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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

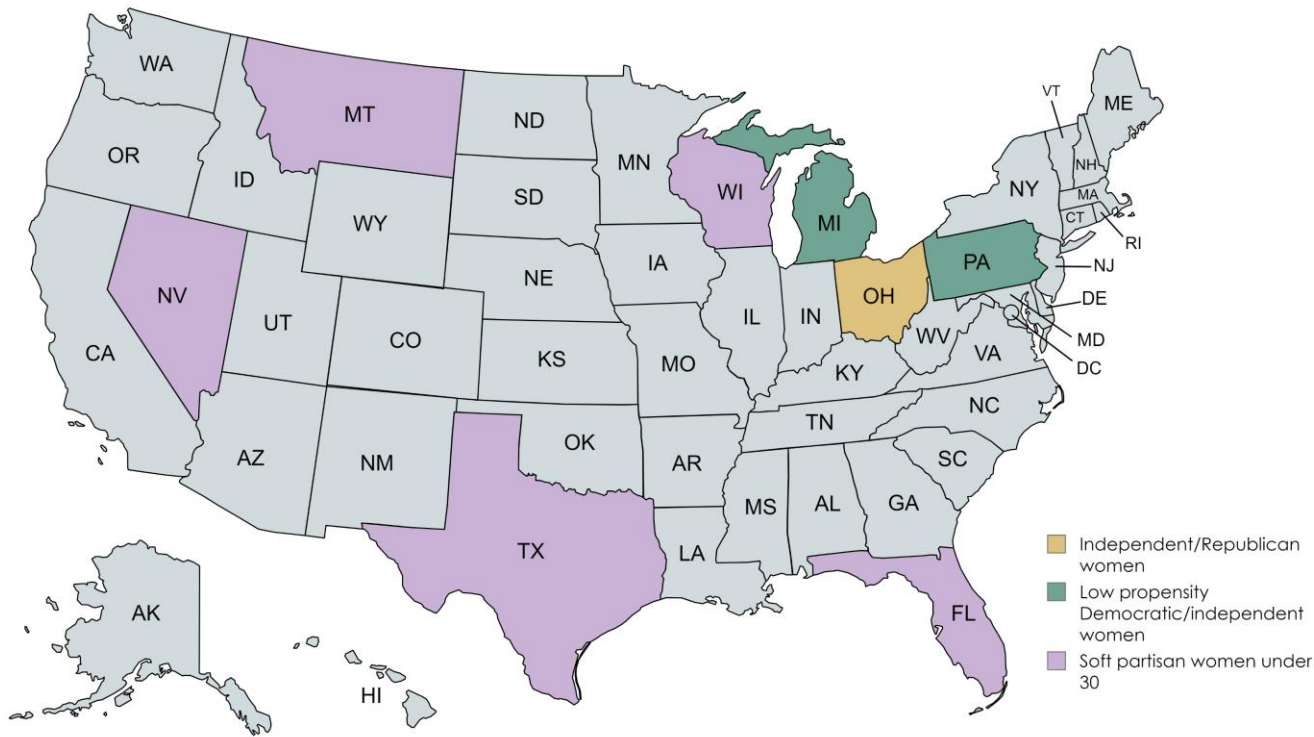
Thursday, June 6, 2024

Democratic, Independent, and
Republican Women on Abortion
Rights



Methodology

On May 29, 2024, GBAO conducted three online focus groups with Democratic, independent, and Republican women across various demographics – including a mix across education, gender, and race – who believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.



- Group 1: Independent and Republican women in OH who voted 'yes' on Issue 1
- Group 2: Low propensity Democratic and independent women in MI and PA who believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases
- Group 3: Soft partisan women under 30 years old in FL, MT, NV, TX, and WI who believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases

Key Takeaways

- There is widespread awareness of and passion about the abortion debate.
- Yet knowledge of state laws and a potential national abortion ban are mixed.
- Younger women acutely report experiencing bans personally
- Trump is viewed as an architect of the fall of *Roe v. Wade*, with an opportunistic and calculating view toward making abortion even harder to get.

Almost No Participant Can Name Something Good Happening in the Country

Moderator: Fill in the blank: I feel [BLANK] is going well in the country today.

