

# Latino Voters in Texas and Abortion

*Results from a Statewide Survey of Latino Likely Voters*

October 22, 2014

## Executive Summary

The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) commissioned nonpartisan research firm PerryUndem Research/Communication to conduct a survey of Latino voters in Texas to better understand their views and values on abortion. The survey follows several studies in recent years that have debunked the myth that the Latino electorate is more socially conservative on abortion than others. One of the main research questions for this survey is whether Latino voters in Texas hold different or similar values and perspectives as Latino registered voters nationwide.

Survey results indicate that Latino likely voters in Texas, essentially mirroring Latino registered voters nationally, tend to hold supportive and non-judgmental views toward abortion. Most respondents say they would offer support to a close friend or family member who had an abortion, with a majority saying they would give her “a lot” of support. A strong majority of Latino voters in Texas agree with the statement “a woman has a right to make her own personal decisions about abortion without politicians interfering.” A majority of respondents agree abortion should remain legal even though some church leaders take a position against abortion. They are twice as likely to say the trend of state level laws restricting abortion across the country are going in the wrong rather than right direction. Finally, the survey indicates that Latino voters in Texas are supportive of health insurance covering reproductive health care, including contraception and abortion care.

## Background

### *Myths around Latino Voters and Abortion*

Over the years, conventional wisdom has suggested that Latinos are more likely than others to hold socially conservative political views on the legality of abortion. Recent data suggest this may be true. A 2013 Pew Research Center survey<sup>1</sup> of Latino adults shows 40 percent support legal abortion in all or most cases and 53 percent say it should be illegal in most or all cases. This compares to the reverse among the general public: 54 percent support legal abortion in all or most cases and 40 percent say it should be illegal in most or all cases.

Several surveys in recent years, however, have debunked this myth among Latino voters. Data suggest that voters, particularly those who turn out in elections, are just as – if not more – supportive of legal abortion as others. For example, 2012 exit poll results<sup>2</sup> show two-thirds of Latinos agreed abortion should be legal (66 vs. 28 percent who disagreed). In fact, Latino voters were more supportive of legal abortion than voters overall (59 percent overall supported legal abortion vs. 37 who disagreed).

In a study<sup>3</sup> released last week, the Pew Research Center shows that Latino registered voters in their survey are more likely to agree with abortion being legal in all or most cases (48 percent) than disagree (44 percent) (note small sample size of n = 169 respondents).

Demographic differences between Latino voters and non-voters may help explain the variations on views toward abortion. In the same study released last week, Pew reports that 51 percent of US-born Latinos in their survey say abortion should be legal in all or most cases (just like 51 percent of US adults nationwide) compared to 35 percent of foreign-born Latinos – most of whom come from countries where abortion is illegal or severely restricted<sup>4</sup>.

Among Latino citizens eligible to vote, 74 percent are US-born and 26 percent are naturalized citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/11/latinos-endorse-legal-abortion/>

<sup>3</sup> [www.pewhispanic.org/files/2014/10/2014-10-16\\_hispanics-in-the-2014-midterm-elections.pdf](http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2014/10/2014-10-16_hispanics-in-the-2014-midterm-elections.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/AbortionMap2014.PDF>

## *Values around Abortion*

In 2011, a Lake Research Partners poll among Latino registered voters nationwide<sup>5</sup> went beyond the legality question typically asked by Pew and others to explore values and feelings around abortion. Results show more nuanced and in-depth perspectives on abortion among Latino voters. For example, most (67 percent) respondents say they would offer support to a close friend or family member who had an abortion and 74 percent agree that a woman has a right to her own personal decision on abortion without politicians interfering.

Unfortunately, conducting methodologically sound survey research among the Latino electorate is a very costly endeavor. That is likely the reason we have not seen any other robust research on Latino voters' values and attitudes toward abortion since this 2011 poll.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://latinainstitute.org/sites/default/files/LatinoAbortionAttitudesPolling.pdf>

