

Accurate and Unbiased?

A deep dive into how the media covers abortion in the US.



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Introduction



When it comes to reproductive freedom, people’s personal ideologies should not interfere with others’ lives, nor should it trump science. But across the country, from states rolling back abortion access - even during a global pandemic - to the U.S. Supreme Court considering a case that could shut down abortion clinics and further limit access to abortion care for millions of women across the country, the right to abortion has never been more at risk. Media plays a fundamental role in framing and influencing the discussion around abortion and what they choose to cover, how they choose to cover it, and who they choose to include in coverage, matters.

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice America, Global Strategy Group (GSG) conducted an extensive analysis of abortion coverage in key news outlets in the United States and evaluated how this issue is discussed by the general public, Democratic and Republican leaders, and reporters on social media. In addition to broad questions of who covers abortion, when abortion is covered, and how it is covered, we wanted to understand the medical accuracy of abortion coverage, as well as the prevalence and framing of emotionally-charged or disinformation-based rhetoric about abortion in reporting and conversations online.

A random sample of more than 300 abortion-related articles were selected for study across ten major news outlets for the media analysis. The articles analyzed were reported during a six-month period, from January through June of 2019, during which time President Donald Trump used his State of the Union Address to perpetuate a potent disinformation campaign about "infanticide," and states across the country pushed an unprecedented number of extreme bans on abortion. Using GSG's Viewfinder platform, we undertook a parallel social listening exercise to analyze the conversation around abortion on Twitter and the tone of the discussion.

Overview

While abortion is ultimately about the freedom to make a personal decision, most abortions happen in a medical setting. But the reality is that the topic of abortion is largely covered by news media in the United States in the context of highly-charged partisan policy and electoral debates, and many media outlets often co-opt disinformation-based rhetoric associated with abortion. The conversation online that follows often becomes even more heightened and polarizing.

Journalists and media outlets play a critical role in shaping the debate around abortion.

Coverage of abortion in the media and on Twitter is dictated by and intertwined with the latest legislative and legal milestones. As a result, abortion coverage lacks unbiased or medically accurate context and terminology, and reads as disconnected from health care and women's actual experiences. This, in turn, can have a harmful impact for readers by presenting a more partisan and politically charged characterization of the issue than what exists in reality.

Analysis showed:

Abortion is covered as a political issue not a health issue. More than 77 percent of all abortion-related articles were written by political, general assignment, breaking news, or legal reporters. Reporter credentials impact whether abortion is accurately described in a medical context and what voices are included in the coverage, with health care reporters more than three times more likely to include the voice of a physician and four times more likely to reference medical research in their reporting than political reporters.

Charged rhetoric from anti-choice advocates are included in coverage, oftentimes with minimal context. Nearly half of all articles analyzed included terms such as "infanticide," "partial-birth abortion," and "heartbeat bill," but only a fraction of those articles provided an independent definition of the term. This trend is exacerbated on Twitter.

Political coverage elevates political voices and excludes those most impacted by abortion: doctors and those who seek abortion care. While 65 percent of the articles analyzed quoted a politician, only 13.5 percent of articles analyzed included a quote from a physician, 11 percent referenced any medical research, and just 8 percent featured a real person's story.

Partisan battlefield dictates abortion coverage. Almost half of the articles analyzed positioned Democrats as uniformly pro-choice and Republicans as uniformly "pro-life," depicting each party as farther apart on the issue of abortion than regular Americans are.

Abortion coverage follows legislation and litigation. Coverage of abortion peaked on days when there were major legislative or legal events resulting from political actions involving elected officials or interest groups. Otherwise, coverage of abortion remained relatively flat.

The rhetoric used by people quoted in the coverage reinforces the notion that the two sides of the abortion debate are far apart. Words like extreme, extremist, radical, or fringe were often used to describe Republicans, Democrats, and activists on both sides of the debate. However, opponents of pro-choice policies quoted in coverage were more likely to characterize Democratic politicians and voters as extreme, whereas supporters of pro-choice policies were more likely to characterize anti-choice policies as extreme.

Reporters characterize the abortion debate as divisive, furthering the perception of profound conflict on the issue. Around 17 percent of the articles analyzed described the issue of abortion as divisive, debateable, charged, controversial, or other similar terms.

Coverage obscures or omits majority support for Roe v. Wade. Only 9 percent of articles analyzed mention that a majority of Americans support Roe v. Wade and abortion access generally even though the vast majority of articles referenced the landmark ruling.

Methodology

We approached our analysis of mainstream media coverage through two lenses: the coverage itself and reporter activity on Twitter.

