

# WORLDPUBLICOPINION.ORG

## **World Publics Reject Criminal Penalties for Abortion**

### **Public at Odds With Their Country's Laws in Half of Countries Polled**

[WorldPublicOpinion.org](http://WorldPublicOpinion.org) finds that in 17 out of 18 nations polled around the world, majorities reject using criminal penalties, such as fines and imprisonment, as a means to prevent abortion.

Nations differ on whether the government should make any effort to discourage abortion. In nine nations majorities believe their government should simply leave these matters to individuals.

Seven nations favor government efforts to discourage abortions, but in only one—Indonesia—does a majority endorse their government using criminal penalties. The other six that favor government efforts are divided between minorities who favor criminal penalties and who favor only non-punitive government efforts to discourage abortion, such as education, counseling and adoption services.

In seven nations the public is at odds with their country's laws. Contrary to their public's preferences, there are criminal penalties for abortion in Egypt, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, the Palestinian Territories, Poland and South Korea.

On average across all 18 countries, 52 percent favor leaving the matter of abortion to the individual, while 42 percent think their government should try to discourage abortions. Those who back government efforts include 18 percent who support criminal enforcement, while 23 percent favor education, counseling, and adoption services but not criminal enforcement.

“While it does appear that many people around the world are uncomfortable with abortion, few think that the government should use punitive means to try to prevent it,” said Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org. “Clearly many governments around the world using criminal penalties to try to prevent abortions are out of step with their publics.”

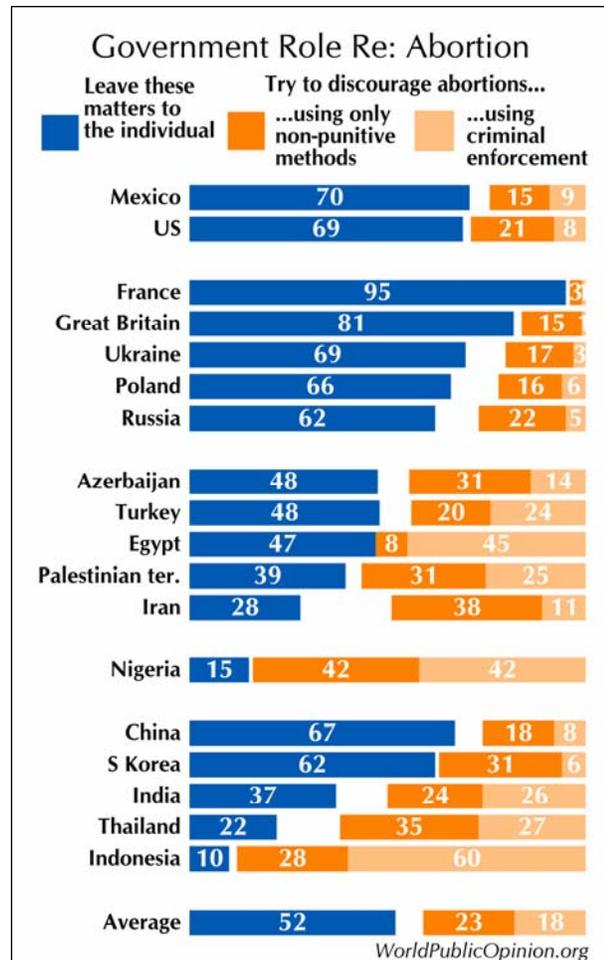
WorldPublicOpinion.org is a collaborative research project of research centers from around the world, managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.

Interviews with 18,465 respondents were conducted in 18 countries representing 59 percent of the world's population. This includes most of the largest countries in the world—China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia—as well as Mexico, Britain, France, Poland, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Egypt, Iran, Turkey, the

Palestinian Territories, Thailand and South Korea. The survey was fielded between Jan. 10 and May 6. Margins of error range from +/-2 to 4 percent.

