

US intensifies abortion restrictions in Texas, Mississippi

The enactment of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 created the basis for current abortion laws in the U.S. Now, state governments are taking action against the laws established in the court case in order to implement further restrictions on abortion accessibility.

Clara Martinez /
News Editor: Print

For Social Studies Teacher Becky Mason, recent developments in abortion restrictions are not a shock considering other political changes.

“I’m not all that surprised, because I think the indicators have been going that direction in the last few years, and especially with the Supreme Court changing last year,” she said.

In 1973, the U.S. court case *Roe v. Wade* set a national standard for abortion restrictions. Now, these laws are being challenged by state governments to further restrict someone’s ability to terminate a pregnancy.

The law established by *Roe v. Wade* states that women can seek abortion throughout the entirety of the first trimester of pregnancy with regulations determined by the state related to maternal health, per Oyez, a site documenting U.S. court

cases. Stricter restrictions or complete prohibition are legal in the third trimester as long as the mother’s health and safety is protected.

According to the New York Times, abortion regulations are currently under fire in ten states that would, if the laws settled by *Roe v. Wade* are overturned, impose immediate restrictions. These states have passed what are known as “trigger laws,” in which U.S. state governments would instantly impose an abortion ban.

In Mississippi, the Supreme Court discussed a proposal to ban abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, directly challenging *Roe v. Wade*. And, in Texas, lawmakers recently implemented Senate Bill 8, banning abortion roughly six weeks into pregnancy.

Senate Bill 8

Also known as the “heart-beat bill,” Senate Bill 8 was passed in the state of Texas Sept. 1, 2021. According to

