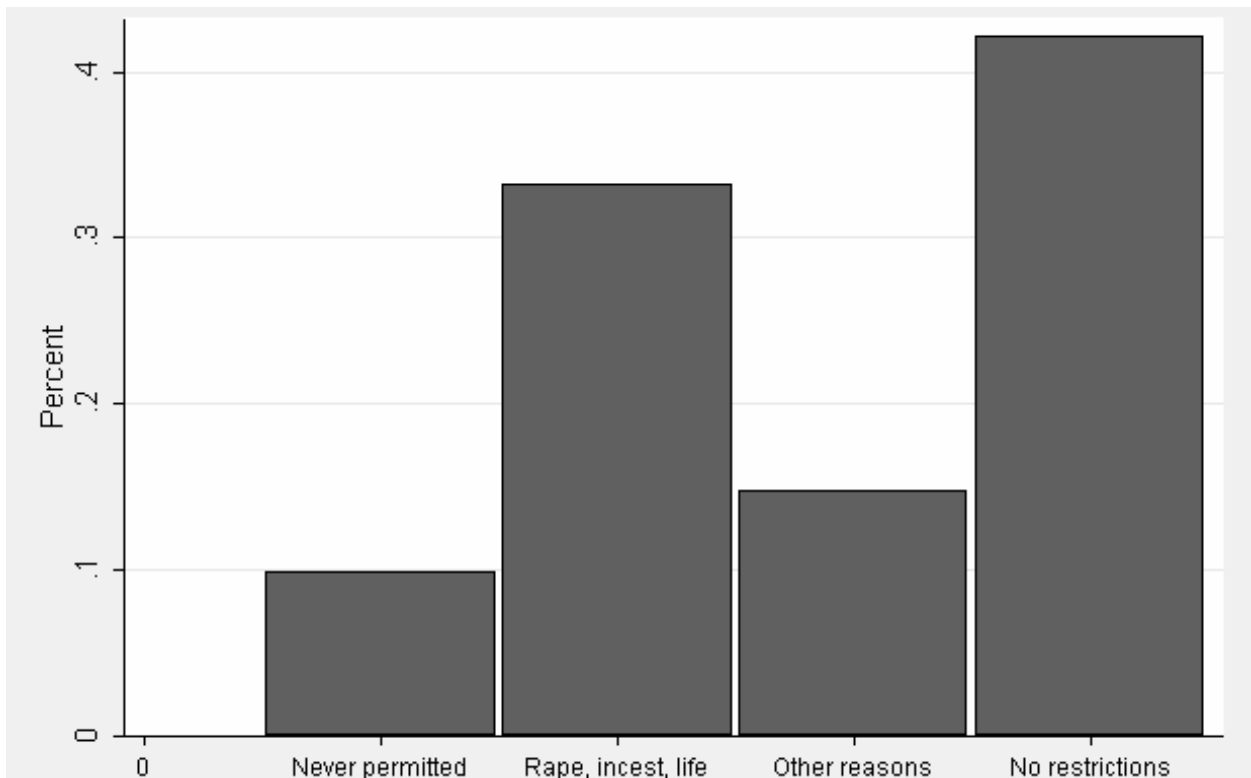
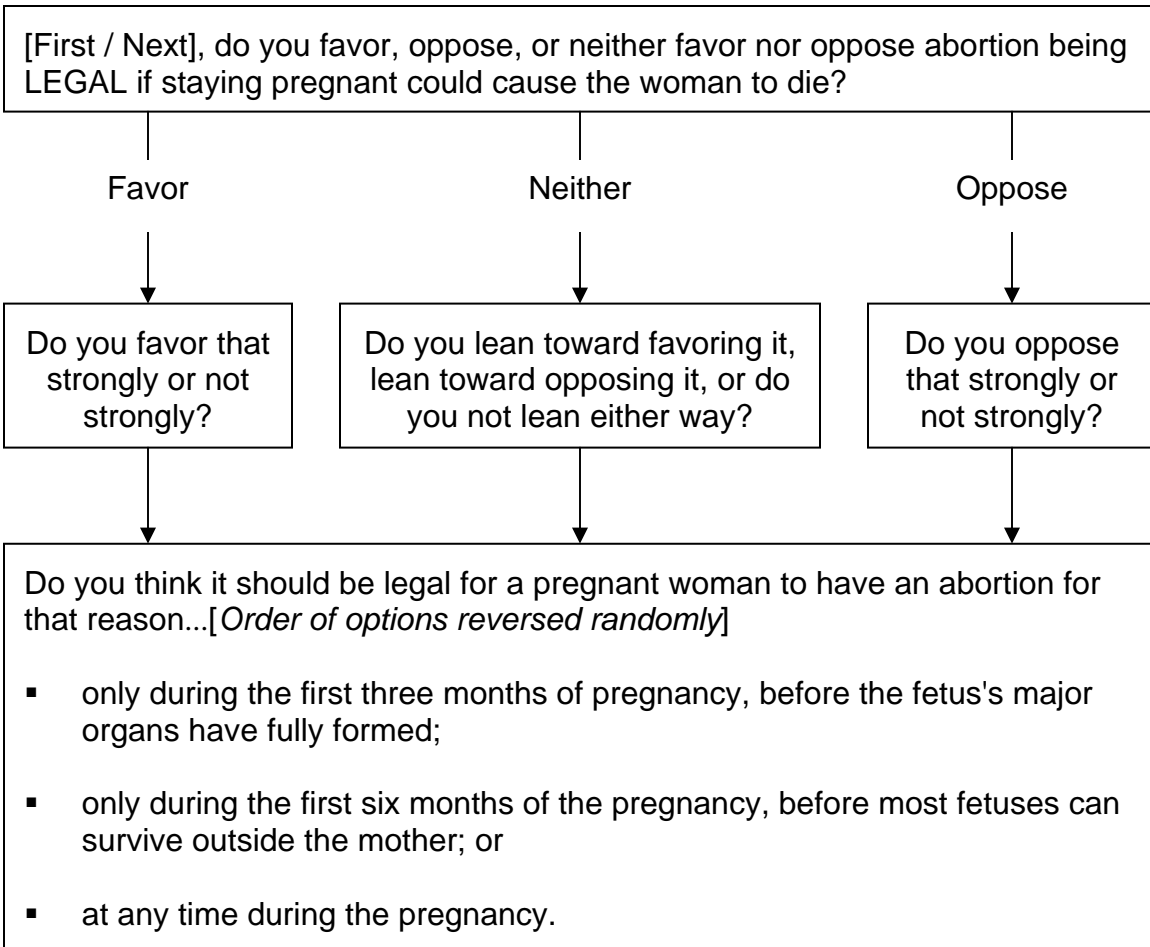