For analysis of media coverage itself, we conducted a quantitative and qualitative audit of more than 300 articles from 10 media outlets between January 1, 2019 - June 30, 2019. Our analysis included print articles and excluded articles written by contributors, editorials, columns, op-eds, or letters to the editor. Beyond controlling for editorial-style coverage and ensuring that abortion was a central theme in the article, the articles were randomly selected to ensuring an accurate representation of coverage. The outlets included in the audit were:

1. The New York Times
2. The Wall Street Journal
3. The Washington Post
4. The Associated Press
5. USA Today
6. CNN Politics
7. NBC News
8. Politico
9. The Los Angeles Times
10. The Houston Chronicle

To analyze the conversation on Twitter we examined posts over the six month period from January 1, 2019 - June 30, 2019. Mentions of abortion and associated topics were captured and analyzed from eight groups:

11. General Population
12. Women
13. Men
14. Democrats in the 116th Congress
15. Republicans in the 116th Congress
16. Dem Influencers
17. GOP Influencers
18. Abortion/Women's Beat Reporters

General Population refers to a sample of US adults on Twitter; Women subgroup refers to a sample of female US adults on Twitter; Men subgroup refers to a sample of male US adults on Twitter; Dem influencers refer to the most followed accounts among seed lists of influential Democrats; GOP Influencers refer to the most followed accounts among seed lists of influential Republicans; Abortion reporters represent available Twitter accounts from the 500 reporters who had most frequently written about abortion topics.

Findings



I. Abortion is covered as a political issue not a health issue

47.9%

(145 – nearly half) of the clips analyzed were written by political reporters.

20.1%

(61) were written by general assignment/breaking news reporters.

9.2%

(28) of the clips were written by legal affairs/Supreme Court reporters.

10.2%

(31) were written by health care reporters.

12.5%

Remaining areas constituted: business (3), culture (5), data (3), entertainment (9), foreign affairs (2), social issues (4), sports (3), demographics (3), religion (1) digital producer (2), economics (1), music (1), photojournalist (1)

Reporters who cover abortion are predominantly reporters who cover politics – White House, Congress, and state bureau reporters. Reporters on other beats potentially relevant to the issue of abortion – such as health care, culture, or social issues – make up a much smaller percentage of those who cover the issue. In fact, general assignment and breaking news reporters were almost twice as likely to cover abortion than health care reporters.

Findings

III. Charged rhetoric from anti-choice advocates are included in coverage, oftentimes with minimal context.

For example, with the rash of so-called "heartbeat" bills passed in several states this spring, legislators were approving bills that would ban abortion when a fetal heartbeat can be detected. Out of the 91 articles mentioning fetal "heartbeat" legislation, many articles noted that "a fetal heartbeat can be detected as early as six weeks." But only 27 articles noted that that is typically before a woman even knows she is pregnant — a critical fact that gives context to the potential impact on women.

And only four articles alluded to the notion that a "fetal heartbeat" is not a heartbeat as we commonly understand it, but "pulsing of what will become the fetus heart beat" or "fetal cardiac activity." **Only one article analyzed from The Washington Post included a more robust description of what a fetal heartbeat actually represents:**

“An ultrasound will usually show electric activity in an embryo’s forming heart at about six weeks of pregnancy, said Jen Villavicencio, an OB/GYN and member of The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. She said although that activity is not the same as a heartbeat that pumps blood, she often uses the term “heartbeat” with her patients at that point because they are familiar with that terminology. Villavicencio said it technically is an inaccurate description.”

In the majority of articles, context and explanations around charged rhetoric were oftentimes left to activists, furthering the politicization of the debate. For example, in an article in The New York Times, it stated:

“In Ohio, the state legislature is prepared to approve a bill this session that would ban abortion after a fetal heartbeat is detected, which could be as early as six weeks into a pregnancy. Anti-abortion activist groups like Right to Life Ohio championed the bill, while abortion rights advocates have pointed out that many women and girls are not even aware that they may be pregnant that early.”

This attributes the notion that many women and girls are not aware that they are pregnant at six weeks is a talking point of abortion rights advocates — not an accepted or neutral truth.

Findings

This is a pattern repeated time and again in coverage of abortion.

In a Politico article on the Congressional bill titled the "Born Alive Abortion Survivors bill," the context around the meaning of Born Alive are attributed solely to Democrats:

Democrats argue that current law already protects infants, and that Republicans are creating a false narrative about doctors routinely allowing healthy, full-term babies to die, when in fact abortions late in pregnancy are rare and most involve severe fetal anomalies or risks to the life of the mother. Under the legislation, they warn, doctors could risk a felony conviction if they don't hospitalize and resuscitate a newborn who is only going to live for a few hours, possibly in pain.