The survey asked respondents whether they thought “the government should be involved in trying to discourage abortions” or whether it “should leave these matters to the individual.” Those who said the government should be involved in discouraging abortions were then asked if it should “use methods of criminal enforcement, such as fines and imprisonment for people who give or receive abortions” or whether it should “use such methods as education, counseling, and adoption services, but not criminal enforcement.”

In nine of the 18 nations, a majority says the government should leave these matters to the individual. This includes countries where abortion is legal: France (95%), Great Britain (81%), the United States (69%), Ukraine (70%), Russia (62%), and China (67%).



But it also includes three countries with highly restrictive laws: two predominantly Catholic countries—Poland (66%) and Mexico (70%, though laws in Mexico have been liberalizing)—as well as South Korea (62%). In all nine of these countries, fewer than ten percent favor criminal enforcement.

Majorities in seven countries favor government efforts to discourage abortions, though only one supports criminal enforcement. The largest majority is in Indonesia, where nine out of ten (89%) back government efforts, including 60 percent who favor criminal enforcement.

In the other six nations majorities favor government efforts to discourage abortion, but not criminal penalties: Nigerians (84% government efforts/42% criminal penalties), Thais (66%/ 27%), Palestinians (57%/ 25%), Iranians (55%/ 11%), Egyptians (53%/ 45%), and Indians (53%/ 26%).

Views are divided between those who favor and oppose government intervention in Azerbaijan and Turkey. Small minorities favor criminal enforcement.

For the sample as a whole there is substantial variation by religion. Christians express the most liberal views: 65 percent favor leaving the decision to individuals while just 8 percent support criminal penalties. Muslims show the highest support for government efforts to discourage abortion (59%), including 31 percent favoring criminal enforcement.

The intensity of religiosity is also related to attitudes. Support for government involvement increases from 25 percent among those who are not at all religious to 65 percent among those who are very religious. Even among those who are very religious, however, just 32 percent favor criminal penalties. Only in Indonesia does this subgroup have a majority favoring criminal enforcement, though nearly half of very religious Palestinians (48%) do.

Support for leaving the matter to the individual rises with education, from 46 percent among those with less than a high school education to 60 percent among college graduates. Income follows a similar pattern: opposition to government intervention rises from 43 percent among those with low incomes to 63 percent among those with high incomes.

Interestingly, opposition to government involvement increases with age. Among those ages 18-29, views are divided between those who oppose government involvement (46%) and those who favor it (48%), though only 21 percent back criminal penalties. Opposition rises progressively so that 61 percent of those ages 60 and above oppose government involvement.

Interestingly, though abortion is often framed as a women's rights issue, there are no significant differences between men and women.

For more information, visit [www.WorldPublicOpinion.org](http://www.WorldPublicOpinion.org).

###

# WORLDPUBLICOPINION.ORG

## World Public Opinion on Abortion

June 18, 2008

Q29-A1: Do you think the government should be involved in trying to discourage abortions or do you think the government should leave these matters to the individual?

	<b>Try to discourage abortions</b>	<b>Leave these matters to the individual</b>	<b>DK / NS</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	26	70	4
<b>US</b>	29	69	2
<b>France</b>	4	95	1
<b>Great Britain</b>	17	81	2
<b>Poland</b>	25	66	9
<b>Russia</b>	29	62	9
<b>Ukraine</b>	21	70	9
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	46	48	6
<b>Egypt</b>	53	47	
<b>Iran</b>	55	28	17
<b>Palestinian ter.</b>	57	39	4
<b>Turkey</b>	46	48	7
<b>Nigeria</b>	84	15	1
<b>China</b>	26	67	7
<b>India</b>	53	37	10
<b>Indonesia</b>	89	10	1
<b>S Korea</b>	37	62	1
<b>Thailand</b>	66	22	12
<b>Average</b>	42	52	6

[Ask if “Try to discourage abortions (01)” in Q29-A1]:

Q29a-A1a: To try to discourage abortions, do you think the government should:

