



FREEDOM IS FOR
EVERYBODY

Findings from One-Week Analysis on Tennessee Abortion Restrictions

July 2020

Following Tennessee's recent passage of a slate of abortion restrictions, our [Global Strategy Group](#) partners conducted a one-week analysis of related coverage. Though these specific restrictions have been blocked from going into effect, attacks on abortion access have persisted in earnest even throughout the pandemic.

Alarming, our findings confirmed several of the insights we identified in our [original analysis](#) of top-tier print outlets. **In an analysis of 35 news articles published from June 19th – July 14th in both local and national outlets in which the main topic was abortion restrictions in Tennessee, we found:**

- Despite the fact that the vast majority of articles (28) quote a politician, **only one article referenced medical research, physician, or medical professional and zero articles included the perspective of an impacted Tennessee woman or pregnant person.** The lack of the perspectives of the two types of stakeholders most impacted by abortion restrictions - pregnant people and doctors - is even more stark than in our original analysis, where we found that 14 percent of articles included the perspective of physicians and 8 percent included the experience of an impacted woman.
- Just over half of the articles (18) mention the inclusion of a so-called "heartbeat bill," which would ban abortion after 6 weeks, but **only three mention that abortion would be banned before many women know that they are pregnant, and none of the articles include further context or explanation about the impact of this legislation for Tennesseans,** such as the number of women who would no longer be able to access abortion or even the medical accuracy of the term "heartbeat" to describe that stage of development. In our broader analysis, we found that fewer than 5 percent of articles mentioning "heartbeat" bill alluded to the notion that a "fetal heartbeat" is not a heartbeat as we commonly understand it and just one article included a robust description of what a fetal heartbeat actually represents.
- Even though more than a quarter (10) of the articles mentioned the Supreme Court ruling *Roe v. Wade*, usually in the context of efforts to overturn the decision, **only one of those articles mentioned majority support for the landmark decision** (77 percent in [NPR/PBS/Marist poll](#)). This aligns precisely with our report finding that just one in 10 articles (9 percent) mentioning *Roe* also include the fact that the majority of Americans support it.
- Nearly half of the articles (17) were written by general assignment and breaking news reporters and nearly a quarter (8) were written by political reporters. Only one article about restrictions to Tennessee's abortion policies was written by a health care reporter with the remaining written by those covering culture or women. This tracks with our original report finding that **abortion is disproportionately covered as a political issue.**

Taken together, our analysis of coverage of Tennessee's new abortion restrictions put a finer point on our broader analysis, particularly as it pertains to gaps in coverage, such as the lack of impacted or expert voices, the use of disinformation-based rhetoric such as "heartbeat" bill without context, and omission of the fact that the vast majority of Americans support reproductive freedom.

###