

Poll finds many US women confused about legality of medical abortion

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Changes in U.S. abortion laws have prompted confusion among women

about medication abortion and emergency contraception, or the "morning-after" pill.

A new poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) underscores this lack of awareness about what's legal or not from state to state, including whether a full abortion ban is in place or abortions are allowed.

Pollsters surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,234 U.S. adults in English and Spanish between Jan. 17 and 24. This [survey](#) was conducted more than six months after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, allowing individual states to ban or limit abortion.

About 4 in 10 adults nationwide said they were unsure whether abortion using a drug called mifepristone was legal where they live. About half of women said they were "unsure" whether medication abortion is legal in their state, including 41% of those between 18 and 49 years of age.

In 13 states with full abortion bans, about 13% of adults thought medical abortion was legal in their state and 47% were unsure. Four in 10 were aware that medication abortion was illegal in their state.

Even in states where abortion is legal, confusion was evident. About 44% surveyed in those states were aware that medication abortion is legal there; the same percentage were unsure. One in 10 respondents wrongly believed medication abortion was not legal in their state.

Respondents tended to be unaware of a recent move by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to allow certified pharmacies to dispense mifepristone directly to patients, with a prescription. Previously, the pills were not available at pharmacies and could be dispensed only by a [health care provider](#).

About 73% of respondents were unaware of this change, including 77% of women under age 50.

Many also were confused about [emergency contraception](#), also known as the morning-after pill or Plan B (levonorgestrel). Although 93% had heard of it and 62% of that group understood that the morning-after pill was not the same as the abortion pill, 73% thought the medication could end early pregnancy.

This included two-thirds of women of childbearing age.

While [emergency contraceptives](#) like the [morning-after pill](#) are legal in all 50 states, 32% of respondents were unsure if they were legal in their state and 5% thought they were illegal.

Women under 50 were among the groups most likely to be aware that [emergency contraceptive pills](#) are legal. Even among this group, however, about 25% were unsure or thought these pills were illegal.

Confusion was more widespread in states where abortions are banned. More than half of respondents in those states were unaware that emergency contraceptive pills remain legal.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [abortion](#).

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