

# Abortion in the united states



A universal truth that holds constant with almost every person worldwide is, " Life is Precious." This idea is a proven truth because the most valued profession on earth is that of a doctor. So, what then constitutes life? Is it when you come out of the womb? Or is it when your heart beats for the first time? This simple question is one that is debated by millions across the world. It shows up in classrooms, supermarkets, and even laws. Abortion laws differ from county to county, state to state, and country to country. Why is that? In America, two states that are the most different are New York and Georgia, especially in regard to their abortion laws. The reason for the variations stems from the historically varied political culture and demographics that make up each state. Even so, a couple of states don't have one pure political culture, instead, the culture stem from the political ideology dominant in the state. An example of this phenomenon is New York. For decades, they have been either politically moderate or leaning more towards the right with an individualistic political culture. Finally, the progressive push in New York has shifted the political culture to lean more towards moralistic. Georgia, on the other hand, has a more traditionalistic political culture, with the people that make up the state more concerned with keeping things as they have been. Comparing these two states, with two very different cultures will shed some light on why laws, specifically abortion laws, differ in the United States.

Before getting into the nuances of why the laws are different, it would probably be helpful to know the laws. New York is one of the thirteen states that are known for having progressive abortion laws (Vestal). The law states that " Every individual who becomes pregnant has the fundamental right

to.... have an abortion" (NY State Senate Bill S240). What this means in layman's terms is that New York wants it known that abortion is a fundamental right for women, and it can't be taken away. Another portion of the law states that " A health care practitioner licensed, certified, or authorized... acting within his or her lawful scope of practice, may perform an abortion..." (NY State Senate Bill S240). This means that ANY health care practitioner, not just a doctor, that is licensed to perform an abortion can do so legally in the state of New York. The same section of the law states that the health care practitioner may perform an abortion " according to the practitioner's reasonable and good faith professional judgment based on the facts of the patient's case: the patient is within twenty-four weeks from the commencement of pregnancy, or there is an absence of fetal viability, or the abortion is necessary to protect the patient's life or health"(NY State Senate Bill S240). This means that they can perform an abortion with up to 24 weeks, when it is necessary to protect the patient's life or health, or in the absence of fetal viability, dependent on the patient's case (NY State Senate Bill S240). What the " fetal viability" means is if the fetus, at any point after 24 weeks, is unable to survive outside the womb, whether that means they didn't develop a brain or heart, the health care practitioner can perform an abortion. The New York Governor wants to take further action with this bill. He wants to have this bill codified in the New York State Constitution to ensure women's rights are guaranteed in his state (Weiner). It will be up to the people to decide if this is the action they want to take.

Georgia, on the other hand, has one of the more restrictive abortion laws in the country. Instead of having until 24 weeks, the " Living Infants Fairness

and Equality (LIFE) Act, otherwise known as the " Fetal Heartbeat Bill" bans abortion as soon as there is a detectable heartbeat. Fetal heartbeat can be detected " as early as six week's gestation" (Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act). According to a recent study, " the mean gestational age at time of pregnancy awareness was 5. 5 weeks" (Branum and Ahren). This means that most women don't learn that they are pregnant until they are about 6 weeks along. Given the time frame, this is not a lot of time for decision making. Roe vs Wade states women have the right to an abortion up to 24 weeks (Prabhu). Under this ruling, the Fetal Heartbeat law undermines a woman's right to have an abortion. Further restrictions on abortion that is mentioned in this law are that a woman must get counseling from a licensed physician, which more often than not discourages her from having the procedure, and then they must wait an additional 24 hours after that to have the abortion performed (Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act). The LIFE act was passed by both the Georgia state house and senate, and signed into law by the governor. The future of this bill is uncertain as it was blocked by a federal judge from being enacted (Prabhu). It remains to be seen what further actions are taken, and if this case makes it all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court.

