Two national surveys show majorities of both political parties support legal abortion

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Despite research showing that a majority of Americans support legalized abortion, the Supreme Court is expected to overturn or limit Roe v. Wade in June 2022. Credit: Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash

Regardless of race, ethnicity and even political party preference, two separate UCLA-led surveys reveal that majorities of people in each

group support access to legal abortion in the United States.

Recent large-scale surveys of voters and non-voters by UCLA political scientists Lorrie Frasure, Matt Barreto, Lynn Vavreck and Chris Tausanovitch took a pulse on a variety of policy issues, including abortion. These separate findings support previous research and literature that shows broad support for legal abortion.

Data from The Democracy Fund + UCLA Nationscape Project, led by Vavreck and Tausanovitch show broad support for abortion across political party lines. Nationscape was a weekly survey fielded from July 2019 through January 2021, reaching nearly 500,000 voters and non-voters representative of the U.S. adult population.

Most Democrats and Republicans—as well as independents—said they do not think abortion should be outlawed completely.

And, according to Nationscape data, most also agreed that abortion should not be limited only to instances of rape, incest or threat to the life of the mother.

Despite the two major political parties' platforms generally taking opposing positions on abortion—Democrats support, Republicans oppose—there are people aligned with the Republican party who support legal abortion and people aligned with the Democratic party who oppose abortion. But for these cross-positioned voters, it's important to note that abortion is not their biggest priority, Vavreck said.

Outlawing Abortion

According to data from a recent survey of nearly 500,000 Americans led by UCLA political scientists Lynn Vavreck and Chris Tausanovitch, most respondents from each political party (as well as independents) indicated they do not want to ban all abortions. They were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "abortion should never be permitted." Most said "disagree."
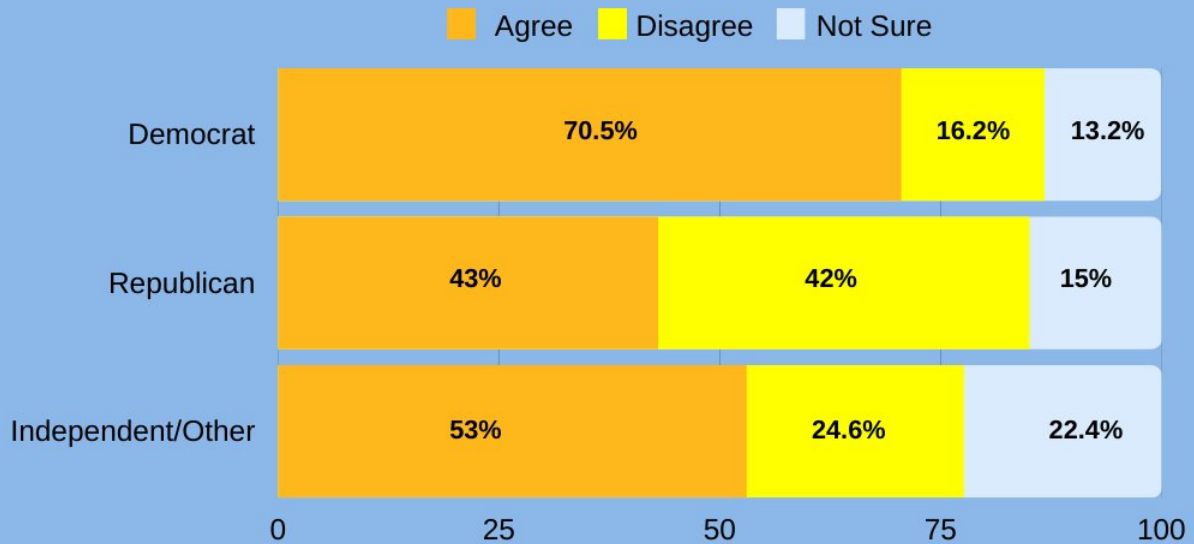
Legend: ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Not Sure

Party	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Democrat	13.6%	71.9%	14.5%
Republican	32.8%	49.4%	17.8%
Independent/Other	17.2%	59.2%	23.6%

Axis: 0   25   50   75   100

Source: The Democracy Fund + UCLA Nationscape Project, a weekly survey of voters and non voters from July 2019 through January 2021.

Credit: UCLA

Abortion Access

The Democracy Fund + UCLA Nationscape Project asked respondents if they supported abortion beyond cases of rape, incest, or threat to the life of the mother. Large numbers from all party affiliations agreed abortion should sill be allowed even outside those limited scenarios.

Legend: Agree (orange), Disagree (yellow), Not Sure (light blue)

Party	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Democrat	70.5%	16.2%	13.2%
Republican	43%	42%	15%
Independent/Other	53%	24.6%	22.4%

Axis: 0, 25, 50, 75, 100

Source: The Democracy Fund + UCLA Nationscape Project, a weekly survey of voters and non voters from July 2019 through January 2021.

