35 respectively). Black Protestant Millennials, on average, elicit much warmer feelings toward the federal government than white evangelical Protestant or white mainline Protestant Millennials (59, 32, and 32, respectively).

**Morality and Legality of Social Issues**

**Approaches to Morality**

College-age Millennials are nearly evenly divided between those who take a more universal approach to morality and those who embrace a more contextual outlook. Half (50%) of Millennials say that what is right or wrong depends on the situation, compared to 45% who say that there are some things that are always wrong, regardless of the situation. There are stark differences in Millennials’ approaches to morality by education type, political affiliation and religious affiliation.

Among Millennials who attended or are currently attending a private college or university, nearly two-thirds (64%) agree that what is right or wrong depends on the situation. By contrast, fewer than half of Millennials who attend or attended community college (47%) or a religious college or university (49%) agree with this statement. A majority (53%) of Millennials who attended or are currently attending a public college or university believe that morality is dependent on the particular context or situation.

**Contextual vs. Universal Approaches to Morality by Religious Affiliation**

- There are some things that are just wrong, regardless of the situation
- What is wrong or right depends on the situation

![Graph showing the number of people who take the contextual vs. universal approach to morality by religious affiliation.](image)

Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Millennial Values Survey, March 2012 (N=2,013)
Religious differences are even more dramatic. Nearly 7-in-10 (68%) white evangelical Millennials believe that there are some things that are always wrong, compared to fewer than half of black Protestant (49%), Catholic (45%), religiously unaffiliated (35%) and non-Christian affiliated (32%) Millennials. A majority of Catholic Millennials (54%) and more than 6-in-10 unaffiliated (62%) and non-Christian affiliated (66%) Millennials say that what is right or wrong depends on the situation.

Roughly 6-in-10 (62%) Republican Millennials believe that there are some things that are just wrong, regardless of the situation. Nearly as many Democratic Millennials (59%) say that what is right or wrong depends on the situation.

The Government and Morality

College-age Millennials are significantly more likely to say that they worry about government getting too involved in the issue of morality than to say that the government should do more to protect morality in society (57% vs. 35% respectively). However, significant divisions emerge among Millennials by religious affiliation. More than 7-in-10 (72%) religiously unaffiliated Millennials and roughly two-thirds of white Catholic (66%) and non-Christian affiliated (65%) Millennials say they worry that the government is getting too involved in the issue of morality. A majority of white mainline Protestant (59%) and white evangelical (52%) Millennials also say they worry about too much government involvement in moral issues. In contrast, fewer than half of black Protestant (48%), Latino Catholic (46%) and Latino Protestant (41%) Millennials say they are worried about too much government involvement in morality.

Legality of Social Issues

Abortion

A majority of college-age Millennials say that abortion should be legal in all (24%) or most cases (30%). More than 4-in-10 say that abortion should be illegal in most (28%) or all cases (16%). Roughly 6-in-10 (59%) Millennials believe that at least some health care professionals in their community should provide legal abortions, compared to one-third (33%) who say they should not. There are sizeable divisions among Millennials by religious affiliation, political identity, and educational background.

More than two-thirds of non-Christian affiliated (68%) and religiously unaffiliated (82%) Millennials say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Roughly 6-in-10 white mainline Protestant Millennials (59%) and black Protestant Millennials (61%) also agree that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Catholic Millennials are more divided: Forty-eight percent say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, while a slim majority (51%) say it should be illegal in all or most cases. There are no differences between Latino and white Catholic Millennials in views on the legality of
abortion. Of all the religious groups, white evangelical and Latino Protestant Millennials are most strongly opposed to legal abortion. Nearly 9-in-10 (88%) white evangelical Protestant Millennials and more than 7-in-10 (71%) Latino Protestant Millennials believe that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases. Similar patterns are evident in views about whether some health care professionals should provide legal abortions.

There are also stark divisions among younger Millennials, not only by education level (i.e. college vs. non-college) but also according to the type of college or university they attended or are currently attending. Fewer than half of Millennials with a high school education or less (49%) and Millennials who attended or are currently attending a religious college or university (43%) say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Millennials who attended or are currently attending a community college are about evenly divided on the issue, with 51% in favor of legal abortion, and 48% opposed. In contrast, roughly two-thirds of Millennials who attended or are currently attending a public college or university (65%) or a private college or university (68%) say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.

The partisan gap is also substantial. More than 7-in-10 (71%) Democratic Millennials and 53% of Independent Millennials say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. In contrast, fewer than 3-in-10 (29%) Republican Millennials say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Seventy-one percent of Republican Millennials say that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases.
Same-sex Marriage

Nearly 6-in-10 (59%) college-age Millennials favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally, compared to 37% who are opposed. The patterns of support and opposition generally mirror those found in attitudes about abortion, with strong differences evident by education level and type, religious affiliation, and party affiliation.

Millennials who attended or are currently attending a private college or university are most supportive of same-sex marriage, with fully 8-in-10 (80%) in favor of allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally. At least 6-in-10 Millennials who attended or are attending a community college (60%) or public college or university (65%) also favor same-sex marriage. In contrast, significantly smaller majorities of Millennials who attended or are currently attending a religious college (53%), as well as Millennials who have a high school education or less (54%) favor same-sex marriage.

