

Abortion Statistics in the United States

“The United States has one of the highest abortion rates among developed countries.”¹

Reported number of legal abortions in the United States for selected years according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):²

Year	# of Abortions	Year	# of Abortions
1972	586,760	1997	1,186,039
1973	615,831	1998	884,273
1980	1,297,606	1999	861,789
1985	1,328,570	2000	857,475
1990	1,429,247	2001	853,485
1992	1,359,146	2002	854,122
1995	1,210,883	2003	848,163
1996	1,225,937	2004	839,226

At first glance, the table listed above appears to show a considerable drop in the number of reported abortions performed in the U.S. between 1997 and 1998. Upon closer examination, however, the decrease is more moderate.

And here’s why: In 1998 and 1999, the number of abortions reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) excluded data from four states—Alaska, California, New Hampshire and Oklahoma—that did not provide information.

Data from Oklahoma was included in 2000 – 2003 statistics. In order to compare reported abortions in 1997 with subsequent years, the CDC recalculated abortion totals for 1995, 1996 and 1997, minus these non-reporting states. The adjusted numbers of reported abortions are as follows:

Year	Number of Reported Abortions	Change from Previous Year
1996	934,549	3 percent increase
1997	900,171	3.5 percent decrease
1998	884,273	2 percent decrease
1999	861,789	2.5 percent decrease
2000	857,475	0.5 percent decrease
2001	853,485	0.5 percent decrease
2002	854,122	0.1 percent increase
2003	848,163	0.7 percent decrease
2004	839,226	1.1 percent decrease

The CDC attributes the majority of the decrease in reported abortions after 1997 to the absence of California’s data. In 1997, the CDC estimated the number of abortions in California to be 275,700. The CDC acknowledges that the number of abortions reported to the agency are probably lower than the actual number performed.

The lack of uniform, mandatory abortion reporting for all states hampers the CDC’s ability to accurately report the number of abortions performed in the U.S., as evidenced in the 1998 to 2004 reports.

According to the CDC report, in 2004:

- Forty-one percent of women who had abortions in the U.S. had no other children.
- Forty-four percent of women who had abortions in the U.S. had at least one previous abortion.
- Eighty-two percent of women who had abortions in the U.S. were unmarried.

According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of the nation’s leading abortion provider Planned Parenthood:³

- At current rates, an estimated 43 percent of American women will have at least one abortion by the age of 45.
- Two-thirds of all abortions are among never-married women.
- Fifty-two percent of U.S. women having abortions are younger than 25 years old.
- About 13,000 abortions each year are attributed to rape and incest—representing one percent of all abortions.

¹ “Facts in Brief,” Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1995, New York, NY.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Abortion Surveillance—United States 2004 Report,” November 23, 2007, accessed online Jan 8, 2008 at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/ss/ss5609.pdf>

³ “Facts in Brief: Induced Abortion,” Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2002, New York, NY.

Status of Abortion Law in the United States

In 1973, two U.S. Supreme Court decisions, *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, radically changed the legal landscape of American abortion law by striking down all then-existing state laws prohibiting abortion. The combined effect of the rulings required abortion to be:

- legal for any woman, regardless of her age
- legal for any reason through the first six months of pregnancy, and for virtually any reason thereafter

Reversal of the *Roe* and *Doe* court rulings would return the issue of abortion to state jurisdictions but would not automatically make abortion illegal in all states. In this event, the status of legal abortion would vary from state to state, depending on pre- and post-1973 laws and court rulings.

For instance, 15 states have not repealed pre-*Roe* abortion bans, which would presumably be activated by the overturning of *Roe* and *Doe*. However, court rulings in 17 states (including seven of those with pre-*Roe* laws prohibiting abortion) declare that their state constitutions permit abortion, above and beyond the federal Constitution.

This potential patchwork of laws in a post-*Roe* and *Doe* era prompts many in the cause for life to seek an amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting abortion. Since 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court has issued 30 abortion-related rulings, including several that have upheld the constitutionality of state laws that regulate and limit abortion in the following ways:

- Parental Involvement Laws requiring a parent to be notified or give consent before their minor daughter has an abortion, subject to a judicial bypass option that allows a teenage girl to involve a judge rather than her parent(s); 44 states have passed such laws with 35 of those laws in effect.
- Informed Consent Laws requiring that women receive full medical disclosure of possible risks associated with and alternatives to abortion; 31 states have passed these laws with most in effect.
- Waiting or Reflection Period Laws requiring that after receiving such information, women wait a period of time (usually 24 to 48 hours) before having an abortion; 23 states have passed these laws.

State legislatures are also considering and enacting laws in the following areas of abortion (and related) law:

- Abortion and breast cancer legislation to inform women that abortion increases their risk of breast cancer.
- Abortion clinic regulations to raise the level of safety and sanitation in clinics where abortions are performed.
- Fetal homicide laws in 36 states recognize two victims (mother and preborn child) when a criminal act is committed against a pregnant woman (excluding abortion).

For more information on the status of abortion law in your state, see Americans United for Life's *Defending Life 2007: Proven Strategies for a Pro-Life America* available at www.unitedforlife.org.