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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

Georgians, Wisconsinites, and
Nevadans on Abortion Rights



Methodology

On September 26, 2024, GBAO conducted three online focus groups with Democrats, independents, and Republicans across various demographics—including a mix across education, gender, race.



Democrats and independents
under 35 in Georgia



White soft partisans without a
college degree in Wisconsin*



Soft partisan men of color voters in
Nevada*

*Participants self report to be independent or not strongly identifying with the Democratic or Republican Party

Key Takeaways

- Threats to abortions rights loom large for many as a pressing national problem.
- Most believe abortion should be a person's private decision.
- The impact of overturning *Roe v. Wade* is viewed negatively, even for those not experiencing the immediate consequences personally.
- Yet there is debate as to who is best equipped to handle this—states or the federal government.
- Republicans are seen as wanting to “go backwards” and control women.

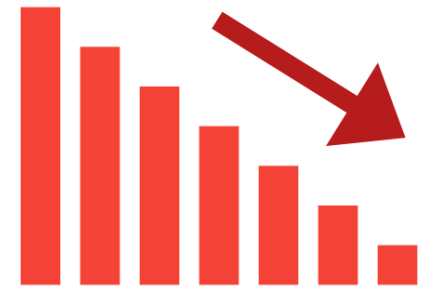
The National Mood Remains Dim

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

"I just think it's hard to pinpoint anything positive just because there's just, nothing [that] feels good. I'm embarrassed, I'm not proud... I think our political climate and our issues are embarrassing." – GA woman, weak Democrat

"There's just so much hate. There really is. No one can get along. There's someone killing each other every single day on the news, and it's just not a good place right now." – WI woman, weak Democrat

"Inflation cost of living. Companies aren't being held accountable. Our government's not doing anything to reduce it. It's frustrating to work and not see any gains from it because we're paying 30% more in groceries and gas and goods and everything." – WI man, independent



"I don't think anything is really going well in the country these days, honestly." – NV man, weak Republican

"Political leadership is not going very well in this country. It just seems to me that there's so much disarray up there in Congress and the House." – NV man, independent lean Democrat

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Unprompted, Many Women See the Threat to Abortion Rights as a Pressing National Problem



"There's a lot of issues that just whenever I think about what's going right in the country, it's hard for me to concentrate on those things when I see a lot of things that aren't going right... For example, the whole attack on women's reproductive rights..." – GA woman, weak Democrat

"We are such a huge country and it's just mortifying that there's other countries around the world that, to me, in my opinion, it feels like they have their act together. [Moderator: On what issues do we not have our act together?] **Reproductive rights**, order, immigration, financial, economic, it's just everything." – GA woman, weak Democrat

"One of the things about Project 2025, again, but it also talks about getting the correct family back on track... Again, **they talk about women's reproductive [rights and] wanting women to reproduce because we are in a decline of birth rate**. And talks a lot about that. It's a lot of pages and there's a lot of other things I go over that seem very, very controlling." – GA woman, weak Democrat

[Moderator: What comes to mind when you think about rights and freedoms?] "I **thought about the abortion ban right away**. I just think [overturning] *Roe v. Wade*, I think, is insane. I think there should be reasons you can and reasons you can't. But I don't think just to flat out say you cannot do this to your body is not right." – WI woman, weak Democrat

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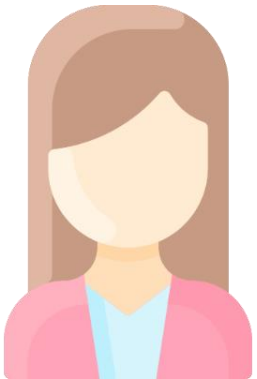
Most Believe Abortion Should Be a Person's Private Decision



"I believe that, in my case, it's none of my business what goes on between, a child that has nothing to do with me. I just need to mind my own business and [let women] decide what to do, they have to live with that, but that's how I feel about that." – NV man, weak Democrat

"Well, the first thing that comes to my mind is honestly, the people that for reasons outside of their own will, to be able to have that choice to have an abortion... It's their bodies, it's their will to do how they please." – NV man, weak Republican

"Everybody has their cross to bear and burdens to behold. So, it's up to the person, and I'm not one to judge." – WI man, independent



"Quite frankly, if someone does choose to have an abortion and it's not medically necessary, I believe it's saving someone from growing up in a situation where it would not be ideal to raise a child, someone that doesn't want a child. I think they have the decision to terminate it if it's an accident that it happened in the first place." – GA woman, weak Democrat

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Some People Are Low Information on the Topic or Reference Abortion Myths

"A lot of women use abortion as birth control, which is where the issue comes in for me. And then they argue in extremes of, "Well, what about incest? What about rape?" Which is 0.1% of any cases in America. So, I honestly feel like, I think it should be illegal with exceptions when the mother's life is at stake or in the cases of rape." – GA man, weak Democrat

"There needs to be more parameters of how many weeks, how many is the guideline? **Because in Wisconsin, you can actually do a partial birth abortion.**" – WI man, independent

