

2016 01 17 GUSS Hot Potatoes: **Abortion**

<u>'ensoulment'</u>	40 days? 80 days?
1869	Pope Pius IX - excommunication for all abortions
Quickening	c 16-20 weeks
1803	English law introduces death penalty for abortion after quickening
1837	all abortions illegal
1929	okay to preserve the mother's life
1938	Dr Alex Bourne
1967	Abortion Act – legal up to 28 weeks
1990	the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act: lowered time from 28 to 24 weeks & governed treatment of embryos

International examples: China, Romania, South America, Ireland, Northern Ireland

WHO: estimated 40-50 million abortions a year and that 47,000 women die as a result of unsafe abortions

England and Wales TODAY:-

- abortions must be carried out in a hospital or a specialist licensed clinic
- two doctors must agree that an abortion would cause less damage to a woman's physical or mental health than continuing with the pregnancy

There are also a number of rarer situations when the law states an abortion may be carried out after 24 weeks. These include:

- if it's necessary to save the woman's life
- to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman
- if there is substantial risk that the child would be born with serious physical or mental disabilities

There were **695,233** live births in England and Wales in 2014

In 2014, the stillbirth rate remained at 4.7 per thousand total births

Doctors estimate 20% pregnancies end in a natural miscarriage

2014

abortions total for E &W residents: 184,571
(for non-residents 5,521)

92% carried out before 13 weeks

Medical abortions 51% - for *first time more than surgical abortions*

3,099 – 2% - were for foetal handicap and 132 to reduce number of foetuses

37% were to women who'd already had one or more abortions

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

- is a foetus a human being?/ when does personhood begin? / is a foetus a separate being from its mother?
 - if the foetus has a right to life, does that right take priority over the mother's right over her own body?
 - If the woman's life is in danger because of the pregnancy, whose rights should prevail?
 - What about 'difficult cases'? (rape, deformity, multiple foetuses...)
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The case against abortion

- deliberately killing innocent human beings is wrong
 - a foetus is an innocent human being
 - abortion is the deliberate killing of a foetus
 - therefore abortion is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being
 - therefore, abortion is wrong
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The case for abortion

- women have a moral right to decide what to do with their bodies
 - a foetus incapable of independent life should not have the same rights as a human being who has already been born
 - the right to abortion is vital for gender equality
 - banning abortion puts women at risk from illegal abortionists
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