"I'm really trying hard to think of something that I think is going really well in the country right now and I guess I'm **struggling**. Can we come back to me? I think I'm going to take a minute." – OH woman, independent

"Yeah, I think **nothing's going well**, but I'm trying to think of something. I would say I think we're not at war in this country, so that's a good thing." – OH woman, weak Republican

"There's just a lot of issues that are happening that don't necessarily seem to be reaching any sort of resolve. So all types of inequities, not just racial, but sexism and gender inequality and LGBT issues. And then the economy is, maybe the GDP is okay, but in terms of inflation, that's exorbitant, crime. **And I just think, for lack of a better phrase, it's like things are going to hell in a handbasket. That's kind of how I feel.**" – PA woman, weak Democrat

"I was trying to stay off the **nothing train**, but **nothing is the first thing that came to my mind**. I think everybody is so worried about which side they're on, that it's overtaking the ability to get anything done, trying to prove that you're on the other side." – MI woman, independent lean Democrat

"I'm going to say [things are] **horrific**. I don't think I've seen a lot of positive change happen over the **past 10 years in this country**... It is kind of getting out of control with inflation, and bills, and taxes, and how they're taxing everything. Making inflation for groceries, buying stuff going up very high. It's very tragic. And pretty much having the wealthy get more wealthy." – TX woman, independent



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The Abortion Debate Remains Salient, With Many Having Deep Knowledge

Moderator: What isn't going well in the country today?

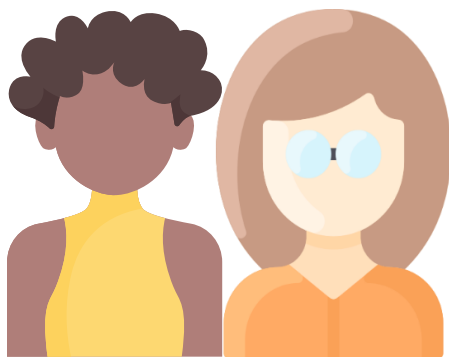
"I think women's rights are an issue for me in this country, especially as someone who just recently had a baby. Reproductive health is an issue and those are some of my top concerns." – NV woman, independent

"It just feels like one side, specifically abortion rights for example, versus pro-choice, pro-life, those are just two completely different sides of a coin that don't seem to ever make it to anywhere in the middle that is reasonable. And you say one thing and the other side will say the exact opposite. So, it's very interesting to me how one statement can mean two very different things depending on who you're talking to." – WI woman, weak Democrat



"I would definitely have to say abortion rights, because abortion rights isn't just about abortion. It's like it's going to cover everything. I feel so sorry for the young women." – PA woman, weak Democrat

"I think that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* was a big blow, not only for women's reproductive rights, but also with the impact that it has on the IVF community as well, because I have two granddaughters that were products of IVF." – OH woman, independent



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Lack of Access Seen as “Going Backwards,” or a “Slippery Slope,” Linking It To Other Injustices

“I think we're on a slippery slope. I mean, I think we have plenty of rights now, but I can see a downward shift and I'm concerned about that... The first thing is *Roe v. Wade*, women's right to decide for themselves what they want to do. Aren't they banning one of the abortion meds or something? I mean, I just think this is the start...” – OH woman, weak Republican

“I definitely think it's going downhill. Like she said, it started with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Ever since then, I keep hearing things more and more. It was not too long ago when I heard how they were talking about banning that... What is it? The day after pill or something like that. I was like, ‘Oh, my goodness, they're just taking all the rights away from women.’ Yeah, I just see where it's declining.” – OH woman, independent

“We're in 2024. I feel like we should have moved on. I don't know why they're trying to take away rights that we've already had before..” – OH woman, strong Republican

“I think it's regressive. I just think we're going backwards in this issue.” – MI woman, independent lean Democrat

“But yeah, it's not just abortion, they're coming after IVF, they're coming after birth control, they're coming after the two M's, those medications... It just affects so much. I was around for the first round with this, so I know what's at stake here.” – PA woman, weak Democrat



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Some Suspect Bans Have Led To Health Care Suffering, With Some States Feeling More Impact