This is echoed in a Wall Street Journal article mentioning the same legislation:

Recently, Republicans have focused on legislation that would force health-care practitioners to provide medical care to infants deemed alive after abortion procedures. Republicans have argued the bill doesn't restrict access to abortions but rather focuses on the care of fetuses that are "born alive" during such procedures. Democrats noted that infanticide is already illegal in the U.S and said that the bill was designed to intimidate reproductive-health-care providers.

In other words, the context around highly charged rhetoric used by anti-choice legislators and activists is provided by other partisans – not independent individuals or associations – further politicizing the coverage and relegating facts around the rarity of later abortion to a Democratic talking point.

Findings

In some cases, the harmful rhetoric was actually used more frequently by journalists than by party activists; journalists who write about abortion were actually more likely to mention "heartbeat bills" on Twitter than Republican Members of Congress or GOP influencers. Journalists mentioned "heartbeat bills" 50 percent more than any other group.

Average number of posts mentioning "heartbeat bills"

Abortion Reporters

GOP Influencers

Women

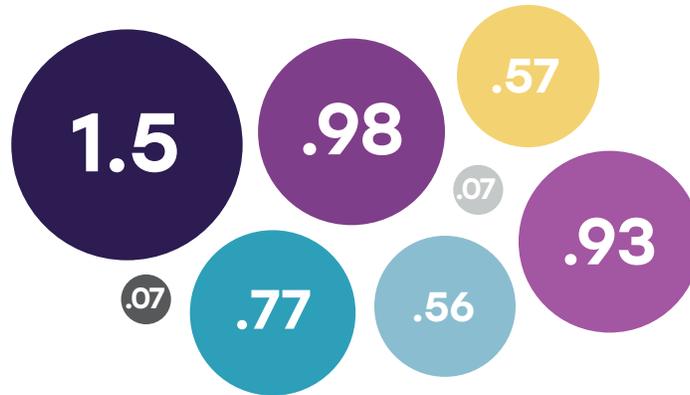
General Population

Men

Dem Influencers

Dems 116 Congress

GOP 116 Congress



Alongside use of this harmful language in their social media posts, journalists were even less likely to put this language in context on Twitter. Only 20 percent of posts mentioning "heartbeat bills" put the term in quotation marks, and fewer than 2 percent of posts included the term "so-called."

Examples of the typical language being used without context included:

-  Board of canvassers deadlocks on fetal heartbeat bill. GOP votes yes to approve language, Dems vote no.
-  Heartbeat bill gets final approval in state House. Heads to governor's desk.
-  Ohio governor signs ban on abortion after 1st heartbeat. (from @AP)

IV. Partisan battlefield dictates abortion coverage.

The politicization of the coverage is seen clearly through the frequent framing of Democratic politicians as uniformly pro-choice and Republican politicians as anti-choice. This framing persists in coverage of abortion despite polling that demonstrates that a majority of Americans support legal access to abortion and do not want *Roe v. Wade* to be overturned, including a majority of Republicans (52%). Research from Avalanche Strategy shows that a strong majority of Americans support reproductive freedom and that the issue is far less polarized than reporting would suggest.

Almost 45 percent (135) of the articles analyzed positioned Democrats as uniformly pro-choice and Republicans as uniformly "pro-life," painting each of these parties with a stance that is farther apart than regular Americans are on the issue.

