

Debunking Anti-Abortion Myths

Issued by the National Mobilization for Reproductive Justice

Myth: *Abortion opponents claim a “heartbeat” can be detected at six weeks of pregnancy and indicates a live birth will occur.*

Reality: A five-six week old embryo does not yet *have* a heart. According to medical experts, all that exist are electrical currents that do not assure a live birth. Structurally and in function, a fetus’s heart develops over the entire course of pregnancy.

Myth: *Fetuses feel pain.*

Reality: A fetus doesn’t develop the nerve connections necessary to feel pain until around the minimum age of viability at 24 weeks or even later.

Myth: *Abortion leads to infertility.*

Reality: Evidence refutes this. Abortions do not impact a person’s ability to become pregnant in the future.

Myth: *Abortion increases the risk of breast cancer.*

Reality: There is no connection between abortion and breast cancer. This has been proven since 2003, when the U.S. National Cancer Institute convened a group of over 100 experts to study the question.

Myth: *Abortions are dangerous and lead to increased rates of death.*

Reality: Abortions are one of the safest medical procedures and are integral to women’s health. They are far safer than pregnancy and childbirth. The U.S. has 20.1 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births, compared to just .6 maternal deaths for the same number of abortions. Banning abortion would increase overall pregnancy-related deaths by 21%, and would cause 33% more deaths among Black women, whose outcomes are skewed by racism and poverty.

Myth: *People use abortion as a form of birth control.*

Reality: When safe contraception is free and accessible, most people prefer it. However, many people who seek abortions are already on birth control. The truth is that no form of birth control is fail-safe. Condoms have a 13% failure rate and the pill a failure rate of about 7%.

Myth: *People who seek abortions are at increased risk for mental health concerns.*

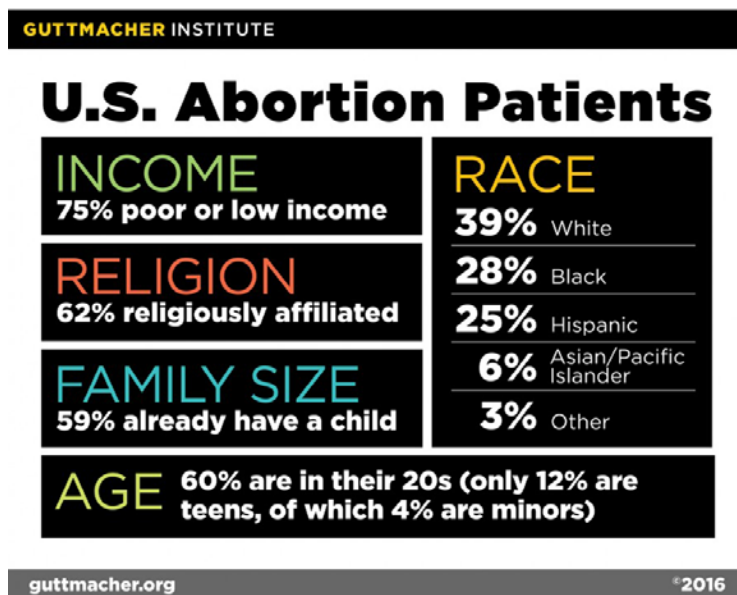
Reality: There is no evidence that having an abortion contributes to depression or suicidal thoughts. One of the largest studies of post-abortion emotions found the most common feeling reported was relief. Participants did not express negative emotions or regret. It was found, however, that women who were *denied* an abortion were more likely to experience anxiety, lower self-esteem, and lower life satisfaction.

Myth: People who get abortions are “anti-parent” and “anti-family.”

Reality: The opposite is true. Many people who access abortions are already parents and know what it means to provide for children. Low-income mothers commonly seek abortions so they can better support the children they already have. Without access to abortion, good jobs, and childcare, parents face serious consequences – including unemployment, barriers to education, and intervention by child welfare agencies.

Myth: Abortion is only of concern to privileged white women.

Reality: Women of color and marginalized people have many reproductive health needs – including ending forced sterilization, achieving birth justice and non-racist health care, and assuring bodily autonomy for trans people and people with disabilities. Blacks and Latinxs are also proportionally the highest users of abortion, so they are hardest hit when abortion is inaccessible. Many lack the money or job flexibility to travel out of state for a safe procedure. They are more likely to be prosecuted for miscarriages. Forced pregnancy contributes to poverty and systemic race and gender oppression in the U.S.



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