"I think realistically we look at states like Iowa, for example, which already historically had a very small amount of medical professionals who were working in women's health, specifically gynecologists, and we see that there's even a larger drain of these gynecologists leaving these conservative states because they're afraid they're at risk. Even procedures like abortions when the mother's health is at risk have now been debated in the courts, so those could cause them to face some sort of fine or jail or be held accountable despite it being a case where they're trying to save the mother's lives. I think that medical professionals are leaving these conservative states, and that's putting an impact on women and women's health and their ability to access health in general." – OH woman, independent

"But there's certain things that need to be respected, and one of those things is medical autonomy and bodily autonomy. I used to live in Texas, which had one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the developed world, not the country, the entire world that has the same standard for healthcare. And that's terrifying. I think there's, it could be changed, but at least from 2017, I can't remember if it was just Texas or American Obstetrician Association, had a policy that a person had to have six miscarriages before doctors investigated into why repeated miscarriages were happening. And that's just barbaric." – MT woman, weak Democrat

"It's like if you take away abortion, you can start there. And for example, the Planned Parenthood does so much more than just abortion rights. They do cancer screening, they do all this, but you're taking away the funding because of one thing. And now you're taking away healthcare and clinics from other people that can possibly, that's their only choice. That's the only place they can go to because they don't have the means to go anywhere else that costs more." – PA woman, weak Democrat

"I think that we all know what happened to women who were in crisis before we had access to abortions. And there have already been some horrific stories of women with difficult pregnancies stuck in a really hard place, and ultimately it's going to hurt. Initially, physically, it hurts women and the baby..." – MI woman, weak Democrat

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Younger Women Share Painful Stories of What Bans Have Meant To Them

“My husband and I had been very seriously talking about having children, and we were living in a state at the time that was completely red. From the point of conception, six weeks, which most people don't even know that they're pregnant by six weeks. And there were talks of having an abortion could lead to jail time. And I spent days crying, fearing for what that could be for me, and theoretically being in jail and what that could look like... For me, it was terrifying and heartbreaking, but not at all surprising that the people in power were able to overturn that.” – NV woman, independent

“When [the decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*] first came out, I live in a state that has very poor abortion protections, and as someone who wants to have kids, I gave serious thought, me and my partner to not having kids, or moving to a different state to have kids, because we don't agree with the protections that are in place. Say I were to become pregnant, and it would be a complicated pregnancy, I would prefer to abort if that's what a medical professional said was safer for everyone involved going forward. But that's not something I could legally do in my state. And so that's a serious concern for me going forward in terms of my life.” – WI woman, weak Democrat

“I mean, I'm on the fence with having kids. It does cost a little bit more for me. And the way the world's going, health risks. Being a Black woman, healthcare has always been scary for me, so I'm not entirely sure if I want to go through that and then have a child. **So just even the idea of somebody being abused and then being forced to have that child, that right there just killed it for me.** It really bothered me that they would even think to want to have to overturn something like that.” – FL woman, independent lean Democrat



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Knowledge of State Abortion Laws Mixed, Even in Ohio

Moderator: What are the laws on abortion in your state?



“I moved to Wisconsin from Texas two years ago, so obviously I knew the laws in Texas because I was there at the time that they were changed. I'm not certain about the laws here. Yeah, I would have to check that. I don't know it off the top of my head.” – WI woman, independent lean Republican

“I do live in Wisconsin as well. We currently abide by the 1849 law, that thing kicked back in place. It's currently being challenged in the courts. We have a very Republican legislature, so I don't hold a lot of hope for that, and a very Republican court. But there are certain cities that have challenged it and are essentially turning a blind eye to the law in order to grant access to abortion. Should be more liberal cities like Madison, Milwaukee, etc.” – WI woman, weak Democrat

[Moderator: Do you feel an abortion in your state is too easy to get or too hard to get? Or is it the way it should be?] “I think here in PA it is the way it should be.” – PA woman, weak Democrat

[Moderator: Do you feel an abortion in your state is too easy to get or too hard to get? Or is it the way it should be?] “I think the cost is an issue for a lot of people, honestly.” – MI woman, independent

“I recall recently there was voting on an issue, yes, I think, and I remember seeing a lot of banners. I don't know if it was vote yes or no. People were promoting it and there was a lot of people putting it in their driveways and stuff, promoting that issue regarding it.” – OH woman, strong Republican

