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FACTS ON ABORTION



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report includes the most recent trends concerning abortion in the United States. From 1973 to 2017, more than 60 million lives have been lost to abortion.¹ While the cumulative abortion numbers will continue to increase, the data reveals that the abortion rate has continued to decline while the percentage of women obtaining medically-induced abortions has increased. Almost all abortions occur during the first trimester—91 percent at or before 13 weeks; however, abortions happening during the first six weeks of pregnancy increased 16 percent from 2004 to 2013.

Though the abortion rate has declined, revenue for the abortion industry continued to grow. In 2017, the abortion industry reported \$3 billion in revenue, up almost \$1 billion from 2013. Nearly 75 percent of that market share is held by Planned Parenthood.

Despite a shift toward earlier abortions, later-term abortion remains legal throughout the United States—there is no federal law governing when or where an abortion may be performed. Only one type of late-term abortion—“partial birth” abortion—is prohibited under federal law. Another method, Dilation and Evacuation, is used routinely.²

Several Supreme Court decisions on abortion at first glance seem to restrict availability of late-term abortion, but the language is permissive enough to allow abortion of a full-term pregnancy in any situation.

Some state regulations permit later-term abortions only when the pregnancy threatens a woman’s “life and health.” However, the Supreme Court in *Doe v. Bolton* ruled that the definition of “health” includes emotional and psychological health, as well as familial situation, and the woman’s age.

This broad definition of “health” essentially allows for abortion to occur in any circumstance during the 2nd and 3rd trimester. Further, according to the Supreme Court in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* and broadened by *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*, state regulations may not substantially burden a woman’s ability to access an abortion.

Thanks to these laws and court precedents, the U.S. is one of only four countries that allows abortion on demand nationwide at any time during pregnancy. For this reason, the decline in the abortion rate and the shift toward abortions earlier in pregnancy that are documented in this report are most likely not a result of more restrictive laws.

In the pages following, we will take a closer look at the state of abortion in the United States: who is having abortions, why, what the next generation is thinking about abortion, and much more.

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RATE

The abortion rate has continued to fall in almost every demographic. The most dramatic change was for 15-19 year-olds, where the abortion rate dropped 31 percent between 2004 and 2013.

- 19% of all pregnancies in the United States in 2014 ended in abortion.³ Down from 29.4% in 1980, and 21.3% in 2000.⁴
- Approximately 926,200 abortions were performed in 2014, down 12% from 1.06 million in 2011.⁵
- The abortion rate in 2014 was 14.6 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44, down 14% from 16.9 per 1,000 in 2011. At 2014 abortion rates, one in 20 women (5%) will have an abortion by age 20, about one in five (19%) by age 30 and about one in four (24%) by age 45.⁶
- Between 2004 and 2013, abortion rates decreased in all age groups except in women 40 and older, where it remained stable. The greatest decrease was among adolescents 15-19, where the rate decreased 46%, meaning that the percent of abortions occurring among adolescents has decreased 31%.⁷

TYPE

Abortions are being performed earlier in pregnancy, compared to previous years. Women are also increasingly opting for medicinally-induced abortions rather than surgical abortions.

- Medication abortions increased from 6% of all non-hospital abortions in 2001 to 31% in 2014, even while the overall number of abortions continued to decline. Data shows that the average gestational age at which abortion occurs has shifted to earlier within the first trimester; likely due, in part, to the increased availability of medication abortions.⁸
- In 2013, the majority (66.0%) of abortions were performed by ≤8 weeks' gestation, and 25.6% were performed between 9 and 13 weeks' gestation. 7.1% of abortions were performed between 14 and 20 weeks' gestation and 1.3% were performed at ≥21 weeks' gestation. From 2004 to 2013, the percentage of all abortions performed at ≤13 weeks' gestation remained consistently high (≥91.5%) and among those performed at ≤13 weeks' gestation, the percentage performed at ≤6 weeks' gestation increased 16%.⁹

AVAILABILITY

The number of abortion facilities has declined, as well as the overall number of abortion providers. Additionally, abortion regulation has increased in 19 states.

