



Supporters of legal abortion take part in a small rally in Tucson, Ariz., April 9, 2024, after Arizona's Supreme Court in Phoenix ruled that a 160-year-old near-total abortion ban still on the books in the state is enforceable. (OSV News/Rebecca Noble)

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Washington, D.C. — August 30, 2024

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About three-quarters of voters in the swing states of Arizona and Nevada favor upcoming referendums on abortion, a new poll found.

A Fox News poll released Aug. 28 found that 73% of Arizona voters said they favor a ballot measure that would enact abortion protections "up until fetal viability or when necessary to protect the patient's health" in their state constitution. Just 23% said they were opposed. In Nevada, 75% of voters said they favor a similar measure to establishing the right to an abortion in their state constitution, while 21% said they opposed that effort.

The same poll showed Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, leading former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, leading 50% to 49% in an average of four key swing states: Arizona, Nevada, Georgia and North Carolina. Individually, Harris leads Trump in three of those states, with Trump leading Harris in North Carolina.

Since the Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization* in June 2022 that reversed its previous abortion precedent, voters in Ohio, California, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Vermont and Kansas either rejected new limitations on abortion or expanded legal protections for it as the result of ballot measures.

Similar efforts will be on the ballot again in several key swing states in November, including in Nevada and Arizona, where closely-watched races for the U.S. Senate are also taking place.

The Arizona Catholic Conference has opposed the abortion ballot measure in that state, calling it "far-reaching and very extreme." The Nevada Catholic Conference has also stated its opposition to the effort, arguing voters should reject "the efforts seeking to permanently place the right to abortion in our state constitution," noting elective abortion is already legal in the state until 24 weeks and should not be further expanded.

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred from conception to natural death, and as such, opposes direct abortion. After the Dobbs decision, church officials in the U.S. have reiterated the church's concern for both mother and child and called to strengthen available support for those living in poverty or other causes that can push women toward having an abortion.

Abortion rates, which began steadily rising in 2017 after a nearly three decade decline, have further increased in the aftermath of the Dobbs decision. According to the Guttmacher Institute, which tracks abortion data, abortions in 2023 were up 11% over 2020. The 2023 data represents the first full year after Dobbs created a "fractured abortion landscape" as states enact restrictions on, or protections of, abortion access.

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Kelsey Pritchard, state public affairs director for SBA Pro-Life America, which works to elect pro-life candidates to public office, told OSV News in an email that the "only way abortion ballot measures in red states will pass is if voters are unaware that amendments eliminate parental rights, eviscerate health protections for women, ensure taxpayer-funded abortion and — worst of all — enshrine all-trimester abortion."

"Through carefully crafted language, these ballot measures will allow elective abortion in even the seventh, eighth, and ninth months of pregnancy," Pritchard said. She pointed to a Harvard-Harris poll showing seven in 10 Americans oppose abortion after 15 weeks.

According to national health statistics, a national 15-week abortion ban — without taking into account exceptions — would have affected approximately 6% of abortions in the U.S. while leaving the overwhelming majority of abortions legally protected. Nearly nine out of 10 abortions take place within the first trimester.

However, Harris has made expanding access to abortion a key part of her candidacy, while recently Sen. JD Vance of Ohio confirmed his running mate Trump would actually veto a national abortion ban if Congress sent him such a bill. In July, at the direction of Trump, delegates at the Republican National Convention approved a new party platform that removed a longstanding call for federal abortion restrictions

at 20 weeks — legislation that would potentially impact just over 1% of U.S. abortions each year — while leaving the decision on how to regulate abortion to the states.

Election Day is November 5. Early voting begins in Nevada on Oct. 19 and in Arizona on Oct. 9.