

navigator*

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

Pro-Choice Swing Women on
the State of Abortion Rights



Methodology

On April 27, 2023, GBAO conducted three focus groups online with swing women across various demographics – age, education, and race.



Suburban independent and weak Democratic and Republican women in Ohio who support abortion/are against government interference in decisions to have an abortion



Suburban independent and weak Democratic and Republican women in North Carolina who support abortion/are against government interference in decisions to have an abortion



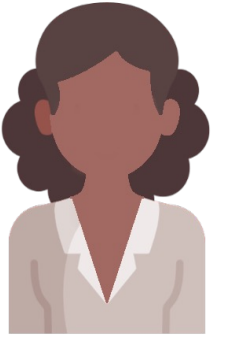
Democratic and independent women of color in Michigan who support abortion/are against government interference in decisions to have an abortion

navigator*

Key Takeaways

- Few see much going well in the country today – including the status of abortion rights.
- Nearly a year out from *Dobbs*, trust in the Supreme Court has weakened considerably.
- There is mixed awareness about the parties' abortion stances.
- Yet many say the issue of abortion will drive their vote.

Few See Things as Going Well



"[A few years ago,] things were a bit better than they are today... We worry about what affects our families. So things that affect my family specifically, I think there's racial inequality... There's still this patriarchal system that I think we need to work on. I think there's a lot of talk in the country, but not enough action." – OH Independent

"I feel like for well over a decade, our country's just been treading water. We're stuck in the ocean, we're in the middle, we're not getting out. And it's great when communities can come together and support each other, but the fact that they have to get together and support each other to fight against injustice means that we're not in the best place. Oh, it's great that these people can come and work to try and improve things, but that means things are bad that need to be improved." – NC Democrat



"I think that the country is so split up and there's so much fighting going on that there's really no chance that we can say that we're doing good things in the country because there's still so much going on that is bad and not good. And also inflation. And again, money and prices. I'm in college and our tuition, they got emails last week that it's going up." – NC Democrat

"Things have gotten better in the past... but racial disparities, healthcare disparities, health equity, environmental justice, it's all in a horrible place right now for us to be the country that we are. We've got a lot of improvements to do." – NC Independent

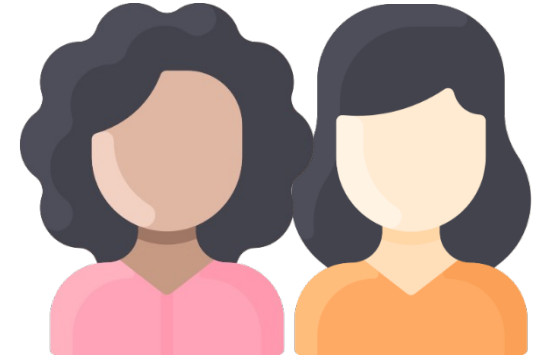
"So now everything is increased [in price] because they're trying to get the economy back up and running, but they really don't understand they're putting us basically in [between] a rock and a hard place. We trying to climb out when y'all piling prices higher, and we barely can't afford what we got already..." – MI Independent

Abortion Is One of Many Top-of-Mind Issues

Moderator: What are the top one or two issues affecting the country right now?

"Abortion." – MI Democrat

"It'd be reproductive rights, I'd say. It's in the forefront right now."
– OH Democrat



"Probably racial inequality and reproductive rights." – OH Independent



"I'd say healthcare. Women's rights to healthcare... Your right to birth control, your right to abortion. Abortion medications, safe abortions, things like that." – NC Independent



"That's where I was going to go, was the healthcare and women's rights."
– NC Republican

Many See the Debate as Over “Control” of Women

“... The debate seems to be sort of religious and emotional feeling versus scientific understanding of the reproductive system and medical care... Legislating morality based on one religion doesn't make sense in this country anyway. And from the other side, you have people who have a very narrow view and don't understand the science, or don't care to, who have a very cherry-picked view of one specific religion that doesn't allow for any nuance or any broader understanding.” – OH Democrat

“People that don't know everything want to control what women can do with their bodies, essentially... That's what it boils down to. It's [that] they don't fully understand that there are reasons that women could, without feeling terribly about themselves, need to have an abortion. There are medical reasons why, and the other side thinks that all abortions are bad, and so they're trying to ban it, ban all of them, and I don't think that's right.” – OH Democrat

“I would say [it's] a debate over body autonomy and who has the right to make healthcare decisions for themselves, and if you can make that for other people.” – NC Independent

“Basically, the two different sides, and I guess I was starting to think that's [the] problem... is that the government is trying to dictate lots of things that maybe they shouldn't be dictating, because they're government and not in healthcare.” – NC Republican

“It feels like a desire to control women, but that's where you stand in the pecking order, right? Because are you controlled? Are people seeking to control you? I mean, I hate to sound cynical, but it feels like control to me. Because if we truly want to have zero abortions, there's so many things. We could have free daycare, we could have free healthcare, we could have free places for women with a pregnancy to go... If that were truly the motivation, there are all kinds of things we could do to facilitate that.”
– NC Democrat

The Supreme Court's Position Is Greatly Weakened

Moderator: How did the Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade change how you feel about them, if at all?

