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Americans Still Oppose Overturning *Roe v. Wade*

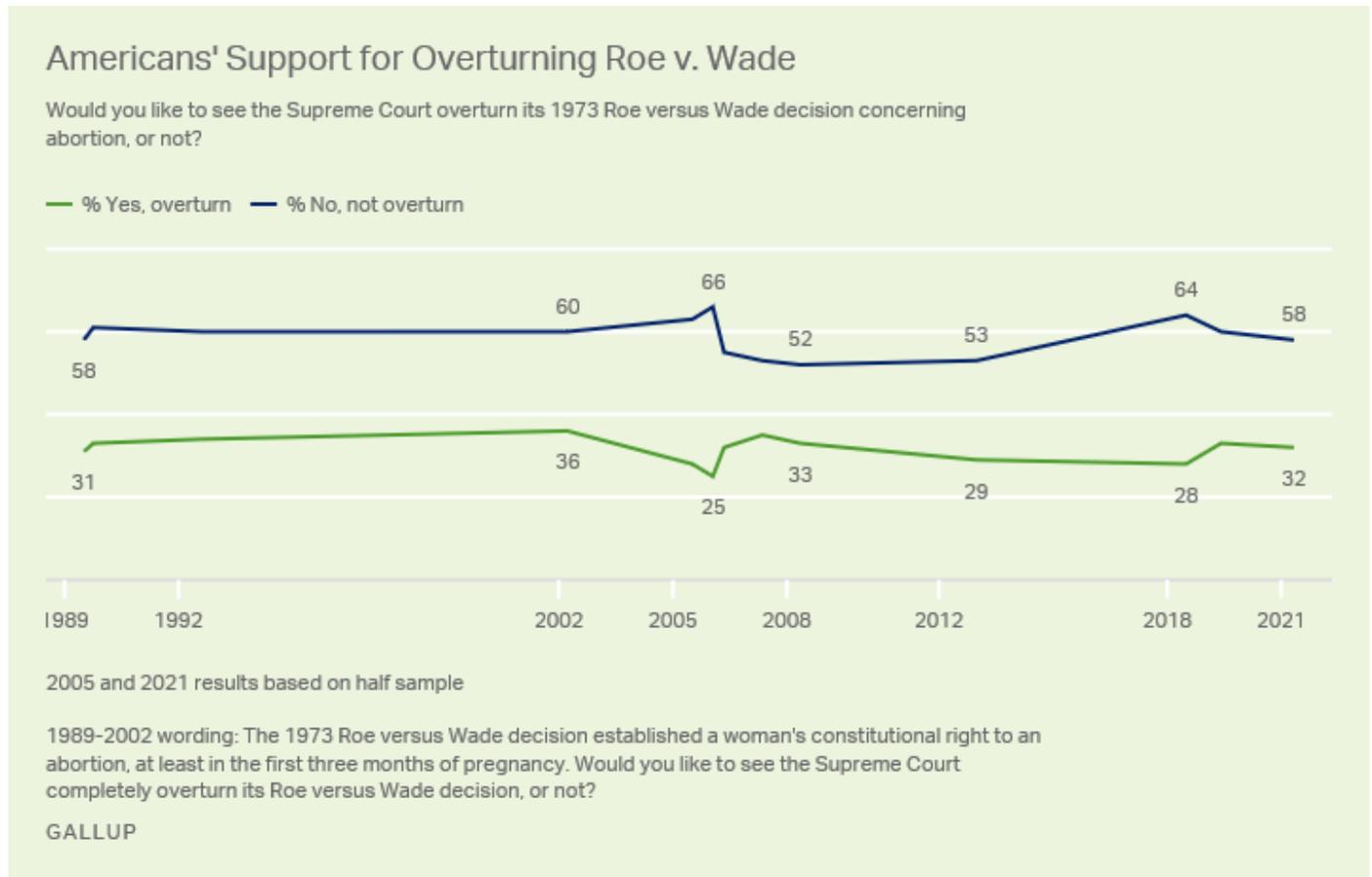
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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Nearly six in 10 Americans do not want Roe v. Wade overturned
- Republicans are closely split on reversing the landmark decision
- Bans on early-term abortions fall short of U.S. public support

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Gallup's latest update on U.S. abortion attitudes finds 58% of Americans opposed to overturning the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, while 32% are in favor. Since 1989, between 52% and 66% of U.S. adults have wanted to maintain the landmark abortion decision. Today's support roughly matches the average over that three-decade period.



The high court recently announced it will take up a Mississippi law prohibiting abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, throwing into question the future of *Roe* as the standard for reviewing abortion bans. *Roe* specifies that states may *regulate* abortion before fetal viability in the interests of maternal health, but not ban the procedure before that developmental stage. *Roe* established a guideline of 24 to 28 weeks for fetal viability.

Several other Republican-led states have passed restrictions on abortion designed to test the Supreme Court's support for *Roe*, should those laws ever reach the high court, as the Mississippi law has. Gallup tested three of these in the May 3-18 poll.

