

Texas abortions fell sharply under law Supreme Court voided

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In a Monday, June 27, 2016 file photo, traffic passes a Planned Parenthood sign in Dallas. Abortions in Texas plummeted about 15 percent during the first year after approval of tough restrictions that the U.S. Supreme Court has since struck down—a decline that activists say shows how hard it had become to get an abortion in America's second-largest state. The health department released the statistics Thursday, June 30, 2016. (AP Photo/LM Otero, File)

Abortions in Texas plummeted about 15 percent during the first year after approval of tough restrictions that the U.S. Supreme Court has since struck down—a decline that activists say shows how hard it had become to get an abortion in America's second-largest state.

The health department released the statistics Thursday, after lengthy delays it blamed on finalizing the data. But providers and [abortion](#)-rights groups spent months complaining that officials were intentionally stalling, and the American Civil Liberties Union even recently accused the state of "concealing" the information.

The number of abortions in Texas has fallen every year since 2008, declining by nearly a third over that period. Fewer than 55,000 abortions were performed in Texas in 2014, compared with nearly 64,000 the previous year and almost 81,600 as recently as 2008. The decline in abortions between 2013 and 2014—the first full year that the state's now-dismantled abortion clinic restrictions were in effect—was almost 9,000, the largest year-on-year drop in at least 15 years and nearly equal to the total decline from 2008 to 2011.

Abortion is becoming less common overall in the U.S. A recent analysis by The Associated Press found that abortions are down 12 percent nationwide since 2010 encompassing both liberal and conservatives states.

Texas has been a focal point for recent legal battles over abortion. The law approved in 2013 required doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals and forced clinics to meet hospital-like standards for outpatient surgery. It was temporarily delayed by a filibuster that drew national attention, led by Democratic state Sen. Wendy Davis.

Supporters said the law would keep women safer. But, since December 2010, the number of abortion clinics in Texas fell from 41 to 19.

"These numbers show that this law never had anything do with women's health," said Trisha Trigilio, staff attorney for the ACLU of Texas. "It's clear why lawmakers might have wanted to keep this information out of

the public eye before the Supreme Court made its decision."

The Supreme Court sided Monday with Texas clinics, which argued that the law was an attempt to make it harder to get an abortion. That ruling nullified similar laws in Mississippi, Wisconsin and Alabama. It could allow some of shuttered Texas clinics to reopen, but operators say that will take time.

Bhavik Kumar, an abortion provider with Whole Woman's Health, which was a plaintiff in the Supreme Court case, said this week that when a clinic closes, its lease is lost, staff has to be rehired and state licenses must be reissued.

"Sometimes it takes months, sometimes on the timeline of years," Kumar said. "And sometimes it's just not possible to reopen that clinic."

Anti-abortion leaders have vowed to continue opposing the procedure in Texas' Republican-controlled Legislature. Joe Pojman, executive director of Texas Alliance for Life, applauded Thursday's statewide numbers.

"After a very tough week, the new TX #abortion figures make my day! Down in every category," Pojman tweeted.

The 2014 totals show that Hispanic women in Texas underwent more than 19,650 abortions two years ago—or about 18 percent less than in 2013. The year-on-year decline was only about 7 percent for white women and 8 percent for blacks.

Another notable drop came in 2014's number of drug-induced abortions, which fell to fewer than 5,000 from 16,000-plus in 2013. Texas state lawmakers approved restrictions on medication used to induced abortions that was unaffected by the Supreme Court ruling.

The data also shows that abortions performed in Texas clinics declined more than 10,000 in 2014 compared with the year before, while around 1,800 more abortions were performed in ambulatory surgical centers that met the struck-down law's hospital-like standards.

A separate Texas law approved in 2003 requires abortions performed after 16 weeks of pregnancy to take place in an ambulatory surgical center. That was unaffected by Monday's ruling.

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