

HEALTH & SCIENCE

Latest Abortion Statistics



Randall K. O'Bannon, Ph.D., NRL Director of Education & Research, commented in National Right to Life News Today on December 1st and 2nd on the latest CDC report. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently released their abortion surveillance report for 2011. There was a significant drop in the number, rate and ratio of abortions in the US. (Note: the most populous state, California, as well as Maryland and New Hampshire did not submit data). The Guttmacher Institute (a nonprofit research organization that supports abortion) issued a report earlier this year that also showed a notable drop in the number of abortions. The CDC reported 730,322 abortions for 2011. The Guttmacher Institute reported 1,058,470 for the same year. The Guttmacher Institute surveys abortion facilities directly. The CDC relies on state health reports. This explains the higher number reported by Guttmacher. Therefore, Guttmacher's numbers are viewed as more accurate. However, Guttmacher only issues reports every few years. The CDC reports annually, and tracks the same variables most years.

The 2011 total is the lowest number of abortions reported by the CDC since California, New Hampshire and at least one other state were dropped in 1998. The abortion rate of 13.9 (number of abortions per 1000 women ages 15-44) is the lowest recorded rate since 1973. The abortion ratio (number of abortions for every 1000 live births) was 359 in 1980. The abortion ratio for 2011 was 219 - quite a significant drop. Women aged 29 and younger had 71.7% of the reported abortions in the 2011 CDC report. 32.9% of these were women aged 20-24. Overall, teens accounted for 13.9% of all abortions in 2011. In 1980, teens accounted for 29.2% of all abortions.

The abortion rate for women 30-34 did not drop as significantly, and the abortion rate for women 35-39 went up 1.4% and for women 40 and over there was a 7.7% increase. O'Bannon questions whether this could reflect a generational attitude difference (younger women more pro-life) or the result of more pre-natal genetic testing which results in abortion after a negative diagnosis.

More abortions were done at less than 8 weeks gestation in 2011 (64.5%) than in 1973 (36.1%). More than 1/3 of all abortions are now done at 6 weeks or less. O'Bannon notes the significant increase in the use of chemical abortion methods. However, most abor-

tions (79.4%) still fall under "curettage" which includes manual vacuum aspiration, suction aspiration, D&E (dilation and evacuation) and other surgical methods. Abortions at 14 weeks gestation or more accounted for 8.7% of all abortions. 7,325 were done at 21 weeks or more.

The Wednesday STOPP report of December 3, 2014 issued by Stop Planned Parenthood noted that the CDC report showed that abortion ratios throughout the entire period were highest among girls under the age of 15, and that abortion ratios decreased from 2002 to 2011 for women in all age groups except those under 15. The STOPP report noted that a Planned Parenthood fact sheet acknowledges that adolescents are more likely to have an abortion at 21 weeks gestation or later.

Most abortions (85.5%) involve unmarried women. 46.4% of all abortions were repeat abortions with 25.5% having one previous abortion, 11.6% having 2 and 9.3% reporting 3 or more previous abortions. 60% of all women reported having had at least one previous live birth. 19.6% had at least 2 children and 13.9% had 3 or more. O'Bannon notes that this indicates a need to address the needs of the young, single mom as well as the high school teenager.

Race and ethnicity are more difficult to report, since the states track this information differently or not at all. However, O'Bannon reports that abortion rates for Hispanics dropped more than those for non-Hispanics, and that although African Americans make up 14.2% of the US population, African American women accounted for 36-38% of all abortions in the US in 2011. Abortion rates for African Americans did go down over the past 10 years, but are still much higher than other groups. The black abortion rate is 25.8 versus 7.8 for white. The black abortion ratio is 381 abortions for every 1000 live births and 126 abortions for whites. O'Bannon states that these numbers indicate a need to increase the pro-life outreach to minority communities.

Dr. O'Bannon notes that although the number of abortions has dropped significantly over the past 20 years, women are still dying from abortion. 10 women are known to have died in 2010 (CDC abortion mortality figures are always behind by one year). For 11 years, 6 or more women have died from abortions. He notes that the risk of death from abortion figures reported by the CDC for the past decade are actually higher than it was for the previous one. He acknowledges that we have made progress, but there are still many ways for us to save unborn babies and their mothers.

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