



The Harms of Denying a Woman a Wanted Abortion Findings from the Turnaway Study

The Turnaway Study conducted at the University of California, San Francisco, shows that women experience harm from being denied a wanted abortion. These findings have far-reaching implications for lawmakers, judges, health agencies and others as they consider policies that restrict abortion access.*

Denying a woman an abortion creates economic hardship and insecurity which lasts for years.

- Women who were turned away and went on to give birth experienced an increase in household poverty lasting at least four years relative to those who received an abortion.¹
- Years after an abortion denial, women were more likely to not have enough money to cover basic living expenses like food, housing and transportation.¹
- Being denied an abortion lowered a woman’s credit score, increased a woman’s amount of debt and increased the number of their negative public financial records, such as bankruptcies and evictions.²

Women turned away from getting an abortion are more likely to stay in contact with a violent partner. They are also more likely to raise the resulting child alone.

- Physical violence from the man involved in the pregnancy decreased for women who received abortions but not for the women who were denied abortions and gave birth.³
- By five years, women denied abortions were more likely to be raising children alone – without family members or male partners – compared to women who received an abortion.¹

*The Turnaway Study included one thousand women from clinics in 21 states, who closely resemble the population seeking abortions in the United States as a whole. Women who received abortions and women who were denied abortions were similar at the time they sought abortions. Their lives diverged after in ways that were directly attributable to whether they received an abortion. A testament to how well the study was designed and its scope, the Turnaway Study has produced 50 peer-reviewed papers in top medical and social science journals.

The financial wellbeing and development of children is negatively impacted when their mothers are denied abortion

- The children women already have at the time they seek abortions show worse child development when their mother is denied an abortion compared to the children of women who receive one.⁶
- Children born as a result of abortion denial are more likely to live below the federal poverty level than children born from a subsequent pregnancy to women who received the abortion.⁷
- Carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term is associated with poorer maternal bonding, such as feeling trapped or resenting the baby, with the child born after abortion denial, compared to the next child born to a woman who received an abortion.⁷

Giving birth is connected to more serious health problems than having an abortion.

- Women who were denied an abortion and gave birth reported more life-threatening complications like eclampsia and postpartum hemorrhage compared to those who received wanted abortions.⁸
- Women who were denied an abortion and gave birth instead reported more chronic headaches or migraines, joint pain, and gestational hypertension compared to those who had an abortion.⁹
- The higher risks of childbirth were tragically demonstrated by two women who were denied an abortion and died following delivery. No women died from an abortion.⁹

Women who receive a wanted abortion are more financially stable, set more ambitious goals, raise children under more stable conditions, and are more likely to have a wanted child later.

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For more information visit: <https://www.ansirh.org/research/turnaway-study>