The new poll can't evaluate state residents' support for their own state's abortion laws. However, consistent with their opposition to overturning *Roe*, majorities of Americans overall oppose two specific prohibitions on abortion at early stages of fetal development.

- Fifty-six percent are opposed to banning abortions after the 18th week of pregnancy, a threshold used in laws passed in two states (Arkansas and Utah), although both laws are currently blocked by court orders.
- Fifty-eight percent oppose banning abortions once the heartbeat of a fetus can be detected -- an abortion restriction passed in several Republican-led states, all of which face court challenges. A fetal heartbeat can typically be detected between six and eight weeks into a pregnancy. While that time frame wasn't specified in the latest Gallup measure, it was in a 2019 question, with similar results.

Additionally, the poll finds a majority of Americans -- 57% -- opposed to generally banning abortion if performed because the fetus is found to have a genetic disease or disorder. Arizona's governor recently signed such a bill into law, outlawing abortions conducted exclusively because of nonlethal genetic conditions such as Down syndrome and cystic fibrosis.

Americans' Support for Restrictions on Abortion Based on Fetal Development

Do you favor or oppose each of the following restrictions on abortion?

	Favor	Oppose	No opinion
	%	%	%
A ban on abortions after the 18th week of a pregnancy	41	56	3

Results based on Form B half sample

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	Favor	Oppose	No opinion
	%	%	%
A ban on abortions after a heartbeat can be detected in the fetus	38	58	4
A ban on abortions that are done if a fetus is found to have a genetic disease or disorder	38	57	4

Results based on Form B half sample

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Previous Gallup polling on this topic found significant variation in support for abortion rights, depending on the type of disorder the child might be born with, as well as when those abortions would occur. At their most supportive, two-thirds of Americans favored abortion being legal in the first trimester when the child would be born with a life-threatening illness. The majority also favored legal abortion in first trimesters when the child would be born mentally disabled. Just shy of half (49%) favored abortion at this stage if the child would have Down syndrome. Support drops significantly for abortion in all three scenarios if each were to occur in the third trimester.

Gallup's broader question on the legality of abortion, updated in the latest poll, finds a third of Americans (32%) believing abortion should be legal in all circumstances and 48% favoring it being legal in certain circumstances, while 19% say it should be illegal in all circumstances.

Opposition to Early Abortion Bans Is Widespread

Public support for the specific abortion restrictions tested in the latest poll falls well short of majority level among most demographic subgroups across society, including by gender, age and race.

Support varies more substantially by political party, with Republicans (including independents who lean Republican) much more supportive of all three bans than Democrats and Democratic leaners. Even among Republicans, however, little more than half are in favor of prohibiting abortion after the 18th week (57%) or after a fetal heartbeat can be detected (54%). Just shy of half of Republicans (49%) would like to see laws banning abortion in the case of genetic disorders, while 48% would not.

On the question of *Roe v. Wade*, 46% of Republicans favor overturning it, while 43% are opposed.

Americans' Support for Abortion Law Changes, by Key Demographics

	Overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i>	Ban after 18th week	Ban after fetal heartbeat detected	Ban for genetic disorders
	%	%	%	%
U.S. adults	32	41	38	38
Gender				
Men	30	37	39	38
Women	34	46	37	39
Age				
18 to 34	37	37	33	31
35 to 54	30	45	37	37
55 and older	32	41	41	46
Race				
White Americans	30	45	38	39
Non-White Americans	37	33	38	37
Party ID with leaners				
Republicans/Lean Rep.	46	57	54	49
Democrats/Lean Dem.	21	28	25	30

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Naturally, support for overturning *Roe v. Wade* and for laws banning abortion in certain situations varies by whether respondents self-identify as "pro-choice" or "pro-life" in their abortion views. However, the correlations are by no means absolute.

Segments of pro-choice Americans support overturning *Roe* (16%) and implementing bans on abortions conducted after the 18th week (30%), after a fetal heartbeat is detected (21%) or in the case of genetic disorders (30%). Similarly, barely half of self-identified pro-life Americans favor some of these policies, while between 38% and 49% oppose them.

Americans' Support for Abortion Law Changes, by Position on Abortion

	"Pro-choice" %	"Pro-life" %
Overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i>		
Favor	16	51
Oppose	77	38
Ban after 18th week of pregnancy		
Favor	30	53
Oppose	67	46
Ban after fetal heartbeat detected		
Favor	21	55
Oppose	76	43
Ban for genetic disorders		
Favor	30	47
Oppose	66	49

Americans' abortion views based on respondents' answer to whether they consider themselves "pro-choice" or "pro-life" on abortion.

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Bottom Line

"Overturning *Roe v. Wade*" is a shorthand way of saying the Supreme Court could decide abortion is not a constitutional right after all, thus giving control of abortion laws back to the states. This does not sit well with a majority of Americans or even a large

subset of Republicans. Not only do Americans oppose overturning *Roe* in principle, but they oppose laws limiting abortion in early stages of pregnancy that would have the same practical effect.

[View complete question responses and trends \(PDF download\).](#)

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[SURVEY METHODS](#)



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