

Rape Pregnancies and Consequent PTSD Resulting From The Overturn of Roe v. Wade

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Introduction

The intersection of reproductive health and politics has historically shaped women’s healthcare, particularly influencing availability of abortion services. The 1973 Roe v Wade decision legalized abortions and allowed American women to access life-saving care on a national level. Fifty years later, politics and women’s health evolved again following the 2022 Dobbs vs Jackson Women’s Health Organization, overturning Roe v Wade decimating federal protections of abortion. The research presents a direct prediction that 1 in 20 women in the United States will be affected by this matter as rape-related pregnancies and PTSD for mothers and their children will increase in the immediate future. The overturning of Roe v Wade has restricted racial and economic minorities from access to abortion in ⅓ of the United States. The re-election of Donald Trump’s administration, employs healthcare officials with no medical training, like Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who further threaten equal access to reproductive care.

Background

Prior to the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, access to safe reproductive care was limited and often dictated by race, class, and geographic location. For decades, abortion existed underground due to its legality, stigmatization, as well as its danger. Seeking reproductive care, between 200,000 and 1.2 million illegal abortions occurred annually in the United States in the 1950s-60s (Gold & Guttmacher Institute, 2003). Underground procedures performed by untrained individuals led to severe infections and fatalities as shown in 1965, where 17% of all deaths that were related to pregnancy and childbirth were related to illegal abortions (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2022). Although abortion was illegal, it exposed deep inequities in access to healthcare in America as the intersectionality between race, class and geographic location shaped who lived and died in a world without safe and legal abortion. Low-income women, particularly women of color, faced disproportionate harm. During the early 1960s in New York City, abortion accounted for 1 in 4 childbirth-related deaths among white women, while for nonwhite and Puerto Rican women, it accounted for 1 in 2 childbirth-related deaths. This disparity underscores how the system failed poor communities as Harlem Hospital admitted nearly 1,600 women for incomplete abortions in 1962, or 1 in 42 births, as unsafe abortions burdened public hospitals in low income communities and endangered BIPOC and low-income women (Gold et al., 1965; Gold, 2003)

Discussion

HEALTH + ABORTION
RFK Jr. Says He’ll Follow Trump’s Lead on Abortion
5 MINUTE READ

BY ALICE PARK
UPDATED: JANUARY 30, 2025 12:09 PM EST | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED: JANUARY 29, 2025 3:33 PM EST

At the Jan. 29 confirmation hearing, Kennedy stuck to a different refrain: "I agree with President Trump that every abortion is a tragedy," he said several times. "I agree with him that we cannot be a moral nation if there are 1.2 million abortions a year," he also said. "I agree with him that states should control abortion."

Woman says she battles trauma, depression 1 year after not receiving abortion care under Florida law

Deborah Dorbert's son Milo died shortly after his birth in a Florida hospital.

By Katie Kindelan GMA
June 6, 2024, 1:35 PM



Sources

ARTICLE OCT 16, 2024

Trump Proclaims ‘I Killed *Roe v. Wade*’ as 134 Rape-Induced Pregnancies Occur Daily in Abortion Ban States

Former President Donald Trump is responsible for eliminating federal abortion protections that paved the way for total bans in 14 states, leaving survivors of sexual assault with few to no options.

"It was the most excruciating pain to go through," Dorbert, 35, told "[Good Morning America](#)" of giving birth to her son Milo Evan Dorbert on March 3, 2023, after not being able to access abortion care in her home state of Florida. "Delivering him just to watch him die was just all extra added trauma."