"[I] used to respect them enough to think that they'll at least do what's the greater good for our country for the most part. But now that's gone. I lost respect for them. It's more about whatever the personal gain is for them or their personal beliefs. And it's not supposed to be about that. It's supposed to be the greater good for our country, and they're not looking in that lens anymore, so I don't respect them." – MI Democrat

"... Those three Supreme Court judges lied in their confirmation hearings. And when they said in their confirmation hearings that they would not touch *Roe v. Wade*, I was holding them to that. So when they reversed it, I just thought, 'Okay, that's it. We need ethics. We need investigations.' Because any one of us regular people, shall we say, if we were to lie on a job application and it was discovered, we would be fired immediately." – MI Democrat



"I've always been distrustful of the Supreme Court because I don't think that the Supreme Court has America's best interest [at heart]. I think they have their best interests at heart, not our best interest, and also, I think they're too old for it." – OH Independent

"I would say I kind of had high hopes for sort of an idealistic like, 'Maybe it's not as bad as it looks like it's going to be.' When they started doing things like this, it's like, 'Oh, no, it's that bad.'" – OH Democrat

"I had lost a lot of faith in the Supreme Court for awhile, and for the record, I was not surprised that they overturned *Roe v. Wade*... And we had three, was it two or three conservative Supreme Court justices brought in the last few years, and when they were being interviewed by Congress, they said, 'Oh, *Roe v. Wade* is set in stone. We won't do anything with it.' And you knew they were lying. I wasn't surprised. Oh, wow. They lied to get a job. Nobody's ever lied to get a job before." – NC Democrat

Participants Divided as to Whether The Decision Was Surprising



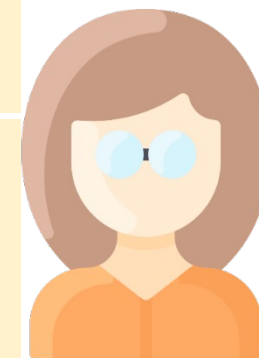
"... Honestly, I was surprised, because it was 2022. This isn't the 1800s anymore, 1900s, or even the '60s. We see that it saves people's lives and the fact that... and it just freaked me out. It was scary. It's scary that things like that can be overturned and all of a sudden, we don't have control of our own selves." – NC Independent

"I wasn't surprised. I think that you could see the makeup of the court changing." – NC Democrat

"I wouldn't [have] thought they would've passed that. I thought they were going to reject that notion and say, 'We not going [to] reverse that decision.' It really surprised me. I wasn't expecting that." – MI Democrat

"... After they nominated Neil Gorsuch and then Amy Coney Barrett and Brett Kavanaugh, I knew that this was going to happen. I knew that. Then with the other conservative justices on the Court, I knew that this was going to happen, that this is what they've been waiting for. It wasn't surprising..." – OH Independent

"Yes and no. I'm not surprised that the government found another way to screw people over. I was kind of surprised that ... It just kind of seemed to come out of nowhere. There's always a little talk. I follow the news pretty well. So there's always mention every few months of things and people being against it, but it kind of seemed like the vote came out of nowhere and then it was banned, or the states were to decide it now. There was a little bit of a shock..." – OH Democrat



"No, not surprised at all. Because the government's been leaning towards conservatism, I feel, and they've been appointing Supreme Court justices based on their view on abortion... They've been appointed, I think, conservatively to rule against abortion." – OH Democrat

Three online focus groups were conducted on April 27, 2023 of swing women who support abortion or are against government interference in decisions to have an abortion in Ohio, North Carolina, and Michigan. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org

navigator*

Many Worry About Decisions Around LGBTQ Rights, Birth Control, and Interracial Marriage

"[Reversing *Roe v. Wade*] is definitely a stepping stone to others." – Ohio Independent

"The paper that they put out, the decision that the Supreme Court put out for overturning *Roe v. Wade* basically knocked out one of the pegs under it that is also the same peg that supports the right to gay marriage, to birth control, to interracial marriage, to a whole swath of other things. And it's very much deliberate. If they knocked that peg out, they can knock the rest of them out..." – OH Democrat

"Definitely think that [overturning gay marriage] will be the next step. Because I mean right now, we're dealing with Florida. You got people who want to leave Florida now because of all the issues, and transgender and gay people, and all that stuff like that. So I definitely think, speaking from my community, we will be next. We'll be next." – MI Democrat