**House Republicans
Now Unanimous in
Opposing Abortion Rights**

***Canceled Fund-Raiser
Prompts Question: Can a
Democrat Oppose Abortion?***

**Missouri Senate joins
GOP anti-abortion wave
with 8-week ban**

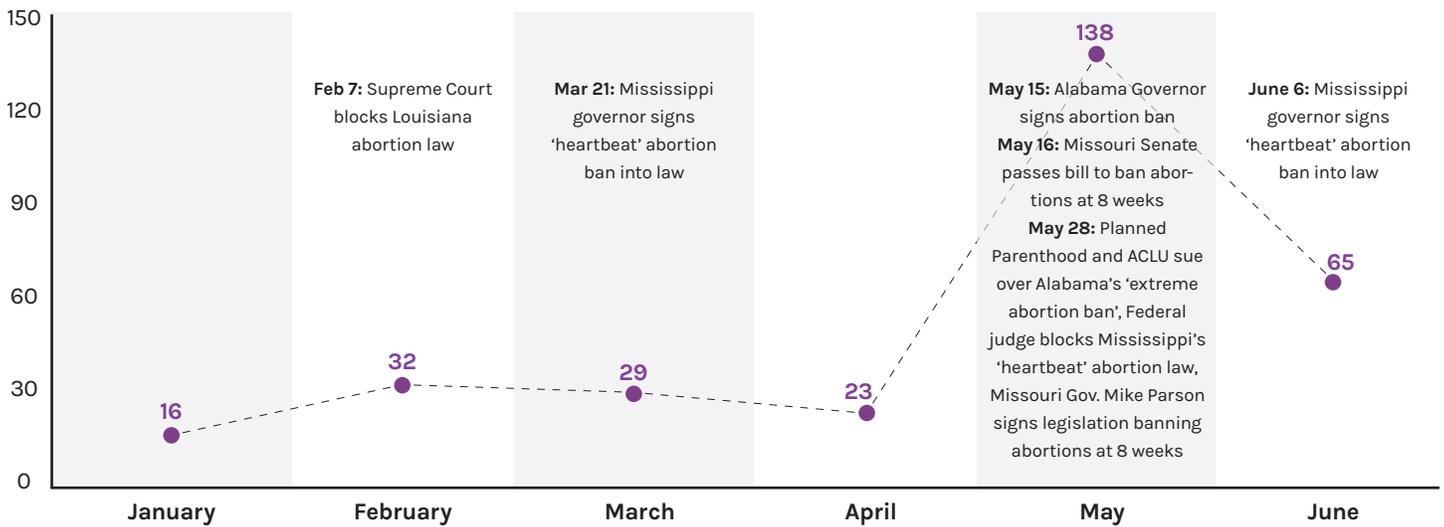
Findings

V. Abortion coverage follows legislation and litigation

In the first six months of 2019, abortion coverage peaked on days when there were major legislative or legal announcements, such as the Supreme Court blocking Louisiana's restrictive abortion law that would have left the state with only one abortion provider in February or the Alabama Governor signing the most stringent abortion law in the nation outlawing abortion in nearly every case, including in instances of rape or incest, in May.

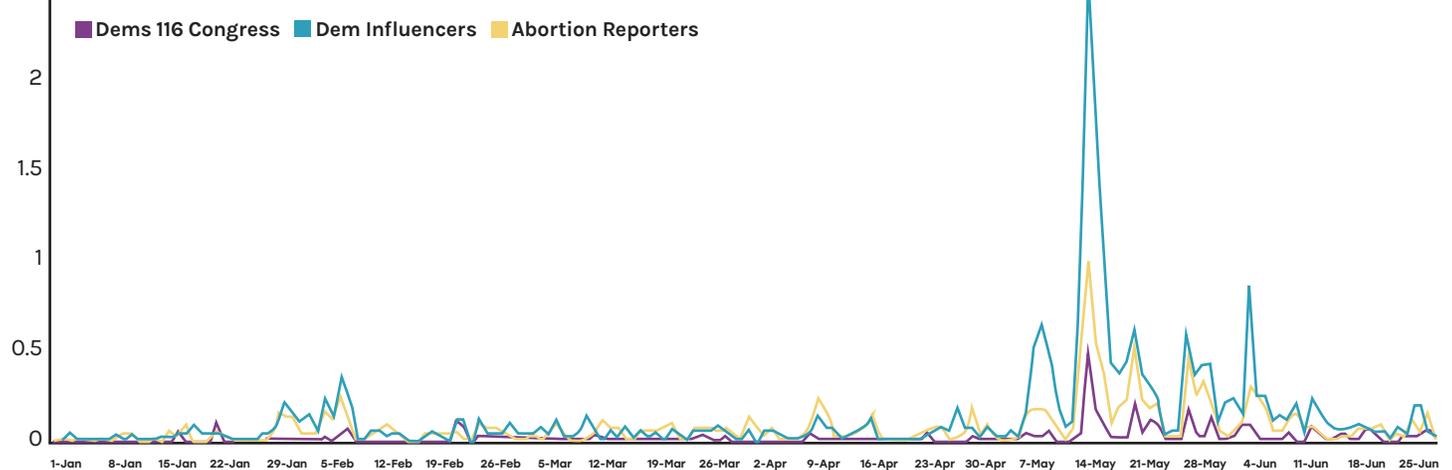
Outside of these peaks, coverage of abortion remained relatively flat.

Average posts per day



Social media conversation, even among Democratic Members of Congress, Democratic influencers, and journalists who wrote multiple stories about abortion, was limited to brief spikes around periods of legislation, litigation, and political news.

