

## Neither “pro-life” nor “pro-choice” can address women’s real life experiences!

TOPIC	“pro-choice”	“pro-life”	REAL LIFE
What is abortion?	the termination of pregnancy through the removal of the fetus	the murder of babies	the decision a woman makes when she feels she cannot have the baby she is carrying
Why do women have abortions?	because they are in an impossible situation and have no other reasonable recourse	it is the easy way out for women who do not understand that they are carrying a baby with the right to live	there are as many reasons for deciding to abort as there are abortion patients, and all deserve respect and support; each woman makes the best decision she can, for herself and her family
What would happen if abortion were to become illegal again?	women would die of back alley and self-induced abortions	women would have fewer abortions and abortionists would be jailed	women would still seek to control their fertility; this could lead to an increase in underground training of extralegal providers, in self-education about safe, effective self-abortion practices, as well as in deadly practices
Why not birth control?	birth control is the ideal but not 100% effective; abortion must remain legal for those whose birth control fails	birth control encourages promiscuity; people should remain abstinent until marriage	there are many good reasons birth control is not used or sometimes fails; abortion must remain legal for all of us, regardless of our birth control methods and practices
How do women feel after abortion?	abortion leads to feelings of relief	abortion causes depression, guilt, and regret	women experience a vast range of emotions after abortion, including happiness, grief, shame, empowerment, relief, anger, and contentment—all normal feelings*
What about motherhood?	abortion saves women from experiencing compulsory motherhood	abortion robs women of the joys of motherhood	most abortion patients (61%) are mothers; abortion is a mother’s decision—a decision about parenting children—regardless of whether the woman has living children
What is the relationship between abortion and marital status?	married women have abortions, too	if women remained abstinent until marriage, abortion would not be so common	86% of abortion patients are not married, and many say that they might choose to have the baby if they believed their partners would be responsible fathers
Who are abortion doctors?	heroes to women and victims of violent anti-abortion activists	greedy murderers or incompetent practitioners who must be stopped	professional health care providers—some very good at their jobs and some not—who should be held to the same standards as any health care provider*
What is the truth about the economics of abortion?	abortion helps poor women and their families	abortion makes doctors rich	abortion has always been one of the most affordable medical procedures in the U.S.; under our capitalist health-care system, abortion is a medical service like any other—some people pay for it, and some people make a living providing it
What are the racial politics of abortion?	abortion is a women’s issue, regardless of race; most abortion patients are white	abortion clinics target women of color as part of a racist plan to reduce the population of non-white people	abortion, like every other social issue in the U.S., is influenced by racism; women of color do have higher abortion rates, which reflects the difficulties they face as mothers in a racist society
What about teenagers and abortion?	abortion must remain legal for teenagers who get pregnant—youthful mistakes shouldn’t ruin someone’s life	legal abortion encourages teenagers to be promiscuous	teens are actually a very small percentage of abortion patients in the U.S.; a pregnant teen deserves our support as she makes the decision to have an abortion, make an adoption plan, or become a mother#
What do parental consent or notification laws do?	they take control away from the family and give it to the law; they are especially hard on girls in abusive families	they help ensure that an unplanned pregnancy does not come between a teen girl and her parents	teens who include their parents in their pregnancy decisions—and most do—are more likely, not less likely, to choose abortion; these laws have little effect in terms of reducing abortion rates, although they can keep young women from getting timely, safe abortions#
What about the men?	abortion is a woman’s decision; men should be supportive	women’s abortions rob men of the chance to be fathers	men have feelings about women’s abortions <sup>Δ</sup> , and most women’s pregnancy decisions are strongly influenced by male partners’ feelings, attitudes, behaviors, and decisions, particularly about parenting
What about religion?	many religions are pro-choice	abortion is an abomination against God	women make moral and ethical decisions about pregnancy; women of all faiths choose abortion, whether their faith communities support their decisions or not

## Abortion by the numbers

57% of abortion patients are between 19 and 29 and 53% are living at or below the federal poverty level. Most are unmarried (86%), Christian (71%), and a mom (61%; only 27% of abortions are for first pregnancy). There is a racial gap in abortion experience: Latinas in the U.S. are twice as likely to have abortions as white women, while African American women are three times as likely. 88% of all abortions occur when the woman is less than twelve-and-a-half weeks pregnant. (Source: AGI/PRCH, 2008. "An Overview of Abortion in the United States." Retrieved from [www.guttmacher.org](http://www.guttmacher.org).)

In the U.S., abortion discussions are dominated by the political stances called "pro-choice" and "pro-life." These political stances are largely irrelevant to women who decide to abort their pregnancies. Many abortion patients identify themselves as "pro-life," and many "pro-choice" people state that they would never choose abortion for themselves. This is the best evidence for the complexity of real life. People simply do not live their lives in political categories. It's time to reshape abortion discussions from debates between political positions to conversations about women's lived experiences with abortion. This chart demonstrates that neither "pro-choice" nor "pro-life" is good enough. We need to understand and support women's REAL LIFE situations and decisions. Let's leave the labels behind and listen to the experiences of women and men.

## How can we be better listeners?

# The Real Life Guide to Talking About Abortion

In the political debate between "pro-choice" and "pro-life," have we forgotten that abortion is a very real part of the lives of millions of women in the U.S.?

It's time to re-focus the conversation about women's lives and real life decisions.

## NOTES

\* Abortion providers are concerned about risk factors that make it difficult for women to cope well after their abortions. For more information, see *Healthy Coping after an Abortion* at [www.abortionsconversation.org](http://www.abortionsconversation.org)

# For more information on teens, parents, and abortion, see *Mom, Dad, I'm Pregnant* at [www.momdadimpregnant.org](http://www.momdadimpregnant.org)

Δ For more information about men and abortion, see *Especially for Men* at [www.abortionsconversation.org](http://www.abortionsconversation.org) or [www.abortionscarenetwork.org](http://www.abortionscarenetwork.org)

### For more information about abortion and women's real lives:

Abortion Conversation Project. <http://www.abortionsconversation.com/>

Abortion Care Network. <http://abortioncarenetwork.org/>

Pregnancy Options Workbooks. <http://pregnancyoptions.info/>

Backline All Options Talkline. <http://www.yourbackline.org/>

Faith Aloud interfaith reproductive justice org. <http://www.faithaloud.org>

Exhale after-abortion counseling talkline. <http://www.4exhale.org/>