

# Young Republicans, Birth Control, and Public Policy

A research report prepared on behalf of The National  
Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

BY KRISTEN SOLTIS ANDERSON, ECHELON INSIGHTS | MARCH 2015

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## About the Author

Kristen Soltis Anderson is a co-founder of Echelon Insights, an opinion research, data analytics, and digital intelligence agency. For nearly a decade, Anderson has studied public opinion and voter attitudes with a particular focus on the views of young voters. Named to *TIME Magazine's* "30 Under 30 Changing the World" list in 2013, Anderson is one of the leading Republican researchers on voter attitudes about policy. She is also a columnist for *The Daily Beast* and has been a fellow at Harvard University's Institute of Politics.

Anderson previously served as Vice President of The Winston Group, a Republican polling firm. Her forthcoming book on young voter attitudes and the future of politics is due to be published by Broadside Books (an imprint of HarperCollins) in the summer of 2015.

## About The National Campaign

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy especially among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors. We are non-ideological and have worked hard to reduce the conflict that too often has impeded action on this issue. We listen carefully to young people themselves and allow their unique viewpoints to inform our work. We rely extensively on high-quality research to inform everything we do. For more information, visit us online at [www.TheNationalCampaign.org](http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org).

## Funding Information

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# A Note from The National Campaign

One of the hallmarks of The National Campaign is to listen to, learn from, and work with people and organizations across the political and ideological spectrum in pursuit of our mission to reduce teen and unplanned pregnancy. One key component of our work has been to commission and publish research about what teens and adults think about sex, pregnancy, birth control, and related issues—something that is especially important in a diverse and complex country.

Past research has shown that almost all women have used contraception at some point in their lives and there is broad and deep support for birth control among Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Despite this public support and the well-documented benefits of birth control, contraception has increasingly become either a target or a taboo subject in the public discourse, and policies intended to improve contraceptive access and affordability frequently meet with resistance.

Against this backdrop, we thought it would be valuable to better understand how a key group—young Republicans—feels about contraception overall, what role it plays in their lives, and specific public policies related to birth control. To delve deeper into these topics, we commissioned Kristen Soltis Anderson, a pollster with her finger on the pulse of young Republicans, to conduct focus groups with young Republican women and a nationally representative online survey of young Republican men and women.

Some of the results are surprising and some are not. There was strong support for contraception overall and for some policies; there were mixed or negative views about others. Some results were inconsistent or left us wanting to know more. Furthermore, it is evident that young Republicans, like many young adults, harbor some myths and misinformation about contraception and related policies. We believe this report sheds new light on the views of this important group, and that it will help to inform efforts to improve the lives of women, children, and families by reducing unplanned pregnancy.



# Introduction

Despite widespread agreement among Americans that birth control is morally acceptable, that most sexually active adults use birth control, and that almost all women who have had sex have used birth control at some point, the issue of contraception has become tangled in political controversy. Most recently, this has included debates about the Affordable Care Act and the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Hobby Lobby* case; although the controversies have also encompassed discussions of public funding for Planned Parenthood and for programs funded through Title X, which provides birth control and family planning education primarily to low-income people.

During the 2012 election, Republican candidates for political office were often faced with the “war on women” narrative and their positions on a number of policies—including those aimed at expanding contraceptive access—were used to portray some candidates as “anti-woman.” Following the 2012 election, research conducted for the College Republican National Committee noted that young women were concerned about Republicans’ perceived positions on birth control. The Republican National Committee’s *Growth and Opportunity Report* recognized the potential danger of losing female voters as a result of the “war on women” narrative and noted that Republicans needed a more “aggressive response” to this political positioning.

By the 2014 election, some Republican candidates facing the “war on women” criticism recognized the danger of being portrayed as anti-contraception. Perhaps the most prominent example was that of Cory Gardner in Colorado who ran an opinion piece in the *Denver Post* noting: “[The Pill] is safe, reliable, effective, and presents very few risks or complications for the more than 10 million women who use it,” and championed over-the-counter availability for oral contraceptives.

## **Questions remain: where do young Republicans stand on birth control? What policy ideas about contraception do they embrace or reject?**

The following research report explores these questions. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy commissioned this report, informed by a series of focus groups and a national survey of young Republicans, both men and women, age 18-34. (Readers should note that there is a full discussion of the sample methodology on page 29. The full survey questions and responses are available by request through The National Campaign.) The goal of this project is quite straightforward: A better understanding of young Republican attitudes on contraception generally and their reaction to current and potential policies that have been proposed from across the political spectrum to expand access to contraception.