With the exception of white evangelical, Latino, and black Protestant Millennials, majorities of every religious group favor same-sex marriage. More than 6-in-10 white mainline Protestant (62%), Catholic (66%), non-Christian affiliated (65%) and religiously unaffiliated (81%) Millennials favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry. In contrast, only 34% of Latino Protestant Millennials and 27% of white evangelical Protestant Millennials favor same-sex marriage. Black Protestant Millennials are evenly divided, with equal numbers voicing support (48%) and opposition (48%).

Unlike the issue of abortion, there is a significant gender gap on this issue. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Millennial women favor same-sex marriage, compared to 52% of Millennial men. Millennials with a close friend or family member who is gay or lesbian.
are also significantly more likely than those without a gay or lesbian friend or family member to favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally (70% vs. 47% respectively).

**Pornography**

Nearly 6-in-10 (57%) college-age Millennials support making it more difficult to access Internet pornography, compared to less than 4-in-10 (39%) who are opposed. There is an evident gender gap, in addition to stark differences between religiously affiliated and religiously unaffiliated Millennials on this issue.

Millennial women are significantly more supportive of making Internet pornography more difficult to access, compared to Millennial men (65% vs. 48% respectively). Millennial men are about evenly divided, with 48% in favor and 45% opposed.

At least 6-in-10 white mainline Protestant (63%), black Protestant (63%), Catholic (66%) and white evangelical Protestant (79%) Millennials favor making Internet pornography more difficult to access. In contrast, fewer than half (43%) of religiously unaffiliated Millennials favor making Internet pornography more difficult to access, while 54% are opposed.

**Contraceptive Coverage and Access**

A majority (54%) of younger Millennials agree that “methods of birth control should be generally available to teenagers age 14 or older without parental approval.” More than 4-in-10 (43%) disagree with this statement. Interestingly, there are no differences between Millennial men and women. There are, however, stark differences by education type and religious affiliation.

Millennials who attended or are currently attending a private (62%) or public (57%) college or university are significantly more likely to support the availability of birth control to teenagers than Millennials who attended or are currently attending a
religious college or university (40%). There are no significant differences in the views of Millennials with varying levels of educational attainment (e.g. between college graduates and high school graduates).

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of religiously unaffiliated Millennials, and much smaller majorities of Catholic (55%) and white mainline Protestant (51%) Millennials, agree that birth control should be available to teenagers who are at least 14 years of age without parental approval. Fewer than half (46%) of black Protestant Millennials, and fewer than one-third (30%) of white evangelical Millennials, agree that birth control should be available to teenagers age 14 years or older.

Millennials are broadly supportive of requiring religiously affiliated institutions to provide no-cost contraception coverage for their employees. Six-in-ten (60%) college-age Millennials say that religiously affiliated colleges and hospitals should be required to provide their employees with health care plans that cover contraception at no cost. Fewer than 4-in-10 (36%) say these institutions should not have to provide this type of coverage. There are substantial partisan differences on whether religiously affiliated colleges and hospitals should be required to provide their employees with no-cost birth control. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Democratic Millennials agree with the requirement, compared to roughly 4-in-10 (42%) Republican Millennials.

Millennials are about evenly divided over whether churches and other places of worship should be required to provide their employees with contraception coverage in their health care plans, with 47% saying that they should be required and 49% opposed to the requirement.

Private Morality and Public Policy

When asked about the moral acceptability of many of these same issues, Millennials are often closely divided.

A slim majority (51%) of Millennials say that having an abortion is morally wrong, while fewer than 4-in-10 (37%) see it as morally acceptable. Nearly 1-in-10 (9%) report that it depends on the particular situation or offer some other sort of explanation. Similarly, less than half (49%) of Millennials say that sex between a young man and young woman under the age of 18 is morally wrong, compared to about 4-in-10 (39%) who believe it is morally acceptable. A slim majority (51%) say that viewing pornography is morally wrong, while more than 4-in-10 (41%) say it is morally acceptable. Millennials are nearly evenly divided over whether sex between two adults of the same gender is morally acceptable (48%) or morally wrong (44%). There is greater consensus among Millennials on whether sex between an unmarried man and woman is moral. Nearly two-thirds (64%) say that this is morally acceptable, while less than 3-in-10 (29%) say it is morally wrong.
Although there are strong correlations between private moral evaluations of same-gender sexual relationships and abortion and public policies that address these issues, significant minorities of those who personally believe that same-sex marriage and abortion are immoral nonetheless think they should still be legal.

There is a strong correlation between views about the morality of same-gender sexual relations and support for same-sex marriage. Among Millennials who say that sex between two adults of the same gender is morally acceptable, 92% say they favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry. Among Millennials who say that same-gender sex is morally wrong, nearly three-quarters (74%) oppose same-sex marriage, although one-quarter (25%) report that they are in favor of it.

There is a similar relationship between views about the morality of abortion and support for legalized abortion. Among Millennials who believe having an abortion is morally acceptable, nearly all (96%) say abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Roughly three-quarters of Millennials who say abortion is morally wrong believe that it should be illegal in all or most cases. Again, a significant minority (23%) of Millennials who say abortion is morally wrong nevertheless believe that it should be legal in all or most cases.