- 99% of offering facilities supply abortions up to 8 weeks gestation.¹⁰
- In 2014, of facilities that supplied later second trimester abortions, 25% offered abortions up to 20 weeks¹¹ (down from 34% in 2012¹²) and 10% offered abortions up to 24 weeks (down from 16% in 2012¹³).
- The number of U.S. abortion-providing facilities declined 3% between 2011 and 2014 (from 1,720 to 1,671).¹⁴
- In 2017, 19 states adopted 63 new regulations on abortion, most aimed directly at curbing high pressure abortion sales tactics and for the protection of women's health and safety.¹⁵

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REVENUES AND COSTS

Despite falling abortion numbers, revenue for the abortion industry has continued to rise.

- In 2017, the abortion and family planning industry reported revenue of \$3 billion dollars (up almost 1 billion from 2013) with annual growth of 3.2%.¹⁶ It is important to note that these numbers include non-abortion products and services. Planned Parenthood has the greatest market share in this industry with 74.9% of profits.¹⁷
- In 2014, the median charge for a surgical abortion at 10 weeks gestation was \$508. The median charge for a early medication abortion at 10 weeks gestation was \$535.¹⁸
- In 2014, the median charge for an abortion at 20 weeks was \$1,195.¹⁹

FERTILITY AND ABORTION

Nearly half of pregnancies are reported as “unplanned” as the birth rate continues to slowly decline.

- 45% of all pregnancies are reported as unintended by American women; 60% of women who report their pregnancy as unintended choose life.²⁰
- Researchers continue to debate the economic consequences of declining fertility rates.²¹ The replacement fertility rate for developed countries is a lifetime total of 2.1 births per woman.²²
- The general fertility rate (GFR) for the United States in 2016 was 62.0 births per 1,000 women aged 15–44.²³ Down 1% from 2015 (62.5) and a record low rate for the nation. This is the second year that the rate has declined following an increase in 2014. From 2007 to 2013, GFR declined steadily.²⁴
- The number of registered births in the United States for 2016 was down 1% from 2015.²⁵

ABORTION DEMOGRAPHICS

Most abortion patients are in their 20s and have already had at least one previous child. African-American women were 2.7x more likely to experience abortion than white women. Additionally, almost half of women experiencing abortion are below the poverty line.

- In 2014, 86% of women who had an abortion were unmarried. 46% had never married and were not cohabiting. However, nearly half were living with a male partner in the month they became pregnant, including 14% who were married and 31% who were cohabiting.²⁶
- 59% of women who had abortions in 2014 had already had at least one previous birth.²⁷
- In 2014, the majority of abortion patients (60%) were in their 20s, and the second-largest age-group was in their 30s (25%).²⁸
- Women in households with incomes under the federal poverty line experience more than 49% of all legal abortions in the United States.²⁹
- In raw numbers, no racial or ethnic group made up the majority of abortion patients in 2014. Overall, 39% were white, 28% black, 25% Hispanic, 6% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3% of other background.³⁰
- Per capita, black women had the highest abortion rate in 2014 - almost three times as many abortions as white women. black women had 27.1 abortions per 1,000 women, Hispanic women had 18.1 abortions per 1,000 women, and white women had 10 abortions per 1,000 women.³¹

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THE ABORTION DECISION

The average woman choosing abortion makes the decision within a day of confirming her pregnancy, and obtains an abortion within the next week. The most frequently cited reason for abortion was financial.

- According to a study by abortion researchers, 4 days passed on average between the time a woman first suspected pregnancy to confirming the pregnancy. The median time from confirming the pregnancy to deciding to have an abortion was 0 days; the median time from deciding to have an abortion to first attempting to obtain abortion services was 2 days; and the median time from first attempting to obtain abortion services to obtaining the abortion was 7 days.³²
- Minors took a week longer to suspect pregnancy than adults did.³³
- 58% of women reported that they would have liked to have had the abortion earlier. The most common reasons for delay were that it took a long time to make arrangements (59%), to decide (39%), and to find out about the pregnancy (36%). Poor women were about twice as likely to be delayed by difficulties in making arrangements.³⁴
- Women's reasons for seeking abortion included financial reasons (40%), timing (36%), partner related reasons (31%), and the need to focus on other children (29%). Most women reported multiple reasons for seeking an abortion (64%).³⁵
- 38% of women indicate that the father of the baby was most influential in their abortion decision.³⁶
- Only 12% of women included a physical problem with their health among reasons for having an abortion.³⁷
- 1% of aborting women reported that they were the survivors of rape.³⁸

MILLENNIALS

About half of individuals between 18 and 31 support more restricted access to abortion.

