



## Stats before Roe v. Wade

Public opinion polls have clearly and consistently shown that the overwhelming majority of the American people do not believe abortion should be legal except under a few, very rare, circumstances: when the mother's life is endangered by continuing the pregnancy, when the pregnancy results from rape or incest, and, to a lesser extent, when the baby will be born with a handicap. Pro-abortion organizations such as NOW, Planned Parenthood, and NARAL, of course, vehemently support the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision allowing a woman to have an abortion for any reason whatsoever. But they also can read the polls, and every time one of their spokespersons steps up to a microphone, she talks almost exclusively about abortion for these few "hard" cases. In an outrageous attempt to distort reality to conform to public opinion, abortion supporters strive to make the American people believe that women turn to abortion only reluctantly when they literally have no other "choice."

But the statistics on abortion - compiled by pro-abortion organizations - tell the true story. The sheer enormity of the number of abortions alone reveals the absurdity of the claim that abortion is chosen only by women who find themselves in the most desperate of circumstances. Even a cursory review of the statistics shows that abortion is not, in facts, the option of last resort. Since legalization, abortion has, instead, become the first choice - indeed, often the only choice - for women who, in the words of abortion supporter Dr. Irvin Cushner, "do not wish to be pregnant at this particular time." (Dr. Cushner made that statement before a U.S. Senate subcommittee in 1981.)

Since legalization, abortion has become so routine more than 40 million unborn babies have been aborted since 1973. In 1996, 1,365,730 abortions were recorded, an increase of well over 100% since 1973, when the annual figure was 615,831, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. About every 20 seconds a baby is aborted. 159 abortions are done every hour, 3,805 every day, 115,744 every month. Almost 30% of all pregnancies are now ended by abortion.

Between 1974 and 1983 the repeat abortion rate soared drastically - 166%. Of women having abortion in 2000, 42% in Georgia had already had at least one previous abortion. Such a high rate of repeat abortions shows that women are choosing abortion more and more as a method of birth control rather than as a last resort in times of intense personal crisis.

"In NARAL (the acronym for the then-National Association for the Reform of Abortion Laws) we generally emphasize the drama of the individual case, not the mass statistics, but when we spoke of the latter it was always 5,000 to 10,000 deaths each year'. I confess that I knew the figures were totally false...But in the 'morality' of our revolution, it was a useful figure, widely accepted, so why go out of our way to correct it with honest statistics?" Said Dr. Bernard Nathanson, one of the founders of NARAL and once the director of the busiest abortion clinic in the Western world. (From *Aborting America*, Doubleday, 1979.)

Pro-abortionists grossly exaggerate the number of illegal abortions and deaths before Roe vs. Wade. One of the major ongoing lines of defense offered to keep abortion-on-demand legal is to insist that the Roe decision did not result in an increase in abortion:



that the same number of abortions is now done legally which were formerly done illegally. Significantly, however, the minute they are asked for data to back up their charges, in their typical "hit and run" debating style, they rush off to another topic. An all-too-common example of this mode of attack appeared in an article by Suzanne Gordon in the April 4, 1989 Washington Post Health Magazine. She stated, "more than 1.2 million women are estimated to have had illegal abortions each year before Roe v. Wade, and approximately 5,000 died annually as a result." Obviously, no official record of the number of illegal abortions exists. Pro-abortion public relations firms may make such estimates of more than 1 million illegal abortions and 5,000 deaths annually. But anyone who looks at the actual figures of abortions after 1973 and the number of all pregnancy-related maternal deaths before 1973 would disagree. These statistics prove that the pro-abortion estimates have no basis in either fact or logic.

During 1973, after the Supreme Court had legalized abortion-on-demand nationwide in January of that year, 744,600 abortions were done (according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, an affiliate of Planned Parenthood, which surveys abortion providers and compiles abortion statistics). If abortion supporters want to claim that more than 1.2 million illegal abortions took place before 1973, then they must also explain why the legalization of abortion caused an immediate drop of more than 450,000 in the number of abortions!

The number of legal abortions did not reach 1 million until 1975, the third year of legalization. It was not until 1977 - four years after Roe v. Wade and with 2,688 abortion providers in operation - that the number exceeded 1.2 million, according to the Guttmacher Institute. The total number of legal abortions today is more than 1.3 million per year.

As for the number of deaths from illegal abortions, in 1960 the total number of all pregnancy-related deaths (from abortions as well as from childbirth and other problems during pregnancy) was 1,579 (according to the Vital Statistics of the United States, Vol. II, Mortality, Part A. 1960-77). To believe the pro-abortion argument that over 5,000 illegal abortion deaths occurred, one must believe that the 1,579 officially recorded maternal deaths were all caused by illegal abortions and an additional 3,421 deaths were also caused by illegal abortions and the death certificates were falsified to attribute the death to something such as "heart attack" or "cirrhosis of the liver," and that no woman died from any other pregnancy-related cause. But in fact, for 1960, Vital Statistics attributes 289 of those 1,579 deaths to abortion (legal and illegal).

In 1968, Vital Statistics reports 859 total pregnancy-related deaths; 133 of the 859 attributed to abortion.

By 1972, the year before the Supreme Court legalized abortion-on-demand nationwide, there were 24 deaths from legal abortions and 39 from illegal abortions (according to the Centers for Disease Control Abortion Surveillance, Annual Summary, 1978). Not only have pro-abortionists grossly exaggerated the number of illegal abortions and deaths, they misrepresent what caused the decline in the number of abortion-related deaths. It had nothing to do with legalization of abortion. The number had been dropping steadily long before the first states legalized abortion. The real explanations are such factors as the availability of better antibiotics, such as penicillin, the establishment of intensive care units and better surgical techniques.