

FLAWED ABORTION POLL PROVES MISLEADING



Bill Donohue comments on a Pew Research Center survey on abortion that was released yesterday:

The title of the Pew survey reads, “*Roe v. Wade* at 40: Most Oppose Overturning Abortion Decision.” Not surprisingly, the media reported what Pew found. Here are some examples:

- “Majority Upholds Landmark U.S. Abortion Ruling: Poll,” AFP (French News Agency)
- “As ‘*Roe v. Wade*’ Turns 40, Most Oppose Reversing Abortion Ruling,” Reuters
- “*Roe v. Wade* at 40: Pew Poll Finds Abortion Not a Key Issue,” *Los Angeles Times*
- “Poll: Most Americans Oppose Reversing Abortion Ruling,” *Washington Post*
- “Survey: Few Religious Groups Want *Roe v. Wade* Overturned Despite Belief Abortion Morally Wrong,” CNN

Only CNN indicated that most Americans are conflicted about abortion. In fairness to the other media outlets, their headlines were not inaccurate. What was misleading was the survey.

Generally, Pew does excellent research. The problem with this survey is that it gave respondents only two choices: “Would you like to see the Supreme Court (a) Completely Overturn *Roe v. Wade* or (b) Not Overturn *Roe v. Wade*.” Either/or questions on complex issues are inherently flawed. Pew should have known this when it learned, in the same poll, that 47 percent say abortion is “Morally Wrong”; only 13 percent say it is “Morally Acceptable.” Among Protestants, the figures are 56

percent to 9 percent; among Catholics, it is 55 percent to 9 percent.

A more sophisticated poll by Gallup last May found that the majority of Americans (52 percent) want abortion legal *under certain circumstances*; 25 percent want it legal in all cases and 20 percent want it illegal in all cases. In other words, only a quarter of Americans support *Roe v. Wade* as it was written. Most want restrictions.