Methods

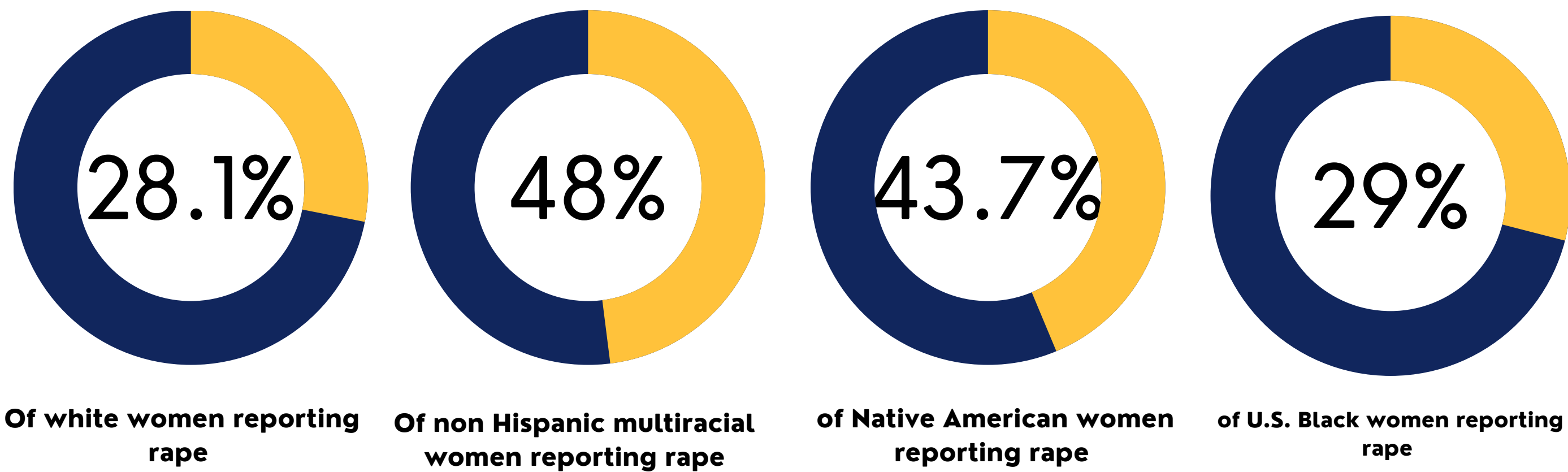
Using sources from 1996 - 2023, the estimated number of women that will have a rape related pregnancy in their lifetime was calculated (D’Angelo et al, Lanthrop et al, Basiel et al). After finding the range of woman that may have a rape-related pregnancy in the United States, we analyzed statistics of how many woman develop PTSD symptoms and criteria as a result of giving birth due to the rape-related pregnancy (Dworkin et al, Kozaric-Kovacic et al, Lončar et al, Lundell et al, Tinglöf et al, Lissman et al). We utilized statistics of PTSD criteria met after giving traumatic births, including sexual assault and rape, ranging from 1991 - 2023. To estimate the number of women affected by the state level laws restricting abortion access in the wake of the 2022 Dobbs decision population data was taken from the 2020 U.S. census from the 19 states with extreme restrictions on abortion availability. Utilizing current literature on rates of rape, studies on the frequency of rape related pregnancies, estimations of PTSD prevalence in both the U.S. population as a whole and in PTSD criteria met after traumatic of forced births in conjunction with these U.S. census data gave a calculated estimate of how many women may be affected by these issues in their lifetimes. Years lived with Disability (YLD) was calculated using the Who Disability weight of PTSD calculation of 0.11, and the National Institute of mental health's assessment that on average PTSD symptoms will last a year (Farr et al).

Results

Due to legislative action, women’s health is consistently under debate and necessary medical procedures are criminalized. In order to showcase the necessity of reproductive freedom, we utilized predictory calculations of the number of women in the United States that will have a rape related pregnancy and of those the amount that will develop PTSD. According to sources from 1996 - 2023, an average of 4.9% of all United States women will be have a rape related pregnancy in their lifetime (D’Angelo et al). Estimates go up to 70% of woman who are raped will result in pregnancy during wartime statistics analysis. Utilizing these statistics, and the most recent U.S. census data, of the 172.78 million women in the United States, we predict that 8.46 million women will experience a rape related pregnancy withing their lifetimes. Given that 19 U.S. states currently have extreme abortion restrictions in place, 3.3 million of these women will be incapable of legally obtaining an abortion (Choi et al). Through demographic analysis, we can determine the disproportionate impact on women in different racial and economic climates, as Black, Native Indigenous, and mixed race women are sexually assaulted and raped at a higher rate than white women. (29.0%, 43.7%, 48.0% and 28.1% respectively) (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2016-2017). The inability to terminate a rape related pregnancy for the 3.3 million women in these 18 states, especially those with a lower socioeconomic status, may result in the development of PTSD in 36% - 79.5% of the cohort population (Moller et al). That is, 1.18 - 2.6 million women will experience PTSD as a result of inability to receive abortions and reproductive service care. PTSD carries with it a 47% increase in mortality (Nilaweera et al), and the estimated increase of PTSD cases over time will add up to 286,000 YDL to the current U.S. burden.

Conclusion

Though the results of this investigation paint a grim picture, future consequences could show greater frequency of forced pregnancy and consequent PTSD than predicted, as sexual assault statistics are frequently underreported due to social stigma against speaking out, an increase in conservative attitude may decrease the number of women who feel safe enough to disclose their experience (End Rape on Campus). An increase in global tensioans brought about during the next few years of the Trump administration may also correlate to an increase in the number of women who experience a rape related pregnancy, as previous studies have shown that increased social tensions lead to an increasing number of rapes (D’Angelo et al). Additionally, the current administration's slashing of federal budgets in the health field equate to less money for mental health help including fewer resources for those with PTSD, increasing the mental, economic, and social burden for those affected and their communities (MCann). This project tackles an on-going statistical analysis that will continue to reform as policies tighten and pressure in our political climate continues to contribute to the suppression of reproductive and general healthcare for women. This unpredictability presents limitations as actual statistics can, unfortunately, be higher than the calculations. Continuous research is required as political executives, such as Robert F. Kennedy Jr., continue creating an unpredictable and dangerous environment for U.S. women and marginalized groups.



Taken from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Sexual Violence