“The issue one which was on the ballot last summer was about abortion and it got voted in to legalize it, so it's legal in the Ohio Constitution for abortions to occur in Ohio. I'm not sure what restrictions are on that, but I do know it's legal in Ohio.” – OH woman, independent



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Abortion Bans Have Made Young Women Think Twice When Planning Their Future; Others Fear For Future Generations

"I am in my twenties, and I currently live in Pennsylvania, but that's not necessarily where I plan to stay forever. So, it's something that does actually make me think when I want to consider what city I might move to in the future. I'm like, 'Okay, actually this city might be cool, but what are the [abortion] rights in that state? What does that look like?'" – PA woman, strong Democrat

[Moderator: What has been the impact?] "Nothing for me, but obviously there's stories of other women going through health crises. And it does make me think of my daughter and the future for her and friends' daughters." – MI woman, weak Democrat

"It's like women aren't going to have any say over what they're able to do with their own bodies. It's body autonomy and it's scary. I fear for what rights my granddaughters are going to have when they grow up." – OH woman, independent

"It definitely made me think twice about living in the same state that I grew up and raised in, and really had no intention to leave until *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. So yeah, it does have a significant effect and it does make me double think about where I want to live going forward." – WI woman, weak Democrat

"As a woman, it's just something obviously that's just going to linger over my head, especially since I have two daughters as well. It's not even me that I have to worry about, I have to worry about them as well. And so, it's a very big anxiety... I've made up my mind. I don't want to be in the United States much longer." – FL woman, independent lean Republican



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States Rights Arguments Fall Flat With Pro-Choice Women

Moderator: Some states want to completely ban abortion, and others might want to keep it legal. What do you think of that?

“Well, when they first came out with this a couple years ago, it was just a couple states. Now it's almost half the states. They're just going to put the pressure on all the other states. **And then we're not going to have this nice little safe state where we live with a governor who still backs us type thing.**” – PA woman, weak Democrat

“I'm a pretty large fan most of the time of local governments having a good degree of power, and not putting too much power in the federal government. **However, on abortion, because it's so contentious and the two sides aren't even speaking the same language, I do think that having some sort of federal standard would probably be the most reasonable thing to do here.**” – WI woman, independent lean Republican

“I just feel like if it's your body, **you get to decide what you want to do. It doesn't matter where you're [living].**” – FL woman, independent lean Republican



“I don't think there is any conservative state that 100% everyone's on the same page, so because of that I think that **we should have more federal rules and regulations in regard to abortion specifically.**” – OH woman, independent

“Even though women do have the rights to go to another state, you're always going to have the women who are of **lower income or who just don't have the resources to be able to cross a state line, to go to another state to have the abortion.**” – OH woman, independent

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Few Have Heard Any Discussion of a National Abortion Ban, Though Some Cite Project 2025

“This Project 2025, I've seen a lot of things about that. They want the national abortion ban. They pretty much, like it's a death penalty to women who get abortion.” – TX woman, independent

“I think it's called Project 2025. It's this idea, I'm not even sure if you could label it a conspiracy theory, but it's this belief that the Republican Party has a set of intentions and goals that they're trying to reach. And they will try to reach it by any means possible... And part of that Project 2025, or part of the rhetoric that was going around, was like they would try to implement a national abortion ban.” – MT woman, weak Democrat



“I was just thinking that I've heard of [abortion] being managed state to state, and so that's always how I've been perceiving it. Now, the more that we're talking, I'm just, I don't know. I'm getting more and more frightened and disgusted.” – MI woman, independent

“I don't think I could see [a national abortion ban] happening within the next couple years just because I'm thinking about the precedent they would need and the process of getting that to the Supreme Court, and I also think that it's really just those conservatives who want the abortion ban.” – OH woman, independent

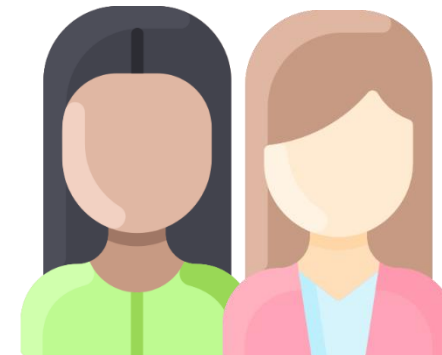
“[I am] scared that [Trump will] be elected as president and that that would actually happen.” – OH woman, independent