	<b>A. Use methods of criminal enforcement, such as fines and imprisonment for people who give or receive abortions</b>	<b>B. Use such methods as education, counseling, and adoption services, but not criminal enforcement</b>	<b>Leave these matters to the individual (Q29)</b>	<b>DK / NS (Q29+ Q29a)</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	9	15	70	5
<b>US</b>	8	21	69	2
<b>France</b>	1	3	95	1
<b>Great Britain</b>	1	15	81	2
<b>Poland</b>	6	16	66	12
<b>Russia</b>	5	22	62	11
<b>Ukraine</b>	3	17	69	10
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	14	31	48	8
<b>Egypt</b>	45	8	47	0
<b>Iran</b>	11	38	28	23
<b>Palestinian ter.*</b>	25	31	39	4
<b>Turkey</b>	24	20	48	8
<b>Nigeria</b>	42	42	15	1
<b>China</b>	8	18	67	7
<b>India</b>	26	24	37	13
<b>Indonesia</b>	60	28	10	2
<b>S Korea</b>	6	31	62	1
<b>Thailand</b>	27	35	22	16
<b>Average</b>	18	23	52	7

\* \* In the Palestinian Territories, not all respondents received the follow-up question and were coded as DKs.

# WORLDPUBLICOPINION.ORG

## RESEARCH PARTNERS

Country	Research Center	Contact
Azerbaijan	International Center for Social Research	Dr. Tair Faradov <a href="mailto:tfaradov@yahoo.com">tfaradov@yahoo.com</a> (+99 412) 492 27 34/672 22 49
China	<a href="http://WorldPublicOpinion.org">WorldPublicOpinion.org</a>	Dr. Stephen Weber <a href="mailto:sweber@pipa.org">sweber@pipa.org</a> +1 202 232 7500
Egypt	Attitude Market Research	Mr. Mohamed Al Gendy <a href="mailto:mgendy@attitude-eg.com">mgendy@attitude-eg.com</a> +202 22711262
France	<a href="http://Efficience3">Efficience 3</a>	Ms. Laetitia Larreguy <a href="mailto:laetitia.l@efficience3.com">laetitia.l@efficience3.com</a> +33 3 26 79 75 82
Great Britain	<a href="http://ChathamHouse">Chatham House</a> ( <a href="http://RoyalInstituteofInternationalAffairs">Royal Institute of International Affairs</a> ) / <a href="http://GlobeScan">GlobeScan</a>	Dr. Robin Niblett <a href="mailto:rniblett@chathamhouse.org.uk">rniblett@chathamhouse.org.uk</a> +44 (0)20 7314 3667 Mr. Lloyd Hetherington <a href="mailto:lloyd.hetherington@globescan.com">lloyd.hetherington@globescan.com</a> +1 416 962 0707
India	<a href="http://TeamCVoter">Team CVoter</a>	Mr. Yashwant Deshmukh <a href="mailto:yashwant@teamcvoter.com">yashwant@teamcvoter.com</a> 91 120 4247135
Indonesia	<a href="http://Synovate">Synovate</a>	Ms. Eva Yusuf <a href="mailto:Eva.Yusuf@synovate.com">Eva.Yusuf@synovate.com</a> (+62-21) 2525 608
Iran	<a href="http://WorldPublicOpinion.org">WorldPublicOpinion.org</a>	Dr. Stephen Weber <a href="mailto:sweber@pipa.org">sweber@pipa.org</a> +1 202 232 7500
Mexico	<a href="http://Reforma">Reforma</a>	Dr. Alejandro Moreno <a href="mailto:alejandro.moreno@reforma.com">alejandro.moreno@reforma.com</a> +52 56 28 72 35
Nigeria	Market Trends Research International	Mr. Michael Umogun <a href="mailto:m.umogun@research-intng.com">m.umogun@research-intng.com</a> + 234-1 791 79 87
Palestinian territories	<a href="http://PalestinianCenterforPublicOpinion">Palestinian Center for Public Opinion</a>	Dr. Nabil Kukali <a href="mailto:kukali@p-ol.com">kukali@p-ol.com</a> (+972-2) 2774846
Poland	<a href="http://CBOS">CBOS</a>	Dr. Michal Wenzel <a href="mailto:m.wenzel@cbos.pl">m.wenzel@cbos.pl</a> (+0-22) 693 47 25 / 693 46 93

