

ISSUE BRIEF, AUGUST 2018

## Socioeconomic outcomes of women who receive and women who are denied wanted abortions

### Key Points:

- Many women are already experiencing economic hardships at the time they seek an abortion. In fact, not having enough money to care for a child or another child is the most common reason for seeking an abortion.
- Consistent with their concerns, we find that being denied a wanted abortion results in economic insecurity for women and their families, and an almost four-fold increase in odds that a woman's household income is below the Federal Poverty Level compared to those who receive an abortion.

### Background

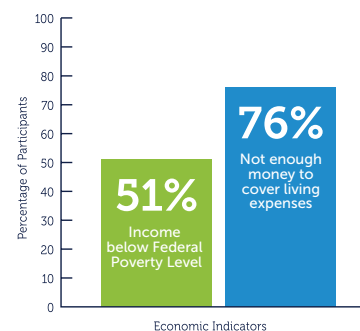
- Not having enough money to care for a child or support another child is the most common reason women give for wanting to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. <sup>1,2,3</sup>
- The data in this brief come from the Turnaway Study, the first study in the US to examine women's outcomes for years after receiving or being denied abortion. The study was designed to assess the consequences for women of having an abortion versus being denied a wanted abortion. Women were recruited from 30 abortion facilities across the country. Some of the women in the study received a wanted abortion and some were denied because they were past the gestational age limit. For more information about the Turnaway Study, visit [www.ANSIRH.org](http://www.ANSIRH.org).

- To measure the relationship between abortion and socioeconomic outcomes, researchers interviewed women about their household size, employment, receipt of public assistance, and financial security every six months for five years after seeking an abortion.

### Findings

- Many women were already experiencing economic hardships at the time they sought an abortion – half had incomes below the Federal Poverty Level and three-quarters reported not having enough money to pay for basic living expenses.

Many women seeking abortion are already experiencing economic hardship.



- Six months after being denied an abortion, women had more than three times greater odds of being unemployed than women who were able to access an abortion.
- Women who were denied a wanted abortion were more likely to be enrolled in public safety net programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food assistance (SNAP), and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) compared to women who received abortions.

For more information about this and other ANSIRH research, please visit [www.ansirh.org](http://www.ansirh.org).



- Over time, women denied abortions were more likely to be raising children alone – without family members or male partners – compared to women who received an abortion.
- Giving birth, instead of being able to access a wanted abortion, resulted in an almost four-fold increase in odds that a woman's household income was below the Federal Poverty Level, and a greater likelihood of reporting not being able to cover basic living needs.



## Conclusions

- Women are justified in being concerned about the financial consequences of carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term.
- Because the responsibility of raising a child born after being denied an abortion falls disproportionately on women, restricting abortion access threatens women's economic security.
- TANF, SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid play an important role in supporting women and their families, but they are not sufficient in keeping women from falling below the Federal Poverty Level.
- Increasing access to, and funding for, public assistance programs could help ensure all women can obtain the support they need regardless of the outcome of their pregnancies.
- Denial of abortion leads to economic hardships for women. Laws that limit women's access to abortion will result in more women carrying unwanted pregnancies to term, with subsequent harm to their economic wellbeing and the financial security of their families.

For more information about this and other ANSIRH research, please visit [www.ansirh.org](http://www.ansirh.org).

## References

1. Biggs, M., et al. (2013). "Understanding why women seek abortions in the US." *BMC Women's Health* 13(1): 29.
2. Finer, L., et al. (2005). "Reasons U.S. women have abortions: quantitative and qualitative perspectives." *Perspect Sex Reprod Health* 37(3): 110-118.
3. Kirkman, M., et al. (2009). "Reasons women give for abortion: a review of the literature." *Arch Womens Ment Health* 12(6): 356-378.

This issue brief summarizes findings from the following publication:

Foster DG, Biggs MA, Ralph L, Gerds C, Roberts S, Glymour MM. "Socioeconomic Outcomes of Women Who Receive and Women Who Are Denied Wanted Abortions in the United States." *Am J Public Health*. 2018 Mar;108(3):407-413.