Figure 1

¹ Exact figures for the 223 responses to the 2006 ANES pilot are 22 (9.9 percent) never permitted, 74 (33.2 percent) permitted only for rape, incest, life of the mother, 33 (14.8 percent) permitted for reasons in addition to rape, incest, and life of the mother, and 94 (42.2 percent) no restrictions.

The 2006 ANES Pilot Survey expanded the four-option item to include more distinct reasons for legal abortion, a more precise measurement of attitudes for each reason, and attitudes about timing. The pilot included seven reasons for legal abortion, each one structured as follows:



The remaining six items were:

- [First / Next], do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose abortion being LEGAL if staying pregnant would hurt the woman's health but is very unlikely to cause her to die?
- [First / Next], do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose abortion being LEGAL if the pregnancy was caused by sex the woman chose to have with a blood relative?
- [First / Next], do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose abortion being LEGAL if the pregnancy was caused by the woman being raped?
- [First / Next], do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose abortion being LEGAL if the fetus will be born with a serious birth defect?

- [First / Next], do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose abortion being LEGAL if the child will not be the sex the woman wants it to be?
- [First / Next], do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose abortion being LEGAL if having the child would be extremely difficult for the woman financially?

Two-thirds of respondents were randomly selected into either the current ANES item, and the remainder was selected into the pilot item bank. The pilot respondents were randomly selected into each of the seven abortion scenarios with regard the order in which the scenarios were presented, the number of scenarios presented, and the particular scenarios presented, with the randomization rule to assign an independent half of pilot respondents to each scenario.

