

# New poll says most oppose abortion

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Most Americans oppose abortion in most circumstances and would support legislation to protect unborn life, according to a new poll.

The poll — designed and tabulated by the Gallup Organization for a pro-life group — seems to contradict earlier surveys that show most Americans support the right to abortion created by the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling in *Roe vs. Wade*.

Among the findings released yesterday:

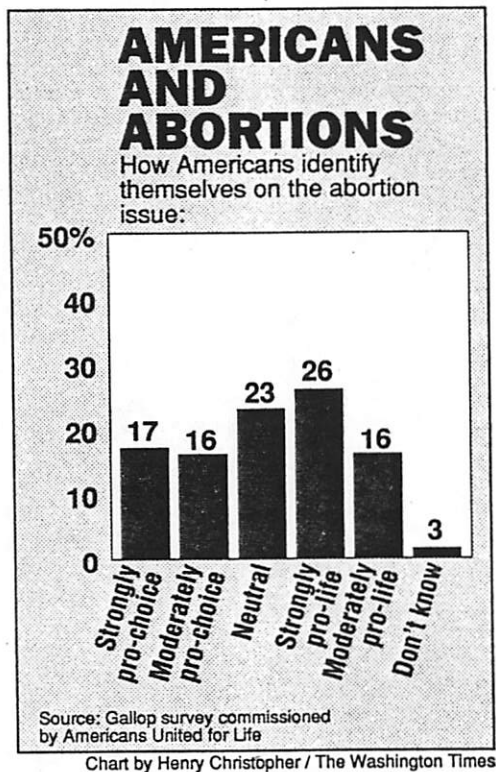
- Seventy-three percent said abortion should be prohibited after the first three months of pregnancy except when the mother's life is endangered.

- Sixty-nine percent believe teenagers should be required to get parental consent for an abortion.

- A majority opposes using abortion as a means of birth control.

The study, commissioned by Americans United for Life, also found that 90 percent of the 2,174 persons interviewed last May could not describe the circumstances under which abortion is legal.

"An overwhelming majority of Amer-



icans simply do not understand what is allowed under current law," AUL vice chairman Victor Rosenblum said at a

news conference. "In many cases, it appears that people who consider themselves pro-choice simply don't know what they're supporting."

For example, 42 percent of those surveyed said they thought the Supreme Court ruling made abortions legal only during the first three months of pregnancy.

The court ruled that during the first trimester of pregnancy the decision to terminate a pregnancy is completely up to the woman. In the second trimester states may impose certain regulations to protect the woman's health. And in the final trimester states can prohibit abortion unless the mother's health is in jeopardy.

"Americans remain largely misinformed and ignorant about *Roe vs. Wade*," said AUL Vice President Laurie Ann Ramsey. Only one out of four persons surveyed could correctly state the outcome of the case, she said.

"I don't think a lot of people sit around and interpret Supreme Court decisions," said National Abortions Rights Action League spokeswoman Loretta Ucelli. "The public generally thinks that politicians should not be involved in making the decision."

A 1990 Cable News Network poll

showed 71 percent of those interviewed believe the decision should be left to the pregnant woman and her doctor, Ms. Ucelli said.

But when those who described themselves as "pro-choice" learned about the rulings resulting from the *Roe* case, AUL found they were inclined to change their stance toward "pro-life."

Eighty-eight percent disapprove of abortion in the first three months of pregnancy "as a repeated means of birth control," and 91 percent disapprove of abortion if tests reveal the baby is not the sex the couple wants.

A majority disapproved of having an abortion for financial reasons.

And one-fourth of the public is opposed to abortion in any circumstance, Ms. Ramsey said.

"There is a need to invoke response in the silent majority," she said, which would lead to a more accurate assessment of the population's stance on the issue.

"The facts about abortion are the most powerful tool in making the case for legal protection for the unborn," Helen Alvare, an official at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement released after the briefing.