# Key Findings

## **Young Republicans are positive about birth control.**

- A majority of young Republicans (57%) say they have a positive view of birth control, while only 17 percent say they have a negative view.
- Eight out of 10 young Republicans say that sexually active people who do not want children should take personal responsibility by using birth control.
- Two-thirds of young Republicans say “every adult woman should have access to affordable, effective birth control because it gives people a chance to build families on their own terms.”
- Not all forms of contraception are viewed equally; while most methods of birth control are viewed positively, emergency contraception (like Plan B) is viewed negatively by most young Republicans (44%).

## **Young Republicans think that insurance ought to cover the full range of contraceptive methods without a co-pay.**

- Young Republican women in particular recognize that birth control can address other health needs beyond pregnancy prevention, including the regulation of menstrual cycles and addressing hormone imbalances.
- Some 48 percent of young Republicans think that their insurance should cover the full range of FDA approved birth control methods without a co-pay; 33 percent disagree.
- Although young Republicans are no fans of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)—60 percent hold a negative view of the law—more support the law’s contraceptive coverage requirement (43%) than oppose it (30%). Half of young Republican women say they support keeping the requirement in place.

## **Young Republican women think birth control should be treated like other preventive health care services yet also tend to view birth control more as a personal convenience than a critical, basic health need.**

- Nearly six in 10 (59%) young Republican women say “birth control should be treated like any other preventive health care service.” Only 38 percent of young Republican men agree.
- However, fully 60 percent of young Republicans, including a majority of young Republican women, say “birth control is more of a personal convenience than a health care need for adult women.”
- Few young Republicans report knowing someone who has struggled to afford birth control, though many do report knowing someone who has experienced an unplanned pregnancy.

Though young Republicans are supportive of birth control and generally think insurance should cover the full range of contraceptive options, they also think there should be flexibility to accommodate employer objections to the ACA requirement that all contraceptive methods be covered.

- When the Supreme Court’s decision in *Hobby Lobby* is explained to respondents, a majority of young Republicans—including 55 percent of young Republican women—say they think the court was right to support Hobby Lobby’s decision to not provide insurance coverage for certain methods of birth control.
- A majority of young Republicans, including a majority who use birth control themselves, think employers should be allowed to exclude certain methods of birth control from coverage on religious grounds.

Many young Republicans lean toward making oral contraceptives available over-the-counter, but have some reservations.

- Some 45 percent of young Republicans support the idea of making oral contraceptives available over the counter, while 32 percent oppose it.
- Women were more likely than men to oppose making oral contraceptives available over-the-counter—four out of 10 women oppose the idea. In focus groups, women repeatedly noted that they felt it is important to be able to discuss contraceptive options with a doctor.

Young Republicans think that providing education on pregnancy prevention and birth control is an important priority and is key to reducing unplanned pregnancies.

- Some 62 percent of young Republicans support providing more educational programs and campaigns for young adults about all methods of birth control, including six out of 10 of conservative and 42 percent of very conservative respondents.
- Half of all young Republicans (50%) support increasing public funding for community organizations that provide contraceptive services and education.



62%

of young Republicans support providing more educational programs and campaigns for young adults about all methods of birth control.

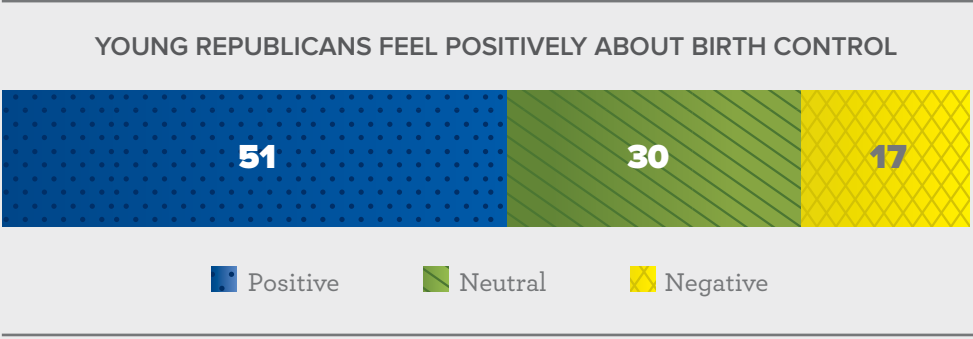
# Attitudes Toward Contraception

Young Republicans are, by and large, positive about birth control.

