

The American Public Agrees: Access to Birth Control Is a Woman's Decision, Not Her Boss's

Since 2010, numerous public and private polls have shown broad support for the birth control benefit, under the Affordable Care Act, which allows women to receive access to birth control without additional out-of-pocket copays.

The data is clear: Americans believe women should have affordable access to prescription birth control, a key preventive health care measure for millions of American women.

Key Points:

General Public

Most Americans support the birth control benefit, and believe that this is an issue of women's health care rather than of employers' religious liberty. A majority believes that birth control should still be covered by for-profit companies, despite employers' religious objections.

- Most Americans believe that employers should be required to provide their employees with health care plans that cover contraception at no additional out-of-pocket cost, with **61 percent saying this about publicly held corporations and 57 percent about privately owned**. [Public Religion Research Institute, June 2014]
- A majority of Americans continue to **support the requirement for private health plans to cover prescription birth control** under the Affordable Care Act by a nearly **2-to-1 margin**. [Kaiser Family Foundation, April 2014]
- When asked whether they support mandated coverage of birth control in all health plans, **69 percent were in support**. [*JAMA*, April 2014]
- Of the general public, **a majority (55 percent) believes for-profit companies should still be required "to cover birth control even if it violates their owners' personal religious beliefs."** [Kaiser Family Foundation, April 2014]
- A June 2012 poll showed **nearly three in four voters (73 percent) agree** that we should do everything we can to make sure that people who want to use prescription birth control have affordable access to it and that cost is not an obstacle. [Hart Research, June 2012]
- When it comes to the question of employers providing full coverage for prescription birth control, **by a margin of 20 percent, American voters view this issue more as a matter of women's health care** (56 percent) than a matter of employers' "religious liberty" (36 percent). [Hart Research, June 2012]

Women

The vast majority (93 percent) of women voters across party lines support the ACA preventive health benefit, with many believing that corporations should not receive exemptions on religious grounds.

- **“More than...68 percent [of] women voters say that corporations should not be able to exempt themselves** from the requirement of covering prescription birth control in their health plans if they object to contraception on religious grounds.” [Hart Research, March 2014]
- **93 percent of women voters are in favor of the ACA “requirement that health plans cover preventive health services with no additional copays,”** including 96 percent of Democrats, 95 percent of Independents, and 87 percent of Republicans. **81 percent of women voters believe birth control should be covered with no additional copay as preventive health care.** [Hart Research, March 2014]
- **85 percent of young women** — a strong majority — believe prescription birth control approved by the FDA, such as the pill, IUDs, the patch, and the ring, should be included in fully covered preventive health care services. [Hart Research, 2010]

Catholics

The majority of Catholics support the birth control benefit, with Catholic women showing strong support in particular.

- A 56 percent majority of voters support the decision requiring health plans to cover prescription birth control with no additional out-of-pocket fees, **including 53 percent of Catholics.** [Public Policy Polling, February 2012]
- A 2010 poll showed that **Catholic women voters are more likely to support health plan coverage for birth control** — 77 percent versus 71 percent for voters at large. [Hart Research, 2010]
- “A majority of Catholics believe that **publicly-held corporations (56 percent), privately-owned corporations (54 percent), and privately-owned small businesses (53 percent)** should be required to provide their employees with health insurance that includes contraception.” [Public Religion Research Institute, June 2014]

Young Adults

The vast majority of millennials support the birth control benefit, with millennials of color in particular believing birth control is basic health care and should be available and affordable.

- **71 percent of persons aged 18-29 support the ACA’s contraceptive coverage requirement, while 64 percent of persons aged 18-29 believe for-profit companies should be required to cover birth control** despite the religious beliefs of company owners. [Kaiser Family Foundation, April 2014]
- **57 percent of persons aged 18-29 believe “privately-owned corporations should be required to provide their employees with health care plans that cover contraception.”** [Public Religion Research Institute, June 2014]
- **More than eight in ten (86 percent) millennials of color believe birth control is part of basic health care and should be covered by insurance,** and half (53 percent) holds this view strongly. [Belden Russonello Strategists LLC, 2012]
- **Large majorities of young adults of color (84 percent) also believe that contraception needs to be available and affordable to help young people stay healthy.** Those most likely to hold this view are African-American young adults (91 percent), especially African-American women (95 percent), and single parents (91 percent). [Belden Russonello Strategists LLC, 2012]

Independents/Republicans

The majority of Independents and Republicans agree that corporations shouldn’t be allowed exemptions from the birth control benefit on religious grounds, with female Independent and Republican voters particularly showing strong support for the benefit.

- **72 percent of Independents and 50 percent of Republicans polled did not feel that corporations should be allowed to “exempt themselves** from the requirement of covering prescription birth control in their health plans if they object to birth control on religious grounds.” [Hart Research, March 2014]
- **Female Independent (95 percent) and Republican (87 percent) voters in particular “favor the requirement that health care plans cover preventive health services with no additional copays,”** [Hart Research, March 2014], and **83 percent of female Independent voters and 63 percent of female Republican voters agree** that “prescription birth control should be covered as a preventive health service with no additional copay.” [Hart Research, March 2014]
- When it comes to “health care plans that include contraception,” a **majority of Independents (56 percent) believe privately owned corporations “should be required to provide** [them.]” [Public Religion Research Institute, June 2014]
- **78 percent of Independents agree** that we “we should do everything we can to make sure that people who want to use prescription birth control have affordable access to it, and **that cost is not an obstacle** that prevents someone from using the most effective form of birth control.” [Hart Research, June 2012]

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