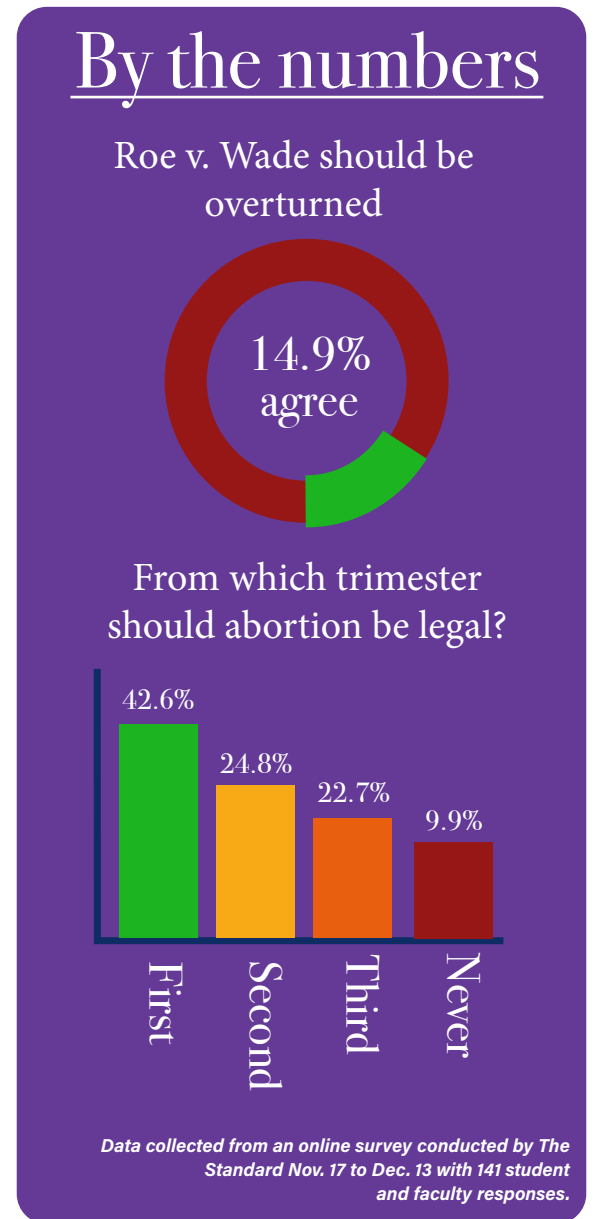
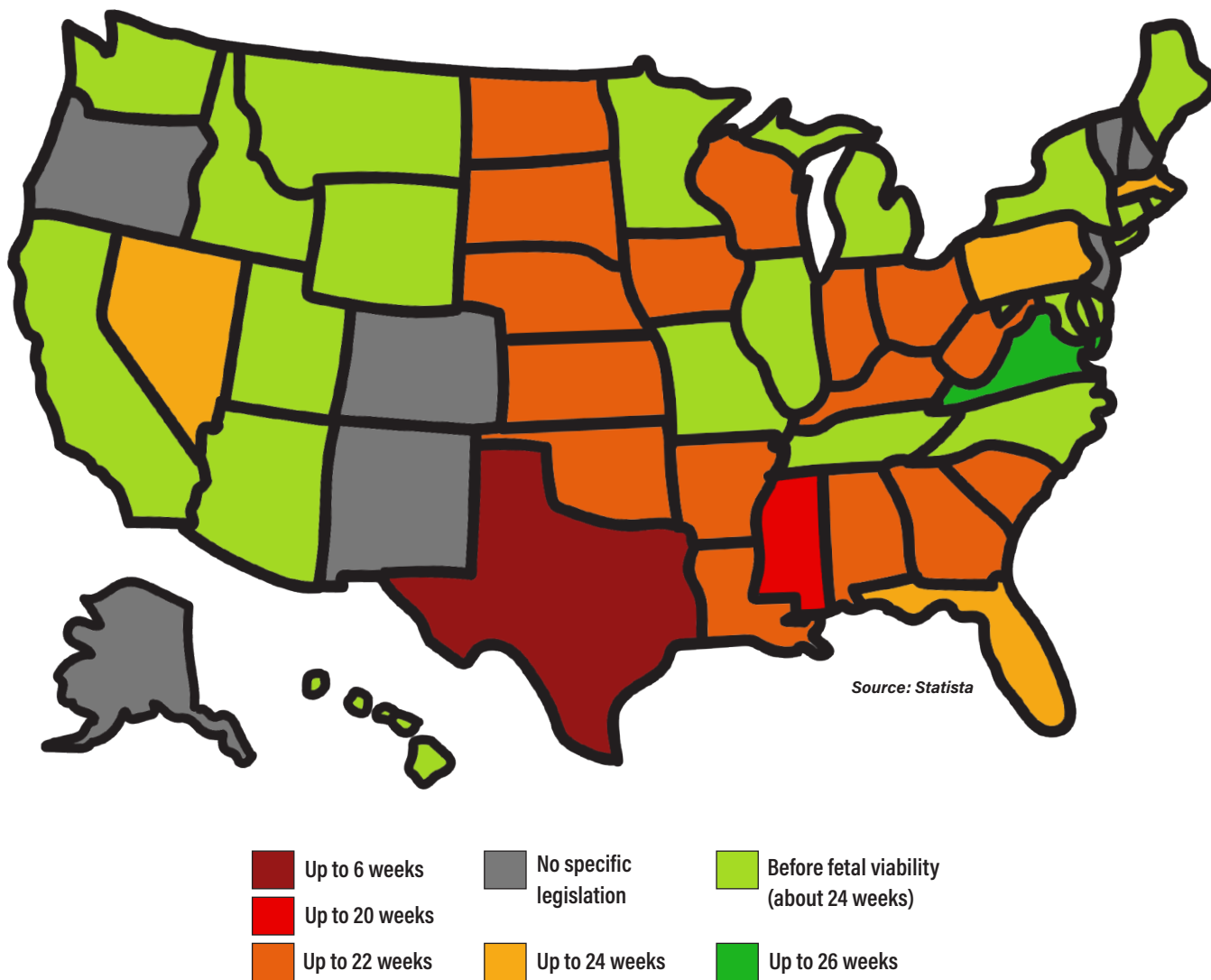
the U.S. Supreme Court case file, the bill prohibits women seeking an abortion in Texas beyond approximately six weeks of pregnancy, often the time of detection of fetal cardiac activity. Women suspected of having an abortion after this time could face a \$10,000 fine with no exceptions made for survivors of rape or incest.