Most young Republicans say that they have a positive view of birth control, although there is a slight gender gap in the intensity of support. Overall, 51 percent of young Republicans say they have a positive view of birth control and just 17 percent have a negative view. Some 35 percent of young Republican women view birth control *very* positively and another 20 percent view birth control somewhat positively. Young Republican men (48%) also hold a positive view of contraception; just 20% hold a negative view.

*“...it makes me feel like I’m in charge of my body.”*  
– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

*“I’m for birth control. I think that if you’re adult enough to have sex, then you should have the option and the means available to prevent pregnancy.”*  
– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH



About three out of 10 respondents in the survey said they had a neutral attitude toward birth control; just 17 percent had a negative view. Only 17 percent of Catholic respondents and 25 percent of Evangelical Christian respondents held a negative view of birth control. Focus group respondents generally thought birth control was good, though they would occasionally express some more neutral attitudes toward it because of side effects or personal religious views.

**For those who wish to avoid pregnancy, using birth control is a matter of personal responsibility, and preventing unplanned pregnancy is an important component of self-determination.**

Young Republicans believe it is important for people to be able to control their own destiny, build their own lives, and to take personal responsibility. Birth control is part of that equation for most young Republicans.



In fact, the overwhelming majority agree that preventing unplanned pregnancy is a matter of personal responsibility. Eight out of 10 respondents in the survey, including 81 percent of evangelical respondents, agreed that “Sexually active people who do not want children take responsibility by using birth control.”

*“If you’re going to have sex then if you want to not get pregnant then you should be responsible and get birth control.*

*It’s not up to anybody else but you.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

It is therefore unsurprising that about two-thirds of respondents (including 71% of women) agree that “Every adult woman should have access to affordable, effective birth control because it gives people a chance to build families on their own terms.” Half of all respondents—including 63 percent of women—agree that access to birth control is important because it enables women to work toward educational and career goals. Preventing unplanned pregnancies helps young people have control over their lives, and this particularly resonates with young moderate Republicans. Furthermore, respondents with a higher level of education tended to be more likely to report that they or their partner are currently using a prescription form of birth control.

*“I really don’t understand why they would try to stop birth control from being accessible. I think just me myself trying to start my career it definitely has helped being on birth control because I don’t have to worry about getting pregnant and going on maternity leave, trying to figure out who’s going to watch my kids while I do go to work.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

However, this idea of personal responsibility cuts two ways. On the one hand, if an individual’s insurance does not cover the method of contraception that works best for them (including the most highly effective and expensive methods of birth control), they may have a tough time taking that personal responsibility. On the other hand, some respondents felt that if someone wanted to have sex and avoid pregnancy, they should assume the total costs of their particular method of birth control and were uncomfortable with the idea of paying for “someone else’s” birth control.

*“Because I don’t think that it’s the government’s place to say ‘Okay well then I’ll provide it to you since you want to have sex, then here you go so you don’t get pregnant.’ No, that person should not have sex then, if they can’t afford it and they don’t want to pay for it, then what’s the point of everybody else paying for them not to get it so that they can have sex?”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL



63%

of young Republican women think that access to birth control is important because it enables women to work toward educational and career goals.

## Young Republicans agree that promoting access to contraception can reduce unplanned pregnancy, and that reducing unplanned pregnancy would lead to fewer abortions.

More than half of young Republicans (59%) hold the view that access to contraception is critical to preventing unplanned pregnancy and that reducing unplanned pregnancy would reduce the number of abortions in the U.S. Some 54 percent agree that the number of unplanned pregnancies that result in abortions is a compelling reason to ensure access to contraceptives.

*“Like big picture if you look at it, it definitely reduces unwanted pregnancies and probably it reduces abortions if you look at a big picture too. And that’s good.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

Furthermore, about six out of 10 respondents say that increasing access to the full range of contraceptive options would reduce unplanned pregnancies, and that reducing unplanned pregnancies makes sense as a priority for someone who is opposed to abortion.

The focus groups confirmed that connecting the individual dots—contraception reducing unplanned pregnancies, and fewer unplanned pregnancies meaning fewer abortions—made more sense than simply asserting a direct line between supporting birth control and reducing abortion.

## Women in particular recognize that birth control addresses health care matters beyond pregnancy prevention.

Not surprisingly, both men and women overwhelmingly think that a significant number of women who use birth control do so to prevent pregnancy. However, women in particular think that there are a significant number of women who use birth control for reasons other than pregnancy prevention, such as managing health risks or to regulate their cycle. For instance, 63 percent of women say that many women use contraception to regulate their menstrual cycle, and nearly four out of 10 think a significant number of women are prescribed contraception to address hormone imbalances.