Three political subcultures make up the United States of America: Moralistic, Individualistic, and Traditionalistic. Moralistic culture believes that the government acts for the greater good of the people, and that everyone should participate in politics. The Individualistic culture believes that the government acts just like a business, and if the trains are running on time, the citizens at large shouldn't be bothered by the actions of politicians,

unless it is time to vote. Traditionalistic culture believes that the government is there to maintain the status quo, and that politics should be left to the elites (Leckrone).

As was said before, New York is one of the three states that have a mixed political culture (Zimmerman). New York is a mix between the Moralistic and Individualistic cultures. For the past few decades, the Individualistic culture has been dominant in the state because the state government has been dominated by the Republicans who reflect the more business-like qualities of an Individualistic culture. With the New York legislature being controlled by Democrats for the first time in decades more progressive laws, especially abortion laws, are being pushed through and signed into law. This marks a shift to a more Moralistic political culture because as Elazar states, " where the Moralistic culture is prominent, innovative activity should be high..."(Johnson). The third political culture, Traditionalistic, is reflected by the state of Georgia.

Unlike New York, Georgia has a pure political culture. This state has always been controlled by those with conservative beliefs, those who believe in maintaining their status. The names of the parties might change, but by today's understanding the political party in charge is the Republicans. The history of this state is vital for your understanding of its political culture. During the Civil War, Georgia was a strong hold for the confederates, those who deeply disagreed with the Republican President Lincoln. When the confederate lost the people that resided in Georgia clung to their traditions, and resented reconstruction (Cohen and Barnes). The residents of Georgia wanted to maintain the status quo, and keep their elite status, so they

passed laws to make it so. With strict segregationist policies and Jim Crow laws, it is no wonder that minorities, especially African Americans, found it so difficult to get a foot in the door that is Georgian politics. Even repealing these policies and making discrimination illegal, decades of those types of policies have left deep scars. Today, Georgia has one of the highest percentages of minorities in the country, but that still hasn't managed to uproot the hundreds of years of tradition (Cohen and Barnes).

Another factor that affects both the laws and the political culture of states is demographics. New York State has a total of 19.5 million people. New York City has a total of 8.4 million people (US Census Bureau). That is almost half the entire population of the state. New York State and New York City can be said to be two completely different places even though they are in the same area because of the different demographic make-up. Different outlooks on life are caused by race, education and religion. When comparing the demographic make-up of New York and Georgia, the results would be more accurate if we compared New York City and Georgia because the population is more similar with 10.5 million people in Georgia (US Census Bureau). New York City, with a population of 8.4 million people, has 32% white people, 24% African Americans, 13% Asian Americans, and about 29% Hispanic or Latino (US Census Bureau). Georgia has a population of 10.5 million people and has about 52% white people, 32% African Americans, 4% Asian Americans, and about 9% Hispanic or Latino (US Census Bureau). In any given area, "differences in racial composition have a substantial impact on state political culture" (Patterson 205). This means that the greater the differences in race there is, the greater the voter impact is. Education is

another factor that affects laws. New York City has a bachelor's degree educational attainment level of 36% and Georgia 29% (US Census Bureau). Of course, there will be room for error in this assessment when comparing a city and a state, but taking that into account, the comparison still holds water because New York State's bachelor degree educational attainment level is 35% (US Census Bureau). The fact of the matter is the more educated you are, the more likely you are to make an -educated- vote (Patterson 205). New York City has 58% of adults believing in a god (Adults in New York) and Georgia 64% of adults believe in a god (Adults in Georgia). Race, education and religion all effect what political leaning someone has. On that note, New York City has 32% of the people leaning liberal (Adults in New York), and in Georgia only 20% (Adults in Georgia). On the other hand, 27% of the people in New York City lean conservative (Adults in New York) and in Georgia 42% lean conservative (Adults in Georgia). Interestingly enough, it is about the same percentage of those who lean moderate in both states, with 35% in New York City and 32% in Georgia. All these factors affect the state's political culture, and in turn the laws that are put in place. For example, there was still opposition to the abortion laws passed in the State of New York, and one of the most vocal critics was the Catholic Church. With 33% of people in New York City (and the state 31% identifying as Catholic) there is a pretty strong opposition. The other voters in New York managed to overcome this hurdle, but not all states are lucky enough to overcome the prominent religion in their state. Even with the separation of church and state, the church is still a massive organization that lobbies for its own interests.

