



Illustration: [Nicole Xu](#)

***the* NOCTURNISTS:**
Post-Roe America
Statistics on Abortion in the
United States



thenocturnists.com/post-roe-america-series

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Abortion During Roe v. Wade

How many legally induced abortions are performed in clinical settings in the United States each year?

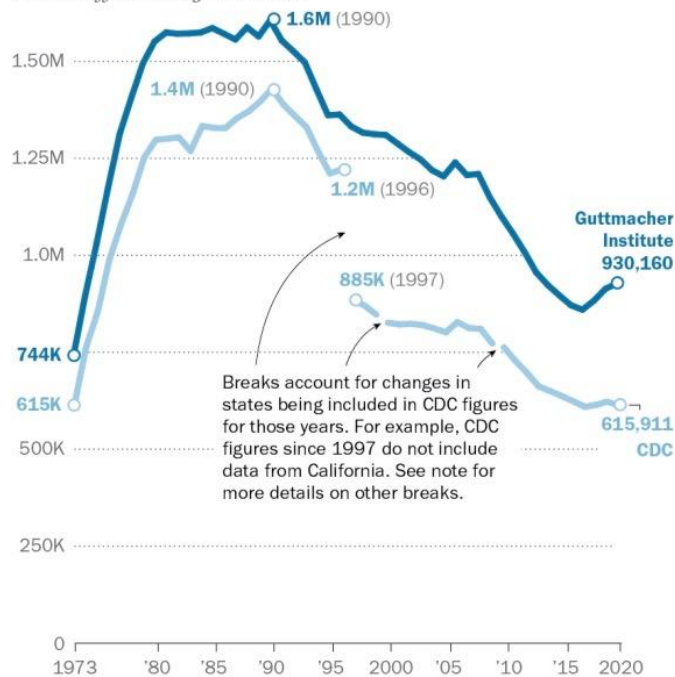
According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Guttmacher Institute, there were between 620,000 and 930,000 abortions performed in 2019 and 2020.

How has the abortion rate in the United States varied over the years?

Before the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, abortion was illegal. As such, data on abortion rates are limited. It is estimated that in the 1950s and 1960s, there were between 200,000 and 1.2 million abortions a year. After the decision, abortion rates peaked in the early 1990s and have generally declined since then. This decline is influenced by several factors including improved access to reproductive health education and contraception.

A look at the changing number of legal abortions in the U.S. since the 1970s

Number of legal induced abortions per year in U.S., according to two different organizations



Source: Pew Research Center, 2023

***For the references and most up-to-date information, please refer to official census reports and research studies from sources such as the CDC, Guttmacher Institute, and the Pew Research Center**

[Abortion Surveillance — United States, 2020](#), Centers for Disease Control

[Pregnancies, Births and Abortions in the United States, 1973–2017: National and State Trends by Age](#), Guttmacher Institute

[Abortion in the U.S.: What the data says](#), PEW Research

Effects on maternal mortality

How many women die from abortion-related complications?

According to the CDC, there were between 13 and 54 reported annual deaths from abortion from 1972 to 1979, and between 9 and 16 deaths from abortions in the 1980s.

One of the main reasons for this decline is a drop in deaths from illegal abortions. In 1972, there were 35 total deaths from illegal abortions. However, after the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, the number fell to 19 total deaths from illegal abortions and remained in single digits every year after that. Between 2 and 12 women have died annually from legally induced abortions since 1990.

How does access to abortions impact maternal mortality?

A study assessing national maternal mortality found that states with more restrictive abortion laws had a 7% higher total maternal mortality rate than less restrictive states.

Specifically, states with restrictions on state Medicaid funding for abortion had a 29% higher total maternal mortality rate and states that require a licensed physician to perform all abortions had a 35% higher mortality rate when compared to other states.

For references and more information, please visit:

Pabayo R, Ehntholt A, Cook DM, Reynolds M, Muennig P, Liu SY. [Laws Restricting Access to Abortion Services and Infant Mortality Risk in the United States](#). Int J Environ Res Public Health, May 2020.

[Study finds higher maternal mortality rates in states with more abortion restrictions](#).

Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine, August 2021.

Effects on infant mortality

How does access to abortions impact infant mortality?

A study examining the relationship between state-level restrictions on abortion laws and infant mortality found that infants born in states with more restrictive abortion laws were significantly more likely to die in their first year of life compared to those born in states with no restrictions. In fact, there was up to a 10% relative increase in infant mortality in states with abortion restrictions.

One of the reasons cited for this observation is that denying a pregnant person an abortion restricts their ability to exercise autonomy, a key principle of biomedical ethics. This can cause psychological distress and ultimately affect the health and well-being of the pregnant person and infant.

For references and more information, please visit:

Pabayo R, Ehntholt A, Cook DM, Reynolds M, Muennig P, Liu SY. [Laws Restricting Access to Abortion Services and Infant Mortality Risk in the United States](#). Int J Environ Res Public Health, May 2020.

Who gets abortions?

People of all backgrounds, races and ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic statuses get abortions in the United States. Before the Dobbs decision, 1 in 4 people capable of getting pregnant reported accessing abortion care. 30% identified as Protestant and 24% as Catholic. Only 12% of abortions were in teenaged persons. Of those who have abortions, 39% identify as white, 28% as Black, 25% as Hispanic, and 6% as Asian American or Pacific Islander.

75% of people accessing abortion care are low-income or live below the poverty line. One study assessing reasons for choosing abortion cited 3 recurrent reasons: a) a baby would impact their work, school, or other professional responsibilities, b) they cannot afford to care for a child, and c) they do not want to be a single parent or do not have a stable partner to support the baby.

For references and more information, please visit:

[Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients in 2014 and Changes Since 2008.](#)
Guttmacher Institute

[United States Abortion Facts at a Glance.](#) Guttmacher Institute