

Ohio Activist Toolkit:

Abortion Polling and Messaging in the Post-Roe World



Summer 2022



Background: On June 24, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, ending the federal constitutional right to abortion, and leaving the decision up to the states. Hours after the decision came down, a federal judge in Ohio granted the State's request to allow a previously blocked abortion ban, Senate Bill 23, to take effect. Senate Bill 23 radically restricts access to abortion in Ohio by outlawing abortion after the detection of fetal cardiac motion, which usually happens at six weeks of pregnancy, with very limited exceptions. On June 29, Ohio abortion providers, represented by the ACLU, ACLU of Ohio, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and the law firm WilmerHale, filed a lawsuit in the Ohio Supreme Court to restore Ohioans' reproductive rights secured by the Ohio Constitution. The lawsuit is ongoing, but for now, abortion is illegal after the detection of fetal cardiac motion.

CIVIQS – Abortion Access Survey (Ohio)

From June 25 to June 28, 2022 (Post SCOTUS decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*), we surveyed 671 registered voters in Ohio via an online poll. Polling was conducted through the CIVIQS group, and results are weighted by age, race, gender, education, and party identification to be representative of the population of registered voters in Ohio.

Topline Results:

This poll confirms what we have seen, heard, and lived for decades: a strong majority (82%) of Ohioans support some form of abortion access. Specifically:

- **38%** think abortion should be legal under any circumstance
- **44%** think abortion should be legal in some circumstances

Motivation message

While there is debate or nuance about the 'certain circumstances,' there is a high level of support for fundamental reproductive rights. Given that a six-week ban, which is before many people know they are pregnant, is almost a total ban, current law allows for none of this nuance. Ohioans support access to abortion. **Ohioans support reproductive freedom. Our current state policies and law do not reflect the will of the majority. Together, we can change this.**

We need to draw the connection that the impact of the SCOTUS decision had immediate and dramatic effects on abortion legality in Ohio. The same day that *Roe* was overturned, nearly all abortions became illegal. Prior to June 24, abortion in Ohio was legal up to twenty weeks after fertilization. **Abortion access became *much* harder, literally overnight.**

When asked if abortion will become harder to access or easier to access in Ohio now that the U.S. Supreme Court has overturned *Roe v. Wade*,

- **75%** think abortion will become harder to access
- **18%** think abortion access will stay the same
- **7%** are unsure

Motivation message

Healthcare in the United States is already out of reach for so many. Adding additional barriers to accessing healthcare, like abortion, creates significant harm to our Ohio communities and beyond. Patients and their doctors, not politicians and other bad-faith actors, should be the ones to make personal medical decisions. All people deserve access to safe and effective healthcare.

Ohioans have a firm understanding that abortions are safe when performed by doctors or managed with medications. History reminds us that if abortion is completely outlawed, many Ohioans will be forced to give birth against their will, travel long distances to get the care they need, or turn to sources outside of the traditional medical sphere, opening them up for potential medical complications or criminal prosecution.

Respondents carry this concern. When asked if abortion becomes illegal in Ohio, do you think abortions will become less safe or more safe,

- **61%** think abortions will become less safe
- **26%** think abortion safety will stay about the same
- **4%** think abortions will become more safe
- **10%** are unsure

Motivation message

Abortion is extremely common, safe, and essential medical care. Legal abortion is one of the safest medical procedures in the United States and is substantially safer than continuing a pregnancy through to childbirth.

It is clear that Ohioans do not see themselves (or their loved ones) as being impacted by the devastating SCOTUS decision... but we know that **one out of four American women⁺ has had, or will have, an abortion before the age of 40.** Furthermore, current abortion law carries dangerous implications for miscarriage management, where the lives of people carrying a wanted pregnancy are also at risk because of this decision. This decision impacts ALL OF US. If some of us don't have reproductive rights, none of us are guaranteed reproductive rights. We must emphasize bodily autonomy, and bring back the #YouKnowMe and #SomeoneYouLove campaigns on social media.

⁺ We know that not just women have abortions and need access to abortions, trans men and non-binary individuals need access as well. We generally use non-gendered and inclusive language when talking about who has abortions – but in this case we are referencing a specific research result in which only women were included in the statistic so must use the more specific “women” to accurately reflect the statistical finding of the research.

When asked how likely it is that you or someone you love will need an abortion at some point in the future,

- **12%** answered very likely
- **18%** answered somewhat likely
- **56%** answered not at all likely
- **14%** answered unsure

Motivation message

Unless, and until, you have ultimate control over what you can do with your body and what is done to it — including your sexuality, your reproductive organs, your choice to procreate or not, and your access to information about your sexual well-being, health, and options — **then you are under someone else's control.** An unchecked government will gladly fulfill that role.

Again we see a major disconnect of people not associating themselves with the issue. It is important to reinforce how everyone is impacted by this issue, and highlight that alternative solutions will not work for everyone. The best thing for Ohioans to do is reinstate abortion access so that we don't have to find alternative solutions.

