

# 5% OF VOTERS SUPPORT NO LIMITS ON ABORTION

A Wall Street Journal/NORC (WSJ) survey found that 68% of Americans believe that *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion, should not be overturned. Yet a Rasmussen survey of American voters found that only 5% believe abortion should be legal in all cases, with no restrictions whatsoever. How to explain the apparent contradiction?

The Rasmussen survey was limited to registered voters; the WSJ poll was not. But that alone would hardly account for what appears to be a huge difference. There is something else going on that explains the differing outcomes.

Recent surveys by the Pew Research Center and Gallup come to the same conclusion as the WSJ poll on the issue of public support for *Roe*: they all conclude that most Americans, while supporting restrictions, do not want *Roe* overturned. Their singular failure is in assuming that most Americans know what *Roe* allows: as interpreted by the courts, it allows for abortion-on-demand. That would surely come as a surprise to most.

Virtually every survey that asks about restrictions, including those by WSJ, Pew and Gallup, finds that the vast majority of Americans want them. This clearly put them at odds with what *Roe* permits, thus undercutting the narrative that most Americans do not want *Roe* overturned.

Similarly, surveys that do not inform respondents that overturning *Roe* would not ban all abortions are dishonest. This matters gravely because the conventional wisdom assumes that overturning *Roe* would do exactly that. In fact, now that *Roe* has been overturned, each state's legislature can decide what the terms should be.

The value of the Rasmussen survey is that it is not conditioned on the perspective of respondents regarding the provisions of Roe. "In aggregate, when asked about specific restrictions, such as notifying the father, notifying the parents of a teenager, and waiting periods," 5% say that "No restrictions should be placed on abortion."

The findings of the Rasmussen survey should prompt other survey houses to reconsider the wording of their questions. Questions that presume an accurate understanding of the issue are bound to provide an inaccurate picture, which further feeds misperceptions.

Survey research can be a great way of judging the pulse of the nation.

This assumes, however, that it is done in an unbiased manner.