In closing, when comparing New York and Georgia there was an attempt to give an overview of why laws, especially abortion laws, differ in the United States. The laws differ because the political cultures, Traditionalistic, Individualistic, and Moralistic, affect the decision making of the politicians and the voters. Meanwhile, the demographic make up of a state effects the political culture. While it is true that history plays apart, the more diverse people that live in an area can begin to affect the culture. Religion, race, and education plays an important role in the viewpoint of a voter and whether they vote or not. How they vote depends on their political ideology, and all of the factors that are stated above influence the outcome of a persons vote. Using the two states that reflect the three political cultures in the United States, the reason that abortion laws differ, sometimes drastically, is because of the political culture and demographics.

## Works Cited

- “ Adults in Georgia - Religion in America: U. S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics.” Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, 11 May 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/georgia/#social-and-political-views>.
- “ Adults in the New York City Metro Area - Religion in America: U. S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics.” Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, 11 May 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/metro-area/new-york-city-metro-area/#social-and-political-views>.
- Branum, Amy M., and Katherine A. Ahrens. “ Trends in Timing of Pregnancy Awareness Among US Women.” Maternal and Child Health



Journal, vol. 21, no. 4, 23 July 2016, pp. 715–726., doi: 10.

1007/s10995-016-2155-1.

- Cohen, Richard, and James Barnes. “ The Almanac of American Politics: Georgia State Profile 2018.” *Ballotpedia* , Columbia Books, 1 Sept. 2017, [https://ballotpedia.org/Almanac\\_of\\_American\\_Politics\\_Georgia\\_state\\_profile\\_2018](https://ballotpedia.org/Almanac_of_American_Politics_Georgia_state_profile_2018).
- Johnson, Charles A. “ Political Culture in American States: Elazars Formulation Examined.” *American Journal of Political Science* , vol. 20, no. 3, Aug. 1976, p. 491. *JSTOR* , doi: 10. 2307/2110685.
- Leckrone, J. Wesley. “ State and Local Political Culture.” *The American Partnership* , 18 Dec. 2013, <https://theamericanpartnership.com/tag/elazars-political-culture/>.
- “ Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act.” *HB 481 2019-2020 Regular Session* , Renee Unterman, 7 May 2019, <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20192020/HB/481>.
- “ NY State Senate Bill S240.” *NY State Senate* , Liz Krueger, 23 Jan. 2019, <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s240>.
- Patterson, Samuel C. “ The Political Cultures of the American States.” *The Journal of Politics* , vol. 30, no. 1, Feb. 1968, pp. 187–209. *JSTOR* , doi: 10. 2307/2128314.
- Prabhu, Maya T. “ Federal Judge Blocks Georgia Anti-Abortion Law.” *Ajc* , The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 2 Oct. 2019, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/federal-judge-blocks-georgia-anti-abortion-law/yh1ttzbYdTcqiUT7OkyqkO/>.

- “ U. S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Georgia; New York City, New York; New York.” *Census Bureau QuickFacts* , 2010, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA,newyorkcitynewyork,NY/RHI725218>.
- Vestal, Christine. “ New Laws Deepen State Differences Over Abortion.” *The Pew Charitable Trusts* , 30 Aug. 2019, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/07/30/new-laws-deepen-state-differences-over-abortion>.
- Weiner, Mark. “ Historic NY Abortion Vote: How Law Will Change, What It Means for Women.” *Syracuse* , 24 Jan. 2019, <https://www.syracuse.com/news/g66l-2019/01/7a5d56a87eac4/historic-ny-abortion-vote-how-law-will-change-what-it-means-for-women.html>.
- Zimmerman, Shirley. “ States Political Cultures and the Family Policies They Enacted in the 1990s. What Difference Does It Make?” *Revue Française d Etudes Américaines* , vol. 97, no. 3, 2003, pp. 59–80. *CAIRN. INFO* , doi: 10.3917/rfea.097.0059.