*Moderator: What do you think are the biggest misconceptions about birth control?*

*Respondent: That you have to be having sex to be on it. I think it’s good for helping people to regulate periods and there are some positives of being on birth control even if you’re not sexually active.*

–exchange during Columbus, OH focus group of young Republican women

*“Well everybody needs health care, but I feel like women have more essential needs than men do.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

## Not all forms of birth control are viewed equally; pills are viewed quite positively while emergency contraception is viewed quite negatively.

Birth control pills are widely known and viewed quite positively by young Republican men and women alike; fully 61 percent of men and 74 percent of women have a favorable view. Fifty-nine percent of Evangelical Protestants and 74 percent of mainline Protestants view birth control pills positively. Other forms of prescription contraceptives, however, are viewed somewhat less favorably.

In many cases, the lower favorability toward certain forms of contraception are driven by a lack of familiarity with various methods; for instance, roughly one-quarter of respondents did not know enough to have an opinion on IUDs, injectable contraception, implants, rings, and patches. Those who use any method of birth control, however, are more aware of and feel more favorably towards methods such as IUDs. For example, a majority of birth control users have a favorable view of IUDs, 48 percent have a favorable view of implantable contraceptives, and 46 percent have a favorable view of contraceptive patches.

In focus groups, women would occasionally swap stories of how they have tried different methods of birth control before finding the right one that worked for them, and when respondents were asked why a woman might not use prescription contraception, a majority of women cited side effects as a reason.

*“Just because one person did really well with one form or one pill, etc. doesn’t mean that you are going to. It could be a wonderful thing for one person but for another person it could cause blood clots or something like that so that is why you always have to speak with your health care professional.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

Emergency contraception, however, is viewed quite negatively. Over half of the respondents (53%) had either a somewhat negative or very negative opinion. Women in particular were very negative toward emergency contraception. Both birth control users and non-users share negative views of emergency contraceptives; half of young Republican birth control users (both men and women) and 58 percent of non-users hold an unfavorable view. Concerns tend to focus on fears that emergency contraceptives would be used as a substitute for other preventative steps.

*“Well it’s not a form of birth control. Plan B is more of a preventative, I mean like yeah birth control is a preventative but it’s an uh-oh let me fix my mistake real quick.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

*“I kind of have a negative opinion on Plan B, just because I feel like you should be responsible before then instead. I mean it’s a good tool in the event of an emergency but I know some people that rely on it a lot and I just think it’s a negative.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

## Young Republicans are not sure that lack of access to all forms of contraception is a serious issue, and few know someone who has struggled to afford birth control.

As noted above, the majority of young Republican men and women view lack of affordable health care as a serious problem. Most young Republicans do not view lack of access to contraception in the same way. While two-thirds of birth control users view lack of access to all forms of birth control as a somewhat or very serious problem, those who do not use birth control are significantly less likely to think contraceptive access is a problem. Some 62 percent of those who do not use birth control say that it is not a particularly serious problem or not a problem at all.

*“You can buy condoms, those are pretty cheap. It’s your choice; it’s not your right or anything. So if you can’t afford that, you need to take other precautions. It’s not somebody else’s job to make sure you’re protected from getting pregnant.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

However, there is a significant difference in how young Republican moderates and conservatives view the issue. Young moderates tend to think lack of access to affordable birth control is a serious issue (57%) while only four in 10 (39%) conservatives and only one out of five very conservative respondents agree.

When respondents were asked why someone might not be using prescription contraception, responses about affordability and access ranked lowest, behind issues of personal choice (religion, sexual activity) and side effects. Evangelical respondents in particular felt that the main reasons a woman would choose not to use contraception were due to her religious views or her decision to not be sexually active.

In general, young Republicans felt that if a woman was not using prescription birth control, it was because she chose not to rather than for lack of access or affordability. Only 15 percent of respondents, including 19 percent of women, said they knew someone who had struggled to afford prescription birth control.

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**WHY DON'T MORE PEOPLE USE PRESCRIPTION BIRTH CONTROL?  
MOST YOUNG REPUBLICANS BELIEVE IT HAS MORE TO DO WITH INDIVIDUAL  
DECISIONS RATHER THAN LACK OF ACCESS OR AFFORDABILITY.**

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*“It’s kind of like an unfortunate circumstance I guess. Some people aren’t as fortunate as others. But I think if there’s at least one form of birth control that they can access I think that’s acceptable.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

*“If they’re only available, if only one kind of birth control is available like physically someone might not be able to take it for health reasons, it could make them sick or something. That’s just as good as not having any birth control.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

Even when the question was changed—when survey respondents were asked how they would feel if it was themselves or their partner who didn’t have insurance coverage for the birth control that was right for them—a majority said they did not think it was a serious problem. However, those who are currently using birth control were much more likely to think a lack of coverage would be a serious problem.