Credit: UCLA

Nationscape researchers know this because of a unique approach they employed to test what matters most to the electorate, essentially forcing survey respondents to make choices based on groupings of hot-button topics. The survey included 44 different policy statements and 8 hypothetical attributes of political candidates. A set of these statements were randomized into two groups of options. Survey respondents were asked to choose which group most aligned with their priorities.

For example, a Democrat who opposes legal abortion might be faced

with two groupings of policy statements—one that included limiting or ending abortion. But, if the other group of policy statements held items that were more important to that person, like not deporting undocumented immigrants, they would select that option. The same held true the other way for Republicans who support legal abortion. If the other bucket of topics included things they cared more about than abortion, that was their choice.

"This happens on other issues beside abortion too, and what this tells us is that these voters and potential voters are not cross-pressured within their party. They're not torn. They just have other priorities—they are cross-positioned, but not cross-pressured," Vavreck said. "These surveys demonstrate that vast majorities support keeping abortion legal but that doesn't necessarily mean that this issue is going to be pivotal to their vote choice."
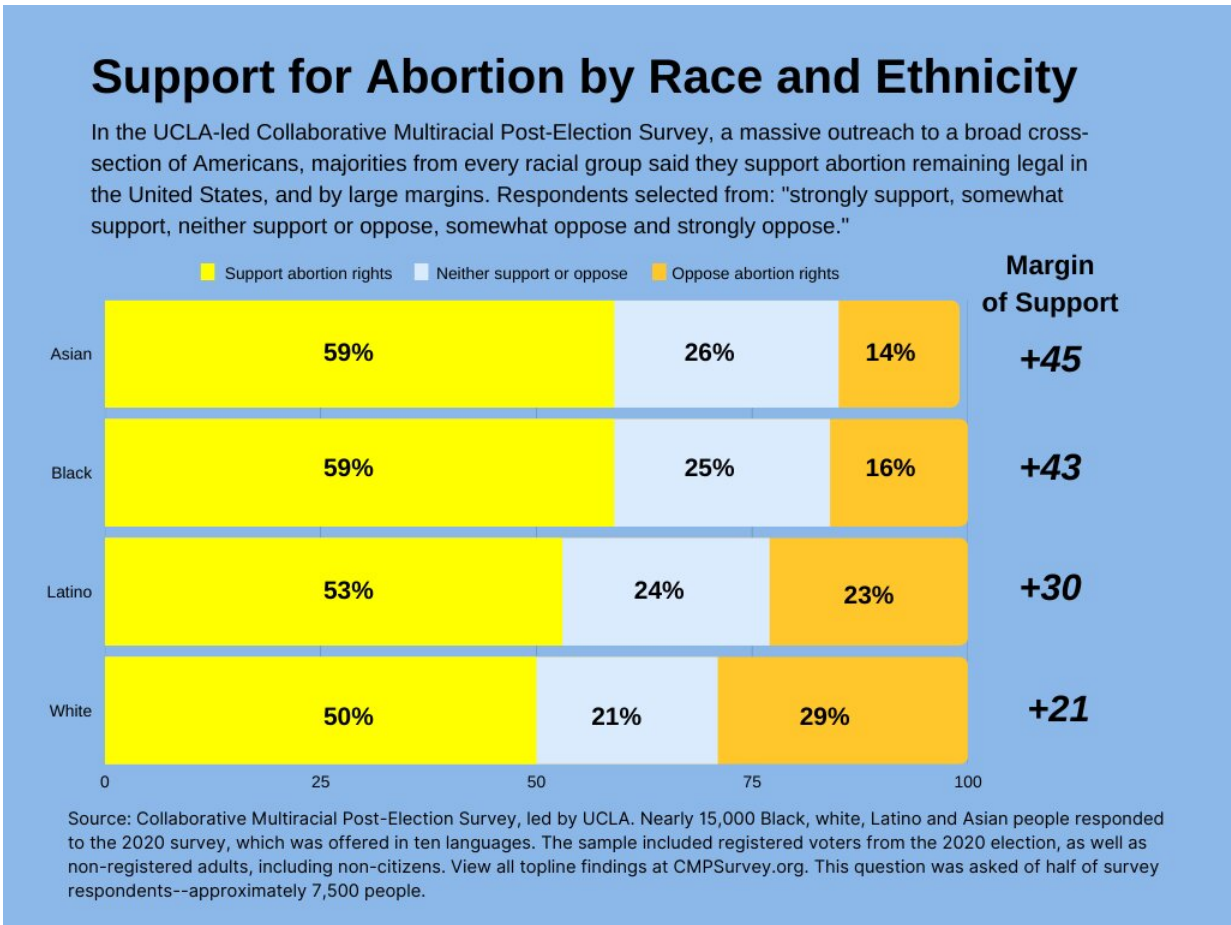
The fourth and largest installment of the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey, or CMPS, led by Frasure and Barreto, alongside Janelle Wong from University of Maryland, College Park, and Edward Vargas from Arizona State University, asked several questions about abortion, reporting results based on the race of respondents.