"It's like abortion is one thing. After 50 years, they overturned it. Can you imagine? They can overturn anything now. Right? Okay, like suppose gay marriage, mixed marriage, anything if they want to. So this is becoming crazy." – MI Democrat

"I'm waiting for what's next. I have no optimism with the Supreme Court anymore, with really most government. I'm just [thinking], what's next? What's the newest thing that I'm going to have to be upset about, I might be mad about? What am I going to have to go protest at? What's coming next? There's no relaxing." – NC Democrat

"I think it is a concern. I think it's more so what's the limit, in reality of, okay, they did this. So even if they were to overturn all these things, well, what's the cap? Because I mean, let's say they really overturn interracial marriage, then we're really going back like 100, 200 years ago. So it's like, what's the cap on you overturning things? Because now we're talking about people's civil rights." – NC Democrat

"I'm scared, because yes, I feel like that they would turn those things around [LGBTQ+ rights, birth control, and interracial marriage]. It's just like what shoe is going to drop next? What are we going to do? Am I going to be able to still be married to my spouse?" – NC Independent

Not All Abortion Rights Supporters Are Following the News Closely

“Governor Whitmer for Michigan, she did so many good things and she just passed a law for abortion rights. And there's other things that she's trying to accomplish and it's great.” – MI Democrat

“South Carolina just stopped a full-stop abortion ban from going through again. I think they're currently at 22 weeks. So different states for Republicans have different timelines...” – MI Democrat

“I really didn't look too much into it with the Supreme Court, so I'm really not sure what [the] decision [on abortion was] or what they came up with.” – MI Democrat

“I just saw something earlier today actually that was an abortion pill that might be circulating soon. I didn't read the article, so I don't know what entirely it was about...” – OH Democrat

[Moderator: There has been some discussion about a ballot measure in Ohio on abortion—what do you think of that?] “I don't know if I know what you mean. I'm sorry.” – OH Independent



“You've really put me on the spot with this one... I would think it would've been overturned during a Republican presidency. Does that make sense?” – NC Republican

Some Confusion About the Parties' Abortion Stances

Moderator: How do the two parties differ on abortion?

"I feel like Democrats are more for banning, and Republicans are for not banning." – MI Democrat



"... To me, Republicans... They want that right to choose." – NC Republican

"I really haven't basically heard anything about which party is leaning towards it and which one isn't." – MI Independent



However, the Republican Stance Described as a Ban by Most

“Yeah... Republicans would say no abortion, but the Republicans that I'm around don't agree with that.” – NC Republican

“I think [Republicans are] against abortions. They wouldn't allow it.” – OH Independent

“I know [Republicans] want to make it federal law. Probably eliminate the right to abortion, probably after six weeks.” – OH Democrat

“... Republican states want it completely banned. Others want it six weeks or less, which most women don't even know that they're pregnant by that time.” – MI Democrat

“I'm not sure. I think Republicans tried to ban abortions versus Democrats. I haven't really looked too much into it and seen what their decision was. But I feel like Republicans are more for banning abortions.” – MI Democrat

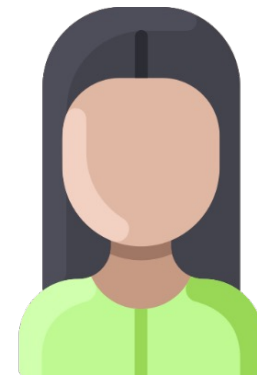


Awareness of What Is Happening at the State Level Is Mostly Thin

"I'm not sure due to the recent changes." – MI Democrat

"I thought [abortion was legal up to] 15 weeks 'cause I thought that they had... I know that they wanted it to be shorter, but then they appealed it, so I thought it was still 15 weeks." – OH Independent

"I thought it was [that] they actually had appealed it or brought it down to six weeks, and I don't recall hearing them... Well, maybe I do. I think maybe I heard that they were appealing that and maybe that it went through, but I don't know how long." – OH Democrat



"I believe it's legal in North Carolina up to a certain point, but they're actively trying to do it... I don't know. I'm guessing right now, but yeah." – NC Democrat

Mixed Awareness of Early Medication Abortion, Yet It Is Widely Supported

“Is it the morning after pill? I can't think of the name of it, but there's a specific drug that they, yeah, that the Supreme Court voted they were going to withhold that, that you were not going to be able to have access to it. What they just ruled on, I think, and I don't know for sure, is that they have agreed to not take a stand on that at this time, but they're going to come back to it.” – OH Democrat

“[Early medication abortion is] not really common knowledge. When you think of an abortion, you think you're going to the clinic and you're waiting for a bit and then you're getting this big operation or surgery... So I don't really think of a pill when I think of getting an abortion, so that is kind of interesting to hear.” – OH Democrat

