

State of Opinion on Abortion Among Minnesota Voters

Findings from New PerryUndem Research

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The Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* last June resulted in a seismic shift in abortion policy, and had a significant impact on public opinion toward abortion. As we know from exit polling and [other data](#), the issue played a prominent role in many voters' minds during the midterm elections.

PerryUndem has studied abortion opinion extensively over the years, including in Minnesota. Gender Justice commissioned PerryUndem to assess Minnesota voters' views on the topic. We wanted to know:

- What impact did the *Dobbs* decision have on Minnesotans? How did they respond to the landmark decision?
- Did it affect their thinking in the midterms?
- How do Minnesota voters think and feel generally on the topic of abortion? •
- What do they want from Minnesota lawmakers?
- What policies do they support and oppose?
- Is this issue going to have staying power in voters' minds?

To explore these questions, PerryUndem conducted a statewide survey of $n = 1,000$ registered voters from December 8 through 19, 2022. The survey was administered using YouGov's online panel. The margin of sampling error is ± 3.7 percentage points. As with all surveys, many other types of error can contribute to overall survey error.

Here's what we learned.

Summary.

The Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* had a big impact on voters nationally, including in the 2022 midterms. Data suggest the impact was also felt among Minnesota voters. The historic decision elevated many core values and fears in their minds, such as worry about the loss of rights and freedoms, risk of maternal deaths, and the state of democracy. The issue likely drove young Minnesotans to vote and vote Democratic. Many, including a majority of Democratic voters, do not think abortion rights and access are secure in Minnesota. At the moment, they think rights and access depend on which party is in power. Young people think their own health and safety depends on the outcome of elections.

In recent years, we see many indications that public opinion has shifted away from stigmatized views on abortion. Results from this survey continue to confirm those trends. Most respondents don't struggle with their views on abortion. Fundamentally, they think abortion is a personal decision, which should be up to individuals and not swayed by the government or religious beliefs. For most Minnesotan voters, abortion is not related to their own personal religious beliefs. They think abortion can be a responsible choice and that someone having an abortion can be a moral person. A majority thinks there shouldn't be so much shame and stigma on the issue.

Data suggest that voters want Minnesota lawmakers to act, and may punish them in the next election if lawmakers sit still. Generally, they want state laws to support rights and access to abortion, and they support a number of specific actions to reflect that. Perhaps contrary to conventional wisdom, voters value everyone having access to affordable abortion care - and a majority supports public coverage.

Data suggest the issue may have some shelf life on voters' minds. A majority of respondents who support abortion rights and access say *Dobbs* will have a long-term effect on their votes (not the case among anti-abortion respondents). Young voters, who have contemplated their own mortality as a result of *Dobbs*, are particularly likely to have long memories on the issue.

Key Findings.

1. **The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* had an impact on many Minnesota voters.** Data suggest that 53% of Minnesota voters oppose the decision, and large majorities of those voters say the decision made them think about a number of values and issues – such as:

- The loss of women's rights (90% who oppose the *Dobbs* decision) •
- Our society going backward (88%)
- The state of our democracy (85%)
- Losing several freedoms (89%)
- The government having control over people's bodies (91%)
- Ectopic pregnancies, maternal death, miscarriages, and IVF (85%) •
- Their own rights and freedoms (85%)
- Too much religious influence in government (80%)

In many people's minds, abortion isn't just about a procedure, it's related to core values like freedom (66% of all respondents), safety (73%), and issues like maternal health (71%), economic security (56%), and childcare (55%).

2. **The *Dobbs* decision had a particularly intimate effect on Minnesota voters of reproductive age who oppose the decision.** A majority (69%) says the decision made them contemplate their own risk of death should they or a partner get pregnant. 82% say *Dobbs* made them think that their own health and safety depends on who wins elections.
3. **Data suggest that abortion / women's rights was a top mobilizing issue, after economic concerns and the state of democracy.** 24% of respondents say the economy / jobs / inflation was the most important issue motivating them to vote last fall, followed by the state of democracy (21%) and abortion or women's rights (19%).