Average posts per day



Findings

VI. The rhetoric used by people quoted in the coverage reinforces the notion that the two sides of the abortion debate are far apart.

Words like extreme, extremist, radical, or fringe were used to describe Republicans, Democrats, and activists on both sides a collective 76 times.

However, opponents of pro-choice policies were more likely to characterize Democrats as extreme, whereas proponents of pro-choice policies were more likely to characterize anti-choice policies as extreme.

Trump and Republicans are trying to paint Democrats as radical on abortion

Who is characterized as extreme/extremist/radical/fringe?

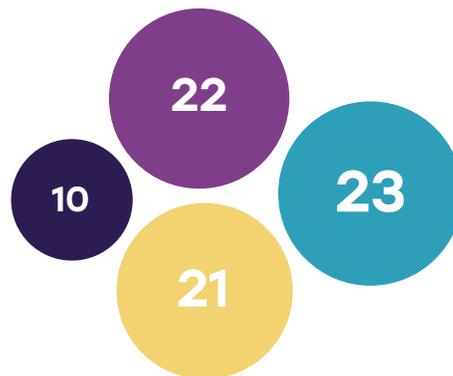
Number of mentions

Republicans

Anti-choice policies/supporters

Democrats

Pro-choice policies/supporters



New abortion laws set battle lines for 2020

"It's an extreme measure that has no place," Sen. Doug Jones (D-Ala.), who faces a tough reelection race next year, said in an interview. "I don't think the majority of the people in Alabama believe in extreme measures like that."

But Republicans insist that they aren't concerned about the politics of abortion going into 2020. They argue Democrats' abortion rights views have become increasingly extreme and believe Democrats rallying around abortion rights will backfire in swing and red-leaning states next fall.

VI. Reporters themselves characterize the abortion debate as divisive, furthering the perception of profound conflict on the issue.

In 17.2 percent (52) of articles analyzed, reporters explicitly described the issue of abortion as divisive, debateable, charged, controversial, or other similar terms.

Sensitive Contentious Combative
Polarizing
Divergent
Divisive
Charged Debateable
Controversial

Amid a shifting legal landscape on abortion, both parties seek political advantage

"The U.S. Supreme Court's shift to the right has intensified the long-running battle over abortion, with activists on both sides racing to pass new laws and capitalize on the divisive issue ahead of the 2020 elections."

Findings

VII. Coverage obscures or omits majority support for *Roe v. Wade*.

Despite coverage framing the issue of abortion as controversial, support for *Roe v. Wade* has enjoyed majority support, with recent polling indicating strong support – 77 percent – for the landmark ruling.

Only 8.9 percent (27) of articles analyzed mentioned majority support for *Roe v. Wade* and abortion access generally, while a clear majority – 62 percent (187) of coverage – mentions *Roe v. Wade* in the context of anti-choice efforts to overturn the landmark ruling because of the conservative composition of the Supreme Court.

VIII. Political coverage elevates political voices and excludes those most impacted by abortion: medical professionals and women.

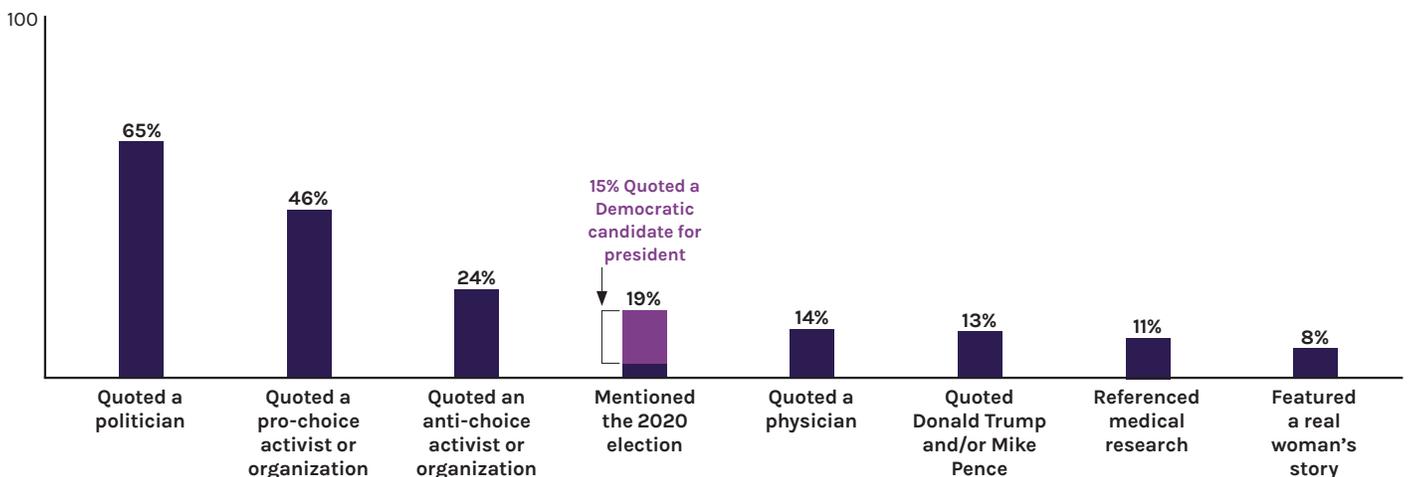
With nearly half of the analyzed articles written by political reporters, it is no surprise the vast majority of voices quoted in abortion coverage come from elected officials and activists on both sides.