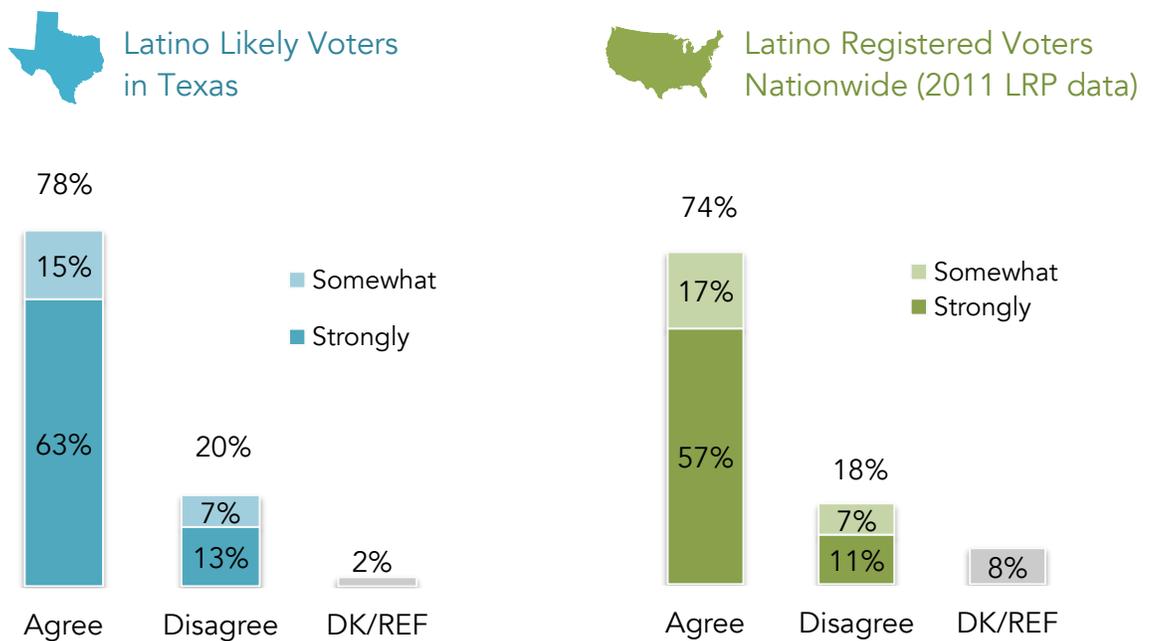
## **Brief Methodology**

PerryUndem contracted with Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS), an independent research company, to administer the survey among 603 Latino likely voters in Texas between September 29 and October 13, 2014. SSRS is the gold standard telephone survey research company in the country, and conducts surveys for the Pew Research Center. SSRS maintains a staff of bilingual interviewers who offered respondents the choice of being interviewed in Spanish or English. A total of 155 respondents chose to take the survey in Spanish. A total of 313 interviews were conducted via landline and 290 by cell phone. Respondents were screened for being registered to vote and saying they “always” or “frequently” vote in elections. A detailed methodology can be found at the end of this report.

## Detailed Findings

**A large majority of Latino likely voters in Texas agree that a woman has a right to make her own personal decisions about abortion without politicians interfering.** Seventy-eight percent agree with this sentiment, 63 percent strongly. One in five respondents strongly or somewhat disagree. These data are consistent with Latino registered voters nationwide<sup>6</sup>.

Do you agree or disagree:  
A woman has a right to make her own personal decisions about  
abortion without politicians interfering.



<sup>6</sup> Survey of n = 600 Latino registered voters conducted by telephone September 26 through October 5, 2011. A total of n = 200 respondents were interviewed via cell phone. The margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3.7$  percentage points. The survey was conducted in the 25 states with the highest Latino-population density. These states are CA, TX, FL, NY, IL, AZ, NJ, NM, CO, GA, NV, NC, WA, MA, VA, PA, CT, MI, OR, MD, IN, OH, MN, OK and WI. These states cover 95% of the country's voting-eligible Latino population.