Claire Heskett (’22) said the extremity of the new restrictions was a shock when she first heard of the bill.

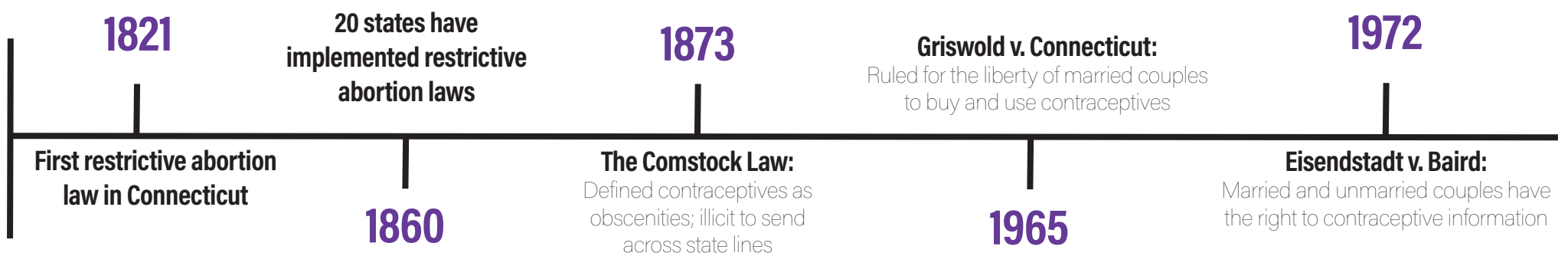
“I remember when I read

that it passed and it was going to be official, I actually cried about it,” she said. “In my mind, there’s no way that you can call that a fair law in abortion.”

According to the New York Times, Senate Bill 8 weakens the laws established in *Roe v. Wade* by empowering citizens to take action against fellow Texans. Any citizen who believes someone is involved with the abortion process after the detection of fetal cardiac activity is subject to be sued.



Abortion Laws Throughout U.S. History



Sources: Eastside Gynecology and Oyez
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A report by the United Nations published Dec. 16, 2021 surveyed 100,000 people from 45 countries between April 2020 and March 2021, concluded women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic in comparison to men.

Unemployment

According to the United Nations survey results, 17% of women compared to 11% of men faced unemployment. Meanwhile, 82% of women saw their work hours reduced as opposed to 65% of men.

Kaila Brooks ('24) said the pre-existing issues with wages and employment seem to have worsened throughout the pandemic as the survey results show that women are struggling simply to find jobs.

"Before, women may have been paid less than men," she said. "Now, it's actually women not being able to get the same jobs and the same opportunities as men rather than them just being different."

Chloe Thompson ('25) said a contributing factor to increasing unemployment for women can be traced back to who is considered to be an essential worker.

"A lot of jobs deemed non-essential were just sort of stopped," she said.

Because of this, Thompson said positions held by women "could have been seen as more non-essential" than the same role filled by a man.

Violence

In 2020, the United Nations reported a 30% increase in reports of domestic violence. The pandemic was attributed as a leading cause of abuse contributing to rising rates of violence.

Brooks said the pandemic highly impacted the number of reports because of the isolated feelings people had throughout multiple lockdowns.

"People are spending so much time alone, whereas before they were able to leave the house a bit and get some of that freedom," she said. "Now, during lockdown, women have had to stay at home."

