

TOPIC BRIEF

Abortion is the ending of a pregnancy by removal or expulsion of an embryo or fetus before it can survive outside the uterus. There are two common ways to safely end a pregnancy: in-clinic abortion, which are surgeries conducted by medical professionals and the abortion pill, which is a medication that can be taken at-home. In the past few months, many states have taken action regarding abortion. “Heartbeat bills” have been passed in states such as Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, and Georgia, mimicking the Decree 770, Romania’s anti-abortion regulation. (see Case Study: Romania 1966-1990). Other states, such as New York, Illinois and Vermont, have passed bills to decriminalize and expand abortion access, acknowledging abortion as a protected “fundamental right.” The bill passed in Alabama is the nation’s most restrictive ban, with no exceptions in cases of rape or incest, making abortion a felony. Several other “heartbeat” bills have been passed in hopes to directly challenged Roe v. Wade, a landmark Supreme Court case in 1973, that protects abortion as a fundamental "right to privacy" for women to choose whether or not to have an abortion under the fourteenth amendment, and to protect the life of these embryos. An international analysis, Reproductive States: Global Perspectives on the Invention and Implementation of Population Policy, covering over the laws of over twenty countries, studied the correlation between these Draconian abortion regulations and fertility rates, finding it to be unrelated. This reality of these regulations will disproportionately affect women of color and those in poverty, who will resort to life-threatening “back-alley” abortions, thereby not decreasing the number of abortions that take place.

CASE STUDY: ROMANIA 1966-1990

Concerned about labor shortages and desperate for population growth, the Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu enacted Decree 770. *Decree 770, Article 1: The State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania decrees: Interruption of pregnancy is forbidden.*

This decree restricted contraception, birth control and abortion, making it a criminal offense, and allowed only in the cases of rape, incest, hereditary disease, disability, or jeopardy of the woman’s life. This law was strictly enforced by the communist government, through the Securitate, a Romanian secret police that registered and kept tabs on suspected pregnancies until the birth of the child.

Results:

The total fertility rate, at first, doubled in one year.

The infant-mortality rate in Romania was more than eight times that in other European countries. One in ten babies were born underweight.

Over 7.3 back-alley abortions were carried through by women, resulting in 15,000 women dead in their attempt or as a result of complications or side effects.

Heterosexual intimacy, marriages and trust were strained between partners, known as “sexual recession.”

Orphanages filled up with over 100,000 unwanted children, who were starved, abused and neglected. This generation grew up to be the “Decretei” that revolted in 1989 against Ceausescu and re-legalized abortion.

QUESTIONS:

How do regulations on abortion contribute to a cycle of poverty? What are some reasons for a women to want an abortion? What are some effective ways to reduce unwanted teenage pregnancies?