However, those who are arguably most impacted by abortion restrictions - doctors and women - are notably excluded from much abortion coverage. Only 13.5 percent (41) of the articles included a quote from a physician and only 11.2 percent (34) of the articles referenced any medical research, despite the fact that abortion is a medical procedure and much of the new legislation targets doctors who perform abortions.

The medical research that is referenced in coverage tends to track when and how many abortions are performed, and tends to omit research on important issues relevant to recent reporting. This includes factors that lead to abortion later in pregnancy, or the legitimacy around a baby being "born alive" following an abortion (an inflammatory and made-up scenario by anti-choice activists describing the notion of a baby "surviving an abortion").

Strikingly, women were the least represented voices in the coverage, with just 8.3 percent – 25 articles – featuring a real woman's lived experience. Politico featured no stories with real women, The Wall Street Journal, CNN Politics, and The Associated Press each featured only one story, and The New York Times and Houston Chronicle had a mere two stories featuring a woman's lived experience with abortion.

Who is quoted in abortion coverage



Changing the Conversation



Nearly one in four women will have an abortion by the age of 45.

Women who decide to get an abortion do so for a wide range of reasons: their own ability to take care of existing children, concerns for their health or the health of the fetus, or because they are simply not ready to be a parent. Whatever the reason, it is a private, personal decision about something that could have profound consequences for, first and foremost, women and pregnant people.

As a result, it is difficult to untether the "battle" around abortion from the battle for control of women. Yet with coverage of abortion dictated nearly entirely by the latest legislative or legal milestones, abortion often reads as largely disconnected from the realities of health care and the lived experiences of women. This can have an insidious impact on how readers see and internalize the issue, with the dichotomy between a real life situation of someone seeking an abortion, and news coverage, farther apart than ever.

Journalists and media outlets play a critical role in shaping the debate around abortion. Following are some recommendations to help close this dichotomy between coverage and the lived experiences of those closest to the issue:

Changing the Conversation

1

Add context and intentional clarification around charged rhetoric

Rhetoric around abortion – and legislation to restrict it – is intentionally emotionally-charged. Phrases like "heartbeat bill" or "born alive" – are strategically coined and injected into the conversation by the anti-choice movement and merit at least some context that helps to qualify the accuracy of the terms used.

Many reporters used quotation marks around these terms or inserted phrases like "so-called" before the term. This is a step in the right direction, but still leaves the rhetoric largely undefined and open to assumptions or misinterpretation. It also reinforces and amplifies the inaccurate and misleading concept behind use of the term.

Below are some recommendations on how to contextualize inflammatory anti-choice terms if they are referenced in coverage:

Heartbeat Bill	Legislation that restricts access to abortion when fetal cardiac activity can first be detected in an embryo, which typically occurs at approximately six weeks, before many women know they are pregnant. This cardiac activity is electric activity among cells that will eventually become the heart, but is not the same as a heartbeat that pumps blood. An alternative to "heartbeat bill" is legislation banning abortion after six weeks, before many women know that they are pregnant.
Infanticide	An inflammatory term used by anti-choice activists and politicians to falsely describe abortion later in pregnancy or post-birth palliative care. Infanticide, of course, is already illegal.
Born Alive	An inflammatory and inaccurate term not rooted in medical science and used by anti-choice activists and politicians who claim they want to protect an infant who is "born alive." In these tragic cases, a baby is dying and politicians are suggesting taking away a parent's ability to make the best decision for their family about palliative care for the infant in exceptionally difficult circumstances.
Partial-birth abortion	An inflammatory phrase used by anti-choice activists and politicians in reference to a criminal ban on a certain abortion procedures that has no exception for if a woman's health is in danger, but is intended to evoke disturbing and violent imagery and is not a medical or clinical term.
Abortion industry / abortion lobby	Phrases used by anti-choice activists and politicians to depict abortion rights advocates and abortion providers as an organized interest group and to call into question their motivations as somehow suspect or malicious. The range of organizations that advocate for abortion rights are doing so to uphold everyone's freedom to make their own decisions about pregnancy, not to seek personal financial enrichment.
Abortion on demand	A phrase used by anti-choice activists and politicians to describe the notion of unregulated abortion access for women. In fact, even though abortion is still legal under Roe, women face many barriers to accessing abortion care, and for many pregnant people, they weigh a number of considerations before seeking abortion care. Guttmacher Institute is a good resource on abortion laws that restrict access and erect barriers to care.

