



FACTSHEET #1

LATINAS/OS AND THE “A WORD”: What Latinas/os really think about abortion

California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) is aware that for our communities, abortion is a complex issue that similar to other sexuality topics is considered taboo and often does not get discussed. The vast majority of public opinion surveys concerning abortion are relegated to a polarizing debate around rights and “choice.” Based on this limited and highly politicized framework, Latinas/os are erroneously perceived as an anti-abortion group, whose beliefs are driven by perceived homogenous values. In addition, this framework falsely assumes that all Latinas/os are aware that abortion is legal in the United States and/or that they identify with traditional “choice” language, which is very specific to the U.S. political context.

CLRJ commissioned Lake Research Partners to assess the attitudes and beliefs of California Latina/o adults around abortion and other reproductive justice issues through a statewide public opinion survey. This groundbreaking poll framed questions from a value-based point of reference, with the understanding that the Latina/o community is very diverse and that depending on circumstance and experience, as a community we hold complex and nuanced views on terminating a pregnancy. In this fact sheet, CLRJ presents findings from its poll, in addition to other research data that reflects a broader spectrum of Latinas’/os’ opinions around abortion. This research provides an opportunity to initiate conversations about abortion with information from our own communities, which has proved helpful to CLRJ in discussing rights and supporting reproductive freedom regardless of personal and/or religious beliefs.

Fact: Latinas/os believe that abortion should be an option for women.

- Nearly seven in ten respondents agree that while they may not choose an abortion for themselves or their partners, they would **protect that right** and **not take the decision away** from women.
- An unprecedented national poll of Latina/o voters found that 74% of the participants agree that a woman has a right to make her own personal, private decisions about abortion **without politicians interfering**.¹
- 61% of Latina/o voters agree that the amount of money a woman has or does not have **should not determine whether she could have an abortion when she needs one**.²

Fact: Latinas/os support and respect women’s reproductive freedom.

- Nearly eight in ten respondents agree that women need medically accurate information about abortion, and that it **should not be coercive, shaming nor should it try to change her mind**.

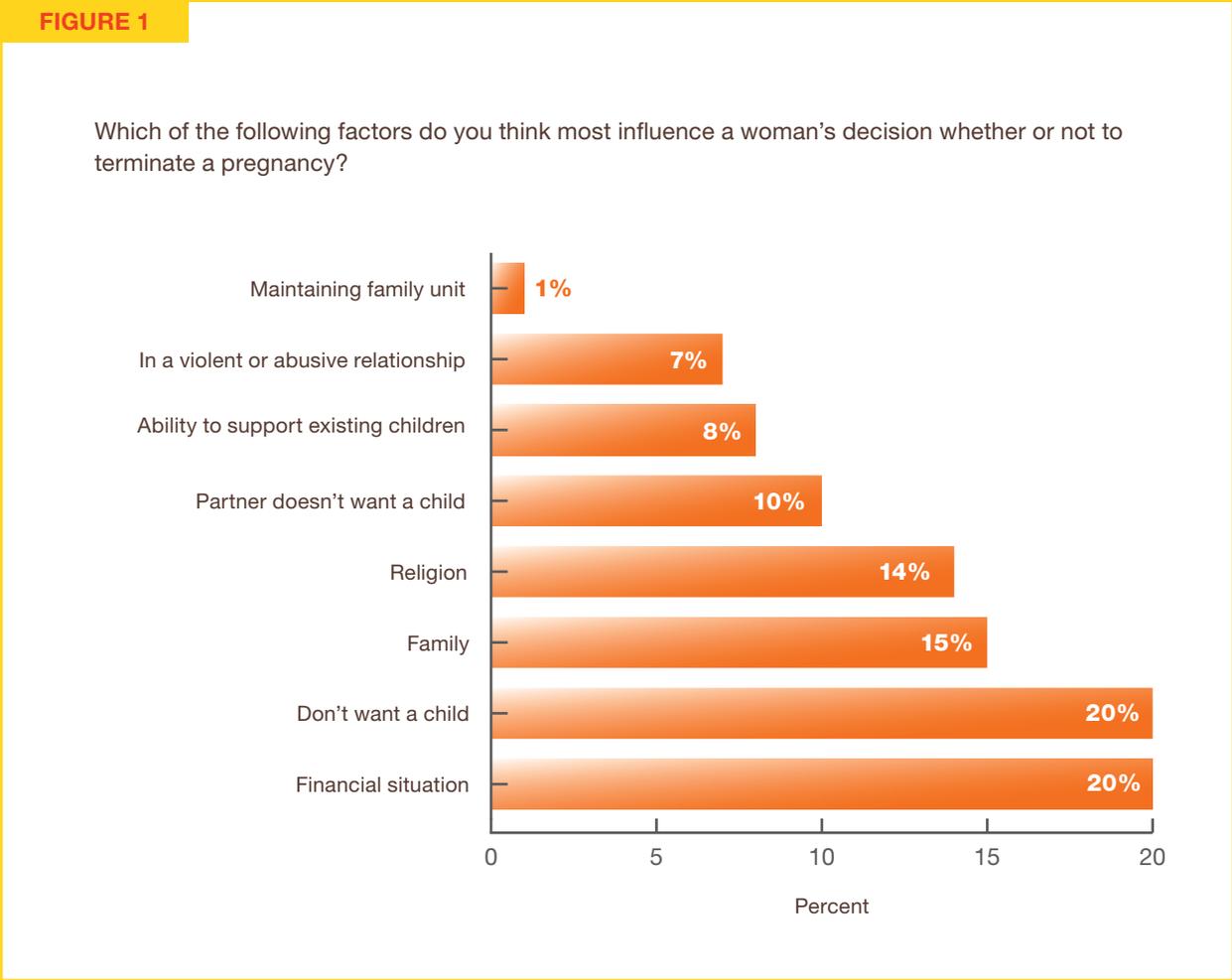
1. National Polling of 600 Latino Voters on Abortion Attitudes. (“*Latino Voters*”). Lake Research Partners, Reproductive Health Technologies Project, October 2011. Available at: http://rhtp.org/documents/RHTP_Memo_fromLake_final_000.pdf

