

Fact Sheet: Abortion Later in Pregnancy

Abortion is safe, effective, and an essential form of health care — and people should be able to access abortion at any point during pregnancy. When someone decides to have an abortion, it should be safe, affordable, and free from punishment or judgment. When politicians impose time-based abortion bans founded on misinformation, they hurt the people who need care. Every person's circumstances are different. People, with the support of their families, communities, and health care providers, should be able to decide for themselves when or why they need an abortion without having those decisions controlled by politicians.

There are many reasons why someone may need an abortion later in pregnancy, all of them equally valid:

- Many people seeking abortion later in pregnancy may not have known they are pregnant until later on.
- For others, their lives and health circumstances may change significantly throughout a pregnancy, resulting in the need for later care.
- Some who are aware of their pregnancy early on and are seeking abortion care may be met with barriers to care or legislative bans that prevent them from getting an abortion once they decide to do so.

Many people are unable to access desired abortion care once they've decided to get an abortion because of barriers, including:

- Systemic racism in health care ("The Fall of 'Roe' Was Driven by Our Country's Original Sin: Anti-Blackness," Rewire News Group)
- Later discovery of pregnancy — **1 in 13.5 people** discover they are pregnant after 12 weeks and **1 in 475 people** discover their pregnancy after 20 weeks (WhoNotWhen.com)
- Lack of abortion providers available to give care — **87% of U.S. counties** do not have abortion providers ("Contraceptive Needs and Services, 2014 Update," The Guttmacher Institute)
- Logistical factors, such as difficulty taking time off from work or school, caregiving responsibilities, and lack of access to transportation ("Texas Abortion Ban Poses New Challenges for Students," Inside Higher Ed)
- Limited financial resources to pay for the logistics to access abortion, as well as the procedure itself — **36% of people** who have abortions later in pregnancy reported that the cost of the procedure was a barrier to accessing care ("Timing of steps and reasons for delays in obtaining abortions in the United States," The Guttmacher Institute)

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- Misinformation about abortion options or about an individual's pregnancy, [like gestational age bans](#) ("Gestational Age Bans: Harmful at Any Stage of Pregnancy," The Guttmacher Institute) and intentionally inaccurate information from [fake clinics](#), known as "crisis pregnancy centers" ("Four Women Reflect on Traveling Out of State for Their Abortions," Condé Nast Traveler)
- Restrictive state laws — [43 states](#) have laws or policies regarding abortion care that go beyond what is necessary to ensure patients' safety ("State Bans on Abortion Throughout Pregnancy," The Guttmacher Institute)
- Disabilities and underlying [health conditions](#) ("A Voice for Choice," Chronogram)
- Harassment, intimidation, and violence at abortion clinic entrances — [about 50% of people](#) seeking an abortion report seeing protesters at clinics ("Introduction to the Turnaway Study," Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health)

Abortion seekers often face more than one of these barriers at once, making it even more difficult to get an abortion.

Most states ban abortion at some arbitrary point in pregnancy, despite public opinion supporting abortion access. There is strong support among the American public for protecting abortion access. Currently, [61 percent](#) of U.S. adults say abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Many of the United States' most respected medical associations have issued statements emphasizing the medical importance of protecting the right to and access to abortion care for people's wellbeing. Some of these associations include the **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**, the **American Medical Association**, and the **American College of Physicians**.

Yet, despite this broad public support, anti-abortion politicians keep pushing abortion ban laws designed to restrict access to abortion, including abortion later in pregnancy. These bans make underlying systemic inequities in wealth, education, and health care access even worse. They delay people from being able to access abortion care throughout pregnancy.

Forcing someone to carry a pregnancy against their will can have harmful and lasting consequences for them and for their families:

- Studies [show](#) there are serious negative physical and economic consequences for a person who is denied abortion care and their family ("Introduction to the Turnaway Study," Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health).
- People denied an abortion are [more likely](#) to experience subsequent poverty, to have insufficient funds to pay for basic living expenses, to have poorer health, and are more likely to stay in violent romantic relationships ("Introduction to the Turnaway Study," Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health).
- A person who has been denied an abortion is [three times more likely](#) to be unemployed than someone who was able to obtain abortion care ("Gestational Age

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Bans: Harmful at Any Stage of Pregnancy,” The Guttmacher Institute). People who are able to get abortion care are [six times more likely](#) to have positive life plans and to achieve them than those denied care (“The effect of abortion on having and achieving aspirational one-year plans,” BMC Women’s Health).

A person’s health and well-being, not political ideologies and interference, should guide important medical decisions throughout pregnancy.

Protecting access to abortion throughout pregnancy requires:

- **Repealing** abortion bans — all of which are medically unnecessary and arbitrary.
- **Holding accountable** lawmakers and fake clinics that spread misinformation about abortion, especially abortion later in pregnancy.
- **Keeping politics out** of personal health care decisions and letting people and their health care providers make individualized health care decisions without political interference.

The Abortion Care Reality Project shares the reality of abortion later in pregnancy by challenging stigmas and correcting misinformation and disinformation. Visit abortioncarereality.org and follow [@AbortionCareRP](https://twitter.com/AbortionCareRP) on Twitter to learn more.