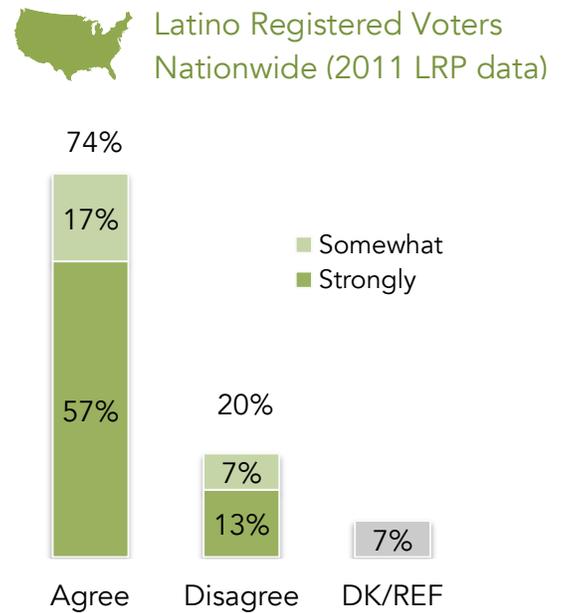
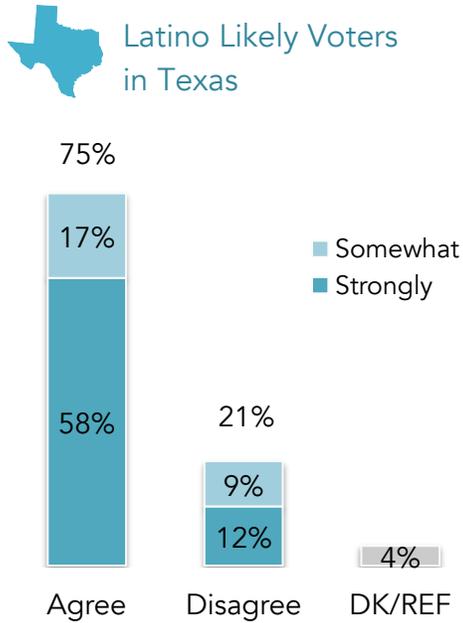
Large majorities of respondents across demographic groups agree with a woman’s right to make a decision about abortion without politicians interfering – including 70 percent of Latino likely voters in Texas who identify as Republican (who comprise 30 percent of the sample overall).

Do you agree or disagree: A woman has a right to make her own personal decisions about abortion without politicians interfering.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Total	78%	20%
Men	77%	20%
Women	78%	20%
18 to 44 years old	76%	23%
45 and older	79%	19%
Less than college degree	77%	22%
College degree	82%	15%
Republican	70%	27%
Democrat	82%	17%

**One factor behind Latino voters' support for a woman's right to make her own decision may relate to not wanting to judge someone who is not ready to parent.** Three-quarters of Latino likely voters in Texas – like Latino voters nationwide – agree with a statement about not judging someone who feels they are not ready to become a parent.

Do you agree or disagree:  
We should not judge someone who feels they are not ready to become a parent.



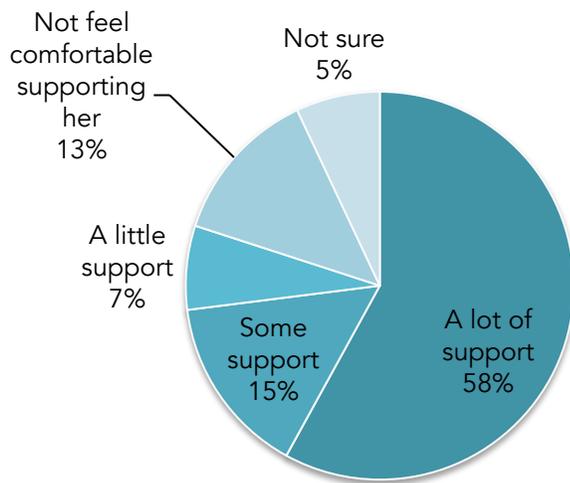
Most respondents across demographic groups agree with the statement about not wanting to judge someone who is not ready to parent.

Do you agree or disagree: We should not judge someone who feels they are not ready to become a parent.

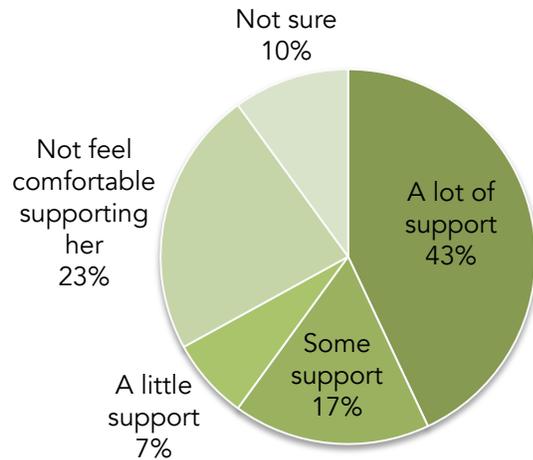
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Total	74%	21%
Men	71%	24%
Women	77%	19%
18 to 44 years old	78%	17%
45 and older	71%	25%
Less than college degree	73%	22%
College degree	79%	17%
Republican	66%	31%
Democrat	79%	17%

