Why have abortions decreased in the USA?

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Declines in the *number* of abortions

Jones & Jerman, 2011, Persp Sex Rep H
And the rate per 1,000 women 15-44
What is driving the decline?

• Harder to access abortion services?
  – Goal of the right wing
• More and/or better use of contraception?
  – We’d like to think (?)

• Context of maternal morbidity/mortality in the US
In 35 states and DC, women enrolled in Medicaid have coverage for abortion only in the most extreme circumstances.
Declines in abortion due to making services harder to access?

• We would anticipate a rise in the birthrate
  – Abortion ratio (# abortions/100 preggs) declined only slightly: 23 to 21
  – 2008-2011
    • abortions declined by about 150,000
    • births by roughly twice as much (down about 300,000)

• Both abortions AND births are down
Better use of contraception?

• Overall decline in unintended pregnancies
• Adolescent pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates declined
  – Evidence that younger women are using contraception


Guttmacher Policy Review | Spring 2014 | Volume 17, Number 2
Declines in unintended pregnancy 2008-2011

Figure 3. Rates of Unintended Pregnancy According to Key Sociodemographic Characteristics, 1981–2011.

Rates are reported as the number of unintended pregnancies per 1000 women and girls 15 to 44 years of age.

Declines in adolescent fertility

**Figure 1.** Birth rate, pregnancy rate, and pregnancy risk among women aged 15–19 years, 2007–2013.

_L. Lindberg et al. / Journal of Adolescent Health xxx (2016) 1–7_
Other secular trends tied to declines in pregnancy, abortion and births?

• Changing social norms?
• More women in the workforce?
• More young women going to university?
Context of maternal mortality in the US

US deaths from abortion after legalization

Number of abortion-related deaths


Roe v. Wade, Jan. 22, 1973
Indicator 3.1.1: Maternal mortality ratio (maternal deaths among women aged 15-49 years per 100,000 live births)

Target 3.1: By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

IHME: [http://vizhub.healthdata.org/sdg/](http://vizhub.healthdata.org/sdg/)
http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)31470-2/fulltext
Fig. 5. Unadjusted combined maternal and late maternal mortality rates, California, 2000–2014. Includes pregnancy-related deaths occurring within 1 year of pregnancy. California revised their death certificate in 2003 to a non-standard question that asks about deaths within 1 year of pregnancy. Before 2003, California did not have a pregnancy question on their death certificate.

Texas

Fig. 4. Adjusted maternal mortality rates, Texas, 2000–2014. Texas revised to the U.S. standard pregnancy question in 2006. The unrevised question asked about pregnancies within the past 12 months.

THANK YOU, philip.darney@ucsf.edu

Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health
By 2014, 10 US states had each enacted greater than 10 types of abortion restrictions: AR, AL, AZ, FL, IN, LA, MS, MO, OK, TX.

These states had the worst child and maternal health indices in USA

Center for Reproductive Rights, Ibis, 2014
The more contraception and abortion are restricted, the worse women’s and children’s health status.

Example, preterm birth (PTB) rates in USA.
March of Dimes, 2010a
And the *rate* per 1,000 women 15-44

![Bar chart showing rates per 1,000 women 15-44 for years 2008 to 2011.

19.4 in 2008,
18.5 in 2009,
17.7 in 2010,
16.9 in 2011.

Jones & Jerman, 2011, Persp Sex Rep H]
And the rate

States paying for abortion, USA, 2016

enrolled in Medicaid; however, 15 states have a policy to cover abortion with state funds and appear to be doing so in practice.
The 534 abortion restrictions enacted by states from 2011 to July 2016 account for 30% of all abortion restrictions since *Roe v. Wade.*
Preterm birth, neonatal and childhood mortality, and unintended births.

- Single most important cause of perinatal mortality (28 weeks gestation through 6 days of life) in the U.S. (accounts for approx 75% of these losses)
- Leading cause of childhood mortality worldwide (Lancet, 2014)
- Second leading cause of infant mortality in U.S.
- Leading cause of black infant mortality in U.S.
- Major determinant of neonatal and infant illness and NICU costs.
- Major contributor of short and long term morbidity, disability, and costs.
- 40-60% of US preterm births resulted from unintended pregnancies.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, period linked birth/infant death data
Prepared by March of Dimes Perinatal Data Center, 2006
Preterm is less than 37 completed weeks gestation. Very preterm is less than 32 completed weeks gestation. Moderately preterm is 32-36 completed weeks of gestation.