



# WE'RE TALKING ABOUT ABORTION

Crucial U.S. public opinion data and  
messaging takeaways for advocates

**Ipas** Partners for  
Reproductive Justice

**We need more Americans to speak up about abortion**—and to support the advocates, organizations, and decisionmakers working to protect and expand abortion access. That's why Ipas worked with Eden Stanley, an audience-centered firm, to conduct broad public opinion research. Our findings reveal three priority demographic groups most likely to support organizations and political candidates championing abortion rights. Based on the values and beliefs of these groups, we've identified key messaging takeaways. In this brief, we share data and takeaways most relevant for U.S. advocates.

**Nine out of 10 Americans  
are against a total ban  
on abortion.**



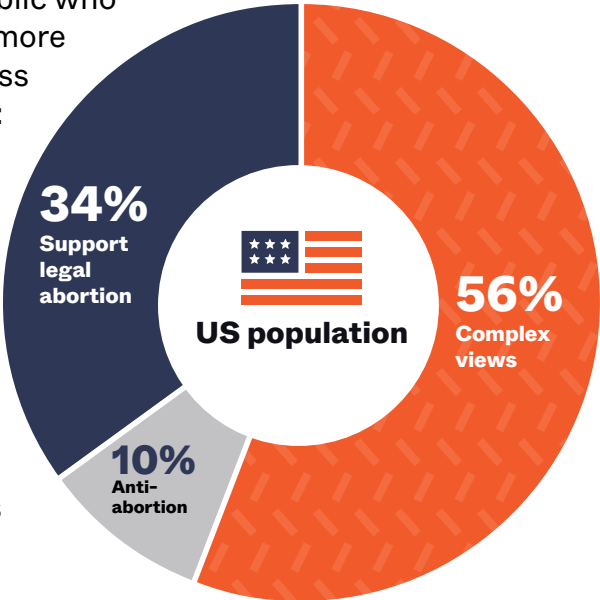
# Research findings

During February 2022, Eden Stanley surveyed 4,000 U.S. adults on topics including basic demographics, faith identity, values, political views, community participation, philanthropic behaviors, internationalism, support for abortion access and human rights, and media consumption. Eden Stanley analyzed the data using a method to yield unbiased results, and then followed up with qualitative research in groups deemed higher priority due to their likelihood of supporting abortion rights.

Results identify a large section of the U.S. public who either believe abortion should be legal or hold more nuanced views but still support abortion access and rights at least under some circumstances:

- 34% believe abortion should be legal in all or almost all circumstances
- 56% have more complex views and don't think abortion should be totally legal or illegal
- 10% believe abortion should be illegal in all circumstances

Added together, the populations who support abortion in some or all circumstances represent 189 million U.S. adults.



“ This research confirms what many advocates have long been saying—that there is an overwhelming majority of support for abortion access in this country. A small, well-organized minority has succeeded at chipping away abortion rights, but we know that these actions do not represent most Americans’ values and beliefs.”

—JENNIFER DAW HOLLOWAY, Ipas Director of Communications

## Priority demographic groups

Even though nine in 10 Americans are opposed to total abortion bans, our findings indicate that we shouldn't waste time and resources reaching out to 90% of the population. Three priority demographic groups stand out for both believing in abortion rights to some degree and being likely to take action in support of those beliefs. Added together, these three groups represent around 50 million adults.

**1.**  
**PRO-CHOICE  
ACTIVISTS**

7% of U.S. population  
15.5 million adults

People in this female-leaning, younger group (63% under age 44) are highly active in their support for causes they care about—lending their voice and time as well as money. They feel a moral duty to act and keep themselves informed via social media and news. Their belief in human rights is reflected in their support for racial, gender, and LGBTQ+ equality. **They believe abortion should be legal in all or almost all circumstances.**

**2.**  
**PRO-CHOICE  
DONORS**

5% of U.S. population  
11 million adults

People in this older group (56% over age 45) share a liberal outlook and support a wide range of progressive causes, including abortion access. Their support is most likely to take the form of donations, and they are generous supporters of NGOs. They’re unlikely to lend their voice or time, though, and tend to think of their charitable support as private. **They believe abortion should be legal in all or almost all circumstances.**

**3.**  
**MODERATES**

12% of U.S. population  
25 million adults

This group occupies a “middle ground” on the spectrum of attitudes about abortion. People in this male-leaning (64% male), urban group view themselves as pragmatic on abortion, balancing faith and community interests with personal experience. They will speak up and support causes that matter to them. **They believe abortion should be legal, but not necessarily in all cases, and they’re wary of absolutist positions.**

## Abortion beliefs in detail

Across all three of these priority demographic groups, we identified some common beliefs. Generally, people in these groups:

- Reject the idea that abortion should be totally illegal, recognizing that this leads to health risks for women (who will seek abortions anyway) and worse outcomes for vulnerable people, including those living in poverty.
- Want abortion to be a legally available option, though moderates would prefer that fewer women exercise this choice.
- See the link between abortion access and the wider need for affordable health care.
- Agree that legislators should stay out of this area, supporting the principle that people have a right to bodily autonomy.
- Are aware abortion is a divisive issue, are careful who they talk to and don’t expect to change the minds of those with “extreme” anti-abortion beliefs.

# Key messaging takeaways

Based on these research findings, we know that it’s possible to build support for abortion access in general, and for pro-choice political candidates and organizations working to expand abortion access and rights. Here are three key messaging takeaways to inform our individual and collective advocacy work:

## 1. NAME IT

We need to win over the majority by breaking the silence. Abortion is one of the most controversial issues in the U.S., and many people avoid talking about it. But the repeal of *Roe v. Wade* has been a wake-up call for Americans, showing us what happens when we take our freedoms for granted and don’t speak up: We lose them.

History shows that advances on social issues depend on our willingness to propel topics into the mainstream and keep them there, from the civil rights movements of the 1960s to Black Lives Matter. When we talk about abortion, we break the taboos that have helped a minority snatch away women’s freedoms.

## 2. SHOW THERE IS A MAJORITY

A more open conversation about abortion is just the start. If people know they’re in step with others, they’re far more likely to take action—because supporting abortion freedoms will feel like the norm, and the fight will feel more winnable.

A relatively small number of well-organized people spent decades campaigning to repeal *Roe v. Wade*. In 2022, they got it done, even though nine out of 10 Americans don’t agree with a ban on abortion. Now the majority needs to fight back.

Let’s not forget: Half the U.S. population is male. If we want to build a majority who are willing to speak up about abortion, then we must engage men as well as women. We can help men understand that talking about abortion shows the women in their lives that they care about their freedoms.

## 3. TALK ABOUT FREEDOM

People in the priority groups we’ve identified are motivated by the idea of freedom. Freedom to choose. To hold an opinion. To decide the course of their own lives. In particular, they value freedom from lawmakers’ interference in people’s personal lives. Some want lawmakers to stay away from all issues of bodily autonomy. They see state control in this area as a tool of oppression, especially of women’s rights.

Either way, the message is the same: Lawmakers, keep out. “Freedom” is a more resonant concept for these groups than “rights.” The term “rights” can alienate moderates because it feels abstract—more about high principles than real life. Talking about freedom from government interference also helps neutralize the vocal minority (actually just 5% of the U.S. public) who are both anti-abortion and fiercely libertarian.



P.O. Box 9990 | Chapel Hill, NC 27515 US | 1.919.967.7052  
[www.ipas.org](http://www.ipas.org) | [ContactUs@ipas.org](mailto:ContactUs@ipas.org)