"I don't think people should use it [abortion] as a form of birth control." – WI woman, weak Democrat

"It should not be totally banned, and it should be situational. I can see everybody if you're using it more than once, **that's the problem I have as a person, as if you're truly making it as birth control.**" – WI man, independent

"You go to the CVS and you get that day-after pill. That's a form of abortion." – NV man, weak Republican



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Some Have Had Personal Experiences or Close Encounters With Abortion

“I just don't think that it should be up to the government. **My sister had an abortion, and I don't feel like that is something that the government should really be involved in**, but there's a lot of misconceptions about what it means now that it's up to the states. I think a lot of people think that that means there's an alt right ban on abortion. It's very charged. Obviously in the country, people's emotions are involved. I don't think that the federal government should be involved...” – GA man, independent

“Sorry. I'm 33 years old. I personally have had an abortion when I was 13 years old. **It was the right choice, I believe.** It wasn't very invasive or anything, but I do believe that it should be situational.” – WI Woman, weak Democrat

“So, for me personally, it has in my personal life been a necessity, and it's something that I don't want to go away because I know what it provides for people, and **I know that it being taken away has caused some very extreme bad things for other people.**” – WI woman, independent lean Democrat

“Well, what I think about it is it's too hard [to get an abortion] as far as is actually going to, actually finding a good clinic for one, and then the price that it is. **I had a situation when I was younger with a young woman that I was with. And we weren't ready and at the time, it was almost like \$500. Now with today's economy, it's not really a lot, but it's still a [chunk of] change to go do that.** Plus, with the emotional side that you have to go deal with...” – NV man, weak Republican

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Others Have Heard Stories or Made Plans in Case it Were to Ever Impact Them

“A woman died in Georgia, I think a week or two ago because she wasn't able to get the approval in time to be able to remove an unviable pregnancy. She was not able to get [abortion pills in] the mail in Georgia. She had to go to another state to get the pills, so she got the pills, came back to Georgia, did the whole thing, and then she died because of the complications with the pill. But since there are the abortion laws in Georgia, no doctors were able to help her, so she just died. That's the type of thing that whenever I see abortions and everything, that's a red flag to me.” – GA woman, weak Democrat

“As someone with a disability who can get really severe complications, it terrifies me because I also have a boyfriend. In the slim, slim case that I could even happen to get pregnant based even by accident, even if something happened that way, if I didn't have access to [an abortion] or I didn't know till after, I can get severe complications based on just having a disability.” – GA woman, weak Democrat

“I don't know the complete details, but all I know is a lot of the women here that are my friends, they all have friends that have gone out of state to get it done because of this issue.” – NV man, independent lean Democrat

“I know people who have plans in place of what they would do or where they would go if they needed to [get an abortion], whether that's to Illinois or to a different country even. I've heard of plans that people have come up with... Why do we have to plan it? It's not a trip. It's a life-changing thing.” – WI woman, weak Republican

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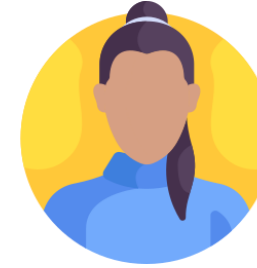
Men and Women Participants at Times Have Different Perspectives and Divergent Views



"I think there's about 20 different versions or varieties of birth control outside of abstinence. So, I guess as a guy, I don't understand, other than the rape, incest thing, why is people getting pregnant when there's all this birth control? I just don't get it." – WI man, independent

"Really, [abortion is] not important to me, but I think it should be allowed because it's a woman's right." – NV man, independent lean Democrat

"I mean, I think fundamentally people should have that choice, but I don't think anyone getting an abortion is inherently a good thing. Yeah, I don't want anyone to have to do that, but I do understand and acknowledge there are circumstances in which that's the difficult decision to make." – GA man, independent



"And I know a lot of men, I don't think they understand it because it's not their body. One gentleman said... It doesn't matter to him whether it's legal or illegal because he's a man, and he had a vasectomy... I don't think that's fair to say because we all have maybe a spouse, a child. What if it happened to your child?" – WI woman, weak Democrat

"People don't understand it until they're in it. And so unless you have a close one or know someone who has had abortions, who has been through that, people don't think about it. So, they have their own opinions based on what they see, and unless they see it right in front of them or see it affect someone close to them, they don't get it." – GA woman, weak Democrat

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There Is Some Debate as to Who Is Best Equipped to Handle the Topic

"I think [abortion laws] should be federal, because I don't think that someone in Georgia should [not] have the same rights to their body as someone in California." – GA woman, weak Democrat

"I'm not exactly up to date in which states [you] can and can't [get an abortion], but I will say I don't think it's the worst thing that we would have regional differences. That's [a] pretty polarizing topic for that one instance, like for abortion, but I don't think it's unreasonable that Alabama would have a different view on laws in certain situations than say, California or something like that. So, I don't really have a dog in the fight on it, but I think it played out the way I think would be reasonable for it to be in the state's hands." – GA man, independent

