

State Facts About Abortion

Alaska

National Background and Context

Abortion is a common experience: At current rates, about one in three American women will have had an abortion by the time she reaches age 45. Moreover, a broad cross section of U.S. women have abortions. 57% of women having abortions are in their 20s; 60% have one or more children; 86% are unmarried; 57% are economically disadvantaged; 88% live in a metropolitan area; and 78% report a religious affiliation. No racial or ethnic group makes up a majority: 41% of women obtaining abortions are white non-Hispanic, 32% are black non-Hispanic, 20% are Hispanic and 7% are of other racial backgrounds.

Contraceptive use is a key predictor of women's recourse to abortion. The very small group of American women who are at risk of experiencing an unintended pregnancy but are not using contraceptives account for almost half of all abortions—46% in 2000. Many of these women did not think they would get pregnant or had concerns about contraceptive methods. The remainder of abortions occur among the much larger group of women who were using contraceptives in the month they became pregnant. Many of these women report difficulty using contraceptives consistently.

Abortion is one of the safest surgical procedures for women in the United States. Fewer than 0.5% of women obtaining abortions experience a complication, and the risk of death associated with abortion is about one-tenth that associated with childbirth.

In the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a woman, in consultation with her physician, has a constitutionally protected right to choose abortion in the early stages of pregnancy—that is, before viability. In 1992, the Court upheld the basic right to abortion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. However, it also expanded the ability of the states to enact all but the most extreme restrictions on women's access to abortion. The most common restrictions in effect are parental notification or consent requirements for minors, state-sponsored counseling and waiting periods, and limitations on public funding.

Pregnancies and Their Outcomes

- In 2005, 6.3 million of the 62 million American women of reproductive age (15-44) became pregnant. 66% of these pregnancies resulted in live births and 19% in abortions; the

remaining 15% ended in miscarriage.

- In Alaska, 14,600 of the 138,731 women of reproductive age became pregnant in 2005. 72% of these pregnancies resulted in live births and 13% in induced abortions.

- In 2005, 1.2 million American women obtained abortions, producing a rate of 19.4 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age. The rate declined 9% from 2000, when the abortion rate was 21.3 abortions per 1,000 women 15-44.

- In 2005, 1,880 women obtained abortions in Alaska, producing a rate of 13.6 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age. Some of these women were from other states, and some Alaska residents had abortions in other states, so this rate may not reflect the abortion rate of state residents. The rate increased 16% since 2000, when it was 11.7 abortions per 1,000 women 15-44. Abortions in Alaska represent 0.2 of all abortions in the United States.

Where Do Women Obtain Abortions?

- In 2005, there were 1,787 abortion providers in the United States. This represents a 2% decrease from 2000, when there were 1,819 abortion providers. 34% of these providers were hospitals, 21% were abortion clinics (clinics where more than half of all patient visits were for abortion), 24% were clinics where fewer than half of all visits were for abortion, and 21% were private physicians' offices. 69% of all abortions were provided at abortion clinics, 25% at other clinics, 5% at hospitals and 2% at private physicians' offices.

- In 2005, there were 9 abortion providers in Alaska. This

represents a 29% increase from 2000, when there were 7 abortion providers.

- In 2005, 87% of U.S. counties had no abortion provider. 1/3 of American women lived in these counties, which meant they would have to travel outside their county to obtain an abortion. Of women obtaining abortions in 2005, nonhospital providers estimate that 25% traveled at least 50 miles, and 8% traveled more than 100 miles.

- In 2005, 81% of Alaska counties had no abortion provider. 23% of Alaska women lived in these counties. In the West census region, where Alaska is located, 18% of women having abortions traveled at least 50 miles, and 5% traveled more than 100 miles.

- In Alaska, no metropolitan area lacks an abortion provider.

Restrictions on Abortion

In Alaska, the following restrictions on abortion were in effect as of January 2008:

- A woman must receive state-directed counseling that includes information designed to discourage her from having an abortion before the procedure is provided.

Credits

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Definitions and Data Sources

References for information contained in this fact sheet are available at http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/sfaa/sfaa_sources.html



U.S. and Alaska abortion rates, 1991-2005

