

Who Not When

The Facts: Abortion Bans and Abortion Later in Pregnancy

Once someone has decided to end their pregnancy, they deserve safe, and affordable abortion care—as early as possible and as late as necessary.

As a pregnancy progresses, the cost of abortion goes up and the number of providers goes down. And more abortion bans go into effect. These factors combine to make care increasingly difficult to access further into pregnancy.



What is Later Abortion

There is no medical definition of “later abortion,” “abortions later in pregnancy,” or “late-term abortion.” **Abortion is common** and most (92%) abortions happen in the first trimester, or up through 13 weeks. Abortions after that may be referred to as “later” in comparison. Others may use these terms to describe abortions after 20 weeks, or 24 weeks, or into the third trimester.



Why People Get Abortions

People seek abortions later in pregnancy for the same reasons they do earlier in pregnancy. But many are not able to access care as soon as they would like. Most people get abortions because they are worried about money, because it’s not the right time, and/or because they’re not with the right partner.

The Big Myth

A lot of people think later abortions, especially those after 20 weeks, only happen for specific medical reasons. **There is no data to support this.** Stories about poor fetal diagnoses in “wanted” pregnancies are overrepresented in the media. This contributes to stigma and moral judgments about why other people get later abortions.

Two Paths to Abortions Later in Pregnancy:

Dr. Katrina Kimport, a researcher at UCSF, identified two common pathways through which people find themselves seeking abortions later in pregnancy:

First Path: **They learn new information:**

- Pregnancy was discovered after the 1st trimester
- Poor fetal diagnosis
- Newly discovered threat to pregnant person’s health/life
- Sudden life event or significant change in circumstances

Second Path: **They experience barriers** to obtaining care as early as desired:

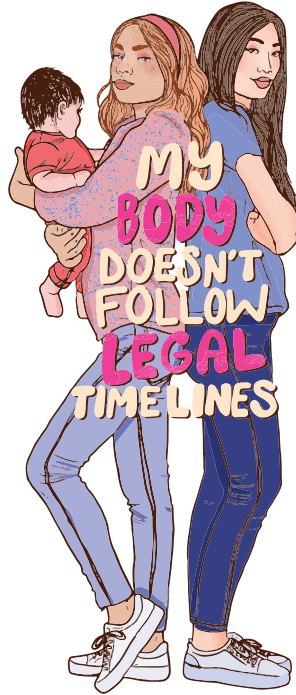
- Abortion bans and burdensome regulations
- Difficulty paying for an abortion earlier
- Interaction with religious Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC)
- Difficulty arranging childcare or getting time off of work
- Conflicts with family or partner about the pregnancy
- Difficulty finding or traveling to an abortion provider

Plenty of people fit into both categories. They may get information later in their pregnancy and then have difficulty accessing abortion care.

Abortion Bans and Abortion Later in Pregnancy

What are Abortion Bans and How are they Harmful?

- These are laws that make abortion illegal after some point during pregnancy, for instance at 6wks, 15wks, 20wks, or after “potential fetal viability.” And they carry civil and criminal penalties. Bans cause real harm to those affected by them.
- Abortion bans are not based in health, safety, science, or medicine which is why major medical organizations oppose them.
- Abortion is a time-sensitive medical procedure. **Bans create pressure, lead to delays, and ensure that people run out of time when trying to access care.**



More Bans, More Harm:

Before Roe was overturned, abortion bans delayed and denied care to thousands of Americans every year.

Since Roe v. Wade was overturned, the number and severity of abortion bans have increased exponentially.

Now more people are pushed later, denied care, and exposed to the harm of abortion bans.



Gestational age bans, at any point in pregnancy, represent a knowing and willful use of state power to compel childbearing without regard for the consequences.

Megan K Donovan
Guttmacher Institute



Abortion bans should be measured by their impact

Bans Create Pressure: Drawing strict legal lines on abortion can pressure pregnant individuals to make decisions before they are ready. Instead, they should have time to gather all relevant information without pressure from the state.

