

COVID-19 and delays in access to sexual and reproductive health care

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Access to contraception was reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This especially impacted individuals who experienced employment and financial instability, according to a study published in the *Journal of Women's Health*.

Megan Kavanaugh, DrPH, MPH, from the Guttmacher Institute, and coauthors, identified the prevalence of, and patient and clinic characteristics associated with, delays in access to sexual and reproductive health care due to the COVID-19 pandemic across three states. More than half of respondents in Arizona (57%), 38% in Iowa, and 30% in Wisconsin were unable to access or indicated a delay in accessing sexual and reproductive health care or a contraceptive method due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In all three states, individuals who had experienced financial instability due to being out of work, having fallen behind on key payments, or because of a job reduction or loss due to COVID-19 had increased odds of experiencing delays in sexual and reproductive health care.

"Importantly, our findings highlight only a small piece of the larger picture of how individuals' reproductive autonomy was impeded due to the pandemic," concluded the investigators. "Further research regarding the extent to which these COVID-19-related delays resulted in subsequent negative consequences for individuals—such as having to rely on less preferred methods of contraception, forego contraception altogether, and/or experience unwanted pregnancies—is warranted."

"Although the researchers demonstrated COVID-19-related delays in access to sexual and [reproductive health care](#), linked to [financial instability](#), the findings revealed no association between [health insurance coverage](#) and COVID-19-related access [delays](#)," says *Journal of Women's Health* Editor-in-Chief Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA.

More information: Megan L. Kavanaugh et al, Financial Instability and Delays in Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Due to COVID-19, *Journal of Women's Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2021.0493](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2021.0493)

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