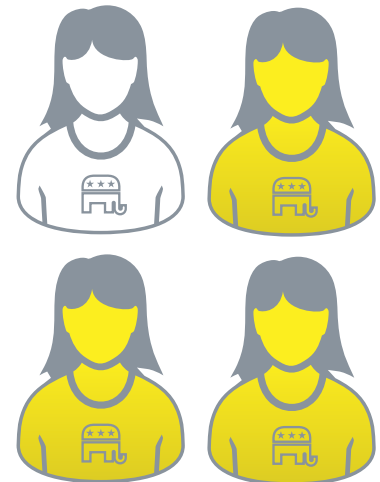
**However, many young Republicans have experience with unplanned pregnancy or know people who have had one, and they think it is a serious issue.**

Some 67 percent of respondents, including three out of four women, said they knew someone who had had an unplanned pregnancy.

*“The majority of my friends have babies, multiple children and I’m 23 so they’re a couple years younger than me and none of them were planned. I think it’s pretty relevant.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

Unplanned pregnancy is seen as a much more serious problem than lack of access to contraception; three-quarters of respondents thought unplanned pregnancy in general was a somewhat or very serious problem. Both moderate and conservative young Republicans view unplanned



3 out of 4

young Republican women know someone who has had an unplanned pregnancy.

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**THREE OUT OF FOUR YOUNG REPUBLICANS THINK UNPLANNED PREGNANCY IS A PROBLEM.**

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pregnancy as a problem. Half of survey respondents, women more than men, felt it would be either a somewhat or very serious problem for them *personally* to deal with an unplanned pregnancy. On this question, there were also very notable differences by respondent race. Only 31 percent of white respondents felt that young people dealing with an unplanned pregnancy represented a very serious problem, 80 percent of Black respondents and 50 percent of Hispanic respondents felt that unplanned pregnancy was a very serious problem facing young Americans.

*“Well I was on birth control and I want to say I didn’t mess up, but I may have, and we got pregnant. We were engaged prior to getting pregnant but it happened. I feel like, I always told myself once I turned 21 no matter what happened I would take responsibility either way. I just feel like you have to. I’m happy.”*

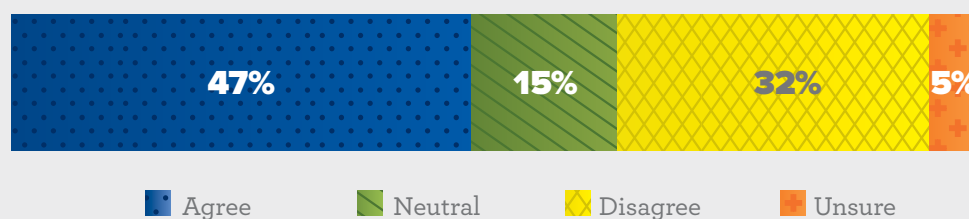
– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

Less than half (47%) of young Republican men surveyed said that a partner experiencing an unplanned pregnancy would be serious problem. In contrast, more than half of young Republican women (53%) said that having an unplanned pregnancy would be a problem for them; nearly one-third said it would be a very serious problem.

# Birth Control, Health Care, and the Affordable Care Act

Most young Republicans think insurance should cover the full range of FDA-approved methods of birth control without a co-pay; however, many do not view birth control as a health care *need*.

## NEARLY HALF OF YOUNG REPUBLICANS THINK HEALTH INSURANCE SHOULD FULLY COVER ALL FDA-APPROVED METHODS OF BIRTH CONTROL



Slightly less than half of survey respondents agree that for young adults in general (47%) as well as their *own* insurance (48%) should cover all methods of birth control; about one out of three disagree. When asked specifically about the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) contraceptive coverage requirement, 43 percent of young Republicans—including 65 percent of young Republicans who use birth control—think it should be kept in place; 30 percent of young Republicans disagree.

## ALTHOUGH MOST YOUNG REPUBLICANS HAVE A NEGATIVE VIEW OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT OVERALL, 43% SUPPORT KEEPING THE LAW'S CONTRACEPTIVE COVERAGE REQUIREMENT IN PLACE—AND THIS RISES TO 65% FOR THOSE WHO USE BIRTH CONTROL.

