

Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice.

Reproductive health is a vital part of an individual's wellness and encompasses a broad range of care. Beyond those relating to family planning, these health services allow people to take care of their reproductive systems by preventing and treating reproductive diseases. This includes diseases that are sexually transmitted but also those that are not, such as endometriosis. Reproductive health services include access to OB-GYNs, contraception, necessary medications and abortion.¹

Reproductive rights are an individual's right to make decisions about their reproductive health, including their ability to decide whether and when to have children.² *Reproductive justice* refers to the fight to protect and expand these rights and the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments.³

Key Supreme Court Cases on Reproductive Health.

Roe v. Wade is the landmark Supreme Court case that guaranteed constitutional protections of abortion rights nationwide.⁴ The Court ruled that no state could ban abortion for the first 23 weeks of a pregnancy until "fetal viability," when the fetus can survive outside the womb.⁵

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization is the recent Supreme Court case that overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June of 2022. With its passing, abortion rights are no longer federally guaranteed and each state can decide whether or not to pass legislation banning or restricting abortion rights.⁶

The Realities of Making a Decision.

Making the decision whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term can be extremely personal and difficult for potential parents, especially considering the strong beliefs many have about abortions. Since many choose to keep their family planning decisions private, it may seem like unintended pregnancies and abortions are uncommon but the statistics show that:

- Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended and nearly half of these pregnancies end in abortion.⁷
- Hispanic women are two times more likely to have an unintended pregnancy than white women.⁸
- 1 in 4 pregnancies end in abortion every year⁹ and 1 in 4 women have an abortion in their lifetime.¹⁰

¹ Kate Bahn et al., "Linking Reproductive Health Care Access to Labor Market Opportunities for Women" *Center for American Progress*, November 21, 2017, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/linking-reproductive-health-care-access-labor-market-opportunities-women/>.

² Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Chapter 5: Reproductive Rights" *The Status of Women in the States*, 2015, pp. 165, <https://statusofwomendata.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PDF-of-final-Reproductive-Rights-chapter-9-4-2015.pdf>.

³ L. Ross & R. Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*, 2017, <https://fordham.libguides.com/WomenGenderSexuality/RJ>.

⁴ Josh Gerstein and Alexander Ward, "Supreme Court has voted to overturn abortion rights, opinion shows," *Politico*, May 2, 2022, Updated May 3, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/05/02/supreme-court-abortion-draft-opinion-00029473>.

⁵ Michael Barbaro, interview with Adam Liptak, "Is This How Roe Ends?," *The Daily*, podcast audio, May 4th 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/04/podcasts/the-daily/roe-v-wade-abortion-supreme-court.html?showTranscript=1>.

⁶ Gerstein and Ward, "Supreme Court has voted to overturn abortion rights, draft opinion shows,"

⁷ Lawrence B. Finer and Mia R. Zolna, "Declines in Unintended Pregnancy in the United States, 2008-2011," *The New England Journal of Medicine*, March 3, 2016, <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmsa1506575>.

⁸ DeArbea Walker, "With Roe v. Wade overturned, communities of color continue to fight for their rights," *Insider*, June 24, 2022, <https://www.insider.com/roe-v-wade-how-women-of-color-will-be-impacted-2022-5>.

⁹ Amnesty International, "Key Facts on Abortion," *Amnesty International*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-and-reproductive-rights/abortion-facts/>.

¹⁰ Alexandria Day, "ICE Detainees Denied Access to Abortion," *Immigration and Human Rights Law Review*, March 25, 2022, <https://lawblogs.uc.edu/ihrlr/2022/03/25/ice-detainees-denied-access-to-abortion/>.

Reproductive Health Accessibility.

Due to structural barriers, residential segregation, and medical racism, Black and Latino communities historically have had *less access* to reproductive health services and information. Undocumented parents face these obstacles *and more* due to fear of deportation, higher chances of being incarcerated, and laws that severely restrict federal funding for abortion.

With the decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, abortion will be banned or severely restricted in more than half the states. For the majority of parents in these states and the surrounding areas, abortions will become impossible to obtain due to geographic and financial barriers.

- 49% of abortion patients are below the federal poverty level.
- 75% of abortion patients are low income.¹¹
- Of all racial or ethnic groups, Latinas experience the highest rates of being medically uninsured.¹²
- 1 in 4 Latinas do not have a regular health provider.¹³

Criminalizing Abortion Will Not Stop Abortions.

Making abortions illegal will not stop parents from needing abortions or seeking them out – it only changes the safety of the procedure. The World Health Organization estimates that *25 million* unsafe abortions take place each year. Unsafe abortions are the *third leading cause* of maternal deaths worldwide and lead to *5 million* largely preventable disabilities.¹⁴

Reproductive Rights are Workers' Rights.

Increased accessibility to contraceptives and expanded reproductive rights allowed women to participate more in the workforce, to invest more in their careers, and to narrow the gender pay gap.¹⁵ Having access to reproductive health impacts a woman's education, earnings, and employment, particularly for women of color.

Education: Having access to an abortion improved the chances of finishing college by *nearly 20 percentage points* for young women who experienced an unintended pregnancy.¹⁶

Earnings: Working mothers are only paid *75 cents* for every dollar paid to fathers. Latina working mothers are paid even less, earning only *46 cents* for every dollar a White, non-Hispanic male earns.¹⁷

Employment:

- Reproductive rights and health care make it easier for employees to freely leave their jobs to explore better opportunities.¹⁸
- Women who were unable to get an abortion were *three times* more likely to be unemployed after six months than their counterparts.¹⁹
- Having access to an abortion improved the chances of entering a professional occupation by *nearly 40 percentage points* for women who experienced an unintended pregnancy.²⁰

¹¹ Heather D. Boonstra, "Abortion in the Lives of Women Struggling Financially: Why Insurance Coverage Matters," *Guttmacher Institute*, July 14, 2016, <https://www.guttmacher.org/qpr/2016/07/abortion-lives-women-struggling-financially-why-insurance-coverage-matters>.

¹² "Addressing Sexual and Reproductive Health Disparities among Latinos," Planned Parenthood Federation of America, March 2015, pp.1, https://www.plannedparenthood.org/files/2814/2773/6927/Latino_Disparities.pdf.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Amnesty International, "Key Facts on Abortion."

¹⁵ Finer and Zolna, "Declines in Unintended Pregnancy in the United States," *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

¹⁶ Kelly Jones, "At a Crossroads: The impact of abortion access on future economic outcomes," *American University*, August 9, 2021, p. 15.

¹⁷ Claire Ewing-Nelson, "Even Before This Disastrous Year for Mothers, They Were Still Only Paid 75 Cents for Every Dollar Paid to Fathers," *National Women's Law Center*, May 2021, <https://nwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EDPFS.pdf>

¹⁸ Bahn et al., "Linking Reproductive Health Care Access" *Center for American Progress*.

¹⁹ Dianna Greene Foster et al., "Socioeconomic Outcomes of Women Who Receive and Women Who Are Denied Wanted Abortions in the United States," *American Journal of Public Health*, February 7, 2018, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304247>.

²⁰ Jones, "The impact of abortion access on future economic outcomes," *American University*.