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Some Predict a National Ban Causing an Uprising, or Wonder If It Might Not Impact Their Own (Blue) State

"I think there will be some states that hold out depending on who their governors are and their elected officials." – PA woman, weak Democrat

"I guess blue states that will be okay with keeping those rights intact that we wouldn't necessarily have to be concerned about a national ban. But I do think that, I think it's going to spread. I think it'll be hard to just do it nationally though." – PA woman, weak Democrat



"I feel like [a national ban] wouldn't [happen] because I feel like there would be a lot of backlash from a lot of people, especially because there's right now currently states that do allow it and they are protecting that right, so I feel like a lot of people will step up and voice their opinions on it and maybe have an effect." – OH woman, strong Republican

"I think if something like that were to come about, we would all march on Washington and say, 'You're not doing this.' Women would unite. I hope women would unite and stand up for our rights, our young women's rights." – OH woman, weak Republican

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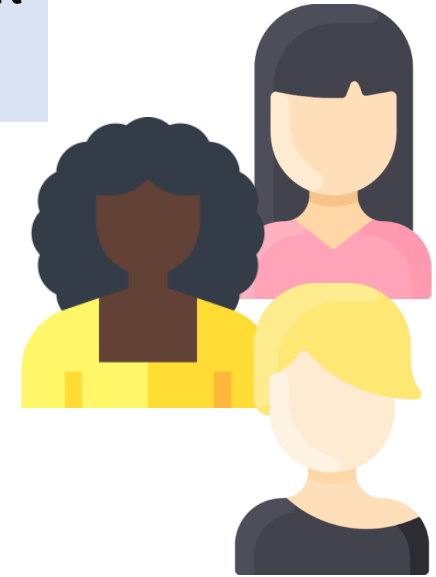
Most See Trump as Responsible *Roe* Being Overturned

Moderator: Who is responsible for Roe v. Wade being overturned?

“Well, we know what happened. Nobody wants to say it, but when Trump came in, he put in three Supreme Court [justices] that are evangelicals and they have this agenda. They've had the agenda for years. And they finally, he stacked the court and they got rid of *Roe v. Wade*.” – PA woman, weak Democrat

“I think that Trump traded Supreme Court positions for promises that they'd vote the way he wanted them to.” – MI woman, independent lean Democrat

“I would argue Mitch McConnell is the one that did it, or those behind him in super PACs, that put in place the funding that got that to where it's at. I mean, Trump just was the Republican president that was in office that put Amy Coney Barrett in, and then Brett Kavanaugh. Any Republican could have done that.” – WI woman, weak Democrat



“Well, I think that Trump knew exactly what he was doing when he was seating these Supreme Court justices. I mean, I don't want to get in a political discussion with anybody, but that's what I think. That's when all of this started, and that's what I think.” – OH woman, weak Republican

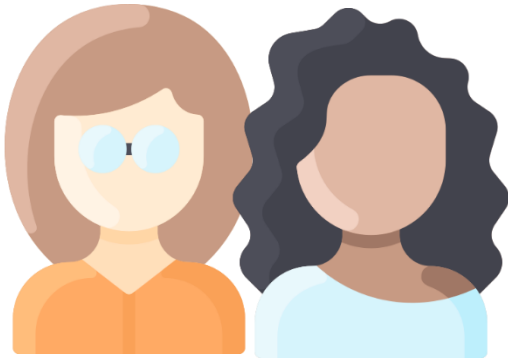
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But Many Are Skeptical He Personally Opposes Abortion

Moderator: What is Donald Trump's personal stance on abortion?

