

August 18, 2023

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Molly Murphy and Nadia Perl; Impact Research

Re: Findings from Research on Abortion Landscape in Battleground States

Our recent research in battleground states confirms that abortion continues to be a salient issue more than a year after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Voters want to expand abortion rights and believe Republican Senators want to ban abortion, regardless of timelines and exceptions. Democrats have an opportunity to drive a meaningful contrast with voters on how Republicans are too extreme on abortion and how their policies will prevent women, even those facing heartbreaking circumstances, from accessing abortion.

The messaging on this emphasizes the core values that have positioned Democrats better than Republicans on the issue: that women and their doctors should have the freedom to make the best decisions for themselves, and that Republicans are passing policies that would prevent this. When Republicans attempt to refine their policies on abortion, be it a 15-week ban or inclusive of exceptions, the message need not change – voters believe that whether a ban includes exceptions or not, exceptions do not work. Therefore, framing Republicans in the extreme on this is believable and upsetting.

The following are key findings based on recent polling and focus groups.

- **Battleground voters disapprove of overturning Roe and want abortion rights restored nationwide.** Nearly two-thirds of voters (65%) want abortion to be legal in most or all circumstances, including majorities of Democrats (87%), Independents (65%), and Republican women (51%) as well as majorities of Black (76%), AAPI (72%), Hispanic (65%), and White (64%) voters.

More than half of voters disapprove of the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision (56%), with nearly as many saying they *strongly* disapprove (47%), and many focus group participants said they want to go back to the *Roe* standard. Nearly two-thirds support the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA) to re-establish a nationwide right to access abortion in the U.S. and protect physicians who provide abortions (64%). Democrats (+84) and Independents (+34) are very supportive of WHPA while Republican women are divided (-6). Black voters are especially supportive (+67), though Hispanic (+45), AAPI (+35), and White (+24) voters are supportive as well.

Findings are based on an online and text-to-web survey as well as 6 online focus groups. The survey was conducted July 13th to 20th, 2023 among N=1000 likely 2024 general election voters in battleground states plus N=100 oversamples of Black voters, Hispanic voters, AAPI voters, and 18-34 voters. The margin of error for the overall results is $\pm 3.1\%$ at the 95% level of confidence. The focus groups were held on June 21st, 22nd, and 26th, 2023 and included 40+ likely 2024 voters, including base voters who support abortion rights and swing voters who are conflicted on the issue. Qualitative research should not be extrapolated to represent the views of all voters.

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“There was nothing really wrong with abortion before [Dobbs].” - Independent Hispanic man in Pennsylvania

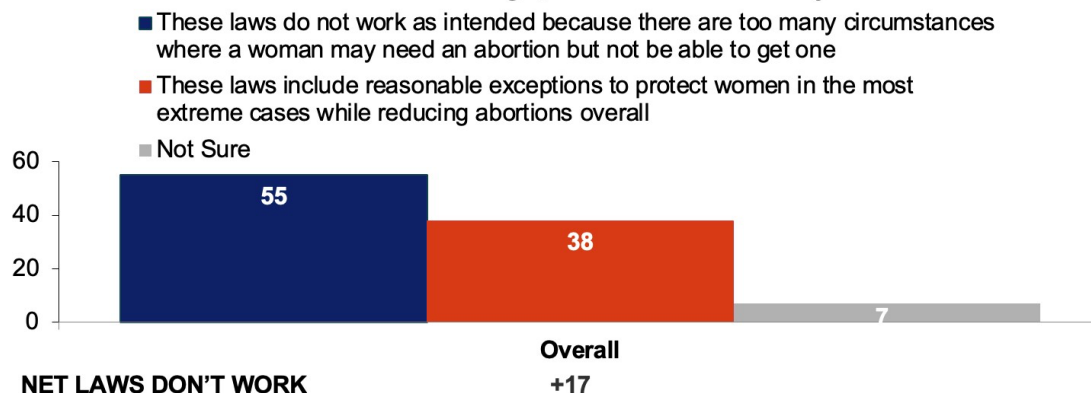
“[Dobbs] just brought to light that things can change and go backward...I didn't know that was possible.” - Democratic White woman in Arizona

- Voters understand that Republicans will ban abortion if they get the chance.** Nearly two-thirds say Senate Republicans want to ban abortion (62%), including half of Independents (51%) and nearly three-quarters of Black voters (+72). Republican voters aren't sure about their own party's intentions: 44% say Senate Republicans want to ban abortion while 33% say they want to pass small restrictions. Nearly two-thirds say that Republicans will pass or try to pass more restrictions if they win the next election (64%). These Republican positions alienate voters: a majority agrees that Republicans are more extreme on the issue than Democrats (52%). While Democrats nearly universally trust Democrats over Republicans on abortion (+91), Republicans are more conflicted (+64), with nearly a third of voters not trusting their own party on abortion policy. Black (+65), AAPI (+28), and Hispanic (+19) voters trust Democrats, while White voters are divided (-1).

“Republicans would eliminate abortion altogether. They've already got the 6 weeks thing going on, and now they're trying to say 'at the moment of conception.' I mean, 6 weeks is when a female learns that she's pregnant...If Republicans had their way, it would have just be no abortions altogether.” - Democratic Black woman in Georgia

Voters understand that exceptions do not work. By 17 points, voters believe that abortion bans that include exceptions do not work as intended because there are too many circumstances where a woman may need an abortion but not be able to get one. Voters understand that abortion bans restrict access for all women, with majorities of Democrats (87%), Independents (63%), and Republicans (52%) agreeing that it's likely doctors who perform abortions will leave states where abortion is illegal or stop performing abortions altogether because it is too risky, making it even harder for women who have emergency situations to have abortions. More than two thirds of Black (74%), Hispanic (69%), and White (67%), and AAPI (66%) agree that these access issues are likely.

Thinking about abortion bans that include exceptions only in cases of rape, incest, and when the woman's life is in danger, which comes closer to your own view?



“Regulations and bans—either way you look at it, they're the same thing. You're controlling something. You can call it a ban with the exception of these people, or you can regulate it with the exception of these people. Just semantics.” - Republican White man in Georgia

“The punishment for doctors... You know how many doctors that's going to frighten, and they're not going to touch that with a 10-foot pole. They're not going to want to do anything, and they're just going to retire, and then you're going to have some goof in there who has no idea what he's doing.” - Republican White man in Arizona

- **Stories about women who have been denied abortions in extreme circumstances are compelling for voters.** These stories—such as women who are near death, ten-year-olds who have been raped, and women who are carrying a fetus that has died—spark empathy and clarify the cruelty and impracticality of applying black-and-white rules to healthcare situations with many grey areas. Voters are nearly universally opposed to policies that prevent women with life-threatening medical conditions from getting abortions until they are near death (87% oppose), including more than two-thirds of anti-choice voters (66% oppose).

“Whether it's because they can't afford it or they're not ready or they were raped or it's a risk to their health...this is a difficult position for them. To criminalize them and treat them like they're criminals just seems really heartless. The idea of treating them with compassion stuck out to me.” - Democratic Black woman in North Carolina

Messaging Recommendation

