

MYTH 08

"MOST AMERICANS SUPPORT ABORTION ON DEMAND."



MYTH #8: "MOST AMERICANS SUPPORT ABORTION ON DEMAND."

In the lingo of the current dysfunctional political climate, it is considered a "war on women" to impose any restrictions that might limit access to abortions. It is implied that all those who support any limitation on abortion would like to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned and for abortion to become illegal in every instance. It seems those who advocate for legal abortion must resist mightily any legislation that attempts to regulate the industry. But the reality is that **most Americans do not inhabit these extremes**. The majority of Americans are willing to allow abortions in certain clearly defined circumstances, but almost all prefer some limits on the procedure of abortion.

ONLY 29 PERCENT OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGAL IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, WHICH IS WHAT CURRENT LAW ALLOWS.

It is interesting to track Gallup survey results on abortion since its legalization. Consistently, most Americans favor **allowing abortion in some situations, but with restrictions** (54 percent in 1975, **50 percent** now). A smaller proportion feel that it should be legal in any circumstance (as allowed by *Roe v. Wade*—22 percent in 1975, **29 percent** now), and an even smaller group would like for it to **be illegal in all** circumstances (21 percent 1975, **18 percent** now). Undoubtedly, if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned, and the question of abortion was returned to the states to legislate, we would still have legal abortion available, but in more limited situations. Interestingly, more Americans today consider abortion to be **morally wrong** (49 percent) than **morally acceptable** (43 percent).[119]

ACCORDING TO THE LAST 40 YEARS OF POLLING, THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORT RESTRICTIONS ON ABORTION, INCLUDING A 24-HOUR WAITING PERIOD, INFORMED CONSENT, ALTERNATIVE COUNSELING, PROHIBITING PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTIONS, AND MORE.

In addition, the majority of Americans have consistently supported the following restrictions: a **24-hour waiting period, parental consent, spousal notification, informed consent, alternative counseling, prior ultrasound, and prohibition of "partial birth abortions."** While most favor allowing abortion to save the life and physical or mental health of the mother, in the cases of severe physical or mental abnormalities in the child, or in the cases of rape and incest, only **36 percent** felt it should be allowed for **financial reasons**.[120]

Americans become even more squeamish about abortion as the pregnancy progresses past the first trimester. The last time Gallup asked the question (2012), **64 percent** wanted the procedure **to be illegal in the second trimester**, and **80 percent in the third trimester**.[121] In 2017, 67 percent of those polled were in favor of some restrictions on the procedure.[122] Similarly in a 2017 Pew poll, 73 percent favored some restrictions on late-term abortions.[123] Although abortion is commonly classified as a woman's issue, one Marist poll found that **82 percent** of women "would restrict abortion—at most—to the first three months of pregnancy."[124] With the widespread availability of ultrasound pictures in physician's offices and on YouTube, most Americans have seen what I see daily in my work as an obstetrician: a fetus beyond the first trimester is easily identified as a young human being.[125]

Finally, it's important to point out that the lack of significant abortion restrictions in the U.S. is not mirrored by the rest of the world. Of 198 countries, only 59 (29 percent) allow abortion on demand (no reason needed). Only seven allow abortion past **20 weeks (3 percent): China, North Korea, Vietnam, Canada, the Netherlands, Singapore, and the U.S.** In fact, we are second only to China in total number of abortions in the world (and they are forcibly aborting many of their children!). Only six other countries allow abortion between 12-20 weeks. The rest (45) allow abortion only at 12 weeks or below. Think about that: only 6 percent of the countries in the world allow abortion after the first trimester.[126] We consider ourselves the **champion of human rights** throughout the world. How did we become part of this **nefarious group**?



NOTES

119 "Abortion," Gallup, accessed December 3, 2018, http://news.gallup.com/poll/1576/abortion.aspx.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.

123 "Public Opinion on Abortion: Views on abortion, 1995-2017," Pew Research Center, accessed December 3, 2018, http://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/public-opinion-on-abortion/.

124 "Abortion in America," Marist Poll – Knights of Columbus, January 2016, http://kofc.org/un/en/resources/communications/abortion-america-january2016.pdf.

125 John C. Fletcher and Mark I. Evans, "Maternal Bonding in Early Fetal Ultrasound Examinations," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 308 (1983): 392, accessed December 3, 2018, http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJM198302173080710.

126 Angelina Baglini, "Gestational Limits on Abortion in the United States Compared to International Norms," Charlotte Lozier Institute, February 2014, https://lozierinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/American-Report-Series-INTERNATIONAL-ABORTION-NORMS1.pdf.