"You live in one state, you drive an hour into another state. And now, it's legal. And now you come home, and you did it legally, even though in your state it's illegal, it doesn't make any sense." – WI woman, independent lean Democrat

"The suits in Washington are pretty shrewd. They don't want to make a decision on this because they know it's a very hot topic. That's why they put it back to the states, let the states figure it out. They don't want to deal with it. That's why the states are all [in] disarray over it." – WI man, independent lean Republican

"Yeah. I'm happy that it's going to come down to the state level and states can now make a firm decision one way or another." – NV man, independent lean Democrat

"I think the federal government should be limited as far as interfering with the lives of the people. I don't think they should have a say. I think if it's going to come to a vote, it should be at the state level where your local politicians matter more." – NV man, weak Republican

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A National Abortion Ban Seems Plausible, But Not Without Uproar and Resistance

Moderator: Do you think a national abortion ban is likely?

"I'll say yes just because with *Roe v. Wade*, I never thought it'd be overturned, so I can't say that wouldn't be a possibility." – GA man, independent

"I think it could happen. I think that if the people that put the laws into place are more leaning right, and that's something they want to get through, yeah, I think that's something that they would do." – WI woman, weak Democrat

"Well, if it's up to solely the government, then it could possibly become a thing. However, if the people have any say in it, I don't think that it could become a thing. Or if it did, then there'd be riots everywhere." – WI man, weak Republican

"No, I don't think it's possible to happen. That would mean too much pushback from the US to sit here and try to ban the whole country." – NV man, weak Republican

"I don't think it's possible at all. There'll be challenges right away." – NV man, weak Republican



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Threats to IVF, Birth Control, and Gay Marriage Are Less Salient Issues, But Still Seen as Possible

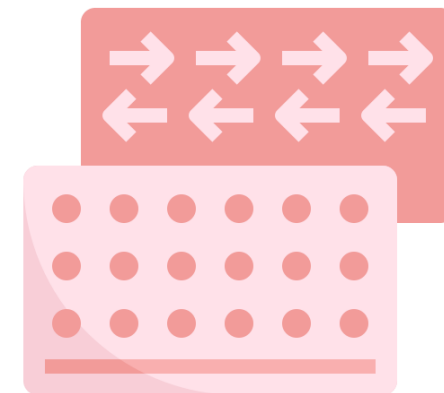
"People having to travel to get abortions, people getting abortions and then coming back, but then not getting that healthcare to be able to not die whenever they come back. So, I feel like that was a domino to where it's like women's rights are going to continue to just pretty much fall." – GA woman, weak Democrat

"I see Congress and the Supreme Court somewhere down the road probably trying to ban gay marriage because of their views. Again, like I said, it's a violation of one's rights and again, it's their own business." – NV man, weak Democrat

"I hope [the IVF ban] doesn't happen in [our] state. But in this day and age, you just never know." – WI man, independent

"I personally am afraid that if Trump gets in that abortion is going to be impossible to get. I think birth control is going to be at risk. I think IVF is going to be hard to get done, but I think we as women or future families, I think it's going to be a lot different." – WI woman, weak Democrat

"I think all of [the potential bans are] believable because all of it is in conversation and different states are at different levels of trying to make all or some of it happen. So, it is believable because there's already actions being taken to attempt to do some of those things." – WI woman, independent lean Democrat



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Perceptions of Trump's Positions on These Topics Are Mixed

Moderator: Do you believe Donald Trump would pass a national abortion ban if he became president?

"I'm not necessarily a Trump fan, but he'd said he wouldn't. So, I don't know what to say about that, other than in the debate they asked him, and he said he wouldn't, that wasn't his agenda, so I don't think so." – GA man, independent lean Democrat

"I imagine he would [sign a national abortion ban], yeah." – GA woman, weak Democrat

"No, Trump is on record saying that he wants the states to make the decisions. I believe that was mentioned in the debate that I watched." – WI man, independent

"If it came across his desk, he would [sign a national ban]." – WI woman, independent lean Democrat



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Yet Broadly, the Republican Party Is Seen as Wanting to “Go Backwards” and Control Women

“When it comes to [Democrat’s] way of talking about the rights and their plans for that, it very much seems like, okay, giving women’s more rights, especially when it comes to bodily autonomy, when it comes to just people in general. When it comes to Donald Trump’s approach and his things, it’s very traditional. But what happens with that is we end up going backwards.” – GA woman, weak Democrat

“I think it’s crazy that [Trump is] talking about being a protector and the whole abortion topic... I don’t want you involved in decisions about my body, and I especially don’t want you protecting me...” – GA woman

[Moderator: How would you describe Republicans’ and Donald Trump’s approach on rights and freedoms?]
“Restrictive. There’s another word that I’ll also throw in there, destructive.” – NV man, weak Democrat

“Republicans are about freedom in guns and during COVID, stuff like that. But Democrats are about freedom for abortion and stuff like that...” – WI woman, independent lean 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 September 26, 2024, with younger Democrats in GA, and soft partisans in WI and NV. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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