"I don't know that he is so much pro-life as he knows that that is very beneficial to his campaign." – OH woman, independent

"I think Trump is a great spin doctor. He can move things around to make it work for him, so I'm not sure that he's definitely opposed to abortions, but I think that he will use that if it'll get to his end." – OH woman, weak Republican



"He knows who his loyalists are, and he knows that that crowd is anti-abortion. So, that's what he's going with. Now all of a sudden, he cares. But you've never heard a word from him before this about any of that." – MI woman, independent lean Democrat

"I don't think he has a personal feeling about it one way or the other. I think he's just looking to win, and he would make sure his own family members get it." – MI woman, weak Democrat

"My only thought is I don't think abortion is Donald Trump's highest priority." – NV woman, independent

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Trump's Own Words Reinforce He Only Cares About His Base and Whatever Might Help Him Personally

"I mean, he said that [there should be some punishment for women who have abortion] and I've just seen different things. **He's just wishy-washy with this. So, it just seems like he's just saying what that particular audience wants to hear at the moment.** If it's going well for him, then he's going to say that. If it's not going his favor, then he's going to say what we want to hear. It goes back and forth." – FL woman, independent lean Republican

"**It just kind of reinforces the fact that he goes either way,** but there's always truth behind what somebody says. Whether or not they mean it or not, there's some kind of truth behind it. **So, it really stamps in the kind of person that he is...**" – FL woman, independent lean Democrat

"He's so non-committal because he doesn't really have an opinion. **He's just, again, he's saying whatever he thinks is going to appease his base. So, he's just non-committal.**" – PA woman, weak Democrat

"**Even the quotes, just give more backbone to the point that everyone's making where it doesn't actually seem like he cares.** The first quote [about killing *Roe v. Wade*] very much sounds, or the quote about women needing to be punished sounds like something he would say at one of his rallies that would really energize his most violent fan base. And then him saying he doesn't care if they track them, it kind of sounds like when they asked the question that that was probably the first time he thought about that, to be honest. And he's like, 'It's none of my business.'" – PA woman, strong Democrat

"**I feel like maybe he's trying not to lose potential votes.** I feel like if he says a specific answer like, 'No, I'll veto it and I will do a national ban,' I feel like more people would likely not vote for him so he's trying to not give a definite answer. He's like, 'Maybe, maybe not.'" – OH woman, strong Republican

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The Comstock Act Alarms and Confuses

Moderator: Some politicians have suggested we use something called the Comstock Act. It's a law that's on the books that bans the mailing of anything considered lewd or obscene. They would use that law to ban the mailing of anything needed to perform an abortion. This can ban abortion medication. What do people think of that?

"Well, that just doesn't seem right to me." – OH woman, weak Republican

"I feel like they're probably using it in 2024 for something that it was never intended to be used for in 1873 because I'm sure that their definition of lewd and, what was it, obscene in 1873 is a lot different than the definition that we would use today." – OH woman, independent

"I guess I have questions as to how they can categorize medications being lewd or obscene because in my knowledge, that's not the definition of those words." – MI woman, independent lean Democrat

"I think it's trying to get full control of women. They want us back in 1950. I lived through the fifties and sixties. I don't want to do it again." – PA woman, weak Democrat

"Also, when does this start extending to things like the internet and not just the mail? I mean, you're talking about a whole lot of censorship that you could open up a can of worms to." – WI woman, weak Democrat

"Women were property back then. Women were property back then, basically. And I feel like it's no different to what those who want to control our bodies are doing. We're just property. And I mean, God, what we knew and how much we've evolved since the 1800s, I think we shouldn't be using that as our reasoning in 2024." – NV woman, independent



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Women See “Old Men” as Not Understanding or Caring About Women

[Moderator: Were you surprised by the Dobbs decision?] “I was kind of surprised that it made it as far as it did. I wasn't surprised by the outcome. **There's always some old man trying to control what we do with our bodies, and it's just ridiculous.**” – FL woman, independent lean Democrat

“I think [life long supreme court appointment] causes the Supreme Court justices to largely be not reflective of the demographics of the US because **they're much older, they're not very diverse,** and they just don't match the opinions of the general population of the US.” – OH woman, independent

“It's not just [old] white [men] because you have Clarence Thomas... So, they run the gamut in terms of race. But yeah, **old, bigoted and in some cases old, bigoted white guys, but just in general, men making decisions with no real care and concern about people.** They're really just, I feel like their focus is on their specific base and their base is old, bigoted people that had these very, I don't know, early 19th century feelings about things. And they want to take the country back to the way that it used to be, make it great again, but what that means to them is the total opposite of what it means to probably a lot of us.” – PA woman, weak Democrat

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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 May 29, 2024 with Democratic, independent, and Republican women who believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases in various states. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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