Access to abortion in the United States

Changes resulting from the *Dobbs* decision

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Who has abortions in the US?

- Who needs an abortion?
- Who gets an abortion?
- What happens when people don’t get wanted abortions?
The #WeCount Project

82% of all abortion providers in the US are reporting

Each clinic reports the number of abortions they provide each month, from April 2022 through July 2023. #WeCount shares these findings summed at the state level.

The Society of Family Planning leads #WeCount.

https://societyfp.org/research/wecount/
Change in abortion numbers following *Dobbs*

- There were nearly **66,000 fewer** abortions in states with abortion bans in the 9 months after *Dobbs* than we would have expected.

- There were also more than **15,000 fewer** abortions in states with 6-week bans.

Thus, the *Dobbs* decision disrupted access to abortion for **more than 81,000 people**, mostly in states where abortion was banned.

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Thus, the *Dobbs* decision disrupted access to abortion for **more than 81,000 people**, mostly in states where abortion was banned.

- States where abortion remained legal had **56,000 more** abortions in the 9 months after *Dobbs*. This increase represents many people who traveled for abortion.

[https://societyfp.org/research/wecount/]
Change in abortion numbers following *Dobbs*

- **81,000** → **25,000**
  - Observed decrease of abortions in states with bans

+**56,000** ←
  - Observed increase of abortions in states without bans

We estimate that **25,000** people *neither* obtained an abortion in their home state *nor* traveled to another state.

These people may have self-managed an abortion or stayed pregnant.

[https://societyfp.org/research/wecount/](https://societyfp.org/research/wecount/)
South Central subregion
Abortions per month, South Central subregion

#WeCount data
South Atlantic subregion
Abortions per month, South Atlantic subregion

Dobbs ruling

South Atlantic subregion

#WeCount data
Overall increases and decreases post Dobbs

#WeCount data, visualization by FiveThirtyEight.com
Travel for abortion

- Who travels for abortion?
- What are the burdens of travel for abortion?
- How are these burdens experienced among different groups?
Abortion travel between US states, 2017

- States with well-protected access to abortion saw 3% of patients leaving for care.
- States with some protections and some restrictions saw 10% of patients leaving for care.
- States with restrictive abortion policies, like Ohio, saw 12% of patients leaving for care.
- Notably, states with the most restrictive abortion policies saw over 25% of patients leaving for care.

People of color, folks experiencing financial insecurity, those living in rural areas, minors, LGBTQ people, and others the healthcare system leaves behind are disproportionately burdened by costs of travel for abortion care.

*Smith 2022, Chakraborty 2022*
**When abortion care is not available**

- Some people overcome barriers and travel to another state. Clinicians report that these patients are arriving later in pregnancy and distressed.

- Some people self-manage an abortion by buying pills on the internet. This is clinically safe yet can be criminalized.

- Some people will be forced to remain pregnant. Risk of death is 13x greater from a delivery than from an abortion, and people who are denied an abortion have worse health and financial outcomes years later.

*Raymond 2012, The Turnaway Study*
Abortion care churn is state- and/or clinic-level instability of abortion care services and chronic uncertainty about potential closure or changes in services.

McGowan, NEJM, 2020
Gestational Limits and Abortion Availability in Ohio and Surrounding States

- No Limit
- Viability or 3rd Trimester Ban
- 24 weeks LMP
- 22 weeks LMP
- 20 weeks LMP
- 15 weeks LMP
- 6 weeks LMP
- Abortion illegal or no services available
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Post Dobbs, Week 6
August 3, 2022

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August 26, 2022
Post Dobbs, Week 12
September 16, 2022

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Resources

#WeCount project
The Dobbs Divide, FiveThirtyEight
Turnaway Study
Traveling for abortion, US
Traveling for abortion, Ohio
Impacts of gestational bans, Ohio
Abortion Care Churn
Post-Dobbs maps
Ohio Policy Evaluation Network