**Most Latino likely voters in Texas say they would offer support to a close friend or family member who had an abortion.** Eight in ten (80 percent) say they would give at least “a little” support, with 58 percent saying they would offer “a lot” of support to a loved one who had an abortion. Latino voters in Texas are more likely than registered voters nationally to say they would support a loved one.

If a close friend or family member told you she had an abortion, would you give her...



If a close friend or family member told you she had an abortion, would you give her...



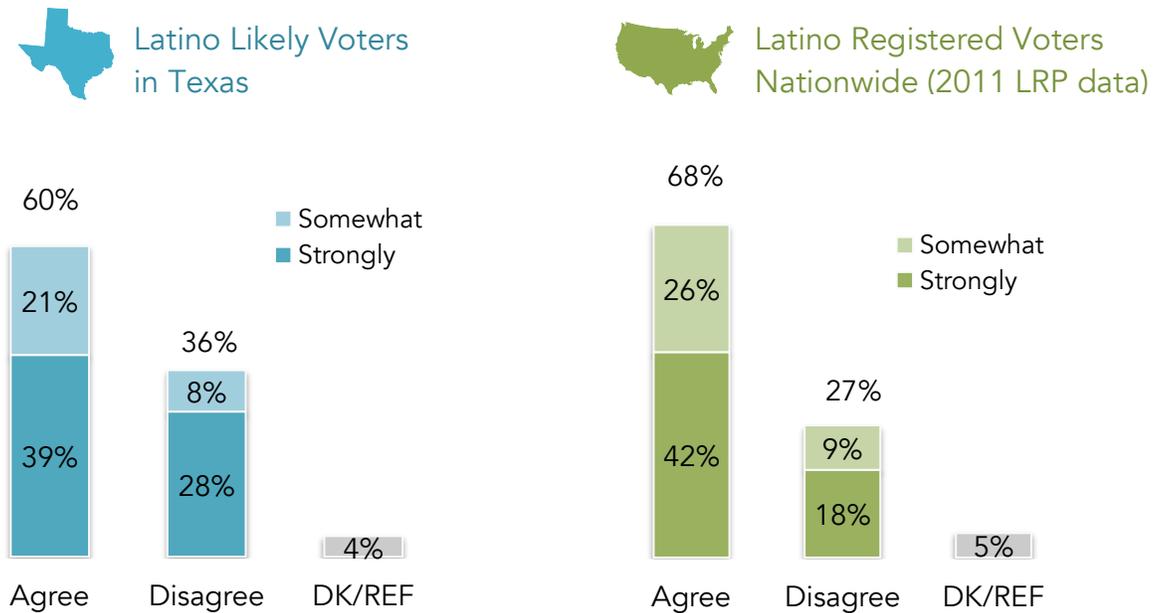
Respondents across demographic groups say they would offer support to a loved one who had an abortion, with more than half saying they would give her “a lot” of support.

If a close friend or family member told you she had an abortion, would you give her...

	<b>At least “a little” support</b>	<b>“A lot” of support</b>
Total	80%	58%
Men	82%	58%
Women	79%	58%
18 to 44 years old	83%	62%
45 and older	79%	56%
Less than college degree	79%	57%
College degree	86%	64%
Republican	74%	53%
Democrat	83%	61%

**A majority of respondents agree that abortion should be legal even though some church leaders take a position against abortion.** Six in ten (60 percent) Latino voters in Texas agree that abortion should remain legal despite some church leaders' positions against it. They are slightly less likely than Latino registered voters nationwide (68 percent) to agree with this statement.

Do you agree or disagree:  
 Even though some church leaders take a position against abortion,  
 when it comes to the law, I believe it should remain legal.



Latino voters who identify as Republicans are more likely than Democrats to disagree with the statement (53 disagree vs. 30 percent). There is also a slight age difference, with younger voters more likely to agree with abortion being legal despite church leaders' positions (64 percent vs. 56 percent).