2. *Latino Voters*

- More than eight in ten participants agree that every woman should have a **right to decide for herself the number and spacing of her children**.
- In a national survey on Latinas/os, 73% of respondents say they would **give support to a close friend or family member who had an abortion**. Comparably, of those surveyed in California, 70% said the same.³

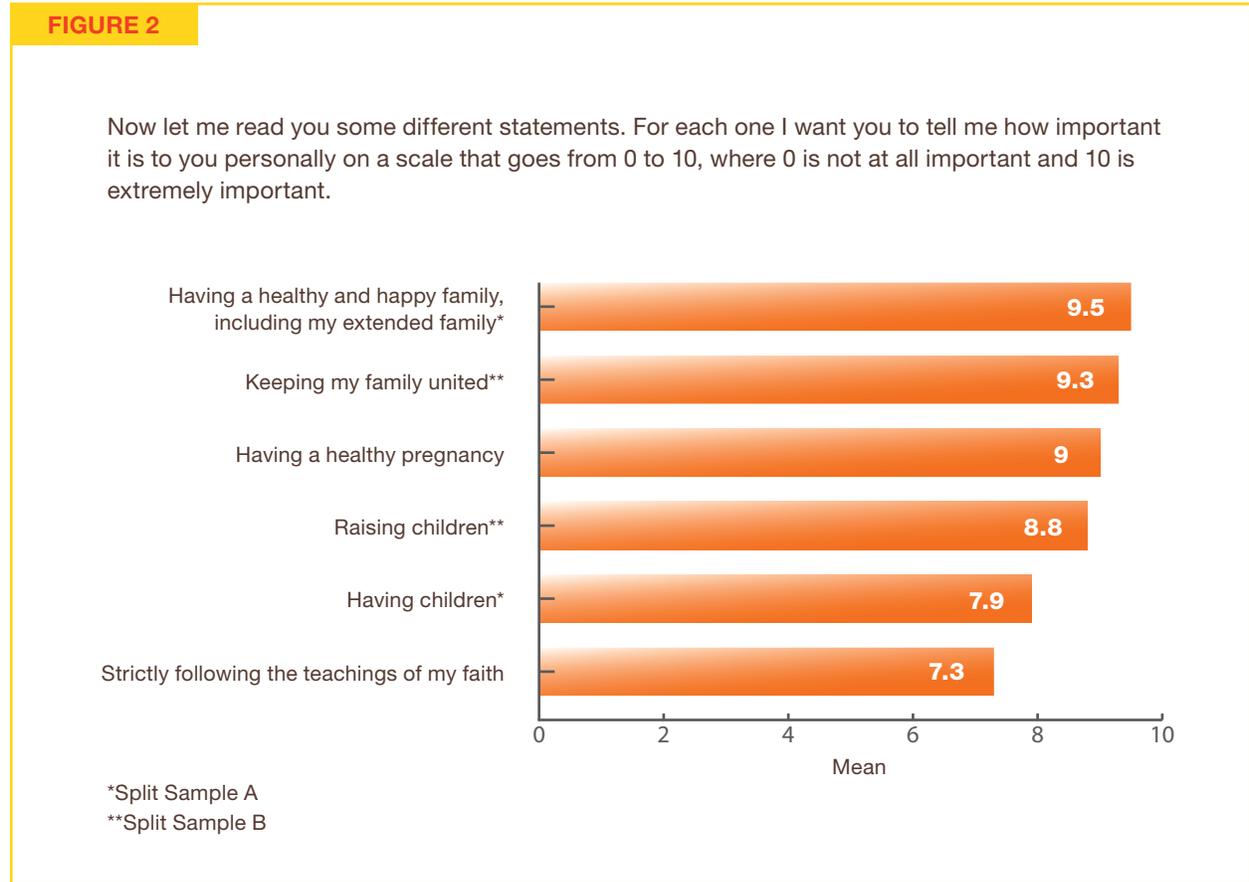
Fact: Religion plays a less prominent role than other factors in Latinas/os decision-making.

