

Making Sense of the Numbers

Abortion in the United States: Statistics and Trends

The Consequences of *Roe v. Wade*

48,589,993
Total Abortions since 1973

Downward Trend Continues

After reaching a high of more than 1.6 million in 1990, the number of abortions annually performed in the U.S. has dropped back to levels not seen since the late 1970s.

Two independent sources confirm this decline: the government's Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), Planned Parenthood's special research affiliate monitoring trends in the abortion industry.

The CDC ordinarily develops its annual report on the basis of data received from 52 central health agencies (50 states plus New York City and the District of Columbia). AGI gets its numbers from direct surveys of abortionists.

Because of these different methods of data collection, AGI has consistently obtained higher counts than the CDC. CDC researchers have admitted their report probably under counts the total number of abortions because reporting laws vary from state to state and some abortionists probably do not report or under-report the abortions they perform. Nevertheless, because increases and decreases in CDC and AGI numbers have until recently roughly tracked each other, both sources are thought to provide useful information on abortion trends and statistics. The CDC stopped reporting estimates for some states in 1998, making the discrepancy larger.

Abortions from AK, CA, NH, and OK were not counted in 1998-99 CDC totals, and numbers for AK, CA, and NH were still missing from 2000-2002; CA NH and WV were excluded from 2003. For those areas that did report, additional declines were seen between 1998 and 2001, and in 2003. The CDC reported a slight increase in 2002, in contrast with the AGI numbers showing a slight decrease.

The AGI figures for 2001 -2003 are estimates based on abortion reports from more than 40 states, and show a downward trend. AGI estimates that abortions decreased in 2003, to the lowest number since 1976.

Using AGI figures through 2003, estimating 1,287,000 abortions for 2004-06, and factoring in the possible 3% under count AGI estimates for its own figures, the total number of abortions performed in the U.S. since 1973 equals more than 48 million.