Do you agree or disagree: Even though some church leaders take a position against abortion, when it comes to the law, I believe it should remain legal.

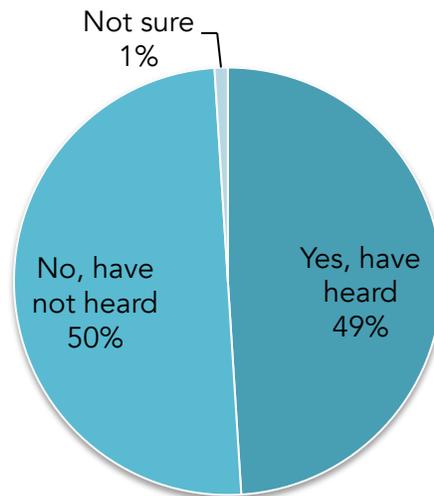
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Total	60%	36%
Men	61%	36%
Women	60%	37%
18 to 44 years old	64%	33%
45 and older	56%	39%
Less than college degree	58%	38%
College degree	67%	30%
Republican	44%	53%
Democrat	67%	30%

**Half of Latino likely voters in Texas say they have not heard about new state-level legislative trends to restrict access to abortion.** Respondents were read the following description of trends to restrict access to abortion:

*The United States Supreme Court ruled that a woman has a right to a safe and legal abortion. Some politicians want abortion to be completely illegal in the US. Because they can't overturn the Supreme Court ruling, many politicians have recently passed new laws at the state level that make it harder for a woman to access abortion care and harder for doctors to provide that care.*

Half of respondents (50 percent) say they have not heard about these laws.

As far as you know, have you heard about any of these new laws?



Respondents with a college degree are more likely to have heard of these new laws (58 percent vs. 46 percent of those without a college degree). Republicans are slightly more likely than Democrats to say they have heard of these new laws (54 percent vs. 48 percent).

Respondents who chose to take the survey in Spanish are slightly more likely to say they have not heard of these new laws (54 percent vs. 48 percent who took the survey in English).

As far as you know, have you heard of any of these new laws?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Total	49%	50%
Men	49%	49%
Women	49%	50%
18 to 44 years old	50%	47%
45 and older	47%	51%
Less than college degree	46%	52%
College degree	58%	42%
Republican	54%	45%
Democrat	48%	52%
Took survey in English	50%	48%
Took survey in Spanish	43%	54%

**When presented with facts about the intended or unintended consequences of recent restrictions across the country on abortion, a majority of Latino voters in Texas say this trend is a step in the wrong direction.** In the past three years, state legislatures have passed 205 laws that restrict access to abortion care<sup>7</sup>. Survey respondents were read the following description of the consequences of the laws that have been passed in various states across the country:

*Here are facts about the results of the laws. As you may know, these new laws have done things like force doctors to give patients medically-false information about abortion, require women to make multiple, medically-unnecessary appointments for care, and make it illegal for Medicaid to cover abortion care, even to protect the health of the mother. New laws have also forced health centers to completely rebuild their facilities by setting requirements that have nothing to do with women's health and safety.*

*In the past three years, politicians across the country have passed 205 laws to make it harder for a woman to access abortion care and harder for doctors to provide that care.*

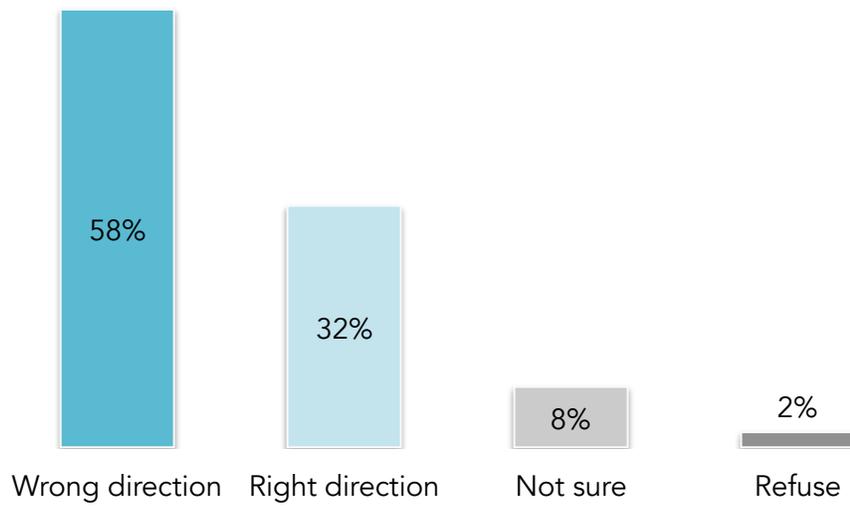
*Do you think these laws are a step in the right direction or a step in the wrong direction?*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/17/1/gpr170109.html>