However, even though young Republicans think it is good for insurance to cover the full range of birth control options, they view contraception more as an issue of convenience than as a health care need.

*“I feel like it shouldn’t fall under that preventative health care service because it is more of a convenience thing.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

Indeed, only about three out of 10 survey respondents think that “birth control is a basic part of women’s health care.” Fully 60 percent, including a majority of young women, say “birth control is more of a personal convenience than a health care need for adult women.” Moderates and conservatives view the role of birth control in health care differently; young Republican moderates tend to view birth control more as a matter of basic health care (51%) than personal convenience (42%), while only about one-quarter of conservative respondents think of birth control as a basic component of health care.

There is a gender gap on the issue of treating birth control as a preventive health care service. Nearly six in 10 (59%) young Republican women say “birth control should be treated like any other preventive health care service,” but only 38 percent of young Republican men agree.

Young Republicans are also of the mind that some exceptions should be granted when it comes to the contraceptive coverage requirements. On the question of whether or not businesses should be allowed not to cover methods of birth control to which they have a religious objection, a majority (56%) of young Republicans agree that businesses should be allowed to exclude some or all contraceptive methods from insurance, and even moderate young Republicans leaned toward allowing such exceptions.

### **Birth control is not a high priority political issue for young Republicans, although health care is.**

In general, young Republicans tend to focus on fiscal and economic issues when choosing for whom they’ll vote, although health care more broadly is a top issue for Republican women. Regarding contraception specifically, when asked what issues would most influence their vote, birth control ranked last for men and women in a list of over a dozen options. Some 38 percent named “the economy” as one of the top issues influencing their vote, followed by both “government spending” and “health care” at 30 percent each. Breaking results out by gender, among young Republican *women*, health care is actually the top issue at 37 percent among the female respondents.

### **While most young Republicans are concerned about access to affordable health care, very few have a positive view of the Affordable Care Act.**

Although most young Republicans take a dim view of the law, many view a lack of health care as a serious problem. Six out of 10 view the ACA negatively; only about 15 percent view the law positively.



59%

of young Republican women think that birth control should be treated like any other preventative health care service.



Opposition is intense; 44 percent of young Republicans say they have a very negative view of the law and two-thirds of respondents who identify themselves as very conservative also held a very negative view of the ACA. Respondent education is also a factor in young Republican opposition to the Affordable Care Act; a majority of young Republicans who are college graduates or hold a graduate degree are *strongly* opposed to the ACA, while only 37 percent of those with only a high school education are strongly opposed.

*“I know several of my friends whose hours were cut back because companies don’t want you to get 35 or more hours because then they are required to give you health care so a lot of companies are cutting people’s hours back so they do not have to give it to you because of the law Obama passed.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

*“For us, our health care went up dramatically recently and we’ve had a lot of medical bills recently from everything. It’s a little ridiculous. I work part-time and my husband’s company dropped me completely so now I have to pay for my own [health care]. Half my salary goes to paying for my health care.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

At the same time, six out of 10 respondents say that young adults who lack affordable health care is a somewhat or very serious problem. There are significant differences on this question by political ideology; eight out of 10 young Republican moderates think affordable health care is a serious problem, compared to only 45 percent of young very conservative Republicans.

### **Most young Republicans have heard about the ACA contraceptive coverage requirement, but few have a great deal of information.**

About one-third of female and one in four male survey respondents reported that they or their partner were using a prescription form of birth control. Of those, the vast majority reported having insurance coverage that paid for contraception (though most of those respondents also noted that they still had to pay a co-pay).

This may reflect some of what we found in the focus groups—some respondents who were currently using a prescription form of birth control were surprised to discover that they no longer needed to pay a co-pay.

*Moderator: Who said Obama made it free?*

*Respondent 1: Me. Mine’s free.*

*Moderator: What’s your reaction to that?*

*Respondent 1: I was ecstatic. One day I went to pay and it was zero dollars.*

*Respondent 2: Yeah, that was the only thing I was happy about. I got my birth control and normally it just tells me how much it is and charges me. This time it said zero and I was like “Mom, what happened?” She goes “Well he put this law and now it’s free.” I’m like “Great, well that’s good for me then.”*

*Moderator: You were excited about the change?*

*Respondent 1: Same, same. It's great. Because I had to start paying for it and it was like \$50 bucks and I was like "What the hell?"*

--exchange between participants, Orlando, FL

Indeed, while a majority of men and women said they had heard at least some about the ACA contraceptive mandate, only 15 percent of men and 21 percent of women said they had heard "a lot."

