

Reproductive Rights

Roe v Wade established our right to safe and legal abortions and maintained it for almost half a century. In 2022, a right-wing religious movement empowered by a strategically stacked Supreme Court officially overturned the landmark decision, revoking federal protections for reproductive rights. Individual states in the U.S. established (or returned to) extreme laws that ban abortions and criminalize people who seek, provide or assist those who need them.

- **Abortion is essential healthcare.** The U.S. has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world despite its economic status and advancements in healthcare. The Center for Disease Control & Prevention defines maternal mortality as the “death of a woman during pregnancy, at delivery, or soon after delivery,” and African Americans are disproportionately impacted due to structural and systemic racism, and gender discrimination in clinical care and health research (see the term [medical misogyny](#)). Researchers have definitively demonstrated the link between lack of access to abortion care and rising maternal mortality rates; states with more restrictions also have [fewer policies supporting women and family health](#). Abortion care saves the lives of pregnant people. We deserve to live long and healthy lives.
- **Abortions will still happen... just not safe ones.** We are currently seeing a *maternal mortality crisis* in the U.S. Laws that ban safe and supportive care force pregnant people to seek dangerous medical alternatives that can severely harm or result in death. Given current trends, the situation promises to escalate. One [article](#) estimates that a total ban on abortion in the U.S. would lead to a 7% increase in pregnancy-related deaths in the first year, and in later years, a 21% increase, with African Americans experiencing the most significant increase (33%).
- **Abortion bans affect all of us.** Cisgender women and their experiences have largely been at the focus of the battle for reproductive rights on both ends of the “debate,” to the exclusion of transgender men, nonbinary and gender queer people who were assigned female at birth, and are capable of being pregnant. According to Planned Parenthood’s [Natalie Hinchcliffe](#), this erasure “moves [us] further from the very important conversation about how abortion affects cisgender men, families, geographic communities, as well as the LGBTQ+ community.” The unraveling of reproductive rights is happening at the same time as the LGBTQ+ community faces attacks from the same political movement that overturned Roe v. Wade. In 2023, trans people have been targeted by [legislation](#) across the country that denies them the same concept of bodily autonomy and the right to gender-affirming care.
- **Abortion may be criminalized, but it always was for incarcerated people.** The U.S. has a higher incarceration rate than any country in the world, and it continues to increase. Several states have already implemented laws that effectively criminalize having an abortion, providing abortion care, or aiding someone in getting an abortion, making it another “crime” that will contribute to mass incarceration. But even before the overturning of Roe v Wade, pregnant incarcerated people had little autonomy over their bodies. One [study](#) reported that among the 58,000 pregnant people who are sent to jails and prisons in an average year, few are able to access abortions due to insurmountable barriers such as exorbitant cost, and distance from abortion caregivers. The majority of incarcerated individuals must give birth behind bars in substandard health conditions with minimal support or resources.

Further Reading

- [Birth Justice Advocates Find New Challenges - and Opportunities - Post-‘Roe’](#)
- [Abortion Restrictions Threaten Independent Providers Like Me](#)
- [After Roe Fell - Abortion Laws by State](#)
- [How Abortion Bans Impact the Transgender Community](#)
- [Pregnancy in Prison Statistics \(PIPS\) Project](#)

This information was compiled as a public resource by HerRights Global, March 2023



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Nonprofit committed to ending gender violence and facilitating social justice