

Both sides celebrate decline in abortions: Guttmacher results on Roe anniversary

News in the [February 26, 2008](#) issue

As abortion-rights supporters and opponents last month marked the 35th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision that legalized the procedure nationwide, new statistics showed that fewer women are choosing abortion.

The study, released just days before the January 22 anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, showed that the U.S. abortion rate is at its lowest in more than 30 years. It also showed that the overall number of abortions nationwide is down more than 25 percent from its peak in 1990.

Thousands of anti-abortion protesters marched through cold temperatures down the National Mall and up Capitol Hill to the Supreme Court building to mark the anniversary. There they were met by abortion-rights supporters, who celebrated the court's ruling that state governments cannot impose undue burdens on a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy.

Abortion opponents heard a recording from President Bush, who said, "We're heartened by the news that the number of abortions is declining, but the most recent data reports that more than one in five pregnancies end in abortion. America is better than this, so we will continue to work for a culture of life."

The numbers came from the Guttmacher Institute, which is affiliated with the abortion provider Planned Parenthood but is generally regarded by those on both sides of the abortion debate as the authority on reproductive-health statistics.

The study showed that in 2005 (the latest year for complete statistics), there were 19.4 abortions per 1,000 U.S. women of child-bearing age. That is a dramatic decrease since the rate's 1981 peak of 29.3. Researchers at the institute found that there were 1.2 million abortions in 2005, approximately a 25 percent decline from

the all-time high of 1.5 million in 1990.

The data also showed that abortions are increasingly done earlier, and a much larger percentage of them are done pharmaceutically, using the abortion pill RU-486 (Mifepristone), known also by its brand name, Mifeprex.

Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, delivered a speech at the University of Texas as part of commemorations of the *Roe v. Wade* anniversary. Keenan said that the abortion-rights community should not cede moral high ground to their opponents or shy away from rhetoric about supporting women who choose not to abort.

“We also believe that if we could prevent unintended pregnancy, then we could therefore reduce the need for abortion,” she said. “So we stand for the teaching of honest, realistic sex education. We stand for the right to choose contraception, including the morning-after pill. And we stand with women who choose to continue their pregnancies, hoping that a compassionate society will support them in the responsibilities of raising a child.” -*Associated Baptist Press*