“I think that's wrong [to ban early medication abortion] because it's a safer way to do it instead of using the other alternative, using the machine to operate for the abortions. I think the pill will be a much safer way, comfortable way, especially to do it in the home setting. So I think it's wrong that the judge is trying to ban it.” – MI Democrat

“But with the medical prescription option, I think that gives flexibility to women who may be in a state where the surgical procedure is not available. They can travel, they can get a prescription, they can return home. So I don't think it would be surprising if ultimately there were further restrictions.” – NC Democrat

“I'm worried about the precedent it sets because medication's been approved for 20 plus years [by the] FDA. There's multiple studies. So who's to say they can't pull other medications once they pull this one, one that's been around for this long? Where does it stop?” – NC Independent

Some Resigned to Going to Another State, Sneaking Around, or Redefining Abortion

"I feel like a lot, maybe in the triangle area, maybe a lot of people that could afford it might actually leave because they can afford to leave but that's not everybody because if somebody can choose where they live, why would they want to live in a state that they don't agree with the politics there?" – NC Independent

"I guess I figured with us being so close to the border, people would go to other states to get what they needed... They can go get the pill and bring it back here... [Moderator: Does that seem like a reasonable solution?] No. And moving altogether to other states doesn't seem like a reasonable solution either." – NC Republican

"We may need [to redefine abortion]. It may come to that. And if that's what we get, if it's comes to a national ban, but those are the carve outs, I think we have to take it. And then, people are going to drive a truck through those carve outs if they're so inclined. I hope it doesn't come to that." – NC Democrat

"I definitely think that a lot of people would be finding ways on their own to get them done illegally and unsafely. I feel like a lot of people are going to travel out of state to do it, and it's just going to further dig the hole against the government that they're digging themselves into." – OH Democrat

"You just have to be more sneaky, I guess, to get what you want. I think as someone else was saying, you can still try and get the operation. If you're trying to get an abortion, you can just be less safe with it and take random drugs, or drink, or smoke and hope that can take care of whatever's inside you, or do less safe measures, which just feels more dangerous. But that's still always an option..." – OH Democrat

"I think they should change the name if it's for medical reasons if I have to get an abortion." – OH Democrat

For Many, Abortion Will Be a Top Vote Driver, Emblematic of a Candidate's Values

Moderator: How important will abortion be to you when you're thinking about how to vote?

"Very important. I know this past election that we just had, when you mentioned that we kind of said we were going to keep abortion legal here in Michigan, everybody in my family rallied up for us, for all women, coworkers. Everybody was really disgusted about that. So I feel like this next coming up, voting election, people can come out and support women rights. I feel like the majority do care." – MI Democrat



"If a candidate's very pro-abortion, or against abortion... I feel like they're going to have that type of view on everything. It's going to permeate all their politics. So it is important to me." – OH Democrat

"Oh, it'll make the difference between whether I vote for somebody or not. If they're pro-choice, that'll be the reason. If I don't vote for them, it'll definitely be the reason." – OH Independent

"Well, I think that the topic on abortion is one of the most important things that I'll be looking for in a candidate in the upcoming election. Just because I think that it's not only a fight for women's rights, it's also a fight over just bodily autonomy. And so, I think a lot of transgender rights and stuff will just be taken away with it." – NC Democrat

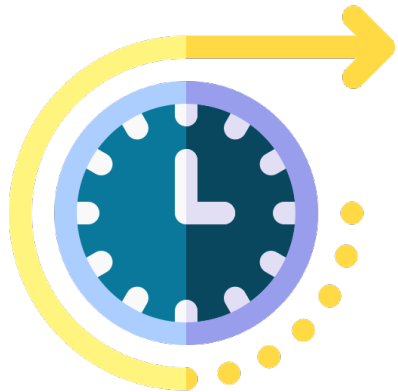
Most Feel Pessimistic About the Future of Abortion Rights

"I'm hopeful that we will not be having this debate in 50 years. But it's very possible that it could still be an issue at that time. We had it in place for 50 years and then they overturned it, so it's kind of scary to think that the future is not set in stone." – OH Democrat

"I feel like it'll probably be the same conversation [in 50 years]. It'll be the same because it does cycle, and maybe in the next 10, 20 years it will be different. But then, by 50 years, who knows? But it does cycle and... I feel like it's going to be the same conversation." – NC Independent



"I think these kinds of things cycle. So, if we're lucky, they don't cycle this far back, but when have we been lucky? I don't know." – NC Democrat



navigator*

About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO along with an advisory committee, including: Jessica Floyd, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; Mike Podhorzer, AFL-CIO; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

About the Study

GBAO conducted three online focus groups on April 27, 2023 with swing Democratic, Republican, and Independent women who support abortion in three states – Ohio, North Carolina, and Michigan. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

For Press inquiries contact:

press@navigatorresearch.org

To learn more about
Navigator:

<http://navigatorresearch.org>

@NavigatorSurvey on Twitter

navigator*