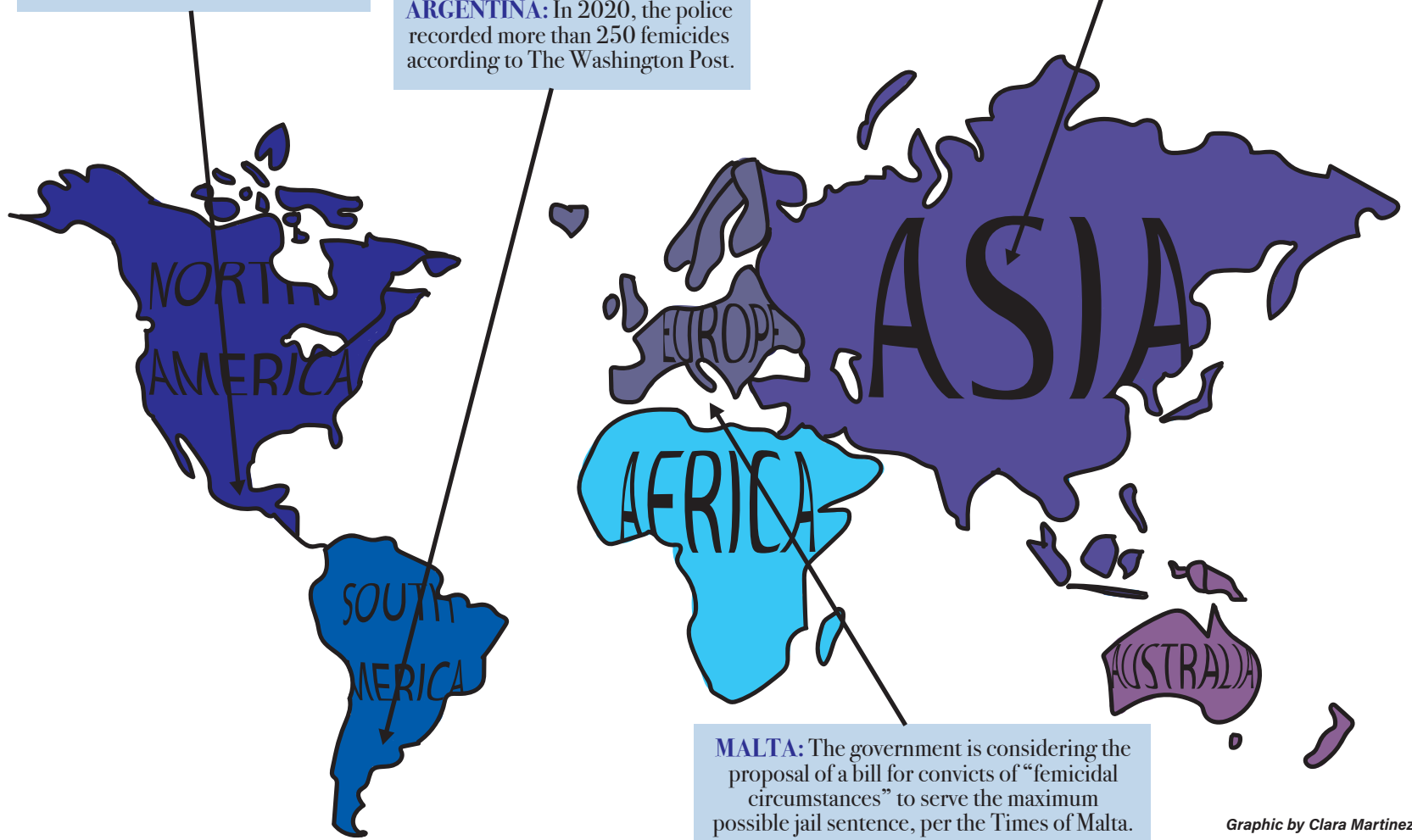
Moreover, Brooks said the stress induced by financial and worldwide instability further contributed to the rise in domestic partner violence.

"People are staying with just their spouses, and I think that that either drives the relation-

MEXICO: According to Reuters, overall murders fell by 3.6% in 2021, yet rates of female-targeted homicides increased.

ARGENTINA: In 2020, the police recorded more than 250 femicides according to The Washington Post.

RUSSIA: Domestic violence has increased in Russia, particularly because of the lack of a legal definition upon which to base preventative laws, per Chatham House.



