

Poll data presaged court's split on health law

by [Lauren Markoe](#) in the [July 25, 2012](#) issue

The Supreme Court's split decision on the new health-care law was mirrored days earlier by divided public opinion, according to a national survey.

A poll taken days before the high court's ruling upholding most of the Affordable Care Act found that 43 percent of Americans said the court should not overturn the law, and 35 percent hoped it would.

The Public Religion Research Institute poll also found that one in five Americans (21 percent) had no opinion on what the court should do.

This shows, said Robert Jones, PRRI's CEO, "that many Americans simply may not know what it would mean for the law to be upheld or overturned." More than half of white evangelicals (52 percent) favored overturning the law. White mainline Protestants were more divided, with 44 percent favoring an overturn and 34 percent opposed.

Among Catholics, 46 percent hoped the law would be left in place and 36 percent wanted the Supreme Court to reject it. On the high court, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Sonia Sotomayor, both Catholics, voted to uphold the law, while the other Catholic justices—Anthony Kennedy, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito—voted to overturn it.

Divisions were starker along racial and party lines. Among black Americans, 63 percent supported the law, as did 62 percent of Democrats. But 61 percent of Republicans and 71 percent of Tea Party members said they wanted the court to declare the law unconstitutional. The poll has a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points. —RNS