It is worth noting that there is a significant ideological divide on this issue; 58 percent of young Republican moderates support the ACA contraceptive coverage requirement, compared to only 35 percent of conservatives.

### **Young Republicans have generally heard at least some information about the Hobby Lobby decision and lean towards supporting the Supreme Court's ruling.**

During the summer of 2014, the Supreme Court handed down a ruling in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, allowing craft store chain Hobby Lobby to decline to provide insurance coverage for a set of contraceptive methods the company's owners found objectionable on religious grounds. This ruling created a precedent for granting religious exceptions to the Affordable Care Act's requirement that employers must provide insurance coverage which includes the full range of FDA-approved birth control methods. Since the ruling, courts have allowed other companies to not cover some or all methods of contraception to which they object.

A majority of both young Republican men and women said they had heard at least "some" about the Supreme Court's *Hobby Lobby* decision. Young women were more likely than young men to report having heard "a lot" or "some" about the *Hobby Lobby* case, and two out of three young women saying they'd heard at least some about it. Conservatives were also slightly more aware of *Hobby Lobby* than were moderates.

There was not, however, a gender gap in attitudes toward the decision; a majority of young Republican men and young Republican women supported the Supreme Court's decision. Moderates were split evenly, but among young conservatives, more than six in 10 agreed with the Court's ruling in favor of Hobby Lobby.



# Over-the-Counter Oral Contraceptives

Young Republicans lean toward making oral contraceptives available over-the-counter, but some have reservations.

Respondents to the survey were presented with three potential options regarding over-the-counter (OTC) access for oral contraceptives: (1) birth control pills should be available over-the-counter *instead* of requiring insurance coverage of all forms of birth control, (2) birth control pills should be available over-the-counter *in addition* to requiring insurance coverage of all forms, and (3) birth control pills should only be available through a prescription from a doctor.

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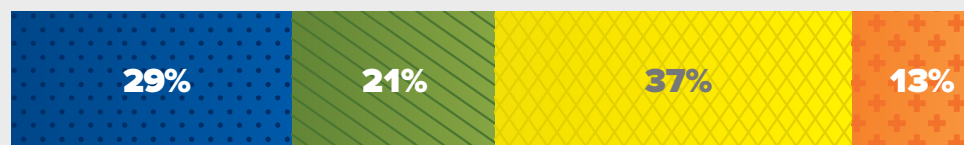
## YOUNG REPUBLICANS HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT MAKING BIRTH CONTROL PILLS AVAILABLE OVER THE COUNTER.





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About half of the respondents chose one of the options that would allow over-the-counter access. Three in 10 young Republicans believe that birth control pills should be made available over-the-counter *instead* of the contraceptive mandate, while another 21 percent think that birth control pills should be made available over-the-counter *in addition* to the coverage requirement of all prescription forms.

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## CURRENTLY, BIRTH CONTROL PILLS REQUIRE A PRESCRIPTION FROM A DOCTOR. WHICH COMES CLOSER TO YOUR VIEW?



-  OTC instead of requiring insurance coverage of all forms of birth control.
  -  OTC in addition to requiring insurance coverage of all forms of birth control.
  -  Don't think birth control pills should be available without a prescription.
  -  Unsure
-

*“Yes, I never really understood that, why you can get Plan B without a prescription, but you can’t get birth control without one.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH

When asked about their views of the potential downsides of making oral contraceptives available over-the-counter *instead* of having an insurance coverage requirement, women identified several key concerns:

- Thirty-five percent said they worried that it would reduce options for women who want to use a form of contraception that is not available over-the-counter.
- One-quarter expressed concern that having to pay out of pocket could make it harder for some women to afford birth control.
- Twenty-two percent thought that, because it will take a while for FDA approval, substituting OTC pills for required insurance coverage might wind up actually limiting access to birth control.

Interestingly, while there are often stark differences between how moderate and conservative respondents view policies about birth control, there are minimal ideological differences on the question of whether or not oral contraceptives should be available over-the-counter. However, it is important to note that over-the-counter is *not* a “slam dunk” with young Republicans, particularly women; 37 percent of all young Republicans and 43 percent of young Republican women say that birth control should not be available without a prescription, echoing what we heard in the focus groups about concerns over side effects and education on proper usage.