4. **One in three young voters (35% of 18- to 44-year-olds) say the *Dobbs* decision was the reason they voted in the midterms.** Among voters of reproductive age (18 to 44), two-thirds (70%) say they can envision a scenario in which abortion might be the best option for them or a partner.

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5. **Majorities of Minnesota voters want decisions about abortion in the hands of individuals.** The data suggest Minnesota voters have fairly straightforward views on abortion. For example, seven in ten (71%) want the decisions left to the individual and their doctor v. regulated by law. When given a description¹ of the Minnesota Supreme Court's ruling on abortion, 77% say they agree with the ruling.

A majority of Minnesota voters think abortion is ending a life or potential life (72%) and want people to make their own decisions on abortion without the government interfering (75%). Nearly half (48%) hold both of these beliefs. Four in five agree they don't want one group's religious beliefs swaying rights for everyone (80%, with 59% agreeing strongly).

6. **In recent years, we've seen many indications that public opinion has shifted away from stigmatized views on the topic. These data continue to confirm those trends.** For example, a majority of respondents:

- Says they don't struggle with their views on abortion (77%)
- Says abortion is not a religious issue for them personally (65%)
- Thinks having an abortion can be the responsible choice (69%)
- Thinks someone can be a good and moral person and have an abortion (76%)
- Agrees there shouldn't be so much shame and stigma on abortion (67%)
- Wants people in all communities to have access to safe, legal, affordable abortion care (70%)

7. **Many voters, including a majority of Democratic voters, think abortion rights and access are not secure in Minnesota.** More than half (57%) thinks rights and access depends on which party is in power (64% of Democrats, 51% of independents, and 55% of Republicans).

8. **Data suggest most voters (89%) want to know what state elected officials are doing on the topic of abortion and they want them to take action.**

Respondents are much more likely to support representatives who work to ensure abortion rights and access than those who work to protect unborn life by restricting rights and access (58% v. 40%). Democratic voters are particularly emphatic. Six in ten (62%) Democrats say they'd be less likely to re-elect a state representative who does nothing on the topic.

¹The Minnesota Constitution has long protected Minnesotans' right to privacy and the right to abortion. On abortion, the Minnesota Supreme Court says the government may not put its thumb on the scale in favor of one pregnancy outcome (e.g., carrying a pregnancy to term) over another (e.g., abortion) - or vice versa. The Court has long viewed pregnancy, childbirth, and abortion as personal decisions that the state should not be trying to sway people one way or another on.

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9. What do they want lawmakers to do? Given how Minnesotans feel about abortion generally and the impact of *Dobbs*, it may not be surprising that:

- Generally, a majority want Minnesota laws to support people's rights and access to abortion v. restrict (65% v. 35%)
- A majority support repealing laws that restrict access – both in a general question (68% support repealing “laws that restrict people’s access to abortion”) and when asked about specific laws, including mandatory waiting periods (54% want repealed), criminalizing the prescription of medication abortion (64%), and parental notification laws (57%)
- Most want abortion care regulated like other types of health care, instead of based on the political beliefs of some politicians (85%)
- Their values are aligned with wanting everyone to have access to abortion, no matter where they live or how much money they have (67%)
- And they support policies to reinforce those values – e.g., a majority supports making sure Medicaid covers abortion care (66%), with many more strongly in support than strongly opposed (46% v. 24%)
- Majorities also support protecting providers from lawsuits from other states (75%), as well as women traveling here for legal abortion care (74%)

10. Data suggest voters may continue to consider abortion in future elections.

More than half of respondents (62%) say *Dobbs* will have a long-term effect on their voting. Those who support abortion rights and access are much more likely than anti-abortion voters to say the decision will affect their vote in the future (74% v. 37%). Additionally, those who support abortion rights and access outweigh anti-abortion voters as saying they would not vote for a candidate who disagrees with them on abortion. If Minnesotans reflect voters nationally, this is a reversal post-*Dobbs* (we don't have tracking data on this question). Young voters, who have contemplated their own mortality as a result of *Dobbs*, are particularly likely to have long memories on the issue.