This survey is conducted after every presidential election, and its questions are drafted by a broad consortium of race and ethnicity politics scholars from across the United States. In 2020, the CMPS was offered in 10 languages to nearly 15,000 respondents.

CMPS data, by way of several questions, show broad support for abortion across four self-reported racial groups—Asian, Black, Latino and white.

Overall, majorities from all groups reported they either support legal abortion or are neutral on the issue, with broad margins of support across
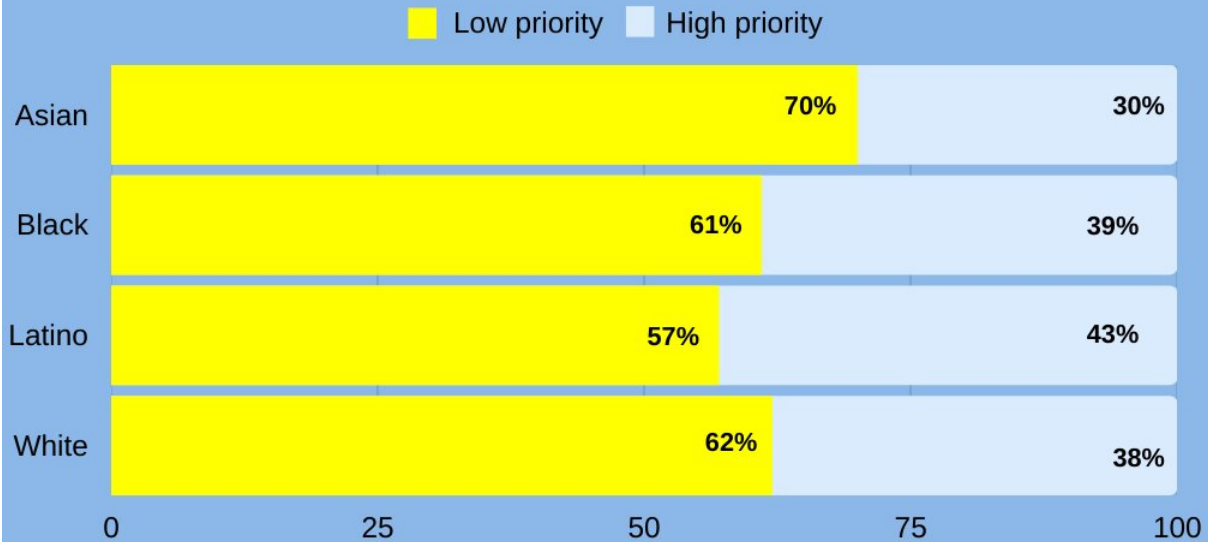
all racial and ethnic groups.

Support for Abortion by Race and Ethnicity

In the UCLA-led Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey, a massive outreach to a broad cross-section of Americans, majorities from every racial group said they support abortion remaining legal in the United States, and by large margins. Respondents selected from: "strongly support, somewhat support, neither support or oppose, somewhat oppose and strongly oppose."

Legend: Support abortion rights | Neither support or oppose | Oppose abortion rights

Margin of Support

	Support abortion rights	Neither support or oppose	Oppose abortion rights	Margin of Support
Asian	59%	26%	14%	+45
Black	59%	25%	16%	+43
Latino	53%	24%	23%	+30
White	50%	21%	29%	+21

Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey, led by UCLA. Nearly 15,000 Black, white, Latino and Asian people responded to the 2020 survey, which was offered in ten languages. The sample included registered voters from the 2020 election, as well as non-registered adults, including non-citizens. View all topline findings at CMPSurvey.org. This question was asked of half of survey respondents--approximately 7,500 people.

Credit: UCLA

Restricting access to abortion

Another question in the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election survey specifically asked respondents how important restricting access to abortion is for their particular racial communities. They selected from the options: "very low, low, high or very high." Most agreed that restricting abortion is a low priority.

Low priority **High priority**

	Low priority	High priority
Asian	70%	30%
Black	61%	39%
Latino	57%	43%
White	62%	38%

0   25   50   75   100

Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey. Nearly 15,000 Black, white, Latino and Asian people responded to the 2020 survey, which was offered in ten languages. The sample included registered voters from the 2020 election, as well as non-registered adults, including non-citizens. View all topline findings at CMPSurvey.org. This question was asked of half of survey respondents--approximately 7,500 people.

Credit: UCLA

"Although the CMPS data was collected before news of the Supreme Court leak, it nonetheless reaffirms what decades of public opinion research has found —across every racial and ethnic group, Americans support safe and legal access to abortion," said Barreto, who added that there are very low rates of opposition to abortion rights for women.

"The CMPS study makes clear that among Black, Latino, Asian and White Americans alike, there remains strong support for maintaining the protections of Roe v. Wade," Barreto said.

When asked if limiting abortion was a specific priority for their racial community, most respondents said that it was a low priority.

   More information: [Nationscape data](#)

[Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey](#)

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