MALTA: The government is considering the proposal of a bill for convicts of "femicidal circumstances" to serve the maximum possible jail sentence, per the Times of Malta.

Graphic by Clara Martinez

ship together or forces them apart," she said.

Countries in Latin America, in particular, had dramatic increases in domestic violence throughout the pandemic. According to La Jornada, femicide - intentional

violence based on gender - rose by 137% in Mexico between 2015 and 2020, with general homicide rising by only 35%.

Learning Support Teacher Yulisa Cruz said while people commonly associate femicide with non-European countries, it is an issue occurring globally.

"There are bad people in every single culture," she said. "There's domestic violence in every culture."

Although Cruz said people in Europe typically highlight instances of sexism occurring in Latin America, data collected in 2021 shows a dramatic rise also occurring in the U.K.

In the Crime Survey for England and Wales conducted by the Office for National Statistics, the data showed that 61,158 rape offences were recorded between June 2020 and June 2021, the highest

rate ever documented within a 12-month period.

Thompson said the increasing rates of sexual offenses throughout 2021 are both worrying and disappointing as it continues to worsen worldwide.

"It's horrific that we're supposed to be in, like, the 21st century, we're supposed to be much more progressive than we were in the past," she said. "We just seem to be continually going in a backward spiral of just, sort of, objectifying women."

Stereotypes

Cruz said she has learned to question any news published about Latin America because of stereotypes perpetuated by the media.

"Most of the countries that are Latin American, people think of them as second class citizens," she said. "So when the news comes out, it depends on the source for me to believe what it is that's happening."

Santiago Londono ('23) said a contributing factor to the spread of misinformation,

particularly in Latin America, is the lack of press surrounding ongoing issues. He said news around the topic of femicide "should be put forward a lot more so that our society knows about it. Beyond fact-checking, Cruz said the expectations on men perpetuated by toxic masculinity create a warped perception of the severity of issues in Latin America compared to the U.S. and U.K. She said there is often a negative connotation when Hispanic names are used, and the term "macho" is almost always swapped for vocabulary related to toxic masculinity.

"When it's 1950s America and the wife is at home and she's in an apron and with a dress on and cooking and baking and raising the children, 'Oh, those are the good old days,'" she said. "But then when it's Diego and Maria, 'Oh, machismo.' I don't like that it's given a negative connotation when it has to do with Latinos."

Cruz said these Eurocentric ideas of machismo in Latin America can be traced back to the influence of white supremacy on gender roles. She said there is a standard that has been created with white supremacy biases and that these expectations are "used as a ruler to gauge everybody else."

Likewise, Londono said men are constantly receiving

messages from society surrounding taking control over others, especially women. He said gender discrepancies can be attributed to the societal construct of toxic masculinity because "men are always put up as more dominant than women. It puts women down a lot and this has been seen everywhere in the world."

Moreover, Cruz said the perpetuation of stereotypes surrounding domestic abuse often comes from the media playing into European expectations and typecasting people that appear on mainstream platforms.

In spite of this, Cruz said men globally are conditioned to play into gender roles no matter their nationality.

"Men have been given this message throughout history that they are the ones in charge - they're the oppressor," she said. "You could find that in any culture."

School community

Even within the school community, Brooks said global is-

suues relating to sexism and the ongoing rise in gender disparities are seldom discussed.

"This is something that needs to be talked about and addressed in order to actually create change," she said. "And I'm not really seeing that as much as I would hope."

Similarly to Brooks, Thompson said gender-based violence either on a global or local scale is not talked about enough within the community.

"We haven't really had a sort of mainstream school discussion on these issues and how they've been impacting us," she said. "It's more just sort of word around the students in the student body."

In addition, Brooks said she is concerned now more than ever before about the instability of women's rights.

"I worry for the future, the future of women and the future of girls who are now growing up," she said. "If something like COVID changes this, I wonder what's going to come next that further changes this and further makes life difficult for women."

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