Respondents are nearly twice as likely to say these laws are a step in the wrong direction (58 percent) than right direction (32 percent).

Do you think these laws are a step in the right direction or a step in the wrong direction?



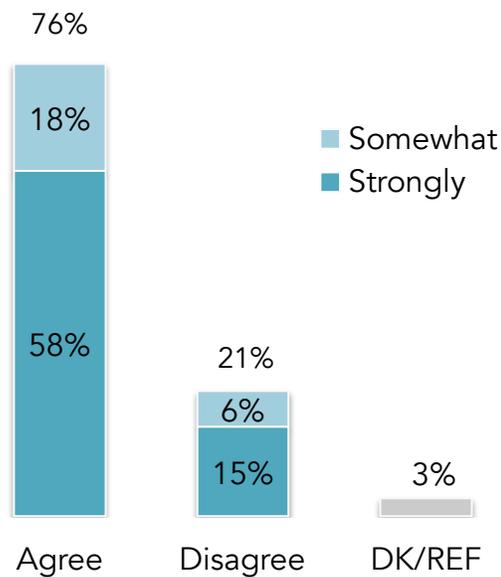
Women, those with a college degree, and respondents who identify as Democrats are most likely to say these laws are going in the wrong direction.

Do you think these laws are a step in the right direction  
or a step in the wrong direction?

	<b>Wrong direction</b>	<b>Right direction</b>
Total	58%	32%
Men	55%	35%
Women	61%	28%
18 to 44 years old	59%	34%
45 and older	58%	30%
Less than college degree	56%	33%
College degree	65%	27%
Republican	36%	49%
Democrat	68%	25%

**Latino likely voters in Texas tend to be supportive of health insurance covering the full range of reproductive health care, including contraception and abortion.** Three in four respondents agree with the statement “I consider birth control part of basic health care that should be covered by health insurance, no matter where you work,” with 58 percent agreeing strongly.

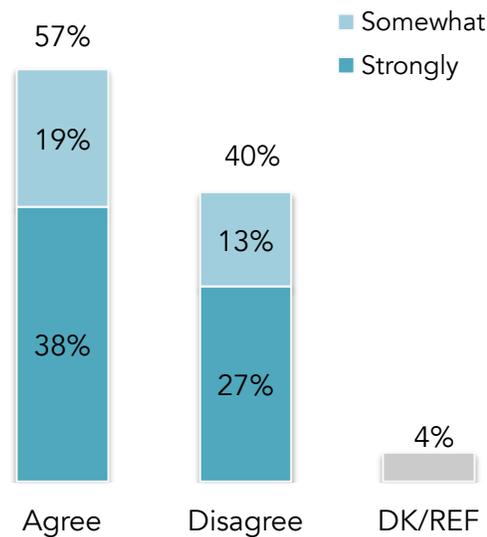
Do you agree or disagree: I consider birth control part of basic health care that should be covered by health insurance, no matter where you work.



Women are particularly likely to agree that contraception should be included in health insurance, no matter where you work (82 percent vs. 69 percent of men).

The survey also explored attitudes toward private and government funded health coverage of the full range of pregnancy-related care, including abortion. Fifty-seven percent of respondents agree that whether she has private or government funded health coverage, every woman should have coverage for these services. Four in ten (40 percent) disagree.

Do you agree or disagree: Whether she has private or government funded health coverage, every woman should have coverage for the full range of pregnancy-related care, including abortion.



Younger voters (60 percent) and Democrats (69 percent) are most likely to agree that every woman should have coverage of the full range of pregnancy-related care, including abortion.

Percent agrees with...