When asked if you or a loved one needed an abortion, but there were no clinics in Ohio,

- **38%** answered travel to another state
- **14%** answered order abortion pills online
- **9%** answered continue with the pregnancy
- **23%** answered neither I, nor my loved ones, would ever need an abortion
- **16%** answered something else or unsure

Motivation message

Everyone deserves to get the healthcare they need in their community. Traveling out of state is not a reality for many Ohioans, and we know the ultimate burdens will fall on BIPOC Ohioans, low-income Ohioans, young Ohioans, rural Ohioans, and Ohioans with a disability. Many people do not think they or someone they care about will ever need an abortion, but procedural abortion is one of the most common surgeries in all of medicine. We must have ultimate control over our bodies, including our sexuality, our reproduction, and our access to information about sexual health and our options. The government should never have the ability to dictate whether someone can have an abortion. **All abortion bans cause harm to our communities.** We are all impacted by this severe regression in our reproductive rights.

Perry Udem – Abortion Access Survey (Nationwide)

From December 20, 2021 to January 4, 2022 (Pre SCOTUS decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*), we surveyed 1,972 voters across the country via an online panel. The survey was administered in English and Spanish.

Topline Results:

Prior to the SCOTUS decision, American voters broadly understood overturning *Roe v. Wade* would be regressive and harmful to women and other people who can get pregnant.

- **67%** say abortion rights and access are important parts of women's rights
- **59%** say a Supreme Court ruling that overturns *Roe* or allows states to ban or severely restrict abortion would be a “step backward for women's rights”
- **57%** say such a ruling would be a step backward on “progress in our society”

Motivation message

People do not see the post-Roe world as a positive place for American society. In fact, it's the exact opposite. This is the first time the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled to take away rights previously granted. This is an unprecedented attack on reproductive freedom.

A SCOTUS ruling is likely to be more mobilizing than deflating to voters. Voters across every demographic group, including white men and those in rural areas, are more likely to say they'd move toward a candidate in favor of, rather than against, abortion rights.

- **37%** say they'd feel more likely to participate in the midterms as a result of a ruling that allows bans on abortions
- **75%** say they'd be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports abortion rights and access

Motivation message

We all need to vote like our reproductive rights depend on it, because they do! Elections can help us win back our reproductive rights. We must all pledge to elect and vet candidates who support abortion access. **Our state lawmakers matter more than ever before, especially the Governor, the Ohio Supreme Court Justices, and the Attorney General of Ohio.**

Voters prefer individual control on this issue over regulation of law. When asked whether elected officials should regulate abortion,

- **64%** said the decision to have an abortion, including the reasons and situations for having an abortion, should not be regulated by law

Motivation message

Framing this as a control issue and governmental power issue helps move people. Personal feelings aside, many people do not feel comfortable having the concept of the ‘abstract government at large’ decide when and if people should start a family.

Voters are beginning to draw their own conclusions more about political motivations on this issue. Fewer than half said the reason is that lawmakers want to protect the unborn. Connecting the line between state policies and gerrymandering is critically important. Voting is the universal tool to stop power-hungry politicians who use abortion as political fodder.

When given a list of potential reasons about state lawmakers’ motives,

- **62%** of voters say that these lawmakers want to appeal to religious conservatives
- **56%** of voters say that these lawmakers only care about staying in power

Motivation message

The current political landscape has allowed extremist politicians, who only represent a minority of the population, to exert their personal beliefs on society with little to no accountability. **Politicians work for the people.** Americans can and should exercise their right to vote out any politicians who put their personal beliefs over people’s rights and freedoms.

- Abortions save lives.
- Abortion is essential healthcare.
- Banning or restricting abortion disproportionately harms the same people who have always faced systemic barriers to care — communities of color, people living on low-incomes, undocumented immigrants, young people, the LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities. The harm will fall hardest on BIPOC communities who already face a severe maternal mortality crisis that is worse in the same states that are determined to ban abortion.
 - In Ohio, Black women are two and a half times more likely to die from a cause related to pregnancy than white women.
 - In 2020, 48% of Ohioans who obtained abortions were Black, while the Black community represented only 13% of Ohio's population.
 - The higher rates of abortion are due to the disproportionate burden Black people face in accessing healthcare for contraceptive services.
 - Higher rates of abortion also stem from the systematic economic disenfranchisement of Black people.
- A pregnant person is 14 times more likely to die from the complications of remaining pregnant or giving birth, than from complications from an abortion.
- People of varying genders need and deserve access to reproductive healthcare, including abortion and birth control.
- By using inclusive language, we center the people most impacted by attacks against reproductive health and rights.
- We are committed to protecting as many people as possible from the traumatic experience of forced pregnancy, the consequences of which can last an entire lifetime and put the health and lives of everyday Ohioans at risk.
- Forced pregnancy is now a reality in 2022 for those who will face life-altering consequences including enduring serious health risks from continued pregnancy and childbirth, harder challenges to escape poverty, derailed education, career and life plans, and difficulties to leave an abusive partner.