Russia	<a href="#">Levada Center</a>	Ms. Ludmila Khakhulina <a href="mailto:lkhahul@levada.ru">lkhahul@levada.ru</a> (+7 095) 229-55-44
South Korea	<a href="#">East Asia Institute</a>	Dr. Han Wool Jeong <a href="mailto:hwjeong@eai.or.kr">hwjeong@eai.or.kr</a> +82 02-2277-1683
Thailand	<a href="#">ABAC Poll Research Center,</a> <a href="#">Assumption University</a>	Dr. Noppadon Kannika <a href="mailto:noppadonknn@au.edu">noppadonknn@au.edu</a> +66-2-719-1550
Turkey	<a href="#">ARI Foundation</a> / <a href="#">Infakto Research Workshop</a>	Mr. Yurter Ozcan <a href="mailto:Yurter@arifoundation.org">Yurter@arifoundation.org</a> +1 (804) 868 0123 Dr. Emre Erdogan <a href="mailto:emre.erdogan@infakto.com.tr">emre.erdogan@infakto.com.tr</a> +90 212 231 07 08
Ukraine	<a href="#">Kiev International Institute of Sociology</a>	Dr. Vladimir Illich Paniotto <a href="mailto:paniotto@kmis.kiev.ua">paniotto@kmis.kiev.ua</a> (+38) 044 537-3376 / (+38) 044 501-7403
United States	<a href="#">Program on International Policy Attitudes</a> / <a href="#">Knowledge Networks</a>	Dr. Stephen Weber <a href="mailto:sweber@pipa.org">sweber@pipa.org</a> +1-202-232-7500 Dr. Michael Dennis <a href="mailto:mdennis@knowledgenetworks.com">mdennis@knowledgenetworks.com</a> +1-650-289-2160

## METHODOLOGY

<b>Country</b>	<b>Sample Size (unweighted)</b>	<b>MoE (%)</b>	<b>Field dates</b>	<b>Survey methodology</b>	<b>Type of sample</b>
Azerbaijan	602	4.1	Jan 13 – Feb 5, 2008	Face-to-face	National
China	1000	3.2	Jan 10-25, 2008	Telephone	Urban <sup>1</sup>
Egypt	600	4.1	Jan 17-27, 2008	Face-to-face	Urban <sup>2</sup>
France	600	4.1	Feb 5-11, 2008	Telephone	National
Great Britain	800	3.5	Jan 29 – Feb 19, 2008	Telephone	National
India	1023	3.2	February 25-29, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>3</sup>
Indonesia	811	3.5	Jan 19-29, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>4</sup>
Iran	710	3.8	Jan 13 – Feb 9, 2008	Face-to-face	National
Mexico	850	3.4	Jan 25-27, 2008	Telephone	National <sup>5</sup>
Nigeria	1000	3.2	February 7-18, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>6</sup>
Palestinian territories	626	4.0	February 10-23, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>7</sup>
Poland	870	3.4	Nov 29 – Dec 4, 2007	Face-to-face	National
Russia	1600	3.5	Jan 18-22, 2008	Face-to-Face	National <sup>8</sup>
South Korea	600	4.1	Feb 11-12, 2008	Telephone	National
Thailand	2699	1.9	Apr 21 – May 6, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>9</sup>
Turkey	719	3.7	Jan 12-24, 2008	Face-to-face	National
Ukraine	2046	3.1	Feb 8-18, 2008	Face-to-face	National <sup>10</sup>
United States	1309	3.3	Jan 18-27, 2008	Internet	National <sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In China, the survey was a national probability sample of urban telephone households across China. A stratified PPS sample design was developed to sample 20 cities; urban households represent approximately 45 percent of the Chinese population.

<sup>2</sup> In Egypt, the survey was executed in the urban areas of Cairo, Alexandria, Giza, and Subra. These four urbanized areas represent 75 percent of Egypt's urban population, which is 42 percent of the national population.