	<b>Birth control covered, regardless of where you work</b>	<b>Private or gov't insurance should cover care, including abortion</b>
Total	76%	57%
Men	69%	56%
Women	82%	58%
18 to 44 years old	80%	60%
45 and older	73%	55%
Less than college degree	78%	57%
College degree	70%	58%
Republican	52%	32%
Democrat	87%	69%

## **Conclusion**

The survey shows remarkable consistency between the views of Latino likely voters in Texas and Latino registered voters nationally on the issue of abortion. Even in the politically conservative state of Texas, Latino voters support legal abortion, hold supportive and non-judgmental views around the issue, and feel a woman has a right to make her own decision on abortion without politicians interfering. While half of these voters have not heard about the recent trend of states restricting abortion access, respondents are twice as likely to say this trend goes in the wrong, rather than right, direction after hearing about the consequences of these laws. Finally, most Latino voters are supportive of health insurance covering contraception, and many also agree that every woman should have coverage for the full range of pregnancy-related care, including abortion.

## Detailed Methodology

### *Overview*

PerryUndem Research/Communication contracted with Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS) to administer the survey. The survey was conducted September 29 through October 13, 2014 among  $n = 603$  Latino likely voters in Texas. Respondents were screened for being registered to vote at their current address and saying they “always” or “frequently” vote in elections. The margin of error for the total results is  $\pm 4$  percentage points. A total of  $n = 290$  interviews were completed via cell phone and  $n = 313$  by landline. Of the  $n = 603$  interviews,  $n = 155$  were conducted in Spanish.

### *Sample Design*

The estimated incidence of Latino likely voters in Texas is 11 percent of the adult population statewide. Reaching this population by telephone using simple random-digit-dial (RDD) is extremely cost prohibitive. Instead, SSRS conducted the survey with a dual sample design. One sample source came from Latinos in Texas who have participated in SSRS’ Omnibus survey. This weekly survey is based on a fully replicated, stratified RDD sample of telephone households with the random selection of an eligible respondent in each household. Every week approximately 1,000 interviews are completed (50 percent landline and 50 percent cellphone) nationwide in English and Spanish. A total of  $n = 168$  interviews were completed using this sample.

The second sample source is the registered voter file for Texas. The benefit of this sample source is that all respondents are indeed registered to vote (we do not have to rely on self-report from the respondent). The disadvantage is ethnicity is identified on the file through statistical modeling, which may leave out some Latino households. However, these households would be represented in the RDD sampling method used for the Omnibus panel. A total of  $n = 435$  interviews were conducted using the registered voter list.

*Interviewing and Calling Procedure*

All interviews were conducted using professionally trained interviewers. In order to maximize survey response, interviewers explained the purpose of the study was not a sales call. Each non-responsive number was contacted multiple times, varying the time of day and day of the week. Non-responsive numbers were re-contacted an average of six times after the first attempt.

*Screening Questions*

The following questions were used to screen survey respondents on ethnicity, registered to vote, and likelihood to vote.

Q. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Caribbean, Central or South American, or some other Latin American background?

Yes..... 100  
No TERMINATE ..... -  
DK TERMINATE ..... -  
REF TERMINATE ..... -

Q. Are you currently registered to vote at your current address?

Yes..... 100  
No TERMINATE ..... -  
DK TERMINATE ..... -  
REF TERMINATE ..... -

Q. How often would you say you vote:

Always ..... 67  
Frequently ..... 33  
Part of the time or TERMINATE ..... -  
Seldom? TERMINATE ..... -  
NEVER (VOL) TERMINATE ..... -  
DK/REF TERMINATE..... -

## Weighting

SSRS used several phases of statistical weighting to account for the sample design and to best represent Latino likely voters in Texas. The sources for weighting included the 2012 (the most currently available) US Census American Community Survey estimates and data from a total of n = 2,311 Latino respondents in Texas from SSRS' Omnibus panel. The final weight also included adjustments for probability of being selected and interviewed via landline or cell phone.

## Sample Composition

Following reflect the weighted data by demographic characteristics.

	Percent of Total Sample (n = 603)
Men	47%
Women	53
18 to 34 years old	26%
35 to 44	18
45 to 54	20
55 to 64	15
65+	19
Less than college degree	74%
College degree	26
Born in US/Puerto Rico	77%
Born outside US	22
Republican	30%
Democrat	55
Independent/other	11