Changing the Conversation

Abortionist	A non-medical term used by anti-choice activists and politicians to describe a medical professional who performs an abortion. The term is intended to undermine the credibility of doctors and other medical professionals who provide abortion care.
Crisis Pregnancy Center / Women's Health Center	These are fake women's health centers that intentionally lie to, shame, and mislead those seeking an abortion in order to block them from accessing abortion care. These centers often do not provide medically accurate, comprehensive, or unbiased information.
Late-term Abortion	A phrase used by anti-choice activists and politicians to describe an abortion that occurs later in pregnancy, often due to complex circumstances, such as a serious fetal diagnosis. This is not a medical term. The preferred phrase is an abortion that occurs later in pregnancy.
Unborn child / preborn child	These terms are used to shift the focus away from a pregnant person and solely focus on a fetus. Embryo or fetus are medically accurate terms, depending on the stage of development.
Pro-Abortion	This term used by anti-choice activists mischaracterizes the core guiding principle of the pro-choice movement: to allow people the ability to choose what is best for them, their bodies, their families, and their lives. The preferred phrase is pro-choice.
Dismemberment Abortion	This an intentionally inflammatory term used to describe the abortion procedure, dilation and extraction (D&E abortions). D&E abortions are a safe - and in some states the only - option for pregnancy around or after 14 or 15 weeks. Many states have tried to ban D&E abortions, which in some states would criminalize the only abortion procedure available after 14 or 15 weeks. The medical term is dilation and extraction or D&E abortions.
Chemical Abortion	A term used to describe medical abortions - also known as medication abortion or the abortion pill- which is a safe and effective way to end an early pregnancy and has been approved by the FDA for 20 years. It is often used to make abortion sound like a dangerous procedure, when in fact abortion care has a safety record of more than 99 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The preferred term is medication abortion.
DIY Abortions	This phrase used by the anti-choice movement to describe a self-managed abortion, where someone ends their own pregnancy, often through medication such as mifepristone and/or misoprostol. The term "DIY" is used to evoke images of abortions being done at home or as part of a "DIY" trend. The preferred term is self-managed abortion.

Changing the Conversation

2

Ask the experts

While the issue of abortion is inextricably linked to the broader notion of freedom, most abortions happen in a medical setting. To be understood and discussed responsibly, the physician's perspective – or, at the very least, a general grounding in medical accuracy – is critical. Yet, there is a profound exclusion of medical voices or medical research in coverage of abortion. The result of this is that key facts about abortion and the impact of restrictions to abortion access end up being shared by partisan – not independent – voices. This, in turn, politicizes important data and research that should be framed as objective. It also enables harmful medical disinformation – such as the notion that an actual heart is beating at six weeks into a pregnancy – to continue confusing and misleading readers.

Physicians who are on the front lines of reproductive health care – and who are targeted by many of the recent legislative restrictions – provide an independent voice outside of the political sphere and can help confirm or refute claims from those on both sides of the debate. Media should consider seeking and incorporating insights from organizations such as the American Medical Association (AMA), American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), and when relevant, the American Academy of Pediatrics who occasionally weigh in on sex education and other reproductive health care issues. Kaiser Family Foundation is also a good resource for broader health care insights, including reproductive health.

Reporters looking for these perspectives at more localized or state-based levels can also find provider voices on the ground; Physicians for Reproductive Health (PRH) maintains a network of abortion providers in many states across the country who can often speak with press.

Some media outlets have even gone so far as to confront the issue of integrating medically-accurate terminology in abortion reporting head on. In the wake of the passage of abortion bans in several states, The Guardian published an article asserting ACOG's stance that 'heartbeat bills' do not "reflect medical accuracy or clinical understanding". This, in turn, prompted The Guardian to update its style guide to "more accurately reflect abortion bans spreading across the United States. Instead of using 'fetal heartbeat bills', as the laws are often called by anti-abortion campaigners, the Guardian will make 'six-week abortion ban' the preferred term for the laws, unless quoting someone, in order to better reflect the practical effect of the laws." Making medical accuracy a central tenet of how The Guardian covers the issue of abortion is a notable way to dial down the politicization of reporting while also improving the quality of the coverage.