<sup>3</sup> In India, a face-to-face survey was conducted in urban and rural areas in 14 of the largest Indian states; these states comprise 77 percent of India's population. The sample is 60 percent urban, India's population is approximately 30 percent urban.

<sup>4</sup> In Indonesia, a national probability sample was conducted in both urban and rural areas and covering approximately 87 percent of Indonesia's population.

<sup>5</sup> In Mexico, a random telephone sample of adults who had landline telephones was conducted in all 31 states and the Federal District. Telephone penetration in Mexico is 55 percent.

<sup>6</sup> In Nigeria, the sample was developed by selecting six states, one per geographic region, based upon their size and representativeness. Within each state, sampling points were selected by means of a multi-stage random sample which disproportionately sampled urban areas. The final sample is 75 percent urban; Nigeria is approximately 50 percent urban.

<sup>7</sup> In the Palestinian Territories, a face-to-face national probability survey was conducted among the population of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

<sup>8</sup> In Russia, all items were half sampled; each item was answered by 800 respondents.

<sup>9</sup> In Thailand, the survey was conducted in 10 provinces of the country including Bangkok, Samutprakarn, Chantaburi, Ratchaburi, Chiang Mai, Kampanpet, Kornkean, Sakonnakorn, Chumporn, and Songkla.

<sup>10</sup> In the Ukraine, all items were half-sampled; each item was answered by at least 1,020 respondents.

<sup>11</sup> In the United States, the poll was an online survey drawn from a nationally representative sample of the Knowledge Networks online panel. This panel is probabilistically-based, selected from the population of US telephone households and subsequently provided with an Internet connection if needed. Items in the US survey were split sampled so that each item was answered by at least 940 respondents.

# WORLDPUBLICOPINION.ORG

## **World Publics Reject Criminal Penalties for Abortion**

### **Public at Odds With Their Country's Laws in Half of Countries Polled**

**For Release: 21:01 GMT Wednesday, June 18th**

**Contact: Steven Kull 202-232-7500**

College Park, MD—WorldPublicOpinion.org finds that in 17 out of 18 nations polled around the world, majorities reject using criminal penalties, such as fines and imprisonment, as a means to prevent abortion.

Nations differ on whether the government should make any effort to discourage abortion. In nine nations majorities believe their government should simply leave these matters to individuals.

Seven nations favor government efforts to discourage abortions, but in only one—Indonesia—does a majority endorse their government using criminal penalties. The other six that favor government efforts are divided between minorities who favor criminal penalties and who favor only non-punitive government efforts to discourage abortion, such as education, counseling and adoption services.

In seven nations the public is at odds with their country's laws. Contrary to their public's preferences, there are criminal penalties for abortion in Egypt, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, the Palestinian Territories, Poland and South Korea.

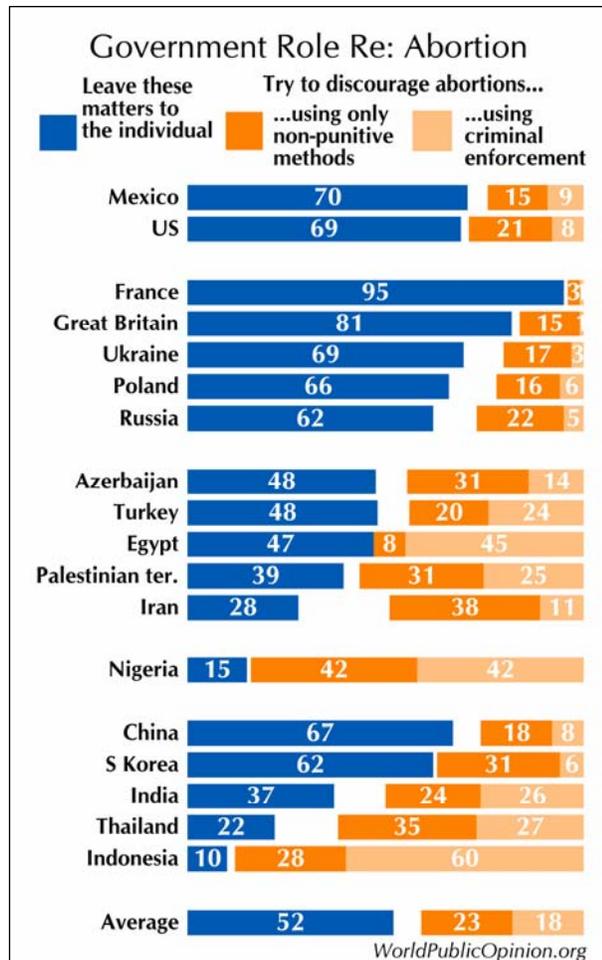
On average across all 18 countries, 52 percent favor leaving the matter of abortion to the individual, while 42 percent think their government should try to discourage abortions. Those who back government efforts include 18 percent who support criminal enforcement, while 23 percent favor education, counseling, and adoption services but not criminal enforcement.