Bans Cause Delays: Once someone decides to get an abortion, they may be delayed in accessing one. Abortion bans lead to delays by forcing people to travel to access care in another state. By far, the most common reason for delay is having to gather money to pay for travel expenses or for the abortion itself. People must take more time off work, sort out childcare, and arrange travel. These delays create a cycle: abortion procedures get more expensive week-by-week, which requires finding more money. This pushes care further and further out of reach.

Bans Deny Care: Many abortion seekers are denied care by abortion bans. Whether they were not able to travel, not able to raise enough money, or just not able to access care in time.

Bans Make Inequities Worse: When someone is unable to obtain a desired abortion, research indicates that they are worse off:

- More likely to live below the poverty line
- More likely to stay with an abusive partner
- More likely to suffer adverse health outcomes
- Less likely to realize life plans.



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Who is most affected by abortion bans?

Delays and denials of abortion care fall hard on people already struggling:

- Poor people (half of abortion seekers live below the federal poverty line)
- Black women
- Young people
- Disabled people
- People living in rural areas
- People who discovered their pregnancies later

These groups are more likely to be affected by bans due to institutional & systemic inequity.

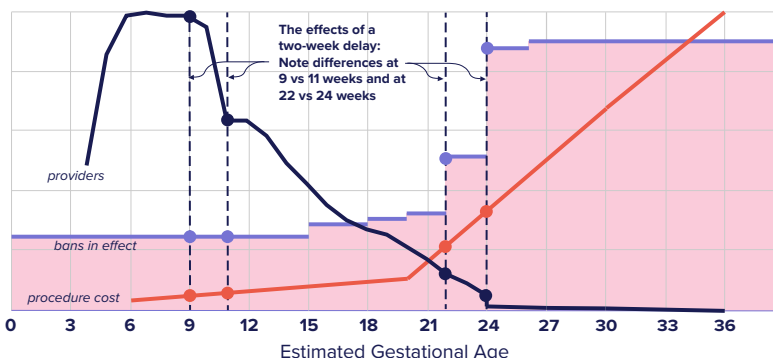
On Compromise in Policy and Politics:

Abortion care later in pregnancy has been overly politicized, and it is often compromised away by abortion advocates. Pro-active efforts to “codify Roe v Wade” have included bans on later abortions.

No abortion ban is reasonable to someone affected by it.

Bans Cause Delays

cost goes up, number of providers goes down



Sources: Wilwer E, Jones RK, Fuentes L, Castle SK. Abortion service delivery in clinics by state policy climate in 2017. *Contracept X*. 2020;2:100043. Ushma D, Upadhyay. 2022. Barriers Push People into Seeking Abortion Care Later in Pregnancy. *American Journal of Public Health* 112, 1280-1281. Guttmacher. State Bans on Abortion Throughout Pregnancy.

What is important to know about later abortion?

- **Abortion is safe throughout pregnancy.** The abortion complication rate throughout pregnancy is low. It is much lower than the rate of complications experienced during pregnancy. Abortions are safer than pregnancy or common procedures such as wisdom tooth extraction.
- **People are confident in their decision to get an abortion** with (95%) of people saying it was the right decision for them. The most common emotion reported is relief.
- **Later abortion care is mostly provided by independently-owned clinics.** 79% of clinics offering care after 22 weeks are independent clinics. After 26 weeks that number jumps to 100%.
- **Later abortion care is expensive;** the average cost for an abortion after the first trimester is over \$2,000. Second trimester care can cost upwards of \$10,000 or more. Third trimester abortion care can cost \$20,000-30,000 or more. Half of abortion seekers live below the Federal Poverty Level (\$13,590 for a single person and \$27,750 for a family of four). Because of a federal ban on abortion funding, Medicaid does not cover abortion care.
- **Accessing later abortion care is expensive.** Later abortion patients often need to pay for travel, food, and hotels for multi-day procedures.

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