- Millennials have had an average of 8 sexual partners - which is less than any generation since the 1960s. Boomers had an average of 11 and Generation X an average of 10.³⁹
- 53% of Millennials (individuals between 18 and 31) think that abortion should be either illegal or legal only in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother.⁴⁰
- 49% of Millennials said they would support a ban on abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, if it were enacted in their state.⁴¹

GEN Z

Fewer current highschool students believe abortion is wrong, compared to Millennials, but slightly more believe sex outside of marriage is wrong.

- 29% of Gen Z believe that abortion is wrong; a decrease from 33% of Millennials.⁴²
- Nationwide, 41.2% of high school students have had sexual intercourse.⁴³
- 21% of Gen Z believe that sex before marriage is morally wrong; an increase from 19% of Millennials.⁴⁴
- The percentage of high school students who are currently sexually active (meaning they had sex during the past three months) is 30.1%.⁴⁵
- 11.5% of high school students had sexual intercourse with four or more persons during their life.⁴⁶

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ADOPTION

Adoption rates have stayed relatively consistent.

- In 2014, there were 17.3 infant adoptions per 1,000 abortions, and 4.6 infant adoptions per 1,000 live births⁴⁷; a slight change from 17.0 infant adoptions per 1,000 abortions and 5.5 infant adoptions per 1,000 live births in 2002.⁴⁸
- The National Council for Adoption estimates the Adoption Option Index (relative frequency of infant adoptions per 1,000 abortions and births to unmarried women)
- for 2014 to be 6.9; an increase from 6.1 in 2007.⁴⁹
- 61% of adults surveyed agreed that for an unmarried woman with an unplanned pregnancy, sometimes choosing adoption is what it means to be a good mother.⁵⁰
- 51% of adults surveyed agreed that for the child of an unmarried woman with an unplanned pregnancy, adoption is generally a positive option.⁵¹

ATTITUDES TOWARDS ABORTION

Fewer Americans are viewing abortion as a moral issue and the percent who consider it morally wrong has also declined.

- In 2016, 34% of US adults did not consider abortion to be a moral issue (up from 23% in 2013) while 44% of US adults consider abortion to be morally wrong (down from 49% in 2013).^{52,53}
- In 2016, 59% (up from 56% in 2013) of Americans express the opinion that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.^{54,55}
- In a 2013 USA Today/Gallup poll of Americans, the following groups viewed themselves as pro-life:⁵⁶
 - 50% of Protestant Christians and 45% of Catholic Christians.
 - 43% of women and 44% of men.
 - 36% ages 18-29; 42% ages 30-49; 53% ages 50-64; and 45% of those ages 65 and older.

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ABORTION & THE CHURCH

More than one third of abortion recipients reported they attended church at least once a month at the time of their first abortion.

- American religious groups vary widely in their views of abortion. 35% of those who are part of the mainline Protestant tradition say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, with 60% in support of keeping abortion legal. Members of the Episcopal Church (79%) and the United Church of Christ (72%) are especially likely to support legal abortion, while most members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the mainline Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (65%) also take this position. Unitarian Universalists (90%) and American Jews (83%) were much more supportive of legal abortion than the general population. And most people who have no religious affiliation – particularly atheists and agnostics (87% each) – also support abortion rights.⁵⁷
- Only 48% of self-identified evangelicals who attend church once or twice per month strongly agree the statement “Abortion is a Sin.”⁵⁸
- 70% of women who have had an abortion indicate their religious preference is Christian.⁵⁹
- 35% of Christian women who have had an abortion indicate they currently attend church once a week or more.⁶⁰
- 36% of women were attending a Christian church once a month or more at the time of their first abortion.⁶¹
- Among patients that had an abortion in 2014, there was a decrease among those who reported a religious affiliation—24% were Catholic, 17% were mainline Protestant, 13% were evangelical Protestant and 8% identified with some other religion. Thirty-eight percent of patients had no religious affiliation.⁶²
- As women considered their abortion decision, the most typical reactions/expectations from a local church were “judgmental” (33%) or “condemning” (26%).⁶³
- 51% of women agree that churches do not have a ministry prepared to discuss options during an unplanned pregnancy.⁶⁴

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