Changing the Conversation

In the articles analyzed, quotes from physicians and medical research brought a refreshing perspective from the front lines. In a CNN Politics article on Trump's false claim that mothers and doctors have the option to "execute" babies, it sought reaction from Dr. Barbara Levy, vice president of health policy at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, who said:

"Abortion later in pregnancy is not used as an alternative to delivering healthy women's full-term, viable pregnancies. Additionally, it's callous to suggest that healthy women with viable pregnancies at term abruptly change their minds and seek abortion care as the solution."

It goes on to quote Dr. Jennifer Conti, a fellow with the advocacy group Physicians for Reproductive Health and co-host of The V Word podcast, who talked about the factors behind later stage abortion:

"Those exceptionally rare cases that happen after 24 weeks are often because a fetus has a condition that cannot be treated and will never be able to survive – regardless of the gestational age or trimester. It's this exact reason that it's nonsensical to legislate these cases: Nobody arrives at the decision to have an abortion after 24 weeks carelessly. Rather, it's the rare case of rapidly decompensating maternal heart disease or a delayed diagnosis of anencephaly, where the fetus forms without a complete brain or skull, that bring people to these decisions."

The expertise physicians bring to the dialogue around abortion cannot be discounted, particularly because of the political nature of the issue.

3

Mention that a majority of Americans support abortion access and maintaining Roe

Reading news coverage of abortion can lead one to believe that America is deeply divided on abortion and there is no viable path forward that can enjoy support from the majority of Americans. Yes, Republican elected officials tend to support anti-choice policies and Democratic elected officials tend to support pro-choice policies, but the fact remains that a majority of Americans (seven in 10) support access to legal abortion and do not want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned, and in fact the issue of abortion is less polarized than conventional wisdom would suggest. In fact, public support for *Roe v. Wade* is at an all-time high.

Changing the Conversation

Those who are most acutely impacted by abortion are also the least likely to be included in coverage of it.

4

Talk to people who've experienced pregnancy or abortion

In evaluating the voices included in the abortion debate, those who are most acutely impacted by abortion are also the least likely to be included in coverage of it. This further alienates the issue of abortion from those impacted by the very legislation and litigation dominating coverage.

Finding people who are willing to share their experiences around abortion can be difficult given the sensitive and personal nature of the issue. And with political and legal affairs reporters leading coverage of the issue, there is little expectation to include a real person's lived experience in articles that are mainly tracking legislative or legal events.

Yet, the failure to include a person's lived experience in coverage of the political and legal actions around abortion only furthers the framing of abortion as a solely political and politicized issue. Each and every time a person makes a decision to keep or terminate a pregnancy is one based on a complex range of factors that does not necessarily fit neatly within the current abortion debate, which is why incorporating the perspectives of real people only helps to enrich the quality of news coverage.

Media seeking perspectives of people with personal stories of reproductive health care and abortion can reach out to organizations like NARAL Pro-Choice America and many other reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations who can help connect reporters with people willing and able to share their personal stories.

About NARAL Pro Choice America

NARAL Pro-Choice America and its network of state affiliates and chapters are dedicated to protecting and expanding reproductive freedom for all. For more than 50 years, NARAL has worked to guarantee that every woman has the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing legal abortion. Since 1969, NARAL has made history, grown to 2.5 million members, and met the moments that have defined this fight with action, power and freedom. In recognition of its work defending our constitutional right to choose, Fortune Magazine described NARAL as "one of the top 10 advocacy groups in America."

About GSG

Global Strategy Group is proud to be a partner to NARAL Pro-Choice America and the many other allies on the front lines of defending women's reproductive health and right to choose. GSG is the go-to public affairs, communications, and research partner for companies, causes, and campaigns. We work with our clients to build their reputations, tackle big challenges, create positive change, and win. We are passionate about working on the issues and the politics that shape the world around us, and to helping elect the nation's progressive leaders. We partner with foundations and major issue advocacy groups to create impact-driven initiatives and build issue campaigns that resonate with key audiences and drive meaningful change. Twice named Democratic Pollster of the Year by the American Association of Political Consultants, GSG is also the largest Democratic Polling firm in the country. We have polled in more races than any other Democratic firm since the 2010 cycle.

