

Reproductive Rights Fact Sheet

What are reproductive rights?

Reproductive Rights are the rights of individuals to decide whether to reproduce and have reproductive health. This may include an individual's right to plan a family, terminate a pregnancy, use contraceptives, learn about sex education in public school, and gain access to reproductive health services.

1873: Contraception for women was NOT illegal until the passage of the Comstock Act in 1873.

From this Act came state- by-state Comstock Laws, which basically prohibited the use of contraceptives for women AND dissemination of information about contraceptives for women.

1880's: Abortions used to be incredibly common, and were not made illegal until the 1880's.

In the United States, abortion was widely practiced before about 1880, by which time most states had banned it except to save the life of the woman. Anti-abortion legislation was part of a backlash against the growing movements for suffrage and birth control — an effort to control women and confine them to a traditional childbearing role.

1930: (post criminalization), abortion accounted for (officially) about 18% of maternal deaths.

Illegal abortions were incredibly common throughout the early and mid-20th century, but they were also dangerous. Without proper medical equipment and medicine, many women were susceptible to infection and possible death; both of which decreased over time as advances in medicine developed.

Lower-income and minority women had it significantly harder.

Due to the steep price of abortions, many lower-income and minority women did not have the money nor accessibility to affordable, safe abortions. Therefore, many women tried to

induce their own abortions or resorted to unsafe procedures, which lead to higher death rates between **minority and low-income women** as compared to white women; a 1:2 versus 1:4 ratio.

Margaret Sanger is the mother of the women's reproductive rights movement.

From birth control to Planned Parenthood, Margaret Sanger started it all, which is why it is important to know who she is. Sanger worked mostly with **lower-income, immigrant women** as a maternity nurse and saw that they suffered from abortions, frequent childbirth, and miscarriages; all due to a lack of birth control and affordable health care.

1921: Sanger forms the American Birth Control League (ABCL), chapters of which begin forming in large cities across the US.

1942: Several groups involved in the reproductive rights movement, including the ABCL merge and become PLANNED PARENTHOOD.

The **American Birth Control League (ABCL)** was founded by [Margaret Sanger](#) in 1921 at the First American Birth Control Conference in New York City. The organization promoted the founding of birth control clinics and encouraged women to control their own fertility.

In 1942, the league became the [Planned Parenthood Federation of America](#), still open today, with clinics all across the nation. Faye Wattleton became the first African American president of the organization and the youngest in the late 70s. She made it her goal to provide affordable health care for both men and women **without discrimination**.

NOTE: How Planned Parenthood works: Most of Planned Parenthood's federal funding is from Medicaid reimbursements for preventive care, and some is from Title X. There's no keep-Planned-Parenthood-running part of the federal budget.

Here's where "defunding" comes in:

At least 60% of Planned Parenthood patients rely on public health programs like Medicaid and Title X for their preventive and primary care. So, when you hear extreme politicians

talking about “defunding” Planned Parenthood, they really mean blocking patients who rely on public health care programs from getting their care at Planned Parenthood

1960: The FDA approved the pill as a form of contraception.

The birth control pill was a medical miracle, because before its invention women suffered from frequent childbirth. Often times families even struggled to feed all their children because of the number of mouths to feed. The pill allowed women the option to not have children, but to continue having sex with their husbands. (Note ‘husbands’: sex outside of cis marriage was not socially acceptable. Also note that the Pill is not the only form of contraception).

**1973: Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in America,
January 22, 1973.**

Roe v. Wade was a case that was taken all the way to the Supreme Court and it concerned the topic of the right to privacy. The final decision made was that a woman’s right to make her own medical decisions fell under the constitutional right to privacy, which therefore prevented politicians from stopping women from getting abortions.

1976: The Hyde Amendment excludes abortion from the comprehensive health care services provided to low-income people by the federal government through Medicaid.

Congress has made some exceptions to the funding ban, which have varied over the years. At present, the federal Medicaid program mandates abortion funding in cases of rape or incest, as well as when a pregnant woman's life is endangered by a physical disorder, illness, or injury.

2010: The Affordable Care Act (3/23/2010) provided more than 55 million women with birth control without a copay, in many important ways reversing the Hyde Amendment.

Before the ACA, many women were not able to afford the out of pocket cost of birth control. The ACA made birth control more accessible, which contributed to equality in terms of health care. Health care should not be more expensive because of gender, and the ACA has helped combat this issue of income and gender inequality.

2017: Accessible and affordable healthcare for all women in America is at risk.

With the election of Donald Trump and the power the Republican party currently holds in Congress, women's health care is at risk. The Republican party has been vocal about their desire to repeal the Affordable Care Act, and on January 5, 2017 Paul Ryan announced that the the Republican party will begin this process by trying to defund Planned Parenthood. Defunding Planned Parenthood and the repeal of the ACA would leave millions of women without proper reproductive and women's health care.

The history of reproductive rights in America is important to know, because we now must defend these rights. Together, men and women alike, we must protect these rights not just for ourselves, but for every other woman in America. All women deserve access to affordable women's health care, and all women deserve the right to control their own body.

FOR ADOLESCENTS AND TEENS: The Guttmacher Institute monitors and analyzes legislation, regulation and judicial action related to state policy developments on minors' access to reproductive health care and sex education. This effort is used to prepare monthly updates on new policy developments and the status of state laws and policies.

Abortion: What is Pro-life vs. Pro-choice?

Abortion is the single most controversial reproductive rights issue in the United States. The issue turns on whether a woman should have the "right" to terminate a pregnancy that would amount to a living human being if remained untouched.

On the one hand, **pro-choice** advocates argue that abortion falls within a person's constitutional right to privacy, believing the choice to terminate an "unborn fetus" lies with the individual and her doctor. On the other hand, **pro-life** advocates argue that a fetus is a

living being at the moment of conception and argues abortion should be criminalized to protect the life of the unborn fetus.

a radical reproductive rights zine for teens in trump's America -

https://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/a-radical-reproductive-rights-zine-for-teens-in-trumps-america

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/23/health/abortion-history-in-united-states/>

<http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org>

<https://www.reproductiverights.org/>

<https://www.guttmacher.org/>

<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/reproductive-health-and-teen-pregnancy>