

Assessing Perceptions of Abortion Safety

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**Abortion is a very safe medical procedure.
Most Ohio women recognize this, but some have misconceptions about abortion safety.**

Key Findings

Of 2,259 women surveyed between October 2018 and June 2019, 35% of adult, reproductive-age women in Ohio believed abortion was safe compared to 15% who thought abortion was unsafe. The remaining 50% said that it was not safe or unsafe, that it depended, or did not know. Women who believed abortion was safe were more likely to identify as “pro-choice” and be of a higher socioeconomic status. There were no significant associations between abortion safety beliefs and age, marital status, racial and ethnic identity, or rural Appalachian residence.

Reasons Respondents Gave for Why They Believed Abortion to be Safe

Environment

“Because it’s in a medical setting which if anything goes wrong they can assess it right away.”
– *Latina, age 30-34*

Abortion is Legal

“It’s safe because it is legal. There are specific and safe ways to do it by a qualified medical professional. Anything less would not be safe.”
– *white woman, age 18-24*

Positive Personal Experience

“Mine & my friends’ abortions went great.”
– *white woman, age 25-29*

Word of Mouth

“I have never heard of someone dying or having major complications from one.”
– *white woman, age 18-24*

Reasons Respondents Gave for Why They Believed Abortion to be Unsafe

Abortion Stigma and Violence

“I think it is somewhat dangerous because of how many people against it there are. Some people against abortion are willing to use violence.”
– *Latina, age 30-34*

“I think the way we approach access to abortion and the stigma around it presents serious mental and other health issues to women.”
– *white woman, age 30-34*

Misconceptions About Abortion Risks*

“They could bleed to death.”
– *white woman, age 35-39*

“Abortion could cause permanent damage to your insides.”
– *Black woman, age 25-29*

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Public Health Implications

- Providers should be aware of the diversity of abortion safety perceptions so that they can best engage with their patients, most importantly when attempting to mitigate misconceptions about abortion safety.
- Increased knowledge of public understanding of abortion safety could provide information for producing more effective public health messaging.