- Respondents identify a person’s financial situation and not wanting a child as factors having **the most influence** on a woman’s decision to terminate a pregnancy. (Figure 1)



3. National Survey of 1015 Latinos on Abortion. (“*Latinos on Abortion*”). Lake Research Partners, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, Reproductive Health Technologies Project, September 2010.

- Respondents state that strictly following the teaching of one’s religious faith is **far less important than other priorities**. (Figure 2)
- 68% of Latina/o voters agree that “even though the church says abortion is wrong, **I believe it should remain legal**.”⁴



Fact: Many Latinas/os are unaware that abortion services are legal and safe in the United States.

- In a national survey, 56% of respondents say abortion is legal, 14% say abortion is not legal and 29% are not sure. Comparably, of those surveyed in California, 55% say abortion is legal, 13% say abortion is not legal and 29% are not sure.⁵
- In a national survey, 29% of the participants say abortion clinics are safe, **37% say abortion clinics are unsafe and 32% are unsure**. Comparably, of those surveyed in California, 25% say abortion clinics are safe, 38% say abortion clinics are unsafe and 34% are unsure.⁶

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4. *Latino Voters*
5. *Latinos on Abortion*
6. *Latinos on Abortion*

CONCLUSIONS

Based on these findings, it is clear that Latinas/os overwhelmingly view abortion as an essential component of women's health and thus, are **pro-access** to the comprehensive reproductive health care services and information needed to ensure that all women can make the best decisions for themselves and their families. While abortion is legal and is one of the safest medical procedures for women in the United States,⁷ the reality for many Latinas and other women of color, low-income women, young women and immigrant women is that they face a number of barriers, which, as these findings indicate, include a lack of knowledge about the safety and availability of abortion. It is therefore imperative that the discourse around abortion be framed from a reproductive justice perspective that makes it more relevant for Latinas/os.

The Hyde Amendment:

In 1976, Congress passed the Hyde Amendment, which severely restricts the use of federal funds for abortion services to only cases of rape, incest and if carrying the pregnancy to term jeopardizes the woman's life. California is one of a handful of states that uses state funds to cover abortion services for low-income women beyond the Hyde Amendment's restrictions. However, there are many women in California who rely on federally funded medical programs and are denied abortion services as a result of Hyde, including: military personnel and their dependents, disabled women on Medicare, Native American women, women in federal prisons, Peace Corps volunteers, women who are federal employees and others who are dependent on federally-funded health insurance.

Data Source: Statewide survey reached a total of 890 California Latina/o adults. Of those surveyed, 475 were reached by phone from November 30 through December 3, 2009 and 415 were reached online from December 1 through December 9, 2009. The margin of error for the total survey is +/- 3.5%.

7. Less than 1% of all U.S. abortion patients experience a major complication and the risk of death associated with abortion is 10 times lower than that associated with childbirth. Guttmacher Institute, *Are you IN THE KNOW?* Available at: www.guttmacher.org/in-the-know