

CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

Memo

To: Interested Colleagues

From: Jon O'Brien, President, Catholics for Choice

Re: Catholics Use and Support Access to Contraception

Date: February 7, 2012

Catholics use contraception

- Ninety-eight percent of sexually experienced Catholic women have used a contraceptive method other than natural family planning, as compared to 99 percent of the general population.¹
- Only two percent of Catholic women, including those who attend church once a month or more, rely on natural family planning.²
- Sixty-nine percent of US Catholic women rely on highly effective contraceptive methods like sterilization (32 percent, including 24 percent using female sterilization), the pill or another hormonal method (31 percent) or an IUD (five percent).³

Catholics support contraceptive coverage

- More than six in 10 (63 percent) Catholic voters surveyed in 2009 supported health insurance coverage—whether it is private or government insurance—for contraception.⁴
- A 2010 poll showed that Catholic women voters are more likely to support health plan coverage for birth control—77 percent versus 71 percent for the population at large.⁵
- Eighty-five percent of Catholics believe in extending birth control coverage to those who want it but cannot afford it—this is more than the 82 percent of the general population.⁶

Catholics support contraceptive access for minors

- Catholics (55 percent) are as likely as the general population (57 percent) to believe that 14- to 16-year-olds should be able to access contraception, even if their parents do not approve.⁷

Catholics believe in limits on religious exemptions

- Two-thirds (65 percent) of US Catholic voters believe that hospitals and clinics taking taxpayer dollars should not be allowed to refuse to provide certain medications or procedures.⁸
- Nearly eight in 10 Catholics (78 percent) oppose allowing pharmacists to refuse to fill birth control prescriptions.⁹

Catholics put conscience first

- A 2011 survey revealed that only 10 percent of US Catholics believe that church leaders have the final say about contraception. Sixty-six percent believe individuals alone decide what is right or wrong about abortion.¹⁰
- When a 2005 poll asked whether they were more likely to follow the pope's teaching or their own conscience on difficult moral questions, 74 percent of US Catholics questioned said they would follow their own conscience.¹¹

Catholics support changing church teachings

- When asked in 2005 about the next pope, 78 percent of US Catholics polled said that birth control should be allowed by the church.¹²

¹ National Survey of Family Growth/Centers for Disease Control, cited in R.K. Jones and J. Dreweke, "Countering Conventional Wisdom: New Evidence on Religion and Contraceptive Use," Guttmacher Institute, April 2011.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Belden, Russonello & Stewart, "Catholic Voters' Views on Health Care Reform and Reproductive Health Care Services," Catholics for Choice, 2009.

⁵ Hart Research, "Survey: Nearly Three in Four Voters in America Support Fully Covering Prescription Birth Control," Planned Parenthood, October 12, 2010.

⁶ Public Religion Research Institute, "The Morning Buzz," January 23, 2011.

⁷ General Social Survey, 2008.

⁸ Belden, Russonello & Stewart, "Religion, Reproductive Health and Access to Services: A National Survey of Women," Catholics for Choice, April 2000.

⁹ Belden, Russonello & Stewart, "Secular and Security-Minded: The Catholic Vote in Summer 2008," Catholics for Choice, 2008.

¹⁰ National Catholic Reporter, "Right and Wrong: Who Has the Final Say?" October 24, 2011.

¹¹ Jeffrey M. Jones, "US Catholics' Reactions to Pope Benedict XVI More Positive than Negative," Gallup News Service, April 20, 2005.

¹² CNN/Gallup/USA Today Poll, April 2005.