

Abortion Knowledge organiser

Key words

Abortion: the deliberate termination (ending) of a pregnancy by removal and destruction of the foetus.

Foetus: the developing baby in the womb.

Embryo: the developing baby before 4 months.

The legal status of abortion

Abortion has been legal in England, Scotland and Wales since 1967 when The Abortion Act was passed.

It is currently legal for a woman to have an abortion up to the 24th week of pregnancy. This limit was put in place in 1990. Under this law abortion is allowed if two doctors agree there is a medical reason for it.

There are a number of rarer situations when an abortion may legally be carried out after 24 weeks.

When does life begin?

This question is key because those that disagree with abortion often see it as murder or killing.

But there has to be a life before there can be murder.

The answer to this question does affect whether or not we see an abortion as wrong.

Why might a woman want or need an abortion?

Some reasons could include:

- The pregnancy was a result of rape which may lead to painful memories
- The mother has money worries
- The mother feels too young to raise a child
- The father is making her end the pregnancy
- The mother already has children and feels she can't cope with another child
- The mother is not in a loving relationship so feels she cannot raise a child in that situation
 - The foetus is disabled
- The mother does not feel emotionally ready
- Her family will disown her if she continues with the pregnancy and has the baby

The different viewpoints

Those who consider abortion to be **WRONG** are **PRO-LIFE**.

Those who support a woman's right to choose are called **PRO-CHOICE**.

Humanist View

Generally, humanists are more concerned with the quality of life than the right to life if the two come into conflict. When necessary, humanists would usually put the interests of the pregnant woman first. They believe however that all other possible options should be explored before abortion e.g. adoption.

Christianity and abortion

Christians might be pro-life because they believe in **Ensoulement** - when a human gains a soul and truly becomes a human. Many Christians believe this happens at conception. Therefore, the foetus is a person and terminating the pregnancy is ending a human life - murder. "**Do not murder**".

Christians might also be pro-life because they believe in the Sanctity of Life. **Sanctity of Life is the belief that all life is given by God and is therefore sacred.** This means all life belongs to God - only God should make decisions about when life ends.

Some Christians think abortion is sometimes acceptable, as it is important to show compassion to the unborn embryo/foetus and show compassion to the mother. In the Bible it says "**love thy neighbour as yourself**" - in some circumstances it could be compassionate to allow abortion.

Islam and abortion

Abortion is generally not permitted within Islam unless it is to save the mother's life.

Hinduism and abortion

Hindu law books say that human life is sacred and abortion is a sinful act.

While strict Hindus still believe abortion is a sin, this view is generally ignored in modern India where abortion is legal if it is carried out in a government clinic.

Many Hindus support abortion. It has been estimated that 5 million abortions are performed in India every year.