“While it does appear that many people around the world are uncomfortable with abortion, few think that the government should use punitive means to try to prevent it,” said Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org. “Clearly many governments around the world using criminal penalties to try to prevent abortions are out of step with their publics.”

WorldPublicOpinion.org is a collaborative research project of research centers from around the world, managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.

Interviews with 18,465 respondents were conducted in 18 countries representing 59 percent of the world’s population. This includes most of the largest countries in the world—China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia—as well as Mexico, Britain, France, Poland, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Egypt, Iran, Turkey, the Palestinian Territories, Thailand and South Korea. The survey was fielded between Jan. 10 and May 6. Margins of error range from +/-2 to 4 percent. More details can be found at [www.WorldPublicOpinion.org](http://www.WorldPublicOpinion.org).

The survey asked respondents whether they thought “the government should be involved in trying to discourage abortions” or whether it “should leave these matters to the individual.” Those who said the government should be involved in discouraging abortions were then asked if it should “use methods of criminal enforcement, such as fines and imprisonment for people who give or receive abortions” or whether it should “use such methods as education, counseling, and adoption services, but not criminal enforcement.”



In nine of the 18 nations, a majority says the government should leave these matters to the individual. This includes countries where abortion is legal: France (95%), Great Britain (81%), the United States (69%), Ukraine (70%), Russia (62%), and China (67%).

But it also includes three countries with highly restrictive laws: two predominantly Catholic countries—Poland (66%) and Mexico (70%, though laws in Mexico have been liberalizing)—as well as South Korea (62%). In all nine of these countries, fewer than ten percent favor criminal enforcement.

Majorities in seven countries favor government efforts to discourage abortions, though only one supports criminal enforcement. The largest majority is in Indonesia, where nine out of ten (89%) back government efforts, including 60 percent who favor criminal enforcement.

In the other six nations majorities favor government efforts to discourage abortion, but not criminal penalties: Nigerians (84% government efforts/42% criminal penalties),

Thais (66%/ 27%), Palestinians (57%/ 25%), Iranians (55%/ 11%), Egyptians (53%/ 45%), and Indians (53%/ 26%).

Views are divided between those who favor and oppose government intervention in Azerbaijan and Turkey. Small minorities favor criminal enforcement.

For the sample as a whole there is substantial variation by religion. Christians express the most liberal views: 65 percent favor leaving the decision to individuals while just 8 percent support criminal penalties. Muslims show the highest support for government efforts to discourage abortion (59%), including 31 percent favoring criminal enforcement.

The intensity of religiosity is also related to attitudes. Support for government involvement increases from 25 percent among those who are not at all religious to 65 percent among those who are very religious. Even among those who are very religious, however, just 32 percent favor criminal penalties. Only in Indonesia does this subgroup have a majority favoring criminal enforcement, though nearly half of very religious Palestinians (48%) do.

Interestingly, though abortion is often framed as a women's rights issue, there are no significant differences between men and women.

###