

Harris Poll Shows Lowest Support for Roe v. Wade in Decades

BY Dave Andrusko

When it comes to abortion, there are pollsters and there are pollsters. When one as consistently, unabashedly partisan as the pro-abortion Harris poll splashes this headline—"Support for Roe vs. Wade Declines to Lowest Level Ever, Says Harris Poll; U.S. Adults Almost Equally Split: 49 Percent in Favor, 47 Percent Oppose"—you can't help but be encouraged.

First, the highlights of the poll of 1,016 adults, released May 4.

Asked about Roe v. Wade, only 49% supported the 1973 decision as opposed to 47% who did not. In 1998 the percentage in favor of Roe was 57%, according to Harris, and 52% in 2005. This is a decline in support for Roe that no amount of hemming and hawing can change.

What makes this even more intriguing is that Harris's question does everything humanly possibly to minimize and misrepresent what Roe allowed, and still the percent in favor continues to drop. Here is the question:

"In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that states' laws which made it illegal for a woman to have an abortion up to three months of pregnancy were unconstitutional, and that the decision on whether a woman should have an abortion up to three months of pregnancy should be left to the woman and her doctor to decide. In general, do you favor or oppose this part of the U.S. Supreme Court decision making abortions up to three months of pregnancy legal?"

Notice that three times the Harris question drives home the totally erroneous conclusion that Roe only legalized abortion up through the first three months. The question further tilted the response by adding the idiom-of-choice ("left to a woman and her doctor to decide"), which always increases the level of support.

Harris asked under which circumstances respondents would permit abortion. The exact question was:

"In general, do you favor permitting a woman who wants one to have an abortion in all circumstances, some circumstances, or no circumstances?"

24% said under all circumstances
20% said under no circumstances
53% said under some circumstances

In other words 73% said abortion should be allowed either in no circumstances (20%) or some (53%). As we've pointed out innumerable times, if you parse the "some circumstances" category you quickly find that most of that 53% supports abortion only in very few circumstances such as to save the mother's life or in cases of rape and incest.

By contrast Roe v. Wade stands for the doctrine that abortion must be allowed for any reason until "viability" (about five and one-half months), and for "health" reasons (broadly defined) even during the final three months of pregnancy. By any definition, that is essentially abortion on demand.

They were also asked, "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?"

40% said more difficult, 15% easier, 40% said no change, and 6% were unsure. The latter figure was up from 1% in 2005. The 40% who said more difficult was down 2% from 2005.

63% of respondents said they believed it is likely Roe will remain unchanged over the next few years.

There was one other result that bodes especially well for the future. While more Republicans (61%) than Democrats oppose Roe, 43% of Democrats said they opposed a decision whose real impact was hidden by a misleading question.

No one poll says everything or stands in isolation from other data. That's what makes Harris's numbers so encouraging. A strongly pro-abortion polling firm finds continuing, ongoing erosion in support for the abominable Roe v. Wade decision.

As Harris said in a statement, "The big picture, therefore, is that the public is now almost equally divided on Roe vs. Wade."