Reason for legal abortion	N	Mean	Std Dev
Pregnancy threatens woman's life	202	1.58	2.33
Pregnancy caused by rape	236	1.70	2.39
Fetus may have a birth defect	212	2.58	2.46
Pregnancy may cause injury to woman	223	2.61	2.52
Pregnancy caused by voluntary incest	211	3.17	2.64
Birth may cause woman financial hardship	235	4.17	2.44
Fetus is not the gender desired by woman	220	5.23	1.74

Items coded from 0 (strongly favor legal abortion for that reason) to 6 (strongly oppose legal abortion for that reason)

Timing for reason	Including 'Never Legal' Responses			Only 'Legal' Responses		
	N	Mean	Std Dev	N	Mean	Std Dev
Pregnancy threatens woman's life	185	1.68	1.23	141	2.21	0.91
Pregnancy caused by rape	221	1.10	0.96	163	1.50	0.81
Fetus may have a birth defect	181	1.05	1.10	105	1.81	0.84
Pregnancy may cause injury to woman	198	0.97	1.07	114	1.69	0.87
Pregnancy caused by voluntary incest	193	0.82	1.08	89	1.78	0.90
Birth may cause woman financial hardship	218	0.45	0.85	61	1.62	0.82
Fetus is not the gender desired by woman	216	0.24	0.75	23	2.22	0.95

Items coded 0 (never), 1 (only in first trimester), 2 (only in second trimester), and 3 (anytime)

	Pregnancy caused by rape	Fetus may have a birth defect	Pregnancy may cause injury to woman	Pregnancy caused by voluntary incest	Birth may cause woman financial hardship	Fetus is not the gender desired by woman
Pregnancy threatens woman's life	0.6159 (116)	0.3677 (98)	0.3259 (100)	0.4985 (101)	0.3060 (106)	0.1880 (115)
Pregnancy caused by rape		0.4741 (108)	0.6266 (117)	0.5078 (113)	0.3822 (126)	0.1772 (113)
Fetus may have a birth defect			0.5609 (109)	0.5151 (106)	0.4791 (104)	0.2236 (116)
Pregnancy may cause injury to woman				0.6398 (91)	0.4625 (126)	0.3494 (115)
Pregnancy caused by voluntary incest					0.5863 (124)	0.4423 (101)
Birth may cause woman financial hardship						0.4662 (125)

The following correlation index reveals the degree to which each of the abortion conditions is associated with (1) interpersonal trust, (2) traditionalism, (3) religiosity, and (4) belief in whether men or women are more likely to support abortion. The exact question wording follows.

	Mod6_B1	Mod7_A4	Mod10_1	23_14
abortfatal	0.2681	-0.0928	-0.1821	-0.2024
abortrape	0.3073	-0.1367	-0.2506	-0.1502
abortbirth	0.1001	-0.2101	-0.3731	-0.1186
abortinjure	-0.0757	-0.1627	-0.277	-0.1429
abortincest	0.0710	-0.2868	-0.3212	-0.1150
abortfinance	0.0485	-0.37	-0.3542	-0.1497
abortwrsex	0.0723	-0.3832	-0.4229	-0.0822

Mod6_B1 Generally speaking, would you say that most people CAN BE TRUSTED, or that you CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL in dealing with people?

1. Most people can be trusted
2. Can't be too careful

Mod7_A4 Tradition is important to [him/her]. [He/She] tries to follow the customs handed down by [his/her] religion or [his/her] family.

1. Very much like you
2. Like you
3. Somewhat like you
4. A little like you
5. Not like you
6. Not like you at all

Mod10_1 Do you consider religion to be an IMPORTANT part of your life, or NOT?

1. Important
2. Not important

Mod23_14 Which Congressional Representative do you think would be more likely to support abortion being legal in all circumstances - a Democrat who is a man, a Democrat who is a woman, or would they be equally likely?

1. Man
 2. Woman
 3. Equal
- (Recoded so Equal = 1.5)

We find it particularly interesting that prolife attitudes tend to be correlated, if only slightly, with belief that men are more likely to be pro-choice. It suggests that such attitudes are tied up in perceptions of the sexes, which is an avenue for research that should be pursued, because it

suggests that abortion attitudes may be, in part, driven by concerns neither pertaining to “life” or “choice.”