*“That takes out the whole education purpose of it.  
You need to know what you’re putting into your body.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

In addition to asking respondents to choose between the three policy options described above, respondents were also simply asked if they supported or opposed making birth control pills available over-the-counter. In this formulation of the question, 45 percent of young Republicans supported the idea and 32 percent opposed it. Women (39%) were more likely than men (27%) to oppose making oral contraceptives available over-the-counter.



# Funding for Contraceptive Access and Education Programs

Young Republicans generally want to maintain public funding for providing contraceptive services for low-income people and, though they have concerns about government spending, they are interested in policies that could lead to lower spending in the future.

Some 51 percent of young Republicans support keeping in place federal funding for current programs that provide contraceptive services and education specifically for low-income people; just 22 percent oppose. On this issue there was no gender divide; 51 percent of women and 48 percent of men support continuing these programs. Survey respondents also supported funding for programs that provide contraceptives and family planning education to low-income people.

There was, however, a significant ideological divide—more than 40 percent of very conservative respondents opposed a proposal to maintain funding for Title X family planning programs, compared to only about one out of 10 young moderates.

Participants in the focus groups were eager to increase contraceptive access if it meant the government would pay for fewer unplanned pregnancies through programs like Medicaid.

*“Like if we have affordable birth control it’s going to cost less for the government to provide that than the cost of all the different government assistance programs used by those that are going to be in financial need once they have the child.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

Overall, 58% of survey respondents said that every woman should have access to affordable, effective birth control because “it is cheaper to pay to prevent an unplanned pregnancy than to pay for the consequences of one.” The gender gap is small and a majority of young Republican men and women agree on this issue. As one focus group participant put it:

*“I think the debt crisis is crazy and if it is saving money then I think we should do it. That is very compelling.”*

– young Republican woman in Columbus, OH



# 58%

of young Republicans believe that every woman should have access to affordable, effective birth control because it is cheaper to pay to prevent an unplanned pregnancy than to pay for the consequences of one.

## Young Republicans are enthusiastic about focusing on education as a key component of preventing unplanned pregnancy and supporting programs that involve education.

Focus group participants were adamant that education and having real conversations with young adults about how to prevent pregnancy are also essential to preventing unplanned pregnancy. Three out of four survey respondents agreed with the statement, “Birth control should involve education on preventing pregnancy,” and Evangelical respondents were among the most likely to agree with the statement. When discussing things like programs aimed at helping low-income families prevent unplanned pregnancy, the fact that those programs offered education as well as contraception was extremely appealing.

*“I think birth control encompasses more than what contraception does.”*

– young Republican woman in  
Columbus, OH

*“Parents can tell you to wait because of your religion or whatever but society is saying a completely different thing in selling sex. With that being said, I want you educated. I want you to wait but if you make that decision here is education. I agree with that. I think it is positive.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL

In the survey, the policy proposal ideas that emphasized education for young adults were far and away the most strongly supported policies; two-thirds of respondents said they would support “providing more educational programs and campaigns for young adults about all methods of birth control.”

Support also cut across ideological and religious divides. Fifty-eight percent of Evangelical respondents and 72 percent of Catholic respondents would support more educational programming about birth control, as would over six out of 10 conservatives and four out of 10 very conservative respondents.

*“...education is the best form of prevention, so by expanding everybody’s knowledge that would be, for me, the best form of prevention.”*

– young Republican woman in Orlando, FL





# Methodology

This report has been prepared by Echelon Insights on behalf of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. It is informed by research conducted by Echelon Insights during August and November 2014.

The research consisted of a series of focus groups followed by a national survey. The four focus groups were conducted among Republican women age 18-35 in both Columbus, OH (August 6, 2014) and Orlando, FL (August 7, 2014).

The focus groups were followed by a survey conducted November 18-30, 2014 of 800 Republicans nationwide age 18-34 using YouGov's online panel of respondents. YouGov interviewed 818 young adults (18-34) who identify as Republican. The respondents were then matched down to a sample of 800 to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, education, party identification, ideology, and political interest. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). Data on voter registration status and turnout were matched to this frame using the November 2010 Current Population Survey. Data on interest in politics and party identification were then matched to this frame from the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey. The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and ideology. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

## After weighting, the survey demographics reflected the following:

- **Sex:** Male: 53 percent; Female: 47 percent.
- **Age:** 18-24 years-old: 42 percent; 25-29 years-old: 29 percent; 30-34 years-old: 29 percent.
- **Race/Ethnicity:** White: 73 percent; Black: 4 percent; Hispanic: 11 percent; Other: 12 percent.
- **Education:** High school education or less: 30 percent; Some college: